

THE PLEDGES AT AQABAH

It was Hajj again in the twelfth year of Prophethood. The tribes were pouring in from all over Arabia to the Holy House that was built by Prophet Ibrahim (as) many centuries earlier. They came to worship the idols that were in and around the Ka'bah, even though it was originally built for the worship of Allah. The Makkans were idol worshippers who had strayed from the right path.

Last Hajj there were six young men from Yathrib who had accepted Islam and had made a pledge to live their lives according to the teachings of Islam. These men had returned to Yathrib where they would practice this religion as well as teach it to their close friends, relatives and tribe. These young men would also be returning to the Hajj and the Prophet (pbuh) was hopeful that they would bring some of their companions with them.

As the many tribes came into Makkah, the Prophet (pbuh) would preach to them the religion of truth and would convey the message of Allah to them. He would try and convey this message to as many of the people as possible. Many of the tribes chose to ignore the Prophet (pbuh) whilst a few would listen to his words. From them a few individuals would accept this message and would become Muslims.

The tribes from Yathrib were also here to worship these same idols with the exception of twelve people who had come to meet the Prophet (pbuh). They visited the holy places in Makkah and when they were at Aqabah, they met up with the Prophet (pbuh). They sat and talked with the Prophet (pbuh). The Prophet (pbuh) explained to them the deen and the implications of them accepting Islam.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) commanded them to refrain from all types of evil and instead implementing good and piety throughout their lives. They were required to leave all their old practices behind that went against the pure teachings of Islam. He taught them about Allah and about worshipping only Allah; the day of Judgement where they would recount all their deeds and the Hereafter where the righteous will be rewarded with eternal bliss and happiness.

The Prophet (pbuh) then took an oath (or pledge) from them that they would adhere to these guidelines throughout their lives and would dedicate their lives to Islam. This was known as the first pledge of Aqabah. After this, this small group departed company with the Prophet (pbuh).

They rejoined their tribes and completed the Hajj before returning to Yathrib.

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) sent with them Mus'ab bin Umair who would stay with Asad bin Zurarah. He was sent as a teacher and a guide for the new Muslim community. He would teach the Muslims about Islam and advise them in all matters of deen. He would also speak to the non-Muslim Arabs and teach them about Islam, inviting them to accept Islam and reject all evil.

In Yathrib, the situation was a lot different than Makkah and less hostile towards Islam. Mus'ab and Asad would speak to the people, reason with them and read to them verses from the Qu'ran. The people were attracted to the truth and simplicity of these teachings and soon many people were accepting Islam. There were many incidents where people were hostile to Islam but when Mus'ab reasoned with them and taught them about the beauty and wisdom of Islam, many would turn and accept Islam.

Islam flourished in Yathrib and soon grew to a sizeable community of practicing and dedicated Muslims. They would learn from this noble teacher Mus'ab about Islam and took his advice in all matters. They would practice what they learned and would teach it to their family and friends. They were a model community who had dedicated their lives to Allah and to the worship of the one and only true Lord of all mankind.

However, the situation in Makkah had not improved. The Makkans were very hostile towards the Muslims and reluctant to let them live in peace and security. Nevertheless, the Prophet (pbuh) would continue to pray to Allah and encourage the believers to have patience through their tough times. Occasionally, news would come to the Prophet (pbuh) about the progress in Yathrib which was a welcome sign of hope.

As the year passed quickly, the Hajj season was coming again and the Makkans made preparations to welcome the Arabs to Makkah. The Prophet (pbuh) was also making preparations to meet the tribes that were coming to Makkah. This time there would be a lot more Muslims coming from Yathrib to visit Makkah. They would also make arrangements to meet the Prophet (pbuh) during the Hajj. There was also excitement amongst the Muslims for the arrival of their guests - their new brothers and sisters from Yathrib.

Although the Yathrib Muslims were keen to meet the Prophet (pbuh), their spiritual guide, the Makkans were hostile to the Muslims and always kept a close eye on their movement. Whatever preparations were made would need to be kept

secret and would need to take place under the darkness of the night. It would also need to be kept secret from the Yathrib Arabs who had not accepted Islam but had come to perform the Hajj.

Preparations were made to meet the Prophet (pbuh) at Aqabah in the middle of one of the last nights of Hajj. The Yathrib Muslims would sneak out in the middle of the night whilst all the rest of the Arabs were sleeping. They would swiftly travel to this location in the hillocks at Aqabah without making excess noises that may alert the Makkans or other Arabs. Here they waited for Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) to arrive. There was about seventy five Yathrib Muslims in total.

