

Towards the Conquest of Islamic Jerusalem: The Three Main Practical Steps taken by Prophet Muhammad

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Introduction

The era of Prophet Muhammad and his relationship with Islamic Jerusalem has not been tackled very well in research. In general, the studies of the relationship between the Muslims and Islamic Jerusalem usually start from the time of Abū Bakr and 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. Therefore, it is necessary that the relationship between the Prophet, who was the first leader of the Muslim nation, and Islamic Jerusalem, be studied thoroughly, not only through the traditional status of Islamic Jerusalem in Islam and its importance.

Did the Prophet himself do something that could be understood as being a practical step towards conquering Islamic Jerusalem? This is a very important issue, since it resolves the problematic case of showing the main reasons and motivations of the companions that made them spend a number of years trying their best to conquer this region; what motivated them? What gave them that determination? Was it because they

knew that the Prophet was preparing to conquer the region or did they simply just want to conquer it?

To answer these questions, one shall study these incidents and events occurring during the life-time of Prophet Muhammad that could have a link with Islamic Jerusalem, and investigate how his words and acts can be understood in that context.

In 2005, El-Awaisi developed a hypothesis, arguing in his book "Introducing Islamic Jerusalem" that the Prophet drew a plan to conquer Islamic Jerusalem during his lifetime, and that this plan was fulfilled and put into practice by his successor, Abū Bakr, after the death of the Prophet. This article will examine this hypothesis, to discover whether there are any connections between these three incidents and the conquest of Islamic Jerusalem. The researcher will examine if it can be argued that the Prophet took some practical steps or made preparations that afterwards led to the conquest of Islamic Jerusalem by his companions. These three incidents are the ones that – the researcher argues – can be called the three main practical steps of the Prophet: the Battle of Mu'tah, the *Ghazwah* of Tabūk, and the *Ba'th* of Usāmah Ibn Zaid.

The Battle of Mu'tah (8 A.H. - 629 C.E.)

The battle of Mu'tah is one of the most important battles in the Muslim history. Its uniqueness comes from the fact that it is the first Muslim battle to occur outside the Arab Peninsula. It is also the first clash between Muslims and one of the two greatest Empires in the world at that time, namely the Byzantine.

The majority of Muslim scholars agree that this battle occurred during *Jamadā al-Ūlā* (the fifth month of the lunar calendar) in the eighth year of *Higra*¹. What is important in studying the time of this battle is that it occurred only a few months before the conquest of Makkah, which took place in the ninth month of the year 8 A.H., as has been mentioned by many historians and scholars such as Safi-ur-Rahmān al-Mubarakpuri in his book *Ar-Raheeq al-Makhtum (the Sealed Nectar)* (see al-Mubarakpuri 1996: 383), and after about one year of the *al-Hudaybiya* treaty between the Prophet and the people of Makkah.

The researcher argues that it can be understood, from the time of the battle, that when the Prophet secured Makkah by treaty with *Quraysh* (the people of Makkah), that was held in *al-Hudaybiyah*, he eliminated the other danger that threatened the Muslims in the Arab Peninsula, namely, the Jews of *Khaybar* (through his *Ghazwah* to conquer *Khaybar*). Later, he began to take the first practical step to draw Muslim attention towards IslamicJerusalem. This could be considered as a reminder to the Muslims of their first *qiblah* (direction of prayer), after they had

¹ In his book '*Ghazwat Mu'tah*', Briek Abū Māyleh said that there were other opinions, on the time of this battle, mentioned by Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, who stated that the battle took place in Jamādā al-Thāniyah (the sixth month of the lunar calendar) in the year 8 A.H.. On the other hand, Kahlīfa Ibn Khayyāt stated in a narration that the battle took place in the year 7 A.H., but in another opinion, he agreed with the majority of the scholars as to the time of the battle (See Briek 2004: 253-254).

been paying attention to “liberate” their present *qiblah* (which was Makkah) from the infidels for a long time.

With regards to the reasons for this battle, it may be noted that Breik quoted Akram Ḍiyā’ al-‘Umarī when the latter stated that the only one who mentioned the direct reason for the battle was al-Wāqidī (d. 207 A.H.) (See Breik 2004: 247). The researcher agrees with Ḍiyā’ al-‘Umarī that many of the scholars of *sīrah* and *ḥadīth*, as well as historians, did not mention a direct reason for the battle of Mu’tah, except for al-Wāqidī. He said that the direct reason was the assassination of al-Ḥārith Ibn ‘Umayr al-Azdī, the messenger of the Prophet to the king of Buṣrā, by Shuraḥbīl Ibn ‘Amr al-Ghassānī, the ruler of al-Karak and the area around it (including Mu’tah). This occurred when the Prophet sent his letters to the world leaders after the *al-Ḥudaybiya* treaty (al-Wāqidī 1966: (2) 755).

However, Breik (2004: 248) mentioned two other opinions concerning the main reason for the battle; the first was that the battle of Mu’tah occurred after the loss of 14 out of 15 of the companions of the Prophet during a mission to Dhāt Aṭlāḥ in the al-Balqā’ region (the same region where Mu’tah is). The Prophet (according to this opinion) sent the army of Mu’tah to revenge the killing of his companions in Dhāt Aṭlāḥ. The second opinion mentioned by Breik (2004: 249) was that this battle took place after the Prophet sent a message to the King of Buṣrā, who rejected it and threatened to send his army to fight the Muslims.

The researcher argues, on one hand, that the reason, mentioned by al-Wāqidī, contradicts the second opinion mentioned by Breik. Al-Wāqidī’s argument shows that the

messenger of the Prophet was killed before he reached the King of Buṣrā. This means that the message of the Prophet did not reach the King. In addition, there is no evidence from any historical source to show that the message of the Prophet was delivered to the King of Buṣrā. To the contrary, almost all of the historians and the scholars of *sīrah* and *ḥadīth* agree that the messenger of the Prophet to the King of Buṣrā was killed by Shuraḥbīl Ibn ‘Amr al-Ghassānī. So, the second opinion stated by Breik may not be acceptable.

On the other hand, the researcher argues that both the opinion of al-Wāqidī and the first opinion mentioned by Briek, have a very important similarity; both considered “revenge” the direct reason for the battle of Mu’tah. The researcher also argues that revenge for killing the messenger of the Prophet could be considered as one of the reasons for the battle, although al-Wāqidī did not mention the date of this incident. Furthermore, most of the scholars, who have mentioned this incident, have depended only on al-Wāqidī’s narration; al-‘Asqalānī for example (1978: (1) 286). Al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 A.H.) did not mention this incident when he spoke about sending the messages of the Prophet to the kings and leaders of the world at that time, which happened in the 6th year A.H. right after the treaty of *al-Ḥudaybiyah* (See al-Ṭabarī 1998: (3) 137), while the battle of Mu’tah happened almost in the middle of the 8th year A.H..

It seems reasonable to say that the direct incident that caused the battle of Mu’tah was the murder of 14 out of 15 of the companions of the Prophet during a mission to Dhāt Aṭlāḥ in al-Balqā’, since the two events took place very close to each

other². At the same time, one should connect the two incidents to examine why the Prophet sent the mission to Dhāt Aṭlāḥ. According to al-Wāqidi (1966: (2) 752), the mission to Dhāt Aṭlāḥ was to invite the people of that area to Islam. This shows that it was not a military mission, but evidence that the Prophet had a vision and an intention to spread Islam in that region in particular. There are no records of sending missions to spread Islam in Iraq for example, which was at that time under Persian rule, although the Persian Empire was then generally weak.³ Therefore, the researcher argues that it could be claimed that the main reason for the battle of Mu'tah might be to take revenge on the killers of the 14 companions of the Prophet, depending on the closeness of the incident of Dhāt Aṭlāḥ to the battle of Mu'tah, as opposed to the other reasons mentioned by some scholars.

Moreover, the researcher argues that, while this reason (the killing of the delegation of the Prophet) could be taken as a direct one for the battle, this does not exclude the indirect reasons that urged the Prophet to send the biggest army that the Muslims had at that time to such a battle, knowing – as a political leader – the great danger behind this choice, not forgetting the situation in that region at that time; the Byzantine were the allies of Shurahbīl, and any clash with him would mean

² The mission to Dhāt Aṭlāḥ took place in the third month of the year 8 A.H., which means only 2 months before the battle of Mu'tah (See al-Wāqidi 1966: (2) 752).

³ The researcher came to this conclusion after studying the general circumstances and events that occurred in the region between the Byzantines and the Persians at that time.

a clash with the Byzantine Empire. For the Byzantine Empire was at its peak after its great victory in *al-Shām* and its defeat of the Persians, excluding them from IslamicJerusalem.⁴

Thus, by connecting all the circumstances in which the battle happened, in addition to the political situation of the state in Madīnah, one can conclude that the battle of Mu'tah was the taking of the opportunity to start a military campaign to conquer IslamicJerusalem. This leads to the argument that the Prophet had made a strategic plan towards conquering IslamicJerusalem, and had begun to apply it with the battle of Mu'tah.

