THE PROPHET'S SIRAH

SERIES 25

KA'B IBN MALIK AND MASJID AD-DIRAR

The Truthfulness of Three Companions, Fifty Nights of Boycott and the Mosque Built to Divide, According to the Qur'an and Authentic Hadith



HJ CHE ALIM HJ CHE HARON

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يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ ٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَكُونُواْ مَعَ ٱلصَّٰدِقِينَ

"O you who have believed, fear Allah and be with those who are true."

SURAH AT-TAUBAH 9:119

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Allah, who turned in forgiveness to the three who were left behind, when the earth closed in on them in spite of its vastness. Blessings and peace be upon our master, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, who nurtured his Companions with truthfulness and compassion, and upon his family and his Companions.

This eBook is specially dedicated to my beloved wife,

ZAHARAH MOHD LATIF;

my dear children,

MUHAMMAD HAFIZ, NOOR HAZWANI, ABDUL HAKIM, NOOR HIDAYAH, NOR AQILA and **NOR ATIQAH**;

and my sons- and daughters-in-law,

FAZILAH, MALEK, HANIN, FAIRIZAL and **FIRWAN**.

This twenty-fifth book of The Prophet's Sirah tells of Ka'b ibn Malik and his two companions who stayed behind from Tabuk and chose to tell the truth, fifty nights of boycott, repentance sent down from the heavens, and Masjid ad-Dirar, built to divide the Muslims. May this knowledge be 'ilmun yuntafa'u bih, knowledge that brings benefit.

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ABOUT THE COVER OF THIS EBOOK

This eBook's cover does not depict any human being or animal. It shows **a rocky hill at the break of dawn**, as the first golden light touches its summit while **the palm groves** at its foot are still wrapped in the shadows of night, with a sandy path winding below. The sky above is still dark, brightening towards the horizon.

The hill recalls **Mount Sal'** in Madinah, from which a man called out at the top of his voice to Ka'b ibn Malik that his repentance had been accepted, after the Fajr prayer on the fiftieth night (Sahih al-Bukhari 4418). The passage from darkness to light recalls the state of **the three who were left behind**, when "the earth closed in on them in spite of its vastness", and then Allah turned to them in forgiveness (At-Tawbah 9:118).

The dark blue band at the bottom, framed by **fine gold lines**, is where the author's name appears.

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Colour guide: green box = verses of the Qur'an; gold box = Hadith; brown box = sirah note (report from the books of sirah); blue table = comparison. Underlined blue narrator names can be clicked to open the narrator's page on sunnah.com.

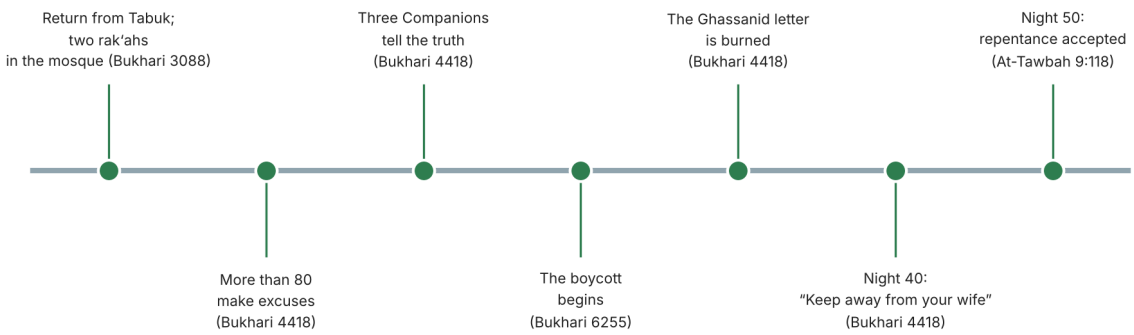
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KA'B IBN MALIK AND MASJID AD-DIRAR

Book 24 ended with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ returning from Tabuk to Madinah. More than eighty men who had not marched came with excuses, and he accepted their outward word. But three Companions chose a different path: they ***told the truth***, even though their honesty led them into ***fifty nights*** — the hardest of their lives.

This Book 25 tells their story — above all that of ***Ka'b ibn Malik*** رضى الله عنه, who told it himself in one of the longest and most moving Hadith in Sahih al-Bukhari (No. 4418) and Sahih Muslim (No. 2769). Then we will look at another event after Tabuk: ***Masjid ad-Dirar***, a mosque built not for Allah, but to divide the Muslims.

Timeline of the Three Who Were Left Behind



All these events are mentioned in the Hadith of Ka'b ibn Malik (Sahih al-Bukhari 4418; Sahih Muslim 2769).

Figure 1: Timeline of the three who were left behind.

Note: The Qur'anic translation in this eBook is Sahih International. The grade of every Hadith is stated in its box. The story of Ka'b ibn Malik is told from the long Hadith of Sahih al-Bukhari 4418 and Sahih Muslim 2769. Information from the books of sirah — such as the stories of Abu Lubabah, Abu 'Amir the Monk and the demolition of Masjid ad-Dirar — is placed in brown "Sirah Note" boxes.

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THE THREE WHO WERE LEFT BEHIND

At the close of the Tabuk story in Surah At-Tawbah, Allah mentions a small and special group. They were not hypocrites, nor were they among those whose excuses were accepted. They were ***the three who were left behind***:

"And [He also forgave] the three who were left behind [and regretted their error] to the point that the earth closed in on them in spite of its vastness and their souls confined them and they were certain that there is no refuge from Allah except in Him" (At-Tawbah 9:118) — Tafsir Ibn Kathir 9:118.

They were ***Ka'b ibn Malik***, ***Murarah ibn ar-Rabi'*** and ***Hilal ibn Umayyah*** رضي الله عنهم — all three from the Ansar. Ka'b himself explained the meaning of "left behind" (khullifu) in this verse: ***it does not mean that they stayed behind from the campaign***, but that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ ***deferred their case*** from that of those who swore oaths and had their excuses accepted, until Allah decided it (Sahih al-Bukhari 4418).

Theirs is a story of ***truthfulness at a high price***, ***sincere repentance***, and ***the mercy of Allah*** that comes after a long trial. It also shows how the society of Madinah nurtured its members: not with hatred, but with discipline that led to healing.

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WHO WAS KA'B IBN MALIK?

Ka'b ibn Malik al-Ansari al-Khazraji رضى الله عنه of Banu Salimah was among the early Companions to embrace Islam in Madinah. He was present on ***the night of the Pledge of 'Aqabah***, when the Ansar pledged allegiance to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ before the Hijrah. He said of that night: "I would not like to exchange it for (being at) Badr, even though Badr is better known among people" (Sahih al-Bukhari 4418).

Ka'b was also known as one of ***the three poets of the Messenger of Allah*** ﷺ, along with Hassan ibn Thabit and 'Abdullah ibn Rawahah. They defended Islam with poetry when Quraysh attacked with words. He took part in every campaign with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ ***except Badr and Tabuk***. Of Badr he said: no one was blamed for missing it, since the Messenger of Allah ﷺ went out only for the caravan of Quraysh, until Allah brought them face to face with the enemy without an appointment.

So Ka'b was no ordinary man. He was ***a believing, brave and accomplished Companion***. This is what makes his story so precious: it teaches us that ***even good people can slip***, and what distinguishes them is what they do after they slip.

SIRAH NOTE: KA'B TELLS HIS STORY IN OLD AGE

This Hadith was narrated from Ka'b by his son ***'Abdullah ibn Ka'b***, who led him about after Ka'b became blind in old age (Sahih al-Bukhari 4678). This means Ka'b told the story ***years after it happened***, in remarkable detail — a sign of how deeply the event marked his soul.

Historians mention that Ka'b died during the reign of Mu'awiyah رضى الله عنه, around 50 AH.

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Ibn Hajar, al-Isabah fi Tamyiz as-Sahabah — biography of Ka'b ibn Malik.

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"TOMORROW I WILL GET READY"

When the call to Tabuk rang out, Ka'b was in the best state of his life. He said: ***"I was never stronger or better off than when I stayed behind from that campaign. By Allah, I had never before owned two riding camels, but I owned them at the time of that campaign"*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 4418).

He had no excuse at all. His problem was a very common illness: ***procrastination***. He related: ***"I would go out in the morning to get ready with them, and return having done nothing. I would say to myself: 'I can do it whenever I want.'"*** Day after day passed like this, until the people had made their earnest preparations and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ set out with the Muslims, while Ka'b had prepared nothing.

Even after the army had left, he still thought: "I will get ready in a day or two, then catch up with them." Ka'b admitted with deep regret: ***"Would that I had done so! But it was not decreed for me."***

The lesson is very close to our lives. How much good do we postpone by saying "tomorrow" — voluntary prayer, reading the Qur'an, giving charity, asking forgiveness — until the chance is gone? The scholars said: ***"Saying 'later' is one of the soldiers of Iblis."*** Ka'b did not intend to stay behind; he simply ***did not act*** when he could.

Ka'b's honesty about his own procrastination is itself instructive. He does not blame the heat, the distance or the ripening dates. He simply says he kept postponing. Many of our failures are not dramatic acts of rebellion but a quiet accumulation of small delays — each one seeming harmless, until the opportunity has passed.

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AN EMPTY MADINAH

After the army left, Ka'b began to feel a strange loneliness in Madinah. He said: ***"When I went out among the people after the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had left, it grieved me that I saw no one like me except a man suspected of hypocrisy, or a weak man whom Allah had excused"*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 4418).

Imagine the feelings of a Companion who had been present on the night of 'Aqabah and fought campaign after campaign, now walking the lanes of Madinah among ***the hypocrites and the excused***. He realised that he was ***in the wrong place***, in a group that was not his own.

Ka'b also mentioned that the Muslims were numerous then, and ***there was no register (diwan)*** recording their names. Anyone who wanted to be absent would think he would go unnoticed, ***as long as no revelation came down*** about him. But that is the reality: people may not notice, but ***Allah sees all***, and revelation would uncover everything.

The lesson: ***our surroundings reflect our state***. If we find ourselves only among the heedless, it is a sign we need to return. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ***"A man follows the religion of his close friend, so let each of you look at whom he befriends"*** (Sunan Abi Dawud 4833, graded hasan).

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"WHAT HELD KA'B BACK?"

Throughout the march, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not mention Ka'b until he reached Tabuk. While sitting with the Companions, he asked: ***"What has Ka'b done?"*** A man from Banu Salimah answered: "O Messenger of Allah, his two cloaks held him back, and his admiring glances at his own sides" — meaning he was distracted by comfort and self-regard (Sahih al-Bukhari 4418).

Then ***Mu'adh ibn Jabal*** رضى الله عنه at once defended his brother: ***"What an evil thing you have said! By Allah, O Messenger of Allah, we know nothing of him but good."*** The Messenger of Allah ﷺ remained silent.

Note two things. First, ***the Messenger of Allah ﷺ remembered Ka'b*** among thirty thousand men. Every individual mattered to him. Second, ***Mu'adh defended the honour of his absent brother***. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ***"Whoever defends his brother's honour, Allah will turn the Fire away from his face on the Day of Resurrection"*** (Jami' at-Tirmidhi 1931, graded hasan).

The lesson for our gatherings: when someone absent is backbitten or thought badly of, be like Mu'adh — ***think well and defend***, not add to it. We do not know a person's true state, and only Allah knows what is in the heart.

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BACK TO THE MOSQUE

When news came that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was on his way back, Ka'b was overcome with grief.

He began thinking of ***a false excuse***: "How can I escape his anger tomorrow?" He sought the opinion of every wise person in his family. But when it was said that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was about to arrive, ***all falsehood left his mind***, and he realised he would never be saved by a lie. So he ***resolved to tell the truth*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 4418).

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ arrived in the morning. As was his habit, the first thing he did was go to the mosque:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 3088

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو عَاصِمٍ، عَنِ ابْنِ جُرَيْجٍ، عَنِ ابْنِ شِهَابٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ كَعْبٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، وَعَمِّهِ، عُبَيْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ كَعْبٍ عَنْ كَعْبٍ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم كَانَ إِذَا قَدِمَ مِنْ سَفَرٍ ضُحًى دَخَلَ الْمَسْجِدَ، فَصَلَّى رَكْعَتَيْنِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَجْلِسَ.

TRANSLATION:

Ka'b ibn Malik رضى الله عنه related that the Prophet ﷺ, ***whenever he returned from a journey in the forenoon, would enter the mosque and pray two rak'ahs before sitting down.***

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Abu 'Asim an-Nabil, from Ibn Jurayj, from Ibn Shihab az-Zuhri, from 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn 'Abdullah ibn Ka'b, from his father 'Abdullah ibn Ka'b and his uncle 'Ubaydullah ibn Ka'b, from Ka'b ibn Malik رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Jihad and Expeditions, Chapter: Prayer on returning from a journey, Hadith No. 3088; also Muslim No. 716.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:3088

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

This Sunnah is beautiful: after a long, tiring journey, ***the first place he headed for was the house of Allah***, not his own house. Those two rak'ahs were ***a sign of gratitude*** for returning safely, and they also made the mosque the first place he met the community. After praying, he sat to receive the people.

Scholars encourage this Sunnah for every returning traveller: ***stop at the mosque and pray two rak'ahs*** before going home, if possible. It reminds us that every journey begins and ends with Allah.

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MORE THAN EIGHTY EXCUSES

Then those who had stayed behind came. Ka'b related: ***"They began making excuses to him and swearing oaths; they were eighty-odd men. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ accepted their outward (word), took their pledge, asked forgiveness for them, and left their secrets to Allah"*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 4418).

Allah had informed His Messenger of this before he reached Madinah:

"They will make excuses to you when you have returned to them. Say, "Make no excuse - never will we believe you. Allah has already informed us of your news" (At-Tawbah 9:94) — Tafsir Ibn Kathir 9:94.

"They will swear by Allah to you when you return to them that you would leave them alone. So leave them alone; indeed they are evil" (At-Tawbah 9:95) — Tafsir Ibn Kathir 9:95.

"They swear to you so that you might be satisfied with them. But if you should be satisfied with them - indeed, Allah is not satisfied with a defiantly disobedient people" (At-Tawbah 9:96) — Tafsir Ibn Kathir 9:96.

These hypocrites ***"succeeded"*** in this world: their excuses were accepted, and they went home in peace. But Allah was not pleased with them. The three truthful men, on the other hand, seemed at first to have ***"lost"***, but in the end their repentance was immortalised in the Qur'an. This is the difference between ***temporary success*** and ***true success***.

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THE MOMENT OF TRUTH

Then came Ka'b's turn. He came and greeted him. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ ***smiled the smile of one who is angry***, and said: "Come." Ka'b walked up and sat before him. He asked: ***"What kept you back? Had you not bought your mount?"*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 4418)

Ka'b's answer is among the most honest words a servant has ever spoken: ***"O Messenger of Allah, by Allah, if I were sitting before anyone else of the people of this world, I would see that I could escape his anger with some excuse; I have been given skill in argument. But by Allah, I know that if I tell you today a false story that pleases you with me, Allah will soon make you angry with me. And if I tell you a true story that makes you angry with me, I truly hope for Allah's forgiveness in it. By Allah, I had no excuse. By Allah, I was never stronger or better off than when I stayed behind from you."***

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ***"As for this man, he has told the truth. Get up until Allah decides about you."***

Ka'b understood something very deep: ***deceiving people may succeed, but deceiving Allah is impossible***. He preferred to face the Prophet's ﷺ anger today with hope of Allah's forgiveness, rather than win people's approval with a lie that revelation would one day expose.

Afterwards, some men of Banu Salimah followed him and said: "By Allah, we never knew you to commit a sin before this. Why did you not make an excuse like the others? The Prophet's ﷺ prayer for forgiveness would have been enough for your sin." They kept reproaching him until ***Ka'b nearly went back to belie himself***. The social pressure to lie was strong — but he held firm.

Ka'b's words also show how well he knew the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. He knew that revelation could expose any lie told to him, and that the Prophet's ﷺ approval was worthless if Allah was displeased. His choice was not between pleasing or angering a man, but between pleasing or angering Allah.

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THE GREATEST BLESSING AFTER GUIDANCE

Years later, when Ka'b looked back on the event, he did not see it as a calamity, but as ***the greatest blessing*** of his life after Islam:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 4673

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى، حَدَّثَنَا اللَّيْثُ، عَنْ عُقَيْلٍ، عَنِ ابْنِ شِهَابٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، أَنَّ عَبْدَ اللَّهِ بْنَ كَعْبِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ كَعْبَ بْنَ مَالِكٍ، حِينَ تَخَلَّفَ عَنْ تَبُوكَ، وَاللَّهِ، مَا أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيَّ مِنْ نِعْمَةٍ بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَانِي أَعْظَمَ مِنْ صِدْقِي رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم أَنْ لاَ أَكُونَ كَذَبْتُهُ فَأَهْلِكَ كَمَا هَلَكَ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا حِينَ أُنْزِلَ الْوَحْىُ {سَيَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ لَكُمْ إِذَا انْقَلَبْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ} إِلَى {الْفَاسِقِينَ}.

TRANSLATION:

'Abdullah ibn Ka'b ibn Malik said: I heard Ka'b ibn Malik رضى الله عنه say, when relating how he stayed behind from Tabuk: ***"By Allah, Allah has never bestowed on me any blessing — after He guided me — greater than my truthfulness to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, that I did not lie to him and so perish as those who lied perished"***, when the revelation came down: {They will swear by Allah to you when you return to them} up to {the defiantly disobedient} (At-Tawbah 9:95–96).

