بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

HEROES OF ISLAM

SERIES 4

ABU ‘UBAYDAH IBN AL-JARRAH

The Trustee of the Ummah and Opener of Syria, According to the Qur'an and Authentic Hadith

۞إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَأۡمُرُكُمۡ أَن تُؤَدُّواْ ٱلۡأَمَٰنَٰتِ إِلَىٰٓ أَهۡلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمۡتُم بَيۡنَ ٱلنَّاسِ أَن تَحۡكُمُواْ بِٱلۡعَدۡلِۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُم بِهِۦٓۗ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعَۢا بَصِيرًا ٥٨

“Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice. Excellent is that which Allah instructs you. Indeed, Allah is ever Hearing and Seeing.”

Surah An-Nisa’ 4:58

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Allah, who commands us to render trusts to those to whom they are due. May blessings and peace be upon our master, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, and upon his family and Companions — and especially upon Abu 'Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah رضى الله عنه, whom he called Amin al-Ummah, the Trustee of this Ummah.

This book 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 fourth book of Heroes of Islam tells the story of Abu 'Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah رضى الله عنه: among the first to embrace Islam, one of the ten promised Paradise, the leader of the Khabat expedition, the supreme commander who opened Syria, and the ascetic governor who died with his army in the plague of 'Amwas. 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 the ***green plains of Syria (Bilad ash-Sham)*** at sunrise: hills covered with ancient olive trees, a river valley wrapped in morning mist, and mountains on the horizon. In this land Abu 'Ubaydah led the Muslim armies, and here he died and was buried.

On a large rock lie a few humble objects: ***a sword in a worn leather scabbard, a leather shield and a camel saddle***. They recall the story of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab entering the house of Abu 'Ubaydah, the governor of Syria, and finding nothing in it but his sword, his shield and his saddle.

In front of these objects lies ***a large iron key***, gleaming in the morning light. The key stands for ***trustworthiness (amanah)***, the quality for which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ called Abu 'Ubaydah "the Trustee of this Ummah" (Sahih al-Bukhari 3744). On the right, ***a white banner*** flies from a spear, standing for his leadership as supreme commander in Syria.

The ***dark blue band*** at the bottom, framed by ***fine gold lines***, is where the author's name appears — the same as on the covers of Series 1 to Series 3, so that all the covers of Heroes of Islam match.

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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.com.

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ABU 'UBAYDAH IBN AL-JARRAH

Every nation has its most trustworthy person. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ named the most trustworthy person of this Ummah: ***Abu 'Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah*** رضى الله عنه. That title, *Amin al-Ummah* (the Trustee of the Ummah), was given to no one else.

Abu 'Ubaydah was among the first to embrace Islam, one of the ten Companions promised Paradise, and the supreme commander who opened Syria. Yet he lived so simply that 'Umar ibn al-Khattab wept when he saw what was in his house.

This eBook is the fourth in the ***Heroes of Islam*** series. As in the earlier books, the story of Abu 'Ubaydah رضى الله عنه is gathered first from the Qur'an and authentic Hadith, and then from the trusted books of sirah and history. The source of every report is given. Famous stories with weak chains are explained honestly.

The story of Abu 'Ubaydah is a story of trustworthiness, humility and gentle leadership. He led a great army without raising his voice, gave way for the sake of unity, and chose to die with his soldiers rather than save himself.

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WHO WAS ABU 'UBAYDAH?

His full name was ***'Amir ibn 'Abdullah ibn al-Jarrah*** al-Fihri al-Qurashi. He was better known by his kunyah, ***Abu 'Ubaydah***, and was named after his grandfather, al-Jarrah. His lineage meets that of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ at Fihr ibn Malik, that is, Quraysh.

He was born in Makkah about forty years before the Hijrah (around 583 CE), roughly eleven years younger than the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The books of biography describe him as a tall, slender man with a calm face and a light beard.

NAME AND TITLES

NAME OR TITLE	EXPLANATION
'Amir ibn 'Abdullah	His real name
Abu 'Ubaydah	His best-known kunyah
Ibn al-Jarrah	After his grandfather, al-Jarrah
Amin al-Ummah	"The Trustee of the Ummah", a title from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ (Sahih al-Bukhari 3744)
Al-Athram	"The one with broken front teeth", because his teeth fell out at Uhud (chapter 4)

LESSONS

Abu 'Ubaydah was not famous for wealth or family rank. He was famous for his qualities: trustworthiness, humility and gentleness. True honour comes from character, not from lineage alone.

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AMONG THE FIRST TO EMBRACE ISLAM

Abu 'Ubaydah embraced Islam in the earliest days of the call in Makkah, before the Messenger of Allah ﷺ entered Dar al-Arqam. According to Ibn Ishaq, he embraced Islam through the call of ***Abu Bakr as-Siddiq*** رضى الله عنه, together with 'Uthman ibn Maz'un, 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn 'Awf and others.

SIRAH NOTE: EMIGRATION AND BROTHERHOOD

According to some reports, Abu 'Ubaydah also emigrated to Abyssinia in the second emigration, then returned to Makkah and emigrated to Madinah with the Muslims.

In Madinah, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ joined the Muhajirun and the Ansar in brotherhood. Anas ibn Malik رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ made Abu 'Ubaydah a brother of ***Abu Talhah al-Ansari*** (Sahih Muslim 2528).

REFERENCES:

Ibn Hisham, as-Sirah an-Nabawiyyah, chapter on the first to embrace Islam; Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat al-Kubra.

Allah praises those who were first in faith among the Muhajirun and the Ansar, and Abu 'Ubaydah was among them:

SURAH AT-TAWBAH 9:100

وَٱلسَّٰبِقُونَ ٱلۡأَوَّلُونَ مِنَ ٱلۡمُهَٰجِرِينَ وَٱلۡأَنصَارِ وَٱلَّذِينَ ٱتَّبَعُوهُم بِإِحۡسَٰنٖ
رَّضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنۡهُمۡ وَرَضُواْ عَنۡهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمۡ جَنَّٰتٖ تَجۡرِي تَحۡتَهَا ٱلۡأَنۡهَٰرُ خَٰلِدِينَ
فِيهَآ أَبَدٗاۚ ذَٰلِكَ ٱلۡفَوۡزُ ٱلۡعَظِيمُ ١٠٠

And the first forerunners [in the faith] among the Muhajireen and the Ansar and those who followed them with good conduct - Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him, and He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever. That is the great attainment.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/9:100

LESSONS

Abu 'Ubaydah answered the call of Islam when Islam was still weak and its followers few. He did not wait until Islam was strong. The courage to accept the truth before it is popular is a sign of genuine faith.

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BADR: THE HARDEST TEST OF FAITH

At the Battle of Badr (Ramadan, 2 AH), Abu ‘Ubaydah fought in the ranks of the Muslims. In the ranks of Quraysh was his own father, ‘Abdullah ibn al-Jarrah, who was still an idolater.

