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THE AGE OF BLISS-3

UMAR
IBN AL-KHATTAB



ZEKERİYA ULAŞLI

NEW JERSEY • LONDON • FRANKFURT • CAIRO

TUGHRA
BOOKS

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A Child Is Born

Hidden in the foothills of a hill nestled a village whose earth-roofed houses crowded around each other surrounded by sparsely dispersed, small and withered shrubs. The serious al-Khattab lived in one of these houses. He was renowned for his sternness and no one had ever seen him laugh. These days, al-Khattab was even more dour and unbearable than usual. A baby was about to be born in his family and he was terrified it might be a girl.

The people living on the Arabian peninsula deemed the birth of a female child inauspicious and whoever was unfortunate enough to have a girl

would either suffer humiliation and blame at the hands of their community, or they would bury the poor child alive.

One morning, al-Khattab left his home early and took his animals out to pasture. Wandering around the fields all day his mind was consumed with thoughts of the approaching birth. When evening arrived, he herded the animals and brought them back down the mountain path. By the time they arrived home, the sun had disappeared behind the mountains. Al-Khattab led them to the barn and fed them, then headed home, tired and in need of a rest. Passing through the narrow streets with hurried steps, he reached his house and was startled to see a crowd of people gathered outside.

Rooted to the spot, a thousand thoughts raced through his mind. What did this crowd mean? Had something bad happened? Seeing him standing motionless, a twelve-year old boy ran up to him and said, "I have good news for you, but I want a gift in return for telling it."

Feeling some relief from the boys words, al-Khattab held the child's arm and replied, "Tell me, what is the good news?"

“If you don’t buy me what I want, I will say nothing.”

Realizing he would get no information without agreeing to the boy’s terms, al-Khattab said, “Tell me then, what do you want?”

“New shoes” came the joyful reply.

“I’ll buy you brand new shoes,” replied al-Khattab.

“Alright then!” said the boy, and told al-Khattab the good news he waited so eagerly to hear, “You have a son!”

Overcome with joy, al-Khattab stuttered, “I, I, I... I have a son!”

“Yes, congratulations, al-Khattab! Your son was born just a few minutes ago.”

Al-Khattab had never experienced such relief and such happiness. Lifting the boy up in a strong embrace he said, “I’ll buy you not one, but ten pairs of shoes!”

When he was lowered to the earth, the boy quickly ran home, dreaming of all the new shoes he would have. Smiling broadly as he had never smiled before, al-Khattab walked home and on entering his house shouted, “Let us prepare a feast!”

Umar ibn al-Khattab ﷺ

This new baby boy was al-Khattab's first child. Feeling as light as a feather now the weight of worry had been lifted from his shoulders, al-Khattab began the preparations for the party, running from one place to another. The ensuing festival held in honor of his son lasted for days. Al-Khattab's house was filled with people congratulating him. The dream he had held dear for so long, of having his own son, had finally come true. Swaddled tightly, baby Umar slept peacefully, unaware of all the fuss around him.





Umar Grows

The time into which Umar was born was full of great upheaval among the families of Mecca. Sons had no respect for their fathers and, in turn, fathers neglected their sons. The hearts of many were tainted with deceit and disloyalty from the wealthiest merchant to the poorest beggar. Everyone tried to gain the upper hand over their fellow men while women and children were treated as worthless possessions.

Without guidance from a true religion, the Mecan people worshipped homemade idols that were often made of bread or halva and eaten after worship or when the owners became hungry. At the same time

as falsely imbuing their idols with godlike power, the people viewed them as mere sustenance. Umar also sometimes worshipped these idols with his father, watching his father as they prayed.

Umar's father was a shepherd and from a young age Umar helped him with the animals. As he grew, his responsibilities increased and he soon began to take the animals out to pasture by himself. Umar would often read beautiful poems as he grazed the animals, appreciating the skill of the region's fine poets. Despite the social turmoil in Arabia, poetry was popular and many poets reached the peak of their art at this time. In contrast to this peaceful pastime, Umar was a passionate wrestler. From a young age he had enjoyed wrestling with his friends and his prowess in this sport gained him self-confidence.

One hot summer's morning, woken by the sun streaming in through the window, Umar rose from his bed and went to the window. Disquieted by a fitful night's sleep, he watched the passersby on the street below before making his way to the kitchen where his mother was busy preparing his breakfast. "I see you have woken up early," she greeted him.

"What should I do, mother? I couldn't sleep."

“How come, my child?”

“I’m not exactly sure. Perhaps it’s because I’m excited,” replied Umar, smiling.

“I’m counting on you, my son. Today you are going to wrestle all the other children to the ground.”

“I can’t wait for the tournament to begin! I’m sure I’ll win all the matches.”

“If you’re the son of al-Khattab, you will be able to. Hurry now. Go and get ready so that we aren’t late. Your friends will be here soon.”

A large wrestling tournament was to take place at Mecca’s fairground and Umar hoped to prove his status as the best young wrestler in the city. Listening to his mother, Umar returned to his room and dressed in his wrestling clothes. His father had already taken the animals out to pasture. Returning to the kitchen, Umar was appraised by his mother from head to toe.

“You look so brave,” she said, proudly.

Hearing these words of praise made Umar very happy. As he sat eating breakfast with his mother, Umar’s friends began to arrive. When everyone had gathered, they set off for the fairground.

The fairground was full of expectant people waiting for the tournament to begin. First the young boys would wrestle and then the adults. Umar was bubbling over with excitement and couldn't keep still. He heard his name and his friend's names announced; the wrestling matches were about to begin. At the end of the matches, young Umar remained undefeated. The crowd went wild with applause and Umar had never felt so happy.

A few days later, Umar was wandering around the streets of Mecca feeling like a hero when he was approached by his cousin, Khalid, may Allah be pleased with him. Khalid greeted him and said, "From what I hear, you defeated everyone at the fair."

"That's right, Khalid," replied Umar.

"Well, if you accept, I also want to wrestle with you."

"Why didn't you come to wrestle at the fairground?" asked Umar.

Khalid responded, "My father didn't allow me to go."

"Well then, meet me on the plains tomorrow at noon," said Umar cheerfully.

Umar met Khalid the next day at the agreed place and when everything was ready, the signal to start was given; the wrestling match began.

Despite having beaten everyone at the tournament, Umar was struggling against his cousin. Khalid was a worthy rival for Umar. Just as Umar felt he was gaining the upper hand, Khalid wrestled him to the floor, hard. Umar gritted his teeth and grasped his leg in pain. His friends rushed over and saw that his leg was broken. The match was called off without either opponent winning. Umar was upset that he'd been unable to defeat Khalid ibn al-Walid and didn't forget that match for a long time.





Expected Good News

Umar, the son of al-Khattab, was a hot tempered young man and as one of the polytheists, he was numbered among those who worked against the noble Prophet often persecuting those who followed him. On hearing that his neighbor's family had accepted Islam, Umar lost himself with rage and beat his neighbor repeatedly.

One hot day in Mecca, while the streets was burning under the merciless sun, a group of leading Meccan's including Umar were discussing how to prevent the spread of Islam in their city. Frustrated by the increasing popularity of the new religion, they offered ideas on what to do. Some suggested increas-

ing the pressure on the Muslims, including using torture against them while other proposed expelling them from the city. At last Hisham's turn came to speak. Swallowing loudly he said, "Friends, I think this business has only one solution. To kill Muhammad."

The room erupted; everyone was speaking at the same time, each trying to be heard above the rest. One of them cried, "How could this be handled, Hisham? Who could dare to confront Muhammad's relatives? Whoever committed this deed would practically be signing his own death warrant."

