

## 15. Unfulfilled Will of the Prophet

The Prophet did not leave a written will though the Holy Qur'an commands every Muslim to make a will:

***"It is prescribed when death approaches any of you if he leaves any valuables that he makes a bequest to parents and closest kins in the legitimate way. This is a duty of every righteous; If anyone changes the bequest after hearing it the guilt shall be on those who make the change. For God hears and knows (all things)." The Holy Qur'an Chapter 2 verses 180–181.***

Although the verse speaks of the imperativeness of willing without specifying a method the Prophet commanded the Muslims to make their wills in writing. Muslim in his Sahih recorded the following: "Abu Salim reported that the Messenger said: 'A person who has something which he may will has no right to stay three nights without his written will.'"

Abdullah Ibn 'Umar reported that the Prophet said: "A person that has something to will has no right to stay two nights without his written will." Muslim reported also that Abdullah Ibn 'Umar said: "Since I heard this from the Messenger of God. I never stayed one night without my written will."<sup>1</sup>

The Prophet had the right to delay his will for days months and years because he exceptionally was on an appointment with his Lord. It is highly probable that he was Heavenly informed that he would not die until the religion of Islam was completed. However during the tenth year after the Hijrah at the completion of his Valedictory Pilgrimage the following verse was revealed:

***"Today I have completed your religion for you and perfected my favor upon you and chosen Islam as a religion for you." The Holy Qur'an Chapter 5 verse 4.***

By this revelation the Prophet felt the nearness of his death and that it was about time to make his will.

Thus on his way back to Medina from his pilgrimage he stopped at Ghadir Khum to make an important declaration in which he said: "I am only a mortal human. The Messenger of my Lord is about to come to me and I shall respond (to His invitation by departing from this world)." Then he declared that 'Ali like the Prophet has more right to the believers than the believers have to themselves and that 'Ali is the

Guardian of every believer (See Chapter 14)

A Written Will Is Necessary In Important Matters Although a verbal will is valuable a written will is indispensable particularly in an important matter such as appointing a successor to lead a nation. A verbal statement can be forgotten increased decreased or inaccurately conveyed. But a written will sealed by the Prophet is difficult to change. The Prophet therefore was expected to make such a will but he did not.

It is said that he verbally told the Muslims to follow the Book of God and the precepts of His Prophet and this was a sufficient will. I disagree for the following reason:

A will by the Prophet is expected to give the Muslims some fresh instructions dealing with the future of the nation after his death. Adherence to the teaching of the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet is not of this kind because its imperativeness is self-evident to the Muslims and because obedience to God and His Messenger is repeatedly recorded in the Holy Qur'an:

***"O you who believe obey God and obey the Messenger..." The Holy Quran Chapter 4 verse 59.***

***"Take whatever the Messenger brought to you. And avoid whatever he prohibited for you..." The Holy Quran Chapter 59 verse 7.***

An unwritten statement by the Prophet cannot be as effective as a Divine word repeatedly recorded in the Book of God. Therefore such a statement dealing with such a self-evident subject cannot be the expected will of the Prophet.

The Prophet is expected more than anyone in the nation to comply with the command of God as stated in His Book and to do what he himself ordered his followers to do. If Ibn 'Umar or any other Muslim has to write a will because he has a little wealth to will and a small family to take care of the Prophet had the final Heavenly message to secure and a whole nation to protect and direct.

Expected Crises Required Written Will The faith of Islam was still a new plantation the roots of which were not yet deepened in the soil of the Arab Society and the dangers against the faith were numerous. We all know that a civil war took place after the death of the Prophet because of the apostasy of the majority of the inhabitants of Arabia.

The Prophet was fully aware of those dangers. Al-Hakim in his Sahih Al-Mustadrak reported that Abu Muwaihbih a companion of the Messenger said:

"The Messenger of God has told me: 'I have been ordered (by God) to pray for the people of Al-Baqee (a cemetery of Medina) for forgiveness.' 'Come with me.' I went with him. When he stood in the midst of the graves he said: 'Peace be upon you people of cemeteries. Congratulations to you for what you are in. You do not know what God has saved you from. The faith-testing trials are coming as pieces of a dark night one follows another...."[2](#)

Abu Bakr Left a Written Will We cannot conceive that the Prophet was less concerned with the future of the nation than his companion Abu Bakr who did not depart from this world before he appointed his successor ('Umar). He did that in spite of the fact that the nation by the time of his death had passed the crisis of the civil war and reached an internal peace. He did that because he knew that leaving the Muslims without appointing a leader would be a negligence of their interest and a peril to their future.

A Dialogue Between 'Umar and His Son It is worthy to note the wisdom of Abdullah Ibn 'Umar in his dialogue with his father as the latter was dying: Abdullah: "You should appoint a successor." 'Umar: "Whom should I appoint?" Abdullah: "You try your best. You are not their Lord."

Suppose you temporarily recall the caretaker of a land of yours. Would you not like him to have a successor during his absence until he goes back to the land?" 'Umar: "Yes."

