

## Hadith

Ibn ‘Abbās narrated that God’s Messenger (peace be upon him) said to Mu‘ādh when he sent him to Yemen:

- 1 You shall come upon people who follow earlier revelations.
- 2 Call on them to declare that there is no deity other than God and that Muhammad is God’s Messenger.
- 3 If they obey in this, tell them that God has made it a duty binding on them to offer five prayers every day and night.
- 4 If they obey in this, then tell them that God has made it obligatory that a *ṣadaqah* is taken from the rich among them and paid to their poor.
- 5 If they obey in this, then do not touch the best of their property.
- 6 Guard yourself against a prayer by a victim of injustice, because nothing stops such a prayer from going straight to God<sup>(1)</sup>.

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 1496; Muslim, 19.

## From the Qur’an

- ﴿Before your time We never sent a messenger without having revealed to him that there is no deity other than Me. Therefore, you shall worship Me alone.﴾ (21: 25)
- ﴿Keep up prayer when the sun is on its decline, in the darkness of the night, and recite the Qur’an at dawn, for the recitation of the Qur’an at dawn is indeed witnessed.﴾ (17: 78)
- ﴿Take a portion of their money as charity, so that you may cleanse and purify them thereby; and pray for them: for your prayers are a source of comfort for them. God hears all and knows all. (103) Do they not know that it is God alone who accepts repentance from His servants, and He is truly the One who takes charitable offerings, and that God is the only One to accept repentance and bestow mercy.﴾ (9: 103-104)
- ﴿Charitable donations are only for the poor and the needy, and those who work in the administration of such donations, and those whose hearts are to be won over, for the freeing of people in bondage and debtors, and to further God’s cause, and for the traveller in need. This is a duty ordained by God, and God is all-knowing, wise.﴾ (9: 60)
- ﴿Or who is it that responds to the one in distress when he calls out to Him, and who removes the ill, and makes you inherit the earth? Could there be any deity alongside God? Little do they reflect!﴾ (27: 62)

## The Narrator

Abu al-‘Abbās ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, belonged to the Hāshim branch of the Quraysh and resided mostly in Madinah. He was born in the Hāshimī quarter in Makkah three years before the Prophet’s migration. He was the leading scholar of the Muslim community and the one who explained the Qur’an best. He was the Prophet’s cousin. He was nicknamed *al-bahr*, which means ‘the sea’, because of his broad knowledge. The Prophet (peace be upon him) included him in his prayers, saying: ‘My Lord, grant him insight into the religion’.<sup>(1)</sup> He was one of the Prophet’s companions who narrated a large number of hadiths. He embraced Islam at a young age and he remained very close to the Prophet after the takeover of Makkah. He lost his eyesight when he became old. He died at Taif in Year 68 AH 688 CE.

## Summary

The Prophet (peace be upon him) sent Mu‘ādh to Yemen and outlined for him how he should call on people to embrace Islam. The first thing he was to advocate was God’s oneness. If they responded and embraced Islam, Mu‘ādh was to tell them that prayer was obligatory. Subsequently, he was to tell them the obligation of zakat.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) then informed Mu‘ādh that he must not take the best of their property when he collected their zakat. He should neither take the best nor the worst, but should choose what was of medium quality. The Prophet (peace be upon him) finally warned Mu‘ādh about a supplication by someone suffering injustice. A prayer by such a person is certain to be answered.

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 143 (his text); Muslim, 2477.



# Message and Meaning

The Prophet (peace be upon him) sent Mu'ādh to Yemen as an advocate of Islam and a governor, towards the end of the Prophet's life.



1 The Prophet told him as he was about to leave to take up his post that he would be dealing with Jewish or Christian people, and that they had their own revelations, namely the Torah or the Gospel. He wanted Mu'ādh to be ready to speak to such people, as they had a good measure of knowledge.<sup>(1)</sup>



2 The Prophet (peace be upon him) then told him to start by calling on them to declare their belief in God's oneness and that Muhammad was God's Messenger. This declaration is the most essential belief. Without it, nothing of the details of the religion is valid. Therefore, people are required to accept this essential principle. The Jews and the Christians do not fulfil the requirements of the declaration of God's oneness and Prophet Muhammad's message. They associate either Ezra or Jesus with God, and they deny Prophet Muhammad's message.



3 The Prophet then tells Mu'ādh that if such people give a positive response, declaring their belief in God's oneness and acceptance of the Prophet as God's Messenger, he should tell them that God requires them to offer five obligatory prayers every day and night, and he should teach them how to offer these prayers.

That the Prophet (peace be upon him) says to Mu'ādh, 'If they obey in this', indicates willing acceptance and acting on it, not the mere admission that this is obligatory. They must realize that prayer is an obligation and must be fulfilled and offered on time.



