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Cover photo:
Jerusalem Arch

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Verse references to the Holy Qur'an item count 'Bismillah...' (In the Name of Allah...) as the first verse of each Chapter. In some non-standard texts, this is not counted. Should the reader refer to such texts, the verse quoted in *The Review of Religions* will be found a verse earlier, i.e. at one verse less than the number quoted.

In this journal, for the ease of non-Muslim readers, '(saw)' or 'saw' after the words, 'Holy Prophet', or the name 'Muhammad', are used. They stand for '*Sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*' meaning 'peace and blessings of Allah be upon him'. Likewise, the letters '(as)' or 'as' after the name of all other prophets is an abbreviation meaning 'peace be upon him' derived from '*Alaihis salatu wassalam*' which are words that a Muslim utters out of respect whenever he or she comes across that name. The abbreviation 'ra' or (ra) stands for '*Radhiallahu Ta'ala anhu*' and is used for Companions of a Prophet, meaning Allah be pleased with him or her (when followed by the relevant Arabic pronoun). Finally, 'ru' or (ru) for '*Rahemahullahu Ta'ala*' means the Mercy of Allah the Exalted be upon him.

In keeping with current universal practice, local transliterations of names of places are preferred to their anglicised versions, e.g. Makkah instead of Mecca, etc.

Hadhrat Abu Bakr As-Siddiq^(ra) – *The Great Lover of Allah*

By Adam Hani Walker – UK

In a reported hadith (Tradition: saying of) the Holy Prophet^(saw) said¹:

‘Love of Abu Bakr^(ra) and gratitude to him are a duty on everyone of my Ummah’

Introduction

Abu Bakr^(ra) was one of many Arabic titles (*kunya*) given to Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) but his actual name was Abdul Ka’aba but after he became a Muslim was named by the Holy Prophet^(saw) ‘Abdullah ibn Abi Qahafa ‘Uthman ibn ‘Amir ibn ‘Amr ibn Ka’b ibn Sa’d ibn Taym ibn Murrah ibn Ka’b ibn Lu’ayy ibn Ghalib al-Quraishi al-Taymi. His other titles are numerous and offer us a deep insight into his character as perceived by those around him. The first of his titles is ‘*Ateeq*’ which literally means noble or one who is freed from some unfortunate outcome or circumstance. There are countless reasons put forward for him being named

as such with the most compelling relating to a hadith in which the Holy Prophet^(saw) said:

‘Abu Bakr^(ra) you are the one whom Allah has freed from the hellfire’².

He was also known as *As-Siddiq*, which comes from the root ‘truthfulness’ and literally means that a person is in a constant state of truthfulness. It has been related in *Al-Bukhari* (Book of Hadith – Traditions) that the Holy Prophet^(saw) once climbed with Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra), Hadhrat ‘Umar^(ra) and Hadhrat ‘Uthman^(ra) to the top of Mount ‘Uhud upon which he said³:

‘Be firm, O ‘Uhud, for upon you are a Prophet, a Siddiq (Hadhrat Abu Bakr) and two martyrs (Hadhrat ‘Umar and Hadhrat ‘Uthman)’.

In relation to this the Promised Messiah^(as) writes in Arabic⁴:

‘My Lord has made it clear to me that the Siddiq (Abu Bakr^(ra)) and Fariq (‘Umar^(ra)) and ‘Uthman were of the righteous and the faithful and were of those who were chosen by Allah and were bestowed in particular with the bounties of the Gracious One.

I have been informed that they were of the righteous and he who hurts them, hurts Allah and is a transgressor.’

In further expounding the deep meaning of As-Siddiq the Promised Messiah^(as) delves into his vast ocean of knowledge and, as was his habit, presents us with a glowing pearl of knowledge. He writes that Prophethood after Hadhrat Muhammad^(saw) is only attainable through the complete and absolute losing of oneself in the love of the Holy Prophet^(saw). The Promised Messiah^(as) writes⁵:

‘...all the doors leading to Prophethood have been closed except the door of Sirat-e-Siddiqi, i.e., losing oneself in the Holy Prophet.’

There were several other titles

attributed to Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) but none more esteemed than the title *As-Sahib* (the companion) which was most magnificently assigned to him by Almighty Allah. It is said that when taking shelter in the cave of Hira, Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) began to weep. The Holy Prophet^(saw) asked him why he was weeping. Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) replied⁶:

‘I do not weep for my life, O Prophet of God, because if I die it is only the question of a single life. But if you die it will be the death of Islam and of the entire Muslim Community.’

It was here that Almighty Allah revealed a comforting verse to remove the fears of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) in which He gave him the title *As-Sahib*⁷,

...when he said to his companion, ‘Grieve not, for Allah is with us.’

To merit such a unique title, and be so closely associated with Hadhrat Khatam-An-Nabiyyeen^(saw), indicates that Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was exemplary in the way he conducted himself. This was exemplified in

his acceptance of Islam when he did not hesitate for a fraction of a second to believe the Holy Prophet^(saw) and offer his bai'at at the hand of Hadhrat Khatam-An-Nabiyeen^(saw). Regarding his acceptance the Holy Prophet^(saw) addressed the companions and said⁸:

‘Verily, when Allah sent me to you, you said, “You are lying”, but Abu Bakr said: ‘He has spoken the truth.’ He then consoled me by sacrificing his life and his wealth.’

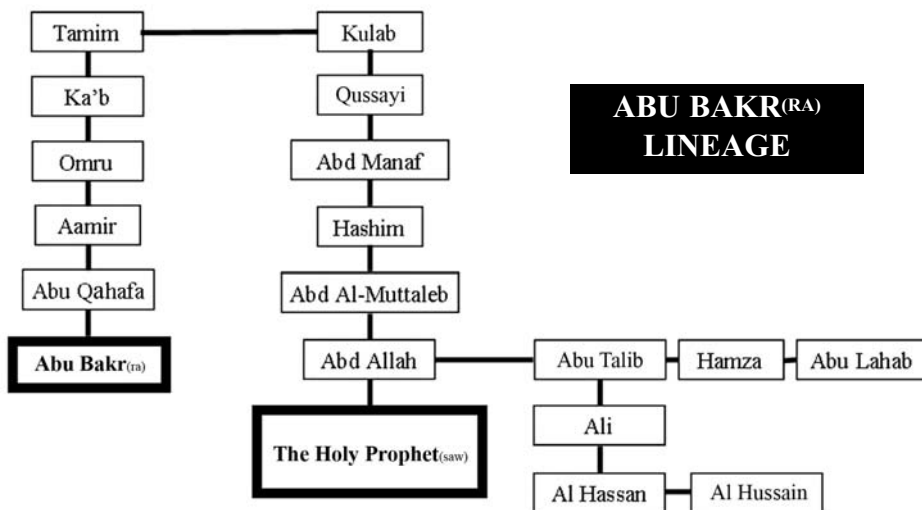
Family

Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) came from a prominent family of good standing and his father was called ‘Uthman ibn ‘Amar ibn ‘Amr^(ra) (also known by the title Abu Quhafa) and his mother was called Salma bint Sakhr ibn ‘Amr ibn Ka’ab ibn Sa’ad ibn Tayim^(ra) (also known by the title Umm-ul-Khair). Whilst his mother accepted Islam in the early days before Hijrah, his father did not accept until the day that Islam liberated Makkah Al-Mukarramah from the hands of the tyrannical pagans.

Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was blessed with four wives who bore six children between them. His wives were Hadhrat Qateelah, Hadhrat Umm Ruman, Hadhrat Asma' and Hadhrat Habibah. His blessed children were Hadhrat ‘Abdur-Rahman^(ra), Hadhrat ‘Abdullah^(ra), Hadhrat Muhammad^(ra), Hadhrat Asma'^(ra), Hadhrat ‘A'ishah^(ra) and Hadhrat Umm Kulthoom who was born shortly after he passed away.

His were blessed believers who contributed heavily towards the success and development of traditional Islamic thought and rule. The family of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was one of the very few families that was blessed with four generations classed as companions of the Holy Prophet^(saw).

Delving deeply into the lineage of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) leads one to realise the rich prophetic tree from which he grew. He was in fact related to Hadhrat Muhammad^(saw) through Hadhrat Tamim (his fourth generation grandfather), who was the brother of Hadhrat Kulab (the fifth generation grandfather of the Holy Prophet^(saw)) who were the sons of Hadhrat Morah from the

HADHRAT ABU BAKR AS-SIDDIQ(RA)

family tree of Hadhrat ‘Adnan as shown in the diagram⁹.

Hadhrat Ibn Hishaam concurs with the above lineage and goes even further listing the blessed lineage of Hadhrat ‘Adnan all the way to Hadhrat Adam(AS). The list is as follows¹⁰:

‘Adnan ibn Udd [also known as Udad] ibn Muqawwim ibn Nahur ibn Tayrah ibn Ya’rub ibn Yashjub ibn Nabit ibn (Prophet) Isma’il ibn (Prophet) Ibrahim [the intimate friend of Allah] ibn Tarih [also known as Azar] ibn Nahur ibn Sarugh ibn

Ra’u ibn Falakh ibn Aybar ibn Shalakh ibn Arfakhshadh ibn Sam ibn (Prophet) Nuh ibn Lamk ibn Muttushalakh ibn Akhnukh [who was said to be Prophet Idris] ibn Yard Mahlayl ibn Qaynan ibn Yanish ibn Shith ibn Adam(AS).’

This was indeed a lineage of great blessings and miracles including no less than six Prophets (Hadhrat Muhammad, Hadhrat Isma’il, Hadhrat Ibrahim, Hadhrat Nuh, Hadhrat Idris and Hadhrat Adam, may Allah be pleased with them all).

Early Life and Acceptance of Islam

Not much is known about the life of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) prior to his accepting Islam. Scholars have estimated that he was born in Makkah roughly two and a half years after the birth of the Holy Prophet^(saw) in 572 AD. He spent most of his youth in Makkah learning how to become a successful merchant and as the years passed he would often leave Makkah with various caravans on trade expeditions in other countries. His business activities proved to be very successful and he soon established himself as a wealthy merchant. It is also known that from a young age Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) lived the life of a Bedouin and came to be known as someone who had a keen interest in camels of which he owned many. He was a just and equitable man quickly gaining a reputation for being trustworthy and honourable, so much so that he was entrusted by many tribes with blood money and other items of value.

It is a natural sign of the truth of Islam that following its advent people were delivered from

darkness into spiritual illumination; however, Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was an extraordinary individual because, unlike most pre-Islamic Arabs, he lived a pure and honest life in the period of ignorance (Jahiliyyah). It is easy to understand why he was such an honest person because during his youth he kept the very best of company being a friend of the Holy Prophet^(saw). Regarding Hadhrat Abu Bakr's friendship with the Holy Prophet^(saw) before the advent of Islam Al-Zamakhshari writes¹¹:

‘Abu Bakr’s name will be juxtaposed alongside that of the Messenger of Allah until the end of time. When he was young Abu Bakr was a close friend of the Prophet^(saw); and when he grew older he spent his wealth on him...’

In addition to his extraordinary qualities he was also exceptional in his actions as was exemplified by the fact that he was one of the few blessed companions who protected themselves from alcohol before the advent of Islam. In a gathering of the companions Hadhrat Abu

Bakr^(ra) was questioned about whether or not he drank wine before entering the fold of Islam to which he admonished the questioner by saying¹²:

‘I seek refuge in Allah...I tried to protect my honour and my manliness, for whoever drinks wine will lose his honour and his manliness’.

On this incident being related to the Holy Prophet^(saw) he replied:

‘Abu Bakr has told the truth, Abu Bakr has told the truth’.

Regarding his accepting Islam, some scholars document Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) as the first grown free man to accept Islam with Hadhrat ‘Ali^(ra) being the first child and Hadhrat Khadija^(ra) the first lady. Imam Al-Suyuti supports the view that Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was the first man to accept Islam citing in evidence the following couplets of the great poet of the Holy Prophet^(saw), Hadhrat Hassaan ibn Thaabit^(ra), as related by Hadhrat Ash-Sha’bi^(ra)¹³:

‘When you recall the distress of

a trusted brother, then remember your brother Abu Bakr for what he did.

The best of creation, most fearfully obedient among them, and the most just, except for the Prophet, and most certain to fulfil what he has undertaken.

The second, the follower whose assembly is praised, and the first of those men who affirmed the Messenger.’

Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was not present in Makkah when the first conversions took place.

