



THE SEERAH

The Life of the Prophet ﷺ

The seerah in 104 chapters, and what each day
asks of our faith

Before you begin

This is not a summary. It is an invitation to walk the whole life of the Prophet ﷺ, from before his birth to his passing, slowly, one chapter at a time, and to let each day move something in our own hearts.

Each chapter is retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ (Memphis Islamic Center), with every Qur'anic verse taken from its canonical translation and verified via quran.ai. Where a report is weak or disputed, the Sheikh's caveat is kept. Read one slowly.

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The specialities of the Prophet

ﷺ, part I

What Allah gave him and no one else

This is day one of a long walk. One hundred and four days through the life of the single greatest human being who has ever walked the face of this earth, and before the story begins, before the lineage, the birth, the cave, and the first trembling word of revelation, Dr. Yasir Qadhi opens his landmark seerah by refusing to rush. He will not start with what happened to the Prophet ﷺ. He starts with who the Prophet ﷺ is. Because, he says, when you study the specialities first, everyone already moved to study this life is moved more, made hungrier, more in love with the road ahead. The scholars call these the khasais, the things that belong to him ﷺ and to no one else. Today is a first handful of them, and by the end you will understand why a hundred more days with him will not feel like enough.

So where does a person even begin describing the one whom Allah chose above the whole of His creation? How do you do justice to a man when Allah Himself has already done it, when the praise of heaven is on him and no words of ours are left to add? You begin, the Sheikh says, where Allah began. You begin with the fact that Allah raised his name with His own hand.

Raised in remembrance

Allah says of His Messenger ﷺ something that no other human being can claim, that He lifted up his very mention in the world.

And raised high for you your repute.

QUR'AN 94:4

Ibn Abbas and the early scholars read this short verse and noticed something you can test for yourself this very hour. Allah raised the Prophet's ﷺ remembrance so high that wherever Allah is mentioned, His Messenger ﷺ is mentioned right beside Him. Listen for it. It is in the shahada, where you cannot bear witness to the Lord without bearing witness to the slave He sent. It is in the adhan that calls a city to prayer. It is in the tashahhud of every single prayer on every continent, where after praising Allah you turn at once to send peace upon the Prophet ﷺ. There is hardly a khutbah, hardly a lesson, hardly a gathering of the faithful, that praises Allah and does not, in the next breath, praise him.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi asks you to stop and actually picture the scale of this. Not one second passes on this earth in which there are not millions, tens of millions, hundreds of millions of human beings praising this one man ﷺ: a soul sitting in tashahhud, a muezzin partway through the adhan, a tongue moving in salawat, a teacher naming him, a writer setting his name down and following it with peace. There is no millisecond of history empty of his praise. And here is the thing to understand: that is not fame. Fame fades, and even the most famous die out of the mouths of men within a generation or two. This is something else. This is Allah keeping a promise. He said He would raise the name, and He raised it past the reach of time.

Mercy, sent walking

And then there is the way Allah described the purpose of sending him at all.

And We have not sent you, [O Muḥammad], except as a mercy to the worlds.

QUR'AN 21:107

Read the wording closely, because the Sheikh lingers on it. Allah did not say He sent the Prophet ﷺ with mercy, as though mercy were a parcel handed to a courier. He said the sending itself is mercy. So follow where that leads. He ﷺ is mercy. His message is mercy. His teachings are mercy. Believing in what he brought, and acting upon it, is mercy reaching down to you personally, fourteen centuries downstream from the man who carried it. He is everything associated with mercy: the source of it, the channel of it, the proof of it. There is nothing he touches that does not carry the same watermark.

Hold that through all hundred and four days. Everything you are about to hear, the years of quiet persecution, the boycott in the valley, the blood at Uhud, the grief of burying his own children, the long road back to a city that drove him out, every last scene sits inside this one verse. A mercy to the worlds. Even the hardest chapters are written in that ink.

The names Allah gave him

People gave the Prophet ﷺ many names across the centuries, the Sheikh tells us; one early scholar gathered more than two hundred and fifty of them. But the names the people gave only carry so far. The names Allah gave are the primary ones, the ones with the deepest meaning, because they come from the

One who knows him best. And in a hadith the Prophet ﷺ himself counted some of these out. I am Muhammad, he said, and I am Ahmad. I am al-Mahi, the one through whom Allah erases disbelief. I am al-Hashir, the gatherer, at whose feet mankind will be raised. I am al-Aqib, the one who comes at the very end, after whom there is no prophet at all. And he named himself the prophet of repentance, the one through following whom people are forgiven, and the prophet of mercy.

Of all of them, the Qur'an itself uses only two as proper names. The first is Muhammad, which appears four times. The second is Ahmad, and the only place it ever appears is on the tongue of Isa, the son of Maryam, announcing the one to come after him centuries before he ﷺ was ever born.

And [mention] when Jesus, the son of Mary, said, "O Children of Israel, indeed I am the messenger of Allāh to you confirming what came before me of the Torah and bringing good tidings of a messenger to come after me, whose name is Aḥmad." But when he came to them with clear evidences, they said, "This is obvious magic."

QUR'AN 61:6

Both names grow from the same root, hamd, and hamd is not just any praise. Here the Sheikh draws a distinction worth keeping for life. There is shukr, the thanks you give a person in return for a favor; if someone helps you and you call him generous, that is shukr, a kind of transaction, something given back for something received. And then there is hamd, which sits higher: praise given not in return for anything, but because of what a being simply is, the praise owed to perfection regardless of what it has or has not done for you. It is the first word of al-hamdulillah. And both of the Prophet's ﷺ most common names are built from it, because

Allah praises him, the angels praise him, the earlier nations praised him, every prophet praised him, and all of mankind praises him whether they know it or not. The believers praise him directly with their tongues. And those who reject him with their tongues are still forced to admire the qualities he came with, the mercy and the gentleness and the truth, so that even denial cannot help but be a kind of praise.

The two names are not the same. Muhammad, the Sheikh explains, carries the sense of praise repeated, again and again and again, praise without end: praise in quantity, the kind that fills every second of time from the beginning until the Day of Judgment and beyond. Ahmad carries the sense of the finest, the highest praise there is: praise in quality. And one classical scholar saw a quiet wisdom in which nation was told which name. The followers of Musa were the largest believing nation before this one, vast in number, and they were given word of Muhammad, the abundantly and continuously praised, a name fitting a great multitude. The true followers of Isa were the opposite: few, hunted, thrown to the lions and torn with combs of iron by pagan Rome, small in number but immense in devotion and quality. To them came the name Ahmad, the finest praise, a name fitting the precious few. Quantity for the many, quality for the few, and both names, in the end, belong to him ﷺ.

The station everyone will praise

Now comes a scene the Sheikh builds slowly, and it deserves to be told slowly, because it is the meaning of the name made visible. It is anchored in a promise Allah made about a praised station.

And from [part of] the night, pray with it [i.e., recitation of the Qur'ān] as additional [worship] for you; it is expected that your Lord will resurrect you to a praised station.

QUR'AN 17:79

Picture the Day of Judgment. Fifty thousand years long, and the standing and the waiting are themselves a kind of punishment. The sun is near, the reckoning has not begun, and humanity, believer and denier alike, is so crushed by the tension of the wait that they want it over, whatever the cost, just let the judgment start. So they go looking for someone to stand before Allah and plead with Him to begin.

They go first to Adam. You are our father, they say, Allah created you with His own hand and breathed into you of His spirit; look at the state of your children and go to your Lord for us. And Adam remembers a single slip, the one mistake he should not have made, and he says, myself, myself, go to another. They go to Nuh, and he remembers the day he prayed for his drowning son, and he too sends them on. They go to Ibrahim, the friend of the Most Merciful, and he remembers three things he had once said, things that were not even truly lies, and the memory of them still makes him tremble, and he says, go to another. They go to Musa, who remembers the man he struck down in anger. They go to Isa, who simply says, go to another. One after another, the very greatest souls Allah ever created, every one of them, says some version of the same small, honest, frightened word: not me.

And then all of humanity comes to Muhammad ﷺ. And he does not flinch, and he does not recite a list of his fears, though no one had a more careful relationship with his Lord than he did. He says: this is mine. I am the one for this. He goes forward, he falls down in prostration before Allah, and he is given what was given

to no one else in all of creation, permission to raise his head and to intercede, so that the reckoning may at last begin. And on that day, every human being who has ever lived will praise him for it. Not only the believers. Even the ones who mocked him in this world, who cursed him, who drew their ugly caricatures of him, on that day they will praise him and send peace upon him, because on that day they will need him and they will know exactly what he is. That, the Sheikh says, is al-maqam al-mahmud, the praised station this verse promised: the name Muhammad, the continuously praised one, paid out in full and in public, before the whole of creation, on the only day that finally counts.

Given to him alone

Then come the specialities themselves, the items that appear on no other prophet's list, and they begin with the most decisive of them all.

Muḥammad is not the father of [any] one of your men, but [he is] the Messenger of Allāh and seal [i.e., last] of the prophets. And ever is Allāh, of all things, Knowing.

QUR'AN 33:40

He is the final prophet. The long chain of revelation, thousands of years of messengers sent nation after nation, ends, deliberately and forever, with him ﷺ. There can be only one last prophet, and Allah chose him for it, and said so plainly. And this was no late decision, no honor awarded at the end of a life well lived. When a companion asked him when exactly he was decreed to be a prophet, he answered: while Adam was still between the spirit and the clay, before the soul was even breathed into the first

man. The last messenger was written into creation before the first human drew breath.

He is also the only prophet sent to the whole of humanity. Every messenger before him was sent to his own people and no further. Someone might object that Adam was sent to all the people of his time, and Nuh too, and that is true, but the Sheikh answers it cleanly: that was an accident of early history, not a commission. Adam was the first man, so the only humanity there was happened to be his own children; Nuh was sent when there was a single town and no other, so when that town was destroyed the world was destroyed with it. Neither was given the title of messenger to all mankind; it simply happened that all mankind, in their day, was one family or one village. No prophet after them, once the earth had filled with cities and nations, was ever sent to more than his own. He ﷺ alone was sent, on purpose, to every nation at once. And further still, he was sent to the jinn, which no prophet before him ever was. There is a night in Makkah the series will reach, the night of the jinn, when a company of believing jinn came and asked him to teach them their religion, and he taught them.

And Allah aided him with a weapon no army has ever carried. He ﷺ said that Allah supported him with awe, a fear cast into the hearts of his enemies across the distance of an entire month's journey, so that they were terrified of him before any rider of his came into view, before a single sword was drawn. Empires felt him coming before they ever saw him.

An ummah like the horizon

He ﷺ was shown the nations of the prophets in a vision, the Sheikh recounts, and the sight of it is staggering. He saw a great multitude of people, stretching as far as the eye could reach, and

he wondered whether this enormous nation was his own. He was told: no, this is Musa and his people. Then he was shown another multitude, and this one filled the whole horizon, swallowing the edge of his vision entirely, and he was told: this is your ummah.

On another day he turned to his companions and asked them a question. Would it please you, he said, to be a third of the people of Paradise? And they called out, Allahu Akbar. Would it please you to be half of the people of Paradise? Allahu Akbar, they cried again. Then he said: by Allah, I hope that you will be two thirds of the people of Paradise.

Here Dr. Yasir Qadhi stops you and tells you to do the arithmetic honestly. When the Prophet ﷺ spoke those words, there was exactly one city of Muslims on the earth, Madinah, and perhaps fifteen hundred believers in all the world, a tiny gathering surrounded by empires that counted their subjects in the millions. He said this to maybe fifty companions in his masjid, that they would be two thirds of all the people of Paradise. In the moment he said it, it was not common sense. It was a prophecy, and an audacious one. Now look around. His followers are counted in the billions, and the number has not stopped climbing for fourteen unbroken centuries. We hear the hadith today and think it obvious. When he said it, it was a miracle. We are simply alive late enough to watch it come true with our own eyes.

And the greatest of the miracles he carries is the one that outlives every other kind. Think, the Sheikh says, of the miracles of the prophets before him. The sea split for Musa. Isa raised the dead by the permission of Allah. These were tremendous signs, but they were spent in a single moment, witnessed by one generation, and gone. You and I were not standing on the shore when the water parted, nor at the grave when the dead man

walked out; for us they are things we believe in, not things we can touch. But the Qur'an is the one miracle a Muslim can physically place into the hands of a doubter and say: here, this is the miracle of my Prophet, read it, hear it for yourself. It is a living miracle, recited on a million tongues, renewed in the air every time it is read, available to every human being in every century. No prophet before him was given anything remotely like it, and we will spend our own weeks with it as the series goes on.

The first, everywhere

Of all the human beings who have ever lived, only one was ever summoned up through the heavens into the presence of Allah.

Indeed, We have granted you, [O Muḥammad], al-Kawthar.

QUR'AN 108:1

On the night journey, a night the series will one day give whole lectures to, the Prophet ﷺ was raised up, and there came a boundary at which even Jibril, the mightiest of all the angels, halted and said: my permission ends here, beyond this you go alone. And he ﷺ went on alone. Musa, the greatest of those before him in this respect, was spoken to by Allah while standing on a mountain of the earth. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was the only one ever called up.

He is, by his own words ﷺ, the sayyid of the children of Adam, the master and leader of all humanity, and he said so without arrogance, simply as a fact entrusted to him. And on the Day of Judgment the order of everything bends toward him. His is the first grave to crack open when the trumpet is blown the second time. He is the first to be clothed. He is the first to cross the bridge over the fire, leading his ummah behind him. He is the first

to knock on the gate of Paradise, and when the keeper asks who is there and hears his name ﷺ, the answer comes back: for no one before you was I commanded to open. His name is the password to the door.

And his ummah, the very last nation to arrive in the order of time, will be the first nation through that gate, not for anything in us, but purely because we are his and Allah honors us for his sake. Waiting beyond it is the hawd, his pool, so immense that a single one of its four sides runs the span of half the Arabian Peninsula. And there is al-Kawthar, the river named in this surah, the great fountain of Paradise from which all its other rivers branch away. So that, the Sheikh points out, anywhere in all of Paradise that a soul bends to drink, it is drinking from a gift that Allah gave to him ﷺ.

A level meant for one

Picture Paradise, the Sheikh says, as something that narrows as it climbs: no crowding anywhere in it, but the lower levels hold the many, and the higher you go the fewer can reach. And at the very top, directly beneath the Throne of the Most Merciful, there is an entire level of Paradise prepared for exactly one servant of Allah. One. It is called al-wasilah.

The Prophet ﷺ told his companions about this place, that Allah had set it aside for a single one of His slaves, and then he added something that should stop your heart. He said: and I hope that I am that servant. He hoped. There was never anyone else it could possibly be, no other creature fit to stand on it, and still, out of the depth of his humility, he would not simply claim it. He hoped for it, and he asked Allah for it, and he asked us to ask for it on his behalf.

And so it is, fourteen centuries later, that every time the adhan finishes anywhere on the earth, the ummah he loved raises its hands and begs Allah to grant Muhammad ﷺ al-wasilah and the lofty station and to raise him to the praised place He promised him. Hundreds of millions of voices, five times in every day, praying not for themselves but for him. It is day one of the seerah, and you already have your first assignment.

What this day asks of our faith

It is tempting to read a list of specialities like a list of trophies, to be impressed, to admire from a safe distance, and to move on. That would be to miss what the Sheikh has done by opening here. He did not begin with the khasais to make us marvel at a man beyond our reach. He began here to make us fall in love before we even meet him, because a heart that loves will walk a hundred and four days gladly that a curious mind would abandon by the second week. So before the story starts, let these gifts ask something of your own faith.

He is the most praised being in creation, and Allah Himself raised that praise and keeps it rising every second without pause. So consider what your share in it is. When you send salawat upon him ﷺ, you are not beginning something. You are joining a river of praise that has never once stopped since Allah promised to raise his name, that was running before you were born and will run long after you are gone. Most of us send peace upon him out of habit, half-asleep at the end of a prayer. Knowing what you now know, you could send it on purpose, awake, glad to be one more voice in a chorus that fills all of time.

He carries the one living miracle, the Qur'an, the sign that did not expire with the generation that saw it. You were not on the shore when the sea split, but the miracle of your Prophet ﷺ sits in your

home and fits in your hand. Ask yourself, honestly, how you treat it. The one proof every century can hear with its own ears, the gift that no nation before us could hold, deserves more from us than a beautiful cover on a high shelf. It asks to be opened, recited, understood, and lived, because to neglect it is to neglect the very thing Allah chose as the standing evidence of the man you claim to follow.

And then there is al-wasilah, the level meant for one, and the way he reached for it: not by claiming it, though it was his by every right, but by hoping, and asking, and asking us to ask. That is the posture this whole day teaches. The most deserving being in creation modeled humility before his Lord, and then handed us a way to love him in return that costs us almost nothing and means almost everything. He asked us to pray for him after the adhan: five small moments in a day, already on your lips, already part of your routine, and he asked that you make them his. There is hardly an easier act of love in the whole religion, and hardly one we forget more often.

So take one thing from this first day down into your ordinary life. The next time the adhan ends, do not let the du'a run past you on its way to nowhere. Stop, lift your hands, and ask Allah to give Muhammad ﷺ al-wasilah and the praised station He promised him, because the most praised soul in all creation once turned to people like us, in a small masjid in a small city, and asked us to. Believe in his nearness before the story even begins. Hold his living miracle the way you would hold something irreplaceable, because it is. And let love, not duty, carry you into the hundred days to come. May Allah send His praise and His peace upon Muhammad ﷺ, raise him to al-wasilah and the praised station, let us drink from his hand a drink after which there is no thirst,

and gather us, the last nation in time, among the first through the gate, under his banner, on the Day the nations are gathered.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 1: the specialities of the Prophet ﷺ (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (94:4, 21:107, 61:6, 17:79, 33:40, 108:1), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of them has been followed.

The specialities of the Prophet

ﷺ, part 2

The beauty they could not describe

The story of his life has not begun yet. For one more evening, before the first revelation and the long road to Madinah, Dr. Yasir Qadhi keeps us standing in front of the man himself ﷺ. Last week counted a first handful of the things Allah gave him and no one else, perhaps fifteen of close to fifty. Tonight the gift is told from a different angle: not what was given to him, but what he was. What he looked like. How he slept. How he laughed. And how fiercely he loved people he would never meet in this world, a group that includes, by name, you.

Begin with a rule the Sheikh lays down before anything else, because it frames the whole night. It is the way of Allah, His sunnah with His prophets, to send each one with the most perfect character and the most perfect form, inner and outer, so that no human being is ever left an excuse to turn away. A messenger comes beautiful so that nothing about him repels. Yusuf was given half of all beauty, and most scholars read that as half the beauty of all mankind. But there is a second reading, and it points exactly where this evening is going: half, some said, of the beauty of Muhammad ﷺ himself, because in their eyes the most beautiful of all creation is the man this entire series is about.

They reached for the sun and the moon

So how did the people who actually saw him describe him? They could not, and that turns out to be the most eloquent description of all. They reached past the things of earth and grabbed at the sky.

Rubayyi bint Muawwidh was an old woman by the time her son pressed her to tell him what the Prophet ﷺ had been like. Everything she had seen with her own living eyes collapsed into a single sentence, preserved in at-Tabarani's Mu'jam: my dear son, had you seen him, you would have thought the sun had risen. Ka'b ibn Malik, when he tried, said that when the Prophet ﷺ was glad, his face would light until it was a piece of the full moon. One companion hands him the sun, another the moon, each one offering the most beautiful thing his world contained and finding it still not enough.

Then comes the report the Sheikh names among his favorites, the kind that catches in the throat. Amr ibn al-As had been one of the noble enemies of Islam. He belonged to that strange category of men who opposed the truth for years and yet never stooped to the gutter of it, the same breed as Khalid ibn al-Walid and Ikrimah the son of Abu Jahl: enemies, but not vile ones, men with a real nobility in their hearts. And Allah, who knew the good that was in those hearts, guided every last one of them to Islam. Amr accepted it late, and had the company of the Prophet ﷺ for barely more than two years. Listen to what those two years did to a hardened statesman who went on to live a life of power and grandeur. There was nothing, he said, sweeter to me than to gaze at the face of the Prophet ﷺ, and I could never get my fill of looking at him. Yet were you to ask me to describe him, I could not. Men do not normally speak this way about another man, and that is the entire point. Two forces worked on Amr at once. A beauty that pulled his eyes upward, and an awe, a reverence the

Arabs called hayba, that pushed them back down. He spent his time with the Prophet ﷺ caught between the pull and the lowering, which is why the face he loved most in all the world is the one face he could never put into words.

The portrait the young ones drew

That awe explains something the Sheikh wants us to notice: the most detailed portraits of the Prophet ﷺ come not from the great elder companions but from the youngest, the ones too small to be pressed down into lowering their gaze.

Anas ibn Malik was a boy when his mother brought him and gave her son to the Prophet ﷺ as a servant. For ten years he would run to that house at dawn, spend the day at his service, and go home at night. So it is Anas, in the description Tirmidhi keeps in his Shamail, who dares the details. He ﷺ was neither so tall that he stood above a gathering nor so short that he was overlooked, but exactly in the middle. His hair was neither tightly curled nor flat, but firm and full, worn down to the earlobes. And Anas adds the two things only a child underfoot would ever know: I never touched silk or velvet softer than the palm of his hand, and I never smelled any musk or perfume more fragrant than his sweat. The household knew that last one intimately. One of the wives would gather his sweat in a small bottle as he slept, and keep it as perfume, and use it as medicine, a drop in water to drink.

His coloring needs a translator, and here the Sheikh slows the pace. The narrations say white with a reddish tinge, but the Arabs did not use the word white the way English does. The shade English calls white they called yellow: they named the Romans the people of yellow, the way some peoples of the Americas said paleface, because it was not a color they reckoned among

themselves. When an Arab called a man white, he meant a luminous light brown. That is him ﷺ, neither the pallor of the Romans nor a deep ruddy brown, but a glowing lightish brown between the two.

Al-Bara ibn Azib gives the frame: medium in stature, broad in the shoulders, a full beard, and that famous thickness of hair, a detail at least five separate companions narrate. He saw the Prophet ﷺ once at night in a red cloak and pronounced his verdict on the spot: I never saw anything more beautiful than him. And Ali ibn Abi Talib, who grew up at his side and married into his house, fills in the face itself: not fleshy, not fully round, but gently oval. The eyes large, the pupils jet black, the lashes long. The joints large, the upper back broad, no hair across the body save a fine line running from the chest to the navel. He walked briskly, leaning forward as a man does coming down a slope, and some scholars said it was as though the earth itself were folded humble beneath his stride. And one habit every teacher should steal from him: when a person addressed him, he never answered over his shoulder. He turned his whole body and gave the speaker all of himself. The Sheikh confesses, as an aside, that he has read stacks of modern books on public speaking, and every technique they sell he keeps finding fourteen centuries early in the ﷺ conduct of the Prophet. Ali ends where everyone ends. Whoever saw him without warning stood in awe of him. Whoever kept his company came to love him. And whoever tried to describe him surrendered with the same words: I never saw anyone like him, before him or after him.

The seal, and the face that could not lie

Between his shoulder blades sat one thing no other human being carried: the seal of prophethood. Not a wound and not a blemish,

but a small raised gathering of hair, a different color from the rest, about the size of a pigeon's egg, growing in a place where hair simply does not grow. The Prophet ﷺ bore it as a physical sign, set on his body by Allah, so that the people who kept the older scriptures could know the one they had been told to wait for.

The series will one day give Salman al-Farsi a night of his own, but here is the foretaste. Salman's Christian teacher had told him the final prophet would carry a seal between his shoulders. So Salman came testing, sign by sign. The first held. The second held. The third lay hidden beneath a garment, and how does a man ask a prophet to bare his back? Salman circled around behind him, hoping to steal a glimpse, and the Prophet ﷺ, reading the stranger exactly, said not a single word and simply let the garment fall from his shoulders. Here is what you came for. Salman saw it, and accepted Islam.

His face passed the same kind of test, again and again. Jabir ibn Samura was walking home one clear night under a full moon when he crossed the Prophet ﷺ in that same red cloak, and he did the thing only an eyewitness ever could. He looked at the moon, then at him ﷺ, back and forth between the two, and swore afterward that he was more beautiful in my eyes than the full moon. And on the Prophet's ﷺ very first day in Madinah, Abdullah ibn Salam, the chief rabbi of its Jews and the most respected scholar among them, came out only to see what the commotion was about. He was not shopping for a religion; he came to inspect a claim. One look undid him. As soon as I saw his face, he said, I knew it could not be the face of a liar. One conversation later, the rabbi was a Muslim.

A bed that left marks

Beauty like that, you would think, sleeps on silk. He ﷺ slept in a small bare room beside the masjid that held a jug of water and a mat, and the mat was woven not from the soft leaves of the date palm but from its hard fibers, with nothing between his body and the weave. Umar ibn al-Khattab walked in on him there in the seventh or eighth year after the hijrah, when the Prophet ﷺ was the undisputed leader of much of Arabia and the wealth had begun to pour in. The Prophet ﷺ sat up to greet him, and Umar saw the weave printed red into his side, and broke down weeping. Messenger of Allah, he said, look at Caesar of Rome, look at the emperor of Persia, look at how they live; surely you, of all people, deserve better than this. The answer came back with an edge. Umar, is this what we are here for? Are you not content that they should have this world, and we the next?

Aisha said his bed was a skin of leather, sometimes stuffed with palm leaves to soften it a little, and leather is something you lay over a saddle, not something you sleep on. One night a wife folded the bedding double to give him a touch of comfort, and he slept longer than usual, and woke asking who had done it. Return it the way it was, he said; the softness had cost him his night prayer.

The food matched the bed. Six weeks could pass, Aisha said, without a fire lit for meat in the house, and when her nephew Urwah asked her decades later how on earth they had lived, she answered: on the two black things, dates and water. Long after the Prophet ﷺ was gone and the wealth of the ummah had finally come, the people who had loved him could not bring themselves to enjoy a rich meal. Abdur Rahman ibn Awf, by then among the wealthiest men of Madinah, was set before a platter of meat and bread and wept over it: the Prophet ﷺ left this world without once eating his fill of bread, and not his family with him,

and here we have remained to see all of this. Aisha wept the same way over fine food across the forty years she outlived him, repeating that he ﷺ never once filled himself even with coarse bread, not one day of his life.

And then there is the noon no one who hears it forgets. Umar stepped out into the midday furnace, the hour when no one walks the streets, and found the Prophet ﷺ sitting outside. What brings you out at this hour? The same thing that brought you, he ﷺ answered: there was nothing to eat at home. Abu Bakr drifted out for the very same reason, and the three best human beings then alive sat together in the heat with empty stomachs, until Abul Haytham, hurrying home from his work, came upon them and could not bear the sight. He owned one old goat, past the age of milk. He slaughtered it, his wife cooked, he kneaded the dough with his own hands, and his three guests ate meat and bread, the luxury of that world. When the meal was done, the Prophet ﷺ turned to his two companions: by Allah, you left your homes hungry, and you will be asked about this blessing on the Day of Judgment. The Sheikh lets that sentence rest on all of us. Three meals a day pass through our hands, and we scarcely stop once to thank Allah for any of them.

The leader who walked his turn

He ﷺ owned a camel and had the means for a horse, and still rode donkeys through Madinah without a flicker of embarrassment. At Badr the believers numbered around three hundred and fourteen, with roughly seventy five camels among them, which worked out to three men per camel, riding in turns and walking in turns. The Prophet ﷺ was placed in a group with Ali and Abu Lubaba, and the two of them tried to give up their shares the gracious way: Messenger of Allah, we are both young

men, you ride and we will walk. Any commander on earth takes that offer, and rank alone would have excused him; a leader, the Sheikh notes, is owed extra protection and extra respect quite apart from religion. He ﷺ smiled and refused. Neither of you is any stronger than I am, and I am no less in need of the reward than the two of you. He wanted the reward of the walking too. So the leader of the army climbed down on his turn and walked his shifts across the sand like every other man in it.

Then the testimony of the boy who watched him backstage. Anas served him ﷺ for ten years, indoors and out, the years in which a servant learns every flaw a man has. His verdict: in ten years he never once said uff to me, not the smallest syllable of irritation in the language. He never asked, why did you do this? He never asked, why did you not do that? The Sheikh turns it on us gently. It is easy to be a saint at the masjid and at work; the person your own family receives is the real you. For ten years, the private Prophet ﷺ was the gentlest man in Madinah. Anas would know. Sent once on an errand, he found children playing in the street and forgot the errand entirely. The Prophet ﷺ came out searching, found his little messenger lost in the game, and took him by the ears from behind, and Anas turned around into a smile, not a scolding. And when his mother had first brought him, she had asked for one thing only: make dua for your little servant. He ﷺ asked Allah to bless Anas in his life, his wealth, and his children. Anas lived past a hundred and ten in an age when thirty was a full life, grew so rich that people joked any rock he turned over had gold beneath it, and lost the count of his own descendants while he yet lived. One dua, paid out across a century.

Gentle with curses, first toward danger

A group of the Jews of Madinah came to him once with a poisoned greeting, winking at one another as they twisted the words: as samu alaykum, may death be upon you, in place of peace. He ﷺ answered with two words, wa alaykum, and upon you, and let it lie. Aisha, listening from behind the curtain, erupted: may you be cursed, may Allah destroy you. And the Prophet ﷺ calmed his wife with a sentence the ummah has carried ever since: gentleness is not placed in a thing except that it beautifies it, and harshness is not placed in a thing except that it makes it ugly. When she asked how he could swallow such an insult, he showed her that he had not swallowed it at all: did you not hear what I said back? And upon you. Whatever they sent was returned to its sender, and his dignity never once left the room.

But do not mistake the gentleness for softness. One night Madinah woke to a frightening sound in the dark, and the people crept out of their doors in nervous knots to learn what it was. They met the Prophet ﷺ already riding back toward them, alone, on Abu Talha's horse with no saddle on its back, his sword slung at his neck, calling out: do not be afraid, I have checked it, there is nothing. He had gone toward the danger before the rest of the city had finished deciding to go and look. Ali would later say of Badr that when the fighting grew fierce, the companions would seek shelter close to the Prophet ﷺ himself.

And he could not bring himself to say no. The companions said that any little girl of Madinah could take the Prophet ﷺ by the hand and lead him wherever she needed his help, with no fear of being turned away. Once, when his own garment had worn through with holes, a companion gave him a fine new one, and he had hardly stepped outside in it when a man asked him for it as a gift. Yes, he said, and went back in, and came out again in the old

patched cloth. The companions rounded on the man: you knew he never refuses anyone, how could you ask? The man's answer ended the rebuke. I did not ask in order to wear it. I asked so that I might be buried in cloth that had touched him ﷺ. It became his shroud.

Even his jokes were true

All of that majesty, and he ﷺ joked. The Sheikh dwells here on purpose, because humor reveals a man's humanity, and the humor of the Prophet ﷺ never once stepped outside the truth. An old woman came asking him to pray that Allah admit her to Jannah, and he answered with a perfectly straight face: my dear aunt, have you not heard? No old woman enters Jannah. She burst into wailing on the spot, and only then did he let the rest of it land: do not cry. No old woman enters Jannah, because Allah will first remake her young, and young and fair she will enter it. Then he recited the proof:

Indeed, We have produced them [i.e., the women of Paradise] in a [new] creation

QUR'AN 56:35

The punchline was Qur'an.

He joked even on his own deathbed. In his final days, with perhaps four or five left to live, Aisha lay nearby with a pounding headache, moaning, oh my head. The reply came from his own sickbed: rather, oh my head, for mine is worse than yours. Then, teasing her: and what would you lose if you were to die before me, when the one to wash you, shroud you, pray over you, and lay you in the earth would be me? She fired straight back: I am sure you would like that; you would come home from my funeral

and spend the evening with your other wives. Days from death, and the two of them are still sparring with smiles. And because he never spoke anything but the truth, even in jest, the scholars later mined that very moment for law: ash-Shawkani built an entire chapter of fiqh, on a spouse washing the body of a spouse, out of a dying man's joke.

And there was Zahir, a simple believer of the desert whom history barely recorded, except for the one fact that matters most: the Prophet ﷺ loved him. Finding Zahir in the market one day shouting his wares, the Prophet ﷺ slipped up behind him and locked him in an embrace. Zahir struggled, let me go, who is this, until he caught sight of who was holding him, and then went limp and pressed himself back to gather all the blessing he could from that body. And the Prophet ﷺ called out over the souk: who will buy this slave from me? Zahir laughed that the buyer would be cheated: by Allah, you would find me poor merchandise. Back came the answer the ummah has never let go of: but in the sight of Allah, you are not cheap; you are dear. Even the prank held nothing false, the Sheikh notes. Zahir was no slave of any man, but the slave of Allah he truly was, and his Lord had priced him high.

Ummati, ummati: the dua he never spent

Ar-Rauf and ar-Rahim are two of the names of Allah Himself. And in one ayah, the Sheikh points out, Allah takes both of His own names, strips away the definite article that fences them off as His alone, and drapes them over His Messenger ﷺ:

There has certainly come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. Grievous to him is what you suffer; [he is] concerned over you [i.e., your guidance] and to the believers is kind and merciful.

Rafa is the close, protective tenderness a mother and father feel for a child, the kind of mercy that cannot rest until the loved one is safe and well. That is the word Allah chose for what he ﷻ feels toward the believers, the overwhelming majority of whom he never met in this life. You are inside the meaning of that verse.

One night he ﷻ was reciting and came to the words of Ibrahim, handing his people over to his Lord:

My Lord, indeed they have led astray many among the people. So whoever follows me - then he is of me; and whoever disobeys me - indeed, You are [yet] Forgiving and Merciful.

QUR'AN 14:36

And then to the words of Isa, doing the same for his:

If You should punish them - indeed they are Your servants; but if You forgive them - indeed it is You who is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

QUR'AN 5:118

Two prophets, each pleading for his nation. And the thought of his own nation rose up and overcame him ﷻ. He lifted his hands and wept and could say only this: Allahumma, ummati, ummati. O Allah, my ummah, my ummah. Allah, who knew already why His beloved was weeping, sent Jibril down to ask, and then sent him back carrying one of the tenderest sentences in all of revelation, kept for us in Sahih Muslim: go to Muhammad and tell him, We shall please you concerning your ummah, and We shall not grieve you.

Now the teaching the Sheikh asks you to carry, not only for tonight but for the rest of your life. Every prophet was granted one dua that Allah guaranteed He would answer, one certain request held in reserve. And one by one, the prophets spent theirs in this world. Nuh, after nine hundred and fifty years of mockery, spent his against his people, asking that not one household of the deniers be left upon the earth; the flood answered him, and mankind began again from the ark. Musa spent his against Firawn, the genocidal tyrant of his age, the slaughterer of infants: O Allah, do not guide him. And Firawn was never guided; his deathbed faith came too late to be counted. Sulayman spent his on a request no one has matched:

He said, "My Lord, forgive me and grant me a kingdom such as will not belong to anyone after me. Indeed, You are the Bestower."

QUR'AN 38:35

So the wind carried him a month's journey and home again, and the jinn built for him and dived for him, and every garbled legend of flying carpets and genies sealed in bottles is a dim memory of what Allah truly gave that prophet. Even Ibrahim spent his outside himself, on a people not yet born:

Our Lord, and send among them a messenger from themselves who will recite to them Your verses and teach them the Book and wisdom and purify them. Indeed, You are the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

QUR'AN 2:129

The Prophet ﷺ would later say: I am the answer to the dua of my father Ibrahim. And what of his own guaranteed dua, the one certain request of the most beloved of all creation? He told us

himself. Every prophet hastened to use his dua in this world, except me; I have held mine back, and saved it for my ummah, and I will call upon it for them on the Day of Judgment: O Allah, forgive my whole ummah. Every soul who ever believed in him stands inside that one sentence, however stained, however late. By that dua, the Sheikh reminds us, every believer in this Prophet ﷺ will eventually reach Jannah, even if he must first be purified, because the most beloved man to ever live held a guaranteed answer from Allah in his hand for his entire life, through everything they did to him, and never once spent it on himself. There is no greater sacrifice than that, and no plainer proof of love.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read an evening like this as a gallery of admiration, a beautiful man set so high above us that he has nothing left to ask of our ordinary lives. That would be to miss what the Sheikh built the whole night toward. Every brushstroke in this portrait is something a person can copy, and together they put a question to our iman.

He was gentle where we are sharp, and the rule he gave was his own: gentleness beautifies whatever it touches, and harshness makes it ugly. He absorbed a curse with two calm words and kept his dignity whole, and his measure of a man was never the face he wore at the masjid but the one his family received behind a closed door. Ten years, and never an uff. Ask honestly which version of you your spouse and your children actually meet, and whether the private you is the best you, because that, and not the public performance, is the real one.

He was content with little while holding the keys to much. The leader of Arabia slept on a weave that printed marks into his side

and would not let it be softened, lest the comfort steal his prayer, and he reminded two hungry friends that even a single meal of meat and bread would be asked about on the Day of Judgment. Set that beside the tables that pass through our hands every day, untouched by gratitude. His life asks whether we could be content with enough, and thankful for more than enough, the way he was content and thankful.

And then there is the dua he never spent, which is the heart of the night. He had one guaranteed answer, the thing each of us would seize for our own rescue, and he carried it untouched through persecution and loss and grief, and laid it down at last not for himself but for people he would never see, ourselves among them. That is what rafa means, the tenderness Allah lent him from His own names: to want for others, before you have even met them, more than you want for yourself. The man who loved us like that asked almost nothing back. He asked that we love him in return, and proved that the love is the whole road, when a man came confessing thin deeds and thick love and was told, plainly, that a person is with the one he loves. The companions said they never rejoiced over any word as they rejoiced over that one, because they had feared their deeds could never lift them to his side, and suddenly the bridge was love itself. It still is. And Allah Himself sealed where that love must lead:

Say, [O Muḥammad], "If you should love Allāh, then follow me, [so] Allāh will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allāh is Forgiving and Merciful."

QUR'AN 3:31

So take one thing from this evening down into your ordinary days. Make the private you gentler than the public you, the way he

was. Be content with enough and thankful for more, the way he was. And love him on purpose, not as a feeling that visits and leaves but as a daily choice that shows itself in following him, because that love is the bridge to the very face his companions could not describe. May Allah send His finest peace and blessings upon His Messenger ﷺ, who held his one dua for us and wept ummati, ummati into the night, gather us in the company of the man we believe in without having seen, count us among the ummah he saved that dua for, and let our eyes one day rest on the face that was more beautiful than the rising sun.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 2: the specialties of the Prophet ﷺ, part 2 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (56:35, 9:128, 14:36, 5:118, 38:35, 2:129, 3:31), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own telling has been followed.

Why Study the Seerah

Why we walk in his footsteps

Before the story begins, there is a question to settle, and it is not a small one. You are about to give a hundred days of your life to the life of one man ﷺ. Why? Why spend evening after evening on dates and journeys and battles that ended fourteen centuries ago, in a desert most of us will never see? Dr. Yasir Qadhi does not rush past this. He stops at the threshold and asks it plainly, because everything that follows depends on the answer. And the first piece of the answer is hiding inside the word itself.

Seerah comes from the Arabic verb sara, which means to travel, to set out on a journey. The Arabs called a person's biography a seerah for exactly that reason: to read a life is to travel it, to walk a road someone walked before you, to follow in his footsteps. So the word tells you, before a single event is narrated, what these hundred days actually are. You are not gathering facts about the Prophet ﷺ the way you might memorize the dates of a war. You are walking behind him. And there is a quiet honour folded into the word, because the Arabs once used it for anyone's biography, but the moment the Prophet ﷺ came, the scholars of Islam kept it for him alone. Say seerah now, in any century and any land, with no name attached, and every scholar on earth knows whose journey you mean. One word, reserved for one life.

Commanded to know him

Begin with the reason that removes all choice from the matter. Knowing this man ﷺ is not a hobby for the devout or a luxury for those with spare evenings. It is an obligation Allah laid upon us. In more than fifty places the Qur'an commands the believer to take the Prophet ﷺ as his example, and the most famous of them is a single, weighty verse:

There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and [who] remembers Allah often.

QUR'AN 33:21

Uswa hasana, the words say: an excellent pattern, a beautiful conduct, a model laid out so completely that you can hold your own life up against it and see where the lines match and where they fall short. But a pattern you have never studied is no pattern at all. The command to follow him is, underneath, a command to learn him.

And here Dr. Yasir Qadhi draws out a mercy most of us pass over. Some among the Arabs balked at the very idea of a human messenger, a man who ate and slept and grieved like them, and the Qur'an answers them: had angels been the ones walking the earth in settled peace, an angel would have been sent down to them. But it is not angels who fill the earth. It is us. So in the perfection of His wisdom, Allah sent flesh and blood, a man born of a woman, who married and raised children and buried some of them, who knew hunger and fear and loss, only chosen and guided. Had the example been an angel, every one of us would have had the perfect excuse ready: we cannot be like that, this is not our kind. No human being will ever say that of the Prophet ﷺ. He was a man, and so the door he walked through is a door we can walk through too.

And there is no angle from which the example fails. Study him ﷺ as a worshipper, and you learn how a servant stands before his Lord. Study his manners, his gentleness, his mercy with the weak and the wronged. Study him as a leader, as a husband, as a father, as a friend, as a man under siege and a man in victory. Whatever role you woke up inside this morning, he was there first, and he was there perfectly.

Love wants the details

Here the lecture turns warm and personal, and it catches you off guard. Dr. Yasir Qadhi describes how, when he travels away from home, he calls his children and asks what they did that day, what they had for breakfast. He says it himself: who cares what they had for breakfast? It changes nothing in his day. And that, exactly, is the point. Love wants the details. Wanting to know everything about someone, down to the most useless little fact, is simply what loving a person looks like. We do not interrogate the lives of people we are indifferent to.

Now turn that lens around onto ourselves, and it stings. Our children can name film stars and athletes without pausing for breath, and many of them, many of us, cannot name the children of the Prophet ﷺ, or say how old he was when revelation first came, or when he made the hijrah, or why. If a person claims to love this man ﷺ, the most beloved of all creation, and yet never once cares to open his story, never wants a single new fact about him, what kind of love is that? It is not a love any human being would recognise in any other corner of life. So the study is two things at once. It is the proof of the love, because love that never seeks the beloved is only a word. And it is the fuel of the love, because the more you learn of him the more you love him, and the more you love him the more you ache to learn. It is a circle,

and Dr. Yasir Qadhi notes the wonder of it: this circle only ever spins upward.

The first generations set that circle turning inside their own homes. The great-grandson of the Prophet ﷺ, raised in Madinah among those who remembered, said that they would teach their children the campaigns of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ exactly as they would teach them a surah of the Qur'an. Two subjects, one curriculum, at the foundation of a child's life. That is the place the seerah once held in a Muslim household, and the place it is quietly waiting to hold again, starting, perhaps, with the bedtime stories told in your own house tonight: not the old pagan legends, but the true story of the best of mankind ﷺ and the companions who loved him.

The surah that needs its story

Travel back with the lecture to the first year of revelation. The wahy had begun, and then it stopped. For weeks, nothing descended. The heavens went quiet, and into that silence crept the worst of thoughts: that perhaps his Lord had grown angry, perhaps he had been abandoned, perhaps the One who had begun this had now turned away. This is early, the most fragile season of the whole mission, and shaytan presses on exactly the place that hurts. And then the answer came down, and notice how it opens. Not with a rebuke, not with an argument, but with daybreak itself:

By the morning brightness And [by] the night when it covers with darkness, Your Lord has not taken leave of you, [O Muhammad], nor has He detested [you]. And the Hereafter is better for you than the first [life]. And your Lord is going to give you, and you will be satisfied.

QUR'AN 93:1-5

Sit with the opening word. Ad-duha is the forenoon brightness, the light that climbs after dawn, and to every people in every age, the breaking of the morning has meant one single thing: a new day is coming. The dark is ending. So before Allah says a word of comfort, He swears by the very image of comfort. Your Lord has not left you. He is not displeased with you. And what lies ahead of you is better than what you are walking through now, until at last you will be given, and given, until you yourself are satisfied. Now ask yourself, honestly, how much of that you felt the last time Surah ad-Duha passed by in your prayer. For most of us, the answer is almost none. The words went by as sound.

This is one of the great gifts the seerah hands back to you, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi presses it hard: the Qur'an was revealed inside a story. It did not float down complete and context-free. It came ayah by ayah, into real moments, answering real fears, consoling a real and frightened heart, and without the story the depths of the words stay locked. Know the weeks of silence, know the whisper of abandonment, and these few short verses open into something almost unbearably tender: Allah Himself reaching down to steady His beloved ﷺ, and through him, every believer who has ever lain awake fearing he has been forgotten.

Then the door swings the other way, because the Qur'an is not only illuminated by the seerah. It is the first and surest source of the seerah, the source Dr. Yasir Qadhi says most people skip straight past on their rush to the history books. It touches nearly every major event of his ﷺ life, and reaches past both ends of it: back to the army of the elephant that Allah turned away in the year of his birth, and forward to among the very last words ever sent down, the verse that declared the religion complete. And it records what no chronicle on earth could ever record. A historian writes down what happened; the Qur'an writes down what

happened inside. It tells us of the day eyes shifted in fear and hearts climbed into throats, of the hidden cowardice and the hidden faith, things only the One who fashioned those hearts could ever publish. And yet, the Sheikh notes, the Qur'an is not arranged in the order things occurred, and it rarely names the battle or the crisis it is answering. So the two need each other completely. You need the seerah to understand the Qur'an, and the Qur'an to understand the seerah. They walk hand in hand, the whole way.

Stories that steady the heart

Why is so much of the Qur'an given over to the stories of the messengers who came before? Nuh and Ibrahim, Musa and Yusuf, told and retold, their trials laid out across surah after surah. Allah tells His Prophet ﷺ the reason in His own words:

And each [story] We relate to you from the news of the messengers is that by which We make firm your heart. And there has come to you, in this, the truth and an instruction and a reminder for the believers.

QUR'AN 11:120

Stop on that, because it is staggering. The strongest, purest, most certain heart ever placed inside a human chest, and Allah chose to steady it with sacred biography, with the journeys of the prophets before him. The seerah of the earlier messengers was the medicine prescribed for the heart of the final Messenger ﷺ himself. So put the question to yourself, the way the lecture does: if his heart was held firm by these stories, what do you imagine yours is meant to run on?

This is the benefit Dr. Yasir Qadhi presses most urgently for our own moment. Muslims in the West, he says, are feeling the heat:

the suspicion, the slander, the hostile cycle of news. And then he does something striking. He refuses to let the word persecution anywhere near it, because when you set our discomfort beside what the Prophet ﷺ and the first believers actually endured, the comparison is, in his word, embarrassing. So walk through their worst years, and two things happen at once. Your own trials shrink to their true and smaller size, and your hope swells to its true and larger size. The seerah is where this ummah has always gone, in every dark century, to refill on optimism, and the supply has never once run dry.

And consider the company you keep along that road. The seerah is the story of the best generation that ever walked the earth, the companions, radiyallahu anhum, the people of whom Allah declares, in eight or nine places, that He is pleased with them and they with Him. Ibn Mas'ud said that Allah looked into the hearts of all His servants and chose the purest of them to be the heart of His Prophet ﷺ, then looked again and chose the purest hearts after his, and made them his companions. Abu Bakr and Umar, Anas and Jabir, and a hundred more, each one a legend, each one a living model of what the message makes of a human being. A famous report likens them to the stars: whichever one you follow, you will be guided. Its wording is somewhat weak, the Sheikh is careful to note, but what it points to is sound and true. Somewhere in that generation is a role model fitted exactly to you.

There is even a blueprint folded into all of it. Every movement and faction today carries its own grand theory for how the ummah might be revived, its own ideology, its own programme. Dr. Yasir Qadhi offers a simpler thought. Why not begin where the Prophet ﷺ began? He started from nothing, literally from zero, a single man in a city that would soon want him dead, and within one

human lifetime the entire world had turned. Whoever truly dreams of rebuilding the house ought to go and sit, first, with the architect.

The life that is itself the miracle

Ask a Muslim to name the miracles of the Prophet ﷺ and the hand reaches for the famous ones: the moon split in the sky, water flowing from between his fingers, the tree that moved and the food that multiplied. Tonight points somewhere closer and easier to miss. His whole life is a miracle, beginning to end. The Andalusian scholar Ibn Hazm swore that if the Prophet ﷺ had been granted no miracle whatsoever other than his life and times, his seerah alone would have been proof enough that he is a messenger of Allah. Weigh that claim, because it holds. An unlettered man who could not read or write, raised a shepherd among a people with no script, no libraries, no civilisation worth the name, stands up out of the middle of all that and brings a scripture of unmatched eloquence, a message no enemy could explain or imitate. Within his own lifetime, Arabia was remade from the ground up. Within a hundred years, the empire of Persia had collapsed before his followers and Rome was reeling. No one alive could have predicted it, and nothing in the natural order accounts for it. Nothing explains it but Allah.

And inside that great miracle sits a quieter one that Dr. Yasir Qadhi lingers over. The Prophet ﷺ ended his life holding a degree of power and devotion that kings would murder to possess; his companions would have sacrificed anything at a single word. And it changed nothing in him: the same simplicity, the same plain food and patched cloak and floor to sleep on. Power exposes every human being it ever touches; it pulls the true self up to the surface. It touched him, and there was nothing

there to expose but more of the same. And that, too, the Sheikh says, is part of the proof: no man survives that much power so intact without a pure and divine sincerity holding him steady from the inside.

That knowledge is also, in our times, your armour. His ﷺ honour has been under attack from the very first day. The Quraysh, cornered by a Qur'an they could not account for, threw every label they could invent: a magician, a madman, a poet, anything that might make him and his words go away. The propaganda never stopped. It only changes its vocabulary from age to age, and the slanders of our own day, that he was a man of violence, a man of appetites, are the same old method dressed in modern clothes. And here is the hard truth the lecture will not soften: you cannot defend the Messenger of Allah ﷺ if you do not know his life. You will not know which charges are pure fabrication, which events truly happened, and what their context was that makes sense of them. The defence of his honour has always run straight through the seerah, and there is no other road to it.

Put every reason side by side, and the summary writes itself: this is the study of the best of the best of the best. The best human being who ever lived ﷺ, the master of the children of Adam, as he said of himself, not in boast but as plain fact reported to him by his Lord. The best generation that ever was. The best places on earth, Makkah and Madinah, the second of them made sacred on his own lips when he declared, by Allah's leave, that he was making Madinah holy as Ibrahim had made Makkah holy. The best of all eras. Three and twenty years of prophethood, out of which everything we hold today has flowed.

How his story reached you

Fourteen centuries is a long way for a story to travel without distortion, so the honest mind asks: where does the seerah actually come from? The first source you have already met tonight, the most prized and most overlooked of all: the Qur'an itself, revealed in the thick of the events. The second is the hadith, because every authentic narration is, in truth, one snapshot of his ﷺ life, and the six famous collections, with dozens of books beside them, hold thousands upon thousands. The third is an entire bookshelf written for the seerah alone, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi traces its beginning to a touching place: the homes of the companions' own children. Picture growing up with a father who had walked beside the Prophet ﷺ, and you understand at once why the sons reached for the pen. Urwa, the son of az-Zubayr and the nephew of our mother Aisha radiyallahu anha herself, could sit with his aunt and ask what no other man was permitted to ask, and so he became one of the great carriers of her memories of the Prophet ﷺ. Those earliest little books survive now only inside the larger works that came after: in an age when owning a book meant copying it out by hand, the scribes copied the fullest one, and the small pamphlets quietly dissolved into the libraries they had fed.

The biggest one came early. Muhammad ibn Ishaq, born in Madinah around eighty-five years after the hijrah, grew up among the children and grandchildren of the companions, in the very city where the Prophet ﷺ had lived and died and been buried. He gathered everything, travelling to other cities to chase down the reports that had scattered with the companions across the new lands. Then he did what the earlier writers had not: he arranged it all, for the first time, in the order it had happened. And he did it the uniquely Islamic way, the way no other religion or culture on earth ever built: every report carried its isnad, its chain

of named narrators running back, link by link, to the eyewitness, with each name's memory and honesty known and graded. We did not simply pass our sacred history down as fable and rumour; we asked, at every step, who told you this, and who told him, all the way back to the one who was there. His book ran to some ten or fifteen volumes. A generation later, Ibn Hisham trimmed it into the edition the world still reads, and the discipline of what he did is the point: he added nothing and rearranged nothing, he only cut, and mostly what he cut was long stretches of poetry and the endless lineages stretching back to Nuh.

Then, centuries on, came the vindication. Ibn Ishaq's original had been lost, until the great Indian scholar Dr. Hamidullah went hunting through the manuscript collections of Europe, where so many of this ummah's treasures had ended up, and recovered roughly a quarter of it. Scholars laid the rediscovered original beside Ibn Hisham's version, and the comparison confirmed him completely: cuts, and only cuts, no additions, exactly as he had claimed. So when you open Ibn Hisham today, Dr. Yasir Qadhi tells us, you are reading, in substance, a book composed roughly a hundred years after the Prophet ﷺ passed away, generations before Bukhari and Muslim ever compiled their hadith. Around these stand the other genres: the shama'il books that preserve how he ﷺ looked and carried himself, the dala'il books that gather his miracles, and the histories of the companions and of the two holy cities.

It is from these wells that this whole series drinks. Dr. Yasir Qadhi teaches from the sources directly, weighing the chains as he goes, refusing the convenience of the modern retellings, and pausing after each incident for the question that justifies the entire journey: not merely what happened, but what it asks of us now. He has taught the seerah four or five times across his life,

he confesses, and never once reached the end of it in English, because every time he refuses to water it down and the years run out before the story does. That is not a flaw in the teaching. Some roads are meant to be walked slowly.

Two rivers of Arabs

The last stretch of the night turns from the why and the how to the stage itself: who were the Arabs that the Prophet ﷺ was sent among? Here Dr. Yasir Qadhi reaches back further than most expect, because you cannot understand a people without their origins. The oldest layer of Arabs is gone entirely. The scholars call them the extinct Arabs, nations like Ad and Thamud, the earliest peoples known to have lived in the peninsula. The Qur'an still recites their stories as a warning, you can still walk today into the dwellings they carved out of the rock, and modern archaeology dates the flourishing of Thamud to some five thousand years ago. Ibn Khaldun preserves a memory that they had wandered out from the ancient city of Babel after some great strife. They rose, they defied the prophets sent to them, and they vanished. History keeps them now only as a lesson.

The Arabs who remained flow down in two great rivers. The first is Qahtan, the line of the south, called the original Arabs. Tradition traces the very word Arab, and the Arabic tongue itself, back to Qahtan's son Ya'rub, though Dr. Yasir Qadhi adds the sensible caveat that languages grow over generations, they are not minted whole by a single man in an afternoon. From this southern river came the storied kingdoms whose names still echo, like Saba, whose sign the Qur'an still recites. And from this same river, much later, two tribes named Aws and Khazraj would settle in a northern town called Yathrib. Hold their names lightly in your memory, because the seerah will come back for them.

The second river runs, astonishingly, through a single baby left crying in a barren valley. Ismail, the Sheikh reminds us, was not an Arab by blood at all. His father Ibrahim came from Iraq, and his mother Hajar was from Egypt. The Prophet ﷺ never forgot that Egyptian grandmother. You will conquer Egypt, he ﷺ foretold his companions, and when you do, treat its people well, for you have with them a bond of kinship. When Ibrahim, by his Lord's command, left mother and infant son in the empty valley that would one day become Makkah, a wandering tribe of Qahtan called Jurhum passed through and settled near the water that sprang for them. Ismail grew up among them, married into them, and took up their tongue. And so his descendants became the Arabized Arabs, the bloodline of Ibrahim speaking the language of Qahtan. Generations down that line a man named Adnan was born, and from Adnan spread the tribes of the north, among them, in time, Quraysh. From Adnan to the Prophet ﷺ, Dr. Yasir Qadhi notes, the genealogists count exactly twenty generations, and on this single point, for once, they do not disagree at all.

And here, at the close of the night, the planning of Allah shows its hand. Settled at the crossroads of the whole peninsula, the Arabized Arabs met every passing tribe, traded with every dialect, and absorbed the best of all of them, until in time they grew more eloquent and more honoured than the original Arabs from whom they had borrowed their very speech. The students surpassed the teachers. And it was from this line, the line that had taken a borrowed language and perfected it, that Allah chose His final Messenger ﷺ. None of this is dry genealogy to be skimmed and forgotten. These tribes, their fierce pride, their old rivalries and shifting alliances, are the chessboard on which the entire seerah will be played out. And beneath all of it lies one

story still waiting to be told: Ibrahim, Ismail, and the empty valley that became the most beloved city on earth.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to treat a chapter like this one as throat-clearing, a list of reasons to get through before the real story starts tomorrow. That would be to miss the question it is actually putting to you. Strip the night down to its heart, and it is not really about why to study at all. It is about how to love, and whether your love for the Prophet ﷺ is the kind that does something, or only the kind that says something.

He told us that love wants the details. The man who loves his children calls home to ask what they ate for breakfast, not because the answer matters but because the wanting to know is the love itself. So the question lands on us with nowhere to hide: can you name the children of the Prophet ﷺ? Do you know how old he was when the angel came, or when he left Makkah, or why? If the honest answer is no, that is not a small gap in your knowledge. It is the measure of a love that has never once gone looking for its beloved. And the cure is the gentlest thing imaginable. Learn one true thing about him today, then one tomorrow. The circle only spins upward.

He showed us that the Qur'an was revealed inside a story, and that the seerah is the key that unlocks it. Most of us recite the same short surahs a thousand times and feel almost nothing, because we read the words without the moment they were sent into. Surah ad-Duha is only sound until you know the weeks of terrible silence it broke, and then it is Allah Himself bending down to console a frightened heart ﷺ, and yours along with it. So pair your recitation with his life, and watch the locked doors swing open one by one.

And he reminded us that Allah steadied the strongest heart ever made with the stories of the prophets who came before, and asked, in effect, what we imagine our own weaker hearts are meant to run on. This is the deepest thing the night offers. When your times feel heavy, when the suspicion and the slander press in and the news runs dark, the medicine has been sitting on the shelf the whole time. Walk through the worst years of the people who came before you, and your trials will shrink to their true size while your hope rises to its true size, because theirs were so much heavier and Allah carried them through every one. That is what the seerah has always been for this ummah: not a museum to admire, but a fire to warm yourself at when the world goes cold.

So take one thing from this threshold down into your ordinary days, before the journey even begins. Decide that you will not merely read these hundred days but walk them, asking of each one where his footsteps ﷺ are pointing your own. Learn the names of his children this week if you have never known them. And the next time your heart feels small and besieged, reach for the lives of those who endured far worse and were not abandoned, because the word for following a beloved down the road he walked first is seerah, and it is a road still open to anyone who wants it. May Allah make us of those who study him until we love him, who love him until we follow him, and who follow him until we are gathered in his company; may He steady our hearts with his story ﷺ as He steadied his heart with the stories of the prophets; and may He send His peace and His blessing upon him, his family, and his companions, until the Day we meet him at last.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 3: why study the seerah and pre-Islamic Arabia (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (33:21, 93:1-5, 11:120), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The World Before Islam

The darkness that made the light unmistakable

Before the seerah tells you who he ﷺ was, before the lineage and the birth and the cave on the mountain, it stops and turns you around to look at the world he was sent into. Not its politics, not yet, but its soul: what people believed, who they bowed to, and how far they had wandered from the truth. Dr. Yasir Qadhi opens this night with a reason as simple as it is exact. We know white by black and day by night; we understand a thing through its opposite. So if we want to feel the weight of the mercy Allah sent in His Prophet ﷺ, we must first feel the dark it arrived in. Walk back into that dark on purpose. It is the only honest way to reach him already grateful.

The Arabs had a prophet too

It is tempting to imagine the Arabs of the desert as a people who had never been told the truth, who simply never knew. That is not the case, and the Qur'an is plain about it.

Indeed, We have sent you with the truth as a bringer of good tidings and a warner. And there was no nation but that there had passed within it a warner.

QUR'AN 35:24

Every nation, Allah says, had its warner. The Arabs were no exception, and their warner was Ibrahim, peace be upon him,

together with his son Ismail. This is why the Qur'an again and again calls the path back to them the religion of your father Ibrahim, and why the Arabs themselves still spoke his name with reverence. He was a man of pure tawhid, one God and not a single idol, and so was his son after him.

And Ibrahim left them more than a creed. He sanctified Makkah itself, made it a haram, a sanctuary, a word from the same root as that which is forbidden, because so much that is permitted everywhere else becomes forbidden within its bounds. Inside the haram a man may not hunt the wild game, may not so much as tear a leaf from a tree, because it is all Allah's creation and untouchable there. Allah says of it that whoever enters it is safe, and the ruling stands in our law to this day: a criminal who flees to the haram seeking refuge is not to be touched within it. The idol-worshippers themselves upheld this so completely that Ibn Abbas remembered men of the days of ignorance saying a person could come upon the very murderer of his father performing tawaf and would not lay a hand on a hair of his head. Ibrahim instituted the four sacred months, when all hostility had to cease and every warring tribe was bound to peace, a mercy that steadied society and let its trade breathe. And he laid down the hajj entire: the tawaf around the House, the running between Safa and Marwa, the sacrifice, the animals garlanded and led to Makkah so that everyone along the road would know they had been dedicated to the poor of the sanctuary. For thousands of years these rites stood.

Which sets up the one question the whole night turns upon. If the father of the Arabs was Ibrahim, and Ibrahim worshipped one God with no idol at all, and Ismail the same, then where on this earth did all the idols come from?

How one man changed a religion

Sheikh Yasir pauses here over an objection the orientalist are fond of: that Islam simply borrowed its rites from the pagans, who already circled the Kaaba, who already ran between the two hills, who already sacrificed at the sanctuary. It is all a matter of where you are standing, he answers. Is the glass half empty or half full? The non-Muslim looks and sees a Prophet ﷺ adopting paganism and adding his own touches to it. We look and see the reverse: a Prophet ﷺ who invented none of these rites but resurrected the original worship of Ibrahim and washed the paganism back out of it. The rites were always Ibrahim's. It was the idols that were the intrusion. For if Ibrahim taught tawhid, the shirk had to enter from somewhere, and the Prophet ﷺ told us exactly where.

In an authentic report in Sahih Muslim, he ﷺ said he saw Amr ibn Luhayy al-Khuzai dragging his own entrails through the Fire, punished in a humiliating way, for he was the first to change the religion of Ismail. He was also the first to invent the superstitions of the dedicated animals, the bizarre rules of which beast must be set loose or slaughtered for the gods according to which female bore which calf, the kind of charms and omens that Allah condemns in the Qur'an:

Allah has not appointed [such innovations as] bahirah or sa'ibah or wasilah or ham. But those who disbelieve invent falsehood about Allah, and most of them do not reason.

QUR'AN 5:103

The story handed down is that Amr traveled north to Syria, to the land of the Amalekites, a powerful and ancient people the histories describe as giants, undefeated, builders of great structures. He found them worshipping idols and asked what these were. These, they told him, are our sources of power: in

drought and in hunger and when the enemy attacks, we pray to them, and miracles come. So he asked them for one to carry home. They gave him an idol called Hubal, and Hubal became the first idol of the Arabian Peninsula and the chief idol of the Quraysh, planted by Amr in front of the Kaaba. By the Sheikh's careful reckoning, since the Arabs kept no calendar and dated nothing, Amr belonged roughly to the first century of the Christian era, some five hundred years before the Prophet ﷺ was born. Five centuries of slow rot, then, for that one imported stone to spread its idolatry across all of Arabia.

But the Sheikh will not let you leave it as a curiosity of history. He slows down and presses the harder question onto you directly: how could a single man overturn the faith of an entire people, the faith of Ibrahim and Ismail? He draws out three reasons, and warns that they are not safely buried in the past. The first was an inferiority complex. Amr was dazzled by a mighty civilization, its architecture and its undefeated armies, and assumed that a people so powerful must be right about everything else as well. They were not. A nation can lead the world in technology and in conquest and be utterly lost in its theology and its morals, and to borrow a people's creed merely because they are winning is a trap. The second was credentials. Amr was no ordinary man but the respected chieftain of Khuzaah, the tribe that then held Makkah, a generous and victorious leader whom his people loved, so that when a man of his standing imported a belief, the people followed without question. And the third was ignorance. Two thousand years lay between Ibrahim and Amr; the prophets had become a distant rumor, the message diluted, and a people who no longer know their own religion are easy to move. The Sheikh names these three plainly and then turns the mirror on us: we face the very same three pressures today, whenever our

religion is pushed to remake itself to suit whoever in our own age happens to be powerful, eloquent, and credentialed.

When the stones became gods

The Qur'an traces idolatry on the earth back further still, past Amr, all the way to the people of Nuh and the names they would not abandon.

And said, 'Never leave your gods and never leave Wadd or Suwa or Yaghuth and Yauq and Nasr.'

QUR'AN 71:23

Ibn Abbas explained how it began, in an age when there was only a single settlement on all the earth. These five, Wadd and Suwa and Yaghuth and Yauq and Nasr, were righteous men, and when they died their people carved images of them so as to remember their piety and be moved by it. That was all it was at first, a memorial. But generation by generation the remembering curdled, until the children no longer recalled the men at all and worshipped the statues themselves. It is always a stepping stone, the Sheikh notes, never a leap, and Shaytan is patient. And the strangest thing is that these very same five names, unworshipped for untold ages, surfaced again among the tribes of Arabia in the Prophet's ﷺ own time, one tribe clinging to Wadd, another to Suwa, another to Yaghuth, as though the oldest idolatry on earth had been disinterred.

From Hubal at the Kaaba the idols multiplied in ways that should stop you cold. Caravans leaving Makkah took to chipping a stone from the Kaaba itself and carrying it off, setting it down wherever they camped and worshipping it, as though the building blocks of the House were holy in themselves. They are not, the Sheikh

insists, and this is a thing many Muslims never pause to think about: it is the place that is sacred, the patch of earth Allah chose, not the marble of the floor nor the silk of the covering nor the bricks of the walls. The Kaaba has been taken down and rebuilt many times across the centuries; the structure comes and goes, and only the ground abides. But the people of that age forgot the difference, and so the worship slid from the House to its stones, and from its stones to any stone at all. One companion, Abu Raja al-Utaridi, remembered it in his own words in a report in Sahih Muslim: before Islam we used to worship rocks, and if we came upon a finer rock than the one we had, we would throw the first away and take up the better; and if we were traveling in the open desert and could find no rock at all, we would heap up a mound of sand, milk a goat over it to pack it firm, and make tawaf around that.

It is, as the Sheikh says, mind-boggling that intelligent people could do such a thing, until you remember that there are corners of the world where men still pour offerings before a painted stone, and then you understand it is not so far from us as we would like. On the two hills of Safa and Marwa themselves stood a pair of idols, Isaf and Naila, which the people would touch in passing as they walked between them. So when Islam came, the Muslims hesitated over the very rite Ibrahim had given: how could they run between two hills that the pagans had defiled with idols? And Allah settled it for them.

Safa and Marwa belong to Allah

Indeed, as-Safa and al-Marwah are among the symbols of Allah. So whoever makes hajj [pilgrimage] to the House or performs umrah - there is no blame upon him for walking

between them. And whoever volunteers good - then indeed, Allah is Appreciative and Knowing.

QUR'AN 2:158

The two hills were sacred long before any idol was ever set upon them, the Sheikh draws out, and they remained Allah's signs after the idols were gone. There is no blame, the verse reassures the hesitant believer, in walking between them. The paganism had always been the stain laid over the rite, never the rite itself, and Allah simply lifted the stain away and handed Ibrahim's worship back, clean.

By the time the Prophet ﷺ would one day conquer Makkah, there were some three hundred and sixty idols ranged around the Kaaba, of every shape and size, most of them half-human and half-animal, the stuff of children's fairy tales given an altar to stand on. The Quraysh had even reached the point of deciding that the angels were the daughters of Allah, and they worshipped them as such. And yet, the Sheikh points out, beneath all of it there was no real creed, no settled doctrine at all. Idolatrous societies rarely have one. Ask ten of them what they believe and you may get ten different answers, each man with his own gods and his own private notion of what they can and cannot do for him, all of it equally permitted because nothing is fixed. Many of the Arabs believed in a Day of Judgment; many denied it; there was no agreement to be had. The one thing they all clung to was the oldest excuse of every idolater who has ever lived, the excuse that the idols only bring us nearer to Allah.

The few who would not bow

It was not total. Even in that long darkness the books of sirat preserve a scattered handful of people called the hunafa, from a

word meaning to turn away: they turned away from shirk and toward Allah, groping back toward the pure way of Ibrahim with no living prophet anywhere to guide them. Allah Himself calls Ibrahim a hanif in verse after verse, more than eight times, and the Arabs knew the word and what it meant, and these few were searching, deliberately, for the religion of Ibrahim by that very name.

One of them was Quss ibn Saidah, an old man of the distant tribe of Iyad, whom the Prophet ﷺ saw with his own eyes preaching against idolatry at the hajj when he ﷺ was still young, for the hajj drew all of Arabia together. Quss was among the most eloquent of the Arabs, and his speech, it was said, came nearer to the cadence of the Qur'an than any other man's. Decades later, in the ninth year after the hijrah, when the tribe of Iyad came to accept Islam, the Prophet ﷺ asked after Quss and was told he had died long ago, and still he remembered him upon his red camel and asked them to remind him of the man's words, and they did, and he loved them: O people, listen and understand; whoever lives will die, and whoever dies is gone, and everything decreed will surely come to pass. Where are Thamud and Aad? Where are your fathers and your grandfathers? Who will reward the one who did good but was never thanked, and who will punish the one who did wrong but was never punished? With no scripture in his hands, Quss was reaching for the Day of Judgment, and saying aloud that there must be a religion better than the one his people were on.

Ibn Hisham preserves a quieter scene, one the Sheikh lingers over with affection. The Quraysh held a great festival around their idols, and the whole city poured out to it, exalting the idols and sacrificing to them, until four men found themselves left behind, each one hanging back, each too ashamed before the others to

take any part in it. And realizing in that moment that they were all of one mind, they made a pact: let us stay friends in this, and let us tell no one, and let us go out and search for the true religion of Ibrahim, for these stones can neither harm nor help. Then their paths scattered across the world. One of the four was Waraqa ibn Nawfal, the cousin of Khadijah, who studied the scriptures, learned Hebrew, and embraced Christianity. He is the same blind old scholar to whom Khadijah would one day rush the Prophet ﷺ after the first revelation, the learned man of Makkah who recognized the angel at once as the very one who had come to Musa and to Isa, and who wept that he was not young enough to stand beside him ﷺ on the day his own people would drive him out. Waraqa died soon after that meeting, and in a sense that the Sheikh marks plainly, this man who knew the truth before the call had even gone public was the first believer in Makkah to pass away. Of the four companions of that pact, the transcript's telling leaves one or two of the names indistinct, and faithful to the discipline of this series we will not guess at what it garbles. What matters is the thing itself: that even with no prophet alive, sincere men went out searching, and were not all of them lost.

Zayd, a nation of one man

The most striking of those searchers was Zayd ibn Amr ibn Nufayl, a cousin of Umar ibn al-Khattab. He went to the Jewish rabbis and to the Christian priests and was unconvinced by both, telling them to their faces what he was sure of: this is not the religion of Ibrahim, and you know it. So he came home to Makkah and stood among the Quraysh and declared that there was not one soul left upon the religion of Ibrahim in the whole of the city but himself. Asma bint Abi Bakr, then still a small child, remembered seeing him with her own eyes, leaning his back

against the Kaaba and rebuking his people for their idols, for the meat they fed to stones, and for the daughters they buried alive. And when any man of the Quraysh meant to kill his infant girl, Zayd would intercept him: give her to me, he would say, I will take her, I will raise her in my own household as my own. And he did, gathering up the daughters that Makkah meant to murder, forbidding the killing, sheltering them.

The Prophet ﷺ, himself a young man who had never once in his life bowed to an idol nor eaten of what was sacrificed to one, met Zayd and found in him a kindred spirit, asking him what stood between him and his people. But Zayd died about five years before the revelation came, and never reached it. Years later his son Saad ibn Zayd, one of the ten given the glad tidings of Paradise in their own lifetimes, came to the Prophet ﷺ and asked, knowing his father and what he had stood for, what his fate would be. And the answer the Prophet ﷺ gave is among the most beautiful things in the whole of this night: he will be raised, on the Day of Judgment, as a single nation entirely by himself, an ummah of one man, with no prophet of his own, saved by the sincerity of a heart that simply knew the idols were a lie. And after the Night Journey the Prophet ﷺ told Saad that he had entered Paradise and seen his father there, blessed with not one garden but two. There is the first comfort of the night, and you should hold onto it: even buried alive in the dark, a sincere heart is never abandoned by Allah.

The world outside Arabia

Lift your eyes beyond the peninsula and the picture does not brighten; it only widens. Persia and its great empire followed Zoroastrianism, tending a perpetual fire that was never permitted to die and dividing all of reality between a god of light and a god

of darkness, which from the eyes of tawhid is one more paganism in another dress. Rome was Christian, but a Christianity already remade by human hands. Within a generation or two of Isa, peace be upon him, his followers had divided. There were those who held to what he had actually taught, that he was a servant and a messenger of Allah, sent to the Children of Israel and bound himself to the Law, circumcision and the rest. And there was a newer theology, traced by the historians to a man who had never walked beside Isa in his life, which lifted Isa up toward divinity, set the Law aside as no longer binding, and seeded the idea of a trinity.

For three centuries it was argued back and forth, the Sheikh recounts, the believers persecuted and thrown to the lions all the while, until a Roman emperor at last converted and gathered a great council to settle on one official version of the faith. The version chosen was the remade one, and it carried more than a little of the old Roman paganism quietly into it. From that point the original monotheists were the ones hunted and scattered, their books gathered up and burned so that only the approved few survived, and the Christianity that went on to conquer Rome was no longer the Christianity of Isa. Two hundred and fifty years before the Prophet ﷺ was born, true monotheist Christianity had all but vanished from the empire.

Almost. The seerah keeps two witnesses to just how little of it was left. The first is Salman al-Farisi, who tells his own story in an authentic report: the son of a Persian fire-keeper, set to tending the sacred flame, who one day heard a Christian monk at prayer and was so moved that he abandoned the fire and the religion of his father and went out, teacher to teacher, across the Christian world. Each of his masters, as he came to die, would point him onward to another who still held the old, undiluted way, until the

last of them told Salman there was nearly no one left upon it anywhere on earth, but that the awaited prophet was about to come at last: he would rise in a land of date palms, he would carry the seal of prophethood between his shoulders, and he would accept a gift but never take charity. Salman set out toward Arabia and was betrayed on the road, kidnapped and sold into slavery, and ended up enslaved in the very town that would one day become Madinah. There, after long years of toil, the Prophet ﷺ arrived on his hijrah, and Salman tested the three signs upon him one by one, the dates, the refusal of charity and the acceptance of a gift, and at last the seal upon his back, which the Prophet ﷺ uncovered for him without being asked, and Salman wept and kissed his hands and feet. The second witness is the emperor Heraclius, who in a report in Sahih al-Bukhari interrogated Abu Sufyan when a trading caravan from Makkah happened to be in Jerusalem, recognized from his own hidden scriptures that this was the foretold prophet, and openly confessed as much, and then could not bring himself to surrender his throne to follow him, and died upon his old faith. Two men who clearly saw the very same truth, and between them the whole of the human heart laid bare: one who surrendered everything to it, and one who could not let go of the world.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read the world before Islam as mere background, the dim stage the real story is acted upon, and move on quickly to the birth. That would be to miss the question this night is built to put to us. Into all of the darkness you have just walked through, the Prophet ﷺ was sent. In a report in Sahih Muslim he describes what Allah saw when He looked upon the

earth in those days, and it is not a gentle picture: He despised them all, in the harshest of terms, their idolatry and their ignorance, save only a remnant of the People of the Book, the very teachers Salman had spent his life chasing from land to land. That is the darkness. That is precisely why we call it jahiliyyah. And because of him ﷺ, the Prophet promised, there will never come a jahiliyyah like it upon the earth again. He is the light, the Sheikh closes the night, and the mercy to all the worlds, sent so that the long night could finally break.

Does man think that he will be left neglected?

QUR'AN 75:36

Carry three things out of this night, because they were never only about the seventh century. The first: guidance comes from Allah alone. For two thousand years no philosopher, no genius, no proud and powerful civilization could reason its way back to the truth; the world stayed lost in the dark until revelation came down from above it. We are not free, then, to bend the Qur'an and the Sunnah to the taste of an age, to make halal today what was haram yesterday because the times have moved on. If the greatest minds of mankind could not find their way to guidance until Allah gave it, neither can we manufacture it for ourselves now. The second: most people follow the crowd. The Quraysh knew in their hearts that the idols were not the religion of Ibrahim, and worshipped them anyway, because everyone did, and it was simply too hard to break away alone. To stand with the truth has almost always meant standing apart from the many. And the third, the gift hidden inside Salman's entire wandering life: whoever is truly sincere will be guided. It did not matter that he was raised tending a fire in Persia, surrounded from birth by everything false; a heart that genuinely wanted the truth was

pulled, teacher by teacher, kidnapped and enslaved and still pulled, all the way to the feet of the Prophet ﷺ. So when you find yourself surrounded by falsehood, or lost in a darkness of your own, the night asks you only to want the truth sincerely, and to trust the promise sealed in the verse: that man was never created to be left neglected, and that the same Allah who guided Salman out of the dark is more than able to guide you out of yours. May Allah show us the truth as truth and grant us to follow it, show us falsehood as falsehood and grant us to leave it, and send His peace upon His Prophet ﷺ, the light sent to a world like ours, and gather us under his banner among the sincere.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 4: the religious status of the world before Islam (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (35:24, 5:103, 71:23, 2:158, 75:36), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The lineage of the Prophet ﷺ and the Year of the Elephant

The chain Allah chose, and the army He turned to straw

The prologue is over. The classical books of seerah never opened with a birth; they opened with a question and a chain: who are the Arabs, and through which line did Allah send His final Messenger? It can look like the driest possible way to begin a story you already love, a recitation of grandfathers, a wall chart of names. But sit with it the way Dr. Yasir Qadhi sits with it, and the names begin to move. For five generations before the Prophet ﷺ was born, Someone was quietly assembling a family, a city, and a House for him, plank by plank, like a stage built in the dark before the lights come up. And the day this assembly ends arrives with one of the most cinematic scenes the ancient world ever produced: an army marching on the Kaaba behind war elephants, in the very year that the Prophet ﷺ lay hidden in his mother's womb.

A map of the Arabs, and twenty certain names

Begin where the old scholars began, with the race itself. None of what follows is science; it is legend handed down generation to generation, and the honest teacher says so plainly. There were the extinct Arabs, the most ancient peoples of the peninsula, nations the Qur'an itself names, Aad and Thamud among them, gone now save for their stories. Then there were the Arabs who

remained, in two branches: the pure Arabs of Qahtan, the old civilisations of Yemen, and the arabized Arabs, the descendants of Ismail, who were not born to the tongue but took Arabic from the southern tribes and made it their own. Many generations down from Ismail comes a man named Adnan, and from Adnan, exactly twenty generations later, comes Muhammad ﷺ. Dr. Yasir Qadhi cannot resist dating him out loud: one early genealogist records that Adnan's son lived in the time of Isa, peace be upon him, and five hundred and seventy years across twenty generations lands at roughly thirty years a generation, which is simply how human families run.

So the lineage of the Prophet ﷺ falls into three zones, and their colours of certainty are themselves a lesson. From him ﷺ back to Adnan: twenty names, agreed upon by everyone, set in stone, memorised by the ummah for fourteen centuries, Muhammad, son of Abdullah, son of Abd al-Muttalib, son of Hashim, son of Abd Manaf, son of Qusayy, and on up. From Adnan back to Ismail: folklore, honestly admitted, one classical source gathering seven different opinions, seven names in one list, forty-one in another. And from Ismail back to Adam there is a single source, the Old Testament, which the Muslim does not rely on.

So those wall charts that run the Prophet's ﷺ ancestry all the way to Adam in fifty-five tidy steps, the ones framed in so many Muslim homes? Dr. Yasir Qadhi grades them with a smile that has become one of his signatures: half fact, half myth, half fiction, never mind that the fractions refuse to add up. The first third is certain, the second is legend, the last is borrowed from a book we cannot trust. And that same chart quietly smuggles in a claim, that humanity is only about six thousand years old, which Islam never signed; carbon dating and cave paintings place human beings tens of thousands of years back, and our tradition, he

insists, leaves room for all of it. Imam Malik was once told of a man who could trace his pedigree to Adam, and disapproved sharply: how could anyone know? And the Qur'an, naming the vanished nations, simply says of the ages between them:

And [We destroyed] 'Aad and Thamūd and the companions of the well and many generations between them.

QUR'AN 25:38

When Allah says many, the Sheikh argues, He does not mean ten or fifteen. The beginning recedes into a depth we cannot measure, and the believer is free to say, of everything before Adnan, the honest words our scholars said: Allah knows best.

The chain Allah chose

Inside those twenty certain names, a hadith in Sahih Muslim draws the circles tighter and tighter, like a hand closing. The Prophet ﷺ said that Allah chose Kinanah from the descendants of Ismail, and chose Quraysh from Kinanah, and chose Banu Hashim from Quraysh, and chose him from Banu Hashim. Choice within choice within choice, until the chain narrows to a single man. For the Arabs of his day, everything rode on lineage, a man's standing, his honour, the very right to be heard, and so Allah gave His final Messenger the noblest line mankind has known. The companions wielded it openly: a companion standing before the emperor of Persia declared, without flinching, that his land was the best of lands, his lineage the best of lineages, his tribe the best of tribes, and the man Allah had sent the best of them all.

But keep the balance the Sheikh insists on, because here the unwary stumble. Your father's name is worth precisely nothing on

the Day you stand before Allah; no pedigree drags a single soul into Paradise or out of the Fire. And yet in this world, lineage opens doors, and to pretend otherwise is naive. Even America, a land of immigrants almost allergic to aristocracy, still makes way for a Kennedy or a Rockefeller. So there is no contradiction in the honour Islam leaves with Quraysh: zakat is held beneath the Prophet's ﷺ descendants, leadership sat among Quraysh for a thousand years of khilafah, and none of it, not one strand of that noble lineage, will save the unrighteous among them on the Day they meet their Lord. Honour in the world, and weightlessness before Allah, held together without strain. Quraysh, by the way, is itself a title, not a birth name, and the strongest opinion settles it on Fihri, because every clan of the tribe in the Prophet's ﷺ Makkah, and the lineages of all ten companions promised Paradise, converge exactly at him.

Qusayy gathers the scattered

Now the story tightens onto Makkah itself, and onto a man without whom there would have been no city for the Prophet ﷺ to be born into. Ismail had married into Jurhum, the tribe that held the sacred valley for centuries, until they grew unjust and bled the pilgrims with taxes. The tribe of Khuzaah rose against them and threw them out, and on their way into exile Jurhum committed one act of pure spite that would shadow the city for three hundred years: they buried the well of Zamzam so thoroughly that no amount of digging could ever find it again, leaving the city of the sacred well to haul its water in from distant places. And Khuzaah pushed out the descendants of Fihri as well, so that the original Quraysh lived scattered in encampments outside their own holy city, exiles at the edge of the House their forefather had served.

Enter Qusayy, around the year 400, some hundred and seventy years before the Prophet's ﷺ birth, his great-great-grandfather and the true beginning of the rise this whole series is about. His method was patience dressed as marriage. He wedded the daughter of the chief of Khuzaah, settled inside the ruling house, and so plainly outshone the chief's own sons that when the old man died the people wanted the son-in-law over the blood heirs. From inside the family he summoned the scattered clans of Fihir, and some say it is this very gathering that earned them the name Quraysh, the gatherers. He went to war, expelled Khuzaah, and took Makkah back for his people. The ascent of Quraysh begins with him; five generations later, when the Prophet ﷺ arrives, they stand at the very pinnacle of their power.

And Qusayy built like a man who fully intended to be remembered. He raised the Dar an-Nadwa, Arabia's first parliament, on the very ground the Prophet's ﷺ own Makkah would still be using generations later. He took custody of the Kaaba and carved its service into offices, the watering of the pilgrims, their feeding, the keys of the House, duties his descendants still held in the Prophet's ﷺ lifetime. And he invented the great Hajj fundraiser, rising every season to remind his tribe: you are the neighbours of Allah's House, and these pilgrims are His guests, and they deserve your hospitality. A good man and a good politician at once, which is rarer than it should be.

Hashim puts Makkah on the grid

Qusayy's son Abd Manaf was the kind of man a city loves, handsome and capable, beloved for the way he carried his responsibilities. But it is Abd Manaf's son whom history refuses

to call by his given name. He was born Amr; everyone remembers him as Hashim, the crumbler, because in years of hunger he would crumble bread into broth and feed a whole city of pilgrims from the pot. It is said that Hashim never once ate a meal alone.

His masterstroke was born out of horror. A drought came so merciless that a man would dig a grave for his own family and sit down in it to wait, because there would be no one left strong enough to bury them later. Hashim decided this could not go on, and the idea he struck upon reshaped Arabia: two caravans a year. In winter, south to Yemen, where the ships docked carrying the goods of India and Africa; in summer, north to Busra near Damascus, a doorway onto the Silk Road. Dr. Yasir Qadhi, who cannot resist a good business case, sums it up the way a merchant would: location, location, location. The whole world already came to Makkah every Hajj; Hashim simply plugged his city into the planet's two great supply lines, with the Kaaba squarely in the middle. Makkah was on the grid.

And the caravans crossed a lawless desert untouched, because no one robbed the neighbours of the House; even the pagans felt these people were too sacred to raid. Hashim sealed treaties with the kings along the routes, the wealth poured in, and he poured it straight back into feeding the pilgrims. Then Allah Himself sealed the whole arrangement into revelation, an entire surah on the two journeys, the feeding against hunger, the safety against fear, and the only fitting response a heart could make to it:

For the accustomed security of the Quraysh - Their accustomed security [in] the caravan of winter and summer - Let them worship the Lord of this House, Who has fed them, [saving them] from hunger and made them safe, [saving them] from fear.

Three seeds were planted in Hashim's life that would shape everything to come. His wealth lit a jealousy in his brother Abd Shams and his nephew Umayyah, and that rivalry of Banu Hashim and Banu Umayyah would run on into Islam and far beyond it. He married a woman of Yathrib, and that single marriage is why, three generations later, the Prophet ﷺ would arrive in Madinah to find distant cousins waiting among the Ansar; Allah plans in decades while men plan in days. And Hashim died far from home, trading in Gaza, which has been called Ghazzat Hashim, the Gaza of Hashim, ever since, where the Prophet's ﷺ great-grandfather rests to this day.

The boy they mistook for a slave

Because Hashim died on the road, his most important son was born in Yathrib, in his mother's town, after his father was already in the grave. The child came with a streak of white in his newborn hair, so they named him Shaybah. His mother kept him quietly hidden from his Makkan uncles, and you can understand why: in that world custody went to the stronger, and Quraysh were stronger. Years later his uncle al-Muttalib passed through Yathrib, took one look at the boy, and knew his own blood. He coaxed the lad onto his camel with talk of the great ancestors and the honour waiting in Makkah to be reclaimed, and rode hard for home. The Makkans who saw a dusty boy riding behind al-Muttalib drew the obvious conclusion, that the chief had bought himself a new slave: Abd al-Muttalib, they said, the slave of al-Muttalib. The nickname stuck, and stuck so hard that the most prestigious chieftain Arabia would ever know carries it to this day, his real name all but forgotten beneath it.

He had to fight his own uncles for his father's share of the inheritance, and he won it. And then came the dream. Night after night he was shown the same thing, dig in such and such a place, between this idol and that marker, and you will find Zamzam. He ignored it at first, then could ignore it no longer. He had one son at the time, al-Harith, and the two of them went out with a shovel and an axe while Quraysh gathered to mock: you will find what no one has found in three hundred years? He kept digging until he struck something Dr. Yasir Qadhi calls more precious than gold and more precious than oil. He struck water.

The clans crowded in at once: the well belongs to all of us. He refused; he had been shown it, he had dug it, the right was his. The standoff sharpened toward bloodshed, and in that pressure Abd al-Muttalib made the vow that would shadow his house: O Allah, if You ever grant me ten sons grown strong enough to defend me, I will sacrifice one of them to You. The dispute was eventually arbitrated in his favour, and the well of Zamzam has run in his line's care, and the ummah's, ever since.

Allah gave him far more than ten sons. Eighteen of his children reached adulthood, and he lived to nearly a hundred years. A man of his word, he gathered the sons and told them of the vow, and the lot fell on Abdullah, the most beloved of them, sixteen or seventeen years old, the future father of the Prophet ﷺ. He took the boy toward the Kaaba to fulfil his oath, and Quraysh physically refused to let it happen, terrified the sacrifice of so beloved a son would harden into a custom that would one day take their own. Sent to a priestess for a way out, they were told to ransom him, and the ransom settled at one hundred camels. And that number walked straight out of the desert and into the Shariah: to this day, the Sheikh reminds you, the blood money for a human life is reckoned at one hundred camels. Abdullah lived.

He married Aminah. And every single day that remains in this series flows out of that ransom.

The year of the elephant

Far to the south, a man named Abrahah governed Yemen for the Negus of Abyssinia, the father of the very Najashi this series will one day meet again. Year after year he watched his Christian subjects stream north, and he asked them where they were going. To Hajj, they told him, to the House of Allah. So Abrahah resolved to build a rival, a colossal cathedral, stained glass hauled across Arabia at vast expense, meant to be the greatest temple of Christianity in the peninsula, and decreed that pilgrimage would now come to him. One Bedouin answered for all the Arabs: he travelled to the cathedral and relieved himself inside it. Abrahah's rage hardened into a vow to match Abd al-Muttalib's own: he would tear the Kaaba to the ground, so the world would have nowhere left to go but to him.

He marched north with an army and with African war elephants, beasts Arabia had never laid eyes on, led by a great tusker named Mahmud. An Arab sold him the road, a hired guide named Abu Righal, whose treachery so disgusted the Arabs that they made a proverb of his name: more treacherous than Abu Righal. As the army neared Makkah it seized livestock, among it more than two hundred camels belonging to Abd al-Muttalib, a small sign of how far the family's fortunes had risen.

Then the chief of Makkah came to the invader's tent, and the books pause over him: a man over six feet tall in an age that rarely produced such height, handsome, unmistakably a leader, so striking that Abrahah rose from his throne and came down to sit on the floor beside him out of sheer respect. I have no quarrel with you, Abrahah offered; leave the city, and I will destroy only

your House. And Abd al-Muttalib answered: I did not come to talk about the House. I came about my camels. Abrahah nearly laughed in his face. I have come to demolish your holiest sanctuary, and you come to me about livestock? And then came the sentence that has outlived both men. I am the lord of the camels, said Abd al-Muttalib, and it is my job to protect them; the House has its own Lord, and He will protect it.

He got his camels back. Then he stood at the Kaaba and pleaded with the only One who could help: O Allah, we cannot fight this army, they are far too strong for us; You take care of Your House. And Quraysh withdrew into the mountains, leaving the House to its Lord. Below them, the army turned Mahmud toward Makkah, and the great elephant knelt. They whipped him, they beat him, they bled him; he would not take a single step toward the House, yet turn him any other direction and he walked freely off.

And then the sky filled. Birds in flocks, each one carrying stones, stones the Sheikh describes as a piece of Jahannam shown openly in this world: wherever one struck, flesh dissolved, man and beast collapsing into ruin before the watching eyes of Quraysh, until Allah, in the surah every Muslim child learns by heart, made the proudest army in Arabia like eaten straw.

Have you not considered, [O Muḥammad], how your Lord dealt with the companions of the elephant? Did He not make their plan into misguidance? And He sent against them birds in flocks, Striking them with stones of hard clay, And He made them like eaten straw.

QUR'AN 105:1-5

Abrahah himself was granted the worst of it. Carried back toward Yemen dissolving as they marched, he died at the very edge of home, denied even the mercy of reaching it. And Makkah kept

the memory for generations: one companion, asked in old age whether he was older than the Prophet ﷺ, answered that he ﷺ was greater, but that he himself was born first, for he remembered his mother showing him the dung of the elephants, dried and yellowed, when he was a boy.

The womb the army never knew about

Now step back with Dr. Yasir Qadhi and look at the whole chain at once, because this is the reading the entire night was building toward. Qusayy built the politics. Hashim built the wealth. Abd al-Muttalib restored the water and crowned the prestige, the chieftain whose dua Allah answered with birds out of the sky. Every single ancestor establishes something momentous, as if a stage were being assembled plank by plank. And the man it was assembled for ﷺ knew what he stood upon: at Hunayn, years later, when the lines broke and the newest Muslims of Quraysh wavered, he steadied the field by calling out, I am the Prophet, this is no lie; I am the son of Abd al-Muttalib, reaching for the very grandfather they were proudest of, the man who would raise him ﷺ for his first eight years.

Two closing observations, and they are the kind a person carries for days. First: the chain is bracketed at both ends by ransom. At its head stands Ismail, ransomed from beneath his father's knife by the ram Allah sent down; at its foot stands Abdullah, ransomed from beneath his father's vow for a hundred camels. The beginning and the end of the lineage were both bought back by Allah, as if the line itself were marked in His own hand: this family is being kept for something. Second: look closely at who fought the war of the year 570. A Christian king attacked a pagan city, and the pagans could not defend the House, did not in the end even try; they handed it to its Lord and climbed the hills. Allah

defended His own House Himself, and in doing so declared two things at once: that none of them were worthy of it, and that someone worthy was coming, who would one day empty it of its idols and return it to what Ibrahim built it to be.

And then the quietest detail of all, the one the whole day was hiding. Living that year beside the Haram was a young wife named Aminah, and she was expecting a child. When the stones fell from the sky, the Prophet ﷺ was already in her womb; he would be born only a few months later, in that same Year of the Elephant. So the very first miracle of protection in the seerah happened before its subject ﷺ had drawn a single breath. Allah was not only defending a building of stone that year. He was defending the child who would one day fill it with the worship of Him alone, and the proudest army in Arabia had marched up to the edge of Makkah and dissolved into straw without ever knowing that the true reason for the day slept, unborn and unguarded by any human hand, in the house just beyond the rocks where the elephant knelt.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read a day like this one as background, a family tree to be skimmed before the real story starts tomorrow with the birth. That would be to miss the question it puts to us. Stripped to its meaning, this day asks our own iman three things.

It asks whether we can see Allah's hand in the long, slow preparation of a life. Nothing about the Prophet's ﷺ arrival was an accident. Qusayy won back the city a century and a half before he was born; Hashim plugged it into the trade routes of the world and married, almost at random it must have seemed, a woman of a distant town that would one day shelter his great-grandson; Abd al-Muttalib followed a recurring dream to a patch

of forgotten ground and dug until lost water rose to meet him. Plank by plank, decade by decade, a stage was being built for a Messenger nobody yet knew was coming. If Allah prepared the world that carefully for him ﷺ, then nothing in the long, frustrating preparation of your own life is random either. The years that feel like waiting are often the years He is building the stage.

It asks us to learn the one sentence at the heart of the day and live by it. I am the lord of the camels, and it is my job to protect them; the House has its own Lord, and He will protect it. There is an entire school of tawakkul folded into that line. Abd al-Muttalib did not abandon his camels to fate and call it trust; he went and got them back, because guarding them was his to do. And he did not march out to fight an army he could not beat, because defending the House was never his to do; it belonged to its Lord. The whole art of faith lives in telling those two apart: doing, with everything in you, the thing that is genuinely yours, and then handing to Allah, without anxiety, the thing that was never in your hands to begin with. We tend to invert it, exhausting ourselves over outcomes we cannot control while neglecting the small duty in front of us. His grandfather got the order right, and the House still stands.

And it asks us to believe, down in the marrow, that what Allah intends to protect cannot be reached. No wall saved the Kaaba that year, no army, no clever negotiation in a tent. Birds saved it. The Arabs dated their calendars from the Year of the Elephant, certain they had witnessed the great event of their age, with no idea that the real event of that year weighed less than a single stone of hard clay and slept in the house of a woman named Aminah. When you are small and unseen and the odds against you look like elephants, this day asks whether you truly believe

that the One who turned that army to straw is the same One who holds your fragile, hidden things, and that He loses nothing He has chosen to keep.

So take one thing from this day down into your ordinary life. Trust that the slow seasons are preparation, not waste. Do the small duty in front of you with all your strength, and then leave to Allah the outcome that was always His. And the next time you feel hidden and outmatched, remember the womb the army never knew about, and rest. May Allah, the Lord of this House, who prepared the whole world for His Messenger ﷺ before he ever drew breath, send His finest praise and peace upon him, ennoble us by a measure of love for him and his blessed line, and protect what is unseen and fragile in our lives as He once protected, behind the rocks of Makkah, the child who would fill His House with the worship of Him alone.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 5: genealogy and the Year of the Elephant (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (25:38, 106:1-4, 105:1-5), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The Birth of the Prophet ﷺ

The du'a of Ibrahim, answered

For five lessons the seerah has walked the world that waited for him: the tribes and their idols, the long descent of a chosen line, the grandfather who once stood ready to sacrifice his own son and was given him back. Now, at last, he ﷺ is about to arrive. And yet the lecture does not hurry to the cradle. Before the child is born there is a question worthy of the moment, one Dr. Yasir Qadhi insists we sit with first: of all the lands on the earth, why this one? Why did Allah pass over Rome, the mightiest civilization of the age, and Persia, the most ancient, and choose for the final messenger a desert with no empire, no script, no army, no government at all?

The answer reads less like an accident of history than like a plan laid down long before anyone in Makkah drew breath. And when the birth itself arrives, it arrives the way this series promises to tell everything: weighed, sifted, stripped of fairy tale, until what is left standing is one Monday, one light, and a name no one in the city had ever carried.

The shirk that knew Allah by name

One debt is left over from the last lesson, and it is worth paying carefully, because it shows what this whole religion came to restore. The pagans of Makkah were not strangers to Allah. Ask them who created the heavens, who sends down the rain, who

provides their sustenance, and the Qur'an itself records their answer, by that very name: Allah. They carved idols of everything they revered, and never once an idol of Allah, because they knew He could not be represented and could not be contained. Their shirk was subtler than the paganism of other nations. The idols were stepping stones, intermediaries; we are too sinful to approach the Holy One directly, they reasoned, so we route our worship through holy beings who will carry it up on our behalf.

Unquestionably, for Allah is the pure religion. And those who take protectors besides Him [say], "We only worship them that they may bring us nearer to Allah in position." Indeed, Allah will judge between them concerning that over which they differ. Indeed, Allah does not guide he who is a liar and [confirmed] disbeliever.

QUR'AN 39:3

And they worship other than Allah that which neither harms them nor benefits them, and they say, "These are our intercessors with Allah." Say, "Do you inform Allah of something He does not know in the heavens or on the earth?" Exalted is He and high above what they associate with Him.

QUR'AN 10:18

And where do such holy beings come from? Consider al-Lat. Before al-Lat was an idol, al-Lat was a man, a generous soul who sat on the road to Makkah grinding barley and feeding soup to tired pilgrims, named for the grinding itself. When he died the people raised a monument over his grave to honor a good man. Travelers began to touch it, then to seek blessings from it, and slowly, surely, a righteous man's grave became a god worshipped beside Allah. This, Sheikh Yasir notes, is exactly why

our religion forbids raising monuments over graves: the slope is slippery precisely where the man was good. Almost no one worships an evil being, while billions invoke Isa, one of the greatest of all the prophets, lifted by love above the place that was his.

The warning lands close to home, and the lecture refuses to soften it. The very sentence of the jahili Arabs, that we are too sinful to reach Allah directly, lives on wherever a Muslim routes his worship through a saint, or even through the Prophet ﷺ himself. He is the most beloved of all creation and the role model for every soul, but never a doorway your prayers must pass through. Islam came to cut every intermediary away. Between a servant and his Lord stands no one at all.

Why Arabia: the empty stage

Two lessons have now catalogued how dark jahili Arabia truly was, so the question asks itself with force: why there? The wisdoms gather one by one, and laid side by side they look like preparation.

Begin with the map. Arabia sat wedged between the two superpowers of the age, the Byzantines and the Sasanid Persians, who had bled one another for four hundred years. Connected to both, ruled by neither. Had the message risen in distant China it could never have toppled them; rising on their very doorstep, it conquered both empires within decades of the Prophet's ﷺ passing. And nobody saw it coming, because the Arabs, forever busy fighting one another, had never once threatened the powers around them. When the first Muslim envoys arrived, it is said the Persian emperor treated them like children: go home, take some gold coins, do not be ridiculous. It

was as though someone today pointed at the poorest country on the index and announced it the next superpower of the world.

Even the emptiness was a gift. The Arabs had poetry but no written literature, courage but no architecture; the great church of Constantinople already stood, a century old, and the palaces of Persia stand to this day, while Arabia raised nothing that lasted. So when Islam came there was no entrenched civilization to fight it, only a vacuum, and Islam filled it with a civilization entirely its own: its language, its script, its coinage, its architecture, all of it new. The first time in history the Arabs were ever united was under the Prophet ﷺ. And the Qur'an told them plainly what had happened to them, that a people with no legacy had been handed one through which the nations would forever speak their name:

We have certainly sent down to you a Book [i.e., the Qur'an] in which is your mention. Then will you not reason?

QUR'AN 21:10

The first House, and a people kept ready

Deeper than the geography lay something older. Makkah was the place of Ibrahim and Ismail, the home of the first house ever raised on the earth for the worship of Allah. Every revelation before this one had been local. Musa was sent to the Children of Israel, and Isa after him to the very same; no prophet had ever been sent to the whole of mankind. Islam is the first universal religion, and so it was only fitting that the first call meant for every nation should rise from the valley of the first House built for them all.

Indeed, the first House [of worship] established for mankind was that at Bakkah [i.e., Makkah] - blessed and a guidance for the worlds.

QUR'AN 3:96

And the people, for all their darkness, had been kept strangely ready. They were simple, unclouded by philosophies and convoluted ideas, and simple hearts accept the truth fastest; in every society, the Sheikh observes, the first to believe are the sincere, never the ones tangled in their own cleverness. They were bred to hardship, able to cross impossible distances on a little water and less food, exactly the stamina the early conquests would demand while the armies of Rome and Persia marched with their pampered troops and long supply lines. They were brave, and proud in the way that pride can be honorable.

Above all, they could not bear to lie. Abu Sufyan, still a pagan and an enemy of the message, once stood before Heraclius, the emperor of Rome, his own caravan placed at his back and instructed to signal the instant he spoke a falsehood. He confessed afterward what held his tongue: had I not feared my people would brand me a liar, I would gladly have invented lies against the Prophet ﷺ. A man's word was the whole of the contract in Arabia; there were no written agreements until Islam brought them, because none had ever been needed, and treachery ranked among the ugliest disgraces a man could carry. Add the finest horses and riders alive, praised by the Prophet ﷺ himself in authentic hadith and prized to this day, and a Semitic tongue so concentrated that a single verb root unfolds into two hundred words, an eloquence fit to carry a final revelation, and the choice of this land stops looking like chance and starts looking like a thing prepared.

The du'a that was waiting for him

Then comes the reason Sheikh Yasir saves for the very end, because in his weighing it outweighs all the rest. Long before that Monday, Ibrahim and his son Ismail stood raising the walls of the Ka'bah, and as they built they prayed:

Our Lord, and send among them a messenger from themselves who will recite to them Your verses and teach them the Book and wisdom and purify them. Indeed, You are the Exalted in Might, the Wise."

QUR'AN 2:129

Ibrahim already knew that prophethood would run through his other son. The glad tidings had named Ishaq, and a prophet beyond him, and so it went: every prophet after Ibrahim, we believe, rose from the line of Ishaq, generation upon generation, a privilege Allah granted them and which we affirm. Every prophet except one. From the line of Ismail came a single prophet, the last of them all, and Ibrahim's prayer that morning at the foundation of the House was reaching forward across the centuries toward him.

So when the Prophet ﷺ later described himself, he reached past his parents and his clan to that scene at the Ka'bah. I am the du'a of my father Ibrahim, he said in an authentic hadith, and the glad tidings of Isa. For Isa had told the Children of Israel that one would come after him, and the lecture pauses on a remarkable trace: even the New Testament still carries farewell words in which, as some Muslim theologians read them, Isa says he must depart so that another can come. A du'a reaching forward from the foundation of the House, a prophecy reaching forward from the last prophet of Israel, and both of them arriving at one child in Makkah.

Even the bloodline had been narrowed like a beam of light. In a hadith in Sahih Muslim the Prophet ﷺ said that from the children of Ismail, Allah chose Kinanah; from the children of Kinanah, Quraysh; from Quraysh, Banu Hashim; and from Banu Hashim, He chose him ﷺ. The noblest lineage of the noblest house, selected stage by stage, until everything that had been prepared came to rest upon a single marriage.

Abdullah and Aminah: a week of marriage

Of his ﷺ parents we hold barely a few lines, and the honesty about why is itself a lesson. Abdullah and Aminah both died in their early twenties, perhaps younger, decades before any soul on the earth knew their son would be a prophet; no one records the life of an ordinary young couple of Quraysh. And by the time Islam stood stable enough to write down its memory, more than half a century had passed. The proportions tell the story: the fifty-three Makkan years of the Prophet's ﷺ own life fill a single volume of chronicles for every three filled by the ten years of Madinah, because a persecuted people, dragging Bilal through the streets and watching Ammar tortured, is far too busy surviving to record. If even his own years were thinned like that, what chance did his parents' brief lives have?

Here is what we do know. Abdullah was the son Abdul Muttalib had nearly sacrificed and then ransomed, the story this series has already told. Soon after the rescue, Abdul Muttalib went looking for a bride for him and chose Aminah, daughter of Wahb, the chieftain of Banu Zuhrah, another of the clans of Quraysh: a chieftain's son for a chieftain's daughter. Abdullah was a young man, eighteen by one report, in his twenties by another. They married only days before the caravan season, and he spent

perhaps three days with his bride, five at the most, before he rode north with the caravan toward Syria. He never came back.

One story survives about him that is not authentically narrated, and the Sheikh flags it exactly so, because this is the discipline the series lives by: people have always wanted to add legends to this story and make it more flowery than it is, and our task is to weigh the chain of transmission, not let our emotions sway us. Yet there is no harm, he says, in telling this one, because nothing in it is wrong. Abdullah, it is said, was strikingly handsome, with a brightness resting in his face, and the young women of Quraysh had openly hinted that they would gladly become his bride; he answered only that he would follow whatever his father wished. After his wedding to Aminah those same women lost all interest, and when he asked them why, they told him: the light that was in your face is gone. Where it had gone, the tale wants us to understand, was into the child Aminah now carried. Allah knows best, and there the matter rests.

On the road home from Syria, Abdullah fell gravely ill. At Yathrib he told the caravan: I am slowing you down; I have relatives here, leave me with them until I recover, and carry on to Makkah. He had kin in that city because Abdul Muttalib's own mother had come from Yathrib, and the Sheikh asks us to pause on that, for Quraysh almost never married outward, and yet Allah had quietly planted a family tie for the Prophet ﷺ in the very city that would one day shelter him and his religion. The caravan reached Makkah without him. Aminah, carrying a child her husband in all likelihood never even knew of, was told first that he was recovering, and then that he was gone, dead at twenty or twenty-two, buried somewhere in Yathrib in a grave no one has ever located. She was a widow at eighteen or nineteen, and the child she carried beneath her heart was the seal of the prophets.

A Monday in the year of the elephant

So when was he ﷺ born? Begin where the Sheikh begins, with the Prophet's own words. A man once asked him why he fasted every Monday, and he answered, in the famous hadith of Sahih Muslim, that this was the day he was born and the day revelation first came down upon him. A Monday, then, on his ﷺ own authority, and that much is beyond dispute.

The year comes to us through the memory of old men. Someone once asked one of the oldest of the living Companions whether he was older than the Prophet ﷺ, and the old man smiled at the wording and corrected it: the Prophet ﷺ is greater than me, but I am older than him. He was born in the year of the elephant, and I remember my mother carrying me out of Makkah as a small boy to see the elephants' dung, still green, drying outside the city. Another Companion said it more simply still: the Prophet ﷺ and I were born in the same year, the year of the elephant. The Arabs kept no running calendar; they hung their years upon events, the year of the drought, the year of the invasion, the year of the elephant, counting forward and back from each until the next great thing happened. Piecing the evidence together, the great majority of historians place that year at 570 of the Common Era. And one faint whisper survives about the hour itself, through a narrator of the first century whose father had lived in the age of the Companions: he ﷺ was born at high noon. There is a small gap in its chain, but it is the only report we have on the hour, and its symbolism is lost on no one. At the very moment the sun stood at its highest and brightest, there entered the world the one who would leave nothing around him dark.

Then there is the day of the month, and here Sheikh Yasir does a thing he jokes may sound to some like blasphemy: he opens the earliest books and simply counts. Ibn Ishaq, the most famous

author of the seerah of all, writing roughly two centuries after the birth, states without any chain of narrators that the Prophet ﷺ was born on Monday the 12th of Rabi al-Awwal. But the next earliest book of seerah records other voices entirely: some said the 10th of the month, others the 2nd. Count across the early books and there are more than ten opinions in all, the 2nd, the 8th, the 10th, the 12th, the 17th, the 22nd, and even Ramadan, the view of az-Zubayr ibn Bakkar, the first scholar ever to write a history of Makkah. Weighed honestly, the 2nd, the 8th, and the 10th rest on earlier and stronger authority, with Imam Malik of Madinah among those who held the 8th and a descendant of the Prophet ﷺ himself among those who held the 10th, while the famous 12th hangs upon Ibn Ishaq alone, late and without a chain.

So why did the 12th conquer the calendar? Two reasons, says the Sheikh, who has written a detailed history of the mawlid. First, nine of every ten books on the seerah do little more than summarize Ibn Ishaq, so his date became the date by sheer repetition. And second, a festival. For five full centuries no Muslim celebrated the Prophet's ﷺ birthday at all; the Arabs did not so much as record birthdays, and many a grandmother to this day does not know the year she was born. The first known mawlid appears around the year 517 of the hijrah under the Fatimids of Egypt, a dynasty of extreme Shia theology that staged dozens of public festivals a year, festivals being then what they remain now, occasions of commerce and of popularity for the ruling house, and the date they chose was the 12th. A century and a half later some Sunni governors in Iraq imported the celebration, rulers began competing over whose festival was the grandest, with free meat and bread and gifts handed out, and under the weight of public enthusiasm the floodgates opened.

The date lodged itself in the mind of the ummah, even though, weighed academically, it is the very weakest of all the candidates.

His counsel at the close of it is the gentlest correction of the whole night. If you truly wish to celebrate the day the Prophet ﷺ was born, then do with it what he himself did: fast on Mondays, because that was his own answer when he was asked about the fast. To love him with a single festival once a year, the Sheikh says plainly, is a very easy way out. Real love does not gather on one day and disperse; it shows itself every day of the year.

One light, and the legends set aside

And the birth itself? Here the series shows you its spine. Of everything ever narrated about that morning in Makkah, Sheikh Yasir counts exactly one report as academically sound, and he says so without flinching. That the child was born already circumcised. That he fell into prostration the instant he arrived. That he lifted a tiny finger to the sky in testimony of the oneness of Allah. The earliest books, hungry as they were for every scrap of detail, know none of this; books written seven centuries later somehow know it all, the volumes swelling fatter with each retelling. Use the mind Allah gave you, he asks: who exactly was in the room with Aminah to witness such things and carry them down to us? We do not need to invent fairy tales to praise the Prophet ﷺ. Allah has praised him enough, and the facts are enough, and dressing the truth in fabrications only makes the religion look less dignified than it truly is.

The same sieve catches the rest. The temples of the pagans toppling across the earth on the night he was born: no recorded history anywhere mentions it, and the Sheikh does not believe it himself. The jinn barred from eavesdropping on the heavens:

that, he says, did happen, but the stronger opinion places it at the coming of revelation, when he ﷺ was forty, and not at his birth. It was then, as the Qur'an describes in the words of the jinn themselves, that they found the sky transformed:

And we have sought [to reach] the heaven but found it filled with powerful guards and burning flames. And we used to sit therein in positions for hearing, but whoever listens now will find a burning flame lying in wait for him.

QUR'AN 72:8-9

And a band of them, hearing the Qur'an recited, returned to their people believing.

What does survive the sieve is his ﷺ own testimony, an authentic hadith in the Musnad of Imam Ahmad. When my mother gave birth to me, he said, and in another version, while she was carrying me, she saw a light go out from her that lit up the palaces of Busra in the land of Sham. No witness needs hunting here; he is telling us of it himself. And the light, of course, is him.

Why should a newborn's light point toward Syria? Because the geography is itself a prophecy. Sham is a land our religion holds blessed, the land of the prophets of Israel, the land where Isa will one day descend at the end of time. And Sham, the right arm of Byzantium, was the first province Islam would open beyond the Peninsula, with Busra among the very first of its cities; Damascus, the jewel of the Romans, would within a single generation become the capital of the Muslims. A light from Aminah's room had drawn the map of everything that was to come. Teaching this lesson in 2011, with Sham itself bleeding, the Sheikh stopped in the middle of his words to beg Allah to free

that land from the tyranny it was enduring and to restore it to its old glory, a du'a worth carrying still in our own prayers.

The seventh day: a name and a freed slave girl

Seven days later, Makkah did for him ﷺ what it did for every newborn, and the very normalcy of it is the point. Ibn Ishaq records it as a matter of fact: his grandfather circumcised him on the seventh day. Only the books written seven centuries later insist that he was born already circumcised, inventing a wonder where the earliest sources saw simply a normal child, of a normal marriage, and a normal birth. Abdul Muttalib held a feast for the boy, and at it he announced a name that puzzled the whole of Quraysh: Muhammad. It was known among the Arabs, the stronger opinion holds, but vanishingly rare, and borne by no one at all in Makkah. Why not a name of your fathers and forefathers, they asked him. The old chief answered: I want him to be praised by the people of the earth, as I want him to be praised by the people of the heavens.

The first day of this series taught what the name carries: the one praised again and again, without end. A grandfather chose it as a wish. Allah wrote it as a fact. Fourteen centuries on, not one second passes without that name being praised somewhere upon the earth.

And one more soul rejoiced that week, and his story is the strangest mercy of the night. Abu Lahab, an older half-brother of the dead Abdullah, was not yet the enemy he would one day become; perhaps he felt the pull of a younger brother's orphan, his own full brother long gone. When his slave girl Thuwaybah came running with the news that his brother's son had been born, he freed her on the spot for sheer joy. Years after Abu Lahab died an enemy of everything that child brought into the

world, his brother Abbas, radiyallahu anhu, saw him in a dream, suffering the severest of punishments. Did your kinship to the Prophet ﷺ avail you nothing at all? he asked him. Nothing, said Abu Lahab, except that because I freed Thuwaybah at the good news of his birth, I am given a few drops of water from between these two fingers. Sit with that exactly where the lecture leaves it. A single flicker of joy at his ﷺ arrival, from a man who would spend the whole of his life opposing him, was still not forgotten, still answered with a mercy across the barrier of death. What, then, of a love chosen deliberately, returned to daily, by a believer who means it?

What this day asks of our faith

It is tempting to read a day like this one as pure narrative, a tender opening to a great story, and to take from it nothing but warmth. That would be to miss the question it puts to us. Strip the day down to what actually stands after the sifting, and it asks something of your iman that does not stay safely in the seventh century.

It asks you, first, to keep your worship pure of every middleman. The pagans of Makkah believed in Allah by name, affirmed Him as Creator and Sustainer and Lord, and lost Him anyway, because they could not believe He would receive them directly, and so handed their hearts to intermediaries they imagined would carry their case upward. The tragedy did not begin in wickedness; it began in reverence for the good, in a man who fed pilgrims soup and ended up a god. That same instinct waits inside everyone who has ever felt too small or too sinful to approach Allah without something, or someone, in between. Love the righteous. Love the Prophet ﷺ above all of creation. And then turn, in your prayer, to Allah alone, with no one in the

doorway, because that is the whole of what this religion came to restore.

It asks you, second, to trust that Allah is preparing what you cannot yet see. Look at how much was laid in place before the child ever drew breath: an empty stage cleared between two exhausted empires, a people trained by the desert to be truthful and tireless, the valley of the first House ever built for mankind, a family tie planted quietly in a far city against a future need, and beneath it all a du'a spoken at the foundation of the Ka'bah and left waiting through the long centuries. None of it was improvised, and the Sheikh's point reaches straight off the page into your own life: nothing in his story was an accident, and nothing in yours is either. The tie you do not understand, the door that closed, the years that felt like waiting, may be the very scaffolding of something you have not been shown.

It asks you, third, to love him the way he himself taught, and not the way that is easiest. Asked about the day he was born, he did not call for a festival; he pointed to a fast, every Monday, quietly, for the rest of his life. The honest measure of love for the Prophet ﷺ is not a grand evening once a year that costs a little money and a few hours. It is the sunnah carried into an ordinary week, the salah prayed, the character softened, the salawat sent when no one is watching. One day of devotion is a thing the heart can fake. A devotion that returns every single week is a thing only love can sustain.

And it asks you, finally, to believe that no turning toward him is ever wasted. Here is the most staggering mercy of the whole night: Abu Lahab, who would become one of the bitterest enemies the message ever had, felt one instant of genuine joy at the birth of his nephew and freed a slave girl over it, and that

single instant followed him past his own death and bought him drops of water in his torment. If a flicker of joy from a man bound for ruin was still recorded and still answered, then consider what is being recorded for you, who love him on purpose, who choose him daily, who send peace upon him with a believing heart. Nothing you give him is lost. Nothing you do for his sake falls through. What the careless world would never count, your Lord is writing down.

So carry one thing from this day down into your ordinary life. Pray to Allah directly, today, about the very thing you have been routing through everyone and everything else. Trust that the waiting and the closed doors are scaffolding, not abandonment. And love the Prophet ﷺ in a way that survives past a single day, by reviving one sunnah this week that no one but Allah will see. May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, the answer to the du'a of Ibrahim and the glad tidings of Isa; may He let that beloved name be praised in our homes as He has raised it in the heavens; may He free the land of Sham that his first light touched; and may He gather every one of us in his company on the Day the light is real and full.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 6: the birth of the Prophet ﷺ and why Arabia (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (39:3, 10:18, 21:10, 3:96, 2:129, 72:8-9), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The early childhood of the Prophet ﷺ

Orphaned three times, raised under Allah's eye

By the time this chapter opens, he ﷺ has barely learned to walk, and the sources go quiet. Dr. Yasir Qadhi begins with an honest accounting, because the honesty is itself part of the lesson. Gather every report we hold from the fifty-three years the Prophet ﷺ spent in Makkah and it amounts to less than half of what we know about ten years in Madinah, and almost all of even that begins after the age of forty. The first four decades reach us as a scattering of moments and long silences. Who, after all, was going to sit in a widow's house and write down the games and the weeping of a fatherless boy?

The believer does not despair at that silence. He takes consolation in a conviction the Sheikh names as the theological footing of it all: whatever we truly needed to know of our Prophet ﷺ, Allah preserved. The few moments we do hold are not leftovers; they are exactly what we were meant to keep, and they are not small: a desert tribe and a milk-mother, an angel who wrestled a four-year-old to the ground, a grave on the road home, a blind chieftain's throne with room for one small boy. This is the chapter that shows why the most beloved of Allah ﷺ was orphaned three times before the age of nine, and why not one of those losses was neglect. Every one was a raising.

Why the nobles sent their sons to the desert

The first thing we know of his life after the birth is strange to modern ears: his mother gave her newborn away, to be nursed and raised out in the open desert. To us it sounds like the opposite of love. To the nobility of Quraysh it was custom, almost a mark of rank, and there was hard, long-term thinking underneath it.

The city bred disease, and in an age when most infants did not survive their first years, the surest protection was distance: a child kept among two or three people in the clean desert air had a better chance of living than one passed from hand to hand in a crowded town. They wanted hardy children, too. Raise a boy in austerity, the reasoning went, and the hardships of Makkah will one day feel like luxury, for children adapt to their circumstances far more easily than grown men can. The desert also kept a boy from the doting of grandparents, uncles, and aunts, the relatives who lovingly undo every rule a parent sets. But the reason the Arabs prized above all was language. City Arabic was being corrupted, loanwords creeping in from every passing caravan, while the pure, ancient tongue survived only in the desert, among certain tribes famous for guarding it unmixed. The most famous of all was Banu Sa'd ibn Bakr: the tribe that came to Makkah for the children of the elite, and that would carry away the son of Amina.

He ﷺ would later fold his entire beginning into a single sentence. Asked to tell something of himself, he said that he was the du'a of his father Ibrahim, the glad tidings of his brother Isa, and that he had been nursed among Banu Sa'd ibn Bakr. The du'a is the prayer Ibrahim made as he raised the very first house of worship, setting the stones of the Ka'bah in place and asking his Lord for a messenger out of his own descendants:

Our Lord, and send among them a messenger from themselves who will recite to them Your verses and teach them the Book and wisdom and purify them. Indeed, You are the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

QUR'AN 2:129

That prayer, made over the foundations of the Ka'bah, was answered with this child. And the glad tidings were the announcement of Isa, who foretold a messenger after him. Some Muslim theologians, the Sheikh notes, find it a plausible reading that the word gospel, which in its own language means simply good news, was always pointing here: the good news Isa kept preaching was him ﷺ.

The orphan nobody wanted

Halima of Banu Sa'd tells her own story, in the first person, preserved in the books of hadith and of sira. She and her husband were crushed by poverty, and that, plainly, is why the desert women made their yearly journey into Makkah: a nursling from a wealthy family meant money, and you had to be a new mother yourself, with milk already flowing, to take one on. Halima came that year with a newborn son of her own, whose name the Sheikh went looking for in the earliest books and could not find recorded, and with an older daughter of perhaps seven or eight, Shaima, who was about to become the foster sister of the best of creation ﷺ.

In Makkah one of the newest babies came with a warning attached: the orphan child. His father was already dead, and you do not take an orphan for free, because the whole point was the fee. His grandfather was the chieftain of Quraysh, yes, but a man with ten sons and a crowd of grandchildren was not going to pay

handsomely for one fatherless boy. Some women never even knocked on Amina's door. Halima went, saw the poverty, and moved on like the rest. By the end of the week every one of her companions had a baby in her arms, and the only child left in all of Makkah was Muhammad ﷺ.

She told her husband she was ashamed to ride home empty-handed. And he answered with the sentence that turned a transaction into a destiny: take the orphan, perhaps Allah will bless us through him. They were both pagans, and yet good-hearted enough to know that sheltering an orphan is a noble thing. The narrations agree on what followed, and the Sheikh sees no difficulty in it: the blessings began at once. The old goat that had long gone dry came back full of milk that very evening, and the worn-out mount that had barely carried the two of them became the swiftest animal in the returning caravan. Allah blesses whomever He chooses, and this poor desert household was now carrying His Messenger ﷺ.

The custom was two years of nursing, and then the child went home. But Halima had seen what her house became with him ﷺ in it, and when the time came she could not give him back. She invented one excuse after another: he is still so young, the city is full of plagues, let him stay a little longer. Amina could never have matched the other families' fees, but by now it was not about the fee, and seeing how cherished her son was, she let him stay on.

The day Jibril opened his chest

Of everything in the childhood, this is the one event the lecture holds with complete certainty, and it is emphatic about why: the Qur'an points to it, Anas ibn Malik radiyallahu anhu narrates it in Sahih Muslim, and the Companions, decades later, could still see

the mark it left on his body. This is no embellished legend; it is bedrock.

He ﷺ was around four, out playing with the children of Banu Sa'd, when Jibril came. The other children took one look and ran. The four-year-old stood his ground, and when the mightiest angel Allah created took hold of him, he struggled, fighting an angel he could not possibly overpower, because even at four he ﷺ would not be taken without resisting. Jibril pinned him gently to the ground, opened his chest, drew out his heart, and removed from it a black clot, saying: this is Shaytan's portion of you.

Pause on that clot, because it is about you as much as about him. The Prophet ﷺ taught that Shaytan pricks every child at the very instant of birth, which is why a newborn enters the world screaming, an enemy already lunging out of ancient envy of the children of Adam. He taught, too, that every person is assigned a qareen, a companion devil whose lifelong work is to whisper. The Companions once asked, even you, Messenger of Allah? Even me, he answered, except that Allah helped me against him, so that my companion only urges me toward good. For the rest of us the whisperer remains. But hear exactly what the whisper is, and is not, for the Qur'an preserves Shaytan's own confession to his followers when the matter is over:

And Satan will say when the matter has been concluded, "Indeed, Allah had promised you the promise of truth. And I promised you, but I betrayed you. But I had no authority over you except that I invited you, and you responded to me. So do not blame me; but blame yourselves. I cannot be called to your aid, nor can you be called to my aid. Indeed, I deny your association of me [with Allah] before. Indeed, for the wrongdoers is a painful punishment."

QUR'AN 14:22

He has no control panel. No one can say Shaytan forced me, because Shaytan forces nothing. The vile thought that ambushes you, the blasphemy that surfaces from nowhere, the sudden ugly desire, is not you and not your iman; it is a call, and a call can be refused. For the Prophet ﷺ, that wire was cut clean at four.

Then Jibril washed the heart in a vessel of gold filled with Zamzam, set it back, and sealed the chest with a pass of his hand. Dr. Yasir Qadhi observes, and means it quite literally, that the first open-heart surgery in history was performed by Jibril upon the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Allah, who can heal without leaving the faintest trace, deliberately left a visible line, so that no one could ever explain the event away as a dream; Anas, looking at him ﷺ near sixty, said he could still see the traces of that line upon his chest. Meanwhile the other children had run shrieking to the tents: our brother has been killed, a man has taken him. The household rushed out in terror and found him sitting alone, his small face pale and shaken, and yet not wailing, not screaming, holding the fear in: the bravest heart the world would ever carry, keeping itself still at four years old.

It would happen once more, some forty-five years later, on the night he ﷺ was taken up through the heavens: the same opening, the same washing in Zamzam, and one difference, no black clot the second time. There was nothing left to remove; it had been taken when he was a child. The scholars of tafsir overwhelmingly read one ayah as a reference to this very cleansing:

Did We not expand for you, [O Muhammad], your breast?

QUR'AN 94:1

A second reading sits alongside it, that the opening of the breast means the opening to guidance and the light of Islam, and the two do not quarrel. By this washing he ﷺ was being prepared for the purest, most dignified life a human being has ever lived; the prophets are ma'sum, protected from every major sin, human enough to slip in small things, angry as Musa grew angry, hasty as Yunus was hasty, but guarded utterly where it matters. Halima, though, had now seen enough strangeness in her tent. Frightened for the child, she quietly carried him ﷺ back to his mother.

He never forgot the desert

Hold Banu Sa'd in your mind and leap forward fifty years, because the lecture leaps with you. After the battle of Hunayn, one of the last campaigns of his life, the captives included people of Banu Sa'd, and one woman insisted to the soldiers that she was the sister of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. They brought her forward, and he asked how he could possibly know. She answered: I still carry the marks of the bite you gave me, when I carried you on my back as a child. Only one person alive could have known that. It was Shaima. He ﷺ freed her and sent her home laden with gift after gift.

And some time later an old woman of the desert came to visit him, when he was in his late fifties with all of Arabia at his feet. He recognized Halima the instant he saw her. He rose to his feet, pulled off his own rida, the cloak from his back, spread it on the ground, and seated his foster mother upon it. The woman who had taken the baby nobody else would bid on received back, half a century later, the cloak off the shoulders of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Of all men who ever lived, he was the least capable of forgetting a kindness.

A grave at al-Abwa

Of the years after Halima returned him to Amina's care, exactly one journey survives; the Sheikh combed the classical works for anything more and found nothing else he could stand behind. When he ﷺ was around six, his mother took him north to Yathrib to visit relatives, traveling with Umm Ayman, the servant girl whom, it is said, Abdul Muttalib had given to Abdullah at his wedding.

Notice the geography, because the Sheikh wants you to see the hand of Allah in it. The Prophet's ﷺ own great-grandmother had been a woman of Yathrib. Of all the towns on earth, the only one this small child ever traveled to, the single place where he had any family ties, was the very village that would one day be renamed Madinah and open its arms to him when his own city cast him out. Coincidence? Allah has a plan. Some books of sirah even mention that fifty years later, arriving as an emigrant, he recognized places he had known as a boy.

They stayed some months. And on the road home, at a small settlement called al-Abwa, which stands to this day, Amina fell ill, and there she died. Umm Ayman buried her where she had fallen and carried the six-year-old the rest of the way to Makkah. Nearly everything we know of these months we know only because Umm Ayman lived to tell it: she accepted Islam, remained at his side ﷺ, and outlived him into the caliphate of Abu Bakr radiyallahu anhu. The Sheikh lets out the historian's quiet sigh: if only someone had written down all she witnessed, we would possess a whole chronicle of these silent years.

Now the scene that no one reads with dry eyes, recorded in Sahih Muslim. Decades on, traveling with his Companions, the Prophet ﷺ suddenly turned his mount off the road and walked

into the wilderness. Not one of them asked a single question; whatever he did, they did. He came to a grave, sat down beside it, and wept until the tears ran down into his blessed beard and soaked it through. Most of them had never once seen him cry, and not knowing why, not daring to ask, the entire company wept with him out of nothing but love. Then he explained: I used to forbid you from visiting graves, but I asked my Lord for permission to visit my mother's grave, and He granted it. So visit the graves, for they remind you of death.

Hold both edges of that moment. He ﷺ would not visit even his own mother's grave without first seeking Allah's permission, and that is precisely what it means that he is the Messenger, a man who does not lift a finger except by his Lord's leave. And the permission your own feet rely on every time you walk into a graveyard entered the Sharia through Amina, through a grown son standing at al-Abwa, weeping for a mother he had lost when he was six.

The chieftain's platform

The orphan now passed into the care of Abdul Muttalib, by this time past eighty and blind, still the chieftain of all Quraysh. From these two years only a couple of glimpses survive, carried by the two most ancient sira sources we possess, Ibn Ishaq and Ibn Sa'd, and both say the very same thing about the old man's heart.

The first: a platform used to be spread for Abdul Muttalib in the shade of the Ka'bah, the seat from which he discussed the affairs of Quraysh every afternoon. It was the closest thing Makkah had to a throne, and not one of his many sons would dare to sit on it. The little boy would come running and climb straight up to sit beside his grandfather. His uncles reached to pull him back

down, because no one sat there, and the blind old chieftain stopped them: leave him, this is my child, let him remain. Of all his grandchildren, the only one Abdul Muttalib seated beside himself on the throne of Quraysh was Muhammad ﷺ.

The second: the uncles once sent the boy, perhaps seven or eight, out alone into the desert to search for strayed camels. Why send a child? Ibn Sa'd preserves the reason: he never set his hand to a task except that it succeeded, and the desperate uncles knew it. But the boy was slow returning, and when Abdul Muttalib learned they had sent the child alone into the wilderness, he was furious, pacing until at last the boy appeared. Then he threw his arms around him and swore: from this day on, I will never let you out of my sight.

He could not keep that promise. When the Prophet ﷺ was eight, Abdul Muttalib died, and the orphan was orphaned a third time: the father before his birth, the mother at six, the grandfather at eight, three bereavements stacked on one small boy before the age of nine. A Companion once asked whether he remembered Abdul Muttalib, that legend of Arabia, and he answered: yes, and I was eight when he passed away (a report with a slight weakness in its chain, the Sheikh notes, but no harm in it, and the thing that fixes his age for us). On his deathbed, the old chieftain chose the next guardian with care. Not Abu Lahab, not the line of Hamza; those were only half-brothers of the boy's father. He entrusted him ﷺ to Abu Talib, the one full brother of Abdullah still living, who would shelter and guard the Prophet ﷺ for more than forty years, until the Prophet was past fifty, and this story will owe him many an evening yet to come.

Why Allah chose an orphan

Now the question the lecture refuses to walk past. If Allah had willed it, His Messenger ﷺ could have been born into luxury and kept both parents at least until he was grown. Why, instead, three griefs heaped one upon another onto a single small child? Why so hard a childhood for the most beloved of all creation?

The scholars' first answer is found in what Allah said to Musa: a helpless baby cast by his own mother into a chest and set adrift on a river, washed up at the door of the very tyrant slaughtering the children of his people, raised inside the palace of his enemy. And Allah told him, long after, what all of that drifting and danger had truly been:

[Saying], 'Cast him into the chest and cast it into the river, and the river will throw it onto the bank; there will take him an enemy to Me and an enemy to him.' And I bestowed upon you love from Me that you would be brought up under My eye [i.e., observation and care].

QUR'AN 20:39

And I produced you for Myself.

QUR'AN 20:41

If that is what Allah says of Musa, the Sheikh reasons, how much more of Muhammad ﷺ. The stripping away of father, mother, and grandfather meant that no parent, no patron, no powerful tribe could ever stand up and claim: I made him, he owes his greatness to me. Allah took the raising of His final Messenger as His own work, directly, under His own eye, a soul produced for Himself.

The orphanhood was also equipment for the road ahead. A pampered childhood does not forge a man for a life of sacrifice; it

forges the opposite. The Sheikh points to a rule every parent has watched come true: the child raised in hardship matures years beyond his peers, carrying responsibilities at six that softer households would not hand a sixteen-year-old. And hardship lived young tends to breed mercy rather than selfishness; it is the rich, he says bluntly, who lean toward stinginess, not the poor. The persecution and crushing burdens that lay ahead needed a heart trained early by loss, and trained by that loss toward tenderness for everyone weak.

So when he ﷺ later said that he and the one who cares for an orphan would be together in Paradise like this, holding up two fingers side by side, and taught that you should pass your hand gently over an orphan's head, do you not think he was remembering a particular boy in Makkah? The Sheikh turns it directly onto you: find an orphan, and sponsor that orphan. Thirty, forty, fifty dollars in a month, less than many of us pour into coffee, and you may stand beside the Prophet ﷺ in the Garden. Our religion set the care of the orphan near its very center, and the Messenger who set it there had himself been the orphan no one wanted to take.

And the desert paid one last dividend. Raised on the unmixed, ancient tongue of Banu Sa'd, he ﷺ grew into the most eloquent of all the Arabs, and he said of himself that he had been given jawami al-kalim, speech gathered tight, a few words that can be unfolded for hours. The eloquence that would one day carry the revelation of Allah to the world was planted in a tent in the desert, by the deliberate design of the One who was raising him.

The monk story, weighed and set aside

One famous tale remains from the childhood, and the chapter ends by laying it honestly on the scale, because how we handle it

teaches something larger than the story itself. As it is told, the boy, eleven or twelve, traveled with Abu Talib in a caravan toward Syria, and along the route a monk named Bahira, who had never given a passing caravan the time of day, came out, laid a feast, and studied the boy: I saw the clouds shading him, I saw the trees leaning to shelter him; this one will be a prophet, so guard him well. In the version recorded by Tirmidhi, seven Roman soldiers then appear, hunting the foretold prophet to kill him; Bahira turns them away, and the boy is hurried back to Makkah, escorted, the narration claims, by Abu Bakr and Bilal.

Most scholars of our tradition passed the story along at face value. But the most critically minded stopped cold, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi, whose own specialty is the science of hadith, walks through their objections with relish. Adh-Dhahabi, with Ibn Kathir and Ibn Sayyid an-Nas beside him, asked: how can this be? Abu Bakr was himself only a child at the time, and Bilal not yet born, not acquired by Abu Bakr until long after Islam came. And the sharpest question of all: why, when he ﷺ stood up thirty years later and all of Makkah called him mad, did no one, not Abu Talib, not the caravan, not the man himself, ever mention that a monk had announced his prophethood to the world? Why does the man who came down trembling from the cave of Hira, running to Khadijah, needing Waraqah to explain that this was the angel who had come to Musa, look nothing like a man told since boyhood to expect exactly this? Adh-Dhahabi's verdict was blunt: I feel this story is fabricated. The Sheikh sides with the critics: tell the story only to make clear that it does not stand.

And the stakes, he insists, are not small. Non-Muslim writers have seized on Bahira as the missing link they were hunting for, the one afternoon in which an unlettered boy, from a city with no Jews, no Christians, no scriptures, and no libraries, supposedly

absorbed the entire sacred history of the Children of Israel he would later recite as Qur'an. Even at face value the theory collapses: an eleven-year-old, in one half-hour feast, memorizing an encyclopedia of prophetic history and reproducing it flawlessly forty years on. But the Qur'an had already answered the charge directly, long before any orientalist raised it:

And you did not recite before it any scripture, nor did you inscribe one with your right hand. Then [i.e., otherwise] the falsifiers would have had [cause for] doubt.

QUR'AN 29:48

And of the histories he brought, histories his people had never known:

That is from the news of the unseen which We reveal to you, [O Muhammad]. You knew it not, neither you nor your people, before this. So be patient; indeed, the [best] outcome is for the righteous.

QUR'AN 11:49

The closing lesson reaches well past Bahira. Throughout the history of this ummah people fabricated reports, many of them, the Sheikh stresses, with sincere intentions, like the man who invented a separate virtue for every single surah of the Qur'an, hoping to draw people back to reciting it, and who confessed exactly that when caught. This is the very reason the science of hadith exists, and the reason the seerah itself must be told from what is authentic. The raised finger at his birth, the claim that his body cast no shadow, the legends piled on legends by people who only wished to exaggerate his greatness, none of it honors him ﷺ. It does the opposite: it hands his enemies their ammunition and makes onlookers ask what kind of religion

traffics in fables. He is the greatest human being who ever lived, and, as the Sheikh puts it with finality, what we authentically know of him is more than enough.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read these first eight years as a string of misfortunes to be pitied and left behind. That would be to miss the question they put to us. Look at the whole of it in one frame. The baby nobody would bid on. The four-year-old pinned to the desert ground by an angel and washed with Zamzam. The six-year-old walking home behind his mother's fresh grave. The eight-year-old at the deathbed of the only throne in Makkah that had ever made room for him. The world looks at that and says: a childhood of catastrophe. The Qur'an teaches you to say what Allah said over the cradle of Musa: brought up under My eye, produced for Myself. Every door this world could close on a child was closed on him ﷺ, so that it would be unmistakable, forever, that Allah alone raised him. When the next hard season closes a door in your own life, his childhood asks whether you can hold open the possibility that the closing is itself a raising.

And the boy raised by so much loss did not grow hard; he grew tender. That is the second thing this day asks of you. He became the man who rose to his feet for an old desert woman and spread his own cloak in the dust for her, who freed his foster sister at the mere memory of a childhood bite, who promised Paradise side by side with himself to anyone who shelters an orphan. Loss made him merciful instead of bitter, openhanded instead of guarded, and that was no accident; it was the training. So the question turns on your own wounds: are they hardening you, or are you letting them soften you toward everyone weak the way his softened him? The proof he asks for is not a feeling. It is an

orphan in your keeping, sponsored and remembered, for less than the price of your coffee, so that you might stand where he promised you could stand.

There is a third thing, quieter, threaded through the chapter. He would not visit even his own mother's grave without first asking Allah's leave. We move on our own wants and ask afterward, if at all, whether Allah had opened the way; his life runs the other direction: seek the permission, then act. And the last thing the day asks is a kind of guarding. The whisper in your chest, the ugly thought, the sudden pull, is only ever a voice, never a command; Shaytan was given an invitation and no authority at all, and the heart washed clean at four shows what a heart can be when it is given over to Allah. Guard that heart with His remembrance, and guard his story too, on your own tongue, from every fable that would dress him in borrowed legend, for the truth of him is already more than enough.

So take one thing from these eight years into your ordinary days. When a door closes hard, hold open the thought that Allah may be raising you through the loss. Find one orphan and make his care a fixture of your life. Seek your Lord's leave before you move, and refuse the whisper as the empty call it is. That is how the most beloved of Allah ﷺ was raised, in loss turned to mercy, in dependence on his Lord alone, and it is a way still open to anyone who wants it. O Allah, send Your peace upon Your Messenger ﷺ, who knew loss before he knew letters; raise us and our children under Your care as You raised him, put orphans in our keeping and mercy in our spending, and gather us with him on the Day every mother and every child is gathered.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 7: the early childhood of the Prophet ﷺ

(Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (2:129, 94:1, 14:22, 20:39, 20:41, 29:48, 11:49), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The Early Manhood of the Prophet ﷺ

The quiet years that built the man Makkah would trust

Of the forty years the Prophet ﷺ lived before the first revelation, history kept almost nothing. There was no writing in Makkah and no records, and no one suspected that the orphan boy in front of them was someone who would one day need remembering. By the time the world wanted to know how he had spent his youth, the people who had watched him grow were mostly gone. Dr. Yasir Qadhi opens this chapter with a question that lands closer to home than any date: how much do you really know of your own father at eight, at twelve, at nineteen? You knew him, and still, of his childhood, all you hold is one story here and one story there. That is exactly what we hold of the Prophet's ﷺ early manhood, fourteen centuries on. A handful of episodes survived, and the striking thing, when you sit with them, is that they are precisely the ones a believer needs.

So this is not a chapter of dates. It is a chapter of formation: a monk on the road to Syria and the honest questions the scholars learned to ask about him, a first job paid in the smallest coins the city had, a war he ﷺ helped in and never once regretted, and a pact sworn in an old man's house that he ﷺ said, decades later as a Prophet, he would not have traded for a herd of red camels. Watch these years closely, because they teach you how Allah builds the men who carry His word: not by dropping greatness

out of the sky, but by raising it, slowly, in the lowest and loneliest schools.

A monk on the road to Syria

He ﷺ was around nine or ten or eleven, nobody recorded which, when his uncle Abu Talib readied a caravan for the long haul north to Syria. The plan was to leave the boy behind. But this was a child who had already buried a mother and then a grandfather, who had learned what it was to be the one left, and he could not bear it. Who are you leaving me with, he asked his uncle. How can you leave me here alone? Abu Talib wept at the words, and took him along. The route ran the way Quraysh rode it every year, and on the northern road it passed the cell of a Christian monk, one of those hermits who walled themselves off from the world entirely, nothing day and night but worship.

Caravans had filed past that cell for years, and the monk had never once stirred for them. This time, the story goes, he came out and called them down. The books give his name as Bahira. He looked at the boy, and then he told Abu Talib what he claimed to see: a cloud that moved to keep the child in its shade, trees that lowered their branches toward him, the very signs of the awaited prophet of the Arabs foretold in the scriptures he kept. He asked after the boy's father. I am his father, said Abu Talib. That cannot be, the monk answered, this boy's father cannot be living. I am actually his uncle, Abu Talib admitted, and the monk nodded, because that, too, fit the signs. And he sent them off with a warning: guard this boy from the Romans, and in another telling the Jews, for if they recognize what he is, they will try to kill him.

Every Muslim child has heard some version of that story, repeated lovingly, and it is exactly here that this chapter becomes

unforgettable, because here the Sheikh stops the caravan.

When a beautiful story meets the scholars

It is time, Dr. Yasir Qadhi announces, for a little critical thinking, a little analysis of the chains. And he does something a softer telling never would: he turns the beloved story over and examines its seams. One version puts Abu Bakr in that caravan at the Prophet's ﷺ side, but Abu Bakr was himself a boy of about ten in those years, with no recorded friendship between them that young. Another places Bilal there as a slave of the company, but Bilal had not yet even been born, let alone been bought and freed, which lay some thirty years down the road. The chain of the report has weaknesses, and so does its content.

He is not the first to frown at it. Classical scholars raised these objections centuries ago, Ibn Kathir among them, and adh-Dhahabi, whose questions still land with full force. Why would the trees need to bend down and shade the boy when the same report already has a cloud overhead doing exactly that? If a monk had announced this child's prophethood before a whole caravan, why did Quraysh find his message so strange decades later, and why did the Prophet ﷺ never once turn to his hesitating uncle and say: do you not remember what the monk told you on the Syria road? And the heaviest question of all: when the angel Jibril came to him in the cave of Hira, why did he ﷺ come down the mountain shaking with fear, fleeing to Khadijah, wondering what had seized him, if he had spent thirty years knowing an angel was coming? A man told at ten that he will be a prophet does not tremble at thirty when it arrives. adh-Dhahabi's verdict, which the Sheikh hands on without flinching: I think the story is fabricated.

Someone will ask, reasonably, why be so strict with a tale that only praises him ﷺ, where the clouds shade him and the trees

bow. Because of what hangs on it. The reports of the seerah, the Sheikh reminds us, were never held to the iron standard demanded of matters of law. Imam Ahmad would clench his fist tight for what is halal and haram, and open his hand loose for the looser histories, and most nights the Sheikh lets the gentler details pass the same easy way. You stop, he says, only when a story creates a problem. And this one does. For more than a century, the people who deny his prophethood have leaned on this very monk to answer the question that corners them: where did Muhammad ﷺ get all of this? One famous orientalist of the last century wrote that Bahira fired up the boy's imagination with tales of Musa and Isa, which the young man then regurgitated, garbled, three decades later. The Qur'an answers him directly. The Arabs had not seen a prophet in the thousands of years since Ismail; the very idea of prophethood reached Makkah as a stranger. He ﷺ did not know the names in those stories, did not know the concept, until it was given to him from above:

And thus We have revealed to you an inspiration of Our command. You did not know what is the Book or [what is] faith, but We have made it a light by which We guide whom We will of Our servants. And indeed, [O Muhammad], you guide to a straight path.

QUR'AN 42:52

So love him with the truth. That is the lesson the Sheikh draws out of a story he is willing to set down: his greatness needs no props that cannot bear their own weight, and the scholars who questioned the tale were not doubting the Prophet ﷺ, they were guarding him.

A shepherd in the valley of Ajyad

From about ten to fifteen the record goes almost completely silent, and then his first job arrives on the most solid footing a report can have, a hadith in Bukhari. Allah never sent a prophet, he ﷺ told his companions, except that he tended sheep. They went looking for an exception in him: even you, O Messenger of Allah? Even me, he said. I used to tend the flocks of the people of Makkah for a few small coins. Notice the texture of that, the Sheikh says: his own companions did not know this about him until he told them himself. If the men closest to him did not know he had been a shepherd, imagine how much of those quiet years has reached no one at all.

He never carried it like a secret. Years later, on an expedition, he ﷺ passed some shepherds and stopped to advise them: take from the darker branches of the arak tree, it is better for your flock. They were astonished. How does the Messenger of Allah know which branch of which tree, in which season, is best for sheep? I was a shepherd, he answered. And in another narration he named the company he kept in that trade: Musa was sent as a prophet while he was a shepherd, Dawud was sent while he was a shepherd, and I tended sheep at Ajjad. Ajjad is the small valley directly behind the Haram. To this day the hospital nearest the Kaaba carries its name, and if you stand there, you are standing in the first workplace of the best of creation ﷺ.

Hold the pattern up to the light, because the Sheikh wants you to see it. Musa kept another man's flock in Madyan as the price of his marriage, and was called from the grazing grounds to face Pharaoh. Dawud was a shepherd boy nobody rated, until he stepped out alone against the giant Jalut with a sling, and the kingship and the prophethood found him in the field. Allah trains the men who will carry His word in the same low, lonely school. It is not an accident that befell them; it is a curriculum.

What sheep teach a future prophet

If Allah had willed it, the Sheikh observes, money would have been poured over His beloved ﷺ from his childhood, and he would never have had to lift a finger. Instead Allah chose for him the lowest-paid and most menial labor in all of Makkah. Why? Dr. Yasir Qadhi, who says plainly that he has never herded a flock but has sat with the shepherds of Arabia and asked them, walks through the wisdoms. Solitude, first: a shepherd spends his days far from people, out under the open sky with his animals and his thoughts, and that emptiness becomes room to think about why we are here at all. Hearts that live close to the creation of Allah stay soft, while hearts buried in the noise of this world slowly harden until they can ignore their Maker entirely. It is no coincidence, the Sheikh notes, that the denial of God grows loudest in the most opulent places, while the people closest to the soil and the sky tend to keep their faith.

Then there is the flock itself. To a stranger the sheep all look alike; but the shepherd knows every single one: this one stubborn, that one gentle, this one a leader, that one a follower, and he handles each according to its nature. That is leadership rendered small enough to learn, and it is exactly the eye a prophet must bring to people, every one of whom is carried differently. The work shapes a soul in two directions at once: tender, because these helpless creatures are yours to keep alive, and brave, because you stand alone between your flock and the wolf. He ﷺ would later say that pride rides with the owners of horses, and a coarse arrogance with the owners of camels, while *sakina*, a settled humility, lives with the people of sheep.

The tenderness never left him; decades on, a camel groaned and wept at the sight of him ﷺ, and he soothed it quiet, then told its owner to fear Allah in the beasts placed in his hand. And the

dignity never left him either. A boy of fourteen or fifteen who would not freeload off his uncle grew into the Prophet ﷺ who taught that the purest wealth a person can hold is what his own hands have earned, and who pointed to Dawud, a king and a prophet, eating only from the labor of his own hands. He was never embarrassed by the bottom rung. Once he had reached the very top, he announced it.

And spread over the whole of these years, the early sorrow and the slow climb out of it, Surah ad-Duha reads almost like a biography. Your Lord has not taken leave of you, nor has He detested you, and the Hereafter is better for you than this first life, and your Lord is going to give you, and you will be satisfied. The Sheikh unfolds the promise simply: every coming stage of his ﷺ life would be better than the one before. Then the surah names the very shape of his childhood:

Did He not find you an orphan and give [you] refuge? And He found you lost and guided [you], And He found you poor and made [you] self-sufficient.

QUR'AN 93:6-8

And then the surah turns that hard beginning outward, into standing orders for everyone who would ever read it: so as for the orphan, do not oppress him; and as for the one who asks, do not turn him away; but as for the favor of your Lord, speak of it. The harsh start was not cruelty. It was the making of a soft heart, so that the man who had been the orphan and the pauper would know, in his bones, how to treat them.

The war they named for sin

He ﷺ was a teenager, most likely around fifteen, when war broke out between two great confederations of Arab tribes: Kinanah, the larger branch to which Quraysh belonged, and Qays Aylan, the branch that held Hawazin and Ghatafan, names that will return in this story years from now. A man of Kinanah killed a man of Hawazin, and the days of ignorance ran on a brutal arithmetic: you kill one of mine, I kill one of yours. Hawazin came for their vengeance, and the Kinanah tribes fell back into the Haram of Makkah, because the ancient law of that sanctuary, the law our religion still keeps, is that whoever enters it is safe.

But Hawazin were too enraged to honor it. They attacked inside the sacred precinct, and that single act tilted everything. The first wrong had been on Kinanah's side, the Sheikh is careful to say; both had blood on them. But killing a man outside the Haram is one kind of crime, and violating the sanctuary itself a far graver one. Now Quraysh declared all-out war. The fighting went against them, then turned in their favor, and a treaty finally closed it. The Arabs themselves named these years with unsparing honesty: the wars of al-Fijar, from fujur, sin, because both sides had done evil and, above all, because the sanctity of the House of Allah had been broken.

And he ﷺ was there. In an authentic report he remembered it himself, long afterward: I would gather the arrows and hand them back to my uncles. An arrow was ammunition you could use twice, and the boy, still too young to be given a sword, kept his family supplied. It is also narrated that on the days he was present, Quraysh would gain ground, and on the days he was absent they would lose it, until Abu Talib swore the boy would not leave his sight again. And here is how he ﷺ weighed it as a Prophet: I do not regret it. A war with no religion in it at all, idol worshippers on both sides, and still he had helped his own

people on the side that stood closer to right, and he refused, ever, to disown having done so. There is a whole world of guidance in that, the Sheikh notes, for a believer living among people who are not believers, watching conflicts that are not about faith, and wondering whether justice is still his to defend.

One poem against all of Quraysh

A few years pass, and he ﷺ is in his early twenties now, one report says exactly twenty, when the second of these surviving episodes unfolds. It was one of the sacred months, the season when Makkah filled with pilgrims and merchants. A trader arrived from Zubayd, a tribe of distant Yemen, which in the cold ledger of Makkah meant two things at once: low standing, and no kinsmen near enough to make a powerful man afraid. He sold his goods to al-As ibn Wa'il, a chieftain of Quraysh, a career statesman and a wealthy one, the father of the Amr ibn al-As whose name will come later. Pay you after the Hajj, said al-As. Then, when the man returned: come back tomorrow. Then tomorrow again, until the stranger understood, with a sinking heart, that he was being robbed, slowly and politely, by a man no one in this whole city would dare to cross.

So he went from door to door through the clans of Quraysh, Banu Hashim among them, and every door gave him an excuse, because that is the other arithmetic of the days of ignorance: justice reached exactly as far as your tribe's swords could carry it, and this man's swords were a month's journey away in Yemen. Trapped, he reached for the one weapon left to a man with a voice. Poetry, the Sheikh smiles, was the news media of that world, its front page and its viral post at once, except that nobody was counting characters, and a sharp enough verse outran any horse.

At the hour when all of Makkah was gathered before the Kaaba, the wronged man stood up and sang his case to the city. O family of Fihir, he called them, naming Quraysh by their oldest and proudest name. A man has been wronged, he cried, here in the valley of Makkah, far from his home and any who would help him, still in the white cloth of his pilgrimage, his hair uncombed and his Umrah unfinished, robbed between the Hijr and the Black Stone. Sanctity, he flung at them, belongs to people of honor; there is no sanctity for a cheat in a clean pilgrim's robe. He was calling the holy city's bluff to its face, and the verses spread like fire through dry grass.

Perfume on the Kaaba

One man heard it and decided the shame of it was unbearable: az-Zubayr ibn Abdul Muttalib, an uncle of the Prophet ﷺ himself. He convened the senior houses of Quraysh in the home of a man whose name, the Sheikh tells you, is worth memorizing, because it recurs again and again in the seerah: Abdullah ibn Jud'an, the most honored elder of Makkah in his day, legendary for his hospitality, the one the city brought its problems to. He would die before the call to Islam ever began, but in his house, that day, the chiefs swore an oath the Arabs had never heard the like of before. We will stand, they pledged, with the oppressed against the oppressor, whoever the two of them turn out to be, until the wronged man is given back his right, even if the wrongdoer is one of our own and the wronged a stranger from the farthest corner of Yemen.

There were no signatures, because there was no paper and almost no one who could read or write. So they sealed it the way Makkah sealed things that mattered: they walked to the Kaaba, proclaimed the pact aloud before everyone, dipped their hands in

perfume and pressed them to the wall of the House. From that it took one of its names, *hilf al-mutayyabin*, the pact of the perfumed. Its other name carries the better story. When al-As ibn Wa'il, the very cheat who had started it all, heard what they had sworn, he snapped that they had meddled in *fudul*, in matters none of their business. The insult stuck, and was worn instead as a badge of honor: *hilf al-fudul*, the pact of the people who made justice their business. Its first piece of business was the stranger from Zubayd, who got his money.

Now look carefully around that room. Among the gray heads and the seasoned chieftains stands the youngest participant of them all, a man of about twenty, dipping his hand in the perfume beside the elders of his city: Muhammad ﷺ, invited into that gathering before a single word of revelation had come to him, because they could already sense the leader he was going to be. And here is the line that should be carried out of that house. Decades later, a Prophet now with the whole world rearranging itself around him, he ﷺ still spoke of that day: I witnessed in the house of Abdullah ibn Jud'an a pact I would not trade for a herd of red camels, the most coveted wealth an Arab could name, and were I called to it in Islam, I would answer.

That, the Sheikh suggests, is the quiet headline of all these years. The age of ignorance was dark, but it was never hollow. The Arabs still carried real veins of nobility within them, and on their best day they could gather, idol worshippers all, against an injustice that touched none of their own tribes, and seal their stand for a stranger with perfume on their hands. It was into exactly that buried, waiting goodness that Allah chose to send His final Messenger ﷺ, to revive the virtues already sleeping in his people. Forty years he ﷺ lived before revelation, and these few episodes are essentially all that history kept of them, and

that, the Sheikh reads as a mercy: Allah preserved precisely what we need, and let the rest fall quietly away.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read these years as a charming prelude, a few sweet anecdotes on the way to the real story. That would be to miss what they ask of us. Strip them down, and each one puts a question to your own iman.

Love him ﷺ with the truth. The scholars who took the beautiful story of the monk and set it aside were not doubting him; they were protecting him, because his proof never rested on a stranger's tale, and a faith propped up by something fragile is weaker, not stronger, for the prop. Be as careful with what you pass on about him as they were with what they were willing to narrate. To honor him with a story that cannot stand is not devotion; to honor him with the truth, even when the truth is plainer, is.

There is no dishonor in the bottom rung, and no shortcut around it. The best of creation ﷺ tended other people's sheep for a handful of the smallest coins Makkah had, and then announced it from the summit of prophethood without a trace of shame. The purest wealth, he taught, is what your own hands earn. We are forever hunting the inheritance, the fluke, the success that skips the climb, when the order of his life was the reverse: start low, work honestly, and let Allah raise the stages one by one. And the hidden wage of those years was time alone under the open sky that kept his heart soft and awake. Our age is engineered against exactly that; the noise never stops, and a heart buried in it hardens by degrees, without noticing the moment it stopped feeling. Find the valley, whatever yours is, where your soul can hear itself. And over whatever Allah has placed in your care, keep

the shepherd's eye: every soul has its own nature, and he who tends them is tender toward the flock and brave before the wolf.

And make justice your business. He ﷺ joined a pact sworn by idol worshippers for the sake of one wronged stranger who shared none of their blood, and said as a Prophet that he would rise to its call again. Oppression is oppression, the Sheikh insists, wherever it lands; it does not become someone else's problem because the one suffering it is not one of yours. A believer who stands publicly with the wronged, no sermon attached, is offering dawah of the very highest order, the kind that makes the faith itself look as sincere as it is. So take one thing from these silent years down into your own. Bless the work of your hands. Keep a little solitude where your heart can stay soft. And pick one fight against an injustice that has nothing to do with you, and show up for it. The years no one bothered to record were not empty; they were a school, and none of your own quiet years are empty either, if you spend them the way he ﷺ spent his: working honestly, thinking deeply, and standing where justice stands. May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, the shepherd of Ayyad and the youngest hand on the pact of honor, soften our hearts in solitude, bless what our hands earn, and write us among those who stand with the wronged until He is pleased with us.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 8: the early manhood of the Prophet ﷺ (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (42:52, 93:6-8), verified via quran.ai. Where the

histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

Marriage to Khadijah and the rebuilding of the Ka'bah

The honest shepherd, the woman who chose him, and the stone no one could lift alone

These are the last two stories the seerah has before everything changes. Dr. Yasir Qadhi reminds us how thin the ground is: for forty years of his life ﷺ before prophethood we have perhaps a dozen incidents and no more, and after these two the next time we meet him a voice will be filling the cave of Hira and the world will divide into before and after. Both of these scenes are about a single thing, and it is the same thing in each: a man so honest, so gentle, so plainly trusted by everyone around him, that a wealthy woman would hand him her entire caravan and a city on the edge of war would hand him its holiest decision, and not one verse had yet been revealed to him.

Watch that thread, because the Sheikh draws it through the whole evening. Before there was a prophet, there was already al-Amin. The trust came first.

The shy shepherd and the wages

He ﷺ was a shepherd, probably twenty-three or twenty-four years old, and shepherding in Makkah was the work of the poor: a man with no flock of his own would take other people's animals out to graze the hills for a meager wage. It so happened that Khadijah's older sister, whom some reports name as Hala, owned

a herd, and she hired two young men to take her animals out beyond the city, the Prophet ﷺ and another whose name we do not know.

When the grazing was finished and the wage was due, they had to go back into town to collect it, because in those days you were paid the moment the work was done. His companion said, come, let us go and ask Khadijah's sister for our wages. And he ﷺ answered with the line that opens this whole story: you go on my behalf and collect for both of us, because I am too shy to go to her, since she is a woman. So the young man went alone.

Khadijah happened to be in her sister's house when he arrived. He asked for his wage, and she said, where is Muhammad? He has earned half of this. He was too shy to come and ask you himself, the man explained. And at that, Khadijah's sister began to praise him, and could not seem to stop. She had never met a man more shy, she said, more honorable, more noble and modest in the way he dealt with her; she had watched him lower his gaze and carry himself with a quiet dignity she had never seen in a worker at so humble a job.

This, the narrator notes, was the first time Khadijah heard his name spoken to her in that way, and as with any human heart, when a man is praised so highly, something stirred. It was honesty that opened the door, before anything else. Not his wealth, for he had none, nor his standing, for he was an orphan working for hire. Only the way a poor shepherd conducted himself when no one important was watching.

A caravan placed in trustworthy hands

Khadijah was the richest woman in Makkah, and it is worth understanding how, because it tells you why she was so often

cheated. In the days of jahiliyyah women did not, as a rule, inherit. But Khadijah's second husband was a wealthy merchant who died leaving no surviving siblings and no children with her, so the fortune, in a rare turn, came to her. She then did with it what a shrewd merchant does: invested it in the two great trade routes, sending goods to Syria and Yemen in the season of Hajj, buying there and selling back in Makkah on the cycle of the caravans.

But because she was a woman she could not travel with her own goods, so every journey she had to hire a man, and paid him not a flat wage but a share of the profit. This arrangement, *mudaraba*, where one party provides the capital and the other the labor and they split the gain by an agreed percentage, is a transaction the Sheikh notes the Sharia has fully endorsed. The trouble was the men. Time after time the merchants she hired, with no real stake in her interest, would lie, steal, and shortchange her of what she had earned. She kept her dignity and a good portion of her wealth, but never the share she actually deserved.

So when she heard her sister praising this honest young man, she made an unusual decision. She would entrust her caravan to him, though he had never made a single business journey in his life. He was inexperienced and young, when caravans were normally led by seasoned men in their forties and fifties who knew every route and market. She set all of that aside for one reason: his honesty. And there is wisdom in her reading of him, the Sheikh observes, for it is human nature that a man so decent and restrained in how he treats a woman is likely decent in the rest of his character too.

The offer was generous, half the profit for him and half for her, and here comes a detail the Sheikh lingers on. He did not seize it. He went to his uncle Abu Talib and said, my uncle, Khadijah has sent me such and such an offer, what do you think? He did not need permission; he was a grown, independent man. But he asked anyway, out of respect, and Abu Talib told him this was a blessing from Allah, far better than herding sheep, and not to refuse it. So he accepted.

He ﷺ took the caravan north to Busra, a market town on the very edge of the Roman lands, perhaps a hundred kilometers short of Damascus, where the Arab traders typically stopped rather than push deeper into the empire. Khadijah sent a servant named Maysarah to travel alongside him and watch. And when they returned, Maysarah told her everything: the care he had shown on the road, the honesty in every dealing, and a profit many times what she had ever seen, what the early Arabic calls *ad'af*, multiplied over. Some of the older books even mention a cloud that shaded him on the journey. The Sheikh is careful here. If it happened, it happened, he says, but there is no authentic report of it, and we must be cautious with such signs before the prophethood, for had people clearly seen a miracle, that would itself have been a public sign of what was coming, and the seerah records none. What is not in doubt is that whatever this man touched, Allah blessed, just as blessing had poured into the household of Halima who nursed him as an infant. The caravan came home richer than Khadijah had ever known it, and her feelings, already stirred, deepened.

The woman who chose him

By now Khadijah's heart was clear, and the Sheikh pauses to say plainly what some of us feel too shy to say. There is nothing

wrong in what she felt. She was a single woman, he ﷺ was an eligible young man, and to be drawn to him was no fault at all. As he tells his own students, falling in love is not haram; it is what a person does with that love that makes it one thing or the other. Khadijah did the thing that honors it. She pursued it through marriage.

And understand what kind of woman was choosing him. Khadijah had been married twice and then closed the door. A number of noble men had proposed, drawn by her pure Qurayshi lineage and, the Sheikh notes bluntly, by her wealth, since under jahili law a woman's fortune passed into her husband's hands the moment he married her. She turned every one of them away, believing none would treat her as she deserved. This is the woman who now wanted a poor orphan, and wanted him for the one thing none of those wealthy suitors had.

Every version of how the proposal came about, the Sheikh stresses, differs in its details but agrees on a single point: Khadijah was the one who set it in motion. A man proposes to a woman, then and in Islam, but there is nothing wrong, within proper limits, with a woman first making her interest known. In one account she sent an older woman named Nafisa to him, who asked, why do you not marry? And he ﷺ answered, and who would marry me? I am an orphan and a poor man of the Quraysh. So she said, what if it were Khadijah? He fell silent, and then said: but why would she want me? Notice, the Sheikh says, what he did not say. He never said he was not interested. He only wondered, with that same humility, why a woman like her would want a man like him.

About three months after his return, in the month of Safar, the marriage took place. The Sheikh deliberately raises a second

version only to set it aside, and it is worth seeing how he handles it, because it is the discipline of the whole seerah. There is a report, on a weak chain, that Khadijah's father was alive, opposed the match, was made drunk and tricked into agreeing, and woke too late to undo it. The Sheikh will not let it stand. It is not a true story, he says, and it is contradicted by stronger facts: Khadijah's father had already died, which is precisely why she controlled her own wealth, for a woman with a living father or brother or husband would not have held the money herself. The reliable version, in more books than the one that carries the tale of the wine, is that her uncle Amr ibn Asad gave her in marriage. This is why we must sift these early histories so carefully, he explains: many were collected within two or three centuries as loose stories without chains, and a tale that happened to someone else, or to some pagan, could drift until a confused narrator pinned it to the Prophet ﷺ.

Abu Talib came with him ﷺ and delivered the sermon, preserved in the early books. He praised Allah, then spoke of the noble lineage of the Quraysh, the descendants of Ibrahim and Ismail, caretakers of the Ka'bah and people of Makkah. And of his nephew he said there was no young man in all of Makkah to compare with him in character, honor, or nobility. The mahr was modest and respectful, twelve and a fraction in pieces of silver, a sum the Sheikh ballparked at a few hundred dollars, not a fortune and not a token but the dignified amount that suited him. Khadijah's uncle accepted, saying this was a young man who could not be refused.

What Khadijah was to him

How old was Khadijah when they married? The famous figure is forty. But the Sheikh lays out the stronger case that she was

younger, around twenty-eight, and it is worth following because it shows how the seerah is actually built. The age of forty comes from al-Waqidi, a narrator who ranks lower than those who give a different number. Against him stand Hisham al-Kalbi, who gives twenty-eight, and, more weightily, Ibn Ishaq, the foundational authority of the seerah, reported through al-Hakim, who also gives twenty-eight; al-Bayhaqi and the great Ibn Kathir indicate she died in her fifties, not at sixty-five. And then the plain human evidence the Sheikh finds clearest of all: she bore him at least six children. Six children from a woman in her late twenties is entirely natural, one every year and a half or two over a dozen years; the same from a woman married at forty strains belief. And the lesson we always draw remains untouched, he adds: he ﷺ married a woman older than himself, twice widowed, with a child of her own, and remained faithful to her alone for twenty-five years, not beginning to marry his other wives until he was past fifty, after she was gone. This was not a man ruled by desire.

And what a wife she was. She was the first to believe in him ﷺ when the revelation came, comforting him in the first terror of it and thinking to take him to Waraqa ibn Nawfal to understand what was happening. Hers was the only household Jibril would enter; of all his wives in the years to come, none would have that. Once, while the Prophet ﷺ sat with her, Jibril came and told him that Allah was sending Khadijah His own greeting of peace, with the glad tidings of a house in Jannah of hollowed pearl, in which there would be no noise and no toil. Look closely at her answer, the Sheikh says. She did not say "and upon Allah be peace," for Allah is As-Salam, peace itself and its source, and one does not return the greeting to its source. She said instead that Allah is peace, and sent peace back upon Jibril and upon her husband

ﷺ. It is a small thing and an enormous one, the quick theology of a brilliant heart.

Years after she died, when Aisha radiyallahu anha was the beloved of his later years, Aisha said she was never more jealous of any woman than Khadijah, whom she had never met and who had died before Aisha was born, because she could see how deeply he ﷺ still loved her. He would slaughter a sheep and send portions of the meat, a luxury then, to Khadijah's old friends, ten years and more after she was gone. Once, irritated, Aisha asked how long he would keep mentioning this old toothless woman when Allah had given him someone younger and better. And the Sheikh has us feel the edge in his reply. No, by Allah, he said, Allah did not give me better than her. She believed in me when the people rejected me. She gave me of her wealth when they deprived me. And Allah blessed me with children only through her, none of my other wives. After that, Aisha said, she never mentioned Khadijah again. And there is the tenderest scene of all: when Khadijah's older sister, the same one who had first praised him, later came to Madinah and her footstep sounded outside the door, his face changed at once, because it was so like Khadijah's walk, and all the memory came back. When Khadijah passed, a companion said, they did not see him smile for months.

Al-Kawthar, and the enemy cut off

All of his children were from Khadijah, and there were at least six. His firstborn was al-Qasim, from whom he took his kunya, Abu al-Qasim; the boy lived long enough to reach the age when children ride a camel, six or seven or eight, before he died, and that is nearly all we know of him. Then came four daughters, Zaynab, Ruqayyah, Umm Kulthum, and Fatima the youngest. And then a second son, Abdullah, also called at-Tayyib and at-Tahir,

the pure one, born after the revelation had begun, who died in infancy. (Some count at-Tayyib and at-Tahir as two more sons, the Sheikh notes, but the stronger view is that these were simply nicknames for Abdullah.)

When Abdullah died, and the Prophet ﷺ was left with no living son, his enemy Abu Jahl ran through the streets of Makkah cheering. Batara Muhammad, he cried, Muhammad is cut off, severed, with no male heir to carry his name. To the Arabs a man without sons was as good as erased. Imagine it, the Sheikh says, and sit in how cruel it is: your infant son has just died, and your worst enemy is running through your city rejoicing aloud at the death. And into that grief Allah sent down a whole surah, three short ayat that became more beloved to him ﷺ than this world and everything in it:

*Indeed, We have granted you, [O Muḥammad], al-Kawthar.
So pray to your Lord and offer sacrifice [to Him alone].
Indeed, your enemy is the one cut off.*

QUR'AN 108:1-3

We have given you al-Kawthar, Allah told him, the abundance, the river of Jannah, the fountain of all good; do not grieve over the one thing taken when you have been given everything. So turn to your Lord and worship. And it is your mocking enemy, not you, who is truly the one cut off. The Sheikh reads the verdict of it straight off the centuries. Fourteen hundred years later, the only people on earth who even speak the names of Abu Jahl and Abu Lahab are the ones who despise them. The man they jeered at as abtar, severed, became the most remembered human being who ever lived, his name raised in every adhan and on every tongue, and they are the ones the world cut off. The promise of the surah came true to the letter.

Tested by loss, and shaped by it

The Sheikh steps back here over the whole span of his life ﷺ, because once you see the pattern you cannot unsee it. The most painful thing that can befall a child is to lose his parents, and the most painful thing that can befall a parent is to lose a child, and he tasted both, over and over. Orphaned of his father before birth, then his mother, then his grandfather, then in time the uncle who shielded him. And then he buried his own children, al-Qasim and Abdullah and three of his four daughters with his own hands, only Fatima outliving him, and even she by mere months. Much later he would have one more son, Ibrahim, born not of a wife but of Maria, and Ibrahim too died, at around eighteen months, which any parent will tell you is the sweetest age of all.

Why would the greatest of all creation be handed the heaviest of all griefs? Because, the Sheikh teaches, it is precisely through trial that the heart is forged, and the Prophet ﷺ needed that forging more than anyone. When life is comfortable the heart hardens; it is loss that throws a person's hands up to the sky, that teaches true servitude and the patience a prophet would need beyond all other men. And there is a mercy folded into the pain: a man who has known poverty feels for the poor, and a man who has been an orphan tends to the orphan. It is no accident, the Sheikh says, that he ﷺ left us so many words about caring for the orphan, even telling us that if we have nothing to give, we should at least pass a gentle hand over the orphan's head, for he knew from the inside exactly what that child carries.

And he named a wisdom in having no surviving son that goes deeper still. Of Ibrahim he said that had the boy lived he would have been a prophet, for it is not possible that a son of the Messenger ﷺ be anything less; but there is no prophet after me, and so the line of sons could not continue, because the

prophethood had to be sealed. Look, the Sheikh adds, at what the ummah did even with grandsons through Fatima, the lengths some went to in exalting them. Had there been a direct son, people might well have made him into a god walking the earth. So even this loss, the cutting off the world mocked, was in truth a mercy and a protection.

The Ka'bah, rebuilt by a shipwreck

Now the years jump forward. He ﷺ was about thirty-five, and in those ten years of marriage the seerah has preserved for us not a single story; we trust, the Sheikh says, that Allah withheld no benefit we needed. Then comes the rebuilding of the Ka'bah, and it begins with two disasters. First a fire: a woman was cooking close by, for in those days the houses of Makkah stood only a few feet from the House, not the vast open courts of today, and an ember caught the cloth that had draped the Ka'bah since jahiliyyah, weakening the structure though it did not bring it down. Then, later in the year, a great flood. Makkah sits in a basin among mountains and floods every so often, something the Sheikh says he has waded through himself, water to his chest in the streets on one of his own pilgrimages. This flood tore off the roof and broke the walls, and between the fire and the water the Quraysh resolved that the House had to be torn down and rebuilt entire.

But they had no fine timber and no marble; they lived in a desert that produced neither. And here, the Sheikh marvels, is the planning of Allah laid bare. The emperor of Rome had sent the choicest materials and a skilled craftsman by ship to rebuild a church in Yemen that the Persians had destroyed in their long war, the Christians against the fire-worshippers. Allah sent a wind off the coast of Jeddah that wrecked the ship, yet did not sink it;

it limped into the harbor, because Allah had a plan for its cargo. And there, suddenly for sale, was the finest marble and grandest wood the people of Makkah had ever laid eyes on, with a master builder trained in the palaces of Caesar beside it, needing now only the fare home. The Quraysh pooled their wealth, bought all of it, and carried back to Makkah materials and a craftsman more skilled than any in Arabia, the whole of it financed, without his knowing, by the most powerful man on earth. Wa makaru wa makarAllah: they planned, and Allah planned.

Even tearing down the old House terrified them, for this was the House of Allah and no hand had ever been raised against it. By one report of Ibn Ishaq, a great snake that had long lived in the well of Zamzam used to come out and hiss at any who approached, until Allah sent a bird to carry it off behind the mountains, and they took that as the sign to begin. Still no one dared lift the first axe. Finally al-Walid ibn al-Mughira stepped forward, the very nobleman of whom Allah would later reveal:

Leave Me with the one I created alone

QUR'AN 74:11

He took up the axe and, in words even Ibn Ishaq preserves, spoke to Allah in his pagan way as he swung: O Allah, do not be alarmed, do not be angry, we mean only to help and rebuild Your House. He brought down part of one wall, and not a single other man helped him that day. Then someone proposed using him as the test: if he lives through the night, we will join him; if something befalls him, then one fewer of us to worry over. He woke unharmed, and so the whole of the Quraysh fell to the work, dividing the walls among the tribes, the noblest branches taking the most prestigious sides.

The stone no one could lift alone

When the building rose back to the corner of the Black Stone, the work stopped dead. The stone belonged to no single wall but to the corner shared between them, and the Arabs had always known it for a sacred stone, so every tribe demanded the honor of setting it back. Banu Abd Manaf, the Prophet's ﷺ own noble branch, and Banu Makhzum, the rival house from which Abu Jahl came, dug in hardest, and the others refused to be passed over. For five days construction halted while the argument grew hot enough to draw blood. Banu Makhzum secretly bound themselves to other tribes in a pact to fight to the death over the stone, and to seal it, having no perfume to dip their hands in, they dipped them in the blood of a slaughtered animal and swore. What jahiliyyah, the Sheikh says: grown men ready to widow their wives and orphan their children over the honor of placing a stone, all for what later Arabs might say of them. A whole city stood on the edge of war over the corner of a wall.

Then the oldest man among them, Abu Umayya ibn al-Mughira, proposed the way out: there will be no bloodshed; let the matter go to whoever next walks in through the gate. To them this was the luck of the draw, for each tribe was privately certain that whoever entered would naturally favor his own people, since in their minds it was simply impossible that a man would choose anyone but his own. And the one who walked in through the gate was him ﷺ.

Here the Sheikh has us stop and feel the wonder of it, because it is the whole point of the evening. Every tribe rejoiced. Not only his own clan, but all of them, even Banu Makhzum, even the bitterest rivals, were glad it was him, because every single tribe was certain this was a man who loved them and would surely choose their side. That is the measure of how he was loved

before he was ever a prophet: a man each rival house was sure was secretly theirs. He likens it to what Amr ibn al-As would say decades later, that the Prophet ﷺ was so warm to him that Amr was convinced he was the most beloved of all the companions, though Amr came to Islam late and was not in the first ranks; that was simply how he made every person feel.

But he chose no tribe. He called for a cloak, laid the Black Stone in its center, and told the chieftains of every clan to take hold of its edges and lift together. They raised it as one, every rival house with a hand on the cloth, and when it reached the level of the wall he ﷺ set the stone into place with his own hands. Banu Makhzum had sworn to fight to set the stone, and in lifting their corner of the cloak they kept their oath without spilling a drop; every tribe was honored, not one above another, and the war died in the cradle. The same thread the Sheikh drew through the marriage runs straight through this: decades before a word was revealed, this was already the man everyone trusted, already the one who could turn rival houses into a single pair of hands.

And the changes they made that day held. They had not enough of the costly material to build on the old foundation of Ibrahim, which was a rectangle, so they raised a smaller square and marked off the remainder, the Hijr, with a low wall, which is why a portion of the original House sits outside the Ka'bah to this day. They doubled its height, raised the door off the ground so the keepers among Banu Abd Manaf could control who entered, and fitted a water spout to carry off the rain that had ruined the roof. Years later, after the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet ﷺ would tell Aisha that were her people not so new to Islam, he would have torn the House down and rebuilt it on the foundation of Ibrahim with its door at ground level, but he feared unsettling new

hearts, and so he left it. So it has stood, square, with the Hijr beside it and its door raised high, from that day to this.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read these two stories as charming preludes, a happy marriage and a clever solution to a quarrel, and move on toward the cave. That would be to miss what they ask. Set side by side, the wedding and the stone make one quiet argument about the man the revelation was about to find, and through him, about us.

Honesty opened every door, and it still does. A poor shepherd, too shy even to collect his own wage from a woman, was lifted into the most trusted hands in Makkah, not by wealth, which he did not have, not by experience, which he lacked entirely, but by how he carried himself when no one important was watching. Khadijah overlooked his every disadvantage for the single thing that outweighed them all. We spend so much effort polishing our credentials and so little tending the plain trustworthiness that, in the end, decides what people will place in our hands. Ask what you are when there is no audience, because that is what you actually are. And notice, beside it, how he asked his uncle's permission for a decision entirely his to make. He needed no one's leave, and he sought counsel anyway, because consulting those who love you is not weakness but the manner of the noble.

Then there is Khadijah, and the way he never once let her go. She believed in him first, gave to him first, comforted him first, and bore him every child but one, and decades after she was in the ground he was still sending meat to her friends and turning pale at the sound of her sister's footstep. No, by Allah, Allah did not give me better than her. There is a whole ethic of loyalty in that one sentence. The people who stand by us when we have

nothing have a claim that does not expire when their usefulness does, or even when their lives do. Keep faith with those who kept faith with you. And let the loss in his life reshape how you read your own, for he was given the heaviest griefs precisely so that his heart would be softened, not hardened, by them. When comfort makes us forget Allah and hardship drives us back to Him, we have misread which one is the gift. The trial that breaks you open to your Lord, and to everyone else who is hurting, may be the most merciful thing that ever happens to you.

And last, the cloak. A city had drawn its swords and dipped its hands in blood over the honor of a single stone, and a thirty-five-year-old man with no rank to enforce and no army at his back ended the war not by choosing a winner but by giving every side a corner to hold and a stone to raise together. He could have taken the honor for his own clan, and every tribe braced for exactly that. Instead he made rivals into one pair of hands. Most quarrels in our own lives are smaller versions of that corner: a thing two proud parties both want to claim alone, that could be lifted, if someone humble enough walked in, by everyone at once. Be the one who reaches for the cloak.

So carry these two scenes down into an ordinary day. Be honest where no one can see it, and let that be enough. Keep faith with the people who kept faith with you, long after the world says you may stop. When loss comes, and it will, let it bend you toward Allah and toward the broken rather than toward bitterness. And when you find a thing too heavy for any one of you to lift alone, lay it on the cloak and lift it together. May Allah send His peace and blessings upon Muhammad ﷺ, whom the people trusted before a single verse was sent down, be pleased with Khadijah who stood with him when the world stood against him, make us

honest in private and loyal in fidelity, and let us lift, together, the things too heavy to carry alone.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 9: marriage to Khadijah and the rebuilding of the Ka'bah (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (108:1-3, 74:11), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

Zayd ibn Harithah and the first revelation

Loved before he was followed

The quiet years are almost over. The Kaaba has been rebuilt on the foundations of Ibrahim, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi reads the sign out loud before moving on: the house of tawhid renewed on its old stones, five years before the very religion of Ibrahim is renewed, by the man whose arbitration had just saved Makkah from a war over a single black stone. The foundations stay the same; the building is made new. But before the cave, there is one last story from the years before revelation, and it may be the strongest character witness the whole seerah owns. It is not a miracle. It is a kidnapped boy, offered his freedom in front of his own weeping father, who refuses to go home.

So this is really two days folded into one. A man named Zayd chooses Muhammad ﷺ over his own blood, years before a single verse exists. And then, in his ﷺ fortieth year, in a crevice of rock above the city, the verses begin to fall.

The boy stolen at the fair of Ukaz

Zayd ibn Harithah was a child of Yemen, from the Qahtani branch of the Arabs, the other great limb of the family tree, the one the Prophet ﷺ and Quraysh do not come from. His mother, Su'da, once took him, seven or eight years old, to visit her own tribe. While they were there a small skirmish flared between her people

and her husband's, the kind of love-hate quarrel those Yemeni tribes carried for years. And some of her own relatives, wanting to wound the father's tribe, did something cruel even by the standards of Jahiliyyah: because in their world a son belongs to the father and takes the father's lineage, they stole the boy from his mother to spite the man, carried him off, and sold him into slavery, just as the brothers once sold Yusuf. He was put up at Ukaz, the greatest fair of Arabia, the vast marketplace that opened after the Hajj season, and sold for a hefty price.

The buyer was Hakim ibn Hizam, the nephew of Khadijah, sent to the market with her money to find a servant for her household. So a stolen Yemeni boy landed, of all the doorsteps in all of Arabia, at the door of Khadijah radiyallahu anha, and when she married Muhammad ﷺ she gifted the young servant to her husband as part of what she brought to the marriage. All of this, the Sheikh is careful to stress, is years before there is any Islam at all. It is Allah quietly carrying a child across the peninsula, into the one household on earth where his small story would be folded into the largest story ever told.

His father, Harithah, meanwhile, was going out of his mind. He sent the boy's description through the tribes the way Yaqub once wept for Yusuf, crying out across the lands: a boy of our people, these are his features, if anyone sees him come and tell me. And one Hajj season it worked. Some pilgrims from his part of Yemen noticed a young Arab slave in Makkah whose features did not belong there, since most slaves came from Ethiopia or other lands and this one was an Arab of the south. They asked him a few careful questions and carried the news home: your son is alive, he is in the holy city, a servant to one of the grandsons of Abdul Muttalib, a man named Muhammad. The father gathered

every coin he could touch, took his brother, and the moment they had enough, they rode.

More than a father and an uncle combined

They found him ﷺ in the Haram, near the Kaaba, and opened with every honor Jahili courtesy owned. O Muhammad, son of Abdul Muttalib, you are of the noblest lineage, a people of generosity and trust, and Allah has blessed you. They praised and praised him, though he was not yet a prophet, because they wanted something. Then the plea: our son was stolen and sold unjustly; name your ransom, and be gentle with us, for we can only afford so much. Notice what they could not do, and the Sheikh wants you to notice it. Jahiliyyah has no court and no judge to hear that a free child was kidnapped. There is no magistrate, no law, no order. Power belongs to the strongest, and a man's only appeal is to mercy.

His answer ﷺ was better than the law they did not have. He set the ransom aside entirely. The matter is his, he said. Let Zayd choose. If he chooses you, take him back, and I want no money for him at all. But if he chooses me, then I am not a man who turns his back on someone who has turned to me; if he has chosen to stay with me, I cannot send him away. The father and uncle nearly sang with relief. O Muhammad, they said, you have done marvelous, you have done far more than we dared hope.

Zayd was called. He was a grown man now, about twenty five, and more than ten of those years had been spent at this master's side, and before that with Khadijah. Do you know these two men? Yes, he said: this is my father, and this is my uncle, I know them. The choice was laid before him plainly, go with them or stay, and Zayd gave the answer that still stops this ummah fourteen

centuries later: I could never choose anyone over you. You are to me more than a father and an uncle combined.

His father erupted. Harithah cried out: Zayd, have you gone mad? You would choose to stay a slave in a strange land, with no rights and no honor, with a man who is not even of your blood, over your own father, your own tribe, your own freedom? And Zayd answered without flinching: yes, I have made my choice, for I have seen from this man what I could never choose anyone over. Here Sheikh Yasir stops the story and makes you sit inside it. A son's bond to his father is fitrah itself; there are men who first meet their fathers at forty and feel the love seize them on sight. Zayd was not a baby when he was taken. He remembered his father, and his memories were good ones. Wallahi, the Sheikh says, and he says it knowing it sounds hard, no man on earth chooses a master over a remembered father, unless the one he is choosing carries what only prophets carry. No verse had come down. There was no religion yet to win him, no paradise promised, no command from heaven. There was only forty years of character, and this single scene, the Sheikh says, tells you more about the manners of Muhammad ﷺ than whole chapters of praise ever could.

Zayd ibn Muhammad

What he ﷺ did next, no one had asked of him. He took Zayd by the hand, walked to the Hijr, the open arc of the Kaaba where the announcements of Makkah were made, and called out to the city: O people of Makkah, bear witness that Zayd is from this day a free man, and that I have adopted him as my son; he will inherit from me, and I from him. He staged it deliberately, in front of the father and the uncle, so that they would not ride home feeling they had lost everything, but rather at ease: their boy was no

longer a slave, he was now adopted into the noblest house of Quraysh, given its name and its standing if not its blood. A father who had come for a slave rode home having gained a son of Banu Hashim.

From that day the city knew him by one name only. Abdullah ibn Umar, who was himself only a young man in early Makkah and had never known Zayd as a slave boy, said: we never knew him as anything but Zayd ibn Muhammad. That was simply who he was to us. It stayed that way for decades, until Allah revealed an ayah of Surah al-Ahzab, some thirty years later in Madinah, returning adopted sons to the names of their true fathers as the more just way before Allah.

Call them by [the names of] their fathers; it is more just in the sight of Allāh. But if you do not know their fathers - then they are [still] your brothers in religion and those entrusted to you. And there is no blame upon you for that in which you have erred but [only for] what your hearts intended. And ever is Allāh Forgiving and Merciful.

QUR'AN 33:5

So he became Zayd ibn Harithah again: a name corrected, and nothing else lost. The love did not move an inch. And when revelation finally came, the man who had chosen him ﷺ before prophethood did not hesitate after it. Ibn Shihab az-Zuhri, one of the great scholars of the first generations, held that Zayd was the very first person to accept Islam. Others name Khadijah, Abu Bakr, or Ali, and the scholars reconcile the reports gently: the first woman to believe was Khadijah, the first free man Abu Bakr, the first child Ali, and the first freed slave Zayd. Order the list however you like; Zayd is always on it.

The only name in the Qur'an

Pull on the thread of Zayd's life and the love simply never runs out. Back in the days of Jahiliyyah he had married Umm Ayman, the woman who had served the Prophet's ﷺ mother Amina and, when Amina died, had stayed on to mother the orphaned boy herself, a foster mother who never suckled him but raised him. She was many years older than Zayd, and both of them were slaves when they married, as slaves could. Their son was born inside the Prophet's ﷺ own home, for there were no hospitals then, and that child was Usama ibn Zayd, who grew up the darling of the household. The companions called him the beloved of the Prophet, and when they wanted something they would send Usama to ask, because they knew he ﷺ could never say no to him; he loved Usama, and he loved his father. Later the Prophet ﷺ matched Zayd to his own cousin, the noblewoman Zaynab bint Jahsh, precisely to dissolve the last social residue of slavery, so that no stigma of having once been a slave could cling to him. That marriage strained and ended, and around its ending hangs a verse and a story the series will face squarely when it reaches the fifth year after the hijrah, refusing every distortion that has been laid upon it. What matters today is what came after: Zayd married again among the women of Quraysh, more than one, and no one any longer thought of him as anything but one of them.

Count what Allah kept giving him. On every expedition Zayd ever rode, and there were at least ten, he was placed in command; not once in his life was anyone set above him. At Mu'tah, against the Romans, the Prophet ﷺ did something unprecedented, because he knew how hard the battle would be: he named three commanders in sequence, Zayd first, then his cousin Ja'far ibn Abi Talib, then Abdullah ibn Rawaha, and all three fell that day,

one of the most painful days of the Prophet's ﷺ entire life. The leaderless army rallied behind Khalid ibn al-Walid, a Muslim of barely a month, an infantryman who took the banner and brought it home, and the Prophet ﷺ gave him the name the world would remember: Sayfullah, the sword of Allah. And the love outlived Zayd. The Prophet ﷺ set young Usama, barely sixteen, over the next army marching north, and passed from this world as that army was setting out. When some pressed Abu Bakr radiyallahu anhu to replace the boy with an older man, he refused to undo what the Prophet ﷺ had tied: how could he remove someone the Messenger of Allah ﷺ himself had appointed? And once, when Abdullah ibn Umar complained to his father that Usama drew a higher stipend than he did, Umar the khalifa answered his own son with fearless honesty: he was more beloved to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ than you, and his father was more beloved to him than your father.

And above all of it sits one honor no other companion shares. Allah names Zayd in the Qur'an itself, in Surah al-Ahzab, the only one of the thousands of companions whose name is written there. Even Abu Bakr is present only by inference, the second of two in the cave:

If you do not aid him - Allāh has already aided him when those who disbelieved had driven him out as one of two, when they were in the cave and he said to his companion, "Do not grieve; indeed Allāh is with us." And Allāh sent down His tranquility upon him and supported him with soldiers you did not see and made the word of those who disbelieved the lowest, while the word of Allāh - that is the highest. And Allāh is Exalted in Might and Wise.

QUR'AN 9:40

Abu Bakr is unmistakably there, and yet unnamed. Zayd is written by name. Some of the companions said that had Zayd lived to see the Prophet ﷺ pass away, he would have been the khalifa, so beloved was he. Allah chose otherwise, and gave him something rarer still: a kidnapped slave boy whose name this ummah will recite from its Book until the Day of Judgment.

The quiet making of a prophet

With Zayd's story told, the file on the quiet years closes. These are nearly all the incidents we have from before revelation, and every sign is now in place: a rebuilt Kaaba, a city united around one trusted man, old seekers among the Hunafa whispering that a prophet is due, the house saved in the year of Abraha. What happens next is narrated in the hadith that opens the very first chapter of Sahih al-Bukhari, the chapter on the beginning of revelation, and the narrator is Aisha radiyallahu anha, who was not yet born when any of it took place. Savor that detail, the Sheikh says, because it tells you something tender about the marriage: she can recount it as vividly as an eyewitness because her husband ﷺ told her, in long unhurried conversations, everything those days had held. A loving husband talks to his wife about his early life, and so the woman who never saw the cave can describe what happened in it.

In his fortieth year he ﷺ began to withdraw to the cave of Hira, high on the mountain that Makkah now calls Jabal al-Nour, the mountain of light, a name it did not carry in Jahiliyyah and earned only from what came down upon it. Dr. Yasir Qadhi has climbed up and sat inside it himself, and his description undoes the picture in your head. It is barely a cave at all, more a crevice, a working in the rock you have to crawl into, with an opening front and back and room for exactly one person. And when you sit in it,

you are forced to face one direction only: the Kaaba. You can see the House clearly from the opening, far below, the summit breeze moving past, as if Allah had carved the little room for this one appointment. Ibn Ishaq records that Abdul Muttalib had found the spot a generation earlier and would sit there to contemplate in private. The grandfather discovered the room; the grandson kept the appointment.

He ﷺ would carry up food and water and spend nights in remembrance, then come down to Khadijah to resupply and see to the family before climbing again. And as he climbed, strange mercies began. He later told the companions, in a hadith Muslim preserves: before the revelation came to me, I would hear the rocks and stones greet me with salam as I passed, and I would turn and find no one. There is a stone in Makkah, he said, that used to give me salam, and I know it to this day.

Then came the dreams. Every single night he ﷺ would see what the next day would bring, and it would arrive exactly as he had seen it, true the way the dawn is true; you know the sun will rise tomorrow, and he came to know that what he saw would be. He brought it to Khadijah, and she answered like the woman Allah had chosen for this house: this is a good sign from Allah. Bukhari preserves the timing, and here the Sheikh does an arithmetic that gives you chills. The dreams ran six full months. The Qur'an began descending in Ramadan, on the night it names itself, the Night of Decree.

Indeed, We sent it down during the Night of Decree.

QUR'AN 97:1

Count six months back from Ramadan and you land in Rabi al-Awwal. The prophethood would last twenty three years, and six

months is exactly one part in forty six of it. Then open Tirmidhi: the Prophet ﷺ said that nothing remains of prophethood except the true dream, and the true dream is one of the forty six parts of prophethood. The fraction is exact, down to the number. The scholars read those months two ways, and both are true at once: as notice, that something immense was coming and he must be made ready for it, and as training, because a man is not handed the weight of revelation cold. Allah was walking him ﷺ into it gently, dream by dream, stone by stone.

Read, in the name of your Lord

Some narrations outside the two Sahihs add a prelude. On a Saturday in Ramadan he ﷺ saw a light and heard a sound and found nothing there. On Sunday, the same. Most men would never have climbed back; that he stayed, with a light and a voice and no visible source, was its own quiet courage. Then came Monday, and we know it was Monday from his own mouth, in Sahih Muslim, when he was asked why he fasted that day: on a Monday I was born, and on a Monday revelation was sent down to me. It was one of the last ten nights of Ramadan, the night this ummah still rises every year to seek.

In the cave the angel came to him and said: iqra. Read. And he ﷺ answered the honest truth of an unlettered man: ma ana bi qari, I am not one who can read. Then Jibril seized him and pressed him until, in his ﷺ own telling, all his strength was squeezed out of him, until he thought he could not bear it, and then released him. Read. I am not one who can read. A second crushing embrace, to the very edge of what a body can hold. A third command, and this time the words came, the first five of heaven's last Book.

Recite in the name of your Lord who created - Created man from a clinging substance. Recite, and your Lord is the most Generous - Who taught by the pen - Taught man that which he knew not.

QUR'AN 96:1-5

Why the crushing embrace? There is no authoritative answer, the Sheikh says, only readings the scholars venture with care. Perhaps so he would know beyond any doubt that this was no dream, for pain is how the dreamer tests whether he is awake. Perhaps his body was being braced for the sheer weight of what it would carry, for Allah would soon tell him plainly:

Indeed, We will cast upon you a heavy word.

QUR'AN 73:5

Receiving the wahy would remain a draining, physical ordeal for the rest of his ﷺ life. And some scholars saw in the three squeezes a sign of three coming trials that would each feel like the end: the boycott, when the believers nearly starved for years; the plot and the hijrah, from which only Allah's protection brought him through; and Uhud, when he stood bleeding and all but surrounded. Each one crushing, each one opened by Allah at the last moment. And Allah knows best.

Now hear the word itself. Iqra in Arabic carries two meanings, to read from a page and to recite from the heart; even today a child told iqra al-Quran will ask, from the page or from memory? The unlettered Prophet ﷺ heard the first meaning and answered honestly, for he had never been taught letters. But Jibril meant the second: not from a parchment, directly from your Lord. And notice, the Sheikh says, what the first revealed words are not. They are not bismillah. They are iqra bismi rabbik, recite in the

name of your Lord, by Him, with His help, your recitation coming not from yourself but straight from Allah. Who created. Created what? The sentence is left open on purpose, the Sheikh points out, because there is nothing to complete: He created everything. Yet out of all of creation, one creature is singled out and named: man, made from alaq, a clinging thing, the embryo suspended in the womb of its mother. The One who shaped that speck is now choosing to speak to it.

And the command lands twice, iqra and then iqra again, and the scholars heard two libraries in the doubling. Recite what comes from your Lord, and read what human beings write with the pen: the deen and the dunya, both of them His gift. This was said to a nation with perhaps five literate men, whose very script had no dots yet, closer to hieroglyphics than to the Arabic we know. Go read what others have written, Allah tells them, broaden your knowledge, but remember that even this I gave you, for it was He who taught by the pen. Within a century they were the foremost power on earth; within a few more, students were riding from England, Italy, and France to study medicine and science in Muslim lands and carry it home. The Prophet ﷺ said the first ever to write with the pen was the prophet Idris: even the pen had to be taught, even speech was taught to Adam, all knowledge tracing back to its Giver. And from this very verb, qara'a, the Book takes its name: the Qur'an, the recitation, preserved whole in human memory and in ink at once, like no other book humanity has ever held.

Cover me, cover me

Then the cave was empty and a man was coming down the mountain in the dark, his heart pounding. He ﷺ burst in upon Khadijah with two words: zammiluni, zammiluni. Cover me, cover

me. She wrapped him until the trembling eased. Stand in this moment, the Sheikh urges, because it answers a slander before anyone has the chance to utter it. This is not how impostors begin. The false claimants of prophethood compose magnificent, premeditated accounts of their own commissioning, polished to persuade. This man ﷺ came home terrified, cold, shaking, and utterly human, into the arms of his wife. He did not run to Abu Talib or to his cousins; he ran to Khadijah, because the comfort a man needs at such an hour is the comfort of the woman Allah chose for him.

When he could speak, he told her everything, and added the phrase Bukhari preserves: I fear for myself. The scholars have stacked up more than a dozen readings of that fear, and the two that hold are simple and human: that the embrace had nearly killed him, or that he feared for his mind, seeing and hearing what other people could not. Khadijah did not pause to philosophize. She swore an oath: no, by Allah, never. Allah will never disgrace you. You keep the ties of kinship, you carry the burdens of others, you give to those who have nothing, you honor the guest, you stand with every good cause. Out of a heart that had never heard a single verse came perfect theology, the Sheikh marvels: the One who made you this good will never hand you over to harm. Do good, and Allah does not waste it. This is precisely why Allah chose her for him.

One lesser known report says she first took him to Addas, the only true Christian then living in Makkah, a slave of Roman background whom the seerah will meet again years later in Ta'if, holding out a plate of grapes; he gasped, the angel of God, in this heathen city of idols? Then, in the version Bukhari carries, she took her husband ﷺ to her own cousin Waraqa ibn Nawfal, the eldest of the four Makkans who had walked away from the idols

years before in search of the religion of Ibrahim, a man who had studied the scriptures of the Jews and the Christians and copied them out in Hebrew, his own quiet category of believer, now old, blind, and near the end of his life.

Waraqa heard the whole story and lit up: this is the Namus, he said, the keeper of the secret, the very one Allah sent down to Musa. Not Isa, the Sheikh notes, but Musa, most likely because this prophet, like Musa, would have to lead a nation and not only teach it. Then the old man's joy bent into longing: how I wish I were a young man, that I might be alive to help you on the day your people drive you out. The Prophet ﷺ had absorbed everything else without flinching, but this stopped him: will my people really expel me? Yes, said Waraqah. No man has ever brought what you bring without his people turning on him, ridiculing him, persecuting him, driving him out; and if I live to see your day, I will help you with all my strength. Aisha says Waraqah died only a short while later, a believer who had barely heard a verse. And years afterward the Prophet ﷺ said he had seen Waraqah, in white robes, amid gardens, in Jannah.

Stand up and warn

After Iqra, there was silence. The wahy paused, and he ﷺ did not see Jibril for a stretch the reports measure differently, some saying months, the claim of a full year judged unreliable, and life steadied for a while. Then one day, walking, he heard a sound, looked up, and saw the same angel of Hira seated on a throne that filled the whole space between heaven and earth. The terror returned, and he ﷺ hurried home with the same plea on his lips: cover me. And the revelation that answered him retired those words forever.

With iqra, the scholars say, he became a nabi, a prophet who receives. With qum fa andhir, arise and warn, he became a rasul, a messenger sent out. Read the opening of al-Muddaththir as the marching order it is.

O you who covers himself [with a garment], Arise and warn, And your Lord glorify, And your clothing purify, And uncleanness avoid, And do not confer favor to acquire more.

QUR'AN 74:1-6

O you wrapped in your cloak: the days of comfort and seclusion are over; rise, and warn. And as you warn, keep magnifying your Lord, for takbir is where the strength will come from. Keep your garments pure, and your record purer, untouched by the very filth you warn the people against. Abandon every idol. And give without keeping a ledger, never doing a favor in order to harvest a larger one in return: work for Allah alone, and look to Allah alone for the reward.

And mark one correction this episode insists upon, the one the Sheikh is most emphatic about. Once revelation came, he ﷺ never returned to Hira, not once. So whoever turns the cave into a method, who tells people to seal themselves into caves and rooms with their dates and water and meditate for months, has the order of events exactly backwards. The seclusion belonged to the time before the message; the message belongs to the streets. The believer who still craves that sweetness of solitude has a door left open to him, and it is not a cave: it is tahajjud, the night prayer, when the world sleeps and the servant rises to stand before his Lord. The seerah's quiet years end here. From this day forward the story is a man ﷺ on his feet, warning with

mercy, and the series turns next to how the wahy itself would come.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read day ten as two charming episodes, a touching story and a famous one, and leave them in the past. That would be to miss the question they put to us together. Set them side by side, because the order is the lesson. On one side of this day stand forty years of character so complete that a kidnapped boy, handed his freedom in front of his own weeping father, chose the man ﷺ instead. On the other side stand the first five verses of the Book that would remake the earth. And Allah arranged them in that sequence on purpose. He let Makkah watch the man for forty years before He asked anyone to trust the message; and when the message came, the two souls who knew him best, his wife and the cousin who knew the scriptures, believed without a moment's hesitation. People believed the man ﷺ before they ever heard the message, and the message never had a better witness than the life that preceded it.

So Zayd asks you the first thing. Your character preaches long before your words are given permission to. Zayd chose him with no religion on offer, nothing to gain, only conduct to go by; and the people nearest you are reading your conduct now, in the years before you ever say a word about your faith. Be the kind of person whose mere manners would make someone choose you over their own blood.

Khadijah asks you the second thing, and it is the steadiest sentence in the whole episode. When fear shook the greatest man who ever lived, she did not hand him a theory; she handed him a mirror. Look at the good Allah has already put in your hands, she said, the ties you keep, the burdens you carry, the

poor you feed, the guest you honor, and know that the One who made you good will not abandon you to harm. Do good, and Allah will not disgrace you. The next time dread comes for you in the dark, steady yourself the way she steadied him: not by arguing yourself out of the fear, but by remembering Whose you are, and trusting Him with what you cannot see.

And the cave asks you the last thing. Six months of dreams as true as dawn, stones offering salam, one part in forty six measured to the number: Allah trains before He tasks. Nothing heavy lands in a faithful life unannounced. Learn to read the slow, quiet preparations Allah is running in your own days, and answer them the way he ﷺ did, by climbing back up the mountain even after a light and a voice gave you every reason to stay home. Then read, and read in His name, knowing that revelation and the pen are both His gift, and that the first command of your religion was to seek knowledge and to seek it bismi rabbik. And when living your faith begins to cost you, remember the very first thing old Waraqa told the new Prophet ﷺ: no one has ever brought the truth without being made to pay for it. If your faith is costing you comfort, you are not off the path. You are on the oldest one there is. May Allah teach us by His pen what we do not know, give us hearts that choose His Messenger ﷺ the way Zayd chose him, tongues that steady the fearful the way Khadijah steadied him, and on the Day the nations are gathered, gather us in his company, never parted from his nearness.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 10: Zayd ibn Harithah and the beginning of revelation (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (33:5, 9:40, 97:1, 96:1-5, 73:5, 74:1-6),

*verified via quran.ai. The narration is the Sheikh's; the phrasing is
The Daily Wird's.*

The Second Revelation

Arise, and warn

When we left him ﷺ, the cave of Hira was behind him, Iqra had been pressed into his chest by an angel he had no word for, and Khadijah had wrapped his shaking body and carried him to the one man in Makkah who might understand. Waraqah ibn Nawfal looked at what he described and named it without hesitation: this is the very angel that came down upon Musa, this is prophethood, and you, by the One in whose hand my soul rests, are the prophet of this nation. And then, almost as soon as he had said it, Waraqah died.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi pauses over a question that troubles people in this narration: how could a prophet go to a man who was not a prophet, to be told what was happening to him? The answer reframes the whole scene. At that moment he ﷺ did not yet know he was a prophet. The concept itself had been lost to the Arabs; they had forgotten how Ibrahim was inspired and what Ismail had carried, the way whole religions in our own time have no notion of a human being who speaks with God. Waraqah came from a tradition that still remembered. So a man overwhelmed by something with no name went to the one person who could name it, and that, the Sheikh notes, is the dignity of knowledge: even a prophet, before he knows, learns from the one who knows. Waraqah believed by declaring him a prophet, and died before he could pray a single prayer, and years later the Prophet ﷺ would say he had seen him in Jannah, clothed in

beautiful garments. The first man to die upon this faith died at its very dawn, before there was even a creed to recite.

And then the most important thing in the world simply stopped. No angel. No voice. Just silence over Makkah.

When the sky went quiet

The scholars have a name for what came next. They call it the *fatrah*, the gap, the long pause in which no revelation came at all. Jabir ibn Abdullah carries the thread of the story forward, and Ibn Abbas fills in the ache of it: for days the Prophet ﷺ would wander the valleys and the slopes of Makkah, climbing back toward Hira, wanting only to see Jibril again, and finding nothing. Some scholars stretched the silence to two or three years, but Dr. Yasir Qadhi sets that aside as far too long. The firmer reports give a shorter span: Ibn Abbas is narrated to have said forty days, another companion simply many days. Working from the fact that the first revelation fell in Ramadan, the likeliest picture is something close to a month and ten days, the silence settling over the month of Shawwal.

Picture that month from the inside, because the seerah asks us to. He ﷺ had seen something that filled the horizon, a creature of Allah enthroned between heaven and earth, and then it was gone, and would not come back. He climbed the mountain expecting the angel and came down with empty hands, day after day after day. In the narration he says, plainly, that he feared for himself. He wondered whether something had gone wrong with his own mind, whether he was hallucinating, whether the thing he had witnessed was a sickness rather than a summons. Sit with how human that is. This is not the diary of a man assembling a legend. This is a person alone with something too large to carry, waiting on an answer that would not come, half afraid of his own

sanity. The silence was its own kind of test, and he passed it the way the sincere pass every test, by enduring it without inventing a comfort he had not been given.

The name in the empty air

Then, one day, coming down off the mountain, he heard his name.

He looked ahead along the path: no one. He looked behind him: no one. He looked again, and again, and the voice kept coming, clear and close, with nobody there to speak it. Dr. Yasir Qadhi draws out a small, true thing about this moment. When someone calls your name, the very last place you think to look is straight up into the air; it is simply not in our nature to search the sky for a voice. So he kept turning over the ground around him, scanning the empty path, until at last he raised his eyes.

And there was the angel he had seen at Hira, the same one, enthroned between the heaven and the earth, filling the whole of the sky. He had wanted exactly this. For a month and more he had begged the mountain for it. But wanting the angel and surviving the sight of him turned out to be two different things entirely. He began to tremble. In one report his knees gave way beneath him and he fell, struck down by the sheer weight of what he was looking at. He got up and he ran, the way a body runs from something it understands before the mind has caught up, all the way down and home to Khadijah, calling out as he came: cover me, cover me. That kind of fear, the Sheikh notes, is the kind that turns a person physically cold, that sets the limbs shaking on their own. May Allah protect us from ever knowing it. He had looked on the angel of revelation in its true form, and there was nothing in him that wanted to perform serenity for the sake of the story. He wanted a blanket and his wife's arms.

Arise, and warn

Here is a detail worth slowing down for, because almost everyone reads past it. The revelation did not come on the mountain, in the open, at the sight of the angel. It came in the house. He ﷺ had already run home, already been wrapped in his cloak, already buried himself in the warmth of the shawl in Khadijah's house, and it was there, under the garment, that Jibril spoke. Which means the angel had followed him home. There was no outrunning this. Wherever he fled, the mission had already arrived ahead of him and was waiting under the blanket.

And the first word was tender before it was heavy.

O you who covers himself [with a garment], Arise and warn

QUR'AN 74:1-2

O you who is wrapped up, O you with the shawl drawn close around you. The address itself is gentle, almost intimate, naming him by the very comfort he had run to. And then the command lands inside the tenderness, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi unfolds the quiet poetry of it. You are comfortable. You are sheltered. You have your safety blanket around you, the way even a child clings to one, and the time for that has ended. Qum, stand up. Get out from under the cloak. Leave the warmth, leave the ease, leave the sheltered life you have been living, and go out to the people. Arise and warn. The man in the cloak is being told, in the first breath of his mission, that he no longer has the luxury of staying still. There is a world outside the blanket that has to be warned, and he is the one who has to do it.

Five commands for a lifetime

After the command to warn come five more verses, and they read less like the opening of a passage than like a whole code of life handed down in a single breath. The Sheikh walks through each one, and behind the literal meaning of each he finds a second meaning aimed at the soul.

*And your Lord glorify And your clothing purify And
uncleanliness avoid*

QUR'AN 74:3-5

Glorify your Lord: as you go out to warn the people, do not for one moment stop worshipping the One who sent you; keep magnifying Him, praising Him, returning to Him, even while your hands are full of the work. Purify your clothing: keep your garments literally clean and presentable, the way a man who calls others to God ought to look, and behind the literal sense, keep the soul itself clean, let no sin pollute the one who summons others to purity. Abandon all uncleanliness: leave every idol, walk away from the false gods entirely, while you preach the true God to a city drowning in them.

Then comes a harder verse, and the Sheikh lingers on it precisely because the translation is so easy to misread.

And do not confer favor to acquire more

QUR'AN 74:6

The word at its heart, the Sheikh explains, is about reminding someone of a kindness you did for them. And why does a person do that? Almost always to collect on it. You lend a man money, and a few months later you happen to mention the loan, and then you ask to borrow his car for a week. The favor was a hook all along. Allah tells His Messenger ﷺ not to do this, not to do good

in order to be repaid, not to give in order to be given back. Do everything for the sake of Allah alone, and nothing for the sake of what people might return to you. Dr. Yasir Qadhi ties this directly to sincerity: when a person acts purely for Allah, no one on earth can impugn his intention, but the moment a caller is suspected of wanting something back, money, status, a debt repaid, his whole message is tarnished. This, the Sheikh notes, is exactly why the Prophet ﷺ was never permitted to take charity, never allowed to receive a wage or a payment for the religion. So that no one, then or ever, could say he was in it for what he could get.

And then the last verse to descend in this passage, and the gentlest words in it carry the hardest warning.

But for your Lord be patient.

QUR'AN 74:7

For the sake of your Lord, be patient. There is a calamity folded inside that command, the Sheikh says. The instruction to be patient is itself a quiet announcement that there will be something to be patient about. The road ahead will be hard. There will be suffering and loss. And the only thing that will hold a human being steady through it is doing the whole of it for Allah, not for applause, not for visible results, not for any reward that people can hand back. For Allah alone. Notice what this means. On the very first day of the mission, in the very first instructions he received, he was already told that it would cost him. The work and the price of the work were handed to him together, in the same seven verses.

The proof inside the trembling

Why the silence at all? Why a month of nothing before the angel returned? The Sheikh gives the scholars' answer: the gap was a mercy. It was a pause to let him recover from the overwhelming first encounter, to gather his strength, to settle his nerves, and even to make him eager, to let the longing for the angel build until he was actively climbing the mountain to find him. And note what happened in spite of all that preparation. Even after a month of mounting hope, even ready and waiting and wanting it, he was still struck to the ground with terror when Jibril appeared. Imagine, the Sheikh says, if it had come without any warning at all. The mercy of the gap was real, and it still left him trembling.

But Dr. Yasir Qadhi pulls something deeper out of that trembling, and it is one of the load-bearing arguments of the whole seerah. A fraud does not write himself this way. Look at the men who have claimed prophethood across history, even in recent centuries, even one who appeared in America and another in India barely a hundred years ago. The stories they tell are always grandiose, always majestic, always with themselves cast as the serene and knowing hero at the center. The seerah gives you the exact opposite. A man who did not plan this, did not seek it, did not want it; a man who when it came was so shaken that he fled down a mountain and begged his wife to bury him in a blanket. That reaction, the Sheikh argues, could only come from someone telling the truth. A liar inventing a religion does not invent his own panic. The fear is not an embarrassment to be explained away. The fear is the evidence.

How revelation came

Seeing the angel directly, as he did at Hira and again now coming down the mountain, was only one of the ways revelation reached him, and the Sheikh takes what he calls a necessary tangent to

walk through the others, drawing on the careful list of Ibn al-Qayyim. There are, he explains, several distinct forms in which wahy descended, not one.

The lowest was the true dream, and it is the only form still open to anyone at all today. He ﷺ saw true dreams before prophethood and after it, and true dreams are not the preserve of prophets; any righteous believer may be given one. Above that was a kind of inspiration cast into the heart, the sort Allah gave to the mother of Musa when He inspired her, and to the mother of Isa, an inspiration that emphatically did not make either woman a prophetess. The Sheikh dwells here, because people reach for these verses to argue for female prophets, and he answers them on their own ground: seeing an angel does not make one a prophet, or the companions who saw Jibril in human form would all be prophets; and being addressed by inspiration does not make one a prophet either, or the mother of Musa would be one. The mufasssirun who held the majority view restricted prophethood to men sent from among the people of the towns, and the Sheikh lays out both the majority and the minority positions plainly rather than flattening them.

Then there was Jibril appearing as a man, often in the form of a strikingly handsome companion, speaking plainly so that the Prophet ﷺ understood him with ease and the companions sometimes saw the visitor without knowing who he was. And then the hardest form of all: Jibril remaining in his angelic reality while something descended on the Prophet ﷺ that no one around him could see, a state so heavy that on a cold day it would break him into a sweat, heavy enough that when revelation came upon him while he sat on a camel, the animal sank to the ground beneath the weight, heavy enough that once, when his head rested on a companion's thigh as it came, the companion

felt the pressure build until he feared his own bone would crack. The Prophet ﷺ described two of these to a questioner: sometimes the angel comes as a man and I understand him, and sometimes it comes like the ringing of a bell, and that is the hardest upon me. Above all of these stood the rarest form, when Allah spoke to him directly, without any angel between them at all, a height reached only once, years later, on the Night Journey above the seven heavens, where even Jibril said: go on, I cannot pass beyond this.

Allah Himself named the weight of it.

Indeed, We will cast upon you a heavy word.

QUR'AN 73:5

A heavy word. Aisha and the companions watched it press down on him, again and again, every time the words came. That is what it cost him, each time, to receive the verses you and I now recite at our ease, lying down, walking, half attentive. The Sheikh wants us to feel the distance between the comfort of our recitation and the weight of its arrival.

The first to believe

With the command to warn, the mission begins, and at first it is small and quiet, kept among the people closest to him. Dr. Yasir Qadhi is careful about the order, because the order itself honors people. The first to believe was Khadijah, who had accepted before there was even a shahadah to pronounce, on nothing but her knowledge of her husband, certain that Allah would never humiliate a man so kind and so true. The second was Waraqah, who believed by naming him a prophet and died before a single prayer was prescribed. After them, the Sheikh resolves an old

dispute the gentle way: the first child to believe was Ali, raised in the Prophet's own household; the first freed servant was Zayd, whom the Qur'an itself would one day name; and the first grown free man was Abu Bakr. All three are first, each in his own category, and respect is given to each.

And Abu Bakr did not pause. The Sheikh relays the Prophet's own words, spoken years later in Madinah when a quarrel flared among the companions and he gently rebuked Umar: Allah sent me to you with the truth, and you all said you lie, and Abu Bakr alone said you have spoken the truth. In another report he said there was no one he ever invited to Islam who did not hesitate, who did not pause to weigh it, except Abu Bakr, who accepted the instant he was asked. This is why, by the consensus of Ahl al-Sunnah, Abu Bakr is the greatest of the companions; and it is why Allah refers to him in the Qur'an as the second of two when the two of them were in the cave. The moment he believed, he became a door, and through that door came a procession of names that would each grow into a world of their own: Uthman ibn Affan, Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, az-Zubayr ibn al-Awwam, Abd ar-Rahman ibn Awf. The Sheikh makes a point of it: every one of these early converts became a legend, a mountain of a man, an entire nation in himself, precisely because they came when coming was costly.

Two of their stories he lingers on, and they belong here whole. Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas was perhaps sixteen, from a great family, and when he believed his mother tried first to torture the faith out of him and then turned to a slower weapon: she swore she would neither eat nor drink until he returned to the idols, and she would die in front of him, slowly, and her death would be on his hands. She wasted away on what looked like a deathbed. And Sa'd, riled and grieving and immovable, said to her: by Allah, my mother, if

you had a hundred souls and they left you one by one before my eyes, I would not leave this religion. And she ate. Allah sent down the verse about exactly this:

But if they endeavor to make you associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them but accompany them in [this] world with appropriate kindness and follow the way of those who turn back to Me [in repentance]. Then to Me will be your return, and I will inform you about what you used to do.

QUR'AN 31:15

Obey them in nothing that severs you from your Lord, and be beautiful to them in everything else. The other story is of Ibn Mas'ud, a young servant tending another man's flock, who was approached by two strangers asking for milk. He answered with the honesty that would mark his whole life: the animals are not mine to give from. So one of them took hold of a barren goat, one long past milk, ran his hand over it, and it filled before the boy's eyes, and they drank. Ibn Mas'ud asked who they were, and learned he was looking at Muhammad ﷺ and Abu Bakr, and believed where he stood. He would one day say he had taken more than seventy surahs directly from the mouth of the Prophet ﷺ, and the Prophet ﷺ would say that whoever wished to recite the Qur'an as fresh as the day it came down should recite it as Ibn Mas'ud did.

Come back when I have prevailed

One last story belongs to this early, hidden dawn, and it carries the whole spirit of the moment in it. A man from Yemen, Amr ibn Abasa, had already worked out in his own heart that idol worship was a lie and that his people were lost in misguidance. Word

reached him in Yemen that someone in Makkah was saying the very thing he had been thinking, so he made the entire journey north to find him. And here the Sheikh marks a detail he promises to return to: when Amr found him, he found him hidden, keeping low, the dawah still private and close. Amr was gentle with him, drew near, kept talking, and finally asked: what are you? A prophet, he ﷺ said. And what is a prophet? One whom Allah has sent. Sent with what? To keep the ties of kinship, to break the idols, and to worship Allah alone, with nothing beside Him. No prayer yet. No fasting, no hajj, no law. Just this, at the very beginning: mend your kinship, smash your idols, worship your one Lord.

Who follows you, Amr asked. One free man and one slave, he answered, meaning Abu Bakr and Bilal, though there were already a few more, naming the smallness of it honestly. And Amr, convinced, wanted to join him then and there. The Prophet ﷺ turned him away, gently. You cannot do this now, he told him. Do you not see my situation? I am hiding from my own people. You are not of Quraysh; if you stay and stand with me now, you will be killed for nothing. And then the line that ought to stop the reader cold: go back to your people, and when you hear that I have prevailed, come to me. At the very beginning of everything, with two followers and a secret and an angel he had met only twice, he already knew how it would end. Amr went home to Yemen and waited, certain, and when at last he heard the news that the Prophet ﷺ had migrated and his cause had risen, he traveled all the way to Madinah and presented himself and asked, do you recognize me? And he ﷺ said: yes. You are the one who came to me from Yemen.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read the second revelation as a single dramatic scene, the angel in the sky, the trembling, the famous opening verses, and to leave it there. That would be to miss what it actually hands us, which is a whole life folded into seven verses, and a question for every one of them.

He was told first to get up. The very first word after the silence was qum, arise. He was wrapped in the warmth of the cloak, sheltered, comfortable, and the command was to leave it, to stand and go out into the day. Our faith does the same thing if we let it: it does not want to stay wrapped in the warm and private place where it costs us nothing. At some point it has to rise from the blanket and walk out into a world that needs warning. Ask yourself honestly how much of your religion is lived under the cloak, in comfort, where no one is troubled by it, and what it would mean to stand up.

He was told to keep his garments clean, and underneath, his soul. The one who calls others to good is asked first to scrub his own heart, quietly, in the place no one sees. And he was told not to confer a favor in order to be repaid, to do good for Allah and never for the credit, because the instant good is done to be seen or returned, it is tarnished, and sincerity is the only thing in this life that no one can ever take from you. There is a freedom in that worth seizing: spend on Allah alone, want nothing back from anyone, and you place your treasure somewhere no person can reach it.

And he was told, in the gentlest words of all, to be patient for the sake of his Lord, which was Allah's quiet way of telling him on day one that it would hurt. The difficulty was promised at the very outset, before a single blow had fallen. And the only patience that survives a thing like that is the patience anchored in

Allah, not the patience that waits for results or applause and collapses when they do not come. Hold all of this beside the trembling, the knees giving way, the run home, the cry to be covered, and take from it the mercy that the Sheikh found there: being shaken to your core by something enormous is not proof that you are unfit for it. Sometimes it is the very proof that you are sincere. The man who came down that mountain afraid was the truest man who ever lived.

So take one thing from this day down into your ordinary one. Rise from the comfortable place when your Lord calls you to rise, and go with your whole heart. Keep the inside clean where only He is watching. Do your good for Him and refuse the wage of anyone's praise. And when the difficulty comes, as it was promised it would, be patient for His sake and no one else's. O Allah, who told Your beloved ﷺ to arise and warn, and then said to him, my Lord, expand for me my breast and ease for me my task, expand our chests as You expanded his, make us of those who stand up rather than stay wrapped, accept from us what we do for You alone, and grant us the patience that is for Your sake and no one else's, until we are returned to You. Ameen.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 11: the second revelation (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (74:1-7, 73:5, 31:15, 20:25-26), verified via quran.ai. The narration is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

The Declaration of Prophethood

Three years a whisper, then a cry from Safa

For three years the most important message ever entrusted to a human being moved through Makkah without once being shouted. A friend told a friend. A household prayed behind its own locked door. Word of it traveled the length of Arabia, all the way to Yemen, and still the man who carried it ﷺ had never stood before his city and said it out loud. A seeker came from Yemen because rumor of a new prophet had reached even there, and the Prophet ﷺ sent him home with a strange instruction: not now; go back, and when you hear that I have prevailed, return to me. The message existed. The whole peninsula could feel it stirring. But it had not yet been proclaimed, and that was deliberate.

This is one of the hinge days of the seerah, the day the whisper became a cry, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi walks it scene by scene. A miracle served at a family dinner. The first public sermon of Islam, delivered from a hilltop that served Makkah as its town hall. The first open curse flung at the Prophet ﷺ, answered from above seven heavens by name. And one old man, with no army and no allies, standing alone between his nephew ﷺ and the whole of Quraysh. Before any of that, though, there is a word to get right.

Private, never secret

The Sheikh is careful about a single word, and the care is worth borrowing. People often call these first years a secret dawah. That is the wrong word. Secret would mean nobody knew. What the Prophet ﷺ practiced was a private dawah, and the difference is everything. He did not stand before the Kaaba and announce his prophethood to the crowds, nor preach to the pilgrims streaming into the city, nor even to the relatives he suspected would only mock him. He went instead to the friends he trusted and the hearts he knew, one soul at a time, and left the public square untouched.

Because he touched nothing public, there was nothing public to oppose. Abu Lahab heard the rumors; Abu Jahl heard them. But what was there to answer? He was not interfering with the city's trade, not challenging anyone in the street, not denouncing the idols at the Kaaba. So for three full years, the proper opinion the Sheikh settles on, there was no ridicule, no torture, no persecution at all. And that quiet was not a failure of nerve; it was the point. Three years without persecution meant three years to learn the faith, to deepen iman, to let a brotherhood knit itself together before the fire came. It was exactly this season of unhurried teaching that braced those first believers for everything about to fall on them.

There is a teaching in that for every age. When the climate is one of real danger, the Sheikh says, dawah is permitted to stay private. He points to the lands where, within living memory, a man could be killed for simply naming himself a Muslim. Our religion does not demand that a believer there stand in the square and volunteer for martyrdom; you may keep a low profile and live your faith quietly. What you may never do is lie about it: when a sincere seeker comes wanting the truth, you cannot hide the truth from him. Private, never secret. The religion is realistic.

And look at who answered in those quiet years. A handful came from the elite: Abu Bakr, Uthman, Zubayr, Abdurrahman ibn Auf, Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, and Zayd, counted among the noble through the Prophet's ﷺ own household. But the bulk were the weak and the low: Ammar ibn Yasir and his parents Yasir and Sumayya, Bilal, Khabbab ibn al-Aratt. Years later the Roman emperor Heraclius would quiz Abu Sufyan about precisely this, whether the strong followed this prophet or the weak. The weak, Abu Sufyan admitted. And the emperor read it correctly: that is the very signature of true faith, for the powerful have privileges to protect and a status quo to defend, while the poor can afford to see the truth plainly. Every one of those early names became a pillar; of more than a hundred thousand companions, history preserved barely five thousand names and full life stories for only a few dozen, and an outsized share of that handful are the believers of these three silent years. Somewhere in this same period, it seems, Jibril came down and taught the Prophet ﷺ wudu and salah: two rakat at a time, voluntary then, a gift before it was ever a command. No single authentic report fixes the date, the Sheikh notes, but the pieces point this way, and the five daily prayers would wait for the night journey still to come.

The five stages of the dawah

Before the story moves forward, the Sheikh stops and hands the listener a map you can lay over the whole of the seerah and the whole history of the ummah after it. The dawah of the Prophet ﷺ passed through five distinct stages, and each was the right wisdom for its hour.

The first was the private dawah just described, three years long, a small and exposed community simply living its faith without confrontation. The second was public dawah carried by the

tongue alone: roughly ten years of open preaching in Makkah with no permission to raise a hand in return, even as the persecution sharpened into torture, exile to Abyssinia, the journey to Ta'if, the boycott, and repeated attempts on his ﷺ life. The command for that decade was patience: turn away from the ignorant and keep speaking, and do not strike back even when one of your own is killed, for you have not the power and it is not yet the time.

Then Madinah changed the equation, in steps. The third stage permitted fighting, but against one enemy only, the Quraysh and whoever allied with them, for the first six years after the hijrah. The fourth, after the treaty of Hudaibiyyah, held real power but deliberately sheathed it: open dawah to all, arms drawn only in defense. It looked to many like surrender and proved one of the greatest victories Islam ever won, the victory Umar himself could not understand until he saw its fruit. And the fifth, in the Prophet's ﷺ final years, was open dawah carried with armies to any power that physically barred its path, the stage upon which he ﷺ passed away and which his companions inherited, until the conquests reached Persia and Rome and beyond.

The Sheikh draws the map for a reason that is the exact opposite of what the fearmongers assume. Conquest was never the goal of the religion; it was a tool the ummah took up only when it needed to, and for most of its history it settled on the fourth stage, open preaching without aggression. For Muslims living as minorities today, the Sheikh is emphatic: the second stage is the model. Speak the truth plainly, harm no one, reject anyone who preaches violence in the religion's name, and never say one thing in the masjid and another in public. Every community, guided by its scholars, reads its own hour. All five stages are his ﷺ sunnah,

and the heart of each is the same: preach the message, by the best means available, and leave the outcome to Allah.

The command comes down

Three years in, the order from heaven changed. The first of the two verses that turned the whisper into a cry was from Surah al-Hijr, and its opening word, *fasda*, means to come out with it, to break forth and proclaim openly, hiding nothing and paying no mind to what the ignorant will do in return.

Then declare what you are commanded and turn away from the polytheists.

QUR'AN 15:94

Then a second verse made the starting point unmistakable, naming the very first audience he was to warn.

And warn, [O Muḥammad], your closest kindred.

QUR'AN 26:214

The word for kindred here, *ashira*, is wider than uncles and aunts; it reaches to kith and kin, the whole web of related clans that was Quraysh itself, the people of Makkah being in truth a single extended tribe. The Prophet ﷺ understood: the time of the private dawah was over, and the message had to be carried into the open. But it would go out the way wisdom goes out, in rings. First his own clan, the Banu Hashim. Then the whole of Makkah. Then, in time, every nation on earth. The order itself is the lesson the Sheikh underlines, because Allah commanded the warning of the nearest kin before He revealed the verses addressed to all mankind: the first people any of us answers for are our own.

One dish, forty guests

So the Prophet ﷺ asked Ali ibn Abi Talib, then a young boy in his household, to prepare a meal. The food was almost nothing, a single leg of lamb and one cup to drink from, but the guest list was not: more than forty grown men of the Banu Hashim and the sons of Abd al-Manaf. The Prophet ﷺ blessed the food and ate first, and then, the narrator remembered, every one of those forty men ate his fill from the one small dish and drank his fill from the single cup, as if each had had the whole of it to himself. One of the first miracles of the prophethood, served quietly at a family dinner.

Abu Lahab sensed what the evening was for. Before his nephew ﷺ could say a word, this senior uncle rose, made an excuse, and left, and with one of the elders gone the gathering broke up. The Prophet ﷺ read the tactic for what it was, and answered it with patience: he told Ali to cook the same meal again. Days later the same faces returned, and this time he ﷺ rose before anyone could slip away. He opened with praise of Allah arranged as no Arab had heard it, the khutbah of need that Muslims still begin their gatherings with to this day, and then said it plainly. O sons of Abdul Muttalib, I know of no man who has ever come to his people with anything better than what I bring you. I bring you the good of this world and the next: leave your idols, turn to Allah alone, and He will give you both.

Abu Lahab muttered his contempt to the room, not daring to address his nephew directly, that this was an unworthy business and that a young man had no place overturning the ways of the forefathers. The rest neither accepted nor refused; it remained, after all, a private family matter. But one of the source books preserves a single voice that rose in answer. Ali, the youngest person in the room, radiyallahu anhu, stood and said: I will help

you, O Messenger of Allah. A boy, against the silence of all his elders. Anyone who knows the rest of Ali's life is not the least bit surprised.

The cry from Safa

Then came the morning Makkah never forgot, a scene preserved in Sahih al-Bukhari. Safa, the hill nearest the Kaaba, stood far taller than fourteen centuries of climbing feet have since worn it down, and it carried one fixed civic meaning: nobody climbed Safa unless he had an announcement that could not wait. So when the Prophet ﷺ climbed it and began calling the clans by name, O Banu Abd al-Dar, O Banu Abd Manaf, the small town, perhaps a thousand souls, dropped everything and assembled. A cry from the top of Safa was old Makkah's town hall bell, and everyone came.

He ﷺ began not with a claim but with a question. What do you know of me, he asked. Have you ever once heard me tell a lie? A voice answered for the crowd: nothing but good; you are al-Amin, the trustworthy. He pressed further. If I told you that an army was massed behind this hill, ready this moment to fall upon you, would you take my word for it, unseen, and act? We would, they said. We have never known you to lie. He had built his ground carefully, on the honesty they had just sworn to before the whole city, and now he laid the message on it: then know that I am a warner sent to you before a severe punishment. Save yourselves from the Fire, for I cannot avail you against Allah at all.

And then he made it personal in the most piercing way. He called the clans from the furthest related inward, ring by ring, until he reached his own blood, and named his uncles and aunts one by one. O Hamza ibn Abdul Muttalib. O Safiyya bint Abdul Muttalib. Save yourselves from the Fire; I cannot help you before Allah.

And last, the dearest soul of all to him, his own daughter: O Fatima. For her alone he added a sentence he gave no one else: ask me whatever you wish of my wealth and it is yours, but I cannot save you from Allah. If nearness to him ﷺ could have rescued a single person, it would have rescued her. The message at Safa was for every soul, standing utterly alone: save yourself.

The first public ridicule of Islam came, fittingly, from inside the family. Abu Lahab scooped up a fistful of dust and flung it toward his nephew, the old Arab gesture of utter contempt, and snarled: tabban laka, may you perish! Is this why you gathered us here? In the privacy of the dinner he had only been cold; here, before the whole city, he performed a bravado he felt he had to show. And Allah answered him from above seven heavens, by name and measure for measure: he had said tabban laka, and Allah revealed a whole surah against him, opening with his very words turned back on him.

*May the hands of Abū Lahab be ruined, and ruined is he.
His wealth will not avail him or that which he gained. He will
[enter to] burn in a Fire of [blazing] flame And his wife [as
well] - the carrier of firewood. Around her neck is a rope of
[twisted] fiber.*

QUR'AN 111:1-5

A surah that this ummah recites against him until the Day of Judgment. From that morning the dawah lived in the open: at the Kaaba, in the markets of Mina, on the roads where the pilgrims came. And from that same morning, so did the opposition.

Stop him, or hand him over

Makkah had no king; its clans were too proud to crown one. What it had instead was the Dar al-Nadwa, a council of chieftains, one

for each clan, and beneath all its customs ran one iron law: no one lays a hand on a man of a tribe unless that tribe's own chief surrenders him. The chief of the Banu Hashim was Abu Talib. So the leaders of Quraysh went to him, politely the first time: your nephew curses our idols and ridicules the ways of our forefathers; surely you cannot allow this to continue.

Notice the arithmetic in that complaint, the Sheikh says, for it is the same dishonest sum used against Islam in every age since. The Prophet ﷺ had cursed no idols at all. The Qur'an itself forbids insulting them, lest the insult rebound onto Allah:

And do not insult those they invoke other than Allāh, lest they insult Allāh in enmity without knowledge. Thus We have made pleasing to every community their deeds. Then to their Lord is their return, and He will inform them about what they used to do.

QUR'AN 6:108

All he had said was that tawhid is the truth and idolatry is foolishness. But hatred takes one and one and makes twenty: if idolatry is foolish, then our forefathers were fools, and if you call them fools, you curse them, and on it builds. It is precisely how the Islamophobe works in our own time, magnifying a small true thing into a vast invented threat. Abu Talib gave the delegation gentle words, promised them nothing, and sent them on their way.

They came back harder: stop him, or hand him over to us, and we will deal with him ourselves. No chief of the Arabs had ever been cornered by his own clan like this, and here the Sheikh draws out a quiet truth about power: every leader, however mighty he looks, is inwardly dependent on the people who carry him, and must keep appeasing them or cease to lead. Only Allah is King without

a court. So the old man called his nephew and pleaded: my people have come to me with such and such. Have mercy on yourself, and on me; do not load me with more than I can bear. Emotional blackmail at its finest, the Sheikh calls it, and from the one man whose plea could truly wound, the uncle who had been father and mother both to him ﷺ since he was eight.

The Prophet ﷺ, overwhelmed, gave the answer the ummah has carried like a banner ever since. O my uncle, by Allah, if they placed the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left so that I would abandon this matter, I would not abandon it, until Allah makes it prevail or I perish in its path. And in another report, the one the Sheikh judges probably the more authentic, he ﷺ pointed instead at the sky: do you see the sun, my uncle? I have no more power to stop what I carry than you have to light your stick from its flame. Read either version twice. The light he bore was brighter than the sun and moon together and could not be eclipsed, and an offer of the heavens themselves could not buy it back, because it had never been his to put down.

Abu Talib looked at his nephew, saw the certainty settled in his face, and gave way. Go, he said, and say whatever you will, for by Allah, I will never come to you about this again. And he kept that word through everything that followed, all the way into the years of the boycott, where he would choose to starve in the valley beside the believers rather than abandon the boy he had raised.

But Quraysh tried once more, and the offer they brought reveals the whole soul of jahiliyyah. They came this time as a full delegation, the entire city now and not merely the Banu Hashim, and brought a young man with them: Umarah, son of al-Walid ibn al-Mughirah, by their reckoning the finest youth in all of Makkah.

Take him, they said. Adopt him as your own son. And in exchange, hand us your nephew, and we will do with him as we please. Abu Talib's reply had his poet's edge in it: what an evil bargain you offer me! You give me your son to feed and raise, and I give you mine to kill?

Then Mut'im ibn Adi rose, the most senior man of Quraysh then alive, the elder remembered for averting bloodshed years before when the Kaaba was rebuilt, and even he sided with the city: O Abu Talib, your people have offered everything that could reasonably be asked; take one of their offers. The stage was now set for a thing the Arabs had never done, the deposing of a living, able chief, a coup against one's own blood. Abu Talib saw the script for what it was and told Mut'im so to his face: this is a plot you have hatched. Then he made his stand. Do as you please, he said. I will not budge. One old man with not a single sword behind him, against the assembled whole of Quraysh, armed with nothing but his dignity and the bedrock certainty that you do not hand your own blood to its killers. He poured that defiance into verse so powerful that Ibn Hajar and others would rank his poetry above the seven famed odes that hung in the Kaaba. And Quraysh, holding every visible advantage, backed down. Nothing carried the day but conviction, and the will of Allah.

Hold on to the name Mut'im ibn Adi, the Sheikh urges, because the Prophet ﷺ did. This day was Mut'im at his worst. But in the years to come he would do the Muslims good after good, and long after his death, standing over the seventy two captives taken at Badr, the Prophet ﷺ would say: had Mut'im ibn Adi been alive and spoken to me for these prisoners, I would have released them all for his sake. The lesson is drawn without flinching: those who do not share your faith are not one undifferentiated mass to be hated alike. Some are noble in their dealings, some stand up

for the wronged, and the Prophet ﷺ remembered such people and honored them. In our own day, the Sheikh says, there are non-Muslims who do more for justice than many Muslims do. They are the Mut'ims of our time. Find them, and honor them too.

The phenomenon of Abu Talib

Now the question that aches through the whole episode: why did the man the Prophet ﷺ loved most never come to believe? He had grown up with no father and no mother, and Abu Talib had been both to him, beside him until he was fifty three years old. And in his heart, the Sheikh says, Abu Talib knew. He had seen too many signs, and above all he knew his nephew, and he knew his nephew did not lie. On his deathbed the Prophet ﷺ bent over him and begged: my uncle, say one kalima, just one, and I will plead for you with it before Allah. The old man's lips began to part. And Abu Jahl, standing watch at the bedside, struck at the one thing Abu Talib treasured even above his nephew: will you abandon the religion of your father, the way of Abdul Muttalib? The mouth closed. He died the son of Abdul Muttalib, and nothing more, for it was his lineage, that one supreme claim to fame and power among the Arabs, that he could not let go.

The Prophet ﷺ, grief-stricken, vowed to keep asking Allah's forgiveness for him unless he was forbidden, for the prophets do not act except by permission. And he was forbidden. The verses came down drawing the line with both love and iron:

It is not for the Prophet and those who have believed to ask forgiveness for the polytheists, even if they were relatives, after it has become clear to them that they are companions of Hellfire.

QUR'AN 9:113

And another, telling him that even the best of all creation ﷺ does not own the gift of guidance:

Indeed, [O Muḥammad], you do not guide whom you like, but Allāh guides whom He wills. And He is most knowing of the [rightly] guided.

QUR'AN 28:56

He could warn, he could weep, he could love with his whole heart; he could not carry his own uncle across the line. And here Dr. Yasir Qadhi opens what he calls the phenomenon of Abu Talib. Suppose the dua had been answered the easy way, and Abu Talib had spoken the kalima and believed. That same hour he would have ceased to be chief of the Banu Hashim. The chieftainship, the standing, the immunity that shielded his nephew, all of it rested on his being the honored heir of Abdul Muttalib in the eyes of pagan Makkah, and the protection would have died the instant his paganism did. For the dawah to survive its Makkan years, the one man who could shield it had to remain, painfully, outside it. The proof followed swiftly: only when Abu Talib died, and Abu Lahab took the clan, did Makkah become unlivable and the road to Madinah finally open. Allah knew what His Messenger ﷺ needed better than His Messenger knew it himself, and both the wisdom and the tears are true at once. It is also, the Sheikh notes, the clearest proof that the Prophet ﷺ was a man and not a god: he could not guide even his own beloved uncle, because guidance belongs to Allah alone.

The ache never left him ﷺ. At the conquest of Makkah, Abu Bakr radiyallahu anhu led his own white-bearded father, Abu Quhafah, to pledge Islam at last, and then wept: by Allah, O Messenger of Allah, I would have given even this, my own father's hand in yours, to have seen the hand of Abu Talib there instead. And

when al-Abbas later asked whether he had been able to benefit the uncle who shielded him all those years, he ﷺ answered, in a hadith Sahih Muslim carries: yes. Because of my dua he has been moved to the shallowest edge of the Fire; were it not for me, he would be in its depths. No one in the Fire bears a lighter punishment than Abu Talib, and still the gate of the Garden is shut to him, because he died upon shirk, and shirk that goes unrepented is the one debt Allah has told us He will not forgive. It is mercy and justice in the same breath, and the sternest sentence in all the seerah.

The episode closes with four sons of Abdul Muttalib laid side by side, four full uncles of one Prophet ﷺ. Hamza, sayyid al-shuhada, above whom no martyr stands. Abbas, a Muslim of the righteous, beloved and honored, though beneath the rank of the very foremost. Abu Talib, never a Muslim, yet no one outside the faith in all our history holds a higher honor or a lighter sentence. And Abu Lahab, the one enemy of Islam cursed by name in the Qur'an, recited against until the end of time. The same father, the same blood, the same nearness to the best of creation ﷺ, and four utterly different ends, because lineage decides nothing and deeds decide everything. Which is exactly where the first public sermon of Islam had begun, on the hill of Safa, with the gentlest man who ever lived ﷺ telling even his own daughter: I cannot save you from Allah. Save yourself.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read this day as a stirring sequence of scenes safely sealed in the past: a miraculous dinner, a speech from a hilltop, a famous defiance. That would be to miss the questions it puts directly to us. Strip the day down and three remain.

The first is the question of the stage. For three years he ﷺ kept the dawah private, then went public the moment Allah commanded it, and even then he moved outward in rings, his own family before his city and his city before the world. We are quick to broadcast and slow to begin at home; we will lecture the distant before we have warned the people sleeping under our own roof. The day asks us to reverse it: say the truth you have been keeping quiet, gently, to the people nearest you first, because they are the ones you will be asked about first. And to keep your faith low when real danger surrounds you is not cowardice but a stage of the same sunnah; what is forbidden is to say one thing in private and another in public. Private, never secret, in your life as in his ﷺ.

The second is the question of Safa, and it is the hardest. Standing on that hill, the most beloved man to ever walk the earth told his own daughter that he could not save her from Allah, that she must save herself. If nearness to him could not rescue Fatima, then no name we carry, no lineage we inherit, no proximity to the righteous, will rescue us. On the morning when names and bloodlines fall away, the only currency left will be deeds. So the day asks, quietly and without flattery, what you are actually doing, beyond what you were born into and whom you happen to know.

And the third is the question of Abu Talib, the one that aches. Here was a man who gave the Prophet ﷺ everything, who would starve beside him in the boycott, who stared down a whole city for him, and who still died without the one word that would have saved him, and the Prophet ﷺ, for all his love and all his weeping, could not carry him across. Most of us have an Abu Talib: someone we love deeply who has not yet answered. The day teaches us our part and its limit at once. Speak to them. Love

them. Make dua for them with everything in you, as he ﷺ did. Then leave their hearts to the One who owns hearts, because you do not guide whom you love, and despair over a beloved soul was never your assignment.

So carry one thing from Safa into your ordinary days. Begin your dawah at home, gently, with the nearest first. Build something of your own that the Day of Judgment will recognize, because no name will stand in for it. And tonight, name before Allah the person you love who has not yet answered, the Abu Talib of your own dua list, and ask for them what only He can give. O Allah, send Your praise and Your peace upon the one who proclaimed what he was commanded ﷺ, make us of those who answer him, guide through us the hearts we love, for You alone are the Guide, and gather us with him at the hawd on the Day when names and lineages fall away and nothing remains but what our hands have sent ahead.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 12: the declaration of prophethood (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (15:94, 26:214, 111:1-5, 6:108, 9:113, 28:56), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

Opposition from the Quraysh

Every weapon they owned, tested against one voice

The dawah is public now, and Makkah has a problem it does not know how to solve. The chiefs leaned on Abu Talib last week and lost; his protection still holds, so the Prophet ﷺ cannot simply be silenced or sent away. The message is loose in the city, and people are listening. So the Quraysh open a new file, and what they reach for, one tactic after another, is the whole arsenal of a society that owns everything except an answer. They will drown the recitation in noise, beat the man who has no tribe to avenge him, mock, slander, dare him to bring miracles, and when all of that fails, reach for the checkbook. Dr. Yasir Qadhi walks their playbook tactic by tactic, and the strange thing running underneath the whole campaign is this: the harder they fight the recitation, the closer they creep toward it. This is the day the enemies of the Qur'an cannot stop confessing to it.

They tried to shout it down

Their first new weapon was the simplest thing in the world: noise. Ibn Abbas preserved the picture of it. Whenever the Prophet ﷺ raised his voice with the revelation in front of the Kaaba, the Quraysh would erupt, shouting and jeering and cursing the One who sent it down and the one ﷺ it was sent down upon, until the words could not be heard. Anyone who wanted to listen had to pretend he was not, straining to catch a phrase over the din. It was crude and deliberate, and the astonishing thing is that the

Qur'an recorded their strategy in their own mouths, so that the scheme to bury the recitation is now read out, forever, as part of the recitation it tried to bury.

And those who disbelieve say, "Do not listen to this Qur'an and speak noisily during [the recitation of] it that perhaps you will overcome."

QUR'AN 41:26

The Prophet's ﷺ own instinct was to answer noise with volume, to lift his voice above the mob. And Allah corrected him toward something better than a shouting match. Not a roar, not a whisper, a path laid carefully between the two.

Say, "Call upon Allah or call upon the Most Merciful. Whichever [name] you call, to Him belong the best names." And do not recite [too] loudly in your prayer or [too] quietly but seek between that an [intermediate] way.

QUR'AN 17:110

Do not let the hecklers set your volume, the verse tells him. Recite the way you were commanded, ignore the racket, and the message will carry. And it did. There is a quiet principle buried in that correction: falsehood is forever trying to set the terms, to drag truth down into its own register of shouting. Truth does not have to accept the invitation. You do the work you were given, at the pitch you were given, and let it travel.

The volunteer at Maqam Ibrahim

With the recitation effectively banned in the open air, the believers gathered and faced a plain fact: in all of Makkah, no one but the Prophet ﷺ himself had ever recited the Qur'an aloud in public. It was simply not done; no one had the courage. So the

question went around the room. Who will volunteer? And a hand went up that the others immediately tried to push back down. Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, radiyallahu anhu, said he would do it, and they said, in effect, not you, pick someone else. Their reasoning was the brutal arithmetic of that world. Ibn Mas'ud was not of the Quraysh; his roots ran back to the tribes of Yemen; he had no clan inside the city to come avenging if he were harmed. In Makkah your lineage was your passport, the Sheikh explains, the thing you pulled out when trouble started. Ibn Mas'ud had no such name, and no one. And he answered them: I am putting my trust in Allah, and Allah will protect me.

If anyone had earned the errand, it was him. This is the man the Prophet ﷺ would one day single out for the Qur'an itself: whoever wishes to recite it fresh and ripe, the way it first came down, let him recite it the way of Ibn Umm Abd, which was Ibn Mas'ud. He had taken more than seventy surahs directly from the Prophet's ﷺ own mouth to his, with no teacher in between; his voice was the voice of a qari, the reciter among the companions.

So the next morning he went down at the hour the town gathered in the shade around the Kaaba to talk and trade gossip, their version of the coffee shop, the Sheikh smiles. He stood at the Maqam of Ibrahim and lifted that beautiful voice with Surah ar-Rahman, one of the earliest and loveliest of all the revelations.

The Most Merciful. Taught the Qur'an. Created man. [And] taught him eloquence.

QUR'AN 55:1-4

A crowd drew in before it understood what it was hearing. These were the masters of Arabic speech, and yet nobody spoke like this: the long held vowels, the hum and roll of it, the strange

music that belongs to the Qur'an and to nothing else on a human tongue. The whole science of recitation, the Sheikh points out, was made for this book; the Arabs had never heard their own language carry like this. They sat and listened and asked one another what this was. Then somebody placed it: this is what Muhammad ﷺ claims has come down on him. The spell broke. They fell on Ibn Mas'ud, fists and sandals, one man with no tribe and no defender, and beat him until the recitation stopped. He had not managed two full pages.

He came back to the believers bloodied and swelling, and they met him with the obvious: this is exactly what we feared for you. And his answer is the kind of sentence you carry for life. By Allah, nothing has grown in me today except contempt for the enemies of Allah, and I am ready to do the very same thing again tomorrow. They told him: enough. You have made them hear what they could not bear to hear.

Three shadows at fajr

Banned in the daylight, the Qur'an became irresistible in the dark. The Prophet ﷺ prayed tahajjud every night and recited aloud, and Makkah was a small, quiet village, dead silent at three and four in the morning, when a voice reciting in a house carries to the alleys outside. And so it happened, in a report the Sheikh grades authentic, that three of the senior men of Quraysh slipped out of their beds on the same night to stand in the dark near his ﷺ house and listen: Abu Jahl, Abu Sufyan, and al-Akhnas. Three architects of the war on the message, each one alone, each certain he was the only man out there. When the recitation stopped near dawn they turned for home down the main alley and collided, and there was a flurry of excuses, and each knew exactly why the other two were out. They swore it would not

happen again. The second night, the same. The third night, the same, until, terrified of what it would do to their standing if the town found out, they made a solemn pact never to come back.

Sheikh Yasir stops the lecture here and asks you to feel the weight of it. These are men in their fifties, leaders of the city, leaving warm beds for the chill of the night to stand in darkness outside the house of the very man they are trying to destroy, three nights running, drawn by a recitation they have outlawed in public. That is what this Qur'an does to people who hate it. And then he turns the thought toward us. If recordings of our own great reciters move a believer the way they do, what must it have been to hear the Prophet ﷺ himself? He breaks off to make a dua, that Allah let him, and all of us, hear that tilawah with our own ears in Jannah, a dua worth making your own.

The morning after the third night, al-Akhnas went looking for verdicts. He came first to Abu Sufyan, who was too cautious to commit and made the other man speak first. Al-Akhnas finally said it plainly: by Allah, it seems to be the truth. Abu Sufyan then hedged exactly as the politician he was, the founder, in time, of a dynasty: some of it I understood, and some was beyond me. No verdict, no clean quotation to be used against him. He was the most sympathetic of the three, and the one who would, years later, accept Islam.

Then al-Akhnas knocked on Abu Jahl's door and got the most honest thing Abu Jahl may ever have said, a confession the Sheikh notes he repeated, in almost the same words, to another man on another day. We and the clan of Abd Manaf, said Abu Jahl, have raced each other for honor for generations. They fed the pilgrims, so we fed them; they gave water, so we gave water; they showed valor, so we showed valor, until we were like two

racehorses neck and neck at the line. And now they say there is a prophet among them, revelation coming to him out of the heavens. When will we ever catch that? By Allah, as long as I live I will never believe in him. Notice what is missing from that speech, the Sheikh says. Not one word that it might be false. The wall between Abu Jahl and faith was never made of evidence; it was lineage, rivalry, the old jahili pride, the very same wall that held Abu Talib back from the other side of the line. Snobbery damns as surely as hatred does.

A taunt, and the dawn that answered it

The next tactic was ridicule: turn the man ﷺ and his followers into a joke, and you never have to answer them at all. Fourteen centuries later, the Sheikh notes dryly, this method still has not retired. There came a stretch when revelation paused for weeks, and one of the women of Quraysh, perhaps the wife of Abu Jahl, no one is certain, taunted him in the open: I see your shaytan has finally abandoned you, meaning the angel that brought the words. He ﷺ was a human being, and it cut him; he was grieved by it. And heaven itself came down to answer a street taunt, not with an argument but with an oath, sworn over the morning and the night.

By the morning brightness. And [by] the night when it covers with darkness. Your Lord has not taken leave of you, [O Muhammad], nor has He detested [you]. And the Hereafter is better for you than the first [life]. And your Lord is going to give you, and you will be satisfied.

QUR'AN 93:1-5

A promise of being given until he is content, sworn to him in the very middle of being mocked: the Lord of the worlds pausing to

console one grieving heart against the cruelty of a taunt in the market.

Abu Jahl, meanwhile, ran the campaign of abuse like a system tuned to each man's weak point. A convert of high standing got public scorn, the loaded question thrown in his face: are you better than your father, better than your grandfather, the founder of your tribe? A merchant got his trade boycotted. A man with no protector got fists. But the smearing kept misfiring, and never more so than on the open roads. In the pilgrimage season Abu Jahl, and sometimes Abu Lahab, would post themselves outside the city to warn the incoming travelers: there is a madman in there, a magician; when you meet him, plug your ears, or he will bewitch you. Most obeyed. But one visitor heard the word madman and thought, I am a healer, I will go and cure him. He came to the Prophet ﷺ, who told him plainly, I am not mad, and then opened with the words of praise his ﷺ addresses always began with, all praise belongs to Allah, we praise Him and seek His help. The man stopped him before he reached a single line of the message. Say that again, he said. By Allah, I have never heard anything more beautiful. And he accepted Islam on the spot. The warning had become the advertisement.

The Shakespeare of Makkah

When mockery had run its course they reached for outright lies, and the Qur'an preserves the whole catalogue, because the Quraysh could never even agree on which lie to tell. He is mad. He is a soothsayer. He is a magician, no, he is the one bewitched; they argued among themselves which it was. He is a poet. And the Qur'an's replies sit right beside the slanders. To the charge of madness: I lived a whole lifetime among you before this, will you not use your reason? To the charge of poetry, his entire

biography: he had never written a line before the revelation came, and to the end of his life, the Sheikh notes, he never once completed so much as a full couplet of verse, half a line at the most. And here the Sheikh makes an observation he wants every one of us to keep. To this very day, every rejection of the Prophet ﷺ still has to reach for one of these same labels: deluded, or a deceiver, or some marvelous natural genius of language. The list has not added a single new item in fourteen hundred years.

Then comes the story the Sheikh asks every one of us to know and memorize, because it shows exactly how they were forced to deal with this book. Al-Walid ibn al-Mughirah was the chieftain of Banu Makhzum, as Abu Talib was chieftain of Banu Hashim, and the father of Khalid ibn al-Walid. He was also the unrivaled poet of the city, its Shakespeare, as the Sheikh calls him: when Quraysh sent a champion against the other tribes in verse, al-Walid was the one they sent to the final. One day he caught the Prophet ﷺ reciting by the Kaaba and, for the first time, with no shouting to cover it, listened all the way to the end. He walked away a changed man, and what he muttered ran through gossip-hungry Makkah by nightfall. By Allah, I have heard from Muhammad speech that is not the speech of men and not the speech of jinn. It has a sweetness to it; the height of it bears fruit and the depth of it gushes water. It rises over everything, and nothing rises over it.

Quraysh panicked: their own laureate, undone by a single hearing. Abu Jahl said, leave him to me, and went to al-Walid with a threat wrapped in concern: your people will not be satisfied with you until you say something against it. Hold that sentence next to last week's, the Sheikh urges. Quraysh said those identical words to Abu Talib, and the old chief stood his ground and let them do their worst; al-Walid hears the same pressure

and folds on the spot. That is the whole difference between a leader and a politician, says the Sheikh: a leader carries his people, while a politician is carried by them, servile because he fears the crowd and not Allah. As Ibn Taymiyyah put it, the people of politics are not leaders at all; they are followers of the whims of the masses.

What follows is the strangest script meeting in the history of Makkah: the greatest wordsmith alive begging to be told what to say. Call him a madman, says Abu Jahl. But he is not mad, al-Walid answers; we have seen madmen, and there is none of it in him. A soothsayer? None of their muttering. A magician? No spells, no knots. Then call him a poet. By Allah, says al-Walid, none of you knows poetry better than I do, and this is nothing like poetry. Every lie dies in the expert's own mouth. At last he asks for a few days, paces his house frowning, and lands on the only label with any plausibility left: magic, but the kind handed down, words passed from teller to teller that bewitch a man and split him from his father and his brother.

He never got to publish it. Before al-Walid could announce his verdict, Allah announced His, reciting back to all of Makkah the very scene from inside the man's house, the thinking, the frowning, the scowling, the turning away in pride, things not even his own family had witnessed. And it opens, the Sheikh reads almost in a whisper, with Allah turning to face the man alone.

Leave Me with the one I created alone. And to whom I granted extensive wealth. And children present [with him]. And spread [everything] before him, easing [his life]. Then he desires that I should add more.

QUR'AN 74:11-15

And then the private deliberation, read out in public before the man could open his mouth.

Indeed, he thought and deliberated. So may he be destroyed [for] how he deliberated. Then may he be destroyed [for] how he deliberated. Then he considered [again]; Then he frowned and scowled; Then he turned back and was arrogant. And said, "This is not but magic imitated [from others]. This is not but the word of a human being."

QUR'AN 74:18-25

Allah, one against one, with a man He had given wealth upon wealth and sons standing at his side, who repaid it by calling His speech secondhand sorcery. The verses are themselves a challenge, the Sheikh notes: do you think you can beat this, al-Walid, you who know poetry better than anyone alive? Al-Walid died on his paganism, true to the same pride that damned Abu Jahl. And both his elder sons, Khalid among them, would one day accept Islam.

Show us a miracle

The next tactic was the dare. If you really are a prophet, then prove it; bring us something to see. Surah al-Isra preserves their whole list of demands. We will not believe, they said, until you split a spring of water out of this ground; until you own a garden of palms and grapes with rivers bursting through it, grapes being the one luxury Makkah's rock could never grow; until you drop the sky on us in fragments; until you bring Allah and the angels here in front of us. And Allah taught him ﷻ a single sentence for the entire catalogue.

Or you have a house of ornament or you ascend into the sky. And [even then], we will not believe in your ascension until you bring down to us a book we may read." Say, "Exalted is my Lord! Was I ever but a human messenger?"

QUR'AN 17:93

So why were the dares refused? The Sheikh gives the reasons in order. First, they were not all refused. Makkah asked for a sign in the heavens and was given the moon itself, split in two before their eyes, one half on each side of the mountain, and they called it sorcery on their vision.

The Hour has come near, and the moon has split [in two]. And if they see a sign, they turn away and say, "Passing magic."

QUR'AN 54:1-2

Second, the greatest miracle was already in their ears every time the Prophet ﷺ opened his mouth. Every other sign in history expired with the people who saw it; the Qur'an is the one miracle that renews itself for every generation that hears it, which is why no other was needed. Third, Allah knew the asking was stubbornness and not searching. Were the angels themselves to come down, and the dead to rise and speak, and every created thing be gathered before their faces, they still would not believe; Allah says as much, knowing what they would do with a sign before they do it.

And there is a heavier reason, with a warning folded inside it. With Allah, a granted sign becomes a verdict: witness the very miracle you demanded, reject it anyway, and the punishment comes down with no second chance. The only reason Allah held the signs back, the Qur'an says, is that the peoples before had

demanded them, then denied them, and been destroyed. So when Quraysh begged the Prophet ﷺ to turn Safa into solid gold, and Safa then stood several times the size of the rise you see today, gold enough to drown the markets of the world, he ﷺ felt that this time they might genuinely be sincere, and he made the dua. The answer came down, in a report the Sheikh grades authentic. If you wish, Safa becomes gold, and if they then disbelieve, they are destroyed where they stand, for Allah does not deal in games; or, if you wish, the door of mercy and repentance stays open. And the Prophet ﷺ chose. Leave the door open.

Sit with that choice, because the Sheikh does. A mountain of gold, traded away for nothing more than the bare chance that his own tormentors might one day be guided, and the door he ﷺ held open that day is the very one their sons and grandsons would walk through.

One word

The seventh tactic was the deal, and it opened with a theological compromise of the kind that always sounds so reasonable in a council chamber: let us simply alternate. One day we all worship your God; the next, you worship ours. Society is stitched back together, everyone keeps his face, the converts stop tearing families apart. The answer came down with no soft edge at all, a short surah of pure and total separation.

Say, "O disbelievers, I do not worship what you worship. Nor are you worshippers of what I worship. Nor will I be a worshipper of what you worship. Nor will you be worshippers of what I worship. For you is your religion, and for me is my religion."

QUR'AN 109:1-6

Pause on the puzzle in it, because the Sheikh does. The Quraysh did worship Allah, over the heads of their idols; how then can the surah tell them you do not worship what I worship? Because worship routed through idols, the Sheikh explains, is not worship of Allah at all. And the surah's strange doubled refrain, which has drawn some ten scholarly opinions, carries a precision he unpacks through Ibn Taymiyyah's reading: the first pair denies any sharing in the One who is worshipped, the second any sharing in the way He is worshipped. Their rites, Allah testifies elsewhere, were whistling and clapping around His House. Object and method, both sealed off. There is no timeshare in tawhid.

So they tried once more, this time face to face, through a delegation: name your price, they said, and all of this stops. And he ﷺ answered: I want one word from you. Abu Lahab leapt at the apparent bargain, hearing one word and thinking one small condition: one word? We will give you ten! And then the word came. La ilaha illa Allah. And the council recoiled, in the very phrase the Qur'an preserved of them.

Has he made the gods [only] one God? Indeed, this is a curious thing."

QUR'AN 38:5

One word was the one thing all their wealth was offered to avoid.

Everything a man could want

The most famous offer of all came through Utbah ibn Rabi'ah, an elder of the wider house of Abd Manaf, a distant cousin of the Prophet's ﷺ own line, wealthy and weighty and, by Makkah's standards, a genuinely decent man. Remember the name, the Sheikh says, because it returns: this is the man in whose garden

the bleeding Prophet ﷺ will one day rest on the road back from Ta'if, and the man about whom, on the morning of Badr, the Prophet ﷺ will say that if there is any good left in the Quraysh they will listen to the man on the red camel, as Utbah gallops between the lines begging his people not to kill their own brothers and fathers, before he is shouted down and dies in the duels that open that battle. A man of real wisdom, the Sheikh observes, spending it all on the wrong side.

In the council, with the chiefs trading curses and dead-end schemes, it is Utbah who asks the question nobody had asked: has anyone actually tried to negotiate with the man? He is my nephew, more or less; send me. He found the Prophet ﷺ sitting alone by the Kaaba and began gently: my nephew, you know your lineage and your standing among us. Then the knife slid in. You have split your people, shattered their unity, made them a laughingstock among the Arabs. Are you better, or your father Abdullah? Are you better, or your grandfather Abdul Muttalib? They are trick questions, and the Prophet ﷺ answered them with silence. The Sheikh holds that silence up as wisdom our own arguments badly need. A believer cannot lie, and the true answer, that yes, he ﷺ was better, would have been blasphemy in Utbah's jahili ears and only set the room aflame; so he ﷺ refused the bait. We keep one face in private and public both, the Sheikh teaches, but that does not oblige us to answer every trap, especially when the questioner could never receive the true answer. Utbah pressed on with an Arabic idiom for a city about to tear itself apart: we are all waiting for the cry of the pregnant woman, the scream that the civil war has begun. He was right, the Sheikh notes quietly; it was only a few years off.

Then came the menu, the complete catalogue of everything Utbah's world believed a man could want. If it is wealth, we will

pool our fortunes until you are the richest man among us. If it is honor, we will make you our king, a crown the proud Quraysh had never granted anyone. If it is women, name the one you want and she is yours. And if some spirit has touched you, we will spend everything on physicians until you are cured. Money, power, women, and a doctor's note. He finished. And the Prophet ﷺ, who had not interrupted him once, asked: are you done, Abu al-Walid? Anything more? No. Then listen to me.

He ﷺ began to recite from the opening of Surah Fussilat, and you can watch Utbah change as the verses come: the lounging ease goes out of him, his hands brace on the ground behind him, his breath shortens. The Sheikh begs us to go home and read this surah ourselves and feel the tempo build. Then came the verse of warning.

But if they turn away, then say, "I have warned you of a thunderbolt like the thunderbolt [that struck] 'Aad and Thamud.

QUR'AN 41:13

And Utbah lunged forward and clapped his hand over the Prophet's ﷺ mouth, begging him: I beg you, by Allah, and by the kinship between us, stop. He could not bear to hear the destruction named over his own city.

He walked back to the men who had sent him and gave Quraysh the most clear-eyed counsel it ever received and ever ignored. Leave this man alone. I have heard speech the like of which I have never heard; I could not grasp all of it, but he is going to be a man of enormous consequence. If the other Arabs cut him down, other hands will have rid you of him and your own are clean. And if he prevails over them, his kingdom is your kingdom,

his honor your honor, his victory your victory. They laughed at their own ambassador: he has bewitched you too, Abu al-Walid. But Utbah had only heard, decades early, what Allah had already written down.

We have certainly sent down to you a Book in which is your mention. Then will you not reason?

QUR'AN 21:10

Without this Book, the Sheikh closes the thought, the Arabs were headed for the footnotes of history. Because of it, they would carry light to the world and outrun Rome and Persia both. Utbah glimpsed the whole trade in a single recitation, and he could never again unsee it. He simply lacked the will to act on what he saw.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read this day as a parade of villains safely defeated long ago. That would be to miss the question it puts to us. Look again at who testifies for the Qur'an across this single episode, and notice that not one of the witnesses is a friend. Al-Akhnas, in the dark before dawn: it seems to be the truth. Abu Jahl, of all men: how could we ever compete with revelation? Al-Walid, the poet laureate of the enemy, after one hearing: nothing rises above it. Utbah, sent to buy the Prophet ﷺ off with a kingdom: his victory is our victory. The whole opposition of the Quraysh, the Sheikh shows us, was never once a counterargument. It was a long confession, made through noise and fists and slander and gold, that no counterargument existed. They threw everything a civilization owns at one reciting voice, and the closest any of them came to refuting the Qur'an was to press a hand over the mouth reciting it.

So take the first lesson from the man with no tribe. Ibn Mas'ud had no clan, no protector, no name to pull out when the fists came, and he went anyway, on a single sentence: Allah will protect me. He came back bloodied and entirely unbroken, his only growth that day a deeper contempt for falsehood and not a trace of self-pity for his wounds. Most of us measure our courage by the protection we can count on. He measured his by Allah alone, and it held.

Then take the lesson the Prophet ﷺ teaches against every one of these tactics: let the Qur'an do the arguing. The chiefs crept out at night to hear it; the city's own poet swore it was beyond the speech of men and jinn; the ambassador begged for it to stop. Nobody in this entire episode actually resisted the recitation itself, only the pride and fear wrapped around their refusal to submit. We are quick to hand people our debate and slow to simply hand them the recitation and let it do what it did to al-Walid and Utbah. And learn his adab, which was a weapon too: he let Utbah finish every last word of the bribe before he answered, and met the trick questions with a silence no lie could corrupt. A believer keeps one face, owes no trap an answer, and never has to interrupt.

And then sit with the mountain of gold he ﷺ refused. Offered Safa turned to solid gold, enough to make him the richest man on earth, he saw the price underneath, that his tormentors would be destroyed the moment they rejected it, and chose instead to keep the door of mercy open over them. The man being cursed was quietly protecting his cursers from their own dare. This is the mercy that plays the long game, that would rather lose a mountain of gold than slam a door someone's grandchild might one day walk through, and walk through it they did. So take this day down into your ordinary life. Trust like the man with no tribe;

argue less and recite more; keep your one face and your patience under insult; and when you are wronged, leave the door of mercy open the way he ﷺ left it, for you never know whose child will need it later. May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, who stood unbought and unprovoked against every weapon Makkah owned, make the Qur'an the spring of our hearts, grant us the trust of Ibn Mas'ud and the patience of His Prophet ﷺ, and let us hear that beloved recitation with our own ears in Jannah.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 13: opposition from the Quraysh (Memphis Islamic Center, 2011). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (41:26, 17:110, 55:1-4, 93:1-5, 74:11-15, 74:18-25, 17:93, 54:1-2, 109:1-6, 38:5, 41:13, 21:10), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The persecution of the weak

The ones with no tribe, and the God who took their side

By the time this evening of the seerah arrives, the dawah is years old and fully public, and Quraysh has been working steadily through its toolbox. They have tried mockery, and it failed. They have tried negotiation, dangling wealth and rank and a turn at the kingship, and it failed. And lately they have tried something stranger: borrowed riddles, fetched from the rabbis of distant Yathrib in the hope that a true prophet of Israel's line could trip up this Arab who claimed to be one. That tactic was the eighth, and it died as the others died. What Quraysh reached for next was the ninth, and it was the oldest weapon the strong have ever turned against the truth: pain. Not aimed at the Prophet ﷺ, whose uncle's protection still held, nor at Abu Bakr, who had a clan behind him, but aimed with cold precision at the believers whose blood no tribe was obliged to avenge. The slaves. The freedmen. The ones nobody would miss.

So this day belongs to the people history usually forgets. Bilal under the boulder. Khabbab under his own forge iron. The family of Yasir on the point of Abu Jahl's spear. Suhayb, the richest freedman in Makkah, robbed of every coin on the road north and arriving on his hands and knees. Dr. Yasir Qadhi hangs this whole heavy evening on a single Arabic maxim and asks his listeners to memorize it before the night is out: *al-jaza min jins al-amal*, the recompense matches the deed. Allah repays a person in his own currency: what you spend for Him comes back in kind, and so

does what you spend against Him. Hold that sentence; it is the thread that will run through every story here, and it will turn an hour of unbearable cruelty into one of the most quietly triumphant chapters of the whole seerah.

Riddles from Yathrib, before the whips

Before the whips, the riddles. To understand them you have to understand what the Arabs of Makkah did not know. Prophethood was simply not their world. They knew poetry, trade, and idols; but the very category of a man who speaks for God had grown faint among them, because the legacy of Ibrahim had faded to almost nothing in their valley. The only neighbors who still spoke the language of prophets, who could tell a true messenger from a false one, were the Jews. Dr. Yasir Qadhi underlines the point: recognizing a prophet was a Jewish competence, not an Arab one, and so when Quraysh wanted this man tested, they sent north to the people of the Book. Give us questions, they asked, that only a real prophet of Israel could answer, and we will unmask him.

One delegation came back with a challenge built on lineage: ask him about Yaqub, who is Israel himself, and about his father and his sons, and what passed within that family. These were the private affairs of the children of Israel, and an Arab merchant could not possibly know them. The answer arrived not as a sentence but as an entire surah, Surah Yusuf, the inner struggle of Yaqub's household laid open in detail the questioners themselves could not have supplied, and Allah sealed it with a verse that named exactly what had happened:

That is from the news of the unseen which We reveal, [O Muhammad], to you. And you were not with them when

A man who had never been there had just told Israel's children their own family secrets. A second delegation carried three questions, and these are the famous ones: ask him about young men who entered a cave and slept across long ages; about a traveler who crossed the earth from east to west and saw wonders; and about the ruh, the spirit, what it is and where it comes from. The report comes through Tirmidhi with a slight weakness in its chain, the kind the scholars tolerate for a narration like this, and the Sheikh lets the caveat travel honestly with it. The Prophet ﷺ, certain of his Lord, answered: come back tomorrow and I will tell you. He did not say insha'Allah. And revelation went silent, not a day but some two weeks, while Makkah jeered that whatever spirit had spoken to him had now plainly deserted him. The pause was itself the teaching: there is the Rabb and there is the slave, and even the most beloved slave waits at his Master's door without a guarantee. And the word slave is no insult here. Allah Himself calls His Prophet ﷺ His abd, His slave, at the very summits of the Qur'an, four times in all, and means it as the height of honor, for there is no rank a human being can climb higher than being the true worshipper of his Lord. Then Surah al-Kahf came down and answered everything: the sleepers of the cave, in detail the rabbis had never possessed, and the world-crossing traveler, Dhul-Qarnayn (who was not, the Sheikh pauses to add, Alexander the Great, a known pagan tutored in the gods of the Greeks by Aristotle himself; whether prophet or just king, Allah knows best, but he was not the Macedonian).

The third question was the trap inside the trap. The rabbis knew the nature of the ruh is knowledge Allah has kept to Himself, so a confident lecture on the soul would have exposed a false claimant on the spot. The answer that descended was the only true one there is:

And they ask you, [O Muhammad], about the soul. Say, "The soul is of the affair [i.e., concern] of my Lord. And you [i.e., mankind] have not been given of knowledge except a little."

QUR'AN 17:85

Fourteen centuries on, no laboratory has improved on it. Every clever weapon Quraysh owned had now been spent and broken. What they reached for next needed no cleverness at all.

The architecture of cruelty

To feel the horror of what follows, you have to understand the machinery that made it possible. Makkah had no state. No police, no court, no magistrate to appeal to. Your safety in that society was worth exactly as much as the tribe obliged to avenge you, and not one dirham more. The Prophet ﷺ himself stood inside that shelter, and the Sheikh lingers over the words Ibn Mas'ud chose to describe it: Allah protected him through his uncle. Not Abu Talib protected him, but Allah protected him through his uncle, the old man only ever the instrument in a hand far higher than his own; and this is the wisdom of why Abu Talib was left a pagan to the end, the God-given wall around the dawah in its most fragile years. Abu Bakr likewise had his people. But the full, unwitnessed weight of Quraysh came down on the believers nobody was bound to avenge: the slaves, and the mawali. A mawla is a freed slave, bound by a client relationship to a former

master, more liberty than a slave but an allegiance owed, and a protection that could be revoked like a cancelled debt. Between the slave and the mawla you have the whole class of people whose lives, in the brutal accounting of that society, were cheap.

