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2. A Game of Contradictions (Part 1)

There actually is no *valid* Sunni proof to establish that Abu Bakr was ever deputized by the Messenger, *sallallahu 'alaihi wa alihi*, as prayer–leader during the latter's fatal or other illness. The reports about Abu Bakr's alleged appointment were narrated *mainly* by both Umm al–Muminin 'Aishah and Anas. Most of the reports on the matter trace directly to them both, and to 'Aishah in particular. There were other Sahabah – such as Ibn Mas'ud, Ibn 'Abbas, Ibn 'Umar, Abu Musa al–Ash'ari, Buraydah, Salim b. 'Ubayd, and Ibn Zam'a. However, their reports were mostly carbon copies of the severely contradictory *riwayat* of both 'Aishah and Anas. In this chapter, we will be dissecting primarily the narrations of 'Aishah and Anas – and by extension, those of all the others too. We will be exposing their extreme weakness as valid proofs in the issue at hand.

Imam Muslim (d. 261 H) has compiled many of these reports under the chapter: "The Imam is authorized to appoint someone as khalifah who will lead the people in salat when there is a valid reason for it, for example illness, or journey or others. And whoever performs salat behind a sitting Imam who is unable to stand should do so standing if he can. And there is an abrogation of performing salat sitting behind a sitting Imam for whoever is able to stand." So, we will be examining the landmark reports in it in this investigative research.

Exhibit A

Muslim records:

حدثنا محمد بن المثنى وهارون بن عبدالله قالا حدثنا عبدالصمد قال سمعت أبي يحدث قال حدثنا عبدالعزيز عن أنس قال لم يخرج إلينا نبي الله صلى الله عليه و سلم ثلاثا فأقيمت الصلاة فذهب أبو بكر يتقدم فقال نبي الله صلى الله عليه و سلم بالحجاب فرفعه فلما وضح لنا وجه نبي الله صلى الله عليه و سلم ