

# HEROES

---

## THAT TIME FORGOT

**Zeya Khan**

### **NO COPYRIGHT**

Anybody can reproduce, publish, translate in any language, or photocopy this book or a part of it for sale or free distribution. No permission or payment is required for this.

You may contact the author at **[zeyakhan@rediffmail.com](mailto:zeyakhan@rediffmail.com)** for electronic files in case you would like to reprint this book.

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 2017

### **CENTRE FOR ISLAMIC RESEARCH**

Near Water Pump House,  
New Parastoli, Doranda,  
Ranchi-834002,  
Jharkhand, India  
Mob: +91 88736-92857  
Web: [www.cirglobal.org](http://www.cirglobal.org)  
[www.cirglobal.net](http://www.cirglobal.net)

## CONTENTS

|    |                                |    |
|----|--------------------------------|----|
| 1. | Introduction                   | 01 |
| 2. | Umar Bin Al Khattab            | 02 |
| 3. | Saladin-Salah Al-Din Al-Ayubbi | 28 |
|    | References                     | 43 |

# 1

## INTRODUCTION

---

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE MOST  
BENEFICENT, THE MOST MERCIFUL

Every nation and era has its heroes, to whom people look for inspiration, so has the nation of Islam. Though the list is unending, I have chosen just two of them, each of them an example that has no second. Both, apart from being known for their piety and other virtues, had one more thing in common— they both conquered Jerusalem in the most peaceful manner that history has ever witnessed. The sense of justice, chivalry, moral code of conduct that was part and parcel of their life has no parallel in human history and shall forever remain as shining example for anyone to examine and emulate.

In spite of such unmatched qualities, it is unfortunate that even Muslims either know little or nothing about them. Though the following few pages won't do justice to these towering personalities, nevertheless it throws some light on their life and achievements.

Let's take a look at the two great heroes that time forgot.

# 2

## UMAR BIN AL KHATTAB

---

*"The people will be honest with their ruler so long as the ruler is honest with Allah, and if the ruler is dishonest, the people will be dishonest."*

Umar

Umar was the second and most powerful of the four rightly-guided Caliphs and one of the most powerful and influential Muslim rulers in history. He was one of the greatest of conquerors, a wise administrator, a just ruler, a monumental builder and a man of piety who loved God with the same intensity that other conquerors of his caliber have loved gold and wealth. Indeed, Umar was the architect of Islamic civilization.

The Caliph was referred to as *Ameer al- Mu'meneen* (leader of the believers). During his caliphate, Umar, after defeating the Roman and Persian Empires, was the most powerful person on the face of the earth. He was an expert jurist and is best known for his justice that earned him the title *Al-Farooq* (*The one who distinguishes between right and wrong*). During the ten years of his rule from 634 to 644 C.E., Umar changed the course of history. Under his leadership the Muslims emerging from the deserts of Arabia overthrew the empire of Persia in the east and shattered the empire of Byzantine in the west.

During the short space of ten years his armies conquered countries comprising an area of 2,251,030 square miles. Under his caliphate the Islamic dominions assumed the dimensions of a continent. These extended from Makkah 1,036 miles to the north, 1,087 miles to the east, and 483 miles to the south. These countries included Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Khuzistan, Fars, Isfahan, Azarbeijan; Armenia, Makran and Khurasan. The dominions extended from the Oxus to the Nile.

### **HIS BIRTH, FAMILY AND EARLY LIFE**

The exact date of birth of Umar is not known. The consensus of opinion, however, is that Umar was born in Makkah around 580 C.E. He was younger than the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) by about ten years. Umar belonged to the Banu Adi clan of the Quraish. It was one of the ten clans of the Quraish which was responsible for arbitrations among the tribes. The pedigree of Umar was: Umar the son of Khattab; the son of Nufayl; the son of Abul Uzza; the son of Rizza; the son of Ribah; the son of Qurat; the son of Adi; the son of Ka'b. In the case of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and Umar, Ka'b in the ninth degree was their common ancestor. The house in which Umar was born in Makkah was situated midway between Safa and Marwah. During the period of his caliphate, Umar had the house dismantled, and the site was turned into a camping ground.

He is said to have belonged to a middle-class family. In his youth he used to tend to his father's camels in the plains near Makkah. His father was famed for his intelligence among his tribe. He was a middle class merchant and emotional polytheist. Despite literacy being uncommon in pre-Islamic Arabia, Umar learned to read and write in his youth. Though not a poet himself, he developed a love for poetry and literature. According to the tradition of Quraish, while still in his teenage years, Umar learned martial arts,

horse riding and wrestling. He was tall and physically powerful and was a renowned wrestler. Umar was also a gifted orator, and due to his intelligence and overwhelming personality, he succeeded his father as an arbitrator of conflicts among the tribes.

Umar followed the traditional profession of Quraish. He became a merchant and made several journeys to Rome and Persia, where he is said to have met the various scholars and analyzed the Roman and Persian societies closely. However, as a merchant he is believed to have never been successful.

### **HIS APPEARANCE**

He was white with reddish complexion and handsome. He was muscular, tall and bald.

### **UMAR'S HOSTILITY TO ISLAM**

In 610 Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) started delivering the message of Islam. Umar, alongside others in Makkah, opposed Islam and threatened to kill Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). He resolved to defend the traditional, polytheistic religion of Arabia. He was most adamant and cruel in opposing Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and very prominent in persecuting the Muslims. Umar was the first man who resolved that Muhammad (pbuh) had to be murdered in order to finish Islam. Due to the persecution at the hands of the Quraish, the Prophet (pbuh) ordered his followers to migrate to Abyssinia.

### **UMAR EMBRACES ISLAM**

Umar embraced Islam one year after the migration to Abyssinia. One day on the way to murder the Prophet (pbuh), Umar met his best friend Nuaim who had secretly embraced Islam but he did not tell Umar anything about it. When Umar told him that he was going to kill Muhammad (pbuh), he got worried. He knew Umar will attempt what he said. So just to divert his attention he told him to set his

own house in order first, as his sister and her husband had embraced Islam. Upon arriving at her house, Umar found his sister and brother-in-law Saeed bin Zaid (Umar's cousin), reciting the verses of the Qur'an (Surah Taha). He started beating his brother-in-law. When his sister came to rescue her husband, he also started quarreling with her. But they kept on saying "you may kill us but we will not give up Islam." Upon hearing these words, Umar slapped his sister so hard that she fell to the ground bleeding from her mouth. When he saw what he had done, out of guilt he calmed down and asked his sister to give him what she was reciting. She gave him the piece on which was written the verses of the Qur'an. He was so struck by the beauty of the verses that he accepted Islam that day. He then went to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) with the same sword he intended to kill him with and accepted Islam in front of him and his companions. Umar was then 27 years old and the fortieth person to accept Islam. Following his conversion, Umar went to inform the chief of Quraish, Amr ibn Hishâm, about his acceptance of Islam. According to one account, Umar thereafter openly prayed at the Kaaba. This further helped the Muslims to gain confidence in practicing Islam openly. At this stage Umar even challenged anyone who dared to stop the Muslims from praying, but no one dared to interfere.

It was after this that the Muslims offered prayers openly in Masjid al-Haram (Kaaba) for the first time. Abdullah bin Mas'ud (a companion of the Prophet (pbuh)) said, "*Umar's embracing Islam was our victory, his migration to Madinah was our success and his reign a blessing from Allah, we didn't offer prayers in Al-Haram Mosque until Umar accepted Islam, when he accepted Islam, Quraish were compelled to let us pray in the Mosque.*"

## MIGRATION TO MADINAH

In 622, due to the growing popularity of Islam in the city of Yathrib (later renamed *Madînat an-Nabî*, or *Madinah*)

the Prophet (pbuh) ordered his followers to migrate to Madinah. Muslims usually migrated at night due to fear of Quraish's resistance to that migration, but Umar is reported to have migrated openly during the day time saying; "*Anyone who wants to make his wife a widow and his children orphan should come and meet me there behind that cliff.*" Umar migrated to Madinah accompanied by his cousin and brother-in-law Saeed ibn Zaid.

