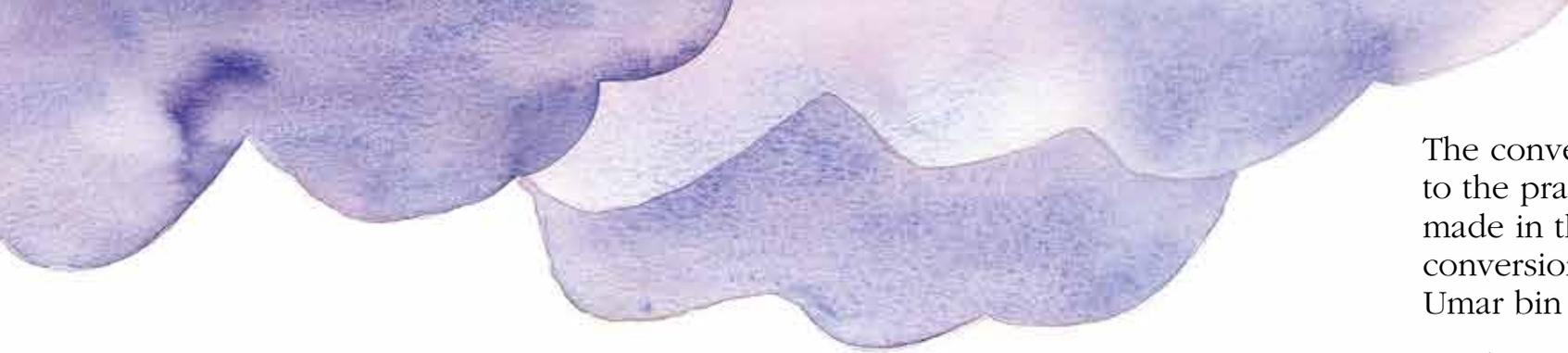


The Prophet Muhammad(Pbuh) gave Umar(ra) the title of “Al Farooq”, which means, ‘The one who distinguishes between right and wrong.’ Once the Prophet said, “Allah has placed truth upon Umar’s tongue and heart.” He also said, “The truth after me is with Umar, wherever he may be.”

These were the qualities which made Umar Farooq(ra) an extraordinary person. In the history of the world, he holds a unique position among the greatest of the kings, statesmen and administrators. Unlike them he was not guided by worldly ambition, but by his faith in Allah, His messenger and His book—the Quran. He became the head of the largest state in the world, but he himself lived the life of a common man, simple in his habits and austere in his living. Even the poorest person could reach him directly and he was concerned about all his citizens, whether they were Muslims or non-Muslims.

Umar(ra) was born in Makkah around 582 C.E. Both his father Khattab and his mother, Khantamah, were prominent members of the ‘Adi, a branch of the Quraish, a clan from which judges and ambassadors were chosen. Whenever the Quraish had any disputes amongst themselves or with others, they were chosen as arbitrators. They were held in great respect as they could speak eloquently and possessed tact and judgment.

As a young boy, like those of his age, Umar(ra) also had to graze camels, goats and sheep, but unlike other children of Makkah, he learned to read and write. As a matter of fact, there were only sixteen other people in the whole of Makkah who could do so. This was surely a great achievement.



loved his sister dearly and was moved at the sight of her blood and by her determination to follow her new faith. Overwhelmed with regret and guilt, he asked his sister to show him what she was reading. She handed him over the *Surah Ta Ha*, and he started reading it.

When he reached verse 14, **'I am Allah. There is no deity save Me; so worship Me alone, and say your prayers in My remembrance'**, he felt as if these verses were addressed to him in person and Allah was talking to him. He immediately decided not to lose any more time in following the truth. He turned to his sister and brother-in-law and said, "I came to you as an enemy of Islam; I go from you as a friend of Islam. I buckled on this sword to slay the Prophet of Islam; I now go to him to offer my allegiance." Fatima and Sa'eed called out, "Allahu Akbar!" (God is great!) He went to the Prophet and professed his faith in Islam. Soon everyone in Makkah came to know that Umar(ra) was no longer a bitter enemy of Islam but a staunch follower. He was the fortieth person to become a Muslim.