The first grown man to accept was the freed slave of the Holy Prophet^(saw) Hadhrat Zaid ibn Haarithah^(ra) who was about thirty years of age at the time. It is the view of Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih II^(ra)¹⁴ that upon Hadhrat Abu Bakr’s^(ra) return to Makkah he began to hear stories about how the Holy Prophet^(saw) had turned mad, announcing to people that angels were delivering him messages from God. Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was a close friend of the Holy Prophet^(saw) and knew that if he had

actually made such claims they would most certainly be true. Such was the absolute trust he placed in the Holy Prophet^(saw). Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) proceeded to the home of the Holy Prophet^(saw), and upon entering, asked the Holy Prophet^(saw) about what had taken place. So as to avoid any misunderstanding of what he was saying, the Holy Prophet^(saw) began to offer him a long explanation of the events but Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) stopped him and said that he wanted no explanation but only to know if an angel had conveyed messages from God to him.

Once again the Holy Prophet^(saw) tried to offer a lengthy explanation but Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) again said that he had no need for such an explanation but only to know if God had communicated with him. The Holy Prophet^(saw) answered him in the affirmative and Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) accepted the claims of the Holy Prophet^(saw) without hesitation and affirmed his status as a Muslim. Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) went on to say that had the Holy Prophet^(saw) offered a lengthy explanation to be followed by debate then this would have

detracted from the sincerity and value of his faith and acceptance. On reading this, who, from all of Allah's creation, would dare to question the sincerity or pure righteousness of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) 'the trusted one.' This alone should be enough to make clear that the status of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was amongst those who had the highest levels of Taqwa (righteousness). His acceptance was indeed the most spectacular of all the companions because it was based on complete belief and required no qualification. Surely this unique action of trust places Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) amongst those referred to in the following verse:¹⁵

And who is better in faith than he who submits himself to Allah, and he is a doer of good and follows the religion of Abraham, the upright? And Allah took Abraham for a special friend.

This verse mentions the term 'Special Friend' (*khalil*) which is taken from the Arabic *Khullah* (meaning intimate friendship) which more precisely refers to a

type of¹⁶, ‘friendship or affection which penetrates the heart and takes root in it’ making a *Khalil* someone who is¹⁷, ‘a special and particular friend who penetrates the inner parts’ of the heart.

In a famous hadith, the Holy Prophet^(saw) expresses his deep love for Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) by both connecting the concept of a *Khalil* with the unshakeable trust and submission shown by Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) when he accepted Islam¹⁸. Further reiterating this Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih II^(ra) relates another hadith in which the Holy Prophet^(saw) said¹⁹:

‘If I had taken anyone as my *Khalil* I would have taken Abu Bakr as such, but my *Khalil* is God’.

Companion of the Holy Prophet^(saw)

From the day that Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) is said to have uttered the blessed Shahadah (affirmation of the unity of Allah and of Muhammad being a Messenger of Allah) he did not leave the side of the Holy Prophet^(saw) but with his express permission for special

circumstances such as Hajj and to take part in battles. It has been reported²⁰ that in gatherings the companions would always surround the Holy Prophet^(saw) and listen to him with such enthusiasm and intensity that their circle would resemble a solid wall; however, a place by the side of the Holy Prophet^(saw) would always be left for his trusty companion Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) and when he would join the group the Holy Prophet^(saw) would address the entire group but face Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra).

As has already been touched upon, Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was blessed with the opportunity to accompany the Holy Prophet^(saw) during Hijra (migration from Makkah to Madinah) and seek refuge from the Quraish in the Cave of Thaur (Ghaar Thaur). It is important to be fully aware of the magnitude of this blessing and know that Allah chose Abu Bakr^(ra) from the greatest companions to accompany His beloved Prophet^(saw). Reminiscing upon the glorious miracles and the fond memories of those three nights spent in Ghaar Thaur, the Holy Prophet^(saw) asked

the greatest of the poets among the companions, Hassaan ibn Thabit, if his dazzling pen had recorded anything about Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) during those nights. Hadhrat Hasaan ibn Thabit responded in the affirmative and recited²¹:

‘and “the second of the two” in the glorious cave,
The enemy went round about it when he ascended the mountain.
The love of the Messenger (for him) they already knew,
Amongst people he held not equal any man.’

Indeed, the love of the Holy Prophet^(saw) for his beloved Abu Bakr^(ra) was special and derived itself from the immense love and sacrifice which Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) continuously displayed for the Creator of the Heavens and Earth, Almighty Allah.

The life of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was characterised by his pure will to excel in all good and noble qualities and none more than kindness and generosity. Over a very short period of time it became

apparent to the inhabitants of Arabia that Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was the most generous of all the companions. It was his habit to regularly free a slave for the sake of Allah. It is famously known that Allah blessed Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) with the opportunity to free Hadhrat Bilal Al-Habashi^(ra) from his torturous life of slavery but another incident involved Hadhrat Zinneerah^(ra) who was also a freed slave. Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) paid for her freedom and shortly after this Hadhrat Zinneerah^(ra) lost her vision. The Quraish became boastful and mocked Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) and Hadhrat Zinneerah^(ra) saying that her loss of vision was in fact a curse upon her from the ‘real gods’ saying that it was none other than al-Laat and al-Uzzah (two pagan gods) who took her eyesight. Hadhrat Zinneerah^(ra) rebuked them and remained steadfast in her faith, after which, out of His Mercy and Grace, Almighty Allah cured her by returning her vision²².

The resilience and power of faith entered the hearts of those slaves whom Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) freed. One young lady who was freed by

Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was subsequently captured and continuously beaten.

Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was not only generous with his wealth in freeing slaves but he would never hesitate for even a second to offer his wealth, effort and very life for the sake of Almighty Allah. There was great rivalry between Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) and Hadhrat ‘Umar^(ra) in the doing of good works. Once the Holy Prophet^(saw) invited funds for a campaign and when Hadhrat ‘Umar^(ra) was asked what he had brought, he responded that he had brought one-half of what he possessed. When Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was asked, his response was that he had brought everything and had only left behind the name of Allah and His Messenger. In this regard Abu Bakr^(ra) was an example for all mankind as related to us by the Holy Prophet^(saw) who said²³:

‘I have never been under obligation to anyone but that I have repaid him, except for Abu Bakr^(ra), for he has put obligations on me which Allah will repay him on the Day of Rising; no one’s wealth has

ever benefited me as much as Abu Bakr’s wealth.’

Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was also blessed with the honour of his daughter, Hadhrat ‘A’ishah (sometimes spelt as Ayesha or Aisha)^(ra), marrying the Holy Prophet^(saw). The events leading up to the Nikah and consummation of this blessed marriage have been beautifully expounded by Hadhrat Muhammad Zafrullah Khan^(ra) in his book *‘Muhammad; Seal of the Prophets’*²⁴. In summary the facts, as we know them, were that two years before Hijrah the Holy Prophet^(saw) was asked by Hadhrat Khaulah^(ra), ‘Messenger of Allah, why do you not marry?’ to which he replied, ‘Whom shall I marry?’ She enquired as to whether he would prefer to marry a virgin or a widow. The virgin she talked of was Hadhrat ‘A’ishah^(ra) and the widow Hadhrat Saudah^(ra). The Holy Prophet^(saw) requested that Khaulah approached both of them. Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was pleased with the proposal but wanted to first enquire from the Holy Prophet^(saw) if such a marriage would be permissible considering the close relationship of bro-

therhood they had. The Holy Prophet^(saw) informed Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) that it was permissible as only physical, and not spiritual brotherhood, prohibits marriage. The Nikah ceremonies were thus held for both Hadhrat ‘A’ishah^(ra) and Hadhrat Saudah^(ra) in the month of Shawwal during the tenth year of Prophethood. The Mahr for both marriages was a modest amount of 400 dirhams each.

Describing his love for Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra), the Holy Prophet^(saw) is reported by Hadhrat Ibn ‘Abbas^(ra) to have remarked²⁵:

‘No one has shown greater favour to me than Abu Bakr. He shared himself and his wealth with me and married me [to] his daughter’.

It is worth pausing for a moment and discussing the age of Hadhrat ‘A’ishah^(ra) when she married the Holy Prophet^(saw) as this has been an issue the opponents of Islam have manipulated in order to attack the pure character of the Holy Prophet^(saw). Using the ill-informed research of some Muslims, the opponents of Islam propose that

the marriage ceremony between the Holy Prophet^(saw) took place when Hadhrat ‘A’ishah^(ra) was five or six years old with the marriage being consummated when she was nine or ten years of age. Such allegations are based on a cocktail of half-truths, manipulation and deception of the highest order. Historical research establishes that Hadhrat ‘A’ishah^(hra) was in fact ten years old at the time of her Nikah which took place two years before Hijrah. Her marriage was not consummated until the third year after Hijrah making her about fifteen years old when the marriage was consummated. To be married at the age of fifteen during the time of the Holy Prophet^(saw) was not at all out of the ordinary. By the age of fifteen it was common for girls of the Arabian peninsular, in the hot climate of Arabia, to have matured beyond the age of puberty and to have begun married life. Explaining the great wisdom behind this marriage Hadhrat Muhammad Zafrullah Khan writes:²⁶

‘In no single marriage of his [the Holy Prophet^(saw)] was he inspired by any purely personal

desire or motive. At the time when his nikah was performed with Aisha, she was only ten years of age. She was the daughter of his closest and most devoted friend; had been brought up from her birth in an atmosphere of piety and righteousness; her mind under the Holy Prophet's care could be moulded along lines of utmost beneficence; she could be instructed in an intimate relationship with regard to all that Islam required of a woman and could thus prove most helpful in guiding Muslim women, both by precept and by example, along the ways of righteousness; and she could be expected to survive the Holy Prophet for a long period and to serve as a source of instruction for the whole Muslim community, as indeed proved to be the case in fact. A great part of the knowledge of the ways and practice of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, was handed down to future generations of Muslims through Aisha'.

Thus do we find that the friendship

of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) with the Holy Prophet^(saw) expanded in meaning and purpose upon the marriage of his daughter to the Holy Prophet^(saw). The love of the Holy Prophet^(saw) for Hadhrat 'A'ishah was of a very special and unique nature. Commenting on Hadhrat 'A'ishah^(ra) the Holy Prophet^(saw) showered her with praise by saying²⁷:

'Many amongst men attained perfection but amongst women none attained perfection except Mary, the daughter of 'Imran and Asiya, the wife of Pharaoh. And the superiority of 'Aisha to other women is like the superiority of Tharid (i.e. an Arabic dish) to other meals.'

Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was an ever-forgiving person who always sought to find goodness in people and act justly in his every action even if he himself had been wronged. In one incident, a man slandered his daughter, Hadhrat 'A'ishah^(ra) (*The Mother of the Faithful*) who, as mentioned previously, was the wife of the Holy Prophet^(saw). By coincidence the slanderer was reliant upon

charitable donations given to him by Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) in order to live and feed his family. Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) immediately stopped supporting this man financially but his generous and forgiving nature overwhelmed him and he soon began to again support the man financially. It should be noted that in this instance the Holy Prophet^(saw) advised him that mercy was the best reaction. Throughout his life Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was privileged to learn and expand as a human being under the watchful eye of the greatest of teachers from Almighty Allah's creation, Hadhrat Muhammad^(saw)²⁸.

Prior to outlining some of his achievements during the latter part of his life as *Khalifat-ur-Rasul* (Successor to the Messenger) we should spend a few sentences reflecting upon the status of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) as a *Da'ee ilallah* (one who calls others to the way of Allah). He was an exceptional preacher and, with the permission of the Holy Prophet^(saw), became the first of the companions to openly preach the message of Islam in public. After accepting Islam it became common

occurrence for Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) to request the Holy Prophet's permission for him to openly preach the message of Allah but the Holy Prophet^(saw) continuously refused his requests knowing that it was not yet the appropriate time. One day, Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was granted this permission upon which he stood up in the middle of a large gathering outside Ka'bah and, with no thought for his own safety, delivered a sermon inviting the people of the various tribes present to the *Sirat-ul-Mustaqeem* (the Straight Path of Islam). The people present became enraged and began to beat Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) and indeed all the other Muslims present which included the Holy Prophet^(saw). Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) is said to have been beaten to within an inch of his life and was saved by the members of his tribe as they could not bear to see him trampled upon by members of opposing tribes. His injuries were so severe that people found it difficult to distinguish his nose from his face. Despite being close to death, and in no state to carry out even simple tasks, he could not allow himself to rest until he stood face to face with

the Holy Prophet^(saw) to ensure that he was healthy and unharmed. It was during this emotion-filled meeting that Ummul Khair^(ra), the blessed mother of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra), accepted Islam in the presence of the Holy Prophet^(saw).

This painful test in no way deterred this great Da'ee (caller) from continuing to invite people to Islam but only acted to make him far more resolute in his pure intention to serve Almighty Allah by spreading the great news of Islam. In addition to the members of his own blessed family, Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was enabled by Allah to convert countless people including Hadhrat 'Uthman ibn 'Affan^(ra), Hadhrat Al-Zubayr ibn ul 'Awwam, Hadhrat 'Abdur-Rahman ibn 'Awf^(ra), Hadhrat Sa'd ibn Abi Waqas^(ra) and Hadhrat Talha ibn 'Ubaidillah^(ra)²⁹.

