

THE **F1RST**S

A Lecture Series

YAQREEN™
INSTITUTE FOR ISLAMIC RESEARCH

Suhaib Ibn Sinan Al Rumi

From Persia To Rome To Paradise

Suhaib al Rumi was the last of the first seven to publicize his Islam and one of the first to be promised Paradise. He was an Arab, despite his name. His father was an Arab who was very intelligent and became a governor of a Persian city on behalf of a Persian Emperor. Suhaib looked like a Roman child but was an Arab, and lived in a Persian city. He was kidnapped at 5 years old and sold into slavery by the Byzantines. He never saw his mother or father again. He remained in the land of the Romans for about 20 years and served many masters. Because he looked like a Roman, he fit into the setting, learned the Roman language but lost his Arab language and identity. However, he always longed to connect with his Arab roots.

Escape to Mecca

He decided to escape to Mecca for asylum. When he arrived he was either purchased or taken in for protection by the richest man in Mecca, Abdullah Ibn Jidan, who was known to be very generous. He continued to be called Suhaib Al Rumi because he looked like a Roman and continued to have a Roman accent, after he learned Arabic. Abdullah Ibn Jidan taught him how to be a successful merchant and how to engage with the Arabs and he became very wealthy. When Abdullah Abu Jidan died, he no longer had protection.

Surviving Torture as a New Muslim

He had met Prophet Mohammad ﷺ through trade and the treaty, before revelation. Suhaib heard about Prophet Mohammad ﷺ calling to Islam before many others did. He didn't grow up in idol worship, and wasn't of any particular faith. Ammar ibn Yasser narrates the story of his conversion to Islam. They both arrived at Dar al Arkam at the same time to meet with Prophet Mohammad and learn more about Islam. They both accepted Islam together. There was no one to stand up for him but he never hid his conversion. Anyone could torture him and no one would say anything. Ammar and Suhaib stayed connected through their severe torture. They were both considered low members of society, even though Suhaib had acquired great wealth from trade.

A Profitable Transaction

Even though he was an Arab, he was essentially a Roman because he grew up with the Romans. When the time of the Hijra came, he was barred from making the Hijra with Prophet Mohammad ﷺ because he was in limbo, and no one could buy him because he had no master. He hid his wealth and was watched by guards all the time. Everyone who

believed in Islam had left for the Hijra except Suhaib al Rumi. He pretended to be ill with diarrhea to escape to the Hijra, but was captured again. They told him that he came to Mecca as a slave and now after acquiring all that wealth how could he expect them to let him go ? He replied that “if you want my money, I will tell you where it all is hidden, but you must let me go to Medina.” They let him go and he left for Medina after giving up everything he earned for all those years of hard work. Upon greeting Suhaib in Medina, Prophet Mohammad ﷺ told him “What a profitable transaction”, and he informed him that he would be entered into Paradise. He entered Medina the same time as Ali, who got there by foot. He was starving, sick and tired. Prophet Mohammad ﷺ gave him bread and dates.

Islam : Brothers out of Strangers

Suhaib accompanied Prophet Mohammad ﷺ in every battle. Islam brought people into unlikely brothers. A close friendly relationship developed between Suhaib and Omar. Omar joked with Suhaib that he had 3 flaws, first, that he was called ‘Abu Yahya’, but didn’t have a son named Yahya. He replied to Omar that Prophet Mohammad ﷺ called him that so he embraced it. Secondly, that he was Roman but he identified and ascribed to being an Arab. He replied to Omar that he was indeed originally an Arab but was kidnapped by the Romans. Thirdly, that he tended to be extravagant when buying food. Suhaib answered that he liked to buy a lot and share it with others, as Prophet Mohammad ﷺ taught the companions to do.

When Omar was stabbed in battle, he appointed Suhaib to be the imam for the Muslims until they chose one through Shura - this shows the virtue of Suhaib. Even though he had an accent, Omar still appointed him to that high rank. This shows how Omar did not have any tribalism when he became a Muslim, which was very indicative of the Arabic culture at the time. The friendship of the companions is a symbol of the inclusivity of Islam, an Abyssinian (Bilal), a Persian (Salman), and a Roman (Suhaib) all worked together to serve the religion of Islam, and support Prophet Mohammad ﷺ in his message. When Omar was hurt in battle, Suhaib called out to him “Oh my brother”, instead of his name, showing how they became very close to each other, despite their different backgrounds. It was an honor that he was in the grave of Omar to place Omar’s body by the side of Prophet Mohammad ﷺ and Abu Bakr.

He was survived by his children, who relayed stories about him. He didn’t narrate many hadith himself, but one of the most famous is that Prophet Mohammad ﷺ said - “how wonderful is the affair of the believer. There is good in everything that happens to him, and that is only for a believer, if good comes to him, he is grateful and it is better for him and if hardship comes to him, he is patient.” As is the case of all the sahaba, especially those that didn’t relay very many hadith, the ones they narrated specifically fit their experiences, and

therefore especially resonated for them. This hadith perfectly fit the life of Suhaib. He was patient and accepted all that Allah gave him of trials and of blessings.

Lessons Learned

- We never know the end of our story as we are in the midst of the journey of life
- We need to be willing to give up everything to serve Allah and follow the Prophet Mohammad ﷺ without fear of consequences.
- It is important to accept truth immediately when it is presented to us
- Islam blurs the lines that otherwise divide us and is the catalyst of making us all brothers and sisters, as we focus instead of service to our Creator, which we all have in common
- The life of Suhaib indicated the importance of patience during hardships and of being grateful.

Disclaimer: Notes for The Firsts are brought to you by dedicated students for your personal reference. Please refer to the original lecture for source material.