MUHAMMAD
AND
THE JEWS
A RE-EXAMINATION

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VIKAS PUBLISHING HOUSE PVT LTD
New Delhi Bombay Bangalore Calcutta Kanpur
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"ABDUL "AZIZ
California Trinidad

To those who believe
And do deeds of righteousness
Hath Allâh promised forgiveness
And a great reward.

The Qur'ân, V, 9.
CONTENTS

Acknowledgements viii

Preface ix

PROLOGUE 1

INTRODUCTION 2

I. THE JEWS OF ARABIA ON THE EVE OF THE HIJRAH 25

II. THE PEOPLE OF THE SAHIFAH 37

III. THE JEWISH SUPPORT TO THE MEDINAN OPPOSITION 51

IV. THE FAILURE OF THE CONFEDERACY 67

V. THE LAST ENCOUNTER 95

VI. THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE CONFLICT 103

EPILOGUE 126

Bibliography 127

Index 135

MAPS

1. MEDINA IN THE FIRST YEAR OF THE HIJRAH 31

2. MEDINA AT THE TIME OF THE BATTLE OF THE AHZAB 69

3. KHAYBAR AND THE POSITION OF THE HOSTILE TRIBES 98
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to the following publishers for permission to quote from the books listed:


I am also grateful to the Editors of *Muslim World, Islamic Culture, International Social Science Journal* (Unesco) and *Bulletin of John Reynolds Library* for permission to quote from their journals.

The prologue has been taken from Bernard Lewis' *History Remembered, Recovered and Invented*, pp 54-55 and the Epilogue from Ellis Rivkin's *The Shaping of the Jewish History*, pp 106-107 and 118-119. The opening quotations of the various chapters have been taken from the following books: Chapter I, Sol Wittmayer Baron's *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, Vol. III p. 65; Chapter II, F. E. Peter's *Allah's Commonwealth*, p. 63, Chapter III and V. Maxime Rodinson's *Mohammed*, p. 160 and p. 214; Chapter IV, Kitson Clarke's *The Critical Historian*, p. 51 and Chapter VI, Arnold J. Toynbee's *Greek Historical Thought*, p. 103.
PREFACE

Intergroup relations, specially when religion is also involved, are full of conflict and suffering. Martyrology feeds the myth, and prejudice adds bitterness to the legend. Political expediency and biased scholarship invest the legend with the status of history. The account of Muhammad's relations with the Jews of the Hijaz is one of such legends. I have analysed this chapter of early Muslim history which has been uncritically accepted both by Muslim and non-Muslim historians. If this re-examination succeeds in raising valid doubts about the evidence on which the account is based, the attempt was worth making.

Of the many friends who have helped me at various stages of the progress of this study I wish to thank, in particular, Professors Bernard Lewis, Nicola Ziadeh and Husain Mohammad Jafri. Prof. Nicola Ziadeh helped me to formulate my ideas when the book was little more than a conversation piece. Without his encouragement this book would have never materialised. Prof. Husain Mohammad Jafri subjected each chapter of the first draft to detailed criticism. Prof. Bernard Lewis went over the manuscript word by word and gave practical and helpful suggestions which have influenced almost every chapter of this book. I consider myself most fortunate to have been alerted by him to the many pitfalls which a book such as this is bound to encounter. The book has greatly benefited from his penetrating comments and his advice on the value of Muslim and Jewish sources. My debt to these friends who have been so generous with their time and advice is immeasurable. None of them, however, is responsible for the views and opinions expressed in this book. In fact they hold opposite views on several points raised in this book. My only consolation is that in most of the cases their criticism was not concurrent, wherever it was I bowed to their cumulative judgment. All errors are sadly mine.

Many thanks are due to Dr. M. A. Aziz, the Trustee of Abdul Aziz Trust (Trinidad) and Mr. Mahmud D. Aziz, the Consul-General of Trinidad and Tobago in New York, who provided invaluable help in the final stages of this work.
I should not wish this book to go out without an expression of gratitude to Professor Arthur Delbridge of Macquarie University, Australia, for his help in reading and correcting the manuscript of this work.

I am indebted to my daughter, Sarah, for her editorial assistance. She helped me with references, notes and specially German and Hebrew texts. Her criticisms removed ambiguities of language and argument. Finally I have to thank Prof. Lois A. Giffen, who has spent much time—which she could ill afford—in first pointing out discrepancies in the manuscript and then correcting the proofs of the book.

I am grateful to Prof. John S. Badeau and Prof. Howard Wriggins who provided me with an opportunity of working in the pleasant, sometimes provocative, but always sympathetic environment of Columbia University.

BARAKAT AHMAD

New York
May 1975
PROLOGUE

The Historian does not set out to prove a thesis, or select material to establish some point, but follows the evidence where it leads. No human being is free from human failings, among them loyalties and prejudices which may color his perception and presentation of history. The essence of the critical scholarly historian is that he is aware of this fact, and instead of indulging his prejudices seeks to identify and correct them.

The recoverers of history begin of course with what is remembered and transmitted. Unlike their predecessors, however, they are not content merely to repeat and pass on the memories of the past. They seek rather to fill its gaps and correct its errors, and their goals are accuracy and understanding. A frequent result, and sometimes perhaps even a purpose of their efforts, is that by analyzing the past they kill it. The minute and critical examination of treasured memories may reveal them to be false and misleading. Once this exposure becomes generally known, that part of the past loses its power. The scholarly recoverers of the past may therefore exercise a powerful destructive influence. In compensation, they can bring much that is new and enrich the collective memory as well as cleansing it.

BERNARD LEWIS
INTRODUCTION

Historians, commentators of the Qurʾān and eminent transmitters have committed frequent errors in reporting stories and events. They accepted them as they were transmitted, without regard for their value. They did not check them with the principles underlying such historical situations, nor did they compare them with similar material. They neither measured them with the yardstick of philosophy, with the help of knowledge of the nature of things, nor with the help of speculation and historical insight. Therefore, they strayed from the truth and found themselves lost in the desert of untenable assumptions and errors.

— IBN KHALDŪN

In 1833 the Rabbi at Wiesbaden, Abraham Geiger wrote a prize essay *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen?* Rudolf Leszynsky, who also wrote a book on a related subject, called Geiger’s essay “epochachender Schrift” (epoch-making writing). Since then several books and articles dealing with various aspects of the Muslim-Jewish relations have been written. The latest is, probably, Goitein’s book *Jews and Arabs.* For Western scholars the origin of Islam, and specially of the Qurʾān, has always been a fascinating subject. “Who instructed the Prophet, who were these teachers?” After observing that “a somewhat uneven literature has grown up around the question,” Goitein concludes that it seems

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1 Geiger’s book was translated into English by F.M. Young and printed in India in 1896 under the title *Judaism and Islam.* Ktav Publishing House, New York, republished the translation in 1970.
2 *Die Juden in Arabien zur Zeit Mohammeds* (Berlin, 1910).
4 *Ibid.,*
5 *Ibid.,*
reasonable to assume that in his early years Muhammad had close contact with Jews, who were not very different from those portrayed in the Talmudic literature. Consequently the beliefs of the Apostle's Jewish neighbours and the nature of his contact with them had a direct bearing on the substance of what he borrowed from Judaism. Western scholarship is, however, mainly confined to these factors. Its research work has helped us in understanding the Apostle's relations with the Jews of the Hijâz and specially those of Yathrib. But some of the reports on which this research depends have not been critically examined. Scholars have also not paid sufficient attention to the socio-political aspects of intergroup relations.

Rabbi Geiger, whose book is “still valuable” had both the advantage and disadvantage of working without the vast Arabic literature the modern orientalist has at his disposal. But Al-Mukhtâşar fî Taʾrîkh al-Bashar of Abū al-Fidāʾ(672/1273-732/1331) was available to him through J. Gagnier, De vita Mohammedis (Oxford, 1723), J. J. Reiske and J. G. Chr. Adler's Annales Moslemici (Leipzig, 1754 and Copenhagen, 1789-94) and Historia Anteislamica. He was also acquainted with al-Bayḍâwî’s commentary on the Qurʾân and the “excellent unpublished commentary by Elpherar which begins with the 7th Surah”. He dealt with his subject fairly extensively. From his point of view the nature of the Apostle’s relationship with the Jews of Yathrib was not pertinent. He made a passing reference to the Banū Qaynuqâʾ, the Banū al-Naḍîr and also to the Jews of Khaybar, but did not mention the Banū Qurayzah. He must have known about them not only through Abū al-Fidāʾ but also through the commentary on the Qurʾân. If he had thought it necessary he had the material at hand to deal with the struggle “forced on the Jews and Muḥammad”, which according to Goitein, “has left its mark on the Holy Book of Islam.”

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1 S. D. Goitein, Jews and Arabs, p. 56.
2 Ibid., p. 237.
3 Such works as Ibn Hishâm’s Sirâh al-Wâqidî’s Maghâzi, and Ibn Sa’d’s Taḥâqât were neither published by them nor probably known to him.
4 It is a universal history covering the pre-Islamic period and Muslim history down to 729/1329.
5 Geiger, p. VII Yahya b. Ziyâd b. Abū Allâh b. Manṣūr (144/761-207/822) known as al-Farrâʾ wrote a commentary on the Qurʾân, Maṭâni al-Qurʾân, which is still in manuscript form.
6 Goitein, p. 61.
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

Between Geiger and Leszynsky, while Muir\(^1\), Grimme\(^2\), Caetani\(^3\), Graetz\(^4\) and others dealt with the subject within the larger context of their researches, Wensinck wrote a doctoral thesis on the Apostle and the Jews of Medina.\(^5\) Since Leszynsky, Lammens\(^6\), Wolfenson,\(^7\) Horovitz\(^8\), Torrey\(^9\), Hirschberg\(^10\), Baron\(^11\) and Goitein have dealt with the same material.

Montgomery Watt in his *Muhammad at Medina*\(^12\) also devoted a whole chapter to the Jews of Yathrib. No Muslim, as far as I know, has given the subject the importance of an independent study and research. Most of the non-Muslim scholarship is tied down to the main theme of the Jewish influence on Islam, the Apostle's disappointment at his rejection by the Jews and the subsequent expulsion and 'extermination' of the Jews. The subject has not been dealt with in its proper socio-political context.

Some of the familiar intellectual attitudes towards non-Muslims, crystallized into patterns of thought, have been repeated for centuries and worn smooth by generations of Muslim jurists and historians. The theme of prejudice and discrimination against *ahl al-dhimma*, mainly based on the works of Muslim jurists, invariably serves as an introduction to the history of Muslim-Jewish relations. The approach, unfortunately, too often sacrifices history to jurisprudence and ignores historical facts in favour of legend which, in the course of time acquired theological colouring.

\(^2\) H. Grimme, *Mohammed* (Münster, 1892-1895).
\(^3\) Leone Caetani, *Ambali dell' Islam* (Milan, 1905 ff).
\(^7\) Israel Wolfenson, *Ta'rikh al-Yahûd fi Bilād al- específ Arab* (Cairo, 1927).
\(^10\) Joachim Wilhelm (Haim Zeev) Hirschberg, *Israel in Arabia* (Tel Aviv, 1946), in Hebrew.
\(^12\) (Oxford, 1962, first published in 1956).
INTRODUCTION

From the inadequate material at our disposal it is not easy to reconstruct the past as it happened. Muslim historians were not interested in the fate of the Jews, and the Jews themselves have not left any record of their first encounter with Islam. Though the available material is, indeed, meagre, fragmentary and at times contradictory, nevertheless there is enough ground to call for a critical re-examination of these accounts.

The study is essentially based on the following sources:

1. The Qur'ān;
2. *Kitāb Strat Rasūl Allāh*,1 Ibn Hishām's recension of the original work of Ibn Iṣḥāq (d.151/768);
3. *Al-Jāmi` al-Ṣahih*2 compiled by Imām al-Bukhārī (d. 256/869);
4. *Al-Ṣaḥīḥ*3 of Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 261/874).

Throughout this study I have, of course, examined *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*4 of al-Wāqīdī (d. 207/822) and *Kitāb al-Ṭabarānī*5 of Ibn Sa`d (d. 230/845), but the main burden of the argument rests on the four sources given above.

The basic source of the history of early Islam is of course the Qur'ān. It is contemporaneous with the Apostle's life and offers a running commentary on all the important events which took place in his lifetime. But the Qur'ān is not a book of history; history depends on precise chronology, whereas no real idea of the dates or sequence of events can be obtained from it. But it plays a very important role in checking the truth of many an incident which happened during the Apostle’s lifetime.

Muslim compilers of the biographical dictionaries of the Companions of the Apostle, later Muslim historians, Western scholars and modern Muslim historians have written exhaustively in criticism of Ibn Iṣḥāq, al-Wāqīdī and Ibn Sa`d. We shall not cover that ground once again. Historical understanding, however, is the constant rethinking of the past. Historical knowledge is inseparable from personal knowledge, which is very much involved with contemporary problems. “It is thus that, in a sense, all history is contemporary, too”.6

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In other words, whatever past the historian chooses to discover, he does it with the historical consciousness of his time. "There is not a part of history which is objective—the facts—and another part—the historian's interpretation or judgment—which is subjective. Judgment and interpretation are equally inherent in deciding what are facts, which are the relevant ones in a certain context, and how significant they are." Ibn Ishāq, al-Waqidi and Ibn Sa'id, who wrote during the early Abbāsid period, have been closely scrutinised in terms of Shi'ite and Sunnite partisanship, or their bias towards B. Umayyah or B. al-Abbās. Muslim historians and orientalists have been so preoccupied with "the outbreak of the fitna" and the early schism in Islam that they have overlooked the total environment in which the eighth/ninth century strah and maghāzī writers worked. They noted Shi'ite and Sunnite tendencies of their early authors, their Umayyad and Abbāsid bias, and their attitude to the prevailing theological controversies. But the historical consciousness of Ibn Ishāq and others was influenced by several other factors also. As Petersen observes: "The Abbāsid period's political situations might have influenced the historical recorder's changing attitudes to the earliest history of Islam." But these situations did not involve only "the new rulers' settling with their revolutionary past, the coalition with Shi'ism in the combat against the Syrian caliphate". New lands were being conquered, more and more non-Arab and non-Muslims with their distinct cultures, languages and religions were entering the world of Islam. They brought new ideas and new problems. All these new elements had an impact on the thinking of the early authors. From our point of view their attitude to contemporary Jewish life under the Abbāsids is a vital factor in judging the information they impart on the relations of the Jews with the Apostle.

Our earliest and most important source for events which took place in the Apostle's lifetime is Muhammad ibn Ishāq b. Yasār b. Khiyār who was born in Medina in about 85/704 during the last year of 'Abd al-Malik's reign. His grandfather, Yasār, was among those

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3 Petersen, p. 19.
4 ibid., p. 178.
INTRODUCTION

taken prisoner at ʿAyn al-Tamr. He became the slave of Qays b. Makhramah b. al-Muṭṭalib b. ʿAbd Manāf b. Qusayy, and having accepted Islam became his mawla. It was during ʿAbd al-Malik’s reign that Mecca was besieged and the Ka’bah destroyed. But he was also the caliph who consolidated the Arab rule and left a splendid empire. For about thirty years Ibn Ishāq lived in Medina where Imām Mālik and Saʿīd al-Musayyib1 were his contemporaries. He was taught by many teachers who were sons of the ʿjahāb. The great Traditionist al-Zuhri was among his teachers. The man who roused the antagonism of Imām Mālik and the admiration of al-Zuhri was obviously not an ordinary person, and the time in which he lived was not ordinary either. Spain, Kashghar and Multan were conquered while he was still in Medina. He also saw the collapse of the Umayyads and the rise of the Abbasids. He died in Baghdad between 150/767 and 154/770 in the reign of al-Manṣūr. Much has been written about his life, and his work has been evaluated from every point of view.2 Muslim and non-Muslim scholarship has, however, ignored the events which took place in his lifetime and influenced his views regarding the Jews living under Muslim rule. On his arrival in the Abbasid capital Ibn Ishāq must have observed that the Jewish community

which had the appearance of a state, had a peculiar constitution. The Exilarch and the Gaon were of equal rank. The Exilarch’s office was political. He represented Babylonian-Persian Judaism under the Caliphs. He collected the taxes from the various communities, and paid them into the treasury. The Exilarchs, both in bearing and mode of life, were princes. They drove about in a state carriage; they had outriders and a kind of body-guard, and received princely homage...

1 Abū Muhammad Saʿīd b. al-Musayyib (15/636-94/712) was born during the caliphate of ʿUmar. A faqih and mujtahid, he was highly regarded by ʿUmar II. Al-Zuhri, Makhūl and Qatādā considered him one of the greatest scholars.

MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

Now that the Exilarch everywhere met with the respect due a prince, he was installed with a degree of ceremony and pomp... In a large open place, which was lavishly adorned, seats were erected for him and the presidents of the two schools. The Gaon of Sora delivered an address to the future Exilarch, in which he was reminded of the duties of his office... Both officials put their hands upon the head of the nominee and declared amidst the clang of trumpets, "Long live our lord, the Prince of the Exile."\(^1\)

Leon Nemoy has accused Graetz of pro-Muslim bias and said that "Graetz must bear a large share of the blame" for the current illusion that Jewish life under the rule of the Crescent was somehow far easier than it was under the sway of the Cross.\(^2\) What Graetz wrote about the Exilarchate is factually correct and is supported by Margolis and Marx\(^3\), Hirschberg,\(^4\) and Bashan\(^5\). But Graetz wrote his history in 1894 under the shadow of the Dreyfus affair, and Leon Nemoy wrote his words of criticism in 1956, probably on the eve of the Israeli occupation of Gaza and Sinai. It is not the facts which have changed, it is the perspective. Graetz is pre-Herzl (the first Zionist Congress was held in Basel in 1897), Nemoy is post-Israeli. But even Gortein, whose book Nemoy was reviewing, after cautious qualifications admits that under the Abbasids the Resh Galutha occupied a very honoured position as the general representative of the Jewish community. According to a Christian source, he had precedence over the Christian dignitaries at the Caliph's court, but as a rule he had no administrative function within the Muslim state. He was addressed by the Muslims as 'Our Lord, the son of David', and as David is described in the Koran as one of the greatest prophets, naturally his office was surrounded by the halo of sanctity...

Of far greater importance for the Jews in Islamic countries than the office of the Resh Galutha was another ecumenical dignity, that of the Gaon, which became indeed so prominent in Jewish life during the first five centuries of Islam that these are labelled in Jewish history as 'the Gaonic Period'. Gaon was the title borne by the heads of the two great Jewish academies of Babylonia-Iraq (originally only one

\(^1\) Graetz, Vol. III, pp. 93-94.
INTRODUCTION

of the two) who were regarded by Jews all over the world as the highest authority in all religious matters, which to be sure, also included at that time civil law.¹

While Ibn Isḥaq was still in Medina, a Syrian, Serene (Serenus)² by name claimed to be the Messiah and held out the promise of a miraculous restoration of Palestine. He set himself up not only as a prophet of the Jews but also as a prophet of the Muslims. He abolished the dietary laws, allowed marriage without a marriage contract and “inscribed the release from Talmudical Ordinances” upon his banner.³ His fame spread as far as Spain, which was now under Muslim rule, and “the Jews of that country resolved to abandon their property and to place themselves under the leadership of the pseudo-Messiah”.⁴ He was finally captured and brought before Yazid II (101/720-105/725), who handed him into the hands of Jews. He was sentenced to death by a Jewish-Muslim court.⁵

Within less than a quarter of a century Abū Muslim hoisted the black flag of revolt at Merv, and Abū al-⁶Abbās, after eliminating the Umayyads, proclaimed himself Caliph in 132/749. His successor al-Manṣūr treacherously murdered Abū Muslim in 137/755. Iran and specially Khurasan, which was loyal to Abū Muslim, once more became a centre of storms and revolutions. New uprisings followed. Sinbadh (140/757)⁶, Ustahs (149/766-151/768)⁷, al-Muqanna (161/777-164/780)⁸ rose to avenge Abū Muslim’s death. All of them were crushed by al-Manṣūr.

It was sometime during this period, but before the Šīrāz was compiled, that a second Jewish Messiah arose in the strong Jewish centre of Isfahan. Ibn ʿĪsa Obadiah⁹ claimed that Palestine was to be

¹ Goitein, pp. 120-121. During the first hundred years of Fatimid rule the Goon, or head of the Jerusalem Academy, occupied a similar position with regard to the Jews of the Fatimid empire. See Goitein, A Mediterranean Society, Vol. II, pp. 5-18, 519-524.
² There seems to be considerable controversy about his name.
³ Graetz, Vol. III, p. 120.
⁴ Ibid., p. 121.
⁵ Margolis and Marx, p. 259.
⁷ Ibid., p. 317.
⁸ Ibid., p. 318.
⁹ The name is variously given. The Encyclopaedia Judaica version has been followed. Hyamson (infra n. 2 on p. 10) gives it as Isaac ben Yaʿqūb Obadiah Abū Ḥasan. Shahristani calls him Isḥaq b. Yaʿqūb (infra n. 1 on p. 10).
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

restored not by a miracle but by force. He called the Jews to his standard and some ten thousand Jews collected under his leadership hailing him as the Messiah.\(^1\) His uprising was well-timed, since the Abbasid Caliphate was still not consolidated. "The affairs of the Khalifate were at that period in a chaotic condition, and a military movement, such as Isaac's soon became, had good chances of success".\(^2\) Ibn Ḥṣāq had planned to join forces with a Persian rebel chief against the Caliph, but al-Manṣūr defeated him at Rayy, where he fell in battle.\(^3\)

"These messianic uprisings", Grayzel observes, "were based on a strange mixture of ideas. The desire of a fairly large number of Jews to throw off the yoke of their new Mohammedan masters was bound up, somehow, with rebelliousness against Jewish authority."\(^4\)

It is difficult to say how the author of the Strah reacted to these events. As a confident member of the dominant elite he could ignore the revolts, smugly look at Jewish prosperity and freedom under Islam and deal with the history of the Jews in the Hijāz during the life of the Apostle with detachment. Or did the impact of the messianic movements juxtaposed with the pomp and show of the Exilarch give him an impression of Jewish infidelity and ungratefulness? Were his reporters (who were the sons of converted Jews)\(^5\) aware of these events, nervous and outdoing the Arab Muslims in their loyalty by embellishing their reports about the Jews of Medina? One is tempted to speculate—and not without reason—that the B. Qaynuqā, the B. al-Naṣır and above all the B. Qurayzh were not so much part of the maghāz of the Apostle as much as a warning to the Jews of the Abbasid empire: "one more Ibn Ḥṣāq and you will be exterminated like the B. Qurayzah". It is idle to ask whether Ibn Ḥṣāq was not hearing the echoes of the trumpets in the installation of the Exilarch retro-

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\(^3\) In addition to Shahrestānī and Maimonides see Graetz, Vol. III, p. 124-5, and Margolis and Marx, p. 259.


\(^5\) Ibn Ḥajar Al-Ḥasqānī, Taḥdīḥ al-Taḥdīḥ, IX, p. 45.
INTRODUCTION

spectively when the camel caravan of the unlucky B. al-Naḍīr wound its way from Medina to Khaybar. It was on such an occasion when Nöldeke simply remarked: "It may have been so; but maybe it was entirely different."¹

But one thing is certain: Ibn Isḥāq’s attitude, as we shall see later in our examination of his reports, is consistently tilted against the Jews of the Ḥijāz.

Ibn Isḥāq has been commended by the early Muslim rijāl specialists and modern scholars—Muslim and non-Muslim. Though "as is usual in the literature of ḍjarh wa taʿdīl, we find the early Muslim critics expressing diametrically opposed judgments on Ibn Isḥāq",² the majority holds him in high regard. Al-Zuhri described him as "the most knowledgeable of men in maghāzi"³ and ʿĀṣim b. ʿUmar b. Qatādah said that "knowledge will remain amongst us as long as Ibn Isḥāq lives".⁴ Shuʿb b. al-Ḥajjāj (85/704-160/776) described him the amṭr of Traditionists because of his memory.⁵ Sufyān b. ʿUyaynah (107/725-198/813) said he did not know anyone who accused (yattahim) Ibn Isḥāq (in Ḥadīth).⁶ Imām Shāfiʿi said, "he who wants to study the maghāzi in depth should consult Ibn Isḥāq".⁷ Yaḥya b. Maʿīn and Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal considered him trustworthy.⁸ Mālik b. Anas, however, called him a "dajjāl (charlatan) who belongs to the dajjājilah".⁹ According to various versions, Hīshām b. ʿUrwa also did not consider Ibn Isḥāq worthy of credence.¹⁰ The

¹ Quoted by Franz Rosenthal in his introduction to Charles Cutler Torrey, The Jewish Foundation of Islam, p. 7.
³ Ibn ʿṢayyid al-Nās, ʿUyān al-Āthar fī Funūn al-Maghāzi wa al-Shamālī wa al-Siyar (Cairo, 1356), Vol. I, p. 8. Though a late writer (d. 734/1334), Ibn ʿṢayyid al-Nās collected all the available references to Ibn Isḥāq, both favourable and unfavourable and then tried to defend him against his critics. In his introduction to ʿUyān (pp. 5-21) Ibn ʿṢayyid al-Nās has provided the most comprehensive summary of Muslim opinion of Ibn Isḥāq.
⁴ ibid., p. 9; Tadhkīb, Vol. IX, p. 44.
⁹ Yaḥyā, Maʿṣūm al-Udābāʾ, (Cairo, 1935-38), II, p. 400.
¹⁰ See for fuller discussion, Joseph Horovitz, "The Earliest Biographies of the Prophet and their Authors", Islamic Culture, April 1928, pp. 169-80; Hamidullah (1967).
most pertinent criticism, from our point of view, is Ibn Ishāq’s method of “tracing the ghazawāt of the Prophet by means of the sons of the Jews who had become Muslims and remembered the story of Khaybar and other matters.”¹ Dealing with this charge and the quarrel between Ibn Ishāq and the great Traditionist Mālik b. Anas, Ibn Sayyid al-Nās concludes that both of them were finally reconciled and when Ibn Ishāq left Medina for Iraq Mālik gave him fifty dinars and half of his date crop of the year as a gift. Mālik did not intend to malign him as a Traditionist but he did question his acceptance of the reports of Khaybar, Qurayzah and al-Naḍir and such other unattested events from the Jewish converts (from their fathers). Ibn Ishāq followed these reports in his maghāzi without necessarily ascertaining the true facts whereas Mālik himself did not report except from reliable men.²

As we shall see while examining the various reports of Ibn Ishāq, the charge does not seem to be without substance. While converts from one religion to another are not necessarily unreliable, a historian should closely scrutinize reports emanating from them. The very fact of their conversion means that they considered the attitude, the policy and the action of their erstwhile co-religionists objectionable, if they were sincere in their conversion; it was expedient to disassociate themselves from their action, if the conversion was forced. In any case their tendency in remembering and reproducing the events of their past or the past of their ancestors directly involved in conflicts with their new co-religionist will be subconsciously—and sometimes deliberately—prejudicial to the task of ascertaining true facts. One might, however, ask in parenthesis if Mālik b. Anas’s charge was fair. It shows a latter-day prejudice against the Jewish converts. Why should they be less reliable than the sons of the pagan Arab converts? Would the Muslim sons of those Meccan pagans who fought the Apostle not distort the role of their ancestors in the same manner as the sons of the Jewish converts, to gain acceptability? Their reports need as much verification as those of the Jewish converts.

Referring to Ibn Ishāq’s methodology of reporting the events in Medina Horovitz observes:

Here the isnād is the rule, and the authorities of Ibn Ishāq are his Medina teachers, above all al-Zuhri, 퓲Asim ibn 二十四Umar and 二十四Abdullāh ibn Abi Bakr, to whom also he is already indebted for the chronological scaffolding… For the presentation of

¹ Tohdhib, Vol IX, p. 45.
INTRODUCTION

the actual Maghāzi, Ibn Ishāq employs a fixed scheme; he sends a brief comprehensive statement of contents on in front, follows it up with a collective account composed of the statements of his weightiest teachers and completes this principal account by individual reports gathered by him from other sources.1

Horovitz' observations are mainly valid as far as Ibn Ishāq's general narrative is concerned. His account of the four Jewish maghāzi, however, is at variance with his general scheme. 2Âšîm b. Úmar b. Qatādah is the main informant of the important events in the affair of the B. Qaynuqā and no Jewish reporter is involved. The deportation of the B. al-Naḍīr also follows the general pattern. The main story begins with Yazīd b. Rumān reporting it direct to Ibn Ishāq.

With the B. Qurayyah the pattern seems to break down. Most of the main events, as we shall see, are not preceded by isnāds. Several reliable reporters like al-Zuhri and Qatâdah appear during the narrative, but a closer examination discloses that they are reporting minor details, not the major events. The account of the expedition to the Khaybar presents the same mixture of reports, some based on isnāds, others without isnāds. Again one comes across important names preceding some reports, but most of them pertain to either juristic matters or minor details.

It might perhaps be safe to say that generally speaking Ibn Ishāq does not give isnāds on crucial matters concerning the B. Qurayyah or the Jews of Khaybar. Writing on Ibn Ishāq's use of the isnād Robson agrees with the observation of Horovitz quoted above and goes on to say:

He commonly begins his treatment of some incident by a general statement of what happened without any authority being quoted but this is merely his method of introducing the subject, for he usually goes on to give isnāds of various kinds for details of the incident, or to present different statements of what happened.3

Robson further observes:

... Ibn Ishāq is quite open about his methods. He does not claim that all the information he gives is full of authority, nor does he try to trace everything back to the Prophet. We may therefore be inclined to trust him when he does quote direct authorities and when he gives connected isnāds.4

When Ibn Ishāq does not give an isnād he is either dealing with material

1 Horovitz, IC (1928), p. 176.
3 Ibid., p. 457.
which was “so well known and well authenticated that it was unnecessary to produce the evidence of an isnād”\(^1\) or is drawing upon “a common corpus of qāṣṣ and traditional material, which they (ṣirah-maghāzī writers) arranged according to their own concepts and to which they added their own researches.”\(^2\) It would be reasonable therefore, to assume that the lack of an isnād for some of the major events concerning the B. Qurayzah and most of the important events of Khaybar indicates that Ibn Iṣḥaq drew his material from the ‘common corpus of qāṣṣ’. We may revert here to Imām Mālik’s charge that Ibn Iṣḥaq traced the ghazawāt of the Apostle by means of the sons of the converted Jews who remembered the stories of the B. al-Naqlīr, the B. Qurayzah and Khaybar. An examination of Ibn Iṣḥaq’s isnāds shows that out of three hundred and four isnāds, which he used in the Sīrah there are only nine in which a Jewish convert or a Jew is involved.\(^3\) The names of the Jewish reporters and the subjects of their reports are given below: \(^4\)

1. Abū Mālik b. Thaʿlabah b. Abū Mālik al-Quraẓī,
   The Ḥimyarites accepted Judaism after the rabbis with their sacred books hanging from their necks walked through fire without any harm to them; \(^5\)

2. Muḥammad b. Kaʻb al-Quraẓī,
   i) Conversion of the people of Najrān to Christianity by ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Thāmir; \(^6\)
   ii) ʿUtba b. Rabīʾah’s proposal to the Apostle offering him money, honour etc. if he stopped insulting their gods; \(^7\)
   iii) The Apostle badly treated by the Thaqīf in Ṭāʾif; \(^8\)


\(^3\) The isnād count is based on Isnād Index given in Ibn Hishām, *Kitāb Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, ed. by Dr. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (2 Vols. Gottingen, 1860), pp. 58-69. This number does not include Ibn Hishām’s isnād.

