



LOYAL
COMPANIONS

2011

EXCERPTS TAKEN FROM "COMPANIONS OF THE PROPHET" BY ABDUL WAHID
HAMID.

Topic V

Table of Contents

MUSAB IBN UMAYR	2
ABU AYYUB AL-ANSARI	6
JAFAR IBN ABI TALIB	9
ABU MUSA AL-ASHARI	13
SAD IBN ABI WAQAS	16
ZAYD AL-KHAYR	20
ABDULLAH IBN ABBAS	24
ABDUR-RAHMAN IBN AWF	26
RABIAH IBN KAB	30
IKRIMAH IBN ABI JAHL	34

Musab Ibn Umayr

Musab ibn Umayr was born and grew up in the lap of affluence and luxury. His rich parents lavished a great deal of care and attention on him. He wore the most expensive clothes and the most stylish shoes of his time.

His elegant bearing and keen mind endeared him to the Makkan nobility among whom he moved with ease. Although still young, he had the privilege of attending Quraysh meetings and gatherings. He was thus in a position to know the issues which concerned the Makkans and what their attitudes and strategies were.

Among Makkans there was a sudden outburst of excitement and concern as Muhammad, known as al-Amin (the Trustworthy), emerged saying that God had sent him as a bearer of good tidings and as a warner. The vulnerable Quraysh leaders thought of ways of silencing Muhammad. When ridicule and persuasion did not work, they embarked on a campaign of harassment and persecution. Musab learnt that Muhammad and those who believed in his message were gathering in a house near the hill of as-Safa to evade Quraysh harassment. This was the house of al-Arqam. To satisfy his curiosity, Musab proceeded to the house undeterred by the knowledge of Quraysh hostility. There he met the Prophet teaching his small band of companions, reciting the verses of the Quran to them and performing Salat with them in submission to God, the Great, the Most High. The Prophet welcomed him, and with his noble hand tenderly touched Musab's heart as it throbbed with excitement. A deep feeling of tranquility came over him. Musab was totally overwhelmed by what he had seen and heard. The words of the Quran had made a deep and immediate impression on him.

In this first meeting with the Prophet, the young and decisive Musab declared his acceptance of Islam. It was a historic moment. The keen mind of Musab, his tenacious will and determination, his eloquence and his beautiful character were now in the service of Islam and would help change the course of men's destinies and of history.

On accepting Islam, Musab had one major concern - his mother. Her name was Khunnas bint Malik. She was a woman of extraordinary power. She had a dominant personality and could easily arouse fear and terror. When Musab became a Muslim, the only power on earth he might have feared was his mother. All the powerful nobles of Makkah and their attachment to pagan customs and traditions were of little consequence to him. Having his mother as an opponent, however, could not be taken lightly. Musab thought quickly. He decided that he should conceal his acceptance of Islam until such time as a solution should come from God.

He continued to frequent the House of al-Arqam and sit in the company of the Prophet. He felt serene in his new faith and by keeping all indications of his acceptance of Islam away from her; he managed to stave off his mother's wrath, but not for long. It was difficult during those days to keep anything secret in Makkah for long. The eyes and ears of the Quraysh were on every road. Behind every footstep imprinted in the soft and burning sand was a Quraysh informer.

Before long, Musab was seen as he quietly entered the House of al-Arqam, by someone called Uthman ibn Talhah. At another time, Uthman saw Musab praying in the same manner as Muhammad prayed. The conclusion was obvious. As winds in a storm, the devastating news of Musab's acceptance of Islam spread among the Quraysh and eventually reached his mother. Musab stood before his mother, his clan and the Quraysh nobility who had all gathered to find out what he had done and what he had to say for himself.

With a certain humility and calm confidence, Musab acknowledged that he had become a Muslim and no doubt he explained his reasons for so doing. He then recited some verses of the Quran - verses which had cleansed the hearts of the believers and brought them back to the natural religion of God. Though only few in number, their hearts were now filled with wisdom, honor, justice and courage.

As Musab's mother listened to her son on whom she had lavished so much care and affection, she became increasingly incensed. She felt like silencing him with one terrible blow. But the hand which shot out like an arrow staggered and faltered before the light which radiated from Musab's serene face. Perhaps, it was her mother's love which restrained her from actually beating him, but still she felt she had to do something to avenge the gods which her son had forsaken. The solution she decided upon was far worse for Musab than a few blows could ever have been. She had Musab taken to a far corner of the house. There he was firmly bound and tethered. He had become a prisoner in his own home.

For a long time, Musab remained tied and confined under the watchful eyes of guards whom his mother had placed over him to prevent him from any further contact with Muhammad and his faith. Despite his ordeal, Musab did not waver. He must have had news of how other Muslims were being harassed and tortured by the idolaters. For him, as for many other Muslims, life in Makkah was becoming more and more intolerable. Eventually he heard that a group of Muslims were preparing secretly to migrate to Abyssinia to seek refuge and relief. His immediate thoughts were how to escape from his prison and join them. At the first opportunity, when his mother and his warders were off-guard, he managed to slip away quietly. Then with utmost haste he joined the other refugees and before long they sailed together across the Red Sea to Africa.

When Musab returned to Makkah again, his mother made a last attempt to gain control of him and threatened to have him tied up again and confined. Musab swore that if she were to do that, he would kill everyone who helped her. She knew very well that he would carry out this threat for she saw the iron determination he now had. Separation was inevitable. When the moment came, it was sad for both mother and son but it revealed a strong Persistence in kufr on the part of the mother and an even greater persistence in Iman on the part of the son. As she threw him out of her house and cut him off from all the material comforts she used to lavish on him, she said: "Go to your own business. I am not prepared to be a mother to you." Musab went up close to her and said: "Mother, I advise you sincerely. I am concerned about you. Do testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His servant and His Messenger." "I swear by the shooting stars, I shall not enter your religion even if my opinion is ridiculed and my mind becomes impotent," she insisted. Musab thus left her home and the luxury and comforts he used to enjoy.

The elegant, well-dressed youth would henceforth be seen only in the coarsest of attire. He now had more important concerns. He was determined to use his talents and energies in acquiring knowledge and in serving God and His Prophet. One day, several years later, Musab came upon a gathering of Muslims sitting around the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace. They bowed their heads and lowered their gaze when they saw Musab, and some were even moved to tears. This was because his jalbab was old and in tatters and they were immediately taken back to the days before his acceptance of Islam when he was a model of sartorial elegance. The Prophet looked at Musab, smiled gracefully and said: "I have seen this Musab with his parents in Makkah.

They lavished care and attention on him and gave him all comforts. There was no Quraysh youth like him. Then he left all that seeking the pleasure of God and devoting himself to the service of His Prophet.

After about ten years of inviting people to Islam, most of Makkah still remained hostile. The noble Prophet then went to Taif seeking new adherents to the faith. He was repulsed and chased out of the city. The future of Islam looked bleak. It was just after this that the Prophet chose Musab to be his "ambassador" to Yathrib to teach a small group of believers who had come to pledge allegiance to Islam and prepare Madinah for the day of the great Hijrah. Musab was chosen above companions who were older than he or were more closely related to the Prophet or who appeared to possess greater prestige. No doubt Musab was chosen for this task because of his noble character, his fine manners and his sharp intellect. His knowledge of the Quran and his ability to recite it beautifully and movingly was also an important consideration. Musab understood his mission well. He knew that he was on a sacred mission; to invite people to God and the straight path of Islam and to prepare what was to be the territorial base for the young and struggling Muslim community. He entered Madinah as a guest of Sad ibn Zurarah of the Khazraj tribe.

The first ambassador of the Prophet, peace be on him, was thus supremely successful. The Prophet had chosen well. Men and women, the young and the old, the powerful and the weak accepted Islam at his hands. The course of Yathribite history had been changed forever. The way was being prepared for the great Hijrah. Yathrib was soon to become the center and the base for the Islamic state. Less than a year after his arrival in Yathrib, Musab returned to Makkah.

At the Battle of Uhud, the Prophet called upon Musab, now well-known as Musab al-Khayr (the Good), to carry the Muslim standard. At the beginning of the battle, the Muslims seemed to be gaining the upper hand. Their main objective, as they cut through the Muslim forces, was to get to the noble Prophet. Musab realized the great danger facing the Prophet. He raised the standard high and shouted the takbir. With the standard in one hand and his sword in the other, he plunged into the Quraysh forces. The odds were against him. A Quraysh horseman moved in close and severed his right hand. His left hand was then severed also and as he held the standard between the stumps of his arms. Musab was then hit by a spear. He fell and the standard fell.

After the battle, the Prophet and his companions went through the battlefield, bidding farewell to the martyrs. When they came to Musab's body, tears flowed. Khabbah related that they could not find any cloth with which to shroud Musab's body, except his own garment. When they covered his head with it, his legs showed and when his legs were covered, his head was exposed and the

Prophet instructed: "Place the garment over his head and cover his feet and legs with the leaves of the idhkhir (rue) plant."