## LIFE IN MADINAH

Madinah became the new center of Islam and the religion spread rapidly across Arabia. When the Prophet (pbuh) arrived in Madinah, he paired off each immigrant (Muhajir) with one of the residents of the city (Ansari), joining Muhammad ibn Maslamah with Umar making them brothers in faith. Later in Umar's reign as Caliph, Muhammad ibn Muslamah would be assigned the office of chief inspector of accountability. Muslims remained in peace in Madinah for approximately a year before the Quraish raised an army to attack them. In 624 Umar participated in the first Battle between Muslims and Quraish of Makkah i.e. Battle of Badr. In 625 he participated in the Battle of Uhud. Later in the year Umar was a part of campaign against the Jewish tribe of Banu Nadir. In 625 Umar's daughter Hafsa was married to the Prophet (pbuh). Later in 627 he participated in the Battle of the Trench and also in the Battle of Banu Qurayza. In 628 Umar participated in the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah and was made one of the witness over the pact. In 628 he was a part of Muslims' campaign to Khaybar. In 630 when Muslim armies rushed for the Conquest of Makkah he was part of that army. Later in 630 he was part of Battle of Hunayn and Siege of Ta'if. He was part of Muslim's army that went for the campaign of Tabuk under the Prophet's (pbuh) command and he gave half of his wealth for the preparation of this expedition. He also

participated in the farewell Hajj of the Prophet (pbuh) in 631.

### DEATH OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD (PBUH)

The Prophet (pbuh) died in 632. Umar was full of grief upon hearing the news, Umar, the devoted companion, could not accept the reality that the Prophet (pbuh) has died. It is said that Umar vowed to strike the head of any man who would say that the Prophet (pbuh) is dead. At this point Abu Bakr (Prophet's most senior and closest companion) is reported to have come out to the Muslim community and gave his famous speech which included:

*"Whoever worshipped Muhammad, let them know that Muhammad is dead, and whoever worshipped Allah, let them know that Allah is alive and never dies."*

Abu Bakr then recited these verses from the Qur'an:

**"Muhammad is but a messenger; messengers (the like of whom) have passed away before him. If, then, he dies or is killed, will you turn back on your heel?" (Al Qur'an, 3:144)**

And

**"And surely you (Muhammad(pbuh)) will die, and they will also die..."**

Hearing this from Abu Bakr, Umar fell on his knees in great sense of sorrow and acceptance of the reality.

### CALIPH ABU BAKR'S ERA

During Abu Bakr's short reign as the first caliph, Umar served as a chief secretary and advisor, and during the Ridda Wars Umar, along with Khalid ibn Walid (one of the military commanders in the annals of history who never lost a battle), served the Caliph as a military strategist and advisor. Due to the delicate political situation in Arabia Umar initially opposed military operations against the rebel tribes in Arabia, hoping to gain their support in the event of invasion by Romans or Persians. Later, however, he came to agree

with Abu Bakr's strategy to crush the rebellion by force. By late 632, Khalid ibn Walid who was given the title of *saifullah* (the Sword of Allah) by the Prophet (pbuh) had successfully united Arabia after consecutive victories against the rebels. Umar advised Abu Bakr to compile the Quran in the form of a book, after 300 memorizers of the Quran died in the Battle of Yamamah. Abu Bakr appointed Umar as his successor before he died in 634.

### UMAR'S APPOINTMENT AS CALIPH (634 – 644)

Due to his strict nature, Umar was not a very popular figure among the notables of *Madinah* and members of *Majlis al Shura*. Nevertheless, Abu Bakr decided to make Umar his successor because he (Umar) was well known for his extraordinary will power, intelligence, political understanding, impartiality, justice and care for poor and underprivileged people. Abu Bakr while addressing his high-ranking advisers is reported to have said,

*"His (Umar's) strictness was there because of my softness when the weight of Caliphate will be on his shoulders he will remain no longer strict. If I will be asked by the God to whom I have appointed my successor, I will tell Him that I have appointed the best man among your men."*

On 22 August Caliph Abu Bakr died. The same day Umar assumed the office of Caliphate. After the assumption of office as the Caliph, Umar addressed the Muslims in his inaugural address as:

*"O ye faithful! Abu Bakr is no more amongst us. He has the satisfaction that he has successfully piloted the ship of the Muslim state to safety after negotiating the stormy sea. He successfully waged the apostasy wars, and thanks to him, Islam is now supreme in Arabia. After Abu Bakr, the mantle of Caliphate has fallen on my shoulders. I swear it before Allah that I never coveted this office. I wished that it would have devolved on some other person more worthy than me. But now that in national interest, the*



*responsibility for leading the Muslims has come to vest in me, I assure you that I will not run away from my post, and will make an earnest effort to discharge the heavy duties of the office to the best of my capacity in accordance with the injunctions of Islam. Allah has examined me from you and you from me. In the performance of my duties, I will seek guidance from the Holy Book, and will follow the examples set by the Holy Prophet (pbuh) and Abu Bakr. In this task I seek your assistance. If I follow the right path, follow me. If I deviate from the right path, correct me so that we are not led astray."*

### **UMAR FACES EARLY CHALLENGES**

Although almost all the Muslims had given pledge of loyalty to him, nevertheless he was rather more feared than loved. The first challenge for Umar was to win out his subjects and members of *Majlis al Shura*.

Umar was a gifted orator, and he would use his ability to get a soft corner in the hearts of people. On Friday prayers Umar addressed the people in the following words,

*"Brethren, it has come to my notice that the people are afraid of me... they say that he (Umar) has become the Caliph now, Allah knows how hard he will be. Whoever has said this is not wrong in his assessment... know brethren that you will feel a change in me. For those who practice tyranny and deprive others of their rights, I will be harsh and stern, but for those who follow the law, I will be most soft and tender."*

Umar's addresses greatly moved the people. Next time he addressed the people as:

*"I will be harsh and stern against the aggressor, but I will be a pillar of strength for the weak. I will not calm down until I will put one cheek of a tyrant on the ground and the other under my feet, and for the poor and weak, I will put my cheek on the ground. By God, he that is weakest among you shall be in my eye the strongest, until I have vindicated for him his rights; he that is strongest I will treat as the weakest, until he complies with the law."*

There could be no better definition of justice, than the historic words of Umar, over which he laid foundation of his rule.

Umar's stress was on the wellbeing of poor and underprivileged people. The people were soundly moved by Umar's speeches and his popularity grew rapidly and continuously over the period of his reign. In Ridda wars, thousands of prisoners from rebel and apostate tribes were taken away as slaves during the expeditions. Umar ordered the general amnesty for the prisoners, and their immediate emancipation. This made Umar quite popular among the Bedouin tribes.

### **HIS MILITARY SETUP AND EXPEDITIONS**

Umar organized the army as a state department. A register of all adults who could be called to war was prepared, and a scale of salaries was fixed. All men registered were liable to military service. They were divided into two categories, namely those who formed the regular standing army, and those that lived in their homes, but were liable to be called to the field whenever needed.

The armies were mostly paid in cash salaries. Promotions in the army were made on the strength of the length of service or exceptional merit. Officer-ship was an appointment and not a rank. Officers were appointed to command for the battle or the campaign; and once the operation was concluded, they could well find themselves in the ranks again. Leave of absence was given to army men at regular intervals. The troops stationed at far off places were given leave after four months. Each army corps was accompanied by an officer of the treasury, an accountant, a Qadi, and many interpreters besides a number of physicians and surgeons. Expeditions were undertaken according to seasons. Expeditions in cold countries were undertaken during the summer, and in hot countries in winter. Umar also established military cantonments on strategic positions

throughout empire to deal with any emergency efficiently and quickly. The garrison towns of Kufa, Busra and Fustat were founded by Umar. They were also provincial capital of their respective provinces. He was the first who established the provinces of (the cities of) Kufah, Basrah, and of Mesopotamia, Syria, Cairo (Egypt), and Mosul.

‘Umar continued the war of conquests begun by Abu Bakr. His first expedition was against Damascus, capital of Syria. Following are some of the expeditions undertaken during his reign.

- **634:** Battle of Basra, Battle of Damascus, Battle of Ajnadin, Battle of Namaraq, Battle of Saqatia.
- **635:** Battle of Bridge, Battle of Buwaib, Conquest of Damascus, Battle of Fahl.
- **636:** Battle of Yarmuk, Battle of al-Qâdisiyyah, Conquest of Madain.
- **637:** Conquest of Syria, Conquest of Jerusalem, Battle of Jalula.
- **638:** Conquest of Jazirah.
- **639:** Conquest of Khuzistan. Advance into Egypt. Plague of Emmaus.
- **640:** Battle of Babylon in Egypt.
- **641:** Battle of Nihawand; Conquest of Alexandria in Egypt.
- **642:** Conquest of Egypt.
- **643:** Conquest of Azarbaijan and Tabaristan (Mazandaran).
- **644:** Conquest of Fars, Kerman, Sistan, Mekran and Kharan.

