

Treaties During The Time Of The Prophet ﷺ

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In fact, what the Prophet (SAWS) did was really wonderful. He never took sides with anyone against what was right, no matter whom this person was. Here the Jew had all the right. The Prophet (SAWS) thus rejected all the excuses that the companion made for not paying, although they were all true and real. The right has to return to its owner, no matter what it takes. The Prophet did not utter except two words ordering him to pay him back: "Give him his right." He repeated the sentence thrice, to stop any argument on the subject. The poor companion had no way but to sell some of the clothes he was wearing. He sold the gown he was putting on to pay his debt, and to return to the Jew his rightful money.

A religion whose followers have such manners, is worthy of being considered and meditated. Those souls, that are able of surmounting all the barriers to create a reality of these principles and values, are truly capable of leading the whole world.

Despite this entire leniency on the part of the Prophet (SAWS), the Jews were in many instances provocative, sometimes going too far in their provocation. However, the Prophet (SAWS) maintained his endurance and wisdom in dealing with these instances, and was always keen to persuade the different sects in Madinah to coexist peacefully. He (SAWS) never imposed his opinion on them; on the contrary, he adopted the policy of debating allegations and proofs. He (SAWS) even did not punish them for plotting against him and his companions, or dispatch armies to fight them, except when they openly broke the covenant and constituted a threat to the security and safety of Madinah.

On one of those occasions of provocation, the Jews insulted Allah, Lord of the Worlds. They once attributed poverty to Allah, as mentioned earlier in this research. To this, Allah (SWT) revealed the following ayah which can be translated as, "Indeed Allah has already heard the saying of the ones who said, "Surely Allah is poor and we are rich." We will write down what they have said, and their killing of the Prophesiers (i.e., the prophets) untruthfully, (i.e. without right) and We will say, "Taste the torment of the burning." (TMQ, 3: 181).

In another instance, they said that Allah's (SWT) hands are constrained. Thus Allah (SWT) sent down the ayah which can be translated as, "And the Jews have said, "The Hand of Allah is shackled." Shackled are their hands, and they are cursed for what they have said. No indeed (but) both His Hands are out spread, He expends how He decides." (TMQ, 5: 64).

They once came to the Prophet (SAWS) claiming that Allah (AWJ[1]) has a son. In addition, they showed disrespect to the Prophet (SAWS). He (SAWS) was not only a prophet whom the Jews did not believe in, but he was also the ruler of the entire Madinah, and one who signed a covenant in which both parties had to cooperate to show benignancy and not vice.

Thus, refuting and slandering him constituted a breaking of the covenant that is between them. In spite of all these doings by the Jews, he (SAWS) remained as tolerant as ever.

They used to invoke death on him as they pass by, trying to hide it by twisting the words, such as saluting him by saying as-sam alaykum (death be upon you) instead of as-salam alaykum (peace be upon you). The Prophet (SAWS) used to respond by saying wa alaykum (and upon you).[2] Nonetheless, he ordered the companions who heard this salute to respond gently and to avoid obscenity.

The Jews also showed disrespect to the rest of the prophets, and this hurt Muslims badly. This is because Muslims believe in all prophets; they do not make distinction between any of them, and have reverence to all of them. Muslims do not accept refuting any of the prophets including Musa (AS) (Moses) himself, even if the refuter was a Jew. Did not the Prophet (SAWS) say, "We are more deserving to Musa than you are."?![3]

An example of such disrespect to prophets is that day when a delegation of Jews comprising Abu-Yasir Ibn-Akhtab, Nafi' Ibn-Abu-Nafi', Azir Ibn-Abu-Azir, and others went to the Prophet (SAWS). They asked him about the messengers whom he (SAWS) believed in. The Prophet (SAWS) replied, "We believe in Allah, and whatever has been sent down to us, and whatever was sent down to Ibrahim, and Ismail, and Ishaq and Yaaqub (Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob, respectively) and the Grandsons, (i.e., the Tribes) and whatever was brought down to Musa and Isa, (Moses and Jesus, respectively) and whatever was brought to the Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we are Muslims." [4] Thereupon, the Jews said, "We do not believe in Isa, son of Maryam, and we do not believe in him who believes in Isa." [5]

They attacked the Noble Qur'an, the Muslim's constitution and law. Not only did their attack on the Qur'an imply indecency, impoliteness and loss of faith, but it was also apt to jeopardize peace and cause unrest inside Madinah. How would a country be secure when its law is called into question and its constitution is defamed?

The most serious thing they did was their attempts to sow dissension among Muslims. It is a grave crime that could ruin the whole state. Furthermore, it is considered violation of the covenant whose terms maintain that counseling and cooperation are a must. Also they persuaded Christians to refrain from paying their financial contribution to the Prophet (SAWS). Again this is very serious; imagine someone provoking people to become financially disloyal to the state or abstain from paying taxes or participating in the critical issues of the state.

The Jews spread rumors that disturbed Muslims. They also formed secret pockets with the hypocrites of Madinah. This conspiracy of the Jews with the fifth column of hypocrites, that sometimes proved to be pretty dangerous, was typical of them and was evident on many occasions.

