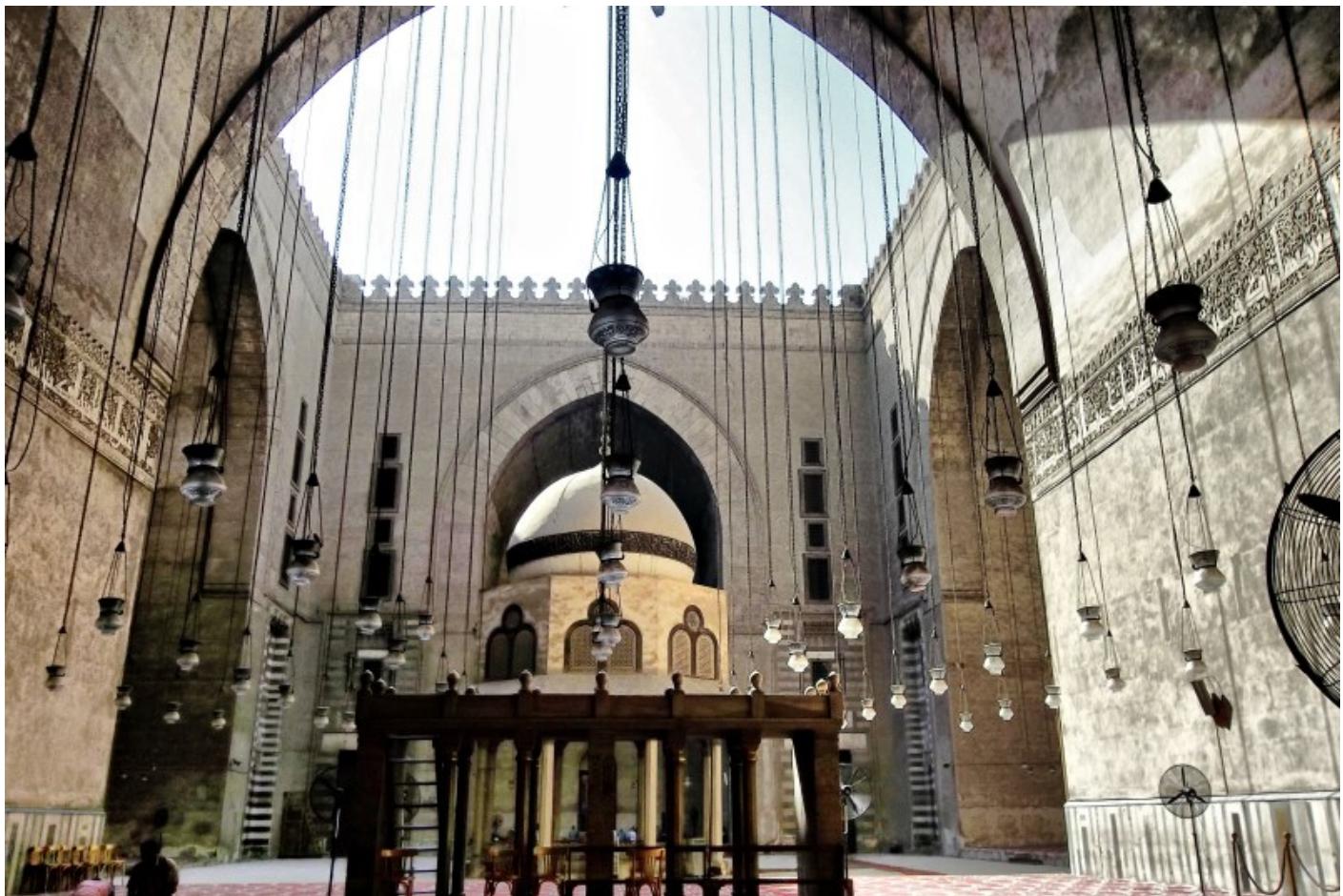


Islam: Legacy of Peace



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Building Common Ground – Prevention of War – Prevention of Hostility – Extending Mercy