"I realize that this is a dangerous business. Whoever is willing to kill Muhammad will be rewarded with one hundred camels," offered Hisham.

On all sides of the room the men looked around at each other; who was brave enough or willing enough to take this job? There was silence. No one was willing to undertake such a dangerous task. One man said to Hisham, "You can do this job yourself and keep your hundred camels."

The stuttering Hisham was rescued from replying by the interjection, "If anyone can do this job it's al-Khattab's son, Umar."

All eyes turned to Umar, anxiously awaiting his response. Without hesitation, Umar replied, "I'll kill him. Just tell me where I can find him."

The group breathed a sigh of relief upon hearing this answer. One of them told him where to find him, "You can find him in Ibn Arqam's house," he said.

Umar took his sword and stepped outside into the daylight. He was going to kill the noble Prophet. On the road, he met Nuaym, may Allah be pleased with him, one of his relatives who asked him, "Where are you going Umar?"

"To destroy Muhammad," he replied angrily. Nuaym thought his heart was going to stop beating. A Muslim himself, he had hidden his new religion from his family. Shaking, he asked, "Are you sure, Umar?"

The question enraged an already angry Umar. "You ask me if I am sure? Of course! Do I seem like I am joking?"

Nuaym was desperate. How could he put Umar off such an evil task. "Do you think the sons of Abdi Manaf will let you live after this?" he suggested, add-

ing, "Before you kill Muhammad, take a look at your own family members."

Umar stopped for a moment and asked him, "What are you talking about? Which family members?"

"I'm talking about your sister, Fatima, and her husband, Sayd. Both of them are Muslim."

Turning and leaving Nuaym, Umar headed straight for his brother-in-law's house. From inside the house came the sound of the Qur'an being recited. He hammered on the door as if he was going to break it down, alerting the people inside to his presence. Inside the house, Fatima, may Allah be pleased with her, and her husband Sayd, may Allah be pleased with him, were listening to Habbab, may Allah be pleased with him, an ironmonger and one of the first Muslims, reciting the chapter named Ta-Ha. Fatima immediately understood the visitor must be Umar and realized he must have heard about them becoming Muslim. She quickly hid Habbab and the paper with the words of the Qur'an that he had been reading from.

Full of fear, Fatima opened the door to Umar who walked straight up to his brother-in-law Sayd, demanding, “Have you changed your religion?”

“Maybe the religion we have chosen is better than yours,” Sayd responded.

Hearing this, Umar attacked his brother-in-law, kicking and punching him as hard as he could. Fatima tried to separate them but Umar slapped her and threw her to the ground, causing her head to bleed. She stood up slowly, saying, “O Umar, it is not right to believe in idols; believe in the religion of Prophet Muhammad, brought from the one true Allah.”

Seeing Fatima’s bleeding wound brought Umar to his senses. He regretted having hurt his sister like this. Then, he remembered the recitation he had heard from outside the house and ordered Fatima, “Give me what it is you’re reading.”

“What are you going to do?” Fatima was afraid to show the paper to Umar who was already in a huge rage.

“I want to see what Muhammad has brought to you.”

“But you’ll just tear it to pieces, won’t you?” said Fatima.

Umar did not like her response. "If I were going to tear it up, I would say so to your face. I'll read it and give it back to you."

Fatima trusted her brother's words and brought out the paper. Sitting down, Umar took the paper and started reading Surah Ta-Ha. The verse, "*to Him belongs what is in the heavens and what is on the earth,*" caused him to think deeply. He was someone who could appreciate the meaning of poetry. The beauty of the Arabic written on this paper was unlike anything he had ever read before, even by the finest poets in Arabia.

Then he read the line, "*Have faith in Allah and His Prophet.*" These words moved him to his very core, softening his heart. Umar felt all his anger and hatred seep away from him, being replaced by softness and love. With eyes full of tears, he gave the paper back to Fatima. "Such beautiful words," he said, "unlike anything I have ever read or heard before." To the surprise and joy of Fatima and Sayd, Umar then said, "There is no deity but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger." Umar had chosen to become a believer.

Fatima had never been happier, she was laughing and crying at the same time.

Addressing his brother in law, Umar said, "Tell me more about Muhammad and the religion he has brought." Coming out from his hiding place, Habbab was pleased to explain more about Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and the religion to Umar. He was so impressed with what he heard, he repeated his request to see the noble Prophet saying to Sayd, "Take me to Muhammad."

Addressing Umar, Habbab said, "Good news, Umar; you have found the right path now. The prayers of the Messenger of Allah have been accepted. He was always praying for you to become Muslim."

Hearing this, Umar became even more excited. "Let's go, straight away!" he said.

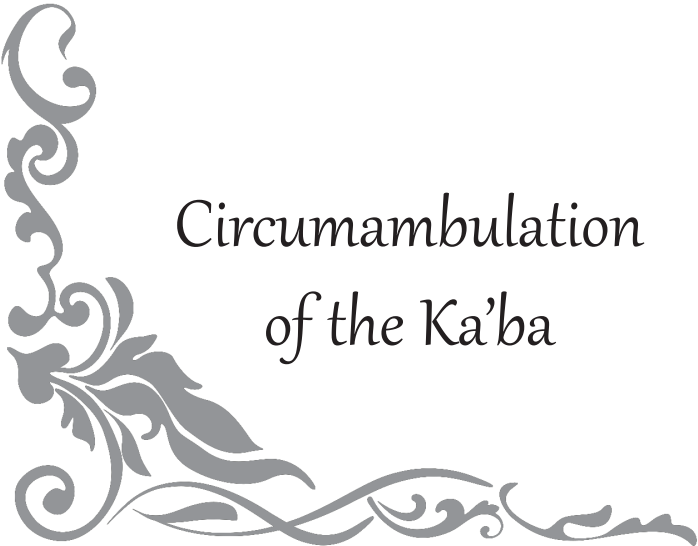
Together with Habbab, Umar set out for Ibn Arqam's house. After a short while, they arrived and knocked on the door. The Companion who opened the door was alarmed to see Umar, and hurried back inside. "Umar has arrived wearing a sword," he reported to the people within.

Hamza, may Allah be pleased with him, another of the Companions and one of the uncles of the noble Prophet, said, "Let him come in. If he has come in good faith, he is welcome, but if he has come with evil intent, I'll take off his head with his own sword."

So Umar and Habbab were invited into the courtyard where the noble Prophet stood to greet them, "O son of al-Khattab, what brings you here? Isn't it true that unless something terrible happens you won't believe in the one true Allah?" he asked.

Nervous and shaking, Umar repeated the words he had said in his sister's house, "I swear that there is no deity other than Allah. I swear again, you're His servant and Messenger."

Hearing these words the happy Prophet cried, "Allahu Akbar! Allah is Great!" and was joined by the other Companions, the courtyard ringing with their shouts.

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Circumambulation of the Ka'ba

Umar's conversion to Islam filled the blessed Prophet and the Companions with happiness. Umar was not only the strongest man in Mecca, he was one of the most courageous and valiant of all people. Everyone in the room congratulated him on his new belief. Then, Umar asked the beloved Prophet, "How many of us Muslims are there, O Messenger of Allah?"

When the noble Prophet replied that there were more than forty, Umar grew excited and suggested, "In that case, why should we hide our faith and our worship? Let's go to al-Masjid al-Haram and worship there!"

The Messenger of Allah accepted Umar's suggestion and they all stood to go to the Ka'ba. Walking together in two rows with Hamza heading the first and Umar heading the second, they headed towards the Ka'ba. The people they met on the streets turned and fled when they saw the determined group; no one had the courage to confront them. Marching along together, they arrived at the Masjid al-Haram.

