

The Treaty of Hudaibiyya.

What is Hudaibiyya?

Hudaibiyya is a small place situated about nine miles from Makka. Part of Hudaibiyya is inside the Haram boundaries and part of it isn't.

In Sīrah literature, Hudaibiyya is the place where a historic treaty was ratified between the non-Muslims of Makka and the Muslims of Madīna, led by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him).

The events happened in the sixth year of Hijrah, in the month of Zūl Qa'da, over a period of 19 or 20 days.¹

The background.

The Muslims were compelled to migrate to Madīna, 300 hundred miles away, but still they were troubled by the Makkans. The battles of Badr, Uhud and Khunduq had already occurred. The Makkans had closed the door on the Muslims entering the city. All the people of Arabia, including idol-worshippers, could come to the Ka'ba for Tawāf, except the deserved Muslims. With regards to this, Allāh said:

‘And why should Allāh not punish them while they stop (men) from al-Masjid al-Harām, though they are not its guardians? None can be its guardians except the pious, but most of them know not.’ (8: 34).

The Muslims in Madīna were anxious to visit Makka again. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) knew this but simply told them to adopt patience. One day, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) informed his Companions that he saw a dream, in which they were all entering the Haram Sharīf. The Companions reacted with great joy, since they knew that the dreams of prophets are truthful and in fact revelation from Allāh. But they faced a dilemma. Would there be a battle with Quraysh and would they be able to enter the Haram thereafter? Or would they be able to enter peacefully?²

¹ *Ziā al-Nabī*. Pīr Muhammad Karam Shāh al-Azharī. 4: 154.

² *Ziā al-Nabī*. Pīr Muhammad Karam Shāh al-Azharī. 4: 128.

The preparations for Umra.

Nevertheless, preparations began. Neighbouring tribes such as Juhayna were also invited to join the Prophet to perform Umra.³ The caravan left on the first of Zūl Qa'da, consisting of between 1400 and 1500 Muslim Companions. 70 camels for sacrificial purposes were brought. The Muslims tied their Ihrām on the outskirts of Madīna, at Zūl Hulaifa. Some tied it at Juhfa. No weaponry was brought, other than the customary, sheathed sword that all Arabs carried.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) was aware that his appearance could result in serious problems in Makka. Therefore, he sent Bishr ibn Sufyān who, at the time, was not a Muslim, from the tribe of Banū Khuzā'a. He told him to travel forward to Makka, to find out what was happening there and whether the Quraysh tribe had any plans.

The Quraysh tribe learned of the Prophet's imminent arrival and reacted with anger and vengeance. They assumed that the Umra was merely an excuse and that the Muslims really wanted to wage war against them. When the Prophet reached Usfān, Bishr returned to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) and told him the plans of the Makkans. They had learned he was coming and had set up a camp on the outskirts of the city, at Zū Tuwā. Here, they had prepared 200 armed men led by Khālid ibn Walīd, only eight miles from Usfān.⁴ The plan was to ambush the Muslims without warning. So the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) held a Shūra (consultation) with his Companions. Abū Bakr (may Allāh be pleased with him) said:

‘Allāh and His Messenger know best. We have merely come for Umra and not to fight. We think that we should proceed to perform Umra. If anyone does stop us from Umra, then we should fight them.’⁵

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) agreed with this opinion. In order to avoid the armed men on the road to Makka, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) decided that they should take a less-known route into the city. They did this and reached Hudaibiyya. By doing so, they avoided the armed men headed by Khālid ibn Walīd.

The Companions set up a camp at Hudaibiyya. All the wells were dry in Hudaibiyya and this would result in serious problems for the Companions. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) took one of his bows and instructed one of the Companions to throw it into it. He did so and, miraculously, the well sprung up water to its brim.

On another occasion, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) performed Wudhū from a small basin of water. The Companions came to him and complained there was not enough water to drink or use for Wudhū purposes. The Prophet placed his blessed fingers in the basin and the water miraculously began to overflow like a fountain. The Companions drank from it and performed Wudhū too. Someone asked; how many were there of you? The reply was ‘fifteen hundred. But even if there were a hundred thousand of us, the water would still have been sufficient.’⁶

³ *Ziā al-Nabī*. Pīr Muhammad Karam Shāh al-Azharī. 4: 129.

⁴ *Ziā al-Nabī*. Pīr Muhammad Karam Shāh al-Azharī. 4: 130.

⁵ *Ziā al-Nabī*. Pīr Muhammad Karam Shāh al-Azharī. 4: 131.

