ABU `UBAIDAH IBN AL-JARRAAH

The Trustworthy of This Nation

 Who was the man whose right hand the Prophet (PBUH) held and said, `In every nation there exists a man worthy of all trust and the trustworthy of this nation is Abu `Ubaidah lbn Al- Jarraah." Who was the man whom the Prophet sent with reinforcements to `Amr Ibn Al-'Aas in the Dhaat As-Salaasil Expedition and made commander of the army that included `Umar and Abu Bakr? Who was this Companion who was the first to be called the Commander of the Commanders? Who was that tall, slim man with gaunt face? Who was that strong, trustworthy man about whom `Umar lbn Al Khattaab said on his deathbed, "If Abu `Ubaidah Ibn Al-Jarraah were alive, I would have entrusted him with the caliphate, and if Allah asked me about him, I would say, I assigned the caliphate to the trustworthy of Allah and His Prophet, Abu `Ubaidah Ibn Al Jarraah.

 He embraced Islam at the hands of Abu Bakr As-Siddiiq at the dawn of Islam, even before the Prophet walked into Daar Al-Arqam. He emigrated to Abyssinia during the second emigration, then returned to stand by the Prophet at Badr, Uhud, and the rest of the great battles.

 Even after the Prophet's death, he continued to be strong and trustworthy in his striving during the caliphates of Abu Bakr and the Commander of the Faithful `Umar. He renounced the world and endured its hardships. He pursued his Islam with an admirable asceticism, piety, firmness, and trustworthiness. When Abu `Ubaidah took the oath of allegiance to the Messenger and dedicated his life in the way of Allah, he knew exactly what those words "in the way of Allah" meant. Moreover, he was ready to endure whatever this way required of self-sacrifice and self-denial. From the time he shook hands with the Prophet as a sign of his pledge, he looked upon himself and his life as something that Allah had entrusted to him to seek His pleasure and abandon every desire or fear that might distract away from Him. When Abu `Ubaidah fulfilled his pledge as other Companions did, the Prophet saw in his conscientiousness and life style that which made him worthy of the epithet he had given him, namely, "The Trustworthy of This Nation".

 Abu `Ubaidah's trustworthiness towards his responsibilities was one of his most outstanding traits. For instance, in the Battle of Uhud, he realized from the way the battle was conducted that the disbelievers' first priority was to kill the great Messenger (PBUH). To them, achieving victory was of secondary importance compared to killing the Prophet. Therefore, he decided to stay very close to where he was.

 Abu Ubaidah thrust his sword into the army of paganism that craved to put out the light of Allah once and for all. Whenever the fierce fight led him far away from the Prophet, he fought ferociously while his eyes were fixed on where the Prophet stood, watching him with great concern. Whenever Abu `Ubaidah saw a potential danger approaching the Prophet, he jumped swiftly to send the enemies of Allah on their heels before they could injure the Prophet.

 When the fight reached the height of ferocity, a group of disbelievers closed in upon Abu Ubaidah. Still his eyes were fixed on the Prophet like hawk eyes. Abu `Ubaidah lost his self-control when he saw an arrow hit the Prophet; yet he recollected himself and thrust his sword into those who closed in upon him as if his sword were a magic one. Finally, he managed to disperse them and darted towards the Messenger, who was wiping the noble blood that ran down his face with his right hand, then exclaimed, `How can they succeed after they tinged with blood the face of their Prophet who invites them to the way of Allah?" .

 When Abu `Ubaidah saw the two rings of the Prophet's chain mail that had pierced his cheeks, he rushed and held the first one with his front teeth and pulled it out. Yet as it fell, it took out his upper front teeth as well, and the same thing happened to the lower front teeth when he pulled out the second ring.

 Now, Abu Bakr As-siddiiq will narrate what he saw in a more impressive way, so let us hear what he has to say: When the Battle of Uhud reached the apex of fierceness and ferocity, the Prophet was wounded, and two of the rings of the Prophet's mail penetrated his cheeks. As soon as I realized what had happened, I rushed to him. A man ran swiftly in the same direction and exclaimed, "Dear Allah, accept this deed as a sign of obedience." Then we both reached the Prophet, but Abu `Ubaidah was there before me, so he pleaded with me, "Please, by Allah, Abu Bakr, let me pull them out of the Prophet's cheeks," so I let him. Abu `Ubaidah held one of the rings with his front teeth and pulled it out along with his upper front teeth. Then he pulled out the second along with his lower front teeth. Thus, he lost his teeth.

 Abu `Ubaidah, like all the Companions, fulfilled his responsibilities and obligations with great honesty, and trust worthiness. Accordingly, when the Prophet (PBUH) appointed him as a commander in Al-Khabat Expedition, he had no supplies except for a knapsack full of dates. Notwithstanding the difficult mission and long distance, Abu `Ubaidah withstood this against all odds with tremendous selfdenial and joy. He and his soldiers marched for miles with nothing to eat but a few dates daily until they ran out of dates and had to pick up withered leaves with their bows and crush and swallow them with water. Hence, the expedition was called Al-Khabat (i.e. The Struggle). They proceeded regardless of the danger and the risks. They did not worry about starvation or deprivation. The only thing that mattered to them was to accomplish their glorious mission under the leadership of their strong and trustworthy commander.