The year 637 C.E. represents an important turning point in Palestine’s history for after this it came under Muslim control and was to remain under their control for the next 1300 years—except for a period of 88 years—until the defeat of the Ottoman rule (The Ottoman Caliphate). This event brought peace and harmony to Palestine, which

for centuries had been the scene of wars, exile, looting, and massacres. Under Muslim rule, however, its inhabitants, regardless of their beliefs, would live together in peace and harmony.

Palestine came under the control of Muslims in 637–38 C.E. under the Caliphate of Umar bin al Khattab. Karen Armstrong, in her book *A History of Jerusalem, One City, Three Faiths*, describes the capture of Jerusalem by Umar in these terms, “the Patriarch Sophronius rode out of the city to meet Umar and then escorted the Caliph back into Jerusalem. Umar also expressed the monotheistic ideal of compassion more than any previous conqueror of Jerusalem. He presided over the most peaceful and bloodless conquest that the city had yet seen in its long and often tragic history, once the Christians had surrendered, there was no killing, no destruction of property, no burning of rival religious symbols, no expulsions or expropriations and no attempt to force the inhabitants to embrace Islam.”

Tim Wallace Murphy, writes in *What Islam Did for Us*, “While Byzantine Emperors had outlawed Judaism and forced the Jews to the point of baptism, Umar invited them to settle in Jerusalem. The Muslims had not only liberated them from the oppression of Byzantium but had also given them rights of permanent residence in their holy city.”

Umar’s generals invaded Persia, defeated the army of Yezdegerd, and conquered the capital and kingdom. His forces defeated the troops of the Emperor Heraclius, near Antioch, in 638, Memphis and Alexandria surrendered, all of Egypt and a part of Libya were conquered from the Romans.

His army pursued their conquests far into Africa, but Umar did not live long to enjoy his glory. In the year 643, at the age of 63, he was fatally wounded, with a knife, by a Persian slave. The companions asked him to appoint a successor; but he refused, and especially rejected, with



earnestness, the proposition of naming his son. *"It is enough,"* he said, *"that one out of my family has been forced to bear this burden."* The caliphate thus became elective.

### UMAR INITIATES POLITICAL REFORMS

Umar was one of the great political geniuses of history. While the empire was steadily expanding under his leadership, he also began to build the political structure that would hold together the vast empire that was being built. Umar did not require that non-Muslim populations convert to Islam; he allowed subject populations to retain their religion, language and customs. Umar was very acute in the appointment of his provincial governors called Wali or Amir. Whenever a governor was appointed by Umar, a man was sent with him that would read publicly his powers and jurisdictions.

During the reign of Caliph Abu Bakr, the state was economically weak, while during Umar's reign because of increase in revenues and other sources of income, the state was on its way to economic prosperity. Hence Umar felt it necessary that the officers be paid high salary as to prevent the possible greed of money that may lead them to corruption. Umar never appointed governors for more than two years, for they might get influence in their county. During his reign, at the time of appointment, every officer was required to take the oath:

1. That he would not ride a Turkic horse.
2. That he would not wear fine clothes.
3. That he would not eat delicacies.
4. That he would not keep a porter at his door.
5. That he would always keep his door open to the public.

Umar was first to establish a special department for the investigation of complaints against the officers of the State. This department acted as administrative court, where the legal proceedings were personally led by Umar. The department was under the charge of Muhammad ibn

Maslamah, one of Umar's most trusted men. In important cases Muhammad ibn Maslamah was deputed by Umar to proceed to the spot, investigate the charge and take action. Sometimes an Inquiry Commission was constituted to investigate the charge. On occasions the officers against whom complaints were received were summoned to Madinah, and charged in Umar's administrative court. Umar was known for this intelligence service through which he made his officials accountable. This service was also said to have inspired fear in his subjects. On discovery of any scandal on the part of any official, an investigation through a special department of accountability headed by Muhammad ibn Maslamah would be carried out and if the official would prove guilty he was immediately deposed from his office and his punishment was publicly humiliating punishments to flogging. Before appointment, all financial assets and details of the political officer used to be recorded and were checked each year. It was due to Umar's strong commitment to eradicate corruption and bribery. He is reported to have said to one of his governors, *"I had send you as a governor, not as a merchant"*.

### Umar's general instructions to his officers were:

*"Remember, I have not appointed you as commanders and tyrants over the people. I have sent you as leaders instead, so that the people may follow your example. Give the people their rights and do not beat them lest they become abused. Do not praise them unduly, lest they fall into the error of conceit. Do not keep your doors shut in their faces, lest the more powerful of them eat up the weaker ones. And do not behave as if you were superior to them, for that is tyranny over them."*

### UMAR'S STRESS ON AUTONOMY OF JUDICIARY

Umar stressed on independence of judiciary and declared it a sovereign state organ that could proceed without any pressure of state. No one was exempted from law, not even Caliph himself. During early years of his rule

he also acted as a chief justice of *Madinah* but later due to increasing burden of work he was left with no option but to assign his office to some other person, he accordingly appointed Abu Dardah, a well-known *Sahabi* (a companion of the Prophet (pbuh)), though he didn't resign completely from the office and Abu Dardah only acted as his secondary. Umar was the founder of *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). More than one thousand juristic pronouncements of Umar are on record and are followed by four *Sunni* schools of law in Islamic jurisprudence. In his instructions to his judicial officers Umar is reported to have said:

*"When you do not find a judgment on an issue in the Qur'an or Hadith and you are in doubt about it, ponder over the question and ponder again. Then look for dicta (previous judgements) on like and similar issues, and decide accordingly."*

Umar was very keen in appointing *qadhis* (chief justices). To all the major provincial cities, Umar would personally appoint judges. Umar entrusted the office of justice only to those selected persons who could fulfill his criteria for this office, some of which are as follow:

- Must be well reputed for his morals, modesty, and interpersonal relations.
- Must be intelligent, and astute in judicial decisions and enjoy his own personal view regarding all social issues that could enable them in the formulation of precedent or case law.
- He must be highly qualified in *fiqh* (jurisprudence).
- Must be socially a powerful and influential personality so that he might not come under pressure of any powerful perpetrator.

Umar appointed judges with very high salaries and for lifelong tenure, as in modern times. This was to make sure that judges could not be drawn towards bribery and non-prejudiced and unbiased verdicts could be reached. Umar also held that in the court the judge should not be

praised. He also gave a general law that any act which did not harm anyone and was otherwise not forbidden under law was permissible.

## **SOCIAL REFORMS**

One of Umar's most remarkable reforms was establishment of Islamic calendar. Umar held the starting point of calendar to be the year of Hijra roughly corresponding the year 622, when Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) migrated to Madinah from Makkah. Umar prohibited the sale of wine and drunkards were punished with 80 lashes. Umar held that a slave woman who bore children to her master should be set free. It was a practice among Arab poets to mention the name of some women in their poetry to make it attractive. Also, many glorified their love affair with some girl mentioning her name in the poetic verses. All these were evil practices as a woman's modesty was directly targeted in it. Umar put a ban on this practice and declared it unlawful and a punishable offense. Similarly, Umar also banned written satires and lampoons. Umar established a more exact system of calculation of the inheritance. Under Umar's rule, for first time in history, state intervention to control the price of merchandise was practiced. Umar established stables for the lost camels. Umar started salary for *Imaams*, *Muadheens* (callers to prayer) teachers and lecturers. He also established an effective postal service. Annually, *zakat* was charged from Muslims, while from non-Muslim, *jizya* was charged. It was charged from non-Muslims adult males only and was usually 2 dirham per head annually, which was far too less than the tax charged by Eastern Roman empire and Sassanid Persian Empire, a reason that pleased the non-Muslim subjects. In addition to this, non-Muslims were also exempted from military services. They were free to follow any religion they wanted. Trade tax that Umar charged was far less than the

tax charged by Roman and other empires. Moreover, for the prosperous trade and trading incentives for merchants and for their comforts, Umar established special chain of state-owned guest houses and guilds for certain trades. The concepts of welfare and pension were introduced under Umar. The taxes (including *zakat* and *jizya*) collected in the *Bayt ul-mal* (state treasury) were used to provide income for the needy, including the poor, elderly, orphans, widows, and the disabled. According to the Islamic jurist Al-Ghazali (Algazel, 1058–1111), the government was also expected to stockpile food supplies in every region in case a disaster or famine occurred.

