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Muhammad's Visit to Aṭ-Ṭā'if

There are moments in history which proved decisive in shaping the future of nations and as “the most momentous results may follow most insignificant happenings”, Muhammad's decision to shift his preaching activities first to Aṭ-Ṭā'if and later to Medina after thirteen years of fruitless attempts to establish Islam at Mecca, proved, indeed, to be the most important factor which shaped the Arab history. As for the circumstances which forced him to make that decision, sources say that in the tenth year of his prophetic mission Muhammad faced a new situation resulting from the death of Abū Ṭālib, his aged uncle and protector and his beloved wife, Ḥadīġa, shortly after which “stripped him of his two chief psychological support”. During their life they assisted him in all situations against his opponents at Mecca: Ḥadīġa was *وكانت* and *كان له* *أبو Ṭālib* *له* *وزير صدق على الإسلام يشكو إليها* say the sources ¹, and *أبو Ṭālib* *له* *عضدا وحرزا في أمره ومنعة وناصرأ على قومه*. These sources speak of Abū Ṭālib as Muḥammad's supporter and defender against aggressive Qurašis, who dared to humiliate him only after Abū Ṭālib's death: *فلما مات أبو طالب اجترأ: سفهاء قريش على رسول الله (ﷺ) ونالوا منه*. His family, the Banū Hāšim, were then reluctant or could no more give him the necessary protection especially as his other and hostile uncle, 'Abd al-'Uzza, known more as Abū Lahab, now headed the family. Like 'Abbās, Muḥammad's other uncle, Abū Lahab was a rich Meccan and one of the magnates called *al-mala'* there. Sources are usually not mild with Abū Lahab, who had earlier suffered, though for some time only, with the rest of the Banū Hāšim from the economic and social boycott imposed on them by other clans of Mecca, the so-called *حصار الشعب* and *Aṣ-Ṣahīfa*, that is, the written pledge among all these clans to do so: *يتعاقدون فيه على بني هاشم وبني المطلب على أن لا ينكحوا إليهم ولا ينكحوهم ولا يتعاقدون فيه على بني هاشم وبني المطلب على أن لا ينكحوا إليهم ولا ينكحوهم ولا يتعاقدون منهم* (*Sīra*, I, 350). It is related that, after the death of Abū Ṭālib, Abū Lahab at first took a favourable position towards

¹ Ibn Hišām, *Sīra*, vol. I, p. 416 ; Ibn Kaṭīr, *Al-Bidāya wa-an-nihāya*, pt. III, p. 133; Ibn Kaṭīr reports here some incidents to this effect.

Muḥammad, similar to that of Abū Ṭālib: to protect him against aggressive hostile Qurašis. Ibn Kaḥīr², quoting sources to this effect, says: *فبلغ ذلك أبا لهب فجاءه فقال: يا محمد، امض لما أردت وما كنت صانعا إذ كان أبو طالب حيا فاصنعه. لا واللات والعزى لا يوصل إليك حتى أموت.* This position shortly changed when Muḥammad, so sources say, admitted before him that ‘Abd al-Muṭṭālib, Abū Lahab’s father, was, like other idolaters, a dweller of Hell in the Hereafter. Whether we accept this account or not, Abū Lahab’s hostility to Muḥammad’s preaching goes back even to an earlier stage of the latter’s prophetic mission, possibly through his strong relationship with the Umayyad Abū Sufyān and other Meccan magnates, himself being one of them. When the Revelation ordered Muḥammad to start preaching among the inner circles of his own clan *وانذر عشيرتك الأقربين* (sura 26:214), Abū Lahab was quick to oppose and discourage him and any others to follow him. Hence the verses of the Qur’ān which curse both Abū Lahab and his wife Umm Ḡamīl (sura CXI). It is noteworthy that Umm Ḡamīl, on hearing these verses, considered them, as others then did, a poetry of humiliating satire, went mad with anger, carried a stone, *fīhr*, and looked for Muḥammad to punish him.³ This “satire” provoked even more of Abū Lahab’s hostility to the new religion and Muḥammad, now that Abū Ṭālib was dead, was subjected to unbearable humiliation at the hands of his Meccan opponents, particularly Abū Ḡahl, ‘Amr Ibn Hišām of Banū Maḥzūm, ‘Uqba Ibn Mu‘ayṭ of Banū Umayya and Ubayy Ibn Ḥalaf of Banū Ḡumah among others. Whenever an important Meccan decided to follow Muḥammad, one of these tried, often successfully, to dissuade him: *تضع شرفك وتدع دين آبائك لدين محدث وتصير تابعا؟*—said Al-Ḥakam Ibn Abī al-‘Āṣ to Ḥuwayṭib Ibn ‘Abd al-‘Uzzā when he learned about the latter’s attempt to embrace Islam.⁴

