

NEGOTIATIONS

The Makkans had tried many times to conquer the Muslims and force them to reject Islam. The Makkans wanted Islam to be eradicated from their society. In the past, the Makkans had been unsuccessful in all their attempts to finish Islam and but they remained hopeful. The Muslims always remained steadfast to Islam and would not behave badly nor fight with the Makkans. The Makkans on the other hand treated the Muslims badly and were very unjust towards them.

Abu Talib supported his nephew and gave him protection from the Makkans. The Makkans knew that if they harmed Muhammad (pbuh), they would need to face Abu Talib and his family (Bani Hashim). The Makkans tried many times to apply pressure on Abu Talib hoping he would remove his protection of Muhammad (pbuh). Every time they tried this tactic, Abu Talib rejected their offer and remained faithful to his nephew.

They also tried to tackle the 'problem' by approaching Muhammad (pbuh) directly. In one such incident, they tried to make a deal with Muhammad (pbuh) so that they could compromise in idol worship. The Makkans proposed that everyone should worship Allah one year and the following year everyone should worship the idols. The Makkans didn't truly understand the concept of Tawheed - the belief in the one Supreme, all powerful creator. Their proposal went against the basics of all true religions. The fact that there is only one God can never be compromised. Surah Kafiroon was revealed which explicitly told the Makkans this. The prophet (pbuh) rejected their proposal and would not compromise the first pillar of Islam.

Once Utbah bin Rabi'a was in a meeting with the Makkans and they decided that Utbah should reason with Muhammad (pbuh). Utbah was a good talker and they thought that he would be able to win Muhammad (pbuh) over. Utbah left the meeting and went to speak to Muhammad (pbuh) whilst the Makkans eagerly awaited his return. They were hopeful that Utbah could persuade Muhammad (pbuh) to leave Islam.

Utbah spoke to Muhammad (pbuh) about the effect the new religion was having on the Makkan society. Utbah said that families were getting divided with some members of the family accepting Islam and others rejecting it. Utbah said Muhammad's message was against idol worship that meant everyone who worshipped idols was wrong. He said the Makkans would never accept their forefathers as

being wrong! He insisted that the only way these problems in the Makkah society could be resolved is if Muhammad stopped preaching Islam!

After speaking for a while, he put forward three offers which had the condition that Muhammad (pbuh) must stop preaching Islam. If Muhammad (pbuh) wanted wealth, the Makkans were prepared to make Muhammad (pbuh) the richest man in all Makkah. If Muhammad (pbuh) wanted power then they would make him their king and would obey his commands. If Muhammad (pbuh) was possessed by a jinn then they would spend all their wealth to cure him. All he had to do in return was stop preaching Islam!

as a reply, Muhammad (pbuh) recited some verses of the Qu'ran and Utbah listened to him with great interest. After hearing the reply he left the company of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and went to the waiting Makkans. When the Makkans saw Utbah's face, they were sure something important had been achieved. Utbah told them about his conversation with Muhammad (pbuh) and told them that the best advice was to leave Muhammad (pbuh) alone.

He said that from his words and actions, Muhammad (pbuh) was neither a liar nor possessed by a Jinn. He advised that if the Makkans were not prepared to follow Muhammad (pbuh) then they should leave him alone. If Muhammad (pbuh) fails in his mission then the rest of the Arabs would kill Muhammad (pbuh). This would save the Makkans any problems with Abu Talib and would prevent bloodshed in Makkah. However, if Muhammad (pbuh) succeeds in his mission then the Makkans would also be able to enjoy and share this success and power.

The Makkans were annoyed with Utbah and expressed their disappointment. They had hoped that Utbah would have been able to bribe Muhammad (pbuh) so that he would no longer preach Islam. They disregarded all the advice Utbah had given and decided that they would speak to Muhammad (pbuh) on their own.

As the Makkans sat down and talked about the discussion with the Prophet (pbuh), Abu Jahl said that he would finish it once and for all. He would take a heavy rock and throw it on the prophet (pbuh) when he was in sajdah. This way Muhammad (pbuh) would be no more and the message would also die out.

