

The Story of The Greatest

21 days with Mohammad
the Messenger of Allah

محمد رسول الله

Dr. Mohammed Bushnaq

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the Massenger of Allah

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Dedication

I dedicate this book to the greatest Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), recognizing my weakness, my shortcomings and my limited knowledge. Who am I to write about the most benevolent of creation when I am but a speck of sand next to his honorable feet? Rather, it is the feeling of an obligation to convey what I have learned, asking the Almighty Allah to make it beneficial and to be sincere for the sake of the Almighty. In this respect, I can only utter the most honorable prayers and blessings to my beloved, my Prophet, my teacher, and my leader Mohammad, hoping to obtain his intercession on the Day of Judgment, and a drink from his hand of Al-Kawthar water.

“The Day when there will not benefit (anyone) wealth or children (88) But only one who comes to Allah with a sound heart (89)”, Sourat Ash-Shu’ara


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Introduction

et your eyes fly away and wander from the eastern to western part of the earth, and you will find that each person has their own role models and heroes. They memorize their words and repeat them, recount their doings and cite them, and raise them high in the moments of their victory. They assure themselves and the witnesses that a legacy which has made a present is more worthy to be followed and continued on its path.

Our Beloved Prophet Mohammad (may peace and blessings be upon him) is a man who devoted himself seeking the Pleasure of Allah. He left between our hands the purity of his wisdom that clears the mind, pleases the heart, and encourages the soul to move forward. Despite all that is written in his biography, it neither describes his greatness enough, nor do we yet understand this great man.



We glorify him unconsciously without understanding, and we defend him with our tongues and not our minds. We entail his name with prayer and submission, yet we do not follow his biography with understanding and contemplation.

He is a great man who was wronged by his companions before his followers, and his relatives hurt him before the strangers. What apology do we owe him, and what consolation can demonstrate our affliction?

Hence, I am grateful for the blessed effort made by the brother and friend Dr. Mohammad Bushnaq in his consideration and speculative look in the biography of the last Prophet, in contemplation and understanding in which he used his deep emotions and the insight of his mind. Therefore, he led us through the life of the greatest man and put in our hands lessons that we can learn in his special journey in the Prophet's biography.

The author went around accompanying Bilal in order to guide him, and he presented us his vision. It is the one that you and I should strive to possess and understand. He also used his knowledge in the field of palliative and spiritual medicine to analyze some events and situations differently. Despite my great gratitude for his good effort, all the world's books will not be enough to cover the Prophet's greatness. You need the wisdom of Luqman, the understanding of Solomon, the patience of Jesus, and the determination of Moses to follow and understand it.

Nevertheless, it is a diligent effort that cannot be compared to his grace, and we are all nothing to him, "May a Dirham surpass a thousand Dirhams". May the sincere word

guide its owner to ‘Illiyin (the “most high” and “supreme” places above Jannah). O Allah, open the minds of people with this book, brighten hearts, and raise its writer to Paradise. O Allah, do not deprive us of understanding and thoughtfulness.

O Allah, do not deprive us of the reward of praying upon the Prophet and the master of us and all creation.

Kareem Elshazaly






“There has certainly come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. Grievous to him is what you suffer; (he is) concerned over you (i.e., your guidance) and to the believers is kind and merciful. (128) But if they turn away, [O Muḥammad], say, ‘Sufficient for me is Allah; there is no deity except Him. On Him I have relied, and He is the Lord of the Great Throne. (129)’”, Sourat- At-Tawba, (The Repentance)


(1)

His Biography
in Another Perspective

he red flames are dancing in the night breeze, while the columns of smoke are steaming into the sky nearly reaching the stars. The Chunks of firewood are cracking and burning, and the scent of wood fills the vast space in a majestic sight that enchants the eyes.

Everyone has entered their tents to sleep, and I am all alone in the stillness of the night immersed in my thoughts with my mind-wandering while drinking a cup of authentic Arabic coffee. It was a long night of conversation and discussion in which I heard the worries of Alia, Laila and Raed. They expressed their concerns and talked about the bitter experiences they lived and the tribulations they went through.





Dozens of questions were asked as we sat around the wood coffee pot. Why, how, and what if? Many questions baffled my heart while I was searching for an answer that would heal their wounds. Each of them has a different story and experience. Stories of bitter experiences they have lived and hard days that have passed. Each of them is drowning in feelings of fear, pain, sadness and loneliness. I don't know how I fall asleep with these thoughts whirring through my mind; I just put my head on my pillow, and it was only a matter of a few moments before I fall into a deep sleep.

I saw myself in a dream as I was walking in the desert among the sand dunes under the blazing rays of the sun, leaning on my stick, and collapsing from exhaustion, thirst and hunger.

From behind one of the mounts, I saw a tall, dark-skinned knight with a majestic look and sharp features galloping towards me on a white horse. As he approached, the knight made two turns around me until the horse stopped, then he dismounted. He approached me, stared at me sharply and placed his hand on my shoulder. I looked alarmed with fear and kept silent. Then he said, "Peace, mercy and blessings of Allah be upon you."

I answered, "Peace, mercy and blessings of Allah be upon you."

The man remained silent, looking into my eyes in astonishment. I asked him, "Who are you and what are you doing here?"

He replied, "Don't you know who I am? I am Bilal ibn Rabah."

I couldn't believe my eyes. I was amazed, overwhelmed and astonishment took hold of me. I started muttering, "Bilal, my Master Bilal? Sir Bilal ibn Rabah? The first muezzin (caller to prayer) in Islam?"


He said, "Yes, Mohammad. I am Bilal ibn Rabah. I heard your conversation with your companions that night and the questions that puzzled your mind. I came to accompany you in a wonderful journey through which you can see the scenes with your eyes and draw lessons and experiences. Ride behind me, Mohammad, get on!". With strong, confident strides, the horse rode quickly through the desert sands towards a destination he knew perfectly well.

Bilal looked at me and said, "Do you know, Mohammad? I was honored by the company of the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings be upon him), the Master of Mankind and the Seal of the Prophets. I knew him as a man, a leader, a teacher and a messenger.

It is very strange for you Muslims in this era! Are you looking for solutions and following role models and heroes from abroad? Oh really?! While you own the biography of the Master of mankind, the greatest leader, teacher and educator known to mankind?! You have studied the life of the Messenger and learned the major events, battles and victories throughout his lifetime, but you have never tried to get closer to him as a human being.

Do you think that all his stands and actions with the tribe of Quraysh, his enemies and opponents, were revelations from heaven? Allah Almighty would not have chosen this man from among all of humanity for the message of Islam unless he






had the virtues of manhood and dignity, wisdom, intelligence and strength as much as no other human being possessed. It is true that he is a Prophet and a Messenger who works under the guidance and revelation of heaven, but many of his actions and decisions were of his own diligence. Otherwise, the revelation would not come later supporting or blaming and correcting. We cannot overlook his role as a distinguished genius in any situation he has been in throughout his life.

Today, you need to study and reflect on the features of this person's personality. What are the values that define his thoughts, control his feelings and determine his behavior? How did he think during the difficult moments and challenges he faced? How did he deal with feelings of sadness, fear, loneliness and anger? On what basis did he make the crucial decisions throughout his life? What are the factors that contributed to building that distinctive personality? Only then, will you enter the world of this great man and get to know him more closely. You will learn to take your decisions and face challenges with determination, strength and hope. Thus, you will return to your friends and teach them a methodology inspired by the biography and stories of this great person."



(2)

The Triumphant Leader

he journey has just begun. The purebred white horse was galloping quickly in the stillness of the desert with dust flying out of its hooves. The fierce wind was blowing in our faces and caused my Master Bilal's cloak and turban to fly away. I was holding on to my master, watching the scene around me with equal measures of curiosity and enthusiasm.

A white horse ridden by a brave knight, with a face that radiated glory, was proceeding with determination towards his goal as if the earth was subservient to him. As for me, I was like a child who had just met the legendary hero for whom he searched for a long time, and clung to him carefully, fearing to lose my grip!

While I am in this state, my Master Bilal turned to me and asked, "Here we have reached our first stop. Are you ready?"





I asked in amazement, “Ready for what?”

He answered smilingly, “For the first lesson!”

Confused, I responded, “I’m ready!”

We got off the horse and he took it to the trunk of a nearby palm tree to tie it. Then, he returned to me, took my hand and we climbed a huge sand dune.

My heartbeats were getting louder as we approached the summit, while faint humming was reaching me from behind the dune. I was wondering, what was happening behind it? Why did Bilal take me to this desolate place?!

And it was only seconds until the unknown was revealed to me. A wondrous sight of great splendor and majesty appeared to my eyes. Large crowds of people had gathered, all of them dressed in white.

I was astonished to the extent that the curiosity drove me closer to the scene. I only went up two more steps towards the top to find myself right on top of the dune, opposite the great crowds.

There were men, women, children, youth and adults. Despite the clear contrast of the origins, races and colors, their appearance seemed to me as one family, in a strange atmosphere of love and harmony. Everyone fell silent and turned their gaze to a man atop a hill.

I had an overwhelming desire to get closer to this man and I moved closer to explore his features and hear his speech. I pushed my way through the crowds of people towards him. Everyone stared at me as if they were wondering about this

stranger who suddenly appeared and entered their world.

Suddenly, Bilal appeared in front of me and said, “Where to, my friend?”

I said in a trembling voice, “I want to see him. I want to hear what he says.”

We walked together until we got closer to the point that we were able to clearly see his face and hear his speech.

The speaker was a man of an average sturdy build, with beautiful large black eyes and a fair complexion. His face was adorned with a thick beard with grey hair spread within it, so it gave him a more dignified and majestic stature.

I began to look at his features which combined grace, prestige and dignity.

I looked at Bilal inquiring about the identity of this man who captured my heart and soul. Bilal was staring at that man with love and admiration. Moments later, he looked at me, and said in a tone seeping with blame, “Woe to you! Don’t you know who is he? This is Mohammad ibn Abdullah, my beloved, my teacher and my messenger (may blessings and peace be upon him).”

I was speechless, a shiver ran through my body and my heartbeats increased that I almost fell on the floor unconscious.

Is he the Messenger of Allah? Really?!

I always prayed and asked Allah to see him, and now my supplications had been answered! I stand now before the Master of all Mankind, Mohammad ibn Abdullah (may



blessings and peace be upon him), my teacher, my role model, my inspiration, my beloved, my Prophet, my messenger and my intercessor on the Day of Judgment!

“We are now in the farewell pilgrimage, in the tenth year of the Hijra¹, and as you can see, Muslims have gathered from far and wide on the land of Arafah², accompanied by the Master of Humanity (may blessings and peace be upon him).

Today, my friend, you will witness for yourself the meanings of spiritual leadership in its highest sense and greatest manifestation. On this day in particular, our great leader reached the pinnacle of his influence and ascended to the summit of empowerment, in one of his most important days (may blessings and peace be upon him).

Look with me, my friend, at this great crowd, which are approximately a hundred thousand souls. Watch how they gathered on this holy land, the land of Arafah in Makkah Al-Mukarramah, after Islam has spread in the Arabian Peninsula, and everyone submitted to it with loyalty and obedience.

Can you see that old man? He is Abu Sufyan ibn Harb, and those around him are Khalid ibn Al-Walid, Akrama ibn Abi Jahl, Suhail ibn Amr, Suhaib Al-Roumi, Ammar ibn Yasser, and Asid ibn Hudayr.

This great man abolished all sorts of ethnic considerations, social differences and class differentiations making of them one equal nation with no difference between

1 *Hijra: the journey of the Islamic prophet Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina in the year 622.^[2]

2 Arafah: Mount Arafah, ‘mountain of mercy’),^[2] is a granodiorite hill^[1] about 20 km (12 mi) southeast of Mecca.

an Arab and a non-Arab, nor a white person and a black one. They are judged only by their piety. The scene happening before your eyes came only to confirm this idea, which was not known for the Arab before Muhammad's mission."

"What distinguishes our Prophet's experience?"

"He established the pillars of a great civilization in only twenty-three years. Outstanding leaders can leave a huge record of accomplishments in such a period, but what distinguishes the legacy of the Prophet (may blessings and peace be upon him) was that it was complete and comprehensive."

"Prophet Mohammad (may blessings and peace be upon him) is not only a noble prophet chosen by Allah to convey his message, he is also a social reformer, veteran politician and outstanding leader. There is no other leader that combined all these qualities and obtained the love and respect of his followers, as happened with this man!


We, my friend, are witnessing today a unique phenomenon that will not be repeated again in history. For this reason, this noble verse was revealed on this day:

"This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My Favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion (3)", Sourat AL-Ma'idah

The Prophet of Allah has just started his speech, let us listen to the celestial sermon."

"All praise is due to Allah, whom we praise and seek help, guidance and forgiveness from. We seek refuge with Allah from the evils within ourselves and from the burden of our evil deeds. He whom Allah guides will never be misled; and he





whom He misguides, will never have one who will guide him. I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah without partners and that Mohammad is His servant and Messenger.

I enjoin you to fear Allah, Serve Allah with fear, and rejoice with trembling. I know what is best for you.

O People, lend me an attentive ear, for I know not whether after this year I shall ever be amongst you again. Therefore, listen to what I am saying to you very carefully and take these words to those who could not be present here today.

O people, just as you regard this month, this day and this city as sacred, so regard the life and property of every Muslim as a sacred trust. Return the goods entrusted to you to their rightful owners. Hurt no one so that no one may hurt you. Remember that you will indeed meet your Lord, and that He will indeed reckon your deeds. Allah has forbidden you to take usury (interest), therefore all interest obligation shall henceforth be waived.

O people, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women, but they also have rights over you. Remember that you have taken them as your wives only under Allah's trust and with His permission. If they abide by your right, then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness. Do treat your women well and be kind to them for they are your partners and committed helpers. O people, listen to me in earnest, worship Allah, say your five daily prayers (Salah), fast during the month of Ramadan, and give your wealth in Zakat. Perform Hajj if you can afford to.

All mankind is from Adam and Eve. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor does a non-Arab have any superiority over an Arab; also, a white has no superiority over black nor does a black person have any superiority over white except by piety (taqwa) and good action. Learn that every Muslim is a brother to every Muslim and that the Muslims constitute one brotherhood. Nothing shall be legitimate to a Muslim which belongs to a fellow Muslim unless it was given freely and willingly. Do not, therefore, do injustice to yourselves.

Remember, one day you will appear before Allah and answer for your deeds. So beware, do not stray from the path of righteousness after I am gone.


O people, no prophet or apostle will come after me and no new faith will be born.

Reason well, therefore, O people, and understand the words which I convey to you. I leave behind me two things, the Qur'an and my example, the Sunnah and if you follow these you will never go astray.

All those who listen to me shall pass on my words to others and those to others again; and may the last ones understand my words better than those who listen to me directly. Be my witness, O Allah, that I have conveyed your message to your people.”

I said to myself after the sermon ended: Perhaps it was the shortest sermon I have ever heard in my life. It is a short and concise sermon which only lasted a few minutes, but it is the richest in meaning and full of lessons.





I pondered the words of the sermon trying to understand its great implications, and tried to discern from his words (may blessings and peace be upon him) Fiqh of Priorities (Islamic jurisprudence of priorities). I tried to realize the importance of the main pillars that this veteran leader highlighted in front of these crowds before his farewell.

There is no doubt that it was an exceptional sermon by all standards. In this sermon, the Prophet (may blessings and peace be upon him) stood in front of large crowds of Muslims who came together to form a strong, expanding and prospering nation; a nation to be reckoned with.

Today, my lord, O Messenger of Allah, you stand before these great crowds. Approximately one hundred thousand people submitted to you with compliance and obedience, believed in you and followed you. You are addressing a young nation ready to spread this religion to the world. A speech suitable for all those who attended today with the diversity of their cultures, roots and even the degree of their faith. Some of them believed in you from the beginning, whereas others have recently entered in the religion of Allah. You know that you are leaving soon, and this is the last chance to gather with your nation, and today's sermon is a farewell sermon.

He was keen (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) to instruct what preserves this nation's solidity and grace. The sermon came at a crucial time; It is a time when this nation bids farewell to its leader. And from today this nation has to manage their affairs following his prophetic approach and following his advice.

My Master Bilal approached me, saying, "What are you thinking about?"

“I am thinking about the main purpose of this brief and eloquent speech.”

“What did you find?” he asked.


“I found the keys to survival and empowerment for any nation. Perhaps that is the whole point of that sermon,” I replied.

“And what is the most important of them?”

“The value of coexistence and acceptance of others.”

“Exactly. That is why our Prophet chose to point out this particular value. As you know very well, tribalism and nepotic clanship were rooted in the Arab culture and mentality, which led to the outbreak of many wars and bloodshed in the pre-Islamic era. Perhaps this is where the danger lies. He (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) noticed sedition raised up in several situations, even among the closest honorable companions. Let alone that Islam spread and people entered the religion of Allah from every source, race, and color. What is the safety valve to preserve the unity and solidarity of the nation? His words (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) carried hidden meanings that empowerment would only happen with unity. Furthermore, unity is realized with coexistence and acceptance of others, leaving behind sectarianism and tribalism. In this context, this messenger, leader and educator (may blessings and peace be upon him) was keen on the importance of coexistence between men and women. He came at a time when women were harshly wronged. Thus, he preceded the whole world in preserving their rights and respecting their status and freedom,” Bilal explained.





“Exactly,” I reflected, “well said. Probably whoever examines the rituals of Islam will notice that they reinforce these meanings you mentioned. In prayer we stand in a row, the poor next to the rich, the master next to the maid, and the Arab next to the non-Arab as well. In the Hajj (pilgrimage), we witness the fusion of all these social differences, even in appearance and clothing. We are now witnessing one coherent and cohesive nation.”

“This unique thought established a distinctive culture that dissolved all social, ethnic and sectarian barriers and made it a great nation.”

I kept watching the Master of Mankind, trying to please my eyes with that majestic sight. This man, who started alone and defied the whole world, now stands and talks about the nation, the message, the sharia (Islamic law) and higher values. I have no doubt that behind this modest, humble and simple personality there were secrets hidden that helped him get to this place.




(3)

The Prophet as a Shepherd

Announcing the beginning of a new day, the sun shone on a beautiful morning painting a masterpiece. A wonderful feeling of tranquility spread in the air, while cherishing the state of harmony and serenity formed by the colors of nature around us. The morning breeze caressed our faces giving us a wonderful feeling of freshness and bloom.

I woke up with my master Bilal at dawn. After we had prayed and read a portion of the Noble Qur'an, he suggested walking towards a beautiful place he knew well. I agreed immediately without asking for any details. We walked for nearly two hours during which we talked about the important issues facing our nation. I also shared with him some of my experiences and stories of my life. When we felt extremely fatigued, I sat in a shade of a tall palm tree, waiting for the surprise Bilal prepared for me.





While in this state, I glimpsed a herd of sheep on the horizon coming our way. The sheep were led by a shepherd who was accompanied by a child not older than four years old. When they got closer to us, their appearance became clearer and their features were obvious. Sir Bilal eagerly got up from his place and pointed his gaze towards the boy saying, “Look well at this boy!”

I started walking towards that boy, followed by my Master Bilal. The boy was handsome, with a round, fair face, and dark black hair. He was distinguished by unique dazzling eyes, and a bright smile that captured the heart. The boy was helping the shepherd. He was chasing after the sheep and jumping with signs of happiness and enthusiasm apparent on his face.

I looked at him for a long time, wondering where the surprise was. My master approached me and placed his palm on my shoulder, saying, “You are wondering where the surprise is, aren’t you?”

“Yes,” I replied curiously.

“Do you know who is this boy?” Bilal questioned me.

There is no doubt that he is a child like no other. Perhaps he is an angel in the form of a human being. Who is this child, Bilal?”

“This is Mohammad ibn Abdullah,” my master declared in a voice overwhelmed by tears of longing.

“Do you mean Mohammad ibn Abdullah, the Messenger of Allah?”

“Yes, this is him when he was a child, and this is my surprise to you!”

“You mean; we are now in Bani Saad tribe?”

“Exactly. I brought you here to see for yourself how Allah Almighty prepared this man for prophethood. I will accompany you throughout his childhood, youth and old age, so you can get to know more about his life, and realize his unique qualities and noble values that prepared him to carry the message and lead humanity,” Bilal explained.