To escape harassment and persecution, a large number of Muḥammad’s followers had already taken refuge in Abyssinia at his recommendation: *لو خرجتم إلى أرض الحبشة فإن بها ملكا لا يظلم عنده أحد وهي أرض صدق حتى يجعل الله لكم فرجا مما أنتم فيه*, said he to his followers, seeing their miserable situation while he was enjoying the protection of his uncle, Abū Ṭālib. He himself had rejected the idea of leaving Mecca as long as his uncle was alive.

² Ibid . But we understand from Abū Nu‘aym’s report (in *Dalā’il an-nubuwwa*, 233) that Abū Lahab soon changed his mind, left the blockaded Ši‘b Abī Ṭālib and joined the hostile party. Another member of the Banū Hāšim who lined with Muḥammad’s opponents and even joined them against him later at the battle of Badr was Abū Sufyān, Muḡīra Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥarīṭ Ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭālib. Abū Lahab died shortly after this battle (*Sīra*, vol. I, p. 647).

³ Abū Nu‘aym, op. cit., p. 150: She said addressing Abū Bakr: *هجانا صاحبك*.

⁴ Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Al-Muntaḥab min Dayl al-muḏayyal*, p. 21.

But now he had become convinced that Mecca was no longer ready to be the home of the new religion and the *umma* he wanted to establish. In these circumstances, he tried in vain to find followers and a non-Qurashi protector among the notable visitors of Mecca and the seasonal fairs, الأسواق, around it to carry out his prophetic message. Muḥammad himself says, addressing one of them: أدعوكم إلى شهادة أن لا إله إلا الله وحده لا شريك له وأني رسول الله. and again with more despair: لا أكره منكم أحدا على شيء. من رضي الذي أدعوه قبله ومن كرهه لم أكرهه. إنما أريد أن تحوزوني مما يراد بي من القتل فتحوزوني حتى أسلم رسالاتي. But none of them would accept him. Then the desperate situation gave him the idea of trying to find this protector at Aṭ-Ṭā'if among the Banū Ṭaqīf, who were known among their neighbours for their sagacity and understanding.

Sources say that after the death of Abū Ṭālib, Muḥammad had no protector among his uncles and clan. So he left for Aṭ-Ṭā'if seeking support there among his maternal uncles, the Banū 'Abd Yālil: فخرج رسول الله (ﷺ) إلى الطائف يلتمس من ثقيف النصرة والمنعة بهم على قومه ورجا أن يقبلوا منه ما جاءهم وذكر أنه According to Aṭ-Ṭabarī nobody accompanied him: به من الله تعالى وخرج إليهم وحده.⁶ It seems that migration to Aṭ-Ṭā'if had already allured him. Some Qur'ānic verses and hadiths point to this. 'Uḡaymī⁷ quotes him as saying: وج على ترعة من ترع الجنة إن وجا مقدس فقدسوه. This and the verses of the Qur'an: وأصحاب اليمين ما أصحاب اليمين؟ في سدر مخضود وطلح منضود (Qur'ān, 56:27ff.) indicate, according to some commentators, that Aṭ-Ṭā'if had always been on his mind. But contrary to his expectations, the position taken by Banū Ṭaqīf there towards him and his preaching proved to be unsurprisingly hostile. This position was determined by several factors mainly the nature of this new *dīn* and the attitude of Qurayš towards it. for "between Mecca and Aṭ-Ṭā'if there was a kind of entente cordiale, an entente cemented by matrimonial alliances", says Lammens.⁸

To begin with, Muḥammad belonged to Banū Hāšim, who were less influential at Aṭ-Ṭā'if than his opponents, Banū Maḥzūm and Banū Umayya, despite the fact that one of his uncles, 'Abbās, was a trader in the Ṭā'ifi raisins needed for the *siqāya* (giving water to pilgrims) during the pilgrimage sea-

⁵ Abū Nu'aym, op. cit., p. 250.