Abdullah: "Suppose you recall the shepherd of your sheep. Would you not like him to have a successor until he goes back to the sheep?"<sup>3</sup>

Although 'Umar refused to appoint a successor he did the equivalent. He chose six companions of the Prophet. He gave them the right to choose a caliph from among themselves. He ordered them to follow their majority if there were a majority. He ordered them to follow the party of Abdul-Rahman Ibn Ouf when the six were equally divided.

Thus he did not leave the Muslim nation without a directive. He defined a method by which a caliph would be selected.

The Prophet Regularly Left Successors In His Absence And the most amazing thing in this matter is that the Prophet used to appoint a successor whenever he left Medina for a few days or weeks: When he left for Badr he appointed Abu Lubabah.

When he left for Doumat Al-Jendal he appointed Ibn Arfatah.

When he left for Banu Quraidhah he appointed Ibn Om Maktoom. He appointed him also when he left for Thee Qirad.

When he left for Banul-Mustalaq he appointed Abu Dharr.

When he left for Kheibar he appointed Numailah.

When he left for Omrat Al-Qadha he appointed Ibn Al-Adhbat.

When he left for Mecca he appointed Abu Raham.

When he left for Tabuk he appointed 'Ali.

When he left for the Valedictory Pilgrimage he appointed Abu Dujanah.<sup>4</sup>

Thus he constantly appointed successors whenever he planned to leave Medina. Yet when he left his nation forever he did not leave a document of succession!!!!.

## The Prophet Was Prevented From Writing A Will

The absence of a written will by the Prophet is astonishing indeed. There must have been an unusual cause that prevented the Prophet from writing a will! However when we review the records of the events of the final days of the Prophet we find that the Messenger wanted to write a will but he could not make it.

Al-Bukhari recorded in his Sahih that Ibn Abbas reported: "When the ailment of the Prophet became serious he said: 'Bring me a writing sheet I will write to you a directive after which you will not go astray.' 'Umar said: 'The Messenger is overwhelmed by his ailment (does not know what he is saying). We have the Book of God. It is sufficient to us."

They (those who were present) disputed with each other vehemently. He (the Messenger) said: 'Go away and no dispute should take place in my presence.' Ibn Abbas went out saying: 'The tragedy the whole tragedy is what barred the Messenger of God from writing his document.'<sup>5</sup>

Muslim in his Sahih recorded that Sa-eed Ibn Jubeir reported that Ibn Abbas said: "The day of Thursday and what a day of Thursday." Then he wept until he moistened the ground with his tears. I said: 'Ibn Abbas what is the day of Thursday?'

He said: "The Messenger became seriously ill and said: 'Bring me a writing sheet to write to you a directive so you will not go astray after me.' They disputed and disputes should not take place in the presence of the Prophet. And they said: "What happened to him? Did he hallucinate? Ask him." He said: 'Go away what I am in is better (than what you think of). I enjoin on you to do three things: Drive the pagans out of the Arabian Peninsula give the delegations (of various tribes who will visit Medina) as much as I used to give them.' Sa-eed said: "He (Ibn Abbas) kept silent on the third one or he said it and I forgot it."<sup>6</sup>

Obeidullah Ibn Abdullah Ibn Utabah said that Ibn Abbas reported: "When the Messenger of God was about to die 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattab was among the men were present at his bedside. The Messenger said: 'Bring me a writing sheet. I will write to you a directive after which you will not go astray.'

'Umar said: 'The Messenger of God was overwhelmed by ailment. You have the Holy Qur'an. The Book of God is sufficient for us.' Those who were present disagreed with each other and disputed.

Some of them said: 'Bring the Messenger what he needs. He will write to you a directive after which you will not go astray.' Some of them said what 'Umar said. When they shouted excessively and disputed in the presence of the Messenger he said: 'Go away.' Ibn Abbas used to say: 'The tragedy the whole tragedy was their argument and dispute which barred the Messenger of God from writing to them that

directive."<sup>7</sup>

Ibn Saad in his Al-Tabaqat recorded that Jabir Ibn Abdullah Al-Ansari reported: "When the Messenger was in his sickness by which he died he called for a sheet to write on it to his nation a directive (after which) they will not go astray nor will they be misled. There was at the house arguments and excessive talk. 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattab spoke and the Prophet refused it."<sup>8</sup>

It is also recorded in Al-Tabaqat that 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattab reported: "We were with the Prophet and there was a screen between us and the women. The Messenger of God said:

'Bring me seven skins filled with water (to pour them on his body in order to cool his fever) and bring me a sheet and an inkwell. I will Write to you a directive after which you will not go astray.' The women said: 'Bring the Messenger what he needs.'

'Umar said: "I said to them: Be silent. You are his female companions. If he becomes ill you squeeze your eyes; if he is cured you hug his neck.' The Messenger of God said: They are better than you."<sup>9</sup>

It is also recorded in Al-Tabaqat that Zeinab the wife of the Messenger said to them: "Do you not hear the Prophet trying to write a directive for you?" They argued and the Prophet said: "Go away."<sup>10</sup>

## **This Unusual Event Raises Many Questions**

1. Why did 'Umar oppose the Messenger and lead the opposition against writing his will?
2. What was the Prophet trying to write in his will?
3. Why did the Prophet not write his will in spite of 'Umar's opposition?
4. How can his directive become a security to the nation against straying? Some scholars say that 'Umar opposed the Prophet's will out of compassion. The Prophet was dying and he was extremely tired. Writing a directive at such a time increases his tiredness. 'Umar did not want the Prophet to over-burden himself at such a time.

