

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE JEWS OF MEDINA?



“Detail from miniature painting The Prophet, Ali, and the Companions at the Massacre of the Prisoners of the Jewish Tribe of Beni Qurayzah, illustration of a 19th century text by Muhammad Rafi Bazil. Manuscript now in the British Library.”

“What Happened to the Jews of Medina”
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What Happened To The Jews Of Medina?

“This is the story of the tragic end of the Jews of Medina. A case of ethnic cleansing, betrayal and genocide carried out by the Messenger of Allah (PBUH). The prophet raided the 2000 year old Jewish communities of Medina, killed their men, confiscated their properties, enslaved their wives and children and banished the unwanted with no provocation on the part of the Jews. The holy Prophet's sole motive was greed for their wealth and lust for their women.”

It is difficult for us to find the truth about what really happened to the Jewish inhabitants of Medina at the time of Muhammad. There are no independent sources and the Jews who were eventually exterminated by Muhammad left nothing for us to refer to. We are left only with the Muslim historians' version, which obviously tell the story tainted with their fanatical faith to their prophet and their hatred of the Jews that is conspicuous in every sentence they wrote about them.

Many Muslim apologists downplay the importance and the number of the Jews of Medina. Dr. A. Zahoor and Dr. Z. Haq writes, “History does not record much as to when first Jewish migration from north to Yathrib (Medina) began as their numbers remained small throughout their stay there.

It may be true that all the writings of the Jews of Medina is lost or destroyed by Muslims, but digging into the writings of the Muslim scholars and reading between the lines one can find some glimpses of what really happened here and there. Maududi, in his comments on the Surah 59 of Quran reporting from Kitab al-Aghani, [a book of songs, an important source for information on medieval Islamic society, vol. xix, p. 94, by Abu al-Faraj Ali of Esfahan (897-967)] writes.

Jewish settlement in Hijaz

“The Jews of the Hejaz claimed that they had come to settle in Arabia during the last stage of the life of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). They said that the Prophet Moses had despatched an army to expel the Amalekites from the land of Yathrib and had commanded it not to spare even a single soul of that tribe. The Israelite army carried out the Prophet's command, but spared the life of a handsome prince of the Amalekite king and returned with him to Palestine. By that time the Prophet Moses had passed sway. His successors took great exception to what the army had done, for by sparing the life of an Amalekite it had clearly disobeyed the Prophet and violated the Mosaic Law. Consequently, they excluded the army from their community, and it had to return to Yathrib and settle there forever. Thus the Jews claimed that they had been living in Yathrib since about 1200 B.C.

The second Jewish immigration, according to the Jews, took place in 587 BC. when Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, destroyed Jerusalem and dispersed the Jews throughout the world. The Arab Jews said that several of their tribes at that time had come to settle in Wadi al-Qura, Taima, and Yathrib.(Al-Baladhuri, Futuh al-Buldan).”

Maududi rejects both these claims and says that “these have in fact no historical basis and probably the Jews had invented this story in order to overawe the Arabs into believing that they were of noble lineage and the original inhabitants of the land.”

However he maintains, “what is established is that when in A.D. 70 the Romans massacred the Jews in Palestine, and then in A.D. 132 expelled them from that land, many of the Jewish tribes fled to find an asylum in the Hejaz, a territory that was contiguous to Palestine in the south. There, they settled wherever they found water springs and greenery, and then by intrigue and through money lending business gradually occupied the fertile lands. Ailah, Maqna, Tabuk, Taima, Wadi al Qura, Fadak and Khaiber came under their control in that very period, and Bani Quraizah, Bani al-Nadir, Bani Bahdal, and Bani Qainuqa also came in the same period and occupied Yathrib.”

Since there are no compelling historical evidences for us to accept Maududi’s version of the History we may as well conclude that Muslims (perhaps Maududi himself) invented this story in order to undermine “the noble lineage of the Jews as the original inhabitants of Yathrib”. It seems that the Jews, who were well established in Yathrib and by the very admission of Maududi were “practically the owners of this green and fertile land” had little use for making such false claim about their origin. On the other hand Muslims whose enmity of the Jews dates back to the time of Muhammad himself and even a reputed scholar like Maududi cannot contain his hatred of them when he writes about them, had more to gain in inventing false stories to justify their expulsion and their ethnic cleansing from their homeland.

No matter what, Muslim historians admit that the Arab Jews, where living in Yathrib for centuries. “In the matter of language, dress, civilization and way of life they had completely adopted Arabism, even their names had become Arabian. Of the 12 Jewish tribes that had settled in Hejaz, none except the Bani Zaura retained its Hebrew name. Except for a few scattered scholars none knew Hebrew. In fact, there is nothing in the poetry of the Jewish poets of the pre-Islamic days to distinguish it from the poetry of the Arab poets in language, ideas and themes. They even inter-married with the Arabs. In fact, nothing distinguished them from the common Arabs except religion. Because of this Arabism the western orientalists have been misled into thinking that perhaps they were not really Israelites but Arabs who had embraced Judaism, or that at least majority of them consisted of the Arab Jews.”

Western orientalists may not be that far from the truth after all. Because even if originally the Jews migrated to Arabia, after centuries, or if we believe in the Jewish version of the history, close to 2000 years of intermarrying with Arabs, they must have become Arabs for all intent and purposes.

Maududi writes, “No authentic history of the Arabian Jews exists in the world. They have not left any writing of their own in the form of a book or a tablet which might throw light on their past, nor have the Jewish historians and writers of the non-Arab world made any mention of them, the reason being that after their settlement in the Arabian peninsula they had detached themselves from the main body of the nation, and the Jews of the world did not count them as among themselves. For they had given up Hebrew culture and language, even the names, and adopted Arabism instead.”

Another reason that no authentic history of the Arabian Jews exists is because Muhammad exterminated all of them. Dead people are not known to write histories.

If the Jews were so Arabianized that they were indistinguishable from the rest of the Arabs, then perhaps the Jewish version of the history is more accurate and the Jews had settled in Arabia much earlier than the Muslim historians are willing to admit. But even if we had to accept the Muslim version of the history, we learn that these Jews made Arabia their home 500 years before the birth of Muhammad and they were as much entitled to their land (Yathrib) as anyone is to his native land.

Other non-Jewish settlers

In A. D. 450 or 451, a great flood in Yaman forced different tribes of the people of Saba to migrate to other parts of Arabia. Among them Aus and the Khazraj went to settle in Yathrib. These two were big tribes yet they were unskilled people. Unlike the Jews who practically were the master of all trades, and the owners of most businesses, Arabs in Yathrib made their living serving the Jews in their farms and households. They were looked down at, by their Jewish masters and this was the cause of resentment.

Yet these two tribes could not see eye to eye and each sought the alliance of one of the Jewish tribes. This worked out well; since the Bani Qainuqa, was not on friendly terms with the other two Jewish tribes also. So Bani Qainuqa and Khazraj formed an alliance together and Bani Quraizah, Bani al-Nadir and Aus Joined their strength together. It is important to note that these feuds were not religiously motivated but were tribal skirmishes.

Maududi comments, "Because of this they (the Jews) had not only to take part in the mutual wars of the Arabs but they often had to go to war in support of the Arab tribe to which their tribe was tied in alliance against another Jewish tribe which was allied to the enemy tribe."

If we could see through the tick fog of prejudice that has shortened the vision of Muslim scholars, we can see, these tribes living in Medina were all Arabs, practicing different religions. And just as other tribes and nations anywhere in the world they had their skirmishes, but as the structure of their alliances suggest, their conflicts were not religiously motivated. This is extremely important. Tribal skirmishes are short lived but religious hatred never dies. It transcends time and space. As we shall see later, it was Muhammad who introduced the religious hatred. It is him who should be credited as the founder of religious intolerance in Arabia and perhaps the entire world. Muhammad is often hailed as the man who united warring Arab tribes. That may be true. But without him these tribes would have put aside their conflicts sooner or later, one way or another, just as other feuding tribes did eventually in other parts of the world. Almost everywhere, formerly hostile tribes have joined together to form stronger nations. Muhammad united the Arabs and turned them into a mighty force, which invaded other countries, devastating other civilizations and imposing their own language, culture and religion.

By embracing Islam Arabs benefited economically from their unity, yet the harm of religious hatred that Muhammad inflicted upon the entire humanity for centuries has outweighed all the good that the unity of few desert dwellers of Arabia might have brought to them.

Migration to Medina

Arabs were always at war with each other. But among them, Meccans had an envious position. Ka'ba, the holy place of all the Arabs was in Mecca. It was a place for pilgrimage and that meant power and money for Meccans.

When Abu Talib, Muhammad's uncle and Khadija, his wife died he lost two of his most powerful supporters and the people of Mecca increased their hostility towards him. He recalled the offer of few men from Thaif who had told him if he made their town the holy place of his new religion, thus making it the religious and the commercial hub of his followers, the Bani Thaqif, people of Taif, might support his cause. So he and his adoptive son Zaid ibn Harith secretly went to Taif in 620 C.E. (Common Era) seeking the alliance of its inhabitants and promising them to make their city the holy place for the Muslims. But instead the Bani Thaqif mocked him and even his plea to keep their visit a secret was not granted. The leaders of Taif may have envied Mecca's religious prestige but they did not wish to jeopardise their comfortable life for a risky adventure with an obscure religious pretender.

When the Quraish learned of this they were enraged and they escalated their hostility to Muhammad until a couple of years later they decided to assassinate him.

Muhammad learned of the plot against his life and escaped to Yathrib. In Yathrib he had some followers. They belonged to both Khazraj and Aus. These two tribes were weary of constant fighting and especially of a recent Battle (Bu'ath) that occurred among them. They were looking for a way to end the hostilities. So the leaders of both parties accepted Muhammad to act as the mediator among them.

The Treaty

It was an Arab custom and it is also practiced everywhere else, even to this day, that two feuding parties agree on someone to act as the arbitrator. Muhammad who was at first considered to be an outsider and therefore impartial was called to act as an arbitrator in one of these conflicts. It is important to note that the conflict in Yathrib was not between Muslims and Jews; otherwise Muhammad could not have acted as the arbitrator. Also as we saw earlier there were no religious disagreements in Yathrib. However Jews were part of the treaty because of their alliances with the Arab tribes.

This must have been a golden opportunity in the prophetic career of Muhammad, which changed his fortune and turned the odds in his favour. As part of the pledge, they were to protect the Prophet as they would protect their women and children if he were attacked by the Meccans.

The numbers of the Muslims in Yathrib grew thanks to the tolerance of the Jews and their error in giving the immigrants a safe haven. Jews did not foresee that the man to whom they give asylum today would be so ungrateful that would turn against them and eventually would be the cause of their destruction.

The treaty did not give Muslims a mandate to govern. Ibn Hisham reports part of that treaty. But as we shall see this treaty must have been forged. It states:

"The Jews must bear their expenses and the Muslims their expenses. Each must help the other against anyone who attacks the people of this document. They must seek mutual advice and consultation, and loyalty is a protection against treachery. They shall sincerely wish one another well. Their relations will be governed by piety and recognition of the rights of others, and not by sin and wrongdoing. The wronged must be helped. The Jews must pay with the believers so long as the war lasts. Yathrib shall be a sanctuary for the people of this document. If any dispute or controversy likely to cause trouble should arise, it must be referred to God and to Muhammad the Apostle of God; Quraish and their helpers shall not be given protection. The contracting parties are bound to help one another against any attack on Yathrib; Every one shall be responsible for the defence of the portion to which he belongs" (Ibn Hisham, vol. ii, pp. 147 to 150).

There are several clues that make us realize that this treaty is altered. The most obvious is that the Jews could not have signed a document, which would have acknowledged Muhammad to be the Apostle of God. This would have meant acceptance of Muhammad's claim by the Jews, which obviously never happened. So the above document is most likely forged. Also there are contradictions in the context of the document. It starts as a treaty signed by two sovereign nations (tribes) with equal rights and powers. However the phrases "The Jews must pay with the believers so long as the war lasts" and "If any dispute or controversy likely to cause trouble should arise, it must be referred to God and to Muhammad the Apostle of God;" contradict that notion of equality.

These sentences are more likely inserted later. They give Muslims superiority, which is in conflict with the rest of the document that gives an impression of an agreement between two equals. But the most important point is how could Muhammad be the arbitrator if he is the beneficiary in this treaty? It is amazing that Muslim scholars have read this document for centuries and it has never occurred to them to ask how could Muhammad be the arbitrator if he is part of the treaty? But that is exactly the point. A religious mind is shackled. Although they would laugh if a similar story is said about another group, they do not seem to have any difficulty in accepting it when it is about their own religion.

These are telltales that the above treaty is not authentic. Yet, since the real document, along with the Jews who were a part of that treaty, was destroyed by Muhammad and his ready-to-assassin followers, we are left with nothing, but this lame document to find the truth. Which makes our task not unlike trying to find a needle in a haystack.

Holy Wars!

After the incident of Badr that Muhammad's men ambushed a merchant caravan, and brought the booty his fortunes changed. He was enriched by the stolen booty, and his popularity grew. He promised wealth and slave girls to those who took part in his armed robberies and paradise with hoores and rivers of wine to those who were killed. For an ignorant fanatic and at the same time greedy Arab this was a proposition hard to resist. If he survived he would have his share of booty including women and if he died he would go to paradise and have more of the same plus the pleasure of Allah. It is interesting that the Arabs had some kind of decency when they captured married women but the prophet of Allah did away with that decency and proclaimed that it is lawful for a man to have sexual intercourse with a woman captured in war. (Q. 4: 24) Jews, having a religion of their own, could not accept Muhammad's pretentious claim of prophethood. They probably derided at him and at his followers. This is perfectly understandable. How would Muslims react, if someone in their midst call himself a messenger of God and start a new religion? Does the persecution of the Bahai's give us a clue?

Banu Qaynuqa

There were three Jewish tribes living in Medina, the Banu Qaynuqa, the Bani Nadir and the Bani Quraiza. Each of these tribes had alliances with other Arab tribes and if there were skirmishes between their Arab allies and the other Jewish tribes they would have sided with their Arab friends. This is the proof that in Medina prior to Islam there were no religious strifes. All the religious intolerance was introduced by the Prophet.

When the Prophet entered Medina, he was hopeful that the Jews would accept his religion. He was preaching the same god of the Jews, approving of their prophets and telling their stories. He had chosen their holy land as his qibla (point of adoration) and was humbugging them for their allegiance.

W. N. ARAFAT who denies the first holocaust writes; "It is also generally accepted that at first the Prophet Muhammad hoped that the Jews of Yathrib, as followers of a divine religion, would show understanding of the new monotheistic religion, Islam."

But to his dismay the Jews, just like the Quraish, ridiculed him and paid little heed to his calling. After his hopes were shattered and his patience vexed the Prophet grew hostile towards the Jews and it became evident that he would one day take his revenge.

INVASION OF BANI QAYNUQA:

The first group of the Jews that fell under the wrath of the Prophet were the Banu Qaynuqa. They lived in quarters within Madinah named after them. As for jobs, they took up goldsmithery, blacksmithing and crafts of making household instruments, that is why war weaponry was available in large quantities in their houses.

Saifur Rahman al-Mubarakpuri in AR-Raheeq Al-Makhtum writes;
"They (the Banu Qaynuqa) started a process of trouble-making, jeering at the Muslims, hurting those who frequented their bazaars, and even intimidating their women. Such things

began to aggravate the general situation, so the Prophet (Peace be upon him) gathered them in assemblage, admonished and called them to be rational, sensible and guided and cautioned against further transgression. Nevertheless they remained obdurate and paid no heed to his warning, and said: "Don't be deluded on account of defeating some Quraishites inexperienced in the art of war. If you were to engage us in fight, you will realize that we are genuine war experts."

Whatever those few Jews retorted to Muhammad, it was not the official voice of the whole population. But for a man looking for an excuse to strike it was a golden opportunity. Maududi says, "This was in clear words a declaration of war."

But it wasn't. These words did not come from the chief of the Bani Qainuqa and they were not threatening. They were shouted down by a bunch of hooligans, to someone who tried to bully them while they were acting on the instructions of their own religion and took a life for a life. Only one whose brain is numbed by his religious fanaticism can interpret the defiant words of a few youth as the declaration of war made by the entire Jews against Muslims. It is the ultimate injustice to punish an entire population with such severity with the pretext that few of them killed one man in retaliation of him killing one of theirs. That is despite the verse that says "... no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another" ([Q. 53: 38](#))

The Muslim historians want to blame it all on the Jews and depict them as the villains of the story. Jeering, however is not a crime. But by paying a little attention to the response of the Jews to the Prophet it is not difficult to see that he did not go there to counsel them but to threaten them.

The following verse that was issued for that occasion reveals the hostile tone of the Prophet when he met the Jews.

"Say [O Muhammad to those who disbelieve: 'You will be defeated and gathered together to Hell, and worst indeed is that place to rest.' There has already been a Sign for you (O Jews) in the two armies that met (in combat — i.e. the battle of Badr): One was fighting in the cause of Allâh, and as for the other (they) were disbelievers. They (the believers) saw them (the disbelievers) with their own eyes twice their number (although they were thrice their number). And Allâh supports with His Victory whom He pleases. Verily, in this is a lesson for those who understand." [Q.3: 22,13]

"One day a Jewish goldsmith provoked a Muslim woman whose genitals become uncovered when he had tied the edge of the garment to her back. A Muslim man happened to be there and killed the man; the Jews retaliated by killing that Muslim. The man's family called the Muslims for help and war started."

Incidents like these often happen in primitive societies. As a matter of fact even in very civilized societies many people are killed over something as trivial as road rage. Humans are not completely rational beings. Most people react in a very unpredictable way often with dire consequences. Any wise man, in similar situations would have eased the tension and would have calmed the mob without taking sides. But Muhammad was far from it. Already emboldened by his plundering of the passing caravans, he had his eyes on the wealth of the Jews in Yathirb and was looking for an excuse to make his move. This incident presented the golden opportunity that the Prophet was waiting for and On Saturday, Shawwal 15th, 2 A.H., he marched out with his soldiers, and laid siege to the Jews' forts for 15 days. Without the

water, the Bani Qainuqa was forced to surrender and defer to the Prophet's judgement on their lives, wealth, women and children.