The Prophet felt deep pain and sorrow at the number of his companions who were killed at the Battle of Uhud. These included his uncle Hamzah whose body was horribly mutilated. But it was over the body of Musab that the Prophet stood, with great emotion. He remembered Musab as he first saw him in Makkah, stylish and elegant, and then looked at the short burdah which was now the only garment he possessed and he recited the verse of the Quran:

"Among the believers are men who have been true to what they have pledged to God. "The

Prophet then cast his tender eyes over the battle field on which lay the dead companions of Musab and said: "The Messenger of God testifies that you are martyrs in the sight of God on the day of Qiyamah."

Abu Ayyub Al-Ansari

Khalid ibn Zayd ibn Kulayb from the Banu Najjar was a great and close companion of the Prophet. He was known as Abu Ayyub (the father of Ayyub) and enjoyed a privilege which many of the Ansar in Madinah hoped they would have. When the Prophet, peace and blessings of God be on him, reached Madinah after his hijrah from Makkah, he was greeted with great enthusiasm by the Ansar of Madinah. Their hearts went out to him and their eyes followed him with devotion and love. They wanted to give him the most generous reception anyone could be given. The Prophet first stopped at Quba on the outskirts of Madinah and stayed there for some days. The first thing he did was to build a mosque which is described in the Qur'an as the "mosque built on the foundation of piety (taqwa)". (Surah At-Tawbah 9: 108).

The Prophet entered Madinah on his camel. The chieftains of the city stood along his path, each one wishing to have the honor of the Prophet alighting and staying at his house. One after the other stood in the camel's way entreating, "Stay with us, O Rasulullah." "Leave the camel," the Prophet would say. "It is under command." The camel continued walking, closely followed by the eyes and hearts of the people of Yathrib. When it went past a house, its owner would feel sad and dejected and hope would rise in the hearts of others still on the route. The camel continued in this fashion with the people following it until it hesitated at an open space in front of the house of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari. But the Prophet, upon whom be peace, did not get down. After only a short while, the camel set off again, the Prophet leaving its reins loose. Before long, however, it turned round, retraced its steps and stopped on the same spot as before.

Abu Ayyub's heart was filled with happiness. He went out to the Prophet and greeted him with great enthusiasm. He took the Prophet's baggage in his arms and felt as if he was carrying the most precious treasure in the world.

Abu Ayyub's house had two stories. He emptied the upper floor of his and his family's possessions so that the Prophet could stay there. But the Prophet, peace be on him, preferred to stay on the lower floor. Night came and the Prophet retired. Abu Ayyub went up to the upper floor. But when they had closed the door, Abu Ayyub turned to his wife and said: "Woe to us! What have we done? The messenger of God is below and we are higher than he! Can we walk on top of the messenger of God? Do we come between him and the Revelation? If so, we are doomed." The couple became very

worried not knowing what to do. They only got some peace of mind when they moved to the side of the building which did not fall directly above the Prophet. They were careful also only to walk on the outer parts of the floor and avoid the middle. In the morning, Abu Ayyub said to the Prophet: "By God, we did not sleep a wink last night, neither myself nor Umm Ayyub." "Why not, Abu Ayyub?" asked the Prophet. Abu Ayyub explained how terrible they felt being above while the Prophet was below them and how they might have interrupted the Revelation. "Don't worry, Abu Ayyub," said the Prophet. "We prefer the lower floor because of the many people coming to visit us."

"We submitted to the Prophet's wishes," Abu Ayyub related, "Until one cold night a jar of ours broke and the water spilled on the upper floor. Umm Ayyub and I stared at the water. We only had one piece of velvet which we used as a blanket. We used it to mop up the water out of fear that it would seep through to the Prophet. In the morning I went to him and said, 'I do not like to be above you,' and told him what had happened. He accepted my wish and we changed floors."

The Prophet stayed in Abu Ayyub's house for almost seven months until his mosque was completed on the open space where his camel had stopped. He moved to the rooms which were built around the mosque for himself and his family. He thus became a neighbor of Abu Ayyub. What a noble neighbor to have had! Abu Ayyub continued to love the Prophet with all his heart and the Prophet also loved him dearly. There was no formality between them. The Prophet continued to regard Abu Ayyub's house as his own.

The following anecdote tells a great deal about the relationship between them. Abu Bakr, may God be pleased with him, once left his house in the burning heat of the midday sun and went to the mosque. Umar saw him and asked, "Abu Bakr, what has brought you out at this hour? Abu Bakr said he had left his house because he was terribly hungry and Umar said that he had left his house for the same reason. The Prophet came up to them and asked, "What has brought the two of you out at this hour?" They told him and he said, "By Him in Whose hands is my soul, only hunger has caused me to come out also. But come with me." They went to the house of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari.

His wife opened the door and said, "Welcome to the Prophet and whoever is with him." "Where is Abu Ayyub?" asked the Prophet. Abu Ayyub, who was working in a nearby palm grove, heard the Prophet's voice and came hurriedly. "Welcome to the Prophet and whoever is with him," he said and went on, "O Prophet of God, this is not the time that you usually come." (Abu Ayyub used to keep some food for the Prophet every day. When the Prophet did not come for it by a certain time, Abu Ayyub

would give it to his family.) "You are right," the Prophet agreed. Abu Ayyub went out and cut a cluster of dates in which there were ripe and half-ripe dates. "I did not want you to cut this," said the Prophet. "Could you not have brought only the ripe dates?" "O Rasulallah, please eat from both the ripe dates (rutb) and the half ripe (busr). I shall slaughter an animal for you also." "If you are going to, then do not kill one that gives milk," cautioned the Prophet. Abu Ayyub killed a young goat, cooked half and grilled the other half. He also asked his wife to bake, because she baked better, he said. When the food was ready, it was placed before the Prophet and his two companions. The Prophet took a piece of meat and placed it in a loaf and said, "Abu Ayyub, take this to Fatimah. She has not tasted the like of this for days." When they had eaten and were satisfied, the Prophet said reflectively: "Bread and meat and busr and rutb!" Tears began to flow from his eyes as he continued: "This is a bountiful blessing about which you will be asked on the Day of Judgment. If such comes your way, put your hands to it and say, 'Bismillah' (In the name of God) and when you have finished say, 'Al hamdu lillah alladhee huwa ashba'na wa an'ama a layna (Praise be to God Who has given us enough and Who has bestowed his bounty on us). This is best."

These are glimpses of Abu Ayyub's life during peace time. He also had a distinguished military career. Much of his time was spent as a warrior until it was said of him, "He did not stay away from any battle the Muslims fought from the time of the Prophet to the time of Mu'awiyah unless he was engaged at the same time in another." The last campaign he took part in was the one prepared by Mu'awiyah and led by his son Yazid against Constantinople. Abu Ayyub at that time was a very old man, almost eighty years old. But that did not prevent him from joining the army and crossing the seas as a graze in the path of God. After only a short time engaged in the battle, Abu Ayyub fell ill and had to withdraw from fighting. Yazid came to him and asked: "Do you need anything, Abu Ayyub?" "Convey my salaams to the Muslim armies and say to them: 'Abu Ayyub urges you to penetrate deeply into the territory of the enemy as far as you can go, that you should carry him with you and that you should bury him under your feet at the walls of Constantinople.'" Then he breathed his last. The Muslim army fulfilled the desire of the companion of the Messenger of God. They pushed back the enemy's forces in attack after attack until they reached the walls of Constantinople. There they buried him. (The Muslims besieged the city for four years but eventually had to withdraw after suffering heavy losses.)

Jafar Ibn Abi Talib

In spite of his noble standing among the Quraysh, Abu Talib, an uncle of the Prophet, was quite poor. He had a large family and did not have enough means to support them adequately. His poverty-stricken situation became much worse when a severe drought hit the Arabian Peninsula. It was during this time of drought, before his call to prophet hood that Muhammad said to his uncle Abbas: "Your brother, Abu Talib, has a large family. People as you see have been afflicted by this severe drought and are facing starvation. Let us go to Abu Talib and take over responsibility for some of his family. I will take one of his sons and you can take another and we will look after them." "What you suggest is certainly righteous and commendable," replied al-Abbas, and together they went to Abu Talib and said to him: "We want to ease some of the burden of your family until such time as this distressing period has gone." Abu Talib agreed. "If you allow me to keep Aqeel (one of his sons older than Ali), then you may do whatever you like," he said. It was in this way that Muhammad took Ali into his household and al-Abbas took Jafar into his.

Jafar stayed with his uncle, al-Abbas, until he was a young man. Then he married Asma bint Umayy, a sister of Maymunah who was later to become a wife of the Prophet. After his marriage, Jafar went to live on his own. He and his wife were among the first persons to accept Islam. He became a Muslim at the hands of Abu Bakr as-Siddiq, may God be pleased with him.

The young Jafar and his wife were devoted followers of Islam. They bore the harsh treatment and the persecution of the Quraysh with patience and steadfastness because they both realized that the road to Paradise was strewn with thorns and paved with pain and hardship. The Quraysh waylaid them at every turn and severely restricted their freedom of movement. Jafar eventually went to the Prophet, peace be upon him, and sought permission for himself and a small group of the Sahabah, including his wife, to make hijrah to the land of Abyssinia. With great sadness, the Prophet gave his permission.

