

Ayat-e-Mubahila

Until now, the Christians of Najran (a city in the province of Yemen) had kept themselves aloof. The Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) sent a letter, inviting them to embrace Islam. In response to that letter the Christians counseled among themselves the course of their action and did ultimately send a representative deputation of fourteen members to Medina to study the facts pertaining to the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) and his mission. Three Christian scholars, viz. Abdul Maseeh Aaquib, Saiyed and Abdul Haris, headed the deputation.

When these deputies reached Medina, they changed their clothes, which they had worn on the journey, dressed themselves in silken garments, put rings of gold on their fingers, and went to the mosque to greet the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace). All of them greeted the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) traditionally, but the Apostle of Allah did not respond and turned his face away from them. They left the mosque and approached Osman and Abdul Rahman Ibn Auf, complaining "your Apostle wrote to us and invited us, but when we went to see him and wished him, he neither reciprocated our wishes nor replied to us. Now what do you advise us to do? Should we go back or wait for another opportunity?" Osman and Abdul Rehman could not comprehend the situation. At last they took the deputies to Ali, who advised them to remove the clothes of silk and the rings of gold that they were wearing and to put on their priestly robes. The Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) would then willingly see them. Thereupon the Christian delegates changed into humble garments and presented themselves to the Apostle who then responded to their salutations and said, "By the Lord who has appointed me His Messenger, when they first came to me they were accompanied by Satan".

Thereafter the Apostle preached to them and requested them to accept Islam. They asked, "What is your opinion about Jesus Christ?" The Apostle said, "You may rest today in this city and after being refreshed you will receive the replies to all your questions from me." The Apostle was awaiting a revelation in this matter, and the next day the verses of the Holy Qur'an Sura No.3 (Al-e-Imraan) verses 59-60 were revealed to him to show the true position of Jesus Christ.

Surely the likeness of Jesus is with Allah as the likeness of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him 'Be', and he was. (This is) the truth from your Lord, so be not of the disputers. [b] Quran 3:59-60

When they reappeared before the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), The Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) recited the above verses before the visiting Christians explaining that Christ was a Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) like Adam and like Adam, created from dust and therefore could not be the son of Allah. After this, the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) invited them to embrace Islam. The Christians remained obstinate and refused to be convinced by anything. Thereupon the following verse was revealed:-

In another Ayah of the Holy Quraan, Allah states:

*"Therefore say to those who dispute with you (O dear Prophet) concerning 'Isa after the knowledge has come to you, "Come! Let us summon our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, and ourselves and yourselves - then pray humbly, thereby casting the curse of Allah upon the liars!"*¹

¹ Surah Ale Imran. Surah No:3. Verse:61

Now the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) reproduced the Qura'nic verse before the deputation of the Christians and declared the challenge of 'Mubahala'. The term 'Mubahala' is derived from its Arabic root 'Bahlah' meaning 'curse'. Thus the word 'Mubahala' literally means cursing each other. The Christians consulted each other and ultimately announced their acceptance of the challenge.

However, early next morning, the 24th of Dhul-Hijjah, the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) sent Sayyidina Salman to the selected site, outside the city area, to set up a shelter for those whom he would take with him, as his sons, women and selves.

A large number of companions assembled in the masjid, making themselves available for the selection. On the opposite side of the field, selected for the contest, the Christians, with their selected men, women and children appeared on the scene.

At the appointed hour, a huge crowd, standing in wait, saw the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) coming in, Imam Husain in his arms, Imam Hasan holding his index finger, walking beside him, Sayyida Fatimah, close to his heels and Sayyidina 'Ali just behind her-as his sons, women, and selves. The Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) then directed them to utter "Ameen" when he prayed to Allah (The Exalted).

No sooner had the sacred caravan of the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) appeared to the sight of the opposing group of the Christians of Najran then they were awestruck and spellbound. Abdul Haris Ibne Alqama, the greatest scholar among them, addressed his people:

"Verily I see a divine light on the face of our combatants, I am beholding such faces among them as can make the mountains move from their spots if they pray to Allah. So beware! Never try to contest with them, otherwise you will perish and the entire nation of Christians will succumb to extinction!"

Thereupon the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) reiterated, "By Allah! Had the Christians of Najran contested with us, they would have been transformed into monkeys and pigs. Fire would have rained over them from the sky and they would have been doomed."