⁶ Ibn Kaṭīr, op. cit., p. 133; Aṭ-Ṭabarī, Annals, vol. I, p. 1199.

⁷ Al-'Uḡaymī, *Ihdā' al-Laṭā'if min aḥbār aṭ-Ṭā'if*, p. 46, Riyad 1973.

⁸ H. Lammens, Ṭā'if, *Encyclopedia of Islam*.

sons, both this and the *rifāda* being in the hands of Banū Hāšim: وَكَانَ عَبْدُ الْمُطَّلِبِ أَوَّلَ مَنْ أَقَامَ الرِّفَادَةَ وَالسَّقَايَةَ لِلْحِجَابِ says al-Mas'ūdī (*Murūğ*, II, 127). Moreover, Banū Hāšim themselves met Muḥammad's preaching with much reserve and only a very limited number of them embraced Islam. Abū Ṭālib himself, though Muḥammad's protector, did not follow him. Another wing of the family headed by Abū Lahab, stood against him while 'Abbās, his other uncle, was almost indifferent to him and his religion. These two were exceptionally rich: Abū Lahab is reported to be one of four Meccans who owned a qintar each, and 'Abbās was a well-known dealer in usury: الْعَبَّاسُ يَدَايِنُ أَهْلَ الطَّائِفِ وَيَقْتَضِي مِنْهُمْ الزَّبِيبَ وَكَانَ. Muḥammad preached an anti-idolatry religion and this naturally raised against him Qurayš, their allies Ṭaqīf, and many other pagan Arabs in the area influenced by Qurayš and their adherence to traditional idolatry.

Ṭaqīf were even more devoted to idolatry than Quraysh, the shrine of the goddess al-Lāt being at Aṭ-Ṭā'if and worshipped by almost all Muḍar.¹⁰ This is clear from the episode of destroying the goddess al-Lāt and its shrine later.¹¹ Another fact was that the majority of the earlier followers of Muḥammad were slaves, proletarians, *ša'ālik* (pl. of *šu'lūk*), and Qurashi and non-Qurashi men of almost insignificant standing at Mecca at a time when social rank was all important. Among these earlier converts were Ḥabbāb, 'Ammār, his father Yāsir, his mother Sumayya, Ṣuhayb, Yasar, Abū Fukayha, Ibn Mas'ūd, Abū Ḍarr, and Bilāl. They were either *ḥalīfs* at Mecca or slaves. Ibn Kaṭīr¹² describes them as *مستضعفون* there and were therefore

⁹ Ibn al-Zubayr, *Aḍ-Ḍaḥā'ir wa-āt-tuḥaf*, p. 201. Abū Nu'aym (op. cit., p. 233) relates that Abū Lahab had left the Ši'b Abi Ṭālib before the blockade was over. Cf. also *Sīra*, I, p. 273 and al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūğ*, II, p. 127. Wāḥidī (*Asbāb an-nuzūl*, 135) says that raisins were used for the siqāya to make the Zamzam water palatable.

¹⁰ Gāḥiẓ (*Al-Ḥayawān*, VII, p. 215) says: وَكَانَ لِتَقِيفٍ بَيْتٌ لَهُ سِدْنَةٌ يَضَاهَتُونُ بِهَا قَرِيْشًا. Its keepers were the Banū Mu'attib of the *aḥlāf*.

¹¹ See Waqidi, *Mağāzī*, p. 972.

¹² Ibn Kaṭīr, op. cit., 102 says: وَكَانَ يَجْلِسُ إِلَيْهِ (مُحَمَّدٌ) الْمُسْتَضْعَفُونَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِهِ خَبَابٍ وَعَمَارٍ... Examining the list (in *Sīra*, I, pp. 321ff.) of those of Muḥammad's followers who fled temporarily to Abyssinia, we find that their majority came from influential Meccan families. Yet they were forced, through ill-treatment or persecution, to leave Mecca. This looks to be the result of deliberate insistence by the influential Meccan chieftains, al-Mala', and agreed upon by almost all heads of the families and clans of Mecca, to uproot the new religion. Almost all Muḥammad's early and prominent followers left for Abyssinia: Abū 'Ubayda of Fihir, Zubayr of Asad, Ṭalḥa of Taym, 'Abd ar-Raḥmān b. 'Awf of Zuhra and 'Utmān of Banū Umayya. None of them, it seems, held a prominent position in his family and all were renounced as *subāt* (صِبَاة). Abū Bakr of Taym, was on his way to Abyssinia when he met Ibn ad-Duḡunna, the *sayyid* of Al-Aḥābiš group who were important allies of Qurayš. Ibn al-

