A REFLECTION ON THE NARRATIVE OF THE KILLING OF THE JEWS OF BANU QURAYZA IN THE SPURCES OF HISTORY AND EXEGESIS

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Abstract: The Banu Qurayza tribe was one of the Jewish tribes living around Medina who conspired many times and together with the polytheists in the battles of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) fought the Muslims, and eventually, some of them were destroyed and others were forced to migrate from that land. The Qur'an tells the story of this group in Sura al-Ahzab in a short and transient manner and passes by it in a simple way, while a lot on this subject has been discussed among the orientalists and some contemporary writers who consider this incident as an example of the Prophet's warlike nature and rigorousness. This story has exaggeratedly found its way in historical narrations and in the interpretation of the Qur'an and such things have been said which are neither

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rational nor supported by historical evidences nor compatible with the holy Prophet's character and requires serious investigation. In this article, by focusing on the report of the Qur'an, we make an attempt to examine a few points: Firstly, to determine how this incident occurred, secondly, how the interpreters have described this story, and thirdly, what justifications they have expressed for their slaughter and killings and how they have interpreted the corresponding verse. Naturally, one of the most important issues in this story is the number of people killed, and explaining the verse can help enlighten the incident. Also, the conflict between hadiths and other hassles of historical narration bespeaks that this incident was not as it became famous, and instead of surrendering, it was a massacre on the battlefield.

Keywords: Banu Qurayza / Jews of Medina / The conquests of the Prophet/ Virtues of the Prophet/ Harshness/ Wars of the Prophet.

Introduction:

One of the controversial and questionable verses concerning its content and cause of revelation and related events is verse 26 of *Sura al-Ahzab*, which concerns the story of Banu Qurayza and the killing of its tribesmen and the capture of their families. Among the 27 battles of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.), this incident is an exceptional and historical case among the contemporaries, both in terms of dimensions of the incident and in terms of analyses and doubts surrounding it by the orientalists and some contemporary writers such as Ali Dashti in the book "23 years old" and the response of exegetes and historians.

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Exegetes and scholars who have addressed this issue are divided into several groups: a group has accepted this incident with all its features and justified and analyzed it, which is marked for this discussion (Refer to Tabatabai, 16/436; Taiyeb, 10/495, Sobhani 2, Ayati 413). Due to its doubts and drawbacks, a group has doubted and strongly rejected the historical extracts of this story (Refer to: Shahidi, 95; Adak, 172). And a group, though in some cases defended this historical incident and considered the report to be widely transmitted, but acknowledged that the killing of Banu Qurayza is an exceptional narration and unprecedented in the early history of Islam, and that some of what has been said is to enhance the courage, zeal and resistance of the Jews against the harshness of Muslims. These hadiths are similar to some of the specimens come down in Muslim sources quoted by Muslim converted Jews. (Jafar Morteza, 11/197; Sadeghi, 178).

Accordingly, this article while reflecting the views and arguments, tries to show an approach that maximizes on the Qur'an and believes that these narrations cannot be trusted and relied upon due to the unconformity and silliness of some of its reports, and basically the subject of the Battle of Banu Qurayza was not surrender and killing, and this verse speaks of the conflict between Muslims and this tribe, which ultimately, some among them were killed and some were captured, and those narrations have been made up by people with specific aims.

Examining the verse

To understand this story, at the beginning, we go to the verse and its interpretation to clarify the fact in

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terms of the most documented historical source of Muslims, and then we refer to the cause of revelation of this verse and its historical narrations. Thereafter, certain doubts and uncertainties would be raised, and finally, we will address the historical points and its flaws.

و أنزل الذين ظاهروهم من أهل الكتاب من صياصيهم و قذف في قلوبهم الرعب فريق تقتلون و تأسرون فريقه (احزاب/٢٩)

And He drove down those of the followers of the Book from their strongholds who backed them and He cast fear into their hearts; some you killed and you took captive another part.

Interpretation

These few sentences are a summary of the whole story and the consequence of the Battle of Banu Qurayza with all the controversy surrounding it, and showing why and how a group of these traitors were killed by the Muslims and a group was taken captive.

و أورتكم أرضهم و ديارهم و أموالهم و أرضا لم تطؤها و كان الله على كل شيء قديره (احزاب /٢٧)

And He made you heirs of their lands, their houses, and their goods, and of a land which ye had not frequented (before). And Allah has power over all things.

The meaning of the verse is: "*And He i.e., God drove down those*" who helped the polytheists against the Muslims, namely Banu Qurayza, who were from *"the People of the Book"* (the Jews) from the top of "*their strongholds*", that is, they were driven down from the high places where they lived (fortresses and houses), Tabatabai, 16/436). Or it's a sarcastic remark in the sense that they were

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dragged down from the lofty rank and position and the dignity they held before the people of Medina and implies both meanings in a complementary manner: dragging down, taking down and pulling them out of their homes and strongholds and humiliating them.

Interestingly, like many cases and appropriate to the style of Qur'anic expression, it does not mention the name of this group and refers to them by the name of “those” (الذين) and because they are not polytheists since they helped the polytheists, so they should be from the rest of the People of the Book residing in Medina. Besides, they are not from Banu Nazir and Banu Mustalaq, who had migrated before, so they should be the tribe of Banu Qurayza.[1]

ظاهروهم المظاهره : It means deputizing and providing assistance and increasing the force with the help of another; as he has become a deputy and supporter for his comrade in his defense (Tabarsi, 20/81). In another interpretation: الذين ظاهروهم و ناصروهم عليكم" those who helped the parties (*Ahzab*) from the Jews of Banu Qurayza".