The conversion of Umar(ra) to Islam was in response to the prayer which the Prophet Muhammad(Pbuh) had made in the Kabah, "O Lord, make Islam strong with the conversion of either of the two men, Amr bin Hisham or Umar bin Al Khattab!"

Until now the Muslims had kept their faith private and prayed in secret. Umar(ra) asked, "O Messenger of Allah, are we not on the truth?" The Prophet answered, "Yes, we are indeed on the truth!" Umar(ra) continued, "Then why do we pray in hiding? Isn't it the time for us to declare our faith openly?" Umar(ra) persisted with his request until the Prophet agreed. Eventually, the Prophet Muhammad(Pbuh) led the prayers publicly for the first time in the Kabah.



By 622 C.E., the persecution of the Muslims had reached its peak, and they started migrating quietly in batches with the Prophet's permission. Umar(ra) left for Madinah accompanied by twenty others after announcing his intentions openly, but nobody among Quraish had the courage to stop him.

Upon his arrival in Madinah, the Prophet Muhammad(Pbuh) established a unique and strong 'brotherhood' to help settle the *Muhajirs* (migrants) with the *Ansars* (the people of Madinah). Utban bin Malik, who was a chieftain, was chosen as Umar's(ra) brother-in-faith.

With the growth in the numbers of Muslims, the Prophet wanted to decide upon a way of calling the faithful to prayers. He and some *Sahaba* (Companions) started considering the use of some kind of musical instrument similar to that of the Jews and the Christians, but at that point, Umar(ra) related a dream he had had, and suggested, "Why not appoint a man for this purpose?" The Prophet then sent for Bilal and asked him to perform the *'adhaan'* (the call to prayers). Therefore, the credit goes to Umar(ra) for the establishment of the *'adhaan'*, which is echoed in every masjid around the globe to this day. He

was the one who also inserted the line 'Prayer is better than sleep' in the *adhaan* for morning prayers.

Subsequently, it was he who instituted the prayers of *Tarawih* in congregation in the masjid in the month of *Ramadan*. It was he who established the *Hijri* calendar, which began in the year of *hijrat* (migration).

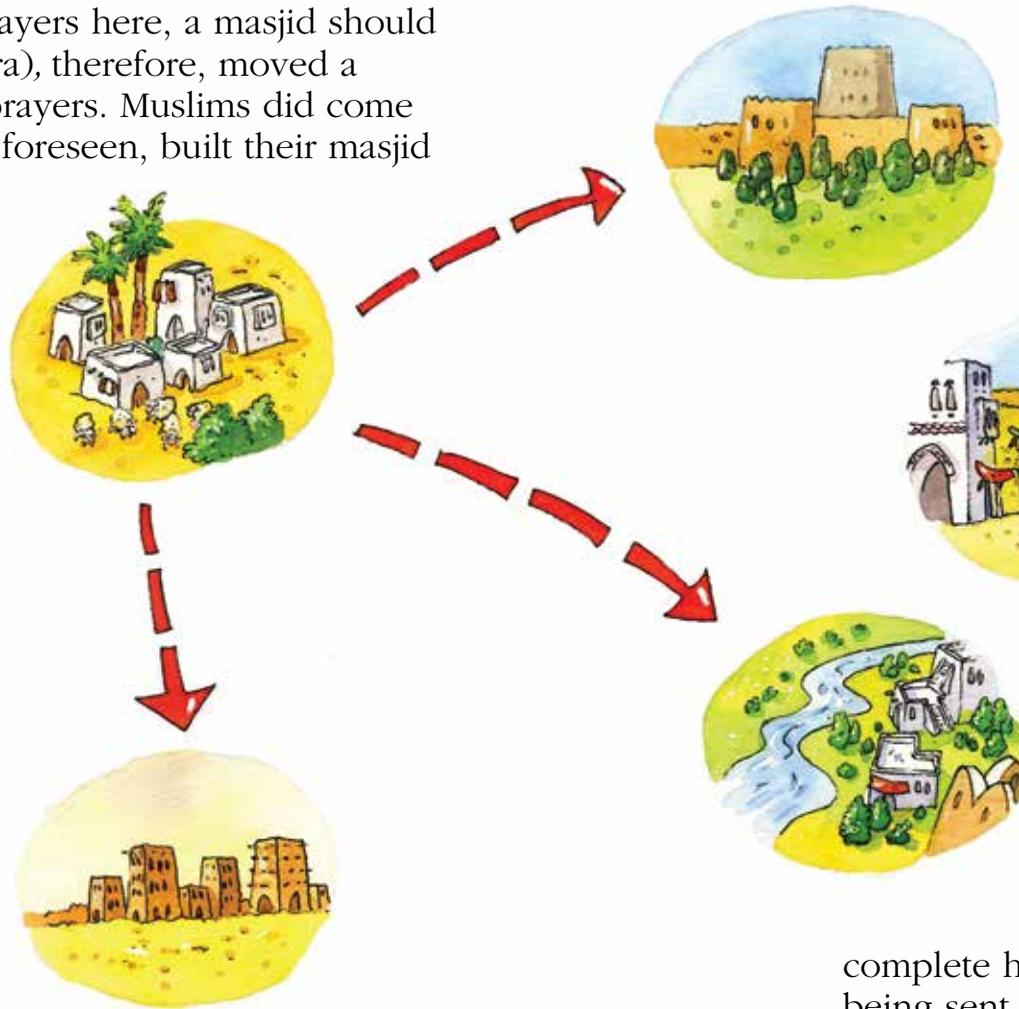
From the time of migration till the death of the Prophet, Umar(ra) was actively involved in all the important events. The Prophet consulted with Abu Bakr and Umar(ra) in all matters of significance. The Prophet Muhammad(Pbuh) once said, "If you two agreed upon any matter, I would not oppose you."