TAFSIR NOTE: ABU ‘UBAYDAH AND HIS FATHER

It is reported that Abu ‘Ubaydah’s father repeatedly sought out his son on the field of Badr, and Abu ‘Ubaydah kept avoiding him. When his father persisted, Abu ‘Ubaydah finally killed him.

Some commentators say that verse 22 of Surah Al-Mujadilah was revealed about this event, although the verse is general in meaning.

Status of the report: This report is famous, but its chain is *mursal* (broken at the level of the Companion), so it is weak. Some historians say that Abu ‘Ubaydah’s father died before Islam. What is certain is that the verse states a true principle without depending on this story.

REFERENCES:

At-Tabarani; al-Hakim, al-Mustadrak; al-Bayhaqi; Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-‘Azim (Al-Mujadilah 58:22); Ibn Hajar, al-Isabah.

The verse referred to is:

SURAH AL-MUJADILAH 58:22

لَّا تَجِدُ قَوْمًا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِٱللَّهِ وَٱلْيَوْمِ ٱلْـَٔاخِرِ يُوَآدُّونَ مَنْ حَآدَّ ٱللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُۥ وَلَوْ كَانُوٓاْ ءَابَآءَهُمْ أَوْ أَبْنَآءَهُمْ أَوْ إِخْوَٰنَهُمْ أَوْ عَشِيرَتَهُمْ ۚ أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ كَتَبَ فِى قُلُوبِهِمُ ٱلْإِيمَٰنَ وَأَيَّدَهُم بِرُوحٍ مِّنْهُ ۖ وَيُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّٰتٍ تَجْرِى مِن تَحْتِهَا ٱلْأَنْهَٰرُ خَٰلِدِينَ فِيهَا ۚ رَضِىَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُواْ عَنْهُ ۚ أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ حِزْبُ ٱللَّهِ ۚ أَلَآ إِنَّ حِزْبَ ٱللَّهِ هُمُ ٱلْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

You will not find a people who believe in Allah and the Last Day having affection for those who oppose Allah and His Messenger, even if they were their fathers or their sons or their brothers or their kindred. Those - He has decreed within their hearts faith and supported them with spirit from Him. And We will admit them to gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide eternally. Allah is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him - those are the party of Allah. Unquestionably, the party of Allah - they are the successful.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/58:22

LESSONS

This verse teaches that love for Allah and His Messenger must come first, even when tested through those closest to us. Yet Islam also commands kindness to non-Muslim parents as long as they do not fight the religion (Surah Luqman 31:15). A test on the battlefield is an extraordinary situation, not a model for ordinary life.

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UHUD: TEETH LOST FOR THE MESSENGER OF ALLAH ﷺ

At the Battle of Uhud (Shawwal, 3 AH), when the Muslim army was thrown into confusion after the attack from behind, a small group of Companions held firm around the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Abu 'Ubaydah was among them.

SIRAH NOTE: THE TWO RINGS OF THE HELMET

It is reported from Abu Bakr as-Siddiq رضى الله عنه that two rings from the helmet of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had pierced his cheek. Abu Bakr rushed to pull them out, but Abu 'Ubaydah said: "By Allah, let me do it."

Abu 'Ubaydah pulled out the first ring with his teeth, gently so as not to hurt the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and one of his front teeth fell out. Then he pulled out the second ring, and his other front tooth fell out. From then on he was called ***al-Athram*** (the one with broken front teeth). The historians say that no one looked more handsome with broken teeth than Abu 'Ubaydah.

Status of the report: This story is narrated by Ibn Sa'd, Ibn Hibban and al-Hakim. The scholars differ on the strength of its chain; it is widely accepted in the books of sirah.

REFERENCES:

Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat al-Kubra; Ibn Hibban, as-Sahih; al-Hakim, al-Mustadrak; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah.

LESSONS

Abu 'Ubaydah did not count his own loss when serving the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. He chose pain for himself so that the Prophet ﷺ would not be hurt further. True love for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is shown by sacrifice, not by words.

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AMIN AL-UMMAH: THE TRUSTEE OF THE UMMAH

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ gave special titles to some of his Companions. Abu 'Ubaydah received the title that suited him best:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 3744

حَدَّثَنَا عَمْرُو بْنُ عَلِيٍّ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الأَعْلَى، حَدَّثَنَا خَالِدٌ، عَنْ أَبِي قِلاَبَةَ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي أَنَسُ بْنُ مَالِك، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ " إِنَّ لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَمِينًا، وَإِنَّ أَمِينَنَا أَيَّتُهَا الأُمَّةُ أَبُو عُبَيْدَةَ بْنُ الْجَرَّاحِ ".

TRANSLATION:

Anas ibn Malik رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ***"Every nation has a trustee, and the trustee of this nation, O Ummah, is Abu 'Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah."***

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from 'Amr ibn 'Ali al-Fallas, from 'Abd al-A'la ibn 'Abd al-A'la, from Khalid al-Hadhdha', from Abu Qilabah, from Anas ibn Malik رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Virtues of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ, Chapter on the Virtues of Abu 'Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah, Hadith No. 3744.

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

Source: sunnah.com/bukhari:3744

All the Companions were trustworthy. But the scholars explain that Abu 'Ubaydah was given this title because trustworthiness stood out in him more than his other qualities. Allah commands every believer to fulfil their trusts:

SURAH AN-NISA' 4:58

۞إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَأۡمُرُكُمۡ أَن تُؤَدُّواْ ٱلۡأَمَٰنَٰتِ إِلَىٰٓ أَهۡلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمۡتُم بَيۡنَ ٱلنَّاسِ أَن تَحۡكُمُواْ بِٱلۡعَدۡلِۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُم بِهِۦٓۗ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعَۢا بَصِيرٗا ٥٨

Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice. Excellent is that which Allah instructs you. Indeed, Allah is ever Hearing and Seeing.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/4:58

LESSONS

Trustworthiness is not only about guarding other people's property. It includes positions, knowledge, secrets, time and responsibility. Abu 'Ubaydah held the post of supreme commander and great amounts of war spoils, yet he never took anything that was not his right.