The result of the battle

The result of this battle was not a definite victory for the Muslims and not even for the Byzantines, although some historians stated that Muslims defeated the Byzantines like Ibn Kathīr (n.d.: (3) 473), and others said that the Byzantines defeated Muslims like al-Wāqidī (1966: (2) 764). Other scholars such as Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām (d. 218 A.H.) have not given a clear opinion on the outcome of the battle.

The researcher does not agree with the first two opinions; since when anyone studies the events of this battle and compares it with others that happened before and after it, they find there

⁴ It was well known that Heraclius defeated the Persians and conquered IslamicJerusalem at that time, and the letter of the Prophet was delivered to him in Jerusalem, during his visit to Jerusalem as thanksgiving for the victory. The evidence is the well-known narration from Abū Sufiān when he was in Jerusalem and he was invited to meet Heraclius after he had received the letter of the Prophet, and Heraclius asked Abū Sufiān several questions about the Prophet. (See al-Bukhārī 1985: (1) 7)

many clear signs of victory and defeat, like war prisoners, booties, etc. However, none of these signs were present here, except for booties taken by some Muslims mentioned by Ibn Kathīr (Ibn Kathīr (n.d.): (3) 471). Hence, it might not be fully accurate to claim that either the Byzantines or the Muslims were defeated.

The Prophet himself gave his own conclusion on the battle's result when, defending the army of Mu'tah after some of the people of Madīnah claimed that they had escaped from the battle, he said: 'They are not escapers, they are to turn around and resume fighting if it pleases Allāh' (Ibn Hishām 1998: 216). When he was in Madīnah, the prophet told the companions of what was happening in the area of the battle as al-Bukhārī narrated: "Zaid took the flag, and he was hit (i.e. killed), then Ja'far took it and he was hit, and then Ibn Rawāḥa took it and he was hit – and his eyes were shedding tears – until one of God's swords took the flag, and God supported them"⁵.

The Significance of the Battle of Mu'tah

Ibn Kathīr held an interesting opinion concerning the significance of the battle of Mu'tah in general; he said: 'This invasion was a sign of the forthcoming Muslim invasion of the

⁵ أخذ زيد الراية فأصيب، ثم أخذ جعفر فأصيب، ثم أخذ ابن رواحة فأصيب – وعيناه تذرغان – حتى أخذ الراية سيف من سيوف الله، حتى فتح الله عليهم. (al-'Asqalānī 1997: (6) 21)

The Arabic concept فتح الله عليهم means some kind of being victorious, but it cannot be translated into (render victory). Thus, it is a kind of victory different to that known in battles generally, and the Prophet may have used this concept to describe the situation as being not a complete victory as it was well known.

Romans⁶, (Ibn Kathīr 2001: (1) 140)⁷. The researcher agrees with Ibn Kathīr in his understanding of the significance of this battle as being a sign and a start of the forthcoming conquest of *al-Shām*.

In addition, the researcher argues that the Prophet used the expression ‘they are to turn around and resume fighting’ when he described the Muslim army after they returned from Mu’tah; this indicates the real purpose of the battle, which for the military campaign to conquer that region was only a starting point. The researcher argues that the Prophet – by stating this – had opened the gate for the next steps towards that region, and had given a hint for Muslims about the upcoming events. In other words, this battle was the introduction of all that was to happen later on. That is, the conquest of IslamicJerusalem, since it was the first practical examination of the road to IslamicJerusalem, and the first examination of the force that was situated in IslamicJerusalem at that time, the Byzantines. In addition, one of the most important results of this battle was that it gave the Muslims an international reputation; they were the

⁶ Meaning the conquest of *al-Shām*.

⁷ This book is different from the Arabic book of Ibn Kathīr (*al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyah*) which was edited by Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Wāḥid; the latter was only a part of the book of Ibn Kathīr (*al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*). The editor took only those parts of that book in which Ibn Kathīr spoke about the Prophet’s biography. However, the book mentioned here is another that was written by Ibn Kathīr, specialising only in the *sīrah* of the Prophet. In other words, Ibn Kathīr wrote two books: one about the *sīrah* of the Prophet (which is this book); and one about the general history (which is the book edited by ‘Abd al-Wāḥid). Both were used in this study since Ibn Kathīr had stated different arguments and opinions in each of them.

only nation that had dared to challenge the Byzantine Empire, which was the victorious Empire at that time since they had defeated the Persians and expelled them from Islamic Jerusalem and *al-Shām* in the year 7 A.H.⁸

Thus, by looking at all the circumstances that surrounded this battle, the importance of the battle as a first practical Muslim (as a nation) step towards Islamic Jerusalem can be understood. The researcher argues that Mu'tah was indeed essential in preparing for conquering Islamic Jerusalem. Without Mu'tah, the Muslims would not have been able to examine this road and investigate the strength of their enemy, i.e. the Byzantines, which might have delayed the conquest of Islamic Jerusalem. The battle can be considered as not only being an important practical step taken by the Prophet towards Islamic Jerusalem, but also the first.

The *Ghazwah* of Tabūk (9 A.H. - 630 C.E.)

When dealing with an important *Ghazwah* like Tabūk, an important question arises; what are the factors that help someone understand the importance and uniqueness of the *Ghazwah* of Tabūk?

To examine this question, it should be noted that Tabūk was: Firstly, the last *Ghazwah* during the lifetime of the Prophet. Secondly, this was far and away the longest *Ghazwah* and the longest trip that the Prophet made during his Prophethood. Thirdly, this *Ghazwah* was the only one in which the Prophet

⁸ This has been studied further by Hānī Abū al-Rub in his book *Tārīkh Filisṭīn* (See Hānī 2002: 88).

publicly announced its direction to his companions from the start; it was usually his habit to keep the destination of any *Ghazwah* secret and indicate to the people that he wanted to go to another direction, as part of his military strategy. In this *Ghazwah*, however, he clarified the case to the Muslims from the beginning, and told them that his aim was the Byzantines. The timing of this *Ghazwah* was critical (in the middle of summer), and the place was very far towards the north of the Arab Peninsula, as many scholars of *sīrah* like Ibn Hishām have mentioned (1987: (4) 155-156).

The importance and uniqueness of this *Ghazwah* can also be understood by noting the strong orders of the Prophet to the Muslims to go for this *Ghazwah*, making it obligatory on all the Muslims at that time except those with serious excuses. All the Muslims participated in this *Ghazwah* except for three companions, and they were boycotted for fifty days until forgiveness was revealed in the Qur'ān (9:117-118); their story is mentioned in all the books of *sīrah* (See Ibn Hishām 1987: (4) 173-179). This boycotting is the main evidence of the obligatory nature of this *Ghazwah*.

The reasons for the *Ghazwah*

It was noticed that most of the scholars who have spoken on the *Ghazwah* of Tabūk did not specify a major event that could have triggered this *Ghazwah*. Ibn Ishāq (Guillaume 1955: 602) and Ibn Hishām (1987: (3) 155) did not mention any specific reason for this *Ghazwah*. They just mentioned the start of the *Ghazwah* without specifying a direct reason, as occurs in

most of the previous *Ghazwahs* of the Prophet. Does this mean that Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām claimed that the Prophet did not have a specific reason or cause for this *Ghazwah*? The researcher argues that Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām, not mentioning a specific reason for the *Ghazwah*, does not mean that the Prophet did not have an aim or reason behind it, since it cannot be understood that the Prophet would have gone into battle without an aim, plan or reason. This one contradicted his previous *Ghazwahs* and battles, which were specified by a direct reason, which can be discovered and proved by reading the opinions of the *sīrah* and *ḥadīth* scholars on the Prophet's previous *Ghazwahs* and military missions after his migration to Madīnah.

Thus, the researcher argues that this *Ghazwah* – with special reference to its unique nature – must have had a strong reason that led the Prophet to march all the way from Madīnah to Tabūk. Some scholars have tried to elaborate on and find the possible main reason for the *Ghazwah*.

Al-Ya'qūbī said a reason put forward was that the Prophet ordered the Muslims to march towards Tabūk in order to revenge his cousin Ja'far Ibn Abī Ṭālib's killing during the battle of Mu'tah (al-Ya'qūbī (n.d.): (2) 67). The researcher argues that this reason may not be considered accurate since it contains no evidence from the sayings or the acts of the Prophet before and through the *Ghazwah* of Tabūk.

