

A Friend like 'Umar

THE ROAD FROM MECCA to Medina was fraught with hardship. It was a desert path, with little in the way of safety or comfort. During the *hijra* from Mecca to Medina, it was a dangerous road where enemies could be lying in wait or following in the *muhājir*'s tracks.

It is narrated in *Sirat Ibn Hishām* that 'Ayyāsh b. Abī Rabī'a and 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb ﷺ met outside of Mecca and traveled together the long road from Mecca to Medina. One wonders what they spoke of, if they were afraid, if they knew who was tracking them and quickly catching up to them.

At the outskirts of Medina, having reached their destination to relative safety, Abū Jahl b. Hishām and his brother, al-Hārith b. Hishām, caught up with them. "Ayyāsh! Indeed your mother has vowed that a comb will not touch her head until she sees you, and she will not shade herself from the sun until she sees you."

'Ayyāsh pitied his mother, and began to consider returning. 'Umar ﷺ saw through the ruse and said to him, "O 'Ayyāsh, indeed by God, your people want not but to tempt you away from your religion – so be forewarned. For, by God, if your mother were to be afflicted with lice, she would comb her hair, and if the heat of Mecca intensifies upon her, she will seek shade."

‘Ayyāsh began to see other benefits in returning to Mecca. He said, “I shall release her of her vow, and I have some money there which I will lay hold of.”

‘Umar, in an impressive act of brotherhood, said, “By God, you know that I am of the richest of Quraish, and I will give you half of my money if you do not go with them!”

‘Ayyāsh still insisted on going.

‘Umar, in a last-ditch attempt to save him from capture, said, “If you insist, then take my camel. It is well bred and docile; do not dismount it. If you suspect your people of trickery, escape upon it.”

‘Umar ﷺ offered ‘Ayyāsh his friendship, financial support, and a means of escape.

‘Ayyāsh took his camel, but after they had gone for a while along the road, Abū Jahl said to him, “By God, my brother (they were half-brothers), riding upon my camel has become harsh. Will you not let me ride your camel?”

‘Ayyāsh made his camel kneel, and he was attacked, shackled, and bound. In Mecca they tormented him until he succumbed, as Hishām b. al-‘Āṣ had done before him.

Later, when the verses of acceptance and forgiveness regarding those who had been imprisoned and had succumbed were revealed, ‘Umar wrote them down with his own hand and sent them to his companion.

The danger of the *hijra* was real and serious. ‘Umar ﷺ set an example of the type of companion we need to help us through. Even when ‘Ayyāsh made all the wrong decisions, ‘Umar remained his friend and caring companion, hoping for his release and success.

Our *hijra* is not the *hijra* of geography, but rather an internal *hijra*. It, too, is fraught with dangers and enemies. As we embark upon our *hijra* from

❖ ignorance to knowledge

❖ heedlessness (*ghafla*) to remembrance (*dhikr*)

- ◊ distance from Allah ﷻ to closeness to Him and His pleasure
- ◊ distance from the beloved Prophet ﷺ to closeness to him ﷺ and love for him ﷺ
- ◊ toxic people to nourishing people
- ◊ stinginess (material and emotional) to generosity
- ◊ shallowness to depth
- ◊ wasted time to full days and nights
- ◊ laziness to energy
- ◊ aimlessness to focus
- ◊ despair to hope

‘Umar رضي الله عنه was supportive, respectful, and thoughtful. He offered money and property. He never gave up on his friend, even in his darkest hour.

If we are to succeed in our spiritual *hijra*, we need friends like ‘Umar رضي الله عنه. And if our communities are to succeed, we need to be a friend like ‘Umar.

Whatever the spiritual journey, let this be the year of success. Let this be the year we emigrate together from whatever dark place we find ourselves in, to a place of light.

Taken from [Joy Jots](#) By Tamara Grey

Things to think about

1. **List the 3 ways Umar (RA) helped his friend?**
2. **Why did Ayyash want to return to Mecca?**
3. **Think about your own hijra, what are you going to make hijra from? (You don't have to share this)**