

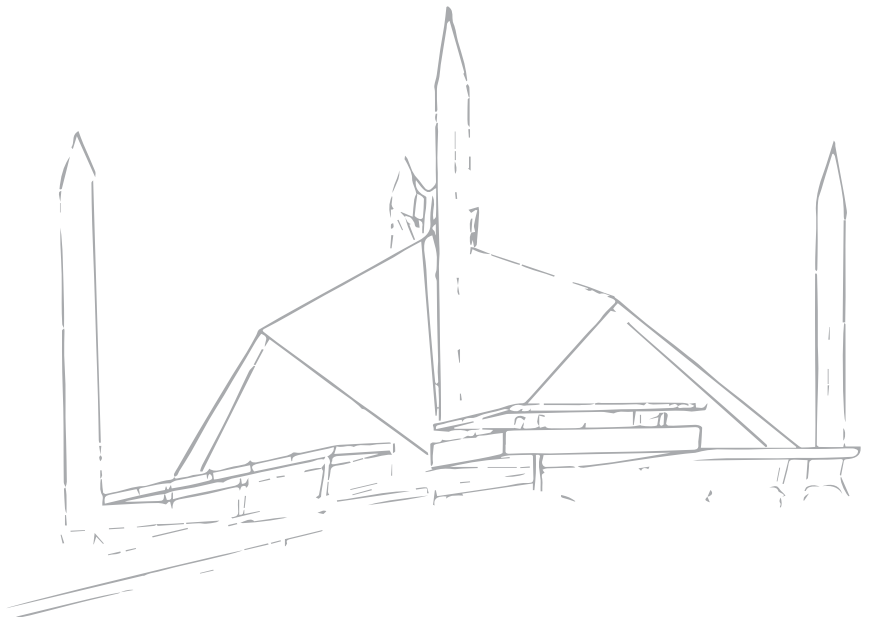


ISSN 1992-5018

# Islamabad Law Review

*Quarterly Research Journal of Faculty of Shariah & Law,  
International Islamic University, Islamabad*

Volume 1, Number 2 April – June 2017





**SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE STORY OF BANU QURAYZAH:  
A RE-EVALUATION OF IBN ISHAQ'S ACCOUNT**

**Muhammad Munir\***

**ABSTRACT**

*One of the universally accepted stories in Islamic jus in Bello is that the Prophet Peace be Upon Him ordered the killing of all the combatants of Banu Qurayzah (Qurayza) for their treachery. It seems that this story is blindly accepted by Muslims themselves without knowing that this is perhaps the greatest fabrication in Islamic jus in Bello. This article attempts to elaborate the inner contradictions in the Banu Qurayza episode. It is concluded that the killing of all the combatants of Banu Qurayza never took place.*

**Key words:** Banu Qurayzah, Jews, Islamic law, Islamic jus in Bello.

---

\* muhammadmunir@iiu.edu.pk Dr. Muhammad Munir, PhD, is Professor at Faculty of Shari'a & Law, International Islamic University, Islamabad, and Visiting Professor of Jurisprudence and Islamic Law at the University College, Islamabad.

## **INTRODUCTION**

One story that is reported as a Gospel truth in our history is the killing of the combatants of the Jewish tribe of Banu Qurayza when they committed treachery against the Muslims during the battle of Khandaq (trenches) in 627 CE. Historians have relied on Muhammad Ibn Ishaq Ibn Yathar (d. 153 AH/770 CE) for this story without questioning the authenticity of his accounts. This article attempts to discuss that Ibn Ishaq's account of the Banu Qurayza episode is full of contradictions and he seems to have fabricated the story but has presented it in such a way as to make it a Gospel truth. Finally, this work also analyses the article of M.J. Kister who has strongly defended Ibn Ishaq and considered the Banu Qurayzah episode as a 'massacre'.

## **IBN ISHAQ'S ACCOUNT OF THE STORY OF BANU QURAYZA: A RE-EVALUATION**

According to Ibn Ishaq, the Banu Qurayzah committed treachery during the battle of Khandaq (trench) also known as *ahzab*, betrayed the Muslims during the battle of *ahzab*, breached the treaty between the two sides (Muslims and Banu Qurayzah), and supported the large anti-Muslim coalition (*ahzab*) headed by the infidels of Makka. This was against the treaty they had with the Muslims which stated that

both sides shall defend the city together against any external attack. Once the battle was over, the Muslim army besieged the forts of Banu Qurayzah who eventually surrendered and were taken captives by the Muslim army and their fate was referred to an arbitrator – Sa’d b. Mu’ad who was their former ally and the head of Aws tribe. It is reported that he decided that “their combatants should be executed, their women and children enslaved, and their properties be divided”.<sup>1</sup> According to Ibn Ishaq, some 600-900 combatants were executed in the market place in Madinah in special trenches dug for them; that all of the Banu Quraydah were put into one house – Dar bint al-Harith in Madina; that trenches were dug; and that all of them (combatants) were executed by just two persons – ‘Ali b. Abi Talib and Zubair b. al-‘Awwam.