subjected to persecution and torture. Only a few of the leading Meccan merchants accepted Muḥammad's preaching. Hence we hear Al-Walīd Ibn al-Muḡīra of Maḥzūm protesting against the Revelation being made to Muḥammad and not to him or to 'Amr Ibn 'Umayr of Ṭāqīf, both being the magnates of Mecca and Aṭ-Ṭā'if: *أينزل على محمد وأترك وأنا كبير قريش ويترك: أبو مسعود عمرو بن عمير ونحن عظيم القريتين*.¹³ Moreover, the influential Qurashis realised that Muḥammad wanted in fact to establish his family's as well as his own supremacy at Mecca. Banū Maḥzūm in particular, were well-aware of this and knew that Muḥammad's success might bring about an end to their supremacy at Mecca and subordinate them to their rivals, the Banū 'Abd Manaf, Muḥammad's clan. This is clear from the words of Abū Ḡahl, 'Amr Ibn Hišām, who headed the Banū Maḥzūm after the death of al-Walīd Ibn al-Muḡīra: *تنازعنا نحن وبنو عبد مناف الشرف. أطعموا فأطعمنا، وحملوا فحملنا وأعطوا فأعطينا، حتى إذا تجاذينا على الركب وكنا كفرسي رهان قالوا: منا نبي يأتيه الوحي من السماء. فمتى ندرك مثل هذا؟ والله لا نؤمن به أبدا ولا نصدقده*¹⁴ In addition, Qurayš were probably worried about the future of the pilgrimage to Mecca in case of Muḥammad's success to establish his anti-idolatry religion and realised that this would end their political, commercial and other ties with other Arabs and would in the wake of this, destroy their means of livelihood as ensured by pilgrimage to Mecca and their trade in the seasonal markets in and outside the Al-Ḥiḡāz.¹⁵

The financiers of Mecca, *al-murabūn*, were also worried by the attacks by Muḥammad on their class and their means of acquiring wealth.¹⁶ By the end of the sixth century A.D., a considerably large class of bankers and financiers was in existence in the Al-Ḥiḡāz particularly at Mecca, Medina and Aṭ-Ṭā'if. They lent money against a pledge for an interest, *ribā*, which amounted to 200% and even 400% as attested by the Revelation: *يا أيها الذين آمنوا لا*

Duḡunna promised Abū Bakr protection, *ḡiwār*, should he return home. Abū Bakr accepted the offer and returned to Mecca. 'Umar Ibn al-Ḥaṭṭāb was in those days known for his unruliness and irritability (*Sīra*, vol. I, p. 342: *وكان (عمر) رجلا ذا شكيمة*: *لا يرام ما وراء ظهره* and so was his clan, the Banū 'Adī (*Munammaq*, p. 364), and therefore 'Umar averted persecution and was not forced to leave Mecca.

¹³ *Sīra*, vol. I, p. 361.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

¹⁵ Wāḥidī, *op. cit.*, p. 228 relates that one of the Meccan magnates answered Muḥammad's call upon them to follow him saying: *إنا لنعلم أن الذين تقول حق ولكن بمنعنا. من اتبعك أن العرب تخطفنا من أرضنا لاجتماعهم على خلافنا ولا طاقة لنا بهم*.

¹⁶ E.g. Sura LXXXIII, 1-3; LXXXIX, 15-20. See also Bandalī Ḡawzī, *Min tāriḡ al-ḡarakāt al-fikriyya fi 'āl-islām*, Beirut n. d.