Seeing the Muslims marching together approaching the Ka'ba alarmed the polytheists. They couldn't understand what was happening. Until that day, the Muslims hadn't left their homes unless it was absolutely necessary. They were even more shocked to see that Umar was among them.

Abu Jahl was the first to speak, jumping to his feet and asking, "What's this, O Umar? What is behind you? What did you come here with?"

Umar roared like a lion, "I came here with the One true Allah and His Servant Muhammad. From now on I am also a Muslim!" He didn't address this speech only to Abu Jahl but to all the people of Mecca.

Abu Jahl couldn't believe what he was hearing. He turned to look at the crowd in astonishment.

Umar turned to the people he found there and ordered, "Nobody move!"

The polytheists were scared speechless. Not a single sound emitted from them. Without saying a word, one by one they left, leaving the space around the Ka'ba empty.

Together with the noble Prophet, all the Muslims circumambulated the Ka'ba with ease. Then, in front of everyone, they prayed.

After this event, the blessed Prophet gave Umar the title of "al-Faruq" meaning "the one who distinguishes between right and wrong" because he was able to separate the true and false.

The polytheists could not accept that the Muslims had behaved so heroically. They couldn't understand how a small group of people had been able to beat them with only words and then worship publicly. They vowed to do all they could to stop them.

The polytheists instigated a boycott against the Muslims. They broke off all relations with them; no one would buy from or sell anything to them. This was the beginning of a new phase in the rift between the polytheists and the Muslims.



Emigration

Islam was spreading throughout the villages and towns in Arabia. Many people and tribes had converted to the new religion and, as the number of Muslims increased, so did their troubles with the polytheists. The pressure on the Muslims grew ever more intense. The polytheists did everything within their power to make life difficult for them.

A group of residents from Medina met with the noble Prophet and his Companions in Aqaba and invited the Muslim community to emigrate to their town. At this time, the persecution of the Muslims in Mecca had reached unbearable levels. Those who were too weak to protect themselves were impris-

oned or left on the hot sand of the desert without sustenance for days at a time. When performing worship they were beaten until they passed out unconscious. Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, received permission from Allah for the emigration.

With Allah's permission, the migration began. Leaving all their belongings behind in Mecca, the Muslims left the city in small groups during the night so as not to be noticed by the polytheists. Umar was among those preparing to make the journey to Medina. Before leaving, he took his sword and went to the Ka'ba, circumambulating it for the last time. Present at the Ka'ba were many of the leading polytheists. Finishing his prayers, Umar turned to them and challenged them saying, "Tomorrow, I am going to Medina. If there is anyone here who wants to leave behind orphaned children, meet me in the Aqiq Valley."

Nobody answered this challenge.

The following morning, Umar set out for the Aqiq Valley. Arriving there he saw that not a single person was waiting for him. For days he travelled under the hot sun until he reached his destination.

The Medinans gave him a wonderful welcome as they had with all the other Muslims, inviting them into their homes and sharing their food and drink with them.

In Medina the Muslims were free to worship as they pleased. This ease when compared to the dire situation the blessed Prophet and Muslims in Mecca were still experiencing upset Umar. He opened his hands and prayed for a long time, asking Allah to send the noble Prophet to Medina. It wasn't long before Umar's prayer was answered. He soon received news that the Messenger of Allah and Abu Bakr had set out on their journey to Medina.

Everyone wanted to be the first to greet the blessed Prophet. They watched from the city gates waiting for their blessed visitor to arrive. At last, the long wait would be over and their wish to see their beloved Prophet would be fulfilled.

When the noble Prophet and Abu Bakr finally arrived, there was a huge celebration. The festival atmosphere was enlivened by the beating of drums and the singing of hymns. With the Messenger of Allah among them, Medina became a different place. All of the Muslims were filled with happiness.

The immigrants who had left all their belongings in Mecca and undertaken the migration only to earn the pleasure of Allah, were living in quite poor conditions, completely dependent on the generous Medinans for their help and hospitality.

The noble Prophet addressed this problem by holding a meeting between the Muslims and the Helpers (the Medinans who had become Muslim). He declared that the Muslims and the Helpers were family. The Helpers would host their new brothers and sisters in their homes. Together they would share their grief and sorrows and help each other both practically and spiritually.

Umar became the brother of Utban ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, who provided him with a house. This extreme generosity moved Umar to tears and he thanked Utban profusely.

Just like Utban, the other Helpers did everything they could to help the immigrants from Mecca sharing their food and drink, their homes and everything else with them. The immigrants were very happy; not only had they been saved from the polytheists, they had gained wonderful friends who were willing to help them.

Some of the immigrants started to work with their Medinan brothers in the date plantations while others sold the dates in the markets. Umar was among them, working together with Utban. However, when they were working, it was impossible for them to attend the meetings that the noble Prophet held and they felt deprived of these discussions. Unable to find a solution, Utban suggested to Umar, “O Umar, you work one day and I’ll work the other day. Whoever isn’t working can go to the Allah’s Messenger’s meetings then tell the other everything he heard. This way, we won’t be deprived anymore.”

Thrilled with this suggestion, Umar hugged his brother saying, “What a wonderful idea. Allah bless you, Utban.”

From that day on they worked separately.





Changing Armour

Three years had passed since the migration to Medina and a year had passed since the Battle of Badr. The Damascus trade route was under the control of the noble Prophet leaving the polytheists unable to trade there. For this, and for Badr, they were planning their revenge. They put together an army of three thousand and travelled to Mount Uhud.

On hearing this news, the Muslims prepared an army and set out to confront the polytheists. Before the battle started, Umar took off his armor and took his elder brother, Zayd, to one side, saying, "Here, take this armor."

Zayd looked at the armor and, not understanding what Umar meant, said, "What shall I do with this?"

"This armor is much better than yours. I want you to wear this."

"What will you wear?"

"I'll wear yours."

Zayd's eyes filled with tears. He realized his younger brother valued his life more than his own and was trying to protect him. Zayd put on Umar's armor and asked, "Are you happy now, my brother?"

"Yes, it's good," Umar smiled.

"Allah bless you, Umar," Zayd said, taking off the armor and handing it back to him. "You need this armor more than me."

No matter how much Umar insisted, Zayd refused to take the better armor and eventually, they carried on towards the battlefield.

The battle was raging and the Muslims displaying the courage of martyrs managed to force the polytheists to retreat. Confident they had the upper hand, the Muslims sheathed their swords and began collecting the spoils of the battle.

Despite having been told not to leave their positions until instructed by the blessed Prophet, the archers also arrived at the battlefield. This was a grave error. Spotting the weakness of the Muslim army, the polytheists approached from behind, trapping them between two fronts. The retreating polytheist army returned and victory started to turn into defeat.

Around this time, there were murmurings on the battlefield that the noble Prophet had been killed. Losing their courage, some of the Muslims said, “If the Messenger of Allah is dead, everything finishes here!”

At the same time, Umar and Zayd cried out, “When the Messenger of Allah dies, we will keep on fighting until our swords are broken and we become martyrs in the Way of Allah,” and with this, attacked the enemy with renewed force.

Seeing that the beloved Prophet was still alive, the Muslims gathered around him. The battle ended, but not in the way the Muslims had hoped for, and they took refuge on the mountain.

Drawing near to them, the polytheist, Abu Sufyan, shouted, “Is Muhammad with you? Is Abu Bakr

with you?” and not hearing a reply, said to the others, “They’re all dead.”

