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# JUMU'AH LECTURE: SAYYIDUNĀ 'ABD ALLĀH

IBN MAS'ŪD رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ



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## Jumu'ah Lecture: Sayyidunā 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd

إِنَّ الْحَمْدَ لِلَّهِ نَحْمَدُهُ وَنَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ وَنَتُوبُ إِلَيْهِ وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شُرُورِ أَنْفُسِنَا وَسَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا مِنْ يَهْدِهِ اللَّهُ فَلَا مَضَلَّ لَهُ وَمَنْ يَضِلَّ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

All praise is due to Allah ﷻ. We ask Allah to send salutations, mercy, and blessings upon Rasūlullāh ﷺ and his noble Companions.

We live in a world where information is being fed to us on a daily basis through various channels, some of which are unacceptable. We are exposed to the media which presents a distorted image of Islam. At times, we are exposed to evil insinuations against Allah ﷻ, Rasūlullāh ﷺ, and his noble Companions on social media. In times like these, the need to attain Islamic knowledge through authentic mediums has become a matter of urgency.

Allah sent Rasūlullāh ﷺ with the Glorious Qur'ān and blessed Sunnah. Allah ﷻ chose the Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ to remain in and benefit from the company of Rasūlullāh ﷺ. Through the Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ, Allah preserved the knowledge and legacy of Rasūlullāh ﷺ as well as his Sunnah, as the Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ emulated him to the minutest detail. The Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ became fountains of knowledge and imparted that priceless legacy to the Ummah.

Among the galaxy of knowledgeable Ṣaḥābah, we learn of a Ṣaḥābī who benefitted tremendously from Rasūlullāh ﷺ from a young age and was a fountainhead of knowledge. He is Sayyidunā 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ.

Sayyidunā 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was born to the Hudhayl Tribe approximately 17 years after Rasūlullāh ﷺ. He was a uniquely short and a skinny man with a dark complexion. Rasūlullāh ﷺ gave him the agnomen Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān while his title was Ibn Umm 'Abd.<sup>1</sup>

Nāfi' says: "Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was from among the most generous of people. He would wear the whitest of clothes and was the most pleasantly scented from among the people."<sup>2</sup>

He was the twenty second person to accept Islam and is thus from the Early Forerunners among the Muhājirīn who have been graciously praised by Allah ﷻ in the Glorious Qur'ān3:

وَالسَّابِقُونَ السَّابِقُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُمْ بِإِحْسَانٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

*And the first forerunners [in the faith] among the Muhājirīn and the Anṣār and those who followed them with good conduct - Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him, and He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever. That is the great attainment.<sup>4</sup>*

The incident behind his Islam is as follows. He worked as a shepherd for 'Uqbah ibn Abī Mu'ayṭ. Once, while shepherding the sheep, Rasūlullāh ﷺ came with Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ. Rasūlullāh ﷺ requested him to milk a virgin sheep, and miraculously, milk began pouring out of its udder. After witnessing this miracle, he embraced Islam.<sup>5</sup>

1 Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā', 1/333.

2 Muḥammad Ibn Sa'd: al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā, 6/209.

3 Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā', 1/334.

4 Sūrah al-Tawbah: 100.

5 Musnad Aḥmad, 1/462.

## Hijrah & Battles

Sayyidunā Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه lived in the close company of Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم and participated in all the major campaigns. He participated in the Battles of Badr, Uḥud, Khandaq, Khaybar, Ḥunayn, Tabūk and the Conquest of Makkah. He reports details of Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم during each battle, which indicates his closeness to Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم.<sup>1</sup>

One distinction he has is that Allah allowed him, a man with the smallest stature, to kill the man with the greatest pride. In the Battle of Badr, he gave the final fatal blow to the Pharaoh of this Ummah, Abū Jahl, facilitating his despatch to Hell and bringing joy to the heart of Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم.<sup>2</sup>

## Attachment to the Messenger of Allah

If we look into his life, we observe that once he embraced Islam, he occupied himself in an action which is key to attaining knowledge. He remained closely attached to Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم and would ardently serve Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم.

