



Lessons
From
Historic
Narratives

2012

Family: Reconnecting Our Hearts to Home

Topic II

Contents

The Story of Cain and Abel	2
The Story of Luqman	6
The Story of Prophet Lot.....	12
The Story of Asmaa Bint Abu Bakr	18
The Story of Barakah	23
The Story of Julaybib.....	29

The Story of Cain and Abel

A Lesson of Treachery in the First Family

God Almighty says: {O mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person (Adam), and from him (Adam) He God created his wife [Hawwa (Eve)], and from them both He created many men and women; and fear God through Whom you demand (your mutual rights), and (do not cut the relations of) the wombs (kinship).

Surely, God is Ever an All-Watcher over you}. (An-Nisa', 1)

The First Four Children

The pinnacle of earthly bliss was reached when Adam and Eve witnessed the birth of their first children, a set of twins. Adam was a devoted father and Eve a contented mother. The twins were Cain (Qabil) and his sister. Later Eve gave birth to a second set of twins, Abel (Habil) and his sister. The family enjoyed the bounties and fruits of the earth provided by their Lord. The children grew up to be strong and healthy young adults. Cain tilled the land while Abel raised cattle.

Cain's Disobedience

The time arrived when the two young men desired life partners. This was part of God's plan for mankind, to multiply and form nations with different cultures and colors. God revealed to Adam that he should marry each son to the twin sister of the other. Adam instructed his children according to God's command, but Cain was displeased with the partner chosen for him, for Abel's twin sister was not as beautiful as his own.

Commentary: Cain's Disobedience

It appears that since the beginning of time, physical beauty has been a factor in the attraction

between man and women. This attraction caused Cain to envy his brother Abel. He rebelled against God's command by refusing to accept his father's advice.

At first glance Cain's rebellion might appear strange, but we should remember that although man has a pure nature, the potential for dichotomy exists. In other words, he had both good and bad qualities. He can become greedy, covetous, possessive, selfish and even destructive. Man is, therefore capable of seeking self-satisfaction even if it leads to failure in this life and in the hereafter. The path to goodness lies in harnessing the enemy within him, his baser self by controlling evil thoughts and deeds and practicing moderation in his desires and actions. His reward then will be the delights of this world and the hereafter. Thus God tests us through our divided nature.

Cain's Jealousy of Abel

Adam was in a dilemma. He wanted peace and harmony in his family, so he invoked God for help. God commanded that each son offer a sacrifice, and he whose offering was accepted would have right on his side. Abel offered his best camel while Cain offered his worst grain. His sacrifice was not accepted by God because of his disobedience to his father and the insincerity in his offering. This enraged Cain even further. Realizing that his hopes marrying his own beautiful sister were fading, he threatened his brother. "I will kill you! I refuse to see you happy while I remain unhappy!"

Abel feeling sorry for his brother, replied, "It would be more proper for you, my brother to search for the cause of your unhappiness and then walk in the way of peace. God accepts the deeds only from those who serve and fear Him, not from those who reject His Commands."

The First Death

Abel was intelligent, obedient, and always ready to obey the will of God. This contrasted sharply with his brother who was arrogant, selfish and disobedient to his Lord. Abel did not fear his brother's threats, but neither did he want his brother to be hurt, God had blessed Abel with purity and compassion.

Hoping to allay the hatred seething in his brother Abel said, " My brother, you are deviating from the right path and are sinful in your decisions. It is better that you repent to God and forget about your foolish threat. But if you do not then I will leave the matter in the hands of God. You alone will bear the consequence of your sin, for the Fire is the reward of the wrong-doers."

This brotherly plea did nothing to lessen the hatred in Cain's heart, nor did he show fear of God's punishment. Even familial considerations were cast aside. Cain struck his brother with a stone killing him instantly. This was the first death and the first criminal act committed by man on earth. When Abel had not appeared for some time, Adam began to search for him but found no trace of his beloved son. He asked Cain about Abel's whereabouts. Cain insolently replied that he was not his brother's keeper nor his protector. From these words his father understood that Abel was dead and Adam was filled with grief.

The First Burial

Meanwhile Cain did not know what to do with his brother's corpse. He carried it on his back wandering from place to place trying to hide it. His anger had now subsided and his conscience was saddled with guilt. He was tiring under the burden of the corpse which had started to have a stench. As a mercy, and to show that dignity could be retained even in death, God sent two ravens that began fighting, causing the death of one. The victorious bird used its beak and claws to dig a hole in the ground, rolled its victim into it and covered it with sand.

Witnessing this, Cain was overcome with shame and remorse. "Woe unto me!" he exclaimed. "I was unable to do what this raven has done, that is to hide my brother's corpse." Cain then buried his brother. This was also the first burial of man. (Ch 5:27-31).

The First Murder

Ibn Abbas, Ibn Masud and a group of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) related that inter-marriage of the male of one pregnancy with the female of another had been in practice among Adam's children. Abel wanted to marry Cain's sister, but Cain wanted her for himself because she was very beautiful. Adam ordered him to give her in marriage to his brother but he refused. So Adam ordered both of them to offer a sacrifice, then went to Mecca to perform the pilgrimage. After Adam had left, they offered their sacrifices; Abel offered a fat lamb, he was a shepherd, while Cain offered a bundle of worst grain. Fire descended and devoured Abel's sacrifice, leaving that of Cain so he became angry and said: "I will surely kill you so that you will not marry my sister." Abel replied, "God accepts from those who fear Him."

Adam's Death

Abdullah Ibn Al Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal narrated that Ubai Ibn Kab said: "When Adam's death was near, he said to his children: "O my children, indeed I feel an appetite for the fruits of Paradise."

So they went away searching for what Adam had requested. They met with the angels, who had with them his shroud and what he was to be embalmed with. They said to them: "O Children of Adam, what are you searching for? What do you want? Where are you going?"

They said: "Our father is sick and has an appetite for the fruits of Paradise."

The angels said to them: "Go back, for your father is going to meet his end soon."

So they returned (with the angels) and when Eve saw them she recognized them. She tried to hide herself behind Adam. He said to her. "Leave me alone. I came before you; do not go between me and the angels of my Lord."

Successor After Adam

After Adam's death, his son Seth (Shiith) took over the responsibilities of prophethood, according to a hadith narrated by Abu Dhar. Abu Dhar narrated that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "God sent down one hundred and four psalms, of which fifty were sent down to Seth" (Sahih al Bukhari). When the time of his death came, Seth's son Anoush succeeded him. He in turn, was succeeded by his son Qinan, who was succeeded by Mahlabeel. The Persians claim that Mahlabeel was the King of the Seven Regions, that he was the first one to cut down trees to build cities and large forts and that he built the cities of Babylonia. He reigned for a period of forty years. When he died his duties were taken over by his son Yard, who on his death, bequeathed them to his son Khonoukh, who is Idris (PBUH) according to the majority of the scholars.

