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Ubayy ibn Ka'b, the Scholarly Youth

Ubayy ibn Ka'b belonged to the Khazraj tribe, that formerly inhabited the Caspian littoral. Before converting to Islam, he was one of the Jewish scholars and intellectuals. He converted to Islam at the age of thirty one. He had complete knowledge of the Tawrat (the Old Testament) and knew about the glad tidings of the coming of the Noble Prophet (S).

When the first Muslim propagator by the name of Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr entered Medina and invited the people to convert to Islam, Ubayy ibn Ka'b responded with clear foresight and complete awareness to the call before he had even met or seen the Noble Prophet (S). During the second allegiance ceremony at 'Aqabah, Ubayy ibn Ka'b was one of the seventy people of Medina who paid allegiance to the Noble Prophet (S).

Before converting to Islam, he was considered as one of the most learned people of Medina. For that reason, it did not take long before he achieved great success among the Muslims. When the Noble Prophet (S) entered Medina, Ubayy ibn Ka'b was the first person among the Helpers [*Ansar*] of Medina to record the Divine Revelation, and, hence, become one of the most famous scribes of the Glorious Qur'an.[1]

Aided by his brilliant intellectual abilities, Ubayy soon became one of the most renowned personalities of the Muslim World. He acquired competence and proficiency in recitation of the Glorious Qur'an and made enormous progress in other fields of Islamic sciences.

It is important to note that this honorable position and status was bestowed upon him by Allah. The Noble Prophet (S) received orders from Allah to recite the Qur'an for Ubayy and teach him how to recite it in a correct manner.

Ubayy had never imagined that some day he could be favored to such a great extent by Allah. When the Noble Prophet (S) informed him about the good news, that Allah had selected him to take up this assignment (recitation of the Glorious Qur'an), he asked in a surprised and eager way, "Did Allah mention me by name?" The Noble Prophet (S) stated, "Yes, he mentioned you by name." He was so

overwhelmed with the honor that he could not restrain the tears from flowing down his cheeks.

In order to bless him with peace, the Noble Prophet (S) recited the following Qur'anic verse [*yah*] for him, ***"Say: In the grace of Allah and in His mercy—it is that they should rejoice; for it is better than that which they gather."***[2]

Ubayy always acted in accordance with the instructions of his teacher, the Noble Prophet (S).

One day, while addressing the Noble Prophet (S), Ubayy said, "O Prophet of Allah! I believed in Allah, and I converted to Islam at your hands, and then learnt the Noble Qur'an from you."[3]

Indeed, Ubayy was always thankful for the great eminence he was honored with, and ascended to great heights because of reciting the Noble Qur'an. Im m al-S diq (*'a*) said this in his favor, "We (the Ahlul Bayt) recite the Noble Qur'an according to Ubayy's way of recitation."[4]

Ubayy ibn Ka'b and Qur'anic studies

In addition to what has been mentioned, Ubayy ibn Ka'b possessed many other special qualities. One of the special qualities which Ubayy possessed was comprehension of the deep and profound meanings of the Glorious Qur'an.

Ubayy ibn Ka'b possessed an enquiring mind, an open attitude and positive thinking regarding Qur'anic studies. It is for this reason that he was always involved in academic research. He used to carefully examine the details expounded in the verses of the Glorious Qur'an. That is why the Noble Prophet (S) always used to encourage him to strive hard at acquiring divine knowledge.[5]

A person asked Ubayy ibn Ka'b for advice. He said, "Your guide, example and judge should be the Glorious Qur'an, because it is a remembrance from Allah's Prophet (S) and an interceder in the presence of Allah. It is a program for the daily activities of the Muslims and is far from accusation and incrimination. The lives of the past peoples have been narrated therein and the right way of life for the Muslims has been shown therein. News about the future of the present Muslims and the generations that will come after has been foretold in the Glorious Qur'an."[6]

Ubayy and the events that occurred after the Noble Prophet (S)

After the sad demise of the Noble Prophet (S) of Islam, the managers of the Assembly of Saq fah succeeded at executing their pre-planned conspiracy to usurp the caliphate and gain the reigns of power. As a result of this, they disregarded 'Al ibn Ab T lib (*'a*), the real Im m of the Islamic community unparalleled in every way from temporal or apparent leadership.[7]

Ubayy, who had painfully witnessed this chaotic state of affairs, used to say, "As long as the Noble Prophet (S) was alive, all eyes were fixed on one point. After his sad demise, however, eyes and faces

started deviating from right to left."[8]

In the afternoon of the day of the Saqīfah, Ubayy ibn Ka'b was passing by a group of the *Ansār*. One of the *Ansār* asked him, "Where are you coming from, Ubayy?" He answered, "From the house of the Prophet's family." They asked him, "How are the Prophet's family faring?" He responded, "How can one describe the state of those whose house is now devoid of the presence of one on whom Allah's angels descended with His Messages?" While saying this he broke down, the tears choking his throat. On witnessing this, the people who had asked him this question started crying too.[9]

Ubayy never paid allegiance to the First Caliph, and believed that the Saqīfah was an illegitimate assembly which possessed no legality and no value at all.[10]

Ubayy was one of the first twelve people who raised their voices of protest against the First Caliph in the Prophet's (S) Mosque, and openly declared their support of 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib (*'a*).[11]

He was constantly protesting against the rulers of his time, and during the rule of 'Uthmān, said, "The rulers of this community have gone astray and destroyed their Hereafter. My heart does not feel pain for them, but breaks for those who have followed these lost leaders. If I stay alive till this Friday, I will reveal the truth as I know it even if I am killed."[12]

But it is very sad that he died on Thursday, the day before Friday of that same week! He passed away in 30 or 32 AH at the age of fifty. Ubayy spent his life as a Muslim struggling to support and uphold the principles of Islam that he had learnt from the Holy Prophet (S) but died of a broken heart filled with sorrow for the direction it was moving in at the hands of the self-appointed rulers. May his soul rest in peace.[13]

1. Al-Asābah, vol. 1, p. 19; Al-Darajāt al-Rafī'ah, p. 324; Zarkulī, Al-A'lām, vol. 1, p. 82; Sifat al-Safwa, vol. 1, p. 188.
2. Sūrat Yūnus 10:57.
3. Hilyat al-'Awliyā, vol. 1, p. 250.
4. Al-Darajāt al-Rafī'ah, p. 324.
5. Hilyat al-Awliyā', vol. 1, p. 250.
6. Hilyat al-Awliyā', vol. 1, p. 253.
7. The usurpers of the caliphate could not dismiss 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib ('a) from divine guardianship because it was Allah the High who had appointed him. Therefore, they only managed to usurp the temporal or apparent leadership. [trans.]
8. Hilyat al-Awliyā', vol. 1, p. 254.
9. Al-Darajāt al-Rafī'ah, p. 325.
10. Al-Fusūl al-Muhimmah, p. 180.
11. Tabarsī, Al-Ihtijāj, p. 47; Tanqīh al-Maqāl, vol. 1, p. 198; Hilyat al-Awliyā', vol. 1, p. 252.
12. Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 3, p. 270.
13. Ibn Sa'd, Tabaqāt, vol. 3, p. 378; Qāmūs al-Rijāl, vol. 1, p. 50; Zarkulī, Al-A'lām, vol. 1, p. 78.

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