

The Prophetic Blueprint: Sayyidunā Mu‘ādh’s Mission to Yemen

This is a translation of Maulana Mahfuz Ahmad’s original Arabic article, which is based on the Hadith of Mu‘ādh concerning the Prophet’s (ﷺ) instructions upon his dispatch to Yemen. The translation was undertaken by Yashfa and H. Ferdaus.

<https://www.alukah.net/sharia/0/176107/> - فوائده من حديث أن النبي -
ﷺ - بعث معاذاً إلى اليمن - دروس في الدعوة والتعليم والتربية

الحديث: عن ابن عباس رضي الله عنه، قال: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ لِمُعَاذِ بْنِ جَبَلٍ رضي الله عنه حِينَ بَعَثَهُ إِلَى الْيَمَنِ: إِنَّكَ سَتَأْتِي قَوْمًا أَهْلَ كِتَابٍ، فَإِذَا جِئْتَهُمْ فَادْعُهُمْ إِلَى أَنْ يَشْهَدُوا أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، فَإِنْ هُمْ أَطَاعُوا لَكَ بِذَلِكَ، فَأَخْبِرْهُمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ فَرَضَ عَلَيْهِمْ خَمْسَ صَلَوَاتٍ فِي كُلِّ يَوْمٍ وَلَيْلَةٍ، فَإِنْ هُمْ أَطَاعُوا لَكَ بِذَلِكَ، فَأَخْبِرْهُمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ فَرَضَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَدَقَةً تَتَّخِذُ مِنْ أَغْنِيَائِهِمْ فَرَقًا عَلَى فُقَرَائِهِمْ، فَإِنْ هُمْ أَطَاعُوا لَكَ بِذَلِكَ، فَإِيَّاكَ وَكَرَائِمَ أَمْوَالِهِمْ، وَاتَّقِ دَعْوَةَ الْمَظْلُومِ، فَإِنَّهُ لَيْسَ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ اللَّهِ حِجَابٌ».

It is narrated on the authority of Sayyidunā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه: ‘The Prophet ﷺ, said to Sayyidunā Mu‘ādh b. Jabal رضي الله عنه, when he [the Prophet ﷺ] sent him to Yemen: “You will be going to the Ahl al-Kitāb, so when you go to them, call them to bear witness that there is no god but Allah جل جلاله and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah جل جلاله. If they obey you in that, then inform them that Allah جل جلاله has enjoined upon them five prayers every day and night. Then if they obey you in that, then tell them that zakah has been prescribed for them that is to be taken from their rich and given to their poor. Then, if they obey you in this, then be warned [from taking] their most valuable wealth, and fear the dua of the oppressed, for there is no barrier between it and Allah جل جلاله.”’

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Hadith 1496, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Hadith 19

This hadith is comprehensive, containing prophetic wisdom and precious gems. Scholars of hadith and Fiqh have delved into this hadith with deep interest and have derived many rulings of Fiqh Including: ‘Are the disbelievers required to follow the obligations stipulated by the shariah such as salah and zakah?’ and ‘Is it permissible to send zakah from one country to another?’

However, this article does not aim to go into the matters of Islamic jurisprudence which the scholars have already provided, rather, the goal is to extract lessons that contribute to ethical development and effective social engagement.

Lesson 1

قوله: «حِينَ بَعَثَهُ إِلَى الْيَمَنِ»

‘When he (the Prophet ﷺ) sent him to Yemen.’

The first point: Sayyidunā Mu‘ādh b. Jabal b. ‘Amr b. Aws al-Anṣārī ؓ was one of the junior Ṣaḥābah, who had excelled in intellect, piety and devotion to Allah ﷻ, such as participating in the Battle of Badr at the age of twenty-one. However despite his tender age, the Prophet ﷺ selected him to be the governor of Yemen. This action reflects the trust of the Prophet ﷺ in the Ṣaḥābah irrespective of what age they were - showing the wisdom of the Prophet ﷺ and his far sightedness. When appointing an individual for a role, the Prophet ﷺ would focus on the skills they possess and see potential in aspects that most would overlook. The Prophet ﷺ displayed this practice towards other junior Ṣaḥābah, such as Zayd b. Thābit ؓ, ‘Abdullah b. ‘Abbās ؓ, Faḍl b. ‘Abbās ؓ and Usāmah b. Zayd ؓ. The Prophet ﷺ would mentor the youth, nurture them, empower them with leadership skills and grow their confidence from a very young age.

