

Ethnic Diversity of the Companions of the Prophet (saw)

**Stories of Lady Fidda,
Barakah – Um Ayman, and
Bilal ibn Rabah**

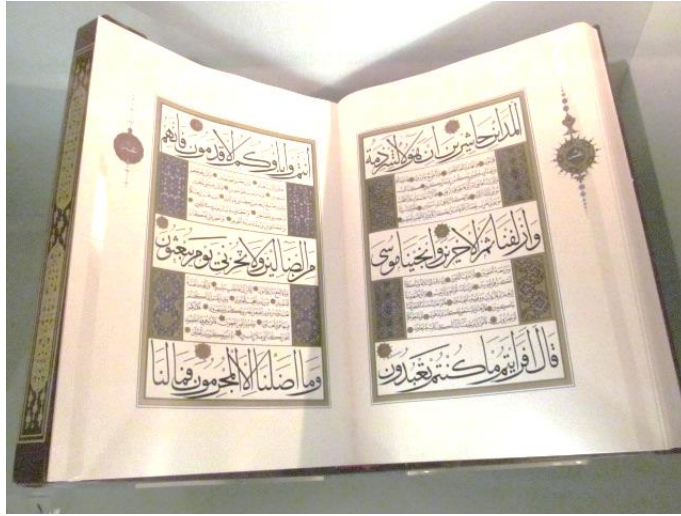


Photo Ayanna Miranda: Sharjah Museum

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

All Glory is due to the Creator, Allah (subana wa ta'alah). There is none worthy of worship except Allah. We believe in Him, glorify Him, and we give thanks for His provisions, His bestowed knowledge, and His Grace.

Those who Allah guides no man can lead astray. We seek His refuge, His forgiveness, and we seek His guidance. We believe in his books, his angels, and his Prophets from Adam (peace be upon him) to Muhammed (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). We seek the protection of Allah from the punishment of the grave, from the torment of the fire, and from the evil of the Dajjal.

Reflections on the Quran

Surah-tul- 'Asr

Time is a commodity that believers cannot afford to waste. We may find that when we use it wisely that Allah expands the resource of time for us. When time is not used wisely, there is a loss greater than the loss of time. Allah states,

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
وَالْعَصْرِ ﴿١﴾ إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ ﴿٢﴾ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا
الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ ﴿٣﴾

Quran 103

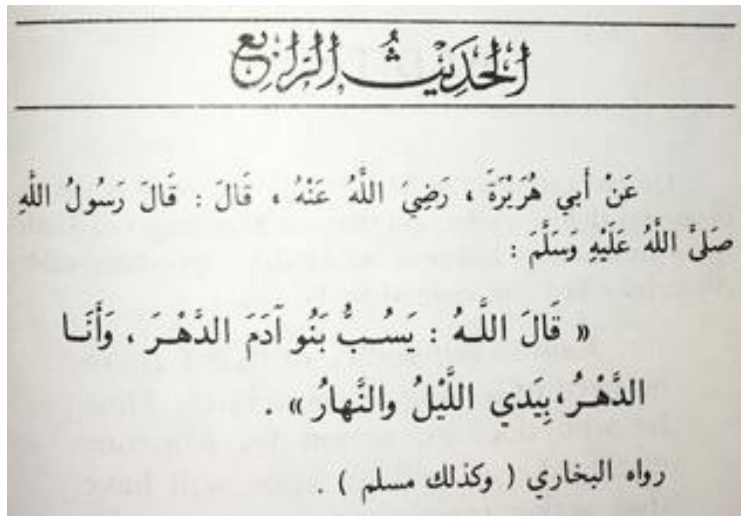
“By the (passage of) time!¹ Surely humanity is in (grave) loss², Except those who have faith, do good, and urge each other to the truth, and urge each other to perseverance.³”^E

Commentary

Surah-tul-Asr is one of the shortest surahs in the Quran. It is an early Meccan revelation.

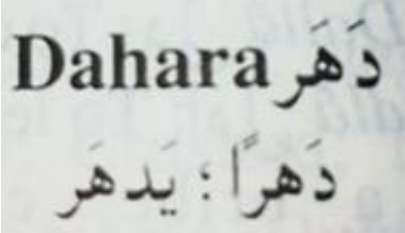
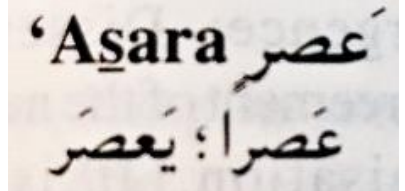
- A. Quran.com states this surah was revealed “...when the message of Islam was being presented in brief but highly impressive sentences so that the listeners who heard them once could not forget them even if they wanted to, for they were automatically committed to memory.”
- B. Abdullah Yusuf Ali *Translation and Commentary* states “Waste not, nor misuse your life. Time...bears witness that nothing remains but **faith and good deeds**, the teaching of **truth** and the teaching of **patience and constancy**.”

Hadith Qudsi #4



Translation of Hadith Qudsi #4

“Allah’s Messenger (saw) said: ‘Allah said, The sons of Adam abuse the time, and I am Time. In my Hand is the night and day’.”

ARABIC	ENGLISH	DEFINITION
	Dahar	To happen; time from beginning of world to its end; Fate; as time brings to pass events. Dahar signifies unlimited time or infinite time.
	Asr	To press, squeeze, withdraw a thing from: Age, Time; succession of periods of time; Time that cannot be recaptured. Asr is finite time.

In Surah tul Kahf, Ayaat 103-106, Allah says,

قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِينَ أَعْمَالًا ﴿١٠٣﴾ الَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعِيَّهُمْ فِي
الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا ﴿١٠٤﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ
الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَلِقَائِهِ ۖ فَحَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فَلَا
نَقِيمَ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَرَنًا ﴿١٠٥﴾ ذَلِكَ جَزَاؤُهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ
بِمَا كَفَرُوا وَاتَّخَذُوا آيَاتِي وَرُسُلِي هُزُوعًا ﴿١٠٦﴾

Quran 18:103-106

“Say, Shall we tell you of those who will lose the most in respect to their deeds?¹⁰³ Those whose efforts have been wasted in this life while they thought that they were acquiring good by their work.¹⁰⁴ It is those who reject the signs (verses) of their Lord and their meeting with Him: vain will be their work, so We will not give their deeds any weight on judgment day.¹⁰⁵ That is their reward: Hell for their disbelief and mockery of My signs and messengers.¹⁰⁶

The descriptions of those who will lose the most when they abuse time:

- 1) The person who thinks their good work is enough - those who have a smug sense of self-righteousness and not performing goods deeds with the intent of pleasing Allah.
- 2) Those who reject faith as taught by the Messengers of the Allah, the King.
- 3) Those who deny the evidence (signs) that their Lord has provided and deny their resurrection by the Creator. **Their deeds will have no weight on judgment day.**

This is the advice of Prophet Luqman,

يَبْنِيَّ أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ وَآمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَانْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأَصْبِرْ
عَلَىٰ مَا أَصَابَكَ ۖ إِنَّ ذَاكَ مِنَ الْعَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ ﴿١٧﴾

Quran 31:17

“O my dear son! Establish prayer, encourage what is good, forbid evil and endure patiently whatever befalls you. Surely this a resolve to aspire to.”^E

"Good habits result from resisting temptation." - An Indian Proverb

As believers the path for us to become **the exception** described in Surah-tul-Asr

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ ﴿١٠﴾

is to reject wrongdoing, to reject the desire to seek praise & esteem from people, to say no to the whispers of shaitan, to reject the worship of any except Allah. This is the way for us to engage in righteous deeds, to engage in truth and to persevere.

Reference: Other Quranic Ayat about Time and Loss

1. Surah Yunus, 10:6-10
2. Surah Mu'minun, 23:114
3. Surah Zumar, 39:15-18

Ethnic Diversity of the Companions of the Prophet (saw)

There are two stories that I want to relate before we discuss the lives of three important companions of the Prophet (saw). Before we discuss any of the stories of the companions of the Prophet (saw) let us read and reflect on Surah Hujjarat, ayat 13 where Allah states,

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا
وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقَىٰكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ
خَبِيرٌ ﴿١٣﴾

Quran 49:13

“O mankind! Indeed We created you from male and female, and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Indeed the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Allah is all Knowing, all Aware.”

The Young Jewish Boy

It is narrated by Anas “A young Jewish boy served the Prophet and the boy became ill. So the Prophet visited him and asked him to embrace Islam. The boy turned to his father, who was sitting with him. The father told him to obey Abul Qasim and the boy accepted Islam. The Prophet said ‘Praise be to Allah who saved this boy from the hell-fire’.”^G

Al ‘Abbas ibn Mirdas - Mesopotamia

There was a companion of the Prophet named al‘Abbas ibn Mirdas from the tribe of Sulaym, located in the southern part of Mesopotamia. Mesopotamia is located within the borders of the country of Iraq. Al‘Abbas ibn Mirdas accepted Islam shortly before the conquest of Mecca. He was known for his poetry. However, after he accepted Islam, he was known for leading military expeditions. He led several hundred men from his tribe in battle. It is reported that after one particular military victory that al‘Abbas ibn Mirdas was granted 4 camels. This was not acceptable to him.

Al ‘Abbas proceeded to make his displeasure known through the recitation of unsavory poetry. The Prophet heard this criticism and spoke to Al ‘Abbas about the manner in which his dissatisfaction was conveyed. This interaction led to an argument between Abu Bakr and al‘Abbas in front of the Prophet. The Prophet then ordered Bilal ibn Rabah “Take him away and cut off his tongue.” Al‘Abbas became startled and apologetic as Bilal pulled him away.^B

He stated ‘Will he cut off my tongue. Friends. Help!’. Bilal then whispered in his ear ‘**The Prophet meant that I should silence you by increasing your gift** (booty of war)’. Bilal led al ‘Abbas away and gave him new clothes and fifty camels. ^B

Lady Fidda, Nubian Princess

Lady Fidda was a Nubian princess who was captured in a battle and became a servant in the household of Fatimah bint Muhammad ibn Abdullah. [It is related that Lady Fidda was Ethiopian.] However, I found two sources that state Lady Fidda is of Nubian descent. ^H

Lady Fidda came to the Arabian Peninsula as a captive of war. After her arrival in Mecca she was freed by Prophet Muhammad (saw). However, she spent a lifetime serving the household of sayyidna Fatimah. Fatimah divided house work equally between herself and Lady Fidda. They would take turns completing daily chores. She remained faithful to the family of the Prophet and accompanied them to Karbala, Iran and to a prison in Syria.

When al Hassan and al-Husain were young Lady Fidda took part in the “**Three Days Fast.**” When they were children, al Hassan and al-Husain were sick. The Prophet (saw) suggested that Ali bin Abi-Talib make a vow to fast for three days when the children recovered. When they were better, Imam Ali bin Abi-Talib, Fatimah, al-Hassan, al-Husain, and Lady Fidda all fasted to fulfill the vow.

However, on each of the three days, when the time came to breakfast (iftar), a hungry/needy person arrived at their door. The first stated that he was poor, the second state that he was an orphan, and the third person stated that they were a freed captive. The arrival of each needy person kept the family and Lady Fidda with no food to break their fast; they broke their fast with water. In praise of this selfless action Allah revealed ayaat 7-11 of Surah tul Insan.

Allah relates this story in Surah 76:7-11,

يُوفُونَ بِالنَّذْرِ وَيَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا كَانَ شَرُّهُ مُسْتَطِيرًا ﴿٧﴾
وَيُطْعَمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا ﴿٨﴾
إِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللَّهِ لَا نُرِيدُ مِنْكُمْ جَزَاءً وَلَا شُكْرًا ﴿٩﴾
إِنَّا نَخَافُ مِنْ رَبِّنَا يَوْمًا عَبُوسًا قَمْطَرِيرًا ﴿١٠﴾
فَوَقَلْنَاهُمُ اللَّهُ شَرَّ ذَٰلِكَ الْيَوْمِ وَلَقَّاهُمْ نَضْرَةً وَسُرُورًا ﴿١١﴾

Quran 76:7-11

Review the translation and come prepared to share/discuss.

