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**A Critical Study of Chapter 9 of the Qur'ān, called *Sūrat at-Tawba*  
(Repentance)**

The Qur'ān is ample of verses that hint at or deal with some of the events which faced Muḥammad and the community (al-umma الأمة) at Medina; and it may be noticed that, of all its chapters, the one entitled as *Sūrat at-tawba* (Repentance) is particularly full of allusions to the events of the last years of Muḥammad's life, when he was at the zenith of his power .

The Qur'ān gives hint to Muḥammad's childhood as being an orphan: ألم ووجدك عائلاً: ويجدك يتيماً فأوى (Chapter 93) . Muḥammad was brought up by his elder uncle, Abū Ṭālib, for so wanted his late grandfather, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib; and because Abū Ṭālib was rather a poor Meccan compared with his brothers, Muḥammad worked hard since childhood to help him . He once said that he used to tend the sheep of rich Meccans to gain some money as a help: كنت أرعى الغنم: لأهل مكة بقراريط Khadija's few sheep غنيمات خديجة. From the Qur'ān we also understand that he was a trader, buying and selling in the markets in and around Mecca : يمشي في الأسواق when he was a youthful man (Chapter 25 verse 7). According to Ibn Qutayba (Al-Ma'ārif, 557), he once sold some items by auction: النبي (ﷺ) جلسا وقدحا فبمن يزيد باع.

His inability to read and write is also hinted at in the Qur'ān in the first verses revealed to him: اقرأ باسم ربك الذي خلق: (Sūra 96) and his reply: ما أنا بقارئ. This was not strange in those days when only 17 men were known to be able to read and write at Mecca (Al-'Iqd al-farīd, IV, 157; Al-Ma'ārif, 553) . Notable among these was Waraqa Ibn Nawfal ورقة بن نوفل, who, Ibn Nu'aym (in Dalā'il an-nubuwwa, 169) says, used to read and write the Gospel: كان يقرأ ويكتب الإنجيل. Waraqa was Ḥadiġa's cousin . He was an old man when Muḥammad received the heavenly Message and died shortly after. That Muḥammad had received from him some information about the

old prophets and books, is not impossible. More than one reference to his illiteracy can be found in the Qur'ān. In his comment on the verses:... الذين الذين (VII, 157 and 158), Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi says that النبي الأمي here is the one who does not read and write: أراد الذي لا يقرأ ولا يكتب (Al-'Iqd al-farīd, IV, 160). There are many accounts in the sīra (Muḥammad's biography) and the tafsīr (exegesis) books which confirm this fact. In the Qur'ān there are also allusions to some pre-Islamic events such as the Yemeni (or Abyssinian) invasion of the Ḥiǧāz, the Īlāf of Quraysh, the defeat of the Byzantines by the Persians (in 619 and 626 A.D.) which was followed shortly by their victory, and the massacre, or rather burning alive, of the Yemeni Christians of Naǧrān in 525 A. D. at the orders of the Yemeni king Dū Nuwās, who had embraced Judaism after his mother (Chapters 105, 106, 30, 85 respectively). There are also allusions to some beliefs, practices, habits and traditions which Islam either approved or disapproved and prohibited (Cf. for examples: Qur'ān, II, 275 ; IV, 3 ; V, 2, 3, 91, 103 ; VI, 136-140, 143-4, 151-2 ; VIII, 35 ; XVII, 31-40).

The main objective of Muḥammad at Mecca was to convert its people to Islam and to eliminate such practices as harmful to the new society he wanted to create and disapproved by the new religion. The Revelation then dealt with this objective copiously, asking Muḥammad to be patient and announcing that the new faith would finally have the upper hand: وكلمة الله لله الأمر من قبل ومن بعد ويومئذ يفرح المؤمنون بنصر الله... (IX, 40) هي العليا (XXX, 4 seq.). A great deal of verses try to convince the Meccans to renounce idolatry on behalf of One God, warning them, in case of disbelief, of punishment in the Hereafter, which some of them believed in, while confirming that Muḥammad's mission will succeed and his followers will be requited with Paradise in the After-life. But the opposition of the unbelievers was great, and sometimes aggressive: Muḥammad belonged to Banū Hāšim, a family of Banū 'Abd Manāf, and the other Qurashi main families, or clans, such as Banū Maḥzūm, through their familial rivalries at Mecca, did not accept such position as he claimed, that is, being a prophet. One of their number once said: تنازعنا نحن وبنو عبد مناف الشرف فأطعمونا فأطعمنا وحملوا فحملنا وأعطوا فأعطينا. حتى إذا تجاذبنا على الركب وكنا كفرسي رهان قالوا منا نبي يأتيه وحى من السماء. فمتى ندرك مثل هذا؟ والله لا نؤمن به أبداً ولا نصدقه (Sīrat Ibn Hišām, I, 316). Therefore they attempted to bring about the failure of Muḥammad's mission. In their attempt to do so, they said he was a soothsayer مجنون and bewitched man كاهن

