

16. Abu Bakr Succeeds

Finally the inevitable came to pass. The Prophet Muhammad died and his death was the greatest loss mankind ever suffered. The Heavenly revelation to the people of the earth came to an end. He was the Final of the Prophets and no prophet will come after him.

The Muslims were so overwhelmed by the death of the Prophet that it was difficult for an outstanding companion to conceive it.

‘Umar Denied the Prophet's Death

‘Umar stood at the Mosque saying: "Some hypocrites allege that the Messenger of God died. The Messenger did not die. He only went to his Lord as Moses son of Imran went to his Lord. He left his people for forty nights then he returned to them after it was said that he died. By God the Messenger of God will return as Moses returned. He will sever the hands and legs of men alleging that he died."¹

Abu Bakr's Speech

Abu Bakr was more realistic and present-minded than ‘Umar. He stood up and said:

"O people whoever was worshipping Muhammad should know that Muhammad has died. Whoever was worshipping God should know that God is living and never dies." Then he recited the following verses:

"And Muhammad is but a Messenger. The Messengers before him passed away. Should you turn on your heels if he will die or be killed? And whoever turns on his heels will not harm God in the least. And God will reward the thankful."²

Hearing these words ‘Umar realized that the Prophet was dead and fell to the ground.

Preoccupied With Holy Funeral

The crushing weight of the tragedy was felt by no one as it was felt by ‘Ali and the rest of the members of the House of the Prophet. The death of the Prophet made them unconscious of other things in the world. The sadness of this bereaved family was indescribable. They wished to depart from this world when he departed.

The Prophet confided in his daughter Fatima Al-Zahra twice during his ailment. He once informed her of his death and she cried. Then he informed her that she will be the first member of his family to follow him and she laughed.

She was joyful to know that she would not be separated from him for long.

Her husband ‘Ali spent twenty-three years with the Prophet offering his life for the protection of the Prophet against danger. Suddenly he beheld that that precious life had ended while he was unable to redeem it. The death of the Prophet was more painful to ‘Ali than if he himself had met his own death.

Political Conference

The tragedy however did not prevent the rest of the companions Meccans and Medinites from political thinking and doing while the Prophet was not yet buried.

As previously mentioned the Messenger attempted but could not write a will in which he was expected to name a successor. He tried to name a man whose leadership represented a security to the nation against straying. A group of companions led by ‘Umar objected to recording such a document and the method of their objection rendered the Prophet's proposed document useless.

The Declaration of Ghadir Khum and the rest of the statements of the Prophet on various occasions concerning ‘Ali were ignored. The best that can be said about the attitude of the companions towards these statements is that they did not see in them compelling evidence for ‘Ali's appointment. The Meccans and the Medinites started and ended their competition for leadership before the Prophet was buried.

‘Umar Spoke of the Conference

‘Umar during the last year of his reign spoke of what took place after the death of the Prophet. He informed his audience that when the Prophet died the Medinites led by Saad Ibn Abadah separated themselves from the Meccans and their prominent men conferred at Saqifat Banu-Saidah trying to select a caliph from among themselves. ‘Ali Ibn Abu Talib Al-Zubayr Ibn Al-Awam and others with them shied away and the Meccans went with Abu Bakr.

Abu Bakr ‘Umar and Abu Obediah Ibn Al-Jarrah went to the conference of the Medinites to thwart their attempt.

Abu Bakr said to the Medinites that the Arabs would not accept a leader from other than the clans of Quraish (people of Mecca) who were the most prominent among the Arabs and from the most honorable city. It is reported that Abu Bakr told them that the Holy Prophet one time declared that the Imams are from Quraish.³

"I am satisfied he told them with the leadership of any of these two men ('Umar and Abu Obediah). Give your allegiance to whomever you choose of the two." Some of the Medinites suggested having a leader from them and another from the Meccans. The argument was heated and 'Umar said to Abu Bakr: "Extend your hand." Abu Bakr did and 'Umar shook his hand and pledged to him his allegiance. The attending Meccans followed him and the conferring Medinites with the exception of Saad Ibn Abadah and his strong supporters accorded.

On the following day people gathered at the Mosque.

'Umar stood up and told the audience: "God has enabled you to agree on your best the companion of the Prophet who accompanied him at the Cave (of Thour at the time of the Hijrah). Rise up and give your allegiance to him." And they did.⁴

Legal And Historical Questions

The succession of Abu Bakr raises these questions:

1. Did Abu Bakr ever claim that the Messenger of God made him his successor?
2. If the Prophet did not appoint him did he desire to appoint him?
3. Was the election of Abu Bakr legal from the Islamic point of view?
4. Did the Messenger say: "The Imams are from Quraish?" and what did he mean by that?

History answers the first question in the negative for Abu Bakr never claimed that the Messenger made him his successor. Nor did any of the companions who worked diligently for the establishment of his caliphate ever claim that the Messenger made Abu Bakr his successor.

The reader may remember that the argument of Abu Bakr which he introduced at the Medinite's conference did not contain any hint to any appointment by the Prophet. He only told the conferees that Arabs would not recognize any leadership that was not a Qureshite.