The Story of Luqman

A Lesson in Virtuous Living from a Wise Man to His Son

God the Almighty says:

{And indeed We bestowed upon Luqman AlHikmah (wisdom and religious understanding) saying:

"Give thanks to God." And whoever gives thanks, he gives thanks for (the good of) his own self. And whoever is unthankful, then verily, God is All-Rich (Free of all needs), Worthy of all praise. And (remember) when Luqman said to his son when he was advising him:

"O my son! Join not in worship others with God. Verily, joining others in worship with God is a great Zulm (wrong) indeed. And We have enjoined on man (to be dutiful and good) to his parents. His mother bore him in weakness and hardship upon weakness and hardship, and his weaning is in two years -give thanks to Me and to our parents. Unto Me is the final destination. But if they (both) strive with you to make you join in worship with Me others that of which you have no knowledge, then obey them not; but behave with them in the world kindly, and follow the path of him who turns to Me in repentance and in obedience. Then to Me will be your return, and I shall tell you what you used to do. "O my son! If it be (anything) equal to the weight of a grain of mustard seed, and though it be in a rock, or in the heavens or in the earth, God will bring it forth. Verily, God is Subtle (in bringing out that grain), Well-Aware (of its place).

"O my son! Aqim-As-Salat (perform As-Salat), enjoin (on people) Al-Ma'ruf (Islamic Monotheism and all that is good), and forbid (people) from Al- Munkar (i.e. disbelief in the Oneness of God, polytheists of all kinds and all that is evil and bad), and bear with patience whatever befalls you. Verily, these are some of the important commandments (ordered by God with no exemption). "And turn not your face away from men with pride, nor walk in insolence through the earth. Verily, God likes not any arrogant boaster." "And be moderate (or show no insolence) in your walking and lower your voice. Verily, the harshest of all voices is the braying of the ass". (Luqman, 12-19)

Description of Luqman

He is Luqman Ibn 'Anqa' Ibn Sadun. Or, as stated by As-Suhaili from Ibn Jarir and Al-Qutaibi that he is Luqman Ibn Tharan who was from among the people of Aylah (Jerusalem).

He was a pious man who exerted himself in worship and who was blessed with wisdom. Also, it is said that he was a judge during the lifetime of Prophet Dawud (Peace be upon him). And, God knows best.

Narrated Sufyan Ath- Thawri from Al-Ash'ath after 'Ikrimah on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas (May God be pleased with him) as saying: He was an Ethiopian slave who worked as a carpenter.

Al-Awza'i said: I was told by 'Abdur Rahman Ibn Harmalah: that a black man came to Sa' id Ibn AlMusayib asking him for charity. Sa' id said: do not feel distressed for your black color because there were from among the best of all people three blackmen: Bilal Ibn Rabah, Mahja' (the freed-slave of 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattab), and Luqman, the wise who was from Nubia.

Ibn Abu Hatim said: I was told by Abu Zar' ah that he was told by Safwan after Al- W alid after 'Abdur Rahman Ibn Abu Yazid Ibn Jabir who said: "God the Almighty raised Luqman's status for his wisdom. A man used to know him saw him and said: Aren't you the slave of so and so who used to look after my sheep not so long in the past? Luqman said: yes! The man said: What raised you to this high state I see? Luqman said: the Divine Decree, repaying the trust, telling the truth and discarding what does not concern me. "

Narrated Ibn Wahb: I was told by 'Abdullah Ibn 'Ayyash Al-Fityani after' Umar, the freed slave of 'Afraah as saying: "A man came to Luqman, the wise and asked: Are you Luqman? Are you the slave of so and so? He said: "Yes!" The man said: You are the black shepherd! Luqman said: As for my black color, it is obviously apparent, so what makes you so astonished? The man said: You became frequently visited by the people who pleasingly accept your judgments! Luqman said: O cousin! If you do what I am telling you, you will be like this. The man said: What is it? Luqman said: Lowering my gaze, watching my tongue, eating what is lawful, keeping my chastity, undertaking my promises, fulfilling my commitments, being hospitable to guests, respecting my neighbors, and discarding what does not concern me. All these made me the one you are looking at."

Advice of Luqman

The majority of scholars are of the view that he was a wise man and not a Prophet. Moreover, he was mentioned in the Glorious Qur'an and was highly praised by God the Almighty Who narrates his advice to his own son in which he says:

{O my son! Join not in worship others with God. Verily, joining others in worship with God is a great Zulm (wrong) indeed}, so he forbade his son and warned him against joining others in worship with God. Imam Al-Bukhari said: I was told by Qutaibah after Jarir after Al-A'mash after Ibrahim after 'Alqamah after 'Abdullah as saying: "When the Verse: {It is those who believe and do not confuse their belief with wrong (i.e. joining others in worship with God)} (Al-An' am, 82) was revealed, we said: "O God's Messenger! Who is there amongst us who has not done wrong to himself?" He (Peace be upon him) replied: "It is not as you say, for 'wrong' in the Verse and ' do not confuse their belief with wrong' means 'SHIRK' (i.e. joining others in worship with God). Haven't you heard Luqman's saying to his son, {O my son! Join not others in worship with God, verily joining others in worship with God is a great wrong indeed}." (Luqman, 13)

Then, God informs us of His advice to mankind to take care of parents. He states their rights on the children and orders us to be kind with them even if they were polytheists. But, one should not obey them if they invite him to join others in worship with God.

Then God resumes Luqman's advice to his son saying: {O my son! If it be (anything) equal to the weight of a grain of mustard seed, and though it be in a rock, or in the heavens or in the earth, God will bring it forth. Verily, God is Subtle (in bringing out that grain), Well-Aware (of its place)}, i.e. he forbids him to do wrong to the people even in the slightest way, for God will bring it forth and bring him to account on the Day of Resurrection. God Almighty says: {Surely! God wrongs not even of the weight of an atom (or a small ant)} (An-Nisa',40) and, {And We shall set up balances of justice on the Day of Resurrection, then none will be dealt with unjustly in anything. And if there be the weight of a mustard seed, We will bring it. And Sufficient are We to take account} (Al-Anbiya', 47) and, he told him if that wrong deed was equal to the weight of a grain of mustard seed, or if it was in a solid rock, or in the heavens or in the earth, God will bring it forth for He knows its exact place, {Verily, God is Subtle (in bringing out that grain), Well-Aware (of its place)}.

God Almighty also says: {And with Him are the keys of the Ghaib (all that is hidden), none knows them but He. And He knows whatever there is in the land and in the sea; not a leaf falls, but He knows it. There is not a grain in the darkness of the earth nor anything fresh or dry, but is written in a Clear Record} (Al-An'am, 59) and, {And there is nothing hidden in the heaven and the earth but it is in a Clear Book (i.e. Al-Lauh Al-Mahfuz)} (An-Naml, 75) and {the All-Knower of the Unseen, it will come to you; not even the weight of an atom (or a small ant) or less than that or greater escapes His Knowledge in the heavens or in the earth but it is in a Clear Book (Al-Lauh Al-Mahfuz)} (Saba', 3).