### RELIGIOUS INITIATIVES

It was Umar who fixed many Islamic traditions and practices and he began the process of compiling the *Qur'an*. His most lasting tradition, however, was establishing the Muslim calendar. The Muslim calendar, like the Arabian calendar, remained a lunar calendar. However, he fixed the beginning of the calendar at the year in which the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) emigrated to Madinah. This, as far as Umar was concerned, was the turning point in Islamic history.

Umar was the first to realize the necessity of the proper sifting of the *Hadith* (the Prophet's (pbuh) sayings, actions, and his ways) and thus founded the science of *Hadith*. Authentic *Hadiths* were compiled, mostly related to religious, moral, social and community related affairs. These were copied and sent throughout the empire to judges, governors, teachers and scholars of all provinces for guidance. All these *Hadiths* had the status of law. Umar took special measures in keeping science of *Hadith* unadulterated. He accordingly forbade companions of the Prophet (pbuh) from reporting *Hadith* in public.

In 638, he extended and renovated the Grand Mosque in Makkah and the Mosque of the Prophet in Madinah. He also began the process of codifying Islamic law.

### EQUALITY AND JUSTICE

Islam does not allow any discrimination because of race, colour, language, and religious affiliation or socio-economic status. All human beings, for the purpose of the enforcement of law, are equal in the eyes of Allah. In the same way, they must also be equal before a judge who decides their disputes even if one of the parties to litigation is head of the state and his opponent is his subject. The companions of the Prophet (pbuh) used to observe strictly equality among the litigants. Once there was a dispute between Ubay ibn Ka'ab (a companion) and Umar the Caliph. Zayd bin Thabith (a companion) was the judge. Zayd spread carpet for Umar and during proceeding requested Ubay ibn Ka'ab to excuse the Caliph from oath. Umar noticed this injustice and said, "*He would never let Zayd to be a judge until Umar and ordinary Muslims are treated equal by him*".

This event indicates that Muslim rulers used to realize and respect the independence of their judges. And they were so conscious about the integrity of their judges that if they showed some undue respect or favour to their rulers, they used to resist such distinctive treatment.

Rulers and subjects are all equal according to *shariah* (Islamic law). Umar's implementation of this principle offers the best testimony in the following episodes:

During Umar's reign a famine struck Madinah. When the wind blew, sand would come down from the sky like ashes, hence that year became known as 'the year of ashes'. Umar swore that he would not eat ghee, yogurt or milk until all the people could afford to have these things. Then some ghee and yogurt reached marketplace and a servant bought them for Umar for forty dirhams. He came to Umar

and informed him about the purchase. Umar told him to give them in charity as it was too expensive and he would not eat in an extravagant manner. He further said, *"How can I be concerned for the people if I do not suffer what they suffer?"* Similarly, Umar would not eat food that was not available to all the people. At the time of the famine, he would eat bread that had been soaked in oil. One day some people slaughtered a camel, and after distributing the meat, brought the best parts to him. He said, *"Where did you get this?"* They said, *"it is from a camel that we slaughtered today."* He said, *"Oh no, oh no, what a bad ruler I am if I eat from the best of it and the people eat from the worst of it. Take this away and bring some other food."* Some bread and olive oil were brought to him and he ate from it.

At another occasion when he was distributing some money to the common people, Sad bin Waqqas (a companion) came, pushing and shoving until he reached Umar, who struck him with his whip and said, *"You have come showing no respect to the authority of Allah on earth (i.e., the Caliph), and I would like to teach you that the authority of Allah has no respect for you."* This was the same Sad bin Waqqas who was one of the ten companions of the Prophet (pbuh) who were given glad tidings of Paradise and that he was the conqueror of Iraq and he was known as the Knight of Islam. This shows how committed Umar was to implementing the principle of equality.

When Umar saw an old man begging. He tapped him on the shoulder and asked, *"From which of the people of the Book are you?"* He said, *"I am a Jew."* Umar asked what forced him to beg. He said, *"I am begging because of the jizyah and the needs of old age."* Umar took him to his house and gave him something. Then he sent for the keeper of the treasury and said, *"Check him and others like him, for by Allah we have not been fair to him if we benefitted from him when he was young and abandon him when he is old."* And he exempted him and others

like him from paying the *jizyah*. And he wrote to all his agents issuing this command.

Once a Jew and a Muslim referred their dispute to Umar and he saw that the Jew was in the right and he ruled in his favour (the fact that the Jew was a non-Muslim did not cause him to be unjust towards him or to be biased against him).

Once a person in a public meeting stood up and said, *"O Umar, fear Allah."* The audience tried to stop him but Umar said, *"Let him speak, he is free to give his opinion. If the people do not give their opinion they are useless and if we (rulers) do not listen to them, we are useless."*

Umar once said, *"He was afraid that a mule might fall off the mountainous roads in Iraq and break its legs, and that Allah might ask him why he had not paved the roads in that area."*

Once Abdullah and Ubaydullah, both sons of Umar went out with an army to Iraq, and on the way back, they passed by Abu Moosa al-Ash'ari (a companion), who was the governor of Basra. He welcomed them and said, *"If there is anything I can do for you, I shall."* Then he said, *"Yes here is some wealth of Allah which I want to send to the Caliph. I will lend it to you to buy some goods from Iraq which you can sell in Madinah, and you keep the profit and give the capital to the Caliph."* So, they did that and he wrote to Umar, telling him to take the money from them. When they came to Umar, he said, *"Did he lend to the whole army as he lent to you?"* They said, *"No."* Umar said, *"Give back the money and the profit."* Abdullah kept quiet but Ubaydullah said, *"You should not do that, O Ameer al-Mu'meneen. If the money had been lost or diminished, we would have paid it back."* But Umar kept on demanding and Ubaydullah kept on saying the same thing. Then a man among those who were sitting with Umar said, *"O Ameer al-Mu'meneen, why don't you make it a partnership (profit sharing)?"* So, Umar took the capital and half of the profit and got it deposited in the public treasury, while



Abdullah and Ubaydullah took the other half of the profit. It is said that this was the first partnership in Islam.

Some musk and amber came to Umar from Bahrain, so he said, *"By Allah, I wish that there was a woman who was good at weighing, who could weigh this perfume for me so that I could divide it among the people."* His wife said to him, *"I am good at weighing, let me weigh it for you."* He said, *"No."* She said, *"Why not?"* He said, *"I am afraid that you might take it and do this"* and he put his finger on his temple and said, *"and wipe your neck, thus you will get more than the others."*

### UMAR ON FREEDOM OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF

Umar was very strict in ensuring that no Muslim forced any non-Muslim to accept Islam. Through his advice, letters and addresses he made it clear to all the Muslims that they had to adhere to the ways of the Prophet (pbuh) which was the only method to preach Islam. Islam does not force anyone to accept it, rather it calls them to study and ponder the creation of Allah and this religion. And it commands its followers to debate with people in the way that is best. Al Qur'an, (2:256) and (16:125).

One day an old Christian woman came to Umar concerning some need of hers. He said to her, *"Become a Muslim, for Allah sent Muhammad (pbuh) with the truth."* She said, *"I am an old woman and death is very close to me."* So, he fulfilled her need, but was worried for what he had said might imply some exploitation of her need in an attempt to force her to become a Muslim. So he prayed to Allah for forgiveness for what he had done, and said, *"O Allah, I was trying to guide her, not force her."*

Umar drew up a treaty with the people of Egypt and Jerusalem ensuring the safety of their lives, wealth and churches.

