

# UMAR BIN ABDUL AZEEZ

## THE FIFTH RIGHTEOUS KHALEEFAH



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

# UMAR BIN ABDUL AZEEZ

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It was already more than a year (two winters) since the young Umayyad Khaleefah, Sulayman bin Abdil Malik, and his army were in Daabik – a town in the vicinity of Halab (Aleppo) – in order to assist and reinforce the Muslim army that had besieged Constantinople. The siege was dragging very slowly; there were absolutely no visible signs of victory, there was a severe outbreak of fever and the morale of the army was at its lowest. The siege had to be ended as soon as possible. However, rejecting the suggestion of his advisors and military experts, Sulayman insisted that the siege continue. Eventually fever struck Sulayman's army too and many lives were lost. The situation became so bad that Sulayman, the Khaleefah, could not find a single person who was fit enough to help him make wudhu. One day he ascended the *mimbar* to deliver a sermon. Initially his voice was loud and clear. As he was speaking, however, he began feeling feverish and his voice became weaker and weaker until he was eventually carried away to his house. At that moment Sulayman realized that his death was imminent. He therefore summoned his chief advisor, an outstanding *Aalim* by the name of Rajaa bin Haywah, in order

to discuss the issue of a successor. Sulayman wanted to appoint one of his two sons as his successor. One of them, however, was absent at the time and the other was still a minor. Rajaa bin Haywah therefore convinced him to appoint Umar bin Abdil Azeez as his successor.

### **Who was Umar?**

Late one night, while walking through the streets of Madeenah, Umar bin Khattaab ﷺ heard the voices of two women – a mother and her daughter – arguing in a nearby tent. As he went closer he heard the following discussion:

Mother: "Dilute the milk with water!"

Daughter: "Didn't you hear Umar's announcement prohibiting that?"

Mother: "Dilute it, Umar won't know."

Daughter: "I will not obey him in public and disobey him in secret. Even if he is absent, his Rabb is present..."

Umar ﷺ was not that much angered at the mother's disloyalty as he was impressed with the Allah-consciousness of the daughter. He therefore enquired about her the next day and was informed that she was an orphan. He then gathered his sons and asked if any one of them would marry her. His son Aasim was the only one who was not yet married and therefore

agreed. This union was soon blessed with a daughter named Layla. When Layla grew up she was married to Abdul Azeez bin Marwaan, the brother of the *Khaleefah* Abdul Malik bin Marwaan. There is a narration in Ibn-ul- Jawzi's *Sifat-us-Safwah* that when Abdul Azeez intended marrying Layla he told his treasurer to "give me four hundred dinaars from my Halaal wealth because I intend marrying in a pious family." The Umar whom we are discussing in this article was the son of Abdul Azeez bin Marwaan and Layla. He was born in 63 AH (the year of the assassination of Husain عليه السلام, the grandson of Rasulullah ﷺ).

Umar bin Khattaab رضي الله عنه used to say: "There will be a man from my offspring who will have a scar on his face – he will fill the earth with justice." According to another narration he said: "Who is the man from my offspring who will fill the earth with justice after it will be filled with injustice." In Dhahabi's *Siyar A'laam-in-Nubalaa* the latter statement is attributed to Umar bin Khattaab's son Abdullah رضي الله عنه. In Suyuti's *Taarikh-ul-Khulafaa* there is a third narration that Ibn Umar رضي الله عنه said: "We used to say that the *dunya* will not perish until a man from the family of Umar will assume leadership and follow his example." Umar bin Abdil Azeez had a scar on his face; the result of a kick by a horse when he was a young boy. When the horse kicked him on his face his father wiped the blood from his face and said; "If you are the man from the Bani Umayyah who has a scar on his face, you are indeed very fortunate."

## **An Aalim**

One of the first signs of Umar's outstanding disposition was his enthusiasm for knowledge. He had memorized the Qur'aan in his early childhood. When his father was posted to Madeenah he was still quite young. In fact his father was doubtful whether he had already reached puberty. His father therefore decided to take him with to Egypt. He, however, requested his father to send him to Madeenah in order to study. (At that time Madeenah was a major centre of learning.) His father agreed and placed him in the tutelage of Saalih bin Kaysaan, a learned and pious *Aalim*.

Later, when Umar's father went for *Hajj*, he passed through Madeenah and enquired from Saalih about his son's progress. Saalih replied: "I don't know anybody in whose heart Allah is more honoured than this boy."

One day Umar missed the congregational *salaah*. When Saalih asked him for an explanation he said that the slave-girl who combs his hair was still combing his hair. Saalih became angry and reprimanded him saying: "Do you give preference to that over *salaah*?" He then wrote a letter to Umar's father informing him of the whole episode. Umar's father immediately sent a messenger to Umar with instructions not to speak to him unless he shaved his head.

On another occasion Da'ud bin Abi Hind and a few others were sitting in the *Masjid* of Nabi ﷺ when Umar entered through



one of the doors. Seeing him one person in the gathering remarked: "The sinner sent this son of his to us to learn the *faraa-id* and *sunan* thinking that he will not die until he becomes a khaleefah and follows the example of Umar bin Khattaab." When narrating this incident Dau'd commented: "By Allah, he did not die until we saw it happen."

The extent of Umar's knowledge of Qur'aan and Sunnah could be gauged from the following:

Abun-Nadr Al-Madeeny told Layth that he saw Sulayman bin Yasaar leaving the house of Umar bin Abdil Azeez. Knowing the knowledge of Sulayman, he went to him and asked him if he was teaching Umar. When Sulayman replied in the affirmative, Abun-Nadr told him that: "By Allah, he is more learned than you!"

Mujaahid said: "We came to teach him but we eventually learned from him."

Maymoon bin Mahraan said: "The ulamaa were students in the company of Umar bin Abdil Azeez."

Umar bin Abdil Azeez had appointed a man who stayed for some time with Ibn Umar and Ibn Abbaas ﷺ to govern Al-Jazeerah. This man told Layth bin Sa'd that: "Whenever we sought a ruling on any issue we found that Umar bin Abdil Azeez was more knowledgeable of its *asl* (the principle it is based on) and its *far'* (what is deduced from it) than anybody else. In his presence the

*ulamaa* were mere students."

Rabee'ah bin Abdir Rahman was Imam Maalik's mentor. Qaadim Al-Barbari once tried to discuss with him a particular judgment which Umar bin Abdil Azeez had passed while he was the governor of Madeenah. Rabee'ah got upset and told him: "It seems that you are saying that Umar made a mistake. By Allah, he never ever made a mistake!"

Abdullah bin Taa-us narrates that he saw his father standing with a man from after the *Esha salaah* until the morning (discussing some academic issue). When that man went away Abdullah asked his father who he was. Abdullah's father replied: "He is Umar bi Abdil Azeez; one of the pious members of this family (the Bani Umayyah)."

Imam Zuhri narrates that he once spent the night with Umar bin Abdil Azeez narrating *Ahaadith* to him. In the morning Umar told him that: "I had (already) heard every *Hadith* you mentioned. The difference, however, is that you remember and I've forgotten."

Imam Ahmed bin Hambal never accepted the opinion of any *Taabi'ie* besides Umar bin Abdil Azeez as authoritative.

