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History of the Umayyad Caliphate

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Course Title:**History of the Ummayyads****Course description :**

The years 41 to 132 A.H are the most formative years of the Umma, politically, socially and geographically. These years and the leaders who tried rule have left a permanent stamp on history, which has shaped the Islamic world, thus the whole world we live in, to this very day.

Course Aims & Objectives:

The scholars of the past and the present have given importance to the study of history, as an enhancement to Islamic knowledge, for an understanding of people must be biased on the experiences of those people. The study of history does not teach us directly how to worship Allah, but it is a necessity to understand our present and a lesson for future. It is a steppingstone for students learning how to give Dawwa, to stand up to the lies told about our past and to put our present in to historical perspective.

1. Introduction to history, its Benefits and Dangers
2. Bani Umayyah and Early Days of Islam
3. The First Fitnah
4. The First Umayyad
5. The Murder of Hussain
6. Ibn Zubair as Caliph
7.The Rise of AbdulMalik
8. The Rule of AbdulMalik
9. Waleed and Suliaman
10. The Muslims' Conquests
11. The Second Omar
12. The End of an Era

Lesson 001

Introduction to History, Its Benefits and Dangers

All praise is to Allah, we praise Him, ask for His help and send His prayers and blessing upon the final messenger and his family and followers.

We ask Allah to grant us knowledge that is useful and allow to benefit from that which we have learned.

There is a connection between the history of this ummah and the shareeh, so every student of Islamic knowledge must have some knowledge of the history of this nation. The changes we have been through and the kingdoms that have passed. So, throughout the ages scholars of Islam have studied and written on certain aspects of history.

To learn about history and take lessons from it is something we find in the Book of Allah. The stories in the Quran, about the prophets, their followers and rulers and past peoples generally.

وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ بَطَرَتْ مَعِيشَتَهَا فَإِنَّكَ مَسْكُونُهُمْ
لَمْ تُسْكَنْ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا وَكُنَّا نَحْنُ الْوَارِثِينَ

(And how many a city have We destroyed that was insolent in its [way of] living, and those are their dwellings which have not been inhabited after them except briefly. And it is We who were the inheritors.)28:58

For this reason, history has been a subject of study for scholars of religion and the general Muslims as well. So, for us to learn how to read and learn from history we must make ourselves aware of the Usool of this important science. A student will read the subject correctly and can use history in a way that will benefit him

History is the movement of people, the rise and fall of kingdoms and developments and changes and the results of those movements.

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَلِكُ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ
تَشَاءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ إِنَّكَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
قَدِيرٌ ﴿٣٦﴾

(Say, "O Allah , Owner of Sovereignty, You give sovereignty to whom You will and You take sovereignty away from whom You will. You honor whom You will and You humble whom You will. In Your hand is [all] good. Indeed, You are over all things competent.)3:26

So, firstly, history cannot be ignored or belittled, a student who is ignorant of history is ignorant of how people develop and what effects them and how they are effected by others. History teaches us that crowds behave differently to individuals and a society can move in a direction that most individuals disagree with.

We see how many wars have started without people knowing why they started. Like the wars which took place at the time of the Sahabah (). The battles of Siffeen and Jamal and the events that led up to these battles, cannot be understood without a in-depth study of the incidents.

As for people's emotions then they change very little over the ages and it is for this reason we say studying history is important because people haven't changed as much as they think they have. Their feelings toward one another and the things that affect them are very much the same.

Secondly, the Quran, as we have said is full of stories for us to learn from, like the story of Yusuf, which is not told merely so we know the story but for us to take a warning from.

لَقَدْ كَانَتْ فِي قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا
يُفْتَرَى وَلَكِنْ تَصْدِيقَ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيلَ
كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١١١﴾

(There was certainly in their stories a lesson for those of understanding. Never was the Qur'an a narration invented, but a confirmation of what was before it and a detailed explanation of all things and guidance and mercy for a people who believe)

Yet the scholars you recorded the history of the Islamic kingdoms and the movements of people in the past often, due to political or religious pressure left out the lessons we could learn for their history books. So, the history texts of the Muslims are just a mention of what happened and the great lessons to be learnt are left for the reader to deduce. Also, they didn't want to mix their opinions with their histories. When we come to reading these books, we must try to learn that, history as a story from the past is not beneficial in itself unless it is used to help understand the present. We must remember that knowing history for its own sake is not what is desired but learning to see the lessons that can be learnt for the present.

Another reason these lessons have been left out is that parables and lessons to be learnt are different for different people. An incident might contain a lesson for a ruler and a different lesson for the general people and again a different lesson for a soldier or a student of Islamic knowledge.

