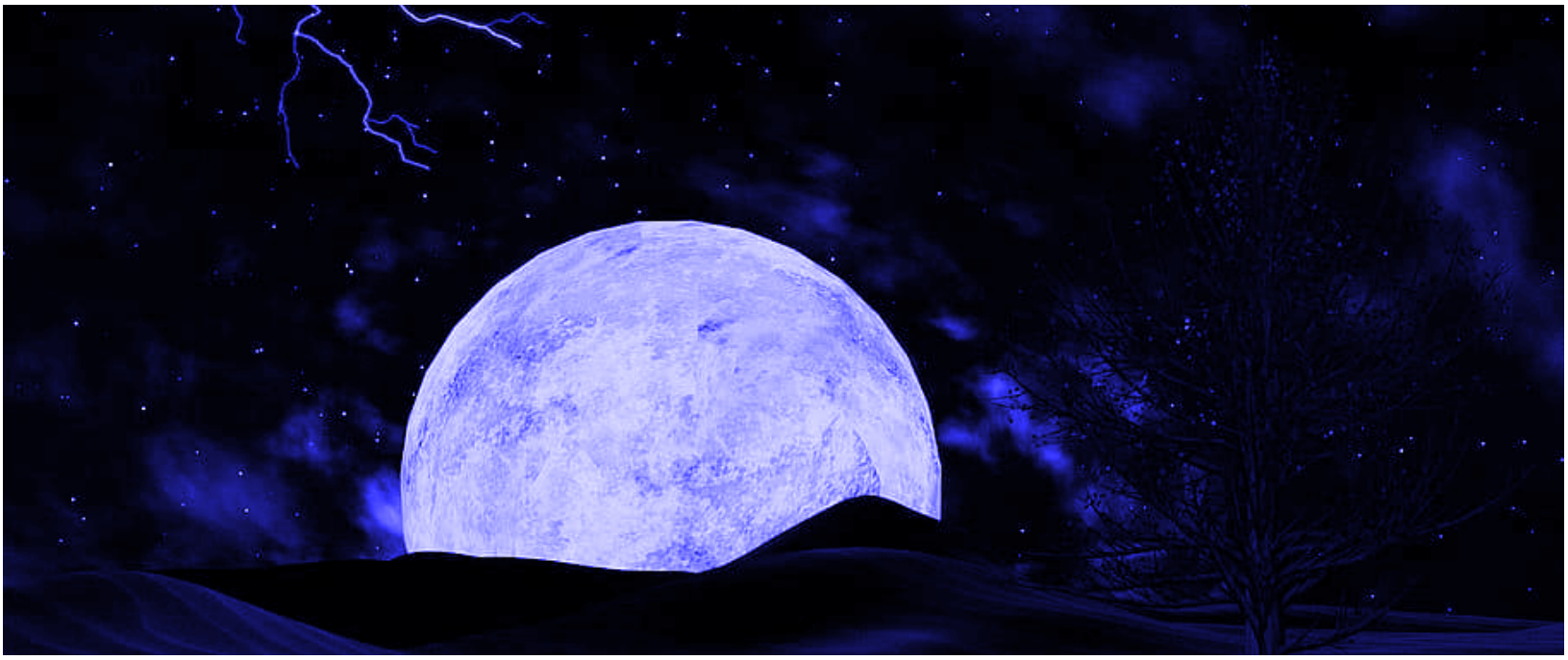
The Caesar of Rome

Heraclius asked

"Who is Muhammad ﷺ ?"



Compiled by Abū Āsiyāh Muzaffar al-Hindī -May Allāh forgive him, his parents, his mashāyikh and the muslims-

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

INTRODUCTION

Nearly 1400 years ago[1], when the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ sent a letter to the Roman Emperor, Heraclius, inviting him to Islam, he summoned Abū Sufyān Ṣakhr bin Ḥarb while he had been accompanying a caravan from Quraish. They were merchants doing business[2] in Sham[3]. So Abu Sufyan, who at this stage had not accepted Islam, along with his companions went to Heraclius[4] at *Ilya* (Jerusalem). Heraclius summoned them to the court and he had the nobles of Rome around him.