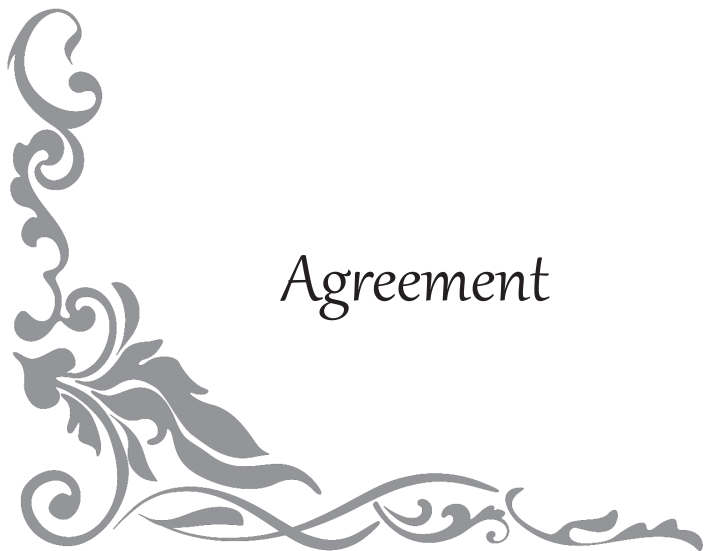
Hearing this, Umar stepped forward saying, “We are all alive and healthy!”

Abu Sufyan turned to his comrades, “Let’s renew our attack,” he said.

But Safwan ibn Umayya disagreed, “Let’s go back. Without killing all the others we can’t get to Muhammad. Let’s not turn our victory into a defeat.”

So, the enemies returned to Mecca and the Muslims followed them, filling them with fear.





The blessed Prophet, together with his Companions, set out for Mecca for the purpose of circumambulating the Ka'ba and performing the minor pilgrimage known as Umra. They reached Hudaibiya near Mecca and the noble Prophet decided to send a message to the Meccan residents to inform them they had come to visit the Ka'ba, not to fight. At first, the noble Prophet wanted to send Umar, but remembering that Umar had many enemies in the city he decided to send Uthman, may Allah be pleased with him, instead.

When Uthman entered Mecca with the message, the angry polytheists took him prisoner. A message

reached the Muslims that Uthman had been killed. The noble Prophet was so upset on hearing this news, he could think of no other way out of the situation than to fight the Quraysh.

Addressing his Companions, the noble Prophet told them that Allah ordered them to swear allegiance to him. More than one thousand four hundred Muslims swore their allegiance to the blessed Prophet. Following this, they met with the Quraysh and made an agreement, the terms of which were: neither side would fight with the other for a period of ten years; the Muslims would forego visiting the Ka'ba this year but would be allowed to return the following year; anyone escaping from Mecca to Medina would be sent back but if anyone wished to seek asylum from Medina to Mecca they would not be sent back. The terms of the agreement were harsh for the Muslims and they were sorely disappointed. However, the noble Prophet saw this agreement as the Quraysh recognizing the Islamic state which was an important step for the future of the Muslim community. This agreement ensured the freedom of movement for everyone, so the beauty of Islam could be spread.

Some of the Muslims objected strongly to not being able to circumambulate the Ka'ba, the most vocal of whom was Umar. He questioned the noble Prophet, "Aren't you the Messenger of Allah?"

"Yes I am," came the reply.

"Our religion is true and theirs is superstition isn't it?"

"Yes it is"

"If so, why did you let them gain the upper hand?"

"I only follow the orders of Allah," the noble Prophet explained.

But Umar was not satisfied with these answers. Refusing to return to Medina without visiting the Ka'ba he continued, "Didn't you say we will circumambulate the Ka'ba?"

The Messenger of Allah replied patiently, "Yes I did."

"So then why are we leaving without performing this?"

"Did I say we will circumambulate the Ka'ba this year?"

"Yes."

“Then, O Umar, you will all circumambulate the Ka’ba.”

At this, Umar left the side of the blessed Prophet, but he was filled with fear. Had he gone too far in opposing the blessed Prophet? He wandered around like this for a while until he heard someone calling him.

“Where are you, O Umar? The noble Prophet wants to see you.”

Umar was wandering around chastising himself, “O Umar, you never could hold your tongue,” as he came to where the blessed Prophet was waiting. When he saw the smile on the noble Prophet’s face, he relaxed a little. The Messenger of Allah told him that after they had met, he received a revelation from Allah which was the chapter called The Conquest. He explained to Umar that while the agreement they made with the Quraysh seemed like a failure, it was actually a victory.



Elected Caliph

Ten years after the migration to Medina, the noble Prophet passed on to the eternal realm. Abu Bakr was elected as caliph of the Islamic State and Umar became his helper. During Abu Bakr's caliphate areas ruled by the empires of Byzantine and Persia were conquered and many people were introduced to Islam. The world's most modest and fair leader, Abu Bakr, died after two years and two months as caliph.

Before his death, while suffering from illness, Abu Bakr transferred his duties to Umar, indicating the regard in which he held him. Understanding that he was near death, he called the Muslims elders

one by one to discuss the transfer of the caliphate with them.

The first elder he called was Abdurrahman ibn Awf, may Allah be pleased with him, who had already received the good news that he had gained a place in Paradise.

“What do you think of Umar?” he asked. “Would you accept him as caliph?”

Abdurrahman replied, “You know Umar better than me.”

“But I want your opinion,” said Abu Bakr.

“Umar is worthy of this position,” he said, “but he gets angry very quickly.”

Then he asked Uthman and Usayd ibn Hudayr, may Allah be pleased with them. They each said, “After you, there is no one better than Umar for this position. He is the best one to be caliph.”

Abu Bakr asked Uthman to bring him a pen and pencil with which he wrote, “I nominate Umar to take over my position as caliph. Obey him. In doing this I am wishing truthfulness and goodness for Allah and His Prophet.”

He presented his choice to the Muslims waiting outside the house, asking, “I have chosen Umar to take my place as caliph. Are you pleased with this? Do you accept it?” The Muslims with one voice replied, “We are pleased. We accept the decision.”

One loud voice could be heard above all the others in the crowd; it was Ali, may Allah be pleased with him. He said, “We are so pleased, if you suggested anyone other than Umar we wouldn’t accept them,” and in this way Umar was chosen as the new caliph.





Unpretentious Commander

As caliph, Umar stepped up the conquests of other lands. He intended to bring Islam to the world, bringing them the news of the one true Allah. At that time, the most powerful empires were those of Byzantine and Persia but Umar's ambitions did not stop there; he also added the lands of Turkestan, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan and Tabaristan.

Amr ibn As, may Allah be pleased with him, was the commander of a Muslim army which conquered Palestine and Egypt. The sacred city of Jerusalem had been part of Palestine since the time of King Solomon. The Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem was the starting point of the blessed Prophet's miracu-

lous journey called Miraj where he ascended through the seven levels of Paradise.

After conquering the surrounding cities, Amr ibn As besieged Jerusalem. The Christians held out for as long as they could but, realizing defeat was imminent, they were willing to make a peace treaty. They requested that the peace treaty be signed by Umar himself. When they insisted on this condition, a message was sent to Umar. On receiving the message, Umar met with the Muslims elders. He left Ali in charge and set out for Jerusalem. When he arrived in Jabiya, Syria, he was welcomed by Khalid ibn al-Walid and some other Companions.

