

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Recommended Lecture Content: al-Fath al-Umari – Sayyiduna Umar’s (*radiyAllāhu ‘anhu*) liberation of Bayt al- Maqdis

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَا
الَّذِي بَرَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيَهُ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ ﴿١﴾

Exalted is He who took His Servant by night from al-Masjid al-Haram to al-Masjid al-Aqsa, whose surroundings We have blessed, to show him of Our signs. Indeed, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing. (Surah Isra: 1)

Ramadan is the month of the Qur’aan. It is a month of mercy, forgiveness and emancipation from the fire of Jahannum. It is also a month of the Help of Allah ﷻ and victory for the Ummah.

The Prophet ﷺ and his Sahabah *radiyAllāhu ‘anhum* passed through approximately nine Ramadāns together after the Hijrah. Those Ramadāns were filled with decisive events that shaped the course of history, amongst them the decisive Battle of Badr and the Conquest of Makkah.

One glorious event for the Ummah, which although not occurring in Ramadan, lives up to the same spirit, is the liberation of Baytul Maqdis by Sayyidina Umar *radiyAllāhu ‘anhu* and the Sahabah *radiyAllāhu ‘anhum* in the year 16AH.

This chapter stands out as a shining example in the history of conquests and is laden with lessons on which are the essentials to draw upon the Mercies of Allah ﷻ for victory.

Calibre of the liberator – Sayyiduna Umar *radiyAllāhu ‘anhu*

Sayyidina Umar *radiyAllāhu ‘anhu* was amongst the forerunners to embrace Islam, amongst the ten Sahabah who were given glad tidings of Jannah, one of the al Khulafa’ al Rashidin, the close companions to the Rasul of Allah ﷺ, and one of the esteemed scholars of the Sahabah *radiyAllāhu ‘anhum*.

- Rasulullah ﷺ made dua that Allah جل جلاله strengthen Islam through him.
- He was the first person to announce his Islam openly.
- *“If there was a nabi to come after me, it would have been ‘Umar.”* (Tirmidhi fi al Manaqib, Hadith no: 3686)
- *“Shaitan does not meet you travelling on a path but he would travel on a path other than your path.”* (Bukhari, hadith no: 3683, Muslim, Hadith no: 2396)
- Some ayat of Qur’an would coincide according to what Sayyiduna ‘Umar radiyAllāhu ‘anhu would say.

Liberation of Bayt al-Maqdis Prophesied

During his lifetime, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ foretold the liberation of Baytul Maqdis, and even informed some of his Sahaba radiyAllāhu ‘anhum of the roles they would take up there, thereby strengthening their affiliation with the Blessed Land.

Sayyidina Shadad Ibn Aws radiyAllāhu ‘anhu reports that the Prophet ﷺ said, *“Shaam will be conquered and Al-Quds (Jerusalem) will be conquered and you or your sons will be Imams there, if Allah wills.”* (Tabarani)

Sayyidina Awf Ibn Malik radiyAllāhu ‘anhu relates, *“I went to the Prophet ﷺ during the battle of Tabuk while he was sitting in a leather tent. He said, ‘Awf, Count six signs, between now and the approach of the Hour (Qiyamah/Doomsday): my death, the conquest of Al-Quds (Jerusalem); a plague that will afflict you (and kill you in great numbers) as the plague that afflicts sheep; the increase of wealth to such an extent that even if one is given 100 hundred Dinars (Arabian currency), he will not be satisfied; then an affliction which no Arab house will escape; and then a truce between you and Banu Asfar (i.e. Byzantines) who will betray you and attack you under eighty flags. Under each flag will be twelve thousand soldiers”.* (Bukhari)

Though Masjid al-Aqsa was not under Muslim control during the time of Nabi ﷺ, the Sahabah radiyAllāhu ‘anhum were eager to learn more about it and fulfil their responsibilities towards it.

Sayyidatina Maymuna radiyAllāhu ‘anha reported: *I said: ‘O Messenger of Allah ﷺ tell us about Jerusalem’. He said: ‘It is the place of Judgement Day where everyone will be called. Come and pray in it, for one prayer in it is like one thousand prayers elsewhere’. ‘What is one cannot go there?’ I asked. He replied, ‘Send oil for its lamps; for whoever does so, it is as if they went there’.* (Ibn Majah)

From Madinah Munawwarah to Bayt al-Maqdis: The Epic Journey

Sayyiduna Umar radiyAllāhu ‘anhu was the illustrious Companion at whose hands the prophecy of liberation of Masjid al-Aqsa occurred. The story of his journey to al-Quds, the opening of the city, his arrival at Masjid al-Aqsa and the guarantees of peace he offered to its residents, is nothing short of epic, and is recorded as one of the most striking examples of statesmanship in the history of mankind.