\(^4\) I have tried to follow as closely as possible the order in which a Jewish reporter appears in the Sīrah.

\(^5\) Ibn Hishām, p. 17.


\(^7\) *Ibid.*, pp. 185-87.

INTRODUCTION

iv) The Apostle’s departure from his house in Mecca on his way to Medina;¹
v) The raid on Al-ʿUshayrah (2/623);²
vi) The occasion of the revelation of the 127th verse of Sūrat al-Anfāl;³
vii) Abū Sufyān’s order to break camp after the Battle of al-Ahzāb;⁴
viii) Abū Dharr’s death;⁵
3. A shaikh of the B. Qurayzah,
The prophecy of a Syrian Jew, Ibn al-Hayyabān, that a prophet would migrate to Medina;⁶
4. The ʿAḥbār of the Jews,
The fulfilment of Ibn al-Hayyabān’s prophecy;⁷
5. One of the family of ʿAbd Allāh b. Salām,
The story of ʿAbd Allāh b. Salām’s conversion to Islam;⁸
6. Ṣafīyā bint Ḥuyayy b. Akhtāb,
Ḥuyayy b. Akhtāb’s determination to oppose the Apostle;⁹
7. One of the B. Qurayzah,
ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿSūriya’s testimony that the Jews knew Muhammad was a prophet sent by God;¹⁰
8. One of Yāmīn’s family,
Yāmīn gave a man money to kill ʿAmr b. Jihāsh, who had attempted to kill the Apostle;¹¹
9. ʿAṭīyah al-Quraẓī,
ʿAṭīyah was not executed with other adults of the B. Qurayzah as he was a lad.¹²

None of the above reports refers to Khaybar and only the last two reports provide information on one minor episode each in the

¹ Ibn Hishām, p. 326.
² Ibid., p. 422.
³ Ibid., pp. 584-85.
⁴ Ibid., pp. 683-84.
⁵ Ibid., p. 901.
⁶ Ibid., pp. 135-36.
⁷ Ibid., p. 136.
⁸ Ibid., pp. 353-54.
⁹ Ibid., pp. 354-55.
¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 394-95.
¹¹ Ibid., pp. 654.
¹² Ibid., p. 692.
ghazawāt of the B. al-Naḍīr and the B. Qurayyāzah. It seems to be obvious that Imām Mālik’s charge was not based on the above reports. A more reasonable explanation is that Imām Mālik had a fuller knowledge of the qāṣṣ material current at the time and was in a position to locate the stories which originated from the sons of the Jewish converts. Ibn Isḥāq seems to have seen no harm in incorporating this material in his Sīrah without verification and without iṣnād. Imām Mālik objected to this procedure. Levi Della Vida’s observation on the subject confirms our view:

The abundance and the variety of material collected by Ibn Isḥāq forced him to enlarge the circle of his authorities and to accept a number of insufficiently supported traditions. He even takes care to give the source, not always particularly clear, of some of his information, especially when, as is often the case, it goes back to Jewish or Christian sources.1

Ibn Isḥāq had no direct knowledge of the events and in view of the self-contradictory nature of the accounts one would have expected that he would either qualify his statements or absolve himself of the responsibility of reporting something of which he either had no direct knowledge or which he thought was of a doubtful nature. In all other doubtful cases he normally uses phrases such as “in what has reached me”2, or “it was mentioned to me”3 or he would simply finish a story by adding that God knows best what happened. Ibn Isḥāq does not show this caution and scrupulousness in his account of the B. Qurayyāzah.

The Umayyads encouraged the collection and preservation of the Traditions, anecdotes and accounts of the maghāzi. Many tābi‘ūn were involved in these efforts; scholars like Mūsā b. ʿUqbah wrote the accounts of maghāzi while a Traditionist like Mālik b. Anas collected the Traditions. But it was Ibn Isḥāq whose Sīrah provided a complete history: pre-Islamic background, pre-Hijrah struggle in Medina, the expansion of Islam after the truces of Hudaibiyah and Khaybar, together with a biography of the Apostle (complete with miracles) which could stand up to any hagiography of a Christian saint. This is not to impute motives or a conscious effort on the part of Ibn Isḥāq to fabricate miracles or to pick and choose from the qāṣṣ material reports emanating from the descendants of the Jewish converts to Islam. There is no reason to disagree with Guillaume’s observation

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2 फरमā balaghani.
3 dhukira li
INTRODUCTION

that Ibn Ishāq’s life of the Apostle “is recorded with honesty and truthfulness and, too, an impartiality which is rare in such writings”.

But a historian is very much part of his time. He cannot isolate himself from the climate of opinion in which he breathes. Men can do only what the norms of their times permit, declared Macaulay. To sum up, the character of Ibn Ishāk in comparison with the authors who preceded him is that of a real historian and in him we have the final fusion of biography of the religious type of the muḥaddithūn with that of the epic-legendary type of the kuttās. It is this original and personal character of the work of Ibn Ishāk, which, while it explains the hostility of the school of traditions, justifies the immense success which it has enjoyed through the centuries, a success which has not only overshadowed similar previous works and some which closely followed him ... but made him a decisive influence on the future development of the Sīra. In addition to Ibn Hishām’s recension, Ibn Ishāk’s biography was reproduced for the most part by al-Ṭabarī in his two great compilations, the Taʾrikh and the Tafsīr and through the intermediary of these two writers it has become the principle source of later historiography. By the time al-Wāqīdī (130/747–207/823) and Ibn Sa’d (168/784–230/845) completed their works both the Abbasid caliphate and the post-Islamic Exilarchate were firmly established. Ibn ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī’s rebellion had been forgotten and forgiven. The Saboras who headed the two leading academies at Sura and Pumbeditha had given themselves the new title of Gaon, “Your Eminence”, and were recognized by the Caliphs as the judicial authority for the Jews within the Muslim Empire. Yehudi ben Naham during his brief term of office (760-764) helped to lay the foundations of what may be described as the invisible Jewish government in exile. The Jews in the Diaspora were governed through the Gaonic Responsa.

Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Wāqīdī was born in Medina and was called al-Wāqīdī after his grandfather al-Wāqīdī, who was a mawla of ʿAbd Allāh b. Buraidah who belonged to a Medinité family. His only surviving work is Kitāb al-Maghāzī (The Book of Expeditions). Within that limited scope he has collected some very useful information about the Medinité life of the Apostle. Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr of Ibn Sa’d, who was al-Wāqīdī’s pupil and secretary, is

1 Guillaume, p. xxiv.
based mostly on his teacher’s work, but it is a compilation of great value. Named *The Great Book of Classes*, it is in fact an extended dictionary or *Who’s Who* containing biographies of the Apostle, his *āshāb* (Companions) and *rābi‘ūn*, the later bearers of Islam, conveniently arranged under classes.

Both of them are chroniclers of events, collectors of anecdotes and repositories of the remembered past, but lack historical consciousness, which Ibn Isḥāq and Ibn Hishām show. We shall, therefore, use them, depending on the reliability of their reports, to check, supplement and evaluate Ibn Isḥāq’s account of the events with which we are concerned.

The *rijāl* critics consider al-Wāqidi unreliable. Imām ʿAḥmad b. Ḥanbal calls him a liar and al-Dhahabi says, “he is no longer cited”. According to Ibn Khallikān, “the Traditions received from him are considered feeble authority, and doubts have been expressed on the subject of his veracity”. On the other hand Western scholarship quotes complimentary opinions on his reliability. Petersen, who has done considerable work on the growth of early Muslim historical writing, however, warns that al-Wāqidi’s Traditional material must “be treated with greater reservation than that of other scholars”.5

Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Saʿd b. Mānī al-Ḵaṣrī al-Ḵāshimi *kātib* of al-Wāqidi was a *mawla* (client) of the B. Ḥāshim, his grandfather being a freedman of Ḥusayn b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUbayd Allāh b. ʿAbbās. Though “as a comparison with the text of Wāqidi’s *Maghāzī* shows, Ibn Saʿd relies above all upon Wāqidi” the *rijāl* critics consider Ibn Saʿd a “trustworthy authority”. As we shall see, however, after providing a comprehensive list of his main transmitters before giving an account of the *maghāzī*, he rarely provides *isnāds* for the individual incidents and events, though there are exceptions such as Badr etc. Therefore, in spite of his general trustworthiness, it is not possible to

5 Petersen, p. 83.
7 Horovitz, (1928), p. 524.
INTRODUCTION

isolate any one of the accounts with which we are concerned and then to identify the source of his information.

With these three works, all written or collected approximately a century and a half or more after the events under study took place, our earliest record of the remembered past of early Islam comes to a close. What was remembered by our informants the original reporters and transmitters, and above all what was recorded by Ibn Ishāq, al-Waqidi and Ibn Sa'īd reflects the importance which they attached to the events as preserved. It is their historical consciousness on which we depend. It is definitely not comparable to our sense of history. Details which might have been of interest to us have been lost for ever, for the early observers of that history were not concerned with them. For example Ibn Ishāq begins his account of the affair of the B. Qaynuqāc with the following words:

The Apostle assembled them in their market and addressed them as follows: 'O Jews, beware lest God bring upon you the vengeance that he brought upon Quraysh and become Muslims ...1

Ibn Ishāq does not tell us why the Apostle assembled them to give such a warning, though he goes on to say that the B.Qaynuqāc were the first of the Jews to break their agreement with the Apostle and go to war between Badr and Uḥud.2 What was that agreement, when was it signed and how did the B. Qaynuqāc break it? There is no information. Almost a hundred years later, Ibn Hishām (d. 218/833) editing the Sirah, noticed that the account lacked some important information. So he added that a Muslim woman was insulted by the B. Qaynuqāc in their market.3 Was that the only reason? Was it an act of war? Did it mean the breach of an agreement? We can only conjecture, reconstruct and try to search for the reasons which led the Apostle to assemble the B. Qaynuqāc and administer them such a warning. For Ibn Ishāq, who never suppresses relevant evidence, this information was not important. If he knew, he did not care to record it; if he did not know, he did not think it was necessary to obtain it. Before giving an account of the battle of Uḥud, Ibn Ishāq records that the Apostle said, 'kill any Jew that falls into your power'. Thereupon Muḥayyishah b. Mas'ūd leapt upon Ibn Sunaynah, a Jewish merchant

1 Ibn Hishām, p. 545.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
with whom they had social and business relations, and killed him.\(^1\) It seems to be a drastic order. Could the Apostle enforce it in the third year of the Hijrah? What was the occasion? And in spite of the language of the order which covered every Jew it seems Ibn Sunaynah was the only unfortunate Jew who fell into Muslim hands. It is obvious that Ibn Ishāq gave this information without context; some important link is missing. For Ibn Ishāq that link was not significant, and for us it is impossible to recover. Ibn Ishāq quotes a conciliatory letter which the Apostle wrote to the Jews of Khaybar\(^2\), but does not tell us who carried the letter, how the messenger transmitting the letter was treated, how the Jews reacted to it, whether they replied, and if they did what their reply was. That information is lost to us.

One may agree with Lord Raglan’s conclusion, which he has drawn after careful study, that “any fact about a person which is not placed on record within a hundred years of his death is lost.”\(^3\) Add to this the fact that “every incident begins to fade as soon as it has occurred”.\(^4\)

Considerable critical work on the authenticity of the Hadith literature has been done by Goldziher\(^5\), Margoliouth,\(^6\) Lammens\(^7\), Robson\(^8\) and Schacht\(^9\). Al-Sahihain, the first two collections of authoritative traditions known as “The Six Genuine Ones”, the Sahih of Muhammad b. Iṣmāʿīl al-Bukhari (194/810-256/870) and the Sahih of Muslim b. al-Ḥajjah (210/816-261/785), though slightly later, “represent for the first time in the literature a more rigorous criticism

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1 Ibn Hishām, p. 553.
9 J. Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford, 1959). A vast literature by Muslim scholars, especially of India and Pakistan, to rebut the criticism of Western scholars, especially that of Schacht, has recently appeared in Urdu. Fuad Sezgin has also done some valuable work. Unfortunately most of these works have not been translated either into Arabic or English.
INTRODUCTION

of the isnād than that customary in the preceding period”.¹ Both of them had their shurūq (conditions) and if a Tradition did not comply with those conditions it was not included in their collection. Robson, discussing degrees of authority in Traditions points out that Muslim scholars like Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Naisābūrī put first on their list those which were given by both Al-Bukhārī and Muslim². This, in fact, is a general view not limited to al-Naisābūrī.

But the criticism of the Hadīth does not apply to the Traditions quoted in this study. Traditions concerning legal and juristic subjects, though they may not always be obvious, have not been used. The Traditions, which might have been fabricated under Umayyad or Abbasid influence are not relevant to our research. Similarly Traditions concerning the Shiʿi-Sunni differences are suspect and do not concern us. Most of the criticism by classical and Western scholars is aimed at such Traditions. My attitude, therefore, in dealing with the Hadīth material has been identical to that of Montgomery Watt who says:

In the legal sphere there may be some sheer invention of traditions, it would seem. But in the historical sphere, in so far as the two may be separated, and apart from some exceptional cases the nearest to such invention in the best early historians appears to be a ‘tendentious shaping’ of material ... in as much as many of the questions in which the historian of the mid-twentieth century is interested are not affected by the process of shaping, there should be little difficulty in obtaining answers to his questions from the sources.³

Wherever no motive can be ascribed, or wherever a Hadīth is not directly involved in a controversy of the subject under study I am inclined to depend more on it than on our three maghāzi sources. Guillaume’s remarks on the subject are pertinent in this connection:

A man who laboured sixteen years on the compilation of his corpus, who sought the aid of prayer before committing a tradition to writing and who interrogated over one thousand sheikhs living in places so distant as Balkh, Merv, Nisapur, the principal towns of Mesopotamia, the Hijaz, Egypt, and Syria, deserved well of his co-religionists ... The man Bukhārī has always been immeasurably greater in the popular estimation than Muslim, and the tendency has been for the work of the former to take precedence of the latter. The one is prized for its range over the whole field of fiqh and the strictness of the shurūq or rules for determining the trustworthiness of rāwīs, while the other is preferred for its more concise treatment

of the material. "Together they form an almost unassailable authority, subject indeed to criticism in details ..."\(^1\)

My preference for the *Ṣahihain* is strictly confined to the study of the historical data concerning the Jews during the time of the Apostle. This would not necessarily apply to the discussion of other subjects, particularly to the origin of Shi'ism or controversies emanating from the Umayyad and Abbasid claims and would certainly not apply to *fiqh* questions pertaining to non-Muslims.

The Qurʾān and the five works mentioned above exhaust our primary sources. Besides these sources I have also used the *Sunan* of Abū Dāūd and al-Samhūdi’s *Wafāʾ al-Wafāʾ bi Akhbār Dār al-Muṣṭafa*.

Abū Dāūd (202/817-275/888) was a contemporary of al-Bukhārī and a pupil of Ḥamīd b. Ḥanbal. Abū Dāūd is less strict with his conditions (ṣuṭrūt) and where a favourable verdict has been accorded by a lenient scholar he has “accepted the Ḥadīth despite the weight of adverse criticism”.\(^2\) This does not mean that he did not exercise proper caution. “He wrote down half a million Ḥadīth, from which he selected 4,800; he calls these authentic, those which seem to be authentic, and those which are nearly so”.\(^3\)

Nūr al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan ṢAlī b. ṢAḥb Allāh b. Ḥamīd al-Samḥūdi (844/1440—911/1505)\(^4\) studied in Cairo under the most renowned man of his time, the Ṣūfī saint al-Ṣaḥīḥi. In 860/1455 he went on pilgrimage and afterwards settled in Medina where he stayed for nearly six years. During this period he made extensive researches on the original state of the Mosque of the Apostle. In 886/1481 he went to pilgrimage and then returned to Egypt where he was admitted to the circle of Sultān al-Ashraf Qāṭībey. He returned to Medina in 890/1485 and remained there till his death. His principal work, which I have used, is *Wafāʾ al-Wafāʾ bi Akhbār Dār al-Muṣṭafa*.\(^4\) This work is the main source of information for the history and the topography of Medina\(^5\).

I have used the two above-mentioned works for supplementary information and supportive evidence but not as independent authorities.

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2. Guillaume, p. 34.

3. Ibid., p. 34.

4. It was published in Cairo in four volumes in 1955.

INTRODUCTION

Abū Dā'ūd provides additional information or explanation of events, where our primary sources have been silent or vague. Al-Samhūdi is the earliest source on Medina after Islam. During the course of research other important sources of Muslim history, which were conceived in another tradition and were inspired by different motives, such as Yahyā b. Ādam’s Kitāb al-Kharāj and Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī’s Kitāb al-Aghānī have also been sifted for relevant material. The main facts or arguments, however, do not depend either on them or on al-Wāqidi and Ibn Sād, and the present study would still stand if references to these works were omitted.

Lord Acton once observed that when an interesting statement is discovered, the critical method “begins by suspecting it”; the historian’s basic duty “is not the art of accumulating material, but the sublimer art of investigating it—of discerning truth from falsehood”. The punishment of the B. Qurayṣah is unique in the life of the Apostle. The total number of men reported to be executed on surrender is said to be six hundred to nine hundred, while the total number of Muslims and non-Muslims killed during all the battles and expeditions which were undertaken during the Apostle’s lifetime is less than five hundred killed on both sides—the number of non-Muslims killed is less than three hundred. “This dark episode, which Muslim tradition, it must be said, takes quite calmly, has provoked lively discussion among Western biographers of Muḥammad, with caustic accusations on the one hand and legalistic excuses on the other”.¹ But in this lively discussion both sides seem to have paid little attention to critical examination of the evidence. The Western scholar quoted Ibn Isḥāq, al-Wāqidi and Ibn Sād and the Muslim apologist answered back with Deuteronomy² and 2 Samuel³.

Stories of massacres and mass murders have a way of impressing themselves on man’s imagination. Once circulated it is difficult to remove them from the collective memory of people. Even when historically demolished they become part of popular legend. George W. Hartman in the Journal of Social Psychology⁴ has analysed the

² Deuteronomy 20, 13-14, quoted by Muhammad Ali, Muhammad the Prophet (Lahore, 1924), p. 163.
⁴ Vol. XXII, November 1945, pp. 221-236.
emotional factors which lead to the continued acceptance of such myths in the absence of any substantial and trustworthy evidence.

Of all historical ‘facts’, stories of massacres and mass executions and murders are most susceptible to doubt and the most likely to prove either pure fabrications or high exaggerations. Ibn Ishāq and to a lesser degree, al-Waqidi and Ibn Sa‘d and their predecessor al-Zuhri and Mūsa b. Ṣa‘iba remembered, noted and reproduced what they considered to be significant facts. Events and details which are significant from our point of view were probably not of any consequence to them. They were not of any importance to the Jews either. There were no Jewish historians and writers, no correspondents, no travellers who carried the tales of the misfortunes of the Jews of the Ḥijāz when these tragic events were taking place. It is improbable and difficult, however, to believe that in the second and third centuries of Islam when Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Sa‘d were collecting their material, the learned rabbis of the Gaonate and the Exilarchate of Babylon were unable to obtain the Jewish version of the events which had a profound influence on the life of the Jewish community of the Ḥijāz at the time of the Apostle. It is not normal with the Jews not to record their misfortunes. The Jews of Khaybar reported to be expelled by ʿUmar were settled in Kufa, which was not very far from the Gaonate. They were the descendants of the B. al-Nādir and the children of the B. Qurayṣah; Jewish scholars could gather their material from them. Samuel Usque’s book A Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel—Third Dialogue is a sixteenth-century classic of Jewish martyrology. This “deft painter of Jewish suffering”, who “caused the long procession of Jewish history to file past the tearful eyes of his contemporaries, in all its sublime glory and abysmal tragedy” reports neither the expulsion of the B. Qaynuqā and the B. al-Nādir nor the execution of the B. Qurayṣah. Jewish history up to Geiger’s time (1833) seems to be free of these stories.

The Jews lost their dominant position in Yathrib and Khaybar because they could not adapt like the Quraysh of Mecca although the terms offered to them were different and far less stringent than those to the Quraysh and other pagan Arabs.

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1 See supra, pp. 19 and 20 for examples.
4 Ibid., p. 16.
CHAPTER I

THE JEWS OF ARABIA ON THE EVE OF
THE HIJRAH

By slow infiltration several Arab tribes drifted into Medina and its vicinity, and were hospitably received by the Jewish farmers. By the sixth century, these new arrivals, steadily reinforced from the south and unified under an able leader, Malik ibn Ajlan, eventually prevailed over their hosts. Nevertheless, Mohammed still found vigorous Jewish tribes in and around that centre of northern Arabia, possibly constituting the majority of the settled population.

—SALO WITTMAYER BARON

The beginnings of the Jewish settlements in the Arab peninsula are “buried in misty tradition”.¹ There is no reliable historical evidence to establish the approximate date of their arrival. Taymâ² was known to the Prophets and may be said to have been the first city in Arabia in which something like a Jewish community had existed in ancient biblical times.² Seafaring Israelites and Jewish fugitives escaping from persecution by Nebuchadnezzar and later by the Romans, had, it seems, established their colonies in the Arabian peninsula. In southern Arabia (Yemen) they were scattered and “lived without social or political cohesion”.³ Towards the beginning of the fifth century they had, however, established themselves by their industry and enterprising spirit. They obtained so great an influence over the Arab tribes of Yemen that one of the kings of Ḥimyār, Dhū Nuwās, embraced Judaism and assumed the name of Yūsuf.⁴

¹ Graetz, Vol. III, p. 54.
³ Graetz, Vol. III, p. 56.
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

The Arab legends trace the first Jewish settlers in the Hijāz to the time of Moses who had ordered some of his followers to fight the Amalek, a people of Edomite stock and described by Rabbinic literature as “Israel’s permanent arch-enemy”. According to Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī (284/897-356/967) these Jews were sent to destroy the Amalek in the Hijāz. But they failed to fulfil the commandment of total annihilation; they took pity on the handsome son of the Amalek king and took him back alive instead of killing him. As a punishment these Jews were banished and they settled in Yathrib, which they had earlier conquered. Among those who settled were the Jews of the B. Qurayzah, the B. al-Naḍīr and the B. Qaynuqā. Though there is nothing intrinsically wrong with this legend the historical evidence takes us only to the first century A.D. The tombstone inscriptions of a Shubeit “Yehudaya” erected in al-Hijr in 42 A.D. (or 45 B.C.) and that of one Simon in 307 (which incidentally is the latest Nabatean inscription yet discovered) are some of the few remnants of Arab-Jewish life in pre-Islamic Arabia. Werner Caskel, referring to these two inscriptions, considers the Jews to be the main representatives of Nabatean culture in the Hijāz after 300 A.D. and declares:

These are the beginnings of the Jewish population, which later occupied all the oases in the northwest including Medinah.

Yathrib, an oasis on the caravan route running from north to south, rich in underground water supplies, springs and fountains, provided the Jews with a land where they could apply their farming experience. They planted it with palms, fruit trees and rice, and seem to have pioneered in introducing advanced methods of irrigation and cultivation of the soil. They also developed new arts and crafts from metal work to dyeing and the production of fine jewellery, and taught the neighbouring tribes more advanced methods of exchanging goods and money.

Though distinguished from the Arabs by their religion, these Jews became Arabicised to such an extent that their tribes adopted Arabic

4 Baron, Vol. III, p. 70.
names. Banū Zaʿūra seems to be the only exception. "Jewish names such as Ādiya, Samauʿal, Sara are comparatively rare". The proportion in which the Arab element was mixed with the Jews is difficult to determine, but probably purely Arab tribes had embraced Judaism. Graetz observes:

Interruption between the two nations tended to heighten the similarity of their characters. Like the Himyarites, the Jews of southern Arabia applied themselves more particularly to the trade between India, the Byzantine empire and Persia. The Jews of northern Arabia, on the contrary, led the life of Bedouins; they occupied themselves with agriculture, cattle breeding, transport of caravan traffic in weapons, and probably also the calling of robbers.

Graetz' view that the Jews of northern Arabia did not take part in trade seems to be based on the silence of Jewish sources on the subject. But Yathrib was on the caravan route, and it is improbable that the rich Jews of the region with their agricultural produce, their jewellery and arms industry, and—above all—capital would not trade with Syria. Wolfenson has referred to the possibility of wide trading contacts between the Jews of Yathrib and the Christian tribes of Ghassân, the Syrian auxiliaries of the Byzantine Empire. Shaban concurs with the view and observes:

In the light of close connections between the Medinan Jews and other Jewish communities in Arabia it is not unreasonable to suggest that a Jewish trade network existed there at the time.

He further points out that

These connections extended as far north as with Adhraʿāt in Syria, and at least as far as Najran in the south.

The Jews of Arabia, as Graetz observes, enjoyed complete liberty. They concluded offensive and defensive alliances and carried on feuds.

4 Wolfenson, Taʾrikh al-Yahud fi Bilād al-ʿArab, p. 60.
6 Ibid.
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

Here they were not shut out from the paths of honour, nor excluded from the privileges of the state, but, untrammelled, were allowed to develop their powers in the midst of a free, simple and talented people, to show their manly courage, to compete for the gifts of fame, and with practised hand to measure swords with their antagonists. Instead of bearing the yoke, the Jews were not infrequently the leaders of the Arabian tribes.\textsuperscript{1}

The Jews of the Hijâz, unlike other Jewish communities, did not seem to interest themselves in literary or scholarly pursuits. The authenticity of their poetical remains has been questioned by Margoliouth and others.\textsuperscript{2} Al-Samaw\textsuperscript{2}al is but a legend and Ka\textsuperscript{b} b. al-Ashraf was the son of an Arab, though "he behaved as if he belonged to his mother's clan of al-Na'dir".\textsuperscript{3} Baron admits:

Arabian Jewry's intellectual equipment seem to have been limited to some scrolls of law, Hebrew prayer books, and other paraphernalia of worship and study, while the availability at that time of more than fragmentary Arabic translations from Scripture is extremely dubious.\textsuperscript{4}

The knowledge of the Bible which the Arabian Jews possessed, according to Graetz,

...was not considerable. They were acquainted with it only through the medium of the Agadic exegesis, which had become familiar to them in their travels or had been brought to them by immigrants. For them the glorious history of the past coalesced so completely with the Agadic additions that they were no longer able to separate the gold from the dross.\textsuperscript{5}

They maintained trade contacts with the Jews of Syria\textsuperscript{6} and religious ties with Babylon\textsuperscript{7}, "but they had few intellectual contacts with the centres of Jewish life" in these two places.\textsuperscript{8} In the absence of any historical evidence it is difficult to agree with the romantic claim of Baron that during the few generations of Jewish control the focal northern areas were raised

\textsuperscript{1} Graetz, Vol. III, p. 53.
\textsuperscript{2} See D.S. Margoliouth, The Relations between Arabs and Israelites Prior to the Rise of Islam (London, 1924) and Horovitz, Islamic Culture, III, pp. 188-90.
\textsuperscript{4} Baron, Vol. III, p. 261.
\textsuperscript{5} Graetz, Vol. III, p. 59.
\textsuperscript{6} Ibid., pp. 58-59, and supra, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{7} Infra, p. 30.
\textsuperscript{8} Baron, Vol. III, p. 72.
THE JEWS OF ARABIA ON THE EVE OF THE Hijrah

almost to the high level of the southern civilization, which had long earned for Himyar and its vicinity the Roman designation of Arabia Felix.\(^1\) In fact the Jews of Arabia "contributed little or nothing to the religious and cultural development of post-biblical Judaism".\(^2\) As Margoliouth points out they do not "appear to have produced any man whose name was worth preserving".\(^3\)

More than twenty Jewish tribes were settled in Medina.\(^4\) Prominent among these were the Banū Qurayzah, the Banū al-Naḍīr, the Banū Qaynuqā'ī,\(^5\) the Banū Tha‘labah and the Banū Hadl. The Banū al-Naḍīr and the Banū Qurayzah claimed to be the descendants of Jewish priests, ‘al-Kāḥinīn‘, Kāhin being the Arabic rendering of Hebrew Kohen. Al-Ya‘qūbī, who does not give the source of his information, however, says:

The Banū al-Naḍīr were a subtribe of the Banū Judham, who embraced Judaism. The Banū Qurayzah were brothers of the Banū al-Naḍīr and it is said that they embraced Judaism in the days of ʿAdiyah the son of Sama‘al.\(^5\)

According to Al-Ya‘qūbī, the Banū al-Naḍīr and the Banū Qurayzah had taken their names after the hills on which they first settled. Margoliouth does not consider them Jews, and is inclined "to regard the term of Judaism applied to these Medinese tribes as indicating some form of monotheism".\(^6\) Reissner also does not consider them 'Jews'. He says:

Less than a hundred years prior to Muhammad's birth, the Talmud had been completed in Babylon. At that time, there was complete agreement, \textit{intra muros et extra}, as to who was a Jew and what constituted the essence of Judaism. A Jew was a follower of the Mosaic Law as interpreted by the teachers of the Law in accordance with principles laid down in the Talmud... whoever did not conform... was discounted. If he was Israelite by descent, he could not be deprived of his birthright, viz, to be called Ben Israel, as in Arabia...\(^7\)

Friedlaender does not agree with Graetz and Reissner. Working on

\(^1\) Baron, Vol. III, p. 71.
\(^2\) Francesco Gabrieli, \textit{Muhammad}, p. 42.
\(^3\) Margoliouth, \textit{Relations}, p. 71.
\(^4\) Al-Samhūdī, p. 165.
\(^5\) Al-Ya‘qūbī, pp. 49-52.
\(^6\) Margoliouth, \textit{Relations}, p. 71.
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

Gaonate documents he established the contact of Arab Jews with the Gaonate in Babylon. He observes:

It is characteristic of the central position of the Gaonate in Jewish life that even in its last representatives it was able to exert its influence over the distant half-mythical Jews in free Arabia and shape their professional and civil life. It shows at the same time that the Arabian Jews, however far removed from the centre of Jewish learning, recognized the authority of the Talmud and were not in any way guilty of those anti-Talmudic sentiments which Graetz is prone to ascribe to their forefathers.¹

The Banū Qurayţah and the Banū al-Naḍîr called themselves Kūḥīnūn and so presumably claimed to be of the house of Aaron.² The Banū Qaynuqa³—who practised crafts such as that of the goldsmith—manufactured arms and conducted a market and were possibly “north Arab, Idumaean or such like”⁴. They possessed no agricultural lands, but had a compact settlement in the suburbs of Medina.⁴ The Banū Qurayţah and the Banū al-Naḍîr were the owners of some of the richest lands towards the south of Medina on higher ground. Other Jewish clans were dispersed. In total the Jewish clans of Medina owned almost sixty aṯām.⁵ These aṯām, (singular, uṯām) which formed a prominent feature of Yathrib, were in fact forts stocked with provisions, provided with water, strong enough to withstand attacks and big enough to stand long sieges. There were schools and synagogues and council halls.

