

ABD AL-RAHMAN IBN AWF

The Trustworthy Businessman, the Benevolent, the Munificent

The truthful businessman will be in the Gardens of Bliss along with the Ambiya', the Ṣiddīqīn (truthful), the martyrs, and the pious. What if this salient quality is coupled with sincerity in dīn, sacrifice, and spending lavishly in Allah's path?

Our discussion revolves around one such truthful entrepreneur, a man blessed with affluence; affluence he utilised in the service of the religion and the ummah. He is none other than Sayyidunā 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf.

Name and Lineage

He is 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf ibn 'Abd 'Awf ibn 'Abd al-Harith ibn Zuhrah ibn Kilāb. His name during the days of ignorance was 'Abd 'Amr (lit. slave of 'Amr) which Rasūlullāh ﷺ changed to 'Abd al-Rahman when he accepted Islam.

It is reported that he said:

كان اسمي عبد عمرو فلما أسلمت سماني رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم عبد الرحمن

My name was 'Abd 'Amr. As soon as I embraced Islam, Rasūlullāh named me 'Abd al-Rahman.

Another report says that his name in Jahiliyyah was 'Abd al-Ka'bah which Rasūlullāh changed to 'Abd al-Rahman.

His mother is Ṣafiyyah bint 'Abd Manaf ibn Zuhrah ibn Kilāb. It is said that her mother was al-Shifa' bint 'Awf ibn 'Abd al-Harith ibn Zuhrah.

This makes it clear that the lineage of Sayyidunā 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf meets with the lineage of Rasūlullāh from both his father's and mother's side, at his forefather Zuhrah.

Birth

Ibn Sa'd reports in *al-Tabaqat* that he was born 10 years after the year of the elephants.

Agnomen

Sayyidunā 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf was known with the agnomen Abū Muhammad.

Description

It is reported from Sahlah bint 'Āṣim:

كانت عبد الرحمن بن عوف أبيض أعين أهدب الأشفار أفتى طويل النابيين الأعلىين ربما أدمى نابه شفته له جمّة أسفل من أذنيه أعنق ضخم الكتفين

'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf was fair in complexion, large-eyed, with large eye-lashes, a prominent nose, long upper canine teeth—many times his canines will cut his lip—with long hair reaching below his ear lobes, with a long neck, and large shoulders.

Ziyād al-Bakkā'ī reports from Ibn Ishāq:

كان ساقط الثنيتين أهتم أعسر أعرج كان أصيب يوم أحد فهتم و جرح عشرين جراحة بعضها في رجله فعرج

His front two incisors had fallen off, he was left-handed, and lame. He was injured on the Day of Uhud and lost his front teeth and also sustained 20 wounds, some in his leg, which made it lame.

Ya'qūb ibn 'Utbah says:

كان عبد الرحمن رجلا طوالا حسن الوجه رقيق البشرة فيه جنا أبيض مشربا حمرة لا يغير شيبه

'Abd al-Rahman was a tall man, with a handsome face, and delicate skin. He had a slight hunch. He was fair in complexion with a mixture of redness. He would not dye his white hair.

Glance at his Household (Wives and Children)

Sayyidunā 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf had many wives [at different times] and was blessed with a number of children. The number of his children reach close to 28, 20 sons and 8 daughters. In the forthcoming lines, we will discuss them briefly.

1. Umm Kulthūm bint 'Utbah ibn Rabī'ah

- Children from her: Sālīm al-Akbar (passed away before Islam).

Glance at his Household (Continued)

2. The daughter of Shaybah ibn Rabī'ah ibn 'Abd Shams

- Children from her: Umm al-Qāsim (born in Jāhiliyyah).

3. Umm Kulthūm bint 'Uqbah ibn Mu'ayt

- Children from her: Muhammad, Ibrahim, Humayd, Ismail, Humaydah, Amat al-Rahmān.

4. Sahlah bint 'Āṣim ibn 'Adī

- Children from her: Ma'n, 'Umar, Zayd, Amat al-Rahman al-Ṣughrā.

5. Bahriyyah bint Hānī' ibn Qabīṣah

- Children from her: 'Urwah al-Akbar (martyred in the Battles in Africa).

6. Sahlah bint Suhayl ibn 'Amr ibn 'Abd Shams

- Children from her: Sālīm al-Asghar (killed on the Day of the Conquest of Africa).

