

Chapter 4: Leading Personalities From Yemen

Having converted what is the equivalent of an entire country and the various tribes within it, the new Muslims were now eager to join Prophet Muhammad (S) in Medina and Mecca for the pilgrimage. Others had travelled to Medina even before the conversion of Yemen upon hearing about the Prophet (S) and his Message.

In this section we will list and briefly describe some of the leading companions and followers, the second generation of Muslims, known as the tabi‘in, who came from Yemen – as a way of demonstrating the importance of this region to the history and development of Islam. This is because without these great companions and their efforts, Islam would not have had some of its champions, scholars and saintly figures who have left their intellectual and spiritual fragrance on this religion.

1. Al-Miqdad Ibn Aswad Al-Kindi

Miqdad belonged to an Arabian tribe named Bahra originally from Hadramout, Yemen.

Among the things that he is most famous for is when the Muslims were consulted as to whether they were ready to partake in the first battle against the pagan Meccan's, many were hesitant until al-Miqdad stood up and said enthusiastically, “O Allah’s Apostle, go on and obey Allah’s Order! We will support you! By Allah, we will not say like the Jews said to their prophet: ‘You and your Lord, go and fight! We will stay here!’ We say: you have come to us with the truth, and we obey and follow you. We will show that you we are real men. We will not back off.” This changed the mood of the entire army it was the beginning to their first victory.

Imam Ja‘far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq ('a) said Miqdad was one of the seven people who most upheld the verse, ***“I do not ask for anything from you as reward except love of my kindred.”*** (*Surah al-Shuara', 42:23*).

2. ﷺAmmar Ibn Yasir

Though ﷺAmmar belonged to the Banu Makhzum tribe in Hijaz, his father, Yasir ibn Amir, was from the tribe of Qahtan in Yemen who migrated to Mecca, and married Sumayyah bint Khayyat, known famously as the first and second martyrs in the history of Islam.

ﷺAmmar was also severely tortured, but escaped after feigning disavowal of the Prophet (S), but when he confessed it was only to further avert torment, and the Prophet (S) approved of this action in order to save his life.

In addition to Yasir and Sumayyah being promised paradise, the Prophet (S) also famously said about ﷺAmmar's torture, "Bear patiently, Aba al-Yaqdhan (ﷺAmmar). O Allah, do not punish anyone from the family of ﷺAmmar with fire!"

3. Hudhayfa Ibn Al-Yamani

Hudhayfa son of al-Yamani is one of the famous companions, especially for his role in certain battles with Prophet Muhammad (S).

In the battle of Uhud, the Prophet (S) placed al-Yamani, Hudhayfa's father with Thabit ibn Waqsh as they were both elderly and non-combatants, however both eager to participate in the battle. Al-Yamani, not known to the Muslims was mistaken for one of the enemies and was attacked and killed in error. Hudhayfa told his father's killers: "May God forgive you for He is the most Merciful of those who show mercy."

Hudhayfa was also known for his intelligence, wit and ability to maintain secrets such that the Prophet (S) would tell him who the hypocrites among the Muslims were and he was employed to keep watch of their movements and plots. This played a vital role in the formative years of the Islamic community.

He also has a lengthy and interesting relationship with Imam ﷺAli ('a). Hudhayfa was the governor of al-Mada'in during the time of the Caliph ﷺUthman. When ﷺUthman was killed and Imam ﷺAli ('a) took over the caliphate, he permitted Hudhayfa to continue being the governor there. He wrote to him the following,

In the Name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate.

From the slave of Allah, ﷺAli, the Commander of the Faithful, to Hudhayfa ibn al-Yaman – peace be upon you. I have confirmed you in your post, just as you was serving my predecessor, in al-Mada'in. It is your responsibility to collect the zakat, kharaj, and jizyah from the Ahl al-Dhimmah. So choose your trustful ones and those whom you are pleased with their religion and who you trust. Use them over your employees. This is better for you and your master (ﷺAli), and it is loathsome to your enemy.

I order you to have consciousness (*taqwa*) of Allah and His obedience in the hidden and the manifest. I warn you against His punishment in every state. I advise you to be good to the good-doers and to be tough to the obstinate. I order you to be kind and soft in all of your matters and be just to all of your people, for you are responsible of that. Give the people who are treated unjustly back their rights. Forgive the people and have good dealings with them for Allah awards the good-doers. I order you to collect fairly and righteously the kharaj from the land. Do not transgress my previous instructions, and do not neglect any one of them.

Do not follow your own self. Divide this kharaj between the people equally and justly and be modest and available to your people. Treat them fairly in your meeting with them. Let the ones who are close to you and those who are not close to you be the same to you when dispensing justice and rights. Decide between the people with truth and justice and be equitable.

Do not follow your own desires, and do not fear the blame of anyone, for Allah is with those who have God-consciousness and those who are good-doers.

Accompanying this letter is another paper from me. It is to be read to your people so that they can be informed of my policy regarding them and all of the Muslims. So gather them and read it to them and take their *bay'ah* (allegiance) – from the youngest to the oldest of them, God-Willing.”