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THE KHABAT EXPEDITION: LEADING THROUGH HUNGER

In 8 AH, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ sent a force of 300 men to the coast to watch the caravans of Quraysh, and appointed Abu ‘Ubaydah as its leader. Their provisions ran out, and they suffered severe hunger:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 4361

حَدَّثَنَا عَلِيُّ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ، قَالَ الَّذِي حَفِظْنَاهُ مِنْ عَمْرِو بْنِ دِينَارٍ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ جَابِرَ بْنَ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، يَقُولُ بَعَثَنَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم ثَلاَثَمِائَةٍ رَاكِبٍ أَمِيرُنَا أَبُو عُبَيْدَةَ بْنُ الْجَرَّاحِ نَرْصُدُ عِيرَ قُرَيْشٍ، فَأَقَمْنَا بِالسَّاحِلِ نِصْفَ شَهْرٍ فَأَصَابَنَا جُوعٌ شَدِيدٌ حَتَّى أَكَلْنَا الْخَبَطَ، فَسُمِّيَ ذَلِكَ الْجَيْشُ جَيْشَ الْخَبَطِ، فَأَلْقَى لَنَا الْبَحْرُ دَابَّةً يُقَالُ لَهَا الْعَنْبَرُ، فَأَكَلْنَا مِنْهُ نِصْفَ شَهْرٍ وَادَّهَنَّا مِنْ وَدَكِهِ حَتَّى ثَابَتْ إِلَيْنَا أَجْسَامُنَا، فَأَخَذَ أَبُو عُبَيْدَةَ ضِلَعًا مِنْ أَضْلاَعِهِ فَنَصَبَهُ فَعَمَدَ إِلَى أَطْوَلِ رَجُلٍ مَعَهُ ـ قَالَ سُفْيَانُ مَرَّةً ضِلَعًا مِنْ أَضْلاَعِهِ فَنَصَبَهُ وَأَخَذَ رَجُلاً وَبَعِيرًا ـ فَمَرَّ تَحْتَهُ قَالَ جَابِرٌ وَكَانَ رَجُلٌ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ نَحَرَ ثَلاَثَ جَزَائِرَ، ثُمَّ نَحَرَ ثَلاَثَ جَزَائِرَ، ثُمَّ نَحَرَ ثَلاَثَ جَزَائِرَ، ثُمَّ إِنَّ أَبَا عُبَيْدَةَ نَهَاهُ. وَكَانَ عَمْرٌو يَقُولُ أَخْبَرَنَا أَبُو صَالِحٍ أَنَّ قَيْسَ بْنَ سَعْدٍ قَالَ لأَبِيهِ كُنْتُ فِي الْجَيْشِ فَجَاعُوا. قَالَ انْحَرْ. قَالَ نَحَرْتُ. قَالَ ثُمَّ جَاعُوا قَالَ انْحَرْ. قَالَ نَحَرْتُ. قَالَ ثُمَّ جَاعُوا قَالَ انْحَرْ. قَالَ نَحَرْتُ ثُمَّ جَاعُوا قَالَ انْحَرْ. قَالَ نُهِيتُ.

TRANSLATION:

Jabir ibn ‘Abdullah said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ sent us, three hundred riders, ***with Abu ‘Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah as our leader***, to watch the caravans of Quraysh. We stayed on the coast for half a month, and we were struck by severe hunger, until we ate the leaves of trees (*al-khabat*). So that army was called ***the Khabat army***. Then the sea threw up for us a creature called al-‘Anbar (a whale). We ate from it for half a month and rubbed our bodies with its fat until our bodies regained their health. Abu ‘Ubaydah took one of its ribs and set it upright, then chose the tallest man with him — in one report of Sufyan: he took a man and a camel — and the man passed beneath it. Jabir said: There was a man among the people who slaughtered three camels, then three more, then three more, and then Abu ‘Ubaydah forbade him. ‘Amr said: Abu Salih told us that Qays ibn Sa‘d said to his father: “I was in the army and they became hungry.” His father said: “Slaughter.” Qays said: “I slaughtered.” … The fourth time he said: “I was forbidden.”

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from ‘Ali ibn ‘Abdullah al-Madini, from Sufyan ibn ‘Uyaynah, from ‘Amr ibn Dinar, from Jabir ibn ‘Abdullah رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Military Expeditions (al-Maghazi), Chapter on the Expedition of Sif al-Bahr, Hadith No. 4361.

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

Source: sunnah.com/bukhari:4361

In the report of Muslim, Jabir relates that before this Abu ‘Ubaydah gave each man one date a day, and they sucked on it as a baby sucks milk (Sahih Muslim 1935). When they returned, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said it was provision that Allah had brought out for them, and he himself ate some of it.

LESSONS

A trustworthy leader does not put himself first in hardship. Abu ‘Ubaydah shared out the food fairly, one date at a time. He also stopped Qays from slaughtering the riding camels, fearing the army would not be able to return home. Leadership means protecting everyone’s safety, not only solving today’s problem.

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DHAT AS-SALASIL: GIVING WAY FOR UNITY

In Jumada al-Akhirah, 8 AH, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ sent 'Amr ibn al-'As to Dhat as-Salasil, on the border of Syria. When the enemy proved numerous, 'Amr asked for reinforcements. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ sent 200 men under Abu 'Ubaydah, including Abu Bakr and 'Umar.

SIRAH NOTE: "EVEN IF YOU DISOBEY ME, I WILL OBEY YOU"

When Abu 'Ubaydah's force arrived, the question arose of who would lead the prayer and command. 'Amr said: "You came as reinforcements for me, so I am the leader." Some Companions felt that Abu 'Ubaydah was more deserving.

Abu 'Ubaydah said: ***"The Messenger of Allah ﷺ instructed me that we should not disagree. By Allah, even if you disobey me, I will obey you."*** So he handed the command to 'Amr, and prayed behind him.

REFERENCES:

Ibn Hisham, as-Sirah an-Nabawiyyah, chapter on the Expedition of Dhat as-Salasil; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah.

Allah describes the Companions as firm against the enemy but merciful among themselves:

SURAH AL-FATH 48:29

مُّحَمَّدٌ رَّسُولُ ٱللَّهِ ۚ وَٱلَّذِينَ مَعَهُۥٓ أَشِدَّآءُ عَلَى ٱلْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَآءُ بَيْنَهُمْ ۖ تَرَىٰهُمْ رُكَّعًا
سُجَّدًا يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ وَرِضْوَٰنًا ۖ سِيمَاهُمْ فِى وُجُوهِهِم مِّنْ أَثَرِ
ٱلسُّجُودِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِى ٱلتَّوْرَىٰةِ ۚ وَمَثَلُهُمْ فِى ٱلْإِنجِيلِ كَزَرْعٍ أَخْرَجَ شَطْـَٔهُۥ
فَـَٔازَرَهُۥ فَٱسْتَغْلَظَ فَٱسْتَوَىٰ عَلَىٰ سُوقِهِۦ يُعْجِبُ ٱلزُّرَّاعَ لِيَغِيظَ بِهِمُ ٱلْكُفَّارَ ۗ
وَعَدَ ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ وَعَمِلُوا۟ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ مِنْهُم مَّغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًۢا ﴿٢٩﴾

Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; and those with him are forceful against the disbelievers, merciful among themselves. You see them bowing and prostrating [in prayer], seeking bounty from Allah and [His] pleasure. Their mark is on their faces from the trace of prostration. That is their description in the Torah. And their description in the Gospel is as a plant which produces its offshoots and strengthens them so they grow firm and stand upon their stalks, delighting the sowers - so that Allah may enrage by them the disbelievers. Allah has promised those who believe and do righteous deeds among them forgiveness and a great reward.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/48:29

LESSONS

Abu 'Ubaydah had embraced Islam earlier and held a higher rank, yet he gave way for the sake of unity. He did not want the Muslim army divided over a position. A trustworthy person does not compete for rank; he guards the greater goal.