The second most important settlement of the Jews was Khaybar. Approximately ninety miles from Yathrib, it is located on a very high mountainous plateau entirely composed of lava deposits and covered by malarial swamps. The valleys, though uninhabitable, are very fertile. The Jews cultivated grapes, vegetables and grain, and raised sheep, cattle, camels, horses and donkeys. They also had palm groves. They traded with Syria and benefited from the caravan trade between Arabia, Syria and Iraq. They also manufactured metal implements such as battering rams and catapults.⁶ They owned several groups

³ O’Leary, p. 173.
⁵ Al-Samhūdī, I, p. 116.
THE JEWS OF ARABIA ON THE EVE OF THE Hijrah

Medina in the First Year of the Hijrah

31
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

of forts, many built on the tops of hills in virtually impregnable positions. According to al-Yaṣḥūbī twenty thousand fighters lived in these forts.\(^1\) Fadak, Wādī al-Qūra and Taymā\(^2\) were the other three Jewish strongholds.

Torrey’s thesis that there were Jews in Mecca at the time of the Apostle\(^2\) is, however, without foundation. Al-Azraqi makes no mention of any Jewish settlement in Mecca, but refers to their reverence for Kaʿbah; they took their shoes off when they reached the boundaries of the sanctuary.\(^3\) As Lammens remarks, the fact that the Quraysh sent a delegation to Medina to consult the Jews regarding the Apostle’s claims proves there were no Jews in Mecca whom they could consult.\(^4\)

When Bani Qaylayh arrived in Yathrib from the south, they were presumably allowed by the Jews to settle on those lands in and around Yathrib which had not yet been brought under cultivation. Divided into the Aws and the Khazraj and further sub-divided into clans they accepted the dominant position of the Jews and entered into a relationship with them which was that of jīwār (neighbour) or hilf (confederation). Hilf is a compact between quite separate tribes, general in scope, made for the object of establishing a permanent state of peace between the tribes. It did not diminish their autonomy, but united them for purposes of common defence, for mutual payment of settlements to third parties, for vengeance, and for the common use of pasturage.\(^5\)

Towards the middle of the sixth century the situation changed, largely owing to Mālik b. al-ʿAjlān’s revolt against the Jewish prince al-Fīṭyawn of the Zubra tribe who as a mark of Khazraj subordination exercised the jus primae noctis with a bride from that tribe.\(^6\) Mālik

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\(^1\) Al-Yaṣḥūbī (Beirut, 1960), II, p. 56.
\(^2\) Charles Cutler Torrey, The Jewish Foundation of Islam, second and third lectures, pp. 28-104.
\(^6\) Al-Samhūdī, Vol. I, p. 178. F. Krenkow (EI1, Vol. II, p. 938) read the name of the Jewish prince as al-Qaytūn and considered it as fictitious since it is originally Greek. Al-Samhūdī, however, has clearly stated that the name begins with “fi”’. Watt (Muhammad at Medina, p. 193), who has not given his source, also gives the name as Fīṭyawn and says he belonged to the B. Thaʿlabah.
THE JEWS OF ARABIA ON THE EVE OF THE Hijrah

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Ajlân belonged to the Khazraj, but both the Aws and the Khazraj bowed to his leadership. Mâlik became independent and it is probable that with him nearly all the Khazraj and most of the Aws freed themselves from the 'Jewish' over-lordship. Ibn Khurradâdhibhî (d. 309/911) reports that the Marzubân al-bâdiyyah appointed an āmil over Medina who collected taxes. The B. Qurayzah and the B. al-Naḍîr, the report continues, were kings who were appointed to collect these taxes from the Aws and the Khazraj. Yâqût (d. 626/1229) also reports that the B. Qurayzah and the B. al-Naḍîr were the kings driven out by the Aws and the Khazraj, who had formerly paid tax to the Jews. Altheim and Stiehl consider Ibn Khurradâdhibhî's report sound, and observe that such a situation could endure as long as the Jewish tribes dominated the Aws and the Khazraj, till the middle of the sixth century. It is probably safer to assume that the Jews of Medina had lost their position as a dominant group sometime before the birth of the Apostle.

Various developments after the middle of the sixth century tended to weaken the Jewish community of Yathrib. The fact that before the battle of Buṣâth, the Banû al-Naḍîr and Banû Qurayzah had given hostages to the Khazraj suggests that they were fully conscious of their weakness. But at the battle of Buṣâth both the tribes helped the Aws against the Khazraj even at the cost of the lives of some of their hostages. This help made it possible for the Aws to gain victory at Buṣâth, which was fought a few years before the Hijrah.

By the first quarter of the seventh century the Banû Qaylah were, probably, on the way to becoming a dominant group in Yathrib. Yathrib at this time was not much of a city. It was a disorganised collection of hamlets and houses, farms and fortified huts scattered over an oasis, rich in underground water supplies and springs and fountains. Though the Aws seemed to have the upper hand, relations between the different groups had reached a very low ebb. They were divided, and unimportant quarrels assumed dangerous proportions.

1 Al-Samhûdî, Vol. I, pp. 177-98. See also Watt, Muhammad at Medina, pp. 192-95.
4 F. Altheim and R. Stiehl, Finanzgeschichte der Spätantike (Frankfurt am Main, 1957), p. 149, n. 63.
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

The balance established by the battle of Bu'āth was tenuous and there was every danger that war might break out again. It was in this atmosphere of chaos, suspicion and lawlessness that the Aws and the Khazraj tried to unite under ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayy b. Salul al-ʿAwfi of the clan of the Banū al-Ḥublā.\(^3\)

For the Jews, however, Yathrib had become the centre of a region which Lammens calls a petite patrie ruled by Talmudic Law.\(^2\) Compact and flourishing Jewish communities occupied Fadak, Wādi al-Qura, Taymāʾ and Khaybar.

An examination of both the Arab sources and the results of modern research indicates that the Jews of Arabia were not an isolated people. Irfan Shahid, who is the latest among the scholars who have worked on this period, considers that the relations of the Yathrib Jews with Yūsuf Dhū Nuwās “must have been very close indeed”.\(^3\) They had incited him to make war against Najrān.\(^4\) The ruler of Ḥirah Mundhir III (505-553) had a contingent of Jews in his army and his son Mundhir IV (580-583) married a Jewess, Salmah bint al-Sāʾigh, the mother of the last of the Lakhmids, the famous Nuʿmān III\(^6\) (592-604).

This was the state of affairs when Islam brought the hope of a new way of life to the quarrelling sons of the Banū Qaylah. Six men of the Khazraj were the first definite converts, who went to Mecca most probably in 620. A year later, five of them returned with four others from the Khazraj and three from the Aws. They pledged themselves solemnly to the Apostle. In June 622 seventy-three men and two women went to Mecca for pilgrimage and on that occasion secretly by night took the pledge not only to obey the Apostle but to fight for him. Kāb b. Mālik, who was present on this occasion has described the significance of that pledge in simple words:

The Apostle spoke and recited the Qurʾān and invited men to Allah and commended Islam and then said: “I invite your allegiance on the basis that you protect me as you protect your women and children”. Al-Barāʾ took his hand and said “By Him Who sent you with the truth we shall protect you as we protect our women. We give our allegiance and we are men of war possessing arms which have been passed on from father to son”. While Al-Barāʾ was speaking Abū al-Haytham

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\(^1\) Ibn Hishām, p. 411.
\(^2\) H. Lammens, p. 53.
\(^3\) Irfan Shahid, The Martyrs of Najrān, p. 268.
\(^4\) Ḥamzah al-Iṣfahānī, Taʾrīkh, p. 113, cited by Irfan Shahid, p. 268.
b. al-Tayyihān interrupted him and said, 'O Apostle, we have ties with other men (meaning the Jews), and if we sever them perhaps when we have done that and Allah will have given you victory, you will return to your people and leave us'. The Apostle smiled and said: 'No, your blood is my blood and what is sacred to you is sacred to me. I will fight against them that fight against you and be at peace with those who are at peace with you.'

The precise nature of the Apostle's agreement with the Muslims of Medina before he left Mecca is not clear. But two things would seem to be certain, some pledge of war must have been involved, and the Jews of Medina were not a party to any agreement before the Hijrah. It is not known exactly what the terms of that pledge were. Before leaving Medina to meet the Quraysh at Badr the Apostle asked for advice. He said 'Give me advice, O Men! Ibn Ishāq says by this he meant the Anṣār.

This is because they were in the majority, and because when they took the oath of fealty at al-ʿAqabah they stipulated that they were not responsible for his safety until he entered their territory, and that when he was there they would protect him as they did their wives and children. So the Apostle was afraid that the Anṣār would not feel it incumbent upon them to go with him against an enemy outside their territory. When he spoke these words Saʿd b. Muʿādh said, 'Perhaps you refer to us', and when the Apostle said 'Yes', Saʿd replied, 'We believe in you, we declare your truth, and we witness that what you have brought is the truth, and we have given you our word and agreement to hear and obey. We now stand by you, whatever you ask us to do.'

The Battle of Badr took place towards the later part of the second year of the Hijrah. It is, therefore, significant to note that neither the Apostle nor Saʿd b. Muʿādh even obliquely refer to the document called the Saḥīfah. Had it been signed immediately after the arrival of the Apostle in Medina or even during the first two years of his stay, a reference would not have been made to a penultimate and obviously obsolete agreement reached at al-ʿAqabah.

As regards the Jews, our sources are contradictory and vague. It is not at all clear if there was a formal agreement with the Jews at all. Ibn Ishāq reports that, when the Apostle reminded the Jews of the condition imposed on them, the Jews—probably the B. al-Naḍir—said, "No covenant was ever made with us about Muhammad". This incident is reported before the B. Qaynuqā came into conflict

1 Ibn Hishām, pp. 296-97.
2 Ibid., pp. 434-35.
3 Ibid., p. 379.
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

with the Muslims. Since there is no definite information about any agreement with the Jews, the relationship between the Muslims and the Jews in Medina rested on some sort of *status quo*. To be more precise, it seemed to be an uneasy truce which lasted till the *Sahifah* was signed.

Historians dealing with the pre-Islamic alliances among the tribes might reasonably ask if the Jews of Medina became an unwitting victim of clannish jealousies or complexities of inter-tribal alliances. As our examination of the incidents shows, such alliances played no part in the Jewish-Muslim conflict. The Jewish trust in the *munāṣbirūn*, however, played a far more important role in their misfortunes. From the very first executions of Abū ṣAfak of the B. ṣAmr b. ṣAwf and ṣAṣmāʾ bint Marwān of Umayyah b. Zayd, the Apostle had taken care to emphasise that Islam had terminated tribal alliances. It would not be correct to conclude that tribal affiliations did not play an important role in the Arab dealings with the Apostle, but they had no part—or no significant part—in the steep decline of the Jewish influence in the Hijāz during the first ten years of their encounter with Islam.

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1 See *infra*, Chapter III. While the B. al-Naḍir were ready to comply with the terms offered by the Apostle it was ṣAbd Allāh b. Ubayy and others who asked them to resist the Apostle.
Chapter II

THE PEOPLE OF THE ṢAHĪFAH

...the concept of the ummah as a political confederation of tribes and clans, including non-Muslims, Jewish ones, had inevitably to yield to Muhammad’s original understanding of a body whose foundation may be ethnic but whose reason for being is shaped by the divine purpose of salvation. The Jews were such an ummah, and in Medina they were more than just a historical and literary illustration of a theological point; they were a political reality.

—F. E. Peters

Yathrib, as we have seen in the previous chapter, presented a picture of political chaos at the time of the Apostle’s arrival. Though no formal peace was made after the Battle of Buṣāth (about 615 A.D.), the feuding clans and their allies were too exhausted to continue an active struggle. In this uneasy state of political vacuum the Jews enjoyed a position of considerable influence. ʿAmr b. al-Nuʿmān and al-Ḥuḍayr b. Simāk, who died in the battle of Buṣāth, did not have the qualities of leaders who could unite a people in the existing state of affairs in Yathrib, which to say the least “was intolerable”.¹ But “there were opportunities for a strong man to gain control over a large section of Medina, perhaps, even over the whole”.² ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayy, as we have seen earlier, seemed to be a man of wider vision. If the Apostle had not arrived at Medina, he might have provided that leadership which Medina so badly needed.

The situation not only offered a challenge to the Apostle, but also several solutions. He could have worked for a full political integration on the basis of religion, which the ruling Zeitgeist seemed to have demanded. This would have meant the exclusion of the Jews,

¹ Watt, Muhammad at Medina, p. 173.
² Ibid.
assigning them a subordinate status with no participation in the life of the Muslim society. He could have united the Ānṣār and the Muhājirūn, who had accepted him as their religious leader into one political group. But it seems at this stage he decided against such a grouping and tried to establish a security-community in which there could be reasonable assurance that its members would not fight each other physically but would settle their disputes by peaceful means. The Apostle’s attempts to create such a community culminated in a document which is called the Ṣaḥīfah. An examination of this document, which was signed in Yathrib between the Muslims from the Quraysh, the various clans of the Ānṣār and the Jews, shows that it was based on a liberal conception of the rule of law with two simple principles: the safeguarding of individual rights by impartial judicial authority, and the principle of equality before the law.

The Arabs of the Jāhilyyah had practically nothing that can be described as positive law. It is common knowledge and therefore needs hardly any proof that the modern sanction of the law, i.e., a fine or imprisonment for the offender, did not exist. No society is, however, absolutely lawless and the Arab tribes maintained security by the solidarity of the tribal group. If a member of the group was killed, other members of the group avenged him; if a member of the group was in danger, he was supported by other members of the tribe irrespective of the right or wrong of the matter in dispute. The working of the lex talionis was, however, modified by the acceptance of weregeld as an alternative. But the system could work only by the solidarity and strength of the kinship group, and by a swift and effective way of settling disputes and paying weregeld. Thus the lex talionis restrained wanton killing and became an important feature of pre-Islamic Arab society.

The Ṣaḥīfah sought to provide the basis of positive law. The object of the document was limited to the resolution of conflict without violence. The community thus created is called the ummah. The ummah, is specifically a Qur’ānic term. It occurs nine times in the Meccan and forty-seven times in the Medinan sūrahs. It describes the totality of individuals bound to one another, irrespective of their

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1 See below for further discussion of the document.
2 Article 23 of the Ṣaḥīfah, see below.
3 Articles 26-35 of the Ṣaḥīfah, see below.
THE PEOPLE OF THE 𐐳𐐴𐐨𐐬

colour, race or social status, by the doctrine of submission to one God. According to Montgomery Watt, it is “the community formed by those who accept the messenger and his message”.¹ Rudi Paret has also reached a similar conclusion and says the word “always refers to ethical, linguistic or religious bodies of people who are the objects of the divine plan of salvation”.² While the orientalists differ as regards the development of the term in the Qurʾān, some Muslim scholars assert that the term ummah describes the community of Muslims,³ but this is only partly true. It describes the de facto position. In theory the use of the term ummah during the major portion of the Apostle’s career was not restricted to Muslims alone. The main difficulty in dealing with the history of ideas is that terms are more permanent than their definitions. While institutions continually change, the terms describing them remain unaltered. A precise and comprehensive definition of the ummah is, however, not required for our purpose. The term ummah, therefore, within the context of our discussion is restricted to the sense in which it has been used in the 𐐳𐐴𐐨𐐬 i.e. “the people of the 𐐳𐐴𐐨𐐬.”

The 𐐳𐐴𐐨𐐬 signed by the Muslims and the Jews, and erroneously called ‘The Constitution of Medina’, is a very important document for the understanding of the status of non-Muslims in a Muslim-dominated society. Scholars of all schools of thought, such as Watt, Serjeant and Hamidullah,⁴ agree that the document is “unquestionably authentic”.⁵

No later falsifier writing under the Umayyads or Abbasids, would have included non-Muslims in the ummah, would have retained the articles against the Quraysh, and would have given Muḥammad so insignificant a place.⁶

Most of the modern scholars dispute the date and unity of the document and there is no clear indication as to the number of agreements which constitute it. Various dates for signing these documents can only be assigned after some reasonable method is found to separate

³ Abul Aʿlā Maudūdī, Islamic Way of Life (Delhi, 1967), p. 17.
⁶ Watt, Muhammad at Medina, p. 225.
the individual agreements. There are, however, certain clear indications as to the possible dates, which are significant in determining the character of the ummānah. Ibn Işıq assigns it to the first year of the Hijrah. But textual comparison of the chronological material in the Sīrah shows that the various biographers differ even on the dating of important events.1 The Sahifah itself, however, provides indications of its approximate date, which, even though obvious, have been ignored by historians.

Firstly, there is no mention of the B. Qaynuqā, the B. al-Naḍīr and the B. Qurayẓah in the Sahifah. While most of the Muslim historians have not paid any attention to the omission of these three important Jewish clans from the Sahifah, some orientalists have tried to explain it away by remarking that the Apostle “grouped the Jews according to the Arab clans in whose districts they lived”.2 This explanation is obviously not convincing. The Jews of the Banū Āwīf, the Banū al-Najjār, the Banū al-Ḥārith, the Banū Sā’idah, the Banū Jusham, the Banū Tha’labah and even a subdivision of the Banū Tha’labah, Jafnah, were all confederates of the Khazraj and have been mentioned as such. If this formula was sufficient to cover the Banū Qaynuqā3 who were the allies of the Khazraj, then the name of their patrons Baqī-Ḥublā or B. Sālim should have been mentioned. As Wellhausen observes, unless the Jews of the Banū al-Aws and Tha’labah are the B. al-Naḍīr and the B. Qurayẓah, these two tribes did not enter into any agreement with Muhammad at the beginning, A.H. 2.3 But the B. al-Naḍīr and the B. Qurayẓah were not the mawāli of al-Aws. Their relationship was that of alliance and not of patronage4. The simple explanation is that the document was signed after the expulsion of the B. Qurayẓah. Montgomery Watt finds difficulty in this explanation because the Sahifah pays that much attention “to Jewish affairs at a time when there were few Jews in Medina”.5 The assumption, however, is not supported by facts. After the two Jewish clans, the B. al-Naḍīr and the B. Qurayẓah, were expelled from Medina the following Jewish tribes still remained there:

2 Watt, Muhammad at Medina, p. 226.
4 Supra, Chapter I, p. 60.
5 Watt, Muhammad at Medina, p. 227.
1. The Jews of Banū ʿAwf,
2. The Jews of Banū al-Najjar,
3. The Jews of Banū Sā'idah,
4. The Jews of Banū Jusham,
5. The Jews of Banū al-Aws,
6. The Jews of Banū Tha'labah,
7. Banū al-Shuṭaybah,
8. The Jews of Banū Zurayq,
9. The Jews of B. Ḥarīthah,
10. The Banū Qaynuqāʾ.1

The names of the first seven Jewish tribes are given in the Ṣaiḥah; the names of the B. Zurayq and the B. Ḥarīthah are given by Ibn Ishāq in the list of the Jewish opponents of the Apostle.2 Our sources do not indicate that there was any general exodus of the Jews during the Apostle’s life. Watt rightly concludes that “the document in its final form was intended as a charter for the Jews remaining in Medina”.3 Though the remaining Jews of Medina had lost their “news-value” for the Muslim historian, there are references to their presence in Medina after the expulsion of the B. al-Naḍir and the B. Qurayzah. Ibn Sa’d reports that the Apostle’s expedition to Khaybar was very painful to the Jews who remained in Medina.4 The Jews were even politically active and continued to offer opposition to the Apostle. When the Apostle ordered the Muslims to prepare for an expedition against the Byzantines (9/630) at Tabuk the disaffected and the waverers assembled in the house of a Jew, Suwaylim, making plans to encourage disaffection. Suwaylim was not punished personally but the Apostle ordered Ṭalḥah b. ʿUbayd Allāh to burn his house to the ground.5

The presence of the Jews in Medina after the expulsion of their three clans seems to be supported by the Qurʾān as well. There is general consensus that Al-Maʾṣūdah is the last sūrah which was revealed to the Apostle. “Aṣmāʾ”, daughter of Yazīd reported that the whole of this sūrah was revealed together.6 There are other reports also to

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1 As we shall see in the next chapter, the evidence seems to indicate that the B. Qaynuqāʾ were not expelled during the Apostle’s lifetime.
2 Ibn Hishām, p. 351.
3 Watt, Muhammad at Medina, p. 227.
5 Ibn Hishām, p. 858.
the same effect. Nöeldeke, while accepting it as the last revelation—114th, has placed some of the verses between 2/623 and 7/628. Verses 45-55, however, have been placed after “the massacre of Bani Quraidha” and prior to the expedition against the Jews of Khaybar in a.H. 7” by Nöeldeke, and Wherry concurs with the view. Verses 46 and 47 say:

Should they (the Jews) come to thee seeking judgment in a dispute, either judge between them or leave them. If thou keepest away from them, they shall not harm thee at all. But if thou undertake to judge, then judge between them with equity. Surely Allah loves the just. And how will they make thee their judge, when they have the Torah containing Allah’s commandments? Yet, they turn their backs, and they certainly do not believe.

A reference to the Jews seeking the Apostle’s judgment in their disputes would be pointless if there were no Jews in Medina. Since the verses were revealed prior to the expedition to Khaybar, the Jews of Khaybar, Fadak and the neighbouring regions were not expected to bring their disputes to the Apostle.

No demographic data of the population of Yathrib at the time of the Hijrah is available to us, so it is not possible to give any exact figures for the Jewish population of Medina during the lifetime of the Apostle. However some definite figures have been provided by Ibn Ishāq and other biographers, which give an approximate idea of the Jewish strength. The B. Qaynuqāṣ provided 700 men to protect ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayy2 and 600 to 900 fighting men of the B. Qurayzah are reported to have been executed after the battle of the Ahzāb.3 The B. al-Naṣir occupied a position of prestige in Medina and were the rivals of the B. Qurayzah. The number of their male members is not given but, when they left Medina nine hundred camels were loaded with their belongings. One may reasonably conclude that they were not smaller in number than the B. Qaynuqāṣ and the B. Qurayzah. This gives us a conservative estimate of three thousand male members for the three tribes which clashed with the Apostle. When the B. Qaynuqāṣ provided 700 men to protect ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayy they probably did not give all their men. If the other nine Jewish tribes

2 Ibn Hishām, p. 546.
3 Ibid., p. 690.
THE PEOPLE OF THE Șahīfah

were even half of these three, although there is no such indication in our sources, the total male population of the Medinan Jews was six thousand. At the time of the Apostle, as Smith has pointed out, only patronymic tribes were possible. The Jews with their consanguinal families comprising six to seven dependent members, therefore, formed a population of 36,000 to 42,000. After the expulsion of the B. al-Naḍīr and the reported execution of the B. Qurayṣah twelve to fourteen thousand Jews left Medina, which leaves the number of Jews in Medina at the signing of the Șahīfah between 24,000 to 28,000. This is not a small number and did require the Apostle's attention.

The second pointer to the probable date of the Șahīfah is the declaration of Yathrib as ḥaram. As Gil points out "the ḥaram clause is one of the identifying points which oral tradition has preserved in reference to the document kept in the sheath of Dhūʾlfaqār". The treatment of a territory as sacred presupposes either a strong tradition and unbroken custom, as was the case with Mecca, or the military strength to enforce and protect that sacredness from external threat and internal strife. In the first years of the Hijrah, specially up to the Battle of the Ahzāb (A.H.5), the Apostle and his followers were not secure, and were certainly not sure if they could successfully protect the town. The peace within Medina, as we shall see, was not secure either. The B. Qaynuqāʾ tried to provoke at least one if not two riots. The B. al-Naḍīr were in touch with the Meccans and the B. Qurayṣah’s attitude during the battle of the Ahzāb was a source of great anxiety to the defenders of Medina. An open conflict between the Muhājirūn and Anṣār after the battle of B. al-Muṣṭalq was averted by the Apostle with considerable restraint. It was on this occasion that ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayy had said, “By Allāh when we return to Medina the stronger will drive out the weaker”. During the battle of Badr (2/624) the Apostle could muster 313 fighters. This was hardly the strength with which approximately more than 36,000 Jews and a large number of munāfiqūn could be forced to respect the ḥaram obligations. The

1 W. Robertson Smith, Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia, p. 40.
2 Encyclopaedia Judaica, Vol. XI, Col. 1212 puts the number of Jews in Medina between 8,000 to 10,000, which is an understatement and not supported by our sources.
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

Apostle did not take hasty decisions, specially those which he could not execute. It would be wiser to wait till the situation was stabilized. Though the battle of the Āhzāb was a defensive war and the Muslims had gained a victory on the home ground, yet they were not secure enough to declare Yathrib a haram. It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that Yathrib was declared a haram after the affair of the B. Qurayzah, which in fact was a continuation of the battle of the Āhzāb. It was at about the same time that the munāfiqūn had been brought under control. The Apostle was strong enough to administer a public reprimand to them after the affair of the B. al-Muṣṭaliq. The Sūrat al-Munāfiqūn was revealed in 6/627.¹ Al-Samhūdi, who has dealt with the date, the boundary and the prohibitions within the haram territory in detail, placed the creation of this haram according to Ḥadīth after the Apostle’s return from Khaybar in 7/628.² Serjeant refers to al-Samhūdi and admits that he should have been “inclined to suggest that the declaration of the haram could have taken place some time after the failure of the Prophet’s enemies to take Medina at the battle of al-Khandaq at the earliest, and what more suitable occasion could there be for declaring Medina a sacred enclave than when it had just manifested its holiness by repelling the invader?”³ However, for “many strong reasons, into which I cannot enter here”⁴ Serjeant falls in line with other historians. One can detect Serjeant’s reasons and one of them seems to be the same difficulty which Montgomery Watt faces. He goes on to say that “surprisingly enough, this document opens with clauses in which the Jews are spoken of as paying nafaqah along with the Muslims”.⁵ Historians, both Muslims and non-Muslims, seem to have assumed without any critical examination that after the departure of the B. al-Naḍir and probably the B. Qurayzah Medina was bereft of its Jewish population.

In fact, a closer examination of the Ṣaḥīfah indicates that the clauses pertaining to the Jews were incorporated after the B. al-Naḍir and some of the B. Qurayzah had been expelled from Medina for their ‘treachery’. On his arrival in Yathrib the Apostle had not expected treachery from the Jews, though he did not expect whole-hearted

⁴ Ibid., p. 10.
⁵ Ibid.
support and help either. The Jews, too, in the first year of the Hijrah, the year normally assigned to the signing of the Šaḥīfa, had done nothing to arouse among the Muslims fear of deceit and duplicity on their part. In pre-Islamic Arabia the Jews did not have an unfavourable image. They were known for their skill in professions, for their mastery of the art of writing and their steadfastness. Above all they were known for their nobility; they did not break their word. Al-Samaw'ī's loyalty to his friend Imrū'al-Qays was proverbial throughout Arabia. There were Jews like Qays b. Ma'dīkarib, who had committed acts of treachery, but that was not part of their reputation. Poets talked of al-Samaw'ī's fidelity and hospitality. It is, therefore, curious that the word 'treachery' should have been used in eight articles in the Šaḥīfa. Except for Article 40, all the seven articles in which the word is used pertain to the Jews. The logical conclusion would seem to be that the Muslims became wiser after the events, and, having experienced treachery from the B. al-Nādir and the B. Qurayzah, they wished to make clear that treachery would automatically cancel all covenants and agreements. The Apostle seemed to be disinclined to suffer the unpleasantness of rejecting intercessions on behalf of the defaulting Jews from the Aws or from the Khazraj.

While we agree with the views expressed both by Sergeant and Watt that there is much that is bound to remain conjectural and obscure in the existing text of the Šaḥīfa, we may be nearer to the facts if the history of the Šaḥīfa is reconstructed in the following manner.

1. The first twenty-three articles form part of the original agreement between the Apostle and the Anṣār at al-Aqabah or shortly after the Hijrah.

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2 The sceptical view taken by D.S. Margoliouth in The Relations between Arabs and Israelites prior to the Rise of Islam, pp. 76-81, in regard to the genuineness of al-Samaw'ī's verses does not affect his reputation.

3 Ilse Lichtenstadier, pp. 185-194.

4 The numbering of the articles follows Watt, Muhammad at Medina, pp. 221-225.

5 Articles 25, 31, 33, 37, 39, 46 and 47.


7 Watt, Muhammad at Medina, p. 228.

8 Ibn Hishām, p. 342; Watt, Muhammad at Medina, p. 227.
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

2. The other articles were added from time to time as the need arose.¹

3. In view of our observations above, the articles pertaining to the Jews and the declaration of Medina as haram were concluded after 7/628.

The force of logic, therefore, leads us to believe that the ummah was formed towards the concluding period of the Apostle's life and not immediately after his arrival in Yathrib. The Apostle died in 11/632.

The Sahifah is actually not the constitution of a state; it lays the guiding principles for building a multi-cultural and multi-religious ummah in which the dominant group will always be Muslim.² Having established the Muslim dominance, the Sahifah also secures the following privileges for the dominant group:

1. The functions of the final court of appeal will be discharged by the Apostle.³

2. The question of war and peace is the prerogative of the Apostle.⁴

The non-Muslims included in the ummah will have the following rights:

1. The security of God is equal for all the groups.⁵

2. Non-Muslim members of the ummah have equal political and cultural rights with the Muslims. There will be complete

¹ Watt, Muhammad at Medina, p. 227.
³ “Whenever there is anything about which you differ, it is to be referred to God and to Muhammad (peace be upon Him).” (Article 23). The text of the Sahifah is given by Ibn Hishām (pp. 341-344), Hamidullah’s text (pp. 41-54) has been compared with Ibn Abi Khaithmah, Ibn Kathir and Abū ʿUbayd. See also Watt’s Muhammad at Medina (pp. 221-225).
⁴ “No one of them may go out (on a military expedition) without the permission of Muhammad (peace be upon Him) but he is not prohibited from taking vengeance for wounds. Whosoever shed blood shall be personally responsible for it as the member of his house, except where a person has been wronged. God is with those who observe this document scrupulously” (Article 36).
⁵ “The security (dhimma) of God is one; the humblest of them can, by extending his protection to anyone, put the obligation on all of them; the believers are brother to one another (mawāli) as against all peoples” (Article 15).
freedom of religion and all groups will be autonomous.\(^1\)

3. Non-Muslims and Muslims will take up arms against the enemy of the ummah and will share the cost of war. Muslims and non-Muslims are sincere friends with honourable dealings and no treachery.\(^2\)

4. Non-Muslims will not be obliged to take part in the religious wars of the Muslims.\(^3\)

The Ṣabīfah is a clear indication of the lines on which the Apostle was building the ummah. It was a multi-religious community. Its basis was neither territorial nor tribal. Article 20 of the Šabīfah implies the exclusion of idolators (mushrikūn) from the ummah and since the Šabīfah included the Jews of Yathrib in the ummah it appears that only a belief in the Unity of God was essential for the membership of the ummah.