Promotion of Peace

Islam indisputably is a religion of spirituality, peace, and tranquility. The word Islam in Arabic means peace, one of the names of God, Allah, is Peace. Many more attributes of God are directly related to peace, The Giver of Peace (al-Mu'min), The Believer, The Just, The Judge, The Merciful, The Gracious, The Beneficent, The Compassionate, The Loving (al Wadood) and The Subtle (al Lateef), all of which are central to the theme of peace, love and compassion. Islam is a haven for social justice and gender equality. Ingrained in its philosophy is the brotherhood of mankind, which enables it to combine civilizations. It considers all Prophets to be brothers of one another and honors their teachings. Islam's philosophy manifesting peace can be recognized through the following verses:

And indeed it (the Holy Qur'an) is a guide and mercy for the believers. Qur'an, 27:77

Seek not mischief in the land, God does not love mischief makers. Qur'an, 28:77

God commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion. Qur'an, 16:90

You who believe! Enter absolutely into peace (Islam). Do not follow the footsteps of Satan. He is an outright enemy of you. Qur'an, 2:208

O humankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know and deal with each other in kindness (not that you may despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of God (is he who is) the most righteous of you, and God is Knower, Aware. Qur'an, 49:13

And when you judge between people, that you judge with justice. Qur'an 4:58

Islam's promotion of peace can also be realized through the social zones listed below:

- The liberation of woman and slaves.
- Assisting the weak and the orphans.
- Relieving the traveler and the helpless.
- Defending the oppressed and those suffering injustice.
- Preserving the human, mind, property, and soul.
- Honoring and dignifying women and motherhood.
- Promoting stronger family ties.
- Enhancing relationships with kith and kin.
- Fostering graciousness and kindness to neighbors and friends.
- Promoting moral characters and ethics.
- Affecting mercy and forgiveness in relationships and dealings.

These qualities and virtues mentioned above are deeply rooted in the fabric of Islam. However, the following discussions are core peace-fostering concepts intended to give the reader an in-depth conceptual sense of why Islam is a peaceful faith.

Building Common Ground

The Tradition (Sunnah) of Building Common Ground

The Sunnah of building common ground and changing enemies into friends is a dynamic political and social practice but a less known sunnah of the Prophet (p). The social customs or culture of certain people, as long as they do not contradict Islamic teaching, can be utilized by a Muslim to serve his or her goal in promoting peace and as a means for building bridges with others.

Prophet Muhammad demonstrated this by utilizing several customs of his community in Arabia. Some of these customs were the building of relations through blood-ties in marriage and social clubs promoting justice.

Building Bridges Through Marital Relations

Creating social bonds through marriage was and still is a very highly respected custom in many Arab and Muslim countries. When a man marries a woman from a clan outside his own, he creates a new social bond between the two tribes, and then the groom becomes honored and protected by the entire tribe of the bride. By the same token, when a woman of honor is married to a person from a different tribe, the groom's entire tribe becomes honored and respected. Prophet Muhammad used this custom in achieving social bonds and fraternity among his people and for correcting what was in the hearts of his opponents.

All of the Prophet's marriages were monogamous until the age of fifty-three and sixty. He was married to his first wife, Khadeejah for twenty-three years until she died during the eighth year after his prophethood. He was twenty-five when he married her. She had been widowed at age forty. When she died, the Prophet was forty-eight. The age difference between them was culturally acceptable at that time. He had been working for Khadeejah for several years before they got married. Her business was in trading between Syria and Mecca. Muhammad's honesty and impeccable character impressed her so much that she sent her friend Nafeesah bent Minyah to him with her request to marry him. In spite of the Arabic

custom that the man asks the woman in marriage, Nafeesah asked Muhammad if he would like to get married. He asked: "Who would the bride be?" She told him: "Khadeejah." His answer was: "yes." After they were married for fifteen years, Muhammad received his prophethood. Khadeejah readily believed in his prophethood and stood by his side until she died. They lived together for twenty-three years and had four daughters and two sons. Both of their sons died in early childhood. He was monogamous until the age of fifty-three, then he married a second wife, 'Aisha.