Then, Luqman said: {O my son! Aqim-As- Sa.lah (perform As-Salah)}, i.e. perform it properly and in due time. Then, he said: {enjoin (on people) Al-Ma'ruf (Islamic Monotheism and all that is good), and forbid (people) from Al-Munkar (i.e. disbelief in the Oneness of God, polytheists of all kinds and all that is evil and bad)}, i.e. with your full power, with your hand, tongue and if you could not, let it be with your heart (i.e. reject and resent it). Then, he advised him to observe patience saying: {and bear with patience whatever befalls you}, for if one enjoins what is good and forbids the evil, he will probably regarded as enemy to certain people (but, the final reward would surely be his). For this, he commanded him to observe patience. {Verily, these are some of the important commandments (ordered by God with no exemption)} that are inevitable and cannot be neglected.

God the Almighty says: {And turn not your face away from men with pride}, narrated Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, `Ikrimah, Sa`id Ibn Jubair, Ad-Dahhak, Yazid Ibn Al-Asam, Abu Al-Jawza' and others: This means one shouldn't be showy or arrogant.

God the Almighty says: {nor walk in insolence through the earth. Verily, God likes not any arrogant boaster}, here, Luqman forbids his son to strut in his walk. God the Almighty says: {And walk not on the earth with conceit and arrogance. Verily, you can neither rend nor penetrate the earth, nor can you attain a stature like the mountains in height}. (Al-Isra', 37) i.e. you will neither be able to tread the whole earth, nor penetrate it with your fast walking or strong footsteps, nor will you be as high as mountains with your showing-off or arrogance. So, know yourself well, for you are only a human being (created to worship God Alone). The Prophetic Hadith states: "While a man was walking, dragging his dress with pride, he was caused to be swallowed by the earth and will go on sinking in it till the Day of Resurrection." (Transmitted by Imam Al-Bukhari in his Sahih)

Another Prophetic Hadith states that: "Beware dragging your dress with pride, for this is boastfulness which is not loved (liked) by God " God the Almighty says: {Verily, God likes not any arrogant boaster}.

After Luqman forbids his son to walk boastfully, he orders him to be moderate in his walking, saying: {And be moderate (or show no insolence) in your walking}, i.e. do not walk fast or too slow, rather take a course in-between, {And the (faithful) slaves of the Most Gracious (God) are those who walk on the earth in humility and sedateness, and when the foolish address them (with bad words) they reply back with mild words of gentleness}. (Al-Furqan, 63) Then, Luqman says: {and lower your voice}, i.e. if you talk, do not raise your voice very loudly because the braying of the ass is the harshest of all voices.

Pearls of Wisdom

Narrated Ibn Hatim that Al-Qasim Ibn Mukhaimirah reported that God's Messenger (Peace be upon him) said: "Luqman said to his son when he was advising him: "O my son! Beware of masking for it is treason by night and dispraise during the day. "

Narrated Damurah after As-Sariy Ibn Yahia as saying: Luqman said to his son: "On my son! Verily, wisdom has brought the indigent to the courts of kings.

'Abdah Ibn Sulaiman reported after Ibn Al-Mubarak after 'Abdur Rahman Al-Mas' udi after 'Aun Ibn 'Abdullah as saying: Luqman said to his son: "O my son! If you come to a people's setting, start them

with salutation (Saying As-Salamu 'Alaikum (Peace be with you)), then, take a side and do not utter a word till they speak. If you find them observing the Remembrance of God, join them. But, if they observe anything else, turn away from them and seek others (who remember God Almighty). "

'Amr Ibn 'Uthman after Damurah Ibn Hafs Ibn 'Umar as saying: "Luqman placed a bag of mustards beside him and started to advise his son, giving him with every piece of advice a mustard till it all ran out. He said: O my son! I gave you advice that if a mountain was given, it would split. He said: then, his son was as if struck. " Saiyar told us after Ja'far after Malik Ibn Dinar as saying: Luqman said to his son: "O my son! Take God's Obedience as your trade, and you will gain profits without having any merchandises."

Yazid told us after Abul Ashhab after Muhammad Ibn Wasi' as saying: Luqman said to his son: "O my son! Fear God and do not let the people notice that you fear Him to gain honor (from them) while your heart is sinful."

Yazid Ibn Hamn and Waki' told us after Abul Ashhab after Khalid Ar-Rab'i as saying: "Luqman was an Ethiopian slave who worked as a carpenter. One day, his master ordered him to slaughter a goat and bring him the most pleasant and delicious two parts thereof. Luqman did so and brought him the tongue and heart. The master asked: Did not you find anything more pleasant than these? Luqman said: No! After a while, the master ordered him to slaughter a goat and to throw the most malignant two parts thereof. Luqman slaughtered the goat and threw the tongue and heart. The master exclaimed and said: I ordered you to bring me the most delicious parts thereof and you brought me the tongue and heart, and I ordered you to throwaway the most malignant parts thereof and you threw the tongue and heart, how can this be? Luqman said: Nothing can be more pleasing than these if they were good, and nothing can be more malicious than these if they were malignant."

Dawud Ibn Rashid told us after Ibn Al-Mubarak after Mu'amir after Abu'Uthman, a man from Basrah, as saying: Luqman said to his son: "O my son! Do not wish for befriending a fool that he may think you approve his foolishness. And, do not take the wise man's rage easily that he may abstain from you."

I was told by 'Abdul Samad and Waki' after Abul Ashhab after Qatadah as saying: Luqman said to his son: "O my son! Set apart with evil and it will set apart with you, for evil begets nothing but evil."

Narrated Imam Ahmed: I was told by 'Abdur Rahman Ibn Mahdi after Nafi' Ibn 'Umar after Ibn Abu Malikah after 'Ubaid Ibn 'Umair as saying: Luqman said to his son when he was advising him: "O my

son! Do not rejoice at seeing a strong man who sheds the blood of the faithful, for God appoints for him a killer that does not ever die."

Abu Mu'awiyah told us after Hisham Ibn 'Urwah after his father as saying: "Wisdom dictates: O my son: Let your speech be good and your face be smiling, you will be more loved by the people than those who give them provisions."

`Abdur Razzaq told us after Mu'amir after Ayyub after Abu Qulabah as saying: Luqman was once asked: Who is the best one in terms of patience? He said: It is the one who practices no harm after observing patience. Those who asked him said: Who is the best one in terms of knowledge? He said: It is he who adds to his own knowledge through the knowledge of others. They asked: Who is the best from among the whole people? He said: It is the wealthy. They said: Is it the one who has properties and riches? He said: No! But, it is the one if whose good was sought, he would not hold it back or prevent it. And, it is the one who does not need anything from others.

Narrated Sufyan Ibn 'Uyaynah: Luqman was asked: Who is the worst of all people? He replied: It is the one who does not feel shame if found committing a sinful deed.

The Story of Prophet Lot

A Lesson of Betrayal in a Righteous Home

Prophet Abraham (PBUH) left Egypt accompanied by his nephew Lot (PBUH), who then went to the city of Sodom (Sadum), which was on the western shore of the Dead Sea.

This city was filled with evil. Its residents waylaid, robbed and killed travelers.

Lot's Message

It was at the height of these crimes and sins that God revealed to Prophet Lot (PBUH) that he should summon the people to give up their indecent behavior, but they were so deeply sunk in

their immoral habits that they were deaf to Lot's preaching. Swamped in their unnatural desires, they refused to listen, even when Lot warned them of God's punishment. Instead, they threatened to drive him out of the city if he kept on preaching.

