

THE
WIVES OF THE PROPHET

By

Dr. Bint al-Shāṭi'

Translated with Introduction

by

MATTI MOOSA, Ph.D.

Professor of History, Gannon College, Pa.

and

D. Nicholas Ranson, (Cantab)



SH. MUHAMMAD ASHRAF
KASHMIRI BAZAR - LAHORE (Pakistan)

1

3

Copyright

First published
March, 1971

PRINTED AT ASHRAF PRESS, LAHORE AND
PUBLISHED BY SH. MUHAMMAD ASHRAF
KASHMIRI BAZAR, LAHORE (PAKISTAN)

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

The life of Muḥammad, the Prophet of Islam, has attracted the attention of many writers from East and West, Muslim and otherwise. To the Muslims the life of Muḥammad is more than the simple biography of a sage, poet or chieftain who died without leaving any impression on the life of Arab society. To them Muḥammad was not only a Prophet and leader but also a statesman of the first rank who, with inspired ingenuity, was able to unite the many Arab tribes in the brotherhood of Islam; someone who built, within his own life-time, a new community united in ideals and purpose.

It is no small wonder that Muslim writers regard Muḥammad as a great man and hero, singled out to carry a divine message, the influence of which is still a dynamic of today's society. Almost every aspect of Muḥammad's life was therefore recorded with meticulous attention to detail: one has only to turn the pages of Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk* (History of Nations and Kings) to read the fullest description of the Prophet's private as well as public life. Here we find mention of his clients, his scribes, the names of his horses, mules, camels, swords and other weapons; all the Prophet's domestic circumstances, down to the dyeing of his hair, are faithfully recorded. In fact, there is nothing about the man that has escaped the chroniclers; and so it is concerning his married life, which received the same scrutiny.

The early Muslim sources treat this subject and

the life of his wives within the general context of the history of Islam. The earliest source for our purposes is the *Sīra* by Muḥammad ibn Ishāq who was born in Madina in A.D. 704 and died between A.D. 767-8. Though subject to criticism because of suspected later interpolations and transmitted to us primarily through Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Mālik ibn Hishām, who died about A.D. 833, it remains the most authentic beginning, for Ibn Ishāq drew much of his information from contemporaries of Muḥammad and frequently cites his authority. Recently, because of its historical importance, the late Alfred Guillaume’s *The Life of Muhammad* (1955) has separated most ably the material of ibn Ishāq from that of ibn Hishām. We should remember too that ibn Ishāq, as well as Wāqidī (d. 822) and Ṭabarī (d. 923), found most of his information in the work of Urwa ibn al-Zubayr (d. 712) and other contemporaries of Muḥammad. Unfortunately many other contemporary sources have been lost to us, such as the works of Abān ibn ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān (d. 723) and al-Maghāzī by Wahb ibn Munnabbīḥ (d. 728). All of these writings, it should be repeated, deal only peripherally with the subject of Muḥammad’s marriage relations.

Sources other than the Qur’ān, ibn Ishāq, ibn Hishām, Wāqidī and Ṭabari are therefore late and generally to be suspected where they introduce details not already current. Regarding certain aspects of Muḥammad’s life the Qur’ān is the indisputable source, particularly for the Falsehood incident (Ḥadīth al-Ifk) of ‘Ā’isha, one of the Prophet’s wives and for the anecdote of his marriage to Zaynab bint Jaḥash.

It is therefore interesting to see a contemporary Muslim scholar writing a complete book about the wives of the Prophet based on early Muslim sources with the aid of modern scholarship freely used.

‘Ā’isha ‘Abd al-Raḥmān was born in Damietta (Dimyat) in Egypt and raised there. The beach of Damietta left on her indelible memories; hence her adopted pen name Bint al-Shāṭi’ (Daughter of the Beach), which give her writings a touch of sadness beyond mere nostalgia due to the fact, perhaps, that her grandmother whom she never knew was drowned in the Nile when her mother was still a young girl. She is a country woman by birth and is conservative in name and belief; she began her literary career by writing on themes taken from the countryside. She graduated from the Teacher’s College and then went to Cairo University, gaining the Ph. D. degree in 1950. There she met and married her Professor Amīn al-Khulī (d. 1966). She is a writer with many publications, notably her edition and commentary on *Risālat al-Ghafrān* (The Epistle of Forgiveness) by the blind poet Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘arrī (d. 1058) which proves beyond doubt her ability as a scholar. She has also written novels and presently holds a chair of Arabic Literature and Language at the University of Ayn-Shams, Cairo.

Having memorised the Qur’ān as a child, she became deeply interested in the life of Muḥammad, both as father and husband. She has written three books directly concerned with this field, namely, *The Wives of the Prophet* (Cairo, 1959), *The Daughters of the Prophet* (Cairo, 1963) and *The Mother of the Prophet*

(Cairo, 1966). Her purpose has been to make a fresh attempt to understand the prophethood of a man orphaned at the age of six by examining him in the role of a son, father and husband, on the assumption that he was a human personality exhibiting all the strength and frailties of a normal man. Consequently the author insists in her Introduction to the third edition, here translated, that her main purpose is to present Muḥammad as a man inspired but not divine. While she does not agree with some Muslim writers who attribute to him qualities of divinity, she equally rejects the ideas of some Western writers who, from 'fanaticism and prejudice', attack the occasionally all-too-human nature of his marriages. She does not share the view of some of her readers though who have suggested that aspects of his life should be discreetly avoided. She points out this would be against all scholarship as well as the testimony of the Qur'ān which makes clear Muḥammad's essentially human quality.

She concentrates on the life of Muḥammad among his wives and on his treatment and discipline of them. She does not intend to cover all the wives but to focus upon such events as particularly reveal his role as a husband. In so doing, she states that she has consulted all the early and later relevant sources, Western and Eastern, and criticises especially the Occidental writings. She also takes up the issue with some Muslim writers such as Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal in his *Ḥayāt Muḥammad (Life of Muḥammad)*, (Cairo, 1935) for apologising for certain incidents in the Prophet's life. In the way of scholarship it should be

said here that she includes nothing factually new about Muḥammad. Her contribution is a new interpretation, at the opposite end of the spectrum from Haykal's standard biography, in which she notably attacks his detailed apologies for Muḥammad's behaviour as unnecessary and mistaken in concept—especially for instance in the case of the wife Zaynab bint Jaḥash.

Zaynab was the daughter of Muḥammad's aunt. Tabari relates that Muḥammad inadvertently saw Zaynab alone in her house in such a manner as to excite his desire and that he conceived the idea of marrying her, although she was already the wife of his adopted son Zayd. Haykal has some criticism for the missionaries and Orientalists who have examined and explained the affair, as follows: he says, "Some of them portray Zaynab the moment the Prophet saw her as almost naked with her long dark hair flowing over her smooth body which speaks with every meaning of love." (*Life of Muḥammad*, 9th ed., 1967, pp. 316-17. He criticises these Western writers for making up a love story embellished by overheated imaginations. He justifies the marriage of Muḥammad to Zaynab by two arguments: firstly, that "the laws applied to ordinary men have no power over the great, so they do not apply to Prophets," and secondly that "He was not as these writers portray, a man whose mind would be captivated by love and he did not marry his wives motivated by lust or infatuation although some Muslim writers in some ages said so, thus presenting to the enemies of Islam such pretexts.

They wished to present Muḥammad as great in everything, even in the appetites of this world. This is an erroneous portrayal, completely denied by the *Life of Muḥammad*." (pp. 317-18). He asks why, if Muḥammad was so lustful, he would adhere to only one wife, Khadija, for twenty-eight years. He never thought then of bringing another wife to the house, though his vigour was greater as a young man.

Now Bint al-Shāṭi' analyses Haykal and applauds his general defence of Muḥammad: but she points out that the accounts of the Zaynab affair were written well before missionaries, Orientalists and Crusaders began to take any interest in it. Her defence of Muḥammad is not based upon denying the authenticity of the chronicles, but rests on this: that Muḥammad attracts neither blame nor praise for his conduct—since it was entirely human. He had no control over his own heart; indeed the very story enhances his nobility by displaying him in a sympathetically human light. Why should he be blamed when it was God who changed his heart? Haykal's defence, she says, actually casts a shadow of suspicion across the whole range of the Prophet's married life. The final proof of the matter is the sanction of the Qur'ān and the public interest served by the resulting revelation (Al-Aḥzāb, xxxiii, 37). In sum, she concludes, this incident was a simple love story.

We should pause here to state that a considerable part of the interest of this book lies in the manner of selection, presentation and conclusion about her material used by the author and the reader will be left to form his own opinion from material

in the book itself. The treatment of this affair by previous writers has placed them in either a pro or anti-Muslim position generally, at least in the eyes of Muslims and has been used by Muslim scholars to test the objectivity of Western writers. What follows therefore is a brief examination of the situation ourselves, for there are several points worth comment.

Haykal's defence of the Prophet relies upon two assertions: firstly that the original accounts are not reliable and secondly, that Western writers have, out of prejudice, embellished the matter with many fantasies—usually with the deliberate intention of branding Muḥammad as licentious. The first point we do not find valid, for the account is clearly related in writings basic to the Islamic faith, that is, the Qur'ān and confirmed and analysed by such an eminent commentator as al-Zamakhsharī in his *al-Kashshāf*. It is hardly acceptable, in logic or scholarship, to discard part of the fabric because it does not accord with the overall picture he conceives. Additionally, his claim that Muḥammad is not to be judged by the standards of ordinary men is really an attempt to shift his ground. Muḥammad, although he received divine guidance, was never, and never so thought himself, a divine being above the laws. The general suggestion Haykal makes that magnificent figures demand special standards of moral judgment is a very dangerous idea and also tends to refute the Islamic belief that Muḥammad was simply a man with a divine message. Haykal confuses the message and the man: Bint al-Shāṭi' attempts to separate them.

Haykal's imputations against Western scholarship read as a little old-fashioned today, for the lurid accounts of the Prophet's married life he refers to were usually expressions of extreme religious points of view that no Western scholar seriously holds now. For example, he easily refutes Washington Irving, an early biographer; but to talk so slightly of Muir and Dermenghem is simply uncritical and avoids discussion of several important questions. It is today, we think, perfectly possible for Western writers to examine the life of Muḥammad without any hostility or prejudice; and indeed the attempt demands to be made in a climate of world religious opinion that seeks to stress the similarities, rather than the differences, of the great faiths of the world.

We agree with the author in her criticism of Haykal's defence; the chronicles are generally trustworthy and there is no reason to disbelieve the incident. She defends Muḥammad on other grounds which we should consider. Her principal point is that, being human, he admired Zaynab, he exercised the self-restraint any noble man should and, in any case, why should he not have had thoughts concerning Zaynab? This fact alone attests, she feels, the very human quality of Muḥammad which she reiterates. She inclines to follow *al-Simt al-Thamīn* and mixes this source with Ṭabarī; in fact, *al-Simt al-Thamīn* here presents nothing more than a later and interpolated story, woven into Ṭabarī; it has no claim to authority.

There are some comparisons that suggest themselves between Muḥammad and the Hebrew Prophet Kings. The case of David who coveted Bathsheeba

and betrayed her husband to gain her comes to mind. The two situations are parallel—both principals were prophets, statesmen and leaders of clannish, polygamous and tribal communities, perpetually at war with their neighbours. In David's case punishment from God took the form of death for the child of the marriage and the promise of the disruption of his kingdom. In Muḥammad's case, God used the occasion to give him a lesson in moral cowardice; for being more concerned with the gossip of idlers who always put the worst construction on any man's action. Both men learnt to know themselves and God better through their ordeals. We should remember, perhaps, that Muḥammad was a man of his times: as a political leader he married often for political reasons, occasionally out of charity and only rarely could he allow himself the luxury of romance.

Rarely before in serious Arab writings dealing with the Prophet has a book, or a series of them, been produced which assumes so much of the style common to the novel. The author's purpose is to present Muḥammad's wives as living figures, unencumbered with all the apparatus of biography, dates and the *minutiae* of conventional lives. Whilst creating atmosphere by continually dwelling on her subjects' motives for action though, the air of romance she builds is sometimes destroyed by her use of medieval Arabic terms and overlengthy quotations from difficult Arabic sources: she confuses us occasionally too by inconsistent methods of footnoting.

But uniquely the book speaks for itself, virtues and blemishes alike. It provides an Arab perspective,

by a scholar in the mainstream of Arab scholarship, upon a subject continually surrounded by controversy. With its rich, ornate style, we feel the author has made a significant contribution towards a modern understanding of Muḥammad. She does not suffer from zealous inhibitions about revealing matters relating to the Prophet's moral sense—though her explanations sometimes have a directness and simplicity unfamiliar to the possibly over-sophisticated Western mind. But as she indeed makes clear, her purpose is to emphasise that very aspect of Muḥammad, which most orthodox Muslim writers have been at pains to explain, namely, Muḥammad's essential humanity.

The translation follows the original Arabic as faithfully as possible, though we have silently completed the sense of many passages left incomplete by a literal rendering. To present the proper meaning is not always the same however as to transliterate, and we have not hesitated to recast occasionally involved sentences which are a feature of this Arabic style. We have also felt it convenient to remove the many ritual phrases of respect accompanying the mention of Muḥammad's name. We have omitted, too, many repetitions of lineage not essential to an understanding of the meaning and have sometimes transferred into the notes parts of the text more appropriate there. Footnotes have been added to supplement those of the text, so that the translation at all times attempts to be explanatory. The English renderings, both from the sources quoted and from the Qur'ān, are those of the translators.

For the sake of consistency, we have used the term

Prophet instead of Apostle unless it occurs in a Qur'ānic verse. We have also used the term Abū for the sake of convenience throughout instead of Aba or Abi. Finally, all explanatory notes in square brackets have been added by the editors.

INTRODUCTION TO THE THIRD (ARABIC) EDITION

I am not doing a favour to my readers by presenting these biographies on which I have spent so much dutiful effort, for it was indeed my readers who favoured me with the encouragement and support necessary to produce them. Their good reception of these new studies about the House of the Prophet was a great help which enabled me to continue my research on the subject and provided me with the will to bear the costs and burdens and to shoulder the difficult responsibilities of the work.

However, I should mention here a praiseworthy feeling on the part of some of my readers who prefer us to keep hidden certain information about the private life of the Prophet, which the enemies of Islam have used against Muḥammad. To be truthful, to try and keep these events hidden is against the fidelity of research; neither is it in compliance with the guidance of the Holy Qur'ān which was meticulous in recording those events which, after all, only confirm the essentially human quality of the Prophet. Many of these qualities were ignored by previous writers more concerned with stressing the divine attributes of the Prophet—an emphasis, of course, which mars the belief in monotheism preached by the Apostles and Prophets of God.

I would not attempt to conceal what God has revealed, particularly the situations in which our Prophet has been blamed and which are recorded in the Qur'ānic verses which we sometimes use in worship

and recite on numerous occasions. It is no longer permissible for a Muslim scholar to brush aside these things especially where they are concerned with the life of the Prophet and have been divinely revealed in such verses as al-Ifk (The Falsehood), *al-Tahrīm* (Prohibition), *al-Aḥzāb* (The Confederate Tribes) and *al-Nūr* (Light). Furthermore, I see nothing in these situations except the sign of greatness in our Prophet who, human like us, was worthy to bear the last revealed messages of God—messages through which he raised humanity to maturity and freed it from the falsehood of paganism, the impurities of polytheism and guided humanity forward to realise its sublime existence.

The sign of the heroic quality of Muḥammad, the son of 'Abd Allah, is that, whilst human like us, he was able to enter and direct History to an extent never before or since attempted, preaching the religion of Islam throughout time and beyond place.

What I should like to say is that, in studying all that has been said about the life of the Prophet, I have never seen anything which I find embarrassing to reveal. My sources are the Holy Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth and other Islamic writings on the life story of Muḥammad and Islamic history whose integrity is beyond doubt.

I ask God for guidance and success: in Him I trust.

Miṣr al-Jadīda
May 1965
Muharram, 1385 A.H.

'Ā'isha 'Abd al-Raḥmān
Bint al-Shāfi'

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST (ARABIC) EDITION

This is an account of the family life of Muḥammad which I present in successive "tableaux" and about the noble ladies who lived in his house. Each of these women had her influence upon Muḥammad and had her place in the history of the hero who led the most magnificent campaign the world has ever known. I have not written a word of this account before reading those sources which treat of this aspect of the lives of both the Prophet and his wives. I began with the Holy Qur'ān, the Ḥadīth and the biographies of the Prophet; then the commentaries on the Qur'ān, biographies in general and their histories. To these I added whatever I could obtain of the numerous books written by Orientalists about 'Muḥammad and Islam' in English, German and French.

When I started to write I put beside me this collection of materials to which I referred wherever necessary and I let my pen portray the life of the Mothers of the Faithful in the House of the Prophet as I envisioned it after I had assimilated what I had read. I should admit, however, that after I finished reading, I felt daunted almost to the extent of not undertaking the task before me for I was filled with the feeling of the majesty and delicacy of the subject; and because of the many previous works already extant in the field.

All of these ladies who lived in the house of the Prophet were possessed of strong feminine emotions and they came to a house in which humanity and

Prophethood had met and where earth was connected with Heaven. They had married a human being who received revelation from above and who in turn delivered the message of God. How then could human pen portray such a life in which house human passion mingle with a flow of sublime light and femininity—whose delicacy, weakness and sensitivity we know—is assailed by such deep and powerful currents? Some of these currents pulled this femininity to earth, others exalted it to Heaven and as a result we have a balance between the Divine and the human. In the end, I saw that this was indeed a rich and exciting life these ladies had enjoyed, the study of which attracted me deeply. It was a rare and unique experiment not easy to drop after so much preparation.

Once I had determined to tackle this august and sensitive theme, I no longer felt intimidated by the other works on the subject, for such books do not preclude a discussion of a new aspect—more especially as the majority of such writings are prejudiced. Some of them, out of sheer faith and glorification of the Prophet, denied that human quality insisted upon by the Qur'ān and which he has more than once recited and affirmed. Others of these writers were misled by fanaticism and blinded by hatred, making this area of our great Prophet's life an occasion for giving full rein to prejudice. And so there is still room for a new treatment, presenting the life of the Prophet in his noble house as it actually was, in the light of the authentic accounts and with a true sensibility of the heart that takes account of the historical environment of those days.

The reader will notice that I have confined my study to those wives who have been honoured by the title of the Mothers of the Faithful (Ummahāt al-Mu'minīn) including Māria the Egyptian who had, in addition to the favour she enjoyed from the Prophet and the honour she received by being the mother of his son Ibrāhīm, a distinct influence on the private life of Muḥammad. Apart from the Mothers of the Faithful and Māria, I have not discussed those ladies whom the Apostle married but with whom he had no physical relations. Accounts vary concerning the numbers and names of them and any one desiring to read about them should consult the fourth volume of *Sīrat Ibn Hishām* (al-Ḥalabī edition), the third volume of *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī* (al-Ḥusayniyya edition), the second volume of *al-Rawḍ al-Unuf* by al-Suhaylī (al-Jamāliyya edition), the eighth volume of *al-Iṣāba* (al-Sharafiyya edition) and *al-Simt-al-Thamīn* (Aleppo edition).

Equally I do not discuss those women who offered themselves to the Prophet, nor do I discuss Rayḥāna bint 'Amr whom the Prophet chose for himself from among the women of the banū Qurayza in the fifth year of the Hijra (A.D. 627). When the Prophet proposed marriage she said, "You may keep me under your protection which is easier for both of us."¹ So she remained with the Messenger of God until his death.²

I am not ignorant that this chosen lady and the other women who offered themselves to the Prophet

1. Ibn Hishām, II, 265 ; *Simt*, p. 146.

2. Ṭabarī, III, 59.

had an effect on his emotional and married life. Oral tradition, however, does not record this influence, neither does it give any place to these women in his house. Therefore I have found it permissible to defer such a discussion until I have dealt with those ladies with whom he consummated marriage, concentrating my attention on portraying their characters as they appeared in the Prophet's house. I omit all mention of their lives prior to their arrival in the household, except where relevant and I have not pursued their lives beyond the death of the Prophet except for a brief indication where the situation requires it.

I do not intend this book to exhaust all the various information about the Prophet's wives, nor have I intended to make this study a collection of biographies following the traditional form. What I was concerned with was the visualization of the lives of each of them in the Prophet's house, their relationship with him and portrayal of each of them as a wife and a woman. This being said, the reader will not expect here an historical investigation of their death and the determination of the whereabouts of their graves or a minute investigation of what happened to them following Muḥammad's death. It is enough that I have presented certain aspects of their real character in their true light.

In conclusion, I would like the reader to know that all the information used in this book was derived from its original sources which are faithfully quoted. In addition, I have my own methods in using the other sources which I hope have been successful in achieving a wide outlook attempted and partake of

the proper candour appropriate to the solemnity of the subject, a candour which respects the sanctity of my research.

Mişr al-Jadida

Bint al-Shāṭi'

CONTENTS

Editors' Introduction	...	...	v
Author's Introduction to the Third (Arabic) Edition			xvi
Author's Introduction to the First (Arabic) Edition			xviii
Chapter I: Muḥammad the Prophet Husband	...	...	1
Chapter II: Khadija Bint Khuwaylid	...	...	19
Chapter III: Sauda Bint Zama'a	...	...	45
Chapter IV: 'A'isha Bint Abū Bakr	...	...	55
Chapter V: Ḥafsa Bint 'Umar	...	...	99
Chapter VI: Zaynab Bint Khuzayma	...	...	113
Chapter VII: Umm Salama Bint Zād al-Rakb	...	...	121
Chapter VIII: Zaynab Bint Jaḥash	...	...	137
Chapter IX: Juwayriya Bint al-Ḥārith	...	...	159
Chapter X: Ṣafiyya Bint Ḥuyayy	...	...	169
Chapter XI: Umm Ḥabība Bint Abū Sufyān	...	...	183
Chapter XII: Māria The Copt	...	...	201
Chapter XIII: Maymūna Bint al-Ḥārith	...	...	217

Chapter 1

MUḤAMMAD, THE PROPHET HUSBAND

"Say, Blessed be my Lord,
I am only a human Apostle."

Holy Qur'ān

MUHAMMAD THE HUSBAND

The discussion of the wives of the Prophet should be preceded by a discussion of the homes in which they lived. In fact, it was not one home, but two. One was in Mecca where Muḥammad lived alone with his first wife and where he begat children and faced the great transformation of his, the Arabs' and mankind's life. This house I have described in my book *Banāt al-Nabī* (The Daughters of the Prophet)¹ and I shall spare myself and my readers the repetition of it. The second house was in Madīna where all the Mothers of the Faithful lived except Khadija, his first wife. Readers will find a brief description of this house in the fourth chapter of the book on Lady 'Ā'isha who had the foremost place among the wives of the Prophet. It was here that the married life of the Prophet gained a social, political and legal meaning hitherto not recognizable in the first house when Muḥammad was merely a young man of twenty-five without as yet a divine message or revelation.

It is also necessary to preface a discussion of the Prophet's wives by considering the Master of the House in whose shade they lived. I think none of my readers would expect me to pursue the life of the Prophet in detail or to give an historical account of his rich and glorious life. I shall only emphasise one

1. Three editions of this book have appeared, the first one by Kitāb al-Hilāl, the second by al-Shirkat al-'Arabīyya (1959) and the third by Dār al-Hilāl (1963).

aspect and that is Muḥammad the husband, the man of human parts, within whose shadow those noble ladies lived and whose private world embraced them all.

To differentiate the character of Muḥammad as husband and as Prophet is very difficult. The case is otherwise in the lives of other prophets who were all human beings of whom God says, "Before you We have sent only men to whom We vouchsafed divine revelation."² The Islamic message has insisted upon admitting the human nature of the Prophet, which has no parallel among other religions, which claim divine attributes for their leaders, notably so in the case of Jesus, the Word of God delivered to Mary and born untouched by a mortal. Further-more the Message did not empty his heart of human feelings nor did it make him immune to all the frailties of human behaviour, except where his Prophethood was concerned. As God indicated, "Say I am human like yourselves."³ He is attracted to a wife, becomes involved in family life and suffers from love and hate, desire and abstinence, fear and hope. What applies to any human applies also to him, such as daily toil, being orphaned, bereavement, disease and death. "Muḥammad is only an Apostle; other Apostles have been and gone before him. If he dies or is killed, you will [Muslims] recant."⁴

If God had willed, he would have made His Prophet free from all human failings and spared him the bitterness of losing his sons, the tragic loss of

2. Qur'ān, *Joseph* : 109, *The Bee* : 43 and *The Prophets* : 7.

3. Ibid., *The Cave* : 100 and *Fuṣṣilat* : 6

4. Ibid., *The Family of 'Imrān* : 144.

Khadija, his first wife and the ordeal resulting from the falsehood episode with 'Ā'isha. He would have made his life a continuous victory over adversity and frustration and would have spared him from the persecution of his enemies, the intrigues of his opponents and the hypocrisy of his faint-hearted followers. But the word of God had already been directed to His Prophet, "Say, I do not possess the power to benefit myself or to avoid evil, except through the power of God. If I could foresee the future, I could have benefited myself with the good and avoided all the evil. I am only a herald who brings warnings or good news to those who believe."⁵

What a difference to mankind, what honour, that a Prophet carrying the Message of Heaven should be a part of mankind itself, as formerly God had honoured humanity by ordering the Angels to worship Adam, the Father of mortals!

Muḥammad, though, was not like any other mortal: how could it be so since God had chosen him of all men to bear the last Divine Message? How could it be so when he, Muḥammad, received the book of God to announce to the people? The difficulty and delicacy of talking about the private life of Muḥammad is that he was a mortal. Neither should this fact be forgotten by any writer touching upon this side of Muḥammad's personality, that he was the Chosen Prophet and that the first word of Islam is to testify that there is no God but Allah and that Muḥammad is his Prophet. What makes the problem more complicated is that the two per-

5. Ibid., *The Heights* : 137.

sonalities of the Prophet are indivisibly intertwined and that God did not grant Muḥammad freedom to dispose of his private life in the manner of any normal person: he talked directly to him in the most particular terms concerning his marriage relations. These relations were sometimes subjected to palpably divine ordinance: for example, the falsehood episode was only solved by Divine revelation exonerating 'Ā'isha from the false accusations concerning her adultery. The marriage of the Prophet to Zaynab bint Jahsh would never have been consummated either if it were not for the obvious expostulation of God who hated to see Muḥammad hide what God wished to reveal and see him pay more attention to the evil tongues of gossipers than to divine exhortation. So too, the divorce of the Prophet's wife, Lady Ḥafṣa, resulted in an act of Heavenly pity towards her father 'Umar, in that God ordered Muḥammad to reinstate Ḥafṣa for her father's sake. Yet another example concerned the unhappiness of the Prophet's wives as a result of the restrictions Muḥammad had placed upon them, which were only lifted by God's word, as appears in "al-Aḥzāb" (The Confederate Tribes) a chapter of the Qur'ān.

"O Prophet, tell your wives, 'If you seek this life and all its finery, then come: I will provide for you and release you honourably. However, if you seek for God and His Apostle and the life to come, then know that God has prepared a rich reward for those of you who do good works'." 6

The conduct of his wives was subject to divine

6. Ibid., *The Confederate Tribes*: 28-29.

supervision. In this regard God says, "O wives of the Prophet, you are not like other women. If you fear God, do not be too complaisant in your speech, for fear that the lecherous-hearted should lust after you. Show discretion in what you say. Stay in your home and do not display your finery as women used to do in the days of Jāhiliyya [the pre-Islamic period]. Attend to your prayers, give alms to the poor and obey God and His Prophet. God seeks only to remove your uncleanness and purify you. Remember the words of the Qur'ān which are the words of wisdom you recite in your homes. God is beneficent and all-knowing." 7

These examples are sufficient to show the difficulty of separating the nature of husband from Prophet.

What sort of man was the Prophet of Islam? What sort of a husband was he whose home harboured such a number of noble wives, who were of such diverse races, colours, origins, ages, and appearance? We may, with an effort, ascertain some salient features of this Hashimite youth who accompanied his uncles, Abū Tālib and Ḥamza, to the house of Khadija bint Khuwaylid to celebrate his marriage to her in the fifteenth year before his designation as Prophet. At that time he was no other than a mortal, not a Prophet. He was a Hashimite youth of noble origin. His father was 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib ibn Hāshim, whose ransom anecdote in fulfilment of a vow was related by the Meccans.⁸ This story is an exciting one recalling the first sacrifice of Ismā'il ibn

7. Ibid., 32-34.

8. Ibn Hishām, I, 160-63. See also *Umm al-Nabi* (The Mother of the Prophet), 3rd ed., pp. 78-82.

Ibrāhīm, the ancestor of the Adnanite Arabs. His mother, Āmina bint Wahab ibn 'Abd Manāf ibn Zuhra ibn Quṣay, was of the noblest origin in the Quraysh tribe.⁹ He (the Prophet) spent his early years in the desert of the Banū Sa'd. His bedouin upbringing left its mark upon his personality and gave him a healthy body and mind, a resolute character and also eloquence.¹⁰ Furthermore his hard life as an orphan gave him stamina and an early feeling of responsibility. Then followed the journey to al-Shām (Syria) which enlarged his horizons and gave him experience of the world and its people. Here we notice in his character traces of the desert and in his conduct the manners of the civilised society that flourished in the area round the Holy shrine [of the Ka'ba,] the meeting place of the pilgrims (in Mecca) and the dwelling place of the Quraysh tribe, which traded with the other civilised parts of the Arab peninsula. We also notice the experience of this travel on his mind and see in his character the true marks of a Hashimite Qurayshite, not yet corrupted by leisure or money or softened by luxury.

This was Muḥammad when the Lady Khadija heard of him and his reputation for serenity, uprightness, honesty and purity. All of this paved the way

9. Ibn Hishām, I, 165.

10. It has not escaped my attention here that generally the Muslim Arabs preserved the soundness of their tongues before they were mixed with the peoples whom they subdued after the emergence of Islam. However, the Arabian desert has relatively retained the purity of its Arabic language as compared to Mecca. By virtue of its religious and its trade position, being the centre of the winter and the summer journeys to al-Yaman and al-Shām (Syria), as well as the place of pilgrimage for all the Arabs, Mecca's society has become cosmopolitan.

to her heart, long closed to all men. She had thought of him before even she met him. "A handsome young man with distinctive features, a radiant colour, neither too tall nor too short, with a fine head and noble brow, a flowing beard and graceful neck, deep chested, with strong hands and feet. Thick, dark hair crowned his head, and his deep set, brilliant dark eyes glowed with a magical charm under long dark eyelashes. His white, well-spaced teeth sparkled whenever he spoke or smiled;"¹¹ and also: "He walked quickly, his weight thrown eagerly forward. He was an attentive and courteous listener and of a pleasant presence, sometimes laughing so heartily that his gums appeared. Yet when he became angry his mildness did not betray him, though sweat beaded on his forehead just above his eyebrows."¹²

Khadija, we must remember, was not an inexperienced young lady, for she had known the world and its people. She had married successively two noblemen from the Quraysh tribe and had dealings with the men who traded on her behalf with al-Shām. Her admiration of Muḥammad and her desire to marry him is proof that she found in his captivating personality, something she could not find in the other men who flocked to her door seeking her hand. It is hardly necessary here to state that she saw in him then not the expected Prophet but only the ideal man.

This mature and worldly lady befriended him fifteen years before he was called to the Prophethood.

11. Ṭabarī, III, 185 and al-Suhaylī, *al-Rawḍ al-Uṣṣūf*, al-Jamāliyya (Egypt) ed., 1914, Vol. I.

12. From the description by al-Imām 'Alī of the Prophet as related by narrators. See al-Suhaylī, *ibid*, and Ṭabarī, III, 185-86.

They were long years, enough to reveal to her the essence of her husband and unravel to her a nature which would remain hidden to other people. There is nothing like married life to test a man's character and measure him truly and therefore the faith of Lady Khadija in her husband and her belief in his Message is a true sign of his greatness; for when she heard his marvellous words concerning his first revelation, she cried out enthusiastically, "By God, God will never shame you, because you show mercy to your relatives, you speak the truth, you bear the burden of the world, you open your doors to all and help those in adversity."¹³

This was the testimony of the wife concerning the husband after many years of living closely with him. Here we find much that explains Muḥammad the man and master before he received his Call. It may also be supported by narratives such as that of 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib, his cousin, who lived side by side with him in the house of his father Abū Ṭālib and remained a close friend after he left to marry Khadija. "He is the most generous, courageous and straight-speaking man, upright, even tempered and the noblest of friends. Those who meet him for the first time immediately venerate him and those that mix with him love him."¹⁴

In the *Isti'āb* is an account by Umm Ma'bad al-Khuzā'iyya, 'Ātika bint Khālid, who describes Muḥammad whom she observed before she formally met him. "I saw a radiant man, fair faced and of

13. Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Iṣāba*, Vol. VIII [hereafter referred to as *Iṣāba*], and *Simt*, p. 19.

14. See the ḥadīth of Anas ibn Mālik al-Anṣārī about the courage and generosity of the Prophet in Ṭabarī, II, 186-87.

excellent features, handsome and elegant, with eyes of jet whose lids were overhung by heavy eyebrows grown together. His neck was a column of ivory, his voice deep and his beard thick. When he was silent, he was serene and when he spoke, he was touched with splendour. From both far and near he looked the most graceful of men; he was sweet of speech and when he spoke, his words went to the point. He was of medium height and had companions who listened attentively to him when he spoke and who hurried to carry out his instructions."¹⁵

Of all the wives of the Prophet, Lady Khadija is the only one who knew Muḥammad as man and husband before he became a Prophet, and this is why we have devoted so much time to their married life, seeking in it the personality of the man and husband.

However, none of them shared the life of Muḥammad without seeing in him both husband and Prophet, the man and the Prophet intertwined.

What we can be certain of is that each of these wives came to the house of Muḥammad proud that she had married the Chosen Prophet, the Hero Lord. Yet no sooner had she entered the house and met the other wives who shared her husband, than she would regard him as husband rather than Prophet; hence the exasperation, rivalry and jealousy which raged endlessly. It is clear that such things would not have happened in the household of those who believed in him only as Prophet. The domestic life of Muḥammad was, in fact, magnificent. He preferred to live

15. Ibn 'Abd al-Birr, *al-Isti'āb fī Ma'rifat al-Aṣḥāb*, Nahḍat Miṣr ed., (1959), IV. [hereafter referred to as *Isti'āb*]. *Du'j* means the deep blackness of the eyes and *Waṭaf* means bushy eyebrows.

among his wives as a man with a heart, with feelings and passions.¹⁶ He did not attempt, except out of extreme necessity, to impose upon his wives his personality as a Prophet. Today we read what history has to say about that married life: we are dazzled by its vitality which knows no sterile passion or fossilized affection. And all this is because he behaved naturally and allowed his wives to fill his private life with warmth and excitement, keeping away the shadows of stagnation and lethargy.

The history of Islam confesses that these noble ladies were always a part of the life of the Prophet Hero. They accompanied him to his battles and afforded him what would satisfy his needs as a man; they fed him with their hearts and entertained his passion, renewed his energy—all of which helped him to carry his burden and endure, for the sake of his eternal Call, incredible hardships. The Prophet of God lived his life with youthful heart even when past sixty, with a vibrant consciousness until the day he died in the lap of his most beloved and favoured wife [‘Ā’isha].

May God forgive those whose belief impelled them to reject God's greatest sign, made manifest in the son of a Qurayshite woman, of the tribe that used to eat dried meat. May God also forgive those who claim that his Prophet's heart did not throb with the love of ‘Ā’isha, nor that it was attracted to Zaynab bint Jahsh! May God forgive those who claim that his feelings had no part in his marriages.

16. *Simt*, pp. 8-11 contains a detailed account of the Prophet's care for his wives, his patience with them and his evenings spent in pleasant conversation with them.

The testimony of God and of his Prophet; the natural behaviour of Muhammad which mankind has recognized and admired; the evidence of History which comprehends the many accounts of the married life of the Prophet: all these decline to approve this life as one of stagnation and dryness.

POLYGAMY AND THE RIVAL WIVES

It is imperative that we should treat here of two big problems in the life of the Prophet, namely, polygamy and the lives of the rival wives. As to the first, Orientalists have said whatever they wanted to say. They have seen in the accumulation of a number of women under the roof of one man a sign of exaggerated materialism. This is sheer falsehood, dictated by foolish fanaticism, prejudice and deviation from scientific method, which forbids us to measure the question of polygamy by modern invented yardsticks created by an environment widely separated from that of Muhammad. The western world today does not have the courage to claim that monogamy is being followed precisely in letter and spirit. In spite of this, however, some western people audaciously deny that Muhammad should have had many wives fourteen centuries ago in an environment where polygamy was the prevalent order and which knew nothing else except in isolated circumstances. This social order was not voluntary, being dictated by time and place in a country still close to primitive life. Society was governed by tribal rules in which sons were the ornament of life and to have many was the pride of a man, as giving birth was the pride of a woman.

This polygamy may appear to us today as a sign of the alleged enslavement of the Arab woman and that it was designed for man's entertainment. In reality, polygamy quite often placed upon a man a heavy burden and saved the Arab woman from a more degrading system—namely, the modern slavery which recognizes only one wife and leaves other women to be carnally used and left without a place in society. Indeed, the woman who really loses is the one who pays that heavier price and this price is also paid by society and mankind which is made miserable by illegitimate children and rejected youngsters, something Arab society has never known. Arab society emphasized having many children, by adoption or association, because the tribal system needed strength through numbers; hence, men took pride in the size of their families.

The question of polygamy has been complicated by the fact that men are not all the same. A woman may contentedly prefer to have half of one man's life rather than the whole life of another. This does not mean that anyone of them would feel happy to have someone else sharing her husband. But strictly speaking it does mean that Muḥammad was of that unique sort among men whose wives preferred to have a place in his home rather than a kingdom apart from him. None of his wives entered his home believing that she would have him for herself, for polygamy appeared natural in a way we may now easily visualize. The truth of this may be seen in the following examples. Firstly, when Khawla bint Ḥakīm suggested to the Prophet a betrothal to 'Ā'isha bint Abū

Bakr and Sauda bint Zama'a at the same time.¹⁷ Secondly, when the Mother of the Faithful, Maymuna bint al-Hārith offered herself to the Prophet,¹⁸ when he already had ten wives (eight of whom were true wives and two in name only). Thirdly, when 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb offered his daughter Ḥafṣa to Abū Bakr¹⁹ while Abū Bakr still had Umm Rumān, the mother-in-law of the Prophet, as his wife and 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib considered marrying Fāṭima al-Zahrā'. [the Fair One] daughter of the Prophet and lastly, when Abū Bakr and 'Umar, the sons-in-law of the Prophet, desired to marry Umm Salama bint Abū Umayya Zād al-Rakb when her husband died, whilst each of them already had more than one wife.

