

CHAPTER 30

Extracts from *The Children of Israel in the Qur'an and the Sunna*



Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi

THE NOBLE QUR'AN METHOD OF CALLING ON THE JEWS TO ACCEPT ISLAM, AND PROOFS OF ITS FAIRNESS TOWARDS THEM

... Then God warned the Jews of severe punishment in this world and the next if they did not believe in Muhammad: Qur'an 4:47: "Before we destroy [their] faces, we overturn them over onto their backs, or we curse them as we cursed the Men of the Sabbath. God's word comes true."

This means: "O you who were given the Godly Book, namely, the Torah, believe in the Qur'an which we have brought down as a confirmation of the principles and pillars of religion that you have of aforesaid—before We scourge you with one of the following punishments:

- (1) One mentioned in Qur'an, above: "We will destroy [their] faces and [over]turn them over onto their backs" [i.e., curse them].

Mujaahid said it means that "we turned (their) faces away from the True Path, and so we will turn them onto their backs for their error."

Al-Suddi said that it means that "we will blind them to the truth, and bring them back to (their former state of) unbelief."

Al-DaHHaak said that it means that "we will return them to clear guidance," for he had already turned them over on their backs so that they disbelieved in Muhammad and the messages he brought.

- (2) God said, Qur'an 4:47: "... or we will curse them the way We cursed the men of the Sabbath." The meaning of "curse" here is exile *al-Tard* and *al-idhlaal al-ma`nawiy* moral humiliation.

The general import is that the verse is a call for belief by the Jews before God stamps their hearts and takes their light away, Qur'an 2:17, so they cannot face the truth, or even lean toward it; or, they were cursed from aforesaid and were exiled from his mercy, and miserable

wretchedness *al-dhullah wal-maskana* was decreed as their lot, for horrible punishment became their dominant trait.

God is capable of punishing a group of them with one of these two punishments, and the other group punished with the other, for they persisted in their rebellious error.

Qur'an 4:47: "God's command comes true" means that everything that God orders is put into effect without exception, for nothing on earth or in heaven can hinder him.

The pronoun in "we will curse *them*" refers to the owners of the faces, or, by way of object switching, it refers to those who were given the Book.

Then he reiterated that he would not forgive anyone who joined partners with him, but except for these, he may forgive whomever he wills, Qur'an 4:48 [also 4:116]: "God will never pardon one who [ascribes] partners to him; he pardons whom he [wishes] among the others. [But] for whoever ascribed partners to him has committed a grievous crime/sin."

This means that God will not forgive those Jews who did not believe in Muhammad any of their sins, big or small. Qur'an 4:48 [4:116]: "... and whoever ascribes partners to God..." because he condemns (those partners) who are not of his creation to lowness and slavery. Qur'an 4:48 [4:119]: "... for he has committed a grievous sin"; i.e., he is to be faulted with a grievous sin.

These two verses command belief in Muhammad and made clear to (the Jews) that their disbelief could only lead them to *khizy* degradation in this world and to *`adhaab* punishment in the next, for he does not forgive those who ascribe partners to him, but other than these (sinners), he punishes whoever he pleases.

Jews Led into Disputing Religion [Islam] Due to Their AL-BAGHY WAL-HASAD Wanton Envy

In their essence, heavenly laws are the same. All descend from God's presence for mankind's guidance in order to help them in this world and the next; they differ only in

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details, not in the essentials. This minute difference is a sign of God's mercy for his worshipers, for he ordained for each community of believers that which is appropriate for them in their particular circumstances.

Muhammad brought the final revelation of religious law, its guardian and the criterion of all fundamental aspects of God's unicity, belief in his emissaries, revelation of noble qualities, and principles of noble behavior.

The Jews should have rushed to believe in this emissary, the unlettered Prophet who brought irrefragable proofs to believe in him and in what he received from his Lord. But most of them were blind and deaf to the truth, and refused to believe in Muhammad, whom they knew like they knew their own sons, Qur'an 2:146: Then they fiercely disputed him.

In many of its verses the noble Qur'an describes the refusal of the People of the Book to enter Islam and from joining Muhammad. The reason is their wanton envy, not logical evidence. Here is one of those verses:

Qur'an 3:19-20:

God's religion is Islam. The people who were given the Book knowingly dispute that which came to them out of *baghy* stiffneckedness/stubbornness. He who disbelieves in God's verses/signs—God is quick to bring him to account. So if they dispute you (Muhammad), I and my followers have directed *alsam-tu* our faces to God, so say to those who were given the Book and to the unlettered, "Have you become Muslims *a-aslam-tum?*" If they did, it was because they were rightly guided; if they turned away—you have to set them right. God sees all concerning his worshipers.

He said, Qur'an 3:19: "God's religion is Islam."

Qataada said that "Islam" means the Shahaada: "There is no God but Allah," and the repetition of this from God's presence. This is God's religion which he legislated for himself, with which he sent his emissaries. God's *awliyyaa'* "friends" demonstrate this: He accepts only these, and reward comes only from him.

Then God points out that the Jews did not leave Islam following any evidence; it was only out of their wanton envy, Qur'an 3:19: "Those who were given the Book did not dispute what they knowingly had, out of stiff-neckedness/stubbornness *baghy* among them," i.e. those who were given the Book did not differ concerning the Islamic religion per se, they left it and refused to enter it, Qur'an 3:20: "except after there came to them what they knowingly had," i.e., even after they knew it was the undeniable Truth, nor did their disputing result from ignorance or doubt on their part, but rather from "stiff-neckedness/stubbornness"; i.e., their disputing and denial of the truth was caused solely out of their wanton envy of Muhammad and of the nobility God endowed him with, and because of their *Talab lil-riyaasa* lust for power and their *HuZuuZ al-dunyaa* striving for the lux-

uries of this life, and out of *radhiilat al-baghy wal-Hasad* their degenerate wanton envy and *Hubb al-dunyaa* love for this world which had penetrated into their hearts—the light of knowledge was removed from them, and this made them deny the truth all the more and distance themselves from the Way of Belief: (the Jews) sank into a *al-kufr wal-fusuuq wal-'iSyaan* prurient and disbelieving disobedience.

