

Islam and Beheading

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There has been a world-wide outcry against the beheadings of non-Muslims in the Middle East. This is not surprising because there is a natural human revulsion against such grotesque and vile deeds. Likewise, most Muslims have been condemning the terrifying spectacle of these gruesome and bloody beheadings too.

Justification

Of course, it would, indeed, be rare that anyone would ever argue that it is permissible to behead an innocent person. A rational person would consider such an argument moral insanity. It is axiomatic that an innocent person is never legitimately punished, let alone beheaded. Even the militant Muslims don't believe that an innocent person deserves to be punished. So, why did they behead these non-Muslims? The answer is simple. The Salafist¹ Muslims believe their captives were not innocent civilians! For starters, in their view, anyone who has not submitted to Allah is an infidel. Secondly, these "infidels" were citizens of nations they consider to be enemies at war with Islam. In fact, they believe much of the world is at war with Islam. Thirdly, Muhammad affirmed decapitation as a form of punishment to warn others who might violate the Qur'an and his authority. Fourthly, Muhammad commanded that only adherents of Islam may reside on the Arabian Peninsula. (Even to this day, Muhammad's injunction is obeyed. Only Muslims may worship legally in Saudi Arabia. Non-Muslims who engage in any type of religious activity public or private are arrested by the religious police (*Mutawwa'in*) and deported.)



The last injunction the apostle gave was in his words 'Let not two religions be left in the Arabian Peninsula.'²

Ibn Humayd—Salamah—Ibn Ishaq—Salih b. Kaysan—al-Zuhri—'Ubaydallah b. 'Abdallah b. 'Utbah—'A'ishah: The last injunction enjoined by the Messenger of God was that no two religions be left in the Arabian Peninsula.³

¹ "Salafi" in Arabic means fundamentalist in the sense of going back to the original texts of Islam.

² Ibn Ishaq, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah*, Translated by A. Guillaume, Oxford University Press, Oxford, England, (Re-issued in Karachi, Pakistan, 1967, 13th impression, 1998) 1955, pp. 689.

³ Tabari (838? – 923), Vol. IX, *The Last Years of the Prophet*, In series: The History of al-Tabari (*Ta'rikh al-rusul wa'l-muluk*), Translated by I.K. Poonawala, SUNY series in Near Eastern Studies, Bibliotheca Persica, State University of New York Press, Albany, New York, 1990, p. 206.

Consequently, Salafist Muslims feel morally justified to enforce the injunctions of the Prophet of Islam and to use his particular methods of punishment.

Idealized Muhammad

Surprisingly, many Muslims deny that beheadings are permitted in the Qur'an and the Sunnah of Muhammad. Most Muslims honor an idealized Prophet of Islam who was a wonderful man of peace who won over his followers by his intellectually persuasive teachings, heartfelt compassion, and acts of tender mercy. So naturally, it is impossible for most Muslims to imagine that Muhammad ever beheaded or abused anyone in a vicious fashion. They sincerely believe it is not within the realm of possibilities. They suppose his marvelous beauty and profound wisdom were so magnificent that people could not help but prostrate in willing submission to Allah.

He [Allah] sent a Messenger from among themselves to both Arabs and non-Arabs, who was the most noble of them, the purest of them in nature and upbringing, the greatest of them in intelligence and forbearance, the most abundant in knowledge and understanding, the strongest in certainty and resolution, the one with the greatest compassion and mercy for them.

Allah purified him both in spirit and body and kept him free from all faults and blemishes and bestowed wisdom and judgement on him. By means of him Allah opened eyes that were blind, hearts that were covered and ears that were deaf, and He made people believe in Him.¹

This fanciful description is more like an Imam preaching an Arabian sand storm (*Simoom*). It blinds the eyes to the true Muhammad of history.

Historical Muhammad

Qur'an

The pre-Islamic Arabs had the custom that tribal relatives could ransom those who were captured in battle. The ransom that the victors received for a prisoner was an important source of wealth. Dead combatants were simply not worth much. So, the prospect of a substantial ransom was a powerful motivation to keep prisoners of war alive. This custom assured combatants that, if they surrendered peacefully, they would not lose their life. They could look forward to being released to their relatives when their ransom was paid.