How bad did it get? Sa'id ibn Jubayr put exactly that question to Ibn Abbas, a living authority in an age before the books were compiled. They were beaten, Ibn Abbas answered, and starved, and denied water until they could no longer sit upright, until a man would be asked, is al-Lat your god, is al-Uzza your god, and he would say yes, just to make it stop. Until an insect crawled past, and they would ask, is this insect your god, and he would say yes, this too, anything, only stop. Hold the horror and the mercy of it together, because the religion does: Islam forgives every syllable of that. A word pried off a tongue by fire does not touch a heart that stayed standing underneath it, and before this evening ends, Allah Himself will write that mercy into the Qur'an.

The engineer of the program had a name, and the Prophet ﷺ gave him a title: Abu Jahl, the Firaun of this ummah, viler in this story than even Abu Lahab. His method moved precisely by class. A convert from the nobility could not be touched, for his tribe would answer the blow, so Abu Jahl gave him taunting and shame. A merchant who lived by trade was strangled where he breathed: a boycott, no one buys from you, no one sells to you. And a slave, who had no one at all, was handed to the mob, with Abu Jahl lending his own hands to the beating. Ibn Mas'ud counted seven who wore their Islam openly in those first days: the Prophet ﷺ, Abu Bakr, Ammar and his mother Sumayyah, Suhayb, Bilal, and al-Miqdad. Of these, the unprotected were seized, wrapped in coats of iron, staked out on burning sand, and every last one of them, in the end, gave the torturers some word of what they demanded. Every one except a single Abyssinian

slave. And who among us, the Sheikh asks, would dare be surprised at the others? Allah forgave them all. We would have broken long before they did. The wonder of this night is not that men bent. It is the one who would not.

Ahad, Ahad

His name was Bilal ibn Rabah, radiyallahu anhu, an Abyssinian slave of Umayyah ibn Khalaf, one of the cruelest men in Makkah, and in that city's racial arithmetic an African slave stood on the very lowest rung there was. Ibn Mas'ud explained why the full storm gathered over him: Bilal had stopped pricing his soul. He counted it as worth nothing beside Allah, was willing to give it up entirely, and so there was nothing left in him for a torturer to bargain with. A man who will not name a price cannot be bought at any, and because he would not bend by a single word, they did to him what they did to no one else.

Umayyah had a sadist's patience. He would take Bilal out at the hottest hour, pin him to the floor of the valley, have a great boulder rolled onto his chest, and leave him there, no water, no shade, while the sun climbed to its height. On other days Bilal was handed to the ruffians of Makkah, the idle and cruel that every city keeps, who looped a rope around his neck and dragged him up and down the lanes for sport. And through all of it Makkah heard one word coming back, from under the rock, from behind the rope, from a throat cracked with thirst: Ahad. Ahad. One. One. He was not pleading and not arguing. He was reciting the oneness of his Lord at the precise place where it cost the most.

The Sheikh stops over two details it would be easy to race past. The first is economic, and startling: a slave cost more than a camel, more than a house, a fortune in any age's money. When

Umayyah tortured Bilal he was methodically destroying his own most valuable property, taking a loss on it day after day, which tells you the depth of a hatred willing to pay that much. The second is darker: an entire city watched a human being dragged through its streets by the neck and did not blink, and the only way a society reaches that point is by first deciding the victim is not quite a human being at all. Reclassify a group as less than people, and anything may be done to them in daylight while the neighbors look away. The Sheikh draws the line forward without flinching, to the death camps of the last century, where the same machinery ran: first the dehumanizing, then the atrocity it licenses. This is exactly what Islam came to tear out by the root. No nobility of lineage, no nobility of skin. The whole jahili ranking, demolished. The witnesses never forgot: Hassan ibn Thabit, still a pagan, marveled that Bilal was somehow alive; a chief of Quraysh remembered him on rocks so hot raw meat would have cooked, saying still, I reject al-Lat and al-Uzza, and I believe in Allah; and Urwah recorded the simple final tally of the long contest. Through every day of it, Bilal never gave them even one word they wanted.

The recompense matches the deed

Now the maxim begins to pay out, and this is where the night turns. Al-jaza min jins al-amal, the recompense matches the deed. It is not a hadith, though many assume it is; it is a rule the scholars trace through the whole fabric of the religion. Do good, and Allah returns you good of the same kind; do evil, and the evil comes back in its own coin. So ask of Bilal: what, exactly, had he spent? A voice, crying the oneness of Allah in the one place and at the one cost where it could buy him nothing but pain.

Then look at what Allah did with that voice. When the call to prayer was given to this ummah in Madinah, shown first to a companion in a dream, the Prophet ﷺ said: teach it to Bilal, for he has the most beautiful voice among you. The throat that had croaked Ahad under a boulder became the appointed caller of the whole ummah, the muadhdhin of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ himself. And consider who stood in that voice's audience: for more than a decade in Madinah, five times every day, the Prophet ﷺ listened to Bilal call. Now place that beside another of his teachings. In a hadith in Ibn Majah, he said that everything within earshot of a muadhdhin, wet or dry, living or stone, jinn and man and tree, will stand as a witness for him on the Day of Judgment, which is why he told even a lone shepherd in the empty hills to call the adhan aloud, so the wilderness itself would testify for him. Now put one and one together, as the Sheikh asks. The man whose voice is heard must be witnessed for by all who hear it; and the man who heard Bilal's voice, day in and day out for years, was the Prophet ﷺ. The witness list being assembled for that tortured slave is not like yours and mine.

And then the scene that closes the circle. The eighth year of the hijrah, Makkah conquered, the idols toppling inside the Ka'bah, and the Prophet ﷺ gives a command: Bilal, climb onto the roof of the House of Allah. From the top of the Ka'bah, over the same valley where boys had dragged him by the neck through the dust, the same voice gives the first adhan those sacred precincts had ever heard. Tortured at the very bottom of the city; raised to the very top of it. No wonder the Prophet ﷺ said that if people only knew the reward in the call to prayer and the first row, and could find no other way to settle who got them, they would draw lots; no wonder he said the muadhdhins will have the longest necks on the Day of Judgment, the old Arabic image for the one to

whom every eye must look up in honor. Every muadhhdhin on earth, until the end of time, is standing inside a tortured slave's inheritance.

The blacksmith and the fire

Khabbab ibn al-Aratt, radiyallahu anhu, was among the first ten to enter Islam: an Arab slave, which in that race-ranked society bought marginally less savage treatment than Bilal's, and a swordsmith by trade, hammering blades for the fighting men of Makkah. He was owned by a woman, Umm Anmar. When she learned what her blacksmith had become, she gathered a gang of Quraysh and sent them to his workplace. Khabbab remembered coming back to find them waiting, and they pressed and taunted him until he confessed his Islam, then beat him so thoroughly he came to bruised and bloodied with no memory of how it ended. After that, his own forge supplied the instrument. Umm Anmar would take the iron her slave had just drawn glowing from the fire, the very metal he had been shaping into swords, and press it to his back. And Khabbab could not lift a hand, for to strike a Qurashi woman was to forfeit his life on the spot.

There is a hard symmetry in what came of him. Decades later, in Madinah, Umar ibn al-Khattab, by then khalifah, asked Khabbab to tell him what Umm Anmar used to do. Khabbab said nothing. He turned around and lifted his shirt, and Umar said: I have never seen anything like what I see today, and seated him beside himself in honor. The symmetry is in who was asking, because in the secret early years it had been this same Khabbab, a slave with almost nothing to give, who slipped into the house of Fatima bint al-Khattab to teach her the Qur'an, the very thread Allah would pull to bring her brother, Umar himself, into Islam. The man

Umar honored for his scarred back had once carried the faith into Umar's own family.

And the fire went back to its sender. The Prophet ﷺ passed the shop one day while the screams were coming out of it, saw Umm Anmar at work with the heated iron, and raised his hand: O Allah, help Khabbab against his enemy. Within days she was seized by a disease that left her panting and crawling about her house like a rabid animal, her senses gone, and the doctors of Makkah prescribed the one remedy they knew: cauterization, the burning of the skin. She died under the burning iron. The recompense, again, paid back in the deed's own coin. And a teaching rides alongside it, for the Prophet ﷺ taught that no one may punish with fire except the Creator of fire; even a lawful executioner is forbidden it, because no torment is crueler.

It was this same Khabbab who, in the hadith Bukhari preserves, came to the Prophet ﷺ as he sat in the shade of the Ka'bah and could bear no more: how long? Will you not ask Allah for us? And the Prophet ﷺ, who had been reclining, sat upright and answered in three movements the seerah never forgets. The believers before you were sawn in two and torn with iron combs and did not leave their religion. By Allah, He will complete this affair until a woman travels alone from Hadramawt to San'a fearing nothing but Allah, and the wolf over her sheep. And then the rebuke, gentle and immense: but you are being hasty. Khabbab lived to test the whole promise. He marched in every expedition and drew one of the highest stipends in Umar's state, for Umar built his pay scale on precedence in Islam, a scale that placed Umar himself below the very slaves he had once watched bleed. Yet on his deathbed he wept, and not from fear of meeting Allah. He wept at the comfort around him, terrified his reward had been paid out early, here, in soft living, while his companions had

gone to Allah having tasted none of this world's sweetness; and when they brought his shroud, a fine broad cloth, he remembered Hamza, buried in a sheet so short that to cover his face was to bare his feet. The men Makkah could not break with rock or iron spent their final breaths afraid of nothing but ease.

The first family of martyrs

Among all the stories of this evening, one belongs not to a man but to a whole household, and the Sheikh tells it as the one that owns him personally. Yasir, his wife Sumayyah, and their sons Abdullah and Ammar, radiyallahu anhum, were a client family bound to a Makkan tribe, with no blood of their own in the city to make their suffering costly, and every one of them had believed. And here is what sets their story apart. Everyone else suffered alone; this family was tortured together, in front of one another, a husband made to watch his wife, a mother made to watch her sons, each one's agony doubled by being made to witness the rest. Dr. Yasir Qadhi calls it the nightmare of nightmares, and then tells why this household has a claim on him: his own father named him for this family, Yasir, and he in turn named his own son Ammar. Fourteen centuries later, scholars are still signing their children into this house.

The Prophet ﷺ would pass them as they were staked out under torture, and could do nothing to stop it. Feel what that helplessness must have cost him ﷺ, to walk past a family being destroyed for believing in him and have no power in his hand to save them. What he could give them was a sentence, preserved in an authentic hadith and among the most famous of the seerah: Sabran, Al Yasir, fa inna mawidakum al-Jannah. Patience, family of Yasir, for your appointed meeting place is Paradise. Notice what he did not promise: not rescue, not relief, not an end to the

pain in this life. He promised them something larger and further away, and they believed him.

Yasir died first under the torture. The reports differ on how, whether dragged through the streets by ropes or torn apart between horses; the sources here are scant, the way history is always scant about what is done to slaves, and all that is certain is that Quraysh took some brutal pleasure in it. Then Sumayyah, grieving and unbroken, rebuked Abu Jahl to his face, a slave woman refusing the man who thought he owned her soul, and the Firaun of this ummah took a spear and drove it up through the most private part of her body, a killing so vile the books still relate it with an apology on the tongue. One after the other, Yasir and Sumayyah became the first two martyrs of Islam. And then the mob turned on Abdullah and killed him too.

Ammar was perhaps fifteen, perhaps younger. He had watched his father killed, his mother killed, his brother thrown into a ditch, and when they turned the iron on him the boy said the words they demanded, and, being the youngest and now alone, was let go. He ran to the house of al-Arqam and stood before the Prophet ﷺ sobbing, his parents' deaths almost blanked from his mind by a terror that felt worse than grief: Ya Rasulallah, I spoke words of shirk, what is to become of me now? The Prophet ﷺ asked one question: how do you find your heart? They could force my tongue, Ammar answered, they could change this, but they could not change this: I find my heart at peace, secure with iman. Then if they do it again, the Prophet ﷺ told him, you do it again. And heaven co-signed the ruling, sending down the verse that would shelter every tortured believer until the end of the world:

Whoever disbelieves in [i.e., denies] Allah after his belief... except for one who is forced [to renounce his religion]

while his heart is secure in faith. But those who [willingly] open their breasts to disbelief, upon them is wrath from Allah, and for them is a great punishment;

QUR'AN 16:106

The exception was carved into the Qur'an forever: the one forced, while the heart stays firm, bears no sin at all. Ammar grew into one of the giants of the companions. The Prophet ﷺ said iman had filled him to the very top, up past his heart to his neck, overflowing; he called him Ibn Sumayyah, his mother's son, the man who, shown two roads, always took the truer of the two. And one prophecy followed him down a long life: the rebel party will kill you, the Prophet ﷺ had told him. Forty years later, when the ummah tore itself apart in the strife between Ali and Muawiyah, the old man fell at the Battle of Siffin, fighting on the side of Ali, and the hadith quietly settled which side had stood nearer the truth. Keep here exactly the manners of Ahlus-Sunnah the Sheikh keeps. Both camps intended good. We say no evil of any companion of the Prophet ﷺ, radiyallahu anhum; we leave what passed between them to the mercy of Allah, who will forgive them. And yet, for the sake of truth and never of partisanship, with the clarity only hindsight allows: the closer cause was Ali's, and the body of Ibn Sumayyah marked the line.

Do not send them away, and the most profitable sale

Three of this evening's names moved through Makkah together as a band of friends, young men in their twenties and thirties, and the sira keeps mentioning them shoulder to shoulder: Ammar, Suhayb, and Bilal. One day Abu Jahl and a circle of the chiefs were deep in conversation with the Prophet ﷺ, and he ﷺ allowed himself to hope their hearts were finally softening, when the three happened to pass nearby. The mood curdled on the

instant. If what you brought were genuine, the chiefs objected, would the likes of these have reached it before us? Send these people away, and then perhaps we will sit with you, but we will not enter a religion as the equals of slaves. The answer did not come from the Prophet ﷺ at all. Allah Himself answered, and He came down on the side of the slaves:

And do not send away those who call upon their Lord morning and afternoon, seeking His face [i.e., favor]. Not upon you is anything of their account and not upon them is anything of your account. So were you to send them away, you would [then] be of the wrongdoers.

QUR'AN 6:52

Weigh exactly what is on that scale. On one side, the chiefs of Makkah, with their gold and swords and the whole following of the city, offering their entire allegiance as the prize. On the other, a freedman's bow, a blacksmith's branded back, a strangled cry of Ahad from beneath a rock. And the scale of heaven comes down, flatly and forever, on the side of the weak. To dismiss them, Allah told His own beloved Messenger ﷺ, would be to join the wrongdoers. The poor and the enslaved of this day are not a footnote to the seerah. They are the reason this verse exists.

And one of those three friends bought himself the last and largest place in this day's ledger. Suhayb ar-Rumi, the Roman, was never Roman at all. He was an Arab boy from Iraq, carried off in a Byzantine raid when he was small and raised so long in Roman lands that Latin had crowded the Arabic out of his mouth and only the memory of his roots remained. He worked his way back toward home, came to Makkah as a slave, and landed in the household of Abdullah ibn Jud'an, one of the gentler masters, who saw the quick and literate mind in his slave, made him his

business manager, and freed him in his will. In time Suhayb became the wealthiest freedman in all of Makkah. His own torture was lighter than the others', for his late master had treated him well, though Abu Jahl and men like him made sure he was not spared entirely. But what Quraysh could not forgive him, in the end, was his fortune.

When Suhayb finally slipped out to make the hijrah, riders of Quraysh overtook him on the road, and he turned in the saddle and gave them the only speech he had left. I am the finest archer among you, he told them, and by Allah you will not lay a hand on me until every arrow in this quiver has found flesh, and then until my sword breaks on your bones. Come, ten of you against one of me. They chose a different arithmetic. You came to us with nothing, they said, a penniless slave, and you grew rich among us; the wealth is ours, not yours. Leave it and go. And the Sheikh notes how old this is, how the same resentment still circles the stranger who arrives with empty hands and prospers, as though his success were a theft from those who watched it. So Suhayb told them where his fortune lay buried, handed over even the camel beneath him, and walked. The books of sira record that the only companion known to have made the hijrah on foot came crawling at last into Quba on his hands and knees, emaciated, caked in dust, very nearly finished.

The Prophet ﷺ wiped the dust from him with his own hands, gave him food and water, and smiled before Suhayb could explain a thing. Rabiha al-bay, Suhayb. The sale has profited. The transaction was the best you ever made. Suhayb could only stare: no one could have brought you that news yet, ya Rasulallah, no one but Jibril. And when revelation opened again in Madinah, the very first that came down, Surah al-Baqarah carried his receipt:

And of the people is he who sells himself, seeking means to the approval of Allah. And Allah is Kind to [His] servants.

QUR'AN 2:207

Among all people, there is the one who sells his whole self, asking nothing in return but the pleasure of his Lord. And here the threads of the whole evening draw together into a single ledger. Bilal sold his body to the rock and the rope. Khabbab sold the skin of his back to the iron. Sumayyah and Yasir and Abdullah sold their very lives. Suhayb sold every coin he had ever earned. This entire day of the seerah is an accounting of those purchases, scream by scream and dirham by dirham, and the verdict it returns on every single one is the same. Not one of them, in the books of Allah, made a losing trade.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read this evening as a catalog of someone else's suffering, safely sealed in the deep past, and to close the book moved but untouched. That would be to miss the questions it puts directly to us, and the Sheikh draws each of them straight out of the wounds.

The first is about the heart, and where iman actually lives. Almost every believer tortured on this day eventually said what Quraysh demanded, and Allah forgave every one of them; the verse revealed for Ammar shelters every forced tongue behind which the heart stayed at peace with faith. So be slow, very slow, to judge anyone's breaking point, including your own. We who have never felt the heated iron are quick to imagine we would have held where they bent, when the truth is that we would have broken long before any of them did. The wonder of faith is not

that the body fails under fire. It is that the heart, in the right person, does not.

The second is the maxim, now that we have watched it pay out again and again. Al-jaza min jins al-amal, the recompense matches the deed. Bilal's strangled Ahad came back as the adhan from the rooftop of the Ka'bah; Khabbab's burned back came back to his tormentor as her own doctors' fire. Allah repays in kind, in this life often and in the next without fail. So look hard at what you are spending, and in what coin, because it is coming back to you in the same.

The third is the warning the Sheikh refuses to soften. Cruelty becomes possible at the exact moment a human being stops being seen as one. Makkah could watch a man hauled through the streets by a rope and feel nothing, because it had first decided he was not quite a man; and that same mechanism runs under every atrocity from that valley to the camps of the last century. Islam answered it at the root, abolishing the nobility of blood and of color outright. So watch your own eyes. Whenever a whole class of people begins to shrink in them, to become a category instead of a soul, this day is the alarm bell, and you should hear it ringing. And running alongside it is the fourth lesson, in the verse heaven sent down to protect three slaves from the chiefs of a city: Allah does not trade His weak servants for your powerful ones. Any gathering, any dawah, any heart that courts the strong by quietly sidelining the poor is bargaining against revelation itself, and will lose.

There is a last question, the one Khabbab left ringing in the shade of the Ka'bah, the one the seerah will answer on another night: why? Why would Allah let His most beloved servants bleed like this, when a single word from Him could have handed them the

victory on the first day? That answer is promised its own evening. But this day has already proved the half of it we most need to carry: that not one scream went unheard, not one burn went unrepaid, not one forced word was ever held against a faithful heart. So take this evening down into your own ordinary, comfortable life. The next time the adhan reaches you, hear the inheritance folded inside it, a tortured man's reward made audible five times a day over every city on earth. O Allah, You heard Bilal when he said One; You saw Ammar's heart while his tongue was breaking; You kept Your appointment with Sumayyah and Yasir at the meeting place You promised them. Make our hearts firm without ever requiring their trials of us. Never let us trade Your weak servants for the approval of the strong. Write us among those who sell themselves seeking nothing but Your face. And send Your peace upon Your Messenger ﷺ, who would not send the slaves away, and who walked past the fire he could not put out, holding only a promise of Paradise, until the day Allah completed the affair, exactly as he said He would.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 14: the torture and persecution of the weak (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (12:102, 17:85, 16:106, 6:52, 2:207), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry a weaker chain, the Sheikh's own weighing of the narrations has been followed.

Harm Reaches the Prophet ﷺ, and the First Hijrah

The cost of one sajdah, and a ship to a just king

The last gathering belonged to the tortured. Bilal flattened under a boulder on the burning sand, Khabbab branded with iron from his owner's own furnace, the enslaved believers whom Makkah's tribal code did not cover, because a slave had no clan to avenge him and so could be broken in the open. They bled because they had no one. The question Dr. Yasir Qadhi opens this day with follows so naturally you almost ask it before he does: and what of the Prophet ﷺ himself? He was a nobleman of Quraysh, a Hashimi, a man with a clan at his back. Did the violence ever actually reach him, or did his standing keep him untouched while lesser men paid?

The honest answer is layered, and the Sheikh refuses to flatten it. Physically, yes, the Prophet ﷺ and the Quraysh believers as a class were relatively protected; nothing here approaches what was done to Bilal. But relatively protected is not the same as immune, and these early Makkan years hold a string of incidents in which harm came to him directly, building eventually toward open talk of assassination. Here is the shape the Sheikh draws across all of it, the lens for everything that follows: sometimes, by a wisdom He alone knows, Allah shielded His beloved ﷺ with wonders no eye could explain, and sometimes, by a wisdom He alone knows, He let the blow land. Both happen on this day.

Neither is an accident. A protection you can see and a protection that looks like its opposite are both, in the end, His hand.

The sajdah the angels guarded

Abu Jahl was boasting, as he loved to do, in the nadi: the open air council beside the Kaaba where the elders of Quraysh sat to talk and be seen, the city's parliament. He swore an oath to his peers. By al-Lat and al-Uzza, if I see Muhammad praying there one more time, I will plant my foot on his neck while he is in sajdah and grind his face into the dust. It was not an idle threat. Most believers prayed hidden in their homes, but the Prophet ﷺ was among the very few who prayed openly at the Kaaba, in full view, and that openness was exactly what enraged them, so the chance came quickly.

The scene is carried to us by Abu Huraira. The Prophet ﷺ came, stood, and went down into prostration, and Abu Jahl moved toward him to make good on his oath. Then the watchers saw something they could not account for. The tyrant stopped short, backing away, shoving at the empty air with both hands, fending off a thing none of them could see. When he returned to the circle they pressed him: what happened to your oath, we saw you reach out, why did you turn? And Abu Jahl, shaken, told them the truth as he had lived it: between me and him was a trench of fire, and a terror, and wings. When the Prophet ﷺ was told of it afterward, he named the wings. They were angels. Had Abu Jahl taken one more step, he said, they would have torn him apart, limb from limb.

Heaven did not let the scene pass without a word, and here the Sheikh shows you how a surah can lock onto a single street. The very chapter that had opened all of revelation in the cave of Hira, the surah of Iqra, its first five verses the first words ever sent

down, received its conclusion over this confrontation, and once you know the story every line drops into its slot. The one who forbids a servant from praying: there he stands in the flesh. Does he not know that Allah sees the whole of it? Then an image desert Arabs felt in their hands before they understood it in their minds. Seize a beast by the forelock, the nasiyah, the tuft at the front of the skull, and the entire animal goes wherever you drag it, helpless. A lying, sinning forelock. Let him call his nadi, the very council he sat boasting in; Allah will summon the angels of Hell. And then the surah turns from the tyrant to the beloved ﷺ and settles the whole matter by ignoring the threat entirely.

Have you seen the one who forbids A servant when he prays? Have you seen if he denies and turns away - Does he not know that Allāh sees? No! If he does not desist, We will surely drag him by the forelock, a lying, sinning forelock. Then let him call his associates; We will call the angels of Hell. No! Do not obey him. But prostrate and draw near [to Allāh].

QUR'AN 96:9-10, 96:13-19

Do not obey him. Prostrate, and draw near. The man who tried to stop the sajdah is handed to the angels of Hell, and the one who made the sajdah is told to keep making it, and to come nearer to his Lord by exactly the act they were trying to stop. The threat had no answer worth giving. The answer was worship.

Choked at the house of Allah, and a carcass on his back

A generation later there lived a young man named Urwah ibn az-Zubayr, born just too late to ever meet the Prophet ﷺ whose memory surrounded his whole childhood, nephew of Aisha herself. Like any child raised on a story he wanted the eyewitness account, so he went to one of the men who had been there,

Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-As, with a blunt question: tell me the worst thing you ever saw the pagans do to him. If you had lived then, the Sheikh notes, you would have asked exactly this.

The answer was this. The Prophet ﷺ was praying beside the Kaaba when Uqbah ibn Abi Mu'ayt came up behind him, pulled the garment off his own back, looped it around the Prophet's ﷺ neck, and twisted it tight. He throttled him there, at the house of Allah, while the crowd watched and did nothing, until word reached Abu Bakr: your companion is being killed. He came running, threw himself on Uqbah, beat him back, and cried out the whole time, will you kill a man for saying, my Lord is Allah? The Sheikh lingers on what became of that one sentence, because its afterlife is astonishing. The cry Abu Bakr raised in the dust stands now in the Qur'an, word for word, in the mouth of the believing man of Pharaoh's household who rose to shield Musa against the same murderous logic, and it is recited in prayer to this hour.

And a believing man from the family of Pharaoh who concealed his faith said, "Do you kill a man [merely] because he says, 'My Lord is Allāh' while he has brought you clear proofs from your Lord? And if he should be lying, then upon him is [the consequence of] his lie; but if he should be truthful, there will strike you some of what he promises you. Indeed, Allāh does not guide one who is a transgressor and a liar.

QUR'AN 40:28

Abu Bakr is one of only two companions the Sheikh notes Allah quotes by name in His Book, the man Allah Himself calls, in the verse of the cave, the Prophet's ﷺ companion. And the words he spoke to save the man he loved were the very words revelation

had already placed in the mouth of the best believer of Pharaoh's court. He did not know he was reciting scripture.

But the worst single thing came later, and Abdullah ibn Mas'ud saw it himself; Bukhari preserved his telling. He watched from the edge, rigid and helpless, because he too was of the slave class, and one move would have cost him his life. The Prophet ﷺ was praying at the Kaaba again, because they always chose the most public stage; the entire point was humiliation. A camel had been slaughtered the day before, its carcass left rotting at the refuse ground outside the city, and Abu Jahl threw down a dare to his circle: which of you will go to that carcass, bring back its filth, and dump it on Muhammad's back when he goes into sajdah? The worst of them rose. Uqbah ibn Abi Mu'ayt, again, a robed nobleman of Quraysh plunging his hands into a rotting body and carrying the reeking entrails back through his own streets. Whatever clung to his hands, what lived in his heart was filthier. He waited for the prostration, then emptied the whole load onto the back of the Prophet ﷺ as he lay before his Lord. The weight pinned him down; he could not lift his head. And the men of Quraysh laughed until they fell against one another, helpless with it.

He ﷺ stayed in sajdah, because he could not rise, and someone, his name lost to us, some last ember of mercy, ran to fetch Fatima. She was a small girl then, eight or nine years old. She came running and weeping, and with her own small hands she pulled the filth off her father's back while the men of her city laughed on. He finished his prayer. Then he stood, faced them, and lifted his finger toward the heavens, and the laughter died as they watched. He prayed against them by name, each name three times: Abu Jahl ibn Hisham, Utbah and Shaybah the sons of Rabi'ah, al-Walid, Umayyah ibn Khalaf, Uqbah ibn Abi Mu'ayt, and

a seventh whose name Ibn Mas'ud could no longer recall. The blood drained from every face. And Ibn Mas'ud swore to the sequel: by the One who sent Muhammad ﷺ with the truth, I saw every one of those seven men dead on the day of Badr, their bodies dragged to the well.

Now pull back and look at the attackers as a kind, because here the Sheikh hands you one of his signature observations. The enemies of the Prophet ﷺ came in two broad sorts. There were honorable opponents, dangerous and angry but who kept it above the belt and never stooped to torturing the helpless: men like Umar ibn al-Khattab before his Islam, Khalid ibn al-Walid, Abu Sufyan. And there were the vile: Abu Jahl, and Uqbah, perhaps the lowest of all. Run both lists to the ends of their lives and the pattern stuns you. The honorable enemies, very nearly to a man, were eventually guided to Islam and became its lions. The vile ones died on their hatred, most of them face down in the well of Badr, guided to nothing. How a person fights tells you what he is made of, and a residual nobility even in an enemy is soil in which guidance can still grow, while a heart that will torture the defenseless has already sealed itself.

Why the best of people are tested

Now stop, because the Sheikh stops, and asks the question this whole season of suffering forces up out of the heart. We believe this man ﷺ is the most beloved of all Allah's creation. We believe his companions were the finest body of believers the world has held. So why? Why is the carcass allowed to land on that back, of all the backs in creation? Why not simply hand them Makkah on the first day, let the people believe and grant them safety and a state at once? And it is not only our story, the Sheikh insists; the true followers of Musa bled under Pharaoh, and the sincere

followers of Isa were butchered under pagan Rome. The best of people, the worst of treatment, again and again across the prophets. What is Allah doing?

The answers come in layers, and the first reaches all the way back to why we are here at all. Allah did not create us to be comfortable in this world. He created death and life to test which of us is best in deed, and the place where the test is administered was never meant to feel like the prize at the end. The suffering is not Allah forgetting His beloved ﷺ; it is the examination hall doing what an examination hall is for. The second layer is mercy dressed as hardship: Paradise is simply too precious to be purchased by a lifetime of deeds, no matter how heavy, so it is granted by mercy, and trials are where Allah magnifies the small deeds of a servant until, by His grace, they outweigh what they could never have outweighed alone. The third layer is that a claim must be tested or it stays a claim. Iman that has never met hardship has never been proven, even to the one who carries it, and so the test sorts the truthful from the one who only said the words.

Do the people think that they will be left to say, "We believe" and they will not be tried? But We have certainly tried those before them, and Allāh will surely make evident those who are truthful, and He will surely make evident the liars.

QUR'AN 29:2-3

Or do you think that you will enter Paradise while such [trial] has not yet come to you as came to those who passed on before you? They were touched by poverty and hardship and were shaken until [even their] messenger and those who believed with him said, "When is the help of Allāh?" Unquestionably, the help of Allāh is near.

These verses, the Sheikh says, were the daily bread of those Makkan years. And there is a last layer, one that buys something time can never take back: the trials proved the rank of that first generation forever. No believer who suffers in any century afterward can say it would have come easy to the companions, that they had it soft and so cannot judge our pain. They had it harder than almost anyone since, did not bend, and every cornered believer in every age has found in them a lamp still burning.

It reached the point where Khabbab ibn al-Aratt, the blacksmith whose owner pressed hot iron from her furnace into his back, came to the Prophet ﷺ as he sat in the shade of the Kaaba and asked it aloud: how long? Will you not ask Allah to help us? The Prophet ﷺ sat up from where he reclined, marking with his body the weight of what he was about to say. Among those before you, he answered, a man would be combed with combs of iron until the flesh was stripped from his bones, and it did not turn him from his religion. Another would be sawn in two from the crown of his head, and it did not turn him from his religion. By Allah, Allah will complete this affair, until a woman will travel alone with her flock from Hadramaut to San'a fearing nothing but Allah, and the wolf for her sheep. But you are being hasty.

Notice precisely what the answer was and was not. It was not a denial that help was coming; he ﷺ never doubted the victory for the length of a heartbeat. It corrected the clock, not the promise. The iron combs and the saw were not flourishes either: this is exactly what pagan Rome later did to the sincere followers of Isa, believers the Sheikh calls the Muslims of their own age, persecuted worse than Makkah ever managed and unbent by it;

Nero burned them as living torches to light his streets. The shepherdess walking unafraid came true as well, in century after century of Muslim peace across those lands. We are asked only to trust the promise while the clock runs, and to know the ease is already on its way, traveling toward us inside the very hardship, the way the verse pairs them: with the difficulty there comes ease.

A safe house hiding in plain sight

By now the believers numbered around twenty or thirty, and many of them were secret: slaves who had not told their masters, sons who had not told their fathers. They needed a place to gather, to learn, to breathe, and there was none. The first true masjid of Islam, Quba, was still years away on the far side of the hijrah; the Kaaba was ringed with idols and watching eyes. So as the dawah went public and the persecution began in earnest, the Prophet ﷺ chose a house. And the choice, the Sheikh says with real delight, is a masterclass in reading the seerah like an analyst, because the books simply record that he chose the house of al-Arqam without telling you why, and the why is quiet genius from first detail to last.

He chose the house of al-Arqam ibn Abi al-Arqam, and look at what that carried. Al-Arqam was from Banu Makhzum, the clan of Abu Jahl himself, the great rival house of Banu Hashim, and no mind in Makkah would imagine a Makhzumi sheltering the Hashimi prophet; the tribal rivalry made the safe house invisible. He was among the first ten to accept Islam, so he could be trusted absolutely with what had become the single most dangerous secret in Arabia. He was a young man, perhaps eighteen, holding a house inherited from his father, and nobody suspects a teenager of hosting the headquarters of a revolution.

And by one report his own Islam was still unannounced, one more layer of cover over all the others.

But the masterstroke is the location, and it runs against every instinct. You would expect a secret base on the empty edge of town, where no one would see you come and go. Al-Arqam's house sat behind Mount Safa, a stone's throw from the Kaaba, in the busiest quarter of the entire city, precisely where every Makkani walked every single day to trade, to socialize, to circle the haram. And that is the genius of it. Forty people drifting toward downtown raise no suspicion at all, because everyone goes downtown; four people walking out to a lonely house on the outskirts would draw every eye in the valley. The believers could slip into an alley, sit with their Prophet ﷺ, and walk back out into the crowds as though coming from the Kaaba itself. Hidden in plain sight, under the noses of the men hunting them. And read analytically, one more fact falls out for free: since dozens met there at a time, the house must have been a large one.

Hold the address in mind, because the seerah keeps returning to this door. In the house of al-Arqam, Ammar ibn Yasir embraced Islam, and Suhayb ar-Rumi embraced Islam. And one day soon, the most feared young man in all of Makkah, Umar ibn al-Khattab, sword on his hip, will arrive at that very door, and what happens inside will change the dawah forever. The most intelligent human being who ever lived ﷺ chose nothing at random, and the lesson runs through the whole seerah like a spine: this careful, layered planning was no crack in his trust in Allah. Planning and tawakkul were never rivals. He tied every camel he could, and trusted his Lord with the rest.

Fifteen souls toward the sea

Barely a year and a half had passed since the dawah went public, and that year and a half held everything you have just read, the choking and the carcass and the iron and the laughter, compressed into eighteen months. So in the month of Rajab, in the fifth year of the dawah, the Prophet ﷺ made an announcement to his people. This land has grown too tight for you, he told them. Whoever wishes, let him go to the land of Abyssinia, for there is a Christian king there, a just king, and no one is wronged for his worship under his rule.

Feel the size of what he was asking, because the Sheikh makes sure you do not read it through modern eyes. There were no passports and no way to wire your wealth ahead of you. Your tribe was your government, your police force, and your insurance all at once, and one step beyond its reach you could be robbed, enslaved, or killed with no one obliged to answer for it. For most of human history, the Sheikh reminds us, the overwhelming majority of people were born, lived, and died within a short walk of one spot. And these believers were being invited to cross a sea to a land of another tongue, another people, another religion, leaving behind property they could not even sell, because to sell it would announce the escape. That they preferred all of that to staying is the truest measure we have of what Makkah had become.

Fifteen went, eleven men and four women, down to the port we now call Jeddah, two days away, and from there onto a ship. At the head of them, the very first couple to emigrate in the history of this ummah: Uthman ibn Affan and his wife Ruqayyah, the daughter of the Prophet ﷺ himself. With them traveled names that would become pillars of the religion: az-Zubayr ibn al-Awwam, Abdur-Rahman ibn Awf, Mus'ab ibn Umayr, Uthman ibn Maz'un, Abu Salamah and his wife Umm Salamah. Umm Salamah

radiyallahu anha would remember those days with a simple, grateful sentence preserved in Bukhari: we lived in a good land, with a good neighbor, safe in our religion, and we worshipped Allah and were not harmed.

Then run your eye down that list again, the Sheikh says, because the observation it yields is unsentimental and it cuts. Every single name on it is Qurashi nobility. The ones who needed escape most desperately, Bilal, Khabbab, Ammar, Ibn Mas'ud, the tortured of the slave class, could not go at all, because leaving was a privilege of the protected; you needed standing and means even to flee. The lesson he draws keeps its mercy without flinching: when you cannot save everyone, you still save whom you can, and the believer who has a way out is not obliged to stay and burn in solidarity with those who have none. As for why Abyssinia in particular, his reasons are four, and the first is the heart of it: a just king under whom worship was free. Then a land Quraysh already knew through trade, so it was no leap into the wholly unknown; an easy passage, two days to the port and a short sail beyond; and a people of the Book whom the Qur'an itself describes as the nearest of all people in affection to the believers.

You will surely find the most intense of the people in animosity toward the believers [to be] the Jews and those who associate others with Allāh; and you will find the nearest of them in affection to the believers those who say, "We are Christians." That is because among them are priests and monks and because they are not arrogant.

QUR'AN 5:82

The day Layla saw Umar soften

Did the emigrants slip away in secret or leave in the open? The reports differ, and the Sheikh notes there is nothing strange in an open departure, because at this stage Quraysh had not yet thought to block the road. One report, carried by Tabarani, points to at least one departure in plain daylight, and it hands us a scene worth the whole episode. Layla, the wife of Amir ibn Rabi'ah, one of only four couples among the fifteen, was loading her camel for the journey when a shadow fell across her packing. It was Umar ibn al-Khattab, in those days still one of Islam's fiercest enemies. Traveling somewhere, are you? he asked. Where to?

And Layla, exhausted, frightened, packing up her whole life, and finished with being polite to the men who had made it unlivable, snapped at him. Yes, by Allah, she said. We are leaving, and it is because of you. Your persecution of us, only because we worship Allah, has driven us out to seek a land where we can worship Him in peace. She braced for his rage. Instead, something crossed his face she had never once seen there: compassion. Has it really come to that? he said quietly. And then: may Allah be with you. And he turned and walked on.

She carried the moment home like a rumor of a miracle. When her husband heard it he snorted in contempt. Are you actually hoping he becomes Muslim? By Allah, the donkeys of his father's house will accept Islam before Umar ibn al-Khattab ever does. Within about two years, the donkeys still as they were, Umar was praying shoulder to shoulder with the Prophet ﷺ. The lessons are gentle and enormous at once. The hardest shells often guard the softest hearts; Umar's inner mercy was real years before his shahada caught up to it, the same softness we will see again in a coming episode when he strikes his own sister and then, at the sight of her blood, breaks. And guidance belongs to Allah alone, who guided the man even his own future brothers in faith would

have bet against. So never condemn a living soul to the Fire, the Sheikh urges; never close the book on anyone while they still draw breath. The persecutor leaning over your camel today may be standing beside you in the prayer line tomorrow, and that file is Allah's, not yours.

Fourteen years under a just king

The king they sailed toward is remembered by a title, not a name: the Najashi, the Negus, just as Rome's ruler was always the Caesar and Persia's the Kisra, the office swallowing the man. His own name, the Sheikh tells us, was As-hama. And weigh the two words the Prophet ﷺ chose to describe him, because the Sheikh builds a whole vision of justice out of them: a just king. What made a Christian ruler just, in the Prophet's ﷺ own framing? One thing above all: that under him no one was wronged for his worship. Freedom to worship Allah, on the tongue of the Messenger ﷺ himself, is offered as the very measure of a kingdom's justice.

And the refuge worked. Muslims lived in Abyssinia for some fourteen years, the Sheikh stresses, long after Madinah was founded and a full Islamic state existed there; seven years into the hijrah there was still a believing community there under Ja'far ibn Abi Talib, which is why Ja'far missed the battle of Badr, and only after Khaybar did the Prophet ﷺ send a letter calling them home. The Sheikh turns this long sojourn into one of his clearest lessons for our own age. Not all non-Muslim lands are the same. Some persecute, as Makkah did, and some guarantee your worship, as Abyssinia did, and where you have that freedom you live as the Abyssinian Muslims lived: grateful, law abiding residents who entered on what amounted to a visa, plotted nothing against the state that sheltered them, and sought nothing

beyond the freedom to pray. Against the voices who declare it forbidden to live in such lands at all, the Sheikh holds this community up as the standing refutation, a model for Muslims who live as minorities in the West, citizens under a government whose laws they obey, asking only the freedom the Abyssinian believers were granted.

Then he presses one turn further. If the Prophet ﷺ praised a Christian king as just precisely because he protected the worship of others, could the very law the Prophet ﷺ brought turn around and deny that same protection? It could not, and does not. Egypt has remained home to its Coptic Christians through fourteen centuries of Muslim rule; the Zoroastrians of Persia, fire worshippers and not people of the Book, were granted protected standing by the consensus of the early Muslims when their land was conquered; and scholars of the stature of Ibn Taymiyyah extended that guarantee to followers of any religion at all. The airless utopia some overzealous young voices imagine, a land scrubbed of every other form of worship, is simply not the Prophet's ﷺ Islam, and never was.

Why did this one king see the truth so clearly? Here the Sheikh shares a theory, flagged honestly as only a theory, and Allah knows best. It may be that the Christianity of Abyssinia still carried traces of an older faith from before the Council of Nicaea, the way of those who held Isa to be the Messiah and a servant of Allah, kept alive in scattered pockets after a man named Arius refused the creed Nicaea imposed and fled south. If a remnant of that faith had survived there, then when Ja'far stands in that court in a coming episode and recites the Qur'an, the king's famous reaction will need no explaining: he will weep and say that what he has just heard and what Isa brought come from one and the same source. The grave of the Najashi is known in

Abyssinia to this day. The first land that ever opened its arms to this ummah was ruled by a man who simply refused to wrong people for their prayers.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read this day as a catalogue of cruelty and a happy escape at the end, and to leave it there, safely sealed in the seventh century. That would be to miss every question it is pressing into your hands. Lay the two images of it side by side and do not look away from either. A man pinned to the earth beneath the rotting insides of a camel while his entire city laughs until it falls over, and the same man ﷺ, minutes later, on his feet with one finger raised toward heaven, utterly unbroken. The trench of fire was real on the day Abu Jahl charged, and the filth was real on the day no fire came, and the Sheikh's deepest point is that both days were the same care of the same Lord at work: one a shield, the other a crown. The God who could wall His beloved ﷺ behind angels chose, on some days, to let the blow land, not because He had looked away, but because the blow was building something a rescue could not have built.

So ask what it was building, because the answer is the question this day puts to your own faith. It was building the proof that this deen traveled into the world on patient, bleeding backs and not on ease, bought and not given cheap. It was building the rank of the best generation, settled forever beyond all argument. And it was building a lamp for you, for the exact night you find yourself cornered and the help of Allah feels impossibly far. Khabbab asked how long, and so will you. The answer he received is the answer you will receive: not a denial of the promise, never that, but a correction of the clock. You are being hasty. The help of Allah is near, the verse says, even while the hardship is still

pressing on the back. You are asked only to trust the timing to its Owner.

And there is a quieter pair of asks underneath the great one. It asks you to plan like the house behind Safa, choosing the rival clan and the trusted youth and the door on the busiest street, using every lawful means with intelligence, never imagining that careful planning betrays trust, because the most intelligent man who ever lived ﷺ planned to the last detail and trusted to the last breath and saw no contradiction in it. And it asks you, perhaps hardest of all, to write no one off. The donkeys of his father's house will accept Islam before Umar will, said a good man in real pain, and within two years Umar was Muslim and would one day lead this ummah. Guidance is Allah's file, not ours, and the mercy was already in Umar's eyes by the loading camel, years before his tongue caught up to it.

So take this brutal, hopeful day down into your own. When the carcass lands, stay in your sajdah and finish your prayer; the One who let it fall is the One who will raise you from it. When you ask how long and hear only you are being hasty, believe the promise and surrender the clock. Be grateful to the land that lets you pray, and keep your heart from closing the book on any soul Allah may yet guide. May Allah send His peace and blessings upon the one who was choked at the house of his Lord and would not stop praying, who stood beneath the filth of his enemies and rose unbroken, and who opened for his people a sea road to a just king. Make us firm as You made his companions firm, and patient as You made him ﷺ patient, and when our own narrow places close around us, let the ease that You have hidden inside the hardship reach us in Your time, and not a moment before it is good for us.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 15: torture to the Prophet ﷺ and the first hijrah to Abyssinia (Memphis Islamic Center, 2011). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (96:9-10, 96:13-19, 40:28, 29:2-3, 2:214, 5:82), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing has been followed.

The so-called Satanic Verses

One real prostration, one planted tale

Some days of the seerah you study because they are beautiful. This one you study because, sooner or later, someone is going to quote it at you. So Dr. Yasir Qadhi does something here that he does almost nowhere else in the series: he puts the verdict before the story. The tale that some have called the Satanic Verses has no authentic chain back to the Prophet ﷺ. An early master of hadith, of the very generation that built the science, called it a fabrication concocted by the enemies of Islam to try to destroy it. And the one version of that night which survives every test of scrutiny contains nothing satanic at all. Hold that conclusion like a lamp, because we are about to walk into a room that has frightened a great many Muslims, and the only thing that ever frightened them in it is the dark.

The honest way to teach this, the Sheikh says, is the hard way. It would be comfortable to announce that the whole affair was invented by missionaries and orientalist and be done with it. It was not. Some version of these reports really does sit in a few of our own books, and our religion does not permit us to bury a truth because it is inconvenient; it commands us to face it, weigh it, and answer it in the open. Walk it slowly, and by the last page you will know this story better than the people who weaponize it.

The rumor that crossed the sea

Pick the thread up where the previous week set it down. In Rajab of the fifth year of the dawah, the Prophet ﷺ had given a small band of believers permission to emigrate across the Red Sea to Abyssinia, to a Christian king under whom they could worship Allah without torture. About fifteen of them went, eleven men and four women. And then, astonishingly, within roughly three months, by Shawwal, they came back. Back across the water, back to Makkah, back to the city of whips and branding irons they had just barely escaped. Why would anyone do that?

Anyone who has ever moved far from home already knows half the answer. The hardest stretch of any migration is not the danger you left; it is the first arrival. No house yet, no friends yet, a strange language, strange food, a whole new set of norms pressing in from every side. The muhajirun were safe in Abyssinia, but they were strangers there, and the heart of a stranger leans homeward with a force that has nothing to do with logic. Into that ache dropped a rumor almost too good to be true: Quraysh have accepted Islam. Fifteen people in a foreign land had no way to send a delegation back to verify it, and some news the heart simply wants to believe. So they packed and started home, and only on the road did the truth catch up with them. Not a lie, the Sheikh is careful to say. An exaggeration. A rumor leaves home a hand span long and comes back the length of an arm.

But underneath every exaggeration there is usually a kernel of something real, and underneath this one there was a real night in Makkah. That night is not in the obscure books. It is in Sahih al-Bukhari.

The night Makkah fell into prostration

Ramadan of the fifth year, roughly two months after the migrants had sailed. The Prophet ﷺ stood and recited Surah an-Najm from its first verse to its last, perhaps fifteen or twenty minutes of recitation, with Muslims and idol worshippers gathered in the same audience. If you know the surah, you already feel what that room was feeling. The verses are short and sharp, the questions landing like hammer strokes. It moves through the great nations of the past, Aad and Thamud and the people of Nuh and the overturned cities of Lut, each one mightier than Quraysh and each one swept away. This is a warner, the surah declares, of the same kind as the warners of old, and the Hour is drawing near, and none but Allah can lift its veil. The pitch climbs verse upon verse until, near the very end, the surah wheels around and addresses the listeners themselves:

Then at this statement do you wonder? And you laugh and do not weep While you are proudly sporting? So prostrate to Allāh and worship [Him].

QUR'AN 53:59-62

And he ﷺ fell into prostration. The Muslims fell with him. And then, in the report of Ibn Abbas, radiyallahu anhu, preserved in Sahih al-Bukhari, the mushrikun went down too. The very men who had mocked him, who had hounded his followers across the sea, beaten for one moment by the sheer power of what they had just heard, found themselves on their faces before Allah behind Muhammad ﷺ. In one narration nothing that heard the surah was left standing, neither human nor jinn. For the first time in the whole history of the dawah, the entire city bowed together, and there was no idol anywhere in that prostration. Just one old man was too proud to go down. He scooped a handful of dust, pressed it to his forehead, and said: this is enough for me. In

another telling it was one of the two staunchest enemies of the Prophet ﷺ who refused, but the detail is a footnote to the scene, not its heart.

That, says Dr. Yasir Qadhi, is the entire authentic event, and his first point about it is exactly that simple: the Bukhari version needs no far-fetched tale bolted onto it, because the surah itself is the whole explanation. Once you have felt the momentum of an-Najm you stop being surprised that it bent the knees of its enemies. That is all that happened. And watch what the rumor mill made of it. By the time the scene had crossed the sea to Abyssinia, Quraysh prostrated behind him had swollen into Quraysh have entered Islam. That single arm's length of exaggeration is what emptied the first hijrah and sent fifteen homesick believers sailing back toward the swords.

A bird, an orientalist, and a borrowed name

So where do the so-called Satanic Verses come in? The first thing to know is where they do not come in. Not in Bukhari. Not in Muslim. Not in any of the six canonical books of hadith. Not in the Musnad of Imam Ahmad. Not even in Ibn Ishaq and Ibn Hisham, the two standard early sources for the sira. The added details live somewhere else entirely: in the vast catch-all collections that gathered up everything, with at-Tabari chief among them. And Tabari, to his credit, warned his readers himself in the introduction to his history. I am going to record everything I hear, he said in effect, authentic or not; my task is simply to report it. Bukhari was a critical collector who sifted and rejected; Tabari announced openly that he was an uncritical one, an open channel passing along whatever reached him. Finding a report in his pages, then, proves only that somebody, once, told that story. It

is the unfiltered wire feed of Islamic history, not the vetted front page.

Even the unforgettable name is borrowed from outside the tradition. You will not find the phrase Satanic Verses anywhere in the Qur'an, in the Sunnah, or even in the weak reports themselves. It was coined roughly a century before this lecture by Sir William Muir, a Presbyterian minister who became a professor of Islamic studies in Scotland and one of the first orientalist to write a major sira in English. He gave the episode that chapter title, and the label stuck. A novelist much later took the same phrase for a work of fiction built upon the very worst version of the tale, and the storm around that book is its own separate history, not this one. What did the Islamic sources that do carry the reports call it? Something else entirely: qissat al-gharaniq, the story of the gharaniq. The gharaniq is a bird. Modern Arabic linguists differ over its exact English equivalent, the heron, the crane, the pelican, but they agree on the shape of it: a bird with a long neck, the kind that climbs high into the sky. Remember that bird. The whole inflated tale turns on it.

And here is the Sheikh's signature move, the reason this episode is taught at all rather than quietly skipped. He refuses to pretend the whole thing was simply manufactured by Islam's enemies, because it was not, and a teacher who shades the truth has already lost the argument. The reports sit in some of our own sources, and our religion tells us not to bury that fact but to bring it into the light and examine it. So examine it we will.

What the weak reports claim

Version two reaches back to a famous and respected narrator of the generation after the Companions, a man who, crucially, never once saw the Prophet ﷺ. Fix that detail in your mind, because it

is the master flaw: the chain is broken at exactly the link that matters most, the link to the Messenger ﷺ himself. Here is what the report claims. Early in Surah an-Najm the recitation names the three great idols of the Arabs in order to tear them down:

So have you considered al-Lāt and al-‘Uzzā? And Manāt, the third - the other one?

QUR'AN 53:19-20

The surah's own argument here is withering: you assign these goddesses to Allah as daughters, while for yourselves you crave sons and bury your daughters in the sand, so you hand your Lord the very thing you despise. But at that exact moment, the report claims, Shaytan cried out two extra lines in his own voice, lines that praised the idols instead of demolishing them: these are the exalted gharaniq, the high-flying cranes, and their intercession is to be hoped for, idols that would carry your prayers upward the way the long-necked birds climb the sky. According to this version, the mushrikun heard the interjection clearly. The Muslims, the report insists, heard nothing at all.

For Quraysh, two lines like that would change everything. This is the point the seerah keeps having to make about them, because we forget it: Quraysh never had a quarrel with Allah. They believed in Allah. Their entire war with the Prophet ﷺ was over the idols he kept rejecting, the gods of their fathers he kept calling worthless stone. So if those idols had suddenly been honored as intercessors, then in their minds Muhammad ﷺ had at last made room for their gods, and the dispute was over. That, says version two, is why the city bowed when he prostrated: we are all in agreement now, so we will go down with you. And that is

why the news racing across the sea sounded so much like a mass conversion.

Version three is uglier, and it is the one the enemies of Islam reach for, because it alone gives them what they want. Here it is not Shaytan shouting over the recitation from outside; it is the Prophet ﷺ himself who, in a pause of the revelation, mistakes Shaytan's interjection for the voice of Jibril and recites the two corrupt lines with his own tongue. Later, when Jibril reviews the surah and arrives at those lines, he disowns them: I never brought you these. The Prophet ﷺ is left grieved and shaken, and in this telling Allah then sends down the verse of Surah al-Hajj about Shaytan casting something into the recitation of the prophets. Understand plainly why this is the version the missionaries and polemicists and the novel were built upon. If it stood, it would mean a prophet who could not tell an angel from a devil, and a preacher who trimmed his message to court a crowd, one theology today and another tomorrow. That is what is actually at stake in something as dry-sounding as the grading of a chain. The whole assault stands or falls on whether these broken chains can carry weight.

The scholars take their stations

A great company of scholars crossed versions two and three off the page from the very beginning. Ibn Khuzaymah, an early giant of hadith who worked at the same exacting level as Bukhari and Muslim, was asked directly about the story of Shaytan inspiring the Prophet ﷺ, and his answer was flat: this is a fabrication, the work of the enemies of Islam to try to destroy it. From the earliest generations, serious critics were already naming it for what it was. Open almost any reliable modern book of sira and you will find it either absent or stamped a fabrication. In 1966 an entire

international conference of scholars convened in Cairo over this one story, and its conclusion was the same word: fabricated. And in our own era al-Albani, whom the Sheikh calls the greatest scholar of hadith of recent times, devoted a whole booklet to nothing but this story, chasing the report through every source it appears in and showing, chain by chain, that every last one is weak.

Now comes the part that takes scholarly honesty: there are enormous names on the other side. Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, the greatest commentator Sahih al-Bukhari has ever had, accepted version two. He conceded that each of the five or six reports is individually weak, but argued from a genuine and accepted principle of hadith science: that enough independently weak chains, all telling the same story without copying one another, can prop one another up until the report as a whole becomes acceptable. Al-Albani's booklet is aimed at exactly this argument. The principle is sound, he answers; but it carries conditions, and he walks through, in technical detail, why this story fails them, so that the weak chains here cannot be stacked into strength. That debate, between two masters who agree on the rule and split on its application, is the real scholarly heart of the matter.

Ibn Taymiyyah went further still and accepted even version three, anchoring it in the verse of Surah al-Hajj:

And We did not send before you any messenger or prophet except that when he spoke [or recited], Satan threw into it [some misunderstanding]. But Allāh abolishes that which Satan throws in; then Allāh makes precise His verses. And Allāh is Knowing and Wise.

QUR'AN 22:52

The word the verse uses, tamanna, can mean to wish, but Ibn Taymiyyah argued, citing pre-Islamic poetry and a reading carried from Ibn Abbas himself, that its older meaning is to recite. Read it that way and the verse seems to describe the gharaniq incident exactly: the prophet recites, Shaytan throws something in, and Allah erases it and firms up His own verses. And the verse immediately after, he argued, settles the case:

[That is] so He may make what Satan throws in [i.e., asserts] a trial for those within whose hearts is disease and those hard of heart. And indeed, the wrongdoers are in extreme dissension.

QUR'AN 22:53

A trial for those whose hearts are diseased, Ibn Taymiyyah reasoned, means people who heard something with their ears out in the world, not something that passed silently through a prophet's private thoughts. The scholars who reject the story read the same two verses in a completely different key: tamanna as wishing, Shaytan forever scheming to tamper with the hopes and intentions of the prophets, and Allah wiping out his every interference, with no connection to the gharaniq at all. As for the claim that Surah al-Hajj came down over this very night, the Sheikh notes that most scholars place that surah's revelation around the time of the hijrah, years later, though he adds that we rarely possess a firm chronology for individual verses, so an early date for this one cannot be ruled out. But read those two verses once more and notice what both camps agree on. Whatever Shaytan throws, Allah abolishes. Then Allah makes His verses precise. The verse at the dead center of the storm is, on every reading, a promise of protection.

Can a prophet be deceived?

For most of the scholars who rejected the story, though, the deciding court was never the chains at all. It was theology. One scholar of our own era put it with startling force: even if the chains were as bright as the sun, he said, I would still not accept it. Qadi Iyad, whose beloved *ash-Shifa* fills two volumes with the rights, ranks, and miracles of the Prophet ﷺ, argued as much from the heart as the head: how could anyone who truly loves him ﷺ believe this of him? The principle they were all defending has a name, *ismah*, the divine protection Allah wraps around His prophets. If revelation could become a channel that Shaytan edits, even for two lines, then every verse in the Book is suddenly negotiable, and the whole structure of trust collapses. This is exactly the line at which Ibn Hajar drew his own border. Version two, he held, leaves the Prophet ﷺ untouched, because a devil shouting over the recitation from outside is the devil's deed and not the Prophet's; but version three, where the Prophet ﷺ recites the corrupt lines with his own tongue, Ibn Hajar would not carry. He kept the one and discarded the other precisely to guard the Prophet's ﷺ *ismah*.

So how could Ibn Taymiyyah, of all people, a titan of orthodoxy, accept version three? Because his map of *ismah* is drawn with finer borders, and the Sheikh walks his students through it fairly. Prophets, on Ibn Taymiyyah's understanding, can never lie; lying is impossible for them. They can never commit major sins, and never anything vulgar or indecent. But they can make judgment calls, *ijtihād*, that Allah then corrects, the way revelation reviewed the Prophet's ﷺ decision to take ransom from the prisoners of Badr. And they can slip in small, genuinely human ways, on two unbreakable conditions: they never persist, and they repent at once. The proof Ibn Taymiyyah reaches for is the one no Muslim

can argue with. Adam, a prophet by consensus and a rank of creation above us all, was told not to eat from the tree, and he ate. And to our own Prophet ﷺ Allah said:

That Allāh may forgive for you what preceded of your sin [i.e., errors] and what will follow and complete His favor upon you and guide you to a straight path

QUR'AN 48:2

A promise of forgiveness, past and future, implies there is something there to be forgiven. Then Ibn Taymiyyah adds the sentence the Sheikh pauses over, because it sounds alarming aloud and rings true the moment you sit with it. In that immediate repentance, he says, lies the very perfection of the prophets, for had Allah made them angels, they could never have been role models for us at all. They are human, not superhuman, and their humanity is as perfect as humanity gets. You do not have to follow Ibn Taymiyyah the whole way into version three; the Sheikh does not, and says so plainly. But that one sentence about the prophets is worth carrying for life.

And then Ibn Taymiyyah, a scholar the Sheikh says he admires immensely, takes the whole weapon and turns it around. Suppose, he says, the story were true. It would prove the exact opposite of everything the enemies of Islam want from it. It would not show the Qur'an corrupted; it would show the Qur'an protected, because an attempt at corruption was made and Allah Himself rebuffed it, erased it, and firmed up His verses so cleanly that no generation of Muslims since has ever been confused about what the Qur'an contains. The attempt was made and defeated in full view, and the defeat is the point. And it would not show the Prophet ﷺ a deceiver; it would show him the most truthful of all who ever spoke. Because a man inventing a

scripture buries his embarrassments, and this story, if it happened at all, could only ever have reached us because he ﷺ reported it against himself, the one tale that appeared to impugn him. A forger hides the thing that makes him look bad. He broadcast it.

Ibn Taymiyyah proves the pattern from a verse no one disputes. The Qur'an once corrected the Prophet ﷺ in public, over the affair of Zayd and Zaynab, radiyallahu anhuma. It told him openly that he had concealed within himself what Allah was going to disclose, that he had feared the people when Allah had more right to be feared, and then revelation went further and performed the marriage itself, We married her to you, a nikah pronounced in the Qur'an and recited by the ummah ever since. There is a report in Bukhari that if the Prophet ﷺ had been one to hide any part of the Qur'an, he would have hidden that verse, the one recording his own correction. He hid nothing. Allah is not embarrassed by the truth, and neither was His Messenger ﷺ. And if he did not bury the verse that corrected him over Zaynab, why would he have buried the gharaniq, had it occurred?

The Sheikh marks these two, the gharaniq and the story of Zaynab, as the two most sensitive episodes in the entire seerah, and his policy toward both is identical. He does not believe in hiding the truth. He says it would almost be easier to skip them, especially for an audience in a Muslim land, and simply teach the gentle, comfortable parts. But we do not live in that world. A Muslim who never hears these stories from a teacher who loves them will one day hear them from an enemy who does not, dressed in their ugliest telling, with no defenses prepared and no answers ready. He has met such Muslims, hit cold with the worst version and left reeling. Ignorance, he says, is not bliss here.

Knowledge is power. The believer's armor against this story is not to look away from it but to know it down to its chains.

Where the Sheikh lands

Having laid the giants out fairly, Ibn Taymiyyah on one flank, Ibn Hajar holding the middle, and the long line of rejectors from Ibn Khuzaymah down to al-Albani on the other, Dr. Yasir Qadhi gives his own verdict with a student's adab. Who is he, he asks, to compete with men of that rank? And yet a student may give his considered opinion, and his is this: version one is all we need, and versions two and three can be crossed out. He offers seven reasons in all, and the two he leads with carry most of the weight.

First, the purity of revelation. Allah has guaranteed the wahy, verse after verse insisting that no falsehood can force its way into His Book. And even with Ibn Taymiyyah's careful explanation in front of him, the Sheikh's heart will not accept that Shaytan's voice could thread itself into that channel for even two lines; he grants Ibn Taymiyyah his answer, that the channel was cleared again at once, but his own heart inclines toward a purity that was never breached at all. Second, and more decisively, there is simply nothing here to accept. Not one version of the gharaniq story carries an authentic chain. Not one runs unbroken back to the Prophet ﷺ. Every single report is weak. A story that exists only in broken chains, and stands in tension with a guarantee Allah made about His own speech, does not get the benefit of the doubt.

The questions from the floor that night finished the job, and the Sheikh lets them. Did any scholar ever claim those two lines were part of the Qur'an? No one, not a single Muslim, not even the scholars who entertained the story, ever held that they belonged

in the mushaf; their very wording does not sound like the Qur'an. How much power does Shaytan truly have over a person? As much, the Sheikh answered, as you give him, and the verse itself says his throwing becomes a fitnah only for hearts that already carry disease and hardness. And as one questioner put it with the plainest logic of all, the Prophet ﷺ reciting praise of idols would contradict every syllable he had been sent to say. Strip the weak versions away, then, and nothing at all goes missing from the history. Bukhari's night explains the prostration. The prostration explains the rumor. The rumor explains the migrants sailing home. The day stands complete and whole, and there is not one satanic syllable anywhere inside it.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to leave this chapter as a clever piece of scholarly defense, a debate you can now win, and miss the worship buried inside it. So before you close it, take the day down into your own chest, because it asks three things of you.

It asks you to meet hard things with knowledge instead of fear. The Sheikh refused to skip the most dangerous story in the books precisely because he knew that one day, in a dorm room or a comment thread or across a dinner table, someone would set it down in front of you in its worst form and watch your face. The Muslim who has never heard it crumbles. The Muslim who has walked it slowly, who knows where the reports live and how the chains break, simply answers. That is the difference between a faith that panics and a faith that stands, and the only thing between the two is that you bothered to learn. Ignorance was never safety. Knowledge is the armor. Learn the answer before you ever need it, and then it is there when you do.

It asks you to trust the Qur'an to defend itself. Read the verse at the center of the storm one final time and feel where it lands: whatever Shaytan throws in, Allah abolishes, and then Allah makes His verses precise. Both camps of scholars, the ones who linked it to this night and the ones who read it broadly, arrive at the identical promise. The Book is guarded. Fourteen centuries have passed, and with everything this ummah has ever disagreed about, there has never once been a disagreement about what the Qur'an actually is. You are holding something the enemy tried, and failed, to alter by so much as a line. Let that steady you the next time a doubt is dressed up to look like scholarship.

And it asks you to love the recitation enough to let it move you. Underneath all the chains and conferences and refutations, the only authentic core of this entire night is breathtakingly simple: a man recited Surah an-Najm from the depth of his heart, and the Book bent the knees of its own enemies. No sword forced them down, no state, no army, not even a friendly crowd. The words alone, falling on hard pagan hearts, pulled the mockers of Makkah onto their faces beside the believers. That is what the Qur'an can do to a human being met with an open heart, and it is exactly what Shaytan's whispering cannot do, because the verse tells us his throwing only ever snags the heart already diseased and hardened. So keep yours soft. Give him nothing to catch on. Recite an-Najm tonight, slowly, and remember what the Book once did to the very people fighting it, and ask Allah to do the smaller, quieter, greater thing to you: to make you firm upon His Book as He has made its verses firm, to keep your heart soft and free of the disease that turns a trial into a fall, to let the recitation of His words bend you the way it bent Makkah on that Ramadan night, and to send His finest praise and peace upon the most truthful of all who ever spoke, our master Muhammad ﷺ, al-

amin, the trustworthy, who carried the Book whole and hid not one letter of it, and upon his family and his companions, ameen.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 16: the incident of the so-called Satanic Verses (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (53:59-62, 53:19-20, 22:52, 22:53, 48:2), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The second migration to Abyssinia

The truth stands before a throne

The believers who sailed home from Abyssinia came back for a Makkah that did not exist. A rumor had crossed the sea ahead of them, the kind of news a hunted people lets itself believe: that Quraysh had finally accepted Islam. It had grown out of one real moment, the day the disbelievers of Makkah fell into prostration at the sheer power of Surah an-Najm, and around that true moment a false tale had wrapped itself, the story Dr. Yasir Qadhi weighed the week before and set aside as having no sound basis at all. Whatever its source, the report reached the exiles, and they packed up their exile and turned for home. On the road, hearts running ahead of them, they asked the first caravan they met the only question that mattered: have our people entered Islam? And the answer came back like a stone dropped into still water. You have heard falsely. Makkah is exactly as you left it, and the new religion is still being hunted down.

Day seventeen is the story of what they did when the door home turned out to be locked, and it carries three treasures that belong together: Abu Bakr handing back the only protection he had rather than pray his Qur'an in silence; a second migration, more than four times the size of the first, setting sail for a foreign king; and Ja'far ibn Abi Talib, radiyallahu anhu, standing in a court already bribed against him, refusing to lower his head, telling a

Christian king the truth about his Prophet ﷺ so beautifully that the king wept. It is a day, beginning to end, about what la ilaha illa Allah costs in a world where every kind of safety has a price, and about a God who keeps His servants when every earthly protection has been spent.

Seventeen come home to nothing

The reports differ on how many made that first migration, somewhere between fourteen and seventeen, and the strongest count the Sheikh gives is twelve men and five women. They were a tiny vanguard, now caught between two worlds. Makkah lay one ridge ahead, with their kin, their homes, everything they owned; behind them lay a land of strange speech they had only just escaped. When the caravan told them the truth, some said it plainly: let us turn around now, it was a mistake to come back. But stand where they stood, the Sheikh asks, with home that close, and you understand why they pressed on the last step to see for themselves.

Only there was no simply walking back in. In a world built entirely on the question of who protects whom, these believers had broken from their tribes to make that journey; in the Sheikh's modern image, they had cancelled their own passports, and now they were trying to re-enter a city that owed them nothing. Leaving your land in that age was so heavy a thing that exile stood in later Islamic law as a punishment in its own right, a sentence handed down for certain crimes; the world has changed so completely, the Sheikh observes, that what was once a punishment now sounds to us like a holiday. But these believers had inflicted that punishment on themselves, willingly, for the sake of one sentence: there is no god but Allah. And now each of them, to set foot in Makkah again, needed a new patron, an entry

visa in human form. Much of this day is the story of how three of them went looking for that protection, and what they did when they found it.

The protection of Allah is enough

Rewind to the day the first migrants set out, because the greatest of all the companions had meant to go with them. Of the four men we think of first among the early believers, only Abu Bakr and Uthman ibn Affan, radiyallahu anhuma, could have migrated at all: Umar had not yet accepted Islam, and Ali was a child of nine or ten. Abu Bakr had loaded his camels and joined the caravan for the sea when they passed the lands of Ibn ad-Daghinah, a chief of a neighboring tribe and an old trading partner who knew him personally, and when he learned a man like this was leaving, he refused to accept it. Someone like you does not deserve to be driven out, he said. Go back, and let me extend my protection over you. It was not a thing he could simply declare, for Makkah was not his city; offering his protection to a man of Quraysh was like one country quietly naturalizing another's citizen, the Sheikh explains. So Ibn ad-Daghinah came to the Kaaba at the hour the chiefs gathered, announced his protection over Abu Bakr, and Quraysh, unwilling to snub a neighboring chief, agreed, on one condition: Abu Bakr must not pray in public. He was of the elite of Quraysh, and before Umar accepted Islam there were only a handful brave enough to pray openly at the Kaaba, the Prophet ﷺ chief among them. That public prayer, Quraysh said, has to stop.

So Abu Bakr went home and did something the books record as a first in this religion. He could pray in his own house, the agreement allowed that, so he extended his house, built a room onto it, and made that room a place of worship, the first masjid

ever built, it is said, only a man reading the loopholes of his agreement to the letter and finding room in them to worship his Lord. There he prayed aloud, because it was his house and the words said his house. But his recitation would not stay behind his walls. His daughter Aisha, radiyallahu anha, tells us he was easily moved to tears, that when he recited the Qur'an he wept from the fear of Allah; Ibn Ishaq describes the women and children of Quraysh gathering in amazement to listen. Picture the smallness of that city, the houses close, the nights silent; a recitation like that carried for blocks, and Quraysh could feel their own families leaning toward the sound.

They could not have it. They sent for Ibn ad-Daghinah: Abu Bakr could not pray even inside his own house. The chief brought him the only two options Quraysh had left, stop praying or release me from my word, and Abu Bakr did not hesitate. I return your protection to you, he said, and I am content with the protection of Allah. From that day until his hijrah he lived in Makkah under no human cover at all. And here is why that matters so much, the Sheikh reminds us, pointing back two weeks in the story: it was in this very period of exposure that Abu Bakr threw himself between the Prophet ﷺ and a man choking him, crying out, would you kill a man for saying, my Lord is Allah? The mob turned on Abu Bakr and beat him until he could not rise for over a week, and no one in Makkah was obliged to lift a finger, because the man who had given everything for the protection of Allah had nothing of this world left to shield him.

The eye that grew jealous

The returnees from Abyssinia ran the same calculation, one by one. Uthman ibn Maz'un, one of the famous early companions with an early martyrdom waiting for him, reached out to an old

friend from before Islam: al-Walid ibn al-Mughirah, one of the most powerful men in Makkah, a rival to Abu Jahl, the father of the great Khalid ibn al-Walid, and the very man the Qur'an describes in the surah of the wrapped one, who turned the revelation over and over searching for some word to throw at it and at last, defeated, called it a strange kind of magic.

*Leave Me with the one I created alone And to whom I
granted extensive wealth And children present [with him]*

QUR'AN 74:11-13

That was al-Walid: created alone, then granted stretching wealth and sons all around him, and still he set himself against the truth. He announced his protection over Uthman publicly, and it held perfectly. Not a hair on Uthman's head was touched.

It held too well. Ibn Ishaq tells us Uthman would move through the city in his untouchable safety and watch the other believers tormented, Bilal, Ibn Mas'ud, the ones who had returned with no powerful name, and the very security he enjoyed began to eat him alive. There was nothing sinful in his situation; he had done nothing wrong. But his conscience would not rest. How are they suffering, he asked, while I sit safe behind a friendship left over from the days of ignorance? So he went to al-Walid: my uncle, take your protection back. The old man was bewildered. Has anyone harmed you? Have I fallen short? Neither, said Uthman. I cannot bear to enjoy a safety my brothers and sisters do not share. They went to the Kaaba and dissolved the pact in public, Uthman insisting the choice was his alone and no failing of al-Walid's.

Walking home, free now and unprotected, Uthman passed a gathering of Quraysh around a guest of honor: Labid ibn Rabi'ah,

one of the towering poets of Arabia, who would one day accept Islam but had not yet. Listen, said Labid, and he recited: truly, everything besides Allah is worthless. You have spoken the truth, Uthman called out, for the Prophet ﷺ himself would later say it was the truest line a poet ever spoke, one of the very few he ﷺ ever quoted. But then Labid went on: and every blessing, without doubt, must one day vanish. You have lied, said Uthman, the bliss of Paradise never ends. A stir went through the crowd; their guest had been heckled, and Labid, with no idea this man was a believer, asked Quraysh since when they let visitors be insulted. A man rose in anger and struck Uthman across the face so hard his eye swelled shut. Al-Walid came rushing: do you see what leaving my protection costs you? Come back under it. And Uthman gave the answer the seerah has never let go of: by Allah, my other eye is in need of what this eye has just received. He would not go back.

But the Sheikh holds a balance here, and we must hold it with him. Not every companion gave back his protector, and there is no blame on any of them; people stand at different levels of strength, and the religion has room for every one of them. The lesson is not that comfort is a sin. It is only that we must never let comfort be the thing that chooses our level for us.

One who kept his protector was Abu Salamah, the husband of Umm Salamah and a cousin of the Prophet ﷺ through his mother. By tribe he was Banu Makhzum, the clan of Abu Jahl himself, the last door he could knock on, so he sent instead to his uncle Abu Talib, already carrying the heaviest protection in Makkah, and Abu Talib simply said yes. Banu Makhzum arrived in a fury: you have taken your nephew Muhammad from us, and now one of our own too? If I am going to protect one nephew, Abu Talib answered, why can I not protect the other? They

surrounded the house, the argument heating, and then help rose from the one direction no one would expect. Abu Lahab stood up. Have you not troubled this old man enough? Let him be, or by God I will stand at his side in everything. And because his weight could not be brushed aside, Banu Makhzum backed down. Abu Lahab was not defending Islam; what moved him was the same tribal love that moved Abu Talib himself, the kind that saves no soul, the affection that sheltered the Prophet ﷺ a whole life without ever accepting what he taught. And yet, the Prophet ﷺ would say in Madinah years later, Allah sometimes strengthens this religion through a person who does not even believe in it. The day Banu Makhzum walked from that door, the living proof of that hadith stood there wearing Abu Lahab's face.

Eighty sails south

Makkah refused to change. The returnees stayed two or three weeks, long enough to confirm with their own eyes that the persecution was exactly as the caravan had said, and long enough for something quiet and decisive to happen. Every Muslim in the city now heard, firsthand, from people they trusted, what Abyssinia had actually been. A strange land, yes, a strange tongue, culturally difficult in every way. But there were no whips there. The migrants had lived with food in their hands and safety in their streets, and those two things, the Sheikh reminds us, are after iman itself the very greatest blessings Allah gives anyone: to wake in the security of your home, with the sustenance of your day before you.

Here Dr. Yasir Qadhi offers a reading he is careful to mark as his own opinion. Perhaps, he says, this is precisely why Allah allowed that first migration to end in a false rumor and a journey that looked entirely wasted. Because nothing on earth convinces

a human heart like word of mouth. No announcement could have moved a third or even half of Makkah's believers across the sea to a foreign land; but seventeen returning eyewitnesses, telling their neighbors with their own mouths how safe that land had been, could move them, and did. When the second migration set out, more than eighty believers went, more than four times the first count, and at their head walked Ja'far ibn Abi Talib, the Prophet's ﷺ own cousin. The wasted journey had not been wasted at all. It had been the seed.

Not everyone crossed a second time. Of that first seventeen, some chose to stay; the most famous was Uthman ibn Affan, who remained and would later make his hijrah to Madinah, fighting at Badr and after. Mus'ab ibn Umayr, the gentle young man whose own parents had tortured him more cruelly than almost anyone, stayed at the Prophet's ﷺ side, and within a few years would become the very first man he ﷺ sent ahead to Madinah. But weigh the departing number the way the Sheikh insists. When the seerah says tribe, do not picture thousands; picture ten, for Banu Hashim was ten brothers, the sons of Abdul Muttalib, and the sub-tribes of Quraysh were small like that. The whole of Makkah held at most perhaps a thousand souls, very possibly only five or six hundred, so eighty believers walking out meant a tenth of the population or more, simply leaving. There was no precedent for it anywhere in Arabia, and it had landed on the proudest tribe of all, the custodians of the sacred house. It was an unbearable public shame, and Quraysh resolved the bleeding had to be stopped.

Leather, bribes, and a king who listens

Their weapon was the oldest one in the world: money. Quraysh chose two envoys, and chief among them was Amr ibn al-As, not yet a Muslim and already the shrewdest political mind the tribe

possessed. The Sheikh pauses to be just to him: once Amr accepts Islam we say nothing of him but good, for he became a companion and carried that same statecraft into the service of the religion; but at this stage that cunning was working for Quraysh. With him went a second man whose name the scholars dispute, the gentler of the two. They were loaded with Makkah's most prized export, the fine camel leather the city was famous for, the kind of luxury Abyssinia could not produce, and pointed at the court of the Najashi. Najashi, the Sheikh explains, is not a name but a title, like Caesar for Rome or Pharaoh for Egypt; this king's own name was As-hama, and his grave is still known in that land, a place friends of the Sheikh have stood at.

Umm Salamah, radiyallahu anha, who lived these years and became the chief narrator of all that happened in Abyssinia, tells what came next, her report preserved in Sahih al-Bukhari. The Muslims had been received with the best of hospitality, granted security in their religion, free to worship without the smallest hindrance; we did not hear so much as one word of ridicule, she says with wonder, knowing how a minority among a majority is usually treated. Then the envoys arrived and worked the court before they ever worked the king. They went to every minister, one by one, pressing leather and rich gifts into their hands with the same whisper: tomorrow we will ask for our runaways; counsel the king to give them back, and remember this gift. Open bribery, the Sheikh calls it, and he lingers, because in our own age the same transaction wears a respectable name: pay a public servant directly and we call it corruption; pay into his campaign and we call it lobbying. Islam forbade it outright, lest the gift bend the judgment of one who has no claim on the public's money beyond his wage. And here were Quraysh, greasing every hand in the court.

The next day they came before the throne, and their pitch touched every nerve a ruler has. These are foolish youths, they said, who abandoned the religion of their own people without entering yours or any we know; they have invented something new, rebelled against their elders, and we, who know their faults better than anyone, have been sent to take them home. They frightened the king on every front at once: religiously, that these were fanatics of neither faith; socially, that they were rebels against their fathers; and beneath it the hint that the trade between the two lands and the king's grip on a band of unknown foreigners were better served by handing them back, for every government fears an unknown. And the bribed ministers rose on cue: our king, what these men say makes sense; these are strangers; return them.

*And they [i.e., the disbelievers] planned, but Allah planned.
And Allah is the best of planners.*

QUR'AN 3:54

The Najashi refused to be hurried. No, by Allah, he said: people who chose my land over every other land, who came to me and asked for my protection, will not be handed over until I summon them and hear what they have to say. He was a king with no earthly reason to listen to a band of refugees over the loaded envoys of a wealthy trading partner, and he insisted on hearing both sides anyway. The Prophet ﷺ had called him a just king, and here, before the believers had spoken a word, was the proof: they planned, and Allah planned.

We will say what our Prophet ﷺ taught us

The summons terrified them. None had ever stood before the king, and now the palace wanted them all at once, their entire

future hanging on the answer. What will we say? And Ja'far gave them the sentence that became the spine of the whole day: we will say what our Prophet ﷺ taught us, and we will not change the truth, whatever comes of it. They entered a hall crowded with the king's viziers and his patriarchs. Amr and his companion prostrated before the throne, as everyone did before the kings of that age; to men who bowed before stones, bowing before a living emperor cost nothing. Ja'far walked in upright and would not lower his head by an inch. The ministers were scandalized: how dare you enter without prostrating to the king? And Ja'far answered, with eighty lives hanging on the audience, our Prophet ﷺ has taught us that we prostrate to no one but Allah. They opened the most important meeting of their lives by declining its etiquette.

The king asked the obvious thing: what is this religion of yours, that has made you leave the faith of your people without entering mine, or the Judaism or Christianity we know? And Ja'far, through a translator, with no warning and no time to prepare, delivered one of the most beloved speeches in the whole of our history. O King, we were a people of jahiliyyah. We worshipped idols, we ate the flesh of dead animals, we committed every indecency, we cut the ties of kinship, we wronged our neighbors, and the strong among us devoured the weak. We lived like that until Allah sent us a Messenger from among ourselves, a man whose lineage we knew, whose house we knew, whose truthfulness we knew, who had never told a single lie in his life. He called us to worship Allah alone and to throw away the stones our fathers served. He commanded us to speak the truth, to keep our trusts, to join the ties of kinship, to be good to our neighbors; he forbade us bloodshed and false testimony, the devouring of the orphan's property and the slander of chaste women; he

ordered us to pray and to fast and to give in charity. So we believed in him and followed him. And for that our own people fell upon us and tortured us, to force us back to the idols, and when their cruelty overwhelmed us, we came out to your land, and we chose you above every other king, hoping that in your presence we would not be wronged.

Sheikh Yasir slows over this speech the way you would over a jewel turned in the light. Composed on the spot, in a hostile court, in a language the speaker had to send through a translator, and it reads its single listener perfectly: to a Christian king it speaks of a Messenger, a category the king's own scripture had trained him to love, and within five minutes the accused have become the wronged and the bribed envoys the persecutors. This is exactly why the Prophet ﷺ placed Ja'far at the head of the eighty: leadership is personality and eloquence, and Ja'far carried both. Then came the request that turned the audience. Do you have anything, the king asked, of what this Messenger brought from Allah? Yes, said Ja'far. And of everything in all the revelation he might have chosen, he chose the opening of Surah Maryam, the surah of the virgin, the cradle, and the child who spoke from his mother's arms.

[Jesus] said, "Indeed, I am the servant of Allah. He has given me the Scripture and made me a prophet. And He has made me blessed wherever I am and has enjoined upon me prayer and zakah as long as I remain alive And [made me] dutiful to my mother, and He has not made me a wretched tyrant. And peace is on me the day I was born and the day I will die and the day I am raised alive."

QUR'AN 19:30-33

For long minutes the recitation rolled through that hall, the voice of Ja'far booming and breaking against the walls of the palace while the elite of a kingdom sat hushed. Ibn Ishaq records that the patriarchs wept without understanding a word of the Arabic, moved by the sound alone, and that when it was translated the Najashi wept with them and said: by God, this and what Musa brought, and what Isa brought, have all come out of one and the same lamp. Then he turned on the two envoys: go. I will not hand these people over to you, and do not even think of asking me again.

A twig, a parchment, and a funeral prayer

Amr ibn al-As was not finished. Leaving the hall in defeat, he whispered to his companion that he had one final trick. His gentler companion tried to talk him out of it, whatever else these people are, they are still our relatives, but Amr would not. The next day, to a king who said he had already decided, he said: there is one thing we forgot. They say something monstrous about Isa the son of Maryam. Ask them. And now the king was caught, for this touched the heart of his own faith, and a fresh summons went out that frightened the Muslims worse than the first, because it came with no delay: come now. Again they asked Ja'far what to say, and again he held the line: we will say exactly what our Prophet ﷺ taught us, whatever comes of it.

Asked about Isa, Ja'far answered: we say that he is the servant of Allah, and His Messenger, and a spirit from Him, and His word, which He cast to Maryam the chaste virgin. Every word true, and not one word more. The Sheikh dwells on the wisdom of that restraint: Ja'far said plainly what the Qur'an says of Isa, neither lying to please the king nor marching forward to call the Trinity a blasphemy, though that is the Muslim's belief. He stopped before

that line and let the king draw his own conclusion. Firm on the principle, wise in the wording, never groveling and never picking a fight the moment has not asked for.

The Najashi bent down, picked up a small twig from the floor, and held up the tiny distance between his fingers. By God, he said, what you have just said about Isa does not exceed what Isa himself said by even this much. For the king had never truly believed Isa was the son of God or the third of a trinity; Ja'far's words had not threatened him, they had named what he already secretly held. He turned on the envoys: be gone, and take your gifts with you; I have no need of them. The day before he had kept their gifts; now even the leather already in the ministers' houses was sent back. Umm Salamah remembered the two men leaving debased, carrying home everything they had come with, and what came after: we stayed in the best of lands, with the best of neighbors, until we returned to the Prophet ﷺ.

But the king paid for that twig, and the way he paid it is one of the quietest treasures in the story. Word spread that the Najashi had abandoned the religion of his fathers and become a heretic, and a faction began moving against him. Warned by his loyalists, he met it head on. He wrote on a small parchment that he bore witness none deserves worship but Allah and that Isa is His servant, His Messenger, and His word cast to Maryam, tucked it inside his robe against his heart, and summoned the agitators. Have I not been a good king to you, a just ruler? Then what is your grievance? When they spoke their creed, that Isa is the son of God, he laid his hand flat over the hidden parchment and swore: by Allah, this is exactly what I believe, and let them hear it however they wished. They went away satisfied; he had told the literal truth and saved both his throne and his faith in a single sentence. He had even sent secretly to the Muslims that if they

heard of his death, a ship lay waiting to take them wherever they pleased; he won, and the ship was never needed. Years later a rival royal house dragged the land toward civil war by the Nile, and the believers, never more terrified, begged Allah to keep the just king on his throne, until Zubayr ibn al-Awwam, radiyallahu anhu, came back from watching the distant battle beaming: rejoice, the Najashi has won.

The believers stayed in his land some twelve years in all. From Madinah the Prophet ﷺ later wrote to invite the Najashi formally to Islam, and al-Bayhaqi records the reply: I am a Muslim; I believe in you and in everything you say; and if you command me, I will come to Madinah and serve you. Then one day the Prophet ﷺ came out to his companions with news no caravan could possibly have carried yet, a death two weeks' journey away announced the very hour it happened: Jibril has informed me that a righteous brother of yours has died in a distant land. He lined the companions up and prayed the funeral prayer over the absent king, the only janazah over an absent body that he ﷺ prayed in his entire life. Why the Najashi alone, when other beloved companions died far away without it? Dr. Yasir Qadhi inclines to the simplest answer: because in that Christian land, where his faith had stayed hidden to the end, there had been no one to pray over him. The king who would not sell eighty strangers for all the leather in Makkah was sent out of this world by the takbir of the very Prophet ﷺ those strangers had followed.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read this day as a thrilling courtroom victory and leave it there, the clever cousin outdueling the clever envoy

before a fair-minded king, a good story safely shut in the past. That would be to miss every question it is asking us.

Look first at what these believers were willing to pay. Abu Bakr handed back his only protector rather than recite his Qur'an in a whisper, and walked his own city for years with nothing between him and the mob but Allah. Uthman ibn Maz'un gave back a safety nobody had asked him to surrender, and when the blow came he asked for a second one, because his conscience could not bear a comfort his brothers did not share. Eighty families sailed into a land of strangers a second time, and a king, far away, risked his throne for a sentence of truth he hid against his heart. None of them broke, and not one was abandoned. La ilaha illa Allah has a price, it always has, and the question is not whether you will be asked to pay but what you are willing to spend. Most of us are never asked for our lives; we are asked for far smaller coins, a comfort, an approval, a silence, and we guard them more tightly than Abu Bakr guarded his life. Ask which of your safeties you would hand back as he handed back his, content, like him, with the protection of Allah alone.

Look next at how Ja'far won. He did not boycott the court of a non-Muslim king or stand on the purity of staying out of a worldly system; he walked straight into it, pleaded inside it, and won his people's freedom through it, and the Sheikh draws the line to our own day sharply: the believer fights oppression with the lawful tools of the land he lives in, the courts, the press, the public square, the vote, and there is nothing in our religion that tells us to sit on our hands while a sympathetic system stands open. But notice the manner he won by. He would not prostrate, would not lie, would not soften by a hair what his Prophet ﷺ taught about Isa, and he also would not volunteer a single insult the moment did not require. Firm on the principle, wise in the wording. That is

the register this day hands you for every hard room you will ever enter: tell the truth, standing up, and do not pick the fight the truth itself has not asked for.

And then hold the whole day under the ayah the Sheikh leaves in your hands. Quraysh did everything cunning could do: they chose their sharpest man, loaded him with their finest wealth, bribed every minister in a foreign court, and frightened a king on every front he can be frightened. They had the money, the brilliance, every visible advantage, and they walked home with their gifts in their arms and nothing else. The believers had no leverage at all, only the truth and a cousin willing to stand and speak it, and they kept their land, their freedom, and their king. They planned, and Allah planned, and Allah is the best of planners. Carry that the next time you find yourself in the weaker chair, outspent and outmaneuvered, with every earthly advantage on the other side of the table. Do every lawful thing in your power, as Ja'far did, and then rest in the one fact that held this scene steady: the planning of Allah overrules the planning of everyone else, and it has never once failed the servant who stood up for His truth.

May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, whose name carried a band of strangers safely across the sea into the heart of a just king; make our conscience louder than our comfort, our truth upright in every hard room, and our hearts content, as Abu Bakr's heart was content, with the protection of Allah above every protection of men; be pleased with Ja'far and Abu Bakr and Uthman ibn Maz'un and Umm Salamah and the Najashi and all who sailed, and gather us with them under the banner of His Prophet ﷺ on the Day when no protector remains but Him.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 17: the second migration to Abyssinia (Memphis Islamic Center, 2011). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (74:11-13, 3:54, 19:30-33), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

Hamza, Umar, and the boycott

Two lions, then the starving valley

By the sixth year of the dawah the arithmetic of the believers looks like defeat. The second flight to Abyssinia has drawn off the bulk of the community, and the few who remain in Makkah can almost be counted on the fingers: by one precise reckoning, only thirty seven or thirty eight men. Out of more than a hundred who had once gathered, the streets now hold a thin remnant, and Quraysh, looking around at a Makkah it seems to have won back, has every reason to think the matter nearly finished. It is exactly here, into a season that looks emptied out, that Allah sends two men in the space of a single week. Both are famous for their strength. One swings a bow across the face of the fiercest enemy of the dawah; the other sets out through the city with a drawn sword to murder the Prophet ﷺ, and by the end of the week both are kneeling among the believers. Then, in the very next breath of the story, Makkah reaches for the cruelest weapon it has left and seals the whole clan of the Prophet ﷺ into a valley to starve. This is a hinge in the Makkan years, and it asks to be held in both hands at once: the sweetest conversions of the period, followed without a pause by its hungriest stretch.

A refuge held in reserve

Before we turn to Makkah, there is one thread from Abyssinia worth tying off, because of what it reveals about the man at the center of everything. The Muslims who fled across the sea did

not come home when the danger eased. They stayed ten or eleven years in all, through the hijrah and through Badr and Uhud and the Trench, the Prophet ﷺ telling them to remain; only after Khaybar, when Madinah at last stood fully secure, did he ﷺ send word to Jafar to bring everyone back. Why keep a whole community parked in a foreign kingdom for a decade while he was fighting for survival and short of every pair of hands? Dr. Yasir Qadhi reads it the only way that makes sense to him, and Allah knows best: Abyssinia was the Prophet's ﷺ plan B, a refuge held in reserve in case Madinah did not work out, released only when it was no longer needed. The man of perfect tawakkul was at the same time the man who tied his camel, trusting Allah completely and planning years ahead in case the obvious plan failed.

The day Hamza's blood boiled

Back in Makkah, Hamza, the uncle of the Prophet ﷺ, was a renowned archer and hunter who would disappear on long expeditions into the wild. His habit on returning was the habit of Makkah's men: before his own door, he went first to the Kaaba to make tawaf. It was on one of these trips, while Hamza was away, that Abu Jahl came upon the Prophet ﷺ near the hill of Safa, in a foul temper, and emptied it onto him: cursing him, his faith, his forefathers, a long and public stream of contempt, never laying a hand on him, while the Prophet ﷺ stood and answered not a single word, until Abu Jahl wore himself out and went on his way.

The women of the Banu Hashim had watched it all, and Muslim or not, this was a matter of blood, not religion: to insult the son of the clan was to insult the clan. So when Hamza came striding back into the city with his bow on his shoulder, they met him with a taunt meant to sting: what kind of uncle are you, what kind of

leader of the Banu Hashim, when your own nephew is abused in the open before all of Makkah and not one man rises to defend him? Hamza asked one question. Did people see it? All of Makkah saw it, they told him.

He never made it home. He marched straight to where Abu Jahl sat among his clansmen of the Banu Makhzum, raised his bow, and brought it across Abu Jahl's face hard enough to open a gush of blood. How dare you curse my nephew, he said, and then, in the heat of it, heard himself say a thing he had not planned and did not yet mean: and I too am a follower of his religion. He had meant only to defend his nephew, and now, in front of everyone, he had declared himself for a faith he did not hold. The men of the Banu Makhzum rose to defend their chief, but Abu Jahl waved them down. Leave him be, he said. By Allah, today I cursed his nephew like I never have before. Even Abu Jahl understood what he had lit.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi pauses to name what actually moved in Hamza that hour, because the Qur'an has a name for it: hamiyyah, the hot, baseless clan pride of the days of ignorance, the pride that defends a bloodline simply because it is yours. Hamza had stood up for a nephew, not for a Prophet. And so that night, the strongest man in Makkah went home dazed and trapped, and out of his confusion came one of the most honest duas in the whole seerah. O Allah, he said, You know that I am one of the leaders of Quraysh, and I have now said a thing I cannot take back. So if this matter is true, then guide my heart to it; and if it is not, then let me die. He spent the most miserable night of his life turning it over. In the morning he went to his nephew ﷺ and told him everything, not as a believer but as a man caught in a snare. And the Prophet ﷺ spoke with him, reasoned with him, called him to la ilaha illallah, until at last Hamza said words that this time rose

from somewhere real: I testify that you are truthful, and I never want to return to the religion of my forefathers.

So a man who began by defending his family ended by submitting to his Lord, and the dawah gained its first elder, a son of Abdul Muttalib and a brother of the chieftain Abu Talib, the most senior man yet to enter Islam. Quraysh noticeably softened its abuse, because to insult the Prophet ﷺ now carried a cost. And Allah took the man whose pride had pushed him through the door and set him on a road that ends at Uhud, where he falls as sayyid ash-shuhada, the master of the martyrs.

A dua for one of two men

A few days later, three days only by one report, Allah followed the gift with a second. To feel the shock of it you have to remember who Umar ibn al-Khattab was in the sixth year of the dawah. Together with Abu Jahl, he was one of the two fiercest enemies the believers had: mighty in body, mighty in lineage, a kind of measuring stick for the persecution itself. And yet there had been one small crack in the wall. When Layla bint Abi Hathma was loading her camel for the second journey to Abyssinia, Umar passed by and she turned on him bitterly: it is because of you that we must leave our land to worship Allah in a foreign place. She braced for something harsh, and instead, for once, Umar wavered. Has it really reached this level, he said, and then: may Allah give you barakah wherever you go. Her husband refused to read a thing into it. By Allah, he said, his father's donkeys will accept Islam before he does.

What no household in Makkah knew was that the Prophet ﷺ had already carried Umar's name into his night prayers. In a dua preserved in Sunan at-Tirmidhi he ﷺ had asked: O Allah, bring honor to Islam through the more beloved of these two men to

You, Abu Jahl or Umar ibn al-Khattab. The two strongest, best connected, most dangerous men in the entire city, and he ﷺ asked his Lord for either one, whichever Allah loved more. Allah loved Umar, and gave him to the religion.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi stops here to hand us two lessons before the story moves on. The first is that guidance belongs to Allah alone, so we must never stamp a final verdict on any soul: the two most hopeless cases in all of Makkah were each one dua away from the truth. The second is that it is not flattery but wisdom to carry the dawah to people of influence, because a society moves when its symbols move; his own example is the boxer Muhammad Ali, who did more for the image of Islam in America than a million scholars could, simply by living his faith in public. The Prophet ﷺ understood that fourteen centuries before us, and prayed accordingly.

More than one account is told of how the answer came, and when that happens, the Sheikh notes, the truth is usually all of them together: blow after blow landing on a single heart until it cracks open. The first blow fell on a night Umar loved to retell for the rest of his life; his first person account is preserved in the Musnad of Imam Ahmad. He was in his mid twenties and fond of his wine, and one night the craving sent him out into the dark to find his drinking companions. They were not at the first house, nor the second, and even the wine seller was gone. So, with nowhere else to take his restlessness, he gave up and went instead to make tawaf of the Kaaba.

The sanctuary had no lamps and stood empty except for one man: the Prophet ﷺ, alone in the middle of the night, standing in prayer before the Kaaba with no guard and no companion, reciting. Umar's first thought was the old, familiar one: here is my

chance, with no one watching, to do him harm. He crept up close behind him. And then the recitation reached his ears, and the plan simply dissolved, because for the first time in his life the man who had only ever hated stopped, and listened. The surah was al-Haqqah, and Umar said afterward that he was amazed at the way it was composed, the short verses landing one after another like blows.

Then came the part he could never afterward explain away. A thought crossed his mind: this must be the speech of a poet, just as Quraysh keep saying. And the very next words off the Prophet's ﷺ tongue answered the thought:

And it is not the word of a poet; little do you believe. Nor the word of a soothsayer; little do you remember. [It is] a revelation from the Lord of the worlds.

QUR'AN 69:41-43

A soothsayer, then, Umar thought, reaching for the next accusation, and the recitation had already closed that door too. Then what if the man is inventing it, he wondered, and the surah answered that as well:

And if he had made up about Us some [false] sayings, We would have seized him by the right hand; Then We would have cut from him the aorta.

QUR'AN 69:44-46

Allah was answering Umar's private, unspoken thoughts in real time, through the mouth of a Prophet ﷺ who did not even know he was there. That, Umar said, was the first time Islam entered my heart. He did not submit that night; he shook it off and slipped

into the dark. But the Word had touched him, and the Word does not let go easily.

His sister's blood

The famous day that followed began with a bounty. Abu Jahl rose before Quraysh in a rage: this man has cursed our religion, mocked our forefathers, condemned our gods, and who will rid us of him? A hundred camels, the choicest in all of Arabia, and a hundred pouches of silver besides, to whoever does the deed. Umar stood up for the price, greed and old grievance moving together in him, strapped on his sword, and walked out through Makkah with the blade bare in his hand. On the way he met Nuaym ibn Abdullah, a man who had quietly accepted Islam and told no one, and who now read death in Umar's face. Where are you going? To kill Muhammad ﷺ. Have you lost your mind, said Nuaym; do you think his clan will let you walk the earth after you kill one of their own? And if you are so eager to set your own house in order, start there: your own sister and her husband have left your religion and followed his.

It was true. Fatima bint al-Khattab and her husband Saeed ibn Zayd had both accepted Islam, and inside that house at that very hour sat a teacher: Khabbab ibn al-Aratt, the former slave whose back the idolaters had once burned over hot stones, now assigned to teach the new believers their faith. Dr. Yasir Qadhi will not let this detail slip past. Even here, in the depths of persecution, in total secrecy and under threat of torture, the dawah was running an education program: every person who converted was assigned someone to teach him the Book and the prayer. Then the Sheikh looks straight at us. Fast forward to our own time, and a convert gets a warm hug at the masjid and is too often never heard from again. Knowledge was the lifeline of this

religion at its weakest hour, and we have let it become optional at our strongest.

Umar heard the low hum of recitation through the door and began pounding on it. Khabbab slipped into hiding, and Fatima pushed the written page beneath her and all but sat on it. What was that humming I heard, he demanded. Nothing, they said. By Allah, I know what I heard, he said; the two of you have followed him. He lunged at Saeed, and Fatima threw herself between them, and the blow meant for her husband fell on her instead and split her lip open. And then, bleeding in front of the very brother she had been hiding from, she stopped hiding. Yes, she said, we have accepted Islam, we believe in Allah and His Messenger ﷺ, so do whatever you please.

The sight of his sister's blood, and the courage behind it, broke something open in him. Here were the two layers of Umar that the ummah would later know across his whole khilafah: granite on the outside, and beneath it a heart that tore easily. Show me what you were reading, he said, suddenly quiet. Not while you are in this state, she said; you are a mushrik, and this Book is not touched until you have purified yourself. Even in the sixth year of the dawah, the Sheikh observes, the believers already knew that the Book of Allah is so honored that one cleans oneself before laying a hand on it. So Umar made ghusl, and only then took up the page and read the opening of Surah Taha:

Tā, Hā. We have not sent down to you the Qur'an that you be distressed

QUR'AN 20:1-2

And Islam entered his heart, and he knew that this was the truth. He had one question. Where is he now?

Allahu Akbar from the house of al-Arqam

Saeed saw that the rage had drained out of his brother-in-law's eyes, and gave up the secret: the Prophet ﷺ is in the house of al-Arqam. So Umar walked there, the sword still in his hand, and knocked. One of the companions looked out through a crack in the door, saw who stood there with a drawn blade, and came back into the room shaking. It is Umar, with his sword. And it was Hamza, only days into his own Islam, who steadied the room. Let him in, he said. If Allah intends good for him, he will accept it; and if not, the very sword in his hand will be the end of him.

They opened the door, took him by an arm on each side, and brought him before the Prophet ﷺ, who reached out, took hold of Umar's garment, and pulled the most feared man in Makkah toward himself. What has brought you here, son of al-Khattab, he said. By Allah, if you do not stop, Allah will send His punishment down upon you. And Umar answered: O Messenger of Allah, I have come to believe in Allah and in His Messenger, and to testify to the truth. The Prophet ﷺ cried Allahu Akbar so loudly that everyone in the house knew at once, without being told, that Umar ibn al-Khattab had become a Muslim.

And then something happened that had never happened before. Around forty believers formed themselves into two rows and walked out to the Kaaba in the open light of day, Hamza at the head of one row and Umar at the head of the other, the two newest converts leading because no one in Makkah now dared lay a hand on either of them. And there, for the first time, the Muslims prayed publicly at the House of Allah. Years later Ibn Abbas asked Umar where his title had come from, and Umar pointed to that day: the Prophet ﷺ named him al-Farooq, the one who separates truth from falsehood, because his Islam had dragged the truth out of hiding. And decades later, as Umar lay

dying, Ibn Masud measured a whole era by him: we have remained in honor ever since Umar accepted Islam, for until that day we could not even pray at the Kaaba.

Umar being Umar, the secrecy itself offended him. He went in person to Abu Jahl's house, informed his old ally face to face that he now believed in Allah and His Messenger, and the door slammed shut on a curse. Then he sought out the man in Makkah least able to keep a secret and confided his news; the gossip was running through the streets shouting it before Umar, walking calmly behind, could even correct the wording for the crowds. And of this convert the Prophet ﷺ would later say, as recorded in Bukhari: among the nations before you there were men who were spoken to though they were not prophets, and if there is any such man in my ummah, it is Umar.

The pact hung inside the Kaaba

Look at the year through the eyes of Quraysh: the bulk of the believers have slipped overseas beyond your reach, and in a single week the dawah has taken your two most promising men. So in the seventh year of the dawah the clans gathered and reached the only consensus they had left: Muhammad ﷺ must be killed. They went to Abu Talib one final time with a cold offer. Hand over your nephew, name whatever blood money you wish, and we will even give you our word that the man who strikes him will not be one of us. Or be cut off from Quraysh entirely. Abu Talib's fury answered before his words did. Do as you please, he told them. I will never hand him over.

So Quraysh did a thing Arabia had never seen. They wrote the threat down. A formal pact: no one would buy from or sell to the Banu Hashim, no one would marry into them or give them daughters, no one would so much as sit and deal with them, no

food, no water, no trade, until they surrendered the Prophet ﷺ. They sealed the document and hung it inside the locked Kaaba, dressing a siege of starvation in the robes of the sacred.

Then the Banu Hashim and their twin clan the Banu al-Muttalib, believer and idol worshipper together, withdrew into a valley the people of Makkah knew as the shib of Abu Talib. Sit with how strange and how telling that is, the Sheikh says: most of those who went hungry beside the Prophet ﷺ for the next years did not believe in him at all. They went into exile out of pure loyalty of blood, an old tribal pride that would not see their own kin treated this way, and Abu Talib, still upon the religion of his fathers, presided over the whole camp the entire time. Only one man of the clan refused: Abu Lahab, unwilling to give up the comforts of the city, publicly broke with his own people and defected to Quraysh.

Two years, some say three, in that valley were the hungriest of the whole seerah. They lived on rainwater and the leaves of the shrubs, and one of those who endured it remembered that their droppings became like the droppings of goats. The sources fall strangely quiet about this stretch, and the Sheikh reads the silence itself: few who lived through it survived into the later years when history came asking, and those who did, being human, did not love returning to the most painful season of their lives. But we do know who kept them alive. Every so often Mutim ibn Adi, the most decent of the Prophet's ﷺ non-Muslim countrymen, would load a camel with grain and water in the dead of night, strike its flank, and send it walking in through the valley's single entrance; Khadijah's nephew Hakim ibn Hizam did the same in secret. Years later, after Badr, the Prophet ﷺ would say that had Mutim been alive and asked him for all seventy captives of that battle, he would have handed them over with no

ransom at all, for he ﷺ never forgot a kindness. In the other direction, when foreign traders arrived in the hajj months who had not heard of the boycott, Abu Lahab would call out, do not sell to these people, and I will pay you double. And still, every hajj season the Prophet ﷺ would walk out of the valley to meet the visiting tribes and go on giving dawah while his own family chewed leaves.

Eaten away, all but the name of Allah

The boycott broke at last under three blows that fell together. The first came from the Prophet's ﷺ own lips. He prayed against them: O Allah, send upon them a famine like the famine of Yusuf. And a drought settled over Makkah until its people too were reduced to eating carcasses and chewing dead hides, and they understood whose dua had done this to them, and messengers began to move, feeling for some way back.

The second was a quiet conspiracy of decency. Hisham ibn Amr, tied to the besieged families through his mother, had had enough, and he built a coalition: Zuhayr ibn Abi Umayyah, Mutim ibn Adi, Abu al-Bakhtari and a fifth man, the small handful of Quraysh whose hearts had never truly signed the pact. The next day, when the assembly gathered by the Kaaba, Zuhayr rose first, the one whose lineage placed him farthest from suspicion. How long, he said, are we going to starve our own kith and kin to death? This is an evil thing. Abu Jahl shot back that the pact had been agreed by everyone, and the trap sprang shut. Hisham rose: I never agreed, this was your idea. Mutim rose: no, you forced this on us. Then the fourth man, then the fifth, each from a different corner of the gathering, until Abu Jahl looked around and said the truest thing he ever said: by Allah, this is a plan that was hatched

in the night. It was, and it had worked. The public mood had turned.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi draws out the lesson the Prophet ﷺ was already living: every nation holds within it some who are cruel and some who are decent, and the wisdom of the dawah is to welcome the consciences that hate injustice. These five men were idol worshippers to the last, and yet they could not stomach what their own people were doing, and the Prophet ﷺ took their decency and used it against their own bigotry. So too, the Sheikh says, must his ummah, wherever it lives among others.

The third blow no human being could have staged. The Prophet ﷺ came to his uncle in the valley with news: Allah has informed me that He has set the termites upon their pact, and they have eaten every word of it except the opening, Bismika Allahumma, in Your name, O Allah. The Kaaba was locked; the document was sealed inside its cloth; no human eye could possibly have checked. Your Lord has told you this, Abu Talib asked. Yes, said the Prophet ﷺ. Then, said the old chieftain, I stake my whole case upon it. And for the first time in years he walked into the Haram with his clansmen behind him and laid a wager before Quraysh. My nephew says his Lord has informed him that your treaty has been devoured, all but the words Bismika Allahumma. Bring it out. If he is wrong, I will hand him to you this very hour; if he is right, you will end this. They agreed, certain of an easy victory, unsealed the cloth, and found there was nothing left to read but: in Your name, O Allah. They spat the word sorcery, but a promise given before all of Quraysh is a promise, and the boycott was dead. Around the tenth year of the dawah, with the Prophet ﷺ nearing fifty, the two clans walked home.

And out of those starving years came, of all things, the era's greatest poem: the Lamiyyah of Abu Talib, around a hundred verses each landing on the letter lam, the old man's furious indictment of Quraysh for what they had done to their own kin in the very shadow of the sanctuary, judged by Ibn Kathir finer than the seven hanging odes. But the seerah holds its breath here, because the relief is brief. Close ahead wait the deaths of Abu Talib and of Khadijah and the bitter road to Taif: the lowest valley of the entire seerah, and the very doorway through which Madinah will at last appear.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read this stretch as two thrilling rescues and a grim siege, a dramatic week sealed safely in the past. That would be to miss the question it puts to us. Held together as the seerah insists on holding them, these scenes form a single lesson about the shape of a believing life, and it cuts in several directions at once.

Begin with the two conversions, and what they say about how we judge other people. On the morning Umar buckled on his sword, no soul in Makkah stood farther from Islam; by nightfall he was praying at the head of a row before the Kaaba. Hamza came to faith sideways, through clan pride and a swing of his bow, and Allah made him the master of the martyrs. The Prophet ﷺ had prayed for the two most dangerous men in the city by name, because he wrote no one off. So make the dua you are tempted to think is wasted. Pray for the hardest heart you know, the relative who mocks, the friend who sneers, the public figure beyond reach, because guidance was never in your hands or theirs but in the hands of the One who turned a drawn sword into

the first row of the prayer. And carry the message, with respect and without flattery, to the people others actually follow.

And then there is the valley, and what it does to our idea of what a good life with Allah should feel like. For two or three years the family of the Prophet ﷺ chewed leaves inside a sealed valley while a document of starvation hung in the holiest building on earth, and most of those who suffered did not even believe. This is the seerah refusing to let us imagine that nearness to Allah buys an easy road: the same week that brought the sweetest strength brought the hungriest exam, and the same Lord, in His wisdom, authored both. So when your own doors are sealed, do everything decency and effort can do, as Hisham's five quiet men did and as the Prophet ﷺ did walking out to the tribes on an empty stomach, and then rest in the knowledge that not even a termite moves except by the command of Allah. The men who wrote that pact held the Kaaba, the wealth, the trade routes, the power of an entire city, and the thing that undid them was an insect they could not see, eating their cruelty away in the dark until nothing was left but the name of Allah.

So take both halves of this day into your ordinary life, because the seerah will not let you take only the sweet one. Despair of no one. Make worship safer for someone weaker than you with whatever strength you hold, whether muscle or money or simply a voice. Seek knowledge and pass it on. And when the world seals its doors, hold fast to the certainty that the One who set the termites upon a sealed pact is more than able to open what has been shut against you. May Allah, who turned Umar from the road of the sword to the front row of the prayer and ate away the pact of the oppressors with the smallest of His creatures, guide the hearts we have given up on, make us a shelter for His weakened servants, keep us patient when the doors close, and

gather us beneath the banner of His Messenger ﷺ with Hamza and Umar on the Day of Gathering.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 18: the conversions of Hamza and Umar and the boycott of Banu Hashim (Memphis Islamic Center, 2011). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (69:41-43, 69:44-46, 20:1-2), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The Year of Sorrow

Two graves, forty days apart

Some years are remembered by a number, and some by a feeling. This one is remembered by its grief. The books of seerah do not file the tenth year of the dawah under a date; they file it under a word, Aam al-Huzn, the Year of Sorrow, because within about two months the Prophet ﷺ lost the two people who had made Makkah survivable: the uncle who shielded him in the street and the wife who held him together at home. Dr. Yasir Qadhi gives the year a full evening, and it is the heaviest evening of the Makkan story so far.

Walk back into the city with them first. The boycott was over. After perhaps a year and a half of hunger, the reports only guess at the length, sympathetic voices inside Quraysh had torn up the pact pinned to the Kaaba, and Banu Hashim came home from the valley they had been penned in. It was the tenth year of the dawah, two and a half, maybe three years before the hijrah. After the ravine, the streets of Makkah must have tasted like mercy.

The relief lasted about six weeks. Then Allah willed three great calamities, one after another, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi is careful with the wording: you cannot rank them, cannot say each was heavier than the one before, because each was a wound of its own. All three fell inside roughly two months, and together they gave the whole year its name. This day carries the first two. The third is a road out of the city, and it waits at the end.

The first blow fell exactly where the whole mission leaned. Barely five or six weeks after the return, Abu Talib fell sick, and the pangs of death came upon him. He had spent the last ten years of his life standing between his nephew ﷺ and a city that wanted him gone. Now he was leaving, in the month of Shawwal, and the question of what he would say at the end was about to become the most painful sentence in the Makkan years.

The word that would not come

The chiefs of Quraysh reached the sickbed before death did. Abu Jahl, Utbah ibn Rabi'ah, the old guard of the opposition came to the dying chieftain with a final plea: you are about to leave us, settle this quarrel before it turns into civil war. Let your nephew keep to himself and stop reviling our idols, and we will keep to ourselves; no one will harm him in your lifetime. The Sheikh weighs the timing the way the Makkan years force him to, because the reports arrive without a chronology: some books set such an embassy at the start of the mission, others at the deathbed, and the elders had come to Abu Talib more than once. But it rings true that a city staring at a future with no Abu Talib in it would find him one last time.

So the old man put it to his nephew: my people have surrounded me, give them this one thing. And the Prophet ﷺ answered with the offer he had carried through thirteen years of rejection: I will give them what they ask, if they give me a single word, one kalima, and with it the Arabs and the non-Arabs will be theirs. Abu Jahl leapt at it: we will give you not one but ten! Then say la ilaha illallah, the Prophet ﷺ told them, and I will fall silent, and all the kingdoms of the Arabs and the others will be under your hand. And the generosity died in Abu Jahl's mouth. Ten conditions, yes; that one word, never.

Sahih Bukhari preserves the hour itself in a single detailed paragraph, the most authentic report we have of any death in this period. The Prophet ﷺ entered the room where his uncle lay dying and found Abu Jahl and Abdullah ibn Abi Umayyah already seated there, like sentries posted over a soul. O my uncle, he ﷺ pleaded, say la ilaha illallah, one word that I may argue for you with before Allah. And Abu Talib was about to say it. But every time he leaned toward the kalima, the two men leaned in with him: will you abandon the religion of Abdul Muttalib? Your father's religion. They had found the one rope that still held him, and they hauled on it, back and forth, until the very end. The last sentence the old man spoke kept him on the religion of Abdul Muttalib, and the word never came.

The Prophet ﷺ left that room carrying a vow that love had spoken ahead of any command: I will keep asking Allah to forgive you, he told his uncle, until I am forbidden to. Sit with the weight of that. The whole order of a prophet's life is that he does not move on his own desire; he waits upon the commandment of his Lord. Here, for once, emotion outran the order. He ﷺ had no instruction to seek forgiveness for a man who died refusing tawhid, and resolved to do it anyway, unless heaven stopped him. So heaven stopped him. And notice, Dr. Yasir Qadhi says, exactly how the answer is worded, because the gentleness of it is the point:

It is not for the Prophet and those who have believed to ask forgiveness for the polytheists, even if they were relatives, after it has become clear to them that they are companions of Hellfire.

QUR'AN 9:113

There is no rebuke in it. No how could you, no you have made a grave mistake. Just a boundary drawn with mercy: you are My Prophet, you know he did not die upon tawhid, and once that much is clear about a soul, however beloved, the asking has to stop. And he ﷺ, in his perfect obedience, stopped.

The man who knew

Here is what makes Abu Talib ache in the memory of this ummah forever: he knew. He was not a man groping in the dark for a truth he could not find. Ibn Ishaq records that as the chiefs left, he told his nephew ﷺ almost plainly that were it not for the fear that his people would say he embraced Islam out of dread of death, he would have said the word and given him the joy of hearing it. And his own poetry, preserved in the books of sira, confesses even more: I have come to know that the religion of Muhammad is the best of the religions of mankind, and were it not for the blame, the dread of being mocked. The line stops exactly where his life stopped.

He had even staked his entire prestige on his nephew's ﷺ truthfulness once, in public, and won, when he carried the Prophet's ﷺ claim about the worm-eaten boycott parchment straight to Quraysh and it proved true before the whole city. He did not worship the idols; his poetry is full of contempt for them. He recognized, with his own eyes, where the truth lived. He simply could not survive one sentence: he left the religion of his father. Abdul Muttalib was the legend of the Arabs, and Abu Talib was its keeper, the eldest living son and the heir of the mythology, and keeping it mattered to him more than the truth he admitted in verse. So much good and so much evil, the Sheikh marvels, can share one chest. The one real crime of this man, who fed and defended the Messenger of Allah for a decade, was

the oldest sin in Arabia: the arrogance of ancestry, pure jahiliyyah.

And out of that deathbed Dr. Yasir Qadhi draws one of the deepest theology lessons of the entire series, the lesson the year was sent to teach. Iman was never information. Islam does not mean knowing; the very word means surrendering, and to merely know the truth has never once made a person a Muslim. The proof is the most terrible example imaginable. Iblis knows everything Abu Talib knew and a great deal more. He affirms that Allah is his Lord. He does not deny that Allah sends prophets. He is so certain of the Day of Judgment that he begs to be granted life until it comes. And all that knowing leaves him a kafir, because when the command came to prostrate, he refused, too proud to bow. Knowledge is not the dividing line. Surrender is.

Then the Sheikh holds up the mirror and turns it toward us. What of the one who calls himself a Muslim and never prays, never fasts, never submits a single corner of his life to the law of this religion? Set him beside Abu Talib. Both are convinced the Prophet ﷺ spoke the truth, and both refuse to let the conviction cost them anything. The difference almost runs the wrong way: the one who says I am not a Muslim is at least honest about what the word demands, while the one who says I am, and submits to nothing, is claiming a surrender he has not made. The kalima was never a fact to nod along with. It is a flag to live under. This is why, the Sheikh adds, it is a mistake to translate iman simply as faith: you can say Iblis has faith, you can say Abu Talib had faith. Faith is one part of iman, not the whole of it. Iman is faith that has bent the knee.

You cannot guide the one you love

It was Ali, radiyallahu anhu, who carried the news, and a report in the Sunan of Abu Dawud keeps the rawness of his words. He did not say my father. He said your uncle, and in one version your misguided uncle, has died. Ali bore the double wound of a believing son whose own father had refused the truth, and there is more sharpness in his grief than in the Prophet's ﷺ, who had only gentleness left to give. Go and bury him, he ﷺ said. But he died a mushrik, Ali objected. Go and bury him, came the answer again, and come straight back to me when it is done, do nothing else on the way.

Ali went, dug the grave, laid his father in it with his own hands, and came back with the dust of it still on his body. And the Prophet ﷺ made du'a for him, long and unhurried, solace poured over a young man who had just buried his father a disbeliever. Ali never let go of it: I would not exchange those du'as, he said, for this world and everything in it.

And in those same days the verse came down, the one this whole year exists around:

Indeed, [O Muhammad], you do not guide whom you like, but Allah guides whom He wills. And He is most knowing of the [rightly] guided.

QUR'AN 28:56

Read it against the room it was sent into. The most beloved of all creation ﷺ could not guide the one human being he loved most in this world. Guidance was never in his hand. It sits in no hand at all but Allah's. And here the Sheikh draws a line he will not let blur: if the Prophet ﷺ did not possess the power to place faith in a single beloved heart during his own lifetime, then whoever is tempted to lift him toward the station of his Lord should stand in

this room and watch the matter being taken out of his hands. His rank is the highest of creation. It is the rank of a created servant, and this verse is the proof.

But read the wording one more time, because there is a mercy folded into it that the year needs you to find. Whom you like. Whom you love. Allah Himself affirmed the love. The Qur'an did not scold the Prophet ﷺ for loving a man who died refusing Islam; it redirected his istighfar and never once touched his heart. And from that single word the episode untangles a knot our own century keeps retying. Some have taken a few verses about loyalty and twisted them into a doctrine that a Muslim must hate every non-Muslim, even his own parents. That, the Sheikh says flatly, is a complete misreading. Allah here is openly affirming the Prophet's ﷺ love for his pagan uncle. The loyalty that belongs to Allah, His Messenger ﷺ, and the believers, and is never given to those who set themselves against them, is a religious loyalty, an allegiance rooted in someone's stand for Allah's cause:

You will not find a people who believe in Allah and the Last Day having affection for those who oppose Allah and His Messenger, even if they were their fathers or their sons or their brothers or their kindred.

QUR'AN 58:22

That is the allegiance of the heart, and it is reserved. But the natural love of a parent, a child, a spouse who do not share your faith is a different thing entirely, human and real and permitted, and the proof is as simple as a marriage contract. Islam allows a Muslim man to stay married to a Christian or a Jewish woman; it could hardly be commanding him, in the same breath, to hate his own wife. Love your people; reserve your allegiance. The two were never the same.

The shallows of the fire

Later, after the grief had settled, al-Abbas, the Prophet's ﷺ uncle, asked the question the whole clan must have carried in silence. O Messenger of Allah, did you benefit your uncle at all? He used to protect you and grow angry on your behalf. Yes, the Prophet ﷺ answered. He is in the shallows of the fire, and were it not for me, he would be in its depths. It was the intercession of the man Abu Talib had defended that lifted him from the bottom to the rim.

A report in Sahih Muslim states it with terrible precision: the one punished most lightly of all the people of the fire is Abu Talib, made to wear two sandals of fire from whose heat his brain boils. And the episode keeps the distinction exactly where the texts keep it. That is the lightest sentence among those who remain in the fire forever. The believing sinners who will pass through Jahannam and then be brought out, may Allah shield us from ever being among them, are an altogether different matter. Abu Talib's is the gentlest of the everlasting punishments, and even that gentleness reaches him only through his nephew ﷺ. The protector ended his life needing the protection of the one he protected.

Why would such an ending be written for such a man? Dr. Yasir Qadhi traces one wisdom out loud, and then stops, deliberately, at the edge of the rest. The very thing that let Abu Talib shield the dawah for ten years was his standing as the true heir of Abdul Muttalib, a chieftain his pagan city could still claim as its own. The day he said the kalima, Quraysh would have stripped the chieftainship from under him, and the shield would have fallen with it, years too early. His refusal, inside the strange perfection of the decree, held the door of belief open for everyone who came after. But then the harder question: fine, let him stay a

disbeliever through the years when his protection was needed, but why not at the very end, on the bed, with nothing left to lose and a lifetime of love to reward? There the tracing stops, and the stopping is itself the lesson.

He is not questioned about what He does, but they will be questioned.

QUR'AN 21:23

We do not audit our Lord. We may grasp a wisdom when He shows us one and rest in His wisdom when He does not, but to stand over the decree of Allah and demand that He justify it is, the Sheikh says, literally satanic, because that is precisely what Iblis did: I know better than You. A heart with iman in it lays that habit down. Why Abu Talib was not given his last word, in the end, only Allah knows, and a believer can live inside that not-knowing.

Forty days later, Khadijah

The household had barely learned to breathe again when the second calamity came, no less heavy than the first and in some ways heavier. Ibn al-Jawzi reckons the gap at less than forty days. Abu Talib died at the beginning of Shawwal; Khadijah, radiyallahu anha, passed away on the tenth of Ramadan, a month and a handful of days later. She had stood beside the Prophet ﷺ from the first trembling night, when he came down shaking from the cave and she wrapped him and steadied him and swore that Allah would never disgrace him. His wife, his closest friend, his first believer, his first support. If Abu Talib had guarded him outside the house, Khadijah had guarded him within it.

There was no janazah for her, and the reason stops you cold: the salah itself had not yet been revealed. The funeral prayer as we know it did not exist to be prayed over her. So the Prophet ﷺ did what love could still do without a ritual to carry it. He took charge of the burial himself, went down into her grave, and laid her body into the earth with his own hands.

The companions said that after Khadijah died, they did not see the Prophet ﷺ smile for months. Set the two losses side by side and you understand at last why this year, alone in the whole seerah, is named after a feeling rather than an event. One loss took the protection of the street and the council chamber; the other took the comfort waiting behind his own door. Within forty days both were in the ground, and a grief so total settled over everything that remained that the year could only be called by its name: Aam al-Huzn, the Year of Sorrow.

No one better than her

Years later, in Madinah, long after the grave in Makkah had closed, a single knock reopened it. Khadijah's sister Halah called out for permission to enter, and her voice was so like her sister's that the Prophet ﷺ, lying down half asleep, started upright, shaken. For one unguarded heartbeat he thought it might be Khadijah. Aisha, radiyallahu anha, watched the fluster cross his face, and a jealousy she could not contain boiled over, jealousy for a rival she had never once laid eyes on. Khadijah had died at sixty five; Aisha was a young woman who knew her only as the name her husband ﷺ would not stop honoring.

So she said what jealousy says, in words she herself admitted went too far: how long will you go on remembering this old woman of Quraysh, toothless with age, when Allah has given you someone better than her? The first part, perhaps, he ﷺ could

have let pass. The second he would not. No, by Allah, he said, Allah has not given me anyone better than her. She believed in me when no one else did. She supported me when the people rejected me. She spent on me when the whole city had boycotted me. And Allah gave me children through her when He gave me children through no other wife.

Aisha said: after that day, I never opened my mouth about Khadijah again. Look closely at what the Prophet ﷺ was defending, because it was not nostalgia. It was a debt, and a loyalty that did not expire with the person who earned it. Years had passed, a whole new life had been built in a new city, and still Khadijah's rank in his heart was simply not up for discussion. Whoever had stood with him in the hardest chapter of his life was written, permanently, into every chapter that came after.

The last door in Makkah

Now feel the ground shift under the whole mission. Abu Talib had been, in the Sheikh's own image, the Prophet's ﷺ visa to live in Makkah at all, and the visa had just expired. Ibn Ishaq records that with the old man gone, Quraysh raised their persecution to a height they had never dared before; an early scholar put it plainly: what they had once been forced to do in hiding, they could now do in the open.

The series has told the story of the camel's entrails in an earlier setting, but Dr. Yasir Qadhi argues it truly belongs here, and his evidence is the silence around it. No protector appears anywhere in the report, and no one is punished afterward, which fits a Makkah with no Abu Talib left in it far better than the earlier years. Uqbah ibn Abi Mu'ayt gathered the slaughter waste of a camel with his own hands, the blood, the dung, the entrails, and dumped the whole reeking load across the Prophet's ﷺ

shoulders while his forehead was on the ground in sajdah. When he ﷺ finally rose with the filth and the blood clinging to him, he turned to the only protector he had left. O Allah, he said, I complain to You. And then, name by name, he handed them over: O Allah, deal with Utbah ibn Rabi'ah; deal with al-Walid; deal with Abu Jahl. Seven men, counted out before their Lord. Within a few years, by the morning of Badr, every name on that list had fallen.

Then, for one strange week, shade fell from the unlikeliest tree in Makkah. Abu Lahab, the eldest pagan son of Abdul Muttalib still living, inherited the leadership of Banu Hashim by default, Hamza and al-Abbas being Muslims, and the office briefly rearranged the man. His given name was Abd al-Uzza; Makkah called him Abu Lahab, father of flame, for the handsome face that seemed to glow, and the Qur'an had already promised, in a surah bearing his nickname, that the flame would one day be no metaphor at all:

He will [enter to] burn in a Fire of [blazing] flame

QUR'AN 111:3

When a man from another clan abused the Prophet ﷺ, the new chieftain bristled with clan pride and went to his nephew with an offer that sounded almost like love: live as you lived in Abu Talib's day; while I am alive, you shall be as you were. But it was not love, and Abu Lahab said so himself. The Sheikh draws a sharp little lesson from it: a man can boast about how he will act, and then responsibility comes and he settles into the seat and behaves like a chieftain whether he means to or not. When the city whispered that Abu Lahab had converted, he crushed the rumor in person. No, he said, I am no Muslim. I am only protecting my flock.

Abu Jahl could not tolerate even that much cover, and he and Uqbah coached the perfect poison. Go to your nephew, they told Abu Lahab, and ask him where your father, Abdul Muttalib, is now, the father in whose name you are protecting him. So Abu Lahab asked, and the Prophet ﷺ, cornered between a truth he would not deny and a cruelty he would not commit, gave the answer that refuses both lying and savagery: he is with his people. Abu Lahab took it for reassurance and went away content, straight to Abu Jahl, who turned the knife exactly where he had aimed it. You fool, where are his people, by your nephew's own preaching, except in the fire? And the rage did the rest. You say my father is in the fire, Abu Lahab stormed back, while I protect you in his name? By Allah, never again. It had taken Abu Jahl one week to pry away the last protection in the city.

So the day ends with the Prophet ﷺ standing in his own birthplace with no uncle, no Khadijah, and no clan cover at all, and the persecution finally wearing no mask. What he ﷺ did next tells you who he was. He did not soften the message to buy safety, and he did not sit down inside his grief and stop. He lifted his eyes past the rim of the valley toward the nearest city that might yet listen: Ta'if. That road is where the series walks next, and it is a hard one. But it begins here, with a man who had buried his shield and his comfort in forty days and would not let the mission be buried with them.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read this year as a stretch of bad luck the Prophet ﷺ simply endured, and leave it sealed in the past. That is to miss what it asks of us. The year heaven named for grief was sent down on the most beloved soul in all creation ﷺ, and

watching him carry it is meant to change how each of us carries our own.

He was not spared loss; he was carried through it. Within forty days the mission lost its outer wall and its inner one, and Allah let it happen to the one He loved most. Sit with that the next time your own year turns dark. You are not being singled out by your sorrow; you are walking a road he ﷺ walked first, all the way down to loving someone the truth could not reach. Loss is not a sign that Allah has turned away. It was poured, in fuller measure than we will ever taste, over the one He had chosen.

At the very center of the year is the deathbed, with the wrong voices in the room. Abu Talib knew. He said in his own poetry that the religion of Muhammad ﷺ was the best of all religions, and the knowing saved him nothing, because iman was never information and the kalima was never a fact to agree with. It is a flag to live under, a surrender that costs you something, and Abu Talib would not pay the one price he had: the pride of his ancestry. So ask yourself honestly which of the two you are doing, agreeing that the kalima is true, or actually living under it. And watch who you let sit beside you, because it was Abu Jahl's voice in that room, not the dying man's own heart, that kept la ilaha illallah off his tongue at the end. Keep near you the people who would whisper the kalima to you in your last hour, not the ones who would whisper your pride.

Then there is the verse the whole year exists to teach, and the mercy hidden inside it. You do not guide whom you love; Allah guides whom He wills. The most beloved of creation ﷺ could not guide the uncle he loved most, and neither can you guide the ones you are aching over. So make du'a for them and never stop, the way he ﷺ would have gone on asking until heaven drew the

line, but lay the outcome where it has always belonged. Love them with all the natural love Allah Himself affirmed and never asked the Prophet ﷺ to surrender; only do not confuse the love that is yours to give with the guidance that was never yours to grant, nor the Messenger's ﷺ station with his Lord's.

So leave this day holding the kalima a little tighter, because two graves just showed you what it is worth: not a sentence to nod at, but a flag to die under with no voice in the room strong enough to talk you out of it. May Allah give us hearts that do not merely know the truth but surrender to it, let la ilaha illallah be the last word on our tongues, grant us the loyalty of Khadijah in our homes and the gentleness of His Prophet ﷺ in our grief, carry us through our own years of sorrow as He carried His beloved ﷺ through his, and gather us with him on the day that sorrow ends for good.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 19: the deaths of Khadijah and Abu Talib (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (9:113, 28:56, 58:22, 21:23, 111:3), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The incident of Ta'if

The day worse than Uhud, and the mercy that answered it

Years later, settled and safe in Madinah, Aisha radiyallahu anha asked her husband ﷺ a tender question. Was there ever a day, she wanted to know, that was harder on you than the day of Uhud? She was asking from the only suffering she had seen with her own eyes. She had lived through Uhud, watched the wounds open on his body, watched the day he very nearly lost his life, and in all her memory of him she could imagine nothing worse. He ﷺ answered her at once. Yes. Your people, he said, have hurt me a great deal, and the worst of it that I ever bore from them was on the day of Aqaba. He named a day she had never heard of, a day from a Makkah she had never known, outside a green city in the mountains called Ta'if.

This chapter is that day. It comes only weeks after the Year of Sorrow, while the graves of Khadija and Abu Talib are still fresh, when the protection that sheltered him for ten years has fallen away and Makkah has become a city with no one left to answer for him. Almost every Muslim first meets this story as a child, and almost no one ever outgrows it, because it is here, with blood drying in his sandals and not a single soul on his side, that the mercy of the Messenger ﷺ shows its full and unbearable size. Hold it gently, and walk it slowly, from the rejection all the way to the answer that came down from heaven.

Why Ta'if, and not anywhere else

For ten years he ﷺ had never once thought of leaving Makkah. Not through the long years of insult, not through the boycott that nearly starved his clan, not through the seasons of being ignored. Dr. Yasir Qadhi draws a quiet, weighty rule out of this before the journey even begins: a person stays with his own people, in the society he belongs to, for as long as it is humanly possible. Even an evil society, even one that puts barriers between you and your faith, you do not simply throw down the towel and walk out of; Nuh alayhi salam stayed among his people nine hundred and fifty years, never giving up. So the Prophet ﷺ stayed. It was only when Abu Talib died and Abu Lahab, after a few short weeks, withdrew the protection he had briefly extended, leaving his nephew with no legal standing at all, a man anyone could harm and no one would avenge, that he began, for the first time, to look toward another city.

The city he turned to was Ta'if, and the Sheikh explains why it was the natural choice. It was the nearest large city to Makkah, a twin and a rival to the Quraysh, in a relationship of love and hate by turns, too close for outright war and too near to ever fully trust. The two knew each other intimately, family by family, in a way no distant city could; if he went to Ta'if, the people would already know who he was and who his people were. And the Qur'an records how the people of those days thought of these two cities. When the deniers sneered that revelation, if it were real, should have come down upon some grand and powerful man, this is the complaint Allah preserved:

And they said, "Why was this Qur'ān not sent down upon a great man from [one of] the two cities?"

QUR'AN 43:31

The two cities are Makkah and Ta'if, and the words, the Sheikh notes, were spoken by al-Walid, the father of the same Khalid ibn al-Walid who would one day be the Sword of Allah. There was even a thread of blood: one of the three chieftains of Ta'if had married a distant aunt from the wider clan of the Quraysh, so that the man he was going to meet was, in some far branch, kin. If anywhere on earth would listen, it stood to reason that it would be here.

The walk, and the tying of the camel

He went on foot, and he went in secret, taking with him only Zayd ibn Haritha radiyallahu anhu, the freed man he loved like a son. Ta'if sits high in the mountains; to this day, the Sheikh reminds us, it is an hour and a half by car up precarious winding roads, and to walk it is a day and a half, perhaps two, of climbing. A mount would have spared his body, and nothing forbade him an animal. He took none. To be seen leaving Makkah on a camel would have raised suspicion, and suspicion at that moment was deadly; had the Quraysh understood he was leaving to seek a new base, they might have stopped him, or worse, before he reached the edge of the city. So he slipped out quietly, the two of them, as though he were only going for an evening stroll, with nothing about him to draw a second glance.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi lingers here, because this scene cuts straight against a lazy and dangerous idea of faith. Trusting Allah, he says, does not mean acting foolishly and calling the result destiny. The man with the most complete trust in Allah who has ever lived still planned to the last detail, crossed every t and dotted every i, plotted his exit so carefully that no one in Makkah knew he had gone. You do everything in your power, perfectly, and only then, in your heart, do you place the outcome with Allah.

That is what trust actually looks like: it comes after the plan, never instead of it.

And by walking out at all, he was doing something far heavier than travel. With his protection stripped away, he had been left in a kind of legal limbo, a grey area where no clan stood behind him, and to make any move at all was itself a statement: an acceptance of the status Abu Lahab had abandoned him to, a cutting of the last fraying tie to the Quraysh. Both literally and in symbol, he was turning his back on the only home he had ever known and walking toward a city that might, just might, say yes.

Rejected, and stoned out of the city

Ta'if belonged to the tribe of Thaqif, the old rival of the Quraysh, and it was ruled by three brothers, the sons of Amr, who on their father's death had made a strange pact: rather than fight over the chieftaincy, all three would hold it together and rule as one. He ﷺ arranged to meet them, presented to all three the message of Islam, and called them to believe. They rejected him, and they did it with the cruelest sarcasm the Sheikh records anywhere in the seerah. One said that if Allah had truly sent him as a prophet, he might as well tear down the covering of the Kaaba, so absurd did he find the claim. The second said: could Allah not find anyone better than you to send? And the third refused to speak to him at all, saying that if he were really a prophet then he was too lofty to be addressed, and if he were a liar then he was too low to be worth the breath of a reply. Three men, three mockeries, the worst kind of contempt.

Even as he rose to leave, he ﷺ was still planning, still tying his camel. He asked them one thing on his way out. If you will not accept me, he said, then at least do not tell the Quraysh that I came to you. He was guarding the little ground he had left,

knowing word of this errand reaching Makkah would only make his standing there more impossible, and it appears they granted him that much, for the Quraysh did not hear of it at once. Then, according to the stronger reports, he did not simply turn and leave. He stayed in Ta'if for roughly a week, working the marketplace, going down to the common people now that the leaders had refused him. This, the Sheikh says, is wisdom: you court the powerful, the ones the masses follow, but you never write off the ordinary people, and never turn one away who comes to you. Later converts would remember, years afterward, the Prophet ﷺ preaching in their streets, and no one answering his call.

And when at last it seemed that one or two might actually be listening, the leaders panicked. They gathered the riffraff of the town, the idle and the ruffians with nothing better to do, and set them on him with orders to drive this man out with stones. They pelted him until the blood ran. Zayd threw his own body into the path of the rocks and was wounded from head to foot trying to shield him, but two men cannot cover each other from a whole city while both are running for their lives. By the time the mob let them go and they staggered free of Ta'if, his sandals were soaked through with his own blood.

To You I complain

He walked out of that city in what we would honestly call a state of shock. By his own telling, he did not come back to himself, did not even register where he was, until he had reached a place miles outside Ta'if. And notice how little he ever said of it, even to the wife who loved him: he did not whine, did not parade his wounds, but kept it generic and left the details for others to tell,

for our honor comes from Allah, not from displaying our injuries to people.

There, bloodied and utterly alone but for Zayd, he sat down in the shade of a tree beside a garden wall and raised the words that Ibn Ishaq preserved for us. The Sheikh notes their standing honestly: this du'a does not come with a complete chain, there are missing links in it, it is not in Bukhari or Muslim. And yet, as one of our own scholars said, it needs no chain, because the wording itself tells you it came from the heart of a prophet. It deserves, the Sheikh says, to be pondered and even memorized.

O Allah, to You I complain of my weakness, my helplessness, and my lowliness before people. O Most Merciful of those who show mercy, You are the Lord of the oppressed and the weak, and You are my Lord. To whom would You entrust me? To a distant stranger who will meet me with a hard face, or to an enemy You have given power over my affair? If You are not angry with me, then I do not care, but Your wellbeing is wider and easier for me. I seek refuge in the light of Your Face, by which all darkness is lit and the affairs of this world and the next are set right, from Your anger descending upon me or Your displeasure alighting upon me. To You belongs the right to reproach until You are pleased, and there is no power and no strength except by You.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi asks the reader to notice what is, and is not, in this plea. There is no question of why. Complaining to Allah, he explains, is not only permitted, it is sunnah. When Ya'qub's grief broke open and his children mocked how long he mourned, his answer was a complaint lifted upward:

He said, "I only complain of my suffering and my grief to Allāh, and I know from Allāh that which you do not know."

There are, the Sheikh says, two utterly different kinds of complaint. There is the complaint of Iblis, the why are You doing this to me, the rejection of Allah's decree and His wisdom, which is not merely a sin but a kind of disbelief. And there is the complaint of the prophets, the look at me, Ya Allah, have mercy on me, the turning to Allah for Allah's own mercy, which is the very essence of tawhid. Every line of this du'a is the second kind. And then the Sheikh points to the thing that should stop the reader's breath. Listen for what frightens him most. It is not the blood on his hands, not the stones, not the abandonment. His one fear is a single question: have I done something to displease You? As long as You are not angry with me, he says, I can bear all of it. What caused him distress was never the pain of the body, but the bare possibility that he might have earned the displeasure of his Lord.

And notice, against a misunderstanding held by some, that he still asks for relief: Your wellbeing is wider for me. To be content with Allah's decree does not mean a person may never plead for the trial to be lifted; he  accepts what Allah decreed and in the same breath asks for something gentler, and there is no contradiction in it. He closes with the words he called a treasure from the treasures of Paradise: there is no power and no strength except by You. Du'a, the Sheikh says, is the weapon of the believer, and here is a man with no city, no protector, not even food in his belly, who reaches for the one weapon that is never taken away. As long as you have du'a, you are never trapped; you will carve a way out of any wall.

A bowl of grapes, and a man from Nineveh

It was as if the very instant he said there is no power except by You, the answer began to arrive. The garden whose wall he was sitting against belonged, though he did not know it, to two of his own distant relatives from the Quraysh, Utba and Shayba, the sons of Rabiah, who kept a plot of land in green Ta'if as many of the Makkans did. They had watched from a distance, seen their kinsman pelted, seen the blood, and felt the stir of the old tribal blood, an unwillingness to see one of their own treated this way by Thaqif. So they sent their servant out to him with a bowl of grapes, and the Sheikh has the reader pause over the timing. Grapes are among the most soothing of fruits, then as now, a fruit he did not even have in Makkah, set before him the moment his plea ended, as though Allah answered instantly, physically, with comfort in the hand before another minute could pass.

The servant was a Christian named Addas, from Nineveh, far away in the land of Iraq. He carried the grapes over and said they were a gift, and because it was a gift and not charity, which the Prophet ﷺ did not accept, he could take it. When he ﷺ reached for the grapes and said Bismillah, Addas startled. What is this phrase? he asked. That is not something the people of this land say. He ﷺ told him it was something his Lord had taught him, and asked where he was from. From Nineveh, said Addas. The Prophet ﷺ smiled. From the city of Yunus ibn Mata, he said, and then: he is my brother, for he too was a prophet of Allah. Addas was astonished. How do you know Yunus ibn Mata, he said, when no one in all this desert has ever heard the name of Jonah? And the man bent down and began to kiss the head and hands and feet of the Prophet ﷺ, the way the Christians honored their priests, and he believed in him then and there.

His two masters stared in disbelief that the slave they had sent with a bowl of fruit was now kneeling and kissing this stranger.

They told him he had been bewitched, that his own religion was better than this man's; he answered that there was no one on earth better than this man, for he had told him things only a prophet could know. But the Sheikh draws the lesson this whole scene was built to teach, small and enormous at once. One little sunnah, a single Bismillah said openly and without the least embarrassment, not even an obligatory act, opened a heart; you never know which small, unhidden mark of your faith Allah will use to guide a soul. And there is a quiet symbolism in who He chose to send: a Christian from the furthest edge of the known world. Even as those nearest to him, Makkah and Ta'if, turned away, the farthest corner of the earth was already recognizing the truth.

The angel of the mountains, and a mercy refused

Then comes the part of the day that no human eye on earth could have witnessed, the part that returns us to the soundest of sources, to Bukhari. As he sat there, he looked up and saw a cloud shading him; if his people had stoned him out into the open sun, his Lord had sent a cloud to shelter him. And in that cloud was Jibril, who called to him: O Muhammad, your Lord has heard what your people said to you and their rejection of you, and He has sent to you the angel of the mountains, to do with as you command. Then another voice gave him salam, the angel of the mountains himself, who said: command me as you wish. If you want, I will fold the two mountains over them, for Ta'if lies in a valley between two great mountains, and the city would be crushed between them and gone.

Here, the Sheikh says, is the heart of the whole day, and he will not let the reader rush past it. Understand where he is standing. The sarcasm of the three chieftains was still ringing in his ears,

the if you are a prophet I might as well tear down the Kaaba, the has Allah found no one better than you, words barely days old. His own blood was still wet on his skin. The angel of all the mountains was at his disposal, offering to erase the city that had done this to him. He had every reason, and by every measure of human justice every right, to say yes. And he ﷺ said no. No, do not do that, he said. Rather, I hope that Allah will bring forth from their loins those who will worship Him alone and associate nothing with Him.

The miracle, Dr. Yasir Qadhi insists, is not that the angel came down, nor that the mountains could be folded together; for Allah those are easy things. The real miracle, the thing the reader is meant to stagger under, is that a man treated like this, fresh from this exact rejection and this exact wound, still had enough mercy left in his heart to refuse, and to ask instead that the descendants of his torturers be guided to worship Allah. If someone says one sharp word to us, the Sheikh says, we will nurse it for ten years. He was stoned out of an entire city, and he prayed for that city's unborn children. This, exactly this, is what it means that Allah sent him as a mercy to all the worlds. And his du'a was answered to the letter. Barely ten years later he ﷺ himself would bring Ta'if into Islam, and the Sheikh, who has stood there, tells us that the very ground where he was tortured is, to this day, a masjid where Allah is worshipped through the day and the night. Had he willed it, there would be no city there at all.

The jinn of Nakhlah

The journey home was long, and the wounds did not wait for it. On the road back he camped in a small desert grove in the valley of Nakhlah, a place that still exists, with the whole trip there and back stretching across some ten days. He had not yet washed

the blood from his body; the scars had not healed, he was not yet home, he had every excuse a person could have. And as was his unbroken habit, he stood up in the cold of that desert night to pray tahajjud. He never once abandoned that prayer, not in travel, not in injury, not while bleeding in the middle of nowhere, and his night prayer was not like ours but two and three hours of standing. Most of us, the Sheikh observes plainly, can barely manage the five daily prayers in all our comfort.

And as he recited the Qur'an into the dark, something happened that no eye of any person on earth could see, that only Allah could tell us about afterward, and did. He turned a company of the jinn toward him to listen. It was no accident of their wandering; He had directed their path to carry them past a prophet praying alone in the night.

And [mention, O Muḥammad], when We directed to you a few of the jinn, listening to the Qur'ān. And when they attended it, they said, "Listen attentively." And when it was concluded, they went back to their people as warners.

QUR'AN 46:29

When the world of men had mocked him, the Sheikh says, the world of the jinn fell silent. Listen attentively, they told one another, and they did not stir until he had finished. Then they turned back to their own people, and the Qur'an is precise about what they became: not merely believers, but warners, little messengers carrying the message onward to their kind.

O our people, respond to the Caller [i.e., Messenger] of Allāh and believe in him; He [i.e., Allāh] will forgive for you your sins and protect you from a painful punishment.

QUR'AN 46:31

The Sheikh reads the symbolism plainly, and after the week this man has had it is almost overwhelming. The seen had rejected him, and now the unseen, the jinn of Nakhlah, stopped dead in their tracks to listen. The people of Makkah could put a barrier between him and a soul or two in their streets, but who could chain the jinn, or forbid the truth from reaching the worlds beyond the sight of men? The truth is not contained by the reach of human hands, and no power on earth can wall in its spread. This was the first company of jinn to accept Islam, and not the last; they would return, the Sheikh notes from the report of Ibn Mas'ud, to learn their religion from the Prophet ﷺ himself.

How he came home

There remained the hard practical matter of getting back into Makkah at all, a city he had, by leaving it, effectively renounced. Zayd asked the obvious, aching question: O Messenger of Allah, how will we even enter Makkah now that they have driven you out? And he answered: O Zayd, Allah will surely make for us a way and a relief; Allah will help His Prophet and not abandon us. This, the Sheikh says, is finally where tawakkul takes its rightful place. Stranded in the desert with no city behind him and none ahead, having done everything in his power and fallen short in nothing, now, only now, he rests the rest with Allah: I do not know what will happen, but I know that Allah will not forsake me.

He sent quietly to two or three men of the Quraysh whom he judged might be sympathetic, men not of the same hard heart as Abu Jahl, asking their protection so that he might re-enter the city. Dr. Yasir Qadhi notes these were chosen with care, not at random, for several of them would in time accept Islam. The first declined, pleading too weak a position to give protection. The second declined too, with a flimsy excuse about precedent that

was plainly not the real reason; and the Sheikh reads the embarrassment itself as a sign, for a person gives a feeble excuse when he knows he ought to act and cannot, which tells you his heart was not as hard as the others. The third said yes. It was Mut'im ibn Adi, chief of one of the clans of the Quraysh, the very man who years before had broken the boycott against Banu Hashim, sending loaded camels of food to the besieged at his own great expense. Mut'im did not merely send word back. He armed his four sons, sent them out dressed for battle to escort the Prophet ﷺ into the city, then stood at the Kaaba and announced to all of Makkah that Muhammad ﷺ was under his protection. Even Abu Sufyan, the Sheikh recounts, asked whether Mut'im had become a follower or was merely granting protection, and accepted it only when told it was protection alone.

Mut'im died a pagan; he never accepted Islam. And yet years later, after the battle of Badr, when more than seventy prisoners of the Quraysh were in the Prophet's ﷺ hands, he ﷺ said that if Mut'im ibn Adi were alive and had asked him for these prisoners, he would have released every one of them for his sake. The Sheikh draws the last lesson of the chapter here, and it is a striking and generous one. Not all who reject the faith are the same. A person may not share your belief and still stand for justice and the protection of the weak, and Allah can grant victory to this religion through such a person, for the Prophet ﷺ taught that Allah aids His religion even by means of people who have no faith. There is no shame in honoring such people for the good they do, in forming alliances with the Mut'im's of every age, so long as the line is kept clear: you honor the justice, not the disbelief. He ﷺ would not pray over Mut'im or make du'a for his soul; religion remained religion. But the decency of the man he repaid with a praise that has outlasted Mut'im's own grave.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read Ta'if as a sad story safely sealed in the past and close it there. That would be to miss what it puts to us. There is a reason he named this, and not Uhud, the worst day his people ever gave him. Uhud wounded the body; Ta'if wounded the heart, and a wound to the heart, as the Sheikh says, is the heavier of the two. And the whole weight of the day is in what he did with that wound.

He complained, and he complained upward, taking his grief to the only One who could lift it instead of carrying it sideways to people who could only watch. When your own day of Ta'if comes, and it will, that is the first question it asks: the complaint of Iblis on your tongue, or the complaint of Ya'qub. And he feared the right thing. Bloodied and abandoned, his single fear was not the stones but whether he had displeased his Lord. Here is a measure to lay against every hard day you are given: not how much it hurt, but whether Allah is pleased with you in the middle of it, a question beside which most of our troubles shrink to their true size. And he tied his camel before he trusted, planning to the last detail and only then resting the outcome with the One in whose hands it always was.

But the thing to carry out of this chapter above all the rest is the mercy. He was handed the destruction of the city that broke his body, an angel waiting on his single word, and he refused it, asking instead that the children of his attackers be guided. When you are most wronged is exactly when mercy weighs the most and costs the most, and exactly then that it counts the most. The ground where he was tortured became a place where Allah is worshipped day and night, because a man on the worst day of his life chose to pray for a future he would not see rather than

avenge a wound he could still feel. Every mercy you have ever been shown runs downstream from a heart that could do this.

So take this day down into your ordinary ones. When the walls close in, complain only upward, in his words: O Allah, to You I complain of my weakness and my helplessness and my lowliness before people; You are the Lord of the oppressed and You are my Lord; if You are not angry with me, I do not care, but Your wellbeing is wider for me. Fear His displeasure more than your pain, do everything you honestly can and trust Him with the rest, and when the chance comes to crush or to forgive, choose, as he chose, the harder and higher road. May Allah send His peace and blessings upon His Messenger ﷺ, who was wronged as no one has been wronged and answered it with mercy, gather us behind him, and make the very ground we are broken upon, in the end, a place where He alone is worshipped. Ameen.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 20: the incident of Ta'if (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (43:31, 12:86, 46:29, 46:31), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The Night Journey and the Ascension, part 1

After the hardest year, the heavens opened

By the time this night arrives, the Prophet ﷺ has buried Khadijah, radiyallahu anha, the woman who believed him first and steadied him through the worst of Makkah. He has buried Abu Talib, the uncle whose protection kept the swords sheathed for a decade. And he has limped back from Ta'if, where he went hoping for shelter and was answered with stones until the blood filled his sandals. One year took almost everything a man can lose, and the early Muslims called it what it was, the year of sorrow.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi opens this episode the way the religion itself answers grief, with the promise stitched into every trial Allah sends: He never tests a servant who meets the test with patience except that ease comes with the hardship and after it. So after the lowest valley of his life ﷺ, it was only fitting that the next thing should be one of the highest peaks. The Sheikh goes further than fitting. Some scholars, he notes, hold that what came next was the single greatest miracle the Prophet ﷺ was ever granted personally. The Qur'an was the miracle given to the whole ummah, a sign meant to last to the end of time. This night was the miracle given to him alone. The Qur'an was the gift to us. This was the gift to him.

The gift after the year of sorrow

Two words name the night, and the names carry the shape of the journey. Al-Isra is built from a word that means to travel by night; it is the ride from Makkah to Jerusalem, a journey across the surface of this earth. Al-Mi'raj is something else. It is not the ascent itself but the instrument of ascent, the apparatus you rise by, the way you might say a lift or an elevator: a thing Allah made for climbing from Jerusalem up and out through the heavens, a journey that has nothing to do with this world at all. Allah references both in the Qur'an, the Isra in the surah that bears its name, the Mi'raj in Surah an-Najm.

And listen to how He opens the surah that carries this night. He begins with the word He reserves for the most exalted of all things.

Exalted is He who took His Servant by night from al-Masjid al-Haram to al-Masjid al-Aqsa, whose surroundings We have blessed, to show him of Our signs. Indeed, He is the Hearing, the Seeing.

QUR'AN 17:1

Subhan: glory be to the One free of every imperfection, who has no defect and no flaw. He praises Himself, and the Sheikh asks us to feel the weight of that. Why is glory due to Him here? Because of this journey. He is announcing that He is worthy of being exalted on account of what He is about to tell you. That is how immense this night is: Allah opens by praising His own perfection because of it.

And notice what He calls the one He carried: not by name, but by title. His Servant, abdihi. The Sheikh stops here, because this is the highest praise Allah ever gives him. Allah tells us why He made us:

And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.

QUR'AN 51:56

So when Allah calls a man His servant, His slave, He is naming the one who perfected the very reason creation exists, the one who worshipped Him as no one before or since. Among ourselves, we address the great by title rather than name, Mr. President, Your Highness, because the title outranks the name. So it is here, and more so: more often than Allah names him ﷺ in the Qur'an, He titles him. To be called by name is honor; to be called His Servant is the summit.

And the ayah states the journey's one purpose plainly: to show him of Our signs. Surah an-Najm answers it from the far side of the night, that he certainly saw of the greatest signs of his Lord. Promised here, delivered there. Notice for whom this night was meant. Not for Quraysh, who would do nothing but mock it. Not even for us, who were not there and can only believe what we are told. The whole journey was a personal gift to him ﷺ; we are simply permitted to overhear it. And it came when it came for the reason this series keeps arriving at: no one passes through a trial with patience except that the sweetness is already on its way.

Twenty narrators and one night

Before the first step, the Sheikh pauses for an honest word about sources, the place where Dr. Yasir Qadhi the storyteller makes room for the academic. The night journey, he says, is among the most heavily narrated events in the whole seerah: more than twenty companions carried pieces of it, six of them in Sahih al-Bukhari alone. Here is the fact he asks us to sit with: gather every authentic report about the entire Makkan period except this night

into one volume, and gather every report about this single night into another, and the volume about one night would be the thicker of the two.

That abundance brought trouble. Professional storytellers fell in love with this story in the earliest generations, men who made a living going masjid to masjid spinning tales the crowds loved, much of it pure invention dressed in vivid, impossible detail. The scholars rose against them and pushed until storytellers were banned from the masjids outright, but by then some of those fabrications had soaked into the popular books. And even after the authentic reports are sifted from the false, a labor the Sheikh says he has spent long hours on himself, a second problem remains. What is left is a box of true puzzle pieces with very little to fix their order. It is, he says, like asking twenty friends to retell one very long day: each starts somewhere different, each remembers a different handful of moments, each tells it in his own words. To reconstruct the exact sequence with certainty is, in honesty, impossible.

The knots were real enough that great scholars wrestled with them. Imam an-Nawawi, among others, allowed in one verdict that perhaps there had been more than one night journey, because certain reports seemed impossible to reconcile otherwise, and this was no fringe view. But the Sheikh stands with the majority and reads the answer straight out of the ayah: Allah said He took His servant by night, laylan, one servant, one night. One journey, and the small seams between narrations are to be reconciled, not multiplied.

As for when it happened, no companion ever recorded a date. The earliest writers of sira, Ibn Ishaq foremost among them, placed it about a year before the hijrah, and that is where most of

the early authorities landed; others guessed two years, even five, but one authentic clue closes the window. Khadijah passed away before the five daily prayers were made obligatory, and the prayers were made obligatory on this very night. So the journey came after her death, which means after the year of sorrow, in the last stretch of Makkah. The month is genuinely unknown; the Sheikh found five claims among the early scholars, the most famous being Rajab, and not one rests on an authentic chain. And there is wisdom in that silence. The companions, who preserved the smallest details of the night, simply let the date fall away, because the date was never the point. What happened matters; when it happened does not. To mark a particular evening as the night of the Isra, when we do not even know the month, is to commemorate what the people closest to it deliberately did not.

The roof opens, the heart is washed

Where did the night begin? Bukhari preserves two answers, and the Sheikh shows how they fit together rather than fight. In one report the Prophet ﷺ says he was lying in the Hijr, the low semicircle of wall beside the Ka'bah; that space was once part of the House itself, left outside the walls when Quraysh rebuilt the Ka'bah and their lawful funds ran short, which is why to pray in the Hijr is to pray inside the original Ka'bah. In another report he says he was in his house when the roof opened and Jibril descended. The scholars read the two as one story: taken from his house, brought first to the Hijr. Why, the Sheikh asks, would a man with a home in Makkah be sleeping out in the open beside the Ka'bah? Not every difference is a contradiction.

There Jibril opened his chest. He brought a basin of gold, and the reports describe what filled it two ways: one says Zamzam, another says iman, faith itself. Both are true at once, the Sheikh

says, for whatever was in that basin was poured in to carry faith into him, and it was Zamzam too. Jibril washed his heart and returned it to its place. This was the second washing of his life. The first came when he was a small boy in the desert, and that time a black speck was drawn out of his heart and discarded. This time there is no speck to remove. So if the heart was already cleansed long ago, why wash it again? Because this washing is not a cleansing. It is a fortifying.

And it had to be, because of what came next. He ﷺ was about to step clean out of the world as we know it. It is related that if another man had been shown even a fraction of what the Prophet ﷺ was about to see, he would have lost his mind on the spot. So Allah strengthened the heart before the seeing, and the Qur'an testifies to the result.

The heart did not lie about what it saw.

QUR'AN 53:11

The sight did not swerve, nor did it transgress its limit. He certainly saw of the greatest signs of his Lord.

QUR'AN 53:17-18

The eye did not flinch, did not wander, did not look away in fear. He gazed steadily, with a heart made strong for the purpose, at sights no human being had ever been permitted to see.

A creature named lightning

Then Jibril brought the mount. The Prophet ﷺ describes it with care: a riding beast, pure white, smaller than a mule and larger than a donkey, and by a report in Tirmidhi it wore a harness and a saddle. Its name was al-Buraq, grown from the root that gives the

word for lightning, and its stride is the detail no one forgets. Each hoof came down at the farthest point its eye could see. Run whatever numbers you like, the Sheikh says: if the horizon is ten miles off and a single step carries you there, and the next the same, then in a heartbeat you have crossed twenty miles, and in a minute a distance the mind cannot hold. This is a creature faster than anything we have ever built.

And notice what is absent from the description: wings. The winged horse of the later paintings and legends was never narrated. The hadith describes a creature of flesh and blood, and it behaves like one. When the Prophet ﷺ moved to mount it, the Buraq startled and reared, the way any animal shies under an unfamiliar rider. Jibril seized the harness and rebuked it: are you not ashamed? No one more honored in the sight of Allah has ever ridden you than the one who rides you now.

Sit with that sentence, the Sheikh says, because of what it quietly admits. Others have ridden this creature before, riders we are told nothing about, on errands of Allah we know nothing of. The Qur'an tells us that Allah creates what we have no knowledge of; even the jinn, we learned not long ago, have their own beasts. Whole orders of creation move through worlds beyond our small catalogue, and tonight one of them stood saddled in Makkah, shying at its noblest rider ﷺ before carrying him out of the world.

The masjid only he could see

The Buraq carried him ﷺ to Jerusalem, and the Sheikh asks us to picture the city honestly, as it truly was in that year and not as it is now. There is no dome on the hill, no minaret, no sanctuary, no structure of worship at all. Rome rules Jerusalem, and Rome is now a Christian empire, and its rulers, out of an old contempt for

the Jews, had deliberately turned the site of the ancient Temple into a refuse heap, a dumping ground for the city's filth. To every other eye in Jerusalem that night, the holiest hill on earth after Makkah was rubble and sewage.

He ﷺ did not see what the city saw. He says: I tied the Buraq to the ring that the prophets tie their mounts to. A hitching post, worn by the prophets who had prayed there before him, at a masjid the world had buried under garbage. Allah unveiled to him the house of worship as it truly is, the original sanctuary no other eye could find. Then he walked in and prayed two rak'ahs. Greeting a masjid with prayer on entering it would only be legislated years later, in Madinah, and the five daily prayers did not yet exist at all; yet here he ﷺ was already living what he would one day be commanded to teach.

And he was not alone. He turned and found them, or perhaps had known all along, for the narrations carry it both ways: the prophets, gathered, standing in prayer. He describes them the way a man points across a room at faces he can see. Musa: tall, dark, powerfully built, like the men of the tribe of Shanu'ah. Isa: of a reddish-white complexion, shorter, his hair glistening as though he had just stepped from a bath. And of Ibrahim he said the simplest and most striking thing of all, that of all people no one resembled him more closely than he himself did.

Then the call to prayer was given, and he ﷺ was put forward to lead. The Sheikh asks us to weigh this slowly. We were told, many lessons ago, that the prophets number around a hundred and twenty thousand; here they stand, well over a hundred thousand souls in a single unbroken row behind him, stretching beyond the reach of the eye. And every prophet is the leader of his own ummah, so the imam of all the prophets is, by extension,

the leader of every ummah that ever was. He ﷺ would later say it plainly, that he is the master of the children of Adam, and he added at once: and it is no boast. It is simply what happened that night in Jerusalem.

One more thing about that row holds the night together. He had already passed Musa on the way, standing in prayer in his grave; here Musa prayed in the row in Jerusalem; soon, in the sixth heaven, they would meet a third time. Death had not stopped a single one of them from praying. The same prayer, toward the same Lord, carrying the same message: one family at one task across all of time, some of them preferred above others, and the one leading them all preferred above every one.

Two cups, one ummah

After the prayer, Jibril held out two vessels. One narration places this moment in Jerusalem, another during the ascent; a small seam, and the Sheikh says it changes nothing. In one was wine. In the other, milk. And remember exactly where we stand in the story: wine has not yet been forbidden. The believers of Makkah still drink it without sin. So this was not a test of law. It was a test of instinct.

Jibril said: choose, and choose for your ummah, for this choice will not stop at you. Fourteen centuries hung on the reach of one hand. He ﷺ took the milk, and Jibril told him: you have chosen the fitrah. The Sheikh lingers on the symbolism, because it runs deep. Milk is the Qur'an's own image of purity.

And indeed, for you in grazing livestock is a lesson. We give you drink from what is in their bellies, between excretion and blood, pure milk, palatable to drinkers.

QUR'AN 16:66

Pure milk drawn clean from between filth and blood, wholesome and nourishing, the drink the Prophet ﷺ loved, and, as a hadith notes, the one thing that serves as both food and drink at once. Wine is the opposite story told backward: something once pure, left to ferment and rot until it steals the very mind that milk would have fed. And the Sheikh relays the word of one of the companions, that even if wine had never been prohibited at all, a man of sound intelligence would have walked past it on his own.

You have chosen the fitrah, Jibril said, and your ummah will be upon it. The Prophet ﷺ taught that every child is born upon the fitrah, the clean original setting, good at its core, and Jibril used that very word for the milk. So that night, long before the laws of permitted and forbidden came down one at a time, the direction of this whole ummah was set: purity as its default, the fitrah as its home.

Doors that ask who is there

The Buraq stays tied at the post in Jerusalem; from here the second journey begins, the Mi'raj, the rising. At the lowest heaven there is a door, and it is locked. Jibril asks for it to be opened, and from the other side a gatekeeper answers: who is this? Jibril. And who is with you? Muhammad ﷺ. Has he been sent for? Yes. Only then does the door open. And the same exchange repeats, word for word, at the second heaven, and the third, all the way to the seventh.

Hold that picture, the Sheikh says. There are doors in the heavens, and they are locked, and each has an appointed keeper, and no one passes without permission, not even Jibril. And the only credential required is a word, because the angels cannot lie. No paper, no stamp, no visa; the angel simply says that Allah has

commanded it, and an angel does not deceive. In a world without falsehood, your word is your passport.

What are these seven heavens? Here the Sheikh slows down, because two words get tangled in people's minds: the samawat and the jannat. The samawat are seven created skies, layered one above the next, each enclosing the one below it. And in his considered view, everything astronomy has ever seen, every star in every telescope, every galaxy billions of light years out, the whole observable universe, is only the first of the seven, the nearest heaven.

And who created seven heavens in layers. You do not see in the creation of the Most Merciful any inconsistency. So return your vision to the sky; do you see any breaks?

QUR'AN 67:3

And We have certainly beautified the nearest heaven with lamps and have made from them what is thrown at the devils and have prepared for them the punishment of the Blaze.

QUR'AN 67:5

The lamps are the stars, and Allah calls the sky He set them in the nearest heaven, the lowest of the seven. Study even the most basic astronomy and the mind begins to lose its footing, the Sheikh says, at the distances, the light years, the galaxies so far off that what we see is what they were ages ago. Every larger telescope only finds more, and still we have not reached the edge of it. And all of that is heaven number one. Six more stretch beyond it, each wrapping the last, and the jannat, the gardens of Paradise, lie at the very top of them all.

Which untangles a confusion before it can start. To meet Adam in the first heaven does not mean Adam dwells on the lowest level of Paradise; the samawat are not the jannat, and in any case no one is in Paradise yet. It stands empty until the Day of Judgment. The prophets he ﷺ is about to meet were brought out to the heavens for one purpose on this night alone: to welcome him.

Seven welcomes, seven messages

Behind the first door stood a tall, towering man, and Jibril said: this is your father Adam, greet him. Adam returned his salam and welcomed him: welcome, O righteous son and righteous prophet. And here the Sheikh clears away the most common mistake about this scene. The order of the heavens is not a ranking of the prophets, lowest to highest; these are welcoming parties. When a dignitary arrives, men of honor receive him at each stage of his coming, and Allah sent out some of the noblest of all His prophets to receive this one guest ﷺ. And each greeter, read rightly, is a message addressed to him, a man on the eve of being driven from his home.

Adam first, fittingly, since he is the father not only of the prophets but of all mankind, and because his story is the Prophet's ﷺ own in miniature: chosen for the holiest of homes, made to leave it, and promised a return. Within a year the son before him would be driven from the holiest city on earth, expelled the way Shaytan once drove Adam out, with the Abu Lahabs of Makkah playing the old part, and like his father he would one day return. The second heaven held Isa and Yahya, the sons of two sisters, the prophets nearest him in time, both savaged by their own people; Yahya was killed outright, a thing recorded in their own scriptures, and Isa escaped only because Allah raised him up. The message: you are not the first whose own people turned on

him. The third heaven held Yusuf, given half of all beauty, wronged by his own blood brothers, who lived to hear them confess and forgave them. The Prophet ﷺ never forgot that one; years from this night, standing over a conquered Makkah while Quraysh waited to learn their fate, he would reach for Yusuf's exact words.

He said, "No blame will there be upon you today. May Allah forgive you; and He is the most merciful of the merciful."

QUR'AN 12:92

The fourth heaven held Idris, of whom the Qur'an tells us essentially one thing.

And We raised him to a high station.

QUR'AN 19:57

A single line about a high station, spoken now over a man being raised through the heavens themselves, who stands in the fourth of seven. The fifth held Harun, despised by his people and then beloved by them, another rejection that ended in love.

The sixth held Musa, and no prophet's road resembled his ﷺ more closely: the trials, the stubborn people, the long hard years, and the second largest ummah ever gathered behind a prophet. All his life the Prophet ﷺ would steady himself by him; when some injury cut deep, he would say that Musa was harmed more than this and was patient, and keep walking. And as the Prophet ﷺ passed beyond him in the heavens, Musa wept. Asked why, he said: this young man was sent after me, and more of his ummah will enter Jannah than mine. A young man, he called him, though the Prophet ﷺ was past fifty; but Musa had lived to a hundred and twenty and more, so to him this was a man half his

age. And the tears were not a grudge. They were ghibtah, the believer's envy, which grieves not that another has something but that another carried more good home to Allah. It is the one jealousy this religion smiles upon: to wish you too had recited more, given more, drawn nearer.

And the seventh heaven held Ibrahim, resting his back against al-Bayt al-Ma'mur. He alone greeted the Prophet ﷺ as Adam had, as righteous son and righteous prophet; every other prophet had said brother, but the two fathers said son, and you can hear the pride of a father in it. Ibrahim is the khalil, the intimate friend, and the Prophet ﷺ said Allah took only the two of them for that rank. As for the house at his back, it is the frequented house, the Ka'bah of the heavens, set so exactly above the Ka'bah of earth that were it to fall it would land upon it. The one authentic hadith about it tells us that seventy thousand angels enter it every day to worship and never return, a fresh seventy thousand every day since creation began; do that arithmetic until the mind gives out. And why is Ibrahim the one resting there, at ease against a house an angel may enter but once in all eternity? Because he built the house below. The reward takes the shape of the deed: raise Allah's house on the earth, and you are given to rest against Allah's house in the seventh heaven.

One quiet note rings ahead out of all these meetings. Of every prophet he met in the heavens, only Isa is still alive, raised up and not yet returned, and so only Isa had to come down to meet him that night, as he will come down once more at the end of time.

What this night asks of our faith

It would be easy to read the night journey as a wonder safely sealed in the past, a story of a white mount and seven skies, and to leave it there. That would be to miss what it puts to us. The

Sheikh ends this first ascent with the journey still climbing, and we will leave the Prophet ﷺ exactly where he left him, standing in the seventh heaven with Ibrahim beside the frequented house and above them what no created eye had yet been shown. But take three things down the stairs into your ordinary days.

The first is that patience gets paid, and sometimes sooner than you dare hope. The year of sorrow, the burials, the blood at Ta'if: these were not the end of the story but the eve of the highest night of his life. Allah does not test a servant who endures with patience except that ease is already written on the far side of the trial, often nearer than the next sunrise. When your own hardest season closes around you, hold that as the literal pattern of his life ﷺ: the lowest valley was the doorstep of the highest peak.

The second is the choice of the milk. Two cups sat in front of him, and the wine was still entirely permitted that night; no law forbade it yet. He chose the milk anyway, and Jibril named the choice the fitrah. Permissible, the Sheikh shows us, is not the only filter a believer uses. There is a higher one: what keeps the heart and the mind clean, what fits the original setting Allah made you on. We spend our days asking only whether a thing is allowed; he ﷺ chose by a deeper instinct, and chose it for all of us. When two cups sit before you and both are lawful, reach for the one that keeps you pure.

And the third is the prayer. Look at where he found it on this night: Musa standing in prayer in his grave, the prophets standing in prayer in Jerusalem in a single row, a greeter standing in prayer behind every door in the heavens. Salah is the family trade of the prophets, the thing not even death interrupts, and it was on this very night, after the year of sorrow, that the five daily prayers were bound to this ummah as a gift. The companions could not

preserve the date of the night, and did not try; they preserved the prayer instead, and so should we. Guard it like the inheritance it is, handed down from the night the heavens opened.

The ascent is not finished. Tonight he ﷺ stands at the seventh heaven, and tomorrow the climb continues past it, into what no eye has seen and no heart could have invented. O Allah, as You carried Your Servant ﷺ by night and raised him through the heavens, raise our love for him, fortify our hearts as You fortified his, keep us upon the fitrah he chose for us, and on the Day You open every locked door, gather us behind him in the row of the prophets. Ameen.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 21: the Night Journey and the Ascension, part 1 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (17:1, 51:56, 53:11, 53:17-18, 16:66, 67:3, 67:5, 12:92, 19:57), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The Night Journey and the Ascension, part 2

Past the last tree, where the prayer was given

Yesterday we left him ﷺ at the seventh heaven, Ibrahim resting his back against the frequented house, the seven welcomes of the seven prophets behind him. Tonight the ascent does not stop there. There is one more tree to pass, one more boundary at which even the mightiest angel of Allah must stay behind, and then a meeting whose details were kept private from us all, except for the single gift that was sent down from it and placed into your ordinary day.

This is the heart of al-Isra wal-Mi'raj, the middle of three nights of telling. Dr. Yasir Qadhi is honest at the very start, the way the sound study of the seerah forces a person to be honest. The reports of this night reach us as scattered fragments, each one a true piece, but with very little to fix their exact order. We have one narration in which the prophets are deep in conversation, and we cannot say for certain where it happened: in Jerusalem, in the masjid before the ascent, or somewhere on the climb itself. Where the order is unknown, the Sheikh simply says so, and so will we. What is certain is the shape of the journey: up, past the last created thing, to the Lord above the veil, and back down again with the prayer in hand.

What the prophets spoke of

Somewhere on this night, the narrations do not pin down exactly where, the prophets fell into conversation, and Allah preserved a piece of it for us through Abdullah ibn Masud, radiyallahu anhu. They were speaking of the one matter none of them could be casual about: the Day of Judgment. Ibrahim was asked first, and he said he had no knowledge of it. Musa was asked, and he too said he had no knowledge. Then they turned to Isa, and Isa had an answer, because Isa had been told his own part in what was coming.

He said that Allah would send him back to this earth, and that he would be the one to kill the Dajjal. After that, he said, the peoples would scatter to their various lands, and Yajuj and Majuj would pour out from every direction, drinking dry every water they passed until nothing was left, until he would pray against them and Allah would destroy them in a single night, the whole earth left reeking with their decay as far as a person could smell. Then, he said, he would pray again, and Allah would send rain from the sky to wash the world clean of them. And after all of that, he said, the Hour would be like a pregnant woman at the very end of her term: everyone knows the birth is near, no one knows the hour it comes. The Prophet ﷺ confirmed it the way he confirmed so much that night. This, he said, is found in the Qur'an, and he recited one of its references to Yajuj and Majuj.

*Until when [the dam of] Gog and Magog has been opened
and they, from every elevation, descend*

QUR'AN 21:96

Sheikh Yasir pauses on what this small scene quietly explains. So much of what the Prophet ﷺ would later teach his ummah about the end of time, about Isa returning, about the Dajjal, about Yajuj

and Majuj, has a source you can now point to: Isa told him directly, on the night he was carried up. One conversation out of who knows how many was preserved for us. What else did the prophets discuss that night? Allahu alam. The rest is in the unseen, and the believing thing to do is to leave it there, exactly where Allah left it.

A father's salam, and a garden's empty soil

There was another exchange that night, and it is a gift handed down to every single one of us. The Prophet ﷺ said: I met Ibrahim on the night I was taken, and he said to me, O Muhammad, convey my salam to your ummah. Hold that for a moment before you move past it. Our father Ibrahim, the khalil of Allah, the intimate friend of the Most High, sending his peace forward across the centuries to a people not yet born, and sending it through the one descendant of his who would carry it to them. So receive it tonight exactly as it was sent: peace from Ibrahim, to you.

And he sent advice along with the greeting. Tell your ummah, he said, that the soil of Jannah is the most beautiful and fertile soil there is, but that it is a flat, barren plain, with nothing planted in it yet. Then he told them how its trees come to grow. Every time a servant says subhanallah, alhamdulillah, la ilaha illallah, Allahu akbar, a tree is planted for him in that rich ground. The soil is guaranteed to bear fruit; what it is waiting for is your seed. You are not guaranteed a single tree until you plant it with your own tongue.

It is the gentlest possible reading of dhikr. The remembrance you scatter through an ordinary day, muttered under your breath in traffic, repeated after the prayer, half-asleep on the pillow, is not vanishing into the air. It is being planted, in the richest soil that

exists, in a garden you are quietly growing while you are still on your way toward it. Ibrahim wanted you to know that, and he asked the Prophet ﷺ to make sure the message reached you. Sheikh Yasir lingers here on the sheer kindness of it: a prophet who saw Jannah with his own eyes, and the one thing he chose to send back was an instruction for how the rest of us might fill ours.

The angel who has never smiled

On this night he ﷺ was also brought to meet Malik. Not the angel of death, whose name is Malak al-Mawt; Malik is someone else, the keeper of the Fire, the gatekeeper the Qur'an names. Jibril said to him: this is Malik, give him your salam. The Prophet ﷺ turned to greet him, and before he could even speak, Malik greeted him first. And he noticed something at once. Every other angel that night had carried a brightness, a warmth, a visible joy at meeting him. Malik did not. He met the best of all creation with a face that held no smile at all, somber and grave.

So the Prophet ﷺ asked Jibril why this one was different, and Jibril answered: he has never once smiled or laughed since the day he was created, because of what he was made to guard. Once Malik had seen the Fire, he never smiled again. Then Jibril added a line that should land softly on your heart: had Malik ever been going to smile for anyone, he would have smiled for you, O Muhammad ﷺ. The keeper of the Fire, somber since the beginning of his existence, makes his one exception in his heart for the Messenger of Allah, and still cannot smile, because of the weight of what he stands over.

There is a courtesy in this scene the Sheikh does not want you to miss. The Prophet ﷺ would be shown the Fire that night, which means that if he had wished, he could have passed by Malik at

his post and greeted him there. Instead, the arrangement was the reverse: Malik was brought up to him, and Malik was made to greet first. From this, Sheikh Yasir draws one of the wisdoms of the whole night. The whole arrangement is a statement about distance. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is as far from that Fire as the seventh heaven is from the lowest of creation. Even its noble keeper comes up to him, and pays him the respect a person pays a superior, greeting him first and waiting to be answered. The gap between this man and that place could not be drawn more clearly than by who was brought to whom.

The Lote Tree of the Utmost Boundary

Then, having passed the seventh heaven and all the prophets, Jibril continued up with him until they came to it: Sidrat al-Muntaha, the Lote Tree of the Utmost Boundary. The sidr was a tree the Arabs knew well, a desert tree prized for its wide, shading branches, its sweet fruit, its pleasant scent. And muntaha means the very end, the utmost limit. That is precisely what this tree marks. It is the edge of creation as we know it. Everything that rises up from the earth, Sheikh Yasir explains, ascends to here and goes no further: the souls, the prayers, the supplications, the righteous deeds, the wholesome word, all of it carried up and absorbed at the Sidra. And everything that Allah sends down to the earth, His mercy and the rain and every decreed thing, begins its descent from here. The Lote Tree is the great threshold between our world and whatever lies above it.

He described it the only way it could be described to people who had never seen it: in the language of things they already knew. Its fruit were like the great clay water jars of the town of Hajar, storage vessels so large the people he spoke to could picture them at once, though we have lost track of their size. Its leaves

were like the ears of elephants, vast and broad, even though he ﷺ had never seen an elephant in his life. And then the description stops being like anything at all. The tree was being enveloped, covered over, by something, and the Qur'an itself will not name what.

When there covered the Lote Tree that which covered [it].

QUR'AN 53:16

Colors ran up and down it that he ﷺ said he could not describe, colors beyond any our eyes were built to register, beyond the small band of the spectrum we know. Butterflies of gold drifted around it. It did not hold still; in one report he said it kept changing until no one could describe it at all. He was no longer looking at anything of this world. The Sheikh notes here, in passing, that this small phrase, colors I cannot describe, fits quietly with what we now know of light and energy beyond the visible, not as a thing to be forced into a scientific proof, but as one more sign that he had crossed into a dimension our senses are not made for.

At the Lote Tree of the Utmost Boundary - Near it is the Garden of Refuge [i.e., Paradise] -

QUR'AN 53:14-15

And the Qur'an's verdict on what he saw there is the seal upon it. Allah Himself counts the Lote Tree among His major signs, the ayat al-kubra. So pause on the arithmetic the Sheikh leaves with you, the same arithmetic the Qur'an invites. If a single tree, at the very edge of the universe, is named among the greatest signs of the Lord, then what is greater still, waiting just beyond it, was about to summon him ﷺ on alone.

Two rivers you can see, two you cannot

At the Lote Tree he ﷺ saw four rivers flowing, two of them hidden and two of them open to view, and he asked Jibril what they were. Jibril said: the two hidden rivers are in Jannah, rivers you will not see in this world; and the two you can see are the Nile and the Euphrates. Two of the rivers of Paradise touch this earth, and they are the very rivers along which the oldest civilizations of mankind have always lived. Sheikh Yasir cannot help but dwell on this small fact: the cradle of human life as we know it sits on the Euphrates and the Nile, watered and blessed from a source higher than any map could ever trace. As for the two rivers of Jannah themselves, they are al-Kawthar, the abundance Allah granted him, and Salsabil, the fountain the Qur'an names.

Indeed, We have granted you, [O Muḥammad], al-Kawthar.

QUR'AN 108:1

[From] a fountain within it [i.e., Paradise] named Salsabeel.

QUR'AN 76:18

And here, somewhere in this stretch above the heavens, three more of Allah's major signs were unveiled to him, one after another. He saw al-Bayt al-Mamur, the frequented house, the Kaaba of the heavens that Ibrahim had been resting against, set so exactly above the earthly Kaaba that were it to fall it would land squarely upon it. Seventy thousand angels enter it every single day to worship and never return, a fresh seventy thousand the next day, and the next, since the beginning of creation, until your mind gives out trying to count them. And he saw Jibril in his true and original form, the form in which Allah first created him,

six hundred wings spread across the whole of the horizon, pearls and corals dripping from his feathers.

Sheikh Yasir gathers the three signs into a single thought. The Lote Tree is the highest reach of this universe, beyond which nothing of creation extends. The frequented house is the heavens at worship, the angels' own Kaaba, the spiritual counterpart of the one we circle. And Jibril in his form is the noblest of all the angels of Allah, the one preferred above the rest, which is why he was given six hundred wings when the Qur'an describes other angels with two or three or four. The greatest of the angels and the greatest of the children of Adam ﷺ, seeing each other as they truly are, at the boundary of everything created. Of all that he was shown that night, the Sheikh notes, the Prophet ﷺ saw Jibril in that original form only twice in his entire life, and this was one of the two.

Carried up alone, to hear the Pen

Now comes the boundary that even Jibril does not cross. Up to the Lote Tree, the narrations keep Jibril at his side, leading, naming, explaining each thing as they rise. At the Sidra, that changes. The Qur'an describes the encounter with the angel, the one intense in strength who rose to his true form at the highest horizon, and then the verbs shift. The Prophet ﷺ stops speaking of Jibril altogether and says, in the singular: then I was caused to ascend. Reading the reports as carefully as he can, and finding no clear statement either way, Sheikh Yasir concludes that the legitimate thing to say, the thing the evidence will bear, is this: the Prophet ﷺ went on beyond the Lote Tree, beyond Jibril, beyond the last living creature, to a level no created being has ever reached.

*Taught to him by one intense in strength [i.e., Gabriel] -
One of soundness. And he rose to [his] true form While he
was in the higher [part of the] horizon.*

QUR'AN 53:5-7

What was up there? In one hadith he said: I rose until I could hear the scratching of the Pen. This is the same Pen that Allah created first of all things, and commanded to write everything that would be until the Day of Judgment, writing in the Book that is with Allah above the Throne. No angel stands at that height. No creature does. He ﷺ rose to where the only ones present are the Owner of the Throne and the Pen recording His decree, and he heard it being written. It was, the Sheikh says, an audience the like of which we know of no other being ever receiving, an elite gathering of one servant before his Lord, with the universe itself left behind below him.

*Then he approached and descended And was at a
distance of two bow lengths or nearer. And he revealed to
His Servant what he revealed [i.e., conveyed]. The heart
did not lie [about] what it saw.*

QUR'AN 53:8-11

And of what passed there, Allah told us almost nothing, and there is a wisdom in the silence. The conversation between the Lord and His Messenger ﷺ was something too private and too precious to be handed out to a crowd. The Qur'an gathers it into one merciful, undisclosed line, and he revealed to His servant what he revealed, and leaves it veiled. Sheikh Yasir is careful to clear away the legends here, the most common being that the words of the tashahhud we say in every prayer are a transcript of this conversation. That, he says plainly, is a fabrication with no

basis in any sound book; do not carry it. What is sound is that only one thing was reported back to us from that meeting. Only one. And it was the most important thing that could possibly have come down.

Fifty, lowered to five

The one gift that came down was the prayer. Think about what that means before you hear the rest of it. Every other command of this religion, the zakah, the fasting, the hajj, the night prayer, the Qur'an itself, all of it was sent down to him ﷺ through Jibril, in the ordinary way of revelation. For one commandment alone, the Messenger was summoned up, past the heavens, past the Lote Tree, into the very presence of the Divine, to receive it directly from his Lord. That one commandment is the salah. If nothing else in the entire seerah told you where the prayer stands in this religion, the Sheikh says, this alone would be enough.

Allah prescribed fifty prayers a day. On the way back down, the Prophet ﷺ passed Musa, who asked him what his Lord had enjoined. Fifty prayers, he said. Musa told him to go back: your ummah cannot bear fifty, I have more experience with people than you, I have tested the Children of Israel before you, go and ask Him to lighten it. And here the Sheikh stops on a detail he loves, because it is so human. The Prophet ﷺ glanced toward Jibril, as if asking his opinion, and Jibril nodded to him: yes, do it. The best of mankind, seeking a second opinion from the best of angels, in the middle of the heavens. So he went back, and Allah lowered the number. And he came down, and Musa sent him back again, and again, and again, the same counsel each time and the same mercy each time, at least five journeys up and down by the soundest reckoning, until at last the Prophet ﷺ said:

I have gone back to my Lord until I am ashamed to ask again. I am content.

And the moment he said it, a voice called out: I have decreed My obligation and I have made it light upon My servants; it is five, but it shall be rewarded as fifty. Five prayers on the scale, fifty in the reward. Allah had known from the very start that it would settle at five; Musa and the Prophet ﷺ, the only two men who had each been spoken to by their Lord, were the only two present to hear it settle. The going up and the coming down was mercy made visible, His easing of the burden shown to us step by step, so that we would see with our own eyes how far He was willing to lower it.

He has chosen you and has not placed upon you in the religion any difficulty.

QUR'AN 22:78

Sheikh Yasir leaves you with the ache of it, and with its other half. The ache first: if Allah had truly wanted fifty, fifty would have stood, for the original command was a window onto what worship could be, a life that is almost nothing but prayer, the way the angels themselves never tire of it. He lowered it because He does not want hardship for you, because, as the verse says, He has not placed any difficulty upon you in the religion. The five are already the light version. And still, the Sheikh says with sorrow, it costs us less than twenty minutes of an entire day, this gift carried down from beyond the Throne, and so many cannot find even the five. Then the other half of the picture, lest the lightening be mistaken for laxity: the Prophet ﷺ himself, knowing the original fifty, would pray close to fifty units a day of his own accord, the obligations and the sunan and the night prayer and

the forenoon prayer adding up almost exactly. The five were lightened for us. He kept reaching for the fifty.

We stop here, with the prayer in his hands and the descent not yet finished. Tomorrow the journey comes the rest of the way down, past Jannah and the Fire, and then the hardest part of the whole night arrives: the morning after, when he ﷺ must stand before Makkah and tell them what he saw.

What this night asks of our faith

It would be easy to read this middle stretch of the ascent as a catalogue of wonders, a tour of trees and rivers and angels meant to leave us amazed and nothing more. That would be to miss the question it puts to us, because the most astonishing thing about this night is not how high he went, but what he was sent back down with.

Look again at the climb. Past the seventh heaven, past a tree that Allah names among His greatest signs, past the mightiest of the angels and the boundary that even he could not cross, all the way up to where the Pen could be heard writing the decree, to a meeting Allah kept private out of its sheer preciousness. The whole universe was crossed in one direction. And what came back down from that unrepeatable height was not a secret to dazzle the crowds, nor a wonder to silence the doubters. It was an instruction for your day. Five prayers, lowered from fifty by a Lord who refused to make the religion hard, and still credited to you as fifty. That is the measure of what the salah is worth: the entire creation was traversed to place it in your hands. When you stand to pray, you are holding the one thing Allah chose to deliver to His Messenger ﷺ in person.

And there is Ibrahim's message, waiting to be acted on the moment you put this down. The soil of Jannah is rich and ready, and it is empty, and it is yours to plant. Every word of remembrance is a seed in ground that cannot fail to bear fruit. The dhikr you have always treated as filler, the muttered subhanallah between tasks, is the most productive thing your tongue does all day. Begin treating it that way. And measure your distance from the Fire by the company you keep: Malik, its keeper, was brought up to the best of creation and made to greet him first, to show how far the beloved of Allah stands from that place. Walk toward him ﷺ, follow his way, and you are walking in the direction that distance points.

So carry three things down from this night into your ordinary days. Guard the five prayers as what they are, a gift carried by hand from beyond the Throne, and never let them become the thing you fit around your day instead of the thing your day is fitted around. Plant your Jannah with your tongue, because the soil is already prepared and only your seed is missing. And let Allah's easing of the burden humble you rather than relax you: He lowered fifty to five as a mercy and rewards the five as fifty, and the only fitting response to a Lord that generous is to give Him, gladly, the little He asked for. May Allah, who carried His servant ﷺ past the Lote Tree and gave him the prayer from above the Throne, make us of those who guard the five, plant for us in the soil of Jannah with every word of His remembrance, keep us as far from the Fire as its own keeper could not smile beside, and gather us with His Messenger ﷺ in the garden he was shown.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 22: the Night Journey and the Ascension, part 2 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations

are from Sahih International (21:96, 53:14-15, 53:16, 108:1, 76:18, 53:5-7, 53:8-11, 22:78), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The Night Journey and the Ascension, part 3 وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

The morning after the heavens

The heavens have been climbed. The prophets have been greeted and led in prayer. The fifty prayers have been received and lightened to five, beyond the seventh heaven, at the very edge of the created order. And now the descent begins, and with it the part of the miracle that nobody warns you about: the morning after. The man who hours earlier had stood where no created being had ever stood, at the veil of light, must now come back down to the streets of his own small city and stand in front of Abu Jahl.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi opens this final night of the arc with a warning about its very shape. The descent, and indeed most of the Night Journey, is almost impossible to lay out in exact order. We do not possess one connected narrative; we have a scattering of separate reports, each sound in itself, the sequence of which only Allah knows. So from here on the honest way to tell it is to gather the incidents as they come down to us, dwell on each, and confess freely that we cannot always say which came first. What we can say is that every one of them, on the way home, was preparing him for the hardest conversation of his life وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ, and preparing the ummah for everything that came after.

A fragrance on the road

Somewhere on the night of the journey, and the reports do not tell us where, the Prophet ﷺ caught a fragrance so sweet that he had to stop and ask. Jibril, what is this beautiful scent? The answer, carried in a long hadith in Musnad Ahmad, opens a window onto a nation that had passed away centuries before: this is the fragrance of the woman who used to comb the hair of the daughter of Firawn, and of her children.

She was a servant in the palace of the tyrant who told his court that he knew of no god for them but himself, the same Pharaoh whose arrogance the Qur'an records in his demand for a tower to the heavens:

And Pharaoh said, "O eminent ones, I have not known you to have a god other than me. Then ignite for me, O Haman, [a fire] upon the clay and make for me a tower that I may look at the God of Moses. And indeed, I do think he is among the liars."

QUR'AN 28:38

One day, as she combed the princess's hair, the comb slipped from her fingers and she said, in the reflex of a believing heart, bismillah. The little girl looked up: surely you mean the name of my father? For a child raised in that palace, her father was god. No, the woman said. My Lord, and your Lord, and the Lord of your father, is Allah. Shall I tell him you said this? Tell him.

Firawn summoned her. He had built his whole rule on the claim that there was no lord above him; the Qur'an even has him ask his people whether he had ever taught them of another god. Now he asked this slave woman the same thing: do you have a lord other than me? And with the same steadiness she had shown his daughter she answered the tyrant to his face: yes. My Lord and your Lord is Allah. So he ordered a great cauldron of water set to

boil over fire, and told her she would throw her own children into it, one by one, or take him as her lord. She asked for one thing only, that her bones and her children's bones be gathered afterward and buried together in a single place, not scattered. He granted it. One by one her children went into the fire, until the only one left was the baby still nursing at her breast, and there, for one human moment, she faltered. Then the infant spoke: my mother, go forward, for the punishment of this world is nothing beside the punishment of the next. And she went. Ibn Abbas would later count this child among the very few who ever spoke from the cradle, alongside Isa and the boy in the story of Jurayj.

Sheikh Yasir lingers here on the thing easiest to miss: we do not even know her name. Her own people never recorded it. Her story survives in no older scripture; it is not in the Torah, not in the traditions of the children of Israel, even though it happened among them. Allah willed instead that her courage travel up through the centuries and meet His final Messenger ﷺ on the greatest night of his life, as a fragrance on the road, and that the largest ummah ever raised would carry her memory to the end of time. Firawn kept his empire for a season and lost his name to a curse. A nameless slave woman lost her body to the fire and became perfume in the heavens.

Tents of pearl, and the fires below

After the prayer had been prescribed, the Prophet ﷺ said: then I entered Jannah. He saw tents made of pearl, and a soil of pure musk, the most precious of perfumes. The order of it is itself a lesson the scholars noticed, and the Sheikh draws it out: first the meeting with Allah, the entire purpose of the ascent, and only afterward the sights He had prepared. The guest is brought to the Host before he is shown the house.

But the word entered raises a question, because other reports say that no one truly enters Jannah until after the Judgment, and that he ﷺ himself will be the very first to enter it then. The scholars offer two readings, and Sheikh Yasir leaves both honestly on the table rather than forcing one. Either this night was an exception written for him alone, an entry now and an entry forever, with no contradiction in his being first after the Resurrection too; or the word is to be read as surveying rather than dwelling, for some versions say only I saw Jannah, just as he saw the Fire that night without entering it, and indeed the fact that he described the Fire in the same breath suggests a beholder looking in, not a resident. Even the martyr, remember, does not yet live in Jannah: his soul roams it in the form of a green bird, hung from its chandeliers, near it but not settled in it. Either way the point stands untouched: he ﷺ was shown what no eye had ever been shown.

And he was shown the other side. Gathering the reports he gave at different times, the picture is terrifying in its precision, and the Sheikh sets them out one by one. People with faces disfigured, swallowing coals of fire that passed straight through their bodies: these were the devourers of the wealth of orphans, exactly as the Qur'an warns:

Indeed, those who devour the property of orphans unjustly are only consuming into their bellies fire. And they will be burned in a Blaze [i.e., Hellfire].

QUR'AN 4:10

People raking their own faces and chests with nails of copper: the backbiters, who in life had torn at the honor and flesh of others, so on that Day their own flesh is torn. People seated before fresh, wholesome meat, turning from it to eat from rotten,

stinking meat instead: those who left the halal Allah had given them and went chasing the haram. People with bellies so swollen they could not stand, left on the ground for beasts to trample them where they lay: the consumers of riba, fattened by greed, shown at last what all their hoarded wealth had earned them. And people cutting their own lips and tongues with shears of fire: the preachers who commanded others to good and forgot themselves. At each scene he asked Jibril, who are these? And at each answer there is only one response left for us, which is to seek refuge in Allah from being among any of them.

On that night he ﷺ also saw the Dajjal, and described him to his companions with a bluntness, the Sheikh notes, that no prophet before him had used with his people. He is one-eyed, the bad eye like a swollen, floating grape, plainly deformed, so that you would know him at a glance. The ummah that will one day face the great deceiver was given, in advance, his very face.

Home before the night was over

Of the way down we have only fragments. The detailed, heaven-by-heaven narrations all belong to the ascent; for the return we have no such thing. At Bayt al-Maqdis the Buraq stood waiting where it had been tied, because the Buraq was the mount of the earthly miles, the creature that carried him from Makkah to Jerusalem, while the climb through the heavens was the mi'raj itself, a different ascent altogether. So when he came back down to Jerusalem he mounted the Buraq once more and rode for home.

On that road, in reports the Sheikh grades as less than the highest but with nothing in them to reject, he passed three caravans of Quraysh, and in a city where everyone knows everyone, he recognized them. In the first he saw faces he could

name. From the second, or another of them, feeling thirst on the way, he drank from the large common vessel the travelers kept their water in, a public store, not anyone's private property. And a third he found out searching the dark for a camel that had wandered off and could not be found. Small, ordinary details, the kind no one bothers to invent, and by sunrise they would matter more than anyone in Makkah could imagine.

Then he slept, and he woke in the Haram. That, the Sheikh explains, is precisely why the reports that have him sleeping that evening in his own house, or in the house of Umm Hani, are read the gentle way: he was resting there, then Jibril brought him first to the sacred mosque, and the journey itself ran exactly as the Qur'an draws it, masjid to masjid:

Exalted is He who took His Servant [i.e., Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ)] by night from al-Masjid al-Haram to al-Masjid al-Aqsa, whose surroundings We have blessed, to show him of Our signs. Indeed, He is the Hearing, the Seeing.

QUR'AN 17:1

The Qur'an had drawn the route from the sacred mosque to the farthest mosque and back. The night had filled it in.

The morning he dreaded

Now the scene this whole episode turns on, and we have it in the first person, from the Prophet's ﷺ own mouth: when I woke in the morning, I felt a heavy anxiety, for how was I going to tell the people what had happened to me? Sheikh Yasir pauses on the logic buried in that sentence. He ﷺ never spoke of his own accord and never acted without command, so the very fact that he felt obligated to tell them means Allah had commanded him to

tell them, and he already knew exactly what Makkah would do with it. Sit with the image. The man who only hours before had stood at the veil of light, where no creature had ever stood, now sat in front of the Kaaba, grieved and worried, like any one of us before the hardest conversation of our lives. The seerah keeps showing us his humanity ﷺ precisely so that we never lose it: the joys and the fears, the highs and the lows, a Messenger of God who still felt the knot in the chest that we feel.

Abu Jahl passed by and saw him sitting in that state and asked, in a sneer, whether something had happened. And because he ﷺ would not lie, not even to Abu Jahl, he answered yes: last night I was taken to Bayt al-Maqdis. To Jerusalem, and here you are among us this morning? Abu Jahl, the Sheikh notes, did not know whether to ridicule him on the spot or to bait a larger trap, and he chose the trap, lest his enemy retract before a crowd could gather. If I call your people, he said, will you tell them exactly what you just told me? Yes, said the Prophet ﷺ. So Abu Jahl ran through the town shouting, summoning the clans by the name of their forefather: come, gather, there is an announcement.

Makkah is small, and the strange sight of these two enemies hosting one announcement together pulled the people out of their houses. They sat, curious, around Abu Jahl standing and the Prophet ﷺ seated. Tell them, Abu Jahl demanded, what you told me. You promised. And the Prophet ﷺ told them: last night I was taken to Bayt al-Maqdis, and I prayed there. Notice, the Sheikh says, that he mentioned only the Isra, the journey to Jerusalem, and not the ascension; the heavens he would entrust to the believers later. Some in the crowd began to clap in mockery, some put their hands to their heads, some snickered, and underneath it all ran a current of genuine confusion, because

the one man in Makkah who had never in his life been caught in a lie was saying this in deadly earnest.

Then a man who had actually traveled to Jerusalem stood up with the obvious test: describe it for us. He ﷺ began to describe the place, and then they pressed him on specifics, and here the seerah shows us his humanity once more. He had entered the city at night, prayed, and left; who memorizes a city in the dark? As the questions narrowed, he said afterward, such distress seized him as he had never felt before; the word the report uses means terrified. The questions were fair from their side and impossible from his, for he had not gone as a tourist counting buildings. And then came Allah's rescue. Bayt al-Maqdis itself was raised up before his eyes, set in the distance just beyond the house of his cousin, the very house in which he had grown up, and he answered every question while gazing straight at the city, though the crowd around him could see nothing at all. At last the man who had set the test conceded: as for the description, he has it exactly right.

He gave them more than they asked. He offered them signs on their own road: three of their caravans, described one by one, the people in the first, the lost camel of another, the water he had drunk from the third, and the nearest of them, he said, was about to enter the city. While they were still arguing it out, word came in that the caravan was arriving, exactly as he had said. Abu Jahl went out, saw it with his own two eyes, and came back with the only door a refusing heart has left to it: this is plain sorcery. The eye had confirmed everything. The heart declined anyway.

If he said it, then it is true

Before the Prophet ﷺ could even reach his closest friend, one of the Quraysh ran ahead to Abu Bakr's house, delighted to be first

with the scandal. Do you know what your companion is claiming now? That he went to Jerusalem, a month's journey there, and came back, another month, all in a single night. Abu Bakr, radiyallahu anhu, did not gasp and did not stumble. His first words, the Sheikh observes, are a masterclass in where faith actually lives: if he said it, then it is true. He did not say yes, that happened, for he had not yet heard it from the Prophet ﷺ himself and would not vouch for the messenger's wording; he verified the source. And this source had never once failed.

You believe him, in something like this? And then the answer that named him for the rest of history: I believe him in something far more amazing than that. I believe that revelation descends to him from above the seven heavens in an instant. Weigh the two, the Sheikh says, the way Abu Bakr weighed them. If you already accept that Allah speaks to this man across the entire span of the heavens, then a night's ride to Jerusalem and back is the smaller wonder, not the larger one. From that morning he was as-Siddiq, the one who declared the truth true, and the title never left him.

One famous line from that morning, though, Sheikh Yasir stops to examine, because the examining is part of the seerah's honesty. Some books of sira say that when the news spread, a number of Muslims could not bear it and left Islam. That phrase, he points out, appears only in Ibn Hisham, with no chain of narration behind it, and in none of the six canonical books. And it collides head-on with something firmly authentic. Years later the Byzantine emperor Heraclius would interrogate Abu Sufyan, at the time still a sworn enemy of the Prophet ﷺ, with a long string of questions, and among them: does anyone abandon his religion, in resentment, after entering it? No, said Abu Sufyan, who would dearly have loved to answer yes. And Heraclius told him that this is exactly what true faith looks like once it settles

into hearts: it does not leak away. Not a single apostasy is recorded in the entire Makkan period. So the famous line, the Sheikh concludes, simply should not be relied upon. The Night Journey thinned no ranks. It sorted the mockers from as-Siddiq.

Did he see his Lord?

The Qur'an houses this night in two surahs: the journey itself in the opening verse of Surah al-Isra, and the scenes of the ascension in Surah an-Najm. And out of an-Najm rose the first of the two great questions the ummah has asked of this night ever since: did he ﷺ see Allah?

The answer plays out in one of the most vivid classrooms in our history, and the Sheikh tells it almost as a scene. Aisha, radiyallahu anha, the mother of the believers, taught from behind a real curtain, for the Qur'an had commanded an extra screen for the wives of the Prophet ﷺ, a veil above and beyond ordinary covering, a physical barrier between them and any man. Her student Masruq gathered his courage and spoke from the other side of it: O my mother, let me ask you something, and do not be angry with me. Did Muhammad ﷺ see his Lord? She answered that his words had made the hair on her body stand on end: whoever tells you that he saw his Lord has uttered an enormous lie against Allah. But Masruq had his proof ready, the verses of an-Najm themselves: does the Qur'an not say that he saw him?

While he was in the higher [part of the] horizon. Then he approached and descended and was at a distance of two bow lengths or nearer.

QUR'AN 53:7-9

Aisha did not retreat an inch. She answered from the highest authority anyone in the world could hold on the matter: I was the very first person of this ummah to ask the Messenger of Allah ﷺ about these verses, and he told me that the one he saw, filling the horizon, was Jibril, the angel in his true and original form. The seeing in an-Najm was the seeing of Jibril, not of Allah. And she sealed it with the Book, citing first that vision itself cannot contain Him:

Vision perceives Him not, but He perceives [all] vision; and He is the Subtle, the Aware.

QUR'AN 6:103

And then the verse that fixes the only ways Allah addresses a human being, none of which is an unveiled face seen with these eyes:

And it is not for any human being that Allah should speak to him except by revelation or from behind a partition or that He sends a messenger [i.e., angel] to reveal, by His permission, what He wills. Indeed, He is Most High and Wise.

QUR'AN 42:51

Abu Dharr, radiyallahu anhu, once put the question to the Prophet ﷺ directly, and the answer is preserved in Sahih Muslim: there was light; how could I see Him? That light, the scholars explain from another hadith, is the veil of Allah itself. His veil is light, and were He to remove it, the glories of His Face would burn through everything His sight reaches, which is to say all of creation. Our veils are made of darkness and covering; His veil is made of light. And the Sheikh points to the mountain, where this was taught once already, to Musa, peace be upon him:

And when Moses arrived at Our appointed time and his Lord spoke to him, he said, "My Lord, show me [Yourself] that I may look at You." [Allah] said, "You will not see Me, but look at the mountain; if it should remain in place, then you will see Me." But when his Lord appeared to the mountain, He rendered it level, and Moses fell unconscious. And when he awoke, he said, "Exalted are You! I have repented to You, and I am the first [among my people] of the believers."

QUR'AN 7:143

If a mountain could not stand the unveiling and crumbled to flat ground, no creature in this world can bear to look upon the Lord of the worlds. And what then of the narration from Ibn Abbas that he did see Him? Either Aisha's word stands above it, for she asked the Prophet ﷺ in person and Abu Dharr asked him in person, or, as another report from Ibn Abbas himself clarifies, he saw Him with his heart, a seeing of an entirely different kind, not the seeing of the eyes. The vision of Allah that the believers are promised belongs to the next world, to a new and perfect order of creation made able to bear it, not to these mortal eyes in this life. And yet hold what even this restraint means for our Prophet ﷺ: he was carried past every created thing, to the very veil of light, the one creature ever brought so near.

Awake, in body and soul

The second great question: was any of it a dream? One or two early voices leaned on the phrase I woke up and read the whole night as a vision, but for more than a thousand years the ummah has answered with a single voice, and the Sheikh gathers the proofs that, as he says, nearly argue themselves. If it were a dream, where is the miracle in it? Any of us can fly to the heavens in our sleep and no one in Makkah would care; if it were

only a dream, why would he have dreaded telling them at all, and why would they have erupted? Why a Buraq, a physical mount to be saddled and mounted and tied at a post, if there were no body to carry? Why did he grow thirsty on the road home and drink real water from a real caravan, an act of a waking body if ever there was one? The Quraysh's fury is itself a witness that he claimed a journey of flesh and bone, not a thing seen behind closed eyes. The Isra is carried by some forty or fifty companions and stated plainly in the Qur'an, so to deny it is to deny the Book and the soundest Sunnah at once. As for the modernists of our own age who find miracles embarrassing and would shrink the night down into a vision, they have, the Sheikh says, missed the entire point: the gift was precisely that it really happened, body and soul together.

And why was it given at all? Here is the reading this series keeps returning to, and the Sheikh states it outright: the Isra and Mi'raj was first and foremost a personal gift from Allah to His Messenger ﷺ. Most miracles are aimed outward, to convince the doubters of a prophet's truth. This one was aimed inward, at his own heart. It is the same mercy we saw with Musa at the sacred valley, shown the staff turned to a serpent and his hand shining white with no audience present, miracles whose only witness was the prophet himself, given to fill his certainty to the brim before the heaviest of roads. Even Ibrahim, peace be upon him, who never doubted, asked to see the dead brought back so that his heart might be at rest. So our Prophet ﷺ was shown, with his own eyes, that everything he had been preaching is real: the angels, the prophets, the Garden and the Fire, the Lord above the veil.

And the timing tells the rest of the story. It came unannounced, with no sign that it was coming, at the lowest point of his life:

Khadijah newly buried, Abu Talib newly buried, the wounds of Taif still raw. The lowest of the low was met with the highest of the high. This is the law the whole arc has been teaching: with hardship comes ease, and the greater the hardship, the greater the ease, so that whatever Allah puts a faithful soul through, what comes back is proportionate to what was borne, or more.

One last detail, and it may be the most staggering of the entire night. Ibn Kathir wrote that if any other man had seen even a fraction of those sights, he would have come back out of his mind. The Prophet ﷺ saw the heavens opened, the Fire, the prophets, the veil of light, and then came home, lay down, and slept. The Qur'an's own praise of that composure is the verse from an-Najm:

The sight [of the Prophet (ﷺ)] did not swerve, nor did it transgress [its limit].

QUR'AN 53:17

He carried what he saw with a steady eye, and he carried it for us. He once told his companions that if they knew what he knew, they would laugh little and weep much. He knew, and he stayed standing.

What this day asks of our faith

The Sheikh closes the three nights of this arc the way the classical scholars close it, by counting what the night left in the ummah's hands. Begin with this: in one journey the Prophet ﷺ met every pillar of iman with his own senses. He reached the veil of Allah and was spoken to. He saw the angels, and Jibril in his true form. He met the prophets, prayed at their head, and spoke with them of the Last Day. He saw Jannah and the Fire, already

created, already real. He even heard the scratching of the pen writing the decree. For one man, on one night, faith in the unseen became faith in the seen. And the question that leaves for us is whether we will believe, on his testimony, what he was shown so that we would not have to be.

So take a few of its lessons down into your ordinary days. Believe like as-Siddiq: verify the source once, and then trust it completely, the way Abu Bakr checked who was speaking and never flinched again, because a heart that has examined its grounds does not crumble at the next strange-sounding truth. Deliver the message and do not edit it: he ﷺ woke dreading the telling and told them anyway, even Abu Jahl, because the command was not his to soften, and our task is to carry the religion as it is and not trim it to fit the approval of the room. Say it to yourself first, before you say it to anyone, remembering the preachers in the Fire shearing their own lips, who called others to a good they would not walk toward themselves. And trust that Allah keeps the names that matter: a slave woman whom no historian on earth bothered to record is remembered above the seven heavens, her fragrance laid across the Prophet's ﷺ own path, which means nothing you offer for the sake of Allah, in the dark, unseen, is ever lost.

And then there is the heart of all three nights, the reading the Sheikh returns to again and again: the journey came unannounced, at the lowest point of his life, and answered the worst season he had ever known with the highest honor any creature has ever received. The year of sorrow lay behind it; the road to Madinah lay ahead of it; and Allah lifted His Messenger ﷺ above the heavens precisely there, at the hinge, as if to show him before the hardest decade of his life that the One sending him into it sees everything and hears everything. That is the

comfort the Night Journey hands to every believer standing in a narrow place: the prayer he brought back, the only command in our religion handed down above the heavens, is in your hands five times today, a daily ascent of your own; and the Lord who carried him through the dark and brought him home before the night was over is the same Lord, near and hearing, in your own dark. May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, whom He took by night from the sacred mosque to the farthest mosque and raised beyond the heavens; grant us the certainty of as-Siddiq, the courage of the woman whose fragrance filled his path, eyes that do not swerve from the truth He shows us, and prayers that never leave us, until He gathers us with His Messenger ﷺ in the home he was shown.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 23: the Night Journey and the Ascension, part 3 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (28:38, 4:10, 17:1, 53:7-9, 6:103, 42:51, 7:143, 53:17), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

Planting the Seeds of Yathrib

Six strangers, and a door no empire could open

For three weeks the seerah had been suspended in the heavens, walking with the Prophet ﷺ through the Night Journey and the seven skies. Now it has to come back down to earth, because he did. Just as he ﷺ returned from the Isra and life in Makkah resumed, the story resumes too, and it resumes at the lowest visible point of his entire life in that city. Khadijah is in her grave. Abu Talib is in his grave. The shield of the Banu Hashim that had covered him from birth is gone, and the man living under it now is living on a courtesy that everyone in Makkah knows will not last. A lesser man would have grown quiet and waited for the end. Instead he ﷺ walked into the single largest gathering on the face of the earth and began knocking on tents.

This is the chapter Dr. Yasir Qadhi calls the planting of seeds. By every measure a human eye can take, the Prophet ﷺ is at his weakest here, refused by superpowers, turned away by the wise, hunted out of one city and abandoned by his own. And it is exactly here, in the hour that looks most like defeat, that the single most important door in the seerah quietly swings open, not where he was pushing on it with all his strength, but in a field no one was watching.

Living on borrowed protection

Step back to where the thread was cut. Abu Talib had died, and with his death the lifelong protection of the Banu Hashim came to an end. For a week or two his uncle Abu Lahab felt the weight of tribal obligation and extended his cover over the Prophet ﷺ, and then he rescinded it, cancelled it, withdrew it within days. So who covered the Prophet ﷺ after that? Not his own clan. A man from outside the Banu Hashim altogether: Mut'im ibn Adi, an elderly chief who never accepted Islam and yet took the Prophet ﷺ under his guardianship, so that he could move through the streets of Makkah and live in it at all.

It was a precarious arrangement, and everyone felt how awkward it was. His own tribe had abandoned him; his protector was from another tribe entirely, and the Quraysh were not pleased to see it. And Mut'im was very old. Within roughly a year, before the Battle of Badr, he would be dead, and the thin paper of protection over the Prophet ﷺ would tear with him. The Prophet ﷺ understood exactly what that meant. Makkah was closing around him like a fist, and he needed a way out before it shut completely. He had already turned to Ta'if and been stoned out of it. So now he turned to the one place on earth where the whole of Arabia came to him.

Knocking on every tent

Every year the tribes streamed into Mina for the Hajj, a pilgrimage reaching back to Ibrahim, peace be upon him. The way pilgrims in our own time gather by nation, with the Americans in one quarter and the Nigerians in another and the Iranians in a third, the Arabs of that age gathered by tribe. Every clan had its known patch of ground in Mina, its customary camp that everyone recognized as theirs. And the Prophet ﷺ, year after year, used

the simple fact that all of Arabia had come to him. He moved through the camps.

He had been doing this for years already, but for one purpose only: to call them to the worship of Allah alone, to preach tawhid tent by tent. After the death of Abu Talib the request changed and doubled. Now it was not only embrace this message; it was shelter me, adopt me, transfer your allegiance and take me into your tribe so that I can convey the words of my Lord, because the Quraysh have stopped me from conveying them. The Arabs had a rare custom by which a man could change his tribe, usually for a marriage or a political cause, and the Prophet ﷺ reached for that custom now. Who will take me in, he asked the camps, who will adopt me, so that I may carry the speech of my Lord, for the Quraysh have prevented me.

We are not guessing at how this looked, because there were eyewitnesses, and not one of them was a Muslim at the time. One of them, Rabia ibn Abbad, recalled it from his boyhood. He remembered coming to Mina as a child at his father's side, and seeing a man, young-looking, his beard still black, moving from tent to tent calling the people to worship Allah and abandon their idols. And he remembered a second man following close behind, an older man in a Yemeni cloak with two braids of hair, waiting for the first to finish and then stepping forward at each tent to undo every word: O people, this man is calling you to abandon your gods and to leave the way of your forefathers, so do not listen, cling to the way of your fathers. The boy asked his father who the two of them were. That, his father said, is the one who claims to be a prophet, and the man behind him is his own uncle, Abu Lahab. Even his rejection had become a family business. His name and his claim had spread across the tribes of Arabia before he ever reached most of their tents.

The price the great tribes named

He went to the heavyweights first, and the answers they gave are a lesson in what people want from a movement they think is just beginning to rise. He approached Kinda, a tribe that had once held a kingdom of its own, four or five centuries before, and still ached for that vanished glory. One of its chiefs listened with sharp attention, then said: this is interesting, come with me, I will give you an audience with the other elders, and what you have said to me, say to them. So the Prophet ﷺ followed him in, and the man convened the gathering, and after the Prophet ﷺ had preached, this chief stood and spoke to his own people in plainly political terms. If we adopt this man of the Quraysh, he told them, we will have a message through which we can devour the rest of the Arabs. Then he turned to the Prophet ﷺ and put the real question on the table: if we follow you, and Allah gives us victory over your enemies, will the rule pass to us after you?

The answer the Prophet ﷺ gave is the answer of a man who could not be bought even when buying might have saved his life. The kingdom, he said, belongs to Allah; He grants it to whomever He wills of His servants. Not yes. Not no. A condition I have no right to accept. The chief heard it for exactly what it was and waved him off: so we are to stretch out our necks for you to be cut in war, and then when victory comes the rule goes wherever Allah pleases? We have no need of this. And so Kinda walked away, one of the true superpowers of the peninsula, perhaps the single strongest card on the table, and the Prophet ﷺ let it go rather than promise it a throne.

Here Dr. Yasir Qadhi makes us stop. This was an opportunity that most of us would have seized with a far smaller compromise than the one being offered. The Prophet ﷺ was in a situation that, if you called it desperate, you would not be far from the truth. He

needed a sponsor. Kinda was a heavyweight that had once outweighed even the Quraysh. And still he would not bend the message a single degree, because he understood two things that the rest of us forget under pressure. The first is that he was not permitted to barter what Allah had revealed; you do not win the help of Allah by trading away a part of His religion. The second is sharper still: a people who came for power would never be the people through whom Allah aids His faith. Allah helps this religion through those who believe in it, not through the might of Kinda or anyone else.

Then he came to Banu Shayban ibn Thalaba, and that meeting went very differently, for these were not fools. The Prophet ﷺ would usually travel with Abu Bakr, radiyallahu anhu, at these seasons, because Abu Bakr was the great master of Arab genealogy, who knew the lineages of the tribes better than any man alive. Before the Prophet ﷺ would speak, Abu Bakr would brief him: this is so-and-so son of so-and-so, these are their strengths, these are the men among them to watch. He was, in effect, his ambassador, opening the doors and managing the introductions. There is a quiet lesson buried in that habit, and the Sheikh draws it out. The Prophet ﷺ is the Messenger of Allah, inspired in everything that touches religion and worship and the unseen, but in the ordinary affairs of this world he had no objection to leaning on the knowledge of those around him. Abu Bakr had studied genealogy for more years than the Prophet ﷺ had, and so the Prophet ﷺ let him advise on it. If the Messenger of Allah himself benefited from the expertise of others, where do the rest of us stand who are too proud to be taught.

To Banu Shayban the Prophet ﷺ gave a short sermon and then recited a verse so complete in its foundations of faith and

conduct that it would later become a fixture of the Friday khutbah for generations:

Say, "Come, I will recite what your Lord has prohibited to you. [He commands] that you not associate anything with Him, and to parents, good treatment, and do not kill your children out of poverty; We will provide for you and them. And do not approach immoralities, what is apparent of them and what is concealed. And do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden [to be killed] except by [legal] right. This has He instructed you that you may use reason."

QUR'AN 6:151

Their elders were impressed, and they were honest. The Quraysh have lied about you, they said, your message is beautiful, this is the best of character and conduct. But we cannot abandon the way of our forefathers on a single first meeting, having never met you before; this would be a hasty decision we might come to regret, and we have left people behind at home whose counsel we are bound to seek. Come back next year, and we will return too. It was, the Sheikh notes, an intelligent answer, exactly the answer of the wise and noble people Abu Bakr had described, where no single man rushes to decide and the elders are consulted before anything is done.

A prophecy in a desperate hour

But their military leader, Muthanna ibn Haritha, added the real obstacle, and in adding it he revealed how the whole world looked from inside that hour. We hold two sets of treaties, he explained. One with the Arab tribes around us, and those we are not worried about; whatever we choose to do, we can manage our own affairs against the Arabs. The other is with Kisra, the emperor of Persia, and that is a different matter. We have a pact

with him to stay neutral in the affairs of the peninsula, and this message of yours does not look like the sort of thing the kings will tolerate. If we were to accept you, it could only be on the Arab side. We could help you against the Arabs, but never against Persia.

Watch what the Prophet ﷺ does with that excuse, because it is one of the most astonishing moments in the whole Makkan period. Banu Shayban are afraid of Persia, the Sasanian empire that had bloodied Rome for three and a half centuries, an empire whose ruined palaces at Ctesiphon still stop anyone who sees them, pillars rising fifty meters out of the bare desert. They tremble before it. And as the Prophet ﷺ rises to leave, a refugee with no army, no city that will keep him, and a protector who will be dead within the year, he turns and says: and what if I were to tell you that Allah will give you the kingdom of Kisra, his land and his wealth and his palaces? Their young men say of course, if that were so, we would follow you. But they do not believe it. How could a scattering of Arabs topple the power that even Rome, in three hundred and fifty years, could not break?

Hold that scene against what history actually did. The same Persia they feared is the empire that, within a handful of years of the Prophet's ﷺ death, the Muslims would pour into and dissolve so completely that historians to this day are mystified by it. The Sasanian state that had stood against Rome for centuries crumbled in roughly two years and became mere tales of the past, and the men who did it were, in many cases, the very Bedouin of tribes like the one he was speaking to. The Sheikh ties it to the famous opening of Surah ar-Rum, revealed in this same Makkan struggle, where Allah foretold that the Byzantines, defeated then, would themselves rise again:

*The Byzantines have been defeated In the nearest land.
But they, after their defeat, will overcome Within three to
nine years. To Allah belongs the command [i.e., decree]
before and after. And that day the believers will rejoice*

QUR'AN 30:2-4

He could see all of it from inside the worst hour of his life, because his certainty was never built on his circumstances. It was built on his Lord. They asked him for safety from an empire; he offered them the empire itself, and they were not ready to believe him. Years later, when the Prophet ﷺ sent his letter to Kisra and the emperor tore it to pieces, the Prophet ﷺ said that Allah would tear his kingdom apart as he had torn the letter, and so it was. The Sheikh points out the precision of it: the promise was the kingdom of Kisra, not of Caesar, and Allah's promise is exact, for the empire of Persia fell utterly while the realm of Rome did not.

No such thing as half a Muslim

So there was a deal on the table from the wisest tribe in the region, and it was a partial one: Muslims toward the Arabs, neutral toward Persia, faith on the half of the map that was convenient and silence on the half that was dangerous. And the Prophet ﷺ refused it as firmly as he had refused Kinda its throne. He praised their honesty first. Your answer has been good, he told them, and you have been sincere and fair in naming your fears. But then came the line that closed the door: the religion of Allah is only ever aided by those who embrace it in full. There is no such thing as half a Muslim. A faith held on the convenient side of a man's life is no faith that moves anything at all.

This is a thread the Sheikh shows Allah drawing again and again through the revelation. It is the very command of the Book:

O you who have believed, enter into Islam completely [and perfectly] and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy.

QUR'AN 2:208

The Quraysh themselves had once tried the same bargain in Makkah, worship our gods for a year and we will worship yours for a year, and the answer had come down from heaven just as cleanly, with no room left to negotiate:

For you is your religion, and for me is my religion.

QUR'AN 109:6

So the Prophet ﷺ stood up and walked away from the most intelligent tribe in the region, leaving its wisdom behind, because its wisdom had a ceiling and his message did not. He would sooner go home empty-handed than carry away a follower who was only following with one foot.

The seed in a city he half-remembered

Then the seerah turns, and it turns on a city the Prophet ﷺ barely knew. Yathrib was not on his radar. He had distant kin there, on his mother's side, and had visited it only once or twice in his life, and it was on the way home from one such visit, as a small boy, that his mother had died on the road. The place carried for him a child's memory and a grave. Yathrib held three peoples in those days: two Arab tribes, the Aws and the Khazraj, and a large Jewish population, one of the only such communities in all of the Hijaz, the others being at Khaybar and, far to the

south, in Yemen. And without anyone in Makkah noticing, two things had been quietly preparing that city's soil for years.

The first was a war. The Aws and the Khazraj had torn at each other for over a decade in a grinding civil war, the small Bedouin quarrels over land and water and grazing that swell, one killing at a time, into something enormous. It climaxed a few years before in the Battle of Buath, the most savage day those two tribes ever knew, which killed off the bulk of their senior leadership and left the survivors a younger generation, sick to death of blood and hungry for something new. Aisha, radiyallahu anha, would later say a thing the Sheikh lingers over: the day of Buath was a gift that Allah gave to His Messenger ﷺ. A strange gift, a battle. But it shattered the old order of Yathrib so completely, decimated the entrenched leaders so thoroughly, that there was room left for a new order to take root, and a generation young enough to want it. Only one senior figure of standing had survived Buath, a man named Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul, and it was precisely his survival, his seniority and unspent ambition, that would one day make him the leader of the hypocrites; had it not been for Islam, he would have ruled the city unopposed.

The second thing was stranger, and it was the very arrogance of their neighbors that had done it. Living for generations beside the Jews of Yathrib, the Aws and the Khazraj had absorbed a vocabulary no other Arabs possessed: a prophet, a book, a law, a reckoning, a God who sends messengers. The Arabs as a whole were a people to whom no warner had come, who did not know what a prophet was. But these two tribes did. And in their quarrels their neighbors would taunt them with a deliverer who was coming: a prophet is about to be sent, they would say, and when he comes we will follow him and destroy you with him, down to the last man. The Qur'an records exactly this turn of

theirs, this praying for a victory through a prophet they expected and then rejecting him when he came, because he came from the Arabs and not from among themselves:

And when there came to them a Book [i.e., the Qur'an] from Allah confirming that which was with them, although before they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieved, but [then] when there came to them that which they recognized, they disbelieved in it; so the curse of Allah will be upon the disbelievers.

QUR'AN 2:89

So the Aws and the Khazraj had been hearing the prophecy of a coming prophet for years, thrown in their faces as a threat by people who held themselves superior. When an Arab actually appeared claiming prophethood, the idea was not strange to them at all. It was the very thing their neighbors had been promising, suddenly within their own reach, and the chance to seize for themselves the book and the law and the dignity that had been flaunted over them for a hundred years.

Six men at Aqabah

And so the meeting that changes everything happens almost without ceremony. The Prophet ﷺ is working the great tents as always, concentrating on the heavyweights, Kinda and Banu Hanifa and the rest, because it is only common sense to give your fullest effort where one conversion might bring a whole tribe. On his way among them he notices a small group resting at Aqabah, the place near Mina where the stones are thrown at the Hajj. No tent. No entourage. No prestige of any kind. Just six men sitting on the ground. He asks them who they are. We are from the Khazraj, they say.

This time Abu Bakr is not at his side to brief him, and so the Prophet ﷺ searches his own memory for the thread. Which Khazraj? He reaches for the one connection he has. The Khazraj who are the neighbors of the Jews? Yes, they answer, those Khazraj. From Yathrib. He asks if he may sit and speak with them, and they make room, and he gives them everything. The call to worship Allah alone, the warning against shirk, the recitation of the Qur'an, the same fire and sincerity and zeal he had spent on Kinda and Banu Shayban and every glittering tribe before them. Six poor men with nothing to offer, not even a tent, received the full measure of his sincerity, exactly as if they had been the strongest tribe in Arabia. And Allah, who chooses where His religion will take root, had chosen them. They believed.

The Sheikh presses on the wonder of it. The first converts to Islam from beyond Makkah were not the superpowers the Prophet ﷺ had so carefully courted. They were an obscure handful from a tribe he could barely place, from the poorer of Yathrib's two clans, the farmers rather than the merchants, men of no rank the world would ever have noticed. And it was through them, not through the might of Kinda or the wisdom of Banu Shayban, that Allah had decided to plant His religion. The Prophet ﷺ himself would later voice the lesson: in Makkah he had been shown that he would emigrate to a land of palm trees and greenery, and he had assumed it must be Yemen, with its civilization and its great tribes, never once guessing it was Yathrib. He was simply scattering seeds across every field he could reach, the way a farmer broadcasts seed not knowing which will take, never trivializing a single soul, and Allah grew His entire religion from the field no one was watching.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read this chapter as a string of near-misses and one lucky break, a discouraging slog redeemed at the last moment, and to leave it there. That would be to miss the question it is putting to us. Strip it down and you will not read a failing season of your own life the same way again.

He never once trivialized a small opening. The Prophet ﷺ poured himself into the heavyweights, as wisdom demanded, but when he passed six tentless strangers on the ground at Aqabah, men with nothing to give him and no power to protect him, he gave them the identical passion he had given the kings, and Allah grew His whole religion out of them. We are forever doing the opposite, measuring people by what they can do for us, saving our sincerity for the rooms that look important and offering the leftovers to everyone else. You do not know, and you cannot know, which small good and which overlooked soul your Lord has already chosen to change everything. Give the six men at the mountain pass the same fire you would give the kings.

He would not barter the message for the win, even when the win looked like survival. Kinda offered him an army for a promise of a throne; Banu Shayban offered him loyalty on the convenient half of the map. He refused both, from inside a situation so tight that any of us would have called it desperate. Here Dr. Yasir Qadhi will not let us pass quickly, because the temptation is so human: this was a deal many of us would have taken for a fraction of the compromise. But the Prophet ﷺ knew that some doors are not worth the key they demand, that you cannot purchase the help of Allah by selling off a piece of His religion, and that a people who come to you for power will never be the people through whom Allah aids His cause. Ask what you have quietly been willing to trade away for a door that looked like rescue.

And his certainty was never a reading of his circumstances; it was a reading of his Lord. With nothing in his hands, his wife and his uncle buried, his city closing around him and his protector dying, he looked a frightened tribe in the eye and promised them the empire of Persia, the very power that had broken Rome for three centuries, and it came true exactly as he said. That is the difference between faith and optimism. Optimism counts up the situation and hopes; faith looks past the situation to the One who owns it. The men hunting his religion held the kingdoms, the armies, the wealth, the whole visible weight of the world, and within a generation it was all carried into the masjid of a city that, on this day, was not even on his map.

So take this one thing down into your ordinary days. When your own efforts seem to be failing on every front you can see, when the powers you approached have all said no and the doors you pushed on hardest have all stayed shut, remember which tent Allah chose. The way out for the Prophet ﷺ came from precisely where he never thought to look, not from Yemen, not from Kinda, not from the heavyweights of the peninsula, but from six strangers at a mountain pass:

*And whoever fears Allah, He will make for him a way out,
and will provide for him from where he does not expect.*

QUR'AN 65:2-3

Six men with no tent went home to Yathrib and began to talk, and the next season more than double their number came, and the season after that the number multiplied again, until a city that had never been on his radar was begging the Prophet ﷺ to come and be its refuge and pledging its very neck to protect him. Three and a half years, from six men on the ground to an entire city opening

its gates. The relief your Lord is preparing for you may already be growing, quietly and unseen, in a field you have not even thought to look at. May Allah, who makes a way out for those who fear Him and provides from where they never expect, open for us the doors we cannot see, grow His good in us beyond our knowing, and never let us trivialize a single soul or a single small chance to do good for His sake. And may He send His peace and blessings upon His Messenger Muhammad ﷺ, who scattered the seeds in every field and trusted his Lord with the harvest.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 24: planting the seeds of Yathrib (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (6:151, 30:2-4, 2:208, 109:6, 2:89, 65:2-3), verified via quran.ai. The narration is the Sheikh's; the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

The Pledges of Aqabah

The night a city took his hand

For more than ten years he ﷺ had walked the fairgrounds of the Hajj season carrying the same question from tent to tent. Who will shelter me, so that I can convey the words of my Lord? Season after season the great tribes of Arabia had looked him over and said no. A man here believed, a man or two there, never enough to be a base to stand on. And then, in the season before this one, he ﷺ had passed a small knot of strangers camped on the plains of Mina, six men he did not recognize, and stopped to ask who they were. They were from Yathrib, of the Khazraj, not a tribe whose name carried far. He sat with them and gave them the dawah, and something opened. They did not all convert on the spot, and the histories are honest that we cannot be sure whether their hearts settled there or later, back home. What we know is the thing that had not happened in ten years: they did not say no. They said, let us think about this affair, and we will come back to you next year.

This is where Dr. Yasir Qadhi picks the thread up, and it is worth holding the smallness of that beginning, because everything that follows grows out of it. Six men who did not say no, and a city not yet called Madinah, for it was still Yathrib and would only take its new name once the man they had just met came to live in it. They went home, and for one full year they did the one thing that costs nothing and changes everything: they spoke. There is a new prophet, they told their people, preaching that Allah is one and

the idols are nothing. Then the next Hajj came, and they returned for the pilgrimage bringing converts.

Twelve hands in broad daylight

Twelve men came from Yathrib in the eleventh year of the dawah, two years before the hijrah, and twelve sounds like almost nothing until you set it against the ten years behind it. Never, the Sheikh says, had twelve people accepted Islam at once from any group outside Makkah; it was the largest single conversion the dawah had yet seen from the wider world of the Arabs. But inside the twelve sat a quieter wonder. Ten were of the Khazraj and two of the Aws, and the two tribes were enemies, fresh from five years of civil war that had decimated both; they had never once stood together under anything. Now they stood in a single row under Islam, in a city the religion had not even reached yet, and it was already doing the work it would never stop doing: cementing the bonds tribalism had severed, making people forget the wars of their fathers and remember they were brothers. A positive beginning, the Sheikh says, and you can read the whole future of the Ansar in it.

There was nothing to hide. Twelve pilgrims talking with a preacher drew no one's eye, so this first covenant happened in broad daylight, on the plains of Mina, in the campground the people of Yathrib always took near the great Jamarah at a pass the Arabs called Aqabah, which is why the meeting carries the name. And a clarification matters, because people confuse the two: what happened the year before, the six men and their conversation, is not counted as a covenant at all, for nothing was formally sworn. This was the first. Ubadah ibn as-Samit, radiyallahu anhu, one of the twelve, narrates it in Bukhari, and it is he who gives it its famous name. He calls it the pledge of the

women, not because women took it, but because of what was in it, and what was not.

For there was not one political clause in it. No armies, no protection, no alliances, nothing about defending him if he were attacked. It was an oath of theology and morality and nothing more: to worship Allah alone, not to steal, not to fornicate, not to kill their children as the people of jahiliyyah did, not to live immoral lives, and to obey the Prophet ﷺ in all that was good. These are the very terms on which the Qur'an, when it came, would set the pledge of the believing women, terms of the heart and the limbs and no more, and so the name fit it exactly.

O Prophet, when the believing women come to you pledging to you that they will not associate anything with Allah, nor will they steal, nor will they commit unlawful sexual intercourse, nor will they kill their children, nor will they bring forth a slander they have invented between their arms and legs, nor will they disobey you in what is right - then accept their pledge and ask forgiveness for them of Allah. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.

QUR'AN 60:12

And the Prophet ﷺ attached to it a promise that is the whole shape of this religion in miniature. Whoever fulfills this, he told them, his reward is with Allah, and Allah will give him Paradise; whoever falls short and repents, Allah will forgive him; and whoever falls short and does not repent, his affair is with Allah, who may punish or forgive. Notice how young the religion still was. The five daily prayers had been legislated by now, brought down on the Night Journey, but there was no Ramadan to fast, no zakat, no Hajj with its rites, and wine was still lawful and would stay lawful for years. To become a Muslim in those days was tawhid and an upright life, and nothing else yet. The Sheikh

lingers here for a reason: Allah builds His religion the way a wise builder builds a house, foundations first, and the foundations are always the heart turned to its Lord and the limbs kept from sin.

One teacher for a whole city

The twelve asked for one thing before they scattered home. Send us someone, they said, who can teach us the Qur'an and lead us in prayer. They had the message now; they needed a teacher to plant it. And the choice the Prophet ﷺ made tells you something about how Allah's religion travels. There were at least two hundred and fifty Muslim men in Makkah by now, some years deep in their faith. Out of all of them he chose one young man, Mus'ab ibn Umayr, radiyallahu anhu, and sent him north alone. One teacher for a whole city.

What that one young man did in a few weeks is almost hard to believe. Within weeks of Mus'ab reaching Yathrib, forty people had embraced Islam, and word came back from the Prophet ﷺ: you may now establish the Jumu'ah prayer. Sit with that, because it rearranges something you might have assumed. The first Friday prayer in the entire history of Islam was not prayed in Makkah, and was not led by the Prophet ﷺ. It was prayed in Yathrib, at his command but far from his presence, because in Makkah the believers still could not so much as pray in public without being set upon and beaten. The very first khutbah was delivered by Mus'ab, in the house of As'ad ibn Zurarah, radiyallahu anhu, a large house with a grove of date palms, and forty worshippers standing in it. This is how things start, the Sheikh says. A handful of people in a living room, and a religion takes root.

From that garden the dawah moved outward, street by street. Their society was divided into subtribes, each living in its own district, and slowly, the Sheikh says, there was hardly a locality

left without at least one household that had entered Islam. But two conversions above all would tip the whole city, and both began the same way: with a man marching up to a door, spear in hand.

Two spears at the door

The civil war that had bled Yathrib white had also emptied its leadership, and into that vacuum two young chiefs were rising: Sa'd ibn Muadh and Usayd ibn Hudayr, radiyallahu anhum. When word reached them that a Makkan stranger was converting their people in the house of As'ad ibn Zurarah, Sa'd was caught in an awkward bind, for As'ad was his own cousin. So he turned to his friend Usayd. Go, he said, and get rid of this man. Who is he to preach against the religion of our forefathers? And Usayd picked up his spear, the open sign of war, and marched.

As'ad saw him coming. This is one of our leaders, he whispered to Mus'ab; he comes with his spear, make du'a. Usayd came in hot. Why have you come to our land, he demanded, to corrupt the weak-minded among us, to take our women and children from the ways of our fathers? Leave this city, if you value your life. And Mus'ab answered with the thing the Sheikh keeps returning to, a calmness that only iman can put into a man. Why not sit, he said, and listen? If you find it agreeable, take it; and if not, I will stop. Usayd, angry but not unreasonable, sat down, spear and all, and listened. And only after the simple message had been laid before him did his heart crack open. What you have said makes complete sense, he told Mus'ab. How does a person enter this faith? The man who had come to kill him was now asking where to sign. Go, said Mus'ab, wash, say the shahada, and pray. So he did. And then he handed Mus'ab the key to the whole city. There is a man behind me, he said, and if you can

convince him of what you have just convinced me, not a soul in Yathrib will hold out against you.

Sa'd saw his friend returning and read his face from a distance. By Allah, he said, this is not the same man who left us; when a person leaves paganism for this religion, the Sheikh notes, they change, and it shows. Usayd did not argue theology. He reached instead for the one lever that would move a chief, letting it be known that another clan was plotting to kill As'ad, Sa'd's own cousin, while Sa'd did nothing. A rumor with likely a grain of truth in it, stretched just enough, the way Yusuf's brothers stretched the truth about the wolf. And it moved Sa'd at once. He took up his weapons and marched on the house himself.

He came in furious, speaking past Mus'ab to his cousin. Were you not my kin, he said, these weapons would not still be hanging at my side. Rid us of this guest and his pollution. And Mus'ab, before a man enraged enough to strike his own cousin, made the very same offer, word for word. Sit and listen; if you find it agreeable, good, and if not, I will stop. The Sheikh marvels at the nerve of it, a confidence that is not overconfidence but the certainty of a man who knows what he carries. And Sa'd, looking at this young man who would not waver, not the least afraid even of a chief ready to kill his own blood, decided the offer was fair, and sat. And this time Mus'ab did not only explain. This time he recited, the Qur'an itself, the living miracle handed straight to the ear of the angriest man in the district. And it finished Sa'd completely. The Qur'an is the miracle, the Sheikh underlines, and having heard it, Sa'd asked the same question Usayd had: how do I convert? What do I do?

With those two names, the city turned. The entire subtribe of the two chiefs, the clan of Abd al-Ashhal, followed them into Islam

within weeks, the largest mass conversion the dawah had yet known. Hold both men in your mind, for the Sheikh will return to them. Usayd ibn Hudayr, whose recitation would one day be so beautiful that lights descended from the sky, which the Prophet ﷺ told him were the angels come to hear his Qur'an. And Sa'd ibn Muadh, at whose death the Throne of the Most Merciful itself would shake. Both walked into this religion past one young teacher's refusal to flinch.

And there is a footnote to that clan the Sheikh cannot resist, for it carries its own lesson in Allah's mercy. One man of the tribe, Amr, refused for years, until the morning of Uhud, when he changed his mind at last, took his shahada, entered the battle, and was killed before a single prayer ever came due on him. Abu Hurayrah, radiyallahu anhu, would later quiz his students with him as a riddle: who entered Paradise without praying a single rak'ah? Of this man the Prophet ﷺ said, he did very little, and he was rewarded much.

Why Yathrib said yes

The next Hajj season came, in the twelfth year of the dawah, only months before the hijrah, and Mus'ab came back to Makkah, not with twelve but with around seventy-five Muslims arriving as pilgrims, and behind every one of them, the Sheikh reminds us, stood two or three more who had stayed home. In one year, one young man had brought somewhere between two hundred and fifty and three hundred people into Islam, a community now rivaling in sheer numbers everything thirteen years of preaching had gathered inside Makkah itself. The question almost asks itself. Why did Yathrib open so fast when Makkah had bolted itself shut for thirteen years?

The Sheikh slows down here, because the answer teaches. There was no persecution there, for one thing; the message could be heard on its own terms. The hearts of that city already leaned, for another, toward the idea of one God. But the biggest reason was also the saddest, and it was the civil war. The old guard who would have defended paganism had largely killed one another off, and the generation coming up behind had watched the old ways bankrupt the whole city. Half their people dead, all their leadership gone, and for what? They had seen the foolishness of the old gods with their own eyes, tasted its emptiness in their own grief. So when a message arrived preaching one God, an end to bloodshed, and clean upright lives, the young were ready for it in a way comfortable, undisturbed Makkah never was. And there was something in the stock itself, the Sheikh adds. The Aws and the Khazraj were Yemeni Arabs by descent, of the line of Qahtan, and the Prophet ﷺ praised the people of Yemen as the softest of heart and gentlest of soul. Iman is Yemeni, he said, and wisdom is Yemeni.

Jabir ibn Abdillah, radiyallahu anhu, who witnessed what came next, folds those long Makkan years into one aching sentence. The Prophet ﷺ stayed more than ten years in Makkah, he said, going to the people in the Hajj season, asking, who will shelter me, who will support me, so that I may convey the message of my Lord? And he would find no one, only a man here, a man or two there, never enough. Until at last Allah guided us, the people of Yathrib, and we believed in him and began to recite the Qur'an. And then, Jabir says, Allah gave us an idea. Mark his words, the Sheikh insists, for Jabir will not take the credit. He does not say we thought of it. He says Allah gave us the idea: for how long will we leave the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to be driven from valley to valley, fearing for his life? So the invitation went from them to

him: come to us, live among us, be one of us. It came from the people of Yathrib. He ﷺ never imposed himself on the city that would one day cradle his grave.

Out of the tents, one by one

So a meeting was set, and this one could not be held in daylight. Seventy-five Muslims hidden among pagan relatives was no longer a curiosity; it was a danger. The word went quietly around: the last night of the Hajj, in the last third of the night, in the valley beside Aqabah, behind the place where they camped. Ka'b ibn Malik, radiyallahu anhu, was there, the same Ka'b whose later repentance Allah Himself would send down in the Qur'an, and he tells it like a memory you can still feel. We hid our Islam from our pagan relatives, he said. We lay down among them, and when the night had grown deep we began to slip out of our tents one by one, so as not to wake suspicion, and gathered in the dark to wait for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

He came with exactly one companion, and the companion tells you something tender about the hour. He came with his uncle al-Abbas, still upon the religion of his people, not yet a Muslim. That he came at all says a great deal. Like Abu Talib before him, Abbas loved his nephew with a fierce and natural love, and that bond would last years yet before Abbas finally entered Islam, late, well after Badr. He had come, the Sheikh explains, to negotiate something like a transfer of guardianship: if Makkah's protection of his nephew was ending, then Abbas, as the senior man of the clan who still acknowledged him, would at least see the boy handed to these strangers on terms he could trust. But the elders of Yathrib he had known from his trading days were dead now, gone in the civil war, and when he looked around that dark valley he recognized not one face, and it unsettled him.

So Abbas spoke first, and he spoke pure tribe. He addressed the whole gathering as Khazraj, though Aws stood among them too, because eyes like his could not yet see Muslims, only Khazraj and Aws, the categories of jahiliyyah. You know the standing of this man among us, he said. We have protected him from his own people, though we follow their same religion. He has honor among us, and protection. But he has resolved to leave us and join you. So if you are certain you can live up to what you promise him and shield him from those who will come against him, take on his burden; and if not, leave him now. Hear the overcompensation in it, the Sheikh says. Honor and protection was a generous account to give of a city whose chiefs would, within weeks, plot the man's assassination; but Abbas was embarrassed that his own nephew had to leave the Banu Hashim at all, and reached for the old tribal pride to cover the shame. The believers let the old diplomat finish, and answered simply. You have spoken, they said. Now let the Messenger of Allah ﷺ speak.

My blood is your blood

There were no torches in that valley, only whatever light the waning night allowed, for the moon was past its full. The Prophet ﷺ stood in that dimness and began to recite the Qur'an, calling them to Allah. And then he laid down his condition. I will take your pledge, he said, on this: that you protect me the way you protect your own, your wives and children and families. That you make me one of you. And one of them seized his hand almost before he had finished. We are a people of war, he said, we have inherited it father to son; no one will harm you, stretch out your hand. Haste and iman in the same breath.

But before the pledging began, one man asked a question first, and the Sheikh holds it up like a jewel. It was Abul-Haytham ibn at-Tayyihan, radiyallahu anhu, the same man who would one day cook his family's last old goat because he could not bear to find the Prophet ﷺ, Abu Bakr, and Umar with stones bound against their bellies for hunger. Messenger of Allah, he said, between us and the Jews of our city there are treaties, and by taking you in we will be severing them. And then, when we have done this for you and Allah grants you victory, will you return to your own people and leave us? Hear what is hidden inside that fear, the Sheikh says. Here are seventy-some men about to take on the whole of Arabia for one hunted refugee, and this man's dread is not death. He is so certain Allah will give His Messenger victory that the only thing he fears is the day after it, the day he might lose him. What a frank, almost dangerously bold question to put to a prophet, and what a freedom there was among them, that a man could ask it without fear.

And the Prophet ﷺ smiled, and answered with a phrase in Arabic that the Sheikh says loses everything in English. Rather, he said, my blood is your blood, and my ruin is your ruin. I am of you, and you are of me. We will live together, and we will die together. Once I cut my ties to Makkah, I am one of you. And mark how completely he kept that word. Years later, on the day Makkah opened to him as its conqueror, his whole tribe now Muslims around him, he could have moved back to his hometown. Instead he turned his back on Makkah and walked home to Madinah. He lived there, died there, and is buried there. He told these men the truth in the dark of that valley.

Set this night beside the tribe of Kindah from only a few months before, the Sheikh insists, and you will see what made these people the Ansar. Kindah too had been offered the chance to

shelter him, and had named a price: make us the rulers, once Allah gives you victory. They were turned away, the irony being that had they asked for nothing, the rule might well have come to them. A religion taken up for the sake of a throne is no religion. The Ansar asked the very opposite of a price; their one condition was that they would never be left. Then he ﷺ named the terms of this second pledge, no longer the gentle clauses of the first: that you hear and obey in ease and in hardship, that you spend of your wealth in the way of Allah, that you command the good and forbid the evil, that you speak the truth fearing no one's blame, and that when I come to you in Yathrib, one of the last times he would call it by that name, you protect me as you protect your own wives and children. These were political conditions now, an oath of war and alliance and sacrifice. And out of the dark a single voice called the question every heart was holding. And what, it asked, is in it for us? And the Prophet ﷺ gave them the one word they wanted. I cannot promise you wealth, he said in effect, nor fame nor spoils. Al-Jannah. Paradise. And that was all they wanted.

Your necks will meet swords

They rose to give the pledge, and then came one of the most striking interruptions in the whole seerah. As'ad ibn Zurarah, Mus'ab's own host, one of the first believers of the city, pressed the Prophet's ﷺ hand down before a single man could take it. Wait, he said, and turned to his own people. O people of Yathrib, we have not crossed all this distance except that we already know, in our hearts, that this man is the Messenger of Allah. But understand what you are about to sign. To take him from his people means war. Once they expel him and he is with us, the Arabs will come against us with swords, and the best of you will

be killed; fathers will lose their sons, and sons their fathers. So if you are ready for your necks to meet the swords, take his hand, and your reward is with Allah. But if you fear, leave it now, and perhaps Allah will excuse you. The Sheikh calls this the intelligence of As'ad: he did not want a single man entering this oath half-understanding what it would cost, standing before Allah having sworn a pledge he had not weighed. So with the hand of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ already reaching out, As'ad held one last exit wide open.

And their answer has carried fourteen centuries down to us. Take your hand off the hand of the Messenger of Allah, they told him. We want this pledge. And one by one, seventy-two men placed their hands in his ﷺ, and one by one he promised each of them Paradise in return. What a blessed company that was. There were two believing women in that valley as well, and from them he ﷺ took the pledge by word alone, never touching the hand of a woman not related to him, as was his way his whole life long.

And when it was finished, al-Abbas looked over the crowd one last time, still worried, and said what was on his mind. These are people I do not know, not one of them; they are all young, all strangers to me. And he was right, the Sheikh grants. But if Abbas did not know them, Allah knew them; if the old diplomat could not place a single face in that dark valley, Allah and His Messenger had counted every name in it. Three weeks from that night, the chiefs of Makkah would gather in their hall to plot the Prophet's ﷺ murder. Within two months, the road these unknown young believers had just opened with their own necks would carry the whole ummah out of Makkah and into a new home. The emigration begins tomorrow. And the highest rank among all the Ansar, the Sheikh notes, belongs to those who were here, at the two pledges: those who said yes in the open

when twelve was a crowd, and those who slipped out of their tents to say it again in the dark.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read the pledges of Aqabah as a clever piece of political timing, a refugee securing a base, and leave it there. That would be to miss the question the night puts to us. Everything in the seerah before this is asking; everything after it is building. This is the hinge, and the hinge turns on hearts.

Look first at how the religion entered that city, because it is the opposite of how we imagine these things move. It came not on the back of an army or a king, but in the calm of one young man with no weapon, who, when a chief stood over him with a spear and a death threat, answered only: sit and listen, and if it displeases you, I will stop. He said it twice, to two different men come to kill him, and twice it disarmed them, because the confidence that iman gives does not need to raise its voice. We so often think our faith must argue and shout and win, when the thing that actually opened a whole city was a quiet certainty, and a Book. Notice what Mus'ab reached for when explanation had done its work: he recited the Qur'an, the miracle you can place before the angriest man in the room and let it do what nothing else can. Ask how much you have let it speak, to others and to your own hard hours.

Look next at what the Ansar asked for against what Kindah asked for, because the two requests are a mirror held up to us. Kindah wanted thrones, was refused, and lost everything. The Ansar wanted one thing only, never to be left, and they were given him ﷺ, and promised Paradise besides. What you ask of this religion reveals what you actually love. Do you come to it for what it can make of your worldly standing, or do you come, like Abul-

Haytham, so sure of Allah's promise that your only fear is being parted from His Messenger? A man of that same city believed on the morning of Uhud and fell before one prayer came due on him, and he ﷺ said he did very little and was rewarded much, because Allah weighs the heart before the deeds. The resume is not the point. The heart that swore the oath is.

And then there is the line the whole night turns on, called from the dark by a voice that spoke for them all: and what is in it for us? He ﷺ could promise nothing the eye could see. He gave them one word. Al-Jannah. And seventy-two men decided, with their necks on the line and As'ad's warning still ringing that their best would be killed, that one word was worth everything they had. That is the trade the pledge struck, and it has never once expired. Hear and obey, spend, command the good, speak the truth no matter who it angers, shelter the deen with your own body, and the return is the same single word it was in that valley. The day quietly asks each of us what we have decided that word is worth, and whether, when our own hand is asked for, we will reach for his ﷺ the way they did, or hold back and hope to be excused.

So take this night down into your ordinary days. Carry your faith with the calm of Mus'ab, who never had to shout. Ask of your religion only what the Ansar asked, and watch what you secretly want from it. And when the cost of obedience comes due, as it always does, remember the seventy-two who heard the price named honestly, the swords and the fatherless sons, and answered, take your hand off the hand of the Messenger of Allah, we want this pledge. May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, whose blood became their blood and whose home became their home, be pleased with the Ansar who took

his hand in the dark and never let go, and gather us with them, and with him ﷺ, in the Jannah he promised and they asked for.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 25: the pledges of Aqabah (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translation is from Sahih International (60:12), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The early emigration to Madinah

Every road out of Makkah had a price

It is the last night of Hajj, in the twelfth year of the dawah, and in a fold of the valley behind the jamarat of Mina something is about to be sworn that will redraw the map of the world. More than seventy men and two women from a northern town named Yathrib have come down under cover of dark to a man ﷺ their own city's poets have not yet heard of. A year before, a smaller delegation had given him a gentle, private oath: no politics in it, no protection, no promise to lift a sword. The Arabs would come to call that first pact the covenant of the women, precisely because it asked nothing a woman could not give. This second night is different. This is the covenant of war.

So begins one of the most underread stretches of the whole seerah. We are taught the famous cave, the spider, the pursuit, all of which belong to tomorrow's story. What we are rarely taught is the quiet exodus that ran ahead of it: believers slipping out of Makkah in ones and twos toward a city not yet called Madinah, each paying a different toll at the gate, a wife, a child, a fortune, freedom itself. Dr. Yasir Qadhi spends this episode with the ones who left first, and by its end the road has come to matter as much as the arrival.

A scream over the sleeping camps

Picture the place exactly as it was: the middle of the night, the last night of Hajj, every camp in Mina dead asleep, and the desert so still that a single voice can carry clear across the valley. The Prophet ﷺ had arranged this meeting like a man who knows that trusting Allah and tying the camel are one instruction, not two: the hour chosen for when Makkah would least suspect it, his cousin Ali and his friend Abu Bakr posted as lookouts, his uncle Abbas brought along at his side. The terms were plain. You will protect me as you protect your own women and your own children. They asked what they would receive in return. He ﷺ answered with a single word: Jannah.

Before a hand was raised, one of their own stood and begged them to slow down, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi lingers on this man, for he shows the marks of a leader thinking past the night in front of him. Do not be hasty, he told them. You have traveled all this way knowing he is the Messenger of Allah; we do not doubt that. But understand what you are saying yes to. Say yes to this and you will bury your sons; you will make widows of your women; the whole of Arabia will come at you as one bow drawn back. If you are ready, give the oath. And if you are not, excuse yourselves tonight, and perhaps Allah will excuse you, for you never made the promise; do not pledge and then break. They shouted him down: remove your hand, and let us pledge. One by one, more than seventy hands took the hand of the Prophet ﷺ, while the two women among them gave their oath by word alone, for his ﷺ hand never in his life touched the hand of a woman who was not his to touch, not even in the sealing of an oath as grave as this one. Off to one side stood Abbas, displeased, still doing the arithmetic of the old world of tribe and elder and protection: I see only young faces, he muttered; I cannot say whether they will

keep faith. He was righter than he knew. They were new faces because a new age was beginning.

Then the scream. From somewhere out in the valley a voice tore over the tents: O people sleeping in your camps, do you not know that a band of the blameworthy has gathered with the one who left his religion to make war on you? The Prophet ﷺ knew at once whose voice it was. He named the shaytan of that valley by his strange, knotted name, for the names of the shayatin, the Sheikh notes, run always to twisted syllables, and answered him aloud: I swear by Allah, I will deal with you. Sit with what this moment is. The entire craft of shaytan is concealment; he whispers, he hides, he almost never shows his hand. This night he was so overwhelmed by what had just been pledged that he abandoned his own method and screamed into the human world for someone to do something, because he himself could do nothing. Allah had warned the believers exactly what he is:

Indeed, Satan is an enemy to you; so take him as an enemy. He only invites his party to be among the companions of the Blaze.

QUR'AN 35:6

At Aqabah you watch that enemy, named in the Book, lose his composure and cry out in the dark.

The blood of the men of Yathrib was up. Should we not fall on them tonight? We are seventy and armed; they sleep unarmed in their tents. It was an honest question, and the Sheikh holds us inside it, for this is the first time in thirteen years of beatings and boycotts and fresh graves that the Prophet ﷺ has had anything resembling a fighting force at his back, and every human instinct in the valley said now. His answer set the shape of everything to

come: I have not been commanded to do this. No falling on sleeping men, not even these men, not even on the night they had plotted his death. The meeting dissolved into the dark as quietly as it had gathered. By morning Quraysh had caught the scent of something and sent delegations storming from camp to camp, and at the tents of the Khazraj the pagans of the tribe swore by Allah, truthfully, that they knew of no such meeting, while the Muslims among them held their silence behind that oath, unwilling to lie even to save their own skins.

The women who kept the pledge

Do not let those two women pass by unremarked, because the Sheikh refuses to. The Prophet ﷺ did not tell the men of Yathrib to leave their women in the tents. The women came, the women pledged, and what they pledged was not a softer version of the men's oath. The first covenant had been the covenant of the women because it carried no commitment to fight. This was the covenant of war, and the promise the two women gave was the very same promise the men gave, word for word, weight for weight. Their oath was counted in full, they were held to its terms, and, as their lives would prove, they held to it.

Of one of them, history kept barely a line: she was a cousin of Muadh ibn Jabal, the companion the Prophet ﷺ would one day call the most knowledgeable of this ummah in the lawful and the unlawful, and beyond that the record falls silent. The other was Nusaybah, and she turned one sentence sworn in a dark valley into half a century of proof. At Uhud she fought with her own body to shield the Prophet ﷺ and walked off that field carrying more than a dozen wounds. Years later, when the rumor flew that he ﷺ had been killed and he called the believers to renew their pledge, her hand was again among them. Her son grew into a

soldier and was cut to pieces before her eyes by Musaylimah the false prophet, and she marched against the very man who killed him. And in her sixties she fought at Yarmuk in the land of the Romans, and there her hand was severed from her arm. Then even the record of her loses the thread. She gave the oath of Aqabah once, as a young woman in the dark, and spent the rest of her life paying it as though it had been sworn that very morning.

Here the Sheikh pauses over a truth at once sorrowful and strangely consoling. There were tens of thousands of companions, and for the overwhelming mass of them we do not possess two facts; for many, not even a name. Think how impossible it would be to document a single generation of one city in our own time; then know that the same forgetting fell over them. Whole lifetimes of sacrifice are filed with Allah alone. The handful of stories we do have, a Nusaybah here, an Umm Salamah there, are not the exceptions. They are the visible edge of a buried treasury, the few coins lying atop a hoard we will not see the bottom of until the Day we are shown it.

Were it not for the hijrah

Understand what the people of Yathrib were truly afraid of that night, because it was not what you would expect. It was not death; they had just volunteered for that with open eyes. Their fear was more tender: when Allah gives you victory, they asked, and your own city of Makkah, which drove you out, finally wants you back, will you leave us and return to them? And the Prophet ﷺ answered with an oath of his own, an old formula of the Arabs that means we are now one people and one fate: my blood is your blood, my ruin is your ruin. Notice the whole direction of this thing. He ﷺ never imposed himself on Yathrib; they came to him,

asked to adopt him, offered the protection. And he kept faith with them to the end: even after Makkah, the most beloved of cities to him, lay conquered and open at his feet, he ﷺ turned around and went home to Madinah, because he had given them his word. The Sheikh lets us watch that promise tested years ahead of our story. After a later campaign, the Prophet ﷺ gave enormous gifts to newly conquered chiefs whose faith was still soft; to one such man, an entire valley of sheep, a gift so staggering that the man went home and told his people to embrace Islam, saying: this is the giving of a man who has no fear of poverty; this is a prophet. The Ansar, who had done the hard fighting, felt the sting of it, for they were human, exactly as we are. So the Prophet ﷺ gathered them alone, no Muhajirun in the tent, and asked: are you not content that these people go home with sheep and dirhams and dinars, and you go home with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ? And the men who had once pledged their lives in a dark valley wept where they sat. It was there that he ﷺ spoke the words Bukhari and Muslim preserve: were it not for the hijrah, I would have been a man of the Ansar; and if the Ansar went down into one valley and all of mankind into another, I would go down into the valley of the Ansar. He taught that loving the Ansar is a part of iman, and hating them a sign of hypocrisy. Fourteen centuries on, that ruling has not expired.

Now rewind, the Sheikh urges, and see how patiently Allah built all of this. It began with six men of the Khazraj, a delegation so minor they did not even have a tent of their own at Hajj. The Prophet ﷺ did not trivialize them, and here Dr. Yasir Qadhi presses what is, in his own estimation, one of the great lessons of the entire seerah: wallahi, be genuine and sincere at every opportunity, however small, for you do not know who is standing in front of you or what he will become. His eyes were on the

great tribes; yet he planted seeds in six tentless men, and those seeds grew into an Islamic republic. The six became twelve; a teacher was sent north and Islam entered house after house in a single year; the next season more than seventy came back to pledge. And underneath it all, Allah had been preparing the city before His Prophet ﷺ knew he would need one: a long, bloody civil war between Yathrib's two great tribes had raged while Abu Talib still lived and Makkah paid it no mind, a gift wrapped and set aside years in advance. There is even a bitter irony stitched in. The People of the Book of Yathrib had boasted for generations over their pagan neighbors that a prophet was coming, and that with him they would crush those neighbors; the very neighbors they mocked heard the message first, recognized it from the mockery itself, and believed, while the ones who had carried the prophecy refused it. The boast fell upon the boasters. These, the Sheikh says, are the ways of Allah.

Stand back here and count the phases you have walked through in twenty-six days: a secret dawah, a public preaching that bore persecution with patience, a political asylum under a just king in Abyssinia, and now a political emigration to a city that has invited him ﷺ to lead it, with treaties and open wars still ahead. A question rises that echoes into our own century, and the Sheikh poses it head on: is the seerah a ladder, each phase abrogating the one below it, so that only the final phase binds? Or a corridor of doors, every one still valid, each opened by the circumstances that fit it? A small, forceful minority said ladder, the Andalusian Ibn Hazm most fiercely, and the Sheikh asks us to notice when he wrote, at the beginning of the decline of al-Andalus, a desperation bleeding into the deduction. But the majority across the centuries answered: nothing here was abrogated; every phase remains alive, ready for the situation that calls it forth. And

here Dr. Yasir Qadhi speaks frankly, in a judgment distinctly his own: to impose one unified program on the whole ummah is, to put it gently, naively foolish, for what is unfolding in one Muslim land is not what is unfolding in another, and none of it is what is happening for Muslims in the West. The scholars of every land must open the seerah fresh in the light of their own street, and for small Muslim minorities in the West he points, with the caution that no model ever fits like a glove, to the closest fit: Abyssinia, believers with no design on the throne, asking only the freedom to worship Allah openly. He said it from a minbar in Memphis in 2012, and it reads as though spoken this morning.

A land of date palms and black stone

After Aqabah, the Prophet ﷺ gathered the Muslims, most likely in the house of al-Arqam where so much of this story has already quietly happened, and made the announcement they had waited thirteen years to hear: Allah has shown me the land of your emigration, a land of date palms lying between two plains of black volcanic rock. For a little while the destination hung unnamed; in one telling he ﷺ wondered at first whether it might be one of Arabia's other famous date countries, for only a few places grew palms in such number. Then certainty came: it is Yathrib. And the Sheikh adds an aside you will not forget on your next journey to the Prophet's city: fly into Madinah in daylight and look out the window as you near it, and you will see them still, the two great harras, fields of porous, ragged, black lava rock that neither hoof nor foot can cross, the exact frame the Prophet ﷺ described before he had ever laid eyes on the place.

Permission was given, and the exodus began the only way it safely could, in ones and twos, by night. Things in Makkah had reached their worst, and Quraysh would tolerate nearly anything

sooner than stand and watch their problem simply walk away from them. The books record that the first to leave was Abu Salamah, a man already stamped twice over for the sake of Allah: he and his wife Umm Salamah are counted among the few who made both hijrahs, to Abyssinia first, and now this one. He was not himself of Quraysh; he had settled in Makkah among his wife's people, and so he reasoned that his leaving was no one's business but his own, and packed in the open: one camel, his wife, and their small son set upon it.

Quraysh met him on the road, armed. You may go, they said; we wash our hands of you. But your wife is one of ours, a daughter of Quraysh, and you will not take her. Her clansmen dragged her back. Then his own kinsmen arrived, their pride stung in turn: in that case the boy is ours, our blood. And there, between the two clans, a child barely two years old was pulled this way and that in an actual tug of war, each side hauling on a small body, until his little arm was wrenched clean out of its joint and his mother cried out for them to take him, only stop. Abu Salamah rode into exile utterly alone: his wife held in one house, his injured son carried to another, everything he loved torn into pieces between two tribes who wanted none of it, only the winning of it.

Umm Salamah, radiyallahu anha, tells the rest herself. Every single day, she said, for a year and a half, she would walk out to al-Abtah, the farthest point from which Makkah is still in sight, and there she would sit and weep, a husband gone in one direction and a son held fast in the other, and herself able to do nothing. At last some of her cousins were cut to the heart by the sight of her and shamed the elders into mercy, and she was released, her boy placed back in her arms. And this young mother set her child upon a camel and walked out into the open desert toward a city two weeks distant, with no guard, no guide,

and no plan beyond the only one she ever named. Asked on the road who was with her, she gave the answer that is the spine of this whole day: no one. I have Allah.

The noblest escort in Arabia

Just beyond the last rooftops she was seen by Uthman ibn Talhah, a young man of Quraysh riding home from an expedition, and at this point in his life not a Muslim at all. A woman alone with an infant in the open desert, past the edge of safety, in a country of wolves and worse. Where are you going? To my husband, in Yathrib. And who is with you? No one, she said, but Allah. He said: by Allah, you shall not be left like this. And he took the halter of her camel into his hand and began to walk.

He walked the whole of it, Makkah to Yathrib, two weeks on foot, leading her camel by the hand, and the Sheikh marvels at the manners of the man: he did not speak a single word to her the entire road. When it came time to rest he would kneel the camel, then turn his back and walk well away so that she could dismount unseen; he slept apart, by the animal; in the morning he readied her mount and turned his back once more. At the edge of Yathrib he pointed: your husband is in that village. Then he turned and walked the two weeks home again, with no camel now and no reward, having asked her for nothing. Umm Salamah said it plainly for the rest of her long life: I have never seen, among all the Arabs, a nobler gentleman than Uthman ibn Talhah. Imagine, the Sheikh says, doing even a fraction of that, and he a pagan, with nothing in it but the bare honor of the deed.

Now watch how Allah repays a debt that not one human ledger even bothered to record. The woman this pagan honored on the road was to become a Mother of the Believers: Abu Salamah would in time die of his wounds, and the Prophet ﷺ would marry

his widow, so that the stranger Uthman had shielded so carefully was, all along, the future wife of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, though no soul on earth knew it that day. And for Uthman himself, Allah held a gate quietly open: he embraced Islam in the very last batch of converts before the conquest of Makkah, slipping in among a company the Qur'an itself sets a degree above the rest:

And why do you not spend in the cause of Allāh while to Allāh belongs the heritage of the heavens and the earth? Not equal among you are those who spent before the conquest [of Makkah] and fought [and those who did so after it]. Those are greater in degree than they who spent afterwards and fought. But to all Allāh has promised the best [reward]. And Allāh, of what you do, is Aware.

QUR'AN 57:10

Then came the conquest itself, and the great honors of the Kaaba were being handed out. The Prophet's ﷺ own uncle Abbas, already entrusted with giving the pilgrims their water, asked to be given the keys of the House as well, to hold both honors at once. And it was in that moment that this ayah came down:

Indeed, Allāh commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice. Excellent is that which Allāh instructs you. Indeed, Allāh is ever Hearing and Seeing.

QUR'AN 4:58

Render the trusts to their rightful people. The keys of the Kaaba had belonged to Uthman's family, and so the Prophet ﷺ sent Ali to place them back into his hands, with words like the deed to an estate: take them, with you and your descendants until the Day of Judgment, and none shall take them from you but a wrongdoer. Fourteen and a half centuries have passed, and the family that

opens the door of the Kaaba to this very day traces its line back to him: the man who once walked a stranger's camel across the whole of Arabia and never once let his eyes rest on her.

The man whose trade could not lose

Suhayb's entire life had been one long climb. An Arab boy of a northern tribe, captured in the raids of the days of ignorance and sold into slavery among the Romans, he grew up far from his own people: fluent in Latin, the only companion who ever was, fair and ruddy like the people who raised him, speaking his native Arabic with a foreigner's accent, which is the whole reason Makkah took to calling him Suhayb the Roman though there was not a drop of Roman blood in him. Sold back into Arabia, he worked his way to the house of Abdullah ibn Jud'an, bought his own freedom with the labor of his own hands, and built himself into a small businessman with savings buried safely in the earth, the way a man banked his money in a world that had no banks. He accepted Islam among the earliest believers, on the same day as his closest friend Ammar, and from that day the two were scarcely ever apart.

When Suhayb at last rode out for Yathrib, a militia of Quraysh caught up and ringed him round, one man alone against a posse. So he stood his ground, drew his bow, and made them a cold accounting. O people of Quraysh, you know I am among your best archers, and by Allah you will not reach me until I have loosed every one of the forty arrows in this quiver, and after the arrows comes my sword, and none of you will lay a hand on me until it has first run him through. They believed him to the letter, for life is sweet and not one of them cared to be first. Then he offered the other ransom. What if I told you where all my wealth is buried? Would you let me pass? Yes, they said; it is a deal. So

he told them the place where the earnings of an entire lifetime lay hidden, the freedom money, the long climb, every coin of it, and walked on toward Madinah with nothing but the clothes on his back.

And here is the moment Allah pinned, like a banner, over the whole exodus. When the Prophet ﷺ saw Suhayb arriving, he smiled before a word of explanation was even possible, and said: your trade has profited, your trade has profited. No rider on earth could have outraced Suhayb to Madinah with the news; Jibril had carried it ahead of him, and revelation had already framed its meaning:

And of the people is he who sells himself, seeking means to the approval of Allāh. And Allāh is Kind to [His] servants.

QUR'AN 2:207

Stand in his sandals at the gate of that city, penniless twice over, having handed away the savings of a whole hard life, and hear heaven itself announce, through the smile of the Prophet ﷺ, that you got the better end of the bargain.

A mother's vow and a brother's camel

When Umar prepared his own hijrah, he made a pact with two companions, Ayyash and Hisham: they would meet at dawn at a named valley outside Makkah, and whoever was missing when the light came would be understood to have been seized and stopped, and the others must ride on without him. Dawn came, and Hisham was not there. Umar and Ayyash rode north together and made it through.

Then two riders came up from Makkah behind them: Abu Jahl and his brother, who were, through one shared mother, the half

brothers of Ayyash. And they had brought a story sharpened on a whetstone. Your mother has sworn an oath to Allah that no shade will touch her head until she has seen your face again; she sits in the burning sun, she will not eat, her hair has matted and crawls with lice, she is wasting away with grief for you. Umar saw straight through it: they are tricking you; by Allah, if hunger truly bites your mother she will eat, and if the sun burns her she will take the shade. And he offered his own wealth to hold his friend in place: if it is money you are riding back for, take from me whatever you want, only do not go. But Ayyash's heart had already gone soft for his mother, and he would go. So Umar gave him the last protection he had left: take my own camel, for she is stronger and faster than theirs; at the first scent of treachery, turn her around and fly. Look, the Sheikh marvels, at what is happening: a man's own blood brothers come to entrap him, while the one who is no blood of his at all, only his brother in faith, offers him all his money and then his own swift camel, anything, only do not walk into the trap.

On the road, the brothers let the long miles and the easy chatter loosen Ayyash's guard, and then Abu Jahl sighed that his own camel had gone weary. Brother, let me ride up behind you on yours, and we will rest mine a while. The very moment Ayyash knelt his camel, the two were upon him. They bound him hand and foot, carried him back, and paraded him into Makkah in his ropes, crying to the city: this is how we deal with our fools. There he found Hisham already taken, exactly as the dawn had foretold, and the two were thrown into a dungeon Quraysh had set up for them alone: a private prison for two believers whose only crime in the world was the road they had tried to take.

The Prophet ﷺ made his own hijrah soon after, and that is tomorrow's story, but from Madinah he did not forget the men left

behind in the dark. He ﷺ would rise from the bowing in the prayer itself and call out for them by name: O Allah, rescue Ayyash; O Allah, rescue Hisham; O Allah, rescue the weak and the oppressed among the believers; O Allah, lay the weight of Your grip upon Quraysh. And he kept asking the Muslims aloud: who will go and bring them back to me? To volunteer meant walking alone into the very midst of Quraysh to pry two prisoners loose, and for a long while no one would. At last one man stood: the older brother of Khalid ibn al-Walid, the same blood from which that bravery would later run. He went down into Makkah alone, by night, found a dungeon whose location was no one's public knowledge, came in over the roof, cut the ropes of both men, and brought them home to Madinah. That is the whole of the detail history kept, and the Sheikh laughs that Hollywood could not have scripted it better; this, he says, is the real stuff. Hisham would live on to die a free man's death years later, fighting the Romans at Yarmuk.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read the early emigration as a string of dramatic escapes and leave it there, a set of adventures safely closed in the past. That would be to walk past the door it is holding open for us. Strip these stories down to what they actually cost the people who lived them, and you will not read a hard season of your own obedience the same way again.