“I am eagerly longing for this,” I answered.

“His uncle Abu Talib and his mother Amna decided to move him to the tribe of Bani Saad, where Halima al-Saadia nursed him, and he would grow up in the desert away from the hustle of Mecca. In your opinion, what is the purpose of showing you this scene?”

“A four-year-old boy who lost his father while in his mother’s womb. He is fated to lose his mother at seven. He is now in this desolate place far from his mother, his home and his homeland. Perhaps this is part of his preparation for the huge responsibility,” I reflected.

My Master Bilal and I were looking at the child surrounded by the shepherd and his flock of sheep. Then, my master continued, “Listen to me, my friend. Many people believe that the key to their children’s success and happiness is by giving them everything they want. Parents always strive to provide all means of comfort for their children, fearing that deprivation would negatively impact their children. Contrary to those convictions, the fates that formed the great personality





of our Master Mohammad (may blessings and peace be upon him) were not a mere coincidence. All the pain and suffering he has gone through were predestined for a reason. And here I am today to summarize for you the most prominent factors of those destinies.

Deprivation and orphanhood

Every great person must have gone through a form of hardships in his life whether it is poverty, orphanhood, disease or injustice. If those hardships came across a decent soul, then the mind would mature, and the soul would learn to wade through difficulties and take responsibility. Whoever lived with the Noble Prophet or studied his praiseworthy biography (may blessings and peace be upon him) will find a man who is strong, wise, compassionate, patient, generous, kind, honest and faithful. Never did he give up, despair or grow discouraged. His zeal was never weakened, and he remained strong, dominant and loveable. He was loved by his followers and yet he was a force to be reckoned with by his opponents until the last moment in his life (may blessings and peace be upon him.)

Desert environment away from the hustle of the city

In the desert environment, one naturally develops a calm disposition and the merits of simple living, as well as eloquence and good expression. There is no doubt that desert people are known for their eloquence and power of statement. Growing up in the desert, this child would develop pure

linguistic abilities and he would acquire the pure characteristics of Bedouins who are known for their honesty, clarity of mind and explicit expressions. It is no secret to you that a man destined to be the leader of mankind and the Seal of the Prophets needs to have rhetoric and eloquence.

Sheepherding

It is a profession practised by all the prophets because it teaches silence, meditation and complete solitude. Silence is the cessation of communication with others for a period of time that allows self-reflection which in turn leads to better ability to express ideas, thoughts, and feelings. Solitude is the act of being alone for long hours. As for meditation, it is silence and solitude in addition to relaxation of the body and clarity of the mind.

“What is the purpose of meditation?”

“Meditation is a high state of heart presence, mindfulness, and focus that helps you to dive deeply within yourself and recognize your feelings and thoughts. This activity enhances self-awareness, broadens the imagination and develops creativity in dealing with problems. Meditation helps you get out of the problem so that you can think about it from all aspects. Accordingly, you can deal with it based on your values, not out of fear, greed or vengeance. Meditation contributes to overcoming anxieties and tension. Moreover, meditation stimulates the human mind to pose existential questions, examine answers, and make creative connections. Meditation is the highest status of human performance. In fact, it is higher than science, as science leads to knowledge, but meditation leads to wisdom.”






After this meaningful conversation, I could not help but get closer to this child and have a thorough look at his facial features with his bright smile. I do not know what was going on in your mind, my master, O Messenger of Allah, while you were tending the sheep with that shepherd. I know that you must have had many questions and at one point a revolution started within you until you attained your full strength and was ready to receive the message. Then, you were ready to stand before the whole world with all your will and determination.



(4)

Orphanhood and Deprivation

 Master Bilal led me from one scene to another, choosing the most impactful and influential parts of the Prophet's life (may blessings and peace be upon him). We walked for a long time after we left the Bani Saad tribe, until we reached Al-Abwa'. It is a region located near Yathrib, which is the old name for Al-Medina.

This place witnessed a heartbreaking event; a young child goes with his mother to visit his father's grave, but he loses her too! His mother passed away and he returned to Makkah without her, drowning in the bitterness of orphanhood and loss again!

A heavy silence descended and the place was wrapped in grief. I sat with my Master Bilal on a rock, pondering over the state of the poor child who was accompanied by his foster



mother, “Umm Ayman,” while looking at his mother’s grave with a broken heart.

There are no words to describe this scene. It was enough to look at the eyes of this young child to understand the pain and sorrow within his heart. His father died before he was born. So, he came to this world with the title “orphan of Bani Hashem³”.

I was staring into the child’s eyes while he was in front of his mother’s grave, imagining what was going on his mind. Did he beg her not to leave him alone? Did he explain to her how much sadness and sorrow filled his heart when he watched his peers accompanied by their fathers? How he longed for a father to hold him, play with him, accompany him on his travels, and teach him archery, fencing, and horse riding?

My Master Bilal was immersed in his silence and looked at me with sad eyes, as if he was overhearing my thoughts. He was running his hands over the sand while thinking of what to say. Then he decided to break the silence, and said, “The biography did not convey to us what was in the mind of our Prophet (may blessings and peace be upon him) in this tragic situation, but what was transferred to us after this event carries great significance. You know very well that after his grandfather (Abdul Muttalib) passed away, custody of our Prophet was transferred to his uncle, Abu Talib. Can you imagine how many deaths he (may blessings and peace be upon him) has witnessed, and the amount of loss and deprivation he suffered from such a young age?

3 Banu Hashim is one of the clans of the Quraysh tribe. It derives its name from Hashim ibn Abd Manaf Hashim, the great-grandfather of Muhammad, *Wikipedia*.

I answered, “Yes, I know. I am impressed at how our Beloved Prophet (may blessings and peace be upon him) experienced all these events with a pure heart, gentle character, and self-composure. As you know, human beings, by nature, need security and love. We’ve heard too many stories of people who strayed from the right path because they were deprived of these basic human needs.”

“Have you ever grasped the warm meanings of Surat Ad-Duha? Listen to these noble verses:”

“By the forenoon (after sunrise) (1) By the night when it darkens (and stand still) (2) Your Lord (O Mohammad peace and blessing be upon you) has neither forsaken you nor hates you (3) And indeed the Hereafter is better for you than the present (life of this world) (4) And verily, your Lord will give you (all good) so that you shall be well-pleased (5) Did He not find you (O Mohammad peace and blessing be upon you) an orphan and gave you a refuge? (6) And He found you unaware (of the Qur’an, its laws, and Prophethood) and guided you? (7) And He found you poor and made you rich (self-sufficient with self-contentment)? (8) Therefore, treat not the orphan with oppression (9) And repulse not the beggar (10) And proclaim the Grace of your Lord (i.e., the Prophethood and all other Graces) (11)”, Sourat Ad-duha

“All people in this life strive to achieve happiness,” Bilal continued, “yet each has their own way to achieve this goal. Some find it in family, others in friends, money or status. The Quranic context in Surat Ad-Duha reveals the Islamic philosophy regarding happiness and teaches us that the ultimate goal for humans is not happiness, but rather it is satisfaction. Happiness is a state of euphoria that is achieved



by a temporary lust that quickly vanishes. You may notice that often the things that make us happy might also bring us misery. Whereas satisfaction is a continuous state of serenity, inner peace and tranquility. Surat Ad-Duha referred to the secret to reaching this superior state, which many of those who possess strength, money and power are deprived of. On the contrary, they would often complain about tension, anxiety and worry; they have lost their sense of satisfaction. Satisfaction is feeling overwhelmed with gratitude for what one has, rather than brooding over what one does not have. It means that your life should target noble values, rather than fleeting pleasures. Satisfaction means having a strong feeling of comfort in giving rather than receiving. Surat Ad-Duha showed us the way to achieve a feeling of satisfaction, which is through contentment and gratitude.”

***“Therefore, treat not the orphan with oppression (9)
And repulse not the beggar (10) And proclaim the Grace of
your Lord (i.e., the Prophethood and all other Graces) (11)”***,
Sourat Ad-duha

Having experienced deprivation at an early age, the Prophet (may blessings and peace be upon him) has embraced deep rooted values within himself. The values of gratitude and generosity were part of his nature. He does not hesitate to give his time, money, knowledge and everything he possesses. He is always grateful to his Lord, family, friends and followers. Gratitude is an inner feeling of appreciation for what Allah Almighty has granted us of countless blessings. Gratitude is an expression with the heart, tongue, and all your limbs to those around you. You give thanks and be grateful to your mother for preparing your food, to your friends whom you enjoy their

company, the public worker, the waiter, the genitor and others for their hard work and performance.

In our current time, we have witnessed tremendous progress in science and in the fields of medicine, engineering, social communication and many others. As a result, luxury became the means of achieving happiness. However, despite all the luxury, numbers indicate high rates of depression, mental illness, suicide, divorce, and family breakup. The human problem is that we seek to achieve happiness through more wealth, positions, and social status.

The state of balance between materialism and spirituality has been achieved only in the Islamic civilization, and only the Islamic philosophy has established rules to maintain this balance. Islam called for self-actualization, spirit-raising, the practice of worship, and having a sound conscience. At the same time, it also urged the pursuit of knowledge, production, promoting growth and prosperity on earth.

My eyes kept watching this little boy as he looked at his mother's grave with grief and sadness. No one thought that this grieving child would grow up and teach the entire world the meanings of mercy, humanity and justice. Throughout his life, he would spare no effort to comfort the hearts of orphans, have mercy on the widows, and do justice to the weak.






(5)

Blooming of his Noble Character

Behind one of the huge sand dunes, a swarm of moving black spots loomed on the horizon. They looked like ants coming from afar, searching for shelter and food. After the swarm gradually drew nearer, it was evident that it was not a swarm of ants, but a massive crowd of people, breaking the stillness of the desert. As the group got closer to us, they appeared to be a large group of people including men on foot, knights on horsebacks and men pulling heavily laden camels by their reins. It was a trade caravan arriving from afar.

I was staring curiously at this scene when a young man in his second decade caught my attention. He was a handsome, broad-shouldered and majestic looking young man with a bright smiling face. He was steadfastly moving forward through the crowd. This time, I had no difficulty recognizing him. He is Mohammad ibn Abdullah, my Messenger and my Prophet (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). I felt





my heartbeat racing with excitement. May blessings and peace of Allah be upon you, my beloved Master Mohammad. I bear witness that you, my beloved, my teacher, my role model, and the joy of my heart, have conveyed the message, advised the nation (ummah), and strived for the cause of Allah, until the last heartbeat in your veins.

My Master Bilal approached me smiling, and said, “In this period of time, our Noble Messenger (may blessings and peace be upon him) had become a young man full of energy and vitality. He was overflowing with generosity and was well-known as truthful and trustworthy. He won the admiration of everyone from far and wide, and became an example of high morals, honorableness, and honesty. He was keen on perfection and excellence in every task entrusted to him. Now, he is leading a trade caravan entrusted to him by his wife Khadija bint Khuwaylid.”

“Perhaps you are wondering why I brought you here this time?”, my Master Bilal said.

“Yes.”

“I will answer you, my friend. But let me first ask you a question. In your time, when you appoint someone to a senior leadership position, what would you do to assess whether this person is qualified and capable of carrying out a huge task with great impact?” Bilal asked.

“A rigorous selection process is put in place to determine which person from among all the applicants is best suited for the position. Thereafter, the person goes through intensive training program that will provide him/her with the skills and information needed to carry out the assigned tasks,” I replied.

“Well said,” Bilal said, considering my answer. “The Master of Mankind went through an extensive process, from his first few years of life until the last day of his life. If we followed the series of events in his life, we can understand the wisdom of those turning points for each had a purpose and an objective. These events eventually will come together to form the greatest personality humanity has ever seen.

Do you know, Mohammad, if we want to study the lives of great men, innovators, and well-known leaders, it is crucial to look into factors that shaped their personalities, their core values and the events they experienced. Hence, each and every event that the Prophet has experienced was part of this qualification process in order to prepare him to lead mankind and free humanity from oppression and injustice. What do you think is the value he acquired from his work in trade?”

“I think that working in trade reveals the true quality of a person. Money is a test that only those who possess a high degree of sincerity, integrity, and self-control can pass.”


“Exactly. What else?” asked my master, encouraging me to further reflect on my answer.

“One needs advanced communication skills in order to deal with people of different origins, personalities and backgrounds to predict and accommodate their needs and preferences”, I elaborated.

“Well, how can communication be effective in this context?”

“The more eloquent and fluent the merchant is, the more efficient he is to build trust and convince people of his goods.”





“Exactly,” Bilal affirmed. “Do you think, Mohammad, that the merchant’s appearance may affect his credibility with his customers?”

“Who, among us, is not charmed by beauty and elegance?” I replied. “Who is not attracted to those who are good looking?”

“Exactly, Mohammad. It is understandable, my friend, that the Prophet’s reputation was on his favor when he openly called for the Messengership (Da’wah). I remember exactly the day when he stood as a preacher in Quraysh and asked those gathered if they would believe him if he told them that an army was going to attack them from behind. Their spontaneous and instinctive answer was that they had never known him but truthful. Hence, his reputation as an honest and truthful person was a key factor for many to believe him and embrace Islam”

Nonetheless, although Quraysh knew him as one who was truthful and sincere, yet they opposed him, and inflicted all kinds of harm on him!

“I wonder how, although Quraysh knew with certainty that a faithful man like the Prophet was impossible to lie or claim prophethood, yet they denied him! Do you know, Mohammad, that there are different levels of truthfulness? The highest state being sincere in our thoughts and feelings towards people, that our inward be better than our outward, and to be sincere regardless of the cost and consequences. In fact, the Prophet’s high level of truthfulness earned him tremendous credibility and confidence among the Quraysh people.”

“So, we are talking about a set of values based on his well-known qualities (truthful and faithful) (Al-Sadiq Al-Amin)?” I asked.

“True, add to that the honorable values for which he is known, such as tolerance, generosity and chivalry, in addition to his keenness on volunteer work and the collective humanitarian effort. His joining of Hilf Al-Fudul (League of the Nobility), whose goal was to support the oppressed, was a testament to that.”

Ladies and Gentlemen, today you are witnessing an almost complete biography of a man who is being prepared to lead the whole of humanity. A man with higher values consisting of truthfulness, honesty, generosity, chivalry, intercultural dialogue and peaceful coexistence. A man of good lineage, eloquence and brilliance, as well as excellence in personal, professional and family affairs. Most importantly, he is a man with pure soul and decent inner thoughts who refrains from every disgrace. He is the one whom the Lord of the Worlds addressed and said,

“Did We not soothe your heart for you? (1) And lift your burden from you?” (2), Sourat Ash-Sharh

Silence and stillness reigned again, and we gazed on his magnificent presence. This young man was mixing and communicating with the merchants, spreading affection and friendliness around him with his sweet spirit and wise words. He had a charisma that no one could disregard. We were captivated by the personality of this young man that Allah Almighty had blessed with elegance and charm. He walked, spoke, and moved with such a presence that all eyes on him were filled with love, appreciation and admiration.


Come, O Messenger of Allah. The countdown has just begun and the universe has been prepared for that great day. The day when you will stand before the whole world and a new dawn will rise on earth.






(6)

The Turning Point

he road to the Cave of Hira is rocky and hard. My Master Bilal helped me climb the heights towards the summit of Jabal Al Nour (the Mountain of Light.)

Bilal pulled my hand as I climbed up one of the huge rocks. When I stood straight up in total exhaustion and fatigue, he looked at me, and said, “Now, my friend, you will witness the greatest and the most crucial moment in this man’s life and indeed, in the history of all mankind.” He was looking at a small cave a few feet below us. With longing and eagerness filling my heart, I quickly followed my Master Bilal to the entrance of the cave. O, my Lord! How could my heart take this majestic scene! Tranquility and peacefulness settled over the place. This mountain seemed to me as a huge giant who bowed in reverence and humility to its guest who came inside the cave, filling the space with grace and splendor.





The beloved (may blessings and peace be upon him) had taken his place inside this cave, his face radiated serenity, dignity and glory. He was looking up at the sky watching the stars.

It was a scene full of magic. There was a small hole in the middle of the rocks through which you can see this great man sitting inside. To the other direction, Mecca with the Holy Kaaba were on sight! Long time had passed while I was watching this majestic scene.

I looked in amazement at my Master Bilal, then he asked, “What do you see, my friend?”

I responded, “I see my master, the Messenger of Allah (may blessings and peace be upon him), looking at the Kaaba from this position!”

Bilal smiled and said, “Exactly, my friend. This scene in front of you carries many important indications. Although this man left his home and family to climb the top of this mountain and spend long nights alone, his eyes were still looking towards his homeland, his neighborhood, and the ancient house (Kaaba). This is a story of a man preparing to change himself and the world following clear and precise steps. This meant climbing to the top of a summit in a harsh barren place. This isolation allowed him to meditate and look at the world through a lens of insight, awareness, and thought.”

While listening to Bilal’s words, I could not look away from my master, the Messenger of Allah (may blessings and peace be upon him). At this point, we were waiting for the great moment. Bilal approached me, and whispered, “My friend, you cannot watch this moment. I swear by Allah; your heart cannot bear this magnificent moment. The most important

moment in human history that witnessed the birth of this great leader. A leader who is not like any other! He is the Greatest Prophet, leader, teacher and educator known to all of humanity in history!”

I shouted excitedly, “It is a turning point! All the distinguished people, leaders, scholars, and pioneers had lived a normal life until the moment that shook them to the very core. A moment that awakened the dormant volcano within. Usually, the moment of change comes when one faces a challenging situation accompanied by feelings of fear, anger, or intense sadness and loneliness. The reaction of distinguished persons towards these situations differs from other people. Unlike other ordinary people, they are not influenced by feelings of despair, indecision, or humiliation. This is the crucial moment in which they discover their purpose in life and decide to devote their lives to a higher goal that captures their hearts, minds and senses.”


“It is true, my friend. The circumstances that accompanied the revelation were not a coincidence. That composition of circumstances would provide the appropriate environment to set the ground for that turning point.” Bilal said.

Let us reflect on the seven factors that witnessed the birth of the Seal of the Prophets, and the Master of Humanity.

1. The divine revelations came in a moment of solitude, silence and meditation.

I have often thought about this question: Why was the Messengership not imparted earlier in the Prophet’s life? If





this man was destined to carry the greatest message in history, and to become the Seal of the Prophets (Khatam an-Nabiyyin) and the lord of messengers, why did it only happen at the age of forty? Simply, the answer is that the responsibilities and challenges awaiting this leader were so heavy that required a special type of man. Although the Prophet (may blessings and peace be upon him) was already prepared with a set of unique characteristics such as good manners, intelligence, intuition, eloquence, and insight, however he still needed to elevate his spiritual intelligence to its highest level. Meditation was the key to achieving it. Meditation is not limited to the Master of Creation; it is a habit followed by all the prophets, scholars, thinkers and great people. Great people of all kinds, regardless of their backgrounds practiced solitude, silence, and meditation. Through meditation, one is able to detach from the problem, think about it from all angles and control one's feelings and emotions. Furthermore, meditation inspires creative thinking, imagination and clarity of mind. The moment of change and spiritual evolution comes when the mind is at peace hence comes the appropriate opportunity to receive the idea and to initiate the change.

2. Meditation at night

Unlike the hustle and noise of the day, the magic and tranquility of the night have an impactful role in providing an appropriate climate to spur that moment.

Medical scientists and psychologists tell us about the importance of relaxing at night, being alone, and consciously self-reflecting in those moments, where the body is in a state of relaxation and disconnection from the routine of daily life. It has proved to provide the soul and mind with physical and

mental advantages as enhancing the focus of the mind and allowing thoughts and ideas to flow, especially if this occurs in a moment of silence and isolation.

3. The month of Ramadan


Unlike what many people think that fasting in Ramadan causes a state of imbalance and feelings of anger or anxiety, medicine proved that fasting prevents several health problems and improves mental health. As a matter of fact, in addition to being the month for devoting more time to performing our religious obligations towards Allah Almighty, Ramadan is a great opportunity for physical relaxation, mental focus, self-discipline and planning for the future.