Hudhayfa addressed his people and engaged in dialogue with them about leadership and the precedents of Prophet Muhammad (S), the full text of which can be read online.[1](#)

4. Owais Al-Qarani Al-Muradi

Owais was distinguished with the honour of being a companion, despite having ever met Prophet Muhammad (S), which is usually considered to be the foremost requirement.

Although he had been a Muslim and lived in Yemen, his situation was that he was preoccupied with taking care of his mother. Only permitted to visit Medina for a short time and required to return quickly, he arrived when the Prophet (S) was away on an expedition. The Prophet (S) died before Owais came back to Medina years later.

Prophet Muhammad (S) is narrated to have said about his rank in the eyes of God that, “If he was to swear in the name of Allah that something should happen, Allah would cause it to happen. If you can ask him to pray for forgiveness for you then do so.”

5. Malik Al-Ashtar Al-Nakha'i

Malik was a Madh'hij, a sub-division of the Bani Nakha tribe from Yemen. It is narrated about them from the Prophet (S) who said, “Those who enter paradise will find many of its inhabitants from the people of Yemen; and indeed many of the tribes present in paradise will be of the Madh'hij.”[2](#)

He was known for extraordinary bravery on the battlefield and his extreme loyalty to Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a) such that it was said, Malik is to Ali what Ali was to the Prophet (S). This is because when Imam Ali ('a) dispatched Malik to be the governor of Egypt, having praised him greatly, Imam Ali ('a) called him his brother, just like the Prophet (S) called Imam Ali ('a) his brother.

Malik is most known for the famous and celebrated letter which he was sent by Imam Ali ('a) instructing him on good governance³, and he later died as a martyr by being poisoned.

6. Hujr Ibn Aday Al-Kindi

Hujr ibn Aday, a companion of the holy Prophet (S), was known as Hujr al-Khayr (the Good). This was because he was the opposite in character to his cousin Hujr ibn Yazid, who was entitled Hujr al-Sharr (the Evil).

Known for his bravery, he was among the commanders of Imam Ali's ('a) army in the Battles of Jamal and Siffin.

After the Battle of Siffin he attempted to stop the cursing of Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a) and for this was arrested and executed alongside his family and companions. Umm al-Mo'mineen Ayesha narrates that she said to Muawiya: "You killed Hujr and his associates, By Allah! The Prophet told me 'In the ditch of Adra seven men will be killed, due to this all the skies and Allah will be angered.'"⁴

On the 2nd of May 2013, militia which was linked to ISIS (the so called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) exhumed Hujr's body from Adra, a suburb in Damascus, and took it to an unknown location.

7. Kumayl Ibn Ziyad Al-Nakhai

Kumayl was born in Yemen two years before the Prophet's (S) migration to Medina. His tribe, Banu Nakha like that of Malik al-Ashtar, also produced great helpers to Islam such as Hilal ibn Nafi' and Sawadah ibn Amir. Kumayl however, did not get to meet the holy Prophet (S) but he was a close aid and confident of Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a) becoming his governor in the Iraqi city of Heet, situated in modern day al-Anbar Province.

Kumayl is known in history for the number of questions that he would ask Imam Ali ('a). Among their famous dialogues is:

O Kumayl, knowledge is better than wealth – for knowledge guards you, while you have to guard wealth; and wealth is diminished when spent, while knowledge grows and increases when put to use. O Kumayl, the hoarders of wealth have died, while the learned men exist forever; their bodies have disappeared, but their teachings and wisdom are ingrained in the hearts.

8. Adiy Ibn Hatim Al-Ta'i

Adiy's father Hatim was well known for being one of the most generous people in all of Arabia in the pre-Islamic era. After him, Adiy became the head of his tribe, Ta'i.

His conversion came when the Prophet (S) sent Imam Ali ('a) to carry out a raid at al-Fals. As the army approach there, Adiy sent his family to Syria, however his sister was left behind and captured. Adiy petitioned her release to which the Prophet (S) accepted it. After the Prophet (S) released her, he invited Adiy to sit and discuss Islam. At the end of their discussion he converted, either in the 9th or 10th year after the migration.

Adiy was later present at the Battles of the Ridda wars – Mada'in, Jamal, Siffin and Nahrawan. It is said that he lived to be 120 years old and narrated many ahadith.

9. Al-Harith Al-Hamdani

Al-Harith came from the tribe of Hamdan, the same about which Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a) was narrated to have said that: "If I was the keeper of the Gate of Heaven, I would have asked the Tribe of Hamdan to enter peacefully."

He was one of the great, knowledgeable and pious tabi'in (the generation which came after the sahaba). In addition to Islamic sciences, he also taught accounting and mathematics, and was a well-known reciter of the holy Qur'an.