For Quraish he said are the most respected people among the Arabs and they are from the most honorable city. Had the Prophet expressed his desire to make him his successor Abu Bakr would have

made the Prophet's statement his sole argument without resorting to the distinction of Quraish. 'Umar also would have quoted such a statement to support his argument for Abu Bakr's election.

The Sunni scholars unanimously agree that the Holy Prophet never appointed a successor. This means that they agree that he did not make Abu Bakr his successor.

However it is reported that a contemporary Medinite scholar from the Wahabis claimed that the Messenger of God appointed Abu Bakr as his successor.⁵

He supported his claim by a hadith which reported that the Messenger said: "And God and the believers reject (any leadership) except that of Abu Bakr." He also claimed that this hadith is "Mutawatir" (reported through numerous channels which makes it certain)

This hadith is what Muslim in his Sahih recorded through his channel to Urwah who reported that Ayesah said: "The Messenger said to me: Call for me your father Abu Bakr and your brother so that I can write a directive.

I fear that a wisher may wish and a sayer may say: I have more right (to the leadership than Abu Bakr) and God and the believers reject (any leadership) except that of Abu Bakr."⁶

Al-Bukhari recorded it in a similar way but it contained the word: "I almost attempted to call Abu Bakr and his son and write a directive...."⁷

It is worthy to note that this hadith is not mutawatir as this Wahabi scholar claimed for it was not reported by numerous companions. As a matter of fact it was reported only by Ayesah.

However introducing this hadith as evidence for the appointment of Abu Bakr as a successor is evidence of the lack of profound knowledge of the hadiths for this hadith is opposed by three authentic hadiths which are reported by Ayesah herself:

Ayesah Reported the Opposite

Muslim recorded through his channel to Masrooq that Ayesah said: "The Messenger of God did not leave behind him a dinar or a dirham or a sheep or a camel nor did he will anything."⁸

Had the Prophet appointed Abu Bakr as his successor Ayesah would not have said: "Nor did he (the Prophet) will anything." For if he had appointed Abu Bakr he would have willed a very important thing.

Muslim also recorded through his channel to Al-Aswad Ibn Yazeed that he reported that people mentioned in the presence of Ayesah that 'Ali was the executor (of the Holy Prophet). She said: "When did he (the Prophet) make him his executor? I was supporting the back of the Messenger by my chest or she said by my lap. He called for a basin then he collapsed on my lap and I did not think that he died. When did he make him his executor?"⁹

This hadith explains the previous hadith in which Ayesah said: "Nor did he will anything." In both hadiths she was trying to disprove that the Messenger made 'Ali his executor. This by itself indicates that the idea of the executorship of Abu Bakr was not in circulation among people.

What was in circulation is that the Messenger made 'Ali his executor. Therefore she was trying actively to disprove it.

Had she known that the Messenger appointed Abu Bakr she would have said to those who mentioned 'Ali's executorship that her father rather than 'Ali was the executor.

Muslim also recorded through his channel to Abu Maleekah that he reported the following: "I heard Ayesah and she was questioned: Had the Prophet wanted to appoint a successor whom would he have appointed? She said Abu Bakr. They said to her: Then whom would he have appointed after Abu Bakr? She said: 'Umar. Then she was asked: Whom would he have appointed after 'Umar? She said: Abu Obeidah Ibn Al-Jarrah. Then she stopped there."¹⁰

Had the Messenger said: "and God and the believers reject (any leadership) except that of Abu Bakr she would have rejected the hypothetical question concerning the Prophet's appointment of a successor. For the appointment would be a fact rather than a hypothesis and Abu Bakr would be the actual appointee. But Ayesah treated the matter hypothetically because the Prophet made no such statement concerning Abu Bakr.

Obvious Prejudice

The prejudice of Ayesah against 'Ali is clear in the last three hadiths. In Abu Maleekah's hadith she tried to tell us that Abu Obeidah was more beloved to the Prophet and was more deserving to be caliph than 'Ali. No one subscribes to this for the Muslims unanimously agree that 'Ali was higher and more beloved to the Messenger of God than Abu Obeidah.

In Al-Aswad Ibn Yazeed's hadith the mother of believers tried to disprove the executorship of 'Ali through no proof. Granting that the Messenger died while he was reclining on her chest and that he did not make 'Ali his executor at that hour this does not disprove 'Ali's executorship.

The Holy Prophet spoke publicly at Ghadir Khum in 'Ali's behalf saying to thousands of Pilgrims that 'Ali was the "Mawla" (Guardian) of the believers and that he is like the Prophet in having more right to them than they have to themselves.

Furthermore Omm Salemah reported what contradicts the claim of Ayesah. Al-Hakim through a channel which he and Al-Thahabi considered to be authentic reported that Omm Salemah (wife of the Prophet) said: "By the One in Whose Name I swear 'Ali was the last one in contact with the Messenger of God. We visited the Prophet before noon and he was saying repeatedly: "Did 'Ali come?"