Maududi writes, "Consequently, the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) laid siege to their quarters towards the end of Shawwal (and according to some others, of Dhi Qa'dah) A. H. 2. The siege had hardly lasted for a fortnight when they surrendered and all their fighting men were tied and taken prisoners. Now Abdullah bin Ubayy came up in support of them and insisted that they should be pardoned. The Holy Prophet conceded his request and decided that the Bani Qainuqa would be exiled from Madinah leaving their properties, armour and tools of trade behind. (Ibn Sa'd, Ibn Hisham, Tarikh Tabari).

The details of Ubayy's intercession with the Prophet is reported in the first Islamic history book, Sirat.

"Asim b. `Umar b. Qatada said that the B. Qaynuqa` were the first of the Jews to break their agreement with the apostle and to go to war, between Badr and Uhud, and the apostle besieged them until they surrendered unconditionally. `Abdullah b. Ubayy b. Salul went to him when God had put them in his power and said, 'O Muhammad, deal kindly with my clients' (now they were allies of Khazraj), but the apostle put him off. He repeated the words, and the apostle turned away from him, whereupon he thrust his hand into the collar of the apostle's robe; the apostle was so angry that his face became almost black. He said, 'Confound you, let me go.' He answered, 'No, by God, I will not let you go until you deal kindly with my clients. Four hundred men without mail and three hundred mailed protected me from all mine enemies; would you cut them down in one morning? By God, I am a man who fears that circumstances may change.' The apostle said, 'You can have them.' [Sirat, p. 363]

In the words of al-Mubarakpuri "Banu Qainuqa` handed over all materials, wealth and war equipage to the Prophet (Peace be upon him), who set aside one fifth and distributed the rest to his men. After that they were banished out of all Arabia to Azru'a in Syria where they stayed for a while and soon perished away."

No one ever asked, why? Why a trivial incident should become the excuse for the envoy of God to banish a whole population and confiscate their entire belongings. The scene of the exiles from Kosovo is too fresh in our memories yet even Milosovic who is now a war criminal did not put hand on the properties of the refugees. And the Jews did not have a UN refugee camp set for them out of Medina with Red Cross and other humanitarian organizations waiting to alleviate their pain. How any decent human being could justify these ruthless genocidal acts of the Prophet? How can any person call himself a Muslims after learning these historic truth about Muhammad? The fact that Abdullah bin Ubayy, whom al-Mubarakpuri does not hesitate to call a "hypocrite" came to the prisoner's support pleading that they be pardoned demonstrates that Muhammad's original plan was to execute them all. It was bin Ubayy's intervention that saved their lives. How is it that a "hypocrite" was more compassionate than the Messenger of Allah and Allah himself? Wasn't he a superior man to Muhammad?

Bani Nadir

BANI AN-NADIR INVASION:

Next it was the turn of the Bani Nadeer. This was another tribe of the Jews of Medina. Ka'b Ibn Ashraf, the chief of the Bani Nadeer became concerned of the safety of his tribe after witnessing the fate of the Banu Qaynuqa and how the Prophet eliminated them with no excuse at all. He realized that Muhammad would stop at nothing to eradicate the Jews. It became clear to him that the Prophet was a ruthless man with no mercy, no conscience and no principles. He would kill innocent people with no qualms. Ka'b knew that he had to do something to protect his people. That is why he started to communicate with the Meccans and seek protection from them in the case that Muslims decided to invade his people.

Ka'b bin Ashraf, the chief of the Bani an-Nadeer, "a wealthy man known for his handsomeness, and a poet, went to Makkah" Says Maududi, "and incited the people to vengeance by writing and reciting provocative elegies for the Quraish chiefs killed at Badr. Then he returned to Madinah and composed lyrical verses of an insulting nature about the Muslim women. At last, enraged with his mischief, the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) sent Muhammad bin Maslamah Ansari in Rabi al-Awwal, A. H. 3, and had him slain." (Ibn Sad, Ibn Hisham, Tabari).

What should a responsible chief do when he sees that a whole population of a tribe like his was ambushed with no provocation by an emerging tyrant, and banished from their homeland despite of their treaty? Although Muslims say that it was the Jews who broke the treaty, their own very historical texts, clearly demonstrates that Muhammad is the one to be blamed for such breach of the covenant. If the stories written by Muslims are true, Ka'b bin Ashraf had no other choice but to go to Mecca and seek assistance for his people's protection. Muhammad, by virtue of what he did to Bani Qaynuqa, was not a man to be trusted. What bin Ashraf did was no crime. He was a chieftain concerned about the safety of his own people. His crime was writing poetry. Nothing justifies Muhammad sending an assassin to kill him traitorously in the middle of the night. Not his contacts with the Meccans and not his "poems satirizing Muhammad" or "eulogizing Quraish". There is no justification in assassinating those who do not agree with you. Muslim apologists are not ashamed of Muhammad's assassinations and approve anything he did without thinking. They say that by cowardly assassinating his enemies, Muhammad was saving lives. This demonstrates how religion drains the intelligence of its victims who otherwise are normal people. How these diehard Muslim apologists justify Muhammad's assassination of Abu Afak, a 120 year old man and Asma bint Marwan a poetess and a mother of five small children whose only crime was to compose lyrics offensive to his holiness prophet of Allah. In what ways he was superior to Saddam Hussein, Bin Laden or for that matter any gangster? Isn't the assassination of the Journalists, writers and the intellectuals by the Islamic Republic of Iran and other Islamic regimes inspired by what the holy Prophet did to his critics?

The story of Ka'b's assassination is recorded in the following hadith.

[BUKHARI, VOLUME 5, #369](#)

Narrated Jabir Abdullah:

Allah's messenger said "Who is willing to kill Ka`b bin al-Ashraf who has hurt Allah and His apostle?" Thereupon Maslama got up saying, "O Allah's messenger! Would you like that I kill him?" The prophet said, "Yes". Maslama said, "Then allow me to say a (false) thing (i.e. to deceive Ka`b). The prophet said, "You may say it."

Maslama went to Ka`b and said, "That man (i.e. Muhammad) demands Sadaqa (i.e. Zakat) [taxes] from us, and he has troubled us, and I have come to borrow something from you." On that, Ka`b said, "By Allah, you will get tired of him!" Maslama said, "Now as we have followed him, we do not want to leave him unless and until we see how his end is going to be. Now we want you to lend us a camel load or two of food." Ka`b said, "Yes, but you should mortgage something to me." Maslama and his companion said, "What do you want?" Ka`b replied, "Mortgage your women to me." They said, "How can we mortgage our women to you and you are the most handsome of the Arabs?" Ka`b said, "Then mortgage your sons to me." They said, "How can we mortgage our sons to you? Later they would be abused by the people's saying that so and so has been mortgaged for a camel load of food. That would cause us great disgrace, but we will mortgage our arms to you."

Maslama and his companion promised Ka`b that Maslama would return to him. He came to Ka`b at night along with Ka`b's foster brother, Abu Na'ila. Ka`b invited them to come into his fort and then he went down to them. His wife asked him, "Where are you going at this time?" Ka`b replied, "None but Maslama and my (foster) brother Abu Na'ila have come." His wife said, "I hear a voice as if blood is dropping from him." Ka`b said, "They are none but my brother Maslama and my foster brother Abu Na'ila. A generous man should respond to a call at night even if invited to be killed."

Maslama went with two men. So Maslama went in together with two men, and said to them, "When Ka`b comes, I will touch his hair and smell it, and when you see that I have got hold of his head, strike him. I will let you smell his head."

Ka`b bin al-Ashraf came down to them wrapped in his clothes, and diffusing perfume. Maslama said, "I have never smelt a better scent than this." Ka`b replied, "I have got the best Arab women who know how to use the high class of perfume." Maslama requested Ka`b "Will you allow me to smell your head?" Ka`b said "yes." Maslama smelt it and made his companions smell it as well. Then he requested Ka`b again, "Will you let me (smell your head)?" Ka`b said "Yes". When Maslama got a strong hold of him, he said (to his companions) "Get at him!" So they killed him and went to the prophet and informed him."

This story becomes more intriguing as it evolves. Maududi continues with his narrative and says "For some time after these punitive measures (i. e. the banishment of the Qainuqa and killing of Ka'b bin Ashraf) the Jews remained so terror stricken that they did not dare commit any further mischief. But later when in Shawwal, A. H. 3, the Quraish in order to avenge themselves for the defeat at Badr, marched against Madinah with great preparations, and the Jews saw that only a thousand men had marched out with the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) as against three thousand men of the Quraish, and even they were deserted by 300 hypocrites who returned to Madinah, they committed the first and open breach of the treaty by refusing to join the Holy Prophet in the defence of the city although they were bound to it."

It is amazing that Muslims expected collaboration from Bani Nadeer after assassinating their charming leader and completely destroying their brethrens, the Bani Qaynuqa. Muhammad

proved to be a ruthless tyrant that would stop at nothing. He would order the assassination of his enemies and next day appear in the mosque reciting prayers as if nothing had happened and praise the killer. He would have no mercy on a 120-year-old man or a nursing woman with five small children to take care of. He would look for an excuse to lash out on an entire population confiscate their belongings and banish them from their homes. If it weren't for someone else's intervention he would have had no qualms executing thousands of Bani Qaynuqa. As Maududi brags these poor Jews were terror stricken and must have asked themselves when would be their turn? And yet the Muslims call them traitors for not willing to fight alongside them after they had killed their chieftain. Wasn't killing Ka'b ibn Ashraf and exiling the Bani Qaynuqa the breach of the contract? Or perhaps Muhammad thought that the treaty is only one sided and while obliges the Jews to observe it, he was free to do as he pleased!

Maududi narrates the story of Muhammad's meeting with the Bani Nadeer thus: "Then, when in the Battle of Uhud the Muslims suffered reverses, they were further emboldened. So much so that the Bani an-Nadir made a secret plan to kill the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) though the plan failed before it could be executed. According to the details, after the incident of Bi'r Maunah (Safar, A. H. 4) Amr bin Umayyah Damri slew by mistake two men of the Bani Amir in retaliation, who actually belonged to a tribe, which was allied to the Muslims, but Amr had mistaken them for the men of the enemy. Because of this mistake their blood money became obligatory on the Muslims. Since the Bani an-Nadir were also a party in the alliance with the Bani Amir, the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) went to their clan along with some of his Companions to ask for their help in paying the blood money. Outwardly they agreed to contribute, as he wished, but secretly they plotted that a person should go up to the top of the house by whose wall the Holy Prophet was sitting and drop a rock on him to kill him. But before they could execute their plan, Allah informed him in time and he immediately got up and returned to Madinah."

What an absurdity! First of all Muhammad already broke any treaty when he assassinated Ka'b bin Ashraf. He already broke all treaties when he confiscated the belongings of the Banu Qaynuqa and banished them on foot in the desert. Now that his assassins, by mistake killed someone else, of which Banu Nadeer had no fault he wanted them to pay for his crimes. Treaties are not made to bail out the criminal activities of the other party. The treaty was to defend Yathrib from the invasion of the enemies. Muhammad's crimes and his gangster activities was not the subject of the treaty. It is unconscionable that intelligent human beings become so dumb to read this story for 1400 years and none of them pause for a second and think. Could you even imagine if the same story was repeated today between two nations that have signed a joint treaty? Let us assume that the president of one of these countries was so low that like Muhammad he decided to eliminate his enemies through assassination, would it be conceivable if he came to his ally and demand to bail him out for his criminal mistakes?

In this story, apparently Muhammad goes to the Bani Nadeer and makes his demand. These terrified Jews of course knew that the treaty did not mean that they should bail out for Muhammad's crime activities and blunders. But they were too weak and too frightened to oppose the emerging tyrant, so they agreed. But this was not what the Prophet of Allah had in mind. He was hoping that they reject him so that he gets an excuse to deal with them the way he dealt with the Banu Qaynuqa. Bani Nadeer had the best-cultivated land in Yathrib. Muhammad had his eyes on their plantations and farms. [Bukhari Volume 9, Book 92, Number 447](#). He was just getting his taste of power and he loved it. So he had to come up with an excuse. When Bani Nadeer disappointed him and agreed with his request. He needed

a pretext to act upon his plan and confiscate the properties of these wealthy Jews. There again, the prophet of Allah had a new "inspiration". It was a brilliant idea. He told his companions that the Jews had plotted to kill him. His followers believed him when he told them of his Miiraj in the company of Gabriele. They had no difficulty believing whatever to believe in any absurdity that he concocted.

Al-Mubarakpouri writes; "Once the Prophet (Peace be upon him) with some of his Companions set out to see Banu Nadeer and seek their help in raising the blood-money he had to pay to Bani Kalb for the two men that 'Amr bin Omaiyah Ad-Damari had killed by mistake. All of that was in accordance with the clauses of the treaty that both parties had already signed. On hearing his story they said they would share in paying the blood-money and asked him and his Companions Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Ali and others to sit under a wall of their houses and wait. The Jews held a short private meeting and conspired to kill the Prophet (Peace be upon him). The most wicked among them, 'Amr bin Jahsh, volunteered to climb up the wall and drop a large millstone on his head. One of them, Salam bin Mashkam, cautioned them against perpetrating such a crime, predicting that Allâh would divulge their plot to him, and added that such an act would constitute a manifest violation of the pact concluded with the Muslims.

In fact, Gabriel did come down to reveal to the Prophet (Peace be upon him) their wicked criminal intention, so he, with his Companions, hurried off back to Madinah. On their way, he told his Companions of the Divine Revelation."

Of course Bani Nadeer was part of the treaty that the Prophet signed with the Medinans but the treaty was to fight against the Meccans if they attacked Medina and not to pay for assassination mishaps of the messenger of Allah. Yet interestingly, despite the absurdity of this demand and despite the fact that the Prophet had assassinated their leader, the Bani Nadeer agreed to pay the ransom. They knew Muhammad and did not want to give him an excuse to exterminate them like he did with the Bani Qaynuqa. They knew that any rejection would mean their death and had no choice but to accept this unjust levy.

But the Prophet who apparently wished they decline this absurd demand and therefore use it as an excuse to declare war against them was disappointed at their complacency. The messenger of Allah, really had no other purpose than to find an excuse and exterminate the Bani Naeer.

The Prophet who believed that God is khairul maakereen, "the best of the deceivers", was himself a cunning man. The story of Gabriel informing him of the plot of the Jews against his life is as credible as his visits of the hell and heaven in the night of Mi'raj or his other fantasy tales of his encounters with Jinns and Satan. It would make us doubt his sanity or his sincerity but his easy to fleece followers would actually believe him and would go killing innocent people for the lies he counted them.

The truth is that it was not the Jews who breached the treaty but it was Muhammad who broke it and along with it he broke the very cords of human decency. He broke the norms of humanity, the human morality, the laws of compassion, the rules of Justice, the standards of ethics and violated the principles of goodness. The Prophet of Allah {peace be upon him} took away the peace from the people who crossed his way and for 1400 years plunged humanity into never ending wars. He instigated hatred in the world and among his followers that is consuming them and the rest of humanity.

The above story raises few more logical questions. If these Jews really wanted to kill Muhammad, couldn't they easily capture and kill him along with his companions? Why drop a stone when he and his companions were already in their hands? And why a God who could inform his beloved prophet of a plot against him did not make 'Amr bin Jahsh to fall to his death? This could have saved his prophet and the entire Jewish population. Didn't God know that his messenger has no mercy and no compassion for the lives of thousands of innocent people and he would make all pay for the crime of a few? If God was so angry of these Jews that he did not care about them any more, why he himself did not kill them with a disease. Why he did not order the Earth to open its belly, as a story if Bible says (numbers; 16:30) and devour them all? It certainly would have been much easier on them and on the Muslims. Why a loving God would ask his devoted servants to act like common murderers and ruthless killers? Only people blinded by faith do not cringe by hearing these stories. To every reasonable person it is obvious that Muhammad made up the whole thing to continue with his plans of ethnic cleansing and plundering.

Maududi finished this story by saying, "Now there was no question of showing them any further concession. The Holy Prophet at once sent to them the ultimatum that the treachery they had meditated against him had come to his knowledge; therefore, they were to leave Madinah within ten days; if anyone of them was found staying behind in their quarters, he would be put to the sword. Meanwhile Abdullah bin Ubayy sent them the message that he would help them with two thousand men and that the Bani Quraizah and Bani Ghatafan also would come to their aid; therefore, they should stand firm and should not go. On this false assurance they responded to the Holy Prophet's ultimatum saying that they would not leave Madinah and he could do whatever was in his power. Consequently, in Rabi' al-Awwal, A. H. 4, the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) laid siege to them, and after a few days of the siege (which according to some traditions were 6 and according to others 15 days) they agreed to leave Madinah on the condition that they could retain all their property which they could carry on their camels, except the armor. Thus, Madinah was rid of this second mischievous tribe of Jews. Only two of the Bani an-Nadeer became Muslims and stayed behind. Others went to Syria and Khaiber."

Muhammad did not massacre the Bani Nadeer as he did the Banu Qurayza, another Jewish tribe residing in Medina but the thought have surely came to him as we can see from the following extract from Sirat.

"Concerning B. al-Nadir the Sura of Exile came down in which is recorded how God wreaked His vengeance on them and gave His apostle power over them and how He dealt with them. God said: 'He it is who turned out those who disbelieved of the scripture people from their homes to the first exile. ... 'So consider this, you who have understanding. Had not God prescribed deportation against them,' which was vengeance from God, 'He would have punished them in this world,' ([Q. 59: 3](#)) i.e. with the sword, 'and in the next world there would be the punishment of hell' as well." [Sirat, p. 438]

There is a verse from Quran that speaks about this event confirming Muhammad's actions in killing them and taking them as prisoners.

"He caused those of the People of the Book who helped them (i.e. the Quraysh) to come out of their forts. Some you killed, some you took prisoner." [Q. 33: 26](#)

It is in this occasion that Muhammad orders the cutting and burning the trees, and even then Allah would reveal a verse to condone that despicable act.

“What you (O Muslims) cut down of the palm-trees (of the enemy), or you left them standing on their stems, it was by leave of Allâh.” [Q. 59: 5](#)

Neither the Quraiza nor the Ghatfans came to help the Bani Nadeer and they were forced to surrender within days and were banished out of Medina. Some left to Syria and some headed to Khaibar. Huyai Ibd Akhtab the new chief of the Bani Nadeer was among those who went to Khaibar. He was murdered few years later when the Prophet invaded the Banu Quraiza and his daughter Safiyah became the booty of the Prophet when Khaibar fell into the hand of the Muslims.