HERACLIUS[5]: Who amongst you is closest in lineage to this man who claims to be a Prophet?

ABŪ SUFYĀN: I am the closest to him in lineage amongst them.

HERACLIUS: Bring him close to me and make his companions stand behind him.

Heraclius told his translator to tell the companions of Abū Sufyān that he would ask him some questions regarding that man (The Prophet) and should he lie, they must contradict him.

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[1] This incident would have occurred sometime between 6th- 8th year after the Prophet's Hijrah from Makkah to Madinah (628 - 630 AD)
[2] This was when Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) had a truce known as the treaty of Hudaybiyah with Abū Sufyān and the disbelievers of Quraish
[3] Shām includes modern-day Syria, Palestine, Lebanon and Jordan
[4] Heraclius was the Byzantine emperor from 610 to 641 AD. After several failed attempts, in 627 AD he was triumphant in defeating the Persians and took control of Shām
[5] Heraclius had a interpreter who translated from his language to Arabic and vice versa

THE INQUIRY

HERACLIUS: What is the status of his family amongst you?

ABŪ SUFYĀN: He is of a noble family amongst us.

HERACLIUS: Has anybody amongst you ever claimed the same (Prophethood) before him?

ABŪ SUFYĀN: No.

HERACLIUS: Was anybody amongst his ancestors a king?

ABŪ SUFYĀN: No.

HERACLIUS: Do the nobles follow him or the weak?

ABŪ SUFYĀN: It is the weak who follow him.

HERACLIUS: Are they increasing in numbers or decreasing?

ABŪ SUFYĀN: They are increasing.

HERACLIUS: Does anybody amongst those who embrace his religion become displeased and renounce the religion afterwards?

ABŪ SUFYĀN: No.

HERACLIUS: Have you ever accused him of lying before his claim (for Prophethood)?

ABŪ SUFYĀN: No.

HERACLIUS: Does he break his promises?

ABŪ SUFYĀN: No. We are now at a truce[6] with him but know not what he will do in this regard.

HERACLIUS: Have you ever been at war with him?

ABŪ SUFYĀN: Yes.

HERACLIUS: What was the outcome of the battles?

ABŪ SUFYĀN: Sometimes he was victorious and sometimes us.

[6] Treaty of Hudaybiyah, 6th year after Hijrah (628 AD)

HERACLIUS: What does he command you with?

ABŪ SUFYĀN: He enjoins us to worship Allāh alone, to worship nothing along with Him, and to renounce all that our forebears have said [of religion]. He enjoins us to Salah, to speak the truth, to chastity, and to keep the bonds of kinship.



The Arabs between the Roman (Byzantine) and Persian (Sassanid) Empires in 600 AD

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THE INFERENCE

After having gathered the responses, coupled with his knowledge of previous scriptures, Heraclius made some strong inferences as follows;

I asked you about his family and your reply was that he belonged to a very noble family. **In fact all the Messengers come from noble families amongst their respective peoples.**

I questioned you whether any others amongst you laid claim to such a thing (prophethood), your reply was in the negative. **If the answer had been in the affirmative, I would have regarded this man to be following his predecessors.**

Then I asked you whether any of his ancestors was a king. Your reply was negative. **If it had been in the affirmative, I would have regarded this man as designing to take back his ancestral kingdom.**

I further asked whether he was ever accused of lying before his claim, and your reply was in the negative. **So I wondered how a person who does not tell a lie about others could ever tell a lie about Allāh.**

I then asked you whether the rich people followed him or the poor. **You replied that it was the poor who followed him. And in fact all the Messenger have been followed by this very class of people.**

Then I asked you whether his followers were increasing or decreasing. **You replied that they were increasing, and in fact this is the way of true faith, until it is complete in all respects.**

I further asked you whether there was anybody, who, after embracing his religion, became displeased and discarded his religion. **Your reply was in the negative, and in fact this is (the sign of) true faith, when its delight enters the hearts and mixes with them completely.**

I asked you whether he has ever betrayed. **You replied in the negative and likewise the Messengers never betray.**

When I asked you whether you have fought each other, you replied in the positive, and that sometimes he was victorious and sometimes you. **Indeed, such are the Messengers; they are put to trials and the final victory is always theirs.**

Then I asked you what he ordered you to do. **You replied that he ordered you to worship Allāh and Allāh alone and not to worship anything along with Him and**

forbade you to worship idols and ordered you to pray, to speak the truth and to be chaste.