Begin with the night in the valley, with seventy swords drawn and the enemy asleep and unarmed within reach. I have not been commanded to do this, he ﷺ said, and turned the moment down. Here is a thing worth carrying out into a violent and suspicious age: at the first taste of strength he had ever known, the answer was restraint. Our religion, the Sheikh says, is not bloodshed and

the slaughter of the sleeping, not even when the sleeping are the men who plotted your death and you hold every visible advantage. Most of us are never tested with a sword in a dark valley. We are tested with smaller power: a sharp word we are entitled to say, a revenge that is technically ours to take, a person unguarded against us. Strength, this night teaches, is never the same thing as permission. The question is never can I; the question is have I been commanded.

Then look at the prices, laid side by side. Umm Salamah paid in her own family, torn into three. Suhayb paid in the buried gold of a lifetime, handed over at arrow point. Ayyash paid in his freedom, chained in a private cell. Nusaybah paid in her blood, on installments, across fifty years, down to the hand she left at Yarmuk. Not one of them could see, while they were paying, the receipts Allah was quietly writing: a Mother of the Believers, a trade announced by revelation before any messenger could arrive, a rescue out of legend, the keys of the Kaaba kept in one family until the end of time. They paid in the dark and could not see, and Allah published every payment forever. This is the quiet promise folded inside the day. Obedience always costs something; there is no road out of any Makkah without a toll at the gate. Ask honestly what yours is costing you, the family that does not understand the turn you have made, the money the haram would have brought, the comfort you surrender, and then pay it, and pay it gladly, knowing that the One who carried Umm Salamah across the desert and ransomed Suhayb's trade keeps an exact account and lets nothing fall.

And do not miss the smallest seed of all, six men without a tent, whom the Prophet ﷺ did not trivialize, and out of whom grew everything. You do not know who is standing in front of you, the Sheikh says, or what Allah intends to make of the opportunity He

has set, unannounced, in your path. Be genuine in the meeting that seems to lead nowhere, faithful in the work no one is watching, because the gift is so often wrapped long before you feel the need of it, the way a civil war prepared a city for a Prophet ﷺ who did not yet know he would need one. So take these things down into your ordinary days. When strength comes to your hand, ask first whether you have been commanded, and choose mercy. When obedience presents its bill, pay it without flinching, and trust the account. And be wholly sincere in the smallest open door, for you are never told in advance which seed becomes the tree. May Allah make us of those who sell themselves seeking His pleasure, carry us across our own deserts as He carried them, rescue the weak and the oppressed among the believers in every land of ours, and send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, who, with seventy swords at his back, chose restraint, upon the Muhajirun who paid the price of the road, and upon the Ansar who made of their city a home.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 26: the early emigration to Madinah (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (35:6, 57:10, 4:58, 2:207), verified via quran.ai.

The Hijrah

Two in the cave, and Allah the third

By the time this night arrives, Makkah is almost empty of believers. For three and a half months they have been slipping out under cover of dark, family by family, house by quietly locked house, until the only ones left are the Prophet ﷺ, Abu Bakr, the young Ali, and a scattering of women and children. Every other adult Muslim has gone. He ﷺ alone is still waiting, and the reason he waits is the heart of this whole story: for him, leaving Makkah required permission from heaven, and heaven had not yet given it.

The hijrah is not one neat tale. Dr. Yasir Qadhi reminds us that the seerah was never written down as a single connected narrative; it has to be pieced together, report by report, weighing each chain as it comes. So this night reaches us in fragments, some from the most authentic books and some from the gentler, looser histories, and the honest way to tell it is to hand on each piece as it was handed down: the firm as firm, the beloved as beloved, and none of them, in the end, the slightest bit difficult for Allah.

Almost everyone left in secret, at night, telling no one. There was one exception, and only one: Umar ibn al-Khattab, radiyallahu anhu, who strapped on his sword, made tawaf seven times in full view of Quraysh, and announced to the chiefs of the city that whoever wished his mother to mourn him should follow him out beyond the valley, for he was making hijrah. Not a man moved. It

was the answer to a dua the Prophet ﷺ had once made, that Allah strengthen Islam with whichever of the two men named Umar was more beloved to Him; Allah loved this one and gave him to the religion. The other man bore a name from the very same root, and history would call him Abu Jahl. On this very night he will be working in the dark for the religion's destruction.

The visitor at the hottest hour

The soundest thread of these days belongs to a child. Aisha, radiyallahu anha, was around six or seven, and her memory of it is preserved in Bukhari. She could not remember a single day on which her parents were not Muslims, nor a day on which the Prophet ﷺ did not come to visit their house, morning or evening. When the command to emigrate came, Abu Bakr made a camel ready and asked his permission to leave, because the companions asked his permission before everything. Wait, he ﷺ told him. I hope that Allah will give me permission too. Abu Bakr heard what lay underneath the words and asked it plainly: are you hoping for my companionship? Yes, the Prophet ﷺ answered. Companionship.

So Abu Bakr did something that reveals the whole texture of his love. He prepared not one camel but two, and fattened them for the desert: penned so they would not burn their strength, fed and salted so they would drink deep and store the water. He did this, Aisha remembered, for some four months, keeping a second camel ready against a hope he could not be sure would ever be answered.

Which day was it? Here Dr. Yasir Qadhi is careful. No hadith names the date. What the sources give is the day of the week, for Ibn Abbas reports in Sahih Muslim that the great markers of the Prophet's ﷺ life fell on Mondays: born on a Monday, made a

prophet on a Monday. Working the calendars backward, modern researchers arrive at Monday the 26th of Safar, in the thirteenth year of the dawah. And notice: the hijrah did not fall in Muharram. The companions would later open their calendar at Muharram for reasons of their own; the journey itself belongs to Safar.

The day announced itself strangely. It was noon, the furnace hour, when the heat of Arabia shutters a city and sends everyone indoors to the midday nap the Prophet ﷺ himself encouraged. Through the deserted streets a figure came walking, his turban wound across his face so that no feature showed. The household knew him anyway, the way you know someone you love by the rhythm of his walk. No one came at that hour, Aisha remembered, unless something grave had happened. He ﷺ asked Abu Bakr to clear the house. Messenger of Allah, said Abu Bakr, there is no one here but your own family. The nikah to Aisha had already been contracted, though years would pass before she joined his household; behind the curtain of that small house, a little girl sat listening to history walk in the door. Then he ﷺ said it: Allah has given me permission to leave. And Abu Bakr begged him, by my mother and my father, has permission been given for me to go with you? Yes, said the Prophet ﷺ. Companionship.

Aisha said afterward that she had never known a person could weep for joy until she saw her father weep that day. Then Abu Bakr offered the gift he had prepared in silence for months: two camels ready for the road, and one of them is yours. The Prophet ﷺ, who in all his life in Makkah had never owned a camel, gave an answer the Sheikh lingers over: only if I pay its price. He would not ride the greatest journey of his life on a borrowed good deed. Part of it was the perfection of his manners, a man who never once leaned on his station to take a favor. And part of it was a hunger of another kind: he wanted the reward of the hijrah

whole, paid from his own pocket and shared with no one, because to help another in a good deed is to take a share of it, and this reward he wanted undivided.

She of the two belts

The house became a departure point within the hour, and it ran on its women. Aisha was too young to do anything but watch, but Asma, radiyallahu anha, her elder sister by more than a decade, was a grown woman, and the work fell to her. She bundled the food and provisions, and when she came to tie the saddlebag she found nothing to bind it. So she reached for her own belt, tore it in half with her teeth, kept one half to hold her garment and lashed the Prophet's ﷺ provisions shut with the other. Heaven liked the trade. From that day she was Dhat an-Nitaqayn, she of the two belts, and the name has stayed on her to the end of time.

Abu Bakr, meanwhile, was emptying his house of money. Ibn Ishaq's account remembers that he had forty thousand dirhams on the day he accepted Islam, and only five thousand remained now; the missing thirty-five thousand had gone to buy persecuted slaves out of the hands of their owners, Bilal among them. Nearly ninety percent of his wealth, given for the sake of Allah. Now he gathered the last five thousand, every coin, and took it with him. His reasoning was love guided by a clear head: Makkah will not let two girls starve, but the desert ahead has no neighbors and no guarantees, and there is no telling who along that road may need to be paid.

The bill for that generosity came due at once, and Asma paid it twice. First came her own grandfather, Abu Bakr's father, Abu Quhafa, an old man, blind, still a pagan, and famously sharp of tongue. He came taunting: your father has run off and abandoned you girls, and taken every last coin with him. Look at Asma's faith

and her quickness. She filled the empty money pouch with pebbles, wrapped it in cloth, took the blind old man's hand and laid it on the bundle: no, grandfather, see, he has left us all this. He felt the reassuring weight and went away satisfied. By Allah, she said later, he left us nothing at all; I only wanted to settle the old man. Then came the second visitor, and he did not come to taunt. Abu Jahl came hunting the fugitives, and when Asma would not tell him where her father had gone, he struck her across the face until she bled. She did not give him a single word.

Midnight in their parliament

Ibn Abbas pointed at one verse of the Qur'an and said simply: this is that night.

And [remember, O Muhammad], when those who disbelieved plotted against you to restrain you or kill you or evict you [from Makkah]. But they plan, and Allah plans. And Allah is the best of planners.

QUR'AN 8:30

While the camels stood fattened and ready, the chiefs of Quraysh met in secret session in Darun-Nadwa, the assembly hall that served Makkah as its parliament. Every clan sent its elders, every clan but one: Banu Hashim, the Prophet's ﷺ own clan, was not invited. And the Sheikh pauses over two more empty seats, because even a council convened for murder kept a strange residue of its own rules. Abu Lahab was kept out, for all that his heart would gladly have voted with them; he could not be seen to bless the killing of his own nephew, and what a man does not officially know, he can never be made to answer for. And Mut'im ibn Adi was kept out, the man whose word of protection still formally covered the Prophet ﷺ; you do not invite a chief into the

room where you mean to tear up the guarantee he has given. Their treachery, to the last, was wrapped in a tribal sense of honor.

A knock interrupted the secrecy. An old stranger asked to be let in, a shaykh of Najd, he said, come to profit them with his counsel. Ibn Abbas named him without flinching: it was Shaytan himself, come to make sure the night ended in blood. The Sheikh hands this on as he found it, noting the chain skips a generation, even as the night to come makes the conclusion easy to believe. The options went around the room. Chain him in a house? His words would seep through the very stones, and his followers would carry them out of Makkah. Exile him? They would only be handing him to his supporters, and he would return stronger. Then Abu Jahl said aloud the thing every man was thinking and none had the courage to name: why do we not simply kill him?

Even for them it was almost unsayable, for the Arabs did not murder one of their own in cold blood, and the shame would cling to Quraysh for generations. So Abu Jahl engineered the shame away. Let every clan send one strong young man, and let them strike together as one hand, so that the blood lies on every sword in Makkah at once and no single house can be blamed. Banu Hashim could never declare war on the whole city; they would have no choice but to accept the blood money, and the matter would be closed. The stranger from Najd pronounced it the only intelligent plan in the room. The young men were chosen on the spot and sent that same night to wait outside his ﷺ door. And here is the line the Sheikh wants carried out of that hall: the timing of the hijrah was this meeting. Their plot set the clock for the escape Allah had already written. They plan, and Allah plans.

Walking out through Yasin

That same evening Jibril came down with the order to go now, tonight, and told the Prophet ﷺ exactly what the parliament had decided. The famous details of the next hour come through Ibn Ishaq without a connected chain, and the right way to tell them, the Sheikh says, is to keep them just as they were handed on: beloved, less than certain, and not one of them hard for Allah to have done. Ali, the young man the Prophet ﷺ had raised in his own household, now eighteen or nineteen, lay down in his bed, so that any eye pressed to the opening of the house would see a sleeper and relax. And the Prophet ﷺ stepped out through his own front door, walked through the cordon of chosen swordsmen, recited the opening verses of Surah Yasin, and let a handful of dust fall on their heads as he passed.

And We have put before them a barrier and behind them a barrier and covered them, so they do not see.

QUR'AN 36:9

Not one of them saw him ﷺ go. They found the dust in their hair, and the decoy in the bed, only after he was long gone.

He made his way through the dark to Abu Bakr's house, and the two of them rode out. Where the last shops on the edge of the city gave way to open land, he stopped, turned, looked back, and spoke to Makkah itself: you are the most blessed of Allah's lands and the most beloved of them to me, and had my own people not driven me out, I would never have left you. He would not set foot in the city again until he entered it as its conqueror, eight and a half years later.

Stand at this hinge a moment, because the Sheikh points to it. Thirteen and a half years earlier, in the first days of revelation, the old scholar who recognized the truth of him had said he

wished he could be alive on the day the Prophet's ﷺ own people drove him out. Will my own people really drive me out? he ﷺ had asked, astonished. Yes, came the answer, for no man ever brought what you bring without being made an enemy. Now, at the city limits, in the dark, the words were coming true to the letter. Prophecies in this story do not rust.

Three quiet jobs and a hired guide

Madinah lies due north of Makkah. The cave of Thawr lies due south, a hard climb of nearly three hours in exactly the wrong direction. That was the plan's first and cleverest stroke: turn your back on your destination and let the hunt wear itself out racing north. They would lie hidden in the rock for three days and nights until the search cooled, then loop down toward the coast near what is today Jeddah and pick up a back road north that only the desert tribes knew. Fourteen centuries later, engineers laid the modern Makkah to Madinah highway along the easiest natural line through the land, and it runs close to the route of the hijrah. The back road, it turns out, was the best road all along.

Around the cave, Abu Bakr's long planning unfolded as three quiet assignments. His son Abdullah, a sharp boy whom no one thought to watch, moved through the markets of Makkah by day with his ears open, then climbed to the cave each night with food, water, and the day's intelligence, so the two men in the rock could change their plan if the search turned toward them. A man named Amir ibn Fuhayra, a servant Abu Bakr had once bought out of slavery and freed, grazed a flock of sheep back and forth across the boy's tracks until the sand kept no testimony of who had passed. And the secret of the back road was held by a hired guide: a Bedouin of a distant tribe, not of Quraysh, and not a Muslim.

Sit with that last fact, because the Sheikh does. The two most wanted men in all of Arabia placed their lives in the hands of a pagan, for a fee that was a small fraction of what his silence was worth, and he kept faith with them. Scholars went looking for this man across the centuries and found almost nothing; we do not even know for certain whether he ever accepted Islam. What we do know is the judgment the Prophet ﷺ and Abu Bakr made of him: he was honest, and honesty is real wherever it is found. The Qur'an itself says as much of the People of the Book, that among them is the one who will return a fortune untouched and the one who will cheat you of a single coin:

And among the People of the Scripture is he who, if you entrust him with a great amount [of wealth], he will return it to you. And among them is he who, if you entrust him with a [single] coin, he will not return it to you unless you are constantly standing over him [demanding it]. That is because they say, "There is no blame upon us concerning the unlearned." And they speak untruth about Allah while they know [it].

QUR'AN 3:75

Faith and trustworthiness, the Sheikh says plainly, are two separate tests. Belief does not by itself make a person honest, nor does its absence make a person a liar. For this road, the two travelers needed proven trustworthiness, and that is what they hired.

Two in the cave, Allah the third

Quraysh woke to dust in the hair of their swordsmen and a cousin asleep in the bed, and the bounty went out across the desert: a hundred camels for the two of them, dead or alive, no questions asked. A camel in that Arabia was what a car is to us; imagine a

hundred offered for one fugitive who, until that very week, had never owned a single one. Riders combed every road to the north and found nothing, because the trail ran south. So Quraysh hired a master tracker, a reader of footprints and camel sign, who followed the traces from Abu Bakr's door to the foot of Thawr, and there he stopped: from here the mountain takes them, and I can read no further.

It was a guess, but it was the best lead in three days, and so the chiefs themselves climbed the mountain, Abu Jahl among them. Understand the shape of the place. The cave of Thawr is not a chamber you walk into; it is a crevice you wiggle through, with room for barely two men, and its mouth opens at the level of a standing man's feet, looking like nothing more than a crack in the rock. That ordinariness is exactly what saved them. Abu Bakr, lying in the dark, could see the sandals of the men standing above. He whispered: if even one of them looks down at his feet, he will see us. And the answer came back, calm as a man sitting in his own home, a sentence preserved in Bukhari that deserves to be memorized and carried: what do you think of two, when Allah is the third of them?

And what of the spider and its web across the mouth, the leaning tree, the pigeons nesting at the entrance? Here the Sheikh weighs rather than flattens. The story of the spider's web comes in Musnad Ahmad with a slight weakness, and it is the strongest of those reports; the leaning tree and the nesting pigeons arrive with whole generations missing from their chains. There is no harm in narrating them, and no certainty in them, and nothing in any of them would have been the least bit difficult for Allah. But notice what the soundest report makes the true shield that day. Not silk, not feathers. A single sentence of tawakkul, and eyes that Allah simply did not permit to look down. The hunters stood

on the roof of the cave and walked away. On the morning after the third night, the guide arrived with the camels, and the road north began.

The hunter and the bracelets of Kisra

Word had spread that three riders had slipped away together: the Prophet ﷺ, Abu Bakr, and a guide. One man came within reach of the bounty, and because he lived to become a Muslim, he told the story on himself in the first person for the rest of his life. Suraqa ibn Malik, a chief among the desert clans, was sitting with his tribesmen when one of them returned from a hunt and said he had just seen three riders far off, surely the ones Quraysh wanted. Suraqa wanted those hundred camels for himself, with no partners. Those are not the three, he said smoothly, that is the party of so-and-so. He sat on a while to keep up the show, then slipped home, armed himself, mounted his warhorse, and galloped after them.

What happened next he swore to in his own telling. At his first sight of the riders his horse pitched forward and threw him. He cast the azlam, the divining arrows the pagans consulted before a venture, and the answer came up: do not go on. Greed put him back in the saddle. The horse went down a second time, the arrows refused a second time, and a third time he rode, close enough now to call out, and this time the horse plunged hardest of all, and a smoke rose up between him and the men ahead. I knew then, Suraqa said, that this was a force beyond me, and that this man's affair was bound to prevail. So the bounty hunter began calling out to his prey, begging a promise of safety. He had been watching them as he closed in: one rider could not keep still, wheeling to the rear and spurring to the front, fear wearing him like a cloak, and none of it fear for himself. That was Abu

Bakr. The other never once turned his head, settled in the saddle, reciting quietly, as untroubled as a man riding home. That was the Prophet ﷺ.

The guarantee of safety was written out for him on a piece of leather. He offered them provisions, and they took nothing. One request only was made of him, by Abu Bakr: keep our secret. He kept it, and turned for home. But the strangest thing came as he was leaving. The Prophet ﷺ, a hunted refugee with a price on his head and a single newly bought camel to his name, turned to him and said: how will it be with you, Suraqa, on the day you wear the two bracelets of Kisra? Kisra was the emperor of Persia, the way you say the king when, on all the earth, there is reckoned to be only one king, a man whose gold was the envy of the world. Suraqa could barely stammer the name back. The Prophet ﷺ did not even pause to explain himself.

Hold that receipt to the end of the story. Years later, after the conquest of Makkah, Suraqa came forward holding the same worn piece of leather; the promise was honored, and he accepted Islam and became a companion. Within six or seven years of the Prophet's ﷺ passing, the Persian empire buckled and broke, and the treasures of its palaces were carried into the masjid of Madinah. Umar ibn al-Khattab looked at the heaped gold of a fallen empire and said: where is Suraqa? They brought him, an old Bedouin now, and Umar sat him in his own place, found the two bracelets of Kisra in the treasure, and clasped them onto the old man's wrists, and the masjid shook with the takbir. The promise had become a legend while it waited to come true. Praise be to Allah, said Umar, who has stripped these bracelets from the emperor of Persia and dressed a Bedouin of the desert in them.

What the Hijrah asks of our faith

It would be easy to read the hijrah as a thrilling escape and leave it there, a great adventure safely sealed in the past. That would be to miss the question it puts to us. Strip the night down to its mechanics and you will never again read a hard season of your own life the same way.

He waited for permission, and then he moved completely. Every believer in Makkah was free to emigrate, and they did; he ﷺ alone stayed, because he took no major step without permission from his Lord, even with the path obvious and the danger closing in. And the moment the word came, nothing in Makkah could hold him another hour. We are quick to move on our own desires and slow to ask whether Allah has opened the door, when the order of his ﷺ life was the reverse: seek the permission first, then act with everything you have. Our hijrah is no longer a journey across the desert. It is the daily migration from sin toward obedience, and it waits, as his did, on a heart willing to be told when to go.

He insisted on paying for his own camel, a detail small enough to slip past you and large enough to reshape how you worship. Offered the mount of his life as a gift, he would not take the reward of the hijrah at a discount; he wanted it whole, bought with his own wealth, shared with no one. Ask how much of your own good is borrowed, done at someone else's cost or for someone else's eyes, and how much you would still want if the whole reward had to be yours alone, seen only by Allah.

And then there is the sentence at the heart of it all, whispered in the dark with sandals creaking overhead and a hundred camels riding on a single downward glance. Abu Bakr did everything a careful man could do: months of feed for two camels, a son carrying intelligence, a freed servant erasing the tracks, a trusted

guide and a back road chosen to deceive the hunt. He planned like a man who knew that planning is part of trust, not its opposite. And when the plan reached its last line, the last line was not a plan at all. What do you think of two, when Allah is the third of them? This is the balance the hijrah teaches and most of us never quite learn: to tie the camel and trust the Lord, to do every lawful thing in our power and then to rest, genuinely rest, in the knowledge that the outcome was never in our hands. The men hunting him held the swords, the bounty, the trackers, the mountain itself. They had every visible advantage, and they walked home empty. They plan, and Allah plans, and Allah is the best of planners.

So take one thing from this night down into your ordinary days. Wait on Allah's permission before you move, and when it comes, move with your whole heart. Do one good thing whose reward is yours alone and whose cost no one else will ever carry. And the next time you find yourself in a narrow place, with the walls close and the way out invisible, do everything you honestly can, and then say the sentence that held this entire religion steady when it was two men wide in a crack of rock: Allah is the third of them. May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, who left the most beloved of lands for His sake, be with us in our narrow places as He was with them in the cave, and write for each of us a hijrah from sin to obedience that He is pleased to receive.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 27: the Hijrah (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (8:30, 36:9, 3:75), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one

narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

Lessons from the Hijrah

What the road taught, and the city that waited

Yesterday the chase ended in the strangest of victories. Suraqa ibn Malik, who had ridden out to collect a hundred camels for the heads of the two fugitives, rode home instead with a promise written on a scrap of leather: that one day he would wear the two bracelets of the emperor of Persia. He could barely stammer the name back. Years later, after an empire had fallen, he wore them. That is where day 27 left the road, and the road is not finished teaching.

Today we walk the last stretch of it with the Prophet ﷺ and Abu Bakr, radiyallahu anhu, and then Dr. Yasir Qadhi does something the seerah does only at its hinges: he stops the story and steps back. Before the palms of his new city part to receive him, the Sheikh asks us to gather up what these days have been quietly handing us, and then to answer the question hiding inside the whole journey. Out of every city on the earth, out of every place the dawah had already reached, why this one? Why Madinah? By the end of today you will know her before he ﷺ ever sets foot inside her: renamed by his own mouth, guarded by angels, soaked in his du'a, and prepared by Allah generations before anyone thought to look.

Milk from a dry goat

Somewhere on that road, in open desert about an hour and a half by car from Madinah today (the place still carries her name, and a highway sign still marks the exit), an elderly bedouin woman sat in a worn tent waiting for her husband to come back from searching for food. She lived the hardest version of the bedouin life, and there was nothing in her tent worth the taking, so when she heard travelers outside asking leave to enter, she let them in without a second thought. She was old, she was poor, and she had no reason to be afraid. She did not know the two men. One was Abu Bakr. The other was the most hunted man in all of Arabia ﷺ.

They asked to buy food, and the Sheikh lingers on that one word, buy. Two desperate travelers with a city's bounty riding behind them, and they would not ask for it free, though desert custom would have excused them completely. This was the manners of the Prophet ﷺ and of Abu Bakr even in flight. She apologized: she had nothing at all, because her husband had gone out for exactly that reason. Then he ﷺ noticed the goat in the corner. An old goat, long past milk and long past bearing young, not even sent out to graze; an animal kept against the day it would be slaughtered for meat, and nothing more. He asked her leave to milk it. She nearly laughed: that day is long gone, there is no milk in her, but do as you like. So he ﷺ mentioned the name of Allah, made du'a, and passed his hand beneath the udder, and the udder filled, right then and there. Abu Bakr milked it until the vessel brimmed over. They drank, she was given her share, and they left the rest for her and her husband.

When the husband came home and found milk waiting, he could not take it in; they had gone days without any. From this goat? So she told him the story, and here she gave history something precious. She described the stranger in detail, handsome, long

haired, neither tall nor short, and her account is one of the very few full physical portraits of the Prophet ﷺ that has reached us, because most of the companions never described him in that way, and this came from a woman who had hosted him for an hour. Her husband knew at once: those are the two the Quraysh are hunting, and one of them, you know, claims to be a prophet. She answered from what her own two eyes had just watched happen: that is no claim. He is a prophet. Both of them accepted Islam, and the whole account reaches us in her own voice.

She was not the only one. The reports mention another two or three souls on that road who met him ﷺ and accepted Islam, some of whom did not even leave us their names. Sit with that, the Sheikh says, because it is the quiet miracle of the journey. A man is fleeing for his life with an entire city's wealth set on his capture, and he keeps pausing to invite strangers to Allah. By the end we can count at least four or five who entered Islam on the road of the hijrah itself. No time, no place, and no danger was ever heavy enough to switch off the dawah.

One more meeting on that road called for quick wits. In deep desert two parties of travelers will drift toward one another simply to trade news, and so a caravan veered across to greet the two riders, and someone in it recognized Abu Bakr from an old trading expedition. These were not Quraysh; they had heard nothing of any bounty, nothing of two men fleeing Makkah. They greeted Abu Bakr, traded their news, and then came the question: who is this man with you? Abu Bakr answered without missing a beat: he is my guide, guiding me to the path. The caravan heard a hired guide for the desert road. Abu Bakr meant his guide to Jannah. The scholars call this tawriyah, a double meaning that Islam permits for a reason, what English would call a white lie, except that it is not a lie at all and contains not one

false word. And a small detail hides inside the exchange, the Sheikh notes, for by this point their actual hired guide had finished his task and turned back; from here the two of them already knew the way.

Tie your camel, then let go

Now step back and look at the architecture of this whole escape, the Sheikh says, because this is where the lessons begin. Recall how meticulously the hijrah was prepared: two camels force fed for months until their humps stood high and full, a face wrapped so no feature showed, a room emptied before a word of the plan was spoken, the young Ali left in his ﷺ own bed so any eye at the window would find a sleeper tossing and turning, tracks covered, a son carrying the morning's news, food slipped out in secret, a hired guide the Quraysh would never think to suspect. Every detail was locked down, and then locked down again.

And the man at the very center of all that planning, the one human being with more right than anyone alive to lean on Allah and simply do nothing, took every precaution there was, and then let go of all of it completely. Out in the open desert he ﷺ rides calm, untroubled, ungrieved, reciting Qur'an, not so much as glancing left or right. It is Abu Bakr who cannot hold still: now spurring ahead in case danger comes from the front, now dropping behind in case it comes from the rear, his heart pounding, and never once for his own sake. When Suraqa came hunting them, it was Suraqa and Abu Bakr who spotted each other from far off. The hunted man ﷺ never turned his head.

Sheikh Yasir is exact about what this means, because believers get it wrong in both directions. Hiding in the cave was not a failure of tawakkul; it was tawakkul. This is the heart of our religion: you tie your camel, and then you put your trust in Allah.

You do everything you possibly can, down to the decoy lying in the bed, because Islam does not ask you to behave like a fool, and then you attach your heart not to the plan but to the One the plan was always for. They did not stand at the mouth of the cave daring Makkah to do its worst. They hid. And when Abu Bakr's heart raced even in the dark (if even one of them looks down at his feet, he will see us), the Prophet ﷺ calmed him, and Allah handled the rest: a dove, the reports say, and a spider's web across the opening, if those reports are authentic, and the Sheikh weighs them honestly rather than flattening them, for there is nothing wrong with citing them. What is beyond any doubt is that men stood close enough overhead to be heard, and Allah simply did not let them look down. Once you have done your part, Allah does His.

The second of two

Years later, that cave received its own ayah, and the timing is half the lesson. The verse came down in one of the very last surahs to be revealed, when the Muslims stood at the absolute peak of their power, after the conquest of Makkah itself. And at that summit, with armies at their command, Allah told them plainly: if you will not help His Messenger ﷺ, it changes nothing at all, for Allah already helped him, back when an entire city was out to kill him and the full census of Islam on that road was two people. The second of two.

If you do not aid him [i.e., the Prophet (ﷺ)] - Allah has already aided him when those who disbelieved had driven him out [of Makkah] as one of two, when they were in the cave and he [i.e., Muhammad (ﷺ)] said to his companion, "Do not grieve; indeed Allah is with us." And Allah sent down His tranquility upon him and supported him with

soldiers [i.e., angels] you did not see and made the word of those who disbelieved the lowest, while the word of Allah - that is the highest. And Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise.

QUR'AN 9:40

Inside the cave he ﷺ had said five words to his friend: do not grieve, Allah is with us. The ayah records what Allah did next. He sent down His sakinah, His tranquility, upon him, so that the hunted man was the calm one, his heart at rest while the searchers stood overhead, and He aided him with soldiers no one could see, the host that many scholars take to include the humble dove and spider. And to the thousands reading this ayah at the very height of their victory, the message lands without a soft edge: none of you were able to help him then, and I did not need you. I sent an army you could not see.

Before moving on, the Sheikh pauses on a treasure buried in the wording: he said to his companion. Abu Bakr is the only human being whose companionship of the Prophet ﷺ Allah Himself affirmed directly in the Qur'an. Every other companion's rank is real, but it is inferred, drawn out indirectly; Abu Bakr's is spelled out in revelation, with no wishy-washiness in it at all. And by the unanimous agreement of every single group that has ever claimed Islam, the man in that cave was Abu Bakr and no one else. So whoever denies that Abu Bakr was the companion of the Prophet ﷺ, the Sheikh says, is not quarreling with history. He is quarreling with the Qur'an.

They call it Yathrib, it is Madinah

Before the Prophet ﷺ enters his city, learn her name, and notice who in the Qur'an refuses to use it. Her original name was Yathrib, an ancient town ringed with old volcanic rock and sitting on a hidden gift of water, a current running beneath the ground,

fed from the mountains around her, enough to raise the date groves that made her famous across Arabia. There were only two places in the whole peninsula with palms like hers. And the Prophet ﷺ was shown his new home by exactly those trees. Two years before the hijrah, in the tenth or eleventh year of the dawah, he ﷺ had told the Muslims of a dream: I saw myself emigrating to a land of date palms. He guessed at two famous date towns far across the peninsula in Yemen, and it was neither. He could not place the city until the sign arrived, when the people of Yathrib embraced Islam and invited him to come. Then he knew. The city in the dream was theirs.

He also told them: I have been commanded to migrate to a city that devours all other cities; they call it Yathrib, and it is Madinah. From this hadith the scholars draw a real ruling, the Sheikh explains. They call it Yathrib, but its name now is Madinah, so Islamically the old name is retired, and one narration teaches that whoever says Yathrib should say al-Madinah. And the Qur'an itself underlines the point, for it places the name Yathrib only ever on one set of tongues. When the hypocrites wanted to stoke fear among the believers and scatter them, it was they who cried out:

And when a faction of them said, "O people of Yathrib, there is no stability for you [here], so return [home]." And a party of them asked permission of the Prophet, saying, "Indeed, our houses are exposed [i.e., unprotected]," while they were not exposed. They did not intend except to flee.

QUR'AN 33:13

So the hypocrites say Yathrib, while Allah Himself calls her al-Madinah, and so does His Messenger ﷺ. That is no accident of vocabulary. It is the city's biography told in two names. The old name, the scholars say, grows from a root meaning blame, or

another meaning evil and corruption, and the Prophet ﷺ never let an ugly name stand, not on a person and not on his city. He disliked bad names and changed them everywhere he met them: a woman embraced Islam carrying a name that meant sour, and he renamed her sweet on the spot. A name that carried blame and corruption could not stay on the city of the Prophet ﷺ. So he called her al-Madinah, the City, capital C, as if there were no other, and a pair of sister names besides, both meaning the pure and the source of purity, the exact opposite of all the old name had carried. The Arabs heaped names on whatever they held grand, and no place collected more than she did; the historians of Madinah, as-Samhudi among them, gathered well over a hundred of her names, and one early scholar wrote that no city known to Islam has more. Yet of them all, he ﷺ used only two or three.

A city soaked in du'a

He ﷺ asked Allah for the love of her, in words like these: O Allah, cause us to love Madinah as we love Makkah, or even more. And the du'a took visible root in him: a companion describes how, returning from an expedition, the moment the silhouette of Madinah rose in the distance he ﷺ would grow excited and urge his mount on. Even her landscape was folded into the love; of Mount Uhud he said this is a mountain that loves us and we love it, and counted it among the mountains of Jannah. He prayed even over her economy: O Allah, bless us in our sa' and our mudd, the very scoops and measures of the marketplace, the hadith meaning that food bought in Madinah stretches further, the same measure feeding more mouths.

Then he asked higher still: O Allah, place in Madinah double the blessing You placed in Makkah. That du'a kept the scholars debating, the Sheikh says. Does it mean Madinah is more blessed

than Makkah? Imam Malik, himself a son of Madinah and perhaps a little partial to his own city, held her to be the holiest of lands. Others held that the two cannot be ranked against each other, each blessed in its own way. Makkah, in the majority view, was blessed from the day the heavens and the earth were created; she holds the first masjid ever raised for the worship of Allah on this earth, and she carries the far greater reward in prayer, a hundred thousand to Madinah's thousand. Madinah's blessing began the day her Prophet ﷺ moved into her. Two cities, two glories, and the believer is not asked to choose between them.

Then come the protections, and these are not faint whispers from weak books; narration after narration sits in Bukhari and Muslim. Iman itself, he ﷺ said, returns to Madinah the way a desert animal darts back to its burrow the instant it senses a threat. When faith is hunted everywhere else, Madinah is where it runs home; she will be the bastion of Islam. The Dajjal himself will not be permitted to enter her: he will come meaning to destroy her, and two great angels will meet him at her approaches and drive him out, which is why the early teaching says that if you hear of him, head for Madinah. And no plague will ever enter her. Fourteen centuries have tested that sentence: famines have come, for he ﷺ made du'a only against the plague, but the great plagues that swept the world passed her by, the bubonic plague and the Spanish influenza of 1918 that killed perhaps a third of mankind, while pilgrims kept arriving from every infected corner of the earth, and the city stayed untouched. The protection has teeth, too: no one plots against Madinah, he ﷺ warned, except that Allah dissolves him the way salt dissolves in water.

She blesses both halves of a believer's story, the living and the dying. No one leaves her, no longer wanting to live in her, except that Allah replaces him with someone better. And she is a hard

land, fierce in her heat and lean in her seasons, and that is exactly the point: whoever bears her difficulties patiently, he ﷺ promised to intercede for him on the Day of Judgment, as he promised for whoever is able to die in her. Umar ibn al-Khattab, radiyallahu anhu, built an impossible du'a on that promise: O Allah, grant me martyrdom in Your cause, and death in the city of Your Messenger ﷺ. Those around him wondered how the two halves could ever meet, for martyrs fall at the far borders of the empire, not at home in their beds. Allah accepted both at once: Umar died a shahid, in Madinah. And her very soil is honored, for al-Baqi is the most blessed graveyard in the world, where over ten thousand companions lie, nine of the Prophet's ﷺ wives (all but Khadijah), his son Ibrahim, and early giants of scholarship. One night a wife of his ﷺ woke to find him gone, and learned on his return that Jibril had told him to go and pray for the people of al-Baqi; so he had left his bed in the dark to stand among his buried companions and make du'a for them. The city is blessed down to her graves.

Only two harams

Madinah is not only blessed; she is a haram, and the Sheikh is careful with the word, because here people get confused. A haram, in the legal sense, is a sanctuary: a stretch of land inside which things that are halal everywhere else become haram, which is precisely why it shares its root with the word for forbidden. Weapons are not carried there except for genuine necessity, like the armed guards who protect the sanctuaries today. Armies do not march in; even the Prophet ﷺ said Allah permitted him to enter Makkah with an army for only a part of a single day, and for no one after him. Blood is not shed. The natural greenery is untouchable, down to a leaf on a tree and the

grass underfoot, and you do not even pick up a lost item from its ground, but leave it where it lies. Everything inside is under the protection of Allah.

That is what Makkah had been since the time of Ibrahim, and the Qur'an itself declares it:

In it are clear signs [such as] the standing place of Abraham. And whoever enters it [i.e., the Haram] shall be safe. And [due] to Allah from the people is a pilgrimage to the House - for whoever is able to find thereto a way. But whoever disbelieves [i.e., refuses] - then indeed, Allah is free from need of the worlds.

QUR'AN 3:97

Even the days of jahiliyyah honored that safety; a man would see the murderer of his own father making tawaf around the Ka'bah and not raise a hand against him, because Makkah was a haram and the Arabs knew it. The ayah goes further still: in the sanctuary of Allah, merely intending wrongdoing, with no need to succeed, invites a painful punishment.

Indeed, those who have disbelieved and avert [people] from the way of Allah and [from] al-Masjid al-Haram, which We made for the people - equal are the resident therein and one from outside - and [also] whoever intends [a deed] therein of deviation [in religion] by wrongdoing - We will make him taste of a painful punishment.

QUR'AN 22:25

And into this exact category the Prophet ﷺ lifted his new city, making du'a in words like these: O Allah, Ibrahim was Your servant and Your khalil, and he declared Makkah a sanctuary; I am Your servant and Your Messenger, and I declare Madinah a

sanctuary, between her two lava plains. Madinah became the second haram of this religion.

Now listen carefully, the Sheikh says, because this next sentence upsets people, and he asks them not to be angry but to hear it out. There are exactly two harams in our religion: Makkah and Madinah. Not three. Jerusalem, the land of al-Masjid al-Aqsa, is beloved and blessed beyond any doubt, a place we should visit and pray in, where the most authentic narration counts one prayer as two hundred and fifty. But blessed and haram are two different words. No scholar of Islam, the Sheikh says, none of them, ever counted Jerusalem a haram in the legal sense. Her animals may be hunted and her trees may be cut, and the rulings of the sanctuary simply do not apply there; the name people use for her precinct is popular vernacular, not the language of fiqh. Hold the rule exactly the way the episode hands it to you: every haram is blessed, but not every blessed place is a haram, and Jerusalem is the clearest proof of it.

Why Madinah?

Step back from the blessings now and ask the planner's question, the way the Sheikh does: there were already Muslims in Abyssinia under a king who had embraced the faith, so why not send the Prophet ﷺ to him? Why this city? The honest answer begins with adab: these are the wisdoms the scholars have traced, and the full ledger of reasons rests with Allah alone. But look at what He had prepared. Madinah sits at a thinking distance from Makkah, seven or eight days by caravan and three and a half for a hard rider, near enough to keep the dawah anchored to the one city that had to be won, yet too far for an army to surprise, and dead center in the Hijaz, which is dead center in Arabia. And her geology reads like fortification poured out in lava

ages before there were any Muslims to shelter behind it: volcanic plains east and west that no army can march and no camel train can cross, dense palm groves choking the southern approach toward Makkah, and a single open gap a few miles wide. Hold that fact, the Sheikh says, because when the Battle of the Trench comes, the one ditch the Prophet ﷺ digs will run exactly across that gap. You cannot moat a whole city in a week, but you can moat a few miles, and Allah had left only a few miles open. Add her people, who had never been conquered and so had never had their fighting spirit broken, and the strange gift of the wars of Bu'ath, a civil war dragging on for a generation or more that, just before the hijrah, accomplished what no strategist could: it cleared away the old, power hungry chieftains and left young blood in charge, open minded, sick to death of funerals, ready to welcome a clean leader from outside the bloodstained tribes. Nobody in Makkah was watching the wars of Bu'ath. But Allah has a plan, and while the dots are being drawn no one can read them; only when everything is finished do you connect them and stand amazed.

And the most intimate reason of all is blood. Of all the tribes of Arabia, the Prophet ﷺ had a direct blood tie to this one city, and the story of how is a small saga by itself. His great-grandfather Hashim, the great trader of Quraysh, used to pass through Yathrib on the road to Syria, and there he met Salma, a striking, strong willed businesswoman, daughter of a chieftain, who married and divorced men of her own choosing. He proposed; she set her terms, that she would keep her city and her trade and any child of theirs would stay with her, and Hashim agreed. Their time together was short, for he died on a later journey far from home, in Gaza. Salma was carrying his son and told the Quraysh nothing. The boy was born with a white streak in his hair, so they

called him Shaybah, and he grew up a child of Yathrib while his father's people knew nothing of him, until a traveler noticed unmistakable Quraysh features on a Yathrib boy and asked whose son he was. Hashim, the boy answered proudly. The news raced to Makkah, and Hashim's brother al-Muttalib rode quietly north, found the boy of twelve or thirteen, talked him onto a camel with promises of his father's rank, and sped away without facing Salma. As they entered Makkah, people asked: who is this boy, a slave you bought? Al-Muttalib, not wanting the news to spread, kept silent, and so the boy was nicknamed Abd al-Muttalib, the slave of al-Muttalib. Sit with what that means, the Sheikh says: Abd al-Muttalib, the grandfather of the Prophet ﷺ, was raised in the very streets his grandson would one day call home. Is this not Allah's plan working through history?

So when Yathrib chose him ﷺ, she was not choosing a stranger. Through Salma he was a second cousin of the Khazraj, and the Arabs kept their lineage by heart, twenty generations deep; kinship through a mother weighed lighter in that culture than through a father, but blood is blood, and they knew exactly whose blood he was. He ﷺ had even seen those streets once, as a child of five, brought by his mother Aminah to visit their Yathrib kin (it was on the road home that she died), which is why, when he finally entered the city, it was no coincidence that he lodged with Abu Ayyub, his closest relative among the Ansar. Wider still, the Aws and Khazraj were Qahtani Arabs, the Yemeni line he ﷺ praised when he said that iman is Yemeni and wisdom is Yemeni, while the tribes ringing Quraysh were all Adnani; so in the new ummah the two ancient halves of the Arab family fused, and no one could ever again rally the peninsula against the Muslims on tribal blood, a sign that this religion had come to bury ethnic pride altogether. And for two centuries these tribes had lived

beside the Jewish tribes of Yathrib, who spoke of prophets and a book and a law and held it over their neighbors as a boast. The boast turned over in Allah's hand: when the awaited prophet came, those who had been waiting for him refused him, and those who had only overheard the waiting recognized the truth and ran to it. Why Madinah? Because long before anyone thought to ask, Allah had already answered.

What this day asks of our faith

Here, on the last stretch of road before the gates, with the city in view but not yet entered, the journey hands over its parting gifts, and they are not relics to admire; they are questions put to us. Tie your camel, and then let go. The hijrah was the most carefully planned escape in the whole seerah, two camels fattened, a wrapped face, a decoy in the bed, tracks erased, and the heart at the center of all that planning was attached to none of it. Plan as though everything depends on the plan; trust as though none of it does. And notice that hiding can itself be tawakkul: they did not stand at the cave's mouth and dare the Quraysh to come; they hid, and Allah turned the searchers' eyes away. Precaution never betrays trust. It is the camel's rope, held lightly, in a hand that knows Who tied the knot that matters.

Then watch how dawah keeps no office hours. With a bounty on his head ﷺ and his life riding on speed and silence, he still paused for a widow's tent and for strangers on the open road, and four or five souls entered Islam during the escape itself. If he could invite while hunted, you can invite while busy, and when the inviting calls for cleverness, let it be clever without ever being false. He is my guide, guiding me to the path: Abu Bakr's tawriyah turned a dangerous question aside without one untrue word in it. A believer's tongue may carry two meanings at once,

but it does not lie. And love the city he loved: he ﷺ asked Allah to make Madinah as beloved to him as Makkah, hurried his mount at the first sight of her, and promised his intercession to whoever bears her hardships patiently. If you are ever her guest, stand in her hard and holy streets like a guest of that love.

But the deepest gift of the day is the one buried under the whole question of why Madinah, because it is also the answer to your own life. A widowed businesswoman's terms in a marketplace, a streak of white in a kidnapped boy's hair, a civil war no one in Makkah was watching, a field of lava cooling for ages: dots nobody could read while they were being drawn, until Allah connected them into a refuge for His Messenger ﷺ, complete down to the few open miles a single trench would one day close. Somewhere in your own story the dots are being drawn exactly the same way, and you cannot read them yet, and you are not meant to. So leave today the way the two travelers left every stop on that road: with the work done and the heart handed over. O Allah, You were with them in the cave, so be with us in every narrow place. Cause us to love Madinah as we love Makkah, or even more, write for us a prayer in the masjid of Your Messenger ﷺ, guard our iman the way You guarded her from plague and from plotters, and gather us under his ﷺ intercession on the Day the dots are all at last connected. Ameen.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 28: lessons from the Hijrah and the blessings of Madinah (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an

translations are from Sahih International (9:40, 33:13, 3:97, 22:25), verified via quran.ai.

Introducing the Madani phase

A city prepared centuries in advance

The escape from Makkah is complete, and somewhere on the long northern road two riders are coming toward a new life. The story is almost at the gates of the city. And here, with the arrival only minutes away, Dr. Yasir Qadhi stops the narrative cold and refuses to take another step forward until we understand the ground we are about to stand on.

His reason is simple, and he says it plainly. The Madani phase is three times the length of the Makkan one, and almost none of it can be understood without a map: who already lives in this oasis, who holds the money and the fortresses, who owes whom an old debt of blood, and how all of that came to be in the middle of an empty desert. So this is an orientation day. No single dramatic scene, no battle, no miracle, until the very end. Just two peoples, five tribes, one oasis, and the slow revelation that Allah had been furnishing this city to receive His Prophet ﷺ for three hundred years before he ﷺ ever needed it. Learn the map well. Everything that comes after is drawn on it.

Two peoples and a ground rule

Yathrib on the eve of the hijrah held two peoples. There were three Jewish tribes, Banu Qaynuqa, Banu Nadir, and Banu Qurayza, and these are names the Sheikh tells us to memorize now, because they will return again and again across the coming

years. And there were two Arab tribes, the Aws and the Khazraj. Nearly everything that happens over the next decade of the seerah, the treaties and the tensions, the betrayals and the mercies, moves along the lines drawn between these five names.

But before any of the history, Dr. Yasir Qadhi lays down a ground rule, and it is one of the most important things he says all day. He knows exactly where this subject leads. How the Prophet ﷺ dealt with the three Jewish tribes is among the most politicized questions in the entire seerah, the basis of the charge that the religion itself is anti-Semitic. It is the kind of question that surfaces every time a Muslim gives dawah to a non-Muslim, alongside the question of his marriages and the age of Aisha. And so it has to be handled, the Sheikh insists, without being apologetic. He pauses to define the word: an apologist is someone who waters Islam down, who shaves off its edges until its critics find it palatable. That is not the method here. The honest method has exactly two steps. First, ask whether a report is actually true; if it is a lie about the religion, say so. And if it is true, do not flinch from it, do not soften it, but explain its wisdom and stand by it, whether or not it sits comfortably with the politics of the age. Did he ﷺ do it? If he did, what was the wisdom in it? That is the whole methodology, and the Sheikh asks us to carry it through every hard chapter still to come.

Then he adds one honesty about the sources themselves. Every detail we possess about these three tribes comes from the Islamic tradition alone; no outside chronicle yet discovered so much as names them. Critics treat this as fatal: the sources are biased, they say, written by people with an agenda to defend the Prophet ﷺ at any cost, so the full truth can never be known and anyone who opposed him must have been painted unfairly. The Sheikh has read where that logic ends. There are articles, he

says, that recast Abdullah ibn Ubayy, the man the seerah knows as the very leader of the hypocrites, into a noble gentleman, the true man of honor in Madinah, on no reasoning whatsoever except that whoever opposed the Prophet ﷺ must secretly have been the good one. They flip the entire narrative inside out. Notice that method now, he warns, because you will recognize it every single time the seerah is attacked.

The temple and the two destructions

Where did Jewish tribes come from, deep in the heart of the Arabian desert? The trail runs all the way back to Jerusalem.

There, once, a man was a king and a prophet at the same moment, Sulayman, peace be upon him, and the Jews in his day were a people of Jerusalem. He raised the great temple, the haykal, and nothing on earth was like it, because his workforce was not of this earth. Allah had subjected the jinn to him, and the Qur'an records the kind of labor they did:

And [also] the devils [of jinn] - every builder and diver

QUR'AN 38:37

Every builder among them raised the structure, and every diver brought treasures and pearls up from the depths of the sea to adorn it. It was reputed to be one of the wonders of the ancient world, a feat the likes of which men had never seen, and the reason, the Sheikh reminds us, was simply that Allah had given Sulayman command of the jinn to build it. It stood solid and untouched for four or five centuries.

And the Qur'an had already foretold what would come of this people. Read the opening page of Surah al-Isra, the Sheikh says,

and you find mention of two corruptions and two punishments sent upon the Children of Israel:

And We conveyed to the Children of Israel in the Scripture that, "You will surely cause corruption on the earth twice, and you will surely reach [a degree of] great haughtiness."

QUR'AN 17:4

The majority of the scholars of tafsir, he tells us, have always read these as two corruptions and two punishments long since fallen, sealed in the ancient past. He then passes along a footnote, careful to say he does not adopt it: some modern readers take these verses as prophecy of something still to come, a reading that would change the entire dynamic of the surah. He leaves that tangent with Allah and returns to the majority view, on which the two punishments are history.

The first blow fell in 587 BC. Nebuchadnezzar, the tyrant the Arabic sources call Bukhtanassar, surrounded Jerusalem and, for the first time in that people's history, destroyed the original temple of Sulayman. This was the first diaspora, the first scattering of a people who would come to call themselves the wandering ones, for from that day they would not hold a unified land again. A later king, in time, took pity and rebuilt the temple, but it was his structure now, a rich man's imitation of a prophet's original. And Rome tore that one down too. The emperor Titus destroyed the second temple in 70 CE, after the time of Isa, peace be upon him, and the people scattered a second time. Then, in 132 CE, a group of Jews rose in armed revolt against an emperor who demanded an act of sacrilege from them, the slaughter of a forbidden animal to an idol, and here the Sheikh interrupts himself to say plainly that in this revolt our sympathies are with them. The emperor Hadrian answered with massacre,

surrounding the city and killing hundreds of thousands, a third great scattering. It is from these Roman catastrophes, in the Sheikh's weighing the most plausible account, that families fleeing helter-skelter wandered south into the Arabian Peninsula.

The refugees who planted Yathrib

Now Dr. Yasir Qadhi lays the theories side by side and weighs each one in the open.

The first account he reports comes from early Islamic sources: that Musa, peace be upon him, himself sent a small colony of his followers to the land of the Hijaz, knowing the final Prophet ﷺ would one day arise there, so that a body of believers would be waiting to welcome him. It is a tender thought. But the Sheikh finds it strained, with an Allahu a'lam. Why would a prophet send his own followers away from him, when the people of his time should remain with him, and the one he foretold would not come for two or three thousand years? It seems too early. He does not forbid the theory; he simply does not find it sound.

Far more reasonable, and this is the account he leans toward, is the second: that the refugees of Rome's destructions wandered due south from Jerusalem, with no particular destination, until the desert opened before them into a fertile, empty ground thick with date palms and without inhabitants. They stopped, and they settled, and on this reading the Jews did not merely come to live in Yathrib. They founded it. One group halted nearby at Khaybar, and the largest wave kept walking south all the way to Yemen, which became home to the greatest number of Jews in all of Arabia. It is no small detail, for Yemen was the one corner of the peninsula that held both Jews and Christians together, and it is exactly why, years later, when the Prophet ﷺ sent Mu'adh ibn

Jabal there, he told him he was going to a land of the People of the Book.

A third account simply runs the river backward: that the Jews of Yathrib came up out of Yemen rather than down from Jerusalem. And here the Sheikh draws the conclusion that survives no matter which theory is right. Whether they came down from Jerusalem and learned their relatives had gone on to Yemen, or whether they were themselves the descendants of those Yemeni Jews, every single version ties Yathrib's Jews to Yemen. That link will matter in a moment.

Then he offers a tangent from modern researchers. Their clue is a strange one: the Jews of Madinah appear to have been not of mainstream rabbinic Judaism at all, but of an ancient scripture-first branch called the Karaites, which rejected the authority of the rabbis. The significance is a matter of dates: rabbinic Judaism, which every Jewish group of our times descends from, became dominant only around 400 or 500 CE. So a Karaite community in Yathrib points to an arrival from before that, which fits precisely with refugees fleeing the swords of Titus and Hadrian, and adds quiet weight to the second theory.

And then Dr. Yasir Qadhi offers a theory entirely his own, and he prefaces it with a humility worth pausing on: Allahu a'lam, he says, and may Allah forgive me for daring to have an opinion. Here is the puzzle that prompts it. Jews do not divide themselves into tribes; that is an Arab habit, not a Jewish one. The twelve tribes of Israel were ancient history by this point, long since merged into one people. So why are the Jews of Yathrib three separate tribes, Qaynuqa and Nadir and Qurayza, distinct enough that they would later fight on opposite sides of an Arab civil war? If they all came from one place and settled together, it makes no

sense for them to fracture into three. His suggestion is that there is an element of truth in more than one of the stories at once: that these three tribes represent three different waves of migration, arriving across three different windows of time, each new group too late and too estranged to be folded into the one before it. Take it or leave it, he says; he knows of no one who has proposed it, and the classical sources, even Ibn Ishaq, never thought to ask the question, never mentioning at all where these Jews came from.

What cannot be taken or left, though, is the conclusion the Sheikh draws firmly against a modern claim. Some recent non-Muslim writers deny that these were real Jews at all, calling them instead Arab converts to Judaism, perhaps, he suggests, out of embarrassment over what later befell them, a wish to make the affair not about Jews. The Sheikh calls the theory baseless, for a single clean reason. Every Arab tribe on the peninsula traces its lineage either to Adnan or to Qahtan, without exception; the Arabs preserved their genealogies above almost all else. These three tribes trace to neither. They appear out of nowhere, and names like Qaynuqa and Qurayza were never Arab names. They were Jews. Real Jews, who would in time take on the dress and the tongue and the manners of the Arabs around them, but Jews in faith and in lineage all the same.

The flood that sent two tribes north

So much for the first people. Where, then, did the Arabs of Yathrib come from, the Aws and the Khazraj? Their trail also ends in Yemen, and unlike the Jews, their lineage is fully mapped, because the Arabs kept their genealogies. They were descendants of Qahtan. And their story the Qur'an tells itself.

In the south of Arabia stood Ma'rib, the city of the people of Saba, mentioned by name in its own surah. And Allah records of them a feat the whole world remembers: they were the first human beings ever to build a dam. Part of it still stands outside the city to this day, a wonder of ancient engineering that blocked the water and sent rivers running through the land. That dam turned desert into a sign, and Allah describes the blessing He poured over them:

There was for [the tribe of] Saba' in their dwelling place a sign: two [fields of] gardens on the right and on the left. [They were told], "Eat from the provisions of your Lord and be grateful to Him. A good land [have you], and a forgiving Lord."

QUR'AN 34:15

Gardens to the right and gardens to the left, rivers flowing between them, a good land and a forgiving Lord. Allah blessed them as He had blessed almost no people of their time. And they were not grateful. So the blessing was withdrawn in the manner the next verse names:

But they turned away [refusing], so We sent upon them the flood of the dam, and We replaced their two [fields of] gardens with gardens of bitter fruit, tamarisks and something of sparse lote trees.

QUR'AN 34:16

The flood of al-Arim was the bursting of their own dam against them. Most likely around 300 CE, the Sheikh judges, two and a half centuries before the Prophet ﷺ, the waters broke through. The gardens died into bitter scrub, villages were destroyed, and the tribes of Saba were scattered across Arabia in flight. Among

the migrants who drifted north were two cousin tribes, descendants of a single ancestor, which is why they always travelled and settled together: the Aws and the Khazraj.

But why Yathrib, of all the oases between Yemen and the north? Here the Sheikh is honest about the limits of knowledge. No one was writing chronicles in 300 CE, he reminds us, so every answer must be held loosely. And yet his earlier thread now pays off. If every origin story ties Yathrib's Jews to Yemen, then the Aws and the Khazraj were not stumbling blindly onto a strange settlement. They were walking toward a place they had likely heard of, settled by a kind of people they already knew how to live beside, because the Arabs of Yemen had lived alongside Jews for generations. That, he suggests, is what drew two southern tribes to this particular northern oasis. Allahu a'lam, but it makes the migration make sense.

More than a coincidence

Now step back from the detail and look at what has quietly assembled itself on the map, because the Sheikh wants us to see a pattern, even as he is careful about how far he will press it.

All Arabs descend from two great fathers: Adnan in the center, whose line mixed with the descendants of Ismail and runs forward to Quraysh and to the Prophet ﷺ himself, and Qahtan, generally of the south. The Hijaz was solidly Adnani, every tribe of it, Quraysh and Thaqif and all the rest. And the single pocket of Qahtani Arabs in the whole region was Yathrib. The two halves of the Arab race, moreover, carried an old animosity stretching back centuries, and were still fighting each other within living memory of the Prophet's ﷺ own day.

So consider what is about to happen. The Adnani Messenger ﷺ is driven out by Adnani Makkah, and given refuge by the only Qahtanis in the land. The two halves of the Arab people fuse together at the very birth of Islam, and from that day no enemy can ever paint his ﷺ religion as the project of a single bloodline. The precursor to uniting all the Arabs under one banner was being laid before a single battle had been fought. The Sheikh is measured here, and his caution is itself a lesson: we do not speak Arabic on behalf of Allah, he says, we cannot claim His purposes with certainty. But this, he allows himself, does not look like coincidence. It looks a great deal more like intention.

And inside the oasis, across the generations, the two peoples had grown into each other. The Jews brought what the desert Arabs lacked: skill in agriculture, in weaving, in trade. The Arabs brought what the harsh land demands: skill in war, and the Arabic language. So the Jewish tribes Arabized. Their tongue became Arabic, fluent and native, though the seerah records that they kept their Hebrew too. They took on the dress of the Arabs, their culture, and their ways of dealing, while remaining in faith and in lineage unmistakably themselves.

Alliances, a long war, and a head count

The two Arab tribes did not arrive as equals, and there is a theory, held loosely as all of this must be, for why. It appears the Aws came first. They won the alliance and protection of the two largest Jewish tribes, Banu Qurayza and Banu Nadir, and with it the best of the land, the most luscious gardens and richest plots of the oasis, for in those days a man lived where his tribe lived. The Khazraj came later, allied instead with Banu Qaynuqa, and settled the lower, leaner ground; this, the Sheikh notes, is why the Aws were the wealthier of the two. And the Jews held more

farmland than they could work themselves, so the newcomers worked it for a share of the harvest. Land, wealth, and loyalty were braided together from the very beginning.

Those braids hardened into battle lines. For more than a hundred years the Aws and the Khazraj bled each other in civil wars, the worst of them the war of Bu'ath, which fell just five years before the hijrah. And the Jewish tribes were pulled in behind their respective Arab allies: Banu Nadir and Banu Qurayza financing the Aws, Banu Qaynuqa financing the Khazraj, bankrolling opposite ends of someone else's war. Whether they actually took up arms, the Sheikh says, the sources do not tell us. But that they were divided against one another, lined up on hostile sides, that much is clear.

How many people, in the end, are we talking about? There was never a census, the Sheikh admits, but a careful estimate can be reconstructed backward from the battles to come. Tally the fighting men of the three Jewish tribes as the seerah reports them and you reach roughly two thousand, which at three dependents apiece gives something like six thousand Jewish souls in Yathrib when the Prophet ﷺ arrived. As for the Arabs, the Ansar mustered four to five thousand men at the conquest of Makkah, which puts the Arab population near twelve to fifteen thousand. So the whole oasis comes to roughly twenty-four thousand people, a substantial town for its day. And now hold the single asymmetry that explains so much of what is coming. The Arabs were nearly double the Jews in raw numbers. But the Jews held the power: the money, the best land, and the fortresses, for the Aws and the Khazraj built none. The three Jewish tribes did not even live in Madinah proper; they lived outside it, each behind its own walls. Numbers on one side, strength on the other.

Remember that imbalance. It is the key to much of the Madani phase.

O Arabs, your king has arrived

The map is drawn. Now Dr. Yasir Qadhi rejoins the road, and the orientation gives way at last to a scene.

Word had outrun the riders. All of Yathrib knew the Prophet ﷺ was coming; it was only a matter of time now. And so every single morning the believers walked out of the city toward what is now Quba and stood there, staring down the southern road, waiting. And every morning, around ten or eleven o'clock, the sun climbed too high and the heat drove them home to sleep. On the day that finally mattered, they had done exactly this, waited through the morning and given up and gone home by the time the heat won, when in the far distance two figures at last shimmered out of the haze, the Prophet ﷺ and Abu Bakr. And not one of the Ansar was left on the road to see them. They had walked home minutes too soon.

The only eyes still on the horizon belonged to a Jewish laborer at the top of a date palm, high up among the fronds, pulling the harvest. The fever of expectation that had gripped the whole city had caught even him, for that is the way of any community when something long awaited is near: everyone feels it, everyone is swept along. And he could not hold the news in. He cried out, at the very top of his lungs, so the whole oasis could hear: O Arabs, your king has arrived.

The Sheikh stops us on the exact wording, because, he says, the entire Madani phase hides inside it. Your king. Not my king. And not a prophet at all, not even a ruler over him, but a king belonging to the Arabs, their affair to celebrate. The excitement

had reached this man fully; the allegiance had not reached him at all. From the very first minute, the Jewish tribes filed the Prophet ﷺ under Arab business, something to shout about from the top of a tree, not something to climb down and follow. We have our affairs and they have theirs, that was the assumption, he will not interfere with us and we will not with him. Slowly, across the years ahead, that assumption would come undone. But on this first day it stands fully intact, announced from a palm tree for the whole city to hear.

And then the city emptied itself into the road. Al-Bara ibn Azib, radiyallahu anhu, whose memory of the day is preserved in Sahih Muslim, describes how the moment the cry went up the Ansar dressed themselves in their finest clothes and poured out in hordes, more than five hundred men, armed, like an honor guard come to escort their Prophet ﷺ in. The women climbed onto the rooftops to see. The children thronged through the crowd. It was a Monday in Rabi al-Awwal, the second of the month by one report and the twelfth by another, in the fourteenth year of the call, the year the ummah would later choose as the first year of the hijrah.

And here the Sheikh asks us to feel the very air change. This is not Makkah. There he ﷺ was persecuted, mocked, tortured, hemmed in. Here, for the first time, there is excitement, there is buzz, there is a freshness in the air, hundreds upon hundreds thronging simply to be near him ﷺ, and every one of them a believer, every one glad of his coming. A new tide is coming in. What the man at the top of the date palm announced as the arrival of a king was, in truth, something far greater than any kingdom: the seed of the first Islamic nation being lowered into the ground. And the story of that seed, its nurturing and its

growth and its flourishing, is the whole story of the Madani seerah. It begins tomorrow.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to skip past a day like this one, to treat it as a dry preface of names and dates and theories to be endured before the real seerah resumes. That would be to miss what it is quietly teaching, which is some of the deepest theology in the whole series.

Look first at what the Sheikh has shown you across the centuries. A dam burst in Yemen around the year 300, and two ungrateful tribes were scattered north. Refugees fleeing the swords of Roman emperors, hundreds of years before that, wandered helter-skelter into an empty valley of date palms and made it a city. And by the time the Prophet ﷺ was driven out of Makkah with a price on his head, every piece was in place: a refuge waiting, an Arab people of the opposite half of the race ready to receive him so that no one could call his religion one bloodline's project, a city he could enter not as a fugitive but as a king. None of those people knew they were building it. The Sabaean did not know their ingratitude was clearing a road. The exiles did not know whose city they were founding. Allah knew. He had been furnishing this refuge for three hundred years while Makkah was busy rejecting the one it was being furnished for. This is what qadar looks like when you can finally see it from above, and it should change how you read the long, slow, seemingly arbitrary arrangements of your own life. Nothing about your refuge, either, is unplanned.

Look next at the method the Sheikh modeled, because it is a discipline as much as the history is a lesson. He refused to be an apologist, and he refused to be a denier, and he held the harder

middle: ask whether a thing is true, and if it is, explain its wisdom and stand by it without flinching. And he held his theories with an open hand, weighing this account against that one, offering his own only after begging Allah's forgiveness for daring to have an opinion at all, ending again and again with take it or leave it, and Allahu a'lam. That is how sacred history deserves to be handled, with rigor and humility at once, never watered down to please a critic and never inflated past the evidence. We live in an age that demands we either apologize for our religion or shout it without thinking; the Sheikh shows a third way, the way of people who actually love the truth.

And then there is the man at the top of the palm tree, who may be the quiet heart of the whole day. He saw the Prophet ﷺ before anyone. He was so moved that he shouted the news to an entire city at the top of his lungs. And he stayed in the tree. Your king, he called, not my king, not a prophet, not someone I must climb down and follow. He stood at the very edge of guidance, closer to it in that instant than almost anyone alive, thrilled by it, announcing it, and he did not take the step toward it. It is a frightening thing to sit with, because it is so possible. We can be moved by the truth, celebrate it, even tell others about it, and still keep it at the safe distance of someone else's affair. Excitement is not allegiance. The whole tragedy of the Madani phase, of those who would not believe, begins in that one word shouted down from the fronds.

So take three things from this map down into your ordinary days. Trust that the inconveniences and detours of your life are being arranged by the One who broke a dam in Yemen to seat His Prophet ﷺ in the right city; your refuge is being built before you know you will need it. Handle the truth, especially the hard parts of it, the way the Sheikh did, without apology and without

arrogance, asking only what is true and what is its wisdom. And do not be the man in the palm tree. When guidance shimmers out of the haze in front of you, do not shout about it from a comfortable height and call it someone else's business. Climb down. Walk out onto the road with the five hundred. May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, the one a whole city dressed itself in its finest to welcome; as He prepared Yathrib for him across three hundred years, let Him prepare our hearts to receive his story, and may He never leave us watching from the edge of guidance, but bring us down into the road with the Ansar, and gather us with him ﷺ in the abode where there is no parting.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 29: introduction to the Madani phase (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (38:37, 17:4, 34:15, 34:16), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The Madani Era Begins

Allah's house before his own

Begin where the last lecture left off: standing at the edge of an oasis with a map of it in your head. Three peoples now share the place we will learn to call Madinah. The Ansar, who are the hosts. The muhajirun, arriving in waves out of the south. And the Yahud, the three Jewish tribes the previous episode introduced. Count them the way Dr. Yasir Qadhi counts them, because the arithmetic itself carries a lesson. Each of the three Jewish tribes fielded around seven hundred fighting men, roughly two thousand in all, and you reckoned a population in that world by taking a fighting man and multiplying by three for the women and children behind him. So call the Yahud some six thousand souls. The Ansar would one day march four thousand men to the conquest of Makkah, so multiply again and call them twelve thousand. For every one of the Yahud in the oasis, then, roughly two Arabs.

And the muhajirun? The smallest of the three by far. At Badr, when very nearly every emigrant alive marched out, they numbered exactly eighty two men, all but a handful of the whole community. With the women and children, perhaps three or four hundred souls in the entire city: the smallest group in Madinah, and the poorest, for they had walked away from everything they owned. Yet whenever the Qur'an names the two groups side by side, it is the muhajirun who come first. Allah counts differently than a census does: what a person abandoned for His sake

outweighs how many stand beside him. Tuck that away, because it returns on the hardest day of the whole story. When the Prophet ﷺ passes, one group of the Ansar will feel it only natural that the majority should lead, outnumbering the emigrants by something like four to one, and through the eloquence Allah will place on the tongues of Abu Bakr and Umar the truth will come out, and the leadership will be handed to the few. The series will reach that day, perhaps a year from now, perhaps three. For now, simply notice that Allah had already decided whose few hundred outweighed whose thousands.

The command that emptied Makkah

For the believers still left behind in Makkah, hijrah was no longer one virtue among many. It had become an obligation laid on every single Muslim, down to the women and the children: leave Makkah, come to Madinah. The Prophet ﷺ himself had been very nearly the last of all to go, and even then he left Ali behind for one unfinished duty. There were no banks in that world, no safety deposit, no secure box; when you owned a precious thing and could not keep it close, you left it with a man you trusted. And here is the detail that should stop you: despite their hatred of him and his message, despite the very plot to kill him, the people of Makkah had kept their valuables in his ﷺ house. The city's safe was the man the city was trying to murder, and he would not leave a single trust unreturned. So Ali stayed to hand the deposits back, and the Prophet ﷺ went.

The command itself came the way Allah's commands always come, which is gradually. Some eight or nine verses across different surahs, each one firmer than the one before, for this is the sunnah of Allah: a law does not descend all at once and strike you down, it arrives by degrees, the first verse coaxing and the

last one closing every door. The earliest held the door open with nothing but promise. In Surah al-Hajj, a surah whose verses some scholars place across the very hijrah itself, the invitation is pure, with no threat in it at all:

And those who emigrated for the cause of Allāh and then were killed or died - Allāh will surely provide for them a good provision. And indeed, it is Allāh who is the best of providers. He will surely cause them to enter an entrance with which they will be pleased, and indeed, Allāh is Knowing and Forbearing.

QUR'AN 22:58-59

Read it the way its first hearers did: emigrate, and even if the road itself kills you, the Best of Providers personally guarantees your provision and an entrance you will love. That is the door held open. Then, a year or two further on, the tone begins to harden. In Surah al-Ankabut, Allah turns to a certain kind of heart:

And of the people are some who say, "We believe in Allāh," but when one [of them] is harmed for [the cause of] Allāh, he considers the trial [i.e., harm] of the people as [if it were] the punishment of Allāh. But if victory comes from your Lord, they say, "Indeed, We were with you." Is not Allāh most knowing of what is within the breasts of the worlds [i.e., all creatures]?

QUR'AN 29:10

The word for the harm here is a delicate one, the Sheikh notes: it can mean real persecution, but it can mean the slightest irritation, a verbal rebuke and nothing more. And at that first scrape of discomfort, this person treats the pressure of men as though it were the punishment of Allah Himself. He has no priorities; a little squeeze and he collapses. Then the moment victory arrives he

reappears to say, we were with you all along. He wants Makkah and iman both, the cake and the eating of it, and Allah ends the passage by reminding him that the contents of every breast are already known.

Who was this aimed at? A small circle, perhaps five or ten souls, of two kinds. Some had been Muslims when the Prophet ﷺ emigrated and simply had not followed, and their names the companions never recorded. Others converted in Makkah after he ﷺ had already reached Madinah, because the dawah did not stop; even after thirteen years the light still went on in a heart here and there. And understand their bind before you judge them. Wealth in that world sat all around you and could not travel; you carried what one camel could carry and abandoned the rest. To emigrate was to choose poverty with your eyes open. So they stayed, hiding their faith, wanting their property and their belief at once, and verse after verse kept arriving to close the gap they were hiding in.

Not one more night in Makkah

Ibn Abbas tells us what staying finally cost them, and the telling turns on one quiet mechanism. There was a secret correspondence running between the Muslims of Madinah and the Muslims still in Makkah, and every fresh revelation was carried in to them. The Qur'an was their lifeline, reaching them verse by verse down that hidden channel. So when the hardest verse of all came down, it traveled to Makkah too:

Indeed, those whom the angels take [in death] while wronging themselves - [the angels] will say, "In what [condition] were you?" They will say, "We were oppressed in the land." They [the angels] will say, "Was not the earth of Allāh spacious [enough] for you to emigrate therein?"

For those, their refuge is Hell - and evil it is as a destination.

QUR'AN 4:97

Ibn Abbas attaches a story to it. When Badr came, those closet Muslims were dragged out to fight on the wrong side, against the believers. They hung back, avoided the fighting as best they could, and still some of them fell to Muslim arrows, killed in the ranks of the enemy. About them this verse descended: the angels at the moment of death asking, in what condition were you? We were oppressed, the dying plead, we were forced. And the angels refuse the excuse: you were not forced to remain in Makkah; was not the earth of Allah wide enough that you could have left?

The verse reached Makkah down the secret line, and it found an old man who had accepted Islam only after the Prophet ﷺ was already gone: so elderly he could not walk, and blind besides, by every reckoning of men precisely the kind of person an excuse is written for. He heard the verse and refused the loophole anyone alive would have handed him. I am not of those who have an excuse, he said. I can emigrate. I will not spend another night in this city. He ordered his servants to lift him onto his bed, a couch of a thing since he could not walk, and to carry him out of Makkah toward Madinah; he would find some way. And as the pangs of death overtook him, just past the edge of the city, he pressed his right hand into his left and said: O Allah, this is my pledge of allegiance to Your Messenger ﷺ, the one I could not give in person; whatever I was able to do, accept it from me. And there, on the very first night of his hijrah, he died, and there he was buried.

When word reached the companions, some of them said: how unlucky, he almost made it. That is how seriously that generation took the command, that they would not even grant him the arrival his body had failed to reach. And Allah Himself answered them, sending down the very next verse:

Except for the oppressed among men, women and children who cannot devise a plan nor are they directed to a way - For those it is expected that Allāh will pardon them, and Allāh is ever Pardoning and Forgiving.

QUR'AN 4:98-99

It came down a little grudgingly, the Sheikh observes, not as an open blanket but as a narrow pardon, precisely to keep showing how severe the matter was for anyone with no genuine excuse. But it came. And Ibn Abbas read the word in it, *asa*, perhaps, the way the early scholars always read that word when its speaker is Allah: every perhaps from Allah is a certainty. For Allah's sake, He will do it. So the old man did not almost make it. He made it all the way.

Does the hijrah still bind us?

If hijrah was once an outright obligation on every believer, the lecture turns to ask, what about a Muslim today, in Memphis, in Toronto, in London? The seerah answers its own question. As the believers grew strong, from around the fifth year onward, the strictness began to ease; and when Makkah itself fell, the Prophet ﷺ closed the chapter with one famous sentence: there is no hijrah after the conquest. He did not mean that travel had ended. He meant the Hijrah with a capital H, the specific migration from Makkah to Madinah carrying those Qur'anic rewards, had been brought to its end. Makkah was now part of

Islam; the duty to leave it was abrogated. A believer could live anywhere.

Later generations of scholars then debated a further question: may a Muslim freely, by his own choice, live in a land that is not a land of Islam? The majority, the standard Hanafi and Hanbali view and the standard Shafi'i view, permitted it on conditions you can count on one hand: that you are secure in your religion, not tortured, not forced into the forbidden, and able to live an Islamic life. Their proof is a hadith about as explicit as proof gets, from a companion we know only as Fudayk. His own tribe in central Arabia had not accepted Islam, and people were telling him his faith obliged him to emigrate or be destroyed; his very Islam, they said, was not valid while he lived among people upon shirk. So he came to Madinah to ask, and the Prophet ﷺ told him: establish the prayer, leave the sins, and live with your people wherever you like. Ibn Hibban carried it, and the Sheikh tells us plainly that this is his own position too.

The Malikis ruled hardest the other way, and their history explains their fatwa: Andalusia. Muslim Spain was Maliki to its core, and when the Reconquista came and the last kingdom of Granada fell, Ferdinand and Isabella first promised the Muslims freedom, telling them not to worry, that only the Jews need fear. Within a hundred years there was not a public Muslim left. Arabic was outlawed in public, Islamic dress forbidden, the hijab stripped from the women; the Inquisition hunted houses for a hidden mushaf; families were forced to eat pork or vanish. The Andalusian scholars wrote that pain straight into law: never again place yourselves under such a power.

Here Dr. Yasir Qadhi gives his own judgment, with the majority, and then asks for something rarer than a ruling, which is realism.

How realistic is it, he says, to import a fatwa from a thousand years ago, built for a world with a real dar al-Islam, into a world that has none? Do the arithmetic. Some two hundred million Muslims in India, a minority. Tens of millions in China, a minority. Forty million and more across the Western lands. Add it up and you reach over half a billion believers living as minorities, fully half the ummah; to tell them all that emigration is obligatory is, with respect, not realistic. And then he turns the question over to land in an unexpected place: every land must be judged by its own scholars, who alone can say whether their situation has become like Makkah's was, and America, he says plainly, with every freedom to pray and fast and live the religion openly, is nowhere near it. Then the line that flips the whole anxiety: the people most worried about whether they should emigrate are usually the most practicing, exactly the ones who should stay and be the best ambassadors of this religion, while the ones who never give it a thought, busy with every sin, are the ones who would actually benefit from a purer place. So memorize Fudayk's hadith and keep it in your pocket: pray, leave the sins, live a good Muslim life, and represent him ﷺ where you stand.

A Friday arrival, and a song returned to its day

So on what date did he ﷺ arrive? Here the Sheikh the academic hands you an honest shrug in place of a fairy tale. Nobody was keeping a calendar, for there was no Islamic calendar yet to keep. Umar would institute one some fourteen or fifteen years later and number the years backward, because the Arabs did not count years, they named them: the Year of the Elephant, the year of drought, each year titled by its great event. This year needed no title; it simply became Year One. As for the beloved 12th of Rabi al-Awwal, stamped by sheer habit onto his birth and his arrival

alike, and even, some say, onto the first revelation, which cannot be true, since the Qur'an came down in Ramadan, the Sheikh calls it gently what it is, a small superstition of ours. What can responsibly be said is this: most likely the first week of Rabi al-Awwal, corresponding to September of the year 622.

He had waited at Quba about a week. Quba was the outermost settlement of an oasis that was not a single city at all, but small pockets of homes separated by stretches of desert and date orchard, some clusters a five minute walk apart, others a full hour, the whole conglomeration called Madinah. He waited there for Ali, until every trust in Makkah had been returned, and he waited for the women Abu Bakr had arranged to be brought north by a guide, his daughters Aisha and Asma among them. When they came, the Prophet ﷺ moved on into the city. And it was a Friday.

The Ansar heard he was coming. More than five hundred of them gathered as a delegation and dressed in full armor, swords and all, the parade dress of that age, the way you turn out to honor a king. They marched to Quba and walked their Prophet ﷺ home.

And the song? Generations have grown up picturing the little girls singing Tala'a al-Badru Alayna as he entered the city, and the Sheikh, academic before romantic, has to move the scene. That song welcomes a traveler coming over Thaniyyat al-Wada, the pass on the road toward Sham, which lies on the northern side of Madinah. But a rider out of Makkah enters from the south, the exact opposite end of the oasis; he ﷺ never passed that northern pass on his way in. If the incident is authentic at all, and its chain carries a measure of doubt, it belongs to his return from the expedition of Tabuk, years from now. Let the song go gently back to its own day, because what is certain here needs no

decoration: an entire oasis turned out in armor and tears, walking at a camel's pace beside the man they had waited their whole history to meet.

Let the camel be

Now every clan in Madinah wanted him. As the camel made her way through the pockets of the oasis, the Ansar pressed in, each household reaching for her halter and begging: stay with us, Messenger of Allah, ours is the strength, ours the wealth. And to every offer he ﷺ gave one answer: let the camel be, for Allah has taken charge of her; let her go where she is going. The routing was out of human hands, so that no tribe could claim the honor or resent the choice. She knelt at last on a small open lot, not a true date plantation but a bare patch with only a few trees, the ground the local people used to spread their dates out to dry. The Prophet ﷺ understood: this was the place Allah had chosen for his masjid. The lot belonged to two orphan boys, named in one narration as Sahl and Suhayl, who had inherited it from their father and, being young, had not yet planted it, which is likely why it sat empty enough for the neighbors to dry their dates on it. Hold that empty lot in view. Almost everything is about to happen on it.

Where the camel knelt, he ﷺ asked a single question: whose house, of our family, is nearest to here? For Madinah held kin. His own great-grandmother, Salma, was a woman of Banu Najjar, this very neighborhood, and so he had distant cousins all around. A man named Khalid ibn Zayd, known to history forever as Abu Ayyub al-Ansari radiyallahu anhu, was of Banu Najjar, and he answered: mine. Count the lineage out and the two men meet something like six generations up, sixth cousins, and the Arabs carried such genealogies in their heads the way we carry a string

of phone numbers. A thread of kinship six generations thin, and the Prophet ﷺ honored it: of all the houses in Madinah, he chose to lodge with family.

By Allah's quiet arrangement, Abu Ayyub's house was one of the few in the oasis built with an upper floor, which is exactly what made it possible for the Prophet ﷺ and Abu Bakr to stay. So the hosts moved upstairs and the guests settled below, and for roughly half a year, while the masjid and his rooms were built, he ﷺ lived there. From those six months only two or three scenes survive, and every one is a portrait of what loving him up close actually looks like.

One night Abu Ayyub turned over in his sleep and knocked the water jar across the upper floor. He woke in a panic, woke his wife, and the thought that froze him was that a drop might seep through the boards and fall on the Prophet ﷺ sleeping below. The two of them spent the rest of that night soaking the spill out of the floor with their own blanket, dreading that one drop might so much as irritate him. Another evening it struck Abu Ayyub cold that he and his wife were walking, their very feet, above the head of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ; they spent that whole night pressed against the edges of the room, feet drawn in, unable to bear what they were doing. In the morning they went down and begged him to swap floors. The bottom is easier for me, he answered: easier for my guests, more private, no stairs to climb. They refused him. We can never stand on a roof above your head, they said, and they would not obey the thing he was begging them to do. It is the only disobedience in the whole seerah made entirely out of respect, and it won. He ﷺ moved upstairs.

And the food. Abu Ayyub would cook and send the whole dish up, keeping nothing back, far more than the Prophet ﷺ would eat, and then he would look for the place on the plate where the Prophet's ﷺ fingers had been and eat from exactly that spot. One day the dish came back down untouched, and Abu Ayyub ran upstairs in alarm: what have I done? Nothing was wrong, the Prophet ﷺ reassured him; nothing was haram. The dish had raw garlic in it, and, he said, I speak with those you do not speak with. The angels kept him company. Garlic is not forbidden, he made clear; cook it and the odor is gone and there is no issue at all. But the one who has eaten it raw should spare the masjid his breath, for the masjid is the place of the angels. Six months of hosting, and what history chose to keep is a soaked blanket, two cramped sleepers, and a studied dinner plate: love, recorded in its smallest units.

Allah's house before his own

Back to the drying yard. The two orphans, already Muslims, understood what the Prophet ﷺ intended and cried out: this is a gift, ya Rasulallah, a gift to Allah from us. He ﷺ refused: I will only take it at its price. He did not operate that way with charity. He negotiated a price as any buyer would and paid it in full, because an orphan's wealth stays fenced off even when the buyer is the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and the project is the house of Allah. The handful of palms on the lot, fewer than a dozen, were cut down, and nothing went to waste: their trunks became two of the masjid's walls, and clay brick the companions made formed the other two. One or two pagan graves, fifty or a hundred years old, were respectfully dug up and the remains moved beyond the grounds, which the Sheikh notes shows that graves may be relocated for a legitimate need, just as the trees of

the sacred precinct, normally untouchable down to a plucked leaf, may be cut for a genuine purpose like building.

Then he ﷺ took his place in the labor line. There was a chain of men passing material from the quarry to the site, and he joined it, carrying his load, and when a companion tried to take the work from him and sit him down, he refused. They sang as they worked, the way men everywhere find a rhythm to pass the hours of manual labor, and Bukhari preserved the words, the Prophet ﷺ chanting them along with the rest: O Allah, there is no good but the good of the hereafter, so have mercy on the Ansar and the Muhajirah. Almost two weeks of that, and the masjid stood.

For its day it was vast, by modern estimates something like a hundred feet by a hundred and thirty, closer to a square than the long rectangle of the masjid today. It had at least three main public doors, on the south, the west, and the east. Years later, when it was suggested that men and women should not crowd through the same entrance, the Prophet ﷺ set the eastern door aside for the women, and it became Bab an-Nisa, the women's door; to this day a pillar in the haram of Madinah bears the name. And because a wall in that world was such a luxury that two households shared one between them, the homes built against the masjid opened straight into it through small private doors, half a dozen of them, perhaps a dozen: a single step and you were inside. Remember those doors. On his deathbed the Prophet ﷺ would order every one of them sealed forever except the door of Abu Bakr, and Madinah would understand exactly what he meant by it, that this was the man to lead them after him. The room of Aisha touched the masjid too, separated from it by nothing but a curtain.

Do not picture marble. The roof, where there was any roof at all, was palm thatch, low enough, says one early report from a companion who could reach up and touch it, that a raised hand brushed it. At first it sheltered only the side facing Jerusalem, the first qiblah. When the qiblah turned toward Makkah, the old patch of shade stayed where it was, and the poorest of the believers, the ones with no household at all, made it their address: the People of the Suffah, whom the series will meet properly very soon, named for that shaded place because anyone spending the day in the masjid had to spend it there or burn in the sun.

Even once a full roof was finally raised over the whole masjid, in the middle of the Madani years, it was built to keep out the sun, not the rain. We know this for certain, the Sheikh says, because Bukhari records that one Ramadan night the sky opened and the floor of the unpaved masjid turned to mud, and a companion who was there describes the Prophet ﷺ rising from sajdah with the traces of mud on his forehead and his nose. He had pressed the noblest part of himself into the mud without a flicker of embarrassment, because sajdah is the whole purpose of a servant: you lower your face, the most honored part of you, before Allah, whatever lies beneath it, since wet earth is not impure. And hold on to the largest fact of these weeks, the one the Sheikh calls, in plain words, mind-boggling: he ﷺ would not raise a roof over his own head until the house of Allah was built. For half a year the man this city would be renamed for had no house in it, and so did not even live with his family, lodging with Abu Bakr instead, because first the house of Allah, and only then his own.

The stump that wept

Inside the new masjid, his first minbar was one of the felled palms: a stump, and a large one, tall enough that he ﷺ once even prayed his salah up on top of it to show the rows exactly how he prayed, stepping down each time for sajdah and climbing back up. For the first few years every khutbah, every reminder, came from that piece of wood, and it stood close beside him through all of it.

Then, as both Bukhari and Muslim record, he asked an Ansari woman whose servant was a carpenter to have a proper minbar made, and the carpenter built one of three steps and set it a little apart from the old trunk. The first Friday the Prophet ﷺ climbed the new steps to give the khutbah, a sound rose over his words: a whimpering, a crying like that of a baby camel, and the companions traced it and found it was the abandoned stump, weeping.

He ﷺ stopped his khutbah, came down, and took the stump in his arms, and it settled like a child, sniffling itself into silence. If I had not embraced it, he said, it would have cried until the Day of Judgment. He ordered it lifted and buried beneath the new minbar, as close to him as wood could be, so that it would not be parted from him after all. For one moment, the Sheikh reminds you, Allah let the companions hear aloud what creation feels in his ﷺ presence and what it cannot bear to lose; that is the miracle of it.

And one of the early scholars, Hasan al-Basri, after narrating this very hadith, would turn the whole thing on his listeners. Here, he said, was a piece of wood that wept because it longed to be near the Prophet ﷺ. O believers, are you, who claim to love him, not more deserving than a tree of crying to be near him? Where are our hearts, that a stump could ache for his ﷺ closeness and we

cannot? Fourteen centuries later, the question still has your name on it.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read the beginning of the Madani era as a relocation, a community simply changing address, and to move on. That would be to miss what the day puts to you. Hold its two buildings side by side, the grave at the edge of Makkah and the masjid rising in Madinah, and they ask you the same question from opposite ends of the same week.

Allah weighs hearts, not headcounts. Three or four hundred emigrants against thousands upon thousands, and still the Qur'an names them first whenever it names the two, because what they walked away from for His sake outweighed the multitude they walked toward. We spend our lives quietly counting the wrong things, our numbers, our backing, our footprint, when the only scale that will matter weighs what we were willing to leave behind for Allah. Ask not how many stand with you, but how much you have been willing to give up.

When the command lands, move that night. A blind old man who could not walk heard one verse and refused the excuse the whole world would have written for him; he died at the city's edge with his pledge pressed between his own two hands, and Allah sent down his pardon in the very next verse. We are quick to find ourselves a loophole and slow to simply obey, and here is a man with the soundest excuse imaginable who would not take it, and who arrived precisely because he refused to. Our hijrah is no longer across a desert; it is the daily migration from sin toward obedience, and it waits, as his did, on a heart that will not bargain when Allah has spoken.

Build Allah's house before your own. He ﷺ slept half a year in a borrowed room, away from his own family, so that the masjid would rise first; he passed its bricks with his own hands and refused to be sat down; and he paid two orphans the full price for land they begged to give him for free. There is a whole order of priorities in that, and a whole ethic of justice: first things first, and fairness even inside an act of charity. Look honestly at what you build first with your hours and your wealth, and ask whether the house of Allah comes before your own.

And then there is the smallest scene of all, which carries the largest weight. A man and his wife awake all night soaking a spilled jar out of the floorboards, terrified that a single drop might reach him; feet drawn back from the space above his head; a dinner plate studied for the marks of his fingers. This is what reverence is actually made of, not grand declarations but the smallest units of behavior, love proven in the dark when no one is watching. And it ends with a piece of dead wood that could not bear the distance from him and wept until he came down and held it. If a stump longed for his ﷺ nearness that much, the early scholar asked, what excuse does a heart have? That is the day's quiet assignment, and salawat is its answer: the refusal of distance from him.

So end the day the way the builders ended theirs, with mud on the floor and the akhirah on their lips. O Allah, there is no good but the good of the hereafter, so have mercy on the Ansar and the Muhajirin, and on us who came late. Send Your peace upon the one who built Your house before his own ﷺ, gather us in his masjid in this life and around him at his pool in the next, and make our hearts like the wood he embraced: unable to bear the distance from him, and quieted only by nearness to him. Ameen.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 30: the beginning of the Madani era (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (22:58-59, 29:10, 4:97, 4:98-99), verified via quran.ai.

The First Mosques of Islam

Allah's house before his own

He ﷺ has barely dismounted. The camel has knelt where Allah willed it to kneel, and a constellation of little settlements scattered across an oasis has begun, all at once, to think of itself as a single city with a single name. Watch what the Prophet ﷺ does with his very first week in his new home, because the first thing a man builds tells you what he loves. He does not build himself a house. He builds Allah a house. Then he begins a second one. And while the houses of Allah rise out of the dust, he ﷺ sleeps under borrowed roofs and has, for weeks, no roof he can call his own.

This is the week of the first mosques, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi walks it stone by stone: Quba, which the Qur'an itself calls a mosque founded on taqwa; the first Friday sermon of his ﷺ life, short enough to memorize in an afternoon; a joke in the dust that turned out to be one of the heaviest prophecies in the whole seerah; and a call to prayer that arrived in a sleeping man's dream and became law on the Prophet's ﷺ single word. Before any of it, there is a small act of scholarly honesty about a date.

A Monday in Quba

Ask almost anyone when the Prophet ﷺ arrived in Madinah and you will hear, without hesitation, the 12th of Rabi al-Awwal. Dr. Yasir Qadhi turns that famous date in the light until its seams

show. One early book of history records that he ﷺ left Makkah on the 1st of that month. The journey took a very fast rider three and a half days and a slow caravan as many as nine, and he ﷺ had also spent two or three hidden nights in the cave of Thawr before turning north at all. Lay those numbers end to end and the 12th will not stretch to cover them; the 8th or the 9th fits far better. The deeper point is not the correction but the reason it is even possible: nobody in that world was keeping a careful calendar, and the precise date of a thing mattered to no one the way it matters to us. What the people of that morning remembered and handed down was not a number on a page but the day of the week. It was a Monday.

And it was nearly noon. The news of his ﷺ departure had outrun him by days, so every morning the believers of Madinah walked out to the southern edge of the oasis and waited on the Makkah road, and every morning the desert sun beat them. By ten or eleven the heat of any desert climate becomes a wall, and these were early risers who gave up the watch when the furnace hour came and went home. The Prophet ﷺ arrived in exactly that emptied hour, a little before or after midday, the welcoming crowds just dispersed and the road deserted. Which is why, as we have already seen, the first voice in all of Madinah to cry out that he had come belonged to a man up a date palm.

The farthest settlement of the oasis out toward Makkah, the first a traveler from the south would reach, was Quba, and so Quba received him ﷺ first. He lodged there with a Companion most of us have never been taught to name: Kulthum ibn Hidm, an elderly man of the Ansar. Search the books, as the Sheikh did when a questioner asked whose house it was, and you find almost nothing. Kulthum was old, he was of the Ansar, and that is nearly the whole record. We know only one thing more, and it stops you.

He was the first Muslim to die in Madinah after the arrival; Allah kept this old man alive, it seems, exactly long enough to host His Messenger ﷺ under his roof, and then took him. A whole quiet lifetime, preserved for one honor. By day, some reports add, the Prophet ﷺ received his visitors at the house of Sa'd ibn Khaythamah, a bachelor whose home could absorb a crowd, and returned to Kulthum's house only at night; Abu Bakr lodged with another family of the Ansar.

The mosque founded on taqwa

Here is the wonder that was waiting for him ﷺ in Quba: Madinah was already praying. Before he ever arrived, the believers there gathered in a place not purpose-built, just a patch of ground, and the daily prayers were established and the congregation formed. And they had something more startling still. They had Jumu'ah. From Makkah, where persecution made any public Muslim gathering unthinkable, the Prophet ﷺ had sent word north to establish the Friday prayer, and so for roughly a year the Muslims of Madinah had been praying a Jumu'ah that their own Prophet ﷺ had never once in his life been free to pray. Dr. Yasir Qadhi lingers on the strange sweetness of this. Jumu'ah is one of the very few commands in all of Islam that the Companions lived out before the Messenger ﷺ himself could, an order he gave from inside persecution and could only watch others obey from afar.

He ﷺ stayed in Quba through the week, partly because a traveler was still on the road behind him. Ali, radiyallahu anhu, had remained three extra nights in Makkah to discharge a duty that tells you everything about the man ﷺ they were trying to murder: the Makkans, even as they plotted to kill him, had left their valuables in his keeping, and he would not leave until every deposit was handed back to its owner. Then Ali set out by the

short main road, while the Prophet ﷺ had gone south to the cave and looped the long way around, so that Ali, starting three days later but traveling faster, caught up at Quba around the Wednesday or Thursday, as if the two had left together. And in those same days the building began. The reports say the Prophet ﷺ set the first stone of Masjid Quba with his own hands; Ali and Abu Bakr carried the work forward; and the Ansar finished it. It was the first purpose-built mosque in the history of Islam.

The verse came down later, in the language of prohibition. The hypocrites of Madinah would in time raise a mosque of their own, not a house of worship but a weapon, a story the series keeps for further along, and Allah forbade His Prophet ﷺ ever to set foot in it.

Do not stand [for prayer] within it - ever. A mosque founded on righteousness from the first day is more worthy for you to stand in. Within it are men who love to purify themselves; and Allah loves those who purify themselves.

QUR'AN 9:108

The majority of the scholars of tafsir, the Sheikh notes, read the mosque founded on taqwa here as Masjid Quba, because the hypocrites had built their rival in its very vicinity, so the verse turns the Prophet ﷺ from the one toward the other. And a hadith in Abu Dawud preserves a small, almost comic scene from the day it arrived. The people of Quba were asked what they had done to be singled out for praise by Allah Himself, named in revelation as men who love to purify themselves. Their answer was disarmingly down to earth: water. After answering the call of nature they did not merely wipe, as most of that world did; they washed, every time. The Sheikh adds what the scholars add: no one in Islam ever made water obligatory for this, and dry

purification has always been permitted and sufficient. But washing is the better way, and Allah loved these men for reaching for it when they did not have to.

And yet. In another hadith, this one fully authentic, a Companion put the question straight to the Prophet ﷺ, asking which mosque the verse meant, and he answered: by Allah, it is this mosque of mine. So which is it, Quba or his own mosque in the city? The answer, and the reconciliation is itself the teaching, is both. Both were founded upon taqwa from their first day, and he ﷺ said it of his own precisely so that no one would imagine Quba outranked it. He never stopped loving Quba, though. Ali relates that every single week, usually on a Monday, the Prophet ﷺ would go out to Masjid Quba, on foot or riding, and pray two rakaat there. And he left his ummah a standing offer that holds to this day: whoever purifies himself in his own house, then comes to Masjid Quba and prays in it, carries away the reward of a complete umrah.

The first Friday of his life

On the Thursday night he ﷺ announced that in the morning he would at last enter the city itself. The Ansar turned out for him more than five hundred strong, in their ceremonial best, wearing armor and blades the way men wear honor on a day of welcome, a guard assembled to escort the man ﷺ who had ridden out of Makkah hunted, with a single companion and a price on his head. And on that road between Quba and the city, the sun tipped past its zenith and Friday came due. So the first Jumu'ah of the Prophet's ﷺ entire life was prayed in neither of his mosques. He stopped where the hour found him, in the quarter of one of the Ansar clans along the way, and prayed it there. The people of that place later raised a mosque over the very spot. A third mosque, planted by nothing more than a pause for prayer.

Then he ﷺ delivered the first khutbah of his life, preserved by Ibn Ishaq through a chain with a touch of weakness, the gentle sort of report the scholars permit themselves to relate. Before a single word of its content, notice its length. Every khutbah of his ﷺ that has come down to us runs three to five minutes, no more. He ﷺ said outright that it is a mark of a man's fiqh, his real grasp of the religion, that he keeps his sermon short and makes his prayer long, and his own salah was always longer than his speech. Dr. Yasir Qadhi is honest about why we have so completely inverted that order. The Friday sermon is now the only hour in the week that most of the ummah spends inside a mosque at all, indeed the only time many pray in congregation in seven days, so the world's khutbahs have stretched to carry the weight of a whole week's teaching. His ﷺ first listeners needed no such topping up. Their iman ran at a voltage ours does not, and a few minutes were enough.

And what did he ﷺ choose as the theme of the first sermon in his new homeland? Giving. He urged them to be generous, and set that urging between two unanswerable certainties: that death is coming to every one of them, and that Allah will ask each soul what it was given in this world and what it sent ahead for the next. And inside the sermon sits a single line the ummah has never stopped repeating, carried independently in Bukhari as well: whoever is able to shield himself from the fire, let him do it with even half a date; and whoever cannot find so much as that, then with a good word, for every good deed is repaid ten times over. Then he sat down.

Of course the first sermon was a call to sacrifice, the Sheikh says. An entire community, an entire new order, was about to be built out of nothing in a city with almost no resources, and there was never an hour in the whole of Islam when the ummah needed

its givers more than at its very birth. And mark the method as much as the message. Hope and fear arrive together in that short khutbah, the promise laced through the warning, Jannah set beside the fire. Some faiths of our own age keep only the warm half of this and call the other backward; the Qur'an keeps both, because human nature is built to answer to both.

The words that converted a chief before the speech began

The second part of the sermon, in Ibn Ishaq's record, opens with the words Muslims still open their sermons with, the khutbat al-hajah: all praise is for Allah, we praise Him and seek His help and ask His forgiveness; we take refuge in Allah from the evils of our own souls and from our wrong deeds; whomever Allah guides, none can lead astray, and whomever Allah leaves to stray, none can guide; and I bear witness that none deserves worship but Allah alone, and that Muhammad ﷺ is His servant and Messenger. There is a small puzzle here the Sheikh flags rather than smooths over: in this report the khutbat al-hajah stands at the head of the second portion, whereas other narrations have the Prophet ﷺ place it at the very beginning. Perhaps the practice settled later, perhaps the parts have been transposed in the telling; he leaves the question open and hands it back to Allah, who knows best.

Do not let long familiarity flatten those opening lines, because they once converted a man entirely on their own, before any sermon had begun. Back in Makkah, a chief of the tribes of Yemen named Dimad al-Azdi, a healer by trade, had been so thoroughly warned about the dangerous sorcerer Muhammad ﷺ, a man possessed, touched by jinn, that he stuffed cotton into his ears so as not to hear the bewitching speech. Then he reasoned himself into courage: I am an intelligent man, he thought, and a

physician; if this man is truly mad, I am the one to treat him. He pulled the cotton out, walked up to the Prophet ﷺ, and said his people had warned him but he wished to hear for himself. And the Prophet ﷺ said the khutbat al-hajah. Repeat those words, Dimad demanded, and he ﷺ repeated them. I have memorized the poetry of men and the speech of the jinn, Dimad finally said, and by Allah I have never heard anything like these words; you must be a man whom Allah inspires. He accepted Islam on the spot, before the Prophet ﷺ had spoken a single line of the actual address. Those few opening sentences have since drawn whole books to themselves: Ibn Taymiyyah wrote a treatise on the khutbat al-hajah, Ibn al-Qayyim filled many pages on it, and in our own era al-Albani gave it an entire book.

Where the first half of the sermon had asked the people for their hands, the second half asked for their hearts. The truly successful one, he ﷺ told them, is the one whose heart Allah has made beautiful, whom He has brought into Islam after disbelief and chosen above the rest of mankind for the best of all matters. So love what Allah loves, and love Allah with the whole of your heart. Never tire of the speech of Allah and never tire of His remembrance, for He has chosen the Qur'an and His dhikr to be the best of all deeds; and do not let your hearts grow hard. Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him; be sincere and true to Him in all that you say; and love one another with the spirit of Allah between you, a phrase so singular that Dr. Yasir Qadhi says he has not found it in any other hadith. The last word of the sermon was a warning dressed as a plain fact: Allah hates that His covenant be broken. You have given Allah your word to uphold His religion; do not be the ones who break it.

Action, then spirit. The hand, then the heart. Fear braided through with hope. An entire religion folded twice into a few short

minutes. And mark the two things he ﷺ named, and only two, as the daily antidote to a hardening heart: never tire of the speech of Allah, never tire of His remembrance. Reciting the Book and remembering its Author are what keep a heart from turning to stone, and he set that prescription for his new city in its first hour.

A mosque at the center of everything

The khutbah finished, he ﷺ rode on into the city, the camel knelt at the place yesterday's episode left her, and Abu Ayyub al-Ansari's household took him in. And the very first work he ﷺ turned his hand to, before any business of governing the new community, before any home of his own, was the same work he had just left behind in Quba: a mosque. Do the arithmetic with the Sheikh, because here the arithmetic is the sermon. Within roughly five days of reaching his new city, the Prophet ﷺ had begun two mosques, three counting the prayer stop a grateful clan later built over, and he still did not have so much as a roof over his own head. The house of Allah went up before the house of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

Allah calls the mosques His own houses, and in Surah an-Nur He shows you what they are for and who fills them.

[Such niches are] in houses [i.e., mosques] which Allah has ordered to be raised and that His name be mentioned [i.e., praised] therein; exalting Him within them in the morning and the evenings

QUR'AN 24:36

[Are] men whom neither commerce nor sale distracts from the remembrance of Allah and performance of prayer and giving of zakah. They fear a Day in which the hearts and eyes will [fearfully] turn about -

Now watch everything that one plain courtyard of palm trunks and mud became. It was the school, where the circles of knowledge met. It was the council chamber: here, before Badr and again before Uhud, he ﷺ would gather the Companions and ask them openly what the community should do, the nearest thing this young society had to a parliament. It was the social heart of the whole city, where the Companions sat and laughed and told stories of their old days of jahiliyyah while the Prophet ﷺ sat among them; weddings were celebrated inside it; armies formed their ranks within its walls and marched out from its door; and the Qur'an itself spread into the world from this single courtyard.

And it was a roof for anyone who had none. Every homeless newcomer was housed in it, for he ﷺ said, in an authentic hadith, that the masjid is the home of every person of taqwa. Dr. Yasir Qadhi hears both meanings ringing at once. Where does a person of taqwa feel most at home, most himself? In the house of Allah; that is the spiritual sense. And the Muslim with no home at all discovers that Allah's house is his house; that is the plain physical sense, and both are true together. The Prophet ﷺ lived the first meaning out in full view, more present in his masjid than in his own rooms, and soon the mosque would become something more again: a residential university, with students who lived in it, the people of Suffa, whose story belongs to tomorrow.

One correction to the imagination before you leave the building site. Do not picture a single grand mosque serving the whole of Madinah. The oasis was a string of settlements, some an hour and a half apart on foot, too far to walk to a central mosque for each of the five prayers, and so in time at least a dozen

neighborhood mosques stood scattered across the city, each clan praying in its own. The Prophet's ﷺ mosque was simply the center and the largest, and, as far as the reports tell us, the only one in which Jumu'ah was ever prayed.

The son of Sumayyah

Back at the building site, the Sheikh adds a story he almost ran out of time to tell, and it carries one of the weightiest prophecies in the whole seerah. The Prophet ﷺ did not stand back and supervise. He labored in the work himself, hauling stone alongside everyone else, and the sight of him ﷺ carrying rock pulled poetry out of the Companions, a line they chanted as they worked: if we sit back idle while the Prophet ﷺ labors, then that, from us, is the deed gone astray.

Through the dust came Ammar ibn Yasir, the young man Makkah had orphaned twice over, for his father Yasir and his mother Sumayyah had been the very first martyrs of this ummah, killed for their faith in the early Makkan years. Ammar was in his twenties now, coated head to foot in dust, carrying two of the great quarry stones at once while everyone else carried one. So he lodged a complaint, the way you complain to someone you love and trust completely: Messenger of Allah, they are killing me, two stones on me and only one on them. He did not mean it, the Sheikh smiles, and the smile carries a point of fiqh. The Companions joked with their Prophet ﷺ, and a joke understood by everyone to be a joke is no lie at all. The only difference, and it matters, is that the Prophet's ﷺ own jokes, unlike ours, never once bent the truth even in play; whatever he ﷺ said in jest was still, somehow, exactly true.

The Prophet ﷺ smiled back, and brushed the dust from his body with his own hand, and answered with words that would take

decades to unfold. They are not killing you, son of Sumayyah, he ﷺ said. The ones who will kill you are the transgressing party, al-fi'ah al-baghiyah, the group that has gone beyond the bounds. And he ﷺ set gentler words beside the heavy ones: everyone here today is earning a single reward for his labor, and you are earning two for your two stones. And the last thing you will drink in this world will be a draught of milk. Hear the name he ﷺ chose to call him by. Not Ammar. Son of Sumayyah, lifting up the first martyr of Islam by honoring her in her own son's name; and the Companions, having heard the Prophet ﷺ call him so, called him Ibn Sumayyah ever after.

Decades later, long after the Prophet ﷺ had passed, an old man in his late sixties stood with Ali ibn Abi Talib in the war that broke the ummah's heart, the fighting between the camp of Ali and the forces of Mu'awiyah. In his camp that day Ammar was handed milk and drank it, went forward into the battle, and an arrow found him, and he was killed fighting on the side of Ali. The Companions remembered the building site at once, down to the glass of milk, and read it as the sign it was. This is sensitive ground, and the Sheikh treads it with all the adab the subject demands, because the killers were themselves Companions whom we honor. For Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaah the hadith became a sign that Ali, radiyallahu anhu, was the closer of the two parties to the truth, while Mu'awiyah, radiyallahu anhu, was sincere yet mistaken, and not a single bad word is to be said of either. Some of the greatest Companions refused to take any side at all; asked in an earlier dispute whether he stood with the party of Ali or the party of Aisha, Ibn Abbas gave the answer the Sheikh loves: I am on the team of Muhammad ﷺ. And what no Sunni doubts, Dr. Yasir Qadhi finishes, is the one thing that dusty afternoon proved beyond argument: the Prophet ﷺ was given

knowledge no one else had, of things not yet come, down to the last glass of milk a man would drink. Like all such cryptic foretellings, it was not understood when spoken; it snapped into place only after the thing came to pass, and then it was crystal clear.

The adhan arrives in a dream

Meanwhile the prayer itself was settling into the form we now know. Since the night of Isra and Mi'raj, which Dr. Yasir Qadhi places most likely in the tenth or eleventh year of the dawah, the believers had prayed five times a day, but every one of the five had been two rakaat. Aisha, radiyallahu anha, relates in Bukhari that when they came to Madinah the prayers were established as we have them today: Dhuhr, Asr, and Isha rose to four rakaat, Maghrib stood at three, and Fajr kept its two; the original two were preserved as a mercy for the traveler, who still prays them shortened on a journey. Around these obligations the sunnah prayers took their settled places, and the witr of the night that he ﷺ never once abandoned, not even when traveling.

Then, within his ﷺ first month or two in the city, a question arose that years of hiding in Makkah had never permitted: how do you call an entire city to prayer? He ﷺ put it to the Companions in open consultation. One suggested a bell, like the Christians; but the Prophet ﷺ disliked bells, and there are authentic reports that he ﷺ said the angels do not accompany a caravan that carries one. Another suggested a horn, the shofar the Jews sounded; that too was set aside. Other ideas were raised and fell away, and the meeting broke up with nothing chosen.

That night, Allah settled in sleep what the council could not settle awake. Abdullah ibn Zayd of the Ansar dreamed of a man carrying the very instruments they had been debating, and went

up to buy one. Why do you want it, the man asked. To call the Muslims to prayer, Abdullah said. Shall I not show you something better, said the stranger, and he taught him the words the earth has not stopped hearing since: Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar, on through to the end of the adhan. Abdullah woke with the dream blazing so vividly that he threw on his clothes and rushed straight to the Prophet ﷺ and told him the whole of it. He ﷺ gave his verdict: it is a true dream, in sha Allah. Then: stand with Bilal on the roof of the masjid and cast the words to him one phrase at a time, for his voice is the loudest. And so, the Sheikh smiles, the first adhan was in a sense given twice at once, whispered phrase by phrase by the man who had dreamed it and proclaimed to the whole city by the voice of Bilal. Before it had even finished, Umar ibn al-Khattab came hurrying into the masjid, his lower garment still trailing half-tied: Messenger of Allah, I saw these very same words in a dream. Allah had scattered the gift across more than one sleeper that night, and willed which mouth would reach His Prophet ﷺ first.

Two reflections of the Sheikh's are worth carrying out of this. The first is a point of law. The adhan is the one and only piece of the entire Sharia that arrived through the dream of a Companion, and even here it was not the dream that made it law but the Prophet's ﷺ ruling upon it, his declaration that it was true. This ummah does not take its religion from dreams; had he ﷺ not confirmed it, the dream would have legislated nothing. The second is a quiet mystery the Sheikh confesses he could not solve. He went looking for any scholar who explains why Allah chose this single ritual, out of the whole religion, to arrive this single way, and found no one who had even taken up the question. And he went looking for Abdullah ibn Zayd himself, and found a Companion remembered for almost nothing else: the one of the dream of the

adhan, as Ibn Hajar sums up his entire life. You can sense from the narrations that he had hoped to be the one to call the prayer himself; but the calling went to Bilal's voice, and the dream remained his portion. Why him? What was his secret standing with Allah that earned him this one shining honor and so little else in the record? We will never know it in this world, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi names this one of the quiet sorrows of studying the seerah: how many of its heroes survive as a single line, while Allah holds the rest. The Prophet ﷺ portioned the blessings of that morning according to what each man carried, the dream to one and the voice to another; and Allah portioned the honor according to what only He could see.

The mosque took some two or three weeks to raise, and only then, with the house of Allah complete, did he ﷺ build a place for himself, and lodging is the better word than house: rooms set directly against the wall of the mosque, not a dwelling apart from it. He had two wives at this time, in the years between Khadijah's passing and the marriages still to come: Sawdah and Aisha, radiyallahu anhumaa. So two rooms went up beside the masjid, the only homes in all of Madinah connected to it; the wives he ﷺ married in later years lived in a separate row of houses with no doors onto the mosque, for by then the city had built itself up close around it. And one undated tenderness from inside those rooms teaches the very giving his first sermon had called for. Sawdah had married him ﷺ in Makkah when she was already elderly, older than him in years. At some point in Madinah she came to him with a gift no one had asked of her: Messenger of Allah, I am an old woman, and I know you prefer the company of Aisha, so I give my night to her. She wanted nothing but his ﷺ pleasure, the Sheikh says, and she knew exactly what would bring it. He ﷺ honored her always, sitting with her by day; but

the nights became Aisha's, a doubled portion, so that the room history remembers as the room he ﷺ lived in, the one against the wall of his own mosque, was Aisha's. One more of the blessings of Aisha, placed in her hands by the open palm of an older woman who asked for nothing but to please the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

What the first mosques ask of our faith

It would be easy to read this week as a pleasant prelude, the settling-in before the real history of Madinah begins. That would be to miss the question it puts to us. The first mosques are not only a story; they are a blueprint, and the blueprint is drawn in the order in which a homeless refugee chose to spend his first five days.

He ﷺ built Allah's house before his own. Two mosques begun, three counting the prayer stop, and still no roof over his ﷺ head. He did not first secure his comfort and then, once settled, attend to the worship of Allah; he reversed the order the whole world takes for granted. We build our lives first and fit Allah into whatever room is left over, a corner of the schedule, a few minutes at the edges of an exhausted day. He ﷺ set the prayer at the dead center of the new city before he had anywhere to sleep, and let everything else arrange itself outward around that center. Ask what sits at the center of the life you are building, and whether the house of Allah goes up first in it or last.

And out of that first sermon comes a prescription with our name on it, untouched after fourteen centuries: never tire of the speech of Allah, never tire of His remembrance, and the heart will not harden. A daily dose of Qur'an and a daily dose of dhikr, in whatever amount you can actually keep, is the medicine he ﷺ handed his city against the slow petrifying of the soul.

And then there is the adhan, and the quiet man who dreamed it. Two lessons sit folded together in that dawn. The first guards the religion: the only piece of the Sharia ever to arrive in a dream became law not by the dream but by the Prophet's ﷺ word upon it, so that we honor our inspirations without ever mistaking them for revelation. The second guards the heart against bitterness. Abdullah ibn Zayd received the dream and not the voice, and is remembered for one line; the old man Kulthum was kept alive just long enough to host the Messenger ﷺ and then died first of all the city's believers; Sawdah gave away her nights and asked for nothing. Allah portioned the honor of that week with a precision none of them could see, each according to what only He knew. Most of His most beloved servants survive in the record as a single sentence, and He holds the rest, and that is enough. So take this week down into your ordinary days. Put the house of Allah first in whatever you are building. Take the daily dose. Honor the small, unremembered acts of giving that no one will ever record but Allah. And when your own portion seems thin beside another's, remember the man of the dream of the adhan, whose name the whole world says five times a day without knowing it, and who carried his secret with Allah quietly to his grave. May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, who laid the first stone of the first mosque with his own hands and loved the houses of Allah more than his own comfort; make the masajid home to our hearts as he ﷺ taught they are home to every soul of taqwa, keep our hearts soft with His speech and His remembrance, and gather us behind the callers of his ﷺ call in the house of His generosity that no builder of this world has ever seen.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 31: the building of the first mosques in

Islam (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (9:108, 24:36, 24:37), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The Brotherhood of Madinah

Strangers made brothers, a city made home

The chase is over. The cave is behind them, the bounty hunters have turned for home, and the most beloved of lands lies far to the south. Now the seerah changes its whole texture, and the change is easy to miss because nothing in it explodes. No swords are drawn here, no riders on the horizon, almost no miracles of the kind that make a story race. There is instead the slower work that comes after every deliverance: a community has to be built out of two cities' worth of strangers, refugees who own nothing and hosts who owe them nothing, and somebody has to do it on purpose. Dr. Yasir Qadhi gathers up the quiet founding acts of those first months in Madinah, and they amount to a portrait of prophethood on its ordinary days: mercy organized into systems. How the ummah learned to count its years. How a band of homesick men was taught to love a new home. And how one man ﷺ sat down and turned migration into family, one named pair at a time.

It is a chapter about belonging: why the Islamic calendar starts where it starts, why Madinah feels the way it feels to anyone who has stood in it, and what the Ansar did for the Muhajirun that no people before or since have managed to do.

When time itself was crooked

Begin with a question you have probably never thought to ask: what year did the Arabs believe it was? The Romans had a calendar. The Persians had a calendar. The Arabs had nothing. A shared way of counting time is one of the marks of a civilization, and this was a people who had reached almost none of those marks: no script, no architecture, no settled learning. So each tribe dated its life by its own memories: the year of the death of so and so, two years after that chieftain, three years before the elephant. And because the tribes were not one nation, every tribe kept a different clock: a hundred private calendars and no public one.

Hold that backwardness next to what was coming. Part of the standing miracle of this religion is that Allah took exactly this people, the most uncultivated society on the map, and made them through a single Book into the teachers of the world. The Sheikh anchors the claim in the verse that promised this nation its legacy would live through the Book it was given.

We have certainly sent down to you a Book [i.e., the Qur'an] in which is your mention. Then will you not reason?

QUR'AN 21:10

And it was worse than having no calendar; the time they did keep was bent out of true. From Ibrahim, peace be upon him, the Arabs had inherited one piece of sacred law: four months of every year are forbidden to war, sanctuaries where no raiding may take place. The number was not theirs to set. Allah had fixed it on the day He made the heavens and the earth, and He says so.

Indeed, the number of months with Allah is twelve [lunar] months in the register of Allah [from] the day He created

the heavens and the earth; of these, four are sacred. That is the correct religion [i.e., way], so do not wrong yourselves during them. And fight against the disbelievers collectively as they fight against you collectively. And know that Allah is with the righteous [who fear Him].

QUR'AN 9:36

Twelve months, four of them sacred, decreed before there was a single human being to keep them. But a sacred month is an inconvenience to a tribe that wants to fight, and the powerful tribes, Quraysh foremost, found a way around it. This is not really Muharram, they would announce, this year it is Safar; and they had the clout to make the smaller tribes accept the swap, so a sacred month became lawful at a chief's word, all to suit a season's ambition. The Qur'an gives this trick its name, the nasi, and refuses to call it a mere adjustment.

Indeed, the postponing [of restriction within sacred months] is an increase in disbelief by which those who have disbelieved are led [further] astray. They make it lawful one year and unlawful another year to correspond to the number made unlawful by Allah and [thus] make lawful what Allah has made unlawful. Made pleasing to them is the evil of their deeds; and Allah does not guide the disbelieving people.

QUR'AN 9:37

An increase in disbelief: a deliberate editing of Allah's own law to fit human appetite. Move the months at will for generation after generation and they scramble like a jigsaw puzzle, until no one alive can say which month it truly is. That is the wreckage the Prophet ﷺ inherited, and at the Farewell Hajj, the tenth year after the Hijrah, he set it right in a single sentence. By Allah's decree the months had cycled that year back into their original positions,

and he ﷺ announced, in a report Bukhari preserves, that time had returned to the shape it held on the day Allah created the heavens and the earth, and from now on, no more swapping. From that declaration to the calendar on your wall this morning, Muharram has followed Dhul-Hijjah and no month has ever been moved again.

Year one, chosen by the companions

The order of the months was fixed by the Prophet ﷺ himself. The counting of the years was not; that part he never instituted, and it surfaced only about seventeen years after the Hijrah, in the most ordinary way imaginable: a lawsuit. Two men stood before Umar ibn al-Khattab, radiyallahu anhu, over a debt. He was to repay me by Sha'ban, said one, and Sha'ban has come and gone. I meant Sha'ban of next year, said the other. And there was no way to settle it, because no document in Arabia could name its own year. The governors wrote in with the same trouble: you order us to finish a project by a certain month, but which year's month? A state cannot keep its promises if it cannot agree on what year it is.

So Umar gathered the companions. Someone suggested adopting the calendar of the Romans or the Persians, and it was dismissed at once: a civilization at its full height does not borrow another people's clock; you follow everyone else, the Sheikh observes, only in your seasons of weakness. Then, which year should be year one? The birth of the Prophet ﷺ, said one. His passing, said another, and the room recoiled from opening a calendar on grief. Badr, said a third. Then Ali ibn Abi Talib spoke, and his reasoning ended the debate: let year one be the year of the Hijrah, because that was the year Allah turned the believers' condition from dhull to izzah, from humiliation to honor. That was

the hinge of the whole story, where the new leaf turned. The room agreed as one. Notice what the companions understood, the Sheikh says: every other milestone was arguable, but no one argued about the Hijrah. They knew which moment had remade them.

One question remained. Which month should open the year? Ramadan had its holiness, some said; Dhul-Hijjah its Hajj; Rajab its blessing. It was Uthman ibn Affan who said: Muharram, and the scholars give two reasons, both tied back to the Hijrah. First, plain history: the call to emigrate went out after the pledge of Aqabah, sworn in the days of Hajj, so the believers began streaming toward Madinah in Muharram, the Prophet ﷺ himself slipping out only at the end of Safar. Second, in a report from Uthman himself: the companions made Hajj almost every year, and coming home from it felt like a life washed clean; and since you return at the close of Dhul-Hijjah, the month that begins that new life is Muharram. Later scholars even reached for a Qur'anic anchor, the masjid founded on taqwa from the first day, since Masjid Quba was raised in the first days of the Hijrah.

Do not stand [for prayer] within it, ever. A mosque founded on righteousness from the first day is more worthy for you to stand in. Within it are men who love to purify themselves; and Allah loves those who purify themselves.

QUR'AN 9:108

The Sheikh smiles at that last argument and calls it an imaginative stretch, though a harmless one. The honest weight rests on the first two reasons. Either way, the year of the Hijrah, opening with Muharram, became the heartbeat of Islamic time, and it became so because the companions, given every other option, kept

returning to the one event that had turned their whole world from disgrace to dignity.

The map of the next ten years

Before walking deeper into Madinah, the Sheikh hands us a map. The Makkan era ran thirteen years; the Madinan era will run only ten, and yet the reports preserved for these ten years are roughly three times everything recorded for the first fifty-three years of his life ﷺ. The pace of history is about to triple, and these ten years fall into three clear eras.

The first is the era of consolidation, from the Hijrah to the battle of Ahzab in the fifth year: the slow, dangerous work of removing every threat to a newborn community, within and without, the pagans, the hypocrites, the hostile tribes, and beyond the walls the enmity of Quraysh. Never let the later triumphs fool you into thinking it was ever safe. At Badr the Prophet ﷺ would plead with his Lord through the night: O Allah, if this small band is destroyed, You will not be worshipped on earth again. That is how thin the thread was. Only after Ahzab, when the great alliance that came to erase Madinah broke apart instead, did the tide turn for good. The second is the era of truce, the two and a half years from Hudaibiyyah to the conquest of Makkah, when Islam and its enemies shared the peninsula at peace; the Sheikh underlines a fact the battles tend to bury, that in the era of peace the ummah multiplied fivefold, far more than it ever grew through war. And the third runs from the conquest to his passing ﷺ in Rabi al-Awwal of the eleventh year, when the whole peninsula came into the religion of Allah in waves.

And you see the people entering into the religion of Allah in multitudes,

That verse is the destination of the whole journey. But everything in this chapter belongs to the earliest, most fragile stretch of the first era, the founding weeks, when a homesick, penniless community had first to be made into one people.

Homesick in the city of light

Now return to those first weeks and to a detail the books of seerah are honest enough to keep: the Muhajirun, at first, did not like Madinah. Nothing was wrong with Madinah. Everything was wrong with its not being home. There is no place like home, the Sheikh says; the finest lodging in the world cannot give you what your own lumpy pillow gives you. And the emigrants were not only heartsick; they were physically sick, because greener, wetter Madinah bred fevers that dry Makkah had spared them. Homesickness and illness came down together, and hard.

Aisha, radiyallahu anha, by now in the household of the Prophet ﷺ, went to check on her father after he and Bilal had emigrated, and found both men burning with fever. Abu Bakr, sweating through the worst of it, spoke like a man who feels death at his shoulder, saying that death is nearer to a person than the strap of his own sandal. And Bilal, who had owned almost nothing in Makkah and had been pinned under a rock on its scorching sand for his faith, ached aloud for one more night in its valley among its thorny desert scrub, missing the very thorns of the place that had tortured him because it was home, and his ache turned to anger as he called upon Allah against Shaybah ibn Rabi'ah and Umayyah ibn Khalaf by name, the men who had driven them out. Sit with that picture, the Sheikh says: these were not weak souls but the giants of this religion, and they wept with homesickness

raw enough to taste. Loving the place you grew up in is not a flaw in faith; it is part of being human, and the strongest of them felt it.

Aisha carried that heavy scene back to the Prophet ﷺ. He did not answer it with a sermon on gratitude. He raised his hands for all of the Muhajirun at once: O Allah, make Madinah as beloved to us as Makkah, or even more beloved still. He asked for blessing in the city's provision, in its sa' and its mudd, in every scoop of food it measured out. And he asked that its fevers be carried off and cast far away, out to Juhfa, an empty land beyond the city, so that his people would not sicken in it.

And Allah answered. The love of Madinah sank so deep into their hearts that when the Prophet ﷺ traveled away, the companions would count the days until return, and Anas narrates in Bukhari that when he ﷺ saw Madinah rise in the distance he would urge his camel faster, hurrying home. Here the Sheikh sets down the seerah a moment and speaks in his own voice: he lived in Madinah, he says, and its love, its sukoon, the peace that settles on the heart there, is unlike anywhere else on earth. He is convinced, wallahi, that the sweetness every visitor still feels there, and the quiet ache that pulls even at those who have never seen it, is nothing other than this one du'a of the Prophet ﷺ, still being answered fourteen centuries after he raised his hands.

Brothers, chosen by name

Among the very first things the Prophet ﷺ did in Madinah, by one early scholar's reckoning even before the masjid itself was finished, was an act with no real precedent: the mu'akha, the pairing. He took each emigrant and joined him to one of the Ansar and declared the two brothers, not as a figure of speech but so completely that in that first stage the two would inherit from each other, the Ansari heir standing ahead of a man's own

blood relatives. Think what that meant for a refugee who had left every coin and every cousin behind in Makkah: he woke up in a strange city with a brother, a household, a place at a table, and a name written into someone's will.

The believers are but brothers, so make settlement between your brothers. And fear Allah that you may receive mercy.

QUR'AN 49:10

And the pairs were not thrown together at random; they were chosen, one by one, and the Sheikh invites you to test it: take any pairing the books preserve, more than a hundred are known by name, look into the two lives, and the match was made with care. Abu Bakr was paired with Kharijah ibn Zayd, a nobleman of the Ansar. Abdur Rahman ibn Awf, once a wealthy merchant of Makkah and now owning nothing, was paired with Sa'd ibn ar-Rabi'ah, one of the richest businessmen of Madinah, two traders who spoke the same language. Salman al-Farsi was paired with Abu Darda, and the two appear side by side ever after, so close that Salman once made his brother break a voluntary fast to share a meal and lie back down when he rose too early in the night to pray, the easy authority of a real brother. Picture it: the Prophet ﷺ literally sat down, and one after another the men came, and he matched soul to soul, by name; Anas ibn Malik remembered with pride that the pairing was done in their quarter. A true leader, the Sheikh says, does not announce brotherhood in the abstract and walk away; he implements it, person by person, choosing for each newcomer the one companion best fitted to carry him.

Nor was it a single ceremony. The Sheikh corrects a thing many readers of the seerah get wrong: it went on for years. Salman

himself did not accept Islam until well after the Hijrah, and was given a brother when he did; when Ja'far ibn Abi Talib returned from Abyssinia in the seventh year, the Prophet ﷺ paired him with Mu'adh ibn Jabal; pairings were still being made after the conquest of Makkah. And from this the Sheikh draws one of the sharpest lessons of the night: the mu'akha is a neglected sunnah, and we should be reviving it. Every convert who walks into a masjid today is a Muhajir without a city, a stranger who knows neither the streets nor the people nor even how to pray, who needs not a friendly handshake but real support, someone assigned to sit with him and teach him until he can stand. It is the founding mechanism by which this religion turned strangers into one body, and the Prophet ﷺ kept it running to the end of his life.

Only one clause of the mu'akha was ever retired. After Badr, Allah revealed in Surah al-Anfal that blood relatives are nearer to one another in the decree of Allah, and inheritance returned to family. Look at the gentleness of the sharia, the Sheikh says: while the Muhajirun had no kin in Madinah, Allah made their brothers their heirs, so no emigrant would die with no one to inherit him; once they married and raised children, He moved inheritance back to blood. The law came down for that founding generation in stages, the same way wine was prohibited in stages, a softness that belonged to them alone, because they were the first Muslims with no community standing yet to lean on. We who come after have the finished example before us, and do not get the staged concessions, because we were handed the whole religion at once.

Half of everything, and a dignified refusal

What the Ansar offered their new brothers has no parallel in history, and the proof is in Sahih Bukhari. They came to the

Prophet ﷺ and offered, in earnest, to hand over half of their land, half of the date orchards that were the wealth of Madinah, free and outright. He made du'a for them, and refused. Instead he ruled: the Muhajirun would work in the orchards and the two parties would share the produce. Labor for the newcomers, partnership in place of charity, dignity in place of dependence.

Why turn down half a city handed over for nothing? Because he ﷺ was building a nation, not a dole. Let the emigrant work and earn; guard his self-respect; and close the door Shaytan might one day pry open generations later, the whisper of we gave your fathers everything for free. It was the same spirit that breathed in the first words the city ever heard from him. Abdullah ibn Salam, the foremost rabbi of Madinah and one of the only great Jewish scholars to accept Islam, pressed into the crowd that rushed to see the new arrival, and said afterward, in a report Muslim and Ahmad preserve, that the moment the Prophet's ﷺ face came clear to him he knew this was not the face of a liar; a pure soul can sense a pure soul. And the first instruction he heard from those lips was this: spread the salam, feed people, keep the ties of kinship, and pray in the night while people sleep, and you will enter Jannah in peace. Generosity was the founding law of the city; freeloading was never part of it.

Then comes the scene every student of the seerah carries in his heart. Sa'd ibn ar-Rabi'ah brought his new brother home and laid the whole inventory of his life on the table. I am the wealthiest of the Ansar, he said; take half of my money. I have two orchards; one is yours. And in some narrations he went further still, offering to part with one of his two wives so that this stranger from Makkah could have a household of his own. He meant the word brother with a completeness that ought to stop you mid-sentence.

And Abdur Rahman ibn Awf answered with the other half of iman. May Allah bless you in your wealth and your family, he said. Just show me the way to the marketplace. He went to the suq, bartered, came home with a little butter and wheat, went back the next day, and built. Some while later the Prophet ﷺ caught the scent of perfume on him and teased: have you married? Yes, he said, a woman of the Ansar, with a mahr the weight of a date stone in gold. Then hold a walima, the Prophet ﷺ told him, even if with one sheep. Notice the two faces of one faith, the Sheikh says. One man's iman commanded him to offer everything, down to his own household; the other's commanded him to accept nothing he could earn for himself. Neither freeloader, neither hoarder. The one gave with his whole heart, and the other, out of his honor and karama, said thank you, and no, and pointed himself toward the market. That, on both sides of the gift, is what real iman looks like.

The home Allah Himself named

When Allah praised the two halves of this new society from above the seven heavens, the Sheikh draws our attention to the exact words He chose. Listen first to what He calls the emigrants.

For the poor emigrants who were expelled from their homes and their properties, seeking bounty from Allah and [His] approval and supporting [the cause of] Allah and His Messenger, [there is also a share]. Those are the truthful.

QUR'AN 59:8

The poor, al-fuqara. Every Muhajir, even the ones who had been rich, became poor by the very act of hijrah; and Allah binds that poverty in the same breath to the highest of titles, the truthful.

Then He turns to the Ansar, and here the Sheikh slows over a single word.

And [also for] those who were settled in the Home [i.e., al-Madinah] and [adopted] the faith before them. They love those who emigrated to them and find not any want in their breasts of what they [i.e., the emigrants] were given but give [them] preference over themselves, even though they are in privation. And whoever is protected from the stinginess of his soul, it is those who will be the successful.

QUR'AN 59:9

Those who settled ad-dar, the Home. Not their home. Allah does not say their house, though the house was technically theirs; He calls it simply the Home, one bare word wide enough to hold host and guest together, because the Ansar had given half of it away. And the Sheikh notes a thing easy to walk past: in all the Qur'an Allah never once calls the city Yathrib. That old name appears only on the tongues of the hypocrites. The city of the Prophet ﷺ had been renamed from above.

Then the verse testifies to something so rare it is almost frightening: the Ansar found no resentment in their chests at what the emigrants were given, and preferred others over themselves even while they themselves were in need. That is ithar, and Allah swears to its sincerity from over the seven heavens; not only did they give, their hearts were clean as they gave. No society in the history of mankind, the Sheikh says flatly, has been this selfless toward strangers; even blood brothers do not do for one another what these men did for people who walked into their city with nothing.

And it grew so overwhelming that the Muhajirun came to the Prophet ﷺ carrying the strangest worry ever laid before him. O

Messenger of Allah, they said, we have never seen a people like these; they share with us in hardship and lavish on us in plenty, until we fear they have carried off all our reward. Notice the beauty of it, the Sheikh says: a complaint wrapped inside a praise. After all the torture of Makkah, the wealth abandoned, the agony of the journey, their fear was not for any of that, but for their deeds, that all of it might be handed to these impossibly generous hosts. And the Prophet ﷺ answered: no, not so long as you keep praising them and making du'a for them. Each keeps his reward whole, for in this religion every soul is repaid for exactly what it has done.

Hold the two verses above in the order Allah placed them, and you have the final balance of the day. Love of the Ansar, the Prophet ﷺ said in what Bukhari and Muslim record, is a sign of iman, and hatred of them a sign of hypocrisy; after the conquest he ﷺ told them that were it not for his own birth and lineage he would have counted himself one of the Ansar, and that if all of mankind walked down one valley and the Ansar walked down another, he would walk the valley of the Ansar. And yet, the Sheikh points out, every time the Qur'an names the two together, the Muhajirun come first; even here, the verse of the emigrants stands one verse ahead of the verse of the helpers. The most honored hosts in history, and the guests still ranked one degree above: that is the weight, in the scale of Allah, of leaving everything behind for His sake.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read past this episode looking for the next battle, and to feel let down that there is no chase in it, no miracle to quicken the pulse. That would be to miss what it is showing you. Strip these first months to their bones and you find three

quiet inventions, a calendar, a du'a, and a list of names, and every one of them is still working, and every one puts a question to your own life.

The first is the calendar, and the lesson is in how the companions chose its starting point. Given the Prophet's ﷺ own birth, given the victory at Badr, given every shining option, they passed them all and counted year one from the Hijrah, because that was the year humiliation turned to honor. We tend to date our lives by what was done to us, the loss, the diagnosis, the betrayal, the windfall. The companions dated theirs by the moment they moved toward Allah. Keep time the way they kept it: let the turning points of your life be the migrations of your own heart from sin toward obedience.

The second is the du'a over homesickness, and the lesson is in what the Prophet ﷺ did not do. Abu Bakr and Bilal, two giants of this faith, lay feverish and aching for a home that had abused them, and he did not scold them for ingratitude. He raised his hands and asked Allah to plant love in their hearts where it would not grow on its own, and the answer is still felt by everyone who has ever wept at the sight of Madinah. When a place or a season Allah has decreed for you sits heavy on your heart, do not lecture yourself into contentment and do not pretend the ache away. Name it to Allah, the way Aisha carried it to the Prophet ﷺ, and ask Him to make beloved to you what He has chosen for you.

And the third is the mu'akha, and it asks the most of us, because unlike the calendar and the du'a it is a thing we do with our own hands. That first society held together on two postures of faith facing each other: the open hand of the Ansari who offered half of everything, and the upright honor of the Muhajir who answered, may Allah bless you in it, now show me the

marketplace. Real iman knows both. But the Prophet ﷺ did more than praise the spirit; he built the structure, sitting in the dust and pairing strangers into brothers by name. The Sheikh's charge lands in our own masjids tonight: somewhere near you is a new Muslim, a newcomer, a homesick soul with all the loneliness of a Muhajir and no Ansari yet. Do not wait to be asked. Be the one who is assigned, the brother or sister who sits down and stays.

So take these three down into your ordinary days. Date your life by your turning toward Allah and not by what befell you. When a trial weighs on your heart, hand the ache to Allah and ask Him to make it beloved. And find the stranger near you and become his brother, expecting nothing, the way the Ansar expected nothing and were named the successful for it. May Allah make iman beloved to our hearts and beautiful within them as He made Madinah beloved to the ones who wept for Makkah, bind us to one another as He bound the Muhajirun and the Ansar, give us hands that offer like Sa'd and honor that strives like Abdur Rahman, and gather us with His Messenger ﷺ in the Home that no one ever has to leave.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 32 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (21:10, 9:36, 9:37, 9:108, 110:2, 59:8, 59:9, 49:10), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing has been followed.

The Constitution of Madinah

The first Islamic state, put in writing

The masjid is built. The brotherhood is paired, muhajir to ansari, heart lashed to heart through the houses of the city. And now, in the early months after the hijrah, comes the third act of building Madinah, and unlike the first two it is made of ink. A long document, five pages of it, names every tribe in the new city: the believers who came from Quraysh and the believers of Yathrib, the Jewish clans one by one, even the pagans who had not yet converted. History calls it the Treaty of Madinah, or its Constitution, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi gives it a full evening, because it is significant, and because almost everyone who picks it up manages to misread it. Some inflate it into the secret seed of the American Constitution; others read malice into its clauses. Walk the document itself, the way he walks it, and you find something better than either myth: the first Islamic state, written down.

It is, in one sense, an ordinary administrative act, the kind a city does when it finally has a government, and in another it is one of the quietest wonders in the whole seerah. A man who arrived as a refugee a few months earlier ﷺ takes a city that had bled itself white in civil war for generations and writes its three faiths and forty quarrelsome clans onto a single page as one body, with no army behind the ink and no treasury to enforce it, only the weight of his word and the words of his Lord.

Five pages history almost mislaid

Begin with a strange fact, because the Sheikh begins there. The most important political document of the seerah reaches us without a chain of narrators, and is not even recorded in every early reference book. We all know the most famous book of seerah, the sira of Ibn Ishaq, which most students meet only through Ibn Hisham's later summary; fewer know that Ibn Ishaq is where the full treaty survives, and that he introduces it with nothing more than: it has been narrated to me. Between Ibn Ishaq and the Prophet ﷺ stand a hundred and fifty years, and across that gap there is no connected isnad at all. The Musnad of Imam Ahmad preserves a single line of it with attribution, that the Prophet ﷺ wrote a document between the people of the city in which every group would carry its own debts and affairs, with goodness between them. One phrase, soundly chained; the rest arrives thin, which has led some, then and now, to doubt there was ever a treaty at all.

Here Sheikh Yasir lays out why the scholars of our age accept it anyway, and the reasoning is a small masterclass in how to weigh a source. Look at the language. The text is written in an Arabic so archaic that even in Ibn Ishaq's day, a century and a half on, nobody wrote that way anymore: long, knotted sentences that wander where a modern treaty would march in tidy rows. A forger does not invent in a dead register. Worse for him, the document is cluttered. It does not simply say the Aws and the Khazraj; it walks through some forty or fifty of their subtribes, clan by clan, names so obscure that most have fallen clean out of history, and it handles the Jewish tribes the same way. A man who fabricates a charter makes it smooth, quotable, convenient. Reality is messy, and this is messy. The clutter, the Sheikh argues, is the signature of authenticity. You do not counterfeit a list of forgotten clans.

So he refuses to read it to us clause by crawling clause, and takes it instead in four bundles: what the treaty asks of the Muslims among themselves, what it agrees with the Jewish tribes, what it lays on the pagans who stayed pagan, and what it sets down, last, for everyone in the city at once. Take it in hand that way, in four grips, and a thing that looks like an unreadable inventory turns into the architecture of a state.

One ummah, and the word Yathrib

The first bundle opens with a single sentence that rearranges Arabia. The believers of Quraysh and of Yathrib, and those who follow them and join them and strive alongside them, are one ummah, distinct from all of mankind. One community, set apart from every older loyalty on earth. The Prophet ﷺ is declaring that these people now share a bond no outsider can enter into and no tribe can outrank. He is building the ummah in writing.

Two small words in that opening are themselves proof of how early the parchment is, and the Sheikh lingers on both. It says Yathrib, the old pagan name of the city, the very name the Prophet ﷺ would soon ask the people to retire in favor of Madinah; do not call it Yathrib, he would say, it is Madinah. But a city does not change its name in a day, and a document written in these first months had to speak to people who still had the old word in their mouths. A later forger, writing when everyone said Madinah, would have written Madinah without a second thought. And notice the second tell: it does not yet say the muhajirun, the Emigrants; the word had not yet crystallized, so the text simply says the believers of Quraysh. Two fingerprints, in the first line, of how close to the event this is.

Then the clauses turn practical, because an ummah, however exalted, still has to pay its bills. Each of the forty named subtribes

keeps the duties it carried before Islam: its own blood money, the ransom of its own captives, the care of its own poor. Welfare in the Prophet's ﷺ state, the Sheikh points out, was local before it was ever national; a man in need did not appeal to a central office but turned to his own clan. Blood money alone could run to a hundred camels, a fortune no single man could shoulder, so the clan carried it together. The person who falls is carried by the people standing nearest him.

Two more clauses bind the believers to one another, and both reach back into the Prophet's ﷺ own past. All of them, the treaty says, shall stand together against whoever commits injustice, even if the wrongdoer is one of their own. The Sheikh hears in that the echo of an older oath: hilf al-Fudul, the pact of justice the young Muhammad ﷺ had stood in long before prophethood, the league of clans who swore to back the wronged man against the strong even when the strong man was their own. What he had pledged as a youth in Makkah is now law in his city. And then: the protection granted by the Muslims is one. Any believer, even the humblest, can grant a stranger safe passage into Madinah, and once it is given no Muslim on earth may break it. A freed slave can grant it; a child old enough to understand what he is doing can grant it, on the majority view. In the giving of protection, the doorman and the chief hold exactly the same seal.

An ummah alongside the believers

The second bundle belongs to the Jewish tribes, and it refuses to treat them as a faceless bloc. We say there were three Jewish tribes, the Sheikh reminds us, but that is shorthand; inside the three were layers of clans, and the treaty honors them. Clause after clause, around a dozen of them, names a tribe in turn: the Jews of this banu, the Jews of that banu, each by its own name.

And over them all stands a line astonishing for its century. These Jews, the document says, are an ummah along with the believers. One community alongside the other.

Sheikh Yasir is careful here, and asks his listeners to be careful with him: do not misquote me, he says. This is not identical standing in every ruling. It is recognized communal standing in one shared city, a status he describes as, in some ways, equivalent. Their religion is their own and the Muslims' religion is the Muslims'. If that, he asks the room, is not the height of equality for its age, then what is? A prophet sent to call all people to one faith writes, into the founding charter of his own state, that the other community's religion belongs to them.

Inside their own walls, that community governs itself. Their disputes, their internal crimes, their own blood money, their quarrels and thefts: their affair, their courts, and the Muslims do not interfere, unless they choose to bring a case to the Prophet ﷺ, or unless the matter crosses the line between the two communities, and then it rises to him. The same financial logic governs them as the Muslim clans: your poor are yours to carry, ours are ours. But let an enemy march on the city and the two ledgers merge. Muslims and Jews are mutual support against whoever makes war on the people of this treaty, and the Jews spend on the defense for as long as the war lasts. Domestic life separate; the defense of the city shared, paid for by both.

Two final clauses complete the picture, and one surprises a modern reader until the Sheikh unpacks it. No one of the Jewish tribes may leave Madinah without the Prophet's ﷺ permission. That sounds severe until you remember what leaving meant. Where you lived was your tribe, your army, your passport, your whole allegiance, all at once; to slip out of the city unannounced

was to defect, to carry your loyalty and possibly your intelligence to the other side. So the clause requires what every modern state still requires of a citizen renouncing his citizenship: declare it openly, before the authority. And the last clause guards the other direction: if any Jew chooses, freely, to follow the believers and embrace their faith, he is to be helped and protected, and no injustice done to him. No one may touch a man for the choice he makes about his own soul.

The pagans who stayed pagan

Here is the detail that startles most readers, and the Sheikh names it plainly. In the Prophet's ﷺ own capital, in the first year of the first Islamic state, there were still idol worshippers walking the streets. We forget this. They remained until the Battle of Badr; only when he ﷺ came home victorious did the last of them read the times, see how small a remnant they had become and how the wind had turned, and enter Islam. Until that day they lived in the city as open pagans, and the Constitution legislates for them too.

And here is the part that should stop a person cold: it does not order them to convert. This is the Prophet ﷺ himself, sent to put an end to the very idolatry these men practiced, writing a clause about them, and the clause does not say believe. It says only this: no pagan of Madinah may grant protection to Quraysh, to their persons or their wealth, nor stand between Quraysh and the believers, not for money and not for the old ties of blood. How fair is that, the Sheikh asks. They are idol worshippers in the Muslims' own city, and they are not told to change their religion. What is in your heart is yours, the clause says in effect; keep your faith if you keep it, but your sword and your purse will not

serve Makkah's war against us. Believe what you believe. The one thing forbidden is treachery.

This clause would echo down the centuries into a real debate among the jurists: could idol worshippers reside under an Islamic state at all, or only the People of the Book? Everyone agreed the Jews and Christians could stay, and so could the Zoroastrians of Persia. The question was whether the same shelter reached the idolaters. The Hanafi school said yes, and this very treaty is among their proofs; it was precisely this position that later made it workable for Muslim empires, the Mughals among them, to govern entire lands full of them. The Sheikh weighs in without hedging: the broader reading seems to him the stronger case, that under the Shariah the freedom to remain upon your own faith is open to anybody. This clause is where that breadth begins.

A sanctuary with four corners

The final bundle belongs to everyone in the city at once, and it has the feel of a foundation being poured. First, the Prophet ﷺ declares the interior of Yathrib a haram for the people of this treaty, sacred ground the way Makkah is sacred, where things permitted everywhere else become forbidden the moment you cross in. No weapon drawn from its sheath. No wild tree torn down. No game hunted within the lines. And he did not leave the lines to anyone's imagination; he drew them himself, marking four corners around the city: two small mountains to the north and south, and the two great black volcanic plains, the harratayn, to east and west, places the people of Madinah still point to and name today. Inside those four markers, the city is sanctuary.

Second, and this is the keystone of everything raised afterward, a single court of last resort. Whatever dispute breaks out among the peoples of this treaty that threatens to tear the city open shall

be referred to Allah and to His Messenger ﷺ. Muslim against Jew, Jew against pagan, pagan against Muslim: when a quarrel grows large enough to endanger the whole, it goes to one address. Pause on that, the Sheikh says, because it is the bedrock under the entire structure. An Islamic state, whatever else it becomes, is at its root a place where the gravest quarrels submit to revelation, where the final word is not a chief's or a faction's but Allah's and His Messenger's ﷺ.

Third, the price of betrayal, and the document turns to thunder. No believer who has agreed to this treaty, and who believes in Allah and the Last Day, may aid or shelter anyone who rises against it; whoever does carries the curse of Allah, of the angels, and of all mankind until the Day of Judgment, and no good deed will be accepted from him. Madinah will be conspired against in the years to come, and this clause is the city's immune system written in advance. Then the treaty exhales into its closing line: whoever stays in Madinah is safe, and whoever leaves is safe, except the one who commits injustice or sin. Come in peace, go in peace, so long as you have committed no crime. And the seal at the very end gathers it all up: Allah protects the pious and the righteous, and Muhammad ﷺ is His Messenger.

Two ways to misread a treaty

Now set the parchment down and deal with its readers, because this document attracts myths from two opposite directions, and the Sheikh handles each in turn. The first inflates it. In the 1980s a paper by a prominent American Muslim academic made the rounds and became, for a while, genuinely famous in Muslim circles, claiming that this treaty was the basis of the American Constitution, that Thomas Jefferson took his very idea of America from it. The Sheikh does not pretend to find this

charming. He names it for what he believes it is: a symptom of an inferiority complex, the reflex that cannot admire anything good in the world without rushing to insist that we did it first. It is not merely unacademic, he says; it makes us a laughingstock, because the documents are so plainly different that the claim collapses the moment a serious reader examines it. And the sober truth is grand enough on its own. The treaty was genuinely novel, genuinely unique in its world, and some of its concepts did, over long centuries, travel west and slowly evolve into other things, by what he wryly calls twenty degrees of separation. That is influence. It is not authorship, and we embarrass the truth when we overstate it.

The second myth blackens it, and this charge the Sheikh will not dodge, because among many non-Muslims it has hardened past accusation into assumed fact: that the Prophet ﷺ dealt with the Jews in bad faith from the start, and that this treaty is the opening move, the proof that he set out to wall them off and load them down. The answer sits in the text itself. Every single obligation the treaty places on the Jewish tribes rests, literally word for word, on the Muslims as well: carry your own poor, pay your own blood money, ransom your own captives, spend on the city's defense. The same duties, the same protections, and on top of them a recognition no power of that age offered a religious minority anywhere, that they were an ummah alongside the believers, their faith and their courts their own. Read the document and the slander has nowhere to stand.

Then comes the verdict that the next stretch of the seerah will put to the test, and the Sheikh states it carefully. Had the Jewish tribes lived by this treaty, they of all people would have risen with the city. They were its tradesmen and jewelers, its craftsmen and financiers; Madinah's flourishing would have been their

flourishing. What happened instead, as the coming chapters will show, is that the agreement was broken, and broken from their side, at its single clearest line: do not side with the pagans against us. So when consequences eventually came, the Sheikh is emphatic that we understand why: for what was done, never for who they were. From our perspective, he says, there is no anti-Semitism in any of it; people were dealt with according to their deeds, not their blood. Hold that distinction, he asks, every time this subject returns, and he promises to take those hard chapters head-on, and frankly, when they arrive.

What one word holds

Step back from the clauses and the deepest revolution in the whole document comes into focus, and it hides inside a single word. Arabia ran on one operating system, ancient and total: you are who your father was. Lineage decided your protector, your rank, your debts, and your grave. This parchment quietly pulls that system out by the root and sets another in its place. The ummah is entered by faith, not by birth; whoever accepts Islam becomes a full member the moment he does, and no chief, no pedigree, no gatekeeper stands in between. Bilal, radiyallahu anhu, a freed slave, and Abu Bakr, radiyallahu anhu, of the noblest lineage in Makkah, stand inside it at precisely the same rank. We take that so completely for granted now, fourteen centuries downstream, that we cannot feel how strange it was. Nobody, the Sheikh says, had ever organized human beings by theology before. Belonging had always been an accident of birth; here it becomes a matter of belief.

And the word chosen to carry this new belonging repays a minute of Arabic, the kind of minute Sheikh Yasir loves to spend. Ummah grows out of umm, mother, as even a non-Arab can hear,

but the root runs deeper still, down past mother to a meaning older than both: to aim for, to head toward, to intend a destination. The same root gives us imam, the one who stands in front, toward whom everyone turns and whom everyone follows. A newborn has exactly one direction, one object that gathers all its attention and all its love, and that is the umm. An ummah, then, is a people gathered so completely upon one direction that they might as well share a single mother, a single source they all come from and all face toward. And the Qur'an stretches the word wide enough to lay it over one man alone. Of Ibrahim, who stood against an entire idol-worshipping world by himself, it says:

Indeed, Abraham was a [comprehensive] leader, devoutly obedient to Allāh, inclining toward truth, and he was not of those who associate others with Allāh.

QUR'AN 16:120

One man, named an ummah, because one chest carried what whole nations are built out of. That is the word written across the top of Madinah's Constitution: not a wary federation of bloodlines holding its breath between wars, but a mother-bond of believers all aimed in one direction, with room inside its walls even for those who had not yet joined it.

Masjid, brotherhood, constitution

So what kind of state did the document actually build? The Sheikh draws its shape before he closes, and three features stand out. It is a state with a head: the treaty makes official what everyone already understood, that the man invited from Makkah, first as a mere arbiter between exhausted factions, is now the accepted ruler of Madinah, the address to which every cross-communal dispute must finally come. It is a state with light hands:

each community runs its own internal affairs and keeps its own courts, even its own inherited customs, for the Prophet ﷺ preserved the accepted norms of each tribe wherever they did not collide with revelation, the principle of *urf* that would become one of the five great maxims of *fiqh*. Defense and the highest justice belong to the center; almost everything else stays local. Some moderns call it a federal system, and the Sheikh allows the comparison cautiously, but the structure is honestly there: autonomy below, unity above, a government that interfered remarkably little. And it is a state with one law for all: crime is crime, whoever commits it; no one may shelter a criminal; and being a Muslim, he says pointedly, gets nobody off the hook.

Two absences are worth naming, because they too are marks of its honesty. There is no *jizya* in it, for the simple reason of chronology: the verses legislating it would not come down for years, so the treaty neither contradicts the later ruling nor pretends to anticipate it, one more quiet proof that no one wrote it back into the record afterward. And there is no compulsion anywhere in it. Under the order this document founds, non-Muslims kept their worship, their family law, their own courts; classical *fiqh* let them keep even their wine among themselves, the Sheikh notes to a slightly startled room, the jurists ruling that a Muslim husband could not forbid his Christian wife what her own religion permitted her. Known limits sat around that freedom, chiefly that one did not proselytize among the Muslims, but the freedom itself was wider than the ancient world had ever thought to offer.

He cannot resist the historical irony here, and it answers a charge thrown at this religion in our own century. The very civilization that calls Islam intolerant spent those same centuries hunting down its own dissenters. From Constantine onward the church

fixed a single creed and outlawed every other Christianity, including those nearer to the truth that held Jesus to be the Messiah and not the Son of God; Arius, whose belief sounded strikingly close to Islam, was driven south, it is said as far as Abyssinia, which is how the rulers there came to know a faith so near to ours. Through the medieval centuries, the Sheikh says without exaggeration, the church killed its own in numbers that run into the millions, long before Luther, who himself had to run for his life. And when John Locke, the very philosopher that Jefferson and Franklin and Adams revered, wanted to shame Christendom into tolerance around 1689, he pointed east: look at the Turks, who let creed live beside creed among them. By the testimony of Islam's own critics, the working model of religious coexistence in that world traced back to the order this treaty founded, which the Ottomans would carry for centuries as the millet system, each community judged by its own law.

And then the episode steps back, and the first year in Madinah snaps into a sequence so deliberate it reads like architecture. First the Prophet ﷺ built a masjid: the compass, the daily reminder of why anyone is alive at all. Then he built the brotherhood, pairing emigrant to helper: the hearts. Then he wrote this treaty, fixing the place of every soul in the city, Muslim and Jew and pagan alike: the order. A mosque, a family, a law. On those three foundations the first Islamic state stood up, and the rest of the seerah is the long account of what it did.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to walk past this day. Thirty-three days into the story, the seerah hands us not a battle and not a miracle but a legal document in difficult Arabic, and the temptation is to file it

as administration and hurry on. That would be to miss the questions it puts to us.

The first is about who counts as our family. The treaty's opening clause makes belief, not blood, the bond: one ummah, distinct from all of mankind, and whoever enters the faith enters the whole of it at full rank, the freed slave beside the noble. We say we believe this. But the old operating system, you are who your people are, is not dead; it has only changed its vocabulary, and it still whispers that this believer is more truly ours for his passport or his accent, and that one less so. The Prophet ﷺ wrote the antidote into the first line of his city's constitution. Treat every believer as a member of one mother-bond, and let the differences the world is so loud about fall where they belong, beneath the bond.

The second is about whether we will hold one law even against ourselves. The believers, the treaty says, stand together against the oppressor even when he is one of their own. This is the precise opposite of the instinct it was written to bury, the tribal reflex that defends a wrong because the wrongdoer is mine. Justice that bends for our own people is not justice; it is tribalism wearing justice as a mask. Ask, the next time loyalty pulls one way and truth the other, which one the Prophet ﷺ legislated for, and you already know.

The third is about the quiet confidence of a faith that does not need to coerce. He left the idol worshippers of his own capital upon their religion. The man sent to end idolatry, with a city behind him, did not force a single one of them to the shahada; he asked only that they keep out of the war and deal in good faith, and trusted the truth to do its own slow work, which it did, after Badr, when they came of their own accord. Coercion is the move

of someone who suspects the truth cannot win an honest argument, and he never suspected that.

And the last thing this day asks is the simplest, and it reaches you exactly where you live, because you too live under agreements: contracts and marriages, citizenships and friendships, the small unwritten treaty of being someone's neighbor. The first Islamic state was built out of kept words. A man with no army and no treasury took feuding tribes and three faiths and forty restless clans and made them one body, and the only thing holding the page together was that his word could be relied upon and his Lord's word stood above it. So take that down into your ordinary days. Make your given word a safe country for whoever holds it. Stand for one law even when it costs you your own side. Carry the people nearest you before you reach for distant causes. And let your certainty be quiet enough that it never needs to force anyone. May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, who made one ummah out of strangers, bind our scattered hearts the way he bound his city, make our given word a shelter and not a snare, and gather this ummah under his banner on the Day the nations are gathered.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 33: the treaty and constitution of Madinah (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translation is from Sahih International (16:120), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry the treaty without a connected chain, the Sheikh's own weighing of its language and authenticity has been followed.

The Change of the Qiblah

The morning every prayer turned home

For about a year and a half in Madinah, every single prayer began with a quiet ache. The Prophet ﷺ would lift his hands, say the takbir, and turn his face north toward Bayt al-Maqdis in Jerusalem, exactly as Allah had commanded him. And the house he loved most on earth, the Ka'bah his father Ibrahim had raised, the first house ever built for the worship of Allah, lay directly behind his back. Not off to one side. Behind him. He never complained about it, and he never once asked out loud to have it changed. He simply carried the ache, prayer after prayer, and waited.

This day is about a direction, but it was never really about geography. Dr. Yasir Qadhi walks through it as one of the great turning points of the Madinan period, and what he uncovers is not a story about which way to point the body. It is a story about what a command is for, about a silent du'a made to the night sky with no witnesses at all, about the first time in the history of Islam that Allah lifted one ruling and put another in its place, and about the tenderness of a Lord who sometimes phrases His decree not as a bare order but as a gift.

A year and a half facing Jerusalem

After the treaty of Madinah, the forward-thinking document that bound the city's communities by faith and covenant rather than

by blood and tribe, the seerah goes quiet for a while. The early books, as the Sheikh keeps reminding us, are a series of snapshots rather than a diary; not every day is recorded, and for seven or eight months after the treaty nothing major is preserved. Then comes the next great incident: the change of the qiblah, which probably occurred around fifteen to sixteen months after the hijrah, a year and a half or a little less into the new life of the city.

From the very beginning of the prayer, the command had been to face Jerusalem, and here Dr. Yasir Qadhi notes something easy to miss: that command had never been written in the Qur'an at all. It came through the Sunnah, through revelation Allah gave His Prophet ﷺ outside the recited text. Jerusalem was the holy land of the children of Israel, and the yahood of that age were, with the Christians after them, the largest community then worshipping the one God on earth. For them the holiest land had always been Bayt al-Maqdis. They barely knew Makkah, and to this day they do not regard it as sacred, because the sanctity of Makkah was a thing Allah had blessed Ibrahim and Ismail with, not their fathers.

The true rank of the Ka'bah had stayed, in a sense, a secret kept among the prophets themselves. By the Prophet's ﷺ own report more than seventy prophets made the pilgrimage to the Ka'bah, because Allah had told them of it and commanded them to perform hajj, though their nations never followed them there. Asked once which masjid was built first on earth, he ﷺ answered: al-Masjid al-Haram. And the next? al-Masjid al-Aqsa. And how long between them? Forty years. Who laid the foundations of the second, whether it was Ismail or someone after him, Allah knows best; the temple that Sulayman would later build came many centuries afterward. The first house was

Makkah, and Allah wished, through His final Prophet ﷺ, to restore that first house to its rightful place.

In Makkah, a believer could hold both houses at once. The books record that whenever the Prophet ﷺ prayed there, he would deliberately position himself on the side of the Ka'bah that faced Jerusalem, so that a single bowing gathered two qiblahs into one. He could face Jerusalem, as commanded, and still have the Ka'bah directly in front of him. The hijrah broke that quiet geometry. Madinah lies due north of Makkah, and Jerusalem due north of Madinah, all on one straight line, so that to face Jerusalem from Madinah now meant turning a full hundred and eighty degrees away from the house of Ibrahim. The same command that in Makkah had let him face both houses at once now forced his back upon the one he loved.

Like they know their own sons

So why carry that ache for a year and a half at all? Because Madinah held an audience that Makkah never had. The Quraysh owned no scripture and could not even say what a prophet was; when the message came to them they would ask, in genuine bewilderment, what is a prophet, what is a book, we have never heard of such things. But the yahood of Madinah knew both. Here at last were thousands of people who believed in one God, in a chain of prophets, in revealed books. Anyone who has tried to convey faith, the Sheikh says from his own experience, knows the difference between speaking to those who share that framework and those who have no concept of it at all.

And the Qur'an says of their learned ones that they knew him ﷺ the way a parent knows a child:

Those to whom We gave the Scripture know him as they know their own sons. But indeed, a party of them conceal the truth while they know [it].

QUR'AN 2:146

Only a parent fully understands that verse. You pick out your own child across a crowded field at any distance, in any clothing; you know his cry in a noisy room without turning your head. That is how surely their own books had taught the rabbis to recognize the man now living among them. So the Prophet ﷺ had every earthly reason to be hopeful. Their foremost rabbi, Abdullah ibn Salam, had already embraced Islam. And in those first months the Prophet ﷺ deliberately kept his outward habits close to the People of the Book, wishing to resemble them where revelation allowed, to ease the road between them and make them feel that here was something familiar, not foreign.

But when it became clear that most of them knew the truth and were determined to refuse it anyway, that their refusal was arrogance and not ignorance, the instruction began to reverse. Now be different from them. They pray barefoot, so pray in your shoes. They part their hair on one side, so part yours on the other. They withdraw from their wives completely during menstruation, so sit with your wives, eat with them, share everything but intimacy itself. A new ummah was being given its own face, distinct from those who had come before, and the single greatest mark of that distinction was still on its way. It would be the qiblah.

The du'a he made to the night sky

He ﷺ longed to face Makkah. But a command of Allah stood, and he would not bend it by a hair on his own authority. And here the

Sheikh dwells on a scene that ought to be sat with slowly. It is narrated that once, when Jibril came down with some revelation, the Prophet ﷺ confided in him his hope: I wish that I were turned toward Makkah. And Jibril answered him: I am only a slave, just like you. I come only with the command of Allah. I cannot do this for you. If you want it, ask Allah.

Stop and picture that exchange. The most blessed human being ever to walk the earth is speaking with the most blessed inhabitant of the heavens, and each one says the same thing: this is not in my hands, take it to Allah. How utterly lost, then, the Sheikh says, is anyone who directs his du'a or his worship to a prophet or an angel, when the Prophet and the angel both pointed the asking past themselves to Allah alone. If the greatest of the angels could not grant the wish of the greatest of mankind, then every raised hand in creation belongs before Allah and before no one beneath Him.

So he asked. Not from the minbar, not before the companions, but at night, when no one was watching, lifting his face again and again toward the sky. This was the posture of his most desperate pleading. Ordinarily in du'a he would lower his head, but on the rarest and gravest occasions, when the situation truly called for it, he would raise his face to the heavens and implore, as he would later do openly on the morning of Badr. This du'a, though, had no witnesses at all. He made it alone in the dark. And then the entire ummah came to know of it forever, recited until the end of time, because Allah Himself announced it from above the seven heavens:

We have certainly seen the turning of your face, [O Muhammad], toward the heaven, and We will surely turn you to a qiblah with which you will be pleased. So turn your

face toward al-Masjid al-Haram. And wherever you [believers] are, turn your faces toward it [in prayer]. Indeed, those who have been given the Scripture well know that it is the truth from their Lord. And Allah is not unaware of what they do.

QUR'AN 2:144

Read the wording slowly, the Sheikh urges, because the wording is the whole point. Allah had already decreed that the qiblah would move; He did not need to mention His Prophet's ﷺ longing at all. He could have issued a bare command. Instead He opens with the longing itself: We have seen the turning of your face toward the sky, and We will give you a qiblah you are pleased with, *tardaha*, one that will please you. Not merely an order, but an order wrapped inside a gift. The Lord of the worlds is saying to His Messenger ﷺ: I saw what you wanted, and because you wanted it, I am giving it to you. The change was already written. The tenderness was that Allah chose to frame it as a present for a beloved.

The morning the rows turned

It happened in Rajab or Sha'ban of the second year, a month or two before Badr. And here Dr. Yasir Qadhi pauses to correct a story almost everyone has heard. The familiar image is of Jibril descending while the Prophet ﷺ leads the prayer in his own masjid, and the whole congregation rotating around him in the middle of a rak'ah. That, the Sheikh says plainly, is a myth, a later confusion. The authentic reports are simpler and quieter. The command came down in the early morning. The Prophet ﷺ announced it. He prayed one prayer facing Jerusalem and the next facing Makkah, and from that day forward the front of his

masjid became the back and the back became the front, and he prayed toward the Ka'bah until he passed away ﷺ.

The dramatic mid-prayer turning did happen, just not where people imagine. After the Prophet ﷺ prayed the new way, a man who had been with him set off back across the city. By the time he reached the masjid of the tribe of Banu Salamah, that congregation was already standing in prayer, still facing Jerusalem, because the news had not yet reached them. So he called out from the back: I have just come from the Messenger's ﷺ masjid, I prayed with him facing Makkah, the command has come down. And they turned where they stood. The imam walked straight through the rows to the opposite end, every worshipper rotated in place, and the prayer carried on unbroken.

That mosque still stands, and it carries the name the moment earned it: Masjid al-Qiblatayn, the mosque of the two qiblahs. The Sheikh notes, with evident warmth, that it sits within walking distance of the Islamic University of Madinah, where he himself studied for ten years; you leave the university, turn left at the roundabout, and there it is. Not a legend on a page but an address you can walk to.

The first abrogation, and the letters inside it

The turning set the whole city talking, and Allah had warned His Prophet ﷺ in advance that it would:

The foolish among the people will say, "What has turned them away from their qiblah, which they used to face?" Say, "To Allah belongs the east and the west. He guides whom He wills to a straight path."

QUR'AN 2:142

One of the yahood scoffed: what kind of prophet faces one direction today and the opposite one tomorrow, changing his mind back and forth? Another took offense: was our qiblah not good enough for him? And for the Muslims themselves the confusion ran deeper still, because this was the first time in Islam that Allah had revealed a ruling and then replaced it with another. The scholars call it naskh, abrogation, and the qiblah was its very first case. It was, the Sheikh says, a mini crisis for a young community encountering a concept entirely new to them.

So al-Baqarah, the first of the great surahs revealed in the Madinan period, taught the ummah what abrogation actually is:

We do not abrogate a verse or cause it to be forgotten except that We bring forth [one] better than it or similar to it. Do you not know that Allah is over all things competent?

QUR'AN 2:106

Nothing is ever lifted, the verse says, except that Allah brings something better, or at least its like. The exchange never runs downward. The classic example the Sheikh gives is the waiting period of a widow: the Qur'an first set it at one full year, then later revealed the four months and ten days that we know today. Both verses are still recited; only one is implemented. That is not a contradiction, for there is no contradiction in the Book of Allah. It is legislation in motion, a Lord raising His people stage by stage. Ahl as-Sunnah affirm abrogation, with more than a dozen authentic cases in the books, even as some later groups denied the concept entirely and tried to reinterpret every such verse away. And abrogation, the Sheikh notes, does not only run from Qur'an to Qur'an. There are four possibilities; revelation can abrogate revelation across its two forms. The Jerusalem command had come through the Sunnah, so Islam's very first

instance of abrogation was the Qur'an lifting a ruling that the Sunnah had carried. Two forms of revelation, one Lord behind both.

And folded inside that single command sat sealed letters, a different message for every reader. To the yahood it spoke firmly and yet fairly. For a year and a half this Prophet ﷺ faced your qiblah, which is proof that he stands within the very line of your own prophets and not outside it; he venerates what your prophets told you to venerate. The Sheikh is exact here, because fairness demands it: the Qur'an itself states that Allah preferred the children of Israel over the worlds of their era. They truly were a chosen people. Were. Some Muslims, in their anger, deny even this, but the Qur'an does not, and the emphasis falls on the tense. The turning announced that the season of one nation's exclusivity had now closed, and the trust was returning to the original house, the first ever raised for the worship of Allah.

The yahood answered in the language of law, which the Sheikh observes is where the emphasis of some of them lay, on observance more than on the inner life of the spirit. They said that piety itself is to face Jerusalem, and that whoever faces elsewhere has nothing accepted from him. To this day they pray toward it, and many of the most ancient churches, the Orthodox and Eastern traditions, still build and pray eastward. And Allah's reply to this stands among the most majestic ayat in the whole Book:

Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets and gives wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveler, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves; [and who] establishes

prayer and gives zakah; [those who] fulfill their promise when they promise; and [those who] are patient in poverty and hardship and during battle. Those are the ones who have been true, and it is those who are the righteous.

QUR'AN 2:177

Righteousness was never about which horizon your face points to. It is faith, and wealth given away while you still love it, and the prayer established, and the promise kept, and patience when patience costs the most. The direction serves the heart; the heart never serves the direction. And the Prophet ﷺ was consoled in the same passage: bring the People of the Book every sign and they will not follow your qiblah, nor will you follow theirs, nor do they even follow one another's, for the Jews have one and the Christians another. Do not be troubled, then; you have your qiblah and they have theirs, and Allah has chosen the best for you. The Quraysh received their letter too, and it cut deep. The man they had expelled from Makkah now honored its house more than they ever had, making it the center of his worship from exile while they ringed it with idols. The qiblah named them unfit to be custodians of the Ka'bah, and named the one ﷺ who would inherit it and restore the dignity it had held in the days of Ibrahim.

One ayah, three answers

Then came a question that only sincere believers would ever think to ask. The prayer had been obligatory for some years, and in the time since perhaps ten of the companions had already died in Madinah of natural causes, since there had been no battle yet. Every prayer of their entire lives had been offered toward Jerusalem. They never once faced the new qiblah. So the companions came to the Prophet ﷺ troubled: what about them?

What about our brothers who have died? Will their salah be accepted? Are their prayers lost?

The answer came down inside one of the tenderest arguments in the whole Qur'an:

And thus We have made you a median [i.e., just] community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you. And We did not make the qiblah which you used to face except that We might make evident who would follow the Messenger from who would turn back on his heels. And indeed, it is difficult except for those whom Allah has guided. And never would Allah have caused you to lose your faith. Indeed Allah is, to the people, Kind and Merciful.

QUR'AN 2:143

Notice what Allah called those prayers. Not your salah. Your iman. Never would Allah let your faith be wasted. Imam al-Bukhari hung an entire chapter heading on exactly this point, the Sheikh notes, and Imam Ahmad and generations of classical scholars drew the weighty conclusion from it: Allah called their prayer their faith, which means that without the prayer there is no faith, that the prayer is not an accessory bolted onto iman but part of the substance iman is made of. One classical scholar filled a whole book on this single question, gathering some twenty-two ayat and dozens of ahadith. It is a position Dr. Yasir Qadhi holds firmly and states plainly: a Muslim must keep some living relationship with the prayer, must at some point be falling into sujud before Allah, for by the Prophet's ﷺ own words the one who utterly abandons the prayer has walked out of the faith itself. And yet, with all that weight, see the mercy: the companions feared for their dead, and Allah did not lecture them, He

reassured them. He does not discard sincerity offered in good faith on a technicality.

Folded into the very middle of the same ayah came an identity for the new community: thus We have made you an ummatan wasatan, witnesses over mankind. Most readers hear wasat and think middle, or moderate, and the Sheikh grants that this meaning is real, but he insists it is secondary. In its oldest classical usage, wasat named the summit. You speak of the wasat of the mountain meaning its peak, which is at once its highest point and, on a mountain's slope, its middle. When the Qur'an tells of the brothers who lost their garden in Surah al-Qalam, the one it calls their awsat, the brother who had urged them to glorify Allah, is not the middle child but the best and the wisest of them. So hear the ayah as its first listeners heard it: I have made you the summit of the nations, the highest in stature and honor and character. And to the summit nation Allah gave the summit qiblah, the first house, the qiblah of your father Ibrahim. The best direction for the best ummah, and the perfect moment to demonstrate it, precisely when they would no longer face the qiblah of the yahood nor of the Christians.

And the same ayah states the test without flinching: We did not make the first qiblah except to make evident who would follow the Messenger ﷺ and who would turn back on his heels, and Allah Himself admits it was hard, difficult except for those whom Allah has guided. Every commandment, the Sheikh says, is a test, every single one. The content of the command changes from age to age. The question inside it never does. When Allah says turn, do you turn?

The shelter, and the first university of Islam

The turning rearranged the masjid itself, and out of that rearrangement came one of the most beautiful institutions of the entire seerah. What had been the front wall, the old Jerusalem-facing wall, was now the back. And over that retired qiblah wall the Prophet ﷺ ordered a shaded covering raised. Hold that detail against another one the Sheikh sets beside it: his own masjid had no roof at all in those years, and would not have a proper one for years to come; when it rained the worshippers were rained upon, and only later was a leaking cover of date palms laid over part of it. The first roof the Prophet ﷺ built, he built for the poor.

Beneath that shade gathered the men history remembers as Ahl as-Suffah, the people of the shelter. They were muhajirun who had arrived with nothing, new converts, travelers come to learn Islam, living inside the masjid because the homes of the Ansar, for all their famous generosity, had finally run out of room. Up until this point every newcomer could be taken in by some household, but eventually the Ansar were saturated, and so the shelter was built. It seems to have taken shape in these very weeks, shortly before Badr; a man or two are counted on both lists, people of the Suffah and people of Badr.

Their poverty is hard for us even to imagine. Many of them had no proper lower garment at all. There is a hadith in Bukhari in which the Prophet ﷺ instructed the praying women not to raise their heads from sujud until the men had fully sat upright, to spare the men of the Suffah their exposure, because they did not own enough clothing to cover themselves in prostration. And he ﷺ carried these men on his heart constantly. When his grandson Hasan was born, he told Fatimah, radiyallahu anha, to send charity to the people of the Suffah. And once, when she came to him worn out by housework and asked for a single servant from a newly arrived group of captives, he refused the most beloved

person on earth to him, and the refusal trembles with the weight of his concern: how can I give you a servant while the people of the Suffah double over with empty stomachs? By Allah, I would sooner sell these captives and spend every coin of the price on them. She never asked again. In his house, the Sheikh observes, nearness of blood bought no privilege, not even for the daughter he loved beyond anyone.

And the city learned to love them as he did. One companion had a simple idea: hang a string between two pillars of the shelter, and whenever the Ansar brought in a date harvest, let the first of it be hung on the string, so that the hungry could come and eat without ever having to beg. The Prophet ﷺ approved it, and it was done. The Sheikh's own elder teachers told him that food was still being hung in the Prophet's ﷺ masjid for those who could not afford it as recently as the 1940s and 1950s. One quiet idea between two companions, and the custom of feeding the poor without humiliating them outlived its own century by more than a thousand years.

But do not picture the Suffah as a mere poorhouse, the Sheikh insists, because it became something the world had never seen before. It was the first university of Islam, with the Prophet ﷺ as its teacher and the masjid floor as its dormitory. Its residents were not only the destitute; some of the Ansar who owned perfectly good homes moved into it anyway, simply to live beside him ﷺ and his teaching, because everything happened in the masjid and he was in the masjid far more than he was in his own house. Its population breathed with the seasons, five or ten men at times, as many as seventy at others, most of them staying for weeks or months. When believers arrived from distant tribes needing to learn the Qur'an and the prayer, the Prophet ﷺ would

assign one of the residents to teach the newcomer, and the graduate would carry the religion home to his people.

Its most famous resident reached Madinah only in the seventh year, after Khaybar: a man from Yemen the whole world now knows as Abu Hurairah, radiyallahu anhu. He stayed close to the Prophet ﷺ long enough to out-narrate every other companion, and when a later generation wondered how a latecomer could possibly relate more hadith than the earliest believers, he answered them himself in a report in Bukhari and Muslim. Were it not that Allah condemned those who conceal knowledge, he said, I would not have narrated a single hadith to you. My brothers among the muhajirun were busy with their trade in the markets, and my brothers among the Ansar were busy with their farms, and I stuck to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ with my hungry stomach, present for what they missed, memorizing what they could not. He was not even truly poor: his mother bought a house in Madinah, and he chose the shelter over it, because to remain in the masjid was to remain with the Prophet ﷺ. He admits in another report that he would sometimes ask a companion a question he already knew the answer to, just to draw out the conversation and walk beside the man to his doorstep, hoping to be invited in for a meal, too dignified to beg.

One day the Prophet ﷺ found him collapsed by the road, faint with hunger, and brought him home, where a neighbor had gifted a single cup of milk. Then came the instruction that sank Abu Hurairah's heart: go and call the people of the Suffah. He obeyed, though everything in him recoiled, and gathered the whole shelter, dozens of men, and served the cup to each in turn, watching them drink their fill and certain that nothing whatever would be left for him. When every one of them had drunk, only he and the Prophet ﷺ remained. Then the Prophet ﷺ said: sit. And:

drink. And again: drink. And again, until Abu Hurairah protested that by the One who had sent him with the truth, there was no room left in him, and only then did the Prophet ﷺ take the cup and drink last of all. He had known his student's hunger the entire time. It was, the Sheikh says, the closest thing to a loving practical joke: did you really think I would let you starve?

Abu Hurairah would one day govern Bahrain and live comfortably, because the Suffah was a season of sacrifice for the sake of knowledge, not a permanent vow of poverty, and the Sheikh is careful to note that the later mystics who derived a whole spirituality of destitution from the word are mistaken even about its origin. And the shelter's final gift came after the Prophet ﷺ was gone. In the wars of the riddah, so many of the Suffah's Qur'an memorizers fell fighting Musaylimah, more than seventy by one report, that Umar pressed Abu Bakr to gather the Qur'an into a single compiled book before its living carriers were lost. The people of the Suffah were the people of the Qur'an, and the mushaf that sits on the shelf today descends, through that compilation, from the students of that shaded wall.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read the change of the qiblah as a piece of liturgical history, a ruling that changed long ago and need not trouble us now, and to move on. That would be to miss every question the day puts to us. Sit with it a little longer, and it reaches into the most ordinary corners of a believing life.

Take the longing first, and where he ﷺ took it. He did not change the command on his own, and he did not even ask another creature to change it for him. When he confided his hope to Jibril, the greatest of the angels said, I am only a slave like you, ask Allah. If the most blessed inhabitant of the heavens could not

grant the wish of the most blessed of mankind, then there is no hand worth raising your du'a to but the hand of Allah. And see where the answer came from: he made the du'a at night, alone, with no witness on earth, and Allah answered it from above the seven heavens in verses recited until the Day of Judgment. The ache you have never said out loud, the one you have told no one, is already seen. He does not need to hear it from your tongue to know it is in your heart, and He may answer it more tenderly than you would ever have dared to ask.

Then take the test that lives inside every command. The ayah says the first qiblah existed only to make evident who would follow the Messenger ﷺ and who would turn back on his heels, and Allah Himself admitted the turning was hard. Every instruction since has carried the same quiet question folded inside it. The thing commanded changes; the question never does. When the prayer arrives and you are tired, when the lawful is plain and the unlawful is sweet, when He says turn and turning costs you something, do you turn? That is the whole of it. The qiblah was the body's version of a turn the heart is asked to make a hundred times a day.

And then take the mercy that ran underneath the test. The companions feared for the prayers of their dead, every one of them offered toward the old qiblah in perfect sincerity, and Allah did not call those prayers wasted. He called them iman, and swore He would never let them be lost. Nothing you have ever offered to Allah in good faith, under a ruling you believed was His, is discarded when the ruling changes. He is, the same ayah says, Kind and Merciful to the people. The God who tested them with the turning is the God who reassured them about their dead in the very same breath, and He named their salah their faith, so

that the scholars built an entire doctrine on that one word: guard the prayer as though it were your iman, because it is.

So carry one turning out of this day and down into your ordinary hours. Five times today you will turn your body toward the house of Ibrahim, the first house ever raised for the worship of Allah. Let the heart make the same turn that the body makes: away from whatever it had been facing, toward the One who sees the longing you never speak, who never wastes a sincere deed, and who sometimes, to a slave He loves, phrases His command as a gift. May Allah make us among those who turn wherever He commands, keep our faces and our hearts toward His house, accept every prayer we have ever offered Him in good faith, and never let what we did for His sake be lost. And may He send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, the one He turned toward a qiblah that pleased him.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 34: the change of the qiblah and abrogation in the Qur'an (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (2:146, 2:144, 2:142, 2:106, 2:177, 2:143), verified via quran.ai. Where the Sheikh weighs a popular report, his own judgment of it has been followed.

The Preparation for Badr

A market drawn in the sand, and permission to fight at last

The constitution has been written, the brotherhood has been built, the qiblah has turned. Madinah is no longer the refuge the Prophet ﷺ slipped into under cover of night; it is a city with his hand on it. And before the seerah arrives at its first great battle, Dr. Yasir Qadhi slows the whole story down to show you something most retellings skip past: a people do not walk out to Badr by accident. They are shaped for it, quietly, over two years, in their markets and their prayers and their hearts, long before a single sword is drawn. The Prophet ﷺ had moved to a new place. It was a new era, and everything was different. Policies became possible in Madinah that had been unthinkable in Makkah, where he had been a persecuted minority with no power to order an economy or a society of his own. Three changes in particular reshaped the young community: the economic, the spiritual, and the political. The first two the Sheikh sketches; the third, the road to war, he opens all the way up. By the last line of this chapter you will be standing exactly where the next seven days begin: on the edge of the wells of Badr.

A market drawn in the sand

In Makkah the Prophet ﷺ had been a minority with no economic policy to call his own. In Madinah he was independent at last, and one of the first things he did was go and look at the markets that already existed. The Arabs of the city, soon to be called the

Ansar, were farmers more than traders; when they wanted to do business they went out to the great trading grounds run by the Jewish tribes on the outskirts, for there was no major market inside Madinah itself. So the Prophet ﷺ walked through those outlying markets, and what he saw there, reported in Sunan Ibn Majah, he refused. There was cheating in them, deception built into the way they ran, and he said it plainly: this is not a marketplace for you. Then he went back toward his masjid and, with his own feet, dragged lines into the sand, a line and another and another, until he had marked out the borders of a new market a short walk to the west of the mosque. He gave it two rules, and only two. Let no one encroach on these lines and shrink it. And let no one tax the people who trade in it: no fee, no penalty, no charge for the right to do business there.

What he built in that square of sand was not a tax code, it was a conscience. He tied honesty in trade directly to faith itself, and this, the Sheikh stresses, is the heart of it. He praised the honest merchant and condemned the cheat, teaching that the truthful trader would stand in the highest company on the Day of Judgment, while the one who deceives has stepped outside the circle of the believers altogether. Anyone who understands how an economy actually works, Dr. Yasir Qadhi notes, knows that without ethics and an inner conscience a person with power or wealth can abuse it at will and nothing on earth will stop him; the only true restraint is the one a man carries inside. So the Prophet ﷺ wove commerce and religiosity into a single fabric, and then he policed it himself, walking the very market he had founded. He once came upon a date seller with beautiful fruit heaped at the top of his bag, and pushed his hand down into it, drawing out from underneath the dates that were wet and ruined and meant to be sold hidden beneath the good ones. Whoever cheats us, he

said to the man, is not of us. Not of us: not, in that moment, a believer doing even the minimum his faith required of him.

The same instinct ran through his other rulings. He forbade false oaths over goods and the hiding of defects, and he banned a practice that sounds almost innocent until you see the wisdom in it: no resident of Madinah was allowed to act as a broker, a *simсар*, for a Bedouin coming in from the desert to sell. Let the Bedouin come and sell for himself, the Prophet ﷺ ruled, because the city insider knows the ins and outs of every price and will inflate and deflate and play the game, while the desert trader, ignorant of the market, is content with whatever fair amount he can get. The middleman gets the fat cut and the stranger gets nothing. Most of the profit in any market, the Sheikh observes, flows to people who do little except possess the cunning to position themselves between buyer and seller, and the Prophet ﷺ cut that off at the root. The whole philosophy was unprecedented. People sometimes claim Islam is simply a capitalist system; that is not quite true. Set it beside the great isms of the modern age, and it comes closest, perhaps, to capitalism, but with many real differences, and the honest thing to say is that Islam is its own system, with its own logic. And its first fruit was independence. The market the Prophet ﷺ drew in the sand flourished, so that when the Jewish tribes were later expelled one by one and their markets collapsed, the believers barely felt it; they had their own, up and running, sufficient unto themselves. Financial independence was there from the very first day, and there is a lesson in that, the Sheikh says, for anyone alive in a world of borrowed and tangled economies.

The faith, taught one rung at a time

The same patience that built the market built the worship. Within roughly a year of the hijrah, almost the entire law of worship had come down, the whole shariah of ibadah, everything except the Hajj, and Hajj alone had to wait, because Hajj is performed in Makkah and Makkah was still enemy ground. It would not be revealed until the ninth year, when Abu Bakr would lead it, with the Prophet ﷺ himself performing it only in the tenth. But the rest arrived inside those first two years, and the way Allah brought it is the thing worth holding onto: never the whole mountain on the first morning, always one rung, then the next.

Watch the fasting come down a single step at a time. The Prophet ﷺ reached Madinah, and the first Muharram passed with no law of fasting at all, and the first Ramadan of the hijrah passed with nothing ordained either. Then, on the tenth of the next Muharram, nine or ten months in, he made the fast of Ashura obligatory: a single day, and he decreed that whoever had already eaten his breakfast that morning should simply eat nothing more for the rest of it. One day, to get the body used to the very idea of fasting. Only afterward, that same second year, did Allah reveal in Surah al-Baqarah that whoever among you witnesses the month of Ramadan must fast it, and the whole month became the obligation, while the fast of the tenth of Muharram softened back into a recommendation, a sunnah, which is what it remains. Charity arrived the same way. First came zakat al-fitr, the small and affordable one, in our day the price of a single modest meal that nearly anyone can give, set so that everyone could taste the act of giving. Then, once that habit was set, within a few months came the zakat on wealth itself, the greater obligation. From the easy rung to the harder one. And the prayer was perfected here too. In Makkah every prayer had been two rak'ahs; pray, he had said, as you have seen me pray. In Madinah the Dhuhr and Asr

and Maghrib and Isha were lengthened, only the Fajr keeping its two, and the wudu, the rules of major impurity, the whole shape of how the prayer is performed, all of it settled in these first two years.

Hold that pattern, because it is how Allah teaches anyone who is willing to be taught. Not the whole law on the first day. One rung, until your foot is steady on it, and then the next.

Thirteen years, and not one blade drawn

Now the heart of the episode. Here is a fact to sit with before anything else: in all thirteen years of Makkah, the Prophet ﷺ never once authorized a single act of force. Not when Yasir and Sumayya were tortured to death. Not when Bilal was dragged across the burning streets of the city. It would not have been impossible, the Sheikh points out, to send a companion to slip out at night and quietly kill one of the persecutors, a man like Umayya ibn Khalaf. The Prophet ﷺ never did, and not from weakness, but because he understood something most of us never learn to do under pressure: he weighed the harm. He saw that to kill one tormentor would bring down on the whole fragile young community a persecution it could not yet survive. So the suffering of one believer was allowed to stand, deliberately, so that the slaughter of the many could be prevented. He thought ten steps ahead while everyone around him was reacting to step one. This is the calculus the scholars call weighing the masaalih against the mafaasid, the benefits against the harms, and it is one of the deepest forms of wisdom a person can carry.

And here is the turn that lands hardest. It was, in fact, the eager who first wanted blood. Some of the young men of Makkah, full of the zealousness that belongs to the young, were straining to fight, and it was them that Allah held back. Dr. Yasir Qadhi reads

the verse over them slowly: those who were told to restrain their hands and pray and give charity, and then, when fighting was finally written upon them, a party of them flinched.

Have you not seen those who were told, "Restrain your hands [from fighting] and establish prayer and give zakah"? But then when battle was ordained for them, at once a party of them feared men as they fear Allah or with [even] greater fear. They said, "Our Lord, why have You decreed upon us fighting? If only You had postponed [it for] us for a short time." Say, "The enjoyment of this world is little, and the Hereafter is better for he who fears Allah. And injustice will not be done to you, [even] as much as a thread [inside a date seed]."

QUR'AN 4:77

In Makkah their hands were tied: lower your hands, the command had been, just pray and give what you can. Then permission came in Madinah, the thing they had begged for, and suddenly the same group grew afraid. They asked why it had been decreed so soon, why it could not have been delayed a little longer. The Qur'an caught them in the very act, and Allah chastised them: where has your enthusiasm gone, now that I have given you what you wanted? And the lesson, the Sheikh says, lands as hard fourteen centuries later as it did then. Those who talk the loudest are very often the ones who act the least. The grandest critic, the most furious voice, frequently does the smallest thing when the moment to act finally arrives.

Permission, at last

Then the first verses permitting fighting came down, and the Sheikh asks you to read their wording with great care, because the very words carry the entire philosophy. This is Surah al-Hajj,

a Makkan surah revealed at the very end of the Makkan era or the very beginning of Madinah, and it is the first concession for armed struggle in the whole of revelation.

Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being fought, because they were wronged. And indeed, Allah is competent to give them victory. [They are] those who have been evicted from their homes without right - only because they say, "Our Lord is Allah." And were it not that Allah checks the people, some by means of others, there would have been demolished monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which the name of Allah is much mentioned [i.e., praised]. And Allah will surely support those who support Him [i.e., His cause]. Indeed, Allah is Powerful and Exalted in Might.

QUR'AN 22:39-40

Notice the very first word, the Sheikh says: permission. Not command, not the summit of the religion, but permission. Allah had withheld them; now He releases them. And the reason is spelled out so plainly that there is no room to twist it: because they were wronged, driven from their homes for no crime except saying our Lord is Allah. Fighting here is the right of an oppressed people against the oppressor who has trampled them, and no court or law on earth, the Sheikh observes, would fail to recognize that right. What else is a people to do when every other avenue has closed and force is the only way left to win back what was stolen? And then the verse widens the principle into a law of the world itself: were it not that Allah restrains one people by means of another, the very houses where His name is remembered, the monasteries and churches and synagogues and mosques, would be torn to the ground. Allah permits war as the means by which oppression and corruption are pushed back, so that the earth does not collapse into chaos. This is, in its own

terms, what later thinkers would call a just-war principle, and the believers need not shy away from it: yes, our religion has jihad, and jihad rightly understood is the cause of a persecuted people whose basic freedoms have been denied, fighting back against those who oppressed them.

Abu Bakr, radiyallahu anhu, said that the moment he heard Surah al-Hajj revealed, he knew there would be war. But here Dr. Yasir Qadhi pauses to make something unmistakably clear, and we keep his caution exactly as he gave it, because the times demand it. This is history, not a slogan, descriptive and not prescriptive, a window onto what actually happened in the Prophet's ﷺ own time, and never a license for the terrorism that gets read back into these words today. In an age when a person can be locked up for a sentence taken out of context, this disclaimer has to be spoken plainly. And then he lays out the four stages the scholars trace through the seerah. First: no military fighting at all, through all thirteen years of Makkah, only the jihad of the soul, patience and turning away and leaving the persecutors to Allah. Second: permission granted but not yet an obligation, fighting on a volunteer basis, immediately after the hijrah. Third: fighting made obligatory, but against the Quraysh alone and no other tribe, and this was the bulk of the Prophet's ﷺ time. Fourth, only at the very end: fighting against all the idolaters of Arabia who had warred against the believers, when he ﷺ said he had been commanded to fight the people of his time until they testified that there is no god but Allah, after which the whole peninsula entered Islam. Permission came first. It always came first.

And the cause, the Sheikh drives home, was justice for a people whose rights had been trampled, and he sets it against an irony you cannot unsee once it is pointed out. This very country, he says, went to war and killed soldiers because of a tax raised on

tea; if that was reckoned a worthy cause, then how much more worthy, a thousand times over, is the cause of a people who say only that their Lord is Allah, and for that are killed, robbed of their property, expelled from their homes, persecuted for thirteen years. To fight back against that was the very least a wronged people could do.

Why the caravans

So the expeditions began, and they had clear and deliberate aims that the Sheikh sets out one by one. First, to declare to the Quraysh in plain terms that the Muslims had not fled like cowards to live quietly and forgotten in another city; they were an independent political and military force, a people who would stand and reclaim what had been taken from them. Second, and this is the strategy he underlines hardest, to cut off the oxygen the Quraysh breathed. Not the oxygen of the air, he says, but the oxygen of money. The wealth of Makkah was not in the city itself; it rode out in caravans.

For the accustomed security of the Quraysh, their accustomed security [in] the caravan of winter and summer.

QUR'AN 106:1-2

The caravan of winter and the caravan of summer were the entire lifeline of the Quraysh, the journeys north toward Syria and south toward Yemen that made Makkah rich; without that linkage, Makkah would have collapsed. So cut the artery, and the city that expelled the believers would feel it where it lived. And third, every march out drew a nearby tribe into alliance, expanding the young state mile by mile. The scholars name two kinds of these ventures, and the Sheikh teaches the terms: a ghazwa is an

expedition the Prophet ﷺ went out on himself, and so commanded in person; a sariyya is one he dispatched but did not personally join. By his companions' own count he went out on nineteen ghazwas and actually fought in only eight, the rest ending without battle, while the smaller saraya were so many, perhaps thirty or forty, that the scholars do not even try to list them all.

The first ventures barely drew blood. One reached a place called al-Abwa and, finding no battle, sealed the first of many treaties with a local tribe, pushing the reach of the young state a hundred miles beyond the city. On another, an arrow was loosed in the path of Allah for the very first time, shot by Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, who carried the pride of it for the rest of his life. Then came the one that was secretly the opening act of Badr itself, the expedition of al-Ushayra. The Prophet ﷺ led some hundred and fifty men, by other counts two hundred, out to intercept the mother of all caravans, the great annual caravan going up to Syria, seventy or eighty camels carrying perhaps seventy or eighty percent of the invested wealth of Makkah, for everyone with a coin to spare put it into that caravan, the way Khadijah once had, since there was no other way to make money. At its head was Abu Sufyan, not yet a believer. And they missed it. By the decree of Allah, a man of the caravan strayed and caught sight of the Muslims in the distance, raced back, and Abu Sufyan, a politician to the bone, at once diverted onto another road. The Muslims, with no way to track him, came home assuming they had simply arrived a day too late, never knowing he had seen them coming. But Abu Sufyan knew, and being intelligent, he did not forget it. There was a smaller expedition too, sometimes called the first Badr, on the plains of Badr but not against the Quraysh: it was their allies who had struck Madinah by night like

thieves, killing a herder or two and stealing some camels, and the Prophet ﷺ rode out after them with seventy of the Muhajirun and could not catch them. Even the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, the Sheikh observes, was not simply handed easy victory after victory; he came home empty-handed more than once, and there is a wisdom in that we are meant to feel.

The sealed letter at Nakhla

Then the incident the whole episode has been walking toward. One consequence of that first Badr was that the Prophet ﷺ decided he needed eyes on the movements of the Quraysh, and so, for the first time, he began sending out reconnaissance missions. He handpicked eight men, all of them from the Muhajirun and not one from the Ansar, and put them under the command of his own cousin, Abdullah ibn Jahsh. He gave Abdullah a sealed letter and sent the party northeast, the opposite direction from Makkah, with an instruction: travel for two days, and only on the morning of the second day open the letter and read it. When Abdullah broke the seal, the letter ordered him to double back to Nakhla, on the eastern side of Makkah toward Ta'if, to watch the movements of the Quraysh and report their preparations. And it added a mercy: force no one; whoever among you wishes may turn back. There were reasons for so strange a method, the Sheikh explains. The first was secrecy so total that not even the eight men themselves knew their destination until they were already two days out, for war, as the Prophet ﷺ said, is deception, deception that is permitted where outright treachery is not. The second was that the detour was itself the disguise, sending them away from Makkah so that they could curve back undetected. And the third was the mercy in the letter: these men were walking nearly unarmed into the lap

of the enemy, eight against a city, and he would compel none of them to it.

Abdullah read the letter to his companions and then said what the moment called for: whoever longs for martyrdom and to meet Allah, come with me, for I do not think I am coming back; and whoever wishes, let him return to Madinah. Not one of them turned around. They had four camels among the eight, two men to a camel, for in those early years the Muslims never had the luxury of a mount apiece. On the way, the camel that Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas and Utba ibn Ghazwan were sharing broke its tether in the night and was lost, and the two of them were left behind in the desert to search for it while the rest pressed on, because the mission had to continue. So six men reached Nakhla. And before they could even pitch a tent and set up their watch, a small caravan of the Quraysh came into view, loaded to the top with spices and raisins and goods, lightly guarded by only three or four men, utterly unsuspecting, for the Quraysh were certain that no one would attack them now.

The six agonized. There were two problems, and the Sheikh weighs both. The first was the Prophet's ﷺ order: he had sent them to gather information, not to fight, though, it is true, he had not forbidden them to fight. But the deeper problem was the date. It was the last day of Rajab, one of the sacred months in which the Arabs did not make war, and only an hour or two of daylight remained before Rajab would end and Sha'ban begin. There was the cruelty of the timing, the Sheikh says, and there is a reason Allah arranged it just so: had it been any other day there would have been no dilemma at all. Wait until sunset and the caravan would pass on and the prize and the chance would be gone forever. Strike now, within that last hour, and they would be guilty of shedding blood in a sacred month. They chose to strike. One

man of the caravan was killed, two were taken captive, the first prisoners the Muslims ever took, and they rode hard for Madinah with the goods. And it should be understood, the Sheikh notes, that there was no greed in this; the laws of dividing the spoils of war had not yet been revealed, so the six had no expectation of personal gain. Whatever they seized would go to the young state, not to their own pockets. They could not be accused of plunder.

But the Prophet ﷺ met them with anger. I did not command you to fight, he said, and he refused to touch any of the spoils. He saw at once what a disaster of reputation this would be, and it was. The Quraysh seized on it and broadcast it across the whole peninsula: look at these Muslims, they have violated the sacred month and spilled innocent blood, they have betrayed the very sanctities of Ibrahim. The criticism, in its narrow place, was valid, and the Prophet ﷺ felt the weight of it heavily; the believers had genuinely done a thing that should not have been done. And the Jewish tribes of Madinah watched the friction with quiet satisfaction, and from this point it grew clear which way they would lean, for they were not going to stand with the Muslims. For days, no one knew what to do, and the fitna gathered momentum.

Who is better than Allah in judging

Then the Qur'an itself settled it, in a verse of such breathtaking balance that the Sheikh calls it the very height of eloquence. Allah did not pretend the bloodshed was nothing.

They ask you about the sacred month - about fighting therein. Say, "Fighting therein is great [sin], but averting [people] from the way of Allah and disbelief in Him and [preventing access to] al-Masjid al-Haram and the

expulsion of its people therefrom are greater [evil] in the sight of Allah. And fitnah is greater than killing."

QUR'AN 2:217

There is the honesty first, the full stop the believers expected: fighting in the sacred month is a grave sin, a kabir, and Allah neither sanctioned it nor excused it, for He is al-Haqq and judges by the truth. The Muslims should not have shed that blood, and the Prophet ﷺ had not commanded it. But the sentence does not end there. And who, Allah turns and asks the Quraysh, are you to be the accusers? You who barred people from the path of Allah, who disbelieved in Him, who blocked the Sacred Mosque and drove its rightful people out of their homes: all of that is far greater in the sight of Allah than the single death you point at, and the fitnah you have caused is a greater crime than this killing. Ibn Abbas, radiyallahu anhu, read the word fitnah here as the very disbelief the Quraysh lived in; the Sheikh widens it, rightly, to take in also the chaos they had spread and the families they had torn apart, all of it worse than the blood that had been shed. Ibn al-Qayyim put it as plainly as it can be put: yes, what the Muslims did was a sin, a great sin even, but what you, the Quraysh, are upon is a far greater crime in the sight of Allah. The grammar of the verse, the Sheikh adds, has occupied scholars from the very beginning, its clauses so intricate that whole treatises and even modern academic papers have been written on this single ayah; it cannot really be carried into English at all.

This is the reading that is distinctly the Sheikh's gift in this episode, the place where he reaches straight out of the seventh century into our own moment, and he reaches with a line that Malcolm X left us: listen to the powerful long enough and you will start to believe that the oppressor is the victim and the victim is the terrorist. He said it more than half a century ago, and it has

only grown truer. The child throwing a stone becomes the aggressor; the tank in front of him becomes the wronged. The accuser screaming about a single death while standing on thirteen years of his own cruelty is not a relic of a vanished age; he is alive and broadcasting today. And the danger runs both ways, the Sheikh is careful to say: a wrong does not become right merely because a greater wrong provoked it, and terror answered with terror is still terror, and it returns upon the one who sheds it. The point is neither to excuse the small wrong nor to let the great one hide behind its outrage. Allah did exactly that here. He named the believers' act a sin and refused to let the Quraysh pose as the injured party, and He closed the matter with a question that should steady any heart that ever has to weigh a hard thing: who is better than Allah in judging?

With the verse revealed, the Prophet ﷺ accepted the spoils and arranged the ransom of the two captives, but he set a condition: they would be held until his two lost companions, Sa'd and Utba, came home safe, for no one yet knew their fate out in the desert. The two did find their camel and, a week or two later, returned to Madinah, and so the captives were ransomed. And one of those two prisoners, a man named al-Hakam ibn Kaysan, did a remarkable thing. After his ransom was paid, he embraced Islam, chose to stay in Madinah, and later died a martyr in one of the Prophet's ﷺ battles. He was the first of many, the Sheikh notes: again and again an enemy taken captive would accept Islam, but only after the ransom had been paid, so that the wealth would already be in the believers' hands and no one could say he had converted to save his money. So the road was paved. Every small expedition, every near miss, every hard judgment had been leading to one place. Abu Sufyan's great caravan was still out there, and the man had already sent a rider galloping toward

Makkah to raise an army, a rider he would instruct to bloody himself and tear his clothes and cry disaster through the streets, so that the Quraysh would gather the largest force they had ever assembled. The believers did not yet know it. They were about to be met by an army out of nowhere. The wells of Badr were waiting, and that is where we go next.

What this day asks of our faith

It is tempting to read a chapter like this one as mere prelude, the throat-clearing before the great battle, and to hurry through it to get to the swords. That would be to miss the questions it presses on us, because nearly everything that matters about a person's faith is decided in exactly the quiet, unglamorous places this chapter lives in: how you earn, how you worship, how you weigh a wrong, how you wait.

He built the inside before he fought the outside. Before a single expedition rode out, the Prophet ﷺ had drawn a market in the sand and ruled it with a conscience, and had let the law of worship come down one rung at a time, a single day of fasting before a whole month, a small charity before a greater one. This is how Allah teaches anyone willing to be taught, and it is how real change is built in a human life: not the whole mountain demanded on the first morning, but one step made steady, and then the next. If you are trying to turn your life toward Allah and you keep collapsing under the weight of everything at once, you have mistaken the method. Build the staircase. And tie your earning to your faith while you climb it, because the honesty you keep when no auditor is watching, the ruined dates you refuse to bury at the bottom of the bag, is itself an act of worship, and whoever cheats us, he ﷺ said, is not of us.

Then there is the long restraint, thirteen years of it, and the discipline it took. He let his own companions be tortured and killed in front of him and did not strike back, not because he could not, but because he had weighed the harm and refused to let the suffering of one trigger the destruction of all. He thought ten steps ahead while the world reacted to step one. Wisdom, this chapter teaches, is not the absence of feeling; it is the refusal to let feeling choose the worse of two outcomes. And notice who flinched when the moment finally came: the same young men who had begged loudest to fight in Makkah grew afraid the instant permission was given. Measure people, and measure yourself, not by what is said while it costs nothing, but by what is done when the order at last lands.

And then the verse that should be carried out of this day into every argument you will ever have about who was wronged and who did wrong. Allah did not pretend the believers' sin at Nakhla was nothing, and He did not let the Quraysh hide their thirteen years of cruelty behind their sudden outrage over a single death. He held both truths at once, named each for what it was, and judged. We are rarely so honest. We excuse the wrongs of the side we love and magnify the wrongs of the side we fear, and the powerful are forever teaching us to mistake the oppressor for the victim. Refuse the inverted story. Look for where the wrong began. And when the matter is finally too tangled for you to judge cleanly, rest where the Prophet ﷺ and his companions rested: who is better than Allah in judging? So take this from a day that has not yet reached its battle: build your faith one rung at a time and tie it to your honesty, weigh the harm before you react, prove yourself by your deeds and not your noise, and never let anyone convince you the victim is the villain. May Allah send His peace and blessings upon His Messenger ﷺ, who built a city's heart

before he ever drew its sword, keep our hearts firm upon His religion when the test arrives, never let us mistake the oppressor for the wronged, make us content with His decree, for who is better than He in judging, and gather us under his banner on the Day the nations are gathered.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 35: the preparation for Badr (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (4:77, 22:39-40, 106:1-2, 2:217), verified via quran.ai. The narration is the Sheikh's; the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

The Battle of Badr, part 1

A thousand camels, two horses, and a dream

Here is the strangest thing about the way the greatest battle of early Islam begins: nobody in it is planning a battle. A caravan of nearly a thousand camels is coming down from Syria carrying the wealth of an entire city, and the man guarding it is the most nervous merchant in Arabia. A column of three hundred and some believers slips out of Madinah expecting to walk home with recovered goods and no fight at all. And in Makkah, three nights before any rider arrives, a woman wakes from a dream that will come true in front of the whole city, on schedule, to the day. Dr. Yasir Qadhi opens here the chapter every earlier episode has been climbing toward, and the wonder of it is exactly this: watch Allah move every piece on the board while each player believes he is only chasing camels. This is the first of seven days at those wells, and it ends mid story, with a scream in the valley.

The well, the qibla, and a city on edge

First the stage, because the ground itself carries meaning here. Madinah has given the believers what Makkah never did: political freedom. For the first time there is an independent community under the Prophet ﷺ, with its own leadership and its own enemies, and the enemies sit in two directions. Inside the oasis are the hypocrites who would gladly see the old order restored, and tribes still watching to see whether the new arrangement will stumble. Beyond the horizon is Quraysh. Over the coming years,

for the first time in the history of the Peninsula, all of Arabia will gather into two great camps, and that polarization, Dr. Yasir Qadhi reminds us, is the painful road toward something the Arabs had never once known: unification. It is why the chroniclers filled the Madani years with one expedition after another; from their seats, the battles were the story worth recording.

Small sparks had already flown. At Nakhlah a scouting party had seized a Quraysh caravan and taken a man's life on the last day of a sacred month, and revelation itself had to answer the uproar that followed. Before that, the Prophet ﷺ had marched out to al-Ushayra to intercept this same great caravan on its way up to Syria, and missed it by a single day. Al-Ushayra was, in effect, the first act of this very battle: the same caravan, the same man, on the journey out, and Badr would be the second act, on the way home. So when Abu Sufyan brought it back down months later, he traveled the way a man travels when he knows he is being hunted, on what we would today call code red.

Between the two cities waits a stretch of ground that nobody yet has reason to notice. Badr is not a town. It is a well, dug generations earlier by a man named Badr ibn Yakhlood of the tribe of Banu Ghifar; his name passed to the water, and the water's name to the whole plain around it. It lies about one hundred and sixty miles southwest of Madinah and two hundred and fifty north of Makkah, three days by caravan then and barely over an hour by car now. It sits closer to Madinah than to Makkah. Hold on to that detail; it will matter when the two forces race for the wells.

One more thing before anyone moves, and the Sheikh will not let it pass. The qibla had changed perhaps three weeks before Badr, and for him that nearness is too close to dismiss as accident, for with Allah there are no accidents. The believers had just turned

their faces from Jerusalem toward a Kaaba still crowded with idols, in a city that had cast them out. The change reads like a quiet promise: how can you face Makkah, and turn toward the House while it is polluted with idolatry, and not one day hold it in your hand and cleanse it? Three weeks after the turn, Allah handed this small community its first great victory on the road between the two cities, as though to say that facing the Kaaba spiritually was the first installment of possessing it entirely. And that, in the end, is exactly what came to pass.

An oath sworn beside the Kaaba

War was in the air long before any caravan was sighted, and Bukhari preserves a scene from the first year after the hijrah that proves it. Sa'd ibn Mu'adh, radiyallahu anhu, the brilliant young chief of the Ansar, had an old friendship from jahiliyyah with Umayyah ibn Khalaf, the Makkan who had once owned Bilal: trading partners who hosted one another, Sa'd in Madinah, Umayyah in Makkah. On one visit Sa'd asked for a quiet hour to make tawaf, and Umayyah walked him to the Kaaba at noon, the furnace hour, when Makkah sleeps and no one would see.

They walked straight into Abu Jahl. Who is this with you, he demanded, and the answer did not soothe him, for here was a chief of the very city that now sheltered Muhammad ﷺ and his companions. How is it, Abu Jahl said, that you circle the House in safety after giving protection to the renegades, the apostates from the religion of your fathers? He did not even seem to know Sa'd had embraced Islam; sheltering the believers was crime enough. Were you not the guest of Umayyah, he swore, you would not return to your home in one piece.

Understand what had just broken. Since the days of Ibrahim, alayhi salam, whoever entered that sanctuary was safe, as the

verse the Sheikh ties to this moment says plainly:

And whoever enters it [i.e., the Ḥaram] shall be safe.

QUR'AN 3:97

The Makkans themselves used to boast, Ibn Abbas narrates, that in the days of ignorance a man could make tawaf beside the very killer of his father and no one would touch a hair of his head. Now, for the first time, the rule bent: sacred for everyone, except the Muslims and whoever loved them. Sa'd did not whisper his reply. He raised his voice so the whole of Makkah could hear it: if you cut me off from the House, by Allah, I will cut you off from something more painful to you, your trade road to Syria. The caravan route was Makkah's bloodstream, and now the threat to sever it came not only from the dispossessed Muhajirun but from the Ansar, sworn aloud beside the Kaaba. When the great caravan finally rolled south, more than one reckoning was riding with it.

The caravan every household paid into

Now it is Ramadan of the second year of the hijrah. The caravan that escaped at al-Ushayra is coming home, swollen with a full season of trade, and the Prophet ﷺ wants to know exactly where it is. He sends out scouts in waves and treats their reports as state secrets. Sahih Muslim records that when one spy returned, he ﷺ cleared the room of everyone except Anas, his young attendant of perhaps seven, before he would hear a word. Ibn Ishaq names Talha ibn Ubaydillah and Sa'id ibn Zayd among the watchers, who shadowed the caravan until it had passed, then galloped for Madinah with the count.

And the count was almost beyond belief. Nearly a thousand camels under Abu Sufyan's command, the largest caravan Quraysh had assembled in living memory, guarded by only forty men. Later attempts to price the cargo land around fifty thousand gold dinars, which converts into the millions in our money, an entire treasury walking through the desert. Ibn Ishaq adds the detail that makes it personal: there was hardly a household in all of Makkah that did not have something invested on those camels. These were traders, not farmers or wage earners, and once or twice a year a man would pour his wealth into the caravan and wait for the return that fed his family for the year. This was not a shipment. It was a city's whole economy.

Orientalist pens have loved this moment, and used it to sneer: the prophet turned highway robber. Dr. Yasir Qadhi answers the charge without flinching. For thirteen years the believers had been persecuted, tortured, and killed; the survivors had been driven from their homes and their property confiscated without a coin in return, and that seized wealth, he notes, is very likely one reason this caravan was the richest Quraysh ever sent. The Prophet ﷺ targeted no neutral tribe and broke no treaty; he moved against the one city already at war with him, and both sides understood the rules of that war exactly. After everything Quraysh had done, returning their plundered fortune to the refugees they had stripped was the least they could expect.

Whoever is ready, come right now

What happened next moved at the speed that wins wars. The reports seem at first to disagree. In Sahih Muslim the Prophet ﷺ announced no destination, only that there was a task, and that whoever had his riding animal ready should come at once; those who asked leave to fetch a mount were told no, only those ready

here and now. In Ibn Ishaq's telling he ﷺ speaks plainly: this is the caravan of Quraysh carrying their wealth, so go out to it, and perhaps Allah will grant it to you. Dr. Yasir Qadhi unties the knot, refusing to drop the Sahih Muslim report most books of seerah quietly skip. Inside the masjid he kept silence, because Madinah still held idolaters and hypocrites and loose tongues, and a destination spoken there could reach Abu Sufyan before the army did. Only once the column was clear of the city did he ﷺ name the target. The two accounts are one: secrecy within the walls, disclosure beyond them.

Notice the pattern, because it runs through the whole of his ﷺ life, from the night of the hijrah onward. He is the Messenger of Allah ﷺ; he could have leaned on heaven and lifted not a finger. Instead he clears rooms to hear intelligence, seals destinations, moves before news can outrun him, and then places his trust in Allah. Tie your camel first, the Sheikh says, and let tawakkul come after the knot, not in place of it.

The urgency tells you what this expedition was, and what it was not. Forty guards on a thousand camels is not a real escort; it is almost an invitation. Show three hundred armed men and that column would scatter like birds. So nobody mustered for war. There was almost no armor in the force, two horses in the entire company, belonging to az-Zubayr ibn al-Awwam and al-Miqdad ibn al-Aswad, and fewer than a hundred camels for more than three hundred men. Badr was never meant to be a battle. It was meant to be a confiscation, swift and bloodless, a sitting target taken before Quraysh could even learn it was in danger. Allah had written something else, for a wisdom that would show itself only on the far side of the coming days, and the whole shape of the expedition is proof that the men who marched had no idea what they were marching into.

Around the twelfth of Ramadan the column slipped out of Madinah, and the city itself was placed in the hands of a man whom the empires of that age would never have considered: Abdullah ibn Umm Maktum, the blind companion. In a world that treated the blind as half a person, fit to be pitied and set aside, the Prophet ﷺ made him the caretaker of his capital, and not for the only time; across his life he would leave him in charge of Madinah perhaps a dozen times. He was simply the wisest man available, and his eyes had nothing to do with the job. Dr. Yasir Qadhi pauses to mark how far ahead of its age this was: a faith that saw the ability and not the disability.

Three hundred and ten and some, three men to a camel

At the first encampment the Prophet ﷺ did what the rush out of Madinah had not allowed: he walked the lines and counted who had come. Two volunteers were younger than fourteen, al-Bara ibn Azib and Abdullah ibn Umar, boys aching to be numbered among the men, and he sent them home; the camp was still close enough that they could walk back in safety. It would not be the last time, for at almost every battle to come children will present themselves at the line and he ﷺ will gently turn them away. The Sheikh draws a word from it for our age: Allah made the age of physical maturity the age of intelligence, and societies that treated a boy of fourteen as a man tended to get men, while we, who have stretched childhood far past it, get the troubles we complain of.

The final muster came to three hundred and ten and some: three hundred and thirteen in some books, fifteen or seventeen in others. Eighty three were Muhajirun, and the rest Ansar, sixty two of Aws and a hundred and seventy of Khazraj, the larger and poorer tribe, who as a rule came to the truth faster than the

comfortable. With that muster, the men of Madinah were now openly inside a fight that had until now been Makkah's quarrel with her own exiles. And linger on the number, because the tradition lingers on it: when Abu Dharr, radiyallahu anhu, asked how many messengers Allah had sent, the Prophet ﷺ answered three hundred and ten and some, and it is said the company who stood with Talut against Jalut numbered the same. Allah knows best what is woven into that figure, but the echo is deliberate: small companies, impossible odds, and a help that never came from numbers.

They shared their mounts three men to a camel, riding and walking by turns, and Imam Ahmad keeps in his Musnad the scene that tells you everything about the man ﷺ they were following. The Prophet ﷺ was grouped with Ali, radiyallahu anhu, and Abu Lubabah, and imagine being assigned to share a single camel with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Of course both men said it at once: ride, ya Rasulallah, and we will walk.

He could have said yes, and the Sheikh presses on this hard, because the temptation to wave it through is exactly the point. Who would object to the general riding while the foot soldiers walk? Every army that ever existed runs on that arrangement, and he ﷺ was infinitely more than a general; he was the Messenger of Allah, and not a soul could have faulted him for accepting. Instead he smiled and said: the two of you are no younger than I am, and no stronger than I am, and I am in no less need of the reward than you. He was in his mid fifties, the senior of all three, which only sharpens the words. There is no answer a man can make to a sentence like that. So when his turn ended, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ dismounted and walked his share of the Ramadan desert, footsore in the heat like every other man in the line.

Who complains about the heat after looking up to see him ﷺ on foot among them? Rank, in his ﷺ hands, was a thing for carrying people, never a thing for being carried, and the lesson did not stay in that desert: Umar would carry it to the gates of Jerusalem.

The held back and the turned away

Two men begged to march to Badr and were refused, and the reason deserves to be carved somewhere lasting. Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman and his father, al-Yaman, had been seized by Quraysh on the road months earlier. Their captors came close to killing them, then released them on one extracted promise: that they would never take up arms alongside Muhammad ﷺ against Makkah. So when the Prophet ﷺ learned of the pledge, he held them to it, and they stayed behind while the army marched out.

Sit with how radical that ruling is. The promise had been wrung out under fear of death, given to the very enemy now waiting across the sand, and keeping it cost two believers their place at the first and greatest battle of Islam. None of it mattered. A Muslim is bound by his conditions; a Muslim is never a traitor. The Sheikh lands the point squarely in our own century: the covenants you have entered, including the quiet ones, the oaths of citizenship and the visas stamped in your passport, are binding contracts in the sight of Allah. The Qur'an opens an entire surah with the command:

O you who have believed, fulfill [all] contracts.

QUR'AN 5:1

Nobody forced you to give your word. Keep it, or do not give it; there is no third road. That two believers missed Badr rather than

break faith with their enemies is the measure of how seriously this religion takes the word a man gives.

Then came the mirror image. As the army moved out, a pagan of Madinah, famous for his courage in a fight, caught up with the column hoping for a share of the prize, and the companions were glad to see so formidable a warrior join them. The Prophet ﷺ turned to him: do you testify to Allah and His Messenger? No, said the man. Then go back, he ﷺ answered, for we will not seek the help of an idolater. The man caught up again with the same offer and met the same refusal, and a third time, until at last he understood and said: I testify that Allah is my Lord and that you are His Messenger. Then come, said the Prophet ﷺ, and the man rode with them.

The scholars would later weigh this refusal against the times he ﷺ clearly did accept help from outside the faith: Abdullah ibn Urayqit, the pagan guide to whom he entrusted his very life on the night roads of the hijrah, and Mut'im ibn Adi, whose protection had carried him home from Ta'if. Imam an-Nawawi settles the tension as a general rule with exceptions: one does not, as a rule, seek the aid of an idolater's army, but where the trust is real and the need genuine, it may be weighed case by case. But do not miss the quieter lesson. A fortune sat on the horizon, the man's conversion had every worldly motive available to it, and nobody interrogated his heart. This religion judges what is outward and leaves the inward to its Lord; we were never asked to read what is in men's chests. And it is unbothered by imperfect beginnings: come for the wrong reason, the Sheikh says, and given time you will stay for the right one.

Date seeds, a dream, and a screaming rider

Out on the trade road, Abu Sufyan was running an intelligence war of his own, sending scouts to hunt for scouts. Desert nomads told him two riders had camped nearby and watched the road. He went to the spot himself, and in the keenness of a frightened, careful man he broke open the camels' droppings and picked out date stones, and knew them at a glance: these were the dates of Yathrib. His caravan was marked. He made two decisions, and in saving his caravan with them he handed Quraysh its catastrophe. First, he hired a guide and swung the caravan off the inland road toward the coast, bypassing Badr altogether. Second, he sent for help: Damdam ibn Amr al-Ghifari, the fastest rider on the fastest camel, pounding toward Makkah with one message, save your wealth or lose it. Damdam covered it in something like three days, and in saving himself Abu Sufyan summoned to the field the army that would be broken at Badr.

But Makkah had already been warned, and not by any rider. Three nights before Damdam arrived, Atikah bint Abdul-Muttalib, the Prophet's ﷺ full aunt, the sister of his father Abdullah and of Abu Talib, woke in terror and sent for her brother Abbas. She had dreamt of a crier who came into Makkah on a camel and cried out three times: first by the masjid, then from the roof of the Kaaba, then from the peak of Abu Qubays, the mountain that overlooks the sanctuary. O you treacherous ones, he called, go out to your deaths in three days. Then he tore loose a great boulder and sent it crashing down the slope, and at the foot it shattered, and not a single house in Makkah was missed by a flying piece of it.

The interpretation needed no expert. Whatever the crier would announce would carry the deaths of these people within three days, and the boulder splintering into every home meant no household in Makkah would be spared its share of the calamity.

Abbas left her shaken. This is a dangerous dream, he told her; tell no one. And then he told his friend al-Walid in confidence, who told his father in confidence, and by the next morning the whole of Makkah was retelling it, which is how secrets work, the Sheikh observes drily: if you want one kept, keep it yourself. Abu Jahl pounced. O sons of Abdul-Muttalib, he sneered before the Kaaba, was a man among you claiming prophethood not enough, that now your women must prophesy too? If three days pass and no crier comes, we will hang a writ on the Kaaba naming you the most lying house among the Arabs. Abbas denied everything. That evening the women of Banu Abdul-Muttalib rounded on him, stung that he had swallowed the insult in silence, and he resolved to face Abu Jahl in the morning.

He never needed the speech. Crossing toward the Kaaba on the third day, Abbas saw Abu Jahl catch sight of him, turn pale, and hurry away, and for one proud heartbeat he credited his own menace. Then he heard it. The crier had come. Damdam stood at the mouth of the valley on a camel he had deliberately mutilated, its nose cut and blood smeared across it, his own shirt torn front and back, turned backward on his saddle, every trick of desert melodrama deployed to make it seem he himself had been attacked, screaming to Quraysh: your caravan, your wealth with Abu Sufyan, Muhammad ﷺ and his companions are upon it, help, help! It was theater; no hand had yet touched a single camel, and the caravan was slipping safely toward the coast. Makkah believed every word.

Did Atikah herself ever embrace Islam? Here the seerah keeps its disagreement honestly, and the Sheikh keeps it with it. Ibn Ishaq, the earlier and weightier authority, counts only Safiyyah among the Prophet's ﷺ aunts as a Muslim; Ibn Sa'd says Atikah accepted Islam and migrated to Madinah; Ibn Hajar leans toward

doubt, since after this dream the record falls silent about her, where a believer's deeds would have been preserved. Allah knows best. What no one disputes is what happened next: a city in which nearly every household had wealth riding on one caravan now heard that the caravan was dying, and a dream that had promised a stone through every doorway began, on schedule, to come true. The next six days will tell how.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read this opening act as a tale of camels and clever spycraft and miss the questions it presses on us. Strip the day down to its moving parts and almost every one is asking something of your own life.

He cleared the rooms, sealed the destination, moved before the news could run, and only then trusted Allah. That rhythm is the cure for two diseases at once. Some of us mistake planning for a failure of trust, and so we drift, and call our drifting *tawakkul*. Others plan as though the outcome were ours to manufacture, and grind ourselves to dust over results that were never in our hands. He ﷺ shows the only way: tie the camel with everything you have, and then rest the rope in the hand of your Lord. Do the work. Send the scouts. Then let go.

He refused to ride while his companions walked. Offered the camel full time by two men who meant it with all their hearts, he answered that he was no stronger than they were and in no less need of the reward, and walked his turn through the Ramadan sand. Ask what your own rank is for, in your home or your work or your community. He ﷺ held the highest station any human has ever held, and used it to carry people, never to be carried by them.

And there are the two men who missed Badr rather than break a word given to their enemies under fear of death, the fighter turned away three times until he believed, and the blind man left to govern a city. Keep the word you have given, even when keeping it costs you the thing you most want, for a believer is bound by his conditions and treachery has no fine print. Judge what is outward and leave the secrets of the heart to the only One who reads them. See the ability and not the disability, as he ﷺ saw only that Ibn Umm Maktum was the wisest man for the job. Behind each of these small doors is the same large room: a way of living that takes Allah's arrangement seriously enough to trust it, and a man's given word seriously enough to die holding it.

So stand back tonight and look at the whole board, because this is where the day leaves us, mid story, with nothing yet decided. A terrified caravan is hugging the coastline. A rider on a bleeding camel is screaming before the Kaaba over an attack that has not happened. Three hundred and some believers, two horses among them, are camped in the desert expecting to walk home with no blood spilled. And over all of it hangs a dream that promised a splinter of flying stone through every doorway in Makkah within three days. Not one player on any side has planned what is actually coming: the believers set out to collect a caravan, and Allah had written something immeasurably larger. May Allah, who moved every piece of Badr while His servants saw only camels, teach us to trust what He arranges behind what we can see, keep us truthful to every word we give, set our feet on the road beside those who walk it for His sake, and send His peace and blessings upon the one who refused to ride while his companions walked, our master Muhammad ﷺ, until the day we meet him at his pool.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 36: the Battle of Badr, part 1 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (3:97, 5:1), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The Battle of Badr, part 2: the march neither side could stop

Two unwilling armies, one appointment

The strangest thing about the most famous battle in Islam is that almost no one in it wanted to fight. We are used to imagining Badr as two hosts straining toward each other, swords already drawn in their hearts. The truth is the opposite. On one road a city marched out in a fury and then spent the whole way arguing with itself about turning back. On the other road a small band rode out for easy plunder and learned, mile by mile, that an army was waiting for them instead. Dr. Yasir Qadhi gives this entire episode to the days before a single blade is drawn, and it is some of the most human ground in the whole seerah: cowards hiding behind hired men, a noble pagan shamed into his own grave, Shaytan marching in a borrowed face, and a Prophet ﷺ who asks his companions one question four separate times, waiting for the right people to answer it.

Last week the story had split in two. A caravan was slipping home along the coast, because Abu Sufyan had sensed the Muslims watching the road and swung his camels toward the Red Sea, while a crier tore into Makkah with an exaggerated scream of alarm that set every street alight. This is the story of what that scream set in motion, and of how Allah walked two reluctant armies, step by step, toward a meeting that neither of them set and neither could stop.

Makkah empties, and the army of the unwilling

The crier's report did exactly what it was sent to do. The Quraysh convened their council, and the verdict was almost unanimous before the debate began: the caravan was not luxury cargo, it was the city's savings, the livelihood of every family that had bought a share, and an army had to ride out at once to protect it. And so there took place the largest and fastest muster in the history of Makkah, preparations that should have eaten up weeks finished inside a day. Ibn Ishaq preserves the detail that gives the gathering its eerie weight: not a single household of Makkah stayed out of it. Every family sent a fighting man, and any family that could not hire a man in its place. Anyone who sat through the first part of this story will feel a chill here, because this is the dream of Atikah coming true in real time. She had seen a rock split from the mountain and a fragment fly to every single house of Quraysh, with no household spared. Now every household was sending out a man, and every household, soon enough, would have someone to grieve.

Look closer, though, and you find this proud host riddled with men who wanted no part of it. Begin at the very top. Abu Lahab, chieftain of Banu Hashim, did not go. He found a man who owed him four thousand dirhams and wiped the whole debt clean in exchange for the man taking his place. The classical books never say why he stayed home, and the Sheikh flags his own explanation as a theory: alongside the plain cowardice of any man who fears being killed, perhaps even Abu Lahab could not draw a sword against his own sub-tribe, for the men across that field would be Banu Hashim, his own blood, and the one they marched against was his own nephew ﷺ. The good that ever flickered in him was never iman. It was tribe.

Then there was Utbah ibn Rabi'ah, the distant uncle who had once sent a tray of grapes to the Prophet ﷺ as he sat bleeding outside Ta'if. Utbah refused to march at first, for these were his own kin. It was his brother Shaybah who turned him with the oldest argument in Arabia: if we hang back at a moment like this, we will spend the rest of our lives under the mockery of Quraysh. So the two brothers packed for war, and neither understood he was packing for his own funeral. They would be the very first to fall at Badr, in the mubaraza, the duel of champions with which the Arabs opened their battles. Hold on to Utbah, because the days just ahead belong partly to him: when the two armies finally face off, he will gallop through his own ranks on a red camel begging Quraysh not to spill the blood of their own sons and brothers, until Abu Jahl questions his courage and rage accomplishes what wisdom never could, and Utbah throws himself first into the duel and dies for the very battle his own counsel had argued against. His loyalty was never to the truth; it was to the tribe, and the tribe is a cause that cannot carry a man safely home. This is one of the judgments the Sheikh returns to again and again: Islam reserves unconditional following for exactly one human being, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Every other person, party, and cause must be weighed against the truth, even when the truth testifies against your own side.

You cannot outrun what is written

Across the whole series, Dr. Yasir Qadhi keeps pointing to a spectrum among the enemies of Islam: dignified ones like Abu Sufyan, who never stooped to something vulgar and whom, as a general rule, Allah eventually guided, because some good remained in them; and crude ones, with no floor beneath them, whom as a general rule He did not. At the very bottom sat Uqbah

ibn Abi Muayt, a man so filthy, the Sheikh suggests, that the Qur'an does not even dignify him with a direct mention.

His record speaks. It was Uqbah who crept up behind the Prophet ﷺ as he prayed at the Kaaba and twisted a garment around his neck to throttle him, until Abu Bakr radiyallahu anhu threw himself in and took the beating in his place, crying out words that would themselves become a verse of the Qur'an, the protest of a believing man of Pharaoh's house: do you kill a man merely because he says, my Lord is Allah? It was Uqbah who, when Abu Jahl asked who would heap the entrails of a slaughtered camel on the Prophet's ﷺ back as he lay in sajdah, leapt up to do it, a rich nobleman carrying filth in his own hands until young Fatima came weeping to pull the load off her father. And it was Uqbah who once spat in the face of the Prophet ﷺ, who calmly wiped it away and gave him a single appointment: the first day I meet you outside the valleys of Makkah, I will put you to death. So when the call to Badr came, Uqbah was terrified, because somewhere beneath the filth he believed the promise. A kinsman talked him out the gate: I own the fastest camel there is; even if the whole army breaks, this beast will carry you home. At Badr, when the army broke, that camel was the first creature on the field to bolt, and it bolted without its rider. Uqbah was left alone on an empty plain and taken prisoner; and of all the captives of Badr only two would be executed. Uqbah headed the list. The appointment was kept to the letter.

And there was Umayyah ibn Khalaf, the slave master who had tortured Bilal in the sun: huge, perfumed, a man of money with no stomach for war, who hired a stand-in and settled back, relieved. But Umayyah was one of the five great lords of Makkah, and Abu Jahl could not afford the hole his absence would tear in morale. When flattery failed, Abu Jahl sent Uqbah into the public square

with a smoking censer and women's perfume: scent yourself, Umayyah, for surely you are one of the women. The barb landed precisely where it was aimed, and Umayyah, cursing the man who had clearly sent it, bought the finest camel he could and rode out swearing to his wife he would only make a show of it and slip home. But he had forgotten an older reckoning. The day the entrails were thrown on him ﷺ, the Prophet ﷺ had risen and named seven or eight of the lords of Makkah aloud, handing them over to Allah: Abu Jahl among them, Uqbah among them, Umayyah among them. Every single man on that list marched out to Badr. Not one of them marched back.

The whole spectacle had begun with a prayer that doomed those who made it. One of the early works of tafsir records that before the army marched, the Quraysh gripped the rings of the Kaaba and prayed: O Allah, whichever of these two armies is nobler in Your eyes, grant it victory; whichever of the two parties is more honorable, send Your aid down upon it. They thought they were buying divine insurance. They were signing their own sentence, and Allah answered them in Surah al-Anfal, the surah that walks through Badr from its first verse to its last.

If you [disbelievers] seek the decision [i.e., victory] - the decision [i.e., defeat] has come to you. And if you desist [from hostilities], it is best for you; but if you return [to war], We will return, and never will you be availed by your [large] company at all, even if it should increase; and [that is] because Allah is with the believers.

QUR'AN 8:19

Then they marched: thirteen hundred men, more than a hundred horses, six hundred coats of armor, camels enough to slaughter ten a day, and even their singing girls, drums beating, to boast

across the desert. Nothing like it existed in Arab memory, where a tribal war was a hundred men against two hundred; now thirteen hundred moved as one body, the first army in a series that would break its own record again and again, because Allah was accelerating Arabia toward an end none of them could yet see. But watch the niyyah behind the parade, because the Qur'an watched it. Allah recorded their procession in Surah al-Anfal, describing men who came forth from their homes insolently and to be seen by people, and then turned to this ummah, for all time: do not be like them. They imagined they were blocking the path of Allah; they had not grasped that Allah had encompassed them entirely.

Shaytan joins the march

The cracks showed before Makkah was even out of sight. The Qur'an's portrait of the disbelievers fit this army exactly: you think them united, but their hearts are diverse. Barely on the road, a panic rolled through the ranks. There was an old blood feud with the Banu Bakr that the arrival of Islam had frozen but never finished, and now every fighting man of Quraysh was walking away from an undefended city. What if the Banu Bakr fell upon their homes the moment their backs were turned? A large part of the army was ready to wheel around on the spot.

Shaytan could not permit that. Iblis himself, the Qur'an testifies, appeared to them in the form of Suraqah ibn Malik, a trusted chieftain of the Banu Kinanah, the wider tribe to which the Banu Bakr belonged. Do not be afraid, he told them; I guarantee you Makkah is safe from them, and to prove it I will march with you myself. The army cheered the great chieftain's pledge, and the devil kept pace with them the whole road to Badr, polishing their confidence as he went.

And [remember] when Satan made their deeds pleasing to them and said, "No one can overcome you today from among the people, and indeed, I am your protector." But when the two armies sighted each other, he turned on his heels and said, "Indeed, I am disassociated from you. Indeed, I see what you do not see; indeed, I fear Allah. And Allah is severe in penalty."

QUR'AN 8:48

Keep the ending of that verse beside its beginning. On the morning of the battle, when this false Suraqah saw what no pagan eye could see, the angels of Allah descending rank upon rank, he spun on his heels and ran, shoving away a soldier who grabbed at him so hard that the man flew through the air. And the devil's parting sermon to the congregation he had so carefully gathered was the single truest thing he ever told them: I see what you do not see; I fear Allah. He marched them all the way to the field, and abandoned them on it. That, the Sheikh notes, is the whole career of Shaytan in one ayah: he beautifies the road in, and he is gone at the precise moment you need him.

Every exit refused

Then a rider came up from the coast with Abu Sufyan's second message: the caravan is safe, I will be back in Makkah within days, the army can go home. Notice that even Abu Sufyan, whose goods had set all of this in motion, wanted no battle at all. And Utbah, the voice of plain sense to the very end, said it openly: the job is done; let us turn back. Abu Jahl refused. No, he said, we march on to Badr, camp there three days, slaughter our camels, drink our wine, let the girls sing for us, and all of Arabia will hear that Quraysh is mighty and not to be touched. There was still, even now, no military reason left to fight a soul; this was

theater, pride hunting for an audience. The Banu Zahra wanted none of it and turned for home, and others with them, some three hundred to three hundred and fifty men, and the army shrank from thirteen hundred to about a thousand. A full third of the host had walked away.

One more warning was wasted on them on the road. The youngest man of the Banu Hashim contingent woke from a dream shaking: he had seen a rider come crying through the camp that Utbah and Shaybah and Abu Jahl and Umayyah were slain, name after name of Quraysh, and then gash his camel and drive it loose until its blood spattered every single tent. The meaning lay in plain sight, the same warning Atikah had been given, that no household would be spared a loss. They laughed it off as a boy's bad sleep, and kept marching. So the march had become a strange thing: the caravan safe, a third of the army gone home, the wisest man in the camp arguing for retreat, the camp's own dreams screaming at it to stop. And on the other road, as we are about to see, the Muslims wanted no battle either.

[Remember] when you were on the near side of the valley, and they were on the farther side, and the caravan was lower [in position] than you. If you had made an appointment [to meet], you would have missed the appointment. But [it was] so that Allah might accomplish a matter already destined - that those who perished [through disbelief] would perish upon evidence and those who lived [in faith] would live upon evidence; and indeed, Allah is Hearing and Knowing.

QUR'AN 8:42

Two armies, neither of which chose this meeting, walked toward the same wells anyway, because the appointment was never theirs to set or to cancel.

The army that only wanted a caravan

Now cross to the other road. Some three hundred and fifteen men had ridden out of Madinah expecting an easy raid: a caravan guarded by forty riders, odds of nearly ten to one in their favor, a few days out and back. They had packed provisions for an errand, not armor for a war. Then the rumors began to drift in from travelers met along the way: an army has left Makkah, and it is looking for you. The Prophet ﷺ had been shown a dream that he would meet a fighting force, and had quietly hoped it might be meant for some later expedition. Now he began testing the camp. What do you think, he asked, if we met a force from Makkah that has been warned of our coming? Some answered honestly: Messenger of Allah, we made no preparations for that; we came out for the caravan. The next day he asked again, and the answer came back firmer still. The Qur'an preserves the scene without the smallest flattery.

Arguing with you concerning the truth after it had become clear, as if they were being driven toward death while they were looking on.

QUR'AN 8:6

And here is the mercy folded inside the rebuke. In the very passage that corrects them, Allah calls them believers; the verse just before names them a party among the believers who were unwilling. There were no hypocrites yet, for the disease of nifaq only appears after Badr makes Islam worth faking. So these arguers were sincere mu'minin who were simply afraid, and Allah records their fear without expelling them from faith. Battle had been prescribed for them while they hated it, just as He says elsewhere: enjoined upon you while it is hateful to you, and perhaps you hate a thing that is good for you. The trembling

before a hard duty, the Sheikh notes, is not the sin; surrendering to it is. And beneath the fear sat a promise that had already been given.

[Remember, O believers], when Allah promised you one of the two groups - that it would be yours - and you wished that the unarmed one would be yours. But Allah intended to establish the truth by His words and to eliminate the disbelievers

QUR'AN 8:7

They ached for the unarmed party, the easy spoils. Allah intended the armed one, and with it something larger: that the truth would be set firm by His words, and that this day would earn the name al-Furqan, the criterion splitting truth from falsehood once and for all. So the Prophet ﷺ kept repeating one line: whichever of the two we meet, Allah has promised us that it is ours.

We are from water

Nearing the wells, certainty was still missing, and what the Prophet ﷺ did next is, in the Sheikh's reading of the whole seerah, the only time it ever happened: he went out as his own scout, with no deputy but the one man he trusted beyond every other, Abu Bakr. A scout rides beyond the protection of the army, where any hand may seize him, and that is the courage of it; and he ﷺ would not carry back a word he had not verified with his own eyes, and that is the care of it. They came upon an old bedouin, one of the desert's professional neutrals who survived by knowing everything and belonging to no one. What word, the Prophet ﷺ asked him, is there of Quraysh, and of Muhammad and his army? I will tell you nothing, the old man bargained, until I

know which side you are on. Speak, the Prophet ﷺ told him, and I promise to tell you where we are from. So the bedouin reported that Muhammad had left Yathrib on a certain day, which would place him now near Badr, and Quraysh on another, which would place them on the far side of it, and both reckonings were exactly right. Now, said the old man, your end of the bargain: where are you from?

We are from water, said the Prophet ﷺ, and he turned his camel and rode away, leaving the bedouin to run through every clan and valley named Water he had ever heard of. It was not a lie. It was tawriyah, a truth wearing a veil, for Allah asks in Surah al-Anbiya whether the deniers have not seen that He made from water every living thing. The scholars note both its permission and its limit, that a tongue which leans on it too freely will soon be called a liar. But in a scout's mouth, on the rim of a battlefield, it was wisdom, and it kept the secret without costing the truth.

Back at the camp, the Prophet ﷺ stood in a long prayer, and a commotion rose up behind him. The companions had caught two slave boys of the Quraysh army at the water. We are from the army, the boys said, truthfully. But the companions' hearts were still fixed on the caravan, so they beat the boys until they said what was wanted, we are from the caravan, and stopped; and when the truth crept back, the beating resumed. When the Prophet ﷺ finished his prayer he put the absurdity into one sentence: when they tell you the truth you beat them, and when they lie to you, you let them go. Under a stick a man will say anything; the only thing those sticks had silenced was the one fact the companions could not bear to hear. Then he ﷺ questioned the boys himself. How many men are they? We are only slaves, they said, we do not count armies. So he asked a question fitted to their work: how many camels do they slaughter

each day? Nine, they said, some days ten. Then they are between nine hundred and a thousand, he said, for a single camel feeds about a hundred men. Two gentle questions had retrieved what all the beating could not. And which of the noblemen are with them? The boys recited a who's who of Makkah, every senior enemy of Islam gathered into one camp, and the companions' faces fell, for if the lords had come, so had their wealth and armor and hired men. But the Prophet ﷺ brightened, because every name was collateral on a promise Allah had already made, and he answered with a phrase Arabic almost refuses to surrender into another language: Makkah has thrown to you the dearest pieces of its own liver, the cream of its crop, the very apple of its eye. Then he began to walk the ground and point. By Allah, he said, here falls Utbah, here Shaybah, here Umayyah, here Abu Jahl. Days later, every one of those men would be found dead on the exact patch of earth his finger ﷺ had marked.

Until the Ansar spoke

One thing remained, and it explains the strangest detail of the whole night. The Prophet ﷺ, who needed counsel from no human being, gathered his companions and asked them: advise me, what should we do? Abu Bakr rose, praised Allah, and said: it is your command, and we are behind you. The Prophet ﷺ thanked him, and asked the same question again. Umar rose and said the like of it, and was thanked, and the question came a third time. So al-Miqdad of the muhajirun stood with fire in his mouth. O Messenger of Allah, he said, we will not say to you what the Children of Israel said to Musa, when they told their prophet in the words Allah preserved in Surah al-Ma'idah to go, he and his Lord, and fight, for they would sit where they were. Rather, said

al-Miqdad, go, you and your Lord, and fight, and we are fighting right beside you; take us to the farthest corner of the earth and we will follow you. And still the Prophet ﷺ asked: what do you think we should do? Why keep asking? Because Abu Bakr and Umar were Quraysh, and al-Miqdad was a muhajir, and the pledge of Aqabah had bound the Ansar to one thing only: to defend the Prophet ﷺ inside Madinah as they would defend their own families. Badr was not Madinah, and this was not defense. He ﷺ would not drag them an inch past the letter of their oath; he wanted them to step past it of their own accord. And the chief of the Ansar understood. Sa'd ibn Muadh radiyallahu anhu, the man at whose death, years later, the Throne of the Most Merciful would shake, rose and said: it seems it is us you mean, O Messenger of Allah. He said yes.

Then Sa'd gave the answer the whole night had been waiting to hear. We have believed in you, he said, and borne witness that what you brought is the truth, and we have given you our oaths to hear and to obey. Notice that he never once reached for the exemption he was entitled to claim; he answered the spirit of his pledge and left its letter where it lay. By the One who sent you with the truth, he said, if you were to plunge into this sea we would plunge into it right behind you, and not a man of us would hang back on the shore. We are not afraid to meet the enemy tomorrow; we are patient in war and true at the encounter; and perhaps Allah will show you, through us, what will comfort your eye. So march, with the blessing of Allah. And the face of the Prophet ﷺ lit up like the shining moon. March, he said, and receive glad tidings, for Allah has promised me one of the two parties, and this is the one; and every man of theirs whom I have named will fall. The desert men who could not swim had just

promised him the ocean. And so the two armies lay down within reach of the same wells, to wake in the morning at Badr.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read this episode as stagecraft before the real drama of the battle, all marching and counting and bargaining, and to wait for the swords. That would be to miss the question it presses on us, the same one the Prophet ﷺ pressed four times on his own companions: when a duty you did not choose is suddenly camped across the valley from you, what will you say?

Look first at the men who came out to silence that question with noise. Utbah argued against the battle with genuine wisdom and then charged into it the instant his pride was pricked, dying for a cause he himself had named as folly. Uqbah secured the fastest camel in the army and it fled without him. Umayyah hired a stand-in and swore to his wife he would only pretend, and fell on appointed ground all the same. Every one of them spent his cleverness trying to bend the outcome, and the outcome did not bend. So the day asks us to stop pouring our strength into outrunning what Allah has written, and to pour it instead into meeting Him well when it comes. And it asks something sharper about where we place our loyalty, for Utbah followed his tribe over the truth he could plainly see, and the tribe carried him straight to his death. Only one human being in all of history is to be followed without condition, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Everyone else, every party we are born into and every cause that flatters us, must be laid against the truth and kept only as far as it agrees, even when the truth indicts our own.

Then look at the men on the other road, the ones who trembled and did not run. Allah corrected the companions who argued against marching, and in the very same breath He called them

believers. That single word should steady everyone who has ever mistaken his own fear for the failure of his faith. The dread before a hard obedience, the weight of the blanket over Fajr, the racing heart before a first Hajj, is not nifaq and it is not weakness of belief; it is the cost of being human, and it takes nothing from the iman that overrules it. The sin was never in the trembling; it would only have been in staying home.

And then there is Sa'd, offered every honest excuse and refusing all of them. He had pledged to defend the Prophet ﷺ within the walls of his own city, and not a soul would have blamed him for holding to exactly that; instead he reached past the letter of his oath to its spirit, and pledged the Ansar into the open desert and the sea beyond it. So when Allah asks of us only the minimum, will we hand Him the minimum and call the account settled, or answer like the Ansar and give Him the spirit of the thing and not merely its letter? Take this night, then, down into your ordinary days. Follow the truth above your tribe and your own comfort. Spend your strength preparing to meet the decree rather than scheming to escape it. Tremble, if you must, and then march anyway. And when Allah asks more of you than He strictly could have, answer Him as the Ansar did: by the One who sent you with the truth, if you plunged into the sea, we would plunge in behind you. May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, make us of those who follow the truth wherever it leads, who fear and obey all the same, and write for each of us the company of the people of Badr in the gardens of His pleasure.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 37: the Battle of Badr, part 2 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International, quoted at 8:19, 8:48, 8:42, 8:6, and 8:7 and referenced from 8:47,

21:30, and 5:24, all verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing has been followed.

The Battle of Badr, part 3

An army asleep, a Prophet ﷺ awake

The day before this one ended with a pledge. The Ansar had stood and committed themselves to whatever their Prophet ﷺ asked of them, and now the pledge is to be spent. Three hundred and some believers are gathered on the plains of Badr, and across the open sand the host of Quraysh is arriving in the failing light, nearly three times their number, armored, mounted, provisioned for a war the believers had not gone out to fight. This is the third of the seven days the seerah spends inside this battle, and it is the hinge of the whole story. Nothing has clashed yet, and by the time the sun goes down on it, everything that decides the outcome will already have happened, except the fighting.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi builds this episode almost entirely out of Surah al-Anfal, the surah he reads as one long commentary on Badr, and out of a single image the Companions could never afterward shake loose: an entire army stretched out fast asleep under a soft rain, and one man ﷺ awake beneath a tree, pleading until the sky turned grey. Hold that image, because the day is built around it.

Three flags and two flanks

With the Ansar committed, the manpower was his to arrange, and the Prophet ﷺ divided the army into its parts. The primary standard, the flag the whole field would orient itself by, was white

that day. He kept no single banner across his life; the color changed from battle to battle, whatever was at hand, sometimes white, sometimes black. This white flag he handed to Mus'ab ibn Umayr, the same Mus'ab who would meet his shahadah years later at Uhud. The right flank, with the Muhajirun, he gave to Ali ibn Abi Talib. The left flank, with the Ansar, he gave to Sa'd ibn Mu'adh. One report adds a small reserve held in the rear under Qays ibn Sa'sa'a, against reinforcement or some shift in the line.

Linger over the choices, because the Sheikh does. The Muhajirun were placed with the Muhajirun and the Ansar with the Ansar, and that arrangement carries a lesson some Muslims badly need. Men fight best beside the men they were raised with; the Muhajirun knew one another, had grown up together, were easy in each other's company, and so were the Ansar among themselves. The instinct of some believers to erase culture and lineage entirely, to pretend that ethnicity simply does not exist, is itself an extreme, and Allah corrects it in His own words:

O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Aware.

QUR'AN 49:13

He made us peoples and tribes on purpose, so that we would come to know one another, and so that each of us would carry a recognizable self. If every face and every taste were identical, what would there be to know? Islam does not flatten that variety; it gathers it. And neither does it pretend that all people weigh the same in their communities, for the Prophet ﷺ set a young, respected nobleman over each flank, Ali over the one and Sa'd

ibn Mu'adh over the other, men whose own people already looked up to them. In war above all, no soldier should be left wondering why a stranger commands him. Leadership belongs to those a community already respects.

And the flag, the most honored post on the field and the most dangerous, went to the one man both halves of the army could claim. The bearer is not the commander; he is the fixed point the army reads to know which way it faces in the chaos, and he fights one hand always on the staff, while every enemy wants nothing more than to see that flag drop, for a falling flag breaks a watching army's heart. Mus'ab was Qurayshi by blood, of the noblest of them, and yet the most Madani of all the Muhajirun, the teacher sent ahead at whose hands most of the Ansar had entered Islam. No one could have symbolized the whole army better. One flag, deliberately chosen, stitching two peoples into a single ummah.

Is this revelation, or is it opinion?

The Prophet ﷺ reached Badr first, on the sixteenth of Ramadan in the second year of the hijrah, a full day ahead of Quraysh, and made camp at the near edge of the plain. Before the camp had properly settled, a man came forward whose whole reputation was the desert: al-Hubab ibn al-Mundhir, a seasoned traveler who had spent long stretches reading this kind of land. He put to the Prophet ﷺ one of the great questions of the seerah. O Messenger of Allah, this place you have chosen to camp: is it something Allah has commanded you, so that we may not move from it a single step forward or back, or is it your own opinion, the tactics and the strategy of war? No, came the answer, it is my own opinion.

Then this is not the place, said Hubab. Do not camp at the corner of the plain. March on, past the midpoint, until the wells of Badr lie behind us. We will hold the water, drink our fill, and leave Quraysh to whatever their jugs carried from Makkah, and there is no heavier blow to an army's spirit than thirst it can see no end to. In one narration Jibril came and told him to follow Hubab's counsel. The Prophet ﷺ rose and did exactly that, telling Hubab he had pointed them to the better course. He set the wells at his back, the great one and the several smaller, and to be safe he had the smaller stopped up, their water hauled out and poured into the great well now at the center of the Muslim camp, so that Quraysh would reach no water on any side. Then, at Sa'd ibn Mu'adh's suggestion, a shaded headquarters was raised on higher ground from which the Prophet ﷺ could watch over the field.

Sit with what just happened, because it is shura made visible. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ pulled no rank. He took the counsel of a single foot soldier and moved an entire army on the strength of it, one of dozens of such moments in his life; he was never the dictator who must have his own way. But the Sheikh plants a warning here, because this very story gets pulled out of shape. Some people stretch this one war-camp question into a license to sort the whole religion into commands they must keep and opinions they may discard, saying the prayer and zakah bind but the laws of marriage, divorce, inheritance, and dealings were merely his personal view. This is, in the Sheikh's plain word, extremism. Where to pitch a tent at Badr legislated nothing; Badr happened once, and he ﷺ never meant the campsite as a ruling for anyone to follow. The prayer, the fast, the laws he taught the believers of Madinah: that is sharia, and Allah binds us to it, for if you obey him you are guided. And notice that even Hubab did not

presume to decide for himself which was which. He asked. Who among us is in any position to do now what Hubab did then? What the Prophet ﷺ said and did is his sharia, and the handful of times a Companion ever asked outright, is this a command or a suggestion, can be counted on the fingers of one hand.

The night Allah put an army to sleep

Night fell, and on the far horizon the believers could watch Quraysh pouring onto the plain. There would be no battle tonight; everyone understood that tomorrow was the day. It is narrated in the Musnad of Imam Ahmad that the Prophet ﷺ spent that entire night awake, standing, pleading, sinking into long prostration, and at the heart of his crying was one sentence: O Allah, if You destroy this small band, You will not be worshipped on earth. He meant it exactly: I am the final prophet, and if this handful falls, there is no messenger to come after me, and the worship of You leaves the earth with us. Ibn Mas'ud, who lived a long life among the believers, said he never in all of it saw a human being plead the way the Prophet ﷺ pleaded that night. And Ali would remember it for years: if only you had seen us at Badr, every one of us dead asleep, and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ alone beneath a tree, praying and making du'a until the morning came.

Feel how strange that sentence is. The night before the first decisive battle of Islam, outnumbered men about to face their own fathers and brothers in the morning, and they sleep like children. The night before any ordinary examination robs us of sleep; how was anyone to sleep before this? But the Qur'an names the sleep itself as the gift, the work of Allah and not of their own calm:

[Remember] when He overwhelmed you with drowsiness [giving] security from Him and sent down upon you from the sky, rain by which to purify you and remove from you the evil [suggestions] of Satan and to make steadfast your hearts and plant firmly thereby your feet.

QUR'AN 8:11

Read what that single verse loads onto one night. The drowsiness was security straight from Him, and sleep is what makes a body fresh and able the next day. The rain that fell in the dark was not a downpour but a drizzle, just enough, and it did three things at once: it washed them clean, a physical bath for tired and dusty men; it drove off the whispering of shaytan, a spiritual bath beneath the first; and it bound the loose desert sand firm beneath their feet, for dry sand swallows a step and heavy rain turns to mud, while just the right rain packs it hard as pavement. Some books add that Quraysh caught a heavy, miring downpour instead, though Sheikh Yasir notes he found no authentic chain for that detail and hands it on only as it came. What is certain is that one side received sleep and the perfect rain, and the other received neither.

Somewhere in that night, Ibn Kathir holds, the Prophet ﷺ briefly dozed, and in that dozing Allah showed him the dream the Qur'an records:

[Remember, O Muhammad], when Allah showed them to you in your dream as few; and if He had shown them to you as many, you [believers] would have lost courage and would have disputed in the matter [of whether to fight], but Allah saved [you from that]. Indeed, He is Knowing of that within the breasts.

QUR'AN 8:43

The Sheikh is careful with this, because it could be misread. It was not false information, for Allah never shows what is untrue. If a hundred men are shown as ten, that is a true portion of the hundred; it would only be a lie to show a hundred as a hundred and fifty. He ﷺ was shown a real section of the enemy, and the sight planted confidence where dread had every right to live, a surge of certainty before the victory had even begun, and that surge was itself the mercy. Then the dawn broke, and it was he ﷺ, the one man who had not slept, who walked among the sleepers calling out: O people, the prayer. So the believers were woken for Fajr, and the seventeenth of Ramadan in the second year of the hijrah began. By some modern reckonings this was the seventeenth of March, 624, and it appears to have fallen on a Friday.

Rows like prayer, and a poke repaid

The Arabs of that age fought in the old way they called al-farr wal-karr: surge out, strike, wheel back to recover, surge again, attacking in waves and circling home between them. After Fajr the Prophet ﷺ arranged something Arabia had never drilled. He stood the army in ranks, rows and files like a congregation lined for salah, the few spears set at the front, the swords forming the body, the handful of bows behind, every man with a sword because swords were what they had. He had attended no academy of war, had never seen this done, and yet it simply came to him, and the same Qur'an that loves the worshippers standing in lines names the same shape on the battlefield:

Indeed, Allah loves those who fight in His cause in a row as though they are a [single] structure joined firmly.

QUR'AN 61:4

A single structure, joined firmly: fourteen centuries later, ranks and files are exactly how every army on earth is taught to stand and to march, the same psychology, the same solidity, and he ﷺ was given it whole, with no precedent behind him.

He walked between the rows with a small stick, straightening the line the way he straightened it for prayer, and found one Companion, Sawad, standing forward out of the line. He prodded his stomach with the stick: get back in line, Sawad. And Sawad, with the battle minutes away, said the unthinkable. You have hurt me without cause, O Messenger of Allah, and Allah has sent you with truth and justice, so I demand my retribution. Picture any other general, in any other army, on any other morning, hearing that from a private over the lightest poke of a stick. The Prophet ﷺ did not pause and did not bristle. He dropped the stick, lifted his garment clear of his stomach, and bared the skin: here, take your retribution. And Sawad fell upon him and pressed his mouth to the bared skin, kissing it. What is this, Sawad? O Messenger of Allah, you see what stands before us today, and I wanted, if I am to die, that my last moment in this world be my skin against yours. The Prophet ﷺ prayed for him and moved on down the line.

The Sheikh draws this out, because it is one of the reasons, he says, that the religion led the world for as long as it did. On the very morning the whole religion could have perished, its justice still ran level over the leader and the led. The man who carried revelation conceded that someone he had poked held a claim against him, and he settled it on the spot, with the enemy in sight. He did not say, not now, there is a war to win. There is no crisis large enough, in his example, to suspend a person's right over the one who leads them.

The man on the red camel

Now cross the field, as the lecture does, to Quraysh. They had arrived late and uncertain of what they faced, so in the early light they sent out their sharpest scout, Umayr ibn Wahb al-Jumahi, to ride wide around the plain and bring back a count. His report was precise enough: around three hundred, no armor, no real cavalry, nothing in their hands but their swords. Then came the assessment no one had asked for. I see catastrophe coming. These are young men of Yathrib with nothing but their blades, and men with nothing fight like the desperate. By Allah, you will not kill one of them before he kills one of you, and if they take three hundred of you, a third of this army, what sweetness is left in life afterward? It was an honest reading. Abu Jahl waved it away: we did not ask your opinion, only the number.

Others were reaching for a way out too. More than a third of the army had already turned back once the caravan was known to be safe, and the doubt had not left those who remained. Hakim ibn Hizam carried a proposal to Utbah ibn Rabi'ah, the senior chief who had opposed this march from the first day and come to it grudgingly. Pay the blood money for Amr al-Hadrami, the man killed months earlier at Nakhlah whose name the war party kept chanting as their grievance, and the pretext for the whole battle dissolves. Utbah, a rich man and a noble one, stood and offered to pay it from his own wealth. If anyone calls you cowards for turning back, he told the army, lay the name on me; say Utbah turned coward. What will you win here? You will kill your own fathers, your own sons, your own cousins, then go home to live as neighbors with the man whose hand killed your brother. Leave this man and his companions to the rest of the Arabs: if the Arabs deal with him, your hands stay clean, and if he prevails, his glory is your glory, for he ﷺ is one of you in the end.

Watching from the Muslim lines, the Prophet ﷺ saw a rider hurrying back and forth on a red camel through the enemy ranks and said: if there is any good in them, it is with the man on the red camel; if they listen to him, they will be rightly guided. He sent Ali forward to call to Hamza, who stood at the front, and learn who the rider was. Sheikh Yasir stops the narrative here for one of the episode's sharpest lessons. Utbah's motive was nothing but tribal jahiliyyah; he did not argue that the believers were upon the truth, he argued from blood, from the horror of a clan killing its own. His reason was pagan, and yet his position was wise, and the Prophet ﷺ named that wisdom as good from clear across a battlefield. A person can be an idolater and still hold to principles worth admiring, worth respecting, even worth supporting. The believers who insist that no cause deserves their backing unless it was born inside revelation, that one must stand wholly apart from any system not their own, have misread their own seerah. Here is the Prophet ﷺ calling an idolater's counsel the one good thing in Quraysh. A just cause is a just cause, wherever it stands.

Abu Jahl made certain wisdom lost. He mocked Hakim as a mere errand boy, and Hakim threw it back, that he carried his own conviction and wanted no bloodshed either. Then Abu Jahl went to the slain man's own brother, shamed him, and pushed him forward to raise the cry for vengeance before any mind could soften, and he told Utbah to his face that the sight of the Muslim ranks had turned his courage to fear. Utbah, who minutes before had volunteered to wear the name of coward for the good of all, could not take the word from this man. He flung a coarse insult back, swore Abu Jahl would soon see who the coward truly was, and called his own brother and his own son out beside him for single combat, then and there. He acted on a wound to his pride,

and it killed him. As the lines drew up, Abu Jahl raised his own voice in prayer for all to hear: O Allah, whichever of these two armies has brought the greater evil, cut more of the ties of kinship, and carried the stranger doctrine, destroy it today. On every one of the three counts he had described himself and not the Prophet ﷺ, who carried the ancient creed of Ibrahim while it was Abu Jahl who clung to the newer idols and fought precisely to sever the ties of his own blood. And the Qur'an is Allah's reply to that prayer:

If you [disbelievers] seek the decision [i.e., victory] - the decision [i.e., defeat] has come to you. And if you desist [from hostilities], it is best for you; but if you return [to war], We will return, and never will you be availed by your [large] company at all, even if it should increase; and [that is] because Allah is with the believers.

QUR'AN 8:19

You asked for a verdict, and the verdict has come.

Three against three

The Prophet ﷺ had his own orders moving down the line as the armies faced off: certain men of the enemy were not to be killed if it could be helped. Among them his uncle al-Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib, and Abul Bukhtari, who had once stood tall among those who broke the boycott of Banu Hashim. These were men dragged out to this field against their will, and even across a line of battle the Prophet ﷺ refused to flatten an army into a single undifferentiated enemy. Not all enemies are the same, the Sheikh says; even among those marching to kill you, some are better than others, and some may carry no hatred in their hearts at all.

First blood had in fact already been spilled. Al-Aswad of Makhzum, the tribe of Abu Jahl, had come upon the blocked wells in a fury and sworn he would drink from that water or die in the attempt. Hamza met him short of it and cut him down, and he died trying, the first man killed at Badr, though whether it fell on the night of the sixteenth or the morning of the seventeenth the books of sira do not settle.

Then came the mubaraza, Arabia's old curtain-raiser, the duel of champions out in the open ground between the armies before the armies themselves close. Utbah strode forward with his brother Shaybah and his son al-Walid, calling for opponents. Three young men of the Ansar leapt up first, Awf and Mu'awwidh the two sons of Afra, who will return in this story to meet Abu Jahl, and Abdullah ibn Rawahah, eager to prove themselves against Quraysh. Utbah waved them off. We have no quarrel with you, people of Yathrib; we do not even know you. Send us our equals, men of our own blood. Even with the proof of it standing in front of him, the jahili mind could not register that iman had made these strangers closer than blood. So the Prophet ﷺ called the names himself: rise, Ubaydah ibn al-Harith; rise, Hamza; rise, Ali. He sent out his own house, a cousin of his father, his uncle, and the young man raised in his shadow. Ubaydah was the eldest, so the pairing fell out by age, the one Ibn Ishaq records and the only one that makes sense: Ubaydah to Utbah, Hamza to Shaybah, Ali to al-Walid. Hamza and Ali killed their men without taking a single blow, then turned to find that Utbah had sliced through Ubaydah's leg and was about to finish him; together they cut Utbah down and carried Ubaydah back on their shoulders. He died of that wound some days after the battle, an elderly man whose leg could not be saved, a shaheed by its slow effects.

Three of the cream of Quraysh lay dead within minutes, the appetizer, as the Sheikh calls it, of a victory Allah had already decided to give them whole. But notice who one of the three was: Utbah, the one man who had argued against this war from the first day to this very morning, dead now beside his own brother and his own son, all three because he could not bear Abu Jahl saying a single word to his face. These were neither the worst of Quraysh nor the best, but their tribal heat, the bare arrogance of my tribe, right or wrong, burned them up in the end. When a person's morals stand on tribe and pride instead of on the Qur'an and the Sunnah, even the wisdom in them carries a crack, and it splits exactly when it is needed most. Many of the scholars of tafsir read the verse below as descending about these very champions, two sides disputing over their Lord, and Ali himself used to say that he would be the first to kneel in that dispute before his Lord on the Day of Judgment, for he was the first to kill at Badr:

These are two adversaries who have disputed over their Lord. But those who disbelieved will have cut out for them garments of fire. Poured upon their heads will be scalding water

QUR'AN 22:19

The cloak that fell from his shoulders

It is narrated in Sahih Muslim that as the ranks stood ready and the two armies could at last see one another, the Prophet ﷺ turned to face the qiblah and raised his hands high above his head, palms open and lifted to the sky. This was the rarest of his postures of du'a, the hands raised all the way to the heavens with the face lifted too, kept for the edge of distress and otherwise never used, unlike the common posture of the palms held open

before him. He stood in it now, and the plea of the night returned word for word: O Allah, fulfill what You have promised me. O Allah, if this small band is destroyed, You will not be worshipped on earth. He begged so long and sank so deep into the asking that he lost awareness of everything around him, and his upper garment slipped from his shoulders and fell, and he did not notice. He stood there bare-shouldered, the cloak in the dirt, and went on asking.

It was Abu Bakr, radiyallahu anhu, who stooped and lifted the garment, wrapped it back around him, and held him from behind. Enough, O Messenger of Allah. Your Lord will give you what He has promised you. Sheikh Yasir reads this scene as one of the treasures of the whole series: two perfections inside a single embrace. The Prophet ﷺ in that moment is perfecting fear, refusing to take even a divine promise for granted, holding the trembling of a servant who will not presume on his Lord. Abu Bakr is perfecting hope, certain the promise is good and already as good as kept. Both belong in a believer's heart, and each has its hour; and here, with the enemy drawn up and everything about to be decided, fear is the more fitting, and it is the Prophet ﷺ who carries it while Abu Bakr, always the second, carries the hope.

His hands had barely come down when the trance of revelation took him. Remember the hadith in Abu Dawud: when a servant raises his hands to Allah, Allah is shy to return them empty, the way a man of any nobility feels shy to send away a beggar who keeps asking; and to Allah belongs the higher example, so what of these hands, and this servant doing the asking? When the revelation lifted and the Prophet ﷺ turned, Ibn Mas'ud said his face shone like the moon. Rejoice, Abu Bakr, he said. You tell me to be calm, and I tell you to be glad: the help of Allah has come.

There is Jibril, wearing his turban, holding the rein of his horse, leading it down through the valley.

[Remember] when you were asking help of your Lord, and He answered you, "Indeed, I will reinforce you with a thousand from the angels, following one another."

QUR'AN 8:9

A thousand angels, following one upon another, for three hundred men, when a single angel would have been enough. That is the measure of Allah's reassurance: not the help the moment required, but help heaped past all need, so the believers would know they were not abandoned to their own thin numbers. Then the Prophet ﷺ stepped forward reciting a verse of Surah al-Qamar:

[Their] assembly will be defeated, and they will turn their backs [in retreat].

QUR'AN 54:45

Umar ibn al-Khattab said he had long wondered which assembly that verse meant, and where on earth it would turn and flee. On the morning of Badr, hearing it on the Prophet's ﷺ lips with the host of Quraysh spread out before him, he knew.

You did not throw when you threw

One gesture remained before the armies closed. The Prophet ﷺ bent down, scooped up a handful of pebbles and dust, and flung it toward Quraysh, saying: may these faces be disgraced. One man's throw, across perhaps half a mile of open plain, and physically it could never have carried; yet every soldier in that army found his eyes and his nostrils stung with grit, blinded,

forced to stop and claw the dust away. Allah Himself carried what a human hand could not, and then He claimed it in His own words:

And you did not kill them, but it was Allah who killed them. And you threw not, [O Muhammad], when you threw, but it was Allah who threw that He might test the believers with a good test. Indeed, Allah is Hearing and Knowing.

QUR'AN 8:17

Hold that sentence, because it is this entire day in miniature, and very nearly the whole seerah. You threw, and it was not you who threw. The hand was his; the reach was Allah's. The believers did everything that lay within their power: they took counsel and moved the camp, secured the wells, straightened the rows, bared the skin for justice, sent out their champions, raised their hands. And the sleep, the rain, the firmed sand, the true dream, the thousand angels, and the dust that blinded an army were Allah's alone. The work was real, and so was the help, and the help was the part that mattered. Tomorrow the lines will crash together at last: the melee, the angels seen striking, and the tyrants of Makkah meeting their accounts. Tonight, hold the image the Companions carried out of this day for the rest of their lives, a Prophet ﷺ who would not stop asking for the ummah that would one day include you and me, and a Lord who was shy to send those hands back empty.

What this day asks of our faith

It is easy to read Badr as a great adventure safely sealed in the past, and to miss the question this particular day puts to us. Strip it to its bones and it asks the same thing of our faith that it asked of theirs, only the battlefield has moved indoors, into the heart.

He carried a promise of victory and still pleaded all night as though he had none. This is the first thing to take down into ordinary days. The Prophet ﷺ knew Allah had guaranteed him help, had been told the enemy would be routed, and spent the whole night in sajdah anyway, begging until his cloak fell and he never felt it go. We treat our confidence in Allah as a reason to ask Him for less, as if certainty made the asking unnecessary; he treated it as a reason to ask for more. If the one man on earth holding a divine guarantee would not stop pleading for it, then the surer you are of Allah, the harder you should be knocking at His door, not the softer. And remember which of them, that morning, carried the fear and which the hope. Neither canceled the other. A believing heart is meant to hold both, and the whole of wisdom is knowing which the hour in front of you calls for.

He took a foot soldier's correction and moved an army on it, and minutes from battle he bared his own stomach to settle a debt over the poke of a stick. Leadership that cannot be advised, that cannot be told it has chosen the lesser ground, is not following his example, however much it claims his name. And justice that waits for a calmer day, that tells the wronged person there is a crisis on and their claim can keep, is not his justice either. He let Hubab redraw the battle plan and he let Sawad take his retribution, on the same field, in the same hour, because neither counsel nor fairness was beneath the dignity of the man Allah had chosen, and neither should be beneath ours.

And he pointed across a battlefield at an idolater and called his counsel the one good in Quraysh. A person can be wrong about the greatest thing of all and still be right about a true and decent thing, and the believer who will not stand with a just cause because it was not born in revelation has shut a door the Prophet ﷺ held open in the middle of a war. Take all of it down into your

days. Knock harder the surer you are. Hold fear and hope together and know the hour. Stay correctable, and let no crisis postpone your fairness to the people in your charge. And when you find yourself outnumbered in some narrow place of your own, do every lawful thing within your power, straighten your rows and secure your wells, and then raise your hands and leave the throw to Allah, who threw at Badr when His Prophet ﷺ threw and did not let the dust fall short. May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, who pleaded through the night for an ummah that had not yet been born, give our nights some portion of his asking and our mornings some portion of Abu Bakr's calm, and answer us, when we are small and afraid, the way He answered the small band at Badr.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 38: the Battle of Badr, part 3 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (49:13, 8:11, 8:43, 61:4, 8:19, 22:19, 8:9, 54:45, 8:17), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The Battle of Badr, part 4: the fighting, the angels, and the fall of Abu Jahl

Two boys, a thousand angels, and the fall of a tyrant

It is Friday, the seventeenth of Ramadan, in the second year after the hijrah, and the sun is barely up over the sand. This is a date Dr. Yasir Qadhi quizzes his students on, because every Muslim should simply know it the way they know their own name. For three days you have watched the two armies circle one another, watched the rain firm the believers' ground and turn the enemy's to slush, watched the Prophet ﷺ beg in the little tent of branches until his cloak slipped from his shoulders. Now the circling is over. The lines crash together, and from soon after Fajr until midday, Allah separates truth from falsehood on a plain that no one had ever heard of and no one will ever forget.

The Sheikh opens with an honest caveat. You cannot describe a battle of hundreds; you can only describe the duels inside it, the single combats of the old style, one man against one man, and of those perhaps fifteen survive in the record, in an order no one can fully reconstruct. So this day is not a marching narrative. It is a mosaic: a man who threw away his dates, archers told to wait, a rider no one could see, two unknown teenagers keeping a secret oath, a tyrant's last words under a shepherd's foot, and a voice that could not be buried. Walk it slowly. Every tile teaches.

Too long a life to finish these dates

Quraysh surged, and the believers braced to meet them, and even now there was discipline in the small army. The Prophet ﷺ had commanded the archers to hold their arrows until the enemy came within range, then to shower them but keep some in reserve. In the version Abu Dawud records he told them not to unsheathe their swords until the enemy was right upon them: until then, arrows, and eyes fixed on the foe. Somewhere in these opening moments, the Sheikh suggests, belongs the handful of dust you watched him ﷺ scoop up the day before. He flung it into the faces of the advancing army with a curse upon those faces, and the reports insist that every single man of them was blinded for a while, clawing the grit out of his eyes. One throw, a whole army staggered. And the Qur'an itself ruled on whose throw that really was.

And you did not kill them, but it was Allah who killed them. And you threw not, [O Muhammad], when you threw, but it was Allah who threw that He might test the believers with a good test. Indeed, Allah is Hearing and Knowing.

QUR'AN 8:17

Then came the call that opens the gates of the unseen. As the lines closed, the Prophet ﷺ cried out: rise to a Jannah whose width is the heavens and the earth. One of the companions was chewing a few dates, eating to put strength in his arm for the fight, and at those words an old Arabic exclamation escaped him, one of those classical phrases, long gone from common speech, that a man uses to make light of a thing, to say in effect, is that all? The Prophet ﷺ asked him what he meant. Nothing, Messenger of Allah, he said, only that if a Jannah as wide as the heavens and the earth is truly there waiting, then what use is it to

keep sitting here? I want to be of its people. And he ﷺ answered: you are of its people.

The man looked at the dates still in his hand, and said the sentence the ummah has never let go of: if I live long enough to finish these dates, that is too long a life. He flung them away, drew his sword, and charged into the army until he met his shahada. Only some thirteen or fourteen Muslims fell at Badr in all. The people of Badr are the elite of the companions, the Sheikh reminds us, and the martyrs of Badr are the elite of that elite, and this man was among the first of them: a believer who measured the distance to Paradise in half a handful of dates, and judged even that too far to wait.