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Yahya ibn Bukayr, from al-Layth ibn Sa'd, from 'Uqayl ibn Khalid, from Ibn Shihab az-Zuhri, from 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn 'Abdullah ibn Ka'b, from 'Abdullah ibn Ka'b ibn Malik, from Ka'b ibn Malik رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Tafsir, Chapter: "They will swear by Allah to you…", Hadith No. 4673; the full story is in No. 4418 and Muslim No. 2769.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:4673

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

Ka'b compared himself with those who lied. They escaped for a moment, but Allah described them with ***the worst words*** ever said of anyone — "indeed they are evil" — and shut the door of His pleasure on them. Ka'b suffered fifty nights, but ***he is mentioned in the Qur'an with accepted repentance***.

This is the true measure of blessing. Sometimes Allah saves us by ***giving hardship***, and sometimes He leaves a person with ***a comfort that destroys***. Ka'b understood that painful truthfulness was ***the door of salvation***, while a comfortable lie was the door of ruin.

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MURARAH AND HILAL

In that pressured state, Ka'b asked: "Has anyone else met with what I have?" They said: "Yes, two men said what you said, and were told what you were told." He asked: "Who are they?" They said: ***"Murarah ibn ar-Rabi' al-'Amri and Hilal ibn Umayyah al-Waqifi."*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 4418)

Ka'b said: ***"They mentioned to me two righteous men who had taken part in Badr; in them was an example for me."*** So he went on his way and did not go back to lie. Knowing that two righteous men had also chosen honesty ***strengthened his heart***.

See how important ***a good example*** is. When we are being tested, knowing that other righteous people walk the same path gives us strength. This is why Allah commands, in the verse revealed with this story: ***"and be with those who are true"*** (At-Tawbah 9:119).

Hilal ibn Umayyah was an elderly man of Banu Waqif, while Murarah ibn ar-Rabi' was of Banu 'Amr ibn 'Awf. Both were ***people of Badr***, whose virtue the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had praised. This shows once again that ***even honoured people can err***, and past honour does not exempt anyone from being corrected.

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THE BOYCOTT BEGINS

Then came a heavy decision. Ka'b related: ***"The Messenger of Allah ﷺ forbade the Muslims to speak to the three of us, from among those who had stayed behind."*** People avoided them and changed towards them, until ***the land itself seemed to change***, no longer the land he knew (Sahih al-Bukhari 4418).

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 6255

حَدَّثَنَا ابْنُ بُكَيْرٍ، حَدَّثَنَا اللَّيْثُ، عَنْ عُقَيْلٍ، عَنِ ابْنِ شِهَابٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، أَنَّ عَبْدَ اللَّهِ بْنَ كَعْبٍ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ كَعْبَ بْنَ مَالِكٍ، يُحَدِّثُ حِينَ تَخَلَّفَ عَنْ تَبُوكَ، وَنَهَى، رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم عَنْ كَلاَمِنَا، وَآتِي رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم فَأُسَلِّمُ عَلَيْهِ، فَأَقُولُ فِي نَفْسِي هَلْ حَرَّكَ شَفَتَيْهِ بِرَدِّ السَّلاَمِ أَمْ لاَ حَتَّى كَمَلَتْ خَمْسُونَ لَيْلَةً، وَآذَنَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم بِتَوْبَةِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْنَا حِينَ صَلَّى الْفَجْرَ.

TRANSLATION:

'Abdullah ibn Ka'b said: I heard Ka'b ibn Malik رضى الله عنه narrating when he stayed behind from Tabuk: ***The Messenger of Allah ﷺ forbade (the people) from speaking to us.*** I would come to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and greet him, and say to myself: ***"Did he move his lips to return the greeting or not?"*** — until ***fifty nights*** were complete. Then the Prophet ﷺ announced ***that Allah had accepted our repentance*** when he had prayed Fajr.

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Yahya ibn Bukayr, from al-Layth ibn Sa'd, from 'Uqayl ibn Khalid, from Ibn Shihab az-Zuhri, from 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn 'Abdullah ibn Ka'b, from 'Abdullah ibn Ka'b ibn Malik, from Ka'b ibn Malik رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Asking Permission, Chapter: Not greeting one who has committed a sin, Hadith No. 6255.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:6255

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

Murarah and Hilal ***stayed at home weeping***. Ka'b, being the youngest and most resilient, still went out to pray in congregation and walk in the markets, but ***no one spoke to him***. After the prayer he would greet the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and wonder whether his lips moved to return the greeting. He would pray

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near him and steal glances: ***when he turned to his prayer, the Prophet looked at him; when he looked towards the Prophet, he turned away*** from him.

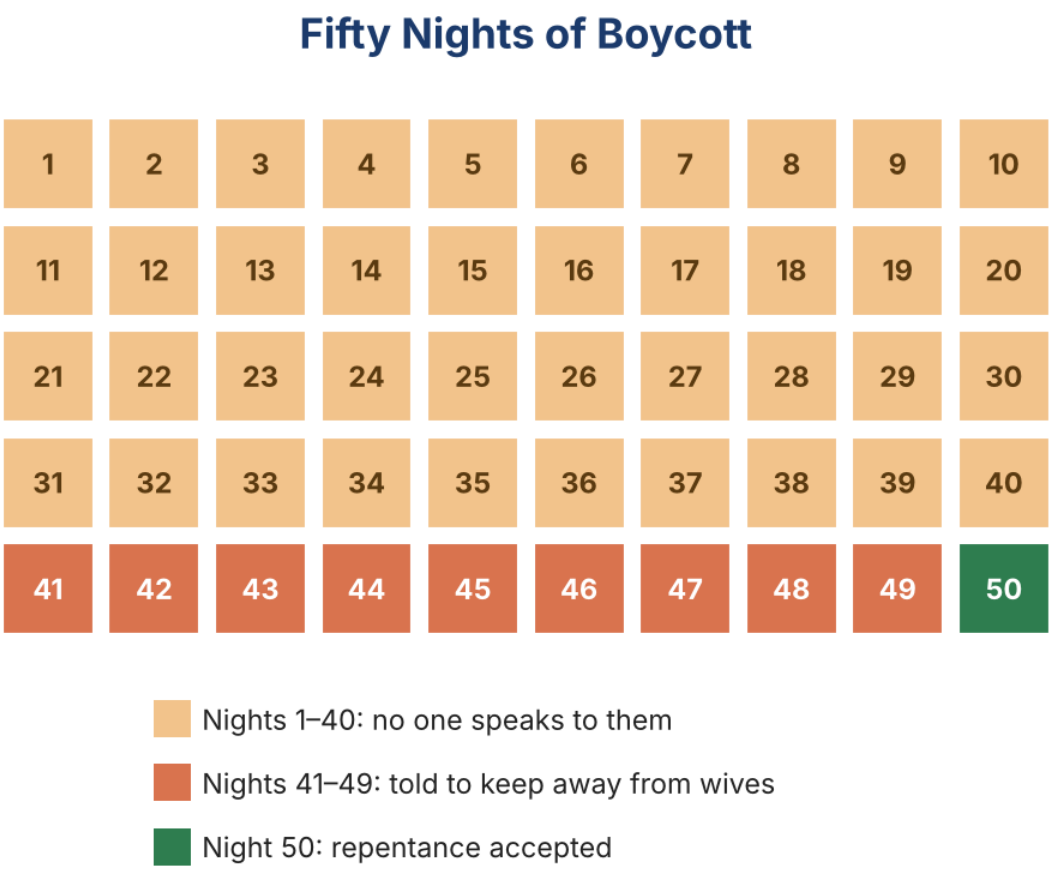


Figure 2: Fifty nights of boycott.

This small detail is very moving. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ ***still looked at Ka'b*** — he did not hate him.

But he carried out ***the discipline that was commanded***, awaiting Allah's decision. Those stolen glances show ***the love that remained*** behind the firmness.

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WHEN THE VAST EARTH CLOSED IN

The days of the boycott passed slowly. Ka'b described his state in words close to the Qur'an: ***"My own self felt confined, and the earth closed in on me in spite of its vastness."*** The peak of his grief was when he climbed the wall of the garden of ***Abu Qatadah*** — his cousin and the person dearest to him (Sahih al-Bukhari 4418).

He greeted him, but ***by Allah, Abu Qatadah did not return his greeting***. Ka'b said: "O Abu Qatadah, I ask you by Allah, do you know that I love Allah and His Messenger?" Abu Qatadah was silent. Ka'b repeated it, and he was still silent. The third time, Abu Qatadah said: ***"Allah and His Messenger know best."*** Ka'b's eyes overflowed with tears, and he turned back and climbed over the wall again.