 The Prophet (PBUH) loved this trustworthy one of his nation so much that he gave him preference over everyone else. For instance, when the Najraan delegation arrived from Yemen after they had embraced Islam, they asked the Prophet to send someone to them to teach them the Qur'aan, the Sunnah, and Islam. The Prophet told them, "I will send you a trustworthy man, a very trustworthy man. When the Companions heard this praise, every one of them prayed that the Prophet meant him with this praise and sincere recommendation.

 ` Umar Ibn Al-Khattaab (May Allah be pleased with him) narrated thus. I have never craved command in my life except on that day, in hope that I would be the man whom the Prophet held in such high esteem. Therefore, I went in intense heat to perform my Dhuhr prayer. When the Prophet finished leading the prayer, he looked to his right, then to his left. I stood on my toes to draw his attention to me, yet he kept on looking round until he saw Abu `Ubaidah Ibn Al-Jarraah and ordered him, "Go with them and judge in fruth between them in the matters in which they dispute." Afterwards, Abu `Ubaidah traveled with them.

 This incident does not mean that Abu `Ubaidah was the only one whom the Prophet trusted or appreciated. He was one of the Companions who equally shared the Prophet's invaluable trust and generous appreciation. But he was the only one or one of few who was qualified to he absent from AlMadiinah for this mission of calling people to accept Islamic monotheism, for he was the perfect man for this assignment. He maintained his trustworthiness as a Companion of the Prophet, and even after his death, he upheld his responsibilities with admirable integrity.

 He adhered to the standard of Islam wherever he went, as a soldier in command with valor and esteem, and as a soldier under command with modesty and faithfulness.

 When Khaalid Ibn Al-Wallid was the commander of the Muslim armies in one of the great decisive battles, the first action of `Umar Ibn Al-Khattaab, the new caliph at the time, was to dismiss Khaalid and assign Abu Ubaidah in his place. When Abu `Ubaidah received the message from `Umar he decided to conceal its purport. He pleaded with the messenger to keep it a secret with great admirable asceticism, intelligence, and fidelity. When Khaalid achieved his great victory, and only then, did Abu `Ubaidah relay to him the message with extraordinary politeness. On reading the Khaalid asked him, `May Allah bestow His mercy on you, Abu `Ubaidah. What made you keep that message from me?" Trustworthy of the Nation answered, "I was afraid lest it should cause any confusion that might affect the army's morale. We do not crave life or its splendor. We are brothers before Allah.

 " Thus, Abu `Ubaidah was assigned as the commander-in -chief in Syria. His army was the mightiest and best equipped among the Muslim armies. You could hardly distinguish him from the rank and file of the army. He was always unassuming. When he heard that the people of Syria were infatuated by him and by his new rank, he asked them to assemble, then addressed them saying, "Fellow men, I'm a Muslim from the Quraish tribe. I will follow any of you like his shadow regardless of the color of his skin, if he is more pious and righteous than me.

 " May Allah greet you, Abu `Ubaidah. May Allah bless the religion that refined you and the Prophet who instructed you. He said that he was a Muslim from the Quraish. His religion was Islam and his tribe was Quraish. For him, this sufficed as an identification. His being the commander -in-chief, the leader of the greatest Muslim army in number, equipment, and victory and the obeyed and respected ruler of Syria were not privileges in themselves. He was not ensnared by the web of conceit or haughtiness. As a matter of fact, all these titles and high positions were the means to a sublime ultimate end.

 One day, the Commander of the Faithful visited Syria and asked those who were at his reception, "Where is my brother?" They asked, "Who do you mean?" He answered, "Abu `Ubaidah Ibn Al Jarraah." Soon Abu `Ubaidah arrived and hugged Umar, then he invited him over to his house, where he had no furniture. In fact, he had nothing but a sword, a shield, and a saddlebag. `Umar asked him, smiling, "Why don't you furnish your house as people do?" Abu `Ubaidah readily answered, "O Commander of the Faithful, as you see, I have a room to sleep in and that is enough for me.

 " One day as the Commander of the Faithful Umar "Al-Faruuq" was conducting the affairs of the vast Muslim world, he received the sad news of Abu `Ubaidah's death. He tried to control himself, but his sadness got the better of him and his tears flowed. He asked Allah to bestow His mercy on his brother. He recalled his memories with Abu `Ubaidah (May Allah be pleased with him) with patience and tenderness. He exclaimed, "If I were to make a wish, I would have wished a house full of men just like Abu `Ubaidah." The Trustworthy of This Nation died in the land which he had purified from the paganism of the Persians and the oppression of the Romans. Today in Jordan lie his noble remains which once were full of life, goodness, and satisfaction. It does not matter if you know where he is buried or not, for if you want to find his grave, you will need no guide; the fragrance of his remains will lead you to it.