

The Legacy of Mohammed

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Many rulers and their subjects in Muslim nations are very peaceable. But some are far more militant. The reason is both concepts are taught in the *Koran* and practiced in the life of Mohammed.

As the centuries passed, those beliefs toppled nations and destroyed kings. They continue to affect men's actions today.

You will here read information gleaned, by the author, from sources not easily available today. These facts are not now often discussed.

— PART ONE —

THE LAND OF MOHAMMED

In the year A.D. 570, a child was born into a lower-income family, in a country which was three-quarters desert and sparsely populated by impoverished nomad tribesmen.

Because of what that man taught, within a century those tribesmen were destined to conquer half of Byzantine Asia, all of Persia and Egypt, most of North Africa, and be headed for their conquest of Spain.

And the explosion did not stop there, but went on and on for hundreds of years.

Who was this man, and what did he teach?

Arabia is a large, irregular triangle that is actually part of the Sahara—the sandy belt that runs from North Africa to the Gobi Desert. The word, *Arab*, means arid. Arabia is a vast plateau which, within 30 miles of the Red Sea, rises to 12,000 feet and, then, slopes through mountainous wastelands eastward to the Persian Gulf. In the center are some grassy oases, with their palm trees and shallow wells. Around them are hundreds of miles of sandy desert.

It is a harsh land, with nights falling to 38° F. and days scorching hot. Sand-laden air cuts into skin that is not protected by long robes and head coverings.

Along the western shoreline, torrents of rain occasionally fall; and there we find the *Hejaz* district and its cities of *Mecca* and *Medina*. Farther south is the district of *Yemen*, with its relative abundance of water, wood, and gardens. But our story will center around Mecca and Medina.

Back then, the Arab felt no duty or loyalty to any group larger than his own tribe. Aside from the loose authority of the clan leader (the *Sheik*; earlier called *sheikhs*), there were no rules. Anything could be done, including robbery and murder, as long as it helped the tribe.

Possibly a tenth of the population lived in towns along, or near, the coast. Some raised a few cattle and horses, but most cultivated orchards of dates, apricots, oranges, bananas, figs, peaches, lemons, and pomegranates. Others tended aromatic plants such as jasmine, lavender, thyme, and frankincense, or cupped trees to draw out myrrh (balsam) from the trunks.

This was an intersection of continents. Harbors and markets for Red Sea commerce were here, plus great caravan routes.

More than half of the population of Arabia consisted of wandering *Bedouin*, the nomads of the desert who moved with their flocks from one pastureland to another. Although they loved horses, the camel was their mainstay in the desert. Even though it only traveled eight miles an hour, it could go without water for five days in the summer and twenty-five in the winter.

The camel provided everyone with milk. Its dung was burned to stave off the chilly nights. The women washed their babies in its urine, to fend off insects. When a camel died, its tender meat was a delicacy, and its valuable hair and hide were made into clothing and tents. The Bedouin could live day after day on a few dates and a little milk.

Although they did not know it, these Bedouin were perfectly fitted for the extremes of desert war-

fare, by which they would later conquer all of the Near East. Indeed, war was something with which they were already acquainted. When not busy with other duties, the Bedouin occupied themselves with tribal war. They called them *razzias*, or *raids*.

But, by mutual agreement, at certain periods of the year, everyone would maintain a “*holy truce*,” so they could attend religious feasts or attend to their crops and other needed activities.

The rest of the time, the Bedouin fought with one another or robbed travelers who did not pay them tribute. These were powerfully built men who loved the freedom of the desert, where they could do whatever they wished.

Next to their horses, camels, women, and date wine, the Arabs loved stories and poetry. Since nearly all of them were illiterate, in their spare time they would sit and listen as one, and then another, would tell them legends or recite poems. This quality would come in handy when a young man, soon to be born, began telling them strange things.

Before the time of Mohammed, the land of Arabia was a nameless place which the Greeks called *Sarakenoi*, or *Saracens* (apparently from the Arabic *sharqiyun*, which meant “*Easterners*”).

For 25 centuries, from Abraham to Mohammed, the Arabs were not a nation but only a multitude of tribes, either stationary or wandering. As far as others were concerned, they had no geography, no history, and no importance. But times were soon to change.

This is the story of a people who rose above their climate and soil, and used their religion to conquer a sizeable part of the world.

As mentioned earlier, the chief ancient Arabian cities were in *Yemen* (anciently called *Arabia Felix*, “*Arabia the Happy*,” because of its more abundant water, wood, and fruit), *Mecca*, and *Medina* farther north. Both of these cities were in the *Hedjaz*, close to the western coast, part of the ancient land of *Arabia Petraea* (“*Arabia the Stony*”).

From far into the distant past, Mecca (today known locally as *Makkah*) had been a place of considerable trade. It is located at the intersection of two important routes: between Syria and Arabia Felix, and between Ethiopia and southeastern Asia.

The *Kaaba*, the holy place in Mecca, was considered the national metropolis of the Arabic people, long before Judaism and Christianity appeared in the peninsula. *Kaaba* means a square structure, and is identical to our word, cube. Arabs believe it was originally built by the angels at the dawn of history. A rectangular stone edifice 40 feet long, 35 feet wide, and 50 high, it is located near the center of a large

porticoed enclosure, the *Masjid al-Haram*, or Sacred Mosque. In the southeast corner of the Kaaba, five feet from the ground (so it can easily be kissed) is embedded the Black Stone. Made of dark red material, oval in shape and about seven inches in diameter, Westerners consider it to be a meteorite. But the worshiping Arabs believe this stone was sent down from God out of heaven before the time of Abraham. Citing Psalm 118:22-23 and Matthew 21:42-43, Arab scholars believe it symbolizes Ishmael and his offspring who were rejected by Israel. They also believed that it covered the tomb of Abraham, before it had been brought to Mecca.