See Abu Qatadah's obedience. He loved Ka'b, but ***his obedience to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ rose above his feelings***. Even his answer did not break the prohibition: he did not converse with Ka'b, but stated a true word. This shows the discipline of the Madinan community — no one "secretly" broke the instruction, even towards a close relative.

And see how precisely the Qur'an describes this feeling: ***"the earth closed in on them in spite of its vastness and their souls confined them"*** (At-Tawbah 9:118). The narrowness was not in the place, but in ***a soul cut off from others***. Humans are social beings; being shunned by those one loves is among the heaviest of trials.

The phrase "the earth closed in on them in spite of its vastness" has comforted believers in every age who feel trapped by grief or guilt. The Qur'an acknowledges that feeling honestly; it does not tell the believer that his pain is imaginary. But it also shows that this narrowness was not the end of the story — it was the doorway to relief.

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A LETTER FROM THE KING OF GHASSAN

In the midst of that loneliness came a subtler test. As Ka'b walked in the market of Madinah, a ***Nabataean farmer from Syria*** who had come to sell food asked: "Who will guide me to Ka'b ibn Malik?" People pointed him out. The man handed him a letter from ***the King of Ghassan*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 4418).

It read: ***"To proceed. It has reached us that your companion has treated you harshly. Allah has not made you to live in a land of humiliation and neglect. Come to us, and we will console you."***

Ka'b said: ***"This too is a trial."*** So he took the letter to ***the oven and burned it***.

The kingdom of Ghassan was an ally of Rome, the enemy just faced at Tabuk. Enemies always watch for cracks in the ranks of the Muslims and try ***to lure those who are hurting***. Ka'b could have said: "I am shunned, I have been treated harshly." But he did not let his grief become ***a door to betrayal***.

The lesson is very relevant: when we are disappointed by our fellow Muslims, community or leaders, there will be those offering "a more honourable place". ***Burning that letter*** is a sign of mature faith — loyalty to Allah and His Messenger does not depend on how people treat us.

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"KEEP AWAY FROM YOUR WIFE"

When ***forty nights*** of the fifty had passed, and still no revelation had come, a messenger of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ came to Ka'b: ***"The Messenger of Allah ﷺ orders you to keep away from your wife."*** Ka'b asked: "Should I divorce her, or what should I do?" The messenger said: "No, but keep away from her and do not go near her." The same instruction was sent to his two companions (Sahih al-Bukhari 4418).

Ka'b said to his wife: ***"Go to your family and stay with them until Allah decides this matter."*** He obeyed at once, without protest.

The wife of Hilal ibn Umayyah came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said: "O Messenger of Allah, Hilal is a weak old man with no servant. Would you dislike it if I served him?" He said: ***"No, but he must not approach you."*** She said: "By Allah, he has no desire for anything. By Allah, ***he has not stopped weeping*** from the time this happened until today."

Some of Ka'b's family suggested he too ask permission like Hilal's wife. But Ka'b refused: "I will not ask permission, for I do not know what the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would say, and ***I am a young man***." He chose to avoid anything that might lead to temptation, even if it was allowed for someone else.

Note the Prophet's ﷺ wisdom: for Hilal, old and weak, his wife was allowed to serve him; for Ka'b, who was young, the situation differed. ***Rulings take account of individual circumstances***, and mercy is always present within firmness.

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THE FIFTIETH NIGHT

Ten more nights passed. Ka'b said: ***"So fifty nights were complete from the time the Messenger of Allah ﷺ forbade (people) to speak to us."*** On the morning after the fiftieth night, he prayed Fajr on the roof of one of his houses (Sahih al-Bukhari 4418).

He described his state at that moment: ***"As I sat in the state Allah has described of us — my own self confined, and the earth closed in on me despite its vastness…"*** This was the lowest point of his trial. Fifty days without a greeting, without a smile, without his wife beside him, without certainty that his repentance would be accepted.

Yet in that narrowness there was one certainty the Qur'an mentions: ***"and they were certain that there is no refuge from Allah except in Him"*** (At-Tawbah 9:118). When every human door is shut, ***Allah's door remains open***. They did not flee to the King of Ghassan, nor to lies — they fled to Allah.

Scholars note that the darkest hour is ***just before dawn***. So too relief often comes when distress reaches its peak. Allah says: ***"Indeed, with hardship comes ease"*** (Ash-Sharh 94:6).

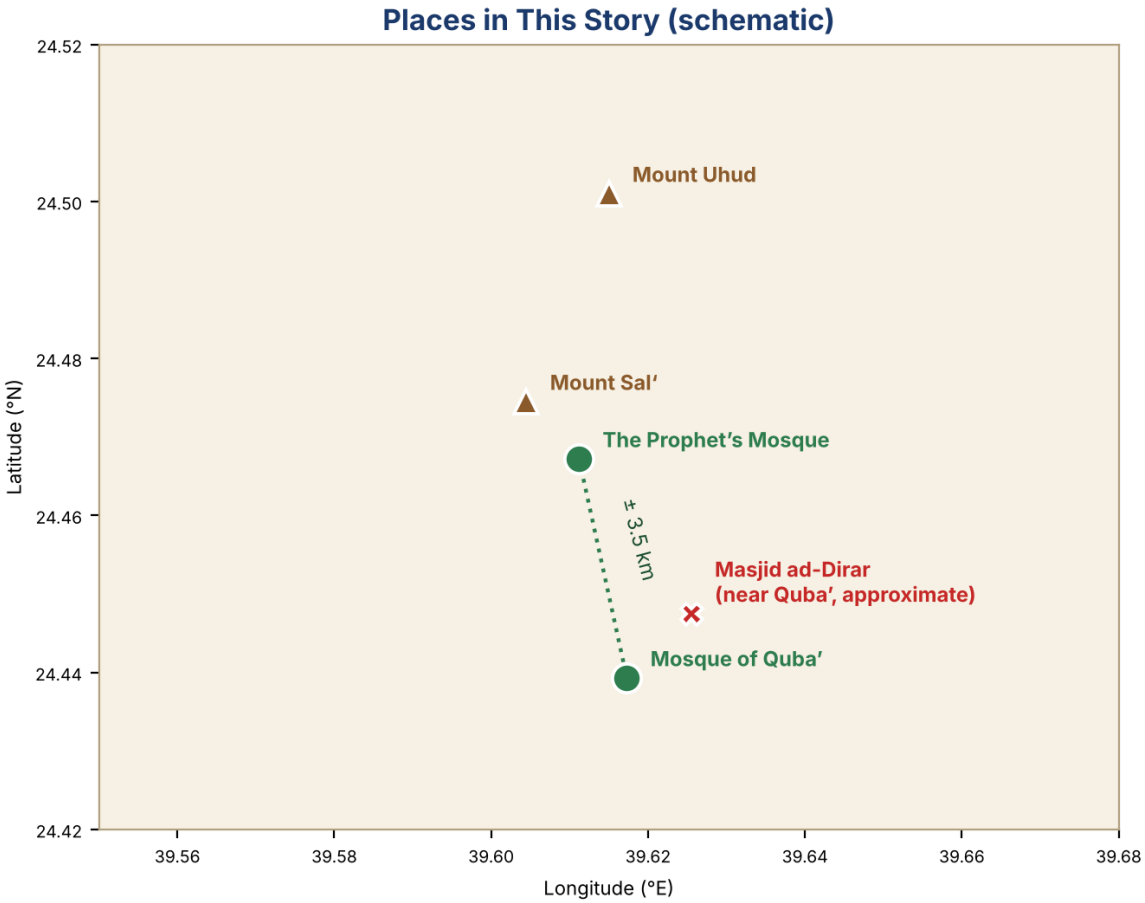
Fifty days is a long time to wait without knowing the outcome. Ka'b and his companions did not know whether the boycott would last a week or a lifetime, nor whether their repentance would be accepted at all. Their patience was not the patience of someone counting down to a known date, but the patience of complete reliance on Allah.

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A VOICE FROM MOUNT SAL'

Suddenly, Ka'b heard a voice from ***the top of Mount Sal'***, someone calling at the top of his voice: ***"O Ka'b ibn Malik, rejoice!"*** Ka'b at once fell ***prostrate***, for he knew relief had come (Sahih al-Bukhari 4418).

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ had announced Allah's acceptance of their repentance after he finished the Fajr prayer. People hurried out to give the good news. One man ***galloped his horse*** towards Ka'b, while a man of ***Banu Aslam ran and climbed the mountain***. Ka'b said: ***"The voice was faster than the horse."***



The exact site of Masjid ad-Dirar is unknown; it is said to have been near Quba'. Other positions are approximate.

Figure 3: Places in this story (schematic).

When the man whose voice he had heard arrived, Ka'b ***took off his two garments and clothed him with them*** as a gift for his good news. Ka'b said: ***"By Allah, I owned no other garments than those two that day."*** So he borrowed two garments and put them on.