In this sentence, there are two possibilities: one is to take "ظاهروهم" as the whole of Banu Qurayza and consider " فريقا تقتلون" as a group of their men and تأمرون فريقا as their women. Another interpretation is to consider "ظاهروهم" as mere traitors who stood up against the Muslims. In any case, it is certain that not all of this tribe were killed and not all of them were taken captives.

الصياصى: is the plural of " صيصيه" meaning solid castles. Of course, this word has also found a general meaning and is also referred to as any defensive device such as towers and fortifications. Previously, it referred to

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the ox horn and tentacles used in the foot of the rooster to defend itself because it is a means of self-defense (Ibid., 82). Since their fortress was often spoken of in Medina, hence the reason for this interpretation and emphasize.

That is, after the migration of the army of the parties (*Ahzab*) and their departure from Medina,

أنزل الله - تعالى – : "The Almighty God, by Divine Power, drove down those…."

"و قذف في قلوبهم الرعب " and *He cast "fear in their hearts"*. In this sentence, reference is made to a grave fear in their hearts (victory via fear) because of the treachery they had committed, which the Prophet (s.a.w.a.), as the Prophet of mercy used to prevent bloodshed, and this method was abundantly used instead of force, battle and killing. And this itself caused them to surrender early and leave their strong positions, and not that all were killed and all were taken captives; and this was the way for them to stop resisting a lot and avoid a serious war thereby depriving them of their strength, dignity and strong position. In this regard, refer to: Tabarsi, 20/81; Tabatabai, 16/436; Taiyeb, 10/495).

And again, because of the pride and arrogance they showed towards the Muslims in the war of the parties (*Ahzab*), they surrendered to the Muslims: "بحيث صاروا مستسلمين لكم", this fear became such that they were obviously prepared for a deal." نازلين على حكمكم ". They were brought down from the castle, while they accepted your verdict.

One of the key interpretations in understanding the incident that has been used about those killed in this war is the above verse, which in this

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battle that was triumphantly fought by means of fear and siege, says: " فريقة تقتلون و تأسرون فريقا " That is, فريقا takes precedence over تقتلون, whereas in case of the captives, فريقا is placed after تأسرون, i.e., you killed some who were the enemy warriors and took captive another part.

In this regard, Allameh Tabataba'i emphasizes that the meaning of " فريقة تقتلون " is only men of war, that is, you killed some of them who were the enemy warriors (Tabataba'i, 16/436), that is, in this battle, a group was killed and a group was captured; not that they surrendered, and then were captured and killed. In this sentence, there are a few notable points:

1) Some exegetes of the Qur'an have talked about the reason for such statement of the Qur'an regarding those killed and say reliance is more on people rather than religious and political issues; because their great leaders were in these groups, but in the case of captivity, there were no prominent people to revolve on (Ibid., 450). In addition, the mark up and letup of the word "فريقا " has made captivity and killing, which are the two factors of victory over the enemy, to be put together and the proportion among them to be observed.

2) The phrase "فريقة تقتلون و تأسرون فريقا " governs that some men from the enemy warriors were killed or taken captive and not that all the men were killed and women were taken captive; because in case of captivity of women and children, the word "سبى " and its plural "سبايا " is used and the word "اسر ", which is used in the above verse and mentioned in other verses such as فهو إن يوم أسارى تفادوهم و هو محترم عليكم إخراجهم (Baqara/85), shows that it refers to the enemy warriors and the men themselves and is relevant to that issue and indicates the killing and

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captivity of a group of men of war and not the women of this tribe. Therefore, in history, other things such as the captivity of immature teenagers have been added for which the verse doesn't refer " و سبی من لم ینبت منهم مع النساء ", because firstly they were not among the warriors, secondly, a person who is not mature, is not obliged to be reprimanded and captured. Therefore, the verse does not apply to women and old men, as well as teenagers who have not been subjected to war, and it is only about those who have been warriors.

Therefore, the phrase "فریقا تقتلون " is contrary to the opinion of most exegetes who consider the deaths to include men and the captives to include women and children. Rather the logical continuation of the verse implies that it refers to the very warriors who after few of them were killed, the rest surrendered out of fear and discontinued fighting and were taken captive.

3) In this verse, the main root cause of the Battle of Banu Qurayza, which was the breaking of the covenant and cooperating with the enemy, is expressed by the interpretation of "ظاهروهم من أهل الكتاب ", i.e. supporting the Arab polytheists in the war of the parties (*Ahzab*) and breaking the treaty and striking from within. Its educational and guiding dimensions have been well contemplated as to how the power and glory of a group suddenly collapses and their wealth and lands fall in the hands of the Muslims as a result of breaking the covenant and opposing the right; " و أورتكم أرضهم و ديارهم."

The phrase " و أورتكم أرضهم و ديارهم و أموالهم و أرضا لم تطؤها " is a continuation of expression of God's blessing to the Muslims and the manner of defeat of the foes. In accord

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with the past tense used "أورتكم" the verse has been expressed in continuation of the same war, post the enemies capture and death. The word "ارث " (inheritance) of these spoils is used because the Muslims did not take much trouble to gain them and all the booty that resulted from years of oppression and tyranny of the Jews and their exploitation in Medina easily fell into the hands of the Muslims. This was because the Jews were wealthy people in Medina and they hired others and forced them into slavery and with their wealth, they exploited and dominated, and hence, their power became the means of amassing wealth and property and imposing their own conditions on others.