⁶ *Ziā al-Nabī*. Pīr Muhammad Karam Shāh al-Azharī. 4: 155.

The tensions begin.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) was trying to avoid war at all costs. The Makkans saw things differently. During this period in Hudaibiyya, a man called Budayl ibn Waraqa from Banū Khuzā'a came to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) along with a handful of his associates. He wanted to know what the Prophet intended to do in Makka. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) informed him that they merely intended to perform Umra, not to fight or try to conquer the city. There were sacrificial animals with them, he remarked, along with no armed men. Budayl was content from what he saw that the Muslims did not intend to fight at all. When he passed this on to the Makkans, they simply ridiculed him and ignored him.⁷

Other observers were sent too by Quraysh. One person called Hulays, belonging to one of the tribes on the outskirts of Makka, returned back to Quraysh even before speaking to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him). From afar, he saw that the Muslims had their sacrificial animals with them, and so he realised their good intention. Again, Quraysh ignored his advice.⁸

The people of Makka then sent the influential Makkan Urwa ibn Mas'ūd Thaqafī. He spoke calmly at first and suggested that war was of no benefit to both parties. He then said that if war was to begin, the Companions of the Prophet would desert him. Immediately, Abū Bakr (may Allāh be pleased with him) spoke up and reacted angrily. 'How could we ever desert the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him)?' he said.

The discussions were long. Eventually, he too was convinced that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) had the sole intention of performing Umra. Urwa discouraged the Makkans from fighting.⁹ He also gained an opportunity to fully appreciate the love and affection the Companions had for the Messenger. He told the Makkans upon his return.

'I have seen the Khusroe of Persia in the midst of his lavish court; I have seen Caesar in the proud senate of the Roman families; I have seen Negus at the head of his formidable guard of Abyssinian warriors. I swear that I have never met any monarch who holds the same position as Muhammad amongst his Companions. No king commands more respect, love and admiration than Muhammad from his Companions. They would never desert him.'

The Makkans realised the possible repercussions if they didn't allow the Muslims to perform Umra. It was the one of sacred months, when fighting was not permitted. The Muslims were not armed. Word would spread that the people of Quraysh were not the custodians of the Ka'ba, but the owners. This would seriously tarnish their reputation.

Instead of allowing the Muslims to perform Umra, they resorted to deceitful tactics. One night, they sent fifty of their warriors to attack the Muslims' camp by throwing stones and firing arrows, in the hope this would provoke them to attack. The Muslims remained calm. The persecutors were caught and released.

⁷ *Ziā al-Nabī*. Pīr Muhammad Karam Shāh al-Azharī. 4: 135.

⁸ *Ziā al-Nabī*. Pīr Muhammad Karam Shāh al-Azharī. 4: 136.

⁹ *Ziā al-Nabī*. Pīr Muhammad Karam Shāh al-Azharī. 4: 137.

Uthmān sent to Makka.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) approached Umar (may Allāh be pleased with him) and asked whether he was willing to go to Makka and negotiate with the Makkans. Umar (may Allāh be pleased with him) informed the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) that he could not. None of his family members were there who could possibly help him and he felt he would be isolated and attacked. Umar suggested that Uthmān (may Allāh be pleased with him) be sent as a representative. He was respected by the people of Quraysh and his family members still resided there.

Hence, Uthmān (may Allāh be pleased with him) set off to fulfil the wishes of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him). He met the leaders of Quraysh and informed them of the wish of the Muslims to perform Umra, after which they would return to Madīna. The Makkans did not listen. They did suggest that they could possibly return the following year.¹⁰ The conversations went on. The Makkans told Uthmān that the other Companions at Hudaibiyya could not perform Umra, but he, as a guest, would be permitted to perform Tawāf. In reply, Uthmān (may Allāh be pleased with him) said:

ما كنت لافعل حتي يطوف به رسول الله

‘I will not perform Tawāf until the Messenger of Allāh does.’

In other report, Uthmān said that ‘even if I stayed here for a year whilst the Prophet was in Hudaibiyya, I would not perform Tawāf.’ In fact, the Muslims with the Prophet too thought that Uthmān would perform Tawāf alone. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) assured them that Uthmān would not do so.

¹⁰ *Ziā al-Nabī*. Pīr Muhammad Karam Shāh al-Azharī. 4: 139.

The Pledge of Pleasure.