Demise of the Holy Prophet^(saw)

Prior to becoming a Khalifah, Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) suffered through the pain of the Holy Prophet's final days on earth. This was especially testing for him because of the unique love he had developed for the Holy Prophet^(saw)

and also in light of the great burden which the Holy Prophet^(saw) would place upon him during this period. The Holy Prophet^(saw) instructed Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) to lead the prayers whilst the Holy Prophet^(saw) was too weak to do so. Many people, including the wives of the Holy Prophet^(saw), felt that such a burden was too great for the tender heart of such a kind and gentle person but the Holy Prophet^(saw) was firm in his command. The great historian Al-Tabari has reported that for some three days or seventeen prayers, Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) endured the deep pain of acting as the Holy Prophet's deputy and leading the prayers³⁰.

In one heartbreaking hadith, it is narrated that two companions carried the Holy Prophet^(saw) into the Mosque while Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was leading the prayers as he had been bidden by the Holy Prophet^(saw). The Holy Prophet's illness is said to have become so overpowering that his blessed feet were dragging along the floor of the Mosque as he was being carried by the two companions. On realising his presence, Hadhrat

Abu Bakr^(ra) began to weep but continued to lead the prayer in complete obedience to his duty. His love and complete subservience to Allah's Messenger was so great that he even tried to step back so that the Holy Prophet^(saw) could lead but the Holy Prophet^(saw) did not permit this. The unrelenting pain he felt at the mere thought that he should lead the Holy Prophet^(saw) in prayers was so piercing that he could no longer bear it and cleverly placed himself in such a position that the congregation believed that the Holy Prophet^(saw) was leading. The effect of this was that the congregation was following the Holy Prophet^(saw) and the Holy Prophet^(saw) was following Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra).

It was during the last days of the life of the Holy Prophet^(saw) that we are reminded of the great connection and understanding which Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) had with the Holy Prophet^(saw) and also Hadhrat Abu Bakr's phenomenal comprehension of the Holy Qur'an. One day the Holy Prophet^(saw) addressed the companions saying³¹:

'Today I have received the revelation:

When the help of Allah comes and the victory, and thou seest men entering the religion of Allah in troops, Glorify thy Lord with His praise and seek forgiveness of Him. Surely He is Oft-Returning with compassion.

(Ch.110: Vs.2-4)

Ordinarily Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) would take great joy in eagerly listening to new verses of the Holy Qur'an as they were being revealed; but on this occasion, rather than display happiness, he began to weep and cry uncontrollably. This perplexed the companions as the context of this chapter seemed to hold glad tidings of victory. Hadhrat 'Umar^(ra) became agitated by this and he and other companions questioned why Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) should be crying so. They had not realised that the coming of the victory of Islam also meant that the Holy Prophet^(saw) would soon pass away. Of all the companions it was only Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) who had instantly understood the meaning

and in a display of the highest affection and love which a man can offer to his brother, the Holy Prophet^(saw) spoke the words:³²

‘Abu Bakr^(ra) is very dear to me. If it were permissible to love anyone more than others, I would so have loved Abu Bakr^(ra). But that degree of love is only for God. O my people, all the doors which open to the Mosque should be closed from today except the door of Abu Bakr^(ra)’.

Could any sincere lover of the Holy Prophet^(saw) wish for more precious words than these to be uttered about him or her by the Holy Prophet^(saw)? There most certainly could have been no person left in the Mosque that day who did not come to appreciate the love held by the Holy Prophet^(saw) for his dear companion Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra).

Appointment as Khalifah

After the passing of Hadhrat Muhammad, Khatam-An-Nabiyeen^(saw) there emerged a void within the Ummah. Losing the Holy Prophet^(saw) created an intense

atmosphere of sorrow, fear and disunity. Ibn Rajab reports that when the Holy Prophet^(saw) passed away the Muslims became³³:

‘...shocked, bewildered and confused. Some of them were stunned and became perplexed; others sat down and were not able to stand; others lost their ability to speak; and yet others were in complete denial and refused to believe that the Holy Prophet^(saw) had really died’.

Hadhrat Abu Bakr was away from Madinah on the day that the Holy Prophet^(saw) passed away. Upon his return, he entered the chamber in which the blessed body of the Holy Prophet^(saw) lay and with tears in his eyes, kissed the forehead of his beloved companion and then walked out into the assembly of the faithful where Hadhrat ‘Umar^(ra) stood with his sword drawn ready to smite anyone who dare say that the Prophet was dead. He asked Hadhrat ‘Umar^(ra) to sit down and then addressed the companions with the most fitting of words³⁴:

‘Whosoever used to worship Muhammad, then (let him

know that) indeed Muhammad has died. And whosoever worships Allah, then Allah is alive and does not die’.

He then qualified this statement and proved that the Holy Prophet^(saw) was not immortal by reciting a verse from the perfect book, the Qur’an³⁵:

And Muhammad is only a Messenger. Verily, all Messengers have passed away before him. If then he dies or be slain, will you turn back on your heels? And he who turns back on his heels shall not harm Allah at all. And Allah will certainly reward the grateful.

Al-Qurtubi very poignantly points out that this very action of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was the highest display of courage³⁶:

‘...If bravery is defined as having a firm and steadfast heart during times of hardship and calamities, and there was no calamity that was greater than the death of the Holy Prophet.’

Following this, there was consensus that the Holy Prophet^(saw) was indeed dead. This is known as the first consensus amongst the Muslims.

There was no established system by which a Khalifah could be elected and it was in this distressing atmosphere that the blessed companions found themselves. A heated and unfruitful debate erupted between members of the Muhajirun and Ansar as to who should become the Khalifah and lead the faithful. At this critical juncture it could only have been Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra), perhaps the most tender-hearted and fragile of all the companions, who could bring calm to the situation.

Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was universally agreed upon by the Muhajirun and Ansar as the Khalifatul Rasul (the Successor to the Messenger). Commenting on this great day of blessing the Promised Messiah^(as) writes³⁷:

‘As it happened at the time of Hadhrat Abu Bakr Siddiq^(ra), the death of the Holy Prophet^(saw) was considered

untimely and many ignorant Bedouins turned apostate. The companions of the Holy Prophet^(saw), too, stricken with grief, became like those who lose their senses. Then Allah raised Abu Bakr Siddiq^(ra) and showed for the second time the manifestation of His Power and thus Islam, which was about to fall, was supported by Him and He fulfilled this promise of His which was given [in the verse of Surah An-Nur].

... and that He will surely establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them; and that He will surely give them in exchange security and peace after their fear.
(Ch.24:V.56)

That is, after the fear we shall firmly re-establish them. That is what also happened at the time of Moses^(as), when he died on his way from Egypt to Canaan before taking the Israelites to the intended destination in accordance with the promise. At his [Moses's] death the Israelites were plunged into deep mourning. It

is written in Torah that with the grief at this untimely death [of Moses] and his sudden departure the Israelites wept for forty days. The same happened with Christ^(as). At the time of the incident of Crucifixion all his disciples scattered and even one of them apostatised.'

The Promised Messiah^(as) records this first consensus as the greatest service to Islam as in its absence, the Muslim community would have never united. It also proves that all prophets, including Jesus^(as) had passed away. In another place the Promised Messiah^(as) reaffirms that the position of Khalifah could have gone to none other than Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra)³⁸:

'And I have been told that the Siddiq (Abu Bakr^(ra)) was the greatest in rank and the highest in station of all the Companions.'

Over the following years and centuries there erupted much criticism of his appointment by Shia scholars, as they were, and are, of the opinion that Hadhrat 'Ali^(ra) was the rightful successor to

the Holy Prophet^(saw). The evidence against this opinion is so overwhelming that it would be unmanageable to discuss it all in this article. A seeker of truth is best advised to read the book of the Promised Messiah^(as) ‘*Sirr-ul-Khilafah*’ in which he outlines that upon the death of the Holy Prophet^(saw) the verse of Successorship (*Istikhlaf*)³⁹ came into immediate action and could have only applied to Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra). The Promised Messiah^(as) writes⁴⁰:

‘In the verse of *Istikhlaf*, (Ch.24:V.56), Allah has promised Muslim men and Muslim women that, in any case, under His mercy and blessings, some of the believers would be made Khalifahs; and Allah would replace the sense of danger in their hearts with a sense of security and peace. So this is a circumstance, a condition, which does not properly and fully apply to any except the Khilafat of the Siddiq.’

Before mentioning a few conclusive narrations of the Holy

Prophet^(saw) and his Companions, regarding the legitimacy of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra)’s Khilafah, the magnificent explanation of Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV^(ru) is one of pure logic. In a Question and Answer⁴¹ session, he very sensibly points out that as a matter of common knowledge it was accepted that Hadhrat Ali^(ra) was one of the most courageous companions and that in the battlefield the fiercest position to be, after that of the Holy Prophet^(saw), was where Hadhrat ‘Ali^(ra) was standing. Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV^(ru) says that in light of the tremendous bravery and righteousness of Hadhrat ‘Ali^(ra) it is incomprehensible that he would offer his bai’at at the hand of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) had he known that the Holy Prophet^(saw) instructed that somebody else should be the Khalifah. It is in actuality an insult of the highest order to accuse Hadhrat ‘Ali^(ra) of disobeying a direct command of the Holy Prophet^(saw), Hadhrat Khatam An-Nabiyeen, and offering his pledge of allegiance to Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra). The only logical conclusion is that he in fact knew and accepted that Hadhrat

Abu Bakr^(ra) should be the rightful Khalifah.

Likewise, it is inconceivable that a man of the towering status of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra), a pillar of righteousness, should have accepted a position which he knew the ‘Beloved of Allah’^(saw) had issued to someone else. It is reckless of anyone to infer that the one whom the Holy Prophet^(saw) named ‘the truthful one’ would act so deceitfully upon the Holy Prophet’s^(saw) death.

Hadhrat ‘Ali^(ra) has himself been recorded on many occasions as having expressed his love and respect for Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra). He is reported to have said in one narration⁴², ‘By the One in Whose Hand is my self, we never strove to be first in a good action but that Abu Bakr was before us in it’. In another report he praised, and showed his deep love for, both Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) and Hadhrat ‘Umar^(ra) saying⁴³: ‘The best of mankind after the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is Abu Bakr and ‘Umar. Love for me will never be united with hatred of Abu Bakr

and ‘Umar in the heart of a believer’.

Regarding the status of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) in the eyes of the Holy Prophet^(saw) we find an interesting hadith⁴⁴ in which a lady visited the Holy Prophet^(saw) and was told to come back after a while, to which she asked the Holy Prophet^(saw) who she should visit if she returned and he was not there (i.e. he had passed away); to which he responded, ‘If you should not find me, go to Abu Bakr’. This, coupled with the fact that the Holy Prophet^(saw) chose Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) to lead the prayers when he was ill, should leave no doubt in the heart of a sincere believer that Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was the legitimate Khalifah after the death of the Holy Prophet^(saw).

After being elected, Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) reluctantly, and under the persuasion of Hadhrat ‘Umar^(ra), climbed the pulpit. After a heart-rendering introduction by Hadhrat ‘Umar^(ra), the Muslim world was treated to one of the most famous and meaningful speeches in the history of Islam. Although only a paragraph or so long, his humble

statements would not only outline his Khilafah but that of those shining stars that followed him. He said the following⁴⁵:

‘O People, I have indeed been appointed over you, though I am not the best among you. If I do well then help me; and if I act wrongly then correct me. Truthfulness is synonymous with fulfilling the truth, and lying is tantamount to treachery. The weak among you is deemed strong by me, until I return to them what is rightfully theirs, Allah Willing. And the strong among you is deemed weak by me, until I rightfully take from them what is rightfully someone else’s, Allah Willing. No group of people abandons Jihad in the way of Allah, except that Allah makes them suffer humiliation. And wickedness does not become widespread among a people, except that Allah inflicts them with widespread calamity. Obey me so long as I obey Allah and His Messenger. And if I disobey Allah and His Messenger, then I have no right to your obedience. Stand up

now and pray; may Allah have mercy on you.’

The Great Leader

These words of humility and wisdom marked the beginning of Hadhrat Abu Bakr’s Khilafah and encapsulated the way with which he conducted himself throughout his entire term as Khalifah. He was a champion of absolute justice. This was then exemplified in one of his first decisions to dispatch an army led by Hadhrat Usamah ibn Zaid to Syria to defend the Muslim empire against an aggressive Roman Empire. What was peculiar about this order is that despite it actually being the final order of the Holy Prophet^(saw), before his passing away, many of the companions disagreed with Hadhrat Abu Bakr’s decision to dispatch the army. They did not agree that such a large number of people should leave Madinah when the Muslims were so vulnerable as a result of loss of the Holy Prophet^(saw). They also objected to the army being led by a Hadhrat Usamah ibn Zaid who was just a teenager. Their argument did hold some weight considering the many apostate tribes threatening to cause

internal disorder; however Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) did not flinch for a second and remained obedient to the order of the Holy Prophet^(saw). He rebuked the companions who were against dispatching the army and in the strongest of terms said:⁴⁶

‘By the One Who has the soul of Abu Bakr in His hand, had I thought that wild predatory animals would make off with me, I would still send out Usamah’s army in accordance with what the Messenger of Allah commanded Usamah to do. And even if I were the last person to remain in these cities, I would still do the same.’