The closest of us to the enemy

Did the Prophet ﷺ himself fight that day? The early scholars discussed it, and the majority held that in most of his battles he did not, because he was the commander, and a commander by and large does not trade blows in the line; he holds the order of the field. But Badr, it seems, was different. Ali ibn Abi Talib would say of it, in a report carried in Muslim and in Ahmad, that on the day of Badr, when the fighting grew fierce, they would seek shelter close to the Prophet ﷺ, and he was the closest of them all to the enemy, the bravest and most courageous of them that day. Sit with that picture. The safest place on the whole field was beside him ﷺ, because no man among them stood nearer to the swords than he did.

And yet the same Ali carries the other half. He slipped back to look in on him ﷺ at the command tent and found him fallen in prostration, pleading with his Lord. Ali returned to the line and fought, came back, and found him still in sujud; a third time he came, and a third time found him on the ground before Allah, and

only after that third return was victory written. So Ali narrates both: that he ﷺ was at the very front, and that he was in the tent in prostration. Scholars like Ibn Kathir and Ibn Hajar put the two memories together the only way they fit. The battle lasted some hours, four or five at least, from a little after Fajr until the heat of midday, and all that morning he ﷺ alternated, front line and then prostration, sword and then sujud, the order of the field in one hand and the plea of a beggar in the other. And wherever he moved, Abu Bakr moved with him, guarding his Prophet's ﷺ prayer when he prayed and his back when he fought.

Most of us, when the pressure comes, choose one or the other. We throw ourselves into the doing and forget to ask, or we sink into asking and never lift a hand to do. The morning of Badr is what it looks like to refuse that choice: one man giving the battle his whole arm and his whole forehead in the very same hour, certain that the effort was obligatory and equally certain that the effort, by itself, would decide nothing.

A thousand, rank after rank

The night of pleading you stood through was answered with a number, and the number was exact: one thousand angels. And here Dr. Yasir Qadhi slows down on the single verb Allah chose, because that verb carries the whole theology of the day.

[Remember] when you were asking help of your Lord, and He answered you, "Indeed, I will reinforce you with a thousand from the angels, following one another."

QUR'AN 8:9

The word is *mumiddukum*, I will reinforce you, I will supply and extend you. It is not the language of replacement, the Sheikh

insists, it is the language of completion. Allah did not say, sit back and I will handle this for you. He said, you have begun the work, and the help I send will carry it through to its end. And the angels came rank following upon rank, host behind host, wave upon wave, until a thousand had come down on one small plain. Then listen to what Allah says, not to the believers now, but to the angels themselves:

[Remember] when your Lord inspired to the angels, "I am with you, so strengthen those who have believed. I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieved, so strike [them] upon the necks and strike from them every fingertip."

QUR'AN 8:12

I am with you. Even the angels, beings of pure light who have never once disobeyed, are steadied with those words before they are sent in. They are told to make the believers firm, and the believers were made firm: their hearts, their footing, their grip on their weapons. And then the order to strike, with Allah Himself naming where the blow should fall. Imagine it, the Sheikh says: Allah instructing the angels where to strike, and in the same breath telling them, I am with you. How much more help could any army need?

And some of the companions heard them, and some saw. Ibn Abbas narrates, in a hadith in Sahih Muslim, that one of the believers was in hot pursuit of an enemy when he heard the crack of a whip above him and a rider's voice he could not see, urging on a horse by its name: forward, Hayzum. Even the angels name their mounts, the Sheikh smiles. Before the companion's own blow could land, the man he was chasing fell with his face struck open, and when he told the Prophet ﷺ of it, he answered:

you have spoken the truth, that was help sent down to you from the third heaven. When a slight, short man of the Ansar brought in al-Abbas, the Prophet's ﷺ uncle and a famous warrior, Abbas would not accept the shame, insisting his captor had been a handsome man with parted hair whom he could not find in the camp; be quiet, the Prophet ﷺ told him, for Allah aided you with a noble angel. And of Zubayr ibn al-Awwam, who wore a yellow turban that morning, he had said, every prophet has a hawari, a devoted helper, and my hawari is Zubayr; it is mentioned that the angels came down dressed as he was dressed, an honor draped over one man by a thousand of Allah's soldiers.

But notice the pattern stamped on every one of these reports, for it is the lesson the whole episode is built around. The believer begins the motion, and the angel completes it. The companion raises the sword, the angel brings the man down. Never once, in any surviving story of Badr, does an angel fight a believer's battle while the believer stands and watches. The help of Allah, at Badr and in your own life, is *mumidd*. It does not descend on the idle. It meets people already moving.

Why a thousand, when one would have done

Here Dr. Yasir Qadhi stops the narrative entirely to ask the question the numbers beg. When Allah willed the destruction of the people of Lut, the reports say that Jibril, who has seven hundred wings, came in his true form, vast as the eye can see, and struck the earth beside their cities with the edge of a single wing, and the cities were lifted whole and brought crashing down. One angel, one wing, one blow, and a civilization gone. So why send a thousand angels to Badr, when one of them could have ended Quraysh before they finished their breakfast?

Not because Allah was short of power. He was teaching a law that runs through the entire Qur'an and sunnah: nothing is given for free, not even Jannah. Our deeds could never purchase Paradise; its price is beyond anything we own, and the reward is worth infinitely more than the effort we pay for it. And still it is not handed over without the effort. Allah looks at the striving, at its quality and sincerity rather than its quantity, and then His help carries that striving immeasurably further than it could have gone alone. The three hundred had to march, and draw, and walk bodily into the swords first. Only then, with the believers already in the thick of it, their trust placed in Allah the way Ibrahim placed his when the knife was already at his son's throat, did the help descend and the verdict come: you have passed the test.

The proof text the Sheikh reaches for is gentler than any battlefield, and it lands harder for being gentle. Maryam, alone, exhausted, in the pains of labor with Isa, leaning against the trunk of a palm, is not simply handed her provision out of the sky.

And shake toward you the trunk of the palm tree; it will drop upon you ripe, fresh dates.

QUR'AN 19:25

If anyone in creation was ever owed a miracle with no effort attached, it was she, in that state, in that hour. And still the dates did not fall until she shook the tree. Allah could have let them drop into her lap. He told her to shake. So when you and I sit back and say, if it is decreed for me, it will come, we have the equation backwards. Take the means, the Sheikh says, shake your tree, and what is decreed for you will fall. Ibn Abbas adds one line more, and the Sheikh treats his word on these matters as weighty: only at Badr did the angels actually fight; in every other

battle they were presence and reassurance, not swords in the line. Even heaven's own army, when it came, came under the rule of effort.

And sometimes the means Allah asks of you will look absurd in your hand. Ukkasha's sword shattered against an enemy's armor, and he came to the Prophet ﷺ holding the useless stump: I have no other sword. The Prophet ﷺ picked up a branch, some twigs, and said: fight with this. He did not stand there asking what a man does with a stick in a war of steel. He took it, raised it, and in his hand it became a sword, and not just any sword but the finest he ever owned, which he carried in every battle until he died a shahid with it years later. That is what taking the means with full trust looks like: the Prophet ﷺ says fight with this, and you do not argue, you walk.

Two boys and an oath of shadows

Across the field, Quraysh had their own version of the command tent. Abu Jahl, the man who had engineered this entire war, was stationed in a grove of trees, as Ibn Hajar and others describe it, screened by his men, his son beside him, a strong young warrior. And Allah had decreed that this tyrant would not fall to a famous champion. He would fall to two teenagers, perhaps sixteen and seventeen, both of the Ansar, neither of whom had ever set foot in Makkah or seen Abu Jahl's face. There is a humiliation in that meant for him, the Sheikh observes, and an honor in it meant for them and for the Ansar to the end of time.

Abdur-Rahman ibn Awf tells the story himself, and Bukhari preserves it. Standing in the line as the armies closed, he looked right and left hoping for big strong men beside him, the kind who finish their opponent and turn to help you, and was deflated to find a young boy on each side. Then one of them nudged him

and leaned in to whisper, so the other would not overhear, for the two were friends and rivals in a secret of their own: uncle, do you know Abu Jahl? What do you want with him, Abdur-Rahman asked. I have heard he insults the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, the boy said, and by Him in whose hand my soul is, if I see him, my shadow will not leave his shadow until the one of us with the shorter life is dead. Barely had he taken that in when the second boy nudged him from the other side and swore the same oath. Two friends, in secret competition, racing each other for one tyrant. I stood between them, Abdur-Rahman said, and was comforted to be there after all.

When he caught sight of Abu Jahl in the distance, he told them: there is your man. And they shot off like two arrows loosed at once, straight through an entire army. Perhaps, the Sheikh notes, their very youth was its own wisdom, for no one recognized two unknown boys or thought to stop them. The first to reach him was Mu'adh, son of a chief of Banu Salamah, a boy who had given his pledge at the second Aqabah. Afraid he would not close the last gap in time, he leapt it with his sword, could not reach Abu Jahl's upper body, and the blow came down instead and took off his leg at a stroke. One narrator, reaching for the only image strong enough, said the leg flew off the way a date stone leaps from beneath the grindstone. It was grievous, but not by itself a killing wound. And Abu Jahl's son, defending his father, brought his own sword down and severed Mu'adh's arm at the shoulder.

The arm hung by a strip of skin, and Mu'adh fought on with it dangling, until it got in his way; so he set his foot on it, bent down, and tore it off, and went on with the other hand. He was perhaps sixteen. If one of us takes a pin to the finger we lose the power to think; this boy ripped his own arm away and returned to

the battle. He lived a long life one-armed and died in his bed in the caliphate of Uthman. The second boy was Mu'awwidh, one of the two sons of Afra you were told to remember, the same boy who had leapt up for the duels at the start of the day and been gently waved back. He landed his own blow on Abu Jahl, fought on, and fell shahid before the day was over, he and his brother both, two sons of one righteous mother lying among the fourteen of Badr.

Both boys had raced back to the Prophet ﷺ first, each crying out: I killed Abu Jahl, I killed him. He ﷺ asked to see their two swords, looked at the blades, and gave a verdict that let neither lose his joy: both of you killed him. The wounds together were the death. By the law of the spoils, the personal effects of a slain enemy belong to the one who killed him, and so Abu Jahl's costly armor, his horse and his sword, went to Mu'adh, because Mu'awwidh had already gone on to something far better than armor.

The Firawn of this ummah, and a voice that could not be buried. When the fighting began to wind down, the Prophet ﷺ sent the companions out: find me the body of Abu Jahl. Because he had fallen in that screen of trees they could not find him for a while. The one who found him, breathing his last among the branches, was Abdullah ibn Mas'ud: the slight Yemeni shepherd, the sixth person ever to accept Islam, the man Abu Jahl and his circle had humiliated again and again in the streets of Makkah precisely because he had no clan worth fearing behind him. Of every man Allah could have appointed to stand over this deathbed, He chose that one.

Ibn Mas'ud placed his foot on the chest of Abu Jahl and said: do you finally see that Allah has disgraced you? And the man stayed

in character to his last breath. How has He disgraced me, he answered, turning the blame back even now, am I anything more than a man killed by his own people? Then: whose is the victory today? The victory belongs to Allah and His Messenger, said Ibn Mas'ud. And the last words Abu Jahl ever spoke were one more sneer, up at the foot on his chest: you have climbed to a lofty place, you little son of a shepherd. Ibn Mas'ud's own sword had been blunted by the long morning, so the end came, fittingly, by Abu Jahl's own gleaming blade, the fine sword he had carried all day and never used, drawn now from his hand and used on him. Ibn Mas'ud came back and said: Messenger of Allah, I have found the body of Abu Jahl. Do you swear by Allah, he ﷺ asked, and three times Ibn Mas'ud swore it, because this was news that changed the shape of the world. Then the Prophet ﷺ stood over the man who had tortured the weak, starved Banu Hashim in the ravine of the boycott, and driven this whole war into being, and gave him the one title of its kind he ever gave anyone: this was the Firawn of this ummah. Every nation has its Pharaoh; ours had now met his sea.

And there was a second tyrant to fall. You met Umayyah ibn Khalaf days ago: the perfumed lord of Makkah who once pinned Bilal to the burning stones, who tried to buy his way out of marching to this battle and was shamed into coming, because deep in himself he believed the Prophet's ﷺ warning that if he were ever met outside Makkah he would not live. Now Quraysh were breaking, and Umayyah cast about for someone to buy his life. His eye fell on his oldest friend from before Islam, Abdur-Rahman ibn Awf, the one believer who had never harmed him. Abdur-Rahman was carrying off captured armor, a small fortune of it. Umayyah seized his hand, his son at his side: leave the armor, take the two of us as prisoners, and I will give you milking

camels beyond counting. A businessman even on the battlefield, the Sheikh smiles, and the deal was permissible, so Abdur-Rahman dropped the armor and began walking his two captives toward the camp.

They never reached it. Bilal, radiyallahu anhu, saw the prisoner's face, and everything Makkah had done to him rose up at once. The head of kufr, he cried, Umayyah ibn Khalaf, if he is saved then let me not be saved. Abdur-Rahman pleaded that these were his prisoners, but Bilal only raised his voice, the voice Allah had built to carry, until a circle of the Ansar gathered, and he told them exactly who this man was. Every Muslim child today knows what Umayyah did to Bilal, the Sheikh reminds us; what then did the Ansar of that day know of it? Abdur-Rahman threw his own body over his old friend to shield him, and the swords went in beneath his arms, one blade catching Abdur-Rahman's own foot, a scar he showed for the rest of his life. Umayyah and his son were killed there, on what was technically still the field of battle, before any law of captives had yet been revealed: a gray hour, the Sheikh is careful to mark, in which the rules that would later govern prisoners did not yet exist, and in which Allah willed that this man not be ransomed. Abdur-Rahman, merchant to the marrow, would say wryly ever after: may Allah have mercy on Bilal; he cost me my armor and my prisoners both. But the end belongs to the justice of Allah. When the dead of Quraysh were gathered for burial, the body of Umayyah alone could not be lifted: every time they took hold of him the flesh came away in their hands. So they left him where he had fallen and heaped the hot pebbles of the desert over him until he was covered. The man who had pressed Bilal down onto the burning stones of Makkah was buried beneath those same stones, and the voice he had tried for years to crush was the very voice that called down his

end. As you do unto others, the Sheikh repeats, so it shall be done unto you. This is a law Allah has written through the seerah and through every nation before it.

Fathers, sons, and where loyalty lands

Badr cut straight through families, blood against blood across the lines, and the Prophet ﷺ never let the army forget it. His order stood: al-Abbas and the young men of Banu Hashim were not to be killed, for they had been dragged out against their will, and indeed they surrendered at the first chance without having killed anyone. And on the same protected list stood a man with no tie of blood at all: Abul Bukhtari, who during the long years of the boycott had quietly slipped food and water to Banu Hashim in the ravine and had pushed hardest of anyone to tear the unjust pact apart. In the middle of a battle, the Prophet ﷺ was repaying an old favor. Dr. Yasir Qadhi pauses here and speaks directly to his own congregation. Not all who reject your faith are the same. Those who stand with the Muslims for justice and dignity, who defend the freedom of every faith to be practiced, are owed gratitude and justice in return, never the treatment reserved for those who hate. Their kufr does not cancel the good they do; the isolationist who would lump every non-Muslim together has missed a clear teaching of the seerah. He draws the line from Badr straight to the Muslims living as minorities in his own land.

Abul Bukhtari's end still aches. A companion reached him and called out the reprieve: we have been forbidden to harm you, surrender and you are safe. He asked: and my companion beside me? Him I cannot protect, the man answered. Then Abul Bukhtari spoke the sentence that became his epitaph: I will not have the women of Quraysh say that I saved myself and abandoned my companion. He forced the fight, and was killed, and the

companion came grieving to the Prophet ﷺ, who excused him, because he had tried.

Then there is Abu Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah, the early believer and muhajir, whose own father had taken the field with one fixed obsession: to kill the son who had believed. All day the father hunted him through the lines, and all day Abu Ubaydah slid away, refusing the fight out of respect and love, until at last the father cornered him and attacked outright, and in defending his own life the son's sword fell and the father died by it. The whispers started at once, that he had killed his own father, and the grief of it sat heavy on him. It was answered from above the seven heavens, in the closing verse of Surah al-Mujadila.

You will not find a people who believe in Allah and the Last Day having affection for those who oppose Allah and His Messenger, even if they were their fathers or their sons or their brothers or their kindred. Those - He has decreed within their hearts faith and supported them with spirit from Him. And We will admit them to gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide eternally. Allah is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him - those are the party of Allah. Unquestionably, the party of Allah - they are the successful.

QUR'AN 58:22

Allah testified that hearts like his have iman written into them by His own decree. Loyalty to Allah outranks the tie of blood, and when blood itself takes up a sword against faith, faith holds. There is no room for negotiation in this, the Sheikh says; every other loyalty a believer carries is conditional upon that one.

And one more son. Abu Hudhayfah ibn Utbah had watched the opening duels take his father Utbah, his uncle Shaybah, and his brother Walid within minutes. When the order to spare al-Abbas

reached him barely an hour later, something jahili flickered up through the fresh grief and a sentence escaped him: so we kill our own fathers and uncles and brothers, and the uncle of the Prophet is to walk free? He even swore he would seek Abbas out himself. When word reached the Prophet ﷺ, he did not summon the man and shame him. He turned to Umar and said: will the face of the Messenger's uncle be struck with the sword? Umar offered to deal with the speaker in the way only Umar would, and the Prophet ﷺ forbade it, and Umar instead went quietly and set Abu Hudhayfah straight behind the scenes. No punishment followed, because the outburst of a man who had just lost three of his house in an hour was owed mercy: corrected, yes; humiliated, never. Abu Hudhayfah himself never granted himself that ease. I will never feel safe from that one sentence, he said, unless Allah grants me a shahada that wipes it away. And Allah did, years later, at Yamamah.

The episode closes at the gentlest moment of the whole day. When the bodies of Quraysh were being dragged off for the burial that is tomorrow's story, the body of Utbah passed by, and the face of his son drained of all its color. The Prophet ﷺ, only hours after this same son had threatened his uncle, walked over to console him: perhaps it pains you, what you see of your father? No, by Allah, Abu Hudhayfah answered, I do not doubt what my father died upon. But I had known in my father wisdom and forbearance and nobility, this was the man who once sent the grapes at Ta'if, and I had hoped all of that would one day lead him to Islam. That he died upon kufr is what grieves me. And the Prophet ﷺ made du'a for him and blessed him. The morning's threat was forgotten; the evening's grief was honored. That, the Sheikh says, is what a true leader of hearts looks like.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read the fighting at Badr as a thrilling tale of swords and angels and a tyrant brought low, and to leave it there, sealed safely in the past. That would be to miss the single question every tile of this mosaic puts to you. Step back from the whole field, and one law shines through all of it.

The man with the dates moved first, and Jannah received him. The archers held, and then they loosed. The Prophet ﷺ swung a sword and wore out a place of prostration in the same morning. Two boys ran before anyone could stop them. Ukkasha raised a piece of wood, Bilal raised his voice, and in every single case the help of heaven landed on the one already in motion. This is what the Sheikh circles back to again and again, because it is the central lesson of the day. Allah sent a thousand angels to a battle that one wing tip could have ended, so that no believer would ever again be able to stand back and say, my small part does not matter. Your part is the very thing the help comes to complete. Mumiddukum: reinforcement, not replacement. Even Maryam, alone and in labor and owed a miracle if anyone ever was, had to put her hand to the trunk and shake it before the dates would fall. So when you find yourself waiting for life to drop into your lap because surely, if it is written, it will come, hear the correction the seerah offers: take the means, shake your tree, walk into the thing you fear with your trust placed wholly in Allah, and then watch how far three hundred steps of honest effort can be carried.

And keep the second law beside the first, because Badr teaches both in the same breath. Umayyah pressed Bilal onto the burning pebbles, and he died on a bed of them and was buried beneath them, and the voice he tried to silence was the voice that ended him. As you do unto others, so it shall be done unto you. Allah

keeps long and exact accounts: a warning to every tyrant who imagines the stone he presses down will never be pressed back, and a balm to everyone who is still, today, lying under someone else's stone. The accounts are not closed. They are simply not yet settled.

So take these down into your ordinary days, where there are no swords and no descending angels, only the same God and the same law. Move first, and trust Allah with the ending. Do the work even when the work in your hand looks as useless as a stick against armor, because it is not the size of your effort that buys the result, it is the sincerity of it that invites the help. Repay the people who were good to you when you were weak, the way he ﷺ repaid Abul Bukhtari in the middle of a war. Correct quietly and console in person, the way he corrected Abu Hudhayfah out of sight and then came to grieve his father with him. And when one bad sentence or one old failure haunts you, remember that a man far better than us carried his single sentence for decades and Allah wiped it clean with mercy in the end. Nothing about where you have been decides where you will land. May Allah, who reinforced His Messenger ﷺ with a thousand angels rank upon rank, complete every good that we begin, finish every swing we take for His sake, write us among those who move first and trust Him with the ending, and send His peace and His blessings upon Muhammad ﷺ, the closest of them all to the enemy on the morning of Badr, and the longest of them in prostration before his Lord.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 39: the Battle of Badr, part 4 (Memphis Islamic Center, 2012). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (8:17, 8:9, 8:12, 19:25, 58:22), verified via quran.ai.

Where the histories carry a detail as a beloved but uncertain report, the Sheikh's own weighing of it has been followed.

The Battle of Badr, part 5

The deceiver flees, and the victor weeps

By the time this day opens, the swords of Badr have already fallen silent. The lines collided, the tyrants of Makkah met their accounts, and Quraysh broke and ran. What follows is not another clash. It is the three days the army stays camped on the field after the victory, and those days turn out to be their own teacher, because what a man does with winning reveals him as sharply as how he meets losing. These are the days the Prophet ﷺ buries two armies in two different ways, divides the first spoils this ummah ever held, repays a debt to a man already in his grave, and spends the morning after the greatest victory of his life in tears.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi builds this stretch of the seerah out of the verses of Surah al-Anfal that came down on the battlefield itself, the surah he reads as one long commentary on Badr, ayah after ayah linked to the day. And he hangs it on two images that refuse to leave you once you have seen them: a Prophet ﷺ standing over a well packed with the dead chiefs of Quraysh, asking them whether their Lord's promise came true, and the same Prophet ﷺ under a tree the next morning, weeping with Abu Bakr over a verdict that had just descended from heaven.

The day the deceiver ran

To understand the strangest flight in the Qur'an you have to rewind to the march out of Makkah. Quraysh had very nearly turned back, afraid that an old enemy among the subtribes of Banu Kinanah would fall on their undefended rear while they were away. Then a familiar chieftain appeared to settle their nerves: Suraqah ibn Malik of Kinanah, pledging on his honor that no one would touch them. No one can overcome you today, he told them, and I am your protector. He even offered himself as a living hostage, riding with the army so that if Kinanah struck, his own life would answer for it. Except it was not Suraqah at all. The Qur'an lifts the disguise and names the rider:

And [remember] when Satan made their deeds pleasing to them and said, "No one can overcome you today from among the people, and indeed, I am your protector." But when the two armies sighted each other, he turned on his heels and said, "Indeed, I am disassociated from you. Indeed, I see what you do not see; indeed, I fear Allah. And Allah is severe in penalty."

QUR'AN 8:48

When the two armies came within sight of one another, the false chieftain saw what no eye of Quraysh could see: Jibril descending on his horse, and the angels with him. He spun on his heels and bolted. Al-Harith ibn Hisham caught at him, where are you going, Suraqah, at an hour like this? The answer was a shove so violent that the man flew upward and landed on his back; whatever wore Suraqah's face was no human being. And as it fled it confessed exactly the words Allah preserved: I am free of you, I see what you do not see, I fear Allah. The Prophet ﷺ said that Shaytan was never, since the day Allah created him, more humiliated or more despised than he was on the day of Badr, for

what he saw of Allah's mercy pouring down and Jibril marshaling the angels forward.

Mark who came that day. This was not some deputy devil sent to do the whispering. By the Prophet's ﷺ own report, Iblis keeps a throne over the waters and dispatches his shayateen out on his errands; for him to walk in person among an army measures his desperation. And it set the field with a terrible clarity. On one side of a hundred meters of sand stood the being who had refused to bow to Adam, and beside him Abu Jahl, Utbah, Shaybah, and Umayyah. On the other side Jibril came down from the heavens beside the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, Abu Bakr, Umar, and the believers. The Qur'an itself calls Badr yawm al-furqan, the day of the criterion, the day truth was split from falsehood, and the Sheikh holds that no battle since mankind was created has drawn that line so visibly, nor will one until the Day of Judgment. It was as if Allah let an entire army watch the betrayal happen live: the one who guarantees protection right up to the brink and abandons you at it has shown you his colors forever. How, the lecture asks, could you ever again trust a liar who will not even feel ashamed to lie until the very last second? The greatest military victory of the Prophet's ﷺ life, with only the conquest of Makkah standing anywhere near it, opened with the deceiver running off the field.

The rout, and a road left open

How the melee itself unfolded the books barely record. The sirat keeps a handful of single combats, the stories of the day before, and then the ending: Quraysh turned on their backs and fled for Makkah. But modern students of the battlefield map notice something the early reports do not pause on. The plain of Badr had one clear corridor of retreat, and the Prophet ﷺ, who had

reached the field first and chosen the ground, never moved to block it. Sheikh Yasir passes their reading on as a theory, for no one can know what was in the Prophet's ﷺ mind, yet he weighs it very plausible: an army with no way out fights to the death, while an open valve lets fear do the routing for you. And Quraysh fled precisely through that gap.

Then the arithmetic of the day. Seventy of Quraysh lay dead and some seventy-three or seventy-four more were taken prisoner, around fifteen percent of an army more than a thousand strong, gone in a single morning. From the believers, around fifteen men were martyred, fewer than five in a hundred, and not one was taken captive. And rather than hurry home in triumph, the Prophet ﷺ announced: we remain here three days. To gather and bury the fallen. To recover. To be certain no counterattack was forming. And, beyond the shadow of a doubt, to settle who held the field, because the victor camps on the battlefield while the loser cannot summon the courage to come back even to look.

It was here at Badr that the law of the shaheed first came down. The martyr is not washed; no janazah prayer is offered over him; he is buried where he fell, in the very clothes he bled in, his wounds left untouched. For the Prophet ﷺ taught that on the Day of Judgment the shaheed will rise with his blood still the color of blood, while its scent will be the scent of musk. Madinah was barely a day's journey away, an hour or so by car in our own time, and yet the fifteen were not carried home. They were buried at Badr, each given his own grave; at Uhud, where the dead would be far more, two men would come to share a single grave because digging enough was too heavy a burden, but here, with so few, each had his own. Visit Badr today and the graves of the first shuhada of this ummah are still there in the ground. A shaheed belongs to the earth he fell upon.

A well, and a mound of pebbles

The seventy of Quraysh were not left to the sun either. Even toward the dead of an enemy army this religion sets a floor of dignity. The bodies were gathered, lowered into one of the abandoned wells of Badr, and the sand thrown in over them. It was not the burial the believers received, and it was never meant to be, but it was a covering, deliberate and commanded, so that the slain would not simply rot in the open. Every nation on earth treats its own dead better than its enemy's; the question is whether your sacred law obliges you to do anything at all for the dead of those you fought. Ours does.

One body refused the well. Umayyah ibn Khalaf was a heavy man, and when the companions tried to lift him the flesh came apart in their hands; the body simply would not be carried whole. So they did the only thing left to them: they heaped over him the pebbles of the very spot where he had fallen, a mound of small stones for a grave.

Read that ending as slowly as the lecture reads it. This is the man who used to drag Bilal radiyallahu anhu out into the desert heat and pile the rocks of that ground onto his chest to make him renounce his Lord. Allah wrote his end in the alphabet of his own crime: pebbles over a body, in the sand, forever. As you do unto others, it shall be done unto you, and the Sheikh counts this strange burial among the signs Allah wanted the watching world to contemplate, that everyone present and everyone after might see the justice of it.

Have you found your Lord's promise true

On the third day the caravan packed up for the road to Madinah, and then the Prophet ﷺ turned the whole line of march aside.

The well was not on the way home; he diverted toward it on purpose, and the companions, obedient as ever, followed without a single question about why. At its mouth he stopped and began to call the dead out by name, each man with his father's name: O Utbah ibn Rabi'ah. O Shaybah. O Abu Jahl. One after another he named every chief lying in that well, and to each he put the same question. Have you found what your Lord promised you to be true? As for me, I have found what my Lord promised me to be true.

Umar said aloud what the army must have been wondering: O Messenger of Allah, how can you speak to bodies that have no souls in them, that have no cognition to hear you? And the answer came with an oath. By the One in whose hand is my soul, you do not hear what I am saying any better than they do; only, they are unable to answer me back. Qatadah, the famous tabi'i in the chain of this report in Sahih Muslim, added the explanation he carried: Allah restored them to life in that moment so that the words would reach them, humiliation and regret heaped on men who had marched out certain of victory.

Out of this well rises one of Islam's oldest and most courteous disputes: can the dead hear the living? Companions themselves stood on both sides of it. Ibn Umar held that the one in the grave hears the visitor who comes to him, and even that he is pained by hearing his family wail over him. Aisha radiyallahu anha denied it, reaching for the verse:

And not equal are the living and the dead. Indeed, Allah causes to hear whom He wills, but you cannot make hear those in the graves.

QUR'AN 35:22

She read it alongside its sisters in Surah ar-Rum and Surah an-Naml, where the dead are likened to the deaf who will not hear you when you call. Each camp carried hadith too: those who affirmed hearing pointed to the authentic report that the buried man hears the footsteps of those who walked away from his grave, to the salam the Prophet ﷺ would give the people of the graveyard, and to Amr ibn al-As, who asked his children to linger at his grave so their nearness might steady him for the questioning. The other camp answered each in turn, and behind them the great imams divided for fourteen centuries, with names on both sides.

Sheikh Yasir, in one of the rare matters where he gently parts from Ibn Taymiyyah, leans with Aisha's reading, and says Allah knows best. To him the verses speak plainly, and Badr reads not as the rule but as the exception that proves it. Notice, he says, that the Prophet ﷺ never corrected Umar with do you not know the dead can hear; he carved out an exception, these men, right now, hear me, and the very astonishment of the companions tells you that hearing was not what they understood to be normal. Then he hands you the manners that matter far more than the verdict. The evidences are genuinely strong on both sides; companions and great imams sit in both camps; and by the unanimous agreement of the scholars not one act of worship changes whichever way you hold it. On neither opinion does anyone stand at a grave holding conversations with the buried, coaching the dead through their questioning, or turning to them with his needs. The Sheikh is scornful of the spectacle, seen in many lands, of a man shouting answers down at a fresh grave as though the deceased could cheat on his exam by being fed the lines. Hold the dispute lightly. Hold the scene at the well in awe.

They ask you about the spoils

The field was strewn with everything a fleeing army drops behind it: weapons, armor, mounts, baggage. And the believers stood over it genuinely unsure, because no ummah before this one had ever been permitted to keep the spoils of war. The nations before us would gather what they had captured into a great pile, and a fire would come down from the sky and consume it as the sign that their fighting had been accepted; the practice is remembered in the Old Testament and confirmed in our own hadith. This was the first ghanimah in the history of Islam, and nobody yet knew the rules. Three groups each pressed a claim: we were the ones who gathered it from the field; we were the ones who chased Quraysh down so you could gather it in safety; we were the ones who ringed the Prophet ﷺ with our bodies so that no blade could reach him, and will his guard be left with nothing? And Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas came carrying a beautiful sword he had taken from a man he cut down: give me this sword, O Messenger of Allah, for by Allah I used it in the battle.

The answer came down on the battlefield itself, the opening words of Surah al-Anfal:

They ask you, [O Muhammad], about the bounties [of war]. Say, "The [decision concerning] bounties is for Allah and the Messenger." So fear Allah and amend that which is between you and obey Allah and His Messenger, if you should be believers.

QUR'AN 8:1

Before a single coin moved, Allah relocated the ownership entirely: it is not your property, it belongs to Allah and His Messenger ﷺ to apportion as He decides. And in the same breath He named what the moment was really testing. Fear Allah,

and set right what is between you. A brotherhood that had just been sealed at Badr was not going to be torn over saddlebags and swords; His pleasure outprices every piece of the loot, and greed was not to be allowed to become the engine of the day.

Then came the law of it, the details of which fill chapters in every book of fiqh. One fifth of the spoils is set aside, itself divided into shares: for Allah and His Messenger ﷺ, a portion that ended with his ﷺ passing; for his near kin; for the orphans; for the needy; and for the stranded traveler. The remaining four fifths went to the army that fought.

And know that anything you obtain of war booty - then indeed, for Allah is one fifth of it and for the Messenger and for [his] near relatives and the orphans, the needy, and the [stranded] traveler, if you have believed in Allah and in that which We sent down to Our Servant on the day of criterion [i.e., decisive encounter] - the day when the two armies met [at Badr]. And Allah, over all things, is competent.

QUR'AN 8:41

At Badr every man drew an equal share. Only later, from Khaybar onward, would the Prophet ﷺ give the man who fought on a mount three times the share of the man who fought on foot. And nine men who never set foot on the field at Badr were written into the shares regardless, every one of them held back by a duty the Prophet ﷺ had himself assigned them.

Sit for a moment with one of those nine. Uthman ibn Affan radiyallahu anhu remained in Madinah by the Prophet's ﷺ explicit order, at the bedside of his wife Ruqayyah, the Prophet's ﷺ own daughter, who lay gravely ill while the army marched. She died, and was buried on the very day the victors of Badr came

home. Uthman is counted among the people of Badr until the end of time, a badri who never saw Badr. In this religion the man obeying at a sickbed holds the rank of the man holding a sword.

The debt owed to a man in his grave

It is narrated in Bukhari that the Prophet ﷺ surveyed the seventy-odd captives drawn up before him, the very men who at sunrise had been swinging their swords at the believers, and said: had Mut'im ibn Adi been alive, and had he spoken to me about these rotten ones, I would have released them all to him. Rotten ones, he called them, a word with no softness in it at all for what these men had just tried to do. And yet, every last captive, ransoms that in today's money would run into the millions, all of it would have been released for a single word from a man who had died months before Badr, a mushrik who never accepted Islam. Why?

Rewind to the bleakest stretch of the Makkan years. Ta'if had answered the Prophet ﷺ with stones, and Abu Lahab had revoked his protection, so that the city of his own birth was closed to him; a believer, in a sense, had cancelled his visa, and he could not enter. He camped outside Makkah and sent word to chief after chief, four or five of them, and each one excused himself: not me, I am not powerful enough, this and that. Mut'im ibn Adi did not excuse himself. He armed his own sons, sent them out to escort the Prophet ﷺ into the city under his shield, stood by as he made tawaf, and declared before all of Quraysh: I have given my protection to Muhammad, and whoever harms him has harmed me. Even Abu Lahab bowed his head and said, we will protect the one you have protected. And years before that, Mut'im had been among the men who stood up to tear apart the boycott that was starving Banu Hashim.

So at Badr, with the nobility of Makkah kneeling in ropes before him, the Prophet ﷺ honored that debt at the highest volume he could give it, announced over a fortune in prisoners, for a dead man who would never hear the words: his nation's highest medal of honor, pinned upon a grave. The Sheikh lingers here deliberately, because he says Muslims keep misplacing this lesson. Mut'im was no believer, and Mut'im was owed. There are people who will never share our theology and will still spend their name, their sons, and their own safety in the cause of justice, and the seerah's verdict on such people is honor, gratitude, and partnership, not suspicion. A community that has talked itself into believing it is treachery to stand alongside non-Muslims who stand for truth has read its own Prophet ﷺ with one eye shut, for he repaid a mushrik's nobility in public, and even into the grave.

Softer than milk, harder than stone

Then came the question with seventy lives inside it: what is to be done with the prisoners? Nothing had yet descended about captives, for the ummah had never held any. In the morning these men had been trying to extinguish Islam; by the afternoon they were bound at the believers' feet. So the Prophet ﷺ did what he had done at the wells before the battle: he gathered counsel, and especially from the two men Ali would call his two wazirs, Abu Bakr and Umar.

Abu Bakr said: O Messenger of Allah, they are our relatives, our own kith and kin, the same families as ours; show them mercy for the sake of the blood between us, and take the ransom from them. Umar saw it the opposite way: hand Aqil to Ali to strike his neck, and hand me a man of my own house to strike, and let each of us put his own kinsman to the sword, so that not one of them lives to march on us another day. Two counsels as far apart as

counsels can be, and the Prophet's ﷺ reply is one of the tenderest pieces of the whole seerah. Allah, he said, makes some hearts so soft they are softer than milk, and some so hard they are harder than stone. You, Abu Bakr, resemble Ibrahim, who said of his people, whoever follows me is of me, and whoever disobeys me, then surely You are Forgiving and Merciful; and you resemble Isa, who handed his deniers over to Allah:

If You should punish them - indeed they are Your servants; but if You forgive them - indeed it is You who is the Exalted in Might, the Wise."

QUR'AN 5:118

And you, Umar, resemble Nuh, who prayed against a people who would not believe:

And Noah said, "My Lord, do not leave upon the earth from among the disbelievers an inhabitant."

QUR'AN 71:26

And you resemble Musa, who asked his Lord to harden the hearts of Pharaoh's people until they should see the painful punishment with their own eyes. Notice that neither companion is scolded. Mercy has prophets standing behind it, and severity has prophets standing behind it; both kinds of heart were forged by Allah, and an ummah will have need of them both. Then the Prophet ﷺ chose: the captives would live and be ransomed, the counsel of Abu Bakr. And here the lecture is careful with a nuance the Qur'an is about to be careful with too. The Prophet ﷺ chose from mercy, and Abu Bakr counseled from mercy, but among the wider army there were also men who simply had their eyes on the

ransom money, and heaven saw the difference between the two motives.

The morning the victor wept

The next day, Umar came upon the Prophet ﷺ and Abu Bakr sitting beneath a tree, and both of them were weeping. What Umar said is its own short lesson in love: tell me what makes you weep, O Messenger of Allah, so that if I find weeping in myself I may weep with you, and if I cannot, I will force myself to weep, only to be with you in it. The Prophet ﷺ recited to him what had just come down:

It is not for a prophet to have captives [of war] until he inflicts a massacre [upon Allah's enemies] in the land. You [i.e., some Muslims] desire the commodities of this world, but Allah desires [for you] the Hereafter. And Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise.

QUR'AN 8:67

If not for a decree from Allah that preceded, you would have been touched for what you took by a great punishment.

QUR'AN 8:68

It was not for a prophet to hold captives while the believers were still this weak in the land; some of you wanted the goods of this world while Allah wanted the Hereafter for you; and had a decree from Allah not already gone ahead, a terrible punishment would have touched you for what you took. The gentler choice, made in mercy, had not been heaven's preference, not yet, not while Islam could still be strangled in its cradle. Allah let the ransom stand, and later revelation would hand the Muslim ruler a whole

range of options for prisoners of war, so that Badr's decision lays down no permanent rule. But the rebuke itself was made eternal, recited in every generation since, and so is the day's most piercing picture: the man who had just won the greatest victory of his life ﷺ spending the morning after it in tears over how the mercy had been weighed, the softest heart of the ummah weeping at his side.

The lecture closes inside the question this scene forces open. Did the Prophet ﷺ exercise ijtihad, his own weighed judgment? A minority of scholars held that his every utterance descended as revelation. But the vast majority, and the plain sense of the seerah, answer that Allah gave him ﷺ the right to weigh and to choose. He said of himself, I am only a human being, I forget as you forget. He chose a campsite at Badr and then accepted a better one when it was suggested; he once advised the farmers of Madinah against a way of pollinating their date palms, and when the crop suffered he told them plainly, you know the affairs of your world better than I do. And here is exactly what guards this point against every modern distortion of it. When his judgment needed adjusting, Allah adjusted it in public, in revelation the world still recites; and when heaven stayed silent over a choice, that silence is itself Allah's approval of it. Either way the outcome carries His seal. That is why his ﷺ command binds every believer, why the Qur'an orders obedience to him in more than sixty places, and why those who whisper that some ruling was merely his ijtihad in order to slip out from under it have, the Sheikh says, stepped outside the religion's plain and agreed teaching altogether. His humanity is not a crack in the proof. It is part of the proof.

The captives are walking toward Madinah now, seventy and more lives suspended between the sword and the ransom, and the

Sheikh is not finished with them. The next day stays at their ropes, because what Islam did with seventy enemies held in its hand is its own story.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to file these three days under aftermath, the tidying-up after the real drama of the battle, and move on. That would be to miss the questions they put to us, which are sharper than anything on the field.

Watch the deceiver run, and never trust his guarantees again. He swore he was their protector and rode with them as a hostage, and the instant the angels became visible he turned on his heels, disowned them, and confessed that he feared Allah. Allah let a whole army witness the betrayal in real time so that no believer afterward would take his whispered promises at face value. Every temptation makes the same offer Shaytan made at Badr: safety, advantage, no one can touch you today. And every one of them abandons you at exactly the brink it lured you toward.

Then learn how this religion wins. Seventy of the enemy are covered with earth rather than left to rot; a tyrant is buried in the very instrument of his own cruelty; a fortune in spoils is surrendered to Allah before a single coin is shared, lest greed eat the brotherhood; a debt of plain human decency is repaid in public to a mushrik already in his grave. This is what victory looks like when it belongs to Allah and not to the ego: dignity even for the dead of your enemy, gratitude even to those outside your creed who once stood for justice, and a fierce guarding of the bond between believers against the pull of the loot. Ask which of these your own small victories tend to forget.

And then sit with the two hearts and the tree. Abu Bakr's mercy was likened to Ibrahim and Isa, Umar's resolve to Nuh and Musa, and neither man was corrected, because an ummah needs both and wisdom is knowing which one the hour is asking for. Your tenderness can be prophetic and so can your firmness; what is dangerous is to mistake the one the moment needs. Above all, sit with the weeping. The most successful man who ever lived spent the morning after his greatest success in tears, not over enemies but over whether he had handled a mercy the way his Lord most loved, schooled in public by a revelation we still recite. That is the measure this day leaves in your hands. Not whether you can win, but whether you can win without cruelty and grieve without despair; whether, when heaven corrects you, you receive the correction as he ﷺ did, with tears and submission and not a word of defense. May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, who routed the deceiver and made his Lord's promise true at the lip of a dry well and then wept over a verdict from heaven, give us Abu Bakr's mercy and Umar's resolve and the wisdom to know the hour of each, and gather us with the people of Badr under his banner.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 40: the Battle of Badr, part 5 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (8:48, 35:22, 8:1, 8:41, 5:118, 71:26, 8:67, 8:68), verified via quran.ai. Where the matter of the dead hearing is contested, the Sheikh's own weighing of the evidences has been followed.

The Battle of Badr, part 6 ﷺ

Seventy captives, and a necklace from Khadijah

The swords of Badr are back in their sheaths, and now comes the part of victory that has no drums. Seventy men of Quraysh, bound and breathing, are on the road north to Madinah, and they put to their captors the oldest question a winner ever faces, the one almost every winner in history has answered badly: what do you do with your enemy once he is finally in your hands? Dr. Yasir Qadhi gives this whole lesson to the answer, because for him this is where the religion turns its face to you. Two men met the sword. Everyone else met bread, ransom, release, and a kindness the world had no word for yet. Strictness exactly where it was due, and mercy everywhere mercy could reach: a scale held level when hardly anyone in the long story of men with power over other men has held it steady for even an afternoon.

Forgiveness belongs to the strong

The previous lesson had ended on a decision and a correction. The Prophet ﷺ, taking counsel, had chosen the gentler of the two options, ransom over the sword, and revelation had come down to say that this once the harder option would have been the better one. Today opens inside the why, and the first answer sits in the verse itself.

It is not for a prophet to have captives [of war] until he inflicts a massacre [upon Allah's enemies] in the land. You

[i.e., some Muslims] desire the commodities of this world, but Allah desires [for you] the Hereafter. And Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise.

QUR'AN 8:67

Read it slowly and you find a principle, not a scolding. Forgiveness offered from weakness, the Sheikh explains, is not really forgiveness at all; it is helplessness wearing a kind face. If you pardon a man because you could not have touched him anyway, what exactly have you pardoned? Only the one fully able to strike, and choosing not to, has truly forgiven. Allah was telling a community still small, still hunted, still the lower hand in Arabia, that the hour of clemency is the hour of strength, and that hour had not yet come. Pardon would come, and it would be magnificent, but it would come from the high ground or not mean what mercy is meant to mean.

The other wisdoms are bracingly practical. Spare a fighting man of Quraysh today and you may meet him in next year's army, the same war, the same enemy, and that is exactly what happened: some of the freed men of Badr came back to fight in later expeditions. Why hand your sword's edge back to the throat it was raised against? And there was Umar's reasoning on the day of the counsel, which the Sheikh marks as distinctly his. Give me my own kinsman, Umar had said, give Ali his relative, let every man deal with his own blood, so that all Arabia would see that loyalty to Allah now outranked the tribe. It took Quraysh years to grasp that such a brotherhood could even exist; Islam had become a stronger glue than blood, invisible to men who measured the world by lineage.

Allah accepted His Prophet's ﷺ gentler choice and let the ransom stand, but the verse that followed pressed its full weight

onto everyone who had reached for the spoils.

If not for a decree from Allah that preceded, you would have been touched for what you took by a great punishment.

QUR'AN 8:68

It is reported that Abu Bakr wept over those words; both he and Umar understood the verse to mean that a real punishment had been hovering, near enough that only a prior decree of Allah held it back. Here the Sheikh pauses for one of his signature arguments. Systems that preach turning the other cheek as an absolute law have never once managed to run a society on it, because a rule that collapses the moment someone tests it is not an ideal but a slogan; turn the other cheek always, and every opportunist on earth takes your second cheek and then your coat. Islam, he says, is more honest, and that honesty is itself a sign of its truth: the general rule is mercy, the stated preference is pardon, yet justice stays within reach for the day mercy would be read as an open invitation. This episode holds both at once, mercy and severity in the same hand, and almost no one in history ever has.

Two men the pardon passed over

The battle had been fought on a Friday, the seventeenth of Ramadan. The Prophet ﷺ stayed three days on the plain and turned for home on Monday the twentieth. Somewhere along that road the column halted at an open stretch of ground, and out of the seventy, two prisoners were drawn aside. Some scholars hold that these two are the only prisoners of war ever executed at the Prophet's ﷺ command in all his campaigns, and the Sheikh offers it as the clearest proof of how absolute the rule of

clemency was: the single exception in all those years was carved for these two, which tells you what they had made of their lives.

The first was an-Nadr ibn al-Harith, one of the very few of Quraysh with a foreign education. He had lived years in al-Hirah, the magnificent old Arab capital in Iraq, and came home stocked with the legends of the kings of Persia. When the Qur'an began to descend, an-Nadr appointed himself its rival. These are nothing but the fables of the ancients, he would sneer, and I can produce better. When people gathered around the Prophet ﷺ to listen, he would set up nearby: leave his stories, come and hear mine, and then unspool the tales of the ancient heroes and kings of the Persians. It is said that eight or more ayat came down concerning this one man, and the Sheikh reads him into every verse that quotes the sneer about old fables, up to the terrifying one about the man who claims he can produce the like of revelation.

And who is more unjust than one who invents a lie about Allah or says, "It has been inspired to me," while nothing has been inspired to him, and one who says, "I will reveal [something] like what Allah revealed." And if you could but see when the wrongdoers are in the overwhelming pangs of death while the angels extend their hands, [saying], "Discharge your souls! Today you will be awarded the punishment of [extreme] humiliation for what you used to say against Allah other than the truth and [that] you were, toward His verses, being arrogant."

QUR'AN 6:93

An-Nadr and the second prisoner had even ridden together, in the early days, all the way to the Jews of Yathrib to collect trick questions designed to expose the Prophet ﷺ as a fraud, and

they had come back proud and certain, only to watch every question answered and waved away.

The second man you have met before. Uqbah ibn Abi Mu'ayt: the nobleman who rose to Abu Jahl's dare and fetched a rotting carcass with his own hands, the carcass no slave would touch, and lowered it onto the Prophet's ﷺ back as he prostrated, while grown men of Quraysh laughed, until a small daughter ran to pull the filth off her father. The same Uqbah who, another day, wound his cloak around the Prophet's ﷺ neck as he prayed and pulled it tight to choke him, until Abu Bakr threw himself between them with the cry the Qur'an itself puts in the mouth of the believer of Pharaoh's house.

And a believing man from the family of Pharaoh who concealed his faith said, "Do you kill a man [merely] because he says, 'My Lord is Allah' while he has brought you clear proofs from your Lord? And if he should be lying, then upon him is [the consequence of] his lie; but if he should be truthful, there will strike you some of what he promises you. Indeed, Allah does not guide one who is a transgressor and a liar."

QUR'AN 40:28

Brought out now to die, Uqbah began to beg. Why me, he cried, out of all of them? And Ali answered with the only reason that mattered: for your enmity toward Allah and His Messenger ﷺ. He had already tried to buy his life with money; now he fell to his knees and asked the question begging men ask. Muhammad, who will take care of my children? The reply is one sentence of the seerah you do not forget. The Fire. The scholars read it two ways, the Sheikh says, and both close the door: do not waste your last breath on your children, for you have something infinitely greater than them to worry about now, or, they need

nothing from you, for you have already led the way to the Fire ahead of them. Then the Sheikh asks the question that closes Uqbah's file for good: where was this man's tenderness for children on the day little Fatima had to come and clean filth off her father's ﷺ shoulders because not one grown man in Makkah dared move? His bravery and sympathy were selective, spent freely on cruelty and gone the moment his own neck was at stake. Abu Jahl, for all his evil, died hard and never begged. Uqbah begged, and it is said Ali himself carried out the sentence.

The takbir, the whisperers, and a grave

Ahead of the army flew the news. The Prophet ﷺ had sent criers, and the first to reach the city was Zayd ibn Harithah, the man all Arabia had once known as the Prophet's ﷺ adopted son, mounted deliberately on the Prophet's ﷺ own she-camel, a mount every eye in Madinah knew on sight, so the news would arrive bearing its master's seal. Zayd rode in crying Allahu akbar and reciting the names of the Qurayshi dead, a roll call of the lords of Makkah, chieftain after chieftain, the men who had owned the city, gone in a single morning.

The believers erupted in joy. But mark the men who did not. Here and there a whisper started: Zayd has lost his mind, Muhammad must be dead, and his poor servant has fled on the master's camel and is babbling of victories in his grief. They were not weighing evidence; they were mourning a world that had just ended and could not believe the thing that had ended it. The Sheikh points to the mirror image in Makkah, where the first crier of the disaster was likewise called a liar, because there too the news refused to fit the world anyone knew.

And watch what the news did next, because Badr redrew Madinah from the inside. The last pagans of the city quietly gave

up their idols. No verse ever commanded them to convert, the Sheikh notes carefully, and no decree was issued; it simply became impossible after Badr to stand in that society holding an idol, and the holdouts dwindled until paganism in the Prophet's ﷺ city was a memory. That was the bright aftershock. The dark one: hypocrisy was born at Badr. Before Badr there was nothing to gain by faking faith and much to lose; now the calculation flipped. Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul, the senior chieftain of Yathrib who had expected the whole settlement to crown him until the Prophet ﷺ arrived, heard Zayd reciting the names of the dead and drew the politician's conclusion aloud: the matter is settled now, this man is here to stay. So he professed Islam with his tongue, and the Qur'an testifies that his heart never followed. From this day the seerah gains a permanent shadow cast, the hypocrites, who will let no opening pass without striking at Islam from within.

And then one footnote of pure grief, set by Allah into the middle of the joy. The same day Zayd's takbir rang through the streets, it is said the very same hour, Uthman ibn Affan, radiyallahu anhu, was finishing the burial of the Prophet's ﷺ daughter Ruqayyah, and had to ask what the shouting was about. The scholars differ over where Ruqayyah fell in the order of his daughters; they do not differ that she was the first of them to die. The happiest day the Muslims had yet lived, and Allah willed that the one household with the most right to its happiness should be standing at a graveside in the middle of it.

Why, the Sheikh asks, and the answer is the seerah's standing lesson about this world: it is a place of testing, and it pauses for no one's celebration. The Prophet ﷺ once sketched it for his companions with two lines drawn in the dust: the long line of a man's hopes running out ahead of him toward all he means to do,

and the short line of his appointed death cutting clean across it long before the hopes run out. Every one of us carries that long list, and death does not wait for us to finish it. Even the day of Badr was not permitted to feel like a final home, so that no joy of yours would ever fool you into thinking it was one.

Prisoners under the Prophet's ﷺ own roof

The captives reached Madinah, and the city had no prison to hold them, so they were marched to the mosque, and the Prophet ﷺ distributed them among the men who had captured them, with one standing order: I command you to treat them with kindness. The most senior lords of Quraysh he kept for his own household. Foremost was Suhayl ibn Amr, by sheer attrition now among the highest-ranking leaders Quraysh had left, the same Suhayl who will one day sit across from the Prophet ﷺ as Quraysh's negotiator at Hudaibiyyah. This man slept, ate, and waited for his ransom under the roof of the Prophet ﷺ he had marched out to destroy. Dr. Yasir Qadhi makes the point with full force: search the whole history of mankind for another ruler who took the enemy's senior prisoners of war into his own house, to eat at the same table where he himself slept. There is no Guantanamo here, the Sheikh says. There is none.

Abu Aziz, the blood brother of Mus'ab ibn Umayr, was assigned to a family of the Ansar, and he described his captivity himself. Whenever the household sat to eat, they pressed the bread and the meat into the prisoner's hands and kept the dates and the water for themselves, because their Prophet ﷺ had commanded kindness. Out of embarrassment, he said, he would put the bread back; they would set it before him again, untouched. The Sheikh asks you to date it. Mankind needed until the twentieth century, the Geneva Conventions, to write down rules requiring that

prisoners be fed decently, and only bothered because it finally realized it could not go on doing what it had always done to captives. Here were the farmers of Madinah, before any convention on earth, feeding their prisoners better than they fed themselves, on the strength of a single sentence.

But that same family carries the hard edge of the lesson, and the Sheikh sets the two side by side on purpose. When Mus'ab passed his captive brother, Abu Aziz brightened: my brother, help me out now. Instead of softening, Mus'ab turned to the Ansari holding him: bind him well, his mother is a wealthy woman and she will pay the highest ransom for him. Is this how you treat me, Abu Aziz protested. And Mus'ab pointed at the Ansari: he is my brother now, not you. Badr had redrawn kinship itself. Blood opened no doors that day. Faith opened them, and the ransom ledger about to be written would prove the same thing on the Prophet's ﷺ own family first of all.

The day Sawdah forgot herself

Into these crowded houses walked a moment so human the Sheikh slows almost to a stop for it. Sawdah, radiyallahu anha, the wife of the Prophet ﷺ, had been visiting the family of the two young men of the Ansar who cut down Abu Jahl, when word came that the prisoners had reached the city. She hurried home, and this was years before the verses of hijab, so the households of Madinah still mixed freely. She burst into her own room, and there in the corner sat Suhayl ibn Amr, the great chieftain she had been raised from girlhood to revere, his hands bound.

She did not even register that the Prophet ﷺ was standing beside her. The old world rose straight up in her throat: Abu Yazid! You surrendered? You let them take you alive? Could you not have died an honorable death? Then a voice at her shoulder:

are you stirring him up to fight against Allah and His Messenger ﷺ? She told the story on herself afterward. By Allah, she said, I did not know what I was saying; when I saw the lord of my people tied like that, I lost hold of who I was, and of all of Islam, and could not control myself, and I fell back into the old days.

Now weigh her words for what they were: a wish, spoken aloud in the Prophet's ﷺ own house, that a pagan champion had fought to the death against Allah and His Messenger ﷺ. Outwardly, the Sheikh says plainly, that is a sentence of kufr, which is exactly why the Prophet ﷺ said she was encouraging Suhayl to fight against Allah and His Messenger. And yet the Prophet ﷺ heard her excuse, accepted it, and never once raised the matter again. The Sheikh sets it beside the famous hadith of the man lost in the desert, dying of thirst, who suddenly finds his lost camel and in the delirium of joy blurts the words backward: O Allah, You are my servant and I am Your lord. The Prophet ﷺ smiled at his madness and excused him, because joy had scrambled his tongue. Emotion trips the tongue, and every one of us has said the thing we did not mean. He ﷺ judged the heart behind the slip and not the slip itself, and in doing so he taught every household among us what to do when the people we love misspeak: take the excuse, close the file, do not keep returning to the wound.

A ransom measured to every man

Word now went to Makkah: come and ransom your men. The narrations on the amounts differ, and the Sheikh weighs them as he always does, settling on the strongest reading, that every prisoner was priced to his own purse. The rich paid heavily, the modest lightly, and the poorest went home owing nothing at all. And notice who set the prices: a Prophet ﷺ who knew every one of these men personally, their families and their trades and, as it

turned out, exactly how much money each of them had. Quraysh were, after all, his own relatives. No tribunal in history has been harder to deceive.

O Prophet, say to whoever is in your hands of the captives, "If Allah knows [any] good in your hearts, He will give you [something] better than what was taken from you, and He will forgive you; and Allah is Forgiving and Merciful."

QUR'AN 8:70

It was tested at once, from inside his own family. The Ansari who had captured al-Abbas, the Prophet's ﷺ own uncle, offered to gift his prisoner back: he is your uncle, Messenger of Allah, take him freely. The answer sealed every door favoritism might creep through: no, do not reduce his ransom by a single coin. Al-Abbas was assessed the steepest price on the whole ledger, four thousand dirhams, and told besides to pay the ransom of two nephews, Aqil and Nawfal, who had no money of their own. He tried the religious argument first. In a report preserved by Imam Ahmad he said: Messenger of Allah, I was already a Muslim, they forced me out to fight. The reply is a whole court ruling in one breath. Allah knows your true state, and if what you say is so, He will repay you and give you something better; but we judge by what we can see, and what we saw was you in the ranks against us. Then he tried poverty: I have no money. And the Prophet ﷺ asked him: then where is the money you and your wife buried on such and such a day, when you told her that if you should fall, this much goes to al-Fadl, this much to Abdullah, this much to each of your sons? Al-Abbas swore on the spot: by the One who sent you with the truth, no living soul knew of that money except the two of us. And he paid.

Al-Abbas himself used to say this very verse came down concerning him, and he lived long enough to test its promise. Years later he would say: I wish the Prophet ﷺ had taken even more from me, for Allah took twenty measures of silver and gave me in their place twenty slaves, every one a businessman trading on my behalf. The man charged the heaviest price at Badr spent his life convinced the exchange had run in his favor. And the refusal of favoritism never wavered: when the day came, years later, that the Prophet ﷺ abolished the dealings of interest, the first debts of *riba* he declared void were those owed to this same beloved uncle, so no one could ever say his family had kept a privilege.

Then there were the captives with no silver at all. For the literate among them, the Prophet ﷺ named a ransom no society on earth had ever thought to ask: teach the children of the Ansar to read and write, and walk free. This is not legend, the Sheikh stresses; it is authentically preserved in the Musnad of Imam Ahmad. Sit with what it means. In a culture that had never prized the written word, the man ﷺ leading it prized literacy above thousands of dirhams of ransom silver. Islam, the Sheikh says, drawing the wide line he has drawn across this whole series, came to the Arabs as a civilizing force, came to a people who cared nothing for letters or history, and lifted them to be the leaders of the world. A religion that freed a captured enemy in exchange for teaching its children to read has told you, once and forever, what is worth spending on.

Those with neither money nor letters were simply released. Abu Azzah pleaded his case: you know I am a poor man with no powerful family, only daughters to feed and no money, so be generous with me. The Prophet ﷺ freed him on a single promise, never to take the field against the Muslims again, and the man

went home and wrote a poem in praise of the Prophet's ﷺ generosity that the books of seerah still carry. And mercy did what no sword could: many of the prisoners of Badr eventually entered Islam, the Prophet's ﷺ own captured kinsmen among the first. Mercy is the general rule, strictness the rare exception, and it was the mercy that won the hearts in the end.

One man refused the entire market. Abu Sufyan, suddenly the most senior leader Quraysh had left and the most humiliated man in Makkah, was told to ransom his son Amr, the older brother of Mu'awiyah. He refused: shall they have my blood and my money both? One of his sons already lay among the dead of Badr; let Amr stay in their hands as long as they please. And here the Sheikh makes an observation quietly devastating: the only reason Abu Sufyan could afford that defiance was that he knew, deep down, his son was in safe hands. No father shrugs at captors who torture. The enemy's coldest calculations were being balanced on the assumption of the Prophet's ﷺ mercy.

How he finally got his son back is uglier. Months later an elderly Muslim of Madinah, a man who had taken no part in Badr, came to Makkah on business, trusting the immunity the sacred precinct had granted every soul since before memory, the very law Quraysh themselves had always upheld so strictly that a man could see his own father's killer in the Haram and not lift a hand. Abu Sufyan seized this old man in broad daylight: my son for your elder. It was blatant extortion, the Sheikh says, and there is no nicer way to say it. Months earlier, when the Muslims had killed a single man of Quraysh near the sacred months, Quraysh had howled their outrage across all Arabia; now one of their own chieftains committed open kidnapping in the sacred city, and not one voice objected. This is what happens when a people answer to no fixed standard from Allah but only to themselves: grand talk

of rights, applied to everyone except their opponents. The Prophet ﷺ did not write a manifesto about it. Pragmatic as ever, he swapped the prisoners and brought the old man home, for what was the old man's fault in any of it? And Allah forgave Abu Sufyan even this in the end, for he would one day accept Islam, and Islam erases what came before.

A necklace, and the road out of Makkah

Among the ransom payments that arrived from Makkah, one parcel stopped the room. It had come to free Abul-As, the husband of the Prophet's ﷺ daughter Zaynab, most likely the eldest of his daughters. Abul-As was the son of Hala, Khadijah's own sister; Zaynab had married her cousin in the days before revelation, when there was no enmity between them, and he had loved her honorably ever since, never once standing between her and her Islam, though he himself stayed on the religion of his people. In those years, the Sheikh reminds us, a Muslim woman could still be married to a pagan man; the verses that would separate such couples came later. So at Badr, Abul-As had marched out with Quraysh against the father of his own wife, and lost, and now from Makkah came the ransom to buy him back.

To complete her husband's ransom, Zaynab had emptied her own jewelry into the parcel, and among the pieces lay a necklace. Khadijah had worn it, and had clasped it around her daughter's neck on Zaynab's wedding day, the way mothers do still. When it tumbled out in Madinah, the companions watched the face of the Prophet ﷺ change. This was the man whose eyes would brim at the mere sound of Hala's footsteps, because they fell so like her sister's, the man whose grief for Khadijah was so visible that Aisha would later confess her jealousy of a woman long dead. And now Khadijah's own necklace was lying in a heap

of war ransoms in his hand. He mastered himself, and made the gentlest request of the whole campaign: if you see fit, release her husband for her, and return to her this necklace. And who, the Sheikh asks, was going to refuse a request from the Prophet ﷺ? They saw fit.

But the release carried a private condition, and Madinah learned it only later. A month after Badr, the Prophet ﷺ quietly sent two companions to a spot outside Makkah: wait here a few days, and a traveler will come to you. The traveler was Zaynab. Her husband's unpaid ransom had not been money at all; it had been a promise to send the Prophet's ﷺ daughter home. Makkah had been told nothing, but everyone knew Abul-As had paid no coin, and the city did its arithmetic. Hind, the wife of Abu Sufyan, appeared at Zaynab's side, all honey: if you mean to go back to your father, tell me first, and I will prepare your baggage, for women know what a traveling woman needs better than any man. The plan, the Sheikh explains, was to keep her in Makkah as a hostage. Zaynab felt the hook inside the sweetness, told Hind nothing, and packed alone.

Abul-As could not bear to lead his wife back to the father he had just fought, so he sent his brother Kinanah, and Kinanah, brave but not subtle, set Zaynab's camel moving out of Makkah in broad daylight. The city boiled over: weeks after the humiliation of Badr, were they now to let the Prophet's ﷺ daughter parade out in front of everyone? A mob caught up with them, and a man named Habbar drove his spear at the camel. It reared in terror, and Zaynab, who was pregnant, was thrown hard to the ground. She bled where she lay, and she lost the child. Some accounts say the injuries never fully left her, and were among the reasons for her early death a few years later; of all the Prophet's ﷺ daughters, only Fatima would outlive him, and Zaynab carried the

last wound of Badr through the few years she had left. Kinanah planted himself over her with his bow drawn: by Allah, the first man who comes near me tastes my arrow, and every one of you knows I do not miss.

The standoff was broken, in the end, by the politician. Abu Sufyan came riding up, scattered the crowd, and scolded Kinanah: you acted like a fool, in broad daylight, after everything that has just happened to us. We gain nothing by keeping this woman, but you cannot parade our humiliation through the streets. Take her back, let the talk die down, then take her out quietly. And that is exactly what happened. A few nights later, under cover of darkness, Kinanah led Zaynab out again and placed her reins in the hands of the two waiting companions, who brought the Prophet's ﷺ daughter home to Madinah. The Sheikh pauses on Kinanah deliberately: a man who was no Muslim, yet ready to die rather than break the promise his brother had made. There are honorable people in every nation, he says, and the seerah will not let you forget it.

And Habbar, the man with the spear? Here Sheikh Yasir, who once wrote a university paper on what follows and can barely hide his delight, traces the bloodline forward. Generations later, the descendants of Habbar, Muslims now, rode into Sindh, and from his progeny rose the Habbari dynasty, which ruled there for some two hundred years and minted its own coins in the land that is today Pakistan. The name of the man who speared the Prophet's ﷺ daughter and killed the child she carried survives in history as the name of a Muslim dynasty. That, the Sheikh marvels, is what Islam does to a bloodline, and what the long, patient justice of Allah does with a story.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read this lesson as a string of episodes, a little statecraft and a little sentiment, and miss that it is one thing held in one steady hand. Hold the whole day at once and you will see it. The Fire pronounced over Uqbah, and bread pressed into Abu Aziz's palms by captors who ate dates and water themselves. Four thousand dirhams taken from a beloved uncle down to the last coin, and freedom handed to a poor father of daughters for a promise and a poem. A wife's terrible sentence forgiven before she had finished explaining it, a daughter lowered into her grave in the very hour the city shouted for joy, a son-in-law set free at the sight of a dead woman's necklace. This is not a man  swinging between moods. It is the steadiest scale ever held by human hands: strictness exactly where Allah's right had been openly and arrogantly attacked, on the two who had made war on revelation itself, mercy everywhere else mercy could reach, and grief carried straight through the middle of it without one drop souring into cruelty.

So ask what the day asks of you. First, the lesson of the verse: forgiveness belongs to the strong. We are quick to call ourselves merciful when in truth we simply lack the power to be otherwise, and that is not mercy, it is incapacity. Real pardon is the pardon you could withhold and choose not to, offered from the high ground and not from the ditch. Its companion is to keep your severity rare and exact: two men met the sword, and seventy met bread and ransom and release. Justice existed in that camp to guard the rule of mercy, never to replace it. When you must be firm, be firm with precision, and then return at once to kindness, because the kindness is the rule and the firmness only its rare and reluctant servant.

Then take Sawdah home with you. When the people you love misspeak out of shock or grief or anger or even joy, when the old

self rises in someone's throat and says the thing they do not mean, do what he ﷺ did: judge the heart and not the sentence, accept the excuse, and never go back to reopen the wound. Take al-Abbas and the children of the Ansar, and learn what a believer spends on: he ﷺ priced the teaching of reading above ransom silver in a society that did not read, so ask what you are willing to pay for knowledge and for the minds of the young, when the Prophet ﷺ was willing to free his enemies for it. And take Ruqayyah's grave, set in the middle of the happiest morning, and learn to hold your joys loosely. The line of your hopes runs long, and your appointed end will cut across it sooner than you plan; celebrate with gratitude, pack lightly, and let no happiness in this world ever pretend to be your home.

And last, take Kinanah and Habbar, and refuse forever to flatten people into camps. There are honest, decent souls in every nation under heaven, and Allah can take the worst act in a story and, generations on, grow from that very bloodline something that worships Him. May Allah send His peace and His blessings upon Muhammad ﷺ, who fed the men who fought him and freed them for teaching children to read, who forgave a slip of the tongue and wept over a necklace, and who held justice and mercy level in the same hand when no one before or since has managed it for a day. Join him in the highest gardens with Khadijah, with Ruqayyah, and with Zaynab, and mend every grief He decreed for that blessed household; and make us people who forgive from strength, who take the excuse gladly, who pay any price for knowledge, and who, on the day our own long line of hopes is cut, are gathered under his banner and given to drink from his hand a drink after which there is no thirst. Ameen.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 41: the Battle of Badr, part 6 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (8:67, 8:68, 6:93, 40:28, 8:70), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The Battle of Badr, part 7: the grief of Makkah, the end of Abu Lahab, and the surah of Badr

The city that could not weep, the surah that remembers

Seven days ago this chapter opened with a caravan hugging the coast road and a city riding out as if to a parade. Today it closes, and not on the battlefield. The fighting at Badr is finished; what is left is the echo, and the echo is louder than the swords ever were. Today the news walks into Makkah and breaks it. The worst of the old enemies dies without a single hand raised against him. An empire falls on the very morning Allah had said it would. And then heaven itself retells the whole battle, because Surah al-Anfal begins to come down while the dust of Badr is still on the believers' clothes.

This is the seventh and final day at those wells, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi spends it the way the sources themselves do: half in a grieving, silenced Makkah, and half inside the surah Allah sent down so that Badr would never be remembered wrongly. The battle has been won. Now comes the harder, quieter business of understanding what it meant, and the Qur'an does that understanding for us, while the memory is still warm.

The news walks into Makkah

Here is how certain Quraysh had been of victory: they marched out with no plan for losing. No rallying point, no second rendezvous, no plan B at all, because it had not occurred to them that the lines could break. So when they did break, the army simply scattered and trickled home in shocked little batches.

The first to reach Makkah was a man called al-Haysuman, and the state of him made the streets gather: bloodied, wounded, something plainly wrong. What happened? they asked. And he answered in a flat, drained voice, a list instead of a story. Utbah is killed. Shaybah is killed. Abu Jahl is killed. Zam'ah is killed. Name after name from the first row of Quraysh, the who's who of the entire city, until he had named so many that the listeners decided the only merciful explanation was that the man had lost his mind. He is listing everyone we know, they said. It is not possible.

Safwan ibn Umayyah was sitting in the shade of the Kaaba, inside the wall of the hijr, when the report reached him, and he designed a small test. If the man has gone mad, Safwan reasoned, he will name even the living among the dead. Go and ask him what became of Safwan ibn Umayyah. So they put the question to the broken rider: and Safwan, what of him? The man looked across the distance, saw Safwan seated there, and said: Safwan is sitting right over there. But I watched with my own eyes as they killed his father and his brother.

The test had come back with a witness instead of a madman. And as survivor after survivor confirmed the same names, a grief settled over Makkah unlike anything in its memory. Three times the number of the Muslims, the finest weapons in Arabia, every great house represented in the ranks, and in a single morning the city's entire senior generation was simply gone.

Abu Lahab hears about the angels

One senior name had not marched at all. Abu Lahab had hired a man to fight in his place, and Quraysh had not pressed him to go, for it sat awkwardly even with them that the chief of Banu Hashim should ride out against his own nephew ﷺ. That was against everything their tribal world stood for, and so, unlike the pressure they put on others, they let him stay.

When the deserters' reports reached him he refused to believe them, sank into a black mood, and waited for Abu Sufyan to come back with the truth, telling himself the others had only run in fear. They met at the house of Abbas, and the house itself is part of the story. Abbas, the Prophet's ﷺ uncle, was at that very moment a prisoner in Madinah, bound after Badr; his iman, Dr. Yasir Qadhi reminds us, had finally settled at the battle, when the Prophet ﷺ told him about money he had hidden that no living soul could have known about. His wife, Umm al-Fadl, is said to have been the second woman to believe after Khadijah, and it may well be that her faith is what had first drawn Abbas toward Islam. She was home. So was a slave of the household, a quiet believer, working over the cooking in the corner, where a servant has no business listening and less business speaking.

Tell me face to face exactly what happened, said Abu Lahab. And Abu Sufyan, a man with no reason in the world to flatter the Muslims, gave testimony worth sitting with. By Allah, he said, the moment we met them it was as if they overpowered us without our lifting a hand. They took prisoners as they pleased and they killed as they pleased. And even so, I cannot blame our men. I saw men with white faces on horses black and white, the finest horses of Arabia, hovering between the heaven and the earth, and nothing on the ground could stand before them.

The slave in the corner could not contain himself. By Allah, he cried out, those were the angels! In that one sentence his loyalty stood exposed, and it was the wrong room to expose it in. Abu Lahab's grief snapped into rage. He seized the man, threw him down, and beat him almost to death, and a slave in that house could not so much as raise an arm to defend himself. When Umm al-Fadl came out and physically pulled Abu Lahab off, he turned and began to beat her too. And wounded as she was, she answered him with a fury that has outlived him: the master of this house is away in captivity, and this is what you do to his household? This is the protector you are?

Abu Lahab left humiliated and guilt-ridden, and within days a foul sickness took hold of him. The books of tafsir and sira describe it in different ways, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi will not call it a natural death; his reading is that misery and disgrace killed Abu Lahab as surely as any disease. He was not seen again. Within a week of the battle he was dead, the worst of that first generation of enemies of Islam, and the very last of them, finished without a single Muslim raising a hand against him. It is as if Allah had saved this one for the end, the icing, the Sheikh says, on a bitter cake, so that the destruction of the old guard of Makkah would be complete and not one of them could claim a Muslim's blade had done it.

The city that was not allowed to weep

Ibn Ishaq records that once the survivors were home, Makkah was soon enveloped in wailing, the loud ritual mourning of the jahiliyyah, rising from every quarter of the city. Remember the dream of Atikah from the first day of this chapter, the boulder that struck the mountain and burst, sending a shard into every single

house in Makkah? This was the shard arriving. There was no household without its dead.

Then Abu Sufyan gathered Quraysh and decreed something the Arabs had never done before in their history: no woman shall wail. Not out of mercy, but out of spite. He could not bear that word might reach the Muslims that Makkah was weeping, that they might take any pleasure from the sound of Quraysh grieving. So the city was made to swallow its grief whole. One night, al-Aswad ibn al-Muttalib, a distant uncle of the Prophet ﷺ who had lost all three of his sons at Badr, heard a woman wailing somewhere in the dark, and a flicker of hope rose in him. He sent his servant running: has the ban been lifted, so that I may finally weep for my son, for my Zam'ah? The servant came back with the answer. No. She is wailing over a lost camel.

Ibn Kathir, on whom the Sheikh leans throughout this episode, saw in that small cruel scene a punishment folded inside the punishment. Mourning shared is mourning softened; the wailing of the jahiliyyah, for all its excess, gave them comfort, the household gathering, the voices rising together, the grief made bearable by being carried in company. By forbidding it, Abu Sufyan, without meaning to, denied his people even that. They had to grieve the worst day in their history in silence, each behind a closed door. The ban he imposed out of pride became, by Allah's decree, one more weight upon their backs.

The other victory of the same morning

Now widen the lens, because Badr was not the only battle Allah decided that morning. Years earlier, in the middle of the Makkan period, around the sixth or seventh year of the dawah, Persia had crushed Rome so thoroughly that Roman power seemed to be sliding into its grave. And it was precisely then, against every

reading of the politics, that Allah revealed the opening of Surah ar-Rum:

The Byzantines have been defeated In the nearest land. But they, after their defeat, will overcome Within three to nine years. To Allah belongs the command [i.e., decree] before and after. And that day the believers will rejoice In the victory of Allah. He gives victory to whom He wills, and He is the Exalted in Might, the Merciful.

QUR'AN 30:2-5

It is one of the most explicit predictions in the entire Qur'an, and it carried two promises at once. The defeated empire would rise and win within bid' sinin, a handful of years; and on the very day that victory came, the believers would be rejoicing in a victory of their own. Ubayy ibn Khalaf mocked the prophecy to Abu Bakr's face: you truly believe Rome will beat Persia, after a defeat like that? So the two men set a wager, in the days before such wagers were forbidden. The Arabic bid' runs from three to nine, and when Ubayy asked how many years, Abu Bakr radiyallahu anhu took the middle and said six. Six years passed with no Roman victory, and Abu Bakr lost the bet and paid up the camels he had staked.

Then, on the same day the swords met at Badr, more than a thousand miles away, Heraclius of Rome launched a fierce offensive and broke the armies of Khosrow II of Persia. As the qadr of Allah unfolded it, two of the Persian king's generals defected with their entire flanks, and his own family plotted against him; it was as though his right hand had been cut off before the fighting began, and the empire that had looked invincible folded. Both predictions of the surah landed together, on one morning. The believers at the wells did not even know it

yet; the news would take two weeks to ride into Arabia, and by then the wager was long settled and Ubayy already dead.

Here Dr. Yasir Qadhi makes one of his signature points. This event is dated in the Roman and Persian chronicles too, written by people who had never heard of Badr and cared nothing for it. Lay the sira beside the recorded history of the world and the dates interlock, incident by incident. For those who doubt whether the sunnah and the sira were truly preserved, here is the answer in the hardest currency there is: the life of the Prophet ﷺ is not legend gilded by his followers. It is preserved, and corroborated, down to the morning. A handful of pebbles changed a desert; on the same sunrise, far away, an empire kept an appointment a Makkan verse had set for it years before.

The best of us

What did one day at those wells make of the three hundred and some who stood it? Jibril himself came down and put the question to the Prophet ﷺ: how do you reckon the people of Badr among you? We count them, he ﷺ answered, the best of us. And Jibril replied: and so do we count the angels who were present at Badr the best of us. Heaven and earth filed the very same ranking. It is why Imam al-Bukhari, generations later, would give the virtues of the people of Badr an entire book within his Sahih, full of hadith on their station.

Some of that rank was bought in blood on the day itself. Harithah ibn Suraqah, a young man struck by a stray arrow that found him before the lines had fully closed, was among the first of the martyrs. His mother came from the Ansar with the only question a mother carries: tell me about my son. Is he in Jannah? And the Prophet ﷺ answered her with a gentleness that multiplied the

gift. It is not one garden, he told her. They are many gardens, and your son has reached al-Firdaws, the highest of them all.

And some of that rank would only show its full weight years later, when one of these men stumbled. At the conquest of Makkah, a veteran of Badr named Hatib ibn Abi Balta'ah did something close to unforgivable: he sent a secret letter ahead to Quraysh, warning them that the Muslims were marching, when the whole power of the conquest lay in its being a surprise. Jibril informed the Prophet ﷺ, riders overtook the courier, a woman, and drew the letter from where she had hidden it in the braids of her hair, and there it was in plain words: beware, the Muslims are coming. Treason, by any measure. Umar asked for the man's head, and this time, Dr. Yasir Qadhi notes, the request was by every outward standard fully justified; this was not a sneer or a doubt but plain treachery in time of war. But Hatib's defense was a frightened father's. By Allah, he said, I never doubted Islam for a moment; you know me. But every other man here has a clan back in Makkah to shield his family, and I have none. I hoped that by doing Quraysh this favor I might buy protection for my family, and I knew with certainty that Allah would protect you regardless. The Prophet ﷺ said: Hatib has told you the truth. And when Umar pressed a second time, asking to strike not for unbelief but for the crime, the Prophet ﷺ answered with the words that fixed the station of these men forever: how do you know, Umar? Perhaps Allah looked upon the people of Badr and said, do as you please, for I have already forgiven you.

He was saying this five and six years after the battle, and using Badr to shield a man's life and lift his rank long after the dust had settled. That is what one day of sincerity at those wells could weigh. It is why the classical sira writers, from Ibn Ishaq down through Ibn Hisham to Ibn Kathir, spent page after page listing all

three hundred and some of the people of Badr by name, one by one, for no scholarly reason at all except honor.

Before opening the surah, the episode steps back to name what this single morning did to history, and the Sheikh draws three effects. First, the Muslims were now a fact of politics: a separate, independent, legitimate entity, a state that Quraysh and all of Arabia would have to deal with as a tangible reality, no longer a runaway preacher and a band of followers to be wished away. Second, it was the wound from which Quraysh never recovered, and the Sheikh's judgment is blunt: this was the single greatest shock in the whole sira, every later defeat trivial beside it. At every battle afterward they would at least fight knowing the Muslims were a power; only at Badr had they marched out certain they were about to wipe Islam from the earth, and instead lost their entire first row before noon. Third, and closest to home: Badr is the moment the masks inside Madinah began to slip. Until now the grumbling of the munafiqun and the unease of the surrounding tribes had been little more than sarcasm; after Badr, envy began to harden into something colder, and the episodes ahead will have to reckon with both the hypocrites within and the treaty tribes around. Victory, it turns out, does not end your tests. It only changes their address.

Allah retells the battle

Now the heart of this final day. Surah al-Anfal, the eighth surah of the Qur'an, began to come down on the plains of Badr itself, to men whose memory of the battle was measured in hours, and the Sheikh walks nearly the whole surah to show that almost every ayah touches what they had just lived. Imagine, he says, what they understood that we never will: references so fresh and so plain to them that they needed no explaining, lost to us now only

because the people who carried that memory are gone. The surah opens exactly where the camp's tension sat: they ask you about the spoils. Say that the spoils belong to Allah and His Messenger, so fear Allah and set right what is between you. The quarrel of the three groups over the war booty, the ones who had chased the enemy, the ones who had guarded the Prophet ﷺ, the ones who had taken the camp, dissolved in a single verse. And immediately the surah lifts the believers' eyes off the money to the real prize:

The believers are only those who, when Allah is mentioned, their hearts become fearful, and when His verses are recited to them, it increases them in faith; and upon their Lord they rely -

QUR'AN 8:2

Then the surah does something astonishingly tender. It remembers their fear, and does not shame them for it. It recalls how their Lord brought them out of their homes in truth while a party of the believers were unwilling, arguing about it after the truth was clear, as if they were being driven toward death with their own eyes open and watching it come. These were the men who, when the army turned out to be the army and not the unguarded caravan, hesitated and said they had not come prepared. And in the very breath that records that terror, Allah names them al-mu'minun, the believers. Fear, the Sheikh insists, does not cancel iman. Being terrified expelled not a single man from the ranks of faith. The believer is allowed to be afraid, even very afraid; what matters is not whether the fear comes but whether the feet keep moving. And the wording is no rebuke: Allah did not call them Muslimun but mu'minun, the higher praise, even as He corrected them.

Verse after verse reads their own week back to them. The desperate cry for help, and the answer: I will reinforce you with a thousand of the angels, rank upon rank. The strange drowsiness that fell over the camp the night before, when men with an ordeal at dawn cannot close their eyes and these men slept; and the rain that purified them, firmed the sand beneath their feet, and drove off the whispers of Shaytan. The dream in which Allah had shown the enemy as few, and the eyes on the field that saw the same, so that one companion guessed aloud, do you think they are seventy? and another answered, perhaps a hundred, when in truth they were a thousand. The meeting itself: had the two armies tried to set that appointment they would have missed it, but Allah delivered both to the wells so that a matter already decreed would be carried out, that whoever perished would perish upon clear evidence and whoever lived would live upon it. Even Abu Jahl's prayer at the Kaaba, that Allah destroy whichever party had cut the ties of kinship and broken most with the faith of the fathers, is answered to the letter: you sought the verdict, and the verdict has come. And it came against him.

And at the center of it all stands one ayah, the one the scholars of aqidah return to again and again:

And you did not kill them, but it was Allah who killed them. And you threw not, [O Muhammad], when you threw, but it was Allah who threw that He might test the believers with a good test. Indeed, Allah is Hearing and Knowing.

QUR'AN 8:17

One handful of pebbles, cast by the Prophet ﷺ at an entire army, and somehow it reached every eye. The Sheikh weighs the wording the way the people of aqidah do, because it holds the whole balance of our belief in qadar. Notice, he says, that Allah

affirms the throw: when you threw. He did not say you never threw; the Prophet ﷺ genuinely picked up the dust and flung it, by his own will and intention, so we are not puppets, and this is not the doctrine of jabr, that a man is forced and does nothing. And then Allah claims the result: but Allah threw. The reaching of every eye, the effect no human arm could produce, was Allah's alone, so we are not the power either. Had the verse stopped at you threw not, man would be a robot; had it said only you threw, man would be the doer of all things. It says both. You act with everything in you; Allah carries the act to its end.

One verse even carries an address. The disbelievers had boasted, when the verses were recited, that they had heard all this before and could compose its like if they wished, that it was nothing but legends of the ancients. That was the trademark sneer of an-Nadr ibn al-Harith, the storyteller of Quraysh, and an-Nadr was among those executed on the road home from Badr, in the very days these verses were descending. No narration spells the timing out, and the Sheikh flags plainly that this is his own reading, not a transmitted fact, but it may well be that the man lived just long enough to hear heaven quoting his own boast back to him. They had dared Allah, too: if this is really the truth from You, then rain stones down on us, or bring a painful punishment. Badr, the surah says in effect, was that rain. And yet even here a door is held open. Allah would not destroy them wholesale while the Prophet ﷺ was among them, and, in the reading the Sheikh prefers, while there were still people in that city who would one day believe and seek His forgiveness. And most of Makkah, in the end, would.

The commands that walked out of Badr

Al-Anfal does not only remember Badr; it legislates from it, and the new state takes its first laws here, given the swift way the Prophet ﷺ gives them.

O you who have believed, respond to Allah and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life. And know that Allah intervenes between a man and his heart and that to Him you will be gathered.

QUR'AN 8:24

Think who first heard the call that gives life. Barely eighty-five Muhajirun stood at Badr, their Ansar brothers around them, and the call they answered looked for all the world like a call to death. Had that small band not answered it, the Sheikh says, the religion would never have reached you; we are alive as Muslims today on the answer they gave that morning. And the verse ends inside the human chest: Allah intervenes between a man and his heart. This is why the Prophet ﷺ never stopped pleading, O Turner of hearts, make my heart firm upon Your obedience. If your heart feels weak, turn to its Owner to strengthen it; and if it feels strong, turn to Him anyway, lest you imagine a strong heart cannot be turned.

The second great law is unity:

And brought together their hearts. If you had spent all that is in the earth, you could not have brought their hearts together; but Allah brought them together. Indeed, He is Exalted in Might and Wise.

QUR'AN 8:63

All the treasure on earth, spent honestly, could never have joined the hearts of these old feuding tribes; Allah joined them, and it is His gift. And the surah guards the gift with a warning a few

verses on: do not dispute with one another, or you will fail and your strength, your wind, will leave you. The Sheikh points one chapter ahead: the very verb of that warning, the root of *tanaza'tum*, is the word the Qur'an will use in Surah Al Imran for exactly what goes wrong at Uhud, where the believers will argue and lose what they had won. Unity is half of victory, and disputing is precisely how a victory is handed back.

Then come the standing orders of the new state. Prepare against the enemy whatever strength you can, and the Prophet ﷺ himself defined that strength: indeed the strength is in the throw, he said, the strength is archery, marksmanship before mere muscle. But if the enemy inclines to peace, then incline to it and rely on Allah, for war is not the default of this religion; peace is. And never treachery: a Muslim may outmaneuver an enemy in war, deception of strategy is allowed, but a sworn word is sacred, and if a treaty must be ended it is announced openly, thrown back so that both stand on equal footing, before a single move is made. The Sheikh lingers here, because the world still slanders the religion on this point: deception in war is not treason. To feint and maneuver is one thing; to swear an oath and break it is another, and that, the surah says, Allah does not love. Even the fighting ratios were eased within these verses, from one believer against ten down to one against two, a concession written because Allah knew the weakness in His servants: mercy folded directly into the law of war.

And at the last the surah turns to the captives and to the believers still scattered far away. Say to the prisoners in your hands: if Allah knows any good in your hearts, He will give you better than what was taken from you, and forgive you. Abbas would swear in later years that this ayah came down concerning him, that he wished only that Quraysh had taken more from him,

for everything Badr had cost him returned many times over, with the gift of Islam on top of it all. And then the brotherhood verses bring the surah to its close. After Badr, every believer still in Makkah was commanded to complete the hijrah; and believers anywhere who call for help in the matter of the religion are owed that help, the Sheikh says, looking up from the page at our own century, within the limits of standing treaties. Brothers always, even where politics constrains what aid can reach them. The bonds of faith are not dissolved by a border.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read this seventh day as the satisfying end of a war story, the enemies punished, the prophecy vindicated, the surah revealed, and to close the book there. That would be to miss what the day is actually asking of us. Strip it down and three questions step forward, each one aimed straight at an ordinary life.

The first is the question of fear. Allah looked at men who marched as though watching their own executioner approach, men whose courage was visibly shaking, and He called them, in the same verse, the believers. We tend to think faith means feeling no fear, and so when dread rises in us before a hard and lawful thing, we take it as a verdict against our iman and we turn back. Badr says otherwise. Bring your fear with you. Let it ride beside you to the wells. Only do not hand it the reins; do not let it choose your direction. The men of Badr were afraid, and they are the best of us, because their feet kept moving when their hearts were pounding.

The second is the question at the center of the surah, the handful of pebbles. You did not throw when you threw, but Allah threw. Here is the balance most of us spend a lifetime failing to hold. On

one side are those who do nothing and call it trust; on the other, those who do everything and credit themselves. The verse refuses both. The Prophet ﷺ genuinely bent down and threw, with his own hand and his own will, and Allah genuinely carried that throw to every eye on the field. So work. Prepare your strength, learn the archery, tie the camel, send the letters, do every lawful thing within your power as if the outcome depended on it, and then, when you have done it all, attribute none of the result to yourself. You are never a puppet, and you are never the power. You throw; Allah carries.

And the third is the question of the heart, and of the hearts around you. All the wealth on earth could not buy what Allah gave freely at Badr, the joining of hearts that had hated each other for generations, and the same surah that named the gift warned that quarreling is how its wind departs. So guard whatever unity you have been handed, in your home, your masjid, your ummah, like the weapon it is. And guard your own heart most of all, for it lies in the hand of the One who turns it, nearer to it than you are. The men who held the swords, the bounty, the numbers, the certainty of victory, marched home with nothing. The handful who answered a call that looked like death are the reason you pray today.

So carry one thing down into your ordinary days from this last morning at the wells. When the next hard, lawful thing stands in front of you and the fear comes, let it come, and move anyway. Do your utmost, and then rest the result with Allah, who threw when His Messenger ﷺ threw. Keep your given word unbroken and your ranks undivided. And when your own heart feels far from Him, say the plea He taught beside the verse that He stands between a man and his heart: O Turner of hearts, make my heart firm upon Your obedience. May Allah, who joined the hearts of

the believers when all the earth's treasure could not, join ours; make us people who answer the call that gives life; and as He looked upon the people of Badr and forgave them, may He look upon us and forgive what He knows of us. And may He send His peace and His blessings upon His Messenger Muhammad ﷺ, and gather us under his banner with the best of them.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 42: the Battle of Badr, part 7 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (30:2-5, 8:2, 8:17, 8:24, 8:63), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

Between Badr and Uhud

A poisoned sword, a broken treaty, and the lines being drawn

Badr is barely a month old, and the ground is still shaking from it. The ransoms are still being haggled over, the shock is still travelling out across Arabia by every road, and into that unsettled season the seerah hands us two stories that belong together even though, on the surface, they could not look more different. In the first, a man crosses the desert with a sword steeped in poison and a secret that only two people on earth know, and he walks out of the masjid a believer. In the second, a treaty dies in a goldsmith's market, and a city learns where its loyalties truly lie. Dr. Yasir Qadhi gathers them as the first events between the two great battles, and the thread that ties them is a single hard fact: after Badr, no one in Madinah can stand in the middle any longer. Every heart has to declare itself, and these two stories are simply the two directions a heart can run.

Two grieving men in the Hijr

The first story begins not in Madinah but in Makkah, in the Hijr beside the Ka'bah, where two cousins sit together with their grief. One is Safwan ibn Umayyah, and his loss is fresh and personal: his father was the famous Umayyah ibn Khalaf, the man who had once owned Bilal and tortured him under the desert sun, and the first rider to return from Badr had found Safwan and told him plainly, by Allah, I saw your father and your brother as they were dragged to their deaths. The cousin beside him is Umayr ibn

Wahb, among the most severe of all the people in his hatred of the new religion. His wound is of a different kind: his own son was taken captive at Badr and now sits a prisoner in Madinah, and the father can do nothing but sit in Makkah and think about it.

So the two of them trade their losses back and forth, until Umayr says the sentence that sets the whole story in motion. Were it not for a debt I owe and a family I would have to leave behind, he says, I would ride to Madinah myself and kill Muhammad ﷺ. Safwan does not let those words cool in the air; he sees a golden opportunity, and his father's wealth is behind him. What if I take care of your debt, he answers, and your family lives exactly as my own family lives, so that every gift I give my children, yours receive the same? Will you do it then? Umayr agrees on one condition. Keep this between the two of us. Tell no single soul.

And he tells no one, not his wife, not his servant. He sharpens his sword and steeps it in poison until the merest scratch from its tip would carry death into the body, the way the Arabs knew how to do to their weapons. Then he slips out of Makkah alone, in complete secrecy, and points his camel north. The ordinary traveler covered that road in eleven or twelve days; a man riding alone would take longer, and Umayr rode the better part of two weeks. Sit a moment with the weight of what he is carrying. His own son is a hostage inside the very city he is riding to strike, and he knows exactly what becomes of that boy once the deed is done. There is no road home from this, for himself or for his son. That is the depth of the hatred: he is spending his own life and his child's life both, for one thrust of a poisoned blade.

The secret only two men knew

He enters Madinah the way any traveler enters from the open desert, his face wound up in his turban against the blowing sand,

his sword slung from his neck, and he makes straight for the masjid. And there the first man he meets is the last he would have chosen. Umar ibn al-Khattab, radiyallahu anhu, takes one look and knows him by his eyes. That dog, Umar says, the enemy of Allah. By Allah, he has come for nothing but evil. He hurries to the Prophet ﷺ ahead of Umayr: the enemy of Allah is in the city, looking for you. The answer comes back without alarm. Bring him to me. So Umar walked Umayr in with his hand resting on his own sword the whole way, ready to cut him down at the first wrong movement, and quietly told the Ansar to watch this man's every move, because he could not be trusted.

What follows is one of the most extraordinary conversations in the entire seerah. Umayr offers the old pagan greeting, a wish for a pleasant morning, and even now, with an assassin and a poisoned sword before him, the Prophet ﷺ teaches rather than recoils. Allah has given us a greeting better than yours, he says, the greeting of the people of Jannah, the salam. Umayr brushes it aside. Then the questions begin. Why have you come? To negotiate the ransom of my son, Umayr answers; he has his cover ready. Then what, the Prophet ﷺ asks, is this sword hanging from your neck? A man who comes to negotiate does not come armed. Umayr glances at it as though seeing it for the first time. This sword? What good did our swords ever do us at Badr? Tell me the truth, the Prophet ﷺ says. I have told you, Umayr insists.

So the Prophet ﷺ tells him the truth instead. No. You and Safwan sat together in the Hijr and spoke of your dead at Badr, and you said that were it not for your debt and your family, you would come and kill me yourself. And Safwan took your debt and your family upon himself so that you would. But Allah has come between you and your plan.

Umayr does the arithmetic of secrets in a single heartbeat. Two men, and only two, had been in that conversation. He had told no wife and no servant; no traveler had outrun him to carry the tale ahead. There was exactly one way this man could know what was said in the Hijr, and it was not a way of this earth. He says it himself, out loud, in the masjid: we used to call you a liar when you told us revelation came down from the sky, but no one knew of this except me and Safwan, and by Allah, only Allah could have informed you. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and that you are the Messenger of Allah. He had come within a sword's length of his target, and there, at the very tip of his reach, he was conquered instead, and then he gave thanks for it: praise be to the One who dragged me to the truth.

Here Dr. Yasir Qadhi stops for a judgment that is distinctly his. Some of Islam's worst enemies, he says, were sincere in their hostility. Some, like Abu Jahl, knew the truth and fought it anyway; but many others genuinely believed this religion false, and for those it sometimes took a miracle as blunt as a slap across the face, the way Pharaoh's magicians, the most hardened of men, fell into sajdah the instant they saw a sign too enormous to explain away. Then the Sheikh turns the point on us. If that was true of people who stood before the Messenger ﷺ himself, we should hold it in mind about the loudest enemies of Islam in our own age: some of them, he has no doubt, genuinely believe the filth they repeat, brainwashed even as they brainwash others. Which is why his general rule stands: gentleness wins what harshness cannot, and a lifetime of hatred can flip in five seconds when it is met the right way.

Two cousins, two shahadas

The Prophet ﷺ turns to his companions and gives three instructions that deserve to be framed on the wall of every masjid. Teach your brother his religion. Help him to memorize the Qur'an. And go and free his captive for him. The son Umayr had come to ransom is released without a single coin, and the would-be assassin's first gift in Islam is the very thing he had used as his cover story. The man who a second earlier was reaching for a poisoned blade now receives every blessing imaginable. And notice which command came first: teach him his religion, help him with the Qur'an. When a person enters the faith, this is the way, that we be as firm as we can without driving him off, even if at the start he reads the Fatiha off a card written in his own letters, the way Sheikh Yasir describes doing for a man who had converted the week before. The Prophet ﷺ assigned a teacher to every new Muslim, every time, and the Sheikh laments openly how completely we have let that simple sunnah lapse, and how easy it would be to revive: a list ready so that the moment a new convert walks in, someone takes him in hand as a teacher and a foster family and folds him into the community.

Umayr stays a while and learns, and then he comes with a request, and the address itself tells you how far he has travelled. The man who walked in saying O Muhammad now says O Messenger of Allah. I spent myself, he says, trying to put out the light of Allah, and I tortured those who embraced Islam. Give me permission to return to Makkah and call them to the very truth I used to bar them from. His blood is safe there; he is senior, pure-blooded Quraysh. Permission is granted. And back in Makkah, Safwan has been telling everyone a surprise is coming, just wait. Then the news arrives: his hired sword has become a believer. Safwan vows to Allah that he will never speak to his cousin again, never look at him, never stand beneath one roof with him, after a

lifetime of growing up side by side. Umayr preaches anyway, and Ibn Ishaq records that a number of people accepted Islam at his hands. It is the same message the Prophet ﷺ had been preaching for thirteen years, only now it lands differently because it comes from inside the family. Guidance, the Sheikh reminds us, is rarely the work of five minutes; people are raised inside a way of life, and it can take years, even decades, to think their way out of it.

And the ending is too good to leave for later, so run the story forward six years. Umayr returns to Makkah with the army of the Conquest, a Muslim now. His cousin Safwan, still a pagan, is certain the Prophet ﷺ will never forgive the son of Umayyah ibn Khalaf, and he flees, though in truth he was not even one of the handful of condemned names. And who goes hunting for him? The very cousin he had sworn out of his life. Umayr asks the Prophet ﷺ for an aman, a guarantee of safety, for Safwan, and the Prophet ﷺ, who never refused a man who asked him, grants it. Umayr tracks his old friend down, talks him back into the city, and Safwan says the shahada in front of the Prophet ﷺ himself. Look at what the qadar of Allah has done: the two men who once sat in the Hijr plotting an assassination both end up giving their hearts to the very man they had hired the sword against.

Telling the hardest stories straight

The second half of the episode steps onto what Dr. Yasir Qadhi calls the most politically charged ground in the entire seerah: the dealings of the Prophet ﷺ with the Jewish tribes of Madinah. It is made heavier by the age we live in, by the charge of anti-Semitism, by the ugly phrase of a mini-Holocaust that gets reached for whenever any group of Jews is harmed, so that every such incident, even a purely political one, is chained to a

catastrophe none of us defends. Before he tells the first of these stories, the Sheikh sets terms that will govern all of them, and they are worth memorizing. We are not allowed to sugarcoat, and we are not allowed to invent false defenses. He is no apologist; he will not bend the truth to shield the faith. Honesty is the best policy, and it is not his job to defend Allah's decree, only to tell it exactly as it is and to let the sources speak for themselves.

But honesty cuts both ways, and the standing accusation, that the Prophet ﷺ was somehow anti-Jewish, collapses the instant you widen the lens. The claim is so shallow, the Sheikh says, that no serious person can hold it. For century after century, large communities of Jews lived in peace across the Muslim world, in Iraq, Tunisia, Morocco, Yemen, and every time they were persecuted and expelled from Christian lands they found safe refuge in Muslim ones. When Spain expelled them, they crossed by the shipload to Morocco, and the Sultan sent his own vessels: come, we want you. The greatest minds of Judaism flourished under Islam. Maimonides, the single greatest mind in the history of Jewish thought, was raised in the universities of Muslim Andalusia, wrote his masterworks of Jewish law in Arabic so that they later had to be translated into Hebrew, and served as the personal physician of Salahuddin; one recent study even argues that for a period he lived outwardly as a Muslim. And the favorite modern label does not even attach, because the Arabs are themselves Semites, descendants of Ibrahim as the Jews are. An Arab may be called anti-Jewish, perhaps, but anti-Semite is a word meaningless against him.

Then the Sheikh hands over the key he will use for every hard chapter that follows, and asks us to hold it firmly. The Prophet ﷺ never treated these tribes harshly because of who they were. It was always, only ever, because of what they did. A criminal who

happens to be a Jew, or a Muslim, or a Christian, punished for his crime, is punished for the crime and not the creed, and the difference is enormous. Yes, harder chapters are coming, he warns plainly, and there is indeed a tribe that will eventually be put to the sword, but the principle does not change, and a heart that wants the glass half empty will always find it half empty without telling an outright lie. Even the Prophet ﷺ, judging the simplest complaint a wife brought against her husband, heard the husband's side before he ruled, and found that every true grievance she stated had a context that changed it. If context matters that much in a marriage dispute, the Sheikh asks, how much more in the story of an expulsion.

The market where the treaty died

Banu Qaynuqa were the largest of the three Jewish tribes of Madinah: seven hundred fighting men, perhaps two or three thousand souls in all, goldsmiths by trade, owners of the biggest market in the city. They were signatories, too, of the treaty of Madinah, by which each community ran its own affairs and all of them stood together against any enemy from outside. The sources preserve very little of what went wrong; Ibn Ishaq gives the whole affair less than a page. The Sheikh offers a humane explanation that has nothing to do with concealment: it is simply human nature, the way a family writing the history of a beloved grandfather lingers on his triumphs and passes over his hard years in a single sentence. There was no impulse among the early Muslims to preserve the gruesome details. But two scenes survive, and they are enough.

The first is public. After Badr the Qaynuqa made no secret of their grief at the Muslims' victory, and their hostility kept rising, until the Prophet ﷺ went himself to their market, gathered them,

and reminded them of the treaty. One of their leaders stood up and answered him to his face. Do not be deceived, Muhammad, by your victory. You fought a people who knew nothing of war, a pack of nobodies. Had you fought men like us, you would have learned what fighting really is. That is not a rumor whispered in the dark; it is a declaration, delivered in the open by one of their own chiefs, three and a half weeks after Badr.

The second scene is the spark, and it is crude and ugly. A woman of the Ansar came to their market to sell her goods, and having sold them she sat at a goldsmith's stall to buy some gold. The goldsmith began pressing her to uncover herself, and she refused. So he made a sign to a man behind her, who pinned her garment in such a way that when she rose to her feet it was torn away and she was left exposed, while the men around her laughed. She screamed for help. A Muslim leapt up and struck the head from the goldsmith with his sword, and the crowd closed in and killed the Muslim. By the time the news reached the Prophet ﷺ, a believing woman had been publicly humiliated and a believing man lay dead.

What he ﷺ did next is itself a lesson. There was no night raid and no ambush. He sent the Qaynuqa a formal message: the pact between us is ended. There is no longer a treaty. For this is the law of it in Islam, that you never break a treaty by surprise; you announce to the other side that the agreement is finished before you act. And the very ayah that governs this exact situation had come down only weeks before, in the surah of Badr:

If you [have reason to] fear from a people betrayal, throw [their treaty] back to them, [putting you] on equal terms. Indeed, Allāh does not like traitors.

QUR'AN 8:58

In Islam, the Sheikh says, a treaty may die, but it dies in daylight, declared openly to the other side, on equal terms. Treachery is never to be answered with treachery.

The siege and the grip on his armor

The Qaynuqa did not expect him to act at all. Call it arrogance, the Sheikh says, or confidence in their numbers, or trust in their fortresses, those thick-walled strongholds the Jewish tribes of the region had mastered the art of building in a way the Arabs never adopted. When the Prophet ﷺ marched, they simply ran inside and locked themselves up. The Muslims had no siege engines, none would appear in the whole story until the very end, at Tabuk, so they did the one thing open to them: they surrounded the fortresses and cut off the supplies. Water does not last forever inside a fort. After half a month the Qaynuqa surrendered, and the Prophet ﷺ ordered the men bound like prisoners of war while their fate was decided.

From the old days of Yathrib the Qaynuqa had two chief allies among the Khazraj, and what those two men did next is the true heart of this episode. The first was Ubadah ibn as-Samit, radiyallahu anhu, and he went straight to the Prophet ﷺ, not to the prisoners, and resigned his old alliance on the spot. O Messenger of Allah, I am finished with them. My loyalty is to Allah and His Messenger and the believers, and I cut my ties to these people. The second ally was Abdullah ibn Ubayy, the man history would know as the head of the hypocrites, and he did the opposite. He marched first to the prisoners and ordered the guards to untie them, and the companion in charge told him that if he so much as touched the ropes he would kill him. So he went instead to the Prophet ﷺ. Muhammad, he said, for he would almost never bring himself to say O Messenger of Allah, be

generous with my allies. The Prophet ﷺ said nothing. He said it again. Silence, and the Prophet ﷺ began to turn away. And then Abdullah ibn Ubayy did the thing no companion in the world would ever have dreamed of: he thrust his hand into the collar of the Prophet's ﷺ armor and gripped it tight.

Let go of me, the Prophet ﷺ said, and those present could see the anger rising in his face. He repeated his demand and held on tighter. Woe to you, the Prophet ﷺ said the third time, let go of me. And ibn Ubayy swore he would not. By Allah, I will not release you until you promise to treat my allies well. Seven hundred men, three hundred in mail and four hundred without, who protected me from the white and the black of mankind, and you would mow them down in a single day? By Allah, I fear the turning of fortune. Listen closely to that last sentence, because it is a confession of what was, and was not, in the man's heart. Not one word about Allah, not one word about truth or justice. Only old debts, old protectors, and the superstition of bad luck.

Finally the Prophet ﷺ said: they are yours. Their lives would be spared. And here Dr. Yasir Qadhi is carefully, deliberately honest about the limit of what we can know. The Prophet ﷺ had never actually announced that he would execute these men; he had only kept silent. We cannot say whether he meant to spare them all along, or conceded it in that moment to be rid of an unbearable man, or changed his mind there and then. Allah knows, and we do not. But the wisdom of the outcome we can see plainly. Abdullah ibn Ubayy was still the senior-most chief of old Madinah, with crowds who looked up to him even among the Muslims; it was barely a year and three months since the hijrah, the hypocrisy was not yet nakedly shown, and there was still hope for the man himself. To grant him this publicly cost little and prevented much. And notice what did not happen: a hand had

gripped the Prophet's ﷺ armor, a voice had defied him, and no punishment of any kind ever followed. Aisha, radiyallahu anha, testified of him ﷺ that he never once took revenge for himself; if he ever punished, it was for the sake of Allah alone.

The verdict came down: three days to load what they could carry and leave, and whatever they left behind would belong to the Muslims. They begged for more time and were refused. They appealed, of all people, to Ubadah, and his answer showed how far the ground had shifted: do not come to me, for I would not have given you even the three days. It was Ubadah who saw them out. They left with their gold but little else, abandoning their houses and the bulk of their possessions, all of which came to the Muslims. A watching heart with a disease in it could spin that ending however it pleased. The plain reading is far simpler: they mocked, they threatened openly, and they broke the treaty in the most delicate season the young city would ever pass through. If your hatred runs that loud and that dangerous, you go and live somewhere else.

The ayat that drew the line

At this Allah revealed a passage of Surah al-Ma'idah, verses fifty-one through fifty-six, that reads almost like a transcript of the week just past. And because the first of those verses is among the most weaponized in the entire Qur'an, the Sheikh slows down over a single word:

O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are [in fact] allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you - then indeed, he is [one] of them. Indeed, Allāh guides not the wrongdoing people.

QUR'AN 5:51

Awliya does not mean friends, the Sheikh insists, whatever the old careless translations say, and the islamophobes have built careers on that one mistranslation, pointing at it to claim the Qur'an forbids a Muslim ever to befriend a Jew or a Christian. It does no such thing. A wali is a protector, a patron, the side you run to and place your loyalty with when the lines have been drawn. And this verse came down in the precise week when one man ran to a tribe that had just broken its treaty and humiliated a believing woman, and another ran to Allah and His Messenger. In a moment like that, the ayah says, you do not hand your ultimate loyalty to the people standing against Allah and His Messenger, and whoever does has joined them.

Then the passage does something that should raise the hair on your arms: it quotes the conversation back from above the seven heavens.

So you see those in whose hearts is disease [i.e., hypocrisy] hastening into [association with] them, saying, "We are afraid a misfortune may strike us." But perhaps Allāh will bring conquest or a decision from Him, and they will become, over what they have been concealing within themselves, regretful.

QUR'AN 5:52

That is Abdullah ibn Ubayy's own sentence, the fear of a turning fortune he confessed aloud while his fist was knotted in the Prophet's ﷺ armor, lifted out of his mouth and set down in the Book. And against him, the declaration of Ubadah is taken up, praised, and made the creed of every believer who would come after:

Your ally is none but Allāh and [therefore] His Messenger and those who have believed - those who establish prayer and give zakāh, and they bow [in worship].

QUR'AN 5:55

And the passage closes with a promise about which side, in the end, holds the field:

And whoever is an ally of Allāh and His Messenger and those who have believed - indeed, the party of Allāh - they will be the predominant.

QUR'AN 5:56

This is the real subject of these in-between weeks, and it is why the two halves of this episode belong to one chapter. Badr split the world in two, and now every heart in Madinah is being forced to declare which half it stands on. The true colors of the hypocrites were beginning to show, the Sheikh notes, even if they would not be fully unmasked until they turned back from the march at Uhud a few weeks later. The lines were being drawn, and a believer in such a moment must choose the side of Allah and His Messenger.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read these weeks as two unconnected anecdotes, a thrilling foiled assassination and then a grim political expulsion, and to file them away as history. That would be to walk past the question they put to us. Strip both stories down and they turn out to be the same story told from two ends, and the question at the center of it will reach every one of us before long.

Look first at what mercy is capable of. A man crossed a desert with poison on his blade and his own son's life forfeit, carrying as

much hatred as a human heart can hold, and he was met not with a drawn sword but with a better greeting and the plain truth, and a lifetime of enmity collapsed in five seconds. The Prophet ﷺ did not lecture him about his crimes; he handed back his captive son for free and told the companions to teach the man his religion. That is the rule the Sheikh asks us to carry into our hardest conversations: gentleness wins what harshness cannot. And underneath it lies a humbler thought, that some of the loudest voices set against this faith, then and now, sincerely believe what they are saying, brainwashed even as they brainwash others. We are quick to write a person off as a settled enemy. Allah flipped this one in the time it takes to draw a breath, and stood ready to do the same for Safwan six years on.

Look next at how a believer keeps his word, even toward those who have broken theirs. The Qaynuqa shattered the treaty, and they were not ambushed in the dark for it; the pact was declared dead to their faces, in daylight, on equal terms, exactly as the ayah of al-Anfal commands. A believer's word holds even when the other side's does not, because the standard was never the other side's behavior; it was Allah's command. Carry that into your own contracts and given words. And carry, too, the key the Sheikh pressed into our hands for every hard chapter ahead: the Prophet ﷺ never moved against anyone for who they were, only ever for what they did. A heart that wants a half-empty glass will always find one, even in the soundest report; refuse to be that heart.

And then there is the choice at the very center of it all, the one the Qur'an itself froze in place forever. Two men, the same crisis, two sentences. One pushed his hand into the Prophet's ﷺ armor and bargained for his old allies out of fear for his luck and his business, and Allah recorded his words from above the heavens

as the speech of a diseased heart. The other gave up every old alliance in one clean sentence, my loyalty is to Allah, His Messenger, and the believers, and Allah made that sentence the creed of everyone who would ever come after. The same question will reach you, in smaller print, on some ordinary day, in some room where standing with Allah and His Messenger ﷺ carries a quiet cost: a friendship, a contract, a reputation, a seat at a comfortable table. The ayat are already written, waiting to see which sentence you will choose, before a hard day chooses it for you. So meet the people who oppose you with the truth and with gentleness, and leave their guidance to Allah, who guided an assassin. Keep your word in daylight even with those who break theirs. And when the lines are drawn in your own small life, say the sentence the whole religion turned on: my loyalty is to Allah, to His Messenger ﷺ, and to the believers, for the party of Allah, in the end, are the ones who prevail. May Allah make our loyalty His, keep our word unbroken even toward those who break theirs, guide the ones who oppose this faith in sincere error as He guided Umayr, and write each of us, when our own day of choosing comes, among the party of Allah. And may He send His peace and His blessings upon His Messenger Muhammad ﷺ, his family, and his companions.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 43: events between Badr and Uhud (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (8:58, 5:51, 5:52, 5:55, 5:56), verified via quran.ai.

Where the histories preserve only fragments, the Sheikh's own weighing of the sources has been followed.

Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf

A man at war, by his bride's own word

Between Badr and Uhud the seerah does not catch its breath. The great victory has barely cooled before the alarms begin again, one after another, smaller fires lit around a city that has just learned how to win. Raiders circle Madinah to avenge a strangled trade route. Abu Sufyan swears an oath he cannot wash off. A caravan worth a fortune slips out of Makkah along a road no one has ever ridden. And inside the walls, a celebrated poet, rich and handsome and bound by the city's own treaty, decides that treaty ink means nothing at all. Day forty four carries every piece of it, and then arrives at the story Dr. Yasir Qadhi opens by calling one of the most controversial in the entire seerah: the killing of Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf.

Pay attention and take good notes, he tells his students that night, because this one will be quoted at you. Then he models the only honest way to hold it: no denial, no sugarcoating, no apology. It is in Sahih al-Bukhari. It happened. And understood in its own time and its own place, it was the act of a head of state protecting a small city at war for its life. So we will walk it slowly, the small fires first and then the hard story, so that you know exactly what happened, why it happened, and what to say when someone sets it before you as a charge.

Small fires after Badr

Seven days. That is all the rest Madinah was given after Badr before the next alarm. Subsections of two of the largest tribes in Arabia, neighbors whose income had bled away when the Makkan caravans were forced off their old road, gathered some two hundred men to strike the city. Their living had depended on that trade, the way a small town today clamors to have the interstate routed through it, for the money moves when the road moves. With the route diverted their livelihood had dried up, and they meant to poke the Muslims hard enough to make sure it never happened again.

The Prophet ﷺ did not wait to be raided. He marched out to meet them, and when the raiders saw the believers coming over the ground toward them they turned and fled without striking a blow, though they outnumbered the Muslims, leaving tents and herds and baggage where they had pitched them. Every man who marched came home the richer for it, two camels apiece. And the Prophet ﷺ camped on the captured ground for three days, exactly as he had done at Badr, for that was his way.

Two small treasures came out of that bloodless march. The first was a man. An Abyssinian slave named Yasar was taken in the first sweep, and during the days he spent among the believers he watched them closely, saw how they lived with one another, and accepted Islam. The companion who had captured him brought him to the Prophet ﷺ and said, he is yours, Messenger of Allah, for he is a Muslim now. And the Prophet ﷺ did with him what he did with every male slave who ever came into his hand: he set him free. Yasar stayed on anyway, a free man serving by choice the one ﷺ who had freed him. The second treasure was a sentence. Asked why armies kept dissolving at the mere sight of the Muslims, the Prophet ﷺ said that Allah had aided him with awe, so that his enemy is struck with terror of him at a month's

journey away. Empires would learn the weight of that sentence in time; the tribes around Madinah were learning it now.

The battle of porridge

Abu Sufyan had sworn an oath of his own after Badr. He would not bathe, not even the purifying bath that the pagans had kept as an inheritance from the religion of Ibrahim, until he had taken his revenge for the dead. Months passed and the water never touched him. At last, unable to bear the weight of his own vow any longer, he gathered around two hundred riders and slipped toward Madinah, and along the way he was sheltered, fed, watered, and resupplied by the Banu Nadir, the second of the Jewish tribes of the city.

Hold that detail, because the seerah will come back for it. The treaty of Madinah bound the Banu Nadir to two clear things: never to aid Quraysh against the Muslims, and to stand as one body with the city if it were attacked from outside. To provision the very man marching against Madinah was no gray area. It was blatant treachery, and it sat on the record waiting to be answered.

The raid itself was small and ugly. With perhaps twenty men Abu Sufyan fell on one of Madinah's date orchards, terrified the women and children there, killed two of the Ansar, set fire to the grove, and ran. The Muslims gave chase, and as the raiders fled they began cutting their saddlebags loose to lighten their camels and gain speed. The bags were full of sawiq, the dried travel food of the Arabs: barley ground and mixed with milk and butter and honey, then dried into packets a man could live on for a long journey. The pursuers came home with a great heap of porridge and no Abu Sufyan, which is why the books, with a perfectly straight face, call this the battle of sawiq, the battle of porridge. It

does not sound like much, and it was not. But the vow behind it tells you the temperature in Makkah: a man with a token revenge in hand and a real war already counting down inside him.

A caravan with no road left

By the third year, Quraysh had a problem that no sword could cut through. The annual caravan to Syria was due, and at their council Safwan ibn Umayyah, put in charge of it that year, laid the difficulty out plainly. Muhammad ﷺ and his companions, he said, have blocked our passages, and if we creep along the coast road most of the tribes there have already given him their allegiance and entered his religion. Dr. Yasir Qadhi stops the whole story here, because a sentence like that is worth more than a chapter. The sira books were written in an age that recorded wars, and the Madinan years come down to us as nine parts battle. Yet here, from a single line in the enemy's own mouth, you learn what the chronicles so rarely pause to say: all this while, with no army anywhere near them, Islam was spreading. Tribe after coastal tribe was entering it through dawah, through preaching, through trade, through the simple force of how the Muslims carried themselves. The battles got written down. The quiet conquest of hearts you have to overhear.

The coast was closed to them, then, and the western route by the Yanbu plain was no safer. So one of the elders proposed the only thing left: send the caravan the long way, a great semicircle east of Madinah, up toward the Iraq road, then doubling back northwest to Syria, a route Quraysh had never once used. It was a measure of how desperate they had become, and of how thoroughly Badr had tightened around them. They hired a guide who knew the strange road, loaded the camels with goods and silver, and set out, telling almost no one.

The secret died in a cup. One of the small inner circle who knew the plan was drinking in Makkah, in the days before wine was forbidden, and in his drunkenness he boasted to his companion of a scheme so clever no one could outsmart it, and named the route aloud. His companion happened to be one of the few Muslims still living quietly in Makkah, his Islam concealed from everyone, and within days the word had reached Madinah. The Prophet ﷺ sent Zayd ibn Harithah, radiyallahu anhu, at the head of an expedition (the books call such a mission a sariyya, one sent by him ﷺ but not ridden with him, and they number them in the hundreds). The whole caravan fell into Muslim hands: a hundred camels, more than fifty thousand dirhams of silver besides the trade goods, a fortune by any reckoning, and not a drop of blood spilled on either side.

Now lay one verse beside that morning. At Badr, Allah had promised the believers one of the two parties, the laden caravan or the armed host, and they had wished for the easy prize and been given the hard one.

[Remember, O believers], when Allāh promised you one of the two groups - that it would be yours - and you wished that the unarmed one would be yours. But Allāh intended to establish the truth by His words and to eliminate the disbelievers

QUR'AN 8:7

A year later the caravan came too. He had promised them one of the two, and out of His generosity He gave them both, the army at Badr and now the caravan without a fight. As for Quraysh, every road was now cut: the coast, the west, even the trackless wilderness. The desperation that boiled up out of that strangling is what would soon march them to Uhud.

The man in the fortress

Now the hard story, and it begins with a pedigree. Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf was born of a union of two worlds. His father was a pure Arab and a pagan, a man of a distant tribe who had killed someone among his own people and fled the blood debt, and the Banu Nadir took him in. In time they gave him one of their women in marriage, and from that marriage came Ka'b: a full Arab through his father, and a full member of the Banu Nadir through his mother, for among them lineage in religion ran through the mother. He inherited everything from both sides, the noble Arab line of his father and the standing of his mother's tribe, who counted him among their chiefs, their ashraf. He was rich, a moneylender with his own fortress on the edge of the city, and, the books agree, one of the most handsome men of all Yathrib, for when two peoples mix you often get the best of both. And he was a poet, which in that age meant something we have no exact word for: a gifted poet was a broadcasting station, a voice that carried, a maker of public opinion across the whole of Arabia.

His hostility to Islam showed itself within months of the hijrah, while the religion was still finding its feet in the new city. When the qiblah was turned from Jerusalem toward Makkah, Ka'b was among the scoffers: what kind of religion changes the very direction it prays toward? The Qur'an answered that scoffing in the verse that opens its second juz, naming the kind of voice that says exactly such a thing.

The foolish among the people will say, "What has turned them away from their qiblah, which they used to face?" Say, "To Allāh belongs the east and the west. He guides whom He wills to a straight path."

QUR'AN 2:142

When charity was commanded, Ka'b went to his old friends among the Ansar who had embraced Islam and worked to talk them out of it. Do not give your wealth away, he told them, you may yet become poor, and who knows how this man's affair will end. The Qur'an described that counsel too, the man who is stingy and presses stinginess on everyone around him.

Who are stingy and enjoin upon [other] people stinginess and conceal what Allāh has given them of His bounty - and We have prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating punishment -

QUR'AN 4:37

Verse after verse came down around the words of this one man, while he sat in his fortress composing. Rich, and never generous, he hoarded his own wealth and worked to make others hoard theirs, and the Book itself kept turning to answer him.

He pronounced his own verdict

Then came Badr. When the two criers rode into Madinah announcing the dead of Quraysh, name after noble name, Ka'b heard them out and said the sentence that would follow him to his grave. If Muhammad has truly killed these men, the very nobles of the Arabs, then it is better to be inside the earth than on top of it. Hear what he is saying. Better dead than alive. He had pronounced sentence on himself, and he would be given precisely what he asked for.

What he did next put his meaning beyond any doubt. Once the victory of Badr was undeniable, Ka'b rode to Makkah with a band of the Banu Nadir, sat with Abu Sufyan, and the two of them struck a secret pact against the Prophet ﷺ. No book of sira records its terms, for it was a thing between the two of them

alone. But ask honestly what a secret pact between two enemies of the same city can possibly be, except coordination for war: a time, a place, a plan. Common sense fills in what the record withholds. And before they parted, Abu Sufyan put a question to him, swearing by Allah as he asked it: which of the two religions is closer to Allah and more beloved to Him, ours or Muhammad's? Sit with the strangeness of the moment. A monotheist by inheritance was being asked by a worshipper of idols to rank idolatry above the worship of the one God. The pagans of Makkah had long felt themselves the lesser men beside the Jews of Madinah, who could read and write and carried a Book, and Abu Sufyan was reaching for reassurance from the very people he felt below. And Ka'b gave it to him. You, he said, the idolaters, are more rightly guided than they are. Allah quoted that private conversation into the Qur'an, where it sits to this day.

Have you not seen those who were given a portion of the Scripture, who believe in jibt [superstition] and ṭāghūt [false objects of worship] and say about the disbelievers, "These are better guided than the believers as to the way"?

QUR'AN 4:51

And Allah told His Prophet ﷺ of the pact itself. Then Ka'b returned to Madinah, and there came the last straw. He turned his celebrated gift to filth, composing lewd verses about believing women, naming them one by one, crafted to shame them and to drag the imaginations of men toward them. You can find the verses; they are as crude as that sounds, and worse. Even by the loose standards of that age it was past every line a man could cross, and he knew exactly whose city he was doing it in.

One note on the timing, because the Sheikh weighs it in the open rather than smoothing it away. Ibn Ishaq, the earliest authority,

places Ka'b's end here, between Badr and Uhud in the third year, and carries an exact date with it. A later master, al-Bayhaqi, whose work on the seerah runs to some twelve volumes, places it instead after Uhud, on the eve of the march against the Banu Nadir, and adds a charge the earlier sources cannot carry: that the idea of inviting the Prophet ﷺ to a poisoned meal had been Ka'b's own. Dr. Yasir Qadhi sides with Ibn Ishaq as the stronger and more authoritative position, while leaving the other honestly on the table, and he offers a thought of his own, flagged plainly as a theory we can never confirm. The books say the Banu Nadir provisioned Abu Sufyan before the porridge raid, but never name who among them arranged it; it would join one and one into two if that host had been Ka'b himself, a few weeks before he rode to Abu Sufyan in person. Either way, the case against the man stands complete on its own.

Say what you must

So the Prophet ﷺ stood before his companions and asked, who will deal with Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf, for he has hurt Allah and His Messenger? Allah is beyond all harm; the word he ﷺ used carries the sense that Ka'b had crossed from mere disbelief into open aggression against Allah and His Messenger. A man of the Aws rose: I will, O Messenger of Allah. His name was Muhammad ibn Maslamah, radiyallahu anhu, and even his tribe was part of the wisdom of the night. In the days of jahiliyyah the Banu Nadir had been the allies of the Aws; had a hand from the Khazraj done this deed, the old buried civil war between the two Ansari tribes might have stirred again in its grave. From the hand of the Nadir's own former allies, no such feud could catch fire.

Then comes the detail that turns a tense story tender. For three days afterward Muhammad ibn Maslamah could not eat or drink.

When word reached the Prophet ﷺ and he asked the man why, he answered, O Messenger of Allah, I gave you a promise, and now I do not know whether I can fulfill it. Ka'b was a rich and guarded man in his own fortress with his own entourage, and the weight of the word he had given was crushing him. The Prophet ﷺ untied the knot with a single sentence: all that is upon you is to try; success belongs to Allah. Keep that sentence somewhere you can reach it quickly, for the rest of your life. It calmed him at once. Then Muhammad ibn Maslamah asked leave to say things he did not mean, the small deceptions the ruse would require, and the Prophet ﷺ said, say as you like.

The ruse was built entirely from Ka'b's own appetites. Muhammad ibn Maslamah called on him in private, the way a borrower calls on a moneylender, and complained, just bitterly enough to ring true. This man, he said, meaning the Prophet ﷺ, has brought us nothing but hardship these few years, the Arabs have all drawn up against us as one, and now on top of everything he asks us for our money. Ka'b lit up; here was a Muslim who sounded exactly like himself. This is only the beginning, he promised, just you wait, he will put you through far worse. Then came the loan, and with it the haggling over collateral that every man in Madinah knew was Ka'b's routine. Pledge your women, said Ka'b. By Allah, came the answer, you are the most handsome of men, charming as Yusuf; shall we trust our women near you? Then your sons, said Ka'b. So they grow up taunted in the streets, came the answer, the boys once mortgaged for a sack of barley? Not that either. Then what is left, said the borrower, but our weapons. And the moneylender agreed gladly, because in a time of war weapons are excellent collateral and there was profit waiting for him. See the quiet genius of it, the Sheikh says. Now armed men could walk up to

Ka'b's fortress in the dark and raise no alarm at all, because the weapons were the whole pretext. Abu Na'ilah, Ka'b's own foster brother, nursed at the same breast, and two or three others arranged loans on the same terms, so the visit would look like ordinary business. A time was set after dark, and Ka'b, who wanted no witnesses either, agreed; secrecy suited them all.

A full moon, and a man at war

The fourteenth night of the month, in the third year of the hijrah. The books of sira remember the very sky: a full moon, and not a cloud near it. The Prophet ﷺ walked the small party to the edge of the city and sent them off with his blessing, may Allah help you in your mission.

At the fortress they called up to him to come down. Ka'b had married a new wife not long before and was lying with her when the voices reached him, and as he rose to go she caught his arm. Where are you going at this hour, she asked, and what honest business comes calling in the middle of the night? Then she said the sentence this whole episode turns upon, a sentence we will need again before the night is out: you are a man at war, and I am worried for you. Hold her words. She was no soldier and no party to any of it, and still she understood what her husband's pacts and his poetry had made of him. He waved her off. It is only Muhammad ibn Maslamah, he said, whom I have known since before Islam, and Abu Na'ilah, my foster brother. He pulled free of her, came down to them perfumed, and armored even then, because a man at war dresses like one even to receive friends.

They talked a while in the moonlight, the easy gossip of old Yathrib, and then one of the party leaned toward him. What is this scent on you, he asked, the sweetest perfume I have smelled? Ka'b smiled. I have with me, he said, the most perfumed woman

in all of Arabia. Let me smell it, said his guest, and then, drawing closer, it is in your hair, let me smell your head. Ka'b bent his head toward him, and the hand that closed on his hair did not let go. The others struck. It was hard work, for his armor turned the blades, and in the dark one of the companions was badly gashed by his own friends' swords and had to limp home bleeding. The Prophet ﷺ met the party on their return and touched his blessed saliva to the wound, and the books record that it healed.

By morning the plotters of the city understood what had happened, and what it meant. Ibn Ishaq writes that after that night there was not a Jewish tribe in Madinah that felt safe in its treachery; some men did not leave their fortresses for days. Complaints were carried to the Prophet ﷺ, and he did not entertain them, because the order had been his own. But look closely at what was done and at what was not. No tribe was attacked. No quarter was burned. No man was harmed for the faith he held, and Madinah went on housing non-Muslims under its treaty exactly as before. One man, the chief instigator himself, answered for his own treason, and the precision of it was the whole message: the treaty is real, betraying it has a price, and the price falls on the one who earned it.

What this day asks of our faith

Now the framing, because this episode sits near the very top of every hostile pile, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi gives the last stretch of the night to teaching you how to carry it without flinching and without lying. Three things, then one beneath them.

First, it is authentic. Sahih al-Bukhari gives the killing of Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf an entire chapter of its own; Sahih Muslim narrates it; no book of sira omits it. Some Muslims have a way of deleting whatever embarrasses them, and it is not the way of honesty.

The one who erases this report has not defended the seerah, he has denied the very sources it stands on, for the same books that carry this carry everything else we hold dear. It happened, the Sheikh says plainly. There is no need to sugarcoat it. It is what it is.

Second, the why. Ka'b was not killed for his disbelief. Nowhere in the entire seerah is a single soul harmed simply for being a kafir, and Madinah itself was full of non-Muslims living peaceably under its treaty, before this night and after it. Nor was he killed for his mockery alone, stinging as it was. He was killed for what any age that has ever known war would name treason: a man bound by his city's own pact who traveled to the enemy's capital and struck a secret military alliance there, who incited the avengers of Badr toward a second war, and who then assaulted the honor of believing women in published verse, by name. There is a line, and the line is not belief. His own bride had already given the true description of him before any blade was drawn. A man at war.

Third, the manner, and here the Sheikh refuses to be apologetic at all. The modern objection is rarely to Ka'b's guilt; it is to the missing courtroom, the absence of judge and jury and trial. But you cannot lower a modern legal system onto a seventh century city-state three years old and fighting for its survival. Madinah had no jails; prisons enter Islamic history generations later. The Prophet ﷺ was, in his own single person, the political, legal, and religious authority of the state, ruler and judge at once, so that his considered order was a verdict, not a vigilante's whim. And the proof that this was authority and not vengeance is Makkah itself: thirteen years of abuse far worse than anything Ka'b did, and nothing of the kind was ever done there, because in Makkah the Prophet ﷺ held no sulta, no executive power. Every young

revolution in history, the Sheikh reminds his students, acted before its institutions were built; you cannot judge the third year of Madinah by the laws of an order it had not yet finished raising. And the critic of our own day has a beam in his own eye. Governments that have legalized targeted killings by drone, that have killed even their own teenage citizens with no trial and no jail and called it lawful policy, have surrendered any standing to gasp at this story. You cannot have your cake and eat it too.

Beneath the law sits something warmer, an honor the Arabs name with a word that English does not own: the protective jealousy, the ghirah, that rises in a believing community for those who cannot defend themselves, for the women a poet had dragged into the public square for sport. Whether any later state should imitate the method is a question for states and their scholars, the Sheikh adds, and it binds no one today. What is asked of you is not imitation. It is only honesty. Told whole and told straight, this is not an embarrassment to be explained away in a whisper. It is the portrait of a three year old city of believers, ringed by armies and salted through with traitors, surviving because its Prophet ﷺ was exactly what that hour demanded: merciful wherever mercy could live, and unflinching where treachery threatened every soul under his care.

So take this day down into your own. When a duty frightens you, when you have given your word and lie awake unable to eat for fear you cannot keep it, remember the sentence that loosened the knot in Muhammad ibn Maslamah: all that is upon you is to try, and success belongs to Allah. When this story is set before you as a charge, do not blush and do not deny; know where the line truly is, that it was never belief but treason in a time of war, and say so without apology. And learn the harder, quieter lesson the whole night teaches, that loving the Prophet ﷺ means loving

him as he actually was, mercy to the worlds and yet unbending before betrayal, refusing the cheap comfort of a version of him sanded down to please his critics. May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, make us truthful about him and unashamed of him, guard this ummah from the betrayal within and the slander without, shield the honor of our women, and let us rise to every frightening duty knowing that the trying is ours and the outcome is His.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 44: the assassination of Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (8:7, 2:142, 4:37, 4:51), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

A summary of the Makkan period

Thirteen years, walked again in one evening

Forty-four days into this walk, the caravan stops and turns around. Badr is behind us, the first open battle won against every expectation, and Uhud waits over the next rise with loss folded into it. When Dr. Yasir Qadhi reached this point in his telling it was the first lesson of a new year, January of 2013, the students back from a break, and instead of pressing forward into the next battle he gave them a gift. He took the whole Makkan period, every year of it, and walked it again in a single sitting, from the days of jahiliyyah to the streets of Quba flooded with joy.

A summary is not a repeat. At walking pace, day after day, you see events: a birth, a marriage, a revelation, a boycott, a flight. From this one hilltop you see what the daily pace hides, which is design. You watch centuries of preparation, a guarded lineage, a neutral land wedged between two tired empires, even the private wars of pagans, all of it bending quietly toward one man ﷺ and one message. So let the road rest a moment, and look back at the whole of it at once. Thirteen years, gathered into one telling.

The stage, centuries in the building

Begin long before the birth, because the Sheikh begins there, and the lesson is in how early Allah starts. Arabia then held three kinds of Arabs: the ancient, extinct tribes, gone without descendants or much history; and two surviving families, Qahtan

and Adnan, both tracing back to Sam the son of Nuh. Adnan descends from Ismail himself, the infant once left in a barren valley with his mother Hajar, raised beside the well that saved them, married into Jurhum, the tribe that held Makkah for centuries. Hold onto that one fact: the city at the dead center of this whole story grew up around the household of the Prophet's ﷺ own forefather. Nothing about Makkah was accidental.

Jurhum grew greedy and unjust, taking advantage of the pilgrims, until the tribe of Khuzaah drove them out; on their way into exile they buried the treasures of the sanctuary and let the well of Zamzam be lost with them. Then Khuzaah, now in charge of the Kaaba, did something far worse than Jurhum ever had. Their first chieftain went north to Syria on business, was dazzled by its flowering civilization, and they were idol worshippers; they gifted him one of their idols, Hubal, and he carried it home and stood it before the Kaaba: the first idol in the valley of Ibrahim, roughly four centuries before the man ﷺ who would one day clear it out. He went on to rewrite the rites of Hajj and seed Makkah with the pagan customs the Qur'an would later condemn. The Prophet ﷺ said, in a report Sahih Muslim carries, that he saw that chieftain dragging his own intestines through the Fire: the first man ever to change the religion of Ibrahim.

Idolatry then did what idolatry always does: it splintered them. Tribes turned partisan to their own gods, and the most ancient idols of all, the five that the drowned people of Nuh had refused to surrender, were raised again among the Arabs and parceled out, one to a tribe, fought over alongside wealth and pride. The Qur'an names them, the very gods of Nuh's stubborn people:

And said, 'Never leave your gods and never leave Wadd or Suwa or Yaghuth and Ya'uq and Nasr.'

Beneath the quarrels, though, a floor was being laid. Qusayy, the great-great-great-great-grandfather of the Prophet ﷺ, married the daughter of Khuzaah's chief around 450 of the common era and brought Quraysh back into the sanctuary, some hundred and fifty years before the birth. The students are made to memorize the chain, and so should we: Muhammad ibn Abdullah, ibn Abd al-Muttalib, ibn Hashim, ibn Abd Manaf, ibn Qusayy. Hashim then tied Makkah into the wider world with his two great caravans, south to Yemen, the gateway of Africa and India, and north to Syria, the gateway of Byzantium, until the city sat wealthy and indispensable on the spine of international trade. Lift your eyes to the larger map and the design grows almost loud: two spoiled, exhausted superpowers, Byzantium and Persia, and wedged precisely between them a hard, free, unconquered people, neutral in politics and religion, never once united. Latent power, the Sheikh calls it, waiting for a word.

Then, in the lifetime of the Prophet's ﷺ own grandfather Abd al-Muttalib, came three signs in quick succession. Zamzam was rediscovered through a dream, after centuries of thirst. His son Abdullah was vowed for sacrifice and then ransomed, the way Ismail had been ransomed before him, so that the child to come would be the son of the two ransomed ones. And an army led by an elephant marched on the House and was turned back in the very year of the birth, the year the Qur'an opens a whole surah to remember:

Have you not considered, O Muhammad, how your Lord dealt with the companions of the elephant?

The Prophet ﷺ would one day trace the whole choosing himself, and the line is worth carrying: Allah chose Kinanah from the children of Ismail, and Quraysh from Kinanah, and Banu Hashim from Quraysh, and chose him ﷺ from Banu Hashim. In a society that worshipped pedigree above nearly everything, that lineage became a shield no enemy dared pierce. To harm him was to bring the deepest shame upon themselves, for he was their prize, the noblest of them. Their own jahiliyyah logic, the Sheikh notes, turned by Allah into Islam's protection.

The orphan Makkah came to trust

He ﷺ was born in the Year of the Elephant. On the exact date there are thirteen recorded opinions, and if any is nearest the truth it is probably the eighth of Rabi al-Awwal. His parents had been together barely a week, some say only three days, before Abdullah left on a journey and never came home; Aminah bore him already a widow. When she gave birth she saw a light go out from her that lit up the palaces of Syria, that bastion of civilization in the age, and the first of the great lands his ummah would one day take. He ﷺ said of himself, in an authentic hadith in Sahih Muslim, that he was the supplication of his father Ibrahim and the glad tidings of Isa; the very word Injil means glad tidings, and he ﷺ is the good news that book was named for.

Like the children of Quraysh's better families, he was sent out to be nursed in the desert, among the Banu Saad: cleaner air, a harder life, purer Arabic. He was four, out with Halimah's people, when Jibril came, opened his chest, washed his heart with Zamzam, and cast away the black speck that is Shaytan's claim on a person. Then loss came in threes. His father he never knew; his mother Aminah died on a journey while he was still small; his grandfather Abd al-Muttalib followed. Hold the why the way this

telling holds it, for the Sheikh refuses to leave it as mere sorrow. He was orphaned again and again so that no human being could ever claim a favor over him, and so that Allah Himself would take charge of the boy; because no child matures faster than an orphan, who stands on his own feet early and is never pampered soft; and because the one who tastes the hardest life comes out tender, not bitter, knowing in his own skin what it is to be helpless. Every quality the final Messenger ﷺ would need was being installed in him from the start.

Of his youth we know almost nothing. It is the least documented stretch of the entire seerah, two or three small scenes across some twenty years, and every one points forward. He worked as a shepherd for a few qararit, the Sheikh says, coins of the lowest sort, the most menial job the city had; and on those hillsides he learned what no palace teaches, the patience a flock demands and the truth that every sheep, like every soul, must be handled in its own way. It is the quiet apprenticeship of a leader. And at around twenty he sat as the youngest member of hilf al-fudul, a pact of the clans to stand with the wronged against the wrongdoer whoever he might be, even if the wrongdoer were of Quraysh and the wronged a man of no tribe. He ﷺ remained proud of that pact all his life.

Then came Khadijah, radiyallahu anha. The wealthiest and most sought-after woman of Quraysh, twice widowed and interested in no one, until she heard of his ﷺ shyness and honesty and quality, and quietly, indirectly, set a proposal in motion. With one marriage Allah rewrote his worldly life: yesterday a shepherd, today a merchant managing her wealth, never again pressed for money through all the Makkan years, and given, far above any wealth, the woman who would believe him before anyone else on earth. Into that house came Zayd, a slave boy received as a gift,

who, when his own father arrived to ransom him home, astonished everyone by choosing the Prophet ﷺ instead. To honor a love like that, he ﷺ declared before the people, this is my son. For more than twenty years Makkah knew him simply as Zayd ibn Muhammad, until Allah revealed Surah al-Ahzab in the fifth year after the Hijrah and returned adopted sons to the names of their true fathers; Ibn Abbas said they had not even known Zayd was anything other than a son until those verses came down.

One last scene before the cave. When he ﷺ was around thirty-five, a flood damaged the Kaaba and Quraysh set out to rebuild it, and the timber arrived by way of a storm. The emperor of Rome had sent a ship loaded with fine wood to raise a grand church in Abyssinia; it wrecked at Jeddah, and the stranded merchants sold their cargo. Wood meant for the greatest church in the region went instead to the House of Ibrahim, as if heaven were announcing where worship was about to be carried. There was not quite enough of it, so for the first time in its history they shortened the Kaaba from a rectangle to the near-square it has kept ever since, leaving one curved side open, which is why a believer today can stand within that low arc, the Hijr, and pray as though inside the House. And when the clans fell to quarreling over who would set the Black Stone back, that stone from Jannah, the one surviving piece of Ibrahim's own building, and the dispute hardened toward bloodshed, it was Muhammad ﷺ they agreed to trust. He laid the stone on a cloak, let each clan lift a corner, and set it in place with his own hands. Read the sign the way the Sheikh reads it: the man returning Ibrahim's stone to its place was about to return Ibrahim's religion to its place, and the man who dissolved a civil war among Quraysh would one day unite all the Arabs.

Read, then stand and warn

Thirteen years before the Hijrah, around the year 600, he ﷺ turned forty. Every worldly need was met; no caravan called him anymore; and exactly then a restlessness settled over him, a sense that something was missing which he could not name. So he withdrew to a cave to contemplate and to worship. And there Jibril came down with the word that split history in two:

Recite in the name of your Lord who created.

QUR'AN 96:1

He ﷺ came home trembling, and Khadijah wrapped him and steadied him with that certainty for which she is forever remembered: what you have seen can only be true, for Allah would never disgrace you. It has been said that she believed in him before he believed in himself, the Sheikh allows, and there is an element of truth in it. Such was Khadijah.

Then came the second revelation, and the Sheikh folds the entire religion into its pairing with the first:

O you who covers himself with a garment, Arise and warn

QUR'AN 74:1-2

Iqra is ilm, knowledge: read, learn, study. Qum fa-andhir is amal, action: now stand up and live what you have learned. And Islam, he teaches, is nothing other than the two together. Learn, then rise and act. The first two commands of revelation already carried the whole curriculum, and they carried it in that order, which is not optional.

For about three years the call stayed quiet, and notice the precise word the Sheikh insists on: not secret dawah but private dawah,

carried person by person to those whose hearts seemed ready. Within the household they believed at once: Khadijah, and Zayd, and Ali, still only a boy. Outside it, the first adult man was Abu Bakr, of whom the Prophet ﷺ testified that every soul he ever invited hesitated except Abu Bakr alone, who was not so much invited as came asking and accepted without a pause. Through him followed a wave of young Quraysh, and after them the mawali and the enslaved, those with no clan to shield them: Yasir and Sumayyah and their son Ammar, Bilal, and the rest of the famous early names. And from this height the Sheikh maps the whole twenty-three years into five stages of dawah: private invitation; then ten years of open preaching by the tongue alone, the last three carried to every tribe of Arabia; then dawah joined to defensive fighting in the early Madinan years; then the open, weaponless call made possible by the peace of Hdaybiyyah; and finally, for the last year and a half after the Conquest, dawah backed by strength. None of the five abrogates another, he is careful to say; all five remain available, and the leadership of the ummah in every age must weigh which one fits its own land and time.

Out loud, and every tactic they tried

After the years of private invitation came the command to go public, and it came aimed first at his own blood:

And warn, O Muhammad, your closest kindred.

QUR'AN 26:214

He ﷺ gathered the relatives and told them to their faces what Makkah had so far only heard as whispers: that he was the Messenger of Allah. His uncle Abu Lahab threw his hands in the

air, spat that this was the ludicrous thing for which he had been called, and cursed him. Heaven answered the curse with a curse that became scripture, recited in every generation since, while the man's own name survives only inside the verses that condemn him:

May the hands of Abu Lahab be ruined, and ruined is he.

QUR'AN 111:1

From that day Makkah and the message were openly at war, and the Sheikh gathers the years that follow into the tactics Quraysh tried, one after another, against a man they could not silence. First, pressure at the top. He ﷺ lived under the protection of his uncle Abu Talib, chief of Banu Hashim, so they leaned on Abu Talib, gently and then with threats. When the old man at last pleaded with his nephew to stop, the answer rang down the centuries: by Allah, if they placed the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left to make me abandon this affair, I would not abandon it until Allah makes it prevail or I perish in its cause. Abu Talib made a vow of his own, that whatever they said to him after this he would never again ask his nephew to stop, and kept it to his last breath.

So they turned to ridicule. Madman, they called him. Magician. Possessed. Abu Lahab and Abu Jahl would trail him ﷺ wherever he went and reach every listener first: this is our kinsman, he is mad, do not listen. It wounded him deeply, and the Qur'an returns again and again to console exactly that wound; mockery, the Sheikh observes, is the tax every truth-teller pays, and he ﷺ paid it daily for years.

When mockery failed, they demanded miracles, made to their own order, and the Qur'an records a dozen such demands. Send

a river gushing through Makkah. Hand us gold. Bring Allah and the angels down before our eyes. Float a written book out of the sky. Allah did not answer to their menu; He gave signs of His own choosing, and the grandest split the moon itself in two over their heads:

*The Hour has come near, and the moon has split in two.
And if they see a sign, they turn away and say, "Passing magic."*

QUR'AN 54:1-2

They watched the sky obey and turned away, saying he had bewitched their eyes. Proof, the Sheikh notes, was never their problem. So they offered a merger: worship our gods for a time, and we will worship yours, and meet in the middle. An entire surah came down to bolt that door forever:

*Say, "O disbelievers, I do not worship what you worship.
Nor are you worshippers of what I worship. Nor will I be a
worshipper of what you worship. Nor will you be
worshippers of what I worship. For you is your religion, and
for me is my religion."*

QUR'AN 109:1-6

When theology failed they tried appetite: we will make you our king, give you all the wealth you want, marry you to whomever you desire, everything a man can dream of, if only you will stop. He  was not for sale at any price their imaginations could reach. Their cleverest move was borrowed. The Arabs had no concept of prophecy, no notion of a man addressed directly by God, so Quraysh sent to the Jews, who did, and came back armed with examination questions. Ask him about Yusuf. So Surah Yusuf came down in answer, the full story of a prophet

with whom the Arabs shared no lineage and about whom they had no books, in a city with no library, recited by a man ﷺ who could not read; and whatever else they asked, revelation answered. Here Dr. Yasir Qadhi pauses for a footnote from our own century: the academy still cannot explain where that knowledge came from, and one prevailing theory simply redates the whole Qur'an a hundred years forward, to Damascus, on the reasoning that an unlettered man in Makkah could not possibly have produced it. Too much knowledge, so they move the goalposts. He calls it ludicrous; the oldest explanation has not budged in fourteen centuries: it came from Allah.

And when every argument was exhausted, there was blood. The torture fell first and worst on those no clan would avenge, the slaves and the foreigners, and in those middle Makkan years Islam was given its first martyrs. Sumayyah was the first soul of this ummah to die for it, and her husband Yasir followed her. Bilal was tortured to the edge of death; so were many of the early believers. The Prophet ﷺ himself, fenced about by his lineage, was not seriously touched until very near the end.

A prostration heard across the sea

When the pain grew unbearable, he ﷺ gave permission for the first hijrah in the history of Islam. Some fifteen believers crossed the sea to Abyssinia, among them Uthman with his wife Ruqayyah, the Prophet's ﷺ own daughter, and Umm Salamah, who would one day be a Mother of the Believers. Barely five months later they came hurrying home, because a report had reached them across the water that all of Makkah had accepted Islam.

What actually happened that day is one of the most slandered scenes in the whole seerah, and the Sheikh's verdict on it

deserves to be carried whole. Western writers call it the Satanic Verses; the older books call it the story of the gharaniq, the cranes; and the strongest opinion, the one this telling rules by, is that it simply never happened. No authentic narration carries any whispered, planted verses. What the authentic report in Bukhari preserves is only this: the Prophet ﷺ recited Surah an-Najm, one of the most powerful surahs in the Qur'an, and when its final command came down, everyone within earshot fell into prostration, Muslim and pagan, human and jinn alike:

So prostrate to Allah and worship Him.

QUR'AN 53:62

You do not need invented verses to explain that scene, the Sheikh says; you only need to hear an-Najm recited, and the people of Makkah were simply overcome. A prostrating Makkah, garbled across the sea, became a believing Makkah, and the homesick emigrants sailed back to find nothing changed.

But Allah had folded a plan inside the disappointment. The returning emigrants reported that Abyssinia was hard in language and culture yet free in worship, and weighing freedom of faith against mere unfamiliarity, a far larger company chose to go: nearly a hundred believers this time, a painful share of a small city, walking out in plain sight. Quraysh felt the humiliation of their own people leaving them, and sent two emissaries with gifts to buy the emigrants back; the emissaries were rebuffed and came home with their gifts. And in those same days, within weeks of each other, two of the most formidable men in Makkah embraced Islam: Hamza, and then Umar. The tide was visibly turning, and Quraysh could feel it.

So they played the cruelest card a tribal society holds: a boycott. The whole of Banu Hashim, Muslim and pagan alike, every soul but Abu Lahab, was cut off and driven out to scrape a living in the desert, for roughly two years so lean that history barely managed to record them. The boycott is hard to date, but reason it out the way the Sheikh does: to sever your own kin was the most drastic act an Arab could commit, the very last resort, which places it late, around the seventh or eighth year of the dawah, after everything else had failed.

The lowest year, the highest night

The boycott ended, and within that very month, by the account this telling carries, Abu Talib died; it is not far-fetched, the Sheikh allows, that two years of hardship had broken the old man's health. It was the tenth year of the dawah, three years before the Hijrah. Less than six weeks later, in Ramadan of that same year, Khadijah followed him. His public shield and his private comfort, gone back to back: the uncle whose standing held back the knives of the city, and the wife who had believed before all the earth believed. He ﷺ was not seen to smile for nearly a year, and the ummah still calls that season by the name his household knew it as, the Year of Sorrow.

One of the evening's quiz questions lands here, and the Sheikh offers it lightly. Of his ﷺ roughly twelve uncles, only four lived to see Islam. The two whose names honored idols, Abd al-Uzza who was Abu Lahab and Abd Manaf who was Abu Talib, refused it. The two who bore the names of lions, Hamza and Abbas, accepted it. Perhaps, he says, just a coincidence.

Abu Lahab inherited the chieftainship of Banu Hashim, and at first, in his brother's memory, kept Abu Talib's policy and shielded his nephew. Then an instigator planted the fatal

question: do you know what this nephew of yours says about your own father, about Abd al-Muttalib? Pressed for an answer, the Prophet ﷺ would not lie, and chose the gentlest true words he could, that he is with his people. The point was made; Abu Lahab snapped, withdrew his protection, and overnight the Prophet's ﷺ standing in his own city went gray, among his people but no longer protected by them. That gray, dangerous status is what finally sent him to Taif.

Taif, with Zayd at his side, was meant to be a door; it became the deepest wound of his life. Years later, asked whether any day had been harder than Uhud, he ﷺ answered that the worst day of his life was the day of Taif. He came away bloodied, and on the road back, alone in the middle of nowhere, he made his famous dua; and the answers began at once. Addas, a Christian servant from Iraq, in that age among the farthest of lands, accepted Islam on the spot. That same night a company of jinn stood in the dark, listened to him reciting, and believed. It was as if Allah were telling His Messenger ﷺ: if your own city refuses you, the ends of the earth will come to you, and so will the world you cannot even see. Yet to reenter Makkah now required a guarantee. Word went quietly to chief after chief, and each excused himself, until Mutim ibn Adi said yes. A pagan to his dying day but loyal to an older code of honor, Mutim armed his seven sons, walked the Prophet ﷺ openly to the Kaaba, and declared before all of Makkah that Muhammad ﷺ was under his protection, a gauntlet thrown at the feet of Abu Jahl. He ﷺ never forgot it; after Badr he honored Mutim's memory in words that keep it green to this day, and there is even a hadith in this meaning, the Sheikh notes, that Allah may strengthen this religion through a man who is not of it.

And somewhere in that lowest season, on a night no historian can fix, came the gift. The Isra and Miraj is the single hardest event of the seerah to date, with opinions scattered from the third year of the dawah to the very last. The Sheikh reads it where the evidence leans, after Khadijah's death, and for the most tender of reasons: she appears in no report of the journey, and it bears every mark of a mercy timed for the hour it was needed most. The Year of Sorrow had stripped him of his shield and his comfort, so Allah took him ﷺ Himself: by night from Makkah to Jerusalem, where every prophet prayed behind him, and then up through the seven heavens to the presence of his Lord:

Exalted is He who took His Servant by night from al-Masjid al-Haram to al-Masjid al-Aqsa, whose surroundings We have blessed, to show him of Our signs. Indeed, He is the Hearing, the Seeing.

QUR'AN 17:1

From the lowest of the low to the highest of the high. It was a personal miracle, the Sheikh says, given to him personally; the rest of us are simply honored to believe in it.

A door opens in Yathrib

He ﷺ kept knocking. He went to the great tribes, the ones with the numbers and the names, the only houses on earth that could rival Quraysh, concentrating on the big names while offering the message freely to all. Every big name said no. And Allah had willed that the help would come from precisely the place no strategist would have chosen, a modest town called Yathrib, tied to him by blood, for his great-grandmother was one of them and he had visited the town as a boy with his mother and lost her on

the road home. When Yathrib eventually took him in, it was taking in a relative.

Allah had been preparing that town, too, by means no one would have requested. The wars of Buath, a feud that ran a hundred years out of a quarrel over a grazing camel, had turned so savage in their final five that nearly the entire senior leadership of Yathrib was wiped away, until Abdullah ibn Ubayy was almost the only elder left standing. What remained was the young: fresh minds, sick of the old ways, hungry for something new. Aisha, radiyallahu anha, later said that Allah gifted the wars of Buath to His Messenger ﷺ. While he knocked at the front doors of the mighty, Allah was quietly unlocking a side gate.

Six men of Yathrib met him in the tenth year of the dawah and carried the message home. Twelve came back the next season and gave him the first pledge of Aqabah: to worship Allah alone and abandon the great sins. He sent Musab ibn Umayr north with them as a teacher, and the dawah spread like wildfire, until there was not a tribe in Yathrib without Muslims in it, its rising young leaders among them. By the final months, with perhaps a hundred and fifty or two hundred believers in the town, seventy of them came and gave the second pledge, and this one changed the world. Not theology alone now, but protection: if you come to us, we will defend you exactly as we defend our own families. Defensive, the Sheikh stresses, not offensive; it was Badr, later, that would extend it. The door out of Makkah now stood open.

So the believers began to leave, with difficulty and at cost. Some were stopped; some bought their freedom with promises; Suhayb famously handed Quraysh everything he owned for the right to walk out. Makkah was emptying, and Quraysh, terrified of what he ﷺ might become beyond their reach, at last agreed on the

deed that thirteen years of malice had stopped short of: every clan together would strike down one of their own. On his last night in Makkah they ringed his house. Jibril came down: now is the time. Allah covered their eyes, and he ﷺ walked out through them untouched, joined Abu Bakr, who had long been quietly preparing for this very night, and vanished. Three days hidden in a cave, then the long desert road north, miracle following miracle, the story of Suraqah among them, all the way to safety.

And then Quba. Five hundred of the Ansar came out, dressed and armed, to receive him ﷺ; the men and the women climbed onto the rooftops, and the streets flooded with joy. A whole new era was in the air, the Sheikh says, the beginning of a new dawn, the seed of a new millennium, and we have been living inside it ever since. After thirteen years of refusal, Allah's yes filled an entire city in a single morning. Tomorrow, the road bends toward Uhud.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to take a summary like this as a convenience, a quick way to remember the order of events, and miss the thing it is for. Seen at walking pace, the Makkan years are a string of incidents. Seen from this hilltop, in one telling, they are a design, and the design itself is the lesson; it asks something of the way we read our own lives.

Allah prepares long before He commands. Before there was a single believer, there was Zamzam rediscovered, a lineage guarded across centuries, two empires held in stalemate, a free and unconquered people waiting in the middle, even a pagan civil war softening a town the Prophet ﷺ had not yet heard he would need. The stage was set generation by generation before the word iqra was ever spoken. We tend to read the slow, uneventful stretches of our own lives as Allah's absence, as time that does

not count; the Makkan period says the opposite. The setup is longer and kinder than it ever looks from inside it, and the quiet years are not empty; they are the floor being laid.

Hardship is a curriculum, not a punishment. The Sheikh refuses to let the orphaning pass as mere grief, or the shepherding as mere poverty. The loss installed maturity; the flock taught patience and the handling of souls; the hard life left him tender rather than bitter, exactly the equipment the final Messenger ﷺ would need. Nothing was wasted. Ask of your own difficult chapters what they are installing, because the same Hand that shaped him in the desert is shaping you in yours, and the soft heart that comes out of real difficulty is one of the rarest things on earth.

And then there is the order of the first two commands, which the Sheikh says is the whole religion in miniature. Iqra came first: learn. Qum fa-andhir came second: now stand and live what you learned. Knowledge that never becomes action is half of what was asked, and action without knowledge is the other half; Islam is the two joined, and joined in that sequence. The cave and the cloak, read together, refuse to let us pick one.

Carry these into ordinary days. Trust the slow preparation of your life the way the believers came to trust the centuries before iqra. Read your hard seasons as a curriculum, especially the years that take from you what Abu Talib and Khadijah were taken in, for it was in exactly that valley that he ﷺ was carried to the highest heaven, the lowest of the low lifted to the highest of the high. And let your knowledge become action and your action rest on knowledge, learning then standing, the way revelation itself was ordered. Quraysh tried everything a city could try, pressure and mockery and miracles demanded and bribes and borrowed

riddles and torture and a boycott, and all it bought them was an empty room and a guarded door; the dawn broke somewhere else, in a small town up the road. May Allah, who set the stage for His Messenger ﷺ centuries before his birth, be trusted by us with the slow preparations of our own lives, give us knowledge that becomes action and patience in our years of sorrow and His nearness in the hours we need it most, and gather us, as He filled the streets of Quba with joy after thirteen years of no, in the company of His Messenger ﷺ on the Day the believers are welcomed home.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 45: a summary of the Makkan period (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (71:23, 105:1, 96:1, 74:1-2, 26:214, 111:1, 54:1-2, 109:1-6, 53:62, 17:1), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration or more than one date, the Sheikh's own weighing has been followed.

The Battle of Uhud, part I

Three thousand for revenge, seven hundred for Allah

Badr did not end at Badr. It is Shawwal now, the third year of the hijrah, a year and a few weeks since the Quraysh limped home from the well in the desert, and they have spent every day of that year preparing to come back. Dr. Yasir Qadhi opens the story of Uhud the way the sources open it, and the first thing to understand is that it is not the same kind of battle as the one before it. Badr was almost an accident of timing, a reconnaissance party sent to intercept a caravan that swelled into a fight no one had quite planned. Uhud is the opposite, the first time the Quraysh arm to the hilt and march out with a single declared purpose: a war, decided upon a full year in advance. And the whole of the first day at the mountain reaches us not as a clash of swords but as a ledger, a letter, a dream, and a Friday meeting that decided where seven hundred believers would stand against three thousand. Walk it slowly, because nothing that happens on the slopes ahead will make sense without what is set in place now. This is the first of five days at the foot of one mountain.

Revenge, paid for in advance

Why are they coming? The Sheikh counts four pressures, and they push Makkah toward war all at once. First, religion: a year of revelation and a year of defeat had hardened the idolaters' dislike of Islam into a settled animosity, a hatred of this monotheism and

of the man ﷺ who preached it. Second, the social debt, and at its center the oldest engine in Arabia: revenge. They had humiliated themselves at Badr and buried the tier of leaders who made Quraysh Quraysh. Abu Sufyan, who had guarded the caravan that started the whole affair, carried the public shame of the disaster; Ikrimah had lost his father, Abu Jahl; Safwan had lost his father, Umayya ibn Khalaf, the man who once owned Bilal. There was blood on their minds now, and blood asks to be answered.

The third pressure was economic, the same one that had loomed behind Badr. Madinah sat astride the trade road from Makkah up to Syria, and the Muslims had made it impassable; even the alternate route had been found out and spoiled. The Makkan economy, the Sheikh reminds us, was a pipeline, Yemen at one end and Syria at the other, and Quraysh grew rich brokering its length; cut one end and the whole line dies, and Madinah had cut the northern end. This was not an inconvenience but the slow strangling of a city. And fourth, the plainly political fear: the Prophet ﷺ was no longer a local irritant but a rising power whose alliances grew by the season. Religious, social, economic, political, four reasons stacked into one necessity. Quraysh felt they had no option left but to fight.

Ibn Ishaq tells us that Abu Sufyan made up his mind the very moment he brought the caravan of Badr safely home. And here is the detail that makes Uhud unforgettable before a single sword is drawn: the war was funded by that very caravan. The Muslims had marched out for the caravan, the lighter and richer of two prizes, and Allah had turned them instead toward the army; so the caravan came home untouched, its luscious profit distributed to every shareholder in Makkah, each man's percentage counted out by Abu Sufyan, its accountant, who knew to the coin who had

invested and who had earned. Now he went door to door, with the two grieving sons at his side, Ikrimah ibn Abi Jahl and Safwan ibn Umayya, and at every house that had profited he said the same thing: hand the profit back, we are buying an army with it. The wealth the Muslims had once ridden out to seize came back to ride against them.

The Qur'an had already written this scene. Surah al-Anfal came down in the weeks right after Badr, while the collection plate was still going around Makkah, and inside it Allah described money spent to block His path with three verbs laid out like a sentence being passed.

Indeed, those who disbelieve spend their wealth to avert [people] from the way of Allāh. So they will spend it; then it will be for them a [source of] regret; then they will be overcome. And those who have disbelieved - unto Hell they will be gathered.

QUR'AN 8:36

They will spend it; then it will become a regret; then they will be overcome. Three movements, in order. The Muslims could not yet have known what it pointed to, but the Sheikh wants you to hold those three verbs through the next five days and watch them pay out one by one.

Three thousand men, and women to sing them forward

Money alone does not win a war; Makkah needed bodies and steel, and had not enough of either on its own. So the Quraysh turned to the great tribes who shared their stake in the caravan road, Kinanah and Tihamah, and asked for everything: men, money, mounts, armor. What assembled was beyond anything

the region had seen them field: three thousand fighting men, two hundred horses, and seven hundred coats of mail.

That last number deserves a pause, because it is easy to skim past. Armor was not something an ordinary man owned. The Arabs were not metalworkers; iron mail was imported from Yemen or Syria at enormous cost, bought for a lifetime and perhaps used once in twenty years, so most fighters owned none at all. This is why one of the most prized things a warrior could carry off a battlefield was the armor stripped from a fallen opponent: a fortune lying in the dust. Seven hundred coats meant the wealth of whole tribes poured into this one army, most of the fighters surely Quraysh while Kinanah and Tihamah gave their aid in logistics, the armor and saddles a wealthy trading people had to spare. And so the circle of the conflict was widening: what had begun as a quarrel between one man ﷺ and his own tribe was becoming, tribe by tribe, the first real confrontation between Islam and the paganism of all Arabia.

And the Quraysh brought their women, around two dozen of them, with Hind bint Utbah, the wife of Abu Sufyan, among them; the seerah will have much more to say about her before it is done. The women came to sing, their poetry sharp and taunting and a little sensual, verses to spur the men forward and shame any thought of turning back. But their presence was more than encouragement; it was strategy with a cold logic underneath. An army that runs abandons its women to the enemy. By bringing their wives, these men had made retreat unthinkable on purpose.

Abu Sufyan took the head of the army himself. On the right flank he set Khalid ibn al-Walid, and on the left, Ikrimah ibn Abi Jahl, two names this story will meet again on very different terms. On the seventh of Shawwal they marched out of Makkah, and you

can measure their hunger in the distance they ate. A caravan covered the road to Madinah in two weeks at ease, ten days at a steady push; they devoured it in seven, as though, the Sheikh notes, they wished to answer Badr almost on the anniversary of the wound.

The letter that outran an army

But Makkah had a leak, and the leak was the Prophet's ﷺ own uncle. Al-Abbas, radiyallahu anhu, still lived in the city. At Badr he had been dragged out to fight against his will and taken prisoner, and when he protested that he had no wealth for ransom, the Prophet ﷺ named to him the exact sum he had hidden with his wife Umm al-Fadl, and his whispered instructions about who should receive what if he died, knowledge no human being could have carried out of that house. Ya Rasul Allah, Abbas had said, no one could have told you this except Allah. From that moment, the Sheikh says, there is a strong theory, which he flags as one we cannot prove, that Abbas went home a secret Muslim, the Prophet's ﷺ quiet eyes inside Makkah, right up until the eve of the conquest when at last he emigrated openly.

Now, the instant the army marched and the streets emptied, Abbas acted. He sealed a letter with everything in it, the three thousand, the horses, the coats of mail, the whole shape of the force, and handed it to a trusted servant who rode the road to Madinah as fast as a human being on a camel could physically cover it. Three days; you cannot do it in less. The army had a head start of weeks; the letter was faster. He had waited until the city emptied, the Sheikh notes, perhaps because Quraysh never fully trusted an uncle who had shown no open hatred, or simply because a servant slipping out under watching eyes would have been a death sentence.

The rider found the Prophet ﷺ at Quba. Ubayy ibn Ka'b was with him, and since the Prophet ﷺ was unlettered, an nabiyy al-ummiyy, he had Ubayy read the letter aloud, the numbers passing into his ears one by one. Then his first instruction: tell no one until I tell you. And watch how he ﷺ moves, because the Sheikh holds it up as a masterclass in leadership under dread. No public alarm, no panic poured over the whole city at once. First he spoke quietly to a core group, leaders of the Ansar like Sa'd ibn al-Rabi, because Madinah had never faced anything like this and the men who would defend her needed to know first. Then he sent two or three of his own scouts to confirm the news with their own eyes.

Did he doubt his uncle? Of course not; he trusted Abbas completely. But this was news that would move an entire city to war, and a city's fate cannot be staked on a single letter, however beloved its sender, for what if even a sincere man had been deceived? So he verified. The scouts came back grim: the army was real, its herds already grazing barely a day or two off, on the very outskirts. He ﷺ had taught his ummah that deliberation is from Allah and haste is from Shaitan, and here is that teaching lived at the highest stakes: the largest army the Muslims have ever faced is at the gate, the window is perhaps forty-eight hours, and still he verifies before he decides and consults before he commits. Some time was lost, and it was better lost than spent raising a false alarm.

The dream of the broken sword

Somewhere across these tightening days hangs a dream. The Prophet ﷺ saw himself strike with his sword, and the blade snapped; then he struck again, and it came back whole, as good as it had ever been. He saw cows. He saw that Allah is good. And

in the version Imam Ahmad carries, he ﷺ saw himself wearing a coat of strong armor, and understood it to mean Madinah.

Every image would be paid out at Uhud. The snapped blade was the blow about to fall on the believers, the calamity of the day to come. The blade restored was what would follow it: victory again, and an ummah fused back into a single piece, for Uhud was about to split this community for the first time into believer and hypocrite, and only after the break would the believers know exactly who stood with them. The cows were the believers who would fall, and Ibn Hajar explains the symbol with a tenderness almost too much to bear: a cow gives benefit while it lives and gives benefit when it is slaughtered, so whichever way the day went for those companions, alive or martyred, Allah had chosen good for them on both sides of it. And the armor was the city itself: stay inside your walls.

Here the Sheikh pauses over a question of sources, and his weighing is part of the lesson. Ibn Ishaq places the telling of this dream before the battle; Bukhari's narration has the Prophet ﷺ relating it afterward, once events had unlocked its meaning, to console a wounded community. The Bukhari placement, the Sheikh argues, simply makes more sense. Read it the other way and you have the Prophet ﷺ announcing the coming defeat to the very army he is about to lead out. That cannot be right. The truer shape is a cryptic dream he could not interpret when it came, understood only in hindsight, and told afterward not to predict the wound but to bind it.

A Friday of shura, and armor that stays on

By now it was Friday, and the city was already gathered for Jumu'ah, and, as Ibn Ishaq notes, a funeral had drawn in even more people than usual, as if Allah willed a full house for the most

consequential meeting Madinah had yet held. After his quiet hours with the inner circle, the Prophet ﷺ now opened the floor to everyone. He laid it all before them, no holds barred, the numbers and the danger exactly as they were, and then, before inviting a single voice, gave his own counsel first.

I see myself, he said, in a strong fortress, and the fortress is Madinah. Stay. Let them break against the city. And the geography backed him completely, for Madinah was born fortified: the harrah, the great fields of black volcanic rock that no cavalry crosses, on the east and west; the long wall of Uhud's range to the north; dense date plantations toward Quba that no army marches through. An enemy that forced its way in would drown in alleys it did not know, split into pockets and cut apart by people fighting for their own streets, with women and children raining stones from the rooftops. Fight them, he was saying, where every wall is on your side.

The first voice to agree was Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul, and the Sheikh asks you to remember the name, because the agreement was not love. Ibn Ubayy was the most seasoned soldier in the city, and he backed the plan because it was militarily correct: Madinah, he said, has never been taken while her people stayed inside her. A correct opinion can sit inside a corrupt heart, and this road is about to prove it.

Then the young men spoke, and they would not stop. Most had missed Badr and had spent a whole year aching over it, hungry to show what they were; some of them, Ibn Ishaq notes, would find their shahadah at Uhud. Shall we sit in our houses like women, they said, while they camp at our gates? Lead us out to meet them like men. And the elder companions, who agreed with the Prophet ﷺ, said nothing at all, and their silence was itself a

lesson: they would not turn his ﷺ gathering into a bickering match in front of him, even to defend his own stated view. When the weight of the room settled with the young men, the Prophet ﷺ accepted it. The one human being on earth who could have imposed his will and been obeyed with joy chose instead to be bound by his people's counsel. Their affair is consultation among them: he did not merely recite the verse, he governed by it on the brink of war.

And those who have responded to their Lord and established prayer and whose affair is [determined by] consultation among themselves, and from what We have provided them, they spend,

QUR'AN 42:38

He ﷺ went inside to put on his armor. The moment he was out of earshot, the elders turned on the young men: he gave you his own opinion, and you pressed him out of it until he yielded? Shame landed fast, and they sent in Hamza, radiyallahu anhu, his uncle, the lion of this story who is fated to fall on the very field they had just argued for, to carry the message: they have changed their minds, they will do whatever you wish. But Hamza found him already buckled into his mail. And the answer he ﷺ sent back is preserved in Muslim and in Ahmad: it does not befit a prophet, once he has put on his armor, to take it off again until Allah has judged between him and his enemy. There is a code that binds the prophets and no one else, the way it was wajib upon him alone to pray through the night and he alone could fast days on end without food or water while companions who tried it fainted. The decision had been made by consultation; now it would be carried with iron, with no reversing it.

And Ibn Ishaq adds a detail that preaches by itself. The man whose life Allah had personally guaranteed wore two coats of mail to this battle, one over the other. He ﷺ needed no armor at all; the protection of heaven was promised to him. Yet he doubled it, to teach his ummah forever that you do not fold your arms and call it tawakkul. Allah commanded the believers to take their precautions in war and to carry provisions for the road, and the best provision is taqwa: do the thing with Allah in your heart, yes, but do it with your hands too. To wear no armor and call it reliance is not faith but folly. Tawakkul ties its camel, and then ties it again, in iron, twice over.

And mark what never happened afterward. When Uhud went the way it went, not one of those young men was ever blamed for it, not for the rest of their lives. The decision had been taken properly, with istikhara and istishara, prayer and counsel, and once a matter is decided that way it is sealed. The believers' mouths stayed clean of every did I not tell you. There is a whole discipline of the heart in that silence: decide well, then leave the decision alone.

Three hundred backs turn away, and two tribes Allah held

Late on that Friday afternoon, after the prayer and the counsel, roughly a thousand men marched north out of Madinah under three banners: the Muhajirun behind Mus'ab ibn Umayr, the Aws behind Usayd ibn Hudayr, the Khazraj behind al-Hubab ibn al-Mundhir. Against an army of three thousand they carried a hundred coats of mail among them and a bare handful of horses.

Then, on the road, the rot showed itself. Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul never announced his treachery; he had not even the courage for that. His people simply began to murmur, to drift, to fall toward the rear, until three hundred backs had turned for

home, a full third of the army gone in a slow slinking retreat. He listened to the boys, Ibn Ubayy complained, and not to me; why should we throw away our lives for a man who will not take our advice? And Abdullah ibn Amr ibn Haram, the father of the famous Jabir and himself barely a day from his own martyrdom, rode after them with the two appeals a believer makes: fear Allah, and do not abandon your Prophet ﷺ and your people with the enemy at the door; and if you will not fear Allah, at least honor your pledge, for you promised at al-Aqabah to defend him as you defend your own families. He reminded them of Allah and of their own word, because that is finally all a man has.

The answer came back smooth and dead. If we knew there would really be fighting, we would follow you; but we do not think it will come to a battle. And Allah seized that sentence and hung it in the Qur'an forever, naming it exactly what it was.

And that He might make evident those who are hypocrites. For it was said to them, "Come, fight in the way of Allāh or [at least] defend." They said, "If we had known [there would be] battle, we would have followed you." They were nearer to disbelief that day than to faith, saying with their mouths what was not in their hearts. And Allāh is most knowing of what they conceal -

QUR'AN 3:167

A lie, from men nearer to disbelief that day than to faith, mouths saying what their hearts did not hold. And the verse just before it gives the why of the whole trial, the meaning the Sheikh names as one of the great purposes of the entire battle:

And what struck you on the day the two armies met [at Uhud] was by permission of Allāh that He might make evident the [true] believers

Before a single arrow flies, Uhud is already doing its first work. It is a sieve. The ummah had never yet seen open disunity in its ranks, innocently unaware of how much evil the hypocrites carried in their hearts; Allah willed that the hidden rot become visible now, on this road, so that this community would never be stung from the same hole twice, and at the Trench every believer will already know exactly who Ibn Ubayy is. It is only in fitna that a man's true iman is shown. Whole stretches of Surah Al Imran came down around this day, and sections of Surah an-Nisa, and you have just read why.

Watching a third of the army peel away, the believers' own blood rose, and they fell to arguing: one group said turn back and deal with these traitors first; another said leave them, settle with them later, march on. And here is the remarkable thing the Sheikh draws out: both sides were angry purely for the sake of Allah, and even so the Qur'an reached down and stilled the quarrel, gently, because the anger was sincere, but firmly, because the people whose entire work is division must not be allowed to divide even the believers' condemnation of them.

What is [the matter] with you [that you are] two groups concerning the hypocrites, while Allāh has made them fall back [into error and disbelief] for what they earned. Do you wish to guide those whom Allāh has sent astray? And he whom Allāh sends astray - never will you find for him a way [of guidance].

QUR'AN 4:88

Do not split into two camps over the hypocrites. Allah has already thrown them back for what they earned; the matter is His.

Because the danger in a walkout is never only the three hundred who leave; it is the wobble that runs through everyone left watching them go. Two whole tribes felt their own feet soften, the Banu Haritha of the Aws and the Banu Salama of the Khazraj, and they came to the very edge of folding back to the city behind Ibn Ubayy. The Qur'an records it without flinching, names them as two parties who nearly gave up, and then says the words that saved them.

When two parties among you were about to lose courage, but Allāh was their ally; and upon Allāh the believers should rely.

QUR'AN 3:122

But Allah was their ally. They steadied, and they stayed. And here is the part to carry home, the part the Sheikh clearly loves. For generations afterward the Banu Haritha and the Banu Salama would boast of this very verse, the one that preserves the most embarrassing hour in their history, and their descendants boast of it to this day. Why boast of the record of their own near-cowardice? Because the same verse that preserves the stumble preserves Whose hand caught them: wallahu waliyyuhuma, and Allah was their Protector. They would not trade their recorded weakness for anyone else's recorded strength, because their weakness came back to them from Allah with His friendship attached. Let that recalibrate the way you read your own worst hours.

Seven hundred, and a mountain that loves them

So seven hundred reached the mountain, and the choice of ground was its own sermon. Uhud, the Sheikh corrects a common error, is not a single peak; it is a range, a wall of rock

more than a mile long across the north of Madinah. The Prophet ﷺ set his camp with its back against that wall and its face toward the city: stone behind him so no one could come at his rear, the flanks pinched tight by the terrain, and on the one open side a single small hill, Jabal ar-Rumah. Hold that name, because fifty archers and one command are going to live or die upon it tomorrow.

What he ﷺ had done, with no academy and no training, was to make seven hundred the largest army the ground could hold. Three thousand men mean little if only a narrow corridor of them can reach you at once; block three sides and the enemy must funnel through the fourth, where your small force meets them on equal frontage. And there was a quieter cruelty folded into the geometry. The Quraysh had come up from the south, so to reach a camp pitched to the north they had to drag their whole army the long way around Madinah, an extra half day's march on legs that had already swallowed two weeks of road in seven days. No military school taught him ﷺ any of this. The One who sent him did.

And of all the mountains of the earth, it is Uhud. The Prophet ﷺ loved this mountain and said so plainly, in words Bukhari preserves from a homecoming, when its face on the horizon was the first sign that Madinah was near: Uhud is a mountain that loves us, and we love it. To love Uhud, the Sheikh says, is a sign of iman, and he ﷺ called it a mountain of Jannah. Once, as Muslim narrates, it trembled beneath him as he climbed it with Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman, and he tapped it with his foot: be firm, Uhud, for upon you are only a prophet, a siddiq, and two martyrs. He ﷺ had even drawn the sacred boundaries of Madinah himself, declaring it a haram as Makkah is, between the mountains of Air and Thawr and the two lava plains. Air sits just

beyond Uhud, which means tomorrow's battlefield lies inside holy ground.

The Sheikh carries a personal memory here, and it belongs in the retelling. One early morning in the mid-nineties his own teacher, Sheikh Safiur Rahman Mubarakpuri, the author of *ar-Raheeq al-Makhtum*, with whom he read *Sahih Bukhari* one-on-one, drove him around this mountain, walked him through his own reading of where the two armies stood, then took him the long way behind Uhud to point out a small rise: that, he said, is Air, the far marker of the haram the Prophet ﷺ named. It was the only time the Sheikh ever saw it. When he teaches you Uhud, he is teaching earth he walked with his sheikh, may Allah have abundant mercy on him.

Now stand at the edge of the camp and do the arithmetic the lecture will not let you skip. Seven hundred men at the mountain. In the entire world that night, counting every secret believer still in Makkah and every scattered soul beyond, there were perhaps not even a thousand Muslim men alive; every able man above fifteen was here, some at fourteen. That is the whole religion of Islam, sleeping at the foot of Uhud. Within fifteen or twenty years these same men, and the sons they would raise, will be knocking on the gates of Damascus and wiping away the empire of Persia; within a hundred, their banners will stand from China to the edge of France. They had no numbers, two hundred fewer horses and six hundred fewer coats of mail than their enemy. What they had, the Sheikh says, is the one thing we so often do not: trust in Allah so total that the mightiest superpowers of the age could not stand against a few hundred of them. They had the promise.

If Allāh should aid you, no one can overcome you; but if He should forsake you, who is there that can aid you after

If Allah aids you, no one can overcome you. The believers at the mountain knew that half of the verse by heart. And Uhud, over the days ahead, will teach the ummah the weight of the other half, the half we would so much rather not read: but if He should forsake you, who is there that can aid you after Him?

What this day asks of our faith

The battle has not begun, and already the road to Uhud is heavy with everything the Sheikh wants us to carry. Strip the day to its turning points, and each puts a question to us that does not stay safely in the seventh century.

He verified, even though he trusted. He ﷺ never doubted his uncle for a moment, and still sent scouts before moving a single household, because a decision that will cost lives cannot rest on one report, however beloved its source. We invert this exactly when it matters most, acting fastest under the heaviest pressure, when the pressure is precisely the reason to slow our hands. Deliberation is from Allah; haste is from Shaitan; the bigger the decision, the slower the hands.

He consulted, and then submitted to the consultation, surrendering the correct opinion when the room went the other way, because their affair is consultation among them. The one leader on earth entitled to impose his will refused to. And once the matter was sealed by counsel and prayer, the armor went on and stayed on, and when the day later turned bitter, no mouth ever said did we not tell you. Decide together, decide properly with istikhara and istishara, and then leave the decision alone, win or lose. Then there are the two coats of mail: the man whose

safety Allah Himself had guaranteed wore his armor doubled, to brand into his ummah forever that trust in Allah is not the absence of effort but the spirit your effort is made of. We dress up our laziness as reliance and our anxiety as diligence; he ﷺ shows the opposite of both, hands that prepare everything possible and a heart that rests in the One who decides the outcome.

And there is the sieve. Before a single arrow flew, this day exposed three hundred hypocrites the believers had marched out beside without knowing what was in their hearts, and steadied two tribes whose own feet had nearly failed. When a trial thins your ranks, or thins your resolve, read it the way the Qur'an reads Uhud: as Allah making the true thing visible, so the community is never wounded from the same opening twice. And read your weak hours the way the Banu Haritha and Banu Salama read theirs, not as a shame to be buried but, if Allah caught you in them, as a place where His friendship became visible, wallahu waliyyuhuma, a verse worth boasting of because it records both the stumble and the Hand.

So leave the believers there tonight, exactly where the day left them. Seven hundred men, their backs against a mountain that loves them and their faces toward the city they were defending; across the plain, an army three thousand strong, bought with the profit of a lost caravan, led by a man avenging his pride and flanked by two commanders avenging their fathers, sung forward by women who had come to make retreat impossible. Nothing has happened yet, and everything has been decided: the letter believed, the shura honored, the armor fastened and refused, the hypocrites unmasked, the wavering held, the ground chosen with a wisdom no one taught him ﷺ. Tomorrow the field gets drawn like a map, where each army stood and how the fighting opened,

and fifty archers will climb a small hill with a single command upon which the whole day will hang. May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, who wore two coats of mail over a heart that trusted his Lord completely; make us a people who seek counsel and honor it, who verify before we move and never look back once the armor is on; and if He writes for us any share of loss on the road to Him, may He choose for us in it the good He chose for the people of Uhud.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 46: the Battle of Uhud, part 1 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (8:36, 42:38, 3:166, 3:167, 4:88, 3:122, 3:160), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The Battle of Uhud, part 2

A mountain at his back, fifty archers on his flank

Uhud does not reach us as a single clean story. It reaches us in fragments, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi is honest about this before he draws the first line on the map. We do not have one companion who painted the whole picture. We have one man who remembered one moment and another who remembered a different one, each handing his children the one or two things from a hard day that he could never forget, and the work of the later scholar is to set those scattered pieces in order and to bridge, as carefully as he can, the gaps between them. Two things make Uhud harder than most. It was chaotic, and it ended in loss, and human nature speaks little of its losses. Open five books of seerah and you will find five different orderings of the same day. So what follows is one reconstruction of the sequence, offered as that and not as the only one, and the incidents themselves are firm even where the thread that ties them is a matter of inference.

And before any sword is drawn, the most striking thing about this day is how much of it was already decided by where the Prophet  chose to stand. He had already prayed his istikhara of the heart and made his decision; he had put on his armor; and once the armor was on, he would not take it off and walk it back, whatever the second thoughts of those around him. The battle, then, was coming. The only question left open was the ground, and the ground was his to choose.

A march nobody was meant to see

By the Thursday, which the early authorities reckon to be around the thirteenth of Shawwal, the Quraysh and the Muslims were within scouting distance of each other, close enough that the spies of each could learn roughly where the other lay. The Quraysh had come three thousand strong, and they had come for revenge. The Prophet ﷺ made his decision plain: before this army could settle outside the city and choose its own moment to strike, the Muslims would go out and meet it at Uhud, and they would get there first. So as soon as the Friday prayer was done, he moved, and the way he moved tells you everything.

He asked for a guide, not to take them along the open highway to Uhud, but to thread them through the date palm groves and the back lanes between the gardens, a man who knew the lay of the land well enough to keep them off the main road the whole way. The reason is not stated outright; it has to be inferred, and the inference is the point. With enemy scouts watching the highway, he did not want his route or his destination handed to them too early. He wanted to reach Uhud before the Quraysh did and to choose, with his own eyes, exactly where his men would stand. Uhud sits due north of the city, and it is close: a walk of barely half an hour from his mosque. Getting there first was not a small advantage. It was the whole battle.

As the army rustled through one of the gardens, the noise of all those men and horses reached an old blind man whose land it was, a friend of the chief of the hypocrites of Madinah. He understood whose feet were crossing his property, and his hatred rose in him, and he began flinging pebbles and shouting that by God he would not let Muhammad ﷺ and his companions set foot on his ground. One of the companions reached for his sword to be done with him. Leave him, the Prophet ﷺ said: he is

blind in his eyes and blind in his heart. What would you gain by killing him? They walked on, and by the early afternoon they held the place they had come for. The Quraysh, learning from their scouts where the Muslims had gone, followed after and made their own camp; and as the night fell with both armies on the field, everyone understood that the morning, the morning of Saturday the fifteenth of Shawwal, would bring battle.

Sent home for being too young

As soon as the ranks were forming, the Prophet ﷺ walked the line, and he looked at every single fighter, putting each man where he belonged. About a dozen boys he turned back. The rule that day was fifteen: you had to be fifteen years old to stand at Uhud, and those younger were sent home to Madinah. Among the ones turned away were names this ummah would one day lean its whole weight upon. Abdullah ibn Umar was sent back. Zayd ibn Thabit, who as a grown man would gather the scattered Qur'an into a single book, was sent back. Usama ibn Zayd was sent back. By the arithmetic of his later life, Usama was perhaps eleven or twelve that day. He had tried to slip into the army unnoticed and keep out of sight until it was too late to send him away, and he was caught right before the fighting and turned around, heartbroken, and made to go home.

Two of the boys argued their way in. Rafi ibn Khadij was fourteen, and the Prophet ﷺ was sending him back when his relatives stepped in to plead for him, because they knew how badly he wanted to stay and how crushed he was at being refused. He is an expert archer, they said: even at fourteen, he need not stand in the front line at all, only let him use his bow. And because he was an archer, Rafi was allowed to remain. The instant he was, Samura ibn Jundub, also fourteen, got to his feet. Messenger of

Allah, he said, if you let Rafi stay, then I should stay too, for I am stronger than him, and I have beaten him in wrestling more than once. To prove it on the spot, one report says, he threw Rafi to the ground in front of everyone, and he too was allowed to remain.

Sheikh Yasir asks you to sit with the contrast, because it is one of the quiet judgments of the whole day. Here are boys of fourteen weeping at being kept away from danger and wrestling each other for the right to risk their lives. And elsewhere in this same story stand grey-haired men of experience and standing, men who carried the dignity of years, who will melt away and go home before the first blow is struck, their cowardice laid bare in the Qur'an. The faith was not in the years. It never is. It was because the young men on this side carried this kind of iman that the religion went where it went.

The mountain, and the order to never leave it

Now look at the ground the way the Sheikh lays it out on the map. Ibn Ishaq records that the Prophet ﷺ turned the army a full half-circle, so that their faces were now toward Madinah, the way they had come, and their backs were to the great mass of Mount Uhud. And Uhud is not a single peak; it is a long range, a wall of rock nearly the size of the old city itself, and it sealed the encampment on three sides. There was only one open side, and on that side, by Allah's arrangement, a small hill stood almost exactly in the middle of the gap. In those days it was called Jabal al-Ainayn. Today it is known as Jabal al-Rumah, the mountain of the archers, and the name tells you what happened there. On that hill the Prophet ﷺ placed fifty of his finest archers, and with their bows commanding the open ground, the camp was sealed shut.

All that remained exposed, the whole field on which the battle could be joined, was a stretch of perhaps three hundred meters.

The verse Allah would later reveal about this day opens on precisely this hour, the Prophet ﷺ in the early morning setting his men in their places:

And [remember] when you, [O Muhammad], left your family in the morning to post the believers at their stations for the battle [of Uhud] and Allah is Hearing and Knowing.

QUR'AN 3:121

This, the Sheikh says plainly, is military genius, and he says it as a man who does not hand out that phrase lightly. Outnumbered more than four to one, seven hundred against three thousand and more, the Prophet ﷺ chose a field so narrow that the enemy's surplus thousands became almost meaningless. If only three hundred meters of front are open, it no longer matters how long a line the other side can form; only so many men can come at you across that gap at once. The Quraysh would be forced to thin out and meet the Muslims more or less man for man, in a space that could not be flanked. He had taken a small army and erased most of the disadvantage of being small, cutting the four-to-one down to something close to even, not by adding men, but by choosing the earth they would fight on.

There was exactly one weakness left in the whole position, and he saw it and named it. The archers' hill guarded the only line by which an enemy could come around the back. So he gave those fifty men an order that, of all the many reports of Uhud, comes down to us through the most authentic chains of all, recorded in Bukhari and Muslim and in every single book of seerah. Protect us with your arrows, he told them, for the enemy's horses will

never charge into arrows; a horse will not run onto the points no matter how its rider drives it. Hold this place. Then, in words shaped to leave no room for interpretation: even if you see the birds eating our bodies, do not leave your positions until I send for you. In another wording: make sure they do not come at us from behind, and whether you see us winning or losing, stay until I call you. Dr. Yasir Qadhi pauses on the fact that this, of everything that happened that day, is the detail history transmitted most reliably, and on what that tells us: the Prophet ﷺ understood, completely, the single hinge on which the whole battle turned, and bolted it down with an image so graphic, our corpses lying out and the birds at them, that no man could later claim he had misunderstood.

A sword, and what it is owed

With the sun rising on the Saturday, the Prophet ﷺ moved among his men to rouse them for the fighting. Every army has its ways of lifting its soldiers, the Sheikh notes; even modern armies keep whole departments for the morale of their troops. And what greater motivation could there be than Allah and His Messenger ﷺ? Among the ways he stirred them, he drew his own sword and held it out: who will take this sword from me? At once the hands went up and the voices came, I will, Messenger of Allah, and among the first to reach for it was his cousin Zubayr ibn al-Awwam. Then he asked it again, but differently: who will take it with its right? Who will give this sword the right that it is owed? And now the hands hesitated. A man named Abu Dujana asked the question the rest were turning over in silence: and what is its right, Messenger of Allah? That you fight the enemy with it, he said, until it bends or breaks and can no longer be used. I take it with that right, said Abu Dujana, and the sword was his.

Abu Dujana was a famous warrior, a fighting machine with a reputation built in the days before Islam, and he owned a red turban he called the turban of death, which he wore only at the fiercest extremity of battle. He tied it on now, and took the bared sword and began to walk out before the lines with a slow, swaggering, deliberate stride, his chest thrown forward, parading himself so that the Quraysh could see exactly what was coming for them. Watching him go, the Prophet ﷺ said: this is a walk that Allah hates, except in a place like this. The Sheikh lets that land, because the lesson in it is double-edged. The arrogant strut, the puffed-out chest, the open display of one's own strength: hateful anywhere else, and you can think without much effort of where you have seen it. But here, on this ground, it had a purpose: to drive fear into the enemy and fire into your own side. And so here, only here, the thing that is hateful everywhere else was exactly right.

An attempt to split the believers in two

Before the clash, the Quraysh tried twice to peel the Ansar away from the Muhajirun, and the strategy was not stupid: the Ansar were the bulk of the army, five or six hundred men, while the emigrants from Makkah were scarcely a hundred. Pull the Ansar out and the rest collapses. So first a herald rode up within shouting distance and called out that Abu Sufyan had sent him: people of Madinah, leave us to our cousins, we have no quarrel with you, go back to your homes safe. The Ansar answered with a volley of curses and insults, furious at the very suggestion that they would walk away and leave the Prophet ﷺ to stand alone. Here the Sheikh notes a point of fiqh in passing: on the battlefield, a harshness and even a roughness of tongue is permitted that would never befit a Muslim in ordinary life. The

decorum of the gathering is for the gathering; the field has its own register.

Then a man came forward who believed he could do better, an old chief of the Aws named Abu Amir. Before the hijrah he had been among the most senior and beloved of his tribe, the equal in standing of the great hypocrite of Madinah himself, and his people had honored him with a title: ar-rahib, the monk. But he had refused Islam and abandoned the city rather than live under it, taking a small band of his tribesmen to Makkah to wait for exactly such a day as this, a day on which he could return and reclaim the chieftaincy he had lost. Leave them to me, he told Abu Sufyan, boasting: my people have always respected me, you will see now the power I hold over them. He went out before the lines and called: people of the Aws, it is me, Abu Amir, I have come back. And before he could say another word they cried back that Allah give him no joy and no comfort, that he was not Abu Amir the monk at all but Abu Amir the corrupt, the fasiq, and they would not hear one more word from his mouth. He came back to Abu Sufyan stunned, saying that some sickness had befallen his people, that he no longer knew them. He did not know them, the Sheikh says, because faith had remade them from the inside: their loyalty belonged to Allah and His Messenger ﷺ now, and the old ranks of tribe and lineage that had once commanded them had simply lost their grip. There is a final note the Sheikh will not let pass, and it is a heavy one. Abu Amir's own son was on the other side, with the Muslims, a man this ummah remembers and loves: Hanzala, who within hours would give his life at Uhud and be washed by the angels. Father against son, on opposite banks of faith.

The duel before the battle

Battles in that age opened with single combat, and Uhud opened with Talha ibn Abi Talha, of the Banu Abd al-Dar, the clan that carried the Quraysh banner, striding out into the open to call for an opponent. Ali ibn Abi Talib answered him. Talha was sheathed in full body armor head to foot, every limb covered; Ali wore none at all. Talha struck the first blow, swinging the moment they were within reach, but Ali was faster. He took the full force of the sword on his shield, and before Talha could even draw the blade back, Ali had answered, one hand still lifting to block while the other came down in the same motion. The Sheikh can only reach for the comparison to something out of a film, a speed of hand and mind that none of us in our own lives could begin to match. Finding Talha armored everywhere except below the thigh, Ali struck him there, and with a force that took the leg clean off, Talha collapsed to the ground.

As he fell backward his garment rode up and he lay exposed, his awrah uncovered, and when Ali came forward to finish him, Talha began to beg, pleading by the ties of kinship, for the two of them were distant cousins through Abd Manaf and Abd al-Dar. They were out of sight of the army, no one watching, and Ali felt a stab of shame, some hayaa, some sense of muruwwah, at killing a defenseless man laid bare on his back who had appealed to him by blood. So he lowered the sword and walked away. When the companions asked why he had let the man live, he told them the truth: the kinship, and the shame of it. Talha could no longer fight in any case; his wound would take his life before the battle ended, and he became one of the few of the Quraysh to die that way. That, the Sheikh says, is the mark of a noble warrior: there is a way to fight, and even a way to spare, and the strength that knows the difference is the higher strength. And look at the two faces of one man inside a single minute. One moment he is

striding out and calling for a champion; the next he is flat on his back, stripped bare, weeping for his life. Look at the distance between those two moments, the Sheikh says, and learn what this world is worth.

The charge that scattered them

Of the opening assault itself we have only a handful of reports, scarcely more than four or five small tidbits, but every one of them points the same way: it was devastating. After Ali's victory in the duel the Muslims charged, and the Quraysh, for all their four-to-one strength and their heavy arms, could not hold the line. This was exactly what the ground had been chosen to produce. Pressed into that narrow three hundred meters, where the enemy could not bring its numbers to bear and had been forced to thin itself out, the concentrated Muslim ranks hit the weakened Quraysh line like a single bullet driven through a thin layer, and they broke clean through it and drove on toward the far end of the camp.

The proof of how far they drove is in where the fighting reached. The Quraysh banner was the ancient honor of the Banu Abd al-Dar, Talha's clan, and before the battle Abu Sufyan had taunted them over Badr, where their flagbearer had been among the first to run, until they swore to him that as long as one of them drew breath the flag would stay up. And it did. One by one, all ten of them were cut down where they stood, most of them by Hamza, some by Ali, some by Abu Dujana, until the last of the ten fell and the banner came down to the ground, which in the language of that age was the symbolic death of an army. Hamza fought that day with a fury that placed him among those who killed the most of the enemy; in Ibn Ishaq's long list of who killed whom at Uhud, his name runs through it again and again. The Sheikh notes

quietly, and leaves it there for now, that this same Hamza, the uncle of the Prophet ﷺ, is about to become the chief of the martyrs, and that his story belongs to the day ahead.

There is one more sign of how completely the charge had carried, and it is the image with which the Sheikh chooses to stop. The women of the Quraysh had come as the army's last line, stationed at the very rear of the encampment, singing the men forward and shaming any who fell back, promising comfort to the brave and scorn to the coward. And the women had to run. Al-Bara ibn Azib, who saw it with his own eyes, remembered it to the end of his life: when we fought them at Uhud, they turned and fled, until I saw with my own eyes the legs of the women as they lifted their skirts and scrambled up the slopes, and I could see their ankle bracelets. Ibn Hisham adds that he remembered seeing Hind herself among them, she and her companions running headlong up the mountain with nothing left to shield them. The fact that the women at the very back were forced to flee tells you that the Muslims had reached all the way to the end of the enemy camp.

The verse Allah revealed about this battle confirms exactly this, that the early promise was kept while the believers struck the enemy down, and it names, in the very same breath, the turn that was still to come:

And Allah had certainly fulfilled His promise to you when you were killing them [i.e., the enemy] by His permission until [the time] when you lost courage and fell to disputing about the order [given by the Prophet (ﷺ)] and disobeyed after He had shown you that which you love. Among you are some who desire this world, and among you are some who desire the Hereafter. Then He turned you back from them [defeated] that He might test you. And He has already

forgiven you, and Allah is the possessor of bounty for the believers.

QUR'AN 3:152

The day, for now, was in their hands; the promise was being kept. And it is exactly here, at the height of the advantage, just before the words until the time when you lost courage and fell to disputing come true, that Sheikh Yasir stops the story, because what comes next, the one weakness, the hill, the order remembered or forgotten, is the turn of the whole battle, and it belongs to the days ahead.

What this day asks of our faith

It is tempting to read the early hours of Uhud as a straightforward triumph and leave them there, a stirring charge safely sealed in the past. That would be to walk past the questions the day is quietly pressing on us, and there are at least three.

The first is in the ground. The Prophet ﷺ won most of Uhud before a single sword was raised, and he won it by where he chose to stand: a mountain sealing his back, three sides closed by rock, one narrow gap left open and commanded by fifty archers on a hill. Notice that he did not pray for the mountain to move or for the three thousand to vanish. He took the means Allah had placed within his reach, the terrain, the timing, the secret march off the highway, the positioning of every man, and arranged them with all the skill he had, and only then did he leave the outcome to his Lord. Our battles are not fought on that plain, but they are fought on some plain, and the question is the same: have we chosen our ground, or are we meeting our trials in the open, exposed on every side, having taken none of the lawful

means that were ours to take? Position is decided before the first blow. It was for him ﷺ, and it is for us.

The second is in the boys and the grey-haired men. Children of fourteen wept to be kept from the danger and wrestled each other in the dust for the right to risk their lives, while men of years and standing, men who should by every outward measure have been at the front, slipped quietly home. The fire was never in the age. It was in the faith. We tell ourselves we will do the good thing when we are older, when we are more established, when the time is somehow riper; and here are boys too young to be allowed to fight, breaking their hearts for the chance to give everything. Eagerness for what is good is not measured in years, and the soul that waits to feel old enough, or settled enough, or ready enough, may be waiting on the wrong thing entirely.

And the third is in the sword. Many hands shot up when the Prophet ﷺ offered it; the hands fell still when he asked who would take it with its right. Wanting the honor is the easy part, and we are all quick at it. Abu Dujana asked first what it would cost him, and when he was told, he accepted the cost: to fight with it until it bent or broke. How much of the good we reach for would we still want if the full price came attached, the responsibility and not only the reward? There is a sword in nearly every life worth living, some trust held out that comes with a right that is owed. The believer is the one who asks what its right is, and then takes it on those terms. So choose your ground before the trial reaches you and take every lawful means within your hand; do not wait to feel old enough to do something good; and when a worthy thing is held out to you, ask what it is owed, and take it with its right. May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, who chose his ground with a mountain at his back and named the one place it could go wrong; keep our courage

when the test comes and our feet where He has told us to stand; and place us never among those who desire only this world, but among those who desire the Hereafter, and gather us under his banner ﷺ on the Day the nations are gathered.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 47: the Battle of Uhud, part 2 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (3:121, 3:152), verified via quran.ai. This chapter follows the Sheikh's own reconstruction of the order of events, which he presents as one careful sequence among several.

The Battle of Uhud, part 3: the archers leave the hill, and the martyrdom of Hamza

The hill emptied, and the lion of Allah fell

Yesterday the Muslims were winning. The Quraysh had broken and fled, the field below Uhud lay open and scattered with the things a poor city could only dream of, and for one bright hour it must have looked as though Badr had simply happened again. Today is the day all of that turns over. And Dr. Yasir Qadhi opens this third chapter the way he opened the last, with a plain admission about how little of it survives. Uhud does not reach us as one connected account; it reaches us as fragments, one story of Musab, one story of Hamza, one story here and one there, and never a clean picture of the whole. Reconstructing what happened at Uhud, he says, is in his own experience the single hardest task in the entire seerah, because the men who lived through it told only a piece each, and human beings do not like to dwell on their worst memories. So the honest way to tell this day is the way he tells it: scene by scene, the way the scenes were handed down, and around the gaps an open and admitted I do not know.

But the shape of the turning is not in doubt, and Allah Himself names it. The verse that the Sheikh keeps returning to belongs to Surah Al Imran, revealed afterward to teach the believers what their own hands had done.

And Allah had certainly fulfilled His promise to you when you were killing them [i.e., the enemy] by His permission until [the time] when you lost courage and fell to disputing about the order [given by the Prophet (ﷺ)] and disobeyed after He had shown you that which you love. Among you are some who desire this world, and among you are some who desire the Hereafter. Then He turned you back from them [defeated] that He might test you. And He has already forgiven you, and Allah is the possessor of bounty for the believers.

QUR'AN 3:152

Read it slowly, because the whole disaster is folded inside it, and Allah folds it around one small word. He had kept His promise; the believers were cutting the enemy down by His permission. Until. Until they lost courage and disputed the command and slipped, after He had shown them the very thing they wanted. That is the lesson of the entire day, and the Sheikh draws it out without hurry: while the Muslims were pure and sincere, victory was theirs by right, and the instant a desire for this world crept in among them, everything changed.

When you had what you loved

Down on the plain it looked harmless enough. The Quraysh were gone, the field was strewn with abandoned wealth, and a man would have had to be made of stone not to bend down and gather. We forget, fourteen centuries later, what those spoils were. Good weapons in that world were imported, because the Arabs were not fine smiths; they exported leather and dates and brought their iron in from other lands, and anything imported was costly and rare. A sword could last a generation and be handed to the next. A single camel left behind by a fleeing enemy was a small fortune on the sand. So when the believers saw the field

littered with all of it, they laid down their guard, set aside their weapons, and began to collect.

And here is the bitter irony the Sheikh will not let pass. The rules of the spoils, the ghaneemah, had not yet been fully revealed. What the men on the plain did not understand is that wealth left on a fled battlefield is not finders-keepers; it does not belong to the hand that snatches it. It is gathered into one pile and shared among the whole army, and to grab a piece and keep it for yourself is not a clever prize but a theft from the war booty, a major sin. So those who broke their discipline to gather did not even own what they gathered. They reached for the dunya, and they broke the one thing that was winning them the battle to do it, and in the end they kept neither. That, the Sheikh says, is the whole symbolism of Uhud caught in a single image: this is the reality of whoever prefers the dunya over everything else. He grasps for it with both hands and walks away with neither this world nor the next.

The fifty who were told to stay

Behind the army, on a small hill the seerah remembers as Jabal ar-Rumah, fifty archers waited. Their orders had been absolute, and the Prophet ﷺ had left no room in them at all: do not leave this place, whatever you see, whether you watch us winning or watch us being torn to pieces, until I send you word. Hold the hill. That was the whole of the command.

No messenger came. From where the Prophet ﷺ stood the battle was not yet over; it was simply too early to call it, and his instinct, as always, was to wait and to be sure. But from where the archers stood the war looked finished and forgotten. They could see everything from up there, all the way to the end of the field: the tents, the animals, the weapons, the food, every other Muslim

below filling his arms while they sat on an empty hill holding a position no enemy seemed to want anymore.

This is exactly where shaytan reached them. Twenty minutes passed, then thirty, then more, and the waiting did its slow work. They began to argue among themselves, and the Sheikh asks us to picture it as it really must have been, not one tidy exchange but a long back-and-forth, because no one changes his mind in an instant. The more men who leaned toward going, the easier it became for the next man to lean with them, because a person stands firm alone with difficulty and follows a crowd with ease. Their commander, Abdullah ibn Jubayr, planted himself against the drift and reminded them of the exact words of the Prophet ﷺ, that they were to hold this place until the command came. By Allah, he said, I will not leave my position until he sends for me. Around forty of the fifty came down anyway. Ten men stayed with their commander on the hill. And the one door that the Prophet ﷺ had bolted shut with an absolute order, the single weak point in the whole arrangement, swung quietly open.

The one who never stopped looking back

There was a man among the fleeing Quraysh who was not running for his life. Khalid ibn al-Walid was retreating the way only a born general retreats, cautiously, glancing back over his shoulder, hunting the whole time for the one mistake the enemy might make. He was barely into his twenties. Uhud was his first real battle; he had not been at Badr. And he was about to become the only man in history ever to inflict a genuine military defeat on the Muslims, before Allah chose him for Islam and he went on to carve out half an empire under its banner. The Sheikh pauses on him here with something close to wonder: Allah gives certain people a talent the way He gives others health or wealth, and this

young man on a fleeing horse, watching and waiting, had the talent of war in him in full.

The moment the forty archers came down, his mind moved. The hill was bare. And here the Sheikh sets aside the popular picture, the one many books repeat, of Khalid circling the entire mountain of Uhud to come at the Muslims from the far rear. Look at the mountain, he says, and the picture collapses. To go all the way around it would take hours, hours the battle did not contain; the Muslims would have packed up and left before he ever arrived. The more careful reading is simpler and more brutal. Khalid saw the gap from a distance and swung his horsemen back in along a low watercourse, one of those dry channels that fill only in the rains and run sunk beneath the level of the land, so that a rider inside it cannot be seen by anyone on open ground. Perhaps a hundred horsemen, perhaps a hundred and fifty; enough to do terrible damage, not so few that they would do little, not so many that the slaughter would have been even worse. They poured up through the gap the archers had left, and in one stroke Khalid cut the Muslim force clean in two. On one side, the camp of the Prophet ﷺ; on the other, the scattered men gathering spoils; and his own cavalry driving between them. The very terrain that had protected the Muslims all morning, the high hill and the sheltering channel, had turned in an hour into the trap that caught them.

The voice calling from behind

The first person on the whole field to see the horsemen coming was the Prophet ﷺ himself. He was watchful where everyone else had grown comfortable, uneasy in exactly the place the others felt safe, and so he caught the flank before any other eye did. And then he did the most dangerous thing he could possibly have done.

He was the one target the entire enemy army wanted. Every man there knew that to bring him down was to end the matter. The safe move, the move any of us would have made by instinct, was to slip away quietly, to not draw a single eye, to protect the one head the whole battle turned on. Instead he stood his ground and shouted at the top of his voice, calling out to the believers scattered across the field that the attack was coming from behind them, take your guard, they are at your backs. And every Muslim there knew that voice; there was no mistaking who was calling, and no commander but him. By shouting he handed the enemy his own location, deliberately, to buy the men in front of him the seconds they needed to turn and arm. It was, the Sheikh says plainly, the bravest thing imaginable, and without it the slaughter that followed would have been double or triple what it was.

This is the scene Allah preserved forever in the next verse, the believers fleeing up the slope without turning to look at anyone, and the Messenger ﷺ calling them back from behind.

[Remember] when you [fled and] climbed [the mountain] without looking aside at anyone while the Messenger was calling you from behind. So Allah repaid you with distress upon distress so you would not grieve for that which had escaped you [of victory and spoils of war] or [for] that which had befallen you [of injury and death]. And Allah is [fully] Aware of what you do.

QUR'AN 3:153

The surprise broke the ranks into chaos. Men were scattered in twos and threes and tens, many of them with their armor off and their swords set aside, because moments before they had been gathering, not fighting. And then a second horror came, of the cruelest kind there is. In the confusion shaytan stirred the two

halves of the Muslim force to mistake one another for the enemy in the dust and the helmets and the screaming, and some believers fell to believing swords. The most tragic of these was an old man named Yaman, the father of Hudhayfa, whose own story carries the whole tenderness of the religion. He had been so elderly that the Prophet ﷺ had excused him from the battle entirely, one of only two men sent back to the city for their age. But his iman would not let him sit with the women and children, and he and a companion as old as himself reasoned with each other through the morning: how long have we even got left, a day, an hour? Let us go, and perhaps Allah will seal our lives with the shahada we want. They came late, into the chaos, after Khalid had struck. And there a group of Muslims who had not seen him in the morning ranks and did not know his face surrounded him with their swords. His own son saw it from a distance and screamed, that is my father, that is my father, stop, but no voice carries over a battle like that, and they cut him down before they knew him. When it was over and the men came in grief to ask forgiveness, Hudhayfa said only: may Allah forgive you, and He is the most merciful of the merciful. The Prophet ﷺ ordered the blood-money paid to him for his father, and Hudhayfa gave every coin of it away in charity. He lived, the companions said, in nothing but good after that day, and the Prophet ﷺ later chose him as the keeper of his greatest secret, the one man entrusted with the names of the hypocrites.

The lion of Allah, taken from behind

And now the heaviest loss of the day, the one Dr. Yasir Qadhi handles with the full gravity it has carried for fourteen hundred years: the death of Hamza ibn Abd al-Muttalib, the uncle of the Prophet ﷺ, his foster-brother, his shield in the worst years of

Makkah. You will remember how Hamza came to Islam. He came to it first not out of faith but out of family honor, blurting his belief in a flash of fury the day Abu Jahl had insulted his nephew, declaring himself a Muslim almost before he knew what he was saying, and then refusing on principle to take it back, until the iman he had announced in anger grew real and grew deep, until he became one of the masters of the martyrs. No man on that field could touch him in open combat. He cut down warrior after warrior, and there was simply no honest way to bring him down. So he was not brought down honestly.

There was a slave in the Quraysh army named Wahshi, an expert with the javelin, who had been promised one thing in exchange for one thing: his freedom, if he killed Hamza. His master Jubayr ibn Mutim wanted Hamza dead twice over, once because Hamza had killed Jubayr's uncle at Badr, and once for the sheer symmetry of it, that the Prophet ﷺ should lose an uncle as Jubayr's family had. Wahshi tells the story himself, in the first person, preserved across the years because two of the next generation sought the old man out and asked him. I had no desire to fight anyone, he said, no hatred for Hamza at all; I only wanted to be a free man. So he did not fight like a warrior. He stalked Hamza through the battle, hiding, waiting, slipping from cover to cover, while Hamza fought on ahead of him. And when Hamza had just struck a man down and his back was turned, Wahshi stepped out from behind the brush and threw with all the force he had, aiming, it is said, for the gap in the armor where the rings did not cover, the place a master javelin-thrower would know to find. The spear went clean through him, half its length out the other side.

And here the Sheikh stops, because the next detail is the measure of the man. With the spear already driven through his

body, Hamza turned to face his attacker and tried to raise his sword, and only then, his strength gone, did he fall. What a man, the Sheikh says, almost helplessly. There was no other way on earth he could have been brought down. Hamza fell in the first half of Uhud, in the victory, before Khalid ever came around the flank, which means that by the time the tide turned, what was done to his body had already been done. We know what Hind did, and the Sheikh does not hide it, because Allah let our tradition preserve it and there is a wisdom in that. Out of nothing but hatred, out of a will to wound the Prophet ﷺ in the deepest place she could reach, she opened his uncle's body with her own dagger and made of the mutilation a trophy. There is no reason for any of it except the desire to inflict pain on the one she hated. And then, the Sheikh reminds us, gently, almost abruptly, Allah guided her, exactly as He would later guide Wahshi. Both of them lived to enter Islam. Both of them were forgiven. By a wisdom that belongs to Allah alone.

Thirty for one, and the verse that answered him

When the battle was finally over and the Prophet ﷺ walked the field and came at last upon the body of his uncle, he wept. And in the first wave of that grief he said a thing that any of us would understand and that Allah, in His mercy, would not let stand. Were it not for two things, he said, he would have left Hamza where he lay for the birds and the beasts, so that Allah would gather his scattered body on the Day of Resurrection as an honor for him. The two things that stayed his hand were tender and human: that his sister Safiyya, Hamza's full sister by the same mother and father, would grieve unbearably to see him left so, and that the people would take whatever he did as a sunnah after him. And he said, in his sorrow, that if Allah ever gave him victory

over the Quraysh, he would mutilate thirty of their dead in answer for this one.

Then Allah sent down the answer from above him, and it is a thing to sit with for a long time. It came in Surah an-Nahl.

And if you punish [an enemy, O believers], punish with an equivalent of that with which you were harmed. But if you are patient - it is better for those who are patient.

QUR'AN 16:126

If you would punish, punish only with the like of what was done to you, and not a hair beyond it; and if you are patient, that patience is the better thing. When this verse came down, the Prophet ﷺ took back his vow at once and put in its place a command that would outlast him and outlast every one of us: that no dead body is ever to be mutilated, friend or enemy, for as long as this ummah stands. The Sheikh stops here to point at something tender about prophethood itself, something easy to rush past. In a moment of unbearable grief a vow was made, the most human vow there is, and Allah corrected it gently from the heavens, and His servant ﷺ submitted in the same breath and turned the correction into law. Even his sorrow became mercy for us. The one man on that field with every earthly right to revenge, standing over the torn body of the uncle who had loved him and shielded him, was taught to choose restraint, and he chose it, and he made his restraint a permanent gift to everyone who would come after.

The other graves of that day

Hamza did not fall alone, and the Sheikh tells the others so that we feel the full weight of what this ummah was built upon. There

was Musab ibn Umayr, who had been the most pampered youth in all of Makkah, the boy whose mother dressed him in new garments and the finest perfumes, who gave up the silk and the scent for chains and hunger when he believed, who was sent ahead as the first emissary to Medina and won whole tribes to Islam by the sheer beauty of how he carried the message. He fell holding the banner. His right hand was struck off and he caught the flag with his left, and his left was struck off and he clutched it against his chest with the stumps of both arms until they killed him with many wounds at once. When they came to bury him he owned a single garment, too short to cover the whole of him; pull it over his head and his feet showed, pull it over his feet and his head showed, and so they covered his head and laid desert grass over his feet. Years later, the companion Khabbab ibn al-Aratt, who had himself been tortured in Makkah and then lived long and was given a house and servants and ease, wept as he told it. Some of us, he said, lived to take our reward in this world. But Musab took nothing here at all. He went with one short garment, and the whole of his reward is waiting for him there.

There was Hanzala, married only the night before, who heard the call and left for the battle without bathing after his wedding night and was struck down within reach of Abu Sufyan himself; the Prophet ﷺ saw the angels washing his body between the sky and the earth and called him forever the one washed by the angels. There was Quzman, a ferocious fighter on the Muslim side whom the companions praised, of whom the Prophet ﷺ said that he was of the people of the Fire, and who, when a single arrow wounded him and the pain became more than he would bear, set the hilt of his own sword against the ground and fell upon the blade and ended his own life, proving the warning true; sometimes, the Sheikh notes, Allah aids this religion even through

a corrupt man, but the man's own end is his own. There was al-Usayrim, still a pagan at dawn that morning, who came to the field, accepted Islam on the spot, fought, and was killed, all before a single prayer-time had so much as entered. He never made one sajda in his life, and the Prophet ﷺ said of him that he did little and was rewarded much, and Abu Hurayra would test his students for years with the riddle: who is the man who entered Jannah without ever praying a single prayer? And there was Mukhayriq, of the Jewish tribes of Medina, who held to the treaty when his own people would not, who took up his sword on the Sabbath out of nothing but loyalty to a promise given and told them that if he died his wealth should go to Muhammad ﷺ. He died defending the Muslims, and the Prophet ﷺ called him the best of his people. Loss after loss after loss, and in every single one of them, the Sheikh shows us, something left behind for us to carry.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read Uhud as a tragedy and close the book, a brave army undone by bad luck and a clever enemy, safely sealed in the past. That would be to miss every question it is asking of us. Strip the day down to what actually turned it, and you will not read a setback in your own life the same way again.

It turned on a hill, and on fifty men, and on one instruction that some of them decided did not apply to them that day. Khalid did not break a strong and faithful army; he walked his horsemen through a door that the army's own archers had left open. And those archers were not cowards or traitors. They were believers who had stood through the hard part, who simply grew tired of waiting, who looked at what everyone else was gathering and reasoned that surely the command no longer meant what it had

plainly said. That is how the disasters of a life almost always begin: not with some towering, obvious sin, but with one small order from Allah or His Messenger ﷺ that we quietly decide cannot really be meant for us, here, now, in our case. The opening is always in the small disobedience. Guard the small commands, the Sheikh is telling us through the whole of this day, because the hill is lost there, long before the cavalry ever appears.

And it turned on the dunya, on a field of spoils spread before tired and victorious men. Watch what it cost them. They reached for the wealth and broke their ranks to do it, and then the wealth was not even theirs to keep, and the victory slipped away with it, so that they ended the day holding neither. Whoever puts this world ahead of everything, the Sheikh says, often ends with neither this world nor the next. Ask yourself honestly how many times the thing you broke your discipline to grab turned to nothing in your hand, and the better thing you let go of to grab it never came back. The believer is not forbidden the dunya; he is forbidden to let it be the thing he reaches for first, at the cost of the command he was given.

And then there is the grief, and what was done with it. Over the body of the uncle he loved more than almost anyone alive, mutilated by people who hated him, the Prophet ﷺ felt the most justified anger a human heart can feel, and made a vow out of it. And Allah took that vow, gently, and turned it into its opposite, and his servant ﷺ obeyed and made restraint the law forever. This is the hardest thing the day asks, and the most needed. Our most justified anger, the wound we did nothing to deserve, is precisely the place where Allah watches most closely what we do next. Grief does not license cruelty. The greater your right to strike back, the greater the worship in choosing not to, and the

man with the most perfect right to revenge in all of history chose patience over the body of the one he loved, and gave that choice to us.

So take this day down into your ordinary life, and do not leave the most hopeful thing in it behind. The hand that threw the spear at Hamza, and the woman who tore his body apart, both lived to say there is no god but Allah, and both were forgiven. Jubayr, who sent the slave to kill him, felt the first stirring of faith in his chest as a prisoner tied to a pillar, hearing the Prophet ﷺ recite in the night the words of Surah at-Tur, until he reached the place where Allah asks the human being who he thinks he is:

*Or were they created by nothing, or were they the creators
[of themselves]?*

QUR'AN 52:35

My heart, Jubayr said, was about to leap out of my chest. He did not believe that night; Allah had His own timing for him, as He had His own timing for Wahshi, and for Hind, and has His own timing for you. But every one of them came in eventually, and every one of them was received. So this day that begins with a hill abandoned for a fistful of spoils, and runs through the worst loss the Prophet ﷺ had yet known, and through brothers cutting down brothers in the dust, ends on the one note that no setback can drown: that Allah guides whom He wills, in His own time, and that the very people who inflicted the deepest wound of his life were not for one moment placed beyond His mercy when at last they turned to Him. If the door was open to them, the Sheikh leaves you to feel it for yourself, then stop deciding it is closed to anyone, including you.

May Allah forgive the martyrs of Uhud and raise them in the highest gardens; may He gather us with Hamza, the lion of Allah and the master of the martyrs, and with Musab who held the banner with what was left of his arms; may He keep our feet where He has placed them when the spoils of this world are spread before our eyes, guard our anger when we are most wronged, and never let us decide that His mercy has run out, for ourselves or for anyone at all. And may He send His peace and His blessings upon Muhammad ﷺ, whose every sorrow He turned into guidance for us, and let us drink from his hand a drink after which there is no thirst.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 48: the martyrdom of Hamza, Uhud part 3 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (3:152, 3:153, 16:126, 52:35), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The Battle of Uhud, part 4

Blood on his face, forgiveness on his lips

When this day of the seerah opens, the battle has already turned inside out. The Muslims who woke up winning are scattered across the plain gathering spoils, certain the war is over; Khalid ibn al-Walid's horsemen have swung back in from behind; and no one even saw the counterattack coming until it was already among them. Dr. Yasir Qadhi opens by showing you his workbench. What happened around the Prophet ﷺ in this single hour survives in ten or fifteen separate reports, and every early source threads them together in a different order, and how to fit them, what came first, how to fill the gaps, we will never know with full certainty, because we were not there. So what follows is one faithful way of stitching the pieces together: the firm as firm, the likely as likely, and some seams left showing where the reports go quiet.

This is day forty-nine, the fourth of five at the mountain, and it is the day of his blood ﷺ. The day a rock, an arrow, and a sword reached the most beloved face in all of creation, and the day the people around him showed exactly what they were built from.

Nine men between him and two hundred

Picture the field as the hour breaks open. Most of the army is dispersed in the certainty that it is finished, and the contingent of Quraysh is coming up behind them before anyone understands

what is happening. One voice never stopped watching. The Prophet ﷺ was shouting that the enemy was at their backs, trying to pull them around to face it. The Qur'an keeps the exact sound of that moment, the climbing and the fleeing and the voice that would not stop calling from the rear:

[Remember] when you [fled and] climbed [the mountain] without looking aside at anyone while the Messenger was calling you from behind. So Allāh repaid you with distress upon distress so you would not grieve for that which had escaped you [of victory and spoils of war] or [for] that which had befallen you [of injury and death]. And Allāh is [fully] Aware of what you do.

QUR'AN 3:153

Now count who was actually beside him. Nine men. Two of the Muhajirun, Talha ibn Ubaydillah and Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, radiyallahu anhum, both of them of the ten given the glad tidings of Paradise, and seven of the Ansar whose names no book ever learned. Every other companion was somewhere else on that wide field, because the assumption everywhere was that the battle had been won. Nine men do not withstand two hundred. But a mountain can, and some of these Ansar, the Sheikh lets us assume, knew Uhud the way you know your own courtyard, while the Quraysh, staring up at a wall of rock, knew nothing at all. So the small band fell back and climbed, drawing the Prophet ﷺ toward shelter, trusting the height and distance to buy the minutes that mattered.

The pursuers kept closing, and a question began to repeat that should never have to be asked. Who will take on these men, and he will be my companion in Jannah? Every time, Talha answered first: I will. And every time, the Prophet ﷺ told him, stay where

you are, O Talha, and sent one of the Ansar instead, keeping his best fighter for the end. And so, the Sheikh reconstructs, one by one the men of the Ansar walked back down the slope, very likely as decoys, drawing the hunt the wrong way while the Prophet ﷺ slipped into the rock. One by one, all seven died as martyrs. That, the Sheikh says, is exactly why we do not know their names: seven men of the highest rank of sacrifice in the religion, who spent their lives so that he ﷺ could keep his, and the books could not preserve so much as what they were called.

The most dangerous hour of the whole seerah

The shelter they were climbing toward is still in the mountain today. To call it a cave flatters it. It is barely an opening into the rock, not a chamber you walk into but a slither, a crevice with room for one body, maybe two. Someone in that group knew exactly where it was, and somewhere on that climb, with the Ansar falling behind him, the Prophet ﷺ reached it with Talha and Sa'd.

Stop here, because Dr. Yasir Qadhi stops here. The people of Ta'if were vicious beyond telling, but they meant to humiliate him ﷺ, not kill him. The cave of the hijrah held danger, but it was trackers who came one at a time, and even Suraqah wanted his prize alive. This is none of that. This is open war, no holds barred, armed men scouring the rocks below for the single purpose of ending his life. And so the Sheikh makes his judgment, and Allah knows best: in the entire seerah, there is perhaps nothing as critical, nothing as dangerous, as this exact point in time. Everything the religion was and would become balanced on a crack in a rock, two guards, and the protection of Allah alone.

Talha planted himself at the opening. When the Prophet ﷺ kept leaning out to read the field, Talha pleaded with him: may my

mother and father be ransomed for you, O Messenger of Allah, do not look out, some stray arrow may strike you. My chest instead of your chest. And Sa'd knelt with his bow while the Prophet ﷺ did a thing that should rearrange how you picture him in this hour. He was gathering fallen arrows off the ground and handing them to his archer, one by one, saying, shoot, may my father and mother be ransomed for you. The companions said that phrase over him ﷺ all their lives, and no one ever deserved it as he did. But the direction matters: it means I would give up my own mother and father for your sake, and the narrations record that in his entire life the Prophet ﷺ never once combined both his parents in that phrase for another human being, except for Sa'd, on this day, at this bow. Sa'd carried that single sentence like a decoration until the day he died.

One more attacker came up the rock, and with the seven Ansar gone, Talha went out alone to meet him. He won the fight, but the man's sword took some of his fingers, and the pain pulled the old Arabic cry of hurt out of him. The Prophet ﷺ told him, gently, what that moment had been worth: had you said Bismillah instead, the angels would have lifted you up while the people watched. Not a rebuke for a wounded man, for there is no sin in crying out in pain. It was a measurement of how high Talha had climbed that day, how close the angels had been to carrying him into the sky, and how one word would have done it.

Others were finding their way up now, and among the first was a man of the Ansar. The Prophet ﷺ handed him a bow, collecting weapons off the ground for whoever could use them, and the man shot until the wood went soft in his hands. When his arrows were finished and the enemy's were not, he made his body the shield, reading each arrow out of the air and stepping into its path, until one came that he could only block with his face. It

struck his eye. The Prophet ﷺ wept, drew the arrow out with his own hand, and prayed: Allah has protected Your Prophet with this man's face, so make his eye the better of his two and the most precise in sight. The man said afterward that it healed on the spot, and that for the rest of his life that eye saw more sharply than the one that was never touched.

Three wounds, and whose decision it is

How many times was the Prophet ﷺ wounded that day, and by whom? Here the reports themselves disagree. Some say once, some say twice; laid side by side, the Sheikh reads them as at least three separate wounds in three separate places, and the exact order is one of those gray areas where honest scholarship simply says, we were not there. What no report disputes is the blood.

A rock struck his face and split his lip, and there is a terrible irony in the hand that threw it. It belonged to Sa'd's own blood brother, riding that day with the Quraysh: two brothers at Uhud, one in the crevice bleeding to defend the Prophet ﷺ, and one below making him bleed, most likely catching the side of his face as they ran up to the cave. Then an arrow found the small gap in his armor and drove through into his cheek, dislodging a tooth and lodging in the flesh. That was the worst wound of the day, and it would not come loose. And a horseman swung a sword down at his head; a shield blunted the blow, but the strike still crushed the rings of his own helmet into his other cheek. The reports name two different men for that sword, two Abdullahs, and both names are left standing. Two wounds, then, one in each cheek, with iron buried in both: an arrowhead on the one side, the driven links of his own armor on the other.

And Sahih Muslim keeps the sound of the hour those wounds opened: the Prophet ﷺ wiping the blood as it ran down his face into his beard, and as he wiped he said it: how can a people succeed who have done this to their own Prophet? In another wording, how can they hope for Allah's mercy, when he was calling them to their Lord, calling them to Paradise, and this is what they returned to him? Read it slowly. He is not cursing them. He is bleeding, and reasoning, and the reasoning carries the edge of a verdict: surely, after this, there is no way they can be forgiven.

And when the believers returned to Madinah, revelation came down and answered him, in one of the bluntest sentences ever addressed to the most beloved of all creation:

Not for you, [O Muḥammad, but for Allāh], is the decision whether He should [cut them down] or forgive them or punish them, for indeed, they are wrongdoers.

QUR'AN 3:128

It is, the Sheikh says, a very harsh way even to phrase it: this is none of your affair, you have no share in it at all. Yes, they wounded you, and to say that much is the truth. But to go past it and decide that heaven will not forgive them is not the Prophet's ﷺ to decide. Whether Allah punishes or pardons belongs to Allah alone.

And here Sheikh Yasir stands on this one ayah and makes the claim of the night. If the ummah truly absorbed this single scene, he says, shirk would vanish from it entirely. Here is the Prophet ﷺ himself, the most beloved creation Allah ever made, told plainly and to his face that the file of forgiveness is not in his hands. His work is to deliver the message; the judgment of who

is forgiven belongs to the One who sent him. So whoever pins his hopes on a saint, a grave, some righteous soul imagined as the real dispenser of pardon, with Allah reduced to merely ratifying his decisions, has the order of the universe exactly backwards. If the keys were not given to him ﷺ, they were given to no one beneath him. Take your asking, all of it, straight to Allah.

And the human truth sits beside the theological one. He ﷺ is a man. He bleeds, he feels the pain, he is angered by treachery, and he has every right to be; most of us would have said far worse. Then watch what the correction produced. The Prophet ﷺ turned his sentence completely around and began to pray for the very people who had done this to him: O Allah, forgive my people, for they do not know. And forgiveness came looking for them. The clearest proof stands at the head of the army that turned Uhud upside down: the man who led that charge would not die as the Prophet's ﷺ wounder. He would die as Khalid ibn al-Walid, Sayfullah, the drawn Sword of Allah, living evidence that the prayer was heard.

But where was the protection in all of this? One of the companions who was there swore to it: on the day of Uhud he saw two men in the whitest of white fighting in front of the Prophet ﷺ, fighting a fight no human being fights, men he had never seen before that day and never saw again after it. Angels. And angels do not miss an arrow. So the wounds were never a lapse in the guarding of him ﷺ; his life never once left Allah's keeping, and had it not been for that protection he would not have walked off the mountain at all. The injuries were measured, permitted, allowed for a wisdom folded inside them, scars that healed without ever debilitating him. He came down from Uhud wounded. He never came down broken.

And hold the severity of that all the way to nightfall. When he finally reached home, Fatima washed her father's face while Ali poured the water, and no matter how much Ali poured, the bleeding would not stop; by then he had been losing blood for the better part of half a day. So Fatima took a piece of date palm matting and burned it, crumbled the ash and worked it with water into a paste, and pressed it into the wound until it sealed shut. A daughter gluing her father's face closed with her own hands. That, in the end, is what this day cost him ﷺ.

The rumor, and the man who smelled Jannah

Somewhere in the same chaos, Mus'ab ibn Umayr fell. He shared the Prophet's ﷺ complexion, his features are said to have echoed him, and one report adds that he may have been carrying a cloak borrowed from him ﷺ. So when the same horseman who had swung the sword at the Prophet ﷺ now cut Mus'ab down, he looked at the man he had killed and believed he had done the unthinkable. He screamed it across the whole field: I have killed Muhammad ﷺ! And the lie ran through Quraysh, and through scattered knots of Muslims, like fire through dry grass.

Strangely, the lie carried a mercy inside it, which we only see looking back. By now perhaps four of every five of the enemy had already drifted off the field; only Khalid's smaller force was still fighting. Nobody wants to risk death once the goal is achieved, and the instant the word spread that the deed was done, the appetite for war died with it: the same false sentence that broke the believers' hearts began, quietly, to empty the field of their enemies. But the hearts were broken all the same. Some men wandered without direction. Some sat down where they stood and let their swords fall, because what is a sword even for now?

Then a man walked into that despair and refused it. Anas ibn al-Nadr, radiyallahu anhu, the uncle of Anas ibn Malik, found a group of companions sitting in their grief and asked why they were not fighting. They told him: have you not heard? The Prophet ﷺ has been killed. His answer deserves to be carved somewhere you will see it every day: even if Muhammad ﷺ has been killed, the Lord of Muhammad has not been killed. And what will you do with your lives after him? Get up and die upon what he died upon. Then, passing an old friend among the Ansar, he called out: by Allah, I can smell the fragrance of Jannah, coming to me from behind this mountain. And he prayed one of the most beautiful prayers ever spoken on a battlefield: O Allah, I seek Your forgiveness for what these have done, meaning the Muslims who had fled, and I free myself before You of what those have done, meaning the army of Quraysh. And he threw himself in.

They found him afterward with more than eighty wounds, his body so cut and disfigured that not one person could say who he was, until his sister came and knew him by the very tips of his fingers. A hadith in Bukhari preserves his stand, and over a soul like his Allah sent down what the ummah still recites:

Among the believers are men true to what they promised Allāh. Among them is he who has fulfilled his vow [to the death], and among them is he who awaits [his chance]. And they did not alter [the terms of their commitment] by any alteration -

QUR'AN 33:23

Among them, the ayah says, is the one who has already fulfilled his vow, and among them is the one still waiting his turn. Anas ibn al-Nadr had fulfilled his.

Found by the brightness of his eyes

Meanwhile the searchers who refused the rumor kept looking, hoping they would find him alive. The first man on the field to recognize the Prophet ﷺ was Ka'b ibn Malik, and you should hold onto that name, because his own mountain of a story is waiting years from now, at Tabuk. Helmet and mail had swallowed the Prophet's ﷺ face so you could not make out who the armored figure was, and Ka'b knew him anyway, by his eyes alone, by the brightness shining out of them. Joy did what joy does: he forgot himself and shouted at the top of his lungs, O Muslims, rejoice, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is alive! The Prophet ﷺ signaled him to be quiet, because a hunted man does not announce where he stands. But the word was already running through the believers in reverse, the true word chasing down the false one that had run the same paths an hour before.

Ka'b reached him and handed over his own armor, perhaps because the Prophet's ﷺ was spent, perhaps so no enemy eye could pick out which armored man was him, since in those days men were known by their armor as much as their faces. Ka'b finished the day with no armor of his own and more than twenty wounds: the ledger of Uhud keeps recording the same entry, his pain ﷺ transferred onto people who volunteered to carry it.

Now they came up the rock in numbers, Abu Bakr and Umar and Ali and Zubayr and the rest. Abu Bakr told the story himself, years later. When the people rushed up, he said, there was already one man standing over him, fighting off everyone who tried to approach, and I said in my heart, O Allah, let it be Talha; if anyone is to have this honor, let it be Talha. And it was Talha. And while I was running, another man overtook me, flying up the mountain light as a gazelle out of sheer joy that the Prophet ﷺ was alive, and it was Abu Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah. The two of them reached

him together and saw the iron lodged in each cheek. Abu Bakr's telling remembers two arrowheads; other reports count one arrowhead and one driven helmet ring; the two wounds themselves are beyond dispute.

Abu Bakr moved to draw the first piece out, and Abu Ubaydah begged him, by the right of love, let me do this, and kept begging until the soft and gentle Abu Bakr gave way. And then think what he faced. The iron was sunk into the cheek of the Prophet ﷺ; to grip it with his fingers and pull risked tearing the wound wider. So Abu Ubaydah closed his teeth on the metal and rocked it loose, gently, gently, taking the pain into his own jaw instead of that beloved face, until the iron came free, and one of his own teeth came with it. Then he insisted on the second extraction too, and paid the same price again. Abu Ubaydah walked the rest of his life missing three, maybe four teeth, a gap he surely wore the way Sa'd wore his sentence. And the Sheikh leaves the arithmetic in your hands: if drawing the iron out cost a strong man his teeth, what did it cost the face that had carried it in, on both sides at once?

He is mine

Back in Makkah there had been a man whose hatred had a hobby. Ubayy ibn Khalaf mocked the Prophet ﷺ like no one else, and he kept a horse expressly for the purpose, boasting that he was feeding it the choicest grain to fatten it strong, so that one day, from its back, he would kill Muhammad ﷺ. His record was already long and filthy; he was among the men who had heaped the bloody innards of a slaughtered camel onto the Prophet ﷺ while he was in sujud. And to this boast, and only to this boast, the Prophet ﷺ ever gave an answer in kind: no, rather it is I who will kill you, insha'Allah.

At Uhud, Ubayy saw him from afar, most likely in this same stretch when only a few were near him, riding that very horse, and he wheeled it to charge. There is no outrunning a horseman, so the companions began to wall the Prophet ﷺ in with their own bodies, and he waved them off with a sentence that still raises the hair on your arms: leave him. He is mine. He took a spear from one of his men, not a sword, not a bow, a spear, read the charge, slipped the blow, and drove the point into the gap at the neck of Ubayy's armor. It caught in the armor and only went in a little, nicking the neck; by the plain arithmetic of the battlefield, a scratch. Ubayy wheeled back to his own lines screaming that Muhammad ﷺ had killed him.

They pulled off his armor, examined the small wound, and laughed: calm down, this is nothing, it will heal. He refused every word of comfort, and his reasoning is the part to keep. He told them: he promised me he would kill me, and by Allah, had he only spat on me, I would have died of it. Too late, and completely, he understood whose word he had spent his life mocking. He died on the road home, in a valley outside Makkah, never even reaching the city, buried in no man's land: the only human being ever killed by the hand of the Prophet ﷺ himself, a dishonor Allah reserved for him alone. And the books of sira add a chilling epilogue. Years later a traveler passing that valley by night saw a fire, and a figure inside it croaking thirst, thirst, and a voice warned him: give him nothing, for this is the one whom the Messenger of Allah ﷺ killed. A hadith seals it: no one earns a more severe anger from Allah than a man the Prophet ﷺ killed with his own hand.

A day for a day, and the answer for Hubal

As the fighting guttered out, the field began to belong to the women. Anas ibn Malik, still a boy, remembered them all his life: women of the believers with their garments hitched up so they could run, carrying water skins between the wells of Madinah and the wounded on the slope, washing wounds, nursing the dying. The verses of hijab had not yet been revealed, the lecture notes, and beyond that, necessity had its own rulings that day. Women did not usually march out with the armies, but Uhud was fought on Madinah's own doorstep, and so once the danger thinned its women came out, and did not wait to be asked.

Then, from below, the voice of Abu Sufyan, come to close the day as the leader of Makkah. He cried out as loud as he could: is Muhammad among you? Answer me. The Prophet ﷺ commanded the believers, do not answer him. Is the son of Abu Quhafah among you? He meant Abu Bakr. Silence. Is the son of al-Khattab among you? He meant Umar. Silence. And the Sheikh stops on the list itself. Here is a man still upon his idolatry, and yet as early as the third year he names, with perfect clarity, exactly who stands first and second after the Messenger ﷺ. How unfortunate are those who came later and could not see what even a pagan enemy saw on a battlefield. Hearing nothing, Abu Sufyan exulted: then we have killed them all. And that was more than Umar could carry. He roared back: you lie, O enemy of Allah; every one of those you named is alive, and Allah has left for you what will yet bring you grief.

Abu Sufyan answered with the ledger of war. A day for a day, he said, a day of Uhud for your day of Badr, and war goes in turns. Then, with a strange flat honesty, he called out that they would find some of their dead mutilated: I did not command it, he said, and I am not angry about it either. And Umar gave the dead their answer: they are not the same. Our dead are in Jannah, and your

dead are in the Fire. And then Abu Sufyan reached for his god and cried out: be exalted, O Hubal! Hubal, the great idol of the Quraysh, the very stone their whole idolatry had grown up around.

And now the Prophet ﷺ, who had ordered silence over his own name and his own life, broke that silence for the name of Allah. Answer him, he said. They asked, what shall we say? He said, say: Allah is Higher and more Majestic. Abu Sufyan tried once more: we have al-Uzza, and you have no Uzza. The Prophet ﷺ said, answer him: Allah is our Protector, and you have no protector. One of the classical commentators stops here in wonder, and the Sheikh stops with him, because it is the perfect place to stop. When Abu Sufyan asked whether he ﷺ was even alive, the Prophet ﷺ would not grant him so much as the dignity of a reply; contempt was the fitting answer to a taunt about himself. But the instant an idol was raised over Allah, silence became impossible, and he ﷺ commanded the reply at once. Everything he swallowed for his own honor; nothing for his Lord's. Silence in its place, speech in its place, and he knew which was which. Abu Sufyan turned away with one last word, a promise to meet again at Badr a year from that day, and the army of Makkah rode off the field. The mountain fell quiet, and the hardest counting of the whole seerah, the long rows of the shuhada of Uhud, was waiting in the days just ahead.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read this hour as a war story and leave it there, all spears and horses and narrow escapes. That would be to walk past the three questions it puts to us, and each one is meant to follow you home.

The first is about forgiveness, and who owns it. Bleeding from both cheeks, his blood running into his beard, the Prophet ﷺ said the most human thing imaginable: surely a people who did this cannot be forgiven. And the answer that came down was not a comfort but a correction, blunt as a closed door: not for you is the decision. If even he ﷺ was told that the file of pardon and Paradise was not in his hands, then it is in no one's hands beneath him: not a saint's, not a grave's, not any imagined intermediary's. The whole architecture of shirk collapses in this one scene. So when you have something to ask for, mercy, forgiveness, a way out, do not route it through anyone. Take it where he ﷺ was told to leave it. Take it straight to Allah.

The second is about protection, and what it does and does not promise. A companion watched two angels fighting before the Prophet ﷺ as no human fights, and on that same field he ﷺ took a rock to the lip, an arrow through the cheek, a sword crushing his helmet into his face. He was guarded perfectly and he bled badly, and there is no contradiction in it, because protection was never a promise of painlessness. His wounds were measured and permitted, blood with a wisdom folded inside it, while his life never for one instant left Allah's keeping. Hold that against your own scars. The hard thing that reached you was not proof that Allah had looked away. It may have been the most carefully guarded thing in your life.

And the third is about love, and what it looks like when it stops being a feeling and becomes a verb. Look at the bodies offered up on that slope: Talha's chest set in front of the Prophet's ﷺ chest at the crevice, an archer's arrows fed to him from the Prophet's ﷺ own hand, a man stepping into the path of arrows until one took his eye and thanking Allah for the trade, Abu Ubaydah's teeth left in the wound in exchange for the iron in that

beloved face, Anas ibn al-Nadr walking toward eighty wounds with the fragrance of Jannah already in his lungs, Ka'b giving away his armor and keeping twenty wounds for himself. Not one of them stopped to deliberate. And here is the part that asks something of you, because his person is now beyond your shielding. You cannot put your chest in front of his ﷺ. But you can stand in front of his sunnah when it is mocked the way Ubayy mocked him, you can refuse to hand Allah's verdicts to any of His creation, and you can answer every Hubal of your own age, every false thing exalted over your Lord, with the words he commanded on that mountain: Allah is Higher and more Majestic.

So carry one thing down from Uhud into your ordinary days. When the worst news comes, and one day it will, say what Anas ibn al-Nadr said: even if everyone I leaned on is gone, the Lord of all of them does not die, and I will live and die upon what they lived and died upon. May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, whose face bled for this religion and whose tongue asked forgiveness for the very people who made it bleed; gather us under his banner with Talha and Sa'd and the seven unnamed of the Ansar and the man who smelled Jannah behind the mountain, let us shield his sunnah now that his person is beyond our shielding, and give us at last to drink from his hand a drink after which there is no thirst.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 49: Uhud, part 4, the Prophet ﷺ wounded (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (3:153, 3:128, 33:23), verified via quran.ai.

Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The Battle of Uhud, part 5: the graves, the grief, and the verdict

Seventy graves, and a meeting at the fountain

The battle is over. What is left is everything a battle leaves behind: seventy bodies on the slopes, a city of women listening for hoofbeats, an enemy not yet far enough away to be safe, and a question that will be asked for fourteen centuries. Did we lose? Today Dr. Yasir Qadhi closes the five days of Uhud with its gentlest and its hardest scenes at once: shrouds and shared graves, wailing and a newborn, one more march on wounded legs, and an accounting that takes the word defeat and turns it inside out.

This is the last day at the mountain. By nightfall the martyrs will be in the ground and the Quraysh will be running for Makkah, frightened off by a rumor they never knew Allah had arranged. And before the chapter ends you will hear the Prophet ﷺ himself, eight years later and one week before his own death, still speaking of these seventy with the love of a man saying farewell. The arc of Uhud does not close at Uhud. It closes at a fountain.

Two shrouds and a drawn lot

The field was still raw when a woman came running across it. The Prophet ﷺ saw the figure in the distance and did not know her, saying only: the lady, the lady. Whoever she was, she should be spared what this ground would show her. It was Safiyya, his

own aunt, the full sister of Hamza by the same mother and father, and the one who recognized her first was her son, Zubayr ibn al-Awwam. He ran to turn her back, and she, a grieving sister and a mother both, pushed him off her chest: I have no need of you now. She had heard her brother was dead, and she had heard what had been done to his body.

Then Zubayr said the only thing in the world that could have stopped her. It is not me, he said, the Prophet ﷺ is the one who says you should not go on. And she halted in her tracks. Hold the two halves of that scene together, because they are the measure of these people: agitated enough to shove her own son aside, and obedient enough to freeze mid stride at one word relayed from her nephew ﷺ. She handed Zubayr two cloths she had carried with her. I bought these for my brother, she said. Shroud him in them.

Zubayr went to wrap Hamza, radiyallahu anhu, and found lying beside him a man of the Ansar with no shroud at all, not even one. He could not bring himself to give his uncle two cloths while the Ansari had none, so the companions drew lots over them, and each martyr was buried in the cloth that fell to him. Sit with what that scene actually shows. The generation that carried this religion on its back was so poor that men cast lots over burial cloth, and so just that a gift bought with love for the Prophet's ﷺ own uncle was shared out with a stranger on the ground. Here Dr. Yasir Qadhi draws a quiet point of fiqh out of the grief. When the need of the whole community is this desperate, the public welfare can take precedence over a private intention, and what was donated for one man may be turned toward the many. It is wajib upon a community with the means to give every one of its dead at least a single shroud, and so the personal gift bent to the public need, and the family of Hamza accepted it. But, he is

careful to add, the one who may make that call is the person in authority, not any hand that simply reaches out and takes.

Bury the one who carried the most Qur'an

Then the Prophet ﷺ walked the field and surveyed the dead, and when he came at last to Hamza he wept, until the reports say he sobbed. This was not the clean death of a soldier; it was mutilation, deliberate and personal. The nose, the fingers, the body opened, the liver torn out. No one on that field had been treated like Hamza, because no one's pain could reach the Prophet ﷺ the way Hamza's would. And for one moment his grief spoke as a vow: if Allah ever gives me victory over them, I will do to thirty of their dead what they did to this one man.

Heaven answered the vow at once, in a verse of Surah an-Nahl.

And if you punish [an enemy, O believers], punish with an equivalent of that with which you were harmed. But if you are patient - it is better for those who are patient.

QUR'AN 16:126

If you punish, then like for like, one for one, never thirty for one, and patience is better still. He ﷺ took the revelation whole. He never took that revenge, and from that day he outlawed the mutilation of the dead forever, friend or enemy, for as long as this ummah stands. The men who had desecrated his uncle were the very reason a mercy entered the law of war.

Seventy graves could not be dug one by one by exhausted, wounded men, so they buried two and three and four to a grave, as deep as they could manage. And he ﷺ gave one instruction that should stop you cold. Let the one who carried the most Qur'an be lowered in first. Even into the earth, the Qur'an goes

first. Look, the Sheikh says, at the honor Allah gives the people of His Book, living and dead. This is the Book through which Allah raises some people and abases others; showing respect to the one who carries it is part of showing respect to Allah Himself, named in the sunnah beside honoring the grey-haired and the just ruler. In the most traumatic hour the community had ever lived through, with mutilated bodies waiting in shared pits, precedence still belonged to revelation.

Standing among those graves he ﷺ gathered the living and spoke to lift them, and among the words the books preserved he said: I will be a witness over these on the Day of Judgment. Here Dr. Yasir Qadhi untangles a misunderstanding that lasted through medieval Islam, where some scholars held that he had prayed the funeral prayer over the dead of Uhud. He did not, the Sheikh explains, and the narration in the Musnad of Imam Ahmad makes the difference plain: he made du'a for them, not janazah, for the martyr is beyond needing the funeral prayer. The supplication itself is preserved: praise of Allah for whatever He decrees, a plea for the good of this world and safety on the Last Day, that they die upon iman, and that Allah Himself take vengeance on those who had done this to them. Then he told the living what the dead had won, in hadith famous to every believer: the martyr is raised on the Day of Resurrection with his wounds as fresh as the moment he was struck, their color the color of blood and their fragrance the fragrance of musk. When the counting was done, the Muslims had lost around seventy, and in no battle did the Ansar ever pay more: Ibn Ishaq counted sixty five, Ibn Hisham added five to bring it to seventy, and the bulk of those dead were Ansar. Of the Muhajirun the two great losses were Hamza and Mus'ab ibn Umayr.

One prisoner out of three thousand

Three thousand men had marched on Madinah, and when the field finally cleared, the Muslims held exactly one prisoner of war, found cowering where the fighting had been. One, out of three thousand. There must be a story in that, the Sheikh says, and indeed there is, and it explains why Allah let this one man be the one humiliated.

His name was Abu Azzah, and he was a poet. He had been captured at Badr, his ransom set at four thousand dirhams, and he had begged the Prophet ﷺ for mercy: I am a man of only daughters, with no one to ransom me, be generous to me. The Prophet ﷺ, soft of heart, freed him for nothing at all, on a single condition: let me never find you raised against us again. Then, as the Quraysh were gathering for Uhud, Abu Sufyan came asking him for war poetry. At first Abu Azzah refused: I gave Muhammad ﷺ my word. So came the sweetening. Three thousand men cannot lose, Abu Sufyan told him; if we win, you share the spoils, and if you happen to fall, I will keep your daughters as my own and they will inherit my wealth. And he went.

He broke a merciful promise for money on either outcome, win or die, and Allah does not love the treacherous. Out of three thousand men, the one whom Allah let fall captive, and the one executed on that field, was the man who had betrayed a mercy shown to him. And the lecture sets a rule down beside the story, one that runs against every instinct: in this religion you may answer like with like in almost everything, an eye for an eye, a wound for a wound, but you may never answer treachery with treachery. Khayana is forbidden even as revenge. If a man betrays you, you may not betray him back, because betrayal itself is haram. Your word is a debt, and Abu Azzah died proving it.

A city learning how to grieve

Madinah had lined its streets, women and children scanning the returning ranks for the faces that were not among them. Then the wailing began, the loud, tearing kind, with beaten breasts and torn clothes and the cries of who will care for us now, how will we live without you. It rose from every quarter of the city at once, because seventy households had just been emptied in a single afternoon, and wailing had not yet been forbidden. Reaching his own home through that sound, the Prophet ﷺ said something that breaks the heart: but Hamza has no women to weep for him. Hamza had never married; there were no women of his own house to raise their voices for him. The women of the Ansar heard it, and they gathered at the Prophet's ﷺ door and wailed for Hamza. He came out and praised them and prayed good for them, and then, their kindness honored, he closed the door on the custom itself, and from that day wailing became haram in the sharia. Notice what was forbidden and what was not. He himself had wept over Hamza; the tears were never the crime. It was the screaming against the decree of Allah, the going-mad of grief, that ended at Uhud.

The grief kept surfacing in him ﷺ. Shortly afterward a son was born to an Ansari couple, and when the father came to ask what to name him, he answered: name him after the most beloved of names to me, Hamza. Madinah's newest life was given Uhud's heaviest loss to carry, and the ummah was taught something tender in passing, that keeping alive the names of the beloved who have gone before us, passing them down to our newborns, is a good way of love and remembrance. This was early; later he ﷺ would teach that the names most beloved to Allah are Abdullah and Abd ar-Rahman. But in this season, the name on his lips was Hamza.

He went in person to break the news where it would land hardest, and we may assume, the Sheikh says, that he chose those with the least family and the most need of consolation. He came to Hamna bint Jahsh and said: ihtasibi, brace yourself and seek your reward with Allah. One word, and inside it lives the whole of bad news softened by patience. For whom, she asked. Your brother, he said. She said inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un and made du'a for him, grieved but steady. Ihtasibi, he said a second time. For whom, she asked. Mus'ab ibn Umayr, he said. Her husband. And she screamed. Mus'ab, the once-pampered youth of Makkah who had given up everything and died owning a single short garment, was her husband, and she who had borne her brother's death with inna lillahi could not bear this. He ﷺ observed afterward, in words the books kept, that the husband holds a place in the heart of his wife that nothing else holds, a love Allah places there like a kind of miracle, which is why the mourning for a husband is four months and ten days where the mourning for any other is three.

And then there is the woman whose name no one wrote down. Father, brother, husband, all three taken at Uhud, her whole immediate family gone in one day, and she had also heard a rumor that the Prophet ﷺ himself was dead. As each blow landed she asked one question only: how is the Prophet ﷺ? He is well, they kept telling her, and she answered: until I see him. She would not be consoled by report. When her eyes finally found him ﷺ alive among the returning men, she spoke the line the ummah has never let go of: kullu musibatin ba'daka jalal. Every calamity after you is small.

Three days at Hamra al-Asad

An army that leaves can turn around, and on the road south the Quraysh were already debating exactly that. The Prophet ﷺ knew it without a single scout, knew it the way Allah taught him directly. So the very next morning, Sunday the sixteenth of Shawwal, with the city's wounds one night old, he called for a force to shadow the enemy and set one hard condition: only those who had stood at Uhud the day before might come. The three hundred who had turned back were not invited.

Seventy wounded men answered, and he sent them ahead under Ali ibn Abi Talib to camp at a place called Hamra al-Asad, and gave them a piece of field-craft no academy ever taught him ﷺ. Watch what the Quraysh are riding, he said. If they have mounted their horses and left the camels, they are wheeling back for Madinah; if they are riding their camels and leading the horses, it is the long haul home to Makkah. They were riding the camels. He ﷺ joined the camp the next day and sat there three full days, the mauled army openly daring the victors to come back and finish what they had started. Allah set that march into the Qur'an, in a verse of Surah Al Imran.

Those [believers] who responded to Allāh and the Messenger after injury had struck them. For those who did good among them and feared Allāh is a great reward -

QUR'AN 3:172

Those who answered Allah and His Messenger with their wounds still open. Years later Aisha, radiyallahu anha, would recite this verse to her nephew Urwah ibn al-Zubayr and tell him: both of your fathers are in this verse, my nephew, Zubayr ibn al-Awwam and Abu Bakr, your father's father and your mother's. Both of them had marched out with the wounded to Hamra al-Asad.

Meanwhile the argument the Prophet ﷺ had foreseen was raging in the Quraysh camp. Ikrimah, the son of Abu Jahl, burned to turn back: we have neither killed Muhammad ﷺ nor done one thing worthy of genuine honor. As is so often the way, the elders were the cooler heads and the young men the hot ones, and Safwan ibn Umayya pushed back hard: do not do this. After what we did to their dead, they will be fuming, and those tribes of the Aws and Khazraj who stayed home will not stay home a second time, not after the killing we dealt their people. The Quraysh never knew the inner politics of the hypocrites; all they knew was that many in Madinah had not come out, and Safwan feared every one of them rising now. But Ikrimah's rhetoric was winning the room.

Then Allah moved a piece nobody was watching. Ma'bad al-Khuza'i was a chieftain of Khuza'ah, not yet a Muslim, but a man whose own sense of honor was disgusted by the mutilations, which violated even the pagans' code. He had just come to Madinah to pay the Prophet ﷺ a condolence visit, of his own accord, telling him plainly that he wished the loss had fallen on the other side. On the road out he crossed paths with Abu Sufyan, who trusted him as a fellow pagan fresh from Madinah and asked him eagerly: how did you leave Muhammad ﷺ and his companions? Ma'bad saw his moment. Without ever having heard Safwan speak, he painted Safwan's exact nightmare, color for color: they are coming for you, fuming with rage, and every man who missed the battle is marching beside them now, drums of war beating, sworn to have their vengeance. What do I advise? Flee as fast as your horses will carry you.

That sealed it. When a nobleman as respected as Ma'bad was this terrified, the Quraysh ran for Makkah, frightened off without a single finger lifted from the Muslim side, by a sympathizer the Prophet ﷺ had never sent and did not even know would meet

them. War, the Sheikh reminds us, permits the deceiving of an enemy, and Allah's help came as it loves to come, min haythu la yahtasibun, from exactly where no one was counting. When the scouts confirmed the road south was empty, he ﷺ led the seventy home. The Battle of Uhud was over.

So was Uhud a defeat?

Now the accounting, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi refuses to sugarcoat the one true column of loss. The Quraysh lost twenty two men; the Muslims lost at least seventy, perhaps seventy five. Three to one. There is no softening that single statistic, and the Qur'an does not soften it either. It answers the believers' own stunned question in Surah Al Imran.

Why [is it that] when a [single] disaster struck you [on the day of Uḥud], although you had struck [the enemy in the battle of Badr] with one twice as great, you said, "From where is this?" Say, "It is from yourselves [i.e., due to your sin]." Indeed, Allāh is over all things competent.

QUR'AN 3:165

From where is this? From yourselves. And in passing the verse even fixes the count, for at Badr the believers had dealt the enemy exactly double, seventy killed and seventy taken captive; at Uhud, half of that came back upon them.

Then he opens the rest of the ledger, and the word defeat begins to wobble. Look first at the goals of the two sides. The Muslims set out to defend Madinah, and Madinah stood untouched; the Quraysh set out to obliterate Islam, and failed in every single manner, never even attempting the city. They came for surprise and found the believers armed and waiting, which so unsettled Abu Sufyan that he suspected a spy, and he was right, for the

letter of al-Abbas had outrun him from Makkah. The opening of the battle was a Muslim rout of the Quraysh. The field at the end of the day was held by the Muslims; it was the Quraysh who withdrew. Prisoners: one to nothing, and one is more than zero. The pursuit: it was the wounded who chased the victors, three days at Hamra al-Asad while the Quraysh hurried home. And the trade route to Syria, the strategic prize this entire war is about, stayed exactly as choked as before. Ibn al-Qayyim, in his summary of Zad al-Ma'ad, lays down the closing argument from the enemy's own mouth: Ikrimah's confession that they had done nothing worthy of honor. No army that won talks like that.

So Uhud was not a victory, and it was not a defeat. It was an uneven thing, the Sheikh judges: the Muslims did not gain what they had hoped, but the Quraysh did not gain a fraction of what they came for. From every angle but the body count, Uhud reads as the believers' day. And as for that one real column of loss, Umar ibn al-Khattab answered it forever: qatlana fi janna wa qatlakum fi nar. Our dead are up there in Jannah, and your dead are down there in the Fire. The two are not the same.

The mirror of Badr

To understand what Uhud was for, the Sheikh holds it up against Badr like a mirror, and reads the two through their surahs, Anfal for Badr and Al Imran for Uhud. Of Badr, Allah said one of its purposes was to part the foul from the pure.

[It is] so that Allāh may distinguish the wicked from the good and place the wicked some of them upon others and heap them all together and put them into Hell. It is those who are the losers.

QUR'AN 8:37

At Badr the foul stood plainly across the field: disbelief facing faith in the open, mushrik against Muslim. Surah Al Imran gives Uhud the very same purpose, with one darker twist.

Allāh would not leave the believers in that [state] you are in [presently] until He separates the evil from the good. Nor would Allāh reveal to you the unseen.

QUR'AN 3:179

The pure are always the same. But this time the foul wore the faces of neighbors. Uhud's great unmasking was the unmasking of hypocrisy. Until that day the believers had kept a good opinion of the doubters among them, surely they cannot be so bad, surely they will stand with us when it truly matters, and they needed to see nifaq with their own eyes. So Allah let them see it, and named it in the surah.

And that He might make evident those who are hypocrites. For it was said to them, "Come, fight in the way of Allāh or [at least] defend." They said, "If we had known [there would be] battle, we would have followed you." They were nearer to disbelief that day than to faith, saying with their mouths what was not in their hearts. And Allāh is most knowing of what they conceal -

QUR'AN 3:167

If we had known there would be fighting. That is almost word for word what Abdullah ibn Ubayy had said when he pulled his three hundred back: as if there will really be a battle. Now match the mirror tighter still. At Badr, Allah had shown the enemy to the Prophet ﷺ as few in a dream, and Surah Anfal explains the mercy in it.

[Remember, O Muḥammad], when Allāh showed them to you in your dream as few; and if He had shown them to you as many, you [believers] would have lost courage and would have disputed in the matter [of whether to fight], but Allāh saved [you from that]. Indeed, He is Knowing of that within the breasts.

QUR'AN 8:43

You would have lost courage, and you would have disputed. Now read the verse of Uhud that the believers were given afterward, almost the same two words, but this time not as a danger Allah shielded them from.

And Allāh had certainly fulfilled His promise to you when you were killing them [i.e., the enemy] by His permission until [the time] when you lost courage and fell to disputing about the order [given by the Prophet (ﷺ)] and disobeyed after He had shown you that which you love. Among you are some who desire this world, and among you are some who desire the Hereafter. Then He turned you back from them [defeated] that He might test you. And He has already forgiven you, and Allāh is the possessor of bounty for the believers.

QUR'AN 3:152

The two diseases Allah had guarded them from at Badr, losing courage and disputing the command, they walked straight into at Uhud, and added a third: and disobeyed. At Badr, Sa'd ibn Mu'adh had said, march us to the ends of the earth, charge into the sea, and we are right behind you. At Uhud, Abdullah ibn Ubayy said, why should we listen to him when he did not listen to me, and three hundred backs turned. At Badr they were unarmed and willing; at Uhud they had every defense and were swayed by the spoils on the ground. Obedience and sincerity bought Badr its

protection; disobedience and a hunger for the dunya bought Uhud its wound. Some of you, the verse says without flinching, desire this world.

And then the same verse does the thing only revelation would dare at the bottom of a catastrophe. He has already forgiven you. The file is closed inside the surah itself. Decades later, when the men who would murder Uthman ibn Affan flung Uhud in his face, you fled that day, he answered them: yes, I did, I was alone and I fled, and have you not read that Allah said He has already forgiven us? If Allah has pardoned it, who are you to reopen it? And Madinah lived that pardon to the letter. No one was reprimanded. No elder told the young men of the shura who had pushed to march out, I told you so. And Hudhayfa, whose own father had been cut down by Muslim swords in the chaos of the battle, lived on among the very men who had done it, forgave them, and gave the blood-money away to the poor. A pardon from heaven, honored on earth, exactly as the Prophet ﷺ taught: once the decision is made and trust is placed in Allah, you go forward, and you do not say if only, for if only opens the door of shaytan.

There remained one more wound to answer, the bitterest of all. Bleeding from the field, his daughter pressing the bandage to his face, the Prophet ﷺ had asked aloud how Allah could ever forgive a people who would do this to their own prophet. The reply, in Surah Al Imran, is startlingly blunt.

Not for you, [O Muḥammad, but for Allāh], is the decision whether He should [cut them down] or forgive them or punish them, for indeed, they are wrongdoers.

QUR'AN 3:128

Not for you is any of this matter. We excuse his anger, the Sheikh says, all of us, and Allah excused it too, yet the verse stands, and it stands as a guard around tawhid itself. Even the beloved of Allah ﷺ, the greatest of all creation, the seal of the prophets, the mercy to the worlds, does not hold the keys of guidance and punishment, because he is the best of creation and not its Lord. Then Allah showed why those keys are His alone, and the proof runs through the very names of these two battles. At Badr, every senior chief of the Quraysh who marched out was cut down and never came back. At Uhud, nearly every commander who had bloodied the Muslims was later led into Islam: Abu Sufyan, Ikrimah, Safwan, and the architect of the whole counterattack himself, Khalid ibn al-Walid, whom the very Prophet ﷺ he had wounded would one day name a sword from among the swords of Allah. Allah alone knew which of them carried faith inside, and Allah alone decides.

So the Sheikh gathers all five days of Uhud into a single sentence. Honor, izza, comes through sincerity and unity and obedience to Allah and His Messenger ﷺ, even outnumbered, even underarmed; and humiliation comes through disobeying Allah and His Messenger for a piece of this world. Victory is not owed to anyone, not to the pious, not even to the best human being who ever lived. It must be struggled for, every time, by everyone, with no exception at all. Rank is raised in this world and the next only through trial, only through patience and pain. He ﷺ had to bleed at Uhud, the Sheikh says, not for his own sake, for he knew all of this already, but for ours: so that every wounded believer who came after him would know that the road he limps is the road his Prophet ﷺ limped first, mocked worse than he is mocked, wounded worse than he is wounded, and still, through all of it, a mercy to the worlds.

Meet me at the fountain

Eight years pass. It is the last week of the Prophet's ﷺ life, the very year he will leave this world, and Uqbah ibn Amir tells us, in a hadith preserved in Bukhari, what he ﷺ chose to do with that week. He made a long, tender du'a for the dead of Uhud, the kind a man makes when he is bidding farewell to people standing right in front of him. Then he climbed the minbar, sick, near the end, and gave the last public sermon of his life.

I am your forerunner at the fountain, he ﷺ said. Ana faratukum ala al-hawd. I will be a witness over you, and our meeting place is the hawd; it is as if I am looking at it from where I stand right now. The Sahaba did not yet know what he knew, that death was very close. And then came the fear he chose to leave ringing in the ummah's ears, his last counsel from that minbar: I do not fear that you will fall into shirk after me. I fear that the dunya will be opened up for you, and that you will compete with one another for it. Uqbah said: that was the last time I ever saw the face of the Prophet ﷺ.

Hold the two ends of this long arc together now. The deepest wound of Uhud was never the seventy graves; it was the moment when hands reached for spoils and let go of an order, when the love of this world cracked an army that faith had been carrying to victory. And the final sermon of the very man ﷺ who had buried those seventy with his own grief returned to exactly that, and named it as the thing he feared most for us. Not idols. The dunya. Five days at one mountain, and the lesson he carried from its slopes all the way to his last minbar is the lesson he hands you tonight. The battle ends. The meeting place is set.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read Uhud's last day as the sad clearing-up after a tragedy, the graves and the grieving and the limping march home, and to close the book there. That would be to miss every question it puts to you. The fifth day at Uhud is the harvest day, where the Sheikh weighs the whole of it, and the weighing is meant for your hands, not the historian's.

Start where he ﷺ started, in the graves. The order of burial that day was set by the Qur'an: the one who carried the most of it was lowered in first, in the worst hour the community had ever known. Allah raises people through this Book and abases others by it, living and dead, and the honor it gave its bearers was given to no one else on that field. So ask yourself, honestly and without flinching, where the Book of Allah would place you if the order were called today. How much of it do you carry, and how much weight does it have in the actual hours of your life. The people of Uhud answered that question with their burial; you answer it with your days.

Then learn the shape of grief from a city that had to learn it overnight. He ﷺ wept over Hamza, and praised the women who came to weep at his door, and then forbade the wailing forever. Sorrow is allowed its tears; it is never allowed to scream against the decree of Allah. There is a shape to grief in this religion, and the whole of it fits inside one sentence the bereaved woman of that day reached for: inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un, to Allah we belong and to Him we return. And learn, too, when Allah has closed a file, to keep it closed. He has already forgiven you came down, and not one believer relitigated Uhud: no reprimands, no I told you so, and Hudhayfa gave away the blood-money of his own murdered father rather than hold the day against anyone. We are slower than they were to let things go, quicker to reopen the wound and to whisper if only. He ﷺ taught the opposite: once

you have done what was right to do, go forward, and do not let if only open the door of shaytan.

But the question this day presses hardest is the one his last sermon pressed. Watch what actually beat the believers at Uhud. The line did not break for disbelief; it broke for booty. Some of you, said the verse, desire this world. And the final public fear of the man ﷺ who buried that day's dead was the same disease, not shirk but the dunya opening up and the ummah competing over it. So weigh whatever you are competing for right now, the thing you are tempted to break a little discipline to seize, the corner of the dunya you would bend a command to reach, against that sermon from that minbar. And weigh it, too, against the deepest comfort the day holds: that the best human being ever created bled, and buried his own uncle, and marched out again at dawn the next morning with seventy wounded men, because victory is struggled for and never owed, and there is no other staircase to rank than trial. If it had to cost him that, it will cost you something too, and the cost is not the punishment. It is the road.

So close the arc where the Prophet ﷺ closed it, at the minbar, one week before his passing, with the people of Uhud on his lips and the fountain before his eyes. O Allah, send Your praise and Your peace upon our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ; accept the martyrs of Uhud and join us with them in their Jannah; forgive us as You forgave the people of that day; guard our hearts from the dunya he feared for us; and gather us with him at his hawd for a drink after which there is no thirst. Ameen.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 50: the Battle of Uhud, part 5 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International

(16:126, 3:172, 3:165, 8:37, 3:179, 3:167, 8:43, 3:152, 3:128), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The massacres of al-Raji and Bir Ma'unah

Two wells, eighty teachers, one night of grief

Uhud is only months behind them, and the desert has drawn exactly the wrong lesson from it. To the eye of a Bedouin watching from the wilderness, raiding by trade and by inheritance, the day at the mountain looked less like a defeat for Madinah than like proof that Madinah could be wounded at all, and that was invitation enough. Dr. Yasir Qadhi marks the shift carefully: the quarrel was no longer simply between the Muslims and Quraysh, one city against another. Something harder was setting in, a religious animosity glimpsed at Uhud and now widening into a war against Islam itself, and the tribes of the open country began to circle. The two stories that give this day its name are the incident of al-Raji and the incident of Bir Ma'unah, each named for the well beside which the killing was done, and each a massacre of the Prophet's ﷺ own teachers, lured out under a promise of safety and slaughtered for it.

Walk these hard pages slowly, because folded inside the treachery are some of the most luminous deaths the whole seerah owns: a body Allah Himself took charge of burying, a chained prisoner consoling the frightened mother of a child, and a man with a spear through his chest crying out, before he fell, that he had won. By one report, the news of both wells reached

the Prophet ﷺ on a single night, and the grief in him turned into a posture of prayer the ummah has all but forgotten how to make.

One man against an army

Begin in Muharram of the fourth year of the hijrah, with a threat the city never saw arrive. The tribe of Hudhayl, one of the large Bedouin tribes of the north, had begun massing for a surprise attack on Madinah under its chieftain, Sufyan al-Hudhali. The Prophet ﷺ did not answer an army with an army. He sent one man, Abdullah ibn Unays, to cut the plot off at the head, to hunt down the chieftain and finish him so that the gathering force would dissolve. This was no expedition; it was a single sword sent into great danger. And the instructions read like prophecy: you will find him in the valley of Arana, the Prophet ﷺ told him, go now, for the time to strike is now.

Abdullah asked the only question a scout could ask. Messenger of Allah, what does he look like? I have never seen him. The Prophet ﷺ had never seen him either, but Jibril had described the man, and the sign he gave was one no spy could have furnished: when you see him, you will feel a terror at the sight of him greater than you have ever felt at any man. So Abdullah took nothing but his sword and rode toward the valley. Telling the story afterward, he said that when he glimpsed the chieftain in the distance, the fear landed exactly as foretold, a man who looked like something evil walking the earth, and he knew that Allah's Messenger ﷺ had spoken the truth.

Then, with the prayer time slipping away as he closed the gap, he did something no Muslim had ever done before him. He prayed while walking toward the chieftain, bowing with gestures of his head, unwilling to stop and stand and lose the hour. It was the first prayer of its kind in the history of Islam, an ijtiḥād he made

on the spot, and the religion kept it. Dr. Yasir Qadhi pauses here, because the moment opens a window onto how the companions reasoned even while revelation was still descending. They made ijtiḥād in the Prophet's ﷺ own lifetime, extrapolating from what they knew of the Qur'an and the Sunnah to meet a situation no text had addressed, and when he heard of it he would sometimes affirm their reasoning and sometimes gently tune it, the way he laughed at the companion who, finding no water, rolled his whole body in the sand to purify himself and was shown the light wipe of tayammum: all you needed to do was this. This, the Sheikh notes, is the basis of a religion meant to remain livable in every time and place: the door of ijtiḥād, opened here in the lifetime of the one who brought the revelation.

Reaching the camp, Abdullah played the recruit. I hear you are gathering an army, he said, let me join it. The chieftain suspected nothing, and when the vulnerable hour came, the great man nearly alone in the valley with only a few about him, Abdullah finished what he had been sent to do. The moment the Prophet ﷺ saw him return he said: may this face be successful. The outcome was written all over him. Then he ﷺ gifted Abdullah a staff and told him it would be a sign between the two of them on the Day of Resurrection, some privilege folded into the gift and waiting for the meeting to come. Abdullah never let that staff out of his sight again, in peace or in war, and when he came to die he asked that it be buried with him in his grave.

Ten teachers walk into a trap

Hudhayl had lost its chieftain, and what it wanted now was worse than a battle. It wanted revenge by deception, the dirtiest of tactics, the Sheikh calls it, designed to get the Muslims killed by their own goodness. The tribe paid two neighboring tribes to

stage a performance: delegations came to Madinah pretending to have embraced Islam and begged the Prophet ﷺ to send his most qualified men back with them to teach their new converts the Qur'an and the prayer, pressing for as many as he could spare. They knew the companions loved nothing better than to go and teach, and that he ﷺ would not refuse a call for teachers; it was the one request almost impossible to turn down, for teaching was the whole point of everything the religion was for. Between seven and ten men, most likely ten, volunteered, under the leadership of Asim.

