

# RELIGIOUS CONFLICT IN EARLY ISLAM: A STUDY OF ITS CAUSES FROM QUR'AN SUNNAH PERSPECTIVE<sup>○</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

This paper aims to present an historical survey on the conflict between Islam and other religions. It undertakes an analytic textual reading of the concerned Quranic verses and a historical survey of the Prophet's (pbuh) efforts to resolution of the conflict. This study finds that a multi-dimensional causes contributed to the conflict between the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and other religions. For example, Religious roots which was mainly caused by the Christians and Jews' denial of prophecy of Muhammad (pbuh) after a clear prediction of his prophethood in their religious scriptures. However, politico-economy was another key element of this conflict in the early Islamic state in Madinah. Though this conflict had come to broad daylight in the Islamic era, had a long pre-Islamic root go back to the second and third century CE. Moreover, Jews and Christians had a genuine fear of being defeated by the new emerging Muslim power. Therefore, they had found themselves in conflict so that they could reign their hegemony over the territory. In addition, after a city state was established in Madinah, the Prophet (pbuh) found a demographic presence of Jews and their ally Quraish threatening it peace, security, stability and even assassination of head of the state. Hence, the conflict had become inevitable.

**Keywords:** *Conflict, religious scriptures, prophethood, Jews, Christians, Muslims.*

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 2 GENESIS AND CAUSES OF THE CONFLICT

#### *2.1 Religious roots of conflict*

There should have been no religious conflict between Islam and other revealed religions, Christianity and Judaism as the coming of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had been predicted in their religious scriptures. Though many of them deny this fact and the Gospels available at the present time are devoid of any reference to that fact, there are abundant evidences in the history that could prove the truth. For example, Al-Qurtubi and others relate that when God revealed the words, *“those to whom We gave the scripture know him (i.e., Prophet Muhammad) as they know their sons. But, indeed, a party of them conceal the truth while they know (it)”* [2:146]. ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab asked ‘Abdullah ibn Salam, a *kitabi* who had embraced Islam, “do you know Muhammad (pbuh) as you know your own son?” he replied, “Yes, and even better”.

Similarly, the reason for Salman Farisi’s decision to embrace Islam was that he had been following the reports concerning the coming of the last Prophet and his attributes in the Gospel, and from monks and scholars of the Christian scriptures (al-Buti, 2000: 115). After examining most of the signs and indications mentioned in Gospel, he embraced Islam. Despite all these irrefutable historical proofs of the emergence of Islam and the Final Prophet (pbuh), peaceful relation between Muslims and non-Muslims especially Jews, in early Islamic era was very difficult to achieve. However, the genesis of conflict fundamentally lies in religious differences and prejudice. Islam adopts a universal outlook and opens its arms to the whole humanity regardless of color, race and territory; whereas Jews consider themselves God’s chosen people and superior to the rest of mankind. This sense about their race was the prime cause of their hostility to Islam (Salahi, 1995: 290).

The proof of this enmity is found even before the emergence of Islam. Bahira’s warning to the Prophet’s uncle, during his business trip to Syria, of possible harms of Jews to the Prophet (Ibn Ishaq, 1995: 81) is a bright example of this hostile tendency. The following incident could also attest clearly to that antipathy that the Jews harbored towards the new political and religious changes that came to stamp the life of Madinah. IbnIshaq, quotes Safiyah (may Allah be pleased with her), the wife of the Prophetand the daughter of Huyayi bin Akhtab: with the advent of the Messenger of Allâh and setting in Quba’ with Bani ‘Amr bin ‘Awf, my father Huyayi bin Akhtab and my uncle Abu

Yasir bin Akhtab went to see him and did not return until sunset when they came back walking lazily and fully dejected. I, as usually, hurried to meet them smiling, but they would not turn to me for the grief that caught them. I heard my uncle Abu Yasir saying to Ubai and Huyayi: "Is it really he (i.e. Muhammad)?" The former said: "It is he, I swear by Allāh!" "Did you really recognize him?" they asked. He answered: "Yes, and my heart is burning with enmity towards him" (al-Mubarakfuri, 2005: 172).

