Fatimah bint al-Khattab
The Sister of Umar ibn al-Khattab
(may Allah be pleased with them)

A Woman of High Status

One of the excellent qualities of Fatimah bint al-Khattab is that her story is always mentioned whenever the story of her brother, Umar's Islam is narrated.

She was the sister of Umar and the wife if Sa'eed ibn Zayd (radhiAllahu anhu), a great Companion and one of the ten who were given the glad tiding of Paradise.

It is enough an honor and glory for her and her husband, that Allah make them the cause of Umar's acceptance of Islam. Allah guides whomever He wants to the straight path.

The story of Umar's Embracing Islam

Umar was sitting down in the company of some Qurayshi chiefs chatting away in the courtyard of the Ka`bah. They were troubled with the spread of Muhammad's call, the increase in the rank of his followers and their steadfastness and audacity in making fool of the Qurayshi idols like al-Lat, al-'Uzza, al-Manat and others. 'Umar became extremely enraged. He stood up from the gathering and decided then and there to kill Muhammad (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) and spare the Quraysh the embarrassment that his religion had caused them and the havoc it had wreaked upon their unity where members of the same family had become disunited.

On his way to the Prophet's place, a man from Banu Makhzum met him and perceived the rage in his face. He asked 'Umar, "Where are you going?" 'Umar answered, "To Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah! I want to kill him and rid us from his trouble!" The man then told him, "Do you think that the clan of 'Abd Manaf would leave you alone if you kill him? Put your own house in order first!"

'Umar asked in utter amazement and extreme rage, "What do you mean and whom do you mean?"

The man answered, "Your sister, Fatimah and your brother-inlaw, Sa'eed ibn Zayd. They have followed Muhammad!"

'Umar then said, "Are you sure? Woe unto them from me!" He changed his direction and headed for the house of his sister, Fatimah, holding the handle of his sword raging like a furious lion.

Until that moment, the call to Islam was kept secret except for a few Companions who used to pronounce their Islam openly like Abu Bakr, the young 'Ali, Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas and Zubayr ibn al-'Awwam - may Allah be pleased with all of them.

One of the one's who would secretly take the teachings of the Messenger to the houses and have private lessons was Khabbab ibn al-Arat (radhiAllahu anhu). He was the one in charge of teaching Sa' eed and Fatimah. He would get information from the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) and come to them secretly to teach them what he had learned. Umar arrived at the house of his sister and brother-in-law.

At the entrance, he heard some murmuring but could not recognize its wordings properly. He violently knocked at the door and shouted! Khabbab quickly hid in a comer of the house. Fatimah covered the pages they were reading and her husband rushed to open the door for Umar. They have all realized that it was Umar, and that his violent knocking at the door and the echo of his voice were signs of an imminent danger and confrontation. He asked, "What is this murmuring I was hearing?"

They denied that there was any murmuring. He then spoke to them harshly and threatened them of terrible consequences if it was true that they had followed Muhammad (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) his religion.

Fatimah bint Khattab's Bravery and Power of Faith

It was there and then that his sister, Fatimah confronted him boldly and said it loud and clear without any fear that she and her husband had accepted Islam and testified that there is no deity worthy of being worshipped but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah!

All of a sudden, Umar pounced on Sa'eed and threw him on the floor. When Fatimah dashed forward to defend her husband, Umar gave her such a brutal slap on her face that she started bleeding.

It was the sight of his own sister's blood that served to bring him back to his senses. He felt bad. He went to Sa'eed and lifted him off the floor and then to his sister Fatimah and wiped the blood off her face.

On one hand, 'Umar was amazed by his sister's and her husband's insistence upon the religion of Islam. On the other, he emotionally changed into a positive human being, with sense of good awakened inside his heart. He then started talking to his sister and her husband in a friendly way until she brought out the pages that contained the beginning of Surah TaHa.

When 'Umar wanted to read it, she quickly stopped him and asked him to wash himself first. He quickly did as she requested.

Fatimah's brave and courageous stand, the spirited manner in which she faced the confrontation and the purity of her soul and conscience revealed to us her strong personality, especially when we know that the other side of the confrontation is Umar ibn al-Khattab. 'Umar read the clear verses of the Book of Allah and was moved to tears.

'Umar spoke, and the first word he uttered was, "Where is Muhammad?" Fatimah and Sa'eed felt some fear within themselves, believing that 'Umar was still insistent on harming the Prophet (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam).

But 'Umar allayed their fear and announced to them that he only wanted to embrace Islam in his presence. They then told him that the Prophet (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) was in the House of Arqam. It was then that Khabbab came out of hiding and told 'Umar, "Rejoice, O' 'Umar! You have been blessed with the Prophet's invocation. I heard him asking Allah to strengthen Islam with you."

This increased 'Umar in confidence and he felt happier. His sister who, for a long time, had been wishing for his guidance so that he could help the Muslims was also extremely happy.

It was therefore from the house of Fatimah and Sa'eed that 'Umar came out.

'Umar came to the House of Arqam and knocked on the door. One of the present Companions looked through a crack and came back terrified and worried saying, "Messenger of Allah, it is the son of al-Khattab!"

The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) smiled and said, "Be calm! Umar has come to you with the light of Islam shinning between his eyes!"

Alllahu Akbar! The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) was saying this though he had not yet seen 'Umar!

The Prophet (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) called on Allah and Allah answered his invocation. He asked Allah for 'Umar's acceptance of Islam and acceptance soon came from Allah, the All-Powerful, Most-Beneficent.

The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) then commanded that the door be opened for 'Umar. When the door was opened, the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) advanced towards 'Umar while all those who were present moved back. He grabbed 'Umar by his collar, pulled him strongly and then said, "O' son of al-Khattab! What are you waiting for? Os it not time you embraced Islam!"

And 'Umar spoke and he said, "I testify that there is no god worthy of being worshipped except Allah and that you, Muhammad, are the Messenger of Allah!" The Muslims who were present there raised their voice in a *takbeer* that echoed throughout the house and whose echo reached those who were at the Ka'bah. 'Umar's Islam was a victory for the Muslims! Allah strengthened him with Islam and strengthened Islam with him.

With Umar's acceptance of Islam, the call of Islam came out of the secrecy into the public and Allah made a distinction between the truth and falsehood. The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) then titled him *al-Farooq,* and gave him the nickname, *Abu Hafs.*

May Allah be pleased with Fatimah bint al-Khattab and please her! She was indeed Islam's key to 'Umar's heart. Her house was the starting point of his reversion to the truth and guidance.