Al-Mubarkpouri writes,

"The Messenger of Allâh (Peace be upon him) seized their weapons, land, houses, and wealth. Amongst the other booty he managed to capture, there were 50 armours, 50 helmets, and 340 swords.

This booty was exclusively the Prophet's because no fighting was involved in capturing it. He divided the booty at his own discretion among the early Emigrants and two poor Helpers, Abu Dujana and Suhail bin Haneef. Anyway the Messenger of Allâh (Peace be upon him) spent a portion of this wealth on his family to sustain their living the year around. The rest was expended to provide the Muslim army with equipment for further wars in the way of Allâh.

Almost all the verses of Sûrah Al-Hashr (Chapter 59 - The Gathering) describe the banishment of the Jews and reveal the disgraceful manners of the hypocrites. The verses manifest the rules relevant to the booty. In this Chapter, Allâh, the All-Mighty, praises the Emigrants and Helpers. This Chapter also shows the legitimacy of cutting down and burning the enemy's land and trees for military purposes. Such acts cannot be regarded as phenomena of corruption so long that they are in the way of Allâh."

As it becomes obvious and even the Muslim historians are not abashed to admit, no crime is bad as long as it is done in the way of Allah. This was the example that the Prophet left for his followers and this has been the way that the devout Muslims have been acting throughout the history. This perhaps can explain to an uninitiated westerner the inspiration behind Islamic fundamentalism and Islamic terrorism. Islamic violence is not a deviation of the true Islam but they IS the true Islam. Murdering, plundering, raping and assassinating are Islamic practices. Nothing is out of limit when it comes to promoting the religion of Allah.

Ironically, this very Surah concludes by exhorting the believers to be pious and and prepare themselves for the world to come. Which makes one wonder about the twisted mind of its author and the distorted values that he uphold.

We, with our modern sensibility wonder how the followers of Muhammad did not abandon him based on his cruelty and inhumanity. But apparently plundering and looting was the norm, in Arabia. Al-Mubarakpuri writes. "The desert Bedouins living in tents pitched in the vicinity of Madinah, ... depended on plundering and looting as a means of living," This was the way Arabs used to live. When Muhammad used the same techniques to amass his wealth

and build his empire, no one raised an eyebrow. This was accepted and everybody did it. In fact when people went to war to bring the booty they prayed to their gods. If they were victorious, they glorified their gods and hailed them as being powerful. Muslims and Muhammad belonged to this primitive culture and had the same primitive mindset. They beseeched Allah, the only idol, for their victories and since Muhammad did not hesitate attacking merchant caravans or unarmed populations he enriched himself and his army very soon. These Arabs attributed his military prowess to the greatness of Allah, What those Arabs believed is not reproachable. They did not know better and this was the only way of life they had ever known. What is tragically deplorable is to see that in this age of science and reason educated people follow the religion of people with such a primitive mentality.

As we saw, if the Bani Nadeer really wanted to kill Muhammad and his few companions, they did not need to make such complicated plans of climbing the wall of throwing a millstone on over their head. He was in their town and they could have killed him easily.

But let us suppose that Muhammad was right and they actually had such plan. Under what law it is allowed to punish thousands of people for a failed murder attempt by a few? Isn't everyone responsible for his own action? What was the crime of those new born children, those pregnant women, those elderly Jews who had to leave everything behind and walk in the desert? How many of those perished? Why the weak ones had to pay for a failed attempt of a few members of their tribe?

Another important thing to consider is that Muhammad actually assassinated K'ab bin Ashraf the leader of the Bani Nadir; very traitorously. These people, according to their own religion and custom, had all the rights to revenge. Why Muhammad believed that he could go killing all his opponents without any impunity but the simple thought of someone planning to kill him should be punished so severely? What would happen to the world if we all followed Muhammad's example?

I ask Muslims to show me one parallel story in the annals of history of mankind where an entire population of thousands of people was eliminated because of a failed plot of few of them against the life of someone.

A Hadith in [Bukhari Volume 5, Book 59, Number 362](#) confirms this story. The narrator talks about the treatment of the Jews of Medina and how Muhammad "killed their men and distributed their women, children and property among the Muslims, but some of them came to the Prophet and he granted them safety, and they embraced Islam. He exiled all the Jews from Medina."

Some Muslim apologists say that the morality of today should not be applied to Muhammad who lived 1400 years ago. They maintain that, "This whole narrative has been problematic for many people because of their notions of what is morally correct and what it morally wrong. The origin of this sickness rests squarely on the Christian mentality of 'turn the other cheek,' and the 'redemptive suffering of Christ,' both of which have been sicknesses in the minds of Europe for centuries on end, until they came to their senses and discarded it."

I don't believe that morality is sickness and it has nothing to do with Christianity either. Morality stems out of human consciousness and its compass is the Golden Rule. We know what is right or wrong when we consider the way we would like to be treated.

Banu Quraiza

INVADING BANU QURAIZA:

The next were the Banu Quraiza. Soon after the Battle of the Trench was over, Muhammad claimed that the Archangel Gabriel had visited him "asking that he should unsheathe his sword and head for the habitation of the seditious Banu Quraiza and fight them. Gabriel noted that he with a procession of angels would go ahead to shake their forts and cast fear in their hearts." [Sahih Bukhari Volume 5, Book 59, Number 443](#)

It is not clear why the Archangel needed Muslim's help to wipe out the Jews if he had "a procession of angels" who would shake their forts. Nevertheless, "the Messenger of Allâh immediately summoned the prayer caller and ordered him to announce fresh hostilities against Banu Quraiza,"

Muhammad headed an army of three thousand infantry men and thirty horsemen of Ansar (Helpers) and Muhajireen (Emigrants).

The Banu Quraiza was attacked for not supporting Muhammad when the Quraish attacked Medina. Ali sworn that he would never stop until he either storms their garrisons or be killed. This siege lasted 25 days. Finally the Banu Qurayza surrendered unconditionally. Muhammad ordered that the men be handcuffed, while the women and children were isolated in confinement. Thereupon Al-Aws tribe interceded begging the Prophet to be lenient towards them. Muhammad suggested that Sa'd bin Mu'adh, a former ally, be deputed to give verdict about them, and they agreed.

Sa'd's verdict who had received as a serious wound in the previous Battle of the Confederates was "that all the able-bodied male persons belonging to the tribe should be killed, women and children taken prisoners and their wealth divided among the Muslim fighters." [Sahih Bukhari Volume 4, Book 52, Number 280](#)

One wonders why Muhammad who claimed to be the messenger of Allah and in contact with him needed the judgment of a human. Yet this most cruel verdict was precisely what pleased him and he "accepted his judgment saying that Sa'd had adjudged by the Command of Allâh."

Al-Bubarpouri adds that "In fact, the Jews deserved that severe punitive action for the ugly treachery they had harbored against Islam, and the large arsenal they have amassed and which consisted of one thousand and five hundred swords, two thousand spears, three hundred armours and five hundred shields, all of which went into the hands of the Muslims."

The Muslims historians have been quick to bring the same baseless alibis to justify their raids against their victims like, they were "mischievous", causing "sedition" or being "treacherous" and "harboring against Islam". However no specifics exists as of the nature of those sins to warrant such a severe punishment and their total genocide.

Trenches were dug in the bazaar of Madinah and a number of Jews between six and nine hundred were beheaded therein.

Huyai, Ibn Akhtab, the chief of the Bani Nadeer and Safiyah's father was captured in this siege and brought to the Prophet with his hands tied to his neck with a rope. In an audacious

defiance he rejected Muhammad and preferred to be beheaded than submitting to his Religion by force. He was ordered to sit down and was beheaded on the spot.

To separate men from the boys, the youngsters were examined and if they had grown any pubic hair, it was enough to behead them.

[Sunan Abu-Dawud Book 38, Number 4390](#)

Narrated Atiyyah al-Qurazi:

"I was among the captives of Banu Qurayzah. They (the Companions) examined us, and those who had begun to grow hair (pubes) were killed, and those who had not were not killed. I was among those who had not grown hair."

If anyone cannot see that this is NOT how a messenger of God should behave cannot claim to have grasped the meaning of humanness. I believe the cruelty of what the Prophet did to the Jews of Arabia are self-explanatory and any fair-minded person would acknowledge that. It is inconceivable that a messenger of God could kill between 600 to 900 people and banish thousands more with no feelings or compassion.

The man we call the Prophet, was full of hate. He thought of nothing but killing, brought nothing but death, taught nothing but vengeance. Muhammad was not a "mercy of God to mankind" but the curse of devil to humanity. Not only in his life he killed and banished all the Jews he could lay hand on, in his dead bed he instructed his followers to continue with the ethnic cleansing that he had initiated.

[Bukhari Volume 4, Book 52, Number 288](#)

The Prophet on his death-bed, gave three orders one of them was to Expel the pagans from the Arabian Peninsula.

[Bukhari Volume 4, Book 52, Number 176](#)

Narrated 'Abdullah bin 'Umar:

Allah's Apostle said, "You (i.e. Muslims) will fight with the Jews till some of them will hide behind stones. The stones will (betray them) saying, 'O 'Abdullah (i.e. slave of Allah)! There is a Jew hiding behind me; so kill him.'"

This man was a hoodlum not a messenger of God, he was a thief, a gangster and a highway robber. He enriched himself with the wealth of his victims.

[Bukhari Volume 4, Book 52, Number 176](#)

Narrated Anas bin Malik:

People used to give some of their datepalms to the Prophet (as a gift), till he conquered Bani Quraiza and Bani An-Nadir, whereupon he started returning their favors.

If you still believe that Muhammad was a messenger of God. Think to yourself what has happened to your humanity.

What really happened to the Banu Qurayza?

The following describes the massacre of the Banu Quraiza and the reason why the Prophet chose Sa'd bin Mu'adh as the arbitrator. This is a must read to understand Muhammad and his true character. (source: <http://www.answering-islam.org/Muhammad/Jews/BQurayza/>)

This is one of the darkest chapters in early Muslim history and it is also one of the most complicated. The sources are partially conflicting and embellished by later traditions which have obscured what really happened.

[Muhammad's atrocity against the Qurayza Jews](#) presents a good first discussion of the facts. See: last chapter of this PDF file.

The below is a very exhaustive collection of source material and a first attempt of drawing conclusions. You might not agree with all our conclusions on this issue, but it will at least give you many sources nobody can ignore when trying to understand this incident. More can certainly be said and we would be glad to know of further sources giving more details that have so far not been taken into account.

*Please read the following three part series in sequence.
The latter build on the information given in the former.*

What really happened with the Banu Qurayza?

Part 1: The siege, the surrender & the intercession of al-Aus

After the Battle of the Ditch Muhammad attacks the last of the large Jewish tribes of Medina, the Banu Qurayza. After a 25 days siege, they surrender unconditionally. In the end, all 600-700 males of the tribe are killed and the women and children sold into slavery.

Muslims have many versions trying explain away the cruelty of these events and are trying shift them blame away from Muhammad to the Jews themselves.

We will not argue the Banu Qurayza are 100% innocent angels, or the Muslims are 100% evil devils. This is not and never was the claim. In every war, both sides commit injustices and do evil things. And in each war, the losing side has to pay some penalty. We do not expect otherwise. But the kind of penalty and its relationship to the crime is a valid question.

This paper is an examination of the early Muslim sources to give a detailed account of the events.

Instead of responding to various Muslim constructions one by one, since there are as many versions as there is creativity, we will rather look at the account as it is reported by Ibn Ishaq in his word Sirat Rasul Allah available in the abridged edition of Ibn Hisham, and translated by A. Guillaume under the title The Life of Muhammad. This is by far the oldest (written)

account of Muhammad's life in regard to the date of its first composition. Besides this work we will make use of a number of hadith as found in Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim.

The issue is what kind of character this event reveals in Muhammad, since this is part of the evidence for or against him being a true prophet of God. Muslims often argue that the exemplary character of Muhammad is (part of) the proof that his is a true prophet. Such a claim should be investigated.

We all agree that Ghengis Khan, or Stalin were cruel men. That is fact of history. And we accept it as it is. It has not much influence on our daily life (at least if none of our direct family or friends were victims of Stalin). But nobody denies it because it has no direct personal relevance what kind of man Stalin was. We are not called to imitate Stalin.

With Muhammad on the other hand, his character is not only used as proof for his prophethood, his life is taken to be normative in many ways for the Muslims. He is declared to be the model for mankind. Therefore we need to look whom we are called to take as our model and whether he should be taken as a model. These two aspects imply that we need to look at his life in detail.

After the Quraysh have retreated back to Mecca, Ibn Ishaq's report on the battle of the trench ends with the words:

"In the morning the apostle and the Muslims left the trench and returned to Medina, laying their arms aside." [Sirat, p. 460]

But the rest after the battle is shortly after interrupted as the next paragraph in Sirat continues with

THE RAID ON B. QURAYZA

According to what al-Zuhri told me, at the time of the noon prayers Gabriel came to the apostle wearing an embroidered turban and riding on a mule with a saddle covered with a piece of brocade. He asked the apostle if he had abandoned fighting, and when he said that he had he said that the angels had not yet laid aside their arms and that he had just come from pursuing the enemy. 'God commands you, Muhammad, to go to B. Qurayza. I am about to go to them to shake their stronghold.'

The prophet ordered it to be announced that none should perform the afternoon prayer until after he reached B. Qurayza (705). The apostle sent `Ali forward with his banner and the men hastened to it. ... [Sirat, p. 461]

[Some details on the arrival of the Muslims and exchanges of insults omitted.]

The apostle besieged them for twenty-five nights until they were sore pressed and God cast terror into their hearts.

Now Huyayy b. Akhtab had gone with B. Qurayza into their forts when Quraysh and Ghatafan had withdrawn and left them, to keep his word to Ka`b b. Asad; and when they felt sure that the apostle would not leave them until he had made an end of them Ka`b b. Asad said to them: 'O Jews, you can see what has happened to you; I offer you three alternatives.

Take which you please.' (i) We will follow this man and accept him as true, for by God it has become plain to you that he is a prophet who has been sent and that it is he that you find mentioned in your scripture, and then your lives, your property, your women and children will be saved. They said, 'We will never abandon the laws of the Torah and never change it for another.' He said, 'Then if you won't accept this suggestion (ii) let us kill our wives and children and send men with their swords drawn to Muhammad and his companions leaving no encumbrances behind us, until God decides between us and Muhammad. If we perish, we perish, and we shall not leave children behind us to cause us anxiety. If we conquer we can acquire other wives and children.' They said, 'Should we kill these poor creatures? What would be the good of life when they were dead?' He said, 'Then if you will not accept this suggestion (iii) tonight is the eve of the sabbath and it may well be that Muhammad and his companions will feel secure from us then, so come down, perhaps we can take Muhammad and his companions by surprise.' They said: 'Are we to profane our sabbath and do on the sabbath what those before us of whom you well know did and were turned into apes?' He answered, 'Not a single man among you from the day of your birth has ever passed a night resolved to do what he knows ought to be done.' [Sirat, pp. 461-462]

It is not clear to me how serious this "inside discussion" is to be taken. How would Ibn Ishaq know about it? It looks like he tries to give a reason why they might not have become Muslims and saved their lives that way as most of the Arab tribes did. Whatever the authenticity of this discussion, it shows that the Jews would not even transgress the law of their book, the Torah, in the face of danger for their life. That doesn't harmonize well with the charges of frivolously corrupting it for a small price as the accusation in the Qur'an wants to indicate.

One more observation on the above paragraph:

Now Huyayy b. Akhtab had gone with B. Qurayza into their forts when Quraysh and Ghatafan had withdrawn and left them, to keep his word to Ka'b b. Asad; **and when they felt sure that the apostle would not leave them until he had made an end of them** Ka'b b. Asad said to them: 'O Jews, you can see what has happened to you; I offer you three alternatives. ...

And then they discussed the alternatives and we read of their reaction. Whether the proposed alternatives are factional or fictional is not so important at this point. The reason for their discussion is more likely within the kernel of truth. What does it mean that "the apostle would not leave them until he had made an end of them"? Maybe we can't say that yet, but we should keep that phrase in mind.

The text in "Sirat Rasul Allah" continues:

Then they sent to the apostle saying, 'Send us Abu Lubaba b. `Abdu'l-Mundhir, brother of B. `Amr b. `Auf (for they were allies of al-Aus), that we may consult him.' So the apostle sent him to them, and when they saw him they got up to meet him. The women and children went up to him weeping in his face, and he felt sorry for them. They said, 'Oh Abu Lubaba, do you think that we should submit to Muhammad's judgement?' He said, 'Yes,' **and pointed with his hand to his throat, signifying slaughter**. Abu Lubaba said, 'My feet had not moved from the spot before I knew that I had been false to God and His apostle.' Then he left them and did not go to the apostle but bound himself to one of the pillars in the mosque saying, 'I will not leave this place until God forgives me for what I have done,' and he promised God that he

would never go to B. Qurayza and would never be seen in a town in which he had betrayed God and His apostle. [Sirat, p. 462]

What do we learn here? Abu Lubaba was a Muslim. But he was still trusted (because of former friendship?) by the Banu Qurayza (or he was just the only one available they could think of to maybe be sympathetic among the Muslim opponents), so they asked him for arbitration. When he meets his former friends he is overcome with compassion and even though as a good Muslim he can't other than say that they should submit to Muhammad, he indicates with a sign that Muhammad has the plan to kill them. But as soon as he has warned them in this way, he is overcome with remorse that he has revealed Muhammad's plan to the enemy.

It follows a long story of Abu Lubaba chaining himself to a pillar and refusing to move until Muhammad would forgive him and how this happens which is omitted.

However, after the 25 days siege, the situation of the Banu Qurayza was now hopeless and the next morning they officially surrendered.

In the morning they submitted to the apostle's judgement and al-Aus leapt up and said, 'O Apostle, they are our allies, not allies of Khazraj, and you know how you recently treated the allies of our brethren.' Now the apostle had besieged B. Qaynuqa` who were allies of al-Khazraj and when they submitted to his judgement `Abdullah b. Ubayy b. Salul had asked him for them and he gave them to him; so when al-Aus spoke thus the apostle said: 'Will you be satisfied, O Aus, if one of your own number pronounces judgement on them ?' When they agreed he said that Sa`d b. Mu`adh was the man. [Sirat, p. 463]

Let us summarize the observations so far.