The attitude of the Jews could be attributed to two causes : One of these was their inborn trait of envy and covetousness, bigotry and narrow-mindedness and obstinate rigidity while the other lay in their errant beliefs, misdemeanors and wickedness, repeatedly criticized by the Qur'an and illustrated by a reference to their past doings, for instance, constantly wrangling with their own prophets, opposing their teachings and even putting them to death, refusing to take the right path, bearing ill will and malice to those who commended the path of virtues, speaking slightly of God, excessive greed of wealth, operating hard usurious bargains despite its interdiction, grabbing the property of others, making interpolations in the Torah to suit their convenience, the insatiate thirst for worldly life and what it stands for and the national and racial jingoism which had become their characteristic hallmarks. But this was what the Jews detested most for it struck at the roots of their beliefs and mental outlook, or, rather their very nature and character, and it led them to become hostile to Islam and the Muslims (Siddiqi, 1999: 211).

The hostile tendency however was not publicly exposed in the beginning of the Madinan period of the Prophet's mission. Rather, soon after the Prophet settled in Madinaha peace treaty was mutually signed with the Jews, which stipulated various bilateral interests such as mutual defense, co-existence, peace keeping and cooperation. It was soon to become clear that the Jews had no intention of putting those agreements into effect. Instead, the hostility, discontent and war of words began to come to light between two parties and at one stage, it reached at serious intensity. The evidence therefore is what the Quran says about it. A number of verses in Surah al-Baqara show the regards of the People of the Book, their denial of their own scripture, and condemn their unbelief and denial in strong terms:

*Is it that whenever there came to you a Messenger with what you yourselves desired not, you grew arrogant? Some, you disbelieved and some, you killed. And they say, "Our hearts are wrapped (i.e. do not hear*

*or understand Allah's Word). " Nay, Allah has cursed them for their disbelief, so little is that which they believe. [2: 88]*

Sometimes, controversy and heated argument between Jews and Muslims reached such a level of intensity that the participants attacked each other. In order to appreciate how provocative the Jews were in their war of words against the Muslim, suffice it to remember the story of Finhas and Abu Bakr (Haykal, 1981: 193). Once Abu Bakr talked to Finhas calling the latter unto Islam, he replied "By God, O Abu Bakr, we do not need God. Rather, it is He who needs us. It is not I who pray to Him, it is He Who prays to us. We are self-sufficient and he is not. If God were self-sufficient, He would not borrow our wealth as your Prophet claims<sup>1</sup>. Abu Bakr then lost his temper and struck Finhas (al-Halabi, 1979: 315).

While the war of words was raging between Muhammad (s a w s) and the Jews in full intensity, Jews tactfully tried to persuade the Prophet to migrate to Jerusalem arguing that this is the place where each and every prophet had visited. They challenged him by asserting that if he were a true prophet, he would only do as his predecessors had done (Haykal, 1981: 194). This was a very soft approach as an attempt to get rid of the Prophet in Madinah but it could further indicate to the dimension of discontent which was prevailing between two groups.

This war of words once jumped from the theological debate to the defamation. Jewish poets<sup>2</sup> started to ridicule the Muslims especially after their victory in the battle of Badr. Thus, the atmosphere between the Muslims and the Jews became tense. Any provocation would surely be enough to start a war between two parties (Salahi, 1995: 283). Some of the Jews had made practice of greeting the Prophet not with the words *assalamualikum* (peace be on you), but with the words of abuse *assamualikum* (May you die) (Al-Bukhari, n.d: 5674).

Moreover, some of them also mispronounced the Quranic words twisting their tongues so as to give them an offensive meaning. Quran says:

*"O YOU who have attained to faith! Do not say [to the Prophet], "Listen to us," but rather say, "Have patience with us," and hearken [unto him], since grievous suffering awaits those who deny the truth." [2: 104]*

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<sup>1</sup> He was actually referring to the verse 245 in Surah al-Baqarah.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Kabibn Ashraf

When the Jews visited the Prophet, they tried to vent their spite by using ambiguous expressions in their greetings and conversation. They used words which had double meanings, one innocent and the other offensive. After using quite proper expressions, they would then whisper some malicious words. Ostensibly, they maintained the decorum of respect and courtesy while sparing no underhand means to insult the Prophet. They used the expression *ra'ina*, which meant 'kindly indulge us' or 'kindly lend ear to us'. It was possible, however, for the expression to be used with quite a different shade of meaning.

