

The Prophetic Biography:

The Meccan Period

Lesson 8



The Conversion of Hamza

- The formal conversion of Hamza ibn Abdul Muttalib to Islam was a huge morale booster for the Muslims. It gave them a sense of security and protection.
- . It's narrated that Hamza was a well-known archer, he was one of the strongest men in Mecca. He would often go on long expeditions, and upon returning, would go to the Ka'bah, do tawaf and go home.

The Conversion of Hamza

- **The Story of Hamza's conversion:**
- One day Abu Jahl was verbally abusing the Prophet and his ancestors in a way that was uniquely offensive even for Abu Jahl.
- News reaches Hamza that Abu Jahl had publicly ridiculed the Prophet and his ancestors.
- Hamza went straight to Abu Jahl and struck him in the face with his bow and blood gushed from his face. He proclaimed to Abu Jahal and everyone around that Muhammad was not only his nephew but that he is also a follower of his religion.

The Conversion of Umar

- The conversion of Umar, **in the Sunni tradition** is considered a major turning point his conversion is believed to have strengthened Islam and intimidated the enemies of the Muslims.
- Like Hamza, he is portrayed as a physically powerful person with massive influence.
- Umar was one of the most rabid enemies of Islam. Some historians mention that Umar's hatred of Islam, and his hostility to the Prophet were matched only by the hatred of, and hostility to them, of his own maternal uncle, Abu Jahl.

The Conversion of Umar

- It is said that one day in sheer exasperation, Umar resolved to kill the Prophet and thus to extinguish the flame of Islam itself. He left his home with this intention.
- On his way to Dar al-Arqam, he was met by Nu'aym ibn Abdullah. Upon learning what Umar was about to do, Nu'aym said, “By God, you have deceived yourself, O Umar! Do you think that Banu Abd Manaf would let you run around alive once you had killed their son Muhammad?”

The Conversion of Umar

- Umar was furious to hear that his sister and her husband had become Muslims. He immediately changed his direction from Arqam's house to her house to investigate the rumor.
- Umar came to the door (of the house of his sister) as Khabbab (a companion of the Prophet) was teaching her and her husband Surat Taha.
- Umar exploded in wrath and struck his sister in her face. The blow caused her mouth to bleed. He was going to strike again but the sight of blood made him pause. He suddenly appeared to relent, and then in a changed tone asked her to show him what she was reading.

The Conversion of Umar

- Umar immediately went away, washed himself, returned to his sister's home, read the text of Quran, and then went to the house of Arqam where he formally accepted Islam.
- Umar was about 35 years old when he recited his shahadah.
- This took place in the 6th year after the commencement of the Prophetic mission.

The Conversion of Umar

- Al-Tirmidhi reports a tradition from Abdullah ibn Umar:

عَنْ ابْنِ عُمَرَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " اللَّهُمَّ أَعِزَّ الْإِسْلَامَ بِأَحَبِّ هَذَيْنِ الرَّجُلَيْنِ إِلَيْكَ بِأَبِي جَهْلٍ أَوْ بِعُمَرَ بْنِ الْخَطَّابِ " . قَالَ وَكَانَ أَحَبَّهُمَا إِلَيْهِ عُمَرُ

“That the Messenger of God said: "O God! Honor Islam through the dearest of these two men to you: Through Abu Jahl or through Umar bin Al-Khattab." He said: "And the dearest of them to Him was Umar."

The Conversion of Umar

- The reports portraying Umar as a fearless man who was willing to kill the Prophet is doubtful because we see no signs of this fearlessness in any of the battles of Islam.
- Did the situation for Muslims improve or get worse after Umar's conversion?

The Conversion of Umar

- Abdullah ibn Omar:

“When Umar embraced Islam, all the (disbelieving) people gathered around his home and said, "Umar has embraced Islam." At that time, I was still a boy and was on the roof of my house. There came a man wearing a cloak of Dibaj (i.e. a kind of silk), and said, "Umar has embraced Islam. Nobody can harm him for I am his protector." I then saw the people going away from Umar and asked who the man was, and they said, "Al-`As bin Wail.”

The Conversion of Umar

“While Umar was at home in a state of fear, there came Al-`As bin Wail As-Sahmi Abu `Amr, wearing an embroidered cloak and a shirt having silk hems. He was from the tribe of Bani Sahm who were our allies during the pre-Islamic period of ignorance. Al-`As said to `Umar "What is wrong with you?" He said, "Your people claim that they would kill me if I become a Muslim." Al-`As said, "Nobody will harm you after I have given protection to you." So Al-`As went out and met the people streaming in the whole valley. He said, "Where are you going?" They said, "We want Ibn Al-Khattab who has embraced Islam." Al-`As said, "There is no way for anybody to touch him." So the people retreated.”

The Boycott

- The conversion of Hamza coupled with the successful emigration to Abyssinia highlighted Quraysh's inability to halt the growth of Islam in Mecca.
- In desperation, the leaders of Quraysh arrange a meeting to draft crippling sanctions against the Prophet's clan.
- This boycott went into full effect in the 7th year after the bi'thah.

The Boycott

- 40 of the leaders of Quraysh placed their seals on a document *الصحيفة القاطعة* in Dar al-Nadwah in which they agreed to cease marrying into or out of the clan of Hashim and particularly Abu Talib; to cease selling to and buying from them; not to talk to them; and not to keep their company until they surrender Muḥammad to them so they can kill him.
- Even Abu Lahab signed . They hung this document inside the Ka'bah

The Boycott

- In response, Abu Talib gathered the clan of Hashim and swore an oath:

فلما اجتمعت قريش على قتل رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله وكتبوا الصحيفة القاطعة جمع أبو طالب بني هاشم وحلف لهم بالبيت والركن والمقام والمشاعر في الكعبة لان شاكت محمدا شوكة لأبئن عليكم بني هاشم

“By the Ka‘bah and the Black Stone and the Station of Abraham and the relics within the Ka‘bah, if Muḥammad is so much as poked by a splinter, I shall come after you all...”

The Boycott

- The narration continues:

فأدخله الشعب وكان يحرسه بالليل والنهار قائما على رأسه بالسيف أربع سنين،

“he (Abu Talib) brought the Prophet into the valley and guarded him day and night. He guarded him with sword ready by night for 4 years.”

- Other reports mention that in the middle of the night, he would shift his children around and place Ali in place of the Prophet.

The Boycott

- Abu Jahl, al-‘Āṣ ibn Wā‘il, al-Naḍr ibn al-Ḥārith, and ‘Uqbah ibn Abī Mu‘āyṭ stood at the gates of Mecca and warned everyone who entered of the terms of the blockade and threatened that they would be looted if they bought or sold from the clan of Hashim.
- Khadijah surrendered all her wealth to support the Prophet during this time.

The Boycott

- In his book, “Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman”, William Montgomery Watt writes of the extreme conditions during the boycott:

“It was a horrible and deadly siege. The supply of food was almost stopped and the people in confinement faced great hardships... they had to eat leaves and skin of animals. Cries of little children suffering from hunger used to be heard clearly... During “prohibited months”— when hostilities traditionally ceased, they would leave their confinement and buy food coming from outside Makkah. Even then the food stuff was unjustly overpriced so that the financial situation would fall short of finding access to it.”

The Boycott

لَقَدْ أُذِيتُ فِي اللَّهِ وَمَا يُؤْذَى أَحَدٌ ، وَأُخِفْتُ [فِي] اللَّهِ وَمَا يُخَافُ أَحَدٌ ، وَلَقَدْ أَتَتْ عَلَيَّ ثَلَاثُونَ
مِنْ يَوْمٍ وَلَيْلَةٍ وَمَا لِي وَلِبِلَالٍ طَعَامٌ يَأْكُلُهُ ذُو كَبِدٍ إِلَّا شَيْءٌ يُوَارِيهِ إِبْطُ بِلَالٍ

“I was being hurt for the sake of Allah when no one was being hurt, and I was threatened because of Allah when no one else was being threatened. Thirty days and nights passed once when neither Bilal nor I had any food that a man may eat save what Bilal may use to cover his armpits [i.e. leaves].”- The Prophet (s)

Source: Kanzul Ummal, hadith 15578

The Boycott

- Abul 'Aas ibn al-Rabi', the Prophet's son-in-law (husband to Zaynab) would help by loading up camels with wheat and dates and letting them wander into the valley.
- The boycott lasted for 4 years with respite only during the Umrah of Rajab and the Hajj season.
 - during this time, they could exit the valley and trade
 - the Prophet used this time to preach to the pilgrims
 - Abu Lahab would come behind him and ask people to excuse his insane nephew

The Boycott

- Although the terms of the ban permit the Prophet to enter the Holy sanctuary during the four sacred months, his visits were often met with jeers and harassment.
- The Quraysh mock him wherever he goes, whispering to each other that his revelations are merely tales from the distant past.
- Despite the constant humiliation, the Prophet remains undeterred, allowing the verses from Surat al-Mutaffifeen to address the Quraysh:

إِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِ آيَاتُنَا قَالَ أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِم مَّا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

“When Our verses are read to one of them, he says, “Tales from the past!” No way! Not so! Their hearts are rusted by the burden (of the sins) they’ve earned.” Quran 83:13-14

The Boycott

- **The End of the Boycott:**
- The Prophet told Abu Talib to tell the Quraysh that the document in which they conspired to enforce the boycott had been destroyed by termites.
- Abu Talib challenges them and promises to surrender the Prophet to them if the news is false.
- They open the 40 seals, and all the words of the document were eaten away except, “In your name, O God” and “Muḥammad.”

The Boycott

- This miracle broke the consensus against the Prophet
 - Many insisted on abiding by the pact
 - Some decided to defect; some of these were related to the Prophet through their mothers