1. Remember the phrase from the beginning? It said "and when they felt sure that the apostle would not leave them until he had made an end of them". This indicates the B. Qurayza knew what Muhammad was up to.

2. When Abu Lubaba a Muslim who fought on Muhammad's side was asked by them what will happen and what they should do, he indicates slaughter. This is not a prejudiced fear of the enemy (we might often exaggerate what the enemies might do to us and have an image of them worse than their actual nature), this now is the expectation or knowledge of a Muslim about his own prophet.

3. When they surrender to Muhammad, the immediate reaction of the al-Aus is to intercede for them. Why would they remind the Prophet of what he had done earlier? Does that look like they expected him to be naturally merciful? If they expected him to be merciful why did they not rest in assurance that Muhammad would act with more mercy than any of them would have? This kind of immediate reaction shows they feared for their friends now that they have surrendered, and they bring the best argument they have to sway Muhammad from his plan. They appeal to his justice regarding how he treats his friends and since he did hear the intercession of the other tribe earlier he shouldn't be seen playing favorites with them and also acknowledge their earlier alliance with the Banu Qurayza. They do not appeal to his nature of mercy towards the Jews, but to his nature as statesman who needs to be impartial with all his companions. This reaction certainly shows that the al-Aus feared for their friends and did not have the impression Muhammad had mercy on his mind.

The people from al-Aus reminded Muhammad of his earlier decision in regard to the other Jewish tribe of the Banu Qaynuqa`. In order to understand this reference, let me quote what this is all about.

`Asim b. `Umar b. Qatada said that the B. Qaynuqa` were the first of the Jews to break their agreement with the apostle and to go to war, between Badr and Uhud, and the apostle besieged them until they surrendered unconditionally. `Abdullah b. Ubayy b. Salul went to him when God had put them in his power and said, 'O Muhammad, deal kindly with my clients' (now they were allies of Khazraj), but the apostle put him off. He repeated the words, and the apostle turned away from him, whereupon he thrust his hand into the collar of the apostle's robe; the apostle was so angry that his face became almost black. He said, 'Confound you, let me go.' He answered, 'No, by God, I will not let you go until you deal kindly with my clients. Four hundred men without mail and three hundred mailed protected me from all mine enemies; would you cut them down in one morning? By God, I am a man who fears that circumstances may change.' The apostle said, 'You can have them.' [Sirat, p. 363]

What impression do we get of Muhammad's intention? How easily was he convinced to be merciful to them?

When `Abdullah interceded for them and insisted on it, Muhammad became extremely angry and it took great courage on the part of `Abdullah to stick to his request and even use physical force against Muhammad to hold him back from massacring all of the tribe. This confirms that Muhammad had the intention of killing the Banu Qaynuqa` from the very beginning and only was hindered by others from doing so. Muhammad was not easily swayed in his intention, but it took considerable effort hindering him.

There was another tribe of Jews in Medina. the Banu al-Nadir. They are not referred to in our story, but they also contribute something to our understanding.

Concerning B. al-Nadir the Sura of Exile came down in which is recorded how God wreaked His vengeance on them and gave His apostle power over them and how He dealt with them. God said: 'He it is who turned out those who disbelieved of the scripture people from their homes to the first exile. ... 'So consider this, you who have understanding. Had not God prescribed deportation against them,' which was vengeance from God, 'He would have punished them in this world,' i.e. with the sword, 'and in the next world there would be the punishment of hell' as well. [Sirat, p. 438]

It seems not clear what but "something" happened to make Muhammad change his mind and which then is justified with this sura. (Sorry, but it was not God, not even in this good thing of sparing their life. God doesn't give revelations to people who are out to murder). But even in this event, the Sirat testifies that Muhammad originally intended to kill them all.

Therefore, the historical records regarding the two "spared" tribes actually confirm that Muhammad was planning to kill all of the Qurayza just as he intended to deal with the tribes of the Banu Qaynuqa` and Banu al-Nadir. For some reason he was prevented in the first two cases. Forcibly in respect to the Banu Qaynuqa, and we don't really know why in regard to the Banu al-Nadir. But: Deeds are judged by intention.

The impression becomes strong that with the third tribe Muhammad now wants to make sure that he won't be losing out on his plans again. To me, the way he asks the al-Aus and then chooses Sa`d b. Mu`adh afterwards, seems planned to prevent another tribe from escaping, and his intentions be thwarted again.

Let us have a second look at the paragraph already quoted in the above.

In the morning they submitted to the apostle's judgement and al-Aus leapt up and said, 'O Apostle, they are our allies, not allies of Khazraj, and you know how you recently treated the allies of our brethren.' Now the apostle had besieged B. Qaynuqa` who were allies of al-Khazraj and when they submitted to his judgement `Abdullah b. Ubayy b. Salul had asked him for them and he gave them to him; so when al-Aus spoke thus the apostle said: 'Will you be satisfied, O Aus, if one of your own number pronounces judgement on them ?' When they agreed he said that Sa`d b. Mu`adh was the man. [Sirat, p. 463]

The next crucial player in the tragedy enters the scene. Who is Sa`d b. Mu`adh? Why is he chosen by Muhammad? Since there is a wealth of material available in the Sirat and Hadith about this man we can answer this question with high confidence.

What really happened with the Banu Qurayza?

Part 2: Who is Sa`d bin Mu`adh?

After a siege of 25 days, the Banu Qurayza surrendered to Muhammad unconditionally. Some members of al-Aus interceded with Muhammad on their behalf, and he asked them if they would accept the judgment of one of their own tribe. They agreed, and Muhammad then appointed Sa`d bin Mu`adh. In order to understand the significance of this appointment, we need to understand the character of this man, his former encounters with the Banu Qurayza and his attitude to the Jews in general.

We will present source material as found in the Sirat Rasul Allah by Ibn Ishaq, edited by Ibn Hisham, in the translation by A. Guillaume, as well as narrations from Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim.

In the Sirat, p. 301, we read that at the Battle of Badr:

*The foe was routed. God slew many of their chiefs and made captive many of their nobles. Meanwhile the apostle was in the hut and **Sa`d b. Mu`adh** was standing at the door of the hut girt with his sword. With him were some of the Ansar guarding the apostle for fear lest the enemy should come back at him. While the folk were laying hands on the prisoners the apostle, as I have been told, saw displeasure on the face of Sa`d at what they were doing. He said to him, "You seem to dislike what the people were doing." "Yes, **by God**," he replied, "**it is the first defeat that God has brought on the infidel and I would rather see them slaughtered than left alive.**"*

The fact that Sa`d b. Mu`adh was Muhammad's personal body guard indicates that he was quite close to Muhammad and Muhammad would have known Sa`d probably better than many others among his companions. This special closeness is confirmed in further sources presented below.

Sa'd's reply to Muhammad's question states it very strongly that he is not a friend of making prisoners of those who do not believe in Muhammad but would rather see them killed.

Would it be wrong to see this as an indication of what Muhammad could expect when appointing Sa'd as judge over the Banu Qurayza? Muhammad himself had asked him at that time and received this reply. He was well aware of general disposition of Sa'd.

[Sahih Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 48, Number 829](#) reports the events around an accusation of immorality on the part of `A'isha. This hadith is very long, therefore only the part giving information about Sa'd b. Mu`adh will be quoted.

Narrated Aisha:

.... Then she told me the rumors of the false accusers.

My sickness was aggravated, and when I returned home, Allah's Apostle came to me, and after greeting he said, 'How is that (girl)?' I requested him to allow me to go to my parents. I wanted then to be sure of the news through them I Allah's Apostle allowed me, and I went to my parents and asked my mother, 'What are the people talking about?' She said, 'O my daughter! Don't worry much about this matter. By Allah, never is there a charming woman loved by her husband who has other wives, but the women would forge false news about her.' I said, 'Glorified be Allah! Are the people really taking of this matter?' That night I kept on weeping and could not sleep till morning. In the morning Allah's Apostle called Ali bin Abu Talib and Usama bin Zaid when he saw the Divine Inspiration delayed, to consul them about divorcing his wife (i.e. 'Aisha). Usama bin Zaid said what he knew of the good reputation of his wives and added, 'O Allah's Apostle! Keep you wife, for, by Allah, we know nothing about her but good.' 'Ali bin Abu Talib said, 'O Allah's Apostle! Allah has no imposed restrictions on you, and there are many women other than she, yet you may ask the woman-servant who will tell you the truth.' On that Allah's Apostle called Buraira and said, 'O Burair. Did you ever see anything which roused your suspicions about her?' Buraira said, 'No, by Allah Who has sent you with the Truth, I have never seen in her anything faulty except that she is a girl of immature age, who sometimes sleeps and leaves the dough for the goats to eat.' On that day Allah's Apostle ascended the pulpit and requested that somebody support him in punishing 'Abdullah bin Ubai bin Salul. Allah's Apostle said, 'Who will support me to punish that person ('Abdullah bin Ubai bin Salul) who has hurt me by slandering the reputation of my family? By Allah, I know nothing about my family but good, and they have accused a person about whom I know nothing except good, and he never entered my house except in my company.'

Sad bin Mu'adh got up and said, 'O Allah's Apostle! by Allah, I will relieve you from him. If that man is from the tribe of the Aus, then we will chop his head off, and if he is from our brothers, the Khazraj, then order us, and we will fulfill your order.'

Is Muhammad's suggestion to kill the person? It might not be entirely clear what he meant by "punishing", but it might well be killing as some other parallel hadith accounts (quoted below) state. Nevertheless, Sa'd was the first to respond and to spell out the punishment as "chop off the head of the man" who suggested immoral behavior on the part of Aisha. Did he just know Muhammad's mind very well, or was it only his own desire to settle opposition and insult to Muhammad by the way of execution? Whatever we can conclude from this, we do learn that

Sa`d b. Mu`adh is ready to shed the blood of anyone who casts doubt on Muhammad or his family.

After some more time and a verbal fight between Aus and Khazraj, the hadith continues:

... Allah's Apostle was standing on the pulpit. He got down and quietened them till they became silent and he kept quiet.

At this time, Muhammad does not take Sa`d up on his offer. Whatever Muhammad's intention was at this occasion, he knew how Sa`d reacted and what his leanings are in situations like these.

[Bukhari, Volume 5, Book 59, Number 462](#) is more explicit in Muhammad's request what to do with the man ...

Narrated 'Aisha: ...

So, on that day, Allah's Apostle got up on the pulpit and complained about 'Abdullah bin Ubai (bin Salul) before his companions, saying, 'O you Muslims! Who will relieve me from that man who has hurt me with his evil statement about my family? By Allah, I know nothing except good about my family and they have blamed a man about whom I know nothing except good and he used never to enter my home except with me.' Sad bin Mu'adh the brother of Banu 'Abd Al-Ashhal got up and said, 'O Allah's Apostle! I will relieve you from him; if he is from the tribe of Al-Aus, then I will chop his head off, and if he is from our brothers, i.e. Al-Khazraj, then order us, and we will fulfill your order.'

It is again unambiguous, Sa`d jumps quickly to Muhammad's request.

On that, a man from Al-Khazraj got up. Um Hassan, his cousin, was from his branch tribe, and he was Sad bin Ubada, chief of Al-Khazraj. Before this incident, he was a pious man, but his love for his tribe goaded him into saying to Sad (bin Mu'adh). 'By Allah, you have told a lie; you shall not and cannot kill him. If he belonged to your people, you would not wish him to be killed.'

On that, Usaid bin Hudair who was the cousin of Sad (bin Mu'adh) got up and said to Sad bin 'Ubada, 'By Allah! You are a liar! We will surely kill him, and you are a hypocrite arguing on the behalf of hypocrites.'

Sa`d is accused he might not keep this word since he would not kill one of his own people. But Sa`d cousin makes it clear that their allegiance to Muhammad is stronger than tribal ties. They would indeed kill anyone offensive to Muhammad, even from their own tribe or family. A similar hadith is found in [Volume 6, Book 60, Number 274](#).

[Volume 4, Book 56, Number 826](#):

Narrated 'Abdullah bin Mas'ud:

Sa'd bin Mu'adh came to Mecca with the intention of performing 'Umra, and stayed at the house of Umaiya bin Khalaf Abi Safwan, for Umaiya himself used to stay at Sa'd's house when he passed by Medina on his way to Sham. Umaiya said to Sad, "Will you wait till

midday when the people are (at their homes), then you may go and perform the Tawaf round the Ka'ba?" So, while Sad was going around the Ka'ba, Abu Jahl came and asked, "Who is that who is performing Tawaf?" Sad replied, "I am Sad." Abu Jahl said, "Are you circumambulating the Ka'ba safely although you have given refuge to Muhammad and his companions?" Sad said, "Yes," and they started quarreling. Umaiya said to Sad, "Don't shout at Abi-l-Hakam (i.e. Abu Jahl), for he is chief of the valley (of Mecca)." Sad then said (to Abu Jahl). 'By Allah, if you prevent me from performing the Tawaf of the Ka'ba, I will spoil your trade with Sham." Umaiya kept on saying to Sad, "Don't raise your voice." and kept on taking hold of him. **Sad became furious and said, (to Umaiya), "Be away from me, for I have heard Muhammad saying that he will kill you."** Umaiya said, "Will he kill me?" Sad said, "Yes." Umaiya said, "By Allah! When Muhammad says a thing, he never tells a lie." Umaiya went to his wife and said to her, "Do you know what my brother from Yathrib (i.e. Medina) has said to me?" She said, "What has he said?" He said, "He claims that he has heard Muhammad claiming that he will kill me."

She said, By Allah! Muhammad never tells a lie." So when the infidels started to proceed for Badr (Battle) and declared war (against the Muslims), his wife said to him, "Don't you remember what your brother from Yathrib told you?" Umaiya decided not to go but Abu Jahl said to him, "You are from the nobles of the valley of Mecca), so you should accompany us for a day or two." He went with them and thus Allah got him killed.

In this account we learn that Muhammad has the intention to kill, and Sa`d knows Muhammad's intention. Assuming that Sa`d did not lie in this, we conclude again, that Sa`d was close enough to Muhammad to know of his intentions in such issues. We see that Sa`d has great contempt for those who do not accept Muhammad. He is very impolite and shouts at the chief of the city in which he is only a visitor and guest - even against the wish of his host. At the least, Sa`d has a bad temper and he threatens with (Muhammad) killing them. Nearly the same hadith can be found in [Volume 5, Book 59, Number 286](#).

There is more testimony of his general attitude and the way he usually seems to have spoken about the Jews:

[Volume 6, Book 60, Number 252](#):

Narrated Musab:

I asked my father, "Was the Verse:-- 'Say: (O Muhammad) Shall We tell you the greatest losers in respect of their deeds?'(18.103) revealed regarding Al-Haruriyya?" He said, "No, but regarding the Jews and the Christians, for the Jews disbelieved Muhammad and the Christians disbelieved in Paradise and say that there are neither meals nor drinks therein. Al- Hururiyya are those people who break their pledge to Allah after they have confirmed that they will fulfill it, and Sad used to call them 'Al-Fasiqin (evildoers who forsake Allah's obedience).

It is not stated which Sa`d is referred to, but it seems probable that it is the same Sa`d bin Mu`adh who again voices his intense dislike of the Jews and Christians. Would anyone be surprised if his dislike or even hatred would influence his judgement on the Banu Qurayza? Could it be that Muhammad was not aware of Sa`d bin Mu`adh's general attitude? It seems unlikely to me.

Later Sa`d thought it to be more useful to have the Banu Qurayza dead rather than alive. However, he thought that he himself would be more useful to Muhammad alive instead of dead:

[Volume 5, Book 59, Number 378:](#)

Narrated Khabbab bin Al-Art:

We migrated in the company of Allah's Apostle, seeking Allah's Pleasure. So our reward became due and sure with Allah. Some of us have been dead without enjoying anything of their rewards (here), and one of them was Mus'ab bin 'Umar who was martyred on the day of the battle of Uhud, and did not leave anything except a Namira (i.e. a sheet in which he was shrouded). If we covered his head with it, his feet became naked, and if we covered his feet with it, his head became naked. So the Prophet said to us, "Cover his head with it and put some Idhkhir (i.e. a kind of grass) over his feet or throw Idhkhir over his feet." But some amongst us have got the fruits of their labor ripened, and they are collecting them.

Narrated Anas:

His uncle (Anas bin An-Nadr) was absent from the battle of Badr and he said, "I was absent from the first battle of the Prophet (i.e. Badr battle), and if Allah should let me participate in (a battle) with the Prophet, Allah will see how strongly I will fight." So he encountered the day of Uhud battle. The Muslims fled and he said, "O Allah ! I appeal to You to excuse me for what these people (i.e. the Muslims) have done, and I am clear from what the pagans have done." Then he went forward with his sword and met Sad bin Mu'adh (fleeing), and asked him, "Where are you going, O Sad? I detect a smell of Paradise before Uhud." Then he proceeded on and was martyred. No-body was able to recognize him till his sister recognized him by a mole on his body or by the tips of his fingers. He had over 80 wounds caused by stabbing, striking or shooting with arrows.

See also [Muslim, Book 19, Number 4683](#).

We have collected now most of the info on Sa`d before the incident with the Banu Qurayza. Let us observe some details closer to the event.

At the beginning of the Battle of the Ditch, when the Banu Qurayza dissolved a treaty between them and Muhammad (the sources are not very clear what kind of treaty this was), Sa'd had been appointed one of the messengers from Muhammad to the Qurayza to find out if that was true, but when he arrived there we read of this encounter:

[T]hey spoke disparagingly of the apostle, saying, 'Who is the apostle of God? We have no agreement or undertaking with Muhammad.' Sa`d b. Mu`adh reviled them and they reviled him. He (Sa`d) was a man of hasty temper and Sa`d b. `Ubada said to him, 'Stop insulting them, for the dispute between us is too serious for recrimination.' Then the two Sa`ds returned to the apostle ... [Sirat, p. 453]

According to Ibn Ishaq Sa'd was a man of a bad temper and he came away from his last encounter with the B. Qurayza from insulting each other, only having been stopped by the other Sa'd, but not really "done with them". Would these last memories influence his

decisions? Muhammad certainly knew of what had happened as he would have had the envoys report to him of their mission.

