

## Which Names Did The Prophet ﷺ Change?

A name is the most important symbol that identifies one person from another. It is also the word heard most often in a person's life, so for this reason everyone wants to have nice name with a good meaning.

Islam gives much importance to the choosing of a good name. The Prophet ﷺ as well as choosing good names (1) made it quite clear in this hadith (saying of the Prophet) "On the day of resurrection, you will be called by your names and by your fathers names so give yourselves good names" (2) This shows the importance of having a name with a good meaning even on the day of resurrection.

In Islam one of the main duties a father has to his child is giving him a righteous name.

### Names Given By The Prophet And Their Characteristics:

The Companions of the Prophet would take their new born, unsuckled babies to the Prophet who would soften a date by chewing it and rub a piece of the date on to the roof of the new-born's mouth. The Prophet then making a prayer would name the child. When choosing a name, its prominent characteristics should be taken into consideration. When we look at the names given by the Prophet, we see that they were mainly the names of past prophets like Ibrahim or the names of Allah like Abdullah, "servant of Allah" which entails confession of submission and Abdurrahman which has confession of compassion to all creatures.

### Names Changed By The Prophet

The names changed by the Prophet were of three categories:

a. Names with a bad meaning:

For instance the Prophet changed the name that Khuzay (a member of the Ansar) gave to his son (3) and told him "Give him the name Munthir" (4). The Prophet also changed the names Al-As, Aziz, Atalah, Shaytan, Hakam, Gurab, Habab and Shihab. Shihab was changed to Hisham, Harb (war) to Silm (peace) and Al-Mudtaji (one who lies) to Al-Munbaith (one who stands up) the Prophet also changed the name of the land Afrah (barren) to Khadrah (green) and Shi'b ad-Dalalah (the mountain path of stray) to Shi'b al-Huda (the mountain path of guidance) Banu az-Zinyah (children of fornication) to Banu ar-Rushdah (children of those on the right path) and Banu Mughwiyah (children of a woman who allures and goes astray) and called them Banu Rushdah (children of a woman who is on the right path)(5)

These names without doubt were changed by the Prophet because of their ugly meanings; Hubab, because it means a kind of snake or Shaytan and Shihab which means to burn like fire (6). It is a fact

that hearing something over and over again, even if it is disapproved of becomes normal. A saying that is kept within borders is less harmful but if the same thing is used freely on a daily basis, they become a normal practice, and would be of much more harm.

Names like Aziz, Kadir and Sammad looking at the above are unapproved of and should be used as Abdul-Aziz, Abdul-Kadir, Abdussamad. These are names of Allah and therefore should not be shortened. The Prophet changed names of this kind. (7) For instance 'Aziz', one of the names of Allah, alone is not a suitable name, but should be Abdul-Aziz. Here 'abd' means 'servant,' therefore, the servant of Allah.

#### *B. Names Of A Nice Meaning Changed For A Better Name:*

Among some of the names changed by the Prophet were also names with nice meanings but when we look at these names, they either made a bad impression on their owners or the people around them. For example the name Barraah (righteous, dutiful) was changed by the Prophet to Zainab "Allah knows the good ones among you" which means do not think with the name Barraah you are among the good "Therefore justify not yourselves" (8), "Allah knows better than everyone the good ones among you" (9). According to the hadith, Zainab bin Ebi Salame's former name was Barraah and people around her said that "By that she is giving herself the prestige of piety" (10). Hearing this the Prophet changed her name, meaning that this name was not a bad name, but that names with the meaning of 'Pride or Arrogance' were not suitable because some names affect the characteristics of a person as in this verse "Therefore justify not yourselves, he knows best who it is that guards against evil." (11)

#### *C. Names Against Unification:*

The Prophet made it clear that the names Abdullah and Abdurrahman given to newly born babies with the meanings of unity and servant of Allah were names most liked by Allah (12) but names with the opposite meaning like "Malik Al-Amlak (king of kings)" were among the names detested by Allah (13) because "there's no king other than Allah" (14). As we can see, this kind of a name is against the unity of Allah and is a form of shirk.

#### *The Importance And Responsibility Of Naming A Child*

It is one of the main duties of a mother and father to give their child a name with a good meaning; giving a name that has a bad meaning is makruh (disliked by Allah) and should be avoided. The names like Malik Al-Amlak are against the unity of Allah. Names with similar meanings are haram (religiously forbidden) and are not to be used.

Nobody is capable of naming himself at birth. The responsibility of giving a child a good name are the parents.

### The Order Of Changing Name

It is possible to separate names that should be changed into three categories: the ones against the unity of Allah, names that have a bad meaning and names with a good meaning that change the character of a person. It is *sunnah* (practice of the Prophet) and required in Islam that names should have a good meaning and any name that is against the unity of Allah is haram and if unknowingly a child has been given a name like this, it must be changed.

This brings to mind Abdullah b. Salam who, when changing his name and religion, asked "Does everyone who changes his religion also have to change his name?" It is not the name that is important, but it is the meaning. If the name has a nice meaning and will not affect in anyway the person's faith or character, it does not need to be changed, but if this name has any symbolic remembrance to his late religion, then it should be changed.

- 1) Bukhari-Manakıbu'l Ansar 45, Aqıqa 1; Muslim, Adab 26
- 2) Abu Dawud, Adab 69
- 3) (Bukhari, Adab 108) these names were not disclosed
- 4) Bukhari, Adab 108; Muslim, Adab 29
- 5) Abu Dawud, Edeb 70.
- 6) Azimabadi, Avnu'l-ma'bud, X111, 298.
- 7) See Abu Dawud, Adab 70
- 8) Muslim, Adab 19.
- 9) Davudoglu, Ahmed, Sahih-Muslim Terve Şer V1, 535.
- 10) Bukhari, Adab 108; Muslim, Adab 17
- 11) Surah Najm (53) 32.
- 12) Abu Dawud, Edeb 69.
- 13) Bukhari, Adab 114; Muslim, Adab 21; Ebu Dawud, Adab 70.
- 14) Muslim, Adab 21.