

Adiyy ibn Hatim

In the ninth year of the Hijrah, an Arab king made the first positive moves to Islam after years of feeling hatred for it. He drew closer to faith (iman) after opposing and combating it. And he finally pledged allegiance to the Prophet, peace be on him, after his adamant refusal to do so.

He was Adiyy, son of the famous Hatim at-Taai who was known far and wide for his chivalry and fabulous generosity. Adiyy inherited the domain of his father and was confirmed in the position by the Tayy people. Part of his strength lay in the fact that a quarter of any amount they obtained as booty from raiding expeditions had to be given to him.

When the Prophet announced openly his call to guidance and truth and Arabs from one region after another accepted his teachings, Adiyy saw in his mission a threat to his position and leadership. Although he did not know the Prophet personally, and had never seen him, he developed strong feelings of enmity towards him. He remained antagonistic to Islam for close upon twenty years until at last God opened his heart to the religion of truth and guidance.

The way in which Adiyy became a Muslim is a remarkable story and he is perhaps the best person to relate it. He said:

"There was no man among the Arabs who detested God's Messenger, may God bless him and grant him peace, more than I, when I heard about him. I was then a man of status and nobility. I was a Christian. From my people I took a fourth of their booty as was the practice of other Arab kings.

When I heard of the Messenger of God, peace be on him, I hated him. When his mission grew in strength and when his power increased and his armies and expeditionary forces dominated east and west of the land of Arabs, I said to a servant of mine who looked after my camels:

'Get ready a fat camel for me which is easy to ride and tether it close to me. If you hear of an army or an expeditionary force of Muhammad coming towards this land, let me know.' One evening, my servant came to me and said: "Yaa Mawlaya! What you intended to do on the approach of Muhammad's cavalry to your land, do it

now." 'Why? May your mother lose you!'

'I have seen scouts searching close to the habitations. I asked about them and was told that they belonged to the army of Muhammad,' he said.

'Bring the camel which I ordered you to get ready.' I said to him. I got up then and there, summoned my household (including) my children and ordered them to evacuate the land we loved. We headed in the direction of Syria to join people of our own faith among the Christians and settle among them.

We left in too much haste for me to gather together our entire household. When I took stock of our situation, I discovered that part of my family was missing. I had left my own sister in our Najd homelands together with the rest of the Tayy people. I did not have any means to return to her. So I went on with those who were with me until I reached Syria and took up residence there among people of my own religion. As for my sister, what I feared for her happened.

News reached me while I was in Syria that the forces of Muhammad entered our habitations and took my sister together with a number of other captives to Yathrib. There she was placed with other captives in a compound near the door of the Masjid.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, passed by her. She stood up before him and said: 'Yaa Rasulallah! My father is dead and my guardian is not here. Be gracious to me and God will be gracious to you.! 'And who is your guardian?' asked the Prophet. 'Adiyy ibn Hatim.' she said. 'The one who fled from God and His Prophet?' he asked. He then left her and walked on.

On the following day, the same thing happened. She spoke to him just as she did the day before and he replied in the same manner. The next day, the same thing happened and she despaired of getting any concession from him for he did not say anything. Then a man from behind him indicated that she should stand up and talk to him. She therefore stood up and said:

'O Messenger of God! My father is dead and my guardian is absent. Be gracious to me and God will be gracious to you.' I have agreed he said. Turning to those about him, he instructed: likewise 'Let her go for her father loved noble ways, and God loves them.' 'I want to join my family in Syria,' she said.

"But don't leave in a hurry," said the Prophet, "until you find someone you can trust from your people who could accompany you to Syria. If you find a trustworthy person, let me know."

When the Prophet left, she asked about the man who had suggested that she speak to the Prophet and was told that he was Ali ibn Abi Talib, may God be pleased with him. She stayed in Yathrib until a group arrived among whom was someone she could trust. So she went the Prophet and said:

'O Messenger of God! A group of my people have come to me and among them is one I can trust who could take me to my family.'

The Prophet, peace be on him, gave her fine clothes and an adequate sum of money. He also gave her a camel and she left with the group.

