

Bilal Ibn Rabah, one of Prophet Mohammad's (PBUH) companions, and one of the greatest figures in the history of Islam.

Bilal originally was a black slave from Ethiopia, belonging to Umayyah ibn Khalaf tribe.

It was said that Bilal was a tall thin man, and slightly hump-backed. He had thick grayish hair. He moved about silently – never speak unless somebody talk to him.

Bilal was restrained by the class system; a slave in the hands of the most harsh tribe of Bani Jumuh and under the scourge of one of the dirtiest polytheistic elements of the Age of Ignorance - Umayyah son of Khalaf.

However, what make his personality most clear and presents him as a model of virtue during the course of history and for all times to come, and lends him greatness, is his true, revolutionary, and unwavering faith. It is a psychological miracle that a person who is an illiterate slave of about twenty years old and has been brought up in the most deplorable system of values and has become habituated to it, should completely reform himself in the shortest possible time and display an exact effect of this reformation in spite of the severest spiritual and corporal torture.

Bilal started to hear people talking about Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), specially in the discussions between his master and guests. Soon he felt drawn and knew that his only resolution is to embrace the religion of justice and dignity, Islam, and so he did.

He would listen to Abu Bakr, another companion of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) calling to Islam, and gradually he found his heart strongly attached to this religion. He went with Abu Bakr to the Prophet, (PBUH), and declared his submission to Islam. He was the seventh person to embrace Islam. Abu Bakr and others of the same tribal status, were safe from harm by the Quraysh tribe, which was very much against Islam and a great enemy to Prophet Mohammad (PBUH).

However, the anger of the disbelievers fell upon the Muslims who had no tribe to defend them. Umayyah ibn Khalaf used to force Bilal (after embracing Islam) to go outside in the morning of a very hot day wearing a suit of armor where he would then throw him face down in the sand and leave him to bake in the sun. He would not return except to turn him on his back.

At times Bilal became unconscious as a result of being subjected to severe torture when he regained his consciousness he had to face the angry yelling of his master who wanted him to abandon Islam. However, Umayyah, his master, said with a dirty and unkind heart: "You must either die or disown Mohammad's Lord." But the resistant and brave Bilal who had been filled with passion for Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and Islam, was not negligent even for a moment and repeated the eloquent and permanently effective word "Allah is On, Allah is One".

In spite of all the hardships, which Bilal had to put up with one after the other, he remained solid and firm like a mountain and was optimistic and sure that Allah will soon save him. And not only that these difficulties and torments did not weaken his faith in Allah but they increased his steadfastness and devotion. Although his body was wounded and his stomach was hungry and he cried on account of weariness his soul was strong and enlightened.

One day Abu Bakr was passing by and saw Bilal being tortured.

He said to Umayyah: "Have you no fear of Allah that you treat this poor man like this?" He replied saying: "You are the one who corrupted him, so you save him from his plight!" Abu Bakr replied: "Then sell him to me, you can state your price." Umayyah who was not to let a good deal pass by, sold Bilal at a good price. However, to humiliate Bilal, he added: "I would have sold him to you even if you had offered me but an ounce of gold." Abu Bakr answered: "I would have bought him even if you had asked a hundred ounces." Abu Bakr and Bilal went to Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) with the good news. There he announced: "I am setting Bilal free, O Messenger of Allah. "Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) was very happy for the news.

When the Muslims settled in Madinah, Islam became firmly established and its pillars were set- praying, paying zakat and fasting were instituted. At first, Muslims gathered for praying at the appointed times without being summoned. Afterwards Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) thought about using a trumpet to summon to the prayers. But he (PBUH) disliked that idea as the Jews used to use the same method, and so ordered a clapper to be made at prayer times.

Later on Abdullah ibn Zayd came to him and said: "O Messenger of Allah, I had a dream last night: A man wearing two green garments came to me holding a bell, so I offered to buy it. When he asked me what I wanted it for, I told him that it was to summon people to Salah (prayer), whereupon he offered to show me a better way. It was to say four times: 'Allahu Akbar', then to say twice: Ash-hadu allaa ilaaha ilia Allah, then twice: ash-hadu anna Muhammadar rasoolullah, then twice: hayya 'alas-salah, then twice: hayya 'alal-falah, then "Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar laa ilaaha ilia Allah." "It is a true vision insha Allah (with God's will)," said Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), adding, "Go and teach it to Bilal for he has a more beautiful and far reaching voice." For the first time Madinah resonated with the adhan as Bilal was reciting it.

When Umar Ibn Al Khattab, another companion of the Prophet (PBUH), heard the adhan he rushed to the Prophet and said; "By the One Who has sent you with the Truth I had the same dream about it!" "Revelation has already preceded you," replied the Prophet, (PBUH).

Bilal was the muadhin (the caller to prayer) during the time of the Prophet (PBUH). After he would make the adhan, he would stand at the Prophet's door and say : "Hayya alas-salah, hayya 'alal-falaah, the salah O Messenger of Allah.". The sweet days with Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) soon came to an end.

For later on, Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) died in Madinah, and all of the Muslims wept over his death, the dearest man ever on Earth. They asked Bilal to make adhan before the burial of the Prophet (PBUH). He started the call: "Allahu Akbar...", but when he came to the name of the Prophet (PBUH), he was sobbing so heavily, he could not continue. He said: "By Allah I will not say the adhan anymore."

Bilal asked the Khalifah, Abu Bakr, to let him to go to ash-Sham for Jihad. And there he spent the rest of his life. He made adhan only twice since then. The first was when Umar Ibn AL Khattab came to ash-Sham. The second was when he visited the tomb of Prophet (PBUH) in Madinah. Upon hearing his voice, people started to cry for it reminded them of the days of the Prophet (PBUH).

On his death bed, Bilal was saying: "Tomorrow you will meet your loved ones, Muhammad and his companions." He died in Alippo at the age of sixty four.