### HIS SIMPLICITY

He was the head of the largest state in the world, and yet he lived the life of a common man. Of simple habits, austere and frugal, he was always accessible to the meanest

of his subject, and yet he was a cause of terror for the wrong doer. He would wander about at night without any guard or escort to find out how his people were doing. On one such inspection tours, he encountered a woman, who seemed to be cooking something in her tent. However, there was no smell of food. He thus asked the woman what she was cooking. She replied that she was cooking stones in order to stop her children from crying. She had promised them that she would feed them when the food is ready, hoping that they would fall asleep while waiting for the meal. She said that Ameer al- Mu'meneen (the Caliph) did not know her situation, in fact he should know, for she was one of his people. After she told him her situation, Umar inquired, *"How could he know if you don't bring that to his attention?"* She replied that it was his duty to know by finding it out by himself, for Allah will be asking him about the affairs of all his people. He listened in piety and left. He immediately rushed to *Bayt al-maal* (treasury) to get a sack of flour and some ghee, hoisted it over his shoulders and went back to that women. He gave her the sack of flour and ghee. She thanked him and told him to convey her thanks and her family's to Ameer al- Mu'meneen. She did not know that the man was Ameer al-Mu'meneen himself.

He was late one Friday for prayer, and he apologized to the people for keeping them waiting. He said, *"I am late because of this garment of mine, it was being cleaned and I do not have any other garment."*

Once a delegation came to him when he was watering the camels of the public treasury. One of the delegates asked him, *"Why don't you tell one of the servants to take care of it?"* Umar replied, *"Who can be a better servant than I, since I have been appointed in charge of the people's affairs."*

### HIS CARE FOR WOMEN

Umar defended the right of girls to agree to those who proposed marriage to them when he said, *"Do not force your daughters to marry an ugly man, for they like what you like."*

Umar said to a man who was thinking of divorcing his wife, *"Why do you want to divorce her?"* He said, *"I do not love her."* Umar said, *"Must every house be built on love? What about loyalty and appreciation?"*

#### **UMAR USED TO SAY...**

- *"Take stock of yourselves before you are brought to account, weigh yourselves before you are weighed, and prepare yourselves for the great judgment (The Day of Judgment)." And because of his great fear of Allah and his strictness in taking account of himself, he used to say, "If a lamb were to die on the banks of the Euphrates, I fear that Allah might call Umar to account for it."*
- *"Returning to truth is better than persisting in falsehood."*
- *"I do not like this world except for three things! the place where my forehead touches the ground in prostration, the places where people gather for knowledge, seeking good words as they would choose the best dates from the dish, and striving in Allah's way."*
- *"The most beloved of people to me is the one who points out my faults."*
- *"Do not look at a man's prayer or fasting, rather look at his reason and honesty."*
- *"O Allah, you know that I fear you more than they fear me."*
- *"Whoever speaks or acts in a suspicious manner should not blame anyone who thinks badly of him."*
- *"Whoever does not recognize evil is more likely to fall into it."*
- *"A little provision acquired with kindness is better than a lot acquired through violence."*
- *"Do not think badly of a word spoken by your brother when you can still find good ways to interpret it."*

#### **REGARDING KNOWLEDGE, HE USED TO SAY...**

- *"Acquire knowledge before you become leaders and pride prevents you from learning and you live in ignorance."*

- *"Even if knowledge does not benefit you, it will never harm you."*
- *"No man is a scholar until he does not envy those who are above him and does not despise those who are beneath him, and does not take any payment for his work."*
- *"Seek knowledge and teach it to people. Learn dignity and tranquility, and be humble towards those from whom you learn knowledge and be humble towards those whom you teach it, and do not be tyrannical scholars otherwise your knowledge cannot be established because of your tyranny."*
- Umar warned against the mistakes of scholars and said, *"Islam will be destroyed by the mistakes of scholars, the arguments of the hypocrites who misinterpret the Qur'an to support their views, and misleading rulers."*

#### **PROPHET MUHAMMAD (PBUH)'S ASSESSMENT OF UMAR**

A number of traditions have come down to us, which speak of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) assessment of Umar. Before the conversion of Umar to Islam, the prayer of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is on record wherein he prayed:

*"O Allah, glorify Islam by the conversion of Umar."*

There is a tradition that when Umar embraced Islam, the Prophet (pbuh) said that Gabriel had visited him to say:

*"O Muhammad, verily the dwellers in heaven rejoice with you at the conversion of Umar."*

On one occasion, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had a dream. He related:

*"While I was asleep, I dreamt that I drank milk. Then that milk began to flow from my fingers. That milk I asked Umar to drink, and he drank to his full." Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was asked to interpret the dream and he said, "that the dream signified that among his followers, Umar would excel everyone in knowledge."*



A tradition is on record according to which pointing to Umar, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said:

*"Umar is a strongly bolted gate against discord. As long as he lives in your midst, there will be no discord among the Muslims."*

There is another tradition according to which the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said:

*"There is not an angel in Heaven, but he reveres Umar, and not a demon on earth but he flees from Umar."*

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said, *"That if there were to be any Prophet after him it would have been Umar."* And he (pbuh) also said, *"Among the nations who came before you were some who were inspired. If anyone among my Ummah were to be inspired it would be Umar."*

It was narrated that Sa'd ibn waqqas said, *"Umar ibn al- Khattab sought permission to see the Messenger (pbuh). There were some women of Quraysh with him who were talking to him and asking too many questions, raising their voices above his. When Umar asked for permission to enter, they ran and hid. The Messenger (pbuh) gave him permission to enter, so Umar came in and found the Messenger (pbuh) smiling. He said, 'May Allah make you smile always, O' Messenger of Allah.'" The Prophet (pbuh) said, "I am surprised about these women who were with me. When they heard your voice, they ran and hid." Umar said, "You have more right to be feared, O' Messenger of Allah." Then Umar said, "O enemies of yourselves! Do you fear me and not the Messenger of Allah (pbuh)?" They said, "Yes, you are more harsh and more stern than the Messenger of Allah (pbuh)." The Prophet (pbuh) said, "O' son of al- Khattab, by the One in Whose Hand is my soul, the Shaytan never meets you on a path but he takes another path."*

## **NON-MUSLIMS' VIEWS ON UMAR**

In his book *Lives of Successors of Muhammad*, Washington Irving estimates the achievements of Umar in the following terms:

*"The whole history of Umar shows him to have been a man of great powers of mind, inflexible integrity and rigid justice. He was more than anyone else the founder of the Islamic empire; confirming and carrying out the inspirations of the Prophet; aiding Abu Bakr with his councils during his brief Caliphate; and establishing wise regulations for the strict administration of the law throughout the rapidly-extending bounds of the Muslim conquests. The rigid hand which he kept upon his most popular generals in the midst of their armies, and in the most distant scenes of their triumphs, gives signal evidence of his extraordinary capacity to rule. In the simplicity of his habits, and his contempt for all pomp and luxury, he emulated the example of the Prophet and Abu Bakr. He endeavoured incessantly to impress the merit and policy of the same in his letters to his generals. 'Beware' he would say of Persian luxury both in food and raiment. Keep to the simple habits of your country, and Allah will continue you victorious; depart from them and He will reverse your fortunes'. It was his strong conviction of the truth of this policy which made him so severe in punishing all ostentatious style and luxurious indulgence in his officers. Some of his ordinances do credit to his heart as well as his head. He forbade that any female captive who would borne a child should be sold as a slave. In his weekly distributions of the surplus money of his treasury, he proportioned them to the wants, not the merits of the applicants. 'God' said he, 'has bestowed the good things of this world to relieve our necessities, not to reward our virtues: those will be rewarded in another world."*

In his book *The Caliphate, Its Rise, Decline and Fall* Sir William Muir says about Umar:

*"Umar's life requires but few lines to sketch. Simplicity and duty were his guiding principles; impartiality and devotion the leading features of his administration. Responsibility so weighed upon him that he was heard to exclaim 'O that my mother had not borne me; would that I have been this stalk of grass instead!' In early life, of a fiery and impatient temper, he was known, even in the later days of the Prophet, as the stern advocate*

of vengeance. Ever ready to unsheathe the sword, it was he who at Badr advised that the prisoners should be put to death. But age, as well as office, had now mellowed this asperity. His sense of justice was strong... No act of tyranny or injustice is recorded against him. The choice of his captains and governors was free from favouritism. The various tribes and bodies in the empire, representing interests the most diverse, reposed in his integrity implicit confidence, and his strong arm maintained the discipline of law and empire... Whip in hand, he would perambulate the streets and markets of Medina, ready to punish offenders on the spot; and so, the proverb Umar's whip is more terrible than another's sword'. But with all this he was tender hearted, and numberless acts of kindness are recorded of him, such as relieving the wants of the widows and the fatherless."