Before we reach the crucial event that Sa'd is mortally wounded in this battle we find him expressing his mind clearly again in this passage (the parts in [...] are my explanatory comments):

When conditions pressed hard upon the people the apostle ... sent to ... [the] leaders of Ghatafan [one of the tribes fighting against Muhammad] and offered them a third of the dates of Medina on condition that they would go back with their followers and leave him and his men, so peace was made between them so far as the writing of a document. It was not signed and was not a definite peace, merely peace negotiations. When the apostle wanted to act he sent to the two Sa'ds and told them of it and asked their advice. They said: 'Is it a thing you want us to do, or something God has ordered you to do which we must carry out? or is it something you are doing for us?' He said: 'It is something I am doing for your sake. By God, I would not do it were it not that I have seen the Arabs have shot at you from one bow, and gathered against you from every side and I want to break their offensive against you! Sa'd b. Mu'adh said: 'We and these people were polytheists and idolaters, not serving God nor knowing him, and they never hoped to eat a single date (of ours) except as guests or by purchase. Now, after God has honoured and guided us to Islam and made us famous by you, are we to give them our property? We certainly will not. **We will give them nothing but the sword until God decide between us.**' The apostle said: 'You shall have it so.' Sa'd took the paper and erased what was written, saying, 'Let them do their worst against us!' [Sirat, page 454]

Sa'd has a fierce spirit, and is more willing than Muhammad to sacrifice even his own people in this war, instead of making peace. If he is willing to rather lose and have his own tribe killed, will such a man have mercy on his enemies? Again, these are Sa'd's words spoken to Muhammad. He knows it well.

[Bukhari, Volume 5, Book 59, Number 448:](#)

Narrated 'Aisha:

Sad was wounded on the day of Khandaq (i.e. Trench) when a man from Quraish, called Hibban bin Al-'Araqa hit him (with an arrow). The man was Hibban bin Qais from (the tribe of) Bani Mais bin 'Amir bin Lu'ai who shot an arrow at Sad's medial arm vein (or main artery of the arm). **The Prophet pitched a tent (for Sad) in the Mosque so that he might be near to the Prophet to visit.** When the Prophet returned from the (battle) of Al-Khandaq (i.e. Trench) and laid down his arms and took a bath Gabriel came to him while he (i.e. Gabriel) was shaking the dust off his head, and said, "You have laid down the arms?" By Allah, I have not laid them down. Go out to them (to attack them)." The Prophet said, "Where?" Gabriel pointed towards Bani Quraiza. So Allah's Apostle went to them (i.e. Banu Quraiza) (i.e. besieged them). **They then surrendered to the Prophet's judgment but he directed them to Sad to give his verdict concerning them.** Sad said, "I give my judgment that their warriors should be killed, their women and children should be taken as captives, and their properties distributed."

Narrated Hisham: My father informed me that 'Aisha said, "**Sad said, "O Allah! You know that there is nothing more beloved to me than to fight in Your Cause against those who**

disbelieved Your Apostle and turned him out (of Mecca). O Allah! I think you have put to an end the fight between us and them (i.e. Quraish infidels). And if there still remains any fight with the Quraish (infidels), then keep me alive till I fight against them for Your Sake. But if you have brought the war to an end, then let this wound burst and cause my death thereby.' So blood gushed from the wound. There was a tent in the Mosque belonging to Banu Ghifar who were surprised by the blood flowing towards them. They said, 'O people of the tent! What is this thing which is coming to us from your side?' Behold! Blood was flowing profusely out of Sad's wound. Sad then died because of that."

We learn that "Nothing is more beloved to Sa`d than to fight the disbelievers." Need we say much more?

We learn also that Sa`d was severely wounded in some of the last days of the battle of the Ditch, i.e. shortly before the siege on the Banu Qurayza and soon after it he died of this wound. Interestingly there is no mentioning of a broken treaty and treason, but the reason for the attack is (supposedly) a vision of Gabriel ordering Muhammad to attack the Banu Qurayza.

Ibn Ishaq's report how Sa`d was wounded and what he said in response is a bit more detailed than the above hadith.

Abu Layla `Abdullah b. Sahl b. `Abdu'l-Rahman b. Sahl al-Ansari, brother of B. Haritha, told me that `A'isha was in the fort of B. Haritha on that day. It was one of the strongest forts of Medina. The mother of Sa`d b. Mu`adh was with her. `A'isha said: 'This was before the veil had been imposed upon us. Sa`d went by wearing a coat of mail so short that the whole of his forearm was exposed. He hurried along carrying a lance, saying the while,

Wait a little! Let Hamal see the fight.

What matters death when the time is right?

His mother said, "Hurry up, my boy, for by God you are late." I said to her, "I wish that Sa`d's coat of mail were longer than it is", for I was afraid for him where the arrow actually hit him. Sa`d was shot by an arrow which severed the vein of his arm. The man who shot him, according to what `Asim b. `Umar b. Qatada told me, was Hibban b. Qays b. al-`Ariqa, one of B. `Amir b. Lu'ayy. When he hit him he said, "Take that from me, the son of al-`Ariqa." Sa`d said to him, "May God make your face sweat (`arraaq) in hell. O God, if the war with Quraysh is to be prolonged spare me for it, for there is no people whom I want to fight more than those who insulted your apostle, called him a liar, and drove him out. O God, seeing that you have appointed war between us and them grant me martyrdom **and do not let me die until I have seen my desire upon B. Qurayza.**" [Sirat, page 459]

When Sa`d is mortally wounded, his last wish is to see his desire upon the Banu Qurayza. He does not spell it out explicitly, but is there any doubt as to what this desire might be?

[Muslim, Book 25, Number 5473:](#)

Narrated Jabir ibn Abdullah:

Sa'd ibn Mu'adh received a wound of the arrow in his vein. Allah's Messenger (peace_be_upon_him) cauterised it with a rod and it was swollen, so the Messenger of Allah (peace_be_upon_him) did it for the second time.

The last three quoted passages give again evidence of our introductory statement, that Sa`d was very close to Muhammad. When Sa`d was wounded he let a tent be put up near himself, so that he could visit him more easily in his bed of sickness (Bukhari). In Muslim, we read that Muhammad was even personally caring for him and treating his wounds. This is clear evidence for their personal closeness. Would Muhammad not have known about Sa`d's above expressed "last desire"?

Sa`d received this wound in the Battle of the Ditch which ended before the siege of the Banu Qurayza began. The siege lasted 25 days before the Banu Qurayza finally surrendered. Muhammad had put up Sa`d's tent beside his own so that he could easily visit him and he was personally attending to his wound. We are not told about their personal conversations when Sa`d received the visits and care of Muhammad, but it could hardly be called excessive speculation that Sa`d would also have expressed to Muhammad his desire to see the end of the Banu Qurayza at some time during these nearly four weeks of siege and fighting against the very people that were the object of his desire.

It is not a minor issue, that Sa`d had received a mortal wound. When people are under high pressure this often brings out the worst in them. Severe sickness like a mortal wound is such stress on the body. Sickness hardly ever makes people mild and merciful to others. Furthermore, at that time there were no painkillers as we have them today. Sa`d was dying and he was most likely in pain from this wound. In a healthy state, Sa`d was already seeking the death of Muhammad's enemies, the fact that he was terminally ill would only make him more cruel than he already was.

Bukhari also states that against the common Muslim claim, that the Banu Qurayza had surrendered to Muhammad's judgment, but he then gave this judgement to Sa`d. The reason for this shift will be the focus of the next part of our investigation.

We have seen the character of Sa`d, his readiness to shed blood, his great hatred for the Jews, and we know that Muhammad was very close with Sa`d and knew of his desires.

Against this background information, we need to look more closely at the intercession of some members of al-Aus and the appointment of Sa`d as the judge.

What really happened with the Banu Qurayza?

Part 3: Muhammad's appointment of Sa`d bin Mu`adh, his judgment, its execution and conclusions

In the last part we have investigated the personality of Sa`d bin Mu`adh is, his character, his hatred for the Jews, and in particular his last wish of finishing off the Banu Qurayza. That was a long chapter. For reminder and summary, let us requote a few pertinent statements:

"Yes, by God," he replied, "it is the first defeat that God has brought on the infidel and I would rather see them slaughtered than left alive." [Sirat, p. 301]

'O you Muslims! Who will relieve me from that man who has hurt me with his evil statement about my family? By Allah, I know nothing except good about my family and they have

blamed a man about whom I know nothing except good and he used never to enter my home except with me.' Sad bin Mu'adh the brother of Banu 'Abd Al-Ashhal got up and said, 'O Allah's Apostle! I will relieve you from him; if he is from the tribe of Al-Aus, then I will chop his head off, and if he is from our brothers, i.e. Al-Khazraj, then order us, and we will fulfill your order.' [Bukhari, Volume 5, Book 59, Number 462]

The last direct encounter of Sa`d with the Banu Qurayza ended in insult:

[T]hey spoke disparagingly of the apostle, saying, 'Who is the apostle of God? We have no agreement or undertaking with Muhammad.' Sa'd b. Mu'adh reviled them and they reviled him. He (Sa`d) was a man of hasty temper and Sa`d b. 'Ubada said to him, 'Stop insulting them, for the dispute between us is too serious for recrimination.' Then the two Sa`ds returned to the apostle ... [page 453]

His last will:

"O God, seeing that you have appointed war between us and them grant me martyrdom and do not let me die until I have seen my desire upon B. Qurayza." [page 459]

Is there any room for ambiguity in these statements? Muhammad knew all this. Muhammad was a great leader. He knew his men and he in particular knew Sa`d. Could it be that this information is the reason why he gave the judgement of the Qurayza to Sa`d?

In part 1, we saw that Muhammad had intended to kill the Banu Qaynuqa`, but he was hindered forcefully. Somehow his intention to kill the Banu al-Nadir didn't work out either. Now, he has conquered the Banu Qurayza and they know Muhammad desires to kill them. Abu Lubaba knows he wants to kill them wholesale, the tribe of al-Aus know it and therefore they jump to their feet as soon as they learn of the surrender of the Banu Qurayza and start pleading for them, appealing not to Muhammad's mercy, but to his justice in dealing with them just as he listened in the earlier case and gave the judgment to their brother tribe the Khazraj. "Be just Muhammad, for our sake," they plead.

We need to examine this intercession and Muhammad's response. Pay close attention to the sequence of words in this crucial passage.

In the morning they [the B.Quraiza] submitted to the apostle's judgement and al-Aus lept up and said, 'O Apostle, they are our allies, not allies of Khazraj, and you know how you recently treated the allies of our brethren.' Now the apostle had besieged B. Qaynuqa` who were allies of al-Khazraj and when they submitted to his judgement `Abdullah b. Ubayy b. Salul had asked him for them and he gave them to him; so when al-Aus spoke thus the apostle said: 'Will you be satisfied, O Aus, if one of your own number pronounces judgement on them ?' When they agreed he said that Sa`d b. Mu`adh was the man. [page 463]

The Aus are refering back to the similar incident with the Banu Qaynuqa`. In that case the forceful intercession of `Abdullah b. Ubayy b. Salul from the Khazraj resulted in sparing the life of the tribe and they were sent into exile instead. So the Aus appeal to Muhammad that he may remember this and deal in equal manner with them and their allies. That would only be just. Muhammad can not really argue against an appeal to justice and does not want to be seen as favoring one tribe of his followers over another. How does he react? What did the Aus hear Muhammad ask?

'Will you be satisfied, O Aus, if one of your own number pronounces judgement on them ?'

This is deliberately ambiguous. The natural sense is that the group of the al-Aus interceding with Muhammad took his question "you, O Aus ... one of your own" as addressed to THEM, who were standing in front of Muhammad and interceding with him. Even if some of them might have been suspicious about who that might be, what can they really respond to that offer? They could hardly answer him "Wait a minute. How do you mean this?" Most likely, they looked at each other and thought this couldn't have resolved any better. There was no choice but answering this question with "yes". Maybe Muhammad would even leave the choice of the judge to them? The question does NOT say: "Will you accept whomever **I appoint** from among you?" The question is so open-ended, they cannot possibly say "No" to it. However, after they have committed to this solution, THEN Muhammad appoints Sa'd who has this strong hatred for the Jews, and Muhammad knows Sa'd will judge exactly as Muhammad wanted it to be.

Is that not at least **a** if not **the** natural way of understanding this exchange? Muhammad was very clever in his way of asking them, nevertheless getting his will in the end, and even looking merciful and generous while doing so. However, in Part 2 we gave plenty of evidence that Muhammad knew the mind of Sa'd very well and he knew what decision this man would make.

We know that Sa'd was at this time in a tent, on his bed, and this was in Medina, some distance away from the fort of the Banu Qurayza. Sa'd was not in the immediate vicinity, he had a mortal wound. He was sick, and he was very weak. When the al-Aus went to get Sa'd they had to help him on the donkey to bring him. He was so weak, he couldn't even walk, or get on his donkey by his own strength. He was certainly not the obvious choice among the Aus for this judgment. Certainly not obvious for the Aus who interceded with Muhammad. But as already indicated, even if they had thought of it, they could hardly respond "no" to Muhammad's offer.

Sa'd is thus appointed and the Sirat continues:

The apostle had put Sa'd in a tent belonging to a woman of Aslam called Rufayda inside his mosque. She used to nurse the wounded and see to those Muslims who needed care. The apostle had told his people when Sa'd had been wounded by an arrow at the battle of the Trench to put him in Rufayda's tent until he could visit him later. When the apostle appointed him umpire in the matter of B. Qurayza, his people came to him and mounted him on a donkey on which they had put a leather cushion, he being a corpulent man. As they brought him to the apostle they said, 'Deal kindly with your friends, for the apostle has made you umpire for that very purpose.' When they persisted he said, '**The time has come for Sa'd in the cause of God, not to care for any man's censure.**' Some of his people who were there went back to the quarter of B. `Abdu'l-Ashhal and announced to them the death of B. Qurayza before Sa'd got to them, because of what they had heard him say. [page 463]

Not surprising, Sa'd is true to his character. When he heard he was chosen to speak judgment on the Banu Qurayza, he knows well what Muhammad had him chosen for. He would be doing the will of God (??) and not the desires of his friends who were too weak and mild with those enemies of God and his apostle. Muhammad could depend on one of his most loyal friends that he would do his will.

When Sa'd reached the apostle and the Muslims the apostle told them to get up to greet their leader. The muhajirs of Quraysh thought that the apostle meant the Ansar, while the latter thought that he meant everyone, so they got up and said 'O Abu `Amr, the apostle has entrusted to you the affair of your allies that you may give judgement concerning them.' Sa'd asked, '**Do you covenant by Allah that you accept the judgement I pronounce on them?**' They said Yes, and he said, 'And is it incumbent on the one who is here ?' (looking) in the direction of the apostle not mentioning him out of respect, and the apostle answered Yes. Sa'd said, 'Then I give judgement that the men should be killed, the property divided, and the women and children taken as captives.' [Sirat, page 464]

Carefully look at the question posed by Sa'd. He asks "Do YOU accept my judgment on THEM?" This means, the Banu Qurayza were NOT asked, but this question was addressed to the Muslims, especially the tribe of Aus and to Muhammad.

There was no refusing of Muhammad's judgment, the **Banu Qurayza had surrendered to Muhammad** unconditionally. It was the tribe of al-Aus who had pleaded for them and Muhammad tricked them with a clever response. Sa'd was appointed and Muhammad would get his way. At this point, the Aus can no longer refuse the judgment of Sa'd having agreed to it prior in their pleading with Muhammad. They can only accept the situation as it is now.

But it is important, this is **only** a decision of acceptance by the al-Aus. The Banu Quraiza are not even present. They were not asked. After they had already surrendered unconditionally, they had no voice in the matter anymore.

What is Muhammad's response to this cruel judgment? The text continues:

`Asim b. `Umar b. Qatada told me from `Abdu'l-Rahman b. `Amr b. Sa'd b. Mu`adh from `Alqama b. Waqqas al-Laythi that the apostle said to Sa'd, 'You have given the judgement of Allah above the seven heavens'.

That doesn't sound "shocked". This is approval if not exuberance that Sa'd made the "right" decision. There is no grief, no pity. It is praise for his decision.

If Muhammad was sure about God's judgement how could he give it to Sa'd and risk that other than God's judgement will come to pass? On the other hand, if God had not given him a specific command about the judgement, how does Muhammad dare to ascribe to God this cruel judgement that came out of the evil desires of merciless men?

The text of Sirat continues:

Then they surrendered, and the apostle confined them in Medina in the quarter of d. al-Harith, a woman of B. al-Najjar. Then the apostle went out to the market of Medina (which is still its market today) and dug trenches in it. Then he sent for them and struck off their heads in those trenches as they were brought out to him in batches. Among them was the enemy of Allah Huyayy b. Akhtab and Ka'b b. Asad their chief. There were 600 or 700 in all, though some put the figure as high as 800 or 900. As they were being taken out in batches to the apostle they asked Ka'b what he thought would be done with them. He replied, 'Will you never understand? Don't you see that the summoner never stops and those who are taken away do not return? By Allah it is death!' This went on until the apostle made an end of them.

Huyayy was brought out wearing a flowered robe in which he had made holes about the size of the finger-tips in every part so that it should not be taken from him as spoil, with his hands bound to his neck by a rope. When he saw the apostle he said, 'By God, I do not blame myself for opposing you, but he who forsakes God will be forsaken.' Then he went to the men and said, 'God's command is right. A book and a decree, and massacre have been written against the Sons of Israel.' Then he sat down and his head was struck off. [Sirat, page 464]

Apparently Muhammad himself worked on the digging of the trench into which the massacred Jews were to be thrown. But he did not only take part in those preparations, the formulation of the text states that HE sent for them and STRUCK OFF their heads. This sounds like he personally struck off at least the heads of those two mentioned men and maybe of more. Beheading 600-700 men one by one takes a substantial time and strength. Certainly this was not done by one man alone but by many. Whoever was appointed to execute the bulk of this judgement, one has to be really numbed in ones conscience to strike off hundreds of heads, looking into they eyes of the victims to be killed. The text describes then a number of these beheadings and the conversations that took place between the executioners and the executed. I will spare the reader the gory details.

We need to recognize that Muhammad got rid of a large group that was challenging his sole authority and power over Medina, and which was in particular refusing to believe him to a true prophet from God. The latter was probably the more important. As long as there were people of the book who knew their scriptures Muhammad's position of spiritual and subsequently political authority was challenged. We have seen in this story that the Jews would rather die than deny the word of God in the Torah and convert to Islam. This can be supported with much further evidence as reported outside these few pages. The elimination of the challenge to his spiritual authority might well have been Muhammad's main motivation.