The Makkans were not sure about what they should do. They decided that maybe it would be a better idea if they went and spoke to the Jews. The Jews also believed in one Allah and maybe they could help them overcome the Muslims. The Makkans

travelled to Yathrib (Madina) where there was quite a large Jewish community.

The Jews had travelled and settled in Yathrib because their books told them a prophet (pbuh) would come to this area. The description of the prophet (pbuh) and the place he was coming to was clearly told in their books. They knew that the prophet (pbuh) would succeed against his enemies and the truth would prevail over falsehood. The Jews thought that they would join the prophet (pbuh) and would overcome the rest of the Arabs.

The Jews were quite interested in the events in Makkah. They had heard about this man Muhammad (pbuh) who claimed to be a prophet. They were not sure if he was a prophet but were following the developments closely. However, the Jews had assumed that the prophet would be from the Jews and not from the Arabs. The Bible had actually told the Jews the prophet would be from their cousins who are actually the Arabs. Both the Jews and the Arabs are decedents of Prophet Ibrahim (as) - one through Ismael and one through Ishaq.

The Makkans travelled to Yathrib and spoke to the Jewish learned scholars. The Jews told them that they should go and ask the prophet about three things. After they had got the answers from Muhammad (pbuh) they should come back to them. Only a true prophet would be able to answer these questions properly. These three questions were about the story of the youths who left their people (people of the caves); about the great traveller who travelled to the edges of the earth (Dhu l-Qarnayn) and about the soul.

The Makkans returned to Makkah and went to ask these three questions to the Prophet (pbuh). Whenever an incident or question came, Allah would send down revelation that would answer that particular question or problem. These answers came in the form of verses or Surahs that are always true revelation. The prophet (pbuh) told the Makkans that he would give them the answer tomorrow. The prophet (pbuh) thought that Allah would send him the revelation soon and he could give the answer the next day.

The next day came and the revelation had not come. The prophet was surprised and again told the Makkans to return the following day. The Prophet (pbuh) was waiting for the revelation to come down with the answers. This continued for a few days and everyone got worried. The Makkans started to laugh and joke at the prophet (pbuh) because the revelation had not come. They thought he did not know the answers and they had finally caught him out.

Finally, the revelation came down and answered the three questions. Not only did it answer the questions it gave a lot more information which proved that Islam was the truth. The Makkans then went and told them Rabbis who confirmed that these answers were true and only a prophet could know this information.

The Makkans that were laughing and joking at Muhammad (pbuh) now remained quiet. The people that did not believe in Muhammad (pbuh) were now assured that he was a true prophet. The Muslims who did not have any doubt in the Qu'ran and the Prophet (pbuh) were pleased with the whole outcome.

The reason that Allah had not granted the revelation straight away was because Muhammad (pbuh) said that the revelation would come the next day but did not say the word 'inshallah'. This was a valuable lesson to all the Muslims. Whenever we do something we should always say Inshallah, which means if Allah wills.

This was also proof for the people that Muhammad (pbuh) did not make things up or spoke his own opinion. He would have answered the questions himself and not waited for revelation to come down. The Makkans knew that Muhammad (pbuh) was a prophet, only a prophet could answer these questions. The Jews also knew that there was a prophet in Makkah because the Makkans had come back with answers that only a prophet could give.

In Yathrib, the word had reached the Jews that there was a prophet in Makkah who had just passed their test. The Jews would warn the Arabs in Yathrib saying "Wait till the prophet comes he will sort you out!" The Jews and Arabs would have problems with each other and there would be many arguments and fights. The two main Arab tribes were the Aws and Khazraj who would often fight amongst themselves.

This incident marked the last of the negotiation and a new phase was ready to begin. The Makkans knew that now was the time to take more direct action against the Muslims, the Makkans that supported them and the Bani Hashim and Bani Al-Mutallib. This action was also directed against the elderly Abu Talib who had protected the prophet (pbuh). The Makkans would fall to new levels of barbarism and injustice to stop the spread of Islam.