Ibn Kathīr held another interesting opinion on the reason for this *Ghazwah*: “Narrated from Ibn ‘Abbās ... and others: when Allāh ordered that the polytheists must be prohibited from

visiting al-Ḥarām mosque (in Makkah) during pilgrimage or any other occasion, Quraysh⁹ said: Now all the markets and trades during the pilgrimage will be stopped, thus, we will lose what we used to gain from them. Therefore, Allāh compensated them by ordering them to fight the people of the book until they become Muslims or pay the *Jizyah*. I (Ibn Kathīr) said: so, the Prophet determined to fight the Byzantines, since they were the closest to him, and the first that deserved to be invited for the truth since they were the closest to Islam and Muslims”.¹⁰

The researcher argues that this analysis of Ibn Kathīr is very interesting, but at the same time it cannot be accepted for different reasons. Firstly, the researcher could not find any relationship between the narration that Ibn Kathīr mentioned (from Ibn ‘Abbās and others) and the *Ghazwah* of Tabūk. The researcher understood from this narration that the *Ghazwah* of Tabūk was a kind of distraction of the people of Makkah from what they expected (as the narration mentioned), and this is unacceptable. Also the army of this *Ghazwah* did not only contain the people of Makkah, the *Ghazwah* contained thirty thousand soldiers from different tribes and places.

⁹ The tribe that was in Makkah, which is the tribe of the Prophet.

¹⁰ روي عن ابن عباس ومجاهد وعكرمة وسعيد بن جبيرة وقتادة والضحاك وغيرهم: أنه لما أمر الله تعالى بأن يُمنع المشركون من قربان المسجد الحرام في الحج وغيره، قالت قریش: لتتقطع عنا المتاجر والأسواق أيام الحج وليذهبن ما كنا نصيب منها. فعوضهم الله عن ذلك بالأمر بقتال أهل الكتاب حتى يسلموا أو يعطوا الجزية عن يد وهم صاغرون. قلت: فعزم رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم على قتال الروم لأنهم أقرب الناس إليه وأولى الناس بالدعوة إلى الحق لقرابهم من الإسلام وأهله.
(Ibn Kathīr (n.d.): (4) 3)

In addition, the researcher argues that the closest to the Muslim land at that time were Iraq, Yemen and Abyssinia (not the Byzantines), and most of them were not Muslims at that time. Moreover, we should not forget that the Byzantines were considered much stronger at that time than the Persians, especially after they defeated the Persians and expelled them from *al-Shām* (Historical Syria). Therefore, it would have been easier for the Prophet either to go to Iraq, Yemen or Abyssinia which were the closest (especially Iraq and Yemen, since there were no seas between them and the Muslims like Abyssinia) or fight the Persians who were getting weaker at that time. So, the researcher argues that the reasons that Ibn Kathīr mentioned were not sufficient.

Some scholars have mentioned other specific reasons for this *Ghazwah* like al-Wāqidī, who stated: “The Prophet heard that the Byzantines had gathered a great army in *al-Shām*, and that Heraclius gave his companions (of what was enough) for a year (i.e. spent a large amount of money on this army), and Lakhm, Jidhām, ‘Āmilah and Ghassān had come with him (Heraclius), and that they brought the front of their armies to *al-Balqā*” (al-Wāqidī 1966: (3) 990)

However, the researcher argues that, though this narration seems very logical, it does not have any supportive narration connected to the Prophet (since it speaks of an incident that occurred in the life-time of the Prophet). Therefore, though it cannot be considered the main reason,¹¹ it might be taken as a

¹¹ The researcher argues that dealing with the events and the acts of the Prophet himself cannot be accepted generally without referring to narrations,

possible reason, especially since no other scholar has mentioned it.

On the other hand, Al-Mubarakpuri tried to elaborate on this issue in order to find the specific reason for this *Ghazwah*; he stated that the main reason for the *Ghazwah* was that there was a serious threat made against Madīnah by the king of the Arab-Ghassanides¹², and caused by the battle of Mu'tah in the year 7 A.H. (al-Mubarakpuri 1996: 422-424). Al-Mubarakpuri depended on a *ḥadīth* narrated in al-Bukhārī's (d. 256 A.H.) *Saḥīḥ* from 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. The *ḥadīth* speaks about the incident where the Prophet was separated from his wives for some time and the Muslims thought that he had divorced them all; in this narration 'Umar said: "...And (during that time) all who were around the messenger of Allāh (i.e. the tribes) surrendered to him, so no one was left except the king of the Ghassanides in *al-Shām*, whom we were afraid would come and attack us. I ('Umar) did not feel the presence of anyone when one of the *Anṣār* came to me (i.e. suddenly) saying: "something has happened!" I said: "what is it? Did the Ghassanaide come?" He said: "No, it's greater than this! The messenger of Allāh has divorced his wives". So I came..."¹³

since the acts of the Prophet are considered the second primary source in Islam, and so should be dealt with differently from other historical materials and narrations.

¹² The Arab-Ghassanides were the rulers of a part of *al-Shām*, and were allied with the Byzantine Empire, they used to have their own kings, but the Byzantines ruled them indirectly (See al-Mubarakpuri 1996: 27).

¹³ وكان من حول رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قد استقام له فلم يبق إلا ملك غسان بالشام كنا نخاف أن يأتينا فما شعرت إلا بالأنصاري وهو يقول إنه قد حدث أمر قلت له وما هو أجاء الغساني

This *ḥadīth* shows – according to al-Mubarakpuri – that the Muslims in Madīnah were considered under threat of the Ghassanides at that period when the incident of the Prophet and his wives occurred.

The researcher argues that this reason mentioned by al-Mubarakpuri might not be considered **the main and only reason** for the *Ghazwah*, since there is disagreement among the scholars as to which happened first: the *Ghazwah* of Tabūk or the incident of the Prophet and his wives. Some of the scholars claim that the incident of the Prophet with his wives did not happen before the *Ghazwah* of Tabūk.¹⁴

قال أعظم من ذلك طلق رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم نساءه فجنت... (al-Bukhārī 1987: (5) 2197)

¹⁴ In fact, the books of *sīrah* generally do not mention this incident (of the Prophet and his wives). But disagreement was raised due to the disagreement about the ordering of the revelation of the verses of the Qur'ān commenting on the incident of the Prophet and his wives, and whether it was revealed before or after Tabūk.

In the Qur'ān: chapter 66 (al-Taḥrīm) was revealed – according to some scholars – after the incident of the Prophet and his wives, which was considered the reason for the revelation of this chapter. Al-Naysābūrī (d. 468 A.H.) – for example – was one of the scholars who claimed this (al-Naysābūrī (n.d.): 243-245).

According to that opinion, this chapter was revealed after chapter 49 (al-Ḥujurāt) (See Darwazah 2000: (8) 529), which was revealed because of the incident of the delegation of *Banī Tamīm*, whose story was mentioned in the *sīrah* of Ibn Hishām. Ibn Hishām said that the incident of the delegation of *Banī Tamīm* occurred after the Prophet had finished the *Ghazwah* of Tabūk (See Ibn Hishām 1987: (4) 203). However, it might be confusing to find that Darwazah in his *Tafsīr* put chapter 9 (al-Tawbah) that spoke about the *Ghazwah* of Tabūk after chapters 49 and 66, but the researcher argues that this can be understood when Darwazah argued that the chapter 9 was

revealed different times (Darwazah 2000: (9) 328) before, during and after the *Ghazwah* of Tabūk. Therefore this chapter might have ended a while after the ending of the revelation of both chapters 49 and 66, and because of that it was organised in the *Tafsīr* of Darwazah after them.

The researcher, after this study, concludes that the incident mentioned in the narration of ‘Umar could not be considered as the main reason for Tabūk (as al-Mubarakpuri argued), because of the disagreement of whether it happened before or after the *Ghazwah* of Tabūk. At the same time, the researcher argues that this reason could be considered one of the reasons for the *Ghazwah* of Tabūk, depending on the narration of al-Bukhārī, which could be considered as one of the reasons, since it is not entirely clear whether it happened before or after Tabūk. The researcher argues that we must not forget that the disagreement between the scholars in this case makes it possible that either side could be right.

On the other hand, if we go to the books of *Tafsīr*, we find that some of the scholars have tried to link the *Ghazwah* of Tabūk and a verse in the Qur’ān in chapter 17, verse 76:

وإن كادوا ليستفزونك من الأرض ليخرجوك منها وإن لا يلبثون خلافك إلا قليلا (17:76)

And they endeavour to estrange thee from the land with a view to driving thee away from it – but, then, after thou wilt have left, they themselves will not remain (in it) for more than a little while (17:76)

(The researcher has taken from the translation some words that the translator (asad 2003: 479) added to the text that showed his own opinion in some disagreements among scholars, as in the case of (which land) for example, since he stated in his translation “from the land (of your birth)...”. Here there was disagreement among the scholars, since some said that the land was Madīnah, not Makkah, so the researcher has stated the exact phrases of the translation that do not have disagreements).