Because of the lengthy discussions, the Muslims were worried about what had happened to Uthmān (may Allāh be pleased with him). Rumours began to spread that he had been killed. The Prophet gathered his Companions and informed them that they would not leave until they took revenge for Uthmān's assassination. Revelation descended upon the Prophet commanding him to take an allegiance of all the Muslims present at Hudaibiyya, that they would fight and would not flee. One by one, all the Muslims shook the hand of the Prophet as a gesture of allegiance. At the end, the Prophet tied both hands together and proclaimed: 'O Allāh! This is from Uthmān! For indeed he has gone to fulfill your command and that of your Messenger's.'¹¹

Allāma Ahmad ibn Zainī Dahlān commented:

و ما ذلك الا انه علم بعدم صحة القول بقتله

'This was not done except because the Prophet knew the rumour (of Uthmān's assassination) was not true.'

Allāh loved this act so much that He revealed the verse:

'Certainly Allāh was pleased with the believers when they sought their allegiance with you under the tree. Allāh knows what is in their hearts and, therefore, He has granted them great victory' (48: 17)

Hence this allegiance became known as Bay'a Ridwān (the Pledge of Pleasure).

The result of this allegiance was magnificent. Firstly, Uthmān (may Allāh be pleased with him) returned to Hudaibiyya soon after this unharmed. Secondly, it demonstrated the amazing strength of the Companions' belief in the Prophet. They had no weapons whatsoever and were small in numbers. Yet, they were all willing to die for Islām.

Thirdly, the allegiance instilled fear in the Makkans and thus they finally cooled down. They realised that the Muslims were strong in their conviction. They began to think rationally about the situation at hand. They decided that they should form a treaty and request the Muslims to return the following year for Umra. So they sent Suhayl ibn Amr to the Prophet for negotiations, commanding him to show a firm hand. When the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) learned that he was coming, he said to his Companions, قد سهل أمركم, 'your matter has become easy.'

¹¹ *Ziā al-Nabī*. Pīr Muhammad Karam Shāh al-Azharī. 4: 143.

The Treaty.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) was willing to accommodate whereas Suhayl showed nothing but staunchness. After heated and lengthy discussions, the treaty was ratified. The treaty was that:

1. Both sides agreed not to fight for ten years.
2. The Muslims must go back to Madīna this year without performing Umra.
3. The Muslims may come the next year and stay in Makka for three days only.
4. The Muslims shall not take back with them the Muslims living in Makka.
5. The Muslims cannot stop any Muslim from choosing to remain in Makka.
6. If a person went to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) from Makka to Madīna, the Prophet would have to return them.
7. If any person went to the Makkans from Madīna, then the Makkans were not obliged to return them.
8. Neighbouring tribes were free to join either party.

When the time came to put the agreement to paper, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) ordered Alī (may Allāh be pleased with him) to write. At the time, he wrote *Bismillāh al-Rahmān al-Rahīm* in full. Suhayl objected and said write باسمك اللهم. He said: I do not know ‘the Merciful’ nor ‘the Compassionate’. Simply write ‘In the Name of God’, like the Arabs do.’ The Prophet agreed. Then Alī wrote:

هذا ما اصطاح عليه محمد رسول الله. ‘This is the treaty formed by Muhammad, the Messenger of Allāh.’ Again, he was told to remove it. He said that if he accepted him as Messenger, there would be no need for the treaty in the first place. The Companions were outraged by the first suggestion to remove *Bismillāh al-Rahmān al-Rahīm*. The second suggestion fuelled them with rage. Alī (may Allāh be pleased with him) himself refused to remove the name of the Prophet out of respect. So the Prophet himself took the pen and removed it himself and in its place wrote ‘Muhammad, son of Abdullāh’.

These affairs were having a profound effect on many of the Muslims. Seemingly, all of the conditions were in favour of the Makkans and none were in favour of the Muslims. Umar (may Allāh be pleased with him) lost his patience and had the following conversation with Abū Bakr.

Umar: O Abū Bakr! Is Muhammad not the truthful Messenger of Allāh?

Abū Bakr: Of course.

Umar: Are we not on the path of truth and they are on the path of falsity? Are our martyrs not in Paradise and their victims in Hell?

Abū Bakr: Of course.

Umar: Then why should we accept disgrace in our religion and return without performing Umra? Why should we give in to the disbelievers?

Abū Bakr: Umar! He undoubtedly is the Messenger of Allāh, and he does not display disobedience to his Lord! Allāh is His assistance. So hold on to his rope until you die! For by Allāh! He is upon the truth and he is the Messenger of Allāh. Remember that I too bear witness that our leader is the Messenger of Allāh.