It is evident that this explanation is erroneous. When was it permissible for a Muslim to prevent another Muslim commoner or great from writing his will while he is about to die? Writing a will is one of the religious duties which every Muslim is supposed to fulfill before he (she) dies.

You have already read that Abdullah Ibn 'Umar reported that the Messenger said: "A person that has something to will has no right to stay two nights unless his will is written."

The duty of every Muslim especially a prominent one such as 'Umar is to assist his Muslim brother in fulfilling his religious duty rather than to prevent him from achieving it. 'Umar and all those who were present at that hour had a manifold duty towards the attempted will of the Messenger.

The Messenger was not only a Muslim he is the Prophet of the Muslims and the founder of the faith. It was the duty of 'Umar to offer him all assistance to fulfill his duty.

It was also the duty of 'Umar to assist the Prophet in writing his will because the Messenger stated that his will represents a security to the nation against straying. The Messenger was always truthful.

When his will represented such a security it would be the most imperative duty of 'Umar as an outstanding Muslim and sincere towards the nation to welcome what the Messenger wanted. With his great position in Islam 'Umar is expected to be the happiest one to obtain such a securing directive which was necessary for the future of the Muslims.

What could be more important to the nation while the Messenger was about to leave it and the revelation of God was about to cease than to obtain a directive which would illuminate the road of the nation and secure its long future?

Furthermore the duty of all companions who were present on that occasion was to obey the command of the Messenger. He ordered them to bring him a sheet to write his will. The order of the Messenger must be and should have been obeyed.

It is erroneous to say that 'Umar opposed his Prophet out of compassion and that he did not want him to increase his tiredness by dictating a directive. Indeed his opposition caused the Prophet a much bigger pain.

The Messenger was in his last days on this earth. When the Messenger was in the days of his strength and activity he used to command the Muslims and they used to rush to fulfill his desire even at the expense of their wealth and blood. Now in his final days in this world he asked them the cheapest thing (just a writing sheet and an inkwell) and his order was not obeyed.

The Prophet no doubt was greatly disturbed and deeply saddened by their attitude. Nothing would indicate his displeasure than his saying to them: "Go away" and his answer to 'Umar: "They (the women) are better than you." Had they brought the Messenger what he wanted they would have lightened his pain. Nothing at that time could be more pleasing to the Prophet than the fulfillment of his religious duty by securing his nation against straying.

Abu Bakr wrote his will in which he appointed 'Umar his successor. He did that while in his death agony fainting while dictating to Uthman the contents of the will. 'Umar did not blame Uthman for assisting the Caliph in his will.

And how cruel would it have been to prevent Abu Bakr at such a time from writing his will.... 'Umar himself was stabbed and fatally wounded. He did not prevent himself from willing to the Muslims what he wanted in spite of his severe pains loss of blood and fainting time after time.

While in that saddening condition he ordered six companions of the Prophet to select from among

themselves a caliph to follow the majority if there were a majority and to side with Abdul-Rahman Ibn Ouf when the six are equally divided.

The Muslims obeyed his order and fulfilled his will in details though his will did not represent a security for the nation against straying. It rather led them to choose a good-hearted and weak-willed Caliph whose weakness led to his murder and his murder brought to Muslims incalculable tragedies. It is very hard indeed to believe that 'Umar opposed the Prophet's proposed will out of concern for his health.

There is another possible explanation: It could be that 'Umar knew what would be the content of the proposed will as he admitted later on and thought that it would not be in the best interest of the nation. Thus we may find the answer when we attempt to answer the second question.

## **What did the Prophet Want to Write?**

It is not logical to think that the Messenger was trying at that difficult hour to write a book containing his teachings and the details of the Islamic laws. Nor was he trying to write to the Muslims the outlines of the Islamic teaching.

For the Messenger was well aware of his extremely short time on this earth.

Furthermore should the Messenger have written the outlines of the Islamic teachings at that moment he would not have secured the Muslims against straying. The outlines of the Islamic teachings are contained in the Book of God and in spite of this the Muslims are still in disagreement arguing about the details of those general outlines. And because of this many of them went astray.

The Messenger of God lived 23 years after the commencement of his Prophethood. He never wrote his teachings nor the outlines of the Islamic teachings nor did he order any Muslim to do that. Yet he was at the peak of his health and activity and the years were the years of teaching and delivery of revelation. For some wisdom he chose not to do that. It is inconceivable that he was attempting at that difficult and short time to do what he did not do during 23 years of his Prophethood.

Nor was the Prophet trying to command the Muslims to follow the Book of God and his own instructions. The Holy Qur'an as I have advanced does command the Muslims to obey God and His Messenger. Yet that does not secure the nation against straying. People are still in disagreement on the interpretation of the Holy Qur'an and the authenticity of hundreds of hadiths.