Lady Fidda continued to support and serve the family of the Prophet in Karbala, Iran. During the Rebellion of Karbala, Lady Fidda supported the campaign of Imam al-Husain ibn Ali and Jawan Bin Huwayy (the Ethiopian) with some twelve other Ethiopians. This group had been captured by the opposition. After their capture there was an order from Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah ibn Abu Sufyan to whip the prisoners. Upon hearing this Lady Fidda gave a fearless and daring speech to the soldiers under Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah ibn Abu Sufyan earnestly stating '**How dare you raise your hands to harm the family of the Messenger. I am from the African continent as some of you are. Why would you dare to harm me, who is one of you?**' The soldiers became agitated and refused to carry out the order to whip the prisoners.

Abdullah Mubarak related an interesting conversation between himself and Lady Fidda.^H He states: "I saw a woman passing through the desert who had fallen behind the caravan and asked her, "**Who are you and where are you from?**" She replied: "**And say, "Salaam" for they shall soon know!**" (Surah Zukhruf, 43:89). Abdullah Mubarak says, I learned that she expected me to greet her and say "As-salaamu alaikum" before my question. I did as she reminded, and then enquired why she was in the desert. She answered: "**And whomsoever Allah guides, there can be none to lead astray!**" (Surah Zumar, 39:37).

On hearing her reply, I asked her, "Are you from mankind or from the jinn?" She replied: "**O Children of Adam! be adorned at every time of prostration**" (Surah A'raf, 7:31). I understood that she was human and then asked her, "Where are you coming from?" She replied: "**Those who are called to from a place far off**" (Surah Ha-Mim 41:44)... I asked her how many days she had been travelling. She told me: "**And indeed We (Allah) created the heavens and the earth and what is between them two, in six days**" (Surah Qaaf, 50:38).

When we reached the caravan, I asked her, "Do you know anyone among them?" She called out in reply: "**O Daud, Verily, We have appointed you a vicegerent in the earth.** (Surah Saad, 38:26) **And Muhammad is not but a Messenger.**" (Surah Al- Imran, 3:144) **O Yahya! Hold the book with firmness!**" (Surah Maryam, 19:12) **O Musa! Verily I am Allah, the All-Mighty.**" (Surah Naml, 27:9)

I called out these four names, **Daud, Muhammad, Yahya, and Musa**, and four youth came out of the caravan and ran towards Lady Fidda. I asked her who they were and she replied: "**Wealth and children are the adornment of the world**" (Surah Kahf, 18:46). I realized that they were her sons. The woman turned to the youth and said: "**O my Father, employ him, verily the best of those who you can employ is the strong man and the trusted one**" (Surah Qasas, 28:26). She thus made them understand that I had helped her. Then she told them: "**And verily God increases manifold to whosoever He wills.**" (Surah Baqarah, 2:261). The sons understood their mother's hint and paid me. I asked them who this noble lady was, and they replied, "She is our mother, Fidda, the maid-servant of Lady Fatimah. She has conversed in nothing but the verses from the Qur'an for the last 20 years."

Lady Fidda is buried in Damascus, Syria.^H

Barakah-Um Ayman, *The Ethiopian*

Barakah, also known as Um-Ayman, was the caretaker of the Prophet (saw) from birth until his death in 633. The meaning of her name, Barakah, is blessed, strong, noble, and virtuous. She was an Abyssinian (Ethiopian) who was a slave of Abdullah ibn Abu Muttalib, the father of Prophet Muhammad (saw). The Prophet inherited Baraka as a servant from his father and freed Barakah upon his marriage to Khadijah bint Kuwaylid.

Barakah was a blessed companion of the Prophet and experienced honored events during her life which demonstrate the blessing of her existence.

The first example of an honored event is that Barakah at age 13 was present when the Prophet was born and was the first to hold the Prophet. Barakah witnessed the birth of the Prophet and the light that emanated from his mother, Aaminah bint Wahab. This light is reported to be seen from the hills and valleys of Mecca to greater Syria.

The second honor for Barakah is that she was the second woman to believe in the message of the Prophet after Khadijah (raha). Due to her devotion and care of the Prophet she did not marry until her 40s. Khadijah paid the mahar (dowry) for Barakah. Her first marriage lasted two years until the death of her husband. In her first marriage she had a son named Ayman. Ayman was a martyr in the Battle of al-Hunayn. Barakah's second marriage was to Zayed bin Harithah when she was in her 50s. Zayed and Barakah had a son named Usama.