"أرضا لم تطؤها " means their lands, houses, properties and the lands in which the Muslims had not set foot in until that day. Now, the question is, which land was it that they hadn't stepped in until that day? Apparently, this sentence is referring to the gardens and special lands that were in the possession of Bani Qurayza and no one had the right to enter it, because the Jews worked hard to preserve and monopolize their properties and kept some of their possessions hidden from others. Therefore, God reminds Muslims that this land was seized by them in the same battle, the land in which they had stride.

Therefore, in this verse, among all the issues of this battle, only the resistance of the Muslims and the result of this encounter and the killing and captivity of some of them are mentioned and makes no reference to the other discussions which are mentioned in the reports and narrations and are essentially related to the post-encounter, and cannot be tangled with this verse.

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Now, with this brief explanation, we turn to the dimension of the revelation of the verse and a short report on the incident and a critique of its historical issues in relation to the verse.

The reason for the revelation of this story

In unveiling this story in the commentaries and books on biography of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.), they have made such a layout by saying: Before the war of *Ahzab* (parties), Huyayy ibn Akhtab Naziri went to Ka'b ibn Asad Qurayzi, the head of Banu Qurayza, to accompany him in the battle of the parties, unaware that Ka'b had a peace treaty with the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and had quitted hostility. Thus, when Ka'b heard the voice of Huyayy ibn Akhtab, he closed the door of the castle on him.

Ibn Akhtab asked for permission to enter, but Ka'b refused to open the door to him. Huyayy shouted, "O Ka'b. Open the door for me! He said, "Woe to you, O Huyayy! Why should I open, even though I know that you are a rude man, and I have a covenant with Muhammad, and I am never willing to break my covenant for your sake, for I have not seen in him anything but honesty and truthfulness. Huyayy said, "Woe to you! Open the door so that I can explain to you. He said, "I will not do it." Huyayy said, "You haven't opened the door to me for fear that I would eat a spoonful of your pottage?" In this way, he angered Ka'b and forced him to open the door. Huyayy said, "Woe to you, O Ka'b! I brought you the dignity of the world, I provided you with an infinite sea of honour, I brought you the Quraysh with all its leaders, and Ghatafan with all his heads. They have made a pact with me

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not to give up until they torment and destroy Muhammad. Ka'b said, "But by God, you have brought me a lifetime of humiliation, and you have prepared for me a cloud of rainless and deceitful clouds, clouds that have poured water elsewhere, and for me it has brought hollow thunder only. Go and leave me alone with Muhammad! I will never make a covenant against him, for I have not seen in him anything except truth and honesty.

This dispute continued, and Hayyi tried hard, until he finally succeeded in deceiving Ka'b, but with the covenant that if Quraysh and Ghatafan failed to reach Muhammad, then Huyayy would take him to his fortress so that whatever happened to him would also come to him. With this condition, Ka'b broke his covenant with the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and expressed his disgust towards the covenant and the past records he had with him. (Al-Tabari, *Jami'ul-Bayan fi Ta'fsir al-Qur'an*, 21/96; Qomi, 2/177).

When the news of breaking of covenant by Ka'b got to the Prophet (s.a.w.a.), he commissioned Sa'd ibn Ma'az, along with Sa'd ibn Ebadah, to investigate the matter. He knew fully well that it was unwise to ignore such a danger within Medina, so it was necessary that this time, the treacherous people should not be simply ignored. But under the situation where they were besieged from around, endurance together with deliberation and restraint was required until the conditions geared up in their favor. Perhaps in those days of the Trench war (*Khandaq*), when the polytheists could not do anything about, and with various war tactics and preparatory measures such as trench digging, as well as the anxious days and nights of siege of Medina, the

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general Muslim public also preferred to punish the Qurayzi violators. (Al-Tabari, *Tarikh Al-Umam wal-Muluk*, 2/250; Ibn Hisham, 2/240; Waqidi, 2/510.

In the commentary of the *Majma' al-Bayan*, it is stated that when the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) returned from the Trench war and put down the tools of the war and bathed, Gabriel appeared to him and said, "You have left no excuse in doing jihad, now we see you have parted the clothes of the war, while we have not."

The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) got on his feet in great distress and immediately approached the people and told them not to recite the evening prayer but after having besieged the Bani Qurayza. The people put on their war clothes once again and they had not yet reached Bani Qurayza castle when the sun set and people quarreled with each other. Some of them said, "We have not sinned, because the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) instructed us not to perform the evening prayer but after we reach the fortress of Bani Qurayza, and we obeyed his command." Others, presumably because his order did not come in conflict with prayers, offered their prayers so that they wouldn't have taken any possible stand against fulfillment of their duty. However, some others did not pray until their prayer time got over, and after sunset when they reached the castle, they performed their prayers, and the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) did not blame any of them. (Tabarsi, 8/340; Suyuti, 5/185).

Urwa says: The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) sent Ali ibn Abi Talib forward as a run-up army and handed him the levy of war and said, "Advance forward until you take the army in front of Banu Qurayza Castle." Ali (a.s.) went ahead and the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) followed him. On

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the way, they met a group of Ansar who were from Banu Ghanem clan, who were waiting for his honor to arrive and when they saw him, they thought that the Prophet asked them from afar whether an army had passed through here an hour ago? They replied: "Dahiya Kalbi crossed here on a hooded mule, while he had thrown a silk blanket on the back of the mule. The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said: "He wasn't Dahiya Kalbi but Gabriel, whom God has commissioned to quiver the Banu Qurayza and fill their hearts with fear.