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NAJRAN: "A TRUSTWORTHY MAN, TRULY TRUSTWORTHY"

In 9 or 10 AH, a Christian delegation from Najran came to Madinah. After discussion with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, they refused the mutual invocation (mubahalah) and chose to make a peace agreement.

They asked for a trustworthy man to be sent with them:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 4380

حَدَّثَنِي عَبَّاسُ بْنُ الْحُسَيْنِ، حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ آدَمَ، عَنْ إِسْرَائِيلَ، عَنْ أَبِي إِسْحَاقَ، عَنْ صِلَةَ بْنِ زُفَرَ، عَنْ حُذَيْفَةَ، قَالَ جَاءَ الْعَاقِبُ وَالسَّيِّدُ صَاحِبَا نَجْرَانَ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم يُرِيدَانِ أَنْ يُلاَعِنَاهُ، قَالَ فَقَالَ أَحَدُهُمَا لِصَاحِبِهِ لاَ تَفْعَلْ، فَوَاللَّهِ لَئِنْ كَانَ نَبِيًّا فَلاَعَنَّا، لاَ نُفْلِحُ نَحْنُ وَلاَ عَقِبُنَا مِنْ بَعْدِنَا. قَالاَ إِنَّا نُعْطِيكَ مَا سَأَلْتَنَا، وَابْعَثْ مَعَنَا رَجُلاً أَمِينًا، وَلاَ تَبْعَثْ مَعَنَا إِلاَّ أَمِينًا. فَقَالَ " لأَبْعَثَنَّ مَعَكُمْ رَجُلاً أَمِينًا حَقَّ أَمِينٍ ". فَاسْتَشْرَفَ لَهُ أَصْحَابُ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم فَقَالَ " قُمْ يَا أَبَا عُبَيْدَةَ بْنَ الْجَرَّاحِ ". فَلَمَّا قَامَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم " هَذَا أَمِينُ هَذِهِ الأُمَّةِ ".

TRANSLATION:

Hudhayfah رضى الله عنه said: Al-'Aqib and as-Sayyid, the two leaders of Najran, came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ intending to invoke a curse with him. One of them said to the other: "Do not do it. By Allah, if he is truly a prophet and we invoke a curse with him, we will never succeed, nor will our descendants after us." Then they both said: "We will give you what you ask of us. Send with us a trustworthy man, and send with us none but a trustworthy man." He said: ***"I will surely send with you a trustworthy man, truly trustworthy."*** The Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ each hoped to be chosen. Then he said: ***"Stand up, O Abu 'Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah."*** When he stood up, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ***"This is the trustee of this Ummah."***

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from 'Abbas ibn al-Husayn, from Yahya ibn Adam, from Isra'il ibn Yunus, from Abu Ishaq as-Sabi'i, from Silah ibn Zufar, from Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Military Expeditions (al-Maghazi), Chapter on the Story of the People of Najran, Hadith No. 4380.

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

Source: sunnah.com/bukhari:4380

LESSONS

Abu 'Ubaydah's trustworthiness was recognised not only by the Muslims; he was also trusted to deal with non-Muslims. Trustworthiness is the strongest form of da'wah. A person who is honest in his dealings becomes the most beautiful face of Islam in the eyes of others.

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AMONG THE TEN PROMISED PARADISE

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ once named ten Companions and told that all of them were in Paradise. Abu ‘Ubaydah was the last named in that list:

HADITH — JAMI‘ AT-TIRMIDHI, NO. 3747

حَدَّثَنَا قُتَيْبَةُ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الْعَزِيزِ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ حُمَيْدٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ عَوْفٍ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم " أَبُو بَكْرٍ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَعُمَرُ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَعُثْمَانُ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَعَلِيٌّ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَطَلْحَةُ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَالزُّبَيْرُ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَعَبْدُ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنُ عَوْفٍ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَسَعْدٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَسَعِيدٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَأَبُو عُبَيْدَةَ بْنُ الْجَرَّاحِ فِي الْجَنَّةِ " .

أَخْبَرَنَا أَبُو مُصْعَبٍ، قِرَاءَةً عَنْ عَبْدِ الْعَزِيزِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ حُمَيْدٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم نَحْوَهُ وَلَمْ يَذْكُرْ فِيهِ عَنْ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ عَوْفٍ . قَالَ وَقَدْ رُوِيَ هَذَا الْحَدِيثُ عَنْ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ حُمَيْدٍ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنْ سَعِيدِ بْنِ زَيْدٍ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم نَحْوَ هَذَا وَهَذَا أَصَحُّ مِنَ الْحَدِيثِ الأَوَّلِ .

TRANSLATION:

‘Abd ar-Rahman ibn ‘Awf رضى الله عنه said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ***“Abu Bakr is in Paradise, ‘Umar is in Paradise, ‘Uthman is in Paradise, ‘Ali is in Paradise, Talhah is in Paradise, az-Zubayr is in Paradise, ‘Abd ar-Rahman ibn ‘Awf is in Paradise, Sa‘d is in Paradise, Sa‘id is in Paradise, and Abu ‘Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah is in Paradise.”***

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam at-Tirmidhi: from Qutaybah ibn Sa‘id, from ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Muhammad ad-Darawardi, from ‘Abd ar-Rahman ibn Humayd, from Humayd ibn ‘Abd ar-Rahman, from ‘Abd ar-Rahman ibn ‘Awf رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam at-Tirmidhi in Jami‘ at-Tirmidhi, Book of Virtues (al-Manaqib), Hadith No. 3747.

GRADE: SAHIH — graded sahih by Darussalam and al-Albani. Also narrated by Abu Dawud (4649) and Ibn Majah (133) from Sa‘id ibn Zayd.

Source: sunnah.com/tirmidhi:3747

LESSONS

Abu ‘Ubaydah lived in this world with the glad tidings of Paradise, yet that news did not make him heedless. He kept striving, living simply and worshipping until the end of his life. The promise of Paradise did not stop his deeds; it increased his gratitude.

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SAQIFAH: A CANDIDATE FOR CALIPH

After the death of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, the Ansar gathered at the Saqifah of Banu Sa‘idah to discuss leadership. Abu Bakr, ‘Umar and Abu ‘Ubaydah went to them. In that discussion Abu Bakr said: “Pledge allegiance to ‘Umar or Abu ‘Ubaydah.” But ‘Umar said: “Rather, we pledge allegiance to you; you are our master and the best of us” (Sahih al-Bukhari 3668).