However, Muhammad also had had huge spoils from this "final solution". At least 600 grown men are killed (those with the ability to fight). This represents probably something like 500 families, each of which on average would have at least a wife and a child, probably several. Consider, 1/5 of the possessions of a whole tribe (possessions of 100 families for Muhammad) plus the profit from selling the women as slaves.

The judgment over the Banu Quraiza (by Sa`d b. Mu`adh) was:

Then I give the judgment that the men should be killed, the property divided, and the women and children be taken captives.

Muhammad answers in endorsement of this:

You have given the judgement of Allah above the seven heavens. [page 464]

The story continues ...

Then the apostle divided the property, wives and children of B. Qurayza among the Muslims, and he made known on that day the sharees of horse and men, and took out the fifth. [1/5 of all booty in all raids/wars was the personal property of Muhammad.] ...

Then the apostle sent Sa`d b. Zayd al-Ansari brother of b. `Abdu'l-Ashhal with some of the captive women of B. Qurayza to Najd and he sold them for horses and weapons. [page 466]

What more can we say? What else need we say?

A few days after the massacre of the Banu Quraiza, Sa`d bin Mu`adh dies. It is relevant to take into account Muhammad's evaluation of Sa`d bin Mu`adh's life and character. We read:

When the affair of B. Qurayza was disposed of, Sa`d's wound burst open and he died a martyr therefrom.

Mu`adh b. Rifa`a al-Zuraqi told me: Anyone you like from the men of my people told me that Gabriel came to the apostle when Sa`d was taken, in the middle of the night wearing an embroidered turban, and said, 'O Muhammad, who is this dead man for whom the doors of heaven have been opened and at whom the throne shook?' The apostle got up quickly dragging his garment as he went to Sa`d and found him already dead.

`Abdullah b. Abu Bakr told me from `Amra d. `Abdu'l-Rahman: As `A'isha was returning from Mecca with Usayd b. Hudayr he heard of the death of a wife of his, and showed considerable grief. `A'isha said: 'God forgive you, O Abu Yahya, will you grieve over a woman when you have lost the son of your uncle, for whom the throne shook?'

One I do not suspect told me from al-Hasan al-Basri: Sa`d was a fat man and when the men carried him they found him light. Some of the disaffected said, 'He was a fat man and we have never carried a lighter bier than his.' When the apostle heard of this he said, 'He had other carriers as well. By Him Who holds my life in His hand the angels rejoiced at (receiving) the spirit of Sa`d and **the throne shook for him.**'

Mu`adh b. Rifa`a told me from Mahmud b. `Abdu'l-Rahman b. `Amr b. al-Jamuh from Jabir b. `Abdullah: When Sa`d was buried as we were with the apostle he said Subhana'llah and we said it with him. Then he said Allah akbar and the men said it with him. When they asked him why he had said Subhana'llah he said 'The grave was constricted on **this good man** until God eased him from it'.

Muhammad's evaluation of Sa`d? He was a **good** man. Everything else we might be able to accept, but calling Sa`d good certainly puts a question mark of doubt behind the issue what moral categories Muhammad was thinking in. In what standard could anyone call Sa`d bin Mu`adh "a good man"? Is "goodness" the equivalent of unquestioning loyalty to Muhammad and doing what he says? And furthermore he claims "The throne of God shook when Sa`d died"?

There are a number of hadith confirming the above in regard to Muhammad's evaluation of Sa`d, expressing his utter admiration of one of his most loyal companions:

[Volume 3, Book 47, Number 785:](#)

Narrated Anas:

A Jubba (i.e. cloak) made of thick silken cloth was presented to the Prophet. The Prophet used to forbid people to wear silk. So, the people were pleased to see it. The Prophet said, "By Him in Whose Hands Muhammad's soul is, the handkerchiefs of Sad bin Mu'adh in Paradise are better than this." Anas added, "The present was sent to the Prophet by Ukaidir (a Christian) from Dauma."

[Volume 5, Book 58, Number 146:](#)

Narrated Al-Bara:

A silken cloth was given as a present to the Prophet . His companions started touching it and admiring its softness. The Prophet said, "Are you admiring its softness? The handkerchiefs of Sad bin Muadh (in Paradise) are better and softer than it."

Similar hadith are found in [Volume 4, Book 54, Number 471, 472](#), [Volume 7, Book 72, Number 727](#).

[Volume 5, Book 58, Number 147:](#)

Narrated Jabir:

I heard the Prophet saying, "The Throne (of Allah) shook at the death of Sad bin Muadh." Through another group of narrators, Jabir added, "I heard the Prophet : saying, "The Throne of the Beneficent shook because of the death of Sad bin Muadh."

Muhammad has only praise and delight for this man. He fully endorsed his judgement and it was the judgement that fulfilled his intentions.

It is an important Islamic principle that we are judged by our intentions.

What is your verdict on Muhammad based on these reports from the Muslim sources?

There is one more aspect that needs to be taken into account. Muhammad's intention was the massacre of the tribe in the case of all three Jewish tribes. It didn't work out in the first two cases, but he made sure the third tribe would not get away and his plans would not again be thwarted.

All three tribes are accused of breaking their treaties. If Muhammad would have acted on the basis of law from God he would have judged them consistently. We see that "circumstances" played a much more important role in determining the punishment for these tribes. If it was right to let them go, why did he not let the Banu Qurayza go into exile? If it was right to execute them, why did he give in to `Abdullah b. Ubayy b. Salul and let him prevent the execution the judgment of God? No true prophet would give in to a misguided companion who wants to stop God's righteous decree. This inconsistency shows that Muhammad was guided chiefly by his own desires of vengeance against those who would not accept him as a messenger from God rather than by a law of consistent justice as it comes from God. The judgement is about offending Muhammad, not about offending God, and Muhammad decided according to expediency. It was desirable for him to massacre the Banu Qaynuqa` but when

there was strong resistance from his followers against this it became more expedient to relent at this time. In the case of the Banu Quraiza though Muhammad would make sure they didn't get away again.

This is how the sources look to me when I read the Sirat. I have presented you my understanding and am interested to hear how you read this and where I might have overlooked anything that is essential and would throw a different light on the events. Are there other early sources that are of higher authenticity that must lead us to different conclusions?

May we all seek the truth of God with sincere hearts. May we all whole-heartedly embrace his truth and follow him as those who surrender our lives to the Lord, but let us also be careful to not believe every claim.

There is a right choice and there are many wrong choices. This world has seen more false prophets than true prophets. We need to ask from the Lord that he may give us wisdom and understanding to discern and recognize His truth.



The Hijaz Area where the Jews lived in Arabia

Investigation of further details and various arguments given as justification of the punishment:

The Bani Quraytha Jews
Traitors or Betrayed?

Introduction

When Mohammed first entered Yathrib (Al-Madina Al-Munawwarah), he was counting on the support of its people. One particular ethnic group he thought would give more authority to his prophethood were the Jews because they had the Torah and all the previous Prophets were Jewish.

The Jews were many in Yathrib and its suburbs. There were the Bani Al-Nadheer Jews, the Bani Qaynuqa' Jews, the Bani Quraytha Jews, and several more. The Jews were rich and successful in their businesses. A great asset to the young Islamic Nation.

At first, Mohammed was trying to befriend the Jews and get them on his side. He insisted that the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) worship the same God [[Quran Surah 29:46](#)]. He said that the same God sent down the Torah [[Quran Surah 5:48](#)]. He ordered the Muslims to fast Aashoorah' or the Passover [[Saheeh Bukhari - 2004](#)]. Even the Qibla (the direction the Muslims face in prayer) was towards Jerusalem - the same direction the Jews faced in prayer [[Saheeh Bukhari - 41](#)].

But no matter how hard Mohammed tried to convince them that he is a prophet he just couldn't. Once he even barged into a Jewish Synagogue in Yathrib (Al-Madina Al-Munawwarah) and said that if only twelve Jews would believe in him then Allah would spare them his wrath [[Musnad Ahmad - 23464](#)].

When he realized that the Jews wouldn't believe in him, and that their unbelief would turn against him, because they have the Torah which has the criteria for any prophet, he realized that they should be eliminated. So at first he switched the Qibla (the direction the Muslims face in prayer) from Jerusalem to Mecca [[Quran Surah 2:144](#) and [Saheeh Bukhari - 41](#)]. Then warned them; they either become Muslims and be safe, or sell their possessions and leave their land [[Saheeh Muslim - 1765](#) & [1767](#) and [Sunan Abi Dawood - 3003](#)].

Mohammed marched towards the Jews in order to either exile them or make a treaty with them. The Bani Al-Nadheer Jews refused to make a treaty with Mohammed so they fought against him, lost, and subsequently were exiled. The Bani Quraytha Jews saw the fate of their Bani Al-Nadheer brethren so they had no choice but to make a peace treaty with him [[Saheeh Muslim - 1766](#) and [Sunan Abi Dawood - 3004](#)].

Yet Mohammed was determined that all Jews should be either exiled or killed - he was set on their elimination. He cannot simply break the treaty with Bani Quraytha though because it would be bad for his image as a Prophet who's supposed to keep his promises and treaties. He strongly emphasized the importance of keeping treaties [[Quran Surah 9:4](#) and [Saheeh Bukhari - 33](#)]. So his only way out was to make it appear as though Bani Quraytha were the ones who

broke the treaty.

Ghazwat Al-Khandaq (The Battle of the Trench or Ditch) came. The Pagan Arab tribes retreated and Mohammed was ready for battle. Mohammed went to the Bani Quraytha Jews and eliminated them because it was claimed that they betrayed the Muslims and renounced the treaty, but did they?

The Battle of Al-Khandaq (Trench) and The Battle of Bani Quraytha

Quraysh and Ghatfan, encouraged by the exiled Bani Al-Nadheer Jews, wanted to eliminate Mohammed once and for all. They gathered up a great army and put Yathrib under siege [[Saheeh Bukhari - 4103](#)]. Mohammed, based on a suggestion by Salman Al-Farisi, dug a trench around Yathrib [[Saheeh Bukhari - 2837](#)], except for the Bani Quraytha side that is, because they had great fortresses and it would be practically impossible for the Pagan Arabs to get through their fortresses unless Bani Quraytha allowed it. Now since Mohammed and Bani Quraytha had a treaty, Mohammed had nothing to fear [[Saheeh Muslim - 1766](#) and [Sunan Abi Dawood - 3004](#)]. Thus all was set.

Now the siege has started, Mohammed was running low on food and resources [[Saheeh Bukhari - 4101](#) and [Musnad Ahmad - 13808](#)], his companions were terrified [[Saheeh Bukhari - 4103](#) and [Musnad Ahmad - 10613](#)], and above all that it was rumored that Bani Quraytha were going to break the treaty between them and Mohammed and let the Pagan Arabs come through their side. But after a while, a sandstorm hit the armies of the Pagan Arabs, and since Bani Quraytha refused to let them in through their fortresses, the armies had no choice but to retreat [[Musnad Ahmad - 22823](#)].

Mohammed on the other hand was ready for battle, he had a full army equipped and eager to fight in the name of Allah. The rumors that Bani Quraytha wanted to betray him were his only excuse, that and an order sent from Allah via Jibreel (Gabriel). He went to them, put them under siege for 14 days. Finally they surrendered. So Mohammed killed all their men, enslaved their women and children [[Saheeh Muslim - 1769](#)]. Now there was one less Jewish tribe to worry about.

Traitors or Betrayed?

Now it all comes down to this; are the Bani Quraytha Jews traitors or were they betrayed?

First of all, how do we know if a treaty is broken? We cannot simply assume that a treaty is broken because of mere rumors [[Quran Surah 49:12](#)]. We can only assume that a treaty is broken if:-

1. The other side officially renounces the treaty
2. The other side does an action which is a direct violation of the treaty

Does any one of the former apply to the Bani Quraytha Jews?

I've searched the nine books of Hadeeth (Saheeh Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim, Sunan Al-Tarmithi, Sunan Al-Nasa'i, Sunan Abi Dawood, Sunan Ibn Majah, Musnad Ahmad, Muwatta' Malik, and Sunan Al-Darimi). In my search I did not find any single Hadeeth which indicates that Bani Quraytha either officially (or even unofficially) renounced the treaty, nor did I find a Hadeeth which indicates that Bani Quraytha violated the treaty in any way.

As a matter of fact, the only Hadeeth I found regarding Bani Quraytha's position was one Hadeeth [[Musnad Ahmad - 22823](#)] which says that Bani Quraytha actually refused to assist the Pagan Arabs in any way in their assault against Mohammed.

The Conclusion

We saw how much Mohammed wanted to get the Jews on his side, but since he couldn't he had to eliminate them. We saw that the Bani Quraytha Jews actually refused to aid the Pagan Arabs or even let them in through their fortresses. Yet Mohammed was determined to eliminate all non-Muslims from Arabia. The Jews were innocent yet that didn't stop him, he marched to Bani Quraytha and ruthlessly slaughtered all their men, enslaved their women and children. He violated the treaty himself, and he was the one who always preached how treaties should be kept.

History is written by the victors, thus the Muslims have throughout history claimed that the Bani Quraytha Jews were the traitors. Yet because the nine Hadeeth collectors (From Bukhari to Al-Darimi) were men who feared Allah, they couldn't include in their books any Hadeeth which wasn't authentic, thus they couldn't find any Hadeeth to put in their books which talks about the treachery of Bani Quraytha.

It all comes down to this, does a true Prophet of God break his treaties?

Muhammad's atrocity against the Qurayza Jews

How Sa'd made him glad

By [James M. Arlandson](#) (copyright)

In AD 627, Muhammad committed an atrocity against the last remaining major tribe of Jews in Medina: the Qurayza.

He beheaded the men and the pubescent boys and enslaved the women and children. In doing this, he wiped an entire tribe "off the map" to use the [language](#) of the President of Iran, recently.

The purpose of this article is full disclosure and straightforward analysis about early Islam. How and why did this atrocity unfold?

Background

The immediate background of this mass extermination and enslavement is the Battle of the Trench (or Ditch), in February-March-April (the exact calculations vary), AD 627. This battle—though it ended up being a siege—pitted a coalition of Quraysh (a large tribe in and around Mecca) against Muslims and some Medinan non-Muslims. The Quraysh also had allies: the Ghatafan (northern Arab tribes to the east of Medina and Mecca) and an assortment of smaller tribes. As for the Muslims, prominent Islamologist W. M. Watt says that on the eve of battle, Muhammad's army consisted of "practically all the inhabitants of Medina with the exception of the Jewish tribe of Qurayzah, who seem to have tried to remain neutral. There

were some Medinans in league with the Meccans, but they were presumably . . . exiled from Medina for the time being" (Muhammad at Medina, p. 36).

For the size of the two armies, the standard figure for the Meccans and their allies is 10,000, but one Muslim scholar says that the coalition of pagans may have reached 12,000 (Maududi vol. 3, p. 63). However, Watt says of the coalition: "The numbers given for the various contingents [the coalition was divided into three corps], however, do not add up to more than about 7,500. The Meccans themselves had about 300 horses and the nomadic tribes a similar number" (Statesman, pp. 166-67). On the Muslim side, the standard figure that is widely accepted is 3,000. They had no cavalry to speak of.

The larger background of this atrocity against the Jews reveals that Muhammad had already expelled two tribes of Jews: the Qaynuqa in AD 624 and the Nadir in AD 625.

It is unclear why the prophet expelled the first tribe, the Qaynuqa. One source says that these Jews waged war on Muhammad, but this is unlikely since he was flushed with victory over the Meccans at the Battle of Badr, only a month before. But perhaps this exaggeration reflects at least some level of conflict between the two sides. Another source says that some Jews played a trick on a Muslim woman, but this too is unlikely, since the trick is found in Arabic literature. These Jews controlled the market of crafts and trade, and the new Muslim immigrants to Medina were craftsmen, so maybe this is the reason. Regardless, the results worked out the same. After being besieged in their fortress for fifteen days, they were expelled, and the Muslims took over the crafts. "The Banu [tribe] Qaynuqa did not have any land, as they were goldsmiths [and armor-makers]. The Messenger of God took many weapons belonging to them and the tools of their trade" (Tabari, vol. 7, p. 87).

About the Nadir tribe, an early Muslim source says that Muhammad suspected an assassination attempt, while he was collecting some blood-wit money (compensation for bloodshed) from the tribe. Muhammad called on his followers to wage war on them, besieging them in their strongholds for fifteen days in August. Muhammad set about destroying their palm trees. Their livelihood undergoing destruction, they surrendered and departed for the north. Muhammad confiscated their property, just as he took the tools of the Nadir tribe.

The upshot of all of this is clear. The conflict between Muslims and Jews is escalating, and the prophet for all of humanity is about to impose the ultimate penalty on the last remaining major tribe of Jews in Medina. And he will take their property, as well.

Sources: W. M. Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, Oxford UP, 1961, pp. 130-31; 148-51; 166-67; *Muhammad at Medina*, Oxford UP, 1956; Sayyid Abul A'La Maududi, *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, vol. 3; Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad*, trans. A. Guillaume, Oxford UP, 1955, pp. 363-64; 437-45. Ibn Ishaq (d. 767) valuable and reliable source by modern scholars, except for some chronology and the miraculous elements. Tabari, *The Foundation of the Community*, trans. M.V. McDonald and annotated by W. M. Watt (SUNYP, 1987), pp. 85-87; 156-61. Tabari (d. 923) is also considered a reliable source, except for some chronology and the miraculous elements.

What started the Battle of the Trench?

Many causes feed into any conflict, but one stands out. Muslim raiders harassed Meccan trade. Modern Saudi biographer Safi-ur-Rahman al-Mubarakpuri expresses the right idea: . . . "[I]t was wise for the Muslims to bring the commercial routes leading to Makkah [Mecca] under their control" (p. 201). Then he lists eight raids between 623 and the Battle of Badr in AD 624. In each one, Muslims were the aggressors, to accomplish the big objective of strangling Mecca's trade. These raids that sometimes involved hundreds of men continued steadily from that time to the Battle of the Trench. The Meccans had had enough. So they wanted to finish off Islam, once and for all.

