Story of ‘Amr ibn ‘Abasah's conversion to Islam and how the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) taught him prayer and ablution

‘Amr ibn ‘Abasah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: 'In the pre-Islamic time of ignorance, I used to think that people were misguided. They were not on a right path, as they worshipped idols. Then I heard of a man in Makkah who was telling news. So I mounted my camel and went to him. It was the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him). He was hiding, since his own people were aggressive toward him. So I acted gently until I entered upon him. I said to him, "Who are you?" He said: "I am a Prophet." I said: "What is a Prophet?" He said: "Allah has sent me.'' I said: "With what has He sent you?" He said: "He sent me with [a message] of maintaining kinship ties, breaking the idols, and upholding the oneness of Allah without associating anything with him." I said: "Who is with you on that?" He said: "A free man and a slave man.'' (At that time only Abu Bakr and Bilāl (may Allah be pleased with both of them) were with him. I said: "I shall follow you.'' He said: "You cannot do that today. Do you not see my situation and that of the people? However, go back to your people, and when you hear that I have succeeded in my mission, come to me.'' So I went to my people. Later, the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) went to Madīnah. It was until some of my people went to Madīnah., that I said: "What happened to this man who came to Madīnah?" They said: "People are hastening to him. His own people wanted to kill him, but they could not." So I went to Madīnah and entered upon him and said: "O Messenger of Allah, do you recognize me?" He said: "Yes, you are the one who met me in Makkah." I said: "O Messenger of Allah, tell me about what Allah has taught you, which I am unaware of. Tell me about prayer." He said: "Perform the morning prayer. Then do not pray until the sun has risen up to the height of a lance, for when it rises, it rises between two horns of a devil. It is when the unbelievers prostrate themselves to it. Then pray, for prayer is witnessed and attended, until the shadow of the lance shrinks. Then do not pray, for at that time Hell is fired up. Then pray when the shadow becomes longer, for the prayer is witnessed and attended, until you perform ‘Asr. Then do not pray until the sun sets, for it sets between two horns of a devil. It is when the unbelievers prostrate themselves to it." I further said: ''O Prophet, tell me about ablution.'' He said: "When anyone of you approaches his ablution water, and rinses his mouth and nose, the sins of his face fall with water from the edges of his beard. Then when he washes his hands up to elbows, the sins of his hands fall with water from his fingertips. Then when he wipes over his head, the sins of his head fall with water from the ends of his hair. Then when he washes his feet up to the ankles, the sins of his feet fall with water from his toes. Then, when he stands up for prayer, praises Allah, the Almighty,, extols Him, glorifies Him as He deserves, and empties his heart for Allah, the Almighty, he becomes free from his sins as he was on the day his mother gave

birth to him.'' ‘Amr ibn ‘Abasah narrated this Hadīth to Abu Umāmah, a companion of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him). Abu Umāmah, therefore, said to him: "O ‘Amr ibn ‘Abasah, think about what you are saying. Will a man be getting all of this on one occasion?" ‘Amr said: "O Abu Umāmah, I am old in age, weak in bones, and close to death. I do not need to tell lies about Allah and His Messenger (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him). Had I not heard this from the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) only once, twice, thrice (he counted up to seven times), I would have not reported it. However, I heard it more than that.''

[Authentic hadith] [Narrated by Muslim]