Abu ‘Ubaydah’s standing with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was also mentioned by ‘A’ishah رضى الله عنها:

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2385

وَحَدَّثَنِي الْحَسَنُ بْنُ عَلِيٍّ الْحُلْوَانِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا جَعْفَرُ بْنُ عَوْنٍ، عَنْ أَبِي عُمَيْسٍ، ح وَحَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ بْنُ حُمَيْدٍ، - وَاللَّفْظُ لَهُ - أَخْبَرَنَا جَعْفَرُ بْنُ عَوْنٍ، أَخْبَرَنَا أَبُو عُمَيْسٍ، عَنِ ابْنِ، أَبِي مُلَيْكَةَ سَمِعْتُ عَائِشَةَ، وَسُئِلَتْ، مَنْ كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم مُسْتَخْلِفًا لَوِ اسْتَخْلَفَهُ قَالَتْ أَبُو بَكْرٍ . فَقِيلَ لَهَا ثُمَّ مَنْ بَعْدَ أَبِي بَكْرٍ قَالَتْ عُمَرُ . ثُمَّ قِيلَ لَهَا مَنْ بَعْدَ عُمَرَ قَالَتْ أَبُو عُبَيْدَةَ بْنُ الْجَرَّاحِ . ثُمَّ انْتَهَتْ إِلَى هَذَا .

TRANSLATION:

Ibn Abi Mulaykah said: I heard ‘A’ishah being asked: “Whom would the Messenger of Allah ﷺ have appointed as successor (khalifah), had he appointed anyone?” She said: “Abu Bakr.” She was asked: “Then who after Abu Bakr?” She said: “‘Umar.” Then she was asked: “Who after ‘Umar?” She said: ***“Abu ‘Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah.”*** Then she stopped there.

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from ‘Abd ibn Humayd, from Ja‘far ibn ‘Awn, from Abu ‘Umays, from Ibn Abi Mulaykah, from ‘A’ishah رضى الله عنها.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of the Virtues of the Companions, Hadith No. 2385.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim, one of the two most authentic books of Hadith (as-Sahihayn).

Source: sunnah.com/muslim:2385

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NOTE: "IF ABU 'UBAYDAH WERE STILL ALIVE…"

It is reported that when 'Umar ibn al-Khattab was stabbed and asked to name a successor, he said: "If Abu 'Ubaydah were alive, I would have appointed him. If my Lord asked me, I would say: I heard Your Prophet say: He is the trustee of this Ummah."

Status of the report: Narrated by Ahmad; its chain is discussed by the Hadith scholars (there is a break in it). Its meaning agrees with the authentic Hadith about Abu 'Ubaydah's standing.

REFERENCES:

Musnad Ahmad (Musnad 'Umar); Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat al-Kubra.

LESSONS

Abu 'Ubaydah was put forward as caliph, yet he himself never sought that position. He pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr willingly. Often the person most fit to lead is the one who least desires it.

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SUPREME COMMANDER OF SYRIA

In the time of Abu Bakr, Abu 'Ubaydah was sent as one of the commanders to Syria. When Khalid ibn al-Walid arrived from Iraq (see Series 3), Khalid was given command of the battlefield, and Abu 'Ubaydah fought under him without any reluctance.

HISTORICAL NOTE: THE LETTER OF APPOINTMENT FROM 'UMAR

In 13 AH, Abu Bakr died and 'Umar became caliph. One of his first decisions was to appoint Abu 'Ubaydah as supreme commander in Syria in place of Khalid.

According to the historians, the letter arrived while the army was fighting. Abu 'Ubaydah kept the letter and did not announce it until the battle was over, so that the soldiers' spirit would not be disturbed and Khalid would not be embarrassed in front of the army.

When Khalid learned of it, he said to Abu 'Ubaydah: "May Allah have mercy on you. Why did you not tell me?" Abu 'Ubaydah replied: "I did not want to spoil your battle. We are not seeking worldly power; we are all brothers."

Status of the report: The details of this story are narrated in the books of history in various wordings. Its core — Abu 'Ubaydah's appointment and the good relations between him and Khalid — is agreed upon by the historians.

REFERENCES:

At-Tabari, Tarikh ar-Rusul wal-Muluk; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah; adh-Dhahabi, Siyar A'lam an-Nubala'.

LESSONS

Two great commanders changed places without any dispute. Abu 'Ubaydah once fought under Khalid, then Khalid fought under Abu 'Ubaydah, and both remained sincere. This was the character of the Companions: position did not change their hearts.

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DAMASCUS, FAHL AND HIMS

Under Abu 'Ubaydah's leadership, the Muslim army opened the great cities of Syria one after another. ***Damascus*** was opened in 14 AH after a long siege. Then the Muslims won at ***Fahl*** (Pella) in the Jordan Valley, and opened ***Hims***, ***Hamah*** and other cities.

HISTORICAL NOTE: JUSTICE THAT OPENED HEARTS

The historians report that before the Battle of Yarmuk, Abu 'Ubaydah had to withdraw from Hims to gather his forces. He ordered that the jizyah collected from the people of Hims be returned to them, saying: "We took it as payment for protecting you, and now we are unable to protect you."

The Christian and Jewish people of Hims said: "Your rule and your justice are dearer to us than the oppression we knew before." They promised to defend the city on behalf of the Muslims until they returned.

Status of the report: Narrated by al-Baladhuri and Abu Yusuf in early works of Islamic history and public finance.

REFERENCES:

Al-Baladhuri, Futuh al-Buldan; Abu Yusuf, Kitab al-Kharaj.

LESSONS

Abu 'Ubaydah opened cities not only with the sword, but with justice and trustworthiness. Jizyah was payment for protection; when protection could not be given, the payment was returned. Justice like this is stronger than any army.

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YARMUK AND JERUSALEM

In 15 AH, the Muslim army under the overall command of Abu 'Ubaydah faced a great Byzantine army at ***Yarmuk***. Abu 'Ubaydah handed the arrangement of the battlefield to Khalid ibn al-Walid because of his skill, and Allah granted a great victory (see Series 3).

HISTORICAL NOTE: THE KEYS OF JERUSALEM

After Yarmuk, the Muslim army besieged ***Jerusalem*** (Iliya'). The head of the city's church, Patriarch Sophronius, was ready to surrender the city peacefully, but on condition that the caliph himself came to receive its keys.

Abu 'Ubaydah wrote to 'Umar. 'Umar came to Syria, and Abu 'Ubaydah received him at ***al-Jabiyah***. 'Umar then accepted the peaceful surrender of Jerusalem in 16 or 17 AH, and wrote a guarantee of safety for its people.

Status of the report: The details differ between sources, but the core of the events is agreed upon by the historians.

REFERENCES:

At-Tabari, Tarikh ar-Rusul wal-Muluk; al-Baladhuri, Futuh al-Buldan; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah.

LESSONS

A wise leader knows how to hand a task to the most skilled person. Abu 'Ubaydah did not feel threatened by Khalid's expertise; he used it for the good of the Ummah. Victory comes when each person is put in the right place.