4 Having established the duty of prayer and obtained their acknowledgement of it, Mu'ādh was to inform them of the duty of zakat. The Prophet ordered him to tell them that God has made it obligatory to take zakat from the rich among them and to distribute it to their poor. Zakat is a small percentage of what they have and it is collected annually.



5 If the people of Yemen obeyed Mu'ādh and declared their wealth for him to take the zakat duty, the Prophet commanded him to avoid taking the best of their property which they love and treasure. A person may have a female sheep which he likes best because it yields plenty of milk, or for some other reason. The zakat collector should not take it as an act of kindness towards the zakat payer. God does not accept unfairness to the rich in order to be kind to the poor. If the zakat payer is willing to give some of his best property in zakat, it is permissible for the collector to take it.

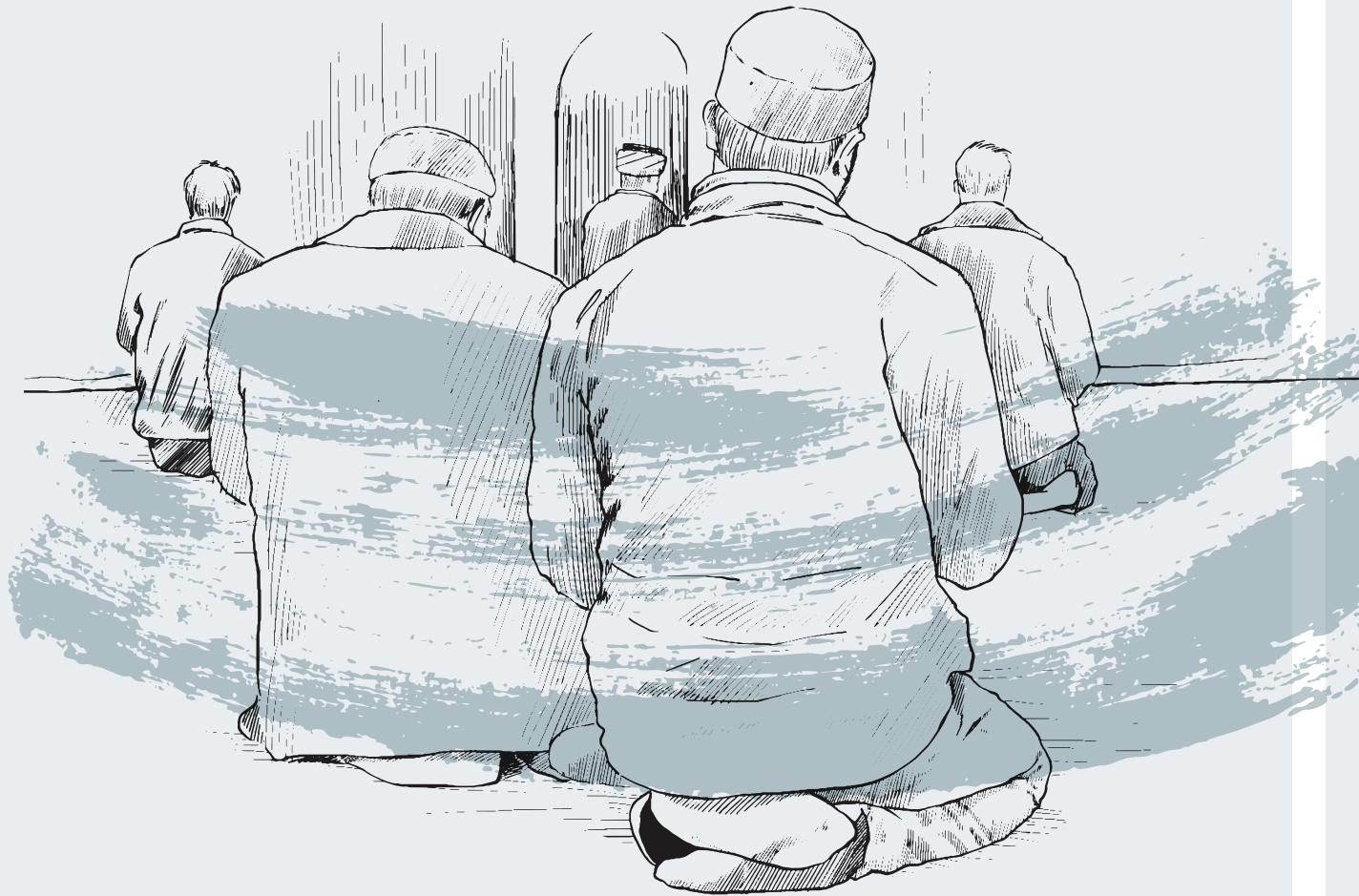
'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb once sent someone to collect zakat. He gave him detailed instructions which included the following: 'Do not take a sheep which is being fattened for people's eating, nor the one reared at home because it is dear to its owners, nor the one which is pregnant and about to give birth, nor a ram'.<sup>(2)</sup>

1 Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-Bārī*, Vol. 3, p. 358.

