

OMAR, THE CRITERION (PART 2 OF 3): A MAN AS A NATION

Rating: 4.7

Description: Omar's love for his brothers and sisters in Islam

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Omar ibn Al Khattab was a strong and assertive man, his heart filled with burning hatred for Islam. The supplications of Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, and the sublime beauty of Quran changed his mind, his heart, and his life. When Omar accepted Islam he became a man devoted to the Ummah of Muhammad, as a Muslim, he was pleased when the Ummah was pleased and displeased when the Ummah was displeased.

Ummah is an Arabic word, roughly translated to mean nation, but as with many Arabic words, it does not translate well into English. The root of the Arabic word Ummah is amma, which means to go or to go see. The word imama means to lead the way, for example, the one who leads the prayer is the Imam. Also derived from this root is the word umm meaning mother, source or origin.

In English speaking and Western countries, the word nation usually defines the nation state, whose members live between a set of predefined borders often set by religious, racial or ethnic differences. This is not the definition of Ummah. Ummah means the community of believers bound together with a purpose - to worship God. Together they are strong, divided they are weak. Each member is united with all of the others in a spiritual way that can even have physical manifestations. When one part of the Ummah is in pain, the whole Ummah hurts.^[1]

“And verily this Ummah of yours is One Ummah and I am your Lord and Cherisher: therefore fear Me (and no other).” (Quran 23:52)

To illustrate this we can look at images you may have seen on TV, Muslims decrying the abuse and mistreatment of their brothers in far off countries. In the Ummah of Muhammad when one member is hurting, the pain in the hearts of the other members is real. Muslims stand up for what is morally correct and inhumanity has no part in the religion of Islam. Omar ibn Al Khattab recognised this unique quality at once and declared himself a man of the Ummah.

When Omar ibn al Khattab accepted Islam he wanted to be part of his community and wanted to proclaim his membership of this unique nation. Omar wanted to join the

Ummah in their happiness and in their pain. At the time of his conversion, the weaker members of the Ummah suffered systematic abuse and oppression, often by Omar himself, but his heart now felt their pain and he wanted to experience it. Omar did not want his Islam to go unnoticed; he immediately informed the enemies of Islam that he was Muslim.

At first, the men of Mecca who had not embraced Islam were shocked and did not react to Omar's conversion, but as word spread, they came together at the House of God and attacked Omar. Eventually Omar, the strong, muscular wrestler sat in the midst of his attackers and they beat him. Omar recovered from his beating and because of him, Islam became strong. Omar's heart was filled with love for his brothers and sisters in Islam. Prophet Muhammad said, "if there was to be a Prophet after me it would have been Omar ibn al Khattab."

More than Strength

Abu Bakr As Siddiq, and Omar were the two companions closest to Prophet Muhammad. Ali Ibn Abu Talib is reported to have said that Prophet Muhammad went out in the morning with Abu Bakr and Omar and he would return at night with Abu Bakr and Omar. The Prophet himself called Abu Bakr and Omar his eyes and ears, and said they were his advisors from the inhabitants of earth.^[2] Omar stood beside Prophet Muhammad in all of the trials and tribulations that faced the Muslim Ummah.

When the Muslims of Mecca migrated to the city of Medina, all left in a well planned, secret migration, but not Omar. He was the only Muslim to make the migration openly, in fact, he proclaimed that he was leaving and invited any man who thought he was strong enough, to challenge him. Omar flung his sword around his neck and strode through the streets of Mecca with his head held high and his heart, which was no longer filled with hate, burning with a fierce love for God, His Prophet Muhammad and his fellow believers. As Prophet Muhammad created his Ummah, Omar stood by his side.

Although remembered for his strength, Omar was also known to be a pious and generous man. He would spend the nights in worship, often waking his family in the last part of the night to join him in his devotions. He was a staunch believer, confident in God's promise of Paradise and readily spent his wealth for the sake of God to benefit the believers. One of Prophet Muhammad's companions narrates^[3] that Omar once distributed 22,000 dirhams to the needy and had a habit of giving away bags of sugar. When Omar was asked why he distributed the sugar he said, "Because I love it and God said in the Quran,

"By no means shall you attain piety, unless you spend (in God's Cause) of that which you love; and whatever of good you spend, God knows it well." (Quran 3:92)

Omar was one of ten men to whom Prophet Muhammad gave the joyous news that they would be admitted to Paradise.^[4] However, this did not stop him from working tirelessly, all of his life to please God. He was a man of knowledge, a man known for

his generosity and tireless devotion to the worship of God and perhaps above all he was devoted to the Ummah of Muhammad. Prophet Muhammad counselled us all when he said, "A man is not a true believer until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself"^[5]. Omar wanted Paradise but he also wanted it for every man, woman or child who has ever believed that there is no god but God and Muhammad is His messenger. This was Omar, who distinguished truth from falsehood; he was a man of the Ummah.

Footnotes:

[1] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim.*

[2] At Tirmidhi.

[3] From The stories of the Rightly guided Caliphs by Imam Ibn Kathir

[4] At Tirmidhi

[5] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim, & others.*

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