It is pertinent to note that S‘ad’s ruling but not the whole story is also reported by the compilers of *ahadith* with some conflicts in reports.<sup>2</sup> The words of *Sahih* Bukhari and *Sahih* Muslim are identical. The wording of Tirmizi is a bit different. It is reported that S‘ad

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibn Ishaq has given the story in minute detail. See, Muhammad b. Ishaq, *The Life of Muhammad*, trans. A. Guillaume (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 461-467.

<sup>2</sup> See, Bukhari, *Sahih*, *hadith* no. 2878 available at <<http://www.sunnipath.com/library/Hadith/H0002P0061.aspx>> (last accessed 01 May, 2014); Muslim b. al-Hajjaj al-Nisapuri, *Sahih Muslim*, *hadith* no. 1769. Also see, Muhammad b. Eisa al-Tirmizi, *Sunan*, *Hadith* no. 1582.

ordered the killing of their ‘men’ (and not their combatants) and enslavement of their ‘women’ (children are not mentioned) so that they could assist Muslims. Tirmizi’s report puts their number at 400.<sup>3</sup> The report in *Musannaf* is identical to the one in Bukhari and Muslim.<sup>4</sup> The episode is also mentioned in al-Juzjani’s work on hadith.<sup>5</sup> Ahmad b. Hanbal has also mentioned the S‘ad ruling.<sup>6</sup> The words of the first report are similar to that of Tirmizi with the only difference that the later mentions the enslavement of children as well. Ahmad also puts their number to be 400. Some commentators of *ahadith* have completely relied on Ibn Ishaq regarding the incident of Banu Quradha, such as Badruddin al-‘Ini who mentions that according to Ibn Ishaq, they were either 600 or 900 (*wa qila*).<sup>7</sup> According to another commentator of *hadith*, they were between 600 to 800 in number. He states that they were imprisoned in one house called Dar bint al-Harith in Madina; trenches were dug; and that all of them (combatants) were executed by just two persons – ‘ Ali b. Abi Talib and Zubair b. al

---

<sup>3</sup> See, Muhammad b. Eisa al-Tirmizi, *Sunan*, *hadith* no. 1582.

<sup>4</sup> Abu Bakr ‘Abdur Razzaq al-Yamani, *Al-Musannaf*, *hadith* no. 9737.

<sup>5</sup> Sa‘id b. Mansur al-Juzjani, *Sunan*, *hadith* no. 2962; Also see, Ishaq b. Ibrahim (Ibn Rahwiya), *Musnad ibn Rahwiya*, *hadith* no. 1126.

<sup>6</sup> Ahmad b. Hanbl, *Musnad*, *hadith* 14773, 24295, and 25097.

<sup>7</sup> ‘*Umdat al-Qari Sharhsahih al-Bukhari*, *hadith* no. 158.

‘Awwam.<sup>8</sup> The author does not cite any source but it is known that this detail is available in Ibn Ishaq’s *Sira*.

Ibn Ishaq’s details of the story have also influenced Muslim jurists (the pro-execution jurists) who advance the alleged execution of the combatants of Banu Qurayzah as an *example* to support their argument and argue that prisoner of war be executed<sup>9</sup> without evaluating the details and the inner contradictions in it. For formulating the rules of Islamic law of war one has to be extremely careful not to base them in an episode which is not reliable.

### **Inner Contradictions in Ibn Ishaq’s Account of the Story of Banu Qurayiza**

It is true that Ibn Ishaq has influenced the formulation of the doctrines of Islamic law regarding the Islamic *jus in bello* but there are many questions regarding his trustworthiness. Two modern authors, i.e., Barakat Ahmad<sup>10</sup> and W. N. Arafat<sup>11</sup> have categorically rejected the mass execution story of Banu Qurayzah. They have pointed out inner

---

<sup>8</sup> Hamza Muhammad Qasam, *Manar al-Qari Sharh Mukhtasar sahih al-Bukhari*, hadith no. 996, ed., Bashir Muhammad ‘Uyoon (Damascus: Maktaba Dar al-bayan, 1990, 4: 354-357.

<sup>9</sup> Ibn Ishaq, *The Life of Muhammad*, 464.

<sup>10</sup> Ahmad, *Muhammad and the Jews*, 10-24, 67-94.