THE TERRIBLE BOYCOTT

The Makkans were very angry and concerned about the situation that had developed. Especially since Hamzah and Umar had joined the ranks of the Muslims by accepting Islam. They were both important and respected members of the community and this had strengthened the cause of Islam. No matter what the Makkans had tried in the past, the Muslims were slowly increasing in number as its message began to reach more people.

The Makkans had already tried to negotiate with the prophet (pbuh) and had failed every time. They had offered to make Muhammad (pbuh) their king or a very rich man but Muhammad (pbuh) had refused them. Instead the prophet (pbuh) had proposed that they only worship Allah and leave idol worship. The prophet (pbuh) explained to them that this was the path of righteousness. The Makkans had refused him saying that they would prefer to follow their forefathers!

Abu Talib, the prophet's uncle, had been offering Muhammad (pbuh) his support and protection. They had many meetings with Abu Talib, trying to win him over. They had tried to negotiate and bargain with Abu Talib but he had also refused their offers. In fact, Abu Talib was often angry with the offers they made because they were so unjust. Abu Talib may not have been a Muslim but he loved and respected his nephew Muhammad (pbuh).

The Makkans had realised that Islam wasn't going to be easy to subdue. They decided on one last attempt to finish off the Muslims and their supporters. The Makkans decided they should now break all communication with the Muslims and boycott them. They would boycott the Muslims, Bani Mutallib and Banu Hashim with the exception of Abu Lahab. Although Abu Lahab was the prophet's uncle, he was also one of his greatest enemies and therefore wasn't included in the boycott.

All the leaders of the Makkans got together and decided to enforce a boycott of the Muslims and their supporters. No one was allowed to have any sort of dealings with them. There would be no inter-marriage, no buying and selling, no business dealings and no socializing. In fact, no one would be allowed to speak to them as far as it was possible. They would also prevent any traders that came to Makkah from dealing with the Muslims and their supporters.

All their Makkan nobles got together at Wadi Al-Muhassab and wrote out an agreement. This agreement started with 'In the name of Allah' and then continued to lay down the exact details of the boycott. They then got all the leaders to sign

this agreement so that they were all obliged to stick to the treaty. The Makkans then took this document and hung it on one of the walls inside the Ka'bah. The Makkans said that they would only cancel this treaty when Muhammad (pbuh) was handed over to them to be killed.

Abu Talib was very concerned about the events unfolding and decided to take action himself. He saw the situation moving from bad to worse, especially since the attacks on the prophet (pbuh) were getting worse. In the past there had been a little bit of bad feeling towards the Muslims by the Makkans. Now the Makkans were openly hostile to the Muslims and their beloved prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Abu Talib gathered together all his tribe and family and moved to a narrow valley which became known as Shi'b Abu Talib. This group of Muslims and Abu Talib's clansmen moved to this valley and lived there for a period of three years. The Muslims during this period were in a very bad state.

There was no trade between the Muslims and the Makkans so the money and food began to run out. It came to a stage that the state of the Muslims was so bad that the cries of hungry children suffering were heard constantly in this valley. Any little food the Muslims had would be shared amongst themselves, which wasn't enough to satisfy anyone. In some cases the Muslims had to resort to eating the leaves of trees and the skins of animals to survive.

The Makkans tried their best to cut off the Muslims completely. Whenever any traders came to Makkah and the Muslims tried to buy food, the Makkans would come and offer a much higher price so that the Muslims could not afford it. The Makkans would warn the traders that trading with the Muslims was not allowed. Some of the Muslims were already poor and suffered a lot through these hardships.

In some cases, close relatives and friends of the people in the valley smuggled some food in. This food was in small amounts and would take place late at night so that the Makkans would not find out. However, the Makkans were always on guard and watching for anyone who was going to break this boycott. Hisham bin Amr, amongst a few others, would occasionally smuggle a little food to their clansmen in the valley. They witnessed the awful state of the Muslims and saw the hardships they were going through.

