125276 - Biography of Uways al-Qarni (may Allah have mercy on him)

the question

I have heard a great deal, and I get a lot of emails, about a Taabi‘i (and sometimes it is said that he was a Sahaabi) called Uywas al-Qarni, and how he honoured his mother. Can you do us the favour of telling us his story and biography? Did the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) really mention him as having a special status? How was his kind treatment of his mother, if it is true that his kindness towards his mother caused him to attain a special status? May Allah reward you with good and draw you near to Him.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

Uways al-Qarni – Abu ‘Amr – was Uways ibn ‘Aamir ibn Juz’ ibn Maalik al-Qarni al-Muraadi al-Yamaani, one of the foremost Taabi‘een and righteous close friends of Allah. He lived at the time of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and became Muslim, but he did not meet him. What prevented him from travelling to meet him was the fact that he was preoccupied with taking care of his mother, as was narrated by al-Haafiz Abu Nu‘aym in Hilyat al-Awliya’ (2/87) from Asbagh ibn Zayd. He was not one of the Sahaabah; rather he was one of the Taabi‘een.

He was born and grew up in Yemen.

Imam adh-Dhahabi said of him in Siyar A‘laam an-Nubala’ (4/19):

The exemplary ascetic, leader of the Taabi‘een of his time, one of the pious close friends of Allah and one of His devoted worshippers.

Secondly:

In Sharh Saheeh Muslim, Imam an-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) wrote a chapter on his virtues, in which he quoted what Imam Muslim (may Allah have mercy on him) had narrated of hadiths that speak of his virtues, such as hadith no 2542:

It was narrated that Usayr ibn Jaabir said:

Whenever reinforcements came from Yemen, ‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab (may Allah be pleased with him) would ask them: Is Uways ibn ‘Aamir among you? When he found Uways he said: Are you Uways ibn ‘Aamir? He said: Yes. He said: Are you from Muraad then from Qaran? He said: Yes. He said: Did you have leprosy, then you recovered from it except for a spot the size of a dirham? He said: Yes. He said: Do you have a mother? He said: Yes. He said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) say: “There will come to you Uways ibn ‘Aamir with the reinforcements from Yemen, from Muraad then from Qaran. He had leprosy but he recovered from it except for a spot the size of a dirham. He has a mother and he honours her. If he were to swear in the name of Allah that something should happen, Allah would cause it to happen. If you can ask him to pray for forgiveness for you then do so.” Pray for forgiveness for me. And he prayed for forgiveness for him. ‘Umar said to him: Where are you headed? He said: Kufa. He said: Shall I write to the governor for you? He said: Being among the common folk is dearer to me.

The following year, a man from among their nobles performed Hajj and he met ‘Umar, who asked him about Uways. He said: I left him in a shabby house with meagre provisions.

He said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) say: “There will come to you Uways ibn ‘Aamir with the reinforcements from Yemen, from Muraad then from Qaran. He had leprosy but he recovered from it except for a spot the size of a dirham. He has a mother and he honours her. If he were to swear in the name of Allah that something should happen, Allah would cause it to happen. If you can ask him to pray for forgiveness for you then do so.”

So he went to Uways and said: Pray for forgiveness for me. He said: You have just come from a sacred journey, so pray for forgiveness for me. He said: Pray for forgiveness for me. He said: You

have just come from a sacred journey, so pray for forgiveness for me. He said: Did you meet ‘Umar? He said: Yes. So he prayed for forgiveness for him, and the people came to know of his piety, so he left.

Usayr said: His garment (allocated annually by the state) was a cloak (burdah) and every time anyone saw him he would say: From where did Uways get this cloak?

In al-Mustadrak (3/455), Imam al-Haakim also wrote a chapter about his virtues, and said of him:

Uways was the monk of this ummah. End quote.

Among the greatest of the reports about his virtue are the hadiths that speak of the intercession of a man from among the ummah of Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) for many people. This is mentioned in many reports, the soundest of which is the marfoo‘ hadith of ‘Abdullah ibn Abi’l-Jad‘a’: “Because of the intercession of a man from my ummah, more people than the tribe of Banu Tameem will surely enter Paradise.” Narrated by at-Tirmidhi (no. 2438). He said: It is hasan saheeh. It was classed as saheeh by al-Albaani.

It is soundly narrated from al-Hasan al-Basri that this intercessor is Uways al-Qarni. This is narrated in other marfoo‘ hadiths, but they are da‘eef (weak).

There are also other da‘eef hadiths that speak of his virtues, such as a lengthy hadith in which it says: “There will surely pray with you tomorrow a man from among the people of Paradise… and that is Uways al-Qarni…” This hadith also speaks of a lengthy discussion between him and ‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab and ‘Ali ibn Abi Taalib.