Again how could the teachings of the Prophet secure the nation against that when they are not recorded by him and according to the opinion of great many Muslims he did not appoint any authority to inform the Muslims of the details of his teachings.

The purpose of the Prophet's attempted directive could not be the two items which Sa-eed Ibn Jubier remembered from Ibn Abbas' words namely: Driving the pagans out of the Arabian Peninsula and giving

the delegations amounts similar to what he used to give.

Both items do not secure the nation against straying. The purpose of the attempted directive could be the item about which Ibn Abbas kept silent or was forgotten by Sa-eed.

## The Prophet Wanted to Name a Successor

It is logical to think that the Messenger wanted to appoint a leader whom he considered most knowledgeable in the Islamic teaching the sincerest to God and His religion and who would be an extension of the Prophet's personality.

That leader would be the highest authority for the nation and through his leadership the nation would walk on the clear road.

Evidently the intended leader was not 'Umar or Abu Bakr. Had he been one of them 'Umar would have been the happiest to see the Prophet's directive written. For we find 'Umar after the death of the Prophet trying to justify the leadership of Abu Bakr by his being the companion of the Prophet at the Cave during the Hijrah or by his leading the congregational prayer at the time of the ailment of the Prophet.

Had the Prophet appointed Abu Bakr through his proposed directive 'Umar would not have needed such a justification. Nor would he have needed to argue with the natives of Medina for the merit of Abu Bakr.

The words of the Messenger on the day of Ghadir Khum when he declared 'Ali to be the Mawla (Guardian) of the Muslims were still fresh in 'Umar's memory. When the Messenger spoke while on his deathbed of a written directive after which the Muslims will not go astray 'Umar immediately remembered the Declaration of Ghadir Khum and many other statements.

The words are almost the same words contained in his statements about his "Itrah" (members of his House) in general and 'Ali in particular. The Messenger of God said and Zayd Ibn Arqam reported:

"I have left for you that which if you hold fast you shall never go astray after me. The Book of God a rope extended between Heaven and earth and my "Itrah." Both the Book and the Itrah will not part with each other until they join me on the Day of Judgement Beware how you treat them after me."[11](#)

The Imam 'Ali reported that the Prophet declared on the day of Ghadir Khum: "Whoever God and His Messenger are his "Mawla " This ('Ali) is his Mawla. I have left for you what if you hold fast you will never go astray. The Book of God is His rope being held by His hand and your hands and the members of my House."[12](#)

Zayd Ibn Thabit reported that the Messenger of God said: "I am leaving in you two caliphs. The Book of God and my Itrah. Beware how you treat them after me. They will not part with each other until they join me on the Day of Judgement."[13](#)

Al-Tirmidhi in his Sahih reported through his channel to Jabir Ibn Abdullah Al-Ansari that he said: "I have seen the Messenger of God in his pilgrimage on the day of Arafat while he was riding his female camel (Al-Qusswa) delivering a sermon and I heard him saying: 'O people I have left among you that which if you uphold you will never go astray: The Book of God and the members of my house.'" [14](#)

These statements and many other similar statements were still ringing in 'Umar's ears. When the Prophet spoke of a directive after which they will not go astray 'Umar by his intelligence immediately understood his intention: The Prophet is trying to record 'Ali's name in his directive. He immediately started his opposition.

Why Was 'Umar Opposed to the Will 'Umar during the days of his reign gave the answer in a reported dialogue between him and Ibn Abbas:

'Umar: "How did you leave your cousin behind you?"

Ibn Abbas: "I left him playing with youths of his age (thinking that 'Umar meant Abdullah Ibn Jaafar)."

'Umar: "I did not mean that. I meant your great man ('Ali) member of the House of the Prophet." Ibn

Abbas: "I left him drawing water from a well through a bucket for palm trees... while reciting the Holy Qur'an."

'Umar: "The sacrifice of camels shall be your atonement if you conceal it from me. Is he still holding in his heart something concerning the caliphate?" Ibn Abbas: "Yes."

'Umar: "Does he allege that the Messenger of God appointed him?"

Ibn Abbas: "Yes and I add to this that I asked my father about his ('Ali's) claim (of his appointment by the Messenger as his successor) and my father said 'Ali told the truth."

'Umar: "There were high words from the Messenger (about 'Ali) which do not constitute a clear evidence nor remove an excuse. For some time he was testing his strength to see if he would be able to appoint him.

He wanted during his ailment to name him and I prevented him from it out of concern with (the future of) Islam. By the Lord of the Kaaba Quraish will not unite behind him and had he become a caliph the Arabs throughout the country would have revolted against him." [15](#)

'Umar was concerned with the future of Islam. His sincerity is not questioned but why would 'Ali's leadership be disadvantageous to Islam if the Arabs revolted against him? The Arabs revolted against Abu Bakr. Thousands and thousands deserted the faith during his reign. Yet 'Umar did not think that he was wrong in supporting the leadership of Abu Bakr.

Again how did he know that the Arabs would revolt against 'Ali? Was it not probable that 'Ali would be

the most acceptable to them because of his close relationship to the Prophet and his unequalled fame as a hero his righteousness and his knowledge in Islam? Then how did he expect all the Arabs to revolt against 'Ali?