When we consider history, we must take an unemotional view, a view that has neither exaggeration nor understatement, then we can learn from it and develop the skill of seeing the wisdom in events as they happen. When we fail to do this our opinions and understanding of what is going on around us will be flawed.

Thirdly, there are many kinds of history book and over the years a science of historical analysis has not developed among the Muslims. The sciences of Arabic grammar and principles of Fiqh have all been standardized, but history has not been categorized or standardized in the same way. Not in what is narrations are to be trusted nor how it should be reported, nor how we can learn from it. For this reason, you will find that the books of history have become full of things which go against our basic belief as Muslims, against the Quran and sunnah and even support false ideologies, like the Shi'a or the Khawarij and other strange things. Just as some books are filled with false information and clearly fabricated narrations. If we were to look at Ibn Jarir for example we would see all of these problems clearly.

Fourthly, the history books are often written from a specific angle or only cover one topic, like we have books that focus only on a single kingdom or a dynasty, or on a single country or collect the biographies of famous people. Like we have books written about the history of a city like Bagdad or a land like Khurastan. All of these have their uses but we must be aware what we are reading and study them accordingly. All these books are part of the knowledge left to us by our predecessors and a student of Islam should try to be well educated in them all.

We see that most of the major scholars have written history books as well as books in their own specializations, these books are most commonly about the history of Hadeeth.

Fifthly, Modern scholars have also spent time writing histories both collecting what has been written before and authoring new books. So, the science of history is growing, and new ideas are being spread but these ideas are often wrong and not based on correct foundations.

The study of Islamic history is divided into four kinds, and we wish only to look at two of them. The first is the history of states, governments and kings. Many books are written specifically to record the history of a single regime, like the Umayyads or the Fatimids. This kind of history has been replaced for the most part by the history of a land, rather than a people or a dynasty, so we see books about Egypt, Kuwait or Yemen. Since the modern drawing up of borders there has been an effort to write a history for each of these countries. In the past, it was the governments that were written about not the land itself.

Imam Althahabi, known as the historian of Islam wrote about Islamic States, as well as many other books about individuals or lands. I would like to mention here that calling his book the History of Islam is not correct as history is the story of the Muslims not the religion itself. It is a sad fact recorded of killings, treacheries and long wars for power should never be ascribed to the religion of Islam. The enemies of Islam have used history as a means to attack Islam claiming all it brought was blood and war. This is due to them looking at Islam as the cause for these wars. Allah has tested this umma with many hardships but we must always distinguish between what the Muslims have done and between what Islam orders. Were these wars waged by the pious and knowledgeable Muslims or the powerful and greedy.

As the Prophet (ﷺ) said, as reported in Bukhari: I asked my Lord three things and He gave me two and refused the third..... I asked Him to protect my nation from fighting among themselves and He refused.

So, Islamic history is what agrees with Islam and follows the Shareea. As for the civil wars and the fitna they were in most cases caused by the enemies of Islam. Just as the wars between the Sahab were caused by the Khawarij and the khawarij were part of the plot to halt the spread of Islam.

What I mean here is that there are many history books that look at history as a whole so they mention whatever has come their way but they mention it with its isnaad.

Like Imam Attabari and we don't fault his book for this, as the scholars have said whoever mentions his isnaad then they have freed themselves of blame. However, in the time of Tabari there were many great fitnas and for this reason he was always careful to say where he got his stories from but sadly he mentioned many things which he should have left out. Things which go against the sharre'a or mention the Sahaba negatively or show support to a deviant group, with isnaads that have many of the groups supporters.

Imam Attabari mentioned the history of the prophets and the Khulafa right up until the time of writing, as did Ibn Katheer and these earlier histories are the ones which normally mention the isnaad. This is one kind of history collection. Another kind is that of Ibn Atheer, where he gathered what was written before him but he chose from those narrations what he deemed to be true or close to the truth, and he was a very capable historian. His book is short but very useful, it is concise but again from an Islamic perspective there are still many narrations which have not been checked and things which should not be mentioned.

The next type of book that came later, after Ibn Atheer, who made more effort to check their narrations like, al-Hafith Althahabi, who was followed by Ibn Katheer, who was more precise. His book *Albidaya wa nihaya* is one of the best books in its choice of narrations.

However, all of these books have some problems. Firstly, they tell us history in the form of battles and invasions, revolutions, fitnah and leave out the good that happened during these times. They will say for example, in the 70th year the following things happened, then they will mention the things reported which they considered strange or particularly noteworthy, like disagreements between leaders or death of a Khaleefa but they don't mention the improvements that happened, the growth of society in their knowledge. So, if we were to look at the Umayyad dynasty we see that their rule had many features, like the great conquests and the great disunity that led to many revolts and uprisings. Also, the great administration and organization that followed these conquests. This time was when Islamic knowledge was protected and organized, and Arabic was chosen as the language of government, salaries and pensions were regulated. The books mention in some detail the uprisings and wars but the other great changes that were happening in society are either totally unmentioned or noted briefly in the obituaries of scholars.