Within the Kaaba (prior to Mohammed’s triumphal entry into Mecca in A.D. 630) were several idols representing tribal divinities. One of them was called *Allah*, and was probably the tribal deity of the Quraish. Three others were Allah’s daughters: *al-Uzza*, *al-Lat*, and *Manah*. They had been worshiped for hundreds of years; for Herodotus (c.484-425 B.C.), the Greek historian, mentioned al-il-Lat (al-Lat) as a major Arabian deity (*Heroditus, iii, 8*). The Quraish worshiped Allah as the Lord of their soil, to whom they must pay tithes of the crops and farm animals.

The tribe of *Quraish* (Koreish) was in charge of the Kaaba. This made them the leaders of Mecca and the most important of all the tribes of Arabia. It was believed that Quraish was the most important of Ishmael’s twelve sons (although we do not find his name listed in Genesis 25:12-16). Since they were acknowledged by the Arabs as being the direct descendants of Abraham and Ishmael, Quraish had been appointed priests and guardians of the Kaaba, and managers of all the donations brought in by the worshipers. The most aristocratic minority of this tribe controlled the entire civil government of Mecca.

Mecca is located in a winding valley at the foot of three barren mountains. The soil consists of rocks and the water is brackish. The pastures are at some distance from the city, and good fruit cannot be obtained any nearer than the gardens of Tayif, about 70 miles away.

In marked contrast, *Medina* (known as Yatreb before the time of Mohammed, and today called Al-Madina by the Arabs) possessed far better natural advantages. It had water, good soil, palm and fruit trees, grasslands, cattle, sheep, and goats.

In view of this, one might wonder why it was that Mecca was the most important Arabic city in ancient times. The answer is that Mecca had the commerce. Between Yemen and other localities, and the cities of Asia and Europe, the trade routes led through Mecca. Ships regularly docked at the port city of

The Legacy of Mohammed

Juddah (today called *Jidda*), not far from Mecca. Part of the wealth of the nations passed through the city.

Because the people of Medina were always jealous of the greater prosperity of Mecca, they gladly accepted Mohammed when he later fled from Mecca. Otherwise he might have been slain by his enemies.

In addition to Arab worshippers of the Kaaba deities, there were also Christians and Jews in the Arabia. So, when the prophet was born, the Arabian religion was a jumble of monotheism and polytheism—Judaism, Christianity, Magism, and idolatry. But Sabeism, the worship of heavenly bodies, was the primary religion.

This was the world into which Mohammed was born.

— PART TWO — MOHAMMED: THE YEARS OF PEACE (A.D. 569-622)

As the sixth century began, the Quraish were split into two factions: one led by *Hashim*, a rich merchant; the other by Hashim's jealous nephew, *Umayya*. On the death of Hashim he was succeeded, as one of Mecca's two leaders, by his son (or younger brother, we are not sure), *Abd al-Muttalib*.

Abdallah was the son of al-Muttalib. In the year 568, he married *Amina* (Emina), also a descendant of the leading family of the Quraish. Three days after the marriage ceremony ended, he set out on a mercantile trip. On the return journey, he died at Medina.

Two months later, *Amina* delivered a son, destined to become the most influential person in history, after the time of Christ.

Although his ancestry was distinguished, little Mohammed only inherited a flock of goats, five camels, a house, and a slave woman who cared for him in his infancy. His mother, *Amina*, died when he was six; and the boy's grandfather, *Abd al Motalleb*, then seventy-six, and later his uncle, *Abu Talib* (Abu Taleb), raised him.

The name, Mohammed (*Mohammad*, *Mahmud*, *Mehmed*), means "highly praised" in Arabic. Although he was well-cared for, like most all other boys, young Mohammed was never taught to read or write. No one considered it important; indeed, only seventeen men of the Quraish tribe could read.

Mohammed was never known to write anything himself; he always dictated his ideas to someone

who would write them down. But his apparent illiteracy did not prevent him from composing the most famous book in the Arabic language.

In spite of his meager surroundings, Mohammed belonged to one of the most illustrious families of Arabia. His Quraish parentage included the branch of *Hussein*, to which belonged the guardianship of the Kaaba. The chief magistrate of the city also belonged to the branch of Hussein.

We know almost nothing about Mohammed's youth, but there are numerous legends. His later biographers compiled a vast number of miraculous stories about his childhood and youth.

Although his mother, *Amina*, was a Jewess who had been converted to Christianity, we do not know the kind of instruction she had given the boy before she died, when he was six. Yet it must have been a fair amount; for Mohammed's dictations, as later compiled into the *Koran*, contain many things which parallel information in the Old Testament (although less in the New). At any rate, it is likely that his Christian mother had been the strongest religious influence in his formative years.

Apparently, he also tended sheep and goats on the hills, in the vicinity of Mecca. At Medina, after he became an accepted prophet, he referred to that earlier experience.

"Pick me the blackest of those berries; they are such as I used to gather when I fed the flocks at Mecca. Verily, no prophet has been raised up who has not performed the work of shepherd."

Mohammed is thought to have gone on his first caravan journey at the age of thirteen. Apparently, he was actively engaged in trade from that time onward. At the age of twenty-five, Mohammed entered the service of a wealthy widow, named *Khadija* (Khadijah), for whose commercial interests he made another caravan trip to Syria. While there, he sold her merchandise at Damascus; and, upon his return home, *Khadija*, forty years old by this time, was so pleased with the capable, intelligent young man—that she married him.

Mohammed is said to have been a faithful husband to *Khadija* for twenty-five years, until her death; and, as long as she lived, he did not take another wife. This was highly unusual for an Arab of any means.

His marriage to *Khadija* brought prosperity into Mohammed's life, and he now had as much time as he wished for leisure.

Khadija bore him several daughters, of whom *Fatima* is the best known, and two sons who died in infancy. Eventually, Mohammed adopted *Ali*, the orphan son of *Abu Talib*, the uncle who had helped raise Mohammed. He also provided for *Abu Talib*,

who had become impoverished. Ali later married Fatima.