It is said that Ali (a.s.) continued to go until he reached the fortress of Ban Qurayza. There he heard insults against the Messenger of Allah from the people of the castle. So he returned to see the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) on the way and said: "O Messenger of Allah! It's not deserving of you to come near the castle and approach these indecent people. The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said: "It seems you have heard indecent words about me from them? He replied: Yes, O the Messenger of Allah. He said, "As soon as they see me, they will not say those words anymore." So they came together with the army near the castle... The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) reminded them about the breaking of the covenant.

So the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) surrounded them for fifteen or twenty-five nights and more, and during this period, they were shooting at the Muslims and insulting them, but the Muslims resisted until the enemy became weary, and God filled their hearts with fear.[2]

Coincidentally, after the Quraysh and Ghatafan fled, Huyayy ibn Akhtab (the great Khaiberian) had entered his fortress with the people of Banu Qurayza, and when they were

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sure that the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) would not come back from around the castle until he fought them, Ka'b ibn Asad told them, "O Jews! It is a calamity that you see coming upon you, and I suggest you one of three things, do whatever you see that is best for you. They asked, "Tell us what it is?" He said, "First, let us pledge allegiance to this man and accept his religion." It has become clear to all of you that he is a Prophet, a Messenger and the same person whose name you find in your heavenly scripture. If we do this, both our lives, property and our women will be protected, and we will have accepted the religion of God. They said, "We shall never separate from the religion of the Torah, and will never exchange it with any other religion."

Secondly, if you do not accept that offer, let's kill our children and women by our own hands and then fight Muhammad, and even destroy our possessions so that there is nothing left of us after our death. If we are killed, we will be killed without any anxiousness, because we are then without any wife, children and property, and if we overcome them, it would be easy later to procure for ourselves women and children. They said, "Are you saying that we should kill this poor lot?" Then, what good is life without them?

Thirdly, if you don't accept this, then let us tonight, which is Saturday night and Muhammad and his companions know that we do not fight on such a night, take advantage of this oversight and ambush them. They said, "Shall we destroy the sanctity of our Saturday night and do the same mistake that our forefathers did and suffer the same calamity that came upon them? No! We shall never do this.

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When Ka'b ibn Asad saw that none of his proposals were accepted, he said, "It’s amazing that you are all irrational people! I think you haven't had a single day of self-discipline and caution since the day you were born.

Examining the various narrations of this incident

Except for some minor and non-important issues, the narrations reporting this incident comprises of differences and contradictions in several matters like the place of prisoners, or the form of killing and the number of deaths and the nature of implementation and execution of this order.

Zuhri, who narrates this story, says: "The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) in response to Banu Qurayza who suggested that he should appoint one person as an arbitrator, said, "You can select any of my companions as the arbitrator." Banu Qurayza chose Sa'd ibn Ma'az; the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) accepted and ordered them to gather whatever weapons they had in his dome, and then they tied their hands from behind their backs and joined each other and got them arrested at Osama's house. According to Ibn Hisham, they were imprisoned in the house of a woman named Kisah, daughter of Harith, who was from Banu-Najjar tribe. Then the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) ordered that Sa'd ibn Ma'az, who was wounded in the battle of the ditch and was hospitalized at home to be brought in. When he came, he asked, "What do we do with these Jews?" He said: "I order the killing of the warriors and taking others as prisoners and confiscation of their belongings. (Ibn Athir, 2/223; Al-Balazuri, 1/348; Muqrizi, 1/249; Ibn Hisham, 2/179.

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Again in this account, it is stated:

«ثم أمر رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم بالأخاديد، فخذت في الأرض، و جيء بهم مكتفين، فضرب أعناقهم.»

"Then the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) commanded that all of them should be placed face down on the ground and then be brought handcuffed and then beheaded"; that all their warriors should be killed, which numbered between 700 and 800, and in a narration between 700 and 900 people, and in a narration 750 people and some up to 900 people have been mentioned.[3] And about the number of captives and those who had not reached puberty and their women, the same number have been narrated but with differences. As for the property, a large volume of belongings right from household items to war tools such as weapons and armor was taken as booty and divided among the Muslims; but their lands and gardens was to be divided only among the *Muhajir* (the early Mulsims who migrated from Mecca to Medina). Then he told the Ansar, "This is your homeland, and you have property and gardens, and the immigrants do not have so." (Maqatel ibn Sulayman 3/485).

Again, in another detailed account, it is narrated that the next day of this incident – Friday, eighth Zhil-Hajjah – the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) went to the Bazaar of Medina and ordered that rectangular pits be dug there, stretching from Abu Jahm's house to the olive-colored stones. Apparently, he was in the streets and in the city itself, and he sat with the elders of his companions while others dug those rectangular pits. Then, he ordered the men of Banu Qurayza to be brought in groups. Thereafter, the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) commanded that only the

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warriors, i.e., those who have been interpreted in the verse as "قريقة تقتلون " be killed such that it is said they were six hundred or seven hundred to one thousand in number. It is narrated that the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) sat with his companions in the market and the men of Banu Qurayza were brought in groups and beheaded. (Ibne-Sa'd 2/74). It is narrated that some of the companions were reluctant to kill them until they were finally satisfied and performed this task.[4]

In another narration, a suspicious report from the Umayyad sources states that the executors of this ruling were Imam Ali (a.s.) and Zubayr ibn Awwam, who beheaded them next to the pits. (Waqidi, 2/513). Undeniably, it is mentioned in Ibn Kathir's commentary that he executed the Jews of Banu Qurayza in the cold of morning and evening for three days and repeatedly said: "Give them refreshing water and give them clean food and do good to their captives", until he killed them all and this verse was revealed. (Ibn-Kathir, 392/6). For a more detailed account, refer to Tabatabai'e, 16/450).