At the well of al-Raji the performance ended. A hundred fighters rose out of the land and surrounded them, and the teachers understood in an instant that the conversion had been a lie and this was a trap. They scrambled to the top of a small hill and unslung their bows, because arrows hold an enemy at distance and none of them wished to throw his life away, and from above they answered the hundred with the only weapons they had. But ten cannot hold off a hundred forever, and the hundred offered the oldest lie war knows: come down, surrender, and your safety is guaranteed.

Asim, radiyallahu anhu, knew a detail that made surrender unthinkable. In one of the battles he had killed the husband of a pagan woman named Sulafa, and she had sworn an oath of grotesque precision: that she would not die until she had drunk wine from the skull of the man who killed him, and she had put a bounty of a hundred camels on that skull. Asim knew the tribe carried this private appetite for him, and so he called out his refusal, and the heart of what he said was not addressed to the hundred at all. O Allah, he prayed, I will not take their security. Inform Your Prophet ﷺ about us, that we were sincere and did not die as cowards. And as I have protected Your religion in the

daytime, protect my body now that night is falling. Then he fought, with his bow until the arrows were gone, with his spear until it broke, with his sword until its edge died, and when there was nothing left to fight with, he fell. He died a shahid, and his dua hung in the air over the hill, waiting to be answered in full view of the men who had come for his head.

The instant the fighting ended, the warriors rushed the hill for one body above all the rest. And out of nowhere a swarm of wasps boiled up over Asim, stinging every face that came near, driving the men back from his corpse. They reasoned their way around it the way practical men do: wasps do not fly at night, they said, so we will simply wait, and take the skull after dark.

At sunset, water answered them instead. It had not rained. There was no river in that place. And yet a flood came surging out of the dry land, climbed the hill to where the body lay on its summit, lifted Asim up, and carried him away into the distance beyond every search. To this day, the Sheikh says, no one on earth knows where Asim is buried. Allah Himself took charge of his burial. He had asked his Lord to guard his flesh by night as he had guarded the religion by day, and his Lord honored the exchange to the letter, in front of the very people who had been promised a hundred camels for that skull.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi gives the moment its proper name. This is karamah, a mini miracle, granted not to prophets, for the miracle of a prophet is a mu'jizah, but to the righteous believers who follow them. It is a distinction he says he has drawn from this minbar many times. What matters here is that this single scene holds two karamat, the wasps and the river, and a third is already on its way to a starving prisoner in Makkah: a bunch of grapes in a season when there were no grapes in all the city.

Khubayb, the razor, and the grapes

Three men were left alive on the hill: Khubayb, Zayd, and Abdullah. The hundred swore them safety if they would come down, and so they came down, and the safety lasted exactly as long as it took to bind their hands. Abdullah named it aloud the moment the ropes went on, this is the first treachery, and he decided he would not be marched anywhere as merchandise. He refused every order, refused to walk, refused to be tied to a stick and led like an animal, until they killed him there at the side of the road because he simply would not move.

Here the lecture stops to settle the fiqh of that hill. Was it right to surrender, or right to fight on to the death? Permission was given for both, the Sheikh says; each man is rewarded for his choice, and which is more honorable depends on the circumstance. And Abdullah's refusal teaches a second ruling: a believer who does something he knows will get him killed at the hands of an enemy has not committed suicide. He did not raise the blade against himself; they did. To accept a death dealt by another's hand rather than submit to humiliation is courage, not self-destruction.

The other two were spared the road only because a living captive fetches money and a dead one fetches none. Khubayb was sold to Banu al-Harith in Makkah, blood for a man of theirs he had killed at Badr. Zayd was bought for a great sum by Safwan, whose father Umayyah, the old master and tormentor of Bilal, had been brought down at Badr by a group of the believers, and Zayd had been one of them. Both purchases had a single purpose, and it was not slavery. It was execution.

But Khubayb's captivity became a window his enemies never meant to open. When his death was announced, he asked his captors for two things: water to bathe, and a razor to clean his

body, so that he might meet Allah purified. Look at where his mind was, the Sheikh says, hours from being killed: not on his family, not on his fate, but on standing before his Lord in a pure state. They granted it. And while the razor sat in his hand, a baby of the household crawled into his lap, and from across the room the child's mother froze in horror, certain that a condemned man with a blade would take his revenge on what was nearest. Khubayb looked up, almost insulted by the thought. Are you afraid I would kill this child? he said. By Allah, I would never do such a thing. He was the prisoner, he was the one about to die, and he was the one consoling her. That same woman testified ever afterward that she never saw a nobler prisoner than Khubayb, and that she had watched him, bound in chains and deliberately starved by his jailers, eating from a bunch of grapes in a season when there was not a grape to be found in all of Makkah. It was provision, she understood, arriving from a place no jailer could intercept.

At the execution ground he asked first to pray two rak'ahs. He prayed them with a steady heart, kept them short, and then turned to his killers with the reason: I would have prayed longer, except that you would think I was afraid of death. Then they killed him, and something outlived him on that ground. Khubayb is the first in Islam, and the Prophet ﷺ approved it in his own lifetime, of a sunnah the ummah still keeps: that any Muslim led out to execution prays two rak'ahs before he dies. May Allah spare us ever needing it, the Sheikh says, but Khubayb opened the door, and every martyr since has walked through it behind him.

A thorn in his place

Zayd was kept with the leaders of Quraysh, and when they brought him out to die, Makkah made a festival of it. The whole

city took the day off to torture and kill one Muslim, treating the death of a single believer as an occasion for joy. He was bound and led to the lances, and before they did their work, Abu Sufyan leaned in with a question he must have thought was unanswerable. I ask you by Allah, tell me the honest truth, he said. Do you not wish, right now, that Muhammad ﷺ were here in your place, and you were safe at home with your family and children?

Zayd had nothing left to gain by lying and nothing left to lose by truth, and he answered with the iman only a believer carries. By Allah, he said, I would not wish that the Prophet ﷺ be pricked by a single thorn where he now sits, to ransom myself from this death, let alone that he stand here in my place. And Abu Sufyan, still years from his own Islam, spoke the sentence history filed away: I have never seen any man so beloved to his people as Muhammad ﷺ is to his companions.

Hold on to where that testimony comes from, the Sheikh insists. The companions did not narrate their own devotion; you do not learn the depth of their love for him from their own mouths. You learn it from the enemies of the message, watching the thing up close, who could not help but write down what they saw. Abu Sufyan would become a Muslim in time. But on this day he was an enemy, and even an enemy could see that no leader on earth was loved the way this one was loved.

Seventy of the best, on one man's word

In the same season, a door seemed to swing open in the other direction. Abu Bara, one of the senior chieftains of Najd, came down to Madinah and stayed a while. Najd was the other Arabia, the Sheikh reminds us, the vast interior of tribes the Hijaz barely knew. Abu Bara was visibly moved by what he saw, and the

Prophet ﷺ tried his best to bring him to Islam, but the man hovered at the edge of it, impressed and undecided. And before he left he laid an offer on the table. If only you would send a group of your companions to the people of Najd to call them to this matter, he said, I am confident that many would answer. They will be under my word.

In the custom of the desert that word was not a private courtesy. When a senior chieftain extended his protection over a party of travelers, every tribe allied to him was bound by the same orf to honor it. So Abu Bara was opening the doors of Najd for da'wah and pledging the weight of his own seniority behind their safety, and he meant it sincerely, as events would prove. The Prophet ﷺ sensed the truth in him, and he was right about the man. What he could not have known was that the word would be broken by someone who had no right to touch it.

The stakes were enormous. Najd was bigger than the Hijaz, nearly double it, and the converts that might come from it could shift the entire balance of the religion. A golden opportunity, the Sheikh calls it, the green light given, and so the Prophet ﷺ sent seventy men. Set that number against the seven hundred who had stood at Uhud, and feel its weight: a full tenth of the city's fighting strength, sent out into the open desert armed with recitation. And not just any seventy. These were the qurra, the cream of the people of Suffa, the masjid's own resident students, men known for their Qur'an, men who would slip out at night to fill the water buckets of the Ansar and then come back to sleep on the floor of the masjid, owning no house in this world. Among them walked Haram, the uncle of Anas ibn Malik, who himself carried this account of them. A loss for the Muslims, the lecture reminds us, is a choosing for the chosen: Allah was selecting His shuhada from the very best of them.

I have won, by the Lord of the Kaaba

At the well of Ma'unah the party made camp and sent Haram ahead with a letter for one of the local chieftains: a greeting, an invitation to Islam, word that teachers had come under protection and were near. They could not have been received by a worse man. This was a chieftain who had once tried to negotiate his way into the religion as though it were a merger between equals: make me master of all the Bedouin lands while you keep the cities, he had proposed, or else name me your successor when you die. The Prophet ﷺ had refused outright, for prophethood is not a kingdom to be parceled out, and the refusal had been souring in the man ever since.

He did not even read the letter through. He flicked an eye at one of his henchmen, a silent signal, and while Haram stood waiting to be received, a man came up behind him and drove a spear between his shoulder blades until the iron came out through his chest. And then came the strangest victory cry in history. Haram felt the spear pass through him and called out: I have won, by the Lord of the Kaaba! Those were his last words, for he died at once. He had been longing for shahadah, and the instant it came he understood it and announced his triumph. One of the men standing there could not put the words down. What does a man win by dying? What kind of religion makes a person rejoice as the spear goes in? He carried the question from person to person, the Sheikh says, until it carried him into Islam.

Weigh the crime the way the lecture weighs it, sin stacked upon sin. Haram was an envoy, and an envoy is untouchable by the unanimous convention of all nations; to this day ambassadors are not harmed. Beyond that, he stood under the protection of a more senior chieftain, a protection it was never this man's business to break, and one report holds that the protector was in fact his own

uncle. And the killing was done by stealth, a coded signal behind a guest's back, so that the man never saw it coming. Then, knowing the rest of the seventy were still camped at the well, the chieftain called on the surrounding tribes to help him finish them. Most refused, because Abu Bara's word still held them. But three clans agreed, and four to five hundred fighters closed the ring around seventy men who had come carrying books, not armor. The teachers tried to defend themselves, but they had not come for a battle, and one by one they were killed where they had camped, radiyallahu anhum. A cold-blooded massacre, the Sheikh says plainly, one that is unparalleled in the entire seerah.

Three escaped the ring, and their fates are a lesson in themselves. One, badly wounded, fell and was buried beneath the bodies of his brothers as they collapsed on top of him, so the killers never knew a living man lay under the pile; this was Ka'b ibn Zayd, and the series will meet him again two years from now at the Trench, where his shahadah finally finds him. The other two had been sent out on an errand and walked back to find vultures wheeling over the place their companions had been. They knew at once. The Ansari of the pair, al-Mundhir, refused to leave: my companions were granted shahadah on this ground, he said, and I will not be the man who outlives them only to go and tell their story. The Muhajir, Amr, argued the other way, that they should carry the news back to the Prophet ﷺ. In the end they walked in together. Al-Mundhir was killed, exactly as he had hoped to be, and Amr, for reasons of the chieftain's own, was released. Neither man was a coward; both walked into the same danger. But one had set his heart on shahadah and was given it, and the other on carrying the news home and was given that. You are handed what you intend, the Sheikh says, and here are two men handed precisely their intentions.

One night, one month of qunut

Amr's walk home added one more wound to the day. On the road he met two men of the killers' tribe coming the other way, and certain he was looking at the enemy who had just slaughtered his companions, he calmed them, waited for them to sleep, and killed them both. Then he found in their belongings a letter of protection from the Prophet ﷺ himself. The two had sought his aman and received it, and had taken no part in the massacre at all. Amr arrived in Madinah carrying the worst news of the year and his own terrible mistake folded inside it. The Prophet ﷺ took responsibility for the two deaths and paid the blood money to their relatives, and a principle was fixed for all time. Abide by your treaty; a mistake, once made, is owned and repaired; and no person wears the guilt of his tribe. These two were innocent of their people's crime, so their people's crime could not be laid on them. Collective guilt, the Sheikh says, pointing the lesson straight at our own politics, has no place in this religion: a man answers for what he did, not for what his nation or his tribe did.

Then the night itself. By one report, the news of al-Raji and the news of Bir Ma'unah reached the Prophet ﷺ on the very same night: eighty of his companions, his teachers, his Suffa students, men he had chosen by hand and lived among, betrayed and butchered at two different wells. And he ﷺ had not seen it coming. Hold that, because the lecture treats it as clear evidence about the unseen. He could describe the face of a chieftain he had never met and name the valley the man was standing in, because Allah informed him. And he could send seventy of his best toward Najd without any knowledge of their fate, because Allah had not. There is no question he ﷺ knew more of the ghayb than any of us, that he was shown portions of the heavens on the night of the Ascension that no one else has seen. But the

unseen never belonged to him; it was only ever lent, in the measure Allah chose. Allah is its sole Knower, and He discloses it to none but the messengers He approves:

[He is] Knower of the unseen, and He does not disclose His [knowledge of the] unseen to anyone Except whom He has approved of messengers, and indeed, He sends before him [i.e., each messenger] and behind him observers

QUR'AN 72:26-27

The grief in him ﷺ turned into a posture of prayer. For one full month, in every one of the five daily prayers, he stood after rising from the final ruku and made qunut: pleading for the martyrs, and calling on Allah against the treacherous clans, naming them one by one. And here the Sheikh stops the story for a sunnah he wants returned to the ummah. This is qunut al-nazilah, the qunut of calamity, and in the position he holds strongest it is not tied to any one prayer and is not a daily individual routine. It is the ummah's emergency supplication, raised standing in the last rak'ah after ruku whenever a general calamity afflicts the believers, and it has been badly neglected. When the Muslims bleed anywhere on earth, this is the sunnah that answers it. He named Syria and Palestine from his minbar in 2013. Fill in this year's names yourself, and pray the way he ﷺ prayed.

For a while, the martyrs themselves were given a voice. Verses of Qur'an were sent down about the men at the wells and recited among the believers, a report carried in Bukhari and Muslim, bearing their own message back to those they left behind: who will tell our brothers that we have met our Lord, pleased with Him as He is pleased with us? Then Allah lifted those verses, abrogating them for a wisdom He alone knows, leaving the

ummah only their echo in the books and their meaning in the heart. The men at the wells did not lose.

As for the chieftain of the eye signal, the man even the Prophet ﷺ prayed against, a disease took him as is to be expected of one of his nature. It began under his arm and spread across his whole skin, a leprosy that drove him to delusion and made a pariah of him, until his own people abandoned him and he died alone in the desert, punished in this world before the next. Now set the two hearts of this day side by side and learn them. A chained prisoner with a razor in his hand who would not so much as frighten a baby, and a chieftain at the height of his power who murdered a protected guest with a flick of his eye. Such, the Sheikh says, is the way of the heart of iman beside the heart of kufr. The heart of iman is a heart of morality. The heart of kufr has none.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read al-Raji and Bir Ma'unah as two tragedies, file them under the cost of the early years, and move on. That would be to miss the questions they put to us, because the Sheikh refuses to leave either well as mere grief, and neither should we.

The first is about the price of the religion in your hands. Islam was never going to spread without sacrifice, without the loss of limb and life, and that loss is bitter to bear. The deen you inherited crossed this stretch of road on the shoulders of schoolteachers: men who filled other people's water buckets in the dark and slept on a masjid floor, men sold into execution grounds, a man speared through the chest while delivering a letter. They paid in blood for the thing you receive for free. Whatever carrying it forward asks of you today is light beside what it asked of them. Pay it gladly.

The second is about what iman looks like under pressure, and the day answered it already by holding two hearts up to the light: Khubayb chained and gentle, the chieftain free and merciless. Iman is the heart that stays moral exactly when treachery would be easy and unpunished. Watch which one you become when no one is watching and nothing would stop you, because that is where Khubayb and the chieftain parted ways.

The third is about how Allah treats those who hand themselves entirely to Him. The karamat are real, the Sheikh affirms, Allah's gifts to the faithful followers of His prophets. Asim asked his Lord to guard his body and his Lord guarded it past every search; Khubayb trusted Him with his last two rak'ahs and his last meal and was fed from the unseen. Hand Allah your everything, and your dignity becomes His to keep.

And two truths sit beside the wells that the day will not let you forget. You are given what you intend, so choose your intentions the way you would choose your ending: al-Mundhir intended shahadah and walked into it, Amr intended to carry the news home and was sent back alive, and neither was a coward. And no one wears another's crime, for the Prophet ﷺ paid the blood money for two innocent men of the killers' own tribe rather than let collective guilt stain them: a treaty is honored, a mistake is repaired, and a person answers only for his own deeds.

So take this day down into your ordinary one, and let it end where the Prophet ﷺ ended it: with grief that becomes prayer instead of despair. When calamity finds the believers anywhere on earth, do not look away. Stand in the night, raise your hands after ruku in the last rak'ah, and plead for them the way he ﷺ pleaded, until Allah is pleased. May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, be pleased with the teachers of al-Raji and Bir Ma'unah and

gather us with them in sincerity, guard this ummah from treachery as He guarded Asim from his enemies, and make us of those who, when His servants bleed, stand in the night and the prayer for them until He is pleased.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 51: the massacres of al-Raji and Bir Ma'unah (Memphis Islamic Center, 2013). Qur'an: Sahih International (72:26-27), verified via quran.ai.

The Mothers of the Believers

Shelter, honor, and the answered du'a

A year has passed since Uhud, and the next campaign is already inked on the calendar: the expulsion of the Banu Nadir, the second of Madinah's three Jewish tribes. But before the seerah marches back to the field, Dr. Yasir Qadhi sets the war ledger down on purpose, because while the great political events unfolded, the Prophet's ﷺ own house was quietly filling, and those stories have been pushed aside too long. So today the door of his home opens, and we are asked to do what the battles never required of us: to learn, and to memorize, the names of the Mothers of the Believers, and to understand who he ﷺ married in these years, and why.

The honest way to walk this list is the way the Sheikh walks it, name by name, watching for the pattern that surfaces on its own. A widow disowned by her own family for her faith. A girl of about twenty whose husband was carried home from Uhud to die of his wounds. A woman the poor had named their mother before Islam ever reached her. A wife certain that no one alive could be better than the husband she had just buried. Run your eye down the names and you keep meeting the two hijrahs, the early sacrifices, records of faith almost too heavy to credit. Allah, the Sheikh says plainly, chose for His Messenger ﷺ women whose worth was already proven. And when the day returns to the field, it ends on a hot road home from Dhat al-Riqa, with a sad teenager on a worn-out camel and the kindest trick in the whole seerah.

Sawdah, who gave away her night

Begin where the grief was. After Khadijah, radiyallahu anha, died, it is related that for many months the Prophet ﷺ was not seen smiling, so devastated was he by her loss. It took a brave woman to say out loud what no one else would. Khawlah bint Hakim came to him and asked, simply, will you not marry, O Messenger of Allah? He asked whom she had in mind, and she had thought it through. If you wish for an elderly woman, Sawdah. And if you wish for a young one, Aisha. He ﷺ married them both within a month of one another, Sawdah at once, while for Aisha there was only the nikah, contracted in Makkah, with three and a half years to pass before she joined his household in Madinah, in the second year of the hijrah. Aisha cannot be told in minutes, and the Sheikh will not try; she deserves her own long series, and one day she will have it. Today belongs to the wives history tends to hurry past. So the counting begins, because hardly any of us has these names by heart: Khadijah the first, Sawdah the second, Aisha the third.

Sawdah bint Zam'ah had already given Islam everything it could ask. Her husband, al-Sukran ibn Amr, a brother of Suhayl ibn Amr, had taken her on the emigration to Abyssinia for the sake of their faith, and then died young, either there or just after the return, one of the few Companions we know by name who passed away in the Makkan years. When Sawdah accepted Islam her own family disowned her and cut her off, and in all of Makkah there was no one left to take her in. So about six months after Khadijah's death, most likely in Shawwal of the tenth year of the call, the Prophet ﷺ married her. It was compassion, given a name and a home.

She was the eldest of all his wives, a woman of large build who walked slowly, and we know it only because she tells us herself.

At the Farewell Hajj she asked his ﷺ permission to leave Muzdalifah by night, ahead of the crowds, and he sent her on early with Ibn Abbas in a small party. From that one request the jurists draw a ruling that has stood ever since: on the night of Muzdalifah, the elderly, the weak, and those who tend them may leave early. Sawdah's slow walk became a mercy written into the law.

Then, years into the Madinah era, she began to fear her marriage might end, and what she did next is hers alone in all the seerah. She came to the Prophet ﷺ of her own will, with terms of her own making. I have no jealousy of your other wives, she said; my age is not for that. What I want is to be raised on the Day of Judgment among them, as your wife. So take my night, and give it to Aisha. He accepted, and it is related that around this it came down, in Surah an-Nisa, a surah that itself belongs to roughly these years:

And if a woman fears from her husband contempt or evasion, there is no sin upon them if they make terms of settlement between them - and settlement is best. And present in [human] souls is stinginess. But if you do good and fear Allah - then indeed Allah is ever, of what you do, Aware.

QUR'AN 4:128

The ayah is not for Sawdah alone; it is for every wife who fears her husband may turn from her, telling her she may negotiate, and that what the two of them agree upon is good. But notice what Allah arranged here for His Messenger ﷺ. Aisha was, after Khadijah, the most beloved to him, and he longed to spend more time with her, yet justice between his wives bound him. So it is as if Allah willed him a wife who had no need of her own night and

would gift it freely, doubling his share with the one he loved most, and no one wronged in the trade. This, the Sheikh notes, shows plainly the permissibility of spouses negotiating that which is theirs by right. Sawdah died in the khilafah of Umar ibn al-Khattab, and lies in al-Baqi with her sisters.

Hafsah, the daughter of Umar

The fourth wife is Hafsah bint Umar, and hers is the marriage that falls exactly at this stage. Born some five years before the call began, she was married very young to one of the early converts, Khunays ibn Hudhafa, and emigrated to Abyssinia at his side. We know almost nothing of Khunays except the one thing that matters most: he was among the small band of Muhajirun, perhaps seventy in all, who stood at both Badr and Uhud, which marks him as one of the elite of the Companions. At Uhud he was severely wounded, carried back to Madinah, and died of those wounds. A martyr, the Sheikh stresses, just not on the battlefield. Hafsah was left a widow at nineteen or twenty, childless and lonely at the prime of her youth, and her father set out to do what fathers in that world did: find her a good man.

Umar went first to Uthman ibn Affan, himself newly bereaved, for his wife, a daughter of the Prophet ﷺ, had passed away in the very days of Badr. What do you think of Hafsah? It was understood what was being offered. Uthman asked for time, and after some days returned: I do not think I will marry at this time. To Umar this landed as a stinging rejection, for Uthman was a wealthy nobleman of every good quality, and unmarried besides. So Umar swallowed his pride and went to Abu Bakr with the same question. And Abu Bakr said nothing at all, not that day and not for days after. That silence, Umar would admit, wounded him more than Uthman's refusal had.

Both men were keeping the very same secret. The Prophet ﷺ had quietly mentioned Hafsa to them, taking their counsel, and neither could betray his confidence. By one report, found in the later biographical collections of the Companions rather than in Ibn Ishaq, Umar carried his frustration to the Prophet ﷺ himself, and the answer smiled with the secret it held: Hafsa will marry someone better than Uthman, and Uthman will marry someone better than Hafsa. So it unfolded exactly: Uthman, in time, married another daughter of the Prophet ﷺ, and Hafsa married the Prophet ﷺ himself. Afterward Abu Bakr came to excuse himself: the Prophet ﷺ had mentioned Hafsa to us, and I could not disclose his secret, and had he ﷺ left her, I would have accepted her myself. Mark the quiet lesson, the Sheikh says: even the Prophet ﷺ sought counsel before a marriage.

Aisha would say it herself: of all the wives, Hafsa was my real competition. The daughter of Abu Bakr and the daughter of Umar, each so much her father's child, close in age, quick, bold, sharp of tongue. And once the sharpness cost Hafsa dearly. Something passed between her and the Prophet ﷺ, serious enough that he considered divorce, and by one report pronounced it once. Then Jibril came down on her behalf: take her back, for she is sawwama, qawwama, a woman of much fasting and much standing in prayer, and she will be your wife in Jannah. Sit with how staggering that is. Heaven itself intervened in a marital dispute to defend her, and what it offered was not her lineage and not her wit, but her worship. Her piety saved her marriage. And here, the Sheikh says, is the lesson for any household that has known friction: weigh a spouse's sharp edge against iman and taqwa, which matter far more. Her own father weighed her less gently; finding her in tears after a later quarrel,

he warned her that if a divorce ever came he would never speak to her again. Make peace, daughter, now.

And it is Hafsa whom history trusted with the Qur'an itself. She was one of the very few women of that generation who could read and write. When Umar was stabbed and died with no khalifah yet chosen, the master copy of the Qur'an, the grand mushaf first gathered in Abu Bakr's day, passed into her keeping, for her father had been holding it. When Uthman later needed it to make the copies he sent out to every city of Islam, he sent to Hafsa for it, and she sent it, and it was copied and returned, and she held it to the end. She died in the year 41 or 45 after the hijrah, and lies in al-Baqi. The daughter of Umar, keeper of the written Book.

The mother of the poor

The next name is the one this evening exists above all to rescue, because almost no one preserved it. Zaynab bint Khuzaymah was not of the Quraysh. She came from the Banu Hilal, a tribe of Najd, which means she had no kin in either city and almost no one to keep her story. She is not to be confused, the Sheikh is careful to note, with Zaynab bint Jahsh, the Prophet's ﷺ cousin from the Quraysh, whose long story is still some way ahead. This Zaynab was married to the Prophet ﷺ for less than a year, three months by one report, five or eight by others, and besides Khadijah she is the only one of his wives who died in his ﷺ lifetime. Even the handful of reports we have about her contradict one another, so little did the world trouble to record a woman with no clan behind her.

But two things about her survive everything. The first is her widowhood. By the best-known account she had come into Makkah through marriage, first to Tufayl ibn al-Harith and then,

after he divorced her, to his brother Ubaydah ibn al-Harith ibn Abd al-Muttalib, a cousin of the Prophet ﷺ. And Ubaydah was no ordinary man: he was the eldest of the three champions who stepped out for the opening duel at Badr, beside Hamza and Ali, and the one struck down there, his leg severed, carried from the field to die of his wounds. The second thing that survives is her name. Long before Islam she was already called Umm al-Masakin, the mother of the poor, because she fed the hungry and gathered in the orphans when nothing yet commanded her to. That was her kunya before any revelation reached her, and it tells you the whole shape of her heart: a generosity that needed no scripture to teach it. The Prophet ﷺ married her around the third year of the hijrah, a woman with no protector and a heart of gold, and within months, in Rabi al-Awwal of the fourth year, she was gone. She was the first of his wives buried in al-Baqi, where nine of their graves now stand in a row. Khadijah alone lies elsewhere, in Hujun, in Makkah.

One tangent here is too remarkable to leave behind. Some books of history call Zaynab's mother the most noble mother-in-law in the history of mankind, and you have only to count her daughters to see why. She had five, and though she herself was not a Muslim, every one married a man of consequence and two became Mothers of the Believers: Zaynab herself, and her half sister Maymunah bint al-Harith, who in years to come would also marry the Prophet ﷺ. Among the others were Umm al-Fadl, the wife of Abbas and mother of Abdullah ibn Abbas; the younger Lubabah, mother of Khalid ibn al-Walid, which makes Khalid and Ibn Abbas cousins and Maymunah the aunt of both; Asma bint Umays, wife in turn to Jafar, then Abu Bakr, then Ali, who gave sons to all three; and Salma bint Umays, the wife of Hamza, whose orphaned daughter Umarah was lovingly fought over by

Ali, Jafar, and Zayd, until the Prophet ﷺ gave her to Jafar, whose wife was the girl's maternal aunt, with a ruling that still stands: the mother's sister holds the place of the mother. One household, woven quietly into the whole story of Islam.

Something better than Abu Salamah

Now the name you already know. Umm Salamah, whose given name was Hind, the daughter of Abu Umayyah of the Makhzum, has walked through this series before. She made both emigrations, to Abyssinia and then to Madinah, and she was the very first woman to make the hijrah to Madinah at all. At Uhud she was among the women carrying water to the wounded on the battlefield. The Sheikh pauses over the pattern he has been pointing at all evening: run down the list of the Prophet's ﷺ wives and you keep meeting the two hijrahs, the early sacrifices, the costly records of faith. To emigrate twice was something very few women did, and yet you find it again and again among his wives, because Allah chooses those who are worthy to be chosen.

Her husband, Abu Salamah Abdullah ibn Abd al-Asad, was a cousin of the Prophet ﷺ from his mother's side, a man famous for the gentleness of his manners, and theirs was a marriage in which people could plainly see the love. Uhud wounded him gravely; the wound seemed to heal but never fully, and a few months later it took him. On his deathbed she tried to comfort him with a pact: she had heard that if a man of Jannah dies and his wife does not remarry, she is joined with him in Paradise, so let us promise one another that neither of us will marry again. Look at the tenderness of it, the Sheikh says: it is her husband who is dying, yet she frames the promise as mutual, to spare him, when in truth it is a promise only she would have to keep. Abu Salamah

asked her, will you obey me? Gladly she said yes, as she always had. Then when I am gone, he told her, marry; do not remain alone. And then he turned to Allah with a du'a that ought to be taught to every husband: O Allah, grant her after me a husband better than me, who will care for her and never harm her, never cause her grief.

There is a second scene from before he died that makes the first unbearable to read. Once, Abu Salamah had come home glowing with something he had heard from the Prophet ﷺ, a hadith preserved in Sahih Muslim, and he told it to his wife: no servant is struck by a calamity and says, indeed we belong to Allah and to Him we return, O Allah reward me in my calamity and grant me better than it in its place, except that Allah rewards him and gives him something better than what he lost. It is the marvel of Allah's qadar, the Sheikh says, that of all the ways she might have learned those words, she learned them from her own husband's mouth. When Abu Salamah died, she remembered them, and she said the du'a. And then her honest heart finished the sentence in private: but who, she thought, could possibly be better than Abu Salamah?

The answer arrived in stages, and the first tells you the whole world of that first community. The very first man to propose to her, once her iddah was complete, was none other than Abu Bakr. And she declined him. Stop and let that register, the Sheikh urges: a widow turning down Abu Bakr, the noblest of men after the Prophet ﷺ. Among the Companions there was no such thing as a woman left to fend for herself, no stigma on a widow or a divorcee, no notion that a woman with children was somehow shelved; it was unthinkable to them that anyone should live without a spouse, and so the noblest men competed to honor exactly the women our own societies prefer to set aside. She

declined because her heart still held that no one could equal Abu Salamah. And then another suitor came, and he came in person.

Three fears, three answers

Umm Salamah, radiyallahu anha, met the proposal of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ with the wisdom and the honesty that made her famous, for she was among the wisest of his wives, known too for her noble lineage and her beauty. The Arabic of her reply is more eloquent than any rendering, but its sense is this: how could I not be honored that you are interested in me? And yet there are three things you should know first, and she laid them on the table rather than rush to a yes. The first: I am a woman of strong jealousy, ghayrah, and you are a man who already has wives, and I fear it will draw out of me something that displeases you, and so displeases Allah. Look at the iman in that fear, the Sheikh notes: her worry is not for her own comfort but that she might sin. The second: I am a woman gone on in years. And the third: I have a family, four children, who come with me, and no one will care for them but the man I marry.

He ﷺ answered all three. As for your jealousy, I will ask Allah to remove it from your heart. As for your age, I am afflicted with the same calamity as you. Hold that line a moment: the Prophet of Allah ﷺ, in the middle of a marriage proposal, makes a gentle joke at his own expense to put a grieving widow at ease. It is his humor, his adab, his kindness all at once. And as for your children, he said, your family is my family. What a beautiful proposal, the Sheikh says, simply. They married around Shawwal of the fourth year of the hijrah, and Abu Salamah's deathbed du'a was answered in full, by the only answer that could possibly have been better than Abu Salamah.

And she repaid the ummah across a long life. It was Umm Salamah who, years later at Hudaybiyyah, would read the moment no one else could read, when the Prophet ﷺ was in a quandary and the Companions too distressed to obey. Do not argue with them, she counseled him; go out, say nothing, and shave your head and offer your sacrifice, and they will follow you. He took her advice, and they did. She outlived nearly all of them, dying in the year 59 in her late eighties, one of the very last of the wives to pass, with Abu Hurayrah leading her janazah, and she lies in al-Baqi. With her marriage he ﷺ had now married six; with Khadijah and Zaynab bint Khuzaymah gone, four were in the household. One story still waits ahead, that of Zaynab bint Jahsh, at whose marriage the verses of hijab would come down, one of the latter laws of the shari'ah, after the salah and the zakah and the fasting. The series will reach her soon.

The prayer of fear at Dhat al-Riqā

Then the lecture turns back to the field, and the field shows you the tide shifting. At the close of Uhud, Abu Sufyan had shouted his appointment across the valley: we meet again, Badr, one year from now, once and for all. So in Sha'ban of the fourth year the Prophet ﷺ marched out with around fifteen hundred Companions, gave the banner to Ali ibn Abi Talib, and camped at Badr, and waited more than a week. No army came. The Quraysh had mustered some two thousand men and even marched out, but their hearts were not in it, and they lost their nerve and turned home, pleading a year of drought and the need to feed their families. The Muslims, who had kept the appointment their enemies set, did not complain. That, the Sheikh says, is what iman against kufr looks like drawn on a map: the believers growing stronger, the Quraysh growing weaker.

The other expedition of these months is the Ghazwah of Dhat al-Riqā, against Ghatafan, a large and lawless Bedouin tribe of the north, known for raiding and highway robbery, who will return later as mercenaries in the armies of the Trench. The Prophet ﷺ led out seven hundred Companions; the two sides camped within eyesight for a week or two, and no battle came. As for when it happened, there is a real controversy, and the Sheikh handles it honestly. Ibn Ishaq places it here, just after Uhud, and we usually follow Ibn Ishaq as the most authoritative of the sira historians, which is why we treat it now; but men greater than Ibn Ishaq, Bukhari among them, place it years later, after Khaybar. One of the strongest reasons for putting it now is a grieving teenager you are about to meet, whose father had just died at Uhud and who had only just married, while the Prophet ﷺ did not even know he was wed.

No battle was fought, but Allah sent down at Dhat al-Riqā something the ummah carries to this day: salat al-khawf, the prayer of fear. An army within sight of its enemy cannot all turn its back to pray, or it would be cut down mid-prostration, so the Qur'an itself arranged the answer.

And when you [i.e., the commander of an army] are among them and lead them in prayer, let a group of them stand [in prayer] with you and let them carry their arms. And when they have prostrated, let them be [in position] behind you and have the other group come forward which has not [yet] prayed and let them pray with you, taking precaution and carrying their arms. Those who disbelieve wish that you would neglect your weapons and your baggage so they could come down upon you in one [single] attack. But there is no blame upon you, if you are troubled by rain or are ill, for putting down your arms, but take precaution.

Indeed, Allah has prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating punishment.

QUR'AN 4:102

The imam prays the full prayer while the ranks behind him pray in shifts, one group standing guard with weapons in hand while the other prays, then trading places; that day it was done half and half, though the leader may decide the proportion by the danger. Stop and feel what this means. In the religion of Muhammad ﷺ, even an army within sight of its enemy is not excused the salah. It bends to the danger; it does not break. And one man showed what the prayer is worth. On the night watch, Abbad ibn Bishr took the first turn while Ammar ibn Yasir slept. Abbad stood to pray, and an arrow flew out of the dark and struck him. He drew it out and prayed on. A second came; he pulled that one out too and kept praying, and only when he feared he could no longer hold the watch did he wake Ammar. Why did you not rouse me at the first arrow? I was reciting a surah, Abbad said, and I did not want to break it; by Allah, were it not that I feared failing the duty the Prophet ﷺ entrusted to me, I would rather have died than cut that recitation short. It is said the surah was Yusuf. That is the sweetness the Companions found in salah.

The road home, and the kindest trick

The road home from Dhat al-Riqā carries two of the most beloved scenes in the whole seerah. The first comes on a blazing afternoon. It was the Prophet's ﷺ way to march after Fajr until the sun grew too fierce, then to halt and rest, and so the army scattered into whatever shade the valley offered, each man under his own tree, and slept, untroubled by any thought of attack. The Prophet ﷺ slept apart, beneath a tree, with his sword hung from a branch above him. A man of Ghatafan named Ghawrath had

trailed the army, having promised his people he would kill him ﷺ. Seeing the camp asleep and the Prophet ﷺ alone, he walked unheard through the sleeping men, took the sword down, drew it, and stood over him as he ﷺ woke. Are you afraid of me? he demanded. No, said the Prophet ﷺ; and why should I be afraid of you? But you have a sword, the man pressed. No.

And as the Prophet ﷺ spoke, Allah cast fear into the man's heart, and he began to tremble until the sword fell from his hand. By another telling the question was, who will protect you from me, and the answer one word: Allah. When he said it, the sword dropped. The Prophet ﷺ picked it up, turned it, and asked him: now who will protect you from me? Be the better of the two who take the sword, Ghawrath managed, confessing his intent; I did not mean to show you mercy, so you be more merciful than I was. The Prophet ﷺ invited him to the shahadah. He would not accept Islam, only give a promise, freely made: I will never fight you, and I will never help anyone who fights you. And the Prophet ﷺ, with the would-be assassin's life in his own hand and the attempt a minute old, let him go. In Jabir's telling, carried in Bukhari, the Companions slept through the whole of it and woke only to him ﷺ calling them over, the scene already ended in forgiveness. Ghawrath went home saying: I have come to you from the best of all mankind. What leader, the Sheikh asks, would let such a thing go? And as for forcing Islam, there is no point in faith taken by the sword; the man promised not to fight, and that was enough.

The second scene begins with the slowest camel in the column. Jabir ibn Abdillah, radiyallahu anhu, sixteen or seventeen years old, sagged at the very back on a worn-out old camel, and under a far heavier load than that: his father had been martyred at Uhud, leaving debts and seven daughters, Jabir's sisters, with no one but him, and he the eldest, with nothing to his name but that

one tired animal. Then a voice beside him: who is that at the back? And then, when he had named himself, why do I see you so sad, Jabir? The leader of seven hundred men had dropped back, alone, to ride beside the army's loneliest soldier, a teenage boy who was neither Abu Bakr nor Umar but just Jabir. He ﷺ drew the whole story out of him, then teased him the way you cheer a young man: so you have married! Why not a young girl, one to play with you and you with her, to make you laugh and you to make her laugh? No, Messenger of Allah, said Jabir: an older woman, a widow, someone to mother my seven sisters rather than add an eighth girl to a house that cannot bear one. And the Prophet ﷺ told him: asabta. You have done right. For marrying young or old, a virgin or a widow, each is right by its own circumstance, and Jabir's choice was right for his.

Then the trick began. The Prophet ﷺ told him to halt the dying camel, mounted it, said bismillah, and struck it the way camels are struck, and it surged to the front of the column like the fastest mount the boy had ever seen. Now Jabir was cheered. And the Prophet ﷺ said: sell it to me. Jabir, who needed that camel for his sisters' sake, refused him. Asked again, he flipped and offered it as a gift; and he ﷺ refused that too. Sell it. A dirham, he ﷺ offered, which for a camel is to offer five dollars for a car, and Jabir said no. Two, then. Still no. And so the haggling climbed, the Sheikh smiling as he tells it, all the way to forty dirhams, with Jabir laying down one condition: that he ride the camel home to Madinah first. He ﷺ slipped the boy a father's advice for that homecoming too, since Jabir had none left to give it: do not burst in upon your wife in the night; let the caravan's crier go ahead, so she has time to comb her hair and ready herself to meet you. Tenderness, taught out loud to a fatherless boy.

The next morning Jabir came to the masjid. Have you prayed two rakahs, Jabir? Pray first, then come for your business. So he prayed, and then the Prophet ﷺ told Bilal: weigh him out his forty dirhams, and add a little extra. Jabir took the money and turned to leave, and was called back. Where are you going? Home. But your camel is here; take it. Did you think, O Jabir, that I would haggle to cheat you out of it? The money and the camel are both yours. Ibn Hajar said this single hadith yields more than a hundred benefits, and the jurists have lived off it ever since: that bargaining is honest, that you may say no even to the best of mankind without shyness, that conditions may be set within a sale. But the Sheikh retells it, in the end, for what it shows of the Prophet's ﷺ own heart. The whole long ploy, the racing camel and the rising price and the call back at the door, was a gentle practical joke played on a proud, grieving boy, engineered so that Jabir could walk home with his camel and his dirhams and his dignity intact, given a great kindness without once tasting it as charity. That, the Sheikh says, is how he ﷺ gave.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read this day as a list to memorize for next week's quiz, names and dates filed away, and to miss what each name is quietly asking of us. The Sheikh sets the battles aside on purpose so that we would look into the house, and the house has more to teach than the field.

Look first at why he ﷺ married these women, because the orientalist tells one story and the seerah tells another. Walk the list as the Sheikh walks it. Sawdah, disowned by her family for her faith, with no one in Makkah to shelter her. Hafsa, widowed at twenty when her husband died of his Uhud wounds. Zaynab, the mother of the poor, the widow of a martyr of Badr, without a

relative in either city. Umm Salamah, a widowed mother of four whose dying husband begged Allah to send her someone better than himself. Every one was a marriage of shelter, of honor, of family, given to a woman whose sacrifice for Islam was already written, in an age when the noblest men competed to take exactly the widows and the children our own societies prefer to shelve. The house answers the polemic by simply being what it was. And it puts a question to us: whom has our culture taught us to quietly set aside, the widowed, the divorced, the woman with children, the one past her youth, and what would it cost us to honor them the way the Companions did?

Look next at how heaven weighed Hafsah. When her marriage shook and a tongue as sharp as her father's had carried her too far, Jibril came down not to recount her lineage or her wit but to testify to her fasting and her prayer, and to promise her Jannah. Her worship saved her marriage. We are quick to judge a spouse, a child, a friend by their edges, and slow to set those edges against their iman and their taqwa. Heaven did the opposite. Before you weigh anyone you love by their faults, weigh them the way Jibril weighed Hafsah, and let their worship outweigh their friction.

And then there is the du'a this whole day exists to put into your hands, the one Abu Salamah carried home from the Prophet ﷺ and Umm Salamah said over his body: indeed we belong to Allah and to Him we return; O Allah, reward me in my calamity and grant me better than it in its place. Say it first, the Sheikh insists, before the tears have dried, at the death, at the lost money, at the lost job, at every musibah, and trust Allah with the replacement. Umm Salamah said it through a heart that could not imagine anyone better than the husband she had buried, and Allah answered her with His own Messenger ﷺ. You will not be

answered with a prophet. But you will be answered by the same Lord, who hears that du'a from you exactly as He heard it from her, and keeps His promise to give better than what He takes.

So take three things from this house down into your ordinary days. Honor the ones your world would set aside, as the Companions raced to do. Weigh the people you love by their worship before their faults, as heaven weighed Hafsah. And keep the du'a of calamity where your grief can reach it in the dark, and say it first of all. May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, who sheltered the disowned widow and rode at the back of the column to find the saddest boy in the army, make our homes houses of settlement and worship and mercy as his ﷺ home was, reward us in our calamities and grant us better in their place, and gather us in Jannah with him ﷺ and the Mothers of the Believers: Khadijah, Sawdah, Aisha, Hafsah, Zaynab, Umm Salamah, and their sisters, radiyallahu anhunna. Ameen.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 52: the background of the wives of the Prophet ﷺ (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (4:128, 4:102), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The expulsion of Banu Nadir

Allah came from where they never expected

A debt brought him ﷺ to their door, and almost everyone who has ever attacked this episode quietly drops that fact. He did not march on the fortresses of Banu Nadir to seize their land or settle a grudge. He walked south, with a handful of his closest companions, to ask a treaty partner for help paying a sum of money he himself had pledged on behalf of two men who were not even Muslims. That is how the day begins: not with an army, but with a debt.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi files this among the controversial topics of the seerah, and then, in the way he has promised to handle every controversy in the series, he walks straight at it. By the end of the evening he has built something you can hold in your hand: a betrayal answered not with vengeance but with ten days' notice, a siege that ended without a single arrow loosed, terms more generous than any empire of that age or this one would have offered, and an entire surah, the one Ibn Abbas refused to call by any name but the surah of Banu Nadir, retelling the whole affair from the side of the heavens. It is also a precursor. The Banu Nadir, once expelled, would become the chief architects of the great siege of al-Ahzab still to come; the men who plotted murder under their own wall would later ride to gather ten thousand against Madinah. So this is not only a story complete in itself. It is the fuse on something much larger.

A debt the whole city carried

Start where the Sheikh starts, with the blood money. In the fourth year after the Hijrah, in the month of Safar, came the twin disasters of al-Raji' and Bi'r Ma'unah, where Muslims sent out to teach were massacred. One survivor of Bi'r Ma'unah, the companion Amr ibn Umayyah, met two men on the road home as he made his way back, and he killed them. He believed he was striking at the very tribe that had butchered his brothers, part self-defense, part vengeance, both at once. But the tribe of Banu Amir was divided against itself. Its elder had personally guaranteed the safety of the Muslims; it was a rebellious nephew, struggling for power and ignoring his uncle, who had carried out the slaughter. The two men Amr ibn Umayyah killed belonged to the side that had kept faith. They were innocent, and their people held a covenant. So the Prophet ﷺ pledged their blood money in full: one hundred camels for each life, two hundred camels in all, a genuine fortune.

Here the Sheikh pauses on a point of law that most Muslims have never heard. Islamic law builds into cases of accidental manslaughter a mercy that pre-Islamic Arabia already understood: the blood money is not crushed onto one man's shoulders alone. A man who kills by accident fasts two consecutive months himself, but the hundred camels no single person could ever afford are shared by his whole community, each member paying a portion into a common fund, the man who did the deed carrying the largest share. Dr. Yasir Qadhi notes that this is precisely the kind of ruling modern jurists have barely begun to rethink for our own age, where a car accident can ruin a family in an afternoon. The wisdom is permanent: what afflicts the whole community, the whole community helps to carry.

The constitution of Madinah extended exactly this logic to the city. Whatever burden fell on it was borne by every signatory to the treaty, each clan paying its share until a fortune became a manageable contribution, and among the largest and wealthiest of those signatories stood the Jewish tribe of Banu Nadir. So when the Prophet ﷺ went to them, he went as a treaty partner calling in a treaty obligation, fully entitled to do so. Nothing about the request was hostile, or even unusual.

But the ledger with Banu Nadir already carried older entries, and the Sheikh lays them out so the reader sees how much tension had stacked up before this day. There was an early plot, recorded in the Musannaf of Abd al-Razzaq, in which a faction of Banu Nadir conspired to murder, in cold blood, some of the people of the Suffa, the devoted students of the mosque who were the closest thing the young community had to scholars. The plot leaked, Allah willed that no harm came of it, and because it was a faction and not the tribe, no one was punished. Then there was Uhud: the early sira authority Musa ibn Uqbah records that it was Banu Nadir who guided the Quraysh, telling an army that did not know the land where to camp and where best to meet the Muslims. And there was Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf, the poet, half Arab and half of Banu Nadir through his mother, counted among their elite, whose incitement against the Prophet ﷺ had finally cost him his life; eliminate Ka'b, and his tribe felt the loss as their own. Grievance upon grievance, and now, by the strongest reckoning, in Shawwal of the fourth year of the Hijrah, he ﷺ would walk into the middle of all of it carrying nothing but a request for money.

The rock above the wall

Picture what they walked into. The Jewish tribes of Arabia did not live as the Arabs lived. They built fortresses, real castles of stone,

set among hectares of date palms with channels of water threading the green, an architecture the Arabs neither shared nor knew how to construct, each smaller clan keeping its own. The Prophet ﷺ took Abu Bakr, Umar, and a core of senior companions and made the day trip south to these plantations, and the welcome was warm to the point of flattery. It is about time you came to us for our help, one of them said, the favor turned around so that the host could feel he was the one doing the giving. Wait here, they said, while we prepare for you. And there was nothing in the world suspicious about it. Unexpected guests, an animal to be slaughtered, a feast to be laid out; of course it would take time. So he ﷺ sat down with his companions in the shade beside the fortress wall, exactly as the protocol of hospitality invited him to.

Above his head, the hospitality turned into a council of murder. He is sitting right beneath us, one of them said. This is our opportunity; let us take it. Every fortress keeps heavy stones ready at the top, because that is simply what a fortress is. One push, one rock lowered onto the head of the man sitting below, and the problem is solved, for what are the Muslims without him? Another voice warned of the backlash such a thing would bring. But the plan won the argument. And because everything was already in place, it would take only minutes.

Then Jibril came down with a single instruction, and the Prophet ﷺ obeyed it to the letter. He stood up and walked away. No word, no explanation, not so much as a glance back, all the way to Madinah. The companions sat there bewildered, watching him go; the hosts inside waited too, expecting their guest to be where they had left him. Nothing. Eventually the companions returned to the city, and there he ﷺ told them what Allah had told him: there had been a plan, and there had been a stone in it. Years later, the

Sheikh notes, one of the last surahs to be revealed, al-Ma'idah, opened its long account of that people's broken trusts, and according to Ibn Abbas it begins with this very afternoon under the wall.

O you who have believed, remember the favor of Allāh upon you when a people determined to extend their hands [in aggression] against you, but He withheld their hands from you; and fear Allāh. And upon Allāh let the believers rely.

QUR'AN 5:11

Remember, the verse says, four years after the fact. Remember when their hands reached for you, and He held their hands back.

Ten days, and a hypocrite's oath

The answer to attempted murder was not an army. It was a notice. The Prophet ﷺ sent Muhammad ibn Maslamah back to Banu Nadir with the plot laid bare in detail: this is what you said, this is what was answered, I know exactly what passed between you. And with it came a single option. You have ten days to leave. Any man of Banu Nadir found after that would answer with his life. Muhammad ibn Maslamah had been their friend in the days of jahiliyyah, and they reached for that old friendship: how could you, of all people, be the one to bring this to us? His reply deserves to be carved somewhere a person can read it every morning. Islam has come and changed everything. The loyalties, the friendships, all of it now ran through Allah and His Messenger ﷺ. My friendship, he told them, is now with those who have Islam. Caught red-handed, with the plot exposed and nothing left to argue, they agreed to go.

Then a message slid in from inside Madinah, and it nearly undid everything. Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul, the head of the hypocrites, could not believe his friends and allies were being expelled. He was close to all the Jewish tribes and especially to Banu Nadir; Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf had been a personal friend. So he sent them a message, frank and harsh. No matter what happens, he swore, you will not leave Madinah. I will guarantee your protection. I will obey no one who tries to expel you, meaning the Prophet ﷺ himself. If you are fought, I will fight at your side. And the ultimate pledge: if you are expelled, I will go into exile with you. I have called my allies of Ghatafan, he added, and they will come two thousand strong.

Be honest with yourself, the Sheikh says, because this is the human heart of the trap. Without iman, you would be persuaded. The senior-most chieftain of the old Yathrib, a noble of jahiliyyah at the height of his standing, is offering you his own exile for your sake. What more could any ally on earth pledge? But Allah recorded both the promise and the verdict in a single ayah, and the verdict needs only four words.

Have you not considered those who practice hypocrisy, saying to their brothers [i.e., associates] who have disbelieved among the People of the Scripture, "If you are expelled, we will surely leave with you, and we will not obey, in regard to you, anyone - ever; and if you are fought, we will surely aid you." But Allāh testifies that they are liars.

QUR'AN 59:11

Allah testifies that they are liars, even as the words leave his mouth. And here is the bitter loop the Sheikh draws out and will not let you miss. Allah exposed the lie in the Qur'an, but Banu Nadir did not believe in the Qur'an in the first place. The one

Book that was telling them the truth about their ally was the one Book they had rejected. So they trusted the liar instead.

By Allah, he is the one

The voice among them that took the bait belonged to Huyayy ibn Akhtab, one of the chieftains of Banu Nadir, and the truest portrait of the man comes, remarkably, from inside his own household. His daughter Safiyyah bint Huyayy radiyallahu anha would one day, after Khaybar still three years away, become a Mother of the Believers. She remembered being a girl of five or six, the beloved of her father and her uncle Yasir, the two men who never came home without making time to play with her and cherish her.

The day the Prophet ﷺ first arrived in the region, the two brothers went out to see this man with their own eyes, because they had been expecting someone: they had a premonition that a prophet was coming to revive their religion, and had long threatened the Arabs that when he came they would overcome them. What they had not expected was that he would come from outside their own people. Safiyyah remembered running to meet them when they returned, jumping for joy, and for the first time in her life neither her father nor her uncle so much as looked at her. They walked past their cherished little girl, gloomy and gray and silent. So she listened. Her uncle asked: is it him? Is he the one? Her father answered, glumly, from somewhere far down inside himself: by Allah, he is the one. And then the question that decides everything. What will you do? His answer: to be his enemy as long as I live. He could not accept a prophet who had not come from his own people. Safiyyah said, looking back across the whole of her life, that this was among the reasons Islam later entered her heart. As a child she had heard her own

father recognize the truth and declare war on it in the very same breath.

Now Huyayy chose the promises of Abdullah ibn Ubayy over the ten days' notice, and he decided Banu Nadir would fight. But not everyone agreed with him. Inside the fortress there was a real argument, leave or stay, surrender or resist, exactly the disunity that the Qur'an would later describe with a precision that must have stung anyone who had been in that room.

They will not fight you all except within fortified cities or from behind walls. Their violence [i.e., enmity] among themselves is severe. You think they are together, but their hearts are diverse. That is because they are a people who do not reason.

QUR'AN 59:14

You think they are together, but their hearts are diverse. Huyayy prevailed over the others by force of will, and his messenger carried the answer back to Madinah with the arrogance of a slammed door. We have decided to stay. Do whatever you want. If'al ma bada lak, the Sheikh repeats, the height of arrogance: do whatever you can.

A siege with no help on the road

When the message was read to him, the Prophet ﷺ said Allahu Akbar, and the companions around him took up the takbir, because they understood at once that defiance meant the matter would now be settled completely, and they sensed it would settle in their favor. They armed themselves, and what happened next stunned Banu Nadir most of all. They had budgeted days for the Muslims to organize, perhaps a week. Mobilization took hours. The very same day, with some reports putting the number around

seven hundred men, the Prophet ﷺ stood at the edge of their groves, and the siege had begun before Banu Nadir had finished disbelieving the news.

Then everyone waited. Banu Nadir watched the road for the two thousand spears of Ghatafan, and the road stayed empty. They watched for Abdullah ibn Ubayy, who had sworn to fight at their side and walk into exile with them, and he never once left his house. Seven days, some say ten, and in all that time not an arrow was loosed and not a sword was drawn, because they were waiting for a rescue that was never coming, and there was no possibility of this one tribe fighting the whole of Madinah alone.

In the middle of the siege the Prophet ﷺ did something almost casual in its confidence, and the Sheikh stops the narration here to make sure its weight lands. He left only a small contingent at the walls and marched the bulk of the army across the city to Banu Qurayzah, the third of the Jewish tribes. Not to fight them: to renew the constitution of Madinah with them yet again, to make them swear once more, with solemn oaths, that they would uphold the treaty, and to make certain the two tribes would not join hands while his back was turned. Banu Qurayzah affirmed it, for the third time now. And Dr. Yasir Qadhi insists you carry this scene forward, because a year and a half from now, when ten thousand men surrounded the city and a fifth column inside it could have meant the slaughter of the Muslims' own women and children, Banu Qurayzah would break exactly the oath they were renewing here. Critics brandish their fate more than any other episode, calling it the greatest smear on his honor, and they always skip scenes like this one: oath upon solemn oath, freely renewed a third time, then broken at the worst possible moment. What befell each of these tribes, the Sheikh says with the full

weight of his method, came from its own actions, never from its blood and never from its Book. Even Banu Nadir here did not betray a fraction of what Banu Qurayzah later would. And the march made the point more brutally than any speech: the Muslims could pull most of their army off the siege and the besieged still could do nothing, cut off and alone, every promised ally failing them on schedule.

The palm trees and the frank answer

One pressure remained, and it was the one that finally broke them. The pride of Banu Nadir was their orchards, hectares of date palms in ordered rows, every channel of water and every amenity laid out with care, and the trees at last grown ripe. A date palm takes five to eight years before it gives anything at all; for the first years a family pours in labor and receives nothing, and only then, once the tree stands, does it yield for a decade or two. This was not merely wealth. It was effort, patience, the prize of a lifetime's work. So when the Muslims cut down and burned stands of the palms in full view of the walls, Banu Nadir watched their decades of labor go up in front of them, and they lamented and wailed, and threw a sharp accusation down from the fortress: you, who call to peace, what kind of peace is this that destroys orchards?

And the question landed not only on the besieged. Some of the believers felt it too, for the most practical of reasons: if these groves are about to pass into our hands, why destroy what we will inherit? It is a rare and striking moment, where the questioners inside the walls and outside them were almost asking the same thing. Allah Himself answered, and the answer is still recited today.

Whatever you have cut down of [their] palm trees or left standing on their trunks - it was by permission of Allāh and so He would disgrace the defiantly disobedient.

QUR'AN 59:5

Whatever you cut, and whatever you left standing on its roots, both were by the permission of Allah, and to humble the defiant. Here Dr. Yasir Qadhi is frank in the way he promises to be with every controversy in this series, and he sees nothing whatsoever to apologize for. It was a legitimate tactic of war. It broke the will of the besieged without spilling a single drop of blood. And the bulk of the four madhahib permit a legitimate army exactly this kind of measure. The trees did what ten days' notice could not: they bent a people who had refused to be bent.

Axes to their own houses

They surrendered unconditionally. Now measure the terms the Prophet ﷺ gave against the crime. Their chieftains, in formal counsel, by shura among themselves, had decided to assassinate him while he sat as their guest beneath their wall; this was not a hothead in the street but the considered decision of their leadership. And in answer he spared every life. The women and children untouched, no one taken captive, and they could take with them whatever their camels could carry. One condition only: leave the weapons behind. Frankly, the Sheikh says, this is extraordinarily generous, and he invites anyone to hold it up against how the empires of that age, or of our own, answer an attempt on the life of a head of state.

What Banu Nadir did next told everyone watching exactly who they were. So that no Muslim would ever live in them, they took axes to their own houses: the most advanced architecture in all

of Arabia, fortresses the Arabs had never learned to build, the rooms where their children and grandchildren had been born, broken out of sheer spite by the very hands that had raised them. And the Qur'an reads it as a punishment fitted exactly to the deed.

It is He who expelled the ones who disbelieved among the People of the Scripture from their homes at the first gathering. You did not think they would leave, and they thought that their fortresses would protect them from Allāh; but [the decree of] Allāh came upon them from where they had not expected, and He cast terror into their hearts [so] they destroyed their houses by their [own] hands and the hands of the believers. So take warning, O people of vision.

QUR'AN 59:2

Read it slowly, the way the Sheikh reads it, with the day in your eyes. They thought their fortresses would protect them from Allah. How foolish can a person be, to imagine a wall of stone standing between him and his Lord? And Allah came upon them from where they had not expected, in the speed of a mobilization that took hours instead of days, in the cutting off of every ally they had counted on, and He cast terror into their hearts so that they destroyed their own houses with their own hands. So take warning, O people of vision. The surah adds that the exile was itself a concession: had Allah not already decreed their banishment, what reached them in this world would have been far worse, and the punishment of the Fire still waits for them beyond it.

Ibn Ishaq describes the departure as a spectacle the whole of Madinah gathered to watch. The wealth these fortresses had hidden astonished the companions: treasures, fabrics, brocades,

jewels, stacked to the saddle horns until the camels groaned under the loads. The children walked so the camels could carry the goods. They would not leave the Muslims a single thing, not even, it is said, the carved doors of their houses, hauled away on top of the loads. And in the same breath the Sheikh pauses on the fairness of the religion: two or three of Banu Nadir chose Islam instead of exile, and instantly kept everything, homes and lands and possessions, their past enmity buying them no penalty at all the moment they entered the faith. The rest went mostly north, to Khaybar. And the surah names the day with a quiet, double-edged warning: the first gathering. First, because Khaybar was coming, where these same people would meet another reckoning three years on. And first, because beyond every gathering in this world waits the last Gathering of all.

The surah of Banu Nadir

The empty fortresses and the laden groves raised a question the companions had never faced. This wealth had been won without one horse spurred, one arrow shot, one wound taken. So it was not ghanimah, the spoils of an actual battle with their familiar shares. Allah revealed a different institution entirely for it: fay, wealth restored rather than seized, captured without fighting or bloodshed, and governed by rules of its own. The Sheikh is careful to add that these rulings, like much of the law of war, hardly apply in our times, having been framed for an unpaid army of volunteers riding their own horses, not the salaried armies of any modern state. But the principle inside the ayah is permanent, and he slows the lecture down to dwell on it.

And what Allāh restored to His Messenger from the people of the towns - it is for Allāh and for the Messenger and for [his] near relatives and orphans and the needy and the

[stranded] traveler - so that it will not be a perpetual distribution among the rich from among you. And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from. And fear Allāh; indeed, Allāh is severe in penalty.

QUR'AN 59:7

So that it will not be a perpetual distribution among the rich from among you. By Allah, the Sheikh says, these few words are among the most powerful verses of Islamic economics ever revealed. Wealth in this ummah is meant to filter downward, to the orphan and the poor and the stranded traveler, not to circle endlessly among the elite. And he points, with real heat, at our own age, where the wealthiest one percent of humanity closes in on owning half of everything there is, and calls that exactly the loop this ayah was sent to break. The orphan, the poor, and the wayfarer are not an afterthought to charity in this religion. They are the policy. And the same verse carries one of the most explicit commands in the entire Qur'an, revealed about these very spoils and binding in everything he ﷺ ever said: whatever the Messenger gives you, take it; whatever he forbids you, leave it.

So what did he ﷺ do with the lands? He distributed them among the Muhajirun, the emigrants who had walked out of Makkah with nothing and lived ever since on the shoulders of the Ansar, and Ibn Ishaq adds that three poor men of the Ansar who owned no land and had fought in the battles were given a share as well. At a single stroke, the two halves of the city, the emigrants who had given up everything and the helpers who had carried them, stood closer to equal. And the Ansar, who might so easily have felt the wealth pass them by, were handed instead an ayah they would treasure above almost any other in the Book.

And [also for] those who were settled in the Home [i.e., al-Madīnah] and [adopted] the faith before them. They love those who emigrated to them and find not any want in their breasts of what they [i.e., the emigrants] were given but give [them] preference over themselves, even though they are in privation. And whoever is protected from the stinginess of his soul - it is those who will be the successful.

QUR'AN 59:9

They love those who emigrated to them, they find no resentment in their breasts at what was given to others, they prefer others over themselves even with poverty sitting in their own house. The verse before promised the Ansar the land; this verse told them they had already won something better. You are the successful, it says, because you were protected from the stinginess of your own souls. And then a door swings open for everyone who came after, which is to say for us.

And [there is a share for] those who come after them, saying, "Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in faith and put not in our hearts [any] resentment toward those who have believed. Our Lord, indeed You are Kind and Merciful."

QUR'AN 59:10

We did not stand at Badr, we did not give up our homes in Makkah, but Allah wrote us into the surah anyway, as the ones who come after and ask forgiveness for those who went before and carry no resentment toward those who believed. The Sheikh adds the sharp edge the ayah implies: whoever carries hatred for the Companions has written himself out of this verse.

Step back now and look at the whole of what this short surah holds: the expulsion, the fortresses that could not protect, the terror cast into hearts, the cut palms, the institution of fay, the praise of Muhajirun and Ansar, the hope held out to every later believer, and the hypocrite whose empty promise Allah compares, literally, to Shaytan himself, who tells a man to disbelieve and then, once the man is ruined, announces that he is free of him.

[The hypocrites are] like the example of Satan when he says to man, "Disbelieve." But when he disbelieves, he says, "Indeed, I am disassociated from you. Indeed, I fear Allāh, Lord of the worlds."

QUR'AN 59:16

That is Abdullah ibn Ubayy exactly: promise everything, urge the ruin, and vanish when the moment comes to deliver, washing his hands of the people he doomed. This is why Ibn Abbas refused even to call it Surat al-Hashr. Hashr means the gathering, and that word almost always points to the Day of Resurrection; but in this surah it does not. Do not call it al-Hashr, he said. Call it the surah of Banu Nadir, for all of it came down about these days. And this is the very reason Dr. Yasir Qadhi built the entire evening around the surah, returning again and again to the conviction that runs through his whole class: one of the main purposes of studying the seerah is to understand the Qur'an. Once you have lived through the day of Banu Nadir, the surah stands up and walks. Read it tonight with this day in your eyes, and it will feel less like reading and more like remembering.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read this episode as a grim political story, a tribe expelled, a siege won, and leave it sealed in the past. That would be to miss what it asks of us. Strip the day down to its beats and look at it once more.

A debt owed for two innocent strangers, honored at staggering cost. A guest seated against a wall, waiting in good faith for a feast, while his hosts counseled murder above his head. A Lord who told him ﷺ what was coming, and a Messenger who simply stood and walked away without a word. A notice of ten days where every empire of every age would have sent fire instead. A siege without a drop of blood, terms without vengeance, exiles leaving rich and free to carry away everything but their weapons. And then, settling over the whole event like light, an entire surah, so that no generation after would ever have to take anyone's word for what happened here. The Prophet ﷺ never needed treachery to win, and never once answered it in its own currency.

So take the threads down into your own days. Let loyalty find its true address: Muhammad ibn Maslamah loved his old friends and still delivered the notice, because Islam had come and changed everything, and when friendship argues with Allah and His Messenger ﷺ, friendship loses. Test every promise against its delivery, not against how grand it sounds, for Abdullah ibn Ubayy swore exile and war and two thousand spears and delivered nothing, and Allah compared that whole pattern to Shaytan: urge a man toward ruin, then step back and say, I am free of you. Trust nothing to stand between you and your Lord, no fortress and no wall, for they thought their fortresses would protect them from Allah, and whatever you shelter behind instead of Him will fail you at exactly the hour you need it most. And believe, as the Sheikh states it like a settled law of this path, that whatever you give up for the sake of Allah comes back larger: the Muhajirun walked

away from their homes in Makkah without a single coin, and the groves of Banu Nadir landed in their hands.

So end the day inside the ayah that was written for you. O Allah, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in faith, and put no resentment in our hearts toward those who believe. Make our loyalty run to You and Your Messenger ﷺ before every friendship, guard us from hollow oaths and from sheltering behind anything besides You, let what we surrender for Your sake return to us larger than we left it, and on the Day of the true Gathering, gather us under the banner of the one ﷻ who answered a rock on a wall with ten days of mercy. May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger, who never needed treachery to win, and write for each of us a heart that recognizes the truth and surrenders to it, rather than recognizing it and declaring war in the same breath. Ameen.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 53: the expulsion of Banu Nadir (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (5:11, 59:2, 59:5, 59:7, 59:9, 59:10, 59:11, 59:14, 59:16), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

Banu al-Mustaliq

The dawn raid that ended in a wedding and a thousand freed

The days between the great battles of the seerah have revelations of their own, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi is careful not to let them slip past while the eye races toward the next clash of armies. Most books of sira, he notes, gather the battles into one long column and sweep the quieter happenings, the births and marriages and small commands, into a chapter at the very back; he tries to keep them where they fell, so the reader meets the Prophet ﷺ not only as a commander but as a teacher, a husband, and a grandfather. The season after Banu Nadir's expulsion is exactly such a stretch. A teenage scribe masters a foreign tongue in a fortnight. The last cup of wine is taken away for good. Sons of the Ansar, raised in another faith, are allowed to choose it, and heaven defends their right. A grandson is born and renamed from war to beauty. And then, at the end of all this gentleness, scouts ride in with word that a tribe by a desert pool is sharpening its spears.

What follows is among the strangest victories in the whole seerah: a battle won in a single morning, almost without blood, that ends in a wedding, a thousand captives walking free, and the enemy entering Islam entire, chief and tribe together. The Sheikh calls it one of the most bizarre and beautiful of the small stories of the Prophet's ﷺ life. The sweetness, as ever, is in the details, so this day is best walked slowly.

Two weeks to learn a language

Begin with the ordinary genius of a teenager. Letters still had to pass between Madinah and the Jewish tribes, and the Prophet ﷺ wanted eyes of his own on every line: he did not trust the correspondence to others, but wanted someone reliable who could read whatever arrived and write whatever he wished to send. He chose Zaid ibn Thabit, the Ansari boy who had been about eleven when the hijrah reached Madinah, presented to him ﷺ by a proud tribe as the child who had already memorized so many surahs of the Qur'an that he could recite them aloud as a small boy. Learn the language of the yahud, the Prophet ﷺ told him. Zaid bent his whole heart to it and came back having mastered Hebrew, reading and writing both, not merely conversation, in fifteen days. When the command comes from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, you give it everything you have, and a fortnight later you own a language.

The choice was its own wisdom. Zaid was young, his mind still supple enough to take in a tongue whole, and he had grown up beside Jewish neighbors, as a boy even drifting into their madrasa, so the soil was already turned. And Allah was preparing something far larger than a postbag: this same mind would later be chosen, through Abu Bakr and Umar, as the principal compiler of the Qur'an after the Prophet's ﷺ passing. The arrangement of the mushaf in your hands is, under Allah, the fruit of Zaid's care. Heaven trains its instruments early.

The last cup

Around this same stretch of days, one of the longest conversations between heaven and Madinah came to its close. Wine was not forbidden in a single stroke; it was walked back in patient stages, because a people soaked in it for centuries could

not be asked for everything at once. The first word came early in the Madani years, in a verse of al-Baqarah, which conceded that there was some benefit in wine and gambling but declared the harm in them far the greater: a nudge to keep away, with no command in it yet. Then an incident: a companion, still under the influence at prayer time, led the salah and mangled the recitation badly, and the verse of an-Nisa came down forbidding the believers to approach the prayer while intoxicated. With five daily prayers strung across the day, drinking now had nowhere left to live but the deep of the night.

Then, according to some reports, while the companions were camped outside the fortresses of Banu Nadir, the final verse arrived and shut the door for good.

O you who have believed, indeed, intoxicants, gambling, [sacrificing on] stone alters [to other than Allah], and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you may be successful.

QUR'AN 5:90

The Sheikh notes that this last verse did not, strictly, belong to the affair of Banu Nadir; it simply happened to descend during that encampment. It named four things filth from the work of Shaytan and commanded that all four be shunned: wine, gambling, the stone altars of the idols, and the divining arrows of the old religion. Those arrows were no abstraction. They were the very kind once drawn before an idol when Abdul Muttalib cast lots over which of his sons would be given up. A society that had drunk for generations had been weaned step by careful step, until the last step asked for the whole thing at once, and Madinah, this time, gave it.

No compulsion, even for your own sons

Now a story most books of sira pass over, the Sheikh says, one that has to be reassembled from fragments scattered through the hadith collections, Abu Dawud among them, on the authority of Ibn Abbas. Before Islam, the Arabs of Yathrib lived in the long shadow of their Jewish neighbors. The yahud could read and write and carried scripture; the Arabs were idol-worshippers who could do neither. The Sheikh is blunt that the gap was real and cut both ways: one side felt superior and behaved as though it were, and the other felt inferior and knew that it was. Out of that complex grew a strange custom. A woman who kept losing her babies would vow that if Allah granted her a son who lived, she would give him over to the yahud, to be raised a Jew though he remained her own flesh. So a number of these boys, the sons of Ansari women, were handed in infancy to the Jewish tribes, most of all to Banu Nadir, on account of the close old ties between Banu Nadir and the Khazraj. They grew up inside Banu Nadir, Jewish in faith, married among Jews, grown men now in every sense, no longer the infants they had been.

When the orders of expulsion came down upon Banu Nadir, these sons prepared to march out with the only people they had ever known. Their birth parents, Muslims now, refused: we will not let our sons go; let them renounce Judaism and accept Islam and stay. The parents had reason to hope, for whoever of Banu Nadir embraced Islam kept his home and property and was not expelled at all; a number had done exactly that, and the door stood plainly open. But these young men believed what they had been raised to believe. And revelation came down, and this is the thing to notice well, on the side of the sons.

There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become distinct from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in taghut and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing.

QUR'AN 2:256

The Muslims were commanded to unhand their own children. The sons departed with their tribe, Jews by their own free word, and the most famous verse on freedom of religion in the entire Qur'an came down defending the right of Jewish young men to stay Jewish.

Here Dr. Yasir Qadhi refuses, as is his way, to dress the religion in borrowed clothes. He will not pretend Islam offers the freedom of the modern secular state, because it does not, and to claim otherwise would be apology rather than truth. That equal, creedless liberty in which every faith is treated as legally identical is a recent invention, he says, born in Europe out of Christendom's wars with itself, the Catholic and Protestant centuries of bloodshed that finally forced Europe to invent secularism simply to survive its own throat-cutting. Muslims never had that disease and never needed that cure. What Islam offered was different, and for its own age without parallel: we will say plainly that we believe you are wrong, and you will still live, worship, marry, and remain entirely yourself. Morally we hold your path to be in error; legally we protect it. And the verse that fixed that principle for all time came down to stop believing parents from forcing their own grown sons back into Islam: the plainest proof imaginable that the soul cannot be coerced.

The boy who was almost named war

Into these same months came the first grandchild. On the stronger of two datings, the Sheikh says, it was in Sha'ban of the fifth year of the hijrah that Fatimah gave birth to a boy. There is a real dispute here, which he lays out honestly: the majority hold that Hasan was born then, but some say it was Husayn, which would push Hasan back to Ramadan of year four. The two brothers arrived less than a year apart. He inclines, with the majority, to Sha'ban of the fifth year for Hasan.

The Prophet ﷺ was overjoyed at the news and called for the child: show me my son, bring me my son. He asked Ali what he had named him. Harb, said Ali: war, a fine and common name in the old days, a warrior's name. The Prophet ﷺ gently overruled the warrior: no, he is not war, he is beauty, he is Hasan. Eleven months later, when the second boy came, he ﷺ did not even wait to be asked. He simply folded the new name out of the first: Husayn, little Hasan, and that was that.

Renaming was his ﷺ settled habit, and Imam al-Bukhari preserves that he disliked harsh names and turned them sweet. An elderly woman who came bearing a name that meant something ugly left with its lovely opposite. And he did the same to names that praised their bearer: Umm Salamah's daughter Barrah, the pious one, a name that amounts to a woman testifying to her own piety, he changed to Zaynab, a fragrant flower of the desert, because a name should not boast of the virtue of the one who wears it. So his school of names ran two ways at once: turn the ugly beautiful, and turn the boastful neutral. Names should bless without bragging. For the newborn there was the adhan given softly in his right ear, and most of what we know about welcoming a child, the Sheikh notes, we know precisely because the Prophet ﷺ was instructing Fatimah over Hasan: shave the baby's head, give the weight of the hair in silver as charity. When

Fatimah asked whether they should perform the aqiqah, he answered: no, I will do it myself. The grandfather would let no one else host it; he sacrificed the two sheep and sent out the invitations with his own hand.

And Madinah got to watch him ﷺ be a grandfather. A toddler Hasan would clamber onto his back while he was in sajdah, and rather than rise, the Prophet ﷺ simply let the prostration last until the boy had had his fill. Once, mid-sermon, the two small grandsons came tripping into the masjid in long red garments and fell; he ﷺ stopped the khutbah, came down, gathered them up one on each arm, and told the congregation he could not be patient enough to leave them stumbling. And once, holding Hasan on the minbar, he said words Bukhari preserves, as authentic as a report can be: this son of mine, and he always called them his sons, is a sayyid, an undisputed leader, and through him Allah will one day reconcile two great camps of the Muslims. Decades later, after Ali was assassinated, Hasan was pledged the khilafah, and rather than let his standoff with Mu'awiyah bleed the Muslims white in war, he gave up his own power on conditions. By the Sheikh's reckoning he was thereby the fifth of the rightly guided khalifas, and his abdication closed exactly thirty years of prophetic rule, down to the very month, as another sound hadith had foretold. And mark this above all, for it is the way of the people of the Sunnah: the Prophet ﷺ called both warring camps Muslims. One was nearer the truth, Ali nearer than Mu'awiyah, yet the other was sincere and not outside the faith. Believers can err and remain believers.

Dawn at the pool of al-Muraysi

South of Madinah, a day or two down the road toward Makkah, a tribe lived around a desert pool called al-Muraysi. These were

Banu al-Mustaliq, keepers of one of the most prestigious idols in all of Arabia, Manat, one of the three great idols named in the Qur'an. They sat astride a busy caravan highway and had grown comfortable on the trade that passed their water. They had history, too, with the Prophet's ﷺ own house: an alliance with his grandfather Abdul Muttalib from the days of ignorance. It did not hold in his favor. When Quraysh marched, Banu al-Mustaliq remembered the old pact in reverse, siding with Makkah and helping against the Muslims at Uhud, against the very grandson of the man their fathers had sworn to. Their position was a standing danger, a stronghold for Quraysh set conveniently between the two cities. And now, with the trade road strangled and their income bleeding away, the decisive word arrived: scouts reported that their chief, al-Harith, was gathering men to launch a surprise attack on Madinah.

The Prophet ﷺ would not move on a rumor. He sent a companion the chief had never seen, who walked into the camp as a drifting bedouin and offered to join the raid for a share of the spoils. Al-Harith, hungry for strong fighting men, welcomed him gladly and promised him a portion. The plot was confirmed from inside its own tent. In the night the visitor slipped away and carried his answer home: it is true, it is true. The chief never thought to wonder where the stranger had gone. Only then did Madinah move. And the Sheikh draws a sharp line here, because he wants no confusion: this is open war, and every nation on earth has always spied on its enemies, so there is no fault in it. There is a difference between treachery, which Islam never permits even in war, and the lawful cunning of war, the stratagem that even the oldest manual of war ranks as nine-tenths of victory. Yet in his own person the Prophet ﷺ never once told a lie, not even with armies hunting him: asked on a journey where

he was from, he ﷺ answered only, from water. The better way is always his way; but the cunning of war against a declared enemy is not a sin.

We have a report that it was a Monday, the second of Sha'ban, in the fifth year. More than seven hundred men and over thirty horses left Madinah, many fully armed, and fell upon al-Muraysi just after Fajr, before the tribe's morning had even begun. The shepherds were walking out with their flocks, the women going down to the water, the children drifting off to play, and the tribe was so utterly unprepared that when they saw the Muslims sweeping in they ran screaming back to their tents and surrendered. There was barely a battle to describe. Only a handful stood and fought; fewer than ten of the tribe were killed; the rest gave themselves up; and not a single Muslim fell to an enemy hand. Into Muslim custody came more than two thousand camels, more than five thousand sheep, and close to a thousand captives, most of them women and children.

The single Muslim death was friendly fire: in the confusion an Ansari mistook a man named Hisham ibn Subaba for an attacker and killed him, one of their own. Keep the footnote, the Sheikh says, because every name on the list of the conquest of Makkah has a story behind it. Hisham's brother Miqyas came up from Makkah, where he was no Muslim, and pretended to convert. He demanded the blood money for his brother and was given it, a hundred camels, for this was clear accidental manslaughter and the debt was owned without argument. That same night Miqyas murdered the Ansari who had killed his brother, took the camels, and fled back to Makkah. For that treachery his name went onto the short list of those excluded from the general amnesty on the day Makkah fell, to be taken dead or alive. And there is mercy

even in that grim list: it held four men and two women, and in the end half were forgiven; Miqyas was one of those who were not.

And notice who marched on this expedition. Because everyone could see an effortless victory coming, a sure thing against a sitting target, the hypocrites volunteered at last in numbers, men who had managed to be absent from Badr and Uhud and every dangerous day before this. Abdullah ibn Ubayy himself came along. Hold that detail, because al-Muraysi matters almost nothing for the fighting and almost everything for what came after it, and the heaviest of that, the slander of Aisha radiyallahu anha on the road home, is where the next days of the seerah will live. Today belongs to the sweetest part.

First, though, a word about the calendar, because here the Sheikh openly parts ways with nine-tenths of the sira shelf. Ibn Ishaq, the authority most books follow, dated this expedition to Sha'ban of the sixth year, after the Battle of the Trench. But Dr. Yasir Qadhi judges this cannot stand, and his reason is precise. Sa'd ibn Mu'adh, the leader of the Ansar, walks through the story of the slander that follows al-Muraysi, and Sa'd died of his wound shortly after the Trench, in the fifth year. If al-Muraysi fell in year six, Sa'd would already be dead and the narration unravels in his hand. So the Sheikh sides with the earlier authority Musa ibn Uqba: Sha'ban of the fifth year, the very Sha'ban in which Hasan was likely born. The fourth year is impossible too, he adds, since that Sha'ban the believers were away at the second appointment of Badr. He is candid that the puzzle never fits perfectly whichever date one holds, and that scholars have wrestled this knot for twelve centuries, but the lessons of the day do not hang on the year. This is why you are reading this episode now, before the Trench, and not weeks from now.

A princess at the door

The captives were distributed among the army, as the custom of that world was, and the chief's daughter fell to an Ansari, Thabit ibn Qays ibn Shammas. Juwayriyyah bint al-Harith was about seventeen or eighteen, and she had no intention of remaining anyone's property. She struck a written agreement with Thabit to purchase her own freedom at a set price, the very arrangement the Qur'an commands the believers to honor.

And those who seek a contract [for eventual emancipation] from among whom your right hands possess, then make a contract with them if you know there is within them goodness and give them from the wealth of Allah which He has given you.

QUR'AN 24:33

This is the door, the Sheikh notes, that by one position in Islamic law the captive has the right to demand outright, at a fair price and with time to earn it. What Juwayriyyah did not have was the money. Her father had escaped the raid and was no captive; there was no one at hand to pay.

So she went looking for help, and she knocked, of all doors, on Aisha's, where the Prophet ﷺ was. Aisha tells the story herself, in the first person, with an honesty no one else would have dared. Juwayriyyah was sweet and lovely, she says; no one saw her without being captivated. And the moment I saw her at my door, Aisha admits, I hated her, because I knew the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would see in her exactly what I was seeing. Asked about that jealousy, the Sheikh declines to be scandalized: it is human nature, and the perfection of her faith was that her iman conquered it and let it go. Juwayriyyah stood and spoke like what she was, the daughter of a lord: I am Juwayriyyah bint al-Harith,

the chief of his people. You see what has befallen me. I have contracted to buy my freedom from Thabit. Help me with it.

The Prophet ﷺ answered with an offer no captive in history has heard: shall I not give you something better than that? She asked what. He said: I will pay your contract myself, and free you, and marry you. He proposed then and there. She said yes. And so her freedom itself became her mahr; no bride has ever carried a dowry quite like it.

Then the marriage did what no command could have done. The word ran through the camp: the people of Banu al-Mustaliq are now the in-laws of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and the in-laws of the Messenger of Allah cannot remain our slaves. One by one, hands opened, captive after captive set free, until every last soul of the tribe had been released, close to a thousand people, freed for the sake of one bride, with no order given from above and no price asked.

Her father al-Harith arrived soon after, carrying a ransom for his family and knowing nothing of how the world had already turned. He asked for his daughter back. And the Prophet ﷺ did something tender and enormous: he placed the decision entirely in her hands. If she wished to return with her father, he would not stop her. From this single act, the Sheikh notes, the jurists drew a whole ruling, that a husband may hand his wife the right to choose. And it was simply his ﷺ way; years before, he had given Zaid, the boy he loved, still legally unfreed at the time, that same open road back to his own father, and Zaid had chosen to stay.

Juwayriyyah chose to stay. And al-Harith stood and watched his own daughter, free, with the road home lying wide open, choose the Prophet ﷺ over her own father and people, and it undid him. There had to be a reason here, he thought. He embraced Islam,

and because a chief goes nowhere alone, his whole tribe embraced Islam behind him. The Prophet ﷺ set al-Harith back at the head of his people and returned everything: the camels, the sheep, the property, all of it. Everything went back to exactly what it had been, except that the keepers of Manat were now a tribe of Muslims. Look where the morning began, the Sheikh marvels, and look where it ended. No one was forced, no one was plundered into faith; they saw this religion from inside its own house and walked in. And Aisha, who had every reason to say otherwise, gave the verdict that surely cost her the most: I know of no woman who brought greater blessing to her people than Juwayriyyah.

A man, not an angel

One question remains, and the Sheikh walks straight at it rather than around it. Was the Prophet ﷺ drawn to Juwayriyyah's beauty and her youth? Some pious voices rush to say never, as though desire itself were a flaw in him, as though he were somehow above being a man. The Sheikh refuses the apology firmly. Aisha knew her own husband better than we do, and she said plainly that he would see what she saw. The true perfection of the Prophet ﷺ, he insists, is not to be made into an angel but to be the best of men: a man who hungered and tired and bled at Uhud, a man whose desires were entirely real and moved only inside what Allah had made lawful. There is nothing haram in being drawn to a woman and proposing to her; the haram is only to act outside of marriage. He was drawn, so he proposed, through the lawful door, to a woman free to refuse, who later, handed the open road home, chose him again. To insist he was an angel, the Sheikh warns, is to lose the role model altogether, for an angel cannot be imitated. A Prophet who was a man,

whose hungers obeyed him completely, is a guide a believer can actually follow.

There was vision in the marriage too, wide as a treaty. Marry the chief's daughter and an entire tribe becomes family, freed without ransom, honored without a single coin demanded of a people the war had already impoverished. Had the Muslims pressed Banu al-Mustaliq for the price of a thousand captives, the tribe would have been ruined; instead the message went out that these people were now kin, and should simply be freed. The Prophet ﷺ had sensed good in them and judged they would come to Islam, and within days the judgment proved true.

And the same day asks a harder question, which the Sheikh answers without a grain of sugar: what of the captivity itself? He will not even let the riqq of Islam share a single word with what was practiced in the America of two centuries ago, which he names among the very worst manifestations of bondage in all human history; to use one word for both, he says, is an insult to the Shariah. Look at the system this very episode has shown you. There is one source only: captives of a war not ended by ransom, absorbed into households rather than slaughtered or left to rot in camps, and eventually, again and again, set free. Kidnapping a free human being to sell, the engine of the later slave trades, earns in the Prophet's ﷺ own words the curse of Allah. The captive could contract for freedom, as Juwayriyyah did. And expiation after expiation in the sacred law repeats one remedy for the believer who breaks an oath, who errs, who slips: free a slave, free a slave, free a slave. The whole institution, the Sheikh stresses, is detachable: cut the entire chapter of riqq away and Islam stands perfect without it, which is precisely why no scholar on earth today calls for its return. And he is equally frank that in later centuries some Muslims did join the world's slave trades,

and that this was flatly haram. The Shariah took an institution the whole world practiced, humanized it past recognition, and built the exits into its very walls.

Then put the fiqh down and end the day where the Prophet ﷺ kept finding his new wife: on her prayer mat. He left her there one morning after Fajr, and when he returned near the middle of the day, she had not moved, still in her place of prayer, still turning her tasbih. Have you remained like this since I left you? Yes, she said. So he ﷺ gave her, and through her gave us, four phrases heavy enough to outweigh a whole morning of sitting: glory and praise be to Allah, as many as the number of His creation, as much as the pleasure of His Self, as heavy as the weight of His Throne, as vast as the ink of His words. She was a woman of fasting and charity, the Sheikh adds; finding her fasting one Friday alone, he taught her not to single Friday out but to pair it with the day before or after. Juwayriyyah lived on in worship like that until around the fiftieth year of the hijrah, dying at about sixty-five, in the very same year, as it happens, that Hasan died: the day's first newborn and its freed princess leaving the world together.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to file al-Muraysi under battles and move on, a quick raid won before breakfast. That would be to miss almost everything in it. Strip the morning down and you find that the sword decided next to nothing; a marriage, a mahr of freedom, and a thousand unforced choices decided it all. The day puts its questions to us one by one.

First, it asks us to verify before we move. Seven hundred armed men sat ready in Madinah while one quiet envoy walked into the enemy's own camp and tested the rumor at its source; the

Prophet ﷺ confirmed al-Harith's plot before a single blade left the city. We live in an age that forwards the alarming report before the cup of tea is cold. When you hear something grave about a person, the Prophet's ﷺ method is to check it where it began before you carry it a step further, and certainly before you act.

Second, it asks us to remember that faith is chosen, never forced. The most famous verse on the matter came down not to restrain unbelievers but to stop believing parents from dragging their own grown sons back into Islam. Offer the truth as beautifully as you can, with character that argues for it better than any sermon, and then leave the soul its own yes. Hearts are Allah's alone to open, and a faith pressed in by force was never faith at all. Banu al-Mustaliq entered Islam whole precisely because no one made them.

Third, it asks us to weigh our names and our words for blessing rather than boast. Harb became Hasan; Barrah became Zaynab. He ﷺ steered every name he could away from war, ugliness, and self-praise alike. What you call your children, and what you let be said of yourself, is a small daily dua, worth choosing with care.

Fourth, it asks us to take his humanity as the very point, not an embarrassment to be explained away. He was not an angel but the best of men, and his desires moved only inside the halal. A role model you cannot possibly imitate is no role model; this one you can follow, step for step, because he walked the same human ground you walk, and mastered it.

Fifth, it asks us to believe that one yes can free a thousand. Juwayriyyah's single choice turned a captive tribe into the Prophet's ﷺ family and loosed every chain among them, and Aisha said no woman ever brought her people more blessing. You

will never see the full reach of a good decision made for Allah's sake.

And last, it asks us to weigh our dhikr and not merely to time it. Four phrases, said with a present heart, outweighed a whole morning on the mat. Keep the long sittings when Allah grants them, but never leave the heavy words behind: glory and praise be to Allah, as many as the number of His creation, as much as the pleasure of His Self, as heavy as the weight of His Throne, as vast as the ink of His words. O Allah, You who made the truth distinct from error, never let us force what only You can open, and make us callers whose character does the convincing. Bless our names and our children with a beauty free of boasting, loosen every bondage upon us, the outer and the inner alike, and write us among those who free and are freed. Send Your finest peace upon Muhammad ﷺ, who answered a captive's plea with something better than she dared ask, and let the next of his days, heavy as it is, find our hearts gentle and our trust in You whole.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 54: the Expedition of al-Muraysi and Banu al-Mustaliq (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (5:90, 2:256, 24:33), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration or date, the Sheikh's own weighing has been followed.

The slander of Aisha, part 1

The night the lie was born

The expedition of al-Muraysi was barely a battle. The enemy was outnumbered, the victory so certain that not a single Muslim fell except one man killed by accident in the confusion. Dr. Yasir Qadhi does not teach this campaign for its fighting; he teaches it for the three stories that gather around it, and they grow heavier as they go. The first was a mercy: a marriage that set an entire captive tribe free. The other two belong to this day, and the second opens the door to the third, which the Sheikh calls one of the most traumatic episodes in the whole seerah: the slander of Aisha, radiyallahu anha, a lie aimed not at the Prophet's ﷺ armies but at the most intimate thing he had, the honor of his own home, the bond of a husband and his wife.

Before a single step of the story, hold its ending tight, because the story is built to make you forget it. Her innocence was not argued by lawyers or sworn to by witnesses. It was proclaimed by Allah Himself, in verses this ummah has recited for fourteen centuries and will recite until the Hour. Of every soul in Madinah the liars could have chosen, they chose the one woman whose vindication Allah would make into Qur'an. So what this day asks of you is not suspense about how it ends, but attention to how it begins: how a lie gets built, brick by brick, from a humiliated man, an exhausted army, a coincidence in broad daylight, and a city of idle tongues. Watch the machinery closely, because it has not

changed, and one day it will come for someone you love, or for you.

A fistfight over water

There is a knot in the dates, and the Sheikh, true to his method, shows it rather than hides it. Did al-Muraysi, and so the slander, fall in Shaban of the fifth year of the hijrah, or of the sixth? Two figures named in the narrations cannot both have been present in the same year, yet both names sit in Sahih al-Bukhari with sound chains; the memories of narrators decades later got crossed. Dr. Yasir Qadhi follows the fifth year with most modern researchers, then sets the question down as a historical curiosity, because nothing in the story changes whichever way you choose. So we will tell it for the fifth, and not let the date distract us from what matters.

It began the way small wars always begin, over something too petty to remember. Two young men went out to draw water for the caravan, one of the Muhajirun who had emigrated from Makkah and one of the Ansar who had given them a home, and they fell into a dispute. No book records what it was about; the companions, in their wisdom, did not preserve such things. A kick was thrown, a punch came back. Then one cried out, O Muhajirun, come and help me, and the other cried, O Ansar, and grown men came running. Each side gathered behind its own, voices rose, tempers caught fire, and hands began to move toward weapons. In the best generation this ummah will ever produce, steel was very nearly drawn over a shoving match at a well.

The Prophet ﷺ heard the noise swelling and rushed from his tent to find his companions arrayed in two factions. He did not investigate. He buried the whole thing in a single sentence: are

you back to the calls of jahiliyyah? Leave it, for it is rotten. Sit with the word he chose. Not unwise, not regrettable: rotten, decaying, putrid, the kind of thing the gut recoils from on sight. And notice what he ﷺ never once asked: who started it, who threw the first kick, whose grievance was older. Some disputes deserve a judge who descends into every detail; this one deserved a burial, because to dig through the pettiness would only feed it. His wisdom was to make grown men feel how foolish the affair was, and let it die. And it died.

Then the Sheikh presses the lesson into our own century, and it is one of the judgments most distinctly his across this night. Muhajir and Ansar are not tribal labels; they are honorifics the Qur'an itself bestows, an Islamic division with the highest credentials. And the very instant those honored names were used to pit believers against one another, they became, in the mouth of the Prophet ﷺ, jahiliyyah. Rotten. If a division the Qur'an sanctions turns putrid the moment it is weaponized, what of ours, which the Qur'an never sanctioned at all? Arab against Pakistani against Bengali against Egyptian; this village of the Punjab against that one. The believer is meant to flinch from racism the way he would flinch from rotting flesh, because that is the comparison his Prophet ﷺ reached for. And if the sahaba themselves, men and not angels, could flare into factions for an afternoon, then no community on earth gets to imagine itself immune.

The whisper at the rear of the army

Al-Muraysi carried a strange and dangerous cargo: the largest concentration of hypocrites ever to march under the banner of the Prophet ﷺ. The arithmetic that drew them was cynical and simple. The target was close, there was no harvest season to

keep anyone home, and the victory was a foregone conclusion. So out they came in numbers, and at their head rode Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul, chief of the hypocrites of Madinah, on the one campaign he would ever join. His Islam had always been arithmetic too: he embraced it late, after Badr, among the very last, when it was finally clear there was no profit left in remaining a pagan. Before that his contempt had been open. This was the man who, when the Prophet ﷺ once rode past on his donkey, pinched his nose shut and said, do not bring this stench near me. The arrogance had been there from the first day, and now, with the Muslims swelling year after year, the old jealousy burned hotter than ever.

He had watched the brawl at the water with delight, and watched the Prophet ﷺ extinguish it with fury, for the division was exactly the wound he had hoped to see spread. So in his own tent, among his own people, the mask slipped all the way off. They now rival us in our own land, he fumed of the Muhajirun. It is exactly as the proverb says: fatten your dog, and it will turn and eat you. He was comparing the believers, and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ who led them, to a dog grown strong on his charity. Then came the sentence he would never outrun: by Allah, when we return to Madinah, the more honorable will surely expel the lower. And he rounded on his own circle: you did this to yourselves; you welcomed them into your land and split your wealth with them; had you withheld it, they would have scattered.

But sitting in that tent was a young man, barely more than a boy, whose heart was full of iman, and his name was Zayd ibn Arqam. He heard clear, unmistakable kufr, mockery of the Prophet ﷺ from the mouth of their supposed ally, and he could not carry it. He ran to his uncle, who took him at once to the Prophet ﷺ, and Zayd repeated what he had heard, word for word. Abdullah ibn

Ubayy was summoned. And he swore. He stacked oath upon oath in the name of Allah that he had said no such thing. He is only a boy, he protested; will you take the word of a child over mine? The accusation was grave, the oaths were heavy, and outwardly the Prophet ﷺ let the matter rest. The Ansar were furious. And Umar, present and seething, wanted the hypocrite dealt with on the spot. Leave him, the Prophet ﷺ said. I will not have the people say that Muhammad kills his own companions.

The Qur'an quotes him word for word

Now watch what the Prophet ﷺ does with a camp full of inflamed tempers and a fresh scandal whispering through the tents. He gave the order to break camp and ride for Madinah, and then he simply refused to stop. The rest of that day, the whole of the night, nearly twenty hours of marching without a halt, until the army reached the outskirts of the city the next morning and dropped where it stood, sleeping the whole day away. A rumor is a fire, and its fuel is idle hours; a small thing tossed from one mouth to the next comes back doubled, every teller adding heat. So the Prophet ﷺ starved the fire of its oxygen. No campfire circles, no factions muttering into the dark, just the road and the long ache of walking, until every tongue was too exhausted to wag. He extinguished a brewing fitna with nothing but forward motion. And somewhere in that column walked the loneliest soul at al-Muraysi: a teenager whose truthful testimony had, in plain effect, been set aside in favor of a hypocrite's false oath. Zayd ibn Arqam would later say it was the worst day his mother ever bore him. Allah was about to answer his grief from the sky.

That very morning, on the doorstep of Madinah, revelation descended: Surah al-Munafiqun, the chapter of the hypocrites, in

its entirety. It opens by naming their pious-sounding oaths for exactly what they were:

When the hypocrites come to you, [O Muḥammad], they say, "We testify that you are the Messenger of Allāh." And Allāh knows that you are His Messenger, and Allāh testifies that the hypocrites are liars.

QUR'AN 63:1

And then the surah does the thing the seerah never lets you forget. It takes the words Abdullah ibn Ubayy had hissed in the privacy of his own tent and prints them into the eternal Speech of Allah, quoted back to him and answered in the same breath. His instruction to withhold their money:

They are the ones who say, "Do not spend on those who are with the Messenger of Allāh until they disband." And to Allāh belong the depositories of the heavens and the earth, but the hypocrites do not understand.

QUR'AN 63:7

And his boast about who would expel whom:

They say, "If we return to al-Madīnah, the more honored [for power] will surely expel therefrom the more humble." And to Allāh belongs [all] honor, and to His Messenger, and to the believers, but the hypocrites do not know.

QUR'AN 63:8

He had told his circle the honored would expel the lowly; Allah answered that honor was never his to ration, but belongs to Allah, and to His Messenger ﷺ, and to the believers, and the hypocrites simply do not know it. The private venom of one bitter man is now recited in the mosques of the world, sealed into the

Book until the end of time. Then the Prophet ﷺ sent for the boy. He took Zayd ibn Arqam gently by the ear and said: Allah has confirmed that this ear heard the truth. One night earlier, Zayd was the rejected witness of an entire army. Now he was the companion whose very hearing Allah Himself had vouched for, for all time.

And the restraint over ibn Ubayy paid a dividend no execution ever could have. Unmasked by the Qur'an rather than by a sword, many of his own followers were shaken loose from their hypocrisy and became sincere believers. Years afterward the Prophet ﷺ reminded Umar of the day he had begged to kill the man: had I killed him then, I would have driven many people away; but now, those same people, if I commanded them, would kill him themselves. And Umar answered: I know now that the judgment of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ carries more barakah than my own. Here Dr. Yasir Qadhi pauses for a teaching among the most important of the night, and the most easily abused. The Prophet's ﷺ restraint, weighing what outsiders would say of Islam and sparing a man who deserved punishment, is a foundational case of *maslaha*, the consideration of public welfare, which is a real source of Islamic law. Caring how Islam looks through your conduct, he says, is not vanity; it is his *sunnah*, and why the Muslim must be the most scrupulous and honest person in any room. But he keeps the caveat the moment demands, because it has become fashionable to swing *maslaha* like a crowbar against the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* themselves, setting aside a command that no longer suits. That, he insists, is the matter turned upside down, and all four schools agree: *maslaha* guides where the texts are silent, never against an explicit text. The proof is inside this very story: where the

Prophet ﷺ had spoken, the good of the ummah lived precisely in obedience to him.

A son at the gate

The news reached the city before the army did, carried ahead by the crier who ran in to announce the return. So the talk was already spreading when a man came out to meet the Prophet ﷺ on the road. His name was Abdullah, and he was the son of Abdullah ibn Ubayy, and everything his father was not: a sincere, truthful believer. He had spent a sleepless night and arrived at perhaps the strangest request in the whole seerah. Messenger of Allah, he said, it has reached me that you intend to have my father killed. If you have resolved on it, then command me to do it, and I will bring you his head myself. He had grown up in jahiliyyah, and its old code still ran in his blood: if any other man kills my father, I do not believe I will keep my sword from the killer, and then I will have slain an innocent Muslim in revenge for a hypocrite, and earned Jahannam. So let the duty fall to the one man who could never seek vengeance for it.

Look hard at what is standing before the Prophet ﷺ: a son offering to obey Allah and His Messenger over the deepest loyalty jahiliyyah ever knew. And the Prophet ﷺ refused him, gently. No, he said. Rather, your duty is to be a good companion to your father, and we will treat him kindly for as long as he remains among us. The relief washed over the young man, but his anger had nowhere to go, and he spent it in his own way. He went and stood at the entrance to Madinah, and when his father came riding up, he barred the road with his own body. You were the one who said the honorable would expel the lowly? By Allah, you will not enter this city until the Messenger of Allah ﷺ gives you leave. And so the chief of the hypocrites waited at his own

city's gate, blocked by his own son's arm, until the permission came down.

Hold both of them in your mind, because the story of this household is not finished with mercy. Years later, when Abdullah ibn Ubayy died, this same son came to the Prophet ﷺ and asked for his own shirt to shroud his father in, hoping it might draw down forgiveness. And the Prophet ﷺ gave it. He prayed the janazah over the chief of the hypocrites himself, and went down into the grave with his own blessed hands to lower the body. Only afterward did Allah reveal that His Prophet ﷺ must never again pray over such men, that even seventy pleas of forgiveness would not be answered for them. Until Allah Himself closed that door, the instinct of the Prophet ﷺ toward his worst enemy in Madinah was mercy, and more mercy. That is the heart the liars were about to take aim at. As for the son, he fell as a shahid in the wars of Abu Bakr's caliphate, a sincere believer to the end, while his father had died in his hypocrisy.

Her story, in her own voice

Now the seerah slows down, and you should feel in your chest why. This story wounds because it was designed to wound: the hypocrites had aimed past the armies and the politics at the most sacred thing a believer possesses, the intimate bond of a husband and his wife, the honor of a home. You cannot aim lower, the Sheikh says, and they went there anyway. Yet Allah folded a mercy into the heart of the pain. The fullest account of the slander that exists anywhere, running to pages in Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, is narrated in the first person by Aisha radiyallahu anha herself, decades later, detail by vivid detail. The hardest story in the seerah comes down to us in the voice of the

one it hurt most, and the lecture does little more than translate her words and stand back. So will this telling.

Her narration opens with what sounds like housekeeping and is really a portrait of justice. Whenever the Prophet ﷺ meant to travel, she says, he would cast lots among his wives, and whichever wife's lot was drawn would accompany him. His fairness was so habitual that it governed even what no one on earth would have begrudged him deciding for himself. For al-Muraysi, the lot fell to Aisha, and so she rode out with him.

This was after the verses of hijab had been revealed, near the end of the fourth year, and here the Sheikh opens an important door, because the word hijab carries a meaning in the Qur'an our everyday speech has narrowed. In our usage, hijab means the headscarf. But the Qur'anic hijab revealed in these verses meant a physical curtain, a screen separating a person entirely, and that command was specific to the wives of the Prophet ﷺ, the Mothers of the Believers, an extra honor above what every believing woman observes. And so Aisha, unlike any other woman, could no longer simply ride in the open. She traveled inside a hawdaj: a small curtained canopy, a kind of miniature tent, lifted with her seated inside it and fastened onto the camel's back. Keep that canopy in your mind; the entire story is about to turn on it. Keep the distinction in its place too, because in our own day you will hear someone say the Qur'an's hijab was only ever for the Prophet's ﷺ wives, and walk away pleased as if they had dismantled something. They are half right about one word, the curtain, and wholly wrong about what they want it to mean: it is utterly false that covering itself was theirs alone, for the Qur'an commands the believing women generally, in plain words, to draw their khimar over their chests and their jilbab about

themselves. A statement technically true about one word, aimed like a weapon at something false.

And mark whose night this was. When the order came to make camp one final time before Madinah, Abdullah ibn Ubayy was riding where the hypocrites always rode, at the rear of the column, freshly exposed by revelation, his honor in ashes, hunting for any wound he could give back. What comes next was not random cruelty; it was revenge, taken in the most cowardly way a man can take it, his darkness just dragged into the light before the entire ummah.

A necklace of onyx

When the camp settled for that last night, Aisha walked out, far beyond the lines of the sleeping army, to relieve herself in private. On her way back she touched her chest, and her heart dropped: her necklace was gone, its string snapped somewhere in the dark. It was a string of onyx, a whitish, translucent stone, barely more than polished rock. Stop on that, because the Sheikh does. The most beloved wife of the most beloved of all Allah's creation ﷺ owned no gold and no rubies. The wives of the emperors of Persia wore treasuries on their bodies; the wife of the Prophet of Allah wore common stone, the kind you might pick up off the ground, and she treasured it because it was his ﷺ gift to her. So she turned back into the darkness to look for it, and the search took a long time.

While she searched, far out of sight, the order to move ran through a camp of men who had barely slept in two days. The crew assigned to her camel lifted the hawdaj, curtained as always, felt nothing amiss in its weight, and set it in place. No one was permitted to look inside; no one would have dreamed of calling out to the wife of the Prophet ﷺ to ask whether she was

within. So the camel went forward with an empty canopy, and not one man knew. And here is the thing the Sheikh will not let you miss: Aisha, narrating this fifty years later, with every right to blame the men who left her alone in a desert, refuses to. I was a young girl, she says, I had not yet put on weight, I was light; when they lifted the hawdaj they could not have noticed the difference. She is the one who was wronged, and she spends her own account making excuses for everyone in it.

She came back to an empty plain. Not a voice, not a soul; the whole army had been swallowed by the night. And there, lying exactly where her camel had knelt, was the necklace, found at last, now that it could do her no good at all. She did not scream, and she did not run blindly into the dark after the vanished column. She reasoned, calmly, like a believer: when they find me missing, they will come back, and this is the spot they will return to. So she sat down where she had been left, a young girl utterly alone in an open desert, without a drop of water, and her trust in her Lord was so settled that she lay down and fell asleep. Take the measure of that faith. Most of us could not close our eyes in such a place for terror; she slept like a child certain she has not been forgotten by the One who counts.

Not one word, and the birth of the lie

She woke to the sound of a man's voice raised in the remembrance of Allah. A companion named Safwan had slept clean through the army's departure, that being simply his nature, and was now making his own way back toward Madinah alone, far behind everyone else. Coming across the plain he saw a single figure asleep on the open ground, and he recognized her, for he had seen Aisha in the years before the curtain came down. The shock of it pulled the remembrance of Allah from his tongue,

and it was that dhikr that woke her: a quiet sign, the Sheikh notes, of what that generation rehearsed, that even surprise came out of their mouths as remembrance rather than a curse. She woke, and at once covered her face with her jilbab. And then, she swears it herself, with an oath she would repeat the rest of her life: by Allah, he did not speak one single word to me.

He did not speak to her. He brought his camel near and made it kneel, then turned his back and walked away, so that she could rise and mount unseen. Then he took the lead rope and walked, on foot, leading the camel that carried the Mother of the Believers across the desert, hour after hour, until they caught up with the army just as it was about to enter Madinah. No questions, no conversation, no glance backward: a gentleman of this ummah doing the plainest right thing in the plainest, most careful way it could be done. Hold his name gently, the Sheikh says, because the liars would not. Safwan had not even married at this point in his life; he would later die a shahid in the conquest of Armenia, and his grave lies there to this day.

But they arrived in the full light of day, in front of everyone: one man on foot, leading a camel, and seated upon it the wife of the Prophet ﷺ. And the rear of an army is exactly where the hypocrites ride. Aisha herself marks the moment: that, she says, was when the rumor began, and the one who took it up was Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul. Out of an act of pure, innocent kindness, a humiliated man began, in broad daylight, to assemble his revenge.

In Madinah the fever took her: one whole month of it. She lay burning in her room, cut off from the circles of women where the talk of the city ran, and so, in the strange mercy of it, she heard nothing, while outside her door the lie did what lies do. It passed

from mouth to mouth, swelling with every teller, because too few would do the one thing that kills a rumor: refuse to carry it. And here the Sheikh dwells on something he finds genuinely beautiful. In fourteen centuries of books of seerah, not one author who ever wrote this episode wrote down what the rumor actually claimed. They could not bring themselves to put it on the page. It is simply al-ifk, the lie, and the reader is trusted to need no more. Set that adab beside a culture that prints every sordid scandal across the front page, and learn the lesson our scholars carried in their very pens: what you spread, you normalize, and what you normalize, you slowly become. Even of true sins the religion commands, cover them; of a lie against the innocent, there was never the slightest question.

And here the lecture pauses, and so does the day, deliberately and mid-breath. She is home in Madinah, feverish, entirely innocent, and the very last soul in the city to know what is being whispered about her in the streets. The lie is loose and growing; Allah's answer has not yet come down. Tomorrow the whisper will reach her own ears at last, the hardest month of her young life will begin in earnest, and from above the seven heavens the vindication will start, slowly, to gather.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read this day as a piece of ancient palace intrigue safely sealed in the past, and to feel nothing but pity for a wronged girl long since vindicated. That would be to miss every question it is pressing into your own life right now. A lie is built, not born whole, and this day shows you the assembly line. It needs a wounded ego, and there was Abdullah ibn Ubayy at the rear of the column with his honor in ashes. It needs a misread coincidence, and there was a kind man leading a camel in the

daylight. It needs idle hours, the very thing the Prophet ﷺ had tried to march out of his army. And it needs carriers, mouths willing to pass the thing along and add a little heat, because too few would let it die in their hands. Look honestly at how often you have been one of those carriers, not the inventor of a lie but its courier, repeating what you could not verify about someone who was not there to answer. The machinery does not run without you, and it does not run if you refuse your link in the chain. Be the place where whispers end: refuse to carry what you would hate carried about you, and think well of the believers when the easy and exciting thing is to think the worst.

There is one image to carry down into your ordinary days: a young girl alone in a dark and empty desert, with no water and not a soul in sight, who reasoned that her Lord would not lose her, lay down, and slept. Around her, men were beginning to build a lie that would put her through the hardest month of her life. Above her, the One who would answer that lie in words this ummah still recites had already begun to write her vindication. She could see none of it; she simply trusted, and rested. Be like that in your own narrow nights. Do the plain right thing, like Safwan, and say nothing more. Tell the truth, like Zayd, and leave its confirmation to Allah. And when you have been wronged and cannot yet see the answer, sit down where your Lord has placed you, think well of Him, and rest in the certainty that He has not forgotten you. May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, whose mercy reached even his enemies, guard our tongues from slander and our hearts from thinking ill of the innocent, and gather us on the Day every whisper is weighed with Aisha, the truthful daughter of the truthful, and with her beloved ﷺ.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 55: the return from al-Muraysi and the slander of Aisha, part 1 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (63:1, 63:7, 63:8), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The Slander of Aisha, Part 2

When the answer came from above seven heavens

The campaign against Banu al-Mustaliq was over, and on the road home a small accident had happened that anyone could see was nothing at all. Aisha, radiyallahu anha, barely into her teens and the most beloved of the wives of the Prophet ﷺ, had been left behind when the caravan moved off in the dark, and was brought back on the camel of a chaste young companion, Safwan ibn al-Muattal, a man so reserved that in all the hours of that return he had spoken to her a single phrase and no more. She herself testified to it: she never heard one word from him beyond that. He walked ahead leading the animal while she rode, and caught the caravan before it reached Madinah. Nothing had happened, and everyone with eyes could see it.

But there was one man in Madinah who did not need anything to have happened. Abdullah ibn Ubayy, the head of the hypocrites, had just been stripped bare by the Qur'an itself, his lying exposed in verses Allah sent down testifying that the hypocrites swear to you while Allah knows they lie. His own people had begun to abandon him, and he was burning to get even, so low that he would do it in any way he could find. He looked at that innocent scene, a young woman and an upright young man on the road, and he saw a weapon. Out of it he built the ugliest lie in the entire seerah.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi opens this chapter by pausing over something genuinely amazing: in fourteen centuries, not one of the books of sira ever actually spells the slander out. None of them, to our own times, says explicitly what was alleged. This is the utmost respect the Muslims hold for the honor of the Prophet ﷺ, because to insult his wife is to insult him, and any man, the Sheikh observes, grows angrier when his wife is slandered than even she does, for it is his honor that is attacked. His household is dearer to the believers than their own families, and his wives are part of that household by the plain words of the Qur'an. So the lie is never named. Today it runs its full month, a young woman's tears finally run dry, and then Allah speaks. This is the day our mother was vindicated from above the seven heavens.

A month of not knowing

The whole city filled with whispers, and the one person it never reached was the one it was about. Aisha came home and thought nothing of the small delay on the road. Then she fell into an ordinary fever and lay bedridden for an entire month, while the rumor moved through Madinah like fire through dry grass and no one could bring themselves to tell her. The hypocrites had aimed at her precisely because she was the most beloved, the most innocent, the youngest, innocent in a way that, as the Sheikh puts it, did not yet even understand how evil people can become. She had never had a wicked thought cross her own mind, and so she could not imagine one in anyone else.

Only one thing troubled her, so small that only a wife would have caught it: the tenderness she was used to was missing. The Prophet ﷺ would come in, ask how she was, and leave, with none of the usual warmth. She wondered at it, let it pass, and had no idea that beneath that faint change a whole city was talking.

Hold that month from his side too, ﷺ, because the episode insists upon it, and it is one of the great themes the Sheikh draws from the whole story: the humanity of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. He is a human being, not a god and not a demigod, and on this matter no revelation had yet come down. For thirty days the best of creation carried the churning heart of a husband who has heard something said about his wife. His every instinct told him she was free of it, and he would defend her in public. But he could not decree the truth into the open by his own will, for the truth he needed came only from his Lord, and he would not drop filth like this onto the bed of a sick girl whose room sat beside his masjid. So he waited on Allah, and Allah, for a wisdom that would only be revealed at the end, kept him waiting.

The night she found out

When the fever finally broke she went out one night with Umm Mistah, a first cousin of Abu Bakr and so, to Aisha, almost an aunt. They walked to the open ground the women of Madinah used in those days before houses had washrooms inside them.

On the way back, Umm Mistah tripped on her own garment and, out of nowhere, burst out with a curse against her own son: may Mistah perish. Aisha was stunned: how can you say that about your own son, she demanded, a man who witnessed Badr? Three years on, to be one of the people of Badr was already the highest honor a believer could carry in the city. Look at her in that moment, the Sheikh says: she defends a believer's honor by pure reflex, knowing nothing of why his mother is angry, simply because her Prophet ﷺ had taught her not to speak ill of others behind their backs. And the cruelest part of it: she is shielding a man who has spent the last month wounding her honor, and she does not know it.

My dear child, said Umm Mistah, do you not know? And then she told her. Some accounts say Aisha fainted where she stood, unable to believe a human being could say such a thing about her. The sickness that came over her now was worse than the whole month of fever, grief doing what no illness had. And yet still she did not collapse in front of anyone. She asked the Prophet ﷺ for permission to go to her parents' house, to verify the news from the only two people she could break down in front of. He gave it, not knowing she had already learned everything. A newlywed barely in her teens, struck with the worst news of her life, and she composes herself and verifies before she reacts: a maturity, the Sheikh notes, that shames many three times her age.

She reached her mother and asked her straight: what are the people saying? Umm Ruman tried to lay it down gently. Be easy on yourself, my daughter; rarely is there a woman beautiful and beloved to her husband, with co-wives besides, except that they find things to say about her. It was meant as comfort. But comfort that does not deny is confirmation, and Aisha heard it as such. Subhan Allah, she said, have people actually said this? And she wept that whole night and into the morning, with no rest in her at all.

The goat and the dough

For a month he ﷺ had held the matter inside, partly to shield the sick girl in the room beside the masjid, and that very shielding had carried a hidden cost: while he kept silent to protect her, the fire in the background fed on the silence and grew. Her going out to her parents now set him free to move, and within a day or two everything happened at once. First he sought counsel. He called the two of his household he trusted most: Ali, his cousin and son-

in-law, raised from boyhood in the house of Khadijah; and Usama ibn Zayd, the beloved son of a beloved father, a boy of perhaps thirteen or fourteen, born into the Prophet's ﷺ own home.

Sit with that, the Sheikh urges, because the men of this ummah in particular need to feel it: the wisest of all creation gathers a teenager to ask his advice. We have a real problem taking counsel from anyone, and here is our Prophet ﷺ broadening his own horizon by asking. Usama answered without hesitation: we know nothing of your family but good; this is not possible. Ali's answer was different in temperature: Allah has placed no narrowness upon you, and there are many women besides her; but if you want the truth, ask her servant girl, she will tell you what we cannot. Nothing Ali said was untrue, and his counsel was sound. But Aisha, telling the story years later, still lets you hear which answer had warmed her, for Usama had defended her outright while Ali had merely left the door of doubt ajar. There were small, human tensions between her and Ali, then and long afterward, that would surface one day at the Battle of the Camel. And the Sheikh is careful here: both of them, all their lives, kept those tensions strictly within the bounds of Islam and honor.

So Barirah was sent for, the servant girl whom Aisha had bought with her own money and set free, and who had stayed on out of pure love to serve her. Now this freed girl, herself young, stood trembling before the Prophet ﷺ, called to the witness stand of the gravest question in Madinah. He asked her directly: have you ever seen anything of her that would make you doubt? And out of her terrified, complete honesty came the entire case against the mother of the believers. The only fault I have ever seen in her, Barirah stammered, is that she is a young girl who falls asleep over the kneading of the dough, and the goat comes and eats it.

That was the whole file. A nap and a goat. You do not know, the Sheikh says, whether to laugh or to cry: the terror of the poor servant girl, racking herself for any sin she had witnessed and producing this; and the innocence of Aisha, shown even in the one fault that could be found, which turns out to be no fault at all but the proof of her purity. And when he ﷺ asked Zaynab bint Jahsh, the one co-wife who genuinely rivaled Aisha in his love, her answer rang out like a coin dropped on stone: O Messenger of Allah, I guard my hearing and my sight; I know nothing of her but good. Aisha never forgot it. Her religion protected her, she would say of her own rival; the jealousy was personal, and Zaynab never let it cross into her faith. Zaynab's own sister, Hamnah, trying to take her sister's side in the rivalry, fell into the talk instead, and suffered for it.

The day the masjid nearly split

With Aisha now out at her parents' house in al-Awali, a good forty minutes' walk from the center of the city, the Prophet ﷺ could at last take the matter public without it reaching her ears in the cruelest way. He stood before the gathered believers and said: who will excuse me concerning a man whose harm has reached even into my own family? By Allah, I know nothing of my wife but good, and they have named a man of whom I know nothing but good. Even now, defending his household before the whole congregation, not a single name crossed his lips ﷺ. Only adab. And in one breath he raised a shield over both of the slandered at once, his wife and the falsely accused Safwan.

Then a young chief of the Aws rose to answer, the famous narration carrying his name as Sa'd ibn Mu'adh. (The reports name two different men here, the Sheikh notes, and one must be a narrator's honest slip; the lesson does not change.) As for me,

the man said, I excuse you. If this man is of my own tribe, the Aws, I will strike off his head; and if he is of our brothers the Khazraj, then command us and we will obey. Everyone knew who was meant, for the man behind it all, Abdullah ibn Ubayy, was a chief of the Khazraj. And so the leader of the Khazraj, Sa'd ibn Ubadah, until that very moment a righteous man, felt the old pre-Islamic blood surge up in him. You lie, by Allah. You will not kill him, and you could not. Had he been of your own tribe, you would never have wanted him dead. Another man of the Aws threw it straight back: you are the liar; we will kill him; you are only pleading on behalf of the hypocrites.

And there it was. In the Prophet's ﷺ own masjid, over his own open wound, the Aws and the Khazraj were rising against one another while the actual criminal sat untouched. The whole purpose of the gathering dissolved into my-people-against-your-people, and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had to set his own pain aside and calm both sides himself. Mark something even here, the Sheikh points out: when Aisha narrates how Sa'd ibn Ubadah flared up, she pauses to defend him, insisting that before this one outburst he had been a righteous man and the tribal urge had simply gotten the better of him.

He ﷺ taught that four traits of jahiliyyah would never fully leave this ummah, and the very first is this one: blind partisanship for your own people, fighting for your tribe right or wrong. In our century, the Sheikh says, it has simply changed its name; we call it nationalism now, my country whether it is right or wrong. If the best generation that ever walked the earth could flare into it for a moment, with the Prophet ﷺ standing right in front of them, then none of us has any business assuming we are above it.

What the father of Yusuf said

Back in al-Awali, Aisha had now wept through a night and a day, until, she said, she thought her very liver would burst. A woman of the Ansar asked permission to enter, and simply sat beside her and wept with her: no questions, no speeches, just company in tears. We never learn her name. And sometimes, the Sheikh says, that is the entire substance of sympathy, and it is why our Sunnah is to be present with the grieving, because the burden lightens when it is carried alongside someone else.

Then, after a month of distance, the Prophet ﷺ himself came. He sat down, and even on this day he began as he began everything, with the praise of Allah. Then: O Aisha, I have heard such and such concerning you. If you are innocent, then Allah will declare your innocence. And if you have slipped into a sin, then seek the forgiveness of Allah and turn back to Him, for when a servant confesses his sin and repents, Allah accepts his repentance. Hear it slowly, for of all the things the Sheikh lingers over, this is among the most tender. At the rawest moment of his ﷺ own confusion, with the truth still hidden from him, there is no accusation in his mouth. He holds open two doors: if you are innocent, Allah will clear you; and if you have fallen, the door of repentance is open. Even where the sin would have carried the gravest weight in the law, he points her toward tawbah, because in this religion repentance is the key that fits every lock.

When he finished speaking her tears stopped completely, until she could feel the dryness in her own eyes. What rose in their place was not despair but a kind of righteous anger: that the question could even be entertained. She turned to her mother: answer the Messenger of Allah ﷺ for me. By Allah, said Umm Ruman, I do not know what to say. She turned to her father, Abu Bakr, caught between the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and his own daughter, and he said the same: by Allah, my daughter, I do not

know what to say. There is no one in that room, the Sheikh marvels, for whom you do not weep; and one hypocrite, with one lie, had made losers of them all.

So the girl answered for herself. She reached for the example of a prophet who had once been wounded by a lie of his own family, and grief had stolen even his name from her memory. She was young, she explained afterward, and had not yet memorized much of the Qur'an, and could not summon the name Ya'qub at all. I can only say to you, she told them, what the father of Yusuf said. Then she recited his words when they brought him the false blood on the shirt:

And they brought upon his shirt false blood. [Jacob] said, "Rather, your souls have enticed you to something, so patience is most fitting. And Allāh is the one sought for help against that which you describe."

QUR'AN 12:18

So beautiful patience, she was saying, and Allah alone is the One whose help is sought against what you describe. And then she turned away from every one of them and faced the wall. She knew she was innocent, and she knew that Allah knew it. The very most she let herself hope for, she said, was that her husband ﷺ might be shown a dream in his sleep, for the dreams of the Prophet ﷺ were true. As for the Qur'an itself coming down about her, naming her, clearing her, she considered herself far too small a thing for that. She could not even imagine it.

Vindicated from above seven heavens

It came before anyone in the room had moved from their place. The weight of revelation descended upon him ﷺ then and there, the signs they had all learned to recognize: the head lowering,

the heaviness, the sweat gathering on his brow like beads of pearl even on a cold day, as though a physical burden were pressing down on him. The room went silent around a girl who had turned her face to the wall.

When it lifted, the Prophet ﷺ was laughing for joy, and the first words out of his mouth were these: glad tidings, Aisha. Allah has declared your innocence. Her mother said: stand and thank him. And the wounded young heart answered: no, by Allah. I will not stand for him. I will stand and thank none but Allah, the One who sent down my innocence. A month of hurt was speaking, and who would not excuse her? And notice, even here, that her hurt itself pointed straight at the truth: the clearing had come from no one on the earth, not her husband and not her father, but from above the seven heavens, and she gave her thanks where the vindication had actually come from.

What had descended was the opening of Surah an-Nur, the Chapter of Light. The first ten of its verses were about her directly, and by the time the whole affair is fully addressed, the Sheikh says, more than twenty-five verses stand connected to this single incident: an entire passage of revelation that will be recited in the prayers of every generation until the end of time, carrying within it the innocence of Aisha radiyallahu anha. The opening verse set the frame for everything:

Indeed, those who came with falsehood are a group among you. Do not think it bad for you; rather, it is good for you. For every person among them is what [punishment] he has earned from the sin, and he who took upon himself the greater portion thereof - for him is a great punishment [i.e., Hellfire].

QUR'AN 24:11

And here the Sheikh plants the sharpest point of the entire episode, the thing he says it establishes beyond doubt: that long, silent month is itself a proof of prophethood and that the Qur'an is from Allah. Had the Qur'an been the composition of Muhammad ﷺ, his own imagination as his enemies claimed, the acquittal would have come on the first evening. No man tortures his own household, his in-laws, and himself for thirty days, for nothing, when a single sentence could end it. Instead the Messenger ﷺ hurt like any husband would and waited like any servant of Allah must, because Jibril does not answer to him; he comes only when Allah sends him. A false prophet clears his wife by sundown. A true prophet waits a month on his Lord. And so the very lie that was meant to shame his household ﷺ ended up proving that the Book is from Allah, exactly as the verse had said: do not think it bad for you, it is good for you.

Would you not like that Allah should forgive you?

The same passage drew out its consequences. The Qur'an fixed the punishment for unproven slander of this kind at eighty lashes, and the three believers who had let the lie pass across their tongues received it: Mistah, the poor man of Badr whose own mother had cursed him over it; Hassan ibn Thabit, the Prophet's ﷺ own poet; and Hamnah bint Jahsh. Not one of the three had invented a thing. Have you heard? was their entire crime, the news tossed from tongue to tongue like a ball that nobody holds. They fell, as so many of us fall, into the weakness of wanting to feel like the life of the gathering, repeating what they had heard, and it cost them a hadd. As for the instigator himself, Abdullah ibn Ubayy, he was left unpunished in this world, and the scholars read Allah's justice even in that: He did not want any worldly

punishment to lighten the great punishment the verse had already promised him in the next life.

Then mercy was given the last word. Abu Bakr had been supporting Mistah for years, his own relative, a poor man and an emigrant, every description the Qur'an would shortly name. When that same Mistah's tongue had helped wound his daughter, Abu Bakr swore he would never spend a penny on him again. And who, the Sheikh asks, could blame him? Heaven did not blame him. Heaven invited him higher:

And let not those of virtue among you and wealth swear not to give [aid] to their relatives and the needy and the emigrants for the cause of Allāh, and let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like that Allāh should forgive you? And Allāh is Forgiving and Merciful.

QUR'AN 24:22

Would you not love, the verse asked him, for Allah to forgive you, the way you are now being asked to forgive? And Abu Bakr answered: yes, by Allah, I would love for Allah to forgive me. He brought back the stipend, made it better than it had been, paid it for the rest of his life, and gave the expiation due for breaking his oath. What kind of a religion is this, the Sheikh keeps exclaiming through this scene, that takes a father wounded in the honor of his own daughter and, rather than rebuke him, gently invites him to out-give his own wound, and then gets to watch him do exactly that?

As for Safwan ibn al-Muattal, the man they had accused: he swore by the One in whose hand is his soul that he had never in all his life so much as lifted the veil of a woman. During the bitter month his anger had once boiled over, and he had struck Hassan ibn Thabit with the flat of his sword, knocking the poet down. The

case came before the Prophet ﷺ, and the Sheikh calls the ruling an astonishing display of this religion's fairness. Safwan's anger was for a real grievance, but he had wounded a man, and in Islam you do not take justice into your own hands, not even when it is your own honor at stake, as this was. So the judgment ﷻ went in Hassan's favor: the poet, who could by right have demanded an equal blow in return, was instead compensated with a garden, and forgave the rest for the sake of the Prophet ﷺ. The slandered man was not permitted to become a vigilante, and the slandering poet, already lashed for his tongue, still received his due for the blow. And Aisha herself, for the rest of her days, would never allow Hassan to be spoken against in her presence. Safwan died as he had lived; most scholars say he never married at all, and in the year eighteen after the hijrah he fell as a martyr on the campaign in Armenia.

The pure, daughter of the pure

One more house from that long month deserves the closing light, because Allah Himself shone it there. When the rumor reached the home of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, his wife came to him and said only: have you heard what the people are saying? She did not even repeat the slander. And Abu Ayyub became angry and answered: Subhan Allah! It is not for us to speak of this; this is a mighty lie. Then the revelation came down carrying, in its very wording, the answer this one believer had already given in the privacy of his own home:

And why, when you heard it, did you not say, "It is not for us to speak of this. Exalted are You, [O Allāh]; this is a great slander"?

QUR'AN 24:16

What greater praise can a man ever receive, the Sheikh asks, than that his own manner of answering should be raised from above the seven heavens and held out to the whole ummah as the answer every believer should have given? He is not named in the Book, but his words are quoted in it, and they became the model. And catch the quiet lesson folded inside that praise: Abu Ayyub said it to his own wife. Marriage is not a license for gossip; the rules of the tongue do not stop at your own front door. We imagine, the Sheikh warns, that because we are married we may now speak freely about other couples. We may not. What the slanderers had done instead was the opposite, and the Arabic of the Qur'an captures it as something passed from mouth to mouth so quickly it was never even digested: the very picture of namimah, of tale-carrying, which the Prophet ﷺ taught is among the sins a person is punished for in the grave.

So where does the whole episode finally leave our mother? Exactly where Allah placed her: the pure, daughter of the pure; the innocent, daughter of the innocent; cleared by verses the ummah will recite in its prayers until the Hour. Which is why Dr. Yasir Qadhi closes the matter with the verdict the scholars draw, and does not mince a word of it: whoever, after all of this, accuses her of what Allah Himself declared her free of is not merely insulting a woman, he is denying the Qur'an, and that takes a person entirely out of the fold of Islam. It does not matter who they are or what they call themselves; Allah has freed her from above the seven heavens, and to accuse her now of any crime against her chastity is kufr.

And then, in the very same breath, he models the justice he has spent the whole night teaching. The group this question always seems to turn toward: their mainstream today, he insists, does not make this accusation. It survives only among a loud, very

small fringe, and he says this as a man with open and deep disagreements with their theology, which is precisely what gives his fairness its weight. They may dislike our mother and say things about her that are far from kind, and even that is to be answered; but the specific accusation Abdullah ibn Ubayy made, the bulk of them do not make, and we are not permitted to hang the sin of the few upon the many. Be just, he reminds his listeners, for it is nearer to taqwa, and the One who taught us so does not allow even the defense of our own mother to make us liars about other people:

O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for Allāh, witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allāh; indeed, Allāh is [fully] Aware of what you do.

QUR'AN 5:8

The day the ummah learned what a tongue can do, the Sheikh is saying, must not end with our own tongues running loose.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read this story as a scandal that happened to other people long ago and close the book on it. That would be to miss every question it puts to us. The slander of Aisha radiyallahu anha is the heaviest door the seerah has yet walked us through, and the strangest thing of all is what was waiting on the other side of it: not scandal, but light, a whole surah named Light, and a handful of lessons the Sheikh gathers at the end of the night and presses into our hands.

Your tongue can cost you what no lie of your own ever did. Mistah, Hassan, and Hamnah invented nothing; they repeated.

Have you heard? was the entire sin, and it earned each of them eighty lashes, because backbiting and tale-carrying are each a separate sin in this religion, heavier still when a woman's honor is the cargo. Mark the thing that should stop every one of us: what they passed along was, in a sense, truthfully reported. Tale-carrying does not even require a lie to be a sin. If the people of Badr could fall into it and be punished, our gatherings and our idle have-you-heards are not somehow safe.

Even the most beloved are tested, so no believer should expect a road without trial. If she, the most beloved wife of the most beloved of creation, had to walk through a month like this, then ease is not the measure of Allah's love. The more He loves a servant, the Sheikh reminds us, the more He tests him, and the trial raised her rank until the end of time. And do not think it was bad for you: that is Allah's own caption over the ugliest month of her life. The pain was entirely real and the good was entirely real, an entire surah's worth of it. We rarely get to read the good in our own trials as plainly as she eventually read hers, but the verse trains us to believe it is folded inside every musibah all the same.

So take the night down into your ordinary days. When every door on earth has shut, His door is still open: her mother had no words, her father had no words, her husband ﷺ was himself waiting on heaven, and she turned to the wall and said what the father of Yusuf said, and the answer came down before anyone had left the room. Be truthful to Allah and Allah will be truthful to you. Watch for the tribe-shaped reflex that flared even in the Prophet's ﷺ masjid, and name your own nationalism before it names you. And when someone wrongs the people you love, reach for the height Abu Bakr reached: out-give your wound, and forgive the way you would beg to be forgiven. May Allah send His peace and His blessings upon His Messenger Muhammad ﷺ, in

whose household this trial fell and from whose patience we learn; may He be pleased with our mother Aisha, the pure daughter of the pure, vindicated from above the seven heavens; may He guard our tongues from the lie passed along so lightly, grant us at every shut door the beautiful patience of Ya'qub and the certainty of a girl who turned to face the wall, teach us to forgive as He taught Abu Bakr to forgive, and gather us with him ﷺ and with her in a place where no slander has ever entered.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 56: the slander of Aisha radiyallahu anha, part 2 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (12:18, 24:11, 24:22, 24:16, 5:8), verified via quran.ai. The narration is the Sheikh's; the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

The Battle of the Trench, part 1



When all of Arabia marched on one city

There is a word for what is coming, and it should make the hair stand up. Khandaq means the trench, and that is the defense. But the battle has a second name, and the second name tells you the size of the danger. Ahzab. The gathered groups, the Confederates: not one tribe, not two in a passing alliance, but groups upon groups, every clan of consequence in the peninsula folded into a single host with a single aim. For the first time in the long, quarrelsome history of the Arabs, the tribes stopped fighting one another and turned, all together, to fight one man and the city that had taken him in.

This is the showdown the last four years have been building toward, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi opens it by slowing on a detail he usually waves past: the year. Normally, he says, it makes little practical difference whether a thing happened in this year or that. Here he lingers, because here the giants stand on both sides. One reading, resting on an explicit first-person report in Bukhari, places the battle in the fourth year after the Hijrah: Abdullah ibn Umar said he was fourteen at Uhud and turned away as too young, and at Khandaq he was fifteen and let through. Uhud was the third year, fifteen comes after fourteen, the arithmetic seems to settle it, and scholars as great as Imam al-Bukhari held to it; Ibn Hazm said there could be no doubt. And yet, the Sheikh

notes, almost no one has even heard that opinion, because the masters of the seerah, the specialists who piece the whole story together report by report, nearly all settle on Shawwal of the fifth year. Their argument is not one text but the shape of the whole: the appointment Abu Sufyan had set for the year after Uhud, the death of Sa'd ibn Mu'adh that the histories fix soon after Khandaq, the way the pieces only fit in the fifth year. As for the boy who was fourteen then fifteen, who, the Sheikh asks, kept careful track of birthdays in that desert? The stronger view is Shawwal of the fifth year of the Hijrah.

A grudge that bought an army

It began, as so many catastrophes do, with a grudge. The tribe of Banu Nadir had once lived in Madinah, and they had been expelled, and they had earned it. Their leaders had agreed to murder the Prophet ﷺ as he sat at the foot of their fortress wall, by rolling one of the great boulders kept ready on the rooftops down onto his head. The plot was exposed before the stone could fall. They were sent out of the city with their lives and the famous condition: leave your weapons, leave your wealth, take only what your camels can carry. They even pulled the doors from their houses and lashed them to the beasts, because a door at least is something. They settled in Khaybar, not the other side of the world but less than two hours up the road, near enough that a man could ride there and back in a day.

But what a camel can carry is nothing beside what a camel must leave behind. They had owned acres upon acres, whole plains of date palms, wealth counted not in the tens of thousands they took but in the millions they abandoned. Land like that does not stop calling a man because he has been told to go. So Banu Nadir

resolved to take it back, and being too few to take it themselves, they set out to rent the rest of Arabia to do it for them.

Their noblemen rode first to Makkah, a high delegation, every senior among them, and put a proposal to the Quraysh: let us strike Muhammad ﷺ together, and we will fund whatever the campaign requires. They were a strange audience for such a pitch, for the Quraysh did not entirely trust these people and did not entirely stop admiring them either. Here was a tribe with a Book, an ancient civilization, men who could all read in an age when the Quraysh by and large could not. So when the delegation came courting, Abu Sufyan was puzzled enough to say it aloud. You are the People of the Scripture, he said in effect, and you come to us. Whose religion is closer to the truth, ours or his?

It is a sharper question than it looks, and the Sheikh pauses to let it cut. To a pagan eye the faith of these visitors and the faith of the Muslims looked like two branches of one tree, and in truth they were close: the same God, the same prophets, laws that overlap in detail after detail. So the Quraysh, idol-worshippers who buried their daughters and circled their stone gods, asked the people of a revealed Book which path was nearer to heaven. And the delegation, with an alliance hanging on the answer, looked at the idolaters and told them: you are better guided than the believers, closer to the truth than Muhammad ﷺ and his companions.

Allah recorded that betrayal, the Sheikh says, and quoted it back to them word for word, and the believers recite it to this day.

Have you not seen those who were given a portion of the Scripture, who believe in jibt [superstition] and taghut

*[false objects of worship] and say about the disbelievers,
"These are better guided than the believers as to the way?"*

QUR'AN 4:51

They themselves believed in jibt and taghut, the very things their Book had come to destroy, and still they bowed to it all to bring down the truth. That, the Sheikh observes, is how far a grudge will carry a soul: a people of revelation, declaring idolatry the better guidance, because they wanted their date palms back.

The price of the harvest

With Makkah won, the delegation rode north to Ghatafan, the largest of the desert tribes and, by every account, the wildest of the Bedouin. Ghatafan had no real stake in this quarrel; their caravans did not live or die by the Syrian road the way the Quraysh caravans did, and irritation at the new power in Madinah is not a cause worth dying for. So Banu Nadir bought them with the only currency that moved such men: half the entire date harvest of Khaybar for a full year. A fortune, the Sheikh marvels, handed over to hire swords for a fight that was none of the hirelings' concern. These were mercenaries in the plainest sense, men with no banner but coin. It would curdle later, for the first to flee when things turned hard would be that same Ghatafan. But for now the bargain held.

Then the smaller tribes were brought in, clan after clan along the broken trade route, each contributing what it could: fighters, weapons, horses, armor, and, as was the custom of that world, slaves sent to fight in their masters' place. The Quraysh stood to gain on every front, not least in food, for they were not farmers and Banu Nadir sat on the date orchards of Khaybar. The bait was perfect: an offer fallen from the sky into the laps of a people

who had hunted for a way back at the Prophet ﷺ ever since Badr, who had even backed out of their own appointed rematch the year before because they did not care to face these believers alone. Now they would not have to. Almost no one would.

For this was the secret of Banu Nadir, and the Qur'an names the pattern exactly. Their whole strength had ever been the fortress: thick walls, deep stores, a place to wait out any siege. Strip away the walls, as they had been stripped, and there was nothing underneath, no capacity to stand on their own feet and fight. The Sheikh reads it as a law that history keeps proving.

They have been put under humiliation [by Allah] wherever they are overtaken, except for a rope [i.e., covenant] from Allah and a rope [i.e., treaty] from the people [i.e., the Muslims]. And they have drawn upon themselves anger from Allah and have been put under destitution. That is because they disbelieved in [i.e., rejected] the verses of Allah and killed the prophets without right. That is because they disobeyed and [habitually] transgressed.

QUR'AN 3:112

A rope from Allah or a rope from men: a borrowed protection, an alliance bought or begged, never a strength of their own. Unable to fight by themselves, they assembled all of Arabia to fight for them.

Two banners over the desert

When the host finally converged on the agreed ground, the books reckon it at around ten thousand, under the command of Abu Sufyan, as at Uhud. Against it Madinah could field at the very most perhaps three thousand, and likely fewer. Three to one, four

to one, the exact ratio hardly matters when the smaller number is your own.

And as that army gathered, something was happening that the Arabs had never witnessed, something the Sheikh wants us to stand still and see. Until this moment the Arabs had been a scattered, tribal people; at the very most two tribes might knot together for a season to crush a third, and that was the ceiling of their unity. Now ten and fifteen tribes marched as one, under banners, and there were only two banners on the whole of that field: the banner of Islam and the banner of disbelief. Every tribe of consequence had to choose a side. In barely more than a decade, a single man who had begun with a handful of frightened followers in the alleys of Makkah had reordered the entire peninsula into one stark confrontation. But on this day, the smaller banner flew over a city about to be sealed inside a ring of steel.

A foreign idea that saved the city

You cannot hide ten thousand men. The dust of them, the noise, the talk of every traveler, all of it reached Madinah long before the army did, and the Prophet ﷺ did what was his habit before Badr, before Uhud, and now before this. He gathered the companions in the masjid, set the whole situation plainly before them, and asked: what should we do?

The books, the Sheikh notes, record almost no proposals, and in his judgment that silence is itself the answer, because there was so little to propose. When an army four times your size is bearing down on your home, the only real question left is where to plant your feet and fight. The room must have been very heavy, until at last one man spoke who had never before been free to speak at such a gathering. Salman al-Farisi.

This was the first battle of Salman's life as a free man, and to feel the weight of his counsel you must remember the road that brought him to that room. A Persian by birth, he had walked away from the fire his people worshipped and gone searching for the true religion, attaching himself to one monk after another, living years with each and burying each as he died and asking him where to go next, until the last told him the final prophet was about to rise in a land of date palms, known by three signs: he would not eat from charity, he would accept a gift, and between his shoulders would be the seal of prophethood. Salman set out, was betrayed into slavery along the way, and was dragged to a Madinah he had never meant to reach, where he found the man, saw the seal, and believed. His master would free him only for an impossible price in date palms grown to fruit, and the Prophet ﷺ had set every seedling into the earth with his own hands so that Salman went free. By the time of this battle he was an old man, seventy at the least, a lifetime of seeking finally spent in the company he had crossed the world to find. He could give the one idea no Arab in that masjid possessed.

In my homeland, Salman said, in Persia, when we feared an enemy stronger than ourselves, we would dig a trench and hold the line behind it. No army of the Arabs had ever done such a thing. It was wholly foreign, a tactic of the empires to the north.

And the Prophet ﷺ took it. Dr. Yasir Qadhi stops here, because this small decision opens onto something that runs through the entire religion. In matters of worship and creed, he says, the believer takes nothing from anyone; there we have what Allah gave us, and innovation is a defect, not a gift. But in the things of this world, in technology and tactics and the plain knowledge of what works, the believer benefits from every people on earth and never once asks where the good idea was born. Wisdom is the

lost property of the believer; wherever he finds it, he picks it up. The same Prophet ﷺ who would later seal his letters in wax because that was how the kings of the earth corresponded, now ordered a Persian trench dug across the open face of his city. This was not the way of the Arabs, and he did not care that it was not. It was useful and permitted, and that was enough.

The poet who could not lift a sword

Before a single spade broke ground, the Prophet ﷺ was already thinking several moves ahead, as he always did. Once every able man stood manning the trench, the city behind them would be hollow, its women and children undefended, and one tribe still living inside the walls, Banu Qurayzah, the last of the Jewish tribes of Madinah, held loyalties no one could fully vouch for. They had signed the treaty and renewed it more than once, sworn again only recently that they stood by the covenant of the city. But a sworn word is a thin wall when ten thousand are at the gate. So he sent the families to al-Fari, the great fortress of Banu Harithah of the Ansar, the strongest the city had, built in imitation of their Jewish neighbors' fortresses. To it went the women, the children, the very old and the blind, and with them a small boy named Abdullah ibn al-Zubayr, four or five years old, the first child born to the Muhajirun after the Hijrah. And one grown man went with them. Hassan ibn Thabit.

Here Dr. Yasir Qadhi turns aside into a story he calls an awkward one, and tells it anyway, carefully, on purpose, because there is too much benefit in it to leave buried, and because if his students do not hear it from him they will one day hear it twisted from someone worse. Hassan was the poet of the Prophet ﷺ. He was not a man of the battlefield. The companions said so plainly, one using a hard, blunt word that means simply he was not brave,

that a sword in his hand made him tremble. He could not fight, everyone knew it, and so without anyone needing to say a thing he was placed where the families were.

One night during the siege, when the armies were already at the walls and Banu Qurayzah had begun to turn, the tribe sent two scouts to test whether the fortress of the families was guarded, meaning to fall on the women and children if it was not. Safiyyah bint Abd al-Muttalib, the aunt of the Prophet ﷺ, heard a man scaling the wall in the dark and whispering down to a companion below. She woke Hassan, the only man there, and told him to go deal with the intruder. He could not. O aunt of the Messenger of Allah, he said, may Allah reward you, do not shame me further; this is not my field. And Safiyyah did not argue. She wrapped a man's cloak around herself so her shape in the dark would read as a defender, took a dagger between her teeth, climbed down the wall, found the climbing man and killed him, and threw his severed head down to his companion below, who fled in terror, certain now the place was full of armed men. The fortress was saved by his believing it was guarded. When she came back up and told Hassan to go strip the dead man of his weapons, he answered that he had no need of them. Radiyallahu anhu.

Why, the Sheikh asks, tell such a thing at all? Not to mock, he says firmly, for to ridicule any companion is a sin, and he repeats it in case anyone misheard: this is no ridicule. He tells it for two reasons. The first is its simple humanity. We have a habit of making the companions superhuman, and the trouble with a superhuman is that you can no longer relate to him. It is healthy to know that some had weaknesses and even sins they repented from and were forgiven, because then their nearness to Allah stops being a locked door and becomes a road we too might walk. The second reason lands like a hand on the shoulder, and it

turns on what came next in Hassan's life. This same man, with this plain weakness on his record, was the one the Prophet ﷺ stood up and commanded: rise, Hassan, and defend me with your tongue, and Jibril is with you. When the Quraysh attacked the Prophet ﷺ in verse, as Arabs warred in poetry before they warred with swords, it was Hassan's reply that struck home, and no one else's. Abu Bakr could not do it. Umar could not do it. Uthman, Ali, Abu Hurayrah, none of them could. He was given his own pulpit in the masjid for his poetry, not to preach but to answer the enemy in the one weapon they could not match, and an angel carried the words to him. Every one of us, the Sheikh says, has a role no one else can fill, and our weaknesses, even our sins, are no excuse to sit out the good we alone were made to do. When his moment came, Hassan, who trembled at a sword, did what the bravest of the companions could not. Do not let Shaytan whisper, the Sheikh warns, who are you to serve this religion, have you forgotten what you did. The honest Muslim owns his sin and refuses to let it silence him.

The Prophet ﷺ in the dust

Then they dug. The trench ran, by the careful reckoning of scholars who have walked the ground, something close to two kilometers along the one exposed face of the city, wide and deep enough to stop a horse, while the rest of Madinah was shielded by what Allah had already set in place: the harrah on either side, the black fields of volcanic rock where no army can march, and beyond them date palms too thick for ten thousand men with their horses and baggage to pass. There was exactly one open stretch wide enough to admit a host that size, and so it was the very size of the enemy that dictated where the trench must run. A smaller force could have slipped through anywhere, but ten

thousand needed open ground, and the open ground was the one place that had to be sealed. Their numbers had become a weakness, and the believers dug to exploit it.

Ten men were set to each section. They had almost no slaves to spare, barely a week to finish, and the bitter cold of the Arabian winter to fight through, and they dug by hand, day and night, hungry the whole time, for the city's food was already running thin before the army arrived. And what the men remembered, decades on when they were old and wealth had finally come, was not the cold or the hunger. It was the sight of the Prophet ﷺ down in the trench beside them.

He did not stand at the edge and direct the work. Al-Bara ibn Azib said he saw the Prophet ﷺ carrying the dug earth until the dust of the trench had buried his chest, and al-Bara, who knew him, added that he was a man with much hair on his chest, and every bit of it was caked with dirt. He had stripped to the labor like any other man, as hungry as the hungriest of them. And when he saw how spent they were, he made dua: O Allah, there is no good except the good of the next life, so honor the Ansar and the Muhajirun. The believers sang it back to him in one voice.

Hold that picture against the verse the Qur'an had already revealed about the people who hid behind walls.

It is He who expelled the ones who disbelieved among the People of the Scripture from their homes at the first gathering. You did not think they would leave, and they thought that their fortresses would protect them from Allah; but [the decree of] Allah came upon them from where they had not expected, and He cast terror into their hearts [so] they destroyed their houses by their [own] hands and the hands of the believers. So take warning, O people of vision.

They thought their fortresses would protect them from Allah. That was the expelled, trusting in stone, and the stone did not save them when Allah came at them from where they never looked. And here was the exact opposite of that trust made flesh: a Prophet ﷺ with no fortress at all, sweating in a ditch, whose whole defense was not in walls but in his Lord. As they worked they chanted together, every man lifting the final words in one chorus: by Allah, were it not for You we would never have been guided, nor given charity, nor prayed, so send down tranquility upon us and make our feet firm if we meet the enemy, for they have transgressed against us, and if they intend fitnah, we refuse. Ten thousand were coming over the horizon. The believers answered them with shovels and a song.

A wall of trust, and a siege ahead

Understand, finally, what the trench truly was, because the Sheikh is careful we do not mistake it for more than it was. It was not a fortress and was never meant to become one. It was a stalling tactic, an act, in plain words, of holy desperation. The city had been short of food before the first enemy tent went up, and now the believers were sealing themselves inside a ring they could not easily resupply across. They could not outlast ten thousand fed on the harvest of Khaybar. All the trench could buy was time, a stretch of days held open by a ditch and a prayer, and into that bought time the believers poured the one thing they had in abundance: their trust in a Lord who does not abandon His servants. Plan with everything in your hands, the day teaches, dig until the dust covers your chest, and then rest the outcome where it always rested, with the only One who decides it.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi leaves us here on purpose, the way a storyteller leaves you at the lip of the cliff. The trench is dug, and the dust is still on the Prophet's ﷺ chest. The women and children are walled inside al-Fari, where one scout already lies dead at the foot of the wall. Ten thousand men are massing on the only open ground, under two banners, and somewhere inside the city the last uncertain tribe is weighing which way to turn. What comes next, the Sheikh promises, is a string of wonders: the great rock in the trench that would not break until the Prophet ﷺ struck it himself and saw, by its sparks, the palaces of empires yet to fall; the little food that fed an entire army; the predictions he gave from the bottom of a ditch with the enemy at the gate. But all of that waits for the days ahead. Tonight the trench is finished, the cold is deep, the city is sealed, and a believing people who have run out of every option except trust stand at their ditch and lift their eyes to the horizon, and wait.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read the digging of the trench as a clever piece of military history, the day the Muslims out-engineered a bigger army. That would be to miss every question it puts to us, and it puts several.

It asks, first, what we do with wisdom that arrives from outside our own walls. The trench was a Persian idea in an Arab war, foreign to everyone in that masjid, and the Prophet ﷺ took it without a flicker of hesitation, because it was true and it worked and its birthplace was irrelevant. We are quick to do the reverse, to reject what is good because of where it came from, and just as quick to swallow what is harmful because it wears a familiar face. The believer's rule is cleaner than either reflex: in worship and creed we hold fast to what Allah revealed, and in the work of this

world we take the good wherever we find it and never ask its pedigree. Wisdom is the lost property of the believer; go and reclaim what is yours.

It asks, second, what our weaknesses are allowed to cost us. Hassan ibn Thabit could not carry a sword, everyone knew it, and he himself never pretended otherwise. He had every excuse to stay small and silent. And when his moment came he stood and did what Abu Bakr and Umar could not, with an angel at his side. There is a thing only you can do, some good shaped exactly to your hand and no one else's, and the voice that tells you to sit it out because of your faults is not humility, it is the whisper of the one who wants the good left undone. Own your sin, and rise anyway. That is what a believer does with a flaw.

And it asks, last and deepest, whether we know the difference between effort and reliance, and how to give ourselves wholly to both. The believers dug a trench they knew, even as they dug it, could not hold forever. They took every means a desperate people could take, in the cold and the hunger, with the Prophet ﷺ himself buried to the chest in the dirt of it. And then, having done all of it, they did not lean on the ditch. They leaned on Allah, and sang it aloud that were it not for Him they would not even be guided. The expelled had trusted their fortresses and been found from where they never expected; the believers trusted no wall, only their Lord, and dug like men who knew that digging is part of trust and not its rival. This is the balance the Trench was built to teach, and most of us never quite learn it: to take every lawful means within reach and then to rest, truly rest, in the certainty that the result was never in our hands to begin with. The ten thousand held every visible advantage. The believers held a ditch, a prayer, and a Prophet ﷺ in the dust. But you already

know, if you have read this far, in whose hands the outcome was always going to rest.

So carry one thing from this freezing night into your own days. When good comes to you from an unfamiliar source, weigh it by its truth and not its origin. When your weakness tempts you to sit out the good only you can do, stand up, faults and all, the way a poet who could not hold a sword once stood. And the next time you face something far larger than yourself, do every honest thing within your power until the dust covers your chest, then lift your eyes from the work to the One who decides what it comes to, and trust Him with the rest. May Allah make our feet firm when the armies of our own lives gather against us, fill the time our effort buys with tranquility from Him, and send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, who met ten thousand not first with a sword but with a shovel, and led his people from the bottom of the trench.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 57: the Battle of Khandaq, part 1 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (4:51, 3:112, 59:2), verified via quran.ai. The narration is the Sheikh's; the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

The Battle of the Trench, part 2

Hunger, miracles, and the night the city was surrounded

The trench is already being dug. On the advice of Salman al-Farisi, the Prophet ﷺ has taken charge of the work himself, walking the ground along the exposed northern face of Madinah and, by one report, marking with his own hand the line the long ditch would follow. He divided the men into sections and managed the logistics the way he managed everything, from inside the labor and not above it. Now the digging is underway. And from the very first days, something is wrong: there is no food.

This is the second night of a siege that will take four to tell, and it is the part where everything tightens at once. The cold of a Madinan winter closes in. The hunger sharpens until grown men are tying stones to their stomachs. Out beyond the trench an army gathers that is larger than anything the Arabs have ever assembled, an alliance so wide the Qur'an gives it its own name. And before the siege is over, the believers will learn that the danger is no longer only in front of them. It is behind them too, inside the walls, among people they thought were bound to them by oath.

A trench dug on an empty stomach

It was winter, the hardest season Madinah knows. No fruit was ripening on the trees, the stores were already thin, and the cold

of the place bit hard. Dr. Yasir Qadhi is honest with you here, and the honesty is part of the lesson: the books of seerah never quite explain why the shortage struck so suddenly and so completely from the very first days of digging. We are left to piece the reasons together. Perhaps it was the season, with nothing being harvested. Perhaps no one had prepared for a siege, laid in no extra supplies against the day the caravans would stop. Perhaps it was simply that every able man was now in the ditch instead of in the market, so trade halted and what little there was ran out fast. Most likely it was all of these together, a thing that took them so completely by surprise that the larders were bare before anyone could stock them. The plain fact, however we account for it, is that for the opening days of the work the companions of the Prophet ﷺ did not have enough to eat.

What they did have was barely food at all. Bukhari preserves the detail: the companions had dried barley that they would mix with a little oil, a coarse paste, and one of them admitted that it carried such a bad smell they had to force it down, eating it only because there was nothing else. Jabir radiyallahu anhu remembered days when the only thing to be found were the pits of dates, which they would put in their mouths simply to have something there. And then there is the image the whole episode turns upon. The Prophet ﷺ was down in the trench doing manual labor with the rest of them, and as he raised his arm to swing the pick his shirt lifted, and Jabir saw it: a stone bound tight against his stomach. In those days a hungry man would lash a rock to his belly and cinch it hard, partly to dull the gnawing, partly because the body, wound tight, half believes it has been fed. The leader of all of them was starving exactly as they were, and he had told no one. They learned it only because, for a moment, his shirt slipped.

A thousand fed from one small goat

Jabir could not carry what he had seen. He was newly married, only seventeen or eighteen, the same young companion of the famous story of the camel. He went home to his wife and told her plainly: I have seen something I do not have the strength to bear. The Prophet ﷺ is in that state. What do we have in the house? A little barley dough, she said, and one small goat, a kid really, too young to be worth slaughtering, so little meat would come of it. That is all we have. Then make the bread, he told her, and he slaughtered the kid and set it to cook. He went quietly to the Prophet ﷺ and whispered an invitation meant for a small table: my wife has prepared a little food, so come, you and one or two others, and eat with us.

And here the famous thing happened. The Prophet ﷺ stood and called out to the whole of the trench: O people of the trench, Jabir and his wife have made a meal for you, all of you come. Jabir went running home in something close to panic, because the food was meant for three or four men and now an army was rising to follow. But his wife asked one steadying question. Did you invite them, she said, or did he? He invited them, said Jabir. Then leave it to him, she answered, and her faith was perfectly calm. He knows what he is doing.

The Prophet ﷺ reached the food first, and he gave one instruction: do not lift the pot off the fire, and do not bake the bread, until I come. When he arrived, the meat was still cooking. He made du'a over the pot and the dough, and as a means of barakah put some of his blessed saliva into them, and asked Allah to bless it. Then he sent the people in to eat ten at a time, because the small room would hold only ten. A group ate their fill and left, and another ten came, and another, and the pot did not empty and the bread did not run out, until every last person there

had eaten to satisfaction. Long afterward one of the narrators asked Jabir how many they had been. Around a thousand, he said. The whole people of the trench, fed from one small kid goat and a handful of barley dough that had been meant for a single household.

This, Dr. Yasir Qadhi explains, is the very essence of what barakah means: not more stuff appearing, but an increase in good placed into what is already there. The quantity looks unchanged, and yet Allah stretches it, so that a single plate feeds a thousand and a single dollar does the work of a hundred. When we beg Allah for barakah in our provision, this is what we are asking for, that the little He has given us be made to act as though it were limitless. The companions saw three or four such food miracles in this siege, the same pattern each time. Jabir's is the one remembered above all the others, for the sheer scale of it.

The rock that showed him three empires

Then the diggers hit a rock. It sat directly on the line the Prophet ﷺ had drawn, and no matter how the companions went down into the ditch one after another and hacked at it, it would not break. Some of them said the sensible thing: let us simply dig around it, the trench will be no weaker for a stone left in place. But one of them refused. No, he said, not until we ask him, because he is the one who showed us this line. Look, the Sheikh pauses here, at how meticulously they followed even the smallest matter of his Sunnah. It was only a stone, and the defense would not suffer if they curved the line around it. And still they would not move it on their own, because he had said the trench runs here, and so they went to ask rather than decide for themselves.

So they brought him down into the trench, and he took the pick. He struck the rock once, and a third of it crumbled away, and he said Allahu akbar, I have been given the keys of Sham, by Allah I can see its red palaces from where I stand. He struck a second time, and another third fell away, and he said Allahu akbar, I have been given the keys of Persia, I can see the white palace of al-Mada'in. He struck a third time and the rock shattered entirely, and he said Allahu akbar, I have been given the keys of Yemen, I can see its gates from this very place.

Sit with the moment in which those words were spoken. A starving, outnumbered band, penned behind a ditch in their own besieged city, bracing for the hour they might be overrun, and their Prophet ﷺ is standing among them naming the empires that will fall to them. And they fell, in exactly the order he gave: Sham first, in the days of Abu Bakr and the early reign of Umar; then Persia, the great empire of the Sasanians broken outright; then Yemen, begun in his ﷺ own lifetime and completed after him. Dr. Yasir Qadhi calls this what it is, a miracle no historian has ever truly explained. How could a band of desert tribesmen, fewer in number, poorer in arms, untrained against the great civilizations of the age, carve away half the Roman empire and topple the Persian one entirely? The historians have a thousand theories and not one sound explanation. The white pillars of al-Mada'in, the palace of Ctesiphon, the capital he described without ever having laid eyes on it, still tower against the sky today.

The word over Ammar

While they worked, the Prophet ﷺ watched young Ammar ibn Yasir radiyallahu anhu carrying twice the load of every other man, the same fierce and determined youth who had watched his own mother and father martyred in Makkah for refusing to

renounce their faith. What Ammar had seen had made him this kind of man. Covered in dust, worn down, hungry like the rest, he drew from the Prophet ﷺ a word that would echo for decades: may Allah have mercy on you, the transgressing party will be the ones to kill you.

Keep the Sheikh's care with these words, because they are easy to mishandle. The Prophet ﷺ did not call them disbelievers, and he did not call them evil. He named a group that would step outside the bounds of the law, that would disobey the rightful authority of its time: in the wrong, yes, but believers still. Years later, in the bitter strife between Ali and Muawiyah, Ammar was an old man fighting on the side of Ali, and an arrow from Muawiyah's side struck him down. That side recognized the sign at once, because everyone remembered the prophecy: the transgressing party would kill Ammar. We hold that Ali was the one closer to the truth, and that Muawiyah made a sincere judgment in which he erred, and we ask Allah's forgiveness for him, for it was a mistake of judgment and not of faith. Some scholars note the saying may have been spoken twice, once at the building of the Prophet's masjid and again here at the trench. Either way, the words were planted in the soil of memory long before the day they grew true.

The Confederates, and the men who led them

This is the war the Qur'an calls al-Ahzab, the Confederates, and the name is the key that unlocks the whole battle. This was not a single army under a single commander. Quraysh came with four thousand men, the largest force they had ever assembled in their history, with three hundred horses and a great train of camels, and even that was only the core. Other tribes brought their hundreds and thousands, group stitched onto group by bribes

and promises until something near ten thousand stood outside Madinah. Ahzab is the plural of hizb, a party or faction, and that is precisely the point: this was an alliance of factions, not a nation. Because there was no one leader they all obeyed, only a treaty of convenience, the whole thing was brittle. And that brittleness, the Sheikh notes, is exactly what Allah would later use to break them apart, for when there is no unity an alliance fragments at the first hard pressure.

Their leaders were a study in contrasts, and their later histories carry their own lessons. Over Quraysh stood Abu Sufyan, whose given name was Sakhr, now the most senior and noble man of his people after so many of their chiefs had fallen at Badr. He was about ten years older than the Prophet ﷺ, an enemy, yes, but a dignified one, who never once stooped to the gutter taunts of an Abu Jahl. The Sheikh draws a quiet rule from this, with its exceptions admitted: those who sank to crude insult generally showed a meanness that was never guided to faith, while those who kept some dignity in their enmity were, most of them, eventually guided. Abu Sufyan is the great example. He would accept Islam at the conquest of Makkah, and at Hunayn the Prophet ﷺ would hand him a fortune in spoils, until Abu Sufyan said: I fought you and you were the noblest of enemies, and I made peace with you and you are the noblest of friends. Generosity finished what war could not, and faith entered his heart in earnest. His son Muawiyah, born to that same hunger for leadership, would one day found a dynasty.

Beside Abu Sufyan rode rougher men. There was Uyaynah ibn Hisn, a coarse Bedouin chief, who once barged into the Prophet's ﷺ own home without seeking permission and, asked where his manners were, boasted that he had never in his life asked any man's leave to enter. After he left, the Prophet ﷺ named him for

what he was: the fool who is obeyed by his people, and explained that the worst of mankind are those people are forced to be kind to only to be spared their evil. And there was Tulayha al-Asadi, leader of the Banu Asad, who stood that day outside Madinah unbelieving. After the Prophet ﷺ died, Tulayha would be one of those who claimed prophethood, until he was defeated and his tribe returned to Islam. He fled to Syria, and there, away from everything, he genuinely repented and came back seeking forgiveness, which Abu Bakr granted him. He carried his guilt openly for the rest of his life, begged Allah to accept him as a martyr, and died one at al-Qadisiyyah. The Sheikh holds his story up as real hope: if a man who went so far as to claim to be a prophet can repent and be received, then the lesser sins that weigh on us are no obstacle to a sincere return.

There is wisdom even in who refused to join. Ghatafan, the second largest contingent after Quraysh, had been promised half the date harvest of Khaybar by the Jewish leaders who had stitched the alliance together. Before the siege closed in, the Prophet ﷺ explored buying them off, sending word that they might withdraw in exchange for a third of Madinah's own harvest, and there is nothing forbidden in such a thing, paying to be spared an enemy's evil. He consulted the two chiefs of the Ansar, Sa'd ibn Mu'adh of the Aws and Sa'd ibn Ubadah of the Khazraj. They asked him a single question: is this something Allah has commanded you, or your own idea that we are free to weigh? It is my own idea, he indicated. Then no, they said. We never bowed to these people in the days of our ignorance, when we did not know Allah, so why would we hand them our wealth in humiliation now that Allah has honored us with Islam? Between us and them there is only the sword. And the Prophet ﷺ was pleased, and sent the messenger back with nothing. That, the Sheikh

observes, is part of why Allah chose the Ansar to carry this religion: a people who had never been conquered, never been made to kneel, and would not learn the posture now.

The longest, most fearful nights

The believers camped with their backs to the mountain of Sila and the trench before them, with Madinah at their rear. The women and children were gathered into the fortress of one of the Ansar, a stronghold called Fari, for fear of treachery from inside the city. The trench itself had taken perhaps six days to dig, no more than two weeks, but the siege stretched on for the better part of a month, and across all those freezing days and nights the believers held the line of the ditch.

Aisha radiyallahu anha was there, in the Prophet's ﷺ own tent, for she would not be parted from him. She said afterward that she had witnessed many battles in which there was fighting and fear, but never one more exhausting, never one more terrifying for the Muslims, than this. Her fear, she said, was for the women and children at the mercy of the tribe inside the walls. Shifts of companions patrolled the entire length of the trench all night long, in the freezing dark, and their task was simply to call out Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar, so that any enemy creeping toward the ditch in the blackness would believe a great host stood waiting on the other side. There were no lights to string along miles of open ground. There were only voices in the cold, and Aisha said you could hear the takbir of the patrols going round and round until the dawn.

The Prophet ﷺ took a watch of his own, standing guard over a stretch of the valley like any of them. One bitter night Abbad ibn Bishr came to the tent in his armor, the clinking of it carrying through the dark, and offered to stand the Prophet's ﷺ shift so

that he might rest. The Prophet ﷺ lay down, and he was so worn through with exhaustion that he fell at once into a sleep deep enough that they could hear him breathing. And through it all the men would step out into the cold to keep their watch, then duck back into shelter only long enough to thaw a little before going out again. Hungry, sleepless, frozen. It was precisely here, at the lowest point of their strength, that the heaviest blow fell.

The treachery within

Inside Madinah, behind the trench and the believers' backs, lived the Jewish tribe of Banu Qurayzah, still bound to the Muslims by the treaty of the city. Huyayy ibn Akhtab, chief of the already exiled Banu an-Nadir and among the bitterest enemies of the Prophet ﷺ, slipped back into the city he knew intimately, for the trench could keep out armies but not a single man who knew every lane of the place. He went to the leader of Banu Qurayzah, Ka'b ibn Asad, and set to work on him. At first Ka'b refused outright, reminding Huyayy that there was a covenant between his people and Muhammad ﷺ, and he refused three times over. But Huyayy knew his people, and knew what could move them, and he wore Ka'b down with promise after promise of immunity and protection and a share of the spoils, until at last the covenant was broken. Now the danger was no longer only the ten thousand in front of the ditch. There was a hostile force of perhaps fifteen hundred to two thousand fighting men inside the city, and the women and children barely shielded from them.

The Prophet ﷺ did not act on rumor. The treachery began as a fear, then a whisper, and he would not move against an entire tribe on a presumption. I fear something from Banu Qurayzah, he said. Who will go and find out? Az-Zubayr ibn al-Awwam stood up, alone, to go and spy on them, a very brave thing to do single-

handed, and the Prophet ﷺ said the famous words: every prophet has a disciple, and my disciple is az-Zubayr. Az-Zubayr came back to report that the treaty was undone. But because certainty had to be total before any action, the Prophet ﷺ sent four leaders of the Aws who had been close to the tribe before Islam to put the question directly, telling them to announce it openly if the news was good but to give him only a hint if it was bad, so as not to break the believers' spirit. They went, and Ka'b ibn Asad met them with arrogance and denial. Who is Muhammad, he said, we have no treaty with him, and by one report he had already torn the document up. One of the four, enraged, began to curse him, and Ka'b answered that the matter between them was now beyond cursing. The four came back and confirmed it: the treaty was no longer named or honored, treachery plainly in the air.

Now picture it as the believers did. Ten thousand outside the ditch. Some two thousand turned hostile inside it. The women and children exposed, the food all but gone, the nights freezing, the men sleepless, and no sign anywhere of where help could possibly come from. This, so many of them said afterward, was the worst night of their lives. And it is precisely this moment that Allah Himself describes in Surah al-Ahzab:

[Remember] when they came at you from above you and from below you, and when eyes shifted [in fear], and hearts reached the throats, and you assumed about Allah [various] assumptions.

QUR'AN 33:10

They came at you from above, the Sheikh explains, meaning the Confederates massed beyond the trench, and from below you, meaning Banu Qurayzah risen within the city, the enemy now on

every side. And the description of the heart climbing into the throat is no figure of speech invented by a poet. Anyone who has ever stood in a genuinely life threatening moment knows the sensation exactly, the heart straining as though it would force its way up and out. The believers reached that edge, and some among them, sincere companions, began to entertain the dark assumption the verse records, that Allah might not help them after all. The next ayah does not soften it:

There the believers were tested and shaken with a severe shaking.

QUR'AN 33:11

Shaken to the very core, and the Sheikh is careful to draw the right conclusion from it. To be shaken in a real crisis is not hypocrisy. It is not the serene certainty of an Abu Bakr or an Umar, which sits far above, but it is not the disease of the hypocrite either. It is only the proof that a believer has not yet reached the highest rank, that his trust, real and saving, is not yet flawless. Put yourself honestly in their place: weeks gone by, the food dwindling, ten thousand outside and an army within, and no human eye able to see the way out. Of course the heart trembles. And it was here, at this exact cliff edge, that the tide was about to turn. We must leave them on the very edge of it, the trench held through the dark by tired men shouting Allahu akbar at an enemy they could not see, the help not yet come and very near.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read part two of the trench as a sequence of wonders, the goat and the rock and the patrols in the dark, and to file it away as a stirring story safely sealed in the past. That would be to miss what it asks of us. Strip the siege down to the

experience of the men who lived it, hungry, freezing, surrounded, betrayed from behind, and it stops being a tale and becomes a mirror.

He went hungry first, and told no one. The leader of the whole community tied a stone to his own stomach and swung a pick in the ditch beside the youngest of his followers, and they discovered his hunger only by accident, when his shirt slipped. This is the shape of real leadership, the kind the seerah keeps insisting on: not the man who is served from the front of the line, but the one who carries the heaviest load quietly from inside the trench and lets no one see what it costs him.

Then learn what to ask Allah for. One small goat, a kid not even worth slaughtering, fed a thousand men, because the Prophet ﷺ asked Allah to put barakah in it. We are forever asking for more, a larger sum, a longer day, a stronger body, when the companions were taught to ask for something subtler and greater: that the little already in our hands be stretched to do the work of much.

Follow the line he drew. They would not move a single stone out of the trench, though the defense would not have suffered, because he had marked the line and the matter was his to decide and not theirs. There is an entire discipline of love folded into that refusal: a precision in following him ﷺ that does not round off the small things we find inconvenient. The companions did not reason that way about a rock. We might ask whether we reason that way about far weightier things he left us.

And then there is the trembling itself, and what Allah said about it. He did not record that the believers at the trench felt no fear. He recorded the opposite, that their eyes shifted and their hearts climbed into their throats and they were shaken with a severe shaking, and then He called them believers in the very same

breath. Hold onto that the next time a real crisis empties the ground from beneath you and you feel your faith shake. To be afraid in a genuine danger is not the failure. The failure would have been to let go of the rope. They trembled, and they held the line through the trembling, and they waited for Allah, and that holding through the fear is itself a station of faith. The Prophet ﷺ named Sham and Persia and Yemen while penned behind a ditch with nothing, and the keys he promised were real keys. They simply turned years later, long after the night that looked like the promise's opposite.

So take this night down into your own narrow places. When the burden falls, carry it quietly from inside the work. Ask Allah not only for more, but for barakah in the little you already hold. And when the ground shakes and the help is nowhere in sight and your own heart climbs into your throat, do not mistake the trembling for the end of your faith. Hold the line in the dark, keep calling on your Lord, and wait, because the help that came to the trench is the help of the One who does not change. May Allah, who fed a thousand from the little in Jabir's house, put barakah in our little; who steadied the hearts that reached the throats at the trench, steady ours when the ground shakes beneath us; and gather us with His Messenger ﷺ, who went hungry so that we might be fed.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 58: the Battle of the Trench, part 2 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (33:10, 33:11), verified via quran.ai.

The Battle of Khandaq, part 3: the siege from within

The night the believers were shaken to the core

The trench held. Ten thousand men had ridden up to the edge of Madinah expecting an open plain and a quick slaughter, and instead they found a ditch they could not cross, dug across the one exposed flank of the city by a people who had never seen such a thing in the wars of the Arabs. So the great army did the only thing left to it. It sat down. We have ten thousand, the chiefs reasoned, we have supplies and we can fetch more, and the believers are trapped inside with nowhere to run. It is a waiting game now, and we will win it.

But a siege is not won at the walls alone. It is won, or lost, in the hearts of the people penned inside them, and it is to those hearts that Dr. Yasir Qadhi turns on this third day with the Battle of the Trench. The danger this time does not come charging on a horse. It slips into the city through a door at the back, it whispers in the gatherings of the faithful, and it bleeds slowly out of the arm of a beloved man. This is the longest night Madinah ever knew, fought entirely from within.

The whisper at the back door

Inside the walls there was still one tribe that had not joined the fight: Banu Qurayza, bound to the Prophet ﷺ by a written treaty, a covenant he had confirmed with them at least three separate

times, the most recent only a few months before. They were the last loose piece on the board, and the enemy outside knew exactly what their defection would be worth. So a man came for them in the dark.

His name was Huyayy ibn Akhtab, a chieftain of the Jewish tribes already exiled from Madinah, and the father of the woman who would one day become the Prophet's ﷺ wife, Safiyyah. He knew Madinah well, and you cannot guard an entire city, so he made his way back inside and went straight to the fortress of Ka'b ibn Asad, the chief of Banu Qurayza. But word of his coming had reached the tribe, and it frightened them, because Huyayy at the gate could only mean one thing. So Ka'b shut the door and would not open it.

Huyayy stood outside and knocked. You bring nothing but bad omens, Ka'b called back through the door, your very presence here is misfortune; go away. I have a treaty with Muhammad ﷺ, he said, and I will not break my word, for I have never seen from him anything but truthfulness and faithfulness. But Huyayy kept knocking, kept begging, until at last he changed his weapon. The only reason you keep this door shut, he taunted, is that you are too stingy even to share your food with an old friend left alone out here in the night. It was crude, it was emotional blackmail, and it worked. The insult stung the door open.

And the instant it swung wide, the real assault began. I have brought you oceans of men, Huyayy told him, the chiefs of every tribe, all here with their armies, and they have sworn they will not leave until Muhammad ﷺ and his companions are wiped from the earth. He knew exactly which nerve to press. Deep down Ka'b wanted to side with his own people, and the only thing holding him back was the fear of treachery and defeat. So he

hammered at that fear with numbers. How could a plan this large possibly fail? This tribe and that tribe, this many men and that many, the whole of Arabia at the gates. He pressed, and pressed, and pressed.

A man who sealed his own verdict

Ka'b's instinct was screaming the truth at him the whole time. He answered Huyayy with an Arab proverb sharp as a blade: you are a cloud that promises rain and gives only thunder and lightning. You make these fat promises, he was saying, but the end of it will leave us ruined. There was a sixth sense in him that would not quiet, this is not right, this is not right. But Huyayy would not let go. All through the night he kept at it, relentless, until finally he played the one card that could not be answered.

To prove how certain he was, Huyayy pledged that if the great armies left without finishing the work, he himself would stay behind inside the city and share Banu Qurayza's fate, whatever that fate turned out to be. He did not use the word hostage, but that was the meaning: I will throw in my own lot with yours. And here Dr. Yasir Qadhi makes you stop, because that is the line that decided everything. A man does not stake his own life on a plan unless he is certain it cannot fail. From Ka'b's vantage, how could ten thousand lose to a few thousand trapped behind a ditch? They had only to wait, and Huyayy's willingness to die with them if he was wrong was the final proof that tipped him over the edge.

By morning, Huyayy had won. The treaty was a written covenant, and Ka'b tore it up with his own hands. Hold onto that detail, the Sheikh insists, because people look at the punishment that will eventually come down on this tribe and tear it loose from everything that came before it. They look at the verdict without

the context, without remembering how many times these people had confirmed their word. They had pledged peace in writing, three times over, the last time barely months earlier. And they tore it up at the single worst possible moment for the people they had sworn it to, with an enemy army of ten thousand camped at the gates. The road to the punishment ran straight through their own choice, and Huyayy, in his confidence, had pronounced his own sentence too. That pledge to share their fate would be honored to the letter. Allah would see to it.

Send me the wise ones

The first hint that something had gone wrong came from Zubayr ibn al-Awwam, watching the perimeter. He could see Huyayy slipping toward the fortress; he could not hear a word that passed. So he came back with a suspicion, not a fact, and for it the Prophet ﷺ gave him a title that stayed on him forever: every prophet has a disciple, and you are mine.

But a suspicion seen from a distance was not enough to act on. So the Prophet ﷺ chose his envoys with great care, the senior companions of the Ansar who had held the oldest and best ties to this tribe: Sa'd ibn Mu'adh, leader of the Aws, and Sa'd ibn Ubadah, leader of the Khazraj, with a small delegation of their elders. Go and confirm this news, he told them, and if it is true, do not announce it; only hint it to me. Notice why. He was not behind palace walls with secretaries guarding the way in, the way of emperors; he was out among his people on the front line, and anything said to him could be heard by everyone around him. If they have turned traitor, signal it quietly, he said, do not spread fear among the people and weaken them. But if they are still faithful, then shout it out for all to hear, so the people are put at ease.

The delegation found Banu Qurayza at their very worst, the most vulgar and foul mouthed the companions had ever seen them. We know no Muhammad, they sneered, and we have no treaty with him. It was a blatant lie, and everyone knew it, the very pinnacle of arrogance, from people who had physically torn that treaty to pieces only days earlier. Sa'd ibn Ubadah, known for his temper, flared and traded curses with them. But Sa'd ibn Mu'adh, the calmer of the two, held him back. My brother, he said, what stands between us and them now is far greater than any insult. Cursing will not help us. The two Sa'ds rode back and gave the Prophet ﷺ their coded signal: they simply named two tribes who in the past had feigned faith with Muslims only to gather them in and massacre them. That was the whole message, and he understood it at once.

When that signal reached him, the Prophet ﷺ said the last thing any heart on earth would have said. Glad tidings, he told them. Good news. He alone, with a trust in Allah no other soul could hold, looked at the worst report imaginable and saw something good buried inside it. This was the final tribe in all of Madinah still outside Islam, and their breaking of the treaty meant that, in time, the whole of the city would be made firm under the faith. Who else could take news like that and find in it a reason to rejoice? For everyone else, this was the worst night of the entire siege. There were now at least two thousand fighting men among Banu Qurayza, with a fortress of their own that they could move in and out of at will, and they sat inside the city walls, between the believers and their undefended women and children. How do you guard against an enemy already inside while another army of ten thousand waits beyond the ditch? This is the night Allah Himself describes, the hour when even the strongest of the companions felt their minds run wild.

[Remember] when they came at you from above you and from below you, and when eyes shifted [in fear], and hearts reached the throats, and you assumed about Allah [various] assumptions.

QUR'AN 33:10

There the believers were tested and shaken with a severe shaking.

QUR'AN 33:11

When the mask came off

Pressure separates people, and this night separated the believers from the hypocrites once and for all. The munafiqun came asking permission to slip home, with the excuse that their houses stood open and their families exposed. But Allah names the excuse for exactly what it was. Their homes were not exposed at all; they were simply too cowardly to meet the enemy, and they wanted only to flee.

And [remember] when the hypocrites and those in whose hearts is disease said, "Allah and His Messenger did not promise us except delusion,"

QUR'AN 33:12

And when a faction of them said, "O people of Yathrib, there is no stability for you [here], so return [home]." And a party of them asked permission of the Prophet, saying, "Indeed, our houses are exposed [i.e., unprotected]," while they were not exposed. They did not intend except to flee.

QUR'AN 33:13

One of them said it aloud in the gathering, dripping with contempt. Here was Muhammad, he scoffed, naming him flatly,

and the flatness was itself a sign, for the believer does not call the Messenger ﷺ the way he calls any ordinary man. Here was Muhammad promising us the treasures of Kisra and Qaysar, the emperors of Persia and Rome, and now not one of us can so much as step outside to relieve himself for fear. The word he used was crude, and it was flung at the noblest of creation in the hardest hour of his life. That contempt drew a line straight through the Book itself, for Allah warned the believers never to address the Prophet ﷺ as they addressed one another, and in the same breath exposed the ones quietly slipping away under cover of the crowd.

Do not make [your] calling of the Messenger among yourselves as the call of one of you to another. Already Allah knows those of you who slip away, concealed by others. So let those beware who dissent from his [i.e., the Prophet's] order, lest fitnah strike them or a painful punishment.

QUR'AN 24:63

Now stand at the far end of that mocking sentence. Six or seven years later, not a lifetime, not even a full decade, the Muslims were eating from the dinner plates of the Persian emperor, exactly as the Prophet ﷺ had promised them, at the close of Abu Bakr's caliphate and the dawn of Umar's. The hypocrite could not see past his own fear, and so the promise looked to him like a delusion. The believer simply had to wait, and trust, and watch the word of Allah come true.

There is a second lesson folded into this night that the Sheikh calls one of the greatest benefits of the whole siege. The treachery was real and confirmed, no rumor and no exaggeration, and still the Prophet ﷺ said: keep it low, do not go

telling everyone. Not because it was false, but because spreading even true evil corrodes the people who hear it. Islam does not sensationalize, even the truth. This stands in complete contrast to the world we live in, where every gruesome detail must be analyzed and exposed, and a heart fed a constant diet of crime and cruelty grows numb to it. Madinah was the ideal community, and still it was not a flawless utopia; even there, the most authentic reports tell us, ugly things sometimes happened. The way of the Prophet ﷺ was not to parade them but to keep them covered, so the public heart stays soft. Allah teaches the same restraint elsewhere: when a frightening report reaches people, the instinct is to spread it; the command is to carry it instead to those who can weigh it rightly.

And when there comes to them something [i.e., information] about [public] security or fear, they spread it around. But if they had referred it back to the Messenger or to those of authority among them, then the ones who [can] draw correct conclusions from it would have known about it. And if not for the favor of Allah upon you and His mercy, you would have followed Satan, except for a few.

QUR'AN 4:83

The instinct to expose, to analyze, to make every ugly thing public, is simply not the instinct Islam trains into you. It trains you to cover, to protect, and to keep the heart of your community soft.

The smallest count of all

Out at the trench, a handful of small skirmishes broke out. At one narrow point where no one stood on the far side, a band of five horsemen flung their mounts across and broke through. At their head rode Amr ibn Abd Wud, an elder of the Quraysh famous for

his ferocity, a man who had wounded and killed at Badr, and who now wore the red turban that was his open boast of death, a sign known to both armies: come and fight me, and I will kill you.

He called out for a duel. A young man rose to answer, in his mid twenties, no match on paper for a warrior with decades of battle behind him: Ali ibn Abi Talib. The Prophet ﷺ held him back and told him to let an elder go. No elder rose. Amr called a second time, and a third, and each time Ali asked again, until the Prophet ﷺ saw the zeal in him and let him go. Amr knew the boy, had watched him grow up, and waved him off: go back, child, send me a man, I have no wish to kill you. And Ali answered him: but I have a wish to kill you. Enraged, Amr charged, and the two horses raised a wall of dust that swallowed them both, and the only word that came back out of it was a single Allahu Akbar. Ali had won, with a blow so swift it ended the fight before it began. Nearby, Zubayr struck down another of the attackers, Nawfal, with a blow so tremendous that the body split clean in two; when the companions marveled at his sword, he answered, it is not the sword, it is the arm.

When the Quraysh called out, offering to buy back Nawfal's corpse so they could bury it, the Prophet ﷺ refused their money. This corpse is filthy and so is its price, he told them; we have no need of the price of corpses, come and take it and bury it. From Badr onward he had given even his enemies the dignity of burial, and took nothing for it. And here is the wonder the Sheikh asks you to sit with. This was the largest army ever gathered against the Prophet ﷺ in his entire life, ten thousand strong, and yet the Battle of the Trench produced one of the very smallest counts of the dead of any major battle he ever fought. Three or four of the enemy, six or perhaps seven of the Muslims, most of those last by arrows showered in from across the ditch rather than by any

direct fighting. You could nearly count the fallen on the fingers of one hand. The largest gathering, the smallest toll. It is a sign from Allah to reflect upon: when Allah fights directly on your side, even the numbers bow.

The arrow that found Sa'd

The true tragedy of the Trench was not any duel. It was a single arrow. Sa'd ibn Mu'adh, the chieftain of the Aws and one of the two envoys sent to Banu Qurayza, came to his mother's tent to bid her farewell before taking his place on the line. The verses of hijab had not yet come down, the Sheikh notes, for they would be revealed only months later, among the last commandments of all, a reminder that the faith was built up from its foundations first and its details last. So his mother could see him as he came, dressed in his armor, and she urged him not to linger: hurry, my son, you are late, everyone else is already at the front. That was the iman of these people, no dallying even in a mother's farewell. But as he left she worried aloud at how sparse his armor was, his chest covered but his arms left bare, for he could not afford more. An arrow struck him in the exposed upper part of his arm, exactly where she had feared, and drove deep. The man who shot it, aiming for the gap, cried out his own name in triumph: take that from me. Sa'd answered him only with a prayer against him. This was the wound that would not close. It bled, and bled, and bled, and in the end it would take his life.

Sa'd ibn Mu'adh was no ordinary man. He had accepted Islam early, at the hands of Musab ibn Umayr, and his standing among his people was such that when he embraced the faith his whole subtribe entered Islam out of love for him. It was Sa'd who, on the eve of Badr, had risen and spoken the words that steadied the entire army: go wherever Allah has shown you, and we are with

you; we will never say to you what the people of Musa said to him, you and your Lord go and fight while we sit here. And the Prophet ﷺ carried this man in his heart so deeply that years after Sa'd was gone, gazing at the finest robe a foreign king had ever sent him, a Persian brocade so dazzling that the companions could not stop circling him to stare at it, he said only this: the handkerchief of Sa'd in Paradise is finer than this. The name simply rose to his lips, the measure of how much love was still there. Now Sa'd lay bleeding in a tent the companions raised especially for him, and the Prophet ﷺ would visit him there. And on what he did not yet know was the edge of death, Sa'd made his du'a. O Allah, if any war remains against the Quraysh, then let me live to fight them, for there is no people more hateful to me than those who have hurt Your Messenger ﷺ. But if You have ended the war between us, then take me as a martyr, and do not let me die until You have cooled my eyes with what becomes of Banu Qurayza. Hold that prayer in your mind. Every single word of it would be answered, and soon.

There was one more wound that night, though it fell on no body. On one of the days of the siege, which dragged on for around a month, the arrows and skirmishing along the ditch grew so relentless that the Muslims could not stop to pray. They did not refuse the prayer; they were so utterly consumed by survival that its time slipped past them before the thought of it could surface. This is one of only two times in the entire life of the Prophet ﷺ that a prayer was missed, and both were beyond his control. When it was finally done, the depth of his anger told you everything about where his heart truly lived. They kept us from the middle prayer, he said, until the sun had set; may Allah fill their houses and their graves with fire. Read that again. He was on a battlefield with ten thousand men at his gates, his own life in

danger, and the thing that made him burn with rage was that he had been kept from a single prayer. Then he made wudu and prayed it after sunset, in its proper order. If this was his fury at missing one prayer under siege, the Sheikh asks, then what shall be said of the one whose business, whose entertainment, whose idle screen robs him of his prayers while he sits in perfect safety?

The stranger Allah sent

Around the twentieth day, with the siege grinding on and the believers worn thin, a man walked out of the darkness and into the Muslim camp. His name was Nu'aym ibn Mas'ud, of the tribe of Ghatafan, one of the very armies besieging the city. I have accepted Islam, he said, and no one among my people knows it. Tell me what to do, and I will do it. Out of nowhere, with the believers stretched to the breaking point, Allah had sent the one man on earth who could undo the entire alliance from the inside: a secret Muslim, trusted by the Quraysh, trusted by Banu Qurayza, and a member of Ghatafan, all three at once. This, the Sheikh says, is what it means that whoever has taqwa of Allah, He makes for him a way out and provides for him from where he never imagined.

You are only one man, the Prophet ﷺ told him, so go back, and do whatever you can think of to protect us. May I say things that are not strictly true, Nu'aym asked? And the Prophet ﷺ answered: war is deceit. Here the Sheikh stops to draw a careful line, because the word is so often abused. Deceit in war means the feint, the illusion, pretending to march one way while you turn the other; it is what every nation on earth practices, what the classic manuals of war have taught for thousands of years. It does not, ever, mean breaking a sworn oath, tearing up a treaty, or stabbing in the back a man to whom you gave your word. That

is treachery, and Islam never permits it, not in war and not in peace. Nu'aym's genius was that his whole plan stayed on the right side of that line: he never broke a single trust, he only planted doubt.

To Banu Qurayza he went first, as the old friend he was. Do not fight alongside the Quraysh, he advised, until they hand you hostages from among their own nobles to keep inside your fortress as a pledge. For if this siege drags on and they tire of it, they will simply turn their backs and go home to Makkah, having lost nothing, and leave you here alone to face the consequences of breaking your treaty. It was sound advice, and they took it. Then he went to Abu Sufyan and the Quraysh, and warned them in confidence, as a man who owed them the truth: Banu Qurayza regret breaking their treaty, and they have secretly offered Muhammad ﷺ to seize some of your nobles and hand them over to be executed, as a peace offering to win back his favor. So if they send to you asking for hostages, send them no one, for it is a trap.

Within hours the seed had taken root. The Quraysh sent to Banu Qurayza proposing they join the fighting, and Banu Qurayza sent back demanding hostages first, and the Quraysh, hearing the very demand Nu'aym had foretold, refused to send a single man, now certain the tribe meant to betray them. Each side dug in, each now sure the other was a snare. The alliance of ten thousand, which the trench itself could not break, had begun to crack from within over a single planted doubt. And here Dr. Yasir Qadhi leaves you, on the night the tide first began to turn, with the army still camped beyond the ditch and nothing yet resolved. The rest, the wind that Allah would send, the lifting of the siege, and the verdict that Sa'd ibn Mu'adh prayed to live and see, waits for the days to come.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read this third day of the Trench as a tense interlude, a stretch of waiting between the digging of the ditch and the lifting of the siege, and to hurry past it. That would be to miss the question it presses on us, because this is the day the whole battle is decided, and it is decided not at the walls but in the heart.

Look first at the glad tidings on the worst of nights. The treachery of Banu Qurayza was the darkest report of the entire siege, an enemy now inside the walls as well as outside them, and the Prophet ﷺ heard it and said: good news. His trust in Allah was so complete that he read catastrophe as the prelude to the whole city being made firm. Every other heart in Madinah heard only the disaster. He heard the promise underneath it. That is the believer's first instinct trained to its limit: when the report is grim, the question is not how bad is this, but where is the good that Allah has hidden inside it. We are quick to despair and slow to look for the mercy folded into a hard decree, when the order of his ﷺ heart was the reverse.

Look next at his silence. The betrayal was real and confirmed, and still he ﷺ ordered it kept quiet, do not go telling everyone, because spreading even true evil corrodes the people who hear it and hardens the heart of a whole society. We live in the opposite instinct, where every ugly thing must be exposed, and we mistake that exposure for honesty. Islam trains you to cover what you can, to protect the soft heart of your community, and to carry a frightening matter to those who can weigh it rightly rather than scattering it among people it will only weaken.

And look, finally, at the two things that burned in him under siege: a missed prayer, and a wounded friend. With ten thousand men

at his gates and his own life in the balance, the thing that filled him with rage was that he had been kept from a single salah, and the deepest wound of the battle was not the loss of a fortress but the arrow in the arm of a man he loved, whose dying prayer he would watch Allah answer word by word. If a missed prayer could make the Messenger ﷺ burn with anger in the middle of a war, then let nothing smaller, no screen, no errand, no comfort, steal yours from you in the calm of peace. And if the promise of the emperors' treasures, sneered at by a frightened hypocrite, came true within a few short years exactly as it was given, then the promise of Allah does not fail; only our patience does.

So when your own trench closes in, with enemies seeming to press from above and below and your heart climbing into your throat, do everything you honestly can and then trust, as the believers of the Trench were made to trust, that Allah can send relief from a door no one was even watching. May Allah send His peace and blessings upon Muhammad ﷺ, who found good news in the worst of nights, make our hearts firm when eyes shift and hearts climb, guard our prayers when the world tries to steal them, and send us, as He sent the believers of the Trench, relief from where we never expected it. Ameen.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 59: the Battle of Khandaq, part 3 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (33:10, 33:11, 33:12, 33:13, 24:63, 4:83), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The Battle of the Trench, part 4



The night Allah sent the wind

By the time this night arrives, the siege of Madinah is almost a month old. Ten thousand men are camped beyond the trench, the largest army Arabia has ever raised against the Muslims: the Quraysh on one front, the tribe of Ghatafan and its allies on another, and inside the city the treaty with Banu Qurayza has quietly collapsed, so that the believers must watch the wall at their backs as carefully as the army before them. They are cold, hungry, outnumbered ten to one, living on dirty water and a handful of dates, worn to the bone after twenty-five days that have ground their bodies down and tested their faith to its edge. And then, with no sword drawn and no battle fought, the whole alliance against them begins to come apart.

This is the night Allah ended it. It is a strange ending, with no charge and no clash of lines, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi tells it as a thing made of small pieces that no human eye could have fitted together: a man who became Muslim out of nowhere on the darkest night of the war, a single companion sent alone into the enemy camp, a quarrel over a Saturday, and above all of them, the One who sends the wind. Not one of those pieces looks like a weapon. Together they are the end of the siege.

The man Islam found in the dark

On one of the last nights of the siege, a man named Nuaym ibn Masud walked out of the confederate camp and crossed into Madinah, and to the end of his life he could not fully explain why. He tells the story himself, in the first person, and the Sheikh lingers on it because of how unusual it is. Allah, Nuaym says, simply threw Islam into his heart. That is his own phrase, and it carries the bewilderment of a man describing something that happened to him rather than something he decided: as if from nowhere, with no preacher at his side and no argument won, the faith was suddenly there. One night he was a pagan camped with the besieging army; the next he was crossing the lines to find the Prophet ﷺ, and waited until he had finished praying. Then the Prophet ﷺ turned to him and asked him why he had come.

That one question tells us something on its own, because it means the Prophet ﷺ knew his face. And of all the ten thousand men gathered beyond the trench, no man was placed quite like Nuaym. He was from Ghatafan, one of the besieging tribes, so his own people trusted him as one of their own. He used to sit and drink and dine with the leaders of Banu Qurayza and then buy his year's stock of dates from them, so they trusted him as an old friend and customer. And he had some old, neutral dealing with the Prophet ﷺ himself, never as an open enemy, enough that when he walked into Madinah the Prophet ﷺ recognized him at once. Every party in this war trusted him a little, and no party suspected him of anything. He had no idea what that was worth. Allah did, and Allah, the Sheikh says, had been arranging this man's life for years against a night Nuaym could not have imagined, drawing the threads of three hostile camps together into a single pair of hands.

Permission to deceive, never to betray

Nuaym offered his services, but admitted the difficulty plainly: no one knew he had become a Muslim. The Prophet ﷺ told him to go and do whatever he saw best, for war is deception. And here Dr. Yasir Qadhi stops to draw a line he will not let blur, because the meaning of what follows, and of what comes after it, depends on keeping it clean.

It is the custom of war the world over, he says, that war has no etiquette of honesty. Every people who have ever gone to battle has allowed the feint, the false impression, the misleading move, and Islam is no different in this. What Islam forbids, absolutely and by the consensus of the scholars, is something else entirely: treachery. To swear a covenant, to write a contract, to give your word of protection while in your heart you intend to break it, that is haram without exception, and the Prophet ﷺ never once in his life did it. Deceit is to indicate one thing and mean another in the open contest of war, where both sides know the game they are playing. Treachery is to betray a promise you actually made. The first is permitted; the second is forbidden; and the difference between them is the difference between a tactic and a sin.

Hold that distinction carefully, because the entire next episode, the fate of Banu Qurayza, will rest on which side of it the events fall. What Nuaym was about to do was clever deception against an enemy who had been given no covenant and no pledge, not the breaking of any oath. He had promised no one anything. He was simply about to tell each of three armies the one thing it was most afraid to hear.

How the alliance came apart

Nuaym went first to Banu Qurayza, since he was already inside the city and they were the easiest to reach. He came to them as the old friend they knew, and he warned them, as a friend warns.

Your situation, he said, is more precarious than you realize. The Quraysh and Ghatafan are far from home; this is not their city and these are not their families. If the fighting turns hard, they can simply break camp and ride away, and then you will be left alone behind these walls with Muhammad ﷺ forever. Protect yourselves. Do not commit to the fight until they hand you seventy of their noblemen as hostages, men they cannot afford to abandon. It was, the Sheikh notes, a genuinely sound piece of advice, the kind a true friend might give.

Then he slipped across to Abu Sufyan and the chiefs of the Quraysh, and he told them the opposite secret, in confidence, because, he said, the closeness of our friendship demands that I warn you. Banu Qurayza, he told them, are having second thoughts. They want to repair their treaty with Muhammad ﷺ, and they have offered him seventy of your nobles as a peace offering, to be handed over and executed so that he will forgive them. So beware, he said: when they come asking you for hostages, and especially if they ask for your leading men, know that those are the very heads they have promised to deliver. Then he went to his own tribe, Ghatafan, and told them the same thing about themselves. Notice the craft in it, the Sheikh says: he set Banu Qurayza against the Quraysh and the Quraysh against Banu Qurayza, but never used his own tribe between the two, for a man cannot pretend to be neutral about his own people. With every party he played the one part that party would believe, and so in every direction he appeared to be exactly the honest friend each one needed.

It was a single rumour, told three ways, and it was devastating, because it did not invent a danger out of nothing. It took each ally's most reasonable request and turned it into the proof of a deadly plot. Now when Banu Qurayza asked for hostages, the

Quraysh would hear an assassin's trap; now when the Quraysh hesitated, Banu Qurayza would hear the first move of betrayal. The siege that ten thousand men could not break, one new Muslim unstitched in a single night, simply by handing each side the truth it was already most afraid was true.

Saturday, and a quarrel that would not heal

It worked exactly as Nuaym had intended, and faster. Banu Qurayza sent an emissary to Abu Sufyan with a hard message: three weeks have passed and you have done nothing but talk. Let us set a date and attack from every side together and finish this matter of Muhammad ﷺ. But first, hand us seventy of your noblemen as surety, so we know you will not turn and ride away once the fighting becomes costly. It was, again, a sensible demand, the common sense of any wary ally; they asked for nobles and not slaves precisely because slaves would simply flee, while a man will not abandon his own chiefs. Abu Sufyan said he would think about it, sent them home empty-handed, and told his people exactly what Nuaym had warned him to expect: this is the trap, hand over no one.

The next day the cycle closed. Banu Qurayza were told what Abu Sufyan had said when their backs were turned, that he would not hand them so much as a single baby camel, let alone seventy of his nobles, because he was certain those men would be killed and delivered to Muhammad ﷺ. Imagine, the Sheikh says, how that lands on a tribe that has put its very survival on the line for this alliance: after all we have risked, you believe we mean to betray you? Each side now read the other's caution as treachery, and the suspicion fed on itself. One of Banu Qurayza's own men, Zubayr ibn Bata, said aloud the thing that should chill us, because it shows they understood their own position exactly: if the

confederates leave, there will be nothing left for us but the sword. They knew the stakes. They knew what siding with the enemy from inside the city would cost them if the enemy failed.

Then Abu Sufyan forced the matter to a head. He sent a high delegation, led by no less than Ikrima the son of Abu Jahl, to issue an ultimatum: everyone attacks tomorrow morning, all sides at once, a surprise assault before any warning could reach the Prophet ﷺ. But the messengers reached Banu Qurayza on a Friday, and the next day was the Sabbath. Banu Qurayza refused to fight on a Saturday and asked to wait until Sunday, and even then would not move without their seventy hostages. To the Quraysh, who had never lived alongside the Jews and had never heard of a day on which a whole people does no work at all, this sounded like a transparent lie, a stall to buy a day in which to run and warn Muhammad ﷺ. Abu Sufyan summoned Huyayy ibn Akhtab, the man who had dragged Banu Qurayza into this war and was now sitting with the Quraysh, and demanded to know what this Sabbath was. Huyayy explained it was their law; Abu Sufyan would not hear it. What is Saturday, he raged, but the day between Friday and Sunday? He swore it was their treachery, that they were making a fool of him, and his anger turned dangerous enough that Huyayy slipped quietly away in fear for his life and went back to Banu Qurayza, pleading with them now to break their Sabbath and fight.

And here the Sheikh draws out a bitter irony. Huyayy, in his hatred of the Prophet ﷺ, was willing to violate the Sabbath, one of the very Ten Commandments his own scripture held sacred, just to strike at his enemy. But the tribe he was urging to sin refused him. We would rather be killed, they told him, than break the Sabbath. In their wrongdoing they still would not cross that line, though crossing it might have saved their lives; Allah had

written the Sabbath for them as a binding law, and even on the wrong side of this war, they held it. Huyayy was so afraid of Abu Sufyan's rage that he did not dare return to the Quraysh, and stayed inside the fortress of Banu Qurayza, a decision that, as we will see, became his own death warrant. The alliance was finished, and not a single arrow had decided it.

The night the Prophet ﷺ asked for a volunteer

That same Friday night, the weather turned into the worst the companions had ever known. Clouds gathered, the cold came down hard, and a freezing wind rose and gathered until it was howling through the camp like thunder, dark and bitter and screaming, the kind of desert windstorm that fills the air with sand until a man cannot breathe and cannot see. After a month of hunger and dirty water and a few dates a day, the believers were spent past the edge of their strength. And into that darkness the Prophet ﷺ stood and asked: who will go and bring me news of the enemy, and he will be my companion in Jannah?

What can the Messenger of Allah ﷺ offer his exhausted, frozen men, the Sheikh asks, when he has no money, no camel, no comfort to give? He offers the only currency the people of iman truly want: a place beside him in Paradise. And no one answered. He asked a second time, and there was silence. A third time, and still not one man rose, not from cowardice but from sheer cold and hunger and dread, the body unable to lift itself after twenty-five days of siege. It was a general call for a volunteer, the companions understood it as such, and not one of them had the strength left to answer it.

Years later, an old companion named Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman would tell the story of that night to a gathering of young men in

Iraq, and the way it came down to him is one of the most honest things in the whole seerah. The young men had been boasting. Had we been with the Prophet ﷺ, one of them said, we would have shown him what real fighting looks like; in another telling, the young man swore he would never even have let the Prophet ﷺ walk, but would have carried him on his own back. They imagined themselves braver than the companions. So Hudhayfah, who had actually been there, with Abu Bakr and Umar and Uthman and Ali ﷺ all around him in the dark, set out to put the boast in its place. Let me tell you about a night, young man. He described it exactly: the Quraysh above them and Banu Qurayza below them, their own families behind them and feared for, a cold and a darkness deeper than any night of their lives, a wind that sounded like thunder and ripped the cooking pots clean off the fires, a blackness so thick that a man could not see his own fingers if he stretched out his hand. And in all of that, three times the Prophet ﷺ asked, and three times not one of us, he said, answered with a single word.

Then the Prophet ﷺ called him by name. Hudhayfah, go. And here is the heart of the way Hudhayfah tells it, the detail the Sheikh fixes on: he does not dress himself up. Once he was named, he says, I had no choice but to rise, and he rose shivering and afraid. He had every reason, telling the story to admiring young men decades later with no witness left alive to correct him, to make himself the hero who leapt up gladly. Instead he confessed his fear, and confessed that only the direct command moved him. That honesty, the Sheikh says, is the very proof of his iman: he would not spin the smallest yarn in his own favour even when no one could have caught him. The Prophet ﷺ told him to bring back news but to give nothing away, neither himself nor the Muslims, and made a du'a over him: O Allah, protect him

from before him and from behind him, from his right and from his left, from above him and from below him. And Hudhayfah says every trace of fear left his heart, and he walked out into the storm calm.

Inside the camp, and the wind of mercy

There was a wisdom in the choosing, the Sheikh points out, that only a man who knew his companions intimately could have managed. The Prophet ﷺ could not send Abu Bakr or Umar or Uthman or Ali ؑ into the Quraysh camp; their faces were known, and they would have been recognized at once and killed. Hudhayfah was perfect for it. He was not from the Quraysh, but an outsider taken in: his father had migrated to Madinah and allied with the Ansar, so Hudhayfah was reckoned among them though of neither their blood nor the Quraysh's. He had not fought at Badr, and had reached Uhud too late to be marked by the enemy's eyes. He could walk into the lion's den entirely unseen. The Prophet ﷺ knew his men, the Sheikh says, and knew exactly which one fit which task.

Hudhayfah walked out into the howling dark, and Allah alone knows how he found the camp through that wind, but he found it, and slipped through the crowd until he saw the back of a man who sat surrounded the way a leader is surrounded. This must be Abu Sufyan, he worked out, though he had never seen Abu Sufyan in his life, which was the whole point of sending him. He had a clear shot; his hand went to an arrow, and the leader of the entire confederacy sat defenceless in front of him. And then he remembered the order: give nothing away. He lowered the arrow and let the moment pass. A while later Abu Sufyan stood and told his men that before he spoke, every man should take the hand of whoever sat beside him and make sure he was one of their own,

for in that blackness no one could be certain who was who. Quick as anything, Hudhayfah seized the hands of the men on either side of him first, demanding who are you, who are you, so that by the time the question could come back to him it had already passed; he had taken the aura of authority and turned it on them. Then Abu Sufyan gave up. We are not in our own homes, he said, and cannot stay here. Our animals are dying, the wind will not let us keep a fire lit or a pot upright, Banu Qurayza have betrayed us, and I am leaving, whatever the rest of you choose. He mounted his camel and untied it, and as the beast lurched to its feet Hudhayfah had one last clear shot, Abu Sufyan utterly exposed on the rising camel, and again he let it go, because the Prophet ﷺ had told him only to watch. Abu Sufyan rode, and the great army broke up and streamed away into the dark behind him.

Hudhayfah came back through the storm and found the Prophet ﷺ doing what he always did when something weighed on him: he was praying. This was his sign, the companions noticed; whenever he was disturbed, he turned at once to prayer, for when every door of the world is shut, the Sheikh says, the door of Allah is open. He had been standing out in the cold, wrapped in a blanket of one of his wives against the freezing wind, begging Allah. They preserved his du'a from that night: O Allah, Revealer of the Book, swift in reckoning, defeat the confederates; O Allah, defeat them and shake them. He had asked Allah by name to send the armies of the wind and the clouds, and Allah had answered with the very storm that was, in that moment, tearing the enemy camp to pieces. When the Prophet ﷺ saw Hudhayfah standing there shivering, he drew him into the blanket at his feet until the prayer was done, and only then took the good news.

The favour of that night is exactly what Allah would later command the believers never to forget:

O you who have believed, remember the favor of Allāh upon you when armies came to [attack] you and We sent upon them a wind and armies [of angels] you did not see. And ever is Allāh, of what you do, Seeing.

QUR'AN 33:9

The wind, and an army no eye could see. On his way back, some reports say, Hudhayfah passed a band of horsemen in the dark, their faces wrapped, who told him to go and tell his companion that Allah had taken care of the fighting for him; these were the angels of that unseen army.

Here Dr. Yasir Qadhi shares a detail that turns the whole night tender. The Prophet ﷺ later said: Allah aided me with the wind of the Saba, and the people of Ad were destroyed by the wind of the Dabur. The Saba, the scholars explain, is the gentle wind, the one said to carry the scent of mercy and to gather the clouds for rain. The Dabur is the harsher, destroying wind, the one that wiped out an entire nation. Allah, who commands every wind, could have sent the destroying one and ended the Quraysh that very night. He sent the merciful one instead: enough to scatter the army and break the siege, but not enough to kill them. And the reason, the Sheikh says, is the most moving thing in the episode. Allah knew His Prophet's ﷺ love for his people, and knew that most of these very men, Abu Sufyan among them, would one day be guided to Islam; had the destroying wind come, they would not have lived to believe. So even in the armies He sent against an enemy, Allah was being kind to that enemy, sparing the very men who would one day stand in the ranks of

the faithful. The wind that broke the greatest siege in Arabian history was a wind of mercy.

The siege that ended without a sword

By morning the confederates were simply gone. Not a tent left standing, not a pot, not a fire; the wind had torn the camp apart and the men had fled in every direction. Ten thousand strong, the largest army Arabia had ever assembled against the Muslims, withdrew having killed barely a handful of men, gained nothing whatsoever, and humiliated themselves in a way the Arabs would not soon forget. And the Prophet ﷺ said the words that mark the turning of the whole seerah: from now on we will march on them, and they will never again march on us. The tide had changed, officially and forever. After the Trench, the Quraysh would never again lay siege to Madinah; the believers had taken the offensive, and they would not give it back.

What had actually won it? Before any tactic, the Sheikh says plainly, it was two things: the iman of the believers and the du'a of the Prophet ﷺ. The Muslims were asked to do one thing only, to hold their ground and prove their faith, and when they proved it, Allah did all the rest. This is the meaning of the verse Allah revealed about that day:

And Allāh repelled those who disbelieved, in their rage, not having obtained any good. And sufficient was Allāh for the believers in battle, and ever is Allāh Powerful and Exalted in Might.

QUR'AN 33:25

Sufficient was Allah for the believers. He fulfilled His promise to defend them, aided His servant, and defeated the gathered armies by Himself, without the believers having to lift a sword.

After this, the Sheikh notes, the Muslims took to repeating words we still say to this day: that Allah is true to His promise, that He aided His servant and alone defeated the confederates.

And around that core of faith and prayer, Allah had arranged every other piece like a master craftsman. The impossible conversion of Nuaym at the one hour it could matter. The Quraysh's total ignorance of the Sabbath, so that a true answer sounded to them like a lie. A month-long siege that had already ground the enemy's morale to nothing, their animals dying and their water gone. And then, at the end, the wind and the unseen army of angels. One secret convert, one brave companion in the dark, one quarrel over a Saturday, and one merciful wind, and the siege was over. Imagine, the Sheikh marvels, how perfectly the pieces fell into place; this is what it looks like when Allah Himself is fighting on your side.

But the war had left one piece still standing on the board. Banu Qurayza had broken their treaty and sided with the besieging army from inside the city, and they understood, even now, exactly what that meant. Their own man had said it aloud during the siege: if the confederates leave, there is nothing left for us but the sword. They had weighed the punishment that treason brings and gambled anyway, and the gamble had failed. The confederates had left. That reckoning comes next, and it is one of the most misunderstood moments in the entire seerah, an episode the Sheikh promises to face frankly rather than gloss over, because it was a punishment for what a people did and not for who they were. But that is tomorrow. Tonight the wind has done its work, the horizon is empty, and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has folded a shivering companion into his blanket and finished his prayer in the cold.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read the last night of the Trench as a lucky turn of weather and leave it there, a storm that happened to arrive at the right moment. That would be to miss the question it puts to us. Look again at what actually broke the greatest army Arabia ever raised, and you will never read a hopeless-looking season of your own life the same way.

Guidance is Allah's to give, and He gives it suddenly. Nuaym had no Muslim beside him, no sermon, no slow turning of the heart anyone could trace; he says only that Allah threw Islam into his heart, out of nowhere, on the darkest night of the war, while his own tribe sat in arms against the believers. None of us knows whose heart Allah has already marked. So never write a single person off as too far gone, and never imagine that the people opposing the truth today cannot be standing inside it tomorrow. Most of the men who fled that wind would one day pray toward the same qiblah as the man they had come to destroy.

Keep the line between deceit and betrayal clean, because Allah does. Islam permits the feints of war against a declared enemy, but it forbids treachery absolutely: a promise made is a promise kept, even to an opponent, even when breaking it would profit you, and the Prophet ﷺ never once broke his word. Most of us will never fight a battle, but every one of us makes promises and gives our word, and the test is the same: do you keep faith when keeping it costs you? Nuaym deceived an enemy who had been promised nothing; he betrayed no one. Guard that distinction in your own dealings and you guard a piece of the Prophet's ﷺ own character.

Be honest even when no one is watching. Hudhayfah told the story of his own great night exactly as it happened, admitting his

fear, admitting that he rose only because he was named, refusing to make himself the hero before an audience that would have believed any version he gave. He had no witness left to correct him and still would not flatter himself by a hair. That, the Sheikh says, is the very mark of his iman. Ask whether the account you give of yourself when no one can check it is as honest as the one a watching world would force on you.

And when every door of the world is closed, stand up and pray. On the worst night of the siege, frozen and besieged front and back, the Prophet ﷺ was found wrapped in a blanket in the cold, praying, asking Allah by name to send the wind; when something weighed on him, he turned straight to his Lord, as a first reflex and not a last resort. The believers were asked only to hold the trench and keep their faith, and Allah did the rest: He repelled the disbelievers in their rage so that they gained no good at all, and was Himself sufficient for the believers in battle. That is the balance this night teaches: do everything your faith and your strength allow, hold your ground with sincerity, and then rest, genuinely rest, in the certainty that the outcome was never in your hands.

So when your own siege feels endless, when you are cold and outnumbered and watching every horizon at once, remember the man praying in a blanket in the dark, and remember what he prayed. Ask, as he asked, knowing that Allah is true to His promise and sufficient for those who trust Him: O Allah, Revealer of the Book, swift in reckoning, defeat what gathers against me, and let me be among those who keep their ground until the wind of Your mercy comes. May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, who loved even his enemies into guidance, be sufficient for us in our narrow places as He was sufficient for the

believers at the Trench, and make us of those who do their part and trust Him with the rest.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 60: the Battle of the Trench, part 4 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (33:9, 33:25), verified via quran.ai.

Banu Qurayzah: the treachery, the siege, and the arbitration of Sa'd ibn Mu'adh

Judged by the law they chose for themselves

This is one of the hardest days in the whole seerah, and one of the most lied about. So begin where Dr. Yasir Qadhi begins, with the one thing the critics always cut away: the context. For nearly a month the city of Madinah had been ringed by the largest army Arabia could assemble, the confederate host of al-Ahzab, Quraysh and Ghatafan and their allies, drawn up against a trench and a handful of believers. And in the middle of that terror one tribe inside the walls, Banu Qurayzah, bound to the Prophet ﷺ by a written treaty, had broken its word and opened negotiations with the enemy at the gates. The danger had never been the army alone. It had been the knife held at the city's back while it faced the spears at its front.

Then Allah lifted the siege without a battle. A bitter wind and a quiet sowing of mistrust between the confederate tribes did what no Muslim sword had to do; the great army woke one morning, struck its tents, and was gone. The Prophet ﷺ came home exhausted, after a month of fear and sleeplessness, and had not even set down his weapon before the next command arrived. Walk this day slowly, the way the Sheikh walks it, and you will see something the headlines never show you: a justice so scrupulous that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ gave away his own right to

pronounce it, and handed it to a man the betrayed tribe themselves would have to call fair.

The war was not over

The morning after the great sandstorm, the believers woke to an empty horizon. The tents were overturned, the enemy gone, the confederates scattered without a single duel being fought. This is the moment of which Allah revealed:

And Allah repelled those who disbelieved, in their rage, not having obtained any good. And sufficient was Allah for the believers in battle, and ever is Allah Powerful and Exalted in Might.

QUR'AN 33:25

The Prophet ﷺ returned to his home around the middle of the day, the furnace hour of the Arabian afternoon, when the whole region shutters itself for the midday rest, and he began to unbuckle his armor. He had barely set down his sword when Jibril came to him, and the Sheikh lingers on how he came: dressed for war, a turban of soft brocade wound across his head, riding a mule whose saddle was draped in silk. Have you put down your weapon? Jibril asked. The Prophet ﷺ said yes. And the answer cut through the exhaustion of a month: the angels have not put theirs down. Allah commands you to go to Banu Qurayzah, and I am going ahead of you now to shake the earth beneath them.

There would not be a single day of rest. Imagine, Dr. Yasir Qadhi says, the longing for home after thirty days of mental siege, the relief of finally setting down the sword, and then the command to take it up again before your foot has crossed your own threshold. The Prophet ﷺ sent a crier through the lanes of Madinah with an

order so urgent it became one of the most famous commands of his life, recorded in every book of hadith: let no one of you pray Asr except at Banu Qurayzah. Hurry. The Companions set out at once, the wounds of a month-long siege still on them, marching the two hours toward the fortress of the tribe that had betrayed the city.

Two honest readings of one command

On the road, that single order opened one of the most instructive episodes in the whole history of Islamic law. The Companions left Madinah in batches, some catching the message late, some delayed in arming again, and as they walked the sun began to slide down the sky. Asr was slipping away. Now what? One group reasoned that the Prophet ﷺ had meant hurry, that Asr at Banu Qurayzah was a way of saying make haste and not a command to let the prayer lapse past its appointed time, so they prayed Asr where they stood, on the road, and pressed on. The other group held to the words exactly as spoken: he said Asr at Banu Qurayzah, and Asr at Banu Qurayzah is what we will pray, even if the sun sets first and we make it up late. They prayed only after they arrived.

Two camps of qualified, sincere people read the same words two honest ways and could reach no consensus, so each acted on its own reasoning and neither rebuked the other. And when they came to the Prophet ﷺ and told him what had happened, that some had prayed on the road and some had prayed only after Maghrib, he criticized neither side. He simply let it be. Dr. Yasir Qadhi draws two threads out of that silence. The first is that when those who are truly qualified to weigh the texts arrive at different rulings, no one of them is bound to abandon his reasoning for another's, and neither should look down on the

other. The literalist who clings to the plain word and the one who reads for the reason behind it are both walking a road the Companions walked first; this tension between the letter and the cause is not a flaw in the religion but an old and healthy current running through it since the first generation. The second thread is a single point that the day quietly settles: the truth itself is one. The Prophet ﷺ had intended one of the two meanings, not both, and a Companion who honestly missed it was not thereby a sinner but a rewarded seeker, for the one who strives and reaches the truth has two rewards, and the one who strives and errs still has one.

But the Sheikh fences this lesson with a caution he repeats with force, because in our age it is constantly abused: this is a conversation for those trained to have it, not for everyone with an opinion and a search engine. A man may have spent his life mastering the Qur'an and the sunnah and still know less about the direction of the qibla than a scout, because that is a different kind of knowledge; and a man who has mastered neither has no business pronouncing verdicts on either. When reputable scholars differ, that is the breadth of the religion. When the untrained crowd into the seat of judgment, that is its corruption. Let the qualified speak, and let the rest of us learn the difference between a scholar's disagreement and a stranger's noise.

The repentance tied to a pillar

The fortress was strong, the real architecture of the tribes of Madinah, of a kind the Muslims had no engines to break, so they ringed it and settled in to wait. Days dragged into weeks. Somewhere in the long siege the tribe sent out a request: they wanted to speak with one of the Companions by name, Abu Lubabah, an Ansari of the Aws who had been their close friend in

the days before Islam, a man who used to sit in their fortress and was trusted among them. The Prophet ﷺ let him go in. Inside, the women and children crowded around him weeping, begging for mercy, and they put the question to him: should we surrender to Muhammad's judgment? Abu Lubabah said yes. But as the word left his mouth he drew his hand across his throat, signaling to them what surrender would mean.

He had not yet moved his feet from that spot, he said afterward, before he knew he had betrayed Allah and His Messenger. The Sheikh names exactly what the treachery was. It was not that he gave them a fact; it was that in the hour it mattered most, with everything at stake, his old affection pulled his loyalty out of place. This is a matter of wala, of where your allegiance lands when it is tested, and Abu Lubabah's had wavered toward the enemy of Allah and His Messenger after all that had happened. And so the verse came down for men in his position:

O you who have believed, do not betray Allah and the Messenger or betray your trusts while you know [the consequence].

QUR'AN 8:27

Abu Lubabah did not wait to be confronted. He walked straight out of the fortress, past the army, past the Prophet ﷺ without stopping, all the way back to the mosque in Madinah, and he bound himself to a pillar and swore he would not be loosed from it until Allah Himself accepted his repentance, and that he would never again set foot in the place where he had disobeyed his Lord. That pillar is called the pillar of repentance to this day. When the Prophet ﷺ heard, he said: had he come to me, I would have asked Allah to forgive him, but now he has bound himself, and the matter is between him and his Lord, for he has made a

vow. And a vow to Allah, the Sheikh reminds us, must be kept, for of the righteous Allah says:

They [are those who] fulfill [their] vows and fear a Day whose evil will be widespread. Qur'an 76:7 Days later, at the dawn prayer, Umm Salamah saw the Prophet ﷺ come out smiling, and asked what had made him laugh; Allah, he said, has accepted Abu Lubabah's repentance. She hurried to carry the news. The Companions rushed to untie him, but he refused to be freed by anyone except the Prophet ﷺ himself, to be sure nothing was left undone, and so the Prophet ﷺ loosed the ropes with his own hands before leading the prayer. Al-Hasan al-Basri said the verse revealed for such men was the most hopeful in the entire Qur'an, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi asks us to memorize it, because it is about us:

And [there are] others who have acknowledged their sins. They had mixed [i.e., polluted] a righteous deed with another that was bad. Perhaps Allah will turn to them in forgiveness. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.

QUR'AN 9:102

People who own their sins, who have tangled good deeds with bad and do not pretend otherwise, and of whom Allah says, perhaps Allah will turn to them in forgiveness. And Ibn Abbas said that whenever Allah says perhaps, He does it.

The man who kept his word

Inside the fortress, the chief Ka'b ibn Asad laid three choices before his people. The first was the only one that could have saved them. Accept this man's religion, he told them, for by Allah we all know he is the prophet foretold in our own scriptures, and then we are all safe, every sin forgiven, for that is what Islam

does. They refused. We will never leave the Torah, they said, we will never leave our religion. The Sheikh stops you here, because at the very end the open secret falls out of the chief's mouth and not one of them denies it. They knew. After all the signs, after all the years, they knew he ﷺ was the one their books had promised, and they would not follow him. There is no arrogance worse than that, to see the truth plainly and turn away from it anyway. His second option, that they kill their own women and children and then charge out sword in hand to the last man, they refused; his third, a surprise attack launched on their own Sabbath when no one would expect them to break it, they refused as a desecration. He despaired of ever wringing a single decision out of them.

So they tried instead to soften the terms. They sent a messenger to the Prophet ﷺ asking for what Banu Nadir had been given, to leave with their families and whatever their camels could carry; he refused. They sent again, offering to abandon every possession if only their lives were spared; he refused. Nothing less than unconditional surrender. And the Sheikh draws out what is easy to miss in that refusal. The Prophet ﷺ knew their fate was effectively sealed. He could have lured them out with a false promise of safety and then done as he wished, and saved everyone the siege. He would not. Treachery and lying are forbidden, the Sheikh stresses, even against an enemy you already know is doomed; the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was a man of his word to the very end, and would not buy a single advantage with a broken one.

And then a small thing happened on the last night that the Sheikh says holds the whole key to the day. One man of the tribe, Amr ibn Sa'da, slipped out past the guards. He was the one Qurazi, perhaps the only one, who had stood up when the covenant was

broken and refused to break it: I will never betray Muhammad, he had said, though he never accepted Islam. The Companion on watch, Muhammad ibn Maslamah, recognized him, murmured a prayer that Allah forgive him for letting a man go, and let him pass. Amr vanished into the night and was never harmed; he reached Madinah, and by morning he was simply gone, and no one knows his end. When the Prophet ﷺ heard, he did not rebuke the guard. That, he said, was a man whom Allah saved because of his faithfulness. He died upon his own religion, and Allah spared him anyway, because he had kept his word. Hold onto that, the Sheikh says, and return to it, because it is the answer to everything the critics will throw at this day: these people were punished for what they did, not for who they were. Here is a man of the very same tribe and the very same religion, and because he alone kept faith, Allah made him a way out.

Judged by their own

When the tribe finally sent word that they would surrender, the Aws gathered around the Prophet ﷺ and began to plead. Banu Qurayzah had been their allies in the days of ignorance, their friends and confederates, and the Aws remembered it; they begged for the same mercy the Khazraj had won earlier for their own allies of Banu Nadir, who had been let go with what their camels could carry. But there was a world of difference between what Banu Nadir had done and what this tribe had done in the hour of the siege, and the Prophet ﷺ had not yet said a single word about their fate. He could feel the old tribal loyalty straining in the Aws, and rather than override it, he did something extraordinary.

Will you be satisfied, he asked them, if one of your own decides their case? They said yes. And he named Sa'd ibn Mu'adh, the

leader of the Aws, the tribe's own ally and chief. Stop here, Dr. Yasir Qadhi says, because this is the part the world never tells. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ stepped down from his own right to pass the judgment and handed it to a man the betrayed tribe's protectors would have to accept as fair. He knew with certainty that if he had ruled, his ruling would have been obeyed without a murmur. But a true leader does not simply impose himself, even when he is the Messenger of Allah; there is a wisdom in carrying your people with you rather than dragging them. So the verdict would not be the Prophet's ﷺ. It would be the verdict of their own.

Sa'd was dying. A wound taken at the Trench had opened the great vessel of his arm and would not stop bleeding; he had spent the whole siege in the tent of Rufaydah, the Companion who had volunteered to nurse the wounded and tend the sick, the first field hospital in the history of Islam. They lifted Sa'd onto a mule and brought him, still bandaged and still bleeding after twenty-five days, and as he came his own people of the Aws pressed close, reminding him of the old friendship, urging him to be gentle, telling him he had surely been chosen so that he would show mercy. And Sa'd answered them: now is the time for Sa'd to fear no one's blame when it comes to Allah. The Sheikh sets that sentence against every man who reaches the end of his life craving a legacy, wanting to be spoken of well; here is a man at the door of death whose only thought is to be honest before his Lord. When he said it, the Aws understood which way he was going. As he arrived the Prophet ﷺ told the Companions, stand for your leader, the one and only time in the entire seerah he ever commanded such a thing, he who never let the Companions rise for him. Sa'd made his people promise that they would accept his verdict and not argue it, and they promised. Then, lowering his

face before the Prophet ﷺ out of awe, unable to look up and speak to him so plainly, he asked him to promise too, that the verdict would stand. It will, the Prophet ﷺ said.

The verdict, and what it was not

Sa'd did not hesitate. He had been carrying this judgment for the better part of a month. His ruling: the fighting men would be executed, their property divided, and the women and children taken as captives. And the Prophet ﷺ said: you have judged by the judgment of Allah from above the seven heavens. The men were led out in batches to a place outside the city, and there they were executed. The books of seerah differ on the number, and the Sheikh hands you the range as he found it rather than choosing for you: Ibn Ishaq, the most authoritative, gives six to seven hundred and notes that some have exaggerated higher to eight or nine hundred; a narration in Muslim and Ahmad mentions around four hundred. Whatever the true figure, it was, Dr. Yasir Qadhi says plainly, not a small number. This was the adult fighting strength of an entire tribe. There is no softening that.

But hold the whole picture, because this is exactly where the lie lives. No children were killed. Of all the women, only one was executed, and only because she herself had killed a Companion during the siege by carrying a heavy grinding stone to the top of the wall and dropping it on him as he passed; Aisha, who sat with the captives, never ceased to marvel that this woman was laughing and joking even as her name was called for death. Everyone of the tribe who accepted Islam was spared. So were those for whom a Muslim asked clemency: the old man Zubayr ibn Batta, whose life a Companion begged in repayment of an old debt of mercy from the wars before Islam, though Zubayr, when he learned his friends and family were gone, asked in the end to

be sent after them and was. Even one of the captives, Rayhana, the Prophet ﷺ would later free; she saw the gentleness with which she was treated, chose Islam over being passed to another, and chose to remain with him.

Now listen to how Dr. Yasir Qadhi answers the critics, because he does not flinch and he does not let you flinch either. This is the episode that has been smeared and weaponized more than any other, with the charge that the Prophet ﷺ and his religion are guilty of slaughtering a people for their faith or their blood. The punishment was harsh, the Sheikh says, and he will not pretend it was anything else; he sees no shame in admitting it was harsh, because harshness has its place. A religion whose rule is mercy and whose default is gentleness is the perfect religion precisely because, once in a great while, it will show severity, for there are lines a people cannot be allowed to cross and survive. A non-Muslim is free to call it harsh, and we will not quarrel with the word; we say it was the judgment of Allah, and that it was deserved. But the one charge that is a flat and academically indefensible lie, that no scholar of the seerah has ever so much as hinted at, is that they were killed for who they were. They were not. They were judged for treason in a time of war, after being warned again and again, three times over, the last of those warnings only months before. Cut away al-Ahzab, cut away the treaty and the betrayal in the hour of greatest danger, shout the number and erase everything around it, and you can make any atrocity out of any justice. Put the context back, and you see a tribunal. And the Sheikh presses the point home with their own scripture: in the book of Deuteronomy, a city that refuses an offer of peace and gives battle is besieged, and when it falls its fighting men are put to the sword while the women and children and livestock are spared as plunder, almost word for word the

verdict Sa'd pronounced. They were judged, in the end, by the very law of the very book they had sworn they would never leave.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to let Banu Qurayzah be only a controversy, a hard fact to defend or to dread, and to walk away from it without letting it touch you. That would be to miss what the day is actually asking. Dr. Yasir Qadhi refuses to make it light, and he refuses to make it only an argument; underneath the siege and the verdict, the day is quietly putting a question to your own heart, and the question is about loyalty.

Watch where everyone's loyalty lands when it costs them something, because that is the spine of this whole episode. Abu Lubabah was a good man with a long record, a man of Badr and Uhud, and one gesture of misplaced affection in the wrong moment convinced him he had betrayed Allah and His Messenger, and he wept at a pillar until forgiveness came down. Amr ibn Sa'da was not even a believer, and because he alone kept the covenant when his whole tribe broke it, Allah opened a door in the night and walked him through it to safety. The one woman who was executed had, with her own hands, killed a man. The tribe that was judged had seen the truth, admitted it among themselves at the very end, and refused it out of pride. Every one of them was answered for what they did with their loyalty, not for the name they were born to. The Sheikh returns to this again and again, and you should carry it out of the chapter: where your allegiance falls in the hour it is hardest is where your allegiance truly is. It is easy to belong to Allah when belonging costs nothing. The test is the moment your old affections, your friendships, your fear, your wish to be thought gentle, all pull the

other way, and you have to decide, like Sa'd on the mule, that now is the time to fear no one's blame when it comes to Allah.

And watch the Prophet ﷺ at the center of it, because he teaches a second thing that most of us never learn. He held every card. The judgment was his by right, his ruling would have been obeyed, and the law was on his side. And he gave the right away, handed it to the tribe's own chief so that no one could ever call the outcome unjust, because a leader who serves his people will surrender his own prerogative before he will let the weight of justice fall from a hand his people cannot trust. There is a whole ethic of power in that single decision. Most of us, given the right to decide, would seize it; he, given the right to decide, gave it to someone else and called the result the judgment of Allah from above the seven heavens.

So the day ends not on a battlefield but at a graveside. Sa'd ibn Mu'adh had made one last du'a as his wound bled, that Allah let him live to settle the affair of Banu Qurayzah, and Allah granted it, and then, his work done, he died only days later, at thirty-seven. When the Companions bore his body they said they had never carried anyone lighter, and the Prophet ﷺ told them why: seventy thousand angels had come down to carry him, angels who had never before descended to the earth. At the graveside in al-Baqi the Prophet ﷺ said Subhan Allah, and all of al-Baqi said it with him; then he said Allahu Akbar, and they followed; and he told them this was the servant for whom the Throne of the Most Merciful had shaken and for whom the gates of heaven had opened, and that even he, even Sa'd, had felt the grave press him once and then release him, so that if anyone were ever to be spared that pressing it would have been this man. And the Prophet ﷺ said into the earth: may Allah reward you with good, leader of your people; you have fulfilled your promise to Allah,

and Allah will fulfill His promise to you. That is the note the day leaves ringing. A dying man who spent the last blood in his body being faithful when faithfulness cost him everything, and a Prophet ﷺ who would rather give away his own authority than wield it over a people who could not trust him. Whose loyalty do you carry, the day keeps asking, and is it Allah's, even when it is hard? O Allah, make us faithful to our word with You as Sa'd was faithful, let our loyalty be Yours in the very moment it costs us most, forgive us as You forgave Abu Lubabah at his pillar, and gather us with Sa'd ibn Mu'adh among the prophets, the truthful, the martyrs, and the righteous, and how excellent are those as companions.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 61: Banu Qurayzah (Memphis Islamic Center, 2013). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (33:25, 8:27, 9:102, 76:7), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry differing numbers and narrations, the Sheikh's own weighing has been followed.

Minor expeditions after the Trench ﷺ

The small skirmishes where the biggest hearts turned

After the Trench, the seerah goes quiet for a while, and the quiet is honest. Roughly eighteen months lie between the great siege that nearly broke Madinah and the treaty that would change everything at Hdaybiyyah, and into those months fall more than a dozen minor skirmishes and expeditions, none of them, Dr. Yasir Qadhi is careful to say, anywhere near as significant as the battle before or the truce after. He chooses four or five, sets the rest aside as names the very advanced student can look up, and tells these few not for their politics, which were small, but for what happened inside them, which was not small at all. The strange thing about these unremarkable days is what filled them. Not conquest. Conversion. A king who walked into Madinah hating that blessed face ﷺ and could not walk back out the same man. An assassin who came for blood and left a brother. A son-in-law so scrupulous he repaid every borrowed coin before he would so much as say the shahada. The Prophet ﷺ rarely lifted a sword in any of these stories. Mostly he was simply who he was, and people standing near him found they could not stay who they had been.

So this is a chapter about the small days, and about the unreasonable size of what they can hold, the question they put quietly to every one of our own ordinary weeks.

The king tied to a pillar

It began with a routine success. A detachment of about thirty companions had been sent against a rebellious tribe in central Arabia, most likely in the sixth year of the hijrah, and they did exactly what they were sent to do and came home. The expedition itself is not the story; what they crossed on the road back is. A small convoy moved through the open desert, and something about it did not sit right, the signs of wealth and the air of rank on men of obvious importance out in the middle of nowhere with no proper guard. The companions took them captive and brought them to the Prophet ﷺ without the faintest idea whom they had caught.

It was Thumama ibn Uthal, chieftain of Banu Hanifah, one of the largest tribes in all of Arabia. To grasp who that is, Dr. Yasir Qadhi reaches for the only scale that fits: an Abdul Muttalib type of figure, the big man, a chief whose tribe was roughly the size of Quraysh itself. There was no royalty among the Arabs, but if there had been, Thumama was royalty. He had not been neutral in the war; he had stood with the pagans, and he had publicly vowed that if he ever got the chance he would kill the Prophet ﷺ himself. He had been travelling unguarded only because he never imagined the danger, certain Quraysh would never harm him and the Muslims were far away. But the Prophet ﷺ had once made a du'a that Allah would give him power over Thumama, and here, carried in as a prisoner by companions who did not recognize him, was the answer to that prayer. They did not know him. The Prophet ﷺ knew him at once.

There was no prison in Madinah, so they tied his hand to a pillar of the mosque itself, and this enemy chieftain who had sworn to kill the Prophet ﷺ now sat bound inside the Prophet's ﷺ own masjid. Then the Prophet ﷺ gave an instruction that set the

whole tone of what followed. Treat him well. That evening he told his wives to send Thumama food from his own household, not because his family ate better than the companions but for the message carried with it, the bearer announcing where it came from: this is from Muhammad ﷺ. A man who had promised murder was being fed from the table of the one he had promised to kill.

Each morning the Prophet ﷺ came and asked the same question. What do you have to say, Thumama? And each morning Thumama answered not like a beggar but like a king. If you kill me, he said, you kill a man whose blood is heavy, and you will have war on your hands. If you forgive me, you forgive a man who recognizes a favor and repays it. And if it is money you want, name your price. There was no pleading in it, only the level confidence of a man who knew his worth and was not afraid to die. The Prophet ﷺ invited him to Islam; Thumama said nothing, and the Prophet ﷺ let him be. The next morning, the same; the third morning, again. The reports do not spell out what those three days did to him, but the Sheikh asks us to do the obvious arithmetic. What does a man absorb, tied to a pillar in the Prophet's ﷺ masjid for some seventy-six hours? He hears the adhan and the prayers, the Qur'an through the night; he watches the manners of the people; he sees exactly what this religion is. Nobody preached him a sermon; the place simply went on being itself in front of him. And on the third day the Prophet ﷺ said the thing nobody expected. Release him.

Three days to change a life

Thumama stood up, walked out a free man, went to a grove of date palms, and took a bath. Then, though he could have ridden away, he walked back in and said it, still addressing the Prophet

ﷺ by his bare first name because no one had yet had time to teach him the etiquette of the believers. By Allah, Muhammad, there was no face on this whole earth more hateful to me than yours, and now there is none more beloved. There was no religion I despised more than yours, and now there is none dearer. There was no city I hated more than your city, and now it is the most beloved of cities to me. Three days, and the entire architecture of his hatred had been overturned, hatred of the man, the faith, the place, every wall of it down.

He explained himself: he had been on his way to perform the pilgrimage when the Muslims crossed his road, and he asked whether he should continue, a believer now. The Prophet ﷺ told him to go on. And here Dr. Yasir Qadhi draws the lesson the whole episode was built to teach: gentleness gets you what harshness never will. The Prophet ﷺ took no ransom, though Thumama offered any sum, and made no threat, though he held the man's life in his hand. He fed him from his own table and handed him back his freedom, the freedom of a man who had vowed to kill him. What does that do to a heart? It does what no sword could. Strength had not opened Thumama. Dignity had.

That same evening the companions brought him the lavish meals he had eaten for days, and he ate only a little and stopped, to their astonishment. The Prophet ﷺ explained: a man who ate this morning with the stomach of a disbeliever now eats tonight with the stomach of a believer, for the disbeliever eats with seven stomachs and the believer with one. Islam had reached even into the way he sat at a meal.

Then Thumama turned a single conversion into a strategy he never planned. He went on to Makkah and, by Ibn Ishaq's report, became the first person to enter the city openly proclaiming the

talbiyah cleansed of the idols Quraysh had added to it, and when they surrounded him with half-drawn swords for it, only the calmer voices saved him, warning that to kill the chieftain of Banu Hanifah was to bring the whole tribe down on their necks. Thumama left that confrontation enraged, and his rage took a devastating shape. By Allah, he swore, not a single grain of wheat will reach you from the north until the Prophet ﷺ himself commands me to allow it. The grain road ran through his country, and he closed it. Weeks passed, then months, until the city was reduced to a famine food the Sheikh could barely find described, resorted to only in droughts because it was so wretched, made by the surviving reports of camel's blood and camel's hair. At last Abu Sufyan had to swallow his pride and write to the Prophet ﷺ, and even half-starving he could not keep the arrogance out of his pen: you claim you preach kindness to kin, and here you are letting us waste away.

And the Prophet ﷺ, at open war with these very people, wrote to Thumama to let the wheat resume. He could have said no, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi notes that no one could have faulted him: these were the people who had exiled him, tried to assassinate him, cut off his own community's supplies only months before. But the Prophet ﷺ would face Quraysh on the battlefield and would not starve their women and children. The Sheikh has a phrase for it, and it is the texture of the whole religion: strictness tempered with pragmatic mercy. He reopened the road, and Makkah ate again.

The assassin with treachery written on him

Abu Sufyan, by now the de facto senior leader of all Quraysh as the older generation died off, was not finished. He announced a bounty for anyone who would kill the Prophet ﷺ, and a bedouin

came forward to earn it. Abu Sufyan equipped him with a camel, supplies, weapons, and a cover story: he would ride to Madinah pretending he wished to accept Islam, the usual pretext, the known way of getting close. He made the journey in six hard days, walked into the mosque, and began his rehearsed lines.

The Prophet ﷺ looked at him and said: this is a man with treachery written upon him. The instant the words were spoken the companions tackled him to the floor, and as they brought him down a hidden dagger fell from his belt, the dagger you do not carry into an audience with the leader unless you mean to use it. There was the whole plot, on the ground beside him. The Prophet ﷺ gave him a choice: tell me the truth and I will let you go. The man told it all, the bounty, the scheme, Abu Sufyan's hand behind it. And the Prophet ﷺ kept his word and freed him, and the would-be assassin, given his life by the man he had come to murder, embraced Islam on the spot. We do not even know his name; he is one of those footnotes the seerah keeps. But the pattern is unmistakable, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi sets it deliberately beside the killings that ran the other direction in these same months. In those days this was a two-way street: Quraysh sent assassins, and the Muslims, as we are about to see, sent their own. And here a man who walked in to kill walked out a believer, disarmed not by the companions but by the mercy of the one he had targeted.

A targeted killing, told honestly

Among these months falls a story Dr. Yasir Qadhi calls one of the favorites of those who want to attack the Prophet ﷺ, and one he frankly does not find troubling at all; he refuses both to sensationalize it and to apologize for it. It is the killing of Abu Rafi', Sallam ibn Abi al-Huqayq, one of the wealthy chiefs of

Khaybar. Sallam was no bystander. He had been among the principal financiers of the coalition that besieged Madinah at the Trench, whose vast army was largely hired mercenaries, men with no stake in the fight who wanted only their pay and were the first to scatter when Allah's help came. Sallam had paid for them, and a man who had financed the destruction of Madinah once would do it again. This time the Prophet ﷺ did not order it. A party of the Ansar came with the proposal themselves, eager because the Aws had earlier dealt with Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf and the Khazraj felt the score stood one to nothing. And this was genuinely dangerous, far more than the killing of Ka'b who had lived an hour away. Khaybar lay two and a half or three days off, and every clan there sat behind the thick fortified walls the Jewish tribes had mastered and the Muslims had not yet learned to breach. The Prophet ﷺ granted permission on one firm condition: harm no woman, harm no child.

Five men went, led by Abdullah ibn Atik, chosen because he spoke the language of Khaybar like a native; you cannot carry out such a thing stuttering in plain Arabic where everyone around you speaks fluently. As the gates were closing at nightfall, Abdullah made himself visible to the guard at a distance, pretending to be a man relieving himself, just another straggler. The impatient guard called to him to hurry, and he slipped through, hid until full dark, then opened the gate and let the others in. They found Sallam's chamber, in the highest room of the house, and killed him. His wife cried out, and one of the men raised his sword to silence her, then remembered the order and sheathed it. On the way out, in the rising alarm, their weak-eyed leader missed a step and broke his foot, and the others carried him through the night while the whole settlement screamed behind them. They reached Madinah without a single casualty,

and the Prophet ﷺ passed his hand over the foot and it was healed.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi will not flinch from what this was, and he will not let the modern reader posture over it either. These were different times with different norms, a declared state of war. This was a targeted killing, in the language we now use, the same kind of act Quraysh had just attempted in the Prophet's ﷺ own mosque with the bedouin and his dagger; it ran in both directions, simply how warfare worked. No scholar in the history of Islam, he stresses, ever licensed an individual to take such matters into his own hands. And the modern world, with its own drones and surgical strikes, has forfeited any clean standing to be scandalized by something fourteen centuries old. Deal with your own present, he says in effect, before you arraign the distant past.

It was on a related and larger expedition, against Banu Lihyan, the tribe responsible for the treacherous massacre of the companions at ar-Raji', that Allah legislated something that would outlast every skirmish of these months. Banu Lihyan, warned by their scouts, fled, and there was no battle. But Quraysh sent a small force to observe, and a moment came that taught the believers a permanent lesson. When the Muslims stood to pray, one of the watching pagans said: if only they would do that again, for there, with the whole army bowing and prostrating, would be the perfect moment to fall upon them in a single charge. They would wait, he was told; another prayer was coming. And in the interval Allah sent down the prayer of fear, salat al-khawf.

And when you [i.e., the commander of an army] are among them and lead them in prayer, let a group of them stand [in prayer] with you and let them carry their arms. And when they have prostrated, let them be [in position] behind you and have the other group come forward which has not

[yet] prayed and let them pray with you, taking precaution and carrying their arms. Those who disbelieve wish that you would neglect your weapons and your baggage so they could come down upon you in one [single] attack. But there is no blame upon you, if you are troubled by rain or are ill, for putting down your arms, but take precaution. Indeed, Allāh has prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating punishment.

QUR'AN 4:102

The choreography is laid out in the verse itself: the army splits, one group prays behind the imam while the other stands guard with its weapons, and then they trade, so the believers are never both unarmed and in prostration at once. The pagans had hoped to catch them defenseless in the very act of worship; Allah answered with a form of worship that could not be caught, the one place in the whole Qur'an where the steps of a single prayer are written down.

The son-in-law and the necklace

Then comes a story plain in its events and unforgettable in its heart. Zayd ibn Harithah was sent with about a hundred and seventy men to intercept a Quraysh caravan returning from Syria, and he took the whole of it, wealth and camels and captives. Among the prisoners was Abu al-As ibn al-Rabi'.

To understand why the mosque would soon hold its breath over this captive, you have to know who he was. Abu al-As was the nephew of Khadijah, his mother her elder sister Halah, and he was married to Zaynab, the eldest of the Prophet's ﷺ four daughters. The match had been Khadijah's own doing, and the Prophet ﷺ, who the Sheikh notes would never refuse Khadijah anything, had given Zaynab to him. He was no hater of the faith. When Quraysh pressed every man married to one of the

Prophet's ﷺ daughters to divorce her, the others gave in, but Abu al-As refused; offered any woman he wanted in exchange, he answered that no one could ever take Zaynab's place. He had fought at Badr on the Makkan side under compulsion, with no heart in it, and been taken prisoner there too.

That earlier captivity is the part that breaks you open. After Badr, when Abu al-As was a prisoner, Zaynab had sent her ransom from Makkah: a necklace that had belonged to her mother Khadijah. The Prophet ﷺ saw it among the ransoms and the memories came flooding back, the whole of his life with Khadijah rising up in a piece of jewelry, and he asked the companions, if they saw fit, to release this captive and return his daughter's necklace, for the ransom was theirs to give, not his to command. They freed Abu al-As gladly and sent the necklace back. But the Prophet ﷺ had asked one thing in return: send me Zaynab. And Abu al-As, a pagan still, had kept his word and sent her on to Madinah.

Now, years later, he was a captive a second time, and this time it was Zaynab's voice that rang out. After the dawn prayer, from the women's side of the mosque, she called, loud enough for every soul present to hear: O Muslims, I am Zaynab, daughter of Muhammad ﷺ, and I have granted my protection to this man. When the prayer ended the Prophet ﷺ turned and asked, did you hear what I heard? They said yes. By Allah, he said, I had no knowledge of this until now, no more than any of you. And then he taught them the principle the whole ummah would carry forever after: the believers are as one in the protection they extend; the least and lowliest among them may grant a pledge of safety, and all the rest are bound to honor it. So Abu al-As was protected on his daughter's word.

There remained his caravan, which was not only his own wealth but goods entrusted to him by many in Makkah. The Prophet ﷺ told the companions who held it that if they saw fit to return his property it would be more beloved to him, but that the choice was theirs and he would not force it. They gave it all back. Some of the Ansar, more zealous than the instruction warranted, tried to attach a condition the Prophet ﷺ had not set: would Abu al-As not accept Islam before they handed over the goods? He refused them flatly, and his refusal is its own magnificence. What an evil suggestion, he said, that I should change my faith out of greed for my property and betray the trust placed in me. He would not be bribed into the shahada.

And then Abu al-As carried it all back to Makkah, every last dirham, and went through the people asking: has anyone entrusted me with anything I have not returned? Until they all said no, you have discharged every trust. Of the whole caravan, he was the one man who brought the entrusted wealth home intact. And only then, with every obligation cleared and his honor beyond accusation, did he announce his Islam openly before Quraysh, so no one could ever say he had done it for his life or his money. He returned to Madinah a Muslim, and he and Zaynab were reunited. Of all his sons-in-law, Dr. Yasir Qadhi notes, this is the one of whom the Prophet ﷺ said: he spoke to me and was truthful, and he promised me and he kept his promise.

There is a subtle fiqh knot in the reunion the Sheikh does not skip. The authentic report says the Prophet ﷺ returned Zaynab to Abu al-As without a new marriage contract, even though years had passed in which she was Muslim and he was not. By the majority position, when a wife accepts Islam and her husband does not embrace it within her waiting period the marriage is dissolved, and a later conversion requires a new contract. But a

minority, championed by Ibn al-Qayyim among others, took the report at its word: such a woman, if she has not married another in the interval, may simply resume married life with her husband once he accepts Islam, and the Sheikh inclines to this as the plain sense of the case.

The gift the size of a hill

The last story Dr. Yasir Qadhi tells is the one that gave a whole stretch of these expeditions its name: the army of al-khabat, the withered leaves. Some three hundred men under Abu Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah were sent to intercept a Quraysh caravan and missed it, and the long march wore their supplies down to nothing. Abu Ubaydah rationed what was left, the same portion to each man, and the portion shrank until it was a single date a day, and then even that ran out. They sucked on the date pits for the faint taste, and they stripped the withered leaves off the thorn bushes, the khabat, and ate those, simply to stay alive. The expedition is remembered by that hunger.

Then they reached the shore, near a coastal town not far from Madinah, and Allah laid a gift before them the reports can barely describe. A whale, al-Anbar, lay beached and dead, a creature the like of which they had never seen. More than ten men, by one count thirteen, sat together inside the socket of its eye; they planted one of its rib bones upright in the sand, and Abu Ubaydah mounted the tallest camel in the army and rode beneath that single bone without lowering his head. For a month, three hundred starving men ate from this one animal until they grew fat again, and then they packed what meat remained and carried it home.

But it troubled them, and the trouble is itself a window into how seriously they took the law of Allah. They had eaten a creature

already dead, that no one had slaughtered or even caught alive. So they brought the leftover meat to the Prophet ﷺ and asked him plainly: was it lawful, what we ate? He asked whether any remained, and when they brought it, he ate of it himself.

Lawful to you is game from the sea and its food as provision for you and the travelers, but forbidden to you is game from the land as long as you are in the state of iḥrām. And fear Allāh to whom you will be gathered.

QUR'AN 5:96

This, by Dr. Yasir Qadhi's knowledge, is the one and only time in his entire life that the Prophet ﷺ tasted seafood, and he ate it not from hunger but as a teaching, plain and physical, that the food of the sea is lawful. It need not be ritually slaughtered; it need not even have been caught alive, for this one was found dead on the sand. By naming the very greatest creature of the sea as halal, the Prophet ﷺ settled the matter for everything smaller: if the enormous whale, washed up and never hunted, is lawful, what doubt remains about the fish, the shrimp, the crab? The lesson teaches itself downward from the largest case, and it rests on the verse Allah revealed.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to skim these months as filler, the interval a lesser telling hurries through from one great battle to the next. That would be to miss the question they put to us, which may be the most personal the whole seerah asks, because most of our lives are made of exactly these days, not of Badr or the Trench.

Look at what actually changed in this quiet stretch. Not borders. Hearts. A chieftain came in chains, having sworn murder, and left unable to live without the face he had hated, undone by three

days of plain dignity. An assassin came with a hidden dagger and a rehearsed lie, and left a brother. A son-in-law was praised by the Prophet ﷺ for repaying every entrusted coin before he would even say the shahada: he promised, and he kept his promise. None of this was won by force. The Prophet ﷺ was simply, relentlessly, who he was, and people could not stand near that and remain unchanged. That is the first thing to carry home: you do not need a great occasion to change a life, and you will almost never be given one. You will be given small encounters and small kindnesses, and it was on exactly such days that the biggest hearts in Arabia turned.

And notice the balance the Sheikh keeps pointing to, the one most of us never quite manage. The Prophet ﷺ was at open war with Quraysh, had faced them four times in the field, and yet when Thumama's blockade was starving their women and children he reopened the grain to the very people who had exiled and hunted him. Strictness tempered with mercy, firm toward the enemy yet unwilling to let the helpless waste away, and in him those were never two things but one. We tend to collapse into one pole, all softness or all severity; he held both at once, and that tension is the very texture of the religion. Notice too how often, across these stories, the du'a of the Prophet ﷺ is simply answered: he asked Allah for power over Thumama, and Thumama was carried into his mosque as a prisoner. It is a sign of his rank with his Lord, and a quiet invitation, for the One who answered His Prophet ﷺ so completely is the same One you are asking. Bring Him your small needs on your small days.

So take this from the small days. Be gentle where you could so easily be harsh, because gentleness opens what force never will. Keep your word and pay back every trust, down to the last coin no one is watching, as Abu al-As did before he would even claim

the faith. Honor the safe-conduct you have given, because the pledge of the least believer is sacred. And believe that your minor days are not minor, that the same Lord who turned a king's hatred to love in seventy-six hours, and freed an assassin into faith, is at work in the unremarkable hours of your life too. O Allah, who answered Your Prophet's ﷺ every supplication, soften our hearts as You softened Thumama's, keep us true to our word as Abu al-As was true, make us strict only where we must be and merciful wherever we can, and gather us with Your beloved ﷺ on the Day we are all gathered to You.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 62: the minor expeditions between Khandaq and Hdaybiyyah (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (4:102, 5:96), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The Treaty of Hdaybiyyah, part I

The road to a victory no one could see yet

There is an event in the seerah that Allah Himself calls a victory, and almost everyone guesses the wrong one. Ask a room full of Muslims what al-fath was, the clear opening, the manifest conquest, and most will picture the day the gates of Makkah swung open and the Prophet ﷺ rode in at the head of ten thousand. But Surah al-Fath, the surah of the opening, did not come down in the year Makkah was taken. It came down two years earlier, on a dusty plain outside the sanctuary, over a treaty so bitter that the believers who signed it walked away feeling humiliated. Not a sword was drawn. The pilgrims were turned back from a House they had crossed a desert to reach, and made to put their names to terms that read, to every eye on that plain, like a surrender. And while they were still swallowing it, Allah called it a clear victory.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi opens this part of the seerah by setting that gap squarely in front of us, because it is the lesson the whole arc turns on: what Allah names a triumph and what a watching crowd calls a defeat are not always the same thing. Hold that gap in your mind for the next stretch of the story, because everything in it will test it. And he flags, gently, why of all the episodes in the seerah this one speaks so directly to us. Hdaybiyyah is the story of a community that enters into an agreement, keeps its word, and then has to stand and watch injustice unfold under the cover of that very agreement, with no power to strike back, with

nothing left to do but raise its hands and ask Allah to act where it cannot. For Muslims living as a minority, bound by treaties and laws not of their making, there is hardly an episode in the entire life of the Prophet ﷺ that lands closer to home. We will reach the heart of it in the days to come. Today is only the road in.

A victory with no battle in it

The Sheikh notes a small puzzle in how the companions themselves remembered this event, because it tells you what they understood it to be. Most of the later writers call it the treaty of Hudaibiyyah, or the peace of Hudaibiyyah. But the companions, the ones who were there, overwhelmingly called it the ghazwah of Hudaibiyyah, the expedition, the campaign. That word is strange here, because a ghazwah is normally the name for a battle the Prophet ﷺ himself led, and at Hudaibiyyah no battle was ever fought. One of them, listing the campaigns he had joined, counted Hudaibiyyah among them as the fifth, a battle with no fighting in it. Why?

Because, the Sheikh explains, the fighting did not happen, but everything except the fighting did. The believers came a hair's breadth from war; they took an oath to fight to the death and stood ready with the swords half drawn in their hearts. It is as if they had fought, and so they gave it the name of a battle they were spared. And there is a second reason it earns that heavier name: the event was so vast in its consequences that it overflows the small plain it happened on. It was a conquest in everything but bloodshed, and naming it a ghazwah, the companions reached for a word large enough to hold what they had lived through.

Indeed, We have given you, [O Muhammad], a clear conquest

QUR'AN 48:1

A dream of the Ka'bah

What set the whole journey in motion was a dream. Sometime in the sixth year after the Hijrah, the Prophet ﷺ saw himself making tawaf around the Ka'bah, standing in the white of ihram, his hair shaved, the rites of umrah complete. And the dreams of the prophets are true. He read it as it was meant: an instruction from his Lord to go to the House. He had not seen Makkah in six years, and neither had the companions who had left everything they owned inside it, the homes and the graves and the streets of their childhood, and walked away with nothing.

The Qur'an would later confirm the dream by name, in plain words, promising that they would enter the Sacred Mosque in safety, heads shaved, fearing no one. But the Sheikh asks us to notice something folded into that same ayah. The dream said they would enter. It did not say when. The believers had assumed it meant this year, and the assumption was natural, and it was also their own. Later, when the year ended very differently from how they had pictured it, one of them would come to the Prophet ﷺ and ask him outright: did you not tell us we would make tawaf and shave our heads? And he ﷺ answered him: I told you, but did I say it would be this year? Allah shows His Messenger the truth, and still keeps the timing of it folded inside His own knowledge. The dream was real. The waiting was real too, and learning to live in the space between them is most of what faith is.

Certainly has Allah showed to His Messenger the vision [i.e., dream] in truth. You will surely enter al-Masjid al-Haram, if Allah wills, in safety, with your heads shaved and [hair] shortened, not fearing [anyone]. He knew what you did not know and has arranged before that a conquest near [at hand].

QUR'AN 48:27

The ones who stayed behind

The Prophet ﷺ announced his intention openly, to the people of Madinah and to the Muslim tribes scattered around it: a peaceful umrah to Makkah, and whoever was able to come should come. By now the territory of Islam had grown large; Badr, Uhud, and the Trench were behind them, and the lands near Madinah had largely entered the faith. The Emigrants prepared at once, understanding what it would cost in time and what it might cost in blood, and preparing anyway. But the bedouin tribes nearer the desert held back. And when the travelers finally returned, these same men came forward with their excuse ready and rehearsed: our wealth and our families kept us occupied, so ask Allah to forgive us.

Allah exposed them in the Qur'an before they could finish the sentence. They say with their tongues, He said, what is not in their hearts. And then He named the real reason, which was far darker than busyness. You thought, He told them, that the Messenger and the believers would never come back to their families, ever. You looked at fourteen hundred unarmed men in pilgrim's cloth walking straight toward the city that had twice marched out to slaughter them, and you did the arithmetic, and you bet against Allah. You thought an evil thought, and it ruined you. Their fear, the Sheikh notes, did not merely keep them

comfortable and alive at home. It robbed them of the single greatest honor available to their generation, an honor that was, at that very moment, being handed to the men who had gone.

Those who remained behind of the bedouins will say to you, "Our properties and our families occupied us, so ask forgiveness for us." They say with their tongues what is not within their hearts. Say, "Then who could prevent Allah at all if He intended for you harm or intended for you benefit? Rather, ever is Allah, of what you do, Aware."

QUR'AN 48:11

But you thought that the Messenger and the believers would never return to their families, ever, and that was made pleasing in your hearts. And you assumed an assumption of evil and became a people ruined."

QUR'AN 48:12

Because those who walked anyway, who put their families and their fields and their very lives behind the command and went, were lifted. The companions, the Sheikh reminds us, were never a single flat rank; they rose in degrees, Badr above what came after, and Hudaibiyyah above what came after that. Of the people gathered with him on this journey the Prophet ﷺ would later say that no one on the face of the earth was more righteous than they were, and anyone present received, from that day, an automatic elevation in standing among the companions. That is the quiet machinery of faith the Sheikh keeps pointing at, the principle that runs through the whole religion: the more you trust Allah, the more He entrusts to you. The men who stayed home to keep themselves safe kept nothing of worth; the men who walked toward the danger were named the most righteous alive.

Leaving in white, on purpose

Fourteen hundred companions set out from Madinah. The number alone tells a story the histories never spell out but cannot hide: Badr had been a few hundred, Uhud and the Trench more, and now a single umrah draws fourteen hundred. The tide was turning even in raw count; the believers were no longer a hunted handful but a people numbering in the thousands.

And everything about the way they left was a deliberate message. The Prophet ﷺ timed the departure to the first of Dhul-Qa'dah, the opening day of the sacred months, the four months in which the ancient law of Ibrahim forbade all fighting, in which a man could meet his own father's killer at the Ka'bah and not lift a hand against him. He waited for the first of those months on purpose. He left in ihram, the white cloth of a pilgrim, not the iron of a soldier. He did not feint in one direction and double back, the way he masked his every military march; he went straight at Makkah, in the open, so that no living soul could mistake what he intended. By every custom the Quraysh themselves claimed to revere, they were forbidden to turn a pilgrim away in the sacred months, and in all their history they never once had. The Prophet ﷺ was, in effect, daring them to be the first.

And he brought the animals. Seventy camels, consecrated, garlanded, marked out with the signs the Arabs all recognized as offerings dedicated to Allah and to His House. Here the Sheikh lingers on a sunnah the ummah has all but forgotten, the consecration of the sacrificial animal, the hady, decorated and set apart so that everyone who saw it knew it had been given to Allah and could not be touched. It was an act the Arabs read instantly as a sign of piety, and they honored it. The Prophet ﷺ took seventy on this journey and would later take a hundred for

his Hajj, because it was his way never to repeat a good deed at the same measure but always to climb. The camels were a true act of worship, offered for Allah's sake and nothing else. And they would also, in the days ahead, soften the hearts of the men Makkah sent out to negotiate, who would look at all those garlanded beasts and say that it was not right to turn such people away from the House. Trust in Allah, and every reasonable precaution, walking side by side.

That [is so]. And whoever honors the symbols [i.e., rites] of Allah - indeed, it is from the piety of hearts.

QUR'AN 22:32

Cautious to the last detail

The Prophet ﷺ never walked in blind, and this journey shows it at every turn; his whole life, the Sheikh says, demonstrates a man who knew Allah would provide and yet did everything in his power to make the plan sound. He chose a single scout to slip ahead into Makkah and learn what the Quraysh were preparing, and he chose him with care: not a famous Emigrant whose face the whole of Makkah knew, not a known Helper, but a man from the tribe of Khuza'ah, a neutral clan, a man who had not even announced his Islam and whom no one in Makkah would think to suspect. He posted lookouts around the caravan. And the heavier weapons of war, the armor and the fighting blades, he kept packed away in the baggage train, unworn, while the travelers carried only the lighter swords a man takes for the road. A pilgrim in ihram cannot dress for battle; the state of consecration does not allow it. But a wise man does not march defenseless toward enemies who have twice tried to kill him either. And here, the Sheikh points out, the two reports in the books of seerah, one

saying the Muslims were armed and one saying they were not, are reconciled exactly: they were not wearing the weapons of war, and the weapons were nonetheless with them, riding in the baggage, ready if the day demanded them.

Then the scout came back with hard news. The Quraysh had heard. They had armed themselves, put on the leopard skins they wore as a public declaration of war, and sent out a cavalry force under Khalid ibn al-Walid, still on their side in those days, to camp on the road at a place called Ghamim and block the pilgrims from reaching the city. They had even brought their women and children, as they had done at Uhud, to announce that they had no intention of retreating.

And here the Sheikh asks us to listen closely to what the Prophet ﷺ said when the news reached him, because the words open a window straight into his heart. Woe to the Quraysh, he said, war has consumed them. What would they lose if they left me to the rest of the Arabs? If the Arabs overcome me, that is the very thing they wanted, and they are rid of me at no cost. And if Allah grants me victory over the Arabs, they will enter Islam with their honor intact, sharing in the triumph. Why must my own people be the ones to fight me? By the One in whose hand is my soul, I will not stop until Allah makes His religion victorious, or this neck of mine is severed. The Sheikh holds those words up against every accusation ever thrown at the Prophet ﷺ, that he was a man hungry for war. Hear him. This is a man grieving that his own blood will force a war upon him, a man who fought only when he was made to and to whom the prospect of fighting his own kin was a wound. He loved his people with the plain love a man has for his own, and he could not understand why they would choose the loss.

The council and the road of thorns

With Khalid's cavalry sitting across the direct road, the Prophet ﷺ stopped the caravan, praised Allah, and laid the whole situation before the companions, the way a true leader does, the Sheikh observes, rather than simply handing down an order that men obey with half a heart. He even offered his own first idea: strike at the desert tribes who had marched out alongside the Quraysh, and draw the enemy into a fight on those terms. Then he asked what they thought.

It was Abu Bakr, radiyallahu anhu, who answered. You came out, Messenger of Allah, intending only the House of Allah, not war and not the killing of anyone. So let us press on straight toward the Ka'bah as we set out to do, and fight only those who try to stop us. The Prophet ﷺ liked it better than his own first thought, and he changed his plan on the spot: then move on, in the name of Allah. A small thing, the Sheikh says, and an enormous one. A leader who rules by veto is obeyed grudgingly and without heart; a leader who consults raises men who follow with genuine enthusiasm, because the plan became theirs in the consulting. And it is also, the Sheikh notes, one of the clearest proofs that the Prophet ﷺ exercised his own considered judgment, his ijtihad, in worldly affairs, and that Allah permitted him to, for here he holds an opinion, hears a better one, and lets it go.

But the new route was brutal. To reach an alternate road into Makkah and slip around Khalid's army entirely, a guide who knew the country led them down through a valley of thorns and black volcanic rock, an entire plain that tore at their feet until they bled. And to carry his exhausted, bleeding people through it, the Prophet ﷺ told them that this place was for them what the gate had been for the Children of Israel, the gate they were commanded to enter humbly, asking forgiveness, and have their

sins forgiven. Whoever passes through this valley, he ﷺ said, will have all his sins forgiven, except, he added, the man with the red camel. The forgiveness gave them the strength to go on, and the strange exception set them wondering. They searched, and found the man at the rear of the caravan, calling out for a lost red camel. They told him to come along and be forgiven, whatever he had done; he answered that finding his camel mattered to him more than going to their companion to have his sins forgiven. Not everyone walking beside the companions was a companion in heart. The Sheikh ties it, carefully, to the Qur'an's own plain acknowledgment that among the bedouins around Madinah were some whose faith had not truly entered, men the believers did not know but Allah did. And just as carefully he refuses to let that general fact be turned, as some try to turn it, against the great companions whom revelation praised by name. A single nameless man chasing a stray camel is one thing; Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, Ali, the ones the Qur'an and the Sunnah honor directly, are another entirely, and no vague verse about hidden hypocrites may be stretched to touch them. Whoever accuses such men of treachery, the Sheikh says plainly, only exposes the treachery in his own heart.

The camel that would not rise

By the time they finally emerged from the valley of thorns the night was falling, and they came out onto a plain called Hodaybiyyah, on the very edge of the sanctuary of Makkah, where a direct road runs down into the city. And there, as they arrived, the Prophet's ﷺ camel, Qaswa, knelt and would not move. The companions called to her the way the Arabs call a camel up, hal, hal, get up, move on, and she would not stir. They grew frustrated, because she was blocking the whole caravan

and no one would ride ahead of him. Qaswa has become stubborn, one of them said. The Prophet ﷺ corrected him at once: Qaswa has not become stubborn, and that is not in her nature. Rather the One who held back the elephant has held her back too.

The Sheikh draws two things out of this, and both are easy to walk straight past. The first is the comparison itself. In the Year of the Elephant, Allah had halted Abrahah's elephant at the edge of Makkah, refusing to let it advance against the House. Now a camel is halted at the edge of Makkah. In both cases an animal is stopped, and stopped so that the sanctuary will be honored; the same hand was moving in both. There is wisdom in this stopping, the Prophet ﷺ was telling them, as there was in that one, so put your trust in Allah. The second thing is smaller and just as sharp. Look at how he ﷺ leapt to defend the honor of an animal against a careless word, refusing to let a gentle camel be slandered as stubborn when stubbornness was not in her. And the Sheikh turns it on us like a blade: if the reputation of a camel deserves to be guarded from a careless accusation, what about the reputation of a human being? Remember that, he says, the next time you hear someone smeared, the next time a careless word is about to leave your own mouth.

So where Qaswa knelt, they made camp, because that was plainly where they were meant to stop. And the one well on that plain had all but run dry, only a little water left at the very bottom. The people complained of thirst, their animals parched after a full day crossing the valley, far off the main road with its known wells. The Prophet ﷺ took an arrow from his quiver and had it placed down into the well, and he gargled water in his mouth and returned it into the bucket and sent it down, and the water rose and gushed until fourteen hundred people and all their animals

drank their fill, and the men who had gone down inside had to scramble out so as not to drown. One more sign, among so very many, of the blessing Allah poured through his hands ﷺ, taking the little and making it more than enough.

And camped now at Hudaibiyyah, a single stone's throw from the Ka'bah he had seen in his dream, the Prophet ﷺ made a vow that would carry the weight of everything still to come. By the One in whose hand is my soul, he said, the Quraysh will not ask me for any condition in which they honor the sacred things of Allah except that I will grant it to them, so long as it spares bloodshed.

Hold that sentence, because it is a door into the rest of the story. Any condition, he ﷺ said, any condition at all, as long as it keeps the sacred things sacred and breaks no part of the religion and avoids the shedding of blood. The Sheikh reads it as the Prophet ﷺ deliberately steeling his companions for what was bearing down on them, because the terms the Quraysh were about to demand would be so bitter, so seemingly one-sided and humiliating, that even Umar ibn al-Khattab, radiyallahu anhu, the strongest and boldest of them, would not be able to make sense of them. He was preparing their hearts in advance, telling them before the blow landed that he had already decided to absorb it. The terms, the tears, the moment the firmest of the companions came undone, and then the slow and staggering turn by which Allah would name the whole of it a clear victory: that is where this road is leading.

Out on the plain, Khalid's scouts saw the Muslim camp and understood that the pilgrims had slipped around the cavalry, and the Quraysh were forced back toward Makkah to think again. Soon emissaries would begin crossing the open ground between

the two camps. But the negotiations belong to tomorrow. For tonight, fourteen hundred travelers sit in white at the boundary of the sanctuary, the cuts from the valley still fresh on their feet, drinking from a well that should have been empty, waiting on a city that has never once in its history turned a pilgrim away, and is about to.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read the road into Hudaybiyyah as throat-clearing, the dull march before the real drama of the treaty, and to hurry past it. That would be to miss the questions it has already, quietly, put to us before a single term has been written down.

Begin with the gap the Sheikh set in front of us at the start, between what Allah names a victory and what a crowd calls a defeat. These fourteen hundred had a true dream of the Ka'bah, set out in obedience to it, walked openly and in peace, brought offerings garlanded for the House, did everything right, and they were about to be turned back from the door with terms that would taste like ash. And Allah would send down an entire surah to call it a clear victory while their feelings were still telling them they had lost. How often we do the reverse, rendering our verdict on a day the moment it disappoints us, writing defeat across an event before Allah has finished writing on it. The road into Hudaybiyyah asks us to wait for His ruling before we pronounce our own, because the very thing breaking our hearts may be the opening we would have begged Him for if we could have seen the end of it.

Then there is the way he ﷺ traveled, which teaches the balance most of us never quite manage. He sent a shrewdly chosen scout, posted lookouts, packed the weapons of war separately,

and changed his plan when Abu Bakr's was better. He did, in short, every reasonable thing a careful man could do, and not one of those precautions was the smallest contradiction of his trust in Allah, because he also leaned his whole heart on his Lord and named the One who stopped the elephant as the One who had stopped his camel. Tie the camel, and trust the One who made the camel. We are forever collapsing that balance to one side, either scheming as though the outcome sat entirely in our own hands, or sitting idle and calling our negligence reliance on Allah. He ﷻ held both at full strength at once, and so must we.

And learn, finally, the smaller mercies threaded through the day. Learn from the bedouins who stayed home that fear keeps you safe and costs you everything, that the ones who hung back lost the highest honor of their generation not for anything they did but for the going they were too frightened to do. Learn from the man with the red camel that you can walk the entire distance beside the believers and arrive nowhere, if your heart was always somewhere else, chasing its own stray camel. And learn from Qaswa that if the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would not let an animal's good name be spoken against unjustly, then the careless word you were about to pass along about someone is heavier than you think. So take these down into your ordinary days. Wait for Allah's verdict before you write your own. Do everything in your power, and then rest your whole heart in His. Be of those who go when He calls, guard one another's honor as the Prophet ﷺ guarded his camel's, and learn, tonight, at the edge of a sanctuary you cannot yet enter, to trust the ending of a story before you are allowed to see it. May Allah, who held back the elephant and held back the camel, hold back from us every harm we cannot fend off ourselves, open for us the openings we could never imagine,

and never let us read defeat into a day that He has written as a victory.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 63: between Khandaq and Hdaybiyyah, part 1 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (48:1, 48:27, 48:11, 48:12, 22:32), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing has been followed.

