

The Life of
Muhammad ﷺ

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CHAPTER



9



9.1 The Nobles of Quraysh Listen to Islam, Quraysh's Reaction

Although the leaders of Quraysh fought the Messenger of Allah with every means at their disposal, by propaganda and lies, by persecuting his followers, by tempting them with money, slave girls and allurements, by threats and rages against those of their class who entered into Islam, and by paying poets and entertainers to relate to people the tales of ancient civilisations in the hope that they would be diverted, many in their heart of hearts were not sure they were in the right, many felt uneasy and many experienced internal conflicts and doubts.

One night four of the leaders of Quraysh, Abu Sufyan ibn Harb, Abu Jahl ibn Hisham, Al-Akhnas ibn Shariq and ‘Amr ibn Wahb decided, each separately and unknown to the other, to go and listen to the wondrous words that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ read to himself during the night, for the Messenger used to spend the night in prayers and reading the Qur’an, stopping only after the dawn prayers.

Each of the four men sat listening in the dark, thinking he was the only listener, but when it was dawn and each rose to go back to his own house, they all met at the crossroads. They reproached each other and assured each other that this was the first time they had succumbed to such a temptation and that it would be the last. But the next night something stronger than them seemed to draw them to the Prophet’s ﷺ house again and each went thinking he would be the only listener. In the morning they again reproached each other and agreed never to be seen listening to the Prophet ﷺ in case the common people heard of it, as it would encourage some to enter Islam. On the third night they met each other again sneaking away from the Prophet’s ﷺ house. They were truly alarmed and feared they were capitulating, so they swore a solemn oath, binding on the four of them, never to approach his house again.

The next morning Al-Akhnas was disturbed. He could not get out of his mind the grandeur and majesty of what he had heard, its deep wisdom and infallible truth. He put on his cloak and went to Abu Sufyan’s house. He asked Abu

Sufyan what he thought of what they had heard. Abu Sufyan answered that he did not know, he could understand some of it but some he could not.

Al-Akhnas left him and went to Abu Jahl and asked the same question. Abu Jahl said, “So what? We and Banu ‘Abdu Manaf (the Prophet Muhammad’s ﷺ tribe) competed with each other for honour. They fed the poor and so did we. They carried water to the Ka’ba (an honorary office) and so did we, until we became like two race horses, neck to neck. Then they say, ‘Among us is a prophet who receives the message from heaven.’ When are we going to be able to do something like that? By Allah we shall not believe him or believe in him ever.”

9.2 The Jealousy of the Prophet Muhammad’s ﷺ Peers

These words of Abu Jahl are most significant. One of the main reasons why the Prophet’s ﷺ peers would not believe was because they were jealous of him. He was one of them, a man, not an angel, who had grown up among them, lived the same life and belonged to the same tribe. Why then was he followed, honoured and obeyed? Why did people listen to his teaching? They thought only with a narrow tribal mentality full of competition and struggle for supremacy in honour and power. They seemed to know very little about the real aims of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

9.3 Reasoning of Quraysh's Leaders

At first the leading men of Quraysh had no objection to the Prophet ﷺ personally but only to the revelation he brought and the concepts it contained. When they saw how the Prophet ﷺ was revered, how people listened attentively when he taught and when he read the Qur'an, they became jealous of him. They could no longer deny the beauty and majesty of the Qur'an, they could no longer ignore the truth and justice of its precepts, so they began to tell each other that they would have believed in the Qur'an if only it had descended upon someone other than the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Why was he chosen from among all the men of Quraysh? And they named two men in particular, two men of great wealth and power, one in Makka, the other in Ta'if, a rich city which the nobles of Quraysh had made their summer resort. The Qur'an quotes their own words to them, then answers them with the following arguments:

And they said, 'If only this Qur'an were sent down upon one of the chiefs of the two cities.'

Are they distributing your Lord's mercy?

It is We who distribute their livelihoods upon them in the life of this world

and raise some above others in degrees

so that they subjugate them,

and your Lord's mercy is better than all they collect. (43:31-32)

9.4 **The Choice of a Prophet**

The choice of a prophet is a very carefully planned matter. There is nothing arbitrary about it. He is chosen from birth from millions of beings and nurtured for his great office. Then he is tried and tested until he is ready for the great task, the greatest that man has ever been given. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, the last and greatest of the messengers of Allah, was no exception. He used to say, “It is my Lord who has brought me up, and He has brought me up well.” In an age when men were gross and brutish, he was refined, cultured, tactful and considerate, and he instilled these qualities in his followers. Like all prophets, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was very severely tested and tried and he endured his trials with manliness, patience and perseverance.

When the Quraysh demanded one of the two great men in Makka or Ta’if to be prophet, they were demanding what they had neither the right to demand or the ability to choose. As the Qur’an points out:

Allah knows best where to place His message.

(6:124)