Even the conquest gets less attention than the internal strife of the empire, so they will mention the conquest of a land and who was the leader but the details are often missing. This is a problem with our history books and we must understand that these wars are not the only thing to have happened. We should understand that history is a report of what happened in the past and not all the past has been recorded.

Like the attacks of the Qaraamita, the a batinyyah, we read about the warfare but we miss out the ideological attacks and refutations that went along with the warfare. Yet we need knowing how the ulama stood against these philosophies, especially in our times.

Whoever is ignorant of history, is ignorant of how people are affected by the societies they live in.

History is part of Islam, not to teach us how to worship Allah but to teach us how people have been affected by different calls and to see how scholars responded to the government oppression.

Lesson 002:

Bani Umayyaa in the Early Days of Islam

It is important to know who Bani Umayya are and what was their position before Islam. Umayya was the brother of Hisham and the father of Harb, who was the father of Abu Sufyan. So the Prophet's great grandfather was Muawiya ibn abi Sufyan's great great grandfather.

When the call to tawheed started in Makkah, Bani Umayya, like all other clans of Quraish, had both active believers and staunch disbelievers.

The clans of Bani Hashim and Bani Umayya were close before and after Islam. They intermarried regularly, which is just one sign of how close they were, and this continued even after they spread out around the Islamic empire.

Muawiya and his father were late in accepting Islam, like Khalid bin Waleed, and many other sahaba. These were welcomed by the Prophet and went on to prove themselves loyal to Islam. Muawiya's sister Ramla umm Habiba was the wife of the Prophet and he himself was the scribe of the Prophet during his lifetime. During the time of Abu Bakr, Muawiya's older brother, Yazid, was chosen to lead an army into Syria against the Byzantines and was followed by Muawiya.

After the death of Yazid in year 18, Omar confirmed Muawiya's governorship of Damascus. Here he proved to be competent and capable, especially in developing political alliances with the Christian Arab tribe of Bani Kalb and defending Sham from Byzantine counter-attacks.

The people of Syria, both original inhabitants and the newly settled Muslims, were extremely loyal to Muawiya, who had governed them for 15 years at the time of the murder of Uthman. So at the beginning of the Fitnah, Muawiya found himself at the head of a very loyal army.

Lesson 003:

The First Fitnah

No study of the Umayyids could be complete without discussing the sad events known as the First Fitnah.

Numan ibn Bashir travelled from Madinah with news of the murder to Muawiyya directly after Uthman had been killed. The picture he gave to Muawiyya was that Madinah had been taken over by a rabble, the leader of the Muslims had been murdered, and the killers were still in Madinah ready to kill again. This was announced to the people of Damascus and they were shocked and emotional. They said Uthman was our khalif; he has been killed unjustfully and we must take revenge or die trying. Who could imagine that news of the murder of the leader of the Muslims would go unpunished? Emotions were high, and revenge was being called for. Then news reached Muawiyya and the people of Sham that Ali ibn Abi Talib was now the Khalifa, and that he was ordering Muawiyya to resign his position as Governor of Sham.

Muawiyya and his followers made ijthihad and chose to reject Ali's order and demand revenge for Uthman's murder. This set the stage for the Battle of Siffeen between Muawiyya and the army of Sham and Ali and the army of Iraq.

During the battle, both sides stopped for prayer, and treated prisoners and the dead with respect. Prisoners captured by Ali would be released if they gave him bayyah, and if they refused, he would take their weapons and release them if they promised not to fight him again. The battle came to an inconclusive end, and both armies returned to their homelands.

Muawiyya never claimed to be khalif; nor did he claim to be equal to or better than Ali. However Uthman had been the head of the Umaayyid clan and on his death, Muawiyya inherited the clan's leadership. Thus it was his responsibility to demand that Uthman's killers be held to account.

In year 41, Ali was murdered in Kufa, and when the news of his death reached Muawiyya he accepted bayyah as Khalifa of the Muslims.

Lesson 004:

The First Umayyad

Muawiyya set up his court in Damascus and made himself available to the public. He would hold an open sitting after Fajr and again before Dhuhr and again after 'Asr, when there would be an open dinner, so three times a day he would meet people. At the same time, after the assassination of the three Khalifs before him, he had bodyguards who went with him everywhere and stood over him even when he led the prayers.