‘Amr ibn ‘Abasah As-Sulami (may Allah be pleased with him) informs us about his situation in the pre-Islamic times and how Allah guided him to Islam. Before Islam, he had light in his heart that showed him that the unbelievers were misguided, as they worshiped false objects, which they associated with Allah. He did not share their beliefs. However, when he heard of someone in Makkah telling prophetic news, he mounted his camel and went to him. Prophet Muhammad was then hiding to avoid the abuse of the Makkans. ‘Amr says that he used gentle ways to get access to the Prophet. He then approached him and asked him about his message. The Prophet told him that Allah sent him with a message of upholding kinship relations, breaking idols, and worshiping Allah alone without associating partners with Him. Here the Prophet was inviting him to Allah, explaining to ‘Amr great aspects of Islam. The most important thing he told him was to believe in the oneness of Allah and to have good manners. He told ‘Amr what people would realize with their reason that idols were a falsehood. Before coming to Islam, ‘Amr knew that the polytheists were on a false course of worship. He was searching for the truth. So when he reached the Prophet and asked him about his message, he told him that Allah sent him with a message that maintains kinship relations. Indeed, the Makkans had spread rumors that the Prophet came with a message that severs kinship ties. Against these backdrop, the Prophet asserted that his message maintained kinship ties. The Prophet further told ‘Amr that his message included the breaking of idols, i.e. everything that is worshipped besides Allah, so that Allah is worshipped alone, without any partners associated with Him. Upom hearing that, ‘Amr asked the Prophet about his followers, and the Prophet told him that a free man (i.e. Abu Bakr) and a slave man (i.e. Bilāl) were following him. So he said that he too would follow the Prophet. However, the Prophet told him that he can not do so on that day. This means that if ‘Amr joined the Prophet in Makkah, thus leaving his own people, the Prophet would not be able to protect him from the Makkans. So he told him to stay as a Muslim among his people until Islam is strong enough, then ‘Amr would join Muslims. This was an aspect of the Prophet’s compassion. ‘Amr was weak and the Makkans were plenty in number and hostile towards the Prophet, who could not defend himself rather than someone else. ‘Amr went back to his own people as a Muslim, and thus he would often check on the Prophet's news. However, he kept his conversion a secret, fearing for his own life. When some of his people came back from a visit to Madīnah, ‘Amr asked them about the Prophet. They told him that people were quick in responding to him and that the Makkans wanted to kill him but failed. So ‘Amr travelled to Madīnah and entered upon the Prophet, who recognized him. ‘Amr asked the Prophets about the teachings of Islam; so as to learn what he is unaware of the divine knowledge. The Prophet told him that he should pray the morning prayer on time and then stop praying until

the sun rises, because when it rises the unbelievers prostrate themselves to it. A Muslim, however, is not allowed to delay his morning prayer, nor to pray optionally when the sun rises. The time for sunrise can be known from the calendar. Now, the Prophet forbade that Muslims emulate the disbelievers by praying at sunrise, because the sun rises between two horns of a devil. Later, however, angels attend the prayers, so as to record a Muslim's prayer and be witness for him. No prayer is allowed when the sun is in the middle of the sky, because then Hell is fired up. At this time, one's shade is under his feet. It is a short time that lasts for only two Rak‘ahs. However, when the shade shrinks under one's feet and moves to the other direction, marking the noon time, the angels attend the prayer, so a Muslim may pray from Zhuhr until ‘Asr. This is an open time for prayer. After praying ‘Asr, one does not pray until sunset. Before sunset, it is forbidden to pray because the sun sets, as it rises, between two horns of a devil. A Muslim, meanwhile, is not allowed to delay praying ‘Asr until shortly before sunset, because in doing so he emulates the unbelievers. The Prophet called it the prayer of hypocrites, who wait until the sun is orange and pray four Rak‘ahs quickly, with little remembrance of Allah. So a Muslim should not behave like unbelievers and hypocrites, willingly delaying the 'Asr prayer until the sun is going to set. ‘Amr then asked the Prophet about ablution. The Prophet told him that doing ablution as prescribed eliminates sins, which fall with water when one washes his limbs. ‘Amr used to tell others about this Hadīth, yet Abu Umāmah warned him, concluding that he was exaggerating. He might have thought that the reward was too large for doing ablution, that a Muslim becomes sin-free as if he is just born. ‘Amr, however, explained that he did not have to lie, because he was already old, weak, and about to die. He further said that he heard the Hadīth not only once or even seven times, but more than that.

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