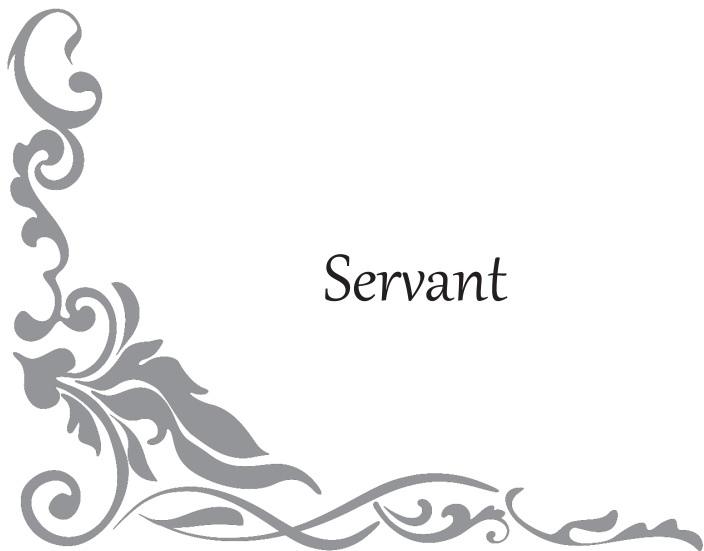
The agreement with the Christians was signed in Jabiya. According to the conditions of the agreement, the lives and property of the indigenous people would be protected, they would be free to worship, they could continue their occupations and would pay a tax to the state. Umar continued his journey to Jerusalem.

During the journey, Umar's horse lost a shoe, hurting its foot and causing it to limp. So as not to cause any more damage to the animal, Umar dismounted and continued his journey on foot. Seeing

this, the Companions presented Umar with a good horse. He mounted but the horse was very lively, playing and rearing up constantly. Umar was not pleased with this show and dismounting he stood in front of the horse and said, "You poor animal what are you so proud of? Who did you learn this behavior from?" and decided to walk instead of ride.

Umar was met outside the city by Abu Ubayda, may Allah be pleased with him, and some of the other commanders. Seeing him arriving on foot, dressed in simple attire, they worried the reputation of the Muslims would decrease in the eyes of the people of Jerusalem. They gave him another horse to enter the city on but Umar refused it, saying, "The honor and glory belong to our religion which Allah gave us. Simplicity is enough for us."

The residents of Jerusalem waited eagerly for the arrival of the Muslim leader. When he arrived, they were surprised to see him looking so ordinary and humble. How could the leader of a country and the caliph of the Muslims look like one of them? Umar's presentation as being one of the people warmed their hearts towards Islam.



Servant

Syria and Egypt were experiencing a terrible plague. The epidemic had spread in a short time, also infecting the Islamic army and causing the deaths of thousands of Muslims. Taking measures to stop the spread of the disease, Umar then wanted to visit the army itself. Leaving Ali in charge, he set out for Jerusalem with a servant and some Companions.

Umar had just one camel to make the long journey and he shared it with his servant, each taking it in turns to ride across the scorching desert. On the last day of the journey, as they approached Jerusalem it was the servant's turn to ride the camel. He

turned to Umar saying, “O Chief of Believers, please ride the camel yourself.”

“No, it’s your turn to ride,” replied Umar, dismounting and giving the camel to the servant.

The servant insisted, “I am a simple servant and you are the leader. The people in Jerusalem should not see you like this, with a servant riding your camel.”

“I may be the Caliph but this doesn’t mean I should take your turn,” replied Umar.

They continued their journey with the servant riding the camel and Umar walking. No matter how hard the servant and the Companions tried to persuade him, Umar would not change his mind. They entered Jerusalem with the servant on the camel and Umar walking behind.

The people of Jerusalem had spilled out onto the streets, hoping to catch a glimpse of the caliph. Not knowing which of the group was the leader, they asked the people around them. When they were shown the man walking behind the camel they were surprised and impressed with the justice and moral standards shown by Umar. The caliph’s humble entrance to the city was the main point of discussion for days.



Crying Children

Umar was working day and night to solve the difficulties of the people and improve their lives. After another night of hard work he was wandering the streets of Mecca with his friend when he noticed a fire blazing. He asked his friend, "Who lit this fire?"

"I don't know, dear caliph."

"Some travelers probably lit it to keep warm because they are unable to continue their journey."

"Yes, I was thinking the same thing."

"How about we go and take a look?" said Umar.

"Yes, that's a good idea."

They started to walk towards the distant fire, talking as they walked. When they arrived, they were surprised by what they found. An old woman and some crying children were sitting next to the fire. Umar asked the woman, "Will you let me approach?"

"If you come in good faith, then you may approach. Otherwise, go away," she said.

Umar assured her that he had come in good faith and moved nearer to them. "What's the matter," he asked. "Why are you here?"

Taking a deep breath, the woman said, "We are staying outside because we have no home. I'm trying to warm the children with the fire."

Pointing to the crying children, the caliph continued, "Why are the children crying?"

Stirring a pot of water, "They are hungry," the woman said.

Umar looked into the pot and asked, "What is in the saucepan?"

"Water," the old woman replied. "I'm pretending to cook food and waiting for the children to fall asleep." She stood up to put some more wood on the fire. "I have no flour, no salt... Caliph Umar

doesn't take care of us. Allah will hold him responsible for this," she said and sat back down.

Umar was deeply affected by the woman's speech. "Allah forgive him," he said. "How could Umar know your situation?"

"How can he be the caliph and not know?" she replied.

Umar looked at his friend and nodded that they should leave. They went to the food depot where Umar showed his friend a sack of flour, saying, "Put it on my back, and you take the oil can."

Seeing the heavy sack of flour, his friend insisted, "O Umar, please let me carry the sack."

"No, put it on my back." Umar became angry with his friend for not complying with his wishes. "Can you carry my sins on Judgment Day?"

Finding no words to reply, his friend put the sack of flour onto Umar's back and the two of them ran to where the woman was staying. They gave the food to the woman and she prepared it for her children, praying, "Allah bless you with goodness. You are more worthy of being caliph than Umar."

Umar was relieved by her words. After looking first at the children and then at the woman he said, "Visit the caliph tomorrow and explain your situation. Maybe he will give you a monthly income. This will save your children from hunger."

Once they were full, the children played for a while and then slept. Umar was happy and, filled with a sense of peace, he left them.

The following day, the woman went to visit the caliph. Entering the room, she was surprised to see the man who had brought her the sack of flour. "Aren't you the compassionate man who visited us last night? Why didn't you introduce yourself?" she asked.

Umar replied, "The important thing isn't to be introduced to Caliph Umar, it is for him to see your needs."

Umar listened to the woman's problems, then he ordered a monthly income to be paid to her to solve her difficulties. The woman was surprised and overjoyed. Praying fervently for the caliph she left and returned to her children.



Who Should Be Punished?

It was night time and the hour was late so there was no one around. Umar and Abdurrahman ibn Awf were walking the streets when they heard some voices coming from a small, single-storey house. Turning to Abdurrahman, Umar asked, “O Abdurrahman, do you know whose house this is?”

“I don’t know,” came the reply.

“This is the house of Rabia ibn Umayr,” Umar said. “The people inside are drunk. They are drinking and shouting. What do you say we go inside and take a look. Who knows what state they are in at this time of the night. Before they cause a problem for other people, let’s catch them and punish them.”

Abdurrahman looked at Umar with surprise and said worriedly, “If we do this, we’ll be punishing ourselves, not them.”

Startled, Umar said, “What do you mean?”

Abdurrahman ibn Awf explained, “Allah says ‘do not investigate the secret shame of the people!’ but we are busy investigating the shame inside this house. What we are doing is worthy of punishment.”

Hearing this, Umar said, “You’re right, I hadn’t thought of it in that way. Let’s go.”

Whilst leaving the area quickly, Umar murmured to himself. “O Allah, don’t deprive people of right-minded friends and don’t let anyone become too insistent in their own judgment.”