The Jews tried to manipulate the Islamic religion by way of embracing Islam then renouncing it. They led attempts of raising suspicions in Islamic creed and jurisprudence. The Jews tried several times to convince people of Madinah that there are many pitfalls in Islam, and in Islamic laws. They used all their intellect in inventing questions that would seem embarrassing to the Prophet (SAWS). However, with Allah's Help, the Prophet (SAWS) managed to refute their suspicions with strong proofs and clear evidences, aided by the revelation of Qur'anic ayahs that exposed their false allegations.

They invoked all the Arab tribes, especially Quraysh, against Muslims, and this was explicit violation to their covenant with the Prophet (SAWS) and the Muslims.

The Covenants of the Prophet (SAWS) with the Christians

The Prophet's (SAWS) biography contains some examples of political covenants which the Prophet (SAWS) concluded with some Christian entities in the Arabian Peninsula and the Levant. However, these covenants with Christians were not as famous as those with the Jews of Madinah. This is because the Jews, unlike Christians and others, were in the heart of the events of the Prophet's life.

In this chapter, we will shed some light on the covenants of the Noble Prophet (SAWS) with the Christians. We will get to know the good treatment of Muslims to others and how it was not confined to the Jews of Madinah but was a steady pattern whenever the Islamic State can implement it.

The Prophet (SAWS) was keen to spread the feeling of peace and security among the Christian tribes in the North of the Arabian Peninsula. This led to an early extirpation of any grudge from their chests. He sent to them inviting them to Islam, and he (SAWS) ordered some of his noble companions to marry of them. This policy paved the way for considering Islam by the Christian leaders, or at least for making peace with Muslims.

In spite of this respect of Muslims to Christians of the Northern area that encompassed also Dawmat al-Jandal, yet significant violations took place on the part of Christians. Some of them killed the Prophet's (SAWS) envoys. Besides, 100,000 of these tribes joined the Byzantines to fight Muslims. The Muslims were thus obliged to fight them in Mu'ata.

Furthermore, the Christian tribes allied once more with the Byzantines to attack Madinah. This made the Prophet (SAWS) march out to Tabouk to meet them. Although the number of Muslims was relatively small compared to the huge number of the Byzantines, yet Allah (SWT) cast horror in the hearts of Byzantines. Consequently, they retreated towards North, leaving behind them areas which were once under their influence, and their allies of the Arabs who dreaded Muslims to a great extent. Amazingly, when the Prophet (SAWS) captured their king, he treated him generously, and was good to him. He (SAWS) did not

humiliate him nor did he approve of his prostration in front of him. On the contrary, he spared his blood, respected his leadership, and made reconciliation with him that guaranteed utmost respect of Muslims to him and his people.

That was quite similar to what happened with Yuhannah Ibn-Ru'bah, king of Aylah[6] and the surrounding areas. He too was a Christian and he came to the Prophet (SAWS) when he was in Tabouk. When he entered, he lowered his head. The Prophet made a signal for him to raise his head. He reconciled him and gave him a Yemeni garment[7] as a present. The wording of this treaty was as follows:

"In the Name of Allah, The All Merciful, The Ever Merciful. This is a guarantee of protection from Allah and Muhammad, the Prophet, the Messenger of Allah, to Yuhanna Ibn-Ru'bah and the people of Aylah. Their ships and their caravans on land and sea shall have the custody of Allah and Prophet Muhammad, he and whosoever are with him of peoples of the Levant, Yemen, or those of the sea (beyond the seas). Whosoever contravenes this treaty, his wealth shall not save him (the jizyah[8] which he pays would not protect him from punishment for the crime he did); it (his wealth) shall be the fair prize of him that takes it. Now it should not be lawful to hinder the men from any springs which they have been in the habit of frequenting, nor from a road on land or sea which they have been in the habit of using." [9]

The Prophet (SAWS) dealt with the Christians of Jarba' and Adhruh in the same way. His (SAWS) message to them reads as, "This is a message from Muhammad, the Prophet, to the people of Adhrah. They are secure by Allah's Protection and Muhammad's. They have to pay one hundred dinars, full and good, every month of Rajab. Allah is a Witness on them being advising and beneficent to Muslims." [10]

The Messenger (SAWS) sustained great responsibilities for providing protection for small weak tribes who are barely richer than Muslims, in return for a trivial worthless price. The aim was to guarantee peace with all those who surround the Muslims.

