

Abdullah ibn Abbas The learned man of this Ummah

Abdullah was the son of `Abbas, who was an uncle of the noble Prophet, (peace and blessings be upon him). He was born just three years before the [Hijrah](#). When the Prophet died, `Abdullah was only thirteen years old.

When he was born, his mother took him to the blessed Prophet who put some of his saliva onto the babe's tongue even before he began to suckle. This was the beginning of the close and intimate relationship between `Abbas and the Prophet that was to be part of life-long love and devotion.

When `Abdullah reached the age of discretion, he committed himself to the service of the Prophet. He would run to fetch water for him when he wanted to make wudu'. While praying, he would stand behind the Prophet and when the Prophet went on journeys or expeditions, he would follow next in line to him. `Abdullah thus became like his (peace and blessings be upon him) shadow, and was constantly in his company.

In all these situations he was attentive and alert to whatever the Prophet said and did. His heart was enthusiastic and his young mind was pure and uncluttered, so he was able to commit the Prophet's words to memory with the capacity and accuracy of a recording machine. In this way and through his constant researches that continued all his life, as we shall see, `Abdullah became one of the most learned companions of the Prophet, preserving on behalf of later generations of Muslims, the priceless words of the Messenger of Allah. It is said that he committed to memory about one thousand, six hundred and sixty sayings of the Prophet, which are recorded and authenticated in the collections of [al-Bukhari](#) and Muslim.

During the lifetime of the Prophet, ` Abdullah would not miss any of his assemblies and he would commit to memory whatever he said. After the Prophet passed away, he would take care to go to as many companions as possible especially those who had known the Prophet for a longer period of time so as to learn from them what the Prophet had taught. Whenever he heard that someone knew a hadith of the Prophet, which he did not know he would go quickly to him and record it. Everything he heard was subjected to close scrutiny and he would check it against other reports. He would go to as many as thirty companions to verify one single matter.

` Abdullah described what he once did on hearing that a companion of the Prophet knew a hadith that was unknown to him, “I went to him during the time of the afternoon siesta and spread my cloak in front of his door. The wind blew dust on me because I sat waiting for him. If I wished I could have sought his permission to enter and he would certainly have given it to me. However, I preferred to wait for him so that he would be completely refreshed. When he was leaving his house and saw me in that condition he said, ‘O cousin of the Prophet! What’s the matter with you? If you had sent for me I would have come to you.’ ‘I am the one who should come to you, for knowledge is sought, and it does not just come,’ I said. I asked him about a hadith and learnt it from him.”

In this way, the dedicated ` Abdullah was continually asking and seeking knowledge. And he would sift through and scrutinize the information he had collected with his keen and meticulous mind.

It was not only in the collection of hadith that ` Abdullah was specialized. He devoted himself to acquiring knowledge in a wide variety of subjects. He had a special admiration for people like Zayd ibn Thabit, the recorder of the revelation, the leading judge and jurist consultant in Madinah, an expert in the laws of inheritance and in reciting the Qur'an. When Zayd intended to go on a trip, the young ` Abdullah would stand humbly by his side and taking hold of the reins of his mount would adopt the attitude of a humble servant in the presence of his master. Zayd would say to him: "Don't, O cousin of the Prophet." "Thus, we were commanded to treat the learned ones among us," ` Abdullah would reply. And Zayd would say to him in turn, "Let me see your hand." ` Abdullah would stretch out his hand. Zayd would take it and kiss it while saying, "Thus, we were commanded to treat the members of the household of the Prophet."

` Abdullah was also known for his great generosity and hospitality. Some of his contemporaries said of his household, "We have not seen a house which has more food or drink or fruit or knowledge than the house of Ibn ` Abbas."

He had a genuine and abiding concern for people and he was thoughtful and caring. He once said, "When I realize the significance of a verse of Allah's Book, I have the wish that all people would know what I know."

"When I hear of a Muslim ruler who deals equitably and rules justly, I am happy on his account and I pray for him..."

"When I hear of rain which falls on Muslim land, I am filled with happiness..."

` Abdullah ibn ` Abbas was constant in his devotions. He kept voluntary fasts regularly and often stayed up at night in Prayer. He would weep while praying and reciting the Qur'an. And when reciting verses dealing with death, resurrection and the life Hereafter his voice would be heavy from deep sobbing.

He passed away at the age of seventy-one in the mountainous city of Ta'if.