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Notice Ka'b's prostration. A believer's first reaction to a blessing is ***a prostration of gratitude*** to Allah. Scholars take this story as one of the proofs that ***the prostration of gratitude is recommended*** on receiving a great blessing or being spared a calamity.

Notice too the joy of the whole community. Those who had not spoken to Ka'b for fifty days now ***raced to give him the good news***. The boycott was not hatred; it was ***discipline born of love***, and when it ended, that love returned in full.

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"THE BEST DAY SINCE YOUR MOTHER BORE YOU"

Ka'b hurried to the mosque. People met him in throngs, congratulating him: ***"May Allah's acceptance of your repentance bring you joy."*** When he entered the mosque, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was sitting surrounded by people. ***Talhah ibn 'Ubaydillah*** رضى الله عنه stood up and hurried to him, shook his hand and congratulated him. Ka'b said: ***"By Allah, no one of the Muhajirun stood up apart from him."*** Ka'b never forgot that for Talhah (Sahih al-Bukhari 4418).

Ka'b greeted the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, whose face was ***shining with joy***. He said: ***"Rejoice at the best day you have seen since your mother bore you."*** Ka'b asked: "Is it from you, O Messenger of Allah, or from Allah?" He said: ***"No, rather from Allah."*** Ka'b said: when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was happy, ***his face shone as if it were a piece of the moon***, and we would know it.

The best day since he was born — not the day he embraced Islam? Scholars explain that the day his repentance was accepted ***completed*** the day of his Islam; it was a day combining Islam with accepted repentance, so it was more complete. It teaches us that ***accepted repentance is among the greatest blessings*** in a believer's life.

Talhah's gesture teaches us about ***welcoming a returning brother***. Do not be the one who keeps reminding a repentant person of his old mistakes. Be the first to stand, shake his hand and rejoice with him.

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THE VERSES OF REPENTANCE

The acceptance of repentance was not merely the Prophet's ﷺ decision — it was ***revelation from the heavens***, verses recited until the Day of Resurrection:

"Allah has already forgiven the Prophet and the Muhajireen and the Ansar who followed him in the hour of difficulty" (At-Tawbah 9:117) — Tafsir Ibn Kathir 9:117.

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 4678

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ بُكَيْرٍ، حَدَّثَنَا اللَّيْثُ، عَنْ عُقَيْلٍ، عَنِ ابْنِ شِهَابٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ كَعْبِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ، أَنَّ عَبْدَ اللَّهِ بْنَ كَعْبِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ ـ وَكَانَ قَائِدَ كَعْبِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ ـ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ كَعْبَ بْنَ مَالِكٍ، يُحَدِّثُ حِينَ تَخَلَّفَ عَنْ قِصَّةِ، تَبُوكَ. فَوَاللَّهِ مَا أَعْلَمُ أَحَدًا أَبْلاَهُ اللَّهُ فِي صِدْقِ الْحَدِيثِ أَحْسَنَ مِمَّا أَبْلاَنِي، مَا تَعَمَّدْتُ مُنْذُ ذَكَرْتُ ذَلِكَ لِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم إِلَى يَوْمِي هَذَا كَذِبًا، وَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم {لَقَدْ تَابَ اللَّهُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ} إِلَى قَوْلِهِ {وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ}

TRANSLATION:

'Abdullah ibn Ka'b ibn Malik — who led Ka'b about (after his father became blind) — said: I heard Ka'b ibn Malik رضى الله عنه narrate the story of how he stayed behind from Tabuk: ***"By Allah, I know of no one whom Allah tested in truthful speech with a better trial than He tested me. Since I told that to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ until this day of mine, I have never deliberately told a lie."*** And Allah, Mighty and Majestic, revealed to His Messenger ﷺ: {Allah has already forgiven the Prophet and the Muhajirun…} up to {and be with those who are true} (At-Tawbah 9:117–119).

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Yahya ibn Bukayr, from al-Layth ibn Sa'd, from 'Uqayl ibn Khalid, from Ibn Shihab az-Zuhri, from 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn 'Abdullah ibn Ka'b, from 'Abdullah ibn Ka'b ibn Malik, from Ka'b ibn Malik رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Tafsir, Chapter: "O you who believe, fear Allah and be with those who are true", Hadith No. 4678.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:4678

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

Note the order of these verses: Allah begins with the repentance of ***the Prophet*** ﷺ, then ***the Muhajirun and Ansar***, and only then ***the three who were left behind***. Scholars point out that this is ***an honour*** for

the three: their repentance is mentioned together with that of the noblest people, so that they would not feel set apart.

The end of verse 118 is also beautiful: ***"Then He turned to them so they could repent."*** Repentance begins from Allah — He grants the ability to repent — and ends with Allah — He accepts it. ***We repent because Allah first turned to us with His mercy.***

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ALLAH'S JOY AT HIS SERVANT'S REPENTANCE

If Ka'b was so joyful at the acceptance of his repentance, and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was so glad that his face shone, then know that ***Allah is more joyful still***. Anas ibn Malik رضى الله عنه narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ***"Allah is more delighted with the repentance of His servant than any of you would be on finding his camel after losing it in a vast desert"*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 6309).

In Muslim's narration, the parable is more detailed: a man loses his camel carrying his food and drink in the desert, despairs and lies down under a tree waiting to die. Suddenly his camel is standing beside him. He seizes its rein and, from sheer joy, blurts out: ***"O Allah, You are my servant and I am Your lord!"*** (Sahih Muslim 2747). Allah's joy at a servant's repentance is ***greater than that***.

Abu Musa al-Ash'ari رضى الله عنه narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ***"Allah stretches out His hand at night to accept the repentance of the one who sinned by day, and stretches out His hand by day to accept the repentance of the one who sinned by night, until the sun rises from the west"*** (Sahih Muslim 2759).

CONDITION OF REPENTANCE	IN KA'B'S STORY
Leaving the sin	No longer delaying obedience
Regret	Weeping, the earth closing in
Resolve not to return	Vowing to speak only truth for life
Restoring rights (if owed to people)	Admitting the fault openly

These conditions are gathered by Imam an-Nawawi in ***Riyad as-Salihin***, chapter on repentance — and he includes the long Hadith of Ka'b ibn Malik in that very chapter. Ka'b's story is ***a model of complete repentance***: honest admission, patient endurance of the consequences, and change afterwards.

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"KEEP SOME OF YOUR WEALTH"

Ka'b's joy moved him to express his gratitude in a big way. He wanted ***to give away all his wealth***:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 2757

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ بُكَيْرٍ، حَدَّثَنَا اللَّيْثُ، عَنْ عُقَيْلٍ، عَنِ ابْنِ شِهَابٍ، قَالَ أَخْبَرَنِي عَبْدُ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ كَعْبٍ، أَنَّ عَبْدَ اللَّهِ بْنَ كَعْبٍ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ كَعْبَ بْنَ مَالِكٍ ـ رضى الله عنه. قُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، إِنَّ مِنْ تَوْبَتِي أَنْ أَنْخَلِعَ مِنْ مَالِي صَدَقَةً إِلَى اللَّهِ وَإِلَى رَسُولِهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم. قَالَ أَمْسِكْ عَلَيْكَ بَعْضَ مَالِكَ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكَ. قُلْتُ فَإِنِّي أُمْسِكُ سَهْمِي الَّذِي بِخَيْبَرَ.

TRANSLATION:

Ka'b ibn Malik رضى الله عنه said: I said: "O Messenger of Allah, part of (my gratitude for) my repentance is that ***I give up all my wealth as charity to Allah and His Messenger*** ﷺ." He said: ***"Keep some of your wealth, for that is better for you."*** I said: "Then I will keep my share that is in Khaybar."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Yahya ibn Bukayr, from al-Layth ibn Sa'd, from 'Uqayl ibn Khalid, from Ibn Shihab az-Zuhri, from 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn 'Abdullah ibn Ka'b, from 'Abdullah ibn Ka'b ibn Malik, from Ka'b ibn Malik رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Wills, Chapter: Giving part of one's wealth in charity or as an endowment, Hadith No. 2757; also No. 4676, 6690.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:2757

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not let Ka'b go to an extreme in his joy. He advised him to ***keep some of his wealth***. This accords with the Islamic principle of ***moderation***: giving charity without ruining oneself and one's family. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said in another Hadith: ***"The best charity is that given while still having sufficiency"*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 1426).

Ka'b also said: ***"O Messenger of Allah, Allah has saved me only through truthfulness, and part of my repentance is that I will speak nothing but the truth as long as I live."*** And he kept that promise: ***"By Allah, since I told that to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ until this day, I have never deliberately told a lie"*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 4418; Sahih al-Bukhari 4678).

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This is ***true repentance***: not merely regret, but ***a change of life***. Ka'b made truthfulness a lifelong pledge, because he knew it was truthfulness that had saved him.