Fatima said: "It seems that you have sent him for a mission." She (Omm Salemah) said: "'Ali came and I thought that the Prophet had something to tell him confidentially. We left the room—and sat at the door and I was the nearest to the door. The Messenger leaned upon 'Ali confiding in him and speaking to him secretly. Then the Messenger of God died on that day. Thus 'Ali was the last one who was with the Prophet."¹¹

The Story of Maghafeer

Ayesah used to allow herself to report some events which never took place if the report would serve the interest which she favored. The story of Maghafeer (a thick secretion which comes out of some particular trees) is well known in the Islamic history and mentioned in the Holy Qur'an in Chapter 66 of "Al-Tahreem."

She and Hafssah (daughter of the Second Caliph) conspired that each one of them individually was to say to the Prophet: "I smell on you the odor of Al-Maghafeer" while both of them knew that this was untrue.

Al-Bukhari recorded in his Sahih that Obeid Ibn Omeir reported that Ayesah said: "The Messenger of God used to drink honey at the house of Zeinab daughter of Juhsh (another wife of the Prophet) and stay with her. Hafssah and I conspired to tell the Prophet when he comes to either one of us: "You have eaten Maghafeer. I smell the odor of Maghafeer."

He said: "No but I was drinking honey at Zeinab's house and I will not do it again. And I swear that you shall not inform anyone about this."¹²

Ayesah betrayed the trust of the Prophet by revealing what he commanded her not to reveal. God informed him of that and this made the Prophet angry. The chapter of Al-Tahreem was revealed for this event. It contains the following:

"When the Prophet disclosed a matter in confidence to one of his wives and she then divulged it to (another) and God made it known to him he (the Prophet) told (her) a portion of it and mentioned not another portion. When he told her thereof she said: Who told thee this? He said:

The One who knows and is well acquainted (with all things). If ye (both) were to turn in repentance to the Al-mighty your hearts would be indeed so inclined. But (if ye collaborate) with each other against him (the Prophet) truly God is his protector; and Gabriel and the righteous believers and furthermore the angels will assist him."¹³

Al-Bukhari reported also through his channel to Obeid Ibn Hunein that he said: I heard Ibn Abbas saying: I stayed a whole year trying to ask 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattab about a Qur'anic verse and I could not ask out of apprehension until he set out for pilgrimage and I was with him.

While we were on the road coming back to Medina he deviated to some trees to relieve himself. Ibn Abbas said: I waited for him until he finished then I walked with him.

I said: Amir Al-Mumineen (Commander of Believers) who are the two of the wives of the Holy Prophet that collaborated against the Prophet? 'Umar said: They are Hafssah and Ayesah.[14](#)

'Umar Considered the Election as "Faltah"

If any one asks for more evidence on the fact that the Holy Prophet did not make Abu Bakr his successor the following statement of 'Umar concerning the election of Abu Bakr is sufficient to clear the matter completely: Al-Bukhari in his Sahih[15](#) Ibn Hisham in his Biography of the Prophet[16](#) and Imam Ahmad in his Musnad[17](#) reported that 'Umar said in a sermon he delivered during the last year of his caliphate:

"...I am informed that a man from among you says: By God if 'Umar dies I will elect "Fulan" (an x person whose name 'Umar did not want to mention). No man should be deceived by saying to himself that the election of Abu Bakr was "Faltah" and it passed. Certainly the election of Abu Bakr was a "Faltah" (a hasty action without due deliberation)....".

This indicates that the Holy Prophet never expressed his desire to make Abu Bakr his caliph. Had the Prophet expressed such a desire or said what was reported through Ayesah the election of Abu Bakr would not have been a hasty action and without due deliberation. It would have been rather of the best planned action for it would have been planned by God and His Messenger.

'Umar's Last Statement

However the Second Caliph made this completely clear after he was stabbed. Muslim in his Sahih[18](#) and Ibn Saad in Al-Tabaqat[19](#) and Ibn Hisham in his Biography of the Prophet[20](#) reported that Abdullah Ibn 'Umar said that he advised his father to name a successor and 'Umar said: "If I do not name a successor the Messenger of God did not name a successor; and if I name a successor Abu Bakr named a successor.".

Al-Bukhari in his Sahih reported that Abdullah Ibn 'Umar said: "It was said to his father: Why do you not name a successor?" He said: "If I name a successor one better than myself Abu Bakr did name a successor. And if I do not name a successor one better than myself the Messenger of God did not name a successor."[21](#)

Did the messenger of god desire to appoint abu bakr as his

SUCCESSOR?

The events of the last days of the life of the Holy Prophet clearly indicate that the succession of Abu Bakr was not on the mind of the Messenger. Nothing substantiates that like the expedition of Osamah.

The Messenger of God made Osamah Ibn Zayd Ibn Harithah a commander in chief of an army and issued a directive in which he commanded him to overrun the borders of Al-Balqa and Al-Daroom in the land of Palestine. People prepared themselves and the early migrants from Mecca joined the army of Osamah.²²

From the well-known events of history in Osamah's expedition are the following:

1. Abu Bakr 'Umar and others from the early migrants were in Osamah's army.²³
2. 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib was not in that army.

