

THE **F1RST**S

A Lecture Series

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Zayd Ibn Al Haritha

Loved & Liberated

His nickname was “the beloved of the beloved صلى الله عليه وسلم” The character of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is exhibited in relationships he had with people before Islam was revealed, and his relationship with Zayd is one of them. Zayd was a man of dark skin, short in height, had a small build, and ten years younger than the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. His father, Al Haritha, was from a prominent Arab tribe outside of Mecca and his mother was Suad ibn Thaliba. He was the first freed slave to become a Muslim.

As a young child, Zayd and his mother were visiting his mother’s relatives outside of Mecca. While they were sleeping, they were attacked by bandits from Banu AlKayn and he was kidnapped by them. They took him to the slave market to sell and profit from him. He was suddenly chained and became a slave. His mother and father searched for him but could not find him. His father wrote poems as he looked for him “ I weep for Zayd without knowing what happened to him..”, desperately needing closure about him to be able to grieve.

Joining Khadija’s Household

Khadija was a modest, humble woman. She told her nephew that she was getting tired and needed help. He went to the slave market and bought Zayd for 400 dirhams (small price). Zayd wasn’t particularly strong but he chose him. Khadija later married the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and Zayd immediately loved Zayd and saw something in his character and his modesty. She gifted him to the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم when she realized how fond of him he was صلى الله عليه وسلم. He treated him like a son, not a slave. He never differentiated between Zayd and his own children in the home.

A few years later, while Al Haritha and his brother were still looking for Zayd, his brother saw Zayd with the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم at the Kaaba. Al Haritha walked up to the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم while he was sitting near the Kaaba and told him the story of his lost son Zayd, asked for his return and offered to pay whatever the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked, for his return. The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم replied that he will call over to Zayd to ask him what he prefers, without any ransom. After Zayd confirmed that they were indeed his father and his uncle, the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم told him that he was free to go with them, without any ransom. Zayd replied that he wanted to stay with the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and Khadija. When his father heard that he asked him “do you choose slavery over freedom, over your parents, your city, and your people”. Zayd replied “I have seen something special from this man صلى الله عليه وسلم and I will never be the one to part ways with him”. This is before the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had received revelation, but the way he treated

Zayd and the relationship they had was special to Zayd. Al Haritha asked him “what does your master do with you ?” Zayd replied, “He treats me better than he treats his own children and his family.” Upon hearing this, The Prophet ﷺ announced in front of everyone, “bear witness that he is free, this is my son, he inherits from me and I inherit from him”. This pleased Al Harith because it formalized the status of Zayd as a free member of society, which was very important for him as his father. He was now known as Zayd ibn Mohammad. He later married the niece of Khadija, showing the status this gave him.

Witness to the Life of the Prophet ﷺ

Zayd experienced the Prophet’s life as his own children did. He witnessed the most painful day of the Prophet’s life ﷺ - the day of Taif. He was the only with him on that day. Khadija, Abu Talib had died, it was the last stage of persecution in Mecca, and the Prophet ﷺ was desperately looking for someone to protect him, and he went to Taif in his search. He was mocked , humiliated and physically attacked in front of Zayd for 15 miles. Zayd tried to stop the people from hurting him and observed the Prophet’s desperate supplication “who are you going to leave me to ?” Zayd was also present when Jibreel asked the Prophet ﷺ if he wanted to destroy everyone as punishment for their treatment of him, and the Prophet declined, stating that there may be one person among them that believes in the one God, and that maybe their children would later be Muslims.

Life in Medina

Zayd was asked to return to accompany the family of the Prophet ﷺ from Mecca to Medina. Upon his arrival in Medina, he was paired with Hamza, the Prophet’s ﷺ uncle. They became extremely close, Hamza even entrusted him to carry out his Last Will and Testament after his death. Zayd was an extremely talented warrior and skilled archer. He fought in all of the battles with the Prophet ﷺ and was left by him as the governor of Medina. Since the Prophet ﷺ didn’t have any living sons, Zayd took on that role. He was sent on 7 military expeditions, as a commander of each one.

Zayd married Um Ayman , who was an Abyssinian woman who cared for the Prophet and loved by him, “my mom after my mom” , when the Prophet announced “whoever wants to marry a woman of Janna, marry Um Ayman”. They later had Osama ibn Zayd, who was so loved by Prophet Mohammad ﷺ that he was known as “the beloved, son of the beloved of the beloved Prophet ﷺ”. When people wanted something from the Prophet ﷺ, they would go through Osama, because it was widely known how much the Prophet ﷺ loved him. Zayd and Osama were both advisors to the Prophet ﷺ and he valued their opinions highly.

The Prophet ﷺ wanted to shatter marital hierarchy in terms of wealth, tribe and social status. To do this, he married Zaynab bint Jahsh to Zayd for this purpose. She was

extremely wealthy and of a high social class. They could not reconcile their marital differences and would later divorce. To mandate a new rule in society of replacing adoption with foster care, the Prophet married Zaynab, which he could not do if Zayd was his son. Through this clarification, Allah did not do away with freeing slaves, or taking care of orphans, but wanted the preservation of lineage. Zayd remained Zayd ibn Al Haritha, regardless of his special status with the Prophet ﷺ. Zayd got a special distinction as a result of this story and is the only companion of the Prophet, male or female, who is mentioned by name in the Quran.

He led many expeditions, one of them was the difficult Battle of Muta. It disproportionately paired 3,000 Muslims against 200,000 Romans. It took place in modern day Jordan. Zayd died in this battle along with many other close companions to the Prophet ﷺ. News of their martyrdom came directly from Jibreel and not a human messenger. The Prophet ﷺ wept as he announced their deaths on the mimbar (pulpit), and was clearly shaken by the loss of Zayd.

Lessons Learned

- One of the ways of loving the Prophet ﷺ is loving who he loved. It's an act of worship to love Zayd. It's a form of closeness with Allah swt and the Prophet ﷺ.
- His status was very special and noble. Aisha said "The Prophet ﷺ never sent Zayd on an expedition, except that he was in charge of it, and if he had lived, the Prophet ﷺ would have appointed him the Caliph."
- His status was so elevated that Zayd's son, Osama was appointed by the Prophet ﷺ to lead the Muslim army, after his death.
- The way Omar respected and treated Osama, showed how much he recognized how special he was to the Prophet ﷺ and out of respect and love, Omar also treated him accordingly.
- Zayd never used his status for perks, but rather he made even more sacrifices *because* of it, as the Prophet's ﷺ entire family also did.

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