A third honored event in Barakah's life occurred during her migration from Mecca to Madinah. She left on foot from Mecca to Madinah. Barakah decided to fast during this journey and did not have with her food provisions. As maghrib arrived Baraka had no water to break her fast. However, there was sound that came from above her. As she tilted her head to the source of the sound, a white rope with a vessel of water descended to her from the heavens. Barakah drank water from the vessel and was able to quench her thirst. (This water is referred to as her 'zam-zam' similar to the miracle of water that appeared for Haajar and Ismael.) Later Barakah stated '**I was not afflicted with thirst after that, although I would expose myself to thirst by fasting during severe heat of the midday...**'

Barakah was a companion of the Prophet. She and was a woman of nobility, of medical knowledge, and knowledge of combat. Her nobility is being a female companion of the Prophet who has been promised paradise. Barakah was reported to be a nurse during the battles/wars during the time of the Prophet. Barakah fought in the Battle of Uhud. She is reported to have

stated to a soldier(s) in the Battle of Uhud, ‘Why do you not take the sewing spindle and give me the sword?’

After the death of the Prophet (saw), Abu Bakr and Umar ibn Kattab, visited Barakah and found her crying. They asked her why she was crying. Barakah stated ‘... **I am crying because the revelation from the heavens has ceased.**’ Barakah is reported to have narrated 5 hadith.

Barakah died during Uthman bin Affan’s caliphate. *C & F*

Bilal ibn Rabah, Ethiopian and Yemen descent

Bilal’s was born a slave in Mecca about 30 years before the Prophet received the message. His mother was Hamamah an Ethiopian who came to Arabia as a slave with Abraha. His father was Rabah who is considered to be from Yemen.

Bilal had a handsome appearance, with dark brown skin and sparkling eyes. He had a tall stature and was known to have great stamina as a slave/worker. Bilal was known for his deep melodious, vibrant voice and he used it to entertain both slaves and slave owners.

Bilal’s virtue endeared him to the tribes of Mecca. He was known as a slave who could be trusted to lead trade caravans between Syria and Yemen. On one of his trade journeys Bilal met and developed a warm friendship with Abu Bakr. After the revelation came to the Prophet Abu Bakr is the one who encouraged Bilal to accept Islam.

Once Bilal’s master, Umayyah Ibn Khalaf, was informed of his acceptance of Islam an intense conflict developed between the slave and master. Umayyah Ibn Khalaf informed Bilal that he was only allowed to worship the god that his master allow him to worship. Umayyah told Bilal that he would no longer enjoy the elevated status as a slave, he took away his ‘good’ food and clothes. Umayyah dressed Bilal in rags, had him whipped and then paraded him through the streets of Mecca to humiliate him so that he would denounce the religion of Muhammad. Bilal’s response to Umayyah was ‘**Yes you are my master and you own my body. However, you do not possess my soul, my mind, or my sentiments. These are my possessions.**’

The torture of Bilal continued as days turned into weeks and weeks turned into months. As Bilal continued to hold firm to his beliefs, Umayyah and Amr ibn Hisham (Abu Jahl) held discussions on how to break Bilal. Abu Jahl suggested to Umayyah that they leave Bilal lying in the sand of the dessert on an extremely hot day shackled with a heavy stone on his bare chest. As Bilal laid in the sand, there was a hot wind that blew the sand onto his skin and intensified the level of torture on his body. Under this extensive torture Bilal could be heard uttering ‘Ahad, Ahad.’

Abu Bakr was of those who witnessed this torture of Bilal and came to the decision to attempt to purchase Bilal from Umayyah. Abu Bakr negotiated and Umayyah decided that he would accept the high price of five ounces of gold for the purchase of Bilal.

In the 7th year of the mission of the Prophet, clans of the Quraysh decided that it was necessary to boycott the Prophet, his community, and the Hashimite and Muttaalibite clans that were the protectors of the Messenger (saw). The Quraysh refused to trade food, clothes, or other necessities. The boycott lasted for 3 years and created a severe case of hunger and deprivation of the Prophet and his community. It is reported that Bilal lost so much weight that his eyes sank deep into his face and his skin became pale. However, none of the community died of starvation.

