

Zaynab bint Muhammad (radhiAllahu anha)

The blessed daughter of the Prophet (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam)

Zaynab (radhiallahu anha) was born ten years before her father was chosen as a Prophet. She was eldest child of the Prophet (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam). So she belonged to the noblest parents in the world. Her father, Muhammad ibn Abdullah (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) is the one who Allah sent as a mercy to mankind. He is the Leader of all the Prophets and the Seal of the Messengers.

Zaynab's mother, Khadijah (radhiallahu anha) is the leader of all women of the world. She had the greatest lineage, nobility, virtue and knowledge. She was also married to the dearest of Allah's creatures to Him.

Zaynab's Growth

Having the greatest parents in the world, Zaynab grew in a household of righteousness, wisdom and love. Like other children of noble Arabs, she was given to a wet nurse. And when she had had her share of that, the gracious house of her parents embraced her with great love and affection once again.

When she grew up to be an adolescent, her mother started training her on how to look after the household responsibilities. She tried to keep her away from childish nonsense. While she was still a young girl, Zaynab was, to her younger sister Fatimah, a great educator and a caring sister. She would take care of her affairs and play with her. This responsibility became greater after the death of their mother, Khadijah (radhiallahu anha).

Married Life

When Zaynab was old enough for marriage, she was married to Abul-Aas ibn Rabi`. He was very close to his aunt Khadijah who treated him like her own son and showed love and compassion to him.

The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) was also pleased with his good character and pleasant nature.

Zaynab and Abul-Aas had two children: a boy named 'Ali and a girl named Umamah. This brought even more happiness and delight to their blessed household. The two children were the Prophet's first grandchildren.

But due to a being a trader and a well-placed person among his people, Abul-Aas travelled a lot. He would be away in Syria for many days and nights due to which Zaynab would feel sad and worried about his condition.

One day, when Abul-Aas was on one of his journeys, a great event happened: The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) was called to Prophethood and was commissioned to deliver the divine message of Allah's oneness to the people of the world. As did her mother and her sisters, she also followed her father and embraced Islam. When her husband came back from his journey, she told him of what had happened while he was away. He also heard the same news from the people.

The Separation

Abul-Aas told his beloved wife, Zaynab, "By Allah, I have nothing against your father and nothing is dearer to me than following the same path with you. But I hate that people should say that I have disappointed my clan by disbelieving in the gods of my ancestors in order to please my wife. Can you please excuse me?" They then separated from each other.

All the happiness and delight of their previous life was filled with anxiety, sorrow and caution.

It should be noted here that this decision of Abul-Aas to follow the path of his people was nothing but a product of pride of the time of ignorance that had prevailed over many others like him. This arrogance was caused by tribalism and utter ignorance.

The Persevering Believer

Zaynab (radhiallahu anha) witnessed the disbelievers' persecution of the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) and the early Muslims. During this period, she was extremely sad and distressed. She would cry and cry and then resign her fate to Allah hoping that He would one day provide a way out for them. Throughout this whole time she was firm in her belief in Islam.

Zaynab's Husband Captured!?

After the hijrah to Madina, in the Battle of Badr, Abul-Aas (husband of Zaynab) was captured by the Muslims as a prisoner of war! When the captives were brought before the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam), he took Abul-Aas aside and told those who were holding him, "Treat the captives well."

Zaynab recognized her husband. When it was time to ransom the captives, she wanted her husband to be returned to her. She brought out from her clothes and jewelery box a necklace that used to be her mother's and which she presented to her as a gift on her wedding day. She gave this necklace to her husband's brother, 'Amr ibn Rabee' so that he could present it as ransom for her husband. As soon as the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) saw that necklace, he had a feeling of extreme compassion and his heart palpitate for the great memory.

The Companions who were present there looked in amazement having being captivated by the magnificence of the situation. After a long silence, the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu

alayhi wa sallam) addressed his Companions, who were holding Zaynab's husband, "If you can release her captive to her and return her property (the necklace) to her, do so." They all said, "Yes, we will do so, Messenger of Allah!"

Another Separation

Even though he was now freed to go, the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) requested Abul-Aas to send Zaynab back to him because Islam had already separated between them. And he swore a pledge that he would do so. He told his wife, "Zaynab, I come here to bid you farewell." And he told her of the pledge he had sworn to his father that he would send her to him. He told her, "Zaynab, whatever happens, I shall always love you as long as I live. Your memory shall forever continue to fill this house that had witnessed the best sweetest and the days of our life." Zaynab wiped off her flowing tears and went away. She prepared to go back to Madinah.