**The Encyclopedia Britannica remarks about Umar:**

"To Umar's ten years' of Caliphate belong, for the most part, the great conquests. He himself did not take the field, but remained in Madina ; he never, however, suffered the reins to slip from his grasp, so powerful was the influence of his personality and the Muslim community of feeling. His political insight is shown by the fact that he endeavoured to limit the indefinite extension of Muslim conquest, to maintain and strengthen the national Arabian character of the commonwealth of Islam; also by making it his foremost task to promote law and order in its internal affairs. The saying with which he began his reign will never grow antiquated: 'By God, he that is weakest among you shall be in my eye the strongest, until I have vindicated for him his rights; he that is strongest I will treat as the weakest, until he complies with the law'. It would be impossible to give a better general definition of the function of the state."

**Mahatma Gandhi said,** "If India needs to prosper, it needs a dictator as honest and as upright as Umar."



# 3

## SALADIN-SALAH AL-DIN AL-AYUBBI

---

*"Victory is changing the hearts of your opponents by gentleness and kindness."*

Saladin

### SALAH AD-DIN YUSUF IBN AYYUB (1138-1193 CE)

Salah ad-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub (1138-1193 CE), popularly known in the West as Saladin, is a rare figure in Middle Eastern history that earned the respect of Christians, Jews, and Muslims alike. Saladin, ruler of Egypt, and the most formidable opponent of the Crusaders, captivated the popular imagination of the Middle Ages. Saladin was born in Mesopotamia and was of Kurdish descent. As vizier of Egypt, he overthrew the unpopular Fatimid caliphate and established himself as the country's first Ayyubid sultan in 1174. At the height of his power he ruled over Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Hejaz, and Yemen.

In wars against the Christian crusaders, he achieved final success with the disciplined capture of Jerusalem (Oct. 2, 1187), ending its 88-year occupation by the Franks. The great Christian counterattack of the Third Crusade was then stalemated by his military genius. Saladin became a legend in the East and West for his role in clearing the Crusaders from Jerusalem. His capture of Jerusalem, and the Muslim

triumph that followed, gave him a remarkable place in the pages of history.

When Dante Alighieri compiled his great medieval Who's Who of heroes and villains, the 'Divine Comedy'...the most surprising entry in Dante's catalog of "great-hearted souls" was a figure "solitary, set apart."

That figure was Saladin. (TIME, Friday, Dec. 31, 1999)

### **SALADIN'S BIRTH AND LINEAGE**

Saladin was born into a well-off Kurdish family in Tikrit (a city on the Tigris River), Iraq in 1137/38. The Abbasid Caliph of Baghdad, al Mustarshid, had appointed his father Ayyub, an earnest Muslim, skilled in administration and diplomacy, as the governor of the town.

### **SALADIN'S ACTUAL NAME**

Saladin's real name is Yusuf or Joseph. His honorific name, Salah al-Din means the "righteousness of the faith" or "cream of the religion." His full name is Salah al Din Abu 'l-Muzaffer Yusuf ibn Ayyub ibn Shadi, which consists of his honorific name, Salah al-Din, his domestic name, Yusuf, his nickname, Abu 'l Muzaffer (father of the Victorious), and a father and a grandfather's names, Ayyub (Job) and Shadi.

### **HIS EARLY LIFE**

Saladin received his early childhood education in Baalbek and Damascus, Syria. In 1143, when Saladin was six years old, Sultan Zengi of Mosul appointed his father Ayyub as the governor of Baalbek.

Sultan Zengi defeated the Crusaders south of Aleppo in 1130 and in 1144 recovered the city of Edessa. When Zengi died in 1146, his son Nur al Din succeeded him. Nur al-Din was a respected devout leader. After few years, Nur al Din appointed Ayyub as the Head of Damascus Militia. Ayyub's younger brother, Shirkuh, who was an officer, was

promoted to a senior command in the military establishment in Aleppo.

Saladin learned Arabic, poetry, the formal prayers and memorized what was required of him of the Qur'an and the tradition of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Saladin had great interest in learning Islam's principles regarding Christians and Jews, the People of the Book.

Saladin was fourteen years old when he got married. He was then sent to his uncle Shirkuh in Aleppo on a career that would lead to his becoming one of Nur al Din's emirs. The devout Nur al-Din soon became a great mentor for the young Saladin.

### **HIS FAMILY**

Little is known about Saladin's wife, except that he married her in Egypt and that she stood by him through thick and thin and gave him 16 sons.

### **HIS APPEARANCE**

It seems that Saladin was a slender man of medium height with a dark complexion, dark hair, eyes and beard, and a rather sad expression.

### **HIGHPOINTS OF HIS MILITARY CAREER**

His formal career began in 1152 when he joined the staff of his uncle Asad ad-Deen Shirkuh, an important military commander under the Amir Nur al-Din, who was the son and successor of Zanqi.

- **1164 - 1174 :** In 1164 Shirkuh appointed him lieutenant of Egypt where he showed his military abilities in three campaigns against the Crusaders who were established in Palestine. The same year he served as second to the commander in chief of the Syrian army, his uncle Shirkuh. By 1169, at the age of 31, he had been appointed vizier of the Fatimid caliphate in Egypt as well as commander of the Syrian troops there. At this time Saladin made a vow to deliver Jerusalem from the Franks.

His position was further enhanced when, in 1171, he abolished the weak and unpopular Shiite Fatimid Caliphate, proclaimed a return to Sunni Islam in Egypt and became the country's sole ruler. Although he remained for a time, theoretically, a Governor for Nur al-Din, that relationship ended with the Syrian Ameer's death in 1174.

- **1174 - 1186 :** In 1174 when Nur al-Din died, the Syrian princes gave their allegiance to Saladin, he used the opportunity to extend his power base, conquering Damascus and began his expansion of his territory. In twelve years Saladin united Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, the Western parts of the Arabian Peninsula and Yemen, and preached to the Muslim world to rise in a *Jihad*, a Just War, to counter crusade.

From 1174 until 1186 he zealously pursued the goal of uniting, under his own standard, all the Muslim territories of Syria, northern Mesopotamia, Palestine and Egypt. This was accomplished by skillful diplomacy, backed, when necessary, by the swift and firm use of military force. Gradually, his reputation grew as a generous and virtuous but firm ruler, devoid of deception, lavishness, and cruelty. Furthermore, he only appointed rulers whom he trusted and who shared his vision.

In 1183 Saladin completed the task of uniting Arab power under a single banner when he took the Gray Castle of Aleppo in the month of Safar. A young Qadi called Muhyi ad Din penned some verse around an old saying, that became very popular: *"he who takes the Gray Castle in Safar will take Jerusalem in Rajab."*

This was a period of periodic clashes with the forces of the Leper King, Baldwin IV of Jerusalem and his successor, King Guy of Lusignan, truces were almost invariably broken by the Franks and restored, thanks to Saladin's legendary tolerance. But open warfare was carefully avoided.

Then, in 1186, a truce he had negotiated with Raymond of Tripoli, was broken by the treacherous Reginald of Chatillon, a bandit-knight and master of the Castle of Kerak in Jordan, who had previously made it known that he intended to conquer Makkah itself. He attacked a large caravan traveling through the desert beneath his mountain eyrie (he had attacked pilgrims on their way to Haj, massacred or imprisoned them and when reminded of truce, he taunted: "let your Muhammad come and save you")

For Saladin, this was the last straw. He proclaimed a war against the crusaders and vowed to kill Reginald with his own hand. In March 1187 Saladin gave a call for Jihad to retake Jerusalem from the Crusaders, which was under their occupation for the last 88 years.