It seems that the Messenger did not want 'Ali to participate in more battles after the Islamic state was established in the Arab Peninsula as a result of the defensive battles in which 'Ali was the outstanding hero.

He did not allow (or at least did not order) him to attend the Battle of Mutah where he sent a Muslim army under the leadership of Zayd Ibn Harithah (father of Osamah) to the borders of Syria where Zayd Jaafar Ibn Abu Talib and Abdullah Ibn Rawahah were killed. Nor did he allow 'Ali to join him in the campaign of Tabuk. He chose to keep him in Medina to succeed him in his absence.

The foundations of the Islamic state were already established and it became unnecessary to expose 'Ali's life to more dangers. Therefore he did not send him with the army of Osamah. Had 'Ali been in that expedition the expedition would have been under his leadership rather than the leadership of Osamah.

The Prophet never put 'Ali under any leadership in any battle. He was the bearer of the banner of the Holy Prophet in all the battles which were led by the Prophet.²⁴ And he was the Commander in Chief of every expedition in which the Holy Prophet sent 'Ali.

The readers of the history of Islam knew that the Prophet gave Abu Bakr and 'Umar the command of the army at the Battle of Kheibar on two consecutive days. 'Ali was at that time suffering from inflammation of his eyes which prevented him from participating in the battle.

When his eyes were miraculously cured on the third day 'Ali became the Commander in Chief and the two sheikhs Abu Bakr and 'Umar and the rest of the companions were under his leadership.

Ibn Saad reported that the Messenger of God made Osama commander of the army. When Wednesday came the ailment of the Messenger began; he had fever and a headache. On Thursday morning he gave the banner to Osamah: Osamah carried the banner then delivered it to Buraidah Al-Aslami and

camped at Al-Jurf.

All distinguished companions from the Meccans and Medinites including Abu Bakr 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattab Abu Obeidah Ibn Al-Jarrah and Saad Ibn Abu Waqass joined Osamah's army.^{[25](#)}

3. The Messenger fell ill after he gave the banner to Osamah. The army was still near Medina and did not begin its journey yet. The Messenger was alarmed by the slowness of the army's motion and reluctance of the soldiers to leave Medina.

Therefore he went to the Mosque twice while he was ill commanding them to begin their journey and to move quickly. He repeated his order three times in one sermon.^{[26](#)}

He did all this while he was aware of the nearness of his death. His awareness of his death is reported in the following hadiths:

A. Ibn Hisham recorded that Abu Muwaihibah reported that the Prophet accompanied him to Al-Baqee cemetery at night before the beginning of his illness. The Prophet stood in the graveyard and congratulated its dwellers for being spared future faith-testing crises. Abu Muwaihibah reported that the Messenger said to him:

"Abu Muwaihibah I have been given the keys of the treasures of this world and the eternal life in it along with Paradise (in the Hereafter). I was given the choice between that and meeting my Lord and Paradise. Abu Muwaihibah said: May my father and mother be your redemption. Take the keys of the treasures of this world and the eternal life in it along with Paradise. He said: "No Abu Muwaihibah I have chosen to meet my Lord and Paradise."^{[27](#)}

B. And when he sat on his pulpit delivering a sermon while he was sick he according to Ibn Hisham concluded the sermon by saying: "Certainly God has given a choice to one of His servants (the Prophet was referring to himself) between this world along with the Hereafter and what the Lord has. The servant chose what the Lord has (he chose to meet his Lord).^{[28](#)} Thus he was informing his audience that he was about to depart from this world.

C. Muslim recorded in his Sahih that the Holy Prophet said to his daughter Fatima while he was suffering from his ailment by which he died: "Gabriel used to review the Holy Qur'an with me once or twice a year and now he has reviewed it with me twice." Then he said to her: "I sense that my death is drawing nigh. Be obedient to God and patient I am a good ancestor of yours...."^{[29](#)}

D. Al-Bukhari through his channel to Ayesah recorded that she said: "The Prophet called upon Fatimah (peace be upon her) in his ailment in which he died and confided in her on a matter and she cried:

Then he confided in her on another matter and she laughed. When we asked her about that she said: 'He informed me that he will die in his present ailment and I cried. Then he informed me that I shall be the first among the members of his House to follow him and I laughed.'^{[30](#)}

All these hadiths testify that he was fully aware of the nearness of his death.

Had the Messenger been desirous to appoint Abu Bakr as his successor while he knew the nearness of his death he would not have ordered him to leave Medina quickly.

Instead of urging Abu Bakr along with the others to leave Medina the Prophet should have prevented Abu Bakr from joining the expedition.

For the expedition of Osamah to reach the land of Palestine fight and return to Medina it would take two months or more. The Prophet on the other hand might have died a few days after the departure of the army and he himself was expecting to die soon.

He did not appoint Abo Bakr before the departure of the army. He could not appoint him after his return with the army from Palestine because Abu Bakr would not be able to see the Prophet alive.