Although chapter 17 is a Makkan chapter (meaning that it was revealed before the Prophet’s migration to Madīnah), it is said by some scholars like al-Ṭabarī (1999: (8) 121), Ibn Kathīr (1994: (3) 74) and al-Qurṭubī (d. 671 A.H.) (1998: (5) 270) that this verse in particular was revealed in Tabūk (which means that this verse in particular is a Madanian verse, i.e. was revealed after the migration of the Prophet). They depended on a narration of al-Ṣuyūṭī that can be found following in this study.

However, al-Şuyūtī (d. 911 A.H.) in his book *Lubāb al-Nuqūl* mentioned a very interesting narration regarding the reason for the *Ghazwah* of Tabūk; he said:

Narrated by 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Ghunm: the Jews came to the Prophet and said: if you are a Prophet, then go to *al-Shām*, since *al-Shām* is the land of gathering and the land of the Prophets. The Prophet believed what they said, so, he went for the *Ghazwah* of Tabūk intending *al-Shām*. When he arrived in Tabūk, Allāh revealed to him some verses from the chapter of *al-Isrā'* (chapter 17) after its revelation was finished.¹⁵

This narration is weak as al-Şuyūtī himself argued after mentioning it (al-Şuyūtī (n.d.): 277). Therefore, it cannot be considered reliable; in any case, al-Şuyūtī mentioned that there are other similar weak narrations that can strengthen this narration.

The researcher argues that these other narrations are also weak. Thus, although they could be used to support an argument, they may not be able to be used to build an argument, as they are not reliable. Furthermore, it was noticed that Ibn Kathīr, when he mentioned this narration in his *Tafsīr*, rejected it totally, not depending on it to find out the possible reason for the *Ghazwah*; the researcher agrees with him in his not relying on this narration. However, the researcher still argues that this

من حديث شهر بن حوشب عن عبد الرحمن بن غنم، أن اليهود أتوا النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم¹⁵ فقالوا: إن كنت نبياً فالحق بالشام، فإن الشام أرض المحشر وأرض الأنبياء. فصدق رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ما قالوا، فغزا غزوة تبوك يريد الشام. فلما بلغ تبوك أنزل الله آيات من سورة الإسراء بعد ما ختمت (وإن كادوا ليستفزونك من الأرض ليخرجوك منها) (al-Şuyūtī (n.d.): 276)

narration can be used to support an opinion without depending on it as evidence, as there are other similar supportive weak narrations, and these narrations could strengthen it.

Moreover, the researcher has mentioned the opinions of both Ibn Kathīr and al-Mubarakpuri and clarified his disagreement with them, and stated his opinion in the narration of al-Ṣuyūṭī. He argues that the main possible reason for this *Ghazwah* was not clarified by any strong evidence; this opens the gate to further debate on connecting the link of the events of this *Ghazwah* to try to find a possible main reason. However, the researcher could not see any actual threat posed by the Byzantines over Madīnah that could be argued as being the main reason for the *Ghazwah* of Tabūk.

The researcher argues that, in order to gain more understanding of the possible reason that motivated the Prophet to go for the *Ghazwah* of Tabūk, the choice of the place and some of the events that occurred during the *Ghazwah* should be studied thoroughly. The researcher will focus on two issues, namely, the choice of the town of Tabūk in particular, and one of the most important *ḥadīths* that the Prophet mentioned while he was in Tabūk that might give a vision of the main reason for the *Ghazwah*.

The *ḥadīth* of conquering IslamicJerusalem

Al-Bukhārī mentioned in his *al-Saḥīḥ* book a *ḥadīth* that was said in Tabūk: “Narrated ‘Awf Ibn Mālik: I came to the messenger of Allāh during the *Ghazwah* of Tabūk while he was in a small tent made of leather, he (the Prophet) said: count six

things before the Day of Judgment: my death, then the conquest of *Bayt al-Maqdis*...”¹⁶

The most important part of the *ḥadīth* is that of “conquering *Bayt al-Maqdis*”. According to Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi, the term “*Islamicjerusalem*” may be translated into Arabic language as “*Bayt al-Maqdis*” (El-Awaisi: 2005: 8),¹⁷ and the researcher argues that it could be used in this *ḥadīth* to refer to the region of Islamicjerusalem.

The researcher argues that it was in this *ḥadīth* that the Prophet **for the first time** in his life clearly mentioned “conquering Islamicjerusalem”. This gives a very important impression of the possible reason behind going to Tabūk. The Prophet had never mentioned conquering Islamicjerusalem before this *Ghazwah*. He used to mention the region or the al-Aqsa mosque in his *ḥadīths* with reference to the status and

¹⁶ حدثنا الحميدي حدثنا الوليد بن مسلم حدثنا عبد الله بن العلاء بن زبر قال سمعت بسر بن عبيد الله أنه سمع أبا إدريس قال سمعت عوف بن مالك قال: أتيت النبي في غزوة تبوك وهو في قبعة من آدم فقال: اعدد ستا بين يدي الساعة: موتى ثم فتح بيت المقدس... (al-Bukhārī 1987: (3) 1159)

¹⁷ However, the researcher has done a short study on the case of translation of the two terminologies (Islamicjerusalem and *Bayt al-Maqdis*). He argues that he agrees with the argument of El-Awaisi though not in all the cases, since the terminology of *Bayt al-Maqdis* could refer to al-Aqsa Mosque, the city of Jerusalem, or the region of Islamicjerusalem. In this *ḥadīth* in particular, the researcher argues that the terminology *Bayt al-Maqdis* is not clear as to whether it refers to a mosque, a city, or a region, since it was open and general and, in the case of conquest, it could be argued that it is acceptable to consider *Bayt al-Maqdis* in this *ḥadīth* speaking about any one of the three (the mosque, the city, and the region), as the conquest could refer to all of the three elements. Hence, conquering the region means conquering the city and the mosque, and to conquer the mosque, they should secure the city and the region as well, i.e. conquer it. So, the researcher sees no difference in this case in particular.

importance of this region for Muslims, but this was the first time ever that the Prophet had mentioned something practical about conquering that region, and this entails many interpretations.

The researcher adds another issue related to this *ḥadīth*; this *Ghazwah* came about one year after conquering Makkah and securing the *Ka'ba*, and this *ḥadīth* was said in Tabūk. Therefore, it could be argued that this gives a sense that the Prophet might have started a new practical stage of marching towards the third holiest place in Islam, which is Islamicjerusalem, right after he secured the first important place, that is Makkah. It must be said that Islamicjerusalem was the first *qiblah* of the Muslims before praying towards the *Ka'ba* in Makkah (al-Ṭabarī 1998: (3) 17).

The researcher argues that there are several elements gathered together in this *Ghazwah*, and they point to Islamicjerusalem. Therefore, when one connects these links, one could conclude that the Prophet might have been preparing the Muslims practically for the next campaign to conquer the third most important site in Islam, i.e. Islamicjerusalem, and that Tabūk could be considered as one of the first practical steps made by the Prophet towards conquering Islamicjerusalem.

The researcher – after this study – argues that the first motivation for the Prophet to go to Tabūk was most likely something other than fighting the Byzantines; and by looking at the general status of Islamicjerusalem in Islam, it could be argued that the Prophet wanted the Muslims to get closer to the region in a military campaign, i.e. a practical preparation and exercise. This can be supported by the narrations of the Prophet

and the Jews (that were mentioned earlier); although the researcher found that these narrations are weak in general. However, the researcher would like to draw attention to an important issue, which is that this analysis of the reason does not mean that the Prophet did not either take into consideration the danger of the Byzantines and their threat over Madīnah, or other motivations.

It could be argued that the Prophet had a major aim, and that he waited for the right circumstances to achieve it. When those circumstances were obtainable, he seized the chance and marched towards Islamicjerusalem. This was not the first time that this occurred during the lifetime of the Prophet; it had happened before when he waited for appropriate circumstances to conquer Makkah, although he had the strength to do that earlier. But, when the right opportunity emerged, he marched towards the city and conquered it.

However, to say that the Prophet wanted to conquer Islamicjerusalem himself might not be accurate; this can be ascertained by studying the *ḥadīth* that the Prophet said in Tabūk, about the conquest of Islamicjerusalem **after** his death. Nevertheless, it could be argued that the Prophet might have wanted this *Ghazwah* to be a practical step and an initial practical campaign towards Islamicjerusalem led by him. This can be more understood when studying the agreements and treaties that the Prophet reached in Tabūk with the northern tribes and cities, especially the treaty with the leader of Aylah¹⁸

¹⁸ The city of Aqaba today in the Kingdom of Jordan.

and the inhabitants of Adhruḥ and Jarbā'¹⁹ (Ibn Ḥibbān 2000: 272). These treaties and documents should be thoroughly studied and analysed, especially a condition appearing in the treaty with the leader of Aylah, in which the Prophet stipulated what the people of Aylah should do. al-Wāqidī stated the text:²⁰ “And they shall not prevent (anyone of the Muslims) from water, or a way that they need to pass through, whether this be on land or through sea”.²¹

The researcher argues that these conditions were very important in securing the road to IslamicJerusalem; thus the applications of these conditions (and other circumstances that occurred in Tabūk) in the Muslim campaign to conquer IslamicJerusalem during Abū Bakr and ‘Umar’s era should be studied thoroughly.