God the Almighty revealed: The people of Lot (those dwelt in the towns of Sodom in Palestine) belied the Messengers when their brother Lot said to them: "Will you not fear God and obey Him? Verily! I am a trustworthy Messenger to you. SO fear God, keep your duty to Him, and obey me. No reward do I ask of you for it (my Message of Islamic Monotheism) my reward is only from the Lord of the Alamin (mankind, jinn and all that exists). Go you in unto the males of the Alamin (mankind), and leave those whom God has created for you to be your wives? Nay, you are a trespassing people!" They said: "If you cease not, O Lot! Verily, you will be one of those who are driven out!"

He said: "I am indeed, of those who disapprove with severe anger and fury your (this evil) Actions. My Lord! Save me and my family from what they do."

So We saved him and his family, all except an old woman (this wife) among those who remained behind. (Ch 26:160-171 Quran)

Lot's Wife

The doings of Lot's people saddened his heart. Their unwholesome reputation spread throughout the land, while he struggled against them. As the years passed, he persisted in his mission but to no avail. No one responded to his call and believed except for the members of his family, and even in his household, not all the members believed. Lot's wife, like Noah's wife, was a disbeliever.

God the Almighty declared:

"God set forth an example for those who disbelieve, the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot. They were under two of Our righteous slaves, but they both betrayed their (husbands, by rejecting their doctrines) so they (Noah & Lot) benefited them (their respective wives) not, against God, and it was said: "Enter the Fire along with those who enter!" (Ch 66:10 Quran)

Angels Come to Meet Lot

If home is the place of comfort and rest, then Lot found none, for he was tormented both inside and outside his home. His life was continuous torture and he suffered greatly, but he remained patient and steadfast with his people. The years rolled by, and still not one believed in him.

Instead, they belittled his message and mockingly challenged him: "Bring God's Torment upon us if you are one of the truthful!" (Ch 29:29 Quran).

Overwhelmed with despair, Lot prayed to God to grant him victory and destroy the corrupt.

Therefore, the angels left Abraham (PBUH) and headed for Sodom the town of Lot (PBUH). They reached the walls of the town in the afternoon. The first person who caught sight of them was Lot's daughter, who was sitting beside the river, filling her jug with water. When she lifted her face and saw them, she was stunned that there could be men of such magnificent beauty on earth.

One of the tree men (angels) asked her: "O maiden, is there a place to rest?"

Remembering the character of her people she replied, "Stay here and do not enter until I inform my father and return." Leaving her jug by the river, she swiftly ran home.

"O father!" she cried. "You are wanted by young men at the town gate and I have never before seen the like of their faces!"

Lot felt distressed as he quickly ran to his guests. He asked them where they came from and

where they were going. They did not answer his questions. Instead they asked if he could host them. He started talking with them and impressed upon them the subject of his people's nature. Lot was filled with turmoil; he wanted to convince his guests without offending them, not to spend the night there, yet at the same time he wanted to extend to them the expected hospitality normally accorded to guests. In vain he tried to make them understand the perilous situation. At last, therefore, he requested them to wait until the night fell, for then no one would see them.

The Mob at Lot's House

When darkness fell on the town, Lot escorted his guest to his home. No one was aware of their presence. However, as soon as Lot's wife saw them, she slipped out of the house quietly so that no one noticed her. Quickly, she ran to her people with the news and it spread to all the inhabitants like wildfire. The people rushed towards Lot quickly and excitedly. Lot was surprised by their discovery of his guests and he wondered who could have informed them. The matter became clear, however, when he could not find his wife, anywhere, thus adding grief to his sorrow.

When Lot saw the mob approaching his house, he shut the door, but they kept on banging on it. He pleaded with them to leave the visitors alone and fear God's punishment.

Lot's people waited until he had finished his short sermon, and then they roared with laughter. Blinded by passion, they broke down the door. Lot became very angry, but he stood powerless before these violent people. He was unable to prevent the abuse of his guests, but he firmly stood his ground and continued to plead with the mob.

The Punishment

At that terrible moment, he wished he had the power to push them away from his guests. Seeing

him in a state of helplessness, and grief the guests said: "Do not be anxious or frightened, Lot for we are angels, and these people will not harm you." On hearing this, the mob was terrified and fled from Lot's house, hurling threats at him as they left. The angels warned Prophet Lot (PBUH) to leave his house before sunrise, taking with him all his family except his wife. God had decreed that the city of Sodom should perish. An earthquake rocked the town. It was as if a mighty power had lifted the entire city and flung it down in one jolt. A storm of stones rained on the city. Everyone and everything was destroyed, including Lot's wife.

The Angels Meet Abraham

God the Almighty recounted this story:

"And tell them about the guests (angels) of Abraham. When they entered unto him, and said:

"Salaaman (peace)!" Abraham said: "Indeed! We are afraid of you."

They (the angels) said: "Do not be afraid! We give you glad tidings of a boy (son) possessing much knowledge and wisdom." (Abraham) said: "Do you give me glad tidings (of a son) when old age has overtaken me? Of what then is your news?" They (the angels) said: "We give you glad tidings in truth. So be not of the despairing."

Abraham said: "And who despairs of the Mercy of his Lord except those who are astray?"

(Abraham again) said: "What then is the business on which you have come, O Messengers?"

They (the angels) said: "We have been sent to a people who are Mujrimeen (criminals, disbelievers, polytheists, sinners). (All) except the family of Lot. Them all we are surely going to save (from destruction)."

Except his wife, of whom We have decreed that she shall be of the those who remain behind (she will be destroyed).

Then when the Messengers (the angels) came unto the family of Lot, he said: "Verily! You are people unknown to me." They said: "Nay! we have come to you with that (torment) which they have been doubting. And we have brought to you the truth (the news of the destruction of your nation) and certainly, we tell the truth. Then travel in a part of the night with your family, and you go behind them in the rear, and let no one amongst you look back, but go on to where you are ordered."

And We made known this decree to him, that the root of those (sinners) was to be cut off in the early morning

The inhabitants of the city came rejoicing (at the news of the young men's arrival). Lot said: "Verily! These are my guests, so shame me not. And fear God and disgrace me not." They (people of the city) said: "Did we not forbid you to entertain (or protect) any of the Alamin (people, foreigners strangers etc) from us?" Lot said: "These (the girls of the nation) are my daughters to marry lawfully) if you must act so."