The Treaty of Hdaybiyyah, part 2

The envoys who came to argue and left convinced

When we left him last, his camel had knelt on the open plain of Hdaybiyyah and refused to rise, and he ﷺ had read in that refusal the will of his Lord and made his camp where the animal stopped. Fourteen hundred men were settled in their tents now, at the very edge of the sacred precincts, dressed in the two white cloths of ihram, their sacrificial animals garlanded and waiting, carrying nothing that could be called a weapon of war. They had come for umrah and nothing else. And on the far side of the water, behind a wall of armed men, sat a Makkah that would not let them in.

A word of warning before we walk into these days, the same warning Dr. Yasir Qadhi sets down first. These are among the hardest pages in the entire seerah to put in order. We do not have one connected account of Hdaybiyyah; we have a scatter of small reports, this companion remembering one scene, that companion another, and no chain that lets us say which came first and which came after. So what follows is one careful reconstruction, offered the way the Sheikh offers it, with Allah knows best written over the order of events. What is not in doubt is the shape of these days, and the shape is unforgettable: a procession of messengers crossing the sand, and almost every one of them arriving to argue and leaving unable to argue anymore.

The raid that drew no blood

Begin with an incident that has no date, because no narration gives it one. It may have fallen on the first day of the standoff or the last; the Sheikh sets it down on its own precisely because it cannot be slotted anywhere with confidence. It is preserved in Sahih Muslim, and it opens with eighty armed men.

While the camp slept, eighty fighters of the Quraysh crept down from the heights above Hudaybiyyah and timed their charge for the grey hour around the dawn prayer, hoping to fall upon a field of tents before a single Muslim could lift a hand. Picture what that raid was built to do. Eighty armed men breaking into a sleeping camp, striking fast and fleeing fast, and out of fourteen hundred there is no counting how many would have been cut down, two hundred, three hundred, before the raiders melted back into the hills. It was the kind of attack that ends with the valley full of the dead.

It ended with no one dead at all. The Muslims were not the easy prey the raiders had imagined; they had posted scouts, and the scouts saw the eighty coming. So the hunters became the hunted. Instead of surprising the camp, the eighty found themselves surrounded, disarmed, and marched in to the Prophet ﷺ without the spilling of a single drop of blood. An astonishing thing, the Sheikh calls it: eighty armed men forced to surrender and not one of them killed.

And then comes the twist that tells you everything about the man they had come to kill. He ﷺ forgave them. Every one of the eighty, captured in the act of a dawn ambush, he pardoned and sent home to Makkah unharmed. Sit with how strange that is. Every legal system that has ever existed, Sheikh Yasir points out, would have called this open and shut: you were attacked in your

sleep, you may answer the attacker with the sword, and not a soul on earth would have blamed you. The eighty expected nothing less. And he let them walk away.

Allah named that restraint a gift, and recorded it in the Qur'an. Here Dr. Yasir Qadhi reads the verse closely, and notice that it cuts in two directions at once.

And it is He who withheld their hands from you and your hands from them within [the area of] Makkah after He caused you to overcome them. And ever is Allah, of what you do, Seeing.

QUR'AN 48:24

Read it slowly. He withheld their hands from you: eighty armed men fell on a sleeping camp and not one believer was harmed, and Allah claims that protection as His own doing. But then, and this is the half we are slow to see, He also withheld your hands from them. Because the Muslims, surrounding eighty raiders caught in an unprovoked attack, might very well have wanted to kill them, and would have been entitled to. And had even one of those eighty been struck down in that valley, the entire peace would have died with him, and Hudaibiyyah was about to become, after the conquest of Makkah itself, the greatest victory Allah would ever give this ummah. The mercy that spared eighty would-be killers was the very mercy that saved everything that came after. One drop of blood, and the whole future closes.

Why the surah is called the conquest

Hold onto something small that turns out not to be small at all. The whole of Surah al-Fath, the surah whose name is the conquest, was sent down about this, not about the day Makkah

opened its gates, but about Hudaybiyyah, revealed on the road back to Madinah when it was over.

Many a Muslim hears the word fath and thinks at once of one thing only, the conquest of Makkah, because fath is fath and surely the conquest is what is meant. Sheikh Yasir corrects the reflex, gently but firmly. Fath means any opening, any victory. When you speak of al-fath without qualification, yes, you mean the day Makkah opened. But this surah, in its entirety, has nothing to do with that day. It came down about a treaty, and the victory it crowns was won by men who never unsheathed a sword.

Indeed, We have given you, [O Muhammad], a clear conquest.

QUR'AN 48:1

Carry that verse with you as the messengers begin to move, because nothing about the coming days is going to look like a conquest. It is going to look like a quarrel with no exit, an enemy too proud to yield over a thing that costs them nothing. And over all of it, before a single clause has been agreed, Allah has already written the word.

Budayl, and the offer the Quraysh would not hear

The first man to step into the gap between the two camps belonged to neither of them. Budayl was a chief of Khuza'ah, a tribe that lived in those hills and leaned quietly toward the Prophet ﷺ, though Budayl himself had not yet entered Islam; that would come in time. For now he was simply a neutral man, a noble Arab whom both sides trusted, and one who did not want a slaughter on the ground where his people lived.

He came into the camp carrying a warning. The sons of Ka'b, he said, naming the legendary ancestors of the Quraysh, are camped on the far side of the water, armed to the teeth, and they have sworn they will die before they let you set foot in the Haram. Muhammad, the message ran underneath, calm yourself, there is an army waiting over there. And he heard back the answer the Prophet ﷺ would give, almost word for word, to every envoy who came after him. We have not come to fight, he said. We have come to honor this House. War has worn the Quraysh down and worn us down alongside them; if they wish for peace, let them have peace, and if they wish for war, then by the One in whose hand is my soul, I will fight them for this matter until my neck is severed and Allah's decree is done. And then he laid out a way through, reasonable and generous: let the Quraysh step out of their city for a few days, let us enter and perform our umrah and leave, and then the city is theirs again. It was an offer the Quraysh would, in the end, accept, though only on their own bitter terms and only the following year.

Budayl carried the offer back across the sand. And here the Sheikh marks a detail that has not aged a day. The foolish among the Quraysh would not even let Budayl speak. We have no reason to listen to you, they told him, you have nothing to tell us we do not already know. The same shut ears we still meet, says Dr. Yasir, the people who have decided everything about you before you open your mouth, who do not care how reasonable the words might be because their minds are made up in advance. Arrogance is so foolish it blinds even a man's own intellect. The wise among them overruled the fools and let Budayl talk, and he told them the Prophet's ﷺ offer in full, and added his own counsel: O Quraysh, you are being hasty with this man, your anger is getting the better of you, he has not come to fight. The

seeds of doubt were being sown in the enemy's own camp, and Budayl was only the first to sow them.

And the Quraysh gave the answer they would cling to, white-knuckled, to the very end. By Allah, they said, he will never enter upon us, and the Arabs will never say that he forced his way in. Not reason. Not theology. Pride, the Sheikh says plainly, nothing but pride. The whole standoff, when you dig to its root, was a wounded sense of honor: the Arabs must never be able to whisper that Muhammad walked into Makkah and the Quraysh could not stop him.

Urwa, the beard, and the curse of Abu Bakr

Then came Urwa ibn Mas'ud, a chief of Thaqif from Ta'if, Makkah's rival sister city in the mountains. Before the Quraysh would let him go as their envoy he had to prove his loyalty, and watch how an Arab does that: am I not like a father to you, he asked them, a son to you? Have I ever wronged you? Did I not avert bloodshed for you on such a day, did I not bring about reconciliation on another? He laid out his record like a resume, until they were satisfied that his heart was with them, and only then let him go. He reached the Prophet ﷺ and heard the same patient speech the others had heard, and he answered it with insult dressed up as advice.

Urwa looked over the fourteen hundred and saw, through the eyes of a man raised on the law of the tribe, nothing but a rabble. Muhammad, he said in effect, who are these people around you? By Allah I do not see men that I recognize, I see a medley of strangers thrown together, and the moment a sword is drawn they will scatter and abandon you and leave you standing alone.

Here Dr. Yasir steps back to teach something he wants carried far beyond this scene, because Urwa's slander follows a pattern that never dies. Look at what Urwa accuses the Prophet ﷺ of: breaking the ties of kinship, bringing a strange new theology, dragging in a crowd of outsiders nobody knows. And in every one of those smears there is a kernel of truth wrapped in layers of falsehood. From Urwa's pagan vantage the Prophet ﷺ truly was, in a sense, cutting across the old tribal bonds; his religion truly was new; he truly had come with people of many tribes. This, says the Sheikh, is the way of it with every accusation hurled at this religion across every century. There is always a small seed of something real, buried under a mountain of lies, and were it not for that seed nobody would ever swallow the lie. They called him a magician, because there were miracles; a poet, because the Qur'an is beautiful beyond speech. And the lesson is sharp: before we open our mouths to defend our faith against the accusations of our own age, we had better understand the kernel the other side is seeing, or our defense will never reach them.

But there was more in Urwa's words than a misreading. There was a claim that the believers would abandon their Prophet ﷺ at the first flash of a blade. And from behind the Prophet ﷺ that claim was answered by a curse so coarse that the Sheikh says he cannot bring himself to repeat it in the masjid, a savage retort flung at al-Lat, the idol that Ta'if guarded and Urwa's own city revered. And the man who said it was the last man on earth you would expect to hear such words from. Urwa, stung, demanded to know who had spoken, and was told: it was the son of Abu Quhafah. It was Abu Bakr, the gentlest of them, the shyest, the softest-spoken, the most modest man in the camp.

This is where Sheikh Yasir lingers, because the anger teaches as much as the gentleness does. Abu Bakr was not insulted for

himself; nothing said that day had touched his own honor. He was told that the Muslims would forsake the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and from stillness to fury in an instant, the kindest of all of them lost his temper and cursed, using words that in any other moment would have been unthinkable from his lips. Some things, the Sheikh says, are worth losing your temper over. He could absorb an insult to himself in silence, but the suggestion that he and his brothers would abandon the Prophet ﷺ set the gentlest heart in the camp ablaze. And the Prophet ﷺ did not rebuke him. It marks a rare exception, not a rule, the Sheikh is careful to add; the general way is to keep far from such speech, but once in a long while there is a thing that nothing else will say.

As the two men talked, Urwa kept reaching out to take hold of the Prophet's ﷺ beard, the old Arab gesture of one equal to another. And each time his hand came up, the flat of a sword came down on it, harder each time, and a voice told him: take your hand away from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ before it does not come back to you. Urwa looked up to find the man behind the helmet, and it was his own nephew. Mughira ibn Shu'bah had come to Islam carrying a dark past, a man who had once shared in the killing of travelers on the road for their goods, until Islam reached his heart and he came to Madinah a changed man. The Prophet ﷺ had accepted his Islam and refused his stolen wealth, telling him plainly that Islam wipes away what came before it but the blood-money and the plunder he could not bring among them, a judgment, the Sheikh notes, that is itself a quiet refutation of all who ever called these early Muslims highwaymen. Now Mughira stood as a bodyguard at the Prophet's ﷺ side, and being of the same blood as Urwa, he was the one man near enough in kinship to dare bring a sword down on an uncle's hand.

What an outsider saw

Urwa went back to the Quraysh, and what he reported is, in the Sheikh's words, one of the most beautiful passages in the whole of the seerah, and beautiful precisely because the man who spoke it was not yet a believer. He had no reason on earth to flatter them. He simply described what his own eyes had seen and could not explain.

O people, he said, I have entered the courts of kings. I have stood before Caesar of Rome, before Khusro of Persia, before the Negus of Abyssinia. By Allah, I have never seen a king honored by his people the way Muhammad ﷺ is honored by his companions. He does not so much as spit but one of them catches it in his hands and wipes it over his face and his skin. He does not make his ablution but they nearly come to blows over the water that runs from him. When he speaks they drop their voices in his presence, and they will not look him full in the face out of awe of him. If he so much as wishes for a thing, they race one another to do it before the words have left him. And then the man who had come to scold delivered his verdict: I have looked them over for you, O Quraysh, and if you want the sword, they will give you the sword, but I do not believe you can beat this man.

Here Dr. Yasir lingers longest, because he loves this turn in the road. The same man, in a single hour, going from who are these people, they will flee you at the first sword, to I have never seen anything like the way they love him. And mark how it happened. The Prophet ﷺ never argued Urwa into it; he never countered a single point. He simply was who he was, surrounded by people who loved him as no court on earth has ever loved a king, and a pagan chief saw it and could not unsee it. This, the Sheikh tells you flatly, is the real weapon of Hudaybiyyah. Not arms. Not

numbers, for the Quraysh outnumbered them three to one. Iman, raw and visible, a faith so real that strangers who did not share it could feel it coming off the believers like heat. Our chief weapon, he presses it home, was never the strength of our hands but the belief in our hearts, and when that belief is true, the rest falls into place behind it. The Quraysh, hearing their own envoy go soft on them, snapped at him too: if any other man had said this, we would have answered him. And still, even now: he will not enter upon us this year.

The camel, the bedouin, and a coalition coming apart

Watch what the Prophet ﷺ does next, because Sheikh Yasir wants you to see the strategy working underneath the patience. It was time to send a man of his own toward the city, and to make the message of peace unmistakable he chose a companion named Khirash and mounted him on his own she-camel, an animal the people of Makkah would recognize on sight, so they would know the sender even before the messenger spoke. They recognized the camel and their rage spilled over. They hamstrung the animal where it stood, mobbed Khirash, and very nearly killed him, until a steadier voice talked the crowd down and sent him back alive. So a peaceful envoy of his own would not work either.

Then a man named Hulays stepped forward, a leader of the Ahabish, the great web of tribes around Makkah whom the Quraysh leaned on for their numbers and their muscle. And as Hulays drew near, the Prophet ﷺ recognized him from a distance and turned to his companions with an instruction that was pure understanding of the human heart: this is a man from a people who venerate the sacrificial animals, he said, so send the camels out to meet him. Hundreds of camels, garlanded and marked for the sacrifice, more than five hundred of them, the sheep and the

goats besides, poured down the valley toward Hulays, and the Muslims raised their voices in the chant of the pilgrim in ihram. Hulays never even reached the camp. He saw a whole valley flooded with consecrated animals and pilgrims crying out their devotion, turned on his heel, and went straight back to the Quraysh: by Allah, it is not permitted to keep these animals from the House of Allah. They sneered at him, you are nothing but an ignorant bedouin, our mistake was ever to send you, and Hulays, stung by the contempt in it, swore by Allah that not one man of the Ahabish would stand with them. Another ally gone.

This, the Sheikh says, is the long patient game of a master, and you can watch the board change. One tribe at a time, the coalition is peeling away from the Quraysh, the Khuza'ah leaning off, Thaqif's envoy gone soft, now the whole bloc of the Ahabish swearing off the fight, until soon the Quraysh will stand alone and have no choice left but to talk. And notice his method with Hulays, because it is the heart of how this man called people to Allah. Hulays had a soft spot for the sacred animals, so the Prophet ﷺ showed him the animals, true and real, nothing staged, only the plain reality of why they had come. Meet people where their hearts already are; find the good a person already honors, and speak to that. And the Sheikh adds a word against the small-mindedness that creeps into some of us: there is righteousness in every people, even among these pagan chiefs who stood up for what was right when their own side was wrong, and the Prophet ﷺ welcomed it wherever he found it. A man need not share your creed to recognize a wrong when he sees one.

Sending Umar, and the man sent instead

Now it was the Prophet's ﷺ turn to send an envoy of his own straight into the city, into the lion's den itself, for in six long years no Muslim had walked into Makkah as a free man. It would take courage, and so he chose Umar, perhaps for exactly that, his strength and his fearlessness, the very man who had once announced his own Islam by daring anyone in Makkah to come and stop him.

And Umar, of all people, asked to be excused, not out of fear but out of clear eyes. Messenger of Allah, he said, my enmity with the Quraysh is well known, and I have no clan left in Makkah to stand at my back and protect me; they will kill me. Then, instead of simply refusing, he pointed to a better man. Uthman, he said, has more standing in their eyes than I do, and his people are strong and near to them. For in that world a man was shielded not by his own arm but by his tribe, and Uthman's tribe could cover him where Umar's could not. And the Prophet ﷺ took the counsel, the way he took good advice all through his life, weighing the word of a sincere man even when it changed his own plan, because firmness in principle was never the same thing as stubbornness in detail. So he turned to send Uthman ibn Affan into Makkah instead.

And there, with Uthman walking toward the city and his fate inside it still unknown, Dr. Yasir stops the story mid-stride. What that errand would cost, the rumor it would breed, and the pledge it would summon from fourteen hundred men under a tree, all of it waits for the days ahead. For now, hold the picture as it stands: a camp that came in peace, an enemy too proud to allow it, and one man after another crossing the sand to argue and turning back half-convinced.

What this day asks of our faith

Not a single battle was fought across these days, and yet by the end of them you have watched a war being won, and that runs against everything the world teaches about strength. A night raid was answered with forgiveness. A coalition of proud tribes came apart, not under attack, but one envoy at a time. A pagan chief was sent to scold and walked home in awe. And underneath all of it lay a weapon the Quraysh never thought to fear: a faith so real that even those who did not share it could feel it and could not stand against it.

So begin where the Sheikh begins, with the eighty who were spared. He ﷺ had every right under heaven and earth to answer that dawn ambush with the sword, and he forgave instead, and Allah called that restraint a gift, because a single drop of blood in that valley would have killed a victory greater than any battle could have won. We are quick to take what is ours by right and slow to ask what the forbearance might be worth. Sometimes the strongest thing a person can do is the very thing he has the full right to do and chooses not to. Ask, the next time you are wronged and entitled to strike back, what your restraint might be guarding that your anger cannot see.

Then sit with the real weapon. The Prophet ﷺ never won Urwa with an argument; he won him by being who he was among people who loved him as no king was ever loved. The people around you are reading the iman in your life long before they weigh anything you say, and a faith that is visible reaches hearts that no debate will ever open. And when you do speak, speak the way he ﷺ spoke to Hulays: find the good a person already honors and meet them there, with nothing bent and nothing staged. There is righteousness in every people; look for it, name it, and build on it.

And learn the gentleness and the anger together, because they are not opposites. The softest companion in the camp erupted in fury, and the Prophet ﷺ let it stand, because Abu Bakr was not burning for himself but for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ; love is what decides when to be calm and when to burn. Then learn the humility of leadership from the man at the center of it all, who heard Umar say send someone else and listened, because even the best plan can be bettered by a sincere word, and to be firm in your principles is not to be stubborn in your details.

So take one thing from this day of no battle down into your ordinary one. Be firm in what is true, and do not bend it to be liked or to be left alone. Be merciful to those who come against you, the way he ﷺ was merciful to eighty men caught with swords in their hands. Reach for the good in people wherever you find it. And let your faith in Allah be the thing that speaks for you before you have said a word, trusting, as this whole day teaches, that the truth, given time, always wins. May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, who answered a raid with forgiveness and an enemy's pride with patience, make us firm upon what is true and soft toward His creation, and let the iman in our hearts speak before our tongues do.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 64: the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah, part 2 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (48:1, 48:24), verified via quran.ai. Where the reports of these days resist a single chronology, the Sheikh's

own careful reconstruction has been followed, and Allah knows best.

The Treaty of Hdaybiyyah, part 3

A pledge under a tree, a treaty that hurt to sign

Fourteen hundred believers are camped at Hdaybiyyah, on the very edge of the Haram, in ihram, with their sacrificial animals beside them and not a single thought of war in their hearts. They came north from Madinah to perform umrah, to walk around the House they had been driven away from, and nothing more. But the Quraysh have sealed every road into Makkah, and three or four envoys back and forth have gone nowhere. Now it is the Prophet's ﷺ turn to send a man of senior rank, someone the Quraysh cannot simply wave away, and what unfolds from that one decision becomes one of the most extraordinary days in the whole of the seerah: a rumor, an oath beneath a tree that the Qur'an itself would carry to the end of time, and then a treaty so lopsided that the ink of it would land, at the last, on the sound of a man dragging his chains.

Umar steps back, and Uthman steps forward

The Prophet's ﷺ first thought was Umar ibn al-Khattab. The reason is exactly what you would expect: physical strength, an intimidating presence, the kind of standing that lets a man walk into Makkah and not be pushed around. But Umar gave an answer that opens his heart to us. He did not refuse out of fear. Dr. Yasir Qadhi will not let that misreading stand for a moment: the last person on earth anyone could ever accuse of cowardice is Umar, the most fearless of men from before Islam until the day

he died. Had this been a matter of ego, of making history, he would have been first in the line saying let me go, whatever happens. What he said instead was that his enmity with the Quraysh was simply too well known. They remembered exactly what he had done at Badr and exactly whom he had killed, and there was no clan of his left in Makkah to protect him. His own tribe, Banu Adi, had largely died out; there was no one to shield him if the Quraysh chose violence. And if they killed the envoy, the whole purpose of the mission, a treaty, an entry into Makkah, would be lost. Send someone they genuinely look up to, he said, someone without my baggage. And he named the man: Uthman ibn Affan.

Understand what this is. It is the opposite of ego. Umar took himself out of the spotlight so that the mission would actually succeed, and pointed instead to a man with the lineage to be safe and the dignity to be heard. Uthman was of Banu Umayyah, and Banu Umayyah and Banu Hashim, the Prophet's ﷺ own clan, were the two great rival houses of Quraysh, descended from brothers. After Ali, who was Banu Hashim himself, Uthman was among the closest in lineage to the Prophet ﷺ of all the early companions. And unlike Umar, he still had powerful relatives alive in Makkah who could stand for him. He had no baggage and he had protection. He was the right choice, and the strong thing Umar did was to see it and step aside. To call this a flinch, the Sheikh says, is to misunderstand the entire life of the man.

Into the city, under a cousin's protection

Uthman, radiyallahu anhu, rode toward Makkah and entered by the road called Baldah, where the Quraysh had men posted to block every approach to the city. They stopped him, they mocked him, and they told him to turn back: there would be no

negotiation, no hope of his entering at all. He was on the point of returning when, in that very group, his own cousin recognized him. The man was Aban ibn Said, an older and well respected figure, and their fathers had been brothers, so Uthman was his first cousin. Whether his heart softened at the sight of how his kinsman was being treated, or whether old respect simply surfaced, Aban climbed down from his horse and put Uthman up on his own saddle and declared him under his protection. You will enter, he said, and you will meet whomever you wish to meet, and I am your guarantor.

This was the visa of that world. In the Arabia of the time, you did not enter a hostile city on your own; you entered under the aman, the guarantee, of a man who would vouch for you and answer for your safety. So Uthman rode into Makkah on his cousin's own mount, an honor in itself, and Aban personally took him to the leaders of Quraysh. He met Abu Sufyan, who was his own father's cousin, and he met the other chiefs, and every one of them refused him the same thing in the same words: the Muslims would not enter this year, for the Arabs must never be allowed to say that Muhammad ﷺ had forced his way in over them.

The Prophet ﷺ had charged Uthman with a second errand as well, and it is one we should not pass over. If he managed to get inside, he was to seek out the believers still trapped in Makkah, the men and women who had accepted Islam but had no means to escape the persecution, and tell them that Allah was aware of their situation and would soon make a way out for them. Uthman found them. Some of them, the Sheikh notes, were still in chains. There was a whole group of Muslims who had never been able to make hijrah to Madinah, not because they did not long to, but because they were being tortured and held and had no way to flee. And Uthman, in the middle of his own dangerous mission,

carried them the Prophet's ﷺ promise: Allah knows, and relief is coming soon.

The rumor that changed everything

The meetings dragged. A thing that should have taken an hour or two stretched across most of a day, leader after leader, each one perhaps taking half an hour or forty five minutes, until the whole afternoon was gone. We do not know the exact timings, and the Sheikh admits frankly that this is one of the frustrations of the seerah, that the early reports so rarely tell us how long things took. But realistically it ran the better part of a full day, and from the camp at Hudaybiyyah it looked like nothing so much as a sealed black box. Uthman had walked in, and not one word had come back out.

And this, Dr. Yasir Qadhi says, is simply how human beings work. As the hours stretched far beyond anything anyone had expected, the silence began to breed. Somebody wondered aloud, what if they have killed him. Somebody else took that thought and hardened it, most likely they have killed him. As it grew later still, the small thing gathered weight, rolling and gathering steam the way a rumor does in every society in every age, until it had become almost a solid fact: surely, if he were alive, he would have come back by now. They were not going to keep so noble a man as a prisoner, and they were not going to simply send him home, so he must be dead. The dread settled over the whole camp, and the people quietly made up their minds that their envoy had been killed.

When that conviction reached the Prophet ﷺ, and it seemed the Muslims had truly accepted it, he did not let it pass. This was too much, he said: you do not send an emissary, one of their own kin, on an honorable mission, and have him killed, and then simply

turn around and go home. We will not leave, he said, until we have settled this with them. And a crier went out through the camp with the call that would define the day: Jibril had come down to the Prophet ﷺ, and he was summoning all of them to give him their pledge.

The pledge of Ridwan, under the tree

Sit for a moment with the circumstance before the oath is given, because the Sheikh insists that we feel it. Fourteen hundred men, worn out from the long road north, low on water, their riding animals exhausted. They had set out for a peaceful pilgrimage, so even if some of them carried a sword or some light arms on the caravan, this was in no sense an army equipped for war; there had been no mustering, no donning of armor, none of the preparation a real battle demands. And facing them, fresh in their own city, were the Quraysh, at least three times their number, armored, fed, with unlimited supplies and every advantage of ground. To pledge to fight now was to pledge, with open eyes, to almost certain death. You are outnumbered, outmaneuvered, outflanked on every side.

And so, one by one, the companions came to the Prophet ﷺ as he sat with his back against a tree, and each man took his ﷺ hand in both of his and swore: that he would not turn back, that he would not flee the field, that he would fight, if it came to it, until death. To stand and die rather than run. This is the oath our tradition calls Bay'at ar-Ridwan, the pledge of Allah's good pleasure, and it carries that name because of the verse Allah revealed about it, the verse the Sheikh draws our eyes straight to:

Certainly was Allah pleased with the believers when they pledged allegiance to you, [O Muhammad], under the tree,

and He knew what was in their hearts, so He sent down tranquility upon them and rewarded them with an imminent conquest

QUR'AN 48:18

Read the middle of it slowly. He knew what was in their hearts. This is Allah Himself testifying that not one heart among those fourteen hundred was hiding a coward, that every man there was inwardly ready to do exactly what he swore. The tree itself is named in the Qur'an; Allah ties His pleasure to a real place and a real afternoon. Only one man held back, a hypocrite who, when the crier called, crouched down behind his camel in its shade so that no one would see him, and Allah exposed him for it. Everyone else gave his hand.

And here is the detail that ought to stop you where you stand. Uthman was not there. He was still inside Makkah, still presumed dead, the very man whose absence had triggered the whole oath. So when the companions had finished, the Prophet ﷺ took his own left hand, said this is the hand of Uthman, and placed it into his right, and gave the pledge on Uthman's behalf. As if to say: if Uthman were here, this is what he would do, so let me stand in his place and do it for him. The hand of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ standing in for the hand of an absent man. The Sheikh lingers here, and we should too: after this, how could any tongue ever utter a word against Uthman, when to insult his hand in that pledge is to insult the very hand of the Prophet ﷺ that stood for it?

Whose hand was over their hands

What did the people of the tree earn for what they did? The Prophet ﷺ told them on the spot: you are the best people on the earth right now, none on the face of the earth better than you.

And later, after the return to Madinah, in a hadith recorded in Sahih Muslim, he said that no one who gave the pledge beneath that tree would ever enter the Fire of Hell. As a single body, the Sheikh explains, the people of Hudaybiyyah stand second only to the people of Badr in all the ranks the Prophet ﷺ ever praised; above them are only individuals, the ten given glad tidings of Paradise by name, but as a group there is no group higher than Badr, and then this. And the Qur'an honors the moment in a way that should make the skin prickle:

Indeed, those who pledge allegiance to you, [O Muhammad] they are actually pledging allegiance to Allah. The hand of Allah is over their hands. So he who breaks his word only breaks it to the detriment of himself. And he who fulfills that which he has promised Allah He will give him a great reward.

QUR'AN 48:10

They had thought they were pledging to a man sitting under a tree. Allah tells them they were pledging to Him. It was not merely that their hands rested in his ﷺ; Allah declares that His own hand, in the manner that befits His majesty, was above theirs. What an honor, the Sheikh says, that should move us to a kind of righteous envy: that these companions gave their oath directly into the hand of the Messenger ﷺ, and over that, the hand of Allah.

This is why, in the way of Ahl as-Sunnah, the people of Hudaybiyyah are untouchable, and why Uthman in particular is beyond the reach of slander. There is a narration the Sheikh relates from al-Bukhari that draws it all together. A Khariji once came to Abdullah ibn Umar, radiyallahu anhu, hunting for faults in Uthman, with the harshness whose seed reaches back to that

earliest sect that first reviled and then killed him. He fired his three accusations. Did Uthman not flee at Uhud? Was he not absent from Badr? Was he not missing from the pledge of Ridwan? To each, Ibn Umar answered, by Allah. Yes, Uthman withdrew at Uhud, but Allah testified in the Qur'an that He has forgiven them, so I testify that he is forgiven. Yes, he was absent from Badr, but the Prophet ﷺ himself had commanded him to remain in Madinah to nurse his sick wife, the Prophet's ﷺ own daughter, who lay dying, and he still gave him a full share of the spoils, so he counts among the people of Badr. And as for Ridwan, you fool, the entire pledge only happened because of Uthman, and the Prophet's ﷺ own hand stood in for his. Now, said Ibn Umar, go back to your people and tell them that.

Suhayl comes, and Allah makes it easy

News of the pledge reached Makkah, and the effect was not what the Quraysh might have wished. According to one report, when they heard that this small, tired, lightly armed band had bound themselves by oath to fight to the death, they trembled in their own houses. A handful of believers with iman could make the mightiest tribe in Arabia afraid; that is what the pledge did. So they sent Uthman back unharmed and moved to negotiate in earnest before the Muslims could act. When the camp learned he was returning, some of them said, how fortunate Uthman is, he must have entered Makkah and surely performed tawaf while he was there. But the Prophet ﷺ said, I do not think he would do tawaf while we are kept out here. And so it was: Uthman answered the suggestion with shock, that he would never circle the House while the Messenger of Allah ﷺ stood barred outside it, that had they kept him in Makkah a full year he would not have done tawaf until the Prophet ﷺ did it first. The Sheikh pauses on

the longing buried in that exchange, on how deeply these exiles ached for the House they had been driven from, that they could even envy a man for a circuit they only imagined he had made.

The Quraysh first sent a man whom the Prophet ﷺ, seeing him approach, named as a treacherous sort, and the talks with him went nowhere; he came with conditions no one could accept and no real authority to settle anything. And then, from the distance, the final delegation appeared, and at its head walked the man who would actually break the deadlock: Suhayl ibn Amr. Suhayl was no mere messenger but a member of the inner council of Quraysh, one of their great orators and statesmen, sent precisely because he knew what to say and how to say it. And when the Prophet ﷺ saw him, he drew a good omen straight from his name. Suhayl comes from the root sahula, which means to make a thing easy. Now, he said, your matter has been made easy for you.

The Sheikh stops here to teach us what a good omen actually is in Islam, because it is widely misunderstood. The Prophet ﷺ rejected superstition outright. There is no such thing as a black cat that brings misfortune, no broken glass, no unlucky number, no ill fate hiding in an object; to believe that such things can harm you, he taught, is a kind of shirk. But he loved al-faal, the good omen, which is nothing other than optimism in Allah, and he set two conditions on it: that the sign be positive, and that it be tied back to Allah. There is no negative counterpart; if you make du'a and then hear thunder, that is not a sign your du'a was refused, for it does not work in the other direction. But to make du'a on a grey and clouded day, and then to see the sun break through, and to take heart that your hardship will lift as those clouds are lifting, that is faal, and it is good, because a believer ought already to be hopeful in his Lord, and anything that lifts that hope

is welcome. The Prophet ﷺ heard the name Suhayl, read ease into it, and ease is exactly what came: with his arrival the long impasse finally broke.

The treaty, word by word

The Prophet ﷺ called for Ali ibn Abi Talib, radiyallahu anhu, to write. And notice, the Sheikh says, that the Prophet ﷺ negotiated as a leader and not as a meek man begging for terms. He dictated first; he set the language; every clause began on his tongue. He started: write, in the name of Allah, ar-Rahman, ar-Rahim. Suhayl objected at once: I do not know this Rahman; write as we are accustomed, in Your name, O Allah. And the Prophet ﷺ conceded it. Then he dictated: this is what Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, has agreed upon with Suhayl ibn Amr. Suhayl objected again: had we accepted that you were the Messenger of Allah, we would never have fought you in the first place; write your own name and your father's, Muhammad ibn Abdullah.

Ali had already written the words the Messenger of Allah, and he could not bring himself to scrape them out with his own hand. Who is this man, his anger rose, that I should erase rasul Allah from this page? So the Prophet ﷺ asked him to point to the very spot, and in those days a document was leather and there was no erasing ink, only a blade or a thumb to rub the writing away, and the Prophet ﷺ took it himself and with his own hand scraped the words off, and then told Ali, gently, write Muhammad ibn Abdullah.

Look closely at what just happened, the Sheikh says, because there are two kinds of love in this one moment. Ali honored the Prophet ﷺ precisely by refusing to strike out his title; that refusal was itself a form of reverence. And the Prophet ﷺ honored Ali in

turn by not forcing him, by understanding his dilemma and reaching for the document himself rather than commanding a young man to do what his heart could not. Neither of these was a concession of faith. Denying him the title on a sheet of leather changed nothing of the reality of who he was. These were concessions of pride, and the Prophet ﷺ had already told his companions plainly, so they would understand exactly what was and was not at stake: by Allah, the Quraysh will not ask me for any condition that honors the sacred ties of Allah except that I will grant it to them, so long as there is no bloodshed in the sacred precinct and no fighting in the sacred months. He was giving up the appearance of victory to hold on to the substance of peace.

The condition, and the chains

Then came the term that cut. The main thing Suhayl had been sent to secure was simple: the Muslims would not enter Makkah this year. The Prophet ﷺ pressed, and Suhayl conceded a single point in return, that they could come the following year, but on Quraysh's own terms. And then Suhayl added a condition that was, for him, as personal as it was political: that no man who defected from Quraysh to the Muslims, even one who had become a Muslim, would be allowed to stay; he must be sent back. But any man who left the Muslims for Quraysh would not be returned. The companions erupted. How could they hand back a believer who had fled to them, who had chosen them and chosen faith? Glory be to Allah, they said, what an unjust condition. Ali's pen stopped. The commotion swelled and the minutes dragged. This was a test, and Allah willed that it would not arrive as an abstraction but with a face, and a voice, and a sound.

For Suhayl had two sons who had broken his heart over Islam. The elder, Abdullah, had been a secret convert; when the army of Quraysh marched out to Badr he walked in its very ranks under their noses, and at the first camp, when the two sides could see one another, he slipped across to the Muslims and fought against his own people, leaving his father to bear that shame as a prisoner of war while his son stood among the victors. The younger son was Abu Jandal. When Abdullah fled to Madinah, Abu Jandal's own faith became plain, and Suhayl was determined not to lose a second son. So he had locked him away and had him tortured, chained in a dungeon, deprived of food and water, commanded to worship the idols: I have lost one son, he said, and I will not lose you until you return to our ways. That had gone on since Badr, four and a half years, and Abu Jandal had not broken, and Suhayl had not relented.

And at that very moment, with the ink of this clause still wet, Abu Jandal had finally found a way out of his chains, no horse and no provisions and no road to anywhere, only the desperate hope of reaching the Muslims he had heard were camped outside the city. He came stumbling toward the camp, the fetters still on his ankles, crying out, O Muslims, not knowing that his own father sat among them, not knowing that the very condition being argued over was about him. They heard the clanking of his chains before they saw his face. And Suhayl turned to the Prophet ﷺ and said: this is the first one you will hand back to me, by our agreement.

There the day ends, on the cruelest sound in the entire seerah, the dragging of a tortured believer's chains and a father pointing at his own son to be returned to the dungeon. The harder verses of this trial are still to come; this is only where the Sheikh sets it down for the week.

And yet, woven invisibly through all of it, was a promise the companions could not yet see. This very year, the year that read to them like surrender and ended on the clinking of fetters, Allah would call by a name they would have wept to hear: a clear victory. And He tied to it a reward they could not begin to imagine on that bitter afternoon:

And much war booty which they will take. And ever is Allah Exalted in Might and Wise.

QUR'AN 48:19

The spoils were over the horizon, at Khaybar, the greatest material victory in the history of Islam to that point, just a few short chapters of their lives away. The Sheikh draws the line he has drawn from the beginning of this seerah: when you stand up for Allah and put your trust in Him, He returns to you far more than you gave up, even in this world before the next. At Badr they were promised one of two good things and given both. Here they were handed a treaty that looked like defeat and promised a conquest with treasure to follow. But that afternoon, none of them could see it. They only heard the chains.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read this day as a story of heroism rewarded, the brave companions under the tree, the noble envoy, the wise Prophet ﷺ, all of it safely resolved long ago. That would be to miss the question it puts to us, because this is the day the seerah teaches you what trusting Allah actually costs.

Start with Umar, because the day begins with him. He was offered the spotlight and he handed it away. The strong thing, the truly brave thing, was not to insist on going and making history; it

was to see that his presence would sink the mission and to point at Uthman and disappear. We are quick to read every opportunity as ours and slow to ask whether our being in the room actually serves the thing we claim to care about. Umar set his own ego down for the sake of the Muslims, and the Sheikh holds him up for exactly that. Ask, the next time you reach for a role, whether you want it for the work or for yourself, and whether the work might be better served by your stepping back.

Then there is the heart of the pledge, the line that should be carried out of this whole episode: He knew what was in their hearts. The people of the tree pledged expecting to die, and they walked away from that afternoon having won nothing visible at all, no battle, no entry, no umrah, only a treaty that stung. And Allah called them the best people on the earth and barred the Fire from them and declared His pleasure with them, for the willingness in their hearts, recorded by Him before the result was ever known. Hold onto that when your own efforts come to nothing the world can see. Sometimes the reward is for the readiness, weighed by the One who knows your heart, long before, and quite apart from, the outcome.

And then there is the treaty itself, and Abu Jandal's chains, which is where the day refuses to comfort us. Look at what these companions were asked to accept: their worship turned away, their dignity bargained down on a sheet of leather, a tortured brother in faith reaching them only to be handed back. Nothing about it felt like victory. The Prophet ﷺ read ease into Suhayl's name on a day that brought, to every eye in that camp, the opposite of ease, and he was right, and they could not yet see how. This is what faal really is, and what tawakkul really is: optimism tied to Allah on the very day the evidence points the other way. Be hopeful, and tie that hope to Him, for there is no

bad omen in a name or a number or a clouded sky, only the certainty that the One arranging your affair is arranging it in mercy even when it reads as loss.

So take this day down into your own narrow places. When your plans come out like Hdaybiyyah, when the door is shut and the terms are unfair and you cannot find the victory anywhere in it, give your hand the way they gave theirs under the tree, and sign what looks like surrender, and wait for the horizon to prove your Lord right. He who knew what was in their hearts knows what is in yours. May Allah make us of those whose hearts He knows and is pleased with, send down His tranquility upon us when the outcome frightens us, and let us trust the ending He has written when all we can hear, for now, is the clinking of the chains. And may He send His peace upon His Messenger Muhammad ﷺ, whose hand was the hand of an absent man, and over whose hand was the hand of Allah.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 65: the Treaty of Hdaybiyyah, part 3 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (48:18, 48:10, 48:19), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing has been followed.

The Treaty of Hdaybiyyah, part 4

The defeat that Allah called a clear victory

They had marched for ten days. They had camped outside Makkah for the better part of three weeks. They had come in white, unarmed, carrying nothing but sacrificial animals and a longing for the House that some of them had not seen in six years. And on this day, the sixty-sixth of the seerah, they would put their names to a treaty that landed on every one of them like a slap across the face, then turn their camels around and ride home without once touching the Kabah.

This is the hardest day in the whole journey so far, and the reason is not the lost pilgrimage and not the wounded pride. It is one boy. It is the day a believer in chains broke out of a Makkan dungeon, dragged himself bleeding into the Muslim camp begging to be saved, and was sent back. Dr. Yasir Qadhi pauses the entire narrative over what the Prophet ﷺ did in that moment, because he says he has found nothing else like it in the whole of the seerah. To understand why the Companions nearly could not obey, and why Allah named the whole bitter affair a clear victory before they had even reached Madinah, you have to stand in the dust at Hdaybiyyah and watch it happen.

The boy in the chains

The terms were still being argued. Nothing had yet been written. Suhayl ibn Amr, the Quraysh negotiator, had forced through the

cruellest clause of all: any man who fled Makkah for Madinah, even one who came as a Muslim, would be handed straight back, while any Muslim who abandoned the faith and ran the other way, back to Makkah, would never be returned. A one way street, and everyone could see it. A number of the Companions began objecting out loud while the clause was still being spoken, which was not even their place, because a negotiation between the Prophet ﷺ and Suhayl was no occasion for the ranks to interject. The very fact that they could not hold their tongues tells you how deep this cut. Every muhajir in that camp knew the clause was aimed at people exactly like himself. Each of them had once fled their family, their tribe, their torturers, and found the believers waiting to embrace them in Madinah. Had this clause existed six years earlier, there would be no Islam in Madinah at all. The steady trickle of converts escaping the city would be choked off completely, and the surge that built the umma would never have come. They felt it, and they said so.

And then, into that exact five minutes of back and forth, came Abu Jandal. He was Suhayl's own younger son. While his father sat negotiating, this boy had been kept in a Makkan dungeon and tortured for two or three years, and one son already lost to Madinah was the reason Suhayl wanted this clause so badly. Somewhere in those years of darkness Abu Jandal had surely worked out how to slip his chains, but escape to where? Out into the streets of a city that hunted men like him, with no mount, no money, no road to the north? It had been hopeless. Then word reached him that the Muslims were camped just outside the walls, and he understood that the one chance of his entire life had arrived. He broke loose and dragged himself the last distance to Hudaybiyyah with the chains still locked on his wrists, the lash marks open and bleeding across an exposed and

emaciated chest, and he threw himself among the believers crying out: O Muslims, save me. O Muslims, rescue me. Across the camp his father saw him and knew him at once, and turned to the Prophet ﷺ: this one, Muhammad, is the very first you return to me under our terms.

Here Dr. Yasir Qadhi stops you, because of what the Prophet ﷺ did next. He did not simply explain that the treaty bound him. He pleaded. Give him to me as a gift, he asked Suhayl, make this one an exception and we will write the clause in after. Suhayl refused. He asked again. And again. Three times, four times, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ begging a pagan for the body of a single tortured young man, and the Sheikh says plainly that nowhere else in all his reading of the seerah has he found the Prophet ﷺ pleading like this for anything. Suhayl would not yield an inch: this is the condition, take it or there is no treaty, and if you refuse me on my own son I will never agree to anything with you. And Abu Jandal, watching his father on the one side and the Prophet ﷺ on the other and grasping at last which way it was going, cried out the question that has echoed down fourteen centuries: will you return me to the idolaters when I have come to you as a Muslim? Do you not see what they have done to me? Do you not see what they have done to me?

Be patient, Abu Jandal

The Prophet ﷺ could not save him. So he gave him the only thing left to give. He turned to the boy directly and said: be patient, Abu Jandal, and seek your reward with Allah, for Allah will surely make for you a way out, and an exit, from this. Trust your Lord, and He will free you. It was not rescue. It was a promise of rescue, handed to a boy in chains by the one man on earth he had crossed a city to reach.

Then Umar ibn al-Khattab, radiyallahu anhu, could bear it no longer. He walked over to Abu Jandal, repeated the Prophet's ﷺ own words, be patient, and then added something far more militant. The blood of these pagans, he told the boy, is worth nothing at all, and as he said it he let his eyes drop to the sword at his own side, a silent invitation: here it is, take it, use it. But the men in front of Abu Jandal were his own father and Suhayl's companion, and to lift that sword was to strike his own father down, and in the end, for the simplest and most human of reasons, the boy could not do it. The most the camp could win for him was a single concession wrung from one of the Quraysh delegates: that he would no longer be tortured as he had been. And so Abu Jandal was put back in his chains and led away toward Makkah, and the whole camp watched him go.

The wound never fully closed. Years later, on the day of Siffin, when two Muslim armies stood on the very edge of slaughtering one another, an old and pious Companion tried to pull them back from the brink by reaching all the way back to this morning. Accuse your own opinions before you accuse the Qur'an and the Sunnah, he told them, blame your own understanding first, for I remember myself on the day of Abu Jandal, and had I been able to reject the command of the Prophet ﷺ that day, I would have done it. Notice, Dr. Yasir Qadhi says, that he does not even call it the day of Hdaybiyyah. He calls it the day of Abu Jandal. Of everything that happened on this long and crushing day, that is the scene that branded itself into a Companion's memory for the rest of his life: a tortured believer thrown back to his torturers before their eyes, and themselves unable to stop it.

The terms nobody wanted

Once the clause stood, the rest of the document was set down. There would be peace for ten years, and the phrase they used was that there would be no armor and no swords between the two sides, which in their language simply meant no fighting at all. Both sides were now free to enter into alliance with any other tribe in Arabia they wished, and whatever bound the two parties would bind their allies too. As for the pilgrimage the Muslims had marched all this way to perform: not this year. Let no Arab ever say the Muslims had forced their way into Makkah by strength. They would turn back now, and next year the Quraysh would empty the city for three days and the Muslims could come, perform their rites, and leave. Ali ibn Abi Talib, radiyallahu anhu, wrote the document out, and witnesses signed for both sides, Abu Bakr and Umar and others for the Muslims, Suhayl and his delegation for the Quraysh.

And here Dr. Yasir Qadhi asks you to lift your eyes off the humiliation for a moment and see the thing the Companions, drowning in their pain, could not yet see. For the first time in the entire story, the Muslims were being treated as an equal. You do not sit down to write a treaty except with a power you recognize, and here were the Quraysh, the masters of Arabia, forced to the same table to negotiate as equals with the very religion they had spent two decades trying to strangle in its cradle. After Badr, after Uhud, after the trench, the Muslims had been upgraded, and this treaty was the proof of it. But notice, the Sheikh says, what is happening underneath the words. On one side of that table sits a faith, the umma, and on the other a tribe, a bloodline, the Quraysh and whoever allied with them. In Islam the thing that binds you to your brother is the religion itself, stronger than kinship, stronger than nation, stronger than tribe; in every other society, then and now, something always trumps the faith, and for the Quraysh it

was the tribe. With this one treaty the whole of Arabia was quietly being sorted into two, Islam on one side and everything else on the other, and the Arabs would soon have to choose which side of the line they stood on. This was the precursor to the conquest of Makkah and to the day, only a few years off, when idol worship would be wiped from the face of the Arabian Peninsula entirely. They had wept over a defeat. They had signed the opening line of their victory.

Are you not the Messenger of Allah?

The anger in the camp had to go somewhere, and it went where the deepest love so often hides. Umar came to the Prophet ﷺ and fired off a series of questions to which he already knew every answer. Are you not the Messenger of Allah? Yes. Are we not upon the truth, and our enemies upon falsehood? Yes. Then why, Umar pressed, do we give up the lower hand in our religion and let them trample over us like this? And the Prophet ﷺ answered with the only answer there was: I am the Messenger of Allah, and I will not disobey Him, and He will help me. I do not know where this is leading, the answer means underneath; I know only that my Lord commanded it, and He will not abandon me. Against a reply like that there is no argument, and Umar knew it, so he switched lines entirely. The vision, he said, the dream you told us in Madinah, that we would make tawaf around the House. And the Prophet ﷺ asked: did I ever tell you it would be this year? No, Umar admitted. Then you will go, he said, and you will make tawaf, only not this year. The vision was true; the timing had simply never been promised.

Then Umar went and put the very same questions to Abu Bakr, radiyallahu anhu, and here is the marvel the Sheikh wants you to catch. Abu Bakr had not heard a single word of the Prophet's ﷺ

replies, and yet he gave Umar the same answers, point for point, almost word for word, and then added something sharper than the Prophet ﷺ himself had said: man, hold fast to the stirrup of his saddle, for by Allah he is the Messenger of Allah and he will not disobey his Lord, and there is no salvation for you anywhere else. Dr. Yasir Qadhi lingers here on a side of Abu Bakr we are forever forgetting. We picture him soft and weeping and gentle, and he was all of that, but when the moment called for a man to be a rock, no one in the umma was firmer, not even Umar. This is his rank: the one human being with the standing to put Umar in his place, the same way he would steady the whole shaking umma on the day the Prophet ﷺ died, when Umar lost himself in grief and it was Abu Bakr, and only Abu Bakr, who could cut him back to his senses. Nobody else on earth had that audacity.

And the Sheikh is careful and clear about Umar, because there are those who have tried to wield this day against him. Umar's anger was never about a bruised ego or wounded tribal pride. It was rage on behalf of the religion he loved, the fury of a man who could not stand to watch Islam, as he understood it, humiliated and trampled. That is a misjudgment born of love, not a sin of arrogance, and there is a world of difference. It is the error of the man who loses his camel in the desert, finds it again, and in his wild joy blurts out something close to blasphemy, and is forgiven, because emotion overran him. Umar overstepped, and he knew it, and he spent the rest of his life making it up, freeing slaves, fasting, praying through the nights, heaping good deed upon good deed in the hope of forgiveness for that one day. Real repentance, the Sheikh notes, is exactly this: not words alone but a change in what the hands do. Neither the Prophet ﷺ nor Abu Bakr ever held the outburst against him; they understood it for exactly what it was, the misfire of a heart that loved too

fiercely. And there is a quiet permission buried here too, that to argue a point respectfully with the one in charge, to bring another view without contempt, is something the religion allows, for Umar did it to the Prophet ﷺ himself, three and four ways, and was corrected only on where it had carried him, never on the arguing itself.

Stand up and shave

It was over. The Prophet ﷺ told them to stand, slaughter their sacrificial animals where they were, shave their heads, and turn for home, the pilgrimage abandoned at the threshold. And then came the thing that Dr. Yasir Qadhi says, again, he has found nowhere else in the entire seerah. The Prophet ﷺ gave a direct command, and not one Companion moved. He said it a second time. No one stirred. A third time, and still the whole camp sat frozen, too crushed to lift a hand, every man waiting on the man beside him, the dead weight of a heartbroken crowd. He went back into his tent, and his wife Umm Salamah, radiyallahu anha, saw the agitation plain on his face, and when he told her that he had commanded his people three times and not one had answered, she gave him the wisdom of a single moment. Say nothing more to them, O Messenger of Allah. Go out, call your barber, and shave your own head where they can see. When they watch you do it, they will follow. He took her counsel, walked out, called for his barber, and put the blade to his own hair in full view of the camp, and the instant they saw it the spell broke and they fell over one another to do the same. He made dua three times for those who shaved their heads clean and only once for those who merely trimmed, and from that the scholars drew the ruling we still carry, that shaving is the more rewarded of the two.

Two new things were born on this day that became the permanent law of every Muslim after. The first was what a pilgrim does when he sets out for the sacred House and is then prevented from reaching it. Wherever you are stopped, by a closed road, a plague, a war, a crisis of any kind, you slaughter what you brought, you shave, you come out of the state of ihram right there, and you make the pilgrimage up later. The Companions had never once seen this done, for the simple reason that it had never needed doing, and across the whole life of the Prophet ﷺ this is the only time he set out for the House and did not reach it. Down all the centuries since, whenever pilgrims have been turned back by politics or plague or poverty, this is the path they have walked, and it was paved at Hudaibiyyah.

The second new thing came when the believing women began to emigrate. To send a man back to be tortured was hard enough, but what was to be done when a woman fled to Madinah in faith? The Prophet ﷺ did not know, and Allah revealed the answer:

O you who have believed, when the believing women come to you as emigrants, examine [i.e., test] them. Allah is most knowing as to their faith. And if you know them to be believers, then do not return them to the disbelievers; they are not lawful [wives] for them, nor are they lawful [husbands] for them. But give them [i.e., the disbelievers] what they have spent. And there is no blame upon you if you marry them when you have given them their due compensation [i.e., mahr]. And hold not to marriage bonds with disbelieving women, but ask for what you have spent and let them [i.e., the disbelievers] ask for what they have spent. That is the judgement of Allah; He judges between you. And Allah is Knowing and Wise.

QUR'AN 60:10

The women were to be tested, and if found true in faith they would not be sent back, their former husbands repaid the dowries they had given, and the women lawful to marry once their waiting period had passed. The reason they could stay turned on the same razor's edge that ran through the whole treaty: the Prophet ﷺ bound himself to the exact letter of what was written, and the letter, the words Suhayl himself had insisted upon, said that no man who came would be kept, and said nothing at all about women. The spirit of the clause surely meant any person, and the Quraysh would have meant it so, but the letter said man, and Allah held them to their letter. Once again a clause the Quraysh wrote to wound the Muslims had a door in it they never noticed, and through that door the believing women walked free.

A clear victory

On the long ride home Umar rode heavy with the weight of what he had said. He brought his camel alongside the Prophet ﷺ and greeted him with salam. No reply. He greeted him a second time. Nothing. A third time, the most a man may repeat it, and silence, and Umar's heart fell through the floor: may my mother lose me, I am finished, my words have ruined me. Then a rider came back along the line: the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is calling for you. Umar went forward braced for the worst thing he had ever heard, and instead he found the Prophet's ﷺ face shining, lit up with a joy that poured off it, and on his tongue a surah that had just come down whole and entire from the heavens, four and a half pages of revelation descending at once, the surah named al-Fath, the Victory, and it opened with the words:

Indeed, We have given you, [O Muhammad], a clear conquest.

Is this a victory? a Companion asked him, the very question that the chains of Abu Jandal had planted in every heart in that camp. Yes, the Prophet ﷺ told him, it is a victory. And Umar, the same Umar who days before could see nothing in any of it but defeat and disgrace, set his camel racing up and down the lines crying out that Allah had granted them a clear victory. The Prophet ﷺ said of this surah that it was more beloved to him than everything the sun rises upon, that nothing on the face of the earth could have gladdened him as it did.

And Dr. Yasir Qadhi draws out a delicate and weighty point that the Companions taught us by the sheer speed of their turnaround, for Umar's reversal was instantaneous, a complete turn the moment the revelation reached his ears. It shows, the Sheikh says, that they had always grasped a difference we must never confuse: the Prophet's ﷺ own human judgment, the decisions he made as a man, which they were permitted to question with respect as Umar had done all day, and the command of Allah, binding the instant it descends, beyond all argument. All through that bitter day they had wondered only whether these terms were the best to be had, whether this was his ﷺ own reading that might have gone another way. They obeyed regardless, because obedience to him ﷺ was never the question; the wondering ended in a heartbeat the moment Allah Himself came down and settled it.

Like a plant that delights the sower

The surah closes by painting a portrait of the Companions themselves, and the Sheikh makes sure you feel exactly why Allah chose this hour to praise them. He likens them to a seed

that a farmer plants, that pushes out its tender shoots, and grows, and hardens, and stands at last tall and firm and proud upon its own stalk until it gladdens the very one who sowed it. And the sower in this likeness is the Prophet ﷺ, made glad by what his Companions had become.

Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; and those with him are forceful against the disbelievers, merciful among themselves. You see them bowing and prostrating [in prayer], seeking bounty from Allah and [His] pleasure. Their sign is in their faces from the effect of prostration [i.e., prayer]. That is their description in the Torah. And their description in the Gospel is as a plant which produces its offshoots and strengthens them so they grow firm and stand upon their stalks, delighting the sowers, so that He [i.e., Allah] may enrage by them the disbelievers. Allah has promised those who believe and do righteous deeds among them forgiveness and a great reward.

QUR'AN 48:29

It had been a brutal test. They were emotional, they were heartbroken, they came within a breath of being unable to obey. And when it came down to the final thing, they obeyed. The Sheikh asks you, honestly and without flattery, to picture any other community on the face of the earth following its leader through a single day like that one: the long march, then the ihram with no House at the end of it, then the humiliating terms read out one by one, then Abu Jandal thrown back to his torturers before their eyes, and still to stay, still to slaughter and shave and turn for home at his word. Allah looked at the tree He had grown in the harshest of soil, and He praised it in words that would be recited until the end of time.

Then came the proof that the whole bitter treaty had been a victory wearing the mask of a defeat. A believer named Abu Basir fled to Madinah, the first to test the new clause. The Quraysh sent two men after him, and the Prophet ﷺ, holding to the exact letter of his word, handed him over, telling him plainly: you knew the treaty when you came, and I will not be treacherous, so return. On the road back Abu Basir flattered one of his captors into letting him handle his sword, struck him dead with it, and sent the second man fleeing in terror all the way to Madinah. Abu Basir followed and stood before the Prophet ﷺ, who would not formally shelter him but turned away and spoke into the air a line of wonder rather than command: what a warrior he is, if only he had someone to help him. Abu Basir understood the hint perfectly. The Prophet ﷺ would not break the letter of the treaty by keeping him, but neither would he hand him back a second time: the meaning was, get out of my sight before another party comes for you. So he fled to the coast, to a spot on the trade road near the shore below Makkah, and set up camp alone. Then word reached Abu Jandal, that same boy whose chains had broken every heart, and he escaped once more and made his way, not to Madinah which he still could not reach, but to Abu Basir's camp. Two legends of the convert community in one place, and the men who could not reach Madinah began to find their way to them, one and two and ten and twenty, until they were seventy and eighty strong, a free company on the trade road raiding every Quraysh caravan bound for Syria.

And it could not be stopped, because of a knot the Quraysh themselves had tied. Their own clause kept these men from any treaty with the Prophet ﷺ, which meant the ten years of peace did not cover them, which meant they were no one's responsibility and no one's to call off. Within a year and a half the

bleeding was so severe that the Quraysh sent a delegation to Madinah and, by the bonds of kinship, begged the Prophet ﷺ to take these men in and end the raids. The very people they had fought tooth and nail to keep out of Madinah, they were now pleading with him to take in. You cannot outwit the best of planners. He sent for them, and they came home to the umma, and the one who led that whole caravan of believers back into Madinah was Abu Jandal himself, the boy in the chains, whose rejection had been the cruelest moment of the day. Perfection, the Sheikh calls it: the very wound became the victory, and the hand that had been turned away led the procession home.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to file Hudaibiyyah away as a clever piece of statecraft that happened to work out, a humiliation that history later vindicated, and to leave it there. That would be to walk past the question it is holding out to each of us. This is the day faith is at its very hardest, and the reason is precise: it is the day faith looked exactly like loss. A believer in chains was sent back. A pilgrimage was abandoned at the doorstep of the House. The Companions sat in the dust too crushed to lift a hand. And every last piece of it, Allah named a clear victory before they had even reached home.

So sit a moment with Abu Jandal, because his iman is the lesson most easily missed. The Sheikh cannot think of a harder test in the whole seerah than to be turned away, for the sake of a political agreement, by the very Prophet ﷺ you believe in. We lose a little money, we scrape a car, some small thing slips through our fingers, and our certainty wobbles. He was handed back to his torturers by the one man he had crossed a city to reach, and he held firm, and out of nowhere Allah's help came

from a direction no one could have scripted, and he rode back into Madinah not as a fugitive but as the honored leader of a whole company of believers. Whoever truly puts his trust in Allah, Allah will be enough for him. That is not a slogan; it is the literal arc of this boy's life inside a single year.

And learn the difference between Umar and Abu Bakr, for both loved the same Prophet ﷺ with the same fierce love, and the day pulled something different out of each. Umar's love came out as protest, a heart so pained on Islam's behalf that it overran his manners, and he was forgiven and spent his life mending it. Abu Bakr's came out as stillness: I do not understand this, but my Lord knows and His Messenger ﷺ knows, and I do not, so I will hold fast to the stirrup of his saddle and not let go. When the revelation came down it did not have to convince Abu Bakr of anything; he was already there. That is the quieter, harder faith, the one that can sit inside an unbearable decision without being shown the reason first.

So carry one thing from this day into your own Hudaybiyyah when it comes, the closed door, the unanswered dua, the outcome you would never in a thousand years have chosen. Accuse your own opinion before you accuse the wisdom of your Lord, as that Companion begged two armies to do on the brink of war, for when your feelings and the decree collide, it is your feelings that are mistaken. Be patient as Abu Jandal was told to be patient, knowing that patience is not the surrender of rescue but the trusting of its timing. And when something looks like the worst defeat of your life, remember that the clause built to choke the religion became the camp that brought the Quraysh begging, and what broke their hearts at the threshold of Makkah was the exact shape of the victory that won them the whole peninsula. May Allah grant us the steadiness of Abu Bakr and the patience

He promised Abu Jandal, let us blame our own eyes before we ever doubt His wisdom, and show us, as He showed them, that the thing that broke our hearts was the very thing that won the war. And may Allah send His peace and praise upon His Messenger Muhammad ﷺ, who held fast when every heart around him was breaking, and was right.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 66: the Treaty of Hdaybiyyah, part 4 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (48:1, 48:29, 60:10), verified via quran.ai.

The Treaty of Hdaybiyyah, part 5: the clear victory

How the defeat was named the clear victory

They were riding home, and their hearts were not with them. The companions had set out for Makkah to make umrah, dressed in the white of pilgrims, the sacrificial animals walking ahead of them garlanded for slaughter, and they had been turned back at the very edge of the sanctuary without setting foot inside it. They had watched the Prophet ﷺ sit across from the envoys of Quraysh and sign a treaty that read, line by line, like surrender. Come back next year, not this one. Hand back to us any man of ours who flees to you, but we will keep any of yours who comes to us. And erase from the top of the page the words Messenger of Allah. Even Umar ibn al-Khattab, radiyallahu anhu, had come close to losing himself over it, and would carry the memory of his own conduct that day as a private terror for the rest of his life. So the army rode north in silence, certain they had been handed a humiliation. And then, somewhere on that open road between Makkah and Madinah, the sky opened.

A whole surah came down at once. Dr. Yasir Qadhi asks us to stop and feel how rare that was. The Qur'an, as a rule, did not descend in finished pieces; it came an ayah here, a passage there, threaded into events over months and years. Surah al-Baqarah took something close to a decade to complete. Surah al-Fath was the exception. It came down whole, from its first word

to its last, in a single descent, and it came down neither in Makkah nor yet in Madinah but in the saddle, on the way back, while the grief was still fresh in the men who carried it. It is counted among the Madani revelations because it came after the hijrah, though no Madani ground was beneath its feet when it arrived. And its very first word took everything these men had just lived through and turned it inside out.

A surah that named the defeat a victory

Indeed, We have given you, [O Muhammad], a clear conquest

QUR'AN 48:1

Not a setback. Not a loss. A conquest, an opening, a clear and manifest victory. The word Allah chose was fath, and He set it at the head of the surah like a verdict handed down before the appeal had even been filed. These men felt they had been defeated. Allah told them, before they had reached their own doorsteps, that what they had actually witnessed was a triumph.

Then He explained why. The surah goes on to say that this was given so that Allah may forgive what came before of the Prophet's ﷺ fault and what will follow, and complete His favor upon him, and guide him along a straight path. The Sheikh pauses on a question that should puzzle us. What does a peace treaty have to do with the forgiveness of sins? The answer he gives is one of the gentlest in the whole seerah. The grief itself was the gift. The anguish the Prophet ﷺ carried at Hudaibiyyah, the sting of being turned from the House he loved more than any place on earth, was not Allah pressing him down. It was Allah lifting him higher. Every honor laid on him and every hardship

asked of him were the same hand raising him in rank and wiping away what could be wiped away. A few verses on, Allah names the harvest of it all:

[And] that He may admit the believing men and the believing women to gardens beneath which rivers flow to abide therein eternally and remove from them their misdeeds - and ever is that, in the sight of Allah, a great attainment.

QUR'AN 48:5

So the treaty that read like a surrender was, in the ledger of heaven, a path to forgiveness for the Prophet ﷺ and to Paradise for those who stood with him. The men riding home in shame were being told that they had just walked through one of the great openings of their lives, and had simply not had eyes to see it yet.

He knew what was in their hearts

Out at Hudaibiyyah, when the rumor had spread that Quraysh had killed the Prophet's ﷺ envoy, he ﷺ had called the believers under a tree and they had put their hands in his hand, one after another, swearing to stand with him to the death. It was the bayah that history would call the Pledge of the Tree, the Bayah al-Ridwan, the pledge of the good pleasure of Allah. Now, on the road home, Allah reached back to that moment and told them what their hands had truly touched.

Indeed, those who pledge allegiance to you, [O Muhammad] - they are actually pledging allegiance to Allah. The hand of Allah is over their hands. So he who breaks his word only breaks it to the detriment of himself.

And he who fulfills that which he has promised Allah - He will give him a great reward.

QUR'AN 48:10

They thought they had given their word to a man. Allah told them they had given it to Him, that His hand had been over theirs as they swore. No small comfort to men forced to fold up their swords and ride away from a fight they were willing to die for: their loyalty had not been spent on a lost cause; it had been received, directly, by the One whose causes are never lost.

That same surah then draws a hard line down the middle of the ummah, and the contrast is one of the quiet miracles of the whole revelation. On one side stood the believers who had marched out for Hudaybiyyah and put their hands in the Prophet's ﷺ hand. On the other stood the Bedouin who had stayed behind in the safety of their tents, calculating that the Muslims were walking to their deaths and wanting no part of it. Allah told the Prophet ﷺ exactly what these men would say to his face when he reached Madinah, and He told him before they said it.

Those who remained behind of the bedouins will say to you, "Our properties and our families occupied us, so ask forgiveness for us." They say with their tongues what is not within their hearts. Say, "Then who could prevent Allah at all if He intended for you harm or intended for you benefit? Rather, ever is Allah, of what you do, Aware."

QUR'AN 48:11

The excuse had not yet been uttered. No one had stood before the Prophet ﷺ and offered it. And here was the Qur'an reciting it back, word for word, before the man who would say it had even opened his mouth. How, the Sheikh asks, could it have been known, unless from the One who knows what a heart holds

before the tongue dresses it up? And Allah went further still, past the excuse to the thing underneath it:

But you thought that the Messenger and the believers would never return to their families, ever, and that was made pleasing in your hearts. And you assumed an assumption of evil and became a people ruined."

QUR'AN 48:12

There it was, exposed. They had not stayed home for their property and their families. They had stayed home because they believed the Prophet ﷺ and his companions were going to their slaughter, and some part of them had found that belief comfortable. Two hearts, the same event, weighed perfectly by the One who sees inside them both, and it was the believers under the tree whom He turned to address:

Certainly was Allah pleased with the believers when they pledged allegiance to you, [O Muhammad], under the tree, and He knew what was in their hearts, so He sent down tranquility upon them and rewarded them with an imminent conquest

QUR'AN 48:18

This is the verse the believers would hold onto for the rest of their days, and that later generations would recite over the names of those present at the tree. Allah was pleased with them. He knew what was in their hearts when they swore, and what was there was true, and so He poured down sakinah, a settling calm, over men who had every reason to be in turmoil, and He promised them a victory close at hand.

What was that nearer victory? The Sheikh points ahead to Khaybar, the great fortified stronghold of the remaining hostile

tribes to the north, which would fall within weeks of the return, its spoils richer than anything the Muslims had ever gathered. The peace with Quraysh had freed their hands to deal with it. But the surah spends a verse, too, on a battle that never happened at all.

And if those [Makkans] who disbelieve had fought you, they would have turned their backs [in flight]. Then they would not find a protector or a helper.

QUR'AN 48:22

Notice what Allah is doing, the Sheikh says. There was no battle at Hdaybiyyah; no swords crossed. And yet Allah describes, with perfect certainty, how a fight that never took place would have ended: the disbelievers turning their backs, finding no one to protect them, the believers left standing though they were fewer. Allah knows the past, the present, the future, and even the shape of a future that will never arrive. It was one more reassurance to men who had walked away from a fight, told now by their Lord that they had never been the ones in danger.

The believers no one could see

And then the surah answers the question that must have burned in every heart riding home. Why hold us back at all? Why not push into Makkah, take the sanctuary by force, finish what they started? The Muslims had been willing; they had pledged their lives under the tree for exactly that. The answer Allah gives is a reason not one man in the camp could have known.

They are the ones who disbelieved and obstructed you from al-Masjid al-Haram while the offering was prevented from reaching its place of sacrifice. And if not for believing men and believing women whom you did not know - that you might trample [i.e., kill] them and there would befall

you because of them dishonor without [your] knowledge - [you would have been permitted to enter Makkah]. [This was so] that Allah might admit to His mercy whom He willed. If they had been apart [from them], We would have punished those who disbelieved among them with painful punishment

QUR'AN 48:25

Inside Makkah, the Sheikh explains, were believing men and believing women, hiding their faith, unable to declare themselves. Had the fighting started, they would have been swept up on the side of Quraysh against their will, their Islam a secret no Muslim sword could read, and the army would have struck down its own brothers and sisters without ever knowing whose blood was on the blade. They would have entered Makkah as conquerors and woken to a grief they could never undo. So Allah held the swords back. The treaty that looked like the Prophet ﷺ being cheated of his rightful pilgrimage was Allah shielding the believers no one could see, and shielding the army from a wound to its own conscience, and giving time for those hidden ones, and others still to come, to be brought into His mercy. The clear victory was already at work, doing its quiet labor, before a single soul in that camp could have named it.

And there was one more thing they could not see, the thing that had started the whole journey. It had all begun with a dream. The Prophet ﷺ had seen himself and his companions entering Makkah in safety, making tawaf around the Kaaba, their heads shaved as pilgrims shave them, all fear gone. That vision was the reason the whole company had set out, and the reason the turning-away cut so deep. Where was the dream Allah had shown him? Had it failed? At the close of the surah, Allah answers.

Certainly has Allah showed to His Messenger the vision [i.e., dream] in truth. You will surely enter al-Masjid al-Haram, if Allah wills, in safety, with your heads shaved and [hair] shortened, not fearing [anyone]. He knew what you did not know and has arranged before that a conquest near [at hand].

QUR'AN 48:27

The dream was true. Every detail of it would come to pass, exactly as shown: the entering, the safety, the shaved heads, the absence of fear. It had never been cancelled. It had only been scheduled, set for a year not yet arrived, and in the gap between the promise and its keeping Allah was arranging a nearer conquest to carry them toward it. He knew what you did not know. What you cannot see, the Sheikh reminds us, is not the same as what is not there.

The proof was in the numbers

So how, in the end, did a treaty that broke the companions' hearts become the greatest victory of the entire seerah? Through the one thing the Muslims had never once been granted in all their years of struggle: peace. For the first time, Quraysh had sat across a table from the Prophet ﷺ as an equal party, and treaties, the Sheikh observes, are only ever struck between equals; otherwise it is not a treaty but a command from the strong to the weak. The very act of negotiating was Quraysh conceding, perhaps without meaning to, that this was no longer a rebellion to be crushed but a power to be reckoned with. And then peace did what war never could. Believers and idol-worshippers could travel the same roads, trade in the same markets, sit and argue without the shadow of a coming battle. And when people can finally talk, Islam spreads the way it

spreads best: not down the edge of a sword, but by persuasion, by a man hearing the truth plainly and finding he cannot refuse it.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi brings forward al-Zuhri here, one of the earliest and greatest scholars of this religion, from whom so much of the seerah itself reaches us. Al-Zuhri said there had never been a victory in Islam before Hdaybiyyah greater than it. His reason was exactly this: that the people were at last at peace, so they mixed and spoke and Islam was mentioned among them, and no person of sound mind heard about it in those two years except that he entered it. The Sheikh sets that alongside the arithmetic of Ibn Hisham, the historian who refined Ibn Ishaq's biography into the standard the world still reads. At Hdaybiyyah the Prophet ﷺ had brought roughly fourteen hundred men. Two years later, when he marched back toward Makkah, he had ten thousand. Islam had been preached for some nineteen years to gather that first fourteen hundred; in the two years of peace that followed the treaty, the numbers more than doubled. Where did the other eight or nine thousand come from? They had converted in the quiet that Hdaybiyyah bought. A treaty had done in two years what nineteen years of struggle and battle had not. That is how a peace can be a larger victory than any war.

And there was one more thing the treaty did, the largest of all: it opened the road straight to the conquest of Makkah. Without Hdaybiyyah, the Sheikh says plainly, there is no conquest of Makkah. It was the very terms of the treaty, and Quraysh's eventual breaking of them, that would later give the Prophet ﷺ the opening to march on the city and take it almost without bloodshed. The humiliation at the edge of the sanctuary was the first step of the walk that ended with the keys of the Kaaba in his hand.

Hate a thing, and it is good for you

Of everything Hudaybiyyah teaches, this is where the Sheikh lingers longest, because for him this episode was always the most relevant in the entire seerah, the story he chose to teach before he had ever taught the rest of the life. Sometimes things happen, and on the surface they look like nothing but chaos and harm and ruin, and Allah knows what you do not.

Battle has been enjoined upon you while it is hateful to you. But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.

QUR'AN 2:216

The whole episode is a lesson in tawakkul, in handing your judgment back to the One who can see the road you cannot. The companions could not see it. The treaty looked to them like surrender after surrender. Even the Prophet ﷺ, when Umar pressed him, did not lay out the wisdom of it; he said only that he was the Messenger of Allah and that Allah would not abandon him, without yet being shown how. He hated the grief of it as any man would, and he trusted anyway, because trust is not the absence of grief but the choice to lean on Allah inside it. You may hate a thing, and it is the best thing that ever happened to you, and you will only learn which it was later, when the field has grown.

Beside this sits the lesson the Sheikh states as bluntly as he states anything in the seerah: never, ever assume you know better than the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Umar himself said afterward that the way he had behaved at Hudaybiyyah frightened him for the rest of his life, and he gave charity and fasted and freed slaves to make up for the words he had spoken.

And he said the thing that should be carved into every believing heart: that if any man other than the Prophet ﷺ had told him to fold up his sword and hand the Muslims back, he never would have obeyed. He had come that close. But in the end he submitted, because once Allah and His Messenger have spoken with an explicit word, your opinion is no longer an opinion. Accuse your own understanding, the Sheikh says, before you accuse the text. Allah's word is fact; ours, at its very best, is a guess. Hudaybiyyah is what it looks like to trust the One who sees the whole road when you can only make out the next step in the dark.

A treaty even with the worst enemy

Hudaybiyyah left behind a body of law and guidance that scholars have mined ever since, and the Sheikh draws out its boldest ruling first, the one he considers the most relevant of all for Muslims of his own time and place. The Quraysh were not neutral, not pacifists, not some well-meaning tribe that had simply misunderstood. They were the worst enemy this ummah will ever have, and the Sheikh means that precisely: no enemy since has fought the Prophet ﷺ as directly as they did. Every later foe attacked Muslims; only Quraysh attacked the Messenger of Allah himself, face to face. They tried to kill him in his own bed. They drove him from the city he loved. And still, with all of that between them, he ﷺ made peace with them and held to it. If a treaty was permissible with Quraysh, then a treaty is permissible with anyone less, which is everyone.

From this the Sheikh turns to the Muslims of his own land, and he is careful and he is firm. Different parts of the ummah, he says, may rightly hold different agreements; what binds one community is not what binds another, and he speaks only for the

people among whom he lives. A believer who carries a passport and a visa has entered into a covenant, and a believer does not betray a covenant, however much injustice he sees, because the believer is never the double-faced man who promises peace and then strikes. So when your heart bleeds, as it should, for the wronged of the ummah, for the prisoner in chains and the bombed and the displaced, remember Abu Jandal, who came stumbling into the camp in his chains, the marks of torture on him, begging the Muslims not to send him back, and whom the Prophet ﷺ, bound by the ink still drying on the treaty, could not keep. That is why Umar lost himself. And remember that there was a wider good Allah was arranging in that very moment that no one in the camp could yet see, a peace that would double the ummah and open Makkah, bought at the price of one man's chains.

The Sheikh is unsparing about the alternative. To act on raw emotion, to lash out, to strike a marketplace and cut down the innocent in the name of grievance, is neither Islam nor even sense. It is forbidden by the plainest reading of the religion and foolish by the plainest reading of the world, because it invites a ruin that falls hardest on the very people it claims to defend, just as the Prophet's ﷺ patience at Hudaibiyah won what rashness never could. Trust Allah. Keep your covenant. Do the good in your reach and make du'a for the rest. And leave the outcome to the One who took the bitterest humiliation in the story and named it, with His own word, the clearest of victories.

Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah

The surah that opened by calling the treaty a clear conquest closes by drawing a portrait, and there is a final, perfect irony in its first words. At Hudaibiyah, Quraysh had forced the Prophet

ﷺ to strike the title Messenger of Allah from the top of the document, refusing to let it stand. Now Allah wrote it into the eternal, unerasable word, where no pen of Quraysh could ever reach it.

Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; and those with him are forceful against the disbelievers, merciful among themselves. You see them bowing and prostrating [in prayer], seeking bounty from Allah and [His] pleasure. Their sign is in their faces from the effect of prostration [i.e., prayer]. That is their description in the Torah. And their description in the Gospel is as a plant which produces its offshoots and strengthens them so they grow firm and stand upon their stalks, delighting the sowers - so that He [i.e., Allah] may enrage by them the disbelievers. Allah has promised those who believe and do righteous deeds among them forgiveness and a great reward.

QUR'AN 48:29

The title they made him erase, written down forever. And around him a community drawn in a single breath: hard against falsehood, tender with one another, bent low in bowing and prostration, the mark of worship on their faces. Then the image the Sheikh finds most fitting of all, the parable Allah draws from the Gospel. They are like a seed that sends out its tender shoot, and the shoot grows firm and thickens and stands tall upon its stalk, until it amazes the very farmers who sowed it, and enrages those who hoped it would wither. That was the ummah at Hudaibiyyah: a fragile shoot of fourteen hundred, mocked, turned away at the door, certain it had lost. And that is the ummah Allah promised would rise into something that astonishes the world. The defeat at Hudaibiyyah was the soil. The clear victory was the harvest, and fourteen centuries on we are still standing in the field He grew.

What the clear victory asks of our faith

It would be easy to read the aftermath of Hudaybiyyah as a happy ending, a tidy proof that things work out, and file it away. That would be to miss the blade of it. The companions did not get a happy ending in the moment. They got a treaty that broke their hearts, a brother in chains they had to surrender, a pilgrimage denied, and a long ride home in the certainty that they had been beaten. The victory was real the entire time, and not one of them could see it. That is the part that should keep us awake.

Because your own Hudaybiyyah will not announce itself either. It will come as the door that closes in your face, the prayer that seems to go unanswered, the plan that collapses, the loss you cannot make sense of. And everything in you will name it a defeat, the way Umar named it a defeat, the way the whole camp did. The lesson of this day is not that the pain was unreal. It was real; Allah Himself tied the treaty to the forgiveness of sins precisely because of the grief it carried. The lesson is that the pain and the victory were the same event, and that the One who could see the hidden believers in Makkah, and the eight thousand converts not yet made, and the keys of the Kaaba two years down the road, was arranging all of it through the very thing that looked like ruin. You may hate a thing, and it is good for you, and Allah knows while you know not.

So take three things from the road home down into your ordinary days. When something you cannot stand is decreed for you, refuse to rush to the verdict that it is bad for you; remember that the clearest victory in the seerah arrived wearing the face of a defeat. When the text is plain and your heart rebels against it, do what Umar finally did and accuse your own understanding before you accuse the word of your Lord. And when your heart bleeds for a wrong you cannot right, keep your covenants, do the good

within your reach, make du'a for the rest, and refuse to let raw emotion drive you into a ruin that wounds the innocent. Above all, learn the one thing this whole arc was sent to teach. Tie your camel and trust your Lord, do every lawful thing in your power, and then rest, genuinely rest, in the knowledge that the One who sees the whole road has already named the ending. May Allah, who turned the grief of His Messenger ﷺ into the clear victory and wrote his title into the word that never fades, give us eyes that trust Him in the dark, hearts that bow to His word over our own, and a share in the harvest He promised would one day delight the One who planted it.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 67: the Treaty of Hdaybiyyah, part 5 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (48:1, 48:5, 48:10, 48:11, 48:12, 48:18, 48:22, 48:25, 48:27, 48:29, and 2:216), verified via quran.ai.

The Battle of Khaybar, Part I

The fortresses fall, and the banner is given to Ali

The ink on the treaty of Hdaybiyah was barely two weeks dry. For years the great danger had always come from the south, from Makkah and the Quraysh, and now the south was bound by a ten year peace. For the first time since the hijrah the Prophet ﷺ could turn his back on Makkah and look the other way, to the north, and there, two hundred and thirty kilometres up the road, sat a problem he had been carrying for a long time. Its name was Khaybar. Dr. Yasir Qadhi notes how little rest the community took: barely a fortnight after they staggered home from Hdaybiyah, the Prophet ﷺ was already thinking about the next step, already planning, already moving. This is the seerah of a man who never let a victory become a resting place. He used the peace he had just won to settle the one account that was still open.

The threat that moved to Khaybar

To understand why the Muslims marched north, you have to remember who was waiting for them there. Over the years in Madinah, the relationship with its three Jewish tribes had broken down one tribe at a time, and the Sheikh runs through the list as a recap, because Muslims so often blur these names together. The Banu Qaynuqa were the first, expelled in the month of Shawwal after Badr, when they sent the Prophet ﷺ a veiled threat that he had only beaten soft men and would find them another matter. The Banu Nadir came next, expelled after Uhud, when they

plotted to drop a stone on his head as he sat against their wall and Jibril came to warn him away. And the Banu Qurayza were last, not expelled but judged, for their treachery during the siege of the trench. With that, Madinah no longer held a hostile tribe inside its walls.

But the exiles had not vanished into the distance. The leaders of the Banu Nadir, men like Huyayy ibn Akhtab, the father of Safiyyah who would soon become the Prophet's ﷺ wife, and Sallam ibn Abil Huqayq, had simply moved up the road to the nearest stronghold, and from Khaybar they never stopped working. It was these exiles who had helped arm the confederate armies at the trench, and it was they who had slipped into Madinah during that siege and talked the Banu Qurayza into breaking their covenant. Now the Quraysh were neutralised, and Khaybar was the single remaining power in the local vicinity that would seize any chance to come back for what it had lost.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi refuses to dress the reason up. There was no army marching on Madinah that day, no plot already in motion. This was a preemptive strike, and he says so plainly, in the way he is known for, without beating around the bush. This was simply the law of that entire world, Muslim and Christian and Jewish and pagan alike: every tribe waited for its moment to move on another, which is exactly why the people of Khaybar had built fortresses in the first place. You do not raise walls like theirs in a land of perfect peace. There was no treaty between Khaybar and Madinah to honour, no covenant being broken. He is careful to add that the law of that age is not a law we are free to import into our own; where there is a treaty, the believer is bound by the treaty. But on that day, in that world, there was no treaty, and there was only the question of who would move first.

Khaybar was a place worth fighting for and a place hard to take. It was a lush, fertile oasis sitting atop a vast underground river, the same hidden kind of current that fed Madinah itself, among the largest date producing regions in all of Arabia, and populated entirely by Jewish tribes with no Arab clans among them. They had done in Khaybar what they had done everywhere they settled: they had built fortresses, the finest and most famous in the whole peninsula. The Sheikh notes that this skill points back to their origins, for the art of raising great fortresses and dams belonged to the south, to Yemen, and the Arabs of central Arabia had never mastered it. The Jews of Khaybar kept the craft secret and taught it to no one, so their walls stood unrivalled.

And Khaybar was not one fortress but many, at least eight or nine and perhaps fifteen in all, scattered across two halves of the oasis, each a walled town holding a few hundred souls with an entire small tribe behind its gate. To men who had only ever fought in the open desert, these walls were a wholly new kind of war. How do you fight a wall? They had no engines to break stone, no answer yet to a fortress that simply refused to open. But the Sheikh stops to point out the flaw the Jews never foresaw in all their genius for building: locked separately inside their own strongholds, they could not unite. Their walls were perfect against a small raiding party, but against a disciplined army of sixteen or seventeen hundred men, each fortress of two or three or five hundred would face the whole force alone, and one by one that is what happened. Their ingenuity had a gaping hole in it, and in that hole lay their downfall.

What an evil morning

The Muslims set out in high spirits, roughly sixteen or seventeen hundred of them, and the books of Bukhari and Muslim

remember how they marched: shouting the takbir at the top of their voices, screaming Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar, la ilaha illa Allah until the desert rang. The Prophet ﷺ turned and gentled them. O people, he said, be easy on yourselves, for the One you are calling upon is not deaf and not absent. He hears you, He sees you, and He is nearer to you than your own jugular vein. In another wording: He is with you. Lower your voices. There is no need to strain them, for Allah is with you wherever you are and hears the whisper as clearly as the shout.

He timed the approach with a commander's instinct. Khaybar lay close enough to reach in under two days of marching, and he camped the last night just short of the oasis and moved the army before dawn, so that Khaybar would wake to find the danger already on its doorstep. At sunrise the farmers came out as on any other day, carrying their plows and axes and tools, expecting nothing but their fields, and they saw the army and froze. They dropped their instruments and ran back through the gates crying out that Muhammad and his forces had come, Muhammad and his army has arrived. The Sheikh pauses on that cry, because it tells you something. They were surprised, yes, but they were not innocent and not bewildered. They knew at once who would come and why. The premonition in their panic was the panic of people who had done something they should not have done and had always known the day of collection would arrive.

As the gates slammed and were sealed, the Prophet ﷺ said the words that every book of seerah and every book of hadith preserves:

Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar, Khaybar has been destroyed. Indeed, when we descend upon the open ground of a people, then evil is the morning of those who were warned.

The siege had begun. Khaybar was not a city to be taken in a day; it was a campaign of at least eight or nine separate battles, some lasting a single day and some dragging on for ten, fought fortress by fortress across both halves of the oasis. It was brutal, close, unfamiliar work. The defenders did what fortress dwellers do, the things we have all seen in the films: they hurled stones and heavy logs and rained arrows down through the slits, and the Muslims, who had never faced this before, did not at first know what to do against it.

At the great fortress of Naim the fighting ground on for ten full days. Abu Bakr took the standard and led, then Umar took it after him, and still the walls held. Then Mahmud ibn Maslamah of the Ansar came too close to the base of the wall, and the defenders dropped a massive log down upon him and crushed him where he stood. He died a martyr, and his death sat heavily on the whole army; to watch a man killed in that manner, with no enemy to even strike back at, was a bitter and demoralising thing. And as each fortress finally fell, its survivors who could still ride would gallop to the next one still standing, so that the strongholds that remained only swelled with fighters as the campaign wore on. The Muslims were learning, slowly and at a price, exactly what it costs to break a wall.

The banner given to Ali

After the long, draining day at Naim, the Prophet ﷺ made an announcement at the night prayer that changed the mood of the entire camp. Tomorrow, he said, I will hand the banner to a man who loves Allah and His Messenger and whom Allah and His Messenger love, and at his hands Allah will grant us the victory. Umar ibn al-Khattab would say afterward that never once in his whole life did he long to lead as he longed to lead that night.

Every man in the camp went to sleep hoping the banner would be placed in his hand.

In the morning the Prophet ﷺ prayed Fajr, turned to the gathered army, and asked: where is Ali ibn Abi Talib? They told him Ali was lying in his tent, his eyes so swollen and infected he could not even open them. Bring him to me, he said. When Ali was led out, the Prophet ﷺ applied his blessed saliva to those eyes, and they were healed on the spot, as though there had never been anything wrong with them. Then he placed the banner in Ali's hand and told him: go forth in the name of Allah, and do not turn back.

Ali set off, then stopped. There was a question he needed answered, but to turn around and ask it would have meant disobeying the order not to turn back. So without turning his head he shouted the question over his shoulder: O Messenger of Allah, on what terms do I fight them? The answer the Prophet ﷺ gave is one Dr. Yasir Qadhi lingers over, because it lays bare what these expeditions were actually for. Fight them, he said, until they bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. If they say it, their lives and their wealth are protected from you, and their account is with Allah. Then the line that reframes the whole campaign: by Allah, if Allah guides a single soul through you, it is better for you than a whole herd of red camels. Ten days of siege, a martyr crushed at the wall, a fortress still unbroken in front of him, and the goal the Prophet ﷺ names for his commander is not the land and not the plunder. It is one heart turned toward Allah. The Sheikh says it as plainly as it can be said: the psychology behind these expeditions was never money or fame or fortune. It was dawah. It was the calling of people to their Lord.

The duel and the door

When Ali reached the fortress, its champion came out to meet him. Marhab was a famous and ferocious warrior, bold enough to call for single combat in front of both armies. The first Muslim to answer, Amir ibn al-Akwa of the Ansar, he cut down, and Amir fell a martyr. Then Ali himself stepped forward. By rights the commander should have stayed back and let others duel, but Ali took the challenge on, and he killed Marhab. It broke something in the defenders, the first great blow of Khaybar, the first time their pride cracked, and soon the fighting spilled out from behind the walls into the open ground.

Then comes the moment every Muslim child has heard. In the thick of the fighting, one of the enemy commanders struck the shield clean out of Ali's grip and left him exposed. Ali turned to the great gate of the fortress, took hold of the door, tore it from its hinges, and carried that single door as his shield through the rest of the battle before he cast it aside. Abu Rafi, who was there and watched it, said that afterward seven of them together took hold of that same door and tried to lift it and could not move it. Dr. Yasir Qadhi names this for exactly what it is, a karama, a small miracle that Allah granted to Ali, and he turns to the gathering with a charge he clearly means: we are the true followers of Ali ibn Abi Talib, and we give him every ounce of credit that Allah and His Messenger gave him, and we are never miserly or stingy in honouring him. Here was a man whom Allah loved and whom the Messenger ﷺ loved, who loved them both in return, one of the very greatest of the companions, radiyallahu anhu.

Three deaths, three lessons

Khaybar is remembered for its fortresses, but the Sheikh stops the army's advance again and again to stand over a single man,

because each one teaches something the walls never could.

The first lesson came wrapped in mercy. When the fortress called as-Sab was taken after three days, it was a deliverance timed to the very hour, for the Muslims' food had run out entirely and they had nothing left. Inside, the fortress was stockpiled with grain and provisions and water, enough to feed the whole army for the remainder of the long campaign. They lived off that one fortress to the end of Khaybar.

The second lesson was a slave, owned by the people of Khaybar, who had heard there was a man claiming prophethood and came to ask him to his face what he was about. The Prophet ﷺ told him: I am a prophet. And what is a prophet, the man asked, what have you brought? So the Prophet ﷺ explained Islam to him, and the slave accepted it on the spot. Then he asked the practical question of a man who owns nothing: my master gave me these sheep to graze, what do I do with them now? Return them, the Prophet ﷺ told him, for it is not permissible for us to take what was entrusted to you. The Sheikh refuses to let the honesty of this slip past. The Prophet ﷺ was at that very moment at war with the man's master; had the master's fortress fallen, the master and his flock and all he owned would have become lawful spoil. But that is not how property is taken, and a trust is a trust even when its owner is your enemy in the field, so the sheep had to go back. The Prophet ﷺ rubbed the heads of the flock and told the man where to send them, and with the baraka of his dua the sheep returned to their master on their own. The slave came back and fought until a stray arrow killed him. Standing over his body, the body of a man who owned nothing in this world but the loincloth that covered him and who never once prayed a single prayer, because the time for prayer had not yet come after he believed, the Prophet ﷺ lowered his gaze and turned his eyes

away. When they asked him why, he said: his two wives from Paradise have come to greet him.

The third man taught the hardest lesson of the three. There was a Bedouin fighting so fiercely that the whole army marvelled and said: there goes a man of Paradise walking the earth. No, said the Prophet ﷺ, he is of the people of the Fire. One companion could not reconcile it, for if a man fighting like that was bound for the Fire, who among them could hope for anything, and so he followed the man to see. The Bedouin fought ferociously, but when an arrow wounded his hand so that he could fight no more, he set the hilt of his sword against the ground and threw himself upon the point and killed himself. He had not been fighting for Allah at all; he had been fighting for his own name, his own glory, the legacy and the fame of being called a mighty man, and when he could fight no longer he could not bear it. The Prophet ﷺ explained what it meant: a man may do the deeds of the people of Paradise as people see them, until the decree overtakes him and he seals his life with a deed of the Fire; and a man may seem to do the deeds of the Fire, until the decree overtakes him and he seals his life with a deed of Paradise. Deeds are judged by their endings. Al-amalu bil-khawatim. Guard the ending, the Sheikh reminds us, and ask Allah for a good one.

Surrender, and a meal that never left him

Fortress after fortress fell across both halves of the oasis, until only the largest stronghold remained, packed now with everyone still left alive who had fled there for protection. This one was too big to storm, so the Muslims simply camped outside it and waited, and a solid two weeks went by until the people inside understood there was nowhere left to run and no way to hide, and they sought terms. They petitioned the conqueror, calling

him not Messenger of Allah but Abul Qasim, and made their case: your people do not know how to work these lands or coax their harvest from them, and we know Khaybar inside out, so let us stay and farm it for you and give you a share. Back and forth the terms went until they were settled. The people of Khaybar would hand over half of everything the oasis produced; all the labour and maintenance and cost would remain entirely their own burden, not split but wholly theirs; and the treaty would last only as long as the Muslims wished it to, to be ended whenever they chose, with no long term guarantee at all.

The Prophet ﷺ agreed, and the Sheikh draws out the foresight in it. The Muslims had neither the numbers nor the experience to leave hundreds of men behind to farm an oasis this vast; Khaybar would have needed a thousand to run it, and the community had no thousand to spare. So the people who knew the land kept the land, and half of its enormous harvest came to the Muslims year after year, the largest single source of wealth Islam had yet known. Scholars later differed over whether Khaybar was a conquest or a surrender, and the Sheikh follows Ibn al-Qayyim and the majority: it was a conquest, for had they truly wished to surrender they would have done so at the start, and only sought terms once every other fortress had fallen and they saw their own turn coming. Years afterward, under the caliphate of Umar, with Islam spread across the world and no further need to keep them there, the open ended clause was finally invoked and the Jews were resettled elsewhere, ending the Jewish presence in central Arabia for good.

Then came the meal. One of the families sent the conqueror a gift, a whole roasted lamb, as a conquered people will send a gift to honour a new ruler. But the woman who prepared it had quietly asked around which cut of meat the Prophet ﷺ loved best, and

she was told it was the shoulder. So she laced the entire animal with a powerful poison and concentrated the worst of it in the shoulder. When the Prophet ﷺ and the companions sat to eat and he put a piece in his mouth, he stopped at once and called out for everyone to stop eating: the shoulder of this lamb has told me that it is poisoned. Allah let the meat itself speak to him. He did not swallow. But one companion, Bishr ibn al-Bara, had already eaten, and the poison took hold of him, and within days he died. The Prophet ﷺ summoned the family and questioned them, drawing out one true answer after another until they admitted it, and then he called the woman, who answered with bitter honesty: he had killed her people, her husband and her kin, and she had wanted revenge; and she had reasoned that if he were a false prophet the world would be rid of him, and if he were a true one the poison could never harm him. Dr. Yasir Qadhi sets that reasoning against the Qur'an's own portrait of those who knew exactly who he was and rejected him anyway:

Those to whom We gave the Scripture know him as they know their own sons. But indeed, a party of them conceal the truth while they know it.

QUR'AN 2:146

They recognised him, the Sheikh says, the way a man recognises his own children, and still they chose pride over the truth they could see. It was the same arrogance the Qur'an records of them elsewhere, the cool certainty that the Fire could never really hold them:

And they say, "Never will the Fire touch us, except for a few numbered days." Say, "Have you taken a covenant with Allah? For Allah will never break His covenant. Or do you say about Allah that which you do not know?"

The Prophet ﷺ forgave what had been done to him personally; he did not retaliate for his own sake. But when Bishr died, justice for Bishr was another matter, and the woman was put to death in retaliation for the companion she had killed. As for the Prophet ﷺ himself, the poison never fully left his body. Four years later, on his deathbed, he would tell Aisha that he could still feel the effects of that meal from Khaybar, that he felt it now in his very heart, and that this was the hour the poison had finally reached it. His death was already written; the poison was one of the causes Allah decreed to make that passing more painful, and he carried it, uncomplaining, to the last days of his life ﷺ.

The day Jafar came home

On the very day Khaybar was finally won, a second joy arrived that nearly eclipsed the first. Jafar ibn Abi Talib, the Prophet's ﷺ beloved cousin, walked back into his life after more than a decade away, returning from Abyssinia with some fifty Muslim men and women who had emigrated there in the earliest, hardest years of the dawah. Jafar was older than the young Ali, and the bond between him and the Prophet ﷺ ran deep and long. He rose to meet him, kissed him on the forehead, and said: I do not know which of the two delights me more today, the conquest of Khaybar or the coming of Jafar. A whole month of siege, the greatest wealth Islam had ever gathered, and still he weighed it all against the face of one man he loved.

These returnees had not lifted a sword at Khaybar, yet the Prophet ﷺ gave them a share of its spoils all the same, for Allah never wastes the sacrifice of those who sacrifice. Theirs had simply been a different war: more than a decade in a foreign land,

a strange tongue and a strange people, even a civil war in Abyssinia that nearly swept them away, in which the Negus who sheltered them came so close to being overthrown that he had readied a secret ship for them in case he fell. The Sheikh tells the homecoming through Asma bint Umayy, who had made that journey. When Umar gently teased her, calling her the seafaring lady of Abyssinia and claiming that he and the emigrants to Madinah had more right to the Prophet ﷺ because they had migrated first, Asma snapped, and took it straight to the Prophet ﷺ himself, declaring before the companions in the masjid that she would not eat or drink until she repeated to him exactly what Umar had said. He settled it at once: they had no more right to him than she did. You made one migration, he told Umar's camp, and these people made two. The riwayat says the Muslims of Abyssinia were never happier than they were that day.

And so Khaybar was the turning of a long tide. The largest land conquest of the Prophet's ﷺ life poured in: orchards and grain, weapons and armour and animals, the smaller settlements around the oasis and even distant Fadak, whose people were so frightened they sent their surrender before any army ever came near them, making Fadak a thing Allah gave to His Messenger ﷺ directly, with no battle fought, its proceeds set aside to care for his family. The wealth ran so deep that the Muhajirun finally returned to the Ansar the very land the Ansar had pressed upon them six years earlier, in the first year of the hijrah, when the emigrants had arrived with nothing and their hosts had given and given and given. Ibn Umar would say it as simply as it can be said: we never ate our fill until after Khaybar. The reward of the patient, the Sheikh reminds you, always comes, and for some of these believers it had been twenty years in the coming.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read Khaybar as a war story, a tale of siege engines and spoils, the biggest land conquest of the Prophet's ﷺ life, and to leave it there. That would be to walk straight past the people the Sheikh keeps stopping to show us, and to miss the questions they put to us.

He insisted the goal was a heart, not a haul. Ten days into a brutal siege, with a man crushed dead at the wall and a fortress still standing in front of him, the order he gave his commander was to call them to Allah first, because a single guided soul outweighs a whole herd of red camels. We are quick to forget what we are really fighting for, in our work and our arguments and our striving, and to let the prize become the land instead of the heart. He never once let it. Whatever you are pouring your effort into, stop and ask whether the aim is still a soul or has quietly become the spoils, because the difference is the whole of it.

He sent the sheep back in the middle of a war. He was at war with the slave's master, the man's flock would soon enough have been lawful plunder, and still a trust was a trust and the animals had to be returned to the very enemy he was fighting. Honesty did not pause for the battlefield, and it does not pause for anything. If integrity could survive that, with a war on and an army hungry, then it has no excuse to fail in the small and comfortable corners of our own lives, in the inbox and the ledger and the things no one would ever check.

And he carried the poison without complaint to the last week of his life. The same season that brought him the richest victory of his life brought him the meal that would help kill him, and the same man met both with the same steadiness, forgiving what

was done to him even as justice was done for Bishr. Victory and pain arrived together, as they so often do in a life, and he did not let the pain sour the gratitude or the victory blind him to the wound. He simply bore it, and bore it quietly, for four more years.

There is a third man at Khaybar we should not leave without, the one the army was certain was bound for Paradise, who ended on the point of his own sword because his fight had never really been for Allah at all. Deeds are weighed by how they finish. A whole life can lean toward the light and still end in the dark, and a hard life can turn at the very end toward Allah and be saved. None of us knows which deed will be our last, and so the only safe prayer is the one the Sheikh keeps pressing into our hands: that Allah grant us a good ending, husn al-khatimah, and guard us from an evil one.

So take Khaybar down into your ordinary days. Make the aim a heart and not a haul. Keep your honesty when no one is enforcing it, the way he kept his with a war on. When victory and pain arrive in the same season, meet them with one steady face and bear the wound without complaint. And ask Allah, every day, for the ending you cannot guarantee yourself. May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, who tasted the poison and forgave, who weighed the greatest conquest of his life against the face of one beloved cousin, who lowered his eyes before the wives of Paradise come to greet a slave; grant us the patience of those who waited long for His reward, and gather us under his banner on the Day the nations are gathered, upon the best of endings.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 68: the battle of Khaybar, part 1 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih

International (2:80, 2:146), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The marriage to Zaynab bint Jahsh

The one marriage Allah Himself contracted

There are evenings in this story that a teacher would rather walk past, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi opens this one by saying so out loud. He had been putting it off for a long time, and then he understood that there was no use in delaying it: you have to face the facts, lay them out, and deal with them in an honest, careful way. The marriage of the Prophet ﷺ to Zaynab bint Jahsh is, by his own description, even more sensitive than the affair of the so-called Satanic Verses, because hostile writers have dressed it up as something it never was, a love story, a scandal, and built a whole library of slander on top of it. So the Sheikh decides that you are better off hearing it from him, in full and in order, in the safety of a room where it can be explained, than stumbling onto a poisoned version on some website that wishes the Prophet ﷺ nothing but harm.

And so he does for this story exactly what he did for the Satanic Verses. He gathers the reports, one by one. He puts dates on them, names on them, asks who said what and in which century. He weighs the chains. And then he lets the truth stand on its own feet, with nothing hidden and nothing exaggerated. Underneath the noise there turns out to be something the slander never wants you to see: this was the one marriage in the history of the world that Allah contracted directly, from above the seven

heavens, recorded in a Qur'an we still recite, in order to tear down a custom that had trapped people for centuries. Lead with that, and every other piece falls into its place.

The most eligible woman of Quraysh

Zaynab was not born Zaynab. She was born Barra, of the tribe of Quraysh, which is to say she was not of Banu Hashim but of the wider Quraysh, and her lineage made her proud. Through her mother she was a first cousin of the Prophet ﷺ himself, for her mother was his paternal aunt, the sister of his father Abdullah. She was younger than him by more than a decade, and by the reckoning of most of the books she was around thirty-five years old at the time of these events, though, as the Sheikh likes to remind us, no one in that age kept careful track of birthdays. She had been married once before, back in Makkah, and divorced, and she had emigrated to Madinah with her brother. A free woman again, available for marriage, and well aware of her own worth.

Then the Prophet ﷺ sent her a proposal, but not for himself. He proposed on behalf of Zayd ibn Harithah, the young man he had freed and raised as his own, the one everyone in Madinah still called Zayd ibn Muhammad. And Zaynab balked. I am the widow of Quraysh, she answered, the most eligible woman of my people, and you want me to marry Zayd? You can hear underneath the words exactly what she meant: a freed slave was beneath her, not of her caliber, not a match that could ever work. Her brother said the same thing, that Zayd was not worthy of their family. The Sheikh does not scold her for it. It is human nature, he says, woven into us, that a woman wishes to marry a man she can respect and look up to, just as a man so often feels unsettled if the woman he approaches has more wealth or

standing than he does. Right or wrong is beside the point; this is simply how people are made. And so, from the very beginning, this match was in danger of collapsing before it began.

When Allah and His Messenger decide

The Prophet ﷺ insisted, and the earliest books of tafsir tell us that a verse came down for this exact standoff. Once Allah and His Messenger have settled a matter, no believing man and no believing woman has any choice left to make about it.

It is not for a believing man or a believing woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decided a matter, that they should [thereafter] have any choice about their affair. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger has certainly strayed into clear error.

QUR'AN 33:36

The moment Zaynab and her brother heard it, their resistance dissolved. They said they were content with Zayd. And so the marriage went ahead, two people joined less by attraction than by obedience, which is rarely the firmest foundation a marriage can have. It did not flourish. Zayd and Zaynab were never an easy fit, and within a few years he was coming to the Prophet ﷺ to complain and to ask permission to divorce her, telling him of her sharp tongue and her sense of standing above him. Hold that ordinary, unhappy marriage in view as you read on, because everything the slander later twists is hiding somewhere inside it.

The verse, and the one name Allah wrote down

There is only one verse in the entire Qur'an that tells this story explicitly, and it is worth slowing down on every clause of it. The Sheikh says you should memorize it, or at least its meaning.

And [remember, O Muhammad], when you said to the one on whom Allah bestowed favor and you bestowed favor, "Keep your wife and fear Allah," while you concealed within yourself that which Allah is to disclose. And you feared the people, while Allah has more right that you fear Him. So when Zayd had no longer any need for her, We married her to you in order that there not be upon the believers any discomfort [i.e., guilt] concerning the wives of their claimed [i.e., adopted] sons when they no longer have need of them. And ever is the command [i.e., decree] of Allah accomplished.

QUR'AN 33:37

Read it slowly. Allah recalls the moment the Prophet ﷺ told Zayd: keep your wife and fear Allah, do not divorce her. And then comes the gentle, extraordinary rebuke: while you concealed within yourself that which Allah is to disclose, and you feared the people, while Allah has more right that you fear Him. There was something the Prophet ﷺ was keeping inside out of concern for what people would say, and Allah, who never lets His Messenger hide behind the opinions of anyone, announced that He Himself would bring it into the open. It is a verse so candid that, as we will see, the early Companions said that if the Prophet ﷺ had ever been going to suppress a single line of revelation, this would have been the line.

And here Dr. Yasir Qadhi stops you on a detail that most Muslims have lived their whole lives without noticing. Zayd ibn Harithah is the only Companion mentioned by name anywhere in the Qur'an. Not Abu Bakr, not Umar, not Ali, no one. Allah elsewhere refers to Abu Bakr by description, the second of two in the cave, which is honor enough, but it cannot be compared to this. Allah took this freed slave, once a piece of property bought and sold in the markets of Arabia, and wrote his name into the eternal book. It is

a rank so towering that when the Prophet ﷺ later passed away, one of the Companions remarked that had Zayd still been alive, they would never have chosen anyone over him for the leadership. Most of us know little of Zayd, the Sheikh notes, only because he was martyred so early, in the eighth year, in a battle whose story is just weeks away in this series, and the grief of the Prophet ﷺ over him was visible and deep.

Then the verse delivers its purpose in one clause: so when Zayd had no longer any need for her, We married her to you. Allah married them. Not a guardian, not two witnesses, not a contract recited between people in a room. The nikah of the Prophet ﷺ and Zaynab was pronounced from above the seven heavens and recorded in the Qur'an itself. The whole world was witness, and no further witness was needed, no dowry-broker, no officiant, nothing. The verse came down and the matter was concluded. It is, the Sheikh says, the only marriage in the history of the world legitimized directly by Allah, the only marriage contract we still recite as scripture to this day.

Why a marriage had to break a custom

Read the verse once more and the reason for the whole painful episode rises to the surface: in order that there not be upon the believers any discomfort concerning the wives of their claimed sons. In pre-Islamic Arabia, adoption was absolute. A man who adopted a boy gave him his own name, and the adopted son became a true son in every legal sense the society recognized. He inherited as a real son inherited. And his former wife was as permanently forbidden to the man who raised him as a real daughter-in-law would be to a father. Nobody, the Sheikh points out, denies the underlying principle here: a so-called adopted son is not the same as a biological son. The wife of your own

flesh-and-blood son is forever forbidden to you; the husband of your own daughter is forever forbidden; these bonds of blood are real and unbreakable. But a child you have raised who is not of your blood does not become your flesh by the mere saying of a word.

So Allah chose to undo the false custom in the way a society feels most sharply: not with a sentence in a sermon, but with a living example at the very top of the community. The man everyone had called Zayd ibn Muhammad would be called Zayd ibn Harithah again, by his real father's name. And the Messenger of Allah ﷺ himself would marry the former wife of the man he had once adopted, to prove in the most public way imaginable that the old taboo had no foundation in the religion of Allah. It cost him something personally, this public example, and it settled the question forever for every believer who came after.

A few lines later the same passage seals the deeper truth about who he ﷺ is.

Muhammad is not the father of [any] one of your men, but [he is] the Messenger of Allah and seal [i.e., last] of the prophets. And ever is Allah, of all things, Knowing.

QUR'AN 33:40

He is not the father of Zayd, nor of any of your men; the bonds were never what the Jahiliyyah imagined. He is the Messenger of Allah and the seal of the prophets, the last of them, with no prophet to come after. The Sheikh draws your attention to the shape of the whole passage: nearly a page and a half around this verse is pure praise of the Prophet ﷺ, including the celebrated verse a little further on in which Allah tells us that He and His angels send their blessings upon him, and commands the

believers to do the same. The slander wants this story to be about a scandal. The Qur'an makes it about the end of false fatherhood, the finality of prophethood, and the honoring of the Messenger ﷺ.

Two versions, and an answer that does not flinch

Now the Sheikh does the work he spent an entire day doing, from nine in the morning until the hour of the lecture, in his own library, with forty or fifty books of tafsir open in front of him. He traces, century by century, in chronological order, what the scholars actually said the Prophet ﷺ was concealing in his heart. There turn out to be exactly two readings, and he names them plainly: version A and version B.

Version A is a story. What the Prophet ﷺ concealed, on this reading, was a quiet human inclination toward Zaynab once he had seen her, and an unspoken wish that the unhappy marriage might end, a wish he would not voice for fear of what people would say. Version B is not a story at all but an interpretation: Allah had already informed the Prophet ﷺ that Zaynab would one day become his wife, and that foreknowledge was the thing he kept inside, fearful that people would accuse him of marrying the former wife of his adopted son.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi is scrupulously honest about where each reading comes from, because the chronology is the whole point. Version A is the standard of the earliest authorities. Muqatil, whose tafsir is the oldest in print, records it, though as a mere storyteller he is cited only to show what people were saying around the year 150, not as a reliable scholar. But then comes at-Tabari, who died in the year 310, the great encyclopedist and most orthodox bastion of Sunni tafsir, and he records version A as essentially the only version, tracing it back through Qatadah, the foremost authority

of his generation, and through other early scholars, all stating that what the Prophet ﷺ hid was the wish that Zayd would divorce her. After at-Tabari, the Sheikh names a procession of major commentators across the next centuries, including al-Wahidi, az-Zamakhshari, al-Baghawi, all carrying version A as if it were simply the received account. Version B appears in the printed books only later, in the fourth and fifth centuries, and slowly gains ground. By the time you reach the later masters like Ibn Kathir, who died in 774, and Ibn Hajar, who died in 852, version A is no longer mentioned at all; they say only that some of the earliest reports are better left uncited, and they cross them out without repeating them.

And here is where the Sheikh refuses to take the easy exit. Even if version A is correct, he says, following al-Baghawi who said it plainly six centuries before him, there is no sin in it whatsoever. Notice, he insists, what the Qur'an does and does not say. It never tells the Prophet ﷺ to repent. It never calls what he did a wrong. It does not say he made a mistake or that he must seek refuge. It says only that he concealed something out of embarrassment, and that he should have feared Allah over the people. A passing inclination of the heart that a man never acts upon is simply not a sin; love and attraction are not things a person controls, only his actions are. And the Prophet ﷺ did exactly what a believer is meant to do with such a feeling. He turned away. He told Zayd to keep his wife. He kept his own counsel. That, the Sheikh says, is not a flaw in the man. That is the role model itself: a human being with the same pulls you and I feel, who never once let one of them carry him into wrong.

A human prophet is the prophet we can follow

What the Sheikh will not accept, and he is emphatic about it, is the move that many modern speakers make: declaring version A a forgery slipped into the books by orientalists and heretics to defame the Prophet ﷺ. It does not behoove us, he says. We Muslims love a conspiracy theory, we love to blame this on that and that on this, but version A is woven all the way through our own earliest tradition, narrated by our own most reliable scholars, carried in the very same chains that at-Tabari relies on for some eighty percent of his entire tafsir. You cannot tear it out and remain honest with your sources. Follow version B if it sits easier on your heart, follow version A if you find it stronger, even hold some blend of the two, as some scholars did. All of it is within the fold of the tradition, and not one of the readings places a single sin on the Prophet ﷺ.

Then he draws the lesson all the way out, and this is the heart of the evening. There has always been a tension in this ummah, he reminds you, and it persists to this day: between those who lift the Prophet ﷺ into a near-mystical being with no human needs at all, who does not eat or drink or cast a shadow, and those who seize on his humanity in order to attack him. The straight path runs between the two, and it is the path the Prophet ﷺ marked out himself when he said, I am only a human being. A messenger who feels what you feel and masters it is a messenger you can actually imitate. Turn him into an angel with no inclinations, and you have quietly emptied his life of any example for your own. He points to the marriage to Juwayriyyah as proof of the same humanity, narrated soundly in the books: her own people said that the moment they saw her they understood what the Prophet ﷺ would see in her, and so it was. Subhan Allah, the Sheikh says, what in the world is wrong with a prophet who has the ordinary inclinations of a man and never once obeys the wrong

one? That is not something less than perfection. That is exactly what perfection looks like.

And he lands it where the slander can never follow him. When the heart is corrupt, he says, it can take the most innocent story and turn it into filth; and when the heart is pure, an innocent story stays innocent. Those who set out to disparage the Prophet ﷺ never needed Zaynab's story at all; they will twist anything they are handed, and we have seen them do it again and again. And those who love him have no trouble here whatsoever. They have, the Sheikh adds with a small smile, far bigger problems to worry about than which version a believer prefers.

The night hijab came down

The wedding itself, in the beginning of the fifth year after the Hijrah, was the most generous feast the Prophet ﷺ ever gave for any of his wives, a fact recorded in all the books of hadith. Anas ibn Malik was sent out with a guest list, and then told to widen it and widen it again: now call the people of the courtyard, then those in the masjid, then anyone you meet on the road, then anyone at all. There was bread and meat until everyone in Madinah had eaten his fill, the simple staple food of the Prophet's ﷺ own table, for there was no rice in Arabia in those years; rice reached the Companions only after the conquests of Persia and Rome. Anas marveled that the people ate from a single small dish, more than seventy men from it, and when they had finished it held as much as it had at the start.

And it was on that very night that the verses of hijab came down. Before this evening there had been no command of covering as the Shariah would later define it, for the simple reason that the ruling had not yet been revealed; the women of the believers did

not yet cover in the way the law would soon require. It arrived here, tied to this wedding.

O you who have believed, do not enter the houses of the Prophet except when you are permitted for a meal, without awaiting its readiness. But when you are invited, then enter; and when you have eaten, disperse without seeking to remain for conversation. Indeed, that [behavior] was troubling the Prophet, and he is shy of [dismissing] you. But Allah is not shy of the truth. And when you ask [his wives] for something, ask them from behind a partition. That is purer for your hearts and their hearts. And it is not [conceivable or lawful] for you to harm the Messenger of Allah or to marry his wives after him, ever. Indeed, that would be in the sight of Allah an enormity.

QUR'AN 33:53

Do not crowd uninvited into the homes of the Prophet ﷺ, the verse instructs, and do not linger over your conversation after a meal has ended, for it troubles him though he is too gentle to say so; and when you ask his wives for something, ask them from behind a partition, for that is purer for the hearts of everyone. And Zaynab would carry the honor of this night with her for the rest of her life. She would say to the other wives, with the pride a co-wife is allowed, that their families had married them to the Prophet ﷺ, but as for her, Allah had married her to him from above the seven heavens.

The longest hand

Aisha, radiyallahu anha, who of all people had the most reason to see Zaynab as a rival, left us instead some of the highest praise Zaynab ever received. Zaynab, she said, was the only woman who ever truly competed with her for standing in the eyes of the Prophet ﷺ. And yet, during the long ordeal of the slander against

Aisha, when Zaynab was asked about her and could so easily have wounded a rival with a careless word, she answered only: I will protect my hearing and my sight, I know nothing of her but good. Her own sister, out of love for Zaynab, had been among those who let the rumor spread, but Zaynab herself would not touch it; her taqwa, Aisha said, held her back. Years later Aisha would speak about her in a single flowing paragraph preserved in Sahih Muslim: she had never seen a woman more devout in her religion than Zaynab, nor more fearful of Allah, nor more truthful in speech, nor more devoted to her relatives, nor more generous in her charity, nor more tireless in drawing near to Allah, except that she had a temper that flared quickly and just as quickly was gone. Imagine, the Sheikh says, the wife of the Prophet ﷺ saying that of another wife.

She was called the mother of the poor and the mother of the orphans, and she was known among all the wives as the most generous of them. The Prophet ﷺ had once told them, when they fell to debating which of them would be the first to follow him in death, that it would be the one with the longest hand. For years afterward they would line up against a wall and measure their arms one against another, until at last they understood what he had meant: not the longest arm, but the hand that reached furthest in giving. In the time of Umar, when the wives of the Prophet ﷺ were placed in the highest category of the public stipend and the great sum of twelve thousand dirhams was poured out before Zaynab in coins, she sat where she was and sent it away, handful by handful, this much to such a house and this much to another, until not a single coin remained and she had not gone to sleep. Umar heard of it, came to her door himself in wonder, and sent in another thousand; she gave that away too, and prayed that she might not live to see such wealth again, for

money, the Sheikh says, is a trial. She passed away that very year, in the twentieth year after the Hijrah, the first of the Mothers of the Believers to die after the Prophet ﷺ and the first to be buried in that resting place where the others would join her. Umar himself led her funeral prayer. The life the slander wanted to soil was, from its first day to its last, the life of a saint.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to leave this evening as a successful defense, an answer filed away for the next time someone tries to ambush you with half a story. That would be to miss what it actually asks of you. Strip it down past the controversy and three things remain, each one meant to be carried out of the page and into an ordinary life.

The first is that obedience outranks preference. Zaynab did not want Zayd; she had every worldly reason to refuse, and she said so, and so did her brother. And then a verse came down telling her, and telling every believer after her, that once Allah and His Messenger ﷺ have decided a matter, there is simply no choice left to be exercised. Most of us are quick to move on what we want and slow to ask whether the door we are pushing on is one Allah has opened. The same surrender Zaynab was asked for is asked of you, and almost always in the very things you would not have chosen for yourself. The marriage that began in reluctant obedience ended in the highest honor any of the wives received. The order of those two facts is not an accident.

The second is that you are judged by what you do, not by what you feel, and that this truth is the very thing that makes the Prophet ﷺ a Messenger you can follow. The slander wants the story to be about a feeling. The Sheikh, walking patiently through six centuries of his own scholars, shows you that even on the

oldest reading a feeling never acted upon is no sin at all, and that the man in the story did precisely what a believer should: he felt the pull, he turned his face away, he told Zayd to keep his wife, and he stepped nowhere near wrong. We spend so much energy ashamed of what passes through our hearts uninvited. Here is a Messenger of Allah ﷺ telling us, with his own life, that the heart's passing weather is not what we are weighed by; our deeds are. Make him an angel above all feeling and you lose your example. Keep him the most human of teachers and he becomes the proof that a real person, with a real person's inclinations, can live an entire life without once obeying the wrong one.

And the third is the matter the whole evening was built to settle: that the love we owe an orphan is real, and the bloodline we cannot invent for him is also real, and the two are not in conflict. Islam did not come to forbid you from raising a child who is not yours; it came to forbid you from lying about it. Zayd was loved, freed, raised, honored above almost everyone, his name written by Allah into the Qur'an forever. He simply was not turned into something he was not. Love the orphan, the Sheikh teaches through this verse, spend on him, give him your home and your heart, and still leave him his own father's name and his own lineage intact, for the caring is worship and the pretending was the custom Islam came to end. The whole episode, every painful and contested line of it, is Allah breaking that one lie from the very top of the community so that no believer beneath would ever have to carry its weight again.

So take this down into your own days. Surrender, in the things you would not have picked, to what Allah and His Messenger ﷺ have already decided. Stop arraigning yourself for the weather of your heart, and watch instead, with everything you have, what your hands and your tongue actually do. And love the ones in

your care without ever needing to falsify who they are, for that is the dignity Allah Himself descended to defend. May Allah send His peace and His blessings upon His Messenger ﷺ, who feared his Lord above all people, and upon Zaynab the daughter of Jahsh, mother of the believers, whom Allah married to His Prophet from above the seven heavens; and may He let us love him as Aisha and Zaynab loved him, follow him as his Companions followed him, and gather us with him and with the Mothers of the Believers in the gardens He has promised them. Ameen.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 69: the marriage to Zaynab bint Jahsh (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (33:36, 33:37, 33:40, 33:53), verified via quran.ai. Where the books of tafsir carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own chronological weighing of them has been followed.

The Battle of Khaybar, part 2

After the fortress falls, the heart that turns

The walls of Khaybar are the part everyone remembers. The fortresses of the north, the last organized Jewish power that had spent years arming the desert tribes against Madinah, had finally come down, oasis by oasis, until the strongest of them surrendered. It was a victory of the first order, and it ended a long shadow that had hung over the young community. And yet, when you sit with the days that followed, you begin to suspect the seerah is not really asking you to look at the walls at all.

Because what happened after Khaybar fell is where the Prophet ﷺ is laid bare. The army lingered. The fighting was over, the terms were being settled, the road home was long, and into that quiet stretch walked a ship's worth of long-lost family, a daughter of the enemy, a captive woman with every reason in the world to be bitter, and a frightened little girl on a camel. Strip away the siege and what is left is a man, and the man is more astonishing than the conquest. Dr. Yasir Qadhi spends a whole session on this aftermath, and by the end of it you have learned more about who the Prophet ﷺ was than any wall coming down could have taught you.

The cousin who came home from across the sea

On the very day Khaybar was conquered, a part of the Prophet's ﷺ heart that had been missing for more than a decade walked

back into his life. These were the emigrants to Abyssinia, the believers who, in the darkest years of Makkah, had fled across the sea and taken refuge under the Najashi, the just Christian king whose land had sheltered them when their own city would not. At their head was the Prophet's ﷺ own cousin, Ja'far ibn Abi Talib, the brother of Ali, a man the Prophet ﷺ loved and had not laid eyes on in over ten years.

He stood and embraced him. And then he said a sentence the seerah will never quite let you put down. By Allah, he ﷺ said, I do not know which of the two makes me happier today: the conquest of Khaybar, or the coming of Ja'far. Sit with the scale he is using. On one side, a complete military triumph, the end of a strategic threat, an oasis of wealth and farmland falling into the hands of the believers. On the other, a single beloved face he had missed. And the Prophet ﷺ, standing in the flush of one of his great victories, could not say which weighed more. The Sheikh draws the line gently and lets it land: that is how he loved. A returning brother could balance a kingdom. We who lose sleep over our wins might ask how lightly we hold the people who are supposed to matter more than them.

A daughter of Abu Sufyan, alone in a foreign land

With that group from Abyssinia, in all likelihood, came one of the women who would become a wife of the Prophet ﷺ and a mother of the believers: Umm Habibah, the daughter of Abu Sufyan. Her story is one of the hard ones.

She and her husband had accepted Islam early, in the first wave, and had emigrated together to Abyssinia to escape the persecution of Makkah. He was, the Sheikh notes, one of a tiny handful of companions, men you could almost count on the fingers of one hand, who did the unthinkable thing: he

abandoned the faith. In the land of the Christians he turned Christian, and not long after, he died. Umm Habibah was left utterly alone. A believing woman with a young daughter, stranded in a foreign country, no husband, no protector, and a father who was not coming to help, because her father was Abu Sufyan, the chief of the Quraysh, the very man leading the war against Islam. There was, on the face of it, no one in the world to take care of her.

So the Prophet ﷺ sent a proposal of marriage to her across the sea. And here the wisdom unfolds in two directions at once. Who would stand as her guardian, when her father was the enemy and no male relative of faith was near? The answer was the Najashi himself, the Muslim emperor in whose land she sheltered. The leader of the believers became the guardian for the one believer who had none. The king was overjoyed at the honor. He paid her dowry generously from his own wealth, on the Prophet's ﷺ behalf, without even being asked, lavished gifts upon her, and held the wedding feast there in Abyssinia. As for the wisdom of the match itself, the Sheikh says it is plain enough that you need say nothing more: she is the daughter of Abu Sufyan, the chief of Quraysh. There was no bridge to that house worth building more than this one. And so a lonely, abandoned believer, who had every reason to feel forgotten by everyone, was raised by Allah to be a wife of His Messenger ﷺ and a mother of the believers.

The gold of Kinana, and a question the Sheikh refuses to soften. Then comes an incident Dr. Yasir Qadhi will not sand the edges off, because, as he puts it, he is no apologist; he calls a spade a spade.

Part of Khaybar's surrender was a clear bargain. Unlike the tribes Madinah had exiled before them, the people of Khaybar had

asked to stay on their land and work it, handing over half the produce, and the Prophet ﷺ had agreed, on conditions. Chief among them: they would surrender all of their gold, silver, weapons, and armor, and they would hide nothing. Conceal anything, and the treaty was void. But Kinana, one of the chiefs, killed in the fighting, had been a wealthy man, a man known to have possessed treasure chests of gold. And the gold could not be found.

His relative, Sa'yah, was brought and questioned: where is it? It is all gone, he said, spent on the war and the years. The Prophet ﷺ pointed out the plain arithmetic of it: Kinana had left Madinah only recently, and a fortune that size cannot be spent so fast; you are clearly lying. And still the man insisted, and insisted, and insisted. So the Prophet ﷺ handed him over to az-Zubayr and told him to extract the truth, and az-Zubayr did what was necessary, which is to say the man was roughed up, until very shortly he remembered: I think I saw Kinana going toward such and such a valley. They went to that valley, found ground freshly dug and turned over, and there was the buried gold.

This, the Sheikh acknowledges openly, is the moment some today seize on to accuse the Prophet ﷺ of condoning the torture of a prisoner. His answer is not to deny a word of what happened. It is to refuse the anachronism. This was the universal norm of that age, long before any Geneva convention had been imagined, let alone signed; every civilization on earth did this. The man was lying, he knew he was lying, and he knew the consequences. To haul a seventh-century world before a courtroom built in the twentieth, the Sheikh says, is not honesty, it is distortion. The principle he leaves us with is exact and worth keeping: where our law binds us to an accord we have actually entered into, we honor it to the letter; where no such accord ever

existed, the Prophet ﷺ did nothing his entire world did not already do. There is no point, he says, in sugar-coating it. It is what it is.

Safiyyah, conquered and free

Now comes the heart of the day. Safiyyah was the daughter of Huyayy ibn Akhtab, the very chief who had spent years marshalling the Jewish tribes against Madinah, the man whose enmity had helped bring on the Battle of the Trench. She tells her own story, preserved in more than one narration, and it begins when she was a little girl.

She was her father's favorite, she said. Every day he and her uncle would come home from their fields and she would run out to them, laughing, and they would play with her. But one day, when she was around ten, they came home crushed, their shoulders dragging, and they walked straight past her as though she were not there. That was the day the Prophet ﷺ had arrived in Madinah, and they had gone to see him. She crept close and heard her uncle ask her father: is it really him? Yes, by the Lord, he answered, it is him. And what will you do? We will oppose him, said her father, as long as we live.

Years passed. Her tribe was exiled, she grew up, she married. And at Khaybar, where her people fought at the very front of the battle, more enraged than the rest because they had been driven from their homes, her father was killed, and her brother, and her husband. In the space of one twenty-day ordeal she was made an orphan and a widow at once. When the fighting ended and the captives were taken, Safiyyah fell, by the lot, to an ordinary soldier. But many of the companions came to the Prophet ﷺ and said a woman of her standing, the daughter of a chief, should not

be left in the share of one soldier. So he ransomed her, paid her price, and took her himself.

What no one yet knew was what she was to be. Both were lawful: she could be kept as a slave, or freed and married. They watched to see how he ﷺ would treat her, and he showed them without a word. When it was time to leave Khaybar and she had to mount his great camel, he knelt, set one knee on the ground, and lifted the other so that his own thigh became a step for her to climb. And Safiyyah, with the quick dignity that marks her whole story, would not place her foot upon the Prophet ﷺ; she set her knee on his thigh instead and rose to the saddle. Then he took his cloak and covered her with it completely, and by that the companions understood: this is a veil for a wife, not for a slave. She was to be honored.

On their wedding night he said to her something deliberately, calculatedly harsh. Your father, he ﷺ said, was the most relentless of all the Jews in his enmity toward me, until Allah caused his death. It is a cruel thing to say to a new bride, and there was a precise reason for it. He was testing her, the Sheikh explains, watching for any hidden bitterness, any flicker of the desire for revenge, before he kept her, because a wife who carried hatred in her heart could not remain. And Safiyyah answered him with the Qur'an itself. Her father's enmity was her father's, she said, not hers; no soul carries the sin of another.

And no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another. And if a heavily laden soul calls [another] to [carry some of] its load, nothing of it will be carried, even if he should be a close relative. You can only warn those who fear their Lord unseen and have established prayer. And whoever purifies himself only purifies himself for [the benefit of] his soul. And to Allah is the [final] destination.

Then he offered her a choice that sounds, on its surface, almost bitter. Accept Islam, and I shall keep you for myself; or remain in your religion, and perhaps I shall free you and you may return to your people. As she understood it, the choice was between staying a slave with him and walking away a free woman among her own. It was a test, the Sheikh says, sharper than the first. If she were not a true believer, why on earth would she choose to remain, even as a slave, with the man whose army had destroyed her family, when freedom and her own people lay open to her?

She answered that she had already inclined to Islam, and already believed in him, before he ever asked. My father and my brother are no more, she said, and notice her precision, the Sheikh adds, that she does not even mention the husband, passing over the awkward fact of the man also killed in the battle. Allah and His Messenger ﷺ, she said, are more beloved to me than being free and returning to my people. Never, the Sheikh says, in the whole history of humanity, do we find its like. A conqueror takes a woman whose father, brother, husband, and entire tribe his army has destroyed, and in place of hatred, vengeance, the wish to see him dead, she chooses his faith, and chooses to belong to him over going free. What does that show, he asks, and answers it plainly: it shows two things at once, that Safiyyah had a pure heart, and that Islam is true. So the Prophet ﷺ freed her then and there and married her, her freedom itself standing as her dowry.

There was a final detail he noticed only then. On her face was a fresh bruise. Where did this come from, he asked. From my husband, she said, Kinana. She had dreamed, before the battle, that the moon rose out of Madinah and came to rest in her lap, and when she told her husband, he struck her across the face:

do you imagine the king of the Arabs is going to marry you? Allah, it turned out, had been preparing her heart for this all along. When Safiyyah later came to Madinah, the other wives, the Sheikh is honest, rushed to see this beautiful newcomer, and one of them remarked that she feared this one would take their husband's affection. It was Allah, in the end, who had won her, long before the army ever reached Khaybar.

The wife with no clan to defend her

Safiyyah came to Madinah with beauty and dignity but with no family and no faction behind her, and the household of the Prophet ﷺ, the Sheikh reminds us with great honesty, was not free of ordinary human jealousy. The wives had their alliances and their tensions, their two loose camps, and Safiyyah belonged to neither, because she had no one. That very aloneness, it seems, drew the Prophet ﷺ closer to her in sympathy.

Some of the wives looked down on where she came from. She came to him once in tears: they have taunted me, she said, for being a daughter of the Jews. Why did you not defend yourself, he asked, and then he taught her exactly what to say. Tell them, he ﷺ said, that your father is a prophet, Harun, and your uncle is a prophet, Musa, and you are married to a prophet. What do they have over you? Hold that answer up to the light. He does not merely comfort her; he hands her a dignity rooted in the prophets themselves, and turns the very lineage they mocked into her honor.

The Sheikh lingers on the depth of this love, because it shows itself most when she is wronged. Once, before Hajj, Safiyyah's camel fell sick and she had no mount, and the Prophet ﷺ asked another of his wives, who had spare camels and came from a more prestigious family, to lend her one. She refused, with a

sneer at Safiyyah's origins, calling her by the slur again though she was now a Muslim. And the Prophet ﷺ was so displeased that he kept apart from that wife for the length of the journey, until she understood the size of her error, and only afterward, when they returned, did he reconcile with her with a gift. Even the best of households, the Sheikh notes, are not free of these human politics; what matters is whose side the Prophet ﷺ took, and he took the side of the one with no one to defend her.

And then there is the end. When the Prophet ﷺ lay dying, tossing in the agony of his fever, his wives gathered around him, not yet knowing he was about to leave them. It was Safiyyah who broke and cried out: how I wish I could carry your pain in your place. The woman whose father, brother, husband, and whole world his army had taken now wished only to take his suffering onto herself. Some of the other wives, in that moment, exchanged knowing looks, as if to say she did not mean it. And from his sickbed, the Prophet ﷺ told them plainly: she has spoken the truth. Where, the Sheikh asks, does a love like that come from? You would expect such a woman to be a vessel of bitterness and the wish for revenge. Instead, here she is at his deathbed, wailing that she would take his pain if she could. That is what enters a heart when iman enters it. A complete turning, a hundred and eighty degrees, and the seerah offers her to us as living proof of what faith can do to a soul.

The man who would carry his words to us

Khaybar's aftermath also quietly delivered the single most important narrator of hadith in the entire history of Islam.

Abu Hurayrah had come up from Yemen, a man of the tribe of Daws, making his way toward Madinah to find the Prophet ﷺ. When he learned that the Prophet ﷺ was at Khaybar, on the road

north, he turned aside to come to him there, and arrived just after the conquest, in that same wave that brought the emigrants home from Abyssinia. For the Muslims returning from Abyssinia, the Prophet ﷺ granted a share of the spoils. For Abu Hurayrah and his small group, who had fought in nothing, he asked the companions' permission to give them a share too, and they agreed. So a man who never lifted a weapon at Khaybar walked away with a portion of its wealth, and with something incomparably greater.

He would accompany the Prophet ﷺ for only three years, the Sheikh marks the smallness of it, three years and a month, less than almost any famous companion. And yet he would transmit more of the Prophet's ﷺ words than any other human being who ever lived, with no exception at all. Number one, without rival. There is a wisdom in that worth a lecture of its own, the Sheikh says. For now it is enough to notice what the quiet aftermath of a battle had done: it had brought to the Prophet ﷺ the very channel through which an immense portion of his life, his sayings, his guidance, would one day reach the rest of us.

A frightened girl on his camel

One more incident, small and easy to pass over, and yet it may be the truest window of the whole day into the manners of the Prophet ﷺ.

A group of women of the Ansar had volunteered to come along to Khaybar, to tend the wounded, carry water, and help behind the lines. The Prophet ﷺ did not, as a rule, take women into battle, but Khaybar was so clearly going to be a victory, with so little danger, that he allowed them. Among them was a girl of perhaps seven or eight with no mount of her own, and so, on the way out,

the Prophet ﷺ sat her on the baggage behind him, on his own camel.

When they halted and he told her to climb down, she froze, and would not move. She had just had her first menses, there, behind the Prophet ﷺ himself, and she was terrified and ashamed beyond words. Of all the times, of all the places, the Sheikh says, imagine the horror of it for a young girl: where, and behind whom. He told her to come down and she could not. So he looked, and saw the traces of blood on the saddle, and understood at once. Perhaps you are having your cycle, he said gently. She nodded. Do not worry, he told her, go and cleanse yourself, set your clothing right, and then bring some water and salt and wash this from the saddle, and take your place again. No anger. No embarrassment. No making her feel the thing she dreaded. Only calm.

Years later she would say that the only gift the Prophet ﷺ gave to the women on that journey, since there had been no fighting to earn a share of spoils, was a necklace he tied around her neck with his own hand. She wore it for the rest of her life and asked that it be buried with her when she died. This, the Sheikh says, is how the Prophet ﷺ met a moment that most men would have made unbearable for a child: he took the one who was frightened, the one with no power to protect herself from the shame of it, and he made her feel safe.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to file Khaybar under its conquest and move on, the way history files most things, under the thing that was won. The aftermath quietly refuses that. It keeps pulling your eye away from the walls and toward the hearts, and that is the question it puts to us.

He could not choose between a conquest and a cousin's face. Set Ja'far's return on one scale and Khaybar's surrender on the other, and the Prophet ﷺ, in his moment of triumph, found them level. We are the opposite by instinct. Our victories swell to fill the whole sky, and the people we love stand quietly in their shadow, certain they will keep. The Prophet ﷺ held his win lightly and his brother dearly, and the seerah leaves the scale sitting there for us to weigh our own lives against. Ask, honestly, which one of yours would tip.

And then there is Safiyyah, who is really the answer the whole day is built around. She had every earthly reason that a human heart can have to hate. Her father, her brother, her husband, her tribe, her whole world, taken in twenty days by the army of the man she now stood before. By every law of the wounded soul she should have been a sealed vault of vengeance. Instead she answered his hardest test with a verse of the Qur'an, that no bearer of burdens bears the burden of another, and chose his faith over her freedom, and lived and died loving him, and at his deathbed wished only to carry his pain. The Sheikh says it twice, because it is the lesson: this shows a pure heart, and it shows that Islam is true. Most of us carry burdens that were never ours to begin with, the resentments of our families, the bitterness of where we came from, the scores our people kept long before we were born. Safiyyah set hers down. No soul carries the sin of another. You will answer for your own heart, and for nothing that was placed in it by someone else, and you are free, this very day, to put down what was never yours to hold.

Notice, too, where his tenderness landed. Not on the powerful, but on the powerless. The lying chief who knew the consequences of his lie met the hard edge of his age; the world Khaybar belonged to was not gentle, and the Sheikh will not

pretend otherwise. But the lonely widow, the taunted wife with no clan, the frightened child on his camel: to each of them the Prophet ﷺ gave dignity, calm, a defense, a necklace tied with his own hand. The measure of a person, this day teaches, is not how they handle the one who can fight back. It is how they treat the one who cannot. He met the moment each of them dreaded most, and he made the dreading one feel safe.

So carry three things out of the days after Khaybar. Hold your wins loosely enough that a beloved face can outweigh them. Set down the burden you have been carrying that was never yours, the inherited grudge, the family bitterness, the sin of someone who came before you, because no soul bears the burden of another. And in every room where you hold the power and someone else holds none, be the one who makes the frightened feel safe. May Allah fill our hearts with the love Safiyyah had for His Messenger ﷺ, free us of every bitterness we were handed and never chose, let no soul among us be made to carry a burden that is not its own, and gather us with His Prophet ﷺ and all those he loved.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 70: the Battle of Khaybar, part 2 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translation is from Sahih International (35:18), verified via quran.ai. The narration is the Sheikh's; the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

Letters to the Kings

A man from the desert, writing to emperors

Stand back far enough to see the scale of it. Twenty years before this, the man at the center of the story was an orphan from a desert town, a trader with no army, no treasury, no throne, no map of the world beyond the caravan roads his uncles walked. Now he ﷺ sits in Madinah and dictates letters to the two superpowers who, between them, owned the known earth: to Heraclius, the Caesar of Rome, and to Chosroes the Sasanian, emperor of Persia. And not only to them. To the Negus of Abyssinia, to the Muqawqis who governed Egypt, to the Arab princes on the Roman and Persian frontiers, to the chiefs of Oman and a dozen tribes besides. The scholars have counted more than twenty-five such letters in all.

They were not sent in a single morning. Dr. Yasir Qadhi is careful about this: the letters went out at different times, to different men, and the historians simply gathered them into one chapter at roughly this point because it makes sense to read them together. They began around the truce of Hdaybiyyah, perhaps a little before Khaybar, and kept going until the end of his life ﷺ. What binds them is not a date but an ambition no orphan trader has any business holding: the conviction that the whole earth was now his audience.

This is the chapter of the letters. Who answered, who scoffed, who tore the page to pieces and what became of his kingdom.

And at the heart of it, one of the most astonishing scenes in the entire seerah, told not by a believer but by an enemy: Abu Sufyan, dragged before the emperor of Rome and forced, against his own will, to testify.

Aiming at the whole world

The timing tells you everything. The Prophet ﷺ did not write to emperors while Makkah still had a sword at his throat; he waited until Hudaybiyyah had bought peace on the Makkan front, and only then turned outward, all the way outward, not to a rival tribe or a neighboring town but to the men who divided the map between them. And Dr. Yasir Qadhi asks you to notice not only who received a letter but who did not. The Prophet ﷺ wrote to Rome, to Persia, to Abyssinia, to Egypt, to the Arab rulers on the borders. He did not write to China, nor to the heart of Africa, though everyone in Arabia knew those civilizations existed, that beyond Abyssinia lay a whole continent and beyond Persia the lands of the Chinese. Why the silence toward them? Because there was no road of contact, no channel of trade or diplomacy along which a letter could travel and an answer return. This was not the fantasy of a man overreaching. It was a deliberate, pragmatic decision to write to exactly those powers with whom the Arabs already had dealings, and to announce that a new nation had risen, one fit to exchange ambassadors with Caesar and Chosroes. The message of Islam was being declared, on purpose, global. And here is the quiet miracle the Sheikh wants you to hold from the first page: within a single decade of these letters going out, there was not one land he ﷺ wrote to that had not entered the fold of Islam.

Read the letters side by side and a discipline emerges. Each one opens with the same line, Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Raheem, and

then, from Muhammad, the slave and messenger of Allah, to so and so. He names himself and he names his reader. He gives each ruler his proudest title, the great one of Rome, the great one of Persia, never a slight in the address. He states the entire religion in four or five plain sentences: there is one God, worship Him alone. No tangled theology, no display of learning. And then each letter is tailored, with real precision, to the man who will read it, as you are about to see. This is the etiquette of a head of state, and he ﷺ used it deliberately. Told that emperors will not even open a letter unless it is sealed in wax with the sender's own stamp, he had a ring engraved and his letters sealed, adopting the world's diplomacy without hesitation, because there was nothing of his religion in the old way of doing things and nothing forbidden in the new.

The Negus, who only needed a nudge

The first letter, and by far the one that truly landed, went to the Negus of Abyssinia, the just Christian king across the sea who, years earlier, had opened his land to the persecuted Muslims when Makkah hunted them and had refused to hand them back. Negus was his title, the way Caesar was a title; his name was Ashama. The Prophet ﷺ wrote to him about Isa, peace be upon him, summarizing in a few words what a Muslim believes: that he is the messenger of Allah, His spirit, and the pure word cast to Maryam. Then the gentle close: Aslim taslam, accept Islam and you will be safe. And he sealed the letter with the verse of Al Imran, the call to a word held in common, which you will meet again in the letter to Rome.

Say, "O People of the Scripture, come to a word that is equitable between us and you - that we will not worship except Allah and not associate anything with Him and not

take one another as lords instead of Allah." But if they turn away, then say, "Bear witness that we are Muslims [submitting to Him]."

QUR'AN 3:64

Here Dr. Yasir Qadhi clears up a tangle that confuses many readers. People assume the Negus accepted Islam more than a decade earlier, on the day Jafar gave his famous speech in the throne room. But if he had become a Muslim then, why would the Prophet ﷺ be writing now to invite him? The likelier truth is that the Negus had long been sympathetic, leaning toward the faith without ever fully entering it, and this letter was the gentle push that finally brought him in. And notice what is conspicuously absent from his letter. The stern warning that closes the letters to Rome and to Persia, that the sin of your people will be upon you if you refuse, never appears here. The Negus was spared that line entirely. He did not need a threat. He needed only an invitation, and he answered it.

The proof of how much his faith meant arrived at his death, in the ninth year after the hijrah. On the very morning the Negus passed away in Abyssinia, the Prophet ﷺ turned to his Companions in Madinah and told them: your brother has died in the land of Habasha; come, let us pray over him. And they stood and prayed the funeral prayer for a man whose body lay an entire sea away, never washed by their hands, never carried on their shoulders. The Sheikh pauses here, because this is the single clearest instance in the whole seerah of salat al-ghaib, the funeral prayer for the absent, and the foundation of what he considers the soundest position in a long-disputed question of fiqh: that the absent prayer is offered for a believer when no one prayed over him where he died. The Negus had embraced Islam, but his people had not, so there was no one in Abyssinia to pray for their

king, and the Muslims of Madinah prayed for him across the water.

Heraclius interrogates an enemy

The most famous of all these letters went to Caesar, and it is no minor report; it is preserved in both Bukhari and Muslim, agreed upon, of the highest authenticity. The Caesar of that day was Heraclius, who reigned from the year 610 to 641, and both Muslim and non-Muslim historians treat him generously. He was a true warrior and a shrewd politician, and, rare among emperors, a serious student of Christian theology, a man who understood the great controversy that had torn his religion for centuries, the question of who exactly Isa was, and who even tried, and failed, to engineer a compromise creed to reconcile its warring factions. He was no figurehead reciting prayers he did not understand. He knew what belief was, and how to recognize it.

Allah had already written this man's story into the Qur'an before the letter ever reached him. The Romans had been crushed by the Persians, who had swept through Iraq and Syria and taken Damascus, and even Jerusalem itself, so that for a span of years it was the Persians, not the Romans, who held the holy city. It looked like the end of Rome. And then the revelation came down.

Alif, Lam, Meem. The Byzantines have been defeated In the nearest land. But they, after their defeat, will overcome Within three to nine years. To Allah belongs the command [i.e., decree] before and after. And that day the believers will rejoice In the victory of Allah. He gives victory to whom He wills, and He is the Exalted in Might, the Merciful.

QUR'AN 30:1-5

The verse fell while Rome was on its knees, and then, exactly as promised, Heraclius accomplished a brave regrouping of his shattered armies, launched a counteroffensive, and by the year 628 had driven all the way to the gates of the Persian capital. All of it unfolded while the Prophet ﷺ was alive to watch the prophecy come true to the letter.

The letter to Heraclius traveled through the governor of Bosra, the small Arab town with Roman culture south of Damascus where the Makkan caravans traded, and it happened to find the emperor in Jerusalem. Whether the Prophet ﷺ knew Caesar would be there, the Sheikh says, we cannot tell; most likely it was simply the way Allah arranged it. And here the narration passes, astonishingly, into the mouth of an enemy. Abu Sufyan, still a pagan, still the chief of Makkah's opposition, happened to be trading in Syria when a crier summoned his party to the emperor's court. He did not understand why, until he found himself, a son of Quraysh, standing in the palace of Caesar before the emperor of Rome and all his dignitaries, the Arab translator at the ready.

Watch the emperor's tactic, because the Sheikh calls it the move of a genuinely intelligent ruler. Heraclius knew these Arabs were enemies of the man claiming prophethood, knew they would happily slander him. So how do you extract the truth from a hostile witness? You set him against his own companions. Heraclius asked which of them was the closest in blood to this man, and the answer was Abu Sufyan, a distant cousin, the nearest relation in the room. Sit him in front, the emperor ordered, and the rest behind him where he cannot see their faces, and he told the men at the back: if he lies to me, signal it. Abu Sufyan understood at once that any one of them would gladly catch him out for the prize and the honor of it, and he confessed afterward

that the only thing that kept him from lying about the Prophet ﷺ was the certainty that his own companions would expose him on the spot.

So the truth came out, one question at a time. Is he of noble family? Yes. Did anyone claim prophethood before him? No. Were his ancestors kings? No. Do the powerful follow him, or the weak? The weak, and they keep increasing. Does anyone abandon his religion once they enter it? No, not one. Have you known him to lie, or to break a promise, or to betray? No; we have a treaty with him now whose end we cannot foresee, the one thing Abu Sufyan could squeeze in. And what does he command? To worship Allah alone and abandon what our forefathers worshipped, and to pray, to speak the truth, to be chaste, and to keep the ties of kinship.

How could a man honest about gold lie about God

Then Heraclius did something extraordinary. He read every answer back, and out of an enemy's grudging testimony he reconstructed, point by point, a prophet. Dr. Yasir Qadhi walks through the emperor's reasoning, because it is a masterclass in how the truth defends itself.

His noble family, Heraclius said, is how every prophet of God comes, from a noble house among his people. That no one claimed prophethood before him means this is no fashion he is merely copying. That no kings stood in his lineage means this is no scheme to win back a lost throne. That the poor and the weak follow him first is the mark of every prophet, for the powerful have the most to lose from the truth and are the last to bow to it. That his followers grow and never leave is the mark of true belief, that once it settles in a heart it never departs.

And then the line the Sheikh lingers over, the hinge of the whole scene. You have told me, Heraclius said, that this man never once lied to you about gold and silver, never cheated you in a matter of money. So tell me: how could a man who would not lie to you over a coin turn around and invent the single greatest lie of all, a lie against God Himself? It does not add up. Sit with the strangeness of it. A pagan enemy is being handed the very logic of belief by a Christian emperor in a Roman court, and the proof is the Prophet's ﷺ own honesty, the honesty Makkah itself had testified to for forty years before they ever called him a liar.

Then Heraclius said it plainly. If what you say is true, this man will one day rule the very ground beneath my feet. We knew from our scriptures that a prophet was coming, but we did not expect him from among you Arabs; we looked for him elsewhere. And were I able to reach him, I would wash his feet with my own hands. Only now, after he had built the man in his mind from an enemy's words, did Heraclius call for the letter to be opened. It was short, like all the rest: from Muhammad, the slave and messenger of Allah, to Heraclius, the great one of Rome. Accept Islam and you will be safe; accept Islam, and Allah will grant you your reward twice over; but if you turn away, then the sin of the common people will be upon you. And then, once more, the verse of Al Imran.

The court erupted in uproar, and Abu Sufyan's party was rushed out. As they left, he muttered to his companions that the affair of this man had grown so great that even the emperor of Rome now stood in fear of him. That moment, Abu Sufyan would confess long afterward, was the first time Islam ever entered his heart, though he would not embrace it openly until the conquest of Makkah years later, and even then, the Sheikh notes without any disrespect, with some reluctance. As Allah Himself distinguishes

them, those who came to faith late, after the victory was assured, are not in the same rank as those who came early, when it cost everything.

The spy from Tanukh, and an emperor who counted the cost

There is a sequel that Bukhari does not narrate but that the Musnad of Imam Ahmad preserves, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi insists you need it, because without it the rest of the Bukhari account makes no sense. Heraclius wrote back to Madinah, but the letter was a cover. What he truly sent was a spy: a Christian Arab he trusted from the tribe of Tanukh, whose name the histories never preserved, so the report is known simply as the hadith of the Tanukhi. The emperor gave him three things to verify. Does this man mention the letters he has sent to the kings of the earth? Does his speech somehow turn on the word night? And is there a strange mark upon his back, between his shoulders?

The man from Tanukh arrived, and the Prophet ﷺ, without so much as opening the emperor's letter, told him: I sent my letter to Chosroes, and he tore it, so Allah will tear his kingdom; and I sent my letter to Caesar, and he preserved it, so Allah will preserve his kingdom. The first sign, delivered before any question was asked. Then the letter was read aloud, and inside was a riddle: your scripture describes a Paradise as vast as the heavens and the earth; if that is so, then where is the Fire? And the Prophet ﷺ answered with a question of his own: where does the night go when the day comes upon it? The second sign, the word night placed exactly where the emperor had said to listen for it. The spy lingered for days, failing to glimpse the Prophet's ﷺ back beneath his garment, until at the moment of his departure the Prophet ﷺ turned, lowered his shirt, and let him see the seal of

prophethood between his shoulders. Three signs sought, three confirmed, and the Tanukhi carried them home.

Only now does the second Bukhari scene make sense, the one readers so often mistake for the first. This is not the day of Abu Sufyan; it is a year or more later, after the spy's report has come back. Behind closed doors Heraclius gathered his senators and floated the question aloud: what would you say if I were to follow this messenger and enter his religion? The room bolted for the doors in fury; the empire was the very bastion of Christianity, and there would be no emperor who left the faith of Jesus. Seeing the danger, Heraclius laughed it off at once, told them he had only been testing their loyalty, and remained a Christian to the end of his days. He had seen the truth as clearly as a man can see it, weighed it against his crown, and kept the crown. And his own prediction came due faster than he can have imagined: within seven years of his standing in Jerusalem, Damascus and Syria and Palestine were carved away from his empire by, as the Sheikh puts it, a band of Bedouins out of the desert.

Chosroes tears the letter

Rome preserved the letter. Persia did the opposite, and the contrast is the spine of this chapter. The emperor of Persia was Chosroes, known across our cultures by his title Parvez, the last of the truly great Sasanian kings, painted by Muslim and non-Muslim historians alike as cruel and given to every excess. The Prophet ﷺ sent his letter through the governor of Bahrain: from Muhammad the messenger of Allah to Chosroes, the great one of Persia. Peace upon whoever follows the guidance. Accept Islam and be safe; and if you refuse, then the sin of the Magians is upon you. There was no verse of Al Imran in this letter, the Sheikh points out, and the omission is itself a lesson: that verse calls to

the People of the Scripture, and Chosroes the fire-worshipper was no person of the Book.

The emperor was insulted to his core that a preacher from the deserts of Arabia would address him as though they were equals. He scoffed, and he tore the letter to shreds in the messenger's face. When word of it reached Madinah, the Prophet ﷺ said: he has torn my letter; may Allah tear his kingdom to shreds, every last shred of it. And so it unfolded. Chosroes, in his arrogance, ordered his governor in the Yemen to fetch this man from Madinah by force, as though two envoys could drag back the Prophet ﷺ whom all of Quraysh in their full strength had failed to stop. But before the order could be carried out, his own son rose against him in a palace coup, threw him into a dungeon, and starved him to death over days. When the two envoys finally stood before the Prophet ﷺ, he refused even to take the letter the first day, and then told them: go back to your master and tell him that my Lord has killed his lord, Chosroes, this very day. They returned to Persia to discover it had happened exactly so.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi stops hard on the dates here, and the point is sharp enough to draw blood. The Western records fix the death of Chosroes to late February of the year 628, and that lands precisely on the month in which the seerah places this conversation in Madinah. You cannot, the Sheikh argues against those who would dismiss such reports, fabricate a seam that fine: a prediction spoken in Madinah, matched to an emperor's death in Persia, down to the very season. And the larger collapse was just as exact. Within nine years the entire Sasanian empire, the very civilization that had so nearly erased Rome from the earth, imploded so completely that the sacred fires of Zoroaster went cold in the land of Zoroaster itself, and Persia became Muslim.

The governor in the Yemen and his two envoys embraced Islam, and great numbers of their region with them.

Egypt, and a verse for the rest

The next batch of letters went out across the map. To the Muqawqis, the title of the ruler of Egypt, the Prophet ﷺ wrote a letter whose exact text the histories do not soundly preserve, but whose reply they remember well. The Muqawqis was courteous; he declined the faith, but sent gifts in return, among them the mule Duldul and the maidservant Mariyah, who would become the mother of the Prophet's ﷺ infant son Ibrahim. Of this ruler the Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said that the man had safeguarded his kingdom for a time by his courtesy, but that Allah would not let it endure. Letters went also to the rulers of Oman, who accepted, and to a long list of Arab chiefs; the scholars count more than twenty in all.

One of those letters carried a lesson worth more than its brevity suggests. It went to the tribe of Banu Hanifa, and among them to a man named Musaylimah, who would soon make his name infamous as the false prophet. Banu Hanifa sent back not a refusal but a bargain: we will accept Islam, they said, if you share your authority with us, if you give us a portion of the rule. The Prophet ﷺ answered with the Qur'an, the very words Allah had given to Musa before him.

Said Moses to his people, "Seek help through Allah and be patient. Indeed, the earth belongs to Allah. He causes to inherit it whom He wills of His servants. And the [best] outcome is for the righteous."

QUR'AN 7:128

The kingdom of God is not a seat to be split in a negotiation. You know, the Sheikh reminds you, what became of Musaylimah after that.

And here Dr. Yasir Qadhi offers the reading that is most distinctly his own, and the one he finds strongest. Each letter to Rome and to Persia warned its emperor that he would carry the sin of his people, and in the letter to Caesar that burden was named with a single word that has puzzled the scholars for fourteen centuries: al-Arisiyyin. It is not an Arabic word at all, and the classical commentators on Bukhari struggled with it, most guessing that it meant the common peasants. But the Sheikh follows the great Indian scholar Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, who read it as the followers of Arius, the early Christian theologian who died around the year 336. Arius had taught a doctrine of Isa, peace be upon him, that, while not Islam, ran closer to its truth than any other Christian sect, denying his divinity; and for that his teaching was condemned and very nearly erased at the Council of Nicaea three centuries before the Prophet ﷺ was born, his books ordered burned until almost nothing of his own words survived. Two things make this reading compelling. First, al-Arisiyyin is precisely how Arabic would render the followers of Arius, and not at all how it would name peasants. And second, the parallel with Persia: there the burden was the sin of the Magians, a specific community, so the matching word to Caesar should name a specific community too, not a vague mass of commoners. If Nadwi is right, then the Prophet ﷺ, sitting in a desert where no living Arab had ever heard of Arius or his quarrel with Nicaea, was telling the emperor of Rome: there is a people among your Christians already primed to believe; block my message from reaching them, and their loss is on your account. It is a quiet

proof of how far the awareness of this unlettered man ﷺ reached beyond the sands that raised him.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read the chapter of the letters as a stately diplomatic interlude between the battles, a list of envoys and replies, and move on. That would be to miss what it puts to us. Strip away the thrones and the seals, and four things in it are still asking something of your own life.

He thought in decades, not in days. Almost none of these letters produced an immediate result; only the Negus answered with his own faith, and even his people did not follow him in his lifetime. By every measure a politician would use, the campaign of the letters failed in the short term. And yet within ten years every single land he ﷺ addressed had come home to Islam. He was planting for a harvest he would not gather in person. We want our good deeds to bear fruit by the end of the week, and we abandon what does not. Aim far, and do not measure the seed by tomorrow's ground.

He spoke to every man in his own register, and honored each one with his best name. The letter to the Christian kings carried a verse about the People of the Scripture; the letter to the fire-worshipping emperor did not, because that verse would have meant nothing to him. He addressed Caesar as the great one of Rome and Chosroes as the great one of Persia, granting his enemies their proudest titles even as he called them to surrender their gods. And told that kings expect a sealed letter, he had a ring made and sealed his, without the faintest fear that courtesy might compromise his faith. Meeting people where they stand, in their own idiom and with their dignity intact, is not weakness; it is

the manner of a prophet, and much of what we defend as religion was only ever custom.

He kept the message short, and clean, and unafraid. One paragraph. One God, worship Him alone. No tangled theology, no hedging, no padding to seem learned. The strongest invitation is almost always the simplest one, opened with the name of Allah and addressed plainly from you to them. We complicate the call until it is heavy enough to carry no one; he made it light enough that an emperor could read it in a breath and never forget it.

And at the center of it all stands the scene the Sheikh returns to, the one that should stay with you longest, because it is not a believer who delivers it. It is the truth defending itself through the mouth of an enemy. Abu Sufyan, who wanted nothing more than to slander the Prophet ﷺ before Caesar, could not, because his own honesty had a witness at his back; and from his grudging answers a Christian emperor assembled the proof of prophethood: a man who would not lie to you about a coin of silver will not invent a lie against God. This is what your own integrity is worth. When you are truthful in the small and unwatched matters of gold and silver, you become a witness for your own faith without saying a word, so that even those who stand against you are forced, in the end, to testify on your behalf. And yet Heraclius saw all of this, weighed it honestly, and still chose his crown over the truth he had just proven to himself. The whole of his tragedy was that he knew, and would not follow; for it is not enough to recognize the truth.

So carry one thing from the chapter of the letters down into an ordinary week. Plant something whose harvest you may never live to see, and trust Allah with the season of it. Speak to people gently, in their own words, by their best names. And guard your

honesty in the smallest matters of money and speech, until your life itself becomes the letter, sealed and unmistakable, that invites others to the truth. May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, who sat in a desert town and wrote to the masters of the earth as one certain that his Lord owned every throne among them, carry His word to the furthest ends of the earth in our own time as it reached the kings of his, and make each of us, in the small and unwatched corners of our lives, a witness He is pleased to accept.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 71: the letters to the various rulers (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (3:64, 30:1-5, 7:128), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

Umrah al-Qada

The promise of Hdaybiyyah, kept

A year before this month, the Muslims had set out for Makkah dressed for worship and been turned back at the edge of the sanctuary, never reaching the Ka'bah at all. The treaty they signed there at Hdaybiyyah, the one so many of them wept over because it read to them like a defeat, carried inside it a single quiet promise: not this year, but next, you may come, and the city will be yours for three days. This is the year the promise comes due, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi opens the story by counting umrahs in a way that turns the whole episode on its head before it has even begun.

They call it Umrah al-Qada, the umrah of making up. Qada means to make good a thing you owed, and on the surface this is the make-up for the umrah they were not permitted to complete. But notice what the Sheikh insists you not miss. In the ledger of Allah, that first umrah was never lost. At Hdaybiyyah the Prophet ﷺ and his companions had shaved their heads, slaughtered their animals, and been given the full reward of the umrah even though they never performed a single circuit of the Ka'bah. So when you are asked one day how many umrahs the Prophet ﷺ performed and you begin to count, you begin, strangely, with Hdaybiyyah, the one he did not actually do, because Allah counted it for him. Which means this one is in fact the first umrah he physically completed, and yet the second he was rewarded for: not a debt

being collected, but a mercy handed back, twice over, to people who had once thought they were going home empty.

Two thousand, and this time armed

In the month of Dhul-Qadah, in the seventh year after the Hijrah, the Prophet ﷺ left Madinah for Makkah at the head of around two thousand Muslims. Set that beside the year before, when fourteen hundred had gone unarmed and been stopped on the road, and you feel the ground shifting. And this time they did not go empty-handed: they brought everything an army carries, horses, bows, armor, the full apparatus of war. Not to break the treaty. To be ready in case the Quraysh broke it first.

Word raced ahead to Makkah that two thousand armed Muslims were on the approach, and the Quraysh sent out a delegation to meet them, led by Mikraz ibn Hafs, the same envoy who had negotiated at Hudaibiyyah the year before. He came uneasy, and what he said is a confession dressed as a complaint. We have never once known you to be treacherous, he told the Prophet ﷺ, in anything small or great. So what is this? We agreed you would enter with nothing but sheathed swords, the bare minimum a traveler carries, and here you come with horses and bows and arrows and armor.

The answer was exact, a small masterclass in keeping a contract to the letter without surrendering your wits. We shall not enter Makkah, the Prophet ﷺ said, except as we agreed. We are not in Makkah yet. He had brought the weapons the whole way to the boundary of the haram, and there he halted them. He left the full arsenal outside the sacred precinct, posted two hundred men to guard the cache, and entered carrying only swords in their scabbards, exactly as the treaty stipulated. Then, so that no man would be cheated of the umrah, the guard was rotated: the

eighteen hundred performed their tawaf while two hundred watched the weapons, and afterward they swapped. The Sheikh lingers on the double truth of it. The Prophet ﷺ did not trust the Quraysh, not after all they had done, so he kept his weapons within arm's reach. And he honored every word of his agreement, so he left those weapons at the line. Faithful to the contract, never naive about the people on the other side of it. Both at once, and the both-at-once is the lesson.

A city that locked its doors

When the Muslims came in, Makkah split three ways. Some families bolted themselves inside their houses for all three days. Another group gathered in Dar an-Nadwah, the assembly hall that doubled as their parliament, the largest house in the city, and shut the door behind them. And some left Makkah altogether, climbing out into the surrounding valleys and hills to camp until the visitors were gone. The reasons were a mix the Sheikh names plainly: partly politics, partly raw fear. Not one of them wanted to be in the city for this. They watched from behind doors and over ridgelines, waiting for it to be over.

And from inside that locked assembly hall, a rumor went out ahead of the Muslims to do its work on the crowd. The bulk of the Quraysh, the women, the elderly, all those who had not gone out to war, had not laid eyes on their emigrant sons and brothers and cousins in six and a half years, and in a society where family lived knotted together that is an ache. Someone decided to poison the reunion before it could happen. Madinah has ruined them, the whisper ran; its climate and its standing water and the diseases that come with them have left them thin and emaciated, weaklings now. And there was a real wound buried in the lie, which is why it could travel. When the companions first

emigrated, the climate of Madinah, so unlike the dry sparse air of Makkah, had made them violently sick. Abu Bakr fell ill and thought he was dying. Bilal lay burning with fever, reciting poetry about how beautiful Makkah had been. The Prophet ﷺ had prayed, and Allah lifted the sickness of Madinah and cast it to an uninhabited place. The rumor took that true memory of a hard arrival and twisted it into a present lie: your emigrants have come home broken men.

When the Prophet ﷺ heard the rumor, he answered it, and his answer was not a word. It was a body, two thousand bodies, moving in front of the people who had told the lie. He commanded the companions three things at once. Raise your voices with the talbiyah, out loud, so the whole city hears it ring. Bare your right shoulders. And for the first three circuits of the tawaf, move with ramal, a brisk, near-running stride, as fast as a man can go without quite breaking into a sprint.

Picture the scene the Quraysh saw. Two thousand men in ihram, right shoulders bared, almost jogging around the Ka'bah, the talbiyah rolling off them in a single roar that filled the valley. From their rooftops and their hilltops the Quraysh watched, and the verdict came back from their own mouths: by God, there is nothing wrong with these people. We have never seen them stronger. And the Sheikh stops here to point out how much of what we still do was born in that single hour as an answer to a slander. The bared right shoulder and the quickened pace of the first three circuits, kept by every pilgrim to this day, were instituted right there, to refute a lie about a feeble ummah. So too the talbiyah: the Quraysh had one laced with shirk, claiming Allah had a partner who was His own, and the Muslims cut it clean at the truth, here am I, O Allah, here am I, You have no partner, and there they stop. That pure declaration of tawhid was now being

broadcast at full voice over the heads of the very men who had driven its reciters out of the city.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi will not let this pass as mere spectacle, because it matters far beyond that day. This is image. This is, in his exact word for it, legitimate PR, and it is a standard thread of the seerah, not a departure from it. He gathers the parallels. This is the same Prophet ﷺ who at Uhud watched Abu Dujanah strut between the lines in his red turban and said of a gait that would otherwise look like pure arrogance, this is a walk Allah hates, except in a place like this. The same Prophet ﷺ who at Hudaibiyyah, learning that the envoy came from a tribe that revered the sacrificial camels, had the camels paraded before the man so he would see them garlanded and marked. The same Prophet ﷺ who now shows a watching Makkah, by the bared shoulder and the running feet, that his ummah is anything but broken. The lesson he draws is aimed straight at us. When people say Islam is violent, or harsh, or cruel, our task is to correct the picture they were handed, to show the accusation was false to begin with. And he draws the boundary as sharply as the permission. You do not soften the deen to please the audience; if a man objects to something Islam actually commands, you do not bend the religion to win him. You correct false charges; you do not negotiate away true ones. Guard the theology and the ethics untouched, and answer every lie told about them with the truth, in strength and dignity.

Home, after six and a half years

The books of seerah say almost nothing about those three days inside Makkah, and the Sheikh reads the silence the way a scholar should: nothing strange happened, or it would have been recorded. The Prophet ﷺ stayed, he prayed, and we can assume

he led the companions in the five prayers before the Ka'bah while the Quraysh kept their distance and kept their word. Three quiet, peaceful days. But under that silence the Sheikh asks you to feel for something the records never thought to capture.

This was the city of his whole life. Fifty-three years of it. He ﷺ was walking past the house of Khadijah, past the corners where he had grown from an orphan boy into a man, past every street that carried a memory, the city of his mother and his father and his grandfather, the city of Abu Talib, the city of everyone he had loved and buried. Think, the Sheikh says, of how it feels simply to return to a house you have not lived in for years, how forgotten memories come flooding back the moment you cross the threshold. Now take that ordinary ache and multiply it by an entire lifetime, and by a forced exile under threat of death, and by the grave of the first woman who ever believed in him. We are not told what he felt. We are left only to imagine it, and the imagining, the Sheikh suggests, is its own quiet kind of worship, the heart leaning toward his heart across the centuries.

The marriage to Maymunah

On the way out, his uncle al-Abbas, radiyallahu anhu, made a suggestion that would close a chapter of the Prophet's ﷺ life: marry Maymunah. She was a widow now, a believing woman with no husband and no protector in a city of disbelievers she did not wish to remain among. And she was family by marriage: al-Abbas's wife, Umm al-Fadl, was her sister. Maymunah had asked her sister to find her a husband; the family turned to al-Abbas; and al-Abbas, now her guardian, brought the proposal to the Prophet ﷺ, praising her warmly. He knew her from the old Makkan days, and he agreed. So Maymunah became his wife.

She would be the last woman the Prophet ﷺ ever married, and, decades on, the last of the Mothers of the Believers to pass away, dying in the year sixty-one of the Hijrah. And there is a small aching symmetry the Sheikh pauses over. The marriage was settled at a place called Sarif, just outside Makkah, where the caravan would camp on the way home. Many years later, an old woman now, returning toward Makkah to perform an umrah of her own, Maymunah died at that very same Sarif, and was buried there, where she lies to this day. She married at Sarif and she was laid to rest at Sarif, a whole lifetime folded between the two.

Here Dr. Yasir Qadhi handles a famous knot of fiqh with care, because it has been misread for centuries and it touches the honor of a great companion. The Prophet's ﷺ cousin Ibn Abbas reported that the marriage contract was concluded while the Prophet ﷺ was in the state of ihram. The report is authentic, which is precisely why it stirred such a long debate, since by the law one does not contract a marriage while in ihram. But the cleanest resolution comes from the one person who would know this marriage best, the bride herself: Maymunah said plainly that he ﷺ had already exited ihram when he married her, that he was in the state of hil on the day of the contract. The Sheikh's verdict is gentle and firm at once. This was simply an honest mistake on Ibn Abbas's part, corrected by Maymunah, and there is no shame whatsoever in saying so. A companion is not infallible in his reports; only the Prophet ﷺ is protected from error. To note that one narration was mistaken, and to follow the better-placed witness, is not to diminish Ibn Abbas in the slightest; it is simply how the truth is established. The consummation, in any case, came only later, at Sarif, by everyone's account.

A feast they would not stay for

On the third day the Quraysh came with a single message: the time is up. And the Prophet ﷺ, who did not want to leave, tried to renegotiate. Would it really harm you, he asked them, if I stayed among you a little longer? I have just married. Let me be a groom in your city, and let us lay out a great feast tomorrow, and you come and eat with me. He was offering the people who had exiled him a wedding celebration, using his own marriage to win a few more days in the city that held his heart. The Quraysh would not bend. We have no need of your food, they said, with an edge the Sheikh notes was frankly a little rude. Three days are up. Peace be upon you, now go. So he honored the treaty and left without incident, completing the marriage only afterward, at Sarif.

But the Sheikh draws out the thing the Prophet ﷺ was reaching for in that offer, because it is the heart of who this man was. These were the same people who had besieged Madinah at the Trench, who had done every single thing they had done across twenty years. And now, for the first time, the upper hand was unmistakably his, and his instinct in that position of strength was not to crush them. It was to feed them. He used his own wedding as dawah: let me throw you a party, break bread at my table. Because, the Sheikh says, when you sit and eat with someone, hatred loosens its grip and anger settles. The Prophet ﷺ no longer needed to stand on the defensive; he could afford, at last, to be generous, and generosity here was not softness but strategy, the strategy of the strong. The Quraysh were too hard of heart to take the offered hand, and the Sheikh suspects their leaders knew why they refused: they could not risk their people feeling something warm toward the Muslims, the boycott of the heart dissolving over a shared meal. But the hand was extended all the same. And the Sheikh ties it without a seam to our own

lives: this is who we are, a people who will sit and eat even with those who oppose us, hoping a hard heart might soften over food.

The orphan everyone wanted

As the caravan filed out of Makkah, a small girl, six or seven years old, came running after them, calling out: O my uncle, O my uncle, do not leave me here, take me with you. She had been living in Makkah with extended family since her father's death, and now she ran from them toward the departing Muslims, a child somehow choosing this caravan over the only relatives she knew. She was Umayrah, the daughter of Hamza, the Prophet's ﷺ uncle and the martyr of Uhud. Her mother was the sister of the famous companion Asma bint Umays, and the threads of kinship run so thick through this small society that, as the Sheikh notes, by his new marriage to Maymunah the Prophet ﷺ had even become a kind of uncle to the running girl. Everyone in Makkah, in the end, was related to everyone.

Ali ibn Abi Talib, radiyallahu anhu, took her by the hand and gave her to his wife Fatimah to raise. And then it became a happy quarrel among the greatest men of the ummah. Zayd ibn Harithah stepped forward to claim her: the Prophet ﷺ made me the brother of Hamza when we paired the emigrants and the helpers, so his daughter is my charge. Ja'far ibn Abi Talib stepped forward too: she is my cousin, Hamza is my uncle, and more than that, my wife Asma is the girl's maternal aunt. Three of the noblest men alive, each pressing his right to take in one small orphan girl, each insisting that he, above the others, was the one most fit to care for her.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi will not let you walk past this, because it is one of the quiet revolutions of the whole seerah. Fifteen years earlier, he

says, no one would have fought for this child. A girl, and an orphan, in the Makkah that buried infant daughters in the sand, she would have been fortunate merely to be kept alive. And now three of the finest men in the world are competing for the honor of raising her, each marshaling his merits, each certain he has the most right. That is what Islam did to the worth of a girl in a single generation. Measure a faith by what it does for the smallest, most forgettable person in the room, and watch what this one did. The Prophet ﷺ settled it with exquisite tenderness, raising each man up before he chose, so not one of them would walk away feeling cast aside. To Ali: you are from me and I am from you. To Zayd: you are our brother and our freed servant and our trusted one. To Ja'far: you resemble me most, in your features and in your manners. Only after lifting all three did he give the verdict, awarding the girl to Ja'far on a principle that passed into the law of Islam: the maternal aunt holds the place of the mother. Ja'far's wife was the girl's aunt, and so she would be raised as near to a mother as she could come.

The last to come before the door opened

This was, the Sheikh says, the final psychological blow. The Conquest of Makkah was now just around the corner, and the proof of how completely the tide had turned lies in what happened in the very months after Umrah al-Qada: three of the most important men in all of Makkah crossed over to Islam, and the Sheikh insists you read it as no coincidence. They had seen the two thousand with their own eyes, heard the talbiyah of tawhid roll over their rooftops, and understood that the contest was effectively decided.

Amr ibn al-As came first, by one of the strangest roads in the entire seerah. The brilliant diplomat of the Quraysh decided after

the Trench that Makkah's fall was only a matter of time, and resolved to wait it out under the Negus rather than ever live under Muhammad ﷺ. He sailed to Abyssinia, and there, in the king's court, he asked leave to kill an envoy the Prophet ﷺ had sent. The Negus struck his own nose in fury and revealed the thing Amr had never suspected: that he, the emperor who was supposed to be Amr's refuge from this Prophet, was himself a secret believer. Follow this man, the Negus told him, for by God he is upon the truth, and he will be victorious over his enemies as Moses was victorious over Pharaoh. And the Sheikh marks the marvel of it: this is the one recorded case of a tabi'i, one who lived in the Prophet's ﷺ time but never saw him, giving dawah to a man who would become a companion. Amr embraced Islam there in the court, overwhelmed that the truth had run ahead of him to the ends of the earth and was waiting when he arrived. He told no one, made his excuses, and turned back toward Makkah.

On that desert road he met two other men with their bags packed and their faces set the same direction, and the meeting sealed the most consequential conversion of the three. Khalid ibn al-Walid was the finest soldier the Quraysh had ever produced, the son of al-Walid ibn al-Mughirah, chief of the Banu Makhzum: the proud poet the Quraysh once sent to pronounce a verdict on the new revelation, who instead retreated into his house to scheme against it, and whom the Qur'an itself exposed:

*Leave Me with the one I created alone And to whom I
granted extensive wealth And children present [with him]*

QUR'AN 74:11-13

The father had plotted in the dark, and his Lord had answered the plotting:

Indeed, he thought and deliberated. So may he be destroyed [for] how he deliberated.

QUR'AN 74:18-19

That was the line al-Walid was born into. But the son took a different road. Khalid told his own conversion in the first person for the rest of his life: when Allah desired good for me, he said, He cast the love of Islam into my heart. He had fought in every battle against the Prophet ﷺ and sensed, every single time, that he was being turned back, that something beyond his strength stood in his way. He had broken the Muslim line at Uhud; he had been sent to intercept the Prophet ﷺ on the road to Hudaibiyyah and been quietly outmaneuvered, a sign, the Sheikh notes, that the better commander was the one with Allah in his sight. After Hudaibiyyah it became plain to him that this man would prevail, and he asked himself where he could possibly go. Then came Umrah al-Qada, and a letter from his own brother al-Walid ibn al-Walid, already a Muslim, carrying the news that the Prophet ﷺ had asked after Khalid by name, had said a man of his caliber should not be kept from Islam, and wished him among the believers. It has become as clear as daylight, Khalid said at last; how long will we keep denying him? He set out for Madinah, and on the road he found Amr, and with them came the third: Uthman ibn Talha, of the clan that held the very keys of the Ka'bah.

The three of them walked into Madinah together, and the Sheikh asks you to see them as a single sign written by the hand of Allah: the custodian of the sacred house, the master strategist, and the master statesman, the religious, military, and political leadership of the Quraysh, all surrendering at once. Read that as decree, he says, not as chance. When Amr came to give his pledge, he held back the Prophet's ﷺ hand and made a

condition first: that all his past sins be forgiven, that he begin with a clean slate. And the Prophet ﷺ told him the threefold mercy that is the born Muslim's hope as much as the convert's: do you not know, O Amr, that Islam erases what came before it, that the Hijrah erases what came before it, and that the Hajj erases what came before it? They had come in late, after years on the other side. But Allah had already drawn, in His Book, the very line that made room for them, distinguishing those who gave and fought before the conquest from those who came after, and then, in the same breath, promising the best of rewards to both:

And why do you not spend in the cause of Allah while to Allah belongs the heritage of the heavens and the earth? Not equal among you are those who spent before the conquest [of Makkah] and fought [and those who did so after it]. Those are greater in degree than they who spent afterwards and fought. But to all Allah has promised the best [reward]. And Allah, of what you do, is Aware.

QUR'AN 57:10

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read Umrah al-Qada as a victory lap, a triumphant little episode tucked safely between Khaybar and the Conquest, and move on. That would be to miss what it is really teaching: how to carry strength once you finally have it, and how long a promise from Allah can take to ripen without ever spoiling.

Begin with the weapons left at the line. The Prophet ﷺ trusted his Lord completely and did not for one moment trust the Quraysh, holding both truths in the same hands, carrying the full arsenal to the boundary of the haram and then leaving it there. We tend to collapse into one error or the other: a naive trust that calls all caution a failure of faith, or an anxious caution that

leaves no room for trust at all. His way was to tie the camel and rely on Allah, to keep every weapon ready and to honor every word of the agreement, and the both-at-once is the discipline most of us never quite learn. Faithful to the letter, never naive about the people. That is the sunnah of the strong believer.

Then there is the bared shoulder and the running tawaf. A lie had been told about the believers, that they were weak and broken, and the Prophet ﷺ answered it not by arguing but by demonstrating, correcting the false picture without altering a single thing about the religion itself. This is the narrow path we walk when our faith is slandered. We do not change the deen to win approval, and we do not sulk in indifference to how it is seen; we answer the lie with the truth, in dignity and strength, guarding the line between refuting a false charge and bending to a true command. The accusation is false; the religion is not on trial; show them what is actually there.

And finally there is the wedding feast no one came to, the orphan girl three great men fought to raise, and the latecomers Allah promised the best reward. Watch what the Prophet ﷺ did the moment the upper hand was his: he offered his enemies a meal, he raised a forgotten child with tenderness, he opened the door wide to the men who had fought him hardest and told them their slate was wiped clean. He had every reason, by the world's accounting, to be harsh, and he chose generosity, because generosity was the strategy of a man who no longer had anything to fear. The lesson under all of it is patience that does not curdle into bitterness. A year before, these same believers had walked away from Makkah empty-handed, clutching a treaty that looked like a humiliation. They held on, they trusted the promise, the promise came due, and the city that had cast them out locked its doors and watched them circle the house of their father Ibrahim.

What looks like a setback in the hand of Allah can be the very doorway to everything. So when your own road bends away from what you wanted, hold the promise and keep your hands open. And if Allah ever hands you the upper hand over someone who wronged you, remember the feast offered to the Quraysh, and that the strongest thing a believer can do with power is to extend, instead of a sword, a place at the table. May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, who kept every promise his Lord gave him, who returned to the most beloved of cities not to take revenge but to worship and to invite, and who taught us that there is room, until the very last moment, for the latecomer to come home.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 72: Umrah al-Qada (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (74:11-13, 74:18-19, 57:10), verified via quran.ai. Where a companion's narration was weighed against another, the Sheikh's own judgment of the reports has been followed.

The Battle of Mu'tah, part I

Three commanders, one flag, and the sword that would not fall

Before the grand finale of the conquest of Makkah, the seerah pauses for one more story, and it is unlike any that has come before it. For the first time the Muslims will march not against an Arab tribe but toward the edge of the Roman world, the superpower of the age, the only non-Arab enemy the believers would ever face while the Prophet ﷺ still walked among them. They will set out expecting one foe and meet many. And they will go led, by his ﷺ own arrangement, by three commanders named one after another, because he understood before they left that not all of them were coming home.

The sahaba did not call it a ghazwah. Dr. Yasir Qadhi is careful here at the very threshold of the story, because the name itself carries a lesson. A ghazwah, by the definition of the early scholars, is a battle the Prophet ﷺ personally took part in, and he did not march north to Mu'tah. Most of the early and even the medieval historians broke their own rule and called it one anyway, struck by the sheer size of the army that went and the staggering identity of the enemy. But the companions themselves had a better name. They called it the expedition of the commanders, because in no other battle of his entire life did the Prophet ﷺ ever appoint so many leaders, one to follow the next. Mu'tah is simply the name of a small plain in what is today the kingdom of Jordan, where the modern Arabs call the village al-

Mazar, the place of visitation, because the three commanders who fell there lie buried in its earth to this day.

An envoy murdered at the border

It begins with a crossed line. The Prophet ﷺ had sent a letter north, carried by his envoy al-Harith ibn Umayr, headed for the Roman emperor himself. To reach Rome you had to pass through the lands of the Arab Christian tribes who served the empire as its frontier, and the largest of these were the Ghassanids, a people originally of Yemen who had migrated north, taken on Christianity, and felt more kinship with the Romans than with their pagan Arab cousins. They were vassals: subservient clients who did whatever the empire asked, and were protected in return. So when the Prophet's ﷺ envoy came through, the Ghassanid chieftain Shurahbil seized him. And when al-Harith said what every envoy in history has said, I am a messenger, you cannot touch me, here is my letter for the emperor, the chief ignored all of it. He had al-Harith tied to a stake, brutally tortured, and then, with his own hands, killed him.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi asks you to feel the full weight of this, because the seerah turns on it. Ambassadors are not killed; that has been the rule of humanity for as long as there have been nations, and it holds to this day, when even bitter enemies expel an envoy rather than harm him. To order a minion to do the deed would already be a grave violation. To take the spear yourself and drive it in, after the man has been bound and tortured, is something cruder still: a deliberate, vulgar insult, a chieftain seven hundred kilometers away saying, this is what I think of you, and you are too far off to do anything about it. It was a declaration of war in the plainest terms. And now that the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah had at last secured the homeland, so that the Prophet ﷺ no longer

had to fear a knife at his back from Quraysh, he was finally free to answer it. Scholars after him would search for deeper reasons, and one rings true as a wisdom even if it was not the direct cause: Mu'tah laid the psychological groundwork that this message was global and would not stop at the Arabs, a first domino before Tabuk and the conquests of Sham. But the earliest and strongest reason is the simplest one. A messenger had been murdered, and the murder demanded a reply.

The expedition of the commanders

In Jumada al-Ula of the eighth year after the hijrah, the Prophet ﷺ called for volunteers, and he told them plainly where they were going, because this was the farthest any Muslim army had ever traveled: a month and a half on the road, there and back, to the very borders of Sham. There could be no ambiguity, for a man needed to know what he was committing to before he committed. Around three thousand answered. Sit with that number for a moment, the way the Sheikh does. At Badr, six years earlier, the believers were three hundred. Even at Hudaibiyyah, a year and a half before, they were perhaps fourteen or fifteen hundred. In six years the army had not doubled or tripled but grown tenfold, and these were only the ones who marched out; there were others left behind in the city. Madinah was becoming a metropolis, the capital of a civilization that had not yet been born.

Then the Prophet ﷺ did something he had never done before and would never do again: he named three commanders, each to follow the last. Zayd ibn Haritha would lead. If Zayd fell, Ja'far ibn Abi Talib. If Ja'far fell, Abdullah ibn Rawaha. And in one narration he added a fourth instruction, that if Abdullah too were killed, the Muslims should choose a leader from among themselves on the

spot. No other expedition in his entire life was given a chain of command like this. The arrangement itself was the warning. He knew, in a way the volunteers did not yet know, that this was no ordinary raid, and that he was sending some of the most beloved men in Islam toward a danger from which they would not all return.

Why Zayd, and the cousin's quiet hurt

Of all the men he could have placed first, the Prophet ﷺ chose Zayd ibn Haritha, and Aisha, radiyallahu anha, later explained why no one should be surprised: the Prophet ﷺ never once sent Zayd on an expedition except as its commander, never as second to anyone, and had Zayd outlived him, she said, no one would ever have been chosen above him. Think of who is saying this. Aisha is the daughter of Abu Bakr, and still she testifies that Zayd would have stood first. This is the Zayd who, as a boy given the choice between freedom beside his own father and slavery beside Muhammad ﷺ, chose to stay, saying the love this man has shown me, no one else on earth could ever show. He was so woven into the household that for years the people simply called him Zayd ibn Muhammad, until Allah revealed that adopted sons are not your true sons and must be called by the names of their own fathers.

Call them by [the names of] their fathers; it is more just in the sight of Allāh. But if you do not know their fathers - then they are [still] your brothers in religion and those entrusted to you. And there is no blame upon you for that in which you have erred but [only for] what your hearts intended. And ever is Allāh Forgiving and Merciful.

QUR'AN 33:5

After that verse he was Zayd ibn Haritha again, by his father's name; and yet, the Sheikh reminds us, he holds an honor no other companion holds, for he is the only one of them whom Allah named directly in the Qur'an. Abu Bakr himself comes only as a pronoun, his companion, in the cave. Zayd alone is named. To place such a man at the head of the column was the most natural thing in the world.

And yet Ja'far ibn Abi Talib, the Prophet's ﷺ own cousin and the elder brother of Ali, felt a small sting at being placed second. The Prophet ﷺ sensed it, as he sensed everything in the hearts of those he loved, and consoled him with a single sentence: you do not know, perhaps Allah has written something better for you in this. It was true beyond anything Ja'far could have guessed. Coming second in line was exactly how he would earn the death that made his name unforgettable, the death that placed him among the most honored martyrs in all of Islam. The hurt of being second became the doorway to a glory the first place could never have given him.

The farewell, and the poet who longed to die

The Prophet ﷺ handed Zayd a white banner, the standard the army would march under, no flag of surrender but simply the colors an army moves behind, and he walked the three thousand out to Thaniyyat al-Wada', the hill of farewell, where Madinah had always accompanied its travelers to the edge of leaving. There he gave his commanders their final counsel, to be firm and not to turn back, and made dua for them. And there the third commander, Abdullah ibn Rawaha, was seen weeping.

Asked why he wept, he gave an answer that has nothing of cowardice in it. I am not crying out of love for this world, he said, nor out of any attachment to it. I am crying because of a verse

Allah has revealed, that every single one of us shall pass over it, meaning the Fire, a promise from Allah that will surely be kept.

And there is none of you except he will come to it. This is upon your Lord an inevitability decreed.

QUR'AN 19:71

He had suddenly seen himself at that crossing, the Sheikh explains, and the tears were for that, not for the road ahead. He had managed the leaving of Madinah; how would he manage the crossing over the Fire? That was the thought that broke him.

This was Abdullah ibn Rawaha: the great poet of the believers, an Ansari and among the elite of the Ansar who had pledged at Aqabah. He had fought at Badr, and he was the one the Prophet ﷺ sent ahead from there to carry the news of that first victory to Madinah, riding into the city crying out the names of the fallen chiefs of Quraysh until people thought him deranged. He was the poet whose verses against Quraysh the Prophet ﷺ defended when Umar bristled at poetry near the sacred precinct, saying let him be, for his words strike them harder than a shower of arrows. All through the journey north this man composed poetry begging Allah for shahada, for a mighty sword blow that would make the blood gush, so that travelers passing his grave one day would say: Allah guided this man to be a warrior, and how rightly guided he was. One night, riding beside young Zayd, who had been raised in his household, his verses about his own death grew so moving that the boy burst into tears at the thought of losing him. Abdullah, ever light of heart even on the road to his death, swatted him gently with his camel stick and teased: you fool, what would it cost you if I get my martyrdom, and you get the

camel to yourself on the way back? That, in the end, is exactly what happened.

An enemy beyond anything they expected

The Ghassanids panicked when word reached them that an army larger than any that had ever left Madinah was on its way. They sent emissaries flying to every ally they had: the Christian Arab tribes of Lakhm, Judham, and others, and a contingent from the Romans themselves. The classical books then pile up the numbers until they become almost unimaginable, a hundred thousand, even two hundred thousand Romans alone. Here Dr. Yasir Qadhi asks you to think critically, the way he does throughout the seerah. He is not accusing the early historians of lying; it is simple human nature to look at a vast crowd and read its number far too high, a thing so well documented that in our own day two rival news channels will count the very same political rally and report figures wildly apart. The whole of the northern Arab tribes did not number a hundred thousand fighting men, and the Romans, who would not have thrown such a host even against the Persians, would certainly not have committed it against a band of Arab Muslims they did not yet take seriously. The more honest estimate is perhaps ten thousand at the very most. Whatever the exact count, one thing is beyond doubt: the Muslims were heavily outnumbered, and worse, they had not come prepared for this enemy at all.

For the Romans were a different breed of soldier altogether: better armed, better trained, better mounted, a professional military class beside the tribal fighters of Arabia. The sahaba knew it, and the knowledge stopped them in their tracks. When the news reached the marching column, the army halted and camped for two full days in a valley of what is now Jordan,

debating what to do. This was not what they had set out for. They had expected the Ghassanids alone, against whom three thousand believers were enough; now they faced double or triple that, with a Roman contingent among them, and a hard choice split the camp in two. One group said: let us write to the Prophet ﷺ and wait for his command, even if it costs two weeks, and do whatever he tells us. The other said: we came to send a message and we have sent it, we stepped onto their land and frightened them, let us go home. The decision hung in the balance.

Zayd turned to Abdullah ibn Rawaha and asked his opinion, and this itself is a moment the Sheikh pauses on: in the hard hour you turn to the people of wisdom and seniority, not to the novices. There was tactic in it too, for Zayd surely knew already what Abdullah would say, but he wanted the most eloquent tongue in the army to say it. Abdullah stood, and gave a speech that settled everything. My people, he said, what you are afraid of is the very thing you came out looking for. You are afraid of death, but is martyrdom not exactly what we want? Your goal itself has become the thing standing between you and your goal. We have never won by numbers or by weapons, but by this Islam with which Allah has honored us, and He has promised us one of two beautiful outcomes. So let us go forward and meet whichever of the two He decrees.

Say, "Do you await for us except one of the two best things [i.e., martyrdom or victory] while we await for you that Allāh will afflict you with punishment from Himself or at our hands? So wait; indeed we, along with you, are waiting."

QUR'AN 9:52

It was the rousing word the army needed. They rose and moved on. And here is a spirit the Sheikh wants you to see with perfect

clarity, because it is easily and dangerously misread. Later in the fighting, when a wide-eyed Abu Hurayra, a recent convert tasting his very first battle, marveled aloud at the size of the enemy host, an older companion answered him simply: you were not with us at Badr, and we did not win that day because we were many. The sahaba expected to win. Wanting shahada is not the same as walking into death on purpose. Abdullah ibn Rawaha longed for martyrdom with his whole heart and still fought a ferocious battle to live, still chose ground with water at hand and a line of retreat behind him. They were brave, not suicidal, and the difference, the Sheikh insists, is everything. They went forward confident of victory, ready for either of the two beautiful things, and afraid of neither.

Three commanders fall, one after the other

At Mu'tah the armies met, on that small plain the Muslims themselves had chosen, almost certainly for its access to water and its line of retreat, and the white banner the Prophet ﷺ had pressed into Zayd's hand became the center of the entire battle. Zayd charged from the front, and because the flag was in his hand the enemy converged on him from every side, for the banner is what an army hunts. He fought surrounded until he fell, a martyr, the first of the three exactly as the Prophet ﷺ had named him.

The banner passed to Ja'far ibn Abi Talib, and Ja'far fought one of the most ferocious fights ever recorded in the whole history of Islam. When his horse was hamstrung beneath him he leapt clear and fought on foot, deep in the enemy, the flag in one hand and his sword in the other. A blow severed the hand that held the banner; before the standard could touch the ground his other hand swept across and caught it. They cut off that second hand

too, and still he would not let it fall: he bent, gathered the banner against his chest with the two stumps of his arms, and held it upright until a Roman soldier came at him from behind with one of those great Roman swords and cleaved him almost in two. When they searched for his body afterward, Abdullah ibn Umar, who fought in the battle, said they found Ja'far beneath a heap of the dead, and counted more than ninety wounds across him, stabs and cuts and arrow marks, around fifty in his front and forty in his back. Pause over that grim arithmetic, the Sheikh says, and ask why a man would count the wounds of a corpse. It is not morbid; it is a badge of honor. Every one of those wounds faced the enemy; not one was earned in flight. Years later, whenever Umar ibn al-Khattab passed the children of Ja'far, he would greet them with a name that is now part of the faith: O sons of the one with two wings. For the Prophet ﷺ said he had been shown Ja'far in Paradise, given two wings in place of the two hands he lost, flying wherever he wished.

Then the banner came to Abdullah ibn Rawaha, and here the seerah hands you something so human it should stop your heart. The poet who had begged for death the entire journey, who had wept at the farewell longing for the crossing, now stood at the very edge of it, and hesitated. He turned upon his own soul and fought it like an enemy on the field. I swear, O my soul, he said, you will go forward, or I will force you forward. The people have gathered, the clamor has risen, so what is the matter with you? Did you not used to long for Paradise? You were nothing but a drop of fluid in a despised vessel; what makes you so precious to yourself now? Then he stopped arguing, plunged into the enemy ranks, and died a martyr, the third of the three.

Do not read his pause as fear getting the better of him, the Sheikh insists, and his refutation here is worth carrying out of the

chapter, for some have tried to mock this scene. Read it instead as the very definition of bravery. Bravery is not the absence of fear, for a man who feels no fear is not truly human at all. Bravery is feeling the fear and conquering it. Abdullah felt it, mastered it, and went, and which of us could even have lifted the sword he carried, let alone walked it into that host? Three of the most beloved men in Islam had now fallen, one after another, in the exact order the Prophet ﷺ had named them in Madinah before they ever set out. The white banner lay in the dust of Mu'tah, and the army, leaderless in the middle of the fight, needed a hand to lift it. Who reached for it, and what he did with it, is tomorrow's story. But mark this much now: the hand that would close around that flag belonged to a man who, only weeks before, had been among the most dangerous enemies the Muslims had ever faced, whose sword had bled them at Uhud. Islam forgives everything, the Sheikh notes, and the hour calls for whoever the hour calls for. Tomorrow we learn his name.

Grief in Madinah, hundreds of miles away

And here is the speciality of this episode, the thing that sets it apart from every battle before it. As the fighting raged some eight hundred kilometers to the north, the Prophet ﷺ sat in the masjid in Madinah and described it as it was happening, in real time, before any messenger could possibly arrive. Anas ibn Malik narrated it, and the report is in Bukhari, rigorously authentic. The Prophet ﷺ told the gathered companions: Zayd took the flag and was struck, then Ja'far took it and was struck, then Abdullah took it and was struck, and Anas said his eyes were overflowing with tears as he spoke, until at last he said: then a sword from the swords of Allah took it up, and Allah granted them victory through him.

When the confirmed news arrived from the north, the Prophet ﷺ sat down, and the grief upon him was plain to everyone who saw it. Think of who he had lost in a single afternoon. Zayd, who had been in his household for some thirty years, since before the prophethood, the closest thing to a son a man ever had until Allah revealed otherwise. Ja'far, whom he had embraced and kissed on his return from Abyssinia, saying he did not know which made him happier, that reunion or the conquest he had just won. Abdullah, his companion and poet from the early days of Madinah. He was a man in shock, and the seerah does not hide it. Aisha watched from behind her curtain as a man came reporting that the women of Ja'far's house were wailing, and the Prophet ﷺ, three times over, sent him back to quiet them, and three times the man returned having failed, until at last, worn down and grieving, the Prophet ﷺ said: then go and throw dust in their mouths.

The Sheikh unpacks this gently, because it can bewilder a reader meeting it for the first time. It is an Arabic expression of sheer exhaustion, not a literal command; the Prophet ﷺ was a man under the weight of loss, the wailing of the bereaved is forbidden in Islam but a thing these women had not yet been tested against, and the messenger kept returning with a problem no one on earth could fix. Notice too how delicately Aisha tells it: she says only that the man mentioned their weeping, covering the fault of the women rather than naming the wailing for what it was. And notice how fiercely she defends her husband. She turned on the man herself, from the corner of the room: may Allah put dust in your own nose, for you neither did what he told you nor spared him this suffering. No one defends a husband like his wife when she means to, and she meant to. It is one of the most human images in the whole seerah: a Prophet ﷺ undone by love and loss,

sitting down under the weight of it, and a wife fierce in his defense. His grief takes nothing at all from his certainty; it only shows you how much love a single heart can carry. And on that grief the story pauses, with the sword of Allah still to be named, and the unexpected hand still closing, far to the north, around a banner in the dust.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read Mu'tah as a stirring tale of valor and leave it there. That would be to miss the questions it presses into the reader, for this is among the hardest and the tenderest days in the whole life of the Prophet ﷺ, and it asks four things of anyone who sits with it honestly.

It asks you to plan as though the worst were real, and to trust as though Allah held everything, and to know these are not opposites. The Prophet ﷺ named three commanders in a row because he faced the danger with open eyes, not because his trust in Allah had wavered for an instant. Careful preparation and reliance upon Allah are two hands of the same faith, and he gave us both in a single decision. We are quick to imagine that to prepare thoroughly is somehow to doubt, when the Prophet's ﷺ own example is the reverse: prepare for the worst, and place the outcome with Allah.

It asks you to understand what courage actually is. Abdullah ibn Rawaha begged for martyrdom every mile of the journey, then stood at its threshold and hesitated, then turned on his own trembling soul and drove it forward into Paradise. A person who feels no fear is not brave; he is merely unfeeling, less than fully human. The courage is in the going, in the conquering of a fear that is genuinely there. Whatever you most dread in obedience to

Allah, the going is the bravery, and the fear you feel on the way is not its enemy but its raw material.

It asks you to stop counting. You were not with us at Badr, the old companion told the wide-eyed Abu Hurayra, and we did not win that day because we were many. When you find yourself outmatched, outnumbered, sure the odds have already decided the thing, the seerah turns the question around: it was never about the count. It was about the faith. And it asks you, in the same breath, never to confuse loving Paradise with throwing your life away. These men longed for shahada and still fought with everything to win, still chose ground with water and a way back; wanting death in Allah's path never once meant courting it recklessly, and anyone who reads their longing as a license for despair has read it exactly backward.

And last, it asks you to let even the grief teach you. The most God-conscious man who ever lived wept openly for three friends fallen far away, sat down under the weight of it, lost his words, and was defended by a wife who loved him. Grief is not weak faith. It is the heart of a believer breaking honestly and beautifully, and it sits in him alongside a certainty that never cracks. So take this day down into your own. Plan for the hardest thing and hand the result to Allah. Feel your fear and go anyway. Weigh your faith, not your odds. And when loss comes, let your heart break without shame, knowing that the tears of the Prophet ﷺ took nothing from his trust in his Lord. O Allah, send Your peace upon Your Messenger ﷺ, and upon Zayd, and Ja'far, and Abdullah, and all who fell at Mu'tah; grant us their love of meeting You, their courage in the face of fear, and a good ending after which there is no thirst, and save us from the Fire that every one of us must pass over.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 73: the Battle of Mu'tah, part 1 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (33:5, 19:71, 9:52), verified via quran.ai.

The Battle of Mu'tah, part 2

How a retreat became the Sword of Allah

Yesterday the three commanders fell one after another, Zayd, then Ja'far, then Abdullah ibn Rawahah, and a single black banner kept being lifted out of the dust and pressed into the next pair of hands. Today the seerah finishes the story of Mu'tah, and it does not finish the way we want our stories to finish. There is no charge that turns the field, no rescue from the south, no miracle that bends the day back toward the Muslims. There are three thousand believers stranded in the far north against an empire, with no commander left to lead them and no victory left to win. What happens next is something quieter than triumph, and in its own way harder: a young man who had been a Muslim for only a few months looks at an impossible field and decides that the only victory still on offer is to bring the army home alive. By the end of it he will carry a title that reaches all the way into the records of the Roman court.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi begins the way an honest historian must, with a warning about the evidence. For the whole of this day, he reminds us, we really have only two or three explicit narrations from which the entire story must be derived. The picture cannot be painted in broad confident strokes; it has to be drawn from a few hard lines, each one weighed, the firm reported as firm and the doubtful as doubtful, and the gaps left honestly as gaps. Mu'tah tests that discipline more than most days, because so little of it was ever written down.

The man who broke nine swords

The clearest of those hard lines comes from Khalid ibn al-Walid's own mouth. On the day of Mu'tah, he would later say, nine swords broke in my hand, until nothing was left to me but a single Yemeni blade. Sit with what a man must be doing to shatter nine swords in one battle, one after another, swinging each until it failed and reaching for the next. That is not the fighting of a soldier holding a position. That is the fighting of a man holding an entire line together by the force of his own arm, and it tells you, even with no other narration, exactly what kind of struggle was keeping three thousand men from being overrun.

Khalid had seen what no one else wanted to say out loud. There was no real victory to be had on this field, none at all. The Romans and their Christian Arab allies were too many; the Muslims could not break them and could not hope to. The only victory still possible, he understood, was to preserve the Muslim army from complete destruction, to save it from massacre. So he fought a two part battle. First came a sharp, sudden push, a quick short term attack whose entire purpose was to make the Romans pause in their onslaught, to stagger them just long enough to break their momentum. Part of how he did it, in the one detail that survives, was to position his archers to blunt the advancing line. One of those archers was an old man whose arm was still strong but whose eyes had failed him. He told his two companions to lift him onto a shield and carry him as high as they could, and he would shoot as hard as he could while they were his eyes: turn me this way, turn me that way. He could no longer see the enemy, but he could still loose an arrow, and he would not be left out of the work.

By the time night fell, Khalid had managed to pry the two armies apart, just past the reach of a bow and arrow. Through the

darkness the two forces could still see one another, but no longer kill one another; they were within sight but out of range. The Muslims took shelter behind a hill, safe at least for the night, and only then, in that pause, could the bodies that had lain on the field all day finally be gathered and buried. The three leaders, Zayd ibn Harithah and Ja'far ibn Abi Talib and Abdullah ibn Rawahah, were laid, the books say, together in a single grave.

A storm of dust, and a way home

About the next morning, the classical books fall silent. Sheikh Yasir is careful here, and the carefulness is itself a lesson. Nothing explicit about the second day appears in the early sources he could find. What he did find, in one of the later books, was a strategy, and he hands it on exactly as that: a tactic preserved by a later author, source unknown, that fits everything else we know about Khalid but that cannot be traced back with certainty. The honest historian neither swallows it whole nor throws it away. He sets it on the table and tells you where it came from.

The strategy was this. Khalid needed the Romans to hesitate long enough for three thousand exhausted men to slip away, because to retreat in full view of the enemy is to be hunted down and cut to pieces on the open road. The one thing that reliably makes an army stop is the fear of reinforcements. So Khalid manufactured exactly that fear. He sent a body of his companions far out across an expanse of sand, spread thin, with instruments to beat up the dust as they drove forward through it, so that from a distance it looked for all the world like hundreds of fresh horsemen riding in from Madinah. The Romans and the Christian Arabs saw the dust cloud gathering on the horizon and did the sensible thing. They paused. They were not about to throw

themselves on the Muslims if a second army was about to arrive at the Muslims' back. And in those few hours of hesitation, the Muslim army disappeared, withdrew, and reached safety. Had they tried to leave before the eyes of the Romans, they would have been followed and massacred on the road. The illusion of help that was never coming bought them their lives. On the way home, the army passed the same village that had earlier ambushed and killed one of their own, and there they took their justice from it; the books are not precise about what they did, only that the wrong was answered.

Then Sheikh Yasir asks you to stop and sit with the arithmetic, because the arithmetic is the heart of the whole matter. Out of three thousand men, facing a vastly superior fighting force, the names we have of the fallen number around fifteen, with perhaps another five or ten whose names were never recorded. Less than one percent of the army. Faced with those odds, against that enemy, the fact that more than ninety-nine of every hundred men came home is, in its own strange way, an extraordinary thing. It is not the arithmetic of a rout. It is the arithmetic of a rescue.

Victory, loss, or something in between

So was Mu'tah a victory or a defeat? The Sheikh lays out three honest answers, and refuses to flatten them into one. The first group of scholars called it a victory, and not a small one. Among them were great experts of the classical tradition, and their evidence ran along three lines. The Muslims by and large returned successfully, with less than one percent lost. They carried some booty home with them, which is true; we will come to one of those stories. And, decisively for them, the Prophet ﷺ himself, when he had described the falling of the three commanders one after the other with tears in his eyes, then said

that a sword from the swords of Allah took the banner, and Allah granted them victory. The argument from there is almost a theological one: if the Prophet ﷺ called it a fath, a victory, then a fath it is, in the same way that Allah names a thing and the thing is so. Nothing more need be said.

A second group, the historians, and every non-Muslim chronicler who wrote of the day, called it a defeat. They looked at it through a military and political lens, and through that lens the verdict was plain. The Muslims lost three of their most significant leaders, one after another. They lost the banner. They had to retreat while the Romans held their ground, and the one who retreats and leaves the field, generally speaking, is not the victor. A third group called it neither, a draw, neither side a clear victor. This was the position of more than one careful scholar, and their reasoning was that at the end neither side launched a frontal assault on the other, neither side took prisoners, the dead were roughly equal, and both armies simply returned home to their own lands.

Here the Sheikh does something you will watch him do again and again across this series. He declines to force the day into a single shape. Each of the three opinions, he says, is correct from where it stands. If the Prophet ﷺ called it a fath, then it is a fath, though not in the narrow military sense; it may be a victory of one kind and not another, the way Hudaibiyyah was a long term victory that felt, in the moment, like anything but. The historians have a real point: the Romans kept their land, the Muslims conquered not a single inch, and they went home. And the third group is weighty too, because the enemy did not annihilate the Muslims but let them go. So the Prophet ﷺ called it a victory, and it was, in the truest sense available to it: the lives that were saved are the victory, not an inch of conquered ground.

Then Sheikh Yasir names something braver, and it is one of the most distinctly his judgments of the whole episode. Part of the trouble, he says, is that many of our own historians want every single battle to come out shining for the Muslims, and in wanting that they miss the wisdom and the mercy hidden in the battles that do not. It is actually a great benefit, he insists, that some battles are not so positive, because Allah is teaching us, through His own beloved companions, that you will not always be handed everything on a silver platter. Sometimes you have to struggle. Sometimes even the best generation that ever lived makes a sound judgment that does not pay off in the short term. And if you only ever read the seerah as one unbroken chain of triumphs, then on the day your own life refuses to come out shining, you will have nothing to hold. Whereas if you have seen even this generation struggle, you find a strange comfort waiting for you exactly when you need it. Loss honestly told is not a wound to faith. It is a steadying of it.

Not runaways, but the ones who will return

The Prophet ﷺ welcomed the survivors home and rejoiced at their return. But within a few days the joy curdled into something ugly. A smear campaign began against the men who had come back, and we know about it because of one quiet detail preserved in the books of hadith. The Prophet ﷺ noticed that a companion named Salamah had stopped appearing in the masjid, and he asked after him: what is the matter, is he well, why do I not see him? Salamah's wife answered him. He has not come out of the house, she said, because every time he steps outside, people make fun of him and rebuke him. They call after him: O you who ran away, O you who fled, have you fled from the path

of Allah? And so Salamah sat in his house, hiding from the mockery.

Some of those voices, the Sheikh notes, may have belonged to hypocrites looking for any wound to open. Some may have belonged to earnest believers stung by a kind of overzealous anger, men who had not gone and could not understand how anyone could turn his back on the enemy and live. It was probably a mixture of both. The men who had actually fought and survived were being branded cowards who had abandoned the field. The Prophet ﷺ ended the entire campaign with a single word. He took the slur they were using, al-fararun, the runaways, the ones who flee, and he changed one letter of it. No, he said, they are not the fararun. They are al-karrarun, the ones who will return and fight again. With that one change he turned an accusation into an honor and shut every mocking tongue. They had not fled as cowards. They had saved themselves so that they could come back and stand another day. This, the Sheikh says, was from the wisdom and the long sight of the Prophet ﷺ, to take the very word being used as a weapon and reforge it into praise.

And this ruling, he is careful to add, is not a softening of the religion but its very law, and he asks plainly that it not be misunderstood. Genuine, legitimate martyrdom is a goal every believer carries in his heart; no one denies that, and the Prophet ﷺ himself made it something to long for. But you do not walk into a battle simply wanting to die, throwing your life away with your sword doing nothing, because if every warrior did that there would be no army and nothing left of Islam to defend. The overzealous thought, how dare you turn your backs; the ones who had fled felt the guilt of it, which is why Salamah sat at home wondering whether he should have stayed and died. The Prophet

ﷺ settled it for all of them. Foolish martyrdom is not bravery; reckless death is not courage. And Allah Himself had already drawn the line in the Qur'an, forbidding flight from the battlefield while permitting the tactical withdrawal:

O you who have believed, when you meet those who disbelieve advancing [in battle], do not turn to them your backs [in flight].

QUR'AN 8:15

And whoever turns his back to them on such a day, unless swerving [as a strategy] for war or joining [another] company, has certainly returned with anger [upon him] from Allah, and his refuge is Hell - and wretched is the destination.

QUR'AN 8:16

Allah does not permit fleeing out of cowardice. He does permit swerving as a maneuver of war, and joining back up with one's own forces to fight again. The men of Mu'tah had done exactly the second thing, and not the first. They were al-karrarun, the ones who would return.

After today, let no one weep

Then the Prophet ﷺ turned to the grief inside his own family. Send food to the family of Ja'far, he commanded, for something has befallen them that has left them too occupied to cook for themselves. And so food was prepared and sent to them. After three days he went to them himself. Abdullah ibn Ja'far, who was only six or seven at the time and who narrates the memory as a grown man, never forgot what he saw. The Prophet ﷺ came and called the children to him, and their hair was matted and wild; the

very word in the hadith is that they looked like little chicks, every hair on end, because their mother, having just lost her husband and already traumatized by all that we heard last week, was in no state to comb their hair. The Prophet ﷺ saw it and took charge even of this. He called for a barber and had their hair seen to himself. Then he spoke to each child in turn, and to each he gave something that made the child feel singled out and held. To Muhammad ibn Ja'far he said, this one looks just like my uncle Abu Talib. To Abdullah he said, this one looks like me and behaves like me. He took the boy's hand, the hand of the one who would now be the man of the house, raised it, and prayed three times: O Allah, bless the progeny of Ja'far, and bless Abdullah in everything his hands touch, in all his buying and selling and dealings. And as for their father, he told them, who had been killed with both his hands cut off, Allah has given him two wings in place of his two hands, and he flies wherever he wishes in Paradise.

Their mother was Asma bint Umays, and Sheikh Yasir lingers on her story because of what it quietly buries. She was Ja'far's wife; after he was martyred she married Abu Bakr, and from him came Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr; and after Abu Bakr passed away she married Ali. Three of the greatest men of this ummah, in turn, and children from each. There was no stigma of divorce or widowhood among the companions the way it would later harden in Muslim societies, where a widowed woman was treated as though she might as well live out her days alone. That attitude simply did not exist among them, and a famous, gentle anecdote proves it. Two of Asma's sons, Muhammad ibn Ja'far and Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, half-brothers through their mother, began to boast about whose father was nobler. Ali sat watching, and to tease his own wife, whose two former husbands were

precisely the two men in question, he said: let your mother be the judge. With perfect wisdom Asma answered: as for the young men, the best is Ja'far, and as for the senior, wise men, the best is Abu Bakr. She had named both as the finest of their kind, leaving neither son defeated. And Ali laughed: then what have you left for me? Read that scene, the Sheikh says, and look for the tension certain groups insist must have lain between these families. Here is Ali, married to Abu Bakr's former wife, joking about whether Abu Bakr or his own brother Ja'far was the nobler man, and teasing her when she answers too well. It is so plainly the joking of a household at ease with itself that the supposed enmity becomes ludicrous to imagine.

There is a whole school of manners folded into this passage. When death visits a household, it is a sunnah for those close to the family to prepare food for them; the grieving should not be made to cook. It is a sunnah to visit with words of consolation, but not to linger, for it is disliked to turn the house of mourning into a long social gathering; Jarir the companion said they used to count gathering at the bereaved house and being fed there as part of the forbidden wailing. And there is a limit on grief itself. Mourning is permitted for three days, the legitimate grief of a heavy heart, of tears, of not feeling like eating, of taking time away. To go beyond three days into wailing, shrieking, beating oneself, crying out claims that border on disbelief, who will care for me, how will I live, that is forbidden. Only the widow keeps a longer term, four months and ten days, and even hers is a term of dignity, not of wailing. So even here, the Sheikh notes, the Prophet ﷺ could not perfectly control the grief in his own extended family in the first raw days; he tried, through a messenger, three times, and when it could not be stopped he let it be. Then on the third day he came himself and gently closed it:

after today, let no one weep over my brother. Now was the time to return to life. Time, as we all learn, heals every wound.

The Sword of Allah, named in Rome

There is a strange and beautiful footnote to Mu'tah that almost sounds too good to be true, and Sheikh Yasir tells you he found it so striking that he went and downloaded the source to read it with his own eyes. The earliest Byzantine chronicler to write about the Muslims at all was an aristocratic monk named Theophanes, who died around the year 820, and who composed a vast chronicle drawing on Arab sources that no longer survive, sources no other Roman writer of his age could reach. His account of the Muslims is full of the usual distortions and antiquated stereotypes; he gets the year wrong, placing the battle in the first year of Abu Bakr's caliphate, and he says the Prophet ﷺ appointed four commanders when it was three. He calls the village Mu'tah, mentions that the brother of Heraclius was stationed there, and even records a detail not found in the Muslim sources at all, that the Romans had learned the day of the battle from a spy in their pay and chose to strike when the Muslims would be distracted. But buried in his garbled account is a single sentence that stops you. The one whom they call the Sword of God, he writes, was the one who got the army away. Khalid. Sheikh Yasir says he could hardly believe it until he held the page in his own hand: the title the Prophet ﷺ had given this man at Mu'tah had traveled, within a few generations, all the way into the records of the Roman Empire, so that a Christian monk writing of his own empire's wars knew the Muslims called Khalid the Sword of God.

That title, Sayfullah, the Sword of Allah, is the thread that ties the whole day together. A man who had been a Muslim for only a few

months walked onto a hopeless field, broke nine swords in his hand, and brought an army home, and from that day forward he was Allah's own drawn blade. Which is exactly why, the Sheikh reminds you, Khalid had to die in his bed and not on a battlefield. On his deathbed he wept, and told a visitor to look him over, front and back: you will not find a hand's breadth of my body without a scar or a bruise from battle, and yet here I am dying like a sick old man. He had warrior's blood, and a warrior longs to fall in the field, and he could not understand it. But the later scholars explained what Khalid could not see. He was the Sword of Allah, and no enemy is permitted to break a sword of Allah; only the One who unsheathed it may sheathe it again and lay it to rest. For Khalid to be struck down as a martyr would have been a breaking of that sword, and so he was kept from it. He was too precious for the field. He received, the scholars trust, the reward of the martyr without the martyr's death.

And there is one more lesson the Sheikh draws, this one from a quarrel after the battle. A man from among the helpers, one of the volunteers from Yemen, had killed a Roman officer in gleaming golden armor who was wreaking havoc in the Muslim lines, attacking him with little more than a sword and a piece of tanned goatskin he had fashioned into armor. By the law of the spoils, the gear of the man you kill is yours, and so he took the officer's horse, weapons, and armor. Khalid, now the commander, judged it too much for one soldier and ordered some of it given to the general fund. The man protested that this was the sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ, and he was right; but Khalid was new to Islam and made an honest mistake, not knowing or not believing the rule, and he did not take anything for himself. When the matter reached Madinah, the Prophet ﷺ ruled in the soldier's favor and ordered Khalid to return all of it. But at that the man

turned and mocked Khalid: see, didn't I tell you, now you have got what you deserved. And the Prophet ﷺ, angered by the arrogance of it, reversed himself on the spot: in that case, do not give it to him. Will you not leave my commanders to me? The soldier had been right about the law, and his arrogance was so ugly that the truth slipped out of his hands. Here is the warning, the Sheikh says: a man can be upon the truth and carry it with such insolence that his arrogance turns the ruling against him. Be right, and be humble, or your being right will not save you. And from the Prophet's ﷺ words, will you not leave my leaders to me, we learn another thing: Khalid had been appointed not by the Prophet ﷺ but by the choice of the people on the field, and yet the Prophet ﷺ called him my commander, my leader, because the leader the believers rightly choose becomes a leader to be honored as if appointed from above.

The frontier that opened

Step back from the day and you can see what Mu'tah actually did. Nearly every battle of the seerah runs south of Madinah; Mu'tah was the great battle to the north, the largest and, in the Prophet's ﷺ lifetime, the first and only time the Muslims and the Romans met in the field at all. With it, the reach of the young Muslim state had touched the very edge of the Roman world, and a real fear had been planted in the hearts of the Christian Arab tribes along that frontier. If three thousand men could do this much damage and still escape, what would happen when the Prophet ﷺ himself came north? The series will reach exactly that answer at Tabuk, where they will not dare to fight him at all. Mu'tah was also the school in which the Muslims, and Khalid above all, first learned the Roman way of war, the experience that

Allah would later use to open the lands of Rome after the Prophet's ﷺ passing.

And remember the timing, because it frames everything that comes next. Mu'tah falls at the very beginning of the eighth year of the Hijra, and the conquest of Makkah is only months away, in Ramadan of that same year. In the year and a half since the treaty of Hdaybiyyah, every serious threat to the Muslim community has been dismantled. The northern frontier has been warned. The threats to the south have been answered. And Quraysh, in Makkah, the proud city that drove him out, is by now an old dog without teeth, all empty noise and quiet defections, its own chief once boasting that he would march down and show the Muslims who was master and now doing nothing at all, because he had seen what they could do. Even Quraysh's own statesman could read the board, which is why he was already slipping away to Madinah ahead of the end. Mu'tah was not the conquest of a single inch of ground. It was a message written in dust and blood on the road home: do not imagine that you can touch us. And it was the last thing standing between the Prophet ﷺ and the day he would walk back, at the head of his people, into the city that had cast him out.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to file Mu'tah away as a grim chapter and move on, one of the least remembered episodes of the whole seerah precisely because it does not end in a clean triumph. That would be to miss the questions it presses on us, and they are questions for ordinary days, not just for battlefields.

It asks us to learn that saving lives can be the victory. The Prophet ﷺ called Mu'tah a fath, not because the Muslims took any ground, but because more than ninety-nine of every hundred

men came home. We are trained to recognize victory only in conquest, in the visible win, the banner planted on captured earth. But there are days when the bravest and most faithful thing a person can do is to live, to withdraw with honor, to preserve what can be preserved and fight on another day. Know the difference, the Sheikh teaches, between giving up and regrouping. Allah forbids turning your back in flight; He permits swerving as a maneuver of war and rejoining your own forces. Reckless death is not courage, and a wise retreat is not cowardice. The men they called runaways were really the ones who would return, and the Prophet ﷺ defended them with a single changed letter.

And it asks us, most of all, to make peace with the battles that do not shine. This is the judgment Sheikh Yasir keeps returning to, and it is the one to carry out of the chapter. We want every story of the believers to end in triumph, and in wanting that we miss the mercy buried in the ones that do not. Allah let even the best generation that ever walked the earth struggle, bury three beloved men in a single grave, limp home to be mocked, precisely so that on the day your own life refuses to come out shining you would not be left thinking that faith and ease must always travel together. When the Prophet ﷺ found his companions weeping for the fallen, he told them not to grieve too long, for the example of his ummah is like a garden whose owner prunes away the leaves and the branches so that each year's harvest comes finer than the last. Loss, in the hands of Allah, is not the end of the garden. It is how the garden grows. So when your own day arrives that will not come out shining, remember the men they called runaways, who were really al-karrarun, the ones who would return; remember Ja'far, who lost two hands and was given two wings; and remember that the One who

unsheathed the Sword of Allah is the only One who decides when any of His servants is laid to rest. O Allah, send Your praise and peace upon Muhammad ﷺ, give Ja'far and the martyrs of Mu'tah their wings in Your Paradise, keep us from ever fleeing the path that leads to You, and on the day the banners are raised, gather us beneath his.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 74: the Battle of Mu'tah, part 2 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (8:15, 8:16), verified via quran.ai.

The Expedition of Dhat as-Salasil

A new Muslim leads the elders, and an elder steps aside

After a pause of a few weeks, the seerah resumes, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi opens not with a new event but with a long breath and a backward glance. We are in the eighth year of the Hijrah now, and the Prophet ﷺ is sixty-one years old. Almost the entire story has been told, and he is nearing what the Sheikh calls the pinnacle of his whole life: the conquest of Makkah. Everything from this point forward will be a footnote to that morning. So before the great event arrives, the Sheikh gathers the whole road into one telling, because to feel the weight of the conquest you have to remember everything it cost to reach it.

For forty years the people of Makkah had loved him ﷺ and trusted him, certain he would one day be among their leaders, if not the leader of them all. Then he began to preach one God and the equality of all people, and the same men turned into his worst enemies, not because he had wronged them but merely because of a new belief. They fabricated against him lies they knew were lies. They called him a madman, a magician, a fanciful poet. And the Sheikh pauses over one accusation they never made: they never once said he was insincere, never said he wanted money or power. That charge would not stick to him, and the silence is its own testimony. The only explanation they could invent for a man who would not bend was that he had gone mad.

The whole road, in one glance

They could not touch him personally. He was the grandson of Abd al-Muttalib, of the elite of Banu Hashim, and in a culture that held noble blood sacred, no one could lay a hand on him. So they took out their cruelty on the weak instead, torturing and killing the early Muslims, until at last they tried the slow weapon of a boycott: we will sell you nothing, not food, not water, not clothing. How does a clan live when no one will sell it bread? The believers withdrew into a valley and starved by their own city's decree. The persecution drove some to flee across the sea to Abyssinia. The hatred only sharpened, until they were choking him in public and throwing the filth of a slaughtered animal upon him as he prayed.

When his uncle Abu Talib died, his protection died with him, and Abu Lahab descended to a level lower still. He would follow his own nephew from gathering to gathering, calling out behind him to the visiting tribes: do not listen to him, he is my nephew and I can vouch that he has lost his mind. Imagine the pain of it, the Sheikh says, a man stationed outside your own door, your own uncle, waiting to walk after you and undo every word you speak. Then Abu Lahab, irritated beyond patience, did the unthinkable for an Arab: he disowned a member of Banu Hashim and withdrew his support entirely. The Prophet ﷺ went to Ta'if seeking shelter and was driven out. And when at last the Quraysh, after thirteen years, resolved to do the one thing every Arab held sacred against, to gather and murder one of their own, the Hijrah came. He left the land of his birth, the land of his ancestors, the land of Ibrahim and Hajar before him, and he spoke to the city as he went: you are the most beloved of all lands to me, and had my people not expelled me, I would never have left you.

Even in Madinah they would not let him be. Badr broke them: the Sheikh calls it the single greatest victory of the whole era after

the conquest itself, the day every senior leader of Quraysh was killed or taken, the day they never truly recovered from. Then the Confederates, when for the first time in their history the tribes united not around blood but around an idea, marshalled an army the Muslims could never have matched, and still Allah protected the city, and Quraysh learned that even all of Arabia could not take Madinah. Hudaibiyyah, which wore the face of a setback, turned every clause against them and bought two years of peace in which more people entered Islam than in the previous ten, the plainest proof that this religion spread through contact and not through the sword. In that peace the Prophet ﷺ cleared the board. Khaybar fell, the wealthiest and best-fortified power that could have opposed him, and with it came money, weapons that were hard to come by in that age, a steady income from its fields, and the final elimination of any serious threat within the Hijaz. Then Mu'tah, where a small force stood against the Roman superpower itself and came home all but untouched, more than ninety-five percent of the army intact. The Sheikh calls it a victory not of the sword but of morale, of perception, and he reminds us that more than half of any war is perception. The Arabs had never dared fight the Romans; the Muslims had, and walked away unharmed. By now Makkah was perhaps two-thirds empty, its noblemen dead or departed, more than half its people already gone to Madinah, and every domino was tipping toward home.

Not the famous battle, and not the point

A few weeks after Mu'tah, in the cold of that same winter, in roughly Jumada or Rabi of the eighth year, came the expedition the books call Dhat as-Salasil. And here the Sheikh stops to clear up a confusion the advanced students will feel at once. This is

not the great Battle of Dhat as-Salasil from the reign of Umar, the one that helped break the Sasanian empire of Persia. The two share a name for entirely unrelated reasons. The later, famous battle was named Salasil, which means chains, because the prisoners taken were so many they were bound together in chains. Ours is named for a small pond, a watering hole called Salasil, that lay near where it took place. So if you have heard of a Battle of Dhat as-Salasil, the Sheikh warns, do not assume you know this one; you studied the famous battle of Umar's time, not this small expedition in the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ.

And for us, he says, the smallness is exactly the point. We are not here for the politics of which tribe was subdued or where its territory lay. With all these minor expeditions, the benefit for beginners is never the military history; it is the small human moments folded inside them, the stories that carry a lesson you can hold in your hand. The target this time was the tribe of Quda'a, a relatively large clan far up in the north, their territory almost touching what is now Jordan, set a little to the northeast of Madinah. Quda'a had aided the enemy at Mu'tah, and this march was the answer to that aid.

A commander of three months

The Prophet ﷺ sent for Amr ibn al-As, and Amr himself narrates what happened in the first person. He commanded me to put on my garments and my armor and come to him, Amr said, so I did, and when I came he was performing wudu. He looked me up and down, taking my measure, and then he said: I wish to appoint you as the leader of an army, and Allah will keep you safe and give you much, and I am hopeful you will return with a great deal of wealth.

Now Amr was the freshest of new Muslims, barely two or three months into the religion, one of the very last to convert before the conquest, among the final batches whom Allah had blessed to enter Islam just in time. He was of the nobility of Quraysh, raised in luxury, the son of a man against whom the Qur'an itself had spoken and who had now died upon his disbelief. So when the Prophet ﷺ spoke of wealth, something in Amr flinched, as though he had been faintly insulted. O Messenger of Allah, he said, I did not accept Islam in order to become rich. I accepted Islam to be a Muslim, and to be with you. It is the kind of sentence that tells you a man is sincere, and it came from the same Amr who once confessed that whenever the Prophet ﷺ looked at him, he felt he must surely be the most beloved person to him. He had even asked, one day, who is most beloved to you, and heard Aisha named, and then her father, and he kept asking and never heard his own name, until he stopped for fear of where the list would end. He was a late convert, low on any roll of precedence, and yet such was the warmth the Prophet ﷺ made every companion feel that Amr believed himself the dearest of all.

The reply the Sheikh lingers over is a gift to anyone who has ever felt uneasy about chasing a living. How excellent is pure wealth for a righteous man, the Prophet ﷺ told him. There is nothing wrong with wanting money, he was teaching, and nothing wrong with having it, on two conditions: that the wealth itself is clean and lawful, and that the man who holds it is good. Amr had misunderstood, reading a rebuke where none existed, and the Prophet ﷺ corrected him gently. People of wealth, after all, can accomplish what those without it cannot. Money is one of the great tests Allah has left to this ummah, the Prophet ﷺ said elsewhere, but the believer does not flee a test; he asks his Lord to help him pass it. He does not say I want no money at all. He

says: O Allah, grant me wealth that is pure, and let me spend it for Your sake. And the man entrusted with this command was deliberately one of the early generation, of whom Allah would later distinguish in His Book:

Not equal among you are those who spent before the conquest [of Makkah] and fought [and those who did so after it]. Those are greater in degree than they who spent afterwards and fought.

QUR'AN 57:10

By the testimony of the Qur'an itself, the Sheikh notes, men like Amr, who entered before the conquest and fought, stand at a higher degree than those who came after. And it is to such a man, sincere and newly arrived, that the army was now handed.

No fires in the dark

Amr was given three hundred men and told to take the tribe by surprise. He was new to Islam, but he was no new soldier. He had been raised since boyhood in the household of a chieftain, a man of a soldier's upbringing, close in age and temperament to the likes of Khalid ibn al-Walid, the younger and harder generation of Quraysh. So he marched with the instincts of a born commander. It was deep winter, and he moved only by night, never by day, so that no word of his coming would reach the enemy ahead. And through that bone-deep desert cold he forbade his men to light a single fire. When they grumbled, he told them flatly that anyone who lit a fire he would throw into it.

Later, when the men carried this complaint to the Prophet ﷺ, Amr explained himself, and his reasoning was sound. O Messenger of Allah, he said, our numbers were small, three hundred against a great tribe, and I did not want the enemy to

see how few we were. We traveled in the dark and we hid ourselves. The desert cold, the Sheikh adds from his own experience, is a different cold from the cold of snow; they say it reaches the bones. Amr asked his men to endure it rather than betray their weakness, and he was right to.

At the edge of Quda'a's land he saw that three hundred would not be enough, so he withdrew and sent to Madinah for reinforcements. The Prophet ﷺ dispatched two hundred more, bringing the force to five hundred, and among the new arrivals were Abu Bakr and Umar and other senior companions. In command of the reinforcement he placed Abu Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah, one of the ten promised Paradise, one of the great elite of the sahaba. And to Abu Ubaydah he ﷺ gave a single instruction for the moment the two forces met: when you reach your companion, make sure the two of you agree, and do not disagree. Whatever happens, stay united.

One of the ten steps down

When the reinforcements arrived it was time to pray, and the iqamah was called, and Abu Ubaydah stepped forward to lead. And here, the Sheikh explains, we must understand something about that age. The one who led the prayer led the army; the imam of the salah was the imam in every sense. This was not like later times, when anyone might be pushed forward to lead a prayer. In early Islam the leader led the prayer himself, gave the call, gave the sermon, and the symbolism was deliberate and total. So when Abu Ubaydah moved to lead, he was assuming command, as he naturally expected to, being by every measure the senior man.

Amr stopped him. No, he said, you came as reinforcements; I am the commander here, and you are over the two hundred you

brought, but I am over the army. Some of the companions bristled at this. Abu Ubaydah is our leader, they said, you may lead your three hundred. And the tension was real, the Sheikh insists, because by every standard Abu Ubaydah was the greater man: senior in Islam, far ahead in Qur'an, of higher rank in every way, set against a boy of three months whose memorized Qur'an could hardly be compared and whose precedence did not exist. Both men, in a sense, were right. Abu Ubaydah was more qualified. Amr had been placed in charge by the Prophet ﷺ himself.

And then Abu Ubaydah remembered the last thing he had been told. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ commanded me to agree with you and not to differ, he said, so even if you disobey me, I will obey you, so that we do not fall into discord. And he stepped down. He let Amr lead the prayer, and lead the army after it, and he swallowed his own pride for the sake of one thing: unity.

The Sheikh stops the march here to break an image we carry wrongly. We have to shatter the picture of the sahaba as superhuman, he says. They were human, the very best of humans, which is a different thing entirely, and as humans they felt exactly what we feel. Abu Ubaydah knew he was more qualified, and he was. Amr knew he had been put in charge, and he had been. The lesson is not that these men had no egos; the lesson is what they did with them. The greater of the two, the one ahead in knowledge and in faith, was the one who let go. That, the Sheikh says, is true leadership: not necessarily to be the one in charge, but to sacrifice your own standing for the wholeness of the community. To step on your own ego so the people stay one.

And folded inside that lesson is a second. In Abu Ubaydah's contingent stood Abu Bakr and Umar, who by the consensus of the ummah are greater than Abu Ubaydah himself, let alone greater than Amr. And they prayed behind a Muslim of three months without a word of complaint. From this, the Sheikh draws a point of creed: to be placed in charge, a man need not be the single best person present. The scholars have a name for it, the leadership of a lesser man over those who are better than him, and it is permitted. This is one of the differences between us and certain sects who insist the leader must be the most virtuous soul on earth. We say that is impossible and was never the case in history, and here is the proof: the two greatest men of the ummah after the Prophet ﷺ, praying in the ranks behind a new convert, because authority is a role and not a verdict on rank.

The cold and the verse

Amr himself tells the next story, and he is not ashamed to tell it on himself, the Sheikh notes, because there is too much benefit in it to keep quiet. On one of the freezing nights of that expedition, Amr woke in a state of major ritual impurity. To take a full bath in that cold, in the open desert with no shelter, he feared, might be the death of him. So he made tayammum, the dry purification with clean earth, and led his companions in the dawn prayer. When the army returned to Madinah, this too went onto their lengthening list of complaints: he led us in prayer while in a state of janabah.

The Prophet ﷺ summoned him. And notice, the Sheikh says, that he asked before he judged: is it true that you led them in prayer while in a state of impurity? He did not condemn on the strength of a complaint; he sought the other side first. Amr answered with the Qur'an. O Messenger of Allah, he said, I heard Allah say:

And do not kill yourselves [or one another]. Indeed, Allāh is to you ever Merciful.

QUR'AN 4:29

And I feared that bathing in that cold would be the death of me, so I made tayammum instead. And the Prophet ﷺ laughed, Amr said, and said nothing against me.

Small as it looks, the Sheikh draws a great deal from this night. By the agreement of the scholars, he says, this establishes that tayammum is valid even when water is present, if using the water would genuinely harm you. Until this point in the seerah, the companions had made tayammum only when no water could be found; this is the first time, while the Prophet ﷺ lived, that a companion had water in plenty and deliberately set it aside, and was not rebuked for it. The two recognized excuses the jurists derive are precisely these: a deadly cold like Amr's, or a wound or skin ailment that water must not touch. And there is something deeper still. Amr was faced with an explicit command, that one in a state of janabah must bathe, and he understood that this command could not possibly have been meant to destroy him, and he found in another verse the room to apply the first with wisdom. He was no rigid literalist who would apply a text even unto his own death. Between the one who says the text means only its surface and the one who reads it in the light of his circumstance, the Sheikh observes, there has always been a tension, present even among the companions, some more literal and some more open, and far sharper in our own day. Our religion asks us to be faithful to the text and alive to the situation at once. It is a delicate balance with no easy formula, and Amr, on a freezing night, walked it well.

He greeted them, and they killed him

The expedition itself was no battle. When Quda'a saw five hundred riders bearing down on them they dropped everything and fled, and the Muslims came home safe and rich, exactly as the Prophet ﷺ had promised at the outset: you will be kept safe, and Allah will give you much. The tribe was too large to subdue entirely, but the message was sent, and fear was set in their hearts, and from that day the north was no threat. Coming so soon after Mu'tah, this expedition effectively secured all of northern Arabia, at least in perception, and several tribes there entered Islam and an alliance formed. But there is one more incident the books attach near here, in one of the small expeditions of those months before the conquest, and it is the heaviest thing in the whole episode. The Sheikh sets aside the names of the tribes, for there is little benefit in them, and tells it for the verse Allah revealed about it.

A party of believers was sent against a tribe that threatened the Muslims, and on the way they passed a man who lit up with joy at the sight of them and called out the greeting of peace, the unmistakable sign of a Muslim. He was a secret believer among a people who had not accepted Islam. The others lowered their weapons at his greeting. But among them was a man named Muhallim ibn Jaththama, who carried an old grudge against him from the days before Islam, some petty vendetta of the Jahiliyyah. The rest accepted the man as a Muslim; Muhallim did not. He decided the greeting was a mere pretense, that the man was only feigning Islam to save himself, and he attacked him alone, killed him, and seized his belongings as spoils. When the news reached the Prophet ﷺ, Allah sent down the verse that exposed the true motive of the deed:

O you who have believed, when you go forth [to fight] in the cause of Allāh, investigate; and do not say to one who gives you [a greeting of] peace, "You are not a believer," aspiring for the goods of worldly life.

QUR'AN 4:94

The verdict came from the heavens, the Sheikh says: it was not faith that moved your hand. It was a vendetta, and a hunger for what the man owned. Allah laid bare the intention Muhallim had hidden behind a claim of zeal.

And the Sheikh does not soften the ending. When Muhallim's people later begged the Prophet ﷺ to ask Allah's forgiveness for him, he refused, in one of the very few refusals of his entire life, because of what Allah had disclosed to him of the man's heart. It is said that within a few days Muhallim died. When his people buried him, the next morning the earth had cast his body back to the surface, lying face down. They dug again and buried him again, and again the earth would not hold him, and a third time the same. At last they gave up, laid his body in a ravine, and heaped stones over it. And the Prophet ﷺ said something that turns the whole story toward us. The earth swallows up people worse than him, he said. His crime was not the worst ever committed; the ground covers far worse. But Allah wished to warn you through him, to teach you the sanctity of a human life. You looked at a man saying peace, and you decided his heart for him, and Allah alone knew what was within it. Here the Sheikh lets the episode land where it must, on the gravest of its lessons: a soul is not yours to weigh.

What this day asks of our faith

It is a small expedition, the kind a history book would skip in a sentence, and yet look at everything it leaves in your hands. Strip it down and four plain teachings stand out, each of them about how a believer carries himself among other people and before Allah.

The first is that clean wealth is a good thing and not a guilty one. How excellent is pure wealth for a righteous man. We are quick to feel that there is something unspiritual about wanting to provide, that the pious heart should want nothing of this world, and the Prophet ﷺ corrected that misunderstanding in a single sentence to a man who felt it as sharply as we do. There is no shame in earning, on two conditions: that the money is lawful and that the heart is right. Money is one of the great tests of this ummah, and the believer does not run from a test. He asks his Lord to help him pass it. O Allah, grant me provision that is pure, and let me spend it for Your sake.

The second is that the strongest move in the room is often to step on your own pride. Abu Ubaydah was the greater man and the senior leader, ahead of Amr in Islam and in Qur'an and in standing, and he is the one who stepped down. He let go of being right so that the army would stay one. We tell ourselves that to yield is to lose, when the seerah shows the opposite: that the larger soul is the one that can set its own claim aside for the sake of the whole. And beside that lesson sits a third, that the leader need not be the best person present. Abu Bakr and Umar, the two greatest of the ummah after the Prophet ﷺ, prayed behind a Muslim of three months and did not murmur. Authority is a role, not a ranking of souls. Do not refuse to follow the one placed over you merely because you can name someone you think is better; the companions could name two, and they prayed behind Amr anyway.

The fourth is to verify before you judge. Twice in this single episode the principle stands out. The Prophet ﷺ did not condemn Amr on the strength of his soldiers' complaints; he called him and asked what had happened, for there are always two sides and the proof comes first. And when Muhallim killed a man over a greeting, the very verse Allah sent down commanded the believers to investigate, to make certain, before they decide that someone is not what he says he is. Which opens onto the heaviest lesson of the day, the one the Prophet ﷺ drew over a grave the earth would not close. A man said peace, and someone decided his heart was a lie and took his life over it, and the ground itself rejected the killer. You do not get to read what is inside another person. That knowledge belongs to Allah alone, and a single human soul is sacred beyond your power to weigh it.

So carry these out of the freezing dark of that winter and down into your ordinary days. Ask Allah for provision that is pure and for deeds He will accept. When your pride and the community's unity stand on opposite sides of a small argument, be the one who steps down. Follow the one placed over you without insisting he be the finest soul alive. And the next time you are tempted to decide what is in someone else's heart, to brand a greeting a lie or a believer a pretender, remember the body the earth threw back three mornings running, and stay your hand. May Allah send His peace and blessings upon His Messenger Muhammad ﷺ, who tested a new believer gently, who asked before he judged, who taught us that clean wealth is no shame and that the larger heart is the one that yields, and who showed us, over a grave that would not close, that a single human soul is sacred and is not ours to weigh.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 75: the recap and the expedition of Dhat as-Salasil (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (57:10, 4:29, 4:94), verified via quran.ai. The narration is the Sheikh's; the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

The conquest of Makkah, part 1

A broken treaty, and the man who came to beg

For two years the treaty of Hudaibiyyah had held, and inside its quiet something strange had happened. The peace that Quraysh had forced on the Prophet ﷺ at the edge of Makkah, the peace that read on parchment like a defeat, had turned into the widest door the religion had ever known. Men who had spent their lives swearing they would never believe sat down with Muslims now, traded with them, argued with them, and one by one were undone by what they heard. Islam grew faster in those two years of peace than it had grown in all the years of war. And so when this day arrives, the day the conquest of Makkah begins, it does not begin with a Muslim drawing a sword. It begins with a treaty tearing apart in the dark, an old blood feud no one had buried, and a murder committed inside the sacred Haram itself.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi opens this episode by reaching back, because the men who break the peace will defend themselves in front of the Prophet ﷺ by reciting the whole history of Arabia, and you cannot follow their plea unless you know what they knew. So the story begins not with the raid but with the names, the lineages, the treaties their grandfathers had sworn. The Arabs forgot none of it. They carried their genealogy and their alliances in their chests, generation upon generation, and very soon every thread of it would be laid out before the Messenger of Allah ﷺ as an argument for war.

A clause that armed both sides

Go back to the treaty itself. One of its clauses gave both sides, Quraysh and the Muslims, the right to take any Arab tribe into alliance, and whatever side a tribe joined, the terms of the treaty reached over it too. No warfare. The peace was not just between two armies; it was meant to cover everyone they gathered under them. So the tribes chose their side. The tribe of Khuzaah, many of whom had by now accepted Islam, came in with the Prophet ﷺ. The tribe of Banu Bakr, still wholly pagan, came in with Quraysh. Two tribes camped on the outskirts of Makkah, now bound to opposite ends of the same fragile peace, with a hundred years of unsettled blood between them.

Khuzaah was no small clan, and the Sheikh dwells on who they were, because they were tied to the Prophet ﷺ himself. They were one of the legendary old tribes of Arabia. It was Khuzaah who had once expelled the tribe of Jurham, the in-laws of Ismail, from the custodianship of Makkah, and Khuzaah who then ruled the sanctuary for some three hundred years, a vast honor for any tribe. And it was a chieftain of Khuzaah, generations back, who first carried idolatry into Arabia. He had traveled north to the Amalekites of Syria, a mighty people he imagined giants, and asked them the secret of their power, and they told him it lay in the idols they worshiped. So he begged one from them and brought it home, and that idol was Hubal, the very Hubal that became the principal god of the Kaaba, the Hubal that Abu Sufyan would one day cry out for over the dead at Uhud, only to hear the Prophet ﷺ answer back: Allah is higher and greater. All of this was Khuzaah's history. And there was more, woven into the Prophet's ﷺ own blood: his great grandmother, several generations removed, was a daughter of the chieftain of Khuzaah, married into the line that would become Banu Hashim.

The Arabs remembered even that, a woman's lineage five generations gone, and they would bring it to his door.

There was a treaty in that history too. When the Prophet's ﷺ ancestor took back Hubal and the Kaaba passed at last into the hands of Quraysh, the two tribes did not fall into endless war. They stayed on cordial terms, and in time his own grandfather, Abdul Muttalib, swore a formal pact with Khuzaah, recorded in the old books in deep poetic Arabic: that the two tribes would be as one, for as long as the sun rose and shone hot over the land, generation after generation, each coming to the other's aid against anyone who brought them harm. A pact meant to outlive everyone who signed it. Hold onto that pact. The man who comes to Madinah will lay it on the table as though the ink were still wet.

The night raid, and a word at the Haram

Banu Bakr and Khuzaah had been killing each other for a hundred years, the way the old tribes did. One death answered by ten, ten by a hundred, names kept on a list and handed down to sons who had not yet been born when the first blood was spilled. Islam had forced a pause. The treaty of Hudaibiyyah had split the two tribes onto opposite sides and frozen the feud in place. But nothing had healed. The list was still there, the dead still uncounted, and in the eighth year of the Hijra, Banu Bakr decided the time had come to settle it.

They knew this meant breaking the treaty, so they went first to Quraysh. Their noblemen came and explained plainly: we want our revenge, and we know we are bound by the peace, so give us permission for a single raid. And here the Sheikh plants a point he will not let pass. Quraysh did not merely look the other way. Some of their leaders quietly handed Banu Bakr weapons, almost

certainly for a share of the spoils, since there was no other reason on earth they would arm them. And one of them laughed off the danger with a line that would haunt Makkah: do not worry, attack at night, and how will Muhammad ﷺ ever find out? They knew. They approved. Their own elders armed the raid. This is not a story, the Sheikh insists, of guilty Banu Bakr and innocent Quraysh standing by. Quraysh were party to the breaking of their own treaty.

So Banu Bakr struck. They fell on a camp of Khuzaah in the dead of night at a watering hole called al-Watir, just outside the boundaries of the Haram, expecting the easy raid of the desert code, where you take the camels, perhaps wound a man, and ride away before anyone is truly hurt. It went wrong. The alarm went up, the men woke, the women and children began to scream, and what should have been a quick theft became a slaughter. More than twenty of Khuzaah were killed, an enormous number for one tribe in one night, where a raid that took even a single life was rare. And one death among them poisoned everything that followed. A man of Khuzaah broke and ran for the sanctuary, thinking only that if he could reach the Haram he would be safe, because even the pagan Arabs held that no blood could be shed on that ground. He made it to the edge of the sacred precinct, turned, and called out the name of the man chasing him: I am in the Haram now, fear your Lord. The man of Banu Bakr answered him with a blasphemy, that there is no Lord today, no religion, call on no one, and cut him down on holy ground. The treaty was not merely broken. It had been broken with a knife inside the sanctuary of Allah.

The poem that moved him

News like that cannot be buried, and Allah, the Sheikh notes, completely exposed and humiliated them through it. The chieftain of Khuzaah set out at once for Madinah with a delegation of forty men, and when he stood before the Prophet ﷺ he did what the Arabs did best in a moment that mattered: he recited a poem. A single page of it, in classical Arabic so old and deep that Dr. Yasir Qadhi pauses to admit that he himself had to sit and translate it slowly, that none of the Arabs around him could have rendered it on sight, because the tongue it was composed in reaches back past anything spoken today. It is preserved in Ibn Hisham. And it is a masterpiece of pleading.

He built his case in three claims, and every one of them was a thread of the history the Sheikh had laid out. First, the blood: you and I share an ancestor, he reminded the Prophet ﷺ, your own great grandmother was of us, we are kin. Then the pact: your grandfather Abdul Muttalib swore a treaty with my tribe, that we would be as one as long as the sun rose, generation after generation, and that bond is still owed. And then the present: we are under your treaty now, we came in on your side at Hudaibiyyah. Kin, and sworn, and allied, three claims twisted into verse. Then he turned to the slaughter, and described how his people were cut down even as they bowed in prayer, how nothing covered them, not even the Haram. This, the Sheikh says, is how news traveled in Arabia. You did not send a messenger; you composed a poem, and the better it was, the faster it spread, until it was on every tongue from one end of the peninsula to the other. This was their CNN, their Fox News, a single brilliant page that could move a nation.

It moved the Prophet ﷺ. He was visibly stirred by what he heard, and he told them plainly, twice over, that they would be helped: you shall be helped, you shall be helped, and then an oath in the

Arab idiom, may Allah never help me if I do not help you, a phrase not meant literally but as the strongest possible promise that aid was coming and there was no question of it. And as he spoke, a cloud was gathering on the horizon, and he read it as a sign, the promise of victory for Khuzaah. This too the Sheikh stops on. Islam encourages the good omen, al-fal, and the Prophet ﷺ loved it. There is no such thing in this religion as a bad omen, no black cats, no broken mirrors, no knocking on wood, all of that superstition bordering on shirk. But a good sign is permitted with two conditions: that you read something hopeful into it, and that you tie the outcome back to Allah and not to a charm. You make your dua, you see a rainbow, and you let your heart say, perhaps Allah is answering me. That is allowed, and more than allowed.

An ultimatum, and a refusal

What did the Prophet ﷺ do next? Here the Sheikh weighs two reports, the way the seerah must always be weighed. Most scholars read Ibn Ishaq to mean that he simply began preparing his army from this moment and marched, treating Quraysh's complicity as an automatic breach of the treaty, which was entirely his right; there is nothing wrong with that reading, for Quraysh had knowingly broken the peace. But there is a second report, carried by Ibn Hajar and others, that Dr. Yasir Qadhi himself leans toward, partly because it traces back soundly and partly because it shows the Prophet ﷺ doing exactly what he always did: trying, one last time, to spare the bloodshed.

In that account he sent Quraysh an ultimatum, and a remarkably fair one. Three choices. Pay the blood money for the slain of Khuzaah. Or cut off your alliance with Banu Bakr and abandon them to whatever they have brought on themselves. Or prepare for war. As reasonable, the Sheikh says, as anyone could ask.

Cut loose a tribe that betrayed the peace, or pay for the dead they killed under your protection, or fight. And Quraysh refused on both counts. The blood money for more than twenty dead would have come to two thousand camels, a staggering fortune; to grasp it, recall that the entire spoils of Badr had not reached even a few hundred camels. Two thousand would have wiped them out, left them, in their own words, with nothing but the clothes on their backs. And they would not abandon Banu Bakr, because Banu Bakr were now the only pagan tribe left anywhere near them. Every other tribe in the region had gone over, fully or in large part, to Islam. Cut Banu Bakr loose, and Quraysh, the old masters of Arabia, would be utterly alone. That refusal is its own measure of how far the world had already turned. The lords of Makkah were down to a single ally, and they clung to it because it was all they had left.

Abu Sufyan goes door to door

When the younger hotheads of Quraysh slammed the door on any compromise, refusing to pay and refusing to give an inch, Abu Sufyan understood what was coming, and he made a decision no one would have predicted. He would go to Madinah himself. He would ride into the Prophet's ﷺ own city and try to renew the treaty of Hudaibiyyah in person, and Quraysh, knowing they had broken it, put him in charge of saving it by any means he could. Sit with the picture, because the Sheikh asks you to. This is Abu Sufyan, the chieftain of Quraysh, the man who had commanded the army at Uhud and the army at the Trench. In all the years of this conflict he had entered Madinah only at the head of soldiers, only to attack. Now he rode in alone, unarmed, to beg.

He went to the Prophet ﷺ first, the Sheikh judges, because no other order makes sense, and got nothing. Not a yes, not a no, only silence. Whatever he asked, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ gave him no answer at all, and Abu Sufyan walked out sick with worry, because silence told him the peril was real and the matter already decided. So he went looking for old connections. He found Abu Bakr, radiyallahu anhu, a friend from before Islam, and asked him to intercede with the Prophet ﷺ. Abu Bakr told him flatly: I cannot help you, I can do nothing for you. He found Umar, radiyallahu anhu, once his business partner, and Umar did not even soften it; he mocked the man outright: you think I would go and speak for you before the Messenger of Allah ﷺ? Never. Two doors, shut. He went to Ali, radiyallahu anhu, the closest of them all to him in blood, since Abu Sufyan too was of Banu Hashim's wider line, and found him at home, with Fatima nearby caring for their little son Hasan. Oh Ali, he pleaded, you are the nearest man in this whole city to me in lineage, go to the Prophet ﷺ for me, do not let me go back to my people humiliated and empty handed. But Ali would not interfere. The Prophet ﷺ has decided a matter, he said, and we do not turn him from his decision once it is made.

How amazing, the Sheikh marvels, is this sight. Ali is barely more than a youth in Abu Sufyan's eyes, half his age, and yesterday Abu Sufyan was the man instigating armies and commanding the field, and now here he is going from door to door, pleading with Abu Bakr, begging Umar, reduced to entreating the young Ali. And it gets lower. Desperate, he turned to Fatima, radiyallahu anha: oh daughter of Muhammad, could you not send this little boy of yours to ask his grandfather for protection on behalf of Quraysh? And he even promised it, that the child would be honored as a chief, a sayyid, until the end of time, not knowing

that the Prophet ﷺ had already named Hasan exactly that, a master of this ummah, by a word from heaven that no man like Abu Sufyan could grant or withhold. She refused him gently: my son is far too young to grant anyone protection, and no one gives protection against the Messenger of Allah ﷺ; we are not a people who go against his decree. And here the Sheikh draws out the point that explains the very marriage the next door will turn on, the reason no guardian needed to act for the Prophet ﷺ in any matter, for as Allah has said:

The Prophet is more worthy of the believers than themselves,

QUR'AN 33:6

His own daughter turns him away

There was one door left, and it was the one that broke him: the door of his own daughter. Umm Habiba, Ramla bint Abi Sufyan, had not seen her father in something like thirteen or fifteen years. She had emigrated to Abyssinia for the sake of her faith in the middle of the Makkan years, and there her husband had done the rare and ruinous thing of abandoning Islam and dying upon his apostasy, leaving her stranded, a believing woman alone in a far country with no home to return to, for she would not go back to her pagan father in Makkah. And in that distant land the Prophet ﷺ had sent a proposal of marriage for her, and the Negus himself had stood in as the one to arrange it, paying her dowry and hosting the wedding feast in his own court while the Prophet ﷺ was a sea away. She had only lately returned. Now her father, still a pagan, walked into her house in Madinah.

As he moved to sit down, she reached out and pulled the Prophet's ﷺ bedding away so that he could not sit on it. He

looked at her, half wounded and half mocking: am I unworthy of the bedding, he asked, or is the bedding unworthy of me, which is it? It is the bedding of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, she said, and you are an idolater, and you will not sit on it. One more door, shut, and this time by his own child, who would not let him so much as rest his weight on a cloth out of honor for the Prophet ﷺ. He muttered that some evil must have touched her since she left him, that she had lost her senses, and he walked back out into the street.

Out of every option, he returned at last to the one piece of counsel Ali had given him on his way: go to the masjid, Ali had told him, and announce that you grant Quraysh your protection, for you are the chief of Kinana, the noblest man of the whole confederation, and perhaps that is something. Protection, amaan, was a real institution in that world. Any member of a tribe could extend safe passage on behalf of his people, and Islam itself kept the practice and honored it, so that even a woman, even a child not yet of age, could grant a man protection and have it stand. So Abu Sufyan rose in the masjid and declared aloud that he had given Quraysh his protection. But it was hollow, and everyone knew it, with the Prophet ﷺ having said nothing and not a soul standing to second him. He had granted a safety that was not his to give. He rode home having achieved precisely nothing, and when Quraysh heard his account, every door refused, every man turned away, they told him to his face: you have been made a fool of. There was nothing else I could do, he answered. That was the only thing left. And the Sheikh asks you to look, simply to look, at what nine years had done. Once, at the gates of Makkah, this man and his city had denied the Prophet ﷺ even the protection of an entry. Now the chieftain of Quraysh stood in the streets of Madinah begging for protection he could not buy at any price,

refused by everyone, refused by his own daughter, and going home to be laughed at for trying. Allah, the Sheikh says, would let him live to taste this, and one day to accept Islam and be forgiven. But first he had to swallow, just a little, what he had spent years dealing out to others.

An army gathered in secret

Now the Prophet ﷺ called the people to arms. And when the leader of the believers issues a general call to muster, the Sheikh explains, answering it becomes an obligation on every able man, all the more so when that leader is the Messenger of Allah ﷺ himself. So the word went out: every man who could march would march. But he would not say where. He gave them the days they needed to settle their affairs and ready their families, and through all of it he kept the destination sealed. Not from his closest companions. Not from Abu Bakr, the dearest of all of them. It is preserved that during those days of preparation Abu Bakr came to his own daughter Aisha, who was packing the Prophet's ﷺ provisions for the journey, and asked her where he was going, and she answered honestly that she had no idea. If Aisha, packing the very bags, did not know, and Abu Bakr, asking her, did not know, then no one did. Such secrecy, the Sheikh says, has almost no parallel in the whole seerah. And the reason was not any doubt about the loyalty of those he trusted. It was the plain wisdom that a secret told even to the most faithful soul, in all innocence, does not stay a secret. One person tells one trusted friend, swears him to silence, and the friend tells one more, and the city knows by morning. Some things are kept only by telling no one at all.

He did more than stay silent. He sent a small scouting party of eight men north, toward Syria, to plant the impression that the

great army was bound that way, and it was a believable feint, for the recent fighting in the north was fresh in everyone's mind, and the campaign of Tabuk would in fact draw him north the following year. The word spread that the army was headed up north, and the whole misdirection held. Only at the very last moment, the Sheikh says, quite literally the day before they set out, did the Prophet ﷺ reveal the truth: they were marching south, on Makkah. And this, exactly this, is the meaning of his famous words that war is deceit. The Sheikh halts here deliberately, because the hadith is twisted by some Muslims and by the Islamophobes alike into a license to lie, a charge that nothing a Muslim says can be trusted. It is no such thing. The Prophet ﷺ did not lie. You are never permitted to give an oath you mean to break, or to sign a treaty or a contract knowing you will betray it; that is treachery, and it is forbidden absolutely, in every circumstance. Deceit in war means only this: you let the enemy believe you are marching north while you march south. There is no broken word in it, no betrayed trust, only the camouflage and misdirection that every army on earth practices. The line is bright, and the Sheikh wants it kept bright: strategy is allowed, treachery is forbidden, and the two must never be confused.

And then they came. Not a single emigrant stayed behind, not one of the famous helpers, for Madinah was now their home and Makkah a city many of them had been driven from; and the outlying tribes poured in by the thousand, one tribe sending a thousand men, another seventeen hundred, until ten thousand believers stood under his banner. The Sheikh asks you to stop and sit with the arithmetic, because it is staggering. Roughly seven years before this, at Badr, the Muslims had numbered about three hundred, and the Prophet ﷺ had stood in the night and begged his Lord that if this small band were destroyed there

would be no one left to worship Allah on the earth. A year or two before this, ten thousand of the enemy had come down on Madinah at the Trench, and again he had turned to Allah, for they could not be fought. And now that same number, ten thousand, marched out behind him. He left on the tenth of Ramadan and reached the outskirts of Makkah on the nineteenth, ten thousand strong, in nine days, an almost impossible speed for so vast a host, when even a small swift caravan took seven.

The letter that almost changed everything

On the eve of that march, as the secret finally broke and the destination became known, one of the great companions made the single worst mistake of his life. The moment he learned the army was bound for Makkah, he sat down and wrote a letter in secret to the people there, warning them to brace themselves, that the Prophet ﷺ was coming, that they would be attacked and should prepare. His name was Hatib. And, the Sheikh promises, his is a long story and a beneficial one, full of wisdom and full of mercy: why a believer of his rank, a man of Badr, would do such a thing, and why the Prophet ﷺ, knowing all of it, would choose in the end to forgive him.

That is where this day leaves us, on the very edge of everything. The treaty is broken, the proud chieftain has been sent home a fool, the deceit has held, ten thousand are on the road covering the desert at impossible speed, and a single secret letter is racing ahead of them toward Makkah, carrying the one warning that could undo it all. We pick up the cliffhanger from here.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read this day as politics, the clever maneuvering of a statesman closing in on his enemy, and to

leave it there. That would be to miss what it asks of us. Strip it down and four things stand out, and not one of them stays in the seventh century.

He kept a word he had not even given. The treaty that bound the Prophet ﷺ to Khuzaah was not his treaty; it was his grandfather's, sworn before Islam, before he was born, in the dark days of idolatry. And he honored it, because a binding agreement stays binding as long as it holds nothing forbidden, and Abdul Muttalib's pact held nothing forbidden. Faithfulness to a promise, the Sheikh teaches plainly here, does not expire with the one who made it. We treat our commitments as ours to renegotiate the moment they grow inconvenient; he treated even an inherited word as a debt that had come due. Ask what promises you are quietly letting lapse because the person who made them, or the version of you who made them, feels long gone.

He drew the brightest possible line between strategy and treachery, and he never once let it blur. War is deceit, he said, and then he showed exactly what that did and did not mean: misdirect the enemy all you like, send scouts north and march south, wear the camouflage every army wears, but never, ever break an oath or betray a contract or go back on your given word. The difference between cleverness and treachery is the difference between a feint and a lie, and most of the cruelty in the world lives in the place where people pretend they cannot tell them apart. In your own dealings, in business and in speech, the test is simple: did I mislead an opponent's expectations, which is allowed, or did I break my word, which is forbidden? Keep that line as bright as he kept it.

He watched power turn, and so should you. The Sheikh will not let the image of Abu Sufyan go, and neither should we. Yesterday he led armies; today he wanders Madinah with his hands out and is refused at every door, including the door of the daughter who was once his. No standing on this earth is permanent, none of it. The man on top this year is the man begging next year, and the only security that does not crumble is security with Allah and His Messenger ﷺ. Hold whatever you have been given, your position, your influence, your good name, lightly, and humbly, because it was always on loan.

And he guarded a secret as an act of wisdom, not suspicion. He withheld the destination from the people he loved and trusted most, not because he doubted them but because he understood how even an innocent word travels, swearing a friend to silence and watching the city know by dawn. Some matters are kept best by telling no one at all. There is a discipline in that for all of us, in an age that confuses sharing with sincerity and treats every withheld thing as a betrayal. Not every truth is owed to every ear, and the strength to carry something alone, in trust, is its own kind of faith.

So take this day down into your ordinary life. Keep the word you gave, and even the word you only inherited. Misdirect an opponent if you must, but never break a promise, and never blur the line between the two. Look at the proud man begging at the closed door and loosen your grip on whatever standing you imagine is yours. And when something must be held in silence, hold it. The treaty broke, the chieftain was humbled, and ten thousand marched, but the lesson the whole episode rests on is older and quieter than any of it: power passes, promises do not, and the only standing that lasts is standing with him ﷺ. May Allah send His peace and His blessings upon His Messenger ﷺ,

keep us true to every word we give, gather us under his banner the day the nations are gathered, and let us be of those who march behind him and never against him.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 76: the conquest of Makkah, part 1 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translation is from Sahih International (33:6), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The Conquest of Makkah, Part 2

The letter in the braids, and the man Badr saved

The army was being raised in the dark. The Prophet ﷺ had told no one where this march was going, not the men sharpening their blades, not the clans counting their riders, not even, until almost the last hour, his closest companions. Eventually he had to say it, because you cannot send an army anywhere without telling it to prepare, and so a day or two before they moved he let the destination out: Makkah. But for weeks before that he had carried one quiet du'a above every other plan, a du'a Dr. Yasir Qadhi sets at the very center of this whole campaign: O Allah, do not let my plan reach them. Everything was riding on Makkah not seeing this coming. The city that had hunted him out of his own home eight years earlier was not to know that ten thousand were forming up against it until they were already at its gates.

And then one of his own men sat down and wrote Quraysh a letter to warn them.

This is the story of that letter. It will take up almost the whole of this chapter, because, the Sheikh says, it is one of the most significant stories in the entire seerah, dense with benefit, and at the same time one of the most dangerously misused stories Muslims carry. People reach for it today to justify killing other Muslims. So we have to walk it slowly, scene by scene: who the man was, how Allah exposed what no human eye could have

found, what he said when the sword was already at his neck, and why the Prophet ﷺ would not let it fall.

A believer writes to the enemy

His name was Hatib ibn Abi Balta'a, and he did not belong to Quraysh by blood. According to the strongest report he was a mawla from Yemen, a man of immigrant, second-class standing in Makkah, attached as a client to one of the Qurayshi houses. By another report he was a freed slave who had bought his own liberty. The two accounts agree on what matters: Hatib was not a Qurayshi noble. He was an outsider who had heard the truth, accepted Islam, and made the hijrah to Madinah, and the second report quietly explains the wound at the heart of his story, because if he had been a slave then his family had been slaves too, and they could not simply pack up and follow him north. However it happened, when Hatib left Makkah, his children stayed behind, and by one narration his mother stayed with them. He had no tribe back there to stand over them. Every other great Muhajir had clansmen in Makkah who would never let their own blood be touched. Hatib had no one.

So when word reached him that the Prophet ﷺ was preparing to move, Hatib wrote to the people of Makkah. Ibn Ishaq does not preserve the wording, but one or two other books carry the gist, and it is unmistakable. By one version he hedged, telling them only that the Muslims were marching with an army and might be coming their way, so take your precautions, which would mean he wrote before the destination was even announced. By the fuller version he named it outright: Muhammad is coming for you with an army like the night, and the image is poetic, the night being dense and dark and crowded, so picture the sheer mass of the host, and he is rushing toward you like a torrent. And then,

woven into the warning itself, a line that gives the whole man away. By Allah, even if he came to you alone, Allah would still give him the victory over you, for Allah will keep His promise to him.

Sit with that sentence, because it will matter at the end. Even as he spilled the secret, Hatib could not stop confessing his own certainty: it will not save you, he is telling them, he will win no matter what you do. This was not a man who had lost his faith in the Prophet ﷺ. This was a man whose faith and whose fear were at war inside him, and on this one night the fear got his hand to the pen.

He had a letter that could undo an entire campaign, and he needed it carried in total secrecy. So he found a travelling woman, a mawla herself, no one famous, a name the books barely record, precisely so that no eye would follow her. He paid her, and he did not tell her what the letter said. Her one task was to smuggle it to Quraysh and breathe a word of it to no one, and her pay waited on its safe delivery. She took it, untied her hair, laid the folded paper against her scalp, and braided it back in until it was buried in the plaits, hidden where she was sure no one would ever look. Then she set out for Makkah. No one had watched Hatib write it. The carrier herself did not know its contents. There was, the Sheikh says plainly, no human way on earth that this letter was ever going to be found.

The secret that could not be kept

There was no human way. So Allah sent Jibril.

The Prophet ﷺ was told the whole of it from above the heavens: there is a letter, here is the woman who carries it, she is on such-and-such a caravan on such-and-such a road, go and stop her

and bring it back. He dispatched riders at once, among them Ali, with a description so exact it could only have come from revelation. Ride out to Rawdat Khakh, just beyond Madinah. You will find a woman travelling with a certain party. She is carrying a letter. Take it from her and bring it to me. Look, the Sheikh says, at the precision of a knowledge that comes straight from Jibril: not a hunch, not a search of the roads, but the place, the company, and the cargo named in advance.

They galloped out and caught the caravan exactly where he had said. They demanded the letter. The woman told them she had nothing, that she did not know what they were talking about. So they searched. They went through every item she carried, piece by piece. They made the camel kneel and searched it, searched the saddle, turned over her belongings, and found nothing, because there was nothing to find anywhere except in her hair. And here one of the riders drew a line worth memorizing and carrying for life. By Allah, he said, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has not lied to us, and we have not lied to you. Either you produce this letter, or we will strip you and search you ourselves. There was not a flicker of doubt in him. Follow the chain of his certainty: Jibril does not lie to the Prophet ﷺ, and the Prophet ﷺ does not lie to us, so the letter exists, whatever our search has turned up so far. The absence of the letter in her bags did not shake his trust by a hair. It only meant they had not yet looked in the right place.

When she saw they meant it, she asked them to turn around. Pause on her, because the Sheikh does, almost ashamed on our behalf. Here is a non-Muslim woman, alone on an open road, surrounded by armed men, threatened with being stripped, and what she will not surrender even now is her modesty. She would not let strange men see her hair. She made them turn their backs,

took off her head covering, unwound the braids herself, and handed over the letter. Covering the hair, the Sheikh notes, was not in those days a Muslim marker at all; it was simply what every woman of every civilized society did, in Arabia and in Rome and, two centuries ago, here in America. And it is a sorrow, he says, that so many of us today have let go of the very shyness that this woman clung to with men standing over her ready to search her body. She was brought back to the Prophet ﷺ with the letter. She told the truth: a man had paid her, she did not know what the letter contained, she had simply done as she was hired to do. And she was let go, because she had not knowingly committed any crime. She is not mentioned again.

O you who have believed, do not take My enemies and your enemies as allies, extending to them affection while they have disbelieved in what came to you of the truth, having driven out the Prophet and yourselves [only] because you believe in Allah, your Lord. If you have come out for jihad [i.e., fighting or striving] in My cause and seeking means to My approval, [take them not as friends]. You confide to them affection [i.e., instruction], but I am most knowing of what you have concealed and what you have declared. And whoever does it among you has certainly strayed from the soundness of the way.

QUR'AN 60:1

The sword, and the man under it

Now the letter lay in the Prophet's ﷺ own hand, and the handwriting was Hatib's, and Jibril had already named him. There was nothing left to establish. The evidence could not be more complete: revelation from heaven, a witness, a confession waiting to happen, the document itself. And still the Prophet ﷺ summoned Hatib and asked him: did you do this?

Stop here, the Sheikh insists, because the lesson is enormous and most of us trample straight over it. The case was airtight. Jibril had told him everything. He did not need a single word more. And yet he called the man in and gave him the chance to answer to his face. If even here, with the proof total and divine, a man is still asked before he is condemned, then when you hear something about someone, however damning it sounds, you confirm it to him directly and you hear his side before you let a single word of verdict leave your mouth. This is not softness. This is the law of how a believer handles an accusation.

Hatib did not deny it. It is my letter, he said. And in the same breath Umar ibn al-Khattab was on his feet, his hand reaching for his weapon: O Messenger of Allah, let me strike the neck of this hypocrite, for he has betrayed Allah and His Messenger. But the Prophet ﷺ said, leave him. And then Hatib spoke, and the thing to notice is what he fought for. He did not fight for his life. He fought for his faith. O Messenger of Allah, he said, by Allah, I have not changed, I have not abandoned my religion, I did not prefer disbelief over Islam. I did not do this out of any love for the disbelief of Quraysh. I knew with certainty that Allah would give you the victory and that you would not be harmed, that my letter could not touch you. I wanted only one thing: a hand with Quraysh, some favor they would remember, so that they would protect my family, because every one of your other companions has clansmen in Makkah to guard his relatives, and I have no one there to guard mine.

Read that again, and see a man arguing for his iman with a drawn sword waiting at his head. He never once says spare me. He almost certainly believed he was about to die and had made his peace with it. What he could not bear was to die with the word disbeliever fixed to his name, and so he spent every breath he

had on that and on nothing else. Then the Prophet ﷺ gave his verdict: he has told you the truth. Say nothing about him but good.

Perhaps Allah has forgiven the people of Badr

Umar was not satisfied, and his second objection was sharper than the first, because it had shifted ground. O Messenger of Allah, he said in effect, even granting that he has faith, he is a spy, he has betrayed the trust placed in him, so let me deal with him. The Sheikh draws the line between the two objections with care, because it is the hinge of the whole episode. The first time, Umar spoke as though Hatib had stepped out of Islam altogether, as though this act were itself disbelief, and the killing he asked for was the killing of an apostate. The second time he set the question of faith aside entirely and argued the law: this is treason, and the penalty for treason is death.

And Umar was not wrong about the principle. Betraying your own people to an invading enemy has been counted among the gravest crimes there is, across nations and across centuries, right down to our own day. The Sheikh reaches for a recent example so no one walks away muttering that Islamic law is harsh: in living memory, on this very soil, a husband and wife were put to death for selling secrets to a foreign power, and the judge told them they had done something worse than murder. No serious nation treats treachery as a small thing. Umar was reading the law correctly.

But the Prophet ﷺ answered with something that no law book could contain and only he could know. Did he not witness Badr? And what can tell you, Umar, that Allah has not looked upon the people of Badr and said: do as you wish, for I have already forgiven you? At that, the man who a heartbeat earlier had

wanted a sword drawn dissolved into tears. Umar wept, and he said: Allah and His Messenger know best. We carry a picture of Umar as all hardness and edge, and the Sheikh asks us to correct it here, because under that sternness was a heart this tender, a heart that one sentence about the forgiveness of Allah could melt straight through. His harshness, the Sheikh adds, was itself a mercy the ummah needed in its season; it was no accident that the great conquests came in the years of his rule. Sometimes a community needs the strict hand, and Allah gave it one when it was needed. But the strict hand here gave way at once to the soft heart underneath it.

And it was at this moment, the books record, that Allah sent down the opening of Surah al-Mumtahanah, the chapter named for exactly this kind of test, a chapter whose very name speaks of the woman, and the believer, who must be examined. Hatib had not betrayed the believers out of love for the enemy or hatred of the faith; he had done it out of fear for his children. But Allah was not only judging one frightened man on one night. He was teaching the whole ummah, to the end of time, where the line sits, and reminding every believer who would ever read it that whatever they bury in secret, He already knows it: I am most knowing of what you have concealed and what you have declared.