He then concluded the noble verse with a strong threat to anyone who would disbelieve in his verses/signs, Qur'an 3:21: "Whoever disbelieves in God's verses/signs—God is quick to bring him to account," i.e., whoever denies his signs and proofs which he establishes as a remembrance for those with intellect, and evidence for those who can consider—God becomes his punisher and his caller to a hard account, for he is quick to bring to account.

... [T]hese are some of the verses which point to the fact that (the Jews rejected Islam) out of wanton envy. Another is Qur'an Surat al-Jaathiya, 45:16-17:

And certainly We gave the Book and the wisdom and the prophecy to the children of Israel, and We gave them of the goodly things, and We made them excel the nations. And We gave them clear arguments in the affair, but they did not differ until after knowledge had come to them out of envy among themselves; surely your—Lord will judge between them on the day of resurrection concerning that wherein they differed.

Another is Surat al-Naml, 27:76-79:

Verily, this Qur'an narrates to the Children of Israel most of that about which they differed truly, it (this Qur'an) is a guide and a mercy to the believers. Verily, your Lord will decide between them (various sects) by His Judgment. And He is the All-Mighty, the All-Knowing. So put your trust in Allah; surely, you (O Muhammad SAW) are on manifest truth.

These noble verses, and many similar ones, point out that the reason for the Jews rejecting Islam was wanton envy and their *istibdaal* clannishness, which is grossly exaggerated. The noble Qur'an called them many times to return to the ways of righteousness, and to extirpate their shared identity *'aSabiyya*, and walk the straight path, and to rush to believe in Muhammad, who brought clear evidence and demonstrable proofs of his truth, and they knew this clearly and without any doubt. Qur'an also called them to Islam, right guidance, and their own happiness, yet in their *i'raad* rejection of it is their *shaqaa' wa-Dalaala* erroneous misery.

*Qur'an Tells the Jews the Truth about That with Which
They Disagree*

... [T]he noble Qur'an does not restrict itself to clarifying that the Jews' religious objections come out of only wanton envy, and that they have to reject these *radhaa'il* unseemly behaviors, and follow the truth Muhammad brought them; no, Qur'an does more than that: it informs them that they already know the *al-Haqq wal-Sawaab* correct truth about their religious quibbles, that they should open their hearts to and not stand in the way preventing others from following it.

So see Surat al-Shuura, 42:14,

And they did not become divided but, after knowledge had come to them, through jealousy among themselves. And had it not been for a word that had already gone forth from thy Lord for an appointed term, the matter would, surely, have been decided between them. Surely, those who were made to inherit the Book after them are in a disquieting doubt concerning it. And, verily, those who were made to inherit the Scripture (Torah and Evangel) after them (i.e., the Jews and Christians) are in grave doubt concerning it (i.e., Allah's true religion—Islam or the Qur'an).

This means that the noble verses in this Qur'an which God revealed to his Prophet Muhammad tell the real story of the Banu Israel . . . [that which] agrees with it is true, what disagrees with it is false.

The Banu Israel disputed many matters, among them the *nusakh* versions. Some claim (that some verses of the Torah) were impossible logically, and inapplicable legally; others held the opposite view. They also differed in the matter of Jesus, they related him to Joseph the carpenter, and accused his mother of what she was innocent of. They disputed also in the matter of Abraham, and said he was a Jew. They also fell out over the Prophet in many matters, which I have described in detail in *Masaalik al-Yahuud li-Kayd al-Islam wal-Muslimiin* (The Methods Jews Use to Entrap Islam and Muslims).

... [T]hen God says that He alone will judge what the Jews differ about. Qur'an . . . then God says that He alone will judge what the Jews differ about. Qur'an 27:78: "Your Lord will judge between them with His Judgment, for He is the Omnipotent, the Omniscient."¹

Then he ordered his Prophet to depend on him, and to strive to spread his religion and his word without paying attention to the *'a'daa al-diin* enemies of the religion, those who block and pervert his way . . . they should *yuHakkimuu 'uquula-ahum* restrain their intellects and forsake *al-'inaad wal-Hasad* rebellious envy . . .

The Proofs against the Jews

See Surat Yuunus, 10:94:

This means, O emissary, that if you have any doubt about what We have revealed to you, including narratives, morals, or laws then ask the people of the Book who recite the Torah and the Evangel, for they know without a shadow of a doubt, that you have come with this Qur'an from God's presence, for their adherence to these books gives them this certain knowledge . . .

[The Qur'anic commentator Abu al-Qasim Mahmud ibn Umar al-Zamakhshari notes that they know their own scriptures like they know their own sons. Qur'an 2:146:

Those to whom We gave the Scripture (Jews and Christians) recognize him (Muhammad SAW or the Ka'bah at Makkah) as they recognize their sons. But verily, a party of them conceal the truth while they know it—[i.e., the qualities of Muhammad SAW which are written in the Taurat (Torah) and the Injeel (Gospel)].

From their own books, they should know that Qur'an is true, yet they *yaktamuuna* conceal the truth knowingly. Qur'an calls the People of the Book in general to Islam, but [also] the Jews, specifically. They cannot open their hearts, and cling to their *hawaa* illusion, and reject the Prophet out of *Hirs 'alaa ziinat al-Hayaat* lust for the luxuries of this world, *bay' lil-diin bil-dunyaa* their selling out of religion for this world, and their *'aSabiyya* tribal solidarity which they fabricated, and their envy of the Prophet . . . which brings down God's *ghaDab* wrath, and condemns them to *khizy* degradation in this world and punishment in the next.

... ([A]t the time of Muhammad's coming) there were waves of false beliefs and inherited fables, and a low moral level and ugly practices.