The group of Muhajirin left Makkah bound for the land of Abyssinia. Leading them was Jafar ibn Abi Talib. Soon they settled down in this new land under the care and protection of the Negus, the just and righteous ruler of Abyssinia. When the Quraysh learnt of the departure of the small group of Muslims and the peaceful life they enjoyed under the protection of the Negus, they made plans to secure their extradition and their return to the great prison that was Makkah. They sent two of their

most formidable men, Amr ibn al-Aas and Abdullah ibn Abi Rabiah, to accomplish this task and loaded them with valuable and much sought after presents for the Negus and his bishops.

Amr and Abdullah went to the Negus himself and presented him with gifts which he greatly admired. They said to him: "O King, there is a group of evil persons from among our youth who have escaped to your kingdom. They practice a religion which neither we nor you know. They have forsaken our religion and have not entered into your religion. The respected leaders of their people - from among their own parents and uncles and from their own clans - have sent us to you to request you to return them. They know best what trouble they have caused." The Negus looked towards his bishops who said: "They speak the truth, O King. Their own people know them better and are better acquainted with what they have done. Send them back so that they themselves might judge them." The Negus was quite angry with this suggestion and said: "No. By God, I won't surrender them to anyone until I myself call them and question them about what they have been accused. If what these two men have said is true, then I will hand them over to you. If however it is not so, then I shall protect them so long as they desire to remain under my protection."

The Negus then summoned the Muslims to meet him. Before going, they consulted with one another as a group and agreed that Jafar ibn Abi Talib and no one else should speak on their behalf. The Negus asked: "What is this religion which you have introduced for yourself and which has served to cut you off from the religion of your people? You also did not enter my religion nor the religion of any other community."

Jafar ibn Abi Talib then advanced and made a speech that was moving and eloquent and which is still one of the most compelling descriptions of Islam. He said: "O King, we were a people in a state of ignorance and immorality, worshipping idols and eating the flesh of dead animals, committing all sorts of abomination and shameful deeds, breaking the ties of kinship, treating guests badly and the strong among us exploited the weak. "We remained in this state until Allah sent us a Prophet, one of our own people whose lineage, truthfulness, trustworthiness and integrity were well-known to us. "He called us to worship Allah alone and to renounce the stones and the idols which we and our ancestors used to worship besides Allah. "He commanded us to speak the truth, to honor our promises, to be kind to our relations, to be helpful to our neighbors, to cease all forbidden acts, to abstain from bloodshed, to avoid obscenities and false witness, not to appropriate an orphan's property nor slander chaste women. " He ordered us to worship Allah alone and not to associate anything with him, to uphold Salat, to give Zakat and fast in the month of Ramadan. "We believed in

him and what he brought to us from Allah and we follow him in what he has asked us to do and we keep away from what he forbade us from doing." Thereupon, O King, our people attacked us, visited the severest punishment on us to make us renounce our religion and take us back to the old immorality and the worship of idols. "They oppressed us, made life intolerable for us and obstructed us from observing our religion. So we left for your country, choosing you before anyone else, desiring your protection and hoping to live in Justice and in peace in your midst."

The Negus was impressed and was eager to hear more. He asked Jafar: "Do you have with you something of what your Prophet brought concerning God?" "Yes," replied Jafar. "Then read it to me," requested the Negus. Jafar, in his rich, melodious voice recited for him the first portion of Surah Maryam which deals with the story of Jesus and his mother Mary. On hearing the words of the Quran, the Negus was moved to tears. To the Muslims, he said: "The message of your Prophet and that of Jesus came from the same source..." To Amr and his companion, he said: "Go. For, by God, I will never surrender them to you."

Turning to Amr and his companion, he instructed his attendants: "Return their gifts to these two men. I have no need of them." Amr and his companion left broken and frustrated. The Muslims stayed on in the land of the Negus who proved to be most generous and kind to his guests.

Jafar and his wife Asma spent about ten years in Abyssinia which became a second home for them. There, Asma gave birth to three children whom they named Abdullah, Muhammad and Awn. In the seventh year of the hijrah, Jafar and his family left Abyssinia with a group of Muslims and headed for Madinah. When they arrived the Prophet was just returning from the successful conquest of Khaybar. He was so overjoyed at meeting Jafar that he said: "I do not know what fills me with more happiness, the Conquest of Khaybar or the coming of Jafar."

Muslims in general and the poor among them especially were just as happy with the return of Jafar as the Prophet was. Jafar quickly became known as a person who was much concerned for the welfare of the poor and indigent. For this he was nicknamed, the "Father of the Poor."

Jafar's stay in Madinah was not long. At the beginning of the eighth year of the hijrah, the Prophet mobilized an army to confront Byzantine force. He appointed Zayd ibn Harithah as commander of the army and gave the following instructions: "If Zayd is wounded or killed, Jafar ibn Abi Talib would take over the command. If Jafar is killed or wounded, then your commander would be Abdullah ibn Rawahah. If Abdullah ibn Rawahah is killed, then let the Muslims choose for themselves a commander." The Prophet had never given such instructions to an army before and the Muslims

took this as an indication that he expected the battle to be tough and that they would even suffer major losses.

When the Muslim army reached Muthah, a small village situated among hills in Jordan, they discovered that the Byzantines had amassed a hundred thousand men backed up by a massive number of Christian Arabs. The Muslim army only numbered three thousand. Despite the great odds against them, the Muslim forces engaged the Byzantines in battle. Zayd ibn al-Harithah, the beloved companion of the Prophet, was among the first to fall. Jafar ibn Abi Talib then assumed command. Mounted on his ruddy-complexioned horse, he penetrated deep into the Byzantine ranks. As he spurred his horse on, he called out: "How wonderful is Paradise as it draws near! How pleasant and cool is its drink! Punishment for the Byzantines is not far away!" Jafar continued to fight vigorously but was eventually slain.

The news of the death of his three commanders reached the Prophet in Madinah. The pain and grief he felt was intense. He went to Jafar's house and met his wife Asma. Asma said: "When the Messenger of God approached us, I saw a veil of sadness shrouding his noble face and I became very apprehensive. But I did not dare ask him about Jafar for fear that I would hear some unpleasant news. He greeted and asked, 'Where are Jafar's children?' I called them for him and they came and crowded around him happily, each one wanting to claim him for himself. He leaned over and hugged them while tears flowed from his eyes. 'O Messenger of God,' I asked, 'why do you cry? Have you heard anything about Jafar and his two companions?' 'Yes,' he replied. 'They have attained martyrdom.' The smiles and the laughter vanished from the faces of the little children when they heard their mother crying and wailing.

The Prophet left Asma's house and went to his daughter Fatimah who was also weeping. To her, he said: "For such as Jafar, you can (easily) cry yourself to death. Prepare food for Jafar's family for today they are beside themselves with grief."

Abu Musa Al-Ashari

When he went to Basra as governor of the city, he called the inhabitants to a meeting and addressed them: "The Amir al-Muminin, Umar, has sent me to you to teach you the Book of your Lord and the Sunnah of His Prophet and to clean your streets for you." People were taken aback when they heard these words. They could easily understand that one of the responsibilities of a Muslim ruler was to instruct people in their religion. However, that one of his duties should be to clean streets was something new and surprising to them. Who was this governor of whom the Prophet's grandson, al-Hassan, may God be pleased with him said: "There was no rider who came to Basra who was better for its people than he." His real name was Abdullah ibn Qays but he was and continues to be known as Abu Musa al-Ashari.

He left his native land, Yemen, for Makkah immediately after hearing that a Prophet had appeared. He heard that there was a man of rare insight, who called people to the worship of One God and who insisted on the highest standards of morality. At Makkah, he stayed in the company of the Prophet and gained knowledge and guidance. He returned to his country to propagate the word of God and spread the mission of the noble Prophet, peace be on him.

Then just after the end of the Khyber expedition he came to the Prophet in Madinah. His arrival there coincided with that of Jafar ibn Abi Talib and other Muslims from Abyssinia and the Prophet welcomed them all with joy and happiness. This time Abu Musa did not come alone. He came with more than fifty persons from the Yemen all of whom had accepted Islam. Among them were his two brothers, Abu Ruhm and Abu Burdah. The Prophet referred to the whole group as the "Asharis". In fact he sometimes referred to all Yemenis as Asharis after Abu Musa al-Ashari. He often praised the group for their soft and tender-hearted nature and held them up to the rest of his companions as a high example of good behavior. He once said of them: "If the Asharis go on an expedition or if they only have a little food among them, they would gather all they have on one cloth and divide it equally among themselves. They are thus from me and I am from them."

Abu Musa soon became highly esteemed in the Muslim community. He had many great qualities. He was a faqih endowed with intelligence and sound judgment and was ranked as one of the leading judges in the early Muslim community. People used to say: "The judges in this Ummah are four: Umar, Ali, Abu Musa and Zayd ibn Thabit." Abu Musa had a natural, uncomplicated disposition. He was by

nature a trusting person and expected people to deal with him on the basis of trust and sincerity. In the field of jihad, he was a warrior of great courage and endurance and skill. The Prophet said of him: "The master of horsemen is Abu Musa."