Judge a person by the whole of his life

Because of one sentence, say nothing about him but good, Hatib lived on for more than twenty years, and not once in all that time did anyone throw this letter in his face. Not once. The Sheikh wants you to feel the sheer weight of that authority. Here was a leader so trusted that a single ruling from his lips could take a man's worst hour, the very worst thing he ever did, and seal it

permanently out of reach, so that an entire community would cover it for the rest of that man's life. Hatib went on to serve. The Prophet ﷺ later chose him as his own emissary, sending him with a letter to the ruler of Egypt. He fought on. He died years afterward in the caliphate of Uthman, his standing whole and unblemished. And the Sheikh adds a quiet aside that lands like a benediction: generations later, one of Hatib's own descendants became a leading student of Imam Malik and helped carry the Maliki school across North Africa and into Andalusia, where it remains the dominant school to this day. Such, he says, are the works of Allah: from the man who wrote the letter, a line that would teach the religion to a continent.

This, the Sheikh says, is precisely how we are taught to weigh people: by the sum total of who they are, the good and the bad together, never by their worst three minutes. The righteous person who slips once is not the same as the habitual sinner who does the identical thing. There is even a hadith, the Sheikh notes, for the people of standing in a community, not the people of knowledge necessarily but the movers, the ones who carry it and serve it and fund its mosques: when such a one slips, overlook it, cut him some slack. We live in an age, he warns, that does the exact opposite, hunting through a person's thousand good hours for the five bad minutes and holding up only those. And he says it about himself, knowing he is among those picked apart this way: a scholar who speaks every day, now permanently recorded, will inevitably say something wrong somewhere across a thousand hours, and to comb for those minutes and parade them while going blind to all the good is not zeal. It is, he says, a disease of the heart.

The Sheikh folds several of his other benefits in alongside this one. The first is the infinite knowledge of Allah, that nothing

escapes Him: a letter braided into a stranger's hair on an empty road, and He exposed it. It is the same Lord, the Sheikh reminds us, who heard the woman who came to dispute about her husband while Aisha sat in the very same room, behind a curtain, straining to catch her words and unable to, and Allah heard that complaint from above the seven heavens and answered it in the Qur'an. He hears what is whispered an arm's length away and unheard; He reads what is folded into a braid and unseen. The second is that du'a is the believer's true weapon. The march on Makkah stayed hidden, above all the secrecy, for one reason: the Prophet ﷺ had asked Allah to keep it hidden. O Allah, do not let my plan reach them. That du'a was the real precaution, and it was answered. The third balances it: even when Allah is handing you a miracle, He still wants your effort. He could have struck the woman down with lightning, or lost her camel in the desert until she died of thirst. Instead riders had to mount and gallop and search. Give your hundred percent, the Sheikh says, and leave the rest to Allah, because even when the help is entirely His, the effort He asks for is still yours.

The story they turn into a weapon

Here the Sheikh slows down and tells you, without flinching, that this is where the story has been turned into one of the most politically loaded passages in the entire seerah, and he does not pretend the hard question away. The question is real: what is the status of a Muslim who helps an enemy that is invading the Muslims? Hatib himself is not in doubt, because the Prophet ﷺ vouched for him directly. The doubt is about everyone after him. What of someone in our own time who aids an invading force against a Muslim land, who feeds it information, or works for it, or fights in its ranks?

There are two main answers, and the Sheikh lays them both out with respect. The first is the stricter one: that to aid an invading enemy against the Muslims is itself an act of disbelief, by that action alone. Its proof is a verse of Surah al-Ma'idah:

O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are [in fact] allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you - then indeed, he is [one] of them. Indeed, Allah guides not the wrongdoing people.

QUR'AN 5:51

Whoever allies with them is one of them: this camp reads the words to mean that aiding the enemy expels a person from the faith outright. It is the position, the Sheikh says, of a number of serious and respected scholars, among them Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, who counted aiding the disbelievers against the Muslims among the very nullifiers of Islam, and Ahmad Shakir in Egypt, writing under British occupation, who ruled that whoever supported the British in any way at all, even by approving of their rule in speech, had left the fold of Islam. The Sheikh is explicit and generous here: he respects this position and the scholars who hold it; they have every right to their reading; he does not dismiss it.

But he leans, in the end, toward the more careful reading of Ibn Taymiyyah, and he draws it straight out of Hatib's own words. If a man aids the enemy out of love for their disbelief and hatred of the believers because they are believers, that is disbelief on its own, even if he never lifts a finger, because the heart alone has already done it. But if he aids them for a worldly reason, for his family, for property, out of a private fear, then it is a grave sin that wounds his faith without tearing him out of it. And that, exactly, is

Hatib. He did not love the idols of Quraysh; he loved his mother and his children. He preferred their safety over the confidence of Allah and His Messenger in that one moment, and Allah named the act a grave straying, a wandering far from the path, yet never once called him a disbeliever, and the Prophet ﷺ guarded both his life and his name. The whole of Hatib's defense, the Sheikh points out, is precisely this argument: I have not changed, my heart is still full of iman, I did this out of fear, not out of love for kufr.

And this, the Sheikh says, is where the real danger lives in our own age, and he is blunt about it to the point of putting himself in the line of fire. The groups he calls jihadist, using the word, he is careful to say, as a plain academic label and not as praise, because what they do is not the jihad Allah and His Messenger laid down, almost all reach for the strictest verdict. They cut the strict ruling out of the book and paste it onto any Muslim who will not follow their line, until people who pray, who fast, who keep the Shariah are branded disbelievers and declared lawful to kill, simply for disagreeing. He has been accused of disbelief himself, he says, a hundred times over, for saying exactly this. And his answer is the beating heart of the whole episode: a ruling is not Google, to be copied and pasted. The work of the scholar is not to read a line in a book and assume it lands on the situation in front of him; it is to weigh the actual human being, his motive, his circumstance, his ignorance or his compulsion, the way the Prophet ﷺ weighed Hatib before he judged him. An act of disbelief, the Sheikh reminds us, does not by consensus make a person a disbeliever, because there may be a misreading in the heart, as there was in Hatib, who genuinely believed his letter could do no harm; or sheer ignorance, which Allah excuses, as He excused the terrified man who told his children to burn his

body so his Lord could not gather him; or compulsion, as with the companion forced to utter words of disbelief while his heart stayed firm. To strip the faith off a praying Muslim so casually, the Sheikh says, is itself the way of the very fanatics the early Muslims feared, and it has done the ummah more damage than the invading armies ever did. When chaos comes, he says, hold your tongue. The Prophet ﷺ warned that whoever calls his brother a disbeliever, the word returns to one of the two of them; if it does not land on the one accused, it comes back on the one who said it. Err, always, on the side of caution. Whoever prays as we pray, faces our qiblah, and eats our slaughter is a Muslim, and Allah will never punish you for having been too slow to cast a believer out of the faith.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read this as a spy story with a merciful ending and leave it there. That would be to miss the questions it presses against our own hearts, and there are several, because the Sheikh drew several out of one evening.

Hatib hid his secret where no human being could ever have found it, and Allah found it. Nothing you fold away in the dark is folded away from Him. He hears the whisper you yourself cannot make out across a small room, and He reads the letter buried in a braid on an empty road. Ask, then, how you would live this single day if you truly carried the knowledge that you are seen: every private message, every hidden account, every thing done where no eye reaches. The man who lives as one who is watched, because he is, has already won half the battle with himself.

And notice the order of the Prophet's ﷺ own striving. The campaign stayed secret not finally because of clever security but because he had asked his Lord to keep it secret, and then he

sent the riders out anyway. Du'a first, and then the full weight of human effort, and never one without the other. We are quick to exhaust our own plans and slow to ask, or quick to ask and too lazy to move. His way was both at once: beg Allah to do what only Allah can do, and then gallop as though it all depended on you. He wants your hundred percent, and then He wants you to rest the rest in Him.

Then there is the way a man was judged. With the proof total and revelation itself naming him, the Prophet ﷺ still turned to Hatib and asked, did you do this. If the case that airtight was still put to the man's own face, then we have no excuse, ever, for the verdict we pass on someone behind his back on a fraction of the evidence. Confirm it to the person. Hear his reason. There may be a whole world in it you cannot see from outside. And when you have heard it, weigh him as the Prophet ﷺ weighed Hatib: by the sum total of his life, his Badr and his letter together, not by his worst three minutes pulled out and held to the light while the thousand good hours go dark. To see only the failure, the Sheikh warned, is a sickness of the heart, not a sign of zeal.

And last, and heaviest, there is the thing Hatib fought for. With a sword at his neck he never once said spare me. He spent his last breath defending his iman, because dying was bearable to him and dying labelled a disbeliever was not. Hold that against the ease with which the word is thrown today. The man who pleads for his faith and not his life when he thinks he is about to die is not a man who hates his Lord, and the Prophet ﷺ knew it, and shielded him, and sealed his name as good for twenty more years. Be slow, then, terrified-slow, to put a praying soul outside the faith. Leave that weighing to those truly qualified for it, and for the rest of us, when the fitna is thick and the tongues are

loud, the safest and most beloved thing before Allah is often silence.

So take this evening down into your ordinary days. Live as one who is seen, because you are. Ask Allah first and then work as though it is all on your shoulders. Hear a person out before you judge him, cover his slip the way the Prophet ﷺ covered Hatib's, and weigh him by the whole of his life. And guard your tongue from declaring against anyone who prays to Allah, for the word you throw has a way of coming home. O Allah, You are peace, and from You is peace, and to You peace returns; make our hearts firm upon Your religion, keep our tongues from casting out those who pray to You, gather us among the forgiven people of Badr, and let us meet our Prophet ﷺ with nothing on our record that he would not wish to see. Ameen.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 77: the conquest of Makkah, part 2 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (60:1, 5:51), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing has been followed.

The Conquest of Makkah, Part 3

The march back, and the men who came home before the gates fell

The army has formed, and the road north is open. On the tenth of Ramadan, in the eighth year after the Hijrah, the Prophet ﷺ rides out of Madinah at the head of ten thousand and turns toward the city that once drove him into the dark. The march is a secret kept so tightly that Makkah itself does not yet know he is coming. Letters have been intercepted, mouths have been sealed, and the largest force Arabia has ever seen is moving across the desert almost without a rumor to announce it.

But the famous part of this story, the city that falls without a battle, is still days away. What the road delivers first is not a battlefield. It is men. Four of them, every one once an enemy of the Prophet ﷺ, every one now hurrying in the opposite direction to reach Islam before it arrives without them. Today belongs to them. Dr. Yasir Qadhi frames the whole of this lesson around their conversions, because before the conquest had begun at all, Islam was already winning back the people who had hated it longest, one man at a time, on an open road. It is a day about the door that stays open until the very last moment, and about who is small enough to walk through it.

Leaving, and the man no one remembers

Before he had gone a mile, the Prophet ﷺ made a quiet decision that is easy to ride straight past. He left Madinah in the care of a

companion almost no one has heard of, before this day or after it: Abu Ruhm al-Ghifari. There is a lesson hidden in that name alone. The plain fact, the Sheikh notes, is that every major companion you can name marched on Makkah; the great names were all on the road. And yet someone still had to mind the city, to keep the home behind the army standing. The someone was not a famous man. History barely records him. There is no shame in being the one who holds the home front while the others ride out to glory, and the choosing of an unknown man to guard Madinah is the Prophet's ﷺ own way of saying so.

He ﷺ and his companions were fasting, for it was Ramadan, and he did not break that fast inside the walls of the city. He waited until they reached a place called Kadid, just outside Madinah, and only there did he break it, and the people broke theirs along with him. The Sheikh pauses on this small scene, because the vast majority of scholars build a ruling out of it. Travel does not begin from inside your own city. You are not permitted to shorten your prayer or to skip the fast of a travel-day while you are still within your own walls. So if your journey falls in Ramadan, you begin that day fasting, and you keep fasting until your city is genuinely behind you. Dr. Yasir Qadhi makes it concrete for the rest of us, who no longer travel by camel: if your flight leaves at three in the afternoon, you cannot break your fast in the Memphis airport, or in any airport, because the airport is still inside the city. You cannot shorten your prayer in your own house before you set out. The departure begins where the city ends, and not one step before.

The last man ever to emigrate

They were barely two days out, still less than halfway and perhaps no more than a quarter of the way, when they passed

the valley of al-Juhfah. Coming the other way, from Makkah toward Madinah, was a small caravan: women, children, and at its head the uncle of the Prophet ﷺ, al-Abbas, traveling with his wives and his family. He was coming as a muhajir. He had no idea any of this was happening. The march was a secret so complete that all of Makkah was in the dark; an uncle on the road to join the Muslims certainly had not been told.

And so Allah handed al-Abbas an honor that no human being after him would ever receive. The Prophet ﷺ was the seal of the prophets; there is no prophet after him. Al-Abbas, by meeting the army at exactly this place, became the seal of the emigrants: there is no hijrah after the conquest of Makkah, and he made it under the wire, never even reaching Madinah, his intention to emigrate carrying him over the line just as the gate was closing. The Sheikh notes a hadith on this, that the Prophet ﷺ told him you are the last of the emigrants just as I am the last of the prophets; the report is weak, but, as he reminds us, there is no harm in using a weak narration in history, only in law. The Prophet ﷺ rejoiced at the sight of his uncle, told him to settle his family somewhere safe and then catch up, and al-Abbas, riding light and alone, soon overtook the slow-moving host.

When exactly al-Abbas entered Islam is a question the scholars argued over for pages, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi lays out their whole range without forcing one of them on us. Some placed it impossibly early; some at the ransom after Badr, when he was a prisoner of war and the Prophet ﷺ told him of money he had buried in secret that no one alive could have known of; some before the conquest of Khaybar; and some right here, on this road. What the Sheikh will say with confidence, setting the academic question aside, is this: after the Battle of Badr, al-Abbas knew Islam was true. Whether he declared it then or kept

it hidden, serving for years as the Prophet's ﷺ man inside Makkah, his heart had already turned. This was the uncle the Prophet ﷺ had once named at Badr among the three not to be killed; this was the man whose grief at false news of a Muslim defeat, and whose joy at the truth, had given him away. He waited a long time. He did not, in the end, wait too long.

The cousins who were turned away

Two more men slipped out of Makkah in panic and fear, and hurried to meet the army before it could reach the city. They did not emigrate to Madinah; they simply came to submit on the road, about a day's journey out. Both were first cousins of the Prophet ﷺ. Both had spent years wounding him. Abu Sufyan ibn al-Harith was the son of al-Harith, the eldest of the Prophet's ﷺ uncles, and he was a poet, and in the years in Makkah he had aimed his poetry at the Prophet ﷺ like a weapon, composing verse after verse to ridicule the message and mock the man. In that age there was no crueller form of slander than this. The other cousin, Abdullah ibn Abi Umayyah, had once stood before the chiefs of Quraysh and thrown a sneer in the Prophet's ﷺ face: I will never believe in you, he said, until you climb a ladder into the sky in front of me and bring back down a book and a covenant we can read with our own eyes, and even then, I am not sure I would believe. The height of arrogance, and delivered in the open parliament of Quraysh, before all their leaders. These were men the Prophet ﷺ had grown up beside, blood relatives bound by the old cousin's camaraderie, and they had turned on him when he was most in need of them.

That exact mockery, the Sheikh notes, is written into the Qur'an. Allah recorded the demands of the deniers, every escalating one

of them, and answered them all in a single dignified line placed in His Prophet's ﷺ own mouth:

And they say, "We will not believe you until you break open for us from the ground a spring Or [until] you have a garden of palm trees and grapes and make rivers gush forth within them in force [and abundance] Or you make the heaven fall upon us in fragments as you have claimed or you bring Allah and the angels before [us] Or you have a house of ornament [i.e., gold] or you ascend into the sky. And [even then], we will not believe in your ascension until you bring down to us a book we may read." Say, "Exalted is my Lord! Was I ever but a human messenger?"

QUR'AN 17:90-93

The spring from the ground, the garden with rivers running through it, the sky torn down in fragments, Allah and the angels brought out in ranks, the house of gold, the climb into heaven, the book carried back down in hand: every impossible thing the deniers demanded, gathered and recorded forever, and met with one calm sentence. Exalted is my Lord. Was I ever but a human messenger? The demand for a spectacle is answered not with a spectacle but with the dignity of a servant who knows exactly what he is and what he is not.

Now these two cousins came begging. They did not go to the Prophet ﷺ directly. They went to his wife Umm Salamah, radiyallahu anha, the sister of one of them, and asked her to carry their request inside, to intercede for them and tell him that his cousins had come in remorse. She felt for them, after all they were her own kin, and she went in and laid their plea before him. The answer came back hard: I have no need for them. I have no need to see them, and no wish to. He ﷺ would not even grant them an audience.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi stops here deliberately, because this scene stings people who only know the gentle Prophet ﷺ, the one who pardoned and pardoned and pardoned again. How could he refuse them outright? But the Sheikh answers it plainly. You cannot govern, you cannot establish justice, you cannot protect a community, by always and only turning the other cheek. Any creed that preaches nothing but endless forgiveness collapses the moment it must build a society, because people will take advantage of it without end. So in the life of the Prophet ﷺ the general rule was mercy, the standing law was forgiveness, but there remained, deliberately, a fear in it: that to cross the line all the way had a cost, and that crossing it was not always met with a smile. He treated people, too, according to who they were; he was gentler with a raw bedouin than with the senior companions he held to a higher standard, and these two were no strangers but cousins who knew exactly what they were doing when they did it. And there was a second wisdom folded inside the refusal, the Sheikh adds, one that the next hour would reveal: it was a test. Turn an insincere man away at the door, and he grows angry and leaves, his pride wounded, muttering that if you do not want him he does not want you. Turn a man away who has finally understood what Islam truly is, and he will not leave. He will stand at the door and refuse to go. It is the difference, the Sheikh says, between Iblis, who was rejected and grew arrogant, and Adam, who fell and begged to return.

I will not go back

Abu Sufyan ibn al-Harith did not leave. He raised his voice where he knew the Prophet ﷺ would hear it, and he took his young son Ja'far by the hand and lifted him up, and called out: if you will not see me, then by Allah, my son and I will walk out into the desert

until we die of hunger and thirst. I am not going back to Makkah. You may call it emotional blackmail, the Sheikh says, and you would not be wrong, but it worked, because the heart it was aimed at was a soft and gentle one. This was his cousin, and the small boy was his cousin's son, his own nephew, a child he had perhaps never even met, but blood all the same. The histories say the Prophet ﷺ felt the softness rise in him at the sound of his cousin begging, and he let the two of them in.

Abu Sufyan had a poem ready, as he always did, but this one had turned all the way around. The Sheikh says the loss of these poems in translation is among his own regrets in teaching the seerah in English, for they are full of a profound beauty that even fluent modern Arabic cannot fully unlock. One line of it ran, in its meaning: a guide other than myself guided me to Allah, a guide whom I kept repelling at every opportunity I could find, and still he kept on guiding me. When Abu Sufyan reached that line, the Prophet ﷺ struck him lightly on the chest, the brotherly way you push someone you love, and said: yes, you repelled me every time you could. The grief he had carried showed for a moment in those words, the hurt of a man whose own cousin had turned a weapon on him. And then he forgave him, fully. This same Abu Sufyan ibn al-Harith would prove the depth of his new faith within weeks, at the Battle of Hunayn, standing firm beside the Prophet ﷺ when others broke and ran, and shaming those who fled.

So three men of the old enemy had already come home before the city was even in sight: al-Abbas the uncle, and the two cousins, Abu Sufyan ibn al-Harith and Abdullah ibn Abi Umayyah. The conquest had not begun, and the hardest hearts were already turning.

Ten thousand fires in the dark

Twenty kilometers from Makkah, roughly a single day's journey out, the army reached a place called Marr az-Zahran and made its final camp. In the morning they would march in. And here the Prophet ﷺ gave an order that says everything about how far the world had turned: light your fires. Every man, light his own. There was no longer any need to hide their numbers, no need for the old caution that had shadowed every earlier expedition. Ten thousand fires bloomed across the plain until the dark itself seemed to catch and burn, campfire upon campfire as far as the eye could reach.

Makkah was a shadow of the city that had driven him out. Fifteen years of emigration, of warriors lost, of tribe after allied tribe accepting Islam, had hollowed it out. The Sheikh reckons it held perhaps a fifth, even a sixteenth, of the people who had filled it when the message first came; the rest had emigrated or fallen, and more than three quarters of Quraysh's old allies had themselves become Muslim. The few who remained could not field an army, and the allies who might once have come would not. Dr. Yasir Qadhi names the reversal in a single breath, and it is worth stopping over: only three years earlier, at the trench around Madinah, the whole of Arabia had massed at the gates of the Muslims to wipe Islam off the earth. Now Islam stood at the gates of Makkah, and Quraysh had no one left to call. The table had turned, completely, and all of it belonged to Allah and His Messenger.

Al-Abbas, the brand-new emigrant whose conversion Quraysh still did not know about, felt the old pity for his former people stir in him as he looked at those fires. He had been one of them only yesterday. He begged the Prophet ﷺ to let him ride out and try to spare Makkah a battle, to give the people one last chance to

come out and submit before the army came in. The Prophet ﷺ gave him his own mule to ride, and sent him into the night.

The chieftain on the Prophet's mule

In the dark al-Abbas overheard three men who had crept out of Makkah to scout the strange fires on the plain. The loudest of them was Abu Sufyan ibn Harb, the great chieftain of Makkah, and the Sheikh is careful to keep him distinct from the cousin of the same name: this is the famous Abu Sufyan, the father of Mu'awiyah, the last senior leader Quraysh had left, for Badr and the years after it had taken all his peers. He and his companions could make no sense of what they saw; it never once occurred to them that the Muslims could be this many. One of them guessed wildly that some friendly tribe must have come to defend Makkah, and Abu Sufyan, who knew the tribes better than any of them, answered that they had neither the courage nor the numbers to be this. Al-Abbas called out to him by name. This, he said, is the army of Muhammad ﷺ, and these are not your helpers, and if he takes the city by force tomorrow, your head will be the first to fall. Come with me, and I will ask him to spare you.

Abu Sufyan, seeing no other road, climbed up behind al-Abbas on the Prophet's ﷺ own mule, and the two of them rode straight through ten thousand men, every one of whom would have killed him on sight and gladly. At every campfire a voice challenged them out of the dark, and every time al-Abbas answered, this is al-Abbas on the mule of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and every time they were waved on without another word, because to ride the Prophet's ﷺ own mount was a sign not just of protection but of trust, a sign that he must have sent you on some errand, and no man dared question it. So they passed through the whole camp untouched, until they came upon Umar ibn al-Khattab,

radiyallahu anhu, who recognized the chieftain at once and leapt up calling for his execution: praise be to Allah, who has delivered the enemy of His Messenger to us with no treaty and no covenant to protect him. Al-Abbas threw out a tribal argument, that Umar would never want to kill a man if he were of Umar's own clan. And Umar shut it down cold. Listen to what he said, the Sheikh urges, for it is one of the great declarations of love in the whole seerah. By Allah, Umar told him, the day you accepted Islam was more beloved to me than the day my own father would have, had he lived to accept it, and only for one reason: because your Islam brought the Prophet ﷺ more joy than my own father's Islam ever could have. How dare you, then, play the tribe card with me. The Prophet ﷺ ended the standoff before it could harden: take him to your tent, al-Abbas, and bring him to me in the morning.

All that night al-Abbas worked on him, the two of them going back and forth, al-Abbas pressing, Abu Sufyan resisting, and at dawn al-Abbas brought him in. Isn't it time, the Prophet ﷺ asked him, that you came to know there is no god but Allah? Abu Sufyan answered first with the highest praise an Arab tongue can offer, may my mother and father be your ransom, how gentle you are, how merciful, how good to your kin, for I would never have treated you as you are treating me. And then he admitted the truth that had finally broken through: by Allah, had there been any other gods beside Allah, they would surely have done something for me by now. He had seen it at last. And the Sheikh draws out, with some urgency for the young especially, how slow that seeing had been. These were men who had watched the Prophet ﷺ at close range for twenty-three years and still half-believed in their idols. It is very hard, he says, to abandon the theology you were raised in, very hard to walk away from a culture you hold

dear. Faith is almost never a five-minute conversation. Abu Sufyan accepted that there is no god but Allah, and then balked again at the second half of the testimony: as for Muhammad, I am not yet sure. At this al-Abbas, out of patience after the long night, told him bluntly to submit or be killed in the morning. Now mark this carefully, the Sheikh insists: it was not the Prophet ﷺ who threatened him, for we do not threaten people into faith and it is forbidden to do so; it was an exhausted friend at the end of his rope, saying come now, I have done all I can, the rest is on you. And reluctantly, half-convinced, Abu Sufyan said the full shahada. For we hold Islam to be true, the Sheikh explains, and so when a man half-accepts it, we let him in, trusting the truth itself to win the rest of him over in time. And in time, it would.

It is not a kingdom

Al-Abbas knew his man. O Messenger of Allah, he said, Abu Sufyan is a man who loves his pride; give him something to hold onto. So the Prophet ﷺ granted him an honor woven exactly to his nature. When Makkah is entered tomorrow, he announced, whoever stays within the Sacred Mosque is safe, and whoever stays inside his own home is safe, and whoever enters the house of Abu Sufyan is safe. His house, alone among the houses of Makkah, would become a sanctuary. You meet a person where his dignity lives, the Sheikh observes, and a proud chieftain was handed a way to stand tall inside his own surrender, to be not merely a man spared but a man whose roof now sheltered others.

Then the Prophet ﷺ sent al-Abbas to hold Abu Sufyan at a narrow neck of the valley, where the whole army would have to file past him as it marched on the city. And banner after banner went by. Who are these, Abu Sufyan kept asking, and al-Abbas

named them, tribe after tribe he had never in his life imagined gathered under a single command, until Abu Sufyan could only marvel that no one on earth could stand against such a host. Last of all came the contingent of the Muhajirun and the Ansar, ringed close around the Prophet ﷺ himself, so thick with armor that, the histories say, you could see nothing but the gleam of steel. Abu Sufyan stared at it and turned to al-Abbas: the kingdom of your nephew, he said, has become very great. And al-Abbas corrected him with one sentence that holds the entire meaning of the day inside it: it is not a kingdom. It is prophethood. It is not power seized and held; it is the gift Allah gives to a messenger, and it has brought him all of this.

Stand where Abu Sufyan stood, the Sheikh urges, and feel the turn of it. What a scene, he says, what a melodramatic sight: ten thousand believers marching in, and the chieftain of Quraysh watching every banner pass and at last submitting. Eight years before, this same Prophet ﷺ had slipped out of this very city in the dead of night with a single companion, Abu Bakr beside him and no one else, and hidden in a cave for three days while Quraysh hunted him for his life and put a price on his head. Now he returns at the head of ten thousand, and the last great chieftain of his enemies watches the army of Allah pass by and gives up his idols. Where are the proud ones now, the Sheikh asks, the ones who tortured the believers and plotted in their assembly hall and drove the Messenger ﷺ out into the desert? Gone, every one of them, fallen at Badr or scattered to the wind. From where to where had Allah carried His Prophet ﷺ in less than a decade. The matter belongs to Allah, and to no one else, and it always did.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to remember the conquest of Makkah only for the city that fell without a battle, and to let the road there blur past on the way to the gates. That would be to miss the question this day puts to us. Strip it down and four men stand in it, and not one of them deserved the door to still be open. An uncle who emigrated with no time to spare. Two cousins who had cut the Prophet ﷺ with poetry and a public sneer. A chieftain who had fought him for twenty years and submitted in the last hour of the last night. All four found the door open anyway. That is the mercy walking quietly underneath the whole conquest: he came back not for vengeance but to gather the ones who were finally ready, even the ones who had hated him longest.

The first thing this day asks is that you believe the door stays open later than you think. Al-Abbas crossed the line into the honor of hijrah with almost no margin at all, the very last man ever to hold that title, his intention carrying him over just as the gate swung shut. Abu Sufyan, the great chieftain, said the shahada in the final dark before the city fell, reluctant and half-convinced, and Islam took him in. As long as you are still breathing, you are not too late to come home to Allah. Do not let the years you wasted, or the things you said, or the length of your turning away, persuade you that you have missed your chance. These men had wasted more, said worse, and turned away longer, and the door was still open.

The second thing it asks is that you learn to read your own sincerity by what it is willing to endure. He ﷺ turned the cousins away, the Sheikh tells us, partly as a measured act of governance, for unchecked mercy cannot rule, and partly as a test. The insincere man, refused, grows angry and leaves; the sincere man, refused, stands at the door and will not go, the way Adam begged to return while Iblis only swelled with pride. When

something good costs you, when the thing you want pushes back and makes you wait at the door, the staying is the proof. Ask yourself whether your faith is the kind that leaves when it is not flattered, or the kind that refuses to leave at all.

And the third thing it asks is patience, both with the people you love and with the slow turning of your own heart. Men watched the Prophet ﷺ for twenty-three years, the Sheikh reminds the eager among us, and still half-believed in their idols at the end of it. Faith is rarely a quick conversation. You cannot argue a heart into the truth in five minutes, and you should not expect to. Plant, and be gentle, and let Allah open the way in His own time, with others and with yourself. And when a heart does turn, even reluctantly, even half-convinced like Abu Sufyan's, let it in, and trust the truth to finish the work. Honor people, too, where their dignity lives, as the Prophet ﷺ honored a proud man with a house of refuge: you can be firm on the truth and still leave a person standing tall, and doing both at once is the Prophetic way.

So take this road down into your ordinary days. Believe the door is still open for you, because it is, as surely as it stood open for an uncle out of time and a chieftain out of arguments. Do not give up on the people whose hearts are turning slowly, and do not give up on your own. And ask Allah for the one thing none of these four men could ever have guaranteed themselves, the gift of dying upon the faith they reached so late: O Allah, You who turned the hearts of Your Prophet's ﷺ oldest enemies into his ummah in a single night, turn ours fully toward You and keep them turned, and let us live as Muslims and take us back to You as Muslims, gathered at last under the banner of the one who came home to Makkah in mercy. May Allah send His peace and blessings upon His Messenger ﷺ, who returned to the most

beloved of cities not to repay its cruelty but to open its door, and who left no one behind who was willing to walk through it.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 78: the Conquest of Makkah, part 3 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translation is from Sahih International (17:90-93), verified via quran.ai.

The conquest of Makkah, part 4

Go, you are free

It is the morning of the 20th of Ramadan, in the eighth year after the hijrah, and the people of Makkah do not know that the end of their world is one hour away. Ten thousand men are standing at the edge of the city, the largest army the Arabs had ever assembled, and not one watchman has run ahead with the news. Dr. Yasir Qadhi asks us to sit with how impossible that is, because in that Arabia word of a single caravan reached a town before the camels did; it was simply how the desert worked. Yet here is a force of ten thousand, arriving at the very doors of Makkah, and the city sleeps on. There is only one explanation, and the Sheikh gives it plainly: when the Prophet ﷺ had asked Allah to conceal his march from Quraysh, Allah concealed it, and kept it concealed to the literal minute the army walked in. It is humanly impossible to hide ten thousand people from a city. So it was not a human doing. It was a miracle, quiet and total, and the men who lived through it never forgot that the silence around them had been arranged in heaven.

Twenty one years of mockery, of boycott in the valley, of torture in the sun, of exile and of war had led to this single sunrise. The man Makkah had driven out was about to walk back into it as its master. What he does in the hours that follow is the reason this day is counted among the very highest points of his whole life ﷺ, and it has almost nothing to do with the size of the army behind him.

An army no one saw coming

The surrender had come the night before. Abu Sufyan, the lifelong leader of Quraysh and for two decades the architect of its wars, had finally accepted Islam in the Muslim camp, after al-Abbas spent an entire night reasoning with him in the dark. By morning his loyalties had turned, and al-Abbas, the recent convert himself, his heart still half attached to the people he had only just left, sent him galloping back through the gates with one urgent task: warn Makkah not to fight. There is no winning this, only blood if they try.

So while Abu Sufyan rode for the city, the Prophet ﷺ ordered the army drawn up. The books of sira keep a long, detailed roll of which clan marched where and who carried which banner, names that mean little to most of us now, but the shape of it is simple enough. There were three great contingents, each with its own smaller companies folded inside. Over one he set the Ansar, over another the Muhajirun, and in the middle rode a mixed body with the Prophet ﷺ himself among them. Khalid ibn al-Walid led one wing; Sa'd ibn Ubadah, one of the two chiefs of the Ansar and the man in whose house the Ansar would one day gather after the Prophet's ﷺ passing, carried the banner of his people.

And over the whole army he laid down one command above every other: sheathe your swords. Do not fight anyone. Do not kill a soul unless you are first attacked, and then only in your own defense. Hold that sentence in your mind, the Sheikh says, because the world has never seen its like. An army the size of a nation was marching on a city under strict and explicit orders not to make war on it.

A banner taken back

As the columns moved in, something in the old tribal blood rose up in Sa'd ibn Ubadah, and he began to chant as he went: today is the day of slaughter, today the day of the great battle, today the sanctuary itself would lose its sanctity and blood would be lawful in it. The word he used was halal. The haram, he was crying, would today be made halal. Understand what those words meant, because the whole life of that ground hangs on them. The sacred precinct is called the haram precisely because things permitted everywhere else become forbidden inside it: you may not hunt its game or pluck its wild trees, and you may certainly not spill blood within it. Even in their paganism, Quraysh had never once declared the haram open for killing. Now the standard-bearer of the Ansar was shouting through its streets that its sanctity had ended.

Abu Sufyan heard it and was alarmed, and he hurried to the Prophet ﷺ: how can he say the haram will be made halal today? The Prophet ﷺ answered that Sa'd had erred, kadhaba in the old classical sense, which here means not that he lied but that he had spoken wrongly, gotten it mistaken. And quietly, without a public rebuke, he had the banner lifted from Sa'd's hand and placed instead in the hand of a man of Quraysh. Here Dr. Yasir Qadhi points to a precision in the Prophet's ﷺ judgment made in the space of a single moment. Sa'd intended no evil; he had simply been carried away, and the heat of the old days had risen in his voice on exactly the wrong morning. But the men leading the entry into the sacred city, the Prophet ﷺ saw at once, should be the city's own people, the Quraysh, so that never afterward could anyone say that outsiders had come to conquer the house of their fathers. He read the danger, weighed it, and adjusted the entire order of the march in an instant. That is ijtiḥād on the spot,

the Sheikh notes: he reasoned, saw the harm coming, and moved to head it off before it arrived.

So the contingents poured in from the west of the town and from the east, its two great gateways, swords down, while Abu Sufyan ran ahead through the lanes crying the strangest call to arms the Arabs ever heard. He did not call them to battle. He called them to surrender. Here is Muhammad, he shouted, he has come with an army you cannot fight, so do not even rise to meet it. Come to my house and you are safe. The very last refuge the Prophet ﷺ had granted him the night before, whoever enters Abu Sufyan's house is safe, Abu Sufyan now turned into the only refuge worth taking, and pressed it on his people in the street. His own wife, the formidable Hind, darted out of the crowd, seized him by his beard, and cursed him in public with words so vile the old books record them half in wonder, calling him a coward, a useless fat man, demanding the people kill this lazy, treacherous leader of theirs. Abu Sufyan held his ground. Woe to you, he told the crowd, do not let her push you into a rash thing; an army has come that you cannot fight. When one of them asked what use a single house could be to a whole city, he finally told them everything: whoever shuts his own door is safe, whoever reaches the haram is safe, whoever enters my house is safe. And the people scattered, some to their homes, some racing to the sanctuary, some to the two or three houses thrown open as public refuge that day. The message had carried. Makkah was laying down its arms.

Barely a drop of blood

Not quite all of it. A small knot of Quraysh could not stomach surrender, and with perhaps half an hour's warning they snatched up whatever weapons lay to hand and threw

themselves at one of the incoming flanks. At their head was Ikrimah, the son of Abu Jahl, and with him two of the last great chiefs still living, Safwan ibn Umayyah and Suhayl ibn Amr. It was not a battle. The books of sira spare it a line or two, and even those lines make clear it was nothing organized, only a chaotic, hopeless rush of men who had no time to think. They struck the wing that Khalid ibn al-Walid was leading. A dozen or so of Quraysh were killed, by one count thirteen or fourteen, by another perhaps twenty, and two or three of the Muslims fell, and it was over almost before it began.

And so, Dr. Yasir Qadhi says, Makkah was finally conquered on the 20th of Ramadan in the eighth year of the hijrah, with barely any loss of life at all. After twenty one years of suffering, the Prophet ﷺ returned as the undisputed master of the city of his birth, the greatest city in the history not merely of Islam but of all humanity, and almost no one had to die for it. Pause on that, because this is simply not how cities fall. Conquest in the human story means siege and sack, fire and slaughter and the long settling of scores. This is the one conquest ever won by an army marching in under orders not to fight, and the Sheikh wants us to feel how unprecedented it stands, before and since: a city honored by being taken without war, by a commander who forbade his men to draw their swords as they entered it.

The conqueror with his head down

He came in from the high northern side of the town, the place still known today, mounted on his camel and dressed in his armor, with a red turban wound and tucked beneath his chin rather than streaming behind him. And here is the image the Sheikh asks us never to lose. The Prophet ﷺ lowered his head, lowered it and lowered it, until his blessed forehead was almost touching the

back of the camel, and as he rode he was glorifying Allah and reciting Surah al-Fath under his breath: we have given you a manifest victory. Empires send their kings into a captured city with their chests thrown out and their chins lifted high, drunk on the moment. The most successful conqueror who ever lived came in bent nearly double over the neck of his mount, the living picture of a servant who knows exactly Whose victory this is and that none of it is his own. Neither before this day nor after it, the Sheikh says, has any conqueror entered a city he had taken in such a posture of humility before God instead of pride before men.

He rode straight to the Ka'bah, the house his father Ibrahim had raised, and began his tawaf still mounted, a staff in his hand and no sword at all. Around the house stood the idols of Quraysh, more than three hundred and sixty of them, very nearly one for every day of their year. Each time he passed one, he pointed the staff toward it, and it fell: forward if its face was toward him, backward if its back was turned, every last one toppling at the gesture of a man who never touched it. A miracle of Allah, Dr. Yasir Qadhi calls it, worked through the pointing of a stick. And as the idols came down he recited the verse that the moment was built to carry:

*And say, "Truth has come, and falsehood has departed.
Indeed is falsehood, [by nature], ever bound to depart."*

QUR'AN 17:81

He touched the Black Stone with the staff as he came round to it, and kept circling, while the precinct filled and filled with the people of the city, believers and pagans pressed together, until

the whole of Makkah stood gathered in one place around the man on the camel, waiting to learn what he would do with them.

Cleansing the house

When the tawaf was done he called for the keys, and with his own blessed hands ﷲ he unlocked the door of the Ka'bah and stepped inside. The interior was no purer than the courtyard had been. There were small idols of precious materials, ornaments, painted images on the walls, even depictions of angels, whom the pagans had imagined as the daughters of God. He gathered them out and broke them, throwing down and cracking apart everything he found, until the inside of the house was as clean as the truth it had been built to hold.

On one wall he came upon a painting of Ibrahim, and in the painted hands were the divining arrows the pagans cast before their ventures, and it grieved him. May Allah ruin them, he said, what has Ibrahim to do with this? Ibrahim was no caster of arrows, no diviner of fates. He was a man of pure and upright faith who surrendered himself wholly to Allah, neither Jew nor Christian and never for an instant an idolater, and the Qur'an itself draws the line clean:

Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he was one inclining toward truth, a Muslim [submitting to Allah]. And he was not of the polytheists.

QUR'AN 3:67

Then every image on those walls was wiped away.

Watch the order of what he did, the Sheikh says, because the order is the whole seerah pressed into a single afternoon. The first act of this conqueror is not to settle accounts, not to divide

spoils, for there are no spoils here, no captives taken, no land seized, no plunder carried off; the conquest of Makkah was unique in that nothing of the kind was taken at all. The first thing he does is worship Allah and tear down what had been worshipped beside Him. He cleanses the outer idols, then the inner ones, then the painted filth on the walls, and only after the house of Allah has been returned to the purity Ibrahim built it for does he turn at last to face the people. He attends to his Lord before he attends to anything in the world, even in the hour of the greatest victory a man was ever given.

Go, you are free

Now he stood in the open doorway of the Ka'bah, on its very threshold, and turned to face them. Imagine the scene, the Sheikh says, because words cannot reach it. Behind him is the house of Allah with its doors flung wide. Before him are gathered more than ten thousand of his own followers and, packed in among them, the thousands of Quraysh who had hunted him, mocked him, tortured his companions in the heat, and driven him out of his home. The doors are open. The man they wronged for twenty one years is standing in them, and every single soul in that precinct is utterly, completely in his power.

He began with the only thing that ever mattered: there is no god but Allah alone, He has fulfilled His promise, He has aided His servant, and He alone has defeated the confederates. Then he abolished the age that had ended. Every claim and custom and conceit of jahiliyyah, the whole inherited hierarchy of who is born above whom, the arrogance of blood and tribe, all of it, he declared, is gone, struck down, finished. He recited to them what Allah had revealed:

O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Aware.

QUR'AN 49:13

All of you are from Adam, he told them, and Adam was from dust. The only rank left standing in this new order is taqwa: the one nearer to Allah is simply the one who fears Him more. Of all the old honors of Makkah he kept just two alive, the custodianship of the Ka'bah and the watering of the pilgrims, and let the rest fall away with the idols.

Then came the question. He turned to the Quraysh and asked them, with what the Sheikh calls flawless and perfect psychology, what do you think I will do with you? Hear everything that one gentle sentence does at once. It tells them, without a word of boasting, that their fate now rests entirely in his hands; he establishes the rank he has earned over them, but he establishes it by asking rather than by declaring. And underneath the gentleness lies the unspoken weight of all they have done, you have wronged me terribly, you deserve to be punished, said not by accusing them but by leaving the silence for them to fill. He does not say how could you, or why did you. He simply asks, and lets the answer rise out of hearts that had always known the truth of him and had been too proud or too afraid to say it. And they said it now, with their own tongues: you are a noble brother, and the son of a noble brother; you will do nothing but good. Then he gave them the very words Yusuf had once given the brothers who sold him, the words that had been revealed to comfort him long ago in Makkah when he was the one persecuted and alone, a promise that a day of power would come

and that on that day he was to forgive as Yusuf forgave. No blame upon you today, he told them. May Allah forgive you. Go, you are free.

Words cannot do justice to the scene, the Sheikh admits, and lets it stand. The man at the height of all earthly power, with the people who had ruined his every year standing helpless before him, reached not for the sword but for the gentlest sentence in the Qur'an, and set a whole city free.

Even the exceptions were forgiven

There was still the matter of the keys. When Uthman ibn Talha brought them, Ali ibn Abi Talib asked the Prophet ﷺ to grant his own clan, Banu Hashim, the honor of holding the custodianship of the Ka'bah together with the watering of the pilgrims, joining a hundred years of divided privilege into one. The Prophet ﷺ would not. He called Uthman ibn Talha forward and placed the keys back into his hands: take them, this is a day of faithfulness and of giving back what is owed. Allah had commanded the returning of trusts, and the Sheikh notes that the scholars read this very moment into the verse:

Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice. Excellent is that which Allah instructs you. Indeed, Allah is ever Hearing and Seeing.

QUR'AN 4:58

From that day to this, across the whole long history of the religion, no one has dared take the key from the descendants of Uthman ibn Talha. The door has changed and the key with it, but the trust has stayed in that one family, generation after

generation, exactly where it was placed on the morning of the conquest.

And there was a short, ugly list. Before he entered, the Prophet ﷺ had named a handful of people, somewhere between six and nine by the differing counts of the early books, who were not covered by the general amnesty and could be killed wherever they were found. They had earned it. There was Ikrimah, the son of Abu Jahl. There was Abdullah ibn Khatal, who had accepted Islam, then murdered the companion sent with him and fled back to Makkah a renegade, and set two slave singing-girls to composing poetry mocking the Prophet ﷺ, the height of propaganda in that age. There was a man who had feigned Islam only to carry out a revenge killing. There were the two who had brutalized the Prophet's ﷺ own daughters as they tried to leave Makkah, driving a spear at the camel of Zaynab until she fell and miscarried, and threatening his two younger daughters on the road. And there was Wahshi, who had killed his beloved uncle Hamza at Uhud. Of these, Abdullah ibn Khatal clung to the very curtains of the Ka'bah begging sanctuary, and even so was put to death, for some crimes the day's mercy did not reach.

But here is the detail the Sheikh most wants us to carry away: even the exceptions turned out to be exceptions. Of that whole list, more than half were forgiven in the end. Ikrimah, the son of the man the Prophet ﷺ had called the Pharaoh of this ummah, fled by ship toward Abyssinia, and when a storm fell on the vessel and the pagan captain cried out that only Allah could save them now, it struck Ikrimah that gods who cannot help a drowning man have no claim on a living one, and he vowed that if he were spared he would put his hand in the Prophet's ﷺ hand and find him forgiving. He was spared, he came back, he was forgiven, and he died years later a martyr on the field against the

Romans. Abdullah ibn Abi Sarh, the renegade scribe whose lie about the revelation orientalists still repeat, was hidden by his foster brother Uthman ibn Affan and brought forward to beg pardon; the Prophet ﷺ let a long, heavy silence fall before he accepted, and that man went on to govern Egypt and die in righteousness. One of the two singing-girls was forgiven. Habbar, who had caused Zaynab's miscarriage, was forgiven when he came repentant. Even Wahshi was forgiven, though the Prophet ﷺ asked him afterward never to let him see his face again, the wound of Hamza being what it was. From a city of some two thousand souls, after twenty one years of war, the Sheikh reckons that only about four were ever actually put to death. Mercy was the rule. Punishment was the rare exception. And even most of the exceptions, in the end, were wiped away.

What this day asks of our faith

It is tempting to read the conquest of Makkah as the triumphant last act of a long war, a victory to admire from a safe distance and then set down. That is to miss the question it presses against our own lives. Strip the day to its core and it stops being history and starts being a mirror.

He bowed lowest at the exact moment he stood highest. At the summit of everything Allah had given him, with a city and an army in his hand, he came in with his forehead nearly on his camel's back, glorifying his Lord. We do the reverse almost by instinct: a small success lifts our chin, a little power straightens our spine. His ﷺ life teaches the opposite reflex, that the larger the victory Allah grants you, the lower your head should go in thanks, because the victory was never yours to puff out your chest over. Ask, the next time something goes gloriously right for

you, whether your first motion is upward in pride or downward in gratitude.

He worshipped before he ruled. The first thing the conqueror did was not to claim, divide, or avenge; it was tawaf and tawhid, the cleansing of the house before a single word to the people. There were no spoils that day because the day was not about spoils. We are quick, in our own moments of victory, to rush straight to the business of winning, to the settling and the spending and the scorekeeping, and slow to turn first to Allah. He ﷺ turned to his Lord first, and let everything in the world fall into its right place behind that.

And then, standing in the open door with every door of revenge swung wide before him, he chose the sentence of Yusuf. This is the heart of it, and the hardest part to live. Anyone can be gentle with nothing to lose; the Prophet ﷺ had been merciful at Ta'if when he was weak and alone and bleeding, and now he was merciful again when he held an army and a city and the unquestioned right to punish, and the Sheikh sets those two days side by side on purpose, because mercy at the height of strength is the rarer and truer thing. It is easy to forgive the person who can still hurt you; it is something else entirely to forgive the person who is now wholly in your hand. Most of us never reach Makkah in our small kingdoms, our homes and arguments and old grudges, the moment when we finally hold the power and the other is finally helpless before us. When we do, the question is the one he answered: what will you do with them now that you can do anything? He returned the trust to the family that held it even when he could have kept it. He left the door open even for the names marked for death, and watched the son of his fiercest enemy walk back through it and die a martyr. So take this day down into your ordinary life. Bow lowest when you stand highest.

Put Allah first in the moment things go right. Return what is not yours to keep. And when someone who has wronged you is at last at your mercy, reach past the sword for the gentler word, and say what he said: no blame upon you today; go, you are free. May Allah, who softened His Prophet's ﷺ heart on the day he could have crushed them all, soften ours toward those who have wronged us, gather us under his banner ﷺ on the day every soul is gathered, and let him say of us on that day, no blame upon you today.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 79: the conquest of Makkah, part 4 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (17:81, 3:67, 49:13, 4:58), verified via quran.ai. The narration is the Sheikh's; the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

The conquest of Makkah, part 5

The day the city he was driven from came to his hand

Makkah has opened. The valley that drove this man into the desert is now spread out beneath him, and there is no army left to fight, no wall left to breach, no question left in the whole city except the oldest one a wronged person ever asks: now that you have them, what will you do? He is standing at the doors of the Ka'bah, the house at the center of the world he was born into and exiled from, and the people who hunted him are pressed around him, watching his face to learn the shape of the reckoning. By every law their century knew, this was the hour of revenge. He gives them one sentence instead, and then the rest of the day fills up with something so much gentler and stranger than vengeance that we are still turning it over fourteen centuries later: a voice on the roof of the Ka'bah, a line of hands on a hill, and a slow trickle of old enemies finding their way home one heart at a time.

This is the fifth of our days inside the conquest, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi sets it down carefully, the way the whole seerah has to be set down: the events of these weeks reach us as scattered reports, each one needing to be weighed and fitted to the others, much of it spread across nineteen or twenty days the narrations do not always date. So we tell it the honest way, scene by scene, never importing into the city a single thing the city did not give us. What it gives us, on this day, is mercy at the height of power,

which the Sheikh names from the start as the whole lesson the conquest exists to teach.

Go forth, you are free

Stand in the scene for a moment, because the symbolism is too obvious to walk past. The doors of the Ka'bah are thrown open behind him, and in front of him are the families of those who tortured his companions, the sons of those who plotted his death in the assembly hall, the woman who had cut open the body of his uncle on the field of Uhud. Quite literally the doors of Allah are standing open, and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is at the threshold of them, and he is not blocking the way in, he is calling a beaten city through it.

He tells them: go forth, you are free. And with the words goes the open invitation that the open doors had already spoken: anyone who wishes may enter Islam, the house is open and so is its Lord's mercy. In the last days the Sheikh had walked through the short list of those the Prophet ﷺ had not granted blanket pardon, and even of that handful, six or seven or eight, the great bulk were in the end forgiven and only a very few were carried out. That is the rule of the whole religion laid bare in one afternoon: mercy and tolerance and compassion are the rule, and strictness is the rare exception, shown only so that a line exists and people know not to cross it. On this day the exception was almost invisible and the rule was everywhere. He held an entire city in his hand at the one moment he could finally have closed it, and he opened it instead.

The voice on the roof

Then he gave one of the most famous instructions of his life. He told Bilal radiyallahu anhu to climb to the top of the Ka'bah, to the

highest point in Makkah, and to call the adhan from there. This is the one detail of the conquest that has traveled everywhere, the thing a person who knows almost nothing of this religion will still somehow know: that Allah honored Bilal to be the first human being ever to call the adhan over the holiest of houses, lifted onto its very summit to proclaim the testimony of faith.

Sit with what that voice had carried before it ever reached the roof. It was the voice that used to cry out the oneness of Allah in the valleys of Makkah while his owner crushed him under the noon sun on the burning sand for refusing to stop, the voice that would not break no matter what was laid on the chest beneath it. The Sheikh draws out the lesson he says we have all heard since we were young and which is true no matter how many times we hear it: how amazing that this exact voice, the one persecuted in these valleys for testifying to Allah, is the voice Allah and His Messenger now chose to raise, literally and figuratively, above the Quraysh who had once stood over it. An Abyssinian with no lineage, no clan, no standing among the Arabs, sent up onto the high place to announce on behalf of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. And the adhan is no small thing to be given: it summarizes the whole religion, the oneness of Allah and the truth of His Prophet, condensed into the call itself.

Here the Sheikh hands you a principle worth memorizing even if you never learn another word of Arabic, a maxim he calls al-jazaa min jins al-amal: you are dealt with as you deserve to be dealt with, good for good and bad for bad, your reward bearing the very character of the deed that earned it. The one who held his voice firm for the sake of Allah at the hour of humiliation is the one whose voice is raised at the hour of honor. Hold firm in the hard years, the principle says, and trust Allah with the repayment,

because the repayment will be cut from the same cloth as the patience.

Below the roof, the elite of Quraysh stood listening, and three of them said three things they thought no one would ever repeat. Attab ibn Asid, the full brother of Abu Jahl, said he thanked God his father had died before this day, so that the old man would not have to watch this black man chosen above them, a sentence with the whole disease of jahiliyyah breathing inside it, a man glad his father was dead rather than see Bilal on the roof. Al-Harith ibn Hisham said that if he truly believed this man was upon the truth, he would follow him, which was his way of saying he did not believe it. And Abu Sufyan, a Muslim now for only a few hours, held his tongue and said: I will say nothing, for if I spoke, these very stones would tell him what I said. Later, as the Prophet ﷺ left the Haram and passed the three of them, he repeated their words back to them, letter for letter, exactly what each man had said while no one was near. Al-Harith took the testimony of faith on the spot. You must be a prophet, he said, for no one heard us and no one carried it to you.

That third man is worth pausing on, because the Sheikh does. Abu Sufyan's sentence is one of the strangest in the seerah: he believed that if he spoke, the Prophet ﷺ would somehow know, which means he already believed the man was a prophet, and yet his soul had not yet bent. His head had arrived and his heart was lagging behind. This is faith arriving in levels, the Sheikh says, and we will see it again before the day is done, and we see it still: people enter this religion and their Islam is at first mediocre, and we accept it and leave their affair to Allah, and some of them go on to outstrip the ones born inside the faith. Islam, for a soul not raised in it, can take time to settle.

The hill where it ended, where it began

From the Ka'bah he made his way to the hill of Safa and sat down somewhere upon it, and there he received the bay'ah, the oath of allegiance, from everyone willing to embrace Islam. They came in hordes, lining up and crowding around him, hand after hand after hand after hand. The Sheikh says this is the primary picture of a promise Allah had made, that very ayah coming to life in front of you:

And you see the people entering into the religion of Allah in multitudes,

QUR'AN 110:2

And the place could not have been chosen more perfectly. Safa is where the public call began, nearly twenty years before, the day he ﷺ climbed it and called his clans by name to warn them, and they turned on him. How apt, the Sheikh says, that where the dawah begins, there it should end. The whole circle closes on the same stone. He once stood up on that hill before a hostile city, and now he sits down on it to receive that city home, the matter that opened two decades ago coming around to its close, and the bulk of the people of Makkah accepting Islam in this single stretch of the day.

The door that closed behind them

One exchange on that hill became a ruling for the entire ummah. A companion, an earlier emigrant, brought forward his own blood brother, newly arrived, and said: O Messenger of Allah, this is my brother, grant him the reward of the hijra as you granted it to me. He wanted for his brother exactly what he had been given himself, which is the very heart of this religion, to want for your brother what you want for yourself. But the answer he received is

among the most famous things said during the conquest, recorded in Bukhari and Muslim: there is no hijra after the conquest of Makkah.

The Sheikh is careful about what this does and does not mean, because most of us have never even heard of the ruling it abrogated. For some seven or eight years, the migration to Madinah had been an obligation on every single Muslim alive: you made hijra or your Islam was deficient. The day Makkah opened, that obligation was lifted. The one and only Hijra, the great communal migration that had defined a whole generation, was complete, and it could not be joined late, so its unique reward could no longer be earned by anyone arriving now. This does not abolish all migration: there will still be personal hijras, a believer or a group fleeing persecution for the safety of their faith, in every age. But the general Hijra of the ummah was finished. What remained in its place, the Prophet ﷺ said, was jihad and good intention, any righteous deed done sincerely. If the brother truly longed for that rank, the road ahead was wide open: the campaigns against Rome and Persia were about to begin, and a sincere heart could still carry him there. The real conquests had not even started yet.

The women's pledge, and Hind behind the veil

When the men had finished, the women of Quraysh were called, and they gathered before him, and he took their pledge upon the conditions Allah lays out in the Qur'an:

O Prophet, when the believing women come to you pledging to you that they will not associate anything with Allah, nor will they steal, nor will they commit unlawful sexual intercourse, nor will they kill their children, nor will they bring forth a slander they have invented between their

arms and legs, nor will they disobey you in what is right, then accept their pledge and ask forgiveness for them of Allah. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.

QUR'AN 60:12

Among them, hidden behind a full face veil so that no one recognized her, stood Hind bint Utbah, the wife of Abu Sufyan, the woman who only hours before had been clutching her husband's beard and crying for the city to fight, and who carried a far older history than that: it was Hind who had done to the body of Hamza radiyallahu anhu at Uhud what every listener knows and dreads to repeat. She knew her history, and she was afraid of it, and the veil was her cover. The Sheikh pauses only to note what the scene incidentally proves: the face veil was known and worn by women in the time of the Prophet ﷺ. Whether it is obligatory is a separate scholarly question; the claim that the niqab is some later medieval invention smuggled into Islam is simply false, and the seerah shows it plainly.

But Hind could not hold her tongue, and her tongue gave her away. When he said do not associate anything with Allah, she spoke up from the crowd that he was demanding of the women something he had not demanded of the men, an assumption that was simply wrong, born of imagining this was a political conquest rather than a religious one, that he was now their ruler but surely would not touch their gods. The men had been told to give up their idols too. Seeing no support, she relented: very well, if you insist, we give it. When he said do not steal, she shot back that she used to take from Abu Sufyan's wealth, bit by bit, without his knowing, and was that theft or not? Abu Sufyan, hearing his wife give herself away and more anxious than she was, hurried to announce that whatever was past, he had forgiven, the past, he was careful to say, not the future. And the Prophet ﷺ said: are

you Hind? She admitted it, and begged his pardon, and asked Allah to forgive her.

He did not punish her, and he did not say you are forgiven. He simply moved on. The Sheikh stops you here, because this is the kind of scene a person who has not studied the seerah can find hard, until he sees what is actually in it. It is easier to forgive a crime done to yourself than one done to someone you love, and harder still when the one wronged is dead and beyond your power to console. He neither struck back nor pretended the wound was nothing. He let it go and let her go, and his very silence, his refusal to receive her into his presence, was itself the lightest possible weight laid on a woman who had earned far worse. Mercy and an honest wound sat together in the same heart, and that, the Sheikh says, is exactly the perfection of it.

She was not finished. When he said do not commit unlawful relations, she snapped, does a free woman do such a thing? a line that says something true even about pagan Arabia, that decent families guarded their honor and held this crime to be beneath them. And when he said do not kill your children, came the answer that undid the gathering: as for that, we raised them as little ones and you killed them as grown men at Badr. It was so sharp and so unexpected, this barb out of nowhere, that one of the great companions seated behind the Prophet ﷺ burst out laughing and toppled over onto his back. Even they, the Sheikh notes, could take a joke; it shows you their humanity. And when the pledge was done, he sent the women to give the oath through Umar radiyallahu anhu, for it is narrated in every book of hadith that the Prophet ﷺ never once took a woman's hand in pledge. His word to them was the pledge itself: my speech to one of you, he would later tell a woman who reached out her hand, is as my speech to a hundred. The best example is the example,

and where one of us cannot rise to it, we keep it as the ideal rather than bend it to ourselves.

The fear of the Ansar

Quietly, off to the side, the Ansar of Madinah began to ache. They watched him returned to the city of his birth, watched his kin and his cousins and the whole of Quraysh pouring into Islam, and a murmur went around among them: now that he has come home, softness for his own people has taken hold of him, he will settle back among them and forget us. The Sheikh asks you to see clearly what was at the root of it. It was not really jealousy. It was love, the particular ache of people who fear that the one they love is drifting back to where he came from and will leave them behind.

Jibril came down and told him what they had said. And yet the first thing the Prophet ﷺ did was go to them and ask, did you say this? though he already knew, word for word, from heaven. The Sheikh dwells on the courtesy of it. When a stranger or an acquaintance comes to us reporting that someone spoke ill of us, we are quick to make ourselves judge and jury and executioner in a single breath, no benefit of the doubt offered, the matter closed before the accused has said a word. Here was a report that could not possibly be doubted, delivered by the angel of revelation, and still he gave the Ansar the chance to speak, because Allah had sent the report to him precisely to quell a fitna before it grew, and the manners of the Prophet ﷺ were to ask even when he already knew. They confessed: yes, O Messenger of Allah, we said it.

Then he reminded them who he was. Had he not, years before at Aqabah, when they asked him whether he would leave them once the victory was his, promised them that his blood was their blood and his destruction their destruction, that his life was their life

and his death their death? Who did they take him for, that he would break that promise now? He had emigrated to them and with them and for them; he belonged to them in living and in dying, gathered into them and no longer merely a man of his own clan. The Ansar wept, and asked his forgiveness, and pleaded that they had spoken only out of what they feared and saw, and were wrong. And the Prophet ﷺ told them that Allah and His Messenger believed their excuse.

The ones who came in slowly

The Prophet ﷺ stayed in Makkah about three weeks, and across those nineteen or twenty days the holdouts came in, one reluctant heart at a time. The narrations do not date each conversion, so we hand them on as bits and pieces, and they all teach the same thing, the thing Allah Himself said to the bedouins:

The bedouins say, "We have believed." Say, "You have not [yet] believed; but say [instead], 'We have submitted,' for faith has not yet entered your hearts. And if you obey Allah and His Messenger, He will not deprive you from your deeds of anything. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful."

QUR'AN 49:14

Islam arrives in levels, the Sheikh reminds you, and Allah tells the bedouins as much, that they should not yet claim belief when they have only submitted, for faith had not entered their hearts. He saw it then and we see it now, and our part with hearts still on the road, including our own, is to be the more patient and the more generous.

There was Fadala, a young man of Quraysh about whom little else is known, so enraged by the defeat and all he had watched

that he hid a dagger and resolved to assassinate the Prophet ﷺ, a suicide mission with no thought of surviving it. He crept up behind him during his tawaf, and the Prophet ﷺ, who made a great deal of tawaf across those days, turned and said: is this Fadala? What were you intending? Nothing, Fadala lied, I was only remembering Allah. The Prophet ﷺ laughed at the open lie, and laid his hand on Fadala's chest, and Fadala said afterward that the instant the hand touched him, no one on the face of the earth was more beloved to him than the man before him. The whole plot dissolved into faith between one breath and the next.

There was Safwan ibn Umayyah, son of Umayyah ibn Khalaf and one of the leaders of Quraysh, who tried to fight, and when fighting failed, fled toward the sea at Jeddah meaning to board a ship and drown himself rather than live under this. His cousin Umayr went to the Prophet ﷺ and begged a guarantee of safety, and was given the very turban the Prophet ﷺ had worn entering Makkah as a token Safwan would recognize, and caught him at the shore. Safwan came back, too afraid even to dismount, calling out across the Haram to confirm the safety with his own ears, and was granted four months to decide, asked nothing of his heart. Later, after Hunayn and its vast spoils, the Prophet ﷺ saw him gazing at an entire valley of livestock and said, take it, it is yours, and Safwan said that such a gift could come only from the heart of a prophet, a man who could not be made to care for the world, and the most hated of men to him became the most beloved. People who love this world, the Sheikh observes, are sometimes won only when they are shown a love stronger than it, and then they recognize the sincerity, and faith enters.

There was Suhayl ibn Amr, the proud negotiator of Hudaibiyyah, a senior leader of the old generation, who did not flee but locked himself in his house in terror and sent his eldest son to plead for

protection, saying he knew of no man still living who had wronged the Prophet ﷺ more than he had. He was granted safety, and the Prophet ﷺ told the companions: when Suhayl comes, do not stare at him in anger, not even in your faces, for he is a man of intelligence and honor, too intelligent to stay ignorant of Islam, and when he sees its truth he will come to it. And so he did, in the months after Hunayn and Ta'if. And there was Abu Quhafah, the aged blind father of Abu Bakr radiyallahu anhu, perhaps the oldest man alive in Makkah, led in by the hand by his granddaughter Asma to give the pledge. The Prophet ﷺ said: why did you not leave the old man in his house? We would have come to him. The dignity of the elder honored, the Sheikh notes, not for his own rank but for his son's, for the one who shows no respect to our elders is not of us, and you treat a person by what he and his family have done, and there is nothing un-Islamic in that. And when the blind old man's hand was placed in the hand of the Prophet ﷺ, Abu Bakr wept, and said he wished the hand he was watching were the hand of the Prophet's own uncle Abu Talib rather than his own father's, that he would gladly have traded his father's Islam for the joy it would have given the Prophet ﷺ to see Abu Talib believe. One by one, across three patient weeks, the city he had been driven from came home.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read the conquest as the triumphant end of a long war and leave it there, the good men winning at last. That is to miss the question it actually puts to us. The conquest is the hour almost no one survives with their soul intact: total, unanswerable power over the very people who hurt you. He ﷺ walked into that hour and walked out the other side gentler than he went in, and the test he passed in it is the test set quietly for

every one of us, on a far smaller scale, more often than we would like.

Power is for mercy. He held an entire city at his mercy and said, go forth, you are free, and let the rule of his whole religion be visible for an afternoon: compassion as the standard, strictness only the rare exception that keeps a line in place. The measure of a person's faith was never what he does when he is wronged and helpless. It is what he does the moment he could finally get even, and chooses not to. Most of us are tested not with a conquered city but with a small advantage suddenly fallen into our hands over someone who wronged us, and the question is the same.

You are paid in your own coin. The voice that cried tawheed under torture in these valleys was the voice raised above the Ka'bah at the hour of honor, good for good, the reward cut from the same cloth as the deed. Hold firm in the hard years and you are trusting Allah for a repayment that will carry the very character of your patience. And forgiveness, the day teaches, does not mean pretending. He forgave Hind without ever saying you are forgiven, and let her pass, neither striking back nor declaring the wound healed. You can release a hurt to Allah without forcing your mouth to say it never happened; mercy and an honest grief can live in one heart, as they lived in his.

Faith comes in levels, and so we are patient. Some entered that day and soared; some, like Abu Sufyan, stood with belief in their heads and not yet in their hearts; some, like Safwan and Suhayl and Fadala and the old blind father led in by the hand, came in slowly across three weeks, dragged the last distance by a touch on the chest or a valley of gifts or sheer unhurried courtesy. Allah told the bedouins not to claim more than they had yet reached, and the lesson for us is to be the more generous and the more

patient with every heart still on the road, beginning with our own. And underneath it all, the promise he gave the Ansar when they feared he would forget them: my life is your life, my death your death. He is yours. Belong to him ﷺ, and trust that the one who answered a conquered city with an open door, and a frightened tribe with that promise, does not forget his own. May Allah let the heart that has been wronged answer with the mercy he answered with, open for us the doors He opened for Makkah, and gather us among those who come to him, however slowly, and are received.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 80: the conquest of Makkah, part 5 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (110:2, 60:12, 49:14), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The Conquest of Makkah, Part 6

From the lowest of the low to the highest of the high

The gates are open. The idols are down. The amnesty has been declared, and the man Makkah once tortured and exiled is now the undisputed master of the city that drove him out. So what does a conqueror do with a city that is finally his? You would expect a settling of scores, a redistribution of houses, a parade. For nineteen quiet days the Prophet ﷺ shows you the opposite, and almost none of it looks like conquest. He pitches a tent in the valley of his worst memory. He welcomes home the last few who come in. He gives the haram back its holiness, teaches the new Muslims their religion, pays blood money for a mistake that was not his, and then, gently, is told that his own work on earth is nearly finished. This is the close of the long Makkah arc, and it lands not on triumph but on mercy, law, and the quiet shape of a life bending toward its end.

The last ones home

Two more came in at the very end, and they tell you what the whole conquest had been for. The first was Umm Hani, the Prophet's ﷺ own cousin, a daughter of Abu Talib and full sister of Ali ibn Abi Talib. She had known him since childhood; she had watched the religion rise from inside his own family, and she had held back from it all those years, embracing Islam only now, at the conquest. Her story has nothing to do with belief and everything to do with the texture of these days. Two of her in-

laws, men with old blood between them and Ali, had fled in terror during the conquest, certain that Ali would take revenge on them. When they had nowhere left to run, they sent word to her, and she took them into her house and locked the door, on her own brother. Ali was enraged. How dare she come between him and the men he was hunting? He threatened to harm them.

So the next morning Umm Hani went straight to the Prophet ﷺ. Because she was family, she was let through to his tent, and she found him in the middle of a ghusl, washing behind a cloth that his daughter Fatima held up to shield him; there were no private rooms in those days, no separate facilities, only a corner of a tent and a curtain held by someone you trusted. He ﷺ asked who had come. Umm Hani, she said, and he lowered the cloth, looked at the cousin he had not seen come into the fold all these years, and said: welcome, Umm Hani. She poured out the whole story, that she was a Muslim now, that she had given protection to her in-laws, that Ali was threatening them, that she had come straight to him to appeal. And he ﷺ answered with a sentence that still astonishes: we grant protection to whomever you have granted it.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi stops you on how open that law is. From this single exchange the scholars of fiqh derived that any Muslim at all, man or woman, free or slave, can extend a personal pledge of safety, an aman, to any individual, and the entire community is then bound to honor it. A single woman's word held the whole victorious army back. This is the law of Islam, and it is, the Sheikh says, a strikingly lax and open system, unprecedented in its age. Any person could say, this one is under my protection, and all the Muslims would have to obey. It grew out of a faith that came to gather people in, not to settle scores. And there is a small treasure folded into the same visit: when he ﷺ finished his ghusl, Umm Hani watched him pray eight units of the forenoon prayer,

salat al-duha. It is the only report we have from the Prophet's ﷺ own life of how many units he prayed for that prayer, because he kept it in the privacy of his home and his wives, understanding it as habit, never thought to count it for us. Umm Hani counted. Eight.

The second latecomer was the man who had spent his whole life trying to keep people out. Abdullah ibn al-Zibara was the official poet of the Quraysh, a man of the Banu Sahm, and his weapon was verse. In an age when poetry was the press, the propaganda, the public verdict all at once, he was the voice that hurled poem after poem at the Muslims, before Badr and after it, before Uhud and after it, trading blows with Hassan ibn Thabit while the Prophet ﷺ told Hassan to answer him and that Jibril was with him. When Makkah fell, Ibn al-Zibara fled to Najran with his cousin and his closest friend, too uncomfortable in his own skin to stay near the Prophet ﷺ even though his name was not on any list. And Hassan, hearing the poet had run, gloated. He wrote a page-long poem, preserved in Ibn Ishaq, the most scathing personal attack he ever composed: what a coward, he flees to Najran, the whole world curses him, he and his children are cursed until the Day of Judgment.

But the poem landed somewhere it was never aimed. Ibn al-Zibara read it and grew not defiant but depressed, because he agreed with it. He had run. He had been a coward. And lying there in a strange city among a strange tribe, he began to turn the message itself over in his mind, not the insult, the content. Within a few days he had packed his belongings to return to Makkah a Muslim. His cousin was bewildered, and a little betrayed: we came all this way together, and now you will abandon me here alone among strangers? And Ibn al-Zibara gave the answer that tells you everything had turned: why should I

stay among a strange tribe in a strange land when I can go back to my own kith and kin, my own cousin, who is the best of all mankind?

I see the light of faith upon him

Picture the scene the Sheikh draws for you. The Prophet ﷺ is sitting before the Ka'bah with the companions around him when a figure appears far off on the road, walking toward them. Before anyone can tense or reach for a weapon, he ﷺ says: that is Ibn al-Zibara, and I see upon him the light of faith. So no one says a word. And before the Prophet ﷺ himself can speak, the poet reaches him and says it first, out of his own mouth: peace be upon you, O Messenger of Allah. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and that you are the Messenger of Allah.

Then he confessed the whole campaign of his life, and even in translation the Sheikh asks you to feel the weight of his words, because the language is pregnant with meaning. I rode horses, he said, and I traveled on camels, and I walked on foot to oppose you. Everything I had, my tongue, my efforts, all of it spent against you. I even fled to Najran to escape you. And still Allah wanted good for me. He spoke of the shame of it, of how Allah had made him see at last how ignorant he had been, venerating and sacrificing to a stone that cannot think, an idol that does not even know it is being worshipped. The Prophet ﷺ welcomed him and told him what he told them all: Islam wipes away everything that came before it. Every sin you committed is erased and made clean. And for the rest of his life the poet who had cursed Islam composed poem after poem in its praise, as an expiation for what he had done, until one day, after a poem recited in front of him, the Prophet ﷺ took off his own cloak and laid it across the man's shoulders. To a poet that was the highest honor imaginable, and

the Prophet's ﷺ personal cloak was a gift he gave to almost no one. Much of Ibn al-Zibara's later poetry, unlike Hassan's, has been lost, and the Sheikh confesses he does not know why; only fragments survive. But the scholars remembered him as a great poet who, after Islam, cancelled with his verse the very evil he had once spread with it.

Two latecomers, then: a woman who sheltered her own family's enemies, and a poet who had cursed the Prophet ﷺ in public for the better part of two decades. Both folded into the mercy at the last hour, without a single word of reproach. That is the texture of the days after the conquest.

A tent in the valley of the boycott

He ﷺ stayed in Makkah for nineteen days. The reports differ, some say fifteen, some twenty, but Bukhari says nineteen, and that is the count the Sheikh follows. And in all that time the conqueror of the city had nowhere of his own to stay. The question came up at once: whose house would he occupy? Ali wanted to reclaim the family home, the house of Abu Talib, the very house the Prophet ﷺ had grown up in. Why, he asked, would they not simply go back to their own house? And the answer he received was a fair man's answer: did Aqil leave us any house to return to?

Understand the reference. Abu Talib had died upon the religion of his fathers, a disbeliever, with four sons. The two eldest, Talib and Aqil, had not embraced Islam in those years; only the younger two, Ali and Jafar, had. So when Abu Talib died, his estate passed, by the plain law, to Talib and Aqil, and Ali and Jafar inherited nothing of the house, because a Muslim does not inherit from a disbeliever. Then Talib died, and Aqil sold the whole property to someone else, a legitimate sale. So when Ali

asked to take the house back, there was nothing to take; it belonged now to a buyer who had paid for it lawfully, and the Prophet ﷺ would not lay a hand on property that had been sold in good faith. He was even, the Sheikh notes, a little wounded by it, a little critical of Aqil, who had sold away the family home; if Aqil had left it for them, they would have had somewhere to go. But Aqil sold it all. From this single episode the scholars drew a clean ruling of inheritance, that a disbeliever is inherited by disbelievers, that Muslims do not take from them, and that lawfully sold property cannot afterward be seized back. The conqueror of the holiest city on earth had, in that city, no house at all. (Aqil himself, the Sheikh adds, did accept Islam at the conquest, and then lived a long and quiet life, never much involved in great affairs, and passed away without fanfare.)

So he did something that is one of the quiet wonders of the seerah. He pitched a tent. The place he chose was a small valley five minutes' walk from the Ka'bah, a place called al-Hujun, and every person who lives in Makkah to this day knows exactly where al-Hujun is; ask any Makkan and he will point to it. But al-Hujun was not just any spot of ground. Al-Hujun was where the Quraysh had once gathered in their secret meeting to enact the boycott, to draw up and sign the document that sealed the Prophet ﷺ and his clan behind years of hunger and isolation. It was the lowest of the low, the worst thing the Quraysh ever did to him, plotted on that exact ground. And now he returns to that exact ground, not as the besieged but as the undisputed master of the city, and lives there. Dr. Yasir Qadhi will not let you walk past the symbolism. Look, he says, at how Allah tests people and then honors them. Allah tested him through what happened at al-Hujun, and in that very same place Allah raised him to the highest of the high. From the lowest of the low to the highest of the high,

in the precise spot where it had hurt the most. That is the perfect justice of Allah, written into the geography of one small valley.

He gave the haram back its sanctity

In one of the earliest sermons of those days, perhaps the very morning after the conquest, he ﷺ gathered the people and reminded them what their city is. O people, Allah has made Makkah sacred. He made it sacred the day He created the heavens and the earth, and it shall remain sacred until the Day of Judgment. No blood may be shed in it, human or animal; you cannot fight in it, you cannot hunt in it, you cannot even pluck its plants or its leaves. Everything Allah has placed there is to be left as it is. It was never lawful to fight in before me, he told them, nor will it be lawful after me, and for me it was made lawful for only a single hour of a single day, the hour in which I entered it; and now that hour is over, and Makkah has returned to its sanctity as it was before. He even gave them the answer to the objection: if anyone ever says to you that the Prophet himself fought in Makkah, tell him that Allah made it lawful for His Messenger and has not made it lawful for you. So deeply did the companions take this in that some of them would not so much as brush an insect off their clothing in the haram, unwilling to disturb any living creation of Allah within its sacred bounds. And Allah Himself, the Sheikh reminds you, warns of a painful punishment for the one who merely intends wrongdoing there.

Indeed, those who have disbelieved and avert [people] from the way of Allah and [from] al-Masjid al-Haram, which We made for the people - equal are the resident therein and one from outside - and [also] whoever intends [a deed] therein of deviation [in religion] by wrongdoing - We will make him taste of a painful punishment.

Then came the cleanup of a pagan economy. Every home in Makkah held idols, and every home held wine. And the city had run a brisk and lucrative trade: they would take any wood or any stone, paint it, carve it, and sell it to the Bedouins and pilgrims coming from outside as an idol from Makkah, which fetched a higher price because a Makkan idol carried prestige, a shirk souvenir from the holy city. The Prophet ﷺ forbade the worship and the drinking, of course, and when the people, stuck now with their stockpiles, began to offer the idols and the wine cheaply to outsiders to be rid of them, he forbade that too. Allah and His Messenger, he said, have forbidden the sale of wine, of carrion, and of idols. When Allah forbids a thing, He forbids its price. The principle is simple and clean: what is not good for you is not good to hand to someone else for money. You do not get to say, it is forbidden for me but I will profit by selling it to you. So the idols were smashed and the wine was poured out into the streets, and from the conquest of Makkah a permanent rule of fiqh was born, one that every student still learns: what is forbidden to use is forbidden to sell.

And he taught them, in the most memorable way, that the law does not bend for rank. A noblewoman of the powerful Banu Makhzum, the tribe of Abu Jahl, was caught stealing, and her people, knowing the Prophet's ﷺ tender heart for him, sent Usama ibn Zayd, the beloved son of his beloved freedman, to intercede and ask that she be let off because she was a woman of high station. He ﷺ was furious. Do you intercede, he said, concerning one of the punishments set by Allah? Then he stood before all the people and gave the line we know by heart: by Allah, if Fatima the daughter of Muhammad were to steal, I would

cut off her hand. We do not operate so that the rich and the famous go free while the poor and the lowly are punished. The high and the low stand on one level before the truth. And there is a gentle coda that Aisha preserved: that very woman lived a good life afterward and would later come to Aisha with petitions and requests of her own, which Aisha would carry to the Prophet ﷺ, and they would be granted, like anyone else's. Because once a punishment has been carried out, the Sheikh says, a person is not branded a criminal for the rest of their days; the matter is closed, and they move on.

Allah knows where to place His message

Here is the thing about the conquest that the Sheikh most wants you to grasp: it changed everything, and not because of a battle. Arabia in those days had no central government; every tribe was its own little province, its own small city-state. But the conquest of Makkah was understood as the conquest of the central nervous system of the whole peninsula, because on one thing every Arab agreed, no matter how far they lived from the fight, that Makkah was the holiest city on earth, the city of Ibrahim and Ismail, the city to which all of them traced their heritage, the city Allah had once shielded from the army of the elephant. The tribes far from the conflict had been watching from the sidelines for fifteen years to see how it would end. Their reasoning, as al-Qurtubi records it, was direct: Allah once protected this city from the people of the elephant. If Allah now allows this man to take it, that settles the question. It shows he is exactly who he says he is, a prophet, and there is no stopping him.

And when a sign comes to them, they say, "Never will we believe until we are given like that which was given to the messengers of Allah." Allah is most knowing of where [i.e.,

with whom] He places His message. There will afflict those who committed crimes debasement before Allah and severe punishment for what they used to conspire.

QUR'AN 6:124

Dr. Yasir Qadhi reads the wisdom of the choice back to you, and it is worth slowing down for. You cannot argue with the grandson of Abd al-Muttalib. You cannot accuse a man born and raised in the holiest city on earth, from the cream of its noblest lineage, of grasping for status he was not owed; he already had every honor the Arabs could confer by birth. His own people had cast him out, and now he had come back and taken not some foreign land but his own city, the holiest city of all, on its own terms. Imagine, the Sheikh says, how the Arabs would have felt if some outside tribe had conquered Makkah. But this was a man of Makkah returning to Makkah. No rival could match the choice from any angle, not lineage, not birthplace, not the symbolism of the Ka'bah itself. Allah is most knowing of where He places His message. He chose this man, in this city, with this lineage, for reasons no one could ever contest.

Entering the religion of Allah in crowds

And so it happened exactly as Allah had said it would. From the conquest onward, tribe after tribe, many of them with names that had never once appeared in the whole story because they had never once fought, began sending delegations to declare their Islam. No armies marched out to compel them. They simply came, in such numbers that the next two years, from the eighth year through the tenth, are remembered as the Year of Delegations: every second or third day a new tribe arriving at his door. Look at what this means, the Sheikh says. The Prophet ﷺ never fought more than ninety percent of the Arabs of his time;

he fought only the Quraysh and the few tribes allied to them. All the rest, central Arabia, the south, the far north, the eastern and western reaches, came in without a single battle. Across a peninsula of hundreds of thousands of people, paganism was wiped out completely, every trace of it gone, and all of it inside fifteen years. It is, he says plainly, a miracle, a verse you could watch happen with your own eyes.

When the victory of Allah has come and the conquest, And you see the people entering into the religion of Allah in multitudes, Then exalt [Him] with praise of your Lord and ask forgiveness of Him. Indeed, He is ever Accepting of Repentance.

QUR'AN 110:1-3

But the Sheikh saves the deepest reading of this surah for last, and it belongs to Ibn Abbas. Years later, in the caliphate of Umar, the teenage Ibn Abbas, the Prophet's ﷺ young cousin, was being seated among the gray elders of Badr, and some of the senior companions objected: we have sons as old as this boy, and you do not bring them. So Umar, to show them why, gathered them and asked them all what this surah meant. Most gave the obvious answer: when Allah blesses you and grants you victory, thank Him and seek His forgiveness. Then Umar turned to the boy and asked him. They have not spoken correctly, Ibn Abbas said. Rather, Allah is informing His Prophet ﷺ that when Makkah is conquered, his time on earth is about to come to an end, and so he is told to prepare to meet Allah by increasing his worship and his seeking of forgiveness. And Umar said: that is all I know of it too. The conquest was the pinnacle, the Sheikh says, and from the pinnacle there is only the descent toward home. Surat an-Nasr is the beginning of the end; it tells him, for the very first

time, that death is near. And barely two years after the conquest, he ﷺ passed away.

Sit with that the way the Sheikh asks you to. The best of all creation, the most generous man who ever lived, the least sinful of all human beings, is told at the very summit of his mission to meet his end with more prayer and more istighfar. So where does that leave you and me? He ﷺ was given a hint that his end was near. We will be given no such hint. The honest response is the only one there is: to begin the worship and the seeking of forgiveness now, today, while there is still time to begin.

What even a perfect victory costs

There was still work to do in those nineteen days. He ﷺ sent out small parties from Makkah to invite the neighboring tribes to Islam and to bring down the great temple idols, the public idols that whole regions venerated, while every household was simply commanded to destroy its own. Khalid ibn al-Walid was sent to destroy al-Uzza, and when he arrived, her own custodian, seeing what was coming, flung his axe around her neck and told her to defend herself, then fled; she did not defend herself, and Khalid destroyed her. Within a few days the famous idols of the whole Hijaz were gone. But this greatness, the Sheikh is careful to say, was marred by a small tragedy, and it was not from the Prophet ﷺ; it was the mistake of a brand-new Muslim, a reminder that in this world there is no perfection, that even at the highest moment of the religion something will go wrong, and that a human being is always prone to error.

Khalid had a checklist of expeditions, and one item on it was the tribe of Banu Jadhima, a day's distance from Makkah. But Khalid had a personal history there: in the days of ignorance this tribe had killed his uncle, and there was old blood between them. So

when he appeared on their horizon with an army behind him, the Banu Jadhima thought attack, and a group of them reached for their swords. When other members of the tribe, understanding what was really happening, tried to announce their submission, they said it clumsily, with the old word, sabana, sabana, we have become Sabians, the way the Arabs used to call the new religion. The senior companions present caught the meaning and held back. But Khalid, already provoked, and not yet taught the sacred rule that a person's surrender is taken at its word, that you do not open up a man's heart to check, the rule the religion had learned from the story of Ali and the man who spat at him, and from Usama killing a man who said the shahada at the last moment, Khalid did not understand. He struck, and he killed men who should never have been killed. Senior companions like Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf refused his order to continue, because in Islam a leader is obeyed only in what is right, and this was a clear case of disobeying a commander who had commanded a wrong. Khalid, who was their military superior though junior to them in faith, grew angry and cursed Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf.

When the news reached the Prophet ﷺ, he did something striking. He stood, faced the Ka'bah, raised his hands, and said: O Allah, I am innocent before You of what Khalid has done. I did not command him to this. He sent Ali at once with a large sum of wealth to pay the full blood money to every family, generously, person by person, and to apologize on his behalf. And when Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf came complaining of how Khalid had cursed him, the Prophet ﷺ gave the words we always quote: do not curse my companions, for by Allah, were one of you to spend the like of Mount Uhud in gold, he would not reach a handful, or even half a handful, of what one of them gave. Dr. Yasir Qadhi points to who was being told this. It was said to Khalid, himself a great

companion, a man who would become one of the most respected figures in the religion. And if Khalid, for all his greatness, could not reach the rank of the earliest believers, then where, the Sheikh asks, does that leave the rest of us? The hadith we use to honor the companions was spoken to a companion. It should raise our estimate of them higher, not lower.

Allah has written [i.e., decreed], "I will surely overcome, I and My messengers." Indeed, Allah is Powerful and Exalted in Might.

QUR'AN 58:21

And this is the theology the whole long arc has been driving toward. Allah has decreed: I will surely overcome, I and My messengers. The man they tortured and exiled, against whom they plotted assassination, came back in eight years and took the capital of Arabia with almost no blood spilled, and from that conquest the whole peninsula entered Islam in crowds. But the seerah, the Sheikh reminds you, has mostly been the downs, not the ups. This victory came after the buried daughters and the strangled children of the early persecution, after the boycott and the years of hunger, after Uhud and the broken treaties, after the dead at Mu'tah whom the Prophet ﷺ himself wept for. Allah does not let the effort of the sincere go unrewarded, but He asks for the effort first; no one is handed the reward sitting at home, waiting for the blessing to fall on him. You stand, you strive, you endure, and then Allah does not waste it. The conquest is the proof of the promise. And yet even now the work was not finished. One major city still stood near Makkah, a city built on a high plateau behind thick walls and its own water, a city no army of that day yet knew how to take by siege. It was the city that had pelted him with stones and turned its children loose on him, the

city he had once stood over with the power to destroy and chose instead to forgive: Ta'if. And before Ta'if, in a narrow valley, there waited a battle that would test the twelve thousand at the very moment they felt invincible. The valley was called Hunayn. That is where the next chapter begins.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read the conquest of Makkah as a story that ends in a parade, the great vindication, the hero home at last, and to close the book there. That would be to miss almost everything the days after the surrender are trying to teach. Strip them down and you find not triumph but four hard disciplines, and every one of them is aimed straight at us.

The first is that mercy keeps its door open to the very last. A woman who locked her door on her own brother to shelter his enemies, and a poet who had cursed the Prophet ﷺ in verse for twenty years and then run away, both came in at the end, and both were welcomed without one syllable of reproach. From a distance, before the poet could even speak, he ﷺ saw the light of faith upon him. No one, this tells you, arrives too late. No past is too dark. While the door is still open, it is open all the way, and the only question is whether you will walk through it. Ask yourself who you have decided is beyond welcome, and then look again at the man walking up the road to the Ka'bah.

The second is that power is for justice, not revenge. The moment he finally had the upper hand over the city that had wronged him was the exact moment his fairness was tested, and it held. He would not seize back a house that had been lawfully sold, even though it was his childhood home and the buyer had been an enemy. He would have cut off his own daughter's hand for theft rather than let rank buy an exemption. When you are weak,

fairness is cheap; you cannot afford otherwise. The test comes when you have won, when you could bend the rule and no one would stop you. That is when this faith asks you to hold the line, because the high and the low stand on one level before the truth.

The third is the small, unglamorous law born in those streets: what is forbidden to use is forbidden to profit from. The wine was poured into the dust, not quietly sold to outsiders for a fair price. When Allah forbids a thing, He forbids its price, because what is not good for you is not yours to hand to another for money. It is a question about your income and your hands. How much of what you take is clean all the way down, and how much of it travels to you over something you would never touch yourself? Clean earning, this day says, is not a side matter of the faith; it is the faith.

And the fourth is the deepest, the one Ibn Abbas read out of a short surah while the elders read only the surface. At the summit, the very pinnacle of his life and mission, with the holiest city on earth in his hand and a whole peninsula turning toward him, the first thing Allah asked of His beloved ﷺ was not celebration but preparation: exalt your Lord, praise Him, and seek His forgiveness, for your work is nearly done. The best of creation was told to meet his death with more prayer. He was given a hint. We will not be. So the lesson he was told to take is the lesson left for us, and it is urgent precisely because we have no warning: that the higher you are raised the lower you should bow, that the right response to every blessing is more worship and more istighfar, and that the only honest time to begin preparing to meet Allah is now, before the conquest of your own life is behind you and the descent has quietly begun.

So carry these four out of Makkah and down into your ordinary days. Leave the door of mercy open to someone you had closed it on. Be most fair in the moment you have the most power to be unfair. Make your earning clean enough that you would put your own hands on every part of it. And meet your blessings the way he ﷺ was taught to meet his greatest one, on your knees, in praise and in seeking forgiveness, as a person whose time is shorter than he knows. May Allah keep our hearts firm upon His religion, gather us among those who entered it in crowds, forgive us as He taught His Prophet ﷺ to seek forgiveness at the height of his honor, and let us follow him through whatever valley comes next. And may Allah send His peace and His blessings upon Muhammad ﷺ, who forgave the city that exiled him, pitched his tent in the valley of his deepest wound, and was raised there from the lowest of the low to the highest of the high.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 81: the conquest of Makkah, part 6 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (22:25, 6:124, 110:1-3, 58:21), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The Battle of Hunayn, Part I

When their numbers pleased them, and the earth closed in

Makkah had fallen, and not with a war. The Kaaba stood cleansed, the idols toppled and shattered, the city that had hunted the Prophet ﷺ for thirteen years now lay open and forgiving beneath him. He ﷺ stayed nineteen days settling its affairs, and the believers who had come up from Madinah could have been forgiven for thinking the long ordeal was over. The hardest thing any of them had ever imagined, the recovery of the sacred city, was behind them. What more, they might have asked, could be left to do?

Then, while he ﷺ was still camped in Makkah, the news came in. A great army was gathering in the mountains, the largest the Arabs had ever raised, and it was marching for them. What followed in the valley of Hunayn is one of only three battles Allah names in the whole of the Qur'an. It was the day the Muslims were more numerous than they had ever been, twelve thousand under one banner, and the day they came nearer to ruin than they had at Badr or Uhud or the Trench. Dr. Yasir Qadhi calls it the battle that humbles the strong. Day eighty-two is the ambush, the rout, and the rally, and the lesson buried in all three: numbers save no one.

The last stand of the old gods

The only city near enough to threaten Makkah was Ta'if, the mountain stronghold of the tribe of Thaqif, and Thaqif had read the conquest more clearly than the Quraysh ever had. With the sacred city in Muslim hands, there was no longer anything in all of Arabia standing between the worship of one God and the whole of the peninsula. If paganism was ever going to make its stand, it would have to be now, before monotheism swept the rest of the land the way it had swept Makkah.

So Thaqif joined hands with the great bedouin confederation of Hawazin and began sending emissaries out to every pagan tribe within reach, and two motives ran braided together through their summons. The first was the fear of a dying religion: they would defend the old gods before the old gods were gone. The second was older and far more familiar to the Arab heart. For centuries Thaqif had been second only to the Quraysh in prestige, and now, with the Quraysh vanquished, Thaqif saw its chance to slip into the vacuum left behind, to seize Makkah and become the new custodians of the Kaaba. They wanted to save paganism, and they wanted to rule it.

Sheikh Yasir Qadhi pauses here to let the size of what happened next land, because it had never happened before. Tribe answered tribe, and the host that assembled was more than twenty thousand fighters: Hawazin and Thaqif at the core, perhaps ten thousand, the other ten thousand drawn from a crowd of smaller tribes whose names the Sheikh leaves aside lest the story drown in them. It was the largest gathering of pagan Arabs in the entire history of Arabia. Sit with that. Since the Arabs had been a people they had been scattered tribes, divided by bloodline and feud, and nothing on earth had ever united them but the pride of fathers and forefathers. Now, for the first time, something else had pulled them into a single army. This was not a

tribal raid. It was a religious war, polytheism gathering its full strength for one final stand against the worship of the one God. The numbers, the Sheikh notes, had been climbing like this through the whole seerah, Badr to Uhud to the Trench, each larger than the last, until at Hunayn the count reached a height the Arabs had never seen and would never see again under the banner of their idols.

The man sent to count them

The Prophet ﷺ heard the rumors and did what he always did when a hard decision lay ahead: he sent for knowledge before he sent for swords. He dispatched a companion named Abdullah ibn Abi Hadrad, a recent convert from that very region, calculating that the gathering tribes would not yet know he had become a Muslim, and that in a crowd of twenty thousand no one would watch any single man. Abdullah walked in among them, fell into step as though he belonged, and counted. He came back shaken: never had he seen so many men, twenty thousand on the march, and he told of their armor and weaponry, for the people of Ta'if had always held an edge over other tribes. They lived high on a fertile plateau, naturally walled, well fed, and they had built real fortresses and fielded real armies. These were not desert raiders but known, hardened fighters.

When Abdullah laid this before the believers, the Prophet ﷺ called his senior companions to council, as was his unbroken habit, and asked them what they should do. But Abu Bakr and Umar and the rest sat astonished, almost silent. They had not been bracing for war. This was meant to be a season of joy; Makkah was theirs, the long struggle won, and now they were told the largest battle of their lives was about to begin. In the confusion Umar said aloud that perhaps Abdullah was simply

mistaken, and Abdullah took it as an accusation of lying and flared back: if you think me wrong, you have thought someone better than me wrong before, meaning the Prophet ﷺ himself in the days before Umar's Islam. Umar complained to the Prophet ﷺ, who answered gently that indeed Umar had once been astray, and Allah had guided him to Islam, and left it there. He took no side. He simply let the heat go out of the room.

The Sheikh draws something tender out of this small quarrel. The companions were not angels. To differ is human, and to grow sharp with one another is something you find in every society that has existed; in His wisdom Allah preserved for us the most perfect human community there has been, and it is one with its small frictions intact. Neither man sinned, and it did not last, for when the matter turned to the protection of the religion these same men closed ranks into a single unbreakable force. It does not make a Muslim a bad Muslim to stumble into a moment of anger. And it shows us the Prophet ﷺ at his most quietly masterful, not adjudicating who was right, but cooling the quarrel until it dissolved.

Ask me for a lucky tree

He ﷺ would not march against twenty thousand with the ten thousand who had come from Madinah alone. So he turned to Makkah itself, the city he had conquered only days before, and roughly two thousand of its men joined the army, some Muslims of a single day, some not yet Muslim at all. He needed armor and weapons, and he asked for them openly. He went to Safwan ibn Umayya, still inside a two-month period of grace and not yet a Muslim, and asked to borrow his armor. Are you taking it by force, Safwan asked, or asking me for a loan? A loan, the Prophet ﷺ told him, guaranteed: if anything is damaged or lost, you will be

repaid its worth. From this single exchange, the Sheikh notes, the scholars draw a settled principle of Islamic law, that what you borrow you are responsible for, and if it is harmed in your keeping you must make it good. He borrowed from Safwan and from others, every loan guaranteed and, when it was over, every loan repaid. So an army of roughly twelve thousand set out, more men than the believers had ever fielded, better armed than they had ever been, on the sixth of Shawwal in the eighth year, and four days later it reached the valley of Hunayn.

On the road out of Makkah the army passed a great green tree standing alone in the desert, a magnificent canopy in a land of stone and sand. The pagans called it dhat anwat, the tree you hang things on. Once a year they would gather around it in festival, sacrifice to it, and drape their weapons in its branches for good luck before riding to battle, trusting the tree to carry them home alive. Some of the men walking past it now were brand new Muslims, a week into the faith, and the memory tugged at them. Messenger of Allah, they called out, why not make for us a tree like theirs?

The Prophet ﷺ was stunned. Subhanallah, he said, and then swore by the One in whose hand his soul rested: you have said exactly what the people of Musa said to him. And he answered them by reciting what Allah had recorded of that older folly, when the Children of Israel, freshly delivered through the parted sea, came upon a nation bowing to idols and turned to their own prophet with the same request.

And We took the Children of Israel across the sea; then they came upon a people intent in devotion to [some] idols of theirs. They [the Children of Israel] said, "O Moses, make for us a god just as they have gods." He said, "Indeed, you are a people behaving ignorantly.

They had not asked for an idol, the Sheikh is careful to say. They had asked for a charm, a tree to hang their weapons on. But to the Prophet ﷺ the two requests were one and the same, sworn upon with the most solemn oath he knew, not because the words matched but because the heart of them matched exactly. For what is a god, in the end, but the thing you turn to for help, the thing you reach for when you are afraid, the thing you trust to protect you and to bring you good? Hang your safety on a tree or a stone or a colored bead, and you have handed a piece of your trust to something that was never going to save you, and that is the very root from which idolatry grows. Only Allah protects. We laugh at the black cat and the wood we knock on, the Sheikh adds, and forget their cousins in our own homes: the hand of five fingers on the wall, the turquoise eye against envy, the amulet tied around the neck. To believe that an object on your wall guards you from the evil eye is, in essence, to keep a small idol, for you have given it your hope and your fear, so that when something happens to it you panic as though your protector has fallen.

And yet, the Sheikh points out, watch what the Prophet ﷺ did and did not do. He named the act, and named it without softening: he called the request a form of shirk, and swore to it. But he did not call the man a mushrik. He did not throw the new Muslim out of the faith, did not brand him an idolater, because the man simply did not know yet. He had left paganism a week ago and had not yet understood what Islam asked of him; ignorance was his excuse, and the Prophet ﷺ extended it to him. Here is a distinction, the Sheikh insists, that the ordinary Muslim almost never makes and badly needs to learn: a person can commit an

act of shirk without being a mushrik, an act of kufr without being a kafir, because there are conditions to be met and excuses to be removed before any such verdict falls on a human being, and that weighing is the work of scholars, not of laymen passing sentence on each other. The deed may be named for exactly what it is. The person, new or unaware, is taught with patience, not cast away.

How can twelve thousand be beaten

The size of the army went to its head. One of the men looked out over the host, the twelve thousand, the horses and camels and weaponry such as the believers had never owned, and said aloud what others were quietly feeling: how could we possibly be defeated, when we are twelve thousand? It reached the Prophet ﷺ, and it troubled him deeply. He answered at once. Do not say such a thing, he warned, for there was once a prophet among the prophets, a man whose name we are not given, who looked upon his own army and felt that same swell of pride at the sheer mass of men behind him. And as he looked, Allah sent down a pestilence out of the clear sky, and the army was destroyed where it stood, before it had so much as met an enemy.

The Sheikh sets this against an image still fresh in the listener's mind. Only weeks before, the Prophet ﷺ had entered Makkah at the head of the greatest force he had ever commanded, his head bowed so low in humility that it nearly touched the back of his mount. That was the posture of true victory, a conqueror folding himself small before the One who gave the conquest. This boast in the valley was its exact opposite, the head lifted in pride rather than lowered in gratitude, and it was spreading from man to man, freely, the Sheikh adds, precisely because so many in the ranks were new, a week into Islam and some not yet truly in it at all, and had not yet learned where strength actually comes from.

The valley that closed its jaws

Hunayn was Hawazin's own ground, and they knew every fold of it. The chieftain leading them was Malik ibn Awf, a young man of about thirty, newly raised to command, with everything to prove in his first great battle. And here, the Sheikh says, an old human drama played itself out, the clash of youth and age every society has known: the young certain they know best, the old who usually do.

Among the host, led by the hand because he was blind with age, was one of the most senior and noble men of the tribe, a former chief named Durayd ibn al-Simma, brought not to fight but for the blessing and wisdom of his presence, a living memory of a hundred battles. When they set him down he listened, and what he heard alarmed him. I can hear babies crying, he said, and goats bleating, and camels lowing. Who has brought the women and children and all the herds to a battlefield? They told him it was the new chief, and Malik was summoned. Why, Durayd demanded, had he dragged the whole of his people, their families and property and cattle, into a war? Because, the young man answered, he wanted every man to fight with his wife and children and wealth at his back. And the blind old warrior rebuked him without mercy. This was a foolish move, and a dangerous one. Your women and children and goats will not win you this war. A man who is going to lose does not win because his family is behind him; wars are won by men with swords, and by nothing else.

Then Durayd asked by name after two or three of the bravest subtribes, the ones a wise commander would want at his side, and was told that not one had come. He understood at once. Those men had weighed this war, judged it a loss, and stayed home, and they had judged rightly. Go back, Malik, he said. Do

not fight. And if you will not heed that, then at least send the precious ones home behind their fortress walls, for if you win you will go home to them, and if you lose, at least they will be safe. It was entirely sensible counsel, and the people of Hawazin began to waver toward it.

But the thirty-year-old chief needed to prove his manhood. So he mocked the old guard, told him he had lost the plot and should leave the war to the young. And when he saw the people still hesitating, Malik played his last card, and it reveals exactly the kind of leader he was. By Allah, he swore before them all, if you do not obey me, I will drive my sword through myself right here in front of you. With that blackmail he silenced them, and the families and the flocks stayed. The age-old folly of youthful zeal over elder wisdom, the Sheikh observes, and on this day Allah willed that it serve the Muslims, for all of it, the families, the herds, the wealth, was about to fall into their hands.

Then Malik laid his trap, and it was a clever one. Knowing the Muslims would have to pass through a narrow valley, he posted bands of archers in the nooks and crevices along both heights of the pass, hidden the length of the valley on ground only he and his men knew. At the far end he set a small token force from Hawazin that looked arrayed for battle. That was the bait: let the Muslims rush toward it, let it break and flee as though beaten, drawing the whole army forward certain of an easy victory, and then, when the bulk of them were deep in the pass with walls on both sides, give the signal. The archers above would loose volley after volley into men who could neither see the bowmen nor reach them, while the twenty thousand below charged from the front. A double assault, from above and from ahead, with nowhere to run.

It unfolded exactly as drawn. In the half light before dawn the Muslims surged into the valley, the bait broke and ran, the army poured forward sure the day was won. And then the signal went up, a great shout, and in an instant the arrows fell from every height at once while the enemy charged from the front, and the great army shattered. This is the precise moment Allah names in His Book, the only mention He makes of a battle alongside Badr in the Qur'an by name.

Allāh has already given you victory in many regions and [even] on the day of Ḥunayn, when your great number pleased you, but it did not avail you at all, and the earth was confining for you with [i.e., in spite of] its vastness; then you turned back, fleeing.

QUR'AN 9:25

They fled, hundreds upon hundreds, helter-skelter, no man caring for any other, a mob in full panic. The Sheikh names why it broke so completely. So many were the newest of Muslims, a week old in the faith, and some not Muslim at all; the ambush was utterly unexpected, for they had walked in certain of victory; and arrows are a terror we can barely imagine, falling out of nowhere from above, impossible to see in time, while the sheer mass of twelve thousand meant most had no armor to turn a single shaft. So they ran, scrambling for any cover from the sky raining death. Their great numbers, in which they had delighted only hours before, availed them nothing at all, and the wide earth shrank around twelve thousand men until there was nowhere left to stand.

I am the Prophet, this is no lie

In the heart of the rout, the Prophet ﷺ did not move. While twelve thousand men streamed past him in blind panic, he pressed his white mule forward, toward the enemy, into the arrows, as though the whole army were fleeing around a single still point, and called out over the chaos in a voice meant to carry: Come to me. I am the Messenger of Allah. I am Muhammad, the son of Abdullah. And then the lines the seerah has never forgotten, that ring down fourteen centuries: I am the Prophet, this is no lie. I am the son of Abdul Muttalib.

He was reaching them, the Sheikh explains, with both hands at once. With the first he held out the truth of his prophethood, the call no believer could ignore. With the second he held out a name, and the name was deliberate. Abdul Muttalib was the most beloved of all the Arabs of the age before Islam, the grandfather every tribe in the peninsula honored, and the men fleeing through that valley were in large part Makkans of a single week's faith who had revered that name their whole lives long. So the Prophet ﷺ combined the two loyalties on purpose, the loyalty to Islam first and above all, and beneath it the loyalty of blood, because for these men a name they had loved since childhood might pull them back when nothing else could. The sentiment of tribe, or in our age of nation, is not evil in itself, the Sheikh adds; like any sentiment it can be turned to good or to ill, and here he ﷺ turned it to good, so long as it never rises above the pride of faith.

His uncle Abbas was beside him, famous for a voice that carried like a horn, and the Prophet ﷺ told him to call the companions back by name, tribe by tribe, beginning with the people of the pledge under the tree, who at Hudaibiyah had vowed to fight without weapons. Abbas roared their names into the valley, one tribe after another, until the walls rang with it. And the Sheikh describes what happened then as men waking from a daze. As

each man heard his own name called across the chaos, he came to his senses, asked himself where on earth he was running to, and turned. Here we are, they cried, here we respond to your call, and they came flocking back. Among those who had never fled at all was the Prophet's own cousin, the other Abu Sufyan, the son of al-Harith, gripping the stirrup of the mule in his armor, so close in blood that when the Prophet ﷺ asked who he was, he answered: I am the son of your mother, the cousin who weeks earlier had wept for forgiveness and been forgiven, and who now, when all the world ran, had stayed.

And not far off were men whose faith was so thin it nearly tore through. When the Muslims first broke, the brother of Safwan ibn Umayya said with satisfaction that today, at last, the magic spell of Islam would be broken, for they had always accused the Prophet ﷺ of sorcery. Safwan, not yet even a Muslim, snapped at him to be silent: by Allah, I would rather be ruled by a man of Quraysh than a man of Hawazin, pure tribal feeling and nothing of faith in it. This, the Sheikh says, is exactly the mindset the Prophet ﷺ was contending with as he reached for the grandfather's name as well as the Lord's: he was holding the line of an army half of which barely believed.

Then He sent down His tranquillity

As the companions surged back around him, the Prophet ﷺ bent down from his mule, took up a handful of dust and pebbles, and flung it toward the enemy with the words: may the faces be disfigured. It is reported as a sign, the Sheikh says, that their sight clouded and the archers on the heights could no longer find their mark, and the tide of the day began to turn. He raised his hands and prayed, and the believers, seeing their Prophet ﷺ unmoved at the center of the storm, pressed forward at last.

And this is where the Qur'an's own account of the rout comes to rest, and Allah tells the believers what no eye on that field could have seen.

Then Allāh sent down His tranquility upon His Messenger and upon the believers and sent down soldiers [i.e., angels] whom you did not see and punished those who disbelieved. And that is the recompense of the disbelievers.

QUR'AN 9:26

The whole lesson of the day is folded into the silence between those two verses. First the earth closes its jaws on twelve thousand men who had let their great host please them until it pleased them right into a trap, and the wide world shrank to nothing around them. Then, in the very next breath, the help comes down: the sakinah poured straight into the hearts of the Messenger ﷺ and the believers in the instant their courage had failed, and with it soldiers no human eye could see. Not when the army grew. Not when the swords were counted. The victory descended the moment the believers stopped fleeing and turned back to their Lord, and it descended from Him alone, unearned and unseen.

The dust is still hanging in the air, the day not yet won, and the Sheikh leaves the rest, the rout about to run the other way, the spoils that will test the believers more sorely than the arrows did, for the day to come. But the turn has already happened, the way it always happens: not when the numbers swelled, but when the men who had trusted them came home to the One who had been calling their names all along.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read Hunayn as a near disaster narrowly survived, a battle story with a happy ending, and to leave it sealed in the past. That would be to miss the question Allah is putting to us by naming this day, of all days, in His eternal Book. He did not name it to record a victory. He named it to expose a heart, and the heart it exposes is ours.

Numbers are not the help. This is what the whole day was built to teach, and Allah taught it by giving the believers, just once, everything the world says you need to win, and then letting it avail them nothing, so that no believer after them would ever again confuse the help of Allah with the size of what he holds in his hand. Ask yourself honestly what you are leaning on: the size of your savings, the breadth of your network, the strength of your body, the count of those who agree with you. All of it is a gift, and none of it is the Helper. The moment you mistake the gift for the Giver, you are standing in the valley at Hunayn with the arrows about to fall.

Watch the charms you reach for. The new Muslims wanted only a tree, and the Prophet ﷺ swore by Allah that it was the very wish of a people who had asked their prophet for an idol, because a god is simply whatever you turn to for protection and help. So look at what you actually turn to when you are afraid, the bead, the eye on the wall, the superstition you would be embarrassed to defend out loud, and ask whether you have quietly handed a sliver of your trust to something that was never going to save you. Only Allah brings good and turns away harm. Strip every rival from that conviction and let it stand alone.

Name the deed, be gentle with the person. The Prophet ﷺ called the request shirk and did not soften it, and in the same breath refused to call the man a mushrik, because the man did not yet

know. Hold both of those at once, because we are forever collapsing them, either excusing the error to spare the person or condemning the person to be done with the error. He ﷺ did neither. He named the wrong clearly, taught the man patiently, and left the judging of souls to those with the knowledge to judge. Be that exact with yourself, and that merciful with everyone else.

And stand when everyone else runs. Twelve thousand men fled, and one man pressed his mule forward into the arrows and called them back by name. Steadiness in the worst moment, the Sheikh reminds us, is not the absence of fear; it is a trust in Allah that simply outlasts the fear. When the thing you counted on melts away and the wide world goes suddenly narrow around you, do the one thing the army at Hunayn finally did. Turn back toward the One calling your name through all the noise. The tranquillity and the unseen soldiers did not come down on the strong or the many. They came down on the few who turned around. Whatever has broken and run in your life, the help of Allah waits on the other side of turning back to Him. O Allah, send down upon us Your tranquillity as You sent it upon Your Messenger ﷺ and the believers on the day of Hunayn, make firm our feet when the ground gives way beneath us, strip from our hearts every reliance but reliance on You, and let us be among those who turn back to You before the day is lost. Ameen.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 82: the battle of Hunayn, part 1 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih

International (7:138, 9:25, 9:26), verified via quran.ai. The narration is the Sheikh's; the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

The Battle of Hunayn, Part 2

The turn, the unseen army, and the largest spoils ever taken

Hold the picture exactly where the last day left it. The valley of Hunayn is a narrow throat of land, and at dawn twelve thousand believers had poured into it certain of an easy morning. They were the most numerous army the Muslims had ever fielded and the best equipped, mail and arrows borrowed by the hundred from the people of Makkah, the men rested from nineteen unhurried days in the conquered city. And for the first time in their lives some of them had felt the thing a believing army can least afford to feel: that they could not lose. The trap snapped shut. Arrows fell from every rim of the valley at once, the herds the army had driven before it stampeded back through its own ranks, and the great host came apart and ran.

Not all of it. In the middle of the panic one man would not move. The Prophet ﷺ pressed his white mule toward the very arrows that were emptying the valley, and around him the army had narrowed to the smallest of circles, Abu Bakr and Umar, Uthman and Ali, his uncle Abbas, a scattering of the Ansar. Twelve thousand had become a dozen. This second day of Hunayn is the story of what happens after a man refuses to flee: the turning of the rout, the descent of an army no eye could see, the heart of an assassin changed in mid gallop, the largest fortune the Muslims would ever take, and the long stubborn road it opened toward Ta'if.

When they heard their own names

Abbas had a voice that carried like a horn, and the Prophet ﷺ set it to work. He did not call to the army as a crowd, which would have been a single cry swallowed by a valley full of screaming. He called them back the way a shepherd gathers a scattered flock, one band at a time, clan by clan and name by name. O company of such and such. O sons of so and so. And the men, blind with panic and running for the rocks, heard their own names rise out of the valley behind them, and it was as if they woke from a bad dream and asked themselves where they thought they were running to. They turned. They came back, first in trickles and then in a flood, re forming around the still center of that white mule.

Then the Prophet ﷺ bent to the floor of the valley, took up a fistful of pebbles and dust, and flung it into the faces of the enemy. He had done this once before, on the morning of Badr, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi draws the line between the two days deliberately: the same hand, the same gesture, the same result. The archers on the heights faltered, their sight clouded, their volleys broke their rhythm, and in that gap of confusion the believers gathered tighter and tighter around the Prophet ﷺ with every breath.

This is the day Allah singled out by name in His Book, one of only a handful of moments in the entire seerah that the Qur'an narrates as it happened. He reminds the believers first that He has carried them through field after field, and then He turns to this one valley and refuses to look away from their worst hour in it:

Allāh has already given you victory in many regions and [even] on the day of Ḥunayn, when your great number

pleased you, but it did not avail you at all, and the earth was confining for you with [i.e., in spite of] its vastness; then you turned back, fleeing.

QUR'AN 9:25

One verse holds the whole morning, the Sheikh points out, and holds it with an unflinching honesty that should stop us. The confidence is in it, the cockiness, the numbers that had pleased them and bought them nothing, the wide valley that suddenly had no room in it for a fleeing man, and the backs that turned, named and recorded forever. Allah does not draw a veil over the moment His servants failed Him. He writes it into the Book that will be recited until the end of the world, so that the lesson of it can never quietly be lost: that the day you trust your own numbers is the day the earth shrinks around you.

An army no eye could see

And then, in the very next breath, the verse turns, and so does the day.

Then Allāh sent down His tranquility upon His Messenger and upon the believers and sent down soldiers [i.e., angels] whom you did not see and punished those who disbelieved. And that is the recompense of the disbelievers.

QUR'AN 9:26

Notice the order, because the order is the whole teaching. The help did not come down while the army was boasting that it could not be destroyed. It came down in the instant their courage had collapsed and they had begun to crawl back toward the One calling their names. First Allah sent His sakinah, His own tranquillity, settling onto the Messenger ﷺ and onto the believers

whose hearts had just been torn open by fear, until terror gave way to a steadying calm. And then He sent down soldiers that no human eye could see. As at Badr, the angels came to Hunayn, and Allah states it plainly in His Book in His own words, so that not one believer for the rest of time could mistake where the rescue had come from. It came from above, not from the borrowed armor and the rested limbs below.

And as at Badr, the Sheikh notes, some of those present were given a glimpse of it. Jubayr ibn Mutim, by now a Muslim, the son of that Mutim ibn Adi whose protection had once sheltered the Prophet ﷺ in the worst of the Makkan years, was watching when the two armies met. He saw what he could only describe as a great black mass come down out of the sky, dense and dark, and then break apart and scatter across the field the way a poured storm of ants spreads over the ground. He understood at once what he was seeing: the help of Allah, descending to fight for the believers. The blackness was not a colour but a density, a host so packed together that it looked like a single shadow until it spread.

But the moment Dr. Yasir Qadhi lingers over longest belongs to a man who had come to Hunayn for the exact opposite of faith. Shaybah ibn Uthman was a distant cousin of the Prophet ﷺ, of Banu Abd al-Dar, one of the sister clans of Banu Hashim. His father Uthman had been killed at Uhud fighting on the side of the pagans, and the wound of it had never closed. Shaybah had accepted Islam only days earlier, at the conquest of Makkah, and his own honesty about it is what makes the story so piercing: his Islam, he would say, was still only on his tongue and had not yet reached his heart. So when he saw the Prophet ﷺ standing exposed on his mule while the whole army fled around him, the old grief rose up and saw its chance. He took his spear, turned

his horse, and spurred it at the Prophet's ﷺ back to finish, in the chaos where no one would see, what Uhud had begun.

And then, he said, out of nowhere a wall of light rose up between him and his target, so blinding that he had to throw his arm across his face, and his eyes burned in his skull. The Prophet ﷺ turned. Whether he saw the angels in that light or saw only a man galloping at him with murder in his face, he understood in an instant exactly what was happening, and he did not reach for a weapon. He raised his hands. O Allah, drive the devil away from Shaybah. O Allah, guide Shaybah. Three times. And Shaybah said that faith came pouring into his heart on the spot, in the space of that single charge, so that by the time his horse reached the end of its gallop the man who had set out to assassinate the Prophet ﷺ had wheeled around and was fighting at his side against Hawazin and Thaqif. He lived a righteous life from that day. It is one of the great answered prayers of the seerah: the Prophet ﷺ, with an assassin's spear at his back, spent his breath not on saving himself but on begging Allah to save the soul of the man holding it.

The rout that ran the other way

Now the whole field tipped. Hawazin and Thaqif, it became clear, had wagered everything on a single tactic, and they had no second one in reserve. The plan had been simple and, for one terrible hour, brilliant: bury the Muslims under arrows from the heights, watch them break, then pour down on a fleeing, scattered enemy and cut them apart. It was a flawless plan A. There was no plan B. So when the believers refused to stay broken, when they re formed and came charging back uphill at full speed behind their Prophet ﷺ, the enemy reached for the next move and found nothing there. The rout simply reversed its

direction. The same panic that had emptied the valley of Muslims now emptied it of pagans, every man fleeing headlong for the mountains and the wadis.

The Prophet ﷺ would not let them gather themselves again. Twenty thousand scattered men can become twenty thousand reassembled men by nightfall, so he commanded the companions to pursue them hard into the valleys and up into the heights and give them no quarter of rest in which to stop and regroup. Out of that command came a long string of small pursuing expeditions, two hundred sent down one wadi, three hundred up another, and in the chasing some of the best of the companions fell.

One of them was the uncle of Abu Musa al-Ashari. Sent in command of a pursuit, he was struck down by a thrown javelin. His nephew reached him with the shaft still standing in his chest, bent close, and learned from his dying lips the name of the man who had thrown it. Abu Musa went after that man at once and dealt with him, then came back to his uncle. I have taken care of him, he said, now what can I do for you. Pull it out, his uncle answered, and when the javelin came free the bleeding took him fast. With his last breaths he sent his salam to the Prophet ﷺ and begged him to ask Allah for his forgiveness. When Abu Musa carried the message back, the Prophet ﷺ rose from where he lay with his shawl about him, called for water, made wudu, turned to the qiblah, and lifted his hands so high that the white of his underarms could be seen, and he prayed for the dead man by name, that Allah forgive him his sins and raise his rank. And me, Messenger of Allah, said Abu Musa, ask for me too. So he prayed for Abu Musa as well, that Allah forgive him and bring him on the Day of Judgment to a noble place. Abu Musa's son Abu Burda, who became one of the great scholars of the generation after the

companions, would treasure that hadith for the rest of his life: that the Prophet ﷺ had made dua, with his own raised hands, for his father and his grandfather both.

She should not have been killed

Walking the battlefield in the aftermath, among the fallen, the Prophet ﷺ came upon the body of a woman who had been killed in the fighting, and the sight of it stopped him cold. This was wrong, he said. She should not have been killed. Who did this. He was told that it was Khalid ibn al-Walid, already sent on ahead in command of a pursuit.

Catch Khalid, the Prophet ﷺ ordered, before he goes any further, and tell him: he is not to kill any woman, any child, or any servant. The last word in that command the scholars have turned over with great care, the Sheikh notes, taking it to mean the hired help, or the elderly, or anyone living on the edges of a fighting camp who has not himself come out to fight. In that age there was no separate class of people called civilians; every grown man was, in effect, a soldier. But the people who were not soldiers, the women, the children, the servants and the old, the Prophet ﷺ placed firmly and explicitly outside the reach of the sword, and he did it not in a lecture hall but on a battlefield still warm from a fight that had nearly killed him.

This, the Sheikh emphasizes, is one of the foundation stones that the books of fiqh return to again and again when they take up the law of war, and it is one of the most urgent rulings in the seerah for our own time. On a field that he had every human reason to think of as nothing but war, the Prophet ﷺ plainly forbade the killing of non combatants. He did not wait to be asked the question. He saw a single body that should never have been there, and before he did anything else he sent a fast rider to

make certain it would not happen a second time. The believer's anger, even on the day of battle, never erases the believer's limits.

The largest spoils ever taken

Hunayn brought the Muslims the greatest war booty they had ever laid eyes on, and the reason was the enemy's own catastrophic miscalculation. Before the battle, the young chieftain of Hawazin had ordered the tribes to drag their entire world to the field, wives and children, flocks and herds, everything they owned, on the theory that a man fights to the death when his family is watching from just behind the lines. The elder among them had warned it was folly, that a woman penned behind an army is no use in winning a battle and only a prize to be lost if the battle is lost, but the young man had his way. So when Hawazin broke and fled, they left all of it standing in the valley. The counts the Sheikh hands on are staggering: some six thousand captives, women and children; more than twenty four thousand camels; over forty thousand goats. Reckon it in the money of our own day and you are speaking of tens of millions, a fortune the Muslims had never before come within sight of. The Prophet ﷺ had every camel and every captive gathered and brought to a valley called Jiranah, on the road between Ta'if and Makkah, and set an armed guard at the head of it, for there was a great deal here that the defeated would dearly want back.

Two small scenes survive from the gathering, and both of them are about him ﷺ more than about the gold. As the captives were led in, one of the women began to cry out that she was no ordinary prisoner, that she was the sister of their own companion. Brought before him, she said she was Shayma, his foster sister from the earliest days of his childhood, of the household of

Halima who had nursed him in the desert. Prove it to me, he said gently, for he had not laid eyes on her in more than half a century; he was sixty now and had last seen her when he was a small boy. She said: you still carry a mark on my back, from the day you bit me as a baby while I was carrying you on my hip. He knew her then, and laughed, and gave her the choice to stay with him in honour or to return to her people loaded with gifts. It is even narrated, in a chain the Sheikh is careful to flag as broken and uncertain, fifty fifty whether it is sound, that his foster mother Halima herself was among those brought to him, an old woman near eighty by now, and that the Prophet ﷺ rose to his feet for her, took the cloak from his own back, and spread it on the ground for her to sit upon, which in that world was the very highest honour a man could pay. Whether or not she ever accepted Islam the narration does not say. That he honoured the woman who had nursed him, the Sheikh says, is certain.

And the Sheikh pauses on one detail it would be easy to read straight past. Only four Muslims were killed at Hunayn, a tiny toll for so vast a day, yet many were wounded, and among the wounded were all four of the men who would one day, each in his turn, lead the ummah after the Prophet ﷺ: Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali. Every one of the four future caliphs shed his blood in this one valley, and every one of them was among the handful who had not run but stood their ground around the white mule when twelve thousand fled. There is a quiet argument in that fact about who was fit to lead. Hunayn also shares something with only one other day in all of history, the Sheikh observes: it is one of just two battles that Allah names outright in the Qur'an, the other being Badr. The Qur'an mentions other conflicts, the confederates at the trench among them, but only as armies and not as named battles. Badr and Hunayn alone are

named. And the parallel runs deeper than the naming. Badr was the victory of faith and Hunayn the victory of fortune; one a boost to the spirit and the other to the hand; one the proof that Allah can win a war with three hundred, the other that He can fill the believers' arms when He chooses. In both, the help came down from the sky. In both, the believers strained to the very end of their own effort, and then stood back and watched Allah finish what they could not.

On to Ta'if

The scattered enemy ran in every direction, but the people of Tha'qif did not melt into the wilderness like the rest of the tribes. They ran home, to the one place on earth they trusted, to Ta'if: their green city nestled high in the cool of the mountains, ringed with massive walls, fed by its own streams, heavy with grapes and fruit, the proud old rival of Makkah that had everything Makkah had except the Kaaba and had answered that one lack by piling up wealth and fortification instead. They had stocked the city against a year long siege and built engines of defence along its walls, cauldrons of burning oil to pour down on any attacker, the like of which no other city in Arabia possessed. And so, with the great fortune still under guard at Jiranah, the Prophet ﷺ turned and marched the army straight from the field of Hunayn to the walls of Ta'if. The scholars of seerah, the Sheikh notes, usually tell Hunayn and the siege of Ta'if as a single story, because they fell back to back against the same enemy, and they argue over whether to count them as one event or two. In truth they are two distinct things: a battle in the open valley, and then a siege at a city wall.

And here Dr. Yasir Qadhi draws out something that should reshape how we picture the Prophet ﷺ as a commander. Long

before any of this, while he was still in Makkah and had only just heard that Hawazin and Thaqif were arming against him, he had quietly sent two or three of the companions away to a distant tribe, Jurash, to learn the machinery of siege warfare, weapons the Muslims had never in their history used: the catapult, the battering ram, and the great shield the soldiers call the testudo, the turtle, a roof of shields under which men can advance to a wall while burning oil and arrows rain down from above. That is foresight, the Sheikh says, a man thinking three steps ahead. While the battle of Hunayn was still entirely in front of him, unfought, he was already preparing for the walls of Ta'if that lay beyond it. And it worked to the letter. By the time he reached the city, those companions had returned with the knowledge, and for the first time anywhere in that part of the world, the Muslims raised a catapult against a wall.

So the same army that had nearly shattered in a valley at dawn now stood, within days, before the most fortified city in Arabia, fielding engines of war it had never before owned. The companions camped first too close, and were driven back under volleys of arrows, until they pitched at the spot where the great mosque of Ta'if, Masjid Ibn Abbas, stands to this day. They tried the catapult, and the battering ram, and once pushed the turtle up to the very wall, only to have the burning oil find its way through and scatter the men out from under it into the open arrows. The walls held. After some days the Prophet ﷺ judged it time to lift the siege, but the younger companions, drunk on the victories of Makkah and Hunayn and feeling themselves on an unbroken roll, begged to stay and try once more, and he let them, for a wise leader, the Sheikh draws out, does not force his judgment on his people like a dictator even when he is the

Messenger of Allah and knows best. They stayed, lost more men, and at last quietly agreed it was time to go.

And when they were leaving, the companions came to him and said: Messenger of Allah, make dua against Thaqif. This was the very city that had once driven him out and set its children to stone him bleeding through its streets, the city that, even after the conquest of Makkah, still stood stubborn and defiant behind its walls. If any people in all of Arabia had earned a curse, it was these. The Prophet ﷺ raised his hands, and every man around him raised his hands certain that the destruction of Thaqif was about to be sealed, and he said: O Allah, guide Thaqif. O Allah, bring Thaqif to us. He prayed for them, not against them. The goal of this religion, the Sheikh says, was never vengeance and blood; it was always mercy and guidance. And Allah answered the dua. Thaqif would come, of their own feet, and accept Islam the following year. The fortune still waited at Jiranah; the men of Hawazin had not yet come to claim back what was theirs; and the way the Prophet ﷺ would choose to divide that staggering wealth, in a manner that would test the hearts of even his closest companions, is the story of the days to come.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to take the second day of Hunayn as a war story with a happy ending, the rout reversed, the angels down, the treasure counted, and to file it away as a great escape that worked out. That is to walk past everything it is trying to put to us. Slow down at three places in it and you will not read your own hard mornings the same way again.

The first is the order of the verse, and the order is the entire lesson. Allah did not send the sakinah and the unseen soldiers down onto an army boasting that it could not be destroyed. He

sent them down at the lowest point of the day, the instant the believers stopped fleeing and began to turn back toward the One calling their names. Their numbers had pleased them and availed them nothing, and the wide earth had shrunk around them; and only then, only after the turning, came the help. We are forever waiting for the rescue to arrive so that we can then turn back to Allah, when the whole shape of this day says the reverse: turn back first, in the dust and the panic and the shame of it, and the help comes down onto the turning. Whatever has scattered in your life, the sakinah is waiting on the far side of facing Him again.

The second is a man on a horse with a spear, riding to kill. The Prophet ﷺ had every right to strike Shaybah down, or to call for help, or simply to flee. Instead he lifted his hands and spent his breath on the one prayer that no one watching would have thought to make: O Allah, guide Shaybah. And by the end of that single gallop the assassin was a brother, fighting at his side. We are quick to write people off, to decide that this heart or that one is finished, an enemy past saving. The Prophet ﷺ looked at a spear aimed at his own back and saw a soul that Allah could still soften, and asked Him to soften it. Ask yourself who you have already given up on, and whether you have ever once raised your hands and begged Allah to guide them the way he begged for the man riding to kill him.

And the third is the strangest pairing of all, and it sits at the very heart of Hunayn. The same Prophet ﷺ who watched an unseen army descend from heaven to fight for him had, weeks earlier and hundreds of miles away, quietly sent men off to learn how to build a catapult. He did not say: Allah will send angels, so why prepare. He prepared to the last bolt and the last shield, and then he leaned with his whole weight on Allah, and when the help

came it came from above and not from the engines below. This is the balance the whole battle was teaching, and the one the army had forgotten at dawn when its numbers pleased it: reliance on Allah is not the enemy of effort, it is what all our effort is meant to rest upon. Tie the camel of every lawful preparation, learn the catapult, count your numbers, sharpen your sword, and then know in your bones that the victory was never once in the numbers or the sword, but came down, as it came down at Badr and at Hunayn, from a place no eye can see.

So carry the turning down into your ordinary days. When something in your life breaks and runs, turn back to Allah before you see any sign of rescue, because the help waits on the turning. Pray for the person you have most given up on, by name, the way he prayed for Shaybah. Prepare like a man who knows that preparing is part of trust, and then rest, genuinely rest, in the knowledge that the outcome was never yours to hold. And remember, when your own winning streak stalls at some wall that will not fall, that even in his hour of greatest glory the Prophet ﷺ was given Hunayn but not Ta'if, was shown that this world is never a clean and total victory, so that we would learn to seek the only victory that is. May Allah send down upon us His tranquillity as He sent it upon His Messenger ﷺ and the believers at Hunayn, soften the hardest hearts toward His guidance as He softened Shaybah's in mid charge, keep us merciful when we hold the power to be cruel, and let every victory He gives us be one we trace back, with the whole of our hearts, to Him alone.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 83: the battle of Hunayn, part 2 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (9:25, 9:26), verified via quran.ai. Where the

histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The Conversion of Ka'b ibn Zuhayr

The poet under a death sentence, and the cloak that saved him

Makkah has fallen, and the Prophet ﷺ is back in Madinah. The idols are coming down across Arabia, the tribes are sending their delegations, and the question that hangs over these last months of the eighth year is what to do with the men who had fought Islam with the most dangerous weapon of all. Not the sword. The tongue. In a world without newspapers and without screens, the poet was the propaganda machine, and a single barbed ode could travel a thousand miles on the lips of strangers and turn a whole people against you. The poets of Quraysh knew this, and they had used it without mercy. Most of them, by now, had been killed at Badr or executed at the conquest, or had repented and come in. But one name still hung over the desert, the most famous of them all.

About two weeks after the conquest, that man, the single most famous poet alive in the Arabian Peninsula, walked quietly into the mosque. No one knew his face. And there was a death sentence on his head.

The greatest poet alive

To feel the weight of this story you have to know who Ka'b was. His father was Zuhayr ibn Abi Sulma, a name that should ring a bell from anyone's schooling in Arabic, one of the authors of the

Mu'allaqat, the seven hanging odes the Arabs reckoned the very summit of their poetry. He ranked among the greatest of all the Jahili poets, in the company of Imru' al-Qays, the absolute peak of the pre-Islamic art. He died before the coming of Islam, when the Prophet ﷺ was still a young man, and never met him. This is his son. Ka'b was born and raised in that house, and grew into the premier poet of the whole Arabian Peninsula in his own generation. Whatever gift his father had carried, the son carried it too, and the Arabs knew it.

And he had used that gift as a weapon against the Prophet ﷺ. He composed poems attacking him. When his own brother accepted Islam, Ka'b grew angrier still, and wrote a harsh satire lampooning his own blood for converting. And then, when he had run out of things to say, he crossed the one line you do not cross with the early Muslims: he began to speak of the Muslim women, in vulgar and unspeakable terms. After that, there was no mercy left for him. It was understood, among the believers, that this man's life was forfeit. He was not of Quraysh; he was from the tribe of Muzayna, up north of Madinah, and he had never set foot in the city. Everyone knew his name. No one had ever seen his face.

What turned him was not a threat from his enemies. It was a letter from the brother he had ridiculed. After the conquest of Makkah, that same brother wrote to him a heartwarming letter, full of a tenderness Ka'b had done nothing to earn. You have no choice left, the brother told him. Makkah is conquered, your life is at stake. Either flee the whole Peninsula, or else come, accept Islam, and repent, because the Prophet ﷺ accepts the repentance of whoever repents. Sit with the shape of that, because Dr. Yasir Qadhi pauses on it. Ka'b had done the cruelest thing a poet could do, a satire against his own brother, and the

Muslim brother answered the cruelty with kindness. He wrote not to gloat over a fugitive but to save him, and he made the way back sound easy, because in truth it was: the door is open, just walk through it.

And Ka'b thought for a long time. In that long thinking he realized something honest about himself, something a lesser man would never have admitted: he did not actually believe in the idols. He never had. He had been clinging to culture and custom, to the way his fathers had always done things, and not to any deep-seated conviction in stone gods at all. Once he saw that clearly, the decision made itself. He wanted to become a Muslim. So he set out for Madinah, the city he had never seen, where his name was a legend and his face was unknown.

Banat Su'ad, and the cloak

He came into Madinah carefully. He spent the night, it is said, in the house of a distant acquaintance who knew to keep his arrival a secret. In the morning he prayed Fajr in the congregation, one more worshipper in the rows, his face meaning nothing to anyone around him. And when the prayer was done, he rose and walked up to the Prophet ﷺ and placed his own hand into the Prophet's ﷺ hand, and still he did not say who he was.

He spoke instead as though he were a messenger carrying a plea from someone far away. Ka'b ibn Zuhayr, he said, is seeking your protection; he has come repenting for what he has done, and wishes to accept Islam. If he comes to you like this, will you accept him? And the Prophet ﷺ said: yes, I will accept him. Only then did the poet let the truth out. I, he said, am Ka'b ibn Zuhayr.

The name landed in the mosque like a thrown stone. One of the Ansar shot to his feet to cut the man down where he stood, this

poet who had defamed their women, now within arm's reach. But the Prophet ﷺ stopped him. Let him be, he said. He has come as a Muslim, repenting and accepting Islam. Leave him. And it was over. The death sentence that had hung over Ka'b for years, the verdict no one had thought to lift, dissolved in a single sentence from the only mouth that could speak it. He had come as an enemy and was received as a brother, in the space of one breath.

Then Ka'b, the poet to the bone, asked the thing a poet would ask. Messenger of Allah, may I recite something for you? He had a poem ready. The Prophet ﷺ told him to go ahead, and Ka'b recited one of the most famous poems in all of seerah literature. The classical books name it after its opening words, Banat Su'ad, "Su'ad has departed." Later generations gave it another name: Qasidat al-Burdah, the ode of the cloak. And here Dr. Yasir Qadhi stops to untangle a knot that confuses Muslims to this day, because there are two Burdahs, and people are forever mixing them up.

This is the original Burdah. Burdah means cloak, and the poem earns the name from what happened at its end. It is in deep, difficult classical Arabic, so hard that it is hardly ever recited today; the Sheikh, no stranger to Arabic, says plainly that these lines are almost impossible to translate without immense help, and that most native Arabs would be no better off, the words and styles simply beyond the reach of modern Arabic. Then there is the second Burdah, the one everyone has heard, composed by al-Busiri some six hundred years later, the famous one sung by Pakistanis and Arabs and Turks and every ethnicity on earth. But it rests on al-Busiri's own claim to have seen the Prophet ﷺ in a dream and been given the cloak there, which comes from no one but the author himself and raises its own questions. That is not

the poem of this night. The Burdah of this night is Ka'b's, recited to the living face of the Prophet ﷺ.

Like every classical ode, it opens with a lost love, a woman who has packed up and walked away, the love story a veil never meant literally. What matters, and what the Sheikh dwells on, is the last third, where the veil drops and the poet speaks straight to his own danger. I have been told, Ka'b says, that the Messenger of Allah has threatened me, and yet to receive pardon at his hands is the thing most hoped for of all. Slow down, he pleads, be careful, before someone strikes me down, by the One who gifted you this Qur'an with all its warnings and its good counsel. Do not believe everything the rumor-mongers say about me, even though they say a great deal, for I am not as guilty as they claim. And then he stands inside his terror and names it without flinching: I am standing now in a place where, if an elephant could see and hear what I see and hear, it would be trembling in sheer terror, unless the Messenger ﷺ should grant me respite.

And then comes the line, the most famous of this long ode and one of the most famous in the whole history of Islamic poetry, the one Dr. Yasir Qadhi takes a particular and personal pride in. The Prophet ﷺ, Ka'b declares, is a light from which guidance is sought, a drawn sword among the swords of Allah, a muhannad. A muhannad is an Indian blade. In seventh-century Arabia the finest steel on earth came from India, the very pinnacle of the metalworker's art, so to call the Prophet ﷺ a muhannad was the highest praise a poet had in him to give: the perfect blade, unsheathed in the path of Allah. The Sheikh, an Indian himself, lingers here with open delight, for here at last is a line in which the people of the subcontinent can take a share of the honor: the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, likened to the steel of their own land.

The poetry was so beautiful that the Prophet ﷺ was moved, and he did the thing that gave the poem its name forever. He took off his own cloak, his Burdah, and draped it over the poet, the single greatest honor you could bestow on a man of verse. And he told Ka'b one thing more: you wounded the Ansar with your tongue, so now praise them. And Ka'b did, in lines the books still record. The man who had come into the city with a death sentence on his head walked out of it wearing the mantle of the Prophet ﷺ, and he died a Muslim, the most famous poet of his age, gathered in at last by the hand of the one he had once attacked.

Adi, who was sure it was either a prophet or a king

In these same final months of the eighth year, while delegations arrived and the new order took shape, the Prophet ﷺ was sending small expeditions out to the smaller tribes to bring them in and pull down the idols that still stood. One such expedition, under Ali ibn Abi Talib, reached the tribe of Tayyi in the north, destroyed their great idol, and brought captives back to Madinah. Among them was a woman who loudly demanded to be heard. I am the daughter of Hatim, she announced, the daughter of Hatim al-Tai. And that name carried its own weight, for Hatim al-Tai was the most famous generous man the Arabs ever knew, the very byword for openhandedness, whom the desert still tells stories about fourteen centuries later. For her father's sake alone, the Prophet ﷺ set her free, gave her wealth and a mount and safe passage, and let her go wherever she wished.

Her brother was Adi ibn Hatim, the chieftain of Tayyi, who had not stayed to face the Muslims. This son who plainly did not share his father's character had prepared an escape, and the moment the advance reached him he abandoned his tribe and fled north with his family, all the way to the Roman frontier. Adi

was a Christian, comfortable and well connected, on good terms with the Roman emperor, living a cushy life on the edge of the greatest empire of the day.

When his sister reached him, after rebuking him roundly for leaving her, she gave him a piece of clear thinking. Go back down to this man Muhammad ﷺ, she said. He is one of two things and no third: either a prophet, in which case the sooner you believe the better, or a king, in which case you might as well go and win his favor. And the very fact she would grant he might be a prophet, the Sheikh points out, showed which way she was already leaning. So Adi, the man who would later say there was no one on earth more despised to him than the Prophet ﷺ, made his decision the honest way: let me go and see for myself. If he is speaking the truth, I will listen, and if he is lying, it will do me no harm.

I know your religion better than you

Adi walked into Madinah with no protection at all, carrying the cool certainty that no one would dare lay a hand on the son of Hatim, and he was right; the honor of that name still covered him, just as it had freed his sister. People recognized him in the streets, a crowd gathered, and they brought him to the Prophet ﷺ. Accept Islam, the Prophet ﷺ told him, and you will be safe. But Adi answered that he already had a religion he followed, that he was a Christian, as if to say: why would I trade down to your faith? I am no pagan, go preach to the pagans. He said it a second time, and a third. And then came a line that Dr. Yasir Qadhi calls a classic of the Prophet's ﷺ dawah: I know your religion better than you know it. I know the message of Jesus better than you do.

And he proved it, gently, with two questions and a third. Are you not the chief of your people? Yes. Do you not take a quarter of their wealth in tax? Yes. And do you not know that your own religion forbids you that? Adi was ashamed, because the Prophet ﷺ had laid his finger on the exact spot where Adi was not even living by what he claimed to believe. I became embarrassed, Adi said afterward, and I knew at that moment that he was a prophet, because he had picked out my hypocrisy at once. Here the Sheikh draws the lesson out: we are the ones truly following the teaching of Jesus, who was a practicing servant of God, who prayed and fasted, never ate the flesh of swine, was circumcised, and lived by the law he was given. Who, among all of humanity, still does that and honors Jesus? Then the Prophet ﷺ was plain about the rest, that those who took Jesus, or Ezra, as more than servants of God had gone astray. He did not soften it, because, as the Sheikh insists, you cannot prove one faith true without disputing the others, and the respectful debate is the honest one, not the comfortable fiction that every creed is equally valid.

This man is not a king

Then the Prophet ﷺ took Adi by the hand and walked with him toward his own house. And on the way, this is Adi telling the story himself, an old woman with a small child stopped him in the road with some need, and the Prophet ﷺ stood there in the open street and stayed with her until her need was met. Adi watched the whole thing, and a sentence formed itself in his mind: this man is not a king. A king does not halt in the road for a poor old woman when a chieftain waits at his side, knowing exactly who that chieftain is.

They reached the house, and there was a single worn-out mat inside, nothing more. The Prophet ﷺ laid it down and said, sit.

But Adi was embarrassed, because it was plainly the only thing in the room. No, said Adi, you sit on it. And the Prophet ﷺ insisted, until Adi sat on the mat and the Prophet ﷺ lowered himself onto the bare ground of his own house. This humility, the Sheikh says, is what first cracked Adi's heart open. Within five minutes he had ruled one of his two possibilities out entirely.

Then the Prophet ﷺ read him, the way you read a man you have understood to the bottom, and went straight to the real obstacle. He began on the simplest ground: do you know of any god besides Allah? No. Any being mightier than Allah? No. Then those who set up partners with Him are mistaken and misguided. And then the heart of it: perhaps, the Prophet ﷺ said, you are not accepting Islam because of the state of the people around me. There it was, named out loud. Adi had come from the edge of the Roman Empire, the premier civilization on earth, down into a Madinah that did not yet look like a civilization at all, and he was judging the truth of the message by the condition of the people who carried it. So the Prophet ﷺ answered every worry in turn. You are worried about safety, he said in effect, and safety is coming: the day is coming when a woman will travel alone from al-Hira to make tawaf at the Kabah, fearing nothing and no one but Allah. You are worried about poverty, and the wealth of empires is coming: the day is coming when the treasures of Kisra son of Hurmuz, the emperor of Persia, will be opened and shared out among you, and a man will walk the streets with his charity in his hand, looking for anyone poor enough to take it, and find no one at all.

And Adi, who lived past the age of a hundred and twenty, narrated this hadith himself as an old man, and added: I have seen two of these three with my own eyes. I saw the woman travel safe and alone from al-Hira to the Kabah, and I was among

those who shared out the treasures of Kisra when we conquered his capital. As for the third, he said, by Allah it will surely come. Adi ibn Hatim accepted Islam.

What Hatim's son was told about his father

Adi came back to the Prophet ﷺ many times after that day, and on one of those visits he asked the question a loving son would ask. My father, he said, used to keep the ties of kinship, feed the people, and be generous to everyone. He was speaking of Hatim al-Tai, the very legend of Arab generosity, the name the desert still honored above all others. Will any of that benefit him? And the Prophet ﷺ gave an answer as gentle as it was exact, a single authentic sentence: your father wanted something, and he got what he wanted.

He wanted fame. He wanted to be praised, remembered, made a legend of generosity, and Allah gave him precisely that, to the letter, down to our own day, fourteen centuries on, when we still tell his stories. He got exactly what he was working for. Here Dr. Yasir Qadhi holds up a hard and clarifying teaching. The good that a person does purely for fame, or status, or the praise of people, is paid out to them in this world, in full, exactly as they wished it: the people have already paid the bill, and there is nothing waiting on the other side. It is only the deed done for the sake of Allah that is kept, treasured up for the next life. Allah says it plainly:

But whoever desires the Hereafter and exerts the effort due to it while he is a believer - it is those whose effort is ever appreciated [by Allāh].

QUR'AN 17:19

And there is nothing unjust in this, the Sheikh insists, nothing illogical at all. When a person never once acted for Allah, why should Allah reward him in the Hereafter? Let him collect, instead, the wage he was actually working for, and he will collect it, every coin. Many of the most beloved names in human history have already been paid in full, here, where they wanted to be paid.

The closing of a year

These were the last months of the eighth year, and the shape of a state was hardening out of what had been, only recently, a single besieged city. For the first time the Islamic polity was being organized along political lines: the Prophet ﷺ was appointing governors over regions, sending teachers to teach the Qur'an and the prayer, and dispatching collectors to gather the zakat, with one man sometimes carrying all three offices at once. And he kept sending out parties to tear down the idols that still stood. He sent Jarir against a great idol in the south called Dhul-Khalasa, a temple so brazen that its people had built a rival structure and called it a Kabah, to compete with the true one in Makkah; Jarir burned it to the ground. He was not at peace, the Sheikh notes, knowing idols were still worshipped in the Sacred Land, and he wanted idolatry gone from the Peninsula entirely. This is the work behind a verse that would come down within a few months:

O you who have believed, indeed the polytheists are unclean, so let them not approach al-Masjid al-Ḥarām after this, their [final] year. And if you fear privation, Allāh will enrich you from His bounty if He wills. Indeed, Allāh is Knowing and Wise.

QUR'AN 9:28

And inside his own household, a single year held everything a human life holds: a marriage, a divorce, a death, and a coming birth. The Sheikh raises the marriage and divorce only because it is well known to students of hadith and he refuses to be accused of hiding anything, while being honest that its real cause was simply never recorded, as such private matters rarely are. A woman the Prophet ﷺ had married sought refuge from him on the very first night, before the marriage was consummated; the words were grave, and he answered them with perfect dignity: you have sought refuge in One who is great, and sent her back to her family. He raises it, the Sheikh says, chiefly to break a stubborn myth, the claim that the Prophet ﷺ never divorced. He did, and there is no shame whatsoever in it. The majority of the Mothers of the Believers had been widowed or divorced before he married them, and the stigma our cultures pile onto divorce has no root in the Qur'an or the Sunnah. Sometimes two people simply do not suit one another, and that is not a sin.

But the death that year was the heaviest weight of all: Zaynab, his eldest daughter, radiyallahu anha. Years before, at the very time of the Hijra, she had been violently thrown from a camel and never recovered from the injury, and now, after eight long years of patient suffering, she passed away, around thirty-one years old. This was the daughter who had once sheltered her own husband, Abu al-As, with her own voice, standing up in the mosque to announce that she had granted him her protection, and the Prophet ﷺ, who had not known of it until that moment, honored her word and gave the man back to her. Three of the Prophet's ﷺ four daughters died during his own lifetime, and Zaynab was among them. A forming empire on the outside, governors and collectors and falling idols across the whole

Peninsula; and on the inside, the ordinary, breaking griefs of a man who was, through all of it, a father burying his child.

What this day asks of our faith

Two strangers walked into Madinah in the same season, one carrying a death sentence and one carrying contempt, and the same Prophet ﷺ disarmed them both. It would be easy to read these as two charming conversion stories and move on, and that would be to miss what each is quietly asking of us.

Start with Ka'b, and with the brother who wrote the letter. Ka'b had done the very worst a poet of his world could do; by the standards of his society he was beyond reach, his life already forfeit. And the move that saved him was not a threat from an enemy but a kindness from the man he had most wronged, an open hand extended to a person who had earned only a closed fist. We tend to believe that those who have hurt us, or hurt what we love, are best met with hardness, that mercy is what you offer those who deserve it. The brother's letter says otherwise, and the Prophet's ﷺ let him be says otherwise, and the cloak off his own back says it loudest of all. No one's record is past the reach of a sincere return. Ask yourself who, in your own life, you have already written past forgiving, and whether you would have the largeness to draft that letter.

Then there is Adi, who ruled out a king before he had heard a single point of theology. He did it by watching: a man who stopped in a public street for a poor old woman while a chieftain waited, a man who sat on the bare ground so his guest could have the only mat. The argument that opened Adi's heart was not an argument at all. It was a character. People read who you are long before they weigh anything you say, and the most persuasive case you will ever make for what you believe is the

way you treat the person who can do nothing for you. The Prophet ﷺ then found the real objection beneath the polite one, naming the worldly weakness Adi was secretly judging him by: people rarely tell you the true thing holding them back, and the patient, loving move is to find it and speak to it.

And underneath both stories runs the hardest teaching of the day, the one that came in the answer about Hatim. Your father wanted something, and he got what he wanted. The good we do for the eyes of people is real good, and it is fully paid, here, in admiration and the warmth of being well thought of, and then it is gone. Only what was done for Allah is kept. This is not a comfortable thought, because so much of what we do is done at least partly to be seen doing it, and the line between serving God and serving our own reputation runs straight through the middle of our best deeds. So sit, before this day closes, with the plainest possible question: of the good I did this week, how much would I still have wanted if no one had ever known? That portion, and only that portion, is being treasured up. The rest has already been spent.

So take three things from this season down into your days. Write the letter you think the other person has not earned, and leave the door of return open even for the one who slammed it. Let your character carry your faith further than your arguments ever will. And weigh, honestly and often, who you are really working for, so that what you build is kept and not merely paid. May Allah send His peace and blessings upon His Messenger ﷺ, the light from which guidance is sought, who pardoned the poet who came against him and clothed him in his own cloak, and who sat upon the ground so a guest could rest. O Allah, accept our repentance as You accepted the poet's, clothe us in the garment

of taqwa as You clothed Your poet in his, and let everything we do be for You alone, so that it is kept for the Day we meet You.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 84: the conversion of Ka'b ibn Zuhayr (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (17:19, 9:28), verified via quran.ai.

The miracles of the Prophet ﷺ

Over a thousand signs, and one that never ends

The story stops here for a night. Hunayn is behind them, the long road to Tabuk is ahead, and Ramadan is about to fold the lecture closed for the year, so Dr. Yasir Qadhi steps out of the timeline and asks a question that has been sitting silently under the whole seerah from the first verse in the cave of Hira. Not a battle tonight, not a treaty, not a delegation. Just this: what made people believe him ﷺ in the first place? What did Allah place in the hands of this one man that the rest of mankind could not match?

The Arabic word for it is mu'jizah, and the Sheikh begins by turning the word over in his hand, because its root is the surprise that frames everything that follows. The same root gives the word for the old, the frail, the one grown weak with age. A mu'jizah comes from weakness. It is named for incapacity. And the reason is exact: a miracle is precisely the thing that the rest of mankind is too weak to reproduce, an event that breaks past what people are accustomed to, granted at the hands of someone who claims to be a prophet, in order to prove the claim true. That is the whole definition. A supernatural occurrence, given to a man who says he is sent by Allah, that demonstrates he is.

And it is no accident in the life of one prophet. It is the sunnah of Allah across all of them. No prophet was ever sent without signs;

carrying a miracle is part of what it means to be a prophet at all. So the question for this evening is not whether he ﷺ had them. The scholars who wrote whole books on this counted past a thousand documented wonders in his life, with one master of the science putting the soundly narrated ones at more than twelve hundred. The question is what they were for, and which of them was meant, in the end, for us. The Sheikh gathers them into ten categories and a handful from each, and he saves for last the one miracle you can still pick up with your own two hands.

A miracle was never the only proof

Before a single wonder, the Sheikh clears away a misunderstanding that has tripped people up for centuries, because if you do not clear it first, everything after it will be misread. Some have claimed that the one and only thing that proves a prophet is a miracle. It sounds reasonable until you test it, and the test is simple. If a miracle were the only proof, then every single person who ever believed must have believed because they saw one. So ask: did Abu Bakr, radiyallahu anhu, see a miracle before he believed? He did not. Did Umar? He did not. Did the majority of the early companions? They did not. Look around any masjid today at the converts sitting in it, and most of them came to the religion without ever witnessing a sign at all.

So the Sheikh draws a firm line through the claim. A miracle is one proof among several, not the only one. The character of the prophets proves them. The truthfulness of the way they live proves them. The weight and the content of the message they bring proves them. A sincere heart can be convinced by the dignity of a life and the beauty of a word, with no wonder in sight, and most believing hearts across history were convinced exactly that way. By the end of an evening of marvels you will be

tempted to think that the miracle is the engine of faith. It is not. It is one door among many, and for most people it was never the door they walked through.

There is a second truth here, harder than the first, and the Qur'an states it without softening: miracles do not help the arrogant. They benefit two kinds of people only. The first are those who already believe, in whom a sign deepens certainty into something unshakable. The second are the open and the sincere, the ones who come honestly and say, prove it to me, show me, and then submit the moment they are shown. To a heart that has already decided to reject, no sign on earth is ever enough. Hold both of those truths in one hand as the wonders begin, the Sheikh says, because they are the lens through which the whole night must be read.

And listen to what the Quraysh actually demanded of him, because you will hear that the problem was never a shortage of proof. Make a spring gush out of the ground for us, they said. Grow us a garden of date palms and grapevines with rivers running through it. Drop the sky on us in pieces. Bring Allah and the angels to stand here in front of us. Build yourself a house of gold, or climb a ladder up into the heavens, and even then, they added, we will not believe in your climb until you bring back down a book out of the sky that we can hold in our hands and read for ourselves. The Qur'an records the demand and the answer it was given in the same breath:

And they say, "We will not believe you until you break open for us from the ground a spring Or [until] you have a garden of palm trees and grapes and make rivers gush forth within them in force [and abundance] Or you make the heaven fall upon us in fragments as you have claimed or you bring Allāh and the angels before [us] Or you have a

house of ornament [i.e., gold] or you ascend into the sky. And [even then], we will not believe in your ascension until you bring down to us a book we may read." Say, "Exalted is my Lord! Was I ever but a human messenger?"

QUR'AN 17:90-93

One line of reply for the whole catalogue of their demands: glory be to my Lord, was I ever anything but a human messenger? He never claimed to be more. And Allah lays the arrogance underneath the demands completely bare. The trouble was never that the proof was too thin; it was that the heart had already shut.

And [even] if We opened to them a gate from the heaven and they continued therein to ascend, They would say, "Our eyes have only been dazzled. Rather, we are a people affected by magic."

QUR'AN 15:14-15

Give them the very thing they ask for, a gate of heaven thrown open in broad daylight, and let them spend the day climbing up through it, and they will come down and tell you their eyes were drugged, that the whole thing was a spell. The Sheikh says he has heard the modern translation of that verse with his own two ears, from anyone determined in advance not to believe. Show me God himself, they say, and then I will accept. It is the same demand the Quraysh made fourteen centuries ago, and the Qur'an answered it before it was ever spoken again.

Nothing in front of a closed heart

Why open a lecture about miracles by insisting, at length, that miracles sometimes do nothing at all? Because, the Sheikh says, by the end of the night you will hear wonder after wonder and you will want to ask: how could anyone witness all of this and still

walk away? And the Qur'an has already answered the question before you can finish asking it. The verse he calls one of the most clear-cut in the whole Book on the subject of human arrogance:

And even if We had sent down to them the angels [with the message] and the dead spoke to them [of it] and We gathered together every [created] thing in front of them, they would not believe unless Allāh should will. But most of them, [of that], are ignorant.

QUR'AN 6:111

Send down the angels in ranks, let the dead climb out of their graves and testify, gather every created thing in all the world before their eyes, and a heart that has decided will still not move, not because the evidence ran short but because evidence was never the point. And the demand that exposes them is the oldest and the proudest one of all:

And those who do not expect the meeting with Us say, "Why were not angels sent down to us, or [why] do we [not] see our Lord?" They have certainly become arrogant within themselves and [become] insolent with great insolence.

QUR'AN 25:21

Notice who speaks that line, the Sheikh says: those who do not expect to meet their Lord, who do not actually care about religion in the first place. Show us our God, they say, as if they had the standing to set Him a summons. Allah names it for what it is, arrogance and insolence, and asks through them the question they should have been asking themselves: who do you imagine

you are, that the signs all around you are not enough, and that some grander sign would somehow be?

So a question people ask about the seerah answers itself. Why were the Quraysh not simply shown more miracles, enough to overwhelm them? Because more would not have helped, and because more would have destroyed them. Allah does not deal in spectacle for its own sake; there is nothing of idle play in how He runs His creation. When the Quraysh swore they would believe if only the mountain were turned to gold before their eyes, the Sheikh relates, the Prophet ﷺ was offered exactly that, on a single condition. If the sign came and they still refused it, there would be no more reprieve; the matter would be sealed and they would be finished. And he ﷺ chose to leave them their time instead, the longer road of patience over the one decisive blow, and that choice, the Sheikh says, is itself a window into his mercy. It is also the reason most of the wonders you are about to meet unfolded in front of believers, and only a rare few in front of the men who came to mock. To pour signs onto arrogance is to pour out destruction, and Allah, out of mercy, gave the proud only enough to know the truth, and then let them be.

When the things of the earth answered him

The first category is the strangest to a modern ear and the gentlest in tone: the wonders worked through lifeless things, through stones and pebbles and food and wood. He ﷺ said that there was a stone in Makkah he still recognized, one that used to greet him with peace, give him salam, before he was ever given prophethood at all. The companions sitting close around him at a meal heard the food in his blessed hand say subhanallah as he lifted it toward his mouth. And once, in a gathering that held Abu Bakr and Umar and Ali among others, he took up a handful of

gravel, small pebbles, and as they lay in his palm the whole company heard them praising Allah aloud. He passed the pebbles to Abu Bakr, and in his hands they went on praising. To Umar, and they kept praising. To the others, and still the sound continued, every man in the circle hearing it. Then he ﷺ set them down, and when the companions picked the same stones back up there was nothing, only silence in their hands.

Sit with what that scene is actually showing, because the Sheikh draws the meaning out and it is larger than the wonder. It is not that the Prophet ﷺ taught the stones to speak. It is that everything in creation is already glorifying its Maker, ceaselessly, all the time, and we are simply built so that we cannot hear it. There is nothing that does not praise Him. When his blessed hand closed around those pebbles, the veil between the people and the rocks lifted for a moment, and the companions heard what creation never once stops saying. Then he set them down, and the veil came back, and the praising went on exactly as before, only now beyond the reach of human ears again. You are sitting, this very moment, inside a worship you cannot hear, surrounded by it on every side, invited into it but largely deaf to it. The pebbles were not the lesson. The silence afterward was.

The trunk that wept for him

And here the Sheikh slows almost to a stop, because this one he lifts out of its category and gives a place of its own, for the sheer enormity of it. In the earliest days of Madinah, when the masjid was first built and some palm stumps had to be cleared to make room, one trunk was left standing near the front, and the Prophet ﷺ took to giving the Friday khutbah leaning against it. He stood there and spoke against that trunk for years, off to one side of the masjid, because you do not get to choose where a tree happens

to grow. Then, a few years on, when some wealth had begun to come to the community, the companions asked his permission to build him a proper minbar, a pulpit of three steps, and one of the women of the Ansar lent the skilled carpenter among her household to carve it. Carpentry was a rare craft in that land. The new pulpit was set in the middle of the masjid, and the trunk was left behind at the side.

The first Friday he ﷺ climbed those new steps, more than a thousand people were packed into the masjid, shoulder to shoulder. And the whole congregation heard a sound. Not the creak of old wood: the crying of a camel. The loud, broken sobbing of a baby camel, rising from the abandoned trunk. The Prophet ﷺ came down from his new pulpit, walked across to the trunk he had stood against all those years, and put his arms around it, holding it and patting it the way you would gentle a weeping child, until the crying stopped. He said afterward that had he not gone to it and quieted it, it would have kept weeping until the Day of Judgment. Then he gave the command that the trunk be taken up and buried beneath the minbar, where the histories say it rests to this day, somewhere under the place where the imam stands.

The Sheikh stresses how certain this report is. It is not one of the gentle, loosely chained stories that the seerah carries alongside its firm ones; it is mutawatir, narrated by so many companions at once, more than a thousand eyewitnesses in that single packed room, that doubt has nowhere to stand. And he tells us that one of the early scholars could never recite this hadith without breaking down in tears, and would say, through his weeping: a tree cried because it missed the Prophet ﷺ and the knowledge that he used to spread leaning against it. And then the scholar's question, which the Sheikh hands straight to us: what, then, is the

excuse of our hearts? We who never once sat in front of him, who never heard a single khutbah from those lips, and yet so often feel nothing at the mention of him at all. A trunk had more longing for him than we manage on our best days.

Water from his fingers, food that would not run out

By sheer count, the Sheikh says, the largest category of all is food and water, and the seerah is so thick with these that he can only gather a few. The shape of them is always the same: a little is set before a multitude, and the little becomes enough, and there is more left at the end than there was at the start. At the treaty of Hudaibiyyah the water ran out entirely, and the Prophet ﷺ put his hand down into the last of what remained in the vessel, and from between his fingers the water came welling up and flowing out, like a spring, like an opened tap, until in one narration more than three hundred people had made their wudu from it. Dr. Yasir Qadhi pauses on a verdict that one of the scholars of al-Andalus passed on this very wonder. It was, he said, a greater sign than Musa striking water from the rock. Because water does, on rare occasion, seep out of stone; you will find it now and then, even if only a trickle, and Musa was given it in abundance. But water has never once, anywhere, gushed out from flesh and bone. That is a thing the world had never seen and has not seen since.

And then the one that the whole city of Madinah stood witness to, on the day of the Trench. The men were starving as they dug, the great confederate army massed around them, and Jabir, radiyallahu anhu, had heard the weakness of hunger in the Prophet's ﷺ own voice. He went home to whatever his household could find, one small goat and a little flour, enough perhaps for a handful of people, and slaughtered the goat and

set his wife to kneading the dough, meaning only to whisper a quiet invitation to the Prophet ﷺ and one or two of the companions. But the Prophet ﷺ rose and announced it to the entire trench: people, Jabir has made a feast for you all, come. Fourteen hundred starving men. Jabir ran home in a panic, certain he was ruined, and his wife asked him what he had done. The Prophet ﷺ had done it, he told her, not him. Then he ﷺ arrived, spat baraka into the dough and blessed the pot, and gave the instruction that the bread was not to be drawn from the oven, nor the meat lifted from the fire, until he was there to serve it. And then the army ate, batch after batch after batch, the company filing in and eating its fill and leaving, until every last man of the fourteen hundred had been fed. And when the last of them rose and left, there was more food in that house than when they had begun. Thousands in Madinah saw it.

The moon, split in two

The tenth and final category is the one the Sheikh reserves for everything that fits nowhere else, the miscellaneous, and into it falls one of the greatest signs ever granted to any prophet who ever lived. In the early years in Makkah, the Quraysh challenged him, one of the very few times a wonder came at their own daring. If I were to split the moon in two, he ﷺ asked them, would you believe in me? They said yes. And the moon split, the two halves drawing apart so that one stood on one side of the mountain and one on the other, in plain sight of them all, with the peak between the pieces. The Qur'an itself records it, without a trace of hedging:

The Hour has come near, and the moon has split [in two].

QUR'AN 54:1

Dr. Yasir Qadhi notes that an early scholar weighed this sign against all the others and ranked it at the very top, above the wonders of every prophet before. The reason is striking. Every other miracle, of every other messenger, took place down here, on the earth we know and walk and can reach. This one happened in the heavens, out beyond our world entirely, in a place no human hand will ever touch. That is what set it above the rest: it was worked in the sky itself, where none of us can go. And still, the Qur'an tells you in the very next breath exactly what the proud did with a sign hung in the heavens for all of them to see:

And if they see a sign [i.e., miracle], they turn away and say, "Passing magic."

QUR'AN 54:2

They looked up at the broken moon, turned their faces away, and called it a passing spell, magic that would soon wear off. Precisely as Allah had said the closed heart always would. The greatest sign in the sky, and arrogance reached for the same one word it always reaches for. The lesson the Sheikh opened the night with closes the loop here: it was never about the size of the proof.

The miracle still in your hands

And then the Sheikh saves the greatest for the very last, the one he says eclipses every other and is, all by itself, worth more than all the rest combined, infinitely more. To see why, look at what the wonders of this whole evening have in common. The stone that gave salam, the pebbles that praised, the trunk that wept, the water from his fingers, the army fed from one goat, the moon broken over the mountain: every single one of them was

witnessed by other people, in another time and place. We believe in them, and we are right to. But we did not see them. We were not standing in that masjid, not kneeling at that well, not looking up at that sky. They lit a moment and then they passed, and the moment is gone.

There is one exception, and only one. When a person comes and asks how he can possibly know that this religion is true, there is a single miracle you can physically place into his hands and say: here. Read this. Listen to its recitation. Sit with what it says. The Prophet ﷺ said that every prophet before him was given signs by which his people came to believe in him, and that the sign he himself was given was the revelation, the Qur'an, and that on account of it he hoped to have the largest following of any prophet on the Day of Judgment. After a whole evening of wonders, the Sheikh lingers on the wording: the only miracle Allah gave me. Clearly he ﷺ was given thousands. But the miracle of the Qur'an is so bright that beside it the others seem almost to fade from view, the way the others recede in front of this one. It has no expiry and no border. It carries no constraint of time or of place. It is the living miracle, renewed every time a child opens his mouth to recite it, and it is the one sign a Muslim can still hold out to a doubter today, when every other wonder can only be reported, never shown. And so the Sheikh closes the evening on the line he has been walking toward all along: in truth, a Muslim needs no miracle beyond the Qur'an, and beyond the life of the Prophet ﷺ itself, for his life is miracle enough.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to leave an evening like this one merely amazed, a parade of wonders admired and then set down, and to walk away no different than you came. That would be to miss every

question the night is actually putting to you. The Sheikh framed the whole hour so that the wonders would point past themselves, and they point straight at us.

Begin where he began, because it is the most freeing thing in the lecture. Proof, by itself, rarely moves a heart that has decided. Allah says it in His own words: send the angels down, let the dead speak, gather every created thing before their eyes, and the arrogant will still refuse. So stop waiting for the one perfect argument that will finally crack someone open, and stop tormenting yourself that you must not have found it yet. Faith lands on the humble and slides off the proud, and that has been true since the Quraysh stood looking at a moon in two pieces and called it a trick of the eye. Carry the truth honestly and leave the hearts to the One who turns them.

And remember, against your own restless craving for a sign, that belief was never mainly about miracles in the first place. Abu Bakr believed without one. Umar believed without one. The truthfulness of his ﷺ life, the dignity of his character, the weight of what he brought, that was enough for the best of this ummah, and it is a door still standing open to anyone sincere. If your own iman feels thin, the answer is almost never to go hunting for a wonder. It is to sit closer to the life and the word that convinced the companions, until they convince you the same way.

Then let the smaller wonders do their quiet work on you. The pebbles praised in his palm because everything is already praising, always, and we are simply too deaf to hear it; you are standing this moment inside a worship the whole creation is offering, and you were invited to join it out loud. And the trunk, the trunk above all. A piece of dead wood wept because it missed him ﷺ and the remembrance he spread while leaning

against it, and the scholar who could not recite that report without crying asked the only question that matters: what excuse, then, do our hearts have? We can still pick up his words. We can still recite what he recited, still walk where his sunnah walks. A tree longed for him with more feeling than we manage, and we have so much less reason to have grown cold. Let that shame you, the Sheikh would say, but gently, the way he ﷺ patted the trunk until it stilled, not into despair but back toward warmth.

And then hold, with both hands, the one gift that was meant for you and not for them. The moon split for a generation that is gone; the water ran from his fingers for men who have long since met their Lord. You were not there for any of it. But the Qur'an is in your home tonight. It is the living miracle, the one sign that did not fade with the eyes that first saw it, the one you can open right now and the one you can place in a doubter's hands and say, simply, read this. It deserves more than a high shelf and a month of attention once a year. So take one thing from this evening of wonders down into your ordinary days: let your eyes see the signs the proud were blind to, in the praising of the stones and the patience of the Prophet ﷺ and the mercy that gave the arrogant their time. And let your heart settle, finally, on the miracle that never ended. May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, the one whose very life is sign enough, keep our hearts firm upon His Book, count us among those whom the Prophet ﷺ will recognize and call to his fountain, and let us drink from his hand a drink after which there is no thirst.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 85: the miracles of the Prophet ﷺ (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (17:90-93, 15:14-15, 6:111, 25:21, 54:1-2), verified via

quran.ai. The narration is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

Lessons from Hunayn and Ta'if

What the largest victory came to teach

Some battles are won so completely that the danger only arrives afterward. After three and a half months away from the seerah, Dr. Yasir Qadhi comes back not to push the story forward but to circle back over ground he feels was crossed too quickly. We were rushed, he admits, through Hunayn and Ta'if, and there were points of benefit left on the field. So this is not a chapter of events. It is a chapter of wisdom mined out of events, and the wisdom turns out to be sharper than the fighting.

Set the scene again. Makkah fell in Ramadan of the eighth year of the Hijrah, and one by one the great names of Quraysh came in, Abu Sufyan, Suhayl ibn Amr, Ikrimah ibn Abi Jahl, slowly at first and then all of them. The Prophet ﷺ broke the idols of Makkah and of the towns around it, and then word reached him of an offensive: the proudest tribe left standing after Quraysh, the people of Thaqif in their mountain city of Ta'if, had allied with their cousins of Hawazin and marched out more than twenty thousand strong to crush the Muslims first. The two armies met at Hunayn, and the day opened in disaster. The new converts, fresh from Makkah and untested, broke and fled at the first shock, and the Prophet ﷺ held his ground with the senior companions until the line re-formed and the rout swung the other way. The Hawazin men ran and left everything behind, their wives and children and herds and wealth, the single largest body of spoils in the entire history of the seerah, because their young

commander had overruled his elders and dragged the whole tribe, families and property and all, onto the battlefield. The army then marched on Ta'if and laid siege, and Ta'if did not break. The Prophet ﷺ lifted the siege and turned back toward Madinah, and over the people who had defied him he said only this: Allah will guide them. They will come. Within a year they did. Now go back, the Sheikh says, and let the battle teach.

Where you put your trust

The Qur'an names only two battles by their own names, Badr and Hunayn, and it names Hunayn not to celebrate it but to correct it.

Allah has already given you victory in many regions and [even] on the day of Hunayn, when your great number pleased you, but it did not avail you at all, and the earth was confining for you with [i.e., in spite of] its vastness; then you turned back, fleeing.

QUR'AN 9:25

For the first time in the whole struggle the Muslims were the larger army, and their numbers pleased them, and in that quiet pleasure something slipped. The confidence of the host rested, for a moment, on its own size rather than on the One who hands out victory. So the earth, for all its width, closed in on them, and they ran. The verse names the cause without mercy: a heart that leaned, briefly, on the wrong thing.

Sheikh Yasir lifts this clean out of the seerah and sets it in the center of theology, because it is the lesson lying underneath all the others. Trust, real trust, must rest in the Causer of causes and not in the cause itself. Allah made causes real, and to neglect them is foolishness, not faith; the Prophet ﷺ gave the whole balance in a single line: tie your camel, then put your trust in

Allah. You tie the camel. But the heart does not cling to the rope. Lean your heart on the alarm system itself, on the salary, on your own qualifications, as though these were what truly kept you, and you have made the means into a small idol. This is not the major shirk that takes a person out of Islam, for no Muslim worships his alarm; it is the hidden, lesser shirk of a heart that has quietly moved its reliance from God to the thing God gave it. And like the numbers at Hunayn, the thing will not save you when you need saving.

Then he draws a distinction with real tenderness in it. There are two kinds of causes, physical and spiritual. A physical cause is one any human being uses regardless of faith: medicine, strength, money, the alarm on the wall. A spiritual cause is supernatural and tied to a belief: for the believer, du'a and the Qur'an. Your heart must not attach itself to a physical cause, because that goes against tawhid. But it may lean fully on a legitimate spiritual cause, because a spiritual cause is by its nature a connection to Allah, and to lean on it is to lean on Him. So the believer works the world with both hands and keeps his heart looking upward. That, the Sheikh says, is the precise thing Hunayn was sent to teach, and he calls it what it is: not seerah anymore, but aqidah.

Mercy for the one who does not know

On the road out to Hunayn the army passed a great spreading tree that the pagan Arabs had once revered, hanging their weapons on its branches for luck, as though the wood would carry them to victory. A man called Abu Waqid al-Laythi, a Muslim of perhaps a single day, who had not yet memorized a verse or sat in one lesson, called out: O Messenger of Allah, make for us a tree like that one, a Dhat Anwat of our own, the

way we used to have in the days of ignorance. And the Prophet ﷺ swore by Allah that this was the very thing the Children of Israel had said to Musa, when he had just brought them through the sea and they passed a people worshipping idols: make for us a god as they have gods. It was major shirk, in plain words, the request for an idol from the lips of a man who days earlier had been a pagan.

And yet watch what he ﷺ did not do. He did not tell Abu Waqid to renew his shahada, did not declare him fallen out of the faith. He corrected him and he taught him, because the man was new and simply did not know. There is a root of faith, *asl al-iman*, the genuine wish to submit to Allah and His Messenger, and it can sit in a heart still tangled with deep ignorance. A person who has that root, who truly wants to submit but does not yet know what submission forbids, may be excused by Allah for what he says out of that ignorance, even when the thing he says is itself shirk. It is the exact inverse of the refusal of Iblis, who understood perfectly and would not bend: *asl al-kufr* is to refuse to submit, knowing; *asl al-iman* is to want to submit, not yet knowing to what.

He brings it straight into our own streets, and names the cases without flinching, because a sanitized faith is no help to anyone. A young Muslim raised far from knowledge says that anyone good will enter Paradise, no matter what they believe, that every path leads to Jannah. To say this, the Sheikh insists, is kufr, because it denies the kalima from both ends: it imagines gods who may be worshipped beside Allah, and salvation for those who reject His Messenger ﷺ. To declare the forbidden permitted is itself disbelief, even though to fall into the forbidden is merely sin: to drink is haram, but to say drinking is fine is kufr. The error is grave and he will not shrink the word for it. But the person in

front of you, raised in ignorance and meaning no rebellion, is not to be hurled out of Islam. He is owed exactly what Abu Waqid was owed: the error named honestly, and then patience, wisdom, and good manners in the teaching. To the elders quick to excommunicate, the Sheikh says: calm down. Yes, it is kufr. And no, you do not answer it by telling a confused believer he is no longer a believer.

The night the Ansar wept

When the spoils of Hunayn were divided, the Prophet ﷺ poured them onto the newest Muslims of Makkah. A hundred camels here, ten thousand somewhere else, fortunes by the million in the reckoning of that world, until men who had fought him for twenty years walked away overnight as the wealthy elite. Abu Sufyan, al-Aqra ibn Habis, the chieftains of Quraysh, became rich beyond anything they had owned. And the Ansar, the men of Madinah who had sheltered Islam for years and bled for it and defended the Messenger of Allah ﷺ with their bodies, were given nothing. Not a single coin.

And they felt it. The Sheikh asks you to put yourself among them honestly, because any one of us, he says, would have lost our minds: twenty years of enmity rewarded with fortunes, and the ones who carried the religion on their backs not even called. Word moved through the Ansar with a dangerous edge: when there is fighting to be done we are the first on the line, but when the wealth is handed out, he gives it to his own people, the Quraysh. To be disappointed in the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is in itself something close to kufr, and it shows you how human this moment was. Then the Sheikh plants his feet and refuses to look away from it, because, he says, we do the companions a quiet violence when we turn them into angels. Make the Sahaba into

angels and they can no longer be our role models, for they are no longer of our kind. They were the best generation of human beings, kuntum khaira ummatin ukhrijat lin nas, and they were human beings.

You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah. If only the People of the Scripture had believed, it would have been better for them. Among them are believers, but most of them are defiantly disobedient.

QUR'AN 3:110

They wanted what you and I want. The greatness was never that they felt nothing; it was that they could be reminded, and would turn. So the Prophet ﷺ called them into a tent, alone, every non-Ansari sent away, and spoke to their hearts. Did I not come to you when you were astray, and Allah guided you through me; poor, and He enriched you; divided against one another, and He joined your hearts? Then he set the choice before them: are you not pleased that the people return to their homes with sheep and camels, and you return to your homes with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ among you? And he gave them the words the Sheikh lingers over: I am one of you. Were it not for the Hijrah, that I was born where I was born, I would be one of the Ansar in truth; and if all mankind walked down one valley and the Ansar walked down another, I would walk the valley of the Ansar. It was exactly what they needed to hear. They wept until their beards were wet and begged his forgiveness. The waswasa had come, and the faith had answered it. That, the Sheikh says, is the very believer the Prophet ﷺ described: the believer can be weak, but when he is reminded, he remembers.

Reading each person where they stand

Watch how differently he ﷺ treated three groups inside one short campaign, because the difference is not favoritism but the religion's own common sense. To the Ansar, secure in their faith, he gave no money at all and a private speech that broke them open. To the new chieftains of Quraysh, whose hearts he was still binding to Islam, he gave fortunes. And to the rough Bedouins who came afterward demanding their share, he gave only tokens until the wealth ran out entirely.

On the battlefield itself he reached for a tool he had never used before and would never use again. When the Quraysh converts wavered and fled, he did not call them back with a verse. He called on the one memory that would move these particular men: I am the Prophet, this is no lie; I am the son of Abdul Muttalib. He invoked his lineage. And the Sheikh marks the tension in it, because the Prophet ﷺ himself warned that four matters of ignorance would cling to his Ummah, and the first he named was pride in ancestry. So he is not boasting, for he cannot disobey what he himself taught. He is reading them. He is true: he is the grandson of Abdul Muttalib, their own legendary chieftain, and for these men in this instant the name of that chieftain was the rope that would pull them back. Notice the order: I am the Prophet comes first, and only then I am the son of Abdul Muttalib. The very same wisdom governs how a believer handles pride of nation or origin today; there is nothing inherently wrong in belonging to a land and a culture, and a thing that can curdle into sin can, used rightly, become a bridge.

And then the human reality of it cut the other way. Later, pressed by a throng of Bedouins shouting for money, money, money, he was forced back into a stand of thorny desert shrubs until his cloak was torn from his shoulders and fell to the ground. The

companions did not shield him as bodyguards, because these were Muslims asking for what was theirs. He said: give me back my cloak. By Allah, if I had coins as many as these thorns I would share them all among you, and you would not find me a miser. He was a man pressed and frustrated, and entirely just in it, with every right to treat this crowd differently from the dignitaries of Quraysh. Aisha, radiyallahu anha, preserved the command beneath all of it in the very first hadith of the introduction to Sahih Muslim: the Messenger of Allah ﷺ ordered us to place people in their proper stations. You honor the man of standing as a man of standing and answer the rude as the rude have earned, and the naive notion that everyone must be treated identically is not the Sunnah.

When to forgive, when to call down justice

At the walls of Ta'if, worn down by a siege that had dragged on for weeks and cost Muslim lives, the companions came to him with a request: O Messenger of Allah, make du'a against Tha'qif. They were not inventing some strange new thing. These companions had seen him pray against people before: against the confederates when the Asr prayer was delayed at the Trench; against the men who once threw the filth of a slaughtered animal upon his back, every one of them later killed at Badr; against the tribes who betrayed and slaughtered his teachers at ar-Raji' and Bi'r Ma'unah, a full month of qunut raised against them. They knew the door was open, and were asking him to open it again.

But over Ta'if he chose mercy: O Allah, guide Tha'qif, and bring them to us. And the Sheikh uses the contrast to clear away a soft modern myth, that a Muslim may never speak a du'a against anyone. He is, by his own description, no apologist, because a false picture of our tradition only sets up a crisis of faith for the

day a reader meets the real one. The Qur'an itself is full of supplication against the wrongdoer. Musa prayed against Pharaoh; Nuh prayed against his people. It is true that the tender-hearted prophets, Ibrahim and Isa, prayed for their misguided peoples, and both responses are genuinely prophetic; Nuh and Musa were of the sterner cast, as Umar was beside Abu Bakr. The general rule leans toward mercy, and at Ta'if mercy won the day. But against a true tyrant, a Pharaoh of our own age drowning the innocent, it is not merely permitted to pray for his downfall, it can be the more fitting prayer of the two. The Prophet ﷺ taught that the supplication of the wronged rises to Allah with no veil between it and Him, even against a fellow Muslim who has stolen your wealth or knowingly slandered your name. If that door is open against a wrongdoing brother, how much more against the open tyrant. Honesty here protects the believer; it does not endanger him.

And yet mercy was also the verdict where strict justice could have been demanded. There was a real crime at Hunayn: to flee the battlefield is counted among the seven deadly sins the Prophet ﷺ named, and whole groups of the new Muslims had done exactly that at the first clash. So when the dust settled, Umm Sulaym, radiyallahu anha, was furious. She had been among the small band that held firm, a woman with no sword who pulled a hand-dagger from her belt and vowed to drive it into the stomach of anyone who came near, and the Prophet ﷺ had seen her do it. Now she came hot with anger at the men who had run: O Messenger of Allah, execute these cowards who fled. And he answered her with a sentence that is itself a principle of leadership: O Umm Sulaym, Allah has sufficed us and been good to us. They had sinned, yes, gravely. But the day was won, the danger was past, and what would be gained by killing a thousand

men over a battle already decided? Let it be. The past is the past. There is a knowing, the Sheikh observes, that recognizes when an offense, however genuine, is better buried than avenged, and the strength to choose the burying.

How he won the hearts of his enemies

Now the masterstroke, and it is pure reading of the human heart. Hawazin, unlike Thaqif who had run back behind the walls of Ta'if with many of their families saved, had lost everyone: every wife and child captured, every herd taken, the whole tribe scattered with nothing left. The Prophet ﷺ judged that a people stripped that bare would have to come back and negotiate, so he held their captives and property at the valley of Ji'ranah, set two hundred men to guard them, and delayed the division as long as he could, marching to Ta'if and back while he waited. But Hawazin delayed too, and a commander cannot hold an army's spoils forever. At last he distributed the people and the property among the companions, and only then, days later, did Hawazin arrive as Muslims, asking for their families back.

He could not simply unwind it. A man handed ten thousand the day before, or a captive worth a fortune, does not gladly give it back the next morning; the attachment is there, and the wealth is lawfully his. So he managed it with a delicacy the Sheikh calls human psychology in its finest form. Which is dearer to you, he asked them, your families or your wealth? Their families, of course; was it even a question? He had known they would say it. Then he taught them the move. Tomorrow, after the prayer, when ten thousand hearts are still soft from worship, stand and announce that you have accepted Islam, and ask me to intercede with the Muslims, and ask the Muslims to intercede with me, to return your children. The right time, the soft hour after salah, an

appeal to the heart and not a command, because he did not wish to command at all; the wealth was the people's right, and to order them to surrender it would be neither just nor likely to move them to generosity. He wanted them to give freely, so he arranged the moment in which giving freely would feel natural.

When they made their plea, he rose at once: as for what belongs to me and to the family of Abdul Muttalib, it is returned to you. The Muhajirun called out that theirs too was given back, for the sake of Allah, and the Ansar stood and said the same. Some of the new converts, within their rights, wanted payment, and he did not shame them; he promised them the first share of the next spoils, until every captive was ransomed home. And then he asked after their leader, the very Malik ibn Awf who had instigated the war and overruled his elders to drag the families to the field. He had fled into Ta'if. Tell him, the Prophet ﷺ said, that if he comes to me as a Muslim I will return his family and his wealth, and give him a hundred camels on top of it. For a man who had lost his tribe, his family, his fortune, and his rank, it was no choice at all. Malik came, took his shahada, and was reinstated as chief of his own tribe. The man who lit the fire went home a Muslim leader of his own people, everything restored to him but the idols.

The Sheikh lets the wonder of it land. What other story in the history of the world tells of an enemy who attacks you, loses, and is sent home with his family, his wealth, his rank, and a religion? It was not the first time, either; he recalls Banu al-Harith and the kin of Maymunah, prisoners freed and restored in the same way. One of the new chieftains, al-Aqra ibn Habis, went back to his people and said it plainly: by Allah, this is truly a Prophet, for no king would give away all he had and care nothing for poverty. That is what generosity does; it was kindness, not the sword, that was

carrying Arabia into Islam, because Islam is the truth and however a heart is brought near it, the truth seeps in. Their faith might be weak now, not yet entered into their hearts, but it would enter, and their descendants are the righteous Muslims of every land since.

The bedouins say, "We have believed." Say, "You have not [yet] believed; but say [instead], 'We have submitted,' for faith has not yet entered your hearts. And if you obey Allah and His Messenger, He will not deprive you from your deeds of anything. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful."

QUR'AN 49:14

And folded inside the mercy is a quieter wisdom the Sheikh asks you not to miss: he gave Hawazin back their own man as their leader. People follow a leader of their own kind, who knows their lineage and their ways, and who is better fit to rule a people than the one who has ruled them already. So the chieftain of Jahiliyyah was handed back his chieftaincy, made the leader of the very tribe he had led before, with nothing changed but that the idols were gone and the people were Muslim.

What the largest victory leaves us

Behind every prisoner of war at Ji'ranah stood a long and uncomfortable question, the question of bondage, riqq, and the Sheikh meets it head on, because honesty is the only thing that protects faith. He will not even use the English word slavery, because the chattel horror that word conjures, one of the worst manifestations the institution ever knew anywhere, was never the thing the Sharia regulated. Bondage was a universal practice that no civilization before Islam had placed a single law upon. Islam was the first to fence it in: narrowing its only lawful source to the

captive of a legitimate war who is not ransomed, where every other culture seized free men off the road and sold them; commanding that the bondsman be fed and clothed as your own brother, until often you could not tell servant from master; and opening avenue after avenue out of it, as the expiation for broken oaths, as one of the eight lawful uses of zakat, as one of the surest deeds by which a believer ransoms his own neck from the Fire. It was a framework, the Sheikh stresses, that governed the institution wherever it existed yet never required it to exist; remove it entirely and the Sharia stands whole, which is why he knows of no scholar today who calls for its return. And the Prophet ﷺ himself never kept a single bondsman as a personal servant. Every one he had, he freed, and many, once freed, simply stayed and served him for love.

The result of it all, Hunayn and Ta'if together, was decisive in a way no plan of men could engineer. The whole of the Hijaz was now Muslim; idolatry was gone from public life, and Ta'if was a small island of paganism in an ocean of tawhid that would surrender within months. Hunayn, the Sheikh says, was the last battle Islam would ever fight against the idolaters of Arabia. After it the campaigns turn outward, toward Rome and Persia and Egypt; within the Peninsula, Arab idolatry simply ceased to exist, less than a year from the conquest of Makkah, after more than two decades of struggle. A whole land cleansed of shirk inside a single generation. No human plan does that; this was a miracle no human could bring about, and our Lord brought it about. Among the last of the great names to come in was the most famous poet alive in all of Arabia, Ka'b ibn Zuhayr, whose celebrated ode opens, as the old Arabian poems always did, with long verses of love and longing for a woman named Su'ad. The Prophet ﷺ let those verses stand uncorrected, though elsewhere

he had stopped a poet mid-line when the words strayed into kufr, telling young girls singing on Eid to drop the verse that claimed a prophet knows the unseen of tomorrow. There is wisdom even in that restraint: a thing need not be perfectly sanitized before it may be left alone, and the poem climbed in the end to its famous praise of him ﷺ as a light by which the world is lit and a drawn sword among the swords of Allah.

What this day asks of our faith

A recap is never only a recap. Going back over a battle long since won, the Sheikh has handed us a set of questions sharp enough to cut into an ordinary week, and the largest victory of the seerah turns out to have come wrapped in the hardest lessons of it.

Begin where the verse begins, with the numbers that pleased them. We are forever doing the same arithmetic, counting the salary, the health, the qualifications, and feeling safe in the count. Hunayn is the day the count failed. Use every lawful means with both hands and neglect none of them, for neglect is not faith; but do not let the heart move in to live with the means. Let it lean only upward, on the One who makes the means work and can unmake them in an instant, and keep for your du'a and your Qur'an the reliance you withhold from the medicine.

Then sit with how human the best of them were. We flatten the companions into angels and then wonder why they cannot reach us, when their whole value as guides is that they wanted what we want and were pulled where we are pulled. The Ansar felt the sting of being passed over, and the marvel was not that the feeling never came but that a single honest reminder turned it to tears. Ask which reminder you have been refusing to hear. And learn from how he answered them, and from Abu Waqid, and from the crowd in the thorns, that wisdom is not the flat

machinery of treating everyone the same; it is reading the soul in front of you and placing it in its proper station, fortunes for one heart, a private word for another, patience for the ignorant.

And carry out of this day the strangest of its lessons, what to do with an enemy at your feet. He returned the families, the wealth, even the rank, and sent the man who lit the fire home as a Muslim chief, and a watching enemy looked at that and said, this can only be a Prophet. Generosity carried a whole peninsula into Islam where the sword alone never could, and the believer who can forgive a closed offense and let the past stay past has laid hold of the very tool the Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to win the hearts of those who once raised their hands against him. So take one thing down into your ordinary days: put your trust above the gifts and never in them, let yourself be reminded and then turn, read the people God places before you, and reach for mercy before you reach for the debt. May Allah make our trust rest in Him and not in what He gives us, soften our hearts the moment we are reminded, and let us treat His servants with the mercy our Prophet ﷺ showed even to those who had come to kill him.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 86: a recap and the lessons of Hunayn and Ta'if (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (9:25, 3:110, 49:14), verified via quran.ai.

The Expedition of Tabuk, Part I

The army of hardship, and the men who gave everything

Hunayn is behind him. Ta'if is behind him. In the six months since he ﷺ withdrew from the walls of Ta'if, central Arabia has fallen almost entirely into his hands, and the small tribes that still held out have begun to come in. He did not march on them himself; he sent the companions out in seven or eight small expeditions to the lands around Makkah and Madinah, partly to bring in the last of the tribes, and partly to pull down the great public idols, Dhul-Kaffayn and al-Fuls and others, that still stood in the open. And then, into the hottest part of the year, with the harvest about to come in and no enemy massing on any horizon that anyone could see, the order came: march north. A thousand miles, on foot and on thirsty camels, through the desert in the heat of late July.

This is the last campaign the Prophet ﷺ would ever lead. There would be no ghazwah after it; from here the road runs only to his farewell Hajj, to his final illness, and to the morning the companions would have to carry Islam without him. And they would remember this expedition by a name heavier than any victory. Not the expedition of Tabuk. The army of hardship, jaysh al-usrah.

The idols and a caution for our times

Before the road north opens, Dr. Yasir Qadhi pauses on those months of idol-breaking, because they are seized on in our own

day and turned into something they were never meant to be. Notice, he says, that the Prophet ﷺ did not pull down a single public idol until he held political authority over the land. He did not begin his dawah twenty years earlier by smashing the gods around the Kaaba; he began with the call to Allah, and only after the conquest of Makkah, only after central Arabia was wholly his, did the destruction of the public idols begin. The ones torn down were public icons of shirk, idols in the open square, not the private temples of a settled community.

And there is a second caution folded into the first. By the consensus of the scholars the Jews and the Christians, and by the ruling of Umar ibn al-Khattab the Zoroastrians too, were always permitted to keep their faith and their houses of worship inside the Islamic state. The history bears this out: across the Umayyads and the Abbasids and the Ottomans, the most unexpected minorities survived for centuries inside Muslim lands, tolerated so long as they kept the peace and did not parade their shirk in the public square. The Sheikh is blunt about why he lingers here. The groups in our own time who lift these incidents to justify destroying whole peoples or sites have torn them from their context: they have neither the authority the Prophet ﷺ had, nor the careful limits he kept. The seerah does not license them. It refutes them.

Why march at all?

Here is the strange thing, and the Sheikh is honest that after teaching the seerah many times he has never found a clean answer: there was no obvious reason to go. The classical historians offer causes, and he weighs them one by one, and most of them fall apart in the hand. A report that the Jews of Madinah goaded the Prophet ﷺ northward to be rid of him,

telling him a true prophet would have to go up to Syria, the land of the prophets and of the gathering on Judgment Day? It cannot stand. There were no Jews left in Madinah by the ninth year. And the verse cited for it, in Surah al-Isra, is a Makkan verse, revealed years before Tabuk was ever conceived; it has nothing to do with this campaign.

A report that forty thousand Roman troops were marching south to crush the Muslims, summoned by the Christian Ghassanid chief who had heard a false rumor that the Prophet ﷺ was dead? The narration is shaky, and the logic worse. The Romans, who ruled millions, had no interest in a desert they could have swallowed any time in the last three or four centuries. They cared nothing for the Arabs and saw in them no threat. To imagine them sending a legion down into that heat is, the Sheikh says plainly, nonsensical.

What lingers is a smaller, realer fear. The Ghassanids, the Christian Arab tribe on the Roman frontier, had spilled Muslim blood before; they had killed an envoy, and they had a hand in the deaths at Mu'tah, where Ja'far fell. The fear of them was genuine. The Sheikh recalls the day the Prophet ﷺ withdrew from his wives for a month and the whole city panicked, and a man burst in on Umar with the words "something has happened," and Umar's very first guess was: has the king of the Ghassanids attacked? That reflex tells you the threat was real in their minds. But even this does not answer the only question that matters, and the Sheikh keeps returning to it like a man pressing on a sore tooth: why now? Why in July, when no army on earth, Ghassanid or Roman, would come down through that furnace? Revenge could wait for January. The harvest did not have to be abandoned. Nothing in the visible world demanded that the march happen in the worst month of the year.

And so the Sheikh lands where the story itself pushes him, and he offers it as his own conclusion, take it or leave it: there was no immediate threat. This was a command from Allah, given plainly, to test these companions before their Prophet ﷺ would leave them.

Two more things point that way. The first is how the Prophet ﷺ went about it. Every other campaign he had kept under a veil, sometimes even feinting in the wrong direction to keep his enemies guessing, so that the blow fell before they knew it was coming. Tabuk he announced. He sent, al-Waqidi tells us, messengers to the surrounding tribes and even back to Makkah, calling the able-bodied men out by name. No surprise, no concealment, an open and declared march that the whole of Arabia could watch assembling. A man does not advertise an ambush. He advertises a test. And the second is a verse:

O you who have believed, fight against those adjacent to you of the disbelievers and let them find in you harshness. And know that Allah is with the righteous.

QUR'AN 9:123

The earliest commentator we possess, at-Tabari, read this as the very instruction that turned the Muslims first against the Arabs nearest them, and then, once Arabia was settled, northward toward Rome. Fight those adjacent to you, those who ring you about, and let them find in you firmness. It reads, the Sheikh suggests, almost like a map drawn in advance: the central Arabs are conquered, the rest will follow on their own, and now the gaze of the young ummah lifts past the desert to the frontier in the north, where the Ghassanids sit in the shadow of the Romans. The danger of the Ghassanids was never really the Ghassanids; it was the empire behind them. The Prophet ﷺ understood the

verse exactly as Allah intended it, and Tabuk was the first step of that turning. He reads it all against Surah at-Tawbah, the surah revealed almost entirely around this expedition, so blunt and so relentless in its call to march that one of its very names is Surat al-Qital, the surah of fighting. Allah was forging the men who would carry Islam out of Arabia after the Prophet ﷺ was gone. The test came first. Everything that the ummah became flowed from whether they passed it.

Go forth, light or heavy

Read Surah at-Tawbah with Tabuk in mind, the Sheikh asks, and you will feel an urgency you find nowhere else in the Qur'an. This was no quiet, voluntary call like the early battles. Going was fard ayn, an obligation on every healthy adult man around Madinah, even the new Muslims of Makkah, excused only by genuine sickness or a hardship that could not be moved. And the verses that came down do not coax. They confront.

O you who have believed, what is [the matter] with you that, when you are told to go forth in the cause of Allah, you adhere heavily to the earth? Are you satisfied with the life of this world rather than the Hereafter? But what is the enjoyment of worldly life compared to the Hereafter except a [very] little.

QUR'AN 9:38

What is wrong with you, the verse asks, that when you are called to march you sink into the ground, heavy, clinging to home? And the warning that follows is sharper still, that if they will not go forth Allah will punish them and put a different people in their place, and they will not harm Him in the least:

If you do not go forth, He will punish you with a painful punishment and will replace you with another people, and you will not harm Him at all. And Allah is over all things competent.

QUR'AN 9:39

And then the line that leaves no man an exit, whatever his state, however little he has:

Go forth, whether light or heavy, and strive with your wealth and your lives in the cause of Allah. That is better for you, if you only knew.

QUR'AN 9:41

Light or heavy: whether you ride out fully armed or with nothing at all, whether the going is easy on you or it costs you everything, go. And here the Sheikh stops you, because these are exactly the verses the extremist groups love to lift and aim at whatever cause they please, cutting and pasting them as though they were sent down for their own war. The verse, he insists, belongs to the moment it descended. Allah revealed this for Tabuk. The words are eternal and there will be a thousand causes across the centuries where they carry weight, but no one gets to staple this specific command onto his own banner and tell his followers that if they do not march with him Allah will punish them. That kind of specificity belongs only to the battle the verse came down for. To pretend otherwise is to forge a revelation in your own name.

The army of hardship

There was never a battle at Tabuk. No clash of armies, no swords drawn against swords, not a drop of blood spilled in anger. Imam al-Bukhari, when he reaches this campaign in his book of the

seerah, gives it both of its names in a single heading: the expedition of Tabuk, and it is the expedition of hardship. The companions, the Sheikh notes, called it by that second name far more often than the first. And they were right to, because the enemy this time was not an army. It was the road itself.

Count the weights stacked on these men. It would be the largest force Arabia had ever raised. The sources reach for twenty thousand, even thirty, and the Sheikh, ever careful, reminds us that crowds always swell in the retelling. It is human nature, he says, not lying: you glance at a great gathering and the zeros multiply if the crowd is on your side, and they fall away if it is not, and the companions kept no roster and counted no heads. Twenty thousand may well be too large for that time and place. Call it simply the biggest army the Prophet ﷺ ever led. A larger army means more mouths, more water, more of everything, carried across more distance, for this was the farthest he ﷺ ever marched at the head of men, close to a thousand miles, and a journey there and back of better than a month, twenty-five days at the least. And it fell in late July, when Madinah bakes past a hundred and ten degrees, when the people who live there abandon work through the middle of the day and shelter through the worst of it because no body can labor in such heat. The Sheikh lived in those lands for ten years, and he calls the summer heat there surreal, a thing you cannot function inside of.

Then the cruelest weight, the one we can barely feel today. August was harvest. And here the Sheikh slows down to make us understand something we have forgotten how to understand. For nearly all of human history, people did not know what they would earn from one month to the next. The salary, the steady paycheck that arrives on the same day every month no matter the weather, is a blessing so recent and so strange that most of

us cannot grasp life without it. The agrarian society of Madinah lived hand to mouth, week to week, and the harvest was not the bonus on top of the income; the harvest was the income, the single great paycheck on which a family lived the entire year. To march now was to walk away from the only money that was coming. The Prophet ﷺ was not merely asking these men to risk death in battle. He was asking them to abandon their bread, in the worst heat of the year, for a journey with no enemy waiting at the end of it. That is why they named it the army of hardship.

Those who followed in the hour of difficulty

The Qur'an gives this expedition its own name, and it is not Tabuk. It is the hour of difficulty, sa'at al-usrah:

Allah has already forgiven the Prophet and the Muhajireen and the Ansar who followed him in the hour of difficulty after the hearts of a party of them had almost inclined [to doubt], and then He forgave them. Indeed, He was to them Kind and Merciful.

QUR'AN 9:117

Qatada, the foremost student of Ibn Abbas, said plainly that this was Tabuk: they set out toward Syria in the blazing heat and were tested almost past bearing. How tested? Two or three men would be rationed a single date for the whole day, the Sheikh recounts, splitting one date between them, and when the flesh of it was gone they would pass the pit from mouth to mouth, each man sucking it for whatever ghost of taste or nourishment remained, real or imagined, because it was better than nothing.

And the thirst was worse than the hunger. Umar ibn al-Khattab himself, asked years later by Ibn Abbas to describe the hour of difficulty, told the story. They reached a place so dry, he said,

that they thought their throats would collapse, that they would simply die. Men went out hunting for water and came back with nothing, more spent and more parched than before. Some slaughtered their own camels to wring the moisture from the stomach, a bitter and brackish thing, salt more than water, and the desperation that drove them to it meant they would now have to walk the whole long way home on foot, having killed the very animal that was to carry them.

It was here, at the edge of dying, that Abu Bakr came to the Prophet ﷺ and begged him: ya Rasul Allah, make du'a for us. We need a miracle. The Prophet ﷺ said, if you wish, and raised his hands. And Umar swore that he had not yet brought them down before the sky darkened and the clouds gathered and the rain came pouring, until every man in that army had filled every container he carried, and the throats that were collapsing drank their fill.

He took the means first

Notice what the Sheikh notices in that rain, because it is one of the judgments he wants carried out of this story. The Prophet ﷺ did not raise his hands the moment the army grew thirsty. He let them reach the very edge: the slaughtered camels, the collapsing throats, the certainty of death. He, of all people, knew that the miracle was his to call. Why would he hold it back so long? Why did it take Abu Bakr, finally, to prod him into asking?

Because he was teaching every one of us a law deeper than any single day in the desert. The Sheikh names it akhdh bil-asbab: you take the means. You struggle, you exhaust your effort, you do the hard and bitter human work to its very end, and only then, when you have given everything you have, does the help of Allah arrive. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was a man to whom miracles

came; that was never in doubt. But he would not lean on them. The miracle came, but never at the start. Only after the struggle. Only after the sacrifice. That is the pattern of the whole seerah, the Sheikh says: at the very end, yes, the help descends, but not before the bitterness has been tasted to the bottom.

And there is mercy folded into that law for the rest of us. Most of us will never raise our hands and split open the sky over a dying army. But the believers who walk his ﷺ road, who put in the effort and taste the bitterness of it and refuse to quit, will see their own miracles, quieter ones, less blatant, arriving in their own lives at the very moment they have nothing left to give. Things will happen to them, the Sheikh promises, that they will recognize for what they are. Allah blesses the ending, not the wishing. He blesses the ones who paid the price first.

Whoever finances the army of hardship

Once the Prophet ﷺ understood the march had to happen, the first thing he did was raise the money for it. And here a beautiful detail surfaces, the Sheikh says: only six months earlier he had held all the spoils of Hunayn and Ta'if in his hands, a fortune, and he had spent every coin of it in the path of Allah, keeping nothing for himself and nothing in the treasury. That was his way to the end. So now the war had to be financed from nothing, from the ground up. He stood on the mimbar and called out: whoever finances the army of hardship will be given Jannah. And the companions came, a bag of gold here, a fistful of coins there, until the piles rose in the masjid.

Then came Uthman ibn Affan, may Allah be pleased with him. A caravan of his, near a hundred camels, had just returned laden from a northern trade, the whole of his recent fortune arriving at once. And when he heard that promise he gave all of it,

thousands of gold coins, poured out before the Prophet ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ turned the coins over in his hands, and over again, and said: whatever Uthman does after this day will not harm him. Words so weighty that years later, when the rebels had surrounded his house and meant to kill him, Uthman would stand and recall them in his own defense, and Ibn Abbas would throw them back at the besiegers: your Prophet ﷺ said that whatever this man does will not harm him, so who are you, with your invented list of complaints, to stand against him?

And then the famous contest. Umar, who had heard the same promise from the Prophet's ﷺ own mouth, hurried home thinking, today at last I will outdo Abu Bakr, and brought half of everything he owned, leaving the other half for his family, which was already a thing no one was even obliged to do. Then Abu Bakr arrived, and what he brought was clearly more, clearly all of it. What did you leave for your family, the Prophet ﷺ asked him. And Abu Bakr answered: I left them Allah and His Messenger. After that, Umar said, I will never try to beat him again; there is no competing with that kind of trust. Understand what the Sheikh wants you to see in this. Tabuk was being paid for not by men who had plenty to spare, but by men who emptied their hands of the only paycheck they had, with no certainty of when the next would come, and trusted that Allah would refill them.

And one last scene from the gathering, because it shows how human these days were, and how honestly the seerah keeps that humanity. Abu Musa al-Ash'ari was sent by his clan to ask the Prophet ﷺ for camels to ride to Tabuk, for no man could cross that desert on foot; the riders went two and three to a beast. He came not knowing that the Prophet ﷺ was in a state of anger that day, troubled most likely, the Sheikh suggests, by the hypocrites and their excuses, the test the story would soon

reach. So when Abu Musa made his request, the answer came sharp: wallahi, I will not give you anything to ride. He went away crushed, certain he had done something wrong, and told his clan that the Prophet ﷺ had refused them and he did not know why.

Barely any time passed before Bilal came calling him back. The Prophet ﷺ handed him six fine camels he had just purchased: take these two, and these two, and these two. Abu Musa hesitated, confused and uneasy, for the Prophet ﷺ had sworn by Allah that he would give him nothing, and here was the gift in his hands. It had to be explained to him, and the explanation is the lesson: when the Prophet ﷺ spoke, he genuinely had nothing to give, and the words came out heavier than the situation deserved; when the means arrived, he remembered Abu Musa and gave. An oath sworn in that way, the Sheikh notes, over a thing not truly intended, does not bind a person, just as Allah says that He does not take us to task for the idle, careless oaths of our tongues, but only for what our hearts have firmly resolved. And there is a tenderness in Abu Musa's unease, his reluctance to simply take the camels after a qasam had been spoken; it is the conscience of a companion who would not step lightly over an oath in the name of Allah.

So the funds were gathered, the camels found, and the largest army Arabia had ever seen began to assemble in the killing heat. But the hardship of jaysh al-usrah was never only thirst and distance and abandoned harvests. Among those who hung back, and even among some who marched, a deeper trial was waiting, the test of the hypocrites and their excuses, the men whose hearts the heat and the distance exposed. And that is where the road to Tabuk turns next.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to file Tabuk away as the campaign where nothing happened, the long hot march that ended without a battle. That would be to miss the whole point of it. There was no battle precisely because the battle was never the test. The test was whether twenty thousand men would move when moving cost them everything and explained nothing, and they passed it so completely that no enemy was even needed to prove what they were made of. The Qur'an remembers them by name, not as conquerors, but as the ones who followed him ﷺ in the hour of difficulty, and tells us that Allah turned to them in mercy.

Sit first with the strangeness of the command. No army was massing. No threat could be seen. The wisest student of the seerah, after teaching it many times, cannot find a worldly reason for the march, and concludes there was none: it was Allah's word, and Allah's word alone, that sent them into the desert in July. We are forever waiting to understand before we obey, demanding that the reason be visible to us before we will move. The men of jaysh al-usrah were asked to do the opposite, to march on the command and trust that the wisdom was real even when it was hidden, and the whole future of the ummah was built on their willingness to do it. Ask yourself how much of your own obedience waits, quietly, on first being shown the point of it.

Then sit with how they gave. Uthman emptied a caravan. Umar gave half of all he had. Abu Bakr gave everything and left his family Allah and His Messenger. And the weight of what they did is not in the size of the piles, but in the fact that this was their bread, the one paycheck of the whole year, given away into the heat with no guarantee that another would ever come. We are generous, most of us, out of our surplus, from the part we will not miss. The army of hardship was financed out of need, by men who trusted that the Hand which asked them to empty their

pockets would not leave them empty. The measure of a gift, this day teaches, is not what it adds to the pile but what it costs the one who gives it.

And sit, last, with the rain. The Prophet ﷺ held back the miracle until the camels were slaughtered and the throats were closing and a man as great as Abu Bakr had to beg him to raise his hands. He could have called the clouds on the first day. He waited, on purpose, so that we would learn the law beneath the mercy: take the means, do the hard human work to its very end, and only then rest in what Allah will send. This is the balance most of us never quite find, forever wishing for the rain without walking the dry road that comes before it. The help of Allah is real, and it is coming, but it comes to the ones who paid the price first. So take one thing from this army that won no battle and may have done the hardest thing the companions ever did. Move on Allah's word before you can see the reason for it. Give from your need and not only from your surplus. And the next time you find yourself at the edge of a dry place, with your throat closing and your strength gone, do every lawful thing in your power, and then raise your hands the way they did, knowing that the One who held the rain until His Prophet ﷺ asked for it has not forgotten you. May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, who emptied his hands for this religion and asked his companions to empty theirs, count us among those who follow him in every hour of difficulty, and grant us, after every struggle, a mercy from Himself after which there is no thirst.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 87: the Battle of Tabuk, part 1 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (9:38, 9:39, 9:41, 9:117, 9:123), verified via quran.ai. Where the

histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The Expedition of Tabuk, Part 2

The man who would not lie his way out

Tabuk was the last expedition of the Prophet ﷺ, and almost the whole of the ninth surah of the Qur'an came down because of it. There was no battle there in the end, no clash of armies, no swords drawn. The enemy never came out to meet them. And yet Dr. Yasir Qadhi spends lecture after lecture inside Tabuk, because the fighting that mattered was not on any field. It was inside the hearts of the men who had to decide whether to march at all. Today the seerah slows almost to a stop and follows just one of those men, the whole way through, because his is one of the most beloved and most painful stories in the entire life of the Prophet ﷺ, and he told it himself.

His name was Kab ibn Malik. He failed. He had every reason on earth to go and he stayed home anyway. What he did after that failure is the reason we still tell his story fourteen centuries later, and the Sheikh walks it line by line, paragraph by paragraph, because Kab narrated it in the first person, to his own son, holding nothing back. It is a story about the one mistake a good man cannot lie his way out of, and exactly what it costs to tell the truth when a lie would be so much easier.

A confession told to his own son

Kab ibn Malik was no ordinary believer. He was of the elite of the Ansar, one of the small band who pledged their lives to the

Prophet ﷺ at Aqabah, before the hijrah, before Islam had a city of its own to shelter in. He belonged to the tribe of Banu Salima, the same tribe that once asked the Prophet ﷺ for permission to move their homes closer to him in Madinah, away from the far edge of the city where they lived. He ﷺ told them to stay where they were: O Banu Salima, your footsteps to the mosque are being recorded for you. Every track you leave is written down. Some of the early scholars, the Sheikh notes, read one verse of Surah Yasin as a promise made to people exactly like them, that Allah counts not only what a soul sends ahead but the very prints it leaves behind.

Indeed, it is We who bring the dead to life and record what they have put forth and what they left behind, and all things We have enumerated in a clear register.

QUR'AN 36:12

So when Kab's story reaches us, it reaches us from a man whose feet had been on the right road his entire life, a man of Aqabah, a man who never missed a march. He lived long, into old age, and his eyes failed him at the end, and it was his son Abdullah who would take him by the hand and lead him about. And it is Abdullah who carries the story forward: I heard my father tell of his staying behind from Tabuk. The whole chain runs through a son repeating, word for word, his father's account of the worst thing his father ever did.

Sit with how rare that is, the Sheikh says, because most of us spend a lifetime hiding our failures from our children. We want our sons and daughters to see a man who never stumbled. Kab did the opposite. He sat his own son down and told him, in effect, let me tell you about the time your father got it badly wrong, because the lesson was never in the falling. The lesson is in how

a believer climbs back up. Nobody is perfect, and a father who pretends he is teaches his child nothing. A father who confesses, and then shows what repentance looks like, teaches him everything.

No excuse, and he knew it

Kab opens his account with a kind of pride, and the Sheikh is careful to call it the good kind, not the arrogance that is always forbidden, but the legitimate satisfaction of a believer taking honest stock of a life spent in service. I was never absent from any expedition the Prophet ﷺ fought, Kab says, except Tabuk. There was Badr, but no one was ever blamed for missing Badr, because Badr set out as a raid on a caravan, not as a battle anyone was obliged to join. And then he adds something striking: I would not trade my night at Aqabah for Badr itself, even though the people speak more of Badr. This is a man reciting his record. Abu Bakr and Umar, radiyallahu anhuma, would do the same from time to time, the Sheikh notes, quietly listing what they had given to the religion. It is not vanity. It is a soul preparing the case it will carry to the Day of Judgment, and the question it puts to us is uncomfortable: when did we last sit and ask what good we have actually done for the sake of Allah, rather than spend the whole accounting on the dunya?

But naming his record only makes what came next harder, not easier. Tabuk was unlike every march before it. The Prophet ﷺ, who normally concealed his destination and let the enemy guess until the last moment, this time announced it plainly and gave his reasons: the heat was punishing, the distance was the farthest the Muslims had ever attempted, the enemy was vast, and it was the season the dates were ripening and the shade had never been sweeter. Because the journey demanded so much

preparation, surprise was set aside. Everyone knew where they were going, and going was an obligation on every able-bodied man. There was no slipping under the radar. To stay behind from Tabuk without a reason was not a lapse. It was a major sin.

And Kab had nothing to hide behind. I had never been stronger or wealthier than I was right before Tabuk, he admits to his son. By Allah, I had never owned two riding camels until that expedition, and then I had two. The Sheikh dwells on the weight of that. There were exactly two excuses a man could lawfully offer: a body too weak to travel, or a purse too empty to equip oneself. The companions financed their own expeditions; there was no paid army, and a single camel, shared among two or three men, was the bare minimum for the road. Most companions owned none at all; even the Prophet ﷺ had not owned a camel until the night of the hijrah, when he bought one from Abu Bakr. And here was Kab with two of his own, and his full health besides. Two camels, the Sheikh says, was like owning two cars in a place where almost no one had even one. Kab had no excuse, and he says so himself, plainly, without flinching: I had no excuse at all.

The weapon called tomorrow

So why did he stay? Not from cowardice, and not from any decision. From the smallest, most ordinary thing in the world. Kab is painfully honest with his son: when the Prophet ﷺ set out, the fruit was ripening and the shade was sweet, and my heart leaned toward my orchard and my comfort more than toward the march. I would go out each day meaning to make my preparations, buy my supplies, settle my affairs, and I would come back having done nothing, telling myself there is no rush. There is always tomorrow.

Then the army formed up and left, thousands of them, so many that Kab says no register could have held all their names. The march of so large a body would be slow; a single rider could still have overtaken them in a day or two. So Kab told himself he would equip himself in the morning and ride out and catch them. Morning came, and he did nothing. Another day, and nothing again. How I wish I had done it, he tells his son, the regret still raw after all the years. By the third day it was hopeless. One rider cannot close a three-day gap. The chance was simply gone, and he had let it go without ever once choosing to.

The Sheikh lingers here, longer than almost anywhere, because this is the trap that catches the rest of us, not just Kab. Procrastination, he says, is among the most effective weapons the shaytan owns, and one of the early scholars described exactly how it operates: every time a door of good swings open in front of you, two other doors open beside it to compete, the door of perhaps and the door of soon. Perhaps I should do it differently, and I will get to it shortly. Open those two doors enough times and you have done nothing at all, while believing the whole while that you fully intend to. The entire Qur'an, the Sheikh reminds us, is built on verbs of motion: race, hasten, rush to your Lord, stand up and warn. Faith itself is action. Kab never resolved to disobey. He kept saying tomorrow until tomorrow ran out, and that is how most of us lose the things we mean to do, not in one defiant choice but in a hundred soft deferrals that each felt like nothing at the time.

Two garments and a man who would not gossip

Now Madinah emptied, and Kab wandered through it like a man in a ghost town. The only faces left were men known for their hypocrisy and men the war had excused, the elderly, the infirm,

the weak. It grieved him to the bone. Out at Tabuk, meanwhile, the Prophet ﷺ made camp for the better part of a month, and one day, looking around the gathering, he asked: what has Kab ibn Malik done? A man from Kab's own tribe of Banu Salima answered with a sneer, his fine clothes and his self-admiration have held him back. At once another companion rounded on the speaker: what an evil thing to say. By Allah, O Messenger of Allah, we know nothing of Kab but good. And the Prophet ﷺ said nothing, and let the matter rest.

Notice who history remembered, the Sheikh says, and notice who it forgot. The man who defended his absent brother is named in the report and honored in it forever. The man who tore Kab down is left nameless, swallowed by the very gossip he tried to spread. Do you not think the Prophet ﷺ knew both their names? Of course he did. And still the report hands one down and lets the other vanish. The Sheikh counts this as one of perhaps a dozen places across the whole seerah where evil is deliberately not named, where the companions choose to cover a sin rather than broadcast it, a discipline he says runs in the exact opposite direction to a culture that builds entire magazines and television shows on gossip. And he hangs a hadith on the moment, one he asks us to memorize: whoever defends the honor of his brother in his absence, Allah will shield his face from the Fire on the Day of Judgment. That very defense, he ﷺ said, becomes your own defense before the Fire. So the next time a man is torn apart in a gathering and you know him to be good, the Sheikh urges, speak for him. Let that word you spend on an absent brother be the word that is spent for you when you most need it.

The smile of an angry man

The Prophet ﷺ turned the army for home, and Kab's mind began racing. He searched for every excuse he could invent, and he even started gathering the counsel of the shrewdest elders of his family, assembling a story that might carry him through. Then word came that the Prophet ﷺ had reached the city, and in an instant every false excuse dissolved in Kab's hands. He knew with total clarity that no lie was going to carry him out of this, that nothing invented could ever save him. So he made his decision: he would tell the truth, only the truth, and let it land wherever it fell.

When the Prophet ﷺ arrived he first prayed two units of prayer in the mosque, a sunnah of the returning traveler that the Sheikh notes we have very nearly forgotten, and then he sat to receive the people. The stragglers came the next day in a long line, more than eighty of them, and one after another they swore their false oaths and begged forgiveness. The Prophet ﷺ accepted each excuse on its surface and left their secrets to Allah. Then Kab's turn came. And here Kab gives us a detail the Sheikh calls one of the most beautiful windows into the heart of the Prophet ﷺ in the whole seerah. He came to me, Kab says, and he smiled at me, the smile of an angry man. When we are truly angry, the Sheikh observes, we will not give a person even the smallest smile; we set our lips straight and let them feel it. But the Prophet ﷺ, even displeased, could not bring himself to scowl in a brother's face. And yet it was not the warm smile, and Kab read it instantly, because you cannot fully hide your heart even behind a smile. This was disappointment, and the disappointment was itself a kind of honor, because it meant the Prophet ﷺ held Kab to a higher standard than the men who had filed past before him. The hypocrites were expected to fail. Kab was not.

Come here, the Prophet ﷺ said. What kept you back? Did you not buy a mount? And here, even now, the Sheikh marvels that the Prophet ﷺ knew: he had been watching this companion who was not even of the inner circle, and he knew Kab had a second camel. Kab answered with everything he had. O Messenger of Allah, if I were sitting before any other man on earth, I have been given a quick and persuasive tongue, and I could talk my way clear of his anger. But by Allah, if I tell you a lie today to win your pleasure, I know Allah will soon make you angry with me by exposing it. And if I tell you the truth, and you are displeased with me today, I can still hope for a good outcome from Allah. By Allah, I have no excuse. I have never been stronger or more able than the day I stayed behind. And the Prophet ﷺ said: as for this one, he has told the truth. Get up, and wait until Allah decides your case.

The Sheikh stops the whole narrative here to draw out the theology buried inside Kab's words, because it is, he says, one of the most important points in the entire story. Kab understood that it was Allah's pleasure he ultimately needed, not the Prophet's ﷺ; that even a lie that won the Prophet ﷺ over would not save him if Allah was not pleased, and that Allah could forgive him even while the Prophet ﷺ remained displeased. That is exactly backward from how some later groups came to speak, attributing to the Prophet ﷺ command over Paradise and Hell. The Prophet ﷺ is the greatest of all creation, the most merciful and the most beloved, but he is not divine, and he is not the one who decrees a soul to the Garden or the Fire. That belongs to Allah alone. Kab, in the rawest moment of his life, had his theology perfectly in place.

Fifty nights as a stranger in his own city

As Kab walked away, his own tribesmen swarmed around him and followed him all the way home. By Allah, they said, we never knew you to commit a sin before this. Why could you not have done what the others did, made some excuse, and let the Prophet ﷺ ask forgiveness for you? They pressed him so hard, and the way out looked so easy, that Kab nearly turned back to retract his confession and lie. Then he stopped and asked the question that saved him: did anyone else tell the truth as I did? They said yes, two men said exactly what you said, and they were answered as you were answered. Who are they, he asked. They named two men, the Sheikh notes, who had both fought at Badr, both righteous, both men in whom there was blessing. And the moment Kab heard their names, his choice was made: if these two are with the truth, then I am with them. Not with the eighty and their excuses. With the two.

The Sheikh ties this directly to the command Allah would send down, and to a clean, hard lesson inside it.

O you who have believed, fear Allāh and be with those who are true.

QUR'AN 9:119

Truth is not measured by the number of people standing on its side, he says. Eighty smooth tongues weighed less, in the sight of Allah, than two honest ones. Kab chose his company by their character and not by their count, and that is the choice the verse asks of every believer: not be with the many, but be with the truthful.

Then the order came. The Prophet ﷺ forbade the Muslims to speak a single word to the three of them, and to them alone. Notice, the Sheikh says, that the hypocrites who lied walked

away untouched in this world; not one of them was punished here. The punishment fell on the three believers who had told the truth. And this is the wisdom of it, he explains, a wisdom that runs through every hardship a believer ever meets: a believer's suffering in this world erases what he would otherwise owe in the next, while the hypocrite is left alone now to face the full reckoning later. So Madinah closed its mouth. No police enforced the order, no informers, no watchers, nothing at all but iman, and an entire city of thousands obeyed as one, simply because the Prophet ﷺ had said so. That kind of obedience, the Sheikh observes, can only grow from faith. And the earth, in Kab's own words, grew tight around him for all its vastness. He had become a stranger in his own land.

His two companions shut themselves inside their homes and wept. But Kab was the youngest of the three and the most spirited, so he forced himself out among the people. He prayed in the mosque, he walked the markets aching for a single soul to return his greeting, and he would come before the Prophet ﷺ and give his salam, then watch his lips, desperate to see them move in reply. They never moved. When Kab prayed nearby he would steal a glance and find the Prophet ﷺ watching him, and the moment Kab looked, the Prophet ﷺ would look away, so that Kab came to know, by that stolen glance, that there was mercy waiting somewhere behind the silence. At last, unable to bear it, Kab climbed the garden wall of his dearest friend and cousin Abu Qatada, the way he always had, and gave his salam. Abu Qatada did not answer. I ask you by Allah, Kab pleaded, do you not know that I love Allah and His Messenger? Abu Qatada was silent. He asked again, and a third time, begging now, weeping, and his cousin answered only into the air: Allah and His Messenger know best. Kab broke down and wept, and climbed back over the wall.

The Sheikh draws a line from this to our own age. The world now recognizes total isolation as a form of torture; those who have endured solitary confinement sometimes say they would take physical pain over being unseen, unspoken to, treated as though they do not exist. Kab's was a gentler version, he walked free and was never caged, but it was a punishment all the same, and it was tearing him apart. And the whole of it, the Sheikh insists, was mercy in disguise. Allah was not casting these three away. He was using fifty nights of silence to lift them higher than they had ever stood.

The letter from a king, and a wife sent away

Then the world came testing, the way it always does at the lowest moment. A merchant from the north was moving through the market of Madinah calling out, who can show me to Kab ibn Malik, and the people pointed Kab out to him. He came and handed Kab a letter. It was from the king of Ghassan, the very people Tabuk had marched against. Their spies in Madinah, perhaps among the hypocrites, had reported that one of the elite of the Ansar had been cast out and shunned, and the king moved at once. We have heard, the letter ran, that your companion has treated you coldly, and Allah has not made you to live in a place where you are humiliated and your worth is wasted. Come to us, and we will console you and honor you. A door had swung open: leave the people who will not so much as look at you, and be a prince among their enemies.

Why would a king reach for a single shunned man, the Sheikh asks, and the answer is layered. To crack the unity of the Muslims. To wound the Prophet ﷺ and the companions by taking one of their own. To win a trophy defector paraded before the world, the way nations have always prized the one who crosses

over. And to plant a source inside the city. The offer was a weapon, and it arrived aimed at Kab in his weakest hour.

Kab read it, and said one thing to himself: this too is part of the test. And he carried it straight to his oven and burned it. The Sheikh draws out why this is so much greater than it first looks. It is one thing to pass a test through iman; it is another thing entirely to recognize, in the moment, that you are even being tested, and that recognition takes knowledge. Iman lets you hold the line. Knowledge lets you see where the line is, and why it has been drawn, and what the enemy is really after. Kab understood exactly what Ghassan wanted from him, and rather than hold the letter and risk it whispering to him again, he burned it on the spot, so there could be no slow reconsidering in a dark hour. The best of all states, the Sheikh says, is iman joined to knowledge: faith to carry you through the trial, and knowledge to show you the trial for what it is.

On the fiftieth morning, the final blow landed. A messenger came with the Prophet's ﷺ command that Kab separate from his wife. Kab did not ask why, or for how long. He asked only one thing: do I divorce her, or what? Just keep apart from her, he was told, and do not approach her. So he sent her to her family. Look at the wonder of that, the Sheikh says: fifty nights of being slowly unmade, and now a fresh and heavier test arrives without warning, and Kab's only instinct is to leap to obey, to ask not why but how. That is iman. Kab's wife went to the Prophet ﷺ herself and asked leave to stay and care for him, for he is an old man, she said, with no servant; would you mind if I serve him? The Prophet ﷺ permitted her to feed him, but said there must be nothing between them. And she answered, by Allah, he has no desire for anything; he has done nothing but weep from the day this began until now. Some of Kab's family urged him to seek the

same permission for himself. Kab refused. I am the youngest of the three, he said. What would I say? What excuse could I make? And so he held the line alone, the hardest way, asking for nothing.

And [He also forgave] the three who were left alone [i.e., boycotted, regretting their error] to the point that the earth closed in on them in spite of its vastness and their souls confined [i.e., anguished] them and they were certain that there is no refuge from Allāh except in Him. Then He turned to them so they could repent. Indeed, Allāh is the Accepting of Repentance, the Merciful.

QUR'AN 9:118

Here the Sheikh, having reached the end of the lecture, stops the story on its cliff edge, and so the seerah stops with him. Ten more nights would pass after the fiftieth. On the morning of the sixtieth day, after two full months, Allah would turn to the three who were left behind and accept their repentance. The verse above records that ending. But the lifting of the punishment is for the next day to tell. Tonight Kab is still weeping against his wall, certain there is no refuge from Allah except in Allah Himself, the earth closed tight around him for all its width. The punishment was never the point. The mercy waiting on the far side of it was, and tomorrow you will hear it arrive.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read Kab's story as a sad interlude and move on. That would be to miss everything it puts to us. Strip it down and it becomes a mirror, and almost no one walks away from it unmarked.

He never decided to disobey. That is the first thing, and the most frightening, because it means the ruin came without a villain. Kab did not choose to miss Tabuk; he chose, over and over, to wait until tomorrow, and tomorrow quietly ate the chance. The Sheikh calls procrastination the favorite weapon of the shaytan, the door of perhaps and the door of soon swinging open beside every good deed until you have done nothing while fully meaning to do everything. Look honestly at your own delayed prayers, your postponed repentance, the good you keep promising yourself you will get to. When the good is in your hands, move, because the cost of waiting is rarely a decision you will remember making, only a chance you will spend the rest of your life wishing back.

He told the truth when the lie was easy, and he had the rarest reason to lie. He could speak; he had the gift of a quick tongue and eighty men modeling the smooth way out, and his own tribe pushing him toward it. And still he refused, because he understood that a lie which pleases today buys Allah's anger tomorrow, while the truth, however much it costs now, leaves the door of forgiveness open. That is the whole arithmetic of honesty, and we get it backward constantly, trading a hard truth for a soft lie and calling it wisdom. And he chose his company by character, not by number: be with those who are true, the verse says, not be with the many. Two honest men of Badr outweighed eighty smooth excuses, and Kab knew which side of that scale he meant to stand on.

And when the enemy's letter came at his lowest hour, he did not merely resist it; he recognized it. This too is a test, he said, and burned it before it could whisper twice. The Sheikh's distinction is one to carry for life: iman holds the line, but knowledge shows you where the line is and why it was drawn, so that the door which opens at your weakest moment does not fool you into

walking through it. Pair the two, and you will not be sold an escape that is really a snare.

So take Kab down into your ordinary days, tonight, before the rest of his story even arrives. Do the good in front of you now, before tomorrow swallows it. Tell the truth when the lie would be easier and cheaper and kinder to your pride. Keep the company of the honest few rather than the comfortable many. And when the earth grows tight around you for all its vastness, when the walls of some hardship close in and you cannot see the way out, hold to the certainty that held Kab against his wall through fifty silent nights: that there is no refuge from Allah except in Him. O Allah, do not let us be people who wait for tomorrow when the good is in our hands today. Make our tongues truthful when the lie is easy, keep us among the truthful, and when we are confined and shunned and afraid, turn to us as You turned to the three who were left behind, and gather us with them, and with Your beloved Prophet ﷺ, in the mercy that was always waiting on the far side of the trial. Ameen.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 88: the expedition to Tabuk, part 2 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (36:12, 9:119, 9:118), verified via quran.ai. The narration is the Sheikh's; the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

The story of Ka'b ibn Malik

The dawn that broke after fifty nights

Yesterday we left Ka'b ibn Malik at the very bottom of it. He had told the truth when a lie would have cost him nothing. He had stood before the Prophet ﷺ and said plainly that he had no excuse for staying back from Tabuk except his own delay, that he had not been sick, had not been poor, had simply kept saying tomorrow until the army was gone. The Prophet ﷺ had ordered him boycotted, and Ka'b had watched an entire city look through him as though he were not there. Forty nights of that, and then the order came that even his wife should leave him. The king of Ghassan sent a letter offering him a home and a place of honor among a people who would not shun him, and Ka'b read it, recognized it for the trial it was, and fed it to the fire. By the end he could no longer bear the walk to the masjid, and a man who had given his Bay'ah at Aqaba was reduced to praying Fajr alone on his own rooftop.

This is where the chapter resumes, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi tells us this is one of his favorite stories in the whole seerah, and that it deserves to be one of ours. The reason is in where it ends. Ka'b is not finally set free by a man telling him he is forgiven. He is set free by Allah Himself, who announces the acceptance of his repentance from above the seven heavens, in words of the Qur'an that are still recited to this day. A believer who loved Allah and His Messenger ﷺ committed a real sin, endured a punishment that broke him, and was forgiven completely, by

name, in a Book that will be read until the end of time. That is why the story is told. Today is the dawn of it.

Fifty nights, and a voice from the mountain

Ka'b would describe those days, decades later, not by reciting a verse but by pointing at it, and the Sheikh finds that detail beautiful: a man so soaked in the words Allah revealed about him that he narrates his own life through the Qur'an without quoting it. He would say only that he was in the state Allah described, and his listeners knew exactly what he meant. Allah had said of the three of them that the wide earth, for all its vastness, had closed in upon them until there was nowhere left to stand, and their own selves had become a burden too heavy to carry, and they had understood the one thing the whole ordeal was built to teach them.

And [He also forgave] the three who were left alone to the point that the earth closed in on them in spite of its vastness and their souls confined them and they were certain that there is no refuge from Allah except in Him. Then He turned to them so they could repent. Indeed, Allah is the Accepting of Repentance, the Merciful.

QUR'AN 9:118

There is no refuge from Allah except in Allah. You cannot save yourself from Him by running anywhere except toward Him. That, Sheikh Yasir says, was the entire purpose of the fifty nights: to bring three honest men to the place where the world had shrunk to a single door, and that door was the One who had closed all the others.

Ka'b had tried, in the beginning, to keep walking among the people, going to the masjid, moving through the marketplace

while no one returned his greeting. But after a while even that became unbearable, and he withdrew into his house and stopped going out at all, until the loneliness was such that he prayed even Fajr by himself on his roof. And it was there, one morning, sitting in exactly the grief the verse describes, worried about himself and about everything, that he heard a man who had climbed to the top of Jabal Sal'. This is the mountain you see as you leave the Prophet's masjid, and it had taken the man some twenty minutes to climb it after the announcement at Fajr. From the summit, across the whole distance, the man cried out at the very top of his voice: Ya Ka'b ibn Malik, abshir. Be glad. The sentence stopped there. Glad of what? There was no need to finish it, because in all the world there was only one thing it could mean. Ka'b fell straight into prostration where he sat. He knew. The relief of Allah had come.

The city becomes a festival

The Prophet ﷺ had announced after Fajr that Allah had accepted the repentance of the three, and Madinah simply erupted. People scattered in every direction to be the first to carry the news. Some ran to the other two men. Some climbed the mountain to shout it down to Ka'b. And a horseman came galloping the whole way from the masjid to Ka'b's house, with no reward waiting for him, no tie of tribe between them, nothing to gain at all except the joy of being the one to say it to his face. The Sheikh dwells on this. Look, he says, at the genuine love that ran through that generation: a man would gallop across the city on his own horse for nothing, simply because his brother had been saved, and to him that was reason enough.

Ka'b, overflowing, wanted to give the rider something, and discovered he had nothing left in the house worth giving. Across

those fifty nights he had quietly given his money away in charity until the coins were gone; he still had his land and his garden, but of cash and clothing the house was empty. All he owned now was the garment on his back. So he took off his outer cloak and gifted it to the man, and then had to knock on a neighbor's door to borrow something to wear to the masjid. The Sheikh lingers here on the poverty of the Companions, and turns it back on us. Gift one of us a used shirt today and we would be insulted, he says, while to the Companions a worn garment was a treasure, because most of them owned only one, and the Prophet ﷺ himself owned two. Our own closets are bursting, and we should be honest about what that has done to our gratitude.

Then Ka'b walked, in his borrowed cloak, into a city that had turned his private deliverance into its own celebration. The people received him in waves, embracing him, congratulating him on Allah accepting his repentance, calling out glad tidings to him at every turn. This was not Ka'b's joy alone; it was an Eid for the whole community. And Sheikh Yasir asks the question that makes it land: what did the rest of the believers have to do with the forgiveness of three men? Why should the whole city rejoice over a matter so private? The answer is the entire point. When the bond of brotherhood is that strong, your brother's rescue is felt as your own rescue. The community grieved as one body while the three were cut off, and now it rejoiced as one body that they had been brought back.

Talha stood up

Ka'b reached the masjid and found the Prophet ﷺ seated with the people gathered around him. And out of all the muhajirun in that gathering, one man rose to his feet, hurried over, took Ka'b's hand, and congratulated him: Talha ibn Ubaydillah, radiyallahu

anhu, the famous companion of Makkah. No one else among the muhajirun stood. It was not that the rest had done anything wrong, the Sheikh is careful to note. They were happy for him; they simply stayed seated. But Talha stood.

Ka'b is narrating this as a blind old man, perhaps seventy-five years of age, looking back across forty years, and he says he never forgot that gesture as long as he lived. One small act of kindness, offered at the moment a person has been hurt and abandoned, can change a heart for the rest of its life. Just a handshake. Just rising to your feet. The Sheikh draws it straight out and presses on it, because it is so easy and so cheap and so rarely done: at times of distress you discover who your friends truly are, and the one who comes with a word of comfort when the whole world has turned away is the one you remember to your grave. It costs almost nothing to be that person. It is never, ever forgotten.

Is this from you, or from Allah?

Ka'b greeted the Prophet ﷺ, and the face of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ shone with joy until it was like a piece of the full moon. That description recurs across many narrations, the Sheikh notes, in the hadith of Ka'b and in others: when the Prophet ﷺ was happy, his face beamed like the moon. And he said to Ka'b: be glad with the best day you have seen since the day your mother gave birth to you. The best day of your whole life. And why? Because Allah had announced his forgiveness, and what more could a servant want than that.

Then Ka'b asked something that tells you everything about the faith of that generation. O Messenger of Allah, he said, is this from you, or from Allah? And the Prophet ﷺ answered: no, it is from Allah. Sheikh Yasir holds this exchange up as the very heart

of tawhid. Ka'b loved the Prophet ﷺ more than he loved his own self, and yet he drew a clear, bright line between the two: the pleasure of the Messenger ﷺ is a tremendous thing, an immense thing, but it is not Heaven and Hell. The One who owns forgiveness, who alone decides Paradise and the Fire, is Allah. A word of pardon from the Prophet ﷺ would have been good; but Ka'b was waiting for the word that decides eternity, and that word could come from only one place. This, the Sheikh says, is exactly what the Companions understood by living alongside the Prophet ﷺ, and it is exactly what is lost when later generations place him on a pedestal he himself never claimed. They did not go to him for the things that belong to Allah, because they knew him as a man, the greatest of men, and a Messenger, but a man.

It was the same conviction Ka'b had voiced when he first confessed. He had told the Prophet ﷺ that if he had wished, he could have talked his way into pleasing him with a smooth excuse, but he could never have deceived Allah, and Allah would have exposed him in the end; whereas if he angered the Prophet ﷺ by being honest, he could still hope that Allah would forgive him. So he had told the truth and waited. Now the waiting was over, and the verdict had come, not from the man in front of him, but from above the seven heavens.

Keep some of your wealth

Overflowing with gratitude, Ka'b made an offer. O Messenger of Allah, he said, because Allah has accepted my repentance, I will give away everything I own in the path of Allah. All of it. He would keep nothing for himself. And here the wisdom of the Prophet ﷺ pulled him gently back from the high of the moment: keep some of your wealth for yourself, that is better for you. So Ka'b said he would hold on to his share from Khaybar, which was a good and

steady source of income, and give the rest away. Khaybar had been the largest fortune the Companions gained, and the Ansar, who had received nothing of the spoils of Hunayn, had a real portion of it.

The Sheikh draws two threads out of this small exchange. The first is that we should not act on raw emotion or a spiritual high. Ka'b at his peak wanted to strip himself completely bare, and the Prophet ﷺ steadied him, told him to think, told him to keep enough for himself and his family, because it is not from this religion to give your whole estate to charity and leave your wife and children in poverty. And if someone objects that Abu Bakr, radiyallahu anhu, once gave away literally everything he owned, the answer is easy: that is precisely why he was Abu Bakr. Not even Umar reached that station. We should be honest about our own level and not mistake a moment of feeling for the rank of a Siddiq. The second thread is gentler. When something good happens, thank Allah with charity. A raise, a graduation, the birth of a child: meet your blessings by giving. Ka'b already knew this in his bones, which is exactly why his first instinct upon being forgiven was to give everything away. The Prophet ﷺ did not correct the instinct. He only adjusted the amount.

I will never tell a lie again

Then Ka'b made the vow that became his legacy. O Messenger of Allah, he said, Allah saved me only because I told the truth. So part of my repentance is that I will never tell a lie as long as I live. He had stood at the very edge of ruin and watched the hypocrites lie their way to a hollow, momentary safety, and he had chosen honesty when it cost him everything he had; and honesty was precisely the thing that rescued him. So he bound himself to it for the rest of his days.

He told his son, decades later, that he did not know of any Muslim whom Allah had tested in truthfulness more severely than him from that day onward. Chance after chance came to him where a lie would have been easier, and each time he remembered his promise and held to it, and he never once told a lie intentionally to the day he was speaking those words. And then, even there, at the very end of a long life, his humility shows through. He said intentionally, the Sheikh points out, because he could not be certain he had never said something he believed to be true that later turned out to be false. An old man, nearly blind, with perhaps a year of life left in him, was still guarding his tongue, still refusing to overstate even his own faithfulness, still asking Allah to protect him for whatever days remained. That caution, the Sheikh says, is itself the mark of sincere repentance: a heart that, forty years after the slip and certain of its forgiveness, still will not take its own salvation for granted.

Sheikh Yasir gathers the whole lesson into a single hadith. The Prophet ﷺ said to hold fast to truthfulness, for truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to Paradise, and a man keeps telling the truth and striving to tell the truth until he is written with Allah as a Siddiq, a truthful one. And he warned against lying, for lying leads to wickedness, and wickedness leads to the Fire, and a man keeps lying until he is written with Allah as a liar. The Prophet ﷺ tied honesty directly, in a single chain, to Jannah. Ka'b had simply lived the hadith out across forty years of his life.

The verse came down

What Ka'b had not yet heard, in the moment he asked is this from you or from Allah, were the actual words. He would hear them only afterward, when Allah revealed his forgiveness in the Qur'an

itself. Allah turned in mercy to the Prophet ﷺ and to the muhajirun and the ansar who had followed him out into the crushing heat and hardship of Tabuk, when the hearts of a group of them had nearly faltered.

Allah has already forgiven the Prophet and the Muhajireen and the Ansar who followed him in the hour of difficulty after the hearts of a party of them had almost inclined [to doubt], and then He forgave them. Indeed, He was to them Kind and Merciful.

QUR'AN 9:117

And then, in the very next verse, the words about the three who were left, the verse Ka'b would spend his life pointing to. Ka'b said that Allah had never granted him a blessing greater than Islam itself, except this one: that on the day he could have lied, he did not. Because had he lied, he would have been destroyed alongside the hypocrites, whom Allah described in the harshest terms He ever used for any people. Notice, the Sheikh says, how Ka'b attributes even his own honesty back to Allah: not "I was strong enough to tell the truth," but "Allah protected me from telling a lie." The believer traces all good back to its source; it is the disbeliever who credits himself.

To show the contrast, Ka'b then recited the verses about those very hypocrites, the ones who would meet the returning army with false oaths so that the believers would simply turn away and leave them in peace.

They will swear by Allah to you when you return to them that you would leave them alone. So leave them alone; indeed they are evil; and their refuge is Hell as recompense for what they had been earning. They swear to you so that you might be satisfied with them. But if you should be

satisfied with them, indeed, Allah is not satisfied with a defiantly disobedient people.

QUR'AN 9:95-96

The Sheikh reads Ka'b's choice of these verses as deliberate. The liars and the truth-teller stand side by side in a single surah, and they end in two completely opposite places: the ones who swore false oaths consigned to the Fire, and the one who told the costly truth named among the forgiven. Allah even commanded that the Prophet ﷺ never again seek forgiveness for those hypocrites; their case was closed against them. Ka'b's case was opened in mercy.

And here, on one word of his own verse, the Sheikh says, Ka'b became a teacher of tafsir. Most renderings translate *alladhina khullifu* as the three who were left behind, as though it merely meant they had lagged behind the marching army. Ka'b corrected this. *Khullifu*, he taught, does not mean we remained behind; it means our verdict was held back, suspended, left hanging. The hypocrites were not in any state of suspension, because the Prophet ﷺ had outwardly accepted their oaths and consigned their hearts to Allah, so their affair was closed. But the three honest men were deliberately placed in limbo, their judgment deferred, no ruling made in their case at all, until Allah Himself ruled on them. That, Ka'b explained, is what the word carries: not the three who lagged behind the expedition, but the three whose case was left open and unresolved until Heaven decided it.

What the story leaves in your hands

Imam Bukhari placed this hadith under the Battle of Tabuk, which makes perfect sense, for that is where it happened. Imam Muslim placed it under the chapter of repentance and its blessings,

which makes just as much sense, because that, in the end, is what the story actually is. Ka'b committed a real sin, the Sheikh is unflinching about this: disobeying a direct command of the Prophet ﷺ at a time when going out was an obligation upon him, and the fifty-night boycott was a heavy and genuine punishment, not a trivial thing. And still, after all of it, he was forgiven, completely, by name, in a Book recited until the Day of Judgment. A story like that, the Sheikh says, is precisely the kind we are permitted and encouraged to tell, the story of the sinner who repented, because it gives the rest of us hope and something to hold on to.

So before the time ran out, Sheikh Yasir drew the threads together, and they are threads to carry down into ordinary days. That victory comes at the darkest hour: relief arrived for Ka'b only when the wide earth had closed upon him and he could not bear another night, so the believer stays patient and trusts that the way out is around the corner precisely when there seems to be no way out at all. That genuine repentance keeps its ache: Ka'b, forty years on and certain of his forgiveness, still wished he had simply gone with the army, and that lingering regret is not weakness of faith but the very sign that the tawba was real. That procrastination is the quiet danger running underneath the whole story: Ka'b kept saying tomorrow, tomorrow, until the army was gone, so every time you feel the pull to delay a good deed, remember Ka'b and do it now. And that when good news comes, the prostration of gratitude, sajdat ash-shukr, is the right response, the way Ka'b fell into sajda the very instant the call reached him from the mountain, without wudu, without delay, simply turning to face his Lord in thanks. The Prophet ﷺ never commanded it in so many words, but the Companions did it, and

earlier prophets did it, and Ka'b did it on his rooftop, and so it is a sunnah we should revive.

Hold on, then, to the shape of this story, because you will need it. A man who loved Allah and His Messenger ﷺ still failed, still slipped, still spent fifty nights as a stranger in his own city with the walls of the earth pressing in on him. And the road back was not a clever excuse or a powerful intercessor or a letter from a king; it was the plain truth, spoken when a lie would have been so much easier, and a heart that ran toward Allah when there was nowhere else left to run. That door is never locked. So if today the earth feels narrow around you, take the lesson Ka'b spent his whole life teaching: there is no refuge from Allah except in Allah. Tell Him the truth. Wait at His door. The relief comes at the hour you are certain you cannot survive another night of it. O Allah, You are the Accepting of Repentance, the Merciful, who forgave the three when the wide earth had closed upon them; turn to us as You turned to them, save us by our honesty as You saved Ka'b, and write us among the truthful who are gathered with Your Messenger ﷺ. Ameen.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 89: the story of Ka'b ibn Malik (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (9:117, 9:118, 9:95-96), verified via quran.ai.

The Expedition of Tabuk, Part 3

Who gave everything, and who gave nothing

There is no battle at Tabuk. Dr. Yasir Qadhi keeps returning to this, almost as a refrain, because it is the strangest thing about the whole campaign: the seerah has spent week after week here and is not yet half finished, and in all of it not two armies ever meet. The Romans do not come. No swords are crossed. And yet these are some of the richest weeks of the entire story, because Tabuk was never really an expedition against Rome. It was a sieve. The call goes out for the hardest, hottest, longest march of the Prophet's ﷺ life, the army they would name Jaysh al-Usra, the army of difficulty, and the moment that call goes out it begins to sort the people of Madinah into what they actually are. Not by tribe, not by wealth, but by what the heart does when it is asked to give.

So the events of these days do not arrive in a tidy line. The Sheikh tells them the way the histories preserve them, as a cluster of smaller incidents, each one a small mirror held up to a particular kind of soul. Watch who empties his house into the cause and who empties his imagination of excuses. Watch a man carry a heap of gold across the city on his shoulder, and another invent a fear so flimsy it embarrasses the page. Watch grown believers weep because they were too poor to be allowed to come. The same city, the same call, and a distance between the two responses that the Sheikh measures with a phrase he uses more than once: as wide as the heavens and the earth.

The day Umar tried to beat Abu Bakr

The Prophet ﷺ stood and asked the people for charity, and he kept asking, and something rose in Umar ibn al-Khattab, radiyallahu anhu, that he had never quite managed to feel before. Today, he thought, is the day I beat Abu Bakr. He went home and gathered half of everything he owned and brought it back.

Sit with how much that is. There were no salaries then. The whole architecture of a monthly paycheck, of money arriving on a known day and arriving again two weeks later, is a modern thing that has quietly reshaped how we think about giving. For the companions, wealth came in unpredictable bursts: a dinar today, then nothing for weeks, then perhaps a hundred from a single transaction and then silence again for years. To hand over half, in a world like that, was to hand over half of an unknown and unrepeatable future. The Prophet ﷺ saw the bag, knew Umar was not a rich man, and asked him gently what he had left for his family. The same amount again, Umar answered. Half for them, half for Allah. There is a tenderness in the question itself, the Sheikh notes: we are not asked to give beyond our means, and the family has the first claim.

Then Abu Bakr, radiyallahu anhu, came, carrying a bag of his own, and he was no richer than Umar. The Prophet ﷺ asked him the same question. What did you leave your family? And Abu Bakr said the line that ended the contest before it had truly begun. I have left them Allah and His Messenger. The bag held everything. And Umar said to himself, by Allah, I will never beat you at anything.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi stops here on something easy to rush past, because it is, by his telling, a mentality the Muslims have very largely lost. The companions monitored one another. Not out of

envy, but as runners in a race, each straining to see how much the next man prayed and fasted and gave, so as not to be left behind on the way to Allah. The Ansar would complain, half in awe, that the wealthier emigrants prayed as they prayed and fasted as they fasted but gave in charity what the Ansar had nothing to match. That is competition, but a competition turned entirely upward. We do this instinctively for the dunya, the Sheikh says: we bend over backward to win the promotion, to be noticed, to be top in our small niche, and we make sure everyone sees us doing it. Allah aims that very same hunger at something infinitely better. The Qur'an does not merely permit it; it commands it, using the exact verb for a footrace:

Race [i.e., compete] toward forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden whose width is like the width of the heavens and earth, prepared for those who believed in Allah and His messengers. That is the bounty of Allah which He gives to whom He wills, and Allah is the possessor of great bounty.

QUR'AN 57:21

And here is the detail the Sheikh sharpens to a point. That racing verb, the Qur'an reserves for the next world. It is never aimed at this one. When the subject is the dunya, the language goes soft and slow: when the Friday prayer is finished, it says, disperse and seek of the bounty of Allah, walk away gently. Run to Jannah; walk to the dunya. Abu Bakr's measure, the Sheikh is careful to add, is his alone. It is an example our religion holds up, not a rule the rest of us are bound to meet. Even Umar did not reach it, and the general command remains to give in balance, neither extravagant nor stingy. But the racing itself, the upward straining, the watching of one another not to envy but to be

spurred, that is the lesson, and it is one we should grieve having mislaid.

A pile of gold on his shoulder

Uthman ibn Affan, radiyallahu anhu, had come to Madinah years before with nothing but the clothes on his back, and through patient buying and selling had built himself into one of the richest men in the city. The call for Tabuk happened to fall just as a great caravan of his returned from Syria, the whole of it financed by him. He did not hesitate. He sold the entire thing on the spot, in the marketplace, the moment it arrived, camels and saddles and all the goods upon them, lock, stock, and barrel, to the buyers gathered there, and walked away with around a thousand gold coins. A fortune in any age, and an almost unimaginable one in his. He had no bag for it. So he gathered the coins into the fold of his thawb, the heavy real wool of it bearing the weight where cotton would have torn, hoisted that load onto his shoulder, and carried it across Madinah, the one city on the face of the earth where a man could walk with a fortune on his back and fear no one. No guard. No escort. This was the Madinah of the Prophet ﷺ.

He poured it out in front of the Prophet ﷺ, a literal heap of gold on the ground, and the Prophet ﷺ began turning the coins over with his hand, and said the words the companions would still be quoting some thirty years later: nothing Uthman does after today will harm him. By another sound account it was a pledge made aloud, before the caravan had even come home. As the Prophet ﷺ kept calling, who will give, who will give, Uthman stood and said he would give a hundred camels with all their loads, and the Prophet ﷺ kept calling, and he raised it to two hundred, and the Prophet ﷺ kept calling, until he said three hundred camels with

everything on them, the very number the returning caravan would turn out to hold, as though he had given it away before it arrived. And the Prophet ﷺ came down from where he stood and said: Uthman has no sin after what he has done today. Decades later, when the rebels surrounded his house demanding answers for trivial things, it was to this day that the aged Uthman pointed, and the companions present confirmed it: the Prophet ﷺ had indeed said it.

He was not alone in his largesse. Abdur-Rahman ibn Awf, who had likewise arrived in Madinah with empty hands and built a fortune from nothing, brought a great quantity of grain. And the Sheikh pauses here to press a point our own times badly need to hear. There is nothing wrong in Islam with wealth. Nothing at all. Not if you are the kind of person who pours it out like this. Money in the hand of a generous believer is a blessing and an instrument, and a man like Abdur-Rahman is precisely the role model for it. The danger was never the gold. The danger is the heart that closes around it and will not let it go.

Two handfuls of dates

On the other side of the very same fundraiser stood the hypocrites, who gave nothing, and could not bear that anyone else gave anything. They were not merely stingy; they worked to discourage others from giving, and they mocked whatever was given. If a man gave a great deal, they sneered that he was showing off. If a man gave a little, they scoffed at how useless so small a gift could be. Sometimes openly, in front of the crowd, and sometimes with a nudge and a wink passed between them across the gathering. It is, the Sheikh observes drily, the same sickness still alive among us, the watching of other people's charity in order to belittle it.

There was a man of the Ansar who had nothing to give. So he spent an entire night at the cheapest, most thankless labor there is, hauling water up from a well by hand to sell it, and by morning he had earned two small handfuls of dates for the whole night's work. He brought one handful to the Prophet ﷺ. Here, he said, is half of everything my night was worth; the other half is for my family. And a hypocrite stood up, in front of the whole crowd, and sneered: does Allah really have any need of these few dates? And a second one scoffed that the poor man needed the dates far more than Allah did, so why was he making a spectacle of his poverty, why did he not give the charity to himself. You can feel, the Sheikh says, exactly how that landed on a man who had just poured out his entire night.

It was over this precise insult that Allah sent down the verse the hypocrites should have feared above all others. They imagined they were the ones mocking; Allah turned the mockery back upon them and promised them a punishment to match:

Those who criticize the contributors among the believers concerning [their] charities and [criticize] the ones who find nothing [to spend] except their effort, so they ridicule them - Allah will ridicule them, and they will have a painful punishment.

QUR'AN 9:79

The handful of dates was never the point. The whole of it was the effort behind the handful, a night of a poor man's sweat, and Allah saw that effort, and weighed it, and defended it by name in a Book that would be recited until the end of time. There was another man too, whose name the histories barely keep, who came and said: Messenger of Allah, I have no money to give you, but I give you my honor, my dignity, that I will defend you against

any who slander you. And the Prophet ﷺ said: I have accepted your charity. Even that which cost no coin at all, offered sincerely, was received and recorded.

Permit me, and do not tempt me

If they would not give their money, they would not give their bodies either, and so the excuses came, in a steady and inventive stream, some offered before the march and some saved up for the return. The Sheikh lingers on the most absurd of them. The Prophet ﷺ turned to al-Jadd ibn Qays, one of the chiefs of the hypocrites, and invited him plainly and warmly: O Jadd, will you not come out with us to fight the Romans? And al-Jadd asked to be excused, and gave this as his reason: by Allah, my own people know that I have a weakness for women, and I fear that if I lay eyes on the women of the Romans I will lose my head and not be able to control myself, so let me stay behind. A man inventing a fear of foreign women in order to dodge a sacred struggle. The Prophet ﷺ simply turned away from him and let him sit.

And Allah answered that exact excuse, almost word for word:

And among them is he who says, "Permit me [to remain at home] and do not put me to trial." Unquestionably, into trial they have fallen. And indeed, Hell will encompass the disbelievers.

QUR'AN 9:49

It is straight into the trial that they have already fallen, head first, by the very lie they told to escape one. The man who begged not to be tempted had walked himself into the deepest temptation there is, the abandoning of the Messenger ﷺ at his hour of need. And Surah at-Tawbah, densely woven with the hypocrites' own words and moods, draws the whole picture of them:

Those who remained behind rejoiced in their staying [at home] after [the departure of] the Messenger of Allah and disliked to strive with their wealth and their lives in the cause of Allah and said, "Do not go forth in the heat." Say, "The fire of Hell is more intense in heat" - if they would but understand.

QUR'AN 9:81

So let them laugh a little and [then] weep much as recompense for what they used to earn.

QUR'AN 9:82

Do not march out in this heat, they told one another, pleased with their own cleverness, lounging at home while the believers prepared to bake in the desert. And the answer comes back with a terrible quiet: the fire of Hell is hotter, if only they understood. They were laughing their way toward the very thing they were so carefully trying to avoid.

And there is a tenderness folded into this section that is easy to miss entirely. Allah, in the midst of exposing the liars, turns and gently corrects the Prophet ﷺ himself:

Allah has pardoned you, [O Muhammad, but] why did you give them permission [to remain behind]? [You should not have] until it was evident to you who were truthful and you knew [who were] the liars.

QUR'AN 9:43

The Prophet ﷺ was so merciful, so disinclined to think ill of anyone, that he accepted every excuse the moment it was offered. The Sheikh reads these words not as a rebuke at all, or barely one: notice that the pardon comes first, before the question. It is the language of a Lord protecting His beloved ﷺ

from men who were taking advantage of his mercy, a gentle steadying hand laid on the one who was too generous with his trust for his own people's good.

The ones who wept to be left behind

Now hold the hypocrites in one hand and these people in the other, because the contrast is the whole point. There was a group of believers, perhaps seven, perhaps a dozen, the histories do not fix the number, whom the sources came to call al-bakkaun, the weepers. They had neither the money to equip themselves nor a camel of their own to ride, and the Prophet ﷺ had already spent everything buying mounts for others until there was nothing left. They kept coming back to the marketplace, day after day, to the very last day before the army moved, still hoping for a beast to carry them. And at last the Prophet ﷺ had to tell them the truth: he could find nothing left to carry them on. The Qur'an itself records the moment they turned away:

Nor [is there blame] upon those who, when they came to you for you to take them along, you said, "I can find nothing upon which to carry you." They turned back while their eyes overflowed with tears out of grief that they could not find something to spend [for the cause of Allah].

QUR'AN 9:92

One man, the Sheikh says, was overjoyed at a false excuse. Another wept at a true one. The distance between those two states of faith is the heavens and the earth. The hypocrite was forgiven nothing and rejoiced; the weeper was excused entirely, blameless, free to stay with a clear conscience, and he wept for the opportunity he was missing. Between the two there is no measuring.

And their longing was not wasted. The Prophet ﷺ told the army, while it was deep in the march, that back in Madinah there were men who shared in every single step they took, every valley they crossed, who were with them the whole way. They asked, astonished: even while they sit in Madinah? Even while they sit in Madinah, he said, because they were held back by nothing but a genuine excuse. Their intention was so pure that it earned them the full reward of a march they never made. Make the intention, the Sheikh urges, even for the good you cannot afford to do. If I had the means, I would, said with a sincere heart, is itself written down as a good deed, and how many of those we let slip away unspoken.

And some closed the gap with their own feet. Abu Khaythama, after the army had gone, walked into his cool garden where his wives had spread a rug in the shade of the date palms and sprinkled water on it to cool it and laid out a meal, and the sight of his own comfort struck him like a blow: what am I doing here in this ease while the Messenger of Allah ﷺ bakes in the desert? He would not even sit down. He saddled his camel that instant and rode out alone to chase the army. Abu Dharr's camel failed him, fell sick or was not returned to him, and rather than stay he hoisted his baggage, the load meant for a camel's back, onto his own shoulders and set out on foot, alone, walking for days, until on the second or third day a lone trudging figure in the heat resolved, as the army watched, into a man on foot carrying a camel's burden. When the Prophet ﷺ saw each of them coming in the distance he hoped aloud that it would be them, because he was always watching, always knew exactly who was missing and who was present. Of Abu Dharr, walking by himself, he said words that would come true to the letter many decades later: may

Allah have mercy on Abu Dharr; he walks alone, he will die alone, and he will be raised alone.

And so it was. Abu Dharr held views on wealth and its hoarding so austere that they brought him into friction with much of the community, until in the time of Uthman he withdrew to live in the wilderness with his wife and an aged servant. When he lay dying his wife wept that they had not even cloth enough to shroud him, and he comforted her: do not cry, for I heard the Prophet ﷺ say that one of us would die in the wilderness and a band of believers would pray over him, and every other man in that gathering has died among his family or in a city, and I alone am left. Go, he told her, and sit my body by the caravan road; someone will come. And out of the empty desert a great caravan came, and among its riders was Ibn Mas'ud, who wept to recognize the prophecy he had heard with his own ears, and they gave of their own garments for the shroud and buried the lone companion and prayed over him there. He walked alone, and he died alone, and a band of the faithful was sent to lay him down, exactly as it had been foretold.

The masjid built to divide

The hypocrites who could not spare a single coin for Tabuk somehow found both the funds and the energy to build, before the Prophet ﷺ had even departed, an entire masjid of their own, finished and standing, within walking distance of his. Their enthusiasm and their wealth, the Sheikh observes, were never truly exhausted; they were simply never for Allah and His Messenger. They were for their own circle, their own elitism, a place where they could gather and say what they liked without the believers nearby to check them.

And behind it lay a darker plot. Years before, a Madinan chief named Abu Amir, called the monk for his pre-Islamic Christian devotion, a man the city had once revered for his apparent integrity, had wanted Madinah's leadership for himself. When the Prophet ﷺ arrived and the people gave their hearts to him instead, Abu Amir's true face showed: it had been the fame he loved, not the faith. He refused Islam, fled to Makkah after Badr, and at last to the court of Caesar in Rome, an Arab willing to live among the Romans and scheme against his own. And from there he wrote to his old friend Abdullah ibn Ubayy: build me a base in Madinah, a foothold from within, so that Roman troops and I together can move against the Muslims. The new masjid was meant to be that headquarters, with Abdullah ibn Ubayy to lead it. The Prophet ﷺ, the Sheikh notes, made dua against Abu Amir that he would die a stranger, far from family and friend, and so he did, alone in Rome.

So when the builders came to the Prophet ﷺ, sweetly, and asked him to come and pray in their new masjid and bless its opening, pleading that it was only for the weak and the elderly and for the rainy nights when the walk to his masjid was hard, he sensed that something was wrong. He did not yet know Abu Amir's letter, but he knew the timing, the money spent on a needless masjid within sight of his own while the army went unfunded, and the recent verses exposing these very men. He would not say yes, and in his gentleness he would not bluntly say no. He told them only that he was busy now, preparing to travel, and that he would see to it, if Allah willed, when he returned. He never said he would come. The masjid stood and operated for about a month while he was at Tabuk, and he never once set foot in it. On the journey home, Jibril came down with the verdict:

And [there are] those [hypocrites] who took for themselves a mosque for causing harm and disbelief and division among the believers and as a station for whoever had warred against Allah and His Messenger before. And they will surely swear, "We intended only the best." And Allah testifies that indeed they are liars.

QUR'AN 9:107

Allah named the place Masjid al-Dirar, the masjid of harm, and laid bare its four poisons in a single verse: harm, disbelief, division among the believers, and a hidden station of ambush for one who had already declared war on Allah and His Messenger, which was Abu Amir. They will swear they meant only good, Allah said, and He Himself testified that they were lying. The Prophet ﷺ sent men ahead to tear the building down and burn it to the ground before he reached the city, and so the last great organized scheme of the hypocrites ended in ashes.

When a masjid is not a masjid

Allah did not leave the matter at a condemnation. He set a second masjid against the first, in the very next verse:

Do not stand [for prayer] within it - ever. A mosque founded on righteousness from the first day is more worthy for you to stand in. Within it are men who love to purify themselves; and Allah loves those who purify themselves.

QUR'AN 9:108

The companions tied this praise partly to the masjid of Quba, whose people were known for their unusual care with cleanliness; when they were asked why Allah had singled them out for loving to purify themselves, they explained their custom of always using water. And a sound report has two companions

disputing in the Prophet's ﷺ own lifetime which masjid the verse meant, taking the question to him directly, and he swore by Allah that it was his own masjid in Madinah. The Sheikh gives the reading the scholars settled on as the one that holds both: every masjid raised from its first day upon taqwa is the masjid Allah is praising here, and every masjid built to do harm is the masjid He is condemning. A building of brick and prayer-niches is only ever as honest as the hearts that raised it.

And from this Dr. Yasir Qadhi draws a warning so urgent that he states it twice. Yes, in principle, a masjid can still today become a masjid of harm, built by the wrong people for the wrong ends. But that is a verdict for Allah to pass, not a label for us to throw. He has seen it happen too many times: a community splits, a second masjid opens down the road, and the first congregation brands the second a masjid of dirar simply because its people disagreed with them. That, he says plainly, is arrogance, and it is dangerous, and it is deeply un-Islamic. To disagree with a scholar, even to leave and pray behind another, even to build your own masjid because you prefer a different teacher, is a believer's right, and it does not make him a hypocrite. Breaking away from a group of people is not breaking away from the Prophet ﷺ. To call that second masjid dirar is to accuse its founders of plotting outright kufr, the way Allah accused Abu Amir, and if you truly believed that, the Sheikh says, you would be obliged to go and burn it down, as the Prophet ﷺ did. Since you will not, you do not believe it. So live and let live. If they are sincere, their masjid will flourish; if they are not, Allah will expose them in this world before the next. Do your own work, and leave others to theirs.

What this day asks of our faith

There is no battle at Tabuk, and that is exactly why it asks so much of us. A battle would let us off easily; we could admire the courage of men long dead and feel that the test was theirs, not ours. But Tabuk does not test the sword arm. It tests the thing every one of us carries into every ordinary day: what the heart reaches for when it is asked to give something it would rather keep.

Watch the two rows it sorted the city into, because they have not changed in fourteen centuries. In one row stands the man who carried a fortune of gold across Madinah on his shoulder, and beside him the man who labored a whole night for two handfuls of dates and gave one, and beside him the weepers who had nothing at all and turned away in tears that they could not give more. Different wealth, identical hearts: every one of them emptying himself toward Allah and grieving only that he could not pour out more. And in the other row stand the comfortable and the clever, who rejoiced at staying home, invented fears, sneered at the poor, and built a masjid to divide, laughing their way toward a fire hotter than any desert. You already know, reading it, which row you would want your name in. The whole difficulty of the religion is to live so that it would actually be there.

So take three things from a campaign that never drew a sword. First, learn again to race upward. The companions watched one another's prayer and fasting and giving the way we watch one another's careers, not to envy but to be pulled forward, because Allah aimed the verb for a footrace at forgiveness and Jannah and never once at this world. Run to Him; let the dunya be the thing you merely walk toward. Second, make the intention even for the good you cannot reach. The weepers shared in every step of a march they never marched, because the heart that sincerely says I would, if I could, has already done something Allah writes

down. Stop letting your missed chances pass in silence. And third, guard your tongue from the easy cruelty of judging another's offering, whether it is a man's small charity or a community's separate masjid. The handful of dates was defended by name in the Qur'an, and the rush to brand a rival masjid as a masjid of harm was called arrogance by the Sheikh who has watched it tear communities apart. Give what you can without shame, never shame what another gives, and leave the weighing of hearts to the One who alone can see them.

May Allah make our hearts of the row that empties itself for Him and not the row that hoards, grant us a truthful intention even for the good we cannot afford, keep us from ever mocking a small gift or shaming a sincere one, and gather us under the banner of His beloved ﷺ among those who answered when He called. May He send His peace and His blessings upon Muhammad ﷺ, who spent everything he had and asked his own price be paid in full, and who watched the road behind him for every soul that was missing.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 90: the expedition to Tabuk, part 3 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (57:21, 9:79, 9:49, 9:81, 9:82, 9:92, 9:43, 9:107, 9:108), verified via quran.ai.

The expedition to Tabuk, part 4

The army finally leaves, and the road teaches

For three weeks and more the seerah has circled the Battle of Tabuk without once leaving Madinah. We have heard the call to march in the punishing heat of late summer, watched the hypocrites peel away one excuse at a time, and sat with the three sincere men who simply stayed behind and would pay for it. All of it happened inside the city, before a single camel turned its head north. Today the army finally moves, and here is the thing to hold onto as it does: Tabuk is barely a battle at all. There is no clash of swords waiting at the end of this road. What waits is a string of small, luminous incidents strung along the journey itself, and the lessons come not from combat but from the road. This is not like Badr or Uhud, one great event told from many angles. It is many little events, and each one is its own lecture.

So watch what happens between the city gate and the well of Tabuk. A young man is left behind and breaks down in tears. A companion finally maneuvers his camel close enough to ask the Prophet ﷺ the only question that had ever truly kept him awake. A Christian emperor sends an old man across the desert with a letter in one hand and three secret tasks in the other. None of it is a battle. All of it is the seerah at its most human, and at its most instructive.

The one left to guard the house

Whenever the Prophet ﷺ left Madinah, he appointed someone to run the city in his absence, and for Tabuk that man was Muhammad ibn Maslamah. But this journey was different in scale. It would stretch close to two months there and back, the longest the Muslims had ever undertaken, and a household cannot be left to fend for itself that long. So the Prophet ﷺ turned to Ali ibn Abi Talib, his cousin, the boy he had raised in his own home, now his son-in-law and the husband of his daughter, and told him to stay behind and take charge of the family, to see to their needs and protect them while the army was away in the far north.

The hypocrites pounced. This was meat for them. They began putting it about that Ali had been left behind because he was a burden, no real fighter, and the Prophet ﷺ did not want him slowing the army down. Of all the men in Madinah to accuse of cowardice, they chose Ali, whose bravery was already a byword. He was a young man, and a young man feels this kind of taunt in his bones. It cut him deeply, and he did what a man stung in his honor does: he put on his armor, took his sword in hand, and rode out hard after the army until he caught it outside the city. Messenger of Allah, he said, are you leaving me behind with the women and children, while the hypocrites mock me and say you only left me because I am not fit to fight?

Dr. Yasir Qadhi asks you to feel the irony before you draw anything else from it. Here is Ali, weeping for the chance to march into danger, so desperate to risk his life for Allah that he chases the column down to beg his way in. And there are the hypocrites, snug at home behind their false excuses, the men who would not march for anything, and yet they are the ones with the gall to call Ali a coward. That, the Sheikh notes, is the permanent signature of hypocrisy in every age: they accuse others of the very crime they themselves are guilty of. The man

who will not fight names the brave man a coward. It is a tell, and once you learn to read it you will see it everywhere.

Like Harun was to Musa

The Prophet ﷺ consoled him with a sentence that has echoed down fourteen centuries. Are you not content, he said, that you are to me as Harun was to Musa, except that there is no prophet after me? And then, to settle the wound the hypocrites had opened, he said it without ornament: they are liars. I left you behind only to take charge of those I have left behind, meaning my own family. Do not give the hypocrites another thought.

This is one of the most sensitive narrations in the whole seerah, and Sheikh Yasir slows right down to handle it with care, because of all the hadith that touch Ali, this is the one a certain group leans on hardest to argue that Ali was meant to lead the ummah after the Prophet ﷺ. So the honest path is to hold two things at once, firmly. The first: as Sunni Muslims, we affirm every single virtue this hadith confers on Ali, and we affirm it gladly, because it sits in our own most authentic books. The honor is real, and we do not wish it smaller. But the second is just as real: we read the narration whole, in its own words and its own moment, and not as a slogan torn loose from both.

Read whole, what does it say? Harun was Musa's brother, his closest helper, the one nearest to him in all the world, and the comparison the Prophet ﷺ reaches for is exactly that closeness, that brotherhood. This is how near you are to me. That is the point of the words, a statement of love and kinship, not a charter of political succession. And look at the proof sitting inside the very same incident: the Prophet ﷺ did not leave Ali in charge of Madinah at all. He left Muhammad ibn Maslamah over the city. Ali was chosen for one role, charge of the household, precisely

because he was family. Who do you trust with your wives and children for two months: a stranger, or your own son-in-law? The Prophet ﷺ said as much in the same breath: I have left you over my family. Faithful to his telling, Sheikh Yasir keeps the blessing and the boundary together. The honor for Ali stands, undiminished. The conclusion some try to build on top of it simply does not follow from the words.

The mound called farewell

The army moved out past a small hill on the northern edge of Madinah, a place nearly every Muslim has heard named and almost none realize is an actual spot on the map. It is called Thaniyyat al-Wada, which means, near enough, the mound of farewell, or the pass of goodbye. It earned the name honestly. When a caravan was setting out to the north, the families would walk alongside it as far as this little rise, embrace their travelers there, wave them off, and turn back home from its crest. It was the last place you saw someone before the desert took them. So the army climbed past it and went on.

And here Dr. Yasir Qadhi pauses to correct a memory that almost every Muslim carries, and carries lovingly. There is a famous song, beloved across the entire ummah: Tala al-badru alayna, the full moon has risen over us, from Thaniyyat al-Wada. It is placed, almost universally, at the Hijrah, the moment the Prophet ﷺ first arrived in Madinah and the city poured out to greet him. The trouble is that it cannot belong there, and the Sheikh gives two decisive reasons. First, the geography is wrong: the mound lies to the north, but at the Hijrah the Prophet ﷺ was arriving from the south, up from Makkah, so the city could not have lined it to receive him. And second, the content is wrong: at the Hijrah the great majority of Madinah was not yet Muslim, so there was no

city of believers waiting to sing of the rising moon. The welcome that song describes, a whole Muslim city rising in joy to greet him ﷺ coming home from the north, fits this moment, the return from Tabuk, and very little else. The song is true and beautiful. It is simply pinned to the wrong day.

Past the mound, the Prophet ﷺ halted the march and reorganized the entire army, assigning the battalions, naming their commanders, distributing the flags. The number of men is a guess, the Sheikh reminds us, because no one counted; some books say thirty thousand, a figure he treats with healthy skepticism, but even at half that it was the largest force the Muslims had ever fielded. Al-Waqidi devotes pages to which tribe followed which leader, and the Sheikh waves the catalogue away as more than we need, but he keeps the lesson buried inside it. The Prophet ﷺ organized the men by their tribes. Islam came to bury blind partisanship, the fanaticism that made a man fight for his clan whether it was right or wrong; and yet it does not erase the natural affinity of people who share a town, a tongue, a homeland. You meet someone from your own city in a strange land and feel a warmth that rests on nothing but shared origin, and that warmth is no crime. It is how human beings are made, and a wise commander, far from fighting it, puts it to work: men stand firmer beside the brothers they know.