The second point: A single leader cannot undertake all the tasks on their own, nor be present in every single place, and directly address the people all at once. Therefore, it is a prophetic practice for someone in leadership to delegate tasks and distribute responsibilities accordingly. The Prophet ﷺ would send certain Ṣaḥābah as preachers and as scholars to different countries and regions. For instance, the Prophet ﷺ sent Sayyidunā Mu‘ādh ؓ and Sayyidunā Abū Mūsā al-Asha‘rī ؓ to Yemen and Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah ؓ to Bahrain.

This practice establishes an important principle in Islamic missionary work which incorporates both organisation skills as well appointing qualified individuals to deliver the message. Leaders and scholars must implement this tradition in their own lives, and dispatch experts from amongst themselves so that they can serve as ambassadors of guidance in all corners of the globe.

Lesson 2

قوله: «إِنَّكَ سَتَأْتِي قَوْمًا أَهْلَ كِتَابٍ»
‘You will be going to the Ahl al-Kitāb.’

The first point: The Prophet ﷺ informed Sayyidunā Mu‘ādh ؓ that the people of Yemen were among the Ahl al-Kitāb as a means to prepare him psychologically and intellectually for the nature of his audience. Addressing the Ahl al-Kitāb differs from addressing the idol worshippers, as the Ahl al-Kitāb have remnants of prior knowledge. Hafiz Ibn Ḥajar has said, ‘The purpose of saying this was to make Sayyidunā Mu‘ādh ؓ aware of the situation as the Ahl al-Kitāb knew some aspects of religion, thus the method of addressing them would not be the same as the address to the idol worshippers [who were not accustomed to the ways of Islam].’¹

From this we understand that part of wisdom in preaching, teaching, and educating is to know the level of the one being addressed and communicate accordingly. This idea is highlighted in the hadith narrated on the authority of Sayyidatunā ‘Ā’ishah ؓ:

«اتَّبِعُوا النَّاسَ مَنَازِلَهُمْ»
*‘Treat people according to their [intellectual] status.’*²

The second point: This hadith highlights a crucial educational point which is the necessity of preparing and guiding preachers before sending them into the field. The Prophet ﷺ did not simply assign Sayyidunā Mu‘ādh ؓ a task, but gave him sound advice, that touched upon the essence of his mission. These prophetic pieces of advice are scattered throughout the books of hadith and serve as a guide for preachers. This demonstrates the importance of academic and educational training. No one should embark on missionary work before receiving knowledge and experience from those with expertise. Therefore, new preachers, especially young people, must seek guidance from experienced scholars, so that they can begin their endeavour with insight, as Allah ﷻ says:

﴿قُلْ هَذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُو إِلَى اللَّهِ عَلَى بَصِيرَةٍ﴾
*‘Say, “This is my way. I call (people) to Allah ﷻ with full perception.”’*³

¹ *Fath al-Bārī*: v. 3, p. 358.

² *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*: Hadith 4842.

³ *Surah Yūsuf*: 12:108.

Lesson 3

قوله: «فَادْعُهُمْ إِلَى أَنْ يَشْهَدُوا» إلى قوله: «قَدْ فَرَضَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَدَقَةٌ»

‘So call them to bear witness’ until ‘Zakah has been prescribed for them.’

The first point: In this noble prophetic guidance for Sayyidunā Mu‘ādh عليه السلام, a clear pedagogical approach to preaching Islam can be seen, based on gradual instruction. The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم commanded to begin with *tawhīd* first (the foundation of the religion) then to salah, zakah and others. This order demonstrates one of the etiquette of preaching Islam, as it cannot be expected for people to fully commit at once, rather they should be trained step by step until their faith is firmly established, upon which the remaining aspects are built. This is similar to when a person eats, he cannot swallow food all at once without chewing it, or else he will choke. This idea can be further highlighted when Sayyidaunā ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها said:

«وَلَوْ نَزَلَ أَوَّلَ شَيْءٍ: لَا تَشْرَبُوا الْخَمْرَ، لَقَالُوا: لَا نَدَعُ الْخَمْرَ أَبَدًا»

‘If the first thing that had been revealed was: “Do not drink alcohol,” they would have said: “We will never give up alcohol.”’⁴

This is a critical principle in missionary works, whereby enjoining good and forbidding evil should be done gradually and with compassionate instruction, not by sudden imposition.