He would not appoint him while he was absent from Medina for it would be inconceivable that the Messenger would allow the capital to be without a caliph after his death for two months or more while he knew the dangers which were threatening Medina and the Faith of Islam.

Furthermore Abu Bakr could have been killed while he was in the expedition. The death of a caliph at a battle during that serious period would lead to the worst consequences for the Muslims and Islam.

Had the Messenger been desirous to appoint Abu Bakr as a successor he would not have allowed him to be in that army. But the fact is that the delay of Abu Bakr and other companions in Medina was against the will of the Prophet which he made clearly known. He emphatically urged them to execute the mission of Osamah repeating that several times while he was on the pulpit and on his deathbed.

Thus Abu Bakr in spite of his high position and the love of the Prophet to him was not meant by the Prophet to be his successor.

Was the Election Of Abu Bakr Legal?

The Muslims had the right to elect Abu Bakr if the Messenger did not choose another person to succeed him. And Abu Bakr had the right to accept the election. Such an election constitutes a contract which exacts from both sides its fulfillment according to the conditions on which the election was based.

When the conditions of the election demand from the elected to follow the Book of God and the teaching of the Prophet and that the elector should obey his elect in what is considered to be an obedience to God and His Messenger the election would be sound and binding to both sides.

However such an election in spite of its legality had two negative sides:

1. The right to disagree with the majority. Since the succession of Abu Bakr came by a popular election

rather than by the Prophet's selection a good Muslim could have refused to join his electors without sinning. Every Muslim is entitled to political freedom and no one has the right to force any one to do what he does not want or to impose on him a restriction that did not come from God. He should not be forced to elect a person whom he does not want to authorize.

It is equally true that the minority has no right to stand in the way of the majority and to prevent it from administering the affairs of the country as long as there is an explicit or implicit agreement that the majority rules the country.

Even in the absence of such an agreement the majority has the right to run the country. This is because the minority has no right to administer the affairs of the majority and if the majority is to be obstructed the country would be ruined.

Since every individual has the right to disagree with the majority it would be an injustice on the part of the majority to force a minority to agree with it. For this we think it was an injustice to force Al-Zubayr Ibn Al-Awam to elect Abu Bakr though he was qualified for leadership.

Abu Bakr was not appointed by God and His Messenger and Al-Zubayr's refusal to elect him did not constitute a violation of any Divine commandment. Abu Bakr and the majority of the companions entered into a pact and Al-Zubayr had the right not to be a part of that pact. Forcing him to enter into such a pact was an encroachment on his rights.

It was more than unfair to try to force 'Ali to join the electors after the Prophet declared him the "Mawla" (Guardian) of every Muslim including Abu Bakr. The right of an individual or a minority to disagree with the majority is sacred and observed in all democratic elections.

When more than one nominee compete for a high office and one of the nominees wins the majority's votes the majority does not attempt to force the electors of the loser to join them in electing the winner.

Even in a nation with one political party where the government asks people to cast their votes by saying yes or no; when the result becomes known the government never forces those who said "no" to say "yes." This is the attitude of Islam the religion of justice.

Forcing people to do what they do not have to do is an aggression and God does not love the aggressors.

When the Imam 'Ali was elected after the death of Uthman Abdullah Ibn 'Umar Saad Ibn Abu Waqass Osamah Ibn Zayd and other companions refused to elect him. The Imam did not force them to join the majority nor did he consider them transgressors He only demanded from them not to hinder his administration.

The companions who lived at the time of Abu Bakr's election had the right to elect or refuse to elect him and they had the right to believe or disbelieve in his qualification. If so the Muslim generations who were

born after that election had the same right. They would not be sinning by taking a positive or a negative attitude towards the caliphate of Abu Bakr.

From this it becomes evident that the mutual incrimination by the Muslims of today for their positive or negative attitude toward the caliphate of Abu Bakr is erroneous and represents extremism.

2. The second negative aspect of this kind of legitimate leadership is that it does not make the word or the deed of the caliph a sacred law. Before his election he was like any other companion unimmuned of error; and he would remain so after the election.

The election does not change his personality nor does it increase his knowledge. It does not elevate him in the eyes of God above other good believers nor does it make all his words or deeds right. At best he would be a righteous "mujtahid" (a scholar who is capable of forming an independent opinion about the Islamic law)

Other scholars have the right to disagree with him and the non-scholars from among the Muslims have the right to follow scholars other than him.

When another mujtahid believes that such a caliph is erroneous in word or deed he should not follow him. To demand from the Muslims to follow a wrong verdict is to demand from people what God did not demand and to add to the religion what is not from the religion.

The Prophet's Appointee

These two negative sides of an elective leadership would not exist in a leadership based on an appointment by the Prophet. If the Prophet chose a leader his decision would be binding on every Muslim and according to the Holy Qur'an no one would have the right to defy it:

"And it is not permitted for believing man or believing woman to make a choice after God and His Messenger have decided in an affair. And whoever disobeys God and His Messenger would be in manifest error." The Holy Quran Chapter 33 verse 36.