With this Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) dispatched the army to Al-Shaam (present day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine) ordering Hadhrat Usamah^(ra) to adhere to the regulations of war as set out by the Holy Prophet^(saw) and stressed that no Muslims should be unjust, nor cut down trees, nor injure the holy people of other lands⁴⁷. His obedience to the Holy Prophet^(saw) was such that he ordered Hadhrat Usamah^(ra) not to rush back but to take his time and fulfil every order

of the Holy Prophet^(saw) to the finest detail. The result was that Hadhrat Usamah^(ra) returned some forty days later with a healthy army that had successfully suppressed the Roman empire in Al-Shaam.

However, whilst he was away with most of the Muslim army and military resources, there erupted a surge of internal battles, which are known as the Al-Riddah or Apostate wars. Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV^(ru) has referred to the challenge here faced by Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) as⁴⁸, ‘The main task of the Prophet^(saw)’s successor, Abu Bakr^(ra)...’. It is worth noting that whilst Al-Riddah literally means ‘the wilful recantation from the religion of Islam’, Huzur^(ru) established that the groups involved in the Al-Riddah wars were named as such by the companions in the metaphorical sense and that they had in fact, for the most, not recanted the religion of Islam. Huzur^(ru) clarifies the actual facts of the revolt through the following quote of Bernard Lewis⁴⁹:

‘The refusal of the tribes to recognise the succession of

Abu Bakr was, in effect, not a relapse by converted Muslims to their previous paganism, but the simple and automatic termination of a political contract by the death of one of the parties. The tribes nearest to Madinah had in fact been converted and their interests were so closely identified with those of the umma that their separate history has not been recorded. For the rest, the death of Muhammad automatically severed their bonds with Madinah, and the parties resumed their liberty of action. They felt in no way bound by the election of Abu Bakr in which they had taken no part, and at once suspended both tribute and treaty relations. In order to re-establish the hegemony of Medina, Abu Bakr had to make new treaties.'

In reality, the Al-Riddah defectors represented several corrupt factions which either intentionally or unintentionally attempted to spark disorder within the Ummah following the passing of the Holy Prophet^(saw). They can be divided into four broad categories, namely:

1. those who falsely claimed prophethood creating deviant splinter groups;
2. those who wanted to continue to follow Islam only to be prevented from doing so by tyrannical leaders;
3. those who wanted to remain within the Ummah but refused to pay Zakah or wanted to renegotiate the amount, and;
4. those who did not feel obligated to pledge allegiance to, and accept, Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra).

It would be credible to say that following the death of the Holy Prophet^(saw), and with the exception of the great moral degradation which the Promised Messiah^(as) was sent to remove, there has been no greater threat to Islam than the Al-Riddah wars.

The effect they were having was to create serious disorder within the Muslim provinces, which had the potential to split and fragment the Ummah. Following the death of the Holy Prophet^(saw) the Ummah

was spiritually unified by Hadhrat Abu Bakr's wise and decisive decisions when faced with the crisis of succession. In a very similar fashion the magnificent and righteous qualities of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) were called upon during the Riddah wars to neutralise the threat of anarchy and maintain the physical and political unity of the Ummah. Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) successfully thwarted one attack upon the Muslims which was headed by Kharjah ibn Hism. Then in a later incident five prominent tribes visited the city of Madinah to negotiate a lowering of the Zakah; however, to the dismay of many companions, Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) refused to negotiate with them. A group led by Hadhrat 'Umar^(ra) approached Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) and voiced their dismay at his decision to fight those who refused to pay Zakah with the following words:⁵⁰

'What right do you have to fight these people? The Prophet^(saw) has said: "I was ordered to fight people until they say there is no God but Allah. If they say this, they

safeguard themselves and their property from me'."

Here Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) stood firm and refused to act upon the opinion of his companions. He knew the cunning mischief behind the renegade tribes' actions and conveyed this to the people of Madinah by delivering the following sermon⁵¹:

'The delegation has observed just how few of you there are in Madinah. You do not know whether they will attack you by day or night. Their vanguard is only a stone's throw from Madinah. They wanted us to accept their proposals and make an agreement with them, but we have rejected their request. So make ready for their attack.'

In fulfilment of his words the tribes attacked no less than three days later and were suppressed by the Muslims' thinly spread army of Madinah. A testament here to the great statesman-like and military qualities of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was that not only could he read situations with unique vision but

that he repelled each of these ruthless attacks with the barest of military resources. The campaign in Syria under Hadhrrat Usamah ibn Zaid had used up much of the Muslims' financial and physical resources and left them short of manpower. In the face of such tribulation, Hadhrrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was successful due to his unshakeable belief in trusting Allah (*Tawakkul 'Alallah*).

Another great test for Hadhrrat Abu Bakr^(ra) during this period was the false claimants of prophethood with perhaps the most famous and well-documented being 'Musailimah the Liar'. In an unprecedented action, Musailimah moved to attack Madinah with a hundred-thousand-man-strong army. Hadhrrat Abu Bakr^(ra) reacted by dispatching Hadhrrat Khalid ibn Waleed at the head of a far weaker force of only 13,000 men in what would later be called the battle of Yamamah (Yamamah being the place where they fought). Despite their valiant efforts, the Muslim army was suppressed at several key junctures and needed a fresh strategy. Hadhrrat Khalid ibn Waleed adopted a proposal put

forward by several companions ordering that the Muslims from among the army that knew the Holy Qur'an by heart should form a separate elite regiment to attack Musailimah. It was thought that the rest of the army, made up of relatively new Muslims, did not fully appreciate the spirit of jihad and that a regiment comprised specifically of Huffaaz would make for a formidable force. The Huffaaz, numbering 3,000 in total, attacked the army of Musailimah with such stealth and power that they were ultimately granted victory by Almighty Allah. Musailimah was killed in battle by Hadhrrat Wahshy ibn Harb (the same person who, before accepting Islam, had killed Hadhrrat Hamza the uncle of the Holy Prophet^(saw)) in what later became known as the garden of death.

The shortfall of this action was that of the 3,000 Huffaaz some 500 were martyred. Deeply concerned by the inevitability that the Huffaaz would continue to reduce in number with each new battle, Hadhrrat 'Umar^(ra) suggested that it was now necessary for the verses of the Holy Qur'an to be collected

into one book. The fact that the Holy Prophet^(saw) had not done this made Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) hesitant at first; however, he eventually agreed and initiated the process. He assigned this task to Hadhrat Zaid ibn Thabit^(ra) who began to collate the verses of the Holy Qur'an by writing down what others had recited and copying down verses that had been written on differing objects which even included tattoos on people's skin. Relating the magnitude of the mammoth task, Hadhrat Zaid ibn Thabit^(ra) said⁵²:

'By Allah, if he had imposed on me the responsibility of removing one of the mountains it would not have been heavier for me than what they ordered me to do of collecting the Qur'an.'

Collating the Qur'anic verses into one book was an achievement of the highest order. The measure of this great act of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) certainly amounts to an immeasurable fountain of blessings, as Allah afforded him the honour of an initiative, the publishing of the Holy Qur'an, by

which many billions of people have since benefited, and will continue to benefit, Insha Allah.

After resolving the internal problems of the Muslim empire, Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) pursued a defensive military strategy to fortify and defend the Muslim territories against bordering enemies. This started with him dispatching an army headed by Hadhrat Khalid bin Waleed^(ra) to the South-West of Iraq and a second army led by Hadhrat 'Iyaad ibn Ghanam to North-Eastern Iraq. It is during this period that we discover how much of a master military strategist Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was. Al-Tabari records that Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was very explicit in his instructions to the two generals who were tasked with defending Muslims against the Persians in Iraq. Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) instructed that Muslims were forbidden to initiate any act of aggression against the enemy but rather proceed with love in an attempt to win the hearts of non-Muslims. One must pause and ask when in the annals of history has any army been dispatched with its primary instruction to put aside the

sword and win over the hearts of its opponents?

He also instructed Hadhrat Khalid bin Waleed^(ra) not to admit people into his army that had left Islam and subsequently re-entered the fold of Islam. Such people might have posed too great a threat to the greater stability of the military lines having already displayed a great weakness in faith. The two armies did as Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) instructed and under Hadhrat Khalid bin Waleed's leadership the combined army managed to repel the Persian aggressors and take control of the whole of Iraq. Following this great victory Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) replaced Khalid bin Waleed^(ra) with a great warrior and commander Hadhrat Al-Muthanna ibn Haaritha Al-Shaybani^(ra) who was assigned the task of defending Iraq from once again falling under the control of tyrannical rule.

Hadhrat Khalid bin Waleed^(ra) was subsequently appointed the general of a new army dispatched to the border of Shaam where they would remain. During the time of the Holy Prophet^(saw) the leader of the

Roman-ruled Shaam threatened that he would one day attack Madinah and it was therefore important that a defensive force be stationed on the border. Khalid bin Waleed^(ra) was thus under strict orders to remain on the border but not fight anyone unless the opponents were the aggressors. It was not long before the leader who had once threatened to attack Madinah ordered his army to attack the Muslim army. Khalid bin Waleed, the Sword of Allah, by Allah's Grace, was unaccustomed to losing on the battle field. The Muslim army thus successfully defeated the fearsome Arab tribes of Al-Shaam with each of them scattering on seeing the resilience of the Muslim army. After a period of setbacks and great hardship which included the martyrdom of the son of Hadhrat Khalid bin Waleed^(ra), and an impressive build-up of Roman military might in Shaam, it became apparent to Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) that a more robust defensive strategy was required. He thus gathered his closest companions for a Majlis-al-Shura (a consultative council) to discuss the options available to them. After much thought, he

assigned Hadhrat Khalid bin Waleed^(ra) to another province and came to the decision that four armies should be sent to Al-Shaam which would be commanded by Hadhrat Yazeed ibn Abi Sufyan, Hadhrat Shurahbil ibn Hasanah, Hadhrat Abu 'Ubaidah ibn Al-Jarrah, and Hadhrat Amr ibn Al-'Aas. The task ahead of them was great as they knew they would have to hold off the might of the Roman Empire, which had built up an impressive set of defences across the whole Al-Shaam region.

Over time, the four leaders of the Muslim armies became weary of the powerful threat facing them and each wrote letters to Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) requesting reinforcements. Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) remained steadfast and reminded each of them of their duty and that whilst they were fewer than the Romans in number, Almighty Allah had blessed them with Muslim soldiers who each valued death in the cause of Allah more than life. As was the great characteristic of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra), he remained constant in his trust in Almighty Allah and

again rebuked the four generals saying⁵³:

'Verily, people such as yourselves do not lose because they are few in number. When tens of thousands of soldiers gather together, they are defeated only because of their sins. So protect yourselves from sins, gather in Yarmook, so that you can support one another. And let each man among you lead his companions in prayer.'

Sensing the need for a more powerful strategy of defence Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) ordered all four armies to gather in Yarmook and issued an order which sent tremors throughout the land of Al-Shaam. He instructed that the Sword of Allah, Hadhrat Khalid Bin Waleed^(ra) should leave his post in Iraq and lead a combined large Muslim army in Al-Shaam. Khalid bin Waleed^(ra) did so with great skill and ability defeating the Romans in both Ajnadain and Yarmook despite being far less well-equipped and greatly outnumbered. A fierce battle then ensued which required of Hadhrat

Khalid bin Waleed^(ra) some of his greatest tactical mastery, but the inevitable outcome was that the Muslim army was victorious inflicting unprecedented damage upon the Roman army.