Damascus was a unique city in that it was ancient and well organized and long used to the firm rule of law, and it had an Arab population even before the conquest. Most of the Arabs in Syria lived outside the city and came from the nomadic tribe of Kalb. Muawiyya married a woman from Bani Kalb, who remained a Christian and it is from her that his son and heir Yazid was born. Muawiyya's power base had little to do with his roots as an Umayyid, and had more to do with the numerous Yamani tribes and Bani Kalb.

Muawiyya kept the administrative system of the Romans intact; official letters and documents in his time were written in Greek.

The conquests continued during the time of Muawiyya, who started a tradition of giving an army a white flag to show they were sent by the Khalif. The tribes and their leaders would also have their own flags. In AC 669 the Muslim armies reached Constantinople for the first time.

Muawiyya had promised the khilafa to Hassan ibn Ali after his death. Yet Hassan died before him, at the age of only 47 in year 49. It was only in year 55 or 56 that Muawiyya started to mention Yazid as his heir. He chose his son for many reasons, but most importantly he would unite the power base of the empire, which was the Yamani tribes of Sham.

After 20 years as Governor, and 20 as Khalif, Muawiyya died peacefully at the age of 77, in year 60 AH, which was 680 AC.

Lesson 005

The Martyrdom of Hussain

Yazid was born in 26 AH/646CE during the khilafa of Uthman. His mother was Maisoon bint Bahdhal, daughter of one of the leaders of Bani Kalb. He grew up with his mother's people on the outskirts of the city of Palmyra, with his father sending him tutors to teach him Islamic knowledge. He was given responsibility at an early age, and he led the first siege of Constantinople. The Muslims gave him baiyah without any objections. Ibn Omar and Ibn Abdullah ibn Abbas, the two most knowledgeable companions, sent him their baiyah after his father died. However, Hussein ibn Ali and ibn Zubair did not send their baiyah. Yazid wrote to the Governor of Madinah, who was his cousin Walid ibn Utbah, ordering him to send the baiyah of Hassan and ibn Zubair. Walid did not obey this order, nor did he stop them when they left for Makkah.

It was in Makkah that Hussein began to receive letters from the people of Kufa begging him to be their Khalifa. After some months, Hussein sent his cousin Muslim ibn Aqeel, to Kufa to test the truthfulness of their claim not to have a true leader. Muslim reached Kufa and was publicly welcomed by crowds of people calling him to tell Hussein that they were waiting for him.

Hussein received this news from Muslim and decided to leave Makkah and head for Kufa - going against the advice of Abdullah ibn Omar and Abdullah ibn Abbas. However, after he left, the situation in Kufa changed drastically. Muslim ibn Aqeel had been killed by Obeidallah ibn Ziyad, Yazid's new deputy, and the people of Kufa were forced to pledge allegiance to Yazid.

Hussein and his caravan of followers camped in a place called Karbala. Here Obeidallah ibn Ziyad's army surrounded him. After talks broke down, and Hussein's water supply was finished, Hussein charged his caravan into the Umayyid lines, and all of them were killed in the battle.

Yazid had not ordered Hussein's murder, yet nor did he punish those who killed him.

Lesson 006

Ibn Zubair as Caliph

Abdullah ibn Zubair ibn Al Awwam ibn Khuwaylid Al Qureshi: his mother was Asma bint abi Bakr. She made hijrah while she was pregnant with him, giving birth in the village of Quba, outside the old city of Madinah. Abdullah's father, Zubair, was the cousin of the Prophet and the son of Safiyyah bint Abdul Muttalib, and his father Awwam was the brother of Khadijah. Abdullah was 11 years old when the Prophet saws died. During the Khilafa of Uthman, he took part in the conquest of north Africa and was in Madinah when Uthman's house was surrounded. In the Battle of the Camel when his father was killed, Abdullah was wounded so badly that he was put in the pile of dead bodies. His aunt, Aisha, paid for doctors to nurse him back to health.

When Abdullah ibn Zubair heard of Hussein's martyrdom, he spoke out against Yazid, and the people of Makkah gave him baiyyah as Khalif. Yazid then sent an army to Makkah to force the submission of Abdullah ibn Zubair. This army was still surrounding Makkah when news of Yazid's death arrived from Damascus. When the army then offered baiyyah to ibn Zubair, it was conditional upon his returning to Damascus with them. This was refused by him, and the army headed back to Sham.