The Prophet's polygamous marriages took place during the difficult times he had with Quraysh and such marriages were crucial to maintaining social bonds, reducing enmity and increasing security for himself and the Muslims in general. This overview of his first marriage suggests that the repeated marriages were not made to satisfy his sexual desires as claimed by some. His marriages were made during the time where social bonds were in great demand for reducing enmity and to bring about unity. For example, he married Ummu Habeebah, daughter of Abu Sufian who was his worst enemy. What is important to know here is that Ummu Habeebah was in Ethiopia at the time of her husband's death, while Muhammad (p) was in Medina, about one thousand miles away. Ummu Habeebah and her husband, Abdullah ibn Jahsh, had emigrated earlier to Ethiopia escaping the torture of Quraysh. After her husband's death, Muhammad (p) sent a messenger to Ethiopia requesting to marry her. After learning of his daughter's marriage to Muhammad, Abu Sufian said: "**The healthy strong (male) camel is not to be prevented from mating with the she-camel,**" referring to the natural selection in breeding. This language is nowhere near his earlier position that called for the killing of Muhammad. Through this marriage, Muhammad improved his relationship with one of his worst enemies.

Furthermore, a few years later, when the Muslims entered Mecca without bloodshed, Prophet Muhammad announced: "Anyone who enters the house of Abu Sufian is safe." The Prophet was in effect acknowledging the social stature of the leaders of Mecca and that Muslims were not to abuse the family and social structures in place. As a result of Muhammad's wise and compassionate work towards Abu Sufian, he embraced Islam.

Another marital example is the one that took place during the first visit by the Muslims to the Ka'ba, known as Umra. This visit was part of the fulfillment of the peace treaty of Hudaybiyah that the Muslims and Quraysh entered into a year earlier. During the three day visit to Mecca, the Prophet attended several meetings with members of Quraysh for the intention of strengthening their relationship. Among the things he did was to send his uncle al Abbass with a request for marriage from the honorable lady, Maymounah, daughter of the honorable leader, al Harith al Hilali.

The lady was honored by this request and accepted. Even though the Prophet was deploying a peaceful approach in breaking up enmity and building a friendship with Quraysh, their leaders refused to allow the Prophet to wed in Mecca. Therefore, the Prophet selected the town of Sarf, six miles outside of Mecca, for the wedding to take place and invited the Meccans to it. As seen in this example the marriage was, in part, an act in promoting social bondage and soothing relations with Quraysh. This is obvious since most marriages are usually made when people are settled at home and not on the move as was the case with this marriage. Many members of Quraysh attended the marriage ceremony and enjoyed good relationships with the Muslims. The facts behind these marriages are a clear sign demonstrating the Islamic ground in pursuing peace and demoting vehement actions at their roots.

The Alliance of Virtue (Hilf al Fudhool)

In a different social matter and before the coming of Islam, Ibn al 'Atheer, in his book, Al Kamil fi al Tareekh (The Comprehensive in History), reported that several Arabian tribes, amongst them the tribe of Bani Hashim (the Prophet's family tribe), met and formed Hilf al Fudhool, the Alliance of Virtue, to help the oppressed and remove injustice in and around Mecca. After Islam, the Prophet (PBUH) clearly spoke about Hilf al Fudhool and said:

I had witnessed (before Islam), along with my uncles, a meeting of the Alliance of Fudhool in the house of Abdullah bin Jud'an, whom I loved more than the most precious thing, and if I were to be called to join it in Islam, I would join. —Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah

The above example positively demonstrates that if things in common are not available to improve relations, the Sunnah of Muhammad (PBUH) clearly shows that Muslims should create social common bonds in order to build upon as yet non-existent relationships. Moves like this can only serve to provide a broader scope for peace to grow.