In Hebrew, for instance, there is a word similar to it which means: 'Listen, may you become deaf.' In the same language, it also means arrogant, ignorant and fool. In actual conversation, it was also used on occasions when one wanted to say: 'If you listen to me, I will listen to you.' When it was pronounced with a slight twist of the tongue, it turned into *ra'ina*, meaning 'our shepherd'. It was their aim to contaminate the simple and pure-hearted Muslims with the spiritual diseases in the beginning while the message of Islam began to spread in Madina. The Jews tried to engage Muslims in controversial religious discussions through raising all kinds of suspicion-provoking problems.

As the Jews were not sincere in their attempts at understanding Islam and recognizing the Prophet as a Messenger of Allah, they began to fear Muhammad(s a w s) because the new religion introduced by him was so clear and logical that they feared the reaction of their own people. Conversion of some prominent rabbis to Islam could be introduced to prove this matter of fact. It is for instance the momentous and significant event that brought the Jews' resentment out into the open and showed what their true feelings were when the most learned scholar and devout rabbi Abdullah ibn Salam converted to Islam (Salamat, 1997: 452).

Along with the conversion of some prominent Jews to Islam, the Quran pointed out to the immoral and corrupt ways of life which they had adopted, often ignoring the teaching of Moses and other Prophets. It also referred to their most heinous crime in history of killing some of their Prophets and rejecting others and spreading a state of persecution and aggression on the land (Afzal-ur-Rahman, 1980: 258).

*“And they were covered with humiliation and misery, and they drew on themselves the Wrath of Allah .That was because they used to disbelieve the Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) of Allah and killed the Prophets wrongfully. That was because they disobeyed and used to transgress the bounds (in their disobedience to Allah, i.e. commit crimes and sins.” [2: 61]*

Racial arrogance had made the Jews adverse to the Muslims and their rejection of Muhammad was not based on their scriptures but was due to base motives such as envy or jealousy. Much of the Jewish strength presumably lay in their absolute conviction that they were God's chosen people. Some of the more presumptuous forms of this conviction are described in the Qur'an: They hold that they are 'justified', and that they alone will be in Paradise; if they go to Hell at all, they will there only be a limited time. They in their arrogance claimed that all wisdom and all knowledge of Allah were enclosed in their hearts. To such claims, which were false and tantamount to a dismissal of Islam as completely false, the Qur'an had various forms of response, e.g.:

*O Muslims, do you then expect that these people will accept your invitation and become believers? whereas there have always been among them some who have been hearing the Word of God, understanding it well and then perverting and tampering with it knowingly. [2: 75]*

*So, woe to their learned people, who write the law with their own hands and then say to the people, "This is from Allah," so that they might gain some paltry worldly end. (They do not see that) this writing of their hands will bring woe to them and what they gain thereby will lead to their ruin. [2:79]*

Such are the main points of the Qur'anic attack upon the Jews. There were also some minor matters, but sufficient has been said to show that the Muslim attitude towards the Jews was well developed. In the thoughts of their leaders it must have bulked at least as largely as the struggle with jahiliyyah Makkah. This has to be kept in mind in considering the actual hostilities between Muhammad (s a w s) and the Jews (Watt, 1978: 207).

Jews' dissatisfaction had continued increasing over changing some religious directions of Muslims from which were common for the Jews too. For seventeen months after the Hijra to Madina, the Muslims had made Jerusalem their orientation in the prayer. Muhammad (pbuh) had felt increasingly uneasy about this and had longed for a direction to face that was characteristic of the pure, un-spoilt faith that was his in common with his forefathers, Ibrahim and Isma'il (Salamat, 1997: 458). The Quran says:

*We see your face scrambling the sky. We shall give you an orientation you approve. Turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque. Wherever you are, turn your faces towards it. Those given the Book know it is the truth from their Lord. Allah is not unaware of what they do. [2: 144]*

Quranic revelation guided the Messenger:

*If you bring the People of the Book every token, they will not follow your orientation, nor will you follow theirs. You will not follow each other's orientation. Should you follow their wishes after the knowledge that has come to you, you would be of the wicked. [2: 145]*

Through changing the Qibla from Jerusalem to Makkah, Muslims began to have a distinctive character while the Jews began to grow closer to the hypocrites and the polytheists. They openly began to attack Muhammad (pbuh) and his religion. From then onwards, their hostile activities turned into intrigues with the enemies of the Muslims and they began to entice the Arab tribes to attack Madinah and destroy it. The prophet appealed to them on the basis of the common ground between them (Afzal-ur-Rahman, 1980: 258). Hence, with these distinctions between the two religions, the Jews were called upon to the similar terms among them so that at least a peaceful atmosphere could be prevailed.