4. The state of fear

A question that often haunted my mind was: Why did the revelation come in such a state of fear that left the Prophet in panic and deeply distressed? It was never easy to be in a lonely place in the darkness of the wild night and be surprised by a giant creature. Angel Gabriel commanded Mohammad to “Read”, upon which he replied, “I am unable to read”. The angle embraced him so hard twice until he could not bear it then he released him and asked him again to read those immortal verses:

“Read, O Prophet, in the Name of your Lord Who created (1) created humans from a clinging clot (2) Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous (3) Who taught by the pen (4) taught humanity what they knew not (5)”, Sourat AL-Alaq





Reflecting on the Prophet's experience at the Cave of Hira, there are lessons that can be learned and applied in our lives. We often face mixed feelings of fear, sadness and anger at pivotal moments of life when one is abandoned by those closest, lose a loved one or is challenged by disease, poverty or disaster. These are natural human feelings that do not necessarily mean descending to the bottom. Perhaps the Lord of the Worlds sent these events your way to shake you right to the core and wake you up from your slumber so that you look for ways of salvation. Allah send tests to us in different ways as each has a different level of patience, tolerance, and faith.

“Allah does not charge a soul except (with that within) its capacity. It will have (the consequence of) what (good) it has gained, and it will bear (the consequence of) what (evil) it has earned (286)”, Surat Al-Baqarah

In that moment, you may start to know your strengths and elevate your spirit. Only then, you will be able to say: this is the most crucial moment in my life! This is when the change begins!

On the other hand, when people experience feelings of fear, loneliness, or deep sadness, they tend to ask themselves the wrong questions and thus get the wrong answers. Most people tend to mourn their loss, complain and blame others for their misfortune.

But persons with high spiritual intelligence reacts differently. Rather than listening to their negative thoughts, they tend to ask clear and specific questions that help them deal with such situations and overcome the challenge. Questions like “What should I do?”, “What are my strengths?”, “What do

I have to offer this world?”. The key here is to have a paradigm shift in order to face the crisis. You can never control feelings of anger, frustration, or sadness. But you can change your way of thinking. If you think differently, those feelings will dissipate and be replaced by feelings of serenity, reassurance and tranquility.

5. Read

It is not strange that the Qur’an begins with the word: “read.” In Islam, knowledge came before worship in an explicit call to invest the mind through knowledge. Knowledge will inevitably lead to worship and to solid morals and values. Islam is distinguished by respecting reason and science, it also calls for meditation, thinking and exploring the earth, and even making the dissemination of scientific knowledge an obligation to fight ignorance and superstitions. The Islamic civilization will witness a comprehensive renaissance that achieves harmony between religion, ethics and science hence embracing the causes of strength and empowerment.

Throughout their lives, humans are exposed to major events and they get overwhelmed by feelings of fear, anger or sadness. It is important that people invest in their minds and not to give up to confusion, negativity and ignorance. In the night of the first revelation, the Beloved Prophet (may blessings and peace be upon him) took that commandment with certainty, as he immediately went to his trusted secret keeper, and his life partner Khadija. The honorable lady who possessed reason, wisdom, intellectual integrity and the presence of an attentive tranquil heart.



Then they sought the advice of Waraqa ibn Nawfal as he was known to have good knowledge of the messages of the prophets and the revelation of heaven. As a sincere and wise advisor, Waraqa listened to Mohammad and gave him the good news that He (may blessings and peace be upon him) would be the Seal of the Prophets.

6. Life-long companion

When the mind is confused and distracted, what could be better than seeking a good companion who would show understanding and provide support. Who was better to fill this role for our Beloved Prophet (may blessings and peace be upon him) than Khadija? She was his wife, soul-mate, confidante and secret keeper, and deeply wise.

Khadija carried out her mission to the fullest; she consoled and reassured him and she deliberately uttered those immortal words written in golden letters in her short memorable speech. Within her words, she did not show any signs of concern or confusion, did not underestimate what happened or what trials awaited him, and did not rely on ancestral lineage, power, and money to overcome difficulties.

Rather, she talked about the values of the Prophet. Listen to what she said:

Never! By Allah, Allah will never disgrace you. You keep good relations with your kith and kin, help the poor and the destitute, serve your guests generously and assist the deserving calamity-afflicted ones.

7. Personal values

Ideas that are based on sound values are destined to survive. Throughout life crisis, one we may experience overwhelming feelings of sadness, pain and loneliness. One who holds good values does not deviate from the right path, nor does he know hesitation or compromise. A person with good values hardly ever experiences feelings of humiliation or despair, but rather may experience feelings of sadness or loneliness and find the way to rise and move on in life towards accomplishment of one's mission.

My Master Bilal was silent as he looked with eyes full of love and admiration towards the Master of Creation (may blessings and peace be upon him), then he looked at me and said, "Come on, my friend, it is time for us to go!"

We began to go down the mountain with hearts fueled by the enthusiasm of what I saw and heard!

Suffering, in all its forms, is an essential part of human life. In real life, we witness stories of protagonists and heroes who went through turning points, including feelings of fear, sadness or loneliness. Thus, by all means, those great people were able to overcome suffering at the moment in which they isolated themselves and decided to make a real change in their lives. A change that went beyond their feelings of anger, revenge or fear.


However, the greatest moment in mankind is the moment of change that is about to happen. In the Cave of Hira, at Al Qadr night (Laylat al-Qadr), it is the first meeting between the Seal of the Prophets and Gabriel (may blessings and peace be upon him) And what a night of glory it is!





(7)

A State of Fear

y Master Bilal took me today to the house where the most honored of messengers lives. It was difficult to see through the window in the darkness of the night but I was able to recognise the Messenger of Allah who was laying covered in his bed with signs of fear and panic on his face. Here is Khadija, the warm-hearted companion and beloved wife next to him, listening and consoling him.

Sometimes during tough times, we may experience moments in life in which we feel that our hearts breaking. So, we fall prey to feelings of deep anxiety and despair and even feelings of loneliness. We may feel isolated and that nobody understands or appreciates our feelings. While trying to help us, others might ask us to show more endurance, lay the blame on us, judge us or tell us what should we do thus denying or



dismissing our feelings. It is not easy to know how to provide support to others when they need it. Shortly after, our Master Gabriel will return to visit our Master Mohammad at his home. This time He will come to help him overcome his fear and to strengthen and console him as a good mentor and best teacher would do!

He descended on him with glorified words that he carried over from the seventh heaven. Virtuous words that will overcome feelings of fear and restore in him determination, strength and hope!

***“O you (Mohammad pbuh) enveloped in your cloak!
 (1) Arise and warn all (2) And your Lord (Allah) glorify!
 (3) And purify your garments (4) And keep away from
 uncleanness and Ar-Rujz (the idols)! (5) And do not confer
 favor to acquire more (6) And persevere for ‘the sake of
 your Lord. (7)”, Sourat Al-Muddaththir***

My Master Bilal was staring at me quietly as if reading my mind, then he took a deep breath and said, “Note the noble Quranic style that descended upon the Prophet urging him to overcome this situation and preparing him for the burden of a great mission in six verses, which are impressive and clear, yet short and precise.

The Prophet is addressed as “**Al-Muddaththir**” meaning ‘the person wearing a cloak’ who is so scared that he has totally hidden himself away out of fear. This Quranic method is a wonderful indication that it is sometimes normal for a person to experience feelings such as fear, sadness or weakness. It is apparent that the Qur’anic speech did not blame our Master, the Messenger of Allah, for the feelings of fear. However, it resumed spontaneously and step-by-step to help him deal with


these feelings in the best way. **“Arise and warn all”** There is no time for fear and panic; you have a huge responsibility and a noble message. Be brave, and arise to perform this mission with courage. The meaning here is very clear. The effective way to get rid of anxiety and fear is not through running away from the problem, suppressing feelings or searching for the causes of happiness, rather it is in the search for the meaning of life. This can only be achieved through setting a purpose in life and determining to stand up and face any challenges. Therefore, the Quranic speech used the word **“arise”** (Qom) which indicates movement, hard work and determination.

This is clearly expressed in the supplication of the Messenger (may blessings and peace be upon him): “O Allah, I seek refuge in You from worry, grief, helplessness and laziness.” A helpless person has the desire but lost the ability, whereas the lazy is the one who has the ability but lost the desire. Failing to have a mission in life and to set goals for achieving the mission, one should expect to be among one of those types!

“And your Lord (Allah) glorify!” Since you have decided to take the initiative and change the world, you will suffer many kinds of rejection and harm. This applies to any person who decides to make a change at any level. If you are a person with high ambitions and you have a great dream yet did not experience rejection or accusation against your ideas, sincerity or actions, then you are not on the right path! It is the nature of people to reject change and resist new ideas!

Suffering is inevitable! However, what eases the pain of suffering is the certainty that there is something worth suffering for.





“And your Lord (Allah) glorify!” Allah is the greatest, the highest and the most glorified. For the sake of Allah’s pleasure, all forms of suffering are endurable. Allah is the Greatest! No trust and no hope except for Allah. Allah is Greatest! Do not attach to people, things, or desires, for everything is bound to perish except He Himself. Attachment must be only for Allah, only for our Lord Himself.

Most people think that change starts from within. However, the Noble Quran called for external change first. **“And purify your garments.”** Purify your garments indicates the change of everything visible. If you face a tough challenge in your life, it might be the right time for a change. Souls and hearts are vulnerable to weakness and laziness as a result of life’s routine and rigidity. Humans by nature fear change; they prefer to remain in their comfort zone. Therefore, the moment of fear is an exceptional opportunity that should be seized. Instead of surrendering to fear or blaming circumstances and others, it might be best to embark on change. Avoid sources of negative energy or unnecessarily heavy burdens whether these are things, habits or people and replace them with whatever carries a value you believe in and work for. If you, my friend, started to achieve external change, the internal change will be much easier, **“And keep away from uncleanness and Ar-Rujz!”** In many cases, a momentous event might shake us and change our convictions, as we later discover that many of the convictions that we used to believe in were initially incorrect. The difficult junctures of life come to reveal things differently and increases our awareness and maturity and we start to acknowledge people worthy of our trust and love.

The meaning of those verses began to become clearer. They contain a very impressive command with speed rhythm,

exceptional expression and clarity of speech. It never crossed my mind that these short verses carry practical guidance and essential tools for dealing with fear and anxiety in an integrated and balanced approach. But the question remains, what if we followed those instructions for a while, then our soul felt lethargy? What if sadness and hate nested in the heart, causing one to lose the ability to forgive? Is this not the nature of humans? Many of my friends and patients do not live comfortably because they are still suffering from the bitterness of injustice, having fallen prey to self-condemnation, or feelings of hate towards those who wronged them.

Bilal continued his speech as if he understood what was going on in my mind and said, “If you studied the seven verses well, you will realize the accuracy and coherence of the steps mentioned in the verses.”

The first three verses set the basic rule for dealing with the state of fear, as mentioned earlier.”

“O you (Mohammad pbuh) enveloped in your cloak! (1) Arise and warn all (2) And your Lord (Allah) glorify! (3)”, Sourat Al-Muddaththir

Acknowledge your feelings and never try to suppress them. Get up and move to achieve a lofty goal that you believe in for the sake and the pleasure of Allah Almighty.

After introducing the basic elements of change: feelings, behavior and intention, comes the two verses that call for change.

“And purify your garments (4) And keep away from uncleanness and Ar-Rujz (the idols)! (5)”, Sourat Al-Muddaththir



The change meant here is the visible kind of change whether of things, habits or people, as well as the internal change of convictions through drawing lessons from life. The sixth and seventh verses came as a safety valve to emphasize the mechanism of change.

“And do not confer favor to acquire more (6) And persevere for the sake of your Lord (7)”, Sourat Al-Muddaththir

After going through hard times, many people overcome the first stage, absorbing the shock and controlling their feelings. Then, they resolve to change and entrust their affairs to Allah Almighty. But if you closely looked at their lives, you will not see real change. The change mentioned in the third and fourth verses is an inside out change. So, what is the point if, after going through a crisis, we just experience an emotional state and not a sustainable behavior? Real change is not words or deeds but sustainable habits. Therefore, the verse **“And do not confer favor to acquire more”** came as a clear call to follow new customs. By performing meditation and embracing our feelings and thoughts, one can pull the strings of change. Thoughts turn into ideas, ideas turn into actions, habits and behavior. It is our behaviors and habits, not events, that determine our destiny.”

“That’s wonderful,” I said. “What about feelings? Many people come out from hard times with their heart suffering bitterness of injustice and deprivation. They carry feelings of self-condemnation or hatred and resentment against those who oppressed them. Eventually, their energy is drained and their hearts are blinded by carrying such hard feelings. Bilal continued, “Whoever remained in this state, could not fulfill the fifth commandment **‘And keep away from uncleanness**


and Ar-Rujz'. How could the heart open to positive thoughts while in this state? A cup full of pain cannot fit the positive thoughts until it is emptied of negative ones. Here comes the seventh verse, which is like a healing balm for those people: **'And persevere for the sake of your Lord.'**"

Confused, I said, "I do not understand! You are telling me that patience is sufficient to get rid of negative emotions as self-condemnation and hatred. Many people keep their patience but to no avail!"

Bilal answered, "This is because you did not understand what patience is. Patience is not just a word of surrender or submission. Patience is a great philosophy for dealing with life's stresses. Have you not heard the beautiful supplication, 'Oh Allah, grant me the strength to change what I can change, and grant me patience for what I cannot change, and grant me wisdom so that I can differentiate between them?'"

Patience, my friend, has three levels. The first level is about people who despair (despairing), those who claim that they are patient, but their hearts are full of sorrow, sadness or anger. The second level is about people who are helpless, those who accept whatever crisis they had been through but waiting passively for rescue without doing whatever is possible. As for the third level, it is those who know (knowers). Patience, as mentioned in this commandment, means to be grateful for what one is facing in terms of events, disasters, injustice or tyranny and being motivated to find a way out, inspired with new ideas that one would not have thought before. Patience here means dealing with these events as if they were a gift sent from heavens to achieve real change that elevates our life for the best. Patience here is to stop complaining and to search





for creative and innovative solutions. Patience drives us to such great heights to the extent that we are grateful for our opponents for the lessons learned with content hearts and no feelings of hatred or anger. This is patience!”

My Master Bilal began to recite the verses with reverence while I kept watching the glorious scene. The Master of Mankind was in his bed, his noble face glowing with peace and serenity which added to the grace and beauty of his face. Today, my Master, after those immortal commandments, you are ready to perform the mission. These commandments will shape your thinking and influence your perception hence promoting your confidence and determination. You have learned how to deal with feelings of fear, sadness and anger, and this will become clear throughout your splendid life. You will walk your way with a heart full of peace, contentment, and certainty.




(8)

The House of Al-Arqam

There is no doubt that wandering around the old alleyways and markets of Makkah is an interesting and pleasant experience. Bilal was keen on showing me the neighborhoods, markets and landmarks where he had memories, stories and adventures from childhood. However, the most important place that occupies a special place in Bilal's heart is the House of Al-Arqam (Dar Arqam ibn Abi'l-Arqam.)

Finally, we arrived in front of Dar Al Arqam, and Bilal asked me to look through the window. Here is my beloved teacher in the center surrounded by about thirty of his companions and followers. Here are the greatest men and the most honorable companions Ammar, Suhaib, Abu Bakr, Omar, Saad, Othman, and Hamza. They are sitting with their Prophet, teacher and leader, their eyes overflowing with reverence, love and appreciation for him. Here is our Master Mohammad (may





blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), in the midst of these great men, his face full of grace, his eyes showing love to his companions and followers, and his speech is captivating while he speaks and teaches his followers. This great and modest man, the Prophet, the leader, the teacher and the educator was passionately listening to his companions to comfort them and help them through their hard times. This place witnessed the making of those heroes who will keep the flag flying after Him. Then, history will write in gold letters the names of these men: leaders, pioneers and scholars. For them, the words of Allah Almighty are well said: ***“You are the best community ever raised for humanity” (110), Sourat Al-Imran***

Bilal went on talking about this house and said, “The chiefs of Quraysh were terrified and helpless in the face of the legendary steadfastness recorded by this great leader and his followers. Quraysh’s cunning chiefs unanimously agreed on the necessity of eliminating this man and seizing every opportunity to get rid of him. They spared no effort hoping that they would get his heart down, as well as his wit and strength. But soon, it became clear that all their efforts were in vain!

The Prophet was determined and decisive. He knew exactly what he wanted and from that day he has devised an approach that does not deviate from Allah. His approach was calm and rational, and he peacefully called to the way of Allah with wisdom and goodly exhortation. The Quraysh became furious due to the calmness, strength, and steadfastness of the Prophet in the face all those plots and connivances.

The Quraysh persevered in torturing Muslims. They exerted all efforts to eliminate and stop the sweeping tide of Islam. So, they turned Makkah into a large prison, and


they moved from aversion and mockery to physical and psychological torture. They persisted for three years with a boycott of the Hashemites⁴ (a boycott against the clan of Banu Hashim). They continuously negotiated and attempted to win through extortion.

It is not easy to live in a society that does not share one's values and beliefs, but rather rivalry and enmity prevail. From here, the Messenger of Allah was keen to form a small community of followers to meet periodically in this place where you can find Ammar, Suhaib, Saad, Abu Bakr and Abd al-Rahman. Here, all classes and social barriers are broken down, and the Islamic brotherhood, in its highest meanings and most beautiful manifestations, is prominently present.

Indeed, the Noble Messenger was not able to stop the abuse and torment of Quraysh; he used his wisdom and prudence to teach us how to build our patience, endurance and resilience. If we were tired, exhausted or desperate, we would look for the Noble Messenger so that he would help us replenish our souls with strength and determination. Being close to him and looking at his honorable face, all feelings of weakness and hesitation faded away and were replaced by wonderful energy that filled our hearts. His face expressed tranquility and calmness even in the most difficult of circumstances. Despite all the torment he was subjected to, we did not witness him in a state of hesitation, weakness or retreat. We used to see him as a leader who lived among us, facing torment and restriction, but he knew exactly what he was doing and where he was going. We loved, trusted and followed him!”

⁴ The Hashemite is the clan of the Quraysh tribe to which the prophet Muhammad belonged, named after Muhammad's great-grandfather Hashim Ibn Abd Manaf.





I looked at my Master Bilal; he was a legend and a great example of heroism, patience, and defiance. Since a young age, we used to read through his biography and stories of his steadfastness, and echo his thundering scream under the whips: “Ahad Ahad” (Allah is The One, Allah is The One!).

I always had a fantasy of meeting this hero and asking him many questions that puzzled my mind. I studied the features of his face: it expressed a combination of gentleness, kindness and a spontaneous childish smile with sharp looks and thick eyebrows. His expressions also conveyed the qualities of strength, manliness, determination and strength of will.

“O my sir Bilal, when you were saying ‘Ahad Ahad’ (Allah is The One, Allah is The One!) you knew very well how much that word annoyed Quraysh. You sarcastically repeated it as if you were mocking your tormentors while they multiplied the torment. Did not you feel the sorrow and bitterness of injustice?”

Bilal looked at me and said, “Listen to me, my friend. When I met our Master Mohammad (may blessings and peace be upon him) and believed in him, I certainly knew that this is the religion of truth, justice and equality. Accordingly, I decided to follow this religion, no matter what sacrifices I would have to make. My experience taught me that the body is subjected to all kinds of torment and suffering but the soul is free. The truth is that Umayya ibn Khalaf, despite his strength and power, was the one who suffered, lost his temper and became agitated, while I looked at him with mockery and disdain and repeated that word that provoked his anger. Although I was a weak black slave, I was the master of the situation with my persistence and steadfastness. I knew with certainty that victory was inevitably coming!

For me, the equation was clear and simple. I knew that suffering will occur and I had two options, either to remain polytheist and submit to humiliation and slavery or to convert to Islam and endure all the sacrifices willingly. I chose Islam with full conviction and satisfaction.

Human literature and the history of civilizations are rich in the philosophy of suffering. The main principle is believing in something that worth suffering for. Did the beloved, the Chosen One (may blessings and peace be upon him) ever promise us authority, money or power?

Never! Instead, he promised us earning the pleasure of Allah. He promised us paradise, and his famous urging is the best witness: ‘Patience, O family of Yasir! Your meeting-place will be Paradise.’ We sacrifice our souls and our money for the sake of Allah Almighty. It is what my beloved and my teacher Mohammad taught us.