The Medinites were from the Arabs and they were the main portion of the Islamic force in that period and they were totally sympathetic with 'Ali. As a matter of fact they were about to shift to him even after the election of Abu Bakr.

Even when 'Ali belatedly came to power the Medinites were solidly behind him. The rest of the Arabs in all the Islamic provinces with the exception of Syria willingly gave him the pledge of fealty. It is true that a portion of the people of Basrah Iraq revolted against him and that the Syrians refused to pledge their fealty to him. But this happened only through incitements by leaders from Quraish.

The millions throughout the Muslim state accepted his leadership at a time when most of the Muslims had already forgotten his high distinctions. Had he been given the leadership at the time of the death of the Prophet and upon a written will by the Prophet the Arabs no doubt would have been more responsive to his leadership. 'Umar said that Quraish will never unite behind 'Ali.

This might be true. However we should not forget that Quraish united against the Prophet and fought him for twenty-one years. Should the Prophethood of Muhammad have been cancelled because of Quraish's opposition? Knowing Quraish's dark past 'Umar should not have taken its opposition to a direction as a mark of unsoundness. He should have rather viewed it as evidence of the soundness of that direction.

Again who were the powerful leaders of Quraish at the time of the death of the Prophet? Abu Sufyan and the rest of the Pre-Islamic leaders were already conquered and lost their influence. The influential leaders at that time were

'Ali Al-Abbas Abu Bakr 'Umar Abu Obeidah Uthman Abdul-Rahman Ibn Ouf Talhah Al-Zubayr and the rest of righteous companions from Mecca. These leaders were expected to obey the Prophet's direction and to sway the rest of the Meccans to do so.

Furthermore history testifies that Abu Sufyan with all his grudges against 'Ali (who killed his two sons Hanthalah Al-Walid and three of his close relatives in the Islamic defense) was willing to support 'Ali rather than Abu Bakr.

Whether Quraish was willing or unwilling to support 'Ali 'Umar should have remembered that the Prophet had much more knowledge about the Meccans and the rest of the Arabs than he had. The Prophet and not 'Umar was fought by them and he knew about them and all companions more than they knew about themselves. 'Umar should have also remembered that the Prophet was concerned with the future of Islam much more than he was.

With all his concern with the future of Islam and his awareness of the Arab psychology the Prophet wanted to record 'Ali's name in his will. The leadership of 'Ali must have been the answer to the Muslims' problems.

## How could he defy the Prophet?

Of course we are confronted with the big question: suppose that 'Umar was certain of the soundness of his opinion. How did he allow himself to oppose the Prophet in spite of what is known about him of being righteous and obedient to God and His Messenger?

To answer this question we ought to know that the companions used to disagree with the Prophet occasionally in matters that belonged to worldly affairs. They used to allow themselves to do so because they believed that Islam granted them the right to disagree with him in such matters.

They wrongly believed also that the leadership of the Muslims was one of their worldly affairs. 'Umar himself disagreed with the Prophet more than once.

The Disagreement with the Prophet at Al-Hudeibayah It is a well-known fact in history that 'Umar disagreed with the Prophet about the terms on which the Prophet agreed concerning the truce between the Muslims and the pagans of Mecca on the day of Al-Hudeibayah.

It was one of the terms that any Muslim from Mecca who came to the Prophet without the permission of the Meccans had to be returned to the Meccans. But if a Muslim chose to leave the Muslims and rejoin the Meccan camp the Meccans do not have to return him to the Muslims. This appeared to 'Umar and many other companions to be unfair to the Muslims.

The Messenger however knew better. A person that leaves Islam to a pagan camp will not benefit the Muslims if he is returned to them by force and Islam does not need such a person.

Ibn Hisham reported in his Biography of the Prophet the following: "When agreement was reached and nothing was left except writing the pact 'Umar jumped... then he came to the Prophet and said: 'Messenger of God are you not the Messenger of God?' The Prophet: "Yes I am."

'Umar: "Are we not the Muslims?"

The Prophet: "Yes you are."

'Umar: "Are they (the Meccans) not the pagans?"

The Prophet: "Yes they are."

'Umar: "Why should we accept this humiliation to our religion?"

The Prophet: "I am a servant of God and His Messenger. I shall not disobey Him and He will not forsake me."[16](#)

‘Umar used to say after that: "I am still paying charity fasting praying and freeing slaves as an atonement for what I did."

## Disagreed With the Prophet On Osamah

There was another occasion in which prominent companions disagreed with the Prophet.

Shortly before his death the Prophet appointed Osamah Ibn Zayd Ibn Harithah commander of the Muslim army which he ordered to leave for Jordan and Palestine. Abu Bakr ‘Umar Abu Obeidah and the rest of the Prominent companions except ‘Ali were in that army.

Many of the companions criticized his appointment thinking that he was too young to lead them. When this was brought to the Prophet's attention he came to the Mosque while he was sick.