As for the Christians of Najran, they came to debate the Messenger (SAWS). He proved to them that their creed that entails the deification of al-Maseeh (Messiah, Christ) (AS[11]) was corrupt. He also proved to them what they had already known, that al-Maseeh (AS) was a human being. Although it became obvious for them that the Messenger (SAWS) is the true messenger mentioned in the Torah and the Bible, yet they turned away arrogantly, and refused to believe. Thereupon, the Prophet (SAWS) offered to do mubahalah (imprecation), based on a revelation, and it means to invoke Allah's Curse upon the liar party. They whispered to one another, "Never has a people made such an invocation with a prophet except that they perished." [12]

They accepted to pay jizyah, whereupon the Prophet approved this after he won the debate. The major clauses of the treaty between the Prophet (SAWS) and the people of Najran were as follows:

“In the Name of Allah, The All Merciful, The Ever Merciful. This is from Muhammad, the Prophet, offering to Bishop Abul-Harith, all archbishops, priests, monks and all what they have, be it few or many, the Protection of Allah and His Messenger. A bishop, a monk, or a priest shall never be forced to quit his faith (or be slipped his authority) by the protection of Allah and His Messenger as long as they reform and counsel without extending any injustice to anyone; and they shall not be treated unjustly”. [13]

This treaty is a token of tolerance and justice, given their arrogance to the Prophet (SAWS), and their denial of the true faith after it became so clear to them.

Worthy of notion is an amazing thing that happened during the visit of the delegation of Najran to Madinah. Ibn-Is`haq reported, “When the delegation of Najran came to the Prophet (SAWS) in his masjid (mosque) it was after al-Asr prayer (the after-noon prayer). When it was time for their prayer, they stood for prayer in the mosque of the Prophet (SAWS). Thereupon the Prophet (SAWS) ordered his companions to leave them to pray. The delegation faced east and made their prayers. [14]

This is tolerance, in the true sense of the word, and the most clear of its examples: the Christians of Najran entering the Prophet’s Mosque, performing their prayers in it, in their own way, and without being prevented or forced and while they were in a weaker situation than Muslims. They announced their creed and faith on the very own grounds of Islam, and in the place of worship of Muslims and their headquarters, not fearing for themselves or their possessions. By Allah! No one ever would have allowed this to take place except for the Prophet of Islam (SAWS). [15] The treaty remained valid, no one broke it, and the good relations between people of Najran and that of Madinah were maintained until the death of the Prophet (SAWS).

[1] AWJ= Aza-Wa-Jal [Glorified and Sublime be He].

[2] Reported by al-Bukhary in: Book of good manners and form, chapter on leniency, no. 5678, and chapter on the Prophet (SAWS) not being indecent, no. 5683, book of asking permission, no. 5901, Book of invocations, no. 6038, and al-Adab al-Mufrad (Book designated for good manners), no. 462, Muslim, in as-Salam (Salutations and greetings), 21641, at-Tirmidhy, no. 3301, and Ahmad, no. 24136.

[3] Reported by Ibn-Majah, Sunan Ibn-Majah (Prophetic Traditions by Ibn-Majah), Book of Fasting, Chapter on the fasting on the day of Ashoura’, no. 1734, al-Bayhaqy, Shu’ab al-

Iman (Subdivisions of faith), no. 3776, and al-Hamidy, Musnad al-Hamidiyy, no. 515. Al-Albany said it is authentic. See al-Albany, Saheeh Ibn-Majah, no. 1409.

[4] Wording is from Surah al-Baqarah, verse no. 136.

[5] Ibn-Hisham, as-Seerah an-Nabawiyyah (The Prophet's biography), 1/567, Ibn-Jarir, Tafseer at-Tabayy (Qur'an exegesis by at-Tabariyy), 1/442, and Abdullah ash-Shaqary, al-yahud fi as-sunnah al-mutahara (The Jews in the most purified prophetic traditions), 1/242, 243.

[6] It is the Egyptian village of Umm ar-Rashwash on the coast of the red sea that was once occupied by the Israelis, who named it Ilat.

[7] Al-Bayhaqy, as-Sunan al-Kobrah (The Greatest Traditions), 9/185. As-Salihy ash-Shamy, Sobol al-Huda wa ar-Rashad (The Paths of Guidance and Rationality), 5/460.

[8] Tax, or annual tribute.

[9] Ibn-Hisham, as-Seerah an-Nabawiyyah (The Prophet's Biography), 2/525, 526, Ibn-Sayed an-Nas, Oyoun al-Athar (The Eyes of Tradidion), 2/258, and Ibnul-Qayyim, Zad al-Ma'ad (The Provisions for the Hereafter), 3/466.

[10] Ibn-Sa'd, at-Tabaqat al-Kobra, 1/290 and Ibn-Katheer, as-Seerah an-Nabawyah, 4/30.

[11] Alayhi as-Salam [Peace be upon him]

[12] Tafseer an-Nasfiyy (Qur'an Exegesis by an-Nasfiyy), 1/158 and Tafseer al-Baydawiyy (Qur'an Exegesis by al-Baydawiyy), 1/46.

[13] Al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah (The Beginning and the End), 5/67 and Ibnul-Qayyim, Zad al-Ma'ad (The Provisions for the Hereafter), 3/549.

[14] Ibn-Hisham, as-Seerah an-Nabawiyyah (The Prophet's Biography), 2/108, and Ibnul-Qayyim, Zad al-Ma'ad (The Provisions for the Hereafter), 3/549, 550.

[15] Dr. Farouq Hamadah, al-Ilaqat al-Islamiyyah an-Nasraniyyah Fi al-'ahd an-Nabawy (The Islamic-Christian Relations During the Time of the Prophet (SAWS)), 116, 117. [free quotation]