The question Mu'adh fell sick over

On the march, after the dawn prayer one morning, the sun began to climb and the riders began to nod off on their camels. As the men dozed, their mounts wandered apart, each drifting after whatever grazing caught its eye, until the tight column had spread loose across the desert. Mu'adh ibn Jabal was trying to keep close to the Prophet's ﷺ camel when his own animal

lurched; he yanked the reins, the beast reared back, and the sudden movement spooked the Prophet's ﷺ mount and sent it bolting forward. The Prophet ﷺ had his turban wound across his face against the sun. He drew it back to see who had startled his camel, saw that it was Mu'adh, and instead of any rebuke simply called him near. And Mu'adh tells it himself: I drew so close that our two saddles were almost touching.

Sit with the sweetness of this. Mu'adh suddenly finds himself alone with the Prophet ﷺ in the open desert, the rest of the army scattered far behind, just the two of them riding stirrup to stirrup. And his first instinct is not small talk. It is to seize, with perfect manners, the chance he had been waiting for. Give me permission to ask you something, he said. There is a question I have turned over until it made me ill: tell me of a deed that will admit me into Jannah, something only you can tell me, so that I need never ask anyone else.

The Prophet ﷺ marveled at the question. You have asked about something tremendous, he said, and repeated it three times, for he would repeat the weighty things so they would sink in. And yet, he went on, it is easy for whomever Allah makes it easy. Then he gave the answer, the whole religion folded into a single breath: you worship Allah alone and associate nothing with Him, you establish the prayer, you give the zakah, and you hold to that until you die. And then, says Sheikh Yasir, he offered Mu'adh the entire architecture of the faith in one image. Shall I show you the head of the whole matter, its pillar, and the summit of its hump? Its head is Islam itself; its pillar is the prayer; and the summit of its hump is jihad, the striving in the path of Allah. Remember where they were when these words were spoken: riding north toward Tabuk, expecting a Roman army to rise over the horizon. Every syllable of it landed with the weight of where they were going.

And he ﷺ sealed it with the saying the enemies of Islam love to twist out of all recognition: I have been commanded to fight the people until they testify to the oneness of Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger, and they establish the prayer and give the zakah; and if they do that, their lives and their property are protected from me. The Sheikh keeps the context the distorters always cut away. This is the Prophet ﷺ explaining, to a companion riding beside him, why he is marching to Tabuk against a hostile power massed on the frontier: an answer to the question why are we on this road, not a standing command to make war on the whole world until the end of time. And the proof that the scholars understood it exactly this way is written across the centuries that followed: the empires of Islam, the Umayyads, the Abbasids, the Ottomans, kept settled borders and lived at peace across them. They did not read this hadith as an order of perpetual conquest, because it never was one.

Twenty days, and a morning sermon

The army reached Tabuk and stayed twenty days. Throughout the whole of it, the Prophet ﷺ shortened his prayers, praying the four-unit prayers as two, and from this single well-attested fact a sprawling discussion in Islamic law was born: how long may a traveler keep shortening his prayer before he counts as settled? The Sheikh lays the schools out honestly, none claiming certainty. The Malikis and Shafiis hold to four days; the Hanafis to fifteen; some read the twenty days at Tabuk itself as the ceiling. And a fourth view, which Sheikh Yasir finds strongest and which Ibn Taymiyyah championed, sets no fixed number at all: shortening tracks your circumstance, not a square on the calendar. The genuine traveler, living out of a saddlebag with no settled home around him, may go on shortening for as long as

that lasts; the man comfortably at home in his own house, even for two days, is no traveler at all. And the twenty days at Tabuk prove no ceiling for an ordinary trip, because Tabuk was a state of war, where every dawn might bring an attack and no one knew the day of return. That uncertainty is its own category, and you cannot stretch it to cover the man who flies somewhere knowing he will be there exactly five days.

On their very first morning at Tabuk, after the dawn prayer, the Prophet ﷺ stood and delivered a sermon. The long chain that carries it whole is weak, and Sheikh Yasir says so frankly, but he reads it out anyway, for parts of it are firmly authentic and the whole is a window onto how he ﷺ actually spoke. It is short, sharp lines, each one a lecture you could live a year inside. The most truthful speech is the Book of Allah. The firmest handhold is the word of taqwa. The best of ways is the way of Ibrahim, and the best of paths is the Sunnah of Muhammad ﷺ. The best of affairs are those most firmly settled, and the worst of them are the newly invented matters.

And on it runs. The worst excuse is the one offered at the moment of death, and the most evil of regrets is the regret on the Day of Judgment. The higher hand, the one that gives, is better than the lower hand that takes. A little that suffices you is better than a great deal that distracts you. The richest wealth is the contentment of the heart, and the noblest provision a traveler can carry is taqwa. He ﷺ closed it the way mercy closes everything: O Allah, forgive me and forgive my ummah, and I ask Allah's forgiveness for me and for all of you.

The king found among the cattle

Tabuk turned out to be a campaign of treaties rather than a clash of armies. While the main force held the camp, the Prophet ﷺ

sent Khalid ibn al-Walid north with a few hundred companions to Dumat al-Jandal, near what is today the city of Sakaka in al-Jawf, hard against the Syrian frontier. The tribe there was Kindah, a great and ancient Christian Arab people, originally of Yemen, famed for their courage, with long-standing ties to Caesar, and prestigious enough that, rarely among the Arabs, they called their chieftain a king, a malik. Their king bore a name strange to our tongues: Ukaydir. And the Prophet ﷺ told Khalid exactly how he would find him: not at the head of his army, but away from it, out among the cattle.

And so it fell out, with an almost comic precision. One night the king's herd came battering against the palace door until his wife could not sleep and demanded he deal with the racket. Ukaydir went down with three or four servants, judged the beasts were simply hungry, and led them out himself to graze before dawn, no army, no guard. Khalid came upon him there with three hundred and fifty companions and took him without a fight. Ukaydir did not accept Islam at that moment, though it is said he did later; but he agreed to break his alliance with Rome, pay the jizyah to the Prophet ﷺ, and never raise a hand against the Muslims.

Three or four more northern tribes followed his example, and this, the Sheikh suggests, may be the deepest political wisdom of the entire expedition, the real reason Allah willed it. A vast Muslim army sitting at Tabuk made the calculation plain to every frontier tribe at once. Men like Ukaydir could not hope to fight such a force alone, and so one after another the northern Arabs cut their ties to Rome and came to terms with the Prophet ﷺ. The northern door was quietly sealed against the empire, without a major battle being fought. Ukaydir later sent gifts to show his new loyalty, among them a robe woven through with gold thread, so fine the companions had never seen its like and circled around it

in wonder. The Prophet ﷺ saw their amazement and said, gently: are you impressed by this? The handkerchiefs of Sa'd ibn Mu'adh in Jannah are finer than this. Sa'd, who had died of his wound after Banu Qurayzah and whose funeral the angels attended, owns napkins in Paradise that put this emperor's robe to shame.

The envoy with three secret tasks

The story Dr. Yasir Qadhi saves for last is one of his favorites in the whole seerah, and he tells it with relish. Heraclius, the emperor of Rome, sent a second letter to the Prophet ﷺ at Tabuk, carried by an old man of the Christian Arab tribe of Tanukh, from Hims in Syria, who by the time he related the tale was nearly a hundred years old. But before the envoy ever set out, Heraclius did something behind locked doors. He gathered his patriarchs and bishops, bolted the chamber, and tested them. You have seen, he said, how far this man's affair has spread, and our own scriptures foretell that what is under my feet will become his. So why do we not follow him, or at the least make peace with him, for he is a true prophet? The clergymen recoiled in horror and bolted for the door, desperate to tell the people that Caesar meant to abandon Christianity. He called them back and soothed them: it was only a test, to see how firm you are in your faith. He had no intention of converting, and never did. He simply wanted to know who this Prophet ﷺ truly was.

So Heraclius found a sharp Arabic speaker with a good memory, the Tanukhi, and gave him the letter along with three secret tasks. First: does this man mention the earlier letters I have sent him? Second: when he reads my letter, does he say anything of night, anything of darkness? And third: look at his back, and see whether there is something there that should not be on the back of any man. The envoy rode south to the well of Tabuk, where the

Prophet ﷺ sat among his companions. And here is a detail that says everything: the Tanukhi could not pick out the leader. The Prophet ﷺ wore nothing to set himself above the men around him, no finery, no mark of rank, and the envoy had to ask which of them was the chief. They pointed him out. He came and set the letter down, and the Prophet ﷺ left it unopened. First he invited the man himself to the faith of his father Ibrahim: you are an Arab, embrace the religion of your forefather. The envoy answered with the practiced logic of a diplomat: I am the ambassador of a nation that has its own religion, and I cannot change my faith while on its business; I will go back and consider the matter. The Prophet ﷺ laughed softly, and recited the verse Allah had revealed for exactly this kind of moment, that guidance was never his to hand out, but Allah's alone:

Indeed, [O Muḥammad], you do not guide whom you like, but Allāh guides whom He wills. And He is most knowing of the [rightly] guided.

QUR'AN 28:56

Then, with the letter still unopened on the ground, the Prophet ﷺ told the envoy what three kings had done with the letters he had sent them. Kisra, the emperor of Persia, tore my letter to pieces, so Allah will tear his kingdom to pieces. The Negus's son tore my letter, so Allah will tear his kingdom apart, and the Sheikh pauses to be exact, for this was not the righteous Negus over whom the Prophet ﷺ had prayed the funeral prayer, but his son, after whom a civil war dissolved that Abyssinian kingdom. But your master Heraclius kept my letter safe, so his rule will endure as long as there is good in it. The envoy started. This was the first sign, the earlier letters, named exactly as Heraclius had said to

watch for. He drew an arrow from his quiver and quietly carved a note into the leather so he would not forget.

Then Mu'adh read the emperor's letter aloud, and inside it was a riddle. You invite me, Heraclius had written, to a Paradise as wide as the heavens and the earth. So where, then, is the Fire? The Prophet ﷺ answered without a heartbeat's pause: subhanallah, where does the night go when the day comes? The second sign, night and darkness, spoken just as the emperor had predicted. The envoy carved his second note. And as the man rose to leave that night, having been hosted by one of the Ansar, the Prophet ﷺ called him back, drew aside his garment from his shoulders, and said: look at what your master sent you to find. Between his shoulder blades was the seal of prophethood, a small raised mark the size of a pigeon's egg, an unusual growth of hair set perfectly between the shoulders. The third sign. The old man of Tanukh went home with all three of his master's questions answered, and the Sheikh leaves him there, at the very edge of belief, a stranger who had come to test the Prophet ﷺ and found, written on his back and spoken from his lips, everything his emperor had been too proud to follow.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to feel a little cheated by a chapter of the seerah with no battle in it, to read past these incidents as filler between the great events. That would be to miss what the road north was put here to teach. Strip Tabuk down and it is not a war story at all; it is a syllabus, and every milestone along the way is asking something of us.

Start with Ali in his armor, weeping to be let into danger, and the hypocrites at home calling him the coward. When people who have plainly failed a test grow loud in accusing you of failing it,

recognize the pattern: they are describing themselves. Hypocrisy projects, and the believer's protection against it is simply to know it on sight, so that the accusation, when it comes, tells you nothing about you and everything about the one who threw it. Then sit with how the Prophet ﷺ answered Ali, because that answer carries its own discipline. He honored Ali as Harun was to Musa, a genuine and towering virtue, and he neither shrank it to avoid being misread nor inflated it into a claim no one had made. Love a true thing enough to keep it exactly its true size. That is harder than it sounds; we are forever either embarrassed by a truth or stretching it past what it can bear.

And then there is Mu'adh, riding stirrup to stirrup with the Prophet ﷺ in the empty desert, finally alone with the one person who could answer the question that had made him ill. Ask yourself what you would say if you had that moment. Mu'adh knew; he had carried his question so long it had worn a groove in him: what gets me into Jannah? And the answer was the whole religion in a sentence, worship Allah alone, establish the prayer, give the zakah, and hold to it until you die. Here is the quiet mercy in it: you already have the answer. The deed that admits you to Paradise was handed to you long ago, and the only question is whether you are living it. Get your one question ready, then notice that the answer is already in your hands. And keep, while you are at it, the discipline the Sheikh kept with the hard hadith on that same ride. I have been commanded to fight the people is quoted by the enemies of this religion with its context surgically removed. Keep the context. Truth survives only when we refuse to read it in fragments, and that refusal is owed to every hard thing, ours and others'.

Last, hold the Tanukhi at the edge of belief and the verse the Prophet ﷺ recited to him. The most beloved of all who ever

called to Allah wanted that old man to believe, and could not make him; Allah revealed it to His own Messenger as a settled fact, that you do not guide whom you like, but Allah guides whom He wills. There is a deep rest in that for anyone who has poured themselves into calling a person they love toward the good and watched them turn away. The calling is yours; the heart was never yours to turn. Do your part sincerely, then lay the outcome down where it always belonged, with the One who alone is most knowing of the rightly guided. So take the road's own lessons into your ordinary days. Name hypocrisy when it accuses you, and keep your peace. Keep every true thing at its true size. Ask the question you have been carrying, and live the answer you already have. And call to the good with everything in you, then set the heart of the one you love gently back in the hands of its Lord. May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, who wore nothing to set himself above his companions and bore the seal of prophethood between his shoulders, keep our hearts firm upon His religion, and gather us in the company of the one we have walked beside these many days.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 91: the expedition to Tabuk, part 4 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translation is from Sahih International (28:56), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry weaker chains, the Sheikh's own weighing of their reports has been followed.

The expedition to Tabuk, part 5

Twenty days, no battle, and a road that pointed at the future

There was no battle at Tabuk. The army had marched the best part of a month north, into a heat and a hardship that would mark this as the most difficult campaign of the Prophet's ﷺ life, and at the end of the road the enemy never came. The tribes of Ghassan stayed home. The Roman columns never formed. And so the Prophet ﷺ made camp in a place where, on the surface, nothing happened, and stayed twenty days. Dr. Yasir Qadhi gathers the scattered reports of those twenty days and the long journey home, and asks us first to notice that the seerah hands us this stretch not as one connected story but as a scatter of small incidents, with no way of knowing which night any of them fell on. So we tell them as they were handed down: a pool refilled by a hand, a sermon counting five gifts and six signs, a burial in the dark, a road past the ruins of a punished people, and the mockers the Qur'an exposed before they could speak. The point of Tabuk was never the destination. It was the rehearsal, and by the end of these days you will see exactly what the Prophet ﷺ was rehearsing his people for.

Twenty days, and a pool that filled to the brim

We do not know how many marched. The reports say ten thousand, fifteen, twenty, thirty thousand, and the honest answer the Sheikh gives is that there was no register and no one counted. What is known with certainty comes from a different

kind of detail, the kind the seerah preserves precisely because no one would invent it. For all twenty days, the Prophet ﷺ prayed his four-rakah prayers shortened to two, the way a traveller prays. Hold onto that, because it carries a quiet ruling that will surface again before this chapter closes.

There was a small pool of water in the area, and he ﷺ had given a plain instruction about it: do not touch it. One or two of the men reached it before he arrived and used it anyway, not out of defiance but out of haste, and when he found what they had done he was angry and rebuked them. They had disobeyed by accident, but they had disobeyed, and a small disobedience is still a disobedience. Then he ﷺ took some water in his hand, rinsed his mouth, and returned it to the pool. That little was all it took. The water rose to the brim, and an army of tens of thousands drank from it for the length of the stay. It is said that a masjid still marks the spot outside Tabuk to this day, Masjid at-Tawbah, with a well at the very place he ﷺ camped, though Sheikh Yasir adds that he has never been there himself and cannot vouch for it. The correction and the mercy, notice, came in the same breath: he rebuked the haste, then fed the whole army from his own rinsed mouthful. That is the texture of his leadership, and it runs through every scene that follows.

Five things given to him alone

One day, after the prayer, he ﷺ stood and told them that Allah had that very day given him five things given to no prophet before him, and counted them out.

The first: he was sent to all of mankind, where every messenger before him had been sent only to his own people. The second: Allah aided him with awe, fear cast into the hearts of his enemies at the distance of a full month's journey, and Tabuk, he said, was

the living proof of it, for Ghassan and the empire of Rome had been so terrified across a month of road that they never marched at all. The third: the spoils of war were made lawful for him, when no nation before him had been permitted to keep them; in the times before, the Sheikh reminds us, a fire would descend from the sky and consume the captured booty as the sign that the deed had been accepted by heaven, while to his ummah alone the spoils were left as a provision. The fourth: the whole earth was made for him a place of prayer and a means of purification, so that wherever a believer stands when the prayer falls due he may purify himself and pray, where the nations before could worship only inside their houses of worship under far stricter rules, granted no tayammum from clean earth when no water could be found.

And the fifth he held back. Allah told him to ask, and he could have asked for anything at all. He chose to save his request as an intercession for his ummah on the Day of Judgment, the day they would need it more than they had ever needed anything. He kept his one open wish for the worst hour of his people, and spent it on them.

And here, standing closer to the great empires of Rome and Persia than he had ever stood as a prophet, he made a promise his companions could barely hold: that Allah had given his ummah the treasures of them both. To men who were a single desert city ringed by superpowers, it can only have sounded impossible. Within a few short years it was history.

Count six before the Hour

On one of those nights he ﷺ gave a teaching that Bukhari preserves, among the most sobering things he ever said. Count six things, he told them, before the Day of Judgment.

The first is my death, he said, that the leaving of the Prophet ﷺ from this world is itself a sign of the Hour. The second is the conquest of Jerusalem, which came to pass less than two years after he was gone. The third is a plague that will take the people the way a certain sickness sweeps through a pen of camels, the kind that, once it touches one animal, leaves the whole herd dead. The fourth is wealth grown so heavy that a man will be handed a hundred dinars, far more than a year's income for most of the companions hearing him, and will be vexed that it is only that much. The fifth is a trial, a fitna, that will not leave a single household of the believers untouched. And the sixth, the heaviest of all, is a truce with a great power that holds while a common enemy is fought and then turns to treachery once that enemy is beaten, ending in a war beneath eighty banners, twelve thousand men under each, an army the like of which the world has never seen.

Here the Sheikh stops the lesson to teach us how to hold it. We do not, he says, nail a specific prediction of the Prophet ﷺ to a specific headline of our own day and declare the two one and the same, because Allah knows best and we do not. We may say our times appear to rhyme with the warning; what we may never do is put a sentence in his ﷺ mouth that he did not say, or claim as certain what he left as a sign. The teaching is given to make a heart sober, not a tongue certain. These are calamities we are taught to dread and to flee, not events we await, even as we believe that whatever he ﷺ foretold will surely come.

The only man a prophet prayed behind

One of those twenty nights the Prophet ﷺ went out from the camp to relieve himself, far from the people as he always did, and Mughirah ibn Shu'bah went with him carrying the water and a

spear. When he ﷺ had finished, Mughirah poured the water for him to make wudu. The night was bitterly cold, deep winter, and he ﷺ was wearing a heavy Roman cloak with narrow sleeves that would not push up past the elbow. So rather than leave any part of his forearms dry, he ﷺ drew his arms out from underneath the cloak entirely and washed them fully from below, then wiped over his turban and his leather shoes, telling Mughirah to leave them on, for he had put them on in a state of purity. Sheikh Yasir lingers on the cold and the tight sleeve on purpose. We are not permitted to be lazy with the water. Every part the wudu requires must be reached by it, even when it is freezing and the clothing fights you. That is precisely the hour when how you worship is being measured.

By the time the two of them walked back, something had happened in the camp that he ﷺ had not arranged and would not undo. He had taken his time, the time for the prayer had come, and the companions had refused to delay it even for him. They could not know how long he would be, and the prayer was too heavy in their hearts to push back a moment longer, so they had begun, with Abdur-Rahman ibn Awf standing as their imam. He ﷺ arrived to find them already a rakah in, and rather than interrupt them or signal them to start over for his sake, he quietly joined the rows behind a companion and prayed a full unit following him.

When Abdur-Rahman realised, in the dark and the rising murmur, who was standing behind him, he moved to step back and yield his place. The Prophet ﷺ motioned to him: stay where you are. So he completed the prayer as imam, and the Prophet ﷺ made up the rakah he had missed afterward. The Sheikh marks what this means. Abdur-Rahman ibn Awf, radiyallahu anhu, carries an honour that as far as we know belongs to no other human being

in all of history: he is the only person a prophet of Allah ever prayed behind for a complete unit of prayer. There is a famous moment near the end, in his ﷺ final illness, when Abu Bakr was leading and the Prophet ﷺ came out and sat beside him, but Abu Bakr, out of pure love, stepped back and refused to lead him, saying it was not for the son of Abu Quhafah to stand in front of him. So that privilege, in its fullness, was never his. It was Abdur-Rahman's alone, given by accident on a cold night in the north, because the companions would not delay their prayer even for the man they loved more than themselves.

A grave dug in the dark

Another night, Ibn Mas'ud woke and saw a fire burning in the distance, and gathered around it the Prophet ﷺ, Abu Bakr, and Umar. He went toward it and found that a companion had died: Abdullah Dhul-Bijadayn, the man of the two coarse garments, and the name was the whole of his story. When he accepted Islam his tribe turned him out with nothing, refusing him even the wages he had earned, and he left owning a single cheap cloak. When he reached Madinah he was so ashamed of his poverty that he tore that one cloak in two, so it would look as if he owned two garments, tying one around his waist and throwing the other over his shoulders. That was all anyone knew of him: not one of the famous, not one of the elite, a man whose only distinction was a torn cloak and a new faith, dead of natural causes on a cold night far from home.

And the Prophet ﷺ went down into the grave himself. Hand him to me, he told Abu Bakr and Umar, and they passed the body down, and he laid Abdullah into the earth with his own hands, and as he settled him he said: O Allah, I am pleased with this servant of Yours, so be pleased with him. Ibn Mas'ud, watching the

Prophet of Allah ﷺ on his knees in the grave of a man no one could place, said afterward that he wished with his whole heart that he had been the one lying dead in that grave, to be received like that.

Think, the Sheikh says, of what a scene like that does to an army. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ himself, woken in the freezing dark for a man no one of rank would have noticed, climbing down into the grave to lay him in by hand and begging Allah to be pleased with him. The men saw that, and it is part of why they had followed him into the hardest march of their lives and would follow him into harder still. He did not lead them from above. He buried their forgotten with his own hands, and let them watch him do it.

The road home, and the ruins of Thamud

Then the long road back, and on it the miracles came again, the way they had for the length of the campaign, every time the provisions thinned out under twenty thousand mouths. The increasing of food and water, Sheikh Yasir notes, is among the most often repeated of the Prophet's ﷺ signs across the seerah, and Tabuk alone holds four or five of them. Water poured from between his fingers ﷺ until the men drank from his hand as from a fountain. On a parched night, a du'a for rain that had fallen by morning. And when the animals could carry no more, he ﷺ had the camels brought before him in a line and patted them and prayed: in the name of Allah, O Allah, carry upon these those who travel in Your path. The narrator, Fadalah, said that by the time they reached Madinah the beasts were so strong and full of fire that the men had to fight to hold them back.

And the road passed al-Hijr, the dead cities of Thamud, the people of Salih ﷺ, whose homes are carved not of wood or brick

but straight into the living rock of the mountains, rooms and chambers and even beds cut into the stone by means no one fully understands. They are older than Ibrahim ﷺ himself, among the most ancient settlements known in Arabia, and they still stand. Some of the men hurried in to explore. The Prophet ﷺ had them called back, and asked them why they would want to walk into the homes of a people upon whom the punishment of Allah had descended. We are amazed at these ruins, O Messenger of Allah, they said. Shall I not tell you of something more amazing, he answered: a man among you, telling you what was and what will be. Your prophet, in other words, is the greater sign by far, more amazing than any punished city in any valley. Then he covered his face with his cloak, lowered his head, quickened his pace, and would not pause anywhere in that valley. Do not enter upon a people who wronged themselves and were punished, he told them, except that you are weeping, lest what struck them strike you. Some of the men had already drawn water from the old wells. Pour it out, he ﷺ told them, give it to the animals, and the dough you kneaded with that water, feed to the animals as well; this is the punished water of a punished place, and it is not for you.

And he turned the warning toward the heart of Thamud's ruin: they had demanded a miracle and then defied it. Allah had brought a great she-camel out of the mountain before their eyes, one that drank the whole settlement's water on one day and gave them milk enough to feed them all on the next. You think yourselves powerful, the Sheikh frames it, for carving rooms into a mountain; Allah brought living flesh out of that same rock. And still they hamstrung her, and the punishment came as a single sound from the heavens that silenced every one of them at once.

So do not, he ﷺ warned his own people, go asking Allah for miracles; that valley demanded its sign and was destroyed by it.

When his own she-camel went missing on that road, the search held up the whole army, and one of the hypocrites sneered, well out of his hearing: here is a man who claims revelation comes to him from the heavens, and he does not even know where his own camel is. The words never reached the Prophet ﷺ by any human mouth, for the man was at the far end of the army; but a man who shared that hypocrite's tent was sitting with him when revelation informed him of it. He ﷺ stood and said: some of you have said such and such. By Allah, I am only a human being, and I know nothing except what Allah tells me, and Allah has just now told me that my camel is held fast by its harness, caught on a tree in such and such a valley. Go and bring it. They went, and it was exactly there. He knew nothing of the unseen, the Sheikh notes, except what his Lord disclosed to him, and his Lord disclosed a very great deal. The same tongue that found the camel by revelation had just confessed, I am only a human being. Both halves are the lesson.

The jokers and the verse that named them

Among the thousands on that road were hypocrites, for an army of twenty thousand was never going to be all of the elite, and on the way home a knot of them grew loud and crude, laughing past every limit. He really thinks we are going to conquer Rome and Persia, one of them mocked, who does he think he is. It was, on any human reckoning, an absurd thing to claim, the Sheikh notes, a handful of desert people against empires six hundred years old, and that very absurdity is where faith and its absence parted ways: to a believer it was a promise, to these men a joke. Then another said something fouler, sneering at the reciters of the

Qur'an in their midst, calling them cowards with fat bellies. A companion overheard it and rounded on them: you are lying, O enemy of Allah, and I will carry your words to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ this instant.

He set off from the rear of the army toward the front to report it, and by the time he reached the Prophet ﷺ, revelation was already descending; the companions could see it in the lowered eyes and the weight that settled over him. The mockers, suddenly terrified that Allah would expose their hearts, came galloping their camels up behind the man to invent an excuse before he could even speak. Picture it, the Sheikh says: the messenger running, the hypocrites racing their mounts behind him, and at the head of the army the revelation coming down. And before the companion could get a word out, before the man's stammered apology was even finished, the Prophet ﷺ was already reciting the words that had just been sent, without so much as turning to look at the man clinging to his stirrup. The verse quoted the excuse back to him before he made it.

And if you ask them, they will surely say, "We were only conversing and playing." Say, "Is it Allah and His verses and His Messenger that you were mocking?"

QUR'AN 9:65

Make no excuse, the revelation went on; you have disbelieved after your belief. The man hung onto the stirrup of the moving camel, dragged along beside it, pleading, and the Prophet ﷺ would not turn his head, only kept reciting: do not give me your excuses.

Here the Sheikh halts the whole army to put something in our hands and make us carry it home, because he judges it among

the most urgent lessons of the entire campaign for the world we now live in. We believe in the sacred. We believe certain things are simply off limits to a joke. You may question, you may argue a matter out, you may ask how a thing can be so, all of that is open. But to mock and ridicule Allah and His Messenger ﷺ is not something a heart with real faith in it is even able to do; the skin recoils at the thought. So the Qur'an does not call it a slip to be patched over. It calls it disbelief after belief, and the man who does it knowingly has, by the verse's own words, to come back to Islam and begin again. The Sheikh names this a red line precisely because it is being erased, and says it is most important of all to teach to a generation raised where nothing is held sacred and a cruel joke about the religion can feel like harmless fun. It is not harmless. The Qur'an even forbids us to mock the false gods of others, lest they turn and mock Allah; how much more, then, the One we worship and the Messenger we love.

A road that pointed at the future

There was one more plot on that road, among the strangest in the whole seerah, reaching us in only a narration or two. Travelling by night, the Prophet ﷺ had drawn apart from the main body with two or three companions onto a high, narrow place above a cliff. In the dark, perhaps fourteen or fifteen men with their faces covered charged his camel, trying to drive it over the edge. He ﷺ brought it down swiftly and safely into the valley, and they scattered and fled. Hudhayfah, who was guarding him, asked who they had been. Hypocrites, he ﷺ said, who wanted to throw me from the cliff. Their faces were hidden, no one recognised them, no punishment followed, and most of the army never even knew it had happened.

After perhaps two months away, perhaps closer to three, he ﷺ came home, and the whole of Madinah poured out to meet him at Thaniyyat al-Wada, the hill of farewell to the north of the city, where the women and the children sang the famous welcome that has echoed down the centuries. And here the Sheikh corrects a misconception most of us were raised inside. That song, Tala' al-Badru alayna, belongs to this homecoming from Tabuk, not to the hijrah from Makkah, as it is so often told. The hill is to the north and the hijrah arrived from the south; and on the day of the hijrah the city was not yet Muslim, where now the entire city was, and so the entire city came out. He went to his masjid, prayed two rakahs, and at once began receiving the delegations of those who had stayed behind.

And then the Sheikh saves for the very end the wisdom of the whole campaign. Why march an army a full month north, through the hardest conditions of his life, when there was no enemy waiting to be fought? The honest answer, he says, is that the only reason we can be sure of is that Allah commanded it, as a test. The Surah is plain about it: when you are told to go forth, you do not cling to the earth.

If you do not go forth, He will punish you with a painful punishment and will replace you with another people, and you will not harm Him at all. And Allah is over all things competent.

QUR'AN 9:39

That, the Sheikh says, is the heart of it. Simply to go, to leave the ripening harvest and the cool shade and the family and walk a month into the desert and a month back for no battle at all, was harder than any fighting would have been. The man who can obey when the reason is not yet visible can certainly fight when

the time comes. The going was the test, and the believers passed it where the fighters were never even examined.

And it was a rehearsal. This is the second half of the wisdom, and the deeper one. The Prophet ﷺ took his people by the hand and led them to the exact northern land they would have to return to and conquer within a year and a half, after he was gone, against the Byzantine empire itself. The little tribal treaties he secured along the way were real, but they were never reason enough to move twenty thousand men a month north; the reason was the road itself, learned once with him leading so the next time they could walk it without him. On his deathbed, with two or three days of his life remaining, his mind was still set on that same direction: he was readying the army of Usamah ibn Zayd to march north. The first land the ummah conquered after him, under Abu Bakr, was Sham, the very north he had just walked them to and home from. He marched them to the edge of the world they would inherit without him, showed them the road, and then he let them go.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to file Tabuk away as an anticlimax, the great campaign that fizzled, a long hot march to nowhere with no battle to remember it by. That is to miss everything it was built to teach. The whole point of Tabuk is that the test was the going, not the fighting, and that is a test we sit for far more often than we ever sit for a battle.

Start with the smallest thing and the largest, held together in one breath at the pool. He ﷺ was angry at men who touched the water in nothing worse than haste, because a small disobedience is still a disobedience; and then he rinsed his own mouth into that same pool and filled it to the brim for tens of thousands. We tend

to split those two apart, to think mercy means letting small things slide and discipline means hardness. He held them in one hand: correct the wrong honestly, then pour out more than they could have asked for.

Then the cold night and the tight sleeve, which sounds like a footnote and is not. Offered every excuse a freezing man could want, he ﷺ pulled his arms clean out of a heavy cloak rather than leave a hand-span of forearm dry in his wudu. We are not permitted to be lazy with the water. The worship that counts is the worship you do not rush when it is cold and inconvenient and no one would blame you for cutting it short, because the cold is the test and the convenience is the bribe. And in the same camp, he ﷺ climbed down into the grave of a man whose entire biography was a torn cloak, and asked Allah to be pleased with him, and an army watched and never forgot. Honour the one no one is counting, bury the forgotten with your own hands, and you will be followed through anything; for status in the eyes of people was never once status with Allah.

And keep the sacred sacred. The hypocrites laughed, and the laugh turned out to be a line they could not come back across, named from the heavens as disbelief after belief while one of them still dragged at the stirrup inventing his excuse. The Sheikh asks us to carry this one home most of all, into a world that holds nothing holy and teaches our children that a joke can be aimed anywhere. You may question and you may argue; you may not mock and ridicule Allah and His Messenger ﷺ, because a heart with faith in it cannot. Teach the young there is a red line before the world persuades them there is none.

And underneath all of it, the thing the Surah commands and the campaign was built to drill: when you are told to go, go. The

hardest obedience is not the one whose reason you can see, the battle in front of you, the danger you understand. It is the long march with nothing visible at the end of it, the leaving of the harvest for a road that points at no enemy, the order whose wisdom you will not be shown until later, if ever. That is the obedience he ﷺ drilled into them on the way to a future they would have to inherit without him. So take this down into your ordinary days: do the small thing right when it is cold and costly, honour the one nobody is counting, keep one thing too sacred to be laughed at, and when the command is clear but the reason is hidden, be of those who go. May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, who buried the forgotten with his own hands and led his ummah to a future he would not walk into, make us of those who go when He says go, keep the sacred sacred in our hearts, and gather us under his banner on the Day the nations are gathered.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 92: the expedition to Tabuk, part 5 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (9:65, 9:39), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

Tafsir of Surat at-Tawbah

The surah with no mercy at its head, and the most merciful man at its close

Tabuk is over. The army that marched into the heat of the northern desert has come home, the test has done its quiet work, and the seerah pauses now to do something it has not done before: it stops walking and sits down to read. Roughly two thirds of an entire surah of the Qur'an was sent down for this one expedition, and so before the story moves on to the last year of his life ﷺ, Dr. Yasir Qadhi turns the whole lesson into a reading of that surah, ayah by ayah, against the events we have just lived through. The chapter is Surat at-Tawbah, the chapter of repentance, and it is one of the very last portions of the Qur'an to descend; there is barely a year of the Prophet's ﷺ life left when its verses come down.

It is a strange and heavy surah, and the Sheikh does not soften that. It opens without the basmalah, the only chapter in the entire Qur'an that does. It names almost no one, and yet it exposes everyone who hid. It carries some of the harshest language in the Book against those who broke faith. And before any of that, before the surah even begins as a surah in our reading, the story it produced begins with a funeral: the death of the man who spent a lifetime trying to wound the Prophet ﷺ, and the mercy that buried him anyway.

The funeral of the man who hated him

There is one incident left from the season of Tabuk, and it happened within a month of the army's return. Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul fell ill, and everyone understood he was dying. To grasp the weight of his deathbed you have to remember who he was. Before Islam ever reached Yathrib, this man was being groomed to be its leader, not a king, for the city had no king, but the senior-most figure among its chiefs. The other elders who might have rivaled him had been killed in the civil wars before the hijrah or had died in the year or two after the Prophet ﷺ arrived, until the only great pre-Islamic politician left standing was Abdullah ibn Ubayy, by now an old man in his seventies.

He did not embrace Islam out of conviction. He was not at Aqaba; he came in with the very last batch of converts, after Badr, when paganism had been swept out of Madinah and a man either accepted Islam or left. He was forced, and his record under Islam shows it. He turned back at Uhud with a third of the army, complaining that since the Prophet ﷺ had not taken his counsel, why should he fight. At the trench of al-Ahzab he was the frightened one, going from Companion to Companion asking whether they could not see that all of mankind had gathered against them this year, trying to spread his terror through the ranks, and Allah answered by raising the believers' iman instead. On the road home from a later expedition he said openly that when they returned to Madinah the honorable would drive out the lowly, meaning himself the honorable and the Prophet ﷺ the lowly. And he lit the first match of the slander against Aisha radiyallahu anha, the worst of all his crimes. Every one of these things sits in the Qur'an. He is the ringleader the Book describes without ever writing his name, the one it calls, in a word that has no clean English equal, the one who took the largest share of it.

And yet, dying, he sent for the Prophet ﷺ and asked him to seek forgiveness for him. The Sheikh stops here, because that single request is the whole psychology of the hypocrite laid open. Why would a man who spent his life mocking the Prophet ﷺ want him at his deathbed at all? Because at some level he knew exactly who Allah was, knew Islam to be true, and at another level was too proud to ever truly bow. That is what makes the hypocrite, in the end, worse than the open disbeliever: the plain pagan does not know, and an utterly ignorant man might find some excuse before Allah, but this man knew, and chose his pride, which is why the Qur'an places the hypocrites in the lowest depth of the Fire.

When the request came, Umar ibn al-Khattab radiyallahu anhu could not contain himself. Messenger of Allah, he said, will you visit him, when he is an enemy of Allah? Notice what the Prophet ﷺ did not do. He did not correct Umar, did not say no, he is not an enemy of Allah. He said only that he hoped, through this kindness, that Allah might draw to faith a thousand of those who still looked up to the dying man. The thousand is not a literal count; Abdullah ibn Ubayy did not have a thousand followers. It is an expression for the many whose iman was still weak and who watched their old leader to see how the Prophet ﷺ would treat him. So the Sheikh draws out the principle the Prophet ﷺ was teaching in the act itself: Islam takes the long view, weighs the good against the harm, and will extend warmth even to a man it has every reason to despise, if a greater good for the community lies on the other side of that warmth.

He went. There are two reports, and the Sheikh holds that both may be true: that the dying man himself asked for the Prophet's ﷺ shirt to be used as his shroud, and that his son later asked for it too; in the first case the request was made in life, in the second

the garment was actually handed over after death. What is certain beyond doubt is that the Prophet ﷺ gave his own shirt for the burial. The Sheikh ties it back to the lesson of the day before, on barakah: the shirt was sought because barakah clung to anything that had touched him ﷺ.

Then the body was brought to the masjid for the funeral prayer, and as the Prophet ﷺ rose to lead it, Umar took hold of his garment to stop him. He began listing the dead man's record back to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: will you pray over him after he did this, and this, and this? It is one of the most extraordinary scenes in the whole seerah, a Companion reaching out and physically halting the Prophet ﷺ, reminding him of a verse of the Qur'an, and asking, is it not forbidden now to pray for the hypocrites? The Sheikh pauses to note what this reveals, and what it does not. It is not the modern slogan of free speech, which is a different idea. It is something quieter and sturdier: that even the Messenger of Allah ﷺ could be respectfully challenged by those who loved him, and that he would hear the challenge without crushing the one who raised it. Set that beside the rulers of our own age, the Sheikh says, where a hundredth of such a word would mean you were never seen on the street again, and you begin to feel what kind of man Umar was standing in front of.

The Prophet ﷺ answered that Allah had given him a choice, and he had chosen, and then he recited the verse:

Ask forgiveness for them, [O Muhammad], or do not ask forgiveness for them. If you should ask forgiveness for them seventy times, never will Allah forgive them. That is because they disbelieved in Allah and His Messenger, and Allah does not guide the defiantly disobedient people.

QUR'AN 9:80

What he ﷺ drew from it is precise. Allah had not commanded him to refrain; Allah had said the forgiveness would not be granted even at seventy askings, but the command itself, ask or do not ask, left the door open. So he chose to ask. If I knew, he said, that asking seventy-one times would gain their forgiveness, I would ask seventy-one. Then he prayed over the man, and walked with the body to the grave, and it is recorded that he climbed down into the grave himself ﷺ and helped to bury the one who had been such an enemy to him. The Sheikh lets the weight of it settle. The Prophet ﷺ had, as we would say, no lost love for this man; in all his years Abdullah ibn Ubayy had done nothing but injure him. And still, now that he was dead, the Prophet ﷺ did not want the Fire even for him. This is the heart of the day's first lesson: you do not wish the Fire of Hell upon even your worst, worst enemy.

The verse that drew the line

After that burial, the line came down from heaven:

And do not pray [the funeral prayer, O Muhammad], over any of them who has died, ever, or stand at his grave. Indeed, they disbelieved in Allah and His Messenger and died while they were defiantly disobedient.

QUR'AN 9:84

Never again pray over one of them; never again stand at his grave. Read quickly, it sounds like a rebuke, as though the Prophet ﷺ had done something he should not have. But the Sheikh asks you to notice the order of events, because the order is the mercy. Allah let His Messenger ﷺ pour out his tenderness one final time, gave his shirt, prayed the prayer, stood at the

grave, and only then closed the door. The verse did not snatch the act back; it sealed it after it had been completed.

And here the Sheikh insists on the part most people miss, because to miss it is to misuse it. This verse never reached down to us. The Prophet ﷺ could be forbidden from praying over specific hypocrites because Jibril had named them to him; he knew, by revelation from the heavens, whose professed Islam concealed real disbelief. We have no such knowledge, and we never will, because hypocrisy is hidden by its very nature, which is exactly what the word means. So the ruling that governs us is the opposite of a license to judge. When a person who openly professed Islam dies, we wash him, we pray the funeral over him, and we bury him among the Muslims, and whatever was truly in his heart we hand over to Allah. The verse drew a line that only the Prophet ﷺ could see, and the day's second lesson is to leave the hidden hearts of others to the One who made them.

The surah with no basmalah

Now the seerah steps back to read the chapter whole, and the first thing anyone notices about Surat at-Tawbah is what is not there. Every other surah of the Qur'an opens with bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Rahim, in the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Especially Merciful. This one does not. It is the only surah without it, and it is also among the last to be revealed, descending in the ninth year of the hijrah with only a year of the Prophet's ﷺ life remaining. The Sheikh is careful to add that the surah was not sent down all at once or in its written order: the first thirty-odd verses came later, around the pilgrimage season, and what we are reading, from verse thirty-eight onward, is the Tabuk material. The Qur'an, he reminds us, was never arranged in the order of its

revelation; verses came down and the Prophet ﷺ told the scribes precisely where each one belonged.

So why no basmalah? Two answers come down from the Companions, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi gives each its full weight. The first is a report in the collection of at-Tirmidhi from Uthman ibn Affan radiyallahu anhu, the Companion who oversaw the compiling of the mushaf. He was asked why he had placed at-Tawbah next to al-Anfal with no basmalah dividing them, when the two surahs were revealed so far apart, al-Anfal early, around Badr, and at-Tawbah at the very end. Uthman answered that at-Tawbah was among the last surahs to be revealed, that the matter of where exactly it belonged was not fully clear to them, and that because its subject was the same as al-Anfal, fighting and striving in the cause of Allah, they set the two together and did not write a basmalah between them, uncertain whether the two were one surah or two.

The Sheikh notes that this is advanced ground, the kind that can unsettle before it settles. From this very report, a small number of the early scholars, among them Qatada, the student of Ibn Abbas, actually held that al-Anfal and at-Tawbah were a single surah, which is why some of the earliest counts list one hundred and thirteen chapters rather than one hundred and fourteen. They were not claiming a surah was missing; they were joining two into one. But that view stood almost entirely alone, and the ummah settled, with no real disagreement remaining, on two distinct surahs.

The second answer comes from Ali ibn Abi Talib radiyallahu anhu, asked the same question by one of his household. This, he said, is a surah in which Allah severs His ties with the idolaters; it opens with a declaration of disassociation, a freedom from any

covenant with them, and it would not befit such a chapter to begin with the name of the Most Merciful. The whole opening, Ali observed, is harsh against those who reject Allah and His Messenger, and so mercy was simply not the right door by which to enter it. Both readings, the Sheikh says, carry a real legitimacy: the placement was genuinely uncertain to the Companions, and the tone of severance made the basmalah an ill-fitting threshold.

And the surah teaches one more thing in passing, something the Sheikh draws out because it touches the integrity of the whole Qur'an. There are two kinds of ordering: the order of the verses within each surah, and the order of the surahs within the Book. On the first there is no dispute. The Prophet ﷺ himself, under revelation, set every verse in its place; you can feel it, the Sheikh says, in the way each surah holds a rhythm and a flow from one ayah to the next, a coherence that runs underneath even a translation. He even pauses on a striking witness from outside the tradition, a non-Muslim German scholar of the Qur'an who, against another orientalist claiming the text had been tampered with by later scribes, argued that this was plainly false, because the internal architecture of each surah demonstrates a single coherent design preserved from the Prophet's ﷺ time. She does not believe the Qur'an divine, the Sheikh notes; she believes it preserved, which is its own kind of testimony. But the order of the surahs is a different matter. That appears to have been arranged by the Companions, who each kept their own arrangement in their private copies, until it was standardized in the time of Uthman, after which it became binding on the ummah to keep. So the flow you feel within a surah is divine, set by the Prophet ﷺ; the sequence of the chapters is the Companions' trust, faithfully kept.

What is the matter with you?

From verse thirty-eight, the surah turns to Tabuk itself, and it opens like a hand laid on the shoulder that then begins to tighten:

O you who have believed, what is [the matter] with you that, when you are told to go forth in the cause of Allah, you adhere heavily to the earth? Are you satisfied with the life of this world rather than the Hereafter? But what is the enjoyment of worldly life compared to the Hereafter except a [very] little.

QUR'AN 9:38

What is the matter with you, that when the call to march comes, your bodies sink to the ground? The severe and beautiful warning begins here and recurs throughout the surah, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi stops at once to build a fence around it, a fence he says is not optional. These are powerful verses of jihad, revealed for a specific command at a specific moment in history, and it is impermissible, haram, for any Muslim to lift them out of that moment and stamp them onto his own private cause, declaring that Allah revealed them for him. Yes, the Sheikh grants, every legitimate cause has a share of their spirit; no one denies that. But to claim this verse points at my particular faction and my particular expedition is to say that Allah is, in effect, revealing the verse to you, and that, the Sheikh warns plainly, is precisely the road that leads to extremism. The verses belong to Tabuk. Read in their context, they instruct; read into one's appetite, they destroy. That is the day's fifth lesson, and the Sheikh states it as a warning, not a footnote: never weaponize a verse of the Qur'an.

Then the command becomes plain:

Go forth, whether light or heavy, and strive with your wealth and your lives in the cause of Allah. That is better for you, if you only knew.

QUR'AN 9:41

Light or heavy: healthy or sick, young or old, rich or poor, fully equipped or empty-handed, go. The Sheikh marks how this set Tabuk apart. Unlike Badr, unlike many earlier expeditions that were voluntary, every able-bodied believer was bound to this one. And he returns to the question that has shadowed this whole episode from its first lesson: why? No real enemy ever materialized at Tabuk; no battle was fought; nothing of substance was found when the army arrived. The verses answer it. The march was a command and a test, deliberately set, to raise the bar so high that this same generation, after the Prophet ﷺ was gone, would carry the struggle out to the ends of the earth. Tabuk was Allah sorting the believer who goes from the one who clings to the ground, and the surah is the record of that sorting.

If you do not aid him, Allah already has

Then comes a verse that reaches back across nine years and sets it down in the middle of the largest Muslim army yet assembled:

If you do not aid him, Allah has already aided him when those who disbelieved had driven him out [of Makkah] as one of two, when they were in the cave and he said to his companion, "Do not grieve; indeed Allah is with us." And Allah sent down His tranquility upon him and supported him with soldiers you did not see and made the word of those who disbelieved the lowest, while the word of Allah, that is the highest. And Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise.

QUR'AN 9:40

If you will not help him, Allah is telling them, then know that Allah has already helped him, on a night when there was no one to help, when he was one of only two men, hunted, hiding in the dark of the cave of Thawr, saying to his companion: do not grieve, indeed Allah is with us. At Tabuk there were more Muslims gathered than ever before in the history of the religion, and Allah turns to that vast army and asks, in effect: do you imagine I need your numbers? I stood by him when he had no numbers at all, when he was one against a city, and I sent down tranquility upon him and armies you could not see.

The Sheikh lingers over two things in the Arabic. The first is the phrase that calls the Prophet ﷺ the second of two, thaniya ithnayn. It carries no ranking, he stresses, no suggestion of a hierarchy between the two men; it is simply how Arabic says one of two people, exactly as one says the third of three, a picture of two figures alone in the dark and nothing more. The second is the word companion, sahibihi. This, the Sheikh says, is the verse, the one that settles the matter for all time, that names Abu Bakr radiyallahu anhu the companion of the Prophet ﷺ in the cave. There is no other verse in the Qur'an that calls a specific, named person the Prophet's ﷺ companion by this description. And so the Sheikh states the conclusion with the firmness it deserves: anyone who denies that Abu Bakr was the companion of the Prophet ﷺ has contradicted the plain testimony of the Qur'an itself, and to contradict the Qur'an on a matter this clear is to step outside belief in the Qur'an. The cave that held two men now anchors a verse that no one can argue around.

Exposed by their fear of being exposed

Much of what follows is a long, unsparing exposure of the hypocrites who stayed behind, and the readings the Sheikh walks

through are unforgettable precisely because the Qur'an is so exact about the human heart.

There were the men who came to be excused with the flimsiest of pretexts. One begged to be left at home lest the sight of foreign women on the campaign tempt him into sin, and Allah answered that with the excuse of fleeing the trial, he had fallen headlong into the trial itself. There were those who swore by Allah that only the lack of means kept them home, and Allah said that even as they swore, they were destroying themselves, because He knew they were lying. And there were the men who, had they actually marched, would only have spread discord through the ranks. Here the Sheikh draws out a distinction the verse makes with surgical care. Allah names not two kinds of people but three: those who sow the discord, those steady enough to resist it, and between them the dangerous middle, the soft hearts who would have listened and been swayed. Sit with that, the Sheikh urges. For every Companion whose name has reached us, there were thousands whose names we will never know, ordinary believers who had not climbed to the rank of an Abu Bakr or an Umar, and some even of that generation could be moved by an evil whisper. So what of ours. The verse is a mirror held up not only to the hypocrites of Madinah but to every age that came after.

And against the whole landscape of their fear, the Qur'an sets the believer's single, steadying line, one Dr. Yasir Qadhi calls among the most beloved verses in the entire Book:

Say, "Never will we be struck except by what Allah has decreed for us; He is our protector." And upon Allah let the believers rely.

QUR'AN 9:51

Nothing will ever reach us, the believer says, except what Allah has already written for us, and He is our protector, our guardian, and on Him we rely. The Sheikh unfolds the courage folded inside it. We are waiting, he says, for only one of two beautiful endings: victory in this world, or martyrdom into the next. So we win in either case, while the hypocrite, who fears death above all, loses in both. Say this verse to yourself when the dunya frightens you. That is the day's fourth lesson, and the Sheikh names the exact ayah: hold the believer's line.

Then the surah turns its sharpest edge on the mockery of the road home, the jokes some of them made at the expense of the Prophet ﷺ and the revelation, and when they were confronted and swore they had only been chatting and joking among themselves, Allah cut straight through the alibi:

And if you ask them, they will surely say, "We were only conversing and playing." Say, "Is it Allah and His verses and His Messenger that you were mocking?"

QUR'AN 9:65

Make no excuse; you have disbelieved after your belief. If We pardon one faction of you, We will punish another faction because they were criminals.

QUR'AN 9:66

The Sheikh draws the deepest point out slowly, and it is a point about eloquence as much as about justice. The hypocrites lived in a particular terror: that a surah would descend laying bare what was hidden in their hearts. Imagine the strange double-mindedness of that, he says, men who at some level knew that Allah knew their secret, and who trembled that He would publish it. And the eloquence of the Qur'an is this: Allah exposed them by

narrating their fear of being exposed. He described the dread itself, named the thing they were hiding by describing how desperately they hid it, and that was enough. They mocked the Messenger ﷺ for being too lenient, for listening to everyone, and Allah turned even that back on them, that his listening was a mercy to them, for had he dealt with them as they deserved they would not have been left alive. Respect for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, the Sheikh says, is itself a branch of iman, and to mock him, to ridicule or belittle him, is something no Muslim heart can do; that line, too, the surah makes absolute.

The mercy at the close

Before it ends, the surah lets the light back in. It tells of the three Companions whose case was held in suspense, true believers who had simply failed to march and then refused to lie about it, their verdict delayed while all of Madinah was commanded to keep its distance from them, until Allah turned to them in mercy and forgave the men who had owned their mistake and told the truth. And the Sheikh notices the order in which the forgiveness is announced, because it is tender. Before declaring the three forgiven, Allah first declares the Muhajirun and the Ansar already forgiven, those who followed the Prophet ﷺ in the hour of hardship, the hour of Tabuk, even after a party of them had nearly inclined to waver. He reassures the obedient first, and only then turns to the three.

And then, after a surah of severance and exposure, of excuses laid bare and ties cut off, the very chapter that refused to open with mercy closes upon the most merciful of all men:

There has certainly come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. Grievous to him is what you suffer; [he is]

concerned over you and to the believers is kind and merciful.

QUR'AN 9:128

A Messenger from among yourselves, one of you: your suffering weighs upon him, whatever harms you pains him, he is forever anxious for your good, and to the believers he is gentle and merciful. The Sheikh ties it straight back to where this whole day began, to the graveside of Abdullah ibn Ubayy. You saw it with your own eyes, he says: a man grieved at the punishment awaiting even a hypocrite, eager that even his bitterest enemy might somehow be spared. That is the Prophet ﷺ this verse is describing. The surah that would not begin with the name of the Most Merciful ends by calling the man at its center kind and merciful, and the two facts, the severance and the mercy, are meant to be held together and not balanced away.

The final word of the surah is given to him as the believer's whole posture compressed into two breaths:

But if they turn away, [O Muhammad], say, "Sufficient for me is Allah; there is no deity except Him. On Him I have relied, and He is the Lord of the Great Throne."

QUR'AN 9:129

If they turn away, say: Allah is enough for me; there is no god but Him; upon Him I have placed my trust, and He is the Lord of the Mighty Throne. With that sentence the Tabuk material comes to its close, and the seerah, the Sheikh tells us, now stands near the very end of the road: the bulk of the Qur'an revealed, the laws of Islam all but complete, Makkah secured, and the tribes of Arabia beginning to enter the religion in crowds. What remains is the last handful of months of his life ﷺ.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read a tafsir lesson as information, a set of facts about a surah, and walk away knowing more. Surat at-Tawbah refuses that. It puts hard questions to the one reading it, and the Sheikh draws them out as questions, not data.

Begin where the surah's story begins, at the grave. The Prophet ﷺ had no love left for the man being lowered into it; Abdullah ibn Ubayy had spent his every breath under Islam wounding him. And still he ﷺ gave his own shirt for the shroud, prayed the funeral, and climbed down into the grave with his own hands, because now that the man was dead he would not wish the Fire even on him. Whatever you are still carrying against someone who wronged you, measure it beside a Prophet ﷺ who buried his bitterest enemy and hoped he might yet be spared. Carry less.

Then hold the line that runs through the surah against the line that runs through your own days. The hypocrites had an excuse for every command, the flimsiest of them sworn to with the name of Allah, and the Book exposed them by narrating the very fear they hid. The Sheikh turns it on us before we can feel superior: count the excuses you reach for when Allah asks something of you, the prayer deferred, the wealth withheld, the command adhered to heavily as though your body were sinking to the ground, and notice how thin the smallest of them is. And learn from the same surah not to point these blades outward. The Prophet ﷺ alone was told who the hypocrites were; the verse forbidding their funerals never reached us. We were never given the right to read another person's hidden heart, only the duty to watch our own. We pray over whoever professed Islam, and we leave the rest to Allah.

And then there is the verse the Sheikh calls among the most beloved in the Qur'an, the one he tells you to keep on your tongue. When the dunya frightens you, when the numbers are against you and the way is dark, say what the believer says: never will we be struck except by what Allah has decreed for us; He is our protector. It is the same trust that held two men steady in a cave with the whole of Quraysh hunting them, and it is offered now to an army of thousands and to you. We wait for one of two endings, and we win in either, while the one who fears only this world loses in both.

So take the day's two gifts down into your ordinary life. Carry less in your heart against those who wronged you, because the most merciful of men buried his enemy with his own hands. And carry the believer's line on your tongue when the world frightens you, because the surah that would not open with mercy chose to close on the man who was mercy itself. May Allah send His peace and blessings upon Muhammad ﷺ, the Messenger from among ourselves whom our suffering grieved, make us of those who followed him in the hour of hardship, who owned their mistakes and found His mercy, and who say with full hearts, when the world turns away, that Allah is sufficient for us, the Lord of the Mighty Throne.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 93: the tafsir of Surat at-Tawbah and Tabuk (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (9:80, 9:84, 9:38, 9:41, 9:40, 9:51, 9:65, 9:66, 9:128, 9:129), verified via quran.ai.

The Year of Delegations, Part I

The year Arabia came knocking

The Battle of Tabuk is behind us, and the ground has shifted under the whole peninsula. The Muslims marched north to meet the Romans and the Romans never came; the Ghatafan never came; and an army that fights no one and rides home unvanquished is, by the only reckoning the desert understood, the winner. Add that to what came before. Makkah has been conquered. Quraysh, the one tribe under whose banner all the others might ever have gathered, has been subdued. Hunayn has been won. And so, quite suddenly, there is no longer a flag in Arabia for anyone to rally under, no capital to resist from, no leadership to unite behind. The smaller tribes look around and understand the arithmetic: they cannot stand alone, and there is no longer anyone left to stand with. So they do the only thing left. They send delegations to Madinah. The ninth year of the Hijrah carries a name for this season, *am al-wufud*, the year of delegations, and it is where Dr. Yasir Qadhi turns now, near the close of the whole series, with not many months of the Prophet's ﷺ life left to tell.

Why this year carries the name

Before a single delegate arrives, the Sheikh hands you a puzzle to hold. If the ninth year is the year of delegations, why do the histories record delegations arriving as early as the fifth, around the time of the Trench, and continuing in a steady stream right up

to the last month of the Prophet's ﷺ life? The delegations did not begin in the ninth year at all. They simply reached their peak in it. After the conquest of Makkah and the victory at Hunayn, the whole political landscape of the peninsula changed, and the frequency of delegations climbed to its height. That is why the year is named for them, and why the scholars gather the bulk of them and discuss them all at this one juncture: there were so many, scattered across so many years, that to pause and narrate each in its place would have been unbearably repetitive. The lists run past a hundred and twenty tribes. The Sheikh has no intention of marching you through all of them; he will illustrate perhaps a tenth, the handful that carry a lesson worth keeping, and let the rest stay in the books for those who want them.

And a delegation, he is careful to insist, did not always mean a tribe embracing Islam. It meant a tribe sending two or three representatives to negotiate. Some of those negotiations ended in faith, freely and joyfully given. Some ended in a hesitant faith that wavered and took years to settle. Some, it turned out, were pure hypocrisy, the tribe only pretending and then abandoning Islam the very moment the Prophet ﷺ died, so that his death alone exposed what they had really been. And some sought nothing more than a treaty: we will not become Muslim, but we will not fight you either. At this stage that was still permitted; a pagan could yet live in Arabia. Only later, after this year, would that door close, when Surah at-Tawbah would come down and give the idolaters four months around the sacred precinct, after which all of Arabia would enter Islam and paganism would be finished. But for now the door stood open, and through it came every kind of visitor, down to the delegation of pure threat: Musaylima the liar, who came at the head of his people from Yamama and offered, with a straight face, to split the earth in half,

one half for the Prophet ﷺ and one for himself. Not every delegation was the same. Each, the Sheikh says, was its own story.

The tribe that heard before anyone came

Begin where the Sheikh begins, with one of the very earliest delegations of all: the tribe of Abd al-Qais. They lived in the region the early sources call Bahrain, which in those days meant not the island we know by that name but the whole eastern coast of Arabia, the land of Dammam and Dhahran, what we now call the eastern province, pressed right up against the empire of Persia. Some were Christian, some pagan, and they sent two delegations: the first in the fifth year, reckoned by some the first delegation ever to come, and a second later in am al-wufud itself.

Here is the thing that should stop you. In the fifth year, a tribe sitting on the very doorstep of Persia already knew the details of Islam, and not one Muslim had ever reached them. No envoy of the Prophet ﷺ had been sent that far, no Companion, no preacher. The message had traveled the whole width of Arabia on its own, and they had heard enough to be interested, interested enough to gather a band of new converts and send them across the desert to Madinah. Abd al-Qais are remembered for it ever after as the first tribe outside the Hijaz to accept Islam voluntarily, without an army at their gates, without ever being invaded, a matter of pride they carried for generations. One day, the Sheikh relates, the Prophet ﷺ was delivering the khutbah and told his Companions a delegation was coming, the best people of the east, and they would be the best of the east for the simplest reason: there were no Muslims at all further east than they. A day or two later Umar ibn al-Khattab, radiyallahu anhu, was standing in the marketplace when a band of strangers

arrived, and he leapt up out of sheer joy, rushed to embrace them, and gave them the good news of what the Prophet ﷺ had said about them before they had even come.

The whole delegation rushed to the Prophet ﷺ, all of them except the youngest, a man history remembers by his nickname, al-Ashajj, the one with the wound, for an old fracture on his head. His given name is uncertain; it is the nickname that survived, because of what he did. While the others hurried ahead in their excitement, brand new Muslims desperate to lay eyes on him ﷺ, al-Ashajj hung back. He washed himself, put on good clothes, perfumed himself, and only then, composed and unhurried, came forward to meet the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ looked at him and told him he had in him two qualities Allah and His Messenger love: al-hilm and al-anaah. Forbearance, the Sheikh explains, the mastery of one's own temper, and anaah, the patience that does not act in haste, that thinks a thing through before it moves. The two are cousins, almost one quality from two sides: a man whose temper is cool does not lunge, and a man who pauses to think gives his temper the time to cool. And al-Ashajj asked one of the most intelligent questions in the whole seerah. These two qualities, he said, did I work to develop them in myself, or did Allah create me with them? And the Prophet ﷺ told him Allah had implanted them in his very nature.

Sheikh Yasir lingers here, because any parent knows the truth of it in their bones. You raise children under one roof, with one upbringing, and one comes out quick to anger and another calm from the cradle; you can see it when they are still babies. Some of who we are is shaped, and some is simply given. So what did al-Ashajj do with the part given to him for free? He thanked the One who gave it: all praise to Allah, who created in me qualities He loves. Not a flicker of pride, only gratitude that his Lord had

built something beloved into him at no cost of his own. A man who answers himself like that, the Sheikh says, is a man you can already tell will go far.

The delegation also had a problem they laid out plainly. Between their land and Madinah lay the tribe of Mudar, still pagan, still hostile, so that the only safe time to travel was during the sacred months, the *ashhur al-hurum*, when warfare was forbidden across all of Arabia. But it cut both ways: once they went home, they could not return for a year. So they asked the Prophet ﷺ for something to carry back, teach us something that will take us to Jannah and that we can teach our people. An intelligent tribe, the Sheikh repeats, asking exactly the right question. He ﷺ commanded them to have faith in Allah, then asked: do you know what faith in Allah is? To bear witness that there is no god but Allah, to establish the prayer, to give the zakat, and to fast Ramadan. And there he stopped, with four, not five; he did not mention the Hajj, because this was still the fifth year and it had not yet been made obligatory. Then, because Abd al-Qais were a people of cold lands who fermented their own drinks, they asked what they could drink, and he ﷺ forbade them their intoxicants by name, listing the kinds they brewed one after another, the precise drinking customs of a people on the far edge of the peninsula whom he had never met. They went home carrying their four pillars and their prohibition, and Abd al-Qais are remembered as the first to build a masjid outside the Hijaz and the first to gather for Jum'ah anywhere beyond Madinah.

The blunt bedouin who made the Prophet ﷺ swear

Some delegations came to negotiate a treaty rather than to believe, and one of those involved a tribe you already know without knowing it: Banu Sad ibn Bakr, one of the sub tribes of

the great Hawazin, and the tribe of Halima al-Sadiyya, the woman who nursed the Prophet ﷺ as an infant in the desert. The Hawazin, the Sheikh reminds you, were the bedouin half of a pair: they and Thaqif of Taif go back to the same ancestor, but one line settled into the town and the other stayed out among the tents, and it is the bedouin who take in the children of Quraysh to nurse, which is how Halima came to him in the first place. These were her people, then, and they sent an envoy who was not himself a Muslim, sent only to arrange a treaty, in the days before Thaqif itself would come. His name was Dimam ibn Thalaba, and he was a bedouin to the bone: hairy, gruff, rough, with two long braids hanging at the sides of his head the way the desert men wore them, the way you could still find them wearing them in old photographs a century ago.

He rode his camel straight up to the door of the masjid, made it kneel right there in plain view, and barged in demanding, where is the son of Abd al-Muttalib? And here, the Sheikh says, pause and see one wisdom of why Allah chose for His Prophet ﷺ the most honored lineage in all of Arabia. This is an unlettered bedouin from a distant tribe, and yet he knows the name Abd al-Muttalib, and knows the man claiming prophethood is his grandson. Lineage opened the door before a word of the message was spoken; a man more willing to listen because the one he had come to hear came from someone his whole world already revered. The Prophet ﷺ answered that he was the one. And Dimam, with no softness in him at all, looked at him and said: you are Muhammad? Then, before anything else: I am going to be hard with you in my questions, so do not be angry with me. He had at least that much courtesy, to ask leave to be blunt. Go ahead, the Prophet ﷺ told him, ask whatever you wish.

What followed was a strange, blunt interrogation, a hadith that has always tickled people for its sheer rough manner. Your envoy came to us, Dimam began, and told us Allah has sent you. He spoke the truth, said the Prophet ﷺ. Then the bedouin built his suspense the way a simple mind builds it, brick by heavy brick. Who created the sky? Allah. The earth? Allah. The mountains? Allah. Then, gathering it into one oath: I ask you by the One who created the heavens and the earth and raised the mountains, did Allah send you to us? And the Prophet ﷺ swore that yes, Allah had sent him. The bedouin trusted an oath where he did not yet trust a messenger, so he made him swear to each command in turn. Did Allah command you to tell us to pray five times a day? Yes. To pay the zakat? Yes. To fast? To make the Hajj, now that the command had come? Yes, to each. Then Dimam swore by the One who had sent him with the truth that he would do exactly this, no more and no less, not adding to it nor subtracting from it by a hair, and just as abruptly as he had stormed in, he stormed back out. He shall enter Jannah if he is truthful, the Prophet ﷺ said, for this is the bare floor of the faith: the five pillars kept, the major sins avoided, and a man who does that has done his part. And when Dimam reached home he tore down his people's idol with his own hands and began to preach. Ibn Ishaq records, from one of the Tabiun, that no single envoy was ever a greater blessing to his community than this rough man was to his: by him, his whole tribe came to Islam. And the Sheikh will not let the baraka of it pass without naming where some of it surely came from, that this was Halima's tribe, the family that had once carried the Prophet ﷺ as a nursing infant, and that Allah poured a particular blessing into them through that old bond.

Among these delegations sits a quiet miracle, told by another tribe. Muzaynah came, four hundred of them, the whole tribe at

once to embrace Islam. They studied with the Prophet ﷺ, and when it was time to make the long journey home, he ﷺ told Umar ibn al-Khattab, radiyallahu anhu, to give them the provisions they would need for the road, four hundred men, weeks of travel. Umar said, O Messenger of Allah, I have only a single sack of dates at home; that will never be enough for four hundred. The Prophet ﷺ simply told him again: go and provide for them. And Umar answered only, I will do it. Whatever you say, I will do it. He went back to his house, put the whole weight of his trust on that command, and found his store room filled with dates to the ceiling, heaped, Ibn Ishaq says, like a camel kneeling and filling the room. He called the four hundred, and every one filled his travelling sack, and the last man to leave looked back and saw the pile sitting exactly as high as before the first man had touched it, undiminished, as though no one had eaten from it at all. Not every delegation ended in wonder. This one did.

The tribe that came boasting

Then came a delegation of ten men from Banu Asad ibn Khuzayma, and they came loudly. They walked into the masjid and announced themselves: O Messenger of Allah, we testify to the shahada, and we are Muslims. And we want you to know we came to you without you ever sending anyone to us, and we accepted Islam without you ever having to fight us. We are not like the other Arabs. We traveled to you through the darkness and through the cold. On and on they went, the Sheikh says, bragging about the favor they imagined they had done him ﷺ by believing, holding their faith over his head like a gift he ought to be grateful for.

And Allah answered them directly, in an ayah Sheikh Yasir ties to this very tribe:

They consider it a favor to you that they have accepted Islam. Say, "Do not consider your Islam a favor to me. Rather, Allah has conferred favor upon you that He has guided you to the faith, if you should be truthful."

QUR'AN 49:17

They were Muslims, the Sheikh is clear, their faith was real, only thin, iman not yet settled deep in their hearts. But they had the order of things exactly upside down. They thought they had done the Prophet ﷺ a favor by entering Islam; Allah turned it around and showed them the favor runs the other way. No one does Islam a kindness by accepting it. If you are truthful in your faith, then be grateful that Allah chose you for it, for the guidance is the gift, and you are the one who received it. Islam is not a favor you grant. It is the favor granted to you.

The delegation that came to kill him ﷺ

The darkest delegation belonged to Banu Amir ibn Sasaa, the tribe behind the massacre at the well of Maouna, where Muslim teachers sent out at the tribe's own request had been betrayed and slaughtered. One of its chiefs, Amir ibn al-Tufayl, a name that had come up before in this story, came to Madinah among the delegates with no intention whatsoever of believing. He had come to murder the Prophet ﷺ. He had arranged it with his man Arbad ibn Qays: I will keep him occupied with questions, and when I give you the signal, draw your blade and strike. Most likely, the Sheikh judges, a poisoned blade, for an ordinary dagger does not reliably kill, and these were people who knew poison and had used it against him ﷺ before, in the sheep at Khaybar; one cut, and the deed would be done. The Sheikh is honest about the dating, which the delegations rarely give us cleanly: he suspects the attempt actually predates the conquest

of Makkah, since once Makkah had fallen it is hard to imagine anyone still thinking an assassination could change anything. But it sits with the delegations in the telling.

Amir kept pressing the Prophet ﷺ for a private audience, just the two of them, and the Prophet ﷺ kept refusing him, telling him there would be no private meeting until he accepted Islam. The conversation went back and forth. Three times Amir gave Arbad the secret signal to strike. Three times Arbad did nothing at all. When it became clear the private moment would never come and the plan had failed, Amir threw off all pretense and laid his arrogance out in the open. I give you three choices, he told the Prophet ﷺ. Take the people of the towns and leave me the people of the open country, and we will divide the leadership between us. Or make me your heir, to rule after you. Or it is war, a thousand stallions and a thousand mares against you. The Prophet ﷺ refused all three, and as the man finally left, he ﷺ raised his hands and prayed: O Allah, suffice me against Amir ibn al-Tufayl, and guide his people. A prayer against the one man, and a mercy for the whole tribe behind him. This dua, the Sheikh urges, is one to memorize and keep, Allahumma-kfini, O Allah be sufficient for me, against this trouble, against this enemy, even naming him, for whenever a particular person threatens us, this is the prayer to make.

Outside, Amir rounded on Arbad in fury. You are the strongest warrior I have, the very reason I chose you; why did you fail me? And Arbad gave an answer that explains everything. Every time you gave me the signal, he said, I could see no one but you. I could not see Muhammad at all. Did you want me to cut you down? He had not refused out of cowardice or mercy; Allah had simply hidden His Messenger ﷺ from the assassin's eyes, the way the seerah has shown before, the way Allah set a barrier

before those who plotted in the early days and behind them and covered them so they could not see. The man stood in the same room and could not find the Prophet ﷺ to strike him. As for Amir, the curse landed fast. On the journey home he lodged for a night in a house of ill repute, and in the dark a spreading sickness fell on him and ran through his body in a single night; realizing he was dying, and dying in a shameful place, he was too ashamed to be found there, so he mounted his horse and fled into the night, and his body was never found.

And Arbad met an end stranger still. He made it home, where his people asked where he had been. He told them he had just come from the man who claimed to be a prophet, and then he said something vile about Allah, words the Sheikh refuses to repeat, a plain and open insult to his Lord. The next day Arbad walked out among his community on his camel, and lightning came down from the heavens and consumed him and his camel where they stood, the two of them turned to ash in front of the whole tribe. Sheikh Yasir reads this as the very meaning of three verses in Surah ar-Rad that the books of tafsir apply to this man. First the warning that nothing repels Allah's punishment once He wills it:

For him are successive [angels] before and behind him who protect him by the decree of Allah. Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves. And when Allah intends for a people ill, there is no repelling it. And there is not for them besides Him any patron.

QUR'AN 13:11

Then the lightning itself, the thing that came down on Arbad, set in the sky for fear and for hope:

It is He who shows you lightning, [causing] fear and aspiration, and generates the heavy clouds.

QUR'AN 13:12

And then the thunderbolt, and the One who sends it down on whom He wills, even as such men stand arguing about Him:

And the thunder exalts [Allah] with praise of Him, and the angels [as well] from fear of Him, and He sends thunderbolts and strikes therewith whom He wills while they dispute about Allah; and He is severe in assault.

QUR'AN 13:13

The thunder itself praises Allah, the Sheikh says, and the angels tremble in His praise, and into all that praise He sends the thunderbolt to strike whom He wills, even while men dispute about Him. Arbad disputed about Allah, insulted Him, and was struck out of the very sky he had mocked. Allah is severe in His assault, and a man who had come to help kill His Messenger ﷺ learned it the hard way, incinerated before his own people.

Tamim al-Dari and the creature on the island

One last delegation, and a famous one. Tamim al-Dari was a Christian from a tribe in the north who came to Madinah and embraced Islam, and he carried a story the Prophet ﷺ found so striking that he gathered the people in the masjid simply to hear it told. The Companion Fatima bint Qays, who narrates it, remembered hearing the call go out, as-salatu jamiah, come to the prayer, outside the usual times; she came and stood in the front row of the women, and when the Prophet ﷺ finished he climbed the pulpit, beaming, his face bright with pleasure. Stay where you are, he told them, and let me tell you why I called you.

By Allah, I did not call you for any sermon or lesson. I called you only to tell you the story of Tamim al-Dari, a Christian who has become a Muslim, and who has told me something that agrees with what I have been telling you about the Dajjal.

Tamim told of sailing with thirty men, tossed by the waves and lost a full month at sea, until at sunset they washed up on a strange island. They took their small boat ashore and met a beast so covered in hair that you could not tell its front from its back. Terrified, they asked what it was. I am al-Jassasah, it said, and sent them on to a monastery where, it told them, a man was waiting to hear from them. Inside they found an enormous man, a giant, bound in iron, his hands chained to his neck, his legs shackled from knee to ankle. He questioned them about specific places in the Levant: the date palms of Baysan, whether they still bore fruit; the lake of Tabariyya, whether it still held water; the spring of Zughar in Syria, whether its water still ran and its people still grew crops. And he asked about the unlettered prophet who had appeared in Arabia, whether the Arabs had fought him and how it had gone. When they answered that he had left Makkah, settled in Yathrib, and prevailed over the Arabs near him, the chained giant told them it would be better for them to obey him, and then named himself. I am the Dajjal, he said, and soon I will be permitted to come out and travel the earth, and I will not leave a single town unentered, staying in each for forty nights, except for Makkah and Tayba; both are forbidden to me, and every time I try to enter one of them, an angel with a drawn sword will turn me back at every road. The Prophet ﷺ struck his pulpit with his staff and said: this is Tayba, this is Madinah; had I not told you he would never enter it? Then he pointed, correcting any guess that the creature lay in the western sea or the Arabian sea: no, he is in the east, in the east, in the east.

Now the Sheikh does something honest with you, because this hadith is recorded in Sahih Muslim and yet it sits uneasily with much of what we otherwise know. He keeps the report exactly as it stands, refusing to reject what an imam of Muslim's rank graded sound; but he also keeps the unease, his own and that of scholars before him. His own teacher, Sheikh Ibn al-Uthaymeen, used to say that something in his heart told him this hadith was troubled, while warning in the very same breath, correctly, that you never reject a hadith merely because your heart dislikes it; the heart is no measure of authenticity. The measure is other evidence, and that is where the real difficulty lies. Several authentic reports, in Bukhari and Muslim both, seem to pull against this one. There is the night the Prophet ﷺ told his Companions that not a single soul then alive would remain upon the earth a hundred years later, with no exception made, hard to square with the Dajjal already alive and chained on an island. The well known descriptions make him a short, stocky man, not a giant; they say he will be born in the future to a couple awaiting a child, not bound across the sea already; they dwell on his one blind eye and the word kufr written between his eyes, none of which appears in Tamim's account. And the long episode of Ibn Sayyad, the strange youth of Madinah whom Umar swore to his dying day was the Dajjal, makes little sense if the Dajjal were known to be locked on a distant island. For reasons like these, a small number of scholars, Rashid Rida of Egypt and Ibn al-Uthaymeen among them, have flagged this single report as problematic, not out of personal taste but against the wider weight of the texts. The Sheikh adds that he himself looked into the chain that very day and found a real weakness in it, the narration passing through a narrator known to have drawn at times on the storytellers, and that another student of Ibn al-

Uthaymeen has written a whole study tracing the same difficulty through every chain.

The Sheikh leaves it precisely where a careful believer must, and the discipline of where he leaves it is itself the lesson. If the Prophet ﷺ truly said this, then it is true and we accept it without the slightest hesitation; our intellects and our cultures and our comfort have no vote. The only question, and it is a real one, is whether he truly said it, and on that there hangs an honest question mark. What is not in question, he reminds you firmly, is the one fact the whole report was told to confirm: the Dajjal will never enter Makkah or Madinah. That is reported by at least six Companions through many separate chains, established beyond any doubt. The strange detail of the chained giant on the island wobbles. The protection of the two sacred cities does not.

What this day asks of our faith

This is the year Arabia stopped resisting and started arriving, and the handful of delegates the Sheikh has set before us are not a parade of tribal names to be skimmed and forgotten. Each one puts a question to us, quietly, across fourteen centuries.

Compose yourself before you come to Allah. The whole tribe of Abd al-Qais rushed in, new Muslims so eager they could not wait, and there is something beautiful in that eagerness; but it was the one who paused that the Prophet ﷺ praised, the young man who washed and dressed and perfumed himself and arrived calm, and was told he carried two qualities Allah loves. We are a people who lunge, who fire off the angry reply and rush the heavy decision. The seerah holds up al-Ashajj and asks whether we can slow down before the things that matter most, whether we can come to our prayer and to our Lord with a temper that has had time to cool. And it asks something gentler too: that we make our

peace with how we were made. Allah built al-Ashajj calm by nature, and al-Ashajj answered with thanks rather than pride. Some of who you are is given, not earned. Thank Allah for the good He set in you for free, and work patiently, without despair, on the part that is yours to shape.

Ask for what you can carry home. Abd al-Qais did not ask for everything; they asked for the floor that holds a whole people up, the testimony and the prayer and the zakat and the fast, simple enough to teach an entire tribe a year's journey away. There is humility in learning the essentials well enough to pass them on, and a trap in always reaching for the advanced and the obscure while the foundations stay shaky. Learn the floor, build on it, and carry it to others.

And then there is the favor, and who is doing it for whom. Banu Asad came boasting they had done the Prophet ﷺ a kindness by believing, and Allah turned the whole thing over from above the seven heavens: do not count your Islam a favor to Me; Allah did you the favor, by guiding you to it. It is a verse to hold against the heart on the days we feel we are doing our religion a service by keeping it, that our prayers and our restraint are gifts we bestow. They are not. The guidance was the gift, given to us, and gratitude is the only fitting response. No one does Islam a kindness by entering it. Islam is the kindness done to them.

Carry, too, the prayer he made over the man who came to murder him. With a poisoned blade somewhere in the room and an assassin waiting on a signal, the Prophet ﷺ did not curse the tribe; he prayed against Amir alone and asked guidance for Amir's people in the very same breath. Curse the harm, and pray for the people. Even at the sharpest moment a man can face, his mercy reached past the one who wronged him to the many who

merely followed, and that is the prophetic temper we are asked to grow toward: hard on the harm, soft on the human beings caught around it.

And keep the discipline the Sheikh modeled over the story of the Jassasah, because it will guard you in an age that loves to throw away whatever it finds uncomfortable. A hadith is weighed by evidence, never by taste. The Sheikh kept the report in Sahih Muslim and kept the scholars' unease, and let neither one swallow the other, insisting all the while that the only valid scale is other texts, never our own comfort or our own era's instinct. Hold your honest questions honestly, but hold them to the right standard, and never make your own heart the judge of what your Lord and His Messenger ﷺ may say.

The waves are only beginning. Still to come, in the next two days, are Daws and the prayer the Prophet ﷺ turned from a curse into a mercy, the proud tribe of Thaqif bending at last in Taif, the false prophet who wanted half the earth for himself, and the Christians of Najran and the curse none of them would dare to risk. For now, let today's prayer be his prayer ﷺ, the one he raised over the man who came to kill him: O Allah, be sufficient for us against all that would harm us, guide those who wrong us before You judge them, soften the hardest hearts the way You softened a whole peninsula until it came knocking at the gates of Madinah, and let us come to You composed and grateful, like the young man who washed and perfumed himself before he ever reached Your Messenger ﷺ. Ameen.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 94: the Year of Delegations, part 1 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih

International (49:17, 13:11, 13:12, 13:13), verified via quran.ai. The narration is the Sheikh's; the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

The year of delegations, part 2

The tribes come to Madinah, one wave at a time

Once Makkah fell, the Arabs understood which way the wind had turned, and they came. From the fifth year of the hijrah onward they had been trickling in, but in the ninth they arrived in a flood: so many delegations, and so loosely dated, that even the earliest historians gave up setting each one in its proper month. Ibn Ishaq and the others gathered them under a single heading and let the calendar blur, because this was the season the delegations came. We call it the year of delegations, and to tell it honestly is to tell it as they preserved it, thematically, with the chronology bending back and forth, since some of these tribes had actually sent word in the seventh and eighth years.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi walks us through three of them, and no two open the same way. A Yemeni chieftain who plugged his ears with cotton so he would not have to hear the Prophet ﷺ, and heard him anyway. A prince of royal blood, mourning a stolen throne, told he would be given something better. And the one tribe in all of the Hijaz that had held out to the bitter, bloody end, finally coming to give up its idol. Three doors into Islam, not one swinging on the same hinge. Read them together and you begin to see how patiently Allah opens the same door for very different hearts, and how patiently His Prophet ﷺ held it open for each.

The chieftain who stuffed his ears

Go back, first, to a year we cannot quite name, the seventh or eighth of the dawah, when the Prophet ﷺ was still being hounded in the streets of Makkah and the Quraysh had made it policy to warn every visiting dignitary against him. In that climate came Tufayl ibn Amr ad-Dawsi, chieftain of the Yemeni tribe of Dos, a poet and a man accustomed to weighing matters for himself. The Quraysh received him warmly, as they would any chief, then leaned in with the warning they gave everyone: be careful, one of our own has become a magician, his speech splits fathers from sons and brothers from brothers, you grow mesmerized just by listening. They said it so insistently, Tufayl remembered, that he grew genuinely afraid. When he went to the Kaaba to present himself before the idols, he stuffed his ears with cotton, so that nothing of the Prophet ﷺ could get through.

But the Prophet ﷺ was standing there in prayer, reciting the Qur'an, and cotton does not block everything. A few words slipped past the wool, and Tufayl had never heard anything like them. So he began to reproach his own cowardice the way an intelligent man does: you are a poet, a thinking man, you know truth from falsehood. Listen to him; if it is good, take it, and if it is bad, leave it. He pulled the cotton from his ears, went to the Prophet ﷺ, and told him plainly what the Quraysh had done and that he now wanted to hear the rest. The Prophet ﷺ sat him down, taught him what Islam is, and recited to him. It is said it was only the last three short surahs, al-Ikhlās, al-Falaq, and an-Nas, and Tufayl was so moved that he accepted Islam on the spot, an early Makkan convert in the thick of the persecution.

Then he asked for something that would echo down the centuries. Make du'a for me, he said, and make du'a for my tribe. And the Prophet ﷺ raised his hands and said, O Allah, guide the tribe of Dos. Three times he made that du'a for a people who had

not yet believed. Whether he raised it in Makkah that day or years later in Madinah the historians are not sure, and Sheikh Yasir is content to leave it open, because the point is not the place but the prayer: the Prophet ﷺ asking guidance for a whole tribe of strangers on the word of one man newly come to the faith. And then the instruction Tufayl was sent home with, the one that frames everything after it: go back to your people, and be gentle with them. Do not be harsh. Be gentle, and perhaps they will be guided.

Gentleness, and the man it brought

Tufayl went home and was gentle, and it worked exactly as the Prophet ﷺ had promised. The very day he returned, his father, his mother, and his wife entered Islam, one after another. He was beloved among his people, the chieftain they trusted, and so the faith spread quietly through them until some eighty families of Dos had accepted Islam at his hands. There is a measure of his standing in something he offered the Prophet ﷺ while the persecution still raged: come to my fortress in Yemen, he said, emigrate to my land and my protection. A safe refuge, offered freely, before Madinah was ever on the horizon, and the Prophet ﷺ declined it, for Allah had not given him permission to go there, having already willed Madinah for him ﷺ and no other door.

In the end Tufayl did not come to Madinah merely as a delegate. He gave up the chieftainship, left his land and his lineage and his honor, and emigrated, and so strong had iman grown in his people that many of them pulled up their lives and came with him. Stop on that, because the Sheikh asks us to. This was no persecuted man fleeing for safety, but a chief with status and inherited rank, with everything to keep, and he walked away from

all of it for the sake of nearness to the Prophet ﷺ. It is easy to say in a sentence. Sit with what it would have cost.

And here is the thread the whole story was quietly carrying. Among the people guided to Islam through Tufayl, back in Yemen, was one man who would become one of the greatest legacies this ummah has ever known: Abu Hurayrah. He accepted Islam at Tufayl's hands and emigrated with that final wave, most likely in the middle of the eighth year, which means he was with the Prophet ﷺ for barely two years before the end. Two years, and yet he is called the preserver of the sunnah, the companion who narrated more hadith than any other, more than five thousand of them, when even those nearest the top of that list come in below four thousand. How? He explained it himself. He had given up marriage and the pursuit of a livelihood to simply stay in the masjid, near the Prophet ﷺ, with no food and no comfort, so as to miss nothing. He was so hungry, he said, that he would sometimes stop a companion in the road and ask a question whose answer he already knew, only hoping the conversation might carry them as far as that man's door, where a meal might be offered. From a poverty like that came the richest harvest of narration in the history of the religion.

Now hold the two men together. Every reward Abu Hurayrah earned for preserving the sunnah, Tufayl ibn Amr has a share in it, because Tufayl is the one who guided him. This is where Sheikh Yasir presses hardest, and returns more than once: never trivialize a single good deed you do. Most people have never even heard the name Tufayl ibn Amr. And on that obscure name hangs a share in every hadith Abu Hurayrah ever taught, every prayer prayed because of a sunnah he preserved, every reward still accruing fourteen centuries later. You never know which small thing Allah is quietly building something enormous upon.

A prince told he would be given better

The second delegation came from royal blood, and it belongs squarely in the ninth year. Wa'il ibn Hujr was from one of the small kingdoms of Yemen, that corner of Arabia which, unlike the rest, was never wholly tribal but studded with little thrones, perhaps a remnant of the age of the Queen of Sheba. His grandfather and great-grandfather had been among its kings; he was, in the plainest sense, a prince. And before he even arrived, the Prophet ﷺ announced to the companions that there was coming to them one of the noblemen of Yemen, one of its princes, of his own free will, no one having pressured or fought him, wanting nothing but to enter Islam. He told them so that they might honor the man. Three days later Wa'il arrived, exactly as foretold, one of the quiet miracles of the Prophet ﷺ that the seerah keeps handing us without fanfare.

And the Prophet ﷺ honored Wa'il as Sheikh Yasir says he honored almost no one else. He brought the young man up onto the minbar beside him, and spread out his own cloak for Wa'il to sit upon, the old Arab gesture of the highest respect, something he did only rarely. And then Wa'il opened the wound he had carried all the way from Yemen: my family, he said, have taken my right from me. The throne. Some cousin had taken the seat Wa'il believed was his, the way royal families have always quarreled over a chair, each prince certain he is the one qualified to sit in it. To this grief over a lost kingdom the Prophet ﷺ answered with a single sentence that should reach every one of us: I will give you better than that.

Better than a throne. Better than a kingdom. Because we know, from the explicit hadith of the Prophet ﷺ, that the very lowest person in Jannah will be told to wish, and wish, and wish, and will then be given everything he wished for and ten times the whole

of this world besides, when no king who ever lived held even a tenth of the dunya in his hands. So a claimant to a throne was told, plainly and gently, do not grieve the crown your cousin took; I have something better waiting for you. And the Sheikh turns it straight toward us: so do we all, if we are faithful to Allah. Whatever you have given up for His sake, He is not bargaining you down to something smaller. He is trading you up to something worth more than an entire kingdom.

There is a tail to this story that Sheikh Yasir cannot resist, and it carries its own quiet warning. The Prophet ﷺ gave Wa'il authority over a district of Yemen, befitting his blood, and sent a young escort along to settle the affairs and return: a youth barely eighteen, named Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan. On the road Wa'il rode his camel while Muawiyah walked alongside in the heat, and the young man asked if he might ride behind him. It is not befitting, said Wa'il, still wearing his old royalty like a second skin, that someone like you should ride with kings. Then at least lend me your sandals, Muawiyah said, for his own were worn through and the stones were burning. It is not befitting that a king's sandals should touch your feet, came the reply. Take shade, instead, from the shadow of my camel. Some forty years and more would pass. Muawiyah became the ruler of the Muslims, the first to found a dynasty, while the little kingdoms of Yemen had long since dissolved into nothing under the caliphate. And Wa'il came to him then, as a petitioner needing the ruler's favor, and reminded him of that day on the road. Be careful, the Sheikh says, who you are stingy with. You never know how the one walking beneath you today will be standing tomorrow.

Urwah, who was killed for calling his people

Now the great story of the day, the most significant delegation of the entire ninth year, and it begins with the one tribe that had refused, to the very last, to bend. Thaqif, the people of Ta'if. This was the tribe the battle and siege of Hunayn had been fought against, the tribe that had once driven the Prophet ﷺ bleeding from their streets, the last holdout of paganism in the whole province of the Hijaz. When the Prophet ﷺ had finally lifted the siege of Ta'if and turned away, the companions urging him to press the attack, he said, let them be, they will come to us. And eventually they realized he was right, that they had no road left open but Madinah. Yet something stood between them and that road and made them terrified to take it: a blood debt of their own making.

The man at the center of it was Urwah ibn Masud, one of the most respected leaders Thaqif had. You may already know him. He is the envoy Quraysh sent to the Prophet ﷺ at Hudaibiyyah, the very man who went back and reported, in the height of eloquence, that he had sat in the courts of Caesar and Khosrow and the Negus and had never seen a people revere a leader as the companions revered Muhammad ﷺ. They would not let his ablution water fall to the ground before they caught it, nor a single hair of his fall without rushing for it; they sat around him with their eyes lowered, as though birds were perched upon their heads. A man of that standing, describing what he saw as a disbeliever, amazed in spite of himself. He is even alluded to in the Qur'an: when the Quraysh sneered that revelation, if it had to come at all, should have gone to one of the two great men of the two great cities rather than to Muhammad ﷺ, Urwah was one of those two great men they meant.

After the siege of Ta'if, Urwah caught up with the Prophet ﷺ on the road back to Madinah and entered Islam, before they ever

reached the city. By the custom of the day the Prophet ﷺ would have expected him to emigrate, his tribe being unbelievers; but Urwah asked instead to be sent home, to call his own people. The Prophet ﷺ warned him: I fear your people will kill you. They love me more than they love their own daughters, Urwah answered; if they found me asleep they would not even wake me. He went home, and at dawn he climbed to the roof of his house and called the adhan, the open declaration of his Islam, and an arrow came out of the dark and struck him. His own people had killed him. As he lay dying his family pressed him, the way of the Arabs: what of revenge, what of the blood money, it is your right. Nothing, he said. This is a gift Allah has honored me with; He chose me as a martyr. You will do nothing at all. And bury me with the martyrs of Hunayn, outside the family graves, with the companions of the Prophet ﷺ whom we ourselves had killed. Look at how loyalties had turned: a chief of Thaqif asking to be laid not among his own ancestors but among the very Muslims his tribe had fought. And when the news reached the Prophet ﷺ, he said that this man was to his people as the man of Ya-Sin was to his.

And there came from the farthest end of the city a man, running. He said, "O my people, follow the messengers.

QUR'AN 36:20

The one who came running to his city to call it toward the messengers, and was killed by his own people for it. There is something more here that the Sheikh lingers over: the Prophet ﷺ had read Thaqif more truly than Urwah, their own leader, had read them. Urwah was certain they would never harm him; he was too beloved. But a man inside a thing is half-blinded to it, while one outside weighs it fairly, and the Prophet ﷺ, with both

his prophethood and that clear outside eye, saw what the blood would cost before it was ever spilled.

Ten days of bargaining

So Thaqif came, in Ramadan of the ninth year, but as frightened men rather than as believers. The blood of Urwah sat heavy on the tribe's conscience, and each of their leaders kept pushing the journey onto the next, afraid that to go to Madinah was to be called to account for killing one of their own, until at last six or seven of the seniors went together with their entourage. They were so eaten by guilt and so certain of poison that they would not touch a meal until their Quraysh go-between, a distant cousin of the Prophet ﷺ named Khalid ibn Saeed, had eaten from it first before them. And when they reached the Prophet ﷺ they ignored every protocol they had been taught, greeting him with the salutation of the days of ignorance and addressing him by his bare name, the very height of disrespect, when Allah Himself had told the believers not to address the Prophet ﷺ as they address one another. All of it announced that iman was not yet in their hearts. And he ﷺ overlooked every bit of it, never taking a word of it personally, and this was of his perfection ﷺ. He ordered a guest tent pitched for them inside his own masjid, doubling their shelter and their honor.

Then the haggling began, and it ran more than ten days, because they had come to negotiate, not to submit. Their first anxiety, tellingly, was for their stomachs and their wealth, in that order. What about interest, they asked, when all our profit is in riba? Allah has forbidden it, came the answer, with the verse quoted to them; you keep your principal and nothing beyond it. What about fornication, when we are travelling merchants always on the road? Forbidden. What about wine, when our land is famous for

its grapes and our winters bitterly cold, surely there is an exception? No exception. One of their leaders said outright that they could never face their people and tell them riba and zina and wine had all been stripped away at once. But another asked the only question that mattered: what is the alternative? An army within the month, and the loss of everything. And then one of them steadied the rest with the most beautiful argument of all. Look at the people gathered around the Prophet ﷺ, he said: they used to live exactly as we do, and they gave it all up and they are living fine. If they could do it, so can we. That, says the Sheikh, is the quiet power of a healthy ummah: a man on the threshold sees the thing can be done, because he watches it being done all around him.

Only once their appetites were settled did they remember the thing that should have come first of all: their idol. Al-Lat, the goddess of Ta'if, second in prestige in all of Arabia only to Hubal. Could they keep her three years, they asked. No. Two? No. One? A month? Down and down they bargained, and the answer never changed: she must come down. Then they asked to be excused from the prayer itself, and the Prophet ﷺ told them there is no good in a religion that has no prayer in it, no such thing as a Muslim who does not pray. Then they asked to be excused from wudu, because of the cold; no, again. This is the very impulse the Qur'an answered when the Quraysh sneered that the revelation should have gone to one of the great men of the two great cities, as though greatness were theirs to assign and Allah's mercy theirs to parcel out.

And they said, "Why was this Qur'an not sent down upon a great man from [one of] the two cities?"

QUR'AN 43:31

Do they distribute the mercy of your Lord? It is We who have apportioned among them their livelihood in the life of this world and have raised some of them above others in degrees [of rank] that they may make use of one another for service. But the mercy of your Lord is better than whatever they accumulate.

QUR'AN 43:32

Of all the demands, the prayer was the hardest for proud men to yield, because to bow the back felt to them like surrender. And surrender, of course, was exactly what it was.

The condition that was no condition

Then came the request Sheikh Yasir lingers on longest, because the scholars are still turning it over. Excuse us from zakat and from jihad, they said. And the Prophet ﷺ answered them: you are excused from zakat and from jihad. But once they had departed, days later, he said of them, they shall give zakat, and they shall go for jihad. What happened there?

The scholars give two readings, and Sheikh Yasir lays both out without forcing a verdict. The first is that this was something special to the Prophet ﷺ alone: knowing by revelation that iman would soon fill their hearts and they would come to do both willingly, he simply let the flawed condition stand, as a prophecy more than a permission, and no leader after him could ever grant the like, because none after him receives revelation about what a people's hearts will become. The second reading takes it as a precedent: that the political leader may accept an incorrect condition from a brand-new Muslim for a temporary time, then enforce the full deen once faith has settled, on the understanding, borne out by history, that everyone who genuinely enters Islam comes in the end to live it from within.

Theological and closed, or legal and repeatable? The scholars differ. Both readings agree, the Sheikh stresses, on the destination: Thaqif did in time give the zakat and go for the jihad, and their descendants are practicing Muslims to this day.

And here he turns it, gently and at length, toward us. When someone comes toward Islam still carrying things that are not yet Islamic, be lenient, he says, ultra lenient, far more than you would ever be with a settled Muslim. Do not justify the haram, never call the forbidden permitted, but cut such a person a million times more slack than you would cut yourself, because at the start iman is only a glimmer, and harshness and the demand for everything-at-once will snuff it out and turn the person away for good. Bring them instead into the fold, into the masjid, near the Qur'an, where they can listen and the faith can grow. Then, when iman has taken root, they will become better Muslims on their own; and even if they never fully do, a Muslim carrying that one sin is far better off than a soul that never came in the door at all. He reaches for the case that makes it real: a woman wants to embrace Islam but her husband will not, and she has children. You do not meet her at the threshold with a demand that she leave her family, unless her iman is already strong enough to bear it. Faith first, perfection later: that is the wisdom hiding inside a stubborn tribe's ten days of bargaining.

The idol comes down

They stayed in Madinah fifteen days, and around the tenth they entered Islam at last, and because it was Ramadan they fasted alongside the Prophet ﷺ and broke their fast in his masjid, Bilal carrying them their suhur in the dark and their iftar at dusk. New to it and over-careful, they kept misjudging the hours. At suhur they held back from eating, sure the dawn had already broken,

until Bilal told them he had just left the Prophet ﷺ eating; at sunset they held back from breaking the fast, sure the light was still in the sky, until Bilal told them the Prophet ﷺ had already broken his. An anxious, beautiful first fast. And quietly, through those days, the youngest member of the delegation had become the most eager of all. Uthman ibn Abi al-As would slip out of the elders' tent to sit with the Prophet ﷺ memorizing the Qur'an, and with Abu Bakr learning how to pray, while the seniors haggled. So when the delegation was about to leave, Abu Bakr suggested to the Prophet ﷺ that Uthman be made their leader, and the Prophet ﷺ agreed: the youngest of them raised over all the seniors, because he loved the Qur'an the most and had hungered for Islam the hardest.

Al-Lat still had to fall. The Prophet ﷺ sent Abu Sufyan and Tha'qif's own nephew al-Mughirah ibn Shu'bah to bring her down. The later books carry a story Sheikh Yasir clearly enjoys, not found in the earliest sources but preserved in the histories. Al-Mughirah, something of a prankster, asked Abu Sufyan whether he might play a joke on the watching crowd. The whole tribe had gathered, tense and grieving, the women weeping and the elders wailing over their goddess, certain that some catastrophe would strike the man who dared touch her. Al-Mughirah swung his axe, let out a great cry, and fell flat on his face. The tribe erupted with joy: did we not warn you, the goddess has struck him down. Then he sprang back to his feet. You fools, he said, and turned back to the work, hewing al-Lat down blow by blow while the keeper of the idol swore the earth would swallow him the instant he reached her base, until there was nothing left of her at all.

On the very spot where she had stood, the Prophet ﷺ ordered Uthman, now the leader of his people, to build a masjid, and it stands in that place to this day. The temple's long-accumulated

hoard of gold and silver, for every pagan shrine becomes a kind of bank over the years, the offerings piling up untouched, was gathered and given to the poor and to those weighed down by debt. And so the proudest holdout in all the Hijaz finally came in. The blood debt was set down, the goddess was rubble, a masjid rose where she had stood, and in time, exactly as the Prophet ﷺ had foretold, Tha'qif gave the zakat and went for the jihad of their own accord. The long story of their paganism was over.

What this day asks of our faith

Three delegations, three kinds of heart, and not one came in the same way, yet every one came in. That is the first thing the year of delegations asks us to see. Tufayl reasoned his way toward the door, an honest man who would not reject a thing before he had tested it, and pulled the cotton from his ears. Wa'il was led to the door and seated in honor, and had to be taught, slowly, that what waited beyond it was greater than the throne he grieved. Tha'qif had to be all but carried through it, bargaining over every inch, and ended exactly where the gentlest of them had hoped. Allah opened one door for three unlike hearts, and the Prophet ﷺ was patient enough to hold it open for each at the speed that heart could manage. Ask which of the three you are with the people in your own life who are still finding their way, and whether you are holding the door or letting it swing shut.

Be gentle when you call, because gentleness is what lets a new flame catch. Go back, and be gentle with them, the Prophet ﷺ told Tufayl, and a tribe came in. And do not trivialize the small good you do, because you cannot see what Allah is building on it. One obscure chieftain guided one man in Yemen, and that man was Abu Hurayrah, and a share in every hadith he preserved runs back to a name most of us had never heard until today. The

kindness you think too small to matter may be the hinge of something you will not learn the size of until you are shown your own record.

And carry home the lesson the Sheikh presses hardest of all, the one that runs under the whole story of Thaqif. Faith first, perfection later. With anyone whose iman is still only a glimmer, the new Muslim, the one inching back toward the masjid, the one tangled in things not yet untangled, cut a million times more slack than you would ever cut yourself. Do not bless the haram, but do not stand at the threshold with a list of demands either, because harshness puts the flicker out, while a soul brought near the Qur'an grows into the rest in time. The Prophet ﷺ excused a stubborn tribe from zakat and jihad to get their hearts in the door, and then they gave both willingly. Get the heart in; the rest tends to follow. O Allah, guide the hearts that are still finding their way as You guided Dos, give us better than every throne we have let go of for Your sake, make us gentle callers to Your path, and gather us with Your Prophet ﷺ and with all those who answered him. Ameen.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 95: the year of delegations, part 2 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (36:20, 43:31, 43:32), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The year of delegations, part 3: Musaylima, Yemen, and the Christians of Najran

A false prophet, a distant miracle, and the curse no one would risk

The books of seerah list more than a hundred and ten delegations by name, and for the great mass of them all that has come down to us is a single line: this tribe came. They sent their men, they heard, they went home, and history kept only the fact of their arrival. Over three sittings Dr. Yasir Qadhi has worked through that long roll and lifted out the few that earn their own telling, and on this third and last day he closes the arc. A fourth, he admits, would only have been a recital of tribal names, so he gathers here the most important of what remains: six or seven embassies, and one of them the strangest in the whole record. For most of them came at last to submit. This one came to make a demand.

By the end of the day you will have met the first man in the history of the Arabs ever to call himself a prophet, watched a miracle land in a far valley while two confused envoys stood in Madinah not understanding a word of it, listened to a tribe from Yemen ask the oldest question there is, and seen sixty Christians offered a curse so heavy they turned their camels around and rode home rather than touch it. And underneath all of it runs one quiet astonishment the Sheikh keeps returning to: in a single

year, with no armies on the march, the whole of Arabia came. That had never happened before in the life of the world.

The man who wanted half the prophethood

Begin with the bizarre one, because it is the most unforgettable. Out of Yamama, in the central uplands of Arabia, came the delegation of Banu Hanifa, a large Christian tribe, and at their head an old man named Musaylima, perhaps in his late sixties, perhaps already past seventy. In his younger years he had travelled all the way to Jerusalem to study Christianity, learned the language of the Romans and taken on their customs, and come home to a reverence that only grew with the decades. By the time Islam reached his country he was a man the entire region of Yamama looked up to, and his tribe carried him into the Masjid shielded behind fine cloths, a procession fit for a king, the whole pomp of a man told he is great for so long that he has come to believe it.

That is the thing the Sheikh wants noticed first, and he names it as one of the great dangers of power: once a man tastes it, it gets into his head, and he comes, quite literally, to feel that people owe him something. Musaylima had watched his peninsula fracture along the new fault line of Islam, watched tribe after tribe go over, watched even a nobleman of his own people, the chieftain Thumama ibn Uthal, who had once been tied to a pillar of the Masjid for three days and emerged a Muslim with such grace that he swore to choke off Makkah's grain until the Prophet ﷺ released it, carry his subtribe over with him. And the more Islam spread, the harder the old man's heart set. He could not imagine, after a lifetime of being venerated, becoming subservient to anyone.

So Banu Hanifa did not come to submit, and Musaylima sent his terms ahead of him: name me your successor and make me a partner in the prophethood, the way Musa made Harun his partner, and then I will follow you. Otherwise, no. He set the condition before he had even declared himself, which tells you, the Sheikh says, that the claim was already alive in his heart. And he had the audacity to put it to the Prophet's ﷺ face. The Prophet ﷺ happened to be holding a branch he had picked off a tree, the idle way a person holds something while he talks, and he gave Musaylima his answer through it: by Allah, if you asked me for this stick, I would not give it to you. You want command after me, and I would not hand you this worthless branch. Allah will deal with you, and humiliate you. And then: you are the one Allah warned me about.

Two bracelets of gold

That last sentence has a story folded inside it. Years later, when Ibn Abbas had grown into an old man, he went to Abu Hurayra to ask about a dream the Prophet ﷺ had once referred to; Ibn Abbas had been a boy of around twelve when the Prophet ﷺ died, and much of his vast knowledge came to him secondhand, gathered from the elder companions. Abu Hurayra gave him the hadith, and it is preserved in Bukhari. As he slept, the Prophet ﷺ had said, he saw two bracelets of gold upon his arms. Gold is forbidden for the men of this umma, and the wrongness of it troubled him even in the dream. Then he was inspired to blow upon them, and at his breath the two broke loose and flew away. He understood them at once: two liars who would rise after him, each pretending to a share of what was his and possessing none of it.

Musaylima was one of those two bracelets. He became the first of the false prophets, exactly as the Prophet ﷺ had foretold in another hadith: after me you will see liars, and the worst of them will follow others who came before them. The Sheikh stops over a quiet fact that is easy to skate past. Before this Prophet ﷺ, the Arabs had never so much as heard of the idea of a man claiming prophethood; it was not a category they possessed. When Heraclius interrogated Abu Sufyan with his careful questions, one of them was whether such claimants were common among the Arabs, and the answer was plain: no, never. The notion belonged to the Jews and the Christians; the children of Ishmael had no tradition of it at all. It took the towering success of the truth to summon all the counterfeits. The copycats only came once there was something worth copying.

And copy he did, down to the style of the Qur'an itself. Musaylima was, to the best of the Sheikh's knowledge, the first human being not merely to claim prophethood but to try to imitate the sound of revelation, and his attempts were so hollow that there is no harm in passing one on as the nonsense it is. There is the line addressed solemnly to a frog: O toad, daughter of two toads, purify what you purify, you neither muddy the water nor keep the drinker from drinking. They believed in those days that toads cleansed water, and this was the height of what the man could set against the Book of Allah. One of the Arabs who passed through his country, not yet a Muslim himself, heard a recitation of it and told him to his face: by Allah, I know you are a liar. Even an idolater could hear the difference. When Banu Hanifa's two messengers later carried Musaylima's letter to Madinah, declaring the earth now split between him and the Prophet ﷺ, half and half, the Prophet ﷺ heard their open profession of the lie and said: were it not that envoys are not to be killed, I would

strike the necks of you both. The Sheikh draws a point of law from the restraint. The immunity of the ambassador is older than any one religion and honoured across them all, the same principle the world today calls diplomatic immunity, a law that does not arise from the Sharia and yet which the Sharia affirms because it serves the common good. The Prophet ﷺ kept it even with men who had come to insult him.

Musaylima's end belongs to the wars of apostasy, after the Prophet ﷺ had passed, and the Sheikh says every Muslim should know the hand that killed him. It was Wahshi, the Abyssinian who had once thrown the javelin that killed Hamza, radiyallahu anhu, at Uhud. Wahshi took up the same weapon and went out against the false prophet, saying that he would atone for the best man he had ever killed by slaying the worst, and so the spear that had taken the Lion of Allah took the first of the liars.

Allah's camel, sacrificed at Jurash

Not every visitor that year came swollen with himself. One of the tribes of Azd, a great people of Yemen, accepted Islam, and the Prophet ﷺ set one of his companions over them as commander, charging him to bring in a neighbouring tribe still upon idolatry, the people of a place called Jurash. While that campaign was quietly unfolding far to the south, Jurash, knowing nothing of it, sent two of its own envoys north to Madinah to take the measure of the Prophet ﷺ and learn whether he would grant them a truce. The timing is the whole point: the two men set out before the attack, so there was no possible way for them to know what was about to happen to their people behind their backs.

They came before him, as delegations came every day, and he asked them which tribe they were from. From Jurash, they said. And he told them, plainly: Allah's camel is being sacrificed at

Jurash, even as we speak. They did not understand him; it was a riddle in their ears, this talk of a slaughtered camel. But Abu Bakr and another companion leaned in and pressed the meaning on them: do you not see what he is telling you? Your tribe is being overrun this very moment, far away. Your one hope now is to beg him to ask Allah to save them. So the two men begged, suddenly afraid, and the Prophet ﷺ raised his hands and prayed that the people of Jurash be guided. The envoys carried their confusion the whole way home, and when they arrived they pieced it together: at the very hour they had stood before him in Madinah, the Muslim commander had overcome their tribe and stood on the edge of a slaughter, then chosen, of his own will, to forgive and spare them. There had been no massacre. The whole tribe took it for the sign it was, and the next delegation that came up from Jurash came not to bargain over a truce but to enter the religion whole.

Faith is Yemeni

Many of the embassies of that year came for no reason but to learn: to sit and memorise the Qur'an, to study the religion, to carry questions of their own and lay them before the Prophet ﷺ. Through these one-time visitors a surprising number of the standard reports of fiqh and even of creed have reached us, narrated by men who saw the Prophet ﷺ once in their lives and went home to teach their people what he had said. The most striking question of them all came from the Banu al-Harith of Yemen, and it is kept in both Bukhari and Muslim.

The contrast that frames it is sharp. A delegation of the Banu Tamim, from the crude and hardened north, had come and been greeted by the Prophet ﷺ with glad tidings of Paradise, and they had answered by asking instead for money, since money was the

only good thing they could imagine being offered. The Prophet ﷺ fell silent and did not lower himself to their level, which is itself a lesson in his manners: when a man misunderstands you out of coarseness, you need not descend to answer him. Then the men of Yemen arrived, and to them he said, accept the good news, since Banu Tamim would not. And they answered as the others had not: we accept it, and we have come all this way to ask you about the very beginning. How did Allah create it all? How did everything start? These, the Sheikh observes, were minds of real depth, reaching past every smaller question to the greatest one imaginable.

The Prophet ﷺ told them there was Allah, and nothing before Him, and that He created the heavens and the earth while His Throne was upon the water. The Sheikh lingers on one thing the wording quietly teaches, and only that one, since the hadith has generated whole volumes of theology he sets aside today. The heavens and the earth are not the sum of Allah's creation. There was a Throne already, and water already, before this world was made; our universe is not His only handiwork. And then comes the detail that breaks the heart of every student of hadith. Imran ibn Husayn, narrating it, was drinking it in when someone called out that his camel had bolted, and he jumped up and ran after it across the sand, and caught neither the camel nor the rest of the hadith. How I wish, he said for the rest of his life, that I had let the camel go. And how the Sheikh wishes it too, because that delegation went home and did not become carriers of hadith, and so the answer to the oldest question trails off where a fleeing camel cut it short, for a wisdom Allah kept to Himself.

It is a piece of why the people of Yemen drew such tenderness from the Prophet ﷺ. The people of Yemen have come to you, he said in a hadith in Muslim, with the softest of hearts and the best

of souls. Faith is Yemeni, and wisdom is Yemeni. And he prayed, O Allah, bless us in our Sham and in our Yemen, calling both lands ours at a time when neither was yet under Muslim rule. So heavy is that praise that the Sheikh notes a promise kept in Muslim: that the Prophet ﷺ will stand at his Hawd, his fountain, beating back the crowd with his staff until room is made, and the people of Yemen will be the first given to drink from his hand.

Make it easy, do not make it hard

A few months on, after Abu Bakr had led the Hajj of the ninth year, one of the kings of Yemen accepted Islam, and the Prophet ﷺ sent Muadh ibn Jabal, radiyallahu anhu, down to him as his judge and deputy. He honoured Muadh as few were ever honoured: he walked on foot beside him while Muadh rode, giving him his counsel for the long road south. You are going to a people of the Book, he told him, so call them first to the testimony of faith; and if they answer, then to the prayer; and if they answer, then to the charity. And near the end, gently, almost in passing: it may be that you will not see me after this year of mine. Neither of them named what that was, but it was a farewell, and Muadh would indeed never see him again.

His last word to Muadh is the one the Sheikh asks every listener to take home and keep. Make things easy, and do not make them hard. Give people glad tidings, and do not drive them away. Bring hearts together, and do not split them apart. People stand at different levels, the Sheikh explains; your work when you reach them is to meet each one where he is, fill in the gaps and draw him closer, never to turn him off the road by flinging a hard truth at the wrong person at the wrong moment. It grieves the Sheikh how many carry the religion the opposite way, speaking a thing that may even be true but speaking it without wisdom, to ears not

ready for it, and slamming shut a door that gentleness would have eased open. And here is Muadh ibn Jabal, a scholar among scholars, sent off with the command to be easy and gentle. If Muadh was told this, the Sheikh asks, then who exactly are we, that we should be harsh in the name of Allah's religion?

The Christians of Najran

Now the long account, and the most instructive of all. Months earlier the Prophet ﷺ had written to Najran, a Christian province in the south with close ties to Rome, addressing its people in the name of the God of Ibrahim and Ishaq and Yaqub and laying three roads before them: accept Islam, pay the jizya, or stand and fight. They gathered to weigh it. Some said openly that a prophet had long been foretold from the line of Ishmael, that there were clear signs of him in their own scriptures, and that perhaps this was the man. Others said that even if he were no prophet but only a king, they had better gauge his strength first. So they agreed to send a delegation north and judge for themselves: sixty men, one of the largest embassies the Prophet ﷺ ever received, where most numbered two or five or ten. Among them were two dozen of their nobility, a handful of bishops, and over them all a patriarch, their senior most figure.

They arrived dressed unlike any Arabs the companions had ever laid eyes on, in the manner of the Romans, and the companions marvelled that they had never seen a delegation like it: their bearing, their manners, their clothing, all of it foreign. When the hour of their own prayer came upon them inside the Masjid, the companions moved to stop them, and the Prophet ﷺ told them to let it be. So in the holiest Masjid in Madinah the Christians of Najran turned to the east, as the Christians of old turned, and

said their prayers facing one of the walls, and no one disturbed them. The Sheikh marks the moment, and will return to it.

Then the dialogue began, and it ran for some days, perhaps three or four, back and forth over Isa, the son of Maryam. At the end of one long day they set down their hardest question, the one they thought unanswerable. If you grant, as we do, that Isa was born of a virgin with no father, then who is his father? The Prophet ﷺ did not answer from himself. He told them: wait, and let Allah answer you. And the next day the opening of Surah Al Imran came down, and within it the answer that dissolves the whole difficulty, for it shows that a birth without a father proves nothing of divinity at all:

Indeed, the example of Jesus to Allāh is like that of Adam. He created him from dust; then He said to him, "Be," and he was.

QUR'AN 3:59

Adam had neither father nor mother, the Sheikh draws out the force of it, and no one calls Adam the son of God. If creation without a father made a man divine, Adam would have the better claim, fashioned as he was from dust by nothing but a word: Be. Isa needs no father, because Allah needs only to say to a thing, be, and it is.

The curse no one would risk

Still the arguing would not end, and so Allah gave the final move. It is the verse the scholars call the verse of mubahala, of mutual invocation, and it stands a little further on in the same Surah:

Then whoever argues with you about it after [this] knowledge has come to you - say, "Come, let us call our

sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves, then supplicate earnestly [together] and invoke the curse of Allāh upon the liars [among us]."

QUR'AN 3:61

The logic of it is merciless in its simplicity. If you are so certain you stand upon the truth, here is a clean way to settle it: bring your children and your women and your own selves, and we bring ours, and together we call down the curse of Allah upon whichever party is lying about Him. Both cannot be right. Either Isa is the son of God, or he is not, and the side that lies about Allah will bear the curse. And the Sheikh explains why the verse summons the children and the wives before the men: because it is far more agonising to watch the punishment of Allah fall upon one's children and wife than upon oneself, and a man sure of his cause would not gamble his little ones on a lie. The Prophet ﷺ made his own family ready, his daughter and Hasan and Husayn and Ali, prepared to walk out and stake the people he loved most on the truth of what he carried.

And the next morning, the Christians of Najran withdrew. Among themselves they had reasoned it to its end: if this man truly is a prophet, and we go through with this curse, we will be wiped from the face of the earth. So they came back and said, we decline the mutual curse, and we will accept the jizya. We will not leave our religion, but we will not stand in that field against you. The Prophet ﷺ set them a measured tribute, a fixed amount of cloth and silver each year, and bound it, in his characteristic wisdom, only for as long as it suited both sides, never forever, always with the clause that either party might one day end it. They asked him, further, for a man to judge their internal

disputes, since they had seen the Muslims to be honest, and he sent them one of the companions.

The Sheikh draws the lessons out as gently as the day asks. The mubahala, first, is a last resort and never an opening; it is almost always a threat held in reserve rather than a thing carried out, the final word at the very end of legitimate argument, and not something Muslims are encouraged to reach for. Then there is the patriarch. On the road home, the most senior man among the sixty was overheard by his younger brother forbidding anyone to speak against the Prophet ﷺ, and when the brother asked why, he admitted it outright: because he is the prophet, the one foretold. Then why did you not follow him? And the old man gave the truest answer in the whole account: because of the honour and the wealth and the standing the Roman emperor has given us, which following this man would cost. The brother was so shaken to hear it said aloud that he broke from his people then and there and came to Madinah a Muslim. The bulk of mankind, the Sheikh observes, simply follows the men it looks up to; the senior had seen the truth and the rest had only followed the senior, which is exactly why the Prophet ﷺ always reached first for the chieftains, knowing that when the head of a people turns, the people turn behind it.

And then there is that wall in the Masjid, and the Christians praying toward it unmolested, which the Sheikh holds up as the very height of what he calls realistic pluralism. The Prophet ﷺ tolerated the People of the Book and never once forced a soul among them. He did not tolerate idol worship, and would not grant the idolaters a single day's delay in tearing down their idols, but a guest who believed differently he honoured, and fed, and housed, and let pray in his own house of worship in his own direction, even knowing the words being said were words no

Muslim could call a valid prayer. This is not the soft lie that every path is equally true, which is in the end a nonsense, since each faith holds the others wrong on the very things that matter most. It is something firmer: clear that there is one road to Allah, and just as clear that no one is dragged down it. Let the Christian keep his religion and the Jew his, and let the dialogue be as firm as it needs to be, firm enough at its furthest edge to call down the curse of Allah, and still no hand is ever laid on anyone. This was tolerance with its eyes open, certain of one truth and tender with every soul.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read this last day of the delegations as a string of curiosities, a false prophet and a far-off miracle and a curse declined, and to file it away as the colourful tail end of a great year. That would be to walk past the questions it sets quietly in front of each of us. The year of delegations does not close with a battle. It closes with a doorway, and tribe after tribe walking through it, the proud and the seeking, the pagan and the Christian and the half convinced, until the whole peninsula stood gathered under one rule for the first time in the history of the world, and not one sword had been raised to gather it. The fruits of patience, the Sheikh says, are always sweet. Allah kept His promise to His Prophet ﷺ. He keeps it still.

Look hard at Musaylima before you look anywhere else, because his ruin is the most ordinary of all and the nearest to us. No enemy destroyed him. His own importance destroyed him. A lifetime of being revered had convinced him, by slow degrees, that the world owed him something, until at last he believed it owed him a share even of prophethood, and he was offered for it not a kingdom, not a title, but a worthless stick the Prophet ﷺ

would not so much as place in his hand. Watch, then, what a little reverence does to a soul, because it does its work quietly, and it does not spare the religious. Guard your heart from your own status before your status hollows it out as it hollowed his.

Take, too, the last thing the Prophet ﷺ ever said to Muadh, and carry it the way it was given. Make things easy and do not make them hard; give people glad tidings and do not drive them away. If the gentlest possible instruction was the one entrusted to one of the greatest of the companions, it is the one entrusted to us, who are so much smaller and so much quicker to be harsh in Allah's name. A true thing flung at the wrong heart at the wrong hour closes a door that mercy would have opened. And learn the lesson of the Christians of Najran alongside it, for they stood in front of the Prophet ﷺ himself, heard the Qur'an answer their hardest question out of the unseen, and many still would not believe, holding instead to their honour and their wealth. If sincere people would not all be convinced by him ﷺ, do not break yourself when your own da'wah does not land. You are asked to be clear and to be kind. You were never asked to force a single heart, because guidance was never in your hands; it is with Allah, who let those Christians pray toward their own wall in his Masjid and sent them home in peace with their treaty intact, firm in one truth and merciful to every soul, and the two were never opposites in him.

So leave the day with the prayer those many delegations came so far to ask of him. They crossed deserts not to bargain but to beg a single du'a from his mouth, the lightest thing in the world to ask and the heaviest to be granted. O Allah, keep our hearts firm upon Your religion as You kept firm the hearts of those who came to him ﷺ from every horizon. Make us easy upon other people as You commanded Your Prophet ﷺ to be easy. Gather us

among the people of the softest hearts and the best of souls, and let us be of those given to drink from his hand at his Hawd, a drink after which there is no thirst again. May Allah send His peace upon His Messenger ﷺ, who would not hand a liar a worthless branch nor deny a guest a place to pray, and who waited in patience until, in a single year, the whole of the earth he was sent to came walking to his door.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 96: the year of delegations, part 3 (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (3:59, 3:61), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry weak or bizarre reports, the Sheikh's own weighing of them has been followed.

Maria and Ibrahim

The son he held, the day even the sun was blamed

By this point in the seerah we are almost at the end of his life, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi turns aside from the great public events, the campaign to Tabuk, the long parade of delegations, to catch up with something quieter that has been waiting in the background all along. It spans two and a half years, the eighth, ninth, and tenth of the Hijrah, and at its center is a single small life: the birth and the death of the Prophet's ﷺ infant son, the boy he named after his own father, Ibrahim. To tell that story honestly we have to tell the story of the child's mother first, Maria the Copt, and around her sit several of the reports that modern readers are made to stumble over. The Sheikh chooses to walk straight into them rather than around them, and so will we.

There is a reason for that choice, and he says it plainly before he begins. Some of this story gets quietly dropped from modern seerah books. Most contemporary authors simply gloss over it, and in a world before the internet, the Sheikh observes, that silence might once have passed for tact. Today it does the opposite. There is no point hiding information or pretending it does not exist, because you will not get anywhere by it. A young brother or sister logs on, reads a verse or a hadith they were never taught in Sunday school, and the shock of it shakes their faith loose, not because the report is a lie but because no one who loved them ever told them it was there. They had built a sheltered picture, and reality cracked it.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi speaks here from his own experience, because the phone calls are real. More than once a young man has called him already having decided he is no longer a believer, quoting incidents lifted straight out of the books of seerah. He heard them not from a teacher but from people with an agenda, who lined up one narration from this year and another from that year, ignored the thousand stories that show the beauty of the Prophet ﷺ, and concentrated on the two or three that sting. And the hard thing, the Sheikh says, is that they are not even lying. They quote directly from the sources. The only thing they hide is the context.

So the choice in this chapter is deliberate. Tell it openly, attribute it honestly, and let it stand inside the belief that frames everything: that this man ﷺ was the Messenger of Allah, and that what Allah sanctioned for his time and place was permitted, even where the ummah has long since agreed to leave the practice behind. It is not the Sheikh's job, nor anyone's, to distort what happened. It is his job to convey and to teach. If people accept it, they accept it; if they reject it, that is not a rejection of him but of Allah and His Messenger ﷺ. And honestly, he adds, most of what follows is not even that difficult once it is placed in its world. The discomfort is ours, projected backward. The man at the center of it did nothing wrong.

A gift from Egypt

After Hudaibiyyah, in roughly the eighth year of the Hijrah, the Prophet ﷺ sent letters calling the kings and rulers around him to Islam, and one of them went to the ruler of Egypt. The Arabic sources call him the Muqawqis, but that is a title, like Caesar or Kisra, not a name, and Egypt in those days was no independent kingdom. It sat under Byzantine rule, and this man was not a king at all but a patriarch the Romans had appointed, for there was no

separation of church and state then and the empire installed its religious men to govern. Looking through the books of history, the Sheikh identifies him as Cyrus of Alexandria, the Arabicized Jurayj, the man who would prove to be the last Byzantine prefect over Egypt, since the Muslims conquered the land within twenty years. He was a Melkite Christian, of the tradition that would later become the Greek Orthodox church, and he was no minor figure; he was a genuine theologian who wrote on the nature of Christ, a man still admired in that church to this day.

No record of his reply survives the way Caesar's does, but everything in his conduct points one way. He did not tear the letter up. He did not mock it. He answered with courtesy and sent back a small fortune: a thousand measures of gold, fine garments, honey, a mule named Duldul that the Prophet ﷺ would keep and ride for years, a servant named Mabur, and two Coptic Christian sisters, Maria and Sirin. The two young women, the books say, had been daughters of a noble family who, by a custom of that church not unlike the one we read of with the family of Maryam and Zakariyya, had been gifted into the care of the church, and so it was the patriarch who now sent them on. Reading the polite letter and the lavish gifts together, the Prophet ﷺ remarked that this man had safeguarded his rule by his courtesy, but that his rule would not last; he would die a natural death, untouched in this world for his kindness, and his line would end with him. Within twenty years Egypt fell, and he was indeed its last Byzantine prefect. It was, in its way, a quiet prophecy.

A man cannot keep two sisters at once, so the Prophet ﷺ gave Sirin to the poet Hassan ibn Thabit, radiyallahu anhu, and she bore him a son, Abd al-Rahman. Maria he kept for himself.

Honest about a hard thing

Here is the part the Sheikh refuses to soften. No amount of sugar-coating removes the reality that Maria and her sister were not wives of the Prophet ﷺ. No marriage was contracted. Maria held the status the tradition calls milk al-yamin, and which the Bible's own vocabulary calls a concubine. We know almost for a fact that she later embraced Islam, but she came as a Christian and was not a Muslim when she arrived, and in the Sharia a free Muslim woman could never have been taken into that status in the first place. We all carry a bias on this subject, the Sheikh says, himself included, and it is a fair one: we believe this man ﷺ to be a prophet, so we trust that what he did was sanctioned by Allah for its time. Someone who does not share that belief, he will not pretend to argue into it.

What he will do is set the wider world straight, because the objection is never really about the Prophet ﷺ alone. The basic pattern of the biblical prophets, on the Bible's own account, was many wives and many concubines; David is given over seven hundred, Solomon more than a thousand women between wives and concubines. Against that, a man who lived more than twenty-five years of his adult life with one wife and married plurally only in his fifties and sixties is hardly the scandal. That is a fair point to put to a believing Christian or Jew. But fewer and fewer people today hold those scriptures sacred, and the Sheikh meets that honestly too. He reads aloud from a modern rabbi answering a questioner disgusted that Solomon used masses of laborers in bondage to build the Temple, and the rabbi's reply is the same one a Muslim must give: history is brutal, and it strips us of our most cherished illusions about the past. We are all, the rabbi writes, children of the anti-slavery movement of modern times, and our discomfort with the institution is only two or three

centuries old. To read the seventh century through the eyes of the twenty-first and then condemn the people who lived in it is fair to none of them.

And the way the institution lived in Islam was simply not the way it lived elsewhere. The Sharia forbids outright the enslaving of a free person; there was one narrow channel, captives of a war who were not ransomed, and nothing else. There is no counterpart here to the cruelty of the American plantation, where free people were hunted, shipped, and worked worse than cattle, a brutality the Sheikh calls perhaps the most monstrous manifestation of the institution in human history. Maria had her own home and was treated with dignity, and the sons of such women in this tradition became caliphs and kings without the faintest stigma. And it is finished. Sheikh Yasir is blunt that he knows no scholar of our tradition calling for its return; the ummah has agreed to move past what was once permitted, exactly as other faiths have. He cites his own late teacher, asked during the Bosnian war, a war the world itself ruled a legitimate defense, whether captives could be taken in the old way, and the answer was a flat no, not in our times. That is the frame. Inside it, the grief is allowed to be just grief.

The sword sent to find the truth

Maria was a stranger in a strange land, alone, with little Arabic, and rumors are cheap. Word began to spread that Mabur, the servant who had come with her from Egypt and was said to be a relation of hers, was visiting her, with everything that whisper was built to imply. This is no report from an obscure corner of the tradition; it is in Sahih Muslim, in nearly every book of the Sunnah. The Prophet ﷺ gave Ali ibn Abi Talib, radiyallahu anhu, his sword and sent him to deal with the man, for anything

touching the household of the Prophet ﷺ fell to Ali, who was of that household.

Ali asked a sharp and intelligent question before he went. Should he carry out the command, he said, as a man who simply obeys an order, or should he go as one who uses his own eyes and ears, who sees and hears what an absent commander cannot? In other words: do you want me to execute, or to investigate? Go, he was told, as one who sees and hears. Find out. On that single phrase the scholars divide. Some hold that the Prophet ﷺ had a right here to judge as no one else does, even without the trial and the two witnesses the Sharia normally demands. Others, and this is the reading Sheikh Yasir leans toward, hold that Ali was sent to frighten the man and to investigate, not to execute, which is precisely why he was told to use his eyes rather than just his blade.

Ali found the man, in a date grove by one account, and the man, terrified at the sight of the sword, was exposed, whether because he fell trying to climb away or because he revealed himself to prove his innocence. Either way it became plain on sight that he had been mutilated, made a eunuch, as some peoples did to their servants, a thing the Sharia forbids absolutely even with a lawful slave. The accusation collapsed where it stood. There was nothing in it, and could be nothing in it. Ali returned and told the Prophet ﷺ that the rumor was empty, and it died.

Last night a son was born to me

Late in the eighth year of the Hijrah, Maria gave birth to a boy, and the Prophet ﷺ was overcome with joy. We do not know exactly when she entered Islam, the Sheikh searched the books and could not date it, but one may fairly assume that by the time

her son was born she had long since become a believer, living in the household of the Prophet ﷺ as she did. He came to the masjid lit up, and the companions could read the happiness on his face. A son was born to me last night, he told them, and I have named him with the name of my father: Ibrahim.

Then he said something about Maria that opens a window onto the whole subject. Her son, he said, has set her free. In the Sharia, a concubine who bears her master a child becomes umm walad, mother of the child. The child is fully legitimate, equal to every other child of the father in name, in inheritance, in standing; and the mother can no longer be sold or transferred or treated as property, and she goes free the moment her master dies. So Islam, the Sheikh observes, was already crowding the institution toward its own end, hemming it in until it could barely breathe. How do you keep as property the very woman who has given you a son? It becomes forbidden. Maria was lifted, by her child, out of the only status she had ever held among them.

There was a small competition among the women of the Ansar over who would nurse the boy, an eagerness to help that has all but vanished from our time but was once a common kindness between mothers, and one of them was given the role, with a stipend for it, since it was understood as work that deserved its wage. Ibrahim lived something under a year and a half, between roughly fourteen and eighteen months by the reports. And of that span almost nothing is recorded. No dramatic episode survives, only a baby and a father seen carrying him through the city. This is one of the quiet sorrows of how the seerah reached us: we have only what the companions chose to pass on, and sometimes, the Sheikh says, that silence simply means there was nothing more to tell than a man delighting in his son, at the most

adorable age a child ever has, the months of waddling and laughing and grunting recognition before the harder years begin.

The eyes weep, the heart grieves

In the first quarter of the tenth year, with less than a year of his own life remaining, word reached the Prophet ﷺ that the child was dying. The signs had begun, and those around him understood what they meant. He went out to Maria's house in al-Aliya, the quarter of Madinah that still carries the name fourteen centuries on, and some of the companions came with him. He took Ibrahim into his hands. The baby was wheezing, the breath catching and rattling, the pangs of death plainly upon him. And the tears began to fall down the face of the Prophet ﷺ.

It startled them. You too, Messenger of Allah? one asked, as though to say: even you weep? That shock is itself a piece of evidence, for it tells you how rarely they ever saw him cry in public; they were almost asking whether he, too, was human enough for this. And he answered with words the ummah has carried to every graveside since. The eye weeps and the heart grieves, but we say only what pleases our Lord. And then, turning to the child: were it not for the truth that this is a decree which must come to pass, and that the last of us will follow the first, we would have grieved for you far more than this. Ibrahim, you are leaving, but I am coming after you, and we will be gathered.

Grief, the Sheikh draws out carefully, was never the thing forbidden. Sabr does not mean an empty face or a heart of stone. It governs the tongue and the limbs, not the feeling itself. You may feel the loss in full, you may let the tears come, and none of that is a breach of patience. What sabr forbids is that you wail against the decree, that you strike yourself or tear your hair, that you cry out why is this happening to me. By and large, he notes

with relief, most Muslim societies have abandoned those old pre-Islamic practices of beating oneself in grief, though they linger in a few cultures still. The Prophet ﷺ prayed the janazah over the infant, with four takbirat, and Ibrahim was buried in al-Baqi, in a grave still known today. And here the Sheikh asks us to stand back and look at the whole shape of this man's life: a father who died before he was born, a mother lost in childhood, then his grandfather, then Abu Talib, then Khadijah his wife of twenty-five years, and every one of his children but Fatimah laid in the earth before him. Ibrahim was the last of those griefs, less than a year before his own. Allah was raising his rank, and making of him a mercy and a model for everyone who would ever stand at a small graveside after him.

The day the sun was blamed

On the very day Ibrahim died, within hours of the child's passing in the morning, the sun went into eclipse over Madinah. The eclipse itself is recorded in Bukhari and Muslim. And the people did what grieving people do: they reached for the most beautiful meaning within reach. The sun itself, they said, is grieving for the Prophet's ﷺ son; the heavens are veiling their own light out of sorrow for his sorrow. The news ran through the city, and it was a tender, loving thing to say.

Here is the moment, and the Sheikh holds you on it, because to him it is one of the clearest proofs of the man's sincerity in the entire seerah. The Prophet ﷺ had everything to gain by saying nothing. Let the people believe the cosmos itself wept for his child; what could it possibly cost him? Let the rumor spread, let the world conclude that the sun darkened for the death of his son. But he could not, because he was a teacher of the truth before he was a grieving father. He gathered the people and

delivered a sermon, recorded in Bukhari and Muslim: the sun and the moon are two of the signs of Allah. They do not eclipse for the death of anyone, nor for anyone's birth. When you see this, hasten to the remembrance of Allah, and pray. On the morning he could most easily have accepted a miracle offered in his own honor, with his infant son freshly dead in the next room, he stood and refused it and called it what it was, a coincidence in the order Allah set into the heavens. A false prophet does not do that. To the Sheikh this is worth a thousand arguments: a man inventing a religion seizes such a gift; this man gave it back over the body of his own child.

And there was a deeper reason the boy could not grow to be a man, written before he was even born. A verse had already come down, in Surah al-Ahzab, and the Sheikh asks us to notice its precision. Allah did not say the Prophet ﷺ was the father of no child at all. He said:

Muḥammad is not the father of [any] one of your men, but [he is] the Messenger of Allāh and seal [i.e., last] of the prophets. And ever is Allāh, of all things, Knowing.

QUR'AN 33:40

The word is rijal, grown men, men come of age, not the general words for a child or an infant that the Qur'an uses elsewhere. Had Ibrahim lived into manhood, the verse would have been contradicted; instead the child remained exactly what the Arabic so exactly leaves room for, a boy who never reached it. Some companions said that had Ibrahim lived he would have been a prophet, and Sheikh Yasir is careful here: the soundest reading makes that the reflection of Anas ibn Malik and others, their own reasoning that the son of the Prophet ﷺ must surely be a prophet, and not a statement of the Prophet ﷺ himself. To it the

Sheikh adds a wisdom of his own. There was a mercy in his leaving no surviving son. Look at the strife that grew even around his blessed line through his daughter, the factions that exalted his descendants past what is human; a living male heir would have become a throne, a crown passed down by blood, and faith was never meant to travel that way. We are all children of prophets, sons and daughters of Adam and of Nuh, and it saves none of us. Whoever's deeds hold him back, the Prophet ﷺ said, his lineage will not push him forward.

A human being, and no sin in it

One last report belongs to Maria, and there is no leaving it aside, because Allah placed it in the Qur'an itself. It is reported in Bukhari and beyond. One day, with Hafsa away, the Prophet ﷺ had Maria with him in Hafsa's room, and Hafsa returned sooner than expected and saw Maria leaving. She was hurt and she was angry: in my house, on my day. He ﷺ kept gentling her and calming her, until, to settle her, he swore that he would not go near Maria again. I have made her forbidden to myself, he said. And he asked Hafsa to keep it between the two of them. She went straight to Aisha and told her.

Sheikh Yasir does not dress this up, and he does not let it wound you either. There was nothing unlawful in any part of it. Maria was lawful to him; Hafsa had every right to feel exactly what any wife feels, and he understands it, every husband in the room understands the fear of a wife's distress and what it can move a man to do. The co-wives were human beings; Hafsa and Aisha were close as friends one day and at odds the next, as hearts are. What the episode dismantles is only the false picture, the imaginary Prophet ﷺ who never desired, never relented under a wife's tears, never moved a beloved away to keep the peace, as

in fact he moved Maria out to al-Aliya, away from the houses by the masjid, to spare the friction. He did all of these things, and not one of them is a sin. He is the perfect human, the Sheikh insists, but a human, and that is precisely what makes him reachable. Build instead a superhuman who never wept and never wanted, and the picture shatters the first time a hard report arrives; the real man, who buried his children and still smiled at a newborn, is unbreakable.

Then Allah revealed the opening of Surah at-Tahrim, gently correcting His Prophet ﷺ for forbidding to himself what Allah had made lawful merely to please a wife:

O Prophet, why do you prohibit [yourself from] what Allāh has made lawful for you, seeking the approval of your wives? And Allāh is Forgiving and Merciful.

QUR'AN 66:1

The surah ordained the expiation that frees an oath, and then it turned to address the two wives themselves, naming no names but leaving no doubt:

If you two [wives] repent to Allāh, [it is best], for your hearts have deviated. But if you cooperate against him - then indeed Allāh is his protector, and Gabriel and the righteous of the believers and the angels, moreover, are [his] assistants.

QUR'AN 66:4

If Allah had wished this private, the Sheikh points out, He would have kept it private; instead He made it Qur'an, recited until the end of time, because there is something in it for us. Notice too, he says, the rank it quietly reveals: this is a household whose affairs Allah Himself guards, a husband whose protectors, should

anyone conspire against him, are named as Allah, then Gabriel, then the righteous believers, then the angels. The young Ibn Abbas, a boy of twelve or thirteen at the time, waited years for the chance to ask Umar who the two women were, and when he finally caught him alone and put the question, Umar answered with the honesty of a man naming his own daughter: Hafsa and Aisha. If anyone could have refused the question it was Umar; he answered it plainly, because Allah had not hidden it. So the Prophet ﷺ broke the oath, gave the expiation, and Maria returned to him. The man at the center of it never once did anything wrong. He was only, gloriously, real.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read this chapter only for its hard reports, to treat it as a list of difficulties to be defended, and to miss what it actually does to the heart. We are near the end of his life now, and this is among the entries that bring him closest to us. Strip it down and four things stay with you.

The first is that tears are not weakness. The companions were startled to see him ﷺ weep, as though grief were beneath a man like him, and he corrected them on the spot. The eye weeps and the heart grieves; sabr lives in the tongue and the hands, not in a dry face. We have somehow inherited the opposite lesson, that faith means feeling less, that the strong believer swallows the loss and shows nothing. He showed us a better way over a wheezing infant in his own hands: feel the loss in full, let the tears fall, and guard only what you say and what you do. You are allowed your grief. What you owe Allah is that your grief never curses His decree.

The second is that he taught the truth before he served himself. On the worst morning of that last year, with the easiest miracle in

the world being handed to him, the whole city ready to believe the sun had darkened for his son, he gathered the people and gave it back. It would have cost him nothing and flattered him plainly, and he refused it, because a teacher of the truth does not let even a beautiful lie stand in his own favor. Ask yourself how often you reach instead for the kinder story, the version that makes you look better, the silence that lets a flattering misunderstanding live. He could not do it on the day it would have comforted him most. Choose the true thing over the flattering one, especially when the flattering one is about you.

The third is that we must not build a Prophet ﷺ who never existed. The picture that shatters under one hard report, the man who never wept and never wanted, was never the one the tradition handed us; we constructed him ourselves, out of a misplaced reverence, and then left our children defenseless when reality arrived. Love instead the Messenger ﷺ the books actually describe: a man given a son in his sixties who could not stop smiling, who wept openly and was startled to be asked why, who felt the pull of what was lawful to him and answered a wife's hurt by moving a beloved out of sight. None of it diminishes him. It is the opposite. A superhuman you cannot weep beside; this man you can.

And the fourth is that lineage saves no one. There was a mercy, the Sheikh said, in his leaving no surviving son, because faith was never meant to pass by blood, and the proof is written across the centuries in the descendants of prophets who sold what their fathers died for. Whoever's deeds hold him back, he ﷺ said, his lineage will not push him forward. Your descent earns you nothing before Allah; your deeds earn you everything. So take this day down into your own losses. Let your tears come, and guard your tongue. Owe the truth even when a softer story is

yours for the taking. And love the real Messenger ﷺ, the one who buried nearly everyone he loved and still met his Lord saying only what would please Him. May Allah send His peace upon Muhammad ﷺ, who said the eye weeps and the heart grieves; may He gather us and our own losses with him in the gardens where no child is buried and no eclipse falls; and when our turn comes, may He let us, too, say only what pleases Him.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 97: Maria the Copt and the death of Ibrahim (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (33:40, 66:1, 66:4), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The Marital Dispute and the Verse of Choice

One month apart, and a choice between two worlds

There is one season in the whole of his ﷺ life when the strain inside his own home grew serious enough that he withdrew from it. One. In fourteen centuries of being held up as the most perfect of husbands, this is the single time it ever reached that point, and Allah sent down Qur'an because of it. Dr. Yasir Qadhi does not even know for certain when it happened. The reports give clues that pull against each other, some pointing to the fifth year, some later, and he is content to leave it where the sources leave it: an incident we know happened, told in vivid detail, without a date pinned to it. What matters is not the year. What matters is the shape of it, and the way it ends.

So we approach it the way the Sheikh approaches it, gently, and with our eyes open to the humanity of everyone in the story. Because that is the first thing the day teaches. The Prophet ﷺ is the best of all men, but he is a man, not God, not divine, a human being who loved and was loved and could be hurt in the way that married people are hurt. His wives are the best of all women, the mothers of the believers, but they are still wives in a marriage with its ordinary friction. What they wanted was permitted. What he chose was higher. And out of that narrow gap came a month of distance, a bare little room with a fiber mat in it, and a verse that still asks every reader who meets it to choose.

What the mothers of the believers asked for

For most of his life there was almost nothing to ask for. He ﷺ was born an orphan; his father had already died, and there was no one to provide for him. His first work was as a shepherd, herding the flocks of Makkah for a few coins, pennies for an entire day's labor in the sun. He lived crowded into the house of Abu Talib among the other children, and the first small relief came only with his marriage to Khadijah, when at last he had a home of his own. Even then it was no life of luxury. He did not so much as own a riding animal until the Hijrah; he could not afford one, and until then had no need of one. The wealth of the world simply was not his.

Then, slowly but surely, it began to come, not to him, but to the ummah around him. After Badr, more than seventy captives were ransomed back, each for thousands of silver coins, and the tide began to turn. After the conquests the first truly large break came at Khaybar, whose fields were handed over, and the gift of Fadak, a sister settlement, which became his ﷺ own personal income and the main source that fed his household from the seventh year onward. Then came Hunayn, the largest accumulation of wealth the young ummah had yet seen, and from all of it he kept, for himself, not a single coin. The Law allowed the leader his share; he gave it all away, by choice. And as the believers around them began to live a little more comfortably, his wives, may Allah be pleased with them, asked for the same. A better house, perhaps, better furnishings, a portion of the standard that was rising on every side.

Hear this clearly, because Dr. Yasir Qadhi makes it the heart of the episode and repeats it so that no one can mistake it. The exact words were never recorded, and it is right that they were not: this was the private speech of a home, and who would write

down what a wife says to her husband behind their own door? But what they asked for was not a sin. It was not even disliked. It was halal, the most natural human wish in the world, and wanting it took nothing whatsoever away from their noble rank. Let no one ever feel, in the telling of this, that we are diminishing the mothers of the believers, for we are not. Two of the wives gathered the others into a shared request, the way any case is stronger when more than one voice carries it, and they were asking their husband, who genuinely did have access to wealth, for a fair portion of what was already his. Nothing in the story lowers them. The whole weight of it falls on a man who had decided, for our sake, to live with far less than he could have had.

The women of Madinah

The story comes to us mostly in the first person, from Umar ibn al-Khattab, radiyallahu anhu, because two of the wives at the center of it were Hafsa, his own daughter, and Aisha. His son-in-law Ibn Abbas had been desperate to ask him about the whole affair, and out of respect for Umar's time he waited more than a year for the right moment, never barging in, until one day on a journey he was helping Umar make wudu and finally put the question to him. And Umar told him the whole of it.

He set the scene with something that had once unsettled him. In Makkah, he said, we were a people who dominated our women. Then we came to Madinah and found a people whose women answered them back, and our women began to learn it from theirs. One day he grew angry with his wife over some matter, and she answered him, defending herself, and he rebuked her: how dare you reply to me? And she shot back, why are you so surprised? The wives of the Prophet ﷺ answer him too, and one of them will keep her distance from him for the whole of a day.

This was not Hafsa's mother, but another of Umar's wives, and the very fact that she knew it tells you something: a community always knows, in broad strokes, the texture of the homes within it, and the household of the Prophet ﷺ was no exception.

It stopped Umar cold, and he went straight to Hafsa. Do you answer him back? Do you leave him for the day? Yes, she said. Both. And here the Sheikh asks you not to flinch but to feel the humanity of it. Strip away the superhuman picture some of us carry, he says, and remove it from your mind, because it is false: he ﷺ is the best of men, but a man, and his wives are the best of women, but wives. This is the portrait of a real marriage, with its back-and-forth, its quiet half-days, its ordinary irritation, and a husband ﷺ who tolerated all of it without ever once imposing on his wives the harsh Makkan customs he had grown up with. Things were permitted to them that would have been unthinkable, even a kind of disbelief, from anyone else, precisely because they were his wives. Umar, frightened for his daughter, rebuked her hard and told her never to answer him back and never to press him for anything she needed, to come to him, her father, for any extra she wanted instead. And then he said the thing that reveals his fear: do not let the standing of your companion deceive you. Aisha is more beautiful in his eyes and more beloved to him than you are; she can get away with what you cannot. The one we love most, he understood, is forgiven what others are not. It is how parents are with a cherished child, and Umar knew his daughter did not have that margin.

Something worse than war

Then one night, after Isha, when the city had gone dark and people had already lain down to sleep because there was no light to keep them up, Umar's neighbor came pounding on his door. In

those days a knock at that hour meant only one thing, and Umar rushed out certain of the worst the times could hold: have the Ghassanids attacked? They were a standing fear along the northern frontier, an enemy that might descend on Madinah at any time. No, the man said. Something worse than that has happened. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ has divorced his wives.

Sit with that for a moment, because Dr. Yasir Qadhi will not let it pass quickly. For these Companions, an enemy army on the march was the lesser disaster. A crack in the household of the Prophet ﷺ was the greater one. A communal catastrophe would wound them; a personal grief of his ﷺ wounded them more, because they loved him so completely that the breaking of his home outweighed the threat of war. By morning the rumor had swept all of Madinah. When Umar came to the masjid after Fajr he found the people gathered there, turning pebbles over in their hands, waiting, weeping, an entire community undone by the thought that his ﷺ home might be coming apart. The young Ibn Abbas, a boy of ten or eleven, remembered that morning to the end of his life: the families of the wives all in tears, the masjid full, the whole city pulled into a single private sorrow.

Umar went to the homes first. He found his daughter Hafsa weeping and rebuked her: did I not warn you that this would happen? Then he went to the apartment of Aisha and called out at the curtain, daughter of Abu Bakr, have you now gone so far in troubling the Prophet ﷺ? But Aisha had a tongue as quick as his own, and she answered him back: son of al-Khattab, go and see to your own vessel. Hafsa is as much in this as I am; worry about your own daughter. He learned, then, that this was not the fault of one of them but of both. And he learned something else: the Prophet ﷺ had not gone to any of his wives at all. He had

withdrawn alone to a small chamber above the masjid, reached by a ladder, a bare little room he otherwise almost never used.

The marks of the mat

This attic room is mentioned in the books of seerah almost nowhere except here, and that is how we know it existed: a small private space the Prophet ﷺ would climb to occasionally for solitude, never to live in, holding little more than a mat and a vessel of water. Now he had gone there to be alone. A servant stood at its entrance, and Umar asked him three times to seek permission to enter before it was granted. He raised his voice the third time so the Prophet ﷺ would hear, and he made sure his purpose was understood: I have not come as a father-in-law to plead for Hafsa. If the Messenger of Allah ﷺ commanded me to strike off her head, he said, I would obey. I come only as a friend, to learn what has happened.

Inside was the scene that has reached every Muslim child since. Some barley, dried, a mere handful of it. A half-tanned skin of water. A vessel in the corner for the body's needs, and almost nothing else. The Prophet ﷺ was reclining on a mat woven from the rough fiber of the date palm, his upper garment set aside, and when he turned to face Umar the coarse weave had pressed its marks into the skin of his side. The most honored man on the face of the earth, and his bed had left lines in his body. Umar looked at the bareness of it and wept.

His first question was the only one that mattered: O Messenger of Allah, have you divorced your wives? No, the Prophet ﷺ said. Allahu akbar, Umar breathed, and from this the Sheikh notes a small recurring sunnah: that one says Allahu akbar on hearing good news. Then, to soften the air, Umar told the whole story of his own wife answering him back and how the women of

Madinah had taught his women to do the same, and the Prophet ﷺ smiled, and Umar took heart, and asked leave to sit and talk, for he had been standing tense the whole time. The Prophet ﷺ smiled again and let him. Here the Sheikh pauses on the gentler, wiser Umar we so rarely picture, the man who reads a friend's pain and sets out simply to lift it. Then Umar lifted his head and looked around the bare room and could hold it no longer: O Messenger of Allah, make du'a that Allah expands your provision. Persia and Rome live in luxury, and they do not even worship Him; how can you, the chosen one, live like this? And he began to weep again. The Prophet ﷺ sat up. Are you in doubt, O son of al-Khattab? Are you not pleased that they should have this world, and we the next?

Dr. Yasir Qadhi stops the whole episode here, on that one line, because it answers a question that still gnaws at us. Why are the believing nations so often not the richest? Why is the wealth and the technology and the GDP so often elsewhere? Part of the answer, he says, is right here: those people may have been handed the good of this life precisely because they have no share waiting in the next. Every good deed a disbeliever does, and they do many, must be repaid somewhere, and if not in the Hereafter then here, in ease and prosperity and comfort. And the deeper point is simpler still. Success is not measured in coin. It is not weighed by what a people own. It is weighed by faith, by ethics, by virtue, and by that measure true success was lying right there on the palm-fiber mat. Umar's answer was instant: ask Allah to forgive me. It was a mistake even to have wished for more.

A choice between two worlds

What the Prophet ﷺ had done, Umar now learned, was take an oath, an *ila*, to keep apart from his wives for one month. The *fiqh* of it is precise, and the Sheikh lays it out: a husband may swear off intimacy with his wife for a fixed period, up to a maximum of four months, to let a heated dispute cool while both sides think it through. It is permitted, and it is wise, one of the surest ways to defuse a quarrel that has grown too hot: step apart, let the heat drain, let each side come to see how far it went. The Prophet ﷺ used this device exactly once in his life, for one month, and he lived it out in that bare room.

On the twenty-ninth day he returned. Aisha had been counting every single day, in her distress, waiting for the thirtieth, anxious that he might come back early and break his oath to Allah before its time. So when he came on the twenty-ninth she corrected him: you swore a month, and only twenty-nine days have passed. Gently he taught her that a month can be twenty-nine days as well as thirty. And then, beginning with her, he laid before each wife the verse Allah had just sent down. He told Aisha not to be hasty about it, to go and consult her parents before she answered, knowing that her mother and father would never in this world tell her to leave him.

The offer was stark and merciful at once:

O Prophet, say to your wives, "If you should desire the worldly life and its adornment, then come, I will provide for you and give you a gracious release. But if you should desire Allāh and His Messenger and the home of the Hereafter - then indeed, Allāh has prepared for the doers of good among you a great reward."

QUR'AN 33:28-29

If you want this world and its adornment, the wealth he truly did have access to is yours: take it, with a gracious, gentle release, no harshness, no bitterness, simply a beautiful parting. But if you want Allah and His Messenger ﷺ and the home of the Hereafter, then Allah has prepared an immense reward for the doers of good among you. This was the whole point of it, the Sheikh says. He ﷺ had chosen to be the model who lived with nothing, and so anyone who would remain his wife had to choose that life with him; it was not appropriate for the Messenger of Allah to live as kings live. Aisha did not even pause. What is there to consult about, she said, when the matter is this clear? I choose Allah and His Messenger ﷺ and the Last Day. She would not pray over it, would not go to her parents; some choices are too plain to need deliberation, and her answer showed not only her maturity but her iman. And every single one of the mothers of the believers chose exactly as she did, though a genuine fortune was within their reach. Not one of them considered, for a moment, leaving him.

And Allah was his protector

There is a tender footnote Umar tucks into the story, back when he was sitting in that bare room. If you ever do decide to part from any of your wives, he had told the Prophet ﷺ, know that Allah is with you, and His angels, and Jibril, and Mikail, and I am with you, and Abu Bakr, and all the believers are with you. Umar used to say that on three occasions in his life Allah sent down revelation that agreed with something he had said, and this was one of them. He had stood there as a father-in-law and declared himself, against his own daughter if it came to it, on the side of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

For at the opening of Surah at-Tahrim, Allah Himself declared it:

If you two [wives] repent to Allāh, [it is best], for your hearts have deviated. But if you cooperate against him - then indeed Allāh is his protector, and Gabriel and the righteous of the believers and the angels, moreover, are [his] assistants.

QUR'AN 66:4

Read in our own day the verse can sound severe, but the Sheikh keeps it exactly where the verse keeps it: this is a husband loved by the very heavens, his back covered by the Lord of all the worlds, by Jibril, by the righteous among the believers, by the angels behind them, even in the privacy of a domestic quarrel. And notice the door the verse leaves wide open. It opens with repentance, with hearts turning back, the whole dispute invited to fold into mercy rather than rupture. The matter was never meant to end in divorce. It was meant to come home.

And there is one last touch that the Sheikh will not let us miss, because it is the fairness of the man in its purest form. When one of the wives quietly asked him ﷺ not to tell the others that she had chosen him, hoping that perhaps some of the rest might then choose differently, he refused. Allah sent me as a teacher, he said, not as one who makes things hard. He would not use his deeper love for one of them as a reason to be unjust to the others, would not let any wife be quietly disadvantaged so that another might gain. We know, all of us know, that he loved Aisha more than the rest; and even that love never once tipped him into unfairness. The most beloved marriage in all of creation, and its justice held even here, even in its hardest hour.

What this day asks of our faith

Dr. Yasir Qadhi lands the whole long evening on the simplest thing in it. Why would a man with access to the treasures of

Persia and Rome choose a palm-fiber mat that left marks on his skin, and then ask the people he loved most in the world to live simply alongside him? To sacrifice for yourself is one thing, and any of us can manage it; to ask it of your wives and children is another thing entirely. He did it not out of poverty but on purpose, deliberately, to set the standard for an entire ummah. He had been offered, the authentic hadith tells us, the rank of a prophet-king, and he chose instead to be a servant-messenger who would humble himself before his Lord, and after that he was never again even seen to eat while reclining at his ease. That choice, the Sheikh says, is itself a sign of his prophethood. No ordinary man, given the keys to the world, hands them back. He was never meant to live as a king, so he lived as a servant, and gave everyone who loved him the same clear choice the verse gives us.

And around that center the Sheikh gathers what this day teaches about marriage, and asks us to receive it without flinching. In a society where it was simply normal for a man to strike his wife, where everyone did it and it was not even questioned, Aisha swore by Allah that the hand of the Prophet ﷺ never once rose against any woman or any servant. When the quarrel grew too hot, it was he who left the home, not she, and the Sheikh draws the line plainly: you never put a woman out of her house. The man is the one who steps away. The wives of the Prophet ﷺ went nowhere; they stayed in their homes, and he withdrew. Cultures differ, he reminds us, in how men and women carry themselves, and Islam allows a wide spectrum of that, asking only that its outer limits be kept. And a marital trouble is not a shame to be buried in silence. The whole of Madinah knew that his ﷺ home was in difficulty, and he was not embarrassed by it, because a problem carried into the light, brought to family or to

wise counsel, is a problem that can be healed. It is the men, especially, who hide such things and so let them fester; he ﷺ did not hide his.

So let this day ask of you what it asked of the mothers of the believers. They were laid the two worlds side by side, comfort now or Allah and His Messenger ﷺ and the everlasting home, and they chose, freely, with a fortune within reach, and to the very last of them they chose him. Ask yourself how much of your own striving is for the adornment of a life that ends, and whether, set plainly beside the home that does not, you would choose as Aisha chose, too quickly even to deliberate. Measure your life, as the Sheikh says, not by its GDP but by its faith. Carry your own home with the gentleness he carried his, stepping away to let the heat cool rather than wounding, never embarrassed to seek help. The best marriage in the history of the world was not the one without storms. It was the one whose single serious storm, in a whole lifetime, was weathered so beautifully that we are still learning from it fourteen centuries on. May Allah make us of those who choose Him and His Messenger ﷺ over every passing comfort, who hold our homes with mercy and our hearts with patience, and who are gathered with the mothers of the believers in the home of the Hereafter, the great reward He has promised the doers of good.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 98: the marital dispute and the verse of choice (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (33:28-29, 66:4), verified via quran.ai.

The Hajj of Abu Bakr ﷺ

The year the idols left the pilgrimage forever

Makkah had fallen the year before. In Ramadan of the eighth year of the hijrah the Prophet ﷺ had entered the city he was born in, and the three hundred and sixty idols crowding the Kaaba had come down, one after another, until the House stood clean. You would think the pilgrimage would follow at once. It did not. There was a season between Ramadan and the next Dhul-Hijjah when the Muslims could have gone up for hajj, and they did not go, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi wants you to sit with why, because the reason is not the one you would guess.

It was not that they were too busy. A duty as weighty as hajj is not set aside for a crowded calendar. The honest answer is harder and plainer: Makkah was not yet safe. Taif sat an hour up the road, a large and bitterly hostile city that had not yet submitted, still armed and still watching. You delay an obligation for danger, not for delegations. So in that eighth year there was no formal pilgrimage out of Madinah at all. A small group of Muslims under the local governor of Makkah performed the rites, the first time believers had openly made hajj since the dawah began, but the Prophet ﷺ and the great companions in Madinah stayed where they were. The city had been conquered, but a conquest is not yet a cleansing, and the time was not right.

By the ninth year it was. Taif had finally accepted Islam, the great northern threat had been answered at Tabuk, and the road south

lay open. So the Prophet ﷺ decided that this year the pilgrimage would finally be set in order, and he made a decision that surprised everyone: he would not lead it himself. He sent Abu Bakr radiyallahu anhu at the head of three hundred Muslims, with twenty-five animals marked for sacrifice, to take charge of the hajj of that year. And as the caravan pulled out of Madinah, the proclamation that would end the age of idolatry forever was still up in the heavens, not yet sent down.

Why he sent Abu Bakr and stayed

Two things had to be true before the Prophet ﷺ would stand at the head of a pilgrimage, and in the ninth year only one of them was. The idols were gone, yes. But pagans were still streaming into Makkah from every corner of Arabia, carrying with them the customs of the days before the light, and one of those customs he would not so much as stand beside.

He said so plainly. There are people, he told Abu Bakr and the others, who still circle the Kaaba naked, and I do not wish to perform hajj until that is brought to an end. That was the whole of his reason, and it was reason enough. It was not befitting for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to take his place in a pilgrimage shot through with that kind of vulgarity. So he held back one more year, and he sent his closest friend ahead in his place.

There was a second thing the Sheikh is careful to set out. The pilgrimage of the ninth year would still be performed in the old order, the way the Arabs had always done it, because the Prophet ﷺ had not yet taught them the corrected rites. That lesson he was saving for the year to come, his own farewell hajj, when he would show the ummah for all time how the rite was meant to be done. So Abu Bakr radiyallahu anhu goes ahead not to perfect the hajj but to lay its foundation: three hundred

believers behind him, twenty-five animals before him, and a single charge to carry out. He goes to make certain that from this year forward, Makkah belongs to one worship and one only. No more idolaters. No more idol rites. Ever again.

The custom he would not stand beside

It needs to be understood, because the modern reader recoils from it and rightly so, that the people who circled the House with nothing on did not think of it as shame. They thought of it as piety. It was not everyone, and not at every hour. The Sheikh estimates, frankly guessing at the proportion, perhaps one in a hundred, a display of extra devotion that grew more common in the dense crowds of the hajj season and more common still in the dark of night. The Quraysh themselves abstained from it, but not out of any decency. They abstained out of arrogance, because they held themselves to be the elite people of the Haram and decided the rules of the sanctuary simply did not bind its own custodians.

Where could such a thing have come from? The Sheikh walks you to the very page of the Qur'an that answers it, in Surah al-A'raf, and the whole passage before the answer is about clothing. It tells how Shaytan worked to strip Adam and his wife and expose them, and then Allah speaks, and what He says is that He sent clothing down.

O children of Adam, We have bestowed upon you clothing to conceal your private parts and as adornment. But the clothing of righteousness, that is best. That is from the signs of Allah that perhaps they will remember.

QUR'AN 7:26

Dwell on the claim inside it. We are the one creation in this physical world that wears something beyond what we were born in, and that covering is not an accident of culture. It was, quite literally, sent down. It is a gift from above, a sign of Allah. And then, a few lines on, comes the indictment of the people who would tear that gift off in His own sanctuary:

And when they commit an immorality, they say, "We found our fathers doing it, and Allah has ordered us to do it." Say, "Indeed, Allah does not order immorality. Do you say about Allah that which you do not know?"

QUR'AN 7:28

A fahisha, the Sheikh explains, is a sin of a particularly vulgar or lewd nature, and circling the House unclothed was exactly that. Notice how Allah handles the two excuses the pagans reach for. The first, that their forefathers did the same, He lets stand without rebuttal, because it happened to be true. Their fathers really had done it. But a true fact is not therefore a valid reason, and Allah simply lets the dead weight of it lie there. The second excuse He crushes outright: that Allah Himself had commanded the practice. No. Allah does not command immorality, whatever a people may claim in His name.

And the justifications these pilgrims actually gave should make the hair on your neck stand up, because we have heard them in our own time. They said they wished to come before Allah the way their mothers gave birth to them, returned to a pure and original state, unspoiled by anything man had added. The Sheikh stops here on purpose, because that is, word for word, the logic of the modern movement that wants to strip down in the name of nature, the very same appeal to a supposedly innocent natural state. Their other excuse was that it was shameful to circle the

House in the same garments they had sinned in, so the garments had to go. Both arguments sound almost reasonable. That is precisely the danger. It is proof, the Sheikh says, of how the human mind, left alone with no revelation to check it, will manufacture a justification for absolutely anything it has already decided to do. You want to walk naked around the holiest house on earth, you will find a noble-sounding reason. You want to do far worse, you will find one for that too. That is why guidance had to be sent down: not because the intellect is too weak to reason, but because it is strong enough to rationalize whatever the heart already wants.

A living lesson for whoever lives among it

Before the proclamation comes down from heaven, the Sheikh pauses to take something out of all this for us, and it is one of those moments where the seerah reaches across fourteen centuries and lays a hand on your shoulder. For the first fifty-three years of his life, the Prophet ﷺ lived in a Makkah where this happened in public, women among the pilgrims included, and there was nothing in his power to do about it. He lowered his gaze. He fought his own battle. He did not pack up and leave the city because sin was visible in its streets.

So hold this, the Sheikh says, and he is speaking especially to the earnest young man who has convinced himself that merely living surrounded by temptation is itself a sin, that he must flee to some purer land where his soul will be safe. There is no purer land. Go east and you will find as much corruption or worse, and in any case the screen in everyone's pocket has flattened the entire map, so that the billboard you escaped is now in your hand wherever you stand. The Prophet's ﷺ own example settles the matter. When you are the minority, when you cannot change

what surrounds you, you do not abandon your place. You guard your own eyes and you keep your own heart, and as long as you are protecting yourself to the best of your ability there is no sin upon you for being there. Presence in a flawed society is not the sin. Surrender to it is.

Bara'ah comes down

Abu Bakr had been gone from Madinah only a matter of hours, the caravan not yet arrived, when the opening of Surat at-Tawbah was revealed: a declaration aimed like an arrow straight at the pagans of Arabia. It is one of the very last surahs to come down, and it begins in a way no other surah does. It opens without the basmala, without "In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate." That is no oversight, and the Sheikh relays the classical explanation for it. The basmala, it was said, is what you write at the head of a covenant of peace and protection. You do not open a proclamation of severance with the formula of mercy and bond, when the proclamation itself announces that Allah has cut His ties. There is, the Sheikh notes, no word in English as total as bara'ah. It is the washing of the hands. It is the end of every relationship. In English we say I have washed my hands of this matter, and that is the sense of it: I have nothing more to do with you.

[This is a declaration of] disassociation, from Allah and His Messenger, to those with whom you had made a treaty among the polytheists.

QUR'AN 9:1

What it ends is the whole web of treaties Makkah had signed over the years, in the sixth year, the seventh, the eighth, agreements made with this tribe and that. All of them are now to

be made null and void. But Islam does not break a treaty by ambush, and this is a point of the Sharia the Sheikh will not let pass. You cannot tear up a covenant and attack in the same breath; it is forbidden, a betrayal of the very etiquette of faith. You must give notice. So notice is given, and it is generous:

So travel freely, [O disbelievers], throughout the land [during] four months but know that you cannot cause failure to Allah and that Allah will disgrace the disbelievers.

QUR'AN 9:2

Four months. Travel where you wish, in complete safety, anywhere across the land and not merely in your own tribal territory, for the grace has been widened beyond the borders of the old pacts. Settle your affairs, see your families, sell your property, pack what you own. And this grace, the Sheikh stresses, is not the gesture of a power too weak to act. Allah is not incapacitated. He is choosing to give notice, choosing to be generous, and warning at the same time that none of them can escape Him or thwart His decree. Four months, and then the bond is gone.

The verse they call the sword

Here Sheikh Yasir slows almost to a stop, because of all the ayat in the Qur'an this is the one most torn from its place and waved in Islam's face. This is the verse Fox News reaches for, the verse Spencer and Geller and every islamophobe quotes and labels the verse of the sword. Read alone, in a single line, it sounds like a sentence of death on the whole world: then kill the polytheists wherever you find them. Read in its place, fenced on both sides by what the same revelation says, it is something else entirely, and the Sheikh insists with real force that you read it in its place.

Start with the verse directly before it, which carves out its own exception with its own hand:

Excepted are those with whom you made a treaty among the polytheists and then they have not been deficient toward you in anything or supported anyone against you; so complete for them their treaty until their term [has ended]. Indeed, Allah loves the righteous [who fear Him].

QUR'AN 9:4

Any tribe that held a fixed-term treaty and kept it honestly, never falling short, never backing an enemy against the Muslims, is to have that treaty honored in full to its appointed end. Not abrogated. Not shortened. Honored, because Allah loves those who keep faith. The four months were for the open-ended pacts; the conditional treaties with their own honored terms are left exactly as they stand. We are, the Sheikh says, a people who are fair to those who are fair to us.

Only now, with that exception already in place, does the verse itself arrive:

And when the inviolable months have passed, then kill the polytheists wherever you find them and capture them and besiege them and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they should repent, establish prayer, and give zakah, let them [go] on their way. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.

QUR'AN 9:5

Read it whole and watch what the islamophobe always cuts away. First the timing: when the inviolable months have passed. Nothing whatsoever happens during the four months of grace; the clock has to run out first. Then the scope. This is not a

decree against humanity. It is for the Arabian Peninsula, for the sanctuary, for the ending of open idolatry in the one land on earth where Islam would not allow it to remain. Two doors stood open to the pagan of Arabia: give up your idols, or leave the peninsula. It was never convert or die, the Sheikh says with great care, it was only ever leave Arabia or accept Islam. And the proof is bolted onto the second half of the very same verse: but if they repent and establish prayer and give zakah, then let them go their way, for they are now your brothers and Allah is Forgiving and Merciful. The sentence that begins with the sword ends with an open door.

Then the verse right after it seals the matter past all argument:

And if any one of the polytheists seeks your protection, then grant him protection so that he may hear the words of Allah [i.e., the Qur'an]. Then deliver him to his place of safety. That is because they are a people who do not know.

QUR'AN 9:6

A pagan, even one standing under that very threat, who comes and asks for protection, is to be granted it. You shelter him. You let him hear the words of Allah. And then, whether or not he believes, you escort him safely to wherever he feels safe, and he goes on his way unharmed. The Sheikh lands the point like a hammer: not one single human being lost his life because of the verse of the sword. Not one. It was a warning, and the warning worked. It was a notice clear enough and grace generous enough to frighten an entire peninsula into a choice, and that, exactly that, is how idolatry vanished from Arabia. He will not soften the goal, and he is firm about this too: it was the intent of Islam that open idol-worship end in this land, and it did end. But he will not

let the verse be ripped away from the mercy that Allah fastened to both its sides.

Why Ali carried it

When the surah came down, someone suggested the simplest thing: just send it ahead to Abu Bakr, who was already on the road with the caravan. The Prophet ﷺ refused. None shall convey this on my behalf, he said, except a man of my own household. So he gave Ali ibn Abi Talib his own personal camel, the way a ruler hands a trusted envoy his ring or his staff as the sign that this man speaks with the ruler's own authority, and sent him galloping after the caravan to recite the proclamation to the people at the time of hajj. Ali radiyallahu anhu had not been among the original three hundred. He was sent for this one sacred task.

And [it is] an announcement from Allah and His Messenger to the people on the day of the greater pilgrimage that Allah is disassociated from the disbelievers, and [so is] His Messenger. So if you repent, that is best for you; but if you turn away, then know that you will not cause failure to Allah. And give tidings to those who disbelieve of a painful punishment.

QUR'AN 9:3

When Abu Bakr saw Ali riding up on the Prophet's ﷺ own camel, he asked at once the only question that mattered: am I being replaced, or am I still the leader of this hajj? Ali answered him plainly. You are still the leader; I have only come to recite Surat at-Tawbah. And the two of them traveled on together in the one caravan.

The Sheikh is even-handed about the dispute this episode has fed for centuries. Our brothers among the Shia read it as among the clearest proofs that Ali, not Abu Bakr, should have led the ummah after the Prophet ﷺ, that here is the Prophet ﷺ declaring that only Ali could represent him. But the answer, the Sheikh says, is simple and it is sitting right in front of us. By the custom of the Arabs, a treaty made by a chief, or broken by him, had to be enacted by a man of his own blood, so that the stubborn pagans, still steeped in a culture where lineage was everything, could raise no objection and could not say they would not accept the word of some lesser man. The Prophet ﷺ removed every possible excuse. That is why a member of his household had to carry the breaking of the covenant. And the two giants ride in a single caravan, Abu Bakr radiyallahu anhu the overall leader of the pilgrimage, Ali radiyallahu anhu sent for one specific errand under that leadership, by Ali's own word. We love Ali, the Sheikh says, as he deserves to be loved, and we are more truly his partisans than those who claim the name, for we believe in him as he is worthy to be believed in. We grant him every honor that is genuinely his, this great one included, with no stinginess at all. But that a man is chosen to deliver a message is not the same as a man being appointed to lead a nation.

Four announcements that closed an age

So Ali and Abu Bakr move together through Mina and proclaim it to the gathered pilgrims, pagan and Muslim alike. First the opening verses of the surah, so that every idolater present knows the clock has started and four months are running. Then four announcements that drew the borders of a new world.

No one enters Jannah but a believer. No one circles the Kaaba naked, ever again. No idolater performs the pilgrimage after this

year. And every treaty with the pagans is dissolved, with four months' notice, unless it carried its own honored, fixed term. The Sheikh lingers on the first of these, that no disbeliever will enter Paradise, because it was placed first on purpose, announced to the very people who were about to scatter back across Arabia carrying word of what they had heard. It is, he says, the one principle of Islam our age finds hardest to swallow and is quickest to water down: that salvation runs through this path, and not through every path at once. But a religion that saves no more than any other religion is a religion that saves nothing in particular, and there would be no reason on earth to follow it rather than another. In this world, the Sheikh says, you have your way and I have mine, and there is no compulsion. But the next world is not a place where every contradiction is true at the same time. Monotheism and idolatry cannot both be right. The pilgrims were being told, as plainly as it could be told, that there is one road to Allah's pleasure, and this was it, and this was their final chance to take it.

And this was the only hajj in all of history in which Muslims and pagans performed the rites side by side, the last time the two would ever stand together at the House. By the very next year the idolaters were gone for good. The Sheikh calls it one of the most astonishing turns the world has ever seen: in roughly twenty years an entire civilization set down a heritage of more than three thousand years and took up a new faith. There are Arab Christians to this day, and there were Arab Jews until living memory, and Islam tolerated both, the People of the Book living under its protection. But Arab pagans simply ceased to exist. The idolatry that had ruled the peninsula since before memory was wiped from it, and it was wiped not by the sword in the end but by a warning so clear and a grace so generous that a whole

people chose. And the Prophet ﷺ, in the last full year of his life, stood and watched the entire arc of his mission, everything he had carried since the first trembling night in the cave of Hira, come to rest.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read the hajj of the ninth year as a tidy administrative chapter, a treaty wound up and a custom abolished, and to move on. That would be to miss what it presses on us. There are four things here worth carrying down into an ordinary life.

The first is how Allah ended the treaties, because it tells you something about how a believer is meant to handle even an ending. He did not let the covenants lapse by ambush. He gave four full months of notice, safe passage anywhere across the land, and He honored to its last day every fixed-term pact that had been faithfully kept. If even severance is done with faithfulness, with notice and fairness and a kept word, then so is everything smaller that you owe to anyone. The way you end a thing, a job, a partnership, a friendship, is part of your din, not an exception to it.

The second is how to read the hard verse. The verse of the sword is fenced on both sides by mercy: a four-month grace before it, an open door of protection after it, an exemption for every tribe that kept faith, and a promise of brotherhood for anyone who repents inside the very same line. Whenever a single fragment of revelation is held up to you to prove something ugly, about your own faith or anyone's, the discipline this day teaches is to ask what stands on either side of it. The fragment torn loose is a weapon. The verse read whole is guidance. They are not the same text.

The third is the thing the Sheikh draws out of the naked tawaf, and it is perhaps the most unsettling, because it is about your own mind. People found pious-sounding, nature-loving reasons to strip themselves bare at the holiest house on earth. The intellect, left to itself, is not too feeble to reason. It is strong enough to build a beautiful argument for whatever the heart has already chosen, and the more clever a person is, the better the argument. That is exactly why guidance had to come down from above and not up from within. When you next find your own reasoning arriving very smoothly at the conclusion your desire wanted all along, remember the pilgrim who undressed in the name of purity, and be suspicious of the smoothness.

And the fourth is the gentlest, and it sits in how the Sheikh handles Ali. Ali carrying the proclamation was a true and a magnificent honor, given for a real and sufficient reason. The Sheikh neither shrinks it nor inflates it. He gives it every ounce of its due and not one ounce more. Love that is honest does exactly that: it grants every blessing its full weight without stretching it into a claim it was never meant to bear. We can honor those we love without inventing things for them, and we should, because the inventing, however affectionate, is in the end a kind of lie.

So take these down into your days. End things the way Allah ended those treaties, with notice and fairness and a word kept to the last. Read whole what people hand you in pieces. Distrust your own cleverness when it agrees a little too readily with your appetite. And love the people you love truthfully, giving them all that is theirs and nothing that is not. May Allah, who ended an age of idols with mercy folded into the warning, never let us read His words to wound, only to be guided by them, and may He gather us at the last under the banner of the one He sent as a mercy to the worlds ﷺ.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 99: the verse of the sword and the hajj of Abu Bakr (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (7:26, 7:28, 9:1, 9:2, 9:3, 9:4, 9:5, 9:6), verified via quran.ai.

The Farewell Hajj

One pilgrimage, and a goodbye the people did not yet understand

For nine years he ﷺ lived in Madinah and did not make Hajj. The House had been cleansed, the idols thrown down, the Quraysh broken open to Islam, and still he waited. Then, in the tenth year of the Hijrah, he announced that this year he would go, and the word ran out across Arabia like water finding every crack in the rock. From every tribe and every valley they rose and walked toward Madinah, not to fight and not to trade, but only to stand where he stood and do what he did. The city swelled. They kept coming along the whole length of the road, until Jabir radiyallahu anhu, an old blind man recounting it seventy years later, could still feel the press of it: he looked in front and saw nothing but riders and walkers, looked behind and to his right and to his left and saw the same, humanity as far as the eye could carry. Never in his entire life had the Prophet ﷺ stood before a larger gathering of human beings.

He would make the pilgrimage exactly once. Everything the ummah would ever know about how to perform Hajj, every ruling and every fine detail argued over in the centuries since, comes out of these few days, because the companions watched his every step and copied it. And underneath the joy of the largest crowd he ever addressed ran something the people around him did not yet feel: he knew he was saying goodbye.

Take your rites from me

When exactly Hajj became an obligation is a question the scholars have long turned over, and Dr. Yasir Qadhi lets the debate stand rather than flatten it. Some hold that the verse came down years earlier and the Prophet ﷺ simply delayed, which is why they permit a Muslim with the means to wait a year or two; others hold that the command came only in the ninth or early tenth year and that he went as soon as it was revealed, which is why they say Hajj must not be delayed once a person can afford it. The honest answer, the Sheikh says, is that we do not know for certain when the verse descended. What is not in doubt is the verse itself, the one that lays the duty of the House on every soul who can find a way to it.

In it are clear signs [such as] the standing place of Abraham. And whoever enters it shall be safe. And to Allah from the people is a pilgrimage to the House, for whoever is able to find thereto a way. But whoever disbelieves, then indeed, Allah is free from need of the worlds.

QUR'AN 3:97

He told the people plainly: take your rites of Hajj from me. He understood with complete clarity that whatever he did on these days, the ummah would do until the end of time, and so he moved through every act deliberately, an example in every footstep. He prayed in the masjid, left Madinah on the twenty-fifth of Dhul-Qadah, stopped just outside the city and prayed and entered the state of ihram, and turned toward Makkah. The journey took ten days at the steady pace of a great caravan, neither hurried nor slow, and along the entire road the crowds thickened. By the time it was over the people had already given these days a name. They were calling it the farewell pilgrimage, Hajjat al-Wada, while he ﷺ was still walking among them,

sensing the goodbye in it without quite grasping what the goodbye would mean.

The name, the Sheikh is careful to note, came from the companions themselves, in his lifetime. On the day of sacrifice he would stand and say again and again, O Allah, bear witness, and he would bid the people farewell, and they began to murmur that this must be a farewell. The word was on their tongues. But its weight had not yet landed in their hearts, because the thing it pointed to, that he ﷺ would soon be gone, simply did not click. He arrived at the edge of Makkah at night and would not enter a city in the dark, nor enter it weary; he camped, slept, woke, prayed, and then, as ihram permits, washed and bathed before going in. On the Sunday morning he entered the sacred city for the last pilgrimage of his life.

The day of Jabir

The fullest record of these days is one long hadith, four pages of it preserved in Sahih Muslim, and the way it reaches us tells you something about the love that carried it. Jabir ibn Abdullah had grown into a blind old man, one of the last living companions, when the great-great-grandson of the Prophet ﷺ, a young descendant through Ali and Fatimah, came to sit with him. Jabir asked who each of his visitors was, and when he learned who this young man was he stood, placed his hand on the boy's head, and opened his shirt and laid his palm on his chest, blind eyes searching, wanting to feel the living thread that ran back to the Messenger ﷺ and to draw a blessing from it. Then he said: ask whatever you wish, my nephew, you are welcome. And the young man asked the one thing he had come for. Tell me about his Hajj.

So Jabir told it, and the brand of it is everywhere in how Muslims pray and walk and supplicate to this hour. He held up nine

fingers, a blind man counting in the air, and said that for nine years the Prophet ﷺ did not make Hajj, then announced it in the tenth. At the Kabah he ﷺ touched the Black Stone and made his tawaf, hurrying the first three rounds and walking the last four, then prayed two rakahs behind the Maqam of Ibrahim, reciting in them the command to take that station as a place of prayer. Then he went out to Safa, and at its foot he recited the verse, saying as he began: I begin with what Allah began with.

Indeed, Safa and Marwah are among the symbols of Allah. So whoever makes hajj to the House or performs umrah, there is no blame upon him for walking between them. And whoever volunteers good, then indeed, Allah is Appreciative and Knowing.

QUR'AN 2:158

He climbed Safa until he could see the Kabah, faced it, raised his hands, and praised Allah for fulfilling His promise and aiding His servant and granting him the city without a battle ever being fought for it. Then he descended toward Marwah, and where the valley floor dipped low between the two hills he ran, the very place where our mother Hajar once ran in her desperate search for water, where she had to hurry because in that hollow she could no longer see her child. He ran where she ran. The whole rite of sai is the footsteps of a frightened mother, made holy, repeated by a hundred thousand and by every pilgrim since.

He went out onto the plain

On the eighth he led the people to Mina, and there he prayed each prayer at its proper time but shortened, teaching the pilgrim's prayer by performing it. On the morning of the ninth, the day of Arafah, he did something the old Quraysh would never

have done. They had invented a private elitism for themselves: too holy, they imagined, to step outside the sacred Haram with the common pilgrims, they used to stop at the very edge of the boundary, at a place called Muzdalifah, and refuse to go out to the plain of Arafah at all. You measly mortals go and stand at Arafah, was the unspoken posture; we are the elite of the House, and we will not leave it. The new Muslims among the Quraysh assumed he ﷺ would keep their old habit, and when he sent word to pitch his tent at Namirah, on the very line where the Haram ends and Arafah begins, they expected him to stop there.

He did not stop there. He camped a stone's throw from the line, and the moment the sun crossed its peak and the time of Dhuhr came in, he called for his camel and rode straight out onto the plain itself, into Arafah, with everyone else. The Sheikh draws the lesson out: this was the death of the old elitism, the leveling of the Quraysh's invented rank, done not by argument but by the Prophet's ﷺ own feet carrying him out among the people. He came to the valley of Uranah, gathered the enormous crowd, and addressed them. Then Bilal called the adhan, and he prayed Dhuhr and Asr together, shortened, with that single call and two iqamahs, and prayed nothing in between.

Then he went to the foot of the mountain, faced the qiblah, and raised his hands. And he did not lower them. The Sheikh asks you to sit with this, because anyone who has stood at Arafah knows the body gives out after twenty or thirty minutes in that furnace of heat: you grow tired, you need to move, you need shade and water. He ﷺ stood from the afternoon until the sun went all the way down, until the last yellow light drained out of the sky and the disc slipped below the horizon, and his hands stayed lifted the entire time, asking and asking and asking. That, the Sheikh says, is the essence of the whole pilgrimage. You read

it and your mind cannot hold it: hours of standing, hours of dua, nothing held back. When the sun was fully gone he mounted his camel, and he set Usamah ibn Zayd behind him, and he pulled the rein of his camel close so the animal could not rush, and he moved off toward Muzdalifah with his hand out to the crowd, calling to them over and over: slow down, slow down, there is no need to hurry. He who never had to fear being jostled, who could have ridden through any press of people, slowed his own camel to teach a stampeding ummah to be gentle. Even his pace was a mercy.

This day I have perfected your religion

It was there, on that plain, on the day of Arafah, that the verse came down. The Prophet ﷺ stood among a gathering so vast that the early scholars, having no real way to count it, simply settled on a round hundred thousand and admitted they were guessing. And into that ocean of believers, with not a single idol left worshiped anywhere in the peninsula and the whole of Arabia gathered as one to Islam, Allah revealed that today He had perfected the religion.

This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion.

QUR'AN 5:3

The Sheikh is careful, here, to guard against a common error. This is not the final verse of the Qur'an. About three months of his ﷺ life remained, and other verses would yet come down, some of them from Surah al-Baqarah among the last to be revealed. But what a moment for these words to descend: the religion declared complete and the favor declared full at the very

peak of Islam's glory, when the Arabs had come in whole and the idols were all thrown down. The faith was finished not in defeat or in struggle but at its highest summit.

And the day held a second gift the people barely noticed: that Arafah, that year, fell on a Friday. Long afterward a Jewish man would come to Umar ibn al-Khattab radiyallahu anhu and say, you have a verse in your Book that, had it come down to us, we would have taken its day as a festival. Which verse, Umar asked. The man recited this one, the perfecting of the religion. And Umar answered him: I know exactly when it was revealed. Our Prophet ﷺ was standing at Arafah, on the day of Arafah, and it was a Friday. It was, the Sheikh notes, already a day of celebration twice over: the greatest day of the Hajj falling on the greatest day of the week.

It is worth knowing, as he points out, that the famous wall-poster image of one long Farewell Sermon is really a gathering of several. He ﷺ spoke at Arafah, and again at Mina on the days that followed, the tenth and the eleventh and perhaps the twelfth, taking every chance a crowd that size offered to drive his message home. What the books preserve from Arafah is the gist of it, and a companion in a distant tent later swore that he could hear the Prophet's ﷺ voice clearly even from there, a voice carried, it seems, beyond what is natural, so that Allah let the furthest pilgrim hear the words straight from his mouth.

Everything of the old days is under my feet

Listen to me, he ﷺ began, for I do not know whether I will ever meet you again after this year. The premonition was plain in the words. Then he set the law of the new ummah against the lawlessness of the old. Your blood and your wealth are sacred to one another, he said, as sacred as this day of yours, in this month

of yours, in this land of yours. The law of the jungle that had ruled Arabia, where the strong simply took, where men killed and plundered and seized, was finished. Every one of you, he was telling them, has a life and a property as inviolable as the Kabah itself. And then he said it in the harshest, clearest way the Arabic allowed: everything of the days of ignorance is under my feet. The feuds, the customs, the rituals, the idol-worship, the old grievances written in blood, all of it trampled, obliterated, gone beneath his foot.

And then he proved he meant it in the most costly way a man can choose: against his own family. The first blood-debt I cancel, he said, is the blood of my own kin. A boy of the family had been killed in a feud between two tribes, and a hundred camels were owed in blood money, and the Quraysh were ready to go to war to collect it. He wiped it out, first, his family's own claim. Then he turned to interest. The first riba I abolish, he said, is the riba owed to my uncle al-Abbas. His uncle had been a wealthy lender, owed a great deal of accumulated interest from before the prohibition came down. The Prophet ﷺ erased it in front of everyone: pay him back his principal, not a single coin more. The Sheikh lingers here, because this is leadership by example at its purest. My own family will not profit from a feud, and my own family will not profit from interest, so that no man in that crowd could ever say the new rules were made for the weak and bent for the strong.

Then he turned to something a seventh-century sermon had no earthly reason to mention, and he gave it a whole passage of its own: fear Allah concerning women. He reminded them that a wife is taken under the trust of Allah, made lawful by His word and His name, that she has rights over her husband as he has rights over her, that she must be provided for in fairness according to his means. There was no social pressure on earth pushing him ﷺ to

defend women that day, no movement to placate, no audience demanding it. He did it, as the Sheikh puts it, for one reason: no community rises while its women are crushed, no ummah flourishes while half of it is wronged. In a world where men beat their wives as a matter of unquestioned habit, every word he spoke to lift and protect them was leaps beyond the age. Finally he gave them the anchor that holds when everything else is gone: I have left among you that which, if you hold fast to it, you will never go astray, the Book of Allah. Then he asked them the question that mattered most to him. You will be asked about me, so what will you say? And they answered as one that he had conveyed the message, fulfilled the trust, and been sincere to them. He raised his fingers to the sky and said, three times: O Allah, bear witness. O Allah, bear witness. O Allah, bear witness. He wanted his ummah, on the Day when every messenger is questioned about his people, to be the ones who testify for him that he did his work.

All of you are from one father

On the tenth, the day of sacrifice, he spoke again, and this time he opened by making the crowd uneasy. What month is this, he asked, and they hesitated, the question so obvious they feared a trap behind it, until he answered himself: is it not Dhul-Hijjah? What day is this? The day of sacrifice. What land is this? The sacred land. Each obvious answer was a hook, because every Arab felt in his bones how holy this month, this day, this ground all were, and on that feeling he hung the lesson: then know that your lives and your wealth, and your honor too, your reputations safe from slander, are as sacred to one another as this day of yours in this land of yours. He had added honor now to blood and wealth. And he warned them sharply: do not return after me to

disbelief, striking one another's necks. He told them to carry the message onward, the one present to the one absent, for perhaps the one who receives it later would understand it better than the one who first heard it.

Then came the words the Sheikh calls genuinely revolutionary, preserved as an authentic hadith. All of you are from Adam, and Adam is from dust. There is no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab, nor of a non-Arab over an Arab, nor of one color over another, except by piety. The Sheikh stops the whole narrative to weigh what this is. No philosopher, no thinker, no ruler in all of recorded human history had ever stood and declared every human being equal. Every society everywhere, by race or by blood or by tongue, had believed itself the better stock, and had built that belief into its laws and its pride. And the one man who said the opposite, plainly, before a hundred thousand witnesses, was the man with the noblest lineage among all the Arabs, the descendant of the keepers of the House, the one human being in that crowd with the most to lose by leveling rank to dust. That it came from him ﷺ, of all people, the Sheikh says, is itself a sign that it did not come from him but from above him. Fourteen centuries later the world is still struggling, still failing, to catch up to that one sentence. We know in our hearts that it is true, and we have not yet learned to live it.

A hundred camels, and a knife he would not lift

He ﷺ had sent word to Ali radiyallahu anhu, who had been serving as a judge in Yemen, to bring up a hundred camels for the sacrifice and to meet him for the Hajj. On the day, the Prophet ﷺ took the knife himself and slaughtered sixty-three of them with his own hand, one camel, it is noted, for every year of his life, for he was sixty-three; and he gave the rest to Ali to

complete the hundred. One narration adds a wonder: that as he approached the herd with the blade, the camels did not flee the way animals always flee the knife, but pressed toward him, each one straining to be the first slaughtered by the hand of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. From every one of the hundred a piece of meat was taken and cooked in a single pot, and he ﷺ ate from the meat and drank from its broth, teaching the ummah by doing it that the sacrifice is eaten, and shared, and given to the poor, the way Muslims keep it to this day.

Then a small moment that says everything about the man. He went to the well of Zamzam, where his own relatives of the Banu Abd al-Muttalib were drawing water for the pilgrims, an honored family duty, and they offered to step aside and let him draw it himself. He declined, and he gave his reason out loud: if I were to draw the water, the people would crowd in to take this task from you, because they would want to do whatever I do. So I will not. He understood, more sharply than anyone, how fiercely the ummah loved to follow his every motion, and rather than disrupt the men at their work or set off a stampede of imitation around the well, he simply took the cup they handed him and drank. Even his restraint was an act of care. He would not let his love of an act become a burden on the people who already held it.

The well of Khumm

One last incident closes these days, and the Sheikh handles it with deliberate care, because it is read very differently across the schools, and he is firm that the difference is not in the facts but in what is read into them. Ali radiyallahu anhu had come from Yemen leading his men and the gathered wealth and charity of the region, and the hundred camels. As he hurried ahead to reach the Prophet ﷺ, the man he had left in charge of the party

handed out new garments from the collected charity to the whole group, fine Yemeni cloth, as a kind of reward. Ali returned, saw it, and was angered, because that charity was not theirs to give away, and he ordered the clothes returned to the collection. The men were stung, and the moment the Hajj was over they came to the Prophet ﷺ complaining about Ali.

So at a place on the road back, a well called Khumm, the Prophet ﷺ rose to Ali's defense and rebuked the complaint warmly. Whoever takes me as a friend, he said, let him take Ali as a friend; Ali is to me as Harun was to Musa. He told them plainly to stop bringing complaints against him, for Allah loved Ali and Ali had done right. And he repeated the charge about his household, the same words from Arafah folded around his family: I leave you the Book of Allah, and fear Allah concerning my family. The Sheikh affirms every syllable of this. None of it is denied, none of it hidden, all of it a genuine and high honor for Ali; Sunni Islam, he says, has never been embarrassed by the virtues of Ali nor competed with anyone over them, for his merits are more than can be counted. But the setting is the setting. These were words to defend a wronged man from unjust complaints, not a contest over who would lead the ummah after him ﷺ. And the simplest proof is the silence that followed: when the Prophet ﷺ passed away only months later and the companions gathered to settle the leadership, not one person, not even Ali's own supporters, raised the day of Khumm as a claim to succession. It had never been about that. We affirm the honor in full, and we do not read into it a politics that was never there.

What the Farewell Hajj asks of our faith

It would be easy to read the Farewell Hajj as a grand finale, a triumph, the religion crowned at the summit and sealed in glory,

and to leave it there. That would be to miss what it puts to us. This was the faith handed over, finished and entire, on a plain crowded to the horizon, with the words this day I have perfected for you your religion still settling over the heads of the ummah. And it was a goodbye dressed as a victory. He ﷺ stood before more people than he had ever addressed in his life, and what he gave them was not a victory speech but a will, the last instructions of a man who knew he was leaving, to a people who did not yet know it.

Look at how he chose to spend that platform, because the choice is the lesson. He did not boast of conquest. He made every Muslim's blood and wealth and honor sacred, and then, to prove the new law was not for the weak alone, he abolished the feuds of the old days starting with his own family's blood-debt, and the interest of the age starting with his own uncle's wealth. He defended the women in his ummah's care when not a soul on earth was pressing him to. He declared every human being equal, no Arab above a non-Arab, no color above another, except by piety, the one man with the most to lose by saying it, saying it anyway. And he left them the rope that does not fray, the Book of Allah. Ask which of these you have actually taken into your own life. Whose debt have you forgiven before demanding what you are owed? Which woman in your care have you honored when no one was watching? What quiet ranking of yourself above another are you still carrying that he ﷺ trampled under his foot at Arafah? How long is your dua, really, before your body tells you to stop?

And then there is the standing itself, the heart of it all. He raised his hands at the foot of that mountain in the afternoon heat and did not lower them until the last light was gone from the sky. Hours of asking, of a Prophet whose past sins were forgiven and

whose future was secured, pouring himself out before his Lord as though he had everything still to beg for. That is the measure he leaves us: not the minutes we can spare for Allah, but the hours; not the prayer we rush through to get back to our lives, but the standing we refuse to cut short. Give Allah the hours.

So take this from the hundredth day of his life ﷺ down into your ordinary one. You are nearly at the place in the story where the ummah will have to learn to walk without him beside it, and he spent his last great gathering teaching it exactly how. Forgive a debt that is yours to demand. Lift someone you could keep beneath you. Stand longer in dua than is comfortable, and do not lower your hands when your body asks you to. Keep your hands on the Book he left, every day and not occasionally, for it is the only thing that was promised to keep you from going astray. And then answer him the way the hundred thousand answered him at Arafah, fingers lifted, three times over: O Allah, we bear witness that he conveyed the message, fulfilled the trust, and was sincere to this ummah to the very end. O Allah, send Your peace and Your blessings upon Muhammad ﷺ, who said goodbye before we understood it was goodbye; gather us where the nations are gathered under his banner, let us drink from his hand at the Pool, and keep our hands on the rope he left us until the day we meet him. Ameen.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 100: the Farewell Hajj (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (3:97,

2:158, 5:3), verified via quran.ai. The narration is the Sheikh's; the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

The death of the Prophet ﷺ

The day the light was laid in the earth

There is no harder day in the whole of the seerah than this one, and there is no day that asks more of our adab. We have walked with him ﷺ for a hundred days, from before his birth in a quiet house in Makkah to the plain of Arafah where a hundred thousand and more stood weeping at his last sermon, and now we have come, with heavy hearts, to the morning the ummah woke to a world that no longer had him in it. So read this slowly. Read it the way you would sit with someone you love in their final hours, lowering your voice, keeping salawat moving on your tongue, asking Allah to let the sweetness of these pages be a closeness to His Messenger and not merely a knowing of his story.

He ﷺ returned to Madinah from the Farewell Hajj in Dhul-Hijjah of the tenth year, and he did not leave it again. He had ridden out of Makkah the moment the rites were done, on the very evening of the last day of Hajj, and once he entered his city he stayed in it until he was carried into its earth. A few quiet weeks passed. Then, in the house of one of his wives, the fever began, and the last ten days of the most beloved life that has ever been lived began to unfold. Dr. Yasir Qadhi taught this seerah for ten years, and this is where it ends, and where he ends it, we end too.

The last command: an army pointed at the horizon

Before the illness, there was a final order. Toward the very end of the month of Safar he called the people to arms and made ready an expedition aimed at the lands of the Romans, at Syria and at Palestine, and at the head of it he placed Usama ibn Zayd, a young man of seventeen or eighteen. Usama was the son of Zayd, the freed slave whom the Prophet ﷺ had once adopted and loved as his own, the same Zayd the companions said no one would have hesitated to follow had he still been alive. And Usama was the son of Umm Ayman, one of the very few souls left on the earth who remembered the Prophet's ﷺ mother and father, the woman who had cared for him as an infant when he was newly orphaned. Usama had been born in the Prophet's ﷺ own home and raised under his eye, and he was loved so dearly that the people simply called him the beloved, the son of the beloved.

Murmurs spread through the city. The boy was too young, they said, and his father had been a freed slave, and how could such a one lead the senior companions, Abu Bakr and Umar among them. It was, the Sheikh notes, a real objection in their hearts, and racism is one of the four diseases the Prophet ﷺ warned would linger in his ummah until the end of time. So he gathered them and answered it head on: if you criticize his leadership now, you criticized his father's leadership before him, and by Allah his father was worthy of it, and this boy is worthy of it, and he is among the most beloved of all people to me after his father. There was a hard wisdom in the choice as well, for Usama's father had been martyred by the Romans at Mu'tah, and who better to send against them than the son seeking the place his father fell.

Usama marched out and camped a day or two beyond Madinah. Then word reached him that the Prophet ﷺ had fallen ill, and the expedition halted to wait for him to recover. He never did. And

here Dr. Yasir Qadhi asks us to sit with what it means that Allah chose for His Messenger to pass with this order still standing in the field. A man who held the whole of Arabia in his hand would not let Islam stop at Arabia's edge. The faith was never meant to be an Arabian thing; it was meant for the whole earth, and for Jerusalem above all after Makkah and Madinah. With the last strength of his life he aimed his companions outward, at the horizon, at the holy land itself. Then he was called home before the army could move, and within a few short years that very force became the first Muslim army to break the Romans and open the road to Syria and to Jerusalem. He laid the foundation and did not live to walk on it, and somehow that is exactly the point.

The signs no one let themselves read

The warnings had been there all along. We can look back now and see them lined up plainly, but when they were given, not one of them landed, and the Sheikh explains why with the most human reason there is: we do not let ourselves think about the death of the people we love, and the more we love them, the less we can bear the thought. So how could anyone alive have made themselves imagine a world without him ﷺ. When Allah had said it to His Prophet, as clearly as words can say a thing, the companions had heard it and never once pictured the day.

Indeed, you are to die, and indeed, they are to die.

QUR'AN 39:30

So explicit, and still it did not register, because they could not let it. When Abu Bakr recited verses like this one on the day of the Prophet's ﷺ death, one companion asked, almost in disbelief, is

this truly in the Qur'an, and another said it was as though he were hearing it for the very first time.

The quieter signs came thick in his last year. In Ramadan of the tenth year, Jibril came and reviewed the Qur'an with him not once, as he had done every Ramadan of the prophethood, but twice, with no explanation given, only the weight of something changed. When Surah an-Nasr was sent down, with its word that the great victory had come and the people were entering Allah's religion in crowds, and its command to glorify the Lord and seek His forgiveness, it was Ibn Abbas, still a young man, who understood what the elders did not: this was a gentle notice that the work was complete and the time to meet the Lord was near. The Prophet ﷺ told Mu'adh, as he sent him off to Yemen, that he might never see him again, and walked him out on foot while Mu'adh rode, and Mu'adh wept. He went out to the martyrs of Uhud and prayed over them like a man saying farewell. Late one night he woke his servant Abu Muwayhibah and walked to the graveyard of Baqi, and stood among the buried and greeted them and said, in effect, rest easy, and wait for me, for I am soon to follow. And he told that same servant that Allah had offered him a choice, the keys of this world and a long life with Paradise at its end, or to meet his Lord now, and that he had already chosen his Lord. Not one of the companions let the meaning of any of it through. They heard the words of a man saying goodbye and went on hoping it was only a hard season that would pass.

The fever, and the chamber he asked to rest in

The fever took hold in the house of Maymunah, around the first days of Rabi al-Awwal. It was a fierce illness, and it must be remembered that they had nothing for it, no medicine to dull the pain the way a single tablet dulls ours; the Prophet ﷺ himself

had called fever a portion of the Fire that Allah lets a believer taste in this world, and a fever in that age could kill a person by its sheer ferocity alone. For a few days he kept moving from house to house, fair to his wives to the very last even when his body could barely carry him. Then, when he grew too weak, he asked their permission, though by his rank before Allah he had no need to ask any of them, to be allowed to stay and rest in a single chamber. They all gave it gladly. It was the chamber of Aisha.

And here the Qur'an had already spoken the thing the heart cannot speak.

And We did not grant to any man before you eternity [on earth]; so if you die - would they be eternal?

QUR'AN 21:34

If any soul in all of creation had a claim to live forever, the Sheikh says, it was him ﷺ, and even he was returning to his Lord. In that chamber Aisha would recite over him the prayers of protection he had taught her and blow them gently upon him, and keep a vessel of cool water at his side, drawing her hand through it to wipe his burning forehead, for the strongest of the companions said afterward that his fever burned like the fever of ten men together.

Settling every debt, and the friend who wept

When the fever climbed, he bound a cloth tightly around his throbbing head and asked to be carried out to the people, leaning between his uncle al-Abbas and his cousin Ali. The masjid was already full, and stayed full, because his illness was no secret and the companions who lived too far to keep watch had simply begun sleeping in the masjid out of pure worry, the way you

cannot sit still in your own house when someone you love is suffering nearby. He could no longer stand on the minbar, so he sat upon it, and gently, deliberately, he began to put his affairs in order.

He warned them, with his own grave already on his mind, that Allah had cursed the peoples before them who took the graves of their prophets as places of worship, and told them plainly not to do that to his. Then he said the thing that pierced them. If I owe any one of you a debt, let him come and take it from me now. If I have ever struck anyone unjustly, here is my back, take your right from me in this world before the Day of Judgment comes. And he asked, and asked, and asked again, until at last a man, mortified, admitted that the Prophet ﷺ had once promised three silver coins to a beggar on his behalf and never repaid him, and would not have said a word except that the asking went on so long he feared the sin of staying silent. Three small coins, long since forgiven in the man's heart, and the Prophet ﷺ had them paid at once. This is the man who held the whole of Arabia, making certain he would meet his Lord owing no one anything at all.

Then he gave an order whose meaning they could not yet read. Every private door that opened from a companion's house into the masjid was to be shut and sealed, every single one, save one. The door of Abu Bakr would stay open. The houses had been built flush against the walls of the masjid, and it had been permitted all those years for their owners to enter through their own doors; now all of them were closed forever, and only Abu Bakr's remained. Dr. Yasir Qadhi reads it the way the companions would only read it later, when their eyes were clearer: of all of them, Abu Bakr was being singled out, brought near, and quietly prepared.

In that same address he told them, in the third person, of a servant of Allah who had been offered the choice between this world and what is with his Lord, and who had chosen what is with his Lord. Most of the masjid simply marveled at how fortunate that servant was, to be asked and to answer so well. Only one man understood, and he began to weep, and could not stop, weeping hard in front of them all, because Abu Bakr alone grasped that the servant was the Prophet ﷺ himself, and that the man he loved more than his own life was telling them goodbye.

The Prophet ﷺ looked at him before the whole gathering and said: do not weep, Abu Bakr. The one I trust most in his companionship and his wealth is Abu Bakr, and were I to take from all of mankind a khalil, a dearest and closest friend, it would be Abu Bakr. But Allah has already taken me as His khalil, so I cannot take another. Yet between us there is the brotherhood of Islam and its love. It is among the tenderest moments in the entire seerah: a dying man gathering the strength to comfort the friend who could not yet bear to say out loud the thing he already knew.

Go and tell Abu Bakr to lead the people

Soon he could no longer stand long enough to lead the prayer himself. He tried. He rose, and fainted, and was revived with water poured over him, and asked, have the people prayed, and was told they were waiting for him, and tried to rise again, and fainted again, longer this time, and tried a third time, until in one narration he had attempted it seven times and his knees simply would not hold him. Sit with that, the Sheikh says, and feel the shame of our own neglect: a dying man, burning with fever, collapsing again and again because he cannot bear to miss leading his people in prayer. Then he said it: tell Abu Bakr to lead the people in prayer. In ten years in Madinah, no one had ever led

the prayer while the Prophet ﷺ was present in the city, not once, and the companions did not miss the weight of what they were hearing.

Aisha, hearing her own father named, tried gently to turn it aside. My father is a soft-hearted man, she said; when he stands in your place and recites he weeps, and the people behind him will not be able to hear. Choose someone else. It was not a lie, but it was not her true fear either. She did not want her father blamed for seeming to push himself forward, and she dreaded that his standing in the Prophet's ﷺ place would be welded, in people's memory, to the loss that was coming. She drew Hafsa in to plead the same case. And from his sickbed he saw clean through all of it: tell Abu Bakr to lead the people; Allah and the believers will refuse anyone but Abu Bakr; you are like the women around Yusuf. So Abu Bakr led the prayers.

Then, a day or so later, the Prophet ﷺ found a little strength, and was carried out while the rows were already standing, and seated beside Abu Bakr. Abu Bakr stepped back to give him his place, but he motioned him to stay, and so the Prophet ﷺ prayed seated, with Abu Bakr standing at his side and the rows following Abu Bakr's movements. Understand what the people's eyes saw and what was truly happening, the Sheikh says. To every eye in the masjid, Abu Bakr was the imam. In reality, the true imam was the one sitting silently beside him, and Abu Bakr was taking his lead from the Prophet ﷺ alone. Dr. Yasir Qadhi calls this the clearest sign of all the quiet signs, given a day and a half before the end. And he draws out its precise restraint: the Prophet ﷺ never named a successor in plain words, because he did not want to fix forever the custom of kings appointing their heirs. He left it open, and indicated everything without commanding it, so

that the ummah after him could choose its leaders in more ways than one, which is exactly what it did.

The last smile, the miswak, and the Highest Companion

On the morning of Monday, the twelfth of Rabi al-Awwal, while Abu Bakr led the dawn prayer, the Prophet ﷺ drew back the curtain of Aisha's chamber and looked out upon his ummah standing in its rows. They had not seen his face in two days. Anas said they nearly broke their prayer for the joy of it. He was smiling, his face beaming, and Abu Bakr stepped backward thinking he was coming forward to lead, but he motioned him to stay where he was, and let the curtain fall. That was the last the companions ever saw of his blessed face ﷺ, smiling at the sight of his people at prayer. And what a fitting last sight it is, the Sheikh says, that the final image they kept of him was joy over the very thing he had spent his last breath defending.

Then the fever climbed higher. Fatima came, and seeing her father in such pain she cried out how it grieved her, oh my father, how your suffering wounds me, and he told her gently: your father will suffer nothing after this day. She was the last of his family left to him; he had buried his mother, his father, his grandfather, his uncle, and every one of his children but her, and now he drew her close and whispered something that made her weep, that Jibril had reviewed the Qur'an with him twice this year and that his time had surely come. Then he whispered again, and she smiled through her tears, for he had told her she would be the first of his household to follow him, and the mistress of the women of Paradise. She wept at the parting and smiled at the reunion, because, the Sheikh marvels, she did not want a single day of life that did not have him in it.

Aisha cradled his head against her chest. Her brother Abdur-Rahman came in holding a fresh miswak, and the Prophet ﷺ looked at it, and she understood, and softened it in her own mouth and gave it to him, and he used it with a vigor that astonished her, clean and presentable to the very end, readying himself to meet Jibril and his Lord. Then his eyes lifted upward and his lips began to move, and Aisha leaned close to hear. With those whom Allah has blessed, he was saying, the prophets and the truthful and the martyrs. O Allah, forgive me, and have mercy on me, and join me with the Highest Companion. He said it three times. The very last words were al-rafiq al-a'la, the Highest Companion, and then he was gone, a little after the sun had risen on that Monday, his head against her, on her day, in her chamber. Of all that Allah ever gave her, Aisha said, this was among the greatest: that he passed between her neck and her chest, with the trace of her own miswak still in his blessed mouth.

Whoever worshipped Muhammad ﷺ

When the news broke, the companions came apart. Umar, the mountain of a man before whom the city trembled, could not accept it; he stood in the masjid and swore the Prophet ﷺ had not died but had gone to his Lord as Musa once went, for forty days, and would return, and he would strike the neck of any man who dared say otherwise. It was not a denial of the truth so much as a heart that could not survive the truth. Abu Bakr was away; he had seen the smile that dawn and gone home for the first time in a week, certain the worst had passed. Now he rode back hard, and did not even stop in the masjid, but went straight to his daughter's chamber, uncovered the Prophet's ﷺ face, bent and kissed his forehead, and wept: how good you are in life and in

death, O Messenger of Allah. Then he covered him, and steadied himself, and walked out to the people.

He told Umar to sit, and Umar, lost in his shock, would not. So Abu Bakr stood, and even now, on the worst morning of his life, his love kept him from climbing to the top of the minbar where the Prophet ﷺ had stood; he took the lower step, as he would for the rest of his days, and praised Allah, and said the words that held the ummah upright when it could no longer hold itself: whoever used to worship Muhammad ﷺ, let him know that Muhammad ﷺ has died; and whoever worships Allah, then Allah is alive and never dies. And he recited the verse that had come down years before at Uhud, on the day they had first feared they had lost him.

Muḥammad is not but a messenger. [Other] messengers have passed on before him. So if he was to die or be killed, would you turn back on your heels [to unbelief]? And he who turns back on his heels will never harm Allāh at all; but Allāh will reward the grateful.

QUR'AN 3:144

Umar said afterward that his legs gave way beneath him and he sank to the ground, and it was as if he were hearing the verse for the very first time, as though it had been revealed in that instant. The grief was real and bottomless. But the faith did not turn back on its heels. Allah was still Allah, and the ummah, with its heart broken clean in two, held its ground.

Now they had to bury him. They were uncertain even how to wash him, until, as they sat exhausted, a sleep fell over them and a voice none of them could place said: wash him in his garments. They woke remembering the same words, and so they washed him ﷺ with his clothes on, and shrouded him in three white

Yemeni garments with no turban, and could not agree where to bury him until Abu Bakr recalled what he had once heard: that a prophet is buried in the very place where he dies. So the grave was dug into the floor of Aisha's chamber, beneath the bed he had lain in. There was no khalifa yet to lead a funeral prayer over him, so the people of Madinah came to him in waves across two full days, the men, then the women, then the children, group after group entering that small room and praying over him alone, while outside the tribes flooded in by the tens of thousands. Anas, who had seen the Prophet ﷺ ride into Madinah on the brightest day the city ever knew, said the day they buried him was the darkest of their lives, that the light went out of Madinah and a man could put out his hand and feel he could not see it, and that by the time they finished laying him in the earth they no longer recognized their own selves. They felt that empty.

And in those same final days he left the ummah a consolation meant to outlast every grief that would ever come. Whoever among my ummah is struck by a calamity, he said, let him be consoled by the calamity that befell them through me, for no calamity will ever strike anyone greater than the calamity of losing me. The loss of the Prophet ﷺ, the Sheikh explains, is the largest disaster the ummah has ever suffered or ever will; measure every sorrow of your own life against it, and let it be the grief that makes all your other griefs bearable.

There is one word more from these last days, and it crosses fourteen centuries to find us where we sit. He told the companions, near the end, how he longed to meet his brethren. Are we not your brethren, they asked. No, he said, you are my companions. My brethren are those who will come after you, who never saw me and yet believed in me, and one of them would give up all his wealth and all his family just to see me once. He

was speaking of people not yet born. He was, if we dare to hope it, speaking of us. He never saw us, and he loved us, and he asked Allah for us by name in his heart. The seerah does not truly end in a grave in Madinah. It ends in that longing, and it turns the longing back upon us as a question we have to answer with our lives.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be possible to read this day as a sad and beautiful story safely sealed in the past, and to close the book a little heavier and otherwise unchanged. That would be to miss everything it is asking. The hardest day in his life ﷺ leaves us, strangely, the gentlest and clearest set of instructions, and they run straight out of how the Sheikh tells it.

He prepared even as he suffered. With the fever burning through him, his last public acts were to settle every debt, to free his conscience of any wrong by offering his own back to be struck, to give away the last seven coins he owned because he could not bear to meet Allah holding them. He died owning nothing of this world, the man who ruled Arabia, with a borrowed lamp burning in the house that night, and he lacked nothing, because he had spent his whole life rich in everything that does not rot. Ask, then, how you are measuring your own wealth, and whether you could meet your Lord today owing no one anything, with your accounts of money and of grievance alike closed clean.

And he never let go of the prayer. He collapsed reaching for it. His last instruction to the ummah from that minbar was to guard the prayer and to fear Allah regarding the weakest people in their care. His last smile was at the sight of his people standing in their rows. If the prayer mattered this much to him ﷺ at the very end

of the most complete life ever lived, what excuse can any of us hold up at the easy beginning of ours.

Then there is the truth that held the world steady on the morning it broke. When the ummah was coming apart and even Umar could not stand, Abu Bakr did not steady them with comfort but with tawhid: whoever worshipped Muhammad ﷺ, he has died; whoever worships Allah, Allah never dies. Love him with the whole of your heart, give the world for one sight of his face the way his brethren would, and worship the One who sent him and will never leave you. That is the line that divides faith in a man from faith through a man to his Lord, and it is the line the whole religion was waiting, in that hour, to see whether the ummah would hold.

So take this day down into your ordinary life. Live so that you owe no one, in coin or in conscience. Guard the prayer the way a dying man guarded it. And love him ﷺ enough that his Sunnah is visible in how you wake and speak and pray and forgive, because he told us his brethren are exactly those who never saw him and believed, and that love is still on offer to anyone who will pay its price. O Allah, send Your praise and peace and blessing upon our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Let us live upon his Sunnah and die upon his love, gather us in his company on the Day the nations are gathered, let him know us and be glad to see us, and let us drink from his blessed hand a drink after which we never thirst again. Ameen.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 101: the death of the Prophet ﷺ (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (39:30, 21:34, 3:144), verified via quran.ai. Where

the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The mosque and the grave of the Prophet ﷺ

The most honored resting place on earth

There is no patch of ground on this earth more honored than the one we are about to stand beside. It is a grave, and it is a home, and for fourteen centuries it has been the place a believer's heart turns toward after the Kaaba itself. Near the very end of our hundred-day walk with him ﷺ, Dr. Yasir Qadhi does something he has not quite done before in the whole series. He sets aside the battles and the sermons and the great public turning points, and takes us inside the house instead. He shows us the bed. And then he tells us what happened to that bed, and to the body laid to rest beside it, across the long centuries that came after.

It is a strange and beautiful way to say goodbye to the man whose life we have followed. Not with a sword raised or a verse revealed, but with a room about ten feet by twelve, with a roof of palm leaves that let the rain through, and inside it the most beloved human being who ever lived. The Sheikh is honest from the start that much of what he draws cannot be known with certainty. The models built by modern architects and displayed in the museums of Madinah are careful attempts, no more, to reconstruct a thing the sources only half preserve. So we should hold the picture the way he holds it: as much as can be gleaned, drawn faithfully, and Allah knows best where the lines blur.

A house you could touch the walls of

When the Prophet ﷺ came to Madinah he built his mosque first, and against its back wall he raised homes for his family: small chambers of unbaked clay, one for Sawda, one for Aisha, and as the years passed more for the rest of the mothers of the believers. He married his daughter Fatima to Ali in those same first days, and built a house for them right beside his own. Ali, the Sheikh notes, kept two houses, one near the mosque and one out in the Quba district, but it was the nearer one, Fatima's house, that sat among the apartments of the Prophet ﷺ, and there the two of them were married.

Then the qibla was turned. The houses that had stood behind the mosque now stood in front of it, and a new prayer-niche was set on the southern wall. There was no covering at first over the open court, so they built a lattice of date-palm trunks and roofed it with woven palm leaves, the ordinary roofing of that age. The mihrab itself was never carved into any wall; it began as a tree stump and then a small pulpit, which is why, on the careful models, you will not find it cut into the stone. Of all those clustered chambers, only Aisha's opened directly into the mosque. Her doorway and the house of Allah shared a single threshold; the others had doors that were eventually closed off.

Do not picture anything grand. The Sheikh asks you to measure it honestly. The room, the actual living chamber, was about three by three and a half meters, which is ten feet by twelve. That is the size of a rug you would roll out in a living room, he says, not the size of the room: the rug. Inside that single span was the sleeping, the cooking, the storing, the whole of a life. There was a low door, perhaps seventy centimeters across, and a ceiling around a meter and a half, so low that some of us today would have to bow our heads to step inside.

Around the cluster of chambers there seems to have run a low clay wall, a barrier for the privacy of his wives, and it is to this that the Sheikh believes Allah points when He speaks of those who would rudely call out to the Prophet ﷺ from behind the apartments.

Indeed, those who call you, [O Muḥammad], from behind the chambers, most of them do not use reason.

QUR'AN 49:4

The wall let him move from one wife's house to the next without ever stepping out among strangers. There is a gentle dispute among scholars, the Sheikh notes, over whether a narrow alleyway ran between Aisha's wall and the mosque, or whether the two walls were one and the same. He weighs a small clue: in Sahih Muslim, the Prophet ﷺ once asked Aisha to pass him his prayer mat from the mosque, and she answered that she was in her monthly cycle and could not enter, and he told her that her menses was not in her hand and to reach in and pass it anyway. That she could simply put her hand through and draw the mat in suggests her room sat right against that shared wall. But whether a sliver of an alley lay between them or not, the Sheikh calls it plainly: a trivial question, pleasant to wonder about, impossible to settle, and Allah knows best. What is certain is that there was a curtain, not a solid door, over the inner opening, and a curtain implies a wall to hang it from. It was that very curtain he ﷺ would lift on the last morning of his life to look out one final time on his people at prayer.

Buried where he slept

The bed was a mattress stuffed with the fibers of the date palm, resting on a frame of stripped branches the way a wooden frame

serves ours. Over the years the stuffing thinned, and it is narrated that those who loved him tried to replace it with something softer, and he ﷺ refused and asked for his old worn one back. There was no kitchen and no second room. They kept jugs of water hung high on the walls, out of reach of rodents; a grinding mill, for we know from the account of the slander that Aisha would fall asleep over the grinding of the barley; a small fire for cooking and warmth; a staff carved from a branch; and swords and shields hung on the wall as every household of that time kept them. Even at ten feet by twelve the room was cluttered, the Sheikh says, so crowded with the few things a life needs that when the Prophet ﷺ rose to pray at night there was not room enough to prostrate until he gently nudged Aisha to draw in her feet.

For the rest, there was a chamber pot for the night, and otherwise they walked out beyond the city, once every two or three days, because they ate so little that they needed no more. The roof is the detail the Sheikh dwells on with something close to wonder. In the whole lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ his roof was never made of solid material. It was only intertwined palm leaves, never watertight, so the rain came through. And more than the rain, the cold. The Sheikh, who lived in Madinah for ten years, can attest to it: the cold there is a sharp, particular desert cold, and a roof of loose leaves cannot hold any warmth against it. The man Allah had honored above all creation was sheltered from neither the rain nor the cold of his own home. A solid roof was built over those houses only after he ﷺ had died. This is the house the Sheikh wants burned into your memory before he tells you what came next.

When the Prophet ﷺ passed away, the companions did not know at first where to lay him, until Abu Bakr, radiyallahu anhu, recalled

a thing the Prophet ﷺ had told him: that every prophet is buried where he dies. So his bed was lifted, and they dug his grave in that very spot, in the floor of Aisha's chamber. They dug it as a lahd: a shaft straight down, then a niche cut into the side toward the qibla, the body laid gently into the niche and the opening sealed with bricks so that no earth would ever fall upon him. There are two lawful forms of grave, the Sheikh explains, the lahd with its side-niche and the shaqq, a straight trench with a hollow at the bottom, the form the law requires in places like Memphis and Houston where he has buried the dead. The majority hold the lahd to be the sunnah, and one of their proofs is simply this: the Prophet ﷺ was buried in a lahd, and Allah would have chosen for His Prophet only the best. He was not undressed. Over the garments he already wore they placed three white cloths, and they laid him down.

The woman who lived beside the graves

Aisha, radiyallahu anha, went on living in her own house, with the grave of her husband ﷺ resting in one corner of it. When her father Abu Bakr was dying he asked to be buried beside his companion, and she gave the space gladly, for it was her father and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ; now there were two graves in her home, and she lived on beside them for another decade.

Then Omar, radiyallahu anhu, was stabbed, and the doctors told him plainly that the wound would kill him. Knowing he was dying, he sent his son Abdullah with a message framed in breathtaking humility. Tell Aisha, he said, that Omar, not the caliph, but a man named Omar, asks her permission to be buried alongside his two companions. And he added a condition that reveals the whole man: if she hesitates even slightly, leave, do not argue and do not press her, for it is her house and her right. She had been keeping

that last space for herself. She gave it away without a pause. I wanted it for myself, she said, but I will prefer Omar over my own soul. So a third grave was opened in her room, and Aisha hung a curtain across it and lived in the small space that remained, drawing the curtain out of modesty, because the third man was neither her husband nor her father.

Sit with what the Sheikh lingers over here, because it visibly moved him. For roughly twelve years this woman ate and slept and prayed in a single room while, a curtain's width away, lay the graves of her husband the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and her own father, with Omar beside them. When Aisha herself was dying, far later, in the time of Muawiyah, in the year fifty-seven after the Hijra, she asked not to be buried there at all, though a space yet remained, but to be laid among the other wives of the Prophet ﷺ in al-Baqi. Why, we are not told. Perhaps out of deference to Omar, the Sheikh offers, perhaps because she felt it more fitting to rest among the women, and he will not guess further. As for the fourth and final space in the room, there are narrations in the books of hadith that Isa, returning at the end of time, may one day be buried there. But every one of those reports is weak or very weak, the Sheikh is careful to say, so we do not affirm it as certain; we say only that it is found in the sources, and Allah knows what will be.

Walls raised over the chamber

For about ninety years the houses simply stood. The wives of the Prophet ﷺ had left no biological descendants, so after they passed no one lived in the chambers; the property fell to the care of the family of the Prophet ﷺ. Then the caliph al-Walid ibn Abd al-Malik, who ruled from eighty-eight to ninety-six after the Hijra, resolved to expand the mosque in all four directions. And that

raised a grave problem, because to the east stood the chambers of the mothers of the believers, untouched for nearly a century. He insisted that the land be purchased at any cost from whoever held it, and that the mosque be made to enclose it all, the grave included.

Why he insisted, the Sheikh weighs carefully and refuses to flatten. One reading is that he was simply a ruler doing what rulers do. Kings have always wanted to leave their mark by raising glorious mosques, and the Sheikh notes drily that there is a ruler in our own time, whom he will not name, building one of the largest mosques in the world out of state funds while his people go hungry. On this reading al-Walid cared nothing for the houses of the wives; he wanted a magnificent mosque, and no one would dare object to a man with the power of the caliphate, especially when, by ninety after the Hijra, not a single companion remained alive in Madinah. They had all passed, the very last of them dying around a hundred and ten after the Hijra, and none of those in Madinah.

But there is a second reading, and the Sheikh confesses he finds it more persuasive: there was politics in it. The Umayyads carried a deep and bitter rivalry with the family of the Prophet ﷺ, and Karbala, the slaughter of Husayn, lay only a decade in the past. The descendants of the Prophet ﷺ were profoundly loved, as is only human, and Ali ibn Husayn, the gentle survivor who as a sick young man in his tent had outlived the massacre of his whole male line, would sit in his ancestor's house, which opened straight onto the mosque, and at times even preach from there into the gathered congregation. Imagine it, the Sheikh says: the descendant of the Prophet ﷺ addressing the people with the very chamber of the Prophet ﷺ as the backdrop behind him. To a throne nervous about its own legitimacy, there was one simple

answer, to remove the house. The Sheikh names this for what it is, the corrupting pull of power, the greatest trial known to man, and he asks Allah to protect us all from ever sitting in such a seat, because when a throne feels threatened, every sacred thing becomes negotiable.

Senior scholars of Madinah objected, the foremost among them Saeed ibn al-Musayyib. But notice precisely why, because the Sheikh corrects a misreading some in our own age have spread. Saeed did not object on some theological ground about a grave standing inside a mosque. He objected because he wanted the people to keep seeing the rough, bare simplicity of the houses of the Prophet ﷺ, so that their hearts would stay soft. Within ninety years, civilization had already come to Madinah: two-story homes, fine embroidered fabric, money pouring in from the conquered empires of Rome and Persia. Saeed wanted a living reminder, in plain view, of how the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had actually lived, and he understood that tearing the houses down would take that lesson away forever. The ruler did not care to keep it. The chambers were demolished, every one of them, except Aisha's.

And as the workmen dug at her wall, one of them cried out in fright and the young governor overseeing the work nearly cried out with him, for two feet were protruding from the earth, fresh and whole after ninety years, and they feared these were the feet of the Prophet ﷺ himself. A scholar of the family was summoned, Abdullah ibn Abd Allah, and he reassured them: do not fear, O Governor, these are the feet of our grandfather Omar. They covered them over and built on. The detail, the Sheikh notes, suggests they had broken into the original wall after all.

The pentagon, the thefts, and the fires

The young governor who oversaw the building was none other than Omar ibn Abd al-Aziz, who would himself become caliph fifteen years later and is remembered as one of the most God-fearing of all rulers, though at this early stage of his life, the Sheikh is candid, he was still an ordinary Umayyad prince, praying and fasting as all did but without the deep love of the faith that came to him later, eager like any governor to please the throne. Around Aisha's chamber he raised a solid structure of thick black blocks, the very stone the Kaaba is built from, with no door at all; whether the original walls of her house were preserved inside this casing or replaced by it is a small dispute the Sheikh leaves open, hoping the original was kept but unable to be sure.

Then, around that, Omar ibn Abd al-Aziz built a second enclosure, and he built it five-sided, a pentagon, on purpose. The scholars give two reasons. First, so that no one praying in the mosque would ever face it squarely, as though it were a qibla. Second, so that no newcomer to Islam, in an age when people were converting in great numbers, would see a black cube in Madinah and mistake it for a second Kaaba. That pentagon would stand for some five hundred years, and to this day, the Sheikh stresses, no one has ever entered the innermost chamber it guards.

The books of history then carry stories, three or four or five of them, of attempts to steal the body of the Prophet ﷺ for prestige. The earliest are ascribed to the deranged Fatimid caliph al-Hakim, and these the Sheikh does not doubt, given the man. But the most famous tells of two men who came to Madinah posing as devout worshippers, fasting and withdrawn, living near the chamber while they secretly dug a tunnel toward it, paid by the Crusaders to seize the body, until the ruler Nur al-Din Zangi,

the man who would raise up Salahuddin, was warned three nights running in a dream by the Prophet ﷺ himself, rode to Madinah, found them out at a feast he threw for the whole city, and poured molten lead around the grave to seal it forever. It is a great story, the Sheikh says, told in many a medieval book. And then, honestly, he sets it down. He has researched it, and he cannot believe it. The earliest reference appears more than two centuries after the supposed event, around the year seven hundred and seventy-two, in an age when histories were already being written and would not have missed it. And a man responsible for the sanctuary of the Prophet ﷺ today, whom the Sheikh questioned directly, told him plainly there is no lead barrier of any kind around the grave. He treats it as a later invention to glorify a beloved figure, and Allah knows best.

Two fires, however, are beyond doubt. In the year six hundred and fifty-four after the Hijra a lamp-keeper went in to refill the oil, had an accident, and the flame caught a curtain, and the curtain a pillar, and the whole mosque burned, the roof collapsing inward, and even the original pulpit of the Prophet ﷺ was lost in it. The people wrote to the caliph in Baghdad for guidance, for no one had entered the chamber in five or six hundred years, but it was the very year of the Mongol sack of Baghdad, when over a million were slaughtered and the caliph himself was about to lose his life, and no answer ever came. So out of sheer reverence they simply rebuilt the mosque around the chamber, daring not to disturb what had fallen inside, and it was the rising sultan Baybars, the freed slave who became king and turned back the Mongols at Ayn Jalut, who financed the rebuilding. A second great fire came in eight hundred and eighty-six, when on a dark and stormy night a bolt of lightning struck the minaret as the

muezzin was climbing to give the call, killing him and setting the roof ablaze, and again the whole mosque had to be raised anew.

The green dome and the grille

Out of those two rebuildings came the shapes a visitor sees today. After the first fire, Baybars raised a square wall around the chamber and set upon it, for the first time in the history of Islam, a dome over the grave; there had never been one before, not in six centuries. It was a wooden dome, and it stood two hundred years until the second fire took it.

After that second fire, the greatest scholar then living, al-Samhudi, who died in nine hundred and eleven after the Hijra and wrote volumes on the history of Madinah, was sent into the inner chambers to clean and restore them and to make sure the structure of Omar ibn Abd al-Aziz still held. He was the first human being in some five hundred years to enter, and the last for the centuries since. He wrote of it in trembling first-person prose. He stepped only to the rear threshold of the blessed room and would go no further, out of awe, not setting foot inside. He caught a fragrance unlike anything he had ever known, and he asked what else one would expect of such a place, where the angels descend and the baraka gathers; anyone who denies that there is something there, he wrote, he could only feel sorry for. He stood as long as he was able, sending salam upon the best of the prophets ﷺ and then upon the nearest of his two companions, and made all the dua he could. He found the graves settled almost flat, only the mound of Omar at the back still slightly raised, a little reddish gravel scattered over them, and the earth, when he took a handful, still moist as if freshly turned. From his hand the wooden enclosure was replaced with one of metal, the green lattice grille that pilgrims look through to this

day. It was built in eight hundred and eighty-six, which is fourteen eighty-one of the common era, when Columbus had not yet crossed the ocean and Granada had not yet fallen, and it is six hundred years old.

And the famous dome itself: Baybars's wooden dome was rebuilt in solid form by the same sultan who set the grille, and for most of its long life it was not green at all. It was bare metal first, bright where the sun struck it, then painted blue, then white. Only around twelve hundred and fifty-three after the Hijra, which is eighteen thirty-seven of the common era, in the reign of Sultan Mahmud, was it painted green for the first time. The green dome of Madinah, the Sheikh reminds us, is barely a century and a half old, and there is no religious meaning whatsoever in the color. A curtain has been hung around the grave since the early Abbasid era, first gifted by the mother of Harun al-Rashid; the cloth that covers it now is woven in the very same Makkah workshop that weaves the covering of the Kaaba, and it is changed once in every ten years.

Where we stand and give salam

So when you finally come, and may Allah let every one of us come, here is what is real and what is imagined. From outside the grille the men give their salam, walking past the three points that face the three graves: peace to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, then to Abu Bakr a little behind him, then to Omar. You stand perhaps ten feet from him ﷺ. The only ones ever permitted into the outer hallway, six feet nearer and no closer, are the cleaners, who are themselves students of knowledge chosen by a committee, and visiting kings and their highest guests. Through the lattice you will see only the curtain. There is no house to glimpse, no graves to make out. Anyone who claims to have seen more than the

curtain, the Sheikh says firmly, it is a figment of their imagination. No one enters the innermost chamber. There are no keys to it, there is no door into it, and no one ever should.

Keep the adab the companions kept. The body of the Prophet ﷺ was left exactly where he died, untouched, out of the utmost respect, and that reverence is the inheritance every generation since has guarded, through fire and flood and the schemes of kings. Even when the great fire brought the roof down upon the chamber, no one would climb in to clear it, because they had not been given leave. You do not need to touch a wall or press your eye to the grille to be near him. You were near him from the first day of this journey, every time his name crossed your lips and you sent your salawat.

What this day asks of our faith

We began this seerah, a hundred days ago, with a single question: who is he ﷺ? We answered it then with his specialities, the list of all that set him apart, the most praised soul in creation, the mercy sent walking, the first to pass through the gate of Jannah. Today we end it standing quietly outside a small room in Madinah, having walked the whole of his life, and the answer is no longer a list at all. It is love. And the room itself puts three questions to us before we leave it.

Measure your wants against his room. Ten feet by twelve, a roof that let the rain and the cold straight through, and inside it the most honored soul in all creation, who turned away the softer mattress and asked for his worn one back. Saeed ibn al-Musayyib begged a caliph not to tear that house down, not over any point of law, but so the people would keep seeing, with their own eyes, how the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had actually lived, and let it keep their hearts soft. The house was taken from the eyes of

the people in the end. Let it not be taken from yours. The next time your own appetite for more grows loud, the Sheikh says, remember the chamber Saeed fought to save, and ask how much of what you crave the most beloved of Allah's creation ever had at all.

Then there is Aisha, who kept the last grave in her room for her own body and gave it away the moment a dying man named Omar asked for it, preferring him over her own soul. The thing you are quietly saving for yourself is sometimes the very thing you were meant to give away. And there is the discipline the Sheikh modeled all evening, loving the Prophet ﷺ with his whole heart and still setting down, gently and firmly, the beautiful tale of the molten lead and the warning dream, because it does not hold up to the sources. Reverence is never a license to repeat what is not sound; the love that honors him is the love that tells the truth about him.

And last, the thing the whole long history of that chamber teaches, from the palm-leaf roof to the bare metal dome to the green paint that is younger than the telegraph: the grave needs no decoration to be honored. There was no dome at all for six centuries, and the green is barely a hundred and fifty years old, and the color means nothing. What honors that room is not its color but the One who lies beside it ﷺ, and the salam this ummah has never once stopped sending. So you do not need to reach Madinah to be close to him. A hundred days you have walked beside him, and the nearness was always in the salawat, and that you can send from anywhere on the earth. Send it now, the way al-Samhudi sent his at the threshold of that fragrant room, the way his ummah has always sent it, and carry it with you out of these hundred days and into the whole of the rest of your life. O Allah, send Your praise and Your peace upon our

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, the most honored of all who ever lived; let us stand one day at that blessed grille and give him our salam in person; gather us under his banner with Abu Bakr and Omar and all who loved him; and convey to his soul, from this ummah that has never stopped saying his name, our greeting and our peace.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 102: the mosque and the grave of the Prophet ﷺ (Memphis Islamic Center, 2015). Qur'an: Sahih International (49:4), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing of their chains has been followed.

The incident of the scrolls

Bring me pen and paper, and the question that followed

We are nearly at the end now. Only a handful of days separate us from the moment the most beloved of all creation ﷺ would leave this world, and before we reach that Monday there is one Thursday we are obliged to sit with. It was a Thursday so heavy that Ibn Abbas, radiyallahu anhu, who carried its memory all his life, could not speak of it in later years without weeping, and he gave it a name that tells you everything about how it felt to those who lived it: the greatest calamity. Not the calamity of a battle lost, not famine, not the death of a child. The greatest calamity, in the reckoning of a man who saw the Prophet ﷺ with his own eyes, was a few words exchanged over a piece of parchment.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi opens this lecture with a confession of reluctance. He would rather not go back into this history at all, he says, because in the end what happened, happened, and reading blame backwards into the past changes nothing that was. But this is not a question a believing life can simply step around. Sooner or later it finds every Muslim who loves this religion. At some point someone leans in and asks: did this happen, did that happen, why did they do it this way and not another. So we go back, carefully, to the place where the two great strands of Islam first part company, and we look at one specific incident, slowly and honestly, the way it deserves to be looked at. It is sensitive ground. It will be walked as such.

Why we cannot simply pass over it

Most tellings of the seerah do not stop at the passing of the Prophet ﷺ. They carry on a little further, to the choosing of Abu Bakr and to the army of Usama marching north toward Syria, because those events grow directly out of his final days and cannot be cut loose from them without leaving the story hanging. And it is here, in this same stretch, that something else has to be faced. What surrounds the death of the Prophet ﷺ is the most contested ground in the whole of the seerah, the very seam where Sunni and Shia first separate. You cannot tell it honestly while pretending one side of the conversation does not exist. To narrate these days with integrity is to acknowledge that there are two readings, and to say plainly which one we hold and why.

There was an earlier incident already, in the final months, that some read very differently from us: the day at the pool of Ghadir, when the Prophet ﷺ spoke of Ali, radiyallahu anhu. And here Sheikh Yasir wants no confusion about the Sunni posture, because it is generous, not grudging. We affirm that day one hundred percent, he says. It is in our own books and we have no difficulty with a word of it. When you put it back into its setting, the Prophet ﷺ was defending Ali, raising him up against those who had found fault with him, declaring that whoever takes me as a protector takes Ali as a protector too, that to irritate Ali is to irritate him ﷺ. We embrace all of that. What we do not read into it is a formal appointment to leadership, and the reason we do not is that the whole texture of those last days points another way. The Prophet ﷺ kept turning, again and again, toward Abu Bakr. He insisted Abu Bakr lead the prayer in his place. When for a moment they could not find him and Omar, radiyallahu anhu, stepped forward instead, the instruction came back firm: no, find Abu Bakr, and let him lead. Never once in his life had the Prophet

ﷺ commanded another man to lead the prayer while he himself was alive and present in the masjid. For us, the Sheikh says, you cannot get more significant than that. So we come to the incident of Thursday already standing in the light of everything around it.

What a Thursday it was

The incident is known by two names: the incident of Thursday, and the incident of the scrolls, the qirtas being the parchment, the papyrus, the surface they wrote upon. And before a single word of controversy, Sheikh Yasir plants a flag he wants no one to walk past. This report is in Bukhari and in Muslim. It is fully authentic. We as Sunnis affirm it one hundred percent. It is in our own books, narrated in our own chains, and there is nothing here to hide and nothing here to deny. The difference between the two sides was never whether it happened. It is only, ever, how it is read.

Ibn Abbas is the one who hands it down, and the longest version is his. As the pain of the Prophet ﷺ grew sharp and heavy upon him, he said: bring me a writing, and I shall write for you something after which you will never go astray. Bring me pen and paper, we would say in plain English, and I will set down for you a thing that will keep you from misguidance forever. And in that room, among the people who loved him most in all the world, there was hesitation. One voice, and the books of hadith do not name whose it was, said: the Prophet ﷺ is overcome by his pain, he is suffering, and we have the Book of Allah, and that is sufficient for us. We need nothing besides the Book of Allah. Others said no, ask him what he wishes, bring it to him, let him write. And the voices went back and forth across the bedside, rising against one another. When the Prophet ﷺ saw them

differing in front of him, he said: get up and leave me, for it is not befitting that you should dispute in my presence.

Here Sheikh Yasir pauses to clear away a misreading before it can take root. The Shia tradition, he notes, identifies that one hesitating voice as Omar, and adds that someone in the room suggested the Prophet ﷺ was speaking deliriously from fever. But our books of hadith do not name the speaker at all, not as Omar, not as anyone. To build a mountain of accusation on a name that the authentic narrations never supply is to build on sand. What the sound report gives us is a voice, a hesitation, a dispute, and the Prophet's ﷺ displeasure at being disputed over. No more than that, and we are not entitled to manufacture more.

Then, that same day or soon after, the Prophet ﷺ gave three final instructions. Expel the idolaters from the Arabian Peninsula. Honor the visiting delegations the way I have always honored them, receive every newcomer to Islam as I received them. And a third that the sub-narrator confessed, with the plainness of an honest man, that he had simply forgotten, lost to us now forever in the telling. Later scholars suggest it may have been the command to send the army of Usama, or the warning that his grave should never be made into an idol, since both of these are recorded in other narrations of his final days, but no one can say for certain. And Ibn Abbas, recalling it across the years, would let the grief rise in him and say that the calamity, the whole calamity, was what came between the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and the writing of that parchment.

Before the controversy, what the day teaches

Imam Bukhari recorded this single incident in seven separate places across his collection, and Sheikh Yasir lingers on why, because before any argument is opened there are quiet lessons

in this scene that both sides of the divide hold in common. They belong to all of us.

That the Prophet ﷺ reached for pen and paper at all is, the scholars say, among the proofs that recording sacred knowledge is beloved and commanded. He who had brought a revelation preserved first in hearts now reached, at the very end, for ink. Write your knowledge down, the scene says to us, before it slips away the way that third instruction slipped away from a man who was standing right there. That his last counsel made room for the delegations tells the ummah how to receive those who come seeking this religion: with warmth, with hospitality, with generosity, exactly as he had received them. And that he disliked the disputing, openly and to their faces, tells us how ugly division is in the sight of Allah, and how much uglier it becomes when it breaks out in the presence of guidance itself.

And there is one more tenderness the scholars draw from these moments, almost too gentle to notice. Do not sit too long at the bedside of the sick. A visit to the ill should be a light thing, a checking-in, brief and kind, not a weight laid upon a body already carrying pain; lingering becomes a burden, however lovingly meant. Even out of the hardest scene in the whole seerah, even from a deathbed, the ummah was still being taught how to love one another well. This is the mercy of it: that nothing of him ﷺ was ever wasted, that even his suffering kept teaching.

The first question: what did that voice mean

Now the controversy itself, and Sheikh Yasir frames it not as a verdict to be pronounced but as three honest questions to be answered in turn. The first: how do we understand the one who said the Book of Allah is sufficient for us, the voice our tradition

takes to be Omar, who turned the moment aside rather than rushing to fetch the pen and ink.

He spent real time, he tells us, gathering how the classical scholars answered this, and across the centuries they are remarkably of one mind on the spirit of it. Al-Khattabi, who died in the year 388, held that Omar never for a moment imagined the Prophet ﷺ was mistaken; rather, seeing the severity of the fever, he feared the Prophet ﷺ might in his pain say something the ummah would later find vague, or that an enemy of the religion might one day twist, and he knew that the Companions did at times reason aloud with the Prophet ﷺ when circumstances allowed it, as they had done at Badr over the placement of the army and at Hudaibiyyah over the terms of the treaty. Al-Qadi Iyad, who died in 544, and al-Qurtubi of Cordova, who died in 676, read it the very same way: a command can carry within it signs that soften it into a request, and Omar must have perceived something in that moment that led him to judge it so, and for that sincere effort of judgment he is rewarded whether he read it rightly or not. Ibn al-Jawzi and Ibn Hajar narrated these positions and agreed with them, that out of care and concern for the Prophet's ﷺ pain Omar felt this was not the hour to draw him into any further matter. And Imam al-Nawawi went further still, saying the scholars had agreed this incident displays Omar's understanding and his foresight, that he feared a thing being written down which people might fail to live up to and then be held to account for, and that he leaned on the Qur'an's own testimony that the religion was already whole and complete.

And here is where Sheikh Yasir refuses, in his own words, to sugarcoat or to play the apologist. We Sunnis look at this, he says, and we are biased, there is no denying it, just as the other side is biased in its turn. But our bias is not arbitrary; it is built

upon a track record. Twenty years of Omar stand behind this Thursday, and years of his justice as a leader still lay ahead of it, and the Prophet's ﷺ own words ring over the man: that had there been a prophet after him it would have been Omar, that Shaytan himself flees the path that Omar walks, that there had been inspired men before and if there were one in this ummah it would be Omar. When you love someone, and they do something ambiguous, you read it in the best light you can find. When you do not love them, you read the very same act in the worst. The Sheikh will not pretend the action is crystalline. Omar's stance here is genuinely ambiguous, he says; the scholars' explanations are good attempts and no more than attempts, for none of them were in that room and neither were we. What we know of the man asks of us a leap of faith: that whatever he saw, he had a very good reason for it, even if the reason is lost to us. Those who do not love him will not make that leap. That, stated honestly and without dressing it up, is the true heart of the disagreement.

The second and third questions: what, and why the silence

The second question sets Omar's motive aside and asks something different: what did the Prophet ﷺ actually want to write? One answer is the simplest and lies right in the text. He wanted to set down the three instructions themselves, and when the writing did not happen, he simply spoke them aloud instead, so that nothing of substance was in fact lost. Many scholars hold exactly this.

But there is an older and weightier reading, and Sheikh Yasir gives it real space. Sufyan ibn Uyaynah, who died in the year 198, and others noticed that only a few days earlier, in the very beginning of this same final illness, the Prophet ﷺ had said something recorded just as firmly in Bukhari and Muslim. This

was the day Aisha, radiyallahu anha, had complained of a headache and he ﷺ had answered that his own was worse. On that day he said: call for me your father, Abu Bakr, and your brother, that I may write a document, for I fear that someone will aspire to leadership and say I have more right, but Allah and the believers will refuse anyone other than Abu Bakr. Read the two scenes together, separated by only three or four days, and the scrolls may well have been pointing the exact opposite way from what is often claimed: toward Abu Bakr, not away from him. This was the considered view of Sufyan and of more than one early scholar, and Ibn Taymiyyah, who devoted ten volumes to these very differences, held the document to have been precisely this, a writing in favor of Abu Bakr. From our tradition, the Sheikh notes plainly, there is simply no evidence at all for the other reading. We cannot follow a claim our own sources nowhere support.

Then comes the third question, and it is the one he finds most decisive of all, the one that closes the matter even if you grant every doubt about the first two. Set Omar's motive entirely aside; let it be whatever the other side wishes it to be. Everyone agrees the incident of Thursday took place on a Thursday. The Prophet ﷺ passed away the following Monday. That is Thursday evening, and then a full Friday, a full Saturday, a full Sunday, and into Monday: roughly four whole days. Now, if this writing was as world-altering as the claim requires, if everything turned upon it, then how did four days pass with nothing further said? He ﷺ was not a man who ever abandoned a charge from his Lord; never once in his life did he set down something Allah had commanded him to carry. And through all four of those days the very people most beloved to the other side, and beloved to us as well, Ali among them, were constantly at his side, and he said nothing

further to any of them either. Ibn Hajar makes exactly this point: it is not possible that the Prophet ﷺ would leave a matter of that magnitude hanging, uncommented, for four days. Imam al-Mazari narrows it to two possibilities, and both of them shut the door. Either Allah had commanded the writing, in which case the dispute of a few Companions could never have stopped it, so it must have been abrogated by Allah Himself; or it was the Prophet's ﷺ own considered judgment, which after the unseemly disputing he simply chose, of his own will, to let go. There is no third road. And on either road, had the matter truly been of that towering importance, it could not have been left undone. To claim otherwise is, in effect, to claim that the Prophet ﷺ failed in his mission, and that no believer of any persuasion can say.

Through all three questions Sheikh Yasir keeps returning to one gentle anchor, the thing Omar himself is said to have leaned on. The religion was already complete. Allah had declared it before this Thursday ever came:

This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you and have approved for you Islām as religion.

QUR'AN 5:3

The faith was finished, the favor was full, and nothing essential could have hung upon a page that was never written.

What was clear, and where we land

There is one more thing that settles the Sheikh's heart on this, and it is not an argument about the scrolls at all. It is everything else those final weeks were quietly saying. Over and over, in his

last days, the Prophet ﷺ kept pointing toward Abu Bakr. He insisted that Abu Bakr lead the prayer, and when at first they could not find him and Omar rose to take his place, the word came back: no, find Abu Bakr, let him lead. Never in his entire life had the Prophet ﷺ ordered another to lead the prayer while he himself was alive and in the masjid; for us, the Sheikh says, you cannot get more significant than that. And in the year he could not make the Hajj, it was Abu Bakr he sent as leader of the pilgrims; when Ali was sent afterward, Ali himself made it plain that he came not as the commander of the Hajj but to deliver a particular message. In the two things the Prophet ﷺ ever delegated, the prayer and the pilgrimage, the same name kept surfacing of its own accord.

So where do we land? The incident of the scrolls is real, affirmed, never denied, recorded in our own most trusted books, and read very differently by different hearts. Sheikh Yasir, who says of himself that he is no apologist and calls a spade a spade, leaves us with three honest conclusions and no more. That Omar, by the sheer weight of who he was across a lifetime, must have had a sound reason we were simply not there to witness. That the writing, if it named anyone at all, leans by the evidence toward Abu Bakr and never once toward the other claim. And that whatever a person decides about the first two, four silent days make it impossible that something of that magnitude was merely lost to a quarrel at the bedside. Underneath all of it sits the deeper truth that Allah Himself declared, the truth that dissolves the panic the whole question can stir up:

We have not neglected in the Register a thing.

QUR'AN 6:38

Nothing was neglected. Nothing was left out. The religion reached us whole and entire. We were never orphaned by a missing page.

He ends as he began, refusing to inflame it. What happened, happened. We hold our reading with conviction and we hold it with adab, the dignity of restraint, and we do not let a grief fourteen centuries old curdle into something that poisons the very love the whole story was meant to plant in us. That is the discipline the day demands: to be honest about the disagreement, settled in our conviction, and gentle in our manner all at once.

What this day asks of our faith

It would be easy to treat the incident of the scrolls as a debate to be won, a place to score a point against someone who reads it differently, and to walk away from it harder than we came. That would be to miss entirely what the Sheikh is doing with it. He is not handing us a victory to brandish. He is handing us a heart to protect.

The first thing the day asks is that we affirm what is authentic even when it is hard to hold. The incident of Thursday is in our own books, and the honest believer affirms it one hundred percent rather than wishing it away. Faith has never needed us to deny the difficult; it asks the harder and nobler thing, that we read the difficult with knowledge and with honesty, and trust that the truth can bear being looked at squarely. A religion that asked us to look away from its own authentic reports would be a fragile thing. Ours does not. It invites the gaze.

The second thing it asks is that we know our own bias and own it out loud, the way the Sheikh does. We read Omar through twenty

years of his character and through the Prophet's ﷺ own praise of him, and that is a lean, an inclination, and we should call it what it is rather than dress it as cold neutrality. There is more strength in saying we love this man and so we read him generously than in pretending we arrived at our verdict from nowhere. And flowing straight out of that, the third thing: that some matters ask of us a leap of faith. We were not in that room. None of us saw what Omar saw. What we know of him asks us to extend the benefit of the doubt we would beg for ourselves, to assume that a man of that stature, doing something ambiguous, had a reason worthy of him even when the reason is hidden from us. To love someone well is, in part, exactly this, to give them the reading we would want given to us on the day our own act looked unclear from the outside.

And then the day asks the quiet, ordinary things that have nothing to do with the controversy at all, and perhaps these are the ones to carry home. That we write our knowledge down, because he ﷺ reached for pen and paper at the very end, and because we have all watched a precious thing slip away the way that third instruction slipped from a man who was standing right beside the Prophet ﷺ when it was spoken. That we visit the sick gently and briefly and do not make a burden of our love. That we treat the division it cost so dearly as the ugly thing he ﷺ named it to be, never to be reopened lightly for the pleasure of being right. And above all, that we rest in the truth Allah declared before that Thursday ever dawned: that the faith was perfected, the favor completed, nothing in the Book neglected. Whatever the disputes of history, you were not handed an unfinished religion. You were handed a whole one.

So take one thing from this heavy day down into your ordinary life. When you meet a contested piece of this religion's past, do

not let it make you cruel, and do not let it make you doubt the completeness of what reached you. Hold your conviction, and hold your manners with it. And then turn, as this day turns the believer, to the only safe ground there is, and ask of Allah the thing the heart feels it needs most when history grows turbulent and loyalties pull in different directions: a heart that will not swerve.

[Who say], "Our Lord, let not our hearts deviate after You have guided us and grant us from Yourself mercy. Indeed, You are the Bestower."

QUR'AN 3:8

O Allah, do not let our hearts deviate after You have guided us, and grant us from Yourself mercy; You are the Bestower. Keep our love for Your Prophet ﷺ and for everyone he loved unshaken by the quarrels of men long dead. Gather us with him on the Day the nations are gathered. And let no disagreement of this passing world ever come between us and the writing he truly left us, the one after which we will never go astray: Your Book, and his guidance, complete and entire, with nothing neglected and no missing page. May Allah send His peace and blessings upon His Messenger ﷺ, who in the last hours of his life reached for ink so that we might never stray, and grant us hearts steady enough to be worthy of the religion he completed among us.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 103: the incident of the scrolls (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (5:3, 6:38, 3:8), verified via quran.ai. The narration and the

weighing of these reports are the Sheikh's; the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

The Election of Abu Bakr

When the first of the two stood in his place

One hundred and four days ago we began before his birth, with a single question: who is he ﷺ? We did not yet know the lineage, or the cave of Hira, or the wound at Ta'if, or the long road north to Madinah. We have walked the whole of it since, year by year, and now we arrive at the far side of the entire life, on a Monday morning in Madinah, only hours after that life has ended. His blessed body ﷺ has not yet been washed. And already the ummah he left behind is standing before the first question of a world without him: who leads now?

Dr. Yasir Qadhi opens this last session with a careful warning, and we are bound to keep it. Today, he says, is not only history; it is also theology, the very place where the divide between Sunni and Shia Islam begins. So we will walk it the way he walks it: slowly, with respect for everyone whose name appears in it, raising our voices at no one and reading the worst into no heart. This is the election of Abu Bakr as-Siddiq, radiyallahu anhu, the first Khalifah of Islam. It is where the seerah closes, and where the age of the companions opens.

Where the divide begins

The Sheikh does not rush past what is at stake. Every Muslim is intimately aware that this moment, the choosing of the first leader after the Prophet ﷺ, is where Sunnism and Shiism part ways.

The Sunni position, he says plainly, is that Abu Bakr was the most suitable man for the role, and that this is a religious matter and not merely a political one. The other group holds otherwise. He is not here to lay out the Shia evidences and argue them; that is a different class. Yet you cannot honestly tell this story while pretending the theology is not in the room with you.

Within Sunni Islam itself, he sets out three views on how Abu Bakr came to lead. The first holds that the companions, recognizing he was the best among them, simply chose him, with nothing explicit from the Prophet ﷺ on the matter. The second, narrated from al-Hasan al-Basri and others, holds that the Prophet ﷺ indicated it indirectly, never naming him outright but leaving clear hints that any attentive heart would catch. The third is a small minority view, held openly by the great Andalusian scholar Ibn Hazm: that the Prophet ﷺ explicitly commanded it. The Sheikh is candid that he searched for another name to attach to that third view and could find almost no one beyond Ibn Hazm. And he notes the symmetry that makes it interesting: it is the exact mirror of the Shia claim, which says the Prophet ﷺ explicitly commanded that Ali, radiyallahu anhu, should lead.

Then he does what a careful teacher does. He collapses the first two views into one. They are not truly opposed, he says. The whole body of hadith praising Abu Bakr as the greatest of the companions is itself an indication of who should lead; to honor a man that highly is already to point at him. So the honest Sunni position, the one he asks us to carry, is this: the Prophet ﷺ did not stand up and name a successor in plain words, but he left enough light in the room that the companions understood. Faithful to that light, the rest of the story unfolds.

The second of the two

Over the centuries, scholars searched the Qur'an itself for indications of Abu Bakr's standing. The Sheikh is honest that many of those readings are a reach; one famous mufasssir, he notes, worked his way out of the very first verse of the Qur'an, al-hamdu lillahi rabbil alameen, by a long and convoluted path, until he too arrived at Abu Bakr. There is a great deal of that sort of thing, and he does not find most of it convincing. But two verses, in his judgment, carry real weight.

The first is the ayah of the cave. As the Prophet ﷺ and Abu Bakr lay hidden from the men of Makkah in the cave of Thawr, Allah revealed the verse that names him forever:

If you do not aid him, Allah has already aided him when those who disbelieved had driven him out as one of two, when they were in the cave and he said to his companion, "Do not grieve; indeed Allah is with us." And Allah sent down His tranquility upon him and supported him with soldiers you did not see and made the word of those who disbelieved the lowest, while the word of Allah, that is the highest. And Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise.

QUR'AN 9:40

Here is the argument the scholars drew from it, and the Sheikh finds it sound. If Allah Himself names Abu Bakr as the second of the two, his companion in the cave, the one told do not grieve, then when the first of the two is gone, who naturally stands in his place? The second. And the word khalifah means precisely that: linguistically, a khalifah is the one who takes over when another departs, who steps into a vacated place. The very word of the office is built into the verse. When number one is no longer here, number two takes the stand. He calls this, frankly, not a bad evidence at all.

The second verse names the foremost believers and ranks them in their order:

And the first forerunners among the Muhajireen and the Ansar and those who followed them with good conduct, Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him, and He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever. That is the great attainment.

QUR'AN 9:100

The Sabiqun, the first forerunners, are praised here as the best, and they are listed in sequence: the earliest of the Muhajireen, then the Ansar, then those who followed. And who, the Sheikh asks, is the very first adult man of the Muhajireen to embrace Islam? Abu Bakr. He stands at the front of the front rank. These two readings, he says, are the ones with genuine substance; the rest he leaves to the side. Hold the cave, then: two men, one threshold, and the quiet logic that when the first crosses over, the second remains.

The dream and the open door

Beyond the Qur'an there are so many ahadith on the rank of Abu Bakr that one could fill whole lectures with them. The Sheikh selects those that touch leadership directly, and the most beautiful is a dream the Prophet ﷺ reported, preserved in Sahih al-Bukhari. I was at a well, he said ﷺ, drawing water as long as Allah willed that I draw. Then Abu Bakr came and drew a bucket or two, and in his drawing there was some weakness. Then Umar ibn al-Khattab came, and the bucket turned in his hands into the great vessel used for watering whole herds; the Prophet ﷺ said he had never seen a leader draw water the way Umar did, until

the people brought their camels back to the pens, watered to their fill.

The symbolism, the Sheikh says, is plain and profound. After the Prophet ﷺ departed, Abu Bakr took the rope and kept the water flowing for a year or two, exactly the span of his Khilafah, a bucket or two. And the weakness in his drawing was no fault of his own; the whole ummah trembled and very nearly fractured in his time, the tribes that broke away, the false claimants, the wars of apostasy, the wound that nearly killed the religion in its cradle. By the grace of Allah, this one man held it together and healed it; had it not been for Allah, and then for His choosing Abu Bakr, the ummah would have splintered and the Islam we know would not exist. He drew exactly long enough to steady the rope, and exactly long enough for Umar to come and turn the well into a flood. For the conquests that followed under Umar remain, in fourteen centuries, unequalled; a band of Arabs who could not read, with no empire behind them, erased the Persian empire from the map and carved away half of Rome, and to this day, the Sheikh marvels, historians scratch their heads at how. We know how. The Prophet ﷺ had told a man who tore up his letter that Allah would tear up his kingdom, and within ten years it was gone. One man steadied the well; the next let it overflow.

But the single strongest indication of all, the Sheikh says, came in the Prophet's ﷺ final illness, when he commanded that Abu Bakr lead the prayer. For three days and nights the dying Prophet ﷺ, feverish and drifting in and out of consciousness, sent again and again for Abu Bakr to stand where he himself had always stood. And once, when those around him tried to substitute another man, he stirred and grew firm: stop him, he said, and bring Abu Bakr, for Allah and His Messenger refuse anyone but Abu Bakr. This was no ordinary question of who would lead a single salah;

it was a demonstration of who would stand in his place when he was gone. And in the last sermon he ever gave from the minbar, lowered now and unable to stand, he gave another sign. The houses of the companions had been built around the masjid, many with small private doors opening straight onto it. Close every one of those doors, he ﷺ said, except the door of Abu Bakr. Every household lost its private access. One man kept his.

So why, with all of these signs laid one upon another, did the Prophet ﷺ never simply say the words, when I die, let Abu Bakr lead? Here the Sheikh offers the answer he finds strongest, and Allah knows best. Had the Prophet ﷺ named a successor outright, it would have hardened into binding law that every leader must name the next, and that is a door better left open than commanded shut. Look, he says, at how the four rightly guided Khalifahs each did it differently. Abu Bakr named Umar outright. Umar named a council of six and told them to choose among themselves. Uthman named no one, and there was a measure of confusion before the people settled on Ali. And later still, Muawiyah, radiyallahu anhu, the last of the companions to hold the office, named his own son, and so opened the door of dynasty. The Sharia, the Sheikh notes, permits every one of these methods; even naming a son does not invalidate a Khilafah, for if it did, the ummah would have had no valid leadership for most of its history. It is simply the least ideal of the ways. The Prophet ﷺ left the matter open on purpose, and so he indicated without commanding.

The shade of Banu Sa'idah

Now to the morning itself. The Prophet ﷺ passed away after the Fajr prayer on Monday, the twelfth of Rabi al-Awwal. Within a few hours, on that same Monday, the Ansar began to gather at their

old meeting place, a covered shelter, a saqifah, in a garden belonging to Banu Sa'idah, one of the great clans of the Khazraj. It had been their gathering place since the days of jahiliyyah, the way every Arab community kept a place to come together. The Sheikh is careful here, and asks us to be careful with him. There was no announcement, no summons, no scheme. It is simply human nature, he says, that when a shared calamity strikes, people come together to ask one another what happens now. And so the conversation turned, as it could only turn, to who would take charge of the ummah, because everyone understood that a people cannot live without a leader.

The name that rose among them was Sa'd ibn Ubadah, radiyallahu anhu, the senior figure of the Khazraj and one of the most honored men of the Ansar. He was a man of Badr, one of the chosen representatives at the second pledge of Aqaba, and famous, as his father and grandfather had been before him, for an open-handed generosity that fed scores of the poor of the Suffah at a time. As his people spoke of him, he lay among them ill with a fever, wrapped in a cloak. There was nothing dishonorable in any of it, the Sheikh stresses. The Khazraj were the larger of the two Ansar tribes, and the first of Madinah to accept Islam, and they felt their weight. Each side genuinely believed itself the more deserving, and there is, he says, an element of truth in every one of those feelings.

Word of the gathering reached the masjid, where Abu Bakr and Umar still were. Let us go to our brothers among the Ansar, Umar said. Abu Bakr agreed. And here the Sheikh offers a theory, naming it openly as his own: that Abu Bakr did not simply happen to be accompanied by the right men, but deliberately chose his delegation. For it is no accident that the two who walked beside him were Umar and Abu Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah, two of the ten

promised Paradise. Meanwhile Ali, Abbas, and the family, radiyallahu anhum, were occupied with the most natural duty of that morning: the inner affairs of the household and the washing and preparation of the Prophet ﷺ. There is nothing here to be awkward about, the Sheikh says plainly, and no conspiracy to imagine; to suppose a plot is, in his word, ludicrous. Ali was barely in his early thirties, while Abu Bakr and Umar and Uthman were nearly twice his age. He was not yet on anyone's mind for the role, not out of any slight, but because those who had known him since he was a child do not suddenly see the child as the elder. His time would come, when he had grown into it, and the ummah would be honored to have him. We admire and respect every blessing in him.

The leaders and the helpers

Only one eyewitness ever told us what happened beneath that shelter, and that is Umar himself, who narrated it years later, during his own Khilafah, to crush a rumor that had begun to spread: that Abu Bakr's election had been a hasty, thoughtless accident, and that another man might have been chosen had it been thought through. When Umar heard that whisper he was incensed, gathered the companions, and told them exactly how it had gone. So the scene we have is the scene Umar gave, in the first person.

A speaker from the Ansar rose and made their case, and he made it with grace, no insults, only honest pride. We are the Ansar, the helpers of Allah, he said, the ones who gave this religion shelter and defended it; and you Muhajireen are dear to us, but you came to us a few at a time, and you are few. From their vantage it was simple arithmetic: the Ansar numbered in the thousands, the senior Muhajireen perhaps a tenth of that, and surely the many

should lead the few. Umar said that as the man spoke, he had a sharp reply taking shape in his own mind, and was on the point of rising to deliver it, knowing even as he readied it that it carried an edge Abu Bakr would not have liked. But Abu Bakr pressed him gently back down and rose himself. And Umar, who feared making no man angry but feared making Abu Bakr angry, held his tongue. By Allah, Umar admitted afterward, Abu Bakr was wiser and gentler than I would have been, and there was not a single point I had prepared except that he said it, or said it better.

For Abu Bakr did not begin by diminishing the Ansar. He began by honoring them. This is the spirit of the ayah of the Sabiqun, the foremost among both the Muhajireen and the Ansar, and Abu Bakr recalled every virtue the Qur'an and the Prophet ﷺ had granted the Ansar, including the saying that had all of mankind taken one path and the Ansar another, he ﷺ would have taken the path of the Ansar. He gave them their full due, and only then did he turn, and turn directly to Sa'd. You were sitting before the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, he said, on the day he himself said that the leaders of this matter shall be from the Quraysh, the righteous of them leading the righteous of mankind. I was there; you were there. And the Arabs, with the tribal pride of their age still in them, would accept leadership from the Quraysh as they would accept it from no one else. By pointing to Sa'd, and then setting before him a hadith they had both heard, he closed the door without ever pushing on it. For how does a believer argue with a hadith of the Prophet ﷺ once it is laid before him? And Sa'd, in a moment the Sheikh holds up as a mark of his iman, answered: you have spoken the truth. You are the leaders, and we are the helpers.

Stretch forth your hand

Then came the moment the Sheikh calls pure wisdom of leadership. Abu Bakr did not nominate himself; that was never his way, and it was not the fitting way. Instead he reached out and took the hands of the two men he had brought with him, Umar and Abu Ubaydah, and said to the gathering: I have nominated these two for you; choose whichever of them you wish. This too was wisdom. The Ansar had not been looking through that door at all; they had been thinking of themselves, of Sa'd. Had Abu Bakr said choose this one, they would have felt cornered. By opening a door they had not even been looking through, and inviting them to pick freely between two of the best of mankind, he made it easy to walk through.

This was the one line of the whole speech that Umar said he hated, that his own name had been put forward at all. By Allah, Umar said, it would be more beloved to me to have my neck struck, where there is no sin in the striking, than to lead a people while Abu Bakr is among them. There was a flurry then, voices rising the way they rise in any crowded gathering, and someone proposed a compromise: two leaders, one from the Ansar and one from the Muhajireen. But that cannot work, the Sheikh notes, any more than a ship can sail with two captains. And it was here that Umar, who had the loudest and deepest voice in the gathering, cut clean through the noise. Stretch forth your hand, O Abu Bakr. Abu Bakr put his hand out. Umar took it and gave him the pledge of allegiance, the very first to do so, and the Muhajireen and the Ansar followed, hand after hand.

The Sheikh, faithful to his task, does not hide the harder edge of the story, for part of his duty, he says, is to show us what is not always on the rosy side of the picture. There are narrations that Sa'd ibn Ubadah was not content with the outcome, that he felt himself pressed into it; you have forced me, one report has him

say, and the answer comes back that it is better to be brought along with the community than to be let go and become a cause of division. If such a report is authentic, the Sheikh says, there is nothing wrong in it, for it is no sin to have wished, for good and halal reasons, to serve and to lead. Other scholars hold even these reports baseless. As for the wild fabrications, that Sa'd refused ever again to pray behind Abu Bakr, that the jinn later killed him and were heard boasting of it, the Sheikh sets every one aside as the stuff of partisan sources and bizarre legend, on which our religion rests not at all. Sa'd quietly withdrew to Sham in the end and passed away there a few years on, a man of Badr and of Aqaba, honored to the last.

The first khutbah of a Khalifah

By Tuesday, barely a day after the Prophet ﷺ had passed, and with his blessed body ﷺ still lying in the house of Aisha awaiting burial, the people gathered in the masjid to give their public pledge before the noon prayer. Umar stood first and undid the rumor at its very root. What I said yesterday, he told them, about imagining the Prophet ﷺ would outlive us all and be the last of us to go, I did not find that in the Book of Allah, nor did the Messenger ﷺ ever tell it to me; it was only my own thought, and I was wrong in it. But Allah has left among you His Book, by which the Prophet ﷺ was guided, so hold fast to it and you will be guided. And Allah has gathered your affair upon the best of you, the companion of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, the second of the two when they were in the cave. So rise, and give him your pledge.

And they did, one after another, until Abu Bakr rose to deliver a sermon the Sheikh calls the most powerful ever given by any political leader after the prophets. It is only three short lines, and

he lets them stand almost bare, because nothing a man could add would improve them.

O people, Abu Bakr said, I have been put in charge of you, though I am not the best of you. So if I do well, then help me; and if I do wrong, then correct me. Truthfulness is a trust, and lying is a betrayal. The weak among you is strong in my sight until I secure his right for him, and the strong among you is weak in my sight until I take from him what is owed. Never does a people abandon striving in the path of Allah but that Allah strikes them with humiliation; and never does indecency spread among a people but that Allah envelops them in His punishment. Obey me so long as I obey Allah and His Messenger ﷺ; but if I disobey Allah and His Messenger, then you owe me no obedience. Now rise, and pray, may Allah have mercy upon you.

The seerah we have walked for a hundred and four days had taught this man exactly how to carry power: as a trust laid upon him, with his own smallness named out loud in the first breath of it. That is not how the world teaches men to take a throne. It is how the Prophet ﷺ had taught him to take a trust.

The age of the companions begins

Within a single day, every question had been settled and the ummah had its leader. Only then was the Prophet ﷺ washed and prepared, and so many thousands came to pray over him ﷺ that the burial was pushed deep into the night; he was laid to rest where he had lived, in the house of Aisha, in the small hours the Muslim calendar already counts as Wednesday. And with that, the Sheikh says, the story of the election of Abu Bakr is complete.

He closes the way a teacher of mercy closes a hard subject, and his closing is itself part of the lesson. We respect every one of the companions, he reminds us, even where we might not agree with some judgment one of them made, for they were human and a difference of ijtiḥād among them is no stain. We do not impugn their integrity, and we trust that each sought the good of this ummah. And when the later disputes among them arise, the ones that brought drawn swords and lost lives among men we all love, his counsel is the counsel of Imam Malik and Imam Ahmad before him: that was a blood Allah kept our swords out of, so let us keep our tongues out of it too. Not every knowledge softens the heart; some of it only hardens, and these companions are far too dear to us that we should pick over their wounds.

And so the seerah ends here, not with the Prophet ﷺ alone, but with the people he left behind taking their first steps into the world he had spent twenty-three years preparing them to carry. This is what a true teacher leaves behind: not a void, but a people ready. The story does not close in grief; it closes in continuity, in a hand stretched out and a pledge given, in the first of the firsts rising to take up what the Prophet ﷺ had set down. One hundred and four days with him ﷺ is over. Loving him, and following those who loved him, never has to be.

What this final day asks of our faith

It would be easy to read this last morning as an administrative footnote, a question of governance settled and filed, and to close the book feeling the story is over. That would be to miss what it asks of us, standing as we do on the far side of the whole life with the question of how to carry it forward now in our own hands.

The first thing it asks is the way we hold our own small portions of authority. Abu Bakr took charge of an entire ummah and opened his first words with I am not the best of you. He did not grasp the office as a prize won; he received it as a trust feared, naming his own smallness before anything else, putting the weakest of the people first in his care and the strongest last, and binding his own claim on obedience to a single condition: only so long as I obey Allah. Most of us are never handed an ummah, but every one of us is handed something, a household, a class, a team, a name others trust. Ask how you carry it. As a prize that proves you, or as a trust that frightens you a little because you know Who will ask after it.

The second thing it asks is how we begin when we need to move another heart. Umar had the sharper reply ready, and it would have been true, and it would have failed. Abu Bakr won the room by honoring the Ansar first, and because he had honored them, the one hard thing he came to say landed soft. You do not change a heart by first showing it everything it has gotten wrong; you change it by first showing it the respect it is owed, and then the truth you came to bring arrives among friends. We are quick with our corrections and slow with our honor, and the order of his wisdom was the reverse.

And the third thing, the one this final day asks more than any other day before it, is whether our love of the Prophet ﷺ is large enough to outlive him. The companions woke to the worst morning of their lives, with his body ﷺ not yet washed, and they did not collapse into the loss; gently, faithfully, they carried on, because he had built them to. He is not here for us to follow with our eyes, but he left us his Book, his Sunnah, and the road his companions walked after him, the firsts of this ummah, the first to believe and the first to give and the first to fall, each one a door

he opened and they walked through. So end the way his ummah has always begun again after every loss. O Allah, send Your praise and Your peace upon Muhammad ﷺ, the second of the two, the most praised of all creation. Be pleased with Abu Bakr and Umar and Uthman and Ali, and with all of his companions. Keep our tongues from what You kept their swords from, gather us among those who loved him and followed those who loved him, and let us drink from his hand, on the day of thirst, a drink after which we never thirst again. The age of the Prophet ﷺ has closed. The age of his companions has begun, and we are invited to walk it too.

Retold faithfully from Dr. Yasir Qadhi's Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, episode 104: the election of Abu Bakr (Memphis Islamic Center). Qur'an translations are from Sahih International (9:40, 9:100), verified via quran.ai. Where the histories carry more than one narration, the Sheikh's own weighing has been followed, and the disputes among the companions are left, as he leaves them, to Allah.