Muhammad brought his message to two types of people: (1) the idol worshipers who believed God had partners they must humbly obey; (2) the People of the Book who *Harrafuu al-kalim 'an mawaaDi'I-hi* corrupted their texts by moving around the words (to inappropriate places), and forgot their previous good fortune, persisted in being hard-hearted, and many were *faasiquuna* fornicators. Thus the different approaches: idolatry cannot be tolerated—[therefore we must,] in short, [declare] total war.

Al-Bukhari relates on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas that the Prophet would let his hair down following the practice of the Jews, and not part his hair as the idolaters were wont to do, which was a sign of his solidarity with the People of the Book, but later he began to part his hair.²

Qur'an describes the People of the Book correctly as such. The Book is the Torah . . . and the Evangel . . .

given to guide them. Sometimes Qur'an mentions this in their praise, and sometimes to chide them for rejecting (the final heavenly revelation) and to condemn them for their low morals and evil ways. They are also called to account for their knowingly *kitnaan al-Haqq* concealing the truth and for giving the lie *takdhiib* to Muhammad, while knowing his truth like they know their own sons, and their being steadfast in their *'inaad wa-juHuud wa-tanaaquD* hard-core denial and obstinacy—this is their true nature. Qur'an 3:98–99:

Say: O followers of the Book! why do you disbelieve in the communications of Allah? And Allah is a witness of what you do. Say: O followers of the Book! why do you hinder him who believes from the way of Allah? You seek (to make) it crooked, while you are witness, and Allah is not heedless of what you do.

Qur'an describes People of the Book in general terms, with negative attributes like their fanaticism in religion, following a false path. It describes the Jews with their own particular degenerate characteristics, i.e., killing the prophets of God, corrupting his words by putting them in the wrong places, consuming the people's wealth frivolously, refusal to distance themselves from the evil they do, and other ugly characteristics caused by their *gaswa wa-fujuur* deep-rooted lasciviousness. See Qur'an 2:83: "And when We made a covenant with the children of Israel: You shall not serve any but Allah and (you shall do) good to (your) parents, and to the near of kin and to the orphans and the needy, and you shall speak to men good words and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate. Then you turned back except a few of you and (now too) you turn aside." [Only a minority of the Jews keep their word.]

Qur'an 3:113–15:

They are not all alike. Among the People of the Book, there is a party who stand by their covenant; they recite the word of Allah in the hours of the night and prostrate themselves before Him. They believe in Allah and the Last Day, and enjoin good and forbid evil, and hasten to vie with one another in good works. And these are among the righteous. And whatever good they do, they shall not be denied its due reward, and Allah well knows those who guard against evil.

This means that all Jews are not the same. The good ones become Muslims; the bad ones do not.

... [The good Jews] follow Islam, the bad ones distance themselves from it, for they turn away from the Truth, disbelieve in God and the Last Day.

Jews Argue with What Is Good

... [T]he Jews always remain *muta`annitiina Zaal-imiina* maleficent deniers. ... [T]hey should desist from their *al-inaad wal-juHuud* negative denial ... some Jews went *bil-ifraaT fil-i`tidaa' wal-inaad* way overboard in their denying hostility, so gentle persuasion can do no good with them, so use force with them and treat them in the way you see as effective in ridding them of their evil. One may go so far as to ban their religion, their persons, their wealth, and their villages.

Al-Bukhari related on the authority of Abu Hurayra [sic] that the Jews used to recite the Torah in Hebrew and explicate it in Arabic for the Prophet of Islam. The emissary of God said, "neither believe nor disbelieve the Jews, but say, 'We believe in what was revealed to us and what was revealed to you. Our God is One God, and we submit ourselves/are Muslims to Him.'"

... [B]e rough only with those Jews who are *al-Zaal-imuun al-mu`aaniduun* evildoers in denial ... Surat al-NaHl, Qur'an 16:125:

Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and have disputations with them in the best manner; surely your Lord best knows those who go astray from His path, and He knows best those who follow the right way.

Allowing Their Food, Dealing with Them, Intermarriage

... [A]ll signs of God's liberality toward the Jews ... Bukhari:

`A'isha said that Muhammad once bought food from a Jew and later bought a pawned iron suit of armor from him [thus testifying to the Prophet's good intentions towards Jews]; ... when Muhammad died, the pawned suit of armor was worth/valued at thirty *Saa's* of barley. Qur'an allows Muslims to marry Jews, but not polytheists.

`Uthman married a Christian; `Umar married a Jewess, and so did Hudhayfa ... despite all this goodwill of the Prophet of Islam towards the Jews, they refused to take advantage of it by persisting in harming the Muslims.

*Receiving the Jizya from the Jews,
Not from the Polytheists*

Some people understood Qur'an 9:29: "Fight against those who (1) believe not in Allah, (2) nor in the Last Day, (3) nor forbid that which has been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger (4) and those who acknowledge not the religion of truth (i.e., Islam) among the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians), until they pay the the Jizya *'an yadin wa-hum Saaghiruuna'* as *qaswa wa-idhlaal wa-intihaan al-karaama,*" with

willing submission, and feel themselves subdued... [and suffer] humiliating harshness and repudiating dignity, but this interpretation is wrong: the People of the Book are to hand over a certain amount of their wealth in order to participate in the construction of the Islamic dynasty/state which will take care of their needs; they must be *khaaDi'uuna* obedient to it, not permitting rebellion against it, or allowing the harming of its interests, nor disturbing its security.

This is their *al-khuDuu` al-taamm* total submission to the laws of the Islamic state in which they live in a protected state, a condition which every state demands of its citizens and from those under its protection to enable it to fulfill its social obligations in calm security, and that it not expose itself to destruction nor to vitiating its power/control, nor its reputation to be sullied, nor subject to deterioration nor disturbance.