Abu Musa's insight and the soundness of his judgment did not allow him to be deceived by an enemy in battle. In battle conditions he saw situations with complete clarity and executed his actions with a firm resolve. Abu Musa was in command of the Muslim army traversing the lands of the Sasanian Empire. At Isfahan, the people came to him and offered to pay the jizyah (in return for military protection) to make peace and avoid fighting. However, they were not sincere in their offer and merely wanted an opportunity to mount a treacherous attack on the Muslims. Abu Musa however saw through their real intentions and he remained on the alert. Thus when the Isfahanis launched their attack, the Muslim leader was not caught off-guard, He engaged them in battle and before midday of the following day; he had won a decisive victory.

In the major campaigns against the powerful Sasanian Empire Abu Musa's role was outstanding. In the great Battle of Tustar itself, he distinguished himself as a military commander. The Persian commander, Hormuzan, had withdrawn his numerous forces to the strongly fortified city of Tustar. The Caliph Umar did not underestimate the strength of the enemy and he mobilized powerful and numerous force to confront Hormuzan. Among the Muslim forces were dedicated veterans like Ammar ibn Yasser, al-Baraa ibn Malik and his brother Anas, Majra'a al-Bakri and Salamah ibn Rajaa. Umar appointed Abu Musa as commander of the army.

In spite of the fact that Abu Musa was a strong and powerful warrior, he often left the battlefield transformed into a penitent, weeping person. At such times, he would read the Quran in a voice that profoundly stirred the souls of all who listened to him. Concerning his moving and melodious recitation of the Quran the Prophet, peace be on him, had said: "Abu Musa has indeed been given one of the flutes of the people of David." Also, Umar, May god be pleased with him, often summoned Abu Musa and asked him to recite from the Book of God, saying: "Create in us a yearning for our Lord, O Abu Musa." As a mark of his dedication to the Quran, Abu Musa was one of the few companions who had prepared a mushaf; a written collection of the revelations.

Abu Musa only participated in fighting against the armies of Mushrikin, armies which tried to oppose the religion of God and extinguish the light of faith. When fighting broke out among Muslims, he fled from such conflict and never look any part in it. Such was his stand in the conflict that arose between

Ali and Mu'awiyah. It is in relation to this conflict and in particular his role as an adjudicator that the name of Abu Musa al-Ashari is most widely known. Briefly, Abu Musa's position appeared to be that of a 'neutral.' He saw Muslims killing each other and felt that if the situation were to continue the very future of the Muslim Ummah would be threatened.

When Imam Ali accepted the principle of arbitration, he wanted Abdullah ibn Abbas to represent him. But an influential section of his followers insisted on Abu Musa. Their reason for so doing was that Abu Musa had not taken part in the dispute from its beginning. Instead he had kept aloof from both parties when he despaired of bringing about an understanding and reconciliation and putting an end to the fighting. Therefore, they felt, he was the most suitable person to be the arbitrator.

Sad Ibn Abi Waqas

In this town (Makkah) lies a young man who has not yet seen twenty summers. He is short and well-built and has a very heavy crop of hair. People compare him to a young lion. He comes from a rich and noble family. He is very attached to his parents and is particularly fond of his mother. He spends much of his time making and repairing bows and arrows and practicing archery as if preparing himself for some great encounter. People recognize him as a serious and intelligent young man. He finds no satisfaction in the religion and way of life of his people, their corrupt beliefs and disagreeable practices. His name is Sad ibn Abi Waqqas.

One morning at about this time in his life the genial Abu Bakr came up and spoke softly to him. He explained that Muhammad ibn Abdullah the son of his late cousin, Aminah bint Wahb had been given Revelations and sent with the religion of guidance and truth. Abu Bakr then took him to Muhammad in one of the valleys of Makkah. It was late afternoon by this time and the Prophet had just prayed Salat al-Asr. Sad was excited and overwhelmed and responded readily to the invitation to truth and the religion of One God. The fact that he was one of the first persons to accept Islam was something that pleased him greatly. The Prophet, peace be on him, was also greatly pleased when Sad became a Muslim. He saw in him signs of excellence. The fact that he was still in his youth promised great things to come. It was as if this glowing crescent would become a shining full moon before long. Perhaps other young people of Makkah would follow his example, including some of his relations. For Sad ibn Abi Waqqas was in fact a maternal uncle of the Prophet since he belonged to the Bani Zuhrah, the clan of Aminah bint Wahb, the mother of the Prophet, peace be upon him. For this reason he is sometimes referred to as Sad of Zuhrah, to distinguish him from several others whose first name was Sad.

While the Prophet was delighted with Sad's acceptance of Islam, others including and especially his mother were not. Sad relates: "When my mother heard the news of my Islam, she flew into a rage. She came up to me and said: "O Sad! What is this religion that you have embraced which has taken you away from the religion of your mother and father? By God, either you forsake your new religion or I would not eat or drink until I die. Your heart would be broken with grief for me and remorse would consume you on account of the deed which you have done and people would censure you forever more.' 'Don't do (such a thing), my mother,' he said, 'for I would not give up my religion for anything.' However, she went on with her threat. For days she neither ate nor drank. She became emaciated and

weak. He said to her: 'Yaa Ummaah! In spite of my strong love for you, my love for God and His Messenger is indeed stronger. By God, if you had a thousand souls and one soul after another was to depart, I would not abandon my religion for anything.' When she saw that I was determined she relented unwillingly and ate and drank. It was concerning Sad's relationship with his mother and her attempt to force him to recant his faith that the words of the Quran were revealed: "And we enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents. In pain upon pain did his mother bear him and his weaning took two years. So show gratitude to Me and to your parents. To Me is the final destiny. But if they strive to make you join in worship with Me things of which you have no knowledge, obey them not. Yet bear them company in this life with justice and consideration and follow the way of those who turn to Me. In the end, the return of you all is to Me and I shall tell you (the truth and meaning of) all that you used to do." (Surah Luqman, 31: 14-15).

One day, a number of idolaters came upon them (the Muslims) while they were praying and rudely interrupted them with ridicule. The Muslims felt they could not suffer these indignities passively and they came to blows with the idolaters. Sad ibn Abi Waqqas struck one of the disbelievers with the jawbone of a camel and wounded him. This was the first bloodshed in the conflict between Islam and kufr - a conflict that was later to escalate and test the patience and courage of the Muslims. After the incident, however, the Prophet enjoined his companions to be patient and forbearing for this was the command of God.

More than a decade later when permission was given for the Muslims to fight, Sad ibn Abi Waqqas was to play a distinguished role in many of the engagements that took place both during the time of the Prophet and after. He fought at Badr together with his young brother Umayr who had cried to be allowed to accompany the Muslim army for he was only in his early teens. At the Battle of Uhud, Sad was specially chosen as one of the best archers together with Zayd, Saib the son of Uthman ibn Mazun and others. Sad was one of those who fought vigorously in defense of the Prophet after some Muslims had deserted their positions. Sad is also known as the first companion to have shot an arrow in defense of Islam. And the Prophet once prayed for him: "O Lord, direct his shooting and respond to his prayer."

Sad is mainly renowned as the commander-in-chief of the strong Muslim army which Umar dispatched to confront the Persians at Qadisiyyah. Umar wanted nothing less than an end to Sasanian

power which for centuries had dominated the region. To confront the numerous and well-equipped Persians was a most daunting task. The most powerful force had to be mustered.

When they were all gathered, Umar consulted the leading Muslims about the appointment of a commander-in-chief over the mighty army. Umar himself thought of leading the army but Ali suggested that the Muslims were in great need of him and he should not endanger his life. Sad was then chosen as commander and Abdurrahman ibn Awf, one of the veterans among the Sahabah said: "You have chosen well! Who is there like Sad?" Umar stood before the great army and bade farewell to them.

The army camped at Qadisiyyah near Hira. Against them the Persians had mobilized a force of 120,000 men under the leadership of their most brilliant commander, Rustum. Sad wrote to Umar about the unprecedented force that the Persians were mobilizing and Umar wrote to him: "Do not be troubled neither by what you hear about them nor about the (forces, equipment and methods) they would deploy against you. Seek help with God and put your trust in Him and send men of insight, knowledge and toughness to him (the Chosroes) to invite him to God... And write to me daily."

Sad understood well the gravity of the impending battle and kept in close contact with the military high command in Madinah. Sad did as Umar instructed and sent delegations of Muslims first to Yazdagird and then to Rustum, inviting them to accept Islam or to pay the jizyah to guarantee their protection and peaceful existence or to choose war if they so desired.

When the Muslim delegation returned to their commander in-chief, it was clear that war was inevitable. Sad's eyes filled with tears. He wished that the battle could be delayed a little or indeed that it might have been somewhat earlier. For on this particular day he was seriously ill and could hardly move. He was suffering from sciatica and he could not even sit upright for the pain. Sad knew that this was going to be a bitter, harsh and bloody battle. And for a brief moment he thought, if only... but no! The Messenger of God had taught the Muslims that none of them should say, "If...." To say "If...." implied a lack of will and determination and wishing that a situation might have been different was not the characteristic of a firm believer. So, despite his illness, Sad got up and stood before his army and addressed them.