Little is known of Mohammed's history for the next fifteen years. But we do know that, as he approached forty, he would go every year during the holy month of Ramadan to a cave in *Mount Hira*, three miles from Mecca, where he prayed, fasted, and meditated. He also went to the cave at other times in the year.

Mohammed began to have visions. He said he saw angels; and one was named Gabriel who would speak to him—and, then, throw him down to the ground where he would lie, foaming at the mouth for a time.

The faithful believe that Gabriel, the highest of the angels, actually spoke with Mohammed and gave him the messages which were later compiled into the *Koran*. Skeptics say he just had epileptic seizures. Others say it was a form of hysteria accompanied with catalepsy. Still others say demons spoke with Mohammed and threw him to the ground.

(In separate studies, I found that Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Jesuits; Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormons; Charles Darwin, inventor of evolution; and Adolph Hitler (who was told to kill the Jews, thus blotting out Sabbathkeepers) also made regular contact with an evil spirit.

Returning from these experiences, he would not only tell others what had happened, but would pay a man to write them down. Everything written down was supposed to have been given to Mohammed by Gabriel, who in turn was said to have memorized the exact words and later dictated them.

The messages were written on palm leaves, pieces of animal hide, and even on bones.

Mohammed's first important message was supposed to have been given to him one night in the year A.D. 610, as he was alone in the cave. This is said to have been the pivotal experience of all Islamic history. According to a report, later written by his chief biographer, *Muhammad ibn Ishaq*, Mohammed said this was what happened:

"Whilst I was asleep, with a coverlet of silk brocade whereon was some writing, the angel Gabriel appeared to me and said, 'Read!' I said, 'I do not read.' He pressed me with the coverlets so tightly that me thought 'twas death. Then he let me go, and said, 'Read!' . . . So I read aloud, and he departed from me at last. And I awoke from my sleep, and it was as though these words were written on my heart. I went forth until, when I was midway on the mountain, I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'O Mohammed! thou art the messenger of Allah,

and I am Gabriel!' I raised my head toward heaven to see, and lo, Gabriel in the form of a man, with feet set evenly on the rim of the sky, saying, 'O Mohammed! thou art the messenger of Allah, and I am Gabriel!' " (*Koran, xcvi*).

It is said that Khadija immediately accepted his vision as true, and thereafter he had many more. Often when they came, Mohammed went into convulsions and lay there heavy with sweat. When others were present, they neither saw nor heard an angel. At other times, Mohammed would hear a bell ringing; and he would be thrown to the ground, writhing, given a vision, or hear something. Afterward, he would dictate what was said to him.

Scholars say the *Koran*, containing those dictated messages, is an unintelligible book—if unconnected with its author's biography. Many incidents of his life assumed shape in some revelation. In his later years, for example, a convenient revelation came whenever he decided he needed to add another wife to his collection. When he thereupon told the latest vision to his wives, they would accept the fact that Gabriel wanted him to take the one he had in mind.

A systematic arrangement of the *Suras* (chapters) of the *Koran* would make it the best biography of Mohammed's life. But, instead, everything is arranged in a jumble—with the longest *Suras* first and the shortest last.

It was in A.D. 609, when Mohammed was forty years old, that he publicly announced his mission for the first time.

At the time that these visions began, Mohammed had lived for years in Mecca as a quiet, peaceful citizen; so when he began telling his visions to others, few paid any attention to them. With the passing of time, the *Quraish*—the ruling tribe—became disgusted with his tales.

During the first three years after announcing his mission, Mohammed had gained only fourteen disciples. By this time he was forty-three years old.

He opened his house to anyone who would come and listen to him, but few were interested. Commerce and trading were all that brought money into Mecca, and it seemed to be a waste of time listening to Mohammed's stories. This continued on for twelve years.

Mohammed was careful not to say that he had a new religion for the people. Instead, he said he was just trying to bring the people back to the old-time religion of earlier years. This tactful approach enabled him to continue speaking publicly in Mecca far longer than he otherwise could have.

The Legacy of Mohammed

**PART TWO
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Continued from the preceding tract in this series

Keep in mind that, in addition to Kaaba worshippers, there were also Jews and Christians in Mecca and the surrounding towns. When speaking to Jews, Mohammed would maintain the authority of the Pentateuch and the inspiration of the Hebrew prophets. When conversing with Christians, he said that Christ's mission was from God, the Gospel was true, and both the Old and New Testaments were divinely inspired. (In later years, when he had attained greater power, Mohammed had a different message about Jews and Christians.)

As for the Arabs, Mohammed took especial care to conciliate them—for he recognized that they could be very dangerous.

As mentioned earlier, Mohammed's first convert was his aging wife, Khadija. His second was his cousin *Ali*. Mohammed had arranged a feast and invited forty guests, at which time he announced himself to be Allah's prophet, and asked, "Who among you will be my vizier, to share with me the burden and the toils of this important mission, to become my brother, my vicar, and my ambassador?" (In Muslim countries, "vizier" means a high government official.)

Silence filled the room and, then, shouting, *Ali* rushed forward and declared, "I will be your vizier, O Apostle! and obey your commands. Whoever dares to oppose you, I will tear out his eyes, dash out his teeth, break his legs, and rip open his body!"

Mohammed expressed delight to have such a helpful friend. No one else at the feast accepted him.

His third convert was his servant, *Zaid*, whom he had earlier bought as a slave and immediately freed. The fourth was his relative, *Abu Bekr*, an influential businessman among the Quraish. *Abu Bekr* brought five other Meccan leaders who also accepted Mohammed's messages. These six, known as his "six companions," would later produce memoirs of Mohammed's life. *Abu Bekr* would figure more prominently than the others;—for, on Mohammed's death, he would become his successor.