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THE HOUSE OF A GOVERNOR

As commander and governor of Syria, Abu 'Ubaydah ruled a wide and wealthy land. Yet his life remained simple.

HISTORICAL NOTE: 'UMAR WEEPS IN ABU 'UBAYDAH'S HOUSE

When 'Umar ibn al-Khattab came to Syria, he asked to see Abu 'Ubaydah's house. When he entered, 'Umar saw nothing in it but ***his sword, his shield and his camel saddle***.

'Umar said: "Why have you not provided yourself with things as others have?" Abu 'Ubaydah replied: "O Commander of the Believers, this is enough to bring me to my resting place (the grave)."

In another report, 'Umar wept and said: ***"The world has changed all of us, except you, O Abu 'Ubaydah."***

Status of the report: Narrated in the books of asceticism and biography, and widely accepted by the historians.

REFERENCES:

Abu Dawud, az-Zuhd; Ibn al-Mubarak, az-Zuhd; Abu Nu'aym, Hilyat al-Awliya'; adh-Dhahabi, Siyar A'lam an-Nubala'.

The cover of this eBook shows a sword, a shield and a saddle on a rock, together with a key. The humble objects stand for Abu 'Ubaydah's asceticism, while the key stands for the trust he carried.

LESSONS

Power and wealth did not change Abu 'Ubaydah's heart. He held the world in his hand, not in his heart. A leader who lives simply is trusted more by his people, because they know he does not lead to enrich himself.

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THE PLAGUE AT SARGH: “FROM THE DECREE OF ALLAH TO THE DECREE OF ALLAH”

In 17 AH, ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab set out for Syria. At ***Sargh***, on the border of Syria, he met the army commanders, including Abu ‘Ubaydah, who told him that plague had broken out in Syria:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 5729

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ يُوسُفَ، أَخْبَرَنَا مَالِكٌ، عَنِ ابْنِ شِهَابٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِ الْحَمِيدِ بْنِ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ زَيْدِ بْنِ الْخَطَّابِ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ الْحَارِثِ بْنِ نَوْفَلٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَبَّاسٍ، أَنَّ عُمَرَ بْنَ الْخَطَّابِ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ خَرَجَ إِلَى الشَّأْمِ حَتَّى إِذَا كَانَ بِسَرْغَ لَقِيَهُ أُمَرَاءُ الأَجْنَادِ أَبُو عُبَيْدَةَ بْنُ الْجَرَّاحِ وَأَصْحَابُهُ، فَأَخْبَرُوهُ أَنَّ الْوَبَاءَ قَدْ وَقَعَ بِأَرْضِ الشَّأْمِ. قَالَ ابْنُ عَبَّاسٍ فَقَالَ عُمَرُ ادْعُ لِي الْمُهَاجِرِينَ الأَوَّلِينَ. فَدَعَاهُمْ فَاسْتَشَارَهُمْ وَأَخْبَرَهُمْ أَنَّ الْوَبَاءَ قَدْ وَقَعَ بِالشَّأْمِ فَاخْتَلَفُوا. فَقَالَ بَعْضُهُمْ قَدْ خَرَجْتَ لأَمْرٍ، وَلاَ نَرَى أَنْ تَرْجِعَ عَنْهُ. وَقَالَ بَعْضُهُمْ مَعَكَ بَقِيَّةُ النَّاسِ وَأَصْحَابُ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم وَلاَ نَرَى أَنْ تُقْدِمَهُمْ عَلَى هَذَا الْوَبَاءِ. فَقَالَ ارْتَفِعُوا عَنِّي. ثُمَّ قَالَ ادْعُوا لِي الأَنْصَارَ. فَدَعَوْتُهُمْ فَاسْتَشَارَهُمْ، فَسَلَكُوا سَبِيلَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ، وَاخْتَلَفُوا كَاخْتِلاَفِهِمْ، فَقَالَ ارْتَفِعُوا عَنِّي. ثُمَّ قَالَ ادْعُ لِي مَنْ كَانَ هَا هُنَا مِنْ مَشْيَخَةِ قُرَيْشٍ مِنْ مُهَاجِرَةِ الْفَتْحِ. فَدَعَوْتُهُمْ، فَلَمْ يَخْتَلِفْ مِنْهُمْ عَلَيْهِ رَجُلاَنِ، فَقَالُوا نَرَى أَنْ تَرْجِعَ بِالنَّاسِ، وَلاَ تُقْدِمَهُمْ عَلَى هَذَا الْوَبَاءِ، فَنَادَى عُمَرُ فِي النَّاسِ، إِنِّي مُصَبِّحٌ عَلَى ظَهْرٍ، فَأَصْبِحُوا عَلَيْهِ. قَالَ أَبُو عُبَيْدَةَ بْنُ الْجَرَّاحِ أَفِرَارًا مِنْ قَدَرِ اللَّهِ فَقَالَ عُمَرُ لَوْ غَيْرُكَ قَالَهَا يَا أَبَا عُبَيْدَةَ، نَعَمْ نَفِرُّ مِنْ قَدَرِ اللَّهِ إِلَى قَدَرِ اللَّهِ، أَرَأَيْتَ لَوْ كَانَ لَكَ إِبِلٌ هَبَطَتْ وَادِيًا لَهُ عُدْوَتَانِ، إِحْدَاهُمَا خَصِبَةٌ، وَالأُخْرَى جَدْبَةٌ، أَلَيْسَ إِنْ رَعَيْتَ الْخَصْبَةَ رَعَيْتَهَا بِقَدَرِ اللَّهِ، وَإِنْ رَعَيْتَ الْجَدْبَةَ رَعَيْتَهَا بِقَدَرِ اللَّهِ قَالَ فَجَاءَ عَبْدُ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنُ عَوْفٍ، وَكَانَ مُتَغَيِّبًا فِي بَعْضِ حَاجَتِهِ فَقَالَ إِنَّ عِنْدِي فِي هَذَا عِلْمًا سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَقُولُ " إِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ بِهِ بِأَرْضٍ فَلاَ تَقْدَمُوا عَلَيْهِ، وَإِذَا وَقَعَ بِأَرْضٍ وَأَنْتُمْ بِهَا فَلاَ تَخْرُجُوا فِرَارًا مِنْهُ ". قَالَ فَحَمِدَ اللَّهَ عُمَرُ ثُمَّ انْصَرَفَ.

