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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the memory of those innocents whose lives were murderously cut short as a result of an Islamic extremist misinterpreting and twisting the words of the Koran.

As Westerners, we are not at war with Islam. For Muslims, your prophet never imagined his later followers would wish to wage war against us.

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CHAPTER 5: MUHAMMAD FLEES MECCA

Despite the Muslims ability to rally around one another in their now oppressed ghetto of Mecca, the reality was that after two years of being boycotted by the city, food shortages began to take hold. Further, the boycott had been extended to banning Muslims from joining caravans, and it was the caravans that gave access to trade and currency. Moreover, Mecca's actions had not been confined to non-violent punitive actions, as a number of slaves who had converted to Islam were kidnapped and tied to trees, left to burn in the blazing sun. These murders deeply angered and saddened Muhammad, but ultimately the boycott would claim the life of someone much closer and dearer to him, his wife Khadija.

In AD 619, the death of his beloved wife of 24 years would become known as the Year of Sorrow, for the devastation it wrought upon Muhammad. For their entire marriage, Muhammad had stayed exclusively monogamous. To their friends and family, theirs had been a perfect union. Together they had given life to their four surviving daughters, and she had served as loyal confidant and counselor. Further, she was the first to acknowledge him as a prophet. Edward Gibbon in his book, *'The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire'*, wrote:

"During the 24-years of their marriage, Khadija's youthful husband abstained from the right of polygamy, and the pride or tenderness of the venerable matron was never insulted by the society of a rival. After her death, the Prophet placed her in the rank of four perfect women, with the sister of Moses, the mother of Jesus, and Fatima."

Further tragedy would befall Muhammad soon after he buried his wife in Jannatul Mualla cemetery, Mecca, with his uncle and guardian Abu Talib falling ill and passing in the same year. While Muhammad's faith had caused he and his uncle to become distant, his death would pose a great security threat to him, as his passing would leave Muhammad without a protector or clan leader who could avenge his death if he were attacked, which always served as a deterrent to those who plotted against him. Muhammad was now exposed and vulnerable, and no chieftain in Mecca was willing to serve as his patron.

Now without a clan leader, confrontations against Muhammad became increasingly regular. He was spat upon. He had dung flung at him and his children, and on another occasion he had the intestines of a dead sheep smeared in shit thrown on him. The prophet knew it would only be a matter of time before things would become dangerously bleak, but there was no place to run and no place to turn.

In desperation, Muhammad rode on horseback to the neighboring city of Taif, which was a solid two-day trip away. His objective was to seek a sanctuary for him and his Muslims, away from the increasing hostility of Mecca. The meeting was a total failure, however, and the chiefs of Taif ridiculed him for his claims of prophethood. One of the elders told him, "What makes you so special? You're a nobody!" While another said, "if God sent you, then I will smash the Kaaba." Dejected, Muhammad began on his return journey to Mecca.

Two hundred and fifty miles away in a town then called Yathrib, which later changed its name to Medina, that city's chiefs were discussing the social woes of their society. The main problem they faced was in how to bring the city's religious violence into some kind of order. The people of Medina had found it impossible live in peace together. There were several Arab tribes who had

converted to Judaism, others who had converted to Christianity, and there were three clans of Jewish descent. What made Medina unique in southern Arabia is a majority of the population believed in monotheism, as opposed to the majority of Meccans who were polytheists.

The chieftains of Medina had heard stories of Muhammad. They had heard he was preaching a blend of combined Judaism and Christianity, but in a way targeted specifically towards Arabs. So they decided to send an envoy to Mecca to meet with Muhammad, under the cover of the hajj (pilgrimage) of AD 620. After a number of meetings and discussions, the Medina envoy became converts to Islam, and they promised Muhammad they would defend him against anyone who attacked him or his Muslim converts.

For the first time Muhammad was starting to see a glimmer of hope. The new pact with Medina would ensure no harm would come to him. It was during this period Muhammad was invited to have dinner at the house of one of his cousins. After dinner he felt restless and anxious, and he asked if he could be excused from the table. He then felt a force pulling him towards the Kaaba. There he walked several times around the shrine, before falling asleep in a nearby shelter. As he slept, he felt the painful jolts of a horse kicking him in the stomach. Suddenly awoken, Muhammad was startled by the sight of a Pegasus. The Archangel Gabriel appeared and told him to throw his legs over the saddle of a winged horse named Buraq. The horse bolted, literally, straight up into the night sky on a journey that covered the caravan routes of his younger days; the ruined cities of the Old Testament; and then onto the revered city of Jerusalem, "the farthest mosque". (Masjid al-aqsa) Once there Muhammad was welcomed by a host of biblical prophets, including Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, who told him he must continue his efforts to bring the Arabs to God. You

can imagine the difficulty Christians have in believing Jesus told Muhammad to continue preaching Islam, but I digress.