However, Muhammad told his followers, when they fought Unbelievers, to smite their necks *at length*, meaning that numerous enemies had to be smitten before cessation of conflict could occur. Not until there had been abundant bloodshed and the enemy thoroughly subdued could captives be taken alive and bound firmly. Only then could generosity be shown (setting free a captive who accepts Islam) or a ransom be accepted (releasing a captive to a tribal relative after receiving a ransom payment). Lastly Muslims

¹ 'Iyad ibn Musa al-Yahsubi, *Muhammad: Messenger of Allah (Ash-Shifa* of Qadi 'Iyad), Translated by Aisha A. Bewley, Madinah Press, Inverness, Scotland, ISBN: 1 874216 26 2, 1991 (third reprint, 1999), p. v.

were commanded to engage perpetually in Jihad until all unbelievers embraced Islam or were subdued by the Muslim armies and made into a subservient class (*dhimmi*).

So, when you meet (in fight *Jihâd* in Allâh's Cause), those who disbelieve smite at their necks till when you have killed and wounded many of them, then bind a bond firmly (on them, i.e. take them as captives). Thereafter (is the time) either for generosity (i.e. free them without ransom), or ransom (according to what benefits Islâm), until the war lays down its burden. Thus [you are ordered by Allâh to continue in carrying out *Jihâd* against the disbelievers till they embrace Islâm (i.e. are saved from the punishment in the Hell-fire) or at least come under your protection], but if it had been Allâh's Will, He Himself could certainly have punished them (without you). But (He lets you fight), in order to test you, some with others. But those who are killed in the Way of Allâh, He will never let their deeds be lost, Sura Muhammad 47:4 ¹

The majority of Muslims has never read and studied the Qur'an in its historical context. So, we don't doubt their sincerity when they condemn the ghastly beheadings. They seem to be utterly unaware of the teaching of the Qur'an on this subject. Yet, in a very real way, while they are condemning the cruelty of beheading, they are really condemning the teachings of the Qur'an too.

Scholars decry ghastly tactic of beheading: Beheadings gain widespread attention, but they have no legitimate basis in Quranic ideology. ... But there is little precedent in Islamic holy texts and tradition for carrying out decapitations, scholars say. [News Day](#) — June 24, 2004

Terror

The purpose for the command to smite above the neck and to cut off the finger tips was to instill terror into the hearts of the Unbelievers. This seems to be the self-explanation of the Qur'an. It is acknowledged that some commentaries (*tafsir*) give a soft-touch to this verse (*ayah*). Certainly, if the obvious meaning were correct, it would have the effect of instilling terror into the hearts of Unbelievers! Do the interpretations developed by Muslim missionaries for their Western audiences have the same terrorizing effect this verse requires?

Remember thy Lord inspired the angels (with the message): "I am with you: give firmness to the Believers: I will instil terror into the hearts of the Unbelievers: smite ye above their necks and smite all their finger-tips off them." Anfal Sura 8:12 ²

Our Muslim friends ask us to study the Qur'an to see that "God clearly rejects such actions and condemns people who cannot show mercy and forgiveness." Yet, this verse seems to command that the Unbelievers are to be smitten above the necks and have their finger tips cut off. Is this verse showing mercy and forgiveness? Does this verse

¹ Al-Hilali, Muhammad and Muhammad M. Khan, *Interpretation of the Meanings of The Noble Qur'an: A summarized Version of Al-Tabari, Al-Qurtubi, and Ibn Kathir with comments from Sahih Al-Bukhari, Summarized in One Volume, Darussalam Publishers, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 1996, pp. 726.*

² Ali, Abdullah Yusuf, *The Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary*, Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, Inc, Elmhurst, New York, U.S. Edition 1987, pp. 417-418.

command brutality and deliberate acts of unimaginable cruelty in the name of Islam? Or, is there another Qur'an we should be studying?

While there are people dying in the name of one belief or the other every day in the Middle East, the pure brutality of such deliberate acts is unimaginable. ... We ask that you not judge Muslims or Islam by the acts of these beasts, but please take the time to speak to a knowledgeable Muslim and find out what Islam is really about. ... We ask that you stop and study the Quran. You will see that God clearly rejects such actions and condemns people who cannot show mercy and forgiveness. [Korean Times](#) — June 24, 2004

Reluctant and Weak Qurayza

Most moderate Muslims are horrified and outraged by the images of someone being decapitated in the name of Islam. Their moral outrage is perfectly understandable. By contrast some Muslim scholars are not surprised, because they are better acquainted with the historical record of Muhammad's life. They know the male adults of the Jewish Qurayza tribe were beheaded in one day. According to the various estimates of the Muslim historians, there were 600 to 900 Qurayza beheaded.

One day, while wearing a fancy turban, the angel Gabriel rode pompously into town on a white donkey with a saddle covered with a piece of beautiful brocade. The donkey trotted up to Muhammad and Gabriel proclaimed, "God commands you, Muhammad, to go to Banu Qurayza." Gabriel said he planned to terrorize the unsuspecting Qurayza.