Hashim bin Amr thought the Makkans were unjust in this inhumane boycott. He

hoped that the agreement could be cancelled which would alleviate this suffering his clansmen were exposed to. Some other Makkans were not as hard-hearted and through compassion would smuggle food to the Muslims. They also considered this agreement as unjust but were powerless to do anything because their nobles and leaders had signed it. There was a general feeling amongst a lot of Makkans that this ban should be lifted.

Abu Talib was also concerned about the welfare of his nephew Muhammad (pbuh). He would often swap places with Muhammad (pbuh) at night in case someone tried to murder him during the night. He was always vigilant and showed a lot of concern for Muhammad (pbuh) through these testing times. Muhammad (pbuh) remained courageous and continued his mission. He would go to the Ka'bah and offer his prayers, even in this hostile environment.

The news got out about the inhumane treatment by the Makkans of their own clansmen. People would talk about the situation in Makkah and about this man Muhammad (pbuh) with his 'new' religion. Many were curious about Muhammad (pbuh) and why the Makkans were so against it. All over Arabia, the people talked about the situation in Makkah and it became a major point of discussion and debate.

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) continued to preach the message of truth in the holy months. In these holy months the Muslims were a little freer to move around but the boycott itself wasn't relaxed. In the holy months there was supposed to be no fighting and the usual persecution would ease off. Muhammad (pbuh) would invite the people and visitors to Makkah to pray and worship the one and only true god of all Mankind - Allah. He would tell them that their success was in the worship and dedication to Allah and his religion. This religion was the same teachings that was brought by all the prophets. The Prophet (pbuh) told the people that this was their means to success in this life and the hereafter. Some of these words fell on deaf ears; some people accepted some of these teaching whilst others accepted Islam.

The Makkans tried their best to discredit Muhammad (pbuh) calling him a liar and invented many lies against him. The Makkans were determined that the message was not conveyed to anyone and they worked endlessly against the prophet (pbuh). Muhammad (pbuh) was undeterred by their activities and continued his noble mission. He knew that Allah would grant this noble mission success and that it was only a matter of time.

It was during this period of hardships that a group of five Makkans got together. They had relatives and friends in the valley. They decided that they would try and change the situation and get the ban lifted. They were concerned for the well being of their relatives or did not agree with this barbaric behaviour. The group of five got together and tried to formulate a plan. They knew that it was a formidable task to cancel an agreement that virtually all of Makkah had agreed to.

One day there was quite a few Makkans at the Ka'bah. The group got together and started talking about the inhumane nature of this boycott. They began to create a bit of a stir just as Abu Jahl heard the talking and decided to join in. They began to debate the ban saying that they had not agreed to such a bad thing and that they should have at least been consulted from the outset. Abu Jahl tried to remedy things saying that this had already been discussed and an agreement had been made. He suggested that the ban was agreed by the majority of the leaders and could not be lifted.

Abu Talib was already at the Ka'bah and also overheard the discussion. He came forward and said that he had heard the prophet Muhammad (pbuh) say that the agreement in the Ka'bah had been partially destroyed by ants leaving only the name of Allah. Abu Talib said that he was so sure of the prophet's words that he would hand Muhammad (pbuh) over if these words were proven to be incorrect!

The Makkans went into the Ka'bah and when they saw the treaty, they were shocked. The treaty had been eaten away by the ants, leaving behind only the words "In the name of Allah". Since the written agreement between the Makkan leaders was destroyed, the ban could no longer be enforced. The boycott had finally ended.

The Muslims had suffered immensely through this period of trials and tribulations. They had suffered three long years of hardship. They were glad that the boycott was finally over and that they could return to their normal everyday lives. They could resume their trade and make contact with friends and relatives. The Muslims thanked Allah that this period of trials and tribulations was finally over.

However, as far as the Makkans were concerned, they were still against the Muslims and their hostilities towards the Muslims were not over. They were also ready to continue where they had left off and would make the life of the Muslims and their prophet a misery. The prophet (pbuh) knew this and also knew that Islam

would prevail despite the hostile conditions they were in.