From Muhammad's point of view, he wanted the Kabah shrine in Mecca, and if this goal involved hindering Meccan trade, then so be it. Two early Medinan suras or chapters (2 and 8) reveal his outlook. Sura 2:189-196 and 216-218 command Muslims to fight the Quraysh because this tribe wanted to control their own shrine, even if this entailed prohibiting the Muslims, who were hampering the large tribe's trade, from visiting it. Next, Sura 2:125-129 asserts without a shred of evidence that Abraham built and purified the shrine, and now Muhammad the monotheist is the best representative of this patriarch. He claimed this while he lived in Mecca, too (Sura 14:35-41). So in effect the shrine belonged to him by revelation, before it actually did by conquest (in early AD 630). Finally, in Sura 8:30-40, the prophet recounts his persecution back in Mecca and why the Quraysh are not the rightful guardians of the shrine. They barred people from it—never mind that about eight years later the prophet will bar pagans from the shrine. All Arab polytheists will be forced to convert or die.

It is impossible (for me at least) to escape the impression that if Muhammad had put aside this desire to control the Kabah, then much of the conflict between him and the Quraysh would never have erupted in the first place. But the shrine was a popular place of religious pilgrimage, so how could he allow religious freedom for polytheists?

Were the Jews involved in the start of the Battle of the Trench? The Islamic sources say that they stirred up the Meccans against the Muslims.

Early biographer Ibn Ishaq says:

A number of Jews who had formed a party against the apostle, among whom were Sallam b. Abu'l-Huqayq al-Nadir [he had been assassinated so the chronology or his placement here is off], and Huyayy b. Aktab al-Nadri, and Kinana b. Abu'l-Huqayq al-Nadri, and Hauda b. Qays al-Wa'ili, and Abu Ammar al-Wa'ili with a number of B. [Bani or tribe or clan] Nadir and B. Wa'il, went to the Quraysh at Mecca and invited them to join them in an attack on the apostle so that they might get rid of him altogether. (p. 450).

How much did the Jews instigate the battle, and how much were the Meccans fed up with Muslim harassment on their own without Jewish provocation? This is unclear. But let us assume only for the sake of argument that the Islamic sources are right. These specific Jews were the principal instigators. In the end, this does not matter, for the following reason.

It is important to cite these (complex) names, above, because today's Muslim polemicists who defend Muhammad's extermination and enslavement of the Qurayza Jews overlook the fact that early Islam knew specifically who the enemy Jewish leaders were—by name. So did all

the men and adolescent boys have to be executed and all the women and children enslaved? Could only the leaders not have been executed?

Sources: Ibn Ishaq; Tabari, *The Victory of Islam*, trans. M. Fishbein, vol. 8, (1997), pp. 6-7. Safi-ur-Rahman Mubarakpuri, *The Sealed Nectar: Biography of the Noble Prophet*, Darrusalam, 1996, p. 201. This biography was awarded first prize by the Muslim World League, but it is an encomium more than an objective biography.

The Battle of the Trench

The Muslims dug trenches to the north of Medina, linking them to or near various high grounds (e.g. Mt. Sal, a hill in the central area of Medina) and other difficult spots (e.g. a marshy ground), in order to neutralize the Meccan cavalry and to avoid hand-to-hand pitched battles. The strategy of trenches was new to Arabia, and the early Islamic sources make much of it. The Muslim army bivouacked south of the trench with Medina at their backs, while the coalition camped north of the trench, facing Medina, with Mt. Uhud at their backs. The Jews retreated south of Medina, facing the back of the Muslim army.

Though the Muslims were under siege, which pressed them hard, the trenches indeed worked well. The coalition's cavalry was stymied, except a foray that came to nothing. The Meccans tried to assault the trench, but they were easily repulsed. The Muslim sources say that Ali, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, fought in a duel, which he won. Some arrows were shot, but that achieved nothing.

This must be emphasized: No real battles or warfare occurred, and this favored the outnumbered Muslims. Early biographer Ibn Ishaq says—and modern historians are in complete agreement—that "[t]he siege continued without any actual fighting" (p. 454). Early historian Tabari agrees: "The Messenger of God and the polytheists stayed in their positions for over twenty nights—nearly a month—with no warfare between the troops, except for the shooting of arrows and the siege" (vol. 8, p. 17). Again, modern western scholars agree on this point.

Even Allah in the Quran confirms this absence of pitched battle: *25 Allah turned back the unbelievers [Meccans and their allies] in a state of rage, having not won any good, and Allah spared the believers battle [q-t-l]*. (Sura 33:25; for more analysis, see the section "the Quran," below)

It is important to realize this fact because Muslim polemicists assert or imply that the Jews actually fought the Muslims, so if the Jews were exterminated and enslaved, then it was their fault. But no full-scale battles ever took place, and the early sources say that the Jews remained in their houses and fortresses near Medina—that is, the sources do not depict them forcefully sallying out and attacking Muslims from behind.

Finally, the early sources say that a storm battered the coalition, and the Quran confirms this, implying also that supernatural forces joined in the fight: "You who believe, remember God's goodness to you when mighty armies massed against you: We sent a violent wind and invisible forces against them. God sees all that you do" (Sura 33:9; Haleem, *The Qur'an*, Oxford UP, 2004).

In short, the coalition that had amassed against the Muslims in Medina was losing heart.

Besides Ibn Ishaq and Tabari, see the reliable hadith collector and editor Bukhari [here](#) and [here](#). The hadith is the traditions about Muhammad outside of the Quran.

[The aftermath of the siege](#)

The Meccans and their allies had to withdraw, for at least four reasons.

(1) As we just observed in the previous section, the Muslims had adopted an effective strategy: trenches.

No full-scale battle or warfare could take place, so the coalition was becoming discouraged. It is highly likely that the average soldiers saw that they would not be dividing up any spoils, and this added to their disheartenment.

(2) Early sources say that Muhammad was about to offer the Ghatafan tribe (a major part of the coalition) one-third of the date harvest, if they withdrew.

But before this offer, he consulted two of his own leaders, and they said that he should not make the deal. They would prefer to meet the coalition with the sword. This account may or may not be authentic. However, the prophet was, after all, under siege for nearly a month, and he wanted to relieve the pressure off of his Muslims. Though the offer may not have been made (and perhaps not even conceived), the narrative may reveal a weakening in the coalition, which Muhammad had observed.

(3) This weakening was indeed the case, which comes up in a tradition that scholars seem to accept, if only tentatively.

A recent convert to Islam, Nuaym, of the Ghatafan tribe, volunteered himself in any way that would help. Muhammad set out on a plan, using Nuaym's affiliations with the Quraysh and the Jews as a ruse: "The apostle said: 'You are only one man among us. Go and awake mistrust among the enemy to draw them off us if you can, for war is deceit'" (Ibn Ishaq, p. 458; see also [Bukhari](#), and view the two hadiths below this linked one).

First, Nuaym goes to the Jews who were his drinking companions in the "Time of Ignorance." Deceitfully reminding the Jews of his special ties and affection for them, he tells them that the invaders are foreigners, so if the coalition leaves after a fight but wins no spoils and the Jews join them in battle, then the Jews will remain in their homes here in Medina, without any help, leaving them exposed and powerless. Thus, they should not fight with the coalition unless they take some hostages from some leaders of the Quraysh and Ghatafan to ensure that the pagan tribes would fight to the bitter end.

Nuaym then goes to the Quraysh polytheists. Deceitfully reminding them of his affection for them and how he has separated from Muhammad, he informs them that word has reached him that the Jews regretted how the relations between them and Muhammad had devolved. So they told the prophet that they would take some Quraysh leaders hostage, under the subterfuge that ensures that the Quraysh would fight hard. But in reality, the Jews would turn the hostages over to Muhammad. Nuaym said that the Quraysh should not take the deal because of this subterfuge. This would end the siege.

Finally, the Quraysh and the Jews communicated with each other, and they were on the verge of a full onslaught against the Muslims, but negotiations broke down. The Jews indeed asked for hostages to ensure that the Quraysh would fight to the very end, and the (forewarned) Quraysh turned the Jews down, fearing that the Jews would betray the noblemen to Muhammad.

(4) The coalition's animals were dying.

This practical reason for the coalition's withdrawal is beyond dispute. Generally, the Arabs did not feed their animals, in this case horses and camels, but allowed them to graze. However, Muhammad had ordered the Medinans to harvest early, so this took away the animals' food. And even if he had not ordered this, then the pasture lands were gone after nearly a month. Indeed, the source documents say through the mouths of the Quraysh and Ghatafan to the Jews that "[t]hey had no permanent camp, that the horses and camels were dying."

To sum up this section, it may be said fairly that Muhammad won a great victory with little fighting. He had three thousand troops at this disposal. The only opposing tribe left in the region was the Jews. Nuaym the deceitful go-between was right up to a point. When the coalition left, the Jews were left powerless, outnumbered, and alone, without allies. This spells trouble for them.

Sources: Ibn Ishaq, p. 458-59; Tabari vol. 8, p. 23-24.

The aftermath of the withdrawal for the Qurayza Jews

After the withdrawal of the coalition, the Jews were isolated, whereas Muhammad had 3,000 jihadists, signaling disaster for the Jews. The tragic drama unfolds in five stages.

(1) Traditions state that as the prophet was taking a bath, the (non-Biblical) angel Gabriel appeared to him.

Gabriel tells him the battle is not finished. Muhammad is ordered to fight the Qurayza Jews.

When Allah's Apostle returned on the day (of the battle) of Al-Khandaq (i.e. Trench), he put down his arms and took a bath. Then Gabriel, whose head was covered with dust, came to him saying, "You have put down your arms! By Allah, I have not put down my arms yet." Allah's Apostle said, "Where (to go now)?" Gabriel said, "This way," pointing towards the tribe of Bani [tribe] Quraiza. So Allah's Apostle went out towards them. (Bukhari; see a parallel hadith [here](#).)

This next hadith shows a regiment of Gabriel (Muslim warriors) marching towards the fortresses of the Jews.

Narrated Anas: As if I am just now looking at the dust rising in the street of Banu Ghanm (in Medina) because of the marching of Gabriel's regiment when Allah's Apostle set out to Banu Quraiza (to attack them). (Bukhari; see this parallel hadith: Muslim [no. 4370](#) and see no. 4371)

These traditions about Gabriel's leadership are designed to give divine support for the atrocity that is about to be unleashed. Today, we may see this as fanciful, but to millions of Muslims this is real. Be that as it may, one thing is clear. Muhammad had taken off his armor and was enjoying a bath, so he did not feel immediately threatened by these Jews. They had not lined up in battle array to wage war.

But even if Muhammad had felt threatened, why not expel the Jews? Soon Islam will be so powerful that it will [expel](#) all Jews (and Christians) from the Arabian Peninsula (see also these hadiths [here](#) and [here](#)). Muhammad had expelled two tribes of Jews a few years earlier. In fact, he conquers the mainly Jewish city of Khaybar in AD 628. Therefore, it would be inaccurate to assert that if Muhammad had simply expelled the Jews, they would constitute a later substantial and serious threat. He is on the rise militarily.

(2) It is odd that during Muhammad's twenty-five-day siege of the Jews, he employed a poet to abuse them.

The Prophet said to Hassan, "Abuse them (with your poems), and Gabriel is with you (i.e. supports you)." (Through another group of sub-narrators) Al-Bara bin Azib said, "On the day of Quraiza's (besiege), Allah's Apostle said to Hassan bin Thabit, 'Abuse them (with your poems), and Gabriel is with you (i.e. supports you).'" ([Bukhari](#))

This shows how valued poetry was in seventh-century Arabia. In some instances, it could resemble a smear campaign, to use the language of today. However, Muhammad [assassinated](#) poets who mocked him. But now that he has the power, he gets to employ a satirical poet without fear of reprisal. In fact, he refers to the Jews as brothers of monkeys, citing a legend that he believed, namely, that God turned some disobedient Jews into [apes](#). (Ibn Ishaq, pp. 461-62).

(3) The Jews did not mount a strong resistance.

How could they do this, when Muhammad had just withstood such a large coalition and still had at his command 3,000 jihadists?

Then something strange happened while the Jews were negotiating the terms of surrender. They called for a man named Abu Lubabah, a nominal or half-committed Muslim who may have opposed Muhammad on several occasions. They asked him, "Abu Lubabah, do you think we should submit to Muhammad's judgment?" He said yes, but then he gestured with his hand to his throat to indicate slaughter. Immediately afterwards, he felt that he had betrayed Muhammad. But why? Scholars are not sure. Maybe Abu Lubabah believed that he had signaled imminent death to the Jews, although Muhammad wanted to keep this brutality a secret. The Jews would have resisted submission on these gruesome terms. Watt speculates that the Muslim go-between may have been standing firm in his own clan's alliance with the Jews and gave away too much information. Regardless, this must be emphasized: It is not whether he gestured that is in dispute, but the dispute is over why he felt that he betrayed Muhammad. Be that as it may, this means that the outcome was not in doubt—as the hand to the throat indicated.

Source: Ibn Ishaq, p. 462; Watt, Muhammad at Medina, pp. 188-89; 214-17

(4) Muhammad proposed that the Jews submit to the judgment of Sad bin Muadh.

He was the leader of a large Medinan tribe, the Aws (or Aus), some of whom favored old alliances with the Jews. The leader was an elderly man who was [wounded](#) during the siege. His verdict was short and simple—but bloody and cruel.

When the tribe of . . . Quraiza was ready to accept Sad's judgment, Allah's Apostle sent for Sad who was near to him. Sad came, riding a donkey and when he came near, Allah's Apostle said (to the Ansar) [or Helpers], "Stand up for your leader." Then Sad came and sat beside Allah's Apostle who said to him. "These people are ready to accept your judgment." Sad said, "I give the judgment that their warriors should be killed and their children and women should be taken as prisoners." The Prophet then remarked, "O Sad! You have judged amongst them with (or similar to) the judgment of the King Allah." ([Bukhari](#); see parallel hadiths [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#))

It should be noted from this passage that Sad bin Muadh sat next to Muhammad. Was there undue influence from Muhammad on the wounded old man who was about to die and meet Allah? Muhammad had often preached hell fire in the mosque. That is, Sad knew that he was dying, so he wanted to demonstrate his allegiance to the prophet and Islam. The best way, as the circumstances presented themselves, was to decide on death and enslavement, the ultimate penalty signaling the ultimate commitment. Sad made the prophet glad. Shortly after this verdict the elder in fact died from his wound.

Sources: Ibn Ishaq, pp. 463-64; Tabari vol. 8, p. 34.

(5) The sentence: Death by decapitation for around 300-600 men and pubescent boys, and enslavement for the women and children. Ibn Ishaq says that the number may have been as high as 800-900 (p. 464).

Muhammad was wise enough to have six clans execute two Jews each in order to stop any blood-feuds. The rest of the executions were probably carried out by Muhammad's fellow Emigrants from Mecca, as the heads and bodies were dragged into trenches in the business district of Medina.

Source: Watt, Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman, p. 174

How did the executioners decide on which boy to slaughter or leave alive? This hadith gives the obvious answer.

Narrated Atiyyah al-Qurazi: I was among the captives of Banu [tribe] Qurayzah. They (the Companions) examined us, and those who had begun to grow hair (pubes) were killed, and those who had not were not killed. I was among those who had not grown hair. ([Abu Dawud](#); see Ibn Ishaq, p. 466)

This next hadith indicates that a woman was delirious. She was killed.

Narrated Aisha . . . No woman of Banu [tribe] Qurayzah was killed except one. She was with me, talking and laughing on her back and belly (extremely), while the Apostle of Allah . . . was killing her people with the swords. Suddenly a man called her name: Where is so-and-so? . . . I asked: What is the matter with you? She said: I did a new act. [Aisha] said: The man

took her and beheaded her. [Aisha] said: I will not forget that she was laughing extremely although she knew that she would be killed. ([Abu Dawud](#))

The following narrative says that Muhammad took one woman for himself.

The apostle had chosen one of their women for himself, Rayhana bint Amr . . . one of the women of . . . Qurayza, and she remained with him until she died, in his power. The apostle had proposed to marry and put a veil on her, but she said: "Nay, leave me in your power, for that will be easier for me and for you." So he left her. She had shown repugnance towards Islam when she was captured and clung to Judaism. (Ibn Ishaq, p. 466)

Shortly afterwards, though, she converted to Islam and a messenger informed Muhammad of this, and he reacts to the good news: "This gave him pleasure." It is wrong to believe that this was Muhammad's motive to execute so many Jews, but this woman does provide an unforeseen, extra benefit.

This hadith gives a hint on how the wealth was distributed.

People used to give some of their date palms to the Prophet (as a gift), till he conquered Bani [tribe] Quraiza and Bani An-Nadir, whereupon he started returning their favors. ([Bukhari](#); see a parallel hadith [here](#))

More specifically, Ibn Ishaq says the spoils were divided among the Muslims thus:

Then the apostle divided the property, wives, and children . . . among the Muslims, and he made known on that day the shares of horse and men, and took out the fifth. A horseman got three shares, two for the horse and one for the rider. A man without a horse got one share (p. 466).

A jihadist horseman was generally wealthier than a horseless jihadist, so this reveals elitism in "egalitarian" Islam. Also, Muhammad was unable to collect any spoils from the departed Meccans and their allies, so how was he supposed to reward his jihadist? The wealth of the Jews. Apart from the details of how the prophet distributed the spoils here, the division of twenty percent for him and eighty percent for his warriors conforms to a "revelation" just after the Battle of Badr in AD 624. In Sura (Chapter) 8:1 and 41, which deals with this battle, Allah grants him and his fighters these percentages.

Allah also allows jihadists to have [sex with female slaves](#). Do we need to discuss this topic any further in the context of these Jewish women and girls?

Sources: Ibn Ishaq, pp. 464-66; Tabari, vol. 8, pp. 27-41.

[Summary of the aftermath for the Jews](#)

Since all the names and politics can be confusing, here is a quick overview of the facts found in the previous section "the aftermath for the Qurayza Jews."