He would lay his sleeping mat for him, keep his miswāk, shoes and water for ablution. This was during travel.<sup>3</sup> He was, thus, known as the Carrier of (Rasūlullāh's صلى الله عليه وسلم) shoes, miswāk and the ablution water container.<sup>4</sup>

He would frequent Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم so often that the Ṣaḥābah who came to Madīnah would think he was from the *Ahl al-Bayt* (family) of Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم. Sayyidunā Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī رضي الله عنه said that when he came from Yemen and accepted Islam. They stayed in Madīnah and thought that Ibn Mas'ūd and his mother were from the *Ahl al-Bayt* (members of the household of the Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم) because they would enter the house of Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم so frequently.<sup>5</sup>

These narrations outline to us an important point. We learn that in order to achieve deep understanding of Dīn and attain Islamic knowledge, it is imperative to stay close to those scholars who are well versed in Islamic knowledge, including travelling with them and serving them. It is our responsibility to learn of our beautiful religion and take out time to seek Islamic knowledge from the 'Ulamā'.

## Rasūlullāh's Love for the Ṣaḥābah

Furthermore, we observe the close relationship Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم had with Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه. By extension, Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم had immense love of all the Ṣaḥābah. He announced:

الله الله في أصحابي لا تتخذوهم غرضا من بعدي فمن أحبهم فبحبي أحبهم ومن أبغضهم فببغضي أبغضهم

Fear Allah! Fear Allah, regarding my Ṣaḥābah! Fear Allah! Fear Allah, regarding my Ṣaḥābah! Do not make them a target of criticism after me. Whosoever loves them, it is on account of his love for me, and whosoever has enmity for them, it is on account of his enmity for me.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, any criticism, mocking, taunting, or defamation against the Ṣaḥābah is a sign of hatred for Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم. Disrespecting the Ṣaḥābah is disrespecting the choice of Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى. Allah does not make mistakes in His choices. If Allah ever intends something, it is on account of His infinite wisdom and in no way will Allah make a mistake in His decision. Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه himself outlines to us Allah's choice in the matter of the Ṣaḥābah.

1 'Abd Sattār Shaykh: 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd, 61-77.

2 Sunan Abi Dawud, Ḥadīth: 2709.

3 Muḥammad Ibn Sa'd: *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, 3/153.

4 Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ḥadīth: 3761.

5 Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ḥadīth: 3763.

6 *Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī*: 2/225.

Wā'il ibn 'Abd Allāh reports that Ibn Mas'ūd رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ said: Verily Allah looked at the hearts of people and chose Muḥammad and then sent him to His creation. Allah sent him with His message and granted him from His knowledge. He then looked at the hearts of people after him and chose for him his Companions. He made them the helpers of His Dīn and the representatives of His Nabī. That which the believers [Ṣaḥābah] see as good is good, and that which the believers [Ṣaḥābah] see as evil is evil in Allah's eyes.<sup>1</sup>

### Master of the Qur'ān

Sayyidunā Ibn Mas'ūd رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ memorised the entire Qur'ān. He learnt seventy Sūrahs directly from Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. He is reckoned as one of the great Qur'rā' of this Ummah. Moreover, he has the distinction of being the first person after Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ to recite the Qur'ān publicly in front of the Quraysh.

Those who were proficient in the Qur'ān were special. Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ordered those around him to learn the Qur'ān from Ibn Mas'ūd رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ among others. Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ instructed: "Learn the Qur'ān from four people: From Ibn Umm 'Abd (Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ began with Ibn Mas'ūd), Mu'adh ibn Jabal, Ubayy ibn Ka'b, and Sālim, the freed slave of Abū Ḥudhayfah."<sup>2</sup>

One of the best ways to begin our journey in Islamic knowledge is by acquainting ourselves with the Qur'ān. On a daily basis, time should be allocated to read the Qur'ān and revise it. The Qur'ān will be a companion in the grave and an intercessor on the Day of Judgement. In these times of turmoil, the need to become proficient readers of the Qur'ān and learn its meaning is of great importance as the Qur'ān will secure our salvation in this world and the Hereafter.