The Prophet (pbuh) and his uncle Abbas went to Aqabah and they met with the Yathrib Muslims. Abbas had not accepted Islam yet but like Abu Talib loved and protected his nephew. He spoke to the Yathrib Muslims and explained to them that the Prophet (pbuh) was relatively safe amongst his people here. He said that if they were going to take the Prophet (pbuh) and support him then they must do it wholeheartedly. They must support the Prophet (pbuh) through the difficult times as well as the times of ease!

Abbas continued to explain to them the full weight of responsibility they were undertaking and advised them that if they could not shoulder this burden then leave the prophet (pbuh) amongst his own people in Makkah. The Bani Hashim and Bani Mutallib may not have been as powerful as before but they would protect Muhammad (pbuh).

The Yathrib Muslims were determined as ever to follow Islam and dedicated their lives and loyalty to the Muhammad (pbuh). They emphasised that they were prepared to sacrifice everything for the prophet (pbuh) and would support him through every situation in the future. They had become Muslims for one reason than it was the truth and they would stand for the truth in all situations. They would support and obey the noble messenger Muhammad (pbuh).

Then Prophet (pbuh) explained to them what was required from the Muslims - dedication to Islam and its teaching - and then they all made the oath or pledge. This was known as 'The Second Aqabah pledge'. After they had taken the oath, the Prophet (pbuh) asked the Yathrib Muslims to appoint twelve people from their tribes to represent them. They nominated twelve people who took a second oath for this new responsibility. After this they all parted company.

However, the word got out very quickly that a meeting had taken place and the Makkans were quite angry at these developments. The Makkans gathered their forces and visited the Yathrib tribes accusing them of supporting the Prophet (pbuh) and planning to fight against the Makkans. The Yathrib non-Muslims were also shocked at these accusations and denied that anything had happened between them and the Prophet (pbuh). The Muslims remained quiet as the two sides argued.

The Makkans seemed to reluctantly accept that nothing had happened and the Hajj continued with all the tribes leaving Makkah and returning to their own territories. The Yathrib tribes had also left Makkah as the Makkans began to piece together the events from their various sources. As soon as they figured out what had happened they got together and again went after the Yathrib tribes. They wanted to confront them but they were too late as the Yathrib tribes were too far away on their return journey.

The Makkans began to appreciate the tricky situation they were in. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had friends and supporters many miles away in Yathrib who could be potential enemies in the future. They were angry that they were not able to intercede quicker and to sort things out before they had supported the Prophet (pbuh). They directed their hostilities and anger towards the Muslims but the vital events had already taken place.

The command was given to the Muslims to perform the Hijra from Makkah and soon the Muslims began to migrate to Yathrib in small groups, leaving behind their homes and belongings. They were making this migration with its great sacrifices for the sake of their deen. They sacrificed everything they had carrying a few essential belongings on the back of their camels. The Makkans tried their best to halt the Muslims from leaving but the majority of them left without incident.

Muslims that were caught were imprisoned in their homes. Often their own family members did this to prevent them from escaping. The Muslims that got away would often leave their home and wealth behind. Suhaib bin Sinan was one such individual who was a wealthy merchant. When the Makkans found out that he wanted to leave Makkah they confronted him saying that he came as a worthless beggar and Makkah had made him wealthy. They told him that he couldn't leave Makkah. Suhaib gave them his wealth and property in Makkah, leaving empty handed for Yathrib.

The Prophet (pbuh) remained behind with a few of his followers that included Abu

Bakr and Ali. The Makkans were keeping a close eye on the Prophet (pbuh) and watching his every move. They were determined not to let him leave Makkah. The prophet (pbuh) was also waiting for the command from Allah for him to leave Makkah. He had asked Abu Bakr to remain behind so that they could travel together when the command came.

However, as the Prophet (pbuh) was waiting for the command, the Makkans were in an emergency meeting with the heads of all the tribes attending. They were discussing the best way to deal with the new developments and at possible solution to their predicament. They discussed many possibilities but Abu Jahl had the most treacherous plan. He suggested that they should murder the Prophet (pbuh) in his own home before he had a chance to leave for Yathrib!

As the meeting progressed, they discussed the fighting that would result in Makkah as the Bani Hashim and Bani Mutallib sought vengeance for the death of Muhammad (pbuh). They would attack the tribe who had killed the Prophet (pbuh) resulting in the death of many people. The Makkans wanted to avoid this bloodshed.