Verily, by your life (O Muhammad), in their wild intoxication they were wandering blindly. So As Saliha (torment, awful cry etc) overtook them at the time of sunrise; and We turned (the towns of Sodom in Palestine) upside down and rained down on them stones of baked clay. Surely! In this are signs for those who see (or understand or learn the lessons from the Signs of God). And verily! They (the cities) are right on the highroad (from Mecca to Syria, i.e. the place where the Dead Sea is now). Surely! Therein is indeed a sign for the believers." (Ch 15:51-77 Quran)

God the Exalted also declared:

"So we saved him and his family, all, except an old woman (his wife) among those who remained behind. Then afterward We destroyed the others. We rained on them a rain of torment. How evil

was the rain of those who had been warned. Verily, in this is indeed a sign yet most of them are not believers. Verily! Your Lord, He is indeed the All Mighty, the Most Merciful. (Ch 26:170-175 Quran)

The Story of Asmaa Bint Abu Bakr

The Lesson of a Dutiful Daughter, Loyal Wife and Steadfast Mother

Asmaa bint Abu Bakr belonged to a distinguished Muslim family. Her father, Abu Bakr, was a close friend of the Prophet and the first Khalifah after his death. Her half-sister, A'ishah, was a wife of the Prophet and one of the Ummahat al-Mu'mineen. Her husband, Zubayr ibn al-Awwam, was one of the special personal aides of the Prophet. Her son, Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr, became well-known for his incorruptibility and his unswerving devotion to Truth.

Asmaa herself was one of the first persons to accept Islam. Only about seventeen persons including both men and women became Muslims before her. She was later given the nickname Dhat an-Nitaqayn (the One with the Two Waistbands) because of an incident connected with the departure of the Prophet and her father from Makkah on the historic hijrah to Madinah.

Asmaa was one of the few persons who knew of the Prophet's plan to leave for Madinah. The utmost secrecy had to be maintained because of the Quraysh plans to murder the Prophet. On the night of their departure, Asmaa was the one who prepared a bag of food and a water container for their journey. She did not find anything though with which to tie the containers and decided to use her waistband or nitaq. Abu Bakr suggested that she tear it into two. This she did and the Prophet commended her action. From then on she became known as "the One with the Two Waistbands".

When the final emigration from Makkah to Madinah took place soon after the departure of the Prophet, Asmaa was pregnant. She did not let her pregnancy or the prospect of a long and arduous journey deter her from leaving. As soon as she reached Quba on the outskirts of Madinah, she gave birth to a son, Abdullah. The Muslims shouted Allahu Akbar (God is the Greatest) and Laa ilaaha illa God (There is no God but God) in happiness and thanksgiving because this was the first child to be born to the muhajireen (those who emigrated) in Madinah.

Asmaa became known for her fine and noble qualities and for the keenness of her intelligence. She was an extremely generous person. Her son Abdullah once said of her, "I have not seen two women more generous than my aunt A'ishah and my mother Asmaa. But their generosity was expressed in different ways. My aunt would accumulate one thing after another until she had gathered what she felt was sufficient and then distributed it all to those in need. My mother, on the other hand, would not keep anything even for the morrow."

Asmaa's presence of mind in difficult circumstances was remarkable. When her father left Makkah, he took all his wealth, amounting to some six thousand dirhams, with him and did not leave any for his family. When Abu Bakr's father, Abu Quhafah (he was still a mushrik) heard of his departure he went to his house and said to Asmaa: "I understand that he has left you bereft of money after he himself has abandoned you."

"No, grandfather," replied Asmaa, "in fact he has left us much money." She took some pebbles and put them in a small recess in the wall where they used to put money. She threw a cloth over the heap and took the hand of her grandfather --he was blind--and said, "See how much money he has left us".

Through this stratagem, Asmaa wanted to allay the fears of the old man and to forestall him from giving them anything of his own wealth. This was because she disliked receiving any assistance from a mushrik (one who associates partners with God) even if it was her own grandfather.

She had a similar attitude to her mother and was not inclined to compromise her honor and her faith. Her mother, Qutaylah, once came to visit her in Madinah. She was not a Muslim and was divorced from her father in pre-Islamic times. Her mother brought her gifts of raisins, clarified butter and qaraz (pods of a species of sant tree). Asmaa at first refused to admit her into her house or accept the gifts. She sent someone to A'ishah to ask the Prophet, peace be upon him, about her attitude to her mother and he replied that she should certainly admit her to her house and accept the gifts. On this occasion, the following revelation came to the Prophet: "God forbids you not, with

regard to those who do not fight you because of your faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them. God loves those who are just. God only forbids you with regard to those who fight you for your Faith, and drive you from your homes, and support others in driving you out, from turning to them (for friendship and protection). It is such as turn to them (in these circumstances) that do wrong." (Surah al-Mumtahanah 60: 8-9).

For Asmaa and indeed for many other Muslims, life in Madinah was rather difficult at first. Her husband was quite poor and his only major possession to begin with was a horse he had bought. Asmaa herself described these early days: "I used to provide fodder for the horse, give it water and groom it. I would grind grain and make dough but I could not bake well. The women of the Ansar used to bake for me. They were truly good women. I used to carry the grain on my head from az-Zubayr's plot which the Prophet had allocated to him to cultivate. It was about three farsakh (about eight kilometers) from the town's centre. One day I was on the road carrying the grain on my head when I met the Prophet and a group of Sahabah. He called out to me and stopped his camel so that I could ride behind him. I felt embarrassed to travel with the Prophet and also remembered az-Zubayr's jealousy--he was the most jealous of men. The Prophet realized that I was embarrassed and rode on."

Later, Asmaa related to az-Zubayr exactly what had happened and he said, "By God, that you should have to carry grain is far more distressing to me than your riding with (the Prophet)".

Asmaa obviously then was a person of great sensitivity and devotion. She and her husband worked extremely hard together until their situation of poverty gradually changed. Az-Zubayr eventually became one of the richest men among the Sahabah but Asmaa did not allow this to corrupt her principles. Her son, al-Mundhir once sent her an elegant dress from Iraq made of fine and costly material. Asmaa by this time was blind. She felt the material and said, "It's awful. Take it back to him".

Al-Mundhir was upset and said, "Mother, it was not transparent."

"It may not be transparent," she retorted, "but it is too tight-fitting and shows the contours of the body."

Al-Mundhir bought another dress that met with her approval and she accepted it.

If the above incidents and aspects of Asmaa's life may easily be forgotten, then her final meeting with her son, Abdullah, must remain one of the most unforgettable moments in early Muslim

history. At that meeting she demonstrated the keenness of her intelligence, her resoluteness and the strength of her faith.

Abdullah was in the running for the Caliphate after the death of Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah. The Hijaz, Egypt, Iraq, Khurasan and much of Syria were favorable to him and acknowledged him as the Caliph. The Umayyads however continued to contest the Caliphate and to field a massive army under the command of Al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf ath-Thaqafi. Relentless battles were fought between the two sides during which Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr displayed great acts of courage and heroism. Many of his supporters however could not withstand the continuous strain of battle and gradually began to desert him. Finally he sought refuge in the Sacred Mosque at Makkah. It was then that he went to his mother, now an old blind woman, and said: "Peace be on you, Mother, and the mercy and blessings of God."

"Unto you be peace, Abdullah," she replied. "What is it that brings you here at this hour while boulders from Hajjaj's catapults are raining down on your soldiers in the Haram and shaking the houses of Makkah?"

"I came to seek your advice," he said.

"To seek my advice?" she asked in astonishment. "About what?"