The second point: The order shown in this hadith, beginning with the shahadah, indicates that faith is the foundation upon which the remaining pillars of religion are built. People are not required to perform obligatory duties or abstain from forbidden acts unless their faith in the oneness of Allah جل جلاله is strengthened.

The third point: There are several instances in the Qur’an wherein Allah جل جلاله pairs the establishment of prayer with the giving of zakah, and the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has also brought them together in the hadiths. This is because salah is a way of rectifying oneself, and giving zakah is a means of contribution to society which supports the notion that Allah جل جلاله highlights in the Qur’an,

﴿كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ﴾

‘You are the best ummah ever raised for mankind.’⁵

⁴ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*: Hadith 4993.

⁵ Surah Āli ‘Imrān: 3:110.

Islam is a religion which promotes both the improvement of individuals as well as the cohesion of society, and these both can be attained through salah and zakah. Salah indicates towards the *ḥuqūq* (rights) of Allah, whilst zakah indicates towards the *ḥuqūq* of the people. Likewise, just as salah is a purification for one's soul, zakah is a means of purification for one's wealth.

Lesson 4

قوله: «تُؤْخَذُ مِنْ أَغْنِيَاءِهِمْ فَتُرَدُّ عَلَى فُقَرَائِهِمْ»

'It (the zakah) is taken from their rich and given to their poor.'

The first point: This part of the hadith demonstrates the greatness of the Islamic economic system, which is based on mutual responsibility and compassion. Islam does not encourage a capitalist mentality that focuses on accumulating wealth for oneself whilst ignoring societal needs. Rather, it establishes a society where every person is supporting and caring for one another, especially at the time of need. The Prophet ﷺ said:

«المسلمون كرجلٍ واحدٍ، إن اشتكى عينه اشتكى كله، وإن اشتكى رأسه اشتكى كله»

*'Muslims are like one body. If the eye is in pain, the whole body is in pain, and if the head is in pain, the whole body is in pain.'*⁶

The spirit of this hadith manifests in the zakah system; where the wealth is taken from the rich and given to the poor, allowing social justice to fruition. The zakah system is a product to avoid the risk that is mentioned in the Qur'an:

﴿كَيْ لَا يَكُونَ دُولَةٌ بَيْنَ الْأَغْنِيَاءِ مِنْكُمْ﴾

*'So that it (the wealth) may not circulate only between the rich among you.'*⁷

This effective method means that the needs of the poor are met, and the bonds amongst Muslims are strengthened.

The second point: In this hadith, one can see the fundamental difference between the way Islam takes care of the places they enter and the lack of consideration of modern colonial powers. Islam teaches that the earth belongs to Allah ﷻ, and wherever a Muslim lives, he should make that land his home, striving to reform it, develop it, and serve the community. Allah ﷻ says in the Qur'an:

﴿إِنَّ الْأَرْضَ لِلَّهِ﴾

*'Surely, the land belongs to Allah.'*⁸

Further, the Prophet ﷺ has said:

⁶ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: Hadith 2586.

⁷ Sūrah al-Ḥaṣhr: 59:7.

⁸ Surah al-Baqarah: 2:115.

«وَجَعَلْتُ لِي الْأَرْضَ مَسْجِدًا وَطَهْرًا»

‘The earth has been made for me a place of prostration and purification.’⁹

When a Muslim migrates to a new country, they do it in the spirit of reviving it, not destroying it. These values are reflected in Islamic history; because wherever the Islamic caliphate settled, it left a lasting cultural and spiritual impact. Some of the distinguished legacies that the Muslims left include the building of the Great Mosque of Cordoba, the Alhambra Palace in Andalusia as well as the Taj Mahal in India. Today, these are among the most prominent landmarks, generating huge tourist and economic revenue for those countries - and this is a legacy of Islamic civilisation.