<sup>11</sup> W. N. Arafat, “New Light on the Story of Banu Qurayza and the Jews of Medina”, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, no. 2 (1976), 100-107.

contradictions in Ibn Ishaq's account. Their arguments may be summarized as follows:

First, both authors question the speech of Ka'b b. Asad – the head of Banu Qurayzah who is reported to have given three alternatives to his people: first, that since Muhammad Peace be Upon Him was a Prophet of God therefore they should follow him but they rejected this option; secondly, he told them that they should kill their wives and children and fight the Muslims. This plan was also rejected by the Qurayzah; and finally, the last alternative given by Ka'b was to fight the Muslims on the night of *Sabbath*. The Qurayzah also rejected this.<sup>12</sup> The story of Banu Qurayzah as reported by Ibn Ishaq has too many inner contradictions which makes it very difficult to accept with all the details. However, the credibility of the mass execution of all the combatants as reported by Ibn Ishaq has been seriously questioned. A full account of criticism of the story of executions is beyond the scope of this work but some of the important points are summarized here.

1) It is very difficult to believe that the Qurayzah knowingly rejected the Prophet Peace be Upon Him and that 600 to 900 men were going to fight an army of 3000 soldiers, who had returned victorious

---

<sup>12</sup> See the full story in Ibn Ishaq, *The Life of Muhammad*, 461-62.



from the Battle of *ahzab*.<sup>13</sup> 2) Ahmad argues that since the Maccabean revolt (175-135 B.C.) a rule has been promulgated that the preservation of life overrides the observance of the *Sabbath*. 3) He asserts that the speech of Ka'b was either imaginary or distorted by later tradition.<sup>14</sup> 4) He mentions that the episode of the Qurayzah requesting to consult Abu Lubabah b. Mundhir who pointed his hand towards his throat signifying slaughter is not true either because it would mean that the fate of Qurayzah was already decided by the Apostle and Abu Lubabah already knew it. 5) In addition, when Aws were asked by the Apostle to decide the fate of Qurayzah and they choose Sa'd b. Muadh who had earlier been deputed by the Apostle to go to Banu Qurayzah and remind them about the treaty and when the Jews told him that they had no agreement or understanding with the Prophet Peace be Upon Him reviled them and they reviled him. Ahmad opines that by the time Sa'd arrived to rule, the news of his intention to sentence them to death had spread and yet he went through the formalities of asking the Banu Qurayzah if they would accept his judgment and these very people who had asked for kind treatment for the Qurayzah said "Yes". Afterwards he asked the

---

<sup>13</sup> Ahmad, *Muhammad and the Jews*, 74.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, at 76.

Prophet Peace be Upon Him the same question although his opinion was known to Abu Lubabah who had already communicated it to Banu Qurayzah. Nevertheless the Prophet said “Yes”. Consequently, S‘ad’s judgment was prearranged which is impossible.<sup>15</sup> 6) Moreover, the contents of the speech of Ka‘b are identical to the contents of the speech of the leader of the Jews at the fort of Masada.<sup>16</sup> 7) Arafat argues that the number of those killed at Masada were 960 in total, that the number of *sicarii* who were killed numbered 600, and that at the time of despair they were addressed by their leader Eleazar precisely the way Ka‘b addressed his people. 8) According to Arafat, the descendants of Jews who fled south to Arabia after the Jewish wars preserved the story and “superimposed details of the siege of Masada on the story of the siege of Banu Qurayza”.<sup>17</sup> Ahmad disagrees with Arafat although Ibn Ishaq narrated reports from the children of Jewish converts it did not make much difference in the shaping of the story. He argues that ‘Atiyah al-Qurazi is the only Jewish convert from whom Ibn Ishaq has narrated a report on this story. 9) In addition, the actual sentencing raises many questions as there is no unanimity in

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., at 79, 80.

<sup>16</sup> Arafat, “New Light on the Story of Banu Qurayza and the Jews of Medina”, 106.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., at 106, 107.

reports. As explained above, one report says that “the men should be killed”; another report mentions that “combatants should be killed”. This would exclude sick, infirm, old, and other adult male population. Another version says that “the Apostle has ordered that every adult of theirs should be killed”; yet another report says that “those should be killed over whom the razor had passed.” The last report is from ‘Atiyah al-Qurazi who was from Banu Qurydha and who says that since the razor had not passed him he was not killed.<sup>18</sup> 10) How could such a large number of captives (600-900) men, their women and children<sup>19</sup> be taken to Madinah without any resistance and incarcerated in one house – Dar Bint al-Harith?<sup>20</sup> 11) Ahmad argues as to why were the captives taken to Madinah as they could have been executed in their own forts and why were new trenches dug for them when trenches were already dug by Muslims to defend Madinah against *ahzab*?<sup>21</sup> 12) The two executioners, ‘Ali b. Abi Talib and Zubair b. al-‘Awwam who have never been reported to share their experiences with

---

<sup>18</sup> See, Abu Dawud Suliman b. al-Ash‘ath, *Sunan*, hadith no. 4404.

<sup>19</sup> In a small family of those days if every family had four children the total number would be 3,600.

<sup>20</sup> The forts of Banu Qurayzah were at a distance of about 5-6 hours from the centre of Madinah. See, Ahmad, *Muhammad and the Jews*, 82. The question is that were there such large houses in Madina at that time?