Argument of the proponents of this incident

This story has attracted the attention of many exegetes and historians in the contemporary period, and they have each exposed a point that is not irrelevant to mention.

1. The most important reason for the Prophet's harsh confrontation was their breaking of their treaty in the worst conditions when they entered Medina with the intention of terrorization, and if it were not for divine help, the Muslims would not have survived this siege. The penalty for such treason is no less than death in the eyes of all nations. Therefore, in the religious

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ruling and in the logic of a society that rejects treason in any form, such a society calls for a harsh and memorable penalty.

2. The holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) twice overlooked punishing the Jews for their conspiracy and breaking the treaty and instead prescribed the least punishment for Banu Qaynuqa and Banu Nazir, which was their expulsion from Medina. This time it was repeated by another group and all of them deserved a lesson so that the same would not be repeated elsewhere. The battle of Banu Qurayza is a unique case, in a way that the entire tribesmen who had surrendered were given the taste of the sword. His gracious reaction towards his greatest enemies during the conquest of Mecca, the release of hundreds of captives of Banu Mustaliq, the release of 6,000 men in the battle of Hunayn, his forgiveness of Banu Qaynuqa and Banu Nazir, and tens of other cases are worthy to contemplate.

3. The tribe of Bani Qurayza itself accepts this type of arbitration and Sa'd too takes confession from them and gives the ruling according to their law. " *And when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword: But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the Lord thy God hath given thee.*" (Bible, Deuteronomy, chapter 20, verse 15-17, p. 239). And of course there is another text in this chapter in the Torah, which is far more ferocious and brutal because it orders the killing of all, with no exception of the women and children. (Ibid, page 231)

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Egyptian writer Abbas Mahmoud Akkad wrote about this matter:

"Indeed, Sa'd drew their attention to the text of Deuteronomy in the Torah, which they believed in."

And Allama Fazlullah, after narrating Deuteronomy, writes in his commentary:

"In this section, there is a need to pay attention to two aspects: One that they accepted such a ruling, and the other that they adhered to the content of the religious laws in relation to others, and in this regard, the only demand that the Prophet had was to enforce this obligation." (Fazlullah, 18/271-289).

Therefore, the ruling of Sa'd ibn Ma'az was based on the Torah law and the treaty that the Jews had signed with the Prophet that if they did implement it, their blood would be spilled and their wives and children taken as captives and their properties confiscated.

4. There is a famous rule in law and jurisprudence: "ألزموهم بما ألزموا به أنفسهم", that is, "oblige the other party to what they themselves accept" and which is the basis of rights, ruling and punishments. This method, which can be used based on the other party's jurisprudence and beliefs, has a history in past religions and was also set forth in the story of Joseph (Yusuf) prior to Moses. For example, in the story of the loss of cup of Aziz, they ask the Bani-Israel what to do if this cup is found in your belongings. They said:

قالوا جزاؤه من وجد في رحله فهو جزاؤه كذلک تجزى الظالمين

They said: "The penalty should be that he in whose saddle-bag it is found, should be held (as bondman) to atone for the (crime). Thus it is we punish the wrong-doers!" (Joseph/75).

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So Joseph invoked them according to their sharia law and took Benjamin as hostage.

5. The Banu Qurayza insulted and offended the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and his wives and companions and the verdict for “defaming the Prophet”, as per the Islamic law, applies to them.

6. Some have said that Sa'd's ruling apparently seems to be an oppression against the slain, but when we look into the reality, apart from the size and dimension of this issue, for which difference of opinion exists, the naturalness of this ruling is revealed to us even if measured with the conduct and customs of the society of that day. The treachery the Banu Qurayza committed by breaking their covenant with the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) at that difficult and critical moment, and the support they extended to the infidels and polytheists against the Prophet and the Islamic *Ummah* necessitates such a verdict which is in accordance with the *Shari’a* and the logic of any society that rejects treason in any form. Evidence of its reasonableness is a narration that was previously quoted from Zuhri as saying: "The Jews asked the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) to send one of his companions to rule. The Prophet said: "You choose whoever you want from my companions. They chose Sa'd ibn Ma'az. The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) too was satisfied with it. The Jews succumbed to the verdict of Sa'd ibn Ma'az. (Ibn Hisham, V.3/244 onwards; Ibn Athir, V.2/185 onwards with summary).

Therefore, Sa'd's judgment was something they themselves accepted, and Sa'd issued such a ruling based on the penal rules of the Torah, of which he was seemingly aware. For more details, refer to Al-Husna, 519, Sadeghi, 170).

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The author of "*Tafsir al-Kashef*", which is not without reference to the behavior of Israelis in the contemporary era, writes: "Sa'd ruled over what they believed, while their own religious belief was to destroy the men and confiscate the properties; take as captives the women and children, destroy the houses and even set fire to villages and towns of all the people from different nations, without anyone having violated the treaty, or having waged a war with them". Then he asks: Is such a conduct oppressive when it's in accordance with the verdict of the Torah and of the kind of their own attitude towards others?