Meanwhile in Damascus, Muawiyya ibn Yazid had refused to accept baiyyah as his father had ordered, leaving Sham leaderless. In AH 64, the Muslim Ummah gave baiyyah to Abdullah ibn Zubair, making him Amir al Mu'mineen. In a town called Belqah in present day Jordan, the Umayyid family gathered, choosing their eldest, Mirwan ibn al Hakm, as leader. They discussed how they could return to power. They had with them their staunch supporters from Bani Kalb and other Yamani tribes, who had chosen not to recognize ibn Zubair. So the stage was set for another civil war among the Muslims. Mirwan and his army marched on Damascus, which surrendered to him. After one major battle, all of Sham was under the control of Mirwan and the Umayyids. Egypt soon followed. Having united Egypt and Syria, Mirwan spent the next few months consolidating his control, and preparing for the invasion of Iraq and Hijaz. Mirwan was only four months younger than Abdullah ibn Zubair, making him 65 years old. He died that year, passing on the Khilafa to his son Abdul Malik ibn Marwan.

Lesson 007

The Rise Abdul Malik

After his father's rule of only nine and a half months, Abdul Malik, at the age of 38, found himself claiming the Khilafa and ruling Egypt and Sham. He was born in Madinah and had grown up close to the prophet's mosque and learning and studying from the Sahaba. He left Madinah in year 42, at the head of army which marched into Anatolia, and in year 45 he returned to Madinah to work as an administrator during his father's governorship. After receiving Baiyyah from the people of Sham and Egypt, he waited to attack Iraq as there was a rebellion going on there, so he secured Sham and Egypt in the meantime. Also, he made a peace treaty in 688 with the Byzantine emperor Justinian II, by sending them half of the taxes of Cyprus and Armenia.

Mus'ab ibn Zubair was the Governor of Iraq, appointed by his brother Abdullah who remained in Makkah. Mus'ab fought against a rebellion led by a man called Mukhtar ath Thaqafi. As soon as Mus'ab was victorious, Abdul Malik led his army into Iraq and wrote letters to the tribal leaders

offering them riches if they changed alliances and deserted Mus'ab. Outside Basra the two armies met. Mus'ab was heavily outnumbered and was defeated, dying of his wounds shortly afterwards.

Madinah and Khaibar surrendered to Abdul Malik with almost no resistance, leaving nothing but the cities of Taif and Makkah to Abdullah ibn Zubair. Abdul Malik returned to Damascus, sending an army to Makkah under the leadership of Hajjah ibn Yusuf al Thaqafi, who had come to the Khalifa's notice during the fighting in Iraq. Hajjah took his home town of Taif without any resistance, and started the second siege of Makkah. Hajjah promised safety to anyone who left Makkah and Abdullah ibn Zubair refused to force anyone to stay.. As provisions dwindled, more and more people, including Abdullah's own sons, left Makkah and went over to Hajjah.

After seven months of siege by 12,000 soldiers, Abdullah ibn Zubair, at the age of 73, led his remaining followers out of the city and attacked the besiegers. They were defeated and his legitimate rule came to an end with his death there in 77 AH, 692 AC.

Lesson 008

The Rule of Abdul Malik

Abdul Malik could be described as the real founder of the Umayyid Empire. He was an energetic ruler and a capable administrator, ruling from 685-705 AC, 65-86. His personal control over the details of how each area was ruled led to a consolidation of the Muslim conquests which had come before him. It was in his reign that the first Islamic coins were minted, and Arabic became the administrative language of the entire empire. Thus the ties with the former Sassanid and Byzantine empires were cut.

The foundation of Abdul Malik's control was firstly the Diwan (the record keeping of each province). Also, the choosing of governors was almost on virtue of merit alone, even though they were allowed very little autonomy and had to answer to the Khalifa in every small issue, and were often removed without explanation. For this empire to function, he spent large amounts of money on an excellent postal and road system to keep the lines of communication open between him and the vast lands that he ruled.

The lands under Muslim control were split up into six states, each with its own governor, stretching from Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan in the east to Tunisia in the west. The western expansion of the empire stopped due to the civil wars in the east, and twelve years of peace between the Romans and the Muslims resulted in a return of commerce in the Mediterranean.

The Muslim empire had no source of gold other than through trade with the Romans, and the Romans had no source of paper other than papyrus from Egypt. From its beginning of the Muslim empire the coins of Rome and Persia had remained the currency of the newly conquered lands, and even continued to be minted after the conquests. In year 70 AH, 690 AC, the first Umayyid coins were minted. The drachma was a silver coin, now called the dirham, and the dinar was gold. The minting of a new currency helped to establish the permanent nature of this new empire as well as the use of the Hijri calendar throughout the empire.

The city of Wasit was built between the 3 Iraqi cities of Basra, Kufa, and Mada'in (the old capital Ctesiphon). The city of Tunis was also built outside the ancient city of Carthage. The Dome of the Rock mosque was built in Jerusalem.