Mohammed often went to the Kaaba and talked

to anyone who would hear him. Quraish leaders ridiculed him, saying he was crazy and offering to send him to a physician, to cure his insanity.

But when Mohammed began telling people that (with the exception of Allah) the deities in the Kaaba were only idols, Quraish leaders wanted to kill him. Such talk could hurt their temple income. If his uncle, *Abu Talib*, had not shielded him from their wrath, Mohammed would have been slain. Although *Abu Talib* did not believe Mohammed's ideas, he defended the right of a close relative to utter them.

Fearing that a major split and blood feud might result from an assassination, the Quraish decided not to harm Mohammed. Instead, they tortured the slaves which had accepted his ideas, until they recanted. But Mohammed encouraged them with a new revelation, that it was all right for his followers to lie and say they were not his followers, in order to save themselves from being martyred.

So many poorer converts were persecuted, that Mohammed told them to flee to *Abyssinia* (modern Ethiopia), where they would be warmly received by the believers in Christ. Mohammed knew the Christians would not hurt his followers, and so it proved to be. The year was A.D. 615. By this time, he only had a total of fifty followers.

One crisis followed another. Then in 616, Mohammed gained the support of *Oma ibn al-Khattab*, a prominent businessman of great physical strength. His support encouraged Mohammed and his followers to more boldly proclaim the new faith in the streets. But more persecution forced them to withdraw to a secluded quarter of Mecca, where *Abu Talib* could protect them.

Eventually, the Quraish relented and let them return to their homes. In 619, two misfortunes occurred. *Khadija*, Mohammed's first wife and loyal supporter, as well as *Abu Talib*, his best protector both died. Fearful of what might happen next, in 620 Mohammed journeyed sixty miles east to the agricultural town of *Taif*. But not wanting to offend the merchant aristocracy of Mecca, the men of *Taif* pelted Mohammed and his followers with stones and told them to get out of town fast, or else.

Returning to Mecca, he married the widow, *Sauda*, and betrothed himself, aged fifty, to *Aisha*, the pretty, but petulant, seven-year-old daughter of Abu Bekr. She was to become his favorite wife, and he eventually had a lot of them.

On one occasion, during a conversation with leaders of the Quraish, Mohammed began reciting one of his Suras (revelations from Gabriel), in which, naming three of the goddesses worshiped by the Quraish, he said that their intercession would help with Allah. This so delighted the leaders that when he called on them to worship Allah, they all prostrated themselves on the ground, in worship of that deity. Then they arose, expressed their satisfaction, and agreed to be his followers and accept Islam, on condition that their goddesses and favorite idols were to be respected.

As soon as Mohammed had gone home, he now had too many gods. The compromise lasted long enough for his followers, in Abyssinia, to hear of the conversion of the Quraish and return to their homes in Arabia. But later the prophet changed on this point; and that verse of the Sura was canceled and another written in its place, declaring that the three goddesses were simply names invented by the idolaters; only Allah was to be worshiped. Soon the Quraish were angry at Mohammed again.

In the year 620, at one of the great annual fairs at Mecca, Mohammed preached his mission to the merchants assembled from all portions of Arabia. Some citizens of Medina were among his hearers.

Now it so happened that, at Medina, there had, for a long time, been many powerful tribes who had converted to Judaism. In their conflicts with the idolaters, they had frequently predicted that a great prophet and lawgiver like Moses would one day return.

At this time, Mohammed taught a modified Judaism, not the warlike message of his later years. He constantly quoted the Jewish sacred books, both the Old Testament and the Talmud. (The *Talmud* was a collection of traditional sayings by learned Jews.) Although he professed to be an inspired prophet, he was not yet claiming to have any new doctrine.

He said that Islam only consisted of submission to the divine will. Its worship consisted of prayer and almsgiving. At this juncture, the prophet did not require belief in himself as a main point of his religion (as he later did). His followers, the Mohammedans, or followers of Mohammed, were also called Muslimin, Mussulmans, or *Muslims* (Moslems), which in the Arabic meant "true believers."

The semi-Judaized pilgrims, from Medina, were quite prepared to accept Mohammed's teachings.

During this pilgrimage the prophet met many of them, and they promised to become his disciples.

They took the following pledge: "We will not worship any but the One God; we will not steal, nor commit adultery, nor kill our children; we will not slander at all, nor disobey the Prophet in anything that is right."

Later, this became known as the *Pledge of Women*, when the prophet added warfare and killing to the code of beliefs,—since women were not required to fight for Islam.

When the pilgrims returned home, the new faith made rapid progress back in Medina among the Arabs. But the Jews and Christians were not so sure. In order to accept it, they would have to call Allah their God and accept Mohammed as a true prophet—and none could know what other things he might teach.

Meanwhile, in Mecca, Mohammed had another dream—one which would later become quite famous and, in our time, be the source of endless woes to the Israelis in Jerusalem.

Mohammed dreamed that he was carried by the angel Gabriel on a winged horse to Jerusalem, where he met all the prophets of God and was welcomed by them, after which he was carried on the same steed and in company with Gabriel, to the seventh heaven into the presence of God.

Ever afterward, Mohammed maintained that he had been to Jerusalem and to heaven.

Because of that dream, Muslims believe that Jerusalem and its Temple Mount is the third holiest location in the Islamic world, after Mecca and Medina. They are willing to fight to the death to make sure that they do not lose control of Jerusalem (actually Old Jerusalem, now called East Jerusalem) and its Temple Mount, on which two of their revered temples are located. The smaller one on the south is the *al-Aqsa Mosque*, from which Mohammed is supposed to have flown to heaven on a winged horse. The larger and more prominent one is the *Mosque of Omar*, also known as the *Dome of the Rock*. It is built above the former location of Solomon's Temple.

In 622, seventy-three citizens of Medina came privately to Mohammed and invited him to make Medina his home. They pledged themselves to protect him and his followers. He asked them whether they would protect him as faithfully as their own families. They asked what reward they would receive if they did; and he answered, Paradise.