He went to the pulpit and said in his address: "O people execute the expedition of Osamah. If you are criticizing his appointment you have criticized the appointment of his father before him. He is qualified for leadership and his father was qualified."[17](#)

They dragged their feet until the Messenger of God came out again while he was seriously sick and holding his head. He said: "O people execute the mission of Osamah.

Execute the mission of Osamah." But the companions did not move. Osamah and the rest of the people stayed near Medina waiting for what God would do to His Messenger.[18](#)

After the death of the Prophet many of his companions attempted to dismiss Osamah though the Messenger appointed him and by his own blessed hand he delivered the banner to him. ‘Umar came speaking for the companions from Medina requesting Abu Bakr to dismiss Osamah and replace him. Abu Bakr jumped and pulled ‘Umar's beard saying:

"May your mother be bereaved by your death and may I lose you son of Al-Khattab. The Messenger of God appointed him and you ask me to dismiss him!"[19](#)

The companions from Quraish thought that if the Prophet names ‘Ali in his will the leadership would stay in his House and would not be accessible to others from the rest of Quraish. Should ‘Ali be the successor Al-Hassan and Al-Hussein sons of ‘Ali and the leaders of the youth of Paradise by the testimony of the Prophet would be his successors. There would be no chance for Meccan or non-Meccan companions regardless of their high positions to reach the leadership of the Muslims.

The companions were human beings like the rest of the people. They had their ambitions and love of fame and they did not want to see the door of leadership slammed entirely in their faces. They wanted

that door to stay open.

So it would be easy for them to reach the leadership. The rest of the clans of Mecca will support them rather than 'Ali.

Those clans of Mecca were ready to accept any non-Hashimite companion rather than 'Ali. They had the unholy grudge against him and they used to envy him for his brilliant record of endeavor for Islam his knowledge in religion his relationship to the Prophet and his heroism.

Should the first successor of the Prophet be a companion other than a "Hashimite" (member of the clan of the Prophet) the rest of the Meccan clans could attain the leadership because the non-Hashimite clans are equal. None of them is inferior or superior to others. Tyme (the clan of Abu Bakr) is not better than Uday (the clan of 'Umar) and Uday is not better than Umayyad or Zuhrah or any other Meccan clan.

Ibn Al-Athir recorded a dialogue between 'Umar and Ibn Abbas which indicates that 'Umar and the rest of the Qureshites were of this idea:

'Umar: "Ibn Abbas do you know what prevented your people (Quraish) from giving you (the Hashimites) the leadership after Muhammad?"

Ibn Abbas: "If I do not know the Commander of the Believers ('Umar) can inform me."

'Umar: "They disliked letting you have both the Prophethood and the caliphate lest you dominate your people. Quraish (the Meccan community) had chosen for itself. It did the right thing and succeeded."

Ibn Abbas: "If the Commander of the Believers permits me to speak and holds away his anger I will speak."

'Umar: "Speak."

Ibn Abbas: "You said that Quraish has chosen for itself and did the right thing and succeeded. Should Quraish have chosen for itself what God had chosen for it the right would have been on its side without being refused or envied."

As to the statement that they disliked to let us have the Prophethood and the caliphate certainly God has described some people with such an attitude and said: 'That is because they disliked what God has revealed so he nullified their deeds.'"

'Umar: "Ibn Abbas by God I heard things about you which I did not like to believe lest I lose your respect." Ibn Abbas: "Commander of the Believers what are the things you heard about me? if they are true they should not make you lose my respect; if they are false a person like me should be able to clear himself of falsehood."

'Umar: "I heard that you say: 'They (the community of Mecca) diverted it (the caliphate) from us out of

jealousy aggression and injustice."

Ibn Abbas: "Commander of the Believers as to the injustice it has become obvious to the ignorant and the wise; as to the jealousy Adam was envied and we are his envied children."

‘Umar: "It is too far. Children of Hashim by God your hearts refuse to harbor but a permanent jealousy."

Ibn Abbas: "Commander of the Believers be not hasty. Do not describe this way the hearts of people whom God made spotless and purified them of jealousy and bad faith. The heart of the Messenger of God is from the hearts of the children of Hashim."

‘Umar: "Ibn Abbas be away from me." Ibn Abbas: "I will." (Ibn Abbas said): "When I was attempting to stand up he (‘Umar) felt embarrassed and said: 'Ibn Abbas stay where you are. By God I am observing your right and loving what pleases you.'"

Ibn Abbas: "Commander of the Believers I am entitled to a right which is due from you and from every Muslim.

Whoever observes it avails himself and whoever does not is the loser."[20](#)

‘Umar and other companions thought that since the Meccan clans do not support ‘Ali out of jealousy and grudge it would be more advisable to have a leader other than him though the Messenger chose ‘Ali.

Quraish is the community which fought Islam and the Prophethood for twenty-one years then embraced Islam reluctantly after a crushing defeat. The same community had become the decider of the future of the Muslim nation.

The Meccan community's support became a decisive factor that tipped the scale in favor of any contender for the Islamic leadership. This is astonishing. But this was the logic of the events.

## **Why did the Prophet not insist on Writing his Directive?**

This brings us to the third question: Why did the Messenger not write his directive in spite of ‘Umar's opposition?