From what is now the Dome on the Rock, Jerusalem, Muhammad ascended into heaven. Gabriel gave him a whirlwind tour of the heavenly realm including the fires of hell, and this was the moment he saw his ultimate mission clear. I mean who wouldn't be impressed, right? Gabriel told him this was his reward for his perseverance to now, and that greater rewards lay in waiting should he unite Arabia under the obedience of God. Muhammad was elated. It was the motivation and inspiration he needed after a decade of hardship that included being ostracized, the loss of his wife and friends, and humiliation.

The Islamic world remain divided as to whether or not this mystical event was merely a spiritual or dream like metaphor, or if it were an actual physical happening. I guess that depends on each individual's faith. Al Tabari, who was one of Muhammad's first biographers, believed it to be an actual event and he gave the following account:

"In heaven he saw 70,000 heads, each head having 70,000 mouths, each mouth having 70,000 tongues, each tongue speaking 70,000 languages; and every one involved in singing God's (Allah's) praises."

As for me I think I will lean towards the dream side of the aisle, in case you were asking. But it doesn't matter what I think. Let's see what others of that time thought of Muhammad's night flight.

Rejuvenated, Muhammad stood in the centre of the shrine in Mecca and called upon the entire city to hear of what he had to say. Over the course of the next few hours, the entire city had gathered. Muhammad began to speak, and what he told them was a full account of his winged horse journey to Jerusalem that previous evening. He gave his account and then silence. And then more silence, some

vacant glances among the crowd, and then wild fits of laughter broke out. Literally, 20,000 people were on their backs laughing that any person would have the audacity to mutter such a fanciful story. His enemies, however, were exultant, for now he had proved beyond a shadow of a doubt he had lost his mind. They were determined more than ever to finish him once and for all, and a bounty was placed on his head for any person willing to murder him.

The euphoria of his night flight had been rubbed away by the realization that he was now considered little more than a punch line in his own town. Further, Muhammad learned of a bounty placed on his head. Timely, the chieftains of Medina reached out to him and pleaded he come to them in order to lead their city, which now seemed intent on destroying itself. Muhammad had little other alternative and he agreed. The assassins were closing in and it was only for a sneaky piece of planning did Muhammad escape Mecca unharmed.

The year was now AD 622 and not a single Muslim remained living in Mecca. They were safely reunited with the Abyssinian refugees, and Arabia's first theocracy was about to be implemented thus beginning the Islamic era. With a safe haven for all Muslims, Muhammad could begin his preparations for waging war on the unbelievers of Mecca. Now, this is a point we all need to be clear on and it's essential to understanding Islam in its entirety. You see, the Meccans and the Quraysh wished to continue practicing their pagan religious beliefs. Muhammad, however, was on a mission to convert them. For the previous decade he had been on the defensive, quietly reciting the Koran, building his converts, but now with a base, he would turn this all around by going on the offensive. Islam means surrender and he had no intention of leaving the Meccans to their own spiritual wishes. He believed it was his divine duty to conquer and convert them, but for now his immediate priority was securing his

position in Medina. Payback and submission would come later.

SURA 2: THE COW

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

The second sura is the Koran's longest, comprising of two hundred and eighty six verses, including the single longest verse in the book. (2:282)

Scholars regard it as a Medinan sura, meaning it was revealed to Muhammad during the first two years after the Hajj. The Hajj, in this instance, being the journey of Muhammad and his followers to Medina in 622. Thus making 622 the first year of the Islamic calendar. Therefore, when scholars say it was written within the first two years after the Hajj, what they're really saying is it was written in the years 622-624 C.E.

'The Cow' addresses a wide range of topics, including many decrees of Islamic law. It also retells the biblical stories of Adam, Abraham and Moses. Also, Muhammad urges the pagan worshipers and the Jews to embrace Islam.

The first half of this sura is addressed to the Jews of Medina, who refuse to accept Muhammad as a prophet. Hence, he puts forth his argument as to why they should accept him on his word.

The second half is addressed to the Muslims of Medina, and prescribes to them how it is they should live their lives as devout Muslims. Essentially, Muhammad submits the following instructions to ensure the survival of the Muslim community there:

1. The Community should work diligently and with utmost zeal to propagate its ideology, so as to recruit as many people as possible.

2. Work hard to prove to non-Muslims their respective religion is wrong
3. The Community should tend assistance to its weakest i.e. orphans and homeless
4. The Community must be ready and willing to suppress and defeat any external enemy who come armed with a different ideology
5. The Community should eradicate evil vices such as gambling, alcohol, and unscrupulous business practices.

VERSES 1 - 20

These introductory verses proclaim the Koran to be the Book of Guidance. Further, it stipulates the articles of faith: belief in Allah, prophethood, and Life-after-death. Muhammad also groups mankind into three categories: Believers, disbelievers, and hypocrites. Specific verses include:

[2:2] This scripture is infallible; a beacon for the righteous;

[2:6] As for those who disbelieve, it is the same for them; whether you warn them, or not warn them, they cannot believe.

[2:7] GOD seals their minds and their hearing, and their eyes are veiled. They have incurred severe retribution.