Umar then presented himself to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) and made similar comments. In reply, the Prophet displayed determination and patience, and simply remarked: ‘I am certainly the Messenger of Allah. And I am not going to disobey him; he is my assistance.’¹²

¹² *Fusūl min al-Sīrah al-Tahlīliyya fī Dhaw al-Kitāb wa-al-Sunna*. Professor Mahmūd Hilāl Hilāl Muhammad al-Sīsī. Al-Azhar University, 1999. p. 119.

Although Umar's frustration was understandable, he felt regret for the rest of his life for these words. He later remarked:

'Out of fear of the words I said that day, I subsequently gave *Sadaqa* continuously, kept fasts and performed prayers, until I became content with Allāh's mercy upon me.'¹³

As the treaty was being concluded, Abū Jandal, the son of Suhayl ibn Amr, appeared, begging for the Prophet to allow him to come to Madīna. He had been tortured constantly by the Makkans since he accepted Islām. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) asked Suhayl to allow him to come to Madīna, but Suhayl cited the treaty as the reason why he couldn't. The Prophet gave Abū Jandal comfort and asked him to adopt patience. He said:

'O Abū Jandal! Have patience and have conviction of your reward from Allāh. Undoubtedly, Allāh shall soon give you and your weak associates a path of salvation. We have ratified a treaty with these people and we do not break our promises.'¹⁴

Umar realised from this episode that the Prophet never broke his promises, even to his enemies.

¹³ *Fusūl min al-Sīrah al-Tahlīliyya fī Dhaw al-Kitāb wa-al-Sunna*. Professor Mahmūd Hilāl Hilāl Muhammad al-Sīsī. Al-Azhar University, 1999. p. 119: *Ziā al-Nabī*. Pīr Muhammad Karam Shāh al-Azharī. 4: 151.

¹⁴ *Fusūl min al-Sīrah al-Tahlīliyya fī Dhaw al-Kitāb wa-al-Sunna*. Professor Mahmūd Hilāl Hilāl Muhammad al-Sīsī. Al-Azhar University, 1999. p. 143: *Ziā al-Nabī*. Pīr Muhammad Karam Shāh al-Azharī. 4: 153.

The ‘Clear Victory’.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) instructed the Companions to remove their Ihrams, shave their heads and sacrifice their animals, and make preparations for the return to Madīna.

Because of their sadness, they were slow to do so. Umm Salma (may Allāh be pleased with her) suggested to the Prophet that he himself should remove his Ihram and then everyone else would follow suit.¹⁵

On their return – when they were twenty-five miles into their journey – Sūrah Fath was revealed to the Prophet. The opening line of this Sūrah is ‘Verily we have granted you a clear victory.’ It was only at this point that the Companions showed joy and happiness over the events that had occurred.

As the treaty stipulated, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) and his Companions returned the next year to perform the Umra.

Lessons from Hudaibiyya.

There is a wealth of benefit that can be derived from this episode from the Prophet’s life. Here are just some of the lessons that we can learn from the story of Hudaibiyya...

a. Human versus divine thought.

Allāh Almighty wanted to clearly differentiate between human thought and divine thought (*al-Fikr al-Basharī* and *al-Nabuwwa*). To all observers, the conditions of the treaty looked unfairly harsh on the Muslims. The Makkans seemingly had the upper hand. Abū Jandal was returned to the Makkans and the Muslims were deprived of performing Umra. But in the end, the treaty of Hudaibiyya became a ‘Fath’ because:

- It led to peace.
- Many Makkans became Muslims owing to the impeccable behaviour of the Companions at Hudaibiyya.
- People recognized Madīna as an independent Islāmic state.
- It directly led to the conquest of Makka later.
- The propagation of Islām became easier and people were entering into Islām openly.

The Prophet had 1400 Muslims with him on the journey to Hudaibiyya. Two years later, on the occasion of the conquest of Makka, he had ten thousand Muslims with him.

- Quraysh themselves asked for article six to be cancelled.¹⁶
- Umar (may Allāh be pleased with him) later admitted: ‘there was no bigger conquest in Islām than the Treaty of Hudaibiyya.’¹⁷ This is precisely the reason why the Qur’an referred to the entire episode of Hudaibiyya as a ‘*Fath Mubīn*’, a clear victory.

In short, sometimes people may dislike something though it is better for them. Only Allah and His Messenger truly understand the wisdom behind something.

¹⁵ *Fusūl min al-Sīrah al-Tahlīliyya fī Dhaw al-Kitāb wa-al-Sunna*. Professor Mahmūd Hilāl Hilāl Muhammad al-Sīsī. Al-Azhar University, 1999. p. 120.