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, at 83.

anyone afterwards makes the story more doubtful.<sup>22</sup> 13) A massacre in the middle of the town where people lived must have created health hazards but Ibn Ishaq or any other reporter has not reported anything of this sort.<sup>23</sup> 14) The whole tribe could not be given the punishment for the wrong of their leaders. 15) Finally, how could the pagans and the *munafiqun* remain muted about this episode? Ahmad concludes that Ibn Ishaq's account of the mass execution of the punishment of the Banu Qurayzah "is a plethora of self-contradictory statements."<sup>24</sup>

### **Is Ibn Ishaq Trustworthy and a Credible Source for Citing in Formulating of the Rules of Islamic *jus in bello*?**

Great scholars of Islam have leveled serious allegations against Ibn Ishaq. First, Imam Malik b. Anas called Ibn Ishaq a "*dajjal* (charlatan) who belongs to the *dajajilah*"<sup>25</sup> (*'dajjal min al- dajajilah'*);<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., at 105.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., at 89. For more details of accusations against Ibn Ishaq, see, Abu Yusuf Ya'qub b. Sufyan, *Al-Ma'rifa wa al-Tarikh*, ed., Akram Zia al-'Umari (Beruit: Mu'assat al-Risala, 1981), 3: 32. See, Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, *Tarikh Baghdad* (Cairo: 1931), I:224.

<sup>25</sup> See, Ibn Sayyid al-Nas, *Uyun al-athaar*, I: 12, 16.

<sup>26</sup> See Abu Yusuf Yaqub b. Sufyan, *Al-Ma'rifa wa al-Tarikh*, ed., Akram Zia al-Umari, Beruit: Mu'assat al-Risala, 1981, vol. 3, p. 32. See, Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, *Tarikh Baghdad*, Cairo 1931, vol. I, 224; al-Dhahabi, *Tadhkirat al-huffaz*, Hyderabad, 1955, I, 173.

Secondly, Ibn Hajar considers this story as “odd tales”<sup>27</sup>; thirdly, Ibn Ishaq generally gives *isnad* but on the crucial matters concerning the Banu Qurayzah he does not give *isnad*<sup>28</sup>; fourthly, the execution of Banu Qurayzah is not reported in Jewish sources, such as Samuel Usque’s book *A Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel – Third Dialogue* which is a classic of Jewish martyrology.<sup>29</sup> One wonders how such an important episode could be missing in this work. Fifthly, he was also accused of *shi‘i* leanings, *qadari* beliefs and transmission of *sifat* traditions.<sup>30</sup> Sixthly, he is also accused of playing with cocks<sup>31</sup>, *tadlis* in transmission,<sup>32</sup> and transmission of unreliable traditions. Seventhly, Dhahabi also mentions that Ibn Ishaq is accused of *shi‘i* leanings, *qadari* beliefs, *tadlis* in transmission, of playing with cocks, transmission of unreliable traditions, and transmission of *sifat*

---

<sup>27</sup> *Tahdhib al-tahdhib*, IX, 45.

<sup>28</sup> See, Barakat Ahmad, *Muhammad and the Jews: A Re-Examination* (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1979), 13. The author argues that several reliable reporters like al-Zuhri and Qatadah appear during the narrative but they report only “minor details, not the major events.” At p. 13.

<sup>29</sup> See, Samuel Usque, *A Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel – Third Dialogue*, trans. Gershon I. Gelbart (New York: Gershon I. Gelbart Memorial Fund, 1964).

<sup>30</sup> See al-Bayhaqi, *al-Asma’ wa-a-sifat*, ed. Muhamad Zahid al-Kauthari, Cairo, 1358, pp. 397-398; al-Dhabi, *Siyar a‘lam al-nubala*, ed. Salah al-Din al-Munajjid, Cairo, n.d. Vol. I, 205, 206, 212-215.

<sup>31</sup> See, al-Dhabi, *Tadhkirat al-huffaz*, vol. I, 173.

<sup>32</sup> See Ibn Abi Hatim, *al-Jarh*, vol. VII, p. 194.

traditions.<sup>33</sup> The above allegations against Ibn Ishaq make his reports extremely doubtful that cannot be accepted otherwise it will put Islamic *jus in Bello* upside down.

M. J. Kister has put a scornful attack on the view of Arafat and Ahmad, especially the later<sup>34</sup>, however, there are so many problems with this work. Kister discusses the rivalry between Malik and Ibn Ishaq and degrades Malik<sup>35</sup> which is very unfair. He mentions many Muslim jurists, such as Shafi'i, Abu 'Ubayad, Ibn Hazm, Shaybani, and Al-Mawardi to prove that they have generalized the outcome of Qurayzah's episode.<sup>36</sup> The author treats the treaty between the Prophet Peace be Upon Him and the Qurayzah not as a real treaty.<sup>37</sup> He attempts to prove that it was a "precarious, crude, incomplete agreement."<sup>38</sup> He mentions that the Prophet Peace be Upon Him

