

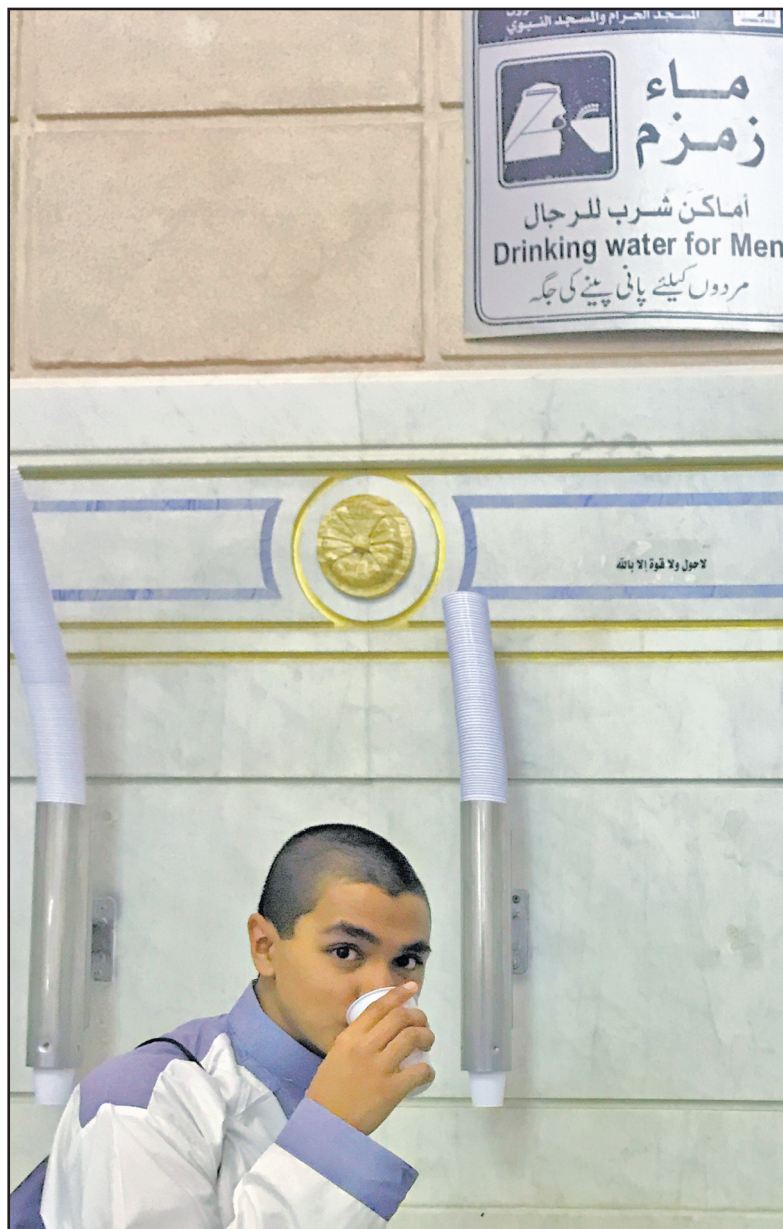


Stories from the Hijaz

THE MAKKAH CHRONICLES



The well that has been gushing for centuries



For a period of time, the Zam-zam well was buried and forgotten until the Prophet's (SAW) grandfather, Abu Muttalib (RA), dug it up after being told to do so in a dream. Today, all pilgrims to Makkah and Madinah are privileged to access the sacred water from containers or taps in and around the two Harams. The writer's son, Yaseen, who is currently on Umrah, is pictured quenching his thirst with some refreshing Zam-zam.

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SALIM PARKER

ZAM-ZAM never dries up, and its nourishing water's continuous flow seems to be more than enough even if millions of pilgrims are in Makkah and seek its miraculous sustenance on a daily basis during the peak Hajj season.

This is accepted by every Muslim. Yet, there was a time when the well was not visible and not in use at all. Allah decreed that for a time, despite the immense wealth and trade fame that Makkah was renowned for, it would be deprived of the blessings of Zam-zam.

The exact time that this occurred is not well established but what is known is that the grandfather of Nabi Muhammad (SAW) was instrumental in the rediscovery of the well, which is situated a mere twenty metres away from the Ka'bah.