### **This Was How Jerusalem Came Under the Crusader's Occupation.**

Palestine was in peace for more than 460 years since the time of Umar but then the Crusades started. In 1099 Jerusalem had fallen to the First Crusaders, (historians refer to the many Crusades, by First Crusade, Second Crusade, etc.,) slaughtering its Christian, Muslim and Jewish inhabitants after promising them safety. They did not spare the lives of the elderly, women or children. The first Crusade started with the invasion in the 11th C.E. Following Pope Urban II's call on 27 Nov 1095 at the council of Clermont, more than 100,000 Europeans set out for Palestine to free the Holy land from the Muslims and find the fabled wealth of the east. They reached Jerusalem in 1099. The city fell after a siege of nearly five weeks. When the Crusaders moved in, they carried out a savage slaughter. For three days, the Crusaders systematically slaughtered about forty thousand inhabitants of Jerusalem and occupied their houses. Ten thousand Muslims who had sought sanctuary on the roof of the Aqsa Mosque were brutally massacred, and Jews were rounded up into their synagogue and put to



the sword. There were scarcely any survivors. The streets literally ran with blood. *"Piles of heads, hands and feet were to be seen,"* says an eyewitness Raymond of Aguiles (a crusader) with no shame. He says, *"If I tell the truth it will exceed your powers of belief. So let it suffice to say this much at least, that in the Temple and the porch of Solomon, men rode in blood up to their knees and bridle reins."* The peace and harmony in Palestine which had lasted since the time of Umar ended in a terrible slaughter.

### **SALADIN RECAPTURES JERUSALEM (JULY 1, 1187 - OCTOBER 2, 1187)**

The Crusaders had made Jerusalem their capital and established a Latin kingdom stretching from Palestine to Antioch. It was under their occupation for only 88 years, when Saladin defeated them at the Battle of Hattin in 1187. Three months after the Battle of Hattin (2 October 1187), Saladin entered Jerusalem. In contrast to the Crusaders "liberation" of Jerusalem, Saladin did not touch one Christian in the city, he merely ordered some Latin Christians to leave Jerusalem. The orthodox Christians who were not crusaders were allowed to stay and worship as they chose. Saladin conquered the city according to the highest Islamic ideals, he did not take revenge for the 1099 massacre. Part of the condition of the surrender of Jerusalem was that each Christian pays his or her ransom. Thousands of Christians, mainly women, were not able to pay their ransom. To save them from slavery, al-Adel, Saladin's brother, Geukburi, Saladin's brother-in law and Saladin paid their ransom out of their own pockets. This act was done in spite of the fact that some rich Christians such as the Patriarch, Heraclius and Madame la Patriarchesse of Jerusalem had so much wealth that they could have easily ransomed all. When Saladin was advised to confiscate the Patriarch and the la Patriarchesse's wealth to use it as

ransom for the poor Christians, he refused to go back on his word and turned his advisors' request down. He allowed the wealthy Christians to depart with all their wealth intact. Saladin was only faithfully responding to God's call that said:

**"Fulfill the covenant of God when you have entered into it, and break not your oaths after you have confirmed them; indeed you have made God your surety; for God knows all that you do."** (Al-Qur'an, 16:91)

Saladin also invited the Jews to come back to Jerusalem, from where they had been almost entirely excluded by the crusaders. He was hailed throughout the Jewish world as a new Cyrus. Saladin had consciously, followed the example of Umar, and taken Jerusalem without bloodshed and destruction. The highest honour that Saladin conferred at that hour was to choose the man who would deliver the first Khutba on Friday from Al Aqsa, he was the young Qadi from Aleppo, Muhi ad Din. The Qadi had one central message for Muslims: *victory had not come because of their sharp swords, fleet horses, or their courage in battle: it had come from Allah.*

**This is indeed an example of nobility in forgiving when you are strong and able.**

Stanley Lane-Poole writes, "Fortunate were the merciless, for they obtained mercy at the hands of the Muslim sultan..." and "If the taking of Jerusalem were the only fact known about Saladin, it were enough to prove him the most chivalrous and great-hearted conqueror of his own, and perhaps of any age."

Among his other achievements, he boosted the Egyptian economy and improved education, built a substantial number of Islamic schools all over Egypt. He encouraged the establishment of institutes of higher learning in Cairo, Damascus and Jerusalem. He also gave school administrators and teachers good salaries.



These schools soon attracted many scholars from Asia and Europe. The Jewish Physician Ibn Maymun, known as Maimonides (d.1204), who became Saladin's personal physician, had come from Andalusia. With so many scholars and schools, Egypt soon developed into a large intellectual center. Saladin borrowed this idea from his father Ayyub and Nur al-Din, who had earlier turned Syria into a large intellectual center.

At the age of 45 Saladin was the most powerful figure in the Muslim world. In Damascus, like Nur al Din, he presided every Tuesday and Thursday at the Hall of Justice. He rectified the wrongs, ordered the oppressor to recompense, and listened to his subjects with his own ears, without a mediator. If there was a matter which he himself was a part of, he surrendered his place to the judge and sat at the side of the plaintiff. If the judge ruled against him, he executed the order.

### **THE THIRD CRUSADE (1188)**

Recapturing of Jerusalem by Saladin shocked the West and as such, all of Christendom called for a new crusade. In 1189, Pope Gregory the VII, ordered The Third Crusade to win back the holy city. The massive forces that assembled during this Crusade, included the armies of the three greatest rulers of Europe, Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, Phillip II Augustus of France and Richard I the Lionhearted of England, each at the head of a large army, set out for the recovery of the Holy City of Jerusalem.

It proved to be futile. Saladin triumphed over the Crusaders, leaving the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem with only a thin strip of coastline.

### **THE TRUCE BETWEEN KING RICHARD THE LIONHEART AND SALADIN**

Five years later, after a period of battles, sieges, counter-sieges and diplomatic negotiations, Saladin and

Richard signed a peace treaty under which the Muslims kept Jerusalem and the interior and the Crusaders were permitted to retain, for a short while longer, their shaky hold on the coastal towns. Christians were permitted to visit Jerusalem without paying tribute, and to have free access to the holy places

Saladin always preferred negotiation and diplomacy to fighting. War to him was a necessary means of reaching certain objectives—a last resort when arbitration had failed.

Although the Crusaders failed in their purpose, Saladin's generosity and sense of honor in negotiating the peace treaty that ended the Crusade won him the lasting admiration and gratitude of the Christian World. King Richard left the Middle East in October 1192, for England and with his departure from the Holy Land the Third Crusade came to an end, the battle was over. Saladin withdrew to his capital in Damascus.

In 1192, Saladin assigned responsibility of the church of the holy Sepulcher to two neighboring Muslim families. The Joudeh were entrusted with the key, and the Nusseibeh, who had been the custodians of the church of the holy Sepulcher since the days of Caliph Umar in 637, retained the position of keeping the door. This arrangement has persisted into modern times. Twice each day, a Joudeh family member brings the key to the door, which is locked and unlocked by a Nusseibeh.

Saladin's courage, justice and moderation were rare in that age and have won him lasting respect in the West.

### **SOME EXAMPLES OF HIS CHIVALRY DURING WAR**

In his 28 years of battling the Crusaders, Saladin left many heart-touching impressions in the minds and hearts of his opponents as a reminder of his magnanimity.

**Following are few of these stories to help the reader understand why Saladin became a legendary figure in the Western world.**

After the capture of Jerusalem, the widow of his treacherous enemy, Reginald of Chatillon, asked Saladin to release her imprisoned son. He agreed, provided she ordered the garrison of Kerak to surrender the castle, which had so far remained out of his grasp. To show his good faith, Saladin released the prisoner and returned him to his mother—in advance. The widow failed to persuade the garrison to surrender, and sent her son back to Saladin. When the garrison of Kerak was finally starved into surrendering, Saladin returned the son to his mother, and to top it all rewarded the garrison for its bravery in fighting without its commander. He also bought back their wives and children from the Bedouin of the area who had taken them in exchange for food.

During the forty days respite that was given to the Westerners to leave Jerusalem, several Christian women approached Saladin stating that their guardians (husbands, fathers or sons) were missing. They explained to Saladin that they had no one to look after them, nor did they have any shelter. The kind-hearted Saladin broke into tears upon hearing their case. He ordered his soldiers to find their missing guardians and that for those whose guardians were dead, they should be given a liberal compensation. Here again he was following the Commandment of God,

**“Let not the hatred for others stop you from being just.”** (Al Qur’an, 5:8)

In September 1192, during the siege of Acre, King Richard the Lionheart gained a lasting respect for Saladin. When Richard fell sick, Saladin sent him his own physician to treat him. Along with this health care, he frequently sent him ice to cool down his fever and plum fruits that were necessary for his recovery.

In this noble act, Saladin was precisely submitting to the call of the Holy Qur’an that said:

**“It may be that God will grant love (and friendship) between you and those whom you hold as enemies. For God has power (over all things); and God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”** (Al Qur’an, 60:7)

When Richard the Lionheart was sick with a fever, Saladin, knowing that he was poorly supplied with delicacies, sent him a gift of the choicest fruits of the land. For two years Richard the Lionheart and Saladin were involved in almost daily combat in the crusaders attempts to capture Jerusalem from the Muslims.