A compact having been agreed upon, the prophet ordered his followers at Mecca to leave in small groups and go to Medina. Mohammed and Abu Bekr, and their families, remained quietly at Mecca until all the rest had fled.

At about the same time, *Abu Sufyan*, grandson of Umayya, came into power in Mecca. Filled with hatred for Mohammed and his followers, he planned to eliminate them. But, upon learning that the followers had left, the Quraish assigned a small group of assassins the task of liquidating the prophet. It was feared that, if he went to Medina, he might raise an army and attack Mecca.

Learning of the plot, on July 16, 622, Mohammed fled with Abu Bekr to the cave of Thatur, about five or six miles south of Mecca.

Meanwhile, the Quraish sent out parties of armed men, mounted on swift horses, northward to search nearly the entire route to Medina and to bring the refugees back to Mecca. The pursuers returned in three days, not having found anyone.

Then, in the night, Abu Bekr's children brought camels to them; and the two men rode northward, night and day, for 200 miles until they reached Medina. They arrived on September 24.

This event, the *Hegira* (hijra, flight), became famous in Muslim history. Seventeen years later, the Caliph Omar designated July 16, 622—the first day of the Hegira—the official beginning of the Mohammedan era.

The reason the flight to Medina was important, was because it marked the turning point in Mohammed's fortunes. Before that time, he was a persecuted prophet; after that time, he was a revered leader of one or more cities.

But the flight to Medina also marked another, even more important, turning point—one that would affect entire populations and produce rivers of blood for centuries to come.

All through those previous years, Mohammed had been a quiet man who taught peace and kindness, in addition to many strange things. For this, he was misunderstood, ridiculed, and persecuted.

But when the prophet went to Medina in 622, something changed within him. He became warlike—a border chieftain, intent on plunder and theft, and ultimately a prophet of death to those who refused to accept him.

What was the cause of this remarkable change? Historians trace it to the fact that Mohammed had finally acquired great power and authority, and it went to his head.

But, after carefully studying the sources, the present writer believes there was another, important causal factor.

For twenty-five years, Mohammed remained faithful to his first wife, Khadija, until her death in 619. It would appear that she had a strong, steady influence on him, which kept Mohammed mod-

erate and even-dispositioned in the midst of many turbulent neighbors.

But Khadija died in late 619. Within about eight months, the Hegira occurred. Between the two events, Mohammed married Sauda and became engaged to marry a seven-year-old flighty child, *Aisha*. Throughout the remainder of his life, amid all his later marriages, Mohammed especially loved *Aisha*, which had been the youngest and prettiest of them all. No longer did the man have Khadija as a wise counselor.

If Mohammed had died in 619, he would probably be found today in the most obscure Arab works as a self-proclaimed prophet of the seventh century.

But the situation was to dramatically change.

— PART THREE —

MOHAMMED: THE YEARS OF WARFARE (A.D. 622-632)

At the time that Mohammed entered it, Medina was called *Ytreb* (Yathrib). It was not until a few years later that its name was changed (by order of Mohammed himself) to *Medinat al-Nabi* or "City of the Prophet." But for purposes of clarity, we shall call it by the name Westerners are today acquainted with: *Medina* (Arabs now call it al-Madinah).

As mentioned earlier, compared with stony Mecca, Medina was like a watered garden with hundreds of orchards, palm groves, farms, and farm animals.

The Mohammedan era truly began with the Hegira. Mohammed entered Medina in triumph, being enthusiastically welcomed by his followers, who now regarded him as a sovereign as well as an apostle and prophet.

At the first ceremony he held with the people, he arose and proclaimed "Allah is most great!" Then he descended the stairs backwards and bowed to the ground three times. Then turning to his followers, Mohammed told them to do this till the end of time. Thus prostration to the ground became an example which his followers followed in years to come. *Islam* means "to surrender"; and its adherents are *Muslims*, "the surrendered ones."

After the prostrations, a sermon was given (which might be very secular). If you were to enter a Muslim mosque, this would be the procedure you would observe.

Although Mohammed was revered by a portion of Medina's inhabitants, there were others—many others—who were quite skeptical. Among them were the Christians, the Jews, and over half of the Ar-

abs. So Mohammed entered into an agreement with them:

“The Jews who attach themselves to our commonwealth shall be protected from all insults and vexations; they shall have an equal right with our own people to our assistance and good offices; they . . . shall form with the Muslims one composite nation; they shall practice their religion as freely as the Muslims . . . They shall join the Muslims to defend Medina against all enemies . . . All future disputes between those who accept this charter shall be referred, under God, to the Prophet” (*Syed Ameer Ali, Spirit of Islam, 54*).

The agreement was soon accepted by all the Jewish tribes in Medina and the surrounding country. Later, the prophet was to deny that agreement in a most terrible way.

Now that Mohammed was in a position of unusual power, he became a changed man. He bore adversity and opposition with great patience, but was not able to bear prosperity so well. Instead of just a preacher, he now became a commander. Previously he taught principles; thenceforth, force constituted his chief means. He no longer sought to convince his antagonists, but determined to force their submission by the terror of his power.

The tone of his dreams and revelations changed, adapting themselves to his necessities; and he claimed inspiration for every action, even for taking an additional wife.

Up to the Hegira, the prophet of Mecca might have said, “My kingdom is not of this world.” But, after that event, the sword was to serve him as his most faithful servant in building up Islam. His objective was the same: submission to Allah. But he no longer contented himself with the arts of persuasion, but used threats and bloodshed.

He declared that the period of long suffering and patience was past and that his mission, and that of every Muslim male, was to propagate the dominion of Islam by the sword. The duty of Muslims was to destroy the temples of the infidels, to overthrow the idols, and to pursue the unbelievers to the remotest quarters of the world.