This is one facet of Islam's munificence toward the People of the Book, i.e., that it requires paying the *jizya* only by the men and not by women or children; nor does it require *jizya* payment by those who can demonstrate they are too poor to pay.

... [I]n Abu Yuusuf's *WaSaya* last will and testament:

O Commander of the Faithful, your Prophet and the son of your uncle Muhammad treated the people of the *Dhimma* with clemency—he did not harm them or hurt them or force them beyond their capacity, nor did he take any of their property, except when it became necessary. Muhammad said, "Whoever harms a contractee/confederate or forces him beyond his capacity, has me as his opponent.

At the time of Muhammad's death, he said to `Umar, "I will to the people of the *Dhimma* after my death that you fulfill your contractual duties to them, that you fight beside them, and not force them above their capacity."

(6) *Treating Them Legally*

When the People of the Book wanted to live under an Islamic state and its protection, and bound itself to live peaceably therein, and not declare war on it, nor display any hostility to it that would harm it, nor relate slanders against it, then Islam orders its followers to treat them according to this extremely fair and merciful *al-qa`ida* basis (what's good for them is good for us and what's bad for them is bad for us).

(... as long as they remain peaceful, they may participate in various ways in the Islamic state... [S]ometimes some Jewish government ministers would take advantage of their Islamic ruler's leniency for their own profit...)

Abu Yuusuf says `Umar once pushed a blind man's arm, then asked him which part of the People of the Book he belonged to. He replied that he was a Jew. `Umar asked, "What brought you to this condition?" "I

blame the *jizya*, poverty, and old age." So `Umar took him by his hand, brought him to his house, and gave him whatever he found. Then he sent him to the treasury, and told him, "Look at all this wealth from taxes! By God! We did not do justly. We consumed his youth and we despise him in his old age. Qur'an 9:60: "The *Sadaqaat* are only for the *Fuqara'* poor and the *Al-Masakin* wretched." The poor are the Muslim poor, this man is one of the wretched People of the Book. Then he relieved him of the *jizya* and of his other taxes. Abu Bakr said, "I witnessed this of `Umar, and I saw that old man."

[S]o this is Islam's fair approach to the People of the Book... and the Jews were of an evil inclination and stood apart from Islam's call, doubting the certainly true; they remained hostile to its emissary spreading [*fitan*] revolution among its followers. They tried every way they could to nip it in the bud.

Next chapter, inshalla, we'll talk about their *masaalik al-khabiitha* evil ways.

THE METHODS JEWS USE TO ENTRAP ISLAM AND THE MUSLIMS

... In the previous section we clarified some of the ways in which the noble Qur'an calls for the Jews to embrace Islam, and we explicated some of the methods which show them the justice inherent in Islam, and its respect and friendship toward them.

We noted that the Jews did not accept this noble treatment for what it was; they employed every means to oppose the call to Islam.

In this chapter we will mention some of the evil methods the Jews have employed to entrap Islam and the Muslims after the Prophet's (PBUH) emigration to Medina.

First we will discuss their evil ways—we will try to answer the following questions:

- A. Were the Jews of Medina aware of the appearance of the Prophet and of his messages before he emigrated there?
- B. How did the Jews receive the Prophet on his arrival in Medina as an emigrant?
- C. Why did the Jews greet—all of them—the call to Islam at first and then oppose it later?

In response to the first question:

Some Jews came to Mecca for business, and various occupations. The inhabitants of Mecca themselves would set out for Khaybar to buy the jewelry of the Abu al-Haqiiq clan, with which their wives and daughters would adorn themselves for their weddings. The Meccans of the Aws and Khazraj tribes would also come to Mecca for business purposes, to circumambulate the Ka`ba, and so on. Doubtlessly these interconnections would result in the dissemination of the news concerning

a new religion which Muhammad ibn `Abd Allah had brought.

During the Prophet's presence among them the Quraish had already sent al-NaDr ibn al-Haarith and `Uqba ibn Abi Mu`iit to the Jewish rabbis in Medina, who asked them about Muhammad, and to describe him. The two of them informed (the rabbis) of Muhammad's statement that the Jews were the first People of the Book, and they had exclusive knowledge about the prophets. The two of them then left and entered [another part of . . .] Medina, and they asked the Jewish rabbis about the Prophet and the two of them informed (the rabbis) of some of Muhammad's statements, saying to them that they were the people of the Torah, so the two came to them so that (the rabbis) would inform them of this their companion.

The Jewish rabbis replied to them that they should ask Muhammad three questions; if he answered correctly, he was a Prophet and an emissary. If he answered incorrectly, he should be killed.

- (I) Ask him about young men who perished long ago, and what was their amazing story.
- (II) Ask him about the wanderer who reached the very ends of the earth, and what was his message.
- (III) Ask him about the [nature of the] *ruuH* (Spirit).

If he answers these three questions correctly, then follow him, for he is a true prophet. If not, then he is a dead man [*sic*], do with him what you will.

Al-NaDr and `Uqba left and went to Mecca and informed the Quraish of what they heard from the Jewish rabbis, and the Quraish went to Muhammad, and said to him that Muhammad should inform them of the amazing story of the young men of long ago, and of the wanderer who had reached the ends of the earth, and of the nature of the *ruuH* (Spirit).

The emissary of God told them he would answer them on the following day. (Muhammad did not include the words "*in sha'a Allah*"—God willing—here.) They departed from Muhammad, and the latter stayed for fifteen nights during which God brought him no revelation, nor did Gabriel come to him, until the Meccans became agitated and said, "Muhammad promised 'tomorrow' but it's now been fifteen nights and we haven't received anything concerning what we asked him about. Muhammad became saddened that no revelation had come to him, and he was distressed as to what he would say to the Meccans. Then Gabriel brought him Sura [17] of the people of the Children of Israel, which brought an end to his sadness in that it informed him of the answers to the questions about the young men and the wanderer, when [Gabriel] brought down, Qur'an 17:85: "They ask you about the *ruuH*. Say, 'the *ruuH* is by God's command [there must be infinite different translations of this phrase]—you have only been given a little bit of knowledge."