The biggest challenge is to take lessons from tough experiences to move forward with high spirit, and this is what I did. I indeed withstood the brutality of Umayya ibn Khalaf, but what is more important is how I preserved my inner strength. My only concern was to raise the flag of monotheism and that gave me a feeling of strange euphoria when subjected to the torment. The truth is that I used to repeat “Ahad Ahad” as an intense mockery of Quraysh, and perhaps a desire to receive more whips. I never had feelings of anger, hatred, or despair, ever!

If you follow the biography of the Prophet’s companions, you will notice that they came out of hard experiences with mature and reconciled souls owning the ability to coexist and



accept the other. Feelings of hatred and resentment did not find a way into their hearts, but rather love, sharing and giving. This is exceptional leadership! The Noble Prophet built this civilization on the shoulders of these men. If his followers did not have balanced souls, how could they establish justice and carry a message? It was from this place that came victory and empowerment.




(9)

A State of Anger

It was the first time I lay my eyes on the Sacred Mosque (Masjid al-Haram); no fences, doors, towers, minarets or tiles. Tall and desolate mountains surrounded Makkah from every direction. The Kaaba, with its nobility and majesty, is in the middle of the square amid the blazing desert sands in the mid-afternoon; it is surrounded by narrow roads, houses and clubs where the Quraysh used to meet and socialize late every night.

The scene was lively with the movement of people. Everyone seemed to be in constant motion and engaged in dynamic activity. People came and went to the markets that were full of all the necessities of life at that time: from food, drink and clothes; in addition to luxury goods of all sorts of eyeliners (kajal), musks, perfumes and precious gems.





The scene almost appeared to be exquisite had it not been for the presence of the idols and statues that filled the pillars of the sacred Mosque, surrounded by people who were kneeling, prostrating, supplicating and bearing gifts of money and jewels.

While I was overwhelmed with thoughts, my Master Bilal said, “Since the beginning of the Messengership, our beloved Chosen One moved forward with all determination and steadfastness. He (may blessings and peace be upon him) faced all kinds of abuse, injustice and assaults from the Quraysh, including cursing, scorning, mocking and beating. He never gave up or lost courage, but he held his head high with dignity and will power. He used to argue with the leaders of the Quraysh and confuse them with his calmness and strength. It is true that the balance of power was in the Quraysh’s favor, but he was undoubtedly always the master of the situations. He knew very well how to address the Quraysh, how to negotiate and how to establish a dialogue with them. Today, my friend, you will witness one of the most difficult situations that he (may blessings and peace be upon him) had gone through and how he reacted.”

I said, “ But where is he?”

Bilal took me to the other side of the Kaaba’s arena.

I got closer until I could clearly see his honorable face. This man, who challenged the Quraysh’s arrogance and tyranny with unparalleled determination, now stands submissively between the hands of the Creator (Al Bari). His face expressing reverence and religious zeal. Not distracted by the noise around him, he was deeply immersed in his prayers.

Suddenly, something terrible happened. A group of Qurayshi leaders, who gathered there, were whispering and looking at him with rage. Then, one of them went and placed the abdominal contents of a sheep on the prophet's shoulders (may blessings and peace be upon him) while he was prostrating. They started laughing at him so much that they were leaning against one another.


I could not bear the atrocity of this scene. I felt the blood boiling in my veins in anger and I was about to attack that damned person and slap him! After a few moments, his daughter Fatima arrived and began to remove dirt from his noble shoulders while she was crying. As for the Messenger of Allah, he continued prostrating and did not raise his head as if nothing had happened! After he finished his prayer, he looked at Fatima, consoling her with words that only speak of a sincere heart and absolute conviction, he reassured her saying, "O Allah! Curse the Quraysh," three times, "O Allah, curse Abu Jahl ibn Hisham, Shaibah ibn Rabi'ah, 'Utbah ibn Rabi'ah, 'Uqbah ibn Abi Mu'ait."

I looked at Bilal, with an aching heart he asked me, "What are you thinking, my friend?"

I answered, "O Messenger of Allah (may blessings and peace be upon you)! This might have been one of the hardest moments in his life. It is not easy for a man of his stature and greatness to experience such a hard situation. Where does he get the strength to resist and never give up!"

My mind got carried away, and I thought what if I were in a similar situation! What if one day I were in a public assembly, and some idiot people decided to degrade me, and one of them approached and poured garbage and dirt over my





head, followed by the crowd's laughing sarcastically! Who has the ability to endure such a situation without losing mind or letting anger lead to dire consequences? Who can get out of that situation without falling prey to feelings of humiliation, and indignity!

My Master Bilal turned to me saying, "Those wicked people knew very well what they were doing. They might have thought that this man would react according to human instincts and lose his balance, so that they would take advantage of his vulnerability and destroy him. At this exact moment, many were watching and waiting for his reaction whether followers and allies or opponents and enemies alike. What shall he do?"

It was a test before everyone's eyes. Needless to say, that the balance of power is not in his favor. He is a man who stands alone in front of an entire society, confronting the most powerful, influential and cunning leaders of the Quraysh. A man who is alone with only a group of vulnerable people most of whom conceal their faith. Moreover, the test came so harsh and sudden that it required a quick and decisive response. How did this great man think? How did the orphan of Bani Hashem act? Having been brought up in nature, he acquired stability and firmness from the mountains, height and eminence from the sky and purity and tranquility from the rain.

Let the time freeze, and let us come closer so that we may understand what was going in the mind of this great person. Biographies about the Prophet have not tried to learn his thoughts and feelings in this serious situation. As the author of this book, it is my own diligence to try to find out, admitting that I may be correct, and I may be incorrect (endeavor of trial and error).

He might have been immersed in his prostration with all reverence and submission, completely absorbed in praise, wholehearted devotion, and supplication to Allah. While he is separated from the world, not feeling was going on around him, suddenly he feels someone is approaching and he feels weight falling on his shoulders. Drops of blood and stinking fluids start to flow on his head, neck and shoulders. The disgusting scent choked his breath and made him lose focus. It was only moments until he heard sounds of mockery and laughing coming from a group of wicked and ruthless persons who have just committed the most filthy and shameful act.

They did it while he was praying quietly and peacefully to disgrace him. Where? In the Sacred Mosque, in front of people, and in broad daylight! To intensify the humiliation, they informed his youngest daughter Fatima about what had happened. Thereafter, she came crying, shocked by the situation in which she found her father. She rushed towards her father and began to remove the dirt from his shoulders while she was crying.

He might have been thinking, “how dare they do this despicable act? I have never offended any of them and I have never asked them for anything for myself. All I did was call them to worship Allah, the One and Only, and I have never imposed my calling by force. My only request was to leave me alone and not to stand between me and my people! I have lived forty years in this town, and I have won the love and respect of everyone and was called the truthful and trustworthy. After Allah has chosen me to guide and deliver his message, I am hereby subject to abuse and insult. Perhaps they were provoked by the sight of my prostration. Or maybe they considered my



turning away from their idols a blow to their pride, so they expressed their feelings in this despicable way.”

My Master Bilal placed his hand on my shoulder saying, “Perhaps he had studied the most appropriate responses. A response which would be prompt, effective and strong. Bear in mind that we are not talking about an ordinary man, but a noble man who doesn’t fall a prey to feelings of humiliation. Our Prophet (may blessings and peace be upon him) will not rage, lose focus, or react aimlessly. This is a man who has been well prepared for such a day. He will gather his strength, control his feelings and take action.

It is no wonder. Was not he the one who learned the art of silence, solitude and meditation in the Cave of Hira where he learned the presence of heart and the ability to focus? Was not he the one who was exposed to fear at the beginning of the Messengership, then the revelation came to reassure him and teach him how to deal with feelings of fear in Surat Al-Muddathir? Wasn’t he the one whom Khadija reassured and said, “*I swear by Allah that He shall never humiliate you?*” He is able to handle this situation as the great leaders, with an approach that is consistent with his supreme values!”. It is a fast-rhythmed, clear-cut and strong three-step approach!

1 – Prolonging the prostration

What is the secret behind prolonging the prostration as opposed to getting up quickly and getting rid of the dirt? Perhaps they are moments of silence that will give him the ability to understand the situation and control emotions wisely. Extending the prostration and refusing to acknowledge their idols irritated Quraysh and, they thought that by doing this, he

will lose his focus and they would force him to end his prayer, yet in vain! He was applying the Almighty's saying:

“No! Do not obey him. But prostrate and draw near (to Allah)”, *Sourat Al Alaq (19)*

2 - Crust

The most difficult battles that a person encounters are the inner ones that take place within the conscience and mind. This man stood after he had finished his prayer with all pride and grace. He directed his words to Fatima: “Do not cry, my daughter, for Allah will support your father.” The life of this great human testifies that his respect and self-esteem have not been shaken nor has he wavered, no matter how complicated the circumstances and the adversities.

3 – The reasonable response


The Prophet pointed his gaze at them in glory, and invoked Allah's imprecations upon them in a loud voice. When they heard his voice, their laughter vanished and they feared his malediction. Feelings of fear and disgrace took hold of those cowards as they withdrew hanging their heads in shame. After a little while, he left the place raising his head with pride. He will remain in the eyes of his followers and opponents alike: a man with strength, grace and pride, no matter how severe the difficulties he will endure.





(10)

A State of Weakness

he distant horizon began to receive the golden sun rays at the early hours of the day. The desert expanded in serenity while the dawn breeze caressed my hair and face. In this beautiful scene, the whole nature is united in glorifying and praising the Almighty Allah. In the stillness of the desert, if your companion is Bilal with his melodious voice, then you would inevitably witness a state of presence of the heart and reverence that you have not experienced before. After we finished the prayer, praise and remembrance (Azkar), my Master Bilal said, “Despite all the books that you have read about the Noble Prophet and all the stories you have learned about him, it is entirely different to come closer to this phenomenal person and have a better sense of his feelings and emotions.”

“I totally agree with you,” I said.



“Today I will take you in an important journey and I want you to witness with your own eyes what you have not read in biographies or heard in the speeches of preachers.”

“I am ready, eager and enthusiastic!” I declared.

“Come on then, let us ride.”

This time our destination was Al-Taif. From afar, we saw a tall palm tree in the middle of vast green areas surrounded by mountains from all sides. When we approached it, we found a man who appeared to be in his 50s. His face was in deep sadness, he sat there alone, completely separated from the world around him.

My Master Bilal got off his horse, and I followed him with strong feeling of eagerness.

He was the Messenger of Allah (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and we were about to witness the Al-Taif incident!

Al-Taif is a city associated with pain in the memory of any Muslim because of what happened to the Prophet (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) there. He came to this city with the hope that people there would respond to his call, after having suffered bitterness and injustice from the Quraysh. The distance separating it from Makkah is estimated at 130 km, and it takes about 28 hours to complete the journey on foot. He travelled that journey on his feet and was accompanied by Zaid bin Haritha. He stayed there for several days, inviting people (the Thaqif tribe) to Islam. However, the result was disappointing and the people of Al-Ta'if not only did not accept his call, but also they made their children throw


rocks and stones at Mohammad and Zayd ibn Harithah to force them to leave the city and never come back. Both men were wounded by the stones thrown at them, and their feet were covered in blood.

I approached him until I almost touched his robe, and my eyes looking closely at his face (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). Today, my lord, O Messenger of Allah, you are fifty years old, and strings of gray hair have begun to invade your head and beard. Today you feel weak as your kin abandoned you, and strangers persisted in your enmity. Today you sit sadly alone, O best of mankind, and best one who walked on the earth! That state of sadness only added to your glory, grace and splendor. The looks of sadness in your eyes carry behind them confidence and dignity.

Bilal approached my master, the Messenger of Allah (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), looking with pain at him. He turned to me and said, “Perhaps you know, my friend, that we are now witnessing one of the most difficult days that the Beloved (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) encountered. At the time, ten years had passed since the beginning of the Islamic Da’wah⁵ (Calling people to Islam), but there was no glimmer of hope on the horizon. The Quraysh are still watching him closely and pursuing his followers and supporters, while years are passing by heavily and painfully. The numbers of those who believed in him are few from amongst the most vulnerable. In this year specifically, our Prophet lost his compassionate uncle Abu Talib who was protecting him from the tyranny of the Quraysh. Moreover, he lost his wife Khadija (may Allah be pleased with her), the joy

5 *Da’wah* is the act of inviting or calling people to embrace Islam.





of his heart and the balm of his soul. It was truly the year of sorrow (the year of grief)!

It is as if the calamities all come at once. Under such bleak, turbulent circumstances, our Prophet resolved to make a change in the course of the events, so he decamped to Al-Taif, hoping to find safety and refuge for himself and his companions. But unfortunately, people there met him terribly and chased after him, then threw stones at him until they bloodied his honorable feet. They did not stop there, but informed the Quraysh of what had happened, giving them the opportunity to gloat over his misfortune and further abuse him.

Can you imagine worse than this? The Seal of the Prophets, the Master of Mankind, and the Great Leader you see before your eyes in his worst state of weakness, loneliness, sadness, and distress!

You may feel distress and pain for this scene, but what happened today was a historical turning point, no less important than the Hijra incident or the Battle of Badr, in my estimation. This great leader taught us how to take advantage of opportunities even in the darkest and most difficult circumstances.


First and foremost, he searched for the source from which he could draw strength in moments of weakness. He found no substitute for the habit he had developed so long ago: silence, solitude and meditation. While practicing these skills the mind becomes clearer, the soul elevates and the anxieties dissipate. Also, he practiced worship, supplication and communing with the Most Merciful.”

He raises his hands to heaven and begins his gentle supplication to his Lord:

O Allah! I complain to you of my weakness, my scarcity of resources and humiliation before the people. O Most Merciful! The Lord of the weak and my Lord too! To whom have You entrusted me? To one who does not care for me? Or have You appointed my enemy as master of my affairs? So as long as You are not angry with me, I care not. Your favor is abundant for me. I seek refuge in the light of Your Face, by which all darkness is dispelled and every affair of this world and the next is set right, lest Your anger or your displeasure descend upon me. I desire your pleasure and satisfaction until You are pleased. There is no power (to do good) and no might (to refrain from evil) except with You.

What a beautiful and gentle supplication. Those moments of meditation were not mere prayers, but it was rather a vision and an integrated approach for change. With these words “*I complain to you of my weakness, my scarcity of resources and humiliation before the people*”, he thought through the problem and identified, with an enlightened mind, the weaknesses (the lack of power, the humiliation of people). The main factor in any dilemma is the diagnosis which, if done accurately, will lead to focused and planned action to address the problem and search for effective treatment. That is the wisdom, strength and confidence that appear at the hardest times of life! Today muslims in the seasons of Hajj (pilgrimage) and Ramadan can be seen gathering in millions, raising their hands to pray for Islam and but with no vein. The problem is that they are waiting for a miracle from heaven, and this is contrary to the laws of Allah. This is not how the Messenger (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) understood the supplication, and this is not what he taught us!





This person had a different perspective. Look at him, my friend, and see the qualities of his greatness, wisdom and genius that are evident in this moment of weakness. In these moments of solitude, he eliminated all negative feelings and did not occupy his mind with the childish behavior of the people of Taif. He did not pour his heart out and did not possess feelings of hatred and revenge. Rather, he examined the situation in depth, and identified the weaknesses which are deficiency in strength, lack of power and humiliation of people. It is true that He is a prophet that carries a message, but now He realizes more than ever that empowering the message requires strength. Therefore, practical steps were necessary to overcome the weakness, lack of power and humiliation of people.

In order to strengthen my point, I will provide you with more historical evidence. For instance: Do you know that, before this day, the Prophet's aim was to allow Muslims to freely practice the rituals of their religion without being harmed or harassed? All what the Messenger (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) wanted was that no body come between him and his people "*Don't stand between me, and people*". In that era, he did not seek to establish a state, nor to take over the reins of power, nor to fight polytheism and polytheists. Perhaps if the Quraysh had fulfilled his request, things would have stopped at this point. Muslims would have formed a community within the bounds of land controlled by the Quraysh, and would have had their own beliefs and rituals just like the Jews in Yathrib. This is exactly what would have happened in Al-Taif if they allowed him to spread Islam there. However, what happened in Al-Taif was a historical turning point. Is it a revelation from heaven, or a genius in planning?


I am not sure, but the implication here is that the strategy has completely changed after this day.

It has become clear that strength has become necessary to ensure the continuation of the message, and from here the discourse changed in a completely different direction. It is the time to establish a nation that would follow the leader and obey his orders without the domination of tribal clan norms. This explains the secret of the Prophet's insistence on making the first and second pledge at al-Aqabah, as well as the secret of his remaining in Mecca after only twelve people converted to Islam from Yathrib. What kept him after he found a safe haven that kept him and his followers safe from the tyranny of the Quraysh? Why didn't he leave Mecca to Yathrib to start spreading his religion? If he departed at that moment, he would have entered Medina as a prophet for a small group of people. He would have retained this status but with no authority to enact laws, run the administration of the country and command armies. His strategy was to wait until the general population of Medina converted to Islam so he entered it in a manner befitting his stature, and people welcomed him as the Prophet, leader, messenger and ruler.

“This means that all the great events starting with the building of the Prophet's Mosque and the establishment of an Islamic civilization, through the Battle of Badr and Tabuk, the conquest of Mecca, and ending up with the sovereignty of the entire Arabian Peninsula under his rule, would not have taken place without this paradigm shift, which was the direct result of his experience that day?”, I said.

“Exactly, my friend,” confirmed Bilal. “This man will never give up and will rise again in a short time. He will





return with relentless determination to Mecca to resume his Messengership again. If you looked carefully at situations throughout his life, you would see moments of weakness, grief and defeat. This is very normal in the course of any reform movement or in the path of any reformer. Yet, for ten years, and despite his weakness and despite subjected to all forms of persecution and harassment, this unrivaled leader remained the master of the situation! He did not fall victim to humiliation and did not give up. Every day, he assessed and analyzed events, studied options, negotiated, and made decisions. His unique personality combined calm temperament, eloquence of speech, wisdom and the genius of dialogue. After this day, this great man will rise, overcome his sadness and will work with determination to achieve his goals with a clear vision, strength, and pride!”

My eyes began to look towards my master, the Messenger of Allah. The place was surrounded by fruit trees, and birds were flying from branch to branch in search for food. The scene was full of life, kindness and compassion, as if nature acknowledged her great guest and adorned her most beautiful images and embraced him in her arms, hoping to console him and relieve his pain.



(11)

A State of Tranquility

It is not surprising that Muslims identify the Day of Hijrah (migration) as the epoch of the Islamic calendar. The Muslim community had grown from a few loyal followers to a fully developed society. They are no longer a group of weak people who are continuously harassed and oppressed. Now they are a nation, a state and an entity to be reckoned with. On this day, history holds its breath and eyes are looking towards two people, only two people there in the Cave of Thawr. The Quraysh was furious and allocated a reward of one hundred camels for those who could find Mohammad (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) alive or dead. Many groups of people from the Quraysh were in search of him. Even boys scattered among the tribes in the plains and mountains, hunting for him. Finding Mohammad (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) has become the primary concern of Quraysh. In Medina,



however, there was a state of anticipation for the arrival of the Prophet (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and his companion Abu Bakr. The entire future of the nation is now dependent on the safety arrival of those two men in the cave!

Amidst all these grievous events, I looked through the hole of the cave. What a spectacular and glorious scene! The Master of Mankind (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) is sitting in this narrow place with his friend Abu Bakr next to him. Nothing on his face indicates tension, anxiety or fear. Rather, there is a man with a wonderful streak of serenity and calmness as though he were surrounded by the luxury of palace gardens. Abu Bakr was watching the movement of the polytheists around the cave entrance and whispered: *“If someone has looked at his feet, he would see us.”*

Then the Messenger of Allah answered him, *“O Abu Bakr! What do you think about two, the third of whom is Allah?”*

“This is you, my beloved, O Messenger of Allah, exactly as we have known you,” Bilal said. “Your thoughtful and strategic planning puzzled the entire town. You left your home and escaped from the siege that was laid around your home. You left Makkah with your friend heading south, in the opposite direction of Madinah, contrary to the Quraysh expectations. You mislead the polytheists and stayed in the cave for three days before resuming your journey to Madinah with your companion.”