Mohammed’s new message was that the sword is the key of heaven and of hell. He said that a drop of blood shed in the cause of Allah, a night spent in arms, is of more avail than two months of fasting and prayer. Whoever dies in battle, his sins are forgiven.

This promise, with the assurance that every

man’s death is decreed by fate, made the Muslims boldly face death in battle. They were assured that no man could die until the appointed moment. Until that moment arrived, he was safe from the enemy’s darts; but, when it did arrive, he would drop dead in his own house or expire in his bed, if not on the battlefield. It is no wonder that, under such teaching, the soldiers of Islam have ever been distinguished for their recklessness.

Mohammed not only promised the glories of Paradise as the reward of the valor of his followers, but the riches of this world were also to be divided among them. Thus the new religion attracted the wandering Bedouins of the Arabian desert—not so much from the sublime dogma which it taught of the spirituality of Allah, as from the sanction it conferred on the Mohammedan conquerors over the wealth, women, and slaves of the conquered.

The prophet who had exhibited such qualities as a religious teacher now also displayed the characteristics of the warrior. He had finally obtained a position at Medina whence he was able to act on men with other forces than those of eloquence and poetry.

Now the man who, for forty years, had been a simple citizen, leading a quiet family life and, for thirteen years afterward, had been a despised and persecuted but patient teacher of Allah—passed the last ten years of his remarkable career in raising and organizing an army of warriors, destined to conquer half the civilized world.

Mohammed, who had always been so kind-hearted and affectionate, was now capable of the greatest cruelty toward those who resisted his purpose.

This tendency showed itself in his treatment of the Jews. They had helped him in many ways in the past, but they refused to receive him as a divinely inspired prophet. So he eventually denounced the Jews as obstinate unbelievers and slew many of them.

About a year after his settlement in Medina, the humble outcast of Mecca proclaimed a holy war (*jihad*) against its leaders. He sent out raiders to ambush the caravans that passed through the entire area. The objective was to dry up the commerce that supported Mecca, as well as enrich himself and his followers. In commissioning his lieutenants to raid the caravans, he was adopting the morals of most Arab tribes in his time. Here is the story of his first successful raid. It provided him with the camels and

The Legacy of Mohammed

**PART THREE
OF THREE**

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Continued from the preceding tract in this series

supplies to be extremely successful in his later ones:

Mohammed went in person to the plain of Bedr, one of the usual watering stations, located about forty miles from Mecca. It was January 624.

Praying and waiting, his spies brought him word that a caravan of traders, consisting of a thousand camels richly laden, was on its home journey to Mecca and Yemen from Syria.

But the prophet's group was so impoverished, that they only had two horses and seventy camels, mounting these by turns. His cause seemed hopeless, but he declared that Allah would give them the victory.

He himself waited at a short distance away at an overlook, and prayed for victory in this first episode in a holy war destined to continue for centuries.

Mohammed's troops charged the merchants and fighting began. The tradesmen outnumbered Mohammed's warriors three to one. But their superiority of numbers was overbalanced by the religious fanaticism of the prophet's followers. They had Allah on their side and the promise that they would go immediately to heaven if they died in battle.

While he waited, Mohammed fell into a brief trance and received another vision from the angel, assuring him that Allah approved and the men would win the battle against the forces of evil.

At this, the prophet mounted his horse and rode to his followers; he rekindled their enthusiasm and led them in battle to total victory.

The innocent traders who were only trying to support their families and feed people back home, in Mecca and Yemen, were slaughtered.

The *Koran* ascribes the glory of this triumph to divine aid. Mohammedan historians relate that the angelic cavalry, headed by the archangel Gabriel, did frightful execution with their invisible swords on the terrified traders.

The prophet spoke bitterly of "his enemies," the hapless traders, as their dead bodies were cast into a pit. Only a few remained alive.

He scowled fiercely at one of the prisoners brought

before him. The unhappy man exclaimed: "There is death in that glance!" Agreeing, the prophet ordered him to be beheaded. Two days later when another was ordered to be executed, he asked piteously: "Who will take care of my little girl?" "Hell-fire," replied Mohammed, instantly ordering the man to be cut down.

Since this event marked the beginning of a jihad which was to last for centuries, we must ask a few questions:

Were these slaughtered men warriors? No, just traders minding their own business.

Had they initiated the attack on the prophet's men? No, they were just passersby.

Had they been given opportunity to accept Allah and his prophet, Mohammed? No, it could not be said that they had rejected Islam. They were killed without being given a chance.

These questions and the answers help us better understand the events of September 11, 2001. The 6,000 people that died there were also private citizens. None of them were soldiers. Both men and women were slain; some children as well. They had not attacked Islam; they hardly knew anything about it. They were just innocent people who were minding their own business, like the tradesmen in the plain of Bedr who were killed in January 624.

By a special revelation from the angel, Mohammed claimed the fifth part of all the captured camels, horses, and supplies. He now had come into an immense supply of wealth.

More raids followed. At one, the same year, Mohammed suffered a severe defeat at Ohud, six miles from Medina, where he himself was wounded. This disaster imperiled his reputation, as some of his followers began questioning whether he was a genuine messenger from God. So the prophet was provided with another revelation. He told his followers the defeat was due to their sins, and assured them that the seventy martyrs who died in that battle were already enjoying the pleasures of Paradise.

For some reason, Mohammed's defeat at Ohud

intensified his harsh feelings. A Jewish lady, Asma, wrote a poem in which she said something negative about the prophet. For this deed she was assassinated by a Muslim. Immediately afterward in the public mosque, the prophet praised the murderer for what he had done.

When some Jews quarreled with some Muslims over a matter, Mohammed ordered his men to attack the entire Jewish tribe. The tribe surrendered after a 15-day siege of their village. Mohammed ordered all the prisoners, including women and children, to be killed. But at the urgent request of a powerful chief in Medina, the prophet cursed them and let them flee to another town.

All of these facts are derived from contemporary Muslim historians. They do not try to hide what happened, but glorify the prophet for what he did.