*Say, 'People of the Book! Come to a word common between us and you: that we shall serve none but Allah and shall associate none with Him in His divinity and that some of us will not take others as lords beside Allah.' And if they turn their backs (from accepting this call), tell them: 'Bear witness that we are the ones who have submitted ourselves exclusively to Allah. [3: 64]*

But they didn't listen to any argument or appeal and increased their hostile activities against the Prophet and his faith. Yet, they stepped up their campaign against the Prophet (pbuh) and his companions on many fronts. First, they began a war of words; used filthy and foul language, showered abuse and even twisted words when addressing the Prophet, to annoy him (Afzal-ur-Rahman, 1980: 259).

The contention between the Muslims and the Jews was further bubbled up when the Muslims started to fasting Ramadan instead of Ashura and the Jews were denounced for altering the text of their holy books and corrupting the true faith of Abraham (Mazhar-ul-Haq, 1992: 83).

However, it should be noted here that the religious practices have been the bone of contention between Jews and Muslims. Jews were content with the Muslims when they had found some of the Islamic religious practices very much akin to their own. Unlike, in case of dissimilar practices they showed their dissatisfaction, resentment and racial prejudice toward their Muslim

counterpart though the Muslims shared their faith in monotheism and not entirely differ from their all religious traditions. For this reason, the Quran called them upon the “common terms”. So there were commonalities between the two.

## 2.2 Economic factors of the conflict

politico-economy was one of the key elements of the conflict between Muslims and Jews in the early Islamic state in Madianh. Though this conflict had come to broad daylight in the Islamic era, it had a long pre-Islamic root reaching to the early human (both Jews and Arabs) settlements in Yathrib in second and third century CE. To understand the role of economic factor in the conflict between two parties, a brief glance should be made on the background of the distinctive presence of both. However, the Arab tribes in Yathrib, namely Aws and Khazraj, were forced to settle down in the un-watered, uninhabited and desert areas because the Jews had come earlier and taken possession of its most arable fertile areas, and they (Arab tribes) remained where they settled, living in poverty and wretchedness without either camels or goats because Medina was unsuitable for pasturage. They owned neither palm groves nor arable land, except some few who possessed some palms or small fields that had no owners. (al-Isfahāni, n.d: 19/95-96) Whereas the Jews possessed the prosperous lands of the region, they brought their expertise in agriculture and crafts which influenced the development of the plantations, with palms, grapes, pomegranates and some cereals.

Moreover, they had given their attention to poultry and livestock farming, in the crafts of weaving, performed by tools needed in an agricultural society (al-Umari, 1991: 44). With these privileges, Jews had been able to dominate economic domain of Yathrib. Furthermore, they excelled at the arts of earning money and trading and they in fact monopolized trading in cereals, dates, wine, clothes, export and import. Dealing in usury was the central means of their economic activities and a common practice amongst them, lending the Arab notables great sums to be squandered on mercenary poets, and in vanity avenues, and in return seizing their fertile land given as surety (al-Mubarakfuri, 2005: 170 ).

For the economic gain, they used to sow seeds of discord between adjacent tribes and entice each one to hatch plots against the other with the natural corollary of continual exhaustive bloody fighting. Whenever they felt that fire of hatred was about to subside, they would nourish it with new means of perpetuity so that they could always have the upper hand, and at the same time gain heavy interest rates on loans spent on inter-tribal warfare.

Together with this, they were given to belligerency and conflict. They were quite rich, but a substantial source of their wealth came from the fact that they were makers and traders of weaponry. So it was in their interest to fan wars and military conflicts, out of which they stood to harvest handsome dividends (Bashier, 2006: 289).

Without exception, the Jews' financial dealings had continued even in the early Madinan period of Islam. While the Muslims were suffering financial difficulties, the Jews had planned to exploit the situation. Some of the Muslim indebted had been cruelly treated and been victimized by them. The Quran condemns these dealings of Jews. Allah (swt) says:

*And their taking of Riba (usury) though they were forbidden from taking it and their devouring of men's substance wrongfully (bribery, etc.). And We have prepared for the disbelievers among them a painful torment. [4: 161]*

These verses portray the Jewish character (Qutb, 1995: 63), their misappropriations and wrongdoings. Ibn Kathir pointed out that they were not only involved in usury but also in earning money with ploy and deceitfully from their clients (Ibn Kathir, 1999: 2/467).