For four days the battle raged. The Muslims displayed valor and skill. But a Persian elephant corps wrought havoc in the ranks of the Muslims. The ferocious battle was only resolved when several

renowned Muslim warriors made a rush in the direction of the Persian commander. A storm arose and the canopy of Rustum was blown into the river. As he tried to flee he was detected and slain. Complete confusion reigned among the Persians and they fled in disarray. Just how ferocious the battle was can be imagined when it is known that some thirty thousand persons on both sides fell in the course of four days' fighting. In one day alone, some two thousand Muslims and about ten thousand Persians lost their lives. The Battle of Qadisiyyah is one of the major decisive battles of world history. It sealed the fate of the Sasanian Empire just as the Battle of Yarmuk had sealed the fate of the Byzantine Empire in the east. Two years after Qadisiyyah, Sad went on to take the Sasanian capital. By then he had recovered his health. The taking of Ctesiphon was accomplished after a brilliant crossing of the Tigris River while it was in flood. Sad has thus gone down in the annals of history as the Hero of Qadisiyyah and the Conqueror of Ctesiphon. He lived until he was almost eighty years old. He was blessed with much influence and wealth but as the time of death approached in the year 54 AH, he asked his son to open a box in which he had kept a coarse woolen jubbah and said: "Shroud me in this, for in this (jubbah) I met the Mushrikin on the day of Badr and in it I desire to meet God Almighty."

Zayd Al-Khayr

People are made up of basic "metals" or qualities. The best of them in Jahiliyyah are the best of them in Islam, according to a hadith of the Prophet. Here are two pictures of a noble companion; one during his life in Jahiliyyah and the other after he became a Muslim. In Jahiliyyah, this Sahabi was known as Zayd al-Khayl. When he became a Muslim, the Prophet renamed him Zayd al-Khayr.

The tribe of Aamir was afflicted one year by a severe drought which destroyed crops and vegetation and caused livestock to perish. So bad was it that one man left the tribe with his family and went to Hira. There he left his family with the words, "Wait for me here till I return to you." He swore to himself not to return to them until he earned some money for them or died in the process. The man took some provisions with him and walked all day in search of something for his family. At nightfall, he found himself in front of a tent. Nearby a horse was tethered and he said to himself: "This is the first booty." He went to the horse, untied it and was about to mount it when a voice called out to him: "Leave it and take your life as booty." He hastily abandoned the horse.

For seven days he walked until he reached a place where there was a pasture for camels. Nearby was an enormous tent with a leather dome, signs of great riches and wealth. The man said to himself: "Doubtless this pasture has camels and doubtless this tent has occupants." The sun was about to set. The man looked inside the tent and saw a very old man in the center. He sat down behind the old man without the latter realizing his presence.

The sun soon set. A horseman, imposing and well built, approached. He rode his mount erect and tall. Two male servants accompanied him, one on his right and the other on his left. With him were almost a hundred she-camels and in front of them a huge male camel. Clearly he was a well-endowed man. To one of the servants he said, pointing to a fat camel: "Milk this and give the old man a drink." The sheikh drank one or two mouthfuls from the full vessel which was brought to him and left it. The wanderer went up to it stealthily and drank all the milk in it. The servant returned, took the vessel and said: "Master, he has drunk it all." The horseman was happy and ordered another camel to be milked. The old man drank only one mouthful and the wanderer drank half of what was left so as not to arouse the suspicion of the horseman. The horseman then ordered his second servant to kill a sheep. Some of it was grilled and the horseman fed the shaykh until he was

satisfied. He and the two servants then ate. After this, they all slept soundly; their snoring filled the tent.

The wanderer then went to the he-camel, untied and mounted it. He rode off and the she camels followed. He rode throughout the night. At daybreak he looked around in every direction but did not see anyone following him. He pushed on until the sun was high in the sky. He looked around and suddenly saw something like an eagle or a big bird in the distance coming towards him. It quickly gained on him and soon he saw that it was the horseman on his horse.

The wanderer dismounted and tied the he-camel. He took out an arrow and placed it in his bow and stood in front of the other camels. The horseman stopped at a distance and shouted: "Untie the camel." The man refused saying how he had left behind him a hungry family in Hira and how he had sworn not to return unless he had money or died in the process. "You are dead if you do not untie the camel," said the horseman. The wanderer again refused to do so. The horseman threatened him once more and said: "Hold out the reins of the camel. There are three knots in it. Tell me in which of them you want me to place my arrow." The man pointed to the middle knot and the horseman lodged an arrow right in the centre as if he had neatly placed it there with his hand. He did the same with the second and third knots. At that, the man quietly returned his own arrow to his quiver and gave himself up. The horseman took away his sword and his bow and said to him: "Ride behind me." The man expected the worst fate to befall him now. He was at the complete mercy of the horseman who said: "Do you think I will cause you harm when you have shared with Muhalhil (the old man, his father) his drink and his food last night?" When the man heard the name Muhalhil, he was astonished and asked: "Are you Zayd al-Khayl?" "Yes," said the horseman. "Be the best captor," pleaded the man. "Don't worry," replied Zayd al-Khayl calmly. "If these camels were mine, I would give them to you. But they belong to one of my sisters. But stay some days with me. I am about to make a raid." Three days later he raided the Banu Numayr and captured about a hundred camels, as booty. He gave them all to the man and sent some men with him as guards until he reached his family in Hira.

When Zayd al-Khayl heard the news of the Prophet, peace be upon him, he made some of his own enquiries and then decided to go to Madinah to meet the Prophet. With him was a big delegation of his people. When they reached Madinah, they went straight to the Prophet's Mosque and tethered their mounts at its door. It happened that as they entered, the Prophet was on the mimbar addressing the Muslims. His speech aroused Zayd and his delegation and they were also astonished

by the rapt attention of the Muslims and the effect of the Prophet's words on them. The Prophet was saying: "I am better for you than al-Uzza (one of the main idols of the Arabs in Jahiliyyah) and everything else that you worship. I am better for you than the black camel which you worship besides God."

The Prophet's words had two different effects on Zayd al-Khayl and those with him. Some of them responded positively to the Truth and accepted it. Some turned away and rejected it. One of the latter was Zurr ibn Sudoos. When he saw the devotion of the believers to Muhammad, both envy and fear filled his heart and he said to those with him: "I see a man who shall certainly captivate all Arabs and bring them under his sway. I shall not let him control me ever." He then headed towards Syria where it is said he shaved his head (as was the practice of some monks) and became a Christian.

The reaction of Zayd and others was different. When the Prophet had finished speaking, Zayd stood up, tall and impressive-looking in the midst of the Muslims and said in a loud and clear voice: "O Muhammad, I testify that there is no god but Allah and that you are the messenger of Allah." The Prophet came up to him and asked, "Who are you?" "I am Zayd al-Khayl the son of Muhahlil." "From now on you are Zayd al-Khayr instead, not Zayd al-Khayl," said the Prophet. "Praise be to God Who has brought you from the hills and dales of your native land and softened your heart towards Islam."

Thereafter he was known as Zayd al-Khayr (Zayd the Good). The Prophet then took him to his house. With them were Umar ibn al-Khattab and some other Companions. The Prophet gave him a cushion to sit on but he felt very uncomfortable to recline thus in the presence of the Prophet and he returned the cushion. The Prophet handed it back to him and he returned it to him. This happened three times. Eventually, when they were all seated, the Prophet said to Zayd al-Khayr: "O Zayd, no man has ever been described to me and when I see him he does not fit the description at all except you. You have two characteristics which are pleasing to God and His Prophet." "What are they?" asked Zayd. "Perseverance and sagacity," replied the Prophet.

"Praise be to God," said Zayd, "Who has given me what He and His Prophet like." He then turned directly to the Prophet and said: "Give me, O messenger of God, three hundred horsemen and I promise you that I will secure Byzantine territory with them." The Prophet praised his fervor and

said, "What manner of man are you!" During this visit, all those who stayed with Zayd became Muslims. They then desired to return to their homes in Najd and the Prophet bade them farewell.

The great desire of Zayd al-Khayr to work and fight for the cause of Islam, however, was not to be realized. In Madinah al-Munawwarah at that time there was an epidemic of fever and Zayd al-Khayr succumbed to it and said to those with him: "Take me away from the land of Qays. I have the fever of small pox, By God, I shall not fight as a Muslim before I meet Allah, the Mighty, the Great." Zayd took the road to his people in Najd in spite of the fact that the fever became more and more intense and slowed him down. He hoped at least to get back to his people and that they would become Muslims, through God's grace, at his hands. He struggled to overcome the fever but it got the better of him and he breathed his last on the way before reaching Najd. Between his acceptance of Islam and his death, however, there was no time for him to have fallen into sin.

Abdullah ibn Abbas

Abdullah was the son of Abbas, the uncle of the Prophet (S). He was born just three years before Hijrah. When the Prophet (S) died, he was just thirteen years old.

When he was born, his mother sent him to the Prophet (S), who put his saliva on the baby's tongue. This was the beginning of the close and intimate relationship between Abbas and the Prophet (S). When Abdullah reached the age of discretion, he attached himself to the service of the Prophet. Abdullah became a shadow of the Prophet, fetching water for his wudu, following him in expeditions, and praying behind him consistently.

Abdullah was very alert and attentive to what the prophet (S) did or said. His heart and mind were young and eager for knowledge. Because of this, he was able to commit the Prophet's words to memory with the capacity and accuracy of a recording instrument. In this way and through his constant researches later, Abdullah became one of the most learned companions of the Prophet. It is said he committed to memory about one thousand, six hundred and sixty sayings of the Prophet which are recorded and authenticated in the collections of al-Bakhari and Muslim.