Abdul Malik's brother, Abdul Aziz, had been designated his heir, yet Abdul Aziz died before him. Abdul Malik was able to order allegiance to be sworn to his sons Al Waleed and then Sulaiman after him. Abdul Malik died in Sinnennabra in Palestine in AH 86.

Lesson 009:

The Caliphate of Waleed and Sulaiman 6 and 7th

Abu al Abbas Waleed ibn Abdul Malik ibn Mirwan received bayyah as Khaleefah after the death of this father in year 86. He is said to have been consistent in his reading of the Qur'an and it is reported that he finished the Qur'an every three days. He is remembered as the sponsor of great buildings and a leader of attacks against the Romans. It was in Waleed's time that the Prophet's mosque was rebuilt on all sides. The scholars of Madinah were against this extension, and said that the bricks of mud and the low roof of palm leaves that was the Prophet's house should be left the way they were as a lesson of his humility. So the Governor of Madinah Omar ibn Abdul Aziz, wrote to Waleed saying that his plans had been rejected. But the old building of the mosque was from the time of Uthman, and was beginning to crumble, so Waleed ordered the building to go ahead. He also ordered the building of the Great Mosque in Damascus, the first grand building of the Islamic empire.

During Waleed's reign the borders of the Islamic empire expanded drastically. Qutayyba ibn Muslim conquered large tracts of central Asia into present day Kazakhstan. The conquest of north Africa was completed and the first forays into the Iberian peninsula began. He also started the second siege of Constantinople.

Waleed took care to help the weak and the destitute. He provided pensions and guides to the blind, and built homes for the lepers. He was a staunch supporter of Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, following the advice of his father, and defended him against many of his accusers. Hajjaj died in 95AH, and one year later Waleed passed away, having ruled for 10 years. His cousin Omar ibn Abdul Aziz led the janaza over him, and his brother Sulaiman heard the news of his death while he was in Jerusalem and received bayyah there.

Sulaiman (who ruled from 715 to 717), unlike previous Khalifs, did not move to Damascus, but made his capital in Ramallah in Palestine. The siege of Constantinople was not going well for the Muslims, so the Khalifa decided to lead an army north to help distract the Byzantines. He camped in a village called Dabiq on the present day Syrian Turkish border.

It was in Dabiq that the Khalifa fell ill, without having named a successor. During his final week he and his trusted advisor Rijaa ibn Haywa chose his cousin/brother in law Omar ibn Abdul Aziz as his successor. Sulaiman ibn Abdul Malik died at the aged of 39, after having ruled only two years.

Lesson 010

The Islamic Conquests

In year 72 AH Islam had spread from Makkah and Madinah no further than the borders of modern Syria and Iraq.

The people of Syria spoke Greek or Aramaic with little or no Arabic. Iraq spoke Persian or Aramaic, Iran spoke Pahlavi, Egypt spoke Greek or Coptic, and north Africa spoke Berbar (Amazigh), Latin or Greek. None of these people were Muslims. Yet these vast lands in the space of two generations changed permanently. However, it is very important for our understanding of Dawah to make three separate issues clear:

Conquest, Settlement, and Conversion.

Conquest itself took many different forms. Some areas were fought over, some surrendered, and others signed peace treaties, but the vast majority agreed to pay tribute and made promises not to help the enemies of the Muslims. Local kings were left in place, and life continued much as it had done before. So this conquest could at times be a totally peaceful process. Conquest meant different things in different areas at different times.

Settlement also was very different in different areas. In Sham, Arabs from Yemen and Hijaz moved into the cities, among people who had lived there before them. In Iraq, Egypt and Tunisia new cities were built where Muslims settled, leaving the local people to continue living as they had previously done.

The issue of conversion to Islam however, was the same everywhere. It took centuries after conquest and settlement for Islam to become the majority religion in all these countries. Islam was not, and never has been, spread by force; it has and always will be, spread by good manners and with great patience.

The armies that marched under the Umayyid banner were Arab at the beginning, but by the end of the first century AH, many armies might have been less than half Arab, with new converts and allies filling the ranks.

We will look at the expansion in each direction separately.

Southwards, the Muslim armies stopped at Yemen. Islam spread to Africa and the Far East through trade and other forms of peaceful contact.

In the north, the frontier between the Muslim empire and the Byzantines went back and forth, but no major conquests were made during this time.

To the east, Transoxania, Central Asia.