The significance of Tabūk during the conquest of IslamicJerusalem

After the death of Prophet Muhammad and the end of *Ḥurūb al-Riddah*,²² the first caliph, Abū Bakr, launched a

¹⁹ These two towns still exist in the Kingdom of Jordan to the south of the city of Madaba.

²⁰ Al-Balādhurī did not mention the text of the treaty, but he mentioned that the Prophet put a condition on the people of Aylah that they would serve food to whoever passed through their land of Muslims (al-Balādhurī 1992: 69).

²¹ وإنه لا يحل أن يمنعوا ماء يريونه ولا طريقاً يريونه من بر أو بحر (al-Wāqidī 1966: (3) 1031)

²² This means the wars that were launched by Abū Bakr against the apostates who declared apostasy from Islam after the passing away of the Prophet.

campaign to conquer Islamic Jerusalem and sent four armies from Madīnah.²³ Three of these were ordered to take the route of Tabūk and the fourth was ordered to take the route of Aylah, on their way to *al-Shām*, as many scholars have mentioned such as al-Balādhurī (1992: 127) and al-Wāqidī (n.d.: 9). According to al-al-Ṭabarī, the only army that was ordered to take the route of Aylah was ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ (al-Ṭabarī 1998: (4) 53). The researcher argues that taking this route (which is longer than the route of Tabūk) means that Abū Bakr was aware of the benefit of a treaty between the Prophet and the people of Aylah. Thus, taking this route would guarantee the needed supplies for the army before entering the southern parts of Palestine, which would then take the Muslim army along the nearest road to Islamic Jerusalem. This shows that the army of ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ was considered to be the most important army, and this can be proved by looking at a narration of al-Wāqidī, stating that when the army of ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ left Madīnah, ‘Uthmān Ibn ‘Affān noticed that Abū Bakr was sad. When asked the reason for this

²³ There is disagreement among the historians as to the number of armies that Abū Bakr sent; while al-Balādhurī (1992: 126) claimed that the armies were only three, Abū al-Rub quoted Ibn A‘tham that Abū Bakr sent Abū ‘Ubaydah ‘Āmir Ibn al-Jarrāh with an army to conquer *Himaṣ* in *al-Shām* (Abū al-Rub 2002: 107).

Al-Balādhurī claimed that Abū ‘Ubaydah was not sent as a leader of any army. However, the researcher argues that, according to many other historians like al-Wāqidī (n.d.: 16) and al-Ṭabarī (1998: (4) 53), Abū ‘Ubaydah was one of the leaders of the armies who marched to *al-Shām*, and he was ordered to lead the whole armies until Khālīd Ibn al-Walīd was sent from Iraq to fight with the armies in *al-Shām* and was ordered to lead the armies instead of Abū ‘Ubaydah (See al-Wāqidī (n.d.): 24). Therefore, the researcher argues that the claim of al-Balādhurī is not acceptable

sadness, he replied: I fear for the Muslim armies, and I wish that Allāh would make them victorious. ‘Uthmān said: “By Allāh, I was not happy for any army that went out of Madīnah except for this army, because it is going to *al-Shām*, **and this is what Allāh has ordered his Prophet**”.²⁴

The researcher argues that ‘Uthmān’s statement shows that the army of ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ was considered one of the most important armies in the Muslim campaign towards conquering IslamicJerusalem; this shows the great benefit of the treaty between the Prophet and the people of Aylah, as well as the *Ghazwah* of Tabūk during the lifetime of the Prophet as a whole, and its great effect on the Muslim campaign during the rule of Abū Bakr.

In addition, one must not forget that specifying the Tabūk route in particular for three armies out of four has its own significance; choosing the same route that the Prophet took during the *Ghazwah* of Tabūk can be considered a completion of the campaign of the Prophet. Furthermore, this could have given the Muslims the more determination to continue their campaign when they remembered that, for almost all the way; this was the same road that the Prophet took during his *Ghazwah* of Tabūk, in which he said the *ḥadīth* of conquering IslamicJerusalem. Especially when they remembered that many mosques on that route have been built in the places where the Prophet prayed on his way to Tabūk (al-Wāqidī 1966: (3) 999).

²⁴ (والله ما خرج جيش سررت به إلا هذا الجيش الذي سار إلى الشام، وهذا الذي أوصى الله نبيه به) (al-Wāqidī (n.d.): 16)

Taking all these facts together gives us a strong impression of the importance of the *Ghazwah* of Tabūk; this *Ghazwah* was not only a step made by the Prophet, but was also one of his most important steps in preparing for the conquest of IslamicJerusalem.

The Ba'th of Usāmah Ibn Zaid (11 A.H. - 632 C.E.)

The *Ba'th* (mission) of Usāmah Ibn Zaid²⁵ was the last military activity that the Prophet planned for and arranged in his life. Nevertheless, it did not occur until after the Prophet's death; it was the first act of his successor, Abū Bakr. Although this *Ba'th* was not fulfilled during the life of the Prophet, the researcher argues that the insistence of the Prophet, until the last moments of his life, on sending this *Ba'th* should be taken into consideration.

The researcher argues that this *Ba'th* is one of the most important incidents in the life of the Prophet and his relationship with IslamicJerusalem. In fact, it can be considered the last preparatory step the Prophet made towards the conquest of IslamicJerusalem. To study the accuracy of this hypothesis, the researcher will look into some issues related to this *Ba'th* and its relationship with IslamicJerusalem, such as the reasons for this

²⁵ Usāmah Ibn Zaid Ibn Hāarithah: his title was 'the beloved, the son of the beloved', because he and his father were very much beloved by the Prophet, his mother was Um Ayman, the nanny of Prophet Muhammad, and he was 18 or 20 when Prophet Muhammad died. The Prophet appointed him leader of the army of this *Ba'th* when he was still young, although there were many senior companions in the army. He died in Madīnah in the year 54 A.H. (See al-'Asqalānī 1978: (1) 31).

Ba'th, the destination of the *Ba'th* and its significance, and the significance of this *Ba'th* in the conquest of IslamicJerusalem after the death of Prophet Muhammad.

The reasons for this Ba'th

While the majority of scholars such as Ibn Ishāq (Guillaume 1955: 678), Ibn Hishām (1987: (4) 253) and al-Ṭabarī (1998 (3) 244) did not mention a specific reason for the *Ba'th* of Usāmah, some historians like al-Ya'qūbī (n.d.: (2) 113), Ibn 'Asākir (d. 571 A.H.) (1995: (8) 64), al-Wāqidī (1966: (3) 1117) and Ibn Sa'd (d. 230 A.H.) (1997: (2) 145) have mentioned some narrations and *ḥadīths* that show that this *Ba'th* aimed to take revenge for the killing of Zaid Ibn Ḥārithah, the first leader of the army of Mu'tah, who was also the father of Usāmah, the leader of the army in this *Ba'th*.

The researcher argues that to consider the revenge for the killing of Zaid as the main reason for this *Ba'th* might not be convincible; the period between the two incidents is more than three years, and this is a long enough period to reject considering revenge as the main reason for the *Ba'th*.

Furthermore, it was noted that al-Ya'qūbī tried to connect both Tabūk and Mu'tah with the *Ba'th* of Usāmah by claiming that the Prophet went for the *Ghazwah* to Tabūk to take revenge for Ja'far, and sent the *Ba'th* of Usāmah to take revenge for Zaid. The researcher argues that this cannot be acceptable. On one hand, it is not reasonable to claim that the Prophet would send two armies to take revenge on two of his leaders in Mu'tah and miss out the third leader, 'Abdullāh Ibn Rawāḥah.

On the other hand, the long period between Mu'tah and this *Ba'th*, is enough evidence that taking revenge for Mu'tah cannot be considered as the main reason for the *Ba'th* of Usāmah.

However, a very problematic issue arising here concerns the orders of the Prophet to Usāmah to burn some places in the destination of the *Ba'th* as was mentioned in the *ḥadīths* that were narrated by Abū Dāwūd (d. 275 A.H.) (n.d.: (3) 39), Ibn Mājah (d. 273 A.H.) (2000: 415) and Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241 A.H.) (1995: (16) 96); also that the Prophet did not order Usāmah to invite the inhabitants of the destination of the *Ba'th* to Islam before fighting them, as Usāmah had himself stated in a narration of al-Wāqidī (1966: (3) 1123). Does this mean that the spreading of Islam in that region was not the aim of the Prophet when he sent the army of Usāmah? And does it strengthen the “revenge” theory as being the main reason for the *Ba'th*?