تأكلوا الربا اضعافا مضاعفة says the Qur'ān (sūra III, 130). Since the poor had no pledge to offer, it may be assumed that only the wealthy class there dealt in usury among themselves. Threats were frequently made in the Qur'ān and the hadith against this class which shows how dangerous dealing in usury was to the society Muḥammad was trying to create. Consequently, the attitude of the upper and influential class at Mecca towards Muḥammad and his religion was naturally hostile. That of Ṭaqīf could not be otherwise. Both Ṭaqīf and Qurayš were involved in a political alliance, strong matrimonial links, as well as financial and commercial schemes. “Les intérêts matériels ont également cimenté l'union entre les ‘deux grandes cités’ du Higaz”, says Lammens.¹⁷ Financiers of Mecca and Aṭ-Ṭā'if dealt with each other on usury basis. Caravans carrying Ṭā'ifi raisins, wine, tanned animal skins (الأهـب الطائفية المدبوغة), and other items, frequented the Ḥiḡāzi trade routes northward and eastward, shortly to become a target for Muḥammad's military activities after his emigration to Medina. To quote Gibb, “the resistance of the Meccans appears to have been due not so much to their conservatism or even to religious disbelief ... as to political and economic causes. They were afraid of the effects that his preaching might have on their economic prosperity, and especially that his pure monotheism might injure the economic assets of their sanctuaries”.¹⁸ The same might be said of Ṭaqīf. Muḥammad's preaching worried the financial and influential class at Aṭ-Ṭā'if, led by Banū 'Amr Ibn 'Umayr and Ġaylān Ibn Salāma, of Banū Mu'attib, in particular, who was so rich as to employ a treasurer—خازن. The success of Muḥammad could be a blow to the interest of this class.

Furthermore, the majority of the people of Aṭ-Ṭā'if were, in general, in better economic conditions because of the fertility of the region. At Mecca there existed beside the wealthy class, a poor one of small craftsmen, working slaves, and poor *ša'ālik*, who were to some extent reduced to enslavement to the rich, but the social conditions at Aṭ-Ṭā'if were much different. While rich Ṭaqafis were landowners, financiers, or traders accompanying Meccans to Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Yemen, for trade, other Ṭaqafis found livelihood in cultivating their fertile land. Hence we hear Abū Miḡḡan, the famous Ṭaqafi knight and poet boasting:

¹⁷ Lammens H., *La cité arabe de Taïf à la veille de l'Hégire*, p. 226. (in M.F.O.B. VIII, pp. 115-327) Beirut, 1922. Al-Hamdānī in *Ṣifat Ġazīrat al-'Arab*, p. 120, speaks of the famous trade items of Aṭ-Ṭā'if, the tanned animal skins الأهـب الطائفية المدبوغة. See also Waqidī, op. cit., pp. 16, 340.

¹⁸ Gibb, *Muḥammadanism*, p. 26.

sources say that these Meccans were in fact indebted to Banū ‘Amr Ibn ‘Umayr and not vice versa as it is clear, particularly from the books of *tafsīr*, even though some other sources assert that Ṭaqīf were indebted to al-Walīd Ibn al-Muġīra of Maḥzūm. Ibn Ḥaġar says of Mas‘ūd, one of the Banū ‘Amr Ibn ‘Umayr: *وكان له ولاخوته ربا عند بنى المغيرة*²⁴, and Aṭ-Ṭabarī says that Mas‘ūd’s brother ‘Abd Yālīl was one of Ṭaqīf’s astutes who made even Banū Maḥzūm indebted to him through his business acumen. It seems that through financial and commercial dealings Banū ‘Amr Ibn ‘Umayr were associated with Banū Maḥzūm in particular while Banū Mu’attib, the keepers, *sādins*, of the al-Lāt shrine, were associated with the Meccan Banū ‘Abd Manāf, who held at Mecca the task of *siqāya* during the annual pilgrimage. There is no contradiction in these sources, for both Meccans, ‘Abbās and Ḥālid Ibn al-Walīd dealt in usury with the Arabs, presumably with Ṭaqafis other than Banū ‘Amr Ibn ‘Umayr, who were definitely in no need of borrowing money on interest. In addition sources say that Muḥammad first approached the great financiers of Aṭ-Ṭā’if to whom Banū Maḥzūm had been indebted.

It may be suggested instead, that Muḥammad had taken into consideration the differences between the two clans of Ṭaqīf, the Banū Mālīk and the Aḥlāf to whom Banū ‘Amr Ibn ‘Umayr belonged. It could also be possible that he had thought of the hostility of a wing of Banū Malik headed by ‘Abd Allāh Ibn ‘Uṭmān to Qurayš in general²⁵ and to those who had business at Aṭ-Ṭā’if and the region in particular and that this could be advantageous to him. Shortly before Islam, both wings of Ṭaqīf had taken part alongside Hawāzin in the so-called war of al-Fiġar against Qurayš and Kināna²⁶, but soon after, differences re-emerged between them. The Aḥlāf then strengthened their link with Qurayš and Banū Mālīk affiliated themselves with Hawāzin. As remarkable landlords in the region, Banū Mālīk were worried about the gradual, peaceful invasion by wealthy Meccans of the fertile land of the Waġġ valley of Aṭ-Ṭā’if, appropriating parts of it by all means, an issue which caused hostility to Quraysh and was behind the grudges borne by Banū Malik against them. Hence Al-Ġāḥiz’s remark: *وكان بين ثقيف وقريش ... تحاسد وتصاقب*. Ibn