It was narrated by Abu Nu‘aym in Hilyat al-Awliya’ (2/81), and he referred to its being da‘eef. Shaykh al-Albaani said in as-Silsilah ad-Da‘eefah (no. 6276): It is munkar jiddan (very odd).

Ibn al-Jawzi (may Allah have mercy on him) – who wrote a chapter about Uways in his book al-Mawdoo‘aat – said:

The saheeh hadiths only mention a few words about Uways that he (the Prophet (blessings and

peace of Allah be upon him)) said to ‘Umar, when the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) told him: “Uways will come to you, and if you can ask him to pray for forgiveness for you then do so.” The storytellers spoke at length about the hadith of Uways but there is no benefit in quoting what they said in any detail. End quote.

Al-Mawdoo‘aat (2/44)

Thirdly:

The scholars quoted in his biography some stories that are indicative of his righteousness and asceticism (may Allah have mercy on him). One of the most famous of the scholars who narrated that is al-Haafiz Abu Nu‘aym in his great book Hilyat al-Awliya’. One of the reports (2/79) he narrated is that from Abu Nadrah, from Usayr ibn Jaabir, who said:

A muhaddith (hadith scholar) in Kufa used to narrate to us, and when he had finished his talk he would say: You may leave now. A few people would remain behind, among whom was a man who would start speaking in such a way that I had never heard anyone speak before, and I liked it. One day he did not come, so I said to my companions: Do you know a man who used to sit with us (and I described him)? Someone said: Yes, I know him; that is Uways al-Qarni. I said: Do you know where he lives? He said: Yes. So I went with him until I came to his room, and he came out to me. I said: O my brother, what kept you away from us? He said: Not having clothes. His companions used to make fun of him and bother him. I said: Take this cloak and wear it. He said: Do not do that, for if they see it, they will bother me. But I kept on at him until he put it on and came out to them, and they said: Who did he cheat to get this cloak? So he came and took it off and said: Do you see?

I went to the people and said: What do you want from this man? Why are you bothering him? Sometimes the man has no clothes to wear and sometimes he does. And I rebuked them in a very harsh manner. End quote.

Fourthly:

Many words full of light, wisdom and admonition have been narrated from Uways.

It was narrated that Sufyaan ath-Thawri said: Uways had a cloak that touched the ground when he sat down, and he used to say:

O Allah, I offer my apology to You for every hungry stomach and unclothed body, but I own nothing in this world except what is on my back and in my stomach. End quote.

Narrated by al-Haakim in al-Mustadrak (3/458)

He (may Allah have mercy on him) also said, encouraging people to fear Allah and remember that He is always watching:

Fear the punishment of Allah as if you are guilty of having killed all the people. End quote.

Narrated by al-Haakim in al-Mustadrak (3/458)

It was narrated that Asbagh ibn Zayd said:

Uways al-Qarni would say when evening came: This night is for bowing, and he would bow until morning came. And he would say when (another) evening came: This night is for prostrating, and he would prostrate until morning came. And when (another) evening came, he would give in charity all that was surplus in his house of food and clothing, then he would say: O Allah, whoever dies hungry, do not take me to task for it, and whoever dies unclothed, do not take me to task for it. End quote.

Narrated by Abu Nu'aym in Hilyat al-Awliya' (2/87). The words "he would bow until morning came… he would prostrate until morning came" mean that he would bow at length in prayer until morning came, then on another night he would prostrate at length in prayer until morning came.

It was narrated that ash-Sha'bi said:

A man from Muraad passed by Uways al-Qarni and said: How are you this morning? He said: I am this morning praising Allah. He said: How is life with you? He said: How is life with a man who, in

the morning, thinks that he will not live until evening comes, and in the evening, he thinks that he will not live until morning comes, and he will either be given glad tidings of Paradise or tidings of Hellfire? O man of Muraad, death and remembrance of death do not leave any moment of joy for the believer; his knowledge of the rights of Allah did not leave him any of his wealth; and his standing up for the truth did not leave him any friends. End quote.

Hilyat al-Awliya' (2/83); also narrated by al-Haakim in al-Mustadrak (3/458)

Fifthly:

Most of the scholars are of the view that he died on the Day of Siffeen in 37 AH, when he fought alongside 'Ali ibn Abi Taalib (may Allah be pleased with him) and he was martyred there. Al-Haakim narrated that in al-Mustadrak (3/460) with an isnaad going back to Shareek ibn 'Abdullah, 'Abd ar-Rahmaan ibn Abi Layla and others.

Other scholars stated that he went on campaign to Azerbaijan and was martyred there. See: Hilyat al-Awliya' (2/83)

But the former is the view of the majority.

And Allah knows best.