To answer this question, the researcher refers to Ahmad al-Shbūl, who argues that the Prophet did not build his military actions and campaigns on the concept of “revenge” (al-Shbūl 1989: (1) 177). The researcher agrees with al-Shbūl to some extent, but adds that it is acceptable to argue that the Prophet waited for the appropriate time to achieve specific aims, like the killing of his delegation of 14 companions in Dhāt Aṭlāḥ, which led to the Battle of Mu'tah.²⁶ This can be clarified as holding

²⁶ See this article, the battle of Mu'tah.

onto the aim until the good reason occurs; however, this does not mean that the Prophet built his actions on revenge.

Ordering the army of Usāmah to burn some sites within their destination and not ordering them to invite the people of that destination to Islam does not necessarily mean that their target was revenge. A very important fact can be given on this point by studying the significance of the *Ba'th* of Usāmah, which will follow on this chapter.

Here the researcher would also like to refer to Khalil Athaminah's opinion on the main cause of the *Ba'th* of Usāmah; he argued that the *Ba'th* of Usāmah reflected the Prophet's desire to examine to what extent the leaders of the southern side of *al-Shām* were trustworthy and committed to the treaties that the Prophet held with them (Athaminah 2000: 96).

The researcher argues that Athaminah's argument is very much appreciated, since it opens a new horizon in understanding the major aim of the Prophet for this *Ba'th*. Such an argument can explain the relationship between this *Ba'th* and the *Ghazwah* to Tabūk, since it shows that the treaties between the Prophet and the inhabitants of the southern region of *al-Shām* like Aylah, for example, were put to the test, which was very important before the start of the conquest of IslamicJerusalem. This can be better understood by looking at the fact that IslamicJerusalem was at that time too far from the Islamic-strength centre in Madīnah. A wide campaign to conquer that region needed all the arrangements to be precise and not miss out on any opportunity for unpleasant surprises.

Thus, the researcher contends that the main reason for the *Ba'th* of Usāmah might not be a revenge for the killing of Zaid Ibn Ḥārithah in Mu'tah; rather it could be argued that the loss of Zaid in Mu'tah had a relation in one way or another with the *Ba'th* of Usāmah. This could be studied further when looking at some narrations that stated that the Prophet mentioned Zaid Ibn Ḥārithah while he was preparing the army of Usāmah.

Al-Wāqīdī (1966: (3) 1117) mentioned this narration, in which the Prophet said to Usāmah: “O Usāmah, March by the name of Allāh and his blessings, until you reach the Place where your father was killed”.²⁷

This was the narration on which the scholars, who claimed that this *Ba'th* was to take revenge on Zaid (Usāmah's father), depended as their main evidence. The researcher argues that this narration does not necessarily clarify the major aim of the *Ba'th*, since it is speaking about the place where the mission was to take place. Therefore, it cannot be considered as an evidence that shows the main reason and aim of the *Ba'th* of Usāmah. However, after studying the reasons for this *Ba'th*, the researcher is led to study the destination, which should have had a very important significance in the whole mission and its reasons.

²⁷ يا أسامة، سر على اسم الله وبركته حتى تنتهي إلى مقتل أبيك

The destination

There has been a lot of disagreement among scholars and historians about the destination of this *Ba'th*; some of them like Ibn Ishāq (Guillaume 1955: 678), al-Ṭabarī (1998: (3) 244) and Ibn Hishām (1987: (4) 253), claimed that the *Ba'th* was towards “the Balqā’ and al-Dārūm in the land of Palestine”. However, al-Ṭabarī (1998: (3) 269) added in another statement that this *Ba'th* was towards Ābul al-Zayt, while Ibn ‘Asākir (1995: (8) 64) stated a narration claiming that the destination was Mu'tah.

Nevertheless, many other scholars and historians disagreed among themselves as to whether it was a town called Ubnā (and this was mentioned by Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (n.d.: (1) 101) and others) or town called Yubnā (mentioned by al-Ya'qūbī (2002: 167) and others). The first one, according to Yāqūt (n.d.: (1) 101), was situated in al-Balqā’, which is the same region where Mu'tah is situated. The latter was situated, as Yāqūt (n.d.: (5) 491) stated, near the city of al-Ramlah in Palestine.

The confusion about these opinions and debates is that the towns are sometimes referred to in different places that are quite far away from each other; there is a long distance between the al-Balqā’ region and the region around al-Ramlah, and each of these places has its own significance if it was the destination of this *Ba'th*.

To solve this problem, the researcher refers to the books of *ḥadīth*, where there was a *ḥadīth* stated by Abū Dāwūd (d. 275 A.H.) (n.d.: (3) 39), Ibn Mājah (d. 273 A.H.) (2000: 415) and Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241 A.H.) (1995: (16) 96). The *ḥadīth*

states that the Prophet ordered Usāmah Ibn Zaid to attack Ubnā in the morning, then to burn some sites in it.²⁸

However, in the narration of Abū Dāwūd, he stated another opinion of one of the narrators, Abū Mus-hir (d. 218 A.H.). Abū Dāwūd said: "Narrated by 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Amr al-Ghazzī, he heard Abū Mus-hir (when he had heard someone says: "Ubnā") replied: We know better; it's Yubnā of Palestine".²⁹

²⁸ The Arabic text: أن يغير على ابني صباحاً ثم يحرق. However, there are some slight differences among the narrations of the three scholars: Abū Dāwūd's narrations stated that Usāmah said that the Prophet ordered him to attack Ubnā at morning and burn sites in it. Ibn Mājah stated almost the same narration. Ibn Ḥanbal stated two narrations: the first one is the same as Ibn Mājah and Abū Dāwūd's. The second stated that Abū Bakr asked Usāmah (after the death of the Prophet) where the destination was that the Prophet had ordered him to attack; he said: "he (The Prophet) ordered me to attack Ubnā at morning and burn" (Ibn Ḥanbal 1995: (16) 107).

²⁹ The Arabic text: حدثنا عبدالله بن عمرو الغزي سمعت ابا مسهر قيل له ابني، قال: نحن اعلم، هي بيني فلسطين (Abū Dāwūd (n.d.): (3) 39). In fact, the researcher found that Al-Bakrī (d. 487 A.H.) (1998: (1) 91-92) quoted this *ḥadīth* from Abū Dāwūd in a different way; the narration there states:

Abū Dāwūd said: I heard Ibn Abī 'Umar al-'Adanī said: I heard Abū Mus-hir – when he heard someone says: Ubnā – replied: We know more; it's between Palestine and al-Balqā'; it is the place where the Messenger of Allāh sent Zaid (the Father of Usāmah) along to, with Ja'far Ibn Abī Ṭālib and 'Abdullāh Ibn Rawāḥah, but all of them were killed in Mu'tah of al-Balqā'.

وقال ابو داود: وسمعت ابن ابي عمر العدني قال: سمعت ابا مسهر قيل له ابني، قال: نحن اعلم، هي بين فلسطين والبلقاء، هي التي بعث إليها رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم زيدا ابا اسامة مع جعفر بن ابي طالب وعبدالله بن رواحة، فقتلوا جميعا رضي الله عنهم بموتة من ارض البلقاء.

At the same time, al-Sahāranfūrī (d. 1346 A.H.), in his explanation of *Sunan Abū Dāwūd*, claimed that the place was Yubnā in Palestine (n.d.: (12) 124-125), whereas al-Kāndahalwī, who edited al-Sahāranfūrī's book argued that the place was Ubnā, not Yubnā (ibid).

The researcher argues that this narration contradicts the above-mentioned one, since in the first one, Abū Mus-hir claimed that Ubnā (which was mentioned in the *ḥadīth*) is in fact Yubnā of Palestine, but here he claimed that it is near Mu'tah.

In order to check the accuracy of this narration of al-Bakrī, the researcher refers to two facts: first, the second narration was narrated from Ibn Abū 'Umar al-'Adanī, while the first one was taken from 'Abdullah Ibn 'Amr al-Ghazzī. The two names "al-Ghazzī" الغزي and "al-'Adanī" العدني are close to each other in the Arabic language. The researcher could not find the name (Ibn Abū 'Umar al-'Adanī) in the books of the narrators of the *ḥadīth*, unlike al-Ghazzī (al-Sahāranfūrī: (12) 124), which gives the impression that the copy of al-Bakrī was not accurate. Second, the researcher searched many printed copies of the *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd, but he could not find any similar narration to al-Bakrī's. In order to further check this case, the researcher compared the printed issues of the *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd with two manuscripts of the same book in order to check whether there had been any differences between them in the text for example. The first one was written in the 12th century C.E., and the narration in it was the same as the first one "We know more; it's Yubnā of Palestine". The second manuscript, which was written in the 13th century C.E., mentioned the same text as well.