It the wives of the Prophet were to have been given the choice of communal life in one home with one husband and a single life in another house, they would not have changed, despite the burden they felt of sharing one husband. They did become exhausted by jealousy and unhappy that each one could not alone win the heart of her husband. The house of the Prophet witnessed many jealous scenes that suggest to us almost a battleground for unmitigated and unrelenting strife. Yet Nature saw in this conflict a reflection of the vitality of the household and simply a sign of the rivalry and selfish desire of each to have the Prophet for herself. No doubt the Prophet suffered greatly, but he trained himself to endure it in consideration of the natural passions which caused

17. Ibn Hishām, I, 352 and Ṭabarī, Vol. III.

18. Ibid., IV, 296 and Ṭabarī, *ibid.*

19. *Simt*, p. 83 and *Nasab Quraysh* by al-Muṣ'ab al-Zubayrī, al-Dhakhā'ir ed., p. 352.

this behaviour. To this day mankind remembers, and will continue to do, his words to 'Ā'ishā when she was possessed by jealousy. "Woe to her, she would have freed herself from jealousy if she could [but she could not]." We see in this the sign of a sound disposition and moral uprightness and a profound understanding of the nature of Woman. His wives knew this quality in their husband the Prophet, so they resorted to him whenever their feminine nature destroyed the peace and harmony expected of a Prophet's wife. They realised no matter how recalcitrant their jealousy made them, some one like the Prophet of God would absolve them, understanding and having compassion on them without seeing in their human weakness an unpardonable sin. Neither would he find anything to despise there and this brings to mind a saying by 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb in which the character of the Prophet husband is revealed and which truly denotes the nature of Muḥammad the man. 'Umar said:

"By God, in the Jāhiliyya [the pre-Islamic period] we thought women of no account until God made known His revelation concerning them and their status. Whilst I was thinking how to issue an order concerning some matter, my wife said to me, 'How about doing this and this?' I said to her, 'What business is it of yours and why do you concern yourself in my affairs?' She replied, 'How strange, O son of al-Khaṭṭāb, that you don't want to be picked upon while your daughter picks upon the Prophet of God until he becomes angry all day.'

I took my rope and I went and saw Hafṣa, saying 'Daughter, do you annoy the Prophet so that he remains angry all day?' She replied, 'Yes, I so annoy him.' Then I went to see Umm Salama because she was my relative and I talked to her about this. She said, 'How astonishing it is, O son of al-Khaṭṭāb; you have interfered in everything and now you want to interfere in the affairs of the Prophet of God and his wives.' She rebuked me until my anger having subsided, I saw that she was right."²⁰

And so, whilst 'Umar and the Companions saw in Muḥammad the Chosen Prophet, his wives saw in him the husband Prophet and he was content that it should be so.

There are those who would avoid discussing the quarrels and differences which took place among the wives of the Prophet. Actually, Muḥammad did not bother about these quarrels unless they went beyond reasonable bounds, at which he would become angry and reproachful or would hold aloof from them until they regained their senses. Apart from the few occasions when the Prophet was forced to treat his wives severely, he did not have time to pay attention to their insignificant quarrels whilst he was engaged in the battle against paganism—quarrels kindled by their love and jealousy. Perhaps his pride was sometimes gratified to see his wives rivalling each other

20. *Ṣiṃṭ*, p. 183 and Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, Leiden ed., II, 73, [hereafter referred to as *Ṭabaqāt*].

for his affections to the extent that they did forget that he was not like other husbands. He never attempted to train them to subdue their feminine instincts, nor would he have been pleased to see their nature distorted. He did not want to subdue their whims and caprices which sprang from their desire to have him alone as a beloved husband. How wise and restrained was his passion and how graceful his temper when he heard of his wives' conspiracy against one of his brides of whose beauty they were jealous. Pretending friendship, they told the simple girl to say to Muḥammad, when he entered in to know her, "I take refuge in God" and that this would gain Muḥammad's love and satisfaction. She did and the result was that he left her without consummating the marriage. Later he had this to say about the part his wives had played: "They are the companions of Joseph and their deception is great."²¹

This, then, is a picture of the lives of the Prophet's wives, may God be pleased with them. I hope the reader will see in it the character of this unique man in whose apostolic mission his wives believed, who admired him as a hero, lived with him as a husband and shared his life as a commander and leader.

21. The narrative is recounted in more detail in Ch. IV below.

Chapter 2

KHADĪJA BINT KHUWAYLID THE MOTHER AND HOUSEWIFE

'By God, the Lord has not given me any woman better than her. She had faith when others did not, she believed in me when others disbelieved, she held me true when others withheld it and she bore me children.'

Muḥammad the Prophet of God

A SAD MEMORY

Muḥammad flourished and reached his prime in an environment that promised him and his Hashimite contemporaries whatever they desired of pleasure. But he found the taste of life bitter whenever a certain and frequent memory came to his mind. It took him back to a time eighteen years ago ; he still remembered standing in the desolate spot between Mecca and Yathrib [Madīna].

He was standing in a deserted spot before his mother Āmina who, after vainly fighting Death, breathed her last before his eyes. Despite the passage of time, this memory was still fresh and clear.¹ He saw himself prostrated over the grave at Abwā' where the precious body of his mother was buried. He felt broken-hearted and helpless, anguished because he could not keep her one moment beyond her allotted time and defend her from the lonely coldness after the sands had covered her for ever. Perhaps the daily routine of living diminished the sharpness of his sorrow and dulled the ache that moment caused, but his memory continually took him back to that lonely spot to the north where his mother lay beyond the reach of his sorrow. How often he passed by that now deserted and empty house in Mecca that had harboured his mother and himself. Often he walked in the pastures outside Mecca and when evening came and he finally retraced his steps back to the holy

1. Ibn Hishām, I, 177 and our book *Umm al-Nabī*, 2nd ed., Dār al-Hilāl, p. 47.

city, he would stop at the gateway and dream. He saw himself returning again from his first trip to Yathrib [Madina], lonely, sad and distraught, now doubly orphaned by the death of his mother and now of his grandfather, following his maid servant Baraka with slow steps to the house of his grandfather 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. How hard his compassionate grandparent tried to exorcise that haunting memory! How he strove for two whole years² to heal that wound of his dear young grandson, until that fearful Visitor which had taken already from him his father and mother returned for his grandfather. For a second time he stood beside the death bed of one who had been a second father to him. He listened with stupefaction and sorrow as the voice of the old man called for his son Abū Ṭālib, entrusting Muḥammad to his care. A moment later the spark of life was gone and the boy moved into a new home, discovering in his uncle yet a third father. Still he missed his mother and his heart ever yearned toward that last resting place at al-Abwā'. The noise of the children of the banū Hāshim at play could not obliterate the echo of that fearful death rattle which was his mother's last sound in the heart of the desert. The busy life near the "Ancient House" [the Ka'ba] in Umm al-Qura [the nickname of Mecca] could not destroy the memory of that death scene.

This is he, standing near the edge of the desert, with a distracted mind, wrapped in the robe of darkness and gloom, tired and despondent. Amid the gathering dusk, he recollects himself and returns to

2. Ibn Hishām, I, 178.

his uncle's house, knowing instinctively that he would soon be leaving it, the house that had sheltered him for seventeen years. It was sufficient that his uncle cared for his own numerous children. But where should he go? To al-Shām [Syria] temporarily, as his uncle wished him to on the day he took his leave.

This is what he said: 'O my nephew! I have no money and time has dealt hardly with us! The ungrateful years have treated us harshly. We have no estates or business; and out there are the camels of your people going to al-Shām. Khadija sends men to trade for her and she will employ you in preference to others because of what she knows concerning your honesty and decency—though I hate to see you go and fear for you among the Jews... I have been informed that she has just hired someone at the rate of two camels for the trip and you are worth more! Do you want me to talk with her about it?'³

Muḥammad replied: 'I had not liked to...'

I wonder if his uncle did talk to her and it was decided that Muḥammad should go, leaving the future to take care of itself? Let him then depart.

THE MEETING

The caravan is hastening towards Umm al-Qura (Mecca), returning from the summer trip to al-Shām, the caravan leaders singing to their camels promises of rest, shade and water and raising the spirits of the cavalcade longing to see their relatives and loved

3. This is related by al-Zurqānī quoting al-Wāqidī. See also Ibn Hishām, I, 199 and *Simt*, p. 13. Ṭabarī relates that Lady Khadija was the one who proposed to him that he undertake a business trip on her behalf to Syria.

ones. The travellers have been taken with ecstasy since Marr al-Zahrān, close to Mecca, craning their necks for a glimpse of the city that called to them from its welcoming heart. But Muḥammad was alone with his soul and when the caravan passed by al-Abwā', the bitter tide of memory swept over him again. In vain did his companion [Maysara] urge him to cast his looks upon Mecca or divert him with the awareness of that rich and noble lady's appreciation, who had chosen him to trade on her behalf in al-Shām and promised him double what she usually paid the people she had hired before.

Maysara said to him, 'Let me hurry to my mistress to tell her how God has favoured her enterprise because of you and so let her favour descend on you because of this.'

Muḥammad let him go and reverted to his own thoughts. Was this all the returning travellers and camel drivers expected, and to see their relatives again? He looked backwards, his sight following a trace of the ghost of his mother Āmina filling the desert and he remembered his first trip returning from Madīna motherless.

The noise of the caravan mingling with the shouting of the waiting crowd and the bleating of the camels squatting safely on the ground of Mecca reached a crescendo, and Muḥammad rode off to the house of Khadija after circling the 'Ancient House' [the Ka'ba]. Khadija was at home anxiously watching for the returning Muḥammad. Beside her was her servant Maysara, enchanting her ears with stories of

their trip.⁴ When, at long last, she saw his handsome and noble features approaching the house, she rushed to the door to welcome and congratulate him, her voice overflowing with sweetness and compassion. He lifted up his eyes thankfully and when they met hers, he shyly lowered them again and began his account of the trip, the profit it had made and the good things he had brought back. She listened enchantedly and when he left, she remained rooted to the spot until he was lost to sight. He returned to his uncle's house feeling contented and satisfied at the outcome of the trip, without having suffered any harm at the hands of the Jews.

SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE

Life at Mecca was for many many days monotonous. The caravan financiers were engaged in checking their accounts whilst the returning traders sought rest and ease after their long and dangerous journey. When the final reckoning was made, the bond between employer and employee terminated—with the exception of that between Khadija and the honest and faithful Muḥammad.

Khadija had experienced the world and known men. She had married twice amongst the highest Arab nobility, firstly 'Ātīq ibn 'Ā'idh al-Makhzūm and secondly, Abū Hāla ibn Zurāra al-Tamīmī.⁵ She

4. Ibn Hishām, I, 200; *Simt*, p. 13 and Ṭabarī, II, 196.

5. Ibn Hishām, IV, 193; Ṭabarī, III, 175 and *Simt*, p. 13. According to *Istī'āb*, IV, 1817 Khadija married Abū Hāla first and then ibn 'Ā'idh. See the biography of 'Ātīq and Abū Hāla in Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamḥarat Ansāb al-'Arab* (Compilation of Arab Genealogies), Dhakhā'ir al-'Arab ed., pp. 133 and 199, [hereafter referred to as *Jamḥara*].

had hired many men before, but she had never seen the uniqueness she saw in Muḥammad. She began to reflect deeply, recollecting his clear, enchanting voice when recounting his trip and visualizing his youth and majesty. Suddenly she found her thoughts roving around the place in which she met this Hāshimite youth and emotion seized her, asking her heart why it was throbbing so wildly when the days of her youth were almost gone? Had she been claimed by love after so many years of slumber? When she received the message of her heart, she started with fright, not knowing how to face the world with such a sentiment after she had finished with men and would be supposed to have finished with such thoughts. How could she face her own people after rejecting so many previous worthy suitors from the Quraysh and from Mecca? ⁶

But woe to her! She thought about her own people without thinking of what Muḥammad thought of her. Would he respond to the sentiments of a forty year old widow when he had shunned the virgins of Mecca and the fairest roses of the banū Hāshim? She felt embarrassed, for as a middle aged woman she felt more in the position of an aunt or mother. If Āmina bint Wahab [Muḥammad's mother] had lived, she would not yet have been forty. Furthermore, she was still occupied by her responsibility as a mother. Her husband 'Ātiq had left her a daughter, now of marriageable age, and her other husband, Abū Hāla, left her a son, Hind, who was still young. ⁷ Her heart

6. Ibn Hishām, I, 201 and *Simt*, p. 13.

7. Ibn Ḥazm, p. 133 and 199 and *Isti'āb*, IV, 1545.

cried out: "Enough of this hopeless and barren passion."

Amidst her perplexity she was visited by her friend Nafisa bint Munya. Nafisa was one of the noblest, richest and most beautiful women of the Quraysh, whose hand was eagerly sought by many men. ⁸ She calmed Khadija and then left, a course of action determined in her heart. She went to Muhammad ⁹ and asked him why he shunned the world and deprived himself of its pleasure. Had he thought of taking a wife who felt compassionate and would remove his loneliness and fill his world with joy?

The young orphan barely checked a tear that betrayed him whilst telling her of his sense of loss at the age of six when his mother died. He forced a smile and told his questioner, "I don't have enough of anything on which to get married."

She immediately said: "If you were invited to beauty, money, honour and compatibility would you not respond?"

No sooner was the question asked that he knew what she meant: that must be Khadija, by the Lord of the Ka'ba, for who could be her equivalent in honour, beauty, and estate? If she would invite him, he would respond, but would she?

Nafisa left him deep in thought, imagining Khadija bright-faced and warmly welcoming. He was afraid that his hopes were too high because he well

8. Ibn Hishām, I, 201.

9. This is how this episode is related in *Sharḥ al-Mawāhib*. Ibn Hishām mentions that Lady Khadija proposed to marry him without an intermediary. Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Ṭabarī in *Simt* relates that she sent an intermediary to the Prophet but he does not mention the name of this intermediary. See Ṭabarī, II, 197.

knew that she had refused many rich and noble men from the Quraysh. He strove to bring himself back to reality. He ran quickly to the Ka'ba, but on the way he was stopped by a priestess who asked him, "Muḥammad, have you come to ask for someone's hand?" He answered, not lying "No". She regarded him a moment and then shook her head and said, "Why not? There is no woman in the Quraysh, even if it were Khadija herself, who would not consider you compatible.¹⁰ It was only a short time after this that he received Khadija's invitation of marriage. He hastened to her, accompanied by his two uncles, Abū Ṭālib and Ḥamza. Awaiting them they found her relatives and preparations made for an immediate marriage. Abū Ṭālib spoke:

"To proceed. Muḥammad is a young man who has no rival amongst the youth of Quraysh for honour, nobility, excellence and wisdom. Though he has no money, that is but a passing shadow, something which is, after all, to be borrowed one day and returned the next. He desires Khadija bint Khuwaylid and she desires him."

Khadija's uncle, 'Amr ibn Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzza ibn Quṣayy, praised Muḥammad and then married them with a dowry from Muḥammad of twenty young camels.¹¹ When the ceremony was finished, sacrifices were made to the sound of tam-

10. See this ḥadīth in the first volume of Ibn Hishām and in *al-Rawḍ al-Unuf*, I, 123.

11. Ibn Hishām, I, 201. According to another account he gave her a dowry of twelve golden *ūqiyyas*; *Simt*, p. 15. The *ūqiyya* is a weight of varying magnitude (Egypt: 37.44 g; Aleppo 320 g; Jerusalem 240 g; Beirut 213.3 g). See Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Writing in Arabic*, ed. J. Milton Cowan (Cornell University Press, 1961), p. 34. [Editors]

bourines and Khadija's house was opened to relatives and friends. Among the guests was Ḥalīma, who had come from the desert of banū Sa'd to witness the wedding of the 'son' whom she had suckled.¹² She returned to her tribe with forty head of sheep as a gift from the noble bride in recognition of her services to her husband. Muḥammad's eyes were misting over with the memory of his mother when a tender hand reached out to heal his wound and he found in Khadija a wonderful compensation for all his long suffering.

Mecca was not very concerned with the happy affair, except to take judicial notice of the joining of Muḥammad and Khadija.¹³ However, history waited

12. Unlike other legal systems, the Islamic Law contains the concept of *riḍā'a*, that is, suckling of a child by a wet-nurse or any other woman other than its own mother. This suckling establishes a legal relationship between the infant on the one hand and the woman who suckled him (and her husband and children) on the other. Subsequently, the infant becomes the son of the woman who suckled him (and her husband) and a brother to their children. This peculiar relationship between the infant and his new kin constitutes one of the prohibitions of marriage in Islamic Law. Once the infant comes of age he is prohibited from marrying his mother-by-suckling and all of her ancestors, the children of his parents-by-suckling and their descendants, the descendants of his grandparents-by-suckling and their descendants if they are of the first degree, etc. Also a Muslim may not marry his wife's ancestors-by-suckling, if he has separated from his wife before or after the consummation of marriage.

The justification Muslim jurists give to this wide-ranging dictum which is ordained by the Qur'ān, is that, by suckling, the infant's body becomes part of the body of the woman who nursed him. By the same token, the woman's body becomes part of infant's and consequently, he becomes like the woman's own son and she and her husband become his parents. For more details on the legal aspects of *riḍā'a* see Muḥammad Abū Zahra, "Family Law," in *Law in the Middle East*, ed. Majid Khadduri and Herbert Liebesny (Washington, D.C., 1955), I, 134-36. [Editors]

13. Khadija's mother is Fāṭima daughter of Zā'ida ibn al-Aṣamm ibn Harim ibn Rawāḥa. See *Istī'āb*, IV, 1917; Ṭabarī, III, 175 and *Nasab Quraysh*, p. 230.

for a few years before recognizing this memorable day and history left the couple to enjoy some years of the happiest marriage that Mecca had seen for a long time—and time would tell how they sipped the nectar of a deep and pure love.

For fifteen years the couple enjoyed a life of intimacy and affection. They were blessed by God with sons and daughters namely, al-Qāsim and 'Abd Allah, Zaynab, Ruqayya, Umm Kulthūm and Fāṭima.¹⁴ During these years Muḥammad found compensation for his sufferings as an orphan and equipped himself for a future of struggle and great affairs. During this period too he was bereaved of both his sons, an event borne with fortitude and resignation by his wife and himself, who recognized that God gives and God takes away.¹⁵

THE MESSAGE OF HEAVEN

Then occurred an event, significant not only for the quiet family and the Quraysh Arabs, but for all Mankind. Muḥammad received the Message of Heaven and was given a holy trust by the Divine spirit, to be a herald and Prophet of God to all people. The Message proclaimed a new life, hard and difficult, the beginning of an era redolent of persecution, torment, struggle and eventual triumph. In all truth, this Message was not a great surprise for the Arabs, for

14. See *Iṣāba*, Vol. VIII; Ibn Hishām, I, 202 and Ṭabarī, III, 175.

15. I have discussed Muḥammad as a father and Khadija as a mother in my book *Bandī al-Nabī* (The Daughters of the Prophet). Ṭabarī mentions that Hind ibn Abū Hāla lived with his mother Khadija after she had married Muḥammad. According to the biography of Hind in *Iṣī'āb* he was the Prophet's foster son, *Iṣī'āb*, IV, 1545.

there were many bizarre rumours circulating. Amongst the story-tellers, priests and hanifs¹⁶ there was much talk about this imminent Divine Message. Mecca was the centre around which these rumours clustered and rippled outwards, and the Ka'ba was the focus of them. This expected Message was no surprise to Muḥammad either for since settling down with a loving wife and relieved of the need to struggle for a living, he was afforded the opportunity for cogitation—a characteristic that dated from his childhood as a shepherd boy. The struggle for daily existence had diverted him from serious reflection; but in the new favourable circumstances this innate quality reasserted itself as freshly and strongly as before. His contemplations often centred round the Ka'ba, a place which had contributed so much to the history of Mecca and to his own family¹⁷ and linked his father 'Abd-Allah and Ismā'il, the great ancestor of the Arabs, with timeless and indissoluble bonds. He recalled the ransom of 'Abd Allah which saved him from slaughter in the same way as Ismā'il was saved.¹⁸ The Light of Truth now became clear to him and he renounced the useless idols in the Ka'ba. He was disgusted at the stupidity of his people who worshipped and offered sacrifices to idols they had fashioned with their own hands and had then made gods and lords out of them. Contemplation sharpened

16. See these episodes in detail in Ibn Hishām, Vol. I and in al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-'Arab*, Dār al-Kutub ed., Vol. XVI.

17. Ibn Hishām, I, 163 and the special chapter about Mecca in our book *The Mother of the Prophet*, 2nd ed., p. 51.

18. According to the Qur'ān and Islamic tradition Ismā'il and not Isaac was the one who was offered as a sacrifice by the biblical patriarch Abraham. [Editors]

his senses and as a result he began to crystallise the secrets of the Universe. He sensed, behind the majesty of the night, the awesomeness of the desert, the Divine light and the beauty of Heaven, an unseen majestic power which operated the Universe according to a precise order and systematic laws. The sun should not overtake the moon, nor might night precede day for the celestial spheres float in their own atmospheres.

By the time he had nearly reached forty, he had accustomed himself to solitude in the cave of Ḥirā'. He enjoyed his spiritual retreat during which he sensed he was drawing near the Great Truth and exploring the Great Secret. Neither was Khadija, because of the serenity of her years and the majesty of her motherhood, annoyed by these retreats which sometimes took him away from her. Her mind remained untroubled and she did not disturb his contemplations by the usual feminine curiosity. She made every effort to surround him with care and quietness whenever he remained at home and when he returned to the cave of Ḥirā', her eyes followed him from afar and perhaps she sent someone to guard¹⁹ and take care of him without disturbing him.

Thus everything appeared ready to receive the anticipated Message, yet despite this preparation the Message, when it came, shook to the foundations that world which was waiting for an immediate prophecy, and shook the very being of that promised Prophet Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allah who had never consented to the idols placed in the Ka'ba or believed

19. Ibn Hishām, I, 253 and *Simt*, p. 19.

for a moment that the life of his own people would continue in such foolish errors. So, as soon as the revelation of Heaven came to him at the cave of Ḥirā', he immediately returned to his house in the early hours of the morning, pale and trembling; yet no sooner had he reached the chamber of his wife than he felt safe. In a shaking voice he disclosed to her all his fears.²⁰ Was he suffering from hallucinations or had he been stricken by madness? she thought. She embraced him, his condition arousing in her the deepest feeling of motherhood, and she exclaimed confidently and with trust, "May God guard us, father of al-Qāsim. Be of good cheer and be resolute, O son of my uncle, for I swear by God, in whose hand my life lies, that you will become the Prophet of this nation. May God never shame you . . . you who show such care for your relatives and trust everyone and shoulder the burden of all, O leader of guests and helper of the righteous in adversity."²¹

The face of Muḥammad shone and his fright left him and he realised he was neither soothsayer nor madman. Here was the sweet and passionate voice of Khadija flowing with the brilliance of the dawn into his heart spreading confidence, tranquillity and peace. He felt relaxed and safe as she led him compassionately to his bed and tucked him in as a mother does with her precious son, singing him to sleep with her sweet voice. Her eyes rested on him and he lay in restful sleep while her heart, full of love, passion, pity and admiration, hovered around him. Then she

20. Ṭabarī, II, 207.

21. Ibn Hishām, I, 253; Ṭabarī, II, 207 and *Simt*, p. 10.

got up and crept quickly to the door of the chamber, and so out into the deserted street, for Mecca was still drowsy as the world began to wake up to life and work again. She rushed to the house of her cousin, Waraqa ibn Nawfal, whose great age prevented him from rising to receive her; and no sooner had he listened to what she said he started to shake with emotion and animation seized his body. He cried out enthusiastically, "Holy, Holy, I swear by God, if what you say is true, O Khadija, he [Muhammad] has received the greatest Nāmūs [Gabriel] which came to Moses and Jesus; and he is the Prophet of this nation, so tell him to be resolute".²² She did not wait for him to say any more, nor echo his words, but flew back to her beloved husband with the glad tidings. On her return she found him sleeping as soundly as when she left him. Loath to disturb him, she sat beside the bed, to await his wakening, her heart melting with eagerness and compassionate love. Suddenly he started upright, his breathing slowed and sweat burst from his forehead. He remained in this position for a while before calm again descended and his breathing regained its regularity. He appeared to be listening to an interlocution; then he began slowly to recite the following, like a lesson taught: "O ye who are enwrapped, arise and give warning. Glorify your Lord, purify your garments, shun pollution, give no favours in return for which you expect more than what you have given. Be patient for the sake of your Lord."²³

22. Ibn Hishām, I, 254 and Ṭabarī, II, 206.

23. Qur'ān, *The Cloaked One* : 1-7.

After repeating this, he awoke from his trance and Khadija took him in her arms, telling him of what Waraqa ibn Nawfal had said. Then Muhammad cast a long look of gratitude upon her until his eyes were full to overflowing with the sight of that woman who had filled his world with such love and peace. Turning back to the bed, he said emotionally, "The time of sleep and rest is over, O Khadija, I have been commanded by Gabriel to warn the people and call them to God and His worship. Whom shall I call and who will hear?"

She exclaimed impetuously, "I will respond, O Muhammad, so call me before all else! I will submit to you, believing your message and in your Lord."

He blessed her with a feeling of peace and contentment. They next discussed the words of Waraqa and Muhammad left shortly to go and see him. When he came, Waraqa cried out, "In the name of God, you are the Prophet of this nation. Yet you will be declared false, molested, ostracized and then fiercely attacked again. If I live to see the day of your glory, then I too will support God's word in you."

Then Waraqa kissed the crown of his head and Muhammad asked, "Will they indeed cast me out?"

"Yes, they will. No man who brought such a Message as yours was ever free of persecution. I only wish I had the strength to be a strong supporter of your Message and were living in the days of your triumph."²⁴

The Prophet left him then, pleased with what he had heard. Confidently, he returned to his house to

24. Ibn Hishām, I, 254 and Ṭabarī, II, 206-207.

begin his struggle, meeting with the greatest persecution for the sake of the Call that the history of heroes has ever known. The Quraysh did not stand idle as Muḥammad denounced their religion, declaring them fools and despising the gods their forefathers had worshipped; and still the loving and trustful wife stood ever beside her chosen Prophet, supporting him and helping him endure those many years of persecution and adversity. And indeed, when the banū Hāshim and 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib were forced to leave Mecca, seeking refuge in the valley of Abū Ṭālib after the Quraysh had placed the document of denunciation in the Ka'ba²⁵ and begun a merciless civil war against them and recorded its boycott on parchment; even then Khadija did not hesitate to follow her husband. So she left her beloved home, the place of her youth and memories, though now old and stooped beneath the weight of years, bereavement and hostility. She spent three years in the valley, sharing the dangers of the siege and herself fighting the weaknesses of a body now sixty years old. She clung to life tenaciously so as to remain at her husband's side during the unique struggle in which her husband and his small band of believers resisted the might of inveterate paganism, led by the rich and well-equipped Quraysh. So the siege failed in the face of that strong and resolute faith and soon Muḥammad returned to Mecca.²⁶ Khadija struggled home and took to her bed, the hardships having left her little energy to sustain her sixty-five years.²⁷ She

25. Ibn Hishām, I, 375 and Ṭabarī, II, 228.

26. *Ibid.*, II, 14-20.

27. *Istī'āb and Simṭ*, p. 17.

lay there for three days, Muḥammad constantly beside her day and night, until she breathed her last, cradled in the hands of the man who she had loved from their first meeting and whose Message she had believed from the first.

Muḥammad looked about him and saw the house empty and desolate; Mecca was now meaningless to him.

Ibn Ishāq writes: "After the death of Khadija, who was the supporter of Muḥammad and his Message, calamities successively overtook the Prophet of Allah.²⁸ His troubles in that year reached such an extent that this period became known as "the Year of Sorrow", and his infidel enemies imagined that darkness had surrounded him beyond hope of a new dawn. And yet, no sooner had Khadija gone than the trusted angel of the revelation [Gabriel] tended the Prophet in his comings and goings, protecting him from fatigue and despondency; so too, those pioneer believers surrounded him faithfully, ready with heart and soul to fight for him, considering even martyrdom for his cause as glory and triumph.

The death of Khadija did not occur until his Message had spread from Mecca into the Hijāz and beyond, to the Arab lands. Some of his Companions even carried his Message beyond the deserts and seas to Abyssinia,²⁹ emigrating with their faith, forsaking home and family to present to the world outside the peninsula a glorious picture of patient and enduring faith. These Companions related all the story of the

28. Ibn Hishām, II, 57 and Ṭabarī, II, 229.

29. *Ibid.*, I, 344 and Ṭabarī, II, 221.

struggles, sacrifices and martyrdom [of the Faithful]. By the time Khadija died, there were supporters of the Prophet³⁰ in Madīna ready to answer the noble call. Their deepest wish was to see Muḥammad lead them into the noble battle, and so either to spend their later days proud of victory or to receive the glory of Death for the sake of God and his Prophet.

THE FULLNESS OF LIFE

But did Khadija truly die? No, she is there, always before his eyes; wherever he went he felt her presence. In later years, many wives would enter the life of Muḥammad, but her place in his heart would ever be secure—she, who shared his life for a quarter of a century, 'without another partner'.³¹

Other wives will come to the house, bringing youth, beauty, prestige and noble birth, but none able to remove Khadija from her rightful place or able to banish Muḥammad's dearest memory, a memory which seemed to hover about him. Madīna will witness, a few years later, after Muḥammad's triumph at Badr, the ransom incident concerning the Quraysh captives: no sooner does he see Khadija's necklace, which Khadija's daughter Zaynab sent as a ransom for her husband Abū al-'Āṣ ibn al-Rabi', than his heart relents at the sight and he asks his Companions to return the necklace and release the captive.³² The Prophet's house will later witness

30. Ibn Hishām, I, 73 and 84.

31. *Iṣāba*, VIII and *Simt*, p. 17.

32. Ibn Hishām, II, 207. See the special chapter in my book, *The Daughters of the Prophet* about the episode of this necklace.

'Ā'isha bint Abū Bakr in her blossoming youth and beauty, and will see her burning with jealousy for that rival who has first possessed Muḥammad's heart and holds it still. One day Hāla, Khadija's sister, came on a visit to Madīna and when Muḥammad heard her voice in the courtyard mistaking it for his dear departed Khadija's, he said sadly, "My God, it's [only] Hāla."

'Ā'isha, unable to control herself, said, "Why do you keep mentioning such an old lady of the Quraysh whose lips were rouged and who has perished now. May God give you better than that."³³

His face changed and he furiously rebuked her saying, "By God, the Lord has not given me any woman better than her. She had faith when others did not, she believed in me when others disbelieved, she held me true when others held me false, she helped me with money when others withheld it and she bore me children."³⁴ 'Ā'isha kept her peace and silently vowed, 'I will never mention her again!' Before this 'Ā'isha had never ceased talking against Khadija.

One day 'Ā'isha asked Muḥammad, when she saw that he never stopped mentioning her, why he talked as if there was no other woman in the world except Khadija. Muḥammad turned to her and said, "She was and remains so. She it was who gave me children." And whenever Muḥammad killed a lamb or sheep for food, he always said, "Send for Khadija's friends." When she asked him why he did this, he said, "I love

33. *Simt*, p. 15.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 26 and *Isti'āb*, IV, 1824.

those she loved.”³⁵ ‘Ā’isha was often reported as saying, “I have never envied a woman as I did Khadija. The Prophet of God did not marry me until she died.” Or she was heard saying, “I never became jealous of any of the Prophet’s wives as I did of Khadija, because he always talked of her. He did not even marry me until three years after her death.”³⁶ Right to the time of the conquest of Mecca—ten eventful years after the death of Khadija—he honoured her even there by choosing a place near her grave for his headquarters from which he directed the conquest.³⁷ Her spirit accompanied him still at the circling of the Ka’ba and the destruction of the idols, causing his gaze every now and then to turn towards their beloved home.

Millions of women will embrace Islam following Khadija, but none will engage the heart of Muḥammad as she did or be able to claim the name of the first Muslim woman destined by God to play such a great role in the life of the Prophet. Historians, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, will write of her place. Bodley says, “Her confidence in the man she married for love reflects the atmosphere of trust in the belief which is today followed by one seventh of the worlds’ population.”³⁸ Margoliouth begins his account of the Prophet’s life on the day that he met Khadija and she

35. *Simf.*, p. 24.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 24 and *Isti’āb*, IV, 1823.

37. Ṭabarī, III regarding the events of the eighth year of the Hijra.

38. Bodley, *The Messenger*, the Arabic translation made by Muḥammad Faraj and ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Saḥḥār. This is the only information the author gives about this quotation. The full title of the book and place of quotation is: R.V.C. Bodley, *The Messenger: Life of Muhammad* (New York, 1946), p. 61. [Editors]

stretched forth to him her helping hand. Margoliouth also dates Muḥammad’s migration to Madina from the day of Khadija’s death. Dermengham³⁹ also elaborates on Khadija’s condition when her husband returned from Hīrā’: “He was frightened and trembling, with unkempt hair and a strange look in his eyes. She restored him to peace and calm and lavished on him the devotion of a lover, the loyalty of a wife and the compassion of a mother. She drew him to her bosom in which he found the peace and tranquillity of childhood, protecting him from evil.” And he wrote about her death: “Muḥammad lost by Khadija’s death the first who heard his message and believed in him. She never ceased to restore calm to his heart and to surround him with the love of a wife and the compassion of a mother.”⁴⁰ Dermengham here understands what has been missed by most Orientalists who fail to evaluate the need of an orphaned young man for a mother figure. Margoliouth thinks Khadija’s money was the motive for marriage between a poor young man and a middle-aged widow bereft of two husbands and now endowed with substantial wealth. He continues in words dripping with venom and hatred: “Khadija’s invitation of marriage reached Muḥammad whilst he was musing over the bitter words he heard from his uncle, Abū Ṭālib, when he asked for the hand of his daughter Umm Hāni in marriage. Abū Ṭālib rejected him because of his poverty and married

39. Dermengham, *The Life of Muhammad*, trans. into Arabic by ‘Ādil Zu’ayter, p. 58. The full title of the book as it appears in the English translation is Emile Dermenghem, *Muhammad and the Islamic Tradition*, trans. Jean M. Watt, (New York, 1958). See pp. 59-60. [Editors]

40. *Ibid.*, p. 128. [Editors]

her to a wealthy suitor. Muḥammad felt the humiliation of poverty and no sooner did he hear of Khadīja's desire to marry him than he anxiously accepted because of her wealth, and to heal the wounds to his dignity caused by his poverty."⁴¹ Margoliouth lies, for Khadīja's money did not attract Muḥammad and enable him to overlook the difference in age: he found in her, as Blachère has testified in *Le Problème de Mahomet*, the utmost tenderness and passion.⁴² The difference in ages was also sufficient to satisfy that dire need of motherly affection, missing since he was six. But even stranger than Margoliouth's statement is what Muir⁴³ has said about the motives for Muḥammad's faithfulness to Khadīja—namely his awe of her and his fear that she might divorce him. Muir should then have explained to us why Muḥammad remained faithful to her after death; perhaps he was afraid that she might ask him for a divorce after she was dead—at the moment, say when Muḥammad was quarreling with 'Ā'isha and rebuking her for slandering Khadīja's memory? Khadīja, living or dead, was the fullness of his life and truly 'Ā'isha did not exaggerate when she railed at Muḥammad for thinking she was the only woman in the world. Indeed, could any other woman have healed his grievous childhood wounds? Could any other woman have prepared such an appropriate atmosphere for

41. About Khadīja's invitation to Muḥammad to marry her see Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt* and *Simī*, p. 134. See also D.S. Margoliouth, *Muḥammad and the Rise of Islam* (New York, 1905), p. 66. [Editors]

42. Régis Blachère, *Le Problème de Mahomet* (Paris, 1952), p. 34.

43. William Muir, *The Life of Muhammad*, four volumes. (London, 1861), II, 194.

contemplation and offer, in such rare altruism, what he needed in order to receive the Message of Heaven? Could any other woman have welcomed his historic Message from the Ḥirā' with such compassion and strong faith, doubting not a moment of its veracity? Would any other rich and prosperous woman have contentedly given up her comfortable life in order to stand beside her husband during the darkest moments of his ordeal, to help him endure persecution for the sake of truth? No! She alone, and no one but her, whom Destiny prepared to fill the life of the man chosen as Prophet—she alone was to be the mother of the orphan, the inspiration of the Hero, the refuge of the fighter and the source of confidence and faith. Ibn Ishāq said, "The Prophet used to grieve when he was criticised as a false Prophet, but Khadīja restored his belief in himself."⁴⁴

Khadīja left four daughters who graced the life of their father and the pages of Islamic history. I have devoted to them a book called *The Daughters of the Prophet* which discusses in detail the motherhood of Khadīja. Regarding her son Hind ibn Abū Hāla, Muḥammad's foster son, it is said he witnessed the battles of Uḥud, Badr and the battle of the Camel with 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib. It is also said that he died of plague in al-Baṣra, where the people honoured his funeral in deserting their own dead, saying "Dead is the brother of Fāṭima, the daughter of the Prophet"⁴⁵

44. Ibn Hishām and *Simī*, p. 23.

45. *Istī'āb*, IV, 1545 and *Jamhara*, p. 199. Khadīja's daughter married 'Atīq ibn 'Ā'idh of the banū Makhzūm. Her son was called Muḥammad ibn Ṣayfī ibn Umayya al-Makhzūmī, nicknamed ibn al-Ṭāhira (son of the righteous woman) after his grandmother Khadīja bint Khuwaylid. See *Nasab Quraysh*, p. 334 and *Iṣāba*, 72.

Chapter 3

SAUDA BINT ZAMA'A, THE WIDOW OF
THE EMIGRANT

'I am not a selfish wife, but I wish to see God
recognize me as your wife on the day of
Resurrection!'