“After you had done your part,” Bilal continued, “you entrusted your affairs to Allah. We are witnessing a state of tranquility in one of the most critical moments in his life! This state of peace is a phenomenon that is worthy of studying. Even


the most fearless and brave hearts of men tremble for such a terrible situation. Tranquility is not a state that one witnesses in ordinary conditions, but rather it is the steadfastness of the heart and composure in the most critical and dangerous circumstances. Can you stay calm when you face the guile of opponents? Can you keep calm in a day that you suffer a heavy financial loss, or a major family crisis or perhaps a deterioration in your health?"

Bilal stood near the cave, ironically staring at the Quraysh boys as they twisted and turned, not knowing that Mohammad was a few meters away from them. Bilal looked at me, and said, "This great man will continue his journey towards Medina, and when Suraqah bin Malik, one of the Quraysh men, follows and approaches him, Mohammad (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) will call upon Malik to return and promised him, if he returned, to be given the bangles of Khusrow of Persia. Time goes by, Persia will be conquered during the reign of Umar ibn al-Khattab, Suraqah will receive the bangles of Khusrow of Persia, and the true promise will be fulfilled."

"My Master Bilal," I said. "There is something that puzzles me. How is it possible to reach that state of tranquility while He (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was in this situation?"

"The reality is that this state of tranquility within the Holy Prophet (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) is nothing but a reflection of his mindset. It is a natural result of his traits and distinguished personality that he established within himself through consistent actions and habits. The question, however is, what are the factors that allow this man





to maintain this state of tranquility? It is true that he is a prophet who is promised victory and empowerment from Allah, and the divine has intervened to protect him from the conspiracies of the polytheists. However, it is important to realize that Allah Almighty has laws by which He runs this universe. Our role is to learn from this biography the secrets of those laws and follow His (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) path for the sake of our religion and our world.”

The Lord of the Worlds has made at our disposal strengths that can be used in times of distress. These reservoirs may differ from one person to another. Our role is to look for them and work to strengthen them so that they are our weapons in those difficult times. This man is well aware of his strengths and has mastered using them today. Here is a highlight of the most important:


1- Faith, certainty, and trust in Allah Almighty. The meaning was clear in his answer to Abu Bakr (***O Abu Bakr! What do you think about two, the third of whom is Allah!***). The concepts of trust and certainty must align perfectly with the heart and actions. Those who understand the meaning of trust realize that benefit and harm are predestined by Allah alone. They do not fear opponents or enemies, nor they carry the burden of fearing the future. It is enough for them to raise their hand to Allah with supplication to retain their peace of mind.

2- He is a true mastermind. The genius of this man was evident that he was always one step ahead of his enemies through the utilization of various tactics including confusing his opponents and staying in control so as to deny his adversaries the opportunity to surprise him. This is evident

when we examine the measures he undertook to guarantee his success: concealing the date of the emigration; seeking the help of Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Bakr to erase their traces from the road; taking an unexpected route to Medina to mislead the polytheists; and resorting to hide in the Cave of Thawr for a period of three days. If you returned to the Prophet's biography (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), you will notice this behavior is frequently witnessed in his negotiations and dialogue with the Quraysh; in the migration (Hijra), the Battles of Badr, Al-Hudaybiyah and Khaybar, and the conquest of Makkah. This wise and calm man possessed superb intuition, intelligence and strategic thinking qualities.

3- A man of values. Did not you notice the reaction of Suraqah ibn Malik when he found the Noble Messenger and thought that he was about to bring the prophet back to the Quraysh? The Messenger of Allah looked at him and said ***“Get back, O Suraqah, and you would one day wear the bangles of Khusrow of Persia.”*** Suraqah was astonished, and said ***“Khusrow ibn Hormuz?”*** ***“Yes”***, said the Messenger. He stopped and turned back. At that time, Suraqah was a polytheist, chasing after the Prophet, driven by a strong desire to get the reward offered by the Quraysh for Mohammad: a hundred camels to whomever captures Mohammad alive or dead. However, he suddenly abandons this urgent mission and returns because Mohammad promised him a pair of bangles! Although Prophet Mohammad (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), at that time, had no power, army, or money, he promised Suraqah the bangles of Khusrow. And who is Khusrow? The greatest king of the largest kingdom and empire at that time!





How could Suraqah believe this? He believed it because Mohammad had always acted with such honor and dignity that everyone knew he was not to be doubted. It was known that his values could not be compromised by the weight of fear nor any temptation proffered. ‘Truthful’ and ‘faithful’ were the values that people associated with him even before the mission and continued to do so in all events and situations he encountered. He never lied even while joking. Even his worst enemy, Abu Sufyan, could not but tell the truth about Mohammad (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) when Hiraq (Heraclius), Chief of the Byzantines, asked Abu Sufyan in the meeting about the lineage, morals and behavior of the Messenger. Abu Sufyan answered that people had never heard him telling a lie. It is worth mentioning that sustaining these virtues is not easy, even for the elites. Look through history and study the biographies of the great leaders, conquerors, preachers and innovators. They raised slogans and people followed them believing in the values they espoused and reflected in their words and actions. Nevertheless, history revealed situations in which many of these great people have failed their personal values under the weight of fear or in pursuit of glamor, power or victory.

Values are not, by nature, a profitable commodity. On the contrary, it is almost more possible to make a quick profit or take control when giving up values; lying, cheating and exploiting. For the Master of Humanity (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), there was always a red line he refused to cross! He is well aware that a true leader needs to master self-control in order to be able to effectively lead people. Thus, he was able to preserve and retain the traits of truthfulness and faithfulness regardless of circumstances and events.

It is not surprising, then, that Suraqah ibn Malik believed him, nor that he acquired the respect of his followers and enemies alike. It is not surprising also that, when he immigrated, the precious possessions of the Makkan people were in his charge! People used to keep their valuables in his care and, when he immigrated, he entrusted them to Ali bin Abi Talib who would join him later.


Looking at the breathtaking scene, there were dozens of Quraysh men and knights desperately searching for the Prophet, wielding their swords, and snarling like fierce desert hyenas. Only few steps separate the two parties. Their target was this man who is sitting peacefully in the cave with his faithful companion Abu Bakr who accompanied him to protect him with his soul. The whole world needs to stop at this scene and teach the generations stories of heroism and courage. It is worth teaching how this man achieved a state of tranquility in the midst of these chaotic events through certainty, mastery of mind and faith in his values!





(12)


A New Civilization in a New Concept

he rising sun spread the golden rays over the fields full of palm trees bearing the best types of dates. Today we are in Medina⁶ where we will witness an extraordinary day; a flow of people from every direction heading towards the land that belongs to two young boys from Bani al-Najjar.

Bilal's face was full of enthusiasm and his eyes sparkled with excitement and joy. It was as if he were a little child reunited with his parents after a long separation. He had

⁶ Medina is officially known as Al Madinah Al Munawwarah and is considered to be the “cradle of Islamic culture and civilization. Prophet Mohammad and his companions immigrated from Mecca to Medina known as ‘Hijrah’.





two reasons for joy; a joy for the arrival of the Chosen Prophet with his companion, immigrating from Makkah, and another joy because today it is an important date. Today we will build the Prophet's Mosque!

“Look, my friend, here comes the Messenger of Allah!” (May blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) Bilal gestured to where two figures came into view.

“Yes, I see him! This is the beloved Chosen One (May blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and he is busy working with his companions. Everyone is working with enthusiasm, energy, and passion. Some of them are carrying stones, some are building with mudbrick, others are raising palm fronds and cleaning the ground.”

Here is the Prophet among his followers carrying mudbrick. Whenever one of his companions offers to carry it on his behalf, he refuses. He works tirelessly and diligently, surrounded by Omar, Ali, Othman, Saad, Mossab and Anas.

O Messenger of Allah! (May blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) Yesterday you were threatened with ending Da'wah and your companions were being harassed by the tyranny of the Quraysh. Today the sun rises on a beautiful day while you are in a new land whose people has opened their arms to you, overwhelmed you with love and shown you loyalty and obedience. The scene has completely changed between yesterday and today. Today, you are the Prophet and the leader with huge tasks and serious challenges. We are now witnessing the world's greatest change in history that aims to establish a nation and build a civilization. A different kind of civilization that this society has not known before! How

did you, O inspiring leader, build this civilization in such a primitive society?

Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah, like all other societies at that time, was dominated by clan hierarchy. It was not a state based on principles of justice and equal rights, but there was a social system based on class differences between members of the community. Conflict among its various communities was frequent as were invasions from outsiders. The city's economy was primarily agricultural and there was no economic or political system in place. The community was mostly based on tribal pride, racism, abuse and marginalization of women and superiority towards certain professions.

According to Arab traditions, any manufacturing done with hands, such as armors and tools, was seen as shameful work and was left to the vulnerable and the non-Arabs within the society. As for the elite, they worked in trade or in their own lands and livestock. In the north, there was strong, young civilizations like the Byzantine and Persian that extended their rule over vast lands and enjoyed the means of strength and pleasure. However, this existence was devoid of all meaning of humanity and injustice and tyranny prevailed in it. How could the Prophet make such a huge difference that has resulted not only in great civilization but also of changing the people's customs, behavior and social norms. His approach did not impose concepts by force, but rather by changing perceptions leading to transformation and change. It is no doubt that this person has an exceptional mindset that has no parallel. We have learned about a lot of philosophers, theorists, preachers and leaders, but none of them was able to change the lives of so many people and build a civilization that no one has ever



seen or experienced before, and only in ten years!

The question here is how, where, and when?

The scene of the construction of the Prophet's Mosque summarizes the whole story and it unfolds profound messages about the community that Mohammad has established.

“You have been the best community that was ever brought forth for mankind (110)”, Sourat Al Imran

What is behind this mastermind? Is it the extra ordinary personality and sound management of this Noble Messenger or is it the mere revelation from Allah? Although it is true that the prophet is sent a revelation from Allah, yet it does not conflict with the fact that he is originally an exceptional personality capable of understanding the scope of the message, and implementing it to the fullest. From the very first moment, all Muslims of all sects and classes worked to build the Prophet's Mosque with the Master of Humanity (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). This scene demolished two out-of-date concepts; the concept of limiting certain types of work to a certain group, and the concept of a leader who is isolated from his own people.

In this mosque specifically and under the direction of this inspiring leader, people will meet with their leader five times every day to discuss worldly and religious affairs. In this place, prayers, sermons and teaching will take place as well as major decisions will be taken for the armies. Have you seen a civilization like this one before?

This great scene combined two concepts that carry strong meanings and notions: meditation and knowledge. The

word “read” in the Quran “Iqra” is an explicit call to invest the mind and possess the tools of knowledge. Knowledge means respecting science and rejecting myths, building civilizations and advancing societies. As for the state of meditation that is apparent in this scene, it reflects awareness and harmony within oneself, and this is the greatness of this religion. Throughout the biography of this great leader, we can realize the secret of his distinction in all the events he faced through his life. He combined awareness and knowledge, and it is nothing but a literal application of this eternal message.

History has witnessed many examples of leaders as well as nations. Some were fascinated with consciousness, human psyche and philosophy. They produced arts and literature but they were not concerned with science and knowledge so they did not enrich their culture with inventions, their minds were occupied with superstitions, allegedly in the name of religion. On the other hand, there were other nations that took on the principles of knowledge and science but failed to understand the consciousness of human. Thus, strong civilizations were built but without culture, where injustice and tyranny prevailed, wars were waged, and corruption spread, subsequently it was destined to end. The magnificence and miracle of this religion is that it is the only one among those civilizations that calls for self-purification, self-awareness, making use of all available means of knowledge and empowerment, and building societies.

The first block in building this civilization started on the first day of the revelation. He was in a state of meditation when he received the first revelation and he was commanded to “**Read**” (*Iqra*) which urges searching for knowledge to build a civilization. Gabriel returned with the words “**Arise and warn**



all' which calls for action that would inspire movement and change.

This inspiring leader presented a unique model for this young society; a model that combines spirituality, morals and higher values. O Chosen Prophet, you will be the Prophet, teacher, preacher and leader. Today, My Master, O Messenger of Allah, and your companions who stand beside you as they look at you and learn the principles of unity and teamwork. Today, the world will witness the emergence of shining stars in the history of mankind. They will follow your approach and roam the world as preachers, scholars, leaders and pioneers. May peace and blessings of Allah be upon you, O Messenger of Allah”.




(13)

A Victorious Mindset

I took my place behind Bilal, the dark-skinned brave knight, on his horse. The horse is galloping enthusiastically while I am looking around me with amazement. Loads of unusual scenes flashing before my eyes; scenes of heroic knights advocating the oneness of Allah and praising Him, scattered corpses here and there, captives walking in humiliation and disappointment, and remnants of defeated armies running away in panic. It is the end of the Day of Al-Furqan (The Day of Criterion), the Battle of Badr! Today the Prophet and Commander Mohammad achieves his first military victory over Quraysh, his traditional enemy, with an army of 313 fighters against approximately 1,000 polytheists. The news will spread in the Arabian Peninsula, and everyone will ask who is Mohammad? What is his message? His name and his Da'wah will mark the map as a new power to be reckoned with!





I kept silent while watching the battlefield and the movement of the heroic soldiers. As for Bilal, it seemed as if he were looking for something. After he climbed a hill, he landed with his horse and took two turns around a few corpses. Then he said excitedly, “Look! Do you know who this is? This is Umayya ibn Khalaf, the man who tortured me in Mecca and bargained with me in the most hideous ways trying to force me apostatize from Islam. I killed him with my own hands. That is Abu Jahl, who was killed by Ammar bin Yasser, after Abu Jahl severely tortured him. Look over there, there is Asadullah (the lion of Allah), Hamza! And here is Ali ibn Abi Talib, carrying his sword ‘Zulfaqar’, and this is Sa’d ibn Mu’adh, al-Zubayr ibn al-Awam, Mus’ab and Anas. These are my brothers and comrades who have bravely fought in the battlefields and wrote the most wonderful verses of courage, heroism and sacrifice!”

Bilal pulled the reins of his horse and slowed down while lowering his head humbly. He is now approaching the Messenger and the Greatest Prophet (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), the Master of Humanity and the leader of this victorious army. He is inspecting the battlefield surrounded by his men, his features reflecting the joy of victory, and his face so modest and so full of tranquility. Here he witnesses the death of his enemies, those who enjoyed torturing him and his companions. O Messenger of Allah, perhaps a long bitter flashback passes before your eyes now. Do you remember the day when a group of Quraysh men conspired against you and placed the contents of a sheep’s abdomen on your honorable shoulders? That day you stood proudly and invoked Allah against them. Allah has accepted your supplication and it is time for you to witness with your own eyes the death of Abu Jahl, `Utba bin Rabi`a, Shaiba bin Rabi`a, Al-Walid bin

`Utba, Umaiya bin Khalaf, and `Uqba bin Al Mu`it! You have taught us, O Messenger of Allah, that sincere supplications will be answered inevitably with patience, and that falsehood, no matter strong, is bound to perish. Today Allah almighty fulfilled His promise and conferred upon His armies the honor of victory! I stood watching the great scene that captured my heart, then I said, “There is no doubt that victory may have more fitnah (trial) than defeat. We have always heard of leaders for whom the glimmer of victory has blinded their hearts. Upon living the euphoria of the victory, they got carried away and deviated from the right path, their armies got out of control and disagreements erupted among the victorious army.”


“True, my friend. The matter is different here with the Master of Humanity. His vision and mindset were always governed by his values. He was well aware that the Quraysh would not tolerate this painful defeat easily, and that danger is still lurking from every side. He then acted according to a strategic vision,” Bilal informed.

“What is this strategic vision?” I asked

“The strategic vision implies establishing a “status of the state’. After the Battle of Badr, the challenge, for this great leader, was to impose a status for the young Islamic state for the far and wide, and this was accomplished in three ways:

1- Forgiveness. Indeed it is not easy to forgive our enemies and opponents, especially when we have the ability to punish them for their transgressions. The Prophet (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not mutilate the dead of the Quraysh nor did he abuse their captives. He did not avenge what they did to him, nor did he use the victory





to simply amplify his ego. Rather, until his last breath he reminded us that establishing justice and maintaining the cause for which we fought for was paramount.


2- He accepted the ransom for the prisoners, because money, no doubt, will be needed for building a new state. Furthermore, he asked the prisoners who are able to read and write to teach Muslims. With broad horizon and strategic thinking, the Prophet (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was well aware that money and knowledge are two pillars for building any civilization, and he took advantage of this opportunity to empower the young Islamic nation.

3- Establishing safety and security. After the Battle of Badr, the Prophet decided to get rid of the Jews who were plotting against him. As soon as He knew of the treachery of the Banu Qaynuqa Jews, he gathered his army and besieged them until they surrendered and were expelled. He led several invasions around Medina, such as the Battle of Al-Suwaiq, the Battle of Bani Salim, and the Battle of Amarr. The message was clear: A state with great power!”

Here is Mohammad, the Messenger and the Great Leader (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), on his way back to Medina surrounded by his companions. It was truly a sight to contemplate: The Prophet is approaching with the flag flapping in the wind, and voices raised in praise to Allah (Takbir). The scene was one that taught the meaning of pride, heroism and courage. Blessings and peace be upon you, my beloved, O Messenger of Allah.


(14)

A State of Defeat

he smell of dust mixes with the smell of pure blood that irrigated the land, while the sounds of neighing horses, the screams of the raving polytheists and the groans of the wounded fill the air. It seems as though the rocks of the mountains and sand of the desert are watching the scene silently in pain and grief!

This is the battle of Uhud and Khaled bin Al-Walid is spinning on his horse with pride after he turned the possible defeat into a decisive victory for Quraysh. While Abu Sufyan chants: “Today is a victory after the defeat at the day of Badr!”. There is Hamza, who attained martyrdom, while Hind mutilated his corpse and tried to eat his liver. The Battle of Uhud resulted in a crushing defeat for the Muslims after the archers disobeyed the orders of the greatest Messenger (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and rushed to collect the spoils. Khaled





took advantage of the opportunity, led the knights towards the spot of the archers and surprised the Muslims with a fierce rear attack. The result was disastrous and shocking. It was spread among the people that the Messenger of Allah (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) had been killed after he fell, broke his canine tooth and his face was wounded.

Here is the Greatest Messenger looking among the wounded Muslims and standing before the body of his uncle Hamzah, with signs of deep sadness, pain and sorrow on his face. He swallowed the bitterness of defeat and his heart suffered the agony of separation for his companions who were martyred.

Despite the misery of the scene, there was no signs of anger on his face for those who disobeyed his order. As I mentioned this notion to Bilal, he said, “There is no doubt, my friend, that our Great Messenger is a human being who is affected by life events whether good or bad. Can you think how he is feeling towards this heavy loss? There is no doubt that this day is one of the hardest days that he had experienced in his whole life. Nearly sixteen years have passed since the beginning of Da‘wah, his efforts finally culminated in the establishment of a state in Medina and he achieved an incredible victory in his first battle against the Quraysh. Today he is shocked by a severe defeat that shakes the rising state; he stands inspecting his wounds with his followers while they endure the grief of the loss.”

“I am curious to know what is possibly going on in his mind while he is in this state. What is he going to do? Will he be overwhelmed by feelings of anger towards the archers who violated his command and caused a terrible defeat? Will

he punish them severely? Will he raise the white flag to the Quraysh and order his companions to surrender and throw down their weapons?”

“Never, my friend,” answered Bilal. “The entire time he remained calm and confident. He was always in control and moving forward without hesitation or fear. His mind was present, his heart radiant, and he always knew what he wanted!

The way in which he will deal with this momentous event will determine the path forward: either to retreat or to recover from the wounds and move on with greater determination and a fearless heart. He studied and analyzed the reality and identified the weaknesses. Soon, he would recover from his wounds and start again with solid steps and a sound plan.

He (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) knew that the greatest danger facing his men lay in the post-defeat. Would they fall for feelings of guilt and self-contempt? Would they start accusing and blaming each other? What if they were driven by feelings of anger to take revenge on the hypocrites, the Jews, and those who did not witness the fighting?”