The armies that pursued the last Persian king, Yazdegerd III, pushed far past the borders of the Persian empire into the ancient city of Merv, Turkmenistan. From there, the Muslim army was only a few days' march from the River Oxus, (Amu Darya). Yet it was here that the army stopped for almost forty years. It was only in the time of Khalifa Waleed ibn Abdul Malik, that one of Hajjaji's officers was sent as Governor to Khurassan. This man was Qutaiba ibn Muslim. His energy and leadership led the Muslim armies across the whole of central Asia, conquering northern Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and all the way to the borders of present day Pakistan and China. The people living in these lands were very different from each other, and had never known a central government. Some were settled, some were nomad; some were Zoroastrian and others Buddhist. But the pattern of conquest was much the same as everywhere else. Local kings made peace, paid taxes and allowed the Muslims to pass through their lands.

After the conquest of Samarkand in Uzbekistan in year 713 AH, a Muslim envoy reached the Chinese emperor. This is recorded in both Arab sources, and in the history of the T'ang dynasty, who mentioned that the ambassadors refused to kow-tow.

The west

Muawiyya made Uqbah ibn Amr ibn al Aas Governor of Egypt, with permission to push westwards into Tunisia. North Africa was almost completely Christian but the local populace had an extremely different understanding of Christianity to their Byzantine governors. Thus the local people had little or no loyalty to their governors and remained neutral or even helped the Muslims. The Byzantines, with their superior navy, always threatened the coastline, so the Muslims built the new city of Qyrawan in Tunisia.

With the Byzantine army busy defending the first siege of Constantinople, Uqbah pushed along the African coast and easily defeated the Byzantine armies. The real challenge in north Africa were the Berber tribes. Many thousands had accepted Islam, but many more resisted the Muslim conquests. During the civil war between Abdul Malik and ibn Zubair, Tunisia and Libya were re-conquered by the Berbers, and it was not until four years later that the Muslims were able to retake this land.

With the end of the civil wars in the east in Iraq, Abdul Malik and his sons were able to push the Islamic empire all the way to the Atlantic Ocean, and even across the Mediterranean into the Iberian peninsula. When the Muslim armies reached the Pyrenees, conquest stopped at this natural border, just as it had stopped in the deserts of Kazakhstan in the east. All these lands, with the exception of Spain and Portugal, retain Muslim majorities to this day, 1300 years later. Almost no other conquests were made until the time of the Ottomans.

Lesson 011.

Omar ibn Abdul Aziz, Yazid II and Hisham.

The age of Omar ibn Abdul Aziz ibn Marwan ibn al Hakam is legendary as the best time of Bani Ummayya. He was a man who is famous for his bravery, for speaking the truth when few wanted to hear it, seeking justice for the weak, and leaving the pleasures of this life in the hope of reward in the next. Omar's father, Abdul Aziz was the brother of Abdul Malik, and the Governor of Egypt during his khilafa. Omar's mother was the daughter of 'Asim, the son of Omar ibn al Khattab. His wife was Abdul Malik's daughter, and Sulaiman ibn Abdul Malik was married to Omar's sister.

Omar was born in Madinah in the reign of Yazid, before his father or uncle had come to prominence as rulers. He grew up in Madinah and studied from many scholars, including Salih ibn Kaysaan and Saeed ibn al Musayyib, and his own uncle, Saalim ibn Abdullah ibn Omar. Omar related ahadith from 33 scholars, 8 of whom were Sahaba, and 25 were Tabi'un. In year 78 he was made Governor of Madinah, and it was as such he was able to offer refuge to people fleeing the oppression of Al Hajjaj in Iraq. He was also able to prevent the Khalifa Waleed from disinheritng his brother Sulaiman, by stopping him from making his son, Abdul Aziz, his heir.

In year 92, Omar was removed from Governorship of Madinah and ordered back to Sham after complaints from Al Hajjaj. When Sulaiman became Khalif, Omar was a close advisor to him, often reminding him of Allah and encouraging him to do justice to the people.

When Sulaiman became sick, he took the advice of the scholar Rajaa' ibn Haywar and ordained Omar as his successor and then Yazid ibn Abdul Malik as the Khalifa after him.

Omar reluctantly accepted the position of Khalif but rejected all its pomp and ceremony. He took himself and his family into account for every bit of wealth they had acquired, and forced many of the powerful princes to give up some of their wealth and submit it to the Beit al Mal.

His greatest service to the Ummah was his encouragement of the scholars to write and collect the Ahadith for future generations. Despite his great legacy, his rule was only two and a half years. He died in Year 101 at the age of 38, possibly as a result of poisoning. His rule was thus from 717 AC to 720 AC.

Yazid ibn Abdul Malik became Khalif after Omar with the support of the Umayyid family. He tried to continue the reforms that Omar had started but soon was unable to, and thereafter reverted to the ways of Omar's predecessors. In the time of Yazid there were numerous rebellions; Kufa and Basra were both briefly occupied by rebel armies and there was a large Berber revolt in Tunisia. Transoxania also suffered from numerous rebellions which were put down with great loss of life. The Muslim army was defeated in Armenia, and far away, in Spain, the Emir of Barcelona crossed the Pyrenees for the first time. Yazid's rule lasted only three years, and he died in year 105.