Another significant situation was that the health of Abu Talib had deteriorated. He was an old man, over eighty years of age. He had supported the prophet (pbuh) through all these hardships and had offered his protection to Muhammad (pbuh). However, these last three years had taken its toll. On return from the Shi'b Abu Talib, he suffered from illness and weakness. Everyone was concerned for his well-being.

What would happen if this old and compassionate man would pass away and what would happen to the Muhammad (pbuh) without his support and protection? The Makkans and Muslims waited to see what would happen over the coming months.

THE YEAR OF SADNESS

The Boycott had lasted for a long hard three years during which the Muslims had suffered immensely. Only when this boycott ended, the Muslims breathed a sigh of relief. This had been a great test for them and they thanked Allah that this difficult period was over. Things in Makkah began to return to normal in this tenth year of prophethood.

Abu Talib had suffered greatly through this ordeal. He was already very old and this had taken a great effect on his health. Shortly after returning from the valley, he became ill and this period of ill health continued for a few months. The Muslims showed great concern for Abu Talib whom they respected and loved. Abu Talib was also the only person who had protected the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) against the Makkans. The Makkans were also concerned for the health of the much-respected Abu Talib.

The Makkans saw that Abu Talib was ill and would take this opportunity to speak about Muhammad and the problems they were having in Makkah. A group of them, which included Abu Jahl, went to check on the health of Abu Talib and also to discuss the affairs of Makkah. Abu Talib was very ill at this time and the Prophet (pbuh) was also there to visit him.

Muhammad (pbuh) asked Abu Talib to accept Islam and say the shahadah. Although, Abu Talib was a generous and kind man; he had protected the prophet (pbuh) and had always been courteous to the Muslims; he had not accepted Islam

even though other members of his family had done so. When Muhammad (pbuh) encouraged him to accept Islam, Abu Jahl interrupted him saying don't leave the religion of your forefathers, don't leave the religion of Abdul Mutallib!

The Makkans pressed Abu Talib to follow the religion of Idol worship, the religion of their forefathers. Muhammad (pbuh) was encouraging him to accept Islam by saying the Shahadah. Abu Talib finally accepted the religion of his forefathers and died as a non-Muslim. The prophet (pbuh) was grieved by this and said that he would make dua for him and ask Allah to forgive him. He continued this until Allah commanded him not to.

A verse came down which said to Muhammad that it was not fitting that he should ask for forgiveness for a non-believer, even though he may be a member of his family. The prophet made dua for Abu Talib, asking Allah to make his punishment easy in the Hereafter. It was later learned from the Prophet (pbuh) that Allah had taken Abu Talib from the worst of the fire of hell and had put him in a place where there was less punishment and torment.

Muhammad (pbuh) was also concerned for his loving wife, Khadija, who also became very ill. She was at the age of sixty-five now and had been his loving and supporting companion for 25 years. Together they had a good close family, which included Fatima, the leader of the ladies in paradise. Khadija had loved and supported Muhammad throughout their marriage and had been by his side through these difficult times. She was the first person to accept Islam and had full faith in the prophet (pbuh) and in his mission.

Abu Talib had just recently passed away and now Khadija had also passed away, leaving the Prophet (pbuh) devastated by these great personal losses. He mourned at the death of Khadija and reflected on the times and memories they shared. He was hurt that he had lost such a dear and loving companion. The Angel Jibrael informed the prophet (pbuh) that Khadija was in a peaceful place in Paradise. Muhammad (pbuh) often spoke about her and held her in the highest esteem. The Muslims shared in the grief of the Prophet (pbuh) and also felt the loss of this wonderful woman.

Muhammad (pbuh) was quiet and remained more in seclusion. He had a mission to fulfil and he slowly began to preach to the Makkans inviting them to the truth. The response was much more hostile than before and many of the Makkans refused to listen to him. However, he persevered in his mission and practiced patience with his

people.

