

Khalifa Ali bin Abu Talib - Banu Quraizah

End of Banu Quraizah

The siege lasted for twenty-five days. On the last day, Ali carried the citadel by assault. All Jews were taken captive, and Ali offered his midnight prayer in the courtyard of the citadel. In spite of their defeat the Holy Prophet was inclined to offer the Jews easy terms, more or less the terms which had been previously offered to Banu Qainuqa and Banu Nadir. The Jews, however, desired that Sa'ad b Muadh the leader of the Banu Aus be appointed as the arbitrator. The Holy Prophet accepted the proposal, and Sa'ad was asked to suggest terms that should be offered to the Jews. Sa'ad asked the Jews whether they would like the terms to be offered to them under the Islamic law or the Jewish law. They said that as they were Jews and not Muslims, they would like the Jewish law to be applied to their case. Sa'ad consulted the Jewish rabbis, and asked of them the question, "If in a battle against the Muslims you would have won, and taken the Muslim men and woman captive, how would you have treated the captives under the Jews law?" They said that in that case they would have killed the men and sold the women and children as slaves.

Thereupon Sa'ad gave his verdict that all male adults of the Banu Quraizah should be killed and their women and children should be sold as slaves. On hearing this verdict, the Jews were stunned and a pall of mourning fell upon them. It was a harsh sentence, but for all that happened the Jews were themselves to blame. They were guilty to high treason, and they had to face the consequences of their misconduct. Even then if they had thrown themselves on the mercy of the Holy Prophet, they would have escaped with a lighter punishment. Instead of asking for terms from the Holy Prophet they sought the verdict of an arbitrator of their own choice. Again they had opted for the Jewish law, and the sentence awarded was in conformity with such laws. The verdict was carried into effect. Over two hundred male Jews were executed. The Holy Prophet commissioned Ali to supervise the process of execution. About six hundred Jews comprising women and children were sold as slaves. The property of the Jews was confiscated and distributed among the Muslims. Details about such property are not available, but as the Jews were a rich people, this property both movable and immovable must have been considerable, and the share of each Muslim would have been sufficient to make him well to do. That would have considerably improved the financial position of Ali, and in this context, the oft-repeated accounts of the poverty of Ali or the Holy Prophet cannot be accepted. As over six hundred Jews were sold as slaves, Fatima would have got a slave girl to work for her. In the Battle of the Ditch or in the military operations against Banu Quraizah, Ali played the most important part. It was Ali who killed the "Hazar Mard" of the Quraish in a duel. It was Ali who carried the citadel of Banu Quraizah by assault. Details about the exploits of Ali are not available in the accounts that have come down to us.

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