2 Related by Mālik, *al-Muwatta'*, Vol. 2, p. 372; al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr*, 6395. Al-Nawawī, *al-Majmū'*, Vol. 5, p. 427.



The Prophet (peace be upon him) finally warns Mu'adh against injustice, whether in zakat collection or in any other matter of government and judgement. That he warns him against supplication by a person who suffers injustice means that he must always be fair to all people. Injustice will always cause the sufferer to pray against the one who caused him such injustice. Such prayer is definitely answered. The gates of the seven heavens are opened for it, and there is nothing to impede its being answered. The Prophet says: 'Three types of people shall never have their prayers unanswered: a fasting person until he ends his fast, a just ruler, and a sufferer of injustice. The prayer of a person suffering injustice is raised by God above the clouds and He opens the gates of heaven for it. God will say: "By My might, I shall support you, even though it be after some time"'.<sup>(1)</sup>



1 Related by al-Tirmidhī, 3598; Ibn Mājah, 1752.

# Implementation

1

The Prophet (peace be upon him) sent Mu'adh ibn Jabal to Yemen when he was in his twenties. He undertook such responsibility and lived away from his people and family to serve God's message, obeying the Prophet (peace be upon him). He provides an example for us all to emulate.

2

God's Messenger (peace be upon him) used to assign grave tasks and serious responsibilities to his companions when they were only young men. They did not evade undertaking such responsibilities. It is important that parents, teachers and educators should train those who are under their care to undertake responsibility. They should not think that they are too young for such tasks. Such young people should also ensure that they are worthy of such trust.

3

Implement the authentic hadiths, including those narrated by one transmitter. The Prophet (peace be upon him) sent Mu'adh to spread the most important matters of belief and Islamic law, giving him a wide scope of authority, including levying zakat on believers' property. All this confirms that what is singly narrated and authentic must be upheld.

4

Learn the nature of the people you are likely to meet. The Prophet (peace be upon him) told Mu'adh that he would be meeting people who had received earlier divine revelations, so that he would know what to observe when he called on them to accept Islam.<sup>(1)</sup> He should arrange his priorities, gather evidence and select the best methods, because they had knowledge and could argue their case. Therefore, it is important for us to gather the relevant information when we undertake any meaningful task.

5

The Prophet (peace be upon him) took care to admonish those to whom he assigned responsibility. Before sending Mu'adh to Yemen, he explained to him the situation on the ground and his order of priorities. He commanded him to ensure justice and warned him against injustice. Yet Mu'adh was among the most distinguished companions of the Prophet in his religion and scholarship. Therefore, do not ignore admonishing your subordinates, and they should not disdain to be so admonished.



1 Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-Bārī*, Vol. 3, p. 358.

6

The Prophet (peace be upon him) attached importance to the essentials and took a gradual approach to their implementation. He did not order Mu'adh to start with sins that people frequently commit in their lives, even though these are important. Instead, he focused on the essence of religion and the key to faith, which is the declaration of God's oneness, then prayer, then zakat. We must follow the same method in our education and advocacy of Islam, and indeed in all our projects: we should start with the most important issue, then we go to the next most important. 'Ā'ishah said: 'The first Qur'anic revelation was one of the shorter surahs, which mentions Heaven and Hell. When people accepted Islam, legislation of what is lawful and what is forbidden began to be revealed. Had the first revelation been an order not to drink wine people would have said that they would never abandon drinking. Had it been an order forbidding fornication and adultery, they would have said that they would never abandon these'.<sup>(1)</sup>

7

Belief, prayer and zakat are the main essentials of faith, and they are often mentioned together in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. They earn great reward and their influence in the life of a believer is so great that its extent is known only to God. Even when people are fulfilling their obligation in these three essentials, they should work harder to make them more perfect.

8

The Prophet (peace be upon him) instructed Mu'adh not to take the best of people's property and those which they treasure as part of their zakat. He ordered him to be fair. Not seeking to take these is fair and shows a good understanding of people's feelings. This is important for every advocate of Islam, parent, educator and official to observe and implement.

9

Make sure that when you go to bed in the evening, there is no one who is sleepless because of something you said or did, whether that person is your spouse, child, student, servant, a shop assistant, or a driver. Never belittle injustice to anyone whom you consider inferior, even though he is a habitual sinner. The Prophet warned Mu'adh against injustice even in dealing with unbelievers, and even if some of them continue to disbelieve in Islam.



1 Related by al-Bukhari, 4993.