The Jews of Madina found themselves in a new and uncomfortable position (Peters, 1994: 193) when they saw that the Muslims were forbidden to deal with usury and they were coming out from their financial subjugation and even creating their own economic axis. No doubt, that the financial supremacy is the key element for political dominance, so the Jews were worried about being powerless and despondent if their economy did not follow the track they designed.

### **2.3 Power straggle**

The Arabs were weak in Madinah at the time of Prophet's arrival there following the Hijrah from Makkkah. The main cause was mutual discord and internecine warfare. They weakened considerably after the battle of Bu'ath and they were no longer strong enough to claim equal strength with Jews (Nomani, 203: 1/317). It was due to the fact that Arabs were divided into various tribes and races and there existed no abiding relationship which could unite them. The Holy Prophet gave them the relationship of Islam (Nadawi, 2000: 3/4). This new relationship inspired Arab tribes to be united irrespective of blood tie, color and race. This radical change in mutual relations among Arab tribes

therein had paved the way for their dominance over Madinah, which the Jews held sway (al-Umari, 1991: 45).

The Jews of Madinah, however, were disappointed when they found that they could not use the Prophet for their aggrandizement. Muhammad (saws) had acknowledged the faith in the Biblical prophets and had directed his people to turn their faces in the direction of Jerusalem during prayers. It is true that he had smashed the idols and stopped the worship of them in Madinah, but the Jews had expected Muhammad to give them domination. Before the first year had ended, the Jews were attempting to seduce Muhammad's followers and secretly undermine the Prophet's influence and to revive through insidious and ceaseless propaganda the old rivalry among the Arab tribes (Kheirallah, 1938: 60-61). They tried to defend their control by dividing the unity of the Aus and the Khajraz, and by provoking conflict between them.

In spite of a peace treaty, the Jews became increasingly unfriendly and hostile to the Prophet and Islam after a year or so of the Hijrah. The reason was the Jewish design to dominate Arabia politically and religiously (Mazhar-ul-Haq, 1992: 83).

The peace treaty with various groups in Madinah including Jews had given the Muslim a superior status among others and the chieftainship of Madina had been conferred on the Prophet, and his mission was developing and growing, unlike the Jews who had possessed not any superior ideology to win the public or a code of morals to meet the higher Islamic culture and their morality was on the lowest ebb and there was nothing to rescue them from their degradation. Therefore, they were suffering from an inferiority complex which produced envious and hostile feelings among them (Siddiqi, 1994: 134).

Besides their resentment at the preaching of the Prophet amongst them, the principal cause that led to their antagonism towards Islam was the ever-diminishing of their influence over the Madinites, who were coming more rapidly than ever under the influence of Islam. It was at this stage that the Jews began to rethink their position vis-à-vis Muhammad (saws) and his companions when they had found that Muslims' power in Madinah was on rise and in great consolidation. Consequently, Muhammad (pbuh) had become more powerful than both Christians and Jews, and his command was growing in effect and application (Haykal, 1981: 190).

Hence, the friendly relations between Muslims and Jews began to move to wrong direction. The Jews became apprehensive of the Prophet's power and strength and considered it a potential threat to their own dominant position in

the region. As they were traders and learned men of knowledge and were superior to the tribes of Aus and Khazraj both in knowledge and in material wealth, they feared that the growing strength of the new faith would endanger their position in both respects (Afzal-ur-Rahman, 1980: 158) and with this steadily growing influence of Islam, the Muslims should soon eclipse their power in Madinah.

This fear had gripped not only the Jews but also their trusted ally (hypocrites), especially their leader Abdullah ibn Ubayy who was the de-facto prince of Madinah and friendly with the Jews due to the fact that it was planned by Arabs and Jews to adorn him as their king before the arrival of the Prophet (saws) there. Thus, Ibn Ubayy's ambition of becoming ruler of Madina had bit the dust (Watt, (n.d): 113). Having realized his loss, he had not been idle but had secretly engineered a deep and growing feeling of opposition and had devised plans in cooperation with Jews to cause trouble to the Muslims.