²⁴ *Iṣāba*, No. 7956: Mas‘ūd Ibn ‘Amr Ibn ‘Umayr; Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Tafsīr*, vol. I, p. 322; Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, vol. III, p. 66, and see Wahidī, *Asbāb an-nuzūl*, p. 59.

²⁵ *Sīra*, vol. II, p. 450: *أبعده الله فانه كان يبغض قریشا* said Muḥammad concerning this ‘Abd Allāh Ibn ‘Uṭmān. Al-Ġāḥiz (*Al-Ḥayawān*, vol. VII, p. 215) also accounts for this hostility though ascribing it to other issues such as neighbourhood, matrimonial links, similarity in wealth and mutual trade schemes saying: *وكان بين ثقيف وقريش: لتقرب الدار والمصاهرة والتشابه في الثروة والمشاركة في التجارة تحاسد وتصاقب*.

²⁶ About this war see *Aġānī*, vol. XIX, pp. 160ff; Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihī, *Al-‘Iqd al-farīd*, vol. V, pp. 256 ff.

ان قريشا حين كثرت رغبت في وج وهو وادى الطائف فقالت لثقيف: *Habīb* says: *The Meccan Abū Sufyān once boasted that his landed property extended from the neighbourhood of Mecca to Tiġna, or Tuġna, a hill near Aṭ-Ṭā'if.*²⁷ *نشاركم في الحرم وتشركونا في وج*.²⁸

The fact that Muḥammad approached, though without success, the important men there, the financiers of Aṭ-Ṭā'if, in that visit suggests that he had been deceived by his thoughts about the sagacity of Ṭaqīf and the possibility of their conversion. Although the other wing of the Aḥlāf, viz. Banū Mu'attib, were related to the Meccan Banū 'Abd Manāf, Muḥammad's clan, through a strong matrimonial link²⁹, he did not approach them. This is possibly because they were the sadins of the goddess al-Lat and the guardians of its sanctuary at Aṭ-Ṭā'if and therefore, most unlikely to listen to him. Ibn Sa'd says: *أقام* *في الطائف لا يدع أحدا إلا جاءه وكلمه*³⁰, which indicates that Muḥammad was in bad need for protection, *jiwar*, there, for without a promise of the protection made by one of the notables there he could hardly do anything. When all refused to give him this privilege, he had to leave Aṭ-Ṭā'if without achieving anything. He stayed there for ten days or so, and having achieved nothing important there, left for Mecca. Ibn Sa'd says: *فانصرف محزوناً لم يستجب له رجل ولا امرأة*. The men traditions usually specify as listening to him at Aṭ-Ṭā'if were the sons of 'Amr Ibn 'Umayr: 'Abd Yālīl, Mas'ūd, and Ḥabīb, who were called in the tradition *الكملة*, the perfect, and were then the *ašrāf* of Ṭaqīf. One of them was married to a Qurashi woman from Banū Ğumah. They listened to him but they refused his approach on grounds mentioned in their different answers: "If you are a prophet, then you are greater, *aġallu*, for us than to speak to you" *لئن كنت رسولا من الله كما تقول) ولئن كنت تكذب على الله ما ينبغي لأنت أعظم خطرا من أن أرد عليك الكلام. (لئ أن أكلمك*; "Could not Allah have found any to send as a prophet other than you" *(أما وجد الله أحدا يرسله غيرك؟)*; "Your countrymen have definitely turned you out (of Mecca) because they hated your presence there. Certainly we shall be even more hostile to you". Muḥammad, having been disappointed by

²⁷ *Munammaq*, p. 280.

²⁸ Al-Azraqī, *Tārīḥ Makka*, p. 393 (Leipzig, 1858).

