



(Zubaidah – The Wife of Haaron Rasheed – Part Three)

During the era of Zubaidah, there was a scarcity of water in Makkah Mukarramah. This shortage was especially devastating at the time of hajj as during this period, thousands of people would flock to the blessed city, as well as the plains of 'Arafaat, Muzdalifah and Mina, from all corners of the Muslim world. Eventually, the demand for water was so high that people would pay up to one dinar (gold coin) for a single bag of water!

When Zubaidah witnessed this, she was overcome by pity for the plight of the poor people who could not afford this exorbitant amount, yet required this valuable resource for survival. She thus embarked on a project to provide water to the people in Makkah Mukarramah.

For this purpose, she summoned engineers and instructed them to survey the land around Makkah Mukarramah, locating viable sources from which water could be brought into Makkah Mukarramah. After conducting the survey, the engineers decided that water would be brought via aqueducts (water channels) from Waadi Hunain and Waadi Nu'maan, as these two areas experienced more frequent rainfall, causing the groundwater level in those regions to be higher.

When Zubaidah's financial manager learnt of her intention, he cautioned her saying, "This project will be extremely costly!" To this, she replied, "Go ahead with the project, even if it costs one dinar (gold coin) for every strike of the axe (during its construction)!"

The engineers first brought water from Waadi Hunain. They dug wells in the area (to access the water) and brought the water to Makkah Mukarramah via an aqueduct. Huge tanks were constructed to store the water, and the remains of these tanks still exist today. However, after some time, the water at Waadi Hunain became depleted. Nevertheless, by this

time, the supply of water could be met from Waadi Nu'maan.

Waadi Nu'maan is situated at the base of Jabal (Mount) Kara, 10km south-east of 'Arafaat, in the direction of Taa-if. Four or five wells were dug here, some up to 34m in depth! The water from all these wells would collect in a central well via small tunnels that were dug between them. Then, to transport the water to Makkah Mukarramah, an aqueduct was built.

As there were no pumps at the time, the water had to flow naturally, using the force of gravity. To make this possible, the aqueduct had to maintain a slight but constant slope all the way to Makkah Mukarramah! Hence, at times, the aqueduct was above the ground (e.g. along the hills of Muzdalifah), and at times, it tunnelled beneath the ground and even through the mountains. Small access wells were built at 50m intervals for the purpose of maintaining and cleaning the well (men who were small in built would enter the aqueduct at these points and attend to the cleaning, removal of blockages, etc.). The entire aqueduct, above and below ground, was solidified with a mortar made from lime and stones which made it waterproof.

From Waadi Nu'maan, the aqueduct first came to 'Arafaat. At Jabalur Rahmah, it stood approximately 3m high. Here, three tanks were constructed, as well as a drinking fountain (the remains of which can still be seen today). From 'Arafaat, the aqueduct proceeded to Muzdalifah where it took the shape of a well near Masjid Mash'arul Haraam. It was from this well that water would be taken to Mina for the hujjaaj. The aqueduct constructed by Zubaidah did not flow all the way into Makkah Mukarramah, but ended in the area known today as 'Azeeziyyah. In this area, the aqueduct ended in a large pond known as the Pond of Zubaidah. Today, Masjid Shaikh Bin Baaz stands in this place. Commencing in Waadi Nu'maan and ending in 'Azeeziyyah, the aqueduct was approximately 38km in length!

The effectiveness of the aqueduct can be gauged from the fact that it would bring to Makkah Mukarramah, on a daily basis, water equivalent to 160 tankers! The canal of Zubaidah continued to function until 1950 when due to the excessive amount of water that was being drawn out by pumps, the water became depleted at the source and the canal ceased to flow. Hence, the canal continued to service the people of Makkah Mukarramah for approximately 1200 years!

One day, while the canal was under construction, Zubaidah's financial manager mentioned,

“Four hundred thousand dirhams (silver coins) have already been spent on this project!” She responded, “You are only saying this because you wish to make me feel remorseful and discourage me from spending further in avenues of goodness! Continue to spend on it and complete the project, even if the cost is many times this amount!”

When the project was finally completed, ten years after its commencement, the scribes came before her to officially record the cost of the project, which was in the region of 1.7 million dinaars (based on the current gold value, this equals approximately R4 billion!).

However, she stopped them and said,

“Leave the record for the Day of Record (i.e. I am not concerned over the cost, but I wish to see whether any reward has been recorded in my favour for undertaking this project).”

She then instructed them to erase the records of the expenditure.

(*Wafayaatul Aa'yaan vol. 2, pg. 314, Al 'Iqduth Thameen vol. 6, pg. 398 and <http://tiny.cc/zubaidah>*)

Lessons:

1. When Zubaidah saw the people in difficulty, especially those coming for hajj, she could not sit by idly and let the difficulties continue. Instead, she used her unique resources, position and influence to do what was in her means to bring relief to the people.

Today, the world refers to a person with this spirit as a ‘humanitarian’. However, we refer to this person as a ‘Muslim’, as every Muslim should have this heart.

2. Despite her financial manager attempting to dissuade her on numerous occasions, she remained resolute and was undeterred. This is the type of determination that we should have when intending to carry out a good deed or refrain from a sin.

3. Perhaps one reason for Zubaidah instructing that the official records be erased is that she did not want to view the amount spent and be overcome by pride.