D.

When a quarrel would break out between the Jews of Medina and the Aws and Khazraj tribes, (the Jews) would threaten them saying, "Our [*sic*] Prophet was but his time has gone, so we will pursue him and kill you together with him, with the same type of killing as that of `Aad and Iram [Qur'anic peoples]."

The noble Qur'an indicated this, Qur'an 2:89:

Whenever a Book from God comes to them, God confirms what had already been with them, and they were from aforesaid (literally, attempting victory) victorious over those who disbelieved. And when what they knew came, they disbelieved. So may God's curse be upon the unbelievers!

(The term *istiftaaH* [in the above verse] means "the attempt for victory"; that is, "If they attempt victory, they will have victory.")

The meaning here is that they will try to gain victory over the unbelievers when they fight them, they say, "O God! Grant us victory over the Prophet sent for all time until eternity, and whose description and features we find in the Torah." When this prophet came whom they tried to defeat—they didn't follow him nor did they believe in him—and may God's curse be upon the disbelievers.

Another opinion holds that the term *yastafiiHuuna* means [not merely "to try to gain victory" but rather] "to gain victory," that is, it informs them that the time of the Arab Prophet is approaching—this is the thrust of this view.

Before the coming of the Prophet, the Jews used to inform the unbelievers of his appearance, and when this prophet, whom they spoke about, appeared, they disbelieved him—may God's curse be upon the unbelievers.

E.

In the few years which preceded the Hegira, the Prophet used to meet—during the pilgrimage season when he would present his call to the tribes, and would teach them Islam—with individuals from the Aws and Khazraj. They would look at one another and exclaim, "By God! This is the Prophet the Jews promised would come, yet they don't accept him."

After the first generation had sworn allegiance to Muhammad, he sent to the inhabitants of Medina MuS`ab ibn `Umayr to recite the Qur'an to them, to teach them Islam, and to train them in religious practice, so that Islam spread throughout many homes in Medina.

There followed the swearing of allegiance of the very large group/generation in which many of the nobles of the Aws and Khazraj took part, at which the Khazrajite leader Abu al-Haytham ibn al-Tayhaan told the Prophet,

"O Emissary! Between us and those people, i.e. the Jews, are ties/relations; but we will cut these off. But how is it possible for us to do so, and then God brought you to return to your people and leave us?"

The emissary laughed and said, "Blood is blood, and blood-letting from a corpse is blood-letting from a corpse,³ you are of me and I am of you, I battle those you battle, and I make peace with those with whom you make peace."

What we must emphasize here is that the Jews were not unaware of those swearings of allegiance between Muhammad and the Medinans before the Hegira, nor were they unaware of the Islamic calls toward Yathrib [Medina] and its propagation among its population.

How could (the Jews) have been unaware that Islam was spreading openly in Medina, when MuS'ab ibn `Umayr was calling the people to God and his emissary in public. This message spread from clan to clan, from sub-tribe to sub-tribe so that joy overflowed in (MuS'ab's) heart: he realized that Islam had found fertile ground among the Medinans, and that its followers were daily increasing in number and power in Yathrib.

But what is the main reason that the Aws and Khazraj took to Islam so readily, and rushed to embrace it with open arms?

In answer to this question: the mixing of the Aws and Khazraj with the Jews of Yathrib had a deep psychological *ruHiyy* impact, since the Jews were the People of the Book, and of preachers, and of the call to monotheism, taking idols for gods was prohibited to them. They were promised a new prophet who would follow them and kill them by his own hands, and would make the king of the world under their power. These religious disputes—in addition to the rebellions and the wars which decimated the Aws and Khazraj by the Jews' incursions on them—made the inhabitants of Yathrib readily accept the call of Islam, and they saw its caller, Muhammad, as their savior from all their trials and tribulations.

Thus we may conclude our answer to the first question: the Jews were not only cognizant of the appearance of the Prophet and his messages—nay, their presence in Medina and its environs was in itself one of the main reasons for the spread of Islam there, even if indirectly and inadvertently, as Dr. Israel Wolfensohn says.

Now we will answer the second question, that is, how did the Jews receive the Prophet upon his emigration?

On a certain day in recorded history, when the Muslims of Medina were waiting, as usual, for the Prophet, after the news of his emigration piled up around their ears a Jew shouted out to them that the Prophet's entourage had come into view, by exclaiming, "O sons of Qayla [matriarch of Aws and Khazraj], your grandfather has arrived!"

Al-Bukhari notes a hadith in his section on the Hegira:

When the Muslims of Madina heard of the Emissary of God's exit from Mecca, they would go out

every morning to al-Hurra in order to see him before the noon-day heat would drive them back. One day they returned toward home after awaiting him for a long time, while a certain Jew watched them. Later, when the Prophet and his Companions seemed to (appear and then) disappear in a desert mirage, so the Jew could not restrain himself from calling out in his loudest voice, "O you group of Arabs! Here's your grandfather you've been waiting for." Thereupon the Muslims went for their weapons, and they met the Emissary of God on the plain of al-Hurra.⁴

All the Jews participated with the Muhaajiruun and the AnSaar in the welcoming reception of the Bringer of God's call. Concerning them all we say that, because of the genuine hadiths that have come down to us about some of the Jews rejected the Islamic call and subversively undermined its caller from the first day of the emigration.

On the authority of Safya bint Hayy ibn AkhTab:⁵ This contract is even better than the League of Nations Charter! . . . and after all we did to deal fairly with the Jews, and they had been aware of news of the Islamic call even in Mecca, especially in the few years immediately following the Hegira, all of them welcomed the Prophet warmly at his arrival in Medina. And there were good relations for (a while) after the Hegira. Qur'an 16:120: "Surely Ibrahim was an exemplar, obedient to Allah, upright, and he was not of the polytheists." Qur'an 16:123: "Then We revealed to you: Follow the faith of Ibrahim, the upright one, and he was not of the polytheists."