While she was on her way, the Quraysh ambushed her on her way out and returned her back to Makkah. She was terrified by what had happened. And she was pregnant. So she started bleeding until this led her to have a miscarriage. Abul-Aas gave her protection in his house and took care of her until she regained some of her health and strength. After this, she sent her back to Makkah safely with his brother to protect her.

Captured once again!

Abul-Aas travelled to Syria with a Quraysh caravan. When information reached the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) that the caravan was on its way back from Syria, he sent one hundred and seventy riders to capture it. They met the caravan at a place called 'Ees. They had the caravan returned to Madeenah taking those who were guarding the caravan as captives.

As for Abul-Aas, he was able to escape. But where did he escape to?

He thought of what to do after a part of the night had gone. The Muslims who had taken over their caravan had left the place after giving up the hope of finding him.

What should he do now? Should he come out of his hiding place and head for Makkah alone with no provision and animal to ride on? Or should he go to the house of Zaynab, the beloved and dutiful former wife who would never refuse to give him shelter and protection?

He was overwhelmed by love and sincere feelings. So he went to her house under the cover of the night and knocked at her door.

Zaynab woke up in fear wondering about who could be knocking at her door at this hour of the night. She asked to know who was at the door and the voice was a recognized one: It the fearful and shaking voice of Abul-Aas! She opened the door and met her husband!!!

Zaynab brought Abul-Aas in, fed him, offered him a seat and gave him all that could make him comfortable and relaxed. In spite of having regained some peace of mind, Abul-Aas was still afraid, and he could utter only few words. Zaynab knew that he had come to seek her protection and shelter and to intercede with her father on his behalf. She assured him that, if Allah willed, she would do what would alleviate his sufferings and doubts.

When the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) finished the *Fajr* prayer, Zaynab stood up and called out interceding on behalf of her former husband:

"I have given protection to Abul-Aas ibn Rabi'!"

The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) said, "O people, did you hear what I have just heard?" The people answered in the affirmative. He then said, "I swear by Him in Whose Hand is my life, I knew nothing of this matter until I heard what you have also heard now." And he added, "The Muslims are like one hand against those who are outside their community and the lowest of the Muslims is entitled to give protection on behalf of the rest of his co-Muslims. So we give protection to she had given protection."

When the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) returned home, his daughter Zaynab came to him and requested that Abul-Aas should be given back what was taken from him. He agreed but warned her that she should not allow him to be with her because she was not lawful for him as long as he was still an idol-worshipper.

Abul-Aas Accepts Islam

When Abul-Aas felt that he could attain security in Madinah and that the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) had provided refuge and shelter to him, and he experienced the mercy and truthfulness that Islam possessed, he realized that the blind state of ignorance in which he was living had misled for a long time.

He also realized that Zaynab's love for him and his love for her was deep-rooted in the hearts of both of them. When he realized all this, he wanted to enter into the fold of this pure religion willingly, not out by force. He wanted to proclaim his acceptance of Islam, but he would not allow his proclamation of Islam to be attributed to any influence or pressure. He would not want anyone in Makkah to claim that he accepted Islam for the love of this life and fear of death or anything. He resolved to proclaim his Islam in the assemblies of Makkah and in front of all the idol-worshippers.

There was other issue that attracted his concern: He had properties of people in his trust. If he remained in Madeenah and announced his Islam there, people would say that he wanted to escape from giving the trusts to whom they were due. And this is what his sense of honour would not permit.

Therefore, he returned to Makkah, returned the trusts to whom they were due and then proclaimed his Islam in the assembly of Quraysh and in the presence of many people. He did

so in a dignified and honored manner. After that, he went to Madinah as a Muslim and an immigrant.

Upon his arrival at Madinah, the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) gave back Zaynab to him. The happy reunion took place and the marriage contract was completed anew. The happiness and comfort with which the house was known before then returned.

The Final Separation

For a whole year afterwards, the two loving couples lived in Madinah in happiness and contentment. Then came the eternal separation after which there is no reunion except in the abode of the Hereafter. Zaynab died at the beginning of the 5th year of Hijrah from complications which she had been suffering from since her migration.

Abul-Aas shed a lot of tears because of her death and everyone around him to tears. The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) came with eyes, full of tears and a heart full of sorrow. Zaynab's death reminded him of the death of his wife, Khadijah. He performed funeral prayers on her and followed her final resting place.

Abul-Aas returned to his children, 'Ali and Umamah kissing them and crying in the remembrance of their beloved mother who passed away.

May Allah be pleased with Zaynab, the Prophet's daughter! May He reward her with Paradise for her patience, endurance and struggle!