Accepting Humiliation to Avoid Catastrophes

Beyond these social Islamic traditions, there are other practices that are instrumental and timely for enduring peace and preventing further crises. One of these Sunan is the practice of accepting humiliation in order to avoid catastrophes. Perpetrators of evil often use superficial and false statements, accusations, and intimidation to bring about their victory and their opponents' defeat. In contrast, deep insight, with proper calculations and consideration, with focus on winning the whole war, not only the battle, is the Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH). Prior to the peace treaty of Hudaybiyah between Muhammad (PBUH) and Quraysh, Prophet Muhammad (PUBH) bravely endured all intimidation and harassment.

Without the treaty of Hudaybiyah, peace would not have been achieved. Islam needs peace to grow and this treaty gave the Muslims the chance they had been deprived of for the past eighteen years. Prior to and during the negotiation of the Hudaybiyah treaty, the Prophet (PBUH) and his companions were intimidated and attacked and Muslim negotiators were imprisoned and harassed. The Prophet's knowledge of the inter-dimensions of Islam did not permit him to react to these intimidations in the same way and lose sight of Islam's ultimate goal in achieving peace.

The treaty of Hudaybiyah, which took place in the sixth year after the Prophet's emigration to Medina, marks the highest achievement of victory for Muslims. In fact, historians report that Surah, al Fat-h, "The Victory," was revealed after this treaty, giving a divine endorsement to this successful step. The treaty gave the Muslims peace and safety from torture and harassment. Subsequent to the treaty and the ritual of Umrah, many Quraysh leaders embraced Islam, including Khalid ibn al Walid, who later was Islam's most successful military leader who liberated Greater Syria from the Romans. Amr ibn Al 'As was another leader from Quraysh who accepted Islam after this treaty and later ruled Egypt. The Hudaybiyah agreement would not have existed if the Prophet (PBUH) had responded to the intimidation his enemies engineered for him. Instead, he practiced humility for the well-being of all.

A side note: if the closely related Sunnah of Absorbing Intimidation and the deep insight of the affairs of people had been considered prior to the United States' attack on Iraq in 1990, a whole nation of Muslims and non-Muslims and all the industry and technology in Iraq could have been saved from devastation. Two million Iraqi children have died from malnutrition as a result of the imposed economic boycott on Iraq that followed the United States attack.

Prevention of War

The Tradition of Prevention of War and Catastrophe

History testifies that Muslims throughout have never entered into a war for the purpose of forcing others to embrace Islam. Having someone believe in a faith by force is incompatible with the spirit of the faith. War and violence in Islam are not considered something holy. As stated earlier, Islam's philosophy is based on establishing peace and preventing violence. Following are additional Qur'anic texts in support of this philosophy:

If it had been the Lord's Will, they would all have believed, all who are on the earth: will you then (Muhammad) compel mankind, against their will, to believe? Qur'an, 10: 99
Let there be no compulsion in religion, truth stands out clear from error. Qur'an, 2: 256
If anyone kills a person, it would be as if he killed the whole people, and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the whole people. Qur'an, 5:32
You who believe! Enter absolutely into peace (islam). Do not follow the footsteps of Satan. He is an outright enemy of you. Qur'an, 2:208

Even when war is taking place, Islam's policy is to seek peace and take the opportunity to stop it. Allah said:

But if they (the enemy) incline towards peace, do you (also) incline towards peace. Qur'an, 8:61

Islam could not have been spread by the sword and Jihad cannot be interpreted as "Holy War." Jihad is an Arabic word that simply means to strive, even for self-defense. The term "Holy War" is a coined term resulting from the Crusaders' war that embodies the connotation of sacred attacks.

While the above traits of fraternity and kindness were set to work on the infrastructure of the people to allow the course of brotherhood and peace to foster, the Prophet was actually translating the Islamic belief of preserving souls by avoiding several major incidents where a major bloodshed was imminent. For example, during the fifth year after the Prophet's emigration to Medina, and on his way to visit the Ka'ba with his one thousand and four hundred people, Quraysh sent fifty horsemen to prevent the Muslims from entering Mecca. The horsemen closed the main route of the pilgrims and waited ready to attack the Muslims as they approached. Even though the Muslims were greater in numbers and could have attained an easy victory, the Prophet did not choose to fight. Instead, he took a different route through a narrow rocky canyon that was extremely difficult to cross.