Sauda bint Zama'a

LONELINESS

The days go slowly by, burdened by struggle: the nights are filled with memories and Muḥammad, in his loneliness now that Khadija is gone, retreats into himself and his memories. The Companions saw the marks of his sorrow and grieved for him, desiring him to marry again to relieve his solitude. None of them though opened the question of marriage during Khadija's mourning period. Some time later, however, Khawla bint Ḥakim al-Sulamīyya¹ went to him and tenderly said, "O Prophet of God! I see you feel the loss of Khadija."

"Yes," he said, "she was both mother and housewife." Then Khawla, looking into the distance, suddenly suggested he should marry again. Muḥammad acknowledged her silently, listening to the sound of his heart, still filled with Khadija's memory. He recalled that once Nafisa bint Munya came to him more than twenty years ago to discuss marriage and had proposed Khadija to him. He turned to Khawla, expostulating:

"Whom . . . after Khadija?" As if she had been prepared for it, Khawla immediately answered his question.

"'Ā'isha, the daughter of your closest friend, Abū Bakr."²

He became responsive at the mention of Abū Bakr's name. After all, Abū Bakr was the first man

1. Ṭabarī, III, 175 and *Siṃt*, p. 103.

2. Ṭabarī, *Ibid*.

who believed in him and on him, after 'Alī and Muḥammad's freedman Zayd. Abū Bakr from the first offered money and support as a brother and friend should do.³ Ah! That lovely and sweet young girl 'Ā'isha, the joy of her father. He could not say no to Khawla and even if he had tried to, his tongue could not have obeyed him. How could he refuse Abū Bakr's daughter? His long companionship, his unique closeness to him, as well as the attraction he felt for that dear, intelligent, charming young girl would prevent him from saying no.

"But she is still young, Khawla." Khawla's reply was ready: "Ask her father for her hand today and wait until she matures." Until she matures? Who's to take care of the house and the Prophet's daughters? Has Khawla come to suggest a delayed marriage which would need some two or three years before consummation? No, she came with two names in mind—one a virgin, 'Ā'isha, the other a widow, Sauda bint Zama'a ibn Qays ibn 'Abd Shams ibn 'Abd Wudd al-Āmiriyya⁴ and her mother was al-Shamūs bint Qays of the Banū 'Adī ibn al-Najjār.⁵

The Prophet allowed her to ask for the hands of both. Khawla went to Abū Bakr's house first and then to the house of Zama'a and told Sauda,⁶ "How God has blessed you, Sauda." Without knowing to

3. Ibn Hishām, I, 266-67.

4. Of the banū 'Āmir ibn Lu'ay. See *Nasab Quraysh*, 421 and *Jamhara* 157.

5. Ibn Hishām, I, 354, and *Isti'āb*, IV, 1867. These two sources mention that al-Shamūs is the daughter of Qays ibn Zayd ibn 'Amr. In *Nasab Quraysh* and *Jamhara*, she is mentioned as the daughter of Qays ibn 'Amr ibn Zayd.

6. *Simt*, p. 102 and Ṭabari, III, 176.

what she referred, Sauda asked, "What are you talking about, Khawla?"

Khawla replied, "The Prophet of God has sent me to ask for your hand." Trying to control her astonishment, Sauda said in a trembling voice, "I love this thing. Go and tell it to my father." Khawla went to the old man, who had missed the pilgrimage because of his infirmities, and greeted him according to the manner of the pre-Islamic period,⁷ saying, "Muḥammad has sent me to ask for the hand of Sauda." The old man replied, "This is a suitable match, but what does Sauda think?"

Khawla answered, "She likes it." He asked her to call Sauda and when she came he said "O Sauda! This woman claims that Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib has sent her to ask for your hand. He is an honourable and compatible person. Would you like me to marry you to him?"

She said only one word, "Yes."⁸ Then Zama'a ibn Qays asked Khawla to send for Muḥammad and she left to do so.

SOJOURN AND WIDOWHOOD

The rumour soon went round Mecca concerning the proposed marriage. Some people could not believe their ears because there was nothing to be seen in Sauda. They questioned . . . an old widow without beauty would succeed Khadija, who at the time of her engagement to the poor orphan was the most eminent lady in the Quraysh and sought by many

7. In the pre-Islamic era, people customarily greeted each other with the term "an'im sabahan", i.e., "Good Morning". [Editors

8. The dialogue is to be found in Ṭabari, III, 176.

rival lords? No, neither Sauda nor anyone else would succeed Khadija. She would only come to the house of the Prophet out of his compassion and as a consolation for the death of her husband, al-Sakrān ibn 'Amr of the banū 'Āmir ibn Lu'ay, in Abyssinia⁹ when he emigrated there [during the persecution of the Muslims]. She was left a widow in a foreign land.¹⁰

The Prophet recalled those eight men of the banū 'Āmir who went through many ordeals on sea and desert to maintain their faith in the new religion. Of these eight were Mālik ibn Zama'a ibn Qays ibn 'Abd Shams al-'Āmirī, Sauda's brother; al-Sakrān ibn 'Amr ibn 'Abd Shams, her husband and cousin and his two brothers Salīṭ and Ḥātib and his nephew 'Abd Allah ibn Suhayl ibn 'Amr.¹¹ Three of these eight had their wives accompany them, and they were all from the banū 'Āmir. They were Sauda and Umm Kulthūm bint Suhayl ibn 'Amr ibn 'Abd Shams and 'Amra bint al-Waqdān ibn 'Abd Shams.¹² Thus this believing group left their country willing to endure more than death for the love of God. The Prophet here imagined Sauda saying goodbye to a dear land where she grew up and matured to go to an unknown country and live among strange people. However, before returning to Mecca, her husband died¹³ and Muḥammad felt so sorry for this believing

9. Ibn Hishām, I, 652; *Simṭ*, p. 101 and *Iṣāba*, VIII.

10. *Jamhara*, p. 157. 11. Ibn Hishām, I, 352 and Ṭabarī, II, 222.

12. Ibn Hishām, I, 352 and Ṭabarī, II.

13. *Jamhara*, p. 157 and Ṭabarī, III, 172 agree that al-Sakrān died in Abyssinia. While the first source relates that he died as a Muslim, the second source relates that he died as a convert to Christianity. *Nasab Quraysh* only mentions that he died leaving his wife Sauda. The information about him in *Isti'āb*, IV, 1867 is scanty.

emigrant widow. No sooner had Khawla mentioned her to him than he stretched a merciful hand to her in her old age.

I HAVE DONATED MY NIGHT TO 'Ā'ISHA

And one day Sauda found herself the wife of the Prophet and the Messenger of Islam. She was awed by her husband's majesty. She measured herself against Muḥammad, then against Khadija and then the bride-to-be 'Ā'isha and felt as if the world was spinning. She did not deceive herself about the insurmountable barrier that existed between her and Muḥammad's heart. From the first moment, she knew it was the Prophet and not the man that had married her and that it was compassion and not love he offered. She was not depressed for the honour of being elevated to the position of Mother of the Faithful was sufficient. She was satisfied to take the offered place and to serve his daughters. She felt happy when he laughed at her walk for she was heavily built¹⁴ and in his delight with her light-heartedness, he liked the remarks she sometimes made. Once she told him: "I have prayed standing behind you, O Prophet, and you made me kneel so long that my nose almost began to bleed." Muḥammad smiled at her words. Sauda was good-hearted to the point of naivety. Ibn Ishāq said: "The captives of the battle of Badr were brought [to Madina]." Sauda was with the banū 'Afrā' who were mourning 'Awf and Mu'awwidh, the sons of 'Afrā,' (this was before the Mothers of the Faithful were secluded). Sauda said, "By God, while I was with

14. *Isti'āb*, IV, 1867.

them, it was reported that these captives taken at Badr were here. I went back to my home and Muḥammad was there. In the corner of the room was Abū Yazīd Suhayl ibn 'Amr, her husband's brother, whose hands were bound to his neck. I could not control myself when I saw him in this state and said 'O Abū Yazīd it is your own fault; you have surrendered when you should have died a noble death.' Suddenly I was alerted by the voice of the Prophet saying, 'O Sauda, are you stirring up trouble between God and his Prophet?' I said, 'O Prophet of God, I could not control myself when I saw Abū Yazīd sitting there with his hands tied and so I said what I said.'¹⁵

Sauda remained in charge of Muḥammad's house until 'Ā'isha arrived. Sauda gave her the first place. She also did her utmost to seek the pleasure and the comfort of the young bride. Later, other wives arrived including Ḥafṣa bint 'Amr, Zaynab bint Jaḥash and Umm Salama. Of all these, Sauda did not hesitate to favour 'Ā'isha most of all, without showing any hostility to the others who claimed so much of the Prophet's time. But Muḥammad felt sorrow for her emotional deprivation and was kind enough not show her that she was not like the others. He tried his utmost to open his heart to her, but human nature would not permit him. His utmost for Sauda was equal treatment, but as for his emotions, how could he force them to something he did not want or subjugate these emotions by his will to the measures of justice that the situation required? Finally he thought he should release her to relieve her from a situation that was causing her

15. Ibn Hishām, II, 299.

pain and wounding her heart even though she did not complain. No sooner had he reached this decision, out of pity and compassion, than he decided to tell Sauda of it. He waited until her night came round and he told her of his decision to divorce her.¹⁶ She was startled when she heard the news and felt suffocated, as if the walls were closing in on her. She lifted up her face to the Prophet in silent supplication and stretched her hands towards him imploringly. He held her hands with great compassion and sympathy, wishing he could drive away from her the consternation which was about to destroy her. Recovering herself, she supplicated him, "Keep me: I am not a selfish wife, but I wish to see God recognize me as your wife on the day of Resurrection."¹⁷ She hung her head in sorrow feeling she should not make him do anything against his will. She also blamed herself for not responding to his desire to release her, though she would willingly have given her life to drive away one moment of sorrow from him. She felt the coldness of age touch her heavy and tired body. She felt ashamed for adhering to a husband for whose love 'Ā'isha, Zaynab, Umm Salama and Ḥafṣa were now competing. She censured herself for trying to wrest a place for herself among these women, but she felt that by claiming a night for herself, she was claiming something she was no longer entitled to. She was about to say, with grief and shyness, "Release me,

16. According to *Iṣāba* the Prophet sent her a message divorcing her. "She sat on the road along which he usually passed and asked him to keep her and that she offered her turn to 'Ā'isha. The Prophet consented." *Iṣāba*, VIII, 117.

17. *Iṣāba*, Ibid.

O Prophet of God," but the words choked in her throat. Her torment and perplexity increased as the Prophet looked at her with pity. Suddenly an idea flashed through her mind and quietened her; she turned to the Prophet and said calmly and respectfully, "Keep me, O Prophet of God, and I will donate my night to 'Ā'isha as I do not demand that which women desire."¹⁸ Muḥammad shook with emotion for this overwhelming and tolerant love. He could not believe that he, who had come to Sauda with the objectionable news of divorce, would find such noble altruism in her.¹⁹ The night was dying as Muḥammad went out to the Mosque to perform the morning prayer, while Sauda stood in her chamber praying, her heart full of faith and contentment.

Now let us leave her at her prayers, happy and content, thanking God who had inspired this successful solution which has saved her the ordeal of separation from the best man in the world, without her feeling ashamed of selfishly possessing a man at her age. Sauda lived in the house until the Prophet died. It is reported that she lived long and she died in the latter part of the reign of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (634-644) 'Ā'isha always remembered the favour Sauda had done her and loved her always. 'Ā'isha used to say, "No one is more beloved to me than Sauda, whose shoes I would rather be in than any others. But she is hot-tempered."²⁰

18. *Iṣāba*, VIII, 117., *Istī'āb*, IV, 1867; *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim and *Ṣimṭ*, p. 103. It is said that she was nearly a hundred years old when she died.

19. *Ṣimṭ*, p. 7.

20. *Istī'āb*, IV, 1867.

Chapter 4

'Ā'ISHA BINT ABŪ BAKR THE BELOVED WIFE

'My daughter, take life calmly, for it is seldom that a beautiful woman married to a loving husband having rival wives will not have problems from them and other people.'

Umm Rūmān
(*Al-Sīra*, III, 311),

THE NOBLE SON-IN-LAW

We return to where we left Khawla bint Ḥakīm suggesting that the Prophet marry 'Ā'isha. Muḥammad was delighted with the idea of the relationship such a marriage would cement. I leave now to Khawla the account of her part in this engagement. She says, according to Ṭabarī,¹ "I entered the house of Abū Bakr where I found Umm Rūmān, 'Ā'isha's mother, and I said to her: 'Umm Rūmān, how much has God blessed you!'"

"How is this?" said Umm Rūmān.

I replied: "The Prophet of God has sent me to ask for 'Ā'isha's hand."

Umm Rūmān replied: "I am delighted. Wait for Abū Bakr who is coming shortly."

When Abū Bakr came, I said the same thing to him. Abū Bakr recalled his long association with the Prophet and said: "Is she suitable for him? She is almost like his niece."

I returned to the Prophet of God and told him the whole story. Muḥammad said: "Go back and tell him, 'You are my brother in Islam and I am yours and that your daughter suits me'."

I returned to Abū Bakr with this message. He said: 'Wait for me until I return...' Here Umm Rūmān explained the situation to Khawla, saying: "Al-Muṭ'im ibn 'Adī has been promised 'Ā'isha as a wife for his son, Jubayr, and by God, Abū Bakr never made a promise which he broke."

1. Ṭabarī, III, 176. See also *Siml*, p. 31.

Abū Bakr went to see Muṭ'im and his wife, who was an unbeliever. The old wife said: "O Son of Abū Quhāfa, suppose we married our son to your daughter you would turn him into an infidel and make him believe in your religion."²

Abū Bakr did not answer, but turned to Muṭ'im and said: "What does she mean?"

Muṭ'im replied: "She is saying what you have heard."

Abū Bakr left feeling relieved for the solution God had found and told Khawla: "Call to me the Prophet of Allah."

Khawla went to the Prophet and summoned him. Abū Bakr married him to 'Ā'isha, who was then six or seven years old.³ Her dowry was five-hundred dirhams. History relates no more about 'Ā'isha at that time.⁴

The people of 'Ā'isha, the banū Taym, were known for their generosity, bravery, honesty and wisdom and for respect to woman. Her father aside from this legacy was also well known for his good character and amiability. The Muslim chroniclers have unanimously agreed that, "He was the most knowledgeable concerning the good and bad of the Quraysh tribe. He was a well known businessman,

2. *Simt*, p. 31.

3. Ibn Hishām, IV, 293; Ṭabarī, III, 177 and *Iṣāba*, VIII.

4. Due to the length of the genealogy the author provides for 'Ā'isha, we have preferred to make it a note rather than leave it in the text. The author says, "History relates no more about 'Ā'isha at that time except that she was six or seven years old, that she was engaged to al-Jubayr ibn al-Muṭ'im ibn 'Adī, that her father was Abū Bakr ibn Abū Quhāfa ibn 'Āmir ibn 'Amr ibn Ka'b ibn Sa'd ibn Taym ibn Murra and that her mother was Umm Rūmān bint 'Umayr ibn 'Āmir of the banū al-Ḥārith ibn Ghanam ibn Kināna." [Editors]

frequently resorted to for advice."⁵

When Muḥammad was sent by God as a Prophet, Abū Bakr was one of the first converts to Islam. He defended Islam and preached it enthusiastically. Those who want to know more on this subject should read *Sīrat Ibn Hishām*,⁶ the first volume. There they will find the names of those Companions who became Muslims in response to Abū Bakr's preaching. Among these were 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān, Al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwām, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Auf, Sa'd ibn Abū Waqqāṣ and Ṭalḥa ibn 'Ubayd Allah. The Prophet used to say: "Everyone whom I called to Islam had doubts or reservations of questions, except Abū Bakr, who accepted everything unhesitatingly."⁷ Muḥammad was also heard to say, "No money has benefited me in the way that Abū Bakr's has!" Upon hearing this, Abū Bakr wept and said: "O Prophet of God, all that I have is yours!"

As to Umm Rūmān, 'Ā'isha's mother, she was the daughter of 'Āmir of the Kināna 'tribe'.⁸ She was eminent among the Companions. She had married during the pre-Islamic era, 'Abd Allah ibn al-Ḥārith al-Asadī and had a son al-Ṭufayl. When her husband died, she married Abū Bakr and begat 'Ā'isha and 'Abd al-Raḥmān. She moved to Madina with her husband and Muḥammad. She died in Muḥammad's lifetime

5. Ibn Hishām, I, 267. See also al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, (Egyptian ed.) II, 200 for the qualities of Abū Bakr.

6. Ibn Hishām, I, 267.

7. Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, (Egyptian ed.) II, 200.

8. There is no disagreement that she belonged to the banū Mālik ibn Kināna. However, there is a great deal of disagreement about the link connecting her father with Kināna. See *Istī'āb*, IV, 1936; *Iṣāba*, *Nasab Quraysh*, 267 and *Jamhara*, p. 127.

shortly after the Falsehood episode. Muḥammad knelt at her grave and asked forgiveness of her, saying: "O God! Thou knowest what she has suffered because of Thee and Thy Prophet."⁹

NORMAL PRACTICE

It was sufficient for 'Ā'isha to be the daughter of the Companion friend for her to open the doors to Muḥammad's world, but besides she was also gracious, captivating, intelligent and youthful.

She was born in Mecca under Islam four or five years after Muḥammad was sent as a Prophet. She embraced Islam herself with her sister Asmā' out of conviction, not content to be simply the daughter of a Muslim, even when Muslims were then few.¹⁰ Muḥammad had known her since she was a child and he considered her as a dear daughter. He watched her grow up and blossom, witnessing the growth of all her lovely qualities under the care of the banū Makhzūm. An Arab custom of sending children to a different tribe to be reared in proper Arab tradition. The Prophet's love of her grew so much that he said to her mother: "O Umm Rūmān, take good care of 'Ā'isha and you will take good care of me."

So when he saw her angry, he would support her and tell her mother in soft expostulation: "Umm Rūmān, haven't I told you that taking care of 'Ā'isha is taking care of me?"

9. The sources do not differ about her death after the Falsehood episode; they differed over fixing her death between the fourth and the sixth year of the Hijra. Cf. her biography in *Uṣd al-Ghāba*, *Iṣāba* and *Istī'āb*.

10. *Iṣāba*, VIII.

Mecca was not surprised when the news of the marriage was announced, receiving it calmly as a normal and expected engagement. No enemy of the Prophet found occasion for gossip nor did it occur to his bitterest enemies to use this marriage as a slander to vilify him, although they normally used every opportunity to blacken his character. Anyway, what could they have said? Would they have attacked the engagement of a girl like 'Ā'isha, who at the greatest estimation was barely seven? But in any case she was promised to Jubayr before Muḥammad; she could not be given through Khawla until Abū Bakr had seen Jubayr's father and been released from his promise. Would they denounce then a marriage between a young girl and a man of fifty-three? What is so strange about this marriage? For 'Ā'isha was neither the first nor the last young girl in that society to be married to a man of her father's age. Hadn't 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib [Muḥammad's grandfather] married Hāla, Āmina's cousin [Āmina was Muḥammad's mother], on the same day that 'Abd Allah [Muḥammad's father] married Hāla's friend Āmina bint Wahab? [Muḥammad's mother]. Later we shall see 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb married to one of the daughters of 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib while he was older than her father. Again, 'Umar will suggest that his young daughter Ḥafṣa marry Abū Bakr when the age difference between them was the same as that between the Prophet and 'Ā'isha. However a group of Orientalists comes 1300 years after that marriage and clamour, regardless of the differences of ages and environments, "the strange bringing together of the middle aged man and the

young virgin child." They try to measure a marriage contracted in Mecca before the Hijrah with what happens today in the civilised West where the girl usually does not marry before the age of twenty-five. This age is considered, even today, to be very late in the Arabian peninsula, the rural areas in Egypt and most of the Eastern countries. A just Orientalist who visited the Arabian peninsula has realised this point and has said :

"In spite of her youth, 'Ā'isha must have grown as rapidly as Arab women do, which causes old age in the later years following their twentieth year . . . But this marriage has occupied those who wrote about Muḥammad . . . These writers looked at it from the point of view of the modern society in which they lived therefore . . . they could not realise that such a marriage was, and still is, an Asiatic custom. They do not realise this custom exists today in Eastern Europe. Until a few years ago, it was still a custom in Spain and Portugal. It is not abnormal in some remote mountainous areas in the United States."¹¹

THE HIJRA

Muḥammad did not dislodge the amiable, cheerful, young girl from her childhood environment or overburden her youth with the responsibilities of marriage, but left her in her father's home to play with her companions. All that he expected from her was to hurry to him whenever he passed by her father's home, to make him forget by entertainment

11. Bodley, *The Messenger*, p. 129 of the Arabic translation [pp. 145-46 of the original, Editors].

and gracefulness his enormous problems and drive away from him the oppression he felt whenever he was alone—though Sauda was his wife and served as housekeeper and guardian of his children.

He was a stranger although living in Mecca, the home of his forefathers. Whenever this feeling of loneliness or strangeness depressed him, he went to Abū Bakr's house to pet his young fiancée and bury his sorrow in the waves of her fun and joyousness. 'Ā'isha, for her part, loved to see the Prophet of God, with all his majesty and serenity, feel comfortable at her side and find in her a joyful world, where he shared in the play with the sweet simplicity. She was elated that "the Prophet would not miss coming to the house of Abū Bakr everyday either in the early morning or late evening."¹²

One day, when the persecution of the Muslims reached its zenith and they fled to Madina, apart from those imprisoned or enticed by the Quraysh none of them stood¹³ with the Prophet, except Abū Bakr and 'Āli ibn Abū Ṭālib. The sun was in its apogee, scorching the earth with its heat. The universe was profoundly silent and 'Ā'isha was in the courtyard playing during the siesta. Suddenly she heard steps coming to the door. She listened eagerly, recognizing her dear husband's tread. She rushed to the door, opening it to welcome him. No sooner did Abū Bakr see the Prophet nearing the house in that burning hour of the day than he jumped up and said: "The Prophet would not have come at this hour unless

12. *Iṣāba*, VIII and Ibn Hishām, II, 128.

13. Ibn Hishām, II, 123.

something had happened."

When the Prophet entered, Abū Bakr moved to make room for him to sit. He sat down and appeared preoccupied with something important. 'Ā'isha and her sister Asmā' held their breath anxiously waiting. The Prophet asked his friend, looking into the distance, "could we be alone?"¹⁴

Abū Bakr answered: "But they are my daughters, O Prophet of God," and asked anxiously for an explanation.

The Prophet said: "I have been allowed to flee from Mecca."

Abū Bakr exclaimed: "I want to go with you, O Prophet of God." Abū Bakr had many times asked Muḥammad's permission to flee the city, but Muḥammad would say;¹⁵ "Do not be hasty; perhaps God will find you a companion" [for the journey], meaning himself and Abū Bakr wished to be that companion. The two friends talked on in the presence of 'Ā'isha and her sister, recalling how the Quraysh became angry when Muḥammad gained supporters and Companions from outside their city [Mecca] and also now, when they saw Muḥammad and his Companions intended to leave Mecca, having found shelter elsewhere, they warned Muḥammad not to leave, knowing he had determined war against them. They met in Dār-al-Nadwa, the home of Qusay ibn Kilāb, where they always discussed serious business, to see what was to be done about Muḥammad."¹⁶ Among those

14. Ibn Hishām, II, 129 and Ṭabarī, II, 245.

15. Ibid., II, 138.

16. Ibid., II, 126-27.

who met there were 'Utba ibn Rabī'a, Hind's father and Shayba his brother, Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb, Ṭu'ayma ibn 'Adī, Jubayr ibn Muṭ'im, al-Nadr ibn Ḥārith ibn Kalda, Zama'a ibn al-Aswad, Abū Jahl ibn Hishām, Ḥakīm ibn Khuzām, Umayya ibn Khalaf and many others from the Quraysh.

Finally they agreed to the plan of Abū Jahl ibn Hishām, namely, that every tribe should select a brave and well-born young man, each one of whom was to be given a sharp sword, to strike him as one man and so kill him. Because the blood would be spread among the tribes, the banū 'Abd Manāf could not fight against all their people and so would agree to settle for blood money.¹⁷ But the Prophet was allowed to migrate [by the grace of God] with Abū Bakr. 'Ā'isha felt anxiety and discomfort at the imminent separation; she looked at the beloved Prophet and then at her father and she was amazed to see her father crying with joy. Never before had she seen anyone do such a thing.¹⁸

Preparations for leaving began and Abū Bakr sent for 'Abd Allah ibn Urayqiṭ who was a trustworthy guide and an expert who knew all the routes. He gave him two camels to take care of until the days of the flight arrived.¹⁹ The Prophet called his cousin 'Alī to him and revealed the news; then charged him (in Mecca) to return the various trusts that had been bestowed on him by many people.²⁰ When the hour of departure drew near, the Prophet stood

17. Ṭabarī, II, 234.

18. Ibid., II, 246.

19. Ibn Hishām, II, 129 and Ṭabarī, II, 247.

20. Ibid.

on a raised dais at the house of Abū Bakr looking toward the Ancient House [the Ka'ba] and scanning Umm al-Qura [Mecca]. He said in a voice broken with emotion: "By God, you are the most beloved part of all God's land to me. I love the land of God for God's sake and if it were not for your people who forced me to leave, I would never have left you."

Then he turned to 'Ā'isha and attempted a farewell smile at her. She was startled at the sudden leave-taking, not knowing if she were awake or in a dream.

The two friends, Muḥammad and Abū Bakr, crept out at the back of Abū Bakr's house. Abū Bakr carried five thousand dirhams, all that he had left to him and his family.²¹ Both of them left Mecca secretly, only 'Alī and Abū Bakr's relatives knowing about it. The two friends made their way to a cave they knew in Thawr mountain, outside Mecca, while 'Ā'isha remained at home alone and worried. Her brother 'Abd Allah had gone to learn what the towns-people were talking about while Asmā' was occupied with cooking food which she secretly took to the cave in the evening.²² From her brother, 'Ā'isha heard that the unbelievers had heard of Muḥammad's flight and had put up one hundred she-camels as a reward for bringing him back. 'Ā'isha was nearly out of her senses, except that her trust in God and His Prophet, and what she heard from her brother, who asked their freedman, 'Āmir ibn Fuhayra, to tend all day among the shepherds of Mecca and in the evening to

21. Ibn Hishām, II, 133.

22. *Ibid.*, II, 130-31.

take Abū Bakr's sheep to the cave, comforted her. The thing which occupied 'Ā'isha all day long was counting the minutes which passed as if they were years, and listening for any fresh news. When the day was over and her sister prepared for her evening journey, 'Ā'isha asked her to take her greetings and prayers to the two beloved travellers. Then she stood staring afterward waiting for Asmā' to return, her heart bursting with anxiety.

Asmā' returns and 'Ā'isha embraces her and kisses those eyes which have seen the Prophet and her father, kissing the hand that had shaken theirs, kissing the ears that had heard them speak. Then she would listen to what Asmā' said of them. Asmā' would tell her about the difficulties of living in a cave and the sadness of Abū Bakr when he saw the Prophet feeling lonely and nostalgic for his family in that narrow cave. She must have heard Abū Bakr say to the Prophet: "If I get killed, well I am only one man. But if you are killed, the whole community [of the Muslims] will perish."

At these words, the Prophet would drive away Abū Bakr's fear by saying: "Do not be sad; God is with us."²³

'Ā'isha keeps repeating the news her sister has brought her until her eyes begin to close in sleep, and her spirit roves the nearby cave where her dearest ones are lying. The next day passed with fresh news of the Quraysh searching for Muḥammad and his friend. The evening came and Asmā' crept out with food and returned to tell 'Ā'isha how the pursuers

23. Qur'ān, *Repentance*: 40.

reached the cave and waited there for a while, they even talked of descending into it, and would have done so were it not for a spider's web which spanned the entrance with two wild doves caught in it.

She told her about her father's anxiety when he heard the pursuers stop barely a foot from the cave and talk about going inside. Abū Bakr said: "If one of them had looked down at his feet, he would have seen us."

The Prophet answered: "Do you not know that we are accompanied by a third person, God; he is our companion."

When the third night drew near 'Ā'isha stood in her watch place (pacing the road), after a day filled with worry. She walked longer than usual until evening hoping to see Asmā' and hear her steps carried from afar on the cool night breeze. Part of the night had passed: she was still waiting, her worries increasing until finally Asmā' appeared, walking quickly and out of breath. 'Ā'isha felt paralysed with fear and she looked and saw Asmā's belt had been torn half away. Asmā' told 'Ā'isha the good news that the two friends had safely left the cave and then, getting her breath back, she continued saying that in the quiet of the evening of that immortal, historic night, which began the Arab history, the guide 'Abd Allah ibn Urayqit al-Bakrī came driving the two camels which her father Abū Bakr had entrusted to him a few days earlier, and another camel as well. He made the camels kneel by the cave. The Prophet and his friend came out. Asmā' came with the food in a bag, having forgotten to tie the neck and when they wanted to

leave and she needed to hang the bag on the camel she could find no fastenings except her belt, which she tore in two for the purpose, girdling herself with the other half.²⁴ Abū Bakr tested the camels and gave the best to the Prophet, saying: "Mount and ride. May my father and mother be your ransom." So the Prophet mounted and Abū Bakr rode the other, his freedman 'Āmir ibn Fuḥayra mounted behind him. The cavalcade left Mecca, heading towards the south through untravelled country while Asmā' stood following it with her eyes and heart until it disappeared. She retired home fearing the pursuers might be alerted to the flight. 'Ā'isha was oblivious to her surroundings and followed the travellers in her thoughts. But she was awakened to consciousness by violent and persistent knockings at the door. 'Ā'isha stood motionless as Asmā' opened it finally, and revealed a group of the Quraysh, among them Abū Jahl ibn Hishām, who asked roughly, "Where's your father?"

She answered, "By God, I do not know." She was not lying, for the last she knew of the Prophet was his leaving the cave for an unknown destination. She felt the hand of Abū Jahl rise and hit her in the face, knocking off her earrings;²⁵ then they left, angry and threatening. Days and nights passed and Mecca had no other topic of conversation except the pursuit of the unarmed fugitive. The Quraysh were enraged, fearing he might find safety from which to spread his message.²⁶ The Prophet and his companion finally reached safety and the news about their destination

24. Ibn Hishām, II, 131; *Iṣāba*, VIII and Ṭabarī, II, 247.

25. *Ibid.*, II, 132 and Ṭabarī, II, 247.

26. *Ibid.*, I, 134 and Ṭabarī, the anecdote of the Hijra.

was confused. His followers in Madina had been awaiting his arrival by going outside the city after morning prayers, not leaving their places till there was no more shade.²⁷ One day, as usual, when the shade had gone and they were returning home, they heard a Jew shouting: "O banū Qayla! This your grandfather, has come!" They went out hurriedly, to see the Prophet and Abū Bakr under the shade of a tree. Most of them had never seen the Prophet before. They greeted the two friends without knowing who was the Prophet, until, the shade leaving one of them, the second one covered him with his robe and thus they knew that he was their noble Prophet.²⁸ The news spread through Madina and shouts of welcome were heard everywhere rising to the skies. Crowds of people appeared filling the roads, anxious to see the great exile.

'Ā'isha looked at the empty place of the Prophet. The Quraysh also knew he had gone and waited with fear to see what the future held in store for them. They shrank in trepidation, utterly humiliated after failing to capture a man who had left Mecca accompanied only by one old man, a freedman and a non-Muslim guide.

THE BRIDE

Only a few days passed before Zayd ibn Ḥāritha returned to Mecca to bring the daughters of the Prophet. He carried with him a letter from Abū Bakr to his son 'Abd Allah asking him to join him with Abū Bakr's wife Umm Rūmān and his two daughters,

27. Ibn Hishām, II, 137.

28. Ṭabarī, II, 248.

Asmā' and 'Ā'isha.²⁹ The exiles prepared to leave. The whole world could not contain 'Ā'isha's happiness. She spent her first days of travel joyfully until once, they reached a point where her camel bolted and Umm Rūmān had to shout for help.

"O my daughter, the bride!" 'Abd Allah, Ṭalḥa ibn 'Ubayd Allah and Zayd hurried after her and brought her back. She calmed down and relapsed into a dreamy meditation about her beloved ones. At Madina the Prophet was preparing a house for 'Ā'isha. It was reported that he stayed for four days at Qubā' during which he founded the first Islamic mosque. One Friday he rode his she-camel called al-Qaṣwā' and when he reached the quarter of Madina of the banū Sālim ibn 'Awf, he performed the first Friday prayer. Then he continued his ride, meeting welcomes from all parts of the city and supporters greeting him, saying: "Come to us, where you will find numbers, supplies and shelter."

But he would answer, "Let go my camel's reins." Finally, where the camel knelt, the Prophet chose that place to build his mosque and residence.

Both the Emigrants and the Helpers rivalled each other in building the Mosque until it was finished. It had nine rooms around it, some built of palm leaves and clay and some of stone. The doors of all opened on the mosque courtyard. In one of the houses lived Sauda, taking care of the domestic affairs and seeing that the Prophet and his two daughters, Umm Kulthūm and Fāṭima were looked after. Of his

29. Ṭabarī, the anecdote of the Hijra; *Iṣāba*, VIII and *Isti'āb*, IV, 1937.

other daughters, Ruqayya was with her husband 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān; Zaynab was left in Mecca held by her husband Abū al-'Āṣ ibn al-Rabī' who was still an unbeliever. A few months later, after the Mosque and the house of the Prophet was finished and the Muslims safely settled in their new abode, Abū Bakr discussed with Muḥammad the consummation of the marriage contracted with 'Ā'isha in Mecca three years ago. The Prophet responded contentedly and went, accompanied by men and women of the Helpers, to Abū Bakr's house, for he lived among the banū al-Ḥārith ibn al-Khazraj. 'Ā'isha, describing her wedding day says:³⁰ "The Prophet of God came to our house where many of the Helpers were waiting. My mother brought me sitting in a litter on two poles. She made me descend; then smoothed my hair and washed my face with water. Then she led me to the door of the house where she stopped until I regained my composure. Then she took me in where the Prophet of God was sitting in our house and made me sit near him, saying 'These are your people. May God bless you through them and they through you.' The people then left and the Prophet consummated the marriage while in our house when I was nine years old. No young camel or lamb was sacrificed, but Sa'd ibn 'Ubāda who sent the Prophet food each day kept sending the usual tray of food." He also sent a pot of milk which the Prophet drank. The shy bride took it too and drank. 'Ā'isha was a sweet bride of slight body with large eyes and dark hair, bright faced with a touch of colour. She moved to

30. *Iṣāba*, VIII; *Simt*, p. 32 and Ṭabarī, III, 176.

her new home, nothing but a single room of the mosque, made of bricks and palm leaves. It had a leather bed stuffed with straw and a mat on the floor; across the door was a hair curtain. In this simple and humble home 'Ā'isha began her eventful married life which became the talk of history and thus began to take her place in the life of the Prophet as well as in Islam.

She was young, or a child, as some writers wish to call her. But, according to the testimony of one of them, an orientalist, "Since her feet entered the house of Muḥammad everyone felt her presence. I never there was a young woman who knew what was in store for her, it was 'Ā'isha, for she expressed her personality from the first day she entered the house of the Prophet."³¹ More precisely than this it should be said that 'Ā'isha matured in this house and that she grew gradually from a young girl, whose husband brought her girlish companions for play or she would watch from behind his shoulders the Abyssinians at lanceplay,³² into an experienced young woman. For instance, if asked a question by any woman about the art of make up, she would answer: "If you have a husband and you are able to take out your eyes and put them in a better place than where they are, do so." Also she hated to see a woman in mourning and said: "It is not right for a woman who believes in God to mourn for more than three days unless for a husband."

* * *

31. Bodley, pp. 93, 130 of the Arabic translation, 145-46 of the English text. [Editors]

32. *Musnad*, VI and *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, al-Sharḥiyya ed., XXX, 182.

The presence of Sauda, as a second wife for the man whom 'Ā'isha loved with all her being, did not affect her. She knew Sauda had no place in the Prophet's heart, but what worried her was that deep love which Khadija had, before her, won from the Prophet and the place she had with the Prophet, monopolising his affections for nearly a quarter of a century. The most annoying thing to the young bride was, that although Khadija was buried in far away Mecca, still she remained in the Prophet's heart. 'Ā'isha could not gratify her animosity by making cruel fun of her, nor could she vie against her with her own beauty and youth, or glory in her virgin marriage with the Prophet.³³ 'Ā'isha tried to ignore this dead rival, but in vain, because her shadow lay always before him and her name was ever on his tongue, her word in his ear and her memory unfading. What made the situation more intolerable was that 'Ā'isha remained childless for months and then years, whilst "that old woman from the Quraysh," as she used to refer to her, gave him sons and daughters. 'Ā'isha well knew that, in her husband's heart as well as in the heart of all Arabs there was a strong love and desire for male children: and yet she saw her beloved husband, doting on the daughters of Khadija, which made her feel even more the pressure of deprivation resting on her heart, ready to suffocate her had it not been for the affection and love her husband afforded her, and the faith which made her patient. She wished to find in the daughters of her beloved

33. As compared with the fact that Khadija was married twice before she married the Prophet. [Editors]

husband what would alleviate her thirst for motherhood; yet, if she thought of attempting to adopt them, no sooner did she remember that they were the daughters of her rival, than she felt an insurmountable barrier between them—nay, she felt as if each one of them was Khadija in person, arousing in her the bitter feeling of barrenness.

'Ā'isha turned to her nephews to find those on whom she could bestow the affections of frustrated motherhood, lest the suppression of this instinct should exhaust her emotionally. Therefore she gave her nephew 'Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr the place of a son and she was soon nicknamed 'the mother of 'Abd Allah'.³⁴ Later, when her brother 'Abd al-Raḥmān died, she added his son al-Qāsim and his young daughter to her household. Al-Qāsim used to say: "I have never seen a mother more loving than her." She also tried to compensate for this unfruitfulness by the satisfaction of knowing that her place in the Prophet's heart was pre-eminent, after that of Khadija, and that she had won his love and affection.