He narrated *Hadith* from five *Sahaabah*: Anas bin Maalik, Sahl bin Sa'd, Saa-ib bin Yazeed, Abdullah bin Ja'far bin Abi Taalib and Yusuf bin Abdillah bin Salaam رضى الله عنهم

He also narrated from a large number of *Taabi'een* including

Sa'eed bin Musayyab, Urwah bin Zubair, Abu Salmah bin Abdir Rahmaan and others.

Dhahabi mentioned in *Siyar A'laam-in-Nubalaa* that he was among the *A-immah* of *Ijtihad*.

### ***A Taabi'ie***

It is apparent from the second-last point mentioned above that apart from being such an outstanding Aalim, Umar bin Abdil Azeez was also a Taabi'ie. Sahl ؓ possessed a glass from which Rasulullah ؐ drank. Due to Umar's love for Rasulullah ؐ he requested Sahl ؓ to gift that glass to him. During the period of Umar's governorship of Madeenah he led Anas bin Maalik ؓ in salaah in the Masjid of Nabi ؐ. Upon completion of the salaah Anas ؓ remarked: "I have never seen anybody whose salaah has a greater semblance with the salaah of Rasulullah ؐ than this young man."

### **From Madeenah to Damascus and Back**

Umar bin Abdil Azeez lost his father while he was studying in Madeenah. Upon his father's death, his uncle, Abdul Malik bin Marwaan (who was the khaleefah at that time) took him to stay with his family in Damascus. Abdul Malik showed so much of affection to his nephew that he gave him preference over many of his own sons and eventually married him to his daughter Fatimah – the Fatimah regarding whom a poet aptly said:

بت الخليفة و الخليفة جدها – أخت الخلائف و الخليفة زوجها

*Daughter of the khaleefah and her grandfather was the khaleefah Sister of the khaleefahs and her husband was the khaleefah*

Umar was naturally very grieved when Abdul Malik passed away. Abdul Malik was succeeded by his son Waleed. Waleed continued treating Umar in the same manner as his father and made him the governor of Madeenah, Makkah and Taa'if. Umar governed Madeenah for seven years; from 86AH to 93AH. During this period he renovated and expanded the *Masjid-un-Nabi* ﷺ under the instructions of Waleed. He was a just governor and never made a decision before consulting ten of the most prominent *Fuqahaa* (or whoever among them who were available) of Madeenah. In fact, the first thing he did when he reached Madeenah is that he led the *Dhuhr salaah* and then assembled these ten *Fuqahaa*<sup>1</sup>. He then praised Allah and said: "...I do not wish to pass any decision without consulting you or whoever among you will be present..." Ibn Katheer also mentions that Umar would never contradict the opinion of Sa'eed bin Musayyab. Furthermore, although Sa'eed shunned visiting the *khulafaa*, he always visited Umar during his stay in Madeenah.

During this period Waleed wrote a letter to Umar instructing him to whip Khubaib, the son of Abdullah bin Zubair ؓ. Umar complied and then ordered that Khubaib be left in the cold. This resulted in Khubaib's death. Umar later regretted this and

whenever people praised him, he would say: "But who will defend me (on the day of Qiyaamah) from Khubaib?"

There is a *Hadith* of Rasulullah ﷺ which states that Madeenah expels its filth (people who don't deserve to be there) just as the furnace expels filth from iron. Umar was dismissed from governorship of Madeenah in 93AH. As he exited the city he turned round to look at it, cried and said to his slave: "I fear that I am one of those whom Madeenah expels." Truly speaking, Madeenah did not expel him. This, however, was his humility and fear for Allah.

### **Sulayman's Advisor**

Waleed passed away in 96AH and was succeeded by his brother Sulayman. When Sulayman became the *khaleefah* he too respected Umar bin Abdil Azeez and often sought his advice. According to a narration quoted by Dhahabi, when Sulayman became the *khaleefah* he told Umar: "I have taken charge of the *khilaafah* but I don't have the knowledge to run its affairs. Therefore command me to do whatever good you think is necessary." This resulted in the dismissal of all the governors of Hajjaaj (the notorious tyrant), establishment of *salaah* on time (for some time previously congregational *salaah* would commonly be performed after its time had lapsed) and other important changes which Sulayman did on the advice of Umar bin Abdil Azeez. Dhahabi concludes that Umar was a sincere advisor to Sulayman.

Sulayman once asked Umar what he thought about the horses, camels, mules and soldiers in his army. Umar replied: "I see the *dunya* eating itself." (What he meant is that the animals and soldiers of the army are all part of the *dunya* and if the *khaleefah's* intention in mustering such an army is not entirely to defend and uplift the deen of Allah, any success he achieves by means of this army is also *dunya*.) As they approached Sulayman's tent a little while later, a bird flew into the tent, chirped, picked a morsel in its mouth and flew away. Sulayman asked Umar what the bird said. Umar replied that he did not know. Sulayman asked: "What do you think it said?" Umar replied: "It seems like it said, 'from where did this morsel come and where is it being taken.'" Sulayman remarked; "You are really amazing." Umar added: "More amazing than me is the person who knows Allah yet disobeys him and knows Shaytaan yet obeys him."

When Umar accompanied Sulayman on Haj and, standing (making the wuqoof) in Arafah, Sulayman was marveling at the huge crowd of people, Umar admonished him saying: "Today they are your citizens and tomorrow you will be questioned about them." According to another narration he said: "...and on the day of *Qiyaamah* they will be your opponents." Hearing this Sulayman began crying and said: "I seek the help of Allah."

The two of them were once on a journey when they got caught in a violent storm. It became very dark and there was severe

lightning and loud thunder. Sulayman seemed uneasy but Umar began laughing. Upon Sulayman's asking why he was laughing, he replied: "These are signs of Allah's mercy and this is our condition. Imagine what our condition will be if we see signs of His anger and punishment."

Imam Maalik narrates that Umar and Sulayman once had a heated argument. In the course of the argument Sulayman accused Umar of lying to him. At that moment Umar said: "By Allah, I've never spoken a lie ever since I learnt that lying is detrimental to those who lie." Umar then intended to sever all ties with Sulayman and migrate to Egypt. Sulayman, however, did not allow him to do so. He called him back and said: "I'm never faced with anything important except that you come to my mind (I seek your advice)." As mentioned in the beginning Sulayman eventually made Umar bin Abdil Azeez his successor.