"The people have deserted me out of fear of Hajjaj or being tempted by what he has to offer. Even my children and my family have left me. There is only a small group of men with me now and however strong and steadfast they are they can only resist for an hour or two more. Messengers of the Banu Umayyah (the Umayyads) are now negotiating with me, offering to give me whatever worldly possessions I want, should I lay down my arms and swear allegiance to Abdul Malik ibn Marwan. What do you think?"

Raising her voice, she replied: "It's your affair, Abdullah, and you know yourself better. If however you think that you are right and that you are standing up for the Truth, then persevere and fight on as your companions who were killed under your flag had shown perseverance. If however you desire the world, what a miserable wretch you are. You would have destroyed yourself and you would have destroyed your men."

"But I will be killed today, there is no doubt about it."

"That is better for you than that you should surrender yourself to Hajjaj voluntarily and that some minions of Banu Umayyah should play with your head."

"I do not fear death. I am only afraid that they will mutilate me."

"There is nothing after death that man should be afraid of. Skinning does not cause any pain to the slaughtered sheep."

Abdullah's face beamed as he said: "What a blessed mother! Blessed be your noble qualities! I have come to you at this hour to hear what I have heard. God knows that I have not weakened or despaired. He is witness over me that I have not stood up for what I have out of love for this world and its attractions but only out of anger for the sake of God. His limits have been transgressed. Here am I, going to what is pleasing to you. So if I am killed, do not grieve for me and commend me to God."

"I shall grieve for you," said the ageing but resolute Asmaa, "only if you are killed in a vain and unjust cause."

"Be assured that your son has not supported an unjust cause, nor committed any detestable deed, nor done any injustice to a Muslim or a Dhimmi and that there is nothing better in his sight than the pleasure of God, the Mighty, the Great. I do not say this to exonerate myself. God knows that I have only said it to make your heart firm and steadfast."

"Praise be to God who has made you act according to what He likes and according to what I like. Come close to me, my son, that I may smell and feel your body for this might be the last meeting with you."

Abdullah knelt before her. She hugged him and smothered his head, his face and his neck with kisses. Her hands began to squeeze his body when suddenly she withdrew them and asked: "What is this you are wearing, Abdullah?"

"This is my armor plate."

"This, my son, is not the dress of one who desires martyrdom. Take it off. That will make your movements lighter and quicker. Wear instead the sirwal (a long under garment) so that if you are killed your 'awrah will not be exposed."

Abdullah took off his armor plate and put on the sirwal. As he left for the Haram to join the fighting he said: "My mother, don't deprive me of your dada (prayer)."

Raising her hands to heaven, she prayed: "O Lord, have mercy on his staying up for long hours and his loud crying in the darkness of the night while people slept... O Lord, have mercy on his hunger and his thirst on his journeys from Madinah and Makkah while he fasted... O Lord, bless his righteousness to his mother and his father... O Lord, I commend him to Your cause and I am pleased with whatever You decree for him. And grant me for his sake the reward of those who are patient and who persevere."

By sunset, Abdullah was dead. Just over ten days later, his mother joined him. She was a hundred years old. Age had not made her infirm nor blunted the keenness of her mind.

The Story of Barakah

A Lesson in Loyalty and Love

We do not know precisely how the young Abyssinian girl ended up for sale in Makkah. We do not know her 'roots', who her mother was, or her father or her ancestors. There were many like her, boys and girls, Arabs and non-Arabs, who were captured and brought to the slave market of the city to be sold.

A terrible fate awaited some who ended up in the hands of cruel masters or mistresses who exploited their labor to the full and treated them with the utmost harshness.

A few in that inhuman environment were rather more fortunate. They were taken into the homes of more gentle and caring people.

Barakah, the young Abyssinian girl, was one of the more fortunate ones. She was saved by the generous and kind Abdullah, the son of Abd al-Muttalib. She became the only servant in his household and when he was married, to the lady Aminah, she looked after her affairs as well.

Two weeks after the couple were married, according to Barakah, Abdullah's father came to their house and instructed his son to go with a trading caravan that was leaving for Syria. Aminah was

deeply distressed and cried: "How strange! How strange! How can my husband go on a trading journey to Syria while I am yet a bride and the traces of henna are still on my hands."

Abdullah's departure was heartbreaking. In her anguish, Aminah fainted. Soon after he left, Barakah said: "When I saw Aminah unconscious, I shouted in distress and pain: 'O my lady!' Aminah opened her eyes and looked at me with tears streaming down her face. Suppressing a groan she said: 'Take me to bed, Barakah.' Aminah stayed bedridden for a long time. She spoke to no one. Neither did she look at anyone who visited her except Abd al-Muttalib, that noble and gentle old man. Two months after the departure of Abdullah, Aminah called me at dawn one morning and, her face beaming with joy, she said to me: 'O Barakah! I have seen a strange dream.'

'Something good, my lady,' I said.

'I saw lights coming from my abdomen lighting up the mountains, the hills and the valleys around Makkah.'

'Do you feel pregnant, my lady?'

'Yes, Barakah,' she replied. 'But I do not feel any discomfort as other women feel.'

'You shall give birth to a blessed child who will bring goodness,' I said."

So long as Abdullah was away, Aminah remained sad and melancholic. Barakah stayed at her side trying to comfort her and make her cheerful by talking to her and relating stories. Aminah however became even more distressed when Abd al-Muttalib came and told her she had to leave her home and go to the mountains as other Makkans had done because of an impending attack on the city by the ruler of Yemen, someone called Abrahah. Aminah told him that she was too grief-stricken and weak to leave for the mountains but insisted that Abrahah could never enter Makkah and destroy the Kabah because it was protected by the Lord. Abd al-Muttalib became very agitated but there was no sign of fear on Aminah's face. Her confidence that the Kabah would not be harmed was well-founded. Abrahah's army with an elephant in the vanguard was destroyed before it could enter Makkah.

Day and night, Barakah stayed beside Aminah. She said: "I slept at the foot of her bed and heard her groans at night as she called for her absent husband. Her moans would awaken me and I would try to comfort her and give her courage."

The first part of the caravan from Syria returned and was joyously welcomed by the trading families of Makkah. Barakah went secretly to the house of Abd al-Muttalib to find out about Abdullah but had no news of him. She went back to Aminah but did not tell her what she had seen or heard in order not to distress her. The entire caravan eventually returned but not with Abdullah.

Later, Barakah was at Abd al-Muttalib's house when news came from Yathrib that Abdullah had died. She said: "I screamed when I heard the news. I don't know what I did after that except that I ran to Aminah's house shouting, lamenting for the absent one who would never return, lamenting for the beloved one for whom we waited so long, lamenting for the most beautiful youth of Makkah, for Abdullah, the pride of the Quraysh. When Aminah heard the painful news, she fainted and I stayed by her bedside while she was in a state between life and death. There was no one else but me in Aminah's house. I nursed her and looked after her during the day and through the long nights until she gave birth to her child, "Muhammad ", on a night in which the heavens were resplendent with the light of God."

When Muhammad was born, Barakah was the first to hold him in her arms. His grandfather came and took him to the Kabah and with all Makkah, celebrated his birth. Barakah stayed with Aminah while Muhammad was sent to the badiyah with the lady Halimah who looked after him in the bracing atmosphere of the open desert. At the end of five years, he was brought back to Makkah and Aminah received him with tenderness and love and Barakah welcomed him "with joy, longing and admiration".

