

Teaching Our Legacy Series

This is a series designed to act as a resource for Individuals, organisations, parents and faith leaders to educate themselves and others on pious Black Muslim figures through history. The aims is to provide resources to better represent Black Muslims and undo ignorance in its many forms.

Female companions: Umm Ayman/ Baraka, Lady Fidda, Summayah, Umm Zafur

Umm Ayman/Baraka (May Allah be pleased with her)

Umm Ayman was her kunyah and her name was Baraka. Umm Ayman was the servant of Abdullah bin Abdil Muttalib, the father of the Prophet (peace be upon Him). Abdullah inherited her after his own father's passing. She was of Abyssinian descent and after the passing of Aminah, Umm Ayman took over as primary care giver of the Prophet (peace be upon him).¹ When referring to her, the Prophet said "Umm Ayman is my mother after my (biological) mother".² After the marriage of the Prophet (peace be upon Him) to Khadijah bint Khuwalid (may Allah be please with her) Umm Ayman was freed. Umm Ayman had a very close relationship to the Household of the Prophet and was present during the marriage between Sayyidah Fatimah and Imam Ali.

Following her emancipation Umm Ayman married Ubayd ibn Zayd who was from the Bani Khazraj and gave birth to Ayman.³ Walid and Mubarak write 'Umm Ayman was one of the early adherents of Islam in Makkah and was one of those who faced persecution from Quraysh. She was among those who migrated from Makkah to Abyssinia then to Al'Madinah'⁴. Ubayd was martyred at Ghazwah Khaybar and Ayman at Ghazwah Hunayn. After the martyrdom of Umm Ayman's husband it is reported that the Prophet told his companions that if anyone wanted to marry a lady from the people of paradise then marry umm Ayman. Zayd ibn Haritha then married her. Little is known about the death of Umm Ayman.

Points to derive from Umm Ayman

- 1. The woman who held the exalted status of being a mother figure to the Prophet (peace be upon him) was a Black woman**
- 2. The Prophet himself (peace be upon him) told his companions that Umm Ayman was a woman of Jannah**
- 3. She is an example of sincerity and piety**

Lady Fidda (May Allah be pleased with her)

Lady Fidda served Sayyidina Fatimah as her maid servant. She was a black Muslim woman originally from Ethiopia and after being captured and brought to Arabia the Prophet (peace be upon Him) freed her. It is said that she was of royal blood.

Conversing only from Qur'an

An extract from Dawud Walid and Ahmad Mubarak's book *Centering Black narrative: Black Muslim nobles among the early pious Muslims* reads as follows:

"Abdullah Mubarak has related a very interesting dialogue between himself and Lady Fidda. 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?"

¹ Dawud Walid, Ahmad Mubarak, *Centering Black Narrative: Black Muslim Nobles Among the Early Pious Muslims* (2016)

² ibid

³ ibid

⁴ ibid

She replied:

And say, "Salaam" for they shall soon know! (Surah Zukhruf, 43:89)

I learned that she expected me to greet her and say "Assalaamu Alaykum" first, before any 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, "Where are you intending to go?"

She said:

And (purely) for Allah, is incumbent upon mankind, the Pilgrimage of the House. (Surah al-Imran, 3:97)

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)

I asked her, "Do you feel hungry?"

She replied:

We (Allah) did not make them such bodies that ate no food. (Surah Anbiya, 21:8)

I gave her food and asked her to hurry up to catch the caravan but she replied:

Allah does not task any soul beyond its ability. (Surah Baqarah, 2:286)

I suggested that she sit on the camel behind me, but she said:

Had there been gods therein besides Allah, there would have been disorder in both (the heavens and the earth). (Surah Anbiya, 21:22)

I realized that, because we were not husband and wife, it was Haram for both of us to ride the camel. So I got off and mounted her on it. As she sat on the camel, she said:

Glory to Him Who subjected this to us. (Surah Zukhruf 43:13)

When we reached the caravan, I asked her, "Do you know anyone among them?" She called out in reply:

O Dawud, 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 began to call out these four names at which four youths 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 well. I asked them who this noble lady was, and they replied,

"She is our mother, Fidda, the maid-servant of Lady Fatima (Alaiha Salaam). She has conversed in nothing but the Holy Qur'an for the last 20 years."

Points to derive from Lady Fidda

- 1. Lady Fidda (may Allah be pleased with her) had such a degree of Taqwa that she spoke only the noblest of words that God had sent. Audiences and listeners can follow her noble example by being conscious of our tongues and speaking only good words/ employing silence when speech is unnecessary.**
- 2. She was held in high esteem by those that came across her**

Summayah bint Khayyat (May Allah be pleased with her)

Summayah was the first martyr from amongst the companions of the Prophet. One of the earliest people to accept Islam in Makkah she was oppressed and tortured along with non-Qurayshi Muslims such as Bilal and Khabab.⁵ After being enslaved by Abu Hudayfah bin Al-Mughirah she was later emancipated after her marriage to Yasir who was an Arab. Every time the Prophet (peace be upon him) would pass by them undergoing routine torture, he would say 'Patience oh family of Yasir, for your destination of paradise.'⁶ Summayah was killed by Abu Jahl, the uncle and enemy of the prophet who stabbed Summayah to death. She thus became the first companion of the prophet to achieve martyrdom.

Points to derive from Summayah

- 1. She has the exalted status of being the first martyr of Islam**
- 2. The Prophet himself assured her that her destination is paradise.**
- 3. She was one of the early converts to Islam**

⁵Ibid

⁶ Ibid

Umm Zafur

Her name is thought to have been Sa'irah al-Asadiyyah but some said it was Shaqirah. An excerpt from Habeeb Akande's *Illuminating the darkness* reads:

"Al Bukhari and Muslim narrated that Ata ibn Abi Rabah said: Ibn Abbas said to me: "Should I not show you a woman from the inhabitants of the garden?" "Certainly!" I replied. "That Black woman over there; she went to the prophet and said, 'I suffer from epileptic fits and uncover myself. Please pray to Allah for me.' He said, 'If you want you can be patient and you will have the Garden or if you want I can pray to Allah to cure you.' She said, 'I will be patient.' Then she said, 'I become uncovered; please pray for me that I do not uncover myself.' And so he supplicated for her."⁷

Points to derive from Umm Zafur:

- 1. She is one of the inhabitants of the garden**
- 2. She is an example of patience with what befalls you due to her patience with a neurological disorder**
- 3. She is an example of Haya and being shy to reveal the shape of one's body**

⁷ Habeeb Akande, *Illuminating the Darkness: Blacks and North Africans in Islam* (2012)