### **Umar's Response**

Rajaa bin Haywah – the *Aalim* who convinced Sulayman to make Umar bin Abdil Azeez his successor – narrates that when Sulayman fell ill, Umar saw him entering and leaving the room of Sulayman very frequently. Umar became suspicious that Rajaa was 'up to something'. He therefore came to Rajaa and said: "I beseech you in the name of Allah and Islam not to mention or suggest my name to *Ameer-ul-Mu-mineen* because, I swear by Allah, I don't have the strength to fulfill the duties of *khilaafah*." Rajaa says that he scolded Umar and said: "You are

being greedy for the *khilaafah*!" Umar felt shy and went away. Rajaa then went back to Sulayman and convinced him to hand the *khilaafah* over to Umar instead of his son or any of his two brothers. Sulayman then wrote his decision on a scroll of paper, sealed it and told Rajaa to go out and tell the public that Sulayman had ordered them to accept the person mentioned in the scroll as the next *khaleefah*. He, however, was to keep the contents of the scroll a secret until Sulayman had passed away, otherwise Sulayman's brothers and other family members would persuade him to reverse his decision. Shortly after Rajaa made his announcement to the public Umar came to him and said: "...I fear that Sulayman has handed the *khilaafah* to me. I am, however, unable to discharge the responsibilities of *khilaafah*. Therefore inform me while Sulayman is still alive so I can ask him to change his mind." Rajaa merely replied: "*Subhaanallah*, He asked me to keep a secret and I must reveal it to you!

When Sulayman passed away and Rajaa informed the masses who he designated the *khilaafah* to, Umar was not in the gathering. The people went looking for him and found him in the *Masjid*. When they informed him that he was their new *khaleefah*, he was so shocked that he was unable to stand up. The people therefore lifted him by his arms and carried him to the *mimbar*. Seated on the *mimbar* he remained silent for a considerable duration of time. Eventually Rajaa stood up said to the crowd: "Aren't you going to come forward and pledge



allegiance to your Ameer?" As the people came forward Umar reluctantly stretched his hands and accepted the pledge (*bay'ah*). He thereafter stood up to deliver his first official address.

### **The First Address**

"...There will not be another *Nabi* after yours and there will not be another book after the Qur'aan. Whatever Allah made *halaal* will remain *halaal* till the day of *Qiyaamah* and whatever he made *haraam* will remain *haraam* till the day of *Qiyaamah*. I am not a lawmaker but I will enforce the law of Allah. I am not an innovator but I am a follower of the *sunnah*. Listen, it is not permissible to obey anybody if that will result in disobedience to Allah. I am not better than you; I am one of you, but Allah has given me a heavier burden than you."

### **I Was Not Consulted!**

Some narrations indicate that prior to delivering the above sermon Umar first addressed the masses saying: "O People, this responsibility has been placed on me although I neither requested it nor was I or the Muslim public consulted. I therefore absolve you of pledging your obedience to me; so seek another *khaleefah* for your selves." The crowd, however, responded with shouts of 'we choose you' and 'we are happy with you'. Umar remained silent until the shouts eventually subsided. He then stood up and delivered his first sermon. The narration of *Sifat-us-Safwah* implies that Umar made the above

statement after the burial of Sulayman bin Abdil Malik. The sermon he delivered thereafter is therefore his second sermon.<sup>2</sup>

### **Bring Me My Mule!**

The previous Umayyad *Khulafaa* used to be transported by a special, "royal" (or should we say "khaleefal"?) carriage that was led by a number of the finest horses. After delivering his first sermon (and according to some narrations, after burying Sulayman), Umar heard a huge noise behind him. He turned around and saw this royal carriage waiting to take him home.

He, however, refused to go on board and said: "Bring me my mule, it's more comfortable!" As he began riding his mule the senior police officer, armed with a bayonet, began walking in front of him in order to clear the way for him. He stopped and said: "Leave me alone. You don't have to bother of me; I'm just an ordinary Muslim." By the time Umar reached home the royal carpets of Sulayman had already been laid out for him. Seeing this he told those around him: "You were hasty." He then addressed the carpet saying: "By Allah, if I was not going to fulfill the needs of the Muslim public, I would never sit on you!" Sometime later, when the caretakers of the carriage came to Umar seeking money to buy fodder for the horses and pay the servants, he had the carriage and the horses sold and the prices thereof placed in the *bait-ul-maal* (public treasury).

## Why Are You So Worried?

After Sulayman's *janaazah* one of Umar's slaves realized that Umar was looking extremely worried. He therefore asked him, "Why are you so worried?" Umar replied: "A person in my predicament should be worried; it is my desire to fulfill the rights of every individual in the *ummah* without him having to ask me..."

## You Must Choose

A person by the name of Yahya was standing outside the door of Umar's house when they suddenly heard loud cries coming from inside. Upon enquiry they were informed that Umar had just told his wife that, in view of the tremendous responsibilities of *khilaafah*, "you must choose between staying with me and returning to your family". Umar's wife, Fatimah, could not control her emotions and burst into tears causing all her slave-girls to also cry. Fatimah, however, was too intelligent to prefer the *dunya* over her husband. In fact, she did not just choose husband, she even chose his new, simple way of life.

## Are You Going To Sleep?

Ibn-ul-Jawzi writes that Umar then went home to have a nap. His son Abdul Malik, however, came to visit him at that very moment and asked him: "What do you intend doing?" He replied that he was going to sleep. His son remarked: "Are you going to sleep instead of restoring all the usurped properties?" Umar replied: "Son, I was awake the whole night tending to

your uncle Sulayman. I will restore the usurped properties after I've performed the *Dhuhr salaah*." Abdul Malik responded: "*Ameer-ul-Mu-mineen*, what guarantee is there that you will live till *Dhuhr*?" Umar was thoroughly impressed – he hugged his son, kissed him between his eyes and said: "All praise is to Allah who created from my offspring somebody who aids me in His *deen*." Umar then left without taking the short nap he had intended and commanded his announcer to announce: "Whoever has been treated unjustly should report his case." It was not long before a *dhimmi* (non-Muslim citizen of *Dar-ul-Islam*) came and complained that Abbaas, the son of the former *khaleefah*, Waleed bin Abdil Malik, had misappropriated his land. Abbaas, who was seated close to Umar, was asked for an explanation. He said: "It was given to me by *Ameer-ul-Mu-mineen* Waleed bin Abdil Malik and he had written a title deed to that effect." Umar then ruled that: "The *Kitaab* (book) of Allah is more worthy of being followed than the *kitaab* (title deed) of Waleed." He thus ordered Abbaas to return the misappropriated land to the rightful owner. The previous Umayyad *khulafaa* and their families had misappropriated huge amounts of wealth and land that belonged to the *bait-ul-maal* and other members of the public. Having commanded Abbaas to return to the *dhimmi* his land, Umar continued ordering the rest of the Umayyads to return all such properties to the lawful owners. Umar himself also possessed properties of this nature. Remembering the *ayaah* "Do you command the people to be

righteous and forget yourselves?" Umar returned all of these properties to the *bait-ul-maal*. Thus his annual income decreased from fifty thousand *dinaars* per annum to a mere four hundred *dinaars*. Furthermore he sold all his unnecessary slaves, clothing, perfumes and other items for a total of twenty-three thousand *dinaars* which he thereafter spent in the path of Allah. Waleed bin Abdil Malik had once given him a very expensive ring. Umar even placed this ring in the *bait-ul-maal* saying that Waleed was not entitled to give it to him.