---

<sup>33</sup> See, Muhammad b. Uthman al-Dhahabi, *Tadhkirat al-huffaz*, ed., Zakariyya Amirat, (Beirut: Dar al-kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1998), 1: 130. See, Abu Bakr al-Baihaqi, *Al-Asma' wa-a-sifat*, ed. 'Abdullah b. Muhammad al-Hashidi, (Jeddah: Maktaba al-Siwadi, n.d. 1st edn.), 2: 319-320; al-Dhabi, *Siyar 'alam al-nubala'*, ed. Shu'aib al-Arnawut, (Beirut: Mua'sasat al-risala, n.d.) 13: 44, 67. See also, 'Abdur Rahman b. Abi Hatim, *al-Jarh wa al-t'adil* (Beirut: Dar Ehya al-turath al-Arabi, 1952), 7: 191-94.

<sup>34</sup> M. J. Kister, "The Massacre of Banu Qurayza: A Reconsideration of a Tradition," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 8 (1986), 68, pp. 61-96, especially at 64-81.

<sup>35</sup> Kister, at 75-80.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, at pp. 66-74.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, at 82, 83.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, at 82.

forced the Banu Qurayzah to conclude an agreement.<sup>39</sup> He opines that it was not an agreement of peaceful co-existence.<sup>40</sup> He calls the episode of Qurayzah's sending supplies to the *ahzab* that eventually ended up in the Muslim camp as a help to the Muslims.<sup>41</sup> This is against the maxim, 'the facts speak for themselves'. This means that the learned author has twisted facts. The episode of sending supplies to the *ahzab* by the Qurayza does not need any re-interpretation. He does mention that the Qurayzah invited *munafiqin* from Madinah and gave them refuge in their stronghold.<sup>42</sup> However, on the one hand Kister relies on Ibn Ishaq and Waqidi to support the view that the mass execution took place but on the other hand he has made new allegations that cannot be supported even by the two authors. Kister treats Ibn Ishaq's account as authentic but Ibn Ishaq mentions that the combatants were executed as a result of arbitration whereas Kister's title suggests that he treats the execution of Banu Qurayza as a '*massacre*' and not the result of an arbitration.

Should the whole story of execution be considered authentic the ruling seems to be in accordance with the Jewish law. According to

---

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., at 83.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., at 86-7.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., at 88.

King James Version, “When thy Lord hath delivered it unto thy hands, thou shalt smite every male therein with the edge of the sword. But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou make unto thyself.”<sup>43</sup> Although they were punished for their treachery but this is how the people of a besieged city are treated when captured by Jews. Leaving aside the heinous deed of treachery of which they were guilty, it is clear that if they had triumphed over the Muslims they would have dealt with them exactly in the same manner. Arguendo, should the whole story as reported by Ibn Ishaq be true (which we have submitted it is not), then can the decision of an arbitrator chosen by the Banu Qurayzah to decide the dispute between them and the Muslims be an example of executing POWs; can a single incident be treated as a *general* rule; and can the ruling of an arbitrator be accepted as the general and established *conduct* of the Prophet (PBUH) and his successors? Our answer is in negative. This ruling of the arbitrator cannot be raised to the status of a general rule because this was the outcome of arbitration. The Banu Qurayzah received the punishment of their treachery

---

<sup>43</sup> See, King James Version, *Denterouomy* (New York: Gideons International, 1987), 20: 10-14, 230; see also, *The Holy Scriptures According to the Mosoretic Text* (Philadelphia: The Jewish publication Society, 1953), 237; and *Good News Bible (today's English Version)* (Glasgow: Harper Collins, 1976), 191.



according to their own law. The Prophet (PBUH) never opted for arbitration regarding the enemy's POWs on all other occasions. This is why this arbitration, if true, has no precedential value in Islamic law.

Kister uses very bad language for the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) that it cannot be reproduced by a Muslim. He cites Western authors who have severally criticized the (Prophet Peace be Upon Him) and S'ad.<sup>44</sup> The author contradicts himself. He says in one place at page 62 that the combatants of Qurayza were taken to a house adjacent to a market in Madina and the decision was given subsequently but in two other places (p. 62 and 93) he mentions that the decision of S'ad was given before they were put in the house near the market in Madina. The learned author considers the much-talked about punishment of Qurayza, i.e. execution, a very harsh one and cruel<sup>45</sup> but does not mention that this punishment is exactly based on Denteroumy.<sup>46</sup> The author has generalized exceptional opinions of Muslim authors to prove his point of view. This means that the learned author is disingenuous. Has deliberately ignored to mention that Sa'd's

---

<sup>44</sup> Kister, f. n. 2.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., at p. 94-5

<sup>46</sup> See, King James Version, *Denteroumy* (New York: Gideons International, 1987), 20: 10-14, 230; see also, *The Holy Scriptures According to the Mosoretic Text* (Philadelphia: The Jewish publication Society, 1953), 237; and *Good News Bible (today's English Version)* (Glasgow: Harper Collins, 1976), 191.

judgment was in accordance with the Jewish law and that they had accepted the verdict before it was given. Finally, even if some Muslim jurists consider the Qurayza episode to have precedential value is it necessary to agree with them? Is it not possible to disagree with Muslim *fuqaha*?