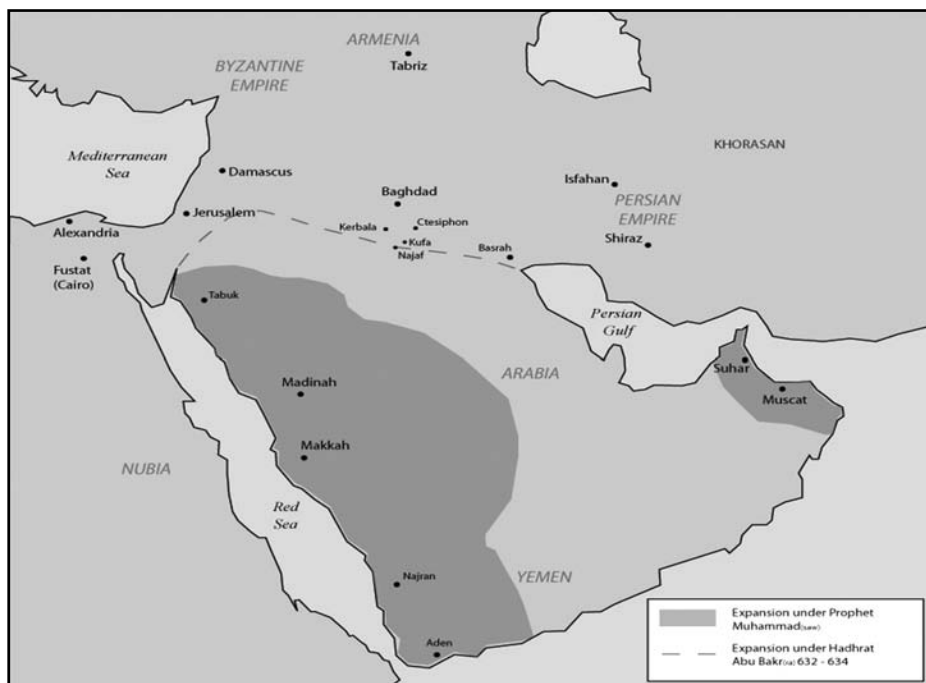
However, the Muslims could not rejoice in their victory as Khalid bin Waleed^(ra) informed them of the demise of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra). It was in fact during the battle that news reached Khalid bin Waleed^(ra) of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra)'s demise but he kept the news from the Muslim army so as not to dishearten them. The military accomplishments of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) cannot be understated and provided a clear and unifying platform for his successors to build upon. The magnitude of his advancement of Muslim territories can be appreciated as shown on the map⁵⁴:

Demise of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra)

As Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) became more and more ill he came to the decision that the station of Khalifah should be given to Hadhrat 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab^(ra). The companions for the most part were in complete agreement with

this decision and all were obedient to it. Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) died in his house with Hadhrat 'A'ishah^(ra) by his side as he was instructing that Hadhrat 'Umar^(ra) should repay the simple wage he received from the Baitul Maal by giving his garden to the treasury. On this day, Madinah was filled with sadness only second in intensity to that felt after the passing of the Holy Prophet^(saw). The companions were distraught and Hadhrat 'Umar^(ra) cried with such pain and anguish that his tears formed a small pool on the floor. On hearing the news Hadhrat 'Ali^(ra), filled with emotion, marched to the house of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) and, surrounded by a large crowd, delivered a long speech in which he outlined some of the dazzling achievements and sacrifices of Hadhrat 'Umar^(ra). In this heart-warming tribute Hadhrat 'Ali^(ra) is reported to have said⁵⁵:

'O Abu Bakr, may Allah have mercy upon you. You were the closest companion and friend of the Messenger of Allah^(saw); you were a comfort to him; you were the one he trusted most. If he had a secret, he would tell it

HADHRAT ABU BAKR AS-SIDDIQ^(RA)

to you; and if he needed to consult someone regarding a matter, he would consult you. You were the first of your people to embrace Islam, and you were the most sincere of them in your faith. Your faith was stronger than any other person's, as was the degree to which you feared Allah. And you were wealthier than anyone else in terms of what you acquired from the religion of Allah *'Azza Wa Jall* (The Possessor of Majesty and Might). You cared most for the

Messenger of Allah, and Islam. Of all people you were the best companion to the Messenger of Allah; you possessed the best qualities; you had the best past; you ranked the highest; and you were the closest to him. And of all people you resembled the Messenger of Allah the most in terms of his guise and demeanour. Your ranking was higher than anyone else's, and the Prophet held you in higher esteem than anyone else. On behalf of the Messenger of Allah and Islam,

may Allah reward you with the best of rewards. When the people disbelieved in the Messenger of Allah you believed in him. Throughout your life you were both his eyes with which he saw, and his ears with which he heard. Allah has named you 'Truthful' in His Book when He said:

And He who has brought the truth and he who testifies to it as the truth – these it is who are the righteous.

When people were stingy in their support for the Messenger of Allah, you comforted him. And when people sat still, you stood side by side with the Messenger of Allah, facing the same hardships that he faced. In times of hardship, you were truly a good and noble companion of his. You were the 'second of two', his Companion in the Cave; and the one upon whom *As-Sakeenah* (peace, tranquility, calmness) descended. You were his companion during the migration (to Al-Madinah), and you were his successor

regarding the religion of Allah and his Nation. And a truly good successor you proved to be when the people apostatised. You did what no other Khalifah of God did before you. You stood up firmly and bravely when his other Companions lost their resolve and became soft. You truly were as the Messenger of Allah said: weak in your body but strong regarding the commands of Allah; humble in yourself, but lofty in your ranking with Allah; well-esteemed in the eyes of the people, honoured and great in their hearts. Not a single one of them had any reason to dislike you, to be suspicious of you, or to hold you in contempt... The weak and humble you have always treated as strong and honourable, making sure you gave them what was rightfully theirs. And in this regard, you have treated relatives and strangers equally. Of all people, you respected those who are most obedient to Allah and who fear Him the most. In your overall character, you embodied truth and compassion. Your

speech has always been characterised by the qualities of wisdom and decisiveness. And you have always struck a noble balance between gentleness and firmness. You have always based your knowledge on knowledge, and once you have made your decisions, you have always kept firm resolve to execute them... Verily to Allah do we belong, and to Him is our return. We are pleased with, and submit to, Allah's decree. And by Allah, other than the death of the Messenger of Allah, Muslims have never been afflicted with greater calamity than the calamity of your death. You have always been a protector, a sanctuary, and a source of honour for this religion. May Allah make you join the company of His Prophet, Muhammad^(saw), and may He not deprive us of your reward. And may He not lead us astray after you.'

This statement of love gives us not only a valuable insight into the great achievements of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) but also of the immense love and high esteem

which the companions had for him. It is at this juncture that we relate the most astonishing part of his Khilafah. His achievements as Khalifah, as outlined in the previous pages, were not made in ten years or twenty or even thirty but rather over just two years and some months. With the exception of Hadhrat Muhammad^(saw), no statesman or spiritual head has achieved so much in such a concentrated period of time. Most importantly he took his responsibilities seriously and fulfilled his mission, which Allah had set him. He presented Hadhrat 'Umar^(ra) with a spiritual community which was stable, unified, greatly expanded and most importantly filled with the Madinite love for Almighty Allah. If one had to highlight any single defining characteristic of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) which those after him benefited from the most, it would have to be his complete trust in Allah. Not a calamity challenged the Ummah when Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) did not hold firm to the fact that Allah had the power to overcome anything. It should be fitting that on perhaps the only occasion that Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra)

had experienced fear from a situation, namely, the threat to the Holy Prophet^(saw) in Ghaar Thaur, it was Allah Who comforted His most truthful of servants.

At the age of 63, Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) moved into the next world. He was buried in the same chamber as the Prophet and at the shoulder of his great leader, mentor and dearest of loves Hadhrat Muhammad^(saw). It is fitting here, and should provide us with immense comfort, to recall a glorious hadith of the Holy Prophet^(saw) in which he said⁵⁶:

‘As for you, Abu Bakr, you will be the first of my Ummah to enter the garden.’

Here, we are reminded of heart-warming incident involving Hadhrat Ibn ‘Abbas which occurred as he stood over the dead body of the second Khalifah of Islam, Hadhrat ‘Umar^(ra). He relates that as he stood there, a man rested his elbow on his shoulder, saying⁵⁷:

‘O ‘Umar^(ra)! May Allah bestow His Mercy on you. I always hoped that Allah would

keep you with your two companions, for I often heard Allah’s Apostle saying, “I, Abu Bakr and ‘Umar were (somewhere). I, Abu Bakr and ‘Umar did (something). I, Abu Bakr and ‘Umar set out.” So I hoped that Allah will keep you with both of them.’

Hadhrat Ibn ‘Abbas says that he turned to find that the man was none other than the ‘Gates of Knowledge’ Hadhrat ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib^(ra). Still to this very day do we find the graves of these two faithful companions set at the shoulders of our beloved Habibullah^(saw) in the Prophet’s Mosque.

Conclusion

Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was the greatest of the companions and after the Holy Prophet^(saw) displayed in word and deed the closest characteristics to those of the Holy Qur’an. Indeed, the Promised Messiah^(as) was gifted by Almighty Allah with unique insights into the characteristics and lives of the companions of the Holy Prophet^(saw) by way of visions. On many occasions the

Promised Messiah^(as) was blessed with the opportunity to meet some of these great ambassadors of Islam and even feel their hardship. His words, therefore, hold exceptional standing and have been vouchsafed as being representative of the truth. Writing about our beloved Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra), the Promised Messiah^(as) comments⁵⁸:

‘Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) was a man of deep insight, meek, and compassionate. Humility and meekness were his qualities. Forgiveness, kindness and compassion were his characteristics. He was recognised by the light of his forehead. He was deeply attached to the Holy Prophet and his soul had been united to the soul of the best of creation. He was covered by the same light that had been bestowed upon his master, the beloved of the Lord. He was enveloped by the light of the Holy Prophet^(saw) and his great bounties. He was distinguished from all other men in his understanding of the Qur’an and in his love of the

Chief of the Messengers and the Pride of Mankind. When the life of the hereafter and the mysteries of the Divine were manifested to him, he forsook worldly connections and physical attachments and was tinged with the tinge of his beloved, and he gave up all objectives for the sake of the One sought after. He discarded all physical impurities and took on the colour of the One, the True, and he disappeared in the pleasure of the Lord of the worlds.

When the love of the True Divine saturated the whole of his being and its light began to manifest itself in all his actions and words and his attitudes, he was named the Siddiq and he was invested with fresh and deep knowledge from the presence of the best of bestowers. Faithfulness became his nature and its effects made themselves manifest in all his doings and sayings and movings and stoppings and in his senses and in his pure breath. He was included among those upon

whom the Lord of the heavens and the earth had bestowed His favours. The truth is that he was a comprehensive illustration of the book of prophethood. He was a leader of those who are recipients of grace and perfection and had partaken of the nature of the Prophet. In stating this I have not been guilty of exaggeration, nor is my statement merely the result of my wishful thinking but is a reality which has been disclosed to me from the Presence of the Lord of Honour.’

The content of this article amounts to nothing more than a droplet in the ocean of the life and achievements of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra). We should each aspire to delve deeper and deeper into the life of this great lover and servant of Almighty Allah. The best way to display our sincere love and gratitude for his great sacrifices is to pray to Allah that we may each instil the spirit of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) in ourselves and our children.. Let us aspire to become an Abu Bakr^(ra) in our faith, love,

spirituality, preaching, courage, etc. The Promised Messiah^(as) has instructed⁵⁹: ‘For my part, no one can be a true Muslim unless he imbibes the colour and complexion of Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthman, and ‘Ali, (may Allah be pleased with them all). They did not love this world but placed themselves entirely at the service of God.’

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Hadhrat ‘Umar^(ra)

By Mashhood Ahmad and Fazal Ahmad – UK

Introduction

In the formative years of Islam, a young man was suddenly turned from being the most animated enemy of the new religion to its staunchest defender. His character changed dramatically from aggression and violence to one of humility and compassion, and he went on to become the second Khalifah of Islam.

However, not all Muslims revere ‘Umar^(ra). The minority Shi’a sect revile him and consider that he prevented ‘Ali^(ra) (who would later become the 4th Khalifah) from becoming the Khalifah in a pact that he supposedly made with Abu Bakr^(ra). This article briefly covers his early life and the key events and achievements of the life of Hadhrat ‘Umar^(ra).

Background

‘Umar ibn al-Khattab^(ra) was to become the second Khalifah of Islam. He was born in June 580 into the Banu Adi clan of the tribe of Quraish in Makkah who often acted

as agents for the Quraish in dealings with other tribes. He grew up with his brother Zaid and his sister Fatimah. His father Khattab ibn Nufayl had been from a middle class family with access to a degree of wealth and power. So the young ‘Umar^(ra) received a good education and was literate unlike most Arabs of the time, even becoming an expert in Arabic poetry. He was described as tall and well built, fair-skinned and with a ruddy complexion.

As a youth, he was trained in self-defence (he was a champion wrestler) as well as public speaking. From the outset, he showed unusual courage and frankness in his dealings. He was also thorough in whatever he undertook.

In his early years, he gained experience as a shepherd and as a merchant. He was becoming known as a shrewd businessman who led trade delegations as far as Syria and Iraq which broadened his

knowledge of other tribes and cultures.

As a non-Muslim and a believer in the traditional faith (idol worship) of the Quraish, he considered Islam to be an affront to the traditions of Makkah. He became a staunch and robust enemy of the faith. He mistreated Muslims in Makkah and was foremost in their persecution. According to Ibn Hisham's *As Sirah an-Nabawiyyah*, when one of his maid-servants also accepted Islam, he beat her violently, yet she would not give up the faith.