Their jealousy soon turned into hatred, as a result of which hostilities that formerly were carried on in secret became open. The Prophet (saws) himself was not spared. They even spoke to him with insolence. For example, instead of saying the Muslim greeting "assalamualayk" they would go up to the Prophet and say "*assamu alayk*" which meant "death be on you." While speaking to him, instead of using the word "*ra'ina*" which meant "listen to us", they would shorten the accent and say instead "*ra'ina*" meaning "you are fool." (Jairazbhoy, 1989: 157-158)

The Prophet found the Jewish group much worse than the Quraish whose hostility was open and frank but the Jews having entered into an agreement with the Prophet could not revolt openly and resorted to treacherous methods. The hostility of the Quraish aimed at maintaining their dominance but the hostility of the Jews was based on the fear of losing their superiority. The former emerged from a superiority complex and the latter from an inferiority complex (Siddiqi, 1994: 122). Thus, the "only feasible explanation for the outbreak of hostilities between the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Jews of Madinah, must be the political one. The responsibility for these hostilities must be placed squarely on the shoulders of the Jews themselves (Bashier, 2006: 291).

The first Islamic state witnessed two types of conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims, namely intellectual and armed confrontation. The first type was the background for the second one. The effects of these conflicts finally reflected in second type through war, siege, execution and expulsion. However, the peaceful co-existence is never possible if any side of existing parties has

secret design of conspiracy, plot of assassination, treachery moves and threatening others' entity.

However, it should be examined here whether the above mentioned elements were available in the first Islamic state or not. On a thorough study of the history of the first Islamic state, one may find that the Prophet (pbuh) never took any punitive and preemptive measures against any person or tribe unless the defense of Muslims was threatened by them. Based on definite information of the enemy's breaking covenants and their preparation for war against Muslims, the prophet had considered the legitimate punitive actions against enemies. The Prophet (pbuh) did not mobilize troops toward any tribe unless they betrayed, retreated from peace treaty, designed conspiracy with Muslims' enemies, plotted to kill the Prophet and put the whole security wall in jeopardy. The Prophet (pbuh) did not make the whole Jewish community scapegoat for the crime of any tribe among them. When Banu Qaynuqa' were punished, other tribes for example, Bani NadËr and BanË QuriÐah were not punished at the same time. Thus, it can be argued that any action taken against Jews was not a racial prejudice; rather it was specific punishment for specific crime.

### **3 Demographic presences of Jews and their alliance with Quraish threatening national security and peace**

After Roman persecution of Jews in second century, they retreated from Syria to the middle of Hijaz and there they built strongholds from Madina to Syria. These places served as their military headquarters and also business stores (Nadwi, 2000: 3/4). Three famous tribes of Jews constituted the demographic presence in Yathrib (now Madinah): Banu Qainuqa', allies of Al-Khazraj tribe, Banu An-Nadir and Banu Quraizah who allied Al-Aws and inhabited the suburbs of Madina. It has been mentioned in the Quran:

*"They will not fight against you in a body save in fortified villages or from behind walls". (59:14)*

This demographic and strategic position of the Jews in Madina, and their covert and overt cooperation with the Quraish who were the arch enemy of the Muslims had posed a potential threat to their existence both from within and without. The joint plot designed by the Jews and Quraish against Muslims first had come to the light after back breaking defeat of the Quraish in the battle of Badr as they hoped that the Muslims would be destroyed in confrontation with the powerful Quraish.

The Jews felt frustrated and began to entertain hostile designs against Muslims. Quraish, on their side, having received a severe blow in the battle field, began to think having recourse to secret conspiracies against the holy prophet (Zafrullah Khan, 1980: 127). Ka'ab ibn al-ashraf, a prominent Jewish figure in Madinah traveled to Makkah to offer condolence for the chiefs killed in the battle and composed elegies for the dead and recited them before gatherings, inciting them to revenge (Nomani, 2003: 324). After arriving at Madinah from Makkah he continued the same derogatory poetry provoking attack on the Muslims and this role could be compared with the role of Abu Jahl had played in Makkah. Jews' wealth, numerical strength, weapons and military capability and unity among themselves had made them proud and haughty.

Therefore, upon the arrival of Muslims from the Badr, they challenged the Muslims saying "don't consider us like the Quraish. You encountered a people, who had no knowledge of war and you beat them. By God, if we fight you, you will meet real men. We know how to fight." This direct challenge for the test of strength must have convinced the Prophet that the information reached to him of the secret agreement between Qainuqa and Makkah was correct (Gulzar, 1985: 192).

