

MUHAMMAD'S BIOGRAPHY (PART 10 OF 12): THE TREATY OF HUDAIBIYYAH

Rating: 4.8

Description: The hidden victory of a non-aggression treaty between the Muslims and the Meccans.

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By: IslamReligion.com

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Punishment of Bani Quraidhah

Nothing is worse, in Arab eyes, than the betrayal of trust and the breaking of a solemn pledge. It was time now to deal with Bani Quraidhah. On the day of the return from the trench the Prophet ordered war on the treacherous Bani Quraidhah, who, conscious of their guilt, had already taken to their towers of refuge. After a siege of nearly a month they had to surrender unconditionally. They only begged that they might be judged by a member of the Arab tribe of which they were adherents. They chose the head of the clan with which they had long been in alliance, Sa'd ibn Mu'adh of Aws, who was dying from wounds received at Uhud and had to be propped up to give judgment. Without hesitation, he condemned the men of the tribe to death.

Hudaibiyyah

In the same year the Prophet had a vision in which he found himself entering Mecca unopposed, therefore he determined to attempt the pilgrimage. Besides a number of Muslims from Medina, he called upon the friendly Arabs to accompany him, whose numbers had increased since the miraculous discomfiture of the clans at the Battle of the Ditch, but most of them did not respond. Attired as pilgrims, and taking with them the customary offerings, a company of fourteen hundred men journeyed to Mecca. As they drew near the valley they were met by a friend from the city, who warned the Prophet that the Quraish had had sworn to prevent his entering the sanctuary; their cavalry was on the road before him. On that, the Prophet ordered a detour through mountain gorges, so the Muslims were tired out when they came down at last into the valley of Mecca and encamped at a spot called Hudaibiyyah; from thence he tried to open negotiations with the Quraish, to explain that he came only as a pilgrim. The first messenger he sent towards the city was maltreated and his camel hamstrung. He returned without delivering his message. The Quraish, on their side, sent an envoy who was threatening in tone, and very arrogant. Another of their envoys was too familiar in the way he spoke to the Prophet, and had to be reminded sternly of the respect due to

him. It was he who consequently said, on his return to the city of Mecca: "I have seen Caesar and Chosroes in their pomp, but never have I seen a man honored as Muhammad is honored by his comrades."

The Prophet sought to send some messenger who would impose respect. Uthman was finally chosen because of his kinship with the powerful Umayyad family. While the Muslims were awaiting his return the news came that he had been murdered. It was then that the Prophet, sitting under a tree in Hudaibiyah, took an oath from all his comrades that they would stand or fall together. After a while, however, it became known that Uthman had not been murdered. Then a troop that came out from the city to molest the Muslims in their camp was captured before they could do any hurt and brought before the Prophet, who forgave them on their promise to renounce hostility.

Truce of Hudaibiyah

Eventually proper envoys came from the Quraish. After some negotiation, the truce of Hudaibiyah was signed. It stipulated that for ten years there were to be no hostilities between the parties. The Prophet was to return to Medina without visiting the Kaaba, but he would be able to perform the pilgrimage with his comrades in the following year. The Quraish promised they would evacuate Mecca to allow him to do so. Deserters from the Quraish to the Muslims during the period of the truce were to be returned; not so deserters from the Muslims to the Quraish. Any tribe or clan who wished to share in the treaty as allies of the Prophet might do so, and any tribe or clan who wished to share in the treaty as allies of the Quraish might do so. There was dismay among the Muslims at these terms. They asked one another: "Where is the victory that we were promised?"

It was during the return journey from Hudaibiyah that the surah entitled "Victory" was revealed. This truce proved, in fact, to be the greatest victory that the Muslims had till then achieved. War had been a barrier between them and the idolaters, but now both parties met and talked together, and the new religion spread more rapidly. In the two years which elapsed between the signing of the truce and the fall of Mecca the number of converts was greater than the total number of all previous converts. The Prophet traveled to Hudaibiyah with 1400 men. Two years later, when the Meccans broke the truce, he marched against them with an army of 10,000.

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