VERSES 21 – 29

These nine verses concern themselves with submission; the submission to Allah, and for those who submit, they will be rewarded in Paradise.

[2:21] O people, worship only your Lord - the One who created you and those before you - that you may be saved.

*[2:24] If you cannot do this - and you can never do this
- then beware of the Hellfire, whose fuel is people and
rocks; it awaits the disbelievers.*

VERSES 30 – 39

Muhammad revises the biblical story of Adam's fall from grace; of his life in Eden; and of his succumbing to Satan. The prophet narrates the Genesis mythology for the purpose of demonstrating bad stuff happens when Muslims stray from God.

*[2:35] We said, "O Adam, live with your wife in
Paradise, and eat there from generously, as you please,
but do not approach this tree, lest you sin."*

VERSES 40 - 120

Muhammad addresses the Jews ("Children of Israel") of Medina throughout the following eighty verses. He is highly critical of the fact he believes they've deviated from the original scriptures i.e. the commandments delivered to them by their prophet Moses. He criticizes them for worshipping the Golden Calf and uses this to illustrate their turning away from God.

Interestingly, he references Israel's covenant with God, and believes it is the Muslim's duty to honor it:

*[2:40] O Children of Israel, remember My favor, which
I bestowed upon you, and fulfill your part of the
covenant, that I fulfill My part of the covenant, and
reverence Me.*

*[2:41] You shall believe in what I have revealed herein,
confirming what you have; do not be the first to reject
it. Do not trade away My revelations for a cheap price,
and observe Me.*

*[2:63] We made a covenant with you, as we raised
Mount Sinai above you: "You shall uphold what we
have given you strongly, and remember its contents,
that you may be saved."*

[2:64] But you turned away thereafter, and if it were not for GOD's grace towards you and His mercy, you would have been doomed.

[2:65] You have known about those among you who desecrated the Sabbath. We said to them, "Be you as despicable as apes."

The historical context of the above verse refers to the establishment of the Muslim community in Medina. As we know, Muhammad saw himself as a kind of reformer of both Judaism and Christianity. He saw himself as a then modern day Moses, but with the specific objective of bringing the Arabs to God. But the Jews never accepted him as anything other than a quasi cult leader. Now, in the above verses, was he calling all Jews "apes"? No, he wasn't. He was specifically referring to the Jewish clan of Medina, who had joined forces with the Meccans to annihilate him in the Siege of Medina.

Jesus makes the first of his twenty-five cameos in the Koran in the following verse. Muhammad considered Jesus to be a Messenger of God, who was sent to guide the Jewish people with an updated memo (Testament) from God. Throughout the Koran, Muhammad actually teaches Muslims to revere and honor Jesus. Effectively, Muhammad believes he is equal to Jesus, sent with the same message but for a different audience. Interestingly, the Koran alleges that Jesus was neither killed nor crucified, but rather he had ascended to heaven.

[2:87] We gave Moses the scripture, and subsequent to him we sent other messengers, and we gave Jesus, son of Mary, profound miracles and supported him with the Holy Spirit. Is it not a fact that every time a messenger went to you with anything you disliked, your ego caused you to be arrogant? Some of them you rejected, and some of them you killed.

VERSES 121 – 141

Muhammad tries to convince the Jews of Medina he has received the same guidance and instructions as the prophets before him, including Abraham and Moses, and therefore, they should follow him as a prophet.

The following verse underpins precisely the manner in which Muhammad saw his duty, to bring the word of God to the Arab speaking populace:

[2:129] "Our Lord, and raise among them a messenger to recite to them Your revelations, teach them the scripture and wisdom, and purify them. You are the Almighty, Most Wise."

Further, Muhammad explains that Christians and Jews may continue the practicing of their faith.

[2:136] Say, "We believe in GOD, and in what was sent down to us, and in what was sent down to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Patriarchs; and in what was given to Moses and Jesus, and all the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction among any of them. To Him alone we are submitters."

VERSES 142 – 152

When the Jews of Medina continued to mock him and refuse him as a prophet, Muhammad, in turn, gave Islam its independence from Judaism in moving the direction of Muslim prayers away from the Temple in Jerusalem, and towards the Kaaba in Mecca.

[2:144] We have seen you turning your face about the sky (searching for the right direction). We now assign a Qiblah that is pleasing to you. Henceforth, you shall turn your face towards the Sacred Masjid. Wherever you may be, all of you shall turn your faces towards it. Those who received the previous scripture know that this is the truth from their Lord. GOD is never unaware of anything they do.

VERSES 153 – 251

In this large chunk of verses, practical measures are prescribed to Muslims in order to better follow Muhammad's guidance. In many ways it reads as a 'How to be a Good Muslim'. Dispensing laws, rules, and regulations for drinking, money lending, gambling, political discourse, and inter-faith relations. Further, he denounces paganism in all forms.

VERSES 252 – 260

[No further sample review]

VERSES 261 – 283

[No further sample review]

VERSES 284 - 286

[No further sample review]