It was suggested that one member of every tribe should get together and simultaneously kill the Prophet (pbuh) so that the Bani Hashim and Bani Mutallib couldn't attack just anyone. The tribes would then offer them blood money for the death of the Prophet (pbuh). This would avoid any fighting in Makkah and also solve their problem. The Makkan agreed to this plan.

The plan was set and the main objective was to kill the Prophet (pbuh) before he performed the Hijra. They would murder him before he left their city in his own home. They assembled a group of people to perform this murder and they immediately decided to put their plan in progress.

What would happen to the Prophet (pbuh)? How could he escape from this evil plan? How would he get to Yathrib with the Makkans watching his every move? When would the command come from Allah to migrate?

THE JOURNEY TO YATHRIB

The Makkans were never going to allow Muhammad (pbuh) to leave Makkah. In fact, in their meeting they had planned an evil plot to murder Muhammad (pbuh). They selected one person from each tribe to carry out this crime. They wanted to spread the blame of this murder to all the tribes in Makkah to prevent bloodshed.

Whilst the Makkans were planning their crime, Allah commanded the prophet (pbuh) to make the Hijra to Yathrib. Muhammad immediately went to the house of Abu Bakr and they planned the details of the Hijra. They decided to travel together during this long journey to Yathrib.

That night, the Makkans were prowling the streets around the Prophet's house. A number of them kept guard close to the house, occasionally peering through the cracks in the door. They wanted to make sure they would capture the Prophet (pbuh) before he could escape from their evil grasp. They were hell-bent on killing our beloved Prophet (pbuh) so they were well armed with their knives and swords.

As it so happened, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had asked Ali, his beloved nephew and Sahabih, to sleep in his bed that night. The Makkans would assume Muhammad (pbuh) was still sleeping. He had assured Ali that he would be free from harm. Therefore, Ali slept in the Prophet's (pbuh) place that night, with the green cloak covering his body.

The prophet (pbuh) took a hand full of dust and blew the dust in the direction of the waiting assassins. He recited some words of the Qu'ran and walked passed them. They were unable to see him as he walked past their very eyes. Therefore, Muhammad (pbuh) was able to leave his house in complete safety whilst the Makkans were still waiting outside for him.

The Prophet (pbuh) then headed towards Abu Bakr's house, they got some things for the journey and then left Makkah for Yathrib. They also had the company of Abu Bakr's daughter, asma, with them for the first part of their journey. They did not head directly for Yathrib but went in the opposite direction towards mount Thawr, in the south. They knew the Makkans would come after them when they discover Muhammad (pbuh) had escaped from them.

As they approached Mount Thawr, Asma left their company and both Abu Bakr and Muhammad (pbuh) proceeded up the mountain. They headed for a cave where they would hide in safety for three days. **Abu Bakr went into the cave first** to clean it out and to fill any holes that may contain dangerous creatures. He used cloth from his clothes to block the holes. As the two travellers entered the cave, they began to rest.

In Makkah, the word got out that the Prophet (pbuh) had left Makkah so the

Makkans barged into the house of Muhammad (pbuh). They were surprised to find Ali sleeping in the Prophet's bed so they beat him up. They had planned to kill the prophet Muhammad (pbuh) when he woke up in the morning so had watched the house all night.

They took Ali to the Ka'bah where they beat him again, trying in despair to get information out of him about the prophet's whereabouts. They called an emergency meeting of all the prominent Makkans. During this meeting, they put a large reward of 100 camels for anyone who could bring them Muhammad, dead or alive. In case Abu Bakr and Muhammad were still hiding elsewhere in Makkah, they posted guards at all the exits leading out of Makkah.

All the people in Makkah heard the announcement and many of them wanted to claim this reward. Groups of people left Makkah in search of the two companions. Many of the Arabs in the surrounding areas also headed out in search of Muhammad (pbuh) and Abu Bakr. In the meantime, they were safe in the cave in mount Thawr.

Amir bin Fuhairah was a shepherd who was a close friend of Abu Bakr. In fact, he had been a slave who Abu Bakr had purchased and set free. Amir herded his sheep all the way up to mount Thawr so the tracks they had left in the sand had been covered by the goat tracks. This meant that it was very difficult to find out the direction Muhammad (pbuh) and Abu Bakr had taken.

