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'Amr bin Al-'Aas رضي الله عنه The Conqueror of Egypt

By
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*In the Name of Allâh,
the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful*

“Among the believers are men who have been true to their covenant with Allâh [i.e., they have gone out for *Jihâd* (holy fighting), and showed not their backs to the disbelievers]; of them some have fulfilled their obligations (i.e., have been martyred); and some of them are still waiting, but they have never changed (i.e., they never proved treacherous to their covenant which they concluded with Allâh) in the least.” (33:23)

Publishers Note

All praises are due to Allâh, the Lord of all that exists. May Allâh’s peace and blessings be upon His final Prophet and Messenger, Muhammad, his family and his Companions.

Darussalam is pleased to present this valuable series, “*The Golden Series of the Prophet’s Companions*”, to the Muslim youth. The purpose of these books is to enlighten our youth about the lives of the greatest heroes of Islam, the Prophet’s Companions. Also, we wish to increase the enthusiasm of the Muslim youth for following and adhering to their religion. In this way, these books achieve two very important tasks: educating our children and encouraging them to be good Muslims.

The following story, “*‘Amr bin Al-‘Aas ؓ - The Conqueror of Egypt*”, is about one of the Prophet’s famous Companions, ‘Amr bin Al-‘Aas ؓ. ‘Amr spent years fighting against Islam on the side of the Quraish pagans. Yet, with deep thought and reflection, it was only a matter of time that a clever and brilliant man like ‘Amr ؓ would see the clear truth and accept Islam. He eventually became one

of the great assets to the Muslims, as an Envoy, Commander and Governor.

We hope that these books are beneficial to our Muslim youth, as they are the future of Islam. We at Darussalam realize the importance of good Islamic literature for Muslim children, especially in the West where non-Islamic influences are so strong. For this reason, we feel that the availability of this series will be a valuable aid in instilling a genuine love for Islam in our children. We would like to thank the author, Mr. Abdul Basit Ahmad, the editors, Mr. Aqeel Walker, and Mr. Muhammad Ayub Sapra for their diligent work in preparing this series. As Allâh says:

“Is there any reward for good other than good?” (55:60)

And our final word is that all praises are due to Allâh, the Lord of all that exists.

Abdul Malik Mujahid
General Manager

Foreword

Usually a few men play important roles in their societies. Some of these men excel others in achieving their objectives through clever plans and shrewd plots. Our hero, ‘Amr bin Al-‘Aas ؓ was one of those distinguished men who played a major role in the history of Islam. He was a great conqueror and leader both before and after the rise of Islam.

During the period of opposition to Islam and the Muslims, he used all his shrewdness and cynical skills to tease the Muslims and make their life in Makkah as hard as possible. He also plotted to get back to Makkah the Muslims who migrated to Abyssinia, to make the Quraish army win the battle of Uhud and to gather as many allies as he could in preparation for the Trench Battle.

After embracing Islam, he also dedicated all his mental abilities to serve the just cause of Islam. After years of struggle against Islam, he realized that it was time to join the overwhelming march of the true faith. Had it not been for his cleverness supported by divine guidance, he would have lost his way to the truth.

He was the man who conquered Egypt and

successfully turned the eyes of the Egyptian people toward the light of Islam after decades of Roman tyranny. During the last moment of his life, he summed up his whole life in the following words:

“I had been disbeliever. I had been hard against the Prophet ﷺ. Had I died at that time, I would have perished in the hellfire. However, when I accepted Islam, I felt that the Prophet ﷺ was the most lovable and most respectable man to me on the earth. If I had been asked to describe him, I would have been unable to do so because I could not look at him with full open eyes. Had I died at that time, I would have hoped to go to Paradise. Afterwards, I was pleased with rule and other things that I cannot say they were in my favour or against. My Lord, I am not so innocent to bring my argument before myself, nor powerful to defend myself. It is only Your mercy that I seek; or I have no shelter from Your punishment.”

These words show how much this great man feared to meet Allâh on the Day of Judgment. To the story of this great Companion of the Prophet ﷺ let us give an ear and from it let us learn a lesson.

Abdul Basit Ahmad

Introduction

Arabs in the Arabian Peninsula

Arabs lived in the Arabian Peninsula both in cities and in the desert. The people of cities mostly worked as traders while desert Bedouins followed their flocks everywhere in the desert in search of food and water. They consisted of tribes and clans which kept in constant clashes against each other. Wars erupted now and then to snatch more lives and leave many houses lacking any fatherly support. In addition, women and children were taken as slaves as a result of such bloody wars.

Gloom and ignorance shrouded the life of Arabs in the absence of any heavenly guidance. Every tribe had its own major idol made of stone to which people worshipped beside Allâh. They claimed that such idols would bring them closer to Allâh. The Ka‘bah in Makkah was itself surrounded with hundreds of idols which were considered by Makkans as gods.