1. After the Meccans and their allies depart, the Jews are left powerless and outnumbered before 3,000 Muslim jihadists.

2. While the Jews were negotiating the terms of surrender with Abu Lubabah, he gestures to his throat, which indicates slaughter. This means that the flow of the events headed in one direction.
3. Sad bin Muadh is the leader of the Aws tribe.
4. This tribe had old alliances, whatever they were, with the Qurayzah tribe of Jews.
5. However, the Aws fought alongside Muhammad.
6. The Jews sided with the coalition (though the Jews did not actually fight).
7. Thus, the old alliances between the Aws and Jews are weakening.
8. After Muhammad's attack on the Jews, some of the Aws plead with Muhammad to be lenient, such as expulsion.
9. Muhammad turns down this request for mercy—a key point, which supports no. 2. The outcome is never in doubt.
10. Instead, Muhammad appoints Sad bin Muadh to decide, and everyone agrees to abide by his decision.
11. Sad decrees slaughter and enslavement, wanting to firm up his allegiance to Islam before he dies. He dies shortly thereafter from his wound.
12. Muhammad says that Sad's verdict is the judgment of "King Allah." It is right and just. Sad makes him glad.
13. Even though everyone agrees to abide by the verdict, Muhammad still does not show mercy, as the men and boys are handcuffed behind their backs and beheaded, and the women and children are enslaved. He takes one of the beautiful, recently "widowed" Jewish women for himself instead of taking the path of mercy.
14. Muhammad gets twenty percent of the Jewish property (movable, immovable and human), and the jihadists get eighty percent, to be distributed as he sees fit.

In any steps leading up to an atrocity, something wrong is bound to be revealed, and this appears to be no. 9. As noted, Muhammad could have exiled the Jews, as he had done to the Jewish tribes of Qaynuqa and Nadir a few years earlier. Or he could have executed only the leaders, if he believed that they stirred up his enemies—assuming that they really did this, as the Islamic sources allege.

Something is also wrong with step no. 13. Even though everyone agreed to abide by the verdict, who could have complained—justly complained—if Muhammad had announced this? "We agreed to abide by the tribal chief's verdict, but as I watch the men and boys being handcuffed and observe all the tears from the women and children, I'm sure no one would object if we showed mercy and exiled them and executed only the few trouble-makers. After all, I often say that Allah is most merciful. I set the example for my community and the

world!" But this is wishful thinking. He took one of the beauties (now a widow) for himself, instead.

Why does he not show mercy? The answer is found in no. 14. Muhammad needs to reward his jihadists, since they collected no spoils from the departed coalition—Allah gives him permission in Sura 33:27 (see the next section, "the Quran"). And what makes this entire episode doubly heinous is that Muhammad and his jihadists could have had all of the wealth of the Jews after their banishment, but he still did not take this merciful option. But if he had taken it, would he have earned all the money (and a new "bride") coming from the enslavement of Jewish women and children?

The Quran

Allah seems to celebrate this slaughter and enslavement in Sura 33:25-27:

25 Allah turned back the unbelievers [Meccans and their allies] in a state of rage, having not won any good, and Allah spared the believers battle [q-t-l]. Allah is, indeed, Strong and Mighty. 26 And He brought those of the People of the Book [Qurayza] who supported them from their fortresses and cast terror into their hearts, some of them you slew [q-t-l] and some you took captive. 27 And he bequeathed to you their lands, their homes and their possessions, together with land you have never trodden. Allah has power over everything. (Majid Fakhry, *An Interpretation of the Qur'an*, NYUP, 2004; insertions are mine)

These verses reveal three unpleasant truths.

First, Allah helps the Muslims in warfare or battle (three-letter Arabic root is q-t-l in v. 25) against a much-larger foe, so Allah endorses Islam in battle. Also, verse 25 confirms that Muhammad had nothing substantial to fear from the Jews. "Allah turned back the unbelievers . . . and Allah spared the believers battle." In down-to-earth terms, Muhammad still had at his disposal a large, weather-beaten army. The prophet had expelled two other tribes (Qaynuqa and Nadir), so he could have done the same to the Qurayza—as indeed they requested. But the prophet for humanity declined this merciful and humane option.

Second, Allah permits the enslavement and beheading of Jews, so any Muslim familiar with the background of this verse knows that beheading as such has been assimilated into the Quran. The word q-t-l in verse 26 means slaughter. What is so troubling about the verse is that it seems to celebrate the "terror" that Allah threw into the Jews' hearts. Indeed, when Abu Lubabah the mediator approached the Jews during negotiations, the women and children were crying. Allah gladly terrorized them.

Finally, Allah permits Muhammad to take the Jewish clan's property on the basis of conquest and his possession of all things. This is a dubious revelation and reasoning. Allah speaks, and this benefits Muhammad materially. This happens too often in Muhammad's life.

If anyone is looking for a down-to-earth reason for Muhammad's attack on the Qurayza Jews (instead of "Gabriel's leadership"), then he does not need to look any further than verse 27. The prophet confiscated wealth. After all, the Meccans and their allies withdrew without allowing Muslims to take their wealth. So how was Muhammad going to reward his jihadists? He was following a bad custom of winner-take-all in seventh-century Arabia. It is a pity that

he could not rise above this, as the prophet for all of the world, the last and the best of all the prophets.

For more translations of these verses, the readers may go to three sites: [this one](#) has multiple translations; [this one](#) has three; and this [conservative translation](#) is subsidized by the Saudi royal family.

Defenses of this atrocity

(1) Muhammad was following his culture.

W. M. Watt follows this tact. He writes:

So far were the Muslims who killed them [the Qurayza Jews] from feeling any qualms that one of them, describing the return from the deed, wrote that they returned with the head of their victim "five honorable men, steady and true, and God was with the sixth of us." This is so much in keeping with the spirit of pre-Islamic times that it is almost certainly authentic; but, even if not, it shows the attitude of the early Muslims. (Muhammad at Medina, p. 328)

This is a remarkable statement from Watt. Five Muslims (plus a sixth) returned after the executions, carrying the head of one of the slaughtered victims, and "God was with the sixth of us" (or the sixth Muslim). This represents the attitude of the early Muslims? God was with all of them during the slaughter? The problem with the "he's only following his culture" defense is that Muhammad is no ordinary tribal leader; if he were, specialists in Arab culture might read about this atrocity and move on, concluding that, though a difficulty, it has no lasting impact. However, Muhammad claims universality for his religion. He and his followers after his death waged wars of worldwide conquest to prove this universality. Thus, the stakes are too high to retreat to this "culture" defense today.

(2) Muhammad was following the Law in the Old Testament.

This line of defense seems to say that the Qurayza Jews got what they deserved from their own Scriptures. If so, then this is a completely misguided comment on this atrocity against the Jews. This sectarian [polemicist](#) even quotes Deuteronomy 20:12-14 (see his note 26a. See [this article](#) at a Muslim website that quotes this passage in Deuteronomy and one in Numbers.)

In reply, however, this defense turns everything on its head and misapplies the true Scriptures. This severe command was given to Moses for a specific purpose and for a specific time (c. 1,400 BC) and for a specific place (the holy land). It was never intended to be followed outside of the holy land at a later, vaguer time and for self-serving purposes. Were the Qurayza Jews carrying out this ancient command of Moses in the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century AD so that Muhammad had to take revenge? The corollary opposite is true. Even if we grant the non-Biblical prophet Muhammad credit for understanding the Torah (and that is giving him way too much credit because the Quran is filled with confusion about the Bible), then he was misinterpreting the Law of Moses by waging war at the wrong time, the wrong place, and for self-serving reasons. He is the one who forced Arab polytheists to convert or die; he is the one who said that all Jews and Christians [should be forced out](#) of the Peninsula.

However, to imply that Muhammad was carefully following the Old Law is to assume too much. Here are some areas in the Old Testament that Muhammad disobeys: [adultery](#), and [divorce](#); [this article](#) is a quick overview of other areas. So why should we take seriously this line of defense that says Muhammad was following the Old Testament?

Hence, this defense is yet another example of tribalism at its worst. Because the ancient Hebrews did this 2,000 years before Muhammad lived, he is justified in doing this to the Jews in his day in Medina. All the Jews of all times meld into one species—the same tribe. But this yanks a Biblical text way out of context and anachronistically misapplies it to another era and context. It is best to analyze Muhammad in his own context and set of circumstances. Did the Qurayza Jews really fight against him? No fighting took place, not even between the coalition and the Muslims.

Finally, Muhammad suffers from the distinct disadvantage of living six hundred years after Jesus, who showed us a better way. We compare—implicitly or explicitly—the two founders, and then the two diverge widely from each other. Thus, all reasonable people sense that this wholesale slaughter and enslavement is an unjustifiable atrocity.

For Christians, Jesus fulfills the aspect of warfare in the Old Testament. See [this article](#) on fulfillment and this one on [how Christians benefit](#) from the Old Testament. The geographically limited and time-specific wars in the Old Testament have been explained and contrasted with Islamic wars of world conquest in [this article](#) and [this one](#). [This article](#) replies to Muslim polemics on the topic.

(3) The Jews [broke](#) (in this link find Sura 33) the treaty and [fought](#) against Muhammad.

Let's take the two aspects (breaking the treaty and fighting) one at a time.

The Islamic sources say that the Jews broke the treaty, so let's assume this, only for the sake of argument. Yet the early sources also reveal the specific names of the Jewish leaders who instigated the rupture in the treaty. Why did not Muhammad put only them on trial? Why did he have to exterminate every man and adolescent boy and enslave the women and children? This is tribalism at its worst—and greed for Jewish wealth (Sura 33:27).

As for fighting against Muslims, modern historians, using simple logic and the early sources, agree that the Jews did not march out in battle formation; they never sallied out of their fortresses and killed Muslims en masse or even one of them, so the Jews did not actually fight. In fact, no substantive fighting during the month-long siege took place even between the Quraysh and Ghatafan on the one hand and the Muslims on the other. Moreover, after these allies withdrew from Medina, Muhammad was too strong militarily, for he still had at his disposal 3,000 hardened veterans. This is why the Jews never mounted a vigorous resistance when they were besieged. Finally, the Quran says that the Muslims were spared a battle. Allah says in Sura 33:25 that he turned away the huge coalition. So how was Muhammad really threatened by a Jewish sub-group that was much smaller than the Quraysh and Ghatafan?

Also, as noted briefly, the numbers do not add up for an attack by the Jews after the coalition left. Recall that Ibn Ishaq says that possibly 900 Jewish men and pubescent boys were butchered. Let's grant that number for a moment. On the other side, the sources say that Muhammad had 3,000 men in his army. How could 900 men and boys fight against 3,000 jihadists? Even if we double the number to 1,800 Jewish men and boys, how could they fight

against a large Muslim army that had just withstood a huge coalition of non-Muslim tribes? What about the Medinan Arab tribe, the Aws, who still had alliances, such that they were, with the Jews? The Aws fought for Muhammad; would they now fight against him? No evidence suggests even a hint that the Aws were on the verge of switching sides. The alliances quickly dissolved into thin air. To repeat, Muhammad was never seriously threatened or in real jeopardy from the Jews. If he imagined Gabriel commanding him to fight, then Muhammad was actually adding up these numbers. He correctly concluded that the Jews were isolated and outnumbered and that he could do what he wanted with them.

But Muslim polemicists do not allow this high number for the Jews, for it makes Muhammad's atrocity seem worse, if that is possible. Sectarian Maulana Muhammad Ali [says](#) that the number of Jews was 300 (see note 26a). Paradoxically, and perhaps unwittingly, this commentator makes the prophet of humanity seem worse with this low number. In no way were 300 Jewish men and boys ever a real threat against 3,000 Muslim jihadists. Clearly, expulsion of the Jewish community was the better option, not butchery and enslavement. But Muhammad was unable to collect any spoils from the departed Meccans and their allies, so he looked to the Jews. The women and children became human spoils.

This inconsistency happens too often in Muslim polemics. For example, Muhammad [assassinated](#) individual critics and opponents. To justify this, polemicists argue that he was defending a fragile and fledgling community. On the other hand, other polemicists argue that Islam was a strong and full-fledged State, so it was allowed to protect its "dignity. The key is to choose the contradictory argument that fits the need at the moment.

Finally, to the victor goes the writing of the history books. Muhammad is the one who gets to call the actions of the Jews a break in the treaty. But are they the only ones to blame? When Muhammad moved to Medina in AD 622, three major tribes of Jews thrived in Yathrib (pre-Islamic name of Medina). When he dies of a fever in AD 632, no major group was left, and the number of individual Jews is in dispute. In these ten years Muslim polemicists would have us believe that all conflicts were everyone else's fault. When Muhammad either sent out or went out on seventy-four raids, small assassination hit squads, or full scale wars, he was always acting defensively and hence justly. However, this is absurd on its face, as anyone who knows human nature must conclude. In the complicated give-and-take of many wars and conflicts, it is rarely only one side that is blameless entirely. More to the point, when did the Jews ever slaughter Muslim men and boys and enslave women and children, so that Muhammad would be justified in taking like-for-like revenge on them after the allies left?

Thus, even if we assume that the Jews broke the treaty, and even if we assume—contrary to fact—that the Jews forcefully fought against Muhammad before and after the coalition left, he still did not have to kill every man and every pubescent boy and enslave all the women and children, did he? Could he not have set the example for the world and punish them in a more lenient and humane way?

(4) Sad bin Muadh, the leader of the Aws, made the decision, so Muhammad is blameless.

As already noted, this line of defense is wrong. Muhammad could have called off the trial. Some of the Aws begged him to show mercy, but he turned down this request. Next, he could have told imaginary Gabriel (read: the prophet's calculations) to get lost. Further, passing off the verdict to Sad bin Muadh reveals not only extra-sly political acumen in Muhammad, but also cowardice. He did not want to make this hard decision. Maybe he feared the old alliances

between the Aws and the Jews, but the alliances did not last. The Aws fought for Muhammad, whereas the Jews opposed him. Would the Aws flip-flop so easily? This did not happen in point of fact. Be that as it may, Sad sat next to Muhammad, and when Sad issued the verdict, he made the prophet glad. "O Sad! You have judged amongst them with (or similar to) the judgment of the King Allah." Was there undue influence from Muhammad on Sad who was dying and about to meet Allah?

(5) Put in perspective, the atrocity is no big deal.

Reza Aslan, a young intellectual Iranian, in his book *No god but God* (Random House, 2005), says that the Qurayza tribe amounted to a tiny fraction of Jews in Medina and its environs (p. 94). Therefore, Muhammad's execution of them is not a "genocide" (Aslan's word). His implication is that this act against one tiny tribe of Jews is minor and therefore not extreme, but proportional.

In reply, however, the number of the Jews who remained in Medina is under dispute, but the evidence suggests that there was not one dominant group, though individuals may have been left (Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, pp. 216-17). Next, tribalism ruled in Arab culture (and still does in many places), and Muhammad eliminates an entire tribe. Though not a genocide, it is excessive even for the Jews' "brazen" (Aslan's word) crime. It is simply underhanded to throw in the word "genocide" as if it is supposed to make Muhammad's excessive punishment seem acceptable. Eliminating a tribe? That's no big deal when we compare it to a genocide, so Aslan implies. This kind of confused defense of Muhammad's indefensible actions permeates Muslim literature today.

(6) The West has committed atrocities, so who are Christians to complain?

The answer to this is simple. First, the West and Biblical Christianity are not identical. Second, it is always better to compare a founder (Jesus) of a religion with another founder (Muhammad). And this is where the similarities break down completely. Third, the Medieval Crusaders are not foundational for Christianity. Only Jesus and the New Testament authors are. Fourth, the "West" does not claim divine inspiration, but Muhammad did.

Despite these six defenses, anyone whose mind has not been steeped in a lifetime of devotion to Islam knows that Muhammad's action was factually and objectively excessive, regardless of his culture that he lived in. And excess is never just, as even Allah himself states when he rebukes his favorite prophet for another of his acts of cruelty (see this hadith, [Abu Dawud 4357](#), and [this article](#)). Sadly, though, Allah does not reprimand his favorite prophet, but celebrates the atrocity in Sura 33:25-27.

Conclusion

Muslim polemical and outreach [websites](#) often [assert](#) that Islam [promotes human rights](#). It is impossible to see how they can say this honestly and at the same time appeal to the origins of their religion.

This whitewash is deceitful at best and dangerous at worst, if or when Islam gets a foothold in a region on the pretence of "peace and love." Maybe sleepy Westerners and others will accept this benign version of Islam—in fact too many are, right now. But what happens later when hard-line Muslims (not to mention nonviolent and violent fanatics) cite the numerous brutal

verses in the Quran and passages in the hadith to inflict barbarity on people, especially on Jews?

The evidence in this article alone demonstrates that violence is embedded in original Islam. Even a reliable hadith shows Allah reprimanding Muhammad for another of his cruelties.

It is time for Muslim leaders to renounce violence clearly and specifically, not vaguely: "Yes, we denounce all forms of violence" They must go deeper than this. They must stop denying the dark past, found in the Quran itself and in the example of their prophet. They must, instead, be clear. "We denounce these specific verses and passages in the Quran and hadith that are violent. These specific acts and words happened in the seventh century (and later centuries), and we have moved beyond all of them. We now want peace."

A peaceful presentation of Islam is not full disclosure. It is time to be honest. Only then can interfaith dialogue even begin.

Answering-islam.org has many fine articles on Muhammad's other questionable policies and practices.



About Faithfreedom International:

Faithfreedom International echoes the voice of ex-Muslims who want to stop the spread of Islam, expose its violent nature, and help Muslims to understand it and leave it. We believe in the oneness of humanity and oppose Islam for inciting hatred against non Muslims. Muhammad instructed his follower to conquer the world by the sword and to rule it with terror. We are determined to not let that happen.

FFI was founded by Ali Sina, a Canadian Iranian. In 1994, in his quest to understand Islam better, he read the Quran and it was then that he was shocked to see this book is replete with violence, terror and sheer absurdities.

He realized that Islam was a dangerous cult which not only victimized its adherents but was also a threat to the free world as it could not tolerate free and opposing thoughts.

Sina understood that the cause of the downfall of his country of origin and the Muslim world at large is Islam. Muslims become violent when they are exposed to the teachings of the Quran. Islam seeks to eliminate all religions and thoughts and impose a draconian set of laws invented by a mentally disturbed man of the Seventh Century Arabia.

In 1998 Ali Sina began his personal campaign to reveal to the world the hidden truth about Islam. While at first a solitary voice in the wilderness of the Internet, soon other ex-Muslims joined and more apostates were born to make leaving Islam, the biggest movement of the 21st century.

FFI site www.faithfreedom.org has been visited by millions of people and is one of the leading sites on the Internet educating people about the real Islam and the danger that it poses to the human civilization.

The mission of FFI is to stop the spread of Islam, through knowledge. We believe truth will demolish lies just as light vanquishes darkness.

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