During the Khilafah of Sayyiduna Abu Bakr *radiyAllāhu ‘anhu* the Muslims conquered most of Byzantine Palestine. Muslims, however, did not manage to take charge of al-Quds.

The Battle of Yarmuk, fought near the Yarmuk River on the borders of modern-day Palestine, Syria and Jordan proved to be the decisive encounter in the quest for leadership of Shaam. A pitched battle lasting six days saw the Muslims come up against a 200 000 strong Byzantine force. After many manoeuvres and counter manoeuvres, the Muslims emerged with a resounding victory.

From there, the Muslims liberated other cities of Shaam until they reached al-Quds. The overall Muslim commander at the time was Sayyiduna Abu Ubaidah ibn al-Jarraah *radiyAllāhu ‘anhu*. Sayyiduna Amr bin al-Aas *radiyAllāhu ‘anhu* led the main army to besiege al-Quds.

He was later reinforced by seven armies, each of five thousand horsemen. The leaders of these batallions were Sayyiduna Khalid ibn Al Walid, Yazid ibn Abi Sufyan, Shurahbil ibn Hasanah, Al-Mirqal ibn Hashim ibn 'Utbah ibn Abi Waqqas, Qais ibn Hubairah Al-Muradi, Al-Musaib ibn Najiyah Al-Fazazi and 'Urwah ibn Muhalhil ibn Zaid Al-Khail *radiyAllāhu ‘anhum*).

After a lengthy siege in adverse weather conditions, the heavily fortified city of al-Quds, which was then under Byzantine Christian control indicated its willingness to surrender. The Patriarch of Jerusalem, Sopronius, however, indicated that they would only hand over the city if Sayyiduna Umar *radiyAllāhu ‘anhu* personally came to get its keys.

Sayyiduna Abu Ubaidah ibn al-Jarraah *radiyAllāhu ‘anhu* wrote to Sayyiduna Umar *radiyAllāhu ‘anhu* informing him of this news. After consultation with senior Sahabah *radiyAllāhu ‘anhum*, among them Sayyiduna Uthmaan and Ali *radiyAllāhu ‘anhum*, it was decided that Umar *radiyAllāhu ‘anhu* should make the journey.

Sayyiduna Umar *radiyAllāhu ‘anhu* appointed Sayyiduna Ali *radiyAllāhu ‘anhu* as his substitute in Madinah. He then set off for the journey with his slave and a camel carrying only the most basic possessions. The Khalif and his slave took turns to ride the camel.

Sayyiduna Umar *radiyAllāhu ‘anhu* met up with the Muslim commanders in Jabia where he was appraised of the latest developments facing the Muslims in Shaam. He refused to change his conveyance to a more luxurious one or wear more expensive clothes. He was content with his modest attire and reprimanded Muslim generals whom he found to be dressing luxuriously.

When Sayyiduna Umar *radīyAllāhu ‘anhu* reached a mountain of Jerusalem overlooking al-Aqsa, he chanted ‘Allahu Akbar’, and was greeted likewise by the Takbeers and praises of Allah ﷻ from the Muslims who were assembled nearby. This mountain came to be called Jabal Mukabbir later, based on this act of Sayyiduna Umar *radīyAllāhu ‘anhu*.

Sayyiduna Umar *radīyAllāhu ‘anhu* approached the Holy City, his feet and garments muddy, with no less than 14 patches on his clothes. It is said that his slave was riding the camel and he was leading it as they entered.

He was greeted by the city’s elite as well as its Patriarch, St. Sophronius.

The people of al-Quds reportedly wept when they saw the simplicity of Sayyiduna Umar *radīyAllāhu ‘anhu*. The patriarch confirmed him to be the worthy recipient of the city reportedly affirming that the description of Sayyiduna Umar *radīyAllāhu ‘anhu* as a liberator was mentioned in scripture, and handed over to him its keys. Sayyiduna Umar *radīyAllāhu ‘anhu* graciously accepted the honour and readily guaranteed the safety of the city and its people in return for the payment of Jizyah.

