

*Whenever we mention the name of the last and final Prophet, Muhammad, we always add the salutation, 'Sallallahu Alayhi Wa Sallam' which means, may the peace & blessings of GOD be on him.

THE RECOVERY OF THE ZAMZAM WELL

In the previous story we read that Abd al Mutallib took over the responsibility of looking after the needs of all the pilgrims who came to Makkah. As this was a desert area, water was in great demand by the many pilgrims who came to rest here from their long journeys to the north and south of Arabia.

There were a number of wells in and around this area but the supply of water was limited and could not satisfy the needs of all the visitors. As Abd al Mutallib and his eldest son, Harith were continuously on the look out for water, they started digging a number of wells in the area.

On the northwest side of the Kaabah was a semi-circular area called, Hijr Ismail because the tombs of Hajira and Ismail (alayhis Salaam) lay beneath these stones. Abd al Mutallib loved this area and he would quite often spread his bedding and sleep there. One night while sleeping, he heard a voice in his dreams say, "Abd al Mutallib uncover the well of the Zamzam. This will provide ample water for all the pilgrims visiting this holy shrine. The flow from this well will be continuous and not dry up." He was startled at this but at first, chose to ignore it.

Over the next few nights the visitor in his dreams returned and gave him directions to find this hidden well.

"Find the place where there is blood in the sand. It will be the place where ravens gather and peck the ground. You will also find dung lying around. And also look for a nest of ants." Such were the directions given by this night visitor.

Early the next morning, before sunrise, Abd al Mutallib awoke Harith and took a spade and a pickaxe and walked in the direction as directed by the visitor in his dreams. He eventually reached the two huge rocks opposite the Kaaba, which were worshipped as idols by the people. Between these two rocks the Quraysh would sacrifice their victims, hence the presence of blood in the sand. As the sun rose and it became lighter, he saw a few birds land and begin pecking the ground in search of food. When he found dung at the spot, he knew that this was the spot his night visitor had directed him to in his dreams. He immediately drew a big circle on the appointed spot and indicated to his son that they should start digging.

The sound of digging attracted people to this spot. When it became lighter, more people became curious to join the crowd to ascertain what was taking place between their stone idols. Soon the crowd grew larger and larger with many curious onlookers. The people at first did not say anything to Abd al Mutallib as they respected him as their leader who was fulfilling an important task of looking after the pilgrims. However, some elderly people became angry when they found that he was

desecrating the holy area between the two idols. "Oh! Mutallib why are you damaging the holy place where we sacrifice? Why are you digging between our idols? You are showing disrespect to our gods? What are you looking for at this spot?" were some of the angry questions that came from the elders in the crowd.

They carried on digging without looking up, not responding to the many questions from the crowd. Although the curious onlookers criticised them for desecrating the grounds of the holy shrine no attempt was made to stop them. Some of the curious onlookers soon tired and began to disperse.

"Oh! We have struck something. It is a huge stone. Yes it is the cover to the well. This is what the Jurham tribe did before they left Makkah in protest. Thank God, Thank God, Thank God," shouted Abd al Mutallib, while his son continued to clear the stones for access to the well. This brought the crowd back again. Word soon spread and more people gathered to share in their find. Their anger turned to excitement and happiness. They were all delighted, as this would meet all the requirements of the local people as well as the visitors to Makkah.

This happiness soon turned to a dispute between the people as to the ownership of the well. The people of Makkah felt that the well should belong to everyone much to the displeasure of the 'ad Dar' tribe who felt that they were more powerful and the well should belong to them. Abd al Mutallib, who was from the Hashim tribe, knew that he had to do something very quickly to avoid dissension and possible bloodshed among the people. He decided that lots should be cast to decide the ownership of the well. Casting by divining arrows at the Kaaba was the recognised way

of settling disputes. To every one's satisfaction, the casting confirmed that the well would remain in the hands of Abd Mutallib, who was also responsible for the water needs of all the visitors to Makkah.