There were no Christians in Medina, so they did not join the ummah. But in 9/630 when a deputation of Christians under the leadership of ʿAbdul-Masih ʿĀqib, al-Ayham and Bishop Abū Ḥāritha b. ʿAlqama visited Medina the Apostle invited the Christians to join him on the basis of the unity of God.\(^4\) He said:

O People of the Book! Come to a word equal between us and you that we worship none but Allāh, and that we associate no partner with him, and that some of us take not others for Lords beside Allāh.\(^5\)

It is significant that this invitation was extended to them after they had declined the Apostle’s offer to accept Islam.\(^6\) The Qurʾānic

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1 “‘The Jews of Banū ʿAwf are an ummah along with the believers. To the Jews their dīn and to the Muslims their dīn. This applies both to them and their clients, except for him who is guilty of oppression, or treachery; he brings evil only on himself and members of his house” (Article 25, Articles 26 to 35 are similar).

2 “‘It is for the Jews to bear their expenses and for the Muslims to bear their expenses, between them there will be help against those who fight against the people of the Šabīfah. Between them is sincere friendship and honourable dealing, not treachery, no one shall violate the pledge of his ally and there is help for the person wronged” (Article 37).

3 “‘And if they (the Jews) are invited to a peace to participate in and to adhere to it, they shall participate in it and adhere to it, and if they invite likewise, the same shall be incumbent upon the believers in their favour, except whoever goes to war in the cause of religion” (Article 45).

4 Ibn Hishām, pp. 401-411.

5 The Qurʾān, ʾĀlʾImrān, 64.

6 Ibn Hishām, p. 411.
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

invitation "to come to a word equal between us and you" does not, therefore, provide a basis for a compromise on matters of faith. The Apostle's biographers, Tradition collectors and jurists working under a mighty Muslim empire have not preserved for us the answer to this offer given by the Christians of Najrān. But there are indications that they accepted to join the ummah on the terms of the Şahifsah as far as they could be applied to that region. They accepted the dominant role of Muslims as the administrators of justice, and requested the Apostle "to send a man he could trust, to decide between them in certain financial matters in dispute among them."1 Abu Ībâyadh b. al-Jarrāḥ was accordingly appointed by the Apostle as a judge for the Christians of Najrān.2

There was, however, flexibility in applying this principle. It was the claim to believe in one God and not the practice which was the criterion. Though the Jews have been accused by the Qurʾān of associating Īzâr with God, Islam accepts them monotheists. This seems to be the foundation of the ummah. It is the concept of the Unity of God which leads to the idea of oneness of the universe and the universal concept of the ummah, emphasizing the essential equality of the rights of all men. The Jews or Christians were not expected to change their religion. Their belief in the Unity of God was sufficient basis for cooperation, but not integration. It was the concept of a multi-religious society. It was a plural society allowing entry on the basis of elective affinities in which racial or ethnic differences had no relevance, but the belief in the Unity of God was essential.

Though the ummah was a pre-political community, yet it was not un-political. By its very nature politics is inherent in any process of community building. "It is interesting to note that this first constitution of the Arabian Prophet dealt almost exclusively with the civil and political relations of the citizens among themselves and with the outside."3

In this pre-political ummah the Apostle exercised authority by virtue of his divine sanction. While the Quraysh rejected the formula of 'Muhammad, the Apostle of Allāh', when signing the Treaty of Hudaibiyah, the Jews of Medina seemed to have acquiesced

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1 Ibn Hishām, pp. 410-411; Ibn Saʿd, p. 412.
2 Ibn Saʿd, p. 412.
to the adoption of a modified formula for the purposes of the Ṣaḥīfah. According to Abū Ḥubayd the words used were, “Muḥammad the Apostle”. It does not say whose Apostle. The formulation seems to have been vague enough to be acceptable to the Jews. Though Ibu Isḥāq an earlier authority gives the full formula, “Muḥammad, the Apostle of Allāh”, we are inclined to accept Abū Ḥubayd’s version. There seems to be no motive, except caution to use a phrase, which was definitely unconventional and awkward. Having accepted a non-dominant position in the ummah, the Jews of Medina probably had no choice but to agree to the appellation with the tacit understanding that it represented the view of the dominant group. Had this understanding not been there they would have not been described as Jews at all.

To search for any theoretical basis of the distribution of authority in the ummah would be futile. Whatever authority was needed at this formative period of the community was provided by the Apostle.

Mecca was conquered soon after the signing of the Ṣaḥīfah, if we agree to the date we have sought to establish above. This conquest significantly altered the situation. The pagans of Mecca lost control of the Ka‘bah and they were prohibited from approaching “the Sacred mosque after this year of theirs”. In the next verse the Muslims were ordered to fight those from among the people of the Book who believe not in Allāh nor in the Last Day, nor hold unlawful what Allāh and His messenger had declared to be unlawful, nor follow the true religion, until they pay the jizyah with their own hand and acknowledge their subjection.

Under the terms of the Ṣaḥīfah the Jews were not required to pay any tax and there was no explicit clause demanding their subjection. With these verses the dominance of the Muslims was formalised, but no other restriction was added. There is nothing in these verses or any other subsequent verses to change the multi-religious character of the ummah. It might be true to say the Jews of Medina, having lost the struggle to retain their dominant character

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1 Abū Ḥubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām, Kitāb al-Amwāl (Cairo, 1968) paragraph 517.
2 The Qurʾān, Al-Taubah, 27.
3 Ibid., Al-Taubah, 28.
4 Even though the modern concept of a community may militate against the existence of two levels of membership, in the seventh century this did not appear to have presented any difficulties.
in Medina, were not in a position to play any significant role. The maghāzī writers seem to have lost all interest in the Yathrib Jews after the discomfiture of the B. Qurayzah and other Jews after the peace treaty with the Jews of Khaybar. The Muslim history of the period, as transmitted to us, is actually the history of the maghāzī. Since the Jewish population of Medina during the later period of the Apostle’s life did not involve itself in any conflict or trouble it ceased to be of any interest to the maghāzī writer. The Apostle did not live very long after the conquest of Mecca. It is difficult to say what form the ummah would have taken had the author of the Šahtfah lived longer. With his death the Šahtfah and the ummah created by it, as well as the Jews who were part of the ummah, passed out of the picture. The term ummah, as with all living institutions, acquired a new definition under the Apostle’s successors. The Sharifah which determined the status of non-Muslim monotheists “did not derive directly from the Qur’ān, it developed out of a practice which often diverged from the Qur’ān’s intentions and even from its explicit wording”.¹ It also did not develop “in close connection with practice, but, as the expression of a religious ideal”,² as understood by Muslim theoreticians and ideologists of the Muslim ruling class, which was in fact not only in opposition to practice but in direct contradiction to the original model set by the Apostle.

² Ibid., p. 40.
CHAPTER III

THE JEWISH SUPPORT TO MEDINAN OPPOSITION

Muḥammad's followers for their part—quite apart from their adherence to the fundamental ideas of Judaism and to the precepts of Noah—showed perfect willingness to conform to a number of Jewish rituals. In theory, therefore, there was no reason why the two communities should not have lived peacefully together. But the Jewish tribes of Medina had probably not abandoned the idea of exerting a considerable political influence over the oasis as a whole. It was quite obvious to them, probably before very long, that Muḥammad's behaviour and the importance he was assuming were likely to interfere with this objective.

—MAXIME RODINSON

The ummah,¹ as visualized by the Apostle and formalized in the Ṣaḥīfah, which we have discussed in the previous chapter, could smoothly function only by the willing cooperation of its various constituents—the Muhājirūn the Anṣār and the Jews of Medina. The first five years of the Apostle's life in Medina, it seems, were spent in trying to obtain that cooperation. A section of the Anṣār, called the munāṣīqūn², and three Jewish clans of Medina—the B. Qaynuqā³,

¹ The ummah in the context of our discussion of the Jews of Medina is confined to the definition given to it by the Ṣaḥīfah i.e. 'the people of the Ṣaḥīfah.' For a fuller discussion of its meanings see Montgomery Watt, 'Ideal Factors in the Origin of Islam', The Islamic Quarterly, No. 3 (October 1955), pp 161-74. and his book Islamic Political Thought, Rudi Paret's article in EI(1) and Abul Aʿla Maududi, Islamic Way of Life, referred to in the previous chapter.
² Though a precise and rigid definition of the word is not possible, it would perhaps be safer to say that the term describes those inhabitants of Medina, who had outwardly accepted Islam, but were suspects for various reasons. They were unreliable during the time of crises (The Qurʾān, Al-ʿAṣāb,12-24), avoided participation financially or physically in the Ḥiḍād (The Qurʾān, Muḥammad, 20, 31) and even looked forward to the time when the Apostle would be expelled from Medina (The Qurʾān, Al-Munāṣīqūn, 8). See The Qurʾān, Al-Munāṣīqūn and Ibn Hishām pp. 411-13.

51
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

the B. al-Naḍir and the B. Qurayzah—withered that cooperation without which the ummah could not play an effective role. Abd Allāh b. Ubayy, a prominent Medinan opponent of the Apostle, led the munāfiqūn, while the leaders of the B. al-Naḍir provided the main Jewish opposition. In the next two chapters we shall examine that Jewish opposition.

The Apostle escaped from the Meccan persecution to the safety of Yathrib in September 622. The date marks not only a new era in Muslim history, but also the second and most crucial phase of the Muslim struggle for survival. While it is admitted that there is "a scarcity of information about the internal politics of Medina" during the early years of the Apostle’s Hijrah, the strength of the opposition which the Muslims had to face does not seem to be fully realized. The Muslim hagiographer by playing up the miraculous aspects of the Apostle’s maghāzi has complicated the historian’s task of ascertaining the true strength of the Apostle’s supporters and opponents up to the time of the truces of Ḥudaiyibah (6/628) and Khaybar (7/628). After an allowance is made for the tendency of the maghāzi writer to exaggerate the opposition and understate the Muslim strength, the fact remains that during the first two years the Quraysh of Mecca, the Jews of Khaybar, the pagan tribes of the Ḥijāz and above all the munāfiqūn and the Jews of Yathrib had collectively superior and decisive strength vis-a-vis the new Muslim community.

Though conscious of their strength, the pagans and the Jews were not unmindful of the progress the Apostle was making. They were worried at the advance of Islam. To stop its further progress the total communication media of the time were employed against the Apostle. The propagandist poets, whom Rodinson describes as "the journalists of the time", and Carmichael as kindlers of battle³ accused the Muslims of Medina of dishonouring themselves by submitting to an outsider. Abū ʿAfak taunted the children of Qaylah (the Aws and the Khazraj):

I have lived a long time, but I have never seen
Either a house or gathering of people

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1 See Ibn Hishām, pp. 351-400 for the details of the Jewish opposition to the Apostle.
2 Watt, Muhammad at Medina, p. 180.
3 Maxime Rodinson, Mohammedi, tr. Anne Carter (New York, 1971), p. 194. "A tribal poet among the Bedouin", as Joel Carmichael puts it, was "no mere versifier, but a kindler of battle", his poems were "thought of as the serious beginning of real warfare". (The Shaping of the Arabs, A Study in Ethnic Identity, New York, 1967, p. 38).
THE JEWISH SUPPORT TO MEDINAN OPPOSITION

more loyal and faithful to
Its allies, when they call on it,
Than that of the children of Qayla
(the Aws and Khazraj) as a whole.
The mountains will crumble before they submit
Yet here is a rider come among them who had
divided them.
(He says) ‘This is permitted; this is forbidden’
to all kinds of things.
But if you had believed in power
And in might, why did you not follow a *tubha*?

Abū “Afak in effect asked: The *Tubba* was after all a south
Arabian king of great reputation, but you resisted him; now what has
happened to you that you have accepted the claims of a Meccan
refugee?

“Ašmā” bint Marwān was more forceful and forthright:

Fucked men of Mālik and Nābit
And of “Afw, fucked men of Khazraj
You obey a stranger who does not belong among you,
Who is not of Murād, nor of Madīn’lūj (Yemenite tribes)
Do you, when your own chiefs have been murdered, hope in him
Like men greedy for meal soup when it is cooking?
Is there no man of honour who will take advantage of an unguarded moment
And cut off the gulls’ hopes?

While “Ašmā” was putting “Afw and Khazraj to shame, Ka’b b.
al-Ashraf was singing erotic prologues to the Apostle’s wives, and
composing insulting verses about the Muslim women. Ibn Ishāq
has preserved for us some of Ka’b’s amatory verses which give an idea

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1 Ibn Hishām, p. 995. The English translation is by Anne Carter given in
Rodinson’s *Mohammed*, p. 157.

2 Goitein like Rodinson observes that “the women of ancient Arabia were famous
not only for their dirges and songs of praise, but in particular for their satirical
poems, which largely served the same function as the press of today”. (*Jews
and Arabs*, p. 30).

3 Ibn Hishām, pp. 995-96; Anne Carter’s translation in Rodinson’s *Mohammed,
pp. 157-58.


5 Ibn Hishām, p. 550.
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

of his style. The following lines are devoted to Umm al-Faḍl bint al-Ḥārith:

Are you off without stopping in the valley
And leaving Umm al-Faḍl in Mecca?
Out would come what she bought from the pedlar of ‘bottles,
Henna and hair dye
What lies ‘twixt ankle and elbow is in motion
When she tries to stand and does not
Like Umm Ḥakim when she was with us
The link between us firm and not to be cut
She is one of B. ʿAmīr who bewitches the heart,
And if she wished she could cure my sickness.
The glory of women and of a people is their father
A people held in honour true to their oath.
Never did I see the sunrise at night till I saw her
Display herself to us in darkness of the night.

While this campaign of vulgarity and abuse was conducted by the poets, a Jew from the B. Qaynuqā, Shās b. Qays, ordered a Jewish youth to recite some poems composed on the occasion of the battle of Buṣāθ to a mixed gathering of Muslims composed of the Aws and the Khazraj till they got so worked up that both the Aws and the Khazraj challenged each other saying, “If you wish we will do the same again”. The excited parties said, “We will. Your meeting place is outside—that being the volcanic tract—To arms! To arms!” As soon as the Apostle heard the news he hurried to the spot with the Emigrants and addressed the men of the Aws and the Khazraj thus:

O Muslims, remember God. Remember God. Will you act as pagans while I am with you after God has guided you to Islam and honoured you thereby and made a clean break with paganism; delivered you thereby from unbelief; made you friends thereby?

The following verses were revealed on the occasion:

O ye who believe, if you obey any party of those who have been given the Book, they will turn you again into disbelievers after you have believed. How would you disbelieve, while you are the people to whom the signs of Allāh are rehearsed and among whom the Messenger of Allāh is present. He

1 Guillaume’s translation (The Life of Muhammad, pp. 366-67). The pornographic nature of this line becomes evident when it is realised that it refers to the motion of Umm al-Faḍl’s buttocks when she is reclining.


3 Ibn Hishām, p. 386.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., p. 387.
who holds fast to Allâh is indeed guided to the right path. O ye who believe, be mindful of your duty to Allâh in all respects, every moment of your lives, so that death, whenever it overtakes you, should find you in a state of complete submission to Him. Take fast hold, all together, of the rope of Allâh, and be not divided. Call to mind the favour of Allâh which He bestowed upon you when you were at enmity with each other and He united your hearts in love so that by His grace you became as brethren.¹

This was the atmosphere of unrest in Medina in which the Battle of Badr took place. Within less than two years of the Hijrah (Ramaḍân 2 A. H./March 624) three hundred and fourteen Muslims led by the Apostle defeated a Meccan army of a thousand Qurayshites at Badr. The dead Meccans numbered between fifty and seventy, including the leading Quraysh opponent of the Apostle, Abû al-Ḥakam ⁶Amr b. Hishâm (Abû Jahl) and several other leaders. Another seventy or so were taken prisoners. On the other side only fourteen Muslims were killed. There were no Muslim prisoners. This was the first major encounter with the Meccans after the Apostle’s migration from Mecca.²

This notable victory considerably strengthened the Muslim position in Medina, “which had perhaps been deteriorating during the previous few months when it looked as if he (the Apostle) was unlikely to achieve anything”³. The incipient opposition in Medina, which had earlier taken the Apostle and his followers rather lightly, seems to have become restive. The Jews and their allies, who had joined the Muslim ranks, but were sitting on the fence, waiting for the opportunity to expel the Muslims from Medina⁴, were naturally disturbed. It seems they were spoiling for a confrontation in Medina, which the Apostle intended to avoid at any cost. During this period probably some incident took place in Medina creating friction between the Muslims and the B. Qaynuqâ. Ibn Iṣḥâq did not report it, but his editor, Ibn Hishâm added it to his narrative. An Anṣârî woman, according to him, was immodestly exposed by a Jewish goldsmith in the market place of the B. Qaynuqâ. She uttered a loud cry

¹ The Qur’ān, Al-Imrān, 100-104.
² Ibn Hishâm, pp. 427-539; al-Wâqîḍî, Vol. I, pp. 19-171; Ibn Sa’d, Vol. II, pp. 11-27. Out of the seven expeditions which took place before Badr there was either no contact or no fighting in six; only in the Nakhlah expedition led by Abd Allâh b. Jahsh involving seven to twelve people was there fighting and one man was killed.
³ Watt, Muhammad at Medina, p. 15.
⁴ The Qur’ān Al-Munâfiqûn, 8; Ibn Hishâm, p. 559.
THE JEWISH SUPPORT TO MEDINAN OPPOSITION

B. al-Naḍîr shut themselves up inside their forts and waited for the help.

The story of the B. Qaynuqāʾ was repeated. The Apostle went with his Companions and sat down till they surrendered. No one moved to help the B. al-Naḍîr. *Sūrat al-Ḥāshîr*, which was revealed on this occasion, deals with the incident. Referring to the promised help the Qurʾān says:

Knowest thou not the hypocrites who say to their disbeliefing companions among the people of the Book: if you are turned out of Medina, we will surely go out with you, and we will never obey anyone at all against you, and if you are fought against we will certainly help you.

The siege lasted for a fortnight and then the B. al-Naḍîr surrendered. They were deported, but allowed to take what they could carry on their camels, except for their weapons. They went with six hundred camels loaded with their possessions, even dismantling their houses and carrying away the lintels of the doors. Wood was expensive and they would need it for their new houses. Some went to Khaybar and others went to Syria. Sallām b. Abū al-Ḥuqayq, Kīnānah b. al-Rabīʿ b. Abū al-Ḥuqayq and Ḥuyayy b. Akhtāb were among those who went to Khaybar. Ibn Iṣḥāq reports that the defeated clan wound its way “with such pomp and splendour as had never been seen in any tribe in their days”. Al-Wāqidī, not to be outdone by Ibn Iṣḥāq, added that the women of the B. al-Naḍîr wore their finest dresses and decked themselves in their jewels. No one had ever seen women so beautiful who vied with shining pearls and the full moon. Ibn Saʿd with his usual restraint dropped this qāṣṣ embellishment from his account.

A great many factors seemed to have conspired in the second year of the Hijrah to produce conditions which made the B. Qaynuqāʾ, probably, an unsuspecting victim of the munāfiqūn’s machination. This benefit of doubt could not be given to the B. al-Naḍîr. The B. Qaynuqāʾ seemed to have invited conflict at a time when the Muslims could respond from a position of strength and consequently afford

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3 Ibn Ḥishām, pp. 653-54.
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

generosity. The B. al-Naḍir adopted a hostile posture at a time when the Apostle and his followers were in deep waters. To treat them with the same leniency which was shown to the B. Qaynuqāʾ would have been a sign of weakness, and disastrous to the Muslim prestige.
CHAPTER IV

THE FAILURE OF THE CONFEDERACY

It seems as if the strain and trouble of trying to take a critical view of confident assertions so troubles the human mind that men and women are prepared to concede the most damning case against their fathers and grandfathers in order to avoid the tedious work of disentangling the evidence for themselves.

— G. KITSON CLARK

Exiled but not exhausted, defeated but not dejected, the B. al-Naḍir settled in Khaybar fairly quickly. In the peace and quiet which Khaybar offered, the leaders of the B. al-Naḍir must have taken stock of the whole situation. The new religion was not only a threat to the Meccans, but to the Jews as well. If the initiative was left to the Muslims they might strike again and do so at a time of their own choosing. Individually neither the Jews nor the Meccans could destroy this band of poor but committed people under a leader who commanded absolute authority and unwavering loyalty. So the B. al-Naḍir decided to send a mission to Mecca. It was a large delegation of twenty leaders. Prominent among the B. al-Naḍir, who led the delegation, were Sallām b. Abū al-Ḥuqayq, Ḥuyayy b. Akhṭab and Kinānah b. Abū al-Ḥuqayq. A number of leaders from the B. Wā’il also joined this delegation; the B. Wā’il was a sub-tribe of the Khazraj but was closely linked with the Jews. This delegation arrived in Mecca in the summer of 5/626 and invited the Quraysh to join them in an all-out attack on Medina so that they might get rid of the Apostle once for all. The Quraysh responded gladly to their invitation to fight the Apostle. From Mecca this delegation of the Jews went to the Ghaṭafān and extended the same invitation. The delegation informed them that the Quraysh had already accepted their invitation. They also offered
them annually half of the date crop of Khaybar as the price of their joining the Quraysh. Later during the Battle of the Ḩazāb the Apostle, who obviously knew of this arrangement between the B. al-Naḍir and the Ghāṭafān, matched the offer and promised them a third of the dates of Medina on condition that they would go back with their followers. The offer was, however, not ratified by the Anṣār. The Jews also contacted their allies among the Banū Saʿd, another sub-tribe of the Khazraj. The Banū Asad and the Banū Sulaym were also approached and they too accepted the invitation to fight against the Apostle.3

Preparations for the joint attack started soon and tribal forces began to arrive in early February 9/627. The Ghāṭafān and the B. Fazāarah came with 2,000 men and a thousand camels under ʿUaynah b. Ḥiṣn b. Ḥudhayfah b. Badr. The B. Sulaym sent a contingent of 700. Ashjāʾ and the B. Murrah sent 400 warriors each. The B. Asad’s contingent, whose strength is not known, arrived under Ṭulayḥah b. Khauwaylid. The Quraysh marched under the leadership of Abū Sufyān b. Ḥarb b. Umayyah; there were 4,000 of them with 1,500 camels and 300 horses. The total strength of the army, which Abū Sufyān led against the Muslims was 10,000.4

The Muslims dug a trench, which ran from Shaykhayn to the Mount of Banū ʿUbayd. The Apostle established his camp just ahead of the hill of Saʿd. The total Muslim strength was 3,000. The women and children were sent away from the main front. The B. Qurayzah were in the rear, which was not covered. (See map on the next page). As Watt observes, “an attack from the south on the Muslim rear by Qurayzah might have put an end to Muḥammad’s career.”5 During the siege, however, no major action took place and the B. Qurayzah did not get an opportunity to attack. There were no large stocks of food in Medina and the Muslims began to feel the pangs of hunger.6 The food also ran short in the enemy camp; Abū Sufyān had made no provisions for such a long siege either. Outnumbered and starving

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2 Ibn Hishām, p. 676.
5 Watt, Muhammad at Medina, p. 39.
Medina at the time of the Battle of the \textit{Ahzab}
with their rear exposed the Muslim were in a bad shape; their plight has been described by the Qurʾān in the following verses:

Your eyes became distracted and your hearts reached your throats, 
while you thought thoughts about Allāh. Then were the believers 
sorely tried, and were violently shaken.¹

To break the impasse Abū Suṭyān sent Ḥuyayy b. Akhtāb to the 
B. Qurayyāh inviting them to join the Confederates.² After some hesitation their leader Kāʾb. b. Asad agreed. The Qurʾān refers to the B. Qurayyāh as “the people of the Book who had backed up the Confederates”.³ In the meantime, the Apostle got wind of Ḥuyayy b. Akhtāb’s approach to the B. Qurayyāh and sent Saʿd b. Muʿādh and others to find the truth; they went, talked to the B. Qurayyāh and confirmed the report. Later, on, a scout of the B. Qurayyāh who had been sent to reconnoitre in the area where the Muslim families were quartered, was killed by Ṣaffiyah the aunt of the Apostle.⁴

The Battle of the Ṭḥāb was actually a major siege in which three armies, “the Quraysh, the Ghaṭafān and the B. Qurayyāh”⁵ invested Medina. “They came at you from above you and from below you”.⁶ According to Ibn Ishāq those who came from above were the B. Qurayyāh and those who came from below were the Quraysh and the Ghaṭafān.⁷ It was an expensive mistake. The Confederates were reasonably optimistic about their ability to take Medina. During the siege which lasted nearly a month there were only two actions: an individual combat in which ʿAmr b. ʿAbd Wudd b. Abū Qays was killed by ʿAlī⁸ and the second in which Ṣaffiyah killed a scout from the B. Qurayyāh. None of the three investing armies got a chance to fight an open battle. Abū Suṭyān, unable to endure the severe winter and wind, broke camp and withdrew. The Ghaṭafān followed him and withdrew to their own country. But the B. Qurayyāh could not go with them. The Muslims now turned to them and they shut themselves in their forts. It was the same old story of the B. Qaynuqāʿ⁹ and the B. al-Naḍīr. The Jews had not learnt the simple

² Ibn Hishām, p. 674.
⁴ Ibn Hishām, p. 680.
⁵ Ibid., p. 694.
⁶ The Qurʾān, Al-Ahzāb, 10.
⁷ Ibid, p. 694.
⁸ Ibn Hishām, p. 678.
THE FAILURE OF THE CONFEDERACY

lesson that the Muslims had adopted a new strategy, and their *ajām* had ceased to provide security against the new method of Muslim warfare. The Apostle went with his companions and laid siege till they surrendered.

This is more or less the standard version of the incident as reported by Ibn Ishāq\(^1\), al-Wāqidi\(^2\) and Ibn Sa’d\(^3\) with slight variations in details. These are the facts as they emerge from the Muslim sources. There is no corroborative evidence from the Jewish or Christian sources. The condemnation of the B. Qurayzah, however, as reported by Ibn Ishāq and other *maghāzī*-writers, does not stand to reason and it is at variance with the Qur’ān.

Before we analyse the various accounts of the conflict with the B. Qurayzah it is interesting to examine Ibn Ishāq’s treatment of the pre-Islamic reports concerning this tribe. We are first introduced to the Banū Qurayzah, when two of their rabbis advised the *Tubba‘* (5th century A.D.) not to destroy Yathrib because “Yathrib was the place where a prophet of the Quraysh would seek refuge in future and it would become his abode and a resting place.”\(^4\) The report is obviously written in the spirit of latter day history. The B. Qurayzah are mentioned for the second time when, after the Apostle’s arrival, the Jewish rabbis, including those of the B. Qurayzah, told the polytheist Quraysh “your religion is better than his and you are on a better path than he and those who follow him”.\(^5\) The third reference is to the arbitration referred to the Apostle by the B. al-Naḍīr and the B. Qurayzah. The B. al-Naḍīr used to pay half of the normal bloodwit instead of the full 100 *wasaq* of grains to the B. Qurayzah, but the Apostle “awarded the bloodwit in equal shares”.\(^6\)

These three references which precede the main account of events connected with the affair of the B. Qurayzah show that Ibn Ishāq might have been swayed by the contemporary ideas about the Jews: they knew or at least their rabbis knew even before the birth of the

\(^{1}\) Ibn Hishām, pp. 669-713.


\(^{3}\) Ibn Sa’d, Vol. II, p. 65-78.


\(^{5}\) Ibn Hishām, p. 391.

\(^{6}\) Ibn Hishām, p. 396. Ibn Kathir explains that the B. al-Naḍīr did not treat the B. Qurayzah as their equals. If in a dispute a man of the B. Qurayzah killed a man from the B. al-Naḍīr he paid 100 *wasaq* of grain, but if the B. al-Naḍīr killed a man of the B. Qurayzah he paid only 50 *wasaq*. (Vol. II, p. 60).
Apostle that a prophet would appear among the Arabs. In spite of that knowledge their rabbis told the polytheist Quraysh that their religion was better than that of the Apostle who like them believed in one God. Ibn Ishāq has given the following account of the whole affair:

The Apostle besieged the B. Qurayzah for twenty-five nights until they were sore pressed and felt sure that the Apostle would not leave them until he had made an end of them. At this stage Ka'b b. Asad offered them three alternatives:
1) Accept Muhammad as a true prophet and save yourselves, or
2) Kill your wives and children and fight with Muhammad till God decides between you and him, or finally
3) Tonight is the eve of the Sabbath; take Muhammad and his companions by surprise.