### **CREDIBILITY OF AL- WAQIDI AND IBN JARIR AL-TABARI**

On the other hand Abu ‘Abdullah Muhammad b. ‘Umar al-Waqidi (207/822) is regarded by the Sunni *‘Ulama al-Rijal* (scholars of *Hadith* reporters) and the *Muhaddithin* (scholars of *Hadith*) as unreliable. Scholars in the West accept Al-Waqidi as a reliable and valuable source for the life of the Prophet (PBUH) and for the period immediately following the death of the Prophet (PBUH), whereas Muslim scholars, by and large, consider him as a story-teller.<sup>47</sup> Nadawi mentions that Al-Waqidi has very few supporters but the list of those who reject him is very long and include Imam al-Shafi‘i, Ahmad b. Hanbal, Yahya b. Ma‘in (d. 233/847).<sup>48</sup> Arafat argues that Ibn Ishaq

---

<sup>47</sup> See, Syed Salman Nadawi, “Muhammad ibn ‘Umar al-Waqidi (130-207/747-822) between two Opposing Views”, conference paper presented in *International Seminar on Modern Trends in Sirah Writing*, arranged by IRD & IRI, Islamabad, 26-28 March 2011, p. 3.

<sup>48</sup> Nadawi, “Muhammad ibn ‘Umar al-Waqidi (130-207/747-822) between two Opposing Views”, p. 3. Also see, W. N. Arafat, “New Light on the Story of Banu

has fabricated stories in his *Sirah*.<sup>49</sup> He is also called as *Kazzab* (liar), who is not considered trustworthy; is a Shi‘a; is known for fabricating *ahadith* and distorting historical facts and so on.<sup>50</sup> There is unanimity among the Sunni scholars of *hadith* that Al-waqidi had fabricated *ahadith*.<sup>51</sup> There are many Western scholars who defend Al-Waqidi.<sup>52</sup> However, there are many accusations against Ibn Ishaq.<sup>53</sup>

---

Qurayza and the Jews of Medina”, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, No. 2 (1976), pp. 100-107.

<sup>49</sup> Arafat, “New Light on the Story of Banu Qurayza and the Jews of Medina”, at p. 101.

<sup>50</sup> Also see, ‘Abdur Rahman b. Abi Hatham Al-Razi, *Kitab al-jarh wa al-ta’dil*, (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-‘Arabi, 1953), 4: 20-21; Muhammad b. Habbab al-Basiti, *Kitab al-Majruhin min al-Muhadithin wa al-Du‘afa’ wa al-Matrukin*, ed., Mahmood Ibrahim Zaid, (Halab: Dar al-Wa‘i, n. d.), 2:290.

<sup>51</sup> See, Shamsuddin al-Zahabi, *Siyar A‘alam al-Nubala*, ed., Shu‘ayb al-Arnawut, (Beirut: Mu‘asas al-Risala, 1990), 7<sup>th</sup> edn., 4:454-467; Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Zahabi, *Mizan al-‘Itidal fi Naqd al-Rijal*, ed., ‘Ali Muhammad al-Bajawi, (Sangla Hill: al-Maktaba al-Athariya: n. d.), 663-666. For further accusation against Waqidi see, ‘Ali b. al-Husayn b. ‘Asakir, *Tarikh Madinah Dimishq*, ed. ‘Umar b. Gharama al-‘Umrawi (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1997), 54: 434; Ahmad b. ‘Ali al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, *Tarikh Baghdad* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, n.d.), 3: 16; Yusuf b. Ibrahim al-Mazi, *Tahzib al-Kamal fi Asma‘a al-Rijal*, ed., Bashr Ghawad Ma‘ruf (Beirut: Mua’sasa al-Risala, 1992), 26: 182; Muhammad Ahmad b. ‘Usman al-Zahabi, *Siyar A‘alam al-Nubala’* (Beirut: Mua’sasa al-Risala, 1982), 9: 455; Ahmad b. Shu‘ayb al-Nas‘i, *Al-Dhua‘afa’ wa al-Matrukin*, ed., Boran al-Dhanawi & Kamal Yusuf al-Hut (Beirut: Mu‘asas al-Kutub al-Saqafiya, 1987), 217; Muhammad b. ‘Amr b. Musa b. Hammad al-‘Uqaili, *Al-Dhu‘afa’ al-Kabir*, ed., ‘Abdul Mu‘ti Amin Qila‘ji (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiya, n.d.), 4: 107-108. See also, Rizwi S. Faizer, “The Issue of Authenticity regarding Traditions of al-Waqidi as Established in His Kitab al-Maghazi,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 58:2 (April 1999), 97-106.