His mother was Hantamah, the sister of Abu Jahl, so he was intimate with the leadership of Makkah and the strength of its feeling against Islam.

One famous incident before his acceptance of Islam was when he noticed a group of Muslims with all of their goods packed onto camels and leaving for Abyssinia. He approached a lady in the party, called Umm 'Abdullah, and asked "Are you leaving?" She replied:

"Yes, God is our witness. We go to another land, because you

treat us most cruelly here. We will not return now until Allah pleases to make it easy for us."

'Umar^(ra) was surprised and a little emotional at the scene, and said to her "God be with you". Behind his tough exterior was a sensitive young man. He felt disturbed that this new faith seemed to be dividing his tribe, and thought to himself that if he killed the new prophet, the people of his tribe of Quraish would return to Makkah and the tribe would be reunited.

Acceptance of Islam

According to the detailed account of Ibn Hisham, one morning, 'Umar^(ra) set out with his sword to kill the Holy Prophet^(saw). He quickly came to know that his own sister, Fatimah, and her husband Sa'id ibn Zayd (who was also his cousin), had converted to Islam. This enraged him further. He therefore, diverted to his sister's house to confront them.

As he approached their house, he heard the voice of Khabbab ibn al-Arat who had been teaching his sister the Qur'an. He stormed into the house, and as he did so,

Khabbab hid, and his sister put away the leaves of the Qur'anic pages. Confronting her, he said:

“I hear you have renounced your own faith.”

He then raised his hands to strike Sa'id, but as Fatimah came between them, he struck her nose and she was injured. The blow did not scare her, and she turned to her brother and said:

“Yes, we are Muslims now and shall remain so; do what you may.”

Having seen the blood on his sister's face, he felt ashamed, and also realised that the new faith must have some merit to have won her heart. In his remorse, he asked to hear what the verses of the Qur'an had to say. At first, his sister was afraid that he would tear up the leaves of the Qur'an, but when 'Umar^(ra) promised not to do so, she first asked him to perform ablutions in order to cool down and to be clean and purified before touching the sacred texts. He then read a few verses from Chapter Ta Ha:

Verily, I am Allah; there is no God beside Me. So serve Me, and observe prayer for My remembrance. Surely the Hour is coming; I am going to manifest it, that every soul may be recompensed for its endeavour.

(Ch.20:Vs.15-16)

He was clearly moved. He cried out “How wonderful, how inspiring!”

On hearing this reaction, even Khabbab came out of hiding and exclaimed:

“God is my witness, only yesterday I heard the Prophet pray for the conversion of 'Umar or 'Amr ibn Hisham. Your change is the result of that prayer.”

(The Life of Muhammad, p.20)

Soon after, 'Umar^(ra) went to the Holy Prophet^(saw) in Dar Arqam in Makkah, his sword still in his hand, but no longer a threat to Islam. At the door were Hamzah, Talha and a couple of other companions. Having suffered at his hands, the companions of the Prophet were reluctant to let him in, but the Holy

Prophet^(saw) knew of his intentions. He asked 'Umar^(ra) "What brings you?" to which 'Umar^(ra) replied:

"Prophet of God, I am here to become a Muslim."

'Umar^(ra) also recited the Kalimah. The Prophet^(saw) replied happily with *Allahu Akbar* and the happy news of the conversion spread rapidly through Makkah and neighbouring towns.

At that time, according to Adh-Dhahabi 'Umar^(ra) was just twenty-seven years of age. In those early days, there were very few other converts to Islam. Scholars vary in their view of the numbers, but it is thought that when he accepted Islam, there were around 40 men and 10 women who were Muslims.

Having accepted Islam, he was to become one of the staunchest and bravest defenders of the faith against severe torment. Asked later about his conversion, he said:

"When I heard the Qur'an, my heart was softened and I wept, and Islam entered into me."
(Armstrong, p.5).

It was after his conversion that Islam began to be preached openly in Makkah with the confidence that he brought to the Muslims, and this is attested by Ibn 'Abbas^(ra) and Suhayb.

Ibn Mas'ud^(ra) is reported to have said:

'The Islam of 'Umar was an opening, his emigration was a help and his imamate was a mercy. I saw us unable to pray in the House until 'Umar accepted Islam'.

Having accepted Islam, the first thing that 'Umar^(ra) did was to call together the chiefs of Makkah to declare that he had become a Muslim. No one had the courage to tell him off. He then requested the Prophet^(saw) to lead prayers at the Ka'bah and led the party of Muslims there. This was the first such prayer observed by Muslims at the Ka'bah.

'Umar's conversion had emboldened the Muslims, but brought about no change in attitude from the Makkans. 'Umar^(ra) was subjected to the same torment at their

hands as the other Muslims and indeed the persecution worsened over time.

Role under the Prophet^(saw)

'Umar^(ra) became a close advisor to the Holy Prophet^(saw) and sacrificed his wealth to dedicate his life for the cause of Islam.

He was among the first wave of emigrants from Makkah to Madinah during the Hijrah. On leaving Makkah, he told the local pagans of his intentions to head for Madinah and challenged them to stop him if they were brave enough. Needless to say, nobody dared to stop him.

He took part in many of the early defensive struggles as the Muslims held on to their freedom in Madinah. He took part in the defensive battles of Badr, 'Uhud and Khaibar when the Muslims struggled to shrug off persecution and tyranny. Indeed at 'Uhud, the Makkans thought that they had killed the prophet and the senior Muslims. Abu Sufyan, leader of the Makkans shouted 'Glory to Hubal' (the primary idol of the Makkans) and then turned to the battlefield

and shouted out first to the Prophet^(saw), then Abu Bakr^(ra) and then 'Umar^(ra) to confirm whether they were alive (Tabari, Vol. VII, p.131). The fact that 'Umar^(ra) was among the three names shouted shows his position among those early Muslims.

In his early years as a Muslim, his temper was still legendary, although his aggression was now only applied to the defence of the Holy Prophet^(saw). An example of this was when Zayd b. Sa'ya forcefully asked for the repayment of a loan from the Prophet^(saw) at the time of a funeral. 'Umar's initial response was threatening, but the Prophet^(saw) knew his character well and asked him to pay Zayd his dues and to give him a bonus of dates for his troubles. 'Umar^(ra) carried out the instructions, and impressed by the patience of the Prophet^(saw), Zayd accepted Islam soon after.

Although he is most often remembered as being aggressive, he also began to demonstrate other qualities. In one example, at the Battle of Badr, he surprised his colleagues by allowing a youngster, Ibn 'Abbas, to attend the planning

council. His colleagues commented that he was letting a child enter the meeting to which he replied:

“He is knowledgeable, as you well know.”

(Bukhari)

This showed his open heart and lack of arrogance, and his respect for knowledge at an early age.

In 625, his daughter, Hafsa, was married to the Prophet^(saw) to further strengthen his ties.

The Holy Prophet^(saw) had great regard for 'Umar's character. There are many references to the status of 'Umar^(ra) in the Hadith, and the following illustrate that strength of feeling:

“Never does Satan find you going on a way, but he takes a way other than yours.”

(Bukhari, Vol.5, 57.32)

“In the nations long before you were people who were spoken to [by the angels] although they were not prophets. If there is anyone of them in my Community, truly it is 'Umar

ibn al-Khattab^(ra).”

(Bukhari, Vol.5, 57.38)

In the Hadith above, commentators described the meaning of 'spoken to' as meaning inspired.

“I have two ministers from the inhabitants of the heaven and two ministers from the inhabitants of the earth. The former are Jibreel (Gabriel) and Mika'il (Michael) and the latter are Abu Bakr and 'Umar.” He said of the latter: “These two are [my] hearing and eyesight” and instructed his Companions: “Follow those that come after me: Abu Bakr and 'Umar.”

A lot has been made of 'Umar's selfless courage, but as described at the beginning, he was also well-educated. During his time in the company of the Prophet^(saw), he was fortunate to pick up a vast treasure of knowledge which he would later apply. The Holy Prophet^(saw) himself is reported by Ibn 'Umar^(ra) as saying:

“While I was asleep I drank – meaning milk – until I saw satiation flowing through my

nails, and then I passed it to 'Umar."

(Bukhari, Vol.1, 3.82)

When asked on the meaning of this, the Prophet^(saw) clarified that it was knowledge that he had passed on to 'Umar^(ra).

'Umar^(ra) had great zeal for Islam, and on one occasion when the companions were asked for funds to support an expedition to Tabuk, 'Umar^(ra) offered half of his household. He was only outdone by Abu Bakr^(ra) who offered all of his household and replied to concerns for his family that "Allah and his Apostle are enough for them."

The death of the Prophet^(saw) in 632 was a stunning shock to 'Umar^(ra). He could not believe it so much so that he drew his sword and swore that he would cut off the head of any man that said that the Messenger of Allah was dead (*Tabari, Vol. IX, p.187*). He could not contemplate life without his master and was consumed in grief and concern for the plight of Islam. These dark thoughts blotted out reason from his mind. It was not until Abu Bakr^(ra) reminded him of

the clear verdict on this subject in the Qur'an that he became calm. Shi'as sometimes assert that 'Umar^(ra) was merely trying to delay the burial to allow Abu Bakr^(ra) to return and pick up the reigns as Khalifah, but this is incorrect.

Role under Abu Bakr^(ra)

Abu Bakr^(ra) became the first Khalifah of Islam in 632 and lead the Muslims for just two years. 'Umar^(ra) held Abu Bakr^(ra) in great esteem, and according to a testimony of Muhammad b. Sirin recorded by Abu 'Abd Allah, when during his own Khilafat a few years later he overheard people commenting that they preferred 'Umar^(ra) to Abu Bakr^(ra), he staunchly reminded them of the Hijrah when Abu Bakr^(ra) had the privilege of escorting the Holy Prophet^(saw) to the Cave of Thaur and ensured his protection by keeping vigil both in front of and behind the Prophet^(saw). 'Umar^(ra) said:

"By Him who holds my soul in His hand, that night was better than the whole clan of 'Umar!"
(Helminski p.41)

During that time, 'Umar^(ra) was one of his closest advisors and allies. It was 'Umar^(ra) who was concerned at the strife facing the early Muslims and encouraged the first Khalifah to have the Qur'anic verses compiled in book form such that they would not be lost (*Bukhari, Vol.6, 60.201*). Having been convinced by 'Umar^(ra), the task was given to Zaid ibn Thabit^(ra).

Some of the Arab tribes had tried to dissociate from Islam following the death of the Prophet^(saw) and in some cases, set up false new prophets to fill the void. Many thought that each tribe should now have its own Imam. 'Umar^(ra) helped to bring them back into the fold and unite the Arabs as a single united Muslim community with a single Khalifah.

At the death of the first Khalifah, Abu Bakr^(ra), 'Umar^(ra) became the second Khalifah of Islam in 634. The famous historian Ibn Khaldun (1332 - 1406) describes the events of the appointment of Hadhrat 'Umar^(ra) as follows:

'Thus, Abu Bakr appointed

'Umar as his successor in the presence of the followers of Muhammad^(saw). They considered themselves obliged by it to render obedience to 'Umar. Likewise, 'Umar appointed six persons to be members of (an electoral) council.' (*Ibn Khaldun, p.167*)

Similarly, al-Tabari records a conversation that Abu Bakr^(ra) had with 'Uthman^(ra) about Hadhrat 'Umar^(ra):

'Abu Bakr said: 'O Abu Abdallah, inform me about 'Umar.' 'Uthman said: 'O God, my knowledge about him is that what he does in private is better than what he shows openly, and that there is no-one like him amongst us.'
(*Tabari, Vol.XI, p.146*)

The implication was that since the example he had shown in public was so noble, the fact that his private actions were better showed the strength of his spiritual nature and character. Abu Bakr^(ra) gave a clear indication that 'Umar^(ra) would succeed him as the second Khalifah.

'Umar's compassion as Khalifah

Having been given the highest office in Islam, his aggression turned to warmth and humility. In one of his early sermons as Khalifah, he appealed to his followers in the following terms:

“In running the State, you are my partners. Help me with your sound advice. If I follow the right path laid down by God and His Prophet, follow me. If I deviate, correct me. Strengthen me with your advice and suggestions.”

(Helminski p.406)

Sir William Muir records in *The Caliphate* that one of 'Umar's earliest acts was to examine the Treasury, but all he found was a small coin in the fold of one of the sacks showing that Abu Bakr^(ra) had distributed all the revenue collected by the state. 'Umar^(ra) was greatly impressed. 'Umar^(ra) is renowned for establishing the principles of the Islamic state.