### **The Orchard of Fidak**

He one day gathered the leaders of the people and addressing them said: "The orchard of Fidak remained in the custody of Rasulullah ﷺ and he would spend its revenue as commanded by Allah. When Abu Bakr and Umar were in charge they followed the example of Rasulullah ﷺ. Marwaan then distributed it and I received a portion of it. Later Waleed and Sulayman gave their shares to me. None of my properties yield more income than these three shares of Fidak. I have, however, returned them to the *bait-ul-maal* as they were in time of Rasulullah ﷺ." According to the narration in Dhahabi's *Siyar* he said: "The orchard of Fidak remained in the custody of Rasulullah ﷺ. He would spend its revenue on the orphans of the Bani Haashim and he would utilize it to marry those who were not married. Fatimah had asked Rasulullah ﷺ to give it to her but he refused. Fidak's status remained the same throughout the *khilaafah* of Abu Bakr and Umar. They handled

its affairs in the same manner as Rasulullah ﷺ. Marwaan then distributed it ...I do not think that I deserve something which Rasulullah ﷺ withheld from his own daughter. I have therefore returned it to the *bait-ul-maal* as it was in the time of Rasulullah ﷺ."

### **Only Seventeen Years Old**

Ibnul-Atheer Al-Jazari writes that during one of those early days of his *khilaafah* Umar said to his slave Muzaahim: "My family gave me such wealth which neither I was permitted to take nor they were permitted to give it to me. I've therefore intended to return it to its rightful owners." Muzaahim asked him: "And what will you do about your children?" Umar began crying and said: "I entrust them to Allah." Muzaahim then went to Umar's son Abdul Malik and informed him of Umar's intentions and that he tried to dissuade him but was not successful. Abdul Malik was not pleased with Muzaahim. He reprimanded him for trying to dissuade his father and said: "You are an evil advisor to the *khaleefah*!" He then went to his father and asked him about his intentions. Umar replied: "I intend doing it this evening." Abdul Malik, however, told him to hurry because "there is no guarantee that nothing will happen to you or that your mind may change". Umar was so impressed that he raised his hands thanking Allah for blessing him with a son who was an assistant in righteousness. In view of this and the previous narration many scholars claim that Umar was largely motivated by his son Abdul Malik. It is significant to note

that Abdul Malik was very young at that time; he passed away before his father - at the age of seventeen.

### **It's Your Fault!**

The Umayyads were understandably angry with Umar's handling of the misappropriated wealth. They therefore sent his father's sister Fatimah to '*speak*' to him. When she approached Umar he called for a *dinaar* (gold coin), some dirt and a few live embers. As she spoke he heated the *dinaar* in the embers until it became burning hot. He then dropped the *dinaar* on the dirt and as it sizzled he said: "Aunt, don't you want to protect your nephew from a punishment like this?" She said: "But don't let the people swear them (the Umayyads)." He replied: "They are not swearing them; they are merely demanding their rights." She left without saying another word and when she returned to the rest of the family, she said: "It's your fault! Why did you marry his father to the daughter of Umar bin Khattaab? Now you'll just have to be patient."

In order to explain his point to the Umayyads, Umar one day invited them to a feast. When they arrived he delayed in serving the food. When he did eventually serve the food, he served very simple food: lentils, dates and onions. Due to the long wait they were hungry and ate the food with relish. He then served some lavish food but nobody could eat it because they were already too full. He then said: "So then tell me, why plunge into the fire for the sake of a little food and drink."

## I Will Go To Madeenah

The Umayyads, however, continued complaining to Umar until he one day got angry and threatened them saying that if they called up another meeting of this nature he would go away to Madeenah, substitute the hereditary system of *khilaafah* with that of *shura* (a system based on consultation) and hand the *khilaafah* over to Qaasim bin Muhammed, the grandson of Abu Bakr Siddeeq رضي الله عنه.

## Me or Your Jewelry!

Fatimah's father had given her some very valuable jewelry – something similar was never previously seen. Umar now told her to either return it to the *bait-ul-maal* or else he would have to divorce her because "I loathe being in the same house as that jewelry". Fatimah replied: "I will choose you over even double that!" When Umar passed away and Fatimah's brother Yazeed became the *khaleefah* he told her that if she desired he would have that jewelry returned to her. She, however, refused and said: "I don't need it! Why should I take it back after his death whereas I had willingly given it away?" Astonishing and astounding as this is, it is also food for thought. There is no other woman in history – neither previously nor presently – like Fatimah.<sup>3</sup> Her father, grandfather, four brothers, husband and two nephews were *khulafaa* who ruled one third of the known world at that time. Yet she forsook the world for the pleasure of Allah; if she was not sincere she would have grabbed her brother's offer to have 'her' jewelry returned to her. Compare this to our attachment to our worldly possessions which are not even comparable to Fatimah's wealth...



Besides the misappropriation of public and private property, the Umayyads also received preferential treatment from the *bait-ul-maal*; they received much higher stipends than other members of the public. Furthermore, many of the Umayyad governors were tyrants of the worst type. For example, Yazeed bin Abi Muslim used to arrest people and beat them up for no valid reason. Usaamah bin Zaid Tanookhi was accused of amputating peoples' hands and slitting their stomachs. In his drive to establish justice Umar bin Abdil Azeez did not only return all misappropriated properties to their lawful owners, he also cancelled all preferential treatment towards the Umayyad and dismissed all corrupt and oppressive governors. All the governors who were appointed by the notorious Hajjaaj bin Yusuf were also dismissed. Many were arrested and taken to task for their atrocities. Usaamah bin Zaid Tanookhi was sentenced to life-imprisonment; one year in every major city in the country. Those who were dismissed were replaced by pious and competent governors.

### **The Wolves and the Sheep**

Maalik bin Dinaar narrates that when Umar bin Abdil Azeez became the *khaleefah* the shepherds on the mountain tops asked: "Who is this pious *khaleefah* that is now in charge of the people? His justice is keeping the wolves away from our sheep!" Hasan bin Qassaab narrates that during the *khilaafah* of Umar bin Abdil Azeez he saw the wolves in the country side grazing with the sheep. He was shocked and exclaimed: "*Subhaanallah*, A wolf among the sheep and it doesn't harm them!" The shepherd explained: "When the head is good there'll be no harm in the rest

of the body. (If the head-of-state is good there'll be no problem in the rest of the body.)" A person who used to graze the sheep for Muhammed bin Abi Uyaynah narrates that during the khilaafah of Umar bin Abdil Azeez the sheep used to graze with lions and other beasts of prey in the same place. He says that: "One day I saw a wolf attack a sheep and I said '*Inna lillah*, I think the pious man has passed away.' A few days later we received the news of Umar's death and realized that he did actually pass away on the day the wolf attacked the sheep."

### **No Fuqaraa**

The extent of justice and prosperity during the rule of Umar can be gauged from the narration of Yahya bin Sa'eed who says that Umar had sent him to collect Zakaat in the African territories. Having collected the Zakaah he started looking for the *fuqaraa* (poor people who qualify to receive *zakaah*) but found none; every citizen was receiving sufficient assistance from Umar and therefore none of them could be classified as *fuqaraa*. The *zakaah* was therefore used to purchase and emancipate slaves.

### **From Where Are You?**

After Umar bin Abdil Azeez passed away his wife Fatimah said that from the time he became the khaleefah until his death two years and five months later *ghusl* never became compulsory on him even once; neither due to *janaabah* (bodily impurity as a result of sexual intercourse) nor due to *ihtilaam* (a wet-dream)..

