

## Boycott of Banu Haashim and the Penning of an Oppressive Decree

When the Qurayshi emissaries returned disappointed from Abyssinia and the disbelievers learnt of Emperor Negus' admiration for Hadhrat Ja'far رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and his companions, whilst here in Makkah Hadhrat Hamzah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and Hadhrat 'Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ embraced Islam, which further fractured the might of the disbelievers, the Muslims seemed to be growing day by day and when no other strategy appeared to be as effective, all the Qurayshi tribes unanimously agreed to endorse an accord that would summarily suspend all dealings with Muhammad صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, the Banu Haashim and their allies. Amongst others, they resolved not to marry any member of the Banu Haashim tribe or to maintain any sort of cordial relationship with them until the Banu Haashim undertook to surrender Muhammad's صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ life to the Quraysh.

They drew up an accord outlining such details and pinned it onto the interior wall of the K'abah. Mansoor bin 'Ikramah, the writer of this oppressive and malicious accord, was instantaneously punished by Allah Ta'ala; his fingers became paralysed and he was unable to use his fingers to write again.

Constrained by these unfavourable circumstances, Abu Taalib, together with members of his family, sought refuge in the valley of Abu Taalib. The Banu Haashim and the Banu-Muttalib – believers and disbelievers – both gave him their full support. The believers offered their support for religious reasons whilst the disbelievers offered their support in honour of family relationship. From the Banu Haashim, only Abu Lahab opted to remain with the Quraysh.

For three long years, these people lived in such dreadful isolation and under the most appalling conditions. The wailing of infants out of acute hunger could be heard right outside the valley where the pitiless Quraysh would hear this anguished crying and cheer in happiness. However, the compassionate from amongst them found this behaviour rather distasteful and bluntly said: "Don't you see what divine retribution was meted out to Mansoor bin 'Ikramah?"

During this dreadful social sanctions imposed upon them, the Muslims lived on Kekar (acacia) leaves and somehow managed to survive. S'ad bin Abi Waqqaas رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ relates: "I was extremely hungry to the point of starvation. One night, I stepped onto something moist. I immediately picked it up and swallowed it. Up until now I have absolutely no idea what it was."

S'ad bin Abi Waqqaas رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ relates another such incident. He says: "One night I was on my way to relieve myself when I came across a shrivelled out camel skin. I picked it up, washed it with water and burnt it. I thereafter pounded it into a powder, which I then gulped down with water. I survived on this for full three days."

The restrictions imposed upon the Muslims were further escalated when Abu Lahab instructed the trade caravans not to supply goods to the companions of Muhammad صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ at normal prices but at enormously inflated prices. In fact, Abu Lahab even agreed to bear the traders' losses if any. The Sahaabah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ would come to purchase from the trade caravans but noticing the outrageous prices would return empty-handed. In short, on the one hand they were distressed by their destitution and tormented by the heavy-handedness of the enemy whilst on the other hand, they were challenged with the heartrending cries and hunger-pangs of the children.

Some people could not stand their family members suffering such anguish and would secretly send some food for them. One day Hakeem bin Hizaam, accompanied by his slave, was taking some provisions for his aunt (father's sister) Hadhrat Khadijah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا when Abu Jahal spotted him. He bellowed in fury: "You are taking grains to Banu Haashim! I will never tolerate you taking any food for them. I will humiliate you in front of everyone." Coincidentally, Abul-Bakhtari happened to pass by. On ascertaining what happened, he addressed Abu Jahal saying: "The man is sending some food to his aunt. Why do you have to interfere?" This really added to his fury and he let stream a few abusive words. Abul-Bakhtari picked up a camel bone and whacked Abu Jahal so hard on the head that he sustained a terrible injury to his head. What hurt Abu Jahal more than the

actual injury was that Hadhrat Hamzah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ was busy witnessing this whole scenario from the valley of Abu Taalib.

Due to these agonising and pathetic hardships the Muslims were facing, some of the disbelievers thought about violating this gruesome accord. The first person who reflected over this was Hishaam bin 'Amr. He dwelled on the fact that they are eating and drinking to their fill whilst their close relatives are longing for just a few grains and they are passing their days in starvation. So every night he would leave a camel-load of grain at the mouth of the valley of Abu Taalib.