7. Umm Hakīm bint Qārid ibn Khalid ibn 'Ubayd

- Children from her: Abū Bakr

Glance at his Household (Continued)

8. **The daughter of Abū al-Hays ibn Rāfi' ibn Imra' al-Qays**
 - Children from her: 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd al-Rahman (killed in Africa the day it was conquered).
9. **Tumādir bint al-Isba' ibn 'Amr ibn Tha'labah ibn Hiṣn ibn Damdam**
 - She is the first woman from Kalb to be married to a Qurayshī man.
 - Children from her: Abū Salamah ('Abd Allah al-Asghar).
10. **Asma' bint Salāmah ibn Makhrabah**
 - Children from her: 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Abd al-Rahmān
11. **Umm Hurayth** (From the captives of Bahra')
 - Children from her: Muṣ'ab, Aminah, Maryam
12. **Majd bint Yazīd ibn Salāmah Dhī Fā'ish al-Humayriyyah**
 - Children from her: Suhayl (Abū al-Abyad)

Glance at his Household (Continued)

13. Umm Walad: Ghazal bint Kisrā

- An Umm Walad from the captives of Sayyidunā Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas from the Battle of Madā'in.
- Children from her: 'Uthman

14. Umm Walad: Zaynab bint al-Ṣabah ibn Tha'labah

- Also from the captives of Bahra'.
- Children from her: Umm Yahya bint 'Abd al-Rahman

15. Bādiyah bint Ghaylan ibn Salamah ibn Mutab al-Thaqafi

- Children from her: Juwayriyyah bint 'Abd al-Rahman

Children from other Umm Walads: 'Urwah (passed away in infancy), Yahya (passed away in infancy), Bilāl (passed away in infancy).

Islam and Hijrah

Sayyidunā 'Abd al-Rahmān recognised Islam at an early stage and entered the faith prior to Rasūlullāh entering Dar al-Arqam ibn Abī al-Arqam and preaching there. He is one of the five who accepted Islam at the hands of Sayyidunā Abū Bakr al-Siddiq after his invitation. He is also one of the first eight attestors to the faith.

After he accepted Islam, he bore his share of persecution and harassment of the Mushrikīn. He was among those who immigrated to Abyssinia, on both occasions. Thereafter, he emigrated to Madīnah al-Munawwarah, seeking the pleasure of Allah and with the intention to assist His religion, leaving behind in Makkah an abundance of wealth and property.

Al-Bukhārī narrates on the authority of Sayyidunā Anas:

قدم عبد الرحمن بن عوف المدينة فأخى النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم بينه وبين سعد بن الربيع الأنصاري فعرض عليه أي سعدة أن ينصفه أهله و ماله فقال عبد الرحمن بارك الله لك في أهلك و مالك دلني على السوق فريح شيئاً من أقط و سمن فرأه النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم بعد أيام و عليه وضر من صفرة فقال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم مهيم يا عبد الرحمن قال يا رسول الله تزوجت امرأة من الأنصار قال فما سقت فيها فقال وزن نواة من ذهب فقال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم أولم و لو بشاة

'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf arrived in Madīnah. The Nabī contracted brotherhood between him and Sa'd ibn al-Rabī' al-Anṣārī. Sa'd offered to share half of his family and wealth with him but 'Abd al-Rahmān politely declined saying, "May Allah bless you in your family and wealth. Just show me the marketplace." He gained some cheese and butter as profit. After a few days, the Nabī spotted him with some yellow die. The Nabī asked, "What is the good news, O 'Abd al-Rahman?" He explained, "O Messenger of Allah, I got married to a woman from the Anṣār." Rasūlullāh enquired, "What did you give as dowry to her?" "Gold equivalent to a date pit," he explained. Rasūlullāh advised, "Make walimah, even if it be with a sheep."

From this we can realise the extent of distress Sayyidunā 'Abd al-Rahman faced and the amount of perseverance he displayed in the face of difficulties and hardships. All of this sacrifice in the path of Allah. It was not long before Allah honoured him with plenty of wealth, which he did not hoard but rather spent in the path of Allah.

His Fear of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic

Sayyidunā 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf had deep fear for Allah and envisaged Him in all aspects of his life.

Al-Bukhārī narrates from Ibrāhīm ibn Sa'd—from Sa'd—from his father who says:

أتى عبد الرحمن بن عوف يوماً بطعامه فقال قتل مصعب بن عمير و كان خيراً مني فلم يوجد له ما يكفن فيه إلا بردة و قتل حمزة أو رجل آخر خير مني فلم يوجد له ما يكفن فيه إلا بردة لقد خشيت أن يكون عجلت لنا طيباتنا في حياتنا الدنيا ثم جعل يبكي

Food was brought to 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf one day. He commented, "Muṣ'ab ibn 'Umayr was killed and he was superior to me. Sufficient cloth to shroud him was not found, except one shawl. Hamzah—or another man was killed who was better than me and sufficient cloth to shroud him was not available except a shawl. I fear that our good deeds have been hastened for us in our worldly life." After saying this, he began to weep.