Hisham ibn Abdul Malik received baiyah as Khalif on 1 Ramadan 105.

Hisham was born in Madinah. His mother was from Bani Makhzum and he was the 10th Khalif, and the last of Abdul Malik's sons to rule. He governed effectively and was able to reverse the tide of defeat on the borders of the empire. A large Khariji revolt was pushed back from Kairouan but the most important rebellion was that of Zaid ibn Ali ibn Hussein ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib. This was put down in a battle outside Kufa, leaving lasting results – the Shia increased their grievances and the Zaidi madhab was born. The Umayyid empire, although safe during Hisham's rule from outside armies, had lost a lot of support and was threatened by many internal forces.

Lesson 012:

The End of an Era

Hisham ibn Abdul Malik, who had received the khilafa from his brother Yazeed, had also promised to make Yazeed's young son, Waleed, the Khalifa after him.

Waleed ibn Yazeed cared little for ruling, and history books have recorded terrible accusations against him, many of which are too ridiculous to believe. However, what is certain is that he upset and alienated large numbers of Bani Umayyah. The elder princes advised patience and hoped to advise the Khalifa, but Yazeed ibn Waleed led the younger princes in a revolt against the Khalifa, his cousin.

Yazeed's revolt gained support from the Yamani tribes, who felt oppressed by the Umayyids, as well as the Qadariyah sect who claimed Yazeed as a follower. To add to the turmoil, a plague and a drought spread through Sham, forcing many people, including the Governor, to flee Damascus. The Khalifa himself was sick and had left the capital. Yazeed's forces took over Damascus easily, and he received bayyah on a Friday morning in year 126 AH (April 744 AC). Yazeed sent an army to find and kill the Khalifa Waleed, who died in al Ghadaf (modern Jordan).

The mother of Yazeed ibn Waleed ibn Abdul Malik was the granddaughter of the last Persian emperor. He also had both Greek and Turkish blood from his father's mother. But the plague that had scared people away from Damascus, also killed the new Khalif, making his reign only six months long.

His half brother, Ibrahim, succeeded him, but did not receive popular support. The Governor of Armenia, Mirwan ibn Muhammad, led his army south to contest the leadership. A battle took place outside the city of Homs, where the khalifa's army was defeated. Mirwan pushed his advantage all the way to Damascus, and Ibrahim was never found. His rule had lasted only four months.

Mirwan ibn Muhammad ibn al Hakm ibn al As.

His father Muhammad was the brother of Mirwan, the father of Abdul Malik, making him the cousin of Abdul Malik, thus the uncle of Abdul Malik's sons. Mirwan II was born in 72 AH, so he was 55 when he became Caliph. He was blond, had a big beard and blue eyes. His mother was Kurdish, and he was loved by his soldiers and known to be a brave horseman and a frontier warrior. Despite Mirwan's capability and bravery, he had taken over a crumbling empire. A group of people who were belittled and seldom thought of in Sham came pouring out of Khorassan carrying black flags and

calling for a return to the rule of the family of the Prophet. This group came to be known as the Abbasids. They defeated the Umayyid army in the battle of Zaab in Iraq in 132 AH. This brought an end to the Umayyid Syrian rule of the Muslim Ummah. Mirwan and the rest of the Umayyids were pursued ruthlessly and massacred wherever they were found. Mirwan himself was caught and killed in Egypt.

Reasons for the decline and fall of the Umayyids are many, from their arrogance and disunity to the population decline due to plagues, revolutions and defeats on the frontiers .

The Umayyid empire has been the only time that the Islamic world was ruled by Arabs. As Islam spread, and non-Arab Muslims became subjects of the empire, the central government did not make allowances for different peoples. This left a lot of resentment on the frontiers of the empire.

Absence of a law of succession: nearly every death of a Khalifa resulted in turmoil and some form of civil war. Clear legitimacy was therefore never fully accepted. A number of incapable rulers added to this confusion.

Local governors were never given autonomy, and were often removed and disgraced without justification.

The problem of Arab tribal prejudices was not solved; rather, different Khalifs would use different tribes against others. Thus, some part of the population always felt disenfranchised.

The killing of Hussein ibn Ali and Abdullah ibn Zubair left a bitterness which is still felt to this very day.

The Abbasid movement learnt how to use all of these failures to rally the dissatisfied peoples and bring about the downfall of the dynasty.

Peace and Blessing be upon our Noble Prophet,
his family and his followers until the last
day