### Commentary of the Qur'ān

Sayyidunā Ibn Mas'ūd's رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ commentary of various verses of the Qur'ān outline to us his deep understanding of the Qur'ān and immense knowledge. In the following narration, he imparts to us a simple, yet valuable action to do to ensure steadfastness in the grave.

"When we narrate to you something then we bring a proof from the Qur'ān. Verily when a Muslim slave says:

سبحان الله و بحمده و الحمد لله ولا إله إلا الله و الله أكبر

An angel places these words under his wings then ascends into the sky. The angel does not pass other groups of angels except that they seek forgiveness for the one who uttered these words, until he brings these words before the Countenance of Allah." Ibn Mas'ūd رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ then recited:

إِلَيْهِ يَصْعَدُ الْكَلِمُ الطَّيِّبُ وَالْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ يَرْفَعُهُ

*To Him ascends good speech, and righteous work raises it.*<sup>3</sup>

### Fiqh

Sayyidunā 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ praised him, "He read the Qur'ān, had a deep understanding of Dīn, and was knowledgeable of the Sunnah."<sup>4</sup> Owing to his proficiency in Qur'ān and excellent understanding of the Dīn, Sayyidunā 'Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ gave

1 *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā'*, 1/375-376.

2 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ḥadīth: 3760.

3 Sūrah al-Fāṭir: 10.

4 *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, 3/156.

him orders to proceed to Kūfah after its establishment in 17 AH and teach the people Qur’ān as well as develop their understanding of Dīn. He remained in Kūfah for many years disseminating the knowledge of Qur’ān and Sunnah, leaving close to 4000 knowledgeable men (‘Ulamā’, Fuqahā’, Muḥaddithīn) in the city.

When Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه came to Kūfah, he was pleased to see so many Fuqahā’ in Kūfah and remarked, “May Allah have mercy on Ibn Umm ‘Abd. He has certainly filled this area with knowledge.” “The students of ‘Abd Allāh were the lanterns for this city,” remarked Sa‘īd ibn Jubayr.<sup>1</sup>

The Ḥanafī Fiqh is significantly influenced by the verdicts and rulings of Sayyidunā Ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمته الله was the student of Ḥammād ibn Sulaymān رحمته الله who was the student of Ibrāhīm al-Nakha‘ī رحمته الله who succeeded al-Aswad and ‘Alqamah, the two outstanding students of ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه.

### Practice upon Knowledge

Practicing on one’s knowledge is the demand of knowledge. Sayyidunā Ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه highlights this aspect in the following narration: “When a man from us learnt ten verses, he would not learn more until he knew its meaning and practiced on it.”<sup>2</sup>

### His Transmission

Ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه narrated approximately 884 aḥādīth from Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم.<sup>3</sup> However, today we will focus on a ḥadīth which highlights the importance of truthfulness.

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ إِنَّ الصُّدْقَ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْبِرِّ، وَإِنَّ الْبِرَّ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ، وَإِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيَصْدُقُ حَتَّى يَكُونَ صَادِقًا، وَإِنَّ الْكُذْبَ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْفُجُورِ، وَإِنَّ الْفُجُورَ يَهْدِي إِلَى النَّارِ، وَإِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيَكْذِبُ، حَتَّى يُكْتَبَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ كَذَابًا

Ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه narrates: Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم said, “Truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to Paradise. A man keeps on telling the truth until he becomes a truthful person. Falsehood leads to *al-Fujūr* (i.e. wickedness, evil-doing), and wickedness leads to the (Hell) Fire. A man may keep on telling lies till he is written as a liar before Allah.”<sup>4</sup>

The ḥadīth emphasises the importance of truthfulness. According to the ḥadīth, truthfulness is the underlying reason to do good and ultimately leads one to Jannah. Thus, if a person hides the truth, or his true religion, or refers to truth as falsehood and falsehood as the truth, or even lies for futile worldly gain, he will be on the road to wickedness. This will ultimately lead a person to Hell. We ask Allah to protect us from lying and concealing the truth.