If what you say is true, he will very soon reign over this very place beneath my feet. Indeed, I knew that he (the Final Messenger) was to appear, but I did not know that he would be from you. And if I were certain that I could reach him, I would expend all efforts to meet him and if I were with him, I would certainly wash his feet.

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Invitation to Islam

Heraclius then called for the letter[7] addressed by Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) which was delivered by Diḥyah bin Khalīfah al-Kalbī -*May Allah be pleased with him*- to the Governor of Busra, who forwarded it to Heraclius to read. The contents of the letter were as follows:

In the name of Allāh the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

From Muḥammad the slave of Allāh and His Messenger

To Heraclius the ruler of Byzantine.

Peace be upon him, who follows the right path. Furthermore I invite you to Islam, and if you become a Muslim you will be safe, and Allāh will double your reward[8], and if you reject this invitation of Islam, upon you will be sin of the Arīsiyyīn (tillers, farmers i.e. your people[9]). And (Allāh's Statement:)

﴿ قُلْ يَٰٓأَهْلَ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ تَعَالَوْا۟ إِلَىٰ كَلِمَةٍ سَوَآءٍۭ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا ٱللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِۦ شَيْـًٔا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ ۚ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا۟ فَقُولُوا۟ ٱشْهَدُوا۟ بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ ﴾

'O people of the scripture! Come to a word common to you and us that we worship none but Allāh and that we associate nothing in worship with Him, and that none of us shall take others as Lords beside Allāh. Then, if they turn away, say: Bear witness that we are Muslims (those who have surrendered to Allāh).'[10]

[Signed with the seal of the Prophet]

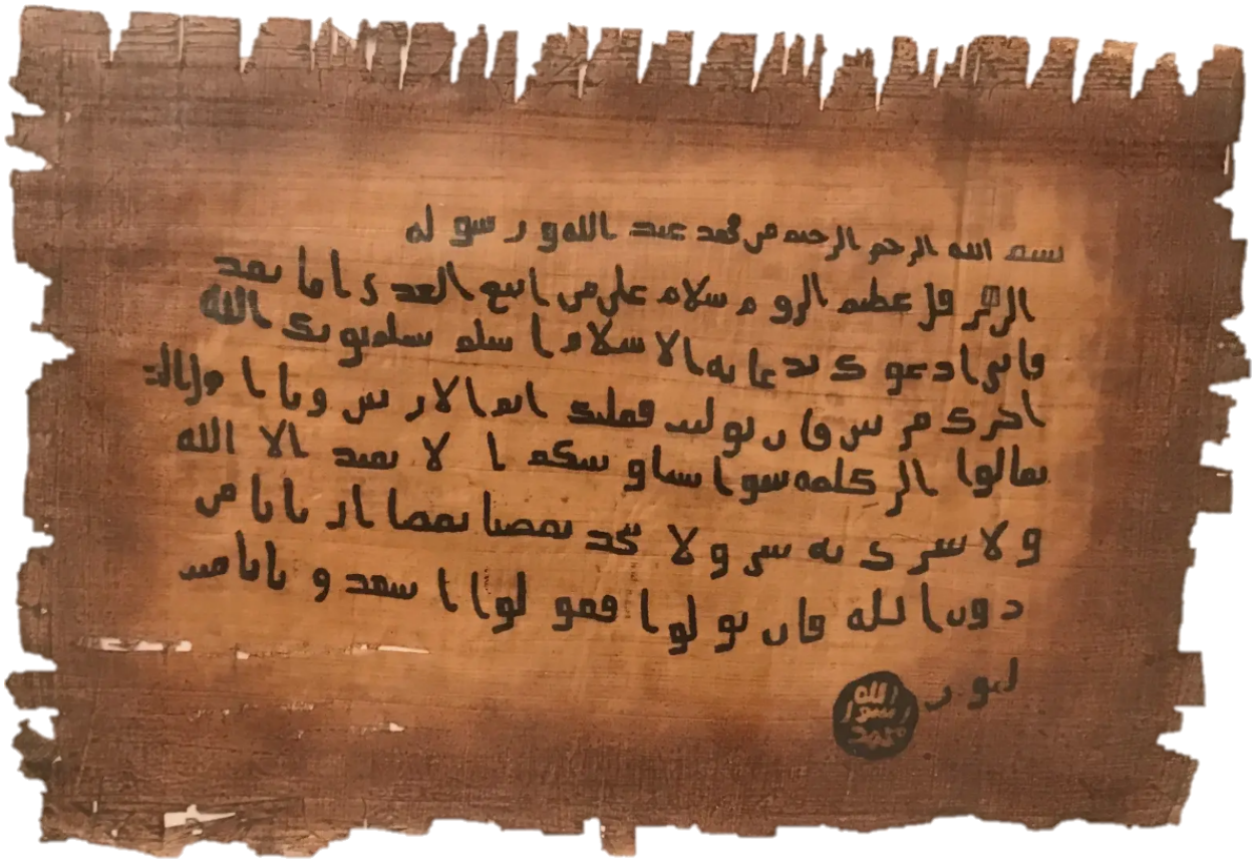
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[7] The letter which the Prophet (ﷺ) wrote to Heraclius of the Roman Empire, is said to be preserved in some museums around the world

