The story of the death of Az-Zubayr ibn al-‘Awwām (may Allah be pleased with him) and paying off his debt

Abu Khubayb ‘Abdullāh ibn Az-Zubayr (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: When Az-Zubayr got up during the battle of Al-Jamal, he called me and I stood up beside him, and he said to me: "O my son, today one will be killed either as an oppressor or as an oppressed one. I see that I will be killed as an oppressed one. My biggest worry is my debts. Do you think that anything will be left of our property after the debts are settled?" Then he said: "O my son, sell our property and pay my debts." He then willed (bequeathed) one-third of his property and willed one-third of that portion to ‘Abdullāh's sons. He said: "One-third of the one third. If any property is left after the settlement of the debts, one-third (of the one-third of what is left) is to be given to your sons." (Hisham, a sub-narrator, said: "Some of the sons of ‘Abdullāh were equal in age to the sons of Az-Zubayr, like Khubayb and ‘Abbād. ‘Abdullāh had nine sons and nine daughters at that time.") ‘Abdullāh added: "He (Az-Zubayr) went on advising me regarding his debts, saying: 'If you should fail to settle part of the debts, appeal to my Master to help you.' By Allah! I could not understand what he meant till I asked, 'O father, who is your Master?' He replied: 'Allah (is my Master).' By Allah, whenever I had any difficulty regarding his debts, I would say: 'O Master of Az-Zubayr, settle his debts on his behalf,' and Allah would (help me to) settle it. Az-Zubayr was martyred leaving no dinar or dirham except for land and property, including a land which was (called) Al-Ghāba, and eleven houses in Madīnah, two in Basra, one in Kufa and one in Egypt. The source of the debt which he owed was, that if somebody brought some money to deposit with him, Az-Zubayr would say: 'No, (I won't keep it as a trust) but I take it as a debt, for I am afraid it might be lost.' Az-Zubayr was never appointed governor or collector of the tax of Kharaj or any other similar thing, but he collected his wealth (from the war booty he gained) during the holy battles he took part in, in the company of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) and Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, and ‘Uthmān (may Allah be pleased with them). When I counted his debt, it turned out to be two million and two hundred thousand." (The sub-narrator added:) Hakīm ibn Hizam met ‘Abdullāh ibn Az-Zubayr and asked him: "O my nephew, how much is the debt of my brother?" ‘Abdullāh did not reveal the exact amount and said: "One hundred thousand." Hakīm said: "By Allah! I don't think your property will cover it." Upon that, ‘Abdullāh said to him: "What if I told you that it is two million and two hundred thousand?" Hakīm said: "I don't think you can repay it; so if you are unable to repay all of it, I will help you." Az-Zubayr had bought Al-Ghāba for one hundred and seventy thousand. ‘Abdullāh sold it for one million and six hundred thousand. Then he called out to the people saying: "Any person who has any money claim on Az-Zubayr should come to us in Al-Ghāba." There came to him ‘Abdullāh ibn Ja‘far whom Az-Zubayr owed four hundred thousand. He said

to ‘Abdullāh, "If you wish I will forgo the debt." ‘Abdullāh said: 'No.' Then Ibn Ja‘far said: "If you wish you can defer repayment if you are going to defer the repayment of any debt." ‘Abdullāh said: 'No.' Ibn Ja‘far said: "Then give me a piece of the land." ‘Abdullāh said (to him): "Yours is the land extending from this place to this place." So, ‘Abdullāh sold most of the land and settled the debt perfectly, with four and a half shares remaining unsold from the land of Al-Ghāba. He then went to Mu‘āwiyah while ‘Amr ibn ‘Uthmān, Al-Mundhir ibn Az-Zubayr and Ibn Zam‘ah were sitting with him. Mu‘āwiyah asked: "At what price have you appraised Al-Ghāba?" He said: "One hundred thousand for each share." Mu‘āwiyah asked: "How many shares are left?" ‘Abdullāh replied: "Four and a half shares." Al-Mundhir ibn Az-Zubayr said: "I would like to buy one share for one hundred thousand." ‘Amr ibn ‘Uthmān said: "I would like to buy one share for one hundred thousand." Ibn Zam‘ah said: "I would like to buy one share for one hundred thousand." Mu‘āwiyah said: "How much is left now?" ‘Abdullāh replied: "One share and a half." Mu‘āwiyah said: "I would like to buy it for one hundred and fifty thousand." ‘Abdullāh ibn Ja‘far then sold his share to Mu‘āwiyah for six hundred thousand. When ‘Abdullāh ibn Az-Zubayr had paid all the debts, Az-Zubayr's other sons said to him, "Distribute our inheritance among us." He said: "No, by Allah, I will not distribute it among you till I announce in four successive Hajj seasons: 'Would those who have money claims on Az-Zubayr come so that we may repay them." So, he started to announce that in public in every Hajj season, and when four years had elapsed, he distributed the inheritance among the heirs. Az-Zubayr had four wives, and after the one-third of his property was excluded (according to the will), each of his wives received one million and two hundred thousand. So the total amount of his property was fifty million and two hundred thousand.

[Authentic hadith] [Narrated by Bukhari]

Az-Zubayr ibn al-‘Awwām (may Allah be pleased with him) said to his son ‘Abdullāh on the Day of Al-Jamal, the battle that took place over the issue of turning in the assassins of ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān: "I do not see myself except an oppressed martyr, and that which concerns me are my debts, so I want you to settle them on my behalf." His debts were so much that they consumed all of his wealth. Despite that, he made a (verbal) will giving his grandchildren (‘Abdullāh's children) a share of the estate, because he knew that they were not entitled to a share of his estate given that his son was still alive. So he allocated for them one third of the bequeatheable third, which is one ninth of the whole. The people used to come and keep their money with him as a trust and he would refuse to take it from them as a trust lest it would be lost, so, he would say: "This is not a trust. It is a loan and a debt on me." Az-Zubayr was an ascetic trustworthy man who never wished to assume a post of authority and never did. When he died, and his son ‘Abdullāh paid off his debts, there remained an excess. The heirs asked him to divide it among them, but he refused to give them their shares until four Hajj seasons had passed during which he would call out seeking those to whom his father was indebted. When it became apparent that all his father's debt was paid off, he gave the heirs their shares. He gave an eighth to his father's wives, which was their legal share from the estate. At the time of his death, Az-Zubayr had four wives.