THE RIVAL WIVES

While she was happy with his love, hoping to forget her dead rival, she was surprised by a new wife coming to the house of the Prophet, who occupied a room next to hers and that of Sauda sharing her married life both day and night. But who is this new wife? She is Ḥafṣa, daughter of 'Umar, son of al-Khaṭṭāb, through whom God strengthened Islam. 'Ā'isha was startled to see Muḥammad take another wife, whilst

34. *Isti'āb*, IV, 1883.

he did not marry a second time until Khadija died at the age of sixty-five. What made her unhappy was that her youth, her father's position and the Prophet's love for her were not sufficient to protect her from the rivalry of a second wife, which the Prophet had not confronted during the life of Khadija. However, other wives after Ḥafṣa came into the household until they filled the nine houses. Among them was the young beauty, Zaynab bint Jaḥash; the proud and pretty Umm Salama bint Abū Umayya Zād al-Rakb; the attractive Juwayriya bint al-Ḥārith; the soft and enchanting Ṣafīyya bint Ḥuyayy, the Jewess; and Umm Ḥabība bint Abū Sufyān, who was the chiefman of Mecca and leader of its army. Then there was the attractive Egyptian Māria the mother of Ibrāhīm and Rayḥāna bint 'Amr, the beauty of the banū Qurayza whom the Prophet did not know but who lived in his household. This situation was not one which could content 'Ā'isha for long. So they are wrong who claim that 'Ā'isha swallowed at last the bitterness of this competition and are ignorant of female instinct who think that 'Ā'isha got over the sorrow of being childless and found, in being the mother of 'Abd Allah or the Mother of the Faithful, what would quench her thirst to have a child from such a unique and beloved husband. She did not know to begin with how to drive away this inevitable challenge, for she knew, as others did, that the Prophet had married carefully and with consideration, although his nature was not devoid of physical desire. She knew, as well as the people associated with them knew, that in spite of the many wives, she was the favourite one. Could she live among

them submissively and contentedly? No,—she had to protect her place in the heart of the Prophet at all costs and try with all her feminine guile, intelligence and youth to keep them from trespassing beyond a certain point. She was helped by the fact that the Prophet was a human being and he did not want his wives to forget their warm humanity either; therefore 'Ā'isha responded to her natural instincts to attract him, letting his other wives have their own sentimental and feminine worries, ignoring their restive jealousy which caused the Prophet such annoyance.

Among the Prophet's wives, 'Ā'isha was the most covetous for his love and contended most fiercely for it. Her excuse was that she was the first one to open the heart of the Prophet after Khadija and that she was the only wife who came to him as a virgin; also that she was the daughter of Abū Bakr. She looked at her rivals measuring herself with them, attempting as far as she could to weigh each one of them fairly, not because she wanted to recognize in them any excellence or merit but because knowing the power of one's opponent is the first weapon in the warrior's hand. She began by dropping from her account those wives who were of no consequence and who could not compete with her, like Sauda and Zaynab bint Khuzayma, who died within a few months of her marriage.

Later 'Ā'isha found she had no ability to fight against these wives collectively, especially as they were supported by Fāṭima, the daughter of the Prophet, whom 'Ā'isha found ever since she came to the house of the Prophet to be a rival and opponent of

hers. She decided to choose from among these wives the one who was least dangerous in competition, so she boldly and tactfully established a friendship with Ḥafṣa bint 'Umar³⁵ using their common background as a means of gaining her friendship. Ḥafṣa responded delightfully that the most beloved wife of the Prophet offered her affection recognizing that the daughter of 'Umar had common ground with the daughter of Abū Bakr. 'Ā'isha took Ḥafṣa into her confidence after she heard the Prophet had married Umm Salama. She found Umm Salama even more beautiful than people had described her. Ḥafṣa belittled the importance of Umm Salama because, in spite of her beauty, she was old and her beauty would soon fade, so she advised 'Ā'isha to reserve her jealousy for another who would merit it. And 'Ā'isha did so. She kept it for the beautiful young Qurayshite Zaynab bint Jaḥash and she prepared for her before she even entered the Prophet's house. No sooner had the Prophet announced his marriage to Zaynab, his cousin, whom God, finally allowed him to marry, than 'Ā'isha said: "How quickly your God responds to your desires!"³⁶ Then 'Ā'isha, supported by Ḥafṣa, began watching the new wife and counting the hours and minutes he spent with her. And when she found him prolonging his stay, she thought of a trick to keep him away from Zaynab. She made Ḥafṣa and Sauda co-operate with her. She arranged that whichever of the three of them the Prophet next visited

35. According to 'Ā'isha her faction included Ḥafṣa, Sauda and Ṣāfiyya, while the other faction included Umm Salama and the rest of the Prophet's wives. See *Simṭ*, p. 39.

36. There is another account of this statement in *Simṭ*, p. 82.

would ask him, "Have you eaten *Maghāfir*?"³⁷ which is a sweet fruit with a bad smell and the Prophet could not stand bad smells. When he came to 'Ā'isha she smelt his breath and said, "Have you eaten *Maghāfir*?" Ḥafṣa also asked the same question and when he passed by Sauda, she again asked him the same question. He said, "No". "What then is this smell?" she asked.

He said, "Zaynab has given me a honey drink."

Sauda answered with an authoritative air, "Then the bees who made the honey must have fed on the '*urfut*.'"³⁸ The '*urfut*' is the plant which yields the *Maghāfir*. The Prophet stopped drinking honey with Zaynab. Sauda, though, regretted it and exclaimed to her two friends, "How pitiful, we have really prevented him from seeing Zaynab."³⁹

'Ā'isha looked at her and said, "Be quiet." But then other wives came who diverted 'Ā'isha's attention from Umm Salama and Zaynab, although she still realized that these two were the most favoured of her rivals by the Prophet. One of these newcomers was from Kinda⁴⁰ and the second from Egypt.

The first was Asmā' bint al-Nu'mān whose beauty 'Ā'isha sensed as a danger. She realised that if she did not preclude her from the Prophet she would create problems for her. Therefore she decided to settle her affairs with her before Asmā's marriage

37. *Simṭ*, pp. 80-81.

38. '*Urfut*' is a species of mimosa tree with prickly leaves and globular flowers. [Editors]

39. *Simṭ*. According to another account Lady Ḥafṣa was the one who gave the Prophet the drink of honey.

40. In central Arabia. [Editors]

was consummated. She immediately set to work with the help of her companions. She called Ḥafṣa and another who were willing to assist her and said, "He has put his hand among these strangers who are about to turn him away from us."

They agreed to a joint plan—they approached the new bride with congratulations whilst preparing her for the wedding. They told her what to do and say in order to gain the satisfaction and love of the Great Husband. Part of their advice was that, as soon as the Prophet entered the Nuptial chamber, she should say, "*A'ūdhu bi-Allah*" (I take refuge in God).⁴¹ The poor thing did so; no sooner did she see the Prophet coming to her than she said the fateful words,⁴² believing that in this way she would gain his favour. Naturally the Prophet of God turned his face from her and said: "You have surely taken refuge in someone who affords it." He immediately left her and ordered that she should be sent back to her people. Either she or her father sent a mediator to the Prophet to intercede and take her back, telling him the trick played against him; but it seems that he smiled and said, referring to his wives, "They are Joseph's companions and their intrigues are abominable."

He held fast to his decision and did not keep

41. A common expression indicating surprise and seeking the help of God against something calamitous. The complete expression was, "*A'ūdhu bi-Allah min al-Shayṭān al-Rajīm.*" (I take refuge in God from the accursed devil.) [Editors]

42. Accounts differ over the name of the one who said to the Prophet "*a'ūdhu bi-Allah*" when he entered the nuptial chamber. It is said that she was Asmā' bint al-Nu'mān or one of her cousins from Kinda. See Ibn Hishām, IV, 297. According to Ṭabarī she was Malka al-Laythiyya, daughter of Dā'wūd, (Ṭabarī, III, 123) or she was Fāṭima bint al-Daḥḥāk of the banū Kilāb. (Ṭabarī, III, 139)

Asmā'; thus 'Ā'isha got rid of a dangerous rival.

As to the newcomer from Egypt, Māria, perhaps 'Ā'isha did not pay too much attention to her simply because she was a stranger, a coptic slave girl and in that capacity being in a lower position than that of the other wives, the Mothers of the Faithfull. Perhaps 'Ā'isha thought it beneath her to consider her as a rival while this Māria was actually living outside the House of the Prophet;⁴³ but when Māria became pregnant, she was consumed with jealousy and anger. She began to intrigue against her while the Prophet attempted to protect her from 'Ā'isha. However, one day the whole affair went beyond his control when Māria came to see him about a personal matter. He met her alone at the house of Ḥafṣa who, at that time, was visiting her father. When Ḥafṣa returned home, she found the curtain to her room drawn and she guessed that Māria was there. She waited anxiously until Māria left; then she entered upon the Prophet, subdued and weeping. She did not calm down until the Prophet swore he would never do it again and he told Ḥafṣa to keep secret what had happened.⁴⁴ But Ḥafṣa could keep no secret from 'Ā'isha and the incident kindled her jealousy. She, in turn, also incited the other wives who, forgetting their jealousy of her, joined ranks. They exclaimed: "We have been patient all this while over the Prophet's favouritism to the daughter of Abū Bakr and now we see him favouring this Coptic slave. What a humiliation!"

43. She was living outside the general quarters of the Mothers of the Faithful. [Editors]

44. *Simt*, p. 85.

'Ā'isha, supported by the Prophet's other wives insisted in her jealousy of Māria who, of them all alone was pregnant. The Prophet treated them as kindly as possible, realising the motives of this revolt against him, but they went too far in their importunate demands and took advantage of the Prophet's compassionate treatment of them. The Prophet did not have time for this female foolishness nor could he concede more than he did to 'Ā'isha, Ḥafṣa and the rest of his wives. Therefore, he held aloof from them all in a resolute manner hitherto unknown to them and declared that he would not associate with them and their petty intrigues, but rather occupy himself with more important issues. And so a whisper went around among the Muslims that the Prophet was divorcing his wives. The rebel wives shrank back repentant from such actions which had caused the rumours. Indeed, they had overstepped the boundaries they had set and were about to fall into the ditch they had sought to dig for Māria. They had no one to protect them from the grave consequences of such actions except the Mercy of God and the forgiveness of His Prophet. Relenting, 'Ā'isha—the chief rebel—was not so much afraid of the Prophet's wrath as she was concerned about the hardships they had caused him. Her heart almost broke as she recalled her beloved husband returning from his daily struggles, weighed down with responsibilities. She could see him confined to his small room reached by the rough trunk of a palm, with his attendant Rabāḥ sitting on his doorstep. There was no tender hand to wipe his noble brow

clear of the beaded sweat or clear the dust of battles from his person, no soft voice to soothe him to sleep. A whole month passed during which the Prophet was busy spreading his message whilst 'Ā'isha was pre-occupied with all these squabbles and his other wives were afraid of the possibility of divorce. The Muslims watched his solitary situation without daring to raise the question of his wives.

However, the Prophet did not divorce them nor did Heaven forsake them; it was considered sufficient to warn them that if they did not repent God would allow the Prophet to divorce them and marry better wives.⁴⁵ The glad tidings that the Prophet was returning to his home quickly reached the Mothers of the Faithful and they stood at their doors in great anxiety, seeking a glance at his noble face now turned from its seclusion, while 'Ā'isha remained in her chamber preparing herself to meet the returning Loved One. She was certain that he would come to her first. As his footsteps neared her door, she held her heart lest it should melt and summoning her courage, she tenderly expostulated with the Prophet, saying, "By my father and mother, O Prophet of God, I said but one thoughtless word and yet you became angry with me." As he listened carefully to her, she continued wheedling him in honeyed tones. "You have sworn to forsake us for a month and yet only twenty-nine days have passed!" His face, brightened and shone with a sweet smile, for he was pleased to know that she had been counting the days of his absence. He replied that the month con-

45. Qur'ān, *Prohibition*.

tained but twenty-nine days.

So 'Ā'isha was rescued from the ordeal of being forsaken and this was not the first time she realised how great was his mercy, for God had rescued her before.⁴⁶

THE STORY OF THE ORDEAL OF FALSEHOOD

This happened in the sixth year of the Hijra, 628 A.D. after the Prophet married Zaynab bint Jahāsh. He was preparing to invade the tribe of the banū al-Muṣṭaliq. As was his custom, whenever he went to war or on a journey, he cast lots among his wives and it fell to 'Ā'isha.⁴⁷ She accompanied him, satisfied and happy, pleased to have him to herself for so many days and nights. It was a good omen for the warring Hero, for he returned from his battles victorious and his entourage hurried back to Madina which was resounding to songs of triumph. On the way, not far from Madina, the army camped for the night and then departed without realising that Lady 'Ā'isha had remained behind. At daybreak the army reached the town and the camel which carried 'Ā'isha was tethered outside her house and her litter lowered carefully to the ground. When the curtains were drawn, the Mother of the Faithful was missing. The Prophet and his men waited, perplexed and anxious, whilst some of his men retraced their steps to search for the dear Lady. She appeared to them from afar riding a camel, led by a man whom they identified as Ṣafwān ibn al-Mu'aṭṭal al-Sulamī. The

46. *Sint*, p. 53.

47. Ṭabarī, III, 67; Ibn Hishām, III, 310 and *Ṭabaqāt*, (Leiden ed), IV, 46.

Prophet was relieved to find she was not harmed and listened to the story of her delay without any suspicion. 'Ā'isha said: "I went to answer the call of nature before the camp master signalled the break up of the caravan and I was wearing my onyx necklace from Zufār (a town in Yemen). When I finished, it seems the necklace slipped off, I do not know how. I returned to the campsite and there discovered my loss. Already the people were leaving, so I quickly returned to the place and found it. The attendants put my litter on the camel never suspecting that I was not in it since I am so light and so led it off with the rest. When I returned to the camp everyone had gone. So I wrapped myself in my robe and lay down in that spot. I knew that they would return looking for me. While I was lying there, Ṣafwān, who had delayed moving with the main body, passed by. He saw me wrapped in black and approached me and knelt over; (Ṣafwān used to see her before the Prophet secluded his wives according to the word of God) and recognizing me, Ṣafwān said: 'We are God's and to him we shall return! [A remark of surprise.] O wife of the Prophet! what made you delay?' I did not answer him. He brought his camel for me and said, 'Mount'. He stepped aside and I mounted. He led the beast and hurried after the main body, but we could not catch up and no one discovered I was absent until the morning when I arrived."⁴⁸

'Ā'isha went to bed and slept peacefully while the city buzzed with rumours. Some unscrupulous people, headed by 'Abd Allah ibn Ubayy ibn Salūl,

48. Ibn Hishām, III, 310 and Ṭabarī, III, 68.

(who had not yet quenched his hatred of the Prophet and was still plotting against him) seized on this incident and wove around it a yarn of falsehood to satisfy their enmity. Thus the story of Falsehood spread from the house of ibn Salūl and his kind to the various quarters of Madina and was repeated by Muslims such as Ḥassān ibn Thābit, the Prophet's poet; Miṣṭah ibn Uthātha, a relative of Abū Bakr and a protégé of his; and Ḥamna bint Jaḥash, the Prophet's cousin and the sister of his wife Zaynab. The story reached Muḥammad and Abū Bakr and Umm Rūmān and assailed their ears, but none of them dared face 'Ā'isha with the foul rumour because since her return she had been sick and was unaware of the gossip. However, she noticed the obvious coolness of the Prophet, who had accustomed her to his abundant kindness whenever she complained of indisposition. Now, this time, it was absent and his visits to her were confined to the questions he addressed to her mother such as,⁴⁹ "How is that woman?" and nothing more. 'Ā'isha did not challenge his manner because of his obviously gloomy preoccupation. She felt in her heart that he was experiencing a great worry, so she remained patient hoping that this dark cloud would disperse. But his coolness became more than she could endure and so she said to him: "I wish you would permit me to go to my mother's house to let her take care of me." He answered harshly: "All right." 'Ā'isha said,⁵⁰ "I moved to my mother's house knowing nothing of

49. *Simt*, p. 64 and Ṭabarī, III, 68.

50. Ibn Hishām, IV, 311; *Simt*, p. 65 and Ṭabarī, III, 68.

what had happened until I recovered some twenty days after. One evening I went out to answer the call of nature and with me went Umm Miṣṭah bint Abū Rahm ibn al-Muṭṭalib ibn 'Abd Manāf whose mother was bint Ṣakhr ibn 'Āmir ibn Ka'b ibn Sa'd ibn Taym, the aunt of Abū Bakr. While she was walking with her she stumbled, tripping on her robe and said: "How wretched is Miṣṭah'."

I replied: "That is an awful thing to say of an Immigrant who has fought at the battle of Badr."

She asked in surprise: "Ā'isha, haven't you heard the stories?" I asked: "What stories are those?" and so she told me everything. By God, I could not even finish my ablutions and returned to the house and cried my heart out. I said to my mother: "May God forgive you. The people have been talking against me and yet you have not mentioned anything to me about it."

She replied: "Daughter, do not upset yourself. No beautiful woman whose husband loves her and who has other wives as rivals will ever escape being slandered."⁵¹ However, 'Ā'isha could neither sleep nor control her tears. Far away from her the Prophet was suffering likewise. His heart told him she was the victim of a grave and unjust accusation, while his ears were yet attentive to the vile rumours. He spoke to the people one day without her knowledge. Thanking God he said: "People, why do some persons try to hurt me through my wives and accuse them of things that are not true? By God, I have known nothing but good of them. They also talk about a

51. Ibn Hishām, III, 311; *Simt*, p. 65 and Ṭabarī, III, 68.

man (Ṣafwān) of whom I know nothing but good, who never entered one of my houses unless I accompanied him." The hearts of the Muslims went out to their Prophet in his agony. Soon they became incensed by the dishonour done to an innocent and honourable wife and their voices united in demanding vengeance. Men of the Aws and the Khazraj tribes demanded the heads of those, even from among their own ranks, who had spread these falsehoods. So anxious were they for justice that relations between the tribes became strained.⁵² 'Ā'isha continues to describe her troubles saying: "The Prophet of God came to see me and called 'Ālī ibn Abū Ṭālib and Usāma ibn Yazīd whom he consulted. As for Usāma he praised me and said: 'She is your family, O Prophet of God and we know nothing of her except good and as for these falsehoods and lies . . .'

"As for 'Alī, he said: 'Women are plentiful, O Prophet of God, and you are able to find others. Ask the freed woman and she will tell you the truth.' So the Prophet of God sent for my freed woman Burayra. When she came, 'Alī got up and beat her severely, saying: 'Tell the Prophet the truth.'

"She replied: 'By God, I know nothing except what is good and I have nothing to blame 'Ā'isha for, except that whenever I kneaded dough for my baking and asked her to watch it, she would fall asleep and let the sheep eat it.' "

Then the Prophet left, and burdened with sad heart and mind he returned to the house of Abū Bakr

52. See the episode of Falschhood in detail in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (al-Sharafiyya ed.) III, 27; *Ṣimṭ*, p. 63; Ṭabarī, the events of the sixth year of the Hijra, III, 67 and Ibn Hishām, III,

where 'Ā'isha remained, her eyes sore with weeping, tended by a woman friend from the Anṣār (helpers) weeping likewise with her. Her parents watched in silence and grief. And for the first time since the false rumours began, the Prophet sat down and talked with her. He said,⁵³ "O 'Ā'isha! you have heard what the people are saying about you, so fear God and if you have done anything wrong, repent, for God accepts repentance from his servants." No sooner had he said this than the tears dried in her eyes and she paled at the enormity she had heard. She tried to speak but could not. She turned to her parents, asking them to speak for her; but they were silent. In her agony, she cried, "Won't you answer him?"

They replied in a voice choked with emotion and tears: "By God! we don't know what to say." Her tears quenching the fire of her heart, she turned to her husband and said with intensity: "I swear I shall never ask forgiveness for the thing you speak of, for I know if I admitted this sin, I would admit what I had never done and God knows I am innocent. And yet if I did deny these rumours, you and the rest of the people would not believe me anyway."

She recalled the grief of Jacob to find comfort in her predicament, but could not. And she concluded: "I will say the same as Jacob said: 'May God give me patience and help me to accept these things!'" And she kept silent.⁵⁴

The Prophet was immediately transfixed by revelation: hastily he was wrapped in a warm

53. *Ṣimṭ*, p. 67 and Ṭabarī, III, 67.

54. *Ibid.*

covering and a leather pillow was placed beneath his head. 'Ā'isha's parents held their breath until she thought they would burst from worry and fright. But she was not frightened because she was innocent and knew God would never do her injustice. Soon the Prophet came to himself and said, wiping his forehead: "Rejoice, O 'Ā'isha! for God has revealed to me your innocence." Abū Bakr heaved a sigh as if a heavy weight had been lifted from his chest and Umm Rūmān jumped with joy from her seat, making a sign to 'Ā'isha to go to her husband. But 'Ā'isha said proudly, "By God, I will never get up and go to him for I have no one to thank except God who has declared me innocent."⁵⁵

She turned to her father who approached and kissed her, with joyous and tearful eyes. She said: "Father, would you not have pardoned me if there had been no answer?"

He replied: "What heaven would cover me and what earth would carry me if I judged that which I could not know?"

As for the Prophet, he turned to her compassionately, remembering the unjust falsehood which she had suffered and went to the Mosque to relate the revelation of the Heaven. "Those who brought about this falsehood are a clique among you. Do not think this is an evil thing; it is something good. Each one of them has gained for himself part of that wickedness and he who has the greatest share of it will receive great torment. Why, when you heard this, men and women Believers, did you not think well of your own

55. *Simt*, p. 67.

people and think this sheer falsehood? Why did they not produce four witnesses? Since they failed to show them, to God they were liars. If it were not for God's grace towards you and his mercy in this world and the next, you would have been greatly tormented. The rumours you voiced by your tongues and mouths, of which you knew nothing, were something light; to God, they were grave. When you heard these tales, you did not say, 'What business do we have to talk of this? May God be praised, this is sheer falsehood.' God commands you never to do such a thing again if you are true Believers. God explains to you his revelations and God is all-knowing and wise. Those of you who like to hear slander spread about those who believe will have torment in this world and the world to come. For God knows and you do not."⁵⁶ And those who spread these falsehoods were lashed. "Those who slander honourable women and do not produce four witnesses, lash them eighty times and never accept their testimony again. Those are the evil-doers."⁵⁷

THE INDISSOLUBLE BOND

So the Lady 'Ā'isha returned to her rightful place in the house of the Prophet surrounded by a halo of light, proud of the divine victory which made her innocence part of that Qur'ān which the Muslims use for worship even today. She again took up her rich married life and enjoyed whatever her youth allowed her beneath the protection of her husband. She taun-

56. Qur'ān, *The Light*: 11-19.

57. *Ibid.*, *The Light*: 4.

ted the other wives saying, "Which woman is more favoured by her husband than me?" She would repeat to them the words of the Prophet: "Your love in my heart, O 'Ā'isha, is like an indissoluble bond." Or she would relate to them the question asked by 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ of the Prophet: "O Prophet of God! Who among the people is most beloved to you?"

The Prophet answered: "'Ā'isha".

'Amr said: "I am talking of men."

The Prophet replied: "Her father."⁵⁸

In the *Sīra* it is related that when the Prophet went to war against Khaybar in the seventh year of the Hijra in the month of Jumāda al-Ulā, one year after this incident, he made his first war banner from a cloak belonging to his wife 'Ā'isha. Regarding this invasion, ibn Sa'd related the following: "The banners appeared first on the day of the Khaybar invasion. Formerly they only used standards. His standard was white, which he entrusted to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.⁵⁹ The Prophet's banner was black, made from the cloak of 'Ā'isha, and was called the Eagle. The Muslims knew the favour and love bestowed by the Prophet on 'Ā'isha and waited until he came to visit her in her chamber to send their gifts to him.⁶⁰ Although the Prophet sent to everyone of his wives the gifts he received when he was with 'Ā'isha, still they were jealous and they discussed among themselves how to put an end to the treatment they received from her. Finally they decided to ask Lady Fāṭima al-Zahrā (the Fair One) to discuss the subject with her father.

58. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, II, 201.

59. *Ṭabaqāt*, (Leiden ed.) II, 77.

60. *Ṣiṃṭ*, p. 40.

Fāṭima agreed and went to see her father and 'Ā'isha was with him. She said: "Father, your wives have sent me to ask for justice regarding 'Ā'isha's behaviour to them."

The Prophet asked her:⁶¹ "Daughter, do you love me?"

She exclaimed truthfully: "Yes, Father."

He said: "Then love 'Ā'isha."

Fāṭima returned with the message. They insisted she reopen the subject with her father, but she refused to talk to him of what he hated. So they chose one of the two most favoured wives after 'Ā'isha, Zaynab bint Jaḥash and Umm Salama.⁶² She talked to the Prophet two or three times about the wives' complaints until he said: "Do not try to upset me by talking about 'Ā'isha."⁶³ Thus the Prophet protected 'Ā'isha from her rivals. Likewise he protected her from the rebukes of her father. Whenever 'Ā'isha's jealousy became too great, the Prophet still defended her by saying: "If she could avoid it, she would not behave so." Sometimes he would ask her: "Have you become jealous?"

And she would answer: "Why not? Why should someone like me not become jealous over someone like you"⁶⁴ 'Ā'isha was right and those who claim she had no humanity or feminine instinct are wrong. Zāhiya Qaddūra in her doctoral dissertation entitled *'Ā'isha the Mother of the Faithful* is mistaken in saying that, "jealousy did not penetrate deeply into her heart but was checked by the limits required by the

61. *Ṣiṃṭ*, p. 40.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

62. *Ibid.*

64. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

principles of religion and justice . . . and the affair is not part of those factional quarrels as some Western writers of Islamic history would like to suggest . . .⁶⁵ Perhaps the best refutation of these Western writers is what we have seen of the wonderful agreement among the rival wives of the Prophet and their utmost desire to please him."

May God be praised! Was there not factionalism among the Prophet's wives in the case of the *Maghāfir* and their intrigues against Māria? Was all this the invention of Western writers? Or was it their advice to the bride on her wedding night to take refuge in God and does this advice come, as our colleague says, within the limits set by religion and justice? Or was there not agreement to vex the Prophet when he was in private with Māria and she was lawful to him—was that among the aspects of the wonderful agreement between the rival wives as our colleague suggests? Certainly not, for 'Ā'isha was truly feminine and responded to her sentiments quite naturally. Her acute jealousy after all this was only a sign of profound love for her sole husband and a proof of her adherence to him and her irresistible desire to have him for himself. We would be doing both her and our noble Prophet injustice if we tried to absolve her from this jealousy and describe what happened between her and her rivals as wonderful agreement. And why shouldn't someone like her feel jealous for someone like him?

The years which followed this ordeal of the false-

65. According to *Simt*, p. 39, quoting 'Ā'isha, the wives of the Prophet were of two factions.

hood were fraught with momentous events. 'Ā'isha lived to see the glories of the Prophet, to meet him returning victorious from his wars and to watch the Message spreading like the morning light which banishes the darkness. Then the time came at last for the Prophet to rest after his hard and challenging life. He completed Ḥajjat-al Wadā' (His farewell pilgrimage to Mecca) and returned to Madina. After his arrival he suffered from sleeplessness and went out to al-Baqi' to visit the graves. On the next morning he went to see 'Ā'isha and found her complaining of a severe headache. "Oh! my head."

He said, suffering from the same complaint, "No, I should say Oh! my head."

When she repeated her complaint, he said tenderly, "What does it matter if you die before me, for I undertake to wrap you in your shroud, pray for and bury you."

She shouted with aroused jealousy: "Let this be someone else's fortune, not mine. I feel already as if you had brought another bride into my house."⁶⁶

His face shone with a graceful smile and his pain subsided slightly so that he was able to visit his wives. But soon the pain returned more severely and when he reached the chamber of Maymuna he could no longer endure it. He looked at his wives now surrounding him and asked questioningly: "Where will I lie tomorrow and after tomorrow?"

They immediately realised what lay behind his question, the desire to remain with 'Ā'isha and they

66. *Simt*, p. 55; Ibn Hisbām, IV, 292 and Ṭabarī, III, 191.

felt content that he should be treated where and as he wanted. So all of them said: "O Prophet of God, we have offered our days to 'Ā'isha."⁶⁷ So the Prophet lay in the room of 'Ā'isha, the beloved one, who kept watch over him with loving devotion. Then the time of departure came as his head rested in her lap. 'Ā'isha described that solemn moment.

"I found the Prophet getting heavier in my lap. I looked in his face and his eyes were turned to Heaven as he repeated 'the Heavenly Companion from Paradise.' I said: "I swear by Him Who has sent you to proclaim the truth, you have been given the choice of Heaven and have chosen rightly to go now." And the Prophet died with his head against my heart. And because of my youth and foolishness, he breathed his last there. So I placed his head upon a pillow and began to mourn."⁶⁸

Discord and trouble was about to break out (after his death); from which God protected the Muslims when he inspired Abū Bakr to stand and speak to them and say: "People, those of you who worshipped Muḥammad should know that he is dead. Those who worship God should know that God is ever living." Then he recited portions of the Qur'ān, as follows: "Muḥammad is but an Apostle. Before him there were many. If he dies or he is killed, you will recant and yet those who recant will not harm God. God will reward those who are thankful."⁶⁹ By God! As

67. Ibn Hishām, IV, 292 and *Simt*, p. 55. Ṭabarī mentions that the Prophet asked his wives' permission to be treated in 'Ā'isha's quarters and they agreed. Ṭabarī, III, 191.

68. Ṭabarī, III, 197.

69. Qur'ān, *The Family of 'Imrān*: 144.

if the people did not know that such a thing had been revealed to Muḥammad until Abū Bakr recited it to them! The Prophet was buried in the chamber of 'Ā'isha and her father succeeded the Prophet.

'Ā'isha lived to become the first source in the Ḥadīth⁷⁰ and Sunna and the Muslims learnt from her half of their religion, as it was ordered by the Prophet. Al-Zuhri said; "If 'Ā'isha's knowledge were compared with that of all the other wives and of all other Muslim women, it would have been superior."⁷¹ Hishām ibn 'Urwa related that his father said: "I have never known anyone who had more knowledge than 'Ā'isha in jurisprudence, medicine and poetry."⁷² 'Ā'isha lived to correct people's opinion about the Arab woman and project a living ideal that fascinated the whole world. She lived to participate vigorously in the history of Islam and to take a leading part in the great revolt (which gave a distinctive dimension to the history of Islam) against the Caliph 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān and led armies against 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib.⁷³ 'Ā'isha died at the age of sixty-six having deeply influenced the legal, social and political life of the Muslims. The date of her death was most likely Tuesday, the seventeenth of Ramaḍān, the

70. Ḥadīth and Sunna are the traditions of Muḥammad. They include everything that Muḥammad had done, said or tacitly approved. The two terms are used interchangeably and are considered by Muslim jurists next in authority after the Qur'ān as a source of the Islamic Law or Sharī'a. [Editors]

71. *Istī'āb*, IV, 1883.

72. *Ibid.*

73. The author here is referring to the Battle of the Camel, December 6, 656 A.D. [Editors].

year 58 A.H./677 A.D.⁷⁴ Abū Hurayra prayed for her and then her coffin was buried at night in the Baqī'⁷⁵ as she had orderd, by the light of torches made of palm leaves dipped in oil, while crowds of people walked behind weeping. There have never been such crowds as there were that night. Her body was placed among those of the Mothers of the Faithful: finally death had put an end to the jealousy and rivalry between her and them. Time had extinguished those flames that had burnt for so many years in that graceful and tender body. She was lowered into the grave by her nephews 'Abd Allah and 'Urwa, sons of al-Zubayr; al-Qāsīm and 'Abd Allah, the sons of her brother Muḥammad and 'Abd Allah, the son of her brother, 'Abd al-Raḥmān.⁷⁶ And so she slept at last; the smallest details of her life, from the age of six onwards, her moves, her worries. All these details became finally the preoccupation of History and of the world.

Chapter 5

ḤAFṢA BINT 'UMAR "THE MEMORISER OF THE QUR'ĀN"

Daughter, don't be beguiled by the one who is proud of her beauty and the fact the Prophet loved her. By God! I know that the Prophet does not love you and if it were not for me, he would have divorced you.

'Umar

74. Ṭabarī, the events of the year A.H. 58; *Simt*, p. 82 and *Isti'āb*, IV, 1885.

75. Al-Baqī' is a burial place outside Madina. [Editors]

76. Ṭabarī, *ibid.*, and *Isti'āb*, IV, 1885.

THE YOUNG WIDOW

None of the banū Sahn except the noble companion' Khunays ibn Hudhāfa ibn Qays ibn 'Adī al-Sahnī al-Qurashī, who was one of those who emigrated to Abyssinia, had participated in the battle of Badr. He also took part in the battle of Uḥud and later died in Madīna leaving his widow Ḥafṣa bint 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. 'Umar felt sad for his young daughter widowed only in her eighteenth year. It pained him to notice signs of bereavement affect her youth and waste her vivacity. Whenever he entered his house, he felt deep sorrow and he thought finally of finding her a husband who would give her back the joy she had lost during the six months or more of her mourning. His choice was Abū Bakr the dear friend of the Prophet, his son-in-law and loyal Companion. This solution calmed his mind because, as a serene, middle-aged man of noble and generous nature, he was able to bear Ḥafṣa's hot temper, inherited from her father, and was able to relieve the agony and boredom of her widowhood. He also felt satisfied that he would have as son-in-law the man most beloved by the Prophet. He did not hesitate but went immediately to Abū Bakr and discussed Ḥafṣa with him, Abū Bakr listening compassionately. 'Umar proposed the marriage believing that Abū Bakr would welcome the young and pious lady who was the daughter of the man whose support had so much strengthened Islam. But Abū Bakr

1. Ibn Hishām, III, 6; Ṭabarī, III, 177 and *Istī'āb*, and *Iṣāba*.

replied nothing. 'Umar left downcast, unable to believe his friend would refuse Ḥaḥṣa after he had proposed her. His feet carried him to the house of 'Uthmān, whose wife, Ruḡayya, the daughter of the Prophet, became ill with measles after the return from Abyssinia (at the time when the Muslims were facing their enemies at Badr) and died after her father and the Faithful were victorious at that battle.² 'Umar proposed Ḥaḥṣa to 'Uthmān, still feeling the humiliation created by Abū Bakr's refusal. He kept his indignation to himself for God in his wisdom might have chosen 'Uthmān for Ḥaḥṣa and God only could know which one of the two was more suitable for the young widow. 'Uthmān wanted a few days for consideration; after which he went to 'Umar and said: "I don't want to get married at this time."³

'Umar nearly burst from anger at the unkind situation and in his rage went to the Prophet, complaining against his two friends. Some one like Ḥaḥṣa in her youth, piety and honour, would be refused? And by whom? By Abū Bakr and 'Uthmān, the Companions of the Prophet and his sons-in-law? It would be better for the Muslims to know the position of 'Umar and it would be better for the Companions not to reject someone like him as a father-in-law! 'Umar entered upon the Prophet, his anger brimming, while the Prophet received him with greetings and smiles, asking tenderly what was worrying him. 'Umar told

2. See the ḥadīth of Lady Ruḡayya in our book *The Daughters of the Prophet*, al-Hilāl edition.

3. This account is mentioned in *Istī'āb*, IV, 1811. According to another account it was 'Umar who offered Ḥaḥṣa in marriage to 'Uthmān, then to 'Alī and then to Abū Bakr. See *Simṭ*, p. 83.

him all his problems, especially that of Abū Bakr and 'Uthmān. The Prophet smiled and said: "Someone will marry Ḥaḥṣa who is better than 'Uthmān and 'Uthmān shall marry someone who is better than Ḥaḥṣa." 'Umar, taken by surprise with the splendour of those words, echoed: "Someone better than 'Uthmān shall marry Ḥaḥṣa?" In his mind the thought flashed—did this mean the Prophet marry his daughter? This, by God, was an honour beyond his aspirations! He rose and joyfully shook the Prophet's hand, forgetting his previous humiliation. He hurried to his daughter and to Abū Bakr and 'Uthmān, and indeed told the whole town the news of the blessed engagement. Abū Bakr was the first he saw and as soon as he looked on 'Umar's face he guessed the reason for his happiness. He stretched out his hand and apologised, saying:⁴ "Don't be angry with me, 'Umar, because the Prophet mentioned Ḥaḥṣa, and I could not betray the secret. However, if he would leave her, I would gladly marry her." Both of them then went to see their respective daughters; Abū Bakr to alleviate the shock of the Prophet marrying another woman and 'Umar to bring the good news of her impending marriage to the most noble man. The whole of Madīna blessed the hand of the Prophet stretched out to honour 'Umar and so heal the wounds of his daughter. Likewise Madīna shortly afterwards blessed the marriage of 'Uthmān to Umm Kulthūm, the daughter of the Prophet, in the month of Jumāda al-Ākhira in the third year of the Hijra [624 A.D.]. And the house of the Prophet prepared to receive

4. *Simṭ*, p. 83 and *Istī'āb*, IV, 1811.

Ḥafṣa, whom he married in the month of Sha'bān in that same year.⁵

THE REVEALED SECRET

So the bride arrived when Sauda and 'Ā'isha were already married to the Prophet. Sauda welcomed her contentedly, but 'Ā'isha was furious to see the Prophet bring home a rival, a thing he had not done with Khadija. She was annoyed because she could not find anything against her, for, after all, she was what she was, a young woman of piety and noble descent. 'Ā'isha, because of her abundant youth and the position of her father, had felt superior to Sauda and to Khadija before her. But Ḥafṣa's share of these qualities was not to be denied. Furthermore, 'Ā'isha had felt annoyed when the Prophet spent night after night with Sauda, whom 'Ā'isha did not consider highly. How, then, would be her situation if the Prophet would spend his time with Ḥafṣa? She did not know what to do, for she realised the significance of this marriage, which pleased 'Umar and was approved by Islam and the Muslims. So she kept silent with anguish and jealousy. She remained so until more new wives came to the Prophet's house and only then did 'Ā'isha forget her jealousy of Ḥafṣa and try to make her the closest of all the rivals to her, the best one fitted to face the common danger of the other wives jointly with her. Ḥafṣa realised it would be fair or just to collaborate with 'Ā'isha who had preceded her to the Prophet's house and heart—perhaps it wounded her feelings to know that the

5. Ṭabarī, III, 9.

