

MUHAMMAD'S BIOGRAPHY (PART 6 OF 12): THE HIJRAH OF THE PROPHET

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Description: A detailed account of the migration of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina.

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The Hijrah (23 September, 622 C.E.)

Meanwhile, the Prophet, with a few intimates, had been awaiting the divine command to join the other Muslims in Yathrib. He was not free to emigrate until this command came to him. At last the command came. He gave his cloak to Ali, bidding him lie down on the bed so that anyone looking in might think Muhammad lay there. The slayers were to strike him as he came out of the house, whether in the night or early morning. He knew they would not injure Ali. The assassins were already surrounding his house when Prophet Muhammad slipped out unseen. He went to Abu Bakr's house and called to him, and they both went together to a cavern in a desert hill, hiding there until the hue and cry was past. Abu Bakr's son and daughter and his herdsman brought them food and tidings after nightfall. Once, a search party came so near to them in their hiding-place that they could hear their words. Abu Bakr was afraid and said, "O Messenger of God, Were one of them to look down towards his feet, he would see us!" The Prophet replied:

"What do you think of two people with whom God is the Third? Do not be sad, for indeed God is with us." (Saheeh Al-Bukhari)

When the search party had departed their presence, , Abu Bakr had the riding-camels and the guide brought to the cave at night, and they set out on the long ride to Yathrib.

After traveling for many days on unfrequented paths, the fugitives reached a suburb of Yathrib called Qubaa, where, for weeks past, the people of the city heard that the Prophet had left Mecca, and hence they been setting out to the local hills every morning, watching for the Prophet until heat drove them to shelter. The travelers arrived in the heat of the day, after the watchers had retired. A Jew who was out and about saw him approaching and called out to the Muslims that he whom they expected had at last arrived, and the Muslims set out to the hills before Qubaa to greet him.

The Prophet stayed in Qubaa for some days, and there he built the first mosque of Islam. By that time, Ali, who had left Mecca by foot three days after the Prophet, has also arrived. The Prophet, his companions from Mecca, and the “Helpers” of Qubaa led him to Medina, where they had been eagerly anticipating his arrival.

The inhabitants of Medina never saw a brighter day in their history. Anas, a close companion of the Prophet, said:

I was present the day he entered Medina and I have never seen a better or brighter day than the day on which he came to us in Medina, and I was present on the day he died, and I have never seen a day worse or darker than the day on which he died” (Ahmed)

Every house in Medina wished that the Prophet would stay with them, and some tried to lead his camel to their home. The Prophet stopped them and said:

“Leave her, for she is under (Divine) Command.”

It passed many houses until it came to a halt and knelt at the land of Banu Najjaar. The Prophet did not descend until the camel had risen and gone on a little, then it turned and went back to its original place and knelt again. Upon that, the Prophet descended from it. He was pleased with its choice, for Banu Najjaar were his maternal uncles, and he also desired to honor them. When individuals from the family had been soliciting him to enter their houses, a certain Abu Ayyoub stepped forward to his saddle and took it into his house. The Prophet said:

“A man goes with his saddle.” (Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim)

The first task he undertook in Medina was to build a Mosque. The Prophet, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, sent for the two boys who owned the date-store and asked them to name the price of the yard. They answered, “Nay, but we shall make thee a gift of it, O Prophet of God!” The Prophet however, refused their offer, paid them its price and built a mosque from there, he himself taking part in its erection.

While working, he was heard saying:

“O God! There is no goodness except that of the Hereafter, so please forgive the Helpers and the Emigrants.” (Saheeh Al-Bukhari)

The mosque served as a place of worship for Muslims. The prayer which was previously an individual act performed in secret now became a public affair, one which epitomizes a Muslim society. The period in which Muslims and Islam was subordinate and oppressed was over, now the adthaan, the call to prayer, would be called aloud, booming and penetrating the walls of every house, calling and reminding Muslims to fulfill their obligation to their Creator. The mosque was a symbol of the Islamic society.

It was a place of worship, a school where Muslims would enlighten themselves about the truths of the religion, a meeting place whether the differences of various warring

parties would be resolved, and an administration building from which all matters concerning the society would emanate, a true example of how Islam incorporates all aspects of life into the religion. All these tasks were undertaken in a place built upon the trunks of date-palm trunks roofed with its leaves.

When the first and most important task was complete, he also made houses on both sides of the mosque for his family, also from the same materials. The Prophet's Mosque and house in Medina stands today in that very place.

The Hijrah had been completed. It was 23 September 622, and the Islamic era, the Muslim calendar, begins the day on which this event took place.. And from this day on Yathrib had a new name, a name of glory: Madinat-un-Nabi, the City of the Prophet, in brief, Medina.

Such was the Hijrah, the emigration from Mecca to Yathrib. The thirteen years of humiliation, of persecution, of limited success, and of prophecy still unfulfilled were over.

The ten years of success, the fullest that has ever crowned one man's endeavor, had begun. The Hijrah makes a clear division in the story of the Prophet's Mission, which is evident from the Quran. Till then he had only been a preacher. Thenceforth he was the ruler of a State, at first a very small one, but which grew in ten years to become the empire of Arabia. The kind of guidance which he and his people needed after the Hijrah was not the same as that which they had needed before. The Medina chapters differ, therefore, from the Meccan chapters. The latter give guidance to the individual soul and to the Prophet as Warner: the former give guidance to a growing social and political community and to the Prophet as example, lawgiver, and reformer.

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