Slavery, burying girls alive and injustices were dominating the societies of the city and desert alike. Any free man today might become a slave tomorrow and a girl who was given the right to live by Allâh was buried alive by her father for fear to

bring him shame.

Youth and old were spending their time in grazing animals or practicing trade during the daytime and seeking worldly pleasures during the night. The guidance brought by previous religions was absent from the life of people. There was no central government; rather, every tribe had its own chief and customs. A number of Jews and Christians were scattered here and there, but their practice of their religions had greatly diminished. The neighbouring Roman and Persian Empires were also lacking such heavenly guidance.

All these vices and atrocities urgently needed a Messenger from Allâh to reform the society and spread guidance throughout the Arabian Peninsula.

The Messenger of Islam

The child Muhammad grew up in such a corrupt environment. His father died before he was born and his mother left him alone when he was only six years old. His grandfather, Abdul Muttalib, the chief of Bani Hashim clan, reared the boy. However, he died when Muhammad was only eight years old. His uncle Abu Tâlib took care of him and loved him dearly. When Muhammad ﷺ became a young man, he kept himself away from the evils

and vices of the Day. Like other youth, he used to graze his uncle's flocks. He was well behaved and was loved and respected by all those who came in contact with him. He was well known to be sincere and trustworthy to the extent that he was called *Al-Ameen* (trustworthy) by people. He did not like the ways that his peers were following to satisfy their desires. He even could not bear the idea to stand before any idol pleading for help. He sometimes engaged in trade on behalf of wealthy men. It is well known that he visited Damascus twice before he was commissioned with the message of Islam. On the way there, many signs of his Prophethood were seen by his companions and even monks living in isolation. When he was twenty-five years old, he married a wealthy woman who preferred him to the chiefs of the Quraish.

Muhammad ﷺ proclaims Islam

At the age of forty, he was blessed by Allâh with the gift of Prophethood. He started preaching the new religion to his close relatives as ordered by Allâh. After three years of calling to Islam, he was ordered by Allâh to preach Islam in public. He met hard opposition and cruel oppression, especially by his tribesmen.

The Quraish challenges Islam

The chiefs of the Quraish did not like the principles preached by the Prophet ﷺ because they felt that their privileges as chiefs would be lost. In the beginning, they tried their best to make the followers of Islam abandon their religion. When they could not force the believers to give up their faith, they began accusing the Prophet ﷺ of things that they themselves knew were untrue. They alleged that Muhammad ﷺ was a magician or a liar, although they themselves used to call him the trustworthy. However, all their attempts met no success. They tried to entice the Prophet ﷺ to make abandon the mission of spreading Islam. They began negotiating with the Prophet ﷺ and his uncle to reach a compromise. They told the Prophet ﷺ that they would make him a king or give him all the money he might ask for.

However, the Prophet ﷺ rejected all of their worldly proposals and continued preaching the message of Islam to all humanity. When they felt that neither oppression nor enticement could make the Prophet ﷺ accept their views, they tried to kill him but Allâh protected him against their conspiracies.

The Most Cunning Opponent

Background

Like other first class men, ‘Amr bin Al-‘Aas was brought up in a high ranking house in Makkah. Since childhood, he showed signs of cleverness that his society highly appreciated. He was trained with his fellow youngsters on how to use his sword to defend his tribe and how to use his mind to foil the plots of enemies. He dedicated all his physical and mental powers for this end. He was known since he was a boy to be of high mental capabilities reflected in shrewd thinking and sound planning. While still young, ‘Amr established close relations with several kings and governors of lands in and out of the Arabian Peninsula. Among those kings was the Emperor of Abyssinia and other high ranking persons whom he approached in due course to achieve his goals.

Opposition to Islam

When the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was ordered to proclaim the new religion of Islam, most leaders of the Quraish opposed the new religion. They did their best and used most of their resources to kill the newborn faith while still fresh. They used to

every tribe in and around Makkah to share in killing the Prophet ﷺ. Forty young men stood by the Prophet's house on the night he was ordered by Allâh to migrate to Al-Madinah. However, Allâh saved the Prophet ﷺ from their plots.

Warring against Islam

'Amr continued his war against Islam and the Muslims. As soon as he knew that the Muslims who settled in Al-Madinah had threatened their trade caravan, he prepared himself to attack them in Al-Madinah. He convinced the people of Makkah that it was time to stop the threat of Islam. He and other chiefs of the Quraish prepared an army of one thousand fully armed soldiers and marched to Al-Madinah in an attempt to put off the light of Islam. However, when the battle started he lost all his cunning and shrewdness. Again, he lost his battle against the Muslims at the battle of Badr.