### Humility

Sayyidunā Ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه was an extremely humble person. Ḥabīb ibn Abī Thābit says: One day, ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd set out and people began to follow him. He said to them, “Do you have a need?” They said, “No, but we wish to walk with you.” He said, “Return, as it is a disgrace for the followers and a test for the one being followed.”<sup>5</sup> He used to tell people: “If you knew my sins, even two men will not walk behind me.”<sup>6</sup>

1 Al-Kawtharī: *Fiqh Ahl al-‘Irāq wa Ḥadīthuhum*, pg. 42.

2 *Tafsīr ibn Kathīr*, 1/13.

3 Muḥammad ibn Abd Allāh Al-Khaṭīb: *Mishkāt, Asmā’ al-Rijāl*, p. 542.

4 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ḥadīth: 6094.

5 *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwah*, 1/406.

6 Al-Dhahabī: *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’*, 2/472.

Allah elevates those who are humble. We therefore find Rasūlullāh ﷺ and ‘Alī رضي الله عنه, among others, heaping praise on ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه. ‘Alī رضي الله عنه narrates that Rasūlullāh ﷺ said: “If I were to appoint anyone a leader without consulting the believers, it would be Ibn Umm ‘Abd (i.e. ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd).”<sup>1</sup>

Ḥabbah ibn Juwayn relates: We were with ‘Alī. We mentioned some of the statements of ‘Abd Allāh. The people then praised him. They said, “O Amīr al-Mu‘minīn, we have not seen a man better in character, gentler in teaching, nobler as a companion, and more Allah fearing than ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd.” ‘Alī said, “I implore you in Allah’s name, is this the truth from your heart?” They said, “Yes.” ‘Alī added, “O Allah, I say the same regarding him as they say or even better.”<sup>2</sup>

We note how humble Ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه was despite his knowledge. Furthermore, we see the honour Allah had given Ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه. This teaches us that in our search of Islamic knowledge, humility is of utmost importance. The garb of pride is Allah’s and the garb of a believer generally, and especially the seekers of knowledge, is humility. We also note that those who are humble will be granted honour by Allah in this world let alone the Hereafter.

### Conclusion

Through the biography of Ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه, we learn important lessons on seeking Islamic knowledge. We observe how important it is to keep the company of the pious and gain an understanding of the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth. Moreover, we observe the importance of practising what we learn and maintaining humility in our endeavours.

Love for the Ṣaḥābah and researching their lives allow us to understand the greatness of these blessed people. We ask Allah to accept us for his Dīn and grant us love of Allah, his Messenger ﷺ and the honourable Ṣaḥābah رضي الله عنهم.

We end with a beautiful narration. The Nabī ﷺ, Abū Bakr, and some of the Companions passed by ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه one night while he was praying in the Masjid. On hearing his recitation, Rasūlullāh ﷺ observed, “Verily, ‘Abd Allāh recites the Qur’ān as fresh as it had been revealed.” After his ṣalāh, ‘Abd Allāh began praising Allah’s Majesty and supplicating to Allah with all his heart. He supplicated, “O Allah, I ask You for such īmān that will never apostatise, such favours that will never end, and the company of Muḥammad ﷺ in the highest abode of Your gardens, the gardens of eternity.” Meanwhile, the entire time Rasūlullāh ﷺ kept saying, “Ask, and you will be granted. Ask, and you will be granted.”<sup>3</sup>

و آخر دعوانا أن الحمد لله رب العالمين

1 *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, 3/154.

2 *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, 3/156.

3 *Al-Mustadrak*, 3/358, Ḥadīth: 5386. Al-Dhababī declared it ṣaḥīḥ.