The Jews did not accept any one of these proposals and requested the Apostle to send Abū Lubābah for consultations. Abū Lubābah told them to surrender, but at the same time pointed with his hand to his throat signifying slaughter. In the morning they submitted to the Apostle’s judgment. The Aws said, ‘O Apostle, they are our allies, not allies of Khazraj, and you know how you recently treated the allies of our brethren’. The Apostle asked, ‘Will you be satisfied if one of your own number pronounces judgment on them?’ When they agreed the Apostle appointed Sa'd b. Mu'ādh. The Aws now requested Sa'd to treat his friends (the B. Qurayzah) kindly, to which Sa'd replied, ‘The time has come for Sa'd in the cause of God, not to care for any man’s censure’. Hearing this some of the Aws went back to the quarter of B. 'Abd al-Ashhal and announced the death of B. Qurayzah before Sa'd reached there, because of what they had heard him say. Sa'd asked the Aws and the Apostle if they would accept his judgment. They agreed. Then Sa'd gave his judgment: The men should be killed, the property divided and the women and children taken as captives. Then the B. Qurayzah surrendered. The Apostle confined them in Medina in the quarters of a woman. Trenches were dug in the market of Medina. They were brought out to him in batches and their heads were struck off in those trenches. As the B. Qurayzah were taken out in the batches they asked Ka'b what he thought would be done to them. He replied, ‘It is death’. This went on until the Apostle made an end of them. There were 600 or 700 in all, though some put the figure as high as 800 or 900. 4Âªishah who was one of the spectators said only one woman was killed. She was sitting with 4Âªishah when an unseen voice called her name and she was taken away and beheaded. 4Âªishah used to say, ‘I shall never forget my wonder at her good spirits and her loud laughter when all the time she knew that she would be killed.5

Now we shall examine the testimony in detail. The beginning of Ibn Ishāq’s story is quite impressive: “According to what

1 Ka'b b. Asad was the chief of the B. Qurayzah.
2 Ibn Hishām adds without isnad that the Jews said, ‘O Mohammad, we will submit to the judgment of Sa'd b. Mu'ādh.’
3 The above summary is based on Ibn Ishāq’s account. Ibn Hishām, pp. 684-69.
al-Zuhri told me."1 But the story deals with (i)2 Gabriel's appearance before the Apostle and (ii) the Apostle's instructions that none should perform the afternoon prayer (ṣaḥr) until after he reached B. Qurayyah. Some of them "prayed the afternoon prayer there after the last evening prayer. God did not blame them for that in His Book, nor did the Apostle reproach them. My father Ishâq b. Yasâr told me this Tradition from Ma'bad b. Mâlik Anşârî".3 To accept the view that Ma'bad b. Mâlik Anşârî's report does not conclude al-Zuhri's report and the rest of the account given by Ibn Ishâq is also on the authority of al-Zuhri is to accept that al-Zuhri not only reported Ka'b b. Asad's imaginary speech but also incidents which are mutually exclusive. In view of al-Zuhri's reputation for reliability4, it is difficult to concur with this view. A more reasonable explanation would be to consider that while some of Ibn Ishâq's information was derived from al-Zuhri, he added details which were not sufficiently supported; on such occasions his sources are "not always particularly clear".5

After this introduction the subsequent account up to the delivery of Sa'd b. Mu'âdh's judgment is of doubtful authority.6

Ibn Ishâq tells us that (iii) the Apostle besieged the B. Qurayyah for twenty-five nights.7 But Ibn Sa'd says that they were besieged for fifteen days.8 (iv) When the Jews felt sure that the Apostle would not leave them until he made an end of them, Ka'b b. Asad addressed them in the following words :

"O Jews, you can see what has happened to you. I offer you three alternatives. Accept what you wish. (i) We will follow this man and accept him as true, for by God it has become plain to you that he is the prophet who has been sent and that it is he whom you find mentioned in your scripture; if you do so your lives, your property, your women and children will be saved." They said, 'We will never abandon the laws of the Torah and never change it for another'. He said, 'Then if you won't accept this suggestion (ii) let us kill our wives and children and send men with drawn

1 Ibn Hishâm, p. 684.
2 All incidents in the account of the B. Qurayyah have been given consecutive Roman numbers.
4 Supra, Introduction, p. 16.
5 Supra, Introduction, p. 16.
6 The incident of Abü Lubâbah's forgiveness is an exception for which Ibn Ishâq has given an isnâd; it has been reported on the authority of Yazid b. Abd Allâh b. Qusayr.
7 Ibn Hishâm, p. 685.
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

swords to Muhammad and his companions leaving no encumbrances behind us, until God decides between us and Muhammad. If we do perish, we shall not leave children behind us to cause us anxiety. If we conquer we can acquire other wives and children. They said, 'Should we kill these poor creatures? What would be the good of life when they were dead?' He said, 'Then if you will not accept this suggestion (iii) tonight is the eve of the Sabbath and it may well be that Muhammad and his companions will feel safe from us then, so come down, perhaps we can take Muhammad and his companions by surprise.' They said: 'Are we to profane our Sabbath and do on the Sabbath what those before us of whom you well know did and were turned into apes?' He answered, 'Not a single man among you from the day of your birth has ever passed a night resolved to do what he knows ought to be done.'

It is at once apparent that the first alternative of Ka'b b. Asad is a reflection of Ibn Iṣḥaq's questionable story of the rabbis of the B. Qurayzah who had told the Tubbae of the coming of the prophet. The Jews, according to Ibn Iṣḥaq's version of Ka'b b's speech, knew that the Apostle was right and was the true messenger of God, and still on the eve of their death they refused to accept him. The first alternative and the answer the Jews gave is patently absurd. If they were convinced that the Apostle was an impostor and they were ready to die then they were heroes, but if it had "become plain" to them that he was a prophet and they still persisted in their death-wish then it meant that the whole clan had gone mad. Obviously, it had not "become plain" to them and Ibn Iṣḥaq has put in Ka'b b. Asad's mouth what had "become plain" to him.

The second alternative shows Ibn Iṣḥaq's ignorance of the Jewish law and history. These 600 to 900 men were going to fight an army of 3,000 soldiers, who had returned victorious from the Battle of the Aḥzāb. Though it seemed to be a mad act of self destruction, yet there was a slim hope. The victorious Muslims were in bad shape. The general position in Judaism is that suicide is strictly forbidden "And surely the blood of your lives shall I require" is considered a prohibition referring to suicide. The preservation of one's life is considered to be of such importance that man is not permitted to sacrifice

1 Ibn Hishām, pp. 685-686.
2 The story as suggested earlier has a latter day Muslim gloss.
3 "... for by God it has become plain to you that he is the prophet who has been sent and that it is he whom you find mentioned in your scripture..." (Ka'b b. Asad's speech).
4 See infra, Chapter VI.
5 Genesis 9:5.
THE FAILURE OF THE CONFEDERACY

his life even to avoid violating biblical commands, the exception being the three cardinal sins, murder, adultery and idol-worship.

Indeed concerning the three for which he must lay down his life, many authorities hold that he is to allow himself to be killed rather than violate them, but must not actively destroy himself.¹

There have been exceptions² but the general rule is that while one should fight to death one should not die by his own hands, or murder. If this tribe of the Jewish priests could fight like the defenders of Masada, it could inflict very heavy losses on the starving Muslims. But the morale of the besieged Jews was so low that Ka'b's advice portended suicide rather than victory.

Probably in the history of religious persecution Jews are the only minority group who while secretly remaining faithful to Judaism practised another religion which they or their ancestors had to adopt to save their lives. Marranos, Chuetas and Jadid al-Islam are some of the well known Crypto-Jews.³ But no one from the B. Qurayzah tried to save his life by accepting Islam. There is nothing intrinsically wrong in accepting that they all died as martyrs, but it seems to be too good to be true; it has the overtones of the story of the martyrs of Najran. In 723 A.D. the Byzantine emperor ordered the Jews of Asia Minor to embrace Christianity under pain of severe punishment; many Jews submitted to this decree. They "were of the opinion that the storm would soon blow over, and that they would be permitted to return to Judaism."⁴ Earlier in 654 the Jews of Toledo had to accept Christianity under similar circumstances.⁵ The second alternative was, therefore, neither in accordance with the Jewish law, nor Jewish practice, and was above all devoid of logic.

The answer to the third alternative which Ka'b b. Asad had suggested also does not comply with the Jewish law. In refusing to fight on the eve of the Sabbath the Jews of the B. Qurayzah said: "Are we to profane our Sabbath and do on the Sabbath what those

³ See Encyclopaedia Judaica, under Crypto-Jews and also under individual headings.
⁴ Graetz, p. 123.
⁵ Ibid., p. 103.
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

before us of whom you well know did and were turned into apes.”¹ This answer betrays the superficiality which Muslim scholarship normally shows when dealing with Judaism. No wonder Margoliouth complains that “the most woful ignorance is displayed by the compilers and interpreters of the Qurʾān about the part played by the Jews”.²

Since the Maccabean revolt (175-135 B.C.) a rule had been promulgated that the preservation of life overrides the observance of the Sabbath.³ All laws of the Sabbath or even the Day of Atonement can be overridden in the face of the sacred duty of preserving life.⁴

The reference to turning into apes is obviously an anachronism influenced by the later commentators on the Qurʾān. This is a reference to the Qurʾān where the word ‘apes’ has been figuratively used meaning that they became abject and humiliated men.⁵ There is no reference in Jewish literature to the conversion of Jews into apes because they profaned the Sabbath. Mujāhid b. Jabr (d. 102/720), who is considered to be one of the great commentators on the Qurʾān and was a tabiʿi does not believe in the physical transformation of the Jews into apes.⁶

It would be reasonable to consider Kaʾb’s speech to the B. Qurayzah on the eve of their surrender as mainly imaginary or distorted by later tradition. Al-Wāqidī has provided an extended version with embellishments.⁷ It seems Ibn Saʿd realized the impossibility of such an address and dropped the whole incident altogether from his account.

(v) After this imaginary exchange between Kaʾb b. Asad and the B. Qurayzah, the Apostle was requested to send Abū Lubābah b.ʿAbd al-Mundhir for consultations. Abū Lubābah, when he arrived, was asked whether he thought the Jews should submit to the Apostle’s judgment. “He said, ‘Yes’, and pointed with his hand to his throat, signifying slaughter. Abū Lubābah said, ‘My feet had not moved from the spot before I knew that I had been false to God and

¹ Ibn Hishām, p. 686.
² Margoliouth, The Relations between Arab and Israelites ..., p. 71.
⁴ Berakho 61 b, Mishnah Yoma 8.7.
⁵ “And surely, you have known the end of those amongst you, who transgressed in the matter of Sabbath. So we said to them ‘Be ye apes, despised’, The Qurʾān, Al-Baqarah, 65.
THE FAILURE OF THE CONFEDERACY

His Apostle. Ibn Hishâm (not Ibn Isâq) quotes two verses from the Qur’an about Abû Lubâbah’s indiscretion. Both of the verses have been quoted in a doubtful context. The first verse: “O ye who believe! prove not false to Allâh and the Messenger, nor prove false to your trusts knowingly” was not revealed at the time of the Battle of the Ahzâb. It was revealed after the Battle of Badr (624/2). The second verse quoted by Ibn Hishâm is supposed to be about God’s forgiveness of Abû Lubâbah:

And there are others who have acknowledged their faults. They mixed a good work with another that was evil. It may be that Allâh will turn to them with compassion, Surely Allâh is Most Forgiving, Merciful.

The above verse was actually revealed after the expedition to Tabûk (9/630) and refers to those true believers who stayed behind without permission.

(vi) Ibn Isâq reports that in the morning the B. Qurayzah submitted to the Apostle’s judgment and the Aws leapt up and said, “O Apostle, they are our allies, not allies of the Khazraj and you know how you recently treated the allies of our brethren”. When the Aws spoke thus the Apostle said, “Will you be satisfied, O Aws, if one of your men pronounces judgment on them?” When they agreed, the Apostle said Sa’d b. Mu‘âadh was the man.

Al-Wâqidi and Ibn Sa’d also report the B. Qurayzah’s surrender to the Apostle’s judgment and the appointment of Sa’d as hakam. But Ibn Sa’d gives another report saying that they surrendered to the judgment of Sa’d.

2 Ibn Hishâm, pp. 686-87.
3 The Qur’an, Al-Anfâl, 27.
4 Ibn Kathîr, Tafsîr, Vol. II, p. 301. The verse was revealed after Háib b. Abû Balta’ihi agreed to send a letter to the Quraysh informing them of the Apostle’s intended attack on them. See also al-Tabari, Tafsîr, Vol. XIII, p. 480.
5 The Qur’an, Al-Taubah, 102.
6 Abû Lubâbah, according to Ibn “Abbâs, was one of these true believers who had stayed away from the expedition to Tabûk with the Apostle’s permission and this verse was sent down about these people. Ibn Kathîr, Vol. II, p. 385; al-Tabari, Tafsîr, Vol. XIV, pp. 447-453.
7 Ibn Hishâm, p. 688.
10 Ibid., p. 77.
Both al-Bukhārī¹ and Muslim² give two contradictory reports, one saying that the B. Qurayyah surrendered to Sa’d’s judgment and the other saying that they surrendered to the Apostle’s judgment, who in turn appointed Sa’d as hakam.

(vii) When the Apostle appointed Sa’d as hakam his people came to him and said, “Deal kindly with our friends, for the Apostle has made you hakam for that very purpose”. When they persisted Sa’d said, “The time has come for Sa’d in the cause of Allah not to care for any man’s censure”. Hearing this clear pronouncement, some of the Aws went to the quarter of the B. ʿAbd al-Ashhal (the sub-tribe of the Aws to which Sa’d belonged) and announced to them the death of the B. Qurayyah.³ Al-Wāqidi’s account is similar to that of Ibn Isḥaq.⁴ Ibn Sa’d has dropped the whole story of the intercession by the Aws on the B. Qurayyah’s behalf. But he has referred to Sa’d’s prayer that he might live till he had the pleasure of seeing the end of the B. Qurayyah.⁵

(viii) After this announcement of the approaching death of the B. Qurayyah to the people of the B. ʿAbd al-Ashhal and Sa’d’s prayer to have the pleasure of seeing the B. Qurayyah’s end, the umpire arrives at the scene and asks the Anṣār, according to Ibn Isḥaq, “Do you covenant by Allah that you accept the judgment I pronounce on them?” They said, ‘Yes’, and he said, ‘And is it incumbent on the one who is here?’ (looking) in the direction of the Apostle not mentioning him out of respect, and the Apostle answered, “Yes”.⁶ Al-Wāqidi⁷ gives a similar account but Ibn Sa’d has dropped it.

(ix) Sa’d’s judgment was that “the men⁸ should be killed, the property divided, and the women and children taken as captives”.⁹

(x) After the judgment has been given Ibn Isḥaq quotes on the authority of ʿĀsim b. ʿUmar b. Qatādah who told him that the Apostle

¹ Al-Bukhārī, Sahīh, Chapter “Return of the Apostle from Al-Ahrāb”, Vol. V, pp. 143-44.
⁶ Ibn Hishām, p. 689.
⁸ فان أحكم نفيهم ان تقتل الرجال Ibn Hishām, p. 689.
⁹ Ibn Hishām, p. 689.
said to Sa'īd, “You have given the judgment of Allāh above the seven heavens”.1

(xi) The Apostle went out to the market and dug trenches in it. Then he sent for them and struck off their heads in those trenches. There were 600 to 900.2

The inner contradictions in the above account cannot be reconciled. To sum up Ibn Isḥāq’s account, the fate of the B. Qurayyāh was already decided by the Apostle: Abū Lubābah already knew it and having revealed it inflicted upon himself a self-imposed punishment. Sa'īd b. Mu‘ādh wished to live till he had avenged the B. Qurayyāh’s treachery and when approached by the Aws he made it clear that in the cause of Allāh he did not care for any man’s censure. Furthermore he is the same Sa'īd who had gone to the B. Qurayyāh before the Battle of Ahzāb and when the Jews told him they had no agreement or understanding with the Apostle he “reviled them and they reviled him. He was a man of hasty temper and Sa'īd b. Ubādah said to him, “Stop insulting them, for the dispute between us is too serious for recrimination.”.3 The Tradition reported by Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī and given by Al-Bukhārī and Muslim is very difficult to accept; it means that the B. Qurayyāh surrendered on the condition that the man who so recently reviled them and was praying for vengeance should be appointed their judge. They were inviting a death sentence. It may be noted that the first two reporters Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī and Abū Umāmah were Anṣārī and were more interested in reporting the status of Sa'īd. This Hadith is shādīhah, and ijmā‘ī. Ibn Hajar has unsuccessfully tried to reconcile its apparent contradiction with ʿĀrāf’s report by quoting Ibn Isḥāq’s account.4 By the time Sa’īd arrived to judge, the news of his intention to sentence them to death had reached the quarter of ʿAbd al-Ashhab and yet he goes through the formalities of asking the Aws if they would accept his judgment and these very people who had asked for kind treatment for the B. Qurayyāh, instead of denouncing him as prejudiced and as having disqualified himself as an impartial judge, say “Yes”. Afterwards he asks the Apostle the same question and the Apostle, whose intentions were known to Abū Lubābah, who in turn had disclosed them to the B. Qurayyāh, says, “Yes.” If Ibn Isḥāq’s account is correct, one is obliged

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1 Ibn Hisham, p. 689.
2 Ibid., pp. 689-90.
3 Ibn Hishām, p. 675.
4 Supra, pp. 77-78, sub para. (vi).
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

to conclude that Sa’d’s judgment was prearranged. It is not without reason that Caetani has questioned the whole account of Sa’d’s selection by the B. Qurayyah as hakam. The evidence is contradictory and mutually exclusive.

It is not within the purview of a historian’s task to express an opinion on Muhammad’s claim to prophethood, but the belief of the Aws and Sa’d b. Mu’ādhh in his prophethood is a historical fact. The Aws and for that matter all the Muslims of Medina, who supposedly saw Abū Lubābah bound to one of the pillars in the mosque for being “false to God and his Apostle” and heard Sa’d praying for vengeance watched this “simulated justice”, and yet there was not one who questioned it.

The account given by Ibn Ishāq, without his usual phrases of qualification such as za’amna or dhukira li or concluding remarks “God knows best”, is rather unusual; it does not comply with his own standard of caution and scrupulousness.

As we have seen earlier the incident concerning Abū Lubābah’s self-imposed punishment does not fit into the context. It must be rejected. “The story as we have it” Watt rightly points out, “must have been manipulated”. The B. Qurayyah’s choice of Sa’d as hakam does not stand to reason. Sa’d was not ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayy; there is not a single incident in his life which shows that the B. Qurayyah could depend on him in the way the B. Qaynuqā did on ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayy. His loyalty to the Apostle and the cause of Islam was beyond doubt. Ibn Ishāq’s report that the Apostle appointed Sa’d as the judge is supported not only by al-Waqīdī but also by Ibn Sa’d. Above all it has the authority of al-Bukhārī’s second Ḥadīth which is marfu‘ being reported by ʿĀz-ıshah, who was an eye witness of the whole affair. It seems to be more in line with the practice of the Apostle. In the absence of positive law during the earlier days of his stay in Medina the Apostle had adopted a policy of punishing a criminal through his kinsmen; it was based on two sound principles: there would be no tribal war of vengeance, and secondly it would be known that Islam had broken all tribal ties. Silkān b. Salāmah b. Waqsh, who had conspired with Muḥammad b. Maslama in killing

2 نوزون بالله من ذلك
2 Ibn Hishām, p. 686.
3 Watt, Muhammad at Medina, p. 188.
Ka'b b. al-Ashraf, was Ka'b's foster brother. Aṣmā bint Marwān who was married to a man of B. Khatmah was killed by Umayr b. Adiy al-Khathṭāmī and Abū Afak who belonged to the B. Amr b. Awf of the B. Ubayyādah clan was killed by Sālim b. Umayr of the B. Amr b. Awf. All these three were killed by their own kinsmen, with the approval of the Apostle, for fomenting trouble between the Muslims and the pagans and for whipping up hatred against the Apostle. It would therefore have been natural that if the B. Qurayyah were to be judged they should be judged by a man from their half, the Aws.

Ibn Sa'd with his usual caution has dropped Ibn Ishāq's and al-Wāqidi's story of Sa'd's remarks that the time had come for him in the cause of Allāh not to care for any man's censure, Sa'd's ceremonial request for a pledge from the Aws and the Apostle to abide by his ruling, and the story of the Aws' intercession with Sa'd on behalf of the B. Qurayyah. Obviously they added ornament to the narrative of a story-teller, but divested it of the reliability of a historian's account.

Now the actual sentencing. According to Ibn Ishāq, Sa'd said "the men should be killed". In another report Ibn Ishāq says that "the Apostle had ordered that every adult of theirs should be killed." This report rests on the authority of Atiyah al-Quraṣī, who was a boy at the time of the B. Qurayyah's surrender. Both of these reports are of doubtful authority. According to al-Wāqidi "those should be killed over whom the razor had passed". Ibn Sa'd has given two reports; in one he has followed al-Wāqidi's wording and in the second he says, "their fighting men should be killed". Al-Bukhārī has given two reports of the incident. In both of them Sa'd b. Muṣādih is reported to have used the word "fighting men".

1 Ibn Hishām, p. 551.
2 Ibid., p. 596.
3 Ibid., p. 595.
4ibbon Hishām, p. 698.
5 "كان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قد أمر أن يقتل من بني قريش كل من أثبت
6 فتاوى أحكامهم أن يقتل من جزء عليه الموسى.
7 Ibn Sa'd, Vol. II, p. 75.
8 "فحكم فيهم أن نقتل مقاتلينهم.
and not adult. According to the first report he said:

'Slay their fighting men and take captive their families'.

In the second report, he said:

'Slay the fighting men and take captive their women and children'.

*Sahih Muslim* has also given two reports using the same word, *muqātil*, that al-Bukhārī used.

Ibn Ishaq's second report, that every adult should be killed, may be ruled out first. There is general consensus that the Apostle in the case of the B. Qurayyah did not give any orders. The first order to "kill all men" is neither in keeping with the Traditions of al-Bukhārī and Muslim nor with the second report of Ibn Sa'd. Al-Waqidi's wording is more colourful but not exact. Since old men cannot be killed the killing was limited to *muqātil*, the fighting men.

According to Ibn Ishaq, 600 to 900 men of the B. Qurayyah were executed. It is not known what was the total strength of the B. Qurayyah. If each family is taken to consist of six persons—and this is a low average—3,600 to 5,400 men, women and children must have surrendered. They were all confined in the house of Bint al-Hārith, a woman of the B. al-Najjār, and bound with ropes. Incarceration of four to five thousand persons can create problems even in a large town in the present age of crime, police and jails. If Ibn Ishaq is to be believed, Medina must have been a very well-organized town which could provide detention arrangements for such a large number of prisoners. How much rope was used and what was the area of Bint al-Hārith's house? Were the prisoners fed? What sanitary arrangements were provided for such a large number of people in a town where there were no toilets and even women went out in the darkness for such necessities. None of these prisoners tried to

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2 Ibid., p. 144.
3 *Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 245 and 246, Vol. II, pp 1112 and 1113.
5 "A'ishah reports: "We did not have those privies which foreigners have in their houses; we loathe and detest them; our practice was to get out into the open spaces of Medina". Ibn Hishām, p. 733. Al-Bukhārī also gives a similar report from "A'ishah, Chapter "Hadith al-Ifk," Book V, p. 150.

82
escape and the Muslims seem to have no difficulty in locking up these tame prisoners. Ibn Ishāq reports again without clear isnād, “Then the Apostle went out to the market and dug trenches in it”.1

Ibn Ishāq has used the words fakhandaqa bihā khanādiqa.2 It is interesting that al-Waqidī has dropped this wording and instead used the words fa amara bikhudādiin.3 The word khudād for trench is of a doubtful nature4, but al-Waqidī, obviously, used it because some of the classical commentators of the Qurʾān consider that the aṣḥāb al-ukhdūd5 were the Christians of Najrān who were massacred by the Jewish king Dhū Nuwas. Most probably al-Waqidī was aware of the role of the Jews of Yathrib in inciting Yūsuf Dhū Nuwas to make war against Najrān.6

7Ali and Zubayr were the executioners, and the prisoners were brought in batches.7 Ibn Ishāq says:

As they were taken out in batches to the Apostle they asked Kaʿb what he thought would be done with them. He replied, “Will you never understand? Don’t you see that the summoner never stops and those who are taken away do not return? By Allāh it is death!”8

These are the people who had surrendered to the judgment of Saʿd who had condemned all the adult males to be executed. It seemed they knew nothing about this sentence of death. But the woman who was sitting with ʿĀʾishah as the “Apostle was killing her men”, and was laughing a great deal, knew that she was to be killed. When her name was suddenly called ʿĀʾishah cried, “What is the matter?” “I am to be killed”, she replied.” “ʿĀʾishah used to say”, Ibn Ishāq continues, “I shall never forget her cheerfulness and her great laugh, when all the time she knew that she was to be killed”.9

8Huyayy b. Akhtāb died bravely and al-Zābir b. Bāṭā al-Quraẓī refused to take advantage of the pardon given to him and his family.

1 Ibn Hishām, pp. 689.
2 Ibid., pp. 689-90.
8 Ibn Hishām, p. 690.
9 Ibn Hishām, pp. 690-91. The story must be rejected; neither al-Bukhāri nor Muslim who report from ʿĀʾishah have accepted it.
The same people who cowardly refused to fight on a Sabbath and in spite of being safe in their castles had lost their morale, died as heroes. None of the 900 wavered or accepted Islam even in the face of death.

It has all the common features of a religious massacre, even though the account has been provided by the partisans of the perpetrators of the slaughter.

1. The victims were outnumbered by their opponents; (Najrān and Masada);
2. They lost because of treachery;
3. There are always some who stand out as heroes (Ḥuyayy b. Akḥtab, Zābir b. Bātāh);
4. There are no waverers and no forced converts;
5. Few are left to give the details of the horror.
And like most massacres it is not true to life.

The first part of Ibn Isḥāq's story gives us a picture of demoralized people trying to avoid fighting at any cost; the second part paints for us a picture of heroes ready to die for their faith. Walking in a flowered robe in which he had made holes so that no one might take it as spoil, Ḥuyayy b. Akḥtab addressed the Apostle:

By God, I do not blame myself for opposing you, but he who forsakes God will be forsaken.

The discrepancies in Ibn Isḥāq's account do not end here. The B. Qurayyah lived at a six to seven hours' walking distance from Medina. On surrender they were brought to Medina and kept in a house. The next morning trenches were dug in the market place to bury the executed people. It is surprising that a general of the Apostle's astute knowledge of strategy and logistics would have brought nearly five thousand captives—nine hundred of them to be slain—all the way to Medina and bury them right in the middle of the town. It would have been far better, safer and more efficient to make short shrift of them outside their forts, and then to take only the women and children to Medina. The problem of the security of prisoners, and of sanitation in Medina, would have been solved. If they had to be marched to Medina then there was a ready-made trench which was dug outside Medina only a month back. It was not far.

1 According to Ibn Isḥāq, the Muslims left Medina at noon and reached the B. Qurayyah after the last evening prayers. Ibn. Ḥishām, p. 685.
THE FAILURE OF THE CONFEDERACY

Since the captives included women, children, and old and sick people they must have walked to Medina at a much slower pace—ten to eleven hours. Neither during this march nor during their captivity in the house of Bint al-Hârith did any incident take place. No one tried to escape except ʿAmr b. Suʿdā al-Quraẓi, and no one accepted Islam to save his life except Rifāʿa b. Samawʿal al-Quraẓi. It was both a tame and a brave crowd. If the story is true the martyrs who fell under Bar Kochba (A.D. 132) against overwhelming odds were nothing in comparison to the martyrs of the B. Qurayṣah.

The disposal of nine hundred bodies did not seem to have posed any problems. The trenches neatly dug were filled by the same night.

There was apparently a complete absence of any sentiment among the Muslims who watched this execution. It must have been a shattering experience for many and an unforgettable event even for those who thought it to be fully justified. Several heart-rending incidents must have taken place during the day; some must have tried to struggle and run, others would have uttered words of dismay and repentence, and there must have been many who either did not die at the first blow, or died of fright even before the executioner’s sword struck. Swords must have blunted and broken. ʿAli and Zubayr, who were the executioners, must have faced several problems, and witnessed many facets of human nature on that day. But neither ʿAli nor Zubayr, in fact no one, ever later mentioned anything about his experience of this execution.

A detailed scrutiny indicates that the whole story of this massacre is of a very doubtful nature. As Ibn Khaldūn has pointed out “the rule of distinguishing what is true from what is false in history is based on its possibility or impossibility.” We have already pointed out that Medina in the Apostle’s time was not equipped to imprison four to five thousand people and execute 600 to 900 people in a day. Killing such a large number of people and disposing of the dead bodies created problems even for Nazi Germany, with hydrogen cyanide as an efficient lethal agent. A massacre in the midst of a town where people live is very different from a massacre in a town which is being sacked by a conquering army marching onwards from town to town with dead bodies left to make it uninhabitable.

MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

Under these conditions it is almost impossible that the people of Medina should have escaped typhoid, typhus, both epidemic and endemic, influenza, diarrhoea and above all cholera. As regards the dead bodies the infection would depend on the animals and birds having access to the remains. But even if there were only flies, and the people whose corpses were lying there had all been healthy, the proliferation of agents, especially bacterial agents, after death would have been a health hazard, since the healthy may be carriers of dangerous diseases such as meningococcus.

Discussing the mass execution of the B. Qurayzah under “the alleged moral failures” of the Apostle, Watt has remarked:

This may seem incredible to the European, but that is in itself a measure of remoteness of the moral ideals of ancient Arabia from our own.¹

But the effect of such a mass execution on the spectators and executioners is not related to moral values—ancient or modern. The human psyche, as is well known to students of psychology, may have nothing to do with a sense of duty, or political and religious obligations. Executioners, grave diggers, undertakers deal with death in the ordinary course of life as an honest and moral profession, nevertheless this continuous association with death creates suffering and terror of blood guilt.² No one could come out of such a holocaust—600 to 900 killed in cold blood in one day—without damage to his personality. ³Ali and Zubayr’s holocaust legacy of massive deadness would not have left them in peace. Though Zubayr’s life is not fully known to us, we do know well enough about the life of the fourth Caliph of Islam. His sermons, letters, political discourses and sayings collected in Nahj al-Balaghah do not reflect experience of such a mass execution. His scruples in “retaliation”, among other aspects of his personality, “cannot be disregarded for the understanding that it affords of his psychology”.⁴ After his victory at ‘the camel’, “he tried to relieve the distress of the vanquished by preventing the enslavement of their women and children, in face of the protests of a group of his partisans; when battles ended, he showed his grief, wept for the dead, and even prayed over his enemies”.⁵ ³Ali was a brave soldier, not a

¹ Watt, Muhammad at Medina, p. 327.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid.
hard-hearted executioner. "Ali’s partner in the execution, al-Zubayr b. al-Awwām, was also renowned for gallantry and took part in all the great battles and campaigns of the Apostle’s lifetime. The very idea of such a massacre by persons who neither before nor after the killing showed any sign of a dehumanised personality is inadmissible from a psychological point of view.

To write history, one must know how to count. Ibn Ishāq, al-Wāqidī and Ibn Sa’d could not only count, but took care, wherever possible, to check their information. But they were writing approximately two centuries after the event and had no way of checking the number of people executed. Six hundred to nine hundred, given by Ibn Ishāq, is an impressionistic round figure. There was no method of taking a tribal census at that time. Circumstantial evidence such as tax figures, jizyah and kharāj accounts and the register of pension payments to the Companions were introduced in 6Umar’s time. Nabia Abbott in discussing the number of Muslim martyrs of Bīr Maṣ‘ūnah (4/625) pointed out that Ibn Ishāq gave the number of people sent to Bīr Maṣ‘ūnah by the Apostle as forty. Ibn Ḥanbal and al-Bukhārī however reported seventy, which is now accepted. According to Ibn Ḥabīb, however, the number of the missionaries who went was thirty. Since the whole party was massacred and only one companion was left alive, sixty-nine companions were killed. But al-Wāqidī lists only sixteen. Ibn Sa’d has not given any list, but taking account of all the entries in Ibn Sa’d one cannot arrive at a figure of more than twenty slain. There is a discrepancy of forty-nine. Even if the conservative figure of Ibn Ishāq is taken into account, there is a fifty per cent exaggeration.