One day, Hishaam bin 'Amr took this thought to Zuhair bin Umayyah. He was the grandson of 'Abdul-Muttalib and the son of 'Aatikah bint 'Abdul-Muttalib. In other words, he was Rasulullah's صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ cousin – his father's sister's son. Hishaam went up to Zuhair saying: "O Zuhair! Are you pleased to eat, drink, wear and marry however you want whilst your mother's brother pines for a few grains of food? By Allah! If Abu Jahal's uncle and maternal relations were to suffer such hardships, he would never have bothered about this accord." Zuhair replied: "Alas! I am alone in this. What can I achieve single-handed? If only I can get another sympathiser to assist me I will readily stand up against this immoral accord."

Hishaam bin 'Amr then went to Mut'im bin 'Adi and convinced him as well. Mut'im bin 'Adi in turn convinced another person to defy this accord.

From here, Hishaam went to Abul-Bakhtari and then to Zam'ah bin Al-Aswad to gather further support against this treaty.

When these five people resolved to challenge the treaty, they unanimously agreed to touch on the topic when all the other people gather. Zuhair undertook to steer the conversation towards this topic. The next morning, when the people had assembled in the Masjid, Zuhair rose saying: "O people of Makkah! It is a matter of grave concern and shame that we eat, drink, marry and attire ourselves whilst the Banu Haashim are dying with starvation. By Allah! I will not sit at ease until this oppressive accord is not shredded up." Abu Jahal retorted: "This divine accord of Allah can never be shredded."

Zam'ah bin Aswad commented: "By Allah! It will certainly be shred. Even when this accord was drawn up we were not happy about it." Abul-Bakhtari said: "Yes, Zam'ah is speaking the truth. We were not pleased with the accord." Mut'im added: "Certainly, both of them are true in what they say." Hishaam bin 'Urwah again endorsed what he said. Witnessing the tones of the gathering, Abu Jahal was left thunderstruck and exclaimed: "It seems like some decision was already taken the previous night."

In the meantime, Rasulullah صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ informed his uncle that apart from the names of Allah Ta'ala, ants had eaten up the written accord. Apart from the sentence *Bismika Allahumma* which generally headed every document, the rest of the words had been devoured by ants.

Abu Taalib, whilst narrating this to the Quraysh said: "This is what my nephew says and up to this day, my nephew has never uttered a lie. Whatever he has claimed thus far has never proven to be fictitious. Come, let us make a decision; if Muhammad's claim is true you will refrain from this cruelty and if his claim proves false, I am prepared to surrender Muhammad to you. You may then slay him or set him free." The people said: "Surely, Abu Taalib! You have been reasonably fair."

The written accord was then sent for. When they caught sight of it, they were shocked to discover that apart from the names of Allah Ta'ala, ants had eaten up the rest of the document. All of them lowered their heads in shame and embarrassment.

In this manner, this oppressive accord was finally put to rest. In the tenth year of prophethood, Abu Taalib and all his companions emerged from this desolate valley. Abu Taalib then went to the Haram Shareef and clinging onto the curtain of the K'abah, he and his companions made the following dua: "O Allah! Those who oppressed us, those who severed our family ties and those who put us through such dishonour, O Allah! We beg of You to retaliate on our behalf."

Abu Taalib also composed a poem in this regard. One couplet reads:

لَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ أَنَّ الصَّحِيفَةَ مَرَّقَتْ      وَإِنَّ كُلَّ مَا لَمْ يَرْضَهُ اللَّهُ يَفْسُدْ

*“Do you not know that the accord was ripped up and whatever displeases Allah Ta’ala is ruined in this manner?”*

Hafiz Ibn Katheer رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ says: “When Rasulullah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ and the Banu Haashim were besieged in the valley of Abu Taalib, Abu Taalib composed his celebrated poem called Qasidah Laamiyyah”.

This brought an end to three years of protracted misery and in the tenth year of prophethood, three years before Hijrah, the Muslims were liberated from the valley of Abu Taalib.