We now answer the third question, that is, why did the Jews make peace with the emissary in the months following the Hegira? And why did they turn against him with hostile trickery in all its shapes and forms?

In answer to the first part of this question: The Jews did not participate in welcoming the emissary on his arrival in Medina out of love, but rather they hoped for his goodwill and his willingness to become allied with them, so they would be helped by him and his Muslim followers to form a united power in the Arabian Peninsula to resist the Christians, who had displaced them from Palestine and had soundly defeated them. They believed that the Islam which Muhammad brought could never compensate for the tritheism of the Christians, so there was no recourse except to get help from the Muslims in stopping Christianity which expelled them from the Promised Land.

Second part: the Jews made peace with Muhammad on his arrival in Medina in the few months after the Hegira only because they believed he would leave them out of the scope of his call, considering themselves better guided than to join his *risaala* religion. They were prevented from accepting his call, and *akbar min* too great to be included under his stewardship. They

believed that he would never allow the new teachings to replace those of the Torah, and that he would not hold them to account for their *taHriif aw taghyiir* corruption or changing of the (holy) text [*sic*]; perhaps they expected that he would join them, especially after they saw him pray toward their *qibla*, and fast on the day of "Aashuuraa" (tenth day of [J]ewish year is Yom Kippur) with them. He said, "We are more deserving of Moses than you." He announced his belief in God, his angels, his emissaries, and the Last Day.

Third: When the emissary of God entered Medina the Jews were in a difficult situation because of divisive dissension within the ranks, and this tight spot they were in made them incapable of showing open hostility to the emissary, so they found it advisable to delay making their opposition to the Islamic call public until the appropriate time they chose.

Fourth: after the emigration of the emissary to Medina the Aws and the Khazraj allied themselves together, and the Islamic state brought them under one flag after they had differed with one another. They now held the real power in Medina and they renewed their agreement with the Prophet that they would defend him with their wealth and persons. This position of total power for the Aws and Khazraj occurred after their entrance into Islam prevented the Jews from opposing the Prophet with their hostility at the time of his emigration, so they preferred to wage war against him [Muhammad] using underhanded means, the most important of which was *al-irjaaf wal-tashkiil* to undermine him with tricky theological questions [*sic*], stirring up religious dissension, and semantic argumentation, which we will detain [*sic*] shortly.

This is one of the most important reasons that made the Jews accommodate themselves to the Islamic call in the first months following the Hegira. They took a wait-and-see attitude toward it, but they saw it spread, and its power continue, so you might assume that they would be content to enjoy security under its umbrella and see their commerce prosper, and their wealth increase. But no! As this situation continued, and the Islamic call gained more adherents and began to take its natural place under the sun, the Jews began to become worried, and anxiety disturbed their sleep, and worries gnawed at them. So they began thinking deeply about *al-kayd* entrapping Islam and the Muslims, and this plotting took control of their emotions and their intellects. They knew the course of events was going in the opposite direction of their aspirations and *ahwaa'* vain hopes, for the following reasons:

- (1) They were disheartened that Islamic teachings were becoming accepted by so many, and that the number of Muslims was increasing, not decreasing. Every day their power grew, and they were achieving independence in thought and deed.
- (2) The Jews' political and economic power, which had been based on dissension among the Arabs,

and keeping this state of dissension in place began to dwindle away to nothing—this alarmed them. The Aws and Khazraj entered Islam, and had become by the grace of God the Muslims' brothers and military confederates—as contrasted to the past when they had been sworn enemies of the Muslims.

- (3) The Jews realized that their fervor to have the Muslims join them in order to make them more formidable in their war on the Christians in the Arabian Peninsula had become a will'o the wisp because the teachings of Islam do not deny the laws of Moses—indeed, it confirms the truth in it—but now Islam was taking on the appearance of independent renewal, and because after the Hegira the Muslims in Medina had become a state with its own independent moral personality. In everything, in their wars and their peace, and so on, the Muslims behaved solely in accordance with the religious practices of their Prophet, and they were hardly inclined to follow the leadership of the Jews, or of anyone else.
- (4) In their very nature the Jews are the people the most eager for life, and the greediest of them in accumulating wealth, and they were aware that the commerce they were doing in Medina for hundreds of years and which they had exploited to acquire *Haraam* things forbidden, began to slip through their fingers to the Muhaajiruun and the Muslims, who did not lack knowledge of financial and economic matters, began to compete with them. This competition encouraged the Muslims to expend their greatest efforts to work for their own benefit and to free themselves of having to borrow from the Jews.
- (5) The Jews were terrified when they saw that the Prophet did not exclude them from his call to Islam, just as he called to others, because his *risaala* message is universal, directed to all mankind. The Jews were frightened by this confrontation with the Islamic call, and wrongly supposed that the Israelite people *fadhha* were above all other peoples, and that it was God's chosen people over all the rest of the nations, and that it would be impossible to appoint an emissary from among any of them, and that He would inspire him with a new law, whose teachings would be no less than those in the Torah.
- (6) The Jews were angered because they recognized in the character of the Prophet a dangerous competitor would vitiate their religious superiority, and special status, and their cultural dominance. People already had begun to desert them and accept the Prophet as their primary authority, and most trustworthy guide and

leader to be obeyed, for he was an emissary from God's very presence, of true Arab blood, and he brought with him religious and secular happiness.