“The situation is undoubtedly critical. We are talking about a morale that is nearly collapsing, a threat posed by the polytheists and even greater danger coming from the hypocrites who put the safety and stability of the city at risk.” I offered.

“Exactly, my friend. We are now in front of three groups; the first group is his companions, soldiers and supporters, the second is the polytheists and the third group is the hypocrites who have actually withdrawn before the battle, numbering 300



men, led by the head of the hypocrites Abd-Allah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul.

The Prophet did not point the finger of accusation and blame to any of his soldiers. He did not even lay the blame at the archers, although they did bear part of the blame for the defeat, nor did he even hold them accountable for their actions. He also went further by gathering his soldiers again to fight the army of the infidels in Hamra al-Assad. Although there was no fight because of Abu Sufyan's withdrawal, this great leader conveyed through this act two messages: a message to his companions and followers that they still have his trust and pride; and a message to the enemies that the Muslims have not been defeated, and that they are still capable and willing to confront and fight.

The Messenger of Allah (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) took with him only those who had fought with him at the Battle of Uhud. Although he had received a threat from the Quraysh that they were intent on eliminating him, he did not back down. Rather, he said:

“Allah is all-sufficient for us, and the best one to trust in (173)”, Sourat Al-Imran

He took great care to keep the morale at its highest levels among his men and to restore their self-confidence and maintain dignity. Allah Almighty has spoken the truth:

“So, (O Prophet) it is through mercy from Allah that you are gentle to them. Had you been rough and hard-hearted, they would have dispersed from around you. So, pardon them, and seek Forgiveness for them. Consult them in the matter and, once you have taken a decision, place your

trust in Allah. Surely, Allah loves those who place their trust in Him (159), *Sourat Al-Imran*

“This is about his soldiers and the polytheists, so what about the hypocrites?” I asked

“The hypocrites are a group of false Muslims who demonstrate faith, yet hide disbelief and hatred,” Bilal explained. “Their danger cannot be underestimated, as they surround him, pray with him and covertly plot against him. It is strange that there was not a single case of confrontation between the Messenger of Allah and that group. He used to believe that the best way to deal with this ‘hornet’s nest’ is to ignore them on the grounds that any group established on lies, deceit and hypocrisy lacks the minimum elements of continuity and will collapse on its own, and this is exactly what happened!”

“The way in which the Messenger (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) dealt with that type of opponents was certainly a reflection of farsightedness and broad-mindedness. Although it is true that the danger of this group is greater than that of the polytheists and the Jews, and that their numbers are relatively few and within reach (he learned their names during the revelation but only shared this information with his secret keeper Hudhaifa ibn al-Yaman), however he did not pursue them or try them for treason.”

“The question is why? Because his main concern was establishing the Muslim civilization. He was busy with the ultimate goal and was trying tirelessly to establish solid principles within this society based on acceptance of others and freedom of opinion, so he did not take any action that



contradicted with those principles and values. Accordingly, this great man has set a model and he taught us how to avoid them as much as possible. That is the true wisdom and rationale in its best meanings!” Bilal concluded.

I moved closer, here is the Messenger of Allah on his way back to Medina, surrounded by his men, holding their heads high. These are men whose spirits are not broken by failure which only served to increase their strength and determination. They do not blame others, but rather draw lessons from failure and move on. These are men who demonstrate to their followers that pride and heroism prevail in fulfillment of the Almighty saying:

“And do not lose heart and do not grieve, and you are the upper-most if you are believers (139) If you receive a wound, they have received a similar wound. And such days We rotate among the people, so that Allah may know those who believe and let some of you be martyrs - and Allah does not like the unjust (140)”, Sourat Al-Imran



(15)

A State of Doubt

I was standing with Bilal at the house of Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq. Through the window, we were able to recognize the faces within. My master, the Messenger of Allah (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and his wife Aisha bint Abi Bakr were guests at his friend's house. The conversation was unusual and the atmosphere was charged and tense, casting gloomy shadows over the faces of the attendees. There were evident signs of confusion and grief. The situation today is difficult and completely different from any situation this great man went through during his life.

My Master Bilal addressed me, "The Messenger of Allah (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) had been accompanied by the Mother of the Believers, Aisha, may Allah be pleased with her, during one of his conquests. When the Messenger sent an announcer calling the people to leave, Aisha realized that she had lost her necklace and returned to



search for it. Meanwhile, the group who were carrying the Howdah⁷ came and, due to her light weight, did not recognize she had not been there, left without her. Aisha returned after finding her necklace, but everyone had departed. She wrapped herself in her cloak, thinking that they would return for her once they noticed she was not there. While she waited, she grew tired and slept.

Aisha did not wake up until Safwan bin Mu'attal came. He trailed behind the army, and his mission was to collect what had been left in its wake. He made his camel kneel down. He dismounted to allow her to ride in his place. He did not speak a word to her, then he set out walking, leading the camel by the rope until they reached the army.

The hypocrites seized the opportunity to spread their falsehoods and hatred. They wrongly accused Aisha of adultery. The news spread so quickly that soon there wasn't a household in Medina that was not aware of it." Bilal paused and allowed me a chance to respond to what I heard. I sighed in pain and said, "Woe on to them! Shame on them! How dare they let their inner vitriol spew forth and tarnish the reputation of one such as her? Aisha? The wife of the Messenger of Allah, his love and trust, and the mother of the believers? Allah forbids!"

I looked at my master's face, the Messenger of Allah, while he was sitting in his companion's house. I wonder what are you thinking, O purest of men? How will you deal with this crisis that has struck you, your home and the entire community? Today you are the Prophet of the nation (Ummah), the head of

⁷ *Hawdah* is a carriage which is positioned on the back of an animal such as a camel, used most often in the past to carry people during progresses or processions, hunting or in warfare.

state and its leader, yet the entire community is busy talking unjustly against your honor! You are the Noble Prophet, and she is the mother of the believers! She is your sweetheart, the pure, the chaste, the friend and the daughter of your closest friend! Perhaps you have become accustomed to having allegations against yourself, your integrity and your message by your opponents and enemies. This time the stab has come to you from those around you towards your home, your wife and your honor. The Ifk (slander) incident of Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) was a strike at the heart!

My Master Bilal pulled me back to the present saying, “The revelation did not come for a long time, approaching a month or more leaving my master, the Messenger of Allah, to handle the matter himself. He had many options for dealing with the situation. He could have gone after each one who spread rumors and dared to unjustly talk about his honor. What could possibly stop him when he is the absolute ruler? He could have inflicted punishments on Aisha to prove to everyone that the holy teachings of the Islamic faith are applied to everyone without exception, even if “everyone” means a member of his household! However, he did not act in this way. He accustomed himself and his followers to follow the language of reason and logic, to search for evidence, and not to make judgments unless there was sufficient evidence.”

“Oh, my Lord, what a tough situation! I think that what makes the situation more complicated is the ambiguity surrounding it. There is no evidence or proof that either support or disprove these foul rumors.

“Exactly, that’s exactly the situation my friend.” Bilal commiserated.



“How did the Messenger of Allah (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) resolve the case?” I asked.

“Given the fact that this issue is extremely complex and sensitive,” Bilal reminded me. “It is no longer a personal matter, but rather one that involved society and public opinion. Talking about this issue had become the concern of the people of Medina, while the Master of Medina is silent, contemplating what he was going to do. It was his habit to remain silent until the facts became clear. But this state of silence would not last for long, so he must take action and face the situation with courage and transparency. The Greatest Messenger (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) took three actions: consultation with his close companions; confronting public opinion; and finally confronting Aisha herself!

He first began by seeking opinion from his close companions, Ali bin Abi Talib and Usama bin Zaid. Usama mentioned the good reputation of his wife and added, ‘O Allah’s Messenger (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)! By Allah, we know nothing about her but good.’ Ali bin Abi Talib said, ‘O Allah’s Messenger (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)! Allah has no imposed restrictions on you, and there are many women other than she.’ After the Messenger of Allah heard what his companions had indicated to him, he reached no decision.” Bilal paused before continuing his story.

“However,” he continued, “the matter that inflamed his pain (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was the filthy role played by the hypocrites, led by Abdullah ibn Abi Saloul, who spared no effort to unjustly talk about the Mother of the Believers, (may Allah be pleased with her)

and spread rumors. The next action was the need to confront public opinion. Any severe act towards Ibn Saloul may lead to terrible consequences because the Greatest Messenger realizes that the people still carry some of the legacy of the Jahiliyyah⁸ including tribalism. So, he gathered people and ascended the pulpit and said, ‘Who will support me in punishing the person (Abdullah bin Ubai bin Salul) who has hurt me by slandering the reputation of my family? By Allah, I know nothing about my family but good, and they have accused a person whose reputation is good and he has never entered my house except in my company.’

Sa`ad bin Mu`adh got up and said, ‘O Allah’s Messenger (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)! by Allah, I will relieve you from him. If that man is from the tribe of the Aus, then we will chop his head off, and if he is from our brothers, the Khazraj, then order us whatever you want and we will fulfill your order.’ On that Sa`ad bin ‘Ubada, the chief of the Khazraj, got up, motivated by his zeal for his tribe and said, ‘By Allah, you have told a lie; you cannot kill him, and you will never be able to kill him.’

On that Usaid bin Al-Hadir got up and said (to Sa`ad bin ‘Ubada), ‘By Allah! you are a liar. By Allah, we will kill him; and you are a hypocrite, defending the hypocrites.’ On this the two tribes of Aus and Khazraj⁹ got hostile and were about to fight each other, while Allah’s Messenger (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was still standing on the pulpit. He got down and quietened them and he kept silent.”

8 *Jahiliyyah* is an Islamic concept referring to the period of time and state of affairs in Arabia before the advent of Islam in 610 CE and it mean the ‘**age of ignorance**’.

9 *Aws* was one of the main Arab tribes of Medina. The other was Khazraj, and the two, constituted the Ansar (helpers [of Muhammad]) after the Hijra.



“My Lord! That saying of Ifk (slander) from a dishonourable person almost shook the pillars of the Islamic state and sowed the seeds of discord among the noble companions! May the curse of Allah fall on hypocrisy and its people!” I exclaimed.

“Those were miserable days, my friend, and the situation was getting more complex and ambiguous. As you can see, the tribal heat erupted and a war almost broke out between the Aus and Khazraj.”

“Therefore, the option to stand firmly against Ibn Saloul was not appropriate. The Messenger of Allah will return to his usual strategy with the hypocrites, that is to turn away and ignore them. Thus, the second action taken towards resolution ended without any result as well!”

“Absolutely, the last option that was left at the time was confronting Aisha and talking to her with transparency,” replied Bilal.

My heart is racing! The situation is embarrassing and difficult!

“I know exactly how difficult it is for a free man to confront his wife, his sweetheart and the daughter of his closest friend with such accusations? The situation would have been overwhelming with regret and sorrow had it involved any of his other wives. Can you imagine how would it be with Aisha? She is the daughter of Abu Bakr, the gentle friend who was the first one to support Da’wa in all its stages and has given everything he owned for this purpose.

The Messenger of Allah started his talk by reciting Tashah-hud (i.e. None has the right to be worshipped but Allah

and Mohammad is His Apostle) and then said, ‘O Aisha! I have been informed such-and-such about you; if you are innocent, then Allah will soon reveal your innocence, and if you have committed a sin, then repent to Allah and ask Him to forgive you, for when a person confesses their sin and asks Allah for forgiveness, Allah accepts their repentance.’

When Allah’s Messenger (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) concluded his speech, Aisha requested her father to reply on her behalf. Her father said, ‘By Allah, I do not know what to say to Allah’s Messenger (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).’ She said to her mother, ‘Talk to Allah’s Messenger (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) on my behalf.’ Her mother said, ‘By Allah, I do not know what to say to Allah’s Apostle.’

Thereafter Aisha had no way but to defend herself, she said: ‘I know, by Allah, that you have listened to what people are saying and you have taken it as a truth. Now, if I told you that I am innocent and Allah knows that I am innocent, you would not believe me. If I confessed to you falsely that I am guilty, and Allah knows that I am innocent you would believe me. By Allah, I will only say as Joseph’s father (i.e., Jacob) said:

“Your souls must have tempted you to do something evil. So, I can only endure with beautiful patience! It is Allah’s help that I seek to bear your claims (18)”, Sourat Yusuf

Bilal continued his story after giving me a moment to reflect, “When you observe this scene you cannot help but to stand in reverence for this great man and wise husband. O Messenger of Allah (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon



him)! You did not submit to your fears and suspicions and your speech reflected mercy. You chose the right place to talk to your wife, in her home and with her parents, to preserve her dignity. You started with Tashah-hud as you always did. Then, you addressed the topic directly and mentioned what you heard (I have been informed). You did not draw any conclusions, pass any judgments, make any guesses or give voice to any suspicions. You gave her the opportunity to repent in case she made a mistake. Then you listened to her and gave her the opportunity to fully defend herself.

The Messenger of Allah did not leave Abu Bakr's house until Aisha's innocence descended from above the seventh heaven. The truth appeared and the signs of happiness and delight appeared on the Master of Mankind's face. He taught the world a lesson in dealing with marital life by acting with justice, reason and wisdom.

“Indeed, those who came up with that outrageous slander are a group of you. Do not think this is bad for you. Rather, it is good for you. They will be punished, each according to their share of the sin. As for their mastermind, he will suffer a tremendous punishment (11)”, Sourat An-Nur




(16)

Emotional Containment

Bilal took me on a walking tour to the neighborhoods of Al Madinah Al Munawwarah. We were admiring the outstanding personality of this leader who had made great achievements in a short period of time. After my Master Bilal told me about several situations he had witnessed involving the Messenger of Allah, I addressed him, “I thoroughly understand the Noble Prophet’s keenness to promote the principles he held to without compromise. However, the question that comes to my mind and puzzles me is: How did the Noble Prophet (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) manage to balance between being firm and flexible, and between being strict and merciful in his dealings with those around him? Although the people in Medina were known to have high morals and values, they are humans after all, and humans make mistakes all the time. His roles as the educator, ruler, teacher and the merciful father,





in addition to being the Chosen Prophet urge him to balance these roles and take the appropriate action for each role.

My Master Bilal paused for a while and then said, “Indeed, my friend, this great man was well aware of this community and he managed all situations with great wisdom and patience. You might have noticed in yesterday’s situation how tribalism broke among the best of his companions due to Saad bin Ubadah’s defense of Abdullah bin Ubai bin Salul, and a war almost erupted between Al-Aws and Khazraj. The situation was extremely agitated and tense. The Beloved Prophet calmed the people and broke the assembly wisely without further comment or discussion.

The Messenger of Allah believed that sometimes silence is the most eloquent answer, especially if entering into discussions may lead to adverse results. This was one of his strategies in his daily life especially if he noticed the predominance of human emotion and the absence of logic and wisdom”.

Bilal kept silent, then said “I will accompany you today so that you may see for yourself one of these situations.” We walked until we reached the house of the Messenger of Allah, where Aisha, the Mother of the Believers, lived.

Here is the beloved Chosen One (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) with Aisha. She is his beloved wife and the daughter of his beloved friend. She is his sweetheart and the joy of his heart. We observed them chatting together in the company of guests. His eyes sparkled with love and passion whenever he turned to her.

Someone knocked at the door, and when it was opened, there was a servant who carried a plate containing some food sent by one of the Prophet's wives. As soon as Aisha saw him, she rose from her seat, approached him and hit the plate with her hand causing it to fall to the ground where it split in half and the food fell to the ground!


I gasped in surprise and couldn't utter a word not really understanding what had happened. It was unfathomable that the Master of Mankind, the Seal of the Prophets and the Best of Spouses, a man with extraordinary status to encounter such a situation. I looked at his honorable face (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and I wondered, 'What is on his mind? How would he react in response to Aisha's act? How could she do this? Was she aware that she was in front of her husband, the Messenger, the Ruler of Medina and the Master of Humanity?'

My Master Bilal approached me, saying: "How would any other man react if he were in his place, in your opinion?"

"He would certainly blame her for her act. He may also shout at her in anger and ask her to apologize to him and to the wife who sent the food. Furthermore, he may leave the house furiously," I responded to the question.

"True. This is the very least one would expect according to the customs. As for the Master of Humanity, he will definitely behave differently. He is a role model who is always in control of his emotions and would never fall victim to emotional reactions. His decisions were always aligned with his values. See for yourself now what will he do." Bilal indicated as the scene was unfolding through the window. Here





is the leader, Master of Medina, and the Greatest Messenger (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). While he was rising from his seat, his noble face did not show signs of anger, he collected the pieces of the broken plate and the food with his hands. He then addressed the room, saying, “*Your mother (my wife) felt jealous*”. He then invited the guests to eat as if nothing had happened!

Then Bilal spoke again, “Did you hear that, my friend? ‘*Your mother (my wife) felt jealous.*’ This is the wise prophetic diagnosis of the scene. Here is the Mohammadian wisdom in containing the situation when he (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: ‘*Act kindly toward women,*’ as well as, ‘*The best of you is he who is best to his family, and I am the best among you to my family.*’ He deeply understood the feminine nature, and realized that it was pointless to have a dialogue with women on this issue. It is a sentimental matter that has nothing to do with the language of logic even if she is the Mother of the Believers. Therefore, he acknowledged her feelings and that her act was not meant as disrespect or discourtesy but rather it was fueled by her jealousy. He collected the food and invited his guests to eat as if nothing had happened!”

“He didn’t order the servant or his wife to collect the food, but he collected it himself,” I mused.

“Yes, he behaved with the utmost modesty and wisdom. It was said that he ordered that a new dish from Aisha’s house to be given to the wife whose dish had been broken and kept the broken one at Aisha’s house, saying, ‘*Food for food, and a vessel for a vessel.*’


He (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) acted on the basis of the values of mercy and justice. His love and mercy for Aisha did not permit him to forget to be equal between his wives, so he asked her to compensate his other wife with another vessel. The issue was settled as quickly and simply as that. The whole matter only took few moments and life returned to normal. While we have witnessed in this person integrity and truthfulness throughout his journey to achieve Da'wah, we have come out today with countless valuable lessons!”






(17)

Checkmate

he chess pieces are being moved from square to square, and the battle is intense between the two teams. Watching his face as he was moving his pieces quietly, I didn't know how brilliant my Master Bilal was in this game until he surprised me and moved the knight to a square near the king. Then he looked at me with a broad smile and declared, "Checkmate!" I was confused and astonished by this sudden move. I realized that I had fallen into a trap and all attempts to save the king didn't work. The game was over and Bilal had won!

There was silence for a few minutes before Bilal initiated the conversation and said, "Life is too short to waste it in grieving, blaming others or waiting for miracles to happen. Life is like a game of chess. You have to understand the rules of the game and define your final goal and set your plan that will take you to realize your goal. You will also have to set





your interim goals which are a step in the right direction. These will change according to how the game progresses, provided that you do not deviate from the final goal. It is very important to put your soldiers in the right places, and to discover your opponent's mindset, strengths and weaknesses so that you are always one step ahead of them. Victory comes to those who plan, work and strive. Loss is inevitable to those who deviate from the rules of the game, no matter how hard they strive in worshipping and supplication. This is how Allah Almighty created the laws of the universe!"

"Do you think that the Messenger (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), being the Chosen Prophet, followed these rules?"

"Absolutely, my friend, otherwise how could he be a role model if he did not follow these rules? His genius was evident in managing the conflict with Quraysh in all the major events of his life, and perhaps the most important one was the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah," Bilal answered.

"Do you mean that everything that happened was the result of strategic planning that even the shrewdest among the Quraysh couldn't detect?" I inquired.

Bilal looked at me with his eyes sparkling in the dark and said, "Come with me my friend, and watch what is going on."

Moments later, I found myself, accompanied by Bilal, standing at a tent in the middle of the desert. When I looked around, I felt overwhelmed by the majesty and grandeur of the place. The night had fallen still on the vast desert, while the sky was adorned with hundreds of stars. Dozens of Muslim knights and noble companions roamed around the tent.


Everyone was tense and waiting for the news that would soon emanate from the tent. Bilal stood at the door of the tent and said encouragingly, “Come with me my friend!”