Fragrant Shower of the Virtues of Ibn 'Awf

Sayyidunā 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf is one of the first forerunners to the faith. He is among the first eight that entered Islam, and one of the five that brought īmān at the hands of al-Siddiq. He immigrated twice to Abyssinia and then to Madīnah. He witnessed Badr and all the major campaigns alongside Rasūlullāh. He is one of the Ten Promised Jannah and one of the six men of the committee regarding whom Sayyidunā 'Umar confirmed that Rasūlullāh passed away while being pleased with them.

Sayyidunā 'Abd al-Rahman was one of the phenomenal economical structures in Islam; one who spent his wealth generously, to the extent that we can safely say that the wealth of Sayyidunā 'Abd al-Rahman was for Islam. On one hand, he participates in Jihad alongside Rasūlullāh and the Sahabah with great sacrifice, and at the same time he was an outstanding individual in the financial field. As reported by Ahmad in his *al-Musnad*:

لقد رأيتني و لو رفعت حجراً رجوت أن أصيب تحته ذهباً أو فضة

I definitely remember my past, if I had to lift a stone, I hoped to find underneath it gold or silver.

In the forthcoming lines, a presentation of the virtues and merits of the prominent Ṣahābī Sayyidunā 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf will come to view.

Jannah is the Most Expensive desired Commodity

Ahmad and al-Tirmidhī report from Sayyidunā 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf:

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم أبو بكر في الجنة و عمر في الجنة و عثمان في الجنة و علي في الجنة و طلحة في الجنة و الزبير في الجنة و عبد الرحمن بن عوف في الجنة وسعد في الجنة وسعيد في الجنة و أبو عبيدة بن الجراح في الجنة

Rasūlullāh stated: "Abū Bakr is in Jannah. 'Umar is in Jannah. 'Uthmān is in Jannah. 'Alī is in Jannah. Talhah is in Jannah. Zubayr is in Jannah. 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf is in Jannah. Sa'd is in Jannah. Sa'īd is in Jannah. Abū 'Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah is in Jannah."

Al-Tirmidhī reports from the same sanad, via Sayyidunā Sa'īd ibn Zayd:

إن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال عشرة في الجنة أبو بكر في الجنة وعمر في الجنة و عثمان و علي و الزبير و طلحة و عبد الرحمن و أبو عبيدة و سعد بن أبي وقاص ...

Indeed, Rasūlullāh declared: "Ten individuals are in Jannah. Abū Bakr is in Jannah. 'Umar is in Jannah as well as 'Uthmān, 'Alī, Zubayr, Talhah, 'Abd al-Rahman, Abū 'Ubaydah, and Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās."

It is also authentically transmitted that Rasūlullāh praised the one who cares for his wives and sympathises with them after his demise.

This is exactly what Sayyidunā 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf did. He bequeathed that an orchard be sold for a handsome amount of money which ought to be given to Rasūlullāh's spouses.

Ahmad, al-Tabarānī, and al-Hakim report on the authority of Umm Salamah:

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يعني لأزواجه الذي يحنو عليكم بعدي لهو الصادق البار اللهم اسق ابن عوف من السلسبيل

Rasūlullāh told his wives, "The one who displays compassion towards you after my passing is definitely the truthful and devout. [She would then pray:] O Allah, give Ibn 'Awf drink from al-Salsabīl (a river in Jannah)."

Ibn Majah reports from Sayyidunā Sa'īd ibn Zayd:

أشهد على رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم أنني سمعته يقول اثبت حراء فما عليك إلا نبي أو صديق أو شهيد و عدهم رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم أبو بكر و عمر و عثمان و علي و طلحة والزبير و سعد و ابن عوف و سعيد بن زيد

I bear testimony upon Rasūlullāh that I heard him stating, "Remain firm, O Hirā', for only a nabī, ṣiddīq, or martyr is upon you." Rasūlullāh listed them: Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, 'Alī, Talhah, Zubayr, Sa'd, Ibn 'Awf, and Sa'īd ibn Zayd.

Rasūlullāh performs salah behind him in the Tabūk Campaign

One of the privileges of Sayyidunā 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf is that Rasūlullāh performed salah behind him in the Tabūk campaign.