Hence, the Jews gave every indication that they considered their peace treaty with the Prophet broken. Thus, the whole circumstance in Madina constituted an internal danger while the Quraysh rallied their forces to assault the Muslims from the outside (Iqbal, 1984: 19) which had not left any choice for the Prophet but crack down the enemies within to face the challenges coming from outside. He then took action against Banu Qainuqa who was the first Jews tribe to rebel. The Prophet decided to punish them and imposed siege upon them in second year after hijrah. As soon as the news reached Makkah, Abu Sufian hastened to help them with a force of 200 men but before their arrival at Madinah, Banu Qainuqa had given up and surrendered to the Muslim force.

Upon arrival, Abu Sufian went straight to the house of Sallam bin Mushkin, one of the leading members of Bani Nadir. He got whatever information he needed from Bani Nadir and moving stealthily along the outskirts of the city destroyed some standing corps, cut some date palms, burnt some few isolated houses and having killed two men hurried back to Makkah (Gulzar, 1985: 195-197). This event proves that the Jews had woven a secret plot with Makkans against the Muslims without any reason or provocation and had worked as spies for the Makkans that could be taken as a major threat to the existence of the Madinah state.

The second wave of resounding conflict had come to light around the battle of Uhud. In this battle when the Muslims received a severe blow from their archenemy, the Jews found it a suitable opportunity to stab the Muslims in the back. They perceived that their concentrated effort could easily precipitate the ruin of Islam.

Moreover, they strained every nerve to produce general dissatisfaction and bitterness against the holy Prophet, his teachings and his faithful companions. A campaign of slander was organized against its followers. The sacred words of the Quran were deliberately mispronounced in order to pervert their meaning. Satirical poems were enthusiastically sung at public places in which the religion of Allah was abjectly ridiculed (Siddiqui, 1999: 211), and now they are preparing for the final assault in order to destroy the Muslims. It was the battle of Trench that occurred in the fifth years after Hijrah. Sallam ibn Abel-Huqayq al-Nadri, Huyayy ibn Akhtab al-Nadari, Kinana ibn Abel-Haqayq al-Nadari, Hawdhah ibn Qays al-Waili, and Abu Ammar al-Waili gathered with a band of Jews of Banu Nadir and Banu Wail to form a party against the Prophet. They went to Makkah inviting the Quraysh to unite against the Prophet and uproot him all together. The Quraysh gladly accepted their invitation to wage war against the Prophet. They gathered together to make the preparations for this war.

Furthermore, the same band of Jews proposed the war invitation to the Ghatafan informing them that they would support them and that the Quraysh had already responded to them, so they accepted to join in the fight (Ibn Hisham, 2000: 167-168). The leaders of Quraysh asked them how they fared, and they replied that they were waiting for Quraysh to come to Madina so that they could march with them to meet Muhammad. Quraysh then asked them about Banu Qurayza, the only Jewish tribe that had not broken its covenant with the Messenger and was still living in Madina. They answered that Banu Qurayza too were waiting for Quraysh to come, so that they could show their true colors and fight on their side. Therefore, all the powers within the region had come together to confront the Muslims with a unanimous aim to root out the existence the Muslims and their state.

### 3.1 Stirring up the old feuds between Arab Muslim tribes

The Jews had aimed at generating internal turmoil by stirring up the old feuds between Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj as this had always been a successful way of dominating them both in the past. *Al-Aus* and *Al-Khazraj* had become brothers in Islam and were often to be seen discussing religion and earnestly studying the Qur'an together. One day, a Jew, Sha'sibn Qays, passed by some of Al-Aus and

Al-Khazraj conversing amiably together. He was annoyed by the sight because he thought that with such unity, the position of the Jews in Madinah was threatened.

Thus, he assigned a Jewish youth who had been standing with them and told him to find an opportunity to mention the battle of Bu'ath that took place between these two tribes in their pre-Islamic past. Moreover, he was told that he should recite some of the poetry composed on those occasions in which each tribe extolled its fighters and abused its opponents. He did so and they began to differ, boasting of their respected warriors until it became a full-blown dispute (Salahi, 1995: 282). When news reached the Messenger (saws) of what was happening, he went to them and reminded them of the lofty aims of Islam and of their bond of brotherhood. Brought to their senses, both stunned at their own stupidity and overjoyed with reaffirmation of their faith they wept and embraced each other.

The Jews, although linked as a community with the *Ansar* by a written agreement, still entertained the desire of domination over them and were deeply disturbed when they found the Muslim community expanding and getting stronger and their jealousy and hatred of the Muslims came to the fore. But unable to launch a frontal open attack they adopted mean tactics and spread their espionage activities among the Muslims to cause disruption and dissensions (Ibn Hisham, 2000: 139).