Prophet loved 'Ā'isha so much—but when the rival wives continued to come to the Prophet's house, she unhesitatingly stood beside 'Ā'isha. 'Umar was watching her situation with uneasiness and he doubted this unnatural friendship, and until he discovered that the reason for their closeness was to intrigue against the other wives, he hated to see Ḥafṣa agree with her companion while she did not have the same love or position in the Prophet's heart that 'Ā'isha enjoyed. So he began to restrain and warn his daughter not to imitate this young and pampered lady. He would say to her: "What are you compared with 'Ā'isha and your father compared with her father?" And when one day he heard from his wife that his daughter had behaved pertly towards the Prophet, he went to his daughter to ask if it were true. When she said it was so, he rebuked her, saying: "Daughter, you know that I warn you against the punishment of God and the anger of his Prophet. Do not be deceived by the one who is proud of her beauty and the fact that the Prophet loves her. By God! I know that the Prophet does not love you and if it were not for me, he would have divorced you." He left Ḥafṣa and in his estimation had put her in her proper place, but she was proud of herself and could not see that 'Ā'isha or the other wives could threaten her position. She felt that she was not forced to act unnaturally. She did not feel constrained to avoid embarrassing her husband whenever he did something which displeased her, and she answered boldly if she found a point against him. Ibn Sa'd related in the Tradition of al-Ḥudaybiyya and Bay'at al-Riḍwān The willing

Homage that the Prophet mentioned Ḥafṣa to his Companions who gave an oath of allegiance to him under the tree of al-Ḥudaybiyya. He said: "God willing, no one who has taken this oath will go to Hell."

Ḥafṣa demurred, "Yes", she said. Muḥammad chided her and she recited the following Qur'ānic verse, "Not one of you shall escape the fire of Hell: this ordained by God." The Prophet answered: "God has said, 'We will save those who have believed and keep the wrong-doers in Hell upon their knees'." ⁶ Probably it was her pride that forced her to handle carefully her jealousy of 'Ā'isha and to try to find, in the company of this merry young woman and by participating in her petty schemes and small battles, a distraction from her hidden worry.

The Prophet would tolerate them when possible because of their weak feminine nature which aroused his pity and because of the fact that they were the daughters of two of his dearest companions; until one day he was alone with Māria in Ḥafṣa's house. Then Ḥafṣa's wound began to ooze blood. She remembered her father's saying, 'By God! I know that the Prophet does not love you and were it not for me, he would have divorced you.' So, when Māria left, Ḥafṣa went to the Prophet and said, "I have seen her with you. By God, you have insulted me—you would not have insulted me by dealing with that woman in my house if you did not disdain me." ⁷ She began to cry. Her words must have saddened the

6. *Ṭabaqāt*, II, 73 and Qur'an, Mary: 71-72.

7. *Simṭ*, p. 85.

Prophet, for he could never insult the daughter of 'Umar whom he had married to honour his Companion. He calmed her ⁸ by revealing to her that Māria was forbidden to him, so let Ḥafṣa forget the whole affair. She was eventually satisfied and spent the night with the Prophet in tender enjoyment. In the morning, when she saw 'Ā'isha, she told her the story and 'Ā'isha seized this opportunity to discredit this Coptic slave girl rival. When Ḥafṣa broke her secret to 'Ā'isha, she could not have realised she was playing with fire. 'Ā'isha was not content until she had organized a demonstration by all the Prophet's wives against Māria, insisting that Māria should have no place in Madina. The events that we have talked of concerning 'Ā'isha before, then followed. ⁹

What concerns us here is connected with Ḥafṣa and her father 'Umar, for she was the one who revealed the secret which the Prophet asked her to keep. By doing so, she unconsciously created this trouble. It is reported by Ibn Ḥajar ¹⁰ that the Prophet virtually divorced Ḥafṣa. As to how he took her back, there are different opinions. According to one, he felt pity for 'Umar who covered his head with dust and lamented: "No more does God care for 'Umar and his daughter after what has happened." But on the next day Gabriel came to the Prophet and said: "God orders you to take back Ḥafṣa, for she is ever fasting and praying and she will be your wife in paradise." ¹¹

8. *Simṭ*, p. 85.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 87-89.

10. *Iṣāba*, VIII 52 and *Isti'āb*, IV, 1812.

11. Both of these accounts are related in *Simṭ*, p. 85 and *Isti'āb*, IV, 1812.

It is most likely this divorce and remarriage took place before the rebellion of 'Ā'isha and the rest of the wives reached its peak. When the Prophet separated himself from them, it was natural that Ḥafṣa's feeling of regret was more than that of the rest of the Mothers of the Faithful. Likewise, her feeling that she had done wrong to the Prophet was graver than that of the rest of the wives, for being such a pious woman and the daughter of the faithful 'Umar, she should not have lightly revealed such a secret of the Prophet who had treated her with honour and dignity, especially after he had asked her to keep it. According to the *Iṣāba*¹² 'Umar visited his daughter and found her crying. He said: "It seems that the Prophet divorced you. He has divorced you once before but took you back for my sake. If he divorces you once more I shall never talk to you again." And he went out to the Mosque a worried man and found the Muslims with bowed heads flicking pebbles and muttering that the Prophet had divorced his wives. Since the Prophet had separated himself from them, none of the Muslims had dared to discuss the subject with him. But 'Umar, seeing his daughter was the cause of all the trouble, lost patience and went directly to the Prophet's chamber where he found Rabāḥ [his attendant] standing guard as usual outside the door. He asked permission to see the Prophet, but received no reply, not even to a second request. Then 'Umar raised his voice imploringly: "O Rabāḥ! ask the Prophet for permission to see him. I have come to talk to him about Ḥafṣa. By God, if he orders

12. *Iṣāba*, VIII, 52.

me to wring her neck, I would do it." His voice reached the Prophet, who was moved. He permitted him to enter and 'Umar, looking round the chamber was moved to tears.

The Prophet asked: "What is it that makes you cry, O son of al-Khaṭṭāb?"

'Umar pointed to the rough mat on which the Prophet was lying and to the handful of barley and mimosa pods which was all the food in the chamber. Then he stopped crying and said: "O Prophet of God! What is it that makes these female troubles so difficult for you? If you have divorced them, God, his angels, Gabriel, Michael are with you and I myself and Abū Bakr, and the Faithful, are with you too." The Prophet smiled and assured him that he had not divorced his wives but separated himself from them for one month. 'Umar's spirits returned and he left for the Mosque and shouted at the top of his voice: "The Prophet has not divorced his wives." Shortly afterwards the Prophet followed him to the Mosque and recited God's words: "O Prophet! Why do you declare unlawful the thing that God has made lawful for you, seeking to please your wives? God is forgiving and merciful. God has ordained that you are absolved from your oaths. God is your Lord and he is All-knowing and wise. When the Prophet confided a secret to one of his wives and she revealed it and God made him aware of it, Muḥammad made some of it known to her but not all. When he told her this secret she said, 'Who told you this?' He said: 'The All-knowing and wise has told me. If both of you [Ḥafṣa and 'Ā'isha] repent to God (for your hearts have sinned)

then he will pardon you. But if you collaborate against him, [Muḥammad] then God is his protector and Gabriel and the Righteous believers. The angels, too are his helpers. If he divorces you, God may give him other wives better than you who will submit to the will of God, believing, pious, penitent, worshipping, and fasting, both widows and virgins."¹³


THE PRECIOUS TRUST

The wives of the Prophet understood this heavenly lesson and Ḥafṣa regained her peace of mind after being on the verge of death from sadness and remorse. We do not know whether she participated in any female intrigue in the house of the Prophet after that time or caused any other disturbance in his life. When he died, Ḥafṣa, out of all the Mothers of the Faithful including 'Ā'isha, was chosen to preserve the manuscript copy of the Qur'ān. It came about this way: 'Umar advised Abū Bakr, the Prophet's successor, to hasten and collect the scattered pieces of the Qur'ān before the memory of those sayings were lost and those who had memorised them were gone. Abū Bakr responded and collected the Qur'ān and entrusted that copy to Ḥafṣa. It remained with her safely until it was taken by the Commander of the Faithful, 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān [the third of the rightly-guided Caliphs]. 'Uthmān made four copies which he distributed to the lands of the Muslims and ordered that all other copies be destroyed. Why? To

13. Qur'ān, *Prohibition*: 1-5. See also the reasons for the revelation of these verses in *Tafsīr al-Ṭabari* (Ṭabari's Commentary on the Qur'ān), and in *al-Kaṣhshāf* by al-Zamakhsharī, IV, Egyptian edition (which is also a commentary on the Qur'ān).

prevent any disagreement among the Muslims regarding the text of the Qur'ān. After that 'Ā'isha devoted her time to worship until the *Fitna* [uprising] after which she left Mecca demanding vengeance for the killing of 'Uthmān. She wanted Ḥafṣa to come with her. Ḥafṣa hated to refuse the entreaties of the companion who had shown her such affection in the House of the Prophet. She got ready to leave with 'Ā'isha, but changed her mind when her brother 'Abd Allah admonished her not to go at this troubled time. She spent the rest of her life in fasting and prayer until she died either in the last days of 'Uthmān or the beginning of the time of Mu'āwiya¹⁴ ['Uthmān died June 17, 656 A.D. and Mu'āwiya became Caliph in 661 A.D.—the Arabic sources are confused regarding Ḥafṣa's death.]

14. According to al-Wāqidī she died in the month of Sha'bān in the year 45. According to another account in *Simt*, p. 86, she died in the year 41. It is also said that she died during the caliphate of 'Uthmān. See *Istī'āb*, IV, 1812. 'Uthmān died June 17, 656 A.D., and Mu'āwiya became Caliph in 661 A.D. Historical sources are confused about Ḥafṣa's death. [Editors]



Chapter 6

ZAYNAB BINT KHUZAYMA
MOTHER OF THE POOR

'She was called Mother of the Poor because of the
mercy she showed to them.'

Ibn Hishām IV, 296

;

Only a short time had passed since Ḥafṣa came to the house of the Prophet, before a fourth wife also arrived. She was, too, the widow of a dear martyr of the battle of Uḥud. She was the 'Mother of the Faithful, Zaynab bint Khuzayma ibn al-Ḥārith ibn 'Abd Allah ibn 'Amr ibn 'Abd Manāf ibn Hilāl ibn 'Āmir ibn Ṣa'ṣa'a.'¹

It seems that, because her stay in the house of the Prophet was short, the chroniclers and the biographers did not concern themselves unduly with her, therefore nothing of the life has reached us except several discrepant narratives. It seemed the only thing that concerned the chroniclers was her noble ancestry and that her husband fell at Uḥud and that the Prophet married her and that she died. There are conflicting opinions concerning the name of her first husband. It is reported² by one source that he was 'Abd Allah ibn Jaḥash, the son of the Prophet's aunt and the brother of Muḥammad's wife Zaynab. Another source³ says she was the wife of al-Ṭufayl ibn al-Ḥārith ibn al-Muṭṭalib ibn 'Abd Manāf. Ibn Ḥajar and ibn 'Abd al-Birr added that after his death his brother 'Ubayda married her. According to a third source: "Before the Prophet married her she was with 'Ubayda and before that she was with Jahm ibn 'Amr ibn al-Ḥārith, her cousin."⁴ The sources also disagree about the time of her husband's death. In

1. *Iṣāba, Isti'āb, Jamhara*, 262 and Ṭabari, III, 179.

2. Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣāba*, VIII, 94 and *Isti'āb*, IV, 1853.

3. Ṭabari, III, 33 and 179; *Iṣāba*, VIII, 944 and *Simt*, 112.

4. Ibn Hishām, IV, 297.

the *Iṣāba* he was killed at Uḥud and according to Ibn al-Kalbī he was killed at Badr. She was married to al-Ṭufayl ibn al-Ḥārith who divorced her and his brother married her, before he was killed at Badr: it was then the Prophet asked for her hand in marriage. According to Ṭabarī: "In this year—the fourth—the Prophet married Zaynab bint Khuzayma of the banū Hilāl in the month of Ramaḍān. Before this, she was married to al-Ṭufayl ibn al-Ḥārith, who divorced her.⁵ These sources differ for the third time as to who undertook to marry her to the Prophet. Ibn al-Kalbī says that he asked her hand in marriage and that she empowered him herself and he married her.⁶ According to ibn Hishām, her uncle Qubayṣa ibn 'Amr al-Hilālī was her '*wakīl*' and the Prophet offered a dowry of 400 dirhams.⁷ Still they differ for the fourth time about the period she stayed in the Prophet's house. According to the *Iṣāba*: "The Prophet consummated marriage with her after he had known Ḥafṣa and she remained with him two or three months and then died." However, according to ibn al-Kalbī, the Prophet married her in the month of Ramaḍān in the third year of the Hijra, A.D. 625 and she remained with him eight months, dying in the month of Rabi' al-Ākhir, the fourth year. Ibn al-'Imād says: "In this year, i.e., the 3rd, he consummated marriage with Zaynab bint Khuzayma al-'Āmiriyya, the Mother of the Poor.

5. Ṭabarī, II, 33 and III, 179.

6. According to Muslim custom the parties to the marriage should appoint sponsors known for their good character to arrange the wedding contract on their behalf; these sponsors are called "*W'ahils*". [Editors]

7. Ibn Hishām, IV, 296.

She lived with him three months, then died."⁸

The concern of modern writers in pursuing the life of Khuzayma and verifying these differences is no more remarkable than the general indifference of the ancient writers. Dr. Haykal confirms that she was the wife of 'Ubayda ibn al-Muṭṭalib who was killed at Badr. She stayed one or two years and then died; thus she was the only wife after Khadija who died before him.⁹ Bodley states: "The marriage of Muḥammad to Ḥafṣa was quickly followed by another which was more of a formality than any thing else. The bride was a widow of 'Obeida ibn al-Ḥārith, Muḥammad's cousin who had fallen at Badr. Her name was Zaynab bint Khuzayma . . . whom' Muḥammad took into his harem more from kindness than any thing else. She never bothered 'Ā'isha or Ḥafṣa and, eight months after her marriage, died."¹⁰ Other writers pass by Zaynab and do not mention her at all. However, no matter how these historians and biographers differ concerning the life of Zaynab, they are unanimous on one point—that she was good, generous and compassionate towards the poor, therefore her name is always associated with the soubriquet 'Mother of the Poor'. Ibn Hishām says: "She was called the Mother of the Poor because of her compassion and pity for them."¹¹ In the *Iṣāba*:¹² "She was called the Mother of the Poor because she fed them and gave

8. *Shadharāt al-Dhahab*, the chronicles of the third year.

9. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, *Ḥayāt Muḥammad* (The Life of Muḥammad), p. 288 and Ṭabarī, III, 179.

10. Bodley, p. 176. Arabic translation. [p. 198 of the original text—Editors]

11. Ibn Hishām, IV, 296.

12. *Iṣāba*, VIII, 94.

them alms." Similar quotations occur in Ṭabari,¹³ *Shadharāt al-Dhahab*,¹⁴ and *al-Istī'āb*.¹⁵ Bodley says: "She was good and generous." Haykal mentions: "She was not beautiful but she was known for her goodness and charity." It is necessary for me here to refer to the article written by his Eminence al-Shaykh Muḥammad al-Madani in *al-Risāla* (March, 1965, No. 1103) which says: "Zaynab bint Jaḥash was the best of them all, and the most compassionate of them towards the poor to the extent that she was called 'The Mother of the Poor.'" I do not know where his Eminence has got this name, but all the sources for the Prophet's biography, the categories of the Companions and the earliest sources of Islamic history agree that the nickname 'The Mother of the Poor' was peculiar to Zaynab bint Khuzayma.

Most likely she died at the age of thirty, according to al-Wāqidī; ibn Ḥajar relates in the *Iṣāba* that this age was considered by his contemporaries as beyond youth. They forgot that the judgment they passed, that she was beyond the age of youth whilst still in her thirtieth year or so, is sufficient to refute their lengthy accounts about the childishness of 'Ā'isha. If we were to consult the books of biography for more information about the life of Zaynab in the house of the Prophet, we should not gain anything more substantial. So it is sufficient to imagine her there, happy for the honour she gained by becoming a Mother of the Faithful; so busy with the poor that she had no time for the intrigues of the harem. She

13. Ṭabari, III, 33.

14. *Shadharāt al-Dhahab*, I, 10.

15. *Istī'āb*, IV, 1853; *Ṭabaqāt and Simt*, p. 112.

was content with the Prophet's respect, not torn by greed nor overburdened by jealousy. But she did not remain long.¹⁶ She passed away like a brief shadow, to rest in peace as she had lived in peace, to become immortal in Islamic history as 'The Mother of the Faithful' as well as the 'Mother of the Poor'.

16. *Simt*, p. 116.

Chapter 7

UMM SALAMA BINT ZĀD AL-RAKB

'When the Prophet married Umm Salama I was greatly grieved, for her beauty, which he used to praise so much, was many times greater than was reported.'

*'Ā'isha bint Abū Bakr
(al-Iṣāba, viii, 241.)*

PRIDE AND BEAUTY

The chamber of the Mother of the Poor remained empty for a long time until Umm Salama came to occupy it. According to ibn Sa'd in his *Ṭabaqāt*: "He married me and moved me to the chamber of Zaynab bint Khuzayma, the Mother of the Poor." Her full name was Hind bint Abū Umayya ibn al-Mughīra ibn 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar ibn Makhzūm. Therefore she was from the banū Makhzūm of the Quraysh tribe.¹ The Prophet consummated marriage with her in the month of Shawwāl in the fourth year of the Hijra, according to Ṭabarī.² Her arrival in the household created concern and worry for the two young wives 'Ā'isha and Ḥaḥṣa—and why should they not be worried? For here was a new and dear wife, bringing with her beauty, intelligence, pride and a noble lineage. Her father was one of the prominent men of his tribe, famous and generous. His house was so generous that through the ages they became known as Zād al-Rakb,³ for when he travelled he refused to let others bring their own food but insisted on supplying all the caravans at his own expense. Her mother was 'Ātika bint 'Āmir ibn Rabī'a bin Mālik ibn Jadhīma al-Kin'āniyya of the prominent banū Firās. Her grandfather Jadhīma ibn 'Alqama was known as Jidhl al-Ṭi'ān.⁴ [valiant warrior] Salama, 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd

1. Ibn Hishām, I, 345 and IV, 294; Ṭabarī, III, 177 and *Nasab Quraysh*, 316.

2. Ṭabarī, III, 42.

3. Zād al-Rakb means 'supplier of food to caravans' which indicates the generosity of Umm Salama's father. [Editors]

4. Ṭabarī, III, 32.

al-Asad ibn Hilāl ibn 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar ibn Makhzūm the Companion, nicknamed Dhu al-Hijra-tayn,⁵ the son of the aunt of the Prophet Barra bint 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib ibn Hāshim and 'brother' of Muḥammad—through suckling.⁶

Both were suckled by an Abyssinian woman Thiwayba, a bondsmaid of Abū Lahab, one of the Prophet's uncles.⁷

Beside their noble lineage, Abū Salama and his wife Hind could claim a glorious past in Islam for they were one of the first to become Muslims and emigrated together to Abyssinia where Umm Salama gave birth to her son Salama.⁸ Then they returned to Mecca until they could no longer endure the renewed persecution and Abū Salama decided to fly again, to Madina and the story of their flight is still, despite the passage of time, a poignant tragedy. Let Umm Salama relate it:⁹ "When Abū Salama decided to leave for Madina he saddled a camel and putting me on it, he guided it. When men from the banū al-Mughīra saw him they told him: 'You cannot do such a thing. Why should you take our tribeswoman into the country?' So they snatched the camel's rein from him and took me. Then the banū 'Abd al-Asad became furious and held our son Salama and told my

5. This term means 'the one who emigrated twice', i.e., once to Abyssinia and once to Madina. [Editors]

6. According to the Islamic religion, brotherhood may be established by infants being suckled at the same breast without being born of the same mother: See Chapter II, footnote 12. [Editors]

7. Ibn Hishām, III, 102; *Istī'āb*, 639 and 1683; *Jamhara*, 134 and *Tasab Quraysh*, 337.

8. Ibn Hishām, I, 345.

9. *Ibid.*, II, 112 and *Simt*, p. 87.

husband's tribesmen: "By God, we shall never leave this our son with her if you remove her from her husband." So they pulled at Salama from both sides so hard that they dislocated his arm. His father's tribesmen finally took him away while the banū Mughīra kept me. My husband went to Madina and so I was separated from him and my son. Every morning I went to the place called al-Abṭuh where I sat and mourned until evening for nearly a year until, one day, a relative of mine, one of the banū Mughīra, felt compassion for me. He asked his tribesmen: 'Won't you release this poor woman? You have separated her from her husband and son.' He persisted until they said to me: 'Follow your husband if you wish.' Likewise the banū 'Abd al-Asad returned my son and I saddled my camel, put my son in my lap and went alone to Madina to find my husband. When I reached al-Tan'im, only about two leagues from Mecca, I met 'Uthmān ibn Ṭalḥa¹⁰ who said: 'Where are you going, O daughter of Abū Umayya?'

'I am seeking my husband in Madina,' I said.

'Is there anyone with you?' he asked.

'No one, except God and my son.'

'I cannot let you travel alone,' he said, so he took the rein of the camel and accompanied me. By God, I had not travelled with such a fine man before. Whenever we stopped, he made my camel squat and

10. 'Uthmān was still then a polytheist. He embraced Islam during the truce of the Ḥudaybiyya and emigrated with Khālid ibn al-Walīd before the conquest of Mecca. When Mecca was conquered the Prophet handed the keys of the Ka'ba to 'Uthmān ibn Ṭalḥa and to his cousin Shayba ibn 'Uthmān ibn Abū Ṭalḥa. 'Uthmān fell as a martyr at the battle of Ajnadin during the caliphate of 'Umar. See *al-Rawḍ al-Unuf*, I, 285 as well as *Ṭabaqāt*, *Iṣāba* and *Istī'āb*.

then he would withdraw himself beneath a tree and before we departed he would bring the camel and saddle it and finally ask me to mount. When I was secure in the saddle, he would then come forward and take the reins to lead it. He continued to serve me until he brought me to Madina. Then he looked at the dwellings of the banū 'Umar ibn 'Auf at Qabā' where Abū Salama's house lay and said: 'Your husband is here in this quarter, so enter and God bless you.' Then he returned to Mecca.¹¹ Thus Umm Salama, out of all the Emigrants was the first woman to enter Madina and likewise was the first Muslim woman to emigrate to Abyssinia.¹² Her husband was also the first of the Companions to emigrate to Madina.¹³

At Madina she became preoccupied with raising her children¹⁴ while her husband was preparing to fight for Islam. When the Prophet conducted his war against Dhu al-'Ushayra in the month of Jumada al-Ulā in the second year of the Hijra [624 A.D.] in which he concluded peace with the banū Mudlij and their allies the banū Dumra, he chose Abū Salama from amongst the Companions to be the governor of Madina.¹⁵ He also participated with the Prophet in

11. Ibn Hishām, II, 112; *Iṣāba*, VIII, 240 and *Isti'āb*, IV, 1939.

12. *Iṣāba*, VIII, 240 and *Isti'āb*, IV, 1939.

13. Ibn Hishām, II, 112.

14. There is disagreement that she gave Abū Salama two sons, Salama and 'Umar. Ṭabarī, III, 177 mentions that she also gave him two daughters Zaynab and Barra. This same account is related in *Jamhara*, 134 and *Nasab Quraysh*, 337. However, it is related in *Isti'āb* in the biography of Zaynab bint Abū Salama that Zaynab said that her name was Barra and that the Prophet renamed her Zaynab.

15. Ibn Hishām, II, 248; Ṭabarī, the events of the second year of the Hijra and *Isti'āb*, IV, 1682. For the raid of dhu al-'Ushayra see *Ṭabaqāt* by Ibn Sa'd, II, 4. Leiden.

the great battle of Badr and so became immortalised as one of the three hundred and fourteen men who achieved victory against three times that number of non-believers in the first decisive battle between paganism and monotheism. And when some men turned against Muḥammad and Islam only two months after the battle of Uḥud and Muḥammad learnt that the banū Asad were calling on the people to attack his house in Madina, he called for Abū Salama and entrusted him with the command of a company of one hundred and fifty men, among whom were Abū 'Ubayda ibn al-Jarrāḥ and Sa'd ibn Abū Waqqāṣ,¹⁶ to fight against them. The valiant horseman Abū Salama executed the orders of the Prophet and took his enemies by surprise at dawn. He won a victory against them, returning triumphant to Madina, and so restored some of the dignity that the Muslims lost at Uḥud.¹⁷ Abū Salama led his men in this battle whilst still suffering from a wound sustained in the battle of Uḥud that was still only partially healed. His fight against the banū Asad overtired him and the wound became dangerous, thus causing his death. The Prophet attended him on his death bed and remained at his side praying until he died; he then closed his eyes with his own noble hands and recited, "God is great" nine times over him. The people asked him. "O Prophet, have you made a mistake or forgotten by reciting these words?"

He replied, "I have neither mistaken nor forgot: for had I a thousand times repeated it over him, he

16. Two Muslims who later became important generals in the conquest of Syria and 'Irāq respectively. [Editors]

17. *Ṭabaqāt* of Ibn Sa'd, II, 35.

would have deserved it.”¹⁸

So Hind was now a widow.

Those who were prominent among the Companions waited until the mourning period of Umm Salama was over. Then Abū Bakr asked for her hand but she gently refused. He was followed by ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, whose luck was no better. After this, the Prophet sent to ask for her hand himself. She would have desired that such a great honour be bestowed upon her, but she was doubtful about filling a proper place in the Prophet’s household beside ‘Ā’isha and Ḥaḥṣā, since she had passed her youth and had children already to take care of. So she sent back word excusing herself, saying she was likely to be jealous, that she was old and had her children to raise.

Muḥammad answered: “As to the question of age, I am older than you and as for jealousy, God will remove it from you and as to the children, God and his Prophet will take care of them.”¹⁹

The marriage was completed. ‘Ā’isha and Ḥaḥṣā pretended whatever they could of courtesy to receive this new woman, but ‘Ā’isha could not sustain the part for long. She told Ḥaḥṣā of her jealousy. “When the Prophet married Umm Salama I was greatly grieved because of his description of her beauty. I kept patient until I saw her and then, by God! I thought she was many times more beautiful than he had described. I mentioned this to Ḥaḥṣā who said: ‘She is not so beautiful as they say.’ Ḥaḥṣā also

18. Ṭabarī, II, 177 and *Iṣāba*, VIII, 240.

19. *Ṣimlī*, p. 89. However, the Prophet had married Salama the daughter of his uncle Ḥamza to someone else. See *Nasab Quraysh*, 338.

pointed out her age. And when I saw Umm Salama again, she was as Ḥaḥṣā said, not so beautiful after all—but still I was jealous.”²⁰

No doubt Umm Salama felt pleased at the impact of her arrival in the Prophet’s household on ‘Ā’isha, the favoured wife. Therefore she may have agreed to send her young daughter Zaynab to a nurse-maid so as to devote her time more fully to the Prophet. Thus Zaynab was still very young at this time; she remained with her mother until one day ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir, Hind’s brother by suckling, took the girl from Hind’s lap and told her: “Let her go, because you are not devoting enough of your time to the Prophet.”²¹ According to the *Iṣāba* the Prophet came to Umm Salama and said: “Where is Zunab?”—a term he used to pamper the child. It was left to ‘Ammār to point out: “This girl is interfering with the Prophet’s married life.”²²

It became obvious that Umm Salama knew her position and would not let ‘Ā’isha hurt her dignity, for good reason since she had the old glory of coming from a venerable and respected family as well as the new glory of being sought after by Muḥammad.

She also resented ‘Umar’s interference in the affairs of the Prophet. She told him resentfully: “I wonder at you, O ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, for you have meddled in everything; even between the Prophet and his wives.” She said this because she was sure of her position with the Prophet, for Muḥammad considered her his kin. It is reported that one day when

20. *Iṣāba*, VIII, 241.

21. Ibn Hishām, II, 171 and *Ṣimlī*, p. 90.

22. *Iṣāba*, VIII, 240.

he was visiting her and her daughter Zaynab was there, that his daughter Fāṭima al-Zahra the Fair One came with her sons al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, and the Prophet hugged them and said: "The mercy and blessings of God be on you, O relatives of the Prophet, for surely God is benign and glorious!" Umm Salama wept, and the Prophet asked why. She answered: "You have singled them out for a blessing and omitted me and my daughter."

He said: "But you and your daughter are of the house of the Prophet."²³

Zaynab grew up in the care of the Prophet and 'she was one of the most learned women of her time.' It is reported that: "She entered upon the Prophet while he was washing, so he sprinkled her face with water and thus the water of youth remained in her face until she became old."²⁴ He loved Salama her son so much that he chose him as a husband for the daughter of his uncle Ḥamza, the chief Martyr.²⁵

Revelation used to come to the Prophet in 'Ā'isha's quarters, which caused her to boast to the rival wives; until Umm Salama came to the household and then the following portion of the Qur'ān came to Muḥammad when he was with her: "And there are others who have confessed their misdeeds. They have mixed a righteous deed with another that was bad believing that God may forgive them. God is forgiving and merciful."²⁶ As to the cause of the

23. *Simt*, p. 2.

24. *Isti'āb*, IV, 1855.

25. Ṭabarī, III, 177; *Simt*, p. 16, *Jumhara*, 124 and *Nasab Quraysh*, 337.

26. Qur'ān, *Repentance*: 102.

revelation of this verse chroniclers relate a story that is worth mentioning. They say that the Prophet went to war against the banū Qurayza in the fifth year of the Hijra and besieged them until he wore them down. God cast fear in their hearts, so they sent a message to the Prophet asking him to send Abū Lubāba ibn 'Abd Mundhir, his Companion, to treat with them. So the Prophet sent him and when they saw him the men stood up and the women and children cried before his eyes. He felt compassion on them, and they asked him: "O Abū Lubāba! should we submit to the judgment of Muḥammad?"

He said: "Yes, if you want to be slaughtered," drawing his finger across his throat. He knew that he had betrayed God and his Prophet. He returned to the Prophet's Mosque and tied himself to one of its pillars, saying, "I will never leave this place till God forgives me for what I have done." The Prophet, who was waiting for his return, finally heard the whole event and said: "If he had come to me, I would have forgiven him but as long as he has done what he has done, I am not the person who will release him, until God forgives him."²⁷

According to Ibn Hishām²⁸ Abū Lubāba remained tied to the column of the Mosque for six nights. His wife came at the time of prayer to release him to perform his prayers and he would then return to be tied again. At last his repentance was revealed to the Prophet at daybreak when he was with Umm Salama. She asked, hearing the Prophet laughing: "What

27. Ṭabarī, the events of the fifth year of the Hijra, III, 54, the Egyptian edition.

28. Ibn Hishām, III, 24.

makes you laugh?"

He replied: "Abū Lubāba has been forgiven."

She said: "Shall I tell the good news to him?"

He said: "Yes, if you want to."

It was before the time that the wives of Muḥammad were secluded. She went to the door of the house and shouted: "O Abū Lubāba, be of good heart, for God has forgiven you." When the people heard, they rose to release him, but he replied and said: "No one will release me except the hand of the Prophet." And when the Prophet passed by for his morning prayer, he released him.

In the sixth year of the Hijra, Umm Salama accompanied the Prophet on his journey to Mecca when the Quraysh prevented Muḥammad and his followers from visiting the Holy shrine. After this there was the Covenant of the Ḥudaybiyya, which historians consider as a great victory. Umm Salama played a singular role in this event, which has not been forgotten by the history of Islam.²⁹ This is how it happened. The Companions of the Prophet grumbled when they heard of the conditions attached to this agreement, thinking that although they were victors the peace was not sufficiently favourable to them. It is sufficient to mention only one aspect of their grumbling here. When the agreement was nearly concluded and remained only to be signed, 'Umar al-Khaṭṭāb came to Abū Bakr and asked him: "Isn't he the Prophet of God? Aren't we Muslims? Aren't they Infidels?"

Abū Bakr said, each time, "Yes."

29. Ṭabarī, III, 80 and *Sinī*, p. 65.

"So why should we agree to what is demeaning to our religion?"

Abū Bakr warned him: "I testify that he is the Prophet of God."

'Umar said: "I do the same." So 'Umar went to the Prophet and asked him the same questions he had asked Abū Bakr, until he reached the last question. The Prophet then said: "I am the servant of God and his Messenger. I shall not disobey Him and He will not fail me."³⁰

The whole issue became so serious that there was danger of a clash. The Prophet then ordered his Companions to get up and slaughter animals and shave themselves. They refused to a man, and a second and third time he repeated his order. Then he returned to Umm Salama and told her of the trouble. She said: "O Prophet of God! do you want to see your Companions slaughter animals and shave themselves? Go out and do not say a word to any one of them until you have slaughtered your fattened she-camel and called your barber to shave you. The Prophet listened to her advice. He went out and said no word until he had slaughtered his animal and shaved. When his Companions saw this they followed suit and began shaving one another, tense with silent frustration, mingled with anger among themselves.³¹ The Muslims came back to their senses after being overcome by their emotions realizing what an important peace the Prophet had concluded and that there had never been such an important victory before for Islam; for the simple fact

30. Ibn Hishām, III, 131 and Ṭabarī, III, 79.

31. Ṭabarī, the events of the sixth year of the Hijra, II, 80.

is that after the Ḥudaybiyya, the number of Muslims was more than doubled.

Umm Salama also accompanied the Prophet in the raid against the Khaybar [a Jewish tribe] and also in his conquest of Mecca, his seige of al-Ṭā'if³² and the raids against the Hawāzin and Thaḳīf tribes. When she returned to Madina in the eighth year of the Hijra, the wives of the Prophet incited her against Māria and they persisted until she submitted to 'Ā'isha, her principal rival and agreed to support her in her intrigues against Māria. Māria gave birth to her son Ibrāhīm in the eighth year of the Hijra and Umm Salama, 'Ā'isha, Ḥafṣa, Zaynab and the rest of the wives saw the great joy the Prophet took in him; this was the cause of the trouble that led to the Prophet separating himself for one month. Then after that storm, quietness descended on the Prophet's house and when he became ill, Umm Salama and the other wives agreed to his being nursed in the chamber of Umm Salama's antagonist 'Ā'isha.

GOD IS BEHIND THIS NATION

Then after his death she avoided participation in public life until the Great Sedition took place. She supported the Prophet's cousin 'Alī. She would have liked to go out and support him actively but she hated, whilst a Mother of the Faithful, to undertake such campaigning. So she came to 'Alī and offered him her son 'Umar, saying: "O Commander of the Faithful, if I would not be disobeying God and knowing anyway that you would refuse me, I would go

32. Ṭabarī, the events of the eighth year of the Hijra, III, 133,

out with you . . . But this is my son 'Umar, who is dearer to me than my own life, and he will go with you and fight your wars."³³

Then she went to 'Ā'isha and spoke to her vehemently: "What is this I hear about you going out to fight? God is behind this nation. If I were to go out as you do, and were I told I would inherit Paradise, I would be ashamed to meet Muḥammad through violating the seclusion he had imposed upon me." However, 'Ā'isha went heedlessly on her way and Umm Salama advanced in age and lived to be afflicted, as was all Islam, by the tragedy of Karbalā and the massacre of the people of the house of the Prophet there.³⁴ According to another source, she died at the end of the year 61 A.H. after she had received the news of al-Ḥusayn's death.³⁵ It is also reported that she lived a year beyond that and died when she heard that Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiya had sent an army to Madina to massacre the house of 'Alī in the year 63. The Muslims saw off, at last, to the grave the daughter of Zād al-Rakb, the last of all the Prophet's wives to die. The noble Companion Abū Hurayra prayed over her and she was buried in the Baqī'. Nothing remained after her of the Mothers of the Faithful except memory and reminiscense.

33. *Iṣāba*, VIII, 241.

34. In the year A.D. 680 al-Ḥusayn, grandson of the Prophet, was invited by the 'Irāqis to become their caliph. Disregarding the advice of friends and relatives who suspected their sincerity, he went with a small entourage to 'Irāq. Al-Ḥusayn and his company were surrounded and atrociously massacred by Umayyad troops near Karbalā in present-day 'Irāq, and only 'Alī the Less, a son of al-Ḥusayn, survived. This massacre is still commemorated today by the Shī'ites who are the adherents of the House of 'Alī. [Editors]

35. *Iṣāba*, VIII, 241.

Chapter 8

ZAYNAB BINT JAḤASH, THE NOBLE AND BEAUTIFUL WOMAN

'O Prophet of God! I am not like any other of your wives for not one of them was married except through her father, brother or one of her relatives. I was married to you by God from Heaven'.

Zaynab bint Jaḥash

A NOBLE WOMAN AND A FREED MAN

When Umm Sa'lama came to the house of the Prophet, and 'A'isha told Hafsa about the pangs of jealousy she experienced because of the beauty of the bride, Hafsa drew her attention to the fact that despite her beauty, she was old and advised her to keep her jealousy for someone who merited it more. It was as if Hafsa was foretelling the future! For not much more than a year had passed¹ since that marriage, than someone who really merited 'A'isha's envy arrived in the Prophet's House. This was Zaynab bint Jahash ibn Ri'ab the beautiful and noble young lady of the banu Asad ibn Khuzayma al-Mudari² and the grand daughter of 'Abd al-Muttalib and Muhammad's cousin.³ She was described as: "fair and well-endowed, one of the most perfect women of the Quraysh."⁴

She was proud of her beauty and of her descent.⁵ If Zaynab had come to the household proud only of her youth, beauty and relationship to the Prophet, these things would have been sufficient to arouse the jealousy of the Prophet's wives. But how much more so when her marriage, a heavenly arrangement, revealing the will of God! We do not know of any of

1. The Prophet married Umm Salama in Shawwāl of the fourth year of the Hijra, and married Zaynab in the fifth year. See Ṭabari, III, 42.

2. *Jamhara*, 180.

3. Her mother is Umayma bint 'Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hāshim. See *Nasab Quraysh*, p. 19.

4. *Simt*, p. 107.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 112.

the marriages of the Mothers of the Faithful that occupied Madina to the same degree as did Zaynab's and that is because of the special circumstances which preceded the marriage and the doubts and differences which it provoked and which were decided by heavenly revelation.

To explain this, it is necessary to return to the period before Muḥammad was sent to spread the message of Islam, when Ḥakīm ibn Ḥizām ibn Khuwaylid returned from his trip to Syria bringing with him a slave boy eight years old named Zayd. In fact, Zayd was not a slave, he was: "Zayd ibn Hāritha ibn Shurāḥil ibn Ka'b" of the banū Zayd al-Lāt. One day his mother Su'da bint Tha'laba took him to visit her people, the banū Ma'n ibn Tayy. They were attacked by horsemen of the banū al-Qayn ibn Jisr who captured Zayd and sold him in one of the Arab markets; and Ḥakīm ibn Ḥizām was the one who bought him.⁶ Khadija, who was then the wife of Muḥammad, came to visit Ḥakīm her nephew; and he insisted on her choosing one of the boy servants for herself. She took Zayd and when our lord Muḥammad saw him he asked for him as a gift to which she readily agreed.⁷ Zayd's father, Hāritha, was worried greatly about his son and sought him everywhere. He heard that he was in Mecca, so he went with his brother Ka'b to Muḥammad's house and said to him: "O son of al-Muṭṭalib, the

6. See this account in detail in Ibn Hishām, II, 264.

7. This is the account of Ibn Hishām in II, 264. According to *Simt*, Muḥammad bought Zayd in the pre-Islamic era at the market of 'Ukāz, but later freed and adopted him. *Simt*, p. 108.