Kister, who has collected all the available versions of the incident and analysed them, has reached the conclusion that the Apostle sent

3 Ibn Hishām, pp. 648-49.
4 Ahmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥanbal, Al-Musnad (6 volumes, Cairo, 1895), Vol. III, p. 196.
5 Al-Bukhārī, Šaḥīḥ, III, p. 91.
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

a group of fourteen companions, who were later joined by four more men.1

One finds the same tendency to exaggerate when dealing with
the Jewish persecution of the Christians of Najrân, who were probably
punished for the so-called treason during the first Abyssinian invasion
of the Jewish kingdom of Yemen.2 The number of Christian martyrs
according to Simeon of Beth Arsham, who received the information
from “those who came from Najrân” was two thousand.3 Bell
considers that a “moderate number” of 200 seems to be more correct.4
Baron considers “that some probably minor local persecution was
exaggerated”.5 “The entire account is so completely legendary”
says Graetz “that it is impossible to discover any historical fact”.6

“The simplest answer”, Nabi Abbott suggests, “would be to
dismiss it as one more example of a well-known and widespread
phenomenon, namely that relayed numbers tend to grow and multiply
with time.”7

It is significant that neither al-Bukhârî nor Muslim reported
any Tradition on the actual execution of Sa'd’s judgment. Since
they did not report how Sa'd’s judgment was carried out they also
did not report on the number of people killed or taken prisoner.

The story that the captive women and children of the B. Qurayzah
were sent to the Najd to be sold for horses and weapons does not agree
with the practice.8 The Jews always bought their captives from
Arabs after every skirmish.9 The Jews of Khaybar, including the
B. al-Naḍîr, Wâdî al-Qura, Taymâ, and even Medina itself were capable
of buying these captives and, as al-Wâqidi says, they bought them.10
The Muslims, if interested in the money at all, were interested in it
to buy weapons and horses. It made no difference to them if the
captives were sold in the Najd or Khaybar. In fact it seemed to be far

1 M.J. Kister, “The Expedition of Bi'r Ma‘unah”, Arabic and Islamic Studies in
2 The date of the massacre is controversial; See Irfan Shahid, The Martyrs of
Najrân, pp. 235-42.
3 Ibid., p. 64.
4 Richard Bell, The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment (London, 1926),
p. 38.
5 Baron, Vol. III, p. 67.
8 Ibn Hishâm, p. 693.
9 Ibid., p. 253.
more convenient to sell them in the Ḥijāz than to travel with such a large number of captives to the Najd.

Finally, according to Ibn Ḩaqq, the Apostle divided the property of the B. Qurayṣah among the Muslims. “On that day he declared the shares of horses and men, and took out the khums (the fifth). A horseman received three shares, two for the horse and one for the rider; a man without a horse got one share. . . . It was the first booty on which lots were cast and the khums was taken. According to the precedent set on this occasion, divisions were made, and it became the custom for raids.”¹ In view of considerable controversy on the share of a horseman Ibn Ḩaqq’s report assumes great importance because it sets two precedents regarding the spoil of war: the share of the horseman and the procedure of casting lots on the booty and taking the khums. Abū Ḥanīfa gives one share to the rider and one to the horse, while al-Awzā’ī (d. 157/774) gives one to the rider and two to the horse. Imam Shāfi’i (150/767-204/820) has dealt with the subject and quoted several authorities on the question without any reference to Ibn Ḩaqq’s reports.² Abū Yūṣuf³ (d. 182/798), one of the founders of the Hanafi school of law, in his well-known treatise on public finance, taxation and other related matters, Kitāb al-Kharāj, also does not mention the share of the horseman fixed on the defeat of the B. Qurayṣah. As regards khums, Abū Yūṣuf is quite categorical: no khums was taken from the property of the B. Qurayṣah.⁴ Yahya b. Ādam,⁵ writing his Kitāb al-Kharāj approximately twenty years after Abū Yūṣuf and dealing with the same subject does not mention the B. Qurayṣah at all. Imam Shāfi’i, Abū Yūṣuf and Yahya b. Ādam, who were compiling judicial works based on authentic traditions and well-established precedents, did not consider either Ibn Ḩaqq’s account or the current qāṣṣ material reliable.⁶

Ibn Ḩaqq’s account of the punishment of the B. Qurayṣah is a plethora of self-contradictory statements. So are the accounts of

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¹ Ibn Ḥishām, pp. 692-93. Al-Waqidi has expanded it into more than four pages (Vol. II, pp. 521-22). Ibn Sa’ūd has not mentioned anything about the property of the B. Qurayṣah.


⁴ Abū Yūṣuf, Kitāb al-Kharāj (Cairo, 1346 A.H.), p. 81.

⁵ Supra, Chapter III.

⁶ It confirms the view expressed earlier that most of Ibn Ḩaqq’s account is not based on al-Zuhri. Abū Yūṣuf frequently quotes al-Zuhri in his book.
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

al-Wâqidi and Ibn Sa’d. The account as given by them is untrustworthy both in detail and substance. Fortunately Ibn Ishâq has left some telltale references which help us to reconstruct the incident in conformity with the information which the Qur’ân gives on the subject. Since an author, writing with a bias is more likely to be unguarded and truthful in his casual reference, we could perhaps rely more on the evidence adduced in the following disquisition. Since “Arab culture was basically oral, and poetry was its documentary evidence and the best means of preserving traditions”, 1 we shall look into some of the verses which Ibn Ishâq has preserved and Ibn Hishâm has not rejected as spurious.

On the day of Qurayzah, by which Ibn Ishâq seems to mean the last day of their siege, the battle was probably heavy. Three Muslims lost their lives on that day. 2 It is not known how many men of the B. Qurayzah died in the battle. The fighting must have been fierce. Ḥassân b. Thâbit said:

Qurayzâ met their misfortune
And in humiliation found no helper,
A calamity worse than that which fell B. al-Naḍîr befell them
With fresh horses bearing horsemen like hawks.
We left them with the blood upon them like a pool
They having accomplished nothing.
They lay prostrate with vultures circling round them. 3

After their defeat they surrendered to the Apostle. A party (fârîq) 4 from among them who had fought but not taken a leading part was taken prisoner. 5 The leaders of the B. Qurayzah were, however, left to the judgment of Sa’d b. Mu‘âdh. There are indications that the sentencing of these leaders was done right on the spot. As al-Samhûdî has pointed out, Sa’d was brought to the Qurayzah mosque

2 Ibn Hishâm, pp. 699-700.
3 Ibn Hishâm, p. 712, Guillaume’s translation.
4 Râghib, see under fârîq “a company of men apart from others” الجماعة المتفرق عن آخرين. Edward William Lane, Arabic-English Lexicon (London, 1863) Book I, Part 6, p. 2385, fârîq, “party more in number or larger than firqah, which means ‘a party, portion, division sect or distinct body or class of men.’ Ibn Manzûr, Vol. X, p. 300, ‘fîrqah is party of men and fârîq is larger than fîrqah’.
5 The Qur’ân, Al-Âhzâb, 26, “You took a party captive”.

90
and not to the mosque of Medina. The Hadith in both al-Bukhārī and Muslim suggests that Sa'īd, who was mortally wounded in the battle, went to a mosque. His tent was so close to the Apostle’s mosque in Medina that in his grave condition it was not necessary to bring him there. Sa’īd decreed that the combatants from among the leaders should be executed. Probably the main leaders included old men and ordained priests, who were not combatants, hence the word ‘combatants’. This party (farīq) was not brought to Medina, but was beheaded at the spot. The leaders, Ḥuyayy b. Akhtāb, Ka‘b b. Asad, Nabbāb b. Qays and Ghazzāl b. Samaw’al were executed by ʿAlī and Zubayr. In conformity with the policy adopted by the Apostle that executions should be carried out by a member of the tribe who is in alliance with the tribe of the guilty party minor leaders were handed over to the Aws. Two of the condemned were given to each of the clans or sub-clans of the Aws; (i) ʿAbd al-Ashhal; (ii) Ḥārithah; (iii) Zafar; (iv) Mu‘āwiyyah; (v) ʿAmar b. ʿAwf; and (vi) Umayyah b. Zayd, so that all the clans were involved in the blood of the B. Qurayzah. The culpable leadership of a tribe of 600 to 900 men; especially when some of them have already been killed in the battle and one group has been taken captive would not normally exceed sixteen, or seventeen accounted for in the above analysis. The decision to help the Ahzāb must have been taken by the leaders and the elders of the B. Qurayzah. The whole tribe could not be given the same punishment that was in store for their leaders. The Apostle himself was bound by the Qur’ānic maxim of just retribution; “an eye for an eye and a life for a life.” This principle, as we have shown earlier, had been agreed upon both by the Muslims and the Jews, for we find it formalized in the Saḥṣfah: “a person acquires guilt against himself.”

1 Al-Samhūdī, Vol. III, p. 824. The place where the Apostle prayed during the siege was converted into a mosque.
2 The Qurʾān, Al-Ahzāb, 26, “You slew a party”.
3 Ibn Hishām, p. 690.
5 Al-Waqīdī, p. 513.
7 The Qurʾān, Al-Baqarah, 178.
8 Supra, Chapter II.
9 Ibn Hishām, p. 344.
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

The Qurʾān mentions only two groups which were punished: one was executed and the other was taken captive. Unfortunately Ibn Isḥāq and other maghāzi writers were not interested in those members of the B. Qurayṣah who were not punished. Some of them might have stayed and others (as Jabal b. Jawwāl al-Thaʿlabī said) might have migrated:

O Saʿd, Saʿd of B. Muʿādh,
For what befell Qurayṣah and al-Naḍir.
By thy life, Saʿd of B. Muʿādh
The day they departed was indeed steadfast.1

In the whole affair of the B. Qurayṣah Saʿd b. Muʿādh plays the most important role, and the account of his appointment as the judge is the most controversial and confusing element in it, as we have noted earlier. The ṣirah writers generally agree that the Apostle appointed him as a judge to satisfy the Aws; out of the two reports al-Bukhārī and Muslim give, one agrees with the ṣirah writers and the other says that the B. Qurayṣah surrendered to Saʿd b. Muʿādh’s judgment. The reports of his appearance on the scene as the judge seem to be concerned with details regarding his personal status and standing; when the Apostle called Saʿd b. Muʿādh Sayyid, a chief, did he mean Sayyid of the Anṣār only or the Muhājirūn as well; how did the Apostle describe the sentence pronounced by Saʿd: did he compare his sentence with the judgment of Allāh, the angel, or the King?2 While the controversy throws some light on dissent and friction among the Anṣār and Muhājirūn, the significance of the whole episode seems to lie elsewhere. Al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277) commenting on the Sahih Muslim report of Saʿd’s judgment says:

In their disputes Muslims are allowed to resort to taḥkīm. There is general consensus on this principle; Khawārij, however, do not accept it. The Ḥadith also establishes

1 Ibn Hishām, p. 713. Guillaume’s translation.
2 See W. Montgomery Watt, “The Condemnation of the Jews of Banū Qurayṣah”, The Muslim World, XLII (3 July, 1952), pp. 160-171 for the different versions of the reports about Saʿd’s appointment as hakam. The heading of Watt’s learned article though not incorrect is misleading; it deals partly with Caetani’s charge that “the tradition has tried to remove from Muhammad the direct responsibility for the inhuman massacre” of the B. Qurayṣah and partly considers how Schacht’s “methods and conclusions (in Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence) affect the study of historical traditions”. He has not dealt either with Saʿd’s judgment, its execution, or the events leading to the “massacre”. 

92
the principle that once a *hakam* has given his judgment it will be enforced, it is not possible for any one to disobey it, although before the judgment is pronounced, one can refuse to abide by it.1

For Abū Yūsuf also the importance of the B. Qurayyah incident lies in *tahkim*. He gives it under the rules of *tahkim*.2 The only time *tahkim* became a matter of controversy between Muslims was when arbitrators were appointed on behalf of 6Ali and Muʿāwiyah at Ẓifin. While the Khawārij protested against *tahkim* 6Ali did not repudiate the convention of Ẓifin. As it is well-known, Muʿāwiyah gained by the result of the arbitration. It is not necessary to repeat the main events here, but it is possible that the Hadith of Saʿd’s judgment of the B. Qurayyah strengthened the Umayyad’s cause. Had this precedent sought to be established by Saʿd’s judgment been really authentic, it would certainly have appeared during the controversy between 6Ali and the Khawārij. Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr has reported in full the debate which took place between ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbbās and the Khawārij on the question of *tahkim* in *Jamiʿ Bayān al-ʿIbn wa Fāḍlihi*, but there is no reference to Saʿd’s appointment as *hakam* in that debate. The story as reported by Ibn Iḥšāq and others had not been forged by then.

It is reasonable to conclude that a minor and unimportant incident in which probably Saʿd b. Muʿādh was involved in dealing with the B. Qurayyah was blown up out of proportion by pro-Umayyad Tradition collectors. In course of time while the *tahkim* controversy became irrelevant due to the Abbasid revolution, the reason for investing this minor incident with the force of an important precedent was also forgotten. The incident of the B. Qurayyah4 occurred before the armistice of Ḥudaybiyah and the peace with Khaybar were achieved. It is impossible that the pagans and the *munāfiqūn* would have remained muted. When Jahsh violated the sacred month and shed blood therein, when the palms of the B. al-Naḍîr were burnt, when the Apostle married the divorced wife of his adopted son, the people criticised and the Qurʾān defended the Apostle.5 It is improbable that the Apostle’s critics would have paid less attention to the lives of the B. Qurayyah

3 (Cairo, 1320 A.H.) pp. 162-63.
than to the palms of the B. al-Naḍîr. That the news of this "massacre" did not reach Syria, which included Jerusalem and Adhrawāt, with which the Medina Jews had contacts, and the Exilarchate in Iraq, which exercised religious authority over them, is highly unlikely.

The *Sahîfah* gives the names of seven Jewish tribes who became part of the *ummah*". Ibn Ishâq gives us two additional names. Unfortunately the *maghâzī*-writers, the jurists and the *Hadîth* collectors have left no information about these Jews. They showed interest only in the three Jewish clans who either joined the *munâfiqûn* of Medina or the Quraysh of Mecca or both in opposing the Apostle, and even that interest was limited to their conflict with the Muslims. As soon as the conflict was over they lost interest in them as well.

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1 See Chapter II for the definition of the *ummah*, in the context of this document.
2 *Supra*, Chapter II.
CHAPTER V

THE LAST ENCOUNTER

... the hot-bed of anti-Muslim intrigue at Khaybar.

— MAXIME RODINSON

After the banishment of the B. al-Naḍīr from Medina and the discomfiture of the B. Qurayzhah, Khaybar assumed great importance. The B. al-Naḍīr settled there after their expulsion from Medina and made it the centre of their activities to avenge their expulsion from Medina. The Jewish poet Sammāk warned the Muslims:

Haply time and the change of fortune
Will take revenge from 'the just and righteous one'\(^1\)
For killing al-Naḍīr and their confederates
And for cutting down the palms, their dates ungathered
Unless I die we will come at you with lances
And every sharp sword that we have
In the hand of a brave man who protects himself.
When he meets his adversary he kills him.
With the army is Ṣakhr\(^2\) and his fellows.
When he attacks he is no weakening
Like a lion in Tarj protecting his covert,
Lord of the thicket, crushing his prey enormous.\(^3\)

But Ṣakhr had been defeated in the Battle of al-Ahzāb and the B. Qurayzhah had also been expelled from Medina, while their leaders—including Ka'b b. Asad and Ḥuyayy b. Akhtab, the leader of the B. al-Naḍīr (and the father-in-law of Kinānāh b. al-Rabī\(^2\) b. Ḍuqayq)—had been executed. The recent defeat of the Confederates, whom the Jewish leaders had collected after a great diplomatic effort, had created a critical situation for the Jewish leadership. The Jews

\(^1\) a sarcastic reference to the Apostle.

\(^2\) Abū Sufyān.

\(^3\) Ibn Hishām, p. 658. Guillaume's translation.
of Medina having lost influence and power, it was now up to the Jews of Khaybar to salvage what was left of their prestige and above all to find a modus vivendi with the rising power of Islam. They had several advantages. Khaybar unlike Yathrib was a homogeneous state of Jews and was thus free from Arab alliances and tribal feuds. It was rich, its strongholds were self-contained, and it could stand a long siege. It could either negotiate a peace with the Apostle from a position of strength or become a garrison state, an Arabian Sparta, to ensure survival. If history was any guide, it would be self-defeating, for its lines of communications were not safe for all time. The tribes which were hostile to Islam could change sides. The Meccans had already signed a peace treaty with the Apostle.

Abū Rāfi', Sallām b. Abū al-Ḥuqayq, who succeeded Ḥuyayy b. Akhṭāb, made lavish though judicious use of the B. al-Naḍīr’s wealth to induce the neighbouring Arabs and especially the strong tribe of Ghāṭafān to join the Jews of Khaybar against the Muslims. Finally he succeeded in collecting a large army. The Khazraj, having obtained the Apostle’s permission, sent a party under the leadership of ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAtīk to kill him. Muslims thought that by removing the leader it would be possible to avoid large scale bloodshed. After Sallām’s assassination, al-Yusayr b. Ẓārīm took over the leadership. He gathered the Jewish tribes and addressed them saying “My predecessors had adopted wrong tactics to oppose Muhammad; the best thing is to attack his stronghold and I intend to do so”.2

The news of al-Yusayr’s intentions created anxiety in Medina. So the Apostle sent ʿAbd Allāh b. Rawāḥah together with three other persons to investigate the truth. ʿAbd Allāh b. Rawāḥah returned to Medina and confirmed the news. Since the Muslims did not want war and were depressed with the seemingly unfavourable terms of the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah, ʿAbd Allāh b. Rawāḥah was sent again. But this time he was on an official mission and was accompanied by thirty other persons. On behalf of the Apostle, he proposed negotiations. The Muslims were ready to try for peace by offering al-Yusayr an honourable appointment as the chief of whole Khaybar. Since the distrust was mutual, al-Yusayr left for Medina with thirty of his own guards. The arrangement was that each Muslim would be

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3 See Chapter VI for a discussion of the treaty.
accompanying a Jew. However, in al-Qarqarah, which is about six miles from Khaybar, al-Yusayr changed his mind about going to the Apostle. In that atmosphere charged with suspicion al-Yusayr made a move to draw his sword, but "Abd Allāh b. Unays was quick to perceive his intention, rushed at him and killed him.1

It was an unfortunate incident. Neither Ibn Sa'd nor Ibn Ishāq say that it was a ruse. In fact the Apostle's remarks to "Abd Allāh b. Rawāḥah on his return indicate that the Apostle did not anticipate the incident. He said, "It was Allāh who saved you from this company of oppressors."2 If al-Yusayr, however, thought it was a ruse, he was not unjustified; "Abd Allāh b. Rawāḥah and "Abd Allāh b. Unays were the Anṣār who had already killed two Jewish leaders, Ka'b b. al-Ashraf and Abū Rāfī Sallām b. Abū al-Huqayq, by deception. This unfortunate incident must have exacerbated the situation. The Jews were now in active negotiations with the Ghaṭafān to join them in attacking Medina. Khaybar became a rallying point of anti-Muslim forces. Both sides were getting ready for a final battle. The Jews at Khaybar, homogeneous, strong and safe in their forts, Muslims depressed by the peace at Ḥudaybiyyah (6/628), uncertain of the wavering at Medina and surrounded by Arab tribes who were still uncertain of this new message and religion, both weighed their chances and waited.

The incident of Dhū Qard, however, clinched the issue for the Muslims. They had no choice, but to deal immediately with the situation of Khaybar. Ibn Ishāq3, al-Waqi'ī4 and Ibn Sa'd5 have placed it before Ḥudaybiyyah, whereas it took place immediately before the Apostle's expedition to Khaybar. Al-Tabari6, reported it from Salāmah b. "Amr b. al-Akwa"7 aslamī who was himself involved in this attack and rightly places it after Ḥudaybiyyah; so does al-Bukhārī,8 who also reports from Salāmah b. al-Akwa9, and dates it three days before the expedition to Khaybar. It so happened that "Uyaynah b. Ḥiṣn b. Ḥudhayfah b. Badr al-Fazārī with the cavalry of the Ghaṭafān raided the Apostle's milk camels in al-Ghābah. A man of the Banū

3 Ibn Hishām, pp. 719-20.
6 Al-Tabari, pp. 596-604.

97
Khaybar and the Position of the Hostile Tribes

98
THE LAST ENCOUNTER

Ghifār, who was in charge of the camels, was killed. His wife and the camels were carried away by al-Fazārī. Al-Ghābah is near Medina in the direction of Syria. That the Ghaṭafān should have ventured so near Medina was not only a provocative act but also a signal of danger for the Muslims. Further efforts to seek a peaceful settlement seemed to be futile. So the Apostle took immediate action to break the alliance between the Jews of Khaybar and the Ghaṭafān.

The Apostle marched (Muḥarram 7 Hijr, May/June 628) from Medina to Khaybar by way of Ḩizr, a mountain between Medina and Wādī al-Furūn, where a mosque was built for him. From there he continued his march to al-Saḥbān, which is an evening's journey from Khaybar. Then he went forward with the army and halted at al-Rajīn to prevent the Ghaṭafān who had marched out to join forces with Khaybar, "but after a day's journey, hearing a rumour about their property and families, they thought they had been attacked during their absence, so they went back on their tracks and left the way to Khaybar open to the Apostle."¹

The Apostle reached Khaybar at night. Looking at Khaybar he prayed:

"We ask Thee for the good of this town and the good of its inhabitants and the good of what is in it, and we take refuge in Thee from its evil and the evil of its people and the evil that is in it."²

The Muslim army passed the night there. It seems the Apostle was still not sure whether the Jews really wished to give battle. However, when he saw the Jewish preparations any doubts on that count were removed. Taking into consideration the position of the Khaybar strongholds and the surrounding swamp, the date palms and valleys providing a natural protection, this must have been the most difficult military expedition for the Muslims. But unfortunately very few details of the battle are given by Ibn Isḥāq; those which are given are grist to a story-teller's mill rather than material for a historical examination. Ibn Isḥāq's account is replete with isnāds.³ The account begins with a long chain of isnāds but all that the report

¹ Ibn Hishām, p. 757. The whole account is given in detail by Ibn Hishām as well as Ibn Sa'd, pp. 106-117.
² Ibn Hishām, p. 757.
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

says is that Ibn al-Akwa was asked to dismount and chant one of his camel songs. Abd Allâh b. Amr b. Qamrah al-Fazârî told Ibn Ishâq that the Apostle prohibited the flesh of domestic donkeys and Sallâm b. Kirkirâh added that when the Apostle forbade the flesh of donkeys he allowed them to eat horseflesh. Yazîd b. Abû Ḥabîb told Ibn Ishâq from Abû Marzûq client of Tujib from Ḥanash al-Ṣanʿâni that he learnt it from a preacher that the Apostle said, “It is not lawful for a man who believes in Allâh and the last day to mingle his seed with another man’s.” All these reports and many more are very important from the point of view of Muslim law, and would not have the force of law if they were not given with proper isnâd. As far as the account of the battle is concerned practically all reports are without any authority. It is the same pattern that we found in the account of the B. Qurayzah. Had Ibn Ishâq come across any authorities he would have quoted them, but there were none. In more than twenty-three pages of Wüstenfeld’s edition there is little that can give us a reasonable account of how these forts on such heights and protected by people who had catapults were conquered by a small army who had no siege-machine.

According to Ibn Ishâq the first to fall was the castle of Nâṣîm, where Maḥmûd b. Maslamah was killed while resting, crushed by a millstone which was thrown on him by Kûnânah b. al-Ḥabîb b. Abû al-Ḥuqaqyq. The fort of al-Qamûs was difficult to conquer. Several commanders failed to subdue it. The casualties of both sides exceeded those of Badr (2/624), but not Uhud where 72 Muslims and 22 Meccans were killed. At Khaybar, 19 Muslims were killed and 50 were wounded. The enemy casualties at Badr were 70 killed and none wounded; at Khaybar 93 were killed.

Both sides knew that for the vanquished it was, probably, the last battle; a dominant elite, if defeated, would never get a chance to recover. A new group trying to establish its ascendancy, had been only very recently shown its weakness by the Quraysh of Mecca at Ḥudaybiyah. The Jews at Medina and all the Arab tribes were waiting for the defeat of this new group which threatened the whole pattern of Arab life. This was one of the most important battles

1 Ibn Hishâm, p. 758.
3 See Chapter VI, pp 285-87.
of the Apostles life. The Jews, though they could not unite under one command, fought bravely. Unlike the Jews of Medina, who had no will to fight and surrendered without giving battle, the Jews of Khaybar put up a stiff resistance. Every day the Muslims would storm and return unsuccessfully till finally ʿAli, flying the Apostles standard—which was ʿĀʾishahs wrap—won the day for the Muslims.

The Jews of Khaybar won back the honour, which had been lost by the B. Qaynuqāʾ, the B. al-ʿNaḍîr and the B. Qurayzah by their trickery and cowardice. Marḥab came out of his castle carrying his weapons and saying:

Khaybar knows that I am Marḥab
An experienced warrior armed from hand to foot,
Now piercing, now slashing
As when lions advance in their rage.
The hardened warrior gives way before my onslaught;
my ḥima cannot be approached.2

When after a heroic struggle with Muḥammad b. Maslamah, Marḥab was killed, his brother Yāsir came out with the challenge:

Khaybar knows that I am Yāsir
Fully armed, a doughty warrior
As when lions advance at a rush
The enemy give way before my onslaught.3

The Jews did not lose at Khaybar, but signed a negotiated peace with the Muslims, which suited the Apostle. The maghāzī-writers account is improbable and, as Lammens has pointed out, incorrect.4 As a result of the treaty Khaybar changed its alliance from the B. Fazārah to the Muslims. As Abū Hurayrah, who was in Khaybar with the Apostle5, plaintively reports, “We conquered Khaybar, in the booty we took neither gold nor silver, but cattle,

4 See next chapter, pp. 115-117.
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

camels, food and palm groves."¹ His report represents the correct position. Yahya b. Ādam reports from Nāfi⁰ that the Apostle gave Khaybar to its inhabitants against payment of half of the produce, and the palm trees.² Ibn Ishāq’s account of the division of the spoil concurs in principle with other reports,³ but as Abū Hurayrah has pointed out there was no hidden treasure of gold or silver.⁴

When Khaybar had been “conquered”, Ibn Ishāq reports without isnād, al-Ḥajjāj b. ʿIlāt al-Sulami went to Mecca to collect his money, which was scattered among the Meccan merchants. He took the Apostle’s specific “permission” to tell lies to collect the money. On his arrival in Mecca the people collected around him and asked how the Apostle fared in Khaybar. Al-Ḥajjāj told them, “He has suffered a defeat such as you have never heard of and his companions have been slaughtered; you have never heard the like, and Muhammad has been captured.” The Meccans, pleased with the news, helped al-Ḥajjāj to collect his money. To a distraught ʿAbbās, whom he took aside, Al-Ḥajjāj said,

‘I left your brother’s son married to the daughter of their king, Ṣafīyah, and Khaybar has been conquered and all that is in it removed and become the property of Muhammad and his companions . . . When three nights have passed let it be known if you so wish. On the third day ʿAbbās put on his robe, scented himself, took his stick and went to the Kaʿbah and performed the ṭawāf. When the people saw him they said, ‘O Abū al-Fadl, this is indeed steadfastness in a great misfortune!’ ʿAbbās answered, certainly not, by Allāh by whom you swear, Muhammad has conquered Khaybar and was married to the daughter of their king. He has seized all that they possess and it is now his property and property of his companions’.⁵

Neither of the two stories of al-Ḥajjāj, are true.

² Yahya b. Ādam, Kitāb al-Kharāj, pp. 23-25.
³ Ibn Hishām, pp. 774-776.
⁴ Ibid., p. 763.
⁵ Ibn Hishām, pp. 771-772, italics are mine.

102
CHAPTER VI

THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE CONFLICT

What does it profit the reader to wade through wars and battles and sieges of towns and enslavements of peoples, if he is not to penetrate to the knowledge of the causes which made one party succeed and other fail in the respective situations?

— POLYBIUS

The Jews of the Hijāz on the eve of the Hijrah, as we discussed in the first chapter, were a declining elite, a group which was in the process of losing its dominance, though it was not necessarily aware of the loss.

Group status reversal is not a new phenomenon. History is full of cases where the dominant elite declined and became a subordinate minority. The reversal of such status can be either sudden and violent or peaceful and gradual. A shift in economic conditions and change in the skills required for dominance, such as the invention of gunpowder, the industrial revolution, replacement of the mastery of the seas by air power, can greatly contribute to the decline of a group, which for various reasons, has not been able to keep up with the times.

Towards the end of the fifth century the Jews ruled Ḥimyār, the last of the successive kingdoms of al-Yaman, dominated Yathrib and controlled Taymāʔ, Padak, Khaybar and Wādí al-Qura on the line of the caravan route running from north to south. With the reign of Dhū Nuwās (510-525) which “provides one of the most remarkable atrocity stories of history”¹, the Jewish dynasty of Saba ended after a run of a century and a half. This may be taken as the beginning of the decline of the Jewish dominant elite. About 522 Dhū Nuwās gave the Christians of Najrān the choice between apostasy

MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

and martyrdom. On refusal to accept Judaism they were mercilessly exterminated in the trenches.\(^1\) The news was received with horror in Christendom. An Abyssinian army landed in Ḥimyar and Arabia Felix was once more restored to Christendom. At approximately the same time the Aws and the Khazraj were unified under the able leadership of Mālik b. Ḍjālān and eventually achieved parity with the Jews if not dominance over them.\(^2\) The Jewish settlements of the Ḥījāz, which according to Torrey were constituted “primarily as commercial enterprises”,\(^3\) had gradually changed into agricultural farms and palm groves, and their ājam, originally built to stave off Bedouin razzias, lost their utility as strongholds against an opponent whose tactics were very different from those of the raiding Bedouin. When the Aws and the Khazraj came to Yathrib they could manage to build only thirteen strongholds, while the Jews had fifty-nine ājam.\(^4\) But on the eve of the Hijrah, the Aws and the Khazraj and other tribes had more than eighty strongholds.\(^5\)

The war of Bu’āth, which had ended five years before the Hijrah, had weakened both the Aws and the Khazraj. The dissipation caused by this war had a far reaching effect on the early history of Islam as it helped to encourage the Apostle’s refuge in Yathrib. As Ṣā‘īd b. Ṭabā‘ah said:

God caused the war of Bu’āth to take place for the benefit of His Apostle. When the Apostle arrived in Yathrib their (the Anṣār’s) important personalities had been dispersed and their leaders killed; they were in a bad state and God had caused the day of Bu’āth so that they (the Anṣār) may enter Islam.\(^6\)

This war had a far more damaging effect on the Jews of Yathrib. First, as the allies of the Aws and the Khazraj they too suffered in the same proportion as the two Arab factions. But far more important was the loss of their position as a group whose support was sought for by both the Aws and the Khazraj and who played a considerably important role in maintaining a balance of power.

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\(^2\) Al-Samhūdī, Vol. I, pp. 177-98 and pp. 190-215. See also supra, Chapter I.

\(^3\) Torrey, The Jewish Foundation of Islam, p. 14.


THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE CONFLICT

The loss of influence among the feuding clans of Yathrib was not the only loss. The Jews, who seemed to have dominated the economic life of Yathrib, were challenged by a new trading community, the muhājjirūn—Quraysh of Mecca—who were active in trade and commerce. When Abū Hurayra was criticised for reporting a large number of Traditions he said:

My brethren of the ansār were occupied in till ing their lands; as for my brethren of the muhājjirūn, they were occupied in the markets, whereas I stayed with the Apostle only for food. I was present when they were not and I committed to memory, whereas they forgot.¹

The Jews could not forget that they were the original settlers of Yathrib and represented a superior civilization. Even though their political and economic position was threatened they could not accept the Apostle's invitation to cooperate on the basis of "a word equal between us and you that we worship no one but God."²

For the first time in their history they were confronted with a situation in which they were invited to join a wider community, not exactly as equals, but on liberal terms. The collective Jewish memory could think of their slavery in Egypt, their return to Palestine, the destruction of Jerusalem, Bar Kochba's insurrection, the Jewish kingdom of Ḥimyar, the persecution of the Christians of Najran, or their own persecution by Heraclius, their heroic constancy in the face of permanent degradation and their forced conversion to Christianity.³ They did not know how to react to this new situation. It is unfortunate that at this crucial period the Jews of Yathrib had no leadership of consequence. There was a failure of perception.

Ḥuyayy b. Akhtab and Ka'b b. Asad represented the bankruptcy of their leadership. Not having fully realized that they were losing their position of influence the Jews could not adjust themselves to group status reversal, from dominant to non-dominant, which the arrival of the Apostle meant. This descent from power, unfortunately, left the Jews irreconcilable and eager to seek revenge and restoration of their paramountcy in Medina by alliance with the Quraysh of Mecca. "If Muhammad succeeded with his plan", Watt observes, "the Jews would have no chance of supreme power, they

¹ Sahih Muslim, Fadā’il al-Šahābah, p. 1591, 160.
² The Qur'an, Al-Invān, 64.
³ Graetz, p. 103.
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

may have realized already that the Emigrants would generally have more influence on Muḥammad than the Āṣār...for some of them hopes may have been set on a league with Ibn Ubayy". Even when they failed they did not realize the necessity of adaptability. "Thus the Jewish opponents of Mahomet placed a ridiculous meaning on his sayings and revelations, and treated him contemptuously."2

The Jews of Yathrib epitomised the tragedy of a group which had lost its moorings. The tensions in the Medina of A.D. 627 reflected the strains and stresses of the larger social structure of which they were only a minor part. Having been assimilated in the Arab majority they had preserved only the external forms of an identity. Nothing distinguished them from other Arabs except their monotheism and the dietary laws. The differences between the two should have been still reduced by the Islamic monotheism, but research has shown "that groups might become more conscious of their opposed identities precisely at a time when external differences between them are being reduced."3 They failed to respond to the new situation by changing their attitude and social organization and fell back on the old tried methods of forging new alliances with non-Muslim Arabs, not anticipating that the winner would be the Muslim and not the Meccan Quraysh. Unfortunately for them, not only the fundamental changes in the larger society, but the character of the Jewish minority was determined by the personal qualities of two of its leaders, Kaʻb b. Asad and Ḥuyayy b. Akhṭab, one a wavering weakling and the other an incorrigible intriguer.

While a decline in the economic sphere is gradual and a declining elite gets time and opportunity to retard and even reverse the process of decline, a shift in the skills of war and a failure to comprehend the nature of that shift, and to adapt or retreat accordingly, is always fatal. The Jews of Yathrib lost and the Jews of Khaybar failed to destroy the small Muslim force investing it because they did not realize till the end that their āṭām had ceased to provide protection.

The origin of the word āṭām is doubtful. According to Arab scholars it is an Arabic word denoting height and according to Jewish scholars it is a Hebrew word. These were fortlike

1 Watt, Muhammad at Medina, pp. 201-2.
2 Graetz, p. 74. The Qurʾān, Al-Nisā, 46.
castles which were built on heights. Within the stronghold of the āṯūm there were stores, silos, halls for conferences, schools, synagogues, treasury and armoury. There were springs of fresh water. They provided protection against the raiding Bedouin. The Arab raiders had neither the equipment, nor supplies nor patience for a prolonged siege. Arab warfare itself was more or less like a medieval European tournament. It started with reciprocal insults and panegyrics in self-praise. Hijā (satire) was “an element of war just as important as the actual fighting.”¹ The poet reviled his enemies, hurled curses on them and extolled the qualities of his tribe. Though the vendetta was prolonged and the vengeance transmitted from generation to generation, the individual battles themselves were not long and sustained. The wars of Fūjār and Buṭāth for instance were long, but each episode during these wars was short. While a war may erupt at any time and a decisive battle can be fought at short notice, a siege demands an elaborate build-up. It is not easy to assess the strength of any well-fortified place. History abounds in expensive mistakes.

The most important and indeed the decisive factor in a siege is the endurance and determination of both the sides.

These qualities need to be particularly highly developed in the besieged, who must believe most strongly in the justice of their cause, as well as having faith in the ultimate success of their stand; fear may well play a great part in hardening the defenders’ will to resist . . . A siege brings out the best and the worst in those enduring it.²

It is different from any ordinary warfare, where most of the combatants on both sides are soldiers. But in a siege which is not of a purely garrison nature, the majority of those besieged are non-combatant men, women, and children. As a consequence morale and discipline can easily be undermined. Children and old people suffer the same privations as the soldiers, and are directly affected. In case of defeat they share the same fate. Disease and hunger can easily undermine even the strongest fortress.

In all the four major encounters with the Apostle the Jews of the Hijāz chose the shelter and protection of their āṯūm. In a

MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

siege the heaviest burden falls upon the leader of the defenders. He
has to combine in himself a veritable galaxy of talents. He must be brave and
appear to be brave without being foolhardy; he must have, or soon acquire, suf-
cient personal authority to be the unquestioned leader of his troops;... such a
man must remain serene in the face of setbacks and disappointments, so that he
generates an air of confidence in eventual victory ....1

These qualities, as the three sieges of Yathrib amply show, were
completely absent in the Jewish leadership. Khaybar presented a
different picture, but there, too, a unified leadership was not
possible.

Ibn Isḥāq, al-Wāqidī and Ibn Saʻd in their accounts of the
conflict with the B. Qaynuqāʾ have not given the name of any person
who led these unfortunate Jews. They were not short of prominent
people whose names have been mentioned in other contexts. Ibn
Isḥāq has given the names of twenty-eight prominent adversaries of the
Apostle from the B. Qaynuqāʾ.2 Rafā’ah b. Qays was one of them;
he went to the Apostle asking why he turned his back to Jerusalem
as the qiblah.3 He also went to the Anṣār asking them not to contribute
to the public expenses and when he spoke to the Apostle he
twisted his words.4 Finḥāṣ is another rabbi of the B. Qaynuqāʾ
who infuriated Abu Bakr by saying that the Jews were not poor
compared to Allāh.5 Another, Shās b. Qays, had earlier ordered a
Jewish youth to recite the poems of Buṣāth to the Anṣār.6 But neither
on the eve of the siege nor during the siege nor after the siege is the
name of any leader of the B. Qaynuqāʾ mentioned. There were seven
hundred well-fed and well-provided combatants among the B. Qaynuqāʾ;
three hundred of them had their armour. Any leader with even a
modicum of military experience would have given battle to the Apostle
in the open field. With their fortress at their back the B. Qaynuqāʾ
could effectively deal with the three hundred-odd Muslims with ease.
Unlike the Quraysh at Badr they were not short of water, and were
not camped in the open. They were strategically in a stronger position.
Their market was near the bridge of the Wādī of Baṭḥān and an upum

1 Belfield, p. 5-6.
2 Ibn Hishām, p. 352.
3 Ibid., p. 381.
4 Ibid., p. 390.
5 Ibid., p. 388.
6 Ibid., p. 385.
on the eastern side of the bridges. With their quarter straddling the bridge they could inflict the maximum losses on the Muslims in an open combat, retreat to their fortress and open the charge again at a time of their choosing. The Muslims were out of the town and, though they were assured of their supply route, they could not insure a continuous supply for a long-drawn-out battle. The B. Qaynuqā instead shut themselves up in their ʿuṣūm. They seemed to have made no attempt to either fight or break the siege. The Apostle just went and sat down outside with his men. There was no action. He could patiently sit and wait; The B. Qaynuqā could not endure beyond fifteen days. Our sources tell us that they were the bravest of the Jews and were “men of war”. These were the people who protected ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayy from all his enemies. The days of B. Qaynuqā’s bravery had passed, and the decline seems to have been rapid.

The B. al-Naḍīr had many ʿātām and were well provided. According to al-Wāqīḍī they had food supplies to last a year and their water resources were abundant; they had even provided themselves with stones to drop on the attacking force. Even granting al-Wāqīḍī’s tendency to exaggerate and lace his narrative with imaginative details, the B. al-Naḍīr were far more prepared for a long siege than the B. Qaynuqā. The Muslims, on the other hand, after their discomfiture at Uḥud and the massacre at Biḥr Maṣūnah, were in no position to maintain a long siege. The Apostle seemed to be conscious of their strength and his weakness, and therefore to break the spirit of the defenders he ordered, contrary to Arab custom, that the palm trees should be cut down and burnt. The palm trees were in any case lost—it made no difference to the B. al-Naḍīr whether they were burnt or taken over by the Muslims. If the B. al-Naḍīr won they could plant new palms; if they were defeated they would be expelled and could not make any use of these palms. But Ḥuyayy b. Akhtab was not a military leader. He was an intriguer. He could not foresee that a long siege would be to their advantage, it would not only disrupt the daily life of Yathrib but would also provide an opportunity to ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayy b. Salūl

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3 Ibn Ṣaʿīd, II, p. 29.
5 Ibn Hishām, p. 546.
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

and other disaffected people whom the Qurʾān described as munāfiqūn to foment trouble and join the battle at an appropriate time. They had sent to them a message saying, “stand firm and protect yourselves ... if you are attacked we will fight with you”.1 But there was no occasion to attack; all that the Apostle did was to burn a few palms and sit with his companions. The Jews lost nerve and surrendered without fighting. The Qurʾān has explicitly referred to the lack of military action: “You urged neither horse nor camel for it; but Allāh grants power to His Messenger over whomsoever He pleases”.3

While the B. Qaynuqā‘ and the B. al-Naḍīr merely shut themselves inside their ātām the B. Qurayzhah according to al-Wāqidī and Ibn Sa‘d offered resistance; arrow shots were exchanged and stones were hurled,9 and there were some casualties on both sides. According to al-Wāqidī and Ibn Sa‘d the siege lasted only fifteen days, but Ibn Ishāq says it continued for twenty-five days. The B. Qurayzhah were taken by surprise. It was blitzkrieg—the lightning war. For almost a month the Muslims themselves had withstood a siege. The B. Qurayzhah did not expect that they would directly return from the front and invest them. This time the Muslim army outnumbered the Jews; there were three thousand Muslims as against six hundred to nine hundred Jews. But it was winter and the Muslims were in the open; the Jews were in their strongholds well protected and provided. Above all they were fresh and the Muslims were hungry and tired. Had the Jews decided to give battle in the open they had the advantage of being on the home ground. They could retreat and sally forth in a war of attrition, which was not to the Muslim advantage. The Quraysh, the Ghaṭafān, the Jews of Khaybar, in fact none of the Arab tribes had been so far subdued by the Muslims and would, probably, have taken advantage at the slightest sign of Muslim weakening. Though Ḥuyayy b. Akhṭab was with the B. Qurayzhah, other leaders of B. al-Naḍīr were free to organize help and rally support. In fact the munāfiqūn of Medina seemed to be still hoping that the Confederates would return to attack Medina. There is a pointed reference to this hope in the Qurʾān.

They think the Confederates have not departed; and if the Confederates should come again, they would wish to be with the (nomad) Arabs in the desert asking for news of you.4

2 The Qurʾān, Al-Hashr, 6.
4 The Qurʾān, Al-Ahzāb, 20.
But the Jewish leadership was as demoralised as ever. The feebleness shown by the B. Qurayzhah made it apparent that they had no leader. Ka"b b. Asad acted like a man driven by despair. While adversity can bring out almost superhuman heroic qualities among besieged people, the B. Qurayzhah were plunged into the depths of depression. They had lost the qualities of leadership, courage and endurance, most probably, during the war of Bu’ath or even earlier.

The division of the Apostle’s life in two periods, the Meccan and the Medinan, seems to be neat and logical. But it is an oversimplification. After the Hijrah the Apostle and the Emigrants had escaped persecution, but the struggle for survival had not ceased. A more logical periodization would be to divide the Apostle’s life into three phases: the first up to the year of his call to the Ministry, the second from this date to the truces of Ḥudaibiyah and Khaybar, and the third from Khaybar to his death. We might subdivide the second phase in two periods, one of persecution and the second of armed struggle, or call them the periods of (1) Meccan struggle, (2) Medinan struggle and (3) the propagation of the faith. Ḥudaybiyah and Khaybar, whatever be the periodization, are definite watersheds in the history of early Islam. The largest number of people the Apostle could gather around him on a battle-field was 3,000 up to the end of the sixth year of the Hijrah. According to our sources this was the number of people who took part in defending Medina during the Battle of the Ahzāb.1 But the people who went out on an expedition did not exceed 1,600.2 This gives a fairly correct idea of the Muslim strength during the first six years of the Hijrah. Except for the Muhājirūn and the Ansār the Arab tribes had not accepted Islam. “Islam had touched only a few tribes on the neighbourhood of Mecca and Medina”.3 The continuous conflict with the Quraysh of Mecca and the cold war with the Jewish elite of the Ḥijāz was not conducive to the propagation of the faith, which required stability and peace. The Apostle was nearing sixty and had accomplished little except a few local successes. The failure of the Meccan-Jewish attempt to liquidate the Apostle and his followers at the Battle of the Ahzāb was only a negative success for the Muslims. They remained bottled up in Medina, safe within their own confines, free to send expeditions,

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1 Ibn Hishām, p. 673.
3 Watt, Muhammad at Medina, p. 40.
but unable to expand. Mecca and Khaybar with their tribal alliances and alignments stood firm in their opposition to Islam. They had failed to destroy Islam; the Apostle was also probably conscious of his inability to win them over. The two actions which he took soon after the Battle of the Alzūh seem to indicate a change in his strategy. He would try to neutralize them and now, being an established power in Medina, would seek a *modus vivendi* with Mecca and Khaybar.

In 628 (6 A.H.) while the exhausted Byzantine and Sassanian empires were negotiating peace after twenty-six years of war the Apostle also took a step towards peace; he announced that he was going to Mecca for the *Umrah* (the lesser pilgrimage). The pilgrimage by its very nature was to be peaceful. He invited other Muslims to accompany him. They took animals for sacrifice and were armed only with the traveller's weapon—the sheathed sword. Sixteen hundred Muslims, including four women, went with him. Some ten miles northwest of Mecca the Apostle camped and the Quraysh took a position between the Muslims and the city to prevent their entry. The Apostle was not allowed to perform the *Umrah*, but got a nonaggression pact instead. The terms of the pact were as follows:

1. The Muslims and the Quraysh will lay aside war for ten years during which men can be safe and refrain from hostilities;
2. If one of the Quraysh should go over to the Muslims without the permission of his guardian, they would hand him over to Meccans, but if any Muslim goes to the Meccans, the latter would not return him to Muhammad;
3. The parties to the pact will not show enmity to each other and there shall be no secret reservations or bad faith;
4. Those who wish to enter into alliance with the Muslims or with the Quraysh will be at liberty to do so;
5. The Muslims shall retire this year without performing the *Umrah*;
6. Next year Muslims may come with swords in sheaths, but nothing more; and can stay in Mecca for three nights.¹

These terms were humiliating. "'Umar jumped up and went to Abū Bakr saying, 'Is he not God's Apostle, and are we not Muslims, and are they not polytheists?' to which Abū Bakr agreed, and he

¹ Ibn Hishām, pp. 747-8.
("Umar) went on 'Then why should we agree to what is demeaning to our religion?'... Then he went to the Apostle and put the same questions... "

The Apostle had bought peace, which he needed most, at the cost of a great many concessions.

Having negotiated the nonaggression pact with the Quraysh of Mecca the Apostle seemed to be anxious to reach some settlement with the second most important power in the Ḥijāz, the Jews of Khaybar. It was one of the most hazardous of expeditions undertaken so far. The Apostle led a force of 1,600 men against approximately 10,000 Jews within their fortifications and 4,000 men of Ghaṭafān waiting outside in the open. It did not seem to be a normal expeditionary force. The odds were heavily against the Muslims. Most of the Arabian tribes were still pagan and had witnessed the retreat of the Muslims from Ḥudaybiyah. Our primary sources are silent on the subject; for them history and hagiography are so fused with each other that it is difficult to reconstruct the events from their narrative. Having suffered a setback at the hands of the Quraysh why did the Apostle undertake an expedition which seemed to have little chance of success? After the unfortunate incident at al-Qarqarah where al-Yusayr b. Zārīm was killed, the Apostle appears to have decided to go himself to negotiate peace with the Jews of Khaybar. He took a large party of dependable and devoted people. These were the people who had taken "their pledge unto death" under a tree at Ḥudaybiyah, known as the pledge of al-Riḍwān. This seems to be a reasonably precautionary action. He did not wish war. He made it clear that those who wished to go for booty need not accompany him on this expedition. He was going into the heart of enemy's stronghold to negotiate peace and sign a treaty with the enemy which would guarantee peace. If he succeeded, it appears, he would bring a nonaggression pact; if not, it might turn out to be a rout like the battle of Uḥud. There was no booty in either case and he did not want to take with him on this occasion anyone who would tend to lower the morale of this small force.

1 Ibn Hishām, pp. 747.
2 Ibid., p. 746.
4 The battle of Uḥud was fought in March 625 (A.H.5). The Apostle went out of Medina to fight against the advice of ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayy who said, "We have never gone out to fight an enemy but we have met disaster and none has come in against us without being defeated". (Ibn Hishām, p. 558). Muslim losses were 70 killed and 40 wounded as against three Meccans killed.
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

He had earlier taken a peace initiative and had sent a letter to Khaybar. The Apostle wrote to the Jews of Khaybar:

In the name of Allah the Compassionate the Merciful from Muhammad the Apostle of Allah, friend and brother of Moses who confirms what Moses brought, Allah says to you, O people of the Book, and you will find it in your Book, “Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah, and those with him are hard against the disbelievers, compassionate among themselves, Thou seest them bowing and prostrating themselves seeking grace and acceptance from Allah. The mark of their prostrations is on their foreheads. That is their description in the Torah. And their description in the Gospel is like a seed which sends forth its shoot and strengthens it, and it becomes thick and rises straight upon its stalk, delighting the sowers, that He may cause the disbelievers to burn with rage at (the sight of) them. Allah has promised those who believe and do good works forgiveness and a great reward”.1 I adjure by Allah, and by what He has sent down to you, by the mana and quails He gave as food to your tribes before you, and by His drying the sea for your fathers when He delivered them from Pharaoh and his works, that you tell me, do you find in what He has sent down to you that you believe in Muhammad? If you do not find that in your Book then “there is no compulsion upon you. The right path has become plainly distinguished from error”2 so I call you to Allah and His Apostle.3

The letter contains nothing which has not been said before. Both in tone and form it represents the Apostle’s approach of identifying his message with that of Moses. Mention of his brotherly relations with Moses was made when he was carried by night to al-Aqsa Mosque for his ascent to heaven.4 The letter is an invitation to Islam qualified with the formula that there is no compulsion in matters of religion. In the letter there is nothing to attract any doubt about its authenticity, no internal contradiction and no anachronism. The fabrication of such a letter to justify an attack on Khaybar is out of the question; firstly, it contains nothing which even remotely alludes to any provocation from the Jews of Khaybar, and, secondly, Ibn Iṣḥaq is not in the habit of providing justification for attacking the Jews. We have earlier noticed that Ibn Iṣḥaq did not give any reason to explain the Apostle’s warning to the B. Qaynuqa.5 Likewise the case of the Jewish merchant Ibn Sunaynah who was killed by Muhayyiṣah without any provocation.6 Furthermore the letter is

1 The Qurʾān, Al-Fath, 29.
2 Ibid., Al-Baqarah, 256.
3 Ibn Hishām, pp 376-7. Italics are mine.
4 Ibid., p. 270.
5 Supra, Chapter III.
6 Ibn Hishām, pp. 553-54.
THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE CONFLICT

not given with the account of Khaybar, but in the chapter dealing
with references to the Munāfiqīn and the Jews in the second sūrah
of the Qurʾān Al-Baqarah. No later falsifier could have adopted a
style which in its attempt to conciliate sounds like an appeal. Ibn
Ishāq has not given the date of this letter. But it can be easily
discovered. The letter quotes the last verse of the sūrat al-Fatḥ.
There is consensus among Muslim scholars that the surah was
revealed when, after signing the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah, the Apostle
was on his way back to Medina (March 628/Dhū al-Qaʿdah 6 A.H.)4.
In the same year in the month of Dhū al-Ḥijjah he sent letters to kings.
Since the Battle of Khaybar took place early in the seventh year of
the Hijrah (May-June/628) the letter must have been sent along with
these letters. This letter had no response from the Jews of Khaybar
or, if it had, Muslim historians have not recorded it.

The chain of events, the nonaggression pact at Ḥudaybiyah,
the letter to the Jews of Khaybar, the invitation to Zārīm to come to
Medina, leads us to conclude that the Apostle needed peace at any
cost. Looking at the terms of Ḥudaybiyah one might even think that
peace with honour had almost changed into peace at any cost. The
conciliatory tone of the letter to Khaybar is indeed remarkable when
one takes into consideration the bitter opposition the Apostle had
received from the Jews of Medina. He called himself “friend and
brother of Moses” and claimed to “confirm what Moses brought”,
he adjured them “by God, and by what He has sent down to you,
by the manna and quails He gave as food to your tribes before you”.
Having entreated them to accept him as the Apostle of God he added
“If you do not find that in your scripture then there is no compulsion
upon you”.

The aging Apostle needed peace and was appealing for it.
The Khaybar Jews however, had by now lost control of their
affairs. Their leadership had passed into the hands of the exiled
Naḍīrī leaders.2 They had failed their own tribe earlier and were
now playing with the destiny of those who had everything to gain
by reaching a compromise with the rising power of Islam. The

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2 Among the chiefs of B. al-Naḍīr “who went to Khaybar were Sallām b. Abū
When they got there the inhabitants became subject to them”. Ibn Hishām,
p. 653.

115
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

Apostle later repeated the Qur'anic injunction of “no compulsion”, making it clear that the invitation to Islam was not compulsory. The new ummah needed reassurance. A hostile people only 90 miles from Medina posed a great danger to the new community.

The Apostle, on the other hand, as a good general, could foresee the dangers of a siege. Located on a high mountainous plateau and surrounded by heavily cultivated valleys and malarial swamps the Khaybar fortifications covered a wide area. This was one location which defied siege. Discussing the nature of sieges Belfield observes:

For those attacking, the first essential is to seal off the besieged place from the outside world. This is always a laborious and often lengthy undertaking, and thus no government will embark upon a major siege without considerable thought, nor will it do so unless there seems to be encouraging prospects of a relatively rapid success... To assess the strength of the natural and the prepared defensive features of any well-fortified place is a very complex matter. Here history abounds in expensive mistakes... In general, natural fortresses, such as Malta and Gibraltar, nearly always seem to defeat the attacker, or cause terrible losses before being taken.1

The Apostle took the field as a last resort. It did not seem to be a conclusive battle, though Muslim historians have tried to depict it as such. Ultimately a peace was negotiated, but it was after a great loss of life in battle. Half of the dates which were offered to the Ghaṭafān were now annually given to the Muslims as tribute. "This practice, far from being considered at that time a sign of political weakness, was freely indulged in also by the great Byzantine and Persian empires to secure peace from many unruly neighbouring tribes. It was far less expensive than keeping permanent garrisons to stave off raids. By arranging with Mohammad to pay him half of their annual produce, the Khaybar Jews may have thought that they had merely exchanged one recipient for another."2 They exchanged the alliance of the Ghaṭafān with that of the Apostle. The only loser were the Faţārah. As Lammens has pointed out it is not correct to talk of it in terms of Muslim conquest of Khaybar. Later historians have painted it as a victory to justify acts which took place during ‘Umar’s time.3

The Jews of Khaybar had not adopted a condescending attitude towards the Muslims, but they had certainly over-estimated their

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1 Belfield, pp. 4-5.
2 Baron, Vol. III, p. 79.
3 Lammens, L’Arabie occidentale avant l’Hégire, p. 72.
THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE CONFLICT

combat efficiency. The fortifications were lightly held. There seemed to be neither coordination nor proper liaison between the different garrisons of the Jews. The Apostle on the other hand took the Khaybarites by surprise, which was the master key to his success in all major battles; it was surprise both in tactics and techniques combined with a toughness to which both the Jews of the Ḥijāz and the Quraysh were unaccustomed.

The Jews, though they did not lose, nonetheless were compelled to negotiate because they had not taken a serious view of their adversary.

The frequent references to the Jews in the Qurʾān, as interpreted by the classical interpreters of the Qurʾān, the unfolding of the Muslim practice, the development of the Shariʿah and the garbled accounts of the controversy with the Jews of Yathrib have created a picture of religious controversy which is both distorted and distorting. Almost all the modern historians have taken the view that when the Apostle left Mecca he looked forward to his acceptance by the Jews of Yathrib. On arrival he tried to win them over by adopting the fast of ʿĀshūrāʾ, by turning towards Jerusalem for prayers etc. The Apostle was, however, soon disappointed by the Jewish rejection, so he broke with them and crushed them.

This picture represents a contorted reflection of events. There is no evidence for Gabrieli's assumption that the Apostle at one time had considered the Jews of Medina as "converts to Islam". Two early Meccan surahs, the Bant Isrāʾīl and the Yūnus, show that the Apostle from the very beginning had an idea of the Jewish reaction to his claim. The seventeenth chapter of the Qurʾān, the Bant Isrāʾīl, has the following eight verses warning the Jews of their future:

4. And we revealed to the children of Israel in the Book, (saying), you will surely do mischief in the land twice, and you will surely become excessively overbearing.
5. So when the time for the first of the two warnings came, we sent against you (some) servants of Ours possessed of great might in war, and they penetrated (the innermost parts of your) houses and it was a warning that was bound to be carried out.
6. Then We gave you back the power against them, and aided you with wealth and children, and made you larger in numbers.
7. Now if you do well, you will do well for your own souls; and if you do evil, it will (only) be against you. So when the time for the latter warning came, (We raised a people against you) to cover your faces.

1 Gabrieli, Muhammad and the Conquests of Islam, p. 67.
with grief, and to enter the mosque (The Temple) as they entered it the first time, and to destroy all they conquered with their destruction. 8. It may be that your Lord will now have mercy on you; but if you return (to your previous state), We too will return, and We have made hell a prison for the disbelievers. 9. Surely, this Qur’ān guides to what is most right; and gives to the believers who do good deeds the glad tidings that they shall have a great reward. 10. And that for those who do not believe in what is to come later we have prepared a grievous punishment. 11. And man asks for evil as he should ask for good; and man is hasty.

In these verses of the Bani Isrā‘il the use of the personal pronoun in the second person is highly significant. Lammens after an examination of early sources has rightly pointed out that there were no Jews in Mecca\textsuperscript{1}, and there is general consensus that the verses are definitely Meccan\textsuperscript{2}. These verses do not point towards an Apostle looking forward to be accepted by the Jews. They also do not indicate an active controversy between the Apostle and the Jews. It is a general statement without polemics. A later verse on the subject is clear.

And we prepared for the children of Israel a blessed abode, and We provided them with all manner of good things. They differed not in anything till true knowledge came to them. Surely thy Lord will judge between them on the day of Judgment concerning that in which they differed. (Yūnus, 93).

Muir, Nöldeke and Grimme\textsuperscript{3} are in agreement with Zamakhshari\textsuperscript{4}, and al-Bayḍāwī\textsuperscript{5} that it is a Meccan sūrah. Wherry calls it "undoubtedly of Meccan origin"\textsuperscript{6} and goes on to say that "the knowledge intended here is that of the Qur’ān, and the allusion is to the rejection of Muḥammad by the Jews".\textsuperscript{7}

\textsuperscript{1} Supra, Chapter I.
\textsuperscript{3} See Bell, p. 207.
\textsuperscript{6} Wherry, p.321.
\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., p. 338.
THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE CONFLICT

The Apostle knew before his arrival in Medina that he would be rejected by the Jews and yet offered them the terms of the Şahifah on the basis of the Unity of God. But the Jews considered him not even a false Messiah, but an outright usurper; being a gentle (unmi) he could not be a prophet unto them, and as a prophet to the Arabs he could endanger their already declining position of influence. Two of their major allies in Medina had already accepted this refugee prophet; the Meccans were unable to crush him alone, and their own efforts in Medina to dislodge him had rebounded. The decline was rapid and they were unable to do anything to stop it.

The actual encounter with Judaism took place at a later period, and not during the time of the Apostle. The sirah writers, maghāzi narrators, Qurʾānic commentators and the Ḥadith collectors read the Old Testament and the Jewish literature and applied all suitable signs to the Apostle. The Messianic movements among the Jews helped to confuse the situation. The abiding hope of the Jews in gahut centred around a king in the house of David who would rule over a new golden age. Derived from the Hebrew mashiah (anointed), the term Messiah in Jewish history applied to the long-awaited, Divinely chosen king who “shall be called wonderful... The Prince of Peace”, who would destroy the enemies of Israel and establish a paradise-like reign of peace and prosperity. Though appearing in many shapes and permutations, the messianic hope has been an activist element in Jewish history. It has retained the binding spell of Jewish kingship to be realized through God’s will. It was not only an article of faith but an emotional necessity in times of distress to hope constantly for the advent of the Messiah. One element basic to Jewish messianism is expectation of the “birth


2 “This influence of the Jewish Agada and Christian legend is attested with regret by orthodox theologians from the earliest times of Islam up to later periods”, Goldziher, Muslim Studies, Vol. II, p. 131.

3 The idea of Jewish kingship seems to have changed to the idea of a Jewish state since the eighteenth century.
pangs of the Messiah (*heveli Mashi'ah*)—the time of troubles and turbulence that precedes his coming. Hence, periods in which massacres of Jews occurred have also been periods of fervent messianic expectations and movements.

The Jews have never ceased their vigil for "one like the son of man", who will be given "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him". Many of the Jewish patriots who fought in the Great Revolt against Rome (66-70 A.D.) believed that they were participating in a battle which was to be followed by the Messiah. Their unflinching heroism can be understood in the context of a messianic movement. The Jewish revolt against Emperor Trajan in 115-17 and the Bar Kochba uprising in 132-35 were influenced by messianic speculations. In the fifth century a Jew in Crete said he was Moses and promised the Jews of the island that he would take them to Judea without ships. He fixed a date for the miracle and the Jews gathered at the appointed time. They were ordered to jump into the sea and many of these credulous Jews were drowned.

