

أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

أَلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ كَمَا هُوَ أَهْلُهُ وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى سَيِّدِ وَدِدِ أَدَمَ كَمَا يُحِبُّ وَيَرْضَى بِأَنْ يُصَلَّى عَلَيْهِ

Allah Almighty, in Whose Name we begin, The Most Compassionate,

The Most Merciful

All Praise is due to Allah Almighty, Countless Peace and Blessings be upon
His Beloved Messenger – *may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* – his family & his
companions – *may Allah be pleased with them all*

A More Generous person than Him

There are many qualities in the Arab nation which distinguishes them from other nations. Obviously, it would imply mostly to the Arab nation of the past. These qualities included bravery, hospitality, generosity, kindness, etc. In fact, amazing examples in history have been presented in this regard. Until the present time, some of these people are still remembered.

Ma'an bin Zaahidah was one such person who was noted for his munificence and his bravery. The Arabs have a proverb which goes, "Kindness is the pinnacle of god behaviour." A person who has these habits is someone who is brave, displays patience and steadfastness. Many people of this nature are also the beloved servants of Allah Almighty and over time, they become famous and well known.

Once the Holy Prophet - *may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* - mentioned to one of his beloved companions, Hadrat Sayyiduna Ashjah Abde Qais - *may Allah be pleased with him*, that, "There are two qualities within which is well liked by Allah Almighty. They are forbearance, honour and steadfastness in action." (Muslim, Tirmidi, Abu Daud, Sunan Bahiqi).

After understanding, let us look at the life of Ma'an bin Zaahidah. His full name is Abul Waleed, Ma'an bin Zaahidah bin Abdullah, Matar Shaybaani. He was extremely wealthy and powerful and extremely generous to others. Ma'an bin Zaahidah was noted for his soft heartedness. In fact, in this regard, he was considered as someone par excellence.

During the rule of the Banu Ummayah Ma'an bin Zaahidah was in charge of different areas and enjoyed different positions. In the last days of their rule, he was also among the close associates of Yazeed bin 'Umar bin Hubayrah who was known as "Ameerul Iraaqeen". In other words, he ruled both Basrah and Kufah.

Times changed and the Banu Ummayah were overtaken by the Banu Abbas. Yazeed bin Umar was surrounded by the forces of Mansur in the city of Waasit. However, being his close associate, Ma'an also gave support to Yazeed bin Umar. However, at the end of the day, defeat was sure and Yazeed bin Umar was killed and Ma'an found a way of escaping from this fort. He remained hidden for a long period. Mansur called for his capture and also announced a large reward for anyone who would capture this person.

There was an area near Kufah called Haashimiyah and in that area people called for the overthrow of Mansur even though the Banu Abbas had become well established. Most of the people who supported the Banu Ummayah had also sworn allegiance to the new rulers. In fact, this act of treason by certain people in this area seemed very unusual as there was already peace in most areas.

When the forces of the Banu Abbas arrived in this area, they fought very bravely against these mutineers. In fact, even Ma'an bin Zaahidah fought against these mutineers but he hid his face so that the soldiers of the Banu Abbas could not recognize him. He fought with such bravery that he was considered as one of those people who turned the battle in favour of Mansur.

When the battle was over, Mansur then called this young soldier to his court who had fought so bravely. He then asked this person to reveal his identity. Ma'an bin Zaahidah then removed the cloth around which covered his face and declared, "O Ameerul Mo'mineen! I am that person for whom your soldiers are in search of day and night. I am that person for whose capture you have presented a great reward".

He then revealed his name. However, since Ma'an bin Zaahidah had fought so bravely against the mutineers, Mansur not only gave him freedom from persecution but also gave him immense wealth and other riches.

It is said that during the time he was on the run, he revealed a very amazing incident which transpired with him.

He narrates, "When Mansur has issued a warrant of arrest for me, the police and other government official went everywhere in search of me. In fact, there was no one who was prepared to give me a shelter. There was a large reward on my head. I also tried to hide my identity and sat in the sun so that my complexion would become darker. I made sure that I looked like an ordinary person or an ordinary labourer. Obviously, I could not stay in one place for very long.

"One day, I decided to leave Baghdad and tried to change my appearance as much as possible. As I left the city, I noticed a camp which belonged to some Bedouin and realized that this was a good place to seek refuge. However, suddenly a person appeared from nowhere, grabbed me and began to hit me with a stick. As my camel came to rest this person jumped on my shoulders and drew his dagger. He looked closely at me and I inquired why he had treated me in this fashion. He mentioned that the Ameerul Mo'mineen was looking for me and he also mentioned my name. I said that he had made a mistake and my appearance was that of any ordinary person while Ma'an bin Zaahidah was someone who dressed in the most expensive clothing.

"He did not fall for this and said that I make excuses. He also told me that he knew exactly who I was and that I should not try to escape or else the dagger would do its job. I realised that that I could not escape from this person and offered him wealth and

riches. I withdrew a very expensive necklace from my pocket and handed it to him. I told him that if he took me to Mansur, the reward would not be as much as the necklace.

“He then took the necklace and began to carefully examine it. He then said to me, ‘The value which you have mentioned is correct. It is a valuable necklace, however, I cannot accept it.’ I asked him the reason for this and he replied, ‘I will ask you a few questions and if you answer them correctly, I will release you.’ I then asked him to ask me whatever he wanted. He asked, ‘You were indeed considered as one of the most generous people in your era. At time, did you ever give away all of your wealth to a needy person?’ I replied that I had never done that.

“He then asked whether I had given half my wealth away to a needy person and again I replied that no, I had never done so. He then asked whether I had given at least one-third of my wealth away and for a third time, I replied that no, I had not done so. He continued to ask me these questions and finally asked whether I had given away at least one-tenth of my wealth to a needy person.

“Obviously, when he asked me this question, I was highly embarrassed and I decided to say yes to this question because they held me as a very generous person. He then mentioned that this was not a great thing which I could be proud of. He then looked at me said, ‘Look at me, I am a poor person and I do not even own a horse. I have no money with me and my salary is only about twenty Dirhams which I earn every year. However, this necklace which you have offered me, the value of this necklace is thousands of Dirhams. I have now become the owner of this necklace. But, I am giving it back to you and I am also allowing you to go free. This means that I am also returning your life back to you. I will not send you to Mansur, however, you should never say to anyone that you were the most generous person in your era. From today, when you are generous to people, never make the claim that you are the most generous (compared to what I have done for you). Always have the impression that whatever you have done, it is very less.”

After saying this, he released the rein of my camel and allowed me to leave. I then shouted that he had indeed released me into an ocean of embarrassment. I also said that I felt it would have been better to be killed by this person than to be made so embarrassed. However, he turned around and laughed and said, “I swear by Allah

Almighty that I will never accept this necklace and I will never accept the reward of what I have done to you from you. I will wait for the reward of this on the Day of Judgement.’ After saying this he disappeared in the crowd.

Ma'an bin Zaahidah mentions that he will always remember this person. He also admits that after he gained wealth from being in the government of Mansur and looked for this person to reward him, he never managed to find the person. He also admits that even though people remembered him as a generous person, but he had never met someone as generous as this soldier. (Waafi yaat Al Uyun by Ibn Kalakan, 5/244/246)

In other words, here was someone one who saved the life of another Muslim and did not even want to be publicly known. He had full confidence that he will receive the reward for his good deed in the Hereafter.