<sup>52</sup> These include, J. Wellhausen, *Muhammad in Medina*, (Berlin: 1882), pp. 11-28, Joseph Horvitz, “The Earliest Biographies of the Prophet and the Authors”, *Islamic Culture*, 2 (1928), pp. 495-526, Marsden Jones, Al-Waqidi, *Kitab al-Maghazi*, ed., Marsden Jones (Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 29-34, M. J. Kister, “The Massacre of the Banu Qurayza: A re-examination of a tradition”, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 8 (1986), 68, pp. 61-96, and Rizwi S. Faizer, “Muhammad and Medinan Jews: A Comparison of the Text of Ibn Ishaq’s Kitab

In addition,, Ibn Jarir al-Tabari relies heavily on Al-waqidi but what is the reason for this? According to authentic sources, Tabari himself was inclined towards the Shi‘a doctrine. The Hanbalis do not consider him trustworthy at all<sup>54</sup> but even Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Zahabi (d.749/1348) – agrees that Tabari was inclined towards the Shi‘a [doctrine].<sup>55</sup> ‘Allama Tamanna ‘Imadi has documented Tabari’s Shi‘a links in his many articles.<sup>56</sup> Nadawi argues that Ibn Jarir was

---

Sirat Rasul Allah with Al-Waqidi’s Kitab al-Maghazi”, *International Journal of the Middle Eastern Studies*, 28:4 (Nov., 1996), pp. 463-489.

<sup>53</sup> For more details of accusations against Ibn Ishaq, see, Abu Yusuf Ya‘qub b. Sufyan, *Al-Ma‘rifa wa al-Tarikh*, ed., Akram Zia al-‘Umari (Beirut: Mu‘assat al-Risala, 1981), 3: 32. See, Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, *Tarikh Baghdad* (Cairo: 1931), 1:224; He is also accused of *shi‘i* leanings, *qadari* beliefs, *tadlis* in transmission, of playing with cocks, transmission of unreliable traditions, and transmission of *sifat* traditions. See, Muhammad b. Uthman al-Dhahabi, *Tadhkirat al-huffaz*, ed., Zakariyya Amirat, (Beirut: Dar al-kutub al-‘Ilmiyah, 1998), 1: 130. See, Abu Bakr al-Baihaqi, *Al-Asma’ wa-a-sifat*, ed. ‘Abdullah b. Muhammad al-Hashidi, (Jeddah: Maktaba al-Siwadi, n.d. ist edn.), 2: 319-320; al-Dhabi, *Siyar ‘alam al-nubala’*, ed. Shu‘aib al-Arnawut, (Beirut: Mua’sasat al-risala, n.d.) 13: 44, 67. See also, ‘Abdur Rahman b. Abi Hatim, *al-Jarh wa al-t‘adil* (Beirut: Dar Ehya al-turath al-Arabi, 1952), 7: 191-94).

<sup>54</sup> Shibli N‘umani, & Syed Suleman Nadawi, *Sirat-un-Nabbi* (urdu), (Lahore: al-Faisal Nashiran wa Tajiran-e-Kutub, n. d.), 1: 25.

<sup>55</sup> Zahabi, *Mizan*, 499.

<sup>56</sup> Tamanna ‘Imadi argues that Ibn Jarir was a Shi‘a but used to hide his real identity. See, ‘Allama Tamanna ‘Imadi, “Sub se Pehle awr sub se bare Mufasir – Abu Ja‘far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari”, *Tulu‘-e-Islam* 7<sup>th</sup> May (1955), 11-13. Tamanna mentions that most of the teachers as well as students of Ibn Jarir were Shi‘a. See, his “Sub se Pehle awr sub se bare Mufasir – Abu Ja‘far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari”, *Tulu‘-e-Islam* 21<sup>st</sup> May (1955), 11-13. Tamanna asserts that there was only one Abu Ja‘far ibn Jarir al-Tabari and not two as propagated by many historians. See, Tamanna, “Sub se Pehle awr sub se bare Mufasir – Abu Ja‘far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari”, *Tuloo‘-e-Islam* 24<sup>th</sup> May (1955), 11-14. The papers of ‘Allama Tamanna ‘Imadi are now put together in a publication. See, Tamanna ‘Imadi, “*Imam Zuhri wa Imam Tabari: Tasweer ka Doosra Rukh (Imam Zuhri and Imam Tabari: The Other Side of the Picture)*” (Karachi: Al-Rahman Publishing Trust, n.d.). Syed Ridhwan ‘Ali Nadawi has defended Ibn Jarir against any accusation of being a Shi‘a.

accused only by Hanbali scholars to be a Shi‘a.<sup>57</sup> The fact of the matter is that some Hanbali scholars did not accuse Ibn Jarir to be a Shi‘a and relied on him. For example, Hafiz ‘Imaduddin Isma‘il b. Kathir (d.774 A.H./ 1372) – a well-known Hanbali, has relied in his *Tafsir* as well as history on Ibn Jarir.<sup>58</sup> The approach of scholars who denounce *hadith* of the Prophet (Peace be Upon Him) as untrustworthy but who accept every story of the biographers (collectors of *sirat* – biography) as the very gospel truth, so long as it is damaging to the (Prophet Peace be Upon Him) and Islam does not need any explanation. They seem to follow a rule (if it is right to call it one) that what is unfavorable to the Prophet (Peace be Upon Him) must be true. Persons who are not trustworthy because of their exaggeration of early Muslim history cannot be trusted when they formulate rules of Islamic *jus in Bello*.