The point that he emphasizes and perhaps different from others and is used in the context of the historical text and the explicit point of the Qur'an is that the Prophet only took their warriors to task, while they had broken the treaty and officially declared war and had killed some people and set fire to places. Their conduct was nothing but murder, arson and corruption in religion, belief and nature. (Mughniyeh, 9/210).

7. It is true that war and looting were characteristic of the Arabs, but fulfilling the covenant and adhering to the treaties and rather defending their allies was a sacred matter among them, and since the Banu Qurayza not only failed to defend the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) but sided with the other parties against the Prophet, and hence they deserved such a sentence and punishment. In Mughniyeh's opinion, even if they had not broken the treaty and had not declared war, but had done all these other works, they still deserved Sa'd's ruling, because this law was their *Shari'a* and it is in all heavenly religions and human rights that everyone is penalized by their

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own law and that is why the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said to Sa'd: " حكمت فيهم بحكم الله من فوق سبعة أرقعة " (i.e.), You judged them in this matter by the Judgement of God from above seven curtains of heaven. (Ibid). Therefore, this is a normal affair which the Torah too gives the same ruling. (Modarresi, 10/253).

On the other hand, the Jewish breach of treaty has had a history in the past and the Qur'an has pointed out this matter:

8. أَ وَ كُلَّما عاهَدُوا عَهْداً نَبَذَهُ فَريقٌ مِنْهُمْ

Is it not (the case) that every time they make a covenant, some party among them throw it aside. (Baqarah/100).

And perhaps one of the reasons for mentioning it in the Qur'an was to refer to their conduct at that time.

The problems set forth by the opponents about the historical correctness of narration:

The hassle that has been raised of this incident and many people who have spoken out while reviewing this story is that this event, i.e. the execution of all men and the captivity of their women and children, is unparalleled in the history of early Islam and is incompatible with the Prophet's other ethics and manners. Besides, that its said they insulted the Prophet and or his wives cannot be defended. Many times the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) was insulted and he had not shown reaction, so how is it that here, he has reacted so harshly?! Therefore, given the following negative aspects, there is no need for all such justifications.

1- This story has been narrated in very diverse and manifold ways. However, in historical sources, this incident is depicted in the form of genocide and massacre of all the men of a tribe and their families being taken as captives by the Prophet

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(s.a.w.a.). Such a depiction is indeed cruel and incommensurate with their offence and is not compatible with the Prophet's mercy and the many verses of the Qur'an that demand the same punishment against a crime (Anam/161, Yunus /27, Ghafir /40), and is inconsistent with the approach and manners of the Prophets and the practice of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.). It was the heads of the tribe who broke the treaty and declared war on the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and according to the rules, they were the ones to be punished and killed, not others. It is possible that in any face-to-face battle many may have been killed, but according to these narrations under question, they were besieged and surrendered and then executed en masse.

According to the penal laws of Islam, is it conceivable that the Prophet (s.a.w.a.), because of the breach of treaty by the chiefs of a tribe, killed all the men and even the newly mature teenagers of that tribe, who perhaps at that age did not even understand the concept of breach of treaty and had no role in that betrayal? Among the men, what was the end of the elderly, the sick, the powerless, and the women? For what crime should they be punished?

2- It is the consensus of exegetists and historians that Sa'd ibn Ma'az gave such a ruling and the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) approved and carried it out. Why did the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) leave the judgment concerning the death and life of these people to Sa'd ibn Ma'az? If the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had made a decisive decision to deal with this tribe, why did he do so by choosing Sa'd as the arbitrator? This approach is incompatible with the explicit character and the righteousness and truthfulness of the Prophet's (s.a.w.a.). If the killing of Banu Qurayza was by

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divine command, then those like Abu Lubaba ought not to be aware of it, and it should not have swayed to the judgment of others. (Zargari Nejad, 460).

Moreover, is reference to the Torah a religious argument for the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and was it a divine authority for him to assign such a substantial ruling to others? (assuming that the verdict issued is in accordance with the Torah)

3- Were all those Jews so courageous enough to stand by their beliefs which they themselves confessed to its hollowness in such a way that they were ready to see others being killed before their own eyes but yet refused to say the "word" (declaration of faith) and hence save their sweet lives? The existence of two Muslim converted Jews, one of whom is well-known in history as a tale-teller (Ibn Sa'd, 5/340) and belonging to this tribe itself, namely Muhammad ibn Ka'b Qurzah and the other, Atiyah Qarzi, who is in the chain of most of these hadiths, and its similarities to several similar incidents in the history of the Jewish people in which several hundred Jews were massacred (1 King's Journey, 18, 24-240) raises in one's mind the relatively strong possibility that the aforesaid narration is made up by people from the Jewish tribe with different names and titles, the like of which can be found in other hadiths attributed to Ibn Abbas and the Prophet's wives. (Sadeghi, 178-182).

Of course, presenting a gratifying but oppressed picture of the Jewish people and, in contrast, a violent and barbarous face of the Prophet of Islam can be the goal of its originators. In this story, Banu Qurayza is portrayed as a tribe which is not willing to abandon their ancestral religion or betray the ideals of the Torah and the customs of Judaism, and in this way, they are even willing to give up their

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lives. The conversations that have been narrated from them before their surrender and the narration attributed to Aisha about the bravery of the only woman victim of this incident and her joyful welcome to death is all worthy of analysis.