Ka'b's wish to give away everything echoes Abu Bakr's gift at Tabuk, when he brought all his wealth (Book 24). Yet the Prophet ﷺ accepted it from Abu Bakr and advised Ka'b otherwise. The difference shows that guidance is given to each person according to his state: Abu Bakr's certainty and reliance were unique, while Ka'b was a man with a family whose future also mattered.

Ka'b's choice to keep his share in Khaybar is also telling. It was land granted to him from the spoils of a campaign he had joined with the Prophet ﷺ. In keeping it, he kept a reminder of his years of striving, while giving away the rest as a sign that his heart now belonged wholly to Allah and His Messenger ﷺ.

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TRUTHFULNESS LEADS TO PARADISE

After the verses of repentance, Allah closes this story with a general command to all believers: ***"O you who have believed, fear Allah and be with those who are true"*** (At-Tawbah 9:119) — Tafsir Ibn Kathir 9:119.

Imam al-Bukhari placed this verse as a chapter heading in the Book of Manners, and under it he narrated the Hadith that is the foundation of the ethic of truthfulness:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 6094

حَدَّثَنَا عُثْمَانُ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ، حَدَّثَنَا جَرِيرٌ، عَنْ مَنْصُورٍ، عَنْ أَبِي وَائِلٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ إِنَّ الصِّدْقَ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْبِرِّ، وَإِنَّ الْبِرَّ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ، وَإِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيَصْدُقُ حَتَّى يَكُونَ صِدِّيقًا، وَإِنَّ الْكَذِبَ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْفُجُورِ، وَإِنَّ الْفُجُورَ يَهْدِي إِلَى النَّارِ، وَإِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيَكْذِبُ، حَتَّى يُكْتَبَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ كَذَّابًا.

TRANSLATION:

'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud رضى الله عنه related that the Prophet ﷺ said: ***"Truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to Paradise. A man keeps telling the truth until he becomes a siddiq (a truthful one). Lying leads to wickedness, and wickedness leads to the Fire. A man keeps lying until he is written before Allah as a liar."***

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from 'Uthman ibn Abi Shaybah, from Jarir ibn 'Abd al-Hamid, from Mansur ibn al-Mu'tamir, from Abu Wa'il Shaqiq ibn Salamah, from 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud رضى الله عنه, from the Prophet ﷺ.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Manners, Chapter: "O you who believe, fear Allah and be with those who are true", Hadith No. 6094; also Muslim No. 2607.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:6094

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

This Hadith portrays truthfulness as ***a path that moves***: one step of honesty leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to Paradise. Conversely, one lie leads to another, until a person ***is written as a liar*** before Allah. Ka'b's story is a living example of this Hadith: ***his honesty led him to repentance, and repentance led him to Allah's pleasure***.

In today's world, lying is often treated as minor — a "white lie", an excuse for being late, a figure slightly altered in a report. Ka'b's story reminds us that ***honesty can be costly in this world, but it always profits in the Hereafter***.

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Truthfulness is not only about words. Scholars describe truthfulness in intention, in resolve and in deeds as well: that a person's inner state matches what he shows. Ka'b's story touches every level — he was truthful in speech before the Prophet ﷺ, truthful in his regret, and truthful in keeping his vow for the rest of his life.

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THE WISDOM BEHIND THE BOYCOTT

Why did the Messenger of Allah ﷺ boycott three truthful Companions, while more than eighty liars were left alone? Does this not seem backwards? Ibn al-Qayyim in ***Zad al-Ma'ad*** explains the wisdom at length. Among it:

WISDOM	EXPLANATION
Discipline for the beloved	Only those in whom good is hoped are disciplined and corrected
Hypocrites left alone	Nothing was hoped from the hypocrites, so their case was left to Allah
Cleansing of sin	Fifty nights of distress erased their error
Raising of rank	Their repentance preserved in the Qur'an until the Last Day
A lesson for the Ummah	No one escapes responsibility because of past merit
Testing loyalty	The Ghassanid letter revealed the firmness of Ka'b's faith

A doctor who cares for his patient gives bitter medicine; he does not give it to someone he is not treating. So it was with this boycott: it was ***medicine for those whose hearts were still alive***. As for the hypocrites, their hearts had died — no medicine could help.

Scholars also derived from this story the ruling on ***al-hajr*** (boycotting) as a tool of discipline: it is permissible to shun someone for a religious reason, with the leader's permission, for a set time, and aiming to reform — not out of personal grudge. In worldly matters, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ forbade a person to shun his brother ***for more than three days*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 6077).

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LESSONS OF FIQH FROM THE HADITH OF KA'B

The Hadith of Ka'b ibn Malik is not only a moving story; it is also ***a mine of fiqh rulings***. Ibn Hajar in ***Fath al-Bari*** and an-Nawawi in ***Sharh Sahih Muslim*** list dozens of lessons from it. Among them:

RULING	EVIDENCE IN THE STORY
Two rak'ahs on return from travel	The Prophet ﷺ went straight to the mosque
Shunning for religious reasons	The ban on speaking to the three
Prostration of gratitude	Ka'b prostrated on hearing the news
Rewarding the bearer of good news	Ka'b gave his two garments
Congratulating on religious blessings	The people and Talhah congratulated him
Separation is not divorce	"No, but keep away from her"
Charity within limits	"Keep some of your wealth"
Judging by the outward	The hypocrites' excuses accepted

See how rich a single Hadith narrated honestly can be. Every detail Ka'b related — from his prostration to the garments he gave away — became ***guidance for the Ummah*** to this day. His honesty in telling it, including his own weakness, made this story ***a source of knowledge*** that never runs dry.

Ibn al-Qayyim also notes a subtle lesson: Ka'b ***did not blame destiny***. He said, "it was not decreed for me," but he did not use it as an excuse. He admitted his negligence plainly: ***"I had no excuse."*** This is the manner of a believer: believing in destiny, yet ***taking responsibility for his choices***.

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WHY DID KA'B TELL OF HIS OWN WEAKNESS?

An interesting question: why did Ka'b relate the story of his own weakness in such detail, when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ***"All of my Ummah will be pardoned except those who make (their sins) public"*** — those who sin at night, Allah conceals it, and then in the morning they themselves tell of it (Sahih al-Bukhari 6069)?

The answer lies in ***intention and circumstance***. Those condemned in that Hadith relate their sins ***with pride or without shame***, as though sin were trivial. Ka'b, on the other hand, told his story ***after his repentance had been accepted and announced by revelation***, with deep regret, in order ***to teach the Ummah*** about the danger of delay and the value of honesty. His story was already mentioned in the Qur'an; he simply explained its details.

Scholars also praise ***Ka'b's integrity as a narrator***. He hid nothing that embarrassed him — his negligence, his temptation to lie, his people's reproach, and his tears in Abu Qatadah's garden. Nor did he exaggerate what honoured him. These are the marks of ***a truthful narrator***, which is why his story was accepted in full by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

The lesson for us: when advising others, ***our own experience*** — including mistakes we have repented of — can be the most effective lesson. But it must be shared ***with shame before Allah***, not with pride, and without exposing sins Allah has concealed for no benefit.

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THOSE WHO CONFESSED THEIR SINS

Surah At-Tawbah mentions several groups who stayed behind from Tabuk. Besides the hypocrites and the three who were deferred, there was another group:

"And [there are] others who have acknowledged their sins. They had mixed a righteous deed with another that was bad. Perhaps Allah will turn to them in forgiveness" (At-Tawbah 9:102) — Tafsir Ibn Kathir 9:102.

SIRAH NOTE: ABU LUBABAH TIES HIMSELF TO A PILLAR

The commentators narrate from Ibn 'Abbas رضى الله عنهما that this verse was revealed about ***Abu Lubabah*** and some of his companions who stayed behind from Tabuk. When they heard the verses revealed about those who stayed behind, they ***tied themselves to the pillars of the mosque*** and swore not to untie themselves until the Messenger of Allah ﷺ himself released them. When this verse was revealed, he released them.

This report is mentioned by at-Tabari and Ibn Kathir with several chains; ***the strength of its details is debated*** by the scholars. Another report links Abu Lubabah tying himself to the event of Banu Qurayzah (Book 13).

REFERENCES:

Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim, At-Tawbah 9:102. https://tafsir.app/ibn-katheer/9/102

Then Allah mentions a group whose decision was deferred — according to Ibn Kathir and many commentators, they are the three in Ka'b's story: ***"And [there are] others deferred until the command of Allah - whether He will punish them or whether He will forgive them"*** (At-Tawbah 9:106) — Tafsir Ibn Kathir 9:106.

See ***Allah's mercy*** in verse 102: ***"Perhaps Allah will turn to them in forgiveness."*** Scholars say that "perhaps" ('asa) from Allah means ***certainty***. Whoever honestly admits his sin, having mixed good deeds with bad, need not despair — the door of repentance is wide open to him.