Lord of his people, you are the neighbours of God.⁸ You redeem the captive and feed the hungry and we have come to you regarding our son. Be generous and release him."

The Prophet said: "There is another solution."

They asked: "What is it?"

He answered: "I will call him and give him the choice: you or me! If he chooses you, then take him; if he chooses me, then by God, I will keep him."

They replied: "You are more than fair." Zayd was called and he recognized his father and uncle. The Prophet asked him to choose and he chose his master. His father implored him in a trembling voice: "O Zayd, do you choose bondage rather than your father and mother, your country and your people?"

Zayd answered: "I have received nothing but good of this man and I shall never leave him." Then Muḥammad took his hand and showing him to the Quraysh, asked them to be his witness that Zayd was his son who would inherit from him and he from Zayd, in the event of either's death. And the boy was called Zayd ibn Muḥammad and was the first to embrace Islam after 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib.⁹

When the Prophet fled to Madina he created a bond of brotherhood among his Companions and so Hamza, his uncle and Zayd, became as brothers.¹⁰ When Zayd reached the marriage age, the Prophet

8. Muḥammad's family was the custodian of the Holy Shrine, the Ka'ba, and took care of the pilgrims who came there to worship, hence this form of address. [Editors]

9. Ibn Hishām, II, 264 and Ṭabari, II, 215.

10. This refers to Muḥammad's measure to unite his followers by making them choose a 'brother' in Islam. [Editors]

chose for him Zaynab, daughter of his aunt Umayma bint 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. Zaynab and her brother 'Abd Allah resented that she, as a noble Muḍārite, should be given in marriage to a freed man. They besought the Prophet that he should not let such shame be done to them, for the daughters of the nobles should not marry bondsmen, even if freed. Zaynab said, amongst other things: "I shall never marry him."¹¹ The Prophet told them about Zayd's dear relationship to him and to Islam, and of his pure Arab origin. But despite their love of the Prophet and their wish to obey him, they did not submit until God revealed to Muḥammad the following: "No man or woman believer should have a choice in an affair if God and his Prophet have decided they should not and those who disobey God and his Prophet have gone astray."¹² And so Zaynab married Zayd and thus the Prophet achieved what he wanted, to destroy the barriers between the classes and to enhance the word of Islam.

But the wife of the newly-married couple was not content, because Zaynab had not forgotten she was a noble woman and had not been enslaved; she did not for a moment like being married to a freedman. Zayd suffered a great deal from her pride and disdain so that he finally lost patience. More than once he complained to the Prophet of the bad treatment he received, but the Prophet had asked him to have patience, to remain with his wife and to fear God.¹³ Then something befell which is related by

11. *Simf*, p. 112.

12. Qur'ān, *The Confederate Tribes*: 36.

13. The full verse is: You said to the one whom God and yourself have favoured: 'Keep your wife and fear God.' *Ibid.*, 37.

Ṭabari, on the authority of Muḥammad ibn Yaḥya ibn Ḥibbān; that the Prophet sought out Zayd and at his house Zaynab came rushing to meet him in such haste that she had no time to clothe herself fully.

She said: "He is not here, O Prophet of God. In the name of my father and mother, though, won't you come in?"¹⁴ According to another narrative related by Ṭabari: "The Prophet came looking for Zayd and there was over the chamber door a curtain made of hair. The wind blew aside the curtain and revealed Zaynab as she was naked in her chamber. Immediately he felt love for her in his heart."¹⁵ She asked him to come in, but he refused and left murmuring words which Zaynab recognized as: "May the Almighty God be praised! God be praised who changes the heart."

Zaynab stood still, thinking of what she had heard from the Prophet and when Zayd came home, the first thing she met him with was the tale that the Prophet had been to his house. Zayd said: "Didn't you ask him to come in?"

"Yes", she said, "I asked him but he refused."

Zayd questioned her further: "Did you hear him say anything?"

She said: "I heard him say as he left, 'May Almighty God be praised! God be praised who changes the heart.'"¹⁶

Zayd nodded for a moment, then went to the Prophet and said: "O Prophet of God, I have heard

14. Ṭabari, III, 42 and *Simf*, p. 107.

15. Ṭabari, III, 43, Egyptian edition.

16. For the complete dialogue see Ṭabari, III, 42.

of your visit to my house. Why did you not enter it?" Then he added enquiringly,¹⁷ "I want to leave her."

The Prophet asked: "Why? What is wrong with you? Do you suspect anything about her?"

Zayd answered, "No, O Prophet of God, nothing has aroused my suspicions. I have seen nothing but good of her, but she boasts of her honour and she is haughty: she hurts me through her tongue."¹⁸

The Prophet said: "Hold on to your wife." Zayd listened to him and then went back only to endure anew more suffering. However, Zaynab deserted him and after that day¹⁹ he found no way to her until his patience was gone, so he left her and the divorce took place.²⁰

A MARRIAGE ORDAINED BY HEAVEN

Muhammad felt an overpowering compassion for the young lady forced to marry, in submission to God and himself, someone she did not want. He would have loved to comfort her wounds. He even thought of marrying her, but how? Did he not reveal to the people of Quraysh that Zayd was his son? And what would the people say if he married a woman who had been his son's wife? Would they listen to him if he reminded them that the adopted son was not a son when traditions had led them to associate the adopted son with his putative father and gave him the same rights as a son—as well as the sanctity of legi-

17. Ṭabarī, *ibid.*

18. *Simt*, p. 107.

19. Ṭabarī, III, 43.

20. *Simt*, p. 108 and Ṭabarī, *ibid.*

itimate descent? The Prophet, however, preferred to stifle his desire and resist his sentiment towards this daughter of his aunt, whom he had plucked as a tender flower from the most noble house of the Muḍar and married, despite her will, to an imposed alien husband, who was not even named after his real father. So, while the Prophet was talking to 'Ā'isha he was taken by the spirit of revelation and when he came to himself, he smiled and said, "Who will go to Zaynab and bring to her the glad tidings that God has wedded her to me?"²¹ Then he recited the following revelation of Heaven:

"When you [Muhammad] said to the one Zayd whom God has favoured and you yourself have favoured 'Keep your wife and fear God', and kept to yourself what God was to make known, fearing the people, while it is God you should fear; so when Zayd divorced her, We gave her in marriage to you in order that no prohibition should be attached to those believers who marry the wives of their adopted sons, if these husbands divorce them. What God has ordered must be fulfilled."²²

'Ā'isha said: "Many thoughts entered my mind because of what we heard of her beauty and because of something else which is greater and nobler, that is, what God has done for her: He had married her to Muhammad. She will boast over us for these things."²³

21. Ṭabarī, *ibid.*

22. Qur'ān, *The Confederate Tribes*: 37.

23. This account is taken from Ṭabarī, III, 43.

Zayd was called Zayd ibn [son of] Muḥammad until the following verse was revealed: "God does not regard your adopted sons as your own. This is only what you have said: but God says the truth and is the guide to the right path. Call them [your adopted sons] after their own fathers, for this is fairer in the eyes of God and if you do not know who their fathers are, regard them as your brothers-in-Faith and your freedmen. The mistakes you have made will not be held against you, but the deliberations of your hearts will be: God is forgiving and merciful." After that he was called Zayd ibn Ḥāritha.²⁴

* * *

This was the story which we have taken from Ṭabarī and the chroniclers of the life of the Prophet and the Companions, without changing a word. I do not know what made Dr. Haykal reject this account and attribute it to the fabrication of Orientalists and missionaries whom he said, 'have added to it until it became an amorous story.' He continues: "It is sufficient to destroy this whole story at its foundation to know that this Zaynab bint Jaḥash is the daughter of the Prophet's aunt and that she was brought up within his sight and care. He knew her and knew whether she had any attractions before or after she married Zayd. He witnessed her growth from childhood through adolescence and he was the one who arranged the betrothal to Zayd, his freedman. If you had known this, all these imaginary stories

24. *Isti'āb*, IV, 1850 and Qur'an, *The Confederate Tribes*: 5-6.

and fabrications—that he passed Zayd's house when her husband was away, saw Zaynab and was infatuated by her beauty, that he said, 'Praise be to Him who changes the heart', that he found her in her robe as if she was Madame Recāmier; that in a moment he was changed and forgot about Sauda, 'Ā'isha, Ḥafṣa, Zaynab bint Makhzūm, Umm Salama and even the memory of Khadīja,—all these ideas would have collapsed before you."²⁵

Dr. Haykal maintains that the Prophet's marriage to Zaynab was not motivated by sentiment, but that he wanted to submit to the command of God which abolished the rights connected with adoption and yet he was afraid that the people would criticise for violating an old custom. But God did not want him to conceal, through fear of censure, what God required to be made public. Dr. Haykal adds: "After all this, would these stories repeated by Orientalists and missionaries have any effect? It is the ardent wish of open Christian evangelization at one time or of evangelizing in the name of science at another, as well as the ancient enmity towards Islam which has become deeply rooted since the Crusades, which dictates to these Western writers what they pen and makes them falsify history in the case of Zaynab: they rely on the weakest sources."²⁶

And what a good refutation is this! Haykal seems to forget though that the story of the Prophet admiring Zaynab, the hair curtain blown aside, the Prophet leaving the house—all this has been written

25. Dermenghem, *The Life of Muhammad*, p. 291.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 293-94.

before the world ever heard of the Crusades, by a group of Muslim biographers who can by no means be accused of hating the Prophet or introducing false accusations against Islam. It is fair to leave aside these Orientalists and missionaries like Muir, Margoliouth, Irving and Sprenger and read the accounts in Ṭabarī,²⁷ *al-Iṣāba*, the commentaries on the Qur'ān and in *al-Simṭ al-Thamīn*.

Let us see now whether there is anything that arouses doubts about these sources. The sign of greatness in our Prophet's personality is that he is a human being who eats and walks in the market-place like anyone else. We know of no other great man, and I avoid the word Prophet here, who has insisted that he was so human as did Muḥammad; neither has Mankind known such a divine book which so clearly affirms, as does the inimitable book of Islam, the human quality of the man entrusted with the Message. None of us can be considered a Believer while we deny this humanity or divest him of it, when it was revealed to him. "Say, I am only a human being like yourselves²⁸ and say, may my Lord be praised! Have I not been but a human messenger?" He said this, then felt pride that "he is the son of the woman of the Quraysh who eats dried meat."

Would it be so extraordinary for a human messenger to see someone like Zaynab and admire her? And what is to be expected of somebody like him in his sublime character and his chaste mind—other

27. Ṭabarī, III, 42-43 and also in Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Nihāya*, the events of the fifth year of the Hijra, *Simṭ*, p. 107 and *Iṣāba*, VIII.

28. Qur'ān, *The Cave*: 111 and *Fuṣṣilat*: 6; *The Night Journey*: 93, *The Moon*: 24 and *The Prophets*: 34.

than to turn his face away from the one who has attracted him and recite in the name of Almighty God who changes the heart? And what more of self-control is to be expected from a human prophet than that when Zayd came to him asking his permission anew to divorce his wife? He insisted on his keeping her and fearing God. The story as it is related by unbiased chroniclers lifts our Prophet to the highest pinnacle that any human could attain of chastity, self-control and restraint. It is worth counting as an object of pride for Muḥammad and Islam. Never has our Prophet claimed that his heart was in his hand to turn it as he wanted; not once did he pretend he was free from human sentiments and whims. He used to say, in preferring 'Ā'isha to his other wives whom God had ordered him to treat equally, "O God, this is my nature to be weak, so do not blame me for what you have and I have not." How then could we fear he would be blamed if his heart inclined to Zaynab? He ordered her husband, despite this inclination, to keep her, although keeping her would make them both miserable. As to his seeing her grow up and having married her to Zayd himself, what of that? God be praised who changes the heart! And as to the fact that the whole affair had been completely free from lust on the Prophet's part, that "the love story" is a fabrication of the missionaries and that God censured the Prophet because he was abashed to face the Arabs after violating their customs concerning real and adopted sons, we need to relate here something like the comment of al-Zamakhsharī. He narrated more than eight centuries ago that the

Prophet, "saw Zaynab after he had married her to Zayd and she entered into his heart; so he said, 'Praise be to God who changes hearts' because formerly he was indifferent to her. Had he wanted her he would have married her previously. If you say, 'what is it that he had hidden in his heart', I reply, 'that his heart had fallen to her; or it may be said, the affection for Zayd had left her. And if you say, 'Why then did God rebuke him for concealing what he feared to make known and yet not rebuke him for coveting his son's wife' or 'why did He not order him to suppress his lust and cease from fighting over Zaynab and chasing her', or 'why did He not make the Prophet free from human folly and that which exposed him to gossip?' I reply, 'How many things are there which a man is warned against and is bashful to reveal publically, while in an ultimate sense it is permissible and lawful and there is no argument or fault in it before God?' For the aspiration of the heart of man toward some desired object is not to be described as ugly either according to reason or religious law, when it does not proceed from the will of man, nor is its presence there by his choice."²⁹

After this, am I not then allowed to say that Dr. Haykal is mistaken, that while wishing to defend the Prophet he has erred because, by denying the Prophet's inclination towards Zaynab and refusing to allow that he fell in love with her, he has cast a shadow of doubt upon the whole matter? He also erroneously thought that such love could not be

admitted and that it was a fault to be absolved. There is no such question. It is human nature which is exposed, sublimated in chastity and noble abstinence, continuing to resist that which is lawful to God through fear of popular gossip. But God disliked seeing his Prophet hesitate to perform such a marriage made lawful by the divine law, which is also required in the public interest, so that, "No prohibition in future should be attached to" those Believers who marry the wives of their adopted sons after their husbands have divorced them.³⁰ A further private factor is that, "Zaynab would feel secure against becoming a divorcee, safe against loss and, furthermore, attain the honour of being one of the Mothers of the Faithful. Hence God's rebuke to the Prophet for concealing the matter so elaborately when God only wanted to see in him the unity of what is open and what is private, to stand steadfast on the ground of Truth so that the Faithful will take him as an example and will not be shy to fight by the Truth, however bitter."³¹

SECLUSION

The herald flew to Zaynab carrying the happy news. It is said that Salma, the servant of the Prophet, bore it;³² it is even said that Zayd himself was the bearer.³³ So she left everything and went thankfully to pray to her Lord. The wedding feast was sumptuous: the Prophet slaughtered a sheep and ordered

30. *Al-Kashshāf*, III, 268.

31. Qur'ān, *The Confederate Tribes*: 37.

32. Ṭabarī, II, 127.

33. *Al-Kashshāf* on *The Confederate Tribes* and *Istī'āb*, IV, 1851.

29. Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, on *The Confederate Tribes*, III, 237, al-Tijārīyya edition.

his freedman Anas ibn Malik to call the people to the feast. So they came in groups, one after another, until Anas said: "O Prophet of God! I have invited all I can find."

The Prophet replied: "Clear the food away."³⁴ For the second time Heaven interfered in the life of the Prophet on behalf of Zaynab, because the guests after eating remained in conversation when they had finished. Now the Prophet was ready to leave, they were not.³⁵ Seeing this, he decided to pay courtesy visits to his wives whilst waiting for them to disperse. When he rose, all the guests left save three. He received his wives' congratulations on his new bride. But, wanting to be alone with Zaynab, he was prevented by the presence of the remaining three guests. His great shyness prevented him from dismissing them, whilst his bride rested against the wall.³⁶ He went to 'Ā'isha's chamber while Anas remained with the guests until they finally left. Anas then hurried to the Prophet and the Prophet returned to Zaynab's chamber, drawing the curtain between him and Anas and reciting the following revelation of Heaven: "Ye who have believed do not enter the houses of the Prophet to eat unless you are permitted to do so. And when you are allowed, then enter. And when you have eaten, disperse and do not remain in idle gossip. Such things will annoy the Prophet and he will feel ashamed to tell you; but God is not ashamed of Truth. And if you ask his wives for anything, do that from behind a curtain for this is purer for your

34. *Al-Kashshāf*, III, 244.

35. *Simt*, p. 107.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 110 and *al-Kashshāf*, III, 344.

hearts and for theirs. You are not to annoy the Prophet of God nor are you ever to marry his wives after him, for this is improper in the sight of God."³⁷

From that moment seclusion was imposed on the Prophet's wives and on all the women of the Believers as a symbol of protection, dignity and a desire to rise above the commonplace.

THE NOBLEST OF THEM ALL

And Muḥammad consummated his marriage with Zaynab whom Heaven had wedded to him; and 'Ā'isha spent her nights racked by jealousy, because of her rival's beauty and that God had chosen her. So felt the rest of the Prophet's wives, becoming uneasy about the new bride who boasted of the circumstances of her marriage. Nor did Zaynab disappoint them, for soon, meeting them face to face and boasting to them, she said: "I am the noblest of you all. As for you, your people have married you; but as for me, I have been married by God from the Seven Heavens above."³⁸ And if Umm Salama had been happy to see herself a rival of 'Ā'isha, undoubtedly Zaynab was likewise satisfied to become the new rival to 'Ā'isha. 'Ā'isha did not conceal her jealousy from Zaynab, as she had not with 'Ā'isha, but confessed that these two women "were the most loved women, as I think, to the Prophet after me". Then she singles out Zaynab alone for her antagonism and says: "None of the Prophet's wives could compete on equal terms with me except Zaynab."³⁹ Or, as she used to say, "none of the wives

37. Qur'ān, *The Confederate Tribes*: 53.

38. *Ṭabaqāt*, VIII, 73.

39. *Ibn Hishām*, III, 311.

occupied such a high position as I did, except Zaynab.”⁴⁰

We have mentioned before ‘Ā’isha’s annoyance because of the Prophet’s partiality to Zaynab and his longer visits to her; we also mentioned her collaboration with Ḥafṣa and Sauda in the affair of the ‘Maghāfir’. It sometimes happened that the rivalry between them became tense in the presence of the Prophet; then he would leave them to their own devices for it was better that they should rid themselves of their antagonism by giving vent to it. Then once ‘Ā’isha overcame Zaynab, the Prophet smiled and said:⁴¹ “She is the daughter of Abū Bakr.” On another occasion, ‘Ā’isha said something that annoyed the Prophet. He had received a gift while in her chamber and he sent part of it to each one of his wives. Zaynab returned the gift and ‘Ā’isha said to her husband: “She has made you contemptible by this.”

He rose and left furious, saying: “Not one of you is important enough to God to render me contemptible.”

... AND MOST GENEROUS OF ALL

However this heated enmity between these foremost wives did not prevent Zaynab from defending ‘Ā’isha in the Falsehood Ordeal. ‘Ā’isha has acknowledged this noble stand by Zaynab and said: “It was ‘Abd Allah ibn Ubayy ibn Salūl who spread the rumours of the Falsehood among men of the Khazraj, along with the slander promoted by Miṣṭah and

40. *Isti’āb*, IV, 1850.

41. *Siṃṡ*, p. 40.

Ḥamna bint Jaḥash—Ḥamna, whose sister Zaynab was the Prophet’s wife. None other of his wives equalled me in the sight of Muḥammad except her. God has protected her from saying anything but good of me because of her great piety. As to Ḥamna she slandered me with whatever she wanted in support of the sister and this made me wretched.”⁴² Zaynab was pious and true in her religion. ‘Ā’isha admitted these qualities in her rival when she said: “I have not seen another woman more truly faithful than Zaynab, or more righteous in the sight of God; more true of tongue or more considerate of her family, generous and of good works than she.”⁴³ According to tradition the Prophet once told ‘Umar al-Khaṭṭāb: “Zaynab is ‘awwāha.”

A bystander said, “O Prophet, what do you mean by this word?”

He replied: “It means humble and prayerful,” then he recited: “Abraham was a forebearing, humble and penitent man.”⁴⁴ She was also generous and gave articles made by her own hands to the poor, the people of God, for God had given her benefits denied to any other wives.

* * *

The death of the Prophet concluded the rivalry of Zaynab and the other wives over their husband. After his death the other wives mention her only as a Beloved Wife of the Prophet, a Compassionate Mother to the Faithful and as being regular at prayer.

42. Ibn Hishām, III, 312.

43. *Siṃṡ*, p. 110 and *Isti’āb*, IV, 1851.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 110; *Isti’āb*, IV, 1852 and Qur’ān, *Hud*: 75.

Umm Salama mentioned what had happened between her and 'Ā'isha, saying: "Zaynab was admired by the Prophet and he gorged himself upon her. She was righteous, prayerful and generous to the poor." 'Ā'isha was heard to say, when she heard of Zaynab's death: "She has died praiseworthy and prayerful, the refuge of orphans and widows." She continued: "The Prophet said those of you who would soonest follow me to the grave are the most generous of you. When we used to meet together after the death of the Prophet, we placed our hands against the wall to see whose arm was the longest. We did this till Zaynab died. She did not have the longest arm, yet we knew then what the Prophet meant by the length of arm, —giving alms to the poor. Zaynab was industrious, tanning skins, threading beads, selling them and giving the proceeds to the poor."⁴⁵ Other sources also relate that 'Umar al-Khaṭṭāb sent her 12,000 (dirhams) as a pension.⁴⁶ Zaynab said: "O God, may this money not come to me next year for it allures me from God."⁴⁷ She divided the money among her needy relatives and when 'Umar heard of this, he sent her greetings and came to see her, saying: "I have been told what you have done. Shall I send you 1,000 more for yourself?" And when he sent the money, she distributed that as well to the poor. When death came to

45. *Simt*, p. 110 and *Istī'āb*, IV, 1851.

46. According to most sources, each wife received 10,000 dirhams except 'Ā'isha who received 12,000 in relation to her eminent position to the Prophet. See Matti Moosa, "The Dīwān of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb", *Studies in Islam*, April, 1965. [Editors]

47. *Simt*, p. 111.

her in the twentieth year of the Hijra⁴⁸ she said: "I have already prepared my shroud and as 'Umar will also send a shroud, give one of them to the poor."⁴⁹ She was fifty-three years old when she died.

48. According to one source she died in the twenty-first year of the Hijra in which the Arabs conquered Alexandria. See *Istī'āb*, IV, 1852.

49. *Iṣāba*, VIII.

Chapter 9

JUWAYRIYA BINT AL-HĀRITH
THE LADY OF THE BANU AL-MUSTALIQ

'When the Prophet divided the captives of the banu al-Mustaliq Juwayriya bint al-Harith fell to the lot of Thabit ibn Qays or to one of his cousins. She agreed with him to write her document of release. She was a beautiful woman. No one had seen her without admiring her. She came to the Prophet asking him to help her write her contract. By God! No sooner did I see her standing at my chamber door than I hated her and knew that the Prophet would see her beauty and fall to her.'

'Ā'isha bint Abū Bakr

THE BEAUTIFUL CAPTIVE

The Prophet was occupied with great events which filled the second half of the fifth year of the Hijra and paid little attention to the squabbles of his wives following his marriage to Zaynab bint Jahash. In the months of Shawwāl and the beginning of the month of Dhu al-Qa'da¹ the Battle of the Ditch took place in which the Prophet and the Muslims met the Confederate Tribes of the Infidels, who were incited to fight against him in his own city by a group of Jews who promised to support them. The Prophet met them with three thousand Muslims behind the ditch which they had dug around Madina. The Quraysh came to fight against him with ten thousand men, and others who followed them were from the banū Kināna, from Tihāma and the tribe of Ghaṭafān and others who followed from Najd.²

The Jews had violated the Covenant of neutrality which they had signed. The danger against the Muslims increased and their fears intensified; their enemy surrounded them on all sides, with the result that the Faithful were shaken and confused. Hypocrites began to murmur: "Muḥammad promised us

1. According to Ibn Hishām, III, 23 the Battle of the Ditch took place in Shawwāl in the fifth year of the Hijra. Ṭabarī, III, 43, states the same. However, *Ṭabaqāt* ibn Sa'd, II, 47, states that this battle occurred in Dhu al-Qa'da in the fifth year of the Hijra. According to another account related by al-Zurqānī, "Mūsā ibn 'Uqba said in his *Maḡhāzī* that it [the Battle of the Ditch] occurred in the fourth year of the Hijra."

2. Ibn Hishām, III, 230; *Ṭabaqāt* ibn Sa'd, II, 47 and Ṭabarī, III, 46.

we would possess the treasures of Kisra [chosroes] and Caesar, but today not one of us has sufficient safety to go out and defecate!"³ The hypocrites who went out to fight with the Prophet in the hope of booty lost heart and when they thought he was going to be defeated, they returned to their homes.

The siege of Madina was painful and it lasted twenty-seven days. Then fortune turned against the Infidels and the Prophet and his followers triumphed.

The Muslims laid aside their arms, exhausted after the battle. They returned home at dawn for a long rest. At noon, they heard the call to prayer of the Prophet's muezzin, saying: "He who hears and obeys, should not perform the afternoon prayer except in the dwelling of the banū Qurayza"⁴ They resumed fighting and laid siege against the Jews of the banū Qurayza for twenty-five days before they capitulated in the month of Dhu al-Qa'da and the beginning of Dhu al-Ḥijja. Then came the sixth year of the Hijra, which witnessed the Prophet's raid against the banū Liḥyan, followed by the raid of the Dhu Qarad.⁵ The Prophet returned to Madina and had been there only a month when he heard that the banū al-Muṣṭaliq, a clan of the Khuzā'a were preparing to rise against him, led by al-Ḥārith ibn Abū Dirār.⁶ The Prophet went out against them, taking with him 'Ā'isha, alone of his wives, and met them near the spring of al-Muraysi'. It was a bitter fight, ending in the defeat of the banū al-Muṣṭaliq. Their women were taken captive,

3. Ṭabarī, III, 47 and Ibn Hishām, III, 233.

4. Ṭabarī, III, 53 and Ibn Hishām, III, 301.

5. Ṭabarī, the events of the sixth year of the Hijra and *Jamhara*, 228.

6. Ṭabarī, III, 64 and Ibn Hishām, III, 302.

including Barra bint al-Ḥārith ibn Abū Dirār or, as the Prophet later called her, Juwayriya. The Prophet returned again to Madina, looking for 'Ā'isha,⁷ but soon finds her returning on the camel of Ṣafwān ibn al-Mu'aṭṭal al-Sulami, to his great relief. Then he went out again to distribute the booty to his followers, returning home finally with mind at rest, except for the ever present affairs of Islam which were about to put an end to polytheistic paganism and inherited error.

While, one day, he was sitting in 'Ā'isha's chamber, a woman was heard asking in sad and touching tones for permission to see the Prophet. 'Ā'isha went to the door to see who she was and there stood a very beautiful and sweet young lady; "whose beauty attracted everyone who saw her."⁸ She was about twenty years old,⁹ trembling with anxiety and fright which only enhanced her charm. 'Ā'isha hated her from the first moment. She wished to prevent her from seeing the Prophet, who was resting. However, the stranger insisted on seeing him and 'Ā'isha finally yielded in spite of herself and the doubts in her heart. The beautiful lady entered and supplicated the Prophet tearfully, yet with pride: "O Prophet of God! I am the daughter of al-Ḥārith ibn Abī Dirār, the lord of his people. You know the calamity which has befallen me. I fell to the lot of ibn Qays and asked him to write a contract of release. I come to you to ask

7. See the Falsehood episode described in Chapter IV. [Editors]

8. Ibn Ishāq quoted by Ibn Hishām, III, 307; Ṭabarī, III, 66 and *Isṭi'āb*, IV, 1804.

9. *Simṭ*, p. 117.

for help in my case."¹⁰

The chivalrous Arab leader was moved by the humiliation of this noble woman, who sought his support against the shame of slavery and captivity even though he was the person who had defeated her people. His heart softened toward Barra, seeing her frightened standing at his door, about to fall into an abyss from which he alone could rescue her. He hated to cut that thread of hope to which she clung in her adversity, and finally Muḥammad said: "Would you like a better proposal than that?"

She asked in anxiety and perplexity: "What is that, O Prophet of God?"

He replied: "I will write your document of release—and marry you."

Her beautiful face shone with an overwhelming happiness. She exclaimed unbelievably that she was saved from humiliation and loss and replied: "Yes, O Prophet of God."

The chivalrous Prophet answered: "It is done."¹¹

THE BLESSING OF THE BRIDE

And how fast the news was revealed to the people! The Companions hurried to congratulate the woman whom their Prophet had honoured by marrying her.¹² Then they freed those of her own people they had taken captive, saying, "They are now the Prophet's

10. Ibn Hishām, III, 307; Ṭabarī, III, 66, *Isti'āb*, IV, 1804 and *Ṭabaqāt*, II, 46.

11. This dialogue is taken from Ibn Hishām, III, 307; Ṭabarī, III, 66 and *Isti'āb*, IV, 1804.

12. Ibn Hishām, III, 307; Ṭabarī, III, 66 and *Isti'āb*, IV, 1804.

relatives."¹³ The bride entered the Prophet's house bringing with her unique blessings for her people; because of her marriage to the Prophet about one hundred households of the banū al-Muṣṭaliq were freed.¹⁴ The Prophet called her Juwayriya because he hated to hear people say: 'he came out from visiting Barra!¹⁵ Juwayriya blessed all her life that happy moment when she met the Prophet, was saved, freed her people from captivity and was honoured by marriage to the Lord of Mankind. Likewise 'Ā'isha recalled that moment with bitterness and pain.

She said: "She was a beautiful woman. No one has seen her without admiring her. She came to the Prophet asking him to help her write her contract. By God! No sooner did I see her standing at my chamber door than I hated her and knew that the Prophet would see her beauty and fall to her."¹⁶ And was there any objection to the Prophet's seeing Juwayriya while she was a noble captive reduced to slavery by war? If she had been a free woman, 'Ā'isha would never have worried at the Prophet filling his eyes with her beauty, unless he had a desire to marry her: but according to al-Suhaylī in *al-Rawḍ al U'nūf*: "As to the question that the

13. Ibn Ishāq as quoted by Ibn Hishām, III, 307; Ṭabarī, III, 66 and *Ṣiml*, p. 116. According to another source the Prophet freed every captive of the banū al-Muṣṭaliq as the dowry of Juwayriya. *Ṭabaqāt*, II, 46.

14. *Ibid*.

15. According to one narrative Juwayriya's name was Barra but the Prophet renamed her Juwayriya for fear that it might be said that 'he has left Barra's chamber'. See *Ṣiml*, p. 117 and *Isti'āb*, IV, 1805. However, the latter source confuses her with the Mother of the Faithful Maymūna bint al-Ḥārith. In Ibn Hishām, *Ṭabaqāt* and Ṭabarī her name is mentioned only as Juwayriya.

16. *Isāba*, VIII, 44; Ṭabarī, III, 66 and *Isti'āb*, IV, 1804.

Prophet saw Juwayriya and that he discovered of her beauty, it was because she was a captive slave; for if she had been a free woman, he would never have looked at her . . . it is possible though that he looked at her because he wanted to marry her . . . it is reported that he permitted any man to examine fully the woman he proposed to marry. He said to al-Mughira, when he consulted him about a marriage, 'You should examine her for that will strengthen your relationship.' He said the same thing to Muḥammad ibn Maslama when he wanted to marry Buthayna bint al-Ḍaḥḥāk. And this was exactly what 'Ā'isha expected and feared. The Prophet looked at the beautiful captive and she became 'Ā'isha's partner in his house. She also became, after embracing Islam, a Mother of the Faithful. It is reported that her father came to Madina after the Prophet proclaimed his marriage and said: "Muḥammad, you have taken my daughter a captive and here is her ransom, for no one like my daughter should be enslaved."

The Prophet replied: "Don't you think I would be fairer if I asked her to choose?"

He said: "Yes". So he went and told her of his conversation with Muḥammad. She said: "I have chosen God and his Prophet." It is also reported that al-Ḥārith heard from the Prophet the account concerning the ransom of his daughter, so he shouted loudly: "I testify that there is no God but God, and that you are Muḥammad, the Prophet of God." Then al-Ḥārith betrothed her and married her with a dowry of four hundred dirhams.¹⁷ 'Ā'isha, however, was too

17. Ibn Hishām, III, 308 and *Ṣiṃṭ*, p. 117.

preoccupied with the gossip resulting from her Falsehood episode to care for Juwayriya or no Juwayriya; but when the cloud of this incident was dispersed and she returned to the house, flushed with her ex-honouration by divine revelation, she was faced by Juwayriya's stunning beauty. Looking from Juwayriya to Zaynab bint Jaḥash, Umm Salama, Ḥafsa and considering the memory of Khadija, she said arrogantly: "I am the only virgin he married."¹⁸ Before Juwayriya was taken captive, she was the wife of Musāfi' (Mālik) ibn Ṣafwān al-Muṣṭaliqi.¹⁹ She lived until Mu'āwiya became Caliph and she died in Madina after the middle of the first century of the Hijra.²⁰ She was known in the history of Islam as the Mother of the Faithful and there was no other woman who was such a blessing to her people as she.

18. *Ṣiṃṭ*, p. 87.

19. His name in *Istī'āb*, IV, 1804, and *Ṣiṃṭ*, p. 116 is mentioned as Mālak ibn Ṣafwān al-Muṣṭaliqi. According to Ṭabarī, III, 177, his name is Mālak ibn Ṣafwān dhū al-Shafr ibn Sarḥ ibn Mālik al-Muṣṭaliqi.

20. *Ṣiṃṭ*, p. 118; *Iṣāba*, VIII, 44 and *Istī'āb*, VIII, 1804.

Chapter 10

ŞAFIYYA BINT ḤUYAYY
THE LADY OF THE BANŪ AL-NADĪR

'And the Prophet singled out Safiyya and she was made to walk behind him: he placed his robe on her and this was a sign to the people that he had chosen her for himself.'

al-Sira

A VICTORIOUS BATTLE

The sixth year of the Hijra came to an end having occasioned many notable events: for in this year Muḥammad had married Juwayriya and was afflicted also by the episode of Falsehood. Then finally occurred the peace of al-Ḥudaybiyya. The month of Muḥarram in the seventh year of the Hijra arrived while the Prophet was preparing for a decisive battle to eradicate the wicked Jews, whose bitter hatred and evil plotting was revealed in the battle of the Ditch. In the middle of Muḥarram,¹ the Prophet marched against Khaybar, the fortress of the enemy. No sooner had he reached the place than he exclaimed: "God is great! The destruction of Khaybar is at hand. When we arrive in these people's square, it will be a bad morning for those who have been warned!"² And Khaybar was destroyed. Its fortresses fell, one after another, its men were killed and its women were carried into captivity, among them was Ṣafiyya bint Ḥuyayy ibn Akhtab, whose lineage goes back to Aaron, the brother of Moses. Her mother was Barrab bint Samaw'al.³ Ṣafiyya was barely seventeen years old. Despite her youth, she had married twice; once to the cavalier and poet of her people, Sallām ibn Mishkam,⁴ and then to Kināna ibn al-Rabī' ibn Abū

1. Ṭabarī and Ibn Hishām (sic). According to *Ṭabaqāt*, the raid against Khaybar occurred in Jumāda al-Ūlā in the seventh year of the Hijra; *Ṭabaqāt*, II, 77.

2. Ibn Hishām, III, 344 and *Ṭabaqāt*, II, 77.

3. Ibn Hishām, *ibid.* For the raid against Khaybar see Ṭabarī, III, 92; *Isti'āb*, IV, 1871 and *Ṭabaqāt*, II, 75.

4. *Simt*, p. 118; *Iṣāba*, VIII, and *Isti'āb*, IV.

al-Ḥuqayq,⁵ the commander of the Qamūs fortress, the most impregnable in Khaybar. The Muslims stormed the fortress after a bitter fight and Kināna was brought alive before the Prophet, it being reported that he knew the whereabouts of the treasure of the banū al-Naḍir. The Prophet asked him about the treasure and he denied that he knew nothing about it. The Prophet said: "Do you not know that if we find it in your possession, I will kill you?"

The man replied: "Yes, I know; kill me."

But when it was discovered that he knew where the hiding place of the treasure was, the Prophet delivered him to Muḥammad ibn Maslama, who beheaded him in revenge for his brother Maḥmūd, whom the Jews killed in the battle.⁶ The women from the Qamūs fortress were taken captive, headed by Ṣafīyya and a cousin of hers, both of whom were led by Bilāl the Muezzin of the Prophet. Bilāl passed, with his two captives, the field strewn with the bodies of the dead Jews. Ṣafīyya wanted to cry, but choked in her throat. Her cousin began to weep, slapping her face and pouring dirt on her head. They were brought to the Prophet: Ṣafīyya in her stifled grief and fright attempting to show courage and dignity. No one knew what she was thinking, although she appeared proud and majestic before the victorious Commander. Her cousin, with unkempt hair, streaked with dirt, her clothes tattered, never ceased wailing. The Prophet shouted, turning his face away from her: "Take

5. Ibn Hishām, III, 351 and Ṭabarī, III, 95 and 178. According to *Istī'āb*, IV, 1871 his name is Kināna ibn Abū al-Ḥuqayq. See also *Ṭabaqāt*, II, 77.

6. Ṭabarī, III, 95; Ibn Hishām, III, 351 and *Ṭabaqāt*, II, 81.

this devil from my presence!"⁷ Then he approached Ṣafīyya who appeared now more desirous to seek the protection of the chivalrous Prophet. He cast on her a compassionate look, saying to Bilāl: "Has mercy dried in your heart, to pass by the corpses of her people?"⁸ Then she was shepherded behind him and he threw his robe on her as a sign to the people that he had chosen her for himself. The Muslims have said they did not know at the time whether he was marrying her or took her for the sake of having a son from her. But when he secluded her, they knew that he had married her.⁹ According to a tradition related by Anas,¹⁰ when the Prophet took Ṣafīyya he asked her: "Do you want me?"

She said: "O Prophet of God! I would have wished that when I was an unbeliever; how much more now that God has enabled me to enjoy this favour under Islam."