According to what al-Zuhri told me, at the time of the noon prayers Gabriel came to the apostle wearing an embroidered turban and riding on a mule with a saddle covered with a piece of brocade. He asked the apostle if he had abandoned fighting, and when he said that he had he said that the angels had not yet laid aside their arms and that he had just come from pursuing the enemy. 'God commands you, Muhammad, to go to B. Qurayza. I am about to go to them to shake their stronghold.' ...

The apostle passed by a number of his companions in al-Saurayn before he got to B. Qurayza and asked if anyone had passed them. They replied that Dihya b. Khalifa al-Kalbi had passed upon a white mule with a saddle covered with a piece of brocade. He said, 'That was Gabriel who has been sent to B. Qurayza to shake their castles and strike terror to their hearts.'¹

The reluctant Qurayza feared Muhammad, and they never wanted to have a quarrel with him. Yet, they were too indecisive to stand on their own convictions. Huyayy came to them and persisted until he was able to secure an agreement that they would join others against Muhammad's armies. Although they were completely without malice towards Muhammad, they made the reluctant — but fatal — decision to join league with other tribes. Al-Tabari gives the details of their reluctance in his history.

¹ *op. cit.*, Ibn Ishaq, p. 461.

The enemy of God, Huyayy b. Akhtab, went out and came to Ka'b b. Asad al-Qurazi, who was the possessor of the treaty and covenant of the Banu Qurayzah.¹ Ka'b had made a truce with the Messenger of God for his people, making a contract and covenanting with him on it. When Ka'b heard Huyayy b. Akhtab, he shut his fortress in his face. Huyayy asked to be allowed in, but Ka'b refused to open to him. Huyayy called to him, "Ka'b, open to me!" "Woe to you, Huyayy," answered Ka'b, "you are a man who brings bad luck! I have made a treaty with Muhammad and will not break the pact that exists between me and him. I have seen nothing but faithfulness and truth on his part." Huyayy said: "Woe to you! Open to me, and I will speak to you!" "I will not do it," said Ka'b. Huyayy said, "By God, you have shut me out only on account of your gruel,² lest I should eat any of it with you." This angered the man, so that he opened to him. Huyayy said: "Woe to you, Ka'b! I have brought you everlasting might and an overflowing sea. I have brought you Quraysh, with their leaders and chiefs, and have caused them to encamp where the stream beds meet at Rumah; and Ghatafan, with their leaders and chiefs, and have caused them to encamp at Dhanab Naqama beside Uhud. They have made a treaty and covenant with me not to withdraw until they root out Muhammad and those who are with him." Ka'b b. Asad said to him: "By God, you have brought me everlasting humiliation—a cloud that has already shed its water, that thunders and lightens but has nothing in it. Woe to you! Leave me to continue with Muhammad as I am now, for I have seen nothing from Muhammad except truth and faithfulness." But Huyayy kept wheedling³ Ka'b until he yielded to him⁴

The Qurayza were easily intimidated and wanted to avoid conflict. So they sought a peaceful way to submit to Muhammad. They asked him to send Abu Lababa, so they could consult with him about what they should do. Abu Lababa felt sorry for them. Yet, he knew that Muhammad planned to slaughter them by slitting their throats and decapitating them.

Then they [Qurayza] sent to the apostle saying, 'Send us Abu Lubaba b. 'Abdu'l-Mundhir, brother of B. 'Amr b. 'Auf (for they were allies of al-Aus), that we may consult him.' So the apostle sent him to them, and when they saw him they got up to meet him. The women and children went up to him weeping in his face, and he felt sorry for them. They said, 'Oh Abu Lubaba, do you think that we should submit to Muhammad's judgement?' He said, 'Yes,' and pointed with his hand to his throat, signifying slaughter.⁵

Still, even though they were warned that they would be slaughtered, they decided to submit to Muhammad's compassion and mercy. They hoped they would be treated in a lenient fashion. Their friends in Medina begged Muhammad to judge kindly. In a feigned show of reasonableness, Muhammad desired to know if one of their own would be

¹ The Banu Qurayzah were one of the three main Jewish tribes of Medina, with lands toward the southeast of the oasis; see EI2, s.v. Kurayza. On this treaty, cf. W, 454-56, which implies that it was a document written by Muhammad and that Huyayy, having persuaded Ka'b to go over to his side, tore it up.