Caravan

“For how many days have we been walking,” said the woman, exhausted from the long journey. Her husband was also upset and waiting for the caravan to take a break.

Trying to calm his wife he said, “Be patient for a little while longer.”

But the woman insisted in front of her two children, “You forget it is almost evening. The air has started to get cold. On top of that, the children are hungry, the caravan is tired. Go to the chief of the caravan and tell him to stop in a place where we can rest.” With these words she sent her husband away.

“OK, let it be as you wish,” said the man and he ran to the front of the caravan.

Finding the chief of the caravan, he related his problem. The chief was an old man and understood the situation. “Alright, we’ll camp in a suitable place,” he agreed.

Happy, the man returned to his wife to give her the good news. His wife’s eyes shone with pleasure and she returned to looking after the children.

The caravan arrived at an empty, open space, near Medina. Holding his hand up to halt the caravan the chief called out for all to hear, “We will camp here for the night. Rest well because we will start again early in the morning.”

Preparations for the night began. Whilst the women made the food the men finished putting up the tents. Later, they met in one tent to discuss the plan for the next day.

One of them said, “We are all tired and we don’t know this place. What if something happens to us here?”

The chief of the caravan was also anxious, but after listening to the group he said, “Don’t worry, I

know this place. The lights you can see are from the Muslim's city. No harm can come to us from them."

Someone else said, "I've also heard that the Muslims are trustworthy people. But we are Christians, they could treat us badly because we are not from their religion."

The caravan chief listened and said, "That's true. It would make sense to protect ourselves. We should arrange security for the night."

They selected six young men to provide security for the night. The rest of them went to sleep. Before two hours had passed, the security guards had also fallen asleep. Like the rest of the caravan, they too were exhausted from the journey.

When the security guards slept, not a single person from the caravan remained awake. Exactly at this time, a man came next to the caravan. He checked whether there was any security. This person was none other than Caliph Umar himself.

Seeing that no one was guarding the caravan, he looked around hopefully, checking again to see if someone was standing guard. The place where they had set their camp was not secure. All kinds of peo-

ple could pass that place and could easily steal their valuables.

Umar directly went to his friend, Abdurrahman ibn Awf and knocked on his door. Anxious that someone could be knocking so late at night, Abdurrahman opened the door. He was surprised to see Umar in front of him. "What's the matter O Chief of Believers?"

"No, no. Get ready, we're going" cried Umar.

"Where?"

"A caravan has come to the outskirts of our city. We will go and be watchmen for them."

"Where have they come from and where are they going?"

"I don't know. They are all asleep."

"Of course. I'm coming straight away," agreed Abdurrahman preparing himself and leaving the house.

With hasty steps they made their way to the camp site. Sitting on a hill, they sat down and started to wait. Neither of them was sleepy. Whilst they were waiting and watching the caravan the security guards were still sleeping. A short while later, one

of the youths woke up and saw Umar and Abdurrahman. He couldn't fathom whether they were real or a dream. He was so tired his eyes closed again in sleep. A moment later he woke with a feeling of unease. The people across from him could be thieves. He looked at them carefully. "No, these people can't be thieves. If they intended us harm they would already have stolen our goods and left. The chief probably hired these guards," he said to himself.

It was nearly time for the Morning Prayer. Thinking that their job was finished, Umar and Abdurrahman ibn Awf returned to Medina to pray. The young guard went to the chief and related what he had seen, asking, "Did you hire two guards to protect the caravan during the night?"

The chief looked at the man as if he were a simpleton then said, "Who are you talking about?"

When the guard mentioned the two men the chief was alarmed. Word spread around the caravan about the two strangers seen near the caravan in the night. In a state of panic, everyone checked their belongings to see if anything was missing. Finding nothing amiss, their thoughts turned to why the men would have protected the caravan.

The chief asked the young guard, “Would you remember the two men if you saw them?”

“Yes, I would”

Climbing a small hill and surveying the area the chief decided, “They couldn’t have gone far. Go and find the two men and ask them who they are and why they protected the caravan.”

The young guard ran towards Medina and saw Abdurrahman ibn Awf and Umar at the entrance to the city. Without them seeing him, he followed them for some way. Approaching some people he asked, “Who are they?”

A man answered him, “One is Caliph Umar and the other is his close friend Abdurrahman ibn Awf.”

Not able to believe his ears, the young guard thought the people were joking with him. How could a caliph guard a caravan. “This can’t be possible,” he said to himself.

Receiving the same answer from other people that he asked, he began to believe it was true and ran back to the caravan to report the news to the chief.

“Did you find out who they are?” asked the chief.

“Yes, I did. But when I tell you who they are, you won’t believe your ears,” said the guard.

Everyone waited eagerly for the news.

“The men who protected our caravan were Caliph Umar and his close friend.”

The chief had previously heard about Umar some time before. To make sure he understood correctly he asked again, “Did you say Caliph Umar?”

“Yes, it was him himself.”

The chief was an old and experienced man. He said to those around him, “My friends, Caliph Umar’s beautiful behavior comes from his religion. I’m going to go and find Caliph Umar and become a Muslim.”

Setting out for Medina to find Caliph Umar, the chief was watched by the rest of the caravan. Agreeing that they too wanted to become Muslims, they ran after him. Together they found Caliph Umar and talked with him for a long time. Then, declaring their faith, they accepted Islam and became Muslim.



The Little Hut

An ambassador from Greece came to Medina for a political meeting. Entering the city he asked the first person he saw, "Where can I find the palace of Caliph Umar?"

The Companion replied, "The Caliph doesn't have a palace. He has a shining palace in his heart. He lives in a small hut like the poor people."

The Greek ambassador didn't believe what he was hearing. How could the leader of a state not live in a palace? Leaving the heavy load of gifts he had brought to one side, he set out in search of Caliph Umar. After following the directions he had been given, he came to the caliph's hut. Asking a woman where he could find

him, she pointed to a man sitting under a date tree, “There is the caliph you are looking for. He’s sitting under the date tree,” she said.

The ambassador looked at the man. How could this be the caliph; sitting under a tree without even a single sentry to protect him? Moving closer, Umar saw him and stood up, welcoming him. He invited the ambassador to sit with him under the tree. They sat together and talked for a long time. The Greek ambassador was so impressed with Caliph Umar, he forgot everything that he wanted to say to him.





Allah Sees Us

During the night, Umar often walked the streets of Medina seeking out those in need. One night, while wandering, he was murmuring a verse from the Qur'an, "Wherever you are, Allah is with you," when he heard a woman's voice.

"Don't forget to boil water with the milk, my daughter."

Umar stopped and listened with interest as to how the girl would answer.

"Mother, didn't Caliph Umar instruct us not to boil water with milk?"

"Well, Caliph Umar is not here. How can he know if you added water to the milk?" replied the woman.

“Yes mother, the caliph isn’t here. He can’t see us, but Allah sees and knows,” said the girl.

Her answer affected the listening Umar greatly. As he was leaving he repeated to himself the verse from the Qur’an, “*Wherever you are, Allah is with you.*” The girl’s answer to her mother had made him very happy.

The following morning, after praying he decided to seek out the woman whose voice he had heard last night. When he knocked at her door, the woman was surprised to see Caliph Umar standing in front of her. Recovering her composure she asked, “Is there something you want, Caliph Umar?”

Umar asked the woman if her daughter was married or not.

“She is single, O Chief of Believers,” she replied.

Hearing the answer he had hoped for, Umar continued, “Then I would like to ask for her hand to marry my son, Asim,” he said.

“O Chief of Believers, this would be a great honor for us,” said the woman. “I’ll ask my daughter. If she is willing, then why shouldn’t it be.”