Avoiding an imminent clash such as this, despite the high possibility of their victory, the Muslims were indeed proving their ground belief that victory is not based on bloodshed and wars, but on conviction and belief. The Prophet's vision in avoiding such bloodshed was that he wanted those same people who were opposing him to become carriers of knowledge and guidance to the rest of the world. The Prophet's vision indeed had come true. All fifty horsemen including their leader, Khalid ibn al Walid embraced Islam and played a major role in carrying the knowledge of the Qur'an and the wisdom to the rest of the world.

After the Muslims passed through the rocky canyon and arrived at the outskirts of Mecca, they camped at a place called Hudaybiyah to avoid bloodshed by entering Mecca. During their stay, the Muslims negotiated the peace treaty of Hudaybiyah with Quraysh. Before and during the negotiation of the peace treaty, Quraysh engaged in more harassment to intimidate the Muslims to fight, but the Prophet was bigger than being intimidated and or sidetracked from his goal. The treaty of Hudaybiyah was one of the fruits of the Sunnah of avoiding violence.

In another example, the Prophet (PBUH) sent Abdullah ibn Unais after Sufian al Huthaly who was building up to wage war against the Muslims in Medina. When Ibn Unais found Sufian al Huthaly, he pretended to be a man of the tribe of Khuza'ah joining him in order to attack the Prophet (PBUH). After dark, Abdullah ibn Unais killed Sufian al Huthaly and returned to the Prophet (PBUH). As a result of this action, the process of building the army was stopped and no war was initiated. By this course, many human lives were saved and the fire that was going to turn into a major war was extinguished at its inception before it flared out of control. There is more wisdom in this action of the Prophet (PUBH) than simply avoiding a major war. This action destroyed the danger from its source of control and strength. When the snake's head is dismantled, the danger from the rest of the body dies off. Much more Sunan in promoting peace and preventing violence will surface when the life of the Prophet (PBUH) is studied and analyzed in greater depth. Today, these Sunan must be practiced before Islam can be appreciated as it was before.

Prevention of Hostility

The Sunnah of Preventing Hostility This section is a short narration of the historical events in chronological order to give the reader perspective on the trend of brutality that Quraysh pursued against the Muslims and how the Muslims had minimized and prevented Quraysh's hostilities.

Execution and Torture From the inception of Islam, Muslims were in a state of self-defense against torture and attacks of the Pagans. During the first few years of the rise of Islam, the leaders of Quraysh had exposed Muslims to severe torture. Three believers (Yaser ibn Amaar, Sumayah, and Thawbiyah) died as a result, while others narrowly escaped. Others were divorced, losing the protection and love of their husbands and some lost their sight as a result of abuse. In their efforts to save Muslims from torture and death, the Prophet and his companions had to purchase and free servants being abused and tormented by their masters, thus preserving the human soul and preventing further hostility and cruelty.

Reading Silently in the Prayer to Minimize Hostility In order to minimize violence and reduce bloodshed, the Prophet reached out, da'wah, secretly. He and his companions met in the house of Arqam, one of his other companions, to perform prayers and to conduct business. Furthermore, the Prophet asked his companions not to openly proclaim their faith while amongst Quraysh and during the course of the day they should conduct their prayers silently but during the evening and early morning their prayers could be read aloud. Evening and early morning prayers were mainly performed in privacy or at home where hostility was less likely to happen. As a sign of the significance of this step to reduce hostility, this circumstantial act of silencing the daytime prayers has become a permanent part of Muslim's noon and afternoon formal Prayers. This simple, but significant undertaking is a solid proof and permanent mark of Islam's policy of pursuing peace and preventing vehement actions.