- (7) The Jews were depressed to witness the teachings of Islam call for the revival of the spirit of brotherhood and equality among all mankind, so that the Arab had no advantage over the non-Arab, nor the Israelite over the non-Israelite, except in respect to *al-taqwaa* piety (see Qur'an), and that Islam had drawn some of the Jews' leading scholars to it, for example, their rabbi and their son of a rabbi, `Abdallaah ibn Salaam, who became a Muslim shortly after meeting the Prophet, and he ordered all the members of his household to become Muslim with him. He did not restrain himself to announcing his acceptance of Islam, but he went on to describe the Jews as a *buhut* mendacious people, and he warned the Prophet of their *makr wal-khiyaan* scheming. Bukhari reported on the authority of Anas ibn Maalik, who said, "In the first few months after the Hegira that `Abdallaah ibn Salaam heard the emissary of God, while he was in a verdant meadow, and asked him three questions which could be answered only by a Prophet:

- (I) What are the first signs of the end of the world? (II) What was the first food for the people in the Garden of Eden? And (III) What does a child get from its mother and its father? [T]he Prophet said that Gabriel had given him the answers already. `Abdallaah ibn Salaam replied, "Gabriel?" the Prophet: "Yes," `Abdallaah ibn Salaam: "But he is the angel who is the Jews' enemy!" Then the Prophet recited the verse, Qur'an 2:97: "Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel—for he has [brought the Qur'an down to your] heart," and then the Prophet answered: (I) The first sign of the Hour is the Fire which will gather all the people of the east and the west, and (II) the first food the people of the Garden of Eden ate was *ziyaadat kabid al-Huut* an abundance of whale liver, and (III) if the father's liquid squirts out before the mother's liquid is released the child will resemble his father; and vice versa. `Abdallaah ibn Salaam exclaimed that there is no god but God, and that Muhammad is his Prophet; the Jews are a *buhut* mendacious people, and when they find out about my becoming a Muslim they will reject me.

... then the Jews came to the emissary of God and he said to them, "Which of you is `Abdallaah ibn Salaam?" and they answered, "The best of us, and the son of the best of us, our leader and the son of our leader." So he asked them, "Do you know whether he accepted Islam or not?" and they answered, "God forbid!" [T]hen `Abdallaah ibn Salaam appeared and said, "I bear witness that there is no god but God, and I bear witness that Muhammad is the emissary of God." So the Jews said, "He is the worst of us, and the son of the worst of us, and they belittled him," so `Abdallaah ibn Salaam told Muhammad, "This is exactly what I feared."

These are the most important reasons the Jews initiated hostilities against the Islamic call in Medina. They took every measure they could to extinguish its fire and vitiate its power. They did not accept the fact that this *al-Haniif* monotheistic religion should gain support, and it troubled them that they would have to live in its shadow and under its rule. If they accepted its safety and security, they could have lived prosperously in this environment. Yet they preferred to unite in *an yakiiduu* entrapping the Prophet of God and the believers, and despite the fact that they lived within the Islamic call, they tried to obstruct it and to distort it. They pooled all their resources of power and wealth to kill it in the cradle, and what wouldn't they do to achieve their ends?

We say in response that we are not exaggerating when we say that the Jews left no stone unturned in the attempt to snuff out the Islamic call, nor was any means considered out of bounds in order to denigrate Islam and its Prophet—they tried everything they could.

Here are some of their ways of entrapping Islam and the Muslims (which we will detail below):

- A. religious argumentation and semantic bickering;
- B. use of various schemes to discredit the Prophet;
- C. their attempt to stamp out trust between the Muslims;
- D. the attempt to convert the Muslims from their religion;
- E. finagling with God's laws, and attempting to arouse rebellion against the emissary;
- F. allying themselves with the hypocrites against the Muslims;
- G. allying themselves with the polytheists against the Muslims;
- H. falsely slandering the emissary;
 - I. making fun of/mocking the religion and its principles;
 - J. attempting to assassinate them.

It appears to us that the first way the Jews tried to harm the emissary was by inciting rebellion among the various groups of Muslims. This is effected through multiplying religious contention and semantic nit-picking. From his very nature the Israelite is contentious and rebellious in the face of the Truth, and the story of their sacrificing the cow, Qur'an 2:67-71 [2:246]: "The story

of a group of the Banu Israel which said to one of their prophets, send us a king we will kill for God," and other stories in Qur'an about their *lujaa*' stubbornness—that is proof enough for us to say that—and here we are not saying that we are analyzing their psychology—we are merely providing some examples and instances of their disputations and demonstrating that evil intentions were the source of their resistance to facing the truth. At the time of the appearance of the Prophet, he was unable to disprove their arguments, nor to confront their religious evidence, to the extent that the Muslims would begin to doubt the truth of their Prophet, and convert out of their religion of Islam to which God had guided them. But the Jews failed in this method just as they failed in others, because God taught his Prophet the response that would silence their tongues, debunk their arguments. Qur'an 10:33: "God's word stands, even if they disapprove."

Here are some of the ways in which the Jews tried to make their case against the Prophet. We will list them all first, and give details below:

- I. they argued against the Prophet's prophethood, to undermine it;
- II. they argued about Abraham and his *milla* people;
- III. they argued against the prophecy of Jesus;
- IV. they disputed the matter of the *nusakh* various versions;
- V. their disputing the matter of the change in the qibla;
- VI. their disputing allowed and prohibited foods.

In more detail: (I) The Jews' dispute with the Prophet concerning the legitimacy of his prophethood in order to undermine him: the Jews tried to undermine the legitimacy of the Prophet's prophethood, and cast doubts on his truth, so that people would turn away from his call. They attempted this in various ways, the most important of which are the following:

(a) They claimed that Muhammad was not the Prophet they had been expecting, and who had been foretold in the heavenly books, even after they knew his truth as well as they knew their own sons. The noble Qur'an spoke of their lies, Qur'an 2:89: "And when there came to them a Book from Allah verifying that which they have, and aforesome they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieve, but when there came to them (Prophet) that which they did not recognize, they disbelieved in him; so Allah's curse is on the unbelievers."