'Amr still did not realize that the Muslims were supported by a divine power. He continued in the same way of opposition to Islam. He and other chiefs of the Quraish convinced Abu Sufyan to use the revenues of the trade caravan which had escaped from the hands of the Muslims to finance their coming battle against the Muslims.

More and more challenges to Islam

'Amr and other chiefs of the Quraish gathered an army of three thousand soldiers and marched to Al-Madinah. They thought that they would revenge themselves against the Muslims and put an end to the message of Islam. Even women participated in the march. 'Amr and other horsemen of the Quraish led the army near to Al-Madinah. In spite of their little number compared to the army of the Quraish, the Muslims defeated their enemy in the beginning of the battle. However, the archers whom the Prophet ﷺ positioned over a small hill behind the Muslim army to protect their backs came down and joined the other members of the army in collecting war booty. 'Amr and Khalid bin Al-Waleed turned from behind the Muslim army and attacked them. Although they defeated the Muslims in this battle, their aims to destroy Islam did not succeed.

As 'Amr returned to Makkah, he began preparing for another battle against the Muslims. He used his shrewdness to convince most of the Arab tribes in Arabia to join the Quraish in their final battle against the Muslims. Even the Jews, who were closer to the Muslims in belief than to pagans, shared in the efforts to gather a huge army of ten thousand soldiers. They were intent on

'Amr the Muslim

From the day 'Amr accepted Islam, his mission had changed from fighting against Islam to fighting for the sake of Islam. He remained by the side of the Prophet ﷺ supporting the message of Islam and spared no effort to make it victorious.

The Muslim Leader

In the eighth year after the migration to Al-Madinah, there were still some clans around Al-Madinah who caused some harm to the Muslims. Now and then, their men attacked the suburbs of Al-Madinah and robbed some camels and killed some Muslims. Other tribes also held pacts with the Romans to weaken the march of Islam toward the northern parts of the Arabian Peninsula.

'Amr ﷺ knew very well the locations of these tribes. He also knew how to stop their threats to the Muslims.

The Prophet ﷺ selected 'Amr ﷺ to lead a small army to subdue the Arab tribes who tried to cause harm to the Muslims. He could punish these tribes and stop their efforts to harm the Muslims. 'Amr ﷺ also led several Muslim brigades throughout

Arabia. He successfully undermined the plans of enemies and put an end to their plots against the Muslims.

The conquest of Makkah

'Amr ﷺ was a witness to the peace treaty that the Prophet ﷺ concluded with the Quraish at Al-Hudaibiyah. At that moment he was at the side of the pagans. However, the pagans failed to respect the treaty. They attacked the Muslims and killed some forty men and women.

The Prophet ﷺ had no choice but to retaliate. It was time to put an end to idolatry in the Arabian Peninsula and to spread the light of Islam in the centre of Arabia.

On the day when the Prophet ﷺ headed to Makkah to conquer the capital of the Quraish, 'Amr ﷺ was at his side. He thought that the Prophet ﷺ would avenge himself against the chiefs of the Quraish. However he forgot how merciful the Prophet ﷺ was to him. He witnessed how much the Prophet ﷺ was merciful to those who did their best to stop his call to Islam. As soon as the Prophet ﷺ finished his job in Makkah, he ordered 'Amr ﷺ to destroy Suwa', an idol worshipped by a mighty Arab tribe named Huzail. 'Amr ﷺ did the job

ﷺ was so pleased with his triumph that he said:

“O ‘Amr! Got ready for further victories.”

Doubtless these words uttered by the blessed tongue of the Prophet ﷺ were treasured with pride to the end of life of ‘Amr bin Al-‘Aas ؓ as they acknowledged wholeheartedly the military services rendered by him.

And about him ‘Umar bin Khattâb ؓ said:

“O ‘Amr when I see your intelligence, your wisdom, your understanding and your foresightedness, I feel you should have been the very first to enter into the fold of Islam.”

Departure

‘Amr ؓ ruled Egypt till the 43rd year after Hijrah. He established a powerful state controlled by justice, freedom and equality.

While lying on his deathbed, he began crying. His son, Abdullah, asked him why he was crying. He replied:

“I was first disbeliever and fought hard against the Prophet ﷺ. Had I died at that time, I would have perished in the hellfire. When I embraced Islam, I felt that the Prophet ﷺ was the most lovable and most respectable man to me on the earth. If I had been asked to describe him, I would have been unable to do so because I could not look at him with full open eyes. Had I died at that time, I would have hoped to go to Paradise. I was then plighted with power and other things that I cannot say whether they were in my favour or against me. My Lord I am not so innocent to bring my argument before myself, nor powerful to defend myself. It is only your mercy that I seek; otherwise, I have no shelter.”