



## ***Reasons for the Hijrah***

***A discussion for the reasons behind the emigration of the Prophet (saw) and early Muslims***

### ***The Year of Sadness***

The tenth year of the prophetic mission is known as the year of sadness. Through its course, the prophet (pbuh) had been bereft of the comfort and emotional support of his beloved wife Khadija and the physical protection of his uncle Abu Talib, who had both passed on earlier that year<sup>1</sup>. To make matters worse, Abu Talib had been replaced as chief of Bani Hashim by Abu Lahab; one of the worst opponents of the prophet (pbuh)<sup>2</sup>. Almost the whole of Mecca was seething with hatred and malice towards the prophet (pbuh); whose life was in constant danger as he stood alone before the masses of idolaters, hungry for his blood. The attacks started as dirt was thrown over the head of the prophet (pbuh) just a few days after the death of Abu Talib<sup>3</sup>, and escalated with time as it became evident that none would come to the prophet's (pbuh) aid.

### ***Severe oppression***

The prophet (pbuh) had known this was coming, until a short time ago the Meccans had ruthlessly barred all trade and support for the Muslims. While Abu Talib had been on his deathbed, the prophet (pbuh) had attempted to establish security by inviting the Quraysh one last time to, '*rule over the Arabs, and the Persians shall be your subjects*'<sup>4</sup>. The only condition was one word, that there is no god but Allah, but the Quraysh were too arrogant and ignorant to give it. Instead, they continued torturing and persecuting the Muslims in any way possible, in an attempt to make them give up their faith. The prophet (pbuh) tried to find some support at nearby Taif, but was dismissed with a nonsensical statement from the chiefs, who said that he may or may not be the prophet but they wanted no conversation with him. Further, when the prophet (pbuh) requested their silence so that he could leave quietly, they informed the '*loafers and simpletons*' who instead attacked him and chased him out of the city<sup>5</sup>. This was the attitude that faced the prophet (pbuh) at every turn; he could not even return to Mecca without sending a messenger to ask Mut'am for his protection from the Quraysh, who were lying in wait for him<sup>6</sup>.

### ***Unable to preach freely***

With the oppressive atmosphere penetrating Mecca, the prophet (pbuh) was restricted to the sacred months to make his speeches. Most were not open to the speech of Muhammad (pbuh); some of the worst resistance he met was from his own relatives such as Abu Lahab, prompting the chiefs of other Arab tribes to ridicule the prophet (pbuh)<sup>7</sup>. Despite this, the prophet (pbuh) did succeed in reaching several individuals from Medina; such as Suwayd bin Samit and Ayas bin Ma'az who had openly adopted Islam. The prophet (pbuh) later met six men from the tribe of khazraj in Medina, who accepted the call to Islam and propagated it upon their return to such an extent that, *'there was no house left where the Prophet was not talked about'*<sup>8</sup>. Having been ravaged by war and conflict, the people at Medina were desperate for the hope of peace, which made them receptive to the ideals of Islam and conditions of the prophet (pbuh). In addition, their close contact with the Jews had prepared them for the advent of an Arab prophet<sup>9</sup>. In contrast to Mecca where the enmity towards Muhammad (pbuh) and his followers grew, Medina became more and more inclined towards Islam as time passed.

### ***The assassination plot***

The Quraysh were spurred into action when they heard that the prophet (pbuh) was successful in bringing his message to Medina. They understood that if in Medina the Muslims could find a base and stronghold, they would no longer be scattered and incapable of decisive action in propagating their faith. The Quraysh knew that this heralded the start of their defeat, so they ruthlessly set about attacking every Medinan they could get their hands on. The persecution rose such that the prophet (pbuh) advised his followers to begin migrating to Medina, until there were almost none left in Mecca save the prophet (pbuh), Ali, and a handful of others<sup>10</sup>. There was no refuge for the prophet (pbuh) in Mecca, nor anyone who would hear his words. The Quraysh rapidly formulated a cowardly plot to assassinate the prophet (pbuh), whereby a group of them would kill him to avoid individual liability, yet despite their every attempt they were unable to carry it out.