On another occasion, seven hundred Jewish prisoners had surrendered, trusting in Mohammed's mercies. He ordered all the men killed, and the women and children sold into slavery. One woman who was especially beautiful, Mohammed selected for his personal concubinage.

Ironically, if Mohammed had died in Mecca in 619 when his wife did, he would go down in history as a good man who preached peace and simple living. But it is impossible to tell the story of Mohammed's life without telling it all. Muslim historians carefully wrote it all down, so later generations could know what happened. People today should know it as well.

About this time, the prophet began multiplying wives. Each time he did so, he publicly announced to his followers that he had received a special revelation permitting it.

In 626, Mohammed led 3,000 men against the Banu-Kuraiza Jews. Capturing them, 600 fighting men among the Jews were put to death and buried in a mass grave. Their women and children were sold into slavery.

From January 624, onward, the violence continued year after year. Battles were fought against the Syrians, Quraish of Mecca, and the Jews. During his ten years in Medina, the prophet planned sixty-five campaigns and raids, and personally led twenty-seven of them.

The men of Mecca had suffered immensely by the years of pillage, and wished that it could somehow stop. The raids led by Mohammed were drying up their commerce. Then, on behalf of his followers who were anxious to visit relatives in Mecca and once again go to the Kaaba, in 628 Mohammed sent the Quraish an offer of peace, pledging the safety of their caravans in return for permission to fulfill

the rites of the annual pilgrimage. The Quraish replied that a period of peace must precede this consent. A ten-year truce was signed, so both sides solemnly agreed not to attack the other.

Mohammed consoled his disappointed raiders, who had been enjoying all the spoils they collected in battle, by ordering them to attack the Khaibar Jews in their settlement six days' journey northeast of Medina. The horrors of another conquest followed.

By agreement with the Quraish, in 629, the Medina Muslims, numbering about 2,000, entered Mecca peacefully, made seven circuits of the Kaaba, reverently touched the Black Stone, and then shouted "There is no god but Allah alone!"

Impressed by their orderly behavior, several influential Quraish, including the future generals *Khalid* and *Amr*, adopted the new faith. In addition, some neighboring desert tribes offered Mohammed the pledge of their belief if he would defend them with his arms.

By the time the prophet had returned to Medina, he decided he was now strong enough to capture Mecca. Of course, he was bound by a ten-year truce not to attack the city, and only two years had elapsed. But, alleging that a tribe allied with the Quraish had attacked a Muslim tribe, Mohammed voided the truce in 630.

Gathering 10,000 men, he marched to Mecca. Fear fell on all the inhabitants. Abu Sufyan the Quraish leader who earlier had opposed him, recognized the situation to be hopeless and let the army enter the city.

Mohammed grandly announced a general amnesty, and only slew two or three of his enemies. He destroyed the idols in and around the Kaaba, but spared the Black Stone and sanctioned the kissing of it. Then he publicly proclaimed Mecca as the Holy City of Islam and the *qibla* (the point toward which Muslims should turn when they pray). He decreed that no unbeliever should ever be permitted to set foot on its sacred soil. All opposition by the Quraish ended, and Mohammed was now master of the city and everyone in it. He was sixty years old.

Only two years remained to his life. Proclaiming that all Arabia must submit to his rule, or else, he sent emissaries to inform them. After some minor rebellions, the entire peninsula yielded submission.

In return for a moderate tribute, the Christians of Arabia were taken under Mohammed's protection and enjoyed full liberty of worship. This was a pattern that would be followed in later years by the prophet's successors: Convert to the faith, or pay yearly tribute money, or die.

Mohammed also sent envoys to several foreign

monarchs, demanding that they accept him as the prophet of Allah.

Heraclius, Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire rejected it with a laugh. The rulers of Hira and Ghassan ignored the message.

On the banks of the River Karasu, Khosrou Parviz, King of Persia, received the letter ordering him to abjure the errors of the Persian faith and embrace the religion of Islam and its prophet, Mohammed. The king was so indignant at what he considered an insulting message that he tore the letter into fragments and cast them into the river. Upon hearing of this, Mohammed said, "It is thus that Allah will tear the kingdom and reject the supplications of Khosrou!"

All those empires, as well as others, were later overrun by the Muslims.

Although age was telling on him, Mohammed wanted to extend his empire beyond the borders of Arabia while he was still alive. The wealth and fertility of Syria attracted his attention, and he determined to invade that part of the Eastern Roman Empire.

The Arabs reluctantly entered upon this struggle, as it was harvest season; and there was scarcity in the land. They vainly begged for a dispensation, urging different excuses—lack of money, camels, provisions, and the hot weather. The angry prophet replied, "Hell is much hotter!"

So an army of thirty thousand Muslims was assembled and a holy war (jihad) was solemnly proclaimed against Romans. Hearing of what was coming, the Emperor Heraclius made some military preparations.

Ten men rode by turns on the same camel, and the suffering from thirst was intense. After a ten-day's journey, they reached the oasis of Tabue, part-way between Medina and Damascus. There they learned that the Roman army packed up and moved elsewhere. Using that as an excuse, the Arabs returned home.

Mohammed, weakened by age and frequent sickness, had no disposition to do anything further outside of Arabia.

Among the Arabs, as among the Jews, the calendar consisted of twelve lunar months of 28 days, with an extra (intercalary) month tossed in every three years, to keep the seasons in harmony with the sun.

But Mohammed changed the calendar for Muslims, and made it a disaster. He declared that the angel said it should have twelve lunar months, of alternately thirty and twenty-nine days. This threw

the Muslim calendar out of harmony with the seasons, and gained a year on the Gregorian calendar every thirty-two and a half years.

The weekly cycle of seven days did not, of course, change. In all lands, everywhere, ever since the Creation of the world, it has always been a week of seven days. According to historians and astronomers, the first day of the week today is the same as the first day of the week in the most distant past.