As Umar(ra) was generous, he was always eager to contribute financially to the cause of Islam and gave away most of his wealth for it. He stood by the side of the Prophet in all his trials



asked where he should say his prayers. The priest replied that he could pray right where he was seated. Umar(ra), however, said, "No, it is not proper for Umar to pray inside the Church, because any Muslim who comes here afterwards, will maintain that since Umar(ra) has said his prayers here, a masjid should be built on that very spot." Umar(ra), therefore, moved a stone's throw away, and said his prayers. Muslims did come to the city later on and, as he had foreseen, built their masjid at the exact point where he had said his prayers. This masjid exists to this day – a short, but discreet distance away from the Church. This discretion shown by Umar(ra) is all the more remarkable for his having been the ruler of Palestine at that time and, therefore, in a position to do anything he wished. A man with less foresight would have regarded praying inside the Church as a harmless event. But Umar(ra) could foresee that this act could in future become a cause of dispute and unnecessary trouble.

During Umar's(ra) Caliphate, Egypt, Iraq, Palestine, Persia and Syria, a total area of 2,251,030 square miles, came under Islamic rule. The conquered territories were dealt with tolerance. Jews and Christians who had been persecuted under the Byzantines appreciated this. Their customs and rules were taken into account while making laws, something hitherto unheard of.



During his Caliphate many new cities were founded like Kufa, Basra and Fustat. These cities were properly planned, and many masjid, orphanages, market places, public utilities and administrative buildings were constructed. He was against the construction of palatial buildings. Umar(ra) stood for simplicity and austerity. Much public work was done all over the empire. Canals were dug to irrigate fields and roads and bridges were constructed for public use. Many shelters, guest houses, wells and eating places were built on the roadsides for the public. Prison houses and military cantonments were made along with stables for the cavalry at various strategic points.

Caliph Umar(ra) established a new administrative structure. Departments of the army, police, education, judiciary, public works and public treasury were formed. He was the first ruler in the history of the world to separate judiciary from the executive. The *Qadis* (Judges) were chosen for their integrity and learning in Islamic law. Nowhere had anything like this ever been done before. Umar(ra) created laws which showed complete human consideration, such as no army personnel being sent away from their families for more than four months at a time.

He selected and appointed honest and capable men to high positions with the approval and consent of the *Sahaba*. Umar(ra) would also take a promise from them to lead a