When we entered the tent, Bilal began to look at the faces of the attendees. Their faces seemed blurry under the cover of the night. He began pointing to them and said, “Look, my friend! This is my beloved, my teacher, and my messenger (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and next to him is Ali ibn Abi Talib. The Messenger of Allah assigned him the task of drafting the terms of the treaty. The man sitting opposite to him is Suhayl ibn Amr, who is the one authorized by the Quraysh to conclude the treaty. Here are my companions and beloved friends, Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq, Umar ibn Al-Khattab, Abdul Rahman ibn Auf, Abdullah ibn Suhayl ibn Amr, Sa’d ibn Abi Waqqas, and Mohammad ibn Salamah, (may Allah be pleased with them all).

Look at the face of our Prophet (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) as he negotiates and leads the discussion. This was a seriously tense situation as the drums of war are about to sound if these negotiations fail. We can never underestimate this stubborn opponent, Suhayl ibn Amr, one of the masters of Quraysh who is known for his eloquence and cunning mind. Nor should we underestimate the pressure that dominates this council; there are some members who would never accept any notion of compromise with the Quraysh. How can He (the Prophet) persuade the Muslims to return to Medina without performing the Umrah after they had come wearing the Ihram clothing¹⁰ and bringing their sacrificial animals with

10 ***Ihram clothing***: includes men’s and women’s garments worn by Muslim people while in a state of Ihram, which is a sacred state which a Muslim must enter in order to perform the major pilgrimage (Haj) or the minor pilgrimage (Umrah).





them? All these factors and many more were present in the mind of this great man as he handled the situation with sound judgement and tactical shrewdness.” Bilal paused in quiet contemplation before resuming his speech.

“Just like in a game of chess, you have to let your opponent think that you are losing while in fact you are moving towards victory. You move your stone and say, ‘Checkmate!’.

Apparently, it was an agreement that went against the wishes of the Muslims, but later it turned out to be a great victory for Muslims. The Prophet showed extreme patience by accepting all these terms as dictated. This treaty is known as the Treaty of Hudaibiyah. It was one of the most outstanding events and proved to be a turning point in the Islamic history. Few of those present there could visualize the victory of the treaty based on the Prophet’s farsightedness. The first gain of the Treaty was that hostile Quraysh leadership recognized Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) as a leader of the Madinah state. Secondly, the Treaty terminated the hostile behavior of Quraish against Muslims. Now they were allowed to move freely and talk openly about Islam. Thirdly, Muslims were equally allowed to make alliances with other tribes. Fourthly, 10 years’ armistice with Quraish provided a unique opportunity to preach Islam and to deal with their rivals in other parts of the peninsula.

Things will not be the same in the Arabian Peninsula after that historic treaty. People will enter into the religion of Allah in groups, and Madinah will open its doors to Khaled ibn Al-Walid, Amr ibn Al-Aas and Safwan ibn Umayya; those who have declared their conversion to Islam and undertook their role as pioneers and preachers to the religion of Allah

in all parts of the Earth. Furthermore, clans and tribes from all over the Arabian Peninsula will owe the Prophet loyalty and obedience. We will also witness the Battle of Khaybar and the battle of Mu'ta. In only a few years, ten thousand fighters from the Muslim army will besiege Makkah after the Quraysh betrayed them and peacefully enter the holy city.

On this specific day, the day of the conquest of Makkah, Suhyl ibn Amr will enter the fold of Islam. He is mentioned in the prophetic biography as a man of virtue and piety after his conversion to Islam. It is he who will stand as preacher after the death of the Noble Messenger. It is he who will soothe the souls of the people when things were fragile, and the Quraysh were about to renounce Islam after having newly embraced it. Who would have imagined all these great events rested on the existence of the Hudaibiyah treaty? It is not surprising that the Qur'an was revealed to give good news to the believers”.

“Indeed, we have given you, [O Mohammad], a clear conquest (1)”, Sourat Al-Fath

“No conquest is greater than this conquest! Allah Almighty has spoken the truth,” I said.

“Now, you can follow, my friend, the details of this historic treaty. Here, the Messenger of Allah was in the forefront of the scene and ordered our master Ali to write the terms of the treaty, beginning of the words: ***‘In the name of Allah, most Gracious and most Merciful’ (Bismillah-ir-Rahmanir-Rahim)***. Suhayl bin Amr objected on the grounds that he did not know the meaning of these words and requested instead that ‘Bi ismika allahumma’ (In thy name, O Allah) should be written.



The companions had been enraged by the objection and responded that Allah is the ‘Most Gracious’, and that nothing other than that should be written. However, the Prophet, in keeping with his wisdom and flexibility indicated to Ali that he should write *‘In thy name, O Allah’*. He then commanded Ali to write: *‘From Mohammad, the Messenger of Allah.’* Before the sentence was complete, Suhayl ibn Amr made an objection to the addition of “the Messenger of Allah” on the grounds that if he believed that Mohammad was the Messenger of Allah he would have followed him. Amr went on to say that the treaty should be signed in Mohammad’s name and the name of his father “Mohammad ibn Abdullah”.

The Muslims protested to that, but the Messenger of Allah, with his farsightedness and tolerance, closed the dispute and ordered the writer to delete the word of ‘the Messenger of Allah’ from the document. The companions remained silent and calm.” Bilal recounted. The treaty was concluded, and consisted of the following articles:

- 1- In the name of Almighty Allah (Bi ismika allahumma)
- 2- These are the conditions of peace between Mohammad, son of Abdullah, and Suhayl ibn Amr the envoy of Makkah.
- 3- There would be peace between the Muslims and the Quraysh for a period of 10 years.
- 4- Whoever from among Mohammad’s companions that comes to Makkah to perform pilgrimage (Hajj) or Umrah, or seeks Allah’s bounty is secure in his blood and money. Whoever from among the Quraysh comes to Medinah when crossing from Egypt or the Levant, or seeks Allah’s bounty is save in his blood and money.


- 5- If any Makkan went to Madinah, then Muslims would return him to Makkah, but if any Muslim from Madinah went to Makkah, he would not be returned.
- 6- There should be sincerity between the two parties and there should be no theft or treachery.
- 7- Any person or tribe who wishes to join Muhammad and to enter into any agreement with him is free to do so. Likewise, any person or tribe who wishes to join the Quraish and to enter into any agreement with them is free to do so.
- 8- The Messenger of Allah will have to return to Medina without entering Makkah that year. The Muslims shall perform their pilgrimage in the upcoming year and they would stay in peace at Makkah for three days with no arms except sheathed swords.

The treaty was signed by the two parties and the council was dismissed. Here is Suhayl ibn Amr leaving the tent, while looking at the faces of the companions with arrogance and insolence.

As for the companions who witnessed the council, they stood still and it was very clear, my friend, the bitterness and sorrow they were feeling and how their hearts were broken. Only Omar (Al-Faruq) could not bear this situation. He broke the silence and revealed what was going in the minds of the companions and all Muslims.

Here is Omar (may Allah be pleased with him), standing in the presence of the Great Messenger (may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). It is indeed a tough situation for Omar. However, Omar's anger towards the terms of the





agreement would not in any way push him to go beyond the limits of courtesy while he is in the presence of the Messenger of Allah. He might have hesitated repeatedly and stopped himself before daring to speak out what in his mind. At the end, he decided to speak.

Omar began talking after a long moment of hesitation. He asked the Messenger of Allah (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) if they were not fighting for truth, while their opponents represented falsehood. The Prophet answered in affirmation. Omar pressed on and asked why they had put a blot on their religion while the issue is not yet settled between the two sides. The answer he received was this: ***“Son of Khattab, I am the Messenger of Allah. I am not disobeying Him and He is my supporter.”***

I watched this majestic scene, while I was gazing at the faces of the companions, who were silent and gloomy. I, too, felt the gloom and could not comprehend what had happened. In an effort to understand, I showered Sir Bilal with many questions: “Sir Bilal, would you explain what happened as foresight of the Prophets and his exceptional ability to see what is likely to happen in the future, or is it a revelation from heaven? What were your feelings at that moment? Did you realize the significance and vision of that treaty?”

Bilal was looking at the Beloved Prophet sitting in his place. He was the only one among the others who did not show any tension. His eyes were sparkling in the dark while his face was glowing with grace that captivated those at his presence.

Bilal put his strong arms on my shoulders and said, “Although I witnessed this situation myself, and despite my

deep faith and great confidence in the beloved Chosen One, I could not realize the meaning of the victory mentioned in the Qur'an at the time. It did not cross my mind that it would result in a greater good for Islam and Muslims. I could only hear and obey the command of Allah and His Prophet (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).


During the life of this great Prophet (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), there were decisions that were definitely revealed by revelation from Allah. Yet, there were other situations which were based on his own diligence, so the revelation came either in support or opposing and correcting. In most cases it was a state of harmony between the revelation of heaven and the personality of this great person.

My own analysis, which could be right or wrong, is that the Holy Prophet moved the chess pieces in a unique way that confused the minds of the Quraysh. The final move, checkmate, came years later, when he (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) besieged Makkah after the Quraysh betrayed the covenant; and thereupon Makkah was returned peacefully to the hands of the Muslims. Today the plan was to obtain the interim goal as part of the ultimate goal.”

“What is the interim goal?” I asked, not sure I understood.

“It is the treaty contract. An armistice! The armistice is what opened the door wide for all the successes and achievements that came afterwards, which did not occur to the Quraysh. In their minds, the only reason this great person signed the treaty was to be able to perform Umrah. So, they took the bait and fell into the trap, so did we, the companions.





The Great Messenger (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was well aware of the Quraysh's weakness and anticipated their reaction. It was their desire to maintain their status among the Arabs. If they prevent the Messenger from entering Makkah, they will lose their credibility among the Arabs. How could they stop a peaceful man who came to visit the Sacred Mosque? Yet, if they allow him, they will appear as if they recognized the new religion and they will lose their dignity. Therefore, while the treaty seemed to be a natural consequence of events, this experienced leader was well aware of the flow of events and of the great result from what looked like a defeat!"

"The serious challenge remains how you and the other companions would react.", I said. "How did this great Prophet and experienced leader handle and contain these rebellious souls? I do not think that this matter was easy, as I see with my own eyes."

He replied with enthusiasm, "Exactly, my friend. An inspiring leader keeps focused on bringing his people together for a common cause, show empathy and reinforce action. Can you imagine who inspired the Prophet and came up with a solution for a difficult problem. It was a woman. Women were respected by the Prophet at a time when the Arabs used to despise them and underestimate their stature. Come with me, my friend, let's see."

Together we approached the tent of the Greatest Messenger (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). "After concluding the treaty, the holy Prophet told his followers to slaughter sacrificial animals at the same place and get their head shaved to come out of ihram. But they were so dejected

that they delayed the compliance. He repeated the request three times, yet none of them rose up to complete the task.”

Bilal affirmed, “The situation is critical and entails immense consequences. It was the first time Muslims disobey the Noble Prophet! It was not a matter of rebellion, Allah forbid. Rather, it was as though we were in a state of shock. We were no longer aware of what we were doing.” “How did the Prophet act regarding your reluctance to end Ihram, and your failure to obey his request?” I asked.

“He seemed extremely distressed and tired,” Bilal continued. “The Prophet (may peace and blessings be upon him) entered the tent and told his accompanying wife, Umm Salma, about people’s reluctance.

She advised, “O the Prophet of Allah! Do you want your order to be carried out? Go out and don’t say a word to anybody till you have slaughtered the sacrificial animal and call your barber to shave your head. They will follow you.” Without talking to anyone, the Prophet (may peace and blessings be upon him) went ahead, slaughtered his animal and got his head shaved. Seeing that, the people followed him, completed their sacrifices and started shaving each other’s heads. Thus, the wisdom of Ummul Momenin, Umm Salma, solved a tedious problem.

The Prophet of Allah returns to Medina, and around him are great men and great heroes. He leads them while they repeat:

“Indeed, we have given you, [O Mohammad], a clear conquest (1)”, Sourat Al-Fath





(18)

The Day of Conquest

It was one of the greatest days in the History of Islam. A day of glory, grandeur and honour. No person had attained such glory and empowerment as that which the Greatest of Mankind, Prophet Mohammed had achieved on this day. The plaza of the Holy Kaaba is filled with thousands of people waiting for the decisive moment. Here are the brigades who arrived in Makkah: Khalid ibn Al-Walid, Al-Zubayr ibn Al-Awam, Abu Ubaidah ibn Al-Jarrah, and Qais ibn Saad ibn Ubadah. Behind them, there are thousands of warriors drawing their swords, while they are glorifying Allah, and filling the horizon with victory. The sound of neighing horses and the roaring knights reverberated and filled the place. When the Messenger of God



uttered, “Allahu Akbar!”, the Muslims shouted all together, “Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar!” The horizons of Makkah resounded with this holy sound. The mountains and stones of this holy land replied, “Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar!”

And here, the people of Makkah were whispering in a strange state of panic, and one of them was calling out, saying, “Whoever enters his house is safe, and whoever enters the Grand Mosque is safe, and whoever enters the house of Abu Sufyan is safe.”

Abu Sufyan walks among the people telling them what his eyes saw of the armies beyond their competence, and trying to convince them to refrain from resisting or fighting. Makkah has fallen, and everyone realized that their fate was in the hands of the orphan of Bani Hashem! He is now inside the Kaaba destroying the idols and repeating:

“Truth has (now) arrived, and falsehood perished: for falsehood is (by its nature) bound to perish (81)”, Sourat Al-Isra

The door opened. Complete silence prevailed over the bounds of the mosque and outside it. Everyone held their breath waiting for that crucial moment!

The Prophet of Mercy (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was standing there, looking at the Quraysh while they were in this state of humiliation and disgrace. He turned his eyes around and the scene brought back many memories. It is Makkah, the closest place to his heart! It is the place where he lived the best memories of his childhood and the prime of his youth. It is the city that have witnessed the dawn of the first call (Da’wah). It is also the city which had

treated him so cruelly, driven him and his faithful band for refuge outside his beloved city.

Here he looks at the grim faces staring at him in apprehension, while a flashback of painful incidents crosses his mind. They are standing before him, remembering the oppression and injustice which they had perpetrated against him, waiting for their just punishment.

He (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) broke the silence and addressed the people of Makkah: ***“O Quraysh, what do you think that I am about to do with you?”*** *They replied, “Good. You are a noble and generous brother, son of a noble and generous brother. We expect nothing but goodness and generosity from you.”* *He replied, “Go your way, you are free.”*

With all the tolerance that a heart may carry, all the modesty that person may hold, all the compassion that a soul may possess and all the simplicity that a mind may have, he said: ‘Go your way, for you are free.’ At this moment of history, the city was now in his control and he could take any sort of revenge on them, but he had not come to the world to cause misery or bloodshed but as a savior of mankind, to spread the message of God: to worship the One and Only God.

The multitudes of people gathered in this place were cheerful, while the triumphant leader kept watching these crowds. Moreover, the Prophet honored Abu Sufyan and did not only grant him pardon but also granted him a source of pride for ever by declaring that “Whoever enters the house of Abu Sufyan is safe.” Abu Sufyan, the fierce enemy is amazed while moving among the people. Whoever enters his house is safe!



What greatness and kindness are that of the prophet! The Arabs have not known such kindness before. There was an army of ten thousand Muslim fighters awaiting one sign. Blood would have been shed and sanctities violated. Was it as simple as that? Pardon without conditions, terms or trials? How, O Messenger of Allah, how did you attain this unique state of modesty, tolerance and serenity? How did you control the feelings of Omar, Suhayb, Bilal and Omar? How did you stop this overwhelming number of soldiers that no power on earth could contain and simply prevent the flood? They are those who proved the most wonderful forms of heroism and courage on the day of Badr, Auhud and Khaybar. They fought in the battlefields of Mu'ta and stood against the Romans. They are Khaled, Saad, Abu Ubaidah and Al-Zubayr who will fearlessly lead the Muslim army and defeat the armies of Khosrow and Hercules and their horses will advance towards the lands of Persia, Egypt and the Levant (Al-Sham). Today, those brave heroes are showing mercy and tenderness and their eyes reflect modesty and respect. They are grabbing the handle of their swords and returning them to their sheathes. Peace prevailed throughout Makkah. Today is not an epic battle. Rather, it is the Day of the Mercy, as stated by the Sheikh and Grandeur of Makkah, Mohammad.

Bilal was watching the scene and reciting,

“Truth has (now) arrived, and falsehood perished: for falsehood is (by its nature) bound to perish (81)”, Sourat Al-Isra

Then he looked at me and said, “He entered Makkah lowering the head until the hairs of his honorable beard nearly touched his horse. Everything in him implied submission and

gratefulness to the most generous Lord who prevented us from entering Makkah only to give us victory, and who forbade us only to give us better than what was forbidden. On the day of the conquest of Makkah, our Prophet could have avenged all his torments and our sufferings, he could have avenged all the bitterness that we endured, and all the humiliation that the Quraysh inflicted on us. Rather, he refrained from all this, only for the sake of Allah! He set a high example in impartiality, modesty and forgiveness. You set a hard-to-reach standard, O Prophet of Mercy! He was reciting Surat Al-Fath, expressing gratitude and thanks to Allah for his surge of generosity.”

“Praise is to Allah by whose grace good deeds are completed,” I said. “But sir, may I ask a question, please?”

“Yes, sure.”

“I have always been overwhelmed by the verses of Surat Al-Nasr. How come that Allah asked our Prophet to seek forgiveness amidst manifested victory? Today he delivered the message and people are converting to the religion of Allah in multitudes, yet the verses instruct him to ask forgiveness instead of congratulating him and giving him the promise of the afterlife that awaits him as a reward for what he presented?”

“I will tell you why. Do you know that Surat Al-Nasr was the last revelation of the surahs?” Bilal asked before answering my question.

“Yes, I know,” I conceded, “and some commentators called it the Surah of Farewell because it contains a communiqué about the Prophet’s (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) imminent demise.”



“Great, but what is the beginning of the Qur’anic revelation?”

“It is Surat Al-Alaq (the clot), which starts with: Recite in the name of your Lord who created,” I replied.

“What do you notice in the vocabulary of Surat Al-Alaq?” Bilal pressed.

“They are great and solemn words: Recite, the most Generous, taught man, by the pen, no! Do not obey him, and prostrate and draw near [to Allah].”

“As you can see, the given meanings are appropriate for the beginning of Da’wah. It indicates meanings of resistance and steadfastness as well as prostration and closeness to the Allah Almighty. The verses call for knowledge, movement, determination, challenge, pride and dignity. Those meanings were present in the mind of the Greatest Messenger, and they were the meanings that determined his destination for that difficult early stage.”

“Very well. What about Surat Al-Nasr?” I continued.

“Surat Al-Nasr, on the other hand, came on this great day, the day of victory and empowerment. The noble surah came asking our Noble Prophet to seek forgiveness! It carried a simple directive: do not be boastful, do not be proud or arrogant, do not think about revenge against your opponents and do not allow your pride make you forget the remembrance of Allah and returning to Him.

“This analysis never crossed my mind!” I ruminated on what Bilal had just told me. “If only we could absorb this

great philosophy. At times of success, and instead of cheering joyfully, we should stand modest and submissive to Allah Almighty, and repeat ‘O Allah, do not entrust me to my oneself so I am helpless or to people so I am lost’.”


You are the greatest man in history, Messenger of Allah! You were great when you lived in orphanhood and deprivation, yet your heart is still generous. You were great as a youth for your honesty and trustworthiness, and never broken a pledge. You were great as a compassionate husband and father. You were even great in dealing with your opponents, raising your head in pride and refusing submission. You were great on the day of victory as you granted forgiveness to your opponents, while you had no concern but paradise.





(19)


Bilal

he whole world was silent to witness the historical moments. A flock of pigeons flying in the blue sky among the clouds and sunlight around the arena of the Sacred Mosque. People mingled in the streets of Makkah, they were equal regardless of their race, color, class, lineage or religion. Remains of broken idols were still scattered, while people stepping on them with their feet. Crowds of people were shoving through the streets in different direction, their faces reflecting peacefulness and tranquility. Amid this hustle, I lost Bilal!

Suddenly I lost sight of my companion Bilal. Like a child who lost his father, I no longer knew what to do and I stayed in my place, distracted and confused.