TRANSLATION:

‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas narrated that ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab رضى الله عنه set out for Syria. When he reached Sargh, he was met by the commanders of the armies — Abu ‘Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah and his companions — who told him that plague had broken out in the land of Syria. Ibn ‘Abbas said: ‘Umar said: “Call the early Muhajirun to me.” He called them, consulted them and told them that plague had broken out in Syria. They disagreed. Some said: “You have set out for a purpose, and we do not think you should turn back from it.” Others said: “With you are the rest of the people and the Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and we do not think you should lead them into this plague.” He said: “Leave me.” Then he said: “Call the Ansar to me.” I called them and he consulted them, and they took the way of the Muhajirun and disagreed as they had. He said: “Leave me.” Then he said: “Call to me whoever is here of the elders of Quraysh who emigrated at the Conquest.” I called them, and not even two of them disagreed. They said: “We think you should return with the people and not lead them into this plague.” So ‘Umar announced to the people: “I will set out (for home) in the morning, so set out with me.” ***Abu ‘Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah said: “Is it fleeing from the decree of Allah?” ‘Umar said: “If only someone other than you had said it, O Abu ‘Ubaydah! Yes, we flee from the decree of Allah to the decree of Allah.*** Tell me, if you had camels that came down into a valley with two slopes, one fertile and the other barren, would you not, if you grazed them on the fertile slope, graze them by the decree of Allah, and if you grazed them on the barren slope, graze them by the decree of Allah?” Then ‘Abd ar-Rahman ibn ‘Awf came, who had been away on some business. He said: “I have knowledge about this. I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say: ***If you hear of it (plague) in a land, do not go to it. And if it breaks out in a land while you are in it, do not leave it to flee from it.***” So ‘Umar praised Allah, then went back.

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from ‘Abdullah ibn Yusuf at-Tinnisi, from Malik ibn Anas, from Ibn Shihab az-Zuhri, from ‘Abd al-Hamid ibn ‘Abd ar-Rahman, from ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abdullah ibn al-Harith, from ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Medicine (at-Tibb), Chapter on What Is Mentioned About Plague, Hadith No. 5729.

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

Source: sunnah.com/bukhari:5729

This Hadith is the basis of the principle of quarantine in Islam: do not enter an area of plague, and do not leave it. It also shows that taking precautions does not contradict faith in the divine decree.

LESSONS

Abu ‘Ubaydah’s question came from deep faith in the decree of Allah. ‘Umar’s answer teaches that effort and caution are also part of Allah’s decree. The Companions disagreed with full respect, then returned to the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ once it was conveyed.

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THE PLAGUE OF 'AMWAS AND HIS DEATH

In 18 AH, plague spread in Syria, starting from a village called ***'Amwas***, near Jerusalem. This plague is known as the ***Plague of 'Amwas***, and it took around 25,000 lives, including many Companions.

HISTORICAL NOTE: "I WILL NOT LEAVE THEM"

It is reported that 'Umar, anxious for Abu 'Ubaydah's safety, wrote to him: "I have a need of you that I cannot settle without you. When my letter reaches you, come to me at once."

Abu 'Ubaydah understood what 'Umar meant. He wrote back: ***"O Commander of the Believers, I know your need. I am in the midst of the Muslim army, and I do not wish to leave them. Release me from your wish."*** When 'Umar read the letter, he wept.

Abu 'Ubaydah then caught the plague and died in 18 AH (639 CE), at the age of 58. He was buried in the ***Jordan Valley*** (Ghawr Baysan); his tomb today lies in the area of Deir Alla, Jordan. Before his death he appointed ***Mu'adh ibn Jabal*** as his successor.

Status of the report: The story of the letter is narrated by at-Tabari and the historians. That Abu 'Ubaydah died in the Plague of 'Amwas in 18 AH is agreed upon by the historians.

REFERENCES:

At-Tabari, Tarikh ar-Rusul wal-Muluk (events of 18 AH); Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah; adh-Dhahabi, Siyar A'lam an-Nubala'.

Abu 'Ubaydah chose to stay with his army, in line with the words of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: "Do not leave it to flee from it." The Messenger of Allah ﷺ also said that plague is martyrdom for every Muslim (Sahih al-Bukhari 2830). Allah speaks of those who are patient when struck by calamity:

SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:156

ٱلَّذِينَ إِذَآ أَصَٰبَتْهُم مُّصِيبَةٌ قَالُوٓاْ إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّآ إِلَيْهِ رَٰجِعُونَ ﴿١٥٦﴾

Who, when disaster strikes them, say, "Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:156

LESSONS

Abu 'Ubaydah could have saved himself on the excuse that the caliph had summoned him, but he chose to follow the Sunnah and not abandon his army in hardship. A trustworthy leader does not desert his people in a calamity. He died a martyr, in sha' Allah, as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ promised.

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THE CHARACTER OF ABU 'UBAYDAH

The story of Abu 'Ubaydah portrays a believer whose noble qualities came together in balance. He was firm on the battlefield, but gentle with his companions.

QUALITY	EXAMPLE FROM HIS LIFE
Trustworthiness	Named Amin al-Ummah by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ (Sahih al-Bukhari 3744)
Love for the Messenger ﷺ	Lost his front teeth pulling the helmet rings from the Prophet's cheek at Uhud
Justice	Shared out dates one by one in the Khabat expedition
Humility	Gave way to 'Amr at Dhat as-Salasil and fought under Khalid
Guarding others' dignity	Kept the letter of appointment so that Khalid would not be embarrassed
Asceticism	His house held only a sword, a shield and a saddle
Loyalty to his people	Refused to leave his army during the plague

LESSONS

Abu 'Ubaydah proved that great leadership needs neither a loud voice nor a harsh manner. Trustworthiness, humility and justice are the true strength of a leader.

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SOURCES OF THE STORIES OF ABU 'UBAYDAH

This table summarises the source of each story and its status, so that readers can tell the authentic from what is merely famous.

STORY	SOURCE	STATUS
Brotherhood with Abu Talhah	Sahih Muslim 2528	Sahih
"Amin al-Ummah"	Sahih al-Bukhari 3744	Sahih
The Khabat expedition	Sahih al-Bukhari 4361; Sahih Muslim 1935	Sahih
Najran: "truly trustworthy"	Sahih al-Bukhari 4380	Sahih
The ten promised Paradise	Jami' at-Tirmidhi 3747	Sahih
Nominated by Abu Bakr at Saqifah	Sahih al-Bukhari 3668	Sahih
Third candidate according to 'A'ishah	Sahih Muslim 2385	Sahih
The plague at Sargh	Sahih al-Bukhari 5729	Sahih
Plague is martyrdom	Sahih al-Bukhari 2830	Sahih
Killing his father at Badr	Al-Hakim; al-Bayhaqi	Mursal, weak
Teeth lost at Uhud	Ibn Sa'd; Ibn Hibban	Disputed
Giving way at Dhat as-Salasil	Ibn Hisham	Sirah
"If Abu 'Ubaydah were alive…"	Musnad Ahmad	Disputed
The letter of appointment kept back	At-Tabari; Ibn Kathir	History
Jizyah returned at Hims	Al-Baladhuri; Abu Yusuf	History
House: sword, shield, saddle	Abu Dawud, az-Zuhd; Abu Nu'aym	Asceticism
'Umar's letter during the plague	At-Tabari	History

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PEOPLE IN THE STORY OF ABU ‘UBAYDAH