The Muslims Migration to Abyssinia: A Step in Reducing Violence When the means for saving the Muslims from death and torture were exhausted, the Prophet drew up a plan for his companions to

migrate to Abyssinia where they could be under the protection of its just Christian King, Negus. As many as 15 families migrated to Abyssinia that year escaping the brutality of Quraysh. The emigrants left behind their loved ones, belongings, and homes in order to reduce violence. For more information on Christian/Muslim alliance, click on “[Muslims alliance with Christians and Jews](#).”

The Boycott

During the eighth year of the first revelation, Quraysh imposed a boycott on the Prophet and his family and forced them to move out of Mecca to an arid and dry valley known as the Abu-Talib Valley. The boycott went on for twenty-eight long months and was in both social and economic aspects of their lives. No member of Quraysh could deal, trade, buy, sell, or socialize with the Prophet's family. The boycott took its toll on him and his family.

As a result, they had to eat grass, insects, and roots of shrubbery. Some of them could not withstand the hardship and fell ill. Shortly after the boycott was removed, the Prophet's wife Khadeejah died and shortly after her, his Uncle Abu Talib died as well. Their deaths were directly related to the long years of malnutrition and hardship conditions in exile.

The Visit of the Christian Delegation and the Removal of the BoycottIt is worthy to mention here the good relations between Christians and Muslims during the time of the Prophet. Many Muslims, and perhaps Christians, do not know that there were several instances of cooperation amongst one another in the early days of Islam. The visit of a Christian delegation to the Prophet in his exile is one of those instances. Some believe that this visit may have triggered the lifting of the boycott.

In coordination with Ja'ffar ibn Abi Talib, the cousin of the Prophet, King Negus of Abyssinia sent a Christian/Muslim delegation of thirty-three people to visit and investigate the condition of the Muslims and the ill-treatment they were receiving from Quraysh. During the visit, the Prophet recited verses from the Holy Qur'an to the Christians, who were overwhelmed with Qur'anic verses and the wisdom of the Prophet. In Mecca, Quraysh leaders insulted the Christian delegation for showing sympathy to the Prophet and his family. The delegation abstained from returning Quraysh's insult and for this occasion, Allah revealed these verses in Surah 28, Verses 52-55, which state:

Those to whom We sent the Book before this, they do believe in this (Revelation); and when it is recited to them, they say: We believe therein, for it is the truth from our Lord: Indeed we have been Muslims (bowing to God's Will) from before this. Twice will they be given their rewards, for that they have preserved, that they avert evil with Good, and that they spend in charity out of what We have given them. And when they hear vain talk, they turn away therefrom and say: To us our deeds, and to you yours.

Although Quraysh showed anger towards the delegation on the outside, the act of a foreign investigation into their internal affairs and exposing their inhumane treatment to their own people was a concern for several tribal leaders that may have led to the removal of the siege. Moved either by the fear of an intervention of a foreign power or by the awakening of their conscience regarding the inhumane acts they applied to the Prophet and his family, Quraysh tribal leaders, Hisham bin Amr, Zuhair bin Umayah, Mut'rim ibn 'Addi, and Buhtury ibn Hisham agreed amongst themselves to “stop the fool act of the boycott” and planned to call the rest of Quraysh leaders into a public meeting at the Ka'ba for the purpose of ending the banishment.

The meeting was a success and the removal of the boycott was achieved. Some believe that it was the visit of the Christian delegation that triggered the meeting and led to the removal of the siege. The visit to Prophet Muhammad during the time in exile and its possible results on changing the behavior of Quraysh regarding the siege was indeed an example of genuine faith

The Muslims Migration to Yathrib (Medina): A Step in Reducing Violence

After the boycott was lifted, Quraysh leaders increased their harsh treatment towards the Muslims and showed no sign of relief. In the ninth year after his prophethood began, Muhammad devised a plan for all the Muslims to emigrate to Medina. In the following several years over eighty-five migrating Muslims left behind their families, loved ones, homes, and their belongings. In Medina Muslims and Jews entered into an agreement to defend their city against the Pagan Quraysh. For the full story on the Muslim/Jewish cooperation see our article, “[The Prophet Muhammad and the Jews](#)”