When the people pledge allegiance to the Prophet's appointee they would be in fact pledging the same to the Messenger. And whoever pledges to the Messenger would be pledging to God. The Holy Qur'an declares:

"Certainly those who pledge allegiance to thee in fact they do that to God. The hand of God is above their hands. And whoever breaches a covenant he breaches against himself and whoever fulfills what he promises God God will grant him a great reward." The Holy Quran Chapter 48 verse 10.

A caliph appointed by the Messenger possesses a holiness that issues from the holiness of the

Messenger. His contemporary Muslims have to follow his order and rules and so do the generations after them. To a certain degree he has jurisdictions that resemble those of the Prophet except that he is not a Prophet. He is not expected to add to nor subtract from the Islamic rules. There shall be no

Prophet after Muhammad and the rules of Muhammad are eternal and will continue until the Day of Judgment. A caliph appointed by the Prophet represents him and because of that he is supposed to be the most knowledgeable of the Holy Qur'an and the teaching of the Prophet.

Whatever he declares legal is legal and whatever he declares illegal is forbidden. No Muslim has the right to disagree with him. He is the most knowledgeable and his obedience is as that of the Messenger.

Quraish And The Caliphate

Did the Prophet say that the Imams are from Quraish? And if he did say that did he mean that the caliphate is by election or by inheritance or by appointment from the Prophet?

Many hadiths on this subject are recorded in the Sahihs and other books of which are the following: Muslim recorded that Abu Hurairah reported that the Messenger of God said: "People are followers of Quraish.

Their Muslim follows their Muslim and their Kafir (unbeliever) follows their Kafir."[31](#)

He recorded also that Jaber Ibn Abdullah reported that the Prophet said: "People are followers of Quraish in good and in evil."

Muslim also recorded that Abdullah reported that the Messenger said: "The Islamic authority (Caliphate) will stay in Quraish as long as two men exist in this world."

He reported also that Jaber Ibn Samorah reported that the Messenger of God said: "This religion will continue until the Day of Judgement comes or 12 caliphs from Quraish rule you."

Al-Bukhari recorded that Ibn 'Umar reported that the Messenger of God said: This Islamic authority will stay in Quraish as long as two persons from Quraish remain alive."[32](#)

He recorded through his channel to Jaber Ibn Samorah that he said: "I heard the Prophet saying: 'There shall be twelve rulers.' Then he said a word I did not hear and my father said that the Prophet said: 'All of them are from Quraish.' " Al-Tirmidhi recorded the same except that he said that the Prophet said: "There will be twelve rulers after me " and that the father of Jaber said: "The Messenger said: 'All of them are from Quraish."[33](#)

Al-Hakim through his channel to Masrouq recorded that he said: "While we were sitting with Abdullah (Ibn 'Umar) a man asked him: 'Abu Abdul-Rahman did you and other companions ask the Messenger of God how many caliphs will rule this nation?' Abdullah replied: 'No one before you asked me about this

since I came to Iraq.' Then he said: 'We asked the Messenger of God and he said: Twelve the same number as the representatives of the children of Israel with Moses."[34](#)

Imam Ahmad reported that Abu Bakr said: (to Saad Ibn Abadah) "And you Saad knew that the Messenger of God said while you were sitting: 'Quarish are the people of this authority. The righteous of the people are followers of their righteous and the wicked of the people are followers of their wicked."[35](#)

It is clear that the first hadith does not speak about the caliphate. For Quraish at the time of the caliphate was not divided into Muslims and non-Muslims. All the Qureshites were confessing Islam at that time. It seems that the hadith came at a time when the majority of the Qureshites were pagans.

The hadith speaks of the influence of Quraish over the Arab tribes. For they were opposed to Islam when Quraish was fighting it. When Quraish entered the new faith the rest of the Arabs rushed into the faith. The Prophet in this hadith was not trying to announce an Islamic law or issue an order to the Muslims. He was speaking of a matter of fact: That is the influence of Quraish and its effect on the rest of the Arab tribes.

The second hadith like the first one does not speak about the caliphate nor about who should be the caliph. It is an information of a situation that existed at the time of the hadith.

As to the last six hadiths they clearly speak of the caliphate. These hadiths vary in their contents without contradiction. Some of them state that the caliphate is in Quraish.

Some of them add that the caliphate shall continue in Quraish until the end of the world. And some of them add that the caliphs are 12 and some of them mention that the number of the caliphs is 12 but do not mention that they are from Quraish.

To understand these hadiths we have to put together the two hadiths of Abdullah Ibn 'Umar in one of which he reported that the caliphate shall continue in Quraish to the end of the world and in the other in which he reported that the number of caliphs is 12 like the representatives of the children of Israel. The two hadiths explain each other and agree with the hadith of Jaber Ibn Samorah which is the most specific among all these hadiths and capable of explaining the non-specific of them.

Thus these hadiths inform us that the non-Qureshites shall not be caliphs and that the caliphs are only twelve and that the caliphate will stay in Quraish as long as two people remain in this world.

These statements could be interpreted in one of the following ways:

Was the Prophet Predicting?