Considering the fact that when Umar became the *khaleefah* he told his wife to decide whether she wanted to remain in his marriage or not, one reason for the above would be total dedication and devotion in fulfilling the duties of *khilaafah*. Another reason is renunciation of worldly desires.

Fatimah owned an extremely beautiful slave-girl whom Umar loved. He had asked Fatimah on a number of occasions to either sell this slave-girl or gift her to him. Fatimah always refused. When Umar became the *khaleefah* Fatimah dressed this slave-girl in the most attractive clothes and the most fragrant perfume and then gifted her to Umar. This slave-girl was fully aware of Umar's love for her and was therefore delighted to be at his disposal. However, the moment Fatimah left the room she realized that Umar was not paying any attention to her. As much as she tried to draw his attention, he ignored her. She eventually could not endure being ignored in this manner and asked: "Master, where is your love for me?" He replied: "By Allah, I still love you. However, I do not have any more need for women; the responsibilities of *khilaafah* have diverted my attention from you and all other women." He then asked her: "But tell me, from where are you?" She replied that she was from the Maghrib. Her father had committed a crime as a result of which Moosa bin Nusayr, the governor of the Maghrib, had confiscated his belongings. She too was taken and sent to Waleed who then gifted her to his sister, Fatimah. Hearing her story Umar said: "*Inna lillahi wa inna ilaihi raaji'oon*. We were almost disgraced and destroyed." (Her story meant that she was actually a free woman. Sleeping with her would therefore

constitute *zinaa*) He then ordered that she be returned to her land and her family in a dignified manner. According to another narration she said that she belonged to a man from Kufa. Hajjaaj bin Yoosuf had imposed a fine on him but he was unable to pay the fine. Hajjaaj therefore confiscated his slaves and other belongings and she was sent to Abdul Malik who then gifted her to Fatimah. Umar enquired whether her owner was still alive. She said that he had passed away but his son was still alive. Umar thereafter sent a message to the governor of Kufa telling him to send the master's son to him. When the master's son arrived Umar told him to inform him of everything Hajjaaj had confiscated from his father. Umar gave him everything he claimed was confiscated by Hajjaaj and then gave him the slave-girl and said: "... your father must have slept with her." The son replied: "*Ameer-ul-Mu-mineen*, she is yours. (Take her as a gift.)" He replied: "I don't need her." The son remarked: "Then why don't you purchase her?" Umar responded: "If I do so, I will not be included among those who constrain their desires."

### **From "Too rough" To "Too Soft"**

The only aspect of Umar's life which jealous people ever criticized is that prior to becoming the governor of Madeenah he led an extravagant life and walked with arrogance. He wore expensive clothes and used the best perfume. All of this, however, came to an abrupt end when Waleed made him the governor of Madeenah. During his days of extravagance he would purchase a garment for four hundred *dirhams* and complain that "it's too rough". After becoming the governor he would purchase a garment for only

fourteen *dirhams* and say: "It would have been an excellent garment if it wasn't so soft." He would now wear a patched *kurtah* even while delivering the *Jumu'ah khutbah* – that was the only *kurtah* he possessed. When he washed it, he would have to wait indoors for it to dry. He once delivered a talk and the *kurtah* he was wearing was patched. After the talk somebody told him that being the *Ameer-ul- Mu-mineen* he should wear better clothes. This made him angry, very angry. His complexion changed and everybody around him could see the anger on his face. After a moment of silence he lifted his head and said: "The best moderation is when one has the wealth to be extravagant and the best forgiveness is when one has the means to take revenge."

### **"He Doesn't Have Another *Kurtah*."**

His brother-in-law, Maslamah, visited him during his final illness and noticed that his *kurtah* was dirty. At the time of leaving Maslamah told Fatimah to wash Umar's *kurtah* and she said that she would do so. When Maslamah visited Umar for a second time he noticed that Umar's *kurtah* was still dirty. He reprimanded Fatimah saying: "Didn't I tell you to wash his *kurtah*?" Fatimah replied: "By Allah, he doesn't have another *kurtah*."

### **Lentils Every Day!**

After assuming the reins of *khilaafah* Umar's diet also changed. The lavish food which he previously ate with relish was now substituted with mainly lentils. One day when Fatimah served the slave-boy lentils he burst out in anger: "Lentils every day!" Fatimah politely told the boy to be patient because that was the

only food his master ate. Amr bin Maymoon narrates that Umar once asked him for advice. As Amr spoke Umar cried very bitterly. Upon completing his speech Amr told him that if he knew that Umar would cry so bitterly he would have adopted a milder approach. Umar, however, replied: "Actually, we eat lentils and, as far as I know, lentils make the heart soft, the tears flow and the body humble." The drastic change in Umar's diet had an obvious effect on his physical appearance. He became thin and his face lost its lustre. Thus Yuunus bin Abi Shabeeb described him as being flabby before *khilaafah* and so thin thereafter that "I could count his ribs without touching them".

### **Are You Umar?**

Abu Haazim was an old acquaintance of Umar bin Abdil Azeez. He was the *qaadi* (judge) of Madeenah – appointed by Umar - while Umar was the governor. He, however, did not recognize Umar when he came to Damascus to visit him after he became the *khaleefah*. Umar recognized him and called him closer. As he drew closer he hesitantly asked: "Are you Umar?" Umar humbly replied in the affirmative. Abu Haazim was so shocked that he straight away asked: "When you were the governor of Madeenah you rode a comfortable horse, your clothes were immaculate, your face was radiant, your food was delicious, your house was high and lofty and you had many servants. So what changed you after you became the *Ameer-ul-Mu-mineen*?" Umar cried and then replied: "Imagine how much more wonder-struck you would be if you see me three days after I am buried in my grave – when my eyes will have fallen on my cheeks, my tongue will be dry, my stomach will

be split open and my body will be covered with worms?"

### **Why Are You Staring At Me?**

Something similar happened to Muhammed bin Ka'b Al-Quradhi, Umar's former advisor in Madeenah. He was so shocked when he saw Umar that he just stared at him until Umar asked him: "Why are you staring at me? You never used to stare at me in Madeenah." He replied: "*Ameer-ul-Mu-mineen*, I am taken aback at your thin body, brittle hair and the change in your complexion." Umar's response was: "Imagine how much more surprised you would be if you saw me three days after my burial – when worms will be creeping out of my nostrils..."

### **You Don't Have Even One *Dirham*!**

Umar went home one day and, desiring to eat grapes, asked his wife if she could borrow him a dirham or some money so that he could purchase some grapes. She also had nothing and exclaimed: "You are the *Ameer-ul-Mu-mineen* and you don't even have one *dirham*!" His response was: "That is easier than having to endure the chains of *Jahannam*."