When the Christians refrained from 'Mubahala', the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) put before them two alternatives: either to embrace Islam or to be prepared to come to terms. But the Christians would not agree till the matter was finally decided by an offer of treaty from their side. Thus a peace treaty was signed on the terms that the Christians of Najran would thereby be committed to pay the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) an annual tribute consisting of two thousand costumes-worth: forty thousand Dinars, thirty horses, thirty camels, thirty armors and thirty spears.²

Authentic Proofs are quoted below regarding the verse of the Qur'an-Sura 3-verse 61 as given on page 73 Imam Fakhruddin Razi writes in his Tafseer-e-Kabeer (volume 2): "When this verse was revealed to the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), the Christians of Najran accepted the challenge of 'Mubahala' and the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) took along with him Imam Husain, Imam Hasan, Sayyida Fatima and Sayyidina 'Ali to the field of Mubahala'."

² Meraj-un-Nabuwat

To quote Allama Zamakhshari in his Tafseer-e-Kashshaf. “There can be no more authentic and stronger evidence for the honour of Ahlul Kisa, i.e. Sayyidina ‘Ali, Sayyida Fatima, Imam Hasan and Imam Husain than this Qur’anic verse. For in compliance with the order of Allah (The Exalted) the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) summoned his Ahl-ul-Bayt, took Imam Husain in his arms, grasped Imam Hasan’s hand in his own, asked Sayyida Fatima to follow him and Sayyidina ‘Ali to follow her. This proved that the Ahl-ul-Bayt were those to whom the Qur’anic verse was directed.”

It is related by Sayyidina Sa’ad Ibn Waqas that: “When this verse was revealed, the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) sent for Sayyidina ‘Ali, Sayyida Fatima, Imam Hasan and Imam Husain and prayed to Allah thus: “O My Allah! These are the very Ahl-ul-Bayt of mine!”³

According to some versions it is stated that on the morning of 24th Dhulhijj, a large number of people crowded at the door of the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), every one anticipating his chance to be selected for the team of ‘Mubahala’. But when the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) emerged out of his house accompanied by his ‘Ahl-ul-Bayt’. They were all stunned.

Now, the first important point one notices is:

When the event of the mubahila took place, the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) was accompanied by a great number of companions. The companions wanted to go out in a show of numbers and force so that the Christians would be intimidated when they see how many followers the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) of Islam has got with him.

However when they got to a certain point, the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) thanked them all for their support but told them not to step any further, and that only the following people would accompany him:

Imam Hasan and Imam Husain who were only young children at the time, Imam Husain in his arms, and Imam Hasan holding his index finger; Sayyida Fatima walking behind him, and Sayyidina ‘Ali walking behind her.

The companions were in a state of shock. They wanted to know why yet again these members of his family had been singled out.

The Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) explained to them, that from here, they were going to go forward and to invoke Allah that whosoever amongst them is a liar then May Allah’s curse and wrath be upon him. Any liar would come under that curse.

If anyone of them had never told any kind of a lie ever, then they were welcome to step forward, because the curse was going to be on the liar.

What happened? Nobody had the nerve to step forward, which is why the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) took only those who Allah (The Exalted) has guaranteed their purification with the verse of Tatheer⁴ (purification) in Surah 33 Verse 33.

³ Sahih Muslim. Vol: 1. Tirmidhi.

⁴ This will be discussed in the next chapter.

This was a challenge of truth over falsehood. Hence only those individuals could accompany the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) who were singled out under the blanket of the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) as being those to whom the verse of purification applies.

“Had there been any soul on the whole earth better than ‘Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Husain, Allah (The Exalted) would have commanded me to take them along with me to ‘Mubahala’. But as they were superior in dignity and respect to all human beings, Allah (The Exalted) confined His Choice on them only for participation in ‘Mubahala’.”⁵

A very large number of Muslims (and also nonmuslims) witnessed the contest and came to know that Sayyidina ‘Ali, Sayyida Fatima, Imam Hasan and Imam Husain were the “Ahlul Bayt” addressed in verse 33 of Surah Ahzab, known as verse of purification (Tathir).

In this verse, the divine command allows the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) to take with him “sons”, “women” and “selves”; therefore, had there been “women” and “selves” worthy to be selected for this symbolic contest, among his companions, he would certainly have selected them, but as it was seen by one and all, only Sayyida Fatima and Sayyidina ‘Ali and their two sons were chosen, because none of the anxiously waiting companions among whom were the three caliphs and the wives of the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) was truthful or so thoroughly purified as to deserve selection for an event which was divinely decreed in order to also make known the true successors of the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace).

Many Muslim scholars, commentators and traditionists whom the ummah acclaim with one voice, have given the details of this event with following conclusions:

- (1) The seriousness of the occasion demanded absolute purity, physical as well as spiritual, to take part in the fateful event.
- (2) Only the best of Allah’s creation (the Ahl ul Bayt) were selected by the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) under Allah’s guidance.
- (3) It, beyond all doubts, established the purity, the truthfulness and the sublime holiness of the Ahl ul Bayt.
- (4) It also unquestionably confirmed as to who were the members of the family of the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace).

⁵ Tasfeer-e-Baizawi