Three Major Battles

After the Muslims emigrated to Medina, Quraysh did not stop its aggression but extended it to their new city in the form of formal war. All three major battles, Badr, Uhud and the Ditch that took place after the Muslims emigrated to Medina, were initiated by Quraysh intending to attack and finish off the Muslims. In all these three battles, Muslim's actions were purely defensive and with each engagement the Muslims attempted to prevent the clash. In the case of the battle of Badr, which took place one year after the emigration of the Prophet, the Muslims had not been prepared or equipped to fight a battle. Instead, they intercepted a merchant caravan belonging to Quraysh (treating them, in the same manner, they had been treating them for the last nineteen years.)

The caravan, however, escaped but the one thousand Quraysh fighters who came to rescue them insisted on fighting the three hundred unequipped Muslims at the wells of Badr. Quraysh's head leader, Abu Jahl refused the requests of his own people not to engage with the Muslims. Furthermore, when the battle turned out in favor of the Muslims (70 dead from Quraysh, 14 from the Muslims), Quraysh prepared another army to attack the Muslims and seek revenge for its dead the following year. This was the battle of Uhud that took place near Medina.

Even though the battle of Uhud was in favor of Quraysh (Muslims' dead 70, Quraysh's dead 45), Quraysh prepared another army to attack the Muslims a year later. However, the Muslims were successful in preventing the battle, known as the battle of the Ditch, from taking place. Quraysh had prepared ten thousand people to attack the Muslims in their city. In order to fail their attempt and prevent bloodshed, the Muslims dug a huge ditch around Medina thereby making it impossible for Quraysh to cross it and attack. After forty days of continuous attempts to clash with the Muslims, Quraysh gave up and returned home without a fight. During the forty days, the Muslims overcame the plots Quraysh made against them and ignored all the intimidation in which Quraysh publicly challenged the Muslims to engage in war. The Muslims, however, took humiliation and intimidations to preserve their noble cause of saving souls and preventing wars

Quraysh Conspire Against the Muslims

During the fourth year after the Prophet's emigration to Medina, Quraysh conspired with the tribe of Uthal (one of the tribes neighboring Medina) against the Muslims and killed six of them. This is known as the Day of Rajee'h. Several members of Uthal came to the Prophet and requested that he send with them some of his companions to help teach Islam. On their way to the Uthal tribe, at the water wells of Rajee'h, many people from Uthal attacked the Muslims, killing four and capturing the other two. Later, the captured Muslims, Khubabe ibn Addi and Zayd ibn al Muthanna were given to Quraysh who imprisoned them first and then crucified them.

Other Attacks on the Muslims A few months after the Day of Rajee'h, sixty-eight companions of the Prophet were killed at a place called Bi'r Mu'nah. Historians reported that Aamer ibn Malik, a respected leader from the tribe of Aamer in Najd of the Arabian Peninsula came to Medina and visited with the Prophet who introduced Islam to him. Aamer suggested to the Prophet to return back to his people along with Muslims as teachers to get his people to take up Islam. Upon Aamer ibn Malik's request, the Prophet wrote a letter to Aamer ibn Thufail, the head leader of the tribe and sent it along with a group of seventy-one people, known as the Reciters of the Qur'an, as teachers to Najd.

In Najd, the Muslims camped at a place called Bi'r Mu'nah. There the Muslims sent Heram ibn Milhan to Aamer ibn Thufail with a letter from the Prophet. Aamer ibn Thufail read the letter and was angered. He killed the emissary and called on his tribe to attack the Muslims in their camp. However, his tribe refused his orders because of Aamer ibn Malik's promise to the Prophet to protect his companions. This refusal, however, did not stop Aamer ibn Thufail from calling on several of the local tribes to get together, surround and finish the Muslims in their camp. All the Muslims in the camp were killed, except two, one was wounded and thought to be dead and the other was away from the camp at the time of the attack. The Prophet and the Muslims were extremely sad for losing many of their reciters and teachers. This massacre was another example of brutality Muslims endured.