وقال الكافرون هذا ساحر كذاب (ساحر) and a poet: (مسحور) (Qur'ān, XXXVIII, 4); قال الظالمون إن تتبعون إلا رجلا مسحورا; (Qur'ān, XXV, 8); قالوا إنما أنت من المسحرين; (XXVI, 153). But the Revelation was ever ready to defend him and reproach and discredit the unbelievers: فذكر فما أنت بنعمة ربك بكاهن ولا مجنون. أم يقولون شاعر تتربص به ريب المنون أم يقولون تقوله. بل لا يؤمنون فليأتوا بحديث مثله إن كانوا صادقين وما ينبغي له. إن هو إلا ذكر وقرآن مبين (LII, 19 ff.) and: بل وما علمناه الشعر (XXXVI, 69). Many verses therefore, discredit and often deride Muḥammad's main opponents, the influential Meccans known as الملائ, such as Abū Lahab, Abū Ḡahl, Al-Aḥnas, Al-Walid Ibn al-Muḡira, Ubayy Ibn Ḥalaf and An-Naḍr Ibn al-Ḥariṭ for their disbelief and harsh attitude towards Muḥammad and his followers. Stories of old prophets who had met similar opposition to their missions were related in the Qur'ān aiming to help Muḥammad and his followers keep calm and patient in face of the opposition and harsh treatment of the Meccans: وكذلك نوحى إليك من أنباء الرسل ما نثبت به فؤادك (XI, 120). With Muḥammad's flight (or emigration) to Yaṭrib (Medina) and gaining some power there, the tone of the Revelation changed: أذن للذين يقاتلون بأنهم ظلموا وإن الله على نصرهم لقدير. الذين أخرجوا من ديارهم بغير حق إلا أن يقولوا ربنا الله (XXII, 39-40). Military confrontation and force should be used against the enemy, the idolaters, particularly the Meccans. Muḥammad found it then necessary to strike at their economic prosperity. Expeditions were organized and sent against their trading caravans, and he finally led one which met the Meccans at the battle of Badr in 2 A.H. / 624 A.D., a milestone in the history of Islam. The events of this battle in which the Muslims routed their enemy, are detailed in Chapter 8 (Sūrat al-Anfāl) of the Qur'ān and its most important result, as rightly seen by W.M. Watt (Muḥammad at Medina, p. 15), "was the deepening of the faith of Muḥammad himself and his closest Companions in his prophetic vocation" and more converts from both Aws and Ḥazraḡ embraced Islam and played important roles in the following events. The confrontation which followed in 3 A.H. / 625 A.D., i.e. the battle of Uḥud where the Muslims were defeated, is also detailed in Chapter 3 (Sūrat Āl 'Imrān). The turning point in the fortunes of the Meccans was their failure at the siege of Medina in 5-6 A.H. / 627 A.D., known as the battle of the Ditch الخندق or the Confederates الأحزاب. This confrontation is also detailed in the Qur'ān in Chapter 33 (Sūrat al-Aḥzāb). In all these events, victory is ascribed to Allah: وما النصر إلا من عند الله (III, 126) and the Muslims' failure to their disobedience and love of worldly interests such as spoils: ولقد صدقكم الله وعده إذ تحسوهم بإذنه حتى إذا فشلتم وتنازعتم في الأمر

وعصيتم من بعد ما أراكم ما تحبون منكم من يريد الدنيا ومنكم من يريد الآخرة ثم إن الذين تولوا منكم يوم التقى الجمعان إنما استزلهم: (III, 152) صرفكم عنهم (III, 155). الشيطان ببعض ما كسبوا

Chapter 9, or Sūrat at-Tawba (Repentance), seems to be a continuation of the previous chapter, Sūrat al- Anfāl (Spoils), and even a بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ is not placed at the beginning of this chapter as usual. It was mainly revealed in the late years of Muḥammad's life. Mecca had already surrendered to Islam and many neighboring tribal chiefs had visited Medina and negotiated with Muḥammad their conversion to Islam. This marked the zenith of his power and subsequently he embarked on a risky attempt to extend the territory of Islam to the outskirts of Arabia, first to Syria. The expedition of Tabūk سرية تبوك is a result of this plan and is detailed to some extent in this chapter.

The chapter starts with a warning to those non-Muslim tribes, groups or individuals not to perform the pilgrimage at Mecca as from the following year (that is, 10 A. H.), threatening them of war if they continued to be idolaters. To begin with, Muḥammad, on his return to Medina (from the Tabūk expedition) in 9 A.H., had on mind to perform that year's pilgrimage but then remembered that he would be joined there by non-Muslim pilgrims who would perform the ṭawāf (that is, the ceremony of circumambulation of the Ka'ba), naked: يطوفون بالبيت عراة as was their custom. It may be relevant here to remind the reader of the story of a pre-Islamic Meccan woman who was once forced to circumambulate the Ka'ba at night completely naked, singing:

اليوم يبدو بعضه أو كله وما بدا منه فلا أحله

Muḥammad therefore, rejected the idea of joining the idolaters in the ṭawāf: فكره مخالطتهم and so he sent his Companion Abū Bakr to lead the Muslim pilgrims in the pilgrimage ceremony that year. Then he sent his cousin 'Alī after Abū Bakr with the instructions, in term of Qur'ānic verses, to be read by 'Alī on his behalf, during the pilgrimage, that the idolaters were no more tolerated to perform any future pilgrimage. These instructions form the first verses of this chapter: براءة من الله ورسوله إلى الذين عاهدتم من المشركين: that is, the idolaters, tribes, groups or individuals, who had got a pact: عهد from Muḥammad, their pact would be valid only for four months after which they should accept Islam or be forced to do so. As from the following year, idolaters المشركين would not be allowed pilgrimage to Mecca and no pilgrim

would perform the ṭawāf naked: يا أيها الذين آمنوا إنما المشركون نجس فلا يقربوا (IX, 28). المسجد الحرام بعد عامهم هذا

Then some verses urge the Muslims to stand for their faith and their Prophet and remind them that Allah assisted him once when the infidels of Mecca had forced him to flee and hide in a cave (on his way to Medina): إلا تنصروه فقد نصره الله إذ أخرجه الذين كفروا ثاني اثنين إذ هما في الغار إذ يقول لصاحبه لا تحزن إن الله معنا (IX, 40). The events of the battle of Ḥunayn in 8 A.H./ 630 A.D. shortly after the fall of Mecca are then referred to, to remind the Muslims that Allah was behind their victory when they, despite their superiority in number, had been almost routed by their enemy, the Banū ‘Amir and their allies Banū Tāqīf: ولقد نصركم الله في مواطن كثيرة. ويوم حنين إذ أعجبتكم كثرتكم فلم تغن عنكم شيئا وضاقت عليكم الأرض بما رحبت ثم وليتم مدبرين (IX, 25). This seems to be a prelude to the demand which follows in connection with the Tabūk expedition; the Revelation asks the Muslims to fight the unbelieving Christians: أهل الكتاب قاتلوا الذين لا يؤمنون بالله ولا باليوم الآخر ولا يحرمون ما حرم الله ورسوله ولا يدينون دين الحق من الذين أوتوا الكتاب (IX, 29). The following verses then urge the Muslims to obey Muḥammad’s order to prepare for the Tabūk expedition against the Byzantines, who were Christians: worldly pleasures should not tempt the Muslims to sit and relax even in the heat of summer. Such pleasures are almost insignificant compared with the pleasures of the Hereafter: يا أيها الذين آمنوا ما لكم إذا قيل لكم انفروا في سبيل الله اثاقتم إلى الأرض؟ أرضيتم بالحياة الدنيا من الآخرة فما متاع الحياة الدنيا في الآخرة إلا قليل (IX, 38). Muslims should obey the order and prepare for the expedition; otherwise Allah would punish them: إلا تنفروا يعذبكم عذابا أليما (IX, 39).

But why were the Muslims then unexpectedly annoyed at this particular call for war (or ḡihād)? Sources say that the expedition took place in 9 A.H./September 630 A.D. and was ordered at a time when the weather was exceptionally hot and people were inclined to sit and relax in the shade of their homes and enjoy their crops of date and other fruits: قالوا: غزا رسول الله (ﷺ) في حر شديد وجهد من الناس وحين طابت الثمار واشتهيت الظلال فأبطأ الناس. So they lingered: فأبطأ الناس and the Revelation interfered to urge them to obey the orders of their Prophet. This was, in fact, only one reason for their reluctance and lack of enthusiasm to go on that particular expedition. Al-Wāqīdī (Maḡāzī, 989 ff.) says that the Byzantines were then seen as a formidable power, and for the Arabs, who were accustomed to tribal clashes among themselves rather than to regular warfare, to go to war against them or the Persians, was seen as disastrous: ولم يكن عدو أخوف عند المسلمين منهم.

Rumours reached Medina that the Byzantines, joined by their allies, the tribes of Laḥm, Ğudām, Ğassān and ‘Amila, had been preparing to invade Medina. Al-Wāqidi says that this was not true and that the Syrian traders, on visiting Medina had spread these rumours: *و لم يكن ذلك إنما شيعى قيل لهم فقالوه*. Muḥammad, however, on hearing that, preferred to go to them despite the long distance, rather than wait for their invasion, and therefore asked the Muslims to prepare well for that expedition: *فجلى للناس أمرهم ليتأهبوا لذلك*: أهبة غزوهم وأخبرهم بالوجه الذي يريد. He also asked the Muslim tribes around Medina to join him. The faithful followers of Muḥammad obeyed the order and started their preparation. Stories associated with their readiness to follow their Prophet and the hardships facing some of them are related by transmitters *الرواة* in the *maḡāzī* and *sīra* books. Sources say, possibly with some exaggeration, that the Muslim army amounted to 30 thousand recruits at the start before a part of it, led by ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Ubayy *عبد الله بن أبي* deserted and returned to Medina.