4- In any case, the Banu Qurayza refused to associate with the polytheists for fear of leaving them alone, while if they had joined the polytheists, the Muslims would undoubtedly have suffered a decisive defeat. On this occasion, they should have witnessed some sort of compassion or at least tolerance from the Prophet (s.a.w.a.). Nevertheless, the Prophet decided to destroy them. (Dashti,176).[5]

5- The other problem of hadiths is the high number of people killed, and this issue has created doubts and exaggerations about the number of Banu Qurayza's deaths among historians and exegetes, especially since there is a great difference in citing this number. Historians have put the number at between 450 to 1,000. Some have said that 450 to 1,000 Banu Qurayzi fighters were killed because of the ruling of Sa'd ibn Ma'az.

Al-Tabari quotes Ibn Ishaq as saying that the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) imprisoned them in the house of a woman from Banu Najjar.[6] It is mentioned in *'Imta al-Asma'* that they were kept in the house of Osama ibn Zayd (Muqrizi, 1/249) and thereafter taken to the bazaar of Medina inside the city where pits were dug and then executed. How is this massive volume with its details and dialogue mentioned in the report above possible to be carried out in one or three days and that too one by one? Apart from the differences in narrations, which sometimes for instance Ibn Hisham narrates once that there were 750 people, and somewhere he narrates that when the Prophet won

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over this tribe, he took four hundred men from them and ordered their heads to be severed. In carrying out this task, the Khawarij did so happily but the tribe of Aus became upset due to the alliance and the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) gave the remaining twelve men to Aus and each Jew was killed by two members of the Aus tribe. (Ibn Hisham, 2/241; Waqidi, 2/510). In a hadith, he says this was done by Ali and Zubayr, while it is not feasible to carry out this number of executions by two individuals and successively, in one day. Moreover, it is unclear why among the *Ansars* and *Muhajirs*, only Ali and Zubayr were selected and assigned to kill so many Jews? How is it that the other companions were not used and the Prophet entrusted this task to these two? Isn't this narration like other Umayyad reports pursuing some specific goals?

This news becomes all the more doubtful because later, these two figures never talked about this incident, particularly Imam Ali (a.s.), who discusses in his sermons and letters about his time with the Prophet and his hardships and prowess, but makes no mention of this incident and his presence in it.

6- It is said that the surrendered individuals were kept in Osama's house or the house of a woman. Now, how can one house under the conditions of Medina of that time accommodate between 700 and 800 people? Maintaining this number of people requires several hundred meters of space. Did such houses, such as Osama's house, have the required capacity?

7- The execution of the ruling and verdict is unclear and there is a great difference in its number and nature of it and is incompatible with

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the etiquette of the Qur'an and the Prophet's (s.a.w.a.) practices. Moreover, the backbone of any war is the war machine. If this very report is taken as the basis of judgement, the Jews, because of possessing additional power, weapons and equipment, with maximum number (by rounding the number) of shields at 300, swords as much as 1500,[7] how, in spite of possessing maximum equipment, which is foreseen for several more times are kept at the disposal of 700 or 1,000 fighters and all of them get killed, while this number of shield (300) adheres to the number of warriors, not the number of swords seized, of which 1,500 have been narrated.

8- Because historians have mentioned the number of warriors between 400, 450, 600, 700, 750, 800 900 and 1000, and interestingly, some related these numbers to the warriors and some consider its related to all the men of Banu Qurayza and some to the number of those killed, because often the warriors make up a percentage of the men of one tribe, and the dead ones make up a percentage of the warriors, and such a difference of opinion indicates conflict and mistrust, and rather the fallacy of these narrations.

Let's keep this issue alongside the principle that the number mentioned in the hadiths was a mere narration lacking any scientific backing and technical accuracy. Today, the statistics of many contemporary events, such as the number of martyrs of 15th Khordad and 17th Sha'rivar during the Iranian revolution, do not match to what has been narrated and later researched, and this reveals the reason behind these differences which cannot be ignored.[8] Thus, some have estimated the death toll at around 120 to 150 because the average number mentioned about the Banu Qurayza

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tribe itself is 700 people. (between 600-900). If we count the family as five or six, adult men are about the same in number. Or, according to a calculation made for the entire Jews, their population share in relation to Banu Mustaliq and Banu Nazir would be 1,500 half of whom are women, and from the remaining 700, half children, adolescents and old men, and between 100 and 200 is the number of warriors mentioned in the book Al-Amwal. (Sadeghi, 190)

Summarization and Conclusion

Considering the hurdles in narrating history and the conflict between its narrators, it seems to us from the outward aspect of the Qur'an that the Bani Qurayza refused to surrender and continued to resist from within the fortress, and with the tightening of the siege and the onset of fear, and the loneliness, crime and betrayal that they did with their work and the decisive decision of the Prophet and the Muslims, they lost the spirit of resistance. In an all-out attack on their strongholds, the Muslims forced them to surrender. Consequently, some were killed and some were captured, and this is the meaning of the verse, and therefore what is logical is that they were killed at the scene of the war and not after their surrender. For this reason, the narrations that have delightfully expressed their resistance, courage and grandeur and even with respect to a woman are all unacceptable for the aforementioned reasons. While there is no consensus in the historical books and commentaries on the characteristics of this incident and the type of punitive action taken, there are many exaggerations in the primary case and their number, to the extent that its originality has been doubted by some.

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As per the Quran, it seems that the genuineness of killing is true but its details and dimensions in this exaggerated form is much to be denied.

Another point to understand this incident is that the existence of people such as Muhammad ibn Ka'b Qurazah, who is well known as tale-teller and the existence of the descendants of Sa'd ibn Ma'az among the narrators of this story and the presence of Muslim converted Jews in praising this Jewish tribe and portraying the image of an oppressed but courageous figure in the Jewish faith should not be neglected. Other instances of such examples have found their way into historical sources of the Muslims and should not be easily passed over. Also, it should be noted that both Muslims and Jews have faced challenges in their tumultuous history and reports like these should be treated with caution.