However, the researcher would like to refer to the fact that Abū Dāwūd already has another book called *al-Marāsīl*, and he could have mentioned the narration that al-Bakrī quoted in that book. However, this is still a problematic issue, since the researcher could not find this book (*al-Marāsīl*) or any manuscript of it, so the real source of the narration of al-Bakrī could not be found. However, the researcher argues that; as long as the other book of Abū Dāwūd could not be checked, this leaves us with the fact that the main book of *ḥadīth* by Abū Dāwūd, which is the *Sunan*, did not mention the narration that al-Bakrī quoted, in addition to the study of the two names of the narrators (al-Gazzī and al-'Adanī) as the researcher mentioned before. Therefore, the researcher argues that the narration that we have in the *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd is the one that one shall rely on, not al-Bakrī's narration.

Meanwhile, in order to gain more understanding of this issue, the researcher has gathered the different opinions of historians and scholars of *ḥadīth* and *sīrah* in the following table:

No	Scholar	Opinion	Notes
1	Al-Ya'qūbī (2002: 167)	Yubnā	He narrated the <i>ḥadīth</i> of Usāmah as (Yubnā), not (Ubnā)
2	Ibn Sa'd (1997: (2) 145)	Ubnā	
3	Al-Ṭabarī (1998: (3) 244-269)	- Al-Balqā' and al-Dārūm - Ābul al-Zayt	He stated two opinions
4	Ibn Ishāq (1955: 678)	Al-Balqā' and al-Dārūm	
5	Ibn Hishām (1987: (4) 253)	Al-Balqā' and al-Dārūm	
6	Al-Suhaylī (n.d.: (4) 385)	Ubnā	
7	Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (n.d.: (1) 101)	- Ubnā - Ābul al-Zayt	He stated two opinions
8	Al-Bakrī (d. 487 A.H.) (1998: (1) 91)	Ubnā	
9	Abū Dāwūd (n.d.: (3) 39)	Ubnā	
	Abū Mus-hir	Yubnā	A narration in Abū

- 10 Dāwūd's book
(n.d.: (3) 39)
- 11 Al-Sahāranfūrī
(n.d.: (11) 124-125) Yubnā
- 12 Al-Kāndahalwī
Ubna
- 13 Ibn Ḥanbal
(1995: (16) 96) Ubna
- 14 Ibn Mājah (2000:
415) Ubna
- 15 Al-Bannā
(n.d.: (13) 66-67) Ubna
- 16 Al-Wāqidī
(1966: (3) 1117) - Ubna
- Mu'tah
- 17 Ibn 'Asākir
(1995: (8) 46-64) - Ubna
- The People of
Mu'tah
Ibn Kathīr Al-Balqā' and al-
- He stated his opinion in his editing of al-Sahāranfūrī's book (n.d.: (11) 124-125)
- He also mentioned that Ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisī said that it is near al-Karak at the borders of *al-Shām*. He named his chapter on this *Ba'th* 'the Ghazwah of Usāmah Ibn Zaid to Mu'tah', but stated that it was towards Ubna
- He stated two opinions

18 (n.d.: (4) 440) Dārūm

Table 1: Opinions of some scholars concerning the destination of the *Ba'th* of Usāmah

The results of this study can be summarised as following:

The Proposed Place	Number of Opinions
Ubnā	11
Al-Balqā' and al-Dārūm	4
Yubnā	3
Mu'tah	2
Ābul al-Zayt	2

Table 2: Summarising the opinions of scholars on the destination of the *Ba'th* of Usāmah

It can be clearly seen that most scholars and historians agreed that the destination of this *Ba'th* was towards Ubnā in al-Balqā'. However, al-Shbūl (1989: (1) 177) tried to elaborate on this issue, claiming that Usāmah might have attacked more than one destination in *al-Shām*, between the two destinations. Al-Shbūl based his opinion on considering al-Dārūm as being situated near Gaza as al-Ḥamawī mentioned (n.d.: (2) 483).

On the contrary, the researcher disagrees with al-Shbūl, and argues that al-Dārūm that was mentioned by Ibn Ishāq and some others (al-Balqā' and al-Dārūm) might not be the one near Gaza in Palestine. Al-Ḥamawī stated another name before mentioning al-Dārūm, that is "Dārūmā" (ibid); this place, according to al-Ḥamawī, is near the Dead Sea, where the cities

of the People of Lot were situated. This gives us a very important insight, i.e. most of the historians, especially the ones who mentioned al-Dārūm, never mentioned it alone, but always accompanied it with al-Balqā', which gives the impression that they are close to each other, and that applies to Dārūmā and al-Balqā', not al-Dārūm and al-Balqā'. Not only that, but al-Balqā' itself contains Dārūmā, since al-Balqā' is a region, while Dārūmā is a small area inside al-Balqā'. Also, by studying the events and the way that Usāmah took in this *Ba'th*, the researcher concludes that Usāmah's act was very fast that and he did not spend much time in this *Ba'th*, and no historian mentioned that Usāmah attacked more than one place. Therefore, connecting all these circumstances with the narration of al-Wāqidī (1966: (3) 1117), in which the Prophet ordered Usāmah to march towards the place where his (Usāmah) father was killed, strengthens the opinion that Ibn Ishāq and other historians, who mentioned al-Balqā' and al-Dārūm, were speaking about Dārūmā that is a part of al-Balqā', not al-Dārūm that is near Gaza.

In addition, when one tries to find Ābul al-Zayt, one learns that Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī states that it was in Jordan on the borders of *al-Shām* (Yāqūt (n.d.): (1) 68). This shows that most of the scholars were speaking about a town or a place in al-Balqā', which means it was near Mu'tah, i.e. on the borders of Islamicjerusalem, except those who claimed that the Place was Yubnā, situated near al-Ramlah in Palestine.

The researcher argues that it seems reasonable to argue that the opinions of the scholars, who claimed that the destination of this *Ba'th* was Yubnā, were established on the basis of a false transcription of the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet about the destination of the *Ba'th* of Usāmah, as all three narrations of this *ḥadīth* in the reliable books of *ḥadīth* stated clearly that the destination was Ubnā. This shows that there may have been some mistakes made when historians transcribed some of these narrations such as the statement of al-Ya'qūbī of the *ḥadīth* as being towards Yubnā (Ya'qūbī 2002: 167), and especially that the two words (Ubnā) and (Yubnā) in the Arabic language can be written in a very close way; the word (Ubnā) can be written in Arabic أبنا or أبى, while the word (Yubnā) can be written بينا or بينا.

The researcher argues that this confusion, among those scholars who claimed that the destination of the *Ba'th* was Yubnā, might be due to the reputation of Yubnā in Palestine. The researcher argues that many scholars mentioned Yubnā when speaking about Palestine, which could give us an impression of the great importance of this town. This can be seen, for example, in Ibn al-Faḥrī's (d. 290 A.H.) book '*Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-Buldān*', where he mentioned that Yubnā was a district in his time, which means that Yubnā had obvious importance.

However, as the importance of the location of Ubnā comes to be more understood, another question arises: does Ubnā still exist today? The researcher did not find any recent source that had tried to locate this town, and the researcher argues that such

a very important place like Ubnā should be defined, especially since the incident that occurred in it had a very important repercussion on the history of this region, especially IslamicJerusalem. The researcher found some hints about the exact place of Ubnā in the narrations of al-Wāqidī (1966: (3) 1117) and Ibn Sa‘d (1997: (2) 145); the Prophet mentioned, when he ordered Usāmah to march towards Ubnā, that it was the place where his father (Zaid Ibn Ḥārithah) was killed in the Battle of Mu’tah.³⁰

The researcher finds here a very important glimpse about the place of Ubnā. The above-mentioned narrations are the only ones that give hints about the site of Ubnā, i.e. Ubnā is the place where the three leaders of the army of Mu’tah were killed and buried. The present place where the three leaders were buried is well-known in the Kingdom of Jordan; it is a town called “al-Mazār”, and it can be seen in the following map:

³⁰ The Arabic text: *سر إلى موضع مقتل أبيك*, and Ibn ‘Asākir (1995: (8) 64) mentioned another supportive narration.