Being amongst the closest companions of Imam Ali ('a), al-Harith was given a special testimony and instruction. One of the most important recorded interactions between al-Harith and Imam Ali ('a) was when al-Harith was old and in poor health, and Imam Ali ('a) advised him before his death, in which the Imam told al-Harith the following:

Adhere to the rope of the Qur'an and seek instructions from it. Regard its lawful as lawful and its unlawful as unlawful. Testify the right that has been in the past. Take lessons for the present condition of this world from the past (condition), because it's one phase resembles the other, its end is to meet its beginning, and the whole of it is to change and depart.

Regard the name of Allah as too great to mention Him, save in the matter of right.

Remember death frequently and (what is to come) after death. Do not long for death except on a reliable condition.

Avoid every action which a doer likes for his own self, but dislikes for the Muslims in general. Avoid every such action which is performed in secret and from which shame is felt in the open. Also avoid that action about which if the doer is questioned he himself will regard it as bad or will have to offer excuses

for it.

Do not expose your honour to be treated as the subject of people's discussions. Do not relate to the people all that you hear, for that will amount to falsehood. Do not contest all that the people relate to you for that will mean ignorance. Kill your anger and forgive when you have the power (to punish). Show forbearance in the moment of rage, and pardon in spite of authority; the eventual end will then be in your favour. Seek good out of every favour that Allah has bestowed upon you, and do not waste any favour of Allah over you. The effect of Allah's favours over you should be visible on you.

Know that the most distinguished among the believers is one who is the most forward of them in spending from himself, his family and his property, because whatever good you send forward will remain in store for you and the benefit of whatever you keep behind will be derived by others. Avoid the company of a person whose opinion is unsound and whose actions are detestable, because a man is judged by his companions.

Live in big cities because they are collective centres of the Muslims. Avoid places of neglectfulness and wickedness and places where there are paucity of supporters for the obedience of Allah. Confine your thinking to matters which are helpful to you. Do not sit in the marketing centres because they are the meeting-places of Satan, and the targets of mischiefs. Frequently look at those over whom you enjoy superiority because this is a way of giving thanks.

Do not undertake a journey on Friday until you have attended the prayers, except when you are going in the way of Allah, or in an excusable matter. Obey Allah in all of your affairs because Allah's obedience has precedence over all other things. Deceive your heart into worshipping, persuade it but do not force it. Engage it (in worshipping) when it is free and merry, except in regards to the obligations enjoined upon you, for they should not be neglected and must be performed at the five times. Be on guard lest death comes down upon you while you have fled away from your Lord in search of worldly pleasure. Avoid the company of the wicked because vice adjoins vice. Regard Allah as great, and love His lovers. Keep off anger because it is one large army from Satan's armies; and that is the end to a matter.[5](#)

10. Al-Asbagh Ibn Nubata

Al-Asbagh was an extremely pious individual and had a special relationship with Imam Ali ('a). Not only was he a commander of his in the Battle of Siffin, but he was also among the 'Shurta al-Khamis' or 'Elite Five Guards' who swore to protect Imam Ali ('a) in the battles even if it took their lives. Asbagh was also one of the last, if not the last companion to see Imam Ali ('a) on his death bed.

Among the beautiful traditions, he narrates, "One day I was leaning on the door of the Commander of the Faithful Ali ('a) and was entreating Allah in supplication when Imam Ali ('a) exited his house. He asked me, 'O Asbagh, what are you doing?' to which I replied, 'Leaning and supplicating to Allah (SwT)'. He asked, 'Would you like me to teach you a supplication that I heard from the Messenger of Allah?' I

replied in the affirmative.

He said, ‘Say: All praise belongs to Allah for what was; and all praise belongs to Allah in every state.’”⁶

1. <https://www.al-islam.org/articles/narration-hadeeth-hudhayfah-ibn-alyama...> [1] (Last accessed on May 15, 2018).

2. Tarikh Baghdad, vol. 8, p. 225; the Arabic text is as follows:

دخلت الجنة فوجدت اكثراً أهلها أهلاً للجنة و وجدت اكثراً أهل اليمن من حجج

3. <https://www.al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-2-letters-and-sayings/lette...> [2] (Last accessed on May 15, 2018).

4. Tarikh Ibn Asakir, vol. 12, p. 227, Chapter entitled Dhikr Hujr ibn Adi.

5. <https://www.al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-2-letters-and-sayings/lette...> [3] (Last accessed on May 15, 2018)

6. Turbi, Muhammad b. Ali al-, Bisharat al-Mustafa, p. 157; the Arabic text is as follows:

الحمد لله على ما كان و الحمد لله على كل حال

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/baldatun-tayyibatun-land-most-goodly-jaffer-ali-ladak/chapter-4-leading-personalities-yemen>

Links

[1]

<https://www.al-islam.org/articles/narration-hadeeth-hudhayfah-ibn-alyaman-hasan-ibn-Muhammad-al-daylami>

[2]

<https://www.al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-2-letters-and-sayings/letter-53-order-malik-al-ashtar>

[3]

<https://www.al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-2-letters-and-sayings/letter-69-al-harith-ibn-abdillah-al-awar-al-hamdani>