At the famous siege of Acre, Richard the Lionheart, violated an agreement and slaughtered the city’s entire 3,000-man garrison. Saladin apparently forgave Richard this villainy: during a later skirmish in front of Jaffa, Richard’s horse was killed under him and Saladin sent him two Arabian horses to replace it, with the message: *“It is not right that so brave a warrior should have to fight on foot.”*

During the siege of Acre, a Christian woman came to Saladin’s camp weeping and wailing, insisting that her child was snatched away by his soldiers. He was moved to tears by the pitiful condition of the woman and he found the child and returned him to his mother. He also provided a horse for them to return safely back to their camp. Through an interpreter, Saladin used to communicate with virtually all the prisoners of war.

During the siege of Acre several soldiers were captured. Among them was an old man who was so old that he was toothless and could hardly walk. Saladin questioned him as to why he was there. The old man said that he had no thought but to make a pilgrimage to the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem. Saladin was so touched by his answer and condition that he provided a horse for him and ordered that he be escorted to Jerusalem to fulfill his worship dream.

Saladin was especially chivalrous towards women and children. Once he was besieging a castle near Aleppo and after protracted and costly efforts, managed to capture it. Then, a little girl, the sister of Aleppo's ruler, came to his camp and Saladin received her with gifts and kindness. As all little girls will, she asked for one thing more: the castle which he had just captured. Without a moment's pause, Saladin gave her the fortress which had cost him a siege of 38 days.

During one of his attacks on the Castle of Kerak, Saladin learned there was a wedding party underway inside. He politely inquired in which wing it was being held, and then directed his catapults elsewhere. (The bride sent out cakes and other samples from the wedding feast.)

### **HIS SIMPLICITY**

He had tremendous endurance and simple tastes in food. He liked fresh fruit and sherbet, drank barley-water when he was suffering, and enjoyed boiled rice. When not in the field he liked nothing better than an evening surrounded by scholars, friends and poets, discussing theology and law or listening to readings of the Qur'an, which if well rendered could move him to tears. He kept a small book in his pocket in which he wrote down quotations from his favorite authors, and he would often read aloud from it to illustrate a point in his conversation. Saladin's favorite pastime was polo—largely because it involved horses. Horses were his weakness and he offered them frequently as special gifts. He could reel off the pedigree of an Arabian stallion without a moment's hesitation.

Although Saladin had all the wealth of Egypt and Syria at his disposal, the trappings of power had no attraction for him. When he became supreme ruler of Egypt, for instance, he preferred a small simple house to the caliph's fabulous palace (4,000 rooms, a 120,000-volume library and sacksful of jewels). He gave away most of the contents of the palace.

Unlike the colorfully-dressed crusaders, Saladin usually wore a simple wool or linen cloak. As a precaution, to protect himself from treachery, he wore a coat of mail under his robes. In his later years, he wore a padded coat while on horseback to keep off the chill.

Ignoring protocol, he commanded loyalty by his personal behavior and example, his gentle character and his magnanimity. During audiences for example, the jostling petitioners often trampled on the very cushion where Saladin sat smiling.

More important, perhaps, was his relationship with his officers and principal emirs. During one long tour of inspection, his friend Baha al-Din, who later wrote a history of Saladin, was riding in front of the Sultan and accidentally splashed mud all over him, ruining his clothes. "But he only laughed and refused to let me go behind," the historian related. Discussion was free and unrestrained. At one officers' meeting, Saladin asked for a drink but nobody paid any attention. He had to repeat his request several times, a secretary recounted, before he was served. Such was the level of comfort his followers enjoyed in his presence.

### **SALADIN WAS ALWAYS OPEN TO SUGGESTIONS**

A humble coppersmith from Damascus once came forward and claimed he had discovered a chemical compound which could destroy the supposedly fireproof Frankish siege-towers near the walls of Acre. Saladin allowed the young man to try out his discovery, and sure enough, to the surprise of the Franks, the discovery—a preparation of naphtha—brought the towers down.

### **HIS MAGNANIMITY**

He also set up courts of law; he did not set himself above the law. A merchant once filed a lawsuit against the Sultan, claiming Saladin had seized the property of a former slave of his on the pretext that the slave actually belonged

to him. The merchant produced documents in support of his claim, and demanded that Saladin give back the property. If anyone else would have been at his (Saladin) position, the merchant would have disappeared from the face of the earth for such disrespect. But Saladin hired a lawyer and himself appeared in court, where he sat beside the merchant and testified that the slave had always belonged to him until he had been freed, and that therefore the property had passed on to his heirs. Then the lawyer took over and produced witnesses who proved the merchant's documents were forgeries, and the merchant lost the case.

Saladin, as usual, took pity on the defeated. He gave the merchant a robe and enough money to cover the expenses of the trial and his journey home—just to show there were no hard feelings.

When all the accounts of the Saladin's life and times are weighed, it seems that in his own sphere of activity, Saladin was a man of real greatness, with nothing low or petty about him. All his life he had impressed others by his example and even his enemies the crusaders (who often praised him) could console themselves that they had been defeated by no ordinary opponent.

The French historian **Rene Grousse** truly said it all when he described Saladin saying:

*"It is equally true that his generosity, his piety, devoid of fanaticism, that flower of liberality and courtesy which had been the model of our old chroniclers, won him no less popularity in Frankish Syria than in the lands of Islam."*

### **SALADIN'S DEATH**

The long campaigning seasons and the endless hours in the saddle finally caught up with him, Saladin barely survived that winter. In February, he fell ill and died on 4 March 1193, his dream and vow fulfilled. He had not only won Jerusalem, he had also saved it for Islam. The day of his death was a day of grief for Muslims, the equal of which

they had not known since the days of the rightly-guided caliphs. While his relatives were already scrambling for pieces of the empire, his friends found that the most powerful and most generous ruler in the Muslim world had not left enough money to pay for his own burial. **Money was borrowed to pay for his funeral for he had no wealth of his own.** The *Imaam* who led the funeral prayer was Muhyi ad Din ibn az Zaki, the young *Qadi* from Aleppo who had led the first Friday prayer at Al-Aqsa after Saladin took Jerusalem.

Saladin's parting words to al-Zahir shortly before his death. "... *Do the Will of God, which is the Way of Peace*, he said, placing his hand on his son's head. "*He is the source of all good. Abstain from the shedding of blood; trust not to that; for blood that is spilt never slumbers. Strive to gain the hearts of thy subjects and watch over all of their interests, look after their welfare. I have become as great as I am because I have won the hearts of men by gentleness and kindness. Never nourish ill feeling toward any man, for Death spares none. Be watchful in thyself. God will pardon the repentant, for He is gracious.*"

Allah, Muhammad (pbuh), Saladin, reads a message inscribed in the small room in the campus of the mosque called *Al-khanqah* where Saladin lived in the old city of Jerusalem after his great conquest in 1187. Saladin had led the most successful *Jihad* after Umar.



## REFERENCES

### Chapter-1

1. Abdulaziz F. Al Mubarak, *The Future World Order*, Vol.1, New Dialogue Press, New York.
2. Dr. Muhammad A. Al Buraey, *Management and Administration In Islam*, Kegan Paul International Ltd., U.K.
3. Prof. Masudul Hasan, *Hadrat Umar Farooq*, Kitab Bhavan, New Delhi.
4. Majid Ali Khan, *The Pious Caliphs*, Islamic Book Trust, Malaysia.
5. Dr. Ali Muhammad as-Sallabi, *Umar ibn Al-Khattab His Life and Times*, Vol.1 & 2, International Publishing House, Riyadh.
6. Tim Wallace Murphy, *What Islam Did for Us*, Watkins Publishing, London.

### Chapter-2

1. Stanley Lane-Poole, *Saladin and the Fall of the Kingdom of Jerusalem*, The Other Press, Kuala Lumpur.
2. Beha Ed-Din, *The Life of Saladin*, Adam Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi.
3. Karen Armstrong, *Jerusalem, One City, Three Faiths*, 1997 The New York Times, Ballantine Books, New York.
4. M.J. Akbar, *The Shade of Swords*, The Lotus Collection (Roli Books), New Delhi.