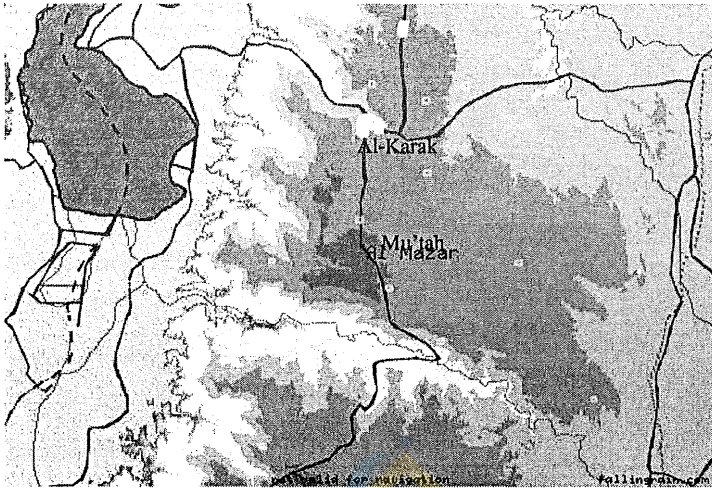


Figure 5: The location of al-Mazār³¹

It is noticed that this town's name is new, since it was not mentioned in the primary sources of the geography of this region. The researcher argues that it seems that the name of this town was Ubnā, and was then changed to “al-Mazār”, referring to the graves of the three leaders of the Muslim army in Mu'tah. Hence, the terminology “al-Mazār” means “the place to be visited”, and this town has no significance or importance today except for the graves of the three leaders.³² Therefore, depending on an examination of the location of this town, and the statement of the Prophet that Ubnā was the place where Zaid

³¹ Global Gazetteer: http://www.fallingrain.com/world/JO/9/A1_Mazar.html, seen on 30th June 2005.

³² The researcher, nevertheless, has visited the town of al-Mazār and Mu'tah as well, and he found that the location and the geography of this town makes it most likely as it fits really closely to the descriptions of Ubnā as understood when studying all related to it in the historical sources.

the father of Usāmah was killed, the researcher concludes that al-Mazār today is most likely Ubnā itself, especially because the location of al-Mazār is to the south of Mu'tah, which means it was where the Muslim army of Mu'tah were situated, since they came from the south.

However, going back to the issue of the main reason for this *Ba'th*; the researcher argues that stating that the Prophet ordered Usāmah to march towards the same place where his father was killed, does not mean that the reason for the *Ba'th* was to revenge the killing of Zaid. Sending Usāmah to the same place where his father was killed does not mean that this was the major aim of the *Ba'th*. It seems most likely that the Prophet said this since Usāmah knew the place where his father was killed as he had participated in the Battle of Mu'tah (See Ibn 'Asākir 1995: (8) 46). Therefore, it was reasonable to mention that the destination of the army was the same place where Zaid had been killed.

The significance of the *Ba'th* of Usāmah

The *Ba'th* of Usāmah did not take place in the lifetime of the Prophet, although the Prophet strictly insisted on sending the army by stating many times, during his last illness: "Send the *Ba'th* of Usāmah" (Ibn Hishām 1987: (4) 299). After the Prophet died and his first successor Abū Bakr was elected, the first thing that Abū Bakr began his rule with was to send the *Ba'th* of Usāmah towards Ubnā as the Prophet had ordered.

Some Muslim sources indicated that many of the companions of the Prophet tried their best to convince Abū Bakr to postpone this mission until he had secured Madīnah and the region around it, especially when the *Riddah* (apostasy) movement started right after the death of the Prophet; however, he strongly rejected this, and insisted on sending the army immediately saying: “Even if I knew that the lions would eat me in this city, I would send the army of Usāmah Ibn Zaid, as the Prophet said: “Send the Army of Usāmah”.”³³

The researcher argues that, on one hand, the insistence of the Prophet to send this army as fast as possible gives a very important glance at his understanding of the importance of this *Ba'th*. On the other hand, the strict insistence of Abū Bakr on sending this army at that critical time shows that Abū Bakr knew something that the other companions did not know.

This was found after the end of *Ḥurūb al-Riddah*, when Abū Bakr delivered a speech to the Muslims: “You should know that the Messenger of Allāh was intending to conquer *al-Shām*, but he died. I intend to send the heroes of the Muslims to *al-Shām* with their families and money, though, the messenger of Allāh told me about this before his death”.³⁴

This statement of Abū Bakr can be considered the clearest evidence that the Prophet had planned to conquer

³³ لو علمت أن السباع تأكلني في هذه المدينة لأنفذت جيش أسامة بن زيد كما قال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: أنفذوا بعث أسامة (al-Wāqidī 1990: 51)

³⁴ واعلموا أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم كان عوّل أن يصرف همهته إلى الشام فقبضه الله إليه، ألا وإنني عازم على أن أوجه أبطال المسلمين إلى الشام بأهلهم ومالهم فإن رسول الله أنبأني بذلك قبل موته (al-Wāqidī (n.d.): 5)

IslamicJerusalem, and he had informed only Abū Bakr about this. This clarifies also the insistence of Abū Bakr to send the *Ba'th* of Usāmah. Also, the statement of Abū Bakr that he would send the Muslims there “with their families and money” is an expression of an intention to conquer that land.

Another important fact is that the *Ba'th* of Usāmah was an essential element in rescuing the reputation of Muslims after the death of the Prophet. This can be seen clearly in the statement of Ibn ‘Asākir about the impact of this *Ba'th*: “The news of the death of the Prophet came to Heraclius together with the news of the attack of Usāmah on a side of his (Heraclius’) land, so the Byzantines said: those (the Muslims) were not affected by their Prophet’s death; on the contrary, they attacked our lands!”³⁵

This statement shows that the news of the Muslims used to be sent to Heraclius, which shows the importance of the Muslims and their movements to and their influence on the Byzantine Empire. It also indicates the importance of sending the *Ba'th* of Usāmah at that time particularly; which explains the insistence of the Prophet and his successor on sending this army. The researcher argues that the Prophet knew that he would die in that illness; this can be proved by looking at the *ḥadīth*, in which the Prophet told his daughter Fāṭimah during his last illness that he would die during that illness (al-‘Asqalānī 1997: (7) 133). Thus, this revealed that the Prophet knew that he would die

³⁵ فقدم بنعي رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم على هرقل وإغارة أسامة في ناحية من أرضه خبراً (Ibn ‘Asākir 1995: واحداً، فقالت الروم: ما بالى هؤلاء بموت صاحبهم أن أغاروا على أرضنا (8) 63)

soon, and he insisted on sending the army, which shows his intention of driving the Muslims' intention towards that region.

However, one might argue that Abū Bakr did not understand that the Prophet intended to conquer Islamicjerusalem but *al-Shām*, since he informed the Muslims that he intended to send armies to *al-Shām*. The researcher argues that Islamicjerusalem as being the purpose of Abū Bakr can be understood by looking at the routes that he ordered the four armies to march through, especially the army of 'Amr Ibn al-'Āṣ.

In addition, the researcher points again to the argument of Athaminah (2000: 96) that the Prophet might have wanted, from this *Ba'th*, to be ascertained about the loyalty of the tribes in that region, before the start of the conquest campaign. The researcher argues that this was one of the most important significances of the *Ba'th* of Usāmah, and it shows that this *Ba'th* was, indeed, a practical start of the campaign to conquer Islamicjerusalem.

Conclusion

Throughout this article, the researcher elaborates the hypothesis of El-Awaisi, and proves that there was a real plan on Prophet Muhammad's part to conquer Islamicjerusalem, though not himself, as was shown when the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet about the conquest of Islamicjerusalem was studied. This gives us a very important glimpse into the discovering that the Prophet had his own vision towards conquering that region, and that his relationship with Islamicjerusalem was not limited to the spiritual aspect.

Generally, it can be concluded, that Mu'tah was the first examination of the enemy and the region of the conflict, Tabūk was the main preparation point and the station in which the most important arrangements took place, and the *Ba'th* of Usāmah was the last testing out of the plan and the preparations before the start of the military campaign to conquer Islamicjerusalem.

The three steps have to be understood together as one context; it is inaccurate to separate them while studying the relationship between the Prophet (as a political leader) and Islamicjerusalem. On the other hand, revenge was not the main and only aspect and basis for deciding the military actions of the Prophet. It could be understood as taking the right opportunity to achieve goals, and this can be seen by connecting all the links and events throughout the three major incidents.

Finally, the researcher would recommend a thorough and comprehensive study of all the incidents that took place in the lifetime of the Prophet, which have a direct or indirect relationship with Islamicjerusalem and can be understood as steps towards the conquest of Islamicjerusalem, due to their significance in the conquest of Islamicjerusalem. This study focused on only three major practical steps of the Prophet. Other practical movements made by the Prophet, as a political leader, towards the conquest of Islamicjerusalem should also be studied. For example, all the military missions that the Prophet sent towards that region in his life. In addition, a full study of the Prophet's treaties with the tribes that were located on the road to Islamicjerusalem should be made.