Most of those who protested against joining that expedition and asked for leave were known as *المنافقون*, the Hypocrites. The Revelation then turns to them, exposes them one by one and slashes them. Notable among these were the Anṣāris ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Ubayy, Al-Ġadd Ibn Qays *الجد بن قيس*, Al-Ġulās Ibn Suwayd *الجلال بن سويد*, Wadī‘a Ibn Tābit *واديعة بن ثابت* among others. According to Al-Wāqidi, the Hypocrites who asked Muḥammad to allow them to stay behind were more than 80 but a number of them joined the expedition. These were behind a plot to murder Muḥammad during the expedition. Al-Wāqidi also relates some stories which happened during the expedition and which tend to show their sophisticated minds towards what was seen as miraculous acts done by the Prophet (*Maḡāzī*, 1008, 1010, 1039). Ibn Ubayy decided at first to join the expedition but then returned to Medina at an early stage of the march saying: Do Muḥammad and his men think that the fight against the Banū al-Aṣfar (i.e. the Byzantines) is a joke? For sure they will face defeat and capture: *يغزو محمد بني الأصفر مع جهد الحال والحرب والبلد البعيد إلى ما لا قبل له به؟ يحسب محمد أن قتال بني الأصفر اللعب؟ والله لكأني أنظر إلى أصحابه مقرنين في الحبال*. He died shortly after the return of the expedition to Medina. The so-called hypocrites *المنافقون* here are two groups: those who accompanied the expedition and in the mean time tried to kill Muḥammad, and those who remained at Medina, called here: *المخلفون*. A number of well-credited Companions such as the Ansaris Ka‘b Ibn Malik, Hilāl Ibn Umayya, and Murāra Ibn ar-Rabī‘ did not take part in that expedition and were referred to in this chapter as *الثلاثة الذين خلفوا* (the three

who were left behind). Because Muḥammad had known their faithfulness, he did not approve of their absence from the expedition and asked the Muslims to boycott them as a kind of punishment, which proved to be effective. Then, to their joy, the Revelation came down with the good news that Allah had accepted their repentance and excused them: لقد تاب الله على النبي والمهاجرين والأنصار الذين أتبعوه في ساعة العسرة... وعلى الثلاثة الذين خلفوا حتى إذا ضاقت عليهم الأرض بما رحبت وضاقت عليهم أنفسهم وظنوا أن لا ملجأ من الله إلا إليه ثم تاب عليهم ليتوبوا. إن الله هو التواب الرحيم (IX, 117-8). Some other verses deal with, and excuse, a group of seven of faithful Muslims called البكاؤون (the weepers) who were so poor that they could not provide for their journey with Muḥammad and therefore remained behind: ليس على الضعفاء ولا على المرضى... حرج... ولا على الذين إذا ما أتوك لتحملهم قلت لا أجد ما أحملكم عليه تولوا وأعينهم تفيض من الدمع حزنا ألا يجدوا ما ينفقون (IX, 91-92). But a lot of verses speak of another and larger group, that of الخلفون (those who remained behind at Medina) who numbered over 80 and were able to follow Muḥammad but they did not. These Muslims, apart from the above three and the (seven) weepers البكاؤون, were denounced by the Revelation in a number of verses and were associated with المنافقون, the Hypocrites: فرح الخلفون بمقعدهم خلاف رسول الله وكرهوا أن يجاهدوا بأموالهم وأنفسهم في سبيل الله وقالوا لا تنفروا في الحر. قل نار جهنم أشد حرا لو كانوا يفقهون. فليضحكوا قليلا وليبكوا كثيرا جزاء بما كانوا يكسبون (IX, 81-2). On the return of the expedition, they came to Muḥammad with different excuses for not joining the expedition and he apparently excused them, but the Revelation then asked Muḥammad not to allow them to join him any more in any future expeditions and not to lead the prayer on their dead: فإن رجعت إلى طائفة منهم فاسأذنوك للخروج فقل لن تخرجوا معي أبد أولن تقاتلوا معي عدوا. إنكم رضيتم بالقعود أول مرة فأقعدوا مع الخالفين. ولا تصل على أحد منهم مات أبدا ولا تقم على قبره (IX, 83-4). They were then grouped with infidels: إنهم كفروا بالله ورسوله وماتوا وهم فاسقون. On the return of Muḥammad and his followers and before entering Medina, he was asked by a group of the so-called Hypocrites المنافقون to lead the prayer in a mosque they had built earlier and had been promised by him to do so on his return. The Revelation ordered him not to do so, as that mosque was seen as a مسجد ضرار (mosque of dissension), meant to become a meeting place for the opposition to Islam at Medina. A number of verses in this chapter also deal with this mosque which was then burnt down at the orders of Muḥammad: والذين اتخذوا مسجدا ضرارا وكفرا وتفريقا بين المؤمنين وأرصادا لمن حارب الله ورسوله من قبل. وليخلفن أن أردنا إلا الحسنى. والله يشهد أنهم لكاذبون. لا تقم فيه أبدا. (IX, 107-8).