² Jashishah was a gruel of coarsely ground wheat or barley, sometimes with the addition of dates and meat. See Lane, *Lexicon*, II, 425.

³ Literally, "kept twisting [the fur of] the upper part and the fore part of the hump"; the metaphor is of a refractory camel that must be massaged and coaxed before it will allow the nose rein to be attached. See Lane, *Lexicon*, VI, s.v. *gharib*.

⁴ Al-Tabari, *The History of al-Tabari (Ta'rikh al-rusul wa'l-muluk)*, Vol. VIII, *The Victory of Islam*, Translated by M. Fishbein, State University of New York Press, Albany, New York, 1997, p. 14-15.

⁵ *op. cit.*, Ibn Ishaq, p. 462.

suitable to judge in this matter. It seemed most reasonable to them, so they readily agreed, thinking one of those before him would be chosen. They had no idea that Muhammad would then call for Sa'd b. Mu'adh, who hated the Qurayza, to come and give his judgment. Muhammad had cleverly trapped them in their own words.

In the morning they [Qurayza] submitted to the apostle's judgement and al-Aus leapt up and said, 'O Apostle, they are our allies, not allies of Khazraj, and you know how you recently treated the allies of our brethren.' Now the apostle had besieged B. Qaynuqa' who were allies of al-Khazraj and when they submitted to his judgement 'Abdullah b. Ubayy b. Salul had asked him for them and he gave them to him; so when al-Aus spoke thus the apostle said: 'Will you be satisfied, O Aus, if one of your own number pronounces judgement on them?' When they agreed he said that Sa'd b. Mu'adh was the man.¹

Sa'd b. Mu'adh arrived on the scene and reaffirmed that his judgment would be accepted by them as well as Muhammad. All agreed, saying "Yes". Their hopes of leniency were immediately dashed when Sa'd said, "Then I give judgement that the men should be killed, the property divided, and the women and children taken as captives."² Muhammad was delighted with the judgment, saying, 'You have given the judgement of Allah above the seven heavens'.

What happened next is best described in the very words of Ibn Ishaq.

Then they [Qurayza] surrendered, and the apostle confined them in Medina in the quarter of d. al-Harith, a woman of B. al-Najjar. Then the apostle went out to the market of Medina (which is still its market today) and dug trenches in it. Then he sent for them and struck off their heads in those trenches as they were brought out to him in batches. Among them was the enemy of Allah Huyayy b. Akhtab and Ka'b b. Asad their chief. There were 600 or 700 in all, though some put the figure as high as 800 or 900. As they were being taken out in batches to the apostle they asked Ka'b what he thought would be done with them. He replied, 'Will you never understand? Don't you see that the summoner never stops and those who are taken away do not return? By Allah it is death!' This went on until the apostle made an end of them.

Why did Muhammad select Sa'd to render the judgment regarding the Qurayza Jews? There were two reasons. Muhammad knew that Sa'd had made an oath that he did not want to die until the Banu Qurayza were utterly destroyed. Sa'd deeply hated these Jews.

Sa'd said to him, "May God make your face sweat (*'arraq*) in hell. O God, if the war with Quraysh is to be prolonged spare me for it, for there is no people whom I want to fight more than those who insulted your apostle, called him a liar, and drove him out. O God, seeing that you have appointed war between us and them grant me martyrdom and do not let me die until I have seen my desire upon B. Qurayza."³

Secondly, Muhammad provided lodging and nursing care for Sa'd when he was

¹ *op. cit.*, Ibn Ishaq, p. 463.

² *op. cit.*, Ibn Ishaq, p. 464.

³ *op. cit.*, Ibn Ishaq, p. 457.

sorely wounded. Muhammad showed him kindness by visiting him while he was recovering. Sa'd was indebted to Muhammad and owed him a favor. His hatred of the Qurayza and his desire to please Muhammad doomed the fated Jewish tribe.

The apostle had put Sa'd in a tent belonging to a woman of Aslam called Rufayda inside his mosque. She used to nurse the wounded and see to those Muslims who needed care. The apostle had told his people when Sa'd had been wounded by an arrow at the battle of the Trench to put him in Rufayda's tent until he could visit him later. When the apostle appointed him umpire in the matter of B. Qurayza, his people came to him and mounted him on a donkey on which they had put a leather cushion, he being a corpulent man. As they brought him to the apostle they said, 'Deal kindly with your friends, for the apostle has made you umpire for that very purpose.'¹

The apostle confined the Jews until they had dug trenches in the market place in town. Muhammad brought them out in batches to the trenches and decapitated them there. The public beheadings instilled fear and awe among the populace. It served as an example to anyone who would dare challenge Muhammad's authority. Many wanted to show compassion and mercy to the Qurayza, but their pleas fell upon Muhammad's deaf ears. Why couldn't Muhammad's mercy rise to the level of others in Medina? Was he motivated by the material goods that he would garner with the demise of the Jewish Qurayza?