After Allah blessed Hajar and Ismail (AS) with the gushing waters of Zam-zam in the barren desert that is now Makkah, a caravan that was passing by the valley noticed birds hovering around the water, which was never present

before, so they requested Hajar's permission to camp near the water. This marked the beginning of Makkah.

The tribe of Jurhum established themselves there and, after Nabi Ibrahim (AS) with the help of his son Nabi Ismail (AS) built the Ka'bah, became the custodians of it.

At a remote, undetermined time in the Jahiliyya, the period of ignorance, Jurhum began to violate the sanctity of Makkah.

They committed major sacrileges by worshipping idols and were finally driven out of Makkah. Some report that the Jurhum tribe members buried the Zam-zam well.

It is reported that they also buried pieces of armour and other objects there.

Other tribes occupied Makkah and used water from other wells. The city was along important trade routes and flourished during this time. Zam-zam was fondly remembered by believers but there are no reports of anyone actually trying to recover it, and it gradually faded from the memories of the idol worshippers.

Some time later, Shaybah, the son of Hashim, a prominent Quraishi businessman of Makkah, was born in Madinah. When Hashim was on his deathbed, he asked his brother Muttalib to fetch Shaybah and the latter became known as Abdul Muttalib.

He became a respected man in Makkah and was to become the grandfather of Muhammad (SAW).

The Quraish were involved in providing water and provisions for the pilgrims who came to Makkah and Abdul Muttalib (RA) was very involved in that respect.

It was his dream one night when he was sleeping in the vicinity of the Ka'bah that led to the re-discovery of the nourishing waters of Zam-zam.

As he was sleeping, he dreamt that someone walked towards him and while standing next to him quietly whispered: 'Dig for Zam-zam.' The dream seemed so real that Abdul Muttalib woke up and immediately started looking for the owner of the voice but he soon realised that he was all alone. It was completely silent all around him. He tossed and turned when he went back to sleep, trying to make sense of the words.

The next morning, Abdul Muttalib told his friends about his dream and to his surprise, they urged him to go back to sleep so that he could get more clarity from the strange voice.

They knew of the existence of the well of Zam-zam and anyone who rediscovered it would indeed become famous and be wealthy in every sense of the word.

That night he went to sleep, hoping to hear more.

Indeed, as soon as Abdul Muttalib fell asleep, the soft-spoken visitor returned. 'Dig for Zam-zam,' the voice said again.

This time, there was some more information given. 'If you dig it up, you will not regret it. It is your heritage from your forefather. It will never run low or dry up, and it will provide ample water for the pilgrims,' the voice added.

'Where is it?' Abdul Muttalib asked in his sleep.

'By the anthill, where the crow pecks the ground tomorrow,' the soft voice replied. The dream then faded away and Abdul Muttalib settled into a deeper sleep and only woke up at dawn.

The next morning, Abdul Muttalib considered his dream. He knew from the oral traditions of his ancestors that the well was close to the Ka'bah. He summoned his son, Al-Harith, to accompany him and together, each carrying a shovel, they decided to scout the area around the Ka'bah.

When they reached there, their attention was immediately drawn to an anthill. Then, seemingly having waited for their arrival, a gleaming crow fluttered down between two of the idols placed around the Ka'bah. It then started pecking at the ground.

Abdul Muttalib knew then that his dreams were due to divine inspiration and he started to dig. Some of their fellow citizens started objecting to the digging as it was a site where sacrifices were made to their idols but Abu Muttalib instructed Al-Harith to protect him while he dug. More people assembled around them.

After a while, Abdul Muttalib saw some old bricks that indicated the mouth of a well. Great excitement ensued and soon, nearly half of Makkah was around them.

Not long after that, Abdul Muttalib's dream came true and a vast crowd witnessed him rediscovering the well when the sweet waters of Zam-zam started flowing again.



'It is your heritage from your forefather. It will never run low or dry up, and it will provide ample water for the pilgrims,' were the words that urged Abdul Muttalib (RA) to search for the long buried Zam-zam well. Today, centuries later, this is the welcome sight for pilgrims in Madinah and Makkah – containers bearing refreshing Zam-zam.

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