The Prophet (S) would often draw Abdullah close to him, pat his shoulders, and pray "Oh Lord, make him acquire a deep understanding of the religion of Islam and instruct him in the meaning and interpretation of things." There were many times after where the Prophet (S) would repeat this *dua* or prayer for his cousin and before long, Abdullah realized his life was to be devoted to the pursuit of learning and knowledge.

"Once the Prophet (S) was on the point of performing wudu, I hurried to get water ready for him. He was pleased with what I was doing. As he was about to begin Salat, he indicated that I should stand by his side. However, I stood behind him. When the Salat was finished, he turned to me and said:

'What prevented you from being at my side, O Abdullah?'

'You are too illustrious and too great in my eyes for me to stand side by side with you,' I replied.

Raising his hands to the heaven, the Prophet then prayed "O Lord, Grant him wisdom."

During the lifetime of the Prophet, Abdullah would not miss any of the assemblies and he would commit to memory whatever he said. After the Prophet passed away, he would go to as many companions as possible and learn from them what the Prophet had taught them. Whenever he heard a hadith, he would record it, scrutinize it and go to as many as thirty companions to verify it.

Once Abdullah ibn Abbas heard a companion of the Prophet knew a hadith unknown to him. He went during the afternoon siesta and spread his cloak outside the companion's front door. He waited for him there, so that he could be completely refreshed. When the companion came out of his house, he exclaimed, "Oh cousin of the Prophet! What's the matter with you? If you had sent for

me I would have come to you." Abdullah responded, "I am the one who should come to you, for knowledge is sought. It does not just come."

Hadith were not just the only collection Abdullah specialized. He devoted himself to acquiring knowledge in wide variety of fields. He had a special admiration for people like Zayd ibn Thabit, the recorder of the revelation, the leading judge and jurist consult in Madinah, an expert in the laws of inheritance and reading the Quran. When Zayd would go on trips, Abdullah would stand humbly at his side and hold the reins of the mount. Zayd would say to him: "Don't, Oh cousin of the Prophet."

"Thus we were commanded to treat the learned ones among us," Abdullah would say. Zayd would say to him in turn: "Let me see your hand." He would then kiss the hands of Abdullah and say: "Thus, we were commanded to treat the ahl al-bayt- members of the Prophet's household."

As Abdullah's knowledge grew, so did his stature. Masruqibn al-ajda said of him: "Whenever I saw Ibn Abbas, I would say: He is the most handsome of men. When he spoke, I would say: He is the most eloquent of men. And when he held a conversation, I would say: He is the most knowledgeable of men."

Umar ibn al-Khattab sought Abdullah's advice on important matters of state and described him as "the young man of maturity." It is these qualities which resulted in Abdullah ibn Abbas being known as "the learned man of this Ummah. He felt it was a duty to the Ummah to educate to those in search of knowledge and the general masses of the Muslim community. He turned to teaching and his house turned into a university.

To avoid congestion with many groups of people coming to discuss various subjects on a single day, Abdullah decided to devote one day exclusively for a particular discipline. On one day, only the exegesis of the Quran would be taught while on another day, only Fiqh. The campaigns of the Prophet, poetry, Arab history before Islam were each allocated a special day.

Abdullah ibn Abbas was constant in his devotions. He kept voluntary fasts regularly and often stayed up at night in prayer. He would weep while praying and reading the Quran. And when reciting verses dealing with death, resurrection and the life hereafter, his voice would be heavy from deep sobbing.

He passed away at the age of seventy-one in the mountainous city of at-Taif.

Abdur-Rahman Ibn Awf

He was one of the first eight persons to accept Islam. He was one of the ten persons (al-asharatu-l mubashshirin) who were assured of entering Paradise. He was one of the six persons chosen by Umar to form the council of shura to choose the Khalifah after his death. His name in Jahiliyyah days was Abu Amr. But when he accepted Islam the noble Prophet called him Abdur-Rahman - the servant of the Beneficent God.

Abdur-Rahman became a Muslim before the Prophet entered the house of al-Arqam. In fact it is said that he accepted Islam only two days after Abu Bakr as-Siddiq did so. Abdur-Rahman did not escape the punishment which the early Muslims suffered at the hands of the Quraysh. He bore this punishment with steadfastness as they did. He remained firm as they did. And when they were compelled to leave Makkah for Abyssinia because of the continuous and unbearable persecution, Abdur-Rahman also went. He returned to Makkah when it was rumored that conditions for the Muslims had improved but, when these rumors proved to be false, he left again for Abyssinia on a second hijrah.

From Makkah once again he made the hijrah to Madinah. Soon after arriving in Madinah, the Prophet in his unique manner began pairing off the Muhajirin and the Ansar. This established a firm bond of brotherhood and was meant to strengthen social cohesion and ease the destitution of the Muhajirin. Abdur-Rahman was linked by the Prophet with Sad ibn ar-Rabi'ah.

Sad in the spirit of generosity and magnanimity with which the Ansar greeted the Muhajirin, said to Abdur-Rahman: "My brother! Among the people of Madinah I have the most wealth. I have two orchards and I have two wives. See which of the two orchards you like and I shall vacate it for you and which of my two wives is pleasing to you and I will divorce her for you." Abdur-Rahman must have been embarrassed and said in reply: "May God bless you in your family and your wealth. But just show me where the suq (market place) is." Abdur-Rahman went to the market-place and began trading with whatever little resources he had. He bought and sold and his profits grew rapidly. Soon he was sufficiently well off and was able to get married.

He went to the noble Prophet with the scent of perfume lingering over him. "Mahyarn, O Abdur-Rahman!" exclaimed the Prophet - "mahyam" being a word of Yemeni origin which indicates pleasant surprise. "I have got married," replied Abdur-Rahman. "And what did you give your wife as mahr?" "The weight of a nuwat in gold." "You must have a walimah (wedding feast) even if it is with

a single sheep. And may Allah bless you in your wealth," said the Prophet with obvious pleasure and encouragement. Thereafter Abdur-Rahman grew so accustomed to business success that he said if he lifted a stone he expected to find gold or silver under it! Abdur-Rahman distinguished himself in both the battles of Badr and Uhud. At Uhud he remained firm throughout and suffered more than twenty wounds some of them deep and severe. Even so, his physical jihad was matched by his jihad with his wealth. Once the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, was preparing to dispatch an expeditionary force. He summoned his companions and said: "Contribute sadaqah for I want to dispatch an expedition." Abdur-Rahman went to his house and quickly returned. "O Messenger of God," he said, "I have four thousand (dinars). I give two thousand as a qard to my Lord and two thousand I leave for my family. " When the Prophet decided to send an expedition to distant Tabuk - this was the last ghazwah of his life that he mounted - his need for finance and material was not greater than his need for men for the Byzantine forces were a numerous and well-equipped foe.

That year in Madinah was one of drought and hardship. The journey to Tabuk was long, more than a thousand kilometers. Provisions were in short supply. Transport was at a premium so much so that a group of Muslims came to the Prophet pleading to go with him but he had to turn them away because he could find no transport for them. These men were sad and dejected and came to be known as the Bakka'in or the Weepers and the army itself was called the Army of Hardship ('Usrah). Thereupon the Prophet called upon his companions to give generously for the war effort in the path of God and assured them they would be rewarded. The Muslims' response to the Prophet's call was immediate and generous. In the forefront of those who responded was Abdur-Rahman ibn Awf. He donated two hundred awqiyyah of gold whereupon Umar ibn al-Khattab said to the Prophet: "I have (now) seen Abdur-Rahman committing a wrong. He has not left anything for his family." "Have you left anything for your family, Abdur-Rahman?" asked the Prophet. "Yes," replied Abdur-Rahman. "I have left for them more than what I give and better." "How much?" enquired the Prophet. "What God and His Messenger have promised of sustenance, goodness and reward," replied Abdur-Rahman.

The Muslim army eventually left for Tabuk. There Abdur-Rahman was blessed with an honor which was not conferred on anyone till then. The time of Salat came and the Prophet, peace be on him, was not there at the time. The Muslims chose Abdur-Rahman as their imam. The first rakat of the Salat was almost completed when the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, joined the worshippers and performed the Salat behind Abdur-Rahman ibn Awf. Could there be a greater

honor conferred on anyone than to have been the imam of the most honored of God's creation, the imam of the Prophets, the imam of Muhammad, the Messenger of God!

When the Prophet, peace be on him, passed away, Abdur-Rahman took on the responsibility of looking after the needs of his family, the Ummahaat al-Muminin. He would go with them wherever they wanted to and he even performed Hajj with them to ensure that all their needs were met. This is a sign of the trust and confidence which he enjoyed on the part of the Prophet's family. Abdur-Rahman's support for the Muslims and the Prophet's wives in particular was well-known. Once he sold a piece of land for forty thousand dinars and he distributed the entire amount among the Banu Zahrah (the relatives of the Prophet's mother Aminah), the poor among the Muslims and the Prophet's wives. When Aishah, may God be pleased with her, received some of this money she asked: "Who has sent this money?" and was told it was Abdur-Rahman, whereupon she said: "The Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, said: No one will feel compassion towards you after I die except the sabirin (those who are patient and resolute)." The prayer of the noble Prophet that Allah should bestow barakah on the wealth of Abdur-Rahman appeared to be with Abdur-Rahman throughout his life.