The Prophet was not trying to instruct the Muslims and inform them of what they ought to do after him concerning the caliphate. He was rather speaking to them about the future forecasting that the caliphate

shall stay in Quraish forever until the Day of Judgement.

Thus he informs us that the caliphate will never be interrupted as long as the people are living on the face of this earth and that every caliph shall be a Qureshite and that the caliphs are to be twelve.

Of course this would not be true because the caliphate was interrupted and discontinued and because many of the caliphs such as the Osmanites were neither Qureshites nor Arabs.

In addition to this stating that the caliphs are twelve cannot be true whether it meant only the righteous caliphs or all of the caliphs including the non-righteous. For the number of righteous caliphs did not reach twelve and if we add to them the number of non-righteous their number is much higher than twelve.

Is the Qureshite Rule Hereditary?

The second way of interpreting the above hadiths is that the Prophet was trying to issue instructions and communicate to the Muslims a religious command so he told his nation that the caliphs after him have to be from Quraish and no one deserves to be a caliph except the Qureshites.

This is because the Qureshites are related to the Messenger closely or remotely for they join the Holy Prophet through their great-grandfather "Fahr Ibn Malik." By this a Qureshite Muslim would be qualified to be a caliph and a non-Qureshite would not qualify.

If we adopt this interpretation we would be admitting that the Islamic authority is by inheritance and that the right of inheritance would not be exclusive to the close relatives of the Holy Prophet. It is rather broad enough to include all the Qureshite clans who are descendants of "Fahr Ibn Malik".

To believe that the Qureshite Muslims are qualified for the caliphate for being close or remote relatives of the Prophet is to subscribe to a theory of inheritance with which the Islamic law of inheritance does not agree. If the Islamic authority can be inherited through blood relation-ship the close relatives bar the remote relative from inheritance according to the Islamic law.

Furthermore the restriction of the number of caliphs to twelve becomes unjustifiable for the righteous among the Qureshite caliphs did not reach the number of twelve and non-righteous among them were many more than twelve.

Are the Qureshites Superior?

The third interpretation of the hadiths is that the Prophet through these statements was announcing a religious law which makes the caliphate an exclusive right of the Qureshites. This is not because they are related to him but because God preferred them to the non-Qureshites.

If we take this interpretation we have to accept two contradictory concepts:

- (a) The caliphate is not to be by the choice of the Muslims. It is rather by appointment from God because He is the One Who decreed that the caliphs are to be Qureshites whether people accept or reject.
- (b) The faith of Islam invites its followers to believe in a tribal superiority and a Qureshite aristocracy whose members regardless of the extent of their faith are preferred by God to others even if the others were more religious wiser and more knowledgeable.

We say these two ideas are contradictory because if the caliphate is by a Divine decree the Almighty is expected to choose for the leadership of the believers their wisest and most knowledgeable and righteous. It would be illogical to say that God prefers Abu Sufyan to Ammar Ibn Yasir because Abu Sufyan fought Islam and the Prophet for twenty-one years and Ammar fought with the Prophet for more than twenty-one years.

History remembers that the Holy Prophet stood on the day of conquest of Mecca and declared the following:

"O people of Quraish certainly God has done away with the boastfulness of the pre-Islamic mentality and its pride of ancestors. People are from Adam and Adam was from soil." Then he recited the following verse:'O mankind certainly We have created you from a male and female and made you people and tribes that you may recognize each other. The noblest among you in the eyes of God is the most righteous of you."

Thus placing the Qureshites above others not for anything except being Qureshites is opposed to the Book of God and the teaching of the Holy Prophet in words and deeds.

Again the restriction of the number of the caliphs to twelve would be unjustifiable for the same reason we mentioned before.

Were the Men Chosen Only for their Righteousness?

The fourth way of interpreting the hadiths is to say the Holy Prophet was trying to inform the Muslims that God had chosen men from Quraish to become caliphs. He did not choose these men because they were related to the Holy Prophet nor because they were Qureshites. He chose them because they were the best among the Muslims. These men are the legitimate caliphs whether people elect them or reject them.

The six hadiths of the Qureshite caliphate clearly indicate that God did not leave to the Muslims a complete choice in selecting their caliphs. He rather decreed that their caliphs have to come from Quraish. It would be illogical to believe that He did that because the Qureshites are relatives of the Messenger or because the Qureshites are better than the rest of the Muslims.

This would be an invitation to the belief in an aristocracy alien to the faith of Islam which calls for equality glorifies the righteous and despises the transgressor. The history of Islam attests that the majority of the Qureshites were the most hostile to the Messenger and his religion before they adopted Islam and less religious than others after they adopted Islam.

It would be only logical to say that the Qureshiteness of the caliphs is like the Qureshiteness of the Prophet himself.

God did not choose Muhammad because he was from Quraish or because he was a Hashimite or from the children of Abdul-Muttalib or from Mecca. He chose him because he was the best among the people of the earth and it happened that the best of the people of the earth was a Qureshite from the children of Abdul-Muttalib.