²⁹ Examples of these matrimonial links are reported in many sources, e.g. Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, pp. 9, 65, 105, 459; Ibn Qutayba, *Ma'ārif*, p. 131; Balāḍurī, *Ansāb*, vol. I, p. 441; vol. IV, ii, pp. 125, 149, 169; Ibn Ḥazm, *Ġamhara*, 267, 269; *Aġānī*, vol. XIX, 161; Waqidī, op. cit., pp. 928 and 594: *ألستم الوالد وأنا الولد؟* said the Ṭaqāfi sayyid, 'Urwah Ibn Mas'ūd of the Aḥlaf to Qurayš when he came to their help against Muḥammad at al-Hudaybiyya, signifying these links between Ṭaqīf and Qurayš. His mother was an Umayyad named Subay'a Bint 'Abd Šams.

³⁰ *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 210.

their answers, asked them to keep his approach secret: أما اذا فعلتم ما فعلتم فاكتموا عني and left.³¹ This cold reception could not have discouraged him had he found the necessary covenant of protection. While the financial class of Aṭ-Ṭā'if were not interested in him and his preaching, others who had seen what had happened at Mecca were worried about their own sons and slaves and meant to turn him out in such a miserable state as described in the sources. They encouraged the town rabble to pelt him with stones until he was forced to flee bleeding and shelter himself in an orchard belonging to the Meccan 'Utba and Šayba: أغروا به سفهاءهم وعبيدهم يسبونهم ويصيحون به حتى اجتمع عليه الناس: اللهم إليك أشكو ضعف قوتي وقلة حيلتي وهواني على الناس يا أرحم الراحمين. أنت رب المستضعفين وأنت ربي إلى من تكلني؟ إلى بعيد يتجهمني؟ أم إلى عدو ملكته أمري؟ إن لم يكن بك علي غضب فلا أبالي. ولكن عافيتك هي أوسع لي. أعوذ بنور وجهك الذي أشرقت له الظلمات وصلح عليه أمر الدنيا والآخرة من أن تنزل بي غضبك أو يحل علي سخطك. لك العتيبي حتى ترضى. ولا حول ولا قوة الا بك. The prayer as translated by Alfred Guillaume (*Islam*, pp. 36ff.), says: "O God, I complain to Thee of my weakness and insufficiency and low estate in the sight of men. O most merciful One, Thou art the Lord of the weak and Thou art my Lord. To whom wilt Thou entrust me? To strangers who will look askance at me or to enemies to whom Thou hast given power over me? If Thou art not angry with me I care not; but Thy defence is broader. I take refuge in the light of Thy countenance (at which the very darkness shines and the affairs of this world and the next are justly balanced), lest Thine anger should descend upon me or Thy wrath light upon me. It is for Thee to be satisfied until Thou art pleased. There is no power, no strength but in Thee." Al-Ya'qūbī says: وقعدوا له صفيين فلما مر رسول الله (ﷺ) رجموه بالحجارة حتى أدموا رجله فقال رسول الله (ﷺ): ما كنت أرفع قدما ولا أضعها الا على حجر. His account here differs slightly from that of Abū Nu'aym for example; probably Al-Ya'qūbī, a Shi'ite, seems to be trying to stir our feelings against Ṭāqif, who were responsible for the massacre of many Alids and

³¹ Cf. *Sīra*, vol. I, pp. 419 ff.; Balāḍurī, *Ansāb*, vol. I, p. 237; Abū Nu'aym, op. cit., 308; Ibn Kaṭīr, *al-Bidāya*, III, 135; al-Suhaylī, *ar-Rawḍ al-unūf*, vol. IV, p. 33. aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Annals*, vol. I, p. 1200 says: لما انتهى (النبي ﷺ) إلى الطائف عمد إلى نفر من ثقيف هم يومئذ سارة ثقيف وأشرافهم فجلس إليهم فدعاهم إلى الله وكلمهم بما جاءهم له من نصرتة على الإسلام والقيام معه على من خالفه من قومه which sums up Muḥammad's aims from his unique visit: preaching Islam and looking for a protector so as to go on with his prophetic mission.