¹⁶ *Muhammad: his life based on the earliest sources*. Lings, M. p. 258.

¹⁷ *Ziā al-Nabī*. Pīr Muhammad Karam Shāh al-Azharī. 4: 159.

b. The importance of Shūra (consultation in Islām).

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) knew what to do as he was inspired by Allāh. But to show its importance and for it to become his Sunna, he held consultation with his Companions.

c. Engaging with non-Muslims is permissible for political purposes.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) used Bishr ibn Sufwān (a non-Muslim) to find out the intentions of the Makkans. However, this does not extend to using them in warfare as mercenaries, as the scholars have clarified.

d. Seeking the Wasīla through the Tabarruk (relics) of the Prophet.

Urwa ibn Mas'ūd saw how the Companions raced to catch the drops of water from the Prophet's body during Wudhū, and even gathered his saliva. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) did not object at all to this practice and therefore it is permissible in Islām. Also, the Companions gathered the blessed hairs of the Prophet after he had his head shaved. Shaykh Mahmūd Hilāl Hilāl Muhammad al-Sīsī (al-Azhar University) concludes from this that (i) there is no faith without love for the Prophet (ii) Tabarruk is not only permissible but preferred.¹⁸

e. The permissibility of creating a truce between Muslims and non-Muslims.

f. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) could read and write.

g. Sometimes, the immediate is worthless and the distant is priceless.

At first, the Makkans truly believed that the treaty was in their favour. In reality, it led to their downfall.

Allah wanted the victory to come not through physical battle, but through peaceful means. Victory is measured by the *Izza* (respect) of Islām and its propagation, not through being the last man standing.

h. The Fiqh rulings derived from the events of Hudaibiyya include:

- The Prophet's Umra during the sacred months (Zūl Qa'da). According to the report of Anas (may Allāh be pleased with him), the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) performed four Umras, three of them during the month of Zūl Qa'da. The other was performed in the month of Zūl Hajj, as part of the Hajj.

- Wearing the Ihrām from the Mīqāt is best, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) wore it at Zūl Hulaifa.

- The Sunna was laid down for what a Muslim should do when he intends to perform Umra, has already put on the Ihrām, but then cannot complete it for some reason. Such a person is called a Muhsar.

We also learn that doing a Qazā for the Umra is not required. This is because the Prophet simply ordered his Companions to shave their heads and sacrifice their animals. He did not inform any of them that they would have to perform a Qazā Umra. The Hanafis however say that the Qazā is necessary.¹⁹

¹⁸ *Fusūl min al-Sīrah al-Tahlīliyya fī Dhaw al-Kitāb wa-al-Sunna*. Professor Mahmūd Hilāl Hilāl Muhammad al-Sīsī. Al-Azhar University, 1999. pp. 148.152.

¹⁹ *Fusūl min al-Sīrah al-Tahlīliyya fī Dhaw al-Kitāb wa-al-Sunna*. Professor Mahmūd Hilāl Hilāl Muhammad al-Sīsī. Al-Azhar University, 1999. p. 155.

i. The Prophet's optimism.

When Suhayl appeared, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) remarked 'your matter has become easy.'

This optimism and indeed his mercy was truly reflected with Suhayl ibn Amr, who later became a Muslim during the Prophet's lifetime. Abū Bakr (may Allāh be pleased with him) said:

'On the occasion of the Farewell Hajj, I happened to see Suhayl ibn Amr. When the Prophet was sacrificing the animals for Qurbānī, it was Suhayl who was bringing the animals to him one by one. When the Prophet had his head shaved, it was Suhayl ibn Amr who was taking his blessed hairs and placing them respectfully on his own eyes. Upon seeing this, I remembered that this was the same Suhayl who only a few years ago would not even allow the Prophet to write 'Bismillāh al-Rahmān al-Rahīm' or 'Muhammad, Messenger of Allāh' on the treaty. I praised Allāh for this, who guided him to Islām.'²⁰

Further Reading.

Ziā al-Nabī. Pīr Muhammad Karam Shāh al-Azharī. Zia al-Quran Publications, Lahore, 1420/1999. Vol. IV, pp. 127-166.

Muhammad: His life based on the earliest sources. Martin Lings. Islamic Texts Society, UK, 1991. pp. 247-258.

M. Lings.

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²⁰ *Fusūl min al-Sīrah al-Tahlīliyya fī Dhaw al-Kitāb wa-al-Sunna*. Professor Mahmūd Hilāl Hilāl Muhammad al-Sīsī. Al-Azhar University, 1999. pp. 132-3.