As Khalifah, the norms of the time (in the prevailing world) would have led him to have a grand palace and court with many luxuries,

fancy garments, hundreds of slaves and lavish displays of wealth and power. But this was not the manner of the great Khalifah. He preferred to live a simple life. His clothes were simple. He ate simple food like his followers. Once he is quoted as saying:

“Nothing of the Lord's goods is allowed me except a garment for winter and one for summer, and enough for the Pilgrimage and the rites, and food for me and my household at the middle rate allowed one of my people; beyond that I have no more right than any other Muslim.”

(Helminski p.408)

He is often cited as owning just a single shirt and even that patched up. He slept on a bed of palm leaves just as his followers did.

'Umar^(ra) would often walk the streets of Madinah at night in disguise to check the safety and comfort of the poorest members of society. He would patrol the streets to gauge the sleeping conditions, the availability of food, water and clothing, and the level of safety.

Once while walking the streets, he noticed a woman cooking something in a pot while her children were restless around her. On enquiring, he learned that the pot was empty but on the fire just to console them, but that they had not eaten for two days. He was moved to tears. 'Umar^(ra) immediately went to the treasury and brought food items for the woman. An employee offered to carry it for 'Umar^(ra) but he declined saying who would carry his burden on the final day. He took the food to this lady and instructed her to visit the treasury regularly for her provisions. She had not recognised him. The woman was very pleased. Although she had no idea who he was, she cried out:

“May Allah make you the Khalifah in place of 'Umar!”
(*Tabari, Vol.XIV, p.110-111*)

'Umar^(ra) began to cry and left without saying a further word. This is an illustration of the genuine compassion that he had for his people.

On another occasion, an ambassador of Greece was visiting and

enquired about the palace of the Khalifah where he could take his horse and baggage. Hearing this, an onlooker is recorded by Jalaluddin Rumi as telling the ambassador:

“He has no palace; 'Umar's only palace is an illuminated spirit. Though he is famous as Commander of the Faithful, his only dwelling is a hut, like the poor.”

(*Helminski p.159*)

He is often described as performing his own tasks rather than engaging servants in order to keep himself humble. One such account is recorded by 'Urwah bin az-Zubayr who had commented that it was not befitting of a Khalifah to walk around carrying a waterskin on his shoulder, to which he received the following response from 'Umar^(ra):

“When deputations came to me, listening and obedient, a certain arrogance entered my soul, and I wished to break it.”

(*Helminski, p.160*)

He also promoted brotherly affection among Muslims, and is recorded by Al-Ghazali in his 'On

Duties of Brotherhood' as saying:

“There are three ways of showing sincere brotherly love; give him the greeting ‘Peace!’ when you first meet him, make him comfortable, and call him by his favourite names”.

To some extent, this would have been expected from the Khalifah, but he also demonstrated love and compassion for non-Muslims living under Islamic protection. While in Syria, he met an old man begging on the streets and learned that he was a Jew. He was upset and told the governor of Syria to look after the old man as his duty. He was very mindful of his subjects' feelings and once even scolded his governor in Egypt saying:

“Since when have we enslaved people who were born free?!”

Taking of Jerusalem

There were many memorable incidents from his 10 years as the second Khalifah. One of these is the taking of Jerusalem in 637.

Around that time, the Muslims had

endeared themselves to the inhabitants of Jerusalem when they were forced to retreat from a Christian territory under pressure from superior numbers of Roman troops. Having levied the Jizyah tax on those people, the Muslims returned the tax because they could no longer defend them against the advancing Romans. The people of Jerusalem were greatly impressed by the integrity of the Muslims so when the Muslims finally came to take control of their city, they had no concerns. (Jizyah was a defence tax on non-Muslims whereas Muslims paid Zakat and were also required to physically take part in the defence).

‘Umar^(ra) came to the city himself after a long siege. He left Madinah with one attendant and a camel which they took turns riding. As they approached Jerusalem, it was the attendant's turn, and he said to the Khalifah:

“Commander of the Faithful, I give up my turn. It will look awkward in the eyes of the people if I ride and you lead the camel.”



Interior of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem

Photo by Eric Stoltz - licenced under Creative Commons, Attribution 2.5

But 'Umar insisted on maintaining the rota and replied:

“Oh no, I am not going to be unjust. The honour of Islam is enough for us all.”

So it was that the people of Jerusalem witnessed a humble man walking towards them leading his servant riding the camel. This endeared him to the people of the city who came into the fold of the

Islamic Empire without conflict. He signed a peace treaty as follows:

“From the servant of Allah and the Commander of the Faithful, 'Umar: The inhabitants of Jerusalem are granted security of life and property. Their Churches and Crosses shall be secure. This treaty applies to all people of the city. Their places of worship shall remain intact. These shall neither be taken

over nor pulled down. People shall be absolutely free to follow their religion. They shall not be put to any trouble ...”
(*Tabari, Vol.XII, p.191*)

‘Umar^(ra) was given the keys to the city by the Orthodox Christian Patriarch Sophronius. He then led prayers on the site of the Al-Aqsa mosque away from the Christian Church to ensure that later Muslims would not lay any claim on the Church.

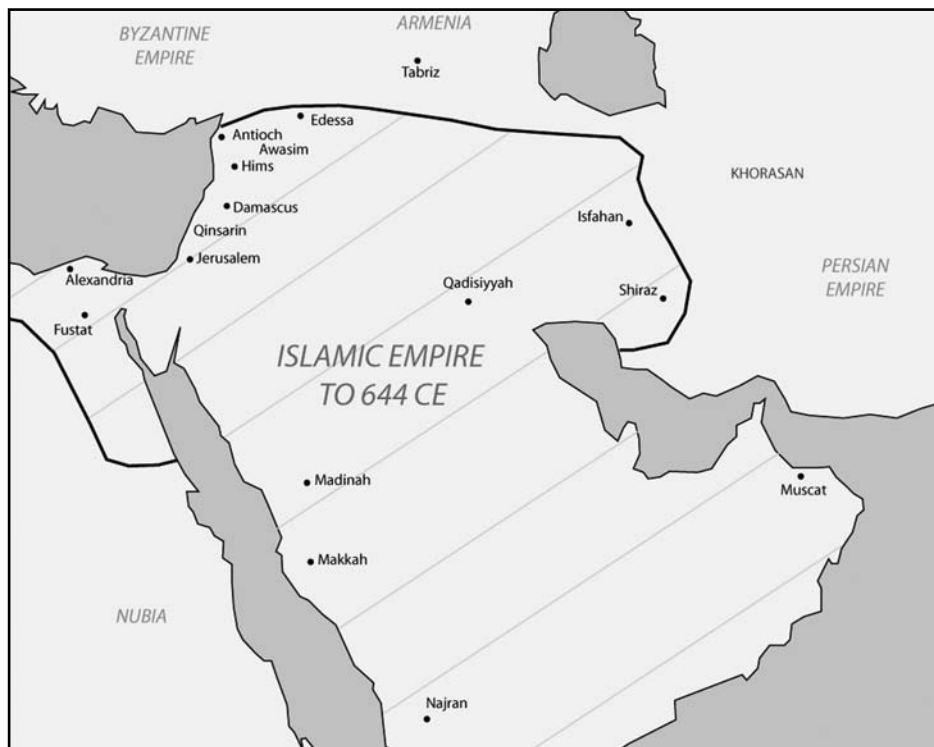
He wanted to build a mosque in Jerusalem and the Bishop suggested the Sakha, or the rock on which God had spoken to Jacob^(as). The Christians had heaped rubbish there to tease the Jews. ‘Umar^(as) helped clear the site of rubbish and then a mosque was built on the site.

Under his leadership, a simple wooden mosque was built to hold 3,000 worshippers, later extended as the al-Aqsa Mosque. Elsewhere on the rock, it was not until 692 that the famous Dome of the Rock was built on the site. (*Al-Khateeb, p.34*).

‘Umar^(ra) established the Umariyyah

Treaties with the Christians to preserve their status and rights within the Muslim state. When returning from his tour of Syria, he delivered a speech in which he said:

“Allah has for the time being made me your ruler. But I am one of you. No special privileges belong to a ruler. I have some responsibilities to discharge, and in this I seek your cooperation. Government is a sacred trust, and it is my endeavour not to betray the trust in any way. For the fulfilment of the trust I have to be a watch-man. I have to be strict. I have to enforce discipline. I have to run the administration not on the basis of personal idiosyncrasies; I have to run it in public interest and for promoting the public good. For this we have the guidance in the Book of God. Whatever orders I issue in the course of day to day administration have to conform to the Qur’an. God has favoured us with Islam. He sent to us His Messenger^(saw). He has chosen us for a mission. Let us fulfil that mission. That mission

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is the promotion of Islam. In Islam lies our safety; if we err we are doomed.”

His style of leadership surprised many non-Muslims, and the rights given to non-Muslims endeared them to Islam.

Spread of Islam under ‘Umar^(ra)
Islam continued to spread in all directions under ‘Umar^(ra). Although there were many raids and conquests during the Caliphate

of ‘Umar^(ra) as Islamic influence spread, this was not a religious expansion. Each of the peoples that the Arabs came across were seen to be Peoples of the Book (i.e. following Divine teachings and prophets) and so could not be compelled to accept Islam. This was actually a process in which pacts were being made, and new trade routes expanded and established.

The motivation for this expansion

and for the wars was in order to spread freedom and exchange knowledge with other faiths and cultures. At that time, the prevailing climate was one of rivalry, jealousy and greed, and constant fighting across the world. Therefore, when Muslims sent missionary expeditions to different countries and found that they were abused and attacked and that locals were being mistreated, they had no option but to fight the oppression until freedom was once again established. The Holy Qur'an gave them guidance on how to conduct themselves as we read:

O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female; and We have made you into tribes and sub-tribes that you may recognise one another. Verily, the most honourable among you, in the sight of Allah, is he who is the most righteous among you. Surely, Allah is All-knowing, All-Aware. (Ch.49: V.14)

So the Muslims were taught to respect other tribes and faiths, but believed that they had a better message for the good of all

mankind. However, if in the course of preaching they faced persecution or attacks, they could respond under the following guidance:

And make ready for them whatever you can of armed force and of mounted pickets at the frontier, whereby you may frighten the enemy of Allah and your enemy and others besides them whom you know not, but Allah knows them. And whatever you spend in the way of Allah, it shall be repaid to you in full and you shall not be wronged. And if they incline towards peace, incline thou also towards it, and put thy trust in Allah. Surely it is He Who is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.(Ch.8: Vs. 61-62)

This guidance as well as other instructions enabled the Muslims to fight defensive wars to attain peace, security and freedom but with the guidelines that no place of worship or civilian could be attacked, and that hostilities must cease as soon as one side seeks peace or a ceasefire.

The Jews, Christians and

Zoroastrians of the new Empire were given a protected status (*Dhimmi*) with unconditional legal and military protection just as they were in Jerusalem, and indeed, often felt safer under Muslim protection than under the Byzantine Christians or the Persians who had been less tolerant to what they saw as unorthodox beliefs such as the Arians and Nestorians. It has even been suggested that under Islamic protection, the Nestorians no longer faced persecution from Orthodox Christianity and were able to expand rapidly eastwards (Nicolle, p.63).

Each new city was left to be governed by its own people who paid a poll tax in return for protection through the Muslim armies. Although now under the protection of the Islamic Empire, the conquered cities and their people were subject to their own laws and traditions as administered largely by their own people; only the governor was an Arab appointed by the Khalifah to maintain order to establish the new norms of tolerance and freedom. The Arabs were strongly discouraged by 'Umar^(ra) from

taking land in these new countries. Islamic Law applied only to Muslims.

There are many examples of tribes who chose not to accept Islam but who were given protection. The Banu Taghlib tribe of Mesopotamia had refused to accept Islam and had also refused to pay the Jizyah tax. 'Umar^(ra) gave a civilised response which the tribe accepted:

'The caliph 'Umar forbade any pressure to be put upon them, when they showed themselves unwilling to abandon their old faith and ordered that they should be left undisturbed in the practice of it, but that they were not to oppose the conversion of any member of their tribe to Islam nor baptise the children of such as became Muslims.'
(*Arnold, p.49*)

On the subject of Jizyah, the Banu Taghlib wanted to pay a levy for the poor similar to the Muslims rather than it being seen as a protection levy, and 'Umar^(ra) agreed to this.

It was during the time of 'Umar^(ra) that Islam expanded rapidly into

Persia, all along North Africa, and into Asia Minor. Interestingly, the Muslims up to that time chose to travel by land and did not exploit the sea. One account by Ibn Khaldun suggests that when 'Umar^(ra) asked 'Amr ibn al-'As about sea travel, the description that he was given was that it was like 'a great creature upon which weak creatures ride - like worms upon a piece of wood'. That description was sufficient to put 'Umar^(ra) off sea travel and he advised all of his generals and envoys to travel by land.

