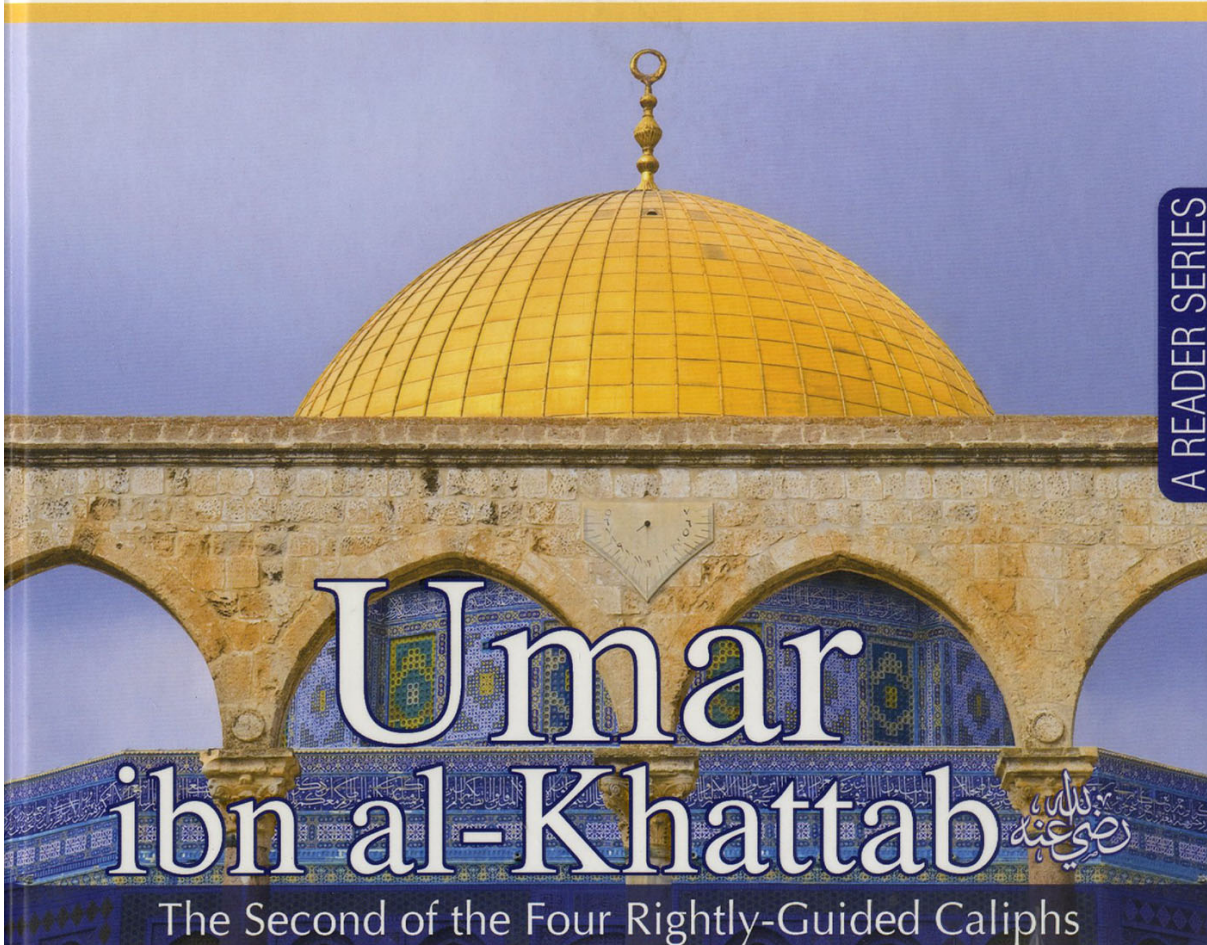


HISTORY OF ISLAM

The Age of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs
AL-KHULAFÄ AR-RASHIDÜN



A READER SERIES

Umar ibn al-Khattab

The Second of the Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs



Maulvi Abdul Aziz

History of Islam “A Reader Series”

The Age of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs:

AL- Khulafa ar-Rashidun

Umar ibn al-Khattab

(May Allah be pleased with him)

The Second of the Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs

By: Maulvi Abdul Aziz

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Publisher's Note



In the Name of Allah, the Lord of Grace, the Ever Merciful

For many years, I have been looking for textbooks on the History of Islam for English-speaking students, yet I have found very few. Most did not overcome a common problem: they did not go beyond the era of the Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs, may Allah be pleased with them all.