### **You Tired the Animals**

Umar one day asked his wife for some honey. She did not have any honey at that moment. A few days later, however, she gave him some honey. He ate it and enjoyed it and then asked her from where she got it. She replied that she had given the *bareed* two *dinaars* and he purchased it for her. (The *bareed*, as explained by Ali At-Tantaawi, was a government transport system which had to

travel from one place to another even if Fatimah had not asked them for such a favour.) Hearing her answer Umar was displeased and asked her for all the honey that was purchased for the two *dinaars* she had given to the *bareed*. He then sold the honey for more than two *dinaars*. Two *dinaars* were returned to his wife and the surplus was deposited in the *bait-ul-maal*. Umar then told his wife: "You tired the animals of the Muslims to satisfy Umar's desire?" The point to consider here is that Fatimah did nothing wrong; the *bareed* had to go in that direction anyway. This, however, was Umar's caution and abstinence. He shunned taking any form of benefit from public funds.

On another occasion Fatimah heard Umar saying that he desired honey from Saneer or Lubnaan (Lebanon). She immediately sent her servants to Ibn Ma'dee Karib, the governor of that vicinity, requesting him to send her some honey for Umar. Ibn Ma'dee Karib obliged and it did not take long for the honey to reach Fatimah. The moment she offered it to Umar he realized what she had done. "Fatimah, I think you sent one of your servants to Ibn Ma'dee Karib and he sent this honey" he said. The honey was then sent to the market, sold and its price was placed in the *bait-ul-maal*. He then sent a stern warning to Ibn Ma'dee Karib that "if you do something like this again you'll never work for me thereafter and I won't even look at your face".

### **I Snatched It from My Heart**

One day Umar was distributing apples that had come to the *bait-ul-maal*. His young son who was at his side suddenly took an apple



in his hand. Umar immediately pulled it out of his hand and, in the process, hurt him. The child began crying and ran to his mother. She took some of her own money and sent a servant to the market to buy some apples for the child. When Umar came home a little while later he smelt the apples and asked his wife: "Fatimah, did some of the apples from the *bait-ul-maal* come to you?" She said "No" and told him what had happened. He then explained that when he snatched the apple from his son's hand "it was as if I snatched it from my heart. However, I did not want to destroy myself for the sake of one apple that belongs to the Muslim public".

### **The Smell of Musk**

Some musk came to the *bait-ul-maal* and had to be distributed. Umar covered his nose while distributing it. Somebody asked him: "Is there any harm if you smell it?" He replied: "Is musk used for anything other than its smell?"

### **That Was Fast!**

Umar one day sent his slave to roast a piece of meat for him. The slave returned very quickly. "That was fast" he said. The slave explained that he had roasted the meat in the public kitchen. (In those days there were public kitchens in which two meals would be served daily at the expense of the *bait-ul-maal*.) Hearing this Umar said: "Eat it my son; it's your sustenance not mine."

### **Heat Some Water for Me**

One Friday Umar wanted to take a *ghusl* (the *masnoon ghusl* for

*Jumu'ah*) and therefore asked his servants to heat some water for him. They initially told him that they could not do so because they did not have any firewood. However, they then rushed to the public kitchen to heat the water. When they took the boiling water to Umar he asked them: "Didn't you tell me you don't have firewood? You must have heated it in the public kitchen?" They admitted that they had done so and he told them to call the supervisor of the kitchen. When the supervisor arrived Umar asked him if he lit a special fire because he was told that this is the bottle of *Ameer-ul-Mu-mineen*. He replied that he did not light a special fire; he heated the water over a few embers which would, in any case, burn out and turn to ashes. Umar then asked him how much he paid for the wood and then deposited that amount in the *bait-ul-maal*. In another very similar incident Umar was told that the cost of the wood used to make the fire was two *dirhams*. He therefore sent two *dinaars* to the *bait-ul-maal*.

### **A Piece of Paper**

Furaat bin Muslim was a civil servant. The narration does not provide any specific description of his job but shows that he was in charge of some books (registers). Whatever the case may be, he narrates that he used to present his books to Umar every Friday. One Friday Umar took a small piece of paper from one of the books and wrote a personal reminder thereon. At that moment Furat was quite surprised (everybody knew that Umar does not utilize public property for his personal needs) and thought to himself that Umar probably did not realize what he had done. The next day, however, Umar called for him to come with his books.

When he reached Umar, Umar took the books from him and sent him on some errand. When Furaat returned a little later Umar asked: "There's been no further development since I last checked these books?" Furaat replied: "No, you had checked them just yesterday." Umar responded: "Take them until I call you again." Furaat narrates that when he returned to his house and checked the books he found that Umar had replaced the piece of paper he had taken the previous day.

### **From Where Did You Get It?**

Umar bin Abdil Azeez asked his slave, Muzaahim, to purchase for him a stand on which he could place his *mushaf* (copy of the Qur'aan). Muzaahim left and returned after some time with a very beautiful stand. Admiring its beauty Umar asked him: "From where did you get it?" Muzaahim replied that he found some unused wood in one of the storerooms and used it to make this stand. Umar immediately sent him to the market to enquire its value. He returned after a little while and told Umar that all the traders in the market said that it was worth half-a-dinaar. "Do you think we'll be safe if we place one dinar in the *bait-ul-maal*?" asked Umar. Muzaahim replied that it was worth half-a-dinaar only. Umar thought for a while and then said: "Place two *dinaars* in the *bait-ul-maal*."

### **A Complaint**

Ady bin Artat, the governor of Basrah, wrote to Umar complaining that too many people were accepting Islaam as a result of which he feared that soon the *jizyah* (money collected

from non-Muslim citizens of the Islaamic state and distributed among the Muslim public) would become insufficient for distribution among the Muslim citizens. Umar's reply was: "...I've understood your letter. By Allah, I'd love all the people to become Muslims even if that means that you and I would have to work in the fields and eat what we earn with our hands."

### **Actions Are More Important**

Maymoon bin Mahraan narrates that he was sitting with a group of people and Umar was giving them *naseehah* (advice). While addressing them Umar saw a tear roll down the cheek of one of the members in the gathering and Umar suddenly kept quiet. Seeing Umar's sudden silence Maymoon urged him to continue speaking "so that Allah may benefit the audience". Umar replied: "Maymoon, speech is a *fitnah* (test) – actions are more important than speech." Umar used to often say: "The reason why I speak so little is fear that I may start boasting."

### **I Was Umar and I'm still Umar**

Rajaa bin Haywah narrates that he spent one night with Umar bin Abdul Azeez discussing certain important issues. In the course of the night the lantern blew out. Indicating to a young boy sleeping in the room Rajaa asked Umar: "Should I tell the lad to fix it?" Umar replied: "No, let him sleep." Rajaa then offered to fix it but Umar stopped him saying: "It is undignified for a man to ask his guest to serve him." Umar then stood up, added more oil to the lantern and relit it. As he sat down he

looked at Rajaa and said: "When I stood up I was Umar and I'm still Umar."

### **You Are Also Feeling the Heat**

Feeling uncomfortable in the intense heat of the summer Umar asked his slave-girl to fan him. She did so but soon fell asleep with the fan in her hand. When Umar realized that she had fallen asleep he gently took the fan from her hand and began fanning her. You can well imagine her shock when she suddenly awoke and saw her master and the master (*Ameer*) of all the Muslims at that time - fanning her. Before she could say anything Umar comforted her saying: "You are also feeling the heat."

