

Gardens of Paradise

Utbah ibn Ghazwan (ra)

(Translated)

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Utbah ibn Ghazwan ibn Jabir al-Mazini is the noble Companion; his lineage traces back to the tribe of Qays Aylan. He was known by the kunyah “Abu Abdullah”, though it is also said he was known as Abu Ghazwan or Abu al-Jabr. He was born in Makkah forty years before the Hijrah.

Utbah ibn Ghazwan (ra) was among the earliest reverts to Islam; he embraced the Deen during the initial days of the call in Makkah, even before the Prophet (saw) entered the House of Al-Arqam ibn Abi al-Arqam.

Imam Muslim narrated in his Sahih collection that Utbah said, «لَقَدْ رَأَيْتُنِي سَابِعَ سَبْعَةٍ مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ، مَا لَنَا طَعَامَ إِلَّا وَرَقُ الشَّجَرِ، حَتَّى قَرِحَتْ أَشْدَافُنَا» **“I recall being one of seven people with the Messenger of Allah (saw); we had no food other than tree leaves, to the point that the corners of our mouths became sore.”** This indicates that he was the seventh person on earth to embrace Islam, and it highlights the severe hardship and trials he endured during the early stages of the Dawah to Islam.

Utbah undertook both Hijrahs: he first migrated to Abyssinia to preserve his Deen from the persecution of the Quraysh, then returned to Makkah before undertaking the Great Migration to Al-Madinah. There, the Prophet (saw) established a bond of brotherhood between him and Simak ibn Kharashah (Abu Dujanah).

Utbah did not miss a single military expedition led by the Messenger of Allah (saw); he participated in the Battle of Badr, the Battle of Uhud, the Battle of the Trench (Khandaq), the Pledge of Ridwan at Hudaibiyyah, and all other major engagements. He was renowned for his exceptional skill in archery and horsemanship.

During the Khilafah (Caliphate) of Umar ibn al-Khattab (ra), Utbah distinguished himself as a seasoned military commander and administrator; Umar dispatched him at the head of a small army—numbering around 800 fighters, though some sources say 300—to the region of Al-Ubulla, the Persian port on the Gulf, to cut off the Persian supply lines reaching their armies in Iraq. Through his military acumen, Utbah succeeded in defeating the Persians and capturing Al-Ubulla.

After establishing a foothold in the region, Utbah recognized the Muslims’ need for a winter encampment—a central gathering place that would not be separated from the capital of the Khilafah, Al-Madinah, by any river or sea. He wrote to Umar (ra) seeking permission to build a city; upon receiving approval, he laid out the city of Basra and founded its masjid, making it the first misr (a fully integrated military city) established by Muslims outside the Arabian Peninsula.

Despite serving as the governor of Basra and achieving great conquests, worldly success did not alter his character. He remained deeply committed to abstention, shunning the displays of luxury that had begun to appear among some Muslims following the conquests.

One day, he stood before the people of Basra and delivered a famous khutbah—documented in the books of Sunnah—reminding them of their harsh past and their current state, and warning them against being deluded by worldly life. Among his words were, «ولقد رأيتني سبع سبعة مع رسول الله ﷺ، ما لنا طعام إلا ورق الشجر حتى قرحت أشداقنا... وإني، «I recall being one of seven men with the Messenger of Allah (saw); we had no food other than tree leaves, to the point where our mouths became sore... And I seek refuge in Allah from being great in my own eyes while being insignificant in the sight of Allah.»

Utbah (ra) disliked holding positions of authority and governorship, fearing that the temptation of power might compromise his Deen. In the year 15 AH (or 17 AH, according to some accounts), he sought Umar ibn al-Khattab's permission to perform the Hajj pilgrimage and traveled to Makkah. After completing the pilgrimage, he met with Umar and asked to be relieved of his governorship of Basra. Umar (ra) adamantly refused to relieve him of his duty, uttering his famous words, (تضعون أماناتكم في عنقي ثم تتركونني؟ لا أعفك) "You place your trusts upon my shoulders, only to abandon me? I will not release you." He ordered him to return to Basra. Utbah obeyed the command of the Khaleefah (Caliph) and mounted his riding beast to return, yet he sincerely supplicated to Allah, saying, (اللهم لا تردني إليها، اللهم لا تردني إليها) "O Allah, do not let me return there; O Allah, do not let me return there."

Allah answered his prayer; on the journey back to Basra—specifically in an area known as Ma'dan Bani Sulaym—he fell from his mount and died, though it is also said that death overtook him due to illness. His soul departed to its Creator at the age of fifty-seven, leaving behind a noble legacy of Jihad and the founding of a great city like Basra.

Such was the life story of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah (saw); they governed the world with strength and piety, understood their mission, and illuminated the world with the light of Islam. Today, after the disbelieving West—aided by Arab and Turkish traitors—conspired to dismantle the final Islamic state on the 27th of Rajab, 1342 AH corresponding to March 3, 1924 CE, the world has been plunged into darkness. It is therefore a Shariah obligation upon us to restore this state so that justice and goodness may return with it; and for this, let the competitors vie.

References:

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- 2- Siyar A'lam al-Nubal* by Imam al-Dhahabi (Volume 1; Biography of Utbah bin Ghazwan)
- 3- Al-Isaba fi Tamyiz al-Sahaba by Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani
- 4- Usd al-Ghaba fi Ma'rifat al-Sahaba by Ibn al-Athir al-Jazari
- 5- Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra by Ibn Sa'd
- 6- *Al-Bidaya wa'l-Nihaya* by Al-Hafiz Ibn Kathir (Events of the years 14 and 15 AH and the founding of Basra)