Muslim reports via his sanad from Sayyidunā Mughīrah ibn Shu'bah who participated alongside Rasūlullāh in the battle of Tabūk...

Mughīrah continues: *I came back with him only to find that the people had put 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf ahead, who was leading them in salah. Rasūlullāh made one of the two rak'at, so he prayed the second rak'at with the people. After 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf made salām, Rasūlullāh stood up to complete his ṣalāh...*

Abū Ya'lā reports from 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf in his *al-Musnad*:

أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم لما انتهى إلى عبد الرحمن بن عوف و هو يصلي بالناس أراد عبد الرحمن أن يتأخر فأومأ إليه النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم أن مكانك فصلّى و صلى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم بصلاة عبد الرحمن

When Rasūlullāh reached 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf, who was leading the people in salah, the latter intended to move back. The Nabī gestured to him to remain in his place. Thus he led the ṣalāh and Rasūlullāh followed the salah of 'Abd al-Rahman.

Spending in the Path of Allah

Sayyidunā 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf was an extremely generous and big-hearted individual. One sample of his lavish spending is that he freed 30 slaves in one day.

Ma'mar reports from al-Zuhrī:

تصدق عبد الرحمن بن عوف على عهد رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم بشطر ماله أربعة آلاف ثم تصدق بأربعين ألفاً ثم تصدق بأربعين ألف دينار ثم حمل على خمسمائة فرس في سبيل الله ثم حمل على خمسمائة راحلة في سبيل الله و كان عامة ماله من التجارة

During the lifetime of Rasūlullāh, 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf gave half his wealth, 4000 (silver coins) in charity, followed by 40,000, followed by 40,000 gold coins. He then mounted 500 warriors on horses in the path of Allah followed by mounting 500 soldiers on camels in the path of Allah.

Ibn 'Asākir reports from Abū Salamah—from Abū Hurayrah that Rasūlullāh declared:

خياركم خياركم لنسائي قال فأوصى عبد الرحمن لهن بحديقة قومت أو بيعت بأربعمائة ألف

"The best of you are the ones who are best to my wives." Accordingly, 'Abd al-Rahman bequeathed in their name an orchard valued at or sold for 400,000.

Al-Tirmidhī reports from Muhammad ibn 'Amr—from Abū Salamah:

إن عبد الرحمن بن عوف أوصى بحديقة لأمهات المؤمنين ببيع بأربعمائة ألف

'Abd al-Rahman bequeathed an orchard for the Ummahāt al-Mu'minīn sold for 400,000.

Al-Tirmidhī reports on the authority of Sayyidah Aishah:

إن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم كان يقول لهن إن أمركن مما يهمني بعدي و لن يصبر عليكن إلا الصابرون قال ثم تقول عائشة فسقى الله أبائك من سلسبيل الجنة تريد عبد الرحمن بن عوف و كان قد وصل أزواج النبي صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم بمال بيعت بأربعين ألفا

Ahmad narrates in his *al-Musnad* from Umm Bakr bint al-Musawwir:

إن عبد الرحمن بن عوف باع أرضا له من عثمان بن عفان بأربعين ألف دينار فقسمه في فقراء بني زهرة و في المهاجرين و أمهات المؤمنين ...

'Abd al-Rahman sold a land of his to 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān for 40,000 gold coins which he distributed among the needy of the Banū Zuhrah, the Muhājirīn, and the Ummahāt al-Mu'minīn.

His Jihād alongside Rasūlullāh

Sayyidunā 'Abd al-Rahman was not content with sacrificing only his wealth in the path of Allah. He also presented his soul to be sacrificed for his dīn. He thus participated in all the campaigns alongside Rasūlullāh.

He is among the Sahabah who witnessed Badr. He, Abū Bakr, and 'Umar shared one camel, taking turns to ride. In the battle of Badr, two of the leaders of the mushrikīn were killed in his presence: Abū Jahl and Umayyah ibn Khalaf.

As regards the slaying of Abū Jahl, Sayyidunā 'Abd al-Rahman tells us the story as reported by al-Bukhārī and Muslim:

بيننا أنا واقف في الصف يوم بدر فنظرت عن يميني وعن شمالي فإذا أنا بـغلامين من الأنصار حديثا أسنانهما ... فغمزني أحدهما فقال يا عم هل تعرف أبا جهل ... فابتدراه بسيفيهما فضرباه حتى قتلاه ...

His belongings went to Mu'ādh ibn 'Amr ibn al-Jamūh. The two youngsters were Mu'ādh ibn 'Afrā' and Mu'ādh ibn 'Amr ibn al-Jamūh.