### **You have Adorned the *Khilaafah***

Due to extreme humbleness Umar disliked being praised by others. He therefore totally ignored the person who came to him and said: "*Ameer-ul-Mu-mineen, khilaafah* adorned the *khulafaa* before you but you have adorned the *khilaafah*. You are like the statement of the poet:

و اذا الدر زان حسن وجوه — كان للدر حسن وجهك زينا

*If pearls adorn the beauty of some faces*

*The beauty of your face is adornment for the pearls*

### **May Allah Reward You**

A person came to Umar and said: "May Allah reward you on behalf of Islam!" Umar corrected him saying: "You've got it wrong. You should rather say: May Allah reward Islam on behalf of Umar!"

### **Are You A Donkey?**

Umar was walking through the *masjid* one night. There was a person sleeping in the way and, due to not seeing him in the dark, Umar tripped over his foot. The person did not know who had tripped over his foot and shouted: "Are you a donkey?" The humble Umar's answer was merely: "No, I am Umar." Umar's guard, however, was infuriated and intended to arrest the man but Umar stopped him saying: "Leave him; he only asked if I'm a donkey and I just told him that I'm not a donkey."

### **Don't You Veil Yourself From This Plasterer?**

A woman once came from a distant part of Iran to meet Umar bin Abdil Azeez. As she entered the city she enquired from the people of the whereabouts of Umar's palace. Following the directions they gave her she soon found herself in front of a simple dwelling no different from the other houses around it. There were no guards at the entrance and inside there was just one young servant. She was, however, most startled when she entered and found a man plastering the wall and the plaster was being passed to him by a woman. "Don't you veil yourself from this man?" she asked and the answer she received was:

"This is *Ameer-ul-Mu-mineen* and I am his wife."

### **I Would Have Killed You**

Abdul Hameed bin Abdir Rahmaan wrote to Umar informing him that a man was arrested for swearing Umar. Abdul Hameed had intended to behead the man for doing so but then thought that it would be better if he first consulted Umar. Umar's reply was: "If you killed him, I would have killed you. Besides the person who swears the Nabi, nobody else may be killed for swearing another person."

### **"If Only..."**

Umar's wife Fatimah used to say: "I never saw anybody perform more salaah and keep more saum (fast) than him and I never saw anybody more fearful of Allah than him.<sup>4</sup> After performing the *Ishaa salaah* he would sit and cry uncontrollably until he would fall asleep. Then he would suddenly wake up and continue crying until he would again fall asleep. (This would continue throughout the night.) He would be lying with me in the bed when he would suddenly think of the Hereafter and start shaking like a bird in the air. He would then sit up and cry. Feeling pity for him I would place a blanket on him and say: "If only the distance between the east and the west existed between us and *khilaafah*. Since we entered it we haven't seen any joy."

### **Who is the *Zaahid*?**

Maalik bin Dinaar used to say: "The people say that Maalik is a *zaahid*. What zuhd (abstinence) do I have? The (true) *zaahid* is Umar bin Abdil Azeez – the world came to him with an open mouth and he did not take it."

Sulayman Ad-Daaraani used to say that Umar bin Abdil Azeez was a greater *zaahid* than Uwais Al-Qarni; Umar possessed the world but renounced it. On the contrary, we do not know what Uwais's attitude would be if he possessed what Umar possessed.

### **Better Than Mu'aawiyah?**

In indication of how high people regarded Umar bin Abdil Azeez is that some people began discussing whether he or Mu'aawiyah ﷺ is better. Considering his justice, abstinence and *ibaadah* some people concluded that Umar is better than Mu'aawiyah ﷺ. The vast majority, however, regard Mu'aawiyah ﷺ as better than Umar bin Abdil Azeez. They say that a single day which Mu'aawiyah ﷺ spent with Rasulullah ﷺ excels Umar bin Abdil Azeez, his entire life and his whole family.

### **Is He the *Mahdi*?**

Rasulullah ﷺ foretold the appearance of the Mahdi, a rightly guided Imaam shortly before Qiyaamah. Another indication of Umar's status in the eyes of the public is that they began asking whether he is the *Mahdi*. Since the literal meaning of *mahdi* is



one who is rightly guided the ulamaa answered that: "He is a mahdi but he is not *The Mahdi*."

### **A Reviver**

However, there is consensus that Umar bin Abdil Azeez was a reviver (*mujaddid*) – one of the many revivers of deen during the first hundred years of Muslim history. Rasulullah ﷺ said that in every hundred years Allah will send to the *ummah* a reviver who will revive their deen for them. Umar bin Abdil Azeez is one of them. He revived deen, the spirit of deen, and he restored people's faith in the Islamic system of governance when, due to Umayyad abuse of power, it was at its lowest.

### **A Great Contribution**

Although writing the Ahaadith of Rasulullah ﷺ commenced in his own lifetime, most people relied on their memories. Thus even in the time of Umar bin Abdil Azeez most of the Ahaadith were preserved in the hearts of the ulamaa instead of the pages of books. One of Umar's greatest contributions to not only his subjects but all Muslims from then till Qiyaamah is that he took the first step towards the formal codification of the *Ahaadith*. Thus he wrote to the governor of Madeenah, Abu Bakr bin Hazm, to instruct the *ulamaa* to write down the *Ahaadith* of Rasulullah ﷺ because "I fear the extinction of knowledge and the departure of the *ulamaa*". Ibn Hazm therefore commissioned Ibn Shahaab Zuhri (the most famous scholar of Hadith at that time) to fulfill this task. Some

naarations suggest that Umar wrote to Imaam Zuhri directly. In one narration Imaam Zuhri says that: "Umar bin Abdil Azeez commanded us to gather the *sunan*. We therefore wrote them in a number of books. Umar then sent copies of these books to every place that fell under his jurisdiction." Thus Haafidh Ibn Hajar writes in his commentary of the Saheeh-al-Bukhaari that the first person to codify the *Hadith* was Ibn Shihaab Az-Zuhri; he did so in the end of the first century with the command of Umar bin Abdil Azeez. This is another link between Umar bin Abdil Azeez and his grandfather, Umar bin Khattaab. If the latter was responsible for initiating the writing of the whole Qur'aan in book form, the former was responsible for initiating the writing of the *Ahaadith* of Rasulullah ﷺ in book form.

### **The Inevitable End**

"Every soul has to taste death." Even the Ambiyaa ﷺ had to leave the world. Nabi Eesa ﷺ, who contrary to Christian belief is still alive and was not crucified, will also taste death when he returns to the world shortly before *Qiyaamah*. The death of Umar bin Abdil Azeez was therefore inevitable. His death, however, was unlike the death of most people. Even in death he resembled his great grandfather, Umar bin Khattaab رضي الله عنه. They both left the world as *shaheed* (martyrs) – Umar bin Khattaab رضي الله عنه was stabbed while leading the *Fajr salaah* and Umar bin Abdil Azeez was poisoned by one of his slaves who was paid one thousand *dinaars* for doing the "job". When Umar bin Abdil Azeez fell severely ill as a result of the poison, he

called the slave and asked him why he had poisoned him. The slave replied that he was paid a thousand *dinaars* to do so. Umar asked him for the thousand *dinaars*, placed them in the *bait-ul-maal* and told him to "run away where nobody will ever see you". With regards to who instigated the slave to poison Umar bin Abdil Azeez, many historians believe that it was somebody from the Umayyad family – Umar's justice may have been a dream-come-true for the general public, but it was a terrible nightmare for them.<sup>5</sup> At the time of his death he was only a few months more than thirty nine years old. The duration of his *khilaafah* was two years and five months; the same as the *khilaafah* of Abu Bakr Siddeeq رضي الله عنه.