So he freed her and married her. Her emancipation was her dowry.¹¹

THE DREAM OF THE BRIDE

The Prophet waited at Khaybar until the lamentations subsided. He thought that the fear was about to leave Ṣafīyya, so he carried her off to a house about six miles from Khaybar. He wanted to consummate marriage with her, but she refused.¹² He became

7. Ṭabarī, III, 95 and Ibn Hishām, III, 350.

8. Ṭabarī, *ibid.*, Ibn Hishām, *ibid* and *Ṭabaqāt*, *ibid.*

9. *Ṭabaqāt*, II, 82.

10. *Simt*, p. 120.

11. *Ṭabaqāt*, II, 85 and *Istī'āb*, IV, 1872.

12. *Simt*, p. 120.

angry with her in his heart and found it hard that she should deny him. He resumed his march back to Madina and when he rested at al-Ṣahbā, far from Khaybar it appeared to him that she was now ready for the wedding. Her hairdresser, whom Ibn Ishāq says was Umm Sulaym bint Miḥān, the mother of Anas ibn Mālīk,¹³ dressed her hair and beautified her. Ṣafīyya appeared as a glorious bride who drew all eyes with her charm; even her hairdresser said that she had not seen any woman more radiant than her.¹⁴ And in face of the expected happiness her grief vanished and the bride appeared to have forgotten the terrible massacre of her destroyed people, which had forced her from Qamūs into captivity.

The wedding feast was sumptuous and the guests ate from the garner of Khaybar until they were satiated. The Prophet then went to her chamber to consummate the marriage, the traces of her earlier rejection still in his heart. The bride approached with obvious impatience, to tell him something amazing. She said that on the night of the wedding with Kināna she saw in a dream the half moon fall in her lap. When she woke up she told the dream to Kināna who angrily said: "You have seen this dream because you desire the king of the Ḥejāz, Muḥammad,"¹⁵ And he slapped her face so hard that a mark remained to that day. The Prophet looked at her seeing the trace of a bruise in her eye and was pleased by her account. He started towards her, but restrained himself. He

13. Ibn Hishām, III, 354. Ibn Sa'd only mentioned her nickname Umm Salīm, *Ṭabaqāt*, II, 82.

14. *Iṣāba*, VIII.

15. Ibn Hishām, III, 350; Ṭabarī, III, 93 and *Simf*, p. 120.

said: "What made you refuse me at the beginning?" or according to another story, "what made you refuse me at the first place?"¹⁶

The bride answered immediately: "I feared the Jews might harm you."¹⁷ And so his estrangement melted away and his noble face shone with a contented smile. There outside the pavilion in which the Prophet consummated marriage with Ṣafīyya a man from the Anṣār [Helpers] named Abū Ayyūb Khālīd ibn Yazīd remained on guard all night, circling the pavilion armed with his sword, without the Prophet's knowledge. Next morning the Prophet heard his movements and saw him outside, so he asked him: "what is the matter, Abū Ayyūb?"

He replied: "O Prophet of God! I feared for you from this woman whose father, husband and people you have killed. She is still new in the Faith, therefore I feared her."¹⁸

It is said that the Prophet blessed him saying, "O God! protect Abū Ayyūb as he wished to protect me."¹⁹ or another account has it that he twice said, "May God bless you, Abū Ayyūb."²⁰ For the Muslims had not yet forgotten that terrible thing which a Jewess of the Khaybar had done, namely, Zaynab bint al-Ḥārith, the wife of Sallām ibn Mishkam, one of the Khaybar leaders. This Zaynab entered Muḥammad's presence while he was enjoying his security after the Jews had accepted their fate and

16. *Simf*, p. 120.

17. *Ibid*.

18. Ibn Hishām, III, 254; *Iṣāba*, VIII and *Ṭabaqāt*, II, 84.

19. Ibn Hishām, III, 355.

20. *Ṭabaqāt*, II, 84.

signed a peace with the victorious Commander. She offered him a poisoned sheep after she had established from some of his Companions which part of the sheep he liked most and learnt that it was the shoulder. So she poisoned that leg profusely until the poison spread throughout and served the Prophet. With him was his Companion Bishr ibn Barā'. The Prophet took the shoulder and offered his Companion another piece which he ate, suspecting nothing. The Prophet took a bite, but not liking it, he spat it out and exclaimed: "I have the feeling this leg is poisoned." He called the wife of Sallām who confessed she had deliberately poisoned the lamb. When he asked what made her do it, she answered: "You know what you have done to my people, so I said: 'If he is a Prophet what I am doing will be revealed, but if he is only a King, I will get rid of him.'" He let her go without punishment and Bishr died of the poisonous meat.²¹ Undoubtedly Abū Ayyūb remembered this Jewish deed when he guarded the pavilion.

* * *

The entourage reached Madina. The Prophet preferred not to introduce the bride to his wives so he took her to the house of his Companion Hāritha ibn al-Nu'mān. In the meantime, the wives of the Helpers came to view her beauty and the Prophet saw his wife 'Ā'isha cautiously leaving the house veiled.

21. Ibn Hishām, III, 352 and Ṭabarī, III, 95. Ibn Sa'd also relates, on the authority of Abū Hurayra, in *Ṭabaqāt*, the episode of the poisoned lamb which was offered to the Prophet during the conquest of Khaybar and that a group of Jews were the ones who poisoned it and gave it to the Prophet. *Ṭabaqāt*, II, 84.

He followed her and saw her enter the house of Hāritha. Waiting until she came out, he caught her robe and laughing, asked her: "What did you see, O little red-haired one?"

'Ā'isha was startled and, her jealousy aroused, shrugged her shoulders and said: "I have seen a Jewess!"

The Prophet answered: "Do not say that; she has become a good Muslim."²²

'Ā'isha did not reply but returned to the house where Ḥafṣa was waiting for her, anxious to hear her opinion about the bride. 'Ā'isha did not deny she was truly beautiful and further told Ḥafṣa how the Prophet followed her and of the ensuing conversation.

MY FATHER IS AARON AND MY UNCLE IS MOSES

Then Ṣafīyya moved to the house of the Prophet. There she was faced with a perplexing problem. She saw that 'Ā'isha, together with Ḥafṣa and Sauda, formed one party, while the other wives, joined by Fāṭima, the Prophet's daughter, formed the other. Ṣafīyya had to choose her side. It was a difficult and serious situation; as an intelligent woman, she could not antagonise "the favoured wife" 'Ā'isha or "the dear daughter" Fāṭima. Guided by her cleverness and inherited caution, she decided to make friends of both parties. Her friendship towards 'Ā'isha and Ḥafṣa was a sign of her willingness to join them. As to establishing peaceful relations with Fāṭima, she gave her as a present some golden jewellery as a

22. Ibn Māja, *Sunan*; *Iṣāba*, VIII and *Simt*, p. 80.

symbol of friendship and a sign of peace.²³ No doubt Şafiyya wanted in this way to protect her Jewish descent from any attack and avoid stirring any memory of the bitter enmity between her own people and Islam. In all truthfulness, she had nothing to fear from Fāṭima because she was most concerned about peace; she loved and obeyed her father so much that she did not indulge in this female bickering—unless she was forced, as we mentioned before, when she was sent to the Prophet concerning the ‘Ā’isha affair. But Şafiyya had everything to fear from ‘Ā’isha’s unmitigated jealousy and her impatience for sharing the house with any other beautiful wife. However, Şafiyya’s attempt to befriend ‘Ā’isha and Ḥafṣa did not prevent what she had feared. Frequently she heard, openly and insinuated, criticism of the Jewish blood in her veins. Many times she closed her ears to the wounding words of critics who envied her living in the house of the most generous and noble husband. But what grieved Şafiyya most was that ‘Ā’isha and Ḥafṣa, whom she had joined, were participating with the other wives in disparaging her, boasting that they were Arabs of the Quraysh and that she was an alien intruder.

* * *

So when Şafiyya heard that ‘Ā’isha and Ḥafṣa were talking against her she told the Prophet, amidst her tears; he wiped her face with his robe and said: “Wouldn’t it be better to say, ‘how could they be better than me, when my husband is Muḥammad, my

23. *Iṣāba*, VIII, 127.

father is Aaron and my uncle is Moses,”²⁴ The words of the Prophet flowed over Şafiyya like a shower of peaceful, refreshing rain and she found in him refuge and protection.

* * *

The Prophet knew she felt a stranger in his house among his wives and so, whenever the opportunity presented itself, he defended her. Narrative sources²⁵ relate that he was travelling once in the company of Şafiyya and Zaynab bint Jaḥash. Şafiyya’s camel fell ill and knowing that Zaynab had some spare mounts, the Prophet said, “Şafiyya’s camel has fallen ill; why not give her one of your spare camels?”

She replied haughtily and contemptuously, “I—give to that Jewess?” The Prophet turned angrily from her and left, not touching her for two or three months. Or it is said, “for this reason he deserted her for the month of Dhu al-Ḥijja, al-Muḥarram and some of Şafar. Then he returned and resumed his relations with her.”²⁶

Şafiyya enjoyed the protection of the Prophet till the end of his days. It was reported that the Mothers of the Faithful met around his deathbed during his last illness. Şafiyya said: “O Prophet of God! I wish that I was ill instead of you.”

The rest of the wives exchanged meaningful glances until they were startled by the Prophet saying: “Rinse your mouths.”

“Of what?” they said.

24. *Iṣāba*, *ibid.*, *Simṭ*, p. 121, and *Isti’āb*, IV, 1872.

25. *Iṣāba*, *ibid.*, *Simṭ*, *ibid.*, and *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd.

26. *Isti’āb*, IV, 1850.

"Of your calumny. By God, she spoke the truth," he said.²⁷

* * *

So the Prophet joined his noble Lord, and Ṣafīyya missed his kind protection; for the people had not forgotten her Jewish lineage, nor did they find it disgraceful to attack her through that loophole which could not be closed even by her becoming a good Muslim or the wife of the Prophet. It is reported that one of her bonds-women went to 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and said, "O Commander of the Faithful! Ṣafīyya loves the Sabbath and helps the Jews." 'Umar sent to Ṣafīyya about this and she replied, "As to the Sabbath, I haven't loved it since God made me change it to Friday.²⁸ As to the Jews, I have relatives among them and therefore I help them." Then she turned to her bonds-woman and asked her what made her tell such a lie. The woman said, "Satan!"

Ṣafīyya answered: "Go! You are free."²⁹

* * *

However, whether contented or forced, Ṣafīyya still participated in the political battle which began in the time of 'Uthmān. Her situation at that time was similar to her position when she stood between 'Ā'isha and Fāṭima. For in spite of her willingness to maintain affectionate relations with 'Ā'isha, who at that

27. *Iṣāba*, VIII, 127.

28. Friday is the holy day of the week for the Muslims comparable to the Christian Sunday. It is recorded that the Qur'ān was revealed to Muḥammad on a Friday night in the month of Ramaḍān known as the Night of the Power. [Editors]

29. *Simt*, p. 112; *Iṣāba*, VIII, 127 and *Isti'āb*, IV, 1872.

time enjoyed strong political influence and an eminent position in the Islamic state, Ṣafīyya made every effort to maintain allegiance to 'Uthmān, Commander of the Faithful, against whom 'Ā'isha never ceased to intrigue: to the degree that 'Ā'isha took the Prophet's robe from her house and showed it to the Muslims, shouting, "People! This is the robe of the Prophet, not yet worn while 'Uthmān has worn out the traditions of the Prophet."

A certain freedman of Ṣafīyya's, named Kināna, who may have been her nephew once said, "Ṣafīyya came riding upon a mule, veiled, to defend 'Uthmān. We were met by al-Asṭar who slapped the face of the mule not knowing who was the rider. Ṣafīyya said to me, 'Take me back; do not create a scandal by revealing who I am.'" Then she built a bridge between her house and that of 'Uthmān, over which she carried food and water to him when he was being besieged.³⁰ Ṣafīyya died about the year 50 of the Hijra while Mu'āwiya was in power; she was buried in al-Baqī' with the rest of the Mothers of the Faithful.³¹ Her name has become immortalised in the books of the Ḥadīth. Among those who related traditions of her was her nephew and freedman, Kināna, and her other freedman, Yazīd ibn Mut'ab, Imām Zayn al-'Ābidīn, ('Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn) and Muslim ibn Ṣafwān.

30. *Iṣāba*, *ibid.*

31. *Simt*, p. 123.

Chapter 11

UMM ḤABĪBA BINT ABŪ SUFYĀN

Then Abu Sufyan went out and came to Madina to visit his daughter Umm Habiba. When he went to sit on the Prophet's carpet, she folded it and removed it. He said, "Daughter, I do not know whether you think me too good for the carpet or the carpet too good for me?" She said: "It is the bed of the Prophet of God and you are a polytheist (infidel) therefore I do not want you to sit on it."

Ibn Ishāq, al-Sira, IV, 38.

THE RETURN OF THE EMIGRANTS

The triumphant Hero returned to his city after he had conquered Khaybar, married Ṣafiyya and taken many spoils of the Jews. Madina was preparing to meet the returning army with a happy surprise for him. There in Madina, while the Prophet was absent in Khaybar, the Emigrants to Abyssinia returned in the company of 'Amr ibn Umayya al-Dumari who had been sent by the Prophet to the Negus the King of Abyssinia to bring them back.¹ 'Amr carried them in two ships and then brought them to Madina where their people and the Helpers lived, when the Battle of Khaybar was reaching its climax.² The news of the great victory over the Jews at Khaybar arrived shortly afterwards and the inhabitants of Madina went out to meet the victorious army. The valley was filled with them and their voices were hoarse with rejoicing. Then the Hero Prophet appeared and saw among them those Companions who had emigrated from Mecca in the days of persecution and torment. His last contact with them was the day they slipped out of Mecca during the Ordeal, leaving their property and belongings for the sake of God. The utmost desire of any of them as a stranger and Emigrant had been to die for the sake of Islam to gain Paradise. They had agreed to meet in the next world where eternal bliss is promised to the Faithful—and now they meet to-

1. Ṭabarī, II, 89.

2. Ibn Hishām, IV, 3.

day on the soil of their homeland during the celebration of the Khaybar victory, with the word of Islam now supreme in the Arabian Peninsula. The Prophet jumped off his camel and embraced his cousin Ja'far ibn Abū Ṭālib, kissing him between the eyes. He said joyfully, "I do not know what makes me happier—the conquest of Khaybar or the return of Ja'far."³ Then the Prophet turned, looking for the rest of the Emigrants who, as Ibn Ishāq narrates, were sixteen men in all.⁴ Among the returning women was Umm Ḥabiba bint Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb waiting for the Prophet to carry her to his house. This is because the Prophet had married her while she was still in Abyssinia.⁵ There is a story behind this marriage which dates back to when Muḥammad was first sent to the people as the Prophet of God.

THE ORDEAL OF EXILE

Ramla bint Abū Sufyān, the chief of Mecca and the Commander of the Polytheists, was the wife of the son of the Prophet's aunt, who was 'Ubayd Allah ibn Jaḥash al-Asadī and brother of Zaynab, Mother of the Faithful. 'Ubayd Allah and his wife had embraced Islam while Ramla's father had remained an infidel. Fearing her father's vengeance, she emigrated to Abyssinia while she was pregnant, leaving her father in Mecca furious with grief that she had become a Muslim and there was now no way of reaching her. There in Abyssinia Ramla gave birth to her daughter Ḥabiba

3. Ibn Hishām, IV, 3-5.

4. *Ibid.*

5. Ṭabarī, III, 90.

and therefore became known as Umm Ḥabiba.

One night, while still a stranger trying to stifle her nostalgia and to find in her husband a substitute for her relatives, she awoke frightened after a dream in which she saw her husband in a most deplorable condition.⁶ She awoke to discover he had recanted the religion for which he had emigrated to Abyssinia, and had embraced Christianity, the religion of the Abyssinians. He tried to make her denounce Islam but she remained faithful to it.⁷ She was about to perish with grief. Why did her husband then emigrate and what was all that torment of persecution, living in a strange land and turning against his own people—and why now this recantation of Islam, for which his wife has borne all these afflictions and caused her father so much sorrow? It would have been nobler for 'Ubayd Allah to remain faithful to the religion of his fathers and to fight for it with his people and to defend it as an inherited holy duty. But to renounce all this and accept Islam as a religion in order to come to Abyssinia and recant it in favour of another strange religion of strange people as if he were changing his clothes—what a shame and humiliation! And this beloved daughter—what was her guilt to be born to such an apostate father? What fault was it of hers, to be born in a strange land, while the relations between her parents and her family were destroyed, her father a Christian, her mother a Muslim and her grandfather an Infidel and enemy of Islam? Ramla dissociated herself from the people, feeling shame for

6. *Simt*, p. 96.

7. Ibn Hishām, III, 6; Ṭabarī, III, 117 and *Istī'āb*, IV, 1929.

what her husband, who was still the father of her daughter, had done. She and her daughter hid behind closed doors, which doubled her sense of isolation, avoiding people and with no way to contact her own kind; while, in her homeland her father was waging war on the Prophet in whom she believed. Furthermore, if she returned to Mecca, where would she stay? In her parent's home, whilst her embracing of Islam had destroyed her relations with them? Or would she stay with the Jaḥash family of her husband who had emigrated as well? She had already heard the following story from Mecca. 'Utba ibn Abū Rabī's, al-'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, and Abū Jahl ibn Hishām-ibn al-Mughīra had passed by the deserted houses of the banu Jaḥash whilst going to the upper part of Mecca, and 'Utba remarked that every home, no matter how long it has survived, one day becomes desolated. Abū Jahl turned to him and said, "Do not weep for him, [‘Ubayd Allah] this is my nephew's own work. He has dispersed and separated us and destroyed our family."⁸ No! she concluded, there is no way for Ramla to go back to Mecca while the battle rages between her father and the Prophet and the house of her in-laws is empty and desolate.

A MESSAGE FROM THE HEJAZ

A period of time passed during which Umm Ḥabība was sunk in sad isolation. One day she heard an urgent knock at the door, from a maid servant of the Negus. The woman entered when she opened the door and handed her a letter from the King: "The

8. Ibn Hishām, II, 115.

King orders you, 'Appoint someone to marry you to the Prophet of the Arabs, for he has sent to the Negus a message asking him to betroth you to him!'" Ramla repeated the statement, once, twice and three times and when she was certain of the glad news, she took from her arm two silver bracelets as a reward.⁹ Then she sent someone to Khālid ibn Sa'īd ibn al-'Āṣ the chief of the Emigrants from the banū Umayya and appointed him to marry her. In the evening the Negus called all those Muslims in Abyssinia to an audience and they came, headed by Ja'far ibn Abū Ṭālib, the son of the Prophet's uncle and Khālid, whom Ramla had appointed. The Negus spoke through an interpreter, saying, "Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allah wrote to me asking me to marry him to Umm Ḥabība bint Abū Sufyān; who among you will perform this?"

They answered, "She has appointed Khālid ibn Sa'īd." The Negus turned to Sa'īd and said, "Marry her to your Prophet and I have given her as a dowry four hundred dinars on his behalf." And he poured forth the dinars and Khālid rose and said, "In response to the Prophet's request, I have married Umm Ḥabība to him." He took the dowry.

The Negus gave a wedding feast and said, "Sit down, for it is the custom of Prophets that when they are married they set a feast."¹⁰ Then they went to Umm Ḥabība's house to offer their congratulations and thus Umm Ḥabība retired to rest that night as one of the Mothers of the Faithful. In the morning the

9. *Simṭ*, p. 97; *Iṣāba*, VIII and *Istī'āb*, IV, 1930.

10. *Istī'āb*, IV, 1930.

Negus' maiden came to her carrying the presents of the King's wives. The presents were aloes-wood, amber and perfumes. The Mother of the Faithful gave her fifty dinars of her dowry as a gift and said, "I gave you yesterday the bracelets, for I had no money; but God has given me now this money."

The maiden refused to touch the money and also returned the two bracelets, saying that the King had generously rewarded her and ordered her not to take anything from Umm Ḥabība. He also ordered his wives to send her what they had of perfume. Umm Ḥabība accepted the present gratefully and preserved it until she carried it with her to the house of the Prophet. The Prophet observed these gifts with her and approved of them."¹¹

BETWEEN FATHER AND HUSBAND

Madina celebrated the entry of the daughter of Abū Sufyān into the Prophet's house and 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān held a sumptuous feast for which he slaughtered many animals and fed the people; while Mecca remained wakeful, repeating the words of its leader, Abū Sufyān, when he heard of the conquest of Khaybar, "This indestructible fellow! You can't cut his nose off!"¹²

Only a few days had passed since the marriage of the Prophet to Ṣafīyya. The Prophet's wives received Umm Ḥabība, their companion, with distant courtesy. At the beginning 'Ā'isha saw no cause for jealousy, because she was nearing her fortieth year.

11. Ṭabarī, III, 89; *Iṣāba*, VIII; *Simt*, p. 97 and *Istī'āb*, IV, 1929-31.

12. Ṭabarī, III, 90; *Simt*, p. 99 and *Istī'āb*, IV, 1845.

She had not the charm of Ṣafīyya, nor the grace of Juwayriya, the loveliness of Umm Salama or the beauty of Zaynab. However, 'Ā'isha showed her willingness to receive the new wife into the ranks by her side, but the daughter of Abū Sufyān refused to become a satellite to another. As 'Ā'isha was angered that Ramla did not quickly seek her approval, as Ḥafṣa did, so Ramla disliked in 'Ā'isha her arrogance and her desire to wield the greatest influence in the Prophet's house. But the estrangement between the two did not reach the degree of open enmity, although 'Ā'isha remained fearful of Ramla and the threat she posed to her supremacy among the wives of the Prophet. Ramla would have become exactly that which 'Ā'isha feared, if it were not for her consciousness that her father was a lost pagan. She was equally grieved that the war between her husband and father was still being fought and consuming those who were dear to her, either of her father's faction or from among the Muslim martyrs.

* * *

One day she heard that the Quraysh had violated the Covenant of the Ḥudaybiyya.¹³ She realized by her native understanding and of what she knew about her husband's character that he would not tolerate such iniquity or condone a violation of his Covenant. Would he then invade Mecca and destroy the idols of the Infidels, and with them, her family? In the meantime, the portents of danger appeared in Mecca. There the leaders met to discuss the problem

13. Ṭabarī, III, 111.

of Muḥammad who was about to attack them, well knowing that they were no match for him. In the past, they had disdained Muḥammad and his followers—would they disdain him now when he had achieved great power and impregnability, becoming the greatest power in the Peninsula? They decided to send a delegate to Madina to renew the truce and extend it to ten years. But who would be their delegate? Certainly it had to be Abū Sufyān and no one else: that is what they decided and Sufyān had to agree. How could he excuse himself while he was the one who kindled the fire and kept feeding its flames with Mecca's sons? So let him today feel the heat of those flames himself and go to Muḥammad, his bitter enemy, to ask for peace. So Abū Sufyān was compelled to go to Madina.

When he reached the city he grew apprehensive about meeting Muḥammad: but recalled at least that he had a daughter in the house of the Prophet. He secretly went to ask her help in accomplishing his mission. The Mother of the Faithful was surprised to see her father entering her house,¹⁴ because she had not seen him since emigrating to Abyssinia; she stood before him now, startled and speechless. During her confusion, he sought unbidden to sit down and moved to the carpet, but was startled to see her quickly and imperiously fold it, breathing hard. He asked her with restraint, "Daughter I do not know whether you think me too good for the carpet or the carpet too good for me?"

She said, "It is the bed of the Prophet of God

14. Ibn Hishām, IV, 38.

and you are a polytheist therefore I did not want you to sit on it."

He replied painfully, "Evil has come to you since you left me."¹⁵ He left furious and she leaned against the wall, drained of tears and emotion. The Prophet came home at last and she told him about the whole affair of Abū Sufyān.

Abū Sufyān went to the Prophet and talked to him about the Covenant; but the Prophet answered nothing,¹⁶ He implored Abū Bakr to talk to the Prophet, but Abū Bakr refused. Then he beseeched 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, who answered harshly, "You want me to intercede for you with the Prophet of God? By God! If I could find only ants with which to fight you, they would be sufficient."¹⁷

Then Abū Sufyān went to the house of 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib where Fāṭima, the Prophet's daughter and her son al-Ḥasan were playing together and said, "O 'Alī, you are the closest person to me and I have come to you in need . . . intercede with Muḥammad for me."

'Alī said, "Woe to you, Abū Sufyān! By God, the Prophet has made up his mind and we cannot talk to him about it."

Then Abū Sufyān turned to Fāṭima imploringly and said, "O daughter of Muḥammad! Will you not let your son act as advocate between us? To act so would make him Lord.

She answered, "By God! My son is not old

15. Ibn Hishām, IV, 38; Ṭabarī, III, 112 and *Simf.*, p. 100.

16. Ibn Hishām, IV, 38 and Ṭabarī, III, 112.

17. Ṭabarī, *ibid.*

enough to do such a thing and he will not help anyone against the Prophet of God."

And when he found that all avenues were closed, he then sought the advice of the Prophet's cousin, 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib, who said, "I know nothing that can save you; but you are the lord of the banū Kinā'na; get up and ask the whole people for protection and then leave quickly for your home. I know this may not do you much good, but it is the best I can find for you."¹⁸

So Abū Sufyān went to the Mosque and there appealed to the people for protection. Then he fled to Mecca on his camel, like a man pursued. When Umm Ḥabība heard what had happened to her father, she only commented, when she saw her husband preparing for the decisive battle of Mecca, that she wished victory for him. Perhaps other wives watched her in her serious and delicate dilemma, seeing the army of Madina preparing to surprise her own people while Mecca was still confused by the account of the unsuccessful mission of Abū Sufyān, who had told them, "I saw Muḥammad and he did not even answer me. Then I talked to ibn Abū Quḥāfa [Abū Bakr] and I found no help there; I saw ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and he was the most venomous of all."¹⁹

The situation was very difficult, for the victory of Muḥammad meant the end of her father and her own people, and Umm Ḥabība had antagonised and renounced her own people for the Prophet's sake.

Would her blood be absolved from the shedding

18. Ibn Hishām, IV, 38 and Ṭabarī, III, 112.

19. Ibn Hishām, IV, 39 and Ṭabarī, III, 113.

of their blood and would her heart recover from grief at the tragic fate awaiting them?

While sunk in her exhausting perplexity, a spark of hope appeared: couldn't Abū Sufyān embrace Islam as did 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, Khālid ibn al-Walid and Abū al-'Āṣ ibn al-Rabī', the Prophet's son-in-law? It was a flimsy hope and more a mirage than real, but she fanned the hope to ease her anxiety. Then she turned toward Heaven, asking God to guide Abū Sufyān to Islam, and soon she felt relief and peace. She recited the verses of the Qur'ān which were said when Muḥammad married her: "May God create affection between you and those whom you have antagonised. God is all powerful, forgiving and merciful."²⁰ This was the utmost that she could do for her father.

In the meantime, one of the Companions of the Prophet who had witnessed the battle of Badr was so apprehensive for the Quraysh that he sent a message to them about the imminent danger by the hand of a woman from Mecca named Sarah, and promised her a generous reward if she delivered it.²¹

The Prophet learnt about the letter of his Companion, Ḥāṭib ibn Abū Balta'a, and he sent 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib and al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwām after her. They caught up with her and questioned her until she produced the letter which was hidden in her braided hair. The Prophet called Ḥāṭib and asked him why he had acted so. Ḥāṭib said, "O Prophet, I am a believer in God and his Prophet; I have not changed

20. *Siml*, p. 110 and Qur'ān, *She Who Is Tested*: 7.

21. Ibn Hishām, IV, 40 and *Iṣāba*: Ḥāṭib ibn Abū Balta'a.

or altered my faith. But I am a man without relations among the Muslims, while I have among the Quraysh many kin and it was for their sake I sent warning."

'Umar jumped up and asked the Prophet's permission to behead him. The Prophet refused because Ḥaṭīb was one of the Companions at Badr.²²

I have mentioned this episode of Ḥaṭīb so that we may realise the difficulty of Umm Ḥabība's situation when she saw her husband leading out ten thousand warriors against Mecca.

* * *

VICTORY GAINED

The welcome tidings soon reached Madina of how God had favoured the Prophet and made him victorious. They heard of the meeting between the Prophet and Abū Sufyān, whom Mecca sent—when it saw the fire of the invading armies burning near it—to reconnoitre those forces marching against them. Al-'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib had recognized Abū Sufyān and told him of the news. "Woe to you, Abū Ḥanzala, [nickname of Abū Sufyān] this is the Prophet of God among the people and tomorrow will be the last dawn for the Quraysh if the Prophet enters Mecca by force. So, embrace Islam, you and all your people."²³

Abū Sufyān asked desperately, "What shall I do then? May my father and mother be your ransom!" Al-'Abbās then took him up behind him and went through the camp, passing the ten thousand who had lit fires to throw fright into the Infidel's hearts.

22. Ibn Hishām, IV, 10.

23. Ibn Hishām, IV, 45; Ṭabarī, III, 40 and *Ṭabaqāt*, II, 98.

When they passed through the division of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, he recognized Abū Sufyān and hurried to the Prophet's tent for permission to behead him. Close on his heels came al-'Abbās who said, "O Prophet of God! I have given him protection," and the people held their breath awaiting the word of the Prophet. He said, "O 'Abbās, take him to your camp and bring him to me tomorrow morning."

Abū Sufyān spent a sleepless night, awaiting the judgment of Muḥammad on the great man of the Quraysh. When morning came, Abū Sufyān was taken into the Prophet's presence, at which assembly were gathered the great men of the Emigrants and the Helpers.²⁴ The Prophet spoke saying, "Woe to you, Abū Sufyān, is it not time for you to learn there is no god but God!"

The man answered, "How great is your understanding, your generosity and your love. By my mother and father had there been another God with God, he would have continued to help me."

The Prophet replied again, "Woe unto you, Abū Sufyān, is it not time you knew that I am the Prophet of God?"

Sufyān replied, "By my mother and father, how great is your understanding, your generosity and your love. But as to this, there are still some doubts in my heart." It did not take long for Abū Sufyān to embrace Islam.

Then al-'Abbās requested the Prophet to honour the man in some way satisfying to his dignity. The gracious Prophet answered, "Whoever enters the

24. Ibn Hishām, IV, 45 and Ṭabarī, III, 40.

house of Abū Sufyān is safe, and whoever locks his own door shall be safe and he who enters the Holy Mosque in Mecca is safe also."²⁵

So Abū Sufyān went to Mecca to declare that whoever entered his house from now on should be in sanctuary. The voice of this proclamation reached the ears of Umm Ḥabība, who echoed with joy, "whoever enters the house of Abū Sufyān is safe." How generous is her husband the Prophet! How understanding, how noble, how tender to his relations! And she knelt down and prayed thankfully to God. She rose and went to see the impact of the glad news upon 'Ā'isha, Ḥafṣa and the rest of the Prophet's wives.

* * *

She felt as if a heavy weight had been lifted from her shoulders. From that moment she would not let 'Ā'isha defy her or treat her as formerly with haughtiness and disdain. She remained all her life watching her and confronting her whenever she behaved with arrogance and pride.

When the time came for her to depart this life, she called 'Ā'isha as she breathed her last and said, "We have nearly been like the other rival wives; so will you forgive me?" Or, according to another source, she said, "Our tense relationship might have been the same as that between rival wives, so may God forgive us both for that."²⁶ 'Ā'isha absolved her and asked forgiveness of her; and so her pale face shone with satisfaction and contentment and she whispered,

25. Ibn Hishām, IV, 46; Ṭabari, III, 117 and *Ṭabaqāt*, II, 98.

26. *Simt*, p. 101.

"You have made me joyful by forgiving me, may God make you joyful too."

She did the same to Umm Salama bint Zād al-Rakb.²⁷ Then she rested in peace and was buried in the good earth of the Baqi' in the city of her husband the Prophet, in the year 44 of the Hijra during the Caliphate of her brother Mu'āwiya.²⁸

27. *Simt*, p. 101.

28. *Ish'āb*, IV, 1929.

Chapter 12

MĀRIA THE COPT
THE MOTHER OF IBRĀHĪM

'Make the Copt your concern, for they have with us a Covenant of protection and relationship.'

Ḥadīth

A GIFT FROM EGYPT

Not far from the house of the Prophet in a special home lived one of his wives. She was not called the Mother of the Faithful, although of all of them she was most honoured by becoming the mother of Ibrāhīm, the son of Muḥammad. She did not live in any of the houses connected with the Mosque, though her influence in those houses and on their occupants was tremendous. It is sufficient that she alone was the one against whom all the wives of the Prophet united and were ready to make her taboo to her husband had it not been for the following verses of Forbiddance:

“O Prophet! Why do you declare unlawful what God has made lawful to you, in order to please your wives?”¹

Who is then this lady and how did she enter the life of the Prophet and what position did she have in this life? In a village in upper Egypt called Hifn, near Anṣinā² on the eastern bank of the Nile opposite al-Ashmunīn, Māria bint Shim‘ūn [Simon] was born to a Coptic father and a Byzantine mother. She spent her early years in the village before she moved in the days of her early youth with her sister Sirīn to the palace of al-Muqawqis, the chief of the Copts. There she heard of the appearance of a prophet in

1. Qur‘ān, *Prohibition* : 1 and *Simṭ*, p. 141.

2. Ibn Hishām, I, 7. See also *The Geographical Dictionary* by Ramsay, Vol. I., (Dār al-Kutub edition). Hifnī Nāṣif wrote a paper on the home of Māria the Copt in Egypt and delivered it at the Oriental Congress in Athens in 1915. May God have mercy on him. (sic.)

the Arabian peninsula calling people to a new divine religion. She was in the palace when the delegate of the Arabian prophet, Ḥāṭib ibn Abū Balta'a, brought a message to al-Muqawqis. Ḥāṭib delivered the message which read :

"In the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful! From Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allah to al-Muqawqis, the Chief of the Copts. Peace be to him who follows true religion. I call you to embrace Islam. Become a Muslim and you will be safe and God will reward you twice; but you decline, the guilt of the Copts will be on your head. O People of the Book! Let us be in agreement that we shall never worship anyone but God and shall never associate anyone else with Him. Let no one take any gods but God. If you decline, then bear witness that we are Muslims."

Al-Muqawqis read the letter and folded it with care and respect, placing it in an ivory box which he handed to one of his bonds-women. Then he turned to Ḥāṭib, asking him to describe the Prophet to him. When Ḥāṭib finished, al-Muqawqis thought for long before saying, "I had known that a Prophet remained and I thought that he would appear in the land of Syria for there is the home of Prophets. But now I see he has appeared in the land of the Arabs . . . However, the Copts do not obey me and I hate to part with what I have."

Then he called his scribe and dictated to him his

answer.

"I have read your letter and understood what it contains and for what you call. I have learnt that there is yet a Prophet who I thought would appear in Syria . . . I have honoured your messenger and I have sent you two maidens who have a high position among the Copts. I have also sent clothes and a beast for you to ride. Greetings !"

Al-Muqawqis handed his message to Ḥāṭib excusing himself that the Copts were adamant in their religion and asked him to keep secret what had passed between them, so that the Copts should not know one word of their conversation. Ḥāṭib returned to the Prophet with Māria and her sister Sirīn,³ and a eunuch, one thousand carats of gold, twenty fine dresses made in Egypt, a saddled and bridled mule, a gray donkey, some Banhā honey, aloes-wood, perfume, and musk.

The two sisters felt some nostalgia at leaving their homeland. They walked through the valley, filling their eyes till sunset on the land in which they were raised until, with a last tearful glance, the day fled them. Ḥāṭib, realising their state of mind, told them of the history of his own land and of the legends and tales which time had woven over many centuries around Mecca and the Ḥijāz. Then he talked, as a familiar believer and Companion, about Muḥammad. The two sisters were taken with what they heard and their hearts were opened to Islam and its Prophet.

3. This is what is generally known about Māria and her sister. According to another account al-Muqawqis sent to the Prophet four young slave-women including Māria and Sirīn. See Ṭabarī, III, 85.

They became pensive about the new life facing them and about the Lord Prophet who eagerly awaited the return to Madina, both of his Companion and the reply of al-Muqawqis.

* * *

The entourage reached Madina in the seventh year of the Hijra, shortly after the Prophet had returned from the Ḥudaybiyya, where he had signed a peace with the Quraysh. The Prophet received the letter and gifts of al-Muqawqis: he liked Māria and was satisfied with her, while he offered her sister Sirīn to his poet Ḥassān ibn Thābit. The news soon reached the house of the Prophet that a beautiful young Egyptian with curled hair had been sent from the land of the Nile as a gift for the Prophet. Muḥammad put her in the house of Ḥāritha ibn al-Nu'mān near the Mosque.

'Ā'isha tried hard to convince herself that there was no danger from this newcomer, for she was nothing but a Coptic stranger, a bonds-woman, sent as a gift from master to master. However, she watched anxiously for signs of excessive attention by the Prophet to the newcomer and what aroused her apprehensions most were the prolonged visitations he made to her.⁴

HOPE AND DREAM

About a year passed and Māria felt happy in the Prophet's favour and secure in his care. She was satisfied, too, that he had secluded her like the rest of his wives. Her hopes, her thoughts, nay, her

4. *Ṭabaqāt and Simḥ*, p. 140.

whole existence were focussed upon that great Lord with whom fate had unexpectedly associated her. For her, he became Master, Companion, relative, even homeland. Her whole concern was to become for ever the object of his favour and contentment. She had about her all the charm of Egypt, and the perfume of the valleys. Likewise, exciting visions and fantasies surrounded her, of Isis in her supreme love, Nefertitti in her bewildering beauty, Hatshepseth in her eternal rule and Cleopatra in her captivating attractiveness. A flowing spring [Egypt] continuously provided her with reminiscence and conversation and more than anything else she recalled the story of Ḥāgar, her Egyptian predecessor who also came from Egypt and was the mother of Abraham's child, who had aroused the jealousy of his lady Sārah, who harassed her husband so much that he took that Egyptian and her son to the Ka'ba⁵ and deserted them at the ruins of the shrine in that barren valley.⁶

How often was Māria fascinated to hear the Lord Prophet relate to her how Heaven had guided Ḥāgar to the spring of Zamzam and describe how the Arabian Peninsula began a new life as a result of the blessed spring. He recounted Ḥāgar's life and how her journey between al-Ṣafā and al-Marwa⁷ had become enshrined as a ritual in the pilgrimages of the Arabs in the pre-Islamic and Islamic times. Whenever she

5. According to the Qur'ān Abraham and his son Isma'īl, born of Ḥāgar, were the ones who built, by divine command, the Holy Shrine of the Ka'ba which the Muslims venerate today. See Qur'ān, *The Cow*: 125-27. [Editors]

6. Ibn Hishām, I, 7.

7. Ṣafā and Marwa are two places visited by pilgrims as part of the rituals observed today. [Editors]

was alone, Māria was accustomed to think of Hāgar, her Egyptian ancestry and her motherhood of Isma'il and the Arabs,⁸ and dwelt on the similarities of her own and Hāgar's position. For both were Egyptian bonds-women: Hāgar was a gift from Sārah to the Prophet Abraham, while Māria was a gift from al-Muqawqis to the Prophet Muḥammad. Both of them aroused the jealousy of the Mistresses of the households. But Hāgar gave Abraham a male child. Would Māria then bear a male child to Muḥammad? How remote and unattainable was this hope! Since Lady Khaḍīja's death, the Prophet had married ten wives among whom were the young and the mature, some of whom were already mothers. But the wombs of all were closed to give the Prophet one male child after Khaḍīja's two sons were taken by death, leaving him only Fāṭima al-Zahra. The Prophet was now sixty and it seemed as if he had given up hope for a male child after these barren years with numerous wives. How could then Māria hope to have a child as Hāgar had Isma'il? A wish beyond possibility and a hope beyond dreams!