Now Muhammad (pbuh) was alone and he was without the protection of his uncle Abu Talib. The Makkans took this opportunity to attack and persecute the Muslims. They were openly hostile to the Muslims and to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). In one incident, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) came home with sand in his hair and on his shoulders. Fatima came rushing to him and wiped away the sand which the Makkans had put on the prophet (pbuh). Fatima was crying and the prophet (pbuh) comforted her saying, "Don't worry Allah will protect you father!"

In the Past the Makkans had held back their aggression, especially against Muhammad. They knew that Abu Talib would retaliate against them if they harmed the prophet (pbuh). Now that Abu Talib had passed away, they knew that there was no one to protect Muhammad (pbuh) and they could do as they pleased.

After a short while, the Prophet (pbuh) decided that he would leave the Makkans for a while and try somewhere else. He thought that maybe in Taif the people would listen to the message and maybe they would be more likely to accept the truth. Many of the wealthy Makkans owned land in Taif which was a much more fertile place compared to Makkah. The prophet (pbuh) and his freed slave Zayd set off for Taif which was about sixty kilometres south of Makkah.

In Taif, the prophet began to speak to the people of Taif. He would tell them about Allah and about the mission he was appointed with. The people were certainly less hostile but they refused to listen to the prophet (pbuh). Some were rude and some just turned the prophet (pbuh) away. The prophet (pbuh) spent ten days there and visited many people. He also visited the nobles of Taif and all of them refused to accept Islam. Some of them even insulted and mocked the prophet (pbuh) but he continued to talk to people.

In one incident, the prophet (pbuh) met and spoke to three youths from the nobles of Thakif. The prophet (pbuh) invited them to the truth and to believe and worship Allah alone. They just mocked the prophet (pbuh) and refused to listen to him. One denied that he could be a prophet because of the disruptions in the Makkan community. The second questioned him saying could Allah not find anyone else to be a prophet. The third refused to listen to him at all because either Muhammad (pbuh) was too important to speak to or was a liar.

Some of the people in Taif tried to chase the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) away; they got together with the boys in the streets and chased the prophet (pbuh) out of the city. They threw stones at the prophet (pbuh) and Zayd as they tried to escape from them. Zayd was injured when a stone hit him in the head as he protected the prophet (pbuh). Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was also injured and blood from his wounds ran down his legs and clogged up his sandals.

When they had travelled a short distance, they rested against one of the walls of a vineyard. As Muhammad (pbuh) rested, a couple of Makkans who owned the vineyard recognised Muhammad (pbuh) and took pity on their state. They sent their servant Addas with some grapes for the two visitors. The prophet (pbuh) thanked Addas and ate the grapes beginning with the name of Allah. Addas was surprised with these words and began to talk to the prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

Addas was a Christian slave and when the prophet (pbuh) asked him where he was from, he replied Nineveh. The prophet (pbuh) said the noble Yunus was from there. Addas was very surprised and asked the prophet (pbuh) "How do you know about Yunus?" The prophet (pbuh) replied, "He was my brother and I too am a prophet."

Addas was very surprised and kissed Muhammad (pbuh) on the hands and forehead before returning to his duties. The two brothers had witnessed this and they asked Addas about his behaviour. Addas said that that man leaning against the wall is none other than a prophet. The two brothers shouted at Addas and told him that he should not leave his religion and follow Muhammad (pbuh). The Makkans were against the prophet and did not want anyone to follow him.

After a short prayer the prophet (pbuh) made a dua to Allah. In the dua, he praised Allah and said to Allah that may he forgive him for his short coming and in his inability to deliver the message. He said that although he had been injured and hurt by the Makkans he was happy as long as he had not displeased Allah.

This is an example of the character of the prophet (pbuh). He was not angry with the people with their bad actions and the bad treatment he had got. He did not blame Allah for this either but instead he thanked Allah and looked for the fault within himself. He also was not concerned about these incidents as long as he had not displeased Allah throughout this trip to Taif. There is a lesson to be learned in this for all of us, we are too quick to blame others without looking within us and our own short comings.