### **Why don't You Go to Madeenah?**

A few days before Umar passed away it was suggested to him to go to Madeenah so that when he dies he could be buried in the *fourth* grave which is still vacant. His reply was: "I would prefer Allah punishing me with every kind of punishment besides the fire instead of him knowing that I regard myself as worthy of that honour."

### **What About Your Children?**

While Umar bin Abdil Azeez was on his deathbed – not very long before he passed away – he was told to make some *wasiyyah* (bequest) to his children because they were poor. He quoted the *Aayah* "My helper is Allah who revealed the Book and He helps the pious" and said: "I will neither deprive them

of what is due to them nor will I give them what is due to others. They are either pious or impious. If they are pious Allah will help them. On the contrary, if they are impious I would not want to help them sin." According to some narrations the last sentence was: "If they are impious I don't care where they perish". The narrators mention that Umar's children were later blessed with so much of wealth that while one of them was observed loading eighty horses in the path of Allah, the children of Sulayman bin Abdil Malik (who received huge amounts of wealth from their father) were observed begging from Umar's children.

### **The Final Moments**

In his last moments Umar asked those around him to help him sit up. He then said: "My lord, you commanded me and I did not fulfill your command. You prohibited me and I disobeyed. Nevertheless, there is no deity but you." He then raised his head and began staring. He was asked what he was staring at. He replied: "I see guests who are neither human nor *jinn*" and breathed his last. According to another narration he asked everybody around him to leave the room. As they all left, his wife Fatimah and her brother Maslamah sat outside the door. After a little while they heard him saying: "Welcome O faces that are neither faces of man nor *jinn*." He then recited the Aayah "This abode of the Hereafter, We give it to those who desire neither arrogance nor corruption in the land. And the end result will be in favour of the possessors of *Taqwa*." This

was followed by total silence. They entered the room and found him facing the qiblah with his eyes closed. The "*Imaam of guidance*" (as Imaam Ibn Sireen used to call him) had already passed on from this transitory life of the world to the eternal life of the Aakhirah. When Imaam Hasan Basri was informed of Umar's death he said:

مات خير الناس

*"The best of people has passed away."*

### **May Allah's Mercy Be On You!**

When Umar passed away and his brother-in-law Yazeed became the *khaleefah*, Yazeed's nephew, Umar bin Waleed came to him and told him that Umar had usurped large amounts of pearls and other precious stones and hidden them in two rooms in his house which he always kept locked. Yazeed immediately sent a message to Umar's wife Fatimah asking her for the keys to those two rooms. She sent the keys to Yazeed with a message that she had never entered those rooms since Umar became the *khaleefah* because she knew that he did not like her to do so...Accompanied by Umar bin Waleed, Yazeed entered the first room and all he found was a leather stool, four bricks spread in front of it and a water bottle. Seeing this Yazeed said: "*Astaghfirullah*". He then entered the second room and what he saw was most shocking: a musalla made of pebbles and above it was a chain hanging from the roof. At the

lower end of the chain was a ring that was big enough for a human head to enter it. It was quite clear what the chain was for – when Umar felt tired and sleepy during his optional *ibaadah* and when he recalled his past sins, he would *hang* himself...Besides this they found a closed box. They opened it and all they found was a short trouser (which people wore in those days to cover the private-area) and a loose outer garment. Both these garments were made of course fabric and were only used at the time of *ibaadah*. Seeing this Yazeed, his nephew and the rest of the group burst into tears. "May Allah's mercy be upon you, brother, your secret and public life was impeccable." Umar bin Waleed left the room in shame and said: "*Astaghfirullah*, I merely repeated what was said."

### **Words of Wisdom**

Umar bin Abdil Azeez was an extremely eloquent man with great wisdom. During the period of his *khilaafah* he delivered countless sermons and wrote scores of letters to his governors in various regions. These sermons and letters are testimony of his excellent command of the Arabic language and his profound thinking. Reproducing them, however, is an arduous task which will take a long time and make this booklet too long. We will therefore suffice with a few short quotes.

❁ The night and day play their role in you. You should play our role in them.

- ❁ Always observe *Taqwa* because nothing else is accepted, nobody else is shown mercy and there is no other reason for reward. The preachers of *Taqwa* are many but those who practice are few.
- ❁ The *dunya* does not please as much as it harms; it causes little pleasure and tremendous grief.
- ❁ A person who does not regard his speech as part of his *amal* will make many errors.
- ❁ Death is sufficient to admonish man, distract him from the *dunya* and divert his attention to the *Aakhirah*. Therefore ask Allah for protection from death and whatever comes thereafter.
- ❁ Don't seek anything of the *dunya* by means of a statement or action which you fear will harm your *Aakhirah*, destroy your deen and anger your Rabb. Remember that *taqdeer* will give you your full sustenance with neither anything more due to your strength nor anything less due to your weakness.
- ❁ Whoever desires *Jannah* and wants to flee from the fire should do so now, while *tawbah* is still acceptable and sin forgivable – before his time runs out.
- ❁ The *dunya* is the enemy of Allah's friends and enemies alike. She is the enemy of His friends because she causes them

untold grief and she is the enemy of His enemies because she deceives them.

❁ Blessed is the person in need who makes abundant *du'a* irrespective of whether his need is fulfilled or not.

❁ I pondered over the *dunya* and its pleasures and I saw in it a lesson. Its pleasures are never fully enjoyed before they are spoilt by its bitterness. If there is no lesson in it for those who seek lesson, there's sufficient admonishment for those who seek admonishment.

❁ Think often of the day of *Qiyaamah* and its harshness because that will lead you to abstention from those things to which you are so inclined and inclination to those things from which you are so disinclined. And be cautious of what you possess of the *dunya* because one who is not cautious of such things is soon caught in negligence.

❁ Don't protect yourself and those who are with you from your enemy more than you protect yourself from sin. I fear sin more than I fear the scheme of the enemy because we can only defeat them on the strength of their sin. If that is not true, we will never be able to defeat them because neither our numbers nor our strength is like theirs. Therefore don't fear any enemy more than your sins.



## Too Much to Mention

مناقبه و فضائله كثيرة جدا

فضائله و مآثره كثيرة جدا

مناقبه أكثر من أن تحصى

The above are the statements of Mizzi, Ibn Katheer and Nawawi in *Tahdheeb-ul- Kamaal*, *Al-Bidaayah Wan-Nihaayah* and *Tahdheeb-ul-Asmaa Wal-Lughaat* respectively. They all mean that the exploits and glorious deeds of Umar bin Abdil Azeez are too much to mention (especially in a short book like this). What you have read in the preceding pages is just a few glimpses of the life of this most illustrious son of Islaam.

أبو حذيفة محمد خروليا

10 ذى القعدة 1428

29 November 2007

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