In contrast, Western colonialism entered Muslim lands through oppression and ransack. Britain colonised India and plundered its vast wealth of gold, cotton, tea, and minerals, using them to develop London, while leaving India in poverty. Similarly, France occupied Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and many other countries for decades, killing millions and stealing the wealth of these countries. Consequently, the traces of oppression still adorn the streets of Paris today. More recent examples include how the United States waged war on Afghanistan and Iraq under no justifiable reason, and left behind nothing but devastation and destruction. The Israeli Zionist occupation of Palestine is a contemporary example of colonialism that has usurped land and displaced its citizens.

The difference remains clear; when Muslims enter a land, they purify it from injustice, establish justice, and develop it as if it were their homeland. Abdul Hakim Murad explains this in his book, *Travelling Home*, that a Muslim does not see the world divided between ‘ours’ and ‘theirs’. Rather, he sees it as land belonging to Allah ﷻ, and moves through the world as a traveller carrying a message of goodness, not exploitation.

The third point: Sayyidunā Mu‘ādh ؓ implemented the instructions given by the Prophet ﷺ to the best of his ability, which led to the improvement in economic conditions in Yemen during his reign. Imam Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Salām mentions in his book, *Kitāb al-Amwāl*¹⁰: When Sayyidunā Mu‘ādh ؓ was sent to Yemen again during the reign of Sayyidunā ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb ؓ, he collected the zakah, and sent a third of it to Sayyidunā ‘Umar ؓ. Sayyidunā ‘Umar ؓ reprimanded him for this saying, ‘I did not send you as a tax collector or to collect *jizyah*. I only sent you to take the money from the rich and give back to the poor.’ To this, Sayyidunā Mu‘ādh ؓ replied, ‘I did not find anyone who would accept zakah from me.’ Then, in the second year, Sayyidunā Mu‘ādh ؓ sent half of the zakah back to Madinah and then, in the third year, he sent it all; and the response remained the same: ‘I did not find anyone who would accept zakah.’

⁹ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*: Hadith 438.

¹⁰ *Kitāb al-Amwāl*: p. 710.

This incident demonstrates that implementing the zakah system as prescribed by Allah ﷻ can eliminate poverty or significantly mitigating its effects, if distributed fairly, honestly, and sincerely. It also demonstrates the significant difference between the Islamic caliphate system, which is based on mercy and solidarity, and the self-centred colonial regimes that flourished off the wealth of people and left them in ruin.

Lesson 5

قوله: «فَإِيَّاكَ وَكَرَائِمَ أَمْوَالِهِمْ»

'Be warned [from taking] their most valuable wealth.'

This part of the hadith manifests a noble instruction to treat people well when collecting zakah. The Prophet ﷺ advised Sayyidunā Mu'adh رضى الله عنه not to take the most beloved parts of their wealth from the people. This demonstrates Islam's concern for people's feelings and possessions, even when they are fulfilling a religious duty.

This also serves as an important educational principle; justice is not complete without respect for mutual responsibilities. In today's society, many people are accustomed to demanding their rights, with no regard for their responsibilities towards others. From this prophetic instruction, one can understand that society's success can fruition when each party recognises their position and duties before demanding their rights.

Imam al-Ghazālī has also highlighted that it is an etiquette of giving zakah to choose the most beloved part of one's wealth to give, based on the verse:

﴿لَنْ تَنَالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتَّى تُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ﴾

*'You shall never attain righteousness unless you spend from what you love.'*¹¹

However, this etiquette is directed at those who give voluntarily, not from those whom zakah is taken from. The person giving zakah will be rewarded for his kindness, but the one who collects zakah is not permitted to force or deceive people into giving the best of their wealth, as that would be considered transgression, not justice. The Prophet ﷺ had clarified this point in a hadith, saying:

«أَرْضُوا مُصَدِّقِكُمْ»

*'[Ensure to] please your zakah collector.'*¹²

The Prophet ﷺ not only focuses on the rights of the zakat payer but also of the zakah collector, showing the importance of fairness in all aspects. When giving zakah one should ensure that they are not causing unnecessary hardship on the collector by being difficult, causing arguments and not

¹¹ Surah Āli 'Imrān: 3:92.