Extending Mercy

The Sunnah of Extending Mercy to Disbelievers

The Holy Qur'an commands Muslims to be merciful to people, animals, and even enemies.

The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree): but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from God, for (God) loves not those who do wrong.

Qur'an, 42:40

And not equal are the good deed and the bad. Repel (evil) by that (deed) which is better; and thereupon, the one whom between you and him is enmity (will become) as though he was a devoted friend. Qur'an, 41:34

Prophet Muhammad said:

He who is not merciful to others, Allah will not be merciful to him. Bukhari and Muslim

The seventh year after his emigration to Medina, Muhammad returned to his birth city, Mecca, with ten thousand people. He entered without any bloodshed. He told its people with his famous words: "Go about (wherever you please), for you are set free." Here the Prophet (PBUH) did not look back at the twenty years of harsh relations with Quraysh. He simply forgave them and let them go. This is indeed a true picture of the essence of Islam—mercy and forgiveness, no arrogance or intolerance, preservation of the human soul, and fraternity for all under God. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

But pardon them and overlook (their misdeeds). Indeed, Allah loves the doers of good. Qur'an, 5:13

There are many other instances during the rising of Islam of Prophet Muhammad's generosity and mercy that he spread upon his opponents. When Prophet Muhammad was extremely tired from the rejection of his people in Mecca, he went to Ta'iff (150 kilometers southwest of Mecca) calling its people to worship God. There he was turned down by its three leaders. The first leader, Abd Yaleel told him: "If God sent you, I will tear down the hangings of the Ka'ba." The second leader, Masoud ibn Amr said to him: "Could God find not but you to send?" As for the third leader, Habeeb ibn Amr who learned the news of the other two totally refused to meet with the Prophet but sent his servant with this message: "I do not need to speak to you. For if you are a messenger from God as you claim, then you are too great of a person for me to address and if you are a liar, it is not befitting for me to speak to you."

Despite the denial and humiliation, the Prophet returned back to the leaders of Ta'iff requesting that they allow him to teach their people, they refused. Then he requested that he stay amongst them and under their protection without returning to Mecca. His request was again turned down. Then he asked them to conceal his news of rejection from the people of Mecca; their answer was still in denial. Instead, they insisted on delivering the bad news to Mecca. When his means were exhausted, he had to leave heartbroken. As he was leaving town, the same leaders who turned him down stirred up their servants and children to insult him and throw rocks and stones at him. As a result, he was cut in his head and body and bled severely until his shoes were saturated with blood. As he reached the outskirts of Ta'iff, inconsolable, he made this prayer:

O my God, unto You I complain of my weakness, of my helplessness, and of my lowliness before men. O Most Merciful of the merciful, You are Lord of the weak. And You are my Lord. Into whose hands will You entrust me? Unto some far off stranger who will ill-treat me? Or unto a foe whom You have empowered against me? I care not if Your wrath is not on me...

Upon this, the Angel of Mountains came to Prophet Muhammad asking his permission to close the two mountains on the people of Ta'iff but despite his deepest wound of rejection, the compassionate Muhammad replied:

No, God may bring from their offspring people who would testify to the oneness of God and worship Him. -Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah

This story of the Prophet with the people of Ta'iff proves the Prophet's zeal and love of peace that indeed overpowered his anger and wounds. His soft heart refused the request to punish the people who severely rejected him, anticipating that one day in the future they or their offspring may come to realize the truth. His vision was so true. All the people of this city later embraced Islam. This is the vision of Islam in promoting its cause for peace, not barbarity. Confirming this God said:

And We have not sent you (O Muhammad), but as a mercy to the worlds. Qur'an, 21:107

But if you pardon and overlook and forgive – then indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful. Qur'an,
64:14

It is with hope that this in-depth look at some historical events interpreted in the light of the existing culture, during the rise of Islam, and the illustration of some aspects of Islam concerning aggression and harmony, help to see a clearer picture of some of the mechanisms of Islam in achieving its ultimate goal– peace.