## Conclusions

Ibn Ishaq is the origin of the oft-quoted Banu Quraydah episode, that is, their combatants were executed and their women and children were

---

See, Syed Ridhwan ‘Ali Nadawi, “Tabarii per Shi‘yyat ka Buhtan: Tajziya awr Tardid” *Al-Bayaan*, (August, 1990), 29-50.

<sup>57</sup> Nadawi, At 36-38.

<sup>58</sup> See, ‘Imaduddin Isma‘il b. Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur‘an al-‘Azim* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma‘rifa, n.d.). Similarly, Ibn Kathir depended on Ibn Jarir in his *Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*. See, ‘Imaduddin Isma‘il b. Kathir, *Al-Bidaya wa Al-Nihaya* (Beirut: Maktaba al-Ma‘rif, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., 1974).

enslaved for their treachery in the battle of *ahzab*. However, there are many inner contradictions in Ibn Ishaq's report that puts many questions on Ibn Ishaq's account. First, the speech of Ka'b b. Asad – the head of Banu Qurayzah puts the whole episode into question because the contents of his speech are identical to the contents of the speech of the leader of the Jews at the fort of Masada. Secondly, the episode of the Qurayzah requesting to consult Abu Lubabah b. Mundhir who pointed his hand towards his throat signifying slaughter is not true either because it would mean that the fate of Qurayzah was already decided by the Apostle and Abu Lubabah already knew it. Thirdly, how could Sa'd b. Muadh, had been earlier deputed by the Apostle to go to Banu Qurayzah and remind them about the treaty and when the Jews told him that they had no agreement with the Prophet (Peace be Upon Him) he reviled them and they reviled him, be chosen to decide the fate of Banu Qurayzah. Fourthly, how could Sa'd ask the Apostle if he could accept his judgment and then ask the Banu Qurayzah the same question. As Abu Lubabah had already told the Banu Quraydah about their punishment. It means that the judgment was prearranged which is impossible. Fifthly, there are conflicting reports about Sa'd's ruling. Some say only 'combatants' be executed;

other say only men should be executed; still other say that adult should be killed. Sixthly, how could such a large number of captives (600-900) men, their women and children be taken to Madinah without any resistance and incarcerated in one house – Dar Bint al-Harith?<sup>59</sup> Seventhly, the whole tribe could not be given the punishment for the wrong of their leaders. Finally, how could the pagans and the *munafiqun* remain muted about this episode? In addition, Ibn Ishaq, the originator of this whole episode is accused of serious allegations. Imam Malik calls him ‘*dajjal min al-dajajilah*’. He was also accused of *shi‘i* leanings, *qadari* beliefs, transmission of *sifat* traditions. He is also accused of playing with coxcs, *tadlis* in transmission. In addition, other scholars who are quoted for the Banu Quraydah are Al-waqidi and Ibn Jarir al-Tabari. Both are not trustworthy according to authentic Sunni sources. Kister has strongly defended Ibn Ishaq and the Banu Qurayzah episode but his story has too many problems and cannot be accepted. Kister considers the treaty between the Muslims and the Quraydah to be a “precarious, crude, incomplete agreement.” He argues that the Prophet (PBUH) forced the Banu Qurayzah to conclude an agreement. He calls the episode of Qurayzah’s sending supplies to

---

<sup>59</sup> The forts of Banu Qurayzah were at a distance of about 5-6 hours from the centre of Madinah. See, Ahmad, *Muhammad and the Jews*, 82.

the *ahzab* that eventually ended up in the Muslim camp as a help to the Muslims. However, on the one hand Kister relies on Ibn Ishaq and Al-waqidi to support the view that the mass execution took place but on the other hand he has made new allegations that cannot be supported even by the two authors. Kister treats Ibn Ishaq's account as authentic but Ibn Ishaq mentions that the combatants were executed as a result of arbitration whereas Kister's title suggests that he treats the execution of Banu Qurayza as a '*massacre*' and not the result of an arbitration. Should the mass execution story be accepted then it was accordingly to the Jewish law. However, because of the inner contradictions and the fact that Ibn Ishaq, Waqidi and Tabari are not reliable the mass execution story is never true with the details given by Ibn Ishaq.

\*\*\*