Thereafter we followed her progress gradually and waited for her return. We could hardly believe what we heard about Muhammad's generosity towards her in spite of my attitude to him. By God, I am a leader of my people. When I beheld a woman in herhawdaj coming towards us, I said: 'The daughter of Hatim! It's she! It's she!'

When she stood before us, she snapped sharply at me and said: 'The one who severs the tie of kinship is a wrongdoer. You took your family and your children and left the rest of your relations and those whom you ought to have protected.'

'Yes, my sister,' I said, 'don't say anything but good.' I tried to pacify her until she was satisfied. She told me what had happened to her and it was as I had heard. Then I asked her, for she was an intelligent and judicious person:

"What do you think of the mission of this man (meaning Muhammad peace be on him)?" "I think, by God, that you should join him quickly." she said. "If he is a Prophet, file one who hastens towards him would enjoy his grace. And if he is a king, you would not be disgraced in his sight while you are as you are."

I immediately prepared myself for travel and set off to meet the Prophet in Madinah without any security and without any letter. I had heard that he had said: 'I certainly wish that God will place the hand of Adiyy in my hand.'

I went up to him. He was in the Masjid. I greeted him and he said: 'Who is the man? 'Adiyy ibn Hatim,' I said. He stood up for me, took me by the hand and set off towards his home.

By God, as he was walking with me towards his house, a weak old woman met him. With her was a young child. She stopped him and began talking to him about a problem. I was standing (all the while). I said to myself: 'By God, this is no king.'

He then took me by the hand and went with me until we reached his home. There he got a leather cushion filled with palm fibre, gave it to me said: 'Sit on this!'

I felt embarrassed before him and said: 'Rather, you sit on it.' 'No, you,' he said.

I deferred and sat on it. The Prophet, peace be on him, sat on the floor because there was no other cushion. said to myself:

'By God, this is not the manner of a king!' He then turned to me and said: 'Yes, Adiy ibn Hatim! Haven't you been a "Rukusi" professing a religion between Christianity and Sabeanism?' 'Yes,' I replied.

'Did you not operate among your people on the principle of exacting from them a fourth, taking from them what your religion does not allow you?'

'Yes,' I said, and I knew from that he was a Prophet sent (by God). Then he said to me: 'Perhaps, O Adiy, the only thing that prevents you from entering this religion is what you see of the destitution of the Muslims and their poverty. By God, the time is near when wealth would flow among them until no one could be found to take it.

'Perhaps, O Adiy, the only thing that prevents you from entering this religion is what you see of the small number of Muslims and their numerous foe. By God, the time is near when you would hear of the woman setting out from Qadisiyyah on her camel until she reaches this house, not fearing anyone except Allah.

'Perhaps what prevents you from entering this religion is that you only see that sovereignty and power rest in the hands of those who are not Muslims. By God, you will soon hear of the white palaces of the land of Babylon opening up for them and the treasures of Chosroes the son of Hormuz fall to their lot.'

'The treasures of Chosroes the son of Hormuz?' I asked (incredulously). 'Yes, the treasures of Chosroes the son of Hormuz,' he said. Thereupon, I professed the testimony of truth, and declared my acceptance of Islam."

One report says that when Adiy saw the simplicity of the Prophet's life-style, he said to him: "I testify that you do not seek high office in this world nor corruption," and he announced his acceptance of Islam. Some people observed the Prophet's treatment of Adiy and said to him:

"O Prophet of God! We have seen you do something which you have not done to any other." "Yes," replied the Prophet. "This is a man of stature among his people. If such a person come to you, treat him honorably."

Adiy ibn Hatim, may God be pleased with him, lived for a long time. He later said: "Two of the things (which the Prophet spoke of) came to pass and there remained a third. By God, it would certainly come to pass. "I have seen the woman leaving Qadisiyyah on her camel fearing nothing until she arrived at this house (of the Prophet in Madinah).

"I myself was in the vanguard of the cavalry which descended on the treasures of Chosroes and took them. And I swear by God that the third event will be realized." Through the will of God, the third statement of the Prophet, on him be choicest blessings and peace, came to pass during the time of the devout and ascetic Khalifah, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz. Wealth flowed among the Muslims so much so that when the town-criers called on people throughout the Muslim domain to come and collect Zakat, no one was found in need to respond.

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