Several scholars from Al-Azhar, the world's highest Sunni religious authority, condemned the decapitation of an American civilian by unknown people in Iraq, saying Islam stands against such acts. "Islam respects the human being, dead or alive, and cutting off the American's head was an act of mutilation forbidden by Islam," Ibrahim Al-Fayoumi, a member of Al-Azhar's Islamic Research Academy, told IslamOnline.net. [Media Review Network](#) — May 12, 2004

Several scholars from Al-Azhar University condemned decapitation, saying such an act of mutilation is forbidden by Islam. If Muhammad were a Muslim, why did he act contrary to the teachings of Islam? Are the scholars of Al-Azhar University unfamiliar with the life of Muhammad? Or, are these assurances meant only to allay the concerns of non-Muslims in the West?

400 Jews

The most ancient Muslim historian recorded another instance in which Muhammad had as many as 400 Jews beheaded. In brief, Muhammad commanded the Khazraj to behead 400 Jews, while the Aus were told to stand aside. This upset the Aus because the Khazraj were having all the fun. Muhammad noticed that the Aus were sulking like spoiled children. So, Muhammad let the Aus behead the last twelve Jews. Since there were only twelve Jews left, Muhammad said two Aus had to share one Jew between themselves. There were not enough Jews left for each Aus to behead one apiece. Muhammad's thoughtfulness pacified the Aus. Huwayyis was so favorably impressed by

¹ *op. cit.*, Ibn Ishaq, p. 463.

the decapitations; he proclaimed, “By God, this is indeed a religion,” and he immediately accepted Islam.

Abu 'Ubayda told me on the authority of Abu 'Amr, the Medinan, when the apostle got the better of the B. Qurayza he seized about four hundred men from the Jews who had been allies of Aus against Khazraj, and ordered that they should be beheaded. Accordingly Khazraj began to cut off their heads with great satisfaction. The apostle saw that the faces of Khazraj showed their pleasure, but there was no such indication on the part of Aus, and he suspected that that was because of the alliance that had existed between them and the B. Qurayza. When there were only twelve of them left he gave them over to Aus, assigning one Jew to every two of Aus, saying, 'Let so-and-so strike him and so-and-so finish him off.' One of those who was so handed over to them was Ka'b b. Yahudha, who was an important man among them. He gave him to Muhayyisa and Abu Burda b. Niyar (it was Abu Burda to whom the apostle had given permission to sacrifice a young goat on the feast of Adha). He said, 'Let Muhayyisa strike him and Abu Burda finish him off.' So Muhayyisa fetched him a blow, which did not cut in properly, and Abu Burda dispatched him and gave him the finishing stroke. Huwayyisa, who was still an unbeliever, said to his brother, Muhayyisa, 'Did you kill Ka'b b. Yahudha?', and when he said he did, he said, 'By God, much of the flesh on your belly comes from his wealth; you are a miserable fellow, Muhayyisa.' He replied, 'If the one who ordered me to kill him had ordered me to kill you, I would have done so.' He was amazed at this remark and went away astounded. They say that he used to wake up in the night astonished at his brother's words, until in the morning he said, 'By God, this is indeed a religion.' Then he came to the prophet and accepted Islam. Muhayyisa then spoke the lines which we have written above.¹

This historical account isn't some Christian missionary's tale conjured up to defame Muhammad. It is the account of the ancient and the most respected Muslim historian, Ibn Ishaq, who had a deep love and respect for Muhammad. We offer this historical account because so few Muslims have read Ishaq's *Sirat Rasul Allah*. Also, we don't doubt that Muhammad has many defenders who would offer some justification for these beheadings. This should not surprise us. Yet, we wonder why some Muslims are willing to excuse Muhammad's beheadings while they feel free to condemn today's Muslims when they carried out lesser crimes. Is it only because today's beheadings make Islam look badly? Is it wrong for a Muslim to follow the example of Muhammad? Are we to conclude that Muhammad and today's militant Muslims both acted inhumanely?

"We are ashamed because these terrorists carried out this revolting and inhumane act in the name of our religion and culture," UAE Information Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahayan said in a written statement. [CNN](#) — May 14, 2004.

¹ *op. cit.*, Ibn Ishaq, p. 752.