The answer is obvious: The purpose of the intended directive is to secure the nation against straying. This can be realized only if the writer of the directive were conscious alert knowing what he said and meaning what he said.

But the method of the opposition was clearly casting the doubt on the consciousness of the Messenger and the soundness of his mind at that hour. They said: "The Messenger is being overwhelmed by his ailment" or "What happened to him?" or "Did he hallucinate? Ask him."

All these words portrayed the Messenger as unconscious of what he was saying or at least seeding the doubt in the minds of others about the consciousness of the Prophet and the soundness of his thinking. Other companions at that meeting shared 'Umar's opposition.

When soundness of the words of the Prophet are doubted the directive is rendered ineffective. If such a doubt could be expressed while he was alive it would be much easier to express after his death. By this the intended directive had lost its significance and would not serve its purpose.

Sa-eed Ibn Jubier said that Ibn Abbas reported: "When the ailment of the Prophet grew he said: 'Bring me an ink-well and a sheet. I will write to you a directive after which you will never go astray.' Some of those who were present with him said 'The Prophet is hallucinating.' Then the Prophet was asked if he still wants to write a directive. He said: 'After what?' (What is its benefit after what has been said?)<sup>21</sup>

And finally we come to the fourth and final question of the subject:

## **How could the directive of the messenger be a security to the nation against straying?**

No one has the right to claim that he knows what the Prophet knew about the method by which he can secure his nation against straying. However what appears clearly is the following:

### **Security Against Sectarianism**

1. Had the Messenger named a person specifically in a written document while his consciousness and soundness of thinking were not doubted he would have avoided the nation a serious division. Had he named 'Ali or Abu Bakr or any other one in such a directive the Muslims would have surrendered to his leadership and the division of the Muslims into Sunni and Shi'a would not have taken place.

This division was born out of the dispute about who was the legitimate successor of the Prophet: Is he Abu Bakr or 'Ali? Should the Messenger have named either of the two men or another one such a division could not have arisen.

The Prophet made many verbal statements about 'Ali but a written statement is much more effective. A verbal statement as we advanced can be denied added to curtailed or forgotten. A recorded statement is much more difficult to be tampered with.

Abu Bakr named 'Umar in writing. And all the followers of Abu Bakr followed his directive. A directive by the Prophet could have been much more effective and more adhered to by the Muslims than that of Abu Bakr.

Naming a successor by such a directive could have prevented the birth of "Kharijis" (seceders) doctrine

which repudiates 'Ali and Uthman and calls for a Muslim state without a government. The war of Siffin which produced this doctrine could not have happened.

The civil war of Siffin between the Imam 'Ali and Muawiya and prior to that the war of Basrah Iraq between the Imam on one side and Ayeshah Talhah and Al-Zubayr on the other side were the result of the murder of Uthman the Third Caliph.

Should 'Ali have been named a caliph in a written directive Uthman would have died before coming to power because 'Ali outlived him. Had 'Ali become the caliph upon a written directive from the Prophet Muawiya could not have come to power nor could his transgressor son Yazeed have been able to massacre the children of the Messenger at Karbala. Nor could the war between the son of Al-Zubayr and the Umayyads and many other tragedies and wars have happened.

All these events were the result of the absence of a Prophet's written directive. Had such a directive been in existence the history of Islam would have changed and we would be reading an Islamic history dissimilar to what we read today.

I would like to rush to say that I do not consider the Second Caliph ('Umar) by his opposition to the proposed directive responsible for the division between the Muslims and all what followed. 'Umar was a human being unable to foresee the future of the Muslim nation.

All what 'Umar was thinking of is that the leadership of the Muslims after the death of the Messenger is one of the worldly affairs which the Meccan companions have the right to decide in it according to what their interest dictated to them.

He did not want the Prophet to write a final word in this matter in order to keep the door open for the companions. Should the Messenger have written his directive his word becomes final. The Holy Qur'an declares:

***"And it is not permissible to a believing man or a believing woman when God and His Messenger have decided an affair (for them) that they should (after that) claim any say in their affairs: And whoever is rebellious to God and His Messenger he verily goes astray in error manifest." The Holy Quran Chapter 33 Verse 36.***

(It is worthy to note that when a Divine decision is stated verbally it would be as final as a written one. Otherwise all the Prophet's decisions and statements would not be binding because they were not written during his time.)

The only one who was able to foresee the future and not through his own power but through the revelation was the Prophet himself. He had seen by the light of God the future of his nation and that if it would remain without a written directive the faith-testing trials will close on it as pieces of a dark night (and this is what his companion Abu Muwaihbih reported). Thus he wanted to spare the nation those

foreseen trials which would destroy its unity.

And for this he said: "Bring me an inkwell and a sheet to write to you a directive after which you will not go astray."

## Security Against School Division

A written directive by the Prophet in which he names his successor would not only be a security to the nation against sectarian divisions but also against the multiplicity of the Islamic School of Law.

The Prophet declared that the Qur'an and his "Itrah" (members of his House) are the security against straying and that the Holy Qur'an and the "Itrah" will not part with each other until the Day of Judgement.