All of a sudden, I was moved by an outstanding sight that shook my senses. I saw a dark-skinned man climbing





the Kaaba and clinging to its ropes. I gasped in surprise, Oh my Lord! It was Bilal. Bilal continued to climb lightly and gracefully under the astonishment of the crowd surrounding the Kaaba. He had risen on top of the Holy Kaaba; he was now above everyone else. Bilal was looking at the faces of the people and reading the expressions on their faces. Some of them were looking at him with eyes full of admiration and pride. They were his companions: Salman, Suhayb, Al-Zubayr and Ubada. Others were watching him with eyes that reflected anger and rage disapproving this black slave who dared to rise on top of the ancient house (Kaaba). Bilal stood in his place gazing towards the Sacred Mosque. He was enjoying the memories that tell stories of heroism, dedication and courage. There was Dar al-Nadwa, the place in Makkah where the elite of the Quraysh gathered, there was the house of Umayya bin Khalaf, and there was the house of Al-Arqam. There was the home of the beloved Prophet. Then he placed the palm of his hand over his forehead and looked far away with a wide smile on his face. Here is the Cave of Hira, the place where the story started! No words can describe the feelings that were overwhelming Bilal's heart. He was feeling happy, satisfied and enthusiastic! Were it not for the great mission ahead of him, he would have spent the rest of the day there!

There was silence, anticipation, and tranquility all over the place; all eyes focused on Bilal. Bilal broke the silence and began with his incredible voice calling to prayer (Azan)! Tears began to stream down and people repeated the praise of the Gracious Bestower.

A shudder went through my body, and I felt my heart pounding and tears streaming down as I listened to this eternal

divine call from Bilal's throat. I was no longer aware of what was happening around me I was in a state of euphoria, as if my soul were flying with a flock of pigeons, caressing the clouds and rising in space. Bilal's silhouette, looked strong with childish features and sweet smile, seemed to expand and fill the space around me. He looked at me with love, determination and enthusiasm. Then, he went on to say:

“I am Bilal, the symbol of heroism and revolution against injustice and tyranny.

I am an icon of resistance, determination and vigor.

Today I stand in the Holiest place, with my voice filling the space, roaring like thunder and shaking the heights of mountains.

My voice flow in harmony with the rhythm of the axes as they break idols.

My voice will echo and fill the globe and reach every human being, of every race, color and nation.


I carry an eternal message to convey to humans and Jiin.

A message that aligns with my life story, as a student of the Greatest Messenger.

I saw with my own eyes how the keys of the Kaaba were returned to Uthman bin Talha while he was still an infidel. ‘Only an unjust person takes it from you’, the chosen prophet said.

Let the whole world know that Allah is the Greatest, and that there is no God except Allah.





Let the whole world know that there is no oppression or aggression on the religion of Allah anymore.

There is no place for injustice, tyranny or discrimination of human beings.

There is no fear or anxiety. After knowing that Allah is the Greatest, there is no fear of any person, oppressor or tyranny.

There is no God worthy of worship except the Creator. All idols are forbidden. Say no to ignorance, superstition and delusion. The Qur'an began with 'Read', and respects science and the human mind.

There is no sanctification of persons nor discrimination between people. The Master of this Place and all Mankind, the Slave and the Apostle of Allah, never wore a crown, and never carried a scepter.

I am Bilal. I am proud that I am a companion and a student of this great person. He is the one who honored me and made me in charge of raising the call to prayer (Azan) and I became the first Muezzin in Islam.

My story will continue to inspire people and guide those who reject oppression and tyranny. The generations will hand down the stories of heroism.

It is true that injustice will always exist but, in the end, we are all humans. The culture of this religion will remain engraved in our collective conscience and our hearts.

The legacy of Mohammad will live throughout time.

I am Bilal, the symbol of freedom!

(20)

A State of Gratitude

I have never seen Bilal as happy as he is today. He was on his horseback, full of joy with a cheerful smile on his face. I followed him on my horse, diligently trying to catch up with him. We rode along until we reached a boundless battlefield. The war was over, and the victory was evident!

The battle of Hunayn ultimately ended in a decisive victory for the Muslims over the tribes of Hawazin and Thaqif, with an army of twelve thousand heroic companions against thirty thousand polytheists. It was in Shawwal, the eighth year of Hijra, marking the complete control of Islam over the Arabian Peninsula.

After Hunayn, the Muslims had no significant resistance. It was a watershed event in the history of Islam. Perhaps the most important feature of the Hunayn battle was



the participation of the newly converted Qurayshy along with the Muhajirin (immigrants from Makkah) and Ansar (the early Muslims from Medina). It was a hard-won victory and in this respect the Almighty said:

“Allah has already given you victory in many regions and [even] on the day of Ḥunayn, when your great number pleased you, but it did not avail you at all, and the earth was confining for you with [i.e., in spite of] its vastness; then you turned back, fleeing. (25) Then Allah sent down His tranquility upon His Messenger and upon the believers and sent down soldiers [i.e., angels] whom you did not see and punished those who disbelieved. And that is the recompense of the disbelievers. (26)”, Sourat At-Tawbah

The battle resulted in great spoils, which the Holy Prophet (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) distributed to Muslims of all sects. However, he sought to attract and soften the hearts of those who had recently entered Islam by giving them the majority of the spoils, while some went to the Muhajirin and Ansaar.

Bilal grabbed his horse’s reins and headed towards the battlefield. The dust of the battle was shrouding the horizon. Thousands of soldiers, knights and flagmen spread in the distance while glorifying Allah. There were many corpses scattered here and there from both sides of the conflict and blood had stained the battlefield. The scene was glorious. It recounted stories of heroism, pride and courage!

Bilal pointed his finger to a distant place and said, “Look! This is Abu Sufyan ibn Harb and his son Muawiyah. Here are Suhyil ibn Amr, Hakim bin Hizam, and Al-Nadir

ibn Al-Harith, Alaa ibn Haritha Al-Thaqafi and Jabir ibn Mutta'm. The Messenger of Allah gave each one of them a hundred camels. They were new to Islam, and the Messenger of Allah wanted to reconcile their hearts and win their loyalty. Conversely, the Muhajirin and Ansar received only one or two camels at most.”

Before hearing what was on my mind, Bilal looked at me and continued “Follow me.” The two horses set off quickly towards an area where a large number of people gathered. The most Honorable of Creation (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) stood in the midst of them, preaching.

The news came to the Messenger of Allah that the Ansar were not satisfied with the way in which the spoils were distributed. They were not happy with the fact that the newcomers to Islam obtained all those spoils while they were given little. After all, they thought that they were the ones who sheltered, supported and fought with the Great messenger.

I moved closer to observe the scene. The eyes of the Ansar could not hide the gentle blame and deep sadness in the presence of the Prophet. Yet in their modesty they held their tongues and preferred to remain silent. And there was the Prophet of Mercy (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) looking at their faces.

Today, O Messenger of Allah, you have reached the crowning glory and extended your influence over the Arabian Peninsula. After this glorious victory, you are facing your best supporters with gentle disappointment in their eyes. This situation might be more difficult for you than the clashing of swords in a battlefield. What are you thinking, the Greatest of



Men? How will you win the hearts of your followers?

Bilal indicated that the Messenger of Allah was preparing to talk.

He said, “O Ansaar, I heard that an incident that happened recently made you feel ill at ease. Now, did I not find you ignorant and guided you to the way of Allah? Did I not find you poor and Allah enriched you of His bounty? Did I not find you enemies and Allah joined your hearts together?”

They answered, “Indeed, Allah and His Prophet are far more generous and better.”

The Prophet then said, “Don’t you have anything to say, O Ansaar?” They answered, “There is nothing to be said but that Allah and His Prophet have the grace and bounty.”

The Prophet then said, “By Allah, you could have said—and if you did, you would have been truthful and acknowledged—We believed in you at a time when all called you a liar. We supported you at a time when you were frustrated. We gave you our money at a time when you were poor and we even sheltered you at a time when you were homeless. O Ansaar, are you upset for a thing so trivial and worldly that I gave to some people so as to join their hearts to Islam and left you out of it, believing that your Islam sufficed you? Is it not enough for you that the rest of the people will go home with a sheep or a camel, whereas you will return with the Messenger of Allah? By Allah in Whose Hands is Muhammad’s soul, you return with a better thing than they went home with. If not for the migration, I would rather have been one of the Ansaar. If the people moved in one way, and the Ansaar moved the other way, I would choose the way of the Ansaar. O Allah, do

have mercy on the Ansaar, their children, and their children's children.”

By the time the Prophet concluded his words, tears were streaming profusely from my eyes. I looked at the faces of the Ansar whose beards were soaked in tears, as they cried out: “It is enough for us to have the Messenger of Allah as our reward!”

I looked at Bilal, and said, “That is truly amazing!” It was a short and concise speech, but with great effect. The words of the beloved Prophet filled their hearts with tranquility and enriched their souls

Bilal dismounted his horse and started wandering around in silence. Then, he looked at me, and said, “Today, you have witnessed a unique style of leadership that is not found in books or biographies of great leaders. A model that does not derive its strength from position and power but rather from an established strong relationship between the leader and his soldiers. A relationship that is based on love, trust and respect. The speech addressed three main elements:

1- Gratitude

Gratitude to the leader for all what he had done to his people. Feeling grateful promotes empathy and compassion (did I not find you ignorant and guided you to the way of Allah? Did I not find you poor and Allah enriched you of His bounty? Did I not find you hostile to each other and Allah joined your hearts together?)



2- Feeling important

He reminded them of their achievements and heroics, which would not have happened had he not brought about a change in them. The feeling of importance leads to respect (If you wish you could say: We believed in you at a time when all called you a liar. We supported you at a time when you were frustrated. We gave you our money at a time when you were poor and we even sheltered you at a time when you were homeless).

3- Vision

The leader builds bonds of trust with his supporters. They are inspired to think and act according to a great vision of Islam and to aim for the great meanings and values rather than going after spoils or easy wins.

I got off my horse and stood next to Bilal, saying “A humanitarian leadership that focuses on human relations rather than positions, power and authority. This is leadership that achieves the meanings of love, respect and trust. Love occurs through deep gratitude for the leader’s accomplishments. Respect comes through the followers’ recognizing their importance and seeing the change that they were able to realize with their leader. Trust comes through clarity of vision and mission.”

The Messenger of Allah, the leader, educator, teacher and the great human being was leaving the place while eyes of the Muhajirin and Ansar followed him, their hearts full of love, respect and trust. May best peace and blessings of Allah be upon you, my beloved, O Messenger of Allah.


(21)

A Heartbreaking Farewell

His head was resting on Aisha's lap, while the fever took over his honorable body leaving him exhausted and unconsciousness. He recovered consciousness for a moment. Aisha rejoiced and began to wipe his hair and touch his sacred face. He began to mumble words, she moved her head closer to him and listened to what he was saying, "In the company of those on whom Allah has bestowed His grace, the Prophets, the true believers, the martyrs, and the righteous. O Allah, forgive me and have mercy on me and enjoin me with the highest company. O Allah, the highest company in paradise." He repeated the last word three times. Aisha felt broken-hearted and knew that he had chosen to join the supreme companion!

Fatima was crying and mourning the devoted father and the caring grandfather. He had always been there for her





and never disappointed her whenever she leaned on him. He was the source of strength and love and the father who spoiled her and treated her like a queen. She looked at him with pain and said, “O my father, what a severe agony!”

Grief and sadness spread on all parts and areas of Madina. Everyone here was silent and anxious. It is Monday, the twelfth of Rabi’a al-Awal, 11 AH. We are now in the Prophet’s Mosque, near the Holy Room. The companions of the Prophet had gathered with tearful eyes and broken hearts. Bilal, the dark-skinned man, seemed like a little child who mourned the death of his mother. He occupied a corner away from other people, hid his face between his hands and cried bitterly until he almost fell unconscious.

All eyes are heading towards the curtain of the room, waiting for the Prophet to regain his strength, come and greet them with his warm smile! They were waiting for him to get up and speak to them, telling them about his experience with illness and teaching them the meanings of patience over affliction and distress.

His place and his pulpit remain vacant in the hope that he will come as he used to do. We are deeply missing his melodious voice in prayer, his sincere speech in the sermons and his carefree smile that wipes away the pain. Our hearts are longing for him and we are waiting for him because we believed that he will definitely come out. These were the whispers heard amongst those gathered to wait for his return to health.

Amidst this state of anticipation, the curtain opens. Our eyes are hoping and our hearts are waiting for the good

news. It wasn't him, but Aisha! She said, unbelieving, "The Messenger of Allah has died!" Then, the curtain was closed!

Aisha closed the curtain and with it closed all doors of hope to see the Messenger of Allah alive among us again!

O Allah! How can our hearts absorb this tragic loss!

The men were wailing at the mosque! Medina lamented its master, its Prophet, its leader and its loved man. They lost the father who consoled them in times of grief. They lost the brother who comforted in times of weariness. They lost a loving heart who cared for every soul!

Allah's Apostle (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) had died! The honorable companions had to comprehend this terrible reality. Death means loss and desperate longing, a wound in the heart that does not heal and a break in the soul for which there can be no solace!

Allah's Apostle had died! Abu Bakr entered the room, uncovered the noble face of Allah's Messenger (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), kissed him and said, "Let my mother and father be sacrificed for you, O Allah's Messenger (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), you are good in life and in death. Abu Bakr stood crying for his lifelong companion.

Omar was standing outside, walking around aimlessly and feeling outraged. He was hit with grief that he was drawing his sword in the faces of those who utter news of the prophet's death! He was so stunned that he was denying the news! Who would have expected that this solid strong man held such a delicate heart! Omar, the powerful, refused to believe and he collapsed from the idea of loss.



Abu Bakr went out to face the people after gathering his strength and said in a voice overwhelmed by sadness, “No doubt! Whoever worshipped Mohammad, then Mohammad is dead, but whoever worshipped Allah, then Allah is Alive and shall never die.” Then he recited Allah’s Statement,

“You ‘O Prophet’ will certainly die, and they will die too (30)”, Sourat Az-zumer

He also recited,

“Muḥammad is no more than a messenger; other messengers have gone before him. If he were to die or to be killed, would you regress into disbelief? Those who do so will not harm Allah whatsoever. And Allah will reward those who are grateful (144)”, Sourat Al-Imran

Upon hearing this, Omar collapsed and said, “As if I had never heard this verse before!”

In utter grief, farewell and burial ceremonies were carried out like a heavy nightmare. They kept crying until they almost ran out of tears!

While in this state, my Master Bilal ascends the minaret to call for the prayer. He was uttering, “I bear witness that Mohammad is the Messenger of Allah” through his tears and with a quivering voice. The death of Prophet Mohammad (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was the greatest grief that people in Madina have ever had to endure.

Bilal’s charming voice sounded sad, exhausted and in pain! How could one convince the pain to leave his voice?!

The Beloved Prophet passed away, and the pillars of Medina shook with sadness and sorrow. Never in history had a man been loved by his followers as he had. Urwa ibn Masoud proclaimed, "I saw among the companions of Mohammad the wonder. Whenever he ordered them, they would carry out his orders immediately; and when they spoke to him, they would lower their voices and would not look at his face constantly out of respect." Urwa returned to his people and said, "O people! By Allah, I have been to the kings and to Caesar, Khosrau and An- Najashi, yet I have never seen any of them respected by his courtiers as much as Mohammad is respected by his companions."

The Beloved Prophet (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) is gone, but he will remain present among us with every dawn of a new day.

The Beloved Messenger (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) is gone, yet his name is present, echoing with the call to prayer every moment and every time.

The Beloved Prophet (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) passed away, and left brave men who fought in the fields of battles and led the armies from east to west. Go and ask the Meadows of Yarmouk, Qadisiyyah, Nahavand, the land of Egypt and the land of Mesopotamia about them. They will tell you about Khaled, Akrama, Sa'ad, Amr bin Al-Aas and Al-Qaqa. They will tell you how they fought the battles like unrelenting lions.

Their graves are witnesses in the land of the Levant, Iraq, Egypt, even the walls of Constantinople and the fortresses





of the Byzantines. Here lies Bilal, Khaled, Amr, Abu Ayyub Al-Ansari, and Abu Ubaidah.

The Beloved Prophet (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) passed away, yet the flag still advocates the oneness of Allah, carried by generation after generation. History witnesses and tells stories of courage and determination led by the heroes; Salah al-Din, Qatuz, Tariq bin Ziyad and Mohammad al-Fateh, who achieved glories in the history of humanity.

The Beloved Prophet (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) passed away, after he established justice and good governance. Many leaders followed on his steps, Omar Al-Faruq, Harun Al-Rashid, Suleiman the Magnificent, and Al-Mu'tasim, who achieved victory and changed the face of the world forever. He said, "There is no compulsion in religion". Thus, the church bells are still ringing and the Christians are still living peacefully among Muslims in Egypt, the Levant and the land of Palestine.

The Beloved Prophet (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) passed away, yet he made remarkable contributions for the welfare of humanity at large. The Islamic civilization contributed to developments in science, jurisprudence, literature, art, medicine and philosophy all of which the pillars of monotheism are their stronghold. Scholars such as Al-Bukhari, Muslim, Al-Shafi'i, Ibn Sina, Al-Razi, Ibn Rushd, Al-Biruni, Ali Ezzat, and Al-Mawdudi, have built on past knowledge and made distinctive contributions in all fields known to mankind.

The Beloved Prophet (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) is gone, after he has established the religion of

Islam, and thirteen centuries after his death, his influence is still powerful and pervasive...

The Beloved (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) is gone, and his inspiring biography is present, recounting stories of honesty, chivalry, courage, bravery and unrelenting determination. He is honest and trustworthy, the Master of the Messengers, a mercy to the whole world, the leader of the glorious companions, our beloved, our teacher and our intercessor on the Day of Judgment.






(22)

Epilogue

He disappeared as quickly as he first appeared. He looked like a warrior riding on his horseback, galloping toward the horizon and leaving behind flying dust of the desert sand. His silhouette gradually waned until it vanished in the dark night. This was the last time I would see my Master Bilal, whom I accompanied on that historic journey, and to whom I was so attached that he captured my heart and my feelings. I looked at his fading figure with gloomy eyes and a broken heart. Bilal was an excellent companion, a superb teacher and counselor. He was a unique man with a clear mind, intuition, patience and sincerity. He was pleasant and kind, strong, brave and a noble man.

We ended up at the same place where I first saw him, in front of the tent, around wood and fire. After a long conversation, a few moments before I woke up from my sleep,





Bilal got up and grabbed his horse's rein. I looked sadly at him and said, "Is it time for us to separate?"

He looked at me and said, "I have to leave, Mohammad!"

I got up and hugged him so tight that I did not want to let him go. Bilal held me by the arm and said, "Listen to me my friend! I have entrusted you with a great task. You have to go back to your friends in the tent and teach them about what you saw and witnessed. This is your turn now, my friend!"

I promised him to do so! Then, I added, "But you did not give me answers to their concerns and challenges."

Bilal smiled and said, "My friend, this is not how things are supposed to be done! Throughout our stories, there was a comprehensive methodology, endless lessons and morals. People go through different situations and circumstances; they have to contemplate these stories and find within them the answers to their unique situation. They have to ask themselves how the Greatest of Creation (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) would act if faced with the same situation. After we watched him through major events at different stages of his life, the answers should become easier to find. We have come very close to him that we might be able to reason, think and act. The entire world should know who the Prophet Mohammad was, the human being, the teacher, the educator and the leader! Today, at this time, the whole of humanity needs to know the most virtuous leader, for by Allah there is wisdom, will and conscience in him that is sufficient to solve all human problems!"

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About the Book & the Author

Perhaps, dear reader, you agree with me that our Master Mohammad (may peace and blessings be upon him) is the greatest personality that humanity has ever seen. Don't you think that we often focused on the events and the conquests in his life, and not enough on the nature of his character? Do you not think that the Lord of the Worlds chose him from among the rest of mankind because he possessed sanity, genius and purity of the heart that no human being matched? Don't you think that these qualities had an important role in the great achievements that he accomplished and the decisions that he made?

In this book, the author takes us on a hypothetical journey with the Seal of the Prophets, in which we observe the most notable events of his life in a form of an interesting story style that suits the spirit of the age. It is nothing but the endeavor of the author to get closer to the personality of this great man. Perhaps it will help you, dear reader, to learn from this great character how to deal with the challenges you face in your daily life,

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