Bearing this in mind, we, at Darussalam, have resolved to present the entire History of Islam to our youth in language that appeals to them, in a simple yet lucid manner. The first four volumes in this series explore Islamic history during the period of the first Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs. Later volumes would be devoted to the History of Islam, down through the ages to modern times, in sha' Allah.

Our past, present, and future are interconnected and interdependent. Therefore, knowing and understanding our history is not optional; it is essential.

This is the second volume from this series, which deals with the life of Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second of the Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs. The evaluation of Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, and his far-sighted policies is captured in a statement attributed to the Prophet, 'There were in the nations before you "inspired people", and if there is any one of them in my nation, it is Umar.'

We would like to thank the author Maulvi Abdul Aziz, the editor and the designer Mr. Shahzad Ahmed for their diligent efforts in preparing this volume. We hope this work will inspire our youth to form a personal relationship with Umar ibn al-Khattab and encourage them to commit their lives sincerely to the mission of 'Al-Faruq', that is, discerning truth from falsehood, which he has left behind as our common heritage.

Abdul Malik Mujahid

Muharram 23, 1433

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December 18, 2011

Chapter 1: Umar ibn al-Khattab



Umar ibn al-Khattab The Second of the Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs

After the death of Abu Bakr as-Siddiq May Allah be pleased with him, Umar ibn al-Khattab May Allah be pleased with him became the leader of the Muslim nation or Ummah. The Muslims took Bai'ah or the oath of loyalty at the hand of Umar, in Madinah on Tuesday, 23 Jumada al-Akhirah, in the year 13 AH/634 CE. Before his death, Abu Bakr had named Umar as his successor – a decision that apparently met with no resistance from the large community. There was good reason for this general acceptance. Umar enjoyed a very high status due to his record of early and enormous service to Islam.

Umar succeeded Abu Bakr whose official title was Khalifat Rasul Allah or the Successor to the Messenger of Allah (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Thus, Umar was first called Khalifat Khalifat RasulAllah, meaning Successor to the Successor of the Messenger of Allah. People realized that repetition of the word Khalifah would prove awkward to use in daily speech. Thus, he adopted the title Amir al-Mu'minin: Commander or Leader of the Believers. This sounded more attractive to the Muslims, since it was shorter, easier and more suitable for common use. Amir al-Mu'minin henceforth became the title of the lawful ruler of the nation after him. The Arabic term Amir stresses the role of the leader primarily as a counsellor or guide, which is quite fitting for the Caliph's position. Some scholars have appropriately translated the title Amir al-Mu'minin as 'First Counsellor'. The Caliphate of Umar marked the period when one of the most outstanding political leaders – not only of Islam but in the history of the world – took over the command of state affairs at Madinah.

When the Bai'ah or declaration of loyalty or allegiance by the people was over, Umar ascended the pulpit and addressed the people assembled in the Mosque:

'Abu Bakr is no more with us. He successfully ran the affairs of the Ummah for more than two years. I wish the responsibility of leading the nation had fallen on someone else. I never desired such a position. I do not want to put myself on the same level as Abu Bakr.'