### 3.2 Jews' attempt (at least three times) to assassinate the Prophet

An attempt was also made to poison the Prophet and a Jewish woman, Zainab, daughter of Al-Hars, prepared roasted mutton and put poison in it, and learning that the Prophet liked the flesh of goat's shank, she mixed a larger quantity of poison in that portion and sent it as gift to the Prophet and his companions. The Prophet took a morsel from it and immediately spat it out saying that it appeared to be poisonous and prohibited his companions from touching it.

But one of the companions Bara bin Ma'rūr, who had taken a morsel but due to his regard for the Prophet swallowed it with all its bitterness died immediately. The Jewish woman was summoned and she confessed it saying that she wanted to test that if the Prophet was truly an Apostle of God he would be forewarned, otherwise "we would be relieved if he died."

Banu Nadir had tried twice to kill the Prophet. The first attempt had come after the battle of Badr when Quraish had written to Banu Nadir threatening to wage war on them if they did not fight the Messenger. The Jews then sent a message to the Prophet inviting him to come out with 30 of his companions to meet the similar number of rabbis from them. They had promised that if the rabbis were convinced with his Message, all the Jews then would convert to Islam. Finally, they reduced the number of delegation to three from each side, but three rabbis were carrying daggers, as was revealed by a Jewish woman whose brother was a Muslim.

Another attempt to kill the Prophet was in the fourth year of migration when Amr bin Umayya Damri had killed two men of the clan of Amir. The Prophet went to Banu Nadair clan seeking their help to pay blood-money according to charter of Madinah. They showed a welcoming approval to contribute. However, in his absence they said to one another, while the Prophet (pbuh) was sitting beside the wall of one of their houses, "You will never find the man in this position again. Who will go up the house to throw a big stone on him and rid us of him? Amar ibn Jahash volunteered to undertake this task (Ibn Hisham, 2000: 161). But the Prophet had a premonition; he left the place and came away.

All these assassination plots were designed by the Jews and without any provocation from the Muslims. As the Prophet was the chief of the state, any plan to assassinate him by any group is clear indication of these non-Muslim Jewish tribes' unwillingness to honor life of peaceful co-existence.

#### 4 CONCLUSION

The aforesaid incidents, their reasons and backgrounds refer to the reality that though various initiatives were taken to establish peaceful co-existence between Muslims and non-Muslims, all had gone in vain. As a result, wars, offences, confrontations, retaliations and expulsions took place in the first Islamic state. In order to appreciate the atmosphere which surrounded these incidents especially the expulsion of Jews from Madinah as well as its surroundings, certain developments must be taken into account. They are as follows: It should be recalled that of the very first things the Prophet did as soon as he migrated to Madinah was to have not only a multicultural pact of friendship with various elements in the population of Madinah including the Jews of the city proper,

but also to enter into separate bi-lateral non-aggression treaties of alliance with three neighboring powerful Jewish tribes of Banu Qainuqa, Banu Nadir and Banu Qurayzah residing on the outskirts of Madinah. According to the mutual defense treaty, they were legally and morally obliged to help the Muslims in case of attack from outside, and not to co-operate with the enemies of the Prophet.

But in the battles, instead of helping the Muslims, they violated the pact, intrigued with the hypocrites of Madinah (Kirmani, 1983: 167), and actively co-operated with the Quraish in their destructive actions against Muslims. They committed treachery at the hour of crisis and didn't repent for their action (Afzal-ur-Rahman, 1980: 263). They molested a Muslim woman, which touched off a violent controversy. The prophet intervened, but failed to persuade them into abandoning their aggressive posture (Kirmani, 1983: 168). They tried to destabilize the Muslim tribes through reviving their old bloody feud which was resolved by the Prophet. Their disruptive activities increased after the Battle of Uhud, when the prestige of the Muslims was at the lowest ebb (Afzal-ur-Rahman, 1980: 263). They flouted the existing bilateral non-aggression treaty of alliance with the Muslims and openly sided with the Quraish-led offensive and participated with them in the Battle (Ahzab) (Kirmani, 1983: 169), and they attempted several times to assassinate the Prophet.

Through these activities and behavior, Jews had proven that they could not be trusted under any circumstances and, therefore, no state conscious of the safety and security of its people could ever take the risk of allowing them to stay among them. All the punishments, including the exile, were for the specific charges of crimes and treachery proved beyond doubt.

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