When Muhammad was six years old, his mother decided to visit the grave of her husband, Abdullah, in Yathrib. Both Barakah and Abd al-Muttalib tried to dissuade her. Aminah however was determined. So one morning they set off -- Aminah, Muhammad and Barakah huddled together in a small hawdaj mounted on a large camel, part of a huge caravan that was going to Syria. In order to shield the tender child from any pain and worry, Aminah did not tell Muhammad that she was going to visit the grave of his father.

The caravan went at a brisk pace. Barakah tried to console Aminah for her son's sake and much of the time the boy Muhammad slept with his arms around Barakah's neck.

The caravan took ten days to reach Yathrib. The boy Muhammad was left with his maternal uncles of the Banu Najjar while Aminah went to visit the grave of Abdullah. Each day for a few weeks she stayed at the grave. She was consumed by grief.

On the way back to Makkah, Aminah became seriously ill with fever. Halfway between Yathrib and Makkah, at a place called al-Abwa, they stopped. Aminah's health deteriorated rapidly. One pitch dark night, she was running a high temperature. The fever had got to her head and she called out to Barakah in a choking voice. Barakah related: "She whispered in my ear: 'O Barakah, I shall depart from this world shortly. I commend my son Muhammad to your care. He lost his father while he was in my abdomen. Here he is now, losing his mother under his very eyes. Be a mother to him, Barakah. And don't ever leave him.' My heart was shattered and I began to sob and wail. The child was distressed by my wailing and began to weep. He threw himself into his mother's arms and held tightly onto her neck. She gave one last moan and then was forever silent."

Barakah wept. She wept bitterly. With her own hands she dug a grave in the sand and buried Aminah, moistening the grave with whatever tears were left in her heart. Barakah returned with the orphan child to Makkah and placed him in the care of his grandfather. She stayed at his house to look after him. When Abd al-Muttalib died two years later, she went with the child to the house of his uncle Abu Talib and continued to look after his needs until he was grown up and married the lady Khadijah.

Barakah then stayed with Muhammad and Khadijah in a house belonging to Khadijah. "I never left him and he never left me," she said. One day Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, called out to her and said: "Ya Ummah!" (He always called her "Mother") "Now I am a married man, and you are still unmarried. What do you think if someone should come now and ask to marry you?" Barakah looked at Muhammad and said: "I shall never leave you. Does a mother abandon her son?" Muhammad smiled and kissed her head. He looked at his wife Khadijah and said to her: "This is Barakah. This is my mother after my own mother. She is the rest of my family."

Barakah looked at the lady Khadijah who said to her: "Barakah, you have sacrificed your youth for the sake of Muhammad. Now he wants to pay back some of his obligations to you. For my sake and his, agree to be married before old age overtakes you."

"Whom shall I marry, my lady?" asked Barakah. "There is here now Ubayd ibn Zayd from the Khazraj tribe of Yathrib. He has come to us seeking your hand in marriage. For my sake, don't refuse."

Barakah agreed. She married Ubayd ibn Zayd and went with him to Yathrib. There she gave birth to a son whom she called Ayman and from that time onwards people called her "Umm Ayman", the mother of Ayman.

Her marriage however did not last very long. Her husband died and she returned once more to Makkah to live with her "son" Muhammad in the house of the lady Khadijah. Living in the same household at the time were Ali ibn Abi Talib, Hind (Khadijah's daughter by her first husband), and Zayd ibn Harithah.

Zayd was an Arab from the tribe of Kalb who was captured as a boy and brought to Makkah to be sold in the slave market. He was bought by Khadijah's nephew and put in her service. In Khadijah's household, Zayd became attached to Muhammad and devoted himself to his service. Their relationship was like that of a son to a father. Indeed when Zayd's father came to Makkah in search of him, Zayd was given the choice by Muhammad of either going with his father or staying with him. Zayd's reply to his father was: "I shall never leave this man. He has treated me nobly, as a father would treat his son. Not a single day have I felt that I am a slave. He has looked after me well. He is kind and loving towards me and strives for my enjoyment and happiness. He is the most noble of men and the greatest person in creation. How can I leave him and go with you?...I shall never leave him."

Later, in public Muhammad proclaimed the freedom of Zayd. However, Zayd continued to live with him as part of his household and devoted himself to his service.

When Muhammad was blessed with prophethood, Barakah and Zayd were among the first to believe in the message he proclaimed. They bore with the early Muslims the persecution which the Quraysh meted out to them.

Barakah and Zayd performed invaluable services to the mission of the Prophet. They acted as part of an intelligence service exposing themselves to the persecution and punishment of the Quraysh and risking their lives to gain information on the plans and conspiracies of the mushrikin (those who associate partners with God).

One night the mushrikun blocked off the roads leading to the House of al-Arqam where the Prophet gathered his companions regularly to instruct them in the teachings of Islam. Barakah had some urgent information from Khadijah which had to be conveyed to the Prophet. She risked her life trying to reach the House of al-Arqam. When she arrived and conveyed the message to the Prophet, he smiled and said to her: "You are blessed, Umm Ayman. Surely you have a place in Paradise." When Umm Ayman left, the Prophet looked at his companions and asked: "Should one of you desire to marry a woman from the people of Paradise, let him marry Umm Ayman."

Ali the companions remained silent and did not utter a word. Umm Ayman was neither beautiful nor attractive. She was by now about fifty years old and looked rather frail. Zayd ibn al-Harithah however came forward and said: "Messenger of God, I shall marry Umm Ayman. By God, she is better than women who have grace and beauty."

Zayd and Umm Ayman were married and were blessed with a son whom they named Usamah. The Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, loved Usamah as his own son. Often he played with him, kissed him and fed him with his own hands. The Muslims would say: "He is the beloved son of the beloved." From an early age Usamah distinguished himself in the service of Islam, and was later given weighty responsibilities by the Prophet.

When the Prophet migrated to Yathrib, henceforth to be known as al-Madinah, he left Umm Ayman behind in Makkah to look after certain special affairs in his household. Eventually she migrated to Madinah on her own. She made the long and difficult journey through the desert and mountainous terrain on foot. The heat was killing and sandstorms obscured the way but she persisted, borne along by her deep love and attachment for Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace. When she reached Madinah, her feet were sore and swollen and her face was covered with sand and dust.

"Ya Umm Ayman! Ya Ummi! (O Umm Ayman! O my mother!) Indeed for you is a place in Paradise!" exclaimed the Prophet when he saw her. At Madinah, Umm Ayman played her full part in the affairs of the Muslims. At Uhud she distributed water to the thirsty and tended the wounded. She accompanied the Prophet on some expeditions, to Khaybar and Hunayn for example.

Her son Ayman, a devoted companion of the Prophet was martyred at Hunayn in the eighth year after the Hijrah. Barakah's husband, Zayd, was killed at the Battle of Muthah in Syria after a lifetime of distinguished service to the Prophet and Islam. Barakah at this time was about seventy years old and spent much of her time at home. The Prophet, accompanied by Abu Bakr and Umar often visited her and asked: "Ya Ummi! Are you well?" and she would reply: "I am well, O Messenger of God so long as Islam is."