As the prophet (pbuh) rested with his head on Abu Bakr's lap, Abu Bakr noticed one of the small holes he hadn't plugged yet. Abu Bakr did not want to disturb the prophet (pbuh) so he stuck his toe into the entrance of the hole, preventing anything coming into the cave. Suddenly, a poisonous creature bit Abu Bakr's toe causing him much pain. Abu Bakr tried his best not to disturb the prophet (pbuh) who was resting after their tiring journey.

Abu Bakr was suffering with the pain getting worse. A bead of sweat fell off Abu Bakr's forehead onto Muhammad (pbuh). The prophet (pbuh) woke up and noticed the pain Abu Bakr was in. He made a dua and put some saliva on the wound causing it to heal immediately. Then the two companions remained inside the small cave.

The Arabs were looking everywhere for these two travellers. They searched all the normal routes leading out of Makkah and also the less common routes. Suddenly, a

group of bounty hunters were heard coming towards the cave. Their voices became louder as they approached the entrance. They were near the entrance of the cave when Abu Bakr expressed his concern to the Prophet (pbuh). The prophet (pbuh) simply replied, "What do you think of those two with whom the third is Allah."

The Bounty Hunters saw that there was an undisturbed spiders web over the front of the cave. They had been ready to go in and explore the cave but now reconsidered. They muttered amongst themselves and decided that there was no one inside. They then walked away without exploring the cave. This was a first close encounter but Allah had saved them from harm again.

During their short stay there, Abdullah the son of Abu Bakr would come to the cave with some food and spend the night with them. Amir bin Fuhairah also came with some of the goats. He would bring them milk to drink.

After the three days were over, the search for the two companions had subsided quite a lot. Just as they had planned, they decided to make the trip to Yathrib. Their guide was Abdullah bin Uraiqit, who was also a trusted friend of Abu Bakr. He took them through the least common routes, near the Red Sea towards Yathrib.

For the journey, Abdullah had brought two camels with him which belonged to Abu Bakr. Abu Bakr had offered Muhammad (pbuh) the faster of the two camels. The prophet (pbuh) refused this gift but said that he would buy the camel of Abu Bakr. They fixed the price and the prophet Muhammad (pbuh) mounted the camel. They set off on their long and arduous journey to Yathrib through the deserts of Arabia.

There were many incidents that took place on this journey until they finally reached their destination. One of the closest was when they were tracked down by one of the Arabs, Suraqah bin Malik, who was attracted by the big reward.

Suraqah was sitting in a company of his tribesmen. He listened to them talking about three travellers moving towards Yathrib on some unused route. Suraqah assured them that they were some people he knew. He assured them that he had met that small group a few days earlier. Deep inside he hoped those traveller were Muhammad (pbuh) and Abu Bakr. He had the intention of catching up with them and claim this reward.

After a short while, Suraqah set off towards the group, with his horse galloping at

full pace making up lost ground. As he got closer, his horse stumbled causing him to fall onto the ground. Suraqah consulted his arrows, which advised him not to continue. However, Suraqah continued moving towards the small group of travellers. Again he fell off the horse as its front legs sank into the sand. Suraqah was startled but again he continued.

From this, he realised that this was no normal group of people and that Muhammad was indeed someone special. He decided to talk to Muhammad (pbuh) and also requested for his protection. After one of the companions wrote this down. Suraqah left their company knowing that he had met a prophet of Allah. He also felt that Muhammad (pbuh) would surely conquer all Arabia.

There were many other incidents that go beyond the scope of these lessons. It is worth studying this in greater detail as personal study. It will be of immense benefit and interest to the reader, inshallah.

The Muslims in Yathrib had waited eagerly for their beloved Prophet (pbuh) to arrive for quite a few days now. Every morning they would come to one of the hillocks and look far into the desert for any sign of travellers coming towards Yathrib. When the sun became extremely hot, the Muslims would leave and return to their houses.

One of the Jews noticed a small group of people, wearing white clothes, coming in their direction. They assumed them to be Muhammad (pbuh) and his companions. The Muslims had already left so he shouted aloud, "Your Prophet (pbuh) is coming!" and the Muslims rushed out to meet him. There was great joy and much celebration and excitement. Muhammad (pbuh) and Abu Bakr had finally arrived in Quba, which was their main stop before going to Yathrib.

The Muslims in Yathrib were by no means wealthy and how would the society absorb such a large number of extra Muslims? Muhammad (pbuh) and the Muslims may have escaped from the grasp of the Makkans but even now the Makkans were annoyed. They were thinking about getting revenge and finishing things off, once and for all! How long would it be before the Makkans and their allies would cause trouble in Yathrib?

Source: Musalla.org