After this, he went down one step, praised Allah, and then said:

'I promise that I shall not run away from this responsibility. I shall fulfil my duty to the best of my ability. I shall seek guidance from the Qur'an, from the teachings of the Messenger of Allah (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and the example set by Abu Bakr in running the affairs of the State. In this work, I will also seek your participation and help. If I am right, follow me; if I deviate, correct me so that we may not go astray. Many of you say that I was harsh during the lifetime of the Messenger of Allah (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and uncompromising during Abu Bakr's rule. Yes, whenever they sought my opinion, I gave my opinion. Sometimes they accepted my

opinion, and sometimes they rejected it. However, thanks to Allah, the Messenger of Allah (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was pleased with me, and so was Abu Bakr. Now that the responsibility has fallen on me, I shall try to be gentle and tender. However, I shall be stern and strict against an aggressor in favour of the weak and poor.’

Umar then sought Allah’s blessings and the people’s co-operation in running the affairs of the state.

The Early Life of Umar ibn al-Khattab

Umar ibn al-Khattab was born in a clan of the Quraysh in Makkah, thirteen years after the Year of the Elephant. He was white with a reddish complexion. He had handsome cheeks, nose, eyes and large hands and feet. He was muscular, tall and bald. He was very strong and bold. When he walked, he walked quickly; when he spoke, he spoke clearly, and when he struck, he caused pain.

His father was al-Khattab ibn Nufayl. His mother was Hantamah bint Hashim, the sister of Abu Jahl. He had thirteen children in all: nine sons and four daughters. One of his daughters, Hafsah, was married to the Messenger of Allah (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) after his migration to Madinah. The total number of his wives was seven – including those whom he married during the time of Ignorance (Jahiliyyah) and Islam, as well as those he divorced, who died or were left behind after his death.

He was one of the few Makkans who were able to read and write. He bore responsibility at an early age. He had a very harsh upbringing devoid of wealth and luxury. His father al-Khattab forced him to tend his camels. His father’s harsh treatment had a negative effect on Umar, which he remembered all his life. This was a period of hardship during Umar’s life.

Once, when Umar went for Hajj and reached Dajnan (a mountain situated at a distance of some 25 kilometres from Makkah), he said, ‘There is no God but Allah, the Most High, the Most Great, the One Who gives whatever He Wills to whomever He wills! I used to tend the camels of al-Khattab in this valley, wearing a woollen garment. He was harsh. He would exhaust me when I worked and beat me if I fell short. And now here I am, with no one between me and Allah!’



Umar did not just tend livestock for his father, he used to tend the animals of his maternal aunts as well. In return for it, they would give him a handful of dates or raisins, which would suffice him for the day. Tending livestock made Umar acquire good qualities such as patience, toughness, and self-control. Umar was also a famous sportsman from his early youth and excelled in all kinds of sports, such as wrestling, riding and horsemanship.

He earned a reputation as a wrestler. He enjoyed and narrated poetry. He was interested in history and the current affairs of his people. By profession, he was a trader. He would engage in trade and learn the history of the Arabs and the battles and conflicts that had occurred among the tribes. Trade made Umar one of the rich men of Makkah. He was introduced to many people in the lands that he visited for the purpose of trade and became familiar with their customs. He travelled to Syria in the summer and Yemen in winter.

People used to come to him to settle their disputes and he would judge between the Arabs regarding their disputes before Islam. Umar resisted Islam in the beginning, because he feared that this new Faith would shake the system that was well-established in Makkah. Makkah enjoyed a special status among the Arabs. It was the site of the Sacred House to which people came for pilgrimage. This gave the Quraysh a unique status among the Arabs. It brought material wealth to Makkah. This was the reason for the city's prosperity and its people's enormous wealth. Thus, the rich men of Makkah stood up against Islam. They tortured the weak among those who accepted Islam, and Umar too was at the forefront of those who persecuted the weak Muslims. Even so, because of his outstanding qualities and bravery, Umar enjoyed enormous power and influence in Arabia.

Umar's Acceptance of Islam



Umar's heart was moved on the day when he saw some women of the Quraysh leaving Makkah and travelling to Ethiopia, a distant land, because of the persecution that they were facing from him and others like him. His conscience was stirred. He felt remorse and pity for them. He spoke kind words to them, which they had never expected to hear from someone like Umar. He wondered: what was the secret behind this extraordinary strength? He felt sad and his heart was filled with pain.