When the girl was petitioned, she accepted with pleasure and so it was that the girl who gave a lesson in propriety to her mother, became the daughter-in-law of Caliph Umar.



A Man Pursuing His Rights

After becoming the Governor of Basra, when preaching Abu Musa al-Ashari would first thank Allah, then greet the noble Prophet and then praise Caliph Umar. One day he was approached by a man called Dabba ibn Mihsan who asked, “Why don’t you praise Abu Bakr in your sermons?”

Displeased by this comment, Abu Musa wrote a letter to Caliph Umar complaining about Dabba ibn Mihsan. “Send him to me,” came the reply from Umar.

Not long after, while walking, Umar came across a traveler wearing dusty clothes. Umar greeted him

and the man returned his greeting and introduced himself, "I am Dabba ibn Mihsan. I'm coming from Basra."

Umar's face became long and he said to the man, "Then I'm not greeting you or welcoming you."

Dabba didn't like this reply. He was made very sad by Umar's attitude but whatever the result, he was determined to seek justice. He overcame his emotion and said to Umar, "Even if you don't greet me, the one who gives goodness and peace is Allah. But I want to ask you this. Even though I'm not guilty of anything, why did you bring me all the way here from Basra? Why did you treat me in this way? Don't you know Allah will question you about this?"

Hearing this, Umar replied, "Why are you disturbing my governor? What do you have against him?"

Taking a deep breath, Dabba said, "I'll explain everything," and started to talk. "When giving his sermons, your governor first thanks Allah, sends greetings to the noble Prophet and then praises you. I reminded him about Abu Bakr and asked why he doesn't also praise him. That is all that has come between us."

Hearing this, Umar was filled with regret. He understood he had made a mistake, judging the man without listening to him first. He should have listened to both sides before making his decision. “You are right,” he said to Dabba, his eyes filling with tears. “Everyone can make a mistake, but the important thing is not to insist on this mistake. Allah says; ‘When my believers know they made a mistake, they never insist on it.’”

Dabba forgave Umar who said to him, “In truth, one day and one night of Abu Bakr is worth more than Umar and his whole family.”



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Allah Sees and Hears Everything

Seventeen years had passed since the Muslims migration to Medina. One day, Caliph Umar called Sayd ibn Thabit, may Allah be pleased with him, next to him and said, "I have decided to go to Mecca and perform Umra. You must represent me here while I'm gone."

Umar set off on his journey. Greeting a shepherd that he met on the way, he said, "We need a sheep. Will you sell us one?"

Looking at the stranger from head to toe, the shepherd replied, "No, I won't sell one."

"Why?"

The shepherd explained, "Because, I am a shepherd. I don't own the flock."

Ignoring this reason, Umar insisted, "Come on, give us one of the sheep and take the money. If you tell the owner a wolf caught it, that will be an end to the issue."

"I can't do it."

"Why can't you do it? I'm making you a good offer."

"I can't, because Allah sees us and hears everything we are saying. How will I answer him?"

This answer brought Caliph Umar to tears. "This is the man I am looking for," he thought to himself. "A brave and honest man." He asked the shepherd, "What is the name of the person you work for?"

Receiving the name from the shepherd, Umar left. The shepherd looked on in astonishment at this man who one minute offered a dishonest deal and the next minute was reduced to tears.

Arriving in Mecca, Umar called the owner of the sheep. "I want to take your shepherd," he said.

"Of course, you can take him, O Chief of Believers," said the man. "But first, please tell me why you want this."

Umar related what had passed to the man and, in this way, the shepherd changed his master. News was sent to him and he came next to them in Mecca. He was very surprised to see his master with the strange man who had approached him the previous day. His master informed him, “You are now tied to Caliph Umar.”

The shepherd couldn’t believe what he was hearing. Umar, gave the shepherd his freedom and presented him with a flock of sheep.





A Woman Made Him Cry

One day, Umar was walking with his friend, Mualla. From behind them a woman's voice called, "Stop, Umar! Wait for me."

Umar stopped walking and turning around, caught up with the woman. "Yes, aunty," he said.

The woman looked him up and down then said, "You were once a small child but now you are grown and you are the Chief of Believers."

Without saying a word, Umar continued to listen to the woman.

"In fact, son of al-Khattab, you shouldn't let this spoil you. Don't forget to respect Allah," she said.

Umar listened to the woman like a little child, angering Mualla. Not able to hold himself, Mualla exploded, “Enough woman! You have made the caliph cry.”

“Be quiet!” Umar said to Mualla. “Do you know who this woman is?”

Mualla didn’t answer, so Umar continued, “This woman is Khawlah bint Hakim. Allah accepted her prayers and helped her. It isn’t possible for me not to listen to her. If she talks until the sun goes down I will listen to her, only stopping for the prayers.”





Witness

A man was brought before Umar to be a witness. Umar wished to test whether he would be a sound witness so he asked, "Bring me someone who knows you very well."

The man left and returned a short while later with another man. Umar asked the man, "Do you know this man?"

Whilst answering the man was very composed, "Yes, I know him. He is a good man."

This answer was not enough for Umar. He continued, "What is the relationship between you and this man? For instance, is he your neighbor? Do you know who comes and goes from his house?"

“No, I’m not his neighbor,” the man replied.

“Have you made a journey with this man?” asked Umar.

“No, I haven’t.”

“Have you done business with this man?” continued Umar.

“No, Chief of Believers.”

“I think you saw this man praying and reading the Qur’an. For this reason you are saying that he is a good man.”

“Yes, Chief of Believers. That is exactly right.”

“In that case, you don’t really know this man well. You can go back to your work now,” Umar finished.

Later, he turned to the first man, saying, “We need someone who really knows you well.”

Even in the smallest cases, Umar always searched well before making a decision. The man left Umar to find someone who knew him well and could testify for his character.



Talha ibn Ubaydallah, may Allah be pleased with him, was returning home late one night when he saw a tall man leaving his neighbor's house. Only an old lady lived in this house and, although he didn't know much about her, Talha wondered what the man could be doing there at this time of night.

The man leaving the house had not seen Talha and had walked away. Walking home, Talha couldn't stop thinking about what he'd seen and said to himself, "It will be good if I can solve this mystery."

Early the next morning, Talha went to the old woman's house and knocked on the door. From inside he heard a voice, "Come in."

Talha went into the house and saw in the corner a blind, old woman. After greeting her he asked, “Do you have any relatives?”

“Other than Allah, I have no one,” replied the old woman.

Talha then asked directly, “I saw a man coming out of this house last night. Who was he?”

Taking a sharp, inward breath, the old woman said, “That was Caliph Umar, may Allah be pleased with him. For a long time he has been coming in the night time, cleaning my house, making my bed and helping me with my other jobs.”

Wiping the tears from his eyes and thanking Allah for such a good caliph, Talha left the old woman’s house.





While People Were Hungry

An unbearable famine had begun and the Bedouins, afraid of starving to death, had come to Medina. The Medinans were in the same position. Deeply upset by the situation, Umar frequently fasted to be able to empathize with them.

During the days of famine a camel was slaughtered and the meat was given out. Umar's servant, Yarfa, brought one of the best pieces of cooked meat to Umar.

Umar asked him, "What is this?"

"The meat from the camel that was slaughtered today. I brought some for you," replied Yarfa.

Looking from the meat to the servant and back again, Umar said, “While people are dying of hunger, will I fill my stomach with the best part of the meat? Take this plate and bring me something else to eat.”

Yarfa returned to Umar with bread and olive oil, the same as he usually ate. Umar took the bread and broke it into pieces. Reaching out for a piece, he stopped for a few seconds, then without taking anything he took his hand away and called Yarfa.