Accounts, with more or less details, are found in the *Sīra* of Ibn Hišām, Maḡāzī of Al-Wāqidi, and other sources on the Hypocrites المنافقون associated with that mosque. These accounts say that, when Muḡammad emigrated to Medina, the two prominent tribal heads there were ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Ubayy of the Ḥazraḡ and Abū ‘Āmir of the Aws, known as the monk الراهب. With Muḡammad’s victory at the battle of Badr, these gradually saw in Muḡammad a rival to their authority and they attempted to defy him. The former apparently embraced Islam but Abū ‘Āmir hesitated and, rather than follow Muḡammad, left Medina first for Mecca then Aṭ-Ṭā’if, and finally for Syria where he died later. The Hypocrites المنافقون who sympathized with him meant that the mosque, known as مسجد ضرار (the mosque of dissension), which they had built and convinced Muḡammad to open it on his return from Tabūk by leading the Muslims in prayer in it, would be a meeting place for the Hypocrites including Abū ‘Āmir. But this never happened because it was demolished at the orders of Muḡammad. It was close to the old Qubā’ mosque and hence it was seen, according to the Revelation, as a place meant “to divide the believers” تفريقا بين المؤمنين as well as “a place of ambush” for those who fought God and His Messenger aforesaid (that is, to shelter the opposition): مسجدا ضرارا وكفرا وتفريقا بين: (IX, 107). The names associated with this mosque are apart from Abū ‘Āmir, who was away in Syria: Mu‘attib Ibn Quṣayr معتب بن قشير, Ta‘laba Ibn Ḥāṭib ثعلبة بن الحاطب, Ḥidām Ibn Ḥalid خذام بن خالد, Abū Ḥabība Ibn al-Az‘ar الأزعر بن حبيبة and ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Nabtal عبد الله بن نبتل (Cf. Ibn Ḥabīb, *Al-Muḡabbar*, 467ff.). This last, ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Nabtal, used to attend the meetings of the Prophet with his Companions, hear what was discussed and return with the news to his fellow Hypocrites: وكان عبد الله بن نبتل... يأتي رسول الله (ﷺ) فيسمع حديثه ثم يأتي به والمنافقين (Maḡāzī, 1047). The Revelation warned him of God’s wrath and punishment in the verse: ألم يعلموا أنه من يحادد الله ورسوله فإن له نار جهنم: His father Nabtal Ibn al-Ḥārīṭ also used to attend Muḡammad’s meetings, say to him things which Muḡammad apparently accepted, and return to his fellow hypocrites to tell them that Muḡammad would listen to, and accept anything: إنما محمد أذن من حدثه: ومنهم الذين يؤذون النبي ويقولون هو أذن. قل هو أذن خير لكم يؤمن بالله ويؤمن (IX, 61) (And some of them hurt the Prophet, saying, ‘he is an ear!...’). Mu‘attib Ibn Quṣayr saw the disaster afflicted on the Muslims, mainly the Anṣār, at



Uḥud and commented saying: لو كان لنا من الأمر شيء ما قتلنا ها هنا (III, 154) (Ah, if we had had a part in the affair, never would we have been slain here). He also said during the siege of Medina by the Confederates: كان محمد يعدنا أن نأكل كنوز كسرى وقيصر وأحدنا لا يأمن أن يذهب إلى الغائط (Sīra, vol. I, 522). It is he and his fellow Hypocrites who are meant by the verse: وإذ يقول المنافقون والذين في قلوبهم مرض: ما وعدنا ورسوله إلا غرورا الله: (XXXIII, 12) (God and His Messenger promised us only delusion). Ibn Hišām names 12 Muslim hypocrites as the ones who built that mosque. All of them belong to Banū ‘Amr Ibn ‘Awf of the Aws, the clan of Abū ‘Āmir, the monk. They said to Muḥammad when they requested him to lead the prayer in that mosque that their aim was to shelter the poor, the needy and the wretched (visitors of Medina) especially in the hard nights of winter: قد بنينا مسجدا لذي العلة والحاجة والليلة المطيرة والليلة الشتائية. وإنا نحب أن تأتينا فتصلي لنا فيه. He promised to do so on his return from Tabūk, but he had other thoughts later: he probably saw no need for two mosques to be in the same area as it was built not far away from the old Quba’ mosque. Then ‘Āṣim Ibn ‘Adī informed him of their real intentions. Ibn Ḥaḡar (Al-Iṣāba, no. 4353) says that the Companion ‘Āṣim Ibn ‘Adī عاصم بن عدي used to attend their meetings and hence he informed the Prophet that their real aim was to build a mosque where they could meet without being annoyed by those whom they did not trust: أرادوا مسجدا يكونون فيه لا يغشاهم فيه إلا من يريدون ممن هو على رأيهم. In this mosque they could meet with other Hypocrites who shared the same view with them ممن هو على رأيهم and even with Abū ‘Āmir, who was then a fugitive in Syria. The Revelation confirmed ‘Āṣim’s report and asked Muḥammad not to lead the prayer in it لا تقم فيه. So he ordered two of his followers to destroy and burn that mosque saying: انطلقا إلى هذا المسجد الظالم أهله فأهدماه: (Sīrat Ibn Hišām, vol. II, p. 530). An account in (Al-Iṣāba, no. 4353) says that Muḥammad had sent ‘Āṣim Ibn ‘Adī to “the people of the mosque of dissension” just before the battle of Badr: رده عن بدر إلى أهل مسجد الضرار: النبي (ﷺ), which may make the story of this mosque much earlier than the Tabūk expedition.

