

The Tale of 'Abdullah bin Saba'

In the Name of the Most Merciful God

For one thousand years historians have been recording astonishing stories about 'Abdullah Bin Saba[ؓ], and his followers — Sabaian.

- a) Who was Abdullah and who were Sabaian, his followers?
- b) What did Abdullah say, and what has he done?

[Summary of what is known from the Historians](#)

A Jew from Sana in Yemen posed as convert to Islam in the time of 'Othman the third Caliph, and plotted against Islam and Muslims. He travelled abroad to large cities such as Kufa, Basra, Damascus and Egypt, preaching a belief in the resurrection of the Prophet Muhammad as being like the return again of Jesus to this world, before Doomsday.

He also preached the idea of apostleship, and claimed that al-Imam 'Ali was the true successor of the Prophet Muhammad — accusing 'Othman of unjustly usurping al-Imam 'Ali's place. He strongly urged the people to murder Caliph 'Othman, who was later assassinated.

The historians named this Jew, 'Abdullah bin Saba[ؓ] as the hero of the stories. He was known as Ibn Amatus-Sawda, meaning son of a negro slave. Abdullah sent his missions to many cities pretending to preach true Islamic faith — enjoining good, and denouncing bad, encouraging the people to revolt against their governors and even to kill them. On the list of the followers of 'Abdullah Bin Saba[ؓ] are some good Sahabis (companions of the Prophet) — for example Abu Dharr also some Tabe'in such as Malik Ashtar.

In the time of al-Imam 'Ali, two men Talha and Zubair, revolted against al-Imam 'Ali demanding the persecution of the murderers of 'Othman. Because of this the battle of Jamal was planned. al-Imam 'Ali and his two opponents agreed to a settlement, but some Sabaian, namely those who were guilty of

murdering 'Othman, did not want the quarrel to be settled because their names had been disclosed.

So, those Sabaian secretly enrolled in both armies — the army of al- Imam 'Ali and the rebellious army. During the night while everyone was dreaming of the peace treaty to be agreed upon the next day, the plotters started shooting at both sides. As a result of this the Battle of Jamal started without the permission or knowledge of the commanders of either side.

Before discussing the story of Ibn Saba in detail, it is worthwhile examining those personalities whose names are on the lists of Sabaian.

- 1) Abu Dharr.
- 2) 'Ammar Bin Yasir.
- 3) Abdur-Rahman Adis.
- 4) Sa'sa'a Bin Souhan.
- 5) Muhammad Bin Abi Hodhaifah.
- 6) Muhammad Bin Abibakr, son of the first Caliph.
- 7) Malik Ashtar.

1) Abu Dharr (Jondob Ibn Jonadeh) Ghafary

He is the third person in the list of the four pioneers who first embraced Islam. He was a monotheist even before his conversion. He declared his faith in Islam at Mecca in the Holy Mosque Beitul Haram. The Quraishite beat him almost to death but he survived, and on the instruction of the Prophet Muhammad he returned to his tribe.

After the Battles of Badr and Uhud he came to Medina and stayed there until the death of the Prophet. Then Abu Dharr was sent to Sham (Damascus) where he could not agree with Mo'awiah. Later Mo'awiah complained about Abu Dharr to 'Othman, the third Caliph, and he sent Abu Dharr into exile at Rabaza where he later died.

Many narratives have been recorded about Abu Dharr from the Prophet. He once said: "Under the blue sky, and on the earth, there is none more straight forward than Abu Dharr."

2) 'Ammar Bin Yasir

He was known as Abuyaqzan. He was one of the Bani Tha'laba tribe and was allied with Bani Makhzoom. His mother's name was Somayyah. He and his parents were pioneers in embracing Islam, and he was the seventh to declare his faith. His parents were executed after the torture of the Quraish

Tribe, because of the conversion to Islam. There are authentic narrations told by the Prophet about 'Ammar, such as "Ammar is full of faith." He fought on al-Imam 'Ali's side at wars of Jamal and Siffin and was killed on the battle-field at the age of ninety-three.

3) Muhammad Bin Abu Hodhaifa called Abulqasim

His father was 'Otba Bin Rabi'a al-Abshami and his mother was Sahlah — the daughter of Sohail Bin 'Amr Ameryyah. He was born in Ethiopia in the Prophet's time.

His father was martyred at Yamama, so, 'Othman adopted him. 'Othman, during his rule, gave him permission to go to Egypt where he revolted against Oqba Bin Amer, the deputy of Medina Abdullah Bin Abi Sarh (10th Man's Governor to Egypt) who had gone to Medina, and was not allowed to re- enter Egypt. Muhammad Ibn Hodhaifa succeeded and became the new Governor, then he mobilized six hundred troops under Abdur-Rahman Bin Adis, to fight 'Othman in Medina. After al-Imam 'Ali became Caliph he allowed Muhammad to remain as Governor of Egypt. When Mo'awiah, on his way to Siffin went .to Egypt, Muhammad stopped him from entering Fostat. But Mo'awiah made a treaty with Muhammad. Under this treaty Muhammad Bin Hodhaifa and Abdur-Rahman Bin Adis with twenty-nine men left Cairo in order to be safe from Mo'awiah, but later Mo'awiah captured and imprisoned them. Muhammad was murdered in prison at Damascus by Mo'awia's own slave Roshdain. Muhammad had met the Prophet.

4) Abdur-Rahman Bin Adis Balavi

He was one of the men who attended the treaty of Shajara. He took part in the conquest of Egypt, and some lands in Egypt were under his protection. He was the commander of the army sent from Egypt to fight 'Othman. He was captured by Mo'awiah, and imprisoned in Palestine. After managing to escape he was recaptured and executed. He had the privilege of meeting the prophet.

5) Muhammad Bin Abu Bakr

His mother was Asma, the daughter of Omais Khathamyiah, the wife of Ja'far Bin Abi Talib. After Ja'far was martyred Asma married Abu Bakr and Muhammad was born to her. al-Imam 'Ali adopted him after Abu Bakr died. Muhammad was the commander of the infantry in the battle of Jamal. He was also present at the battle of Siffin.

al-Imam 'Ali appointed him the Governor of Egypt, and he took his office 15.9.37 H.L. Mo'awiah sent an army under the leadership of 'Amr Bin 'As to Egypt in the year of 38, who fought and captured Muhammad then killed him. His body was placed in the belly of a dead donkey and burnt.

6) Abdi

This man was a good speaker and was converted to Islam in the Prophet's time. He attended the Battle

of Siffin when Mo'awiah captured Kufa. Mo'awiah exiled Sa'Sa'a to Bahrain where he died.

7) Malik Ashtar al-Nakha'i

He met the Prophet and was one of the trustworthy Tabe'in (The Followers). He was the chief of his tribe, and after receiving an injury to one of his eyes at the Battle of Yarmook he became known as Ashtar. In the Battles of Jamal and Siffin he was with 'Ali and won great victories. At the age of thirty eight he was appointed Governor of Egypt, but on his way there, near the Red Sea, he died after eating honey mixed with poison which had been planned by Mo'awiah.

The above are short biographies of some of the eminent Muslims. It is regrettable that some historians allege that they followed an unknown Jew. Having known this, we should now try to analyze the motives for 'Abdullah Bin Saba's stories.

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