



A STORY TO READ ALOUD

The Story of Bilal ibn Rabah

بلال

His voice rose over the rooftops in the first call to prayer.

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The Story of Bilal ibn Rabah

“O Bilal, tell me which of your deeds in Islam you have done with the most hope of reward, for I heard the sound of your footsteps in Paradise last night.”

Sahih al-Bukhari · 1149

Come with me. Today, we're going on a journey... far, far away... and long, long ago. We're going out to the burning desert just outside the city of Mecca... at the very hottest hour of the day, when the sand shimmers like fire.

And here we are. Feel the heat pressing down from every side... the air too hot to breathe. A young man is lying on the scorching ground, and a heavy stone has been pressed down onto his chest. A cruel man stands over him, shouting at him to give up his faith and bow to the stone idols. All he has to do is say the words... and they will let him rest. They will give him water. The pain will stop.

But he will not say them. Instead, over and over, through cracked lips, he whispers just one small word. One word, again and again, no matter what they do to him. What is that word? And where does a heart that strong even come from?

To find out, we have to wind the whole story back, to a time before that desert, when this young man had no friend in all the world. This is the story of Bilal ibn Rabah, raḍiyallāhu ‘anhu... the first muezzin of Islam.

Long ago... in the city of Mecca... there lived a young man named Bilal.

His mother had come from Abyssinia. The land we now call Ethiopia.

His skin was deep brown. His eyes were kind. His voice was soft and warm.

But Bilal was a slave.

In those days... before Islam came... some people in Mecca owned other people. They could buy them. They could sell them.

The man who owned Bilal was a hard-hearted man.

Bilal worked for him. Quietly. Patiently. From the early light of morning... until the deep dark of night.

One day... a new message began to spread through Mecca.

A man named Muhammad, ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam, was teaching that there is only one Allah. The Lord of the heavens and the earth. The One who made every person... rich and poor... free and enslaved... equal in His sight.

Bilal heard this message.

And his heart... opened.

For all his life... people had told him he was less. Because of his skin. Because of his work. Because of his chains.

But this new message said... none of that mattered to Allah.

What mattered was the heart.



The Heart that Heard

Bilal believed. Quietly. In secret. Before he could even speak the words out loud.

The Prophet Muhammad, ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam, became his teacher. His friend. His brother in faith.

Bilal had never had a friend like that before.

The man who owned Bilal found out.

He was angry.

He told Bilal to give up this new faith. He told him to go back to bowing to the stone idols of Mecca.

But Bilal would not.

So the man took Bilal out into the desert... in the hottest part of the day... when the sun beat down on the sand like fire.

He kept him there. He placed a heavy stone on his chest. He told him... give it up... and you can have water... give it up... and you can rest.

Bilal was hot. Bilal was tired. Bilal was thirsty.

But Bilal had a word in his heart. A small, beautiful word.

The Arabic word for one.

Aḥad.

He said it softly. Then again. Then again.

Aḥad. Aḥad. Aḥad.

Allah is One. There is no god but Allah. And no test... and no thirst... and no heavy stone... could make Bilal say anything else.

The man pushed him. The man shouted at him. The sun rose higher.

And Bilal kept whispering... his one quiet word.

Aḥad.

Subhan'Allah.



The Word that Could Not Be Broken

Little one... can you imagine that?

A heart so full of Allah... that even when his body was tired... his lips remembered.

That is what real faith looks like.

A kind man passed by.

His name was Abu Bakr, raḍiyallāhu ‘anhu. The dearest friend of the Prophet Muhammad, ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam.

Abu Bakr saw what was happening. His heart broke.

He went to the man who owned Bilal. And he said... I will buy him from you. Name your price.

The man named a great price. He thought Abu Bakr would walk away.

But Abu Bakr did not walk away.

He paid.

He paid a great price. For one man's freedom.

Then Abu Bakr turned to Bilal. And he said gently...

You are free now. Free for the sake of Allah.

Bilal stood up. The stone was lifted. The sun was still hot.

But for the first time in his life... no one owned him.

He belonged only... to Allah.

Bilal went home with Abu Bakr that day. To the Prophet Muhammad, ﷺ.

His brothers in faith welcomed him with smiles. With hugs. With tears.

He had been a slave that morning.



Abu Bakr's Gift

He was a free man by sundown.

And the same Allah who had heard his quiet word in the desert... had answered.

Time passed.

The Prophet Muhammad, ﷺ, and the believers moved from Mecca... to a new city called Madinah.

In Madinah... they built the first masjid. A simple, beautiful place. Mud walls. Date-palm beams.

A place to bow to Allah, together.

But the believers had a question.

How would they know when it was time to pray?

Some said... we could ring a bell.

Some said... we could blow a horn.

Some said... we could light a fire.

But none of those felt right.

That night... one of the Companions had a beautiful dream. In his dream... a man came to him... and taught him a song. A song to call the believers to prayer.

He woke up. He went to the Prophet Muhammad, ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam, and shared what he had learned.