Shortly afterwards, Umar embraced Islam. The main reason behind his acceptance of Islam was the Du'a or supplication of the Messenger of Allah (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as we shall learn shortly.

Umar's Decision to Kill the Messenger of Allah (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)



Once, the Quraysh met to discuss the matter of the Prophet (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). They asked each other, 'Who will kill him?' Umar responded, 'I will do it.' Umar had been one of the most unbending enemies of the Prophet of Allah (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and his mission. He was devoted to the pagan cult centred on the Ka'bah and used to blame the

Prophet (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) for dividing the loyalties of the Quraysh by questioning their ancient pagan religion.

As he left his home in fury with his sword in hand, he met a friend who had become a Muslim but he had not made public his Islam for fear of the Quraysh. 'Where are you heading, O Umar?' asked his friend Nu'aym ibn Abdullah. Umar said, 'I am looking for the one who has changed his religion, who has divided the Quraysh, criticized their religion and slandered their gods. I am going to kill him.' Nu'aym at once responded, 'Have you any idea what will happen if you kill him?' The entire tribe of Banu Abd Manaf will take their revenge on you.' They argued until their voices became loud. 'It seems you too have become a Muslim,' Umar remarked furiously. He added, 'If I find it to be true, I shall start with you.' Nu'aym realized that it was not possible to stop Umar. He, therefore, revealed, 'Let me tell you that your sister Fatimah and her husband have accepted Islam. They have abandoned you and the misguidance that you follow.'

Suddenly, Umar changed his path. Instead of going to the Messenger of Allah (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), he headed toward his sister's home. Nu'aym, obviously, went straight to inform the Prophet of Allah (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

Umar loved his sister very much, but his fury and hatred against Islam made him lose all sense. When the furious Umar reached their home, Fatimah and her husband were reciting a Surah of the Qur'an written on a parchment, under the instruction of another Muslim named Khabbab. On hearing his irate voice at the door, Khabbab hid from Umar. Fatimah immediately hid the parchment as soon as she noticed Umar entering her home. Nevertheless, Umar had already seen it. When he questioned them, both Fatimah and her husband confessed that they had accepted Islam. They had concealed it for fear of the Quraysh. Upon hearing this, Umar struck his brother-in-law. When his sister sprang up to defend him, he struck her as well and drew blood. However, at the sight of his wounded sister he was overcome with regret. Seeing his changed expression, Fatimah said, 'O enemy of Allah! Are you hitting me, because I believe in Allah alone?' He said, 'Yes.' She said, 'Do what you like. I bear witness that there is no god except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. We have become Muslims whether you like it or not.'

When Umar heard this, he regretted what he had done. He realized that he had behaved in a senseless manner. When he calmed down, Umar asked Fatimah and her husband to show him what they were reciting before his arrival. However, Fatimah told him he could not touch it, because he was not clean.

So Umar washed himself and then took the parchment of the Qur'an to see what his sister and brother-in-law were reading. Umar saw Surah Ta Ha and some other Surahs (chapters of the Qur'an) were written on it. He saw on it the words: 'Bismillah ir-Rahmanir Rahim' [In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious the Most Merciful]. When he read the words ar-Rahman and ar-Rahim, he was amazed. He began to read Surah TaHa [Surah 20: 1-8] and felt a growing respect and awe for the words. He said, 'How beautiful and noble are these words!' When Khabbab heard this, he came out from his hiding-place and said, 'Umar, I have hope that Allah has chosen you through the supplication of His Prophet whom I heard praying yesterday, "O Allah! Strengthen Islam with Abu'l Hakam, the son of Hisham, or with Umar, the son of al-Khattab!"' 'O Khabbab,' said Umar, 'Where will Allah's Messenger be now, that I may go to him and enter Islam?' Tears of joy flowed from the eyes of Fatimah and her husband. It was the happiest moment for them.