During the sixth century the continuous conflict between the Byzantine and Sassanid empires gave rise to messianic expectations, which most probably played a major role in shaping the image of Arab Jewry. Zerubbabel, a grandson of King Jehoiachin, was the leader of the Jewish exiles who returned from Babylonia to Judea with the consent of Cyrus. Under Darius I in 521 B. C. he was appointed governor of Judea and thus became the last ruler of Judea from the House of David. The pseudepigraphical work, the Book of Zerubbabel written in his time tells about the visions of Zerubbabel concerning the appearance of the Messiah. The literature which developed around the messianic hopes arising from the Book of Zerubbabel, is vast. Though "it is difficult to date the various works in this literature; some of them may even be earlier than the Book of Zerubbabel... (yet it) had an enormous impact upon medieval Jewry".¹

Until the beginning of the sixth century at least two successive Judaised dynasties ruled in the Yemen. There was a large Jewish population in Arabia and it is very likely that the messianic hopes might have sustained the Jewish people of Arabia during the destruc-

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tion of the kingdom of Ḥimyār and the decline in the position which followed it. The various references by Ibn Ishāq to the Jewish prophecies regarding the advent of a “prophet” seemed to be the result of a variant reading. Ibn Ishāq and Muslim scholars following him thought that the Jews whose rabbis had predicted the advent of a prophet were really waiting for Muhammad and when he claimed the prophethood, the Jews deliberately denied him. It seems the Jews of the Ḥijāz saw no signs, and did not witness any prophecies being fulfilled. Salām b. Mishkam of the B. al-Naḍīr told Muḥād b. Jabal “He (the Apostle) has not brought us anything we recognize and he is not the one we spoke of to you”.¹

The language and the idiom of the argument between the Apostle and the Jews was unmistakably religious. But “ideological differences, no matter, how mutually antagonistic they become, alone are not enough to sustain negative patterns of conduct. However when some breakdown, crisis, or structural stress, e.g., economic, social, or political disintegration occurs, such differences become vital”.² Religious conflict becomes lethal only when social, political and economic conflicts are conjoined with it. The Aws and the Khazraj, who were trying to take over the control of the oases from the Jews, did not seem to have any experience in trade and commerce. By inviting Muhammad and some seventy of his Quraysh companions the Anṣār gave refuge to the Apostle of God, and got, among many things, a leader with commercial expertise in the bargain. The Apostle, earlier in his career, had established a reputation for managing the commercial interests of the richer Quraysh merchants. The maghāzī writers do not tell us how the Muhājirūn made a living in Medina during the early period of their sojourn. There is no evidence to show that they changed their vocation and took up agriculture, but there are occasional notices of their commercial transactions. As Abū Hurayrah, reported, the Muhājirūn spent their time in the markets.³ “Umar did not hear the message conveyed by the Apostle as he was engaged in the market.” When ʻAbd al-Rahmān b. Ṭawfīq was offered half of his wealth by his Medinah ‘brother’ Sa‘d b. al-Rabī‘,⁴

¹ Ibn Hishām, p. 379.
³ Supra, p. 105.
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

he said, "May God bless your wealth and family; you just show me the market". "Abd al-Rahmān was shown the way to the B. Qaynuqāḍ market, where he soon earned a skin of butter and cheese. It is not surprising that the B. Qaynuqāḍ were the first to feel threatened by this new mercantile element, and played into the hands of "Abd Allāh b. Ubayy to save their business. The Jewish trading post of Tāʾif was saved because the people of Tāʾif as a whole rejected the Apostle. A section of the Medinan Arabs, on the other hand, brought the Apostle to Medina. Not accustomed to competition the B. Qaynuqāḍ could not think of buying off the superior business acumen of the Muhājirūn; they tried to remove them instead. The B. al-Nādir, the B. Qurayṣah and other Jewish clans were mainly engaged in farming and agriculture. The danger posed to them by the new entrepreneur class of the Muhājirūn was of a different nature. The B. Qaynuqāḍ through their market provided Yathrib and its environs opportunities to change goods and barter produce, and acted as middlemen and retailers and were an adjunct to the agrarian economy of the oasis. But the Muhājirūn did not grow up "in the atmosphere of the desert, but in that of high finance". The Meccans were "financiers skilful in the manipulation of credit, shrewd in their speculations, and interested in any potentialities of lucrative investment from Aden to Gaza or Damascus". The Jewish farmer and landowner was threatened by the merchant. Not only his social values, but his prosperity, as usual with all agrarian societies, faced danger from the new merchant class. The B. al-Nādir and the B. Qurayṣah fought and lost; other Jewish clans accepted their temporary decline with resignation and re-emerged as an elite, but not dominant, after mastering the technique, which the Muhājir entrepreneur had brought to Yathrib.

It was a local affair. It was not an encounter between the two religions. That encounter began in Mecca, where there were no Jews and reached its highest point under the Abbāsids in the Eastern Caliphate and under the Umayyads in Spain during the periods when there was no persecution. The rise of Islam and the Jewish

2 Al-Balādhurī, Futūḥ al-Buldān, ed. by M.J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1866), p. 56.
3 Ibn Hishām, pp. 279-81.
4 Watt, Muhammad at Mecca, p. 3.
5 Ibid., p. 3.
THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE CONFLICT

renaissance are concomitant. The great Jewish-Muslim symbiosis during the golden period of Islam was the result of that encounter. It is meaningless to talk of a 'break with the Jews'. It presupposes an alliance with them of which we have no evidence. The Jews of the Hijāz as usual with a declining elite soon faded out of the limelight, but did not disappear from Medina. When the Apostle died his coat of mail was mortgaged to a Jew who had supplied him with foodgrains. The Jews were obviously conducting business as usual, but for the Muslim chronicler of wars and the biographer of the Apostle the Jews of the Hijāz ceased to be of interest after the peace of Khaybar. The jurists and the Tradition compilers kept their watch on the Jews for a slightly longer period to find or establish precedents for collecting jizyah and kharāj. Actually the Jews of the Hijāz were neither expelled nor did they leave the region during the lifetime of the Apostle.

The Apostle himself took care to obliterate signs of bitterness. To both the B. Qurayzhah and the Jews of Khaybar the Apostle made a gesture of goodwill and conciliation after their discomfiture. No such gesture was made to the B. Qaynuqā. They did not need it either. The pattern of the Apostle's marriages as it unfolds itself is clearly social and political. "His marriages were not simply love matches; they were political alliances". A defeated adversary was almost always won by this gesture. Umm Salamah (Hind) was a close relative of the leading man of the Makhzūm clan, Juwayriyyah was the daughter of the tribe of al-Muṣṭaliq, who were defeated by the Muslims. All the Apostle's marriages, Watt observes, "can be seen to have a tendency to promote friendly relations in the political sphere." The Union with Rayhānah was in fact a political announcement that the Apostle had closed the chapter of bitterness and was making another attempt to win the friendship of the B. Qurayzhah through marriage with a lady of their clan. The gesture would have been meaningless and empty if all the male adults had been slain and their women and children sold as slaves. The Apostle tried to strengthen his negotiated peace with the State of Khaybar by the same sign of goodwill. He took Ṣafiyyah in marriage and thus sealed his alliance with the most important Jewish power in the Hijāz.

1 S.D. Goitein (Jews and Arabs, p. 127) calls it 'Jewish-Arab symbiosis'.
3 Robinson, Mohammed, pp. 280-81.
4 Watt, Muhammad at Medina, p. 287.
5 Ibid., p. 288. Rayhānah was a widow from the B. Qurayzhah.
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

The result of the two peace treaties, at Ḥudaybiyah and Khaybar, was a great success. Two years later (1.I 630/10.IX 8), when the Apostle marched to Mecca, his army numbered 10,000 men as compared to 1,600 in 628 (6 A.H.). Ḥudaybiyah and Khaybar had paid a great dividend.

Watt finds it "interesting to speculate on what would have happened had the Jews come to terms with Muhammad instead of opposing him. At certain periods they could have secured very favourable terms from him, including religious autonomy\(^1\), and on that basis the Jews might have become partners in the Arab empire and Islam a sect of Jewry. How different the face of the world would be now, had that happened!"\(^2\) Unfortunately a declining elite does not act that way.

Among the migratory peoples of ancient times the Greeks, the Italians and the Hebrews "looked upon their neighbours with greater apprehension than did any of the others. These three peoples lived in deep fear of the societies beyond, and even among themselves there was mutual antagonism and distrust."\(^3\) While the Greeks and the Italians had settled by the beginning of the Christian era, the Jews, due to their unfortunate circumstances, retained the characteristic of a migratory society. We have noted earlier that the B. Qaynuqā\(^4\), the B. al-Naḏir and the B. Qurayzah bore their misfortunes alone. No other Jewish tribe moved to help them. They had shown the same "mutual antagonism and distrust" at the Battle of Bu arab. "They were continually conscious, indeed too conscious, of a distinction between their society and others, between themselves and the out-group"\(^4\). Their apprehension over strangers and foreigners prevented them from accepting the invitation to join the ummah. Things became far more difficult, because they formed an elite group, which would have lost its exclusiveness by joining an out-group. Even where the Jews have broken physical restrictions of a gentile-instituted ghetto, the ghetto as a Jewish institution holding the Jews under intellectual

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1. Islam in any case gave religious autonomy to the Jews and it lasted in the form of the "millet" system up to the downfall of the Ottomans.
2. Watt, Muhammad at Medina, p. 219.
4. Freeman, p. 32.
repression has survived. Unfortunately the Jews of the Hijaz as if by instinct withdrew physically and mentally to their umum. In less than twenty years after the death of the Apostle they demolished the walls of their mental and spiritual umum and walked out to accept the challenge of a Muslim society which opened for them the doors of its mosques, its schools, its bazaars, markets and civil service, for education, social assimilation and their participation in the civic and political life. They took the fullest advantage of the somatic, intellectual, and spiritual comforts offered by the dominant elite without disappearing as a marginal minority. They joined the ummah as sustaining members. For seven hundred years their destiny was bound with that of the Muslims.

Every phase of Islamic growth was accompanied by a positive and creative reaction among Jews. Every phase of Muslim breakdown was accompanied by a disintegration: a golden age when Spain’s wealth grew; humiliation and exile when it dwindled.⁡

Carmichael considers it “very strange that while Christianity was gradually to disappear in most parts of Muslim Empire, Jewish communities survived and flourished—in Bukhara, formerly a great Christian centre; in Yemen, once a Christian bishopric; and in North Africa, the home of Saint Augustine”.³ It would not look strange if the restricted nature and the limits of the Muslim-Jewish conflict were seen in their proper perspective.

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EPILOGUE

There was never a time from the birth of Islam to the present when large number of Jews did not live under Moslem rule. There is no phase in Islamic history that does not resonate through Jewish history and no form of Islam that does not have its Jewish counterpart. And though during many periods the differences between Islam and Judaism were stressed to rationalize hostility, these differences also were responsible for catalyzing some of the most creative Jewish achievements of the Middle Ages.

Under the Umayyads and the Abbasids, Jews prospered and found their way to virtually every part of the Moslem empire. Thriving communities sprang up in North Africa and Spain. The Abbasids, particularly, encouraged Jewish enterprise, with the result that by the tenth century a small but significant class of large-scale merchants and bankers had come to play a prominent role in the finances of the caliph. The policies of the caliphs were pragmatic, following from a reading of their own interests, not from a reading of the Koran.

The relationship of Jews to Islam was complex, at times positive, at times negative. During the tenth century, Jews living under the Abbasids in the east were experiencing a major breakdown, while Jews in Andalusia were embarking on a golden age. In the twelfth century, Maimonides fled from a hostile Islam in Andalusia, tarried briefly in hostile Islamic North Africa, only to become welcome in Islamic Egypt, where he became physician to the vizier of Saladin. Islam created climates favourable to Jewish creativity and climates altogether inimical to Jews. The record is clear: the differences setting Islam apart from Judaism did not always generate hostility.

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133
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS


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INDEX

Aaron, 30.
Abbasid(s), 6, 7, 8 and n, 10, 17, 21, 22, 39, 122, 126.
Abbott, Nabia, 63, 87, 88, and n.
Abū al-ʿAbbās, 9.
Abū Dāʾūd, 22, 23, 64n, 77, 78, 79, 91, 111, 112.
Abū al-Ḥaḍārī, 3.
Abū Hūrayrah, 101, 102, 105, 121.
Acrón, Lord, 23.
Adrāʾī, 27, 94.
Adler, J. G. Chr., 3.
Abū Bār, 15.
Abū Zābī, al-, 15, 42, 43, 44, 68, 70, 74, 77, 78n, 79, 91 and n, 95, 111, 112.
Ali, Amīr, 23n.
All, Muhammad, 23n.
al-Ali, Saleh, Ahmad, 30n, 61n, 109n.
Amalek, 26 and n.
Altheim, F., 33 and n.
Asad, B., 68.
Asja, 68.
AWS, Al-, 32, 33, 34, 40, 41, 45, 52, 55, 57, 72, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 91, 92, 104, 121.
Awzāʾī, Al-, 89.
Ayham, Al-, 47.
Azraqī, al-, Muhammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Ahmad, 32 and n.
ʿAbbās, al-, B., 6.
ʿAbbās b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, 102.
ʿAbbās, Iḥsān, 7n.
ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbbās, 93.
ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṭabk, 12.
ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṭāḥk, 96.
ʿAbd Allāh b. Rawlīḥah, 96, 97.
ʿAbd Allāh b. Salām, 15.
ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣūrīyā, 15.
ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubuyy b. Salul al-ʿAwfī, 34, 36n, 37, 42, 43, 52, 57, 58, 59, 80, 106, 109, 113n, 122.
ʿAbd Allāh b. Umayy, 97.
ʿAbd al-ʿAshhāl, B., 72, 78, 79.
ʿAbd al-ʿAski, 6, 7.
ʿAbd al-Maṭṭī, ʿĀqib, 47.
ʿAdīya (h), 27, 29.
ʿAfak, Ṭob, 36, 52, 53, 63, 81.
ʿAjlūn, Mālik b., 32, 33, 104.
ʿAlqamah, Abī Ḥarithah b., 47.
ʿĀmīr, B., 63.
ʿĀmīr b. al-ʿAkwa, 100.
ʿAmr b. ʿAbd Wudd b. Abū Qays, 70.
ʿAmr b. ʿAwf, B., 36, 81, 91.
ʿAmr b. ʿAwf b. ʿAbd Niʿmān, 37.
ʿAmr b. Suʿdā al-Qurāzī, 85.
ʿAwf, Al-, 35, 45.
ʿAṣmāʾ bint Mūrān, 36, 53, 53, 80.
ʿAṣma, b. Yāzīd, 41.
ʿAwf, B., 40, 41, 47n.
ʿAsqalānī, al-ʿIbān Ḥājar, 7n, 79.
ʿĀʾishah, 70n, 72, 79, 80, 82n, 83, 104.
ʿAzīz M.A., iii.
ʿAzīz M.D., iii.
Babylon (Ian), 7, 8, 24, 28, 29, 30.
Badeau, John F. iv.
Badr, 18, 19, 35, 43, 55, 57, 58, 61, 62, 64, 77, 100, 108.
Baghdādī, al-, al-Khatīb, 7n, 89n.
Balāḏūrī al, 122n.
Bar Kochba, 85, 105, 120.
Barāʾī, al-, 34.
Baron, Salo, Wittmayer, 4 and n, 24n, 25, 26n, 29n, 88 and n, 116n.
Bashan, Eliezer, 8 and n.
Bayḍawī, al-, 3, 60n, 61n, 115n, 118 and n.
Belfield, Eversley, 107n, 108n, 116 and n.
Bell, Richard, 88 and n, 104n, 118n.
Betjeman, 106n.
Biṭrīq, Māṭīnah, 62, 64, 87, 109.
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

Browne, Edward G., 9n.
Bukhārī, al-, Muhammad b. Ismā‘īl, Imām, 5, 7n, 11n, 20, 21, 22, 59, and n, 63n, 68n, 70n, 78 and n, 80, 81, 82 and n, 87, 88, 91, 92, 97, and n, 102n, 115n, 118n, 121n, 122n, 123n.
Bāθān, 61, 108.
Byzantine(s), 27, 41, 75, 112, 116, 120.

Caetani, Leone, 4 and n, 40n, 80 and n, 92n.
Carmichael, Joel, 52 and n, 125 and n.
Carter, Anne, 52n, 53n.
Caskel, Werner, 26 and n.
Clark, G. Kitson, 67.
Clive, John, 17n.

Dā‘īs, 64.
Delbridge, A. iv.
Deuteronomy, 23.
 Dhahabi, al-, 7n, 18.
Dharr, Abū, 15.
 Dhīmmah, ahl al (dhimmah) 4, 46n.
Dhū Nuwās, Yūsuf, 25, 34, 83, 103.
Dhū Qaraḍ, 97.
Durā, A. A., 73n, 90n.
Dāmrī, al-, Âmr b. Umayyah, 63.

Edomite, 26.
Elphérar (al-Farrā‘), 3 and n.
Exilarch (Exilarchate), 7, 8 and n 10, 17, 24, 94.

Fadak, 32, 34, 42, 103.
Faḍl, al-, Umm, bint al-Hārith, 54.
Fatimid (empire), 9n.
Freeman, Richard, 124n.
Finbās, 108.
Friedlaender, Israel, 10n, 29, 30n, 119n.
Fujār, 107.
Fück, Johann, 7n, 18n.

Gabrieli, Francesco, 23n, 29n. 117 and n.
Gagnier, J., 3.
Gaon. (Gaonate, Gaonic), 7, 8, 9n, 17, 24, 30.
Geiger, Abraham, 2 and n, 3, 4, 24.
Ghābah, al-, 97, 99.
Ghassān, 27.
Ghīfār, B., 99.
Giffen, Lois A., iv.
Gil, Moshe, 43 and n.
Goitein, S. D., 2 and n, 3 and n, 4, 8 and n, 9n, 29n, 53n, 123n.
Goldziher, Ignaz, 20 and n, 21n, 107n, 119n.
Goods, Alexander David, 125.
Graetz, H., 4 and n, 8 and n, 9n, 10n, 24n, 25n, 27 and n, 28n, 29, 30, 75n, 88 and n, 106n.
Grayzel, Solomon, 10 and n.
Grimme, H., 4, 118.
Guillaume, A., 7n, 16, 17n, 21, 22n, 54n, 56n, 62n.

Habīb, ibn, 87 and n.
Hadīl, B., 29.
Hagiography, 16.
Hartman, George W., 23.
Hijāj, 107.
Hilberg, Raul, 85n.
Hirschberg, Joachim Wilhelm (Haim Z'ew), 4 and n, 8 and n.
Hishām, ibn, 3n, 5, 14n, 15n, 18, 19 and n, 20n, 33n, 34n, 35n, 41n, 42n, 43n, 45n, 46n, 47n, 48n, 51n, 53n, 54n, 55 and n, 56n, 57n, 58n, 59 and n, 62n, 63n, 64n, 65n, 68n, 70n, 71n, 72n, 73n, 74n, 77 and n, 78n, 79n, 80n, 81n, 82n, 83n, 87n, 88n, 89n, 90 and n, 91n, 92n, 93n, 95n, 96n, 97n, 99n, 100n, 101n, 102n, 108n, 109n, 110n, 111n, 112n, 113n, 114n, 115n, 121n, 122n.
INDEX

Haaji Khalifah, 22n.
Hakam, 77, 78, 80, 92n, 93.
Hamidullah, Muhammad, 74n, 114n, 39 and n, 46n.
Hanbel, Ahmad b., 11, 18, 22, 87, and n.
Hanifa, Abu, 89.
Harith, al-, Bint, 82.
Harith, al-B., 40.
Harithah, B., 41, 91.
Hasan b. Thabit, 90.
Hatib b. Abu Balta, 77n.
Hayyabun, al-, Ibn, 15.
Hijr, al-, 26.
Hilf, 32.
Himyar (Himyarites), 25, 27, 29, 103, 104, 105.
Hira, 34.
Horovitz, Joseph, 4 and n, 7n, 11n, 12, 13 and n, 18n, 27n, 28n.
Hubla, Ba, 34, 40.
Hudaybiyah, al-, 16, 46, 52, 93, 96, 97, 100, 111, 113, 115, 124.
Hudayar, al-, b. Simak, 37.

Ibn Abi Khaithamah, 46n.
Ibn Habib, 87 and n.
Ibn Kathir, 41n, 44n, 46n, 71n, 76n, 77n, 83n, 118n.
Ibn Khaldun, 2, 85.
Ibn Khallikân, 7n, 11n, 18 and n, 89n.
Ibn Maqur, 81n, 90n.
Ibn Sa'd, ibn, 3n, 5, 6, 7n, 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 41 and n, 48n, 55n, 57, 58, 59 and n, 60, 64n, 65, 68n, 73 and n, 76, 77, 78, 81, 82, 87, 89n, 96n, 97 and n, 99n, 101n, 108, 109n, 110 and n, 111n, 113n.
Idumaeans, 30.
Imru' al-Qays, 45.
Isaiah, 25n.
Ishaq, ibn, Muhammad, 5, 6, 7 and n, 9, 10, 11, and n, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24, 35, 40, 41, 53, 55, 56, 58, 59, 61, 63, 65, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 87, 89, 90, 92, 93, 94, 97, 99, 100, 102, 108, 110, 114, 115, 121.
Ishahani, Abu al-Faraj, 23, 26 and n, 64.
Ishahani, al-, Abu Na'am, 63n.
Ishahani, al-, Hamza, 34n.
Ishahani, al-, Raghib, 81n, 90n.
Imad, al-, Abd al-Hayy b. Ahmad al-Hanbal, ibn, 60 and n.
Isa, ibn, Obadiah, 9 and n, 10, 17.

Jafnah, 40.
Jafri, Husain Mohammad, iii
Jahiliyah, 38.
Jahsh, Abd Allah b., 55n, 93.
Jahiz, 34n.
Jeremiah, 25n.
Jibshah, 15.
Jizyra, 49, 123.
Job, 25n.
Jones, J.M.B., 11n, 14n, 40n.
Judham, B., 29.
Juma, al-, Muhammad b. Sallam, 53.
Jusham B., 40, 41.
Juwayriyah, 123.

Ka'b b. Asad al-Qurazi, 70, 72 and n, 73, 74, 75, 76, 83, 91, 95, 105, 106, 111.
Ka'b b. al-Ashraf, 28, 53, 62, 63, 80, 97.
Ka'b b. Malik, 34.
Kahin (Kahin), 29, 30.
Khadaj, al-, 44. See Al-Abzab.
Khatmah, B., 81.
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

Nabatean, 26.
Nabhash b. Qays, 91.
Nadhir al-, B., 3, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 
24, 26, 28, 29, 35, 36n, 40, 41, 42, 
43, 44, 45, 52, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 
63-66, 67, 68, 70, 71, 88, 90, 92, 93, 
94, 95, 96, 101, 109, 110, 115n, 121, 
122, 124.
Naisaburi, 'Abd Allah, 21.
Najjar, al-, B., 40, 41, 82.
Najran, 14, 27, 34, 48, 75, 83, 84, 88, 
103, 105.
Nas, al-, Ibn Sayyid, 7n, 11n, 12 and n.
Nawawi, al-, 92, 93.
Nemoy, Leon, 8.
Nöldeke, Theodore, 11, 42, 118.
Nu'man III, 34.

Obermann, J., 48n.
O’Leary, De Lacy 30n, 119n.

Paret, Rudi, 39, 51n.
Peters, F.E., 37.
Petersen, Erling Ladewig, 6 and n, 18 
and n.
Polybius, 103.

Qā‘ibey, Sulṭan al-Ashraf, 22.
Qarda al-, 97.
Qarqarah, al-, 97, 113.
Qatadah, 'Āsim b. Umair, 7n, 11, 12, 
13, 61, 78.

138
INDEX

Qaylah, B., 32, 33, 34, 52, 53.
Qays b. Madi, 45.
Qays b. Makhramah, 7.
Qurayzah, B., 3, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 23, 24, 26, 29, 30, 33, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 50, 52, 58, 59, 60, 61, 64, 68-94, 95, 100, 101, 110, 111, 122, 123, 124.
Quraishi, Al-Atiyah, 15, 81.

Raglan, Lord, 20 and n.
Rajit, Al-., 99.
Rayhanah, 123 and n.
Reiske, J. J. 3.
Reissner, H.G., 29, and n.
Ridwan, Al-., 113.
Rifahah b. Qays, 108.
Rifahah b. Samawal al-Quraishi, 85.
Rivkin, Ellis, 121n, 125n, 126.
Robson, James, 13 and n., 14n, 20 and n., 21 and n.
Rodinson, Maxime, 51, 52 and n., 53n, 64, 95, 123n.
Rosenthal, Franz, 11n, 60n.

Saboras, 17.
Sa'd, B., 68.
Sa'd b. Muadh, 35, 70, 72, 73, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 83, 88, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94.
Sa'd b. Ubada, 79.
Saba', Al-., 99.
Sa'idah, B. 40, 41.
Safi, 68.
Salim, B., 40.
Salim b. Umayr, 81.
Sallam b. Abii al-Quayq (Abi Rabi), 65, 67, 96, 97, 115n.
Salim b. Mishkan, 64, 121.
Salamah b. Amr b. al-Akwas al-Ashami, 97, 100.
Salama b. Fa'iz b. al-Abrash al-Ansari, 56n.
Salmah bint al-Sarigh, 34.
Samaw'al, Al-., 27, 28, 29, 45 and n.
Samhudi, Al-., 22, 23n, 29n, 30n, 32n, 33n, 44, 68n, 90, 91n, 104n.
Sammak, 95.
Samuel, 23.
Schacht, Joseph, 20 and n., 50n, 60n, 89n, 92n.
Sere (Serenus) 9.
Sergeant, R.B., 39 and n., 44 and n., 45 and n. 46n, 83n.
Shaban, M.A., 27 and n.
Shafi', Imam, 11, 60 and n., 89 and n.
Shahid, Irfan, 25n, 34 and n., 83n, 88n, 104n.----
Shahrastani, Muhammad b. Abd al-Karim, 9n, 10n.
Shas b. Qays, 54, 108.
Shibah b. al-Hajar, 11.
Shuyaybah b., 41.
Shaykhayn, 68.
Silkan b. Salaman b. Waqsh, 80.
Simeon of Beth Arsham, 58.
Sindibad, 9.
Smith, W. Robertson, 32n, 43 and n.
Stiehl, R., 33 and n.
Sufyan, Abu b. Uarb, 15, 64, 68, 70, 95.
Sufyan b. Uuyyinah, 11.
Sulaym, B., 68. ---
Sunaynah, Ibn, 19, 20, 114.
Suwallam, 41.
Suwayd, 64.
Safiya bint Abd al-Muttalib, 70.
Safiya bint Uyyayn b. Akhtab, 15, 30n, 102, 123.
Sami, Al-., Ubadah b., 59.
Siffin, 93.

Tabuk, 41, 77.
Tabkim, 92, 93.
Talmud, (Talmudic), 3, 29, 30, 34.
Talmudical Ordinances, 9.
Tayma', 25, 32, 34, 88, 103.
MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

Thaâlubah, B., 29, 32n, 40, 41.
Tirmidhi 30n.
Torrey, Charles Cutler, 4 and n, 11n, 32 and n, 104 and n.
Tubbâ*, 53, 71, 74.
Ṭabarî, al-, 17, 54n, 56 and n, 60n, 61n, 63n, 65n, 77n, 97 and n.
Ṭalhâ b. *Ubayd Allâh, 41.
Ṭulaybâh b. Khuyaylîd, 68.

Uḥud, 19, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 100, 109, Ukhdûd, 83.
Umâmah, Abû, 79.
Umayyad(s), 6, 7, 7, 16, 21, 22, 39, 93, 122.
Umâyyah, B, 6.
Umây'yah, b. Zayd, 91.
Umm Salamah 123,
*Ubadah b. al-Samî'î, 59.
Ubayd, Abû, 46n, 49 and n.
*Ubayd, Mount of Banû, 68.
*Ubaydah, B., 81.
*Ubaydah, Abû, b. al-Jarrah, 48.
*Umar, 7n, 24, 59, 87, 112, 113, 116, 121, 125n.
*Umar II, 7n.
*Umây r b. *Adî'â al-Khatmi, 81.
Ummah, 37-50, 51, 52, 94, 116, 124, 125.
*Urwa'h, Hishâm b., 11.
Usque, Samuel, 24 and n.
Ustadhês, 9.
*Utbah b. Rabî'âh, 14.

Vaglieri, L. Vecchia, 86n.
Vida, G. Levi Della, 16 and n, 17n.

Wâdî al-Furâ', 99.
Wâdî al-Qura, 32, 34, 88, 103.
Wâ'il, B., 67.
Waqqâdî, al-, Abû *Abd Allâh
Muhammad b. *Umar, 3n, 5, 6, 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 45n, 56 and n, 57n, 58, 59 and n, 60, 61n, 65 and n, 68n, 71, 76 and n, 77, 78, 80, 81, 82, 83, 87, 88 and n, 89n, 90, 91n, 96n, 97 and n, 108, 109 and n, 110 and n, 113n.
Watt, Montgomery, 4, 18n, 21 and n, 28n, 32n, 39 and n, 40 and n, 41 and n, 42n, 44, 45, 46n, 51n, 52n, 55n, 68 and n, 80, 86 and n, 92n, 105, 106n, 111n, 122n, 123 and n, 124 and n.
Wellhausen J., 40 and n.
Wensinck. A.J., 4 and n.
Weregeîd, 38.
Wherry E. M., 42, 44n, 118 and n.
Wolfenson Israel, 4 and n, 27 and n, 107n.
Wüstenfeld, Ferdinand, 5n, 14n.

Yahya b. 'Âdam, 23, 60 and n, 89, 102 and n.
Yahya b. Ma'sin, 11.
Yâmin, 15.
Ya'qûbî, al-, Ibn Wâdi'h, 27n, 29 and n, 30n, 32 and n.
Yaqtû, 11n, 33 and n.
Yâsîr, 101.
Yazîd, II, 9.
Yazîd b. *Abd Allâh b. Qusayfî, 73n.
Yazîd b. Rumân, 13.
Yehudi ben Naham, 17.
Young, F.M., 2.
Yûsuf, Abû, 59, 89 and n, 93.

Zafar, 91.
Zamakhshari, al-, 60n, 61n, 65n, 115n, 118 and n,
Zârîm, Al-yusayr b., 96, 97, 113, 115.
Zâurah, B., 27.
Ziâdah, Nicola, 11i
Zubayr, Al-, b. al-*Awwâm, 83, 85, 86, 87, 91.
Zuhrî, Al-, 7, 11, 12, 13, 24, 73 and n, 89n.

Zurayq, B., 41.
Zurqûnî, al-, 63n.