Sayyiduna Umar *radīyAllāhu ‘anhu* then entered into a treaty with the people of al-Quds, which came to be known as the Treaty of Umar. It guaranteed religious freedom and protected minority rights. It provided an assurance of safety for the Christian inhabitants, their property and churches. A pledge was given that no person will be forcibly converted.

He soon proceeded to Masjid al-Aqsa accompanied by hundreds of Muslims. He found the area covered in dust and debris.

Sayyiduna Umar *radīyAllāhu ‘anhu* knelt down and began cleaning the Masjid, using his own garment to collect the dirt. He urged his companions to do the same.

Thereafter, he led the Muslims in the first Salaah to be performed at al-Aqsa since the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ led the Ambiyaa there during the night of Mi’raj. In the first rak’ah, he recited Surah Saad (Surah 38) and in the next, Surah Bani Isra’eel (Surah 17). Surah Saad mentions the story of Dawud *alayhis salaam* who was among the Ambiyaa to reside in al-Quds and reconstruct al-Aqsa, whilst Surah al-Isra begins by mentioning the journey of Isra, the most magnificent episode in the history of al-Quds.

It is said that the Athaan on this historic occasion was raised by Sayyiduna Bilaal *radīyAllāhu ‘anhu* the muezzin of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Sayyiduna Bilaal *radīyAllāhu ‘anhu* had hardly given the Athaan after the Prophet’s ﷺ demise out of the deep sense of sorrow he felt over his passing. He, in fact, spent most his time engaged in Jihaad in Shaam and hardly visited Madinah. He, however, delivered the Athaan on this occasion after earnest requests to do so from senior Sahabah *radīyAllāhu ‘anhum*.

Sayyiduna Umar *radīyAllāhu ‘anhu* soon ordered the restoration of Masjid al Aqsa. Since the area of the blessed compound of Masjid al-Aqsa is vast, he sought a location a structure would be built for the performance of congregational Salaah. A huge timber mosque, in a

similar location to today's Masjid Qibli, was erected with a capacity to accommodate 3000 worshippers.

During his stay in al-Quds, Sayyiduna Umar *radiyAllāhu 'anhu* also was at the vicinity of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, when the time for Salaah arrived. The Patriarch Sophronius permitted him to pray at church. However, Sayyiduna Umar *radiyAllāhu 'anhu* however declined, fearing it might establish a precedent that would threaten the church's continued use as a Christian house of worship. Instead he prayed in an area to the south of the church, now the site of a masjid called Masjid Umar built some time later in his remembrance.

Sayyiduna Umar *radiyAllāhu 'anhu* remained in al-Quds for anything between 10-40 days, before returning to Madinah Munawwarah.

Lessons from the glorious journey

- **Mashwarah**

When Sayyiduna Umar *radiyAllāhu 'anhu* received the request to personally come to al-Quds, he called a meeting of his Consultative Council, and asked for their advice. Sayyiduna Uthman *radiyAllāhu 'anhu* expressed the view that it was not necessary for the Khalif to go, and that the defeated Byzantines would themselves surrender. Sayyiduna Ali *radiyAllāhu 'anhu* said that Jerusalem was as much sacred to the Muslims as the Jews or the Christians, and that in view of the sanctity of the place it was desirable that its surrender should be received by the Khalif personally. Umar *radiyAllāhu 'anhu* decided to accept the advice of Sayyiduna Ali *radiyAllāhu 'anhu*.

- **Simplicity**

Sayyiduna Umar *radiyAllāhu 'anhu* rode his camel wearing a garment with fourteen patches, some of which were of skin. He took turns with his slave in riding. He did not travel in pomp or with an entourage.

"He who humbles himself for the sake of Allāh, Allāh will raise him." (Muslim)

- **Seeking help through Salaah**

Before his departure from Madinah Munawwarah, Sayyiduna 'Umar *radiyAllāhu 'anhu* went to Masjid Nabawi and prayed four rak'ahs. Whenever he rested somewhere, he did not leave it unless he prayed Fajr.

- **Shukr**

Whilst en-route to al-Quds, Sayyiduna Umar *radiyAllāhu ‘anhu* would praise and thank Allah ﷻ for the great bounties granted to him and the Ummah and the new lands they now controlled. He said: "All praise to Allah Who dignified us through Islam and honoured us through faith and distinguished us by His Prophet ﷺ. He the Almighty led us to guidance after error, united us on the word of piety though we had been enemies, removed any hatred from our hearts, granted us victory over our enemy, gave us sovereignty in our land, and made us brothers, loving and caring about each other. So thank Allah, you servants of Allah, for these countless blessings and manifest gifts, for Allah multiplies for those desirous who strive more for what He has and he completes His blessings on those who thank Him."