As for the second of them, Sayyidunā 'Abd al-Rahman yet again narrates as documented by al-Bukhārī:

كاتب أمية بن خلف كتابا بأن يحفظني في صاغيتي بمكة و أحفظه في صاغيته بالمدينة ... فلما كان في يوم بدر خرجت إلى جبل لأحرزه ... فأبصره بلال ... فتخللوه بالسيوف من تحتي حتى قتلوه و أصاب أحدهم رجلي بسيفه ...

The narrator says: 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf would show us that scar at the back of his leg.

'Abd al-Rahman also participated in Uhud and excelled. He sustained 21 wounds on that day. He was injured on his leg due to which he had a limp and his two front incisors fell out as well.

Despatched by Rasūlullāh to Dawmat al-Jandal

One of his merits is that Rasūlullāh sent him to Dawmat al-Jandal in Sha'bān, 6 A.H. Rasūlullāh first summoned him and tied a turban around his head with his own blessed hand and commanded, "Wage war in the name of Allah..." Sayyidunā 'Abd al-Rahman married Tumādir bint al-Asbagh and brought her with him back to Madīnah. She is the mother of Abū Salamah ibn 'Abd al-Rahmān.

A Station with 'Abd al-Rahman's Deep Understanding

The Sahabah would refer to him in legal matters and had full reliance on his words.

Ahmad reports in his *al-Musnad* regarding the doubt in ṣalāh:

سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يقول إذا شك أحدكم في صلاته فلم يدر أواحدة صلى أم ثنتين فليجعلها واحدة ...

'Abd al-Rahman said: "I heard Rasūlullāh saying: 'When any of you has doubt in his ṣalāh and does not know whether he performed a single or two rak'at, he should settle on one...'"

Al-Bukhārī reports from Sayyidunā 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbās regarding the plague in Shām:

'Umar ibn al-Khattāb left for Shām... They informed him that a plague has ravaged the land of Shām...

'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf arrived and said: "I have knowledge regarding this. I heard Rasūlullāh advising: 'When you hear of a plague in a land, then do not go to it. And if it breaks out in a land where you are present, then do not leave, running away from it.'" Hearing this, 'Umar praised Allah and then departed.

Another testimony of his is with regards the issue of accepting Jizyah from the Magians of Hajar:

'Umar had not accepted Jizyah from the Magians until 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf bore witness that Rasūlullāh accepted it from the Magians of Hajar.

Similarly, the issue of whipping after consuming liquor:

'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf suggested: "I feel that you make it equal to the lightest hadd." Accordingly, 'Umar gave 80 lashes.

'Abd al-Rahman's Question is the Cause for Ease on the Excusable

Rasūlullāh allowed 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf and Zubayr ibn al-'Awwām to wear silk robes during a journey due to itchiness or a disease they were experiencing.

Rasūlullāh testifies for Goodness for 'Abd al-Rahman

Al-Tabarānī and Ibn 'Asākir report:

Rasūlullāh advised, "Marry her to 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf since he is from the cream of the Muslims. And the best Muslims are those similar to him."

'Uthmān bears witness to the Goodness of 'Abd al-Rahman

Ibn Sa'd and al-Hakim report from Miswar ibn Makhramah:

'Uthmān explained, "Whoever thinks that he is better than your maternal uncle (i.e. 'Abd al-Rahman) in the first and second hijrah, is lying."

Demise

Just before his demise, an amazing incident took place:

One night 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf fell unconscious for a long period... He then regained consciousness and uttered the takbīr... He related a dream where he was told that he is among those for whom Allah decreed good fortune and forgiveness. He remained alive after this incident for a month and thereafter passed away.

After a life filled with sacrifice, he passed away in the year 31 A.H. in Madīnah at the age of 75. He bequeathed 50,000 gold coins for the path of Allah, and 400 gold coins for each of the surviving participants of Badr (100 in number).

Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ was one of those who carried his janāzah saying, "What a huge mountain!" He left behind plenty of wealth, including gold cut up with axes, 1,000 camels, 100 horses, and 3,000 sheep.

Upon his demise, Sayyidunā 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib said:

ذهب ابن عوف فقد أدركت صفوها و سبقت رنقها

Ibn 'Awf has left. You have attained its purity and remained safe from its murkiness.

Congratulations to you, O Ibn 'Awf, for the reward of what you spent in the path of Allah seeking His pleasure, and for Jannah which Rasūlullāh gave you glad tidings of.