At times, there were miracles related to the rapid advance that the Muslims were making. There are numerous accounts of the time when Hadhrat 'Umar^(ra) was delivering his Friday Sermon and then suddenly broke off and shouted three times '*Sariyah, the mountain!*' (*Tabari, Vol.XIV, p.71*). He then continued with his sermon, but this obviously troubled the worshippers. When quizzed later, he said that he saw his Muslim forces led by Sariyah being attacked and defeated near Nahawand in Persia so he shouted to warn them.

When later a messenger came back from Sariyah a month later, he described how indeed the troops had been losing out until they heard the shouts of '*Sariyah, the mountain!*' and then as they turned towards the mountain, rather than being ambushed, they themselves were victorious. This story has been narrated by Ibn 'Umar and 'Amr ibn al-Harith.

As the influence of Islam spread, 'Umar^(ra) appointed Governors in different lands, but also tried to ensure that they stayed faithful and dutiful rather than getting embroiled in the trappings of power that he himself had also rejected. Khuzaymah ibn Thabit records:

'Whenever 'Umar appointed a governor, he wrote to him and made a condition on him that he should not ride a *birdhaun* (heavy non-Arab horse from Turkey or Greece), nor eat delicacies, nor dress in finery, nor lock his door against the needy.'

From this, we get a sense of 'Umar's own stance on duty and modesty. Had the future Muslims

such as the Umayyads and Ottomans kept this in mind, their fate may have been different.

The conquered nations accepted the new peace with confidence because the Arabs did not take their land or impose Islamic Law. They took a tax, and then discharged their duties to the new people by restoring roads and canals, building bridges, freeing slaves and improving living conditions for the poorest and the meekest in society. New trade routes were opened to the rest of the Islamic Empire. Rivers were banked and irrigation paths established. The Muslims established new gardens. Hadhrat 'Umar^(ra) was the pioneer in this new Empire, and was very cautious to ensure that the rights of the new people were maintained or enhanced, and that nobody, Arab or otherwise, would lose out as a result of the Muslims, or blame the religion of Islam.

Achievements

It was during the stewardship of Hadhrat 'Umar^(ra) that the Khalifah took on the designation '*Amir ul Momineen*' (Commander of the Faithful). As Khalifah, 'Umar^(ra)

established the Hijri Shamsi calendar which began at the time of the Hijrah from Makkah to Madinah (Tabari, Vol.VI, p.158). There had been a consensus that Muslims needed their own calendar as many edicts had been going out on letters without dates, but there was no agreement on the point at which the calendar should begin. Some had suggested the dates of the birth or death of the Holy Prophet^(saw), but in the end, there was agreement on the Hijrah.

He began to codify Shariah Law, mainly because he recognised that the people needed an effective, consistent and speedy form of justice based upon the Qur'an and the teachings and practices of the Holy Prophet^(saw). He established courts for the public, and carefully selected Judges who were knowledgeable, honest, respected and not liable to be influenced.

One of the most senior and respected judges that he appointed was 'Ali ibn Abi Talib^(ra), later the Fourth Khalifah, who was known for his thorough knowledge of both the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith, having lived so close to the

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Prophet^(saw) for thirty years as first his cousin and then son-in-law. 'Umar^(ra) gave all of the Judges the following advice:

'Verily Justice is an important obligation to Allah and to man. You have been charged with this responsibility. Discharge this responsibility so that you may win the approbation of Allah and the good will of the people. Treat the people equally in your presence, and in your decisions, so that the weak despair not of justice and the high-placed harbour no hope of favouritism. The onus of proof lies on the plaintiff, while the party who denies must do so on oath. Compromise is permissible, provided that it does not turn the unlawful into something lawful, and the lawful into something unlawful. Let nothing prevent you from changing your previous decision if after consideration you feel that the previous decision was incorrect. When you are in doubt about a question and find nothing concerning it in the Qur'an or the Sunnah of Prophet

Mohammad^(saw), ponder the question over and over again.'

He saw it as his duty to renovate and expand the two great Mosques in Makkah and Madinah. However, Hadhrat 'Umar^(ra) had a simple understanding of a Mosque. He expected to see a prayer hall with a niche for the Imam facing Makkah, minarets where the muezzin would call people to prayer and be heard from a distance, and washrooms where worshippers could perform ablutions before worship. He did not like innovations, and on one occasion, when he learned that in Fustat (Cairo), his governor 'Amr ibn al-'As had built a minbar (raised pulpit with steps on which the Imam stands to deliver sermons in some mosques), he wrote to him saying:

'And now, I have heard that you use a pulpit and thus raise yourself above the necks of the Muslims. Is it not sufficient for you that you are standing while the Muslims are at your heels? Therefore, I urge you to smash it to bits.'

'Umar^(ra) was concerned that this

kind of innovation would be the start of arrogance creeping in amongst the Imams. Minbars became widely used in North Africa and in the Ottoman Empire.

He established the Majlis Shura as an advisory body for the Khalifah. As the Islamic empire gained in power and wealth, he also turned his attention to education and established a number of schools and mosques across his empire.

As the numbers of Muslims in outlying areas grew rapidly, so the need for teaching them about Islam and the Qur'an became apparent. 'Umar^(ra) despatched many of the learned Companions to these areas to begin the process of teaching at a sufficient level of quality. He sent 10 Companions to Basra to teach the Qur'an, and sent Ibn Mas'ud to Kufa. He was also very careful about what was being taught and how. When he learned that Ibn Mas'ud was teaching the Qur'an in his native Hudhail dialect, he told him:

'The Qur'an was revealed in the dialect of the Quraish, so teach according to the dialect of

the Quraish and not the Hudhail.'

After complaints from Yazid bin Abi Sufyan about the lack of help in teaching in Syria, he despatched Mu'adh, 'Ubadah and Abu ad-Darda' to Hims, and from there Abu ad-Darda' went on to Damascus and Mu'adh to Palestine, while 'Ubadah remained in Hims. Abu ad-Darda' established a study circle of 1600 scholars in Damascus of whom his brighter students went on to train hundreds of others. (Al-Azami, p.85-86) These were the growing pains of Islam that Hadhrat 'Umar^(ra) had to deal with in order to ensure that the next generation of Muslims were of quality and not just quantity. Even in the wilderness, he sent people to train and educate the bedouins, and in Madinah, the home of Islam, he tasked Companions to teach the children and also to make the Qur'an more understandable even for adults.

He encouraged his followers to focus on the spread of the message of Islam rather than on settling and owning land. It was with this zeal that his followers were able to



Tomb of Hadhrat 'Umar^(ra), Madinah

rapidly take the message of Islam to Syria, Jerusalem, Egypt, Libya and Iraq. Islam expanded into the Middle East and Persia, across North Africa and up towards Asia Minor. Muslims were encouraged to hand over land as trusts for the building of schools, hospitals and orphanages, and so as not to grow too attached to worldly things. The accumulation of wealth and power was not in the minds of the Muslims as the sphere of influence expanded. If anything, the larger the Islamic Empire grew, the more opportunities arose to make sacrifices for the sake of Islam.

'Umar's death

'Umar's^(ra) end was untimely. He was marshalling worshippers for the midday prayer when a disgruntled Persian non-Muslim, Abu Lu'lu'ah Firoz of Basra, who held a grudge against him, stabbed him. Just a few days earlier, Abu Lu'lu'ah had approached 'Umar^(ra) to complain about the amount he had to pay his master, Mugheerah ibn Sha'bah, and asked the levy to be reduced. 'Umar^(ra) listened to him and suggested that the level of the levy was reasonable. So it was according to historians, such as Tabari, that while 'Umar^(ra) began the prayers, Abu Lu'lu'ah stepped

forward from one of the rows and stabbed him six times. When apprehended, he stabbed himself (*Tabari*, Vol.XIV, p.89-90).

On his deathbed, 'Umar^(ra) gave instructions for a Shura to be established to elect a new Khalifah. He said:

“To him who shall follow me, I give it as my wish that he be kind to this city which gave a home to us and to the Faith, that he acknowledge much of their virtues and pass lightly over their faults. And bid him treat well the Arab tribes for they are the strength of Islam.”
(*Helminski p.410-411*)

He died two days later on November 644 at the age of just 64 years.

'Umar's Character

'Umar^(ra) demonstrated his courage throughout his life. He also showed humility and compassion as Khalifah. He was also very wise and truthful.

There are hadith (sayings of the Holy Prophet^(saw)) that show the

regard of the Prophet^(saw) for his character as we read:

‘Truly Allah has placed the truth upon the tongue of 'Umar and he speaks by it.’
(*Abu Daud, Book 19, No.2956*)

He adopted a simple life and this extended to his clothing and his tastes in food. He once admonished his son 'Asim for eating meat just because he had a craving for it. In response, Al-Hasan records him as saying:

‘Every time you crave something, do you eat it? It is sufficient wasteful extravagance for a man that he eats everything for which he has an appetite.’

He was a practical man, and inspired others with his insight and with his moral stand. This extended beyond actions towards fellow men to the treatment of animals. On one occasion, he saw a man dragging a goat by its leg and taking it to slaughter. He was appalled at this and said:

‘Woe unto you. If you take the

animal to its death, do so in a proper manner.'

He felt a great responsibility as Khalifah and a compassion for the weak and the poor. At one time, there was a great famine in the Hijaz and despite some supplies being sent from Egypt and Syria, 'Umar^(as) felt so touched by the plight of his people that he swore not to touch butter or honey while the famine lasted. Although his assistant could see the adverse reaction on his health, he still refused to consume what he thought of luxuries saying:

"If I do not taste suffering, how can I know the suffering of others?"

He was keenly aware of not abusing his position as Khalifah. He would only burn an oil lamp while on official business. Once he refused to give a family member money because he had asked for it out of God's money. He later called him back and gave him 10,000 dirhams out of his own wealth (*Tabari*, Vol XIV, p.107), but was very careful on spending from the funds of the Muslims.

On another occasion, 'Umar^(ra) turned to Salman and asked, "Am I a King or a Caliph?" Salman replied "If you collect from a Muslim territory 1 dirham – or less or more - then you put it to use other than for what it is by right intended, you are a King, not a Caliph". 'Umar wept at the thought of having used even the smallest amount for a different purpose (*Tabari*, Vol. XIV, p.118), such was his sense of duty and responsibility.

He had a keen sense of fair play. Once he appeared before a Court in Madinah following a complaint against him. As he entered the Court, the Judge stood to show his respect, but 'Umar^(as) turned to the Judge and said:

"This is the first injustice you have done to the plaintiff."

Conclusions

There were many great leaders and wise characters amongst the early followers of the Holy Prophet^(saw), but what makes 'Umar's story so intriguing is how he changed from being such a well-known enemy of Islam to being its defender. In the journey, his transformation from a

passionate and aggressive man to the most humble and dignified of leaders despite the huge authority that he carried is an example to us all. While the sphere of influence expanded rapidly and the great Roman (Byzantine) and Persian Empires were both humbled during his leadership, if the conquered people came to the town and home of the most powerful man, rather than seeing vast structures and the pomp and show that they were used to seeing in Rome, Constantinople or Ctesiphon, they witnessed instead humble mud-brick houses, simple mosques and a leader who wore simple clothes, ate simple food and expected no special treatment. Hurmuzan, the conquered ruler of Ahwaz visited the Khalifah wearing his silks and bejewelled crown only to see his master wearing coarse and patched clothes.

The historian Edward Gibbon in the 18th Century wrote of him:

‘The abstinence and humility of Omar were not inferior to the virtues of Abu Beker: his food consisted of barley bread or dates; his drink was water; he

preached in a gown that was torn and tattered in twelve places; and the Persian satrap, who paid his homage to the conqueror, found him asleep among the beggars on the steps of the mosque of Medina.’

(The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol.5)

Finally, although Shi’as claim that ‘Umar^(ra) prevented Hadhrat ‘Ali^(ra) from becoming Khalifah earlier due to his own greed for power, the actions of the man show the opposite. ‘Ali^(ra) himself admired Hadhrat ‘Umar^(ra) and keenly served him as a judge and key advisor.

If a man were keen for personal power, having attained that status, such a person would then take steps to make the most of his position in terms of power, wealth and the exploitation of the trappings of power. With Hadhrat ‘Umar^(ra) we see the opposite. He never sought a position. But having been given that position, he led by example, looked after the welfare of the needy and lived a simple life. His focus was not political expansion either, but the spread of freedom

and then the sharing of knowledge. He put a lot of thought into how to teach the Qur'an and the principles of Islam to the large numbers of new Muslim converts across the world and set up a system that helped ensure the integrity of Islam.

Hadhrat 'Umar^(ra) always remembered throughout his dealings that he was answerable to God for his actions. He was an exemplary Muslim. May God be pleased with him. Amin.

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