### ***Divine Aid***

Allah, the Almighty, ordered the prophet (pbuh) to go to Medina, and helped him every step of the way. He sent the angel Gabriel to warn the prophet (pbuh) of the plan of Quraysh, and blinded their eyes to him, allowing him to escape<sup>11</sup>. He covered the mouth of the prophet's (pbuh) hiding place with cobwebs, so that the Quraysh would pass by it without finding him<sup>12</sup>. He caused Saraqah's horse to become startled and throw him, before he could do the prophet (pbuh) any harm<sup>13</sup>. And when the prophet (pbuh) got to Medina, he brought peace and brotherhood, friendship and love, and united the community under the banner of faith. Allah had taken Muhammad (pbuh) from the land that was dearest to him, to the land that He held most dear.

### ***Allah's plan***

Bloodied and weary on escaping from the mob in Taif, the messenger of Allah (pbuh) collapsed by a vine in the enemy's garden. He made a desperate plea to Allah: *'O Lord! I present my weakness and lack of strength before You. You are the kind Nourisher. You are the helper of the weak. To whom are You abandoning me?'*

The Almighty, All-Seeing and Hearing, showed His servant His purpose. A Christian slave was sent to the prophet (pbuh) to give him some grapes, and left as a Muslim after hearing only a few words from him. He recognised the truth of the prophet's (pbuh) words, and immediately embraced the faith. Though many would reject, there were a few who would believe, and it was for their sake the prophet (pbuh) had been sent. Men like the two chiefs of Bani Abdul Ashhal, who approached Islam with enmity then embraced it wholeheartedly<sup>14</sup>. Men like the old man who only heard of Muhammad (pbuh) from a party returning from pilgrimage, and declared, *'it is the very luminous star which has risen from the horizon of reality'*<sup>15</sup>. And not just men, but also jinn like Haam ibn Heem ibn Lakees ibn Iblees, and Hasheem bin Lumau bin Iblees who embraced Islam at the prophet's (pbuh) hands<sup>16</sup>. The prophet (pbuh) was their hope and salvation. With his journey to Madina the prophet (pbuh) could establish an Islamic community, usher in a new era of Islamic history<sup>17</sup>, and bring Islam to the hearts of all who would receive it.

- <sup>1</sup> M. Lings, *Muhammad, His life based on the earliest sources*, Millat Book Centre (India) ch31, 'the year of sadness', p.96
- <sup>2</sup> M. Lings, *Muhammad, His life based on the earliest sources*, Millat Book Centre (India) ch31, 'the year of sadness', p.98
- <sup>3</sup> J. Subhani, *The Message*, ch.23, 'Journey to Taif'
- <sup>4</sup> as 1 above
- <sup>5</sup> as 1 above
- <sup>6</sup> J. Subhani, *The Message*, ch.23, 'Journey to Taif: The Prophet returns to Makkah'
- <sup>7</sup> J. Subhani, *The Message*, ch.23, 'Journey to Taif: invitation to the heads of the tribes during hajj season'
- <sup>8</sup> J. Subhani, *The Message*, ch.24, 'the agreement of Aqabah: the details of this event'
- <sup>9</sup> J. Subhani, *The Message*, ch.24, 'the agreement of Aqabah: the condition of Muslims after the agreement of Aqabah'
- <sup>10</sup> J. Subhani, *The Message*, ch.24, 'the agreement of Aqabah: fear over takes Quraysh'
- <sup>11</sup> J. Subhani, *The Message*, ch.25, 'The event of migration: the archangel Jibreel informs the Prophet'
- <sup>12</sup> J. Subhani, *The Message*, ch.25, 'The event of migration: the Quraysh do not hesitate in searching out the Prophet'
- <sup>13</sup> J. Subhani, *The Message*, ch.25, 'The event of migration: schedule of the journey'
- <sup>14</sup> J. Subhani, *The Message*, ch.24, 'the agreement of Aqabah: the spiritual influence of Islam'
- <sup>15</sup> J. Subhani, *The Message*, ch.24, 'the agreement of Aqabah'
- <sup>16</sup> M. B. Majlisi [tr. J. L. Merrick] (1997), *The life and religion of Muhammad, Hiyat al Qulub*, pp.178-180
- <sup>17</sup> J. Subhani, *The Message*, ch.25, 'The event of migration: Why the year of Migration became the era of Islamic History'