Shi'ites later. Muḥammad was once asked to mention the most painful moments he had met, more painful even than what he had encountered at the battle of Uḥud, he replied: *ما لقيت من قومك (فى أحد) كان أشد منه يوم العقبة: اذ عرضت نفسى على ابن عبد ياليل بن كلال فلم يجبنى الى ما أردت فانطلقت³² وأنا مهموم فلم أشعر الا وأنا بقرن الثعالب* possibly referring to what he had suffered at the hands of rabbles of Aṭ-Ṭā'if. Though I am unable to find out in the sources available to me who this Ibn 'Abd Yālil Ibn Kulāl was, it may be assumed that he was associated with that visit. It is related that Muḥammad then met the Ġumaḥi woman mentioned earlier and said to her: *ماذا لقينا* ("You see what a reception I have had from your brothers-in-law!") Sources account of Muḥammad meeting 'Addās, a Christian slave of the afore-mentioned Meccans 'Uṭba and Šayba, while sheltering himself in their orchard and a Thaqaḥi woman named Ruqayqa Bint Wahb, who was a Muslim concealing her faith there.³³ A tribesman visiting Aṭ-Ṭā'if then, also met Muḥammad there and was later glad to speak of that occasion. His name was Ḥālid Ibn Abī Ġabal of 'Adwān and Ibn Ḥaḡar quotes him as saying of the meeting: *فسمعته (i.e. Muḥammad) يقرأ: والسماء والطارق حتى ختمها فوعيتها فى الجاهلية (ثم قرأتها فى الاسلام). فدعتنى تقيف فقالوا: ماذا سمعت من هذا الرجل؟ فقرأتها عليهم. فقال بعض القرشيين (apparently the aforementioned 'Utba and Šayba): نحن أعلم بصاحبنا. لو كنا نعلم ما يقول حقا لاتبعناه*:³⁴ This harsh treatment, however, had no retributory effect on Muḥammad when later Ṭaqīf were pressured into surrender to him and to his religion in 9 A.H.; in fact he, through his magnanimity shown earlier to Qurayš, made their conversion easier by granting them a number of concessions which they appreciated when he was the powerful in the region.

The approach, however, failed and Muḥammad returned to Mecca, which he could not now enter without a solemn assurance of protection from one of its notables, Al-Muṭ'im Ibn 'Adī Ibn Nawfal, a non-Hashimite. Negotiations for his protection when entering Mecca lasted for a few days before they succeeded; for we understand from the sources that the whole journey to Aṭ-Ṭā'if and back to Mecca lasted for about twenty-five days, ten of which were spent at Aṭ-Ṭā'if. Muḥammad finally re-entered Mecca escorted by Al-Muṭ'im's six or seven sons carrying their weapons for his protection.³⁵ His own clan, now headed by Abū Lahab, could not come to his protection since he had broken his con-

³² Abū Nu'aym, op. cit., p. 236.

³³ *Iṣāba*, no. 426: Ruqayqa. 'Addās gave Muḥammad grapes to eat and Ruqayqa gave him porridge: *شرايا من سويق* (a mush made from wheat).

³⁴ Ibid., no. 2152: Ḥālid Ibn Abī Ġabal; Ibn Kaṭīr, *Tafsīr* (of Surah LXXXVI).

³⁵ Ibn Kaṭīr, *Bidāya*, vol. III, p. 135.

ventional tribal ties with them when he left for Aṭ-Ṭā'if. It seems, however, that their protection was shortly resumed for we see his uncle 'Abbās accompanying him while he was looking for converts among the tribal pilgrims outside Mecca.³⁶

The attempt to establish himself at Aṭ-Ṭā'if failed, but he did not give up hope and was sure that the “word of Allāh” (كلمة الله) would finally win. Sources indicate that henceforth, Muḥammad looked for followers among tribal pilgrims during the pilgrimage seasons. Ibn Ishāq relates: فكان (النبي) يعرض نفسه في المواسم على قبائل العرب يدعوهم الى الله ويسألهم أن يصدقوه ويمنعوه فيقول: هل من رجل يحملني الى قومه؟ فان قريشا قدموني أن أبلغ كلام الله عز وجل. His attempt to win new converts and a protector during the seasons had almost been a failure when he was finally fortunate to meet and convert first a group of six, and later in the next year, another of twelve, pilgrims coming from Yaṭrib, whose conversion was a landmark in the history of Islam and who were destined “to change the course of the world's history”.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 138: لا أرى عندك ولا عند أخيك منعة فهل أنت مخرجي الى السوق غدا حتى نقر: said Muḥammad to his uncle al-'Abbās, urging him to accompany him to the different encampments of tribal pilgrims outside Mecca and to protect him while preaching.