On the authority of Ibn `Abbaas: "The Jews tried dominate the Aws and the Khazraj before the Prophet's mission, and when God sent him from among the Arabs, the Jews denied him, and denied what they had been saying about him, so Mu`aadh ibn Jabal and Bishr ibn al-Barraa' said to them, 'O you Jews! Obey God and become Muslims! You used to dominate us before

Muhammad, when we were a polytheistic people, and you would announce to us his coming, and would provide us with his description.' Then a member of the (Jewish) Banu NaDiir, Salaam ibn Mushkam, said to them, 'No-one we recognize has come to us: Muhammad is not the Prophet we described.' At this point the noble verse, Qur'an 2:89 was revealed."⁶

(b) The perception among the people that the Jews were the guardians of God's contracts, and that they disbelieved in Muhammad out of envy of him. They really did believe in Muhammad because he did not perform any miracles as previous prophets had done, so they warned the people not to believe in Muhammad, because this meant for them that he was not a genuine prophet.

[The] noble Qur'an spoke of their doubt, and rejected it at Qur'an 3:183: "(Those are they) who said: Surely Allah has enjoined us that we should not believe in any apostle until he brings us an offering which the fire consumes. Say: Indeed, there came to you apostles before me with clear arguments and with that which you demand; why then did you kill them if you are truthful?" The core of this doubt is expressed in their saying that God made contracts with them in their books which told them not to believe in any Prophet who does not perform miracles. If anyone of the nation accepts such a false prophet, fire will come down from the sky and consume him.

God ordered his Prophet to respond to the Jews by telling them of their evil history, for this would silence them, by his telling Muhammad, "Say to them (O Muhammad) prophets before me came with signs (i.e., evidence and proofs) and with what you say (i.e., the fire that would consume the victims who accepted the false prophets), but you did not kill them if you were truthful," Qur'an 3:183 (in your opposing that you follow the truth and are led by genuine emissaries).

In his commentary the Imam al-Razi notes on this verse that God made clear the proofs they would demand of such a miracle, not by way of honest inquiry, but rather by way of deception. This is because their forefathers demanded of former prophets, for instance Zechariah, John the Baptist, and Jesus, and after they had demonstrated these miracles, the Jews made haste to kill them, after having welcomed them with deceit, dissension, and obstinacy [*sic*]. This shows that their demands were by way of deception, for if this were not so, they would not have rushed into murder. The contemporary Jews were satisfied with these deeds of the former generation in their demands, too. So God does not have to answer them in this.

Thus the noble verse nullifies the Jews' demand, and demonstrates their lie to them, and emphasizes the Prophet's truth in what his Lord communicated to him.

(II) The Jews' making deceitful demands of Muhammad, in order to challenge him with impotence (to produce

miracles), and Muhammad's appearance to (be able to produce miracles) at their demand, was to make people abandon Muhammad and to believe in his untruthfulness.

Al-Tabari and Ibn Abi Haatim related, on the authority of `Ikrama, on the authority of Ibn `Abbaas, who said, "The Jew Raafi` ibn Huraymala told Muhammad, 'O Muhammad! Were you an emissary from God as you say, tell God to speak so that we may hear Him,'" to which God replied with, Qur'an 2:118: "Those who do not know ask that God speak to them or give a sign, as those who came before them—their minds are alike—We have given signs to people who are true believers."

The meaning of this noble verse is that "Those who do not know" any useful knowledge, like those Jews who make deceitful demands of you, O Muhammad "if only God would speak to us," that is, either directly, or through inspiration to us or to you, or would show us a proof to establish the Truth of your prophethood, and they say this in stubborn denial because the signs that God established prove the Truth of your prophethood for they are true signs.

Then God replied to them by saying, "[T]heir speech is just like that of those who came before them," that is, like this deceitful speech, the speech of their forefathers, to whom God sent emissaries to take them out of their darkness into the light . . . "their minds are alike," that is, the minds of these and those in their erroneous stubbornness.

"We made clear signs for the true believers"—that is, we made them completely transparent in their natures, for those whose real intention is to seek out the truth sincerely wherever it may be found, so they aspire for it by examining genuine evidence with hearts purified from prejudicial fantasies, in respect for the truth and the necessity to follow it.

(III) One of the methods the Jews used to undermine Muhammad was to dispute his prophethood, trying to negate the fact that Qur'an was brought down from God's presence to Muhammad. Ibn `Abbaas related that

Ibn Surayyaa al-FiTyuuni⁷ said that the Hebrew word *al-fiTyuun* referred to whatever the Jews owned or controlled [*sic*] ["pitayon" in Hebrew means "bait; temptation"] said to the emissary, "O Muhammad! You have not brought anything we recognize, God has not revealed to you any clear sign for which we would follow you." Muhammad replied that the noble Qur'an was a miracle for the emissary, so God thereupon revealed Qur'an 2:99: "We have revealed to you clear signs, which only the *faasiq* will deny."⁸

A *faasiq* is one who goes from one thing to another, and it refers to disobedient unbelief, because this is going out from God's *fiTra* (nature), which is the good and true, into wanton destruction. The meaning of this noble verse is that "we have already revealed to you—O Muhammad—signs so of themselves clear in their import, because their *I'jaaz* (inimitability/miraculousness) for mankind, and in their irrefragable proofs of theological matters, one needs no further evidence of its veracity.

NOTES

1. M. T. Al-Hilaalii and M. M. Khan, trans., *The Noble Qur'an* (Riyadh: Darussalam Publishers, 1996). "Judgment" is translated elsewhere "In His Wisdom."
2. Abu `Abdallah Muhammad ibn Isma`il al-Bukhari, *Al-Sahih*, 10 vols. (Cairo: 1303/1885-86), 5:900.
3. I.e., the Jews tried to kill me, so kill them.
4. Al-Bukhari, *Al-Sahih*.
5. *Siiira of Ibn Hishaam* (N.p.: Halabi publishers, 375/1955), vol. 2., p. 140, concerning the Banu `Amr ibn `Awf.
6. According to Ibn Kathiir's commentary.
7. Al-Suhayli.
8. From al-Niisaabuuri, *The Occasions of the Revelation*.