Throughout the series of events associated with the Umma and soon after Muḥammad’s arrival at Yaṭrib, we hear of the Hypocrites المنافقون as those who disagreed with Muḥammad secretly rather than openly, and often plotted to bring about his failure at decisive moments. These often had strong ties with the Jewish tribes of Medina and did not cut them despite Allah’s warning: يا أيها الذين آمنوا لا تتخذوا عدوي وعدوكم أولياء تلقون إليهم بالمودة (LX, 1). They were mainly the followers of ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Ubayy of

the Banū ‘Awf Ibn Hārīṭa of Ḥazraġ and Abū ‘Āmir the monk *الراهب* of Banū ‘Amr Ibn ‘Awf of the Aws. These two, it seems, were the most influential among the two wings of the Anṣār. The former, ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Ubayy was associated at least with one of the three Jewish clans of Yaṭrib, the Banū Qaynuqā’ *بنو قينقاع*, while the latter was associated with Christianity *وكان قد ترهب* and was called the monk *الراهب*. After the victory of the Muslims at Badr, the former apparently and rather reluctantly, accepted Islam and joined some of Muḥammad’s expeditions but as events had proved, he often tried to bring about the failure of his plans. In one instance he even threatened to expel Muḥammad from Medina, saying, as recorded in the Qur’ān (LXIII, 8): *لئن رجعنا إلى المدينة ليخرجن الأعز منها الأذل*; and in another, also recorded in the Qur’ān (LXIII, 7), he urged his followers not to offer help to Muḥammad’s followers: *حتى ينفضوا لا تنفقوا على من عند رسول الله*. Before the clash at the battle of Uḥud, he deserted with his followers who formed a third of the Muslim army and it is ironic to hear one of the victorious Meccans then, ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ, admitting that the reason behind the withdrawal of Qurayš at the end of the Uḥud day was their expectation that Ibn Ubayy might attack them with his followers (Maġāzī, p. 299). Ibn Ubayy was behind the safety of his Jewish allies, the Banū Qaynuqā’, whose men were about to be put to death for the reason mentioned hereunder when Ibn Ubayy intervened and almost forced Muḥammad to change his mind and set them free. He said to him: *يا محمد. أحسن في موالي: أربعمئة دارع وثلاثمئة حاسر منعوني يوم الحداثق ويوم بعث من الأحمر والأسود، تريد أن تحصدهم في غداة واحدة؟* that is, the Banū Qaynuqā’ had stood for him and the Ḥazraġ and fought by their side on several occasions such as the Bu‘āṭ and Al-Ḥadā’iq battles in the pre-Islamic war between these and the Aws, and therefore he would not allow Muḥammad to put them to death for any reason. Banū Qaynuqā’, though saved from death, were, however, forced out of Medina and they left for Syria. Unlike the aristocratic and landed class of Banū an-Naḍīr *بنو النضير* and Banū Qurayza *بنو قريظة*, they were mainly blacksmiths, goldsmiths *صاغة* and manufacturers of tools, swords and some other weaponry and tools particularly for home and agriculture. They left no land properties but their weapons, behind when they left for Syria. The Banū an-Naḍīr were, in the words of Muḥammad himself, ranking socially and economically with the Banū al-Muġīra of Qurayš: *هوؤلاء في قومهم بمنزلة بني المغيرة في قريش*: (Maġāzī, 375). They allied themselves with the Aws and sided with them in war. They were known among their neighbours for their generosity and readiness to help in time of

