

18. Abu Bakr Names a Successor

Abu Bakr died and a life filled with important achievements came to an end.

1. He subdued the deserters of the faith and the withholders of the Zakat. He brought the Arab tribes back to Islam and made them soldiers of Islam after they became its adversaries.
2. Upon his order the verses and chapters of the revelations were gathered in the Book of Islam the Holy Qur'an.
3. He pushed the faith of Islam beyond the borders of the Arabic Peninsula. He died while the Muslim forces were facing the Persian armies in Iraq and the Roman armies in Syria.

As Abu Bakr's death was drawing nigh he chose to appoint a successor and this was his right. He decided not to leave to chance the leadership of the state.

Had the history been logical 'Ali would have succeeded Abu Bakr. He was by-passed after the death of the Prophet because the election was held hastily without planning and consultation. It is said that the emergency which was brought about by the conference of the Medinites at Saqifat Ranu Sa-idah and the absence of 'Ali who was preoccupied with the Holy Funeral made the companions overlook 'Ali and his qualifications.

If this were the fact 'Ali should not have been overlooked at this time. There was no emergency and the Caliph was able to appoint whomever he chose. Yet 'Ali was not chosen by the Caliph.

Quraish stood against him for many reasons and his high distinctions along with his close relationship to the Prophet were the main reason.

The Meccan clans went into costly wars against the Messenger of God because they did not want the Hashimites to have the exclusive honor of having the Prophet from among them. Having this attitude they were not expected to let the Hashimites possess another exclusive honor by allowing 'Ali to succeed the Prophet.

The Qureshite influence grew rapidly during the reign of Abu Bakr. The rapid growth of the Qureshite influence was expected to increase the distance between 'Ali and the High Office.

One might say that Abu Bakr should not have followed the unfair attitude of Quraish toward 'Ali after he heard so many statements by the Prophet which indicated that 'Ali was his choice. But Abu Bakr seemingly did not believe that the statements of the Prophet concerning 'Ali made it mandatory for the Muslims to follow him. Had he believed that he would not have allowed himself to be the First Caliph. Being of this opinion he thought he had the option to choose 'Ali or any one from the outstanding companions.

He did not choose 'Ali because he was his main opponent. He chose 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattab his strongest supporter the planner of his election and his right hand in all affairs.

The reader may remember that when 'Ali reconciled with Abu Bakr he complained of Abu Bakr's failure to consult him when he was elected and that he took from 'Ali what he was entitled to have. Abu Bakr listened to his complaint and wept.

Abu Bakr's tears gave the impression that he would not repeat it. He was expected to consult 'Ali and the rest of the Hashimites along with companions who were inclined towards him. Nothing of this took place.

It is worth noting that Fatimah Al-Zahra daughter of the Prophet was not on speaking terms with Abu Bakr and she was urging the Medinites to shift from Abu Bakr to 'Ali. She was angry with Abu Bakr because of the caliphate and because he nationalized "Fadak." (a group of orchards) which she had received from her father and was supposed to keep for herself as a gift or a legacy. But Abu Bakr reported that the Messenger said: We the Prophets do not leave inheritance.

Fatimah denied that her father said that because this is opposed to the Holy Qur'an which declares that Suleiman (Solomon) received an inheritance from his father David. Both Solomon and his father were prophets.

Abu Bakr made efforts to normalize relations with her without reversing his position on Fadak but she refused to speak to him and when she died he was not informed of her death lest he attend her funeral. [1](#) Abu Bakr was very concerned with Fatimah's anger because the Prophet said: "Fatimah is a portion of me.

Whoever displeases her displeases me." He also said: "Fatimah is the leader of the women of Paradise." (Both hadiths were reported by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih section of virtues of Fatimah)."

With all this the righteous Caliph would be expected to name 'Ali his successor for this would please the Prophet because it pleased Fatimah though belatedly.

Abu Bakr did not do that nor did he consult 'Ali or any of the Hashimites including Al-Abbas uncle of the

Holy Prophet.

Indeed Abu Bakr did not consult any companion about whom he should choose to succeed him. He did not give them a choice between two or more candidates. He consulted a few companions about 'Umar and 'Umar only. The consultants were Abdul-Rahaman Ibn Ouf Uthman Ibn Affan and Osseid Ibn Hudheir. These were 'Umar's admirers and all of them were positive towards him. Talhah Abu Bakr's cousin was not consulted and when he criticized 'Umar Abu Bakr exploded in anger.

Why shouldn't we call the events by their names? Abu Bakr was indebted to 'Umar in his election and establishing his leadership. He was his right hand during the time of his caliphate. Abu Bakr wanted to return to his good friend his favor. We say this not trying to minimize the sincerity of the First Caliph.

While he was dying Abu Bakr commanded Uthman to write his will. When he reached the following words: "I have appointed as a successor " he fainted before mentioning the name of his appointee. When he woke up he asked Uthman to read what he wrote and to the surprise of Abu Bakr Uthman had added the name of 'Umar. Abu Bakr was very pleased with that.

Of course the new Caliph was more pleased with Uthman. He remembered this favor for Uthman. He rewarded him by a similar favor at the end of his reign.

¹. Al-Bukhari reported it in his Sahih Part 5 p. 178. Muslim also reported it in his Sahih Part 12 "Hukm of Al-Fei" (The wealth which is acquired from enemies of Islam) p.77.

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