THE PROMISE

(sacrifice of son)

The discovery of the well of the Zamzam gave Abd al Mutallib extra status in the community and everyone developed greater respect for him. However, the sudden claim of the well by the 'ad Dar' tribe who were greater in numbers concerned him. He did not have the enough support to challenge such a request. He started praying to God to give him more sons as they would one day, protect him and his property. "O my God, please give me 10 sons. I take a vow that, when they grow to manhood, I am prepared to sacrifice one of them, as thanksgiving to you and the Kaaba," This was the promise he made to God.

The years passed and his prayer was soon answered with the birth of ten sons. Abd al Mutallib enjoyed the company of his sons. He now commanded greater respect, even from the 'ad Dar' tribe. When his sons reached manhood, the vow he made started playing a more dominant role in his life. He knew that he had to fulfil his promise made to God but dreaded the thought of sacrificing one of his sons. "Which one will it be? Will it be Abdullah, the youngest and his favourite? How am I going to decide?" These thoughts tormented his mind.

As a man of his word with a deep sense of justice and responsibility, he decided that the time had come to fulfil his promise. Again, he chose to use the divining arrows to select the son he

was going to sacrifice. On an appointed day he gathered his ten sons and informed them of the promise he made to God to sacrifice one of them. He appealed to them to help him keep his word. "Father who will it be? Which one have you chosen? We are ready to obey your instructions. Tell us what to do," was the approval voiced by his sons.

He requested each of them to make their mark on an arrow and to accompany him to the Kaaba. He had also sent word to the official arrow-diviner of the Quraysh to be present as a witness. In the mean time, when word had reached the different mothers that one of their sons was going to be sacrificed, they, together with their greater families, marched to the place where it was going to happen. When they had all gathered there he collected the arrows from each of them and handed it over to the official. He closed his eyes and with a huge knife in his right hand he started praying to God to make the right choice.

The casting took place and to the great disappointment of Abd al Mutallib, Abdullah was the unfortunate one. Although tears ran down his cheeks he grabbed Abdullah by the hand and hurriedly led him to the spot where all sacrifices took place.

To her absolute horror, Fatima, Abdullah's mother, realised it was her son that was to be sacrificed. She also knew that Abd al Mutallib was a man of his word and would not heed her calls to change his mind. Fatima belonged to the large Makhzum tribe who had also gathered there. Both father and son were quiet and very pale at what they were about to go through. "Why the knife Abd al Mutallib?" called an elder from the Makhzum tribe. Although more mumblings

followed, everyone knew that Abdullah was about to be killed. When Abd al Mutallib tried to explain, he was cut short by Mughirah, the chief of the Makhzum, "Sacrifice him you shall not, but instead offer a sacrifice in place of him." The other sons were quick to accept this advice and appealed to their father to spare the life of their brother by considering the alternative. Abd al Mutallib finally agreed to seek the advice of an influential woman living in Yathrib (known today as Madinah) to advise him if this was possible and also the method and procedure.

When they reached this woman she indicated to Abd al Mutallib and the two sons who accompanied him to return the next day for her decision on the matter. On their return the next day they were given the glad tidings to return home and draw lots between Abdullah on the one side and ten camels on the other. If the arrow fell against Abdullah he could add another 10 camels and draw lots again. He could continue adding 10 camels until the Lord accepted the number of camels equivalent to the life of his Abdullah.

They returned to Makkah, gathered the 10 camels and headed straight to the courtyard of the Kaaba where all the townspeople had gathered. Abd al Mutallib then went inside the Kaaba and prayed to his Lord to accept what he was about to do. When he emerged, silence fell over the crowd and they anxiously watched him take up an arrow in his hand.

He tossed the arrow up into the air and the trailing "Oh no...no...no" went through the crowd confirming that the camels should live and Abdullah should die. Another 10 camels were

added and the casting was repeated. Again the echoing “Oh No...no...no” was heard from the crowd. They went on adding 10 camels with each casting. When Abd al Mutallib had eventually placed all the 100 camels he owned, he knew that this would be his final casting. There was a pause followed by a final prayer before the arrow was tossed up. All eyes followed the flight of the arrow for that final casting of who should live - the camels or Abdullah? The instant applause from the crowd turned the tension- filled air into laughter and smiles, as the arrow fell towards the camels.

To be continued **PART 3**

THE NEED FOR A PROPHET