“Yes, O Chief of Believers.”

“Take this food to the Bedouins on the edge of town. I couldn’t visit them for the past three days. They might not have any food.”

Yarfa took the plate and left. The caliph made his intention to fast again the next day without having eaten anything.



One Dress from Two Pieces of Cloth

“Son, have this fabric, it’s not long enough to make me a new dress. You can make one for yourself,” Umar said to his son, handing him the fabric he’d gained when the war booty was shared out.

“No, father. If I use the fabric there will be some left,” his son replied.

“You can give it to someone.”

“But, the extra piece won’t be enough to make a dress. You take my fabric and make a dress for yourself. Both pieces will make a dress for you. You didn’t have a new dress for a long time and yours is very

old and frayed.” Umar’s son, refused the fabric and offered his own to his father.

“They will say the caliph had more than his share,” Umar said.

“If they say such a thing, I will explain the truth,” replied his son.

So Umar accepted his sons offer and made himself a new dress, but he wasn’t comfortable inside. However, his old dress was so worn and ripped there was no other choice.

That day, Umar went to the mosque in his new, clean dress. He climbed to the pulpit to give his sermon, starting, “Listen people...”

Suddenly, a voice shouted out, “We’re not listening.” It was Salman al-Farisi.

Shocked, Umar asked, “Why aren’t you listening?”

“The dress you are wearing is made from twice the fabric we were given. If you don’t explain this, we won’t listen to you,” replied Salman.

“Where is my son, Abdullah?” Umar asked.

“I’m here,” replied Abdullah, may Allah be pleased with him.

“Stand up and answer, my son.”

Standing, Abdullah explained to the crowd, “My father didn’t get more fabric than everyone else. Because he is tall, I thought his fabric wouldn’t be enough to make a new dress so I gave him my share of the fabric.”

Umar called out, “O Salman, is this enough of an explanation for you?”

Salman had heard enough. In fact, he knew Umar and knew he wouldn’t have done anything unfair. He asked the question because he didn’t want others to have that thought in their minds. He wanted the subject to be explained openly.

“It’s enough, O Chief of Believers. Talk now, we are listening to you,” he said.

Umar relaxed; he said to Salman al-Farisi, “May Allah be pleased with you. With people like you keeping an eye out for justice, this religion will always be cherished.”

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Not Even the Governor Is Privileged

It was nearly evening, and the sound of hoofbeats rose from the streets of Medina. The messengers on horseback were on a mission for the caliph. They were delivering letters to all the governors around. The letters said, “Dear governor, the caliph is expecting you in Mecca for the pilgrimage season.”

Every year, Caliph Umar sent the same requests to his governors. The governors congregated in Mecca for Hajj. The purpose of this meeting was to listen together to the complaints of the people.

Every season, some agents were specially commissioned to wander the streets of Mecca shouting,

“The caliph is waiting for you to listen to your complaints.”

It was again a new Hajj season and all the governors had been called and had arrived in Mecca. The agents began to call the people who started to crowd around Umar and the governors. Umar rose to his feet and said, “O people, I appoint my governors to help you and to show you the right way. Is there anyone from among you with a complaint against a governor?”

One man moved towards Umar saying, “Your governor scourged me one hundred times unjustly.”

Turning to the governor, Umar asked, “Did you scourge this man one hundred times?”

“Yes,” said the governor.

“Tell me the reason,” said Umar.

When the governor couldn’t give a reason, Umar understood the complaint was true. Giving the man a whip he said, “Come on, take your rights.”

Umar never made jokes and his son, Amr ibn As, knew this better than anyone. He had been called from Egypt to Medina to explain why he had scourged a Bedouin. Umar had then instructed the Bedouin

to scourge his own son to compensate. Now the same situation was happening but Amr ibn As thought it would degrade the governor in front of the people. Approaching his father, he said, “O Chief of Believers, this is a heavy punishment and after this it could become a common act.”

“I can’t show preference for a governor,” said Umar, turning to the man and repeating, “Come on, take your rights.”

Not wanting to give up, Amr tried again, “Could the man give up his rights if we convince him to waive them?”

“If the man waives his rights, I can’t say anything,” replied Umar.

The crowd was surprised to see the governor of a large area being held to account in front of the whole nation. This wasn’t something that could usually happen. They thanked Allah that they had a caliph that showed such justice.

After a long period of bargaining, the man agreed to waive his rights for a price of two hundred dinars. The governor was saved the humiliation of being scourged in front of all the people.



Time to Come Together

Early one morning the Muslims were on their way to the mosque for the Morning Prayer. The Iranian slave, Abu Lu'lu, was also going to the mosque. Anyone looking at him carefully would have seen that his legs were shaking. Abu Lu'lu was an ironmonger, stoneworker and carpenter. He earned good money building mills. However, he thought he was paying too much tax and asked Caliph Umar to reduce it. Umar refused saying that the rate was not too high. From that day onwards, Abu Lu'lu was filled with hatred for Umar and planned to kill him.

To fulfil his plan, he got up early and went among the other Companions to the mosque. With

his face was covered to shield his identity, he entered the mosque. Making his way to the front he sat as close to Umar as possible.

Umar, as usual, turned towards the front, looked to the left and right and invited the people to come closer. He started the Prayer with, “Allahu akbar.” Behind him, the congregation repeated the words and put their hands on their chests, ready to pray.

This was the moment Abu Lu’lu had been waiting for. He stabbed his dagger into Umar. Everything happened in just a few seconds. Umar crumpled to the floor in pain. Abi Bukayr caught the killer from behind. This time, the dagger stabbed himself. Waving the dagger from side to side, Abu Lu’lu tried to escape from the mosque but Abdullah ibn Awf threw his overcoat over the slave causing him to fall to the ground. When he understood escape was impossible, he lifted his dagger into the air and brought it down hard, into his own heart, ending his life.

Everyone ran to the side of Caliph Umar. Having lost consciousness for a moment, Umar came to himself and recited the verse, “Allah’s order is that the destiny cannot be changed.” He then fainted again. The people took him to his house. When he

regained consciousness he asked if it was time to pray. The sun hadn't yet risen he was told.

With help, Umar made his ablution and reciting Surah al-Asr and Surah al-Kafirun from the Qur'an he prayed the Morning Prayer. Blood was still flowing from his wound. When he'd finished praying he turned to his son and asked, "Who was it that tried to kill me?"

"Abu Lu'lu," replied Abdullah.

Umar breathed a sigh of relief and thanked Allah that the killer was not a Muslim. He turned to Abdullah again and said, "Go to Aisha and tell her, if she permits it, I would like to be buried next to my two friends."

Abdullah went to Aisha, may Allah be pleased with her, and repeated his father's request. Aisha replied, "The remaining place in the tomb I was considering for myself. But, I would happily give it up for Umar."

Umar was happy to hear this but was still doubtful. He said to his son, "At my funeral, before you bury me, please ask Aisha again. It could be that she

allowed it out of respect for authority. If she changes her mind, bury me in al-Baqi Cemetery.”

Umar had entered his last days. Each day he became weaker. The doctor visited him and helped him to drink a glass of milk. When he examined him, his color changed. “O Chief of Believers, there isn’t anything else I can do. It’s time to make your last will and testament.”

Umar looked at the people around him with tears in his eyes. They were tears of joy because in a short time he would be reunited with the people he loved most. Umar’s last words in this life were, “I swear there is none worthy of worship other than Allah. And I swear again that Muhammad is His Servant and Messenger.” With those words, he passed from this world to the next.

The man who was the model of justice died at sixty-three years old, just as the one he loved more than anything or anyone else, his beloved Prophet. May Allah be pleased with him.