He became the richest man among the companions of the Prophet. His business transactions invariably met with success and his wealth continued to grow. His trading caravans to and from Madinah grew larger and larger bringing to the people of Madinah wheat, flour, butter, cloths, utensils, perfume and whatever else was needed and exporting whatever surplus produce they had. One day, a loud rumbling sound was heard coming from beyond the boundaries of Madinah normally a calm and peaceful city. The rumbling sound gradually increased in volume. In addition, clouds of dust and sand were stirred up and blown in the wind. The people of Madinah soon realized that a mighty caravan was entering the city. They stood in amazement as seven hundred camels laden with goods moved into the city and crowded the streets. There was much shouting and excitement as people called to one another to come out and witness the sight and see what goods and sustenance the camel caravan had brought. Aishah, may God be pleased with her, heard the commotion and asked: "What is this that's happening in Madinah?" and she was told: "It is the caravan of Abdur-Rahman ibn Awf which has come from Syria bearing his merchandise." "A caravan making all this commotion?" she asked in disbelief. "Yes, O Umm al-Muminin. There are seven hundred camels." Aishah shook her head and gazed in the distance as if she was trying to recall some scene or utterance of the past and then she said: "I have heard the Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, say: I have seen Abdur-Rahman ibn Awf entering Paradise

creeping." Why creeping? Why should he not enter Paradise leaping and at a quick pace with the early companions of the Prophet? Some friends of his related to Abdur-Rahman the hadith which Aisha had mentioned. He remembered that he had heard the hadith more than once from the Prophet and he hurried to the house of Aishah and said to her: "Yaa Ammah! Have you heard that from the Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace?" "Yes," she replied. "You have reminded me of a hadith which I have never forgotten," he is also reported to have said. He was so over-joyed and added: "If I could I would certainly like to enter Paradise standing. I swear to you, yaa Ammah, that this entire caravan with all its merchandise, I will give fisabilillah." And so he did. In a great festival of charity and righteousness, he distributed all that the massive caravan had brought to the people of Madinah and surrounding areas. This is just one incident which showed what type of man Abdur-Rahman was. He earned much wealth but he never remained attached to it for its own sake and he did not allow it to corrupt him.

Abdur-Rahman's generosity did not stop there. He continued giving with both his hands, secretly and openly. Some of the figures mentioned are truly astounding: forty thousand dirhams of silver, forty thousand dinars of gold, two hundred awqiyyah of gold, five hundred horses to mujahidin setting out in the path of God and one thousand five hundred camels to another group of mujahidin, four hundred dinars of gold to the survivors of Badr and a large legacy to the Ummahaat al Muminin and the catalogue goes on. On account of this fabulous generosity, Aishah said: "May God give him to drink from the water of Salsabil (a spring in Paradise)."

All this wealth did not corrupt Abdur-Rahman and did not change him. When he was among his workers and assistants, people could not distinguish him from them. One day food was brought to him with which to end a fast. He looked at the food and said: "Musab ibn Umayr has been killed. He was better than me. We did not find anything of his to shroud him with except what covered his head but left his legs uncovered. . Then God endowed us with the (bounties of) the world... I really fear that our reward has been bestowed on us early (in this world)." He began to cry and sob and could not eat. May Abdur-Rahman ibn Awl be granted felicity among "those who spend their substance in the cause of God and follow up not their gifts with reminders of their generosity or with injury. For them their reward is with their Lord, on them shall be no fear nor shall they grieve". (The Quran, Surah al-Baqarah, 2: 262).

Rabiah ibn Kab

The Sahabah Rabiah ibn Kab was a young man when he accepted Islam. His love for the Prophet, peace be upon him, was overwhelming and possessed his entire being. For this reason, Rabiah decided to put himself in the service of the Messenger of God, and the Prophet accepted him as his servant. Rabiah says of this commitment, "From that day, I lived in the shadow of the noble Prophet." When the Messenger of God looked in Rabiah's direction, Rabiah would jump to attention immediately. When the Messenger of God expressed a need, Rabiah would hasten to fulfill it. Rabiah was with the Messenger of God wherever he went. Even when the Prophet, peace be upon him, would return home at night, Rabiah would remain seated on the threshold of the Prophet's door in case the Prophet required something during the night.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, was very grateful for Rabiah's loyalty and service. When someone performed an act of kindness for him, the Messenger of God loved to repay that person with something more superb. One day, the Messenger of God called Rabiah, "O Rabi'ah ibn Kab."

Rabiah replied, "Labbayk ya rasulullah wa Sadark (At your command, O Messenger of God and may God grant you happiness)."

The Messenger of God said, "Ask of me anything and I will give it to you." Rabiah thought about this, and then said: "Give me some time, O Messenger of God, to think about what I should ask of you. Then I will let you know." The Prophet, peace be upon him, agreed.

Rabiah was a poor man at this time, though still young. He had no family, no wealth of his own, and no property. He used to sleep at the Suffah (shaded area or an area covered by a roof) of the mosque with other poor Muslims. Whenever charity was brought to the Prophet, peace be upon him, he would send it to the poor Muslims who slept there. If a gift was brought to the Messenger of God, he would take some of it and leave the rest for them. So Rabiah thought of requesting something from the Prophet that would bring him worldly gains. But Rabiah quickly said, "May you perish Rabi'ah. The world is temporary and will pass away. You have your share of sustenance in it which God has guaranteed and which must come to you. The Prophet, peace be on him, has a place with his Lord and no request would be refused him. Request him therefore, to ask Allah to grant you something of the bounty of the hereafter."

Rabiah returned to the Prophet, peace be upon him. The Prophet asked, "What do you say, O Rabiah?"

Rabiah replied, "O Messenger of God, I ask you to beseech God most High on my behalf to make me your companion in Paradise." The Prophet then said, "Who has advised you thus?"

Rabiah replied saying, "No by God. No one has advised me. But when you told me 'Ask of me anything and I will give to you,' I thought of asking you for something of the goodness of this world. But before long, I was guided to choose what is permanent and lasting against what is temporary and perishable. And so I have asked you to beseech God on my behalf that I may be your companion in Paradise."

The Prophet remained silent for a long time after hearing Rabiah's request. He finally asked, "Any other request besides that, Rabiah?"

"No, O Messenger of God, nothing can match what I have asked you."

"Then, in that case, assist me for your sake by performing much prostration to God," said the Prophet, peace be upon him. Rabiah dedicated himself to worship in order to secure himself a place in Paradise with the Prophet, peace be upon him, just as he had been his Companion and servant in this world.

Shortly after this incident, the Messenger of God called Rabiah and asked him, "Do you want to get married, Rabiah? Rabiah replied, "I do not want anything to distract me from your service. Moreover, I don't have anything to give as dowry to a wife nor any place where I can accommodate a wife." The Prophet stayed silent, but asked Rabiah the same question the next time he saw him. Rabiah gave the same reply. The third time the Prophet asked Rabiah if he would like to get married, Rabiah replied, "Oh yes, Messenger of God. But who will marry me when I am in this state?"

The Prophet instructed Rabiah to go to a particular family and say to them, "The Prophet has instructed you to give your daughter to me in marriage.' Rabiah timidly went to the family and said, "The Messenger of God, peace be upon him, has sent me to you to ask you to give your daughter to me in marriage."

"Our daughter?" they asked, very surprised. "Yes," Rabiah replied.

"Welcome to the Messenger of God and welcome to his messenger. By God, the messenger of God's Messenger shall only return with his mission fulfilled," exclaimed the family. A marriage contract between Rabiah and the daughter was completed. The Prophet instructed Buraydah ibn al-Khasib,

one of the leading people in Rabiah's tribe of Banu Asiam, to collect a *nuwat's* weight in gold for Rabiah to give as dowry to his bride. Buraydah was then instructed by the Prophet, peace be upon him, to collect the price of a ram for Rabiah's marriage feast. Aishah, the wife of the Prophet, gave Rabiah a bag of barley to serve at the feast as well, and told him, "By God, we do not have any other food."

The Prophet attended Rabiah's wedding feast, and after wards the Prophet gave him a piece of land near Abu Bakr. Rabiah soon became distracted by the material things of this world. One day, he got into a dispute with Abu Bakr over a palm tree. "It is in my land," Rabiah told Abu Bakr.

"No it is in my land," countered Abu Bakr. The two men continued to argue until Abu Bakr cursed Rabiah. As soon as Abu Bakr cursed him, he regretted his words and said, "Rabiah, say the same word to me so that it could be considered as qisas (just retaliation)."

"No by God, I shall not," replied Rabiah.

"In that case, I shall go to the Messenger of God and complain to him about your refusal to retaliate against me measure for measure," said Abu Bakr.

Abu Bakr set off to see the Prophet, followed by Rabiah. Rabiah's tribe, the Banu Asiam, also followed while angrily saying, "He's the one who cursed you first and then he goes off to the Prophet before you to complain about you!"