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[1]In this regard, Tabarsi writes: "All the commentators are unanimous that they are Banu Qurayzah, except for Hasan al-Basri, who said that they were Banu al-Nadhir, and the first statement

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is more correct and relevant to the verses, because Banu al-Nadhir had nothing to do with fighting with the people of the parties (*Ahzab*) and they had much earlier moved and gone away. (Tabarsi, 20/82)

[2]Aram ibn Fadl quotes Hammad ibn Zayd from Yahya ibn Sa'eed from Sa'eed ibn Musaib as saying that the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) besieged the Banu Qurayza for 14 nights. (Tabari, Tarikh Al-Umam Wa Al-Muluk 2/75).

Another narration states that the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) circled the Banu Qurayza for fifteen days. They fired shots and were barricaded in their fortresses and none of them could be seen. (Ibid, 72).

[3]و حدثني موسى بن عبيدة، عن محمد بن المنكدر، قال: كانوا ما بين ستمائة إلى سبعمائة. و كان ابن عباس رحمه الله يقول: كانوا سبعمائة و خمسين.

[And Musa bin Ubaidah narrates on the authority of Muhammad bin Al-Munkadir, who said: They were between six hundred to seven hundred. And Ibn Abbas, may God have mercy on him, used to say: They were seven hundred and fifty.](Waqidi, 2/518; Ibn Hisham, 2/179/). In Sa'd's biography, in the discussion about his judgment, it is stated that 650 of the Banu Qurayza were killed by his ruling. (Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, 2/603)

[4]و جاء سعد بن عبادة، و الحباب بن المنذر فقالا: يا رسول الله، إن الأوس كرهت قتل بني قريظة لمكان حلفهم. فقال سعد بن معاذ: يا رسول الله، ما كرهه من الأوس من فيه خير، فمن كرهه من الأوس لا أرضاه الله ! فقام أسيد بن حضير فقال: يا رسول الله، لا تبقين دارا من دور الأوس إلا فرقتهم فيها، فمن سخط ذلک فلا يرغم الله إلا أنفه، فابعث إلى داري أول دورهم. فبعث إلى بني عيد الأشهل باثنين، فضرب أسيد بن تحضير رقبة أحدهما، و ضرب أبو نائلة الآخر. و بعث إلى بني حارثة باثنين، فضرب أبو بردة بن التيار رقبة أحدهما، و ذقف عليه محيصة، و ضرب الآخر أبو عبس بن جبر، فقف عليه ظهير بن رافع. و بعث إلى بني ظفر بأسيرين. (واقدى، ٢/٥١٥)

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[5]Of course, in justifying this incident, the author writes below:

"In any case, their existence inside Medina always posed a danger. Moreover, this move would put an end to the danger posed by others who intended to conspire and by eliminating fear, Islam would enter the hearts."

[6]For example, refer to: Forough-Abadiyat, (Eternal Radiance), Sobhani, V 2, p.153; Tarikh Payambar Islam, (History of Prophet of Islam), Muhammad Ibrahim Ayati, p.13, Sirat al-Mustafa, (Biography of Mustafa), Hashim Marouf Hasani, p. 515; Al-*Abqariat*Al-*Islamia*Abbas al-Aqad p. 219; Tarikh Tahlili Payambar Islam, (Analytical History of the Prophet of Islam), Sayyid Ja'far Shahidi, p. 96, Rahmate-Nabavi, Khushunate-Jaheli, (Prophetic Mercy, Savagery of the Ignorant, Saber Adak, p. 179-191; Jalaluddin Farsi, Prophet and Jihad, p.496

[7]و مما روى أن ما صادره رسول الله منهم ١٥٠٠ سيف و ٣٠٠ درع و ٢٠٠٠ رمح و ١٥٠٠ ترس و حجفة و خمر عدا كثير من الجمال النواضح و الماشية. و كان عدد الذين قتلوا بين ۶۰۰ و ۷۰۰ وفي رواية ۴۰۰ و استثنى من القتل من لم ينبت شاربه و أسروا مع النساء و الأطفال و اعتبر الجميع رقيقا وأرسل قسم منهم على اختلاف في الروايات في عددهم إلى نجد حيث يبيعوا و اشترى بثمنهم خيل و سلاح. (دروزه، ٣٩٧)

(It was narrated that what the Messenger of God confiscated from them were 1,500 swords, 300 shields, 2000 spears, 1,500 gears, gourds and wine, besides many camels and cattle. The number of those killed was between 600 and 700, and in a narration 400, those who were minor and were captured with women and children were excluded from the killing, and all were considered slaves, and some of them were sent, with differing narrations in their numbers to Najd,

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where they sold and bought horses and weapons for their price. (Daruzeh, 397)

[8]Some historians have guessed and put this number at 100 people and not as a definite number, such as Zahabi, who writes:

«و أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم قتل مقاتلتهم، و كانوا فيما زعموا ستمائة مقاتل، قتلوا عند دار أبي جهم بالبلاط، فزعموا أن دماءهم بلغت أحجار الزيت التي كانت بالسوق، و سبى نساءهم و ذراريهم، و قسم أموالهم بين من حضر من المسلمين. و كانت خيل المسلمين ستا و ثلاثين فرسا.» (ذهبی، ۲/۵ ۳۱)

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