Kinana

Muhammad drove the Jewish tribe of al-Nadir from the city of Medina, and they fled to the Jewish settlement of Khaybar. They were allowed to take only what could be carried upon the backs of their camels. The remainder of their possessions had to be left in Medina with the Muslims. No doubt they took their gold and silver with them because it is highly valued and could have been easily transported.

Kinana was the treasurer of the al-Nadir community who was highly regarded and entrusted with keeping safe their valuable goods. Muhammad and his companions were looking for booty so they raided the villages of Khaybar knowing there must be silver and gold there.

Kinana b. al-Rabi', who had the custody of the treasure of B. al-Nadir, was brought to the apostle who asked him about it. He denied that he knew where it was. A Jew came (T. was brought) to the apostle and said that he had seen Kinana going round a certain ruin every morning early. When the apostle said to Kinana, 'Do you know that if we find you have it I shall kill you?' he said Yes. The apostle gave orders that the ruin was to be excavated and some of the treasure was found. When he asked him about the rest he refused to produce it, so the apostle gave orders to al-Zubayr b. al-'Awwam, 'Torture him until you extract what he has,' so he kindled a fire with flint and steel on his chest until he was nearly dead. Then the apostle delivered him to Muhammad b. Maslama and he struck off his head, in revenge for his brother Mahmud.¹

Greed — The first thing we notice is that Muhammad was greedy for the treasures of the Jews of al-Nadir that were in the custody of the honorable Kinana. Muhammad was not satisfied with driving them from their homes and lands in Medina, he pursued them because he wanted their gold and silver too.

Threat — Next Muhammad threatened Kinana with death unless he betrayed the location of the hidden treasures. Kinana was a faithful custodian, and he was not moved by Muhammad's ominous threat. Lesser, more cowardly men would have betrayed the trust to save their own life.

Torture — Thirdly, Muhammad gave the order to torture Kinana, "Torture him until you extract what he has." Al-Zubayr started a fire on Kinana's chest, nearly burning him to death. Amazing Kinana endured this fiendish fiery torture without giving into the evil designs of Muhammad.

Beheading — Fourthly, before Kinana was completely dead, Muhammad delivered him to be beheaded. Muhammad did the worst cruelty he could imagine against Kinana who paid the ultimate price for his faithfulness. Kinana did not survive the cruelty of Muhammad's *Abu Ghraib* prison.

Lust — Greed, threat, torture, and beheading don't complete the story of Kinana's death. Muhammad wanted Kinana dead for another reason too; he lusted after Kinana's wife, Safiya. Hence, this was another important motivation to have Kinana killed.

¹ *op. cit.*, Ibn Ishaq, p. 515. As a side note, it should not be imagined that Kinana himself was responsible for Mahmud's death who was killed by millstone cast over the wall in self-defense against the unprovoked attack by Muhammad and his followers. It was an Arabic revenge killing against the al-Nadir tribe.

The apostle took captives from them among whom was Safiya d. Huyayy b. Akhtab who had been the wife of Kinana b. al-Rabi' b. Abu'l-Huqayq, and two cousins of hers. The apostle chose Safiya for himself.¹

When the apostle had conquered al-Qamus the fort of B. Abu'l-Hugayq, Safiya d. Huyayy b. Akhtab was brought to him along with another woman. Bilal who was bringing them led them past the Jews who were slain; and when the woman who was with Safiya saw them she shrieked and slapped her face and poured dust on her head. When the apostle saw her he said, 'Take this she-devil away from me.' He gave orders that Safiya was to be put behind him and threw his mantle over her, so that the Muslims knew that he had chosen her for himself. ... Now Safiya had seen in a dream when she was the wife of Kinana ...²

So, motivated by the *lust* of another man's wife and the *greed* of treasures, Muhammad threatened Kinana to yield the gold and silver in his custody. This *threat* did not move Kinana, so Muhammad had him *tortured* and finally *beheaded*. While Muslims lack intellectual freedom to question the behavior of Muhammad publicly, we ask them, at least, to evaluate quietly within themselves the actions of Muhammad. Is this the behavior of a true prophet of Allah? Does Muhammad's real behavior correspond to the sanitized behavior of the Muhammad acclaimed by Islamic da'wah? If ghastly beheadings were inconsistent with Islam, were Muhammad's acts contrary to the teachings of Islam? Was Muhammad a true Muslim?