Rabiah turned to his tribe and said, "Woe to you! Do you know who this is? This is As-Siddiq, and he is the respected elder of the Muslims. Go back before he turns around, sees you and thinks that you have come to help me against him. He would then be more incensed and go to the Prophet in anger. The Prophet would get angry on his account. Then Allah would be angry on their account and Rabi'ah would be finished." His tribe then turned back.

Abu Bakr told the Prophet of the incident exactly as it happened. The Prophet raised his head and said to Rabiah, "O Rabiah, what's wrong with you and As-Siddiq?"

"Messenger of God, he wanted me to say the same words to him as he had said to me and I did not," replied Rabiah.

"Yes," said the Messenger of God, "do not say the same word to him as he said to you. Instead say: 'May God forgive you Abu Bakr.'"

Abu Bakr turned away with tears in his eyes. He left while saying, “May God reward you with goodness for my sake, O Rabiah ibn Kab. May God reward you with goodness for my sake, O Rabiah ibn Kab.”

Ikrimah Ibn Abi Jahl

He was at the end of the third decade of his life on the day the Prophet made public his call to guidance and truth. He was held in high regard by the Quraysh, being wealthy and of noble lineage. Some others like him, Sa'd ibn abi Waqqas, Mus'ab ibn Umayr and other sons of noble families in Makkah had become Muslims. He too might have followed their example were it not for his father. His father, Abu Jahl, was the foremost proponent of Shirk and one of the greatest tyrants of Makkah. Through torture, he sorely tested the faith of the early believers but they remained steadfast. He used every stratagem to make them waver but they continued to affirm the truth.

Ikrimah found himself defending the leadership and authority of his father as he pitted himself against the Prophet. His animosity towards the Prophet, his persecution of his followers and his attempts to block the progress of Islam and the Muslims won the admiration of his father. At Badr, Abu Jahl led the Makkan polytheists in the battle against the Muslims. He swore by al-Laat and al-Uzza that he would not return to Makkah unless he crushed Muhammad. At Badr he sacrificed three camels to these goddesses. He drank wine and had the music of singing girls to spur the Quraysh on to fight. Abu Jahl was among the first to fall in the battle. His son Ikrimah saw him as spears pierced his body and heard him let out his last cry of agony. Ikrimah returned to Makkah leaving behind the corpse of the Quraysh chieftain, his father. He wanted to bury him in Makkah but the crushing defeat they suffered made this impossible. From that day, the fire of hatred burned even more fiercely in the heart of Ikrimah.

Others whose fathers were killed at Badr, also became more hostile to Muhammad and his followers. This eventually led to the Battle of Uhud. At Uhud Ikrimah was accompanied by his wife, Umm Hakim. She and other women stood behind the battle lines beating their drums, urging the Quraysh on to battle and upbraiding any horseman who felt inclined to flee. Leading the right flank of the Quraysh was Khalid ibn Walid. On the left was Ikrimah ibn Abi Jahl. The Quraysh inflicted heavy losses on the Muslims and felt that they had avenged themselves for the defeat at Badr. This was not, however, the end of the state of conflict. At the battle of the Ditch, the Quraysh mushrikun besieged Madinah. It was a long siege. The resources and the patience of the mushrikun were wearing out. Ikrimah, feeling the strain of the siege, saw a place where the ditch, dug by the Muslims, was relatively narrow. With a gigantic effort, he managed to cross. A small group of Quraysh followed him. It was a foolhardy undertaking. One of them was immediately killed and it was only by turning on his heels that Ikrimah managed to save himself. Nine years after his hijrah, the Prophet returned with thousands of his companions to Makkah. The Quraysh saw them approaching and decided to leave the way open for them because they knew that the Prophet had given instructions to his commanders not to open hostilities. Ikrimah and some others however went against the consensus of the Quraysh and attempted to block the progress of the Muslim forces. Khalid ibn al-Walid, now a Muslim, met and defeated them in a small engagement during which some of Ikrimah's men were killed and others who could, fled. Among those who escaped was Ikrimah himself. Any standing or influence that Ikrimah may have had was now completely destroyed.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, entered Makkah and gave a general pardon and amnesty to all Quraysh who entered the sacred mosque, or who stayed in their houses or who went to the house of Abu Sufyan, the paramount Quraysh leader. However he refused to grant amnesty to a few individuals whom he named. He gave orders that they should be killed even if they were found under the covering of the Ka'bah. At the top of this list was Ikrimah ibn Abi Jahl. When Ikrimah learnt of this, he slipped out of Makkah in disguise and headed for the Yemen.

Umm Hakim, Ikrimah's wife, then went to the camp of the Prophet. With her was Hind bint Utbah, the wife of Abu Sufyan and the mother of Mu'awiyah, and about ten other women who wanted to pledge allegiance to the Prophet. At the camp, were two of his wives, his daughter Fatimah and some women of the Abdulmuttalib clan. Umm Hakim then got up and professed her faith in Islam and said: "O Messenger of God, Ikrimah has fled from you to the Yemen out of fear that you would kill him. Grant him security and God will grant you security." Umm Hakim continued on her way until she finally found Ikrimah on the coast of the Red Sea in the region of Tihamah. He was negotiating transport with a Muslim seaman who was saying to him: "Be pure and sincere and I will transport you." "How can I be pure?" asked Ikrimah. "Say, I testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah." "I have fled from this very thing," said Ikrimah. At this point, Umm Hakim came up to Ikrimah and said: "O cousin, I have come to you from the most generous of men, the most righteous of men, the best of men . . . from Muhammad ibn Abdullah. I have asked him for an amnesty for you. This he has granted. So do not destroy yourself." "Have you spoken to him?" "Yes, I have spoken to him and he has granted you amnesty," she assured him and he returned with her.

As Ikrimah approached Makkah, the Prophet, peace be upon him, told his companions: "Ikrimah ibn Abi Jahl shall come to you as a believer and a Muhajir (a refugee). Do not insult his father. Insulting the dead causes grief to the living and does not reach the dead." Ikrimah and his wife came up to where the Prophet was sitting. The Prophet got up and greeted him enthusiastically. "Muhammad," said Ikrimah, "Umm Hakim has told me that you have granted me an amnesty." "That's right," said the Prophet, "You are safe." "To what do you invite?" asked Ikrimah. "I invite you to testify that there is no god but Allah and that I am the servant of Allah and His messenger, to establish Prayer and pay the Zakat and carry out all the other obligations of Islam." "By God," responded Ikrimah, "You have only called to what is true and you have only commanded that which is good. You lived among us before the start of your mission and then you were the most trustworthy of us in speech and the most righteous of us." Stretching forth his hands he said, "I testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His servant and His messenger." The Prophet then instructed him to say, "I call on God and those present here to witness that I am a Muslim who is a Mujahid and a Muhajir". This Ikrimah repeated and then said: "I ask you to ask God for forgiveness for me for all the hostility I directed against you and for whatever insults I expressed in your presence or absence." The Prophet replied with the prayer: "O Lord, forgive him for all the hostility he directed against me and for all the expeditions he mounted wishing to put out Your light. Forgive him for whatever he has said or done in my presence or absence to dishonor me." Ikrimah's face beamed with happiness. "By God, O messenger of Allah, I promise that whatever I have spent obstructing the way of God, I shall spend twice as much in His path and whatever battles I have fought against God's way I shall fight twice as much in His way." From that day on, Ikrimah was committed to the

mission of Islam as a brave horseman in the field of battle and as a steadfast worshipper who would spend much time in mosques reading the book of God. Often he would place the mushaf on his face and say, "The Book of my Lord, the words of my Lord" and he would cry from the fear of God.

Ikrimah remained true to his pledge to the Prophet. Whatever battles the Muslims engaged in thereafter, he participated in them and he was always in the vanguard of the army. At the battle of Yarmuk he plunged into the attack as a thirsty person after cold water on a blistering hot day. In one encounter in which the Muslims were under heavy attack, Ikrimah penetrated deep into the ranks of the Byzantines. Khalid ibn al-Walid rushed up to him and said, "Don't, Ikrimah. Your death will be a severe blow to the Muslims." "Let us carry on, Khalid," said Ikrimah, now at the peak of motivation. "You had the privilege of being with the Messenger of God before this. As for myself and my father, we were among his bitterest enemies. Leave me now to atone for what I have done in the past. I fought the Prophet on many occasions. Shall I now flee from the Byzantines? This shall never be." Then calling out to the Muslims, he shouted, "Who shall pledge to fight until death?" Four hundred Muslims including al-Harith ibn Hisham and Ayyash ibn Abi Rabi'ah responded to his call. They plunged into the battle and fought heroically without the leadership of Khalid ibn al-Walid. Their daring attack paved the way for a decisive Muslim victory. When the battle was over, the bodies of three wounded mujahideen lay sprawled on the battleground, among them Al-Harith ibn Hisham, Ayyash ibn Abi Rabi'ah and Ikrimah ibn Abi Jahl. Al-Harith called for water to drink. As it was brought to him, Ayyash looked at him and Harith said: "Give it to Ayyash." By the time they got to Ayyash, he had just breathed his last. When they returned to al-Harith and Ikrimah, they found that they too had passed away. The companions prayed that God may be pleased with them all and grant them refreshment from the spring of Kawthar in Paradise, refreshment after which there is thirst no more.