Were 'Ali (the head of the members of the House of the Prophet) the highest Muslim authority after the Prophet he would have been that security. He was undisputedly the most knowledgeable in the Holy Qur'an and the teaching of the Prophet. The first two Caliphs (Abu Bakr and 'Umar) with all their profound knowledge in Islam used to resort to him in what they did not know.

'Umar repeatedly said: "Had not the counsel of 'Ali been available 'Umar would have perished (religiously)." And he said: "May God not keep me to a problem for which Abu Hassan ('Ali) is not available." Ibn Saad reported that 'Ali said: "By God there isn't a revealed verse which I do not know about what and where and about whom it was revealed. My Lord has granted me a comprehending mind and a fluent and inquiring tongue."[22](#)

'Ali was asked why was he among the companions of the Prophet the biggest reporter of his statements? He replied: "He used to inform me when I asked him and to initiate (his teaching) when I was silent."[23](#)

Sa-eed Ibn Al-Musavab said: "No one other than 'Ali ever said: 'Ask me before you miss me.'"[24](#) 'Ali is the one about whom the Messenger of God said: "I am the city of knowledge and 'Ali is its gate. Whoever wants to enter the city should come through the gate."[25](#)

Omm Salemah (wife of the Prophet) reported that she heard the Prophet saying: "'Ali is with the Qur'an and the Qur'an is with 'Ali.

They will not part with each other until the Day of Judgement."[26](#)

Had 'Ali been the immediate successor of the Prophet through his written directive the instructions of the Prophet would have been known and the Muslims would have agreed upon them in the various branches of the Islamic laws.

Thus the Prophet wanted to use 'Ali as the uniting force for all Muslims in all generations and this could have prevented them from going astray.

- [1.](#) These three hadiths are recorded by Muslim in his Sahih Part 11 (The Book of Will) pp. 74–75. The second of them is also recorded by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih Part 4 p. 3.
- [2.](#) Al-Hakim in his Al-Mustadrak Part 3 pp. 5–6. Ibn Hisham also reported this hadith in his Biography of the Prophet Part 2 p. 642. Ibn Sa'd also reported in his Al-Tabaqat Part 2 p. 204.
- [3.](#) Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqat Part 3 p. 343. Muslim in his Sahih also reported what is similar to this Part 12 p. 206.
- [4.](#) Ibn Hisham Biography of the Prophet.
- [5.](#) Al-Bukhari Sahih Al-Bukhari Part 1 p. 39.
- [6.](#) Muslim in his Sahih Part 11 (at the end of the Book of Will) p. 89. Ibn Sa'd also recorded it in his Al-Tabaqat Part 2 p. 242 And so did Imam Ahmad in his Musnad Part 1 p. 222.
- [7.](#) Muslim in his Sahih Part 11 p. 95. Similar to this is recorded by Ibn Sa'd in his Al-Tabaqat Part 2 p. 244. Imam Ohmad also rcoreded it in his Musnad Part 1 p. 336.
- [8.](#) Ibn Sa'd recorded it in his Al-Tabaqat Part 2 p. 242. Similar report by Jabir is recorded in the same Part 2 p. 244. In this report Jabir said: "They excessively talked at the presence of the Prophet until he refused it."
- [9.](#) Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqat Part 2 pp. 243–244.
- [10.](#) Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqat Part 2 p.244.
- [11.](#) Al-Tirmidhi Part 5 p.328.
- [12.](#) Recorded by Ibn Rahawaih Ibn Jareer Ibn Abu Assim and Al- Mahamili in his Amali (Kansul-Ummal Part 15 hadith 356)
- [13.](#) Imam Ahmad in his Musnad Part 5 p. 181.
- [14.](#) Al-Tirmidhi in his Sunan Part 5 p.328. Al-Tirmidhi said also that Abu Dharr Abu Sa-eed (Al-Khidri) Zeid Ibn Arqam and Hutheifa Ibn Oseid reported what agrees with this.
- [15.](#) Ibn Abu Al-Hadid in his Commentaries on Nahjul-Balaghah Vol.3 p.278. And Ahmad Ibn Tahir in his History of Baghdad (Sharaful-Ddeen Al-Murajaat)
- [16.](#) Ibn Hisham Biography of the Prophet Part 2 pp. 216–217 Similar to this is recorded by Muslim in Sahih Muslim.
- [17.](#) Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqat Part 2 p. 249.
- [18.](#) Ibid p. 249.
- [19.](#) Al-Halabi in his Biography of the Prophet Part 3 p. 336 and Addahlani in his Biography of the Prophet and Ibn Jareer in his history book where he recorded the event of the year 12 after the Hijrah (Al-Murajaat by Sayed Sharaful-deen p. 225)
- [20.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil Part 3 p. 31.
- [21.](#) Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqat Part 2 p. 242.
- [22.](#) Muttaqi Hindi in his Kanzul-Ummal Part 15 p. 113.
- [23.](#) Ibid p. 113.
- [24.](#) Ibid p. 113.
- [25.](#) Al-Hakim Al-Mustadrak Part 3 p. 124.
- [26.](#) Al-Hakim Al-Mustadrak Part 3 p. 127.

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