

The Companions of Prophet Muhammad: Ammar ibn Yassir

Description: A man hears the truth and embraces Islam but his life becomes one of torture and abuse. Through the mercy of Allah and the empathy of Prophet Muhammad he survives to stride into history and Paradise.

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Objectives

- To learn about the life of Ammar ibn Yassir and his perseverance for the truth.

Arabic Terms

- *Hadith* - (plural " *ahadith*) is a piece of information or a story. In Islam it is a narrative record of the sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad and his companions.
- *Hijrah* - the act of migration from one place to another. In Islam, *the Hijrah* refers to the Muslims migrating from Mecca to Medina and also marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar.
- *Masjid* - the Arabic term for mosque.
- *Aayaat* - (singular " *ayah*) the word *aayaat* can have many meanings. It is almost always used when talking about proofs from Allah. These include evidences, verses, lessons, signs, and revelations.
- *Muhajiroon* - those who migrate. More specifically and usually it refers to those who migrated from Mecca to Medina.

Ammar ibn^[1] Yassir was one of the first people to answer Prophet Muhammad's call to Islam. He suffered abuse and humiliation at the hands of Quraish^[2] and watched his parents die at the hands of Islam's biggest enemy. He participated in the first migration to Abyssinia and later on also made *Hijrah* with Prophet Muhammad to Medina. Ammar participated in building the first *masjid* and was with Prophet Muhammad at all the battles fought by the fledgling Muslim nation. Numerous *ahadith* are attributed to Ammar and Prophet Muhammad said he was as near to him as an eye is to a nose^[3].



Ammar ibn Yassir is believed to have been born around the 570 CE, approximately one

year before the birth of Prophet Muhammad. They were friends before the advent of Islam and it is thought that Ammar had some part to play in arranging the marriage between Muhammad and Khadijah[4]. Ammar was drawn to the house of Al-Arqam where Prophet Muhammad used to preach in secret. He heard the words of Prophet Muhammad and the words of God in the Quran and accepted Islam.

Ammar's parents Yassir and Summaya also accepted Islam on the very same day due to a dream Yassir had the previous night. He dreamed that Ammar and his wife were calling to him from a garden from across a valley divided by fire. The whole family accepted Islam and drew the notice and hatred of one of the chieftains of Quraish, Abu Jahl. The favorite pastime of many of the men of Quraish was to torture and torment the weaker followers of the new religion. As poor and marginalized members of the Meccan community they had no alternative but to face their tormentors. The family of Yassir was preyed upon so consistently that Prophet Muhammad would exhort them to patience saying they were destined for Paradise.[5]

Eventually, in front of their son Ammar, Yassir and Summaya were murdered. Summaya was stabbed to death and in this sad way became the first martyr in Islam (i.e. the first person to die for the sake of Islam). Sometime later Yassir was killed. Ammar was overcome with grief and fear and did what his parents refused to do; he cursed Islam and Prophet Muhammad. Gleefully Abu Jahl allowed Ammar to leave and he ran straight to Prophet Muhammad. Ammar was overwhelmed and shocked by his own behaviour, he was traumatised by the torture meted out to his parents and himself. Prophet Muhammad comforted him and eased his fear, reminding him of the forgiveness of God. It is said that the following *ayah* of the Quran was revealed in response to this situation.

oeWhoever disbelieved in Allah after belief, except him who is forced and whose heart is at rest with faith but such that open their breast to disbelief on them is wrath from Allah and theirs will be a great torment.” (Quran 16: 106)

When others criticized Ammar and called him a disbeliever, Prophet Muhammad defended him. He replied to their taunts saying, oeNo, indeed Ammar is full of faith from head to toe.”[6] To ease the relentless persecution and suffering of many followers of the new faith, the Prophet sent a group of the weakest amongst them to Abyssinia. Ammar was amongst this group. Ammar later returned to Mecca only to migrate to Medina. He was amongst the first *muhajiroon* to flee from Mecca to Medina.

Ammar was amongst those who built the first *masjid* in Medina. While carrying the bricks for the construction, Prophet Muhammad noticed that while everyone else was carrying one brick at a time Ammar was carrying two bricks. He said, oeThey will get one reward whereas you (Ammar) will get two.” Ammar was with Prophet Muhammad at every battle the young nation faced including the Battle of Badr. When Abu Jahl was killed in that battle, Prophet Muhammad turned to Ammar and said oeThe murderer of your mother is dead.”

A number of *ahadith* have been attributed to Ammar ibn Yassir, particularly some

concerning *tayammum*^[7]. One hadith in particular is about Ammar and Umar ibn Al-Khattab being on a journey together. A man came to Umar ibn Al-Khattab and said, "I became impure but no water was available." Ammar ibn Yassir said to Umar, "Do you remember that you and I became impure while we were together on a journey and you didn't pray but I rolled myself on the ground and prayed? I informed the Prophet about it and he said, 'It would have been sufficient for you to do like this.' The Prophet then stroked the earth lightly with his hands and then blew off the excess dust that had gathered on his hands and passed his hands over his face and hands."^[8]

This hadith not only gives us information about *tayammum* but demonstrates how close Ammar was to Prophet Muhammad and his inner circle. Remember that Ammar was a man that was overcome by fear and could not bear the torture he and his family had to endure. When Ammar abused Islam he was forgiven and he went on to find spiritual and physical strength. The men present at Badr were considered the best of the best but they were also human. Sometimes when a person embraces Islam their life can become a rollercoaster of happiness and trepidation and threats seem to come from places hitherto thought to be safe. The story of Ammar demonstrates that Allah's mercy and protection is close at hand, the believer only needs to ask.

Ammar is said to have died in battle around the age of ninety. His death had been predicted by Prophet Muhammad and some believe that the prophecy was so accurate it was one of the signs of prophecy. "Alas! a rebellious group which swerves from the truth will kill Ammar. Ammar will be calling them towards Paradise and they will be calling him towards Hell. His killer and those who strip him of arms and clothing will be in Hell."^[9]

Endnotes:

^[1] Ibn means the son of, sometimes incorrectly spelled bin.

^[2] Quraish is the name of the most powerful tribe in Mecca at the advent of Islam and the tribe to which Prophet Muhammad belonged. It is also the name of a chapter of the Quran.

^[3] *Ibn Hisham*, as-Sirah, vol. 2

^[4] Khadijah, the daughter of Khuwaylid, was the first, and for 25 years, the only wife of Prophet Muhammad.

^[5] *At-Tirmidhi*

^[6] *Ibn Majah*

^[7] *Tayammum* has been discussed in detail here: <http://www.newmuslims.com/lessons/123/>

[8] Saheeh Al-Bukhari

[9] Saheeh Al-Bukhari, At Tirmidhi, & Imam Ahmad among others and transmitted through 25 sahabah.

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