[8] Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari -*May Allāh be pleased with him*- reported: The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said, "Three kinds of people will have a double reward: A man from the People of the Book who believes in his Prophet and (also) believes in Muhammad; a slave who discharges properly the duties towards Allāh and towards his master; and a man who possesses a slave-girl and teaches her manners, educates her well, and frees her and then marries her." *Agreed upon*

[9] It means that if Heraclius were to reject the invitation, he would also have to bear responsibility for the sin of his subjects as they would be quick to follow him as he does

[10] *Sūrah Āl ʿImrān* 3:64



Digital copy of the letter sent by the Prophet to the Roman Emperor

When Heraclius had finished his speech and had read the letter, there was a great hue and cry in the Royal Court. So Abū Sufyān and his companions were turned out of the court. He told his companions that the matter of the son of Abu Kabsha[11] (the Prophet ﷺ) has become so prominent that even the King of Byzantine is afraid of him. By this, he started to become sure that the Prophet would be the conqueror in the near future up until Allāh guided him to embrace Islam -*May Allāh be pleased with him*-.

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[11] It was said that Abu Kabsha was a reference to the Prophet's maternal grandfather and not an attempt to disgrace him

CONCLUSION

The matter concerning Heraclius' acceptance of Islam remains uncertain. It is possible that his lack of declaration of faith was for fear of being killed by his people. It is also possible that he continued to be in a state of doubt until he died as a disbeliever. In all, if his intentions were true, he would benefit by it, else he has failed and lost a great opportunity.[12]



References: *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 7, 2681, 2940, 2941, 3174, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 1773, Explanation of Ibn Ḥajr al-Asqalānī from Fatḥ al-Bārī, Explanation of Imām an-Nawawī from Sharh Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*

[12] Completed by the permission of Allāh on the night of 24th Dhu'l-Qi'dah, 1443 AH corresponding to 23/6/2022

The Caesar of Rome

Heraclius asked
"Who is Muhammad ﷺ ?"

"

This is Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and these are his lofty ideals
Why then is he despised constantly, these prolonged ordeals

Reflect! Dear esteemed reader and respond
As they say 'what goes around comes around'

Read! Spread! Yours is this small treatise
For in it could be your path to eternal success.

"