- **Honour is only in Islam**

When Sayyiduna Umar and Abu Ubaidah *radiyAllāhu ‘anhum* came upon a river en route to al-Quds, Umar *radiyAllāhu ‘anhu* dismounted from his camel, took off his sandals and placed them over his shoulder, and then led the camel over the creek. Sayyiduna Abu Ubaida *radiyAllāhu ‘anhu* said, "O commander of the faithful, are you doing this? You have taken off your sandals and placed them on your back and you led the camel through the creek yourself. I do not think it will be easy for me to get the people of this country to honour you." Sayyudina Umar *radiyAllāhu ‘anhu* said, "If only someone else had said this, O Abu Ubaida! I have made this a deterrent for the nation of Muhammad ﷺ. **Verily, we were a disgraceful people and Allah honoured us with Islam, so if we seek honour from other than Islam, then Allah will humiliate us.**"

- **Correct actions and Aqeedah prerequisites for victory**

The liberation of Masjid al-Aqsa came at the hands of the great Sahabi, Sayyiduna Umar *radiyAllāhu ‘anhu*. The next liberation of Masjid al-Aqsa (from the Crusades) came at the hands of Salah ad-Deen Ayyubi *rahimahullah*, who was a member of the Ahlus Sunnah and followed closely in the footsteps of Sayyiduna Umar *radiyAllāhu ‘anhu*. Salah ad-Deen upheld the Aqeedah of the Ahlus Sunnah was Jamaah and fought against the deviancy of the Shia Fatimids of his time. He also understood that without Allah ﷻ being on their side, there was no point in all the armies and weapons they had.

Victory for the Ummah and liberation of Masjid al-Aqsa will not come at the hands of those who do not honour the Sahabah *radiyAllāhu ‘anhum* and in fact revile the very persons who brought Masjid al-Aqsa to this Ummah. All the slogans of such groupings regarding al-Quds ring hollow.

Deviant ideas that veer off from the established standard of the Jamaah of the Muslims, can never guarantee the Ummah anything but shortlived and shallow victories.

- **Our responsibilities to Masjid al-Aqsa**

Sayyiduna Umar *radiallāhu ‘anhu* left Madinatul Munawwarah solely out of reverence and appreciating the significance of Masjid al-Aqsa. He was eager to attain the reward of Salaah and multiplication of rewards promised at Masjid al-Aqsa. Likewise, he led by example in showing his love for the Masjid when he got down on his knees to personally clean it.

We should too aspire to visit Masjid al-Aqsa and contribute towards it to attain the rewards promised by Rasulullah صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم.

Sayyidina Abu Hurayrah radiallāhu ‘anhu relates that the Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said, “You should not undertake a special journey to visit any place other than the three Masajid with the expectations of getting greater reward: the Sacred Masjid of Makkah, this Masjid of mine, and Masjid al-Aqsa”. (Sahih al-Bukhari)

Sayyidna Abu Darda radiallāhu ‘anhu relates that the Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said, “A prayer in Makkah is worth 100000 times, a prayer in my Masjid (Madinah) is worth 1000 times, and a prayer in al-Aqsa is worth 500 times more than anywhere else”. (Tabarani)

Umm Salamah, Umm al-Mu’minin رضی اللہ عنہا, relates that the Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said, “If anyone puts on ihram for Hajj or ‘Umrah from the Masjid al-Aqsa and then proceeds to the sacred Masjid, his former and latter sins will be forgiven, or he will be guaranteed Paradise”. The narrator ‘Abdullah doubted which of these words he said. (Sunan Abu Dawud)

May Allah جل جلالہ reward Sayyiduna Umar radiallāhu ‘anhu for his great services to this Ummah

May we adorn ourselves with the correct A’maal and Aqeedah to draw the Mercies of Allah جل جلالہ

*May we all be afforded the honour of performing Salaah in Masjid al-Aqsa
May Allah (SWT) bring honour and victory to this Ummah, ease the suffering of Masjid al-Aqsa and its people and may we see its liberation in our lifetime.*

Aameen!

This khutbah was prepared by the Palestine Information Network (PIN) in the interests of enhancing education on Masjid al-Aqsa and Palestine.