GLAD TIDINGS

Throughout the second year of her marriage Māria continuously mentioned Hāgar, Isma'il and Ibrāhīm, until one day she felt her own womb quicken. She could not believe it at first and accused herself of day-dreaming, thinking it all an illusion magnified by her intense longing for motherhood and brought on by her continual meditation on Hāgar and Isma'il.

8. Ibn Hishām, I, 7.

She kept her condition secret for one or two months while she was still in doubt as to the reality or the dream, until the signs became too conspicuous to be doubted. Then she told Sirīn, who assured her that it was no illusion, but a living embryo. Māria felt faint with joy, for she could scarcely believe that Heaven had so responded to her prayers. Her hopes, once barren and dream-like, were now realised. She was overwhelmed by ecstasy and when the Prophet came, she told him the great secret encompassed within her. Immediately he recalled the signs of her recent indisposition, restlessness and lack of appetite, symptoms which he remembered in Khaḍīja during her pregnancies, but which he had seen as a passing illness in Māria. He raised a glowing countenance to Heaven, thanking his Creator for the wonderful comfort bestowed upon him after the successive loss of his daughter Zaynab, and before her Ruqayya, Umm Kulthūm, 'Abd Allah and Al-Qāsim.

And when Māria told him of her earlier doubts about the truth of this pregnancy, he recited God's words about Dhakariyya: "How may I have a male child while my wife is barren and has become so old? He said, 'Thus says your Lord, this is not difficult for Me to do, for I have created you from nothing.'"⁹ Then he also recited God's words: "Have you heard the story of Ibrāhīm's honoured guests who visited him and said, 'Peace.' He replied, 'Peace to you.' He saw that they were strangers and went out to kill a fattened calf to serve them and said, 'Will you not eat?' He was apprehensive of them, but they

said, 'Do not be afraid,' and they broke to him the glad tidings that he would have a son full of wisdom. His wife then came in sorrowfully slapping her face, saying, '(I am) an old barren woman!' They said, 'Thus says your Lord. He is wisest and all-knowing'.¹⁰ Māria laughed and said, showing her abundant youth, "But I am not an old woman, O Prophet of God," and she was overwhelmed with joy.

Soon the good news spread through Madina that the Prophet of God was expecting a child from the Egyptian Māria. There is no need for us to explain to the reader here the painful impact of this news upon the wives of the Prophet. Why should this stranger bear a child whilst she had been but a year in Madina, when some of them had been in the house of the Prophet for many years without bearing a child? Why should God favour her with this great blessing while the Mothers of the Faithful, among them the daughters of Abū Bakr and 'Umar, bint Zād al-Rakb and the grand daughter of Abū Ṭālib, were denied this favour? They were consumed with jealousy, not knowing what to do or say, and a whisper spread accusing Māria of the same thing which was charged against 'Ā'isha.¹¹ But 'Ā'isha was justified by Heaven. Would then Māria aspire to justification by Heaven too? God did not forsake her in her predicament, but gave her a decisive proof against the false accusations.

Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allah al-Zuhri related the following from Anas ibn Mālik, who said that Māria,

10. Qur'ān, *The Winds* : 24-30.

11. *Siml*, p. 141 and *Istī'āb*, IV, 1912.

the bonds-woman of the Prophet, was in her quarters and a Coptic man¹² used to bring to her water and firewood. When the people saw this, they said knowingly, "A foreigner goes to see a foreigner." The Prophet heard this and sent our Lord 'Alī ibn Abū-Ṭālib there, who saw the Copt resting in a palm tree. When our Lord 'Alī pulled his sword the man was frightened and threw off his robe in fright to reveal his nakedness; and 'Alī saw that his member was cut off. 'Alī returned to the Prophet and related what he saw.¹³ Then Gabriel, the entrusted Angel of Revelation, followed and said, "Peace be unto you, O Father of Ibrāhīm." When the Prophet heard this greeting, his mind became at peace.¹⁴

The Prophet, anxious for Māria, removed her to al-'Ālia' in the suburbs of Madina, for her safety and comfort and to take care of her health and her burden. 'Ā'isha said, "I have never felt so jealous of a woman as I did of Māria, because she was beautiful with curled hair. The Prophet admired her and accommodated her at the beginning in the house of Ḥārith ibn al-Nu'mān and she became our neighbour. He was with her most of the day and the night. She became unhappy, so he moved her to al-'Ālia', but he saw her continuously there which became even harder for us to bear. Then God blessed him with a son from her while denying us this blessing."

The Prophet continued tending her and so did her sister Sirīn until the hour of delivery came one

12. He came with her from Egypt as part of the gift of Muqawqis.

13. *Istī'āb*, IV, 1912.

14. *Ṭabaqāt* and *Siml*, p. 141.

night in the month of Dhu al-Ḥijja in the eighth year of the Hijra. The Prophet called her midwife Salma, the wife of Abū Rāfi', then went apart privately to pray. And when Umm Rāfi' brought the good news¹⁵ he rewarded her generously and hurried to Māria with congratulations for her son who had set her free from bondage.¹⁶

Then he took his son in his arms with great joy and love and called him Ibrāhīm as a blessing after Abraham, the father of the Prophets. He gave silver coins to all the poor of Madina equivalent to the weight of hairs on the child's head. The Helpers competed to suckle the child for they wished to free Māria for the Prophet, knowing how much delight he took in her. The Prophet chose a nurse for his son and provided her with seven goats in case her milk failed.¹⁷

And he began watching the boy's growth each day, finding in him joy and comfort and wishing that all the world could share his delight.

One day he carried the child in his arms to 'Ā'isha and asked her tenderly to see what signs of the father appeared in this infant. 'Ā'isha felt as if an arrow had pierced her heart. She was about to cry, but held her tears, saying in fury, "I see no similarity between you and him." Instantly he perceived her torment and left with the boy, feeling pity for her. The flame of jealousy lay hidden beneath the assumed patience and affability of 'Ā'isha until the day the

15. According to another account Salma's husband was the one who carried the happy news. *Simt*, p. 140 and *Isti'āb*, I, 54.

16. *Simt*, p. 142 and *Isti'āb*, IV, 1913.

17. *Iṣāba*, I and *Isti'āb*, I, 55.

Prophet met with Māria in the house of Ḥafṣa and then the flames rose up, resulting in the episode of Forbiddence. Māria thought her wish fulfilled, for she had given the Prophet a son as Ḥāgar before had given Abraham a son, and the problem of 'Ā'isha's jealousy ended in her favour, when the Prophet, after refusing to see her, returned according to the instructions of the Qur'ān, the revealed Book used by Muslims for their worship. This is parallel to the story of Ḥāgar who was cast into the barren deserted valley by Sārah's jealousy. Nothing made Māria happier than offering the Lord Prophet a boy to be the delight of his heart. He was comforted for the loss of the sons of Lady Khadija and the despair of having a male child, because of advancing years, was lifted.

THE SETTING MOON

Her happiness however only lasted a little more than a year and then came tragedy and bereavement, for Ibrāhīm fell ill when nearly two years old. His mother was distraught and called her sister; they both attended his bed constantly caring for him, but his life began to ebb gradually. His father came leaning on 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf and he took the child from his mother's lap to his own as he was breathing his last; and his heart filled with grief. He no longer knew what to do, except bow his head in submission and say, "O Ibrāhīm! We do not want anything from God except your life."¹⁸

His eyes filled with tears as he saw his only son

18. *Isti'āb*, I, 57.

suffering the throes of death. Then he listened darkly to the death rattle mingled with the cries of the bereaved mother and afflicted aunt.

Finally he bent over the body of his son and kissed it tearfully, before restraint settled upon him and he said, "The eye flows with tears and the heart with grief, but I say nothing except that which pleases the Lord. O Ibrāhīm, we are grieved over you. We are God's and to him we shall return." Then he looked lovingly and with pity at Māria, comforting her by saying, "He has a nurse in Paradise."¹⁹

His cousin, al-Faḍl ibn 'Abbās, came and washed the body while the Prophet sat watching in deepest sorrow.²⁰ The body then was borne away from his mother's chamber to the burial place, al-Baqī'. The Prophet prayed over him and put him in his grave with his own hands, shovelling the earth and wetting it with water. The melancholy cortege returned to Madina, while the horizon darkened and the sun was eclipsed. One of them said, "It has eclipsed because of Ibrāhīm's death."²¹

When these words reached the Prophet, he turned to his Companions and said, "The sun and the moon are the marvellous works of God. They do not eclipse for the death or the life of anyone."

He kept the wound in his heart, submitting to the will of God, while Māria remained in her house, assuming patience in order not to wound further the

19. *Iṣāba*: Ibrāhīm the son of Muḥammad.

20. *Istī'āb*, I, 55 and *Simt*, p. 143.

21. *Simt*, p. 143 and *Iṣāba*, I.

Prophet. And when patience failed her, she went out to al-Baqī', seeking comfort in crying and in nearness to her lost son.

* * *

There were not many days left to the Prophet himself after the death of Ibrāhīm in the tenth year of the Hijra, for no sooner did the month of Rabī al-Awwal of the following year come than the Prophet fell ill and joined his heavenly Lord; leaving Māria to live in isolation for five years, seeing only her sister Sīrīn. She only left her chamber to visit the grave of her husband in the Mosque or the grave of her child in al-Baqī'. When she died in the year sixteen of the Hijra, the Commander of the Faithful, 'Umar, ordered the people to walk in the funeral train and he prayed over her and buried her himself in al-Baqī'.²²

'Every soul shall taste death.' It is sufficient for Māria to have entered the life of the Prophet, that Heaven interfered to protect her when the other wives of the Prophet conspired against her and that God favoured her with the motherhood of Ibrāhīm.

THE PROPHET'S INSTRUCTION

Above all it is sufficient for Māria that she had consolidated the ancient relation between Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula, which began with Hāgar in the remote past and which led the Prophet to enjoin his followers to make the welfare of Māria's people

22. *Iṣāba*, VIII; *Simt*, p. 143 and *Istī'āb*, IV, 1912.

their concern, saying, "I entrust to you as I have done to God, the people of Dhimma,²³ [i.e., the Copts] who are the black people with curled hair, for they have with you now a relation through marriage."

And he also said, "Make the Copts your concern, for they have with us a covenant of protection and relationship."

The Prophet left these instructions as a heritage. It is reported that during the negotiations of peace with Mu'āwiyā, al-Imām al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī requested him to relieve the people of Ḥafan from the land-tax because among them were the uncles of Ibrāhīm, the Prophet's son. It is also reported that when 'Ubāda ibn al-Ṣāmit went to Egypt after its conquest he asked the whereabouts of her village and Māriā's house and built a Mosque over it.

23. 'Ahl al-Dhimma' is a term meaning those people, namely Jews and Christians, who had revealed Books and were closest to the Muslims. But after the great conquests of Islam in the first half of the seventh century, this term was applied to the conquered people who lived under the Muslims, paying a poll-tax instead of becoming Muslims. Hence, *dhimma* meant protection. [Editors]

Chapter 13

MAYMŪNA BINT AL-ḤĀRITH THE LAST OF THE WIVES OF THE PROPHET

By God! Maymuna is no more! She was the most pious of us all and the most affectionate to her relatives.

'Ā'isha bint Abū Bakr in al-Iṣāba, VIII, 192

A HEART FULL OF LONGING

Nothing preoccupied the Muslims after the conquest of Khaybar and the return of the Emigrants from Abyssinia like their thinking about one of the stipulations of the peace of al-Hudaybiyya concluded at the end of the sixth year of the Hijra, that "Muhammad and his Companions shall return to Mecca in the following year and remain there for three days fully armed with their swords in their scabbards and nothing more."¹

The Emigrants kept dreaming of their return to Mecca and visualising the moment of the circling of the Ka'ba and filling their eyes with the sight of their beloved homeland. Many years had passed since they were driven from their homes and were prevented from worshipping in the Holy Shrine.

However, when in the sixth year of the Hijra they went peacefully to perform the pilgrimage and drew near to Mecca, the polytheists prevented them from visiting it, although agreement was made to let them return the following year.

* * *

The days and nights dragged on until the turn of the year when the Prophet ordered his followers to prepare for Mecca. He mounted his she-camel, al-Qaṣwā', followed by two thousand mounted men all longing to see the land where they were born and raised and the oldest shrine where God was still worshipped.

1. Ṭabar i, III, 79.

Even at a distance, the sight of Mecca aroused their memories, for was it not the birthplace of the Prophet and the place where the revelation came to him? The voices of the camel leaders were raised announcing the promised day. In front was 'Abd Allah ibn Rawāḥa holding the reins of al-Qaṣwā', chanting²

O sons of the Infidels, leave the shrine alone
All the good of the world is in the Prophet
O God, I believe in the Lord of this House
I know God's truth by accepting him.

And they entered Mecca safely, with shaven heads and undaunted, whilst the Infidel polytheists had deserted the city. They recited God's promise, "God has truly fulfilled the vision of his Prophet that you will enter the Forbidden Mosque, by the Will of God, safe, with shaven heads and unafraid. He knew what you did not know and granted you a quick victory."³

Then they shouted with one voice, saying, "Here we are, O Lord! There is no god but God." The quarters of Mecca resounded with this chant of belief and the earth shook beneath the feet of the infidels encamped outside the Forbidden city and they felt as if the mountains were erupting with awe and majesty. The prayers continued from the floor of the Holy Shrine, "There is no god but God alone. He has fulfilled His promise, made His servant victorious, strengthened his soldiers and defeated alone the Confederate Tribes."

All of the Meccans believed that the great day of victory for the Believers was very near. The

2. Ibn Hishām, IV, 13.

3. Qur'ān, *Victory*: 37.

majestic scene affected Mecca like magic and there one of the noblest ladies of Mecca felt her heart filled with longing for Muḥammad. She was Barra bint al-Ḥārith ibn Hazn of the banū Hilāl of the Muḍar tribe; she was one of four sisters whom the Prophet described as the 'Believing sisters'. Another of these sisters was Umm al-Faḍl Lubāba al-Kubra bint al-Ḥārith who was the wife of al-'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and the first woman after Khadija to believe in the Prophet. She is also remembered as the woman who struck Abū Lahab, the enemy of God and his Prophet, when he entered the house of his brother al-'Abbās and threw his servant Abū Rāfi' to the ground for becoming a Muslim. Seeing this, Umm al-Faḍl had picked up a wooden pole and broken it over his head, saying, "You found him weak because his lord is absent." So he had left humiliated and died seven days later of an affliction imposed by God.⁴

The other two half-sisters of Barra were Asmā bint 'Umays al-Khath'amīyya, the wife of Ja'far ibn Abū Ṭālib (he of the two wings), and mother of his son 'Abd Allah. After Ja'far she married Abū Bakr and gave him a son Muḥammad; and then after him married al-Imām 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib and gave birth to Yaḥya. The other sister was Salma bint 'Umays, the wife of Ḥamza ibn Abū Ṭālib, the Lion of God and the Martyr of the Battle of Uḥud. Their mother was Hind bint 'Awf ibn Zuhayr ibn al-Ḥārith who was described as, "The old woman who had the noblest sons-in-law on earth; they are the Prophet Abū Bakr, Ḥamza and al-'Abbās, the sons of 'Abd

4. Ibn Hishām, II, 301.

al-Muṭṭalib and Ja'far and 'Alī sons of Abū Ṭālib."⁵

Hind also had other sons-in-law of prominent position: al-Walid ibn al-Mughīra al-Makhzūmi, the husband of Lubāba the Less bint al-Ḥārith, and the mother of Khālid, Ubayy ibn Khalaf al-Jumāhī the husband of her daughter 'Aṣmā' bint al-Ḥārith and mother of Abān, Ziyād ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Mālik al-Hilālī, husband of 'Azza bint al-Ḥārith.⁶ Lubāba, 'Aṣmā' and 'Azza were daughters of al-Ḥārith and sisters of Barra.

Barra was at this time a widow of twenty-six years, who had lost her husband Abū Rahm ibn 'Abd al-'Uzza al-'Āmiri.⁷ Barra confided to her sister Umm al-Faḍl the longing of her heart and her sister in turn freed her husband al-'Abbās to arrange this matter. 'Abbās, of course did not hesitate to carry such a message to the Prophet of Islam, and went immediately to him to propose marriage. The Prophet responded with the offer of four hundred dirhams, and sent his cousin Ja'far, the husband of her sister Asmā' to betroth her. According to another source, Barra was the one who offered herself in marriage, as a result of which occasion God revealed the following verses of the Qur'ān: "If a woman Believer offers herself in marriage to the Prophet and he wishes to marry her, she will be reserved exclusively to him."⁸

The three days truce stipulated by al-Ḥudaybiyya

5. *Simṭ*, p. 113 and *Isti'āb*, IV, 1915.

6. This is the account of Ibn Ishāq as quoted by Ibn Hishām, IV, 196. See also *Isti'āb*, IV, 1915 and *Simṭ*.

7. This is the account of Ibn Ishāq quoted by Ibn Hishām, IV, 196 and *Isti'āb*. There is some disagreement regarding the name of the husband. See Ṭabarī, III, 178; *Isti'āb*, IV, 1916 and *Simṭ*, p. 115.

8. Ibn Hishām, IV, 296 and Qur'ān, *The Confederate Tribes*: 50.

Peace⁹ neared its end. The Prophet wished for an extension to celebrate his marriage and to win more time for the Muslims to overwhelm these blasphemous, stubborn and envious infidels. So when two delegates of the Quraysh asked him to leave the town at the end of the truce, he said to them peacefully, "Will you not leave me to have my wedding among you and I will prepare a feast for you to attend?"¹⁰

But the delegates realized that if Muḥammad remained a few more days in Mecca, the city would willingly surrender its keys to him. They answered him harshly, "We have no need for your food; so leave at once."

The Prophet obeyed in fulfilment of the Peace and ordered his followers to leave likewise. He left behind his freedman Abū Rāfi' to follow him with Barra.

THE BLESSED SPOT

In Sarif, near to al-Tan'im, Barra came, accompanied by the Prophet's freedman. There Muḥammad consummated his marriage, and then took her to Madina.¹¹ He called her Maymūna (Blessed) because he married her on the occasion that he and his followers entered Mecca after seven years' exile, without fear of their safety. No doubt she was stung by jealousy against 'Ā'isha and Māria, the first because she received the greatest share of the Prophet's love

9. This Peace agreed that the Prophet and his Companions were not to enter Mecca that year, that is the sixth year of the Hijra, but that they could enter it in the following year and remain in it three days. See the text of this affair in Ṭabarī, III, 79 and *Ṭabaqāt*, II, 70.

10. Ibn Hishām, IV, 14 and Ṭabarī, III, 100.

11. Ibn Hishām, IV, 14; Ṭabarī, III, 101 and *Isti'āb*, IV, 1918.

and the second because she became the mother of Ibrāhīm. No doubt also she could not resist joining the faction against Māria which caused the Prophet to leave his wives for a month. Apart from this event, Muslim chroniclers and biographers of the Prophet do not mention that she was engaged in any quarrel in the house of the Prophet. However they mention that when the Prophet entered his last illness, he was in her house and that she agreed he might lie where he wished ; and so was moved to 'Ā'isha's quarters. When he went to join his Lord, Maymūna lived on to recall the blessed day on which she met the Prophet and to yearn for the blessed spot of Sarif at which he consummated the marriage. She instructed that she was to be buried in a small pavilion there and when she died, sometime after the middle of the first century of the Hijra, they laid her body in the chosen spot.¹²

She left behind a good reputation.

Yazīd ibn al-Aṣamm related, "I received 'Ā'isha coming from Mecca. I had with me one of the sons of Talḥa [her brother] and 'Ā'isha's sister. We stood on the walls of Madina looking out . . . and when 'Ā'isha came, rebuking her nephew, she turned teaching me a lesson, saying, "Do you not know that God has guided you until he made you prominent in one of the Prophet's houses ? By God ! Maymūna is no more, she has gone and you are left free to do whatever pleases you. She was the most pious of us all and the most affectionate to her relatives."

Peace be upon Maymūna and peace be upon the wives of the Prophet, the Mothers of the Faithful.

12. *Simt*, p. 15 and *Isti'āb*, IV, 1918.

OUR PUBLICATIONS

QURAN

THE HOLY QURAN, English translation with commentary and Arabic text by Allama Abdullah Yusuf Ali

in one volume
in two volumes
in three volumes

The above translation printed on superior quality of imported paper is also available

in one volume
in two volumes
in three volumes

THE MEANING OF THE ILLUSTRIOUS QURAN, Textless edition of Allama Abdullah Yusuf Ali's English translation

AN APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF THE QURAN, by Nawab Sir Nizam Jung Bahadur

PHILOSOPHY OF THE QURAN, by Hafiz Ghulam Sarwar

QURANIC LAWS, by Muhammad Valibhai Merchant

PROPHECIES OF THE HOLY QURAN, by Q. I. Hingora

A GEOGRAPHICAL HISTORY OF THE QURAN, by S. Muzaffar-ud-Din Nadvi

THE MESSAGE OF ISLAM, (Bird's eye-view of the contents of the Holy Quran), by Allama A. Yusuf Ali

LESSONS FROM THE STORIES OF THE QURAN, by A. M. R. Muhajir

MUHAMMAD AND TEACHINGS OF QURAN, by John Davenport

ASH-SHĀFI'Ī'S RISALAH : BASIC IDEAS, by Dr. Khalil I. Semaan

HADIS

SAHIH MUSLIM, English translation by Abdul Hamid Siddiqi, being issued in Parts of 80 pages each or four volumes (First Volume available)

MISHKAT AL-MASABIH (AL-HADIS), English translation by Dr. James Robson, in four volumes

THE ORATIONS OF MUHAMMAD, translated by M. Ubaidul Akbar

SAYINGS OF MUHAMMAD (with Arabic Text), translated by Professor Ghazi Ahmad

PRAYERS OF THE PROPHET, (Masnūn Du'ā'ain, with Arabic text), translated by A. H. Siddiqi

THUS SPOKE THE HOLY PROPHET, by Bennet and Brown

PRAYERS OF MUHAMMAD, Compiled and translated by A. H. Farid Available with Arabic text and without Arabic text

AL-HIZB AL-AZAM (A collection of Prayers with Arabic Text), translated by M. Abdul Hamid Siddiqi

THE TABLE TALK OF MUHAMMAD, by S. Lane-Poole

SAYINGS OF MUHAMMAD THE LAST PROPHET, Compiled by S. A. Husain

ISLAM

- SALAT OR ISLAMIC PRAYERS BOOK, with Arabic text and illustrations
 ISLAM IN PRACTICAL LIFE, by A.M.R. Mubajir
 MODERN ISLAM IN INDIA, by W.C. Smith
 ISLAM AND THE WORLD, by S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi
 THE PREACHING OF ISLAM, by Sir Thomas Arnold
 TENETS OF ISLAM, by A.M.R. Mubajir
 NOTES ON ISLAM, by Nawab Sir Amin Jung Bahadur
 SUPPORT OF THE FAITH, Shah Ismail Shahid's Taqwiyat-ul-Īmān translated into English by Mir Shahamat Ali
 PEARLS OF THE FAITH (or Islam's Rosary), by Sir Edwin Arnold
 THE ESSENCE OF ISLAMIC TEACHINGS, by Syed Nawab Ali
 GATEWAY TO ISLAM, by Saifuddin J. Aniff Doray
 TALEEM-UL-ISLAM, by Allama Mufti Muhammad Kifayatullah, English translation by Dr. Mahmood Qaderi and revised by Khalil Mian. Four Parts
 MANIFESTO OF ISLAM, by Dr. M. Rafi-ud-Din
 GLIMPSES OF ISLAM, by Prince Agha Khan and Dr. Zaki Ali
 THE REFORMS AND RELIGIOUS IDEAS OF SIR SAYYID AHMAD KHAN, by J.M.S. Baljon, Jr.
 MAXIMS OF ALI, translated by J. A. Chapman
 QADIANISM: A CRITICAL STUDY, by S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi
 PRAYER—FOR PROGRESS, by Abdul Razzaque
 HIS HOLINESS, by Phoenix, with Foreword by the late Maulana Zafar Ali Khan
 "LESSONS IN ISLAM" SERIES, Five Books
 A GUIDE TO HAJJ, by S. A. Husain
 THE MUSLIM CONDUCT OF STATE, by Dr. M. Hamidullah
 ISLAM AND THE THEORY OF INTEREST, by Dr. Anwar Iqbal Qureshi
 ISLAMIC SOCIAL FRAMEWORK, by M. Raihan Sharif
 PUBLIC FINANCE IN ISLAM, by S.A. Siddiqi
 ISLAMIC ECONOMICS: THEORY & PRACTICE, by M.A. Mannan
 ECONOMICS OF ISLAM, by Sh. Mahmood Ahmad
 ISLAMIC CULTURAL STUDIES, by Dr. Syed Abdul Latif
 ECONOMIC SYSTEM UNDER UMAR THE GREAT, by Irfan Mahmud Ra'na
 ECONOMIC JUSTICE IN ISLAM, by Dr. S.M. Yusuf
 CULTURE - L SIDE OF ISLAM (Islamic Culture), by M.M. Pickthall
 HUMAN RIGHTS & OBLIGATIONS, by S.M. Nadvi
 OUTLINES OF ISLAMIC CULTURES, by A.M.A. Shushtery
 A SURVEY OF MUSLIM INSTITUTIONS AND CULTURE, by Prof. M.A. Hanifi
 GOD, SOUL AND UNIVERSE IN SCIENCE AND ISLAM, by Nawab Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan
 ISLAM VERSUS SOCIALISM, by Mirza Muhammad Hussain
 DETERMINATION OF THE DIRECTION OF QIBLA AND THE ISLAMIC TIMINGS by Malik Bashir Ahmad Bagvi
 ISLAMIC JURISPRUDENCE IN THE MODERN WORLD, by Anwar Ahmad Qadri

- COMMUNISM, ISLAM AND YOU, by Haji Abu Idris
 LANDMARKS OF JIHAD, by Lt.-Col. M.M. Qureshi
 CONFLICT BETWEEN SOCIALISM & ISLAM
 ADVICE TO A FRIEND, by S.A. Rouf

BIOGRAPHY & MEMOIRS

- PAYAMBAR: THE MESSENGER, translated from the Persian of Z. Rahnema by L.P. Elwell-Sutton (three volumes)
 MUHAMMAD: THE HOLY PROPHET, by Hafiz Ghulam Sarwar
 INTRODUCING THE PROPHETS, by Muhammad Shamim Raza
 SAYYID AHMAD (SHAHID), by M. Hedayetullah
 AN EASY HISTORY OF THE PROPHET OF ISLAM, by S. Muzaffar-ud-Din Nadvi
 MUHAMMAD: UPON WHOM BE PEACE, by Sheikh Abdur Rahman Lutz
 THE SHADOWLESS PROPHET OF ISLAM, by Syed Abdul Wahab
 THE WIVES OF THE PROPHET, Dr. Bint al-Shati translated from Arabic by Matti Moosa & D.N. Ranson
 LIFE OF ABU BAKR (FIRST CALIPH OF ISLAM), by Muhammad Habibur Rahman Khan Sherwani, translated by Dr. Moin-ul-Haq
 OMAR THE GREAT (AL-FAROOQ), by Allama Shibli Nu'mani, translated by M. Zafar Ali Khan and Prof. M. Saleem. In two volumes

"HEROES OF ISLAM" SERIES

By Prof. Fazl Ahmad

1. Muhammad—The Prophet of Islam
2. Abu Bakr, the first Caliph
3. Omar, the second Caliph
4. Othman, the third Caliph
5. Ali, the fourth Caliph
6. Khalid bin Walid
7. Muhammad bin Qasim
8. Mahmud of Ghazna
9. Aurangzeb Alamgir
10. Sultan Tipu
11. Aisha the Truthful
12. Husain the Great Martyr
13. Some Companions of the Prophet, Part I
14. Some Companions of the Prophet, Part II
15. Some Companions of the Prophet, Part III

IBN AL-ARABI, by S.A.Q. Hasaini

IBN KHALDUN, HIS LIFE AND WORKS, by M.A. Enan

TADHKARATUL-AULIYA (MEMOIRS OF SAINTS), by Dr. Bankey Behari

KHAWAJA GHARIB NAWAZ, by Dr. Zahurul Hassan Sharib

JAMI; The PERSIAN MYSTIC, by F. Hadland Davis

IBN AS-SIKKIT, by Dr. S.A. Ahmadali

- RUMI: THE PERSIAN MYSTIC, by F. Hadland Davis
 THE SAINT OF JILAN, by S.A. Salik
 FALCON OF SPAIN, by T.B. Irving
 MY LIFE: A FRAGMENT (late Maulana Mohamed Ali's), Edited by Afzal Iqbal
 MEET MR. JINNAH by A.A. Ravoof

PHILOSOPHY & MYSTICISM

- THE PHILOSOPHY OF ISLAM, by Khaja Khan
 STUDIES IN TASAWWUF, by Khaja Khan
 STUDIES IN MUSLIM PHILOSOPHY, by M. Saeed Sheikh
 AL-GHAZALI ON DIVINE PREDICATES AND THEIR PROPERTIES,
 English translation by Abdu-r-Rahman Abu Zayd
 IDEOLOGY OF THE FUTURE, by Dr. M. Rafi-ud-Din
 MUSLIM THOUGHT AND ITS SOURCE, by Syed Muzaffar-ud-Din Nadvi
 THE ETHICAL PHILOSOPHY OF AL-GHAZALI, by Muhammad Umar-uddin
 THE PANTHEISTIC MONISM OF IBN AL'ARABI, by Dr. S.A.Q. Husaini
 PHILOSOPHY OF FAQIRS, by Sir Amir Jung Bahadur
 THE MUJADDID'S CONCEPTION OF TAWHID, by Dr. Burhan Ahmad Faruqi
 RUMI THE PERSIAN, REBIRTH IN CREATIVITY AND LOVE, by A. Reza Arasteh
 THE 'ABYAT' OF SULTAN BAHOO, translated by Maqbool Elahi
 THE SECRET OF ANA'L-HAQQ, translated by K.S. Khaja Khan
 FUTUH AL-GHAIB (Revelation of the Unseen) of Hazrat Syed Abdul Qadir Jilani, trans. by M. Aftabuddin Ahmad
 THE DOCTRINE OF THE SUFIS, by A.J. Arberry
 AN INTRODUCTION TO SUFI DOCTRINE, Titus Burckhardt, translated by D.M. Matheson
 THE SECRET ROSE GARDEN OF SA'D-UD-DIN MAHMUD SHABIS-TARI, translated by E. Lederer
 THE IDEA OF PERSONALITY IN SUFISM, by R.A. Nicholson
 THE MYSTICAL PHILOSOPHY OF MUHYID DIN IBN ARABI, by A.E. Affifi
 FAITH AND PRACTICE OF AL-GHAZALI, by W. Montgomery Watt
 SOME MORAL AND RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS OF GHAZALI, by Syed Nawab Ali
 THE BOOK OF KNOWLEDGE, by Dr. Nabih Amin Faris
 THE MYSTERIES OF PURITY, translated by Dr. Nabih Amin Faris
 THE MYSTERIES OF FASTING, translated by Dr. Nabih Amin Faris
 THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE ARTICLES OF FAITH, translated by Dr. Nabih Amin Faris
 THE ALCHEMY OF HAPPINESS (al-Ghazali's Kimiya-i-Sa'dat), translated by Claud Field
 THE CONFESSIONS OF AL-GHAZALI, by Claud Field
 GHAZALI'S MISHKAT AL-ANWAR (The Niche for Lights), translated by W.H.T. Gairdner
 TEACHINGS OF SHAH WALIYULLAH, by G.N. Jalbani

- SATA'AT, trans. by G.N. Jalbani
 LAMAHAT, trans. by G.N. Jalbani

HISTORY

- JUSTICE IN HISTORICAL ISLAM, by Anwar Ahmad Qadri
 ARAB ADMINISTRATION, by Dr. S.A.Q. Husaini
 CONSTITUTION OF THE ARAB EMPIRE, by Dr. S.A.Q. Husaini
 CHRISTIANITY IN HISTORY, by Ahmad D. Azhar
 MUSLIM CONTRIBUTION TO SCIENCE AND CULTURE, by Muhammad Abdur Rahman Khan
 THE ARAB CIVILIZATION, by Prof. Hell's die Kultur der Araber, trans. by S. Khuda Bakhsh
 THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF MUSLIM HISTORIOGRAPHY, by M.G. Rasul
 MUSLIM CONTRIBUTION TO GEOGRAPHY, by Dr. Nafis Ahmad
 SUCCESSION TO THE RULE IN ISLAM, by Dr. Anwar G. Chejne
 ANECDOTES FROM ISLAM, by M. Ebrahim Khan
 MUSLIM COLONIES IN FRANCE, NORTHERN ITALY AND SWITZERLAND, by Prof. H. K. Sherwani
 THE ARAB NAVIGATION, by S. Sulaiman Nadvi
 HEROIC DEEDS OF MUSLIM WOMEN, by S. Sulaiman Nadvi
 CONFLICT OF EAST AND WEST IN TURKEY, by Halide Edib Hanum
 TURKISH EMPIRE (1288-1924), Lord Eversely
 OUR DECLINE AND ITS CAUSES, by Amir Shakib Arslan, translated by M.A. Shakoor
 DECISIVE MOMENTS IN THE HISTORY OF ISLAM, by M.A. Enan
 MUSLIM LEAGUE, YESTERDAY AND TODAY, by A.B. Rajput
 A PHILOSOPHICAL INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY, by Abdul Hamid Siddiqi

IQBAL

- STUDIES IN IQBAL, by Syed Abdul Wahid
 THE NEW ROSE GARDEN OF MYSTERY AND THE BOOK OF SLAVE
 English translation of Iqbal's "Gulshan-i-Raz-i-Jadid and Bandagi Namah" by M. Hadi Hussain
 THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS OF IQBAL, edited by Syed Abdul Wahid
 GLIMPSES OF IQBAL'S MIND AND THOUGHT, by Dr. H. H. Bilgrami
 IQBAL AND THE RECENT EXPOSITION OF ISLAMIC POLITICAL THOUGHT, by Dr. Muhammad Aziz Ahmad
 PERSIAN PSALMS, translated by A.J. Arberry
 IQBAL'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY, by K.G. Saiyidain
 THE SECRET OF THE SELF, translation of Iqbal's 'Asrar-i-Khudi' by R. Nicholson
 NOTES ON IQBAL'S ASRAR-I-KHUDI, edited by A.J. Arberry
 RECONSTRUCTION OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT IN ISLAM by Allama Muhammad Iqbal

COMPLAINT AND ANSWER, translated by A.J. Arberry
 METAPHYSICS OF IQBAL, by Dr. Ishrat Hasan Enver
 IQBAL AS A THINKER, edited by Prof. Taj Muhammad Khayal
 POET OF THE EAST, by Abdullah Anwar Beg
 LETTERS OF IQBAL TO JINNAH

PAKISTAN

A POLITICAL STUDY OF PAKISTAN by Saifdar Mahmood
 THE EVOLUTION OF INDO-MUSLIM THOUGHT AFTER 1857, by Dr. L.S. May
 MODERN MUSLIM INDIA AND THE BIRTH OF PAKISTAN, by Dr. S.M. Ikram
 PAKISTAN : A CULTURAL UNITY, by S.F. Hassan Faizi
 RENAISSANCE OF ISLAMIC CULTURE AND CIVILIZATION IN PAKISTAN, by Dr. A.Rauf
 WHYS OF THE GREAT INDIAN CONFLICT, by M.A. Mehtar
 PAKISTAN : A NATION, by El-Hamza
 PAKISTAN AS AN ISLAMIC STATE, by Wilfred Cantwell Smith
 PAKISTAN DEFINED, by Begum Firdaus Rizvi

"PAKISTAN LITERATURE" SERIES

1. National States and National Minorities
2. The Communal Pattern of India
3. Some Aspects of Pakistan
7. Muslim Educational Problems
8. The Future Development of Islamic Polity
9. The Development of Islamic Culture in India
11. The Industrial Pakistan
13. Are the Indian Muslims a Nation ?

EDUCATING PAKISTAN, by Malik Zafarul Hassan
 STORY OF INDIAN AGGRESSION AGAINST PAKISTAN

POLITICS

THE FIRST WRITTEN-CONSTITUTION IN THE WORLD, (With Arabic Text) edited and translated by Dr. M. Hamidullah
 SELECT WRITINGS AND SPEECHES OF MAULANA MOHAMED ALI, edited by Afzal Iqbal (two volumes)
 STUDIES IN MUSLIM POLITICAL THOUGHT AND ADMINISTRATION, by Prof. H.K. Sherwani
 SPEECHES AND WRITINGS OF MR. JINNAH, Edited by Jamil-ud-Din Ahmad (two volumes)

LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND EDUCATION

WHY WE LEARN THE ARABIC LANGUAGE, by Dr. Sh. Inayatullah
 THE CONTRIBUTION OF INDO-PAKISTAN TO ARABIC LITERATURE, by Dr. M.G. Zubaid Ahmad
 ARABIC PHONETICS (IBN SINA'S RISALAH), translated by Dr. K.I. Semaan
 ARABIAN WISDOM, translated by John Wortabet
 THE BUSTAN OF SA'DI, translated by A.M. Edwards