need as it is understood from the account of Al-Wāqidī (ibid.): أما والله لقد كان عندكم لنا للمجتدي وقرى حاضر للضيف... ونجدة إذا استنجدتم said Ḥassān Ibn Tābit when he saw them leave Medina after they had plotted to kill Muḥammad. The notable tribesman Nu‘aym Ibn Mas‘ūd بن مسعود of Ašḡa أشجع of Ġaṭafān غطفان, also lamented their expulsion saying: فدى لهذه الوجوه التي كأنها المصايح ظاعنين من يثرب؟ من للمجتدي الملهوف؟ من... للطارق السغبان؟ (Ibid.). This Nu‘aym embraced Islam later and was behind the failure of the Confederates to achieve their aim of destroying Muḥammad and Islam by creating dissensions between the Meccans, Ġaṭafān and the Banū Qurayza. The same can be said of Banū Qurayza. Pacts of mutual security and cooperation against outsiders were made between Muḥammad and non-Muslim communities at Medina shortly after his arrival there. It seems that the Jewish clans did not keep their promise. The Banū Qaynuqā‘ were sure of their power as they could recruit 700 strong, and when Muḥammad tried to win them over to Islam after his victory at Badr, they rejected his approach and even warned him of their power if he used force against them: وأنا والله أصحاب الحرب، ولئن قاتلنا لتعلمن أنك لم تقاتل مثلنا (Maḡāzī, p. 176). However, they killed a Muslim and Muḥammad besieged them and forced them to surrender. They escaped death but were forced out of Medina as mentioned above. The Banū an-Naḍīr conspired to murder Muḥammad shortly after the battle of Uḥud, while he was on a business visit to them. This gave him a pretext to order for their expulsion from Medina. Ibn Ubayy tried to convince them to disobey and fight, promising them help, but they rejected his offer and accepted to leave in safety together with their families leaving behind their weapons and landed properties for Muḥammad and the Muslims. This is recorded in the Qur’ān (IXL, 2-6 and 11-14). The third clan, the Banū Qurayza, a force of about 700 strong, broke the pact with Muḥammad when they joined the Confederates: the Meccans and their allies particularly Ġaṭafān, who invaded Medina in 5 A.H. /627 A.D. The failure of the invasion meant an end to this Jewish clan despite the intercession of a number of Awsite figures, their former allies, to ensure their safety from death as Ibn Ubayy had done earlier for his allies, the Banū Qaynuqā‘. Muḥammad left it to the Awsite Sa‘d Ibn Mu‘āḍ سعد بن معاذ to give the sentence against them. Sa‘d, who had been mortally wounded by an astray arrow during the siege of Medina by the Confederates, decreed that their men should be put to death for their treachery, and so they were. With this, and by the year 6 A. H.,

Medina was almost clean of non-Muslim opposition. But hypocrites remained there.

Abū 'Āmir the monk kept his faith but could not stand the opposition of his kinsmen at Yaṭrib. He left for Mecca where he joined the Meccans against Muḥammad at the battle of Uḥud and was behind the strategy of digging holes (حفر الحفائر) in the battle-ground which led to the fall and wounding of a number of Muslim fighters including Muḥammad himself. He continued unsuccessfully to plot with the Meccans to bring about the failure of Muḥammad's plans. With the fall of Mecca into the hands of the Muslims, he fled to Aṭ-Ṭā'if and later, after the conversion of Ṭaqīf, to Syria where he continued to have contact with the hypocrites of Medina. He planned to come back with a Syrian force but he never did. He and Ibn Ubayy formed the top hypocrites and their followers were a considerable number of the Aws and the Ḥazraġ at Medina. Ibn Kaṭīr says that when the Muslims had achieved victory at the battle of Badr, the hypocrites of Medina embraced Islam. However, their conversion was only apparent and the following events exposed their real intentions and hypocrisy: they could not even hide their rejoicing at the defeat of the Muslims in the following confrontation at Uḥud and the Revelation exposed them: *إن تصيبك حسنة تسوؤهم وإن تصيبك مصيبة يقولوا قد أخذنا حذرنا من قبل وتولوا وهم فرحون* (IX, 50) (If good fortune befalls thee, it vexes them ; but if thou art visited by an affliction, they say, 'We took our dispositions before,' and turn away rejoicing) (Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, and I am quoting his interpretations in this article). Then at the siege of Medina by the Confederates, they asked for permission to leave the front and return to defend their homes saying: *إن بيوتنا عورة* (Our houses are exposed). So they deserted and even appealed to their fellow tribesmen to follow suit. The Revelation exposed them: "A party of them said: O people of Yaṭrib, there is no abiding here for you, therefore return ! And a party of them were asking leave of the Prophet, saying: Our houses are exposed... they desired only to flee " (XXXIII, 12, 13) ; *إذا لقوكم قالوا آمنا، وإذا خلوا عضوا عليكم الأنامل من الغيظ* ; (III, 119) (when they meet you they say: ' We believe ', but when they go privily, they bite at you their fingers, enraged...). In the long run, their hypocrisy of course annoyed Muḥammad, who then found their absence from the fight more convenient for his success. The Revelation came down with the verses: "If they were among you, they would fight but little" (XXXIII, 20) ; *لو كان عرضا قريبا وسفرا قاصدا لا تبعوك ولكن بعدت عليهم الشقة* (IX, 42) (Were it a gain near at hand, and an easy journey, they would have followed thee; but