After the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, had died, Barakah would often be found with tears in her eyes. She was once asked, "Why are you crying?" and she replied: "By God, I knew that the Messenger of God would die but I cry now because the revelation from on high has come to an end for us."

Barakah was unique in that she was the only one who was so close to the Prophet throughout his life from birth till death. Her life was one of selfless service in the Prophet's household. She remained deeply devoted to the person of the noble, gentle and caring Prophet. Above all, her devotion to the religion of Islam was strong and unshakable. She died during the caliphate of Uthman. Her roots were unknown but her place in Paradise was assured.

The Story of Julaybib

A Lesson in Marrying Virtue

His name was unusual and incomplete. Julaybib means "small grown" being the diminutive form of the word "Jalbab". The name is an indication that Julaybib was small and short, even of dwarf-like stature. More than that, he is described as being "damim" which means ugly, deformed, or of repulsive appearance.

Even more disturbing, for the society in which he lived, Julaybib's lineage was not known. There is no record of who his mother or his father was or to what tribe he belonged. This was a grave disability in the society in which he lived. Julaybib could not expect any compassion or help, any protection or support from a society that placed a great deal of importance on family and tribal connections. In this regard, all that was known of him was that he was an Arab and that, as far as the new community of Islam was concerned, he was one of the Ansar. Perhaps he belonged to one of the outlying tribes beyond Madinah and had drifted into the city or he could even have been from among the Ansar of the city itself.

The disabilities under which Julaybib lived would have been enough to have him ridiculed and shunned in any society and in fact he was prohibited by one person, a certain Abu Barzah of the Aslam tribe, from entering his home. He once told his wife: "Do not let Julaybib enter among you. If

he does, I shall certainly do (something terrible to him)."Probably because he was teased and scoffed at in the company of men, Julaybib used to take refuge in the company of women. Was there any hope of Julaybib being treated with respect and consideration? Was there any hope of his finding emotional satisfaction as an individual and as a man? Was there any hope of his enjoying the relationships which others take for granted? And in the new society emerging under the guidance of the Prophet, was he so insignificant as to be overlooked in the preoccupation with the great affairs of state and in the supreme issues of life and survival which constantly engaged the attention of the Prophet?

Just as he was aware of the great issues of life and destiny, the Prophet of Mercy was also aware of the needs and sensibilities of his most humble companions. With Julaybib in mind, the Prophet went to one of the Ansar and said: "I want to have your daughter married."

"How wonderful and blessed, O Messenger of God and what a delight to the eye (this would be)," replied the Ansari man with obvious joy and happiness.

"I do not want her for myself," added the Prophet.

"Then for whom, O Messenger of God?" asked the man, obviously somewhat let down. "For Julaybib," said the Prophet.

The Ansari must have been too shocked to give his own reaction and he merely said: "I will consult with her mother."And off he went to his wife. "The Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, wants to have your daughter married," he said to her. She too was thrilled. "What a wonderful idea and what a delight to the eye (this would be)," she said.

"He doesn't want to marry her himself but he wants to marry her to Julaybib," he added. She was flabbergasted.

"To Julaybib! No, never to Julaybib! No, by the living God, we shall not marry (her) to him," she protested.

As the Ansari was about to return to the Prophet to inform him of what his wife had said, the daughter who had heard her mother's protestations, asked: "Who has asked you to marry me?"

Her mother told her of the Prophet's request for her hand in marriage to Julaybib. When she heard that the request had come from the Prophet and that her mother was absolutely opposed to the idea, she was greatly perturbed and said:"Do you refuse the request of the Messenger of God? Send

me to him for he shall certainly not bring ruin to me." This was the reply of a truly great person who had a clear understanding of what was required of her as a Muslim. What greater satisfaction and fulfillment can a Muslim find than in responding willingly to the requests and commands of the Messenger of God! No doubt, this companion of the Prophet, whose name we do not even know had heard the verse of the Quran: "Now whenever God and His Apostle have decided a matter, it is not for a believing man or believing woman to differ in so far as they themselves are concerned. And he who disobeys God and His Prophet has already, most obviously, gone astray." (The Quran, Surah al-Ahzab, 33:36).

This verse was revealed in connection with the marriage of Zaynab bint Jahsh and Zayd ibn al-Harithah which was arranged by the Prophet to show the egalitarian spirit of Islam. Zaynab at first was highly offended at the thought of marrying Zayd a former slave and refused to do so. The Prophet prevailed upon them both and they were married. The marriage however ended in divorce and Zaynab was eventually married to the Prophet himself. It is said that the Ansari girl read the verse to her parents and said: "I am satisfied and submit myself to whatever the Messenger of God deems good for me." The Prophet heard of her reaction and prayed for her: "O Lord, bestow good on her in abundance and make not her life one of toil and trouble."

Among the Ansar, it is said there was not a more eligible bride than she. She was married by the Prophet to Julaybib and they lived together until he was killed.

And how was Julaybib killed? He went on an expedition with the Prophet, peace be on him, and an encounter with some mushrikin ensued. When the battle was over, the Prophet asked his companions: "Have you lost anyone?" They replied giving the names of their relatives or close friends who were killed. He put the same questions to other companions and they also named the ones they had lost in the battle. Another group answered that they had lost no close relative whereupon the Prophet said: "But I have lost Julaybib. Search for him in the battlefield." They searched and found him beside seven mushrikin whom he had struck before meeting his end. The Prophet stood up and went to the spot where Julaybib, his short and deformed companion, lay. He stood over him and said: "He killed seven and then was killed? This (man) is of me and I am of him." He repeated this two or three times. The Prophet then took him in his arms and it is said that he had no better bed besides the forearms of the messenger of God. The Prophet then dug for him a grave and himself placed him in it. He did not wash him for martyrs are not washed before burial. Julaybib and his wife are not usually among the companions of the Prophet whose deeds are sung and whose exploits are recounted with reverence and admiration as they should be. But in the

meager facts that are known about them and which have here been re counted we see how humble human beings were given hope and dignity by the Prophet where once there was only despair and self-debasement.

The attitude of the unknown and unnamed Ansari girl who readily agreed to be the wife of a physically unattractive man was an attitude which reflected a profound understanding of Islam. It reflected on her part the effacement of personal desires and preferences even when she could have counted on the support of her parents. It reflected on her part a total disregard for social pressures. It reflected above all a ready and implicit confidence in the wisdom and authority of the Prophet in submitting herself to whatever he deemed good. This is the attitude of the true believer.

In Julaybib, there is the example of a person who was almost regarded as a social outcast because of his appearance. Given help, confidence and encouragement by the noble Prophet, he was able to perform acts of courage and make the supreme sacrifice and deserve the commendation of the Prophet: "He is of me and I am of him."

This Packet contains excerpts from Ibn Katheer's Stories of the Prophets (Translation by Imaam Imaduddin Abu Fida Ismail), Ibn Katheer's Stories of the Quran (Translation by Ali Sayed Al Halawani) and Companions of the Prophet by Abdul Wahid Hamid