The boycott ended when the united clans of the Quraysh felt that the tactic was not working. It is reported that during the boycott several wealthy and prominent members of the Quraysh chose to accept the message of the Prophet (saw). As prominent members of the Quraysh accepted Islam, the opposition continued to harass the Islamic community and worked to convince the Prophet to practice their religion. There was one leader of the Quraysh who came to speak to the Prophet. However, the leader was disappointed to find that the Prophet was surrounded by Bilal, other former slaves, and men who were considered to be of the lower caste of the Quraysh. The leader felt he should not be in the company of the low caste people and requested that Prophet have a separate meeting with them. While the Prophet contemplated this request these ayaat were revealed as an admonition, **An'am 6:52 and Kahf 18:28**.

وَلَا تَطْرُدِ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ^ط
مَا عَلَيْكَ مِنْ حِسَابِهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَمَا مِنْ حِسَابِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ
شَيْءٍ فَتَطْرُدَهُمْ فَتَكُونَ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾

Quran 6:52

“And do not dismiss those who call on their Lord in the morning and evening desiring His countenance (to please Him). You are not accountable for them, nor are they accountable for you. So if you were to send them away, then you would be unjust.” ^{A&E}

وَأَصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ^ص
وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنَاكَ عَنْهُمْ تُرِيدُ زِينَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَلَا تُطِعْ مَنْ أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ
عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ فُرُطًا ﴿٢٨﴾

Quran 18:28

Review the translation and come prepared to share/discuss.

Bilal migrated to Medina (Yathrib) with two companions Ammar ibn Tasir and Sa'd ibn Abu Waqqas. In Medina Bilal was paired with an Ansar named Abu Ruwayhah.

Medina is where the establishment of community prayer took hold. The method to call the community to prayer was seen in a dream by 3 people Abdallah ibn Zayd, the Prophet, and Umar ibn Khattab. Abdallah ibn Zayd revealed this to the Prophet, '**While I was asleep, I saw a man in two green garments carrying a clapper. I asked him to sell it to me so that we could summon people to prayer. But he said, shall I teach you a better way for summoning people to prayer. I agreed. He then taught me to recite aloud the following words: (The Adhan as we know it today).**'

The Prophet told Abdallah ibn Zayd to teach this to Bilal. When Bilal made the adhan with his rich, deep, resonant, melodious voice travel across the city of Medina. The adhan reached beyond the ears of those who heard it, the words reached the hearts of the believers. Bilal was the designated mu'adhdhin during the remainder of the Prophet's life. Bilal was the first mu'adhdhin of Medina and first of Mecca, after the Muslims conquered Mecca. Bilal stood atop the Ka'bah and called the adhan.

Bilal moved to Syria after the death of the Prophet as it was difficult to live in the Medina without the Prophet. It is reported that, after the death of the Prophet, Bilal did not make the adhan again except on 2 occasions: 1) when the Muslim army concurred Jerusalem and Caliph Umar asked Bilal to make the adhan at the site of the Temple of Solomon and 2) when he returned to Medina and he found the grandsons of the Prophet (saw) who requested Bilal to make the adhan while he was visiting.

Bilal returned to Syria and is buried in Damascus. *B&F*

Conclusion

Lady Fidda Life Highlights	Barakah Life Highlights	Bilal ibn Rabah Life Highlights
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Nubian princess2. Participated in <i>Three-day fast</i> w/family of the Prophet3. Surah 76:7-11 revealed the story of the <i>Three-day fast</i>4. Spoke in verses from Quran for 20 years.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Deeply loved the Prophet and The Prophet (saw) loved Barakah, Um Ayman2. Only Companion of the Messenger (saw) for his entire life3. Second woman to believe in the message of the Prophet4. Companion to be promised paradise5. Khadijah paid the mahar for her first marriage	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Respected slave2. Dear friend to Abu Bakr & the Prophet (saw)3. First mu'adhdhin in Mecca and Medina & designated mu'adhdhin during 13 years of the Prophet's life.

Dua'

رَبَّنَا أَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٥٠﴾

Quran 2:250

“Our Lord! Shower us with perseverance, make our steps firm, and help/assist us against those who do not believe.” ^{A&E}

REFERENCES & FOOTNOTES

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- D. **www.quran.com**
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