PERSON	ROLE
Abu Bakr as-Siddiq	Called him to Islam; nominated him at Saqifah
Abu Talhah al-Ansari	His brother in the brotherhood of the Muhajirun and Ansar
Jabir ibn ‘Abdullah	Narrator of the story of the Khabat expedition
Qays ibn Sa‘d	Slaughtered camels for the hungry army
‘Amr ibn al-‘As	Commander at Dhat as-Salasil; Abu ‘Ubaydah gave way to him
Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman	Narrator of the story of the Najran delegation
‘A’ishah	Named Abu ‘Ubaydah as the third candidate for caliph
Khalid ibn al-Walid	Battlefield commander; fought alongside Abu ‘Ubaydah (Series 3)
‘Umar ibn al-Khattab	Appointed him supreme commander of Syria; his close friend
Sophronius	Patriarch of Jerusalem who surrendered the city peacefully
Mu‘adh ibn Jabal	His successor in Syria after his death

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PLACES IN THE STORY OF ABU 'UBAYDAH

PLACE	EVENT
Makkah	Birthplace; embraced Islam in the earliest days
Badr	The Battle of Badr (2 AH)
Uhud	Pulling the helmet rings from the Prophet's cheek ﷺ (3 AH)
Red Sea coast	The Khabat expedition and the whale (8 AH)
Dhat as-Salasil	Gave way to 'Amr ibn al-'As (8 AH)
Najran	Sent as "the trustworthy man" (9–10 AH)
Saqifah of Banu Sa'idah	Nominated as caliph (11 AH)
Damascus	Opened in 14 AH
Hims	Jizyah returned to its people
Yarmuk	Great victory over the Byzantines (15 AH)
Al-Jabiyah and Jerusalem	Received 'Umar; surrender of Jerusalem (16–17 AH)
Sargh	Discussion of the plague with 'Umar (17 AH)
'Amwas and the Jordan Valley	The plague; his death and burial (18 AH)

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TIMELINE OF ABU 'UBAYDAH'S LIFE

YEAR	EVENT
c. 40 BH	Born in Makkah in the clan of Banu al-Harith ibn Fihr
Early prophethood	Embraced Islam through the call of Abu Bakr
1 AH	Emigrated to Madinah; joined in brotherhood with Abu Talhah
2 AH	The Battle of Badr
3 AH	The Battle of Uhud; lost his front teeth
8 AH	The Khabat expedition; Dhat as-Salasil
9–10 AH	Sent to Najran as "the trustworthy man"
11 AH	Saqifah; nominated as caliph
12–13 AH	Sent to Syria as one of the commanders
13 AH	Appointed by 'Umar as supreme commander of Syria
14 AH	Opening of Damascus and Fahl
15 AH	Victory at Yarmuk
16–17 AH	Surrender of Jerusalem to 'Umar
17 AH	Discussion at Sargh about the plague
18 AH	Died in the Plague of 'Amwas, aged 58

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ABU 'UBAYDAH

This chapter answers questions often asked about Abu 'Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah رضى الله عنه. The answers are brief; details are in the earlier chapters.

1. WHAT WAS ABU 'UBAYDAH'S REAL NAME?

'Amir ibn 'Abdullah ibn al-Jarrah al-Fihri al-Qurashi. He was better known by his kunyah.

2. WHY WAS HE CALLED AMIN AL-UMMAH?

Because the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Every nation has a trustee, and the trustee of this nation is Abu 'Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah" (Sahih al-Bukhari 3744).

3. IS IT TRUE THAT ABU 'UBAYDAH KILLED HIS FATHER AT BADR?

This story is famous, but its chain is mursal and weak. Some historians say his father died before Islam.

4. WHY WAS HE CALLED AL-ATHRAM?

Because his two front teeth fell out when he pulled the helmet rings from the cheek of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ at Uhud, according to the reports of sirah.

5. WHAT WAS THE KHABAT EXPEDITION?

A force of 300 men led by Abu 'Ubaydah in 8 AH, who were forced to eat tree leaves from hunger, until Allah provided them with a whale (Sahih al-Bukhari 4361).

6. IS ABU 'UBAYDAH AMONG THE TEN PROMISED PARADISE?

Yes. He is named in the Hadith of the ten promised Paradise (Jami' at-Tirmidhi 3747).

7. WAS ABU 'UBAYDAH EVER PUT FORWARD AS CALIPH?

Yes. Abu Bakr put forward 'Umar or Abu 'Ubaydah at Saqifah, but both pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr (Sahih al-Bukhari 3668).

8. WHAT WAS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ABU 'UBAYDAH AND KHALID IBN AL-WALID?

Excellent. They took turns in command without dispute, and Abu 'Ubaydah handed the battlefield arrangement at Yarmuk to Khalid.

9. WHY DID ABU 'UBAYDAH NOT LEAVE SYRIA DURING THE PLAGUE?

Because he did not want to leave his army, and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ forbade leaving a plague area to flee from it (Sahih al-Bukhari 5729).

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10. WHEN AND WHERE DID ABU 'UBAYDAH DIE?

In 18 AH in the Plague of 'Amwas, and he was buried in the Jordan Valley.

11. WHO SUCCEEDED ABU 'UBAYDAH IN SYRIA?

Mu'adh ibn Jabal, who also died soon after in the same plague.

12. WHAT IS THE GREATEST LESSON OF ABU 'UBAYDAH'S STORY?

Trustworthiness and humility are the true strength of a leader; position and wealth do not change the heart of a sincere person.

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LESSONS AND CONCLUSION

The story of Abu ‘Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah رضى الله عنه begins with a man of Makkah who answered Islam in its earliest days, and ends with a governor who died in the midst of his army during a plague. Between the two lies a life filled with trustworthiness.

LESSON	FROM THE STORY OF ABU ‘UBAYDAH
Trustworthiness is honour	The title Amin al-Ummah from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ
Sacrifice out of love	The teeth lost at Uhud
Fair leadership	One date for each man in hunger
Unity above position	Giving way to ‘Amr and working with Khalid
Justice for all	Jizyah returned to the people of Hims
Asceticism	A governor’s house with only a sword, a shield and a saddle
Loyal to the end	Not leaving his army during the plague

ABU ‘UBAYDAH IN OUR LIVES

We may never lead an army or govern a province, but each of us carries trusts: family, work, knowledge, time and wealth. Each time we fulfil a trust honestly, give way for the sake of unity, or live simply though we could live in luxury, we follow in the footsteps of Abu ‘Ubaydah.

His story also reminds us of the etiquette of an epidemic: take care, follow the Sunnah, and do not abandon those who need us. These lessons feel very close to our own times.

In sha’ Allah, the Heroes of Islam series will continue with Sa‘d ibn Abi Waqqas, the commander of al-Qadisiyyah. May Allah be pleased with Abu ‘Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah, the Trustee of the Ummah, and gather us with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and his Companions in His Paradise.

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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

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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: 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: sunnah.com/muslim:1631

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