¹² Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: Hadith 989.

adhering to the standard procedures. Rather they should hand over their money with happiness, treat them well and make their job easy, and this applies to all workers of any job. By striking this balance, the Prophet ﷺ ensures that the rich are not wronged, while at the same time preserving the rights of the poor; and this type of balance is rarely found in modern economic systems.

The approach of the Prophet ﷺ to fairness between different people is found in many situations, including:

- ❖ For instance, the Prophet ﷺ ordered men not to prevent their wives from going to the mosque, while simultaneously explaining that it is better for a woman to pray at home.
- ❖ The Prophet ﷺ emphasised that women should obey their husbands, but he did not neglect their rights; rather, he recommended treating them kindly, and he repeatedly told men to treat them well. Even during the Farewell Sermon, the Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Treat the women well.’ Thus, we find that the prophetic guidance always strikes a balance between the two parties, raising the nation on justice, mercy, and mutual respect. Rather than exploitation, harshness, or injustice, be that in regards to zakah or other cases.

Lesson 6

قوله: «وَاتَّقِ دَعْوَةَ الْمَظْلُومِ، فَإِنَّهُ لَيْسَ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَ اللَّهِ حِجَابٌ»

‘Fear the dua of the oppressed, for there is no barrier between it and Allah ﷻ.’

The Prophet ﷺ concluded his advice to Sayyidunā Mu‘ādh ﷺ with this eloquent phrase, which is considered one of the greatest warnings against injustice and its consequences. The Prophet ﷺ reminded Sayyidunā Mu‘ādh ﷺ, since he was about to become a ruler and judge in Yemen, that authority is a responsibility, not a privilege. He was also taught that justice is the foundation of governance, and that injustice is the quickest path to destruction in this world and the hereafter. The dua of the oppressed, even if it comes from a low ranking person who lacks any power or influence, reaches Allah ﷻ without barrier or delay. Whilst the effects of injustice are not always seen in the life of the oppressor, it may manifest in his offspring, or it may be delayed so that he may be punished in the hereafter, for this is a promise of Allah ﷻ, ‘And who is more truthful than Allah ﷻ in [giving a] statement?’¹³ Furthermore, Ibn Khaldūn highlighted a principle in his *Muqaddimah*¹⁴: ‘Injustice paves the way for the downfall of civilisation.’ In other words, injustice not only corrupts hearts, but also leads to the collapse of a nation.

Hence, we understand that Islam does not merely call for goodness and worship, but rather focuses on achieving social justice, spreading mercy, and improving people’s conditions. Justice is a central value in Islamic law, which is a manifestation of what Allah ﷻ says in the Qur’an:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ﴾

‘Allah ﷻ enjoins to do justice and to adopt good behavior.’¹⁵

Moreover, this prophetic warning serves as an eternal lesson for anyone who pursues any responsibility (no matter how small) to fear Allah ﷻ in dealing with people, striving for justice, and avoiding injustice in all its forms, for injustice will be darkness on the Day of Judgement.

In conclusion, this hadith of the Prophet ﷺ sending Sayyidunā Mu‘ādh ﷺ to Yemen, is not merely a historical text. Rather, it is a lesson for missionary works, an educational guide, and a practical constitution for the nation in matters of religion, education, upbringing, governance, and social relations. It contains important commandments that establish justice, mercy, awareness of addressing people according to their level of understanding, respecting rights, and a warning

¹³ Surah al-Nisā’: 4:122.

¹⁴ *Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldūn*: p. 353.

¹⁵ Surah al-Naḥl: 16:90.

against injustice. Each of these commandments can serve as a foundation upon which the fields of missionary works and politics can be built to reform society.

It is important that this hadith is carefully explained and communicated, and specialised lessons and courses should be organised for it. Especially by collecting all the hadith narrations that address the pieces of advice of the Prophet ﷺ to Sayyidunā Mu‘ādh ﷺ upon his farewell to Yemen. By doing this one can delve into its content and intricacies in order to benefit from them to a high degree. We ask Allah ﷻ to grant us an understanding of this hadith and the ability to act upon it properly, and to make us among those who follow the path of the Prophet ﷺ.