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MASJID AD-DIRAR IS BUILT

We now turn to another event also connected with Tabuk. Before the Messenger of Allah ﷺ set out, a group of hypocrites had built a mosque near the Mosque of Quba'. Allah exposed their real intention:

"And [there are] those [hypocrites] who took for themselves a mosque for causing harm and disbelief and division among the believers and as a station for whoever had warred against Allah and His Messenger before" (At-Tawbah 9:107) — Tafsir Ibn Kathir 9:107.

This verse names ***four evil aims*** behind building that mosque: (1) ***dirar*** — harming the Muslims; (2) ***kufr*** — strengthening disbelief; (3) ***tafriq*** — splitting the congregation of Quba'; and (4) ***irsad*** — serving as a base for an enemy who had fought Allah and His Messenger. The name "Masjid ad-Dirar" comes from the first of these words.

SIRAH NOTE: ABU 'AMIR THE MONK AND THE HYPOCRITES' REQUEST

The commentators and sirah authors relate that "whoever had warred against Allah and His Messenger before" was ***Abu 'Amir the Monk*** of the Khazraj, who had become a Christian before Islam. He opposed the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, joined Quraysh at Uhud, then ***went to the Roman emperor*** to seek help against the Muslims. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ called him ***Abu 'Amir the Corrupt***. His son, ***Hanzalah ibn Abi 'Amir***, was the Companion martyred at Uhud and washed by the angels (Book 10).

The hypocrites built the mosque as a place to await Abu 'Amir. They came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ while he was preparing for Tabuk and said: "We have built a mosque for the sick and needy on cold, rainy nights; we would like you to pray in it." He replied: "I am preparing for a journey; when we return, in sha Allah." These details are ***sirah and tafsir reports***.

REFERENCES:

Ibn Hisham, as-Sirah an-Nabawiyyah (from Ibn Ishaq) — chapters on the three who were left behind and Masjid ad-Dirar; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah.
Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim, At-Tawbah 9:107. https://tafsir.app/ibn-katheer/9/107

See how subtle the hypocrites' scheme was: they used ***the holiest religious symbol*** — a mosque — to divide. They also wanted ***the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to pray in it*** so that it would gain "legitimacy". But Allah exposed them before the plan could succeed.

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"DO NOT STAND IN IT"

As the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was returning from Tabuk, Allah revealed a firm prohibition: ***"Do not stand [for prayer] within it - ever"*** (At-Tawbah 9:108) — Tafsir Ibn Kathir 9:108.

The hypocrites had also prepared their oath: ***"We intended only the best."*** But Allah answered: ***"And Allah testifies that indeed they are liars"*** (At-Tawbah 9:107). Oaths and claimed good intentions do not change reality.

SIRAH NOTE: MASJID AD-DIRAR IS DEMOLISHED

The sirah authors relate that when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ reached ***Dhu Awan***, a place near Madinah, he called ***Malik ibn ad-Dukhshum*** and ***Ma'n ibn 'Adi*** (or his brother 'Asim ibn 'Adi) and ordered them: "Go to this mosque whose people are wrongdoers, and demolish and burn it." They went and ***burned and demolished it***.

It is also mentioned that its site was later used as a rubbish dump. These details are ***reports of Ibn Ishaq*** and the books of sirah.

REFERENCES:

Ibn Hisham, as-Sirah an-Nabawiyyah (from Ibn Ishaq) — chapters on the three who were left behind and Masjid ad-Dirar; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah.

The lesson: ***a building is not sacred because of its form***, but because of its ***intention and purpose***. A mosque built to divide the Ummah is not a house of Allah in the true sense. Scholars derived from this event that ***anything built to harm and divide the Muslims*** must be stopped, even if it hides behind the name of religion.

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THE MOSQUE FOUNDED ON PIETY

The same verse continues with praise for the true mosque: ***"A mosque founded on righteousness from the first day is more worthy for you to stand in"*** (At-Tawbah 9:108). Which mosque is meant? The Companions themselves once asked:

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 1398

حَدَّثَنِي مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ حَاتِمٍ، حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ سَعِيدٍ، عَنْ حُمَيْدٍ الْخَرَّاطِ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ أَبَا سَلَمَةَ بْنَ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ، قَالَ مَرَّ بِي عَبْدُ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنُ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ الْخُدْرِيِّ قَالَ قُلْتُ لَهُ كَيْفَ سَمِعْتَ أَبَاكَ يَذْكُرُ فِي الْمَسْجِدِ الَّذِي أُسِّسَ عَلَى التَّقْوَى قَالَ قَالَ أَبِي دَخَلْتُ عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم فِي بَيْتِ بَعْضِ نِسَائِهِ فَقُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَىُّ الْمَسْجِدَيْنِ الَّذِي أُسِّسَ عَلَى التَّقْوَى قَالَ فَأَخَذَ كَفًّا مِنْ حَصْبَاءَ فَضَرَبَ بِهِ الأَرْضَ ثُمَّ قَالَ هُوَ مَسْجِدُكُمْ هَذَا - لِمَسْجِدِ الْمَدِينَةِ - قَالَ فَقُلْتُ أَشْهَدُ أَنِّي سَمِعْتُ أَبَاكَ هَكَذَا يَذْكُرُهُ

TRANSLATION:

Abu Salamah ibn 'Abd ar-Rahman said: 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Abi Sa'id al-Khudri passed by me, so I asked him: "How did you hear your father mention ***the mosque founded on piety***?" He said: My father (Abu Sa'id al-Khudri رضى الله عنه) said: I went in to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in the house of one of his wives and said:

"O Messenger of Allah, which of the two mosques is the one founded on piety?" He took a handful of pebbles, struck the ground with it, and said: ***"It is this mosque of yours"*** — meaning the Mosque of Madinah. Abu Salamah said: "I bear witness that I heard your father mention it this way."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Muhammad ibn Hatim, from Yahya ibn Sa'id al-Qattan, from Humayd al-Kharrat, from Abu Salamah ibn 'Abd ar-Rahman, from 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Abi Sa'id al-Khudri, from his father Abu Sa'id al-Khudri رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Hajj, Chapter: The mosque founded on piety is the Mosque of the Prophet ﷺ in Madinah, Hadith No. 1398.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:1398a

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

The context of the verse points to ***the Mosque of Quba'***, since Masjid ad-Dirar was built near it to rival it, and Quba' was the first mosque the Messenger of Allah ﷺ built during the Hijrah (Book 7). Yet this Hadith names ***the Prophet's Mosque***. Ibn Kathir, Ibn Hajar and others reconcile both: ***both mosques were founded on piety***. The verse was revealed about Quba', and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ made clear that his own mosque was even more deserving of that description.

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The greater lesson: ***the foundation of a building decides its fate***. The mosques founded on piety live on and are filled to this day — millions pray in the Prophet's Mosque and the Mosque of Quba' every year. Of Masjid ad-Dirar, ***not a single stone remains***.

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QUBA' AND THOSE WHO PURIFY THEMSELVES

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ cherished the Mosque of Quba' throughout his life:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 1193

حَدَّثَنَا مُوسَى بْنُ إِسْمَاعِيلَ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الْعَزِيزِ بْنُ مُسْلِمٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ دِينَارٍ، عَنِ ابْنِ عُمَرَ ـ رضى الله عنهما ـ قَالَ كَانَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَأْتِي مَسْجِدَ قُبَاءٍ كُلَّ سَبْتٍ مَاشِيًا وَرَاكِبًا. وَكَانَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ ـ رضى الله عنهما ـ يَفْعَلُهُ.

TRANSLATION:

Ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنهما said: ***The Prophet ﷺ used to come to the Mosque of Quba' every Saturday, walking and riding.*** And 'Abdullah (ibn 'Umar) رضى الله عنهما used to do the same.

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Musa ibn Isma'il, from 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Muslim, from 'Abdullah ibn Dinar, from 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Virtue of Prayer in the Mosques of Makkah and Madinah, Chapter: Visiting the Mosque of Quba' every Saturday, Hadith No. 1193; also Muslim No. 1399.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:1193

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

He also said: ***"Prayer in the Mosque of Quba' is like an 'umrah"*** (Jami' at-Tirmidhi 324, graded sahih by al-Albani). This Sunnah is still practised by pilgrims to this day: performing wudu' at home, then going to Quba' and praying in it.

Verse 108 also praises the people of Quba': ***"Within it are men who love to purify themselves; and Allah loves those who purify themselves"*** (At-Tawbah 9:108) — Tafsir Ibn Kathir 9:108.

In the narration of Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه, it is mentioned that this verse was revealed about the people of Quba' because they ***cleaned themselves with water*** after relieving themselves (Sunan Abi Dawud 44, graded sahih by al-Albani). Their outward cleanliness reflected inner purity. Compare Masjid ad-Dirar: its building may have been fine, but ***the hearts of its builders were impure***.