The brutal beheadings of Nicholas Berg, Paul Johnson and Kim Sun-il are being erroneously described as acts of "Islamic militancy." Certainly they are the actions of terrorists or militants, but they are not acts of Islam. [Florida Times Union](#) — June 25, 2004

Canal of Blood

Abu Bakr was the first 'Rightly-Guided' Caliph (632-634 A.D.) of the emerging Islamic state. He was one of Muhammad's earliest male converts, perhaps the very first one.³ Abu Bakr's daughter, 'Aisha, married Muhammad when she was nine years old, and she was his favorite wife in the final years of his life. Abu Bakr's general was Khalid b. al-Walid al-Makhzumi who had fought under the leadership of Muhammad too.

Before we continue, we should note the dichotomy between the story of Islam's spread as told by Muslim moderates and the history as recorded by Muslim historians. According to today's da'wah, Islam spread peacefully from its center, as it invited people to submit to Allah and His messenger. They claim that the clarity of the truth of Islam drew humanity naturally from the darkness of ignorance (*Jahiliyyah*) into the pure light of Islam. With assurances of sincerity they state that *Jihad* is never offensive; it is always defensive. However, since truth is more important than this fiction, we must study the actual history of the ancient Muslim scholars.

¹ *op. cit.*, Ibn Ishaq, p. 511.

² *op. cit.*, Ibn Ishaq, p. 514-515.

³ Tabari (838? – 923), Vol. VI, Muhammad at Mecca, In series: The History of al-Tabari (Ta'rikh al-rusul wa'l-muluk), Translated and annotated by W.M. Watt and M.V. McDonald, SUNY series in Near Eastern Studies, Bibliotheca Persica, State University of New York Press, Albany, New York, 1988, pp. 84

Abu Bakr ordered Khalid b. al-Walid to lead a campaign to extend Islam to the people surrounding Arabia.¹ He was chosen by Abu Bakr because he fought under Muhammad so effectively that he earned the appellation, *Sword of Allah*.² His invitation to Islam was succinct and easily understood by all. The people had three options: 1) accept Islam and be safe, or 2) submit and pay the *jizyah* tax of dhimmitude, or 3) prepare to die.

In the name of God, the All-Compassionate, the Merciful. From Khalid b. al-Walid to the governors (*marazibah*) of Persia. Embrace Islam so that you may be safe. If not, make a covenant of protection with me and pay the *jizyah*. Otherwise, I have brought you a people who love death just as you love drinking wine.³

As is clear, the *Invitation to Islam* was equally a *Threat of War*. If a people did not accept the invitation to Islam or did not pay the *jizyah* tax, war followed. Our Muslim friends love to tell us that Islam spread by inviting people to Islam. However, they avoid mentioning that the invitation included a threat of war. It is true that one side of the coin was an invitation to Islam, but the flip side was a declaration of war. In reality, it was the threat of war, bloodshed, and death that persuaded most peoples to accept the invitation to Islam.

In 12 A.H.(633-634 A.D) Abu Bakr sent Khalid to Iraq to *invite* them to Islam. At Ullays on the Euphrates River, Khalid fought some Persians and Christians (May 633 A.D) who had rejected his proposal. The battle went fiercely. So, Khalid vowed to Allah that a canal would run red with their blood if he defeated them. To fulfill his vow, He commanded the Persians and Christians to be captured alive. There were so many captives that it took a day and a half just to cut their heads off, spilling their blood into the dry canal.

Khalid had a serious problem; the blood congealed when it was exposed to the air, rather than flowed. So, he wasn't able to fulfill his oath. Al-Qa'qa' told Khalid to let the water again flow in the canal, and the water would turn red from the blood of those decapitated and fulfill his obligation to Allah.

The Muslims raged against them. Khalid said, "O God, if You deliver their shoulders to us, I will obligate myself to You not to leave any one of them whom we can overcome until I make their canal run with their blood." Then God defeated them for the Muslims and gave their shoulders to them. Khalid then commanded his herald to proclaim to the men, "Capture! Capture! Do not kill any except he who continues to resist." As a result, the cavalry brought prisoners in droves, driving them along. Khalid had detailed certain men to cut off their heads in the canal. He did that to them for a day and a night. They pursued them the next day and the day after, until they reached al-Nahrayn⁴ and the like of that distance in every direction from Ullays. And Khalid cut off their heads.

¹ Tabari (838? – 923), Vol. XI, The Challenge to the Empires, In series: The History of al-Tabari (Ta'rikh al-rusul wa'l-muluk), Translated by K.Y. Blankinship, SUNY series in Near Eastern Studies, Bibliotheca Persica, State University of New York Press, Albany, New York, 1993, p. 1-2.

