

Amr ibn al-Jamuh

Amr ibn al-Jamuh was one of the leading men in Yathrib in the days of Jahiliyyah. He was the chief of the Banu Salamah and was known to be one of the most generous and valiant persons in the city.

One of the privileges of the city's leaders was having an idol to himself in his house. It was hoped that this idol would bless the leader in whatever he did. He was expected to offer sacrifices to it on special occasions and seek its help at times of distress. The idol of Amr was called Manat. He had made it from the most priceless wood. He spent a great deal of time, money and attention looking after it and he anointed it with the most exquisite perfumes.

Amr was almost sixty years old when the first rays of the light of Islam began to penetrate the houses of Yathrib. House after house was introduced to the new faith at the hands of Musab ibn Umayr, the first missionary sent out to Yathrib before the hijrah. It was through him that Amr's three sons--Muawwadh, Muadh and Khallad--became Muslims. One of their contemporaries was the famous Muadh ibn Jabal. Amr's wife, Hind, also accepted Islam with her three sons but Amr himself knew nothing of all this .

Hind saw that the people of Yathrib were being won over to Islam and that not one of the leaders of the city remained in shirk except her husband and a few individuals. She loved her husband dearly and was proud of him but she was concerned that he should die in a state of kufr and end up in hell-fire.

During this time, Amr himself began to tell uneasy. He was afraid that his sons would give up the religion of their forefathers and follow the teaching of Musab ibn Umayr who, within a short space of time, had caused many to turn away from idolatry and enter the religion of Muhammad. To his wife, Amr therefore said:

"Be careful that your children do not come into contact with this man (meaning Musab ibn Umayr) before we pronounce an opinion on him."

"To hear is to obey," she replied. "But would you like to hear from your son Muadh what he relates from this man?" "Woe to you! Has Muadh turned away from his religion without my knowing?" The good woman felt pity from the old man and said: "Not at all. But he has attended some of the meetings of this missionary and memorized some of the things he teaches." "Tell him to come here," he said. When Muadh came, he ordered: "Let me hear an example of what this man preaches." Muadh recited the lalihah (the Opening Chapter of the Quran):

"In the name of God, the most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace. All praise is due to God alone, the Sustainer of all the worlds, The most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace. Lord of the Day of Judgment!

You alone do we worship and to You alone do we turn for help. Guide us on the straight way, the way of those upon whom you have bestowed Your blessings, not of those who have been condemned by You, nor of those who go astray."

"How perfect are these words, and how beautiful!" exclaimed the father. "Is everything he says like this?"

"Yes indeed, father. Do you wish to swear allegiance to him? All your people have already done so" urged Muadh.

The old man remained silent from a while and then said, "I shall not do so until I consult Manat and see what he says." "What indeed would Manat say, Father? It is only a piece of wood. It can neither think nor speak." The old man retorted sharply, "I told you, I shall not do anything without him."

Later that day, Amr went before Manat. It was the custom of the idolators then to place an old woman behind the idol when they wished to speak to it. She would reply on behalf of the idol, articulating, so they thought, what the idol had inspired her to say. Amr stood before the idol in great awe and addressed profuse praises to it. Then he said:

"O Manat no doubt you know that this propagandist who was delegated to come to us from Makkah does not wish evil on anyone but you. He has come only to stop us worshipping you. I do not want to swear allegiance to him in spite of the beautiful words I have heard from him. I have thus come to get your advice. So please advise me."

There was no reply from Manat. Amr continued:

"Perhaps you are angry. But up till now, I have done nothing to harm you... Never mind, I shall leave you for a few days to let your anger go away."

Amr's sons knew the extent of their father's dependence on Manat and how with time he had become almost a part of it. They realized however that the idol's place in his heart was being shaken and that they had to help him get rid of Manat. That must be his path to faith in God.

One night Amr's sons went with their friend Muadh ibn Jabal to Manat, took the idol from its place and threw it in a cess pit belonging to the Banu Salamah. They returned to their homes with no one knowing anything about what they had done. When Amr woke up the following morning, he went in quiet reverence to pay his respects to his idol but did not find it.

"Woe to you all," he shouted. "Who has attacked our god last night?" There was no reply from anyone. He began to search for the idol, fuming with rage and threatening the perpetrators of the crime. Eventually he found the idol turned upside down on its head in the pit. He washed and perfumed it and returned it to its usual place saying.

"If I find out who did this to you, I will humiliate him." The following night the boys did the same to the idol. The old man recovered it, washed and perfumed it as he had done before and returned it to its place. This happened several times until one night Amr put a sword around the idol's neck and said to it: "O Manat, I don't know who is doing this to you. If you have any power of good in you, defend yourself against this evil. Here is a sword for you."

The youths waited until Amr was fast asleep. They took the sword from the idol's neck and threw it into the pit. Amr found the idol lying face down in the pit with the sword nowhere in sight. At last he was convinced that the idol had no power at all and did not deserve to be worshipped. It was not long before he entered the religion of Islam.

Amr soon tasted the sweetness of Iman or faith in the One True God. At the same time he felt great pain and anguish within himself at the thought of every moment he had spent in shirk. His acceptance of the new religion was total and he placed himself, his wealth and his children in the service of God and His Prophet.

The extent of his devotion was shown during the time of the battle of Uhud. Amr saw his three sons preparing for the battle. He looked at the three determined young men fired by the desire to gain martyrdom, success and the pleasure of God. The scene had a great effect on him and he resolved to go out with them to wage jihad under the banner of the messenger of God. The youths, however, were all against their father carrying out his resolve. He was already quite old and was extremely weak.

"Father," they said, "surely God has excused you. So why do you take this burden on yourself?"

The old man became quite angry and went straight away to the Prophet to complain about his sons: "O Rasulallah! My sons here want to keep me away from this source of goodness arguing that I am old and

decrepit. By God, I long to attain Paradise this way even though I am old and infirm."

"Let him," said the Prophet to his sons. "Perhaps God, the Mighty and the Great, will grant him martyrdom."

Soon it was time to go out to battle. Amr bade farewell to his wife, turned to the qiblah and prayed: "O Lord, grant me martyrdom and don't send me back to my family with my hopes dashed." He set out in the company of his three sons and a large contingent from his tribe, the Banu Salamah.

As the battle raged, Amr could be seen moving in the front ranks, jumping on his good leg (his other leg was partially lame), and shouting, "I desire Paradise, I desire Paradise."

His son Khallad remained closely behind him and they both fought courageously in defense of the Prophet while many other Muslims deserted in pursuit of booty. Father and son fell on the battlefield and died within moments of each other.

[View Page](#)

Source : *Alim.org*-