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A BUILDING ON THE EDGE OF A CLIFF

Allah then gives a very powerful parable:

"Then is one who laid the foundation of his building on righteousness [with fear] from Allah and [seeking] His approval better or one who laid the foundation of his building on the edge of a bank about to collapse, so it collapsed with him into the fire of Hell?" (At-Tawbah 9:109) — Tafsir Ibn Kathir 9:109.

Imagine a building raised on ***a riverbank already eroded*** beneath. From outside it looks solid, but the ground under it is hollow. At any moment it will collapse — and in this parable, it ***collapses straight into Hell*** with its builder.

"Their building which they built will not cease to be a [cause of] skepticism in their hearts until their hearts are stopped" (At-Tawbah 9:110) — Tafsir Ibn Kathir 9:110.

This parable applies to ***every deed***, not only mosques. Every deed — a business, an organisation, a work, even worship — has a "foundation". If its foundation is ***piety and Allah's pleasure***, it will last. If its foundation is showing off, deceit or self-interest, it is like a building on the edge of a cliff: it looks grand, but is only waiting to fall.

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TWO MOSQUES, TWO INTENTIONS

A comparison between the Mosque of Quba' and Masjid ad-Dirar shows that the worth of anything lies in its ***intention and foundation***, not its appearance:

ASPECT	QUBA' → MASJID AD-DIRAR
Builders	The Prophet ﷺ and Companions → the hypocrites
Foundation	Piety and Allah's pleasure → the edge of a collapsing bank
Purpose	Uniting the Muslims → dividing them
Its people	Those who love purification → those who swear falsely
Command	More worthy to pray in → never pray in it
Outcome	Still filled with worshippers today → burned and demolished

The story of these two mosques also completes the story of the three Companions. Both teach about ***truthfulness***: the three Companions were truthful in their words, while the builders of Masjid ad-Dirar deceived with their building and their oaths. Allah exposed both — raising the truthful, and bringing down the deceivers.

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SOURCES OF THE STORY

This story is narrated in sources of differing grades. The table below summarises them:

EVENT	SOURCE AND GRADE
Full story of Ka'b ibn Malik	Sahih al-Bukhari 4418; Sahih Muslim 2769 — sahih
The blessing of truthfulness	Sahih al-Bukhari 4673 — sahih
Fifty nights	Sahih al-Bukhari 6255 — sahih
The verses of repentance	Sahih al-Bukhari 4678 — sahih
Two rak'ahs after travel	Sahih al-Bukhari 3088 — sahih
"Keep some of your wealth"	Sahih al-Bukhari 2757 — sahih
Truthfulness leads to Paradise	Sahih al-Bukhari 6094 — sahih
The mosque founded on piety	Sahih Muslim 1398 — sahih
Quba' every Saturday	Sahih al-Bukhari 1193 — sahih
Abu Lubabah ties himself	Tafsir at-Tabari, Ibn Kathir — debated
Abu 'Amir the Monk	Sirah and tafsir books
Demolition of Masjid ad-Dirar	Ibn Ishaq — sirah

The story of Ka'b ibn Malik is among the sirah stories with ***the strongest chains***, since it is narrated by Ka'b himself in both Sahih collections. The story of Masjid ad-Dirar is confirmed by the Qur'an, while its details come from the books of sirah and tafsir.

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LESSONS AND CONCLUSION

The story of the three who were left behind and the story of Masjid ad-Dirar are two sides of the same coin: ***truth and falsehood***. One seemed to lose but in the end won; the other seemed to succeed but in the end collapsed.

LESSON	FROM THIS STORY
The danger of delay	"Tomorrow I will get ready"
Defending an absent brother	Mu'adh defends Ka'b at Tabuk
Truth even when costly	Ka'b refuses a false excuse
Righteous examples	Murarah and Hilal, people of Badr
Loyal when hurt	The Ghassanid letter burned
Fleeing to Allah	"No refuge from Allah except in Him"
Prostration of gratitude	Ka'b prostrates at the voice from Sal'
Welcoming the returning	Talhah stands to shake his hand
Intention decides worth	Quba' and Masjid ad-Dirar

KA'B IN OUR LIVES

Each of us has erred like Ka'b — delaying good, falling behind in obedience. The question is not whether we will err, but ***what we do afterwards***. Do we look for excuses like those eighty men, or do we tell the truth, bear the consequences with patience, and flee to Allah? Ka'b chose the second path, and Allah made the day of his repentance ***the best day since he was born***.

In sha Allah, the series **The Prophet's Sirah** will continue with ***Book 26 — 'Am al-Wufud (The Year of Delegations)***: after Tabuk, delegation after delegation from across Arabia came to Madinah to embrace Islam — Thaqif from Ta'if, Banu Tamim, Najran, and many more. And Allah knows best.

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HADITH

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SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:261

مَّثَلُ ٱلَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ أَمۡوَٰلَهُمۡ فِي سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنۢبَتَتۡ سَبۡعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنۢبُلَةٖ مِّاْئَةُ حَبَّةٖۗ وَٱللَّهُ يُضَٰعِفُ لِمَن يَشَآءُۚ وَٱللَّهُ وَٰسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ٢٦١

The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:261

SURAH SABA' 34:39

قُلۡ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبۡسُطُ ٱلرِّزۡقَ لِمَن يَشَآءُ مِنۡ عِبَادِهِۦ وَيَقۡدِرُ لَهُۥۚ وَمَآ أَنفَقۡتُم مِّن شَيۡءٖ فَهُوَ يُخۡلِفُهُۥۖ وَهُوَ خَيۡرُ ٱلرَّٰزِقِينَ ٣٩

Say, "Indeed, my Lord extends provision for whom He wills of His servants and restricts [it] for him. But whatever thing you spend [in His cause] - He will compensate it; and He is the best of providers."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/34:39

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2588

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ، وَابْنُ، حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - وَهُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « مَا نَقَصَتْ صَدَقَةٌ مِنْ مَالٍ وَمَا زَادَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا بِعَفْوٍ إِلاَّ عِزًّا وَمَا تَوَاضَعَ أَحَدٌ لِلَّهِ إِلاَّ رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Charity does not decrease wealth.

Allah does not increase a servant who forgives except in honour. And no one humbles himself for the sake of Allah except that Allah raises him in rank."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya bin Ayyub, Qutaibah bin Sa'id and 'Ali bin Hujr, from Isma'il bin Ja'far, from al-'Ala' bin 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father 'Abd al-Rahman bin Ya'qub, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه .

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Virtue, Good Manners and Joining the Ties of Kinship (Kitab al-Birr wa al-Silah wa al-Adab), chapter on the encouragement of forgiveness and humility, Hadith No. 2588.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2588

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 1631

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ - يَعْنِي ابْنَ سَعِيدٍ - وَابْنُ حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - هُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « إِذَا مَاتَ الإِنْسَانُ انْقَطَعَ عَنْهُ عَمَلُهُ إِلاَّ مِنْ ثَلاَثَةٍ إِلاَّ مِنْ صَدَقَةٍ جَارِيَةٍ أَوْ عِلْمٍ يُنْتَفَعُ بِهِ أَوْ وَلَدٍ صَالِحٍ يَدْعُو لَهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "When a person dies, his deeds come to an end except for three: an ongoing charity, knowledge that is benefited from, or a righteous child who prays for him."

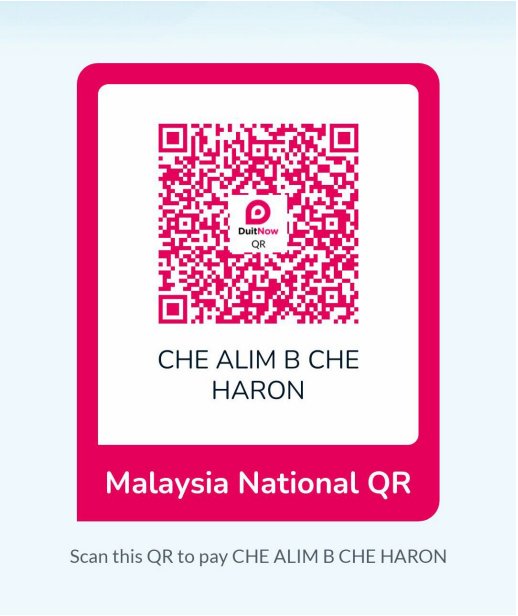
CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya bin Ayyub, Qutaibah bin Sa'id and 'Ali bin Hujr, from Isma'il bin Ja'far, from al-'Ala' bin 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father 'Abd al-Rahman bin Ya'qub, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه .

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Wills (Kitab al-Wasiyyah), chapter on the reward that reaches a person after his death, Hadith No. 1631.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:1631

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