The prophet drew up no code; he just issued revelations covering items as they arose. When a conflict occurred, he came up with a new revelation contradicting the previous one.

Even his most prosaic directives were presented as revelations from the angel. When Mohammed decided to marry the pretty wife of Zaid, his adopted son, he accomplished the task by issuing another revelation from the angel. The angel said he could take the other man's wife.

By divine revelation, Mohammed had earlier announced that no Muslim could have more than four wives. But, by special revelations from the angel, he gave himself more.

The prophet's first wife, Khadija, died in 619. After that, by 632 Mohammed had ten wives and two concubines. All his wives after Khadija were barren. Of the children presented to him by Khadija, only one daughter survived him: Fatima. The sons all died in infancy.

His crowded harem troubled him with quarrels, jealousies, and demands for spending money. Women and power were his only indulgence. Otherwise, he lived simply. His usual fare were dates and water, or a small quantity of barley bread—the same as his countrymen ate. But he did enjoy spending time grooming himself, perfuming his body, painting his eyes, and dying his hair. He was proud of a ring someone had engraved for him, which said, "Mohammed the Messenger of Allah."

Mohammed took part in religious processions. His camp included all his wives, who rode on camels and were inclosed within pavilions of embroidered silk. He was followed by a number of captives. Every spot where he halted and said his prayers became consecrated. The manner in which he conducted the various religious rites, from cutting his hair and nails to the solemn act of casting stones at the devil, are still faithfully followed by Muslims.

He was an unscrupulous warrior, yet kind to the poor. His followers collected his spittle, hair cuttings, nail clippings, and the water in which he washed himself, hoping that those objects would perform magic cures. The prophet never told them

they erred in doing so.

As he grew older, Aisha his favorite wife reported, he would leave the house at times, visit a graveyard, ask forgiveness of the dead, pray aloud for them, and congratulate them on being dead.

Early in his sixty-third year, Mohammed contracted a fever which continued for fourteen days. On June 7, 632, he passed away.

When he was born, Arabia was a collection of quarrelsome tribes. When he died, it was a single nation, prepared to rapidly expand from Gibraltar to the borders of India. Few men in history have been more influential.

— PART FOUR —

SOME TEACHINGS OF THE KORAN

In the year A.D. 633, when many of Mohammed's earlier acquaintances had died, the Caliph Abu Bekr ordered Mohammed's chief scribe, Zaid ibn Thabit, to "search out the *Koran* and bring it together." He gathered the fragments, says tradition, "from date leaves and tablets of white stone, and the breasts of men," that is, from the dried rib bones of dead men, on which notes had been made. From Zaid's completed manuscript, several copies were made. The entire book is a heap of confusion. We are not sure that Mohammed wanted all these scraps of notes included in a book. In it we find procedures, stories, laws, proclamations of victory, treaties, appeals for funds, regulation of ritual, trade, finance. Many of them were momentary details, sometimes changed later.

The one hundred and fourteen chapters (*Suras*) are in the order of decreasing length instead of the order of composition, which was unknown at that time. Since Mohammed had the most time to dictate notes in later life, the history of incidents from his life are in reverse,—and the harshest part of the *Koran* is in front. The best part, consisting of small *Suras*, does not fill a lot of space at the back.

All the *Suras* take the form of statements by Allah or Gabriel to Mohammed.

Here are a few of the statements:

The emphasis on predestination is strong: "Allah sendeth whom He will, and guideth whom He will" (xxxv,8; lxxvi,31). "We have thrown veils over their hearts, lest they should understand" (xviii,58).

"Had we pleased, we had certainly given to every soul its guidance. But true shall be the word

that has gone forth from me: I will surely fill hell with jinn [ginii; demons] and men together" (xxxii,13).

More than a hundred times, the *Koran* threatens with hell anyone who rejects Mohammed's messages (iii,10,63,131; iv,56,115; vii,41; viii,50; ix,63, etc.).

Hellfire will last forever and the drink of the damned will be boiling water and filth (lvi,40f).

Portrayals of heaven are just as vivid, but we will not quote them here since they are semi-pornographic. Each male will have seventy-two *houris* (women) to wait on him throughout eternity (xliv,56; lxxviii,33; xxxvii,48, etc.). Children will be born, who will never grow old (lxxvii,19).

The husband was not allowed to remarry his divorced wife until after she had been married and divorced by another man (ii,232).

"Every woman who dieth, and her husband is pleased with her, shall enter Paradise" (iv,35).

"Take not the Jews and the Christians for friends . . . Choose not your fathers nor your brothers for friends if they take pleasure in disbelief rather than in faith" (v,51,55; ix,23).

After giving unbelievers time to accept Allah, enemy unbelievers were to be killed wherever found (ix,5). But be sure to give them time to accept the faith. "But if any of the idolaters seeketh thy protection, then protect him that he may hear the word of Allah . . . If they repent and establish worship [accept Islam], then leave their way free" (ix,5-6).

"And one who attacks you, attack him in like manner . . . Whoso defendeth himself after he hath suffered wrong, there is no way [of blame] against them" (ii,194; xlii,41). "O ye who believe! Endure! Outdo all others in endurance!" (iii,200).

It is stated in iii,48 that at least part of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures are divinely inspired. Of the one hundred and four revelations given to mankind, only four have been preserved: the Pentateuch to Moses, the Psalms to David, the Gospel to Jesus, and the *Koran* to Mohammed. The first three are corrupted and only the *Koran* is safe, and now replaces them. We are told that God did not really let Jesus die on the cross (iv,157).

A few other teachings: culled from Islamic writings, for which I could not find *Koran* references:

The Sabbath teaching was ruined, by transferring the day to Friday. Jesus did not die on the cross, only a phantom did. Against unbelievers who did not peaceably submit, a jihad was to be proclaimed in the name of Allah. There are seven levels in hell, and all Christians and Jews will go into hell. —*vf*