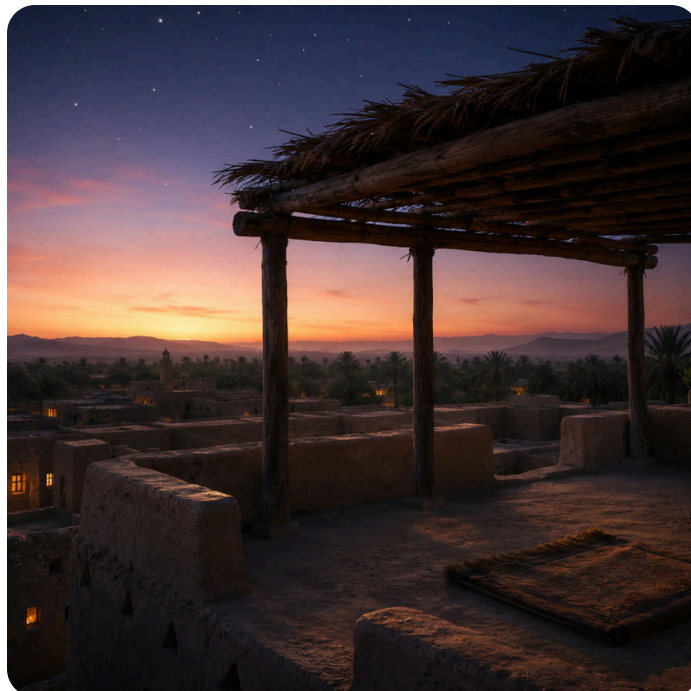
The Prophet, ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam, smiled.

This call is from Allah. It is true.

And he turned... and he looked at Bilal.

Bilal had a beautiful voice. Warm. Steady. Carrying.

Stand, Bilal, the Prophet said gently. Teach this call to the people.



The First Call to Prayer

And so... Bilal climbed up onto the roof of the simple masjid.

It was the soft hour just before dawn. The sky was turning from deep indigo to soft rose. The crickets were quieting. The world was very still.

Bilal took a breath.

And the first adhan in all of history... rose into the sky.

Allāhu Akbar... Allāhu Akbar...

A voice that had once whispered Aḥad under a heavy stone... was now calling all of Madinah to prayer.

Subhan'Allah.

The believers heard him. They rose from their beds. They walked, smiling, toward the masjid.

The first muezzin of Islam had been chosen.

And it was Bilal.

Many years passed.

Bilal stayed at the side of the Prophet Muhammad, ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam. He called the adhan five times every day. The Companions loved him. The Prophet, ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam, loved Bilal dearly.

The Prophet once told him something so beautiful... it was almost a secret.

Bilal... I heard the sound of your footsteps... in front of me... in Paradise.

Bilal could not believe it.

He asked the Prophet... what deed have I done?

Bilal told him quietly... I never make wudu without praying two rakah afterward.

A small deed. A simple habit.

But done... again and again... with a clean heart.

That is what Allah saw.



The Roof of the Kaaba

Then... after many years away... the believers returned to Mecca.

The same Mecca where Bilal had once been a slave. Where stones had been placed on his chest. Where the man who owned him had tried to break his faith.

The believers entered Mecca peacefully. The idols inside the Kaaba were taken down. The Kaaba was cleansed. Returned to the way Prophet Ibrahim, alayhi salaam, had built it.

And then... the Prophet Muhammad, ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam, looked at Bilal.

And he said... gently...

Climb up, Bilal. Call the adhan from the top of the Kaaba.

Bilal climbed.

He stood... on the roof of the holiest place on earth.

He looked out across Mecca. The same desert sun he had once been pinned beneath. The same hills. The same sky.

And his voice... rose.

Allāhu Akbar... Allāhu Akbar...

The man who had been a slave... was now standing where no one stood. The man who had said Aḥad in a whisper... was now calling it across the desert in a song.

Just as Allah lifted Prophet Yusuf, alayhi salaam, from the dark of the well... to the highest place in Egypt... so He lifted Bilal from the chains of slavery... to the roof of the Kaaba.

Allah always sees the patient heart.

He always hears the quiet word.

And now... slowly... we leave that rooftop high above Mecca behind... and travel back home. To right here. Right now.

But carry Bilal with you, wherever you go. The world told him he was nobody, that his skin, and his chains, and his hard work made him less than everyone else. But Allah never measures people the way people do. Allah looked at his patient heart, and his one quiet word, and lifted him higher than anyone in all of Mecca. Somewhere in the world, right now, a muezzin is climbing to a high place to call the believers to prayer, and that beautiful, rising call began with one warm voice... Bilal's voice... long, long ago.

So carry these words with you, whenever something feels too heavy to bear. They mean... Allah is enough for us... and the best one to trust.

Ḥasbunā-llāhu wa ni'ma-l-wakīl.

Talk about it

Read a question aloud and let your child answer before you show the choices. Then ask: what would you have done?

1. What word did Bilal (RA) whisper under the stone?

- a. Ahad
- b. Amin
- c. Salam

2. What did the word Bilal (RA) whispered mean?

- a. One
- b. Peace
- c. Light

3. Who paid to set Bilal (RA) free?

- a. Abu Bakr (RA)
- b. Umar (RA)
- c. His own master

4. What did Bilal (RA) do when they told him to stop?

- a. He kept believing
- b. He ran far away
- c. He hid his faith

5. Where was Bilal (RA) kept out in the burning sun?

- a. In the hot desert
- b. In a cold cave
- c. On a high roof

6. What are the first words of Bilal (RA)'s adhan?

- a. Allahu Akbar
- b. Alhamdulillah
- c. Bismillah

Answers: 1a, 2a, 3a, 4a, 5a, 6a



Hear this story

Read it again online, or listen to it narrated in the Sukun Kids app.

sukunkids.app/stories/bilal

Sukun Kids: stories of the prophets for Muslim children, narrated for bedtime.

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