the distance was too far for them) and: لو خرجوا فيكم ما زادوكم الا خبالا (IX, 47-8), approving Muḥammad's policy towards them. A whole chapter of the Qur'ān, Chapter LXIII (Sūrat al-Munāfiqūn), is mainly meant to expose them and their activities towards Muḥammad. The Revelation, addressing him here, says: "They (i.e. the Hypocrites) are the enemy; so beware of them. God assail them ! How they are perverted... God will never forgive them. God guides not the people of the ungodly". Faithful Muslims around them also did not approve their behaviour: the son of Ibn Ubayy, named also 'Abd Allāh, whose conversion preceded his father's, disliked the visits paid to his father by other hypocrites (Maḡāzī, 1059: وكان ابنه عبد الله ليس شيء أثقل عليه ولا... فكان يغلق دونهم الباب (أعظم من رؤيتهم...)). Unlike his father, he took part in the battle of Uḥud and received some wounds which brought him his father's reproach but his faith remained unshaken. Another hypocrite was Al-Ġadd Ibn Qays, the sayyid of Banū Salama of the Ḥazraġ. He was invited by Muḥammad to take part in the Tabūk expedition but he requested to be excused saying that he would not then stand the beauty of Roman girls there, meaning that his faith would then be blurred: أو تأذن لي ولا تفتني؟ فوالله لقد عرف قومي ما أحد أشد عجباً بالنساء مني. وإني لأخشى أن رأيت نساء بني الأصفر لا أصبر عنهم. His son 'Abd Allāh Ibn al-Ġadd, a faithful Muslim, then blamed him for turning down Muḥammad's invitation and accused him of hypocrisy (Maḡāzī, pp. 992 seq.). Al-Ġulās Ibn Suwayd, another hypocrite, took part in an abusive talk with two or more other hypocrites. His step-son, 'Umayr, was quick to blame him for that and then to inform Muḥammad of what he and the others had been talking. Abū 'Āmir's son, Ḥanzala حنظلة, was a faithful Muslim and he often blamed his father for his hostility to Muḥammad and Islam. In all these instances, the Revelation exposed the Hypocrites: Al-Ġadd Ibn Qays was slashed in a number of verses: ومنهم من ألا في الفتنة سقطوا (Give me leave and do not tempt me) يقول ائذن لي ولا تفتني (IX, 49, 81-2) ; and so were Al-Ġulās and Wadī'a Ibn Tābit (IX, 65-6 and 74): ولئن سألتهم ليقولن إنما كنا نخوض ونلعب (We were only plunging and playing) and: يحلفون بالله ما قالوا ولقد قالوا كلمة الكفر: وكفروا بعد إسلامهم وهموا بما لم ينالوا... فإن يتوبوا بك خيراً لهم however, finally repented and made up his mind to die as a martyr, which he got at the battle of Al-Yamāma later.

Another hypocrite was the Awsite Ṭa'labā Ibn Ḥāṭib, who took part in building the evil mosque and who once had promised before Muḥammad to

give alms to the poor if he became rich enough. It happened that this was realized for him and Muḥammad asked him to fulfil his promise but he refused and when he later repented, his alms were never accepted. He was also discredited in these verses of this chapter: ومنهم من عاهد الله لئن آتانا من فضله لنصدقن ولنكونن من الصالحين. فلما آتاهم من فضله بخلوا به وتولوا وهم معرضون. فأعقبهم نفاقا في قلوبهم إلى يوم يلقونه بما أخلفوا الله ما وعدوه وما كانوا يكدبون (IX, 75-7).

An important step taken by the Hypocrites was their decision to kill Muḥammad during the expedition of Tabūk. A number of them took the opportunity one night, on the way back to Medina, when Muḥammad was riding almost alone along a steep track with only two Companions, ‘Ammār Ibn Yāsir and Ḥudayfa Ibn al-Yaman, driving his she-camel, and tried to push him down: لما كان رسول الله (ﷺ) ببعض الطريق مكر به أناس من المنافقين: ببعثوا في الطريق واثتمروا أن يطرحوه من عقبة في الطريق (Maḡāzī, 1042). The attempt failed and the conspirators who in one tradition numbered 13, remained almost unknown because of the darkness of the night and their being veiled ملتهم. It is referred to, in one tradition, in the verse: وهموا بما لم ينالوا (IX, 74). Reference to the Hypocrites is again made at the end of the chapter (IX, 124-7): وإذا ما أنزلت سورة فمنهم من يقول: أيكم زادته هذه إيمانا فأما الذين آمنوا فزادتهم إيمانا وهم يستبشرون. وأما الذين في قلوبهم مرض فزادتهم رجسا إلى رجسهم وماتوا وهم كافرون... وإذا ما أنزلت سورة نظر بعضهم إلى بعض هل يراكم من أحد ثم انصرفوا. انصرفوا. Here they are criticised for their attitude towards what was revealed to Muḥammad and again they are associated with the infidels الكافرون. In his comment on verse 64 of this chapter, Ibn Kaṭīr says: فاضحة المنافقين، فاضحة الفاضحة، قال قتادة: تسمى هذه السورة الفاضحة، فاضحة المنافقين for its role in exposing the hypocrites.

Gradually, the Hypocrites continued to decrease in number and power or influence especially after the expulsion of the Jewish tribes from Medina and the death of Ibn Ubayy, and the continuous success of Islam as promised by Allah (وكلمة الله هي العليا) finally convinced them to be more faithful Muslims.