And so the caliphs about whom the Holy Prophet spoke were chosen by God because they were the best of the people of the earth and it happened that they were from Quraish. This logical interpretation agrees with the Shi'ite Islamic School. When God chooses a man to become Imam of the people he would be the Imam whether the Muslims accept him or reject him just as when God chooses a Prophet he would be the Prophet even if people do not believe in his Prophethood.

Qureshites and Election Are Irreconcilable

It is irreconcilable to say that God has decreed that the caliphs are to be from Quraish and that He left to the Muslims the matter of the selection of the caliphs from among the Qureshites.

God has decreed that the caliphs are to be from the Quraish in order to lead the Muslims to what is best for them. If he left the selection of the caliph from Quraish to the choice of the Muslims He would leave the future of the caliphate to chance. Election by people does not secure the best leadership for people do not know what is hidden in the hearts of individuals. God is the only One who knows that.

Since God did not leave the caliphate entirely to the choice of the people and decreed that their caliphs are to be only from a particular group (the Qureshites) the entire choice must be His. He would not divide the choice between Himself and the Muslims leaving the selection of the tribe to Himself and the selection of the man from the tribe to the Muslims.

God is expected to choose the tribe for the sake of the individual and not to choose the individual for the sake of the tribe. God has chosen Hashim and Quraish because of Muhammad and He did not choose Muhammad because he was a Hashimite or Qureshite Choosing the man rather than the clan is what secures the right leadership.

Thus when God and His Messenger informed us that the caliphs are from Quraish they were actually informing us that there are particular individuals who happened to be from Quraish and were chosen by God to be caliphs. They were chosen because of their high qualifications and not because of their being

Qureshites.

- [1. Ibn Hisham in his Biography of the Prophet Part 2 p.655.](#)
- [2. Ibn Hisham Biography of the Prophet Part 2 p.656.](#)
- [3. Dr. Taha Hussein Al-Fitna tul-Kubra Part 1 p. 35.](#)
- [4. Ibn Hisham in his Biography of the Prophet Part 2 pp. 659–660.](#)
- [5. Sheikh Muhammad Jawad Mugneyah recorded this in his book Hathi Hiya Al- Wahabiyah \(This Is the Wahabism\)](#)
- [6. Muslim Sahih Muslim Part 15 p. 155.](#)
- [7. Al-Nawawi in his commentary on Sahih Muslim conveyed this.](#)
- [8. Muslim Sahih Muslim Part 11 \(Book of Will\) p.89.](#)
- [9. Ibid.](#)
- [10. Ibid Part 11 p. 154.](#)
- [11. Al-Hakim Al-Mustadrak Part 3 p.139.](#)
- [12. Al-Bukhari Sahih Al-Bukhari Part 6 Book of Commentary on the Holy Qur'an. It is in the comment on the chapter of Al-Tahreem p. 194.](#)
- [13. Holy Qur'an Chapter 66 pp. 1–4.](#)
- [14. Sahih Al-Bukhari Part 6 p. 195.](#)
- [15. Al-Bukhari in his Sahih Part 8 p. 210.](#)
- [16. Ibn Hisham in his Biography of the Prophet Part 2 p.658.](#)
- [17. Imam Ahmad in his Musnad Part 1 p.55.](#)
- [18. Muslim in his Sahih Part 12 p.206.](#)
- [19. Ibn Sa'd in his Tahaqat Part 3 p.342.](#)
- [20. Ibn Hisham in his Biography of the Prophet Part 2 p.653.](#)
- [21. Al-Bukhari in his Sahih Part 9 p. 100.](#)
- [22. Ibn Hisham Biography of the Prophet Part 2 p.642.](#)
- [23. This is recorded by Ibn Al-Athir in Al-Kamil and by Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqat Part 2 p.190; and by Al-Dahlani and Al- Tabari in his history and Al-Halabi in his Biography of the Prophet \(all this was conveyed by Sharaful-deen in Al-Mur- ajaat\)](#)
- [24. Ibn Sa'd in his Al-Tabaqat Part 3 p. 25 and Al-Hakim in his Al-Mustadrak Part 3 p.111.](#)
- [25. Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqat Part 2 p. 249.](#)
- [26. Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqat Part 2 p. 249.](#)
- [27. Ibn Hisham Biography of the Prophet Part 2 p. 642.](#)
- [28. Ibn Hisham in his Biography of the Prophet Part 2 p. 649.](#)
- [29. Muslim in his Sahih Part 17 p. 7.](#)
- [30. Al-Bukhari in his Sahih Part 7 p. 12.](#)
- [31. This hadith and the following three hadiths are recorded by Muslim in his Sahih Part 12 Book of Al-Imarah pp. 200–202.](#)
- [32. Al-Bukhari Sahih Al-Bukhari \(in the book of Al-Ahkam\) Part 9 p. 78.](#)
- [33. Al-Tirmidhi in his Sunan Part 2 p. 35. \(Al-Fairuzbadi in his book Fadha-il Al-Khamsah Virtue of the Five\) Part 2 p. 23.](#)
- [34. Al-Hakim Al-Mustadrak Part 4 p. 501.](#)
- [35. Imam Ahmad in his Al-Musnad Part 1 p. 5.](#)

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