² *op. cit.*, al-Tabari, VIII, p. 71.

³ *op. cit.*, al-Tabari, XI, p. 44-45.

⁴ A subdistrict on the lower Nahr Sura in Bihqubadh, east of the Euphrates. It disappears after the conquest. See Morony, *Iraq*, 149. But see note 234, below.

Al-Qa'qa' and others like him said to Khalid, "Even if you were to kill all the population of the earth, their blood would still not run. Blood has not done more than glistened ever since it was forbidden to flow and the earth was forbidden to dry blood. Therefore send water over it, so that you may fulfill your oath." Khalid had blocked the water from the canal. Now Khalid brought the water back, so that it flowed with spilled blood. Owing to this, it has been called Blood Canal to this day. Others, among them Bashir b. al-Khasasiyyah,¹ said, "It has reached us that the earth, when it had dried the blood of Adam's son, was then forbidden to dry [spilled] blood, and blood was forbidden to flow except enough to congeal."²

Abu Bakr and Khalid b. al-Walid al-Makhzum were both long-time companions (*Sahabah*) of Muhammad. Abu Bakr was the first 'Rightly Guided' Caliph and Khalid was his military leader named the 'Sword of Allah.' So, there is no doubt they were true and faithful Muslims who acted according to the example of Muhammad and the principles of Islam. Why don't Muslims mention the Threat of war that accompanied the Invitation to Islam? Why do moderate Muslims decry decapitation when their Islamic heroes decapitated so many? Who is guilty of hijacking Islam? Can Abu Bakr and Khalid be accused of hijacking Islam? Or have the moderate Muslims hijacked Islam by condemning the beheading as ghastly and barbaric; and thus, despising the deeds of Muhammad, Abu Bakr, and Khalid? Lastly, if it were vile and diabolic, why should anyone follow the example of Muhammad?

Thrown onto a Bridge

At 'Ayn al-Tamr, Khalid besieged a fortress and would not allow its occupants safe passage. So, they decided to submit to whatever surrender conditions Khalid might offer. Apparently, they expected he would invite them to Islam and spare their lives. That fond hope of mercy was not to be. He decapitated 'Aqqah and had his dead body thrown onto a bridge to terrorize the other prisoners. He beheaded another leader, 'Amr b. al-Sa'iq, before beheading all the men of the fortress and looting their possessions. More examples could be added,³ but these accounts show that true Islam and decapitation are perfectly compatible.

Khalid approached with the Muslim troops to besiege the fortress. He had with him 'Aqqah as a prisoner and 'Amr b. al-Sa'iq.⁴ The enemy hoped that Khalid would be like those of the Arabs who would raid [and withdraw], but when they saw Khalid was intent [on taking them], they asked for a safe-conduct. But Khalid refused any but his own terms, and they agreed to this readily. When they opened [the gates], Khalid handed them over to the Muslims, who bound them.³⁰⁰ Khalid commanded that 'Aqqah, who had been their protector, be beheaded so that the prisoners might despair of life. When the prisoners saw him thrown onto the bridge, they despaired of life. Then Khalid called for 'Amr b. al-Sa'iq, who was beheaded as well. Khalid beheaded all the men of the fortress

¹ He is Zahm b. Ma'bad b. Sharahil b. Sab'b. Dubari al-Sadusi. See Ibn al-Kalbi, *Gamharat*, II, 225; Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqat*, VI, 50; VII, 55; Ibn Hajar, *Isabah*, I, 159.

² *op. cit.*, al-Tabari, XI, p. 24.

³ *op. cit.*, al-Tabari, XI, p. 58, 59.

⁴ Apparently 'Am b. Khuwaylid al-Sa'iq al-Kilabi. See Ibn al-Kalbi, *Gamharat*, I, 96; II, 176; Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqaq*, 297; Yaqut, *Mu'jam*, I, 166. His death does not seem to be reported except in this place.

and took possession of all that their fortress contained, seizing as spoils what was in it. ¹

Conclusion

How infinite is moral distance between the Lord Jesus Christ and Muhammad! The Muhammad of history was a murderer motivated by lust and greed. Jesus Christ is a Savior motivated by love for sinners. He loves them so much so He was willing to die sacrificially for them. Turn to the loving Savior of sinners and be eternally saved. Jesus died for you so that you might have eternal life and fellowship with the God of the universe. You cannot stand before the Holy One in your own righteousness of dead religious rituals. You need the divine righteousness that comes from God alone through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Romans 5:6-10 (NIV)

¹ *op. cit.*, al-Tabari, XI, p. 54-55.