

Entry Into Mecca

Despite the improved relations between Mecca and Medinah after the signing of the Treaty of Hdaybiyah, the ten-year peace was to be broken by Quraysh who, with their allies, the Bani Bakr, attacked the Khuza'ah tribe. Now Khuza'ah were allies of the Muslims and when the Prophet (pbuh) heard of the attack he immediately ordered his men to prepare for war. When they were ready he told them that their destination was Mecca and, as he did not want any fighting within the walls of the city, he told them they must move quickly and take the enemy by surprise. In this way the Meccans would not have time to prepare for war and, being surrounded would have to surrender. The Muslims would then be able to take the city without injury or loss of life to anyone.

When the Muslim army, which numbered ten thousand, set out for Mecca it was the month of Ramadan in the eighth year of the Hijrah. Many of the men kept the fast, even though they were not obliged to because they were travelling. Everyone was jubilant because they were going to Mecca, especially as some of them had not seen their homes in the city for eight long years. In the meantime, the Prophet's uncle, al-'Abbas, had decided that the time had come for him and his wife to leave Mecca and join the Prophet (pbuh) in Medinah. They did not, however, have to go far as after a distance of only twenty-five kilometers they came across the Muslim camp. When the Prophet (pbuh) saw them he said, 'Uncle, your emigration is the last emigration. My prophecy is the last prophecy.' Al-'Abbas then joined the army and his wife went on to the safety of Medinah.

Night fell and the Muslims made fires to light their camp. The Meccans, looking out of the city, were amazed to see the many fires, and Abu Sufyan went all over Mecca trying to find out whose camp it was. Suddenly he saw al-'Abbas riding towards him from the direction of the fires. He was returning as a messenger of peace from the Prophet (pbuh) and said to Abu Sufyan, 'The Muslims have come with a large army.'

They do not wish to fight, only to enter the city. It would be better to surrender and not fight. Come under my protection and meet the Prophet (pbuh).' Abu Sufyan agreed, and got up behind al-'Abbas, who was riding the Prophet's white mule. It was still night as they entered the Muslim camp. Each time they passed a fire, someone would call out, 'Who goes there?' None of them recognized the stranger as the leader of their enemy but all knew al-'Abbas and so let them through. As they passed by 'Umar, however, he immediately recognized Abu Sufyan and yelled out, 'Abu Sufyan! The enemy of Allah!' He ran after them intending to kill his

enemy but al-'Abbas made the mule go faster. They reached the Prophet's tent just before 'Umar who rushed in after them quite out of breath. 'Umar begged the Prophet (pbuh), 'O Messenger of Allah, let me end the life of Abu Sufyan, this enemy of Islam, who has led the Quraysh armies in their attacks on us!' Al-'Abbas interrupted, saying, 'I have sworn to protect him during his time here whereupon the Prophet (pbuh) told his uncle to take Abu Sufyan to his tent for the night.

In the morning Abu Sufyan was taken to the Prophet (pbuh) who said, 'Abu Sufyan! Have you not yet realized that there is no divinity but Allah?' To this Abu Sufyan replied, 'If there had been another he surely would have helped me by now.' 'Shame on you, Abu Sufyan', responded the Prophet (pbuh), 'it is time you realize that I am truly Allah's Messenger.' After a moment or two, Abu Sufyan, who remembered how 'Umar had not been allowed to kill him, replied: 'I can see you are a generous and forgiving man but I still cannot be sure of that.' At this, al-'Abbas, who had been standing nearby turned to him and said: 'Believe as I do now.' Abu Sufyan stood quietly for a moment, then in a calm, clear voice swore in front of everyone, there is no divinity but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.'

The Prophet (pbuh) then told Abu Sufyan to go back to Mecca and tell the people that the Muslims would enter the city the next morning. Before he left, however, al-'Abbas suggested to the Prophet (pbuh) that as Abu Sufyan was a proud man, it would be good to give him an honorable position. The Prophet (pbuh) took this advice, saying to Abu Sufyan, 'Tell the people that when we enter, anyone seeking refuge in your house will be safe.' This was a great honor for Abu Sufyan.

In addition, the Prophet (pbuh) told him to assure the Meccans that those who remained in their own homes or at the Ka'bah would also be protected.

Abu Sufyan returned quickly to the city. He made straight for the hill Hagar had climbed in her search for water and from which the Prophet (pbuh) later spoke, and called upon Quraysh to come to him. Abu Sufyan then spoke to the people, 'O people of Mecca, the fires we saw all around us were the camp fires of Muhammad and his men. He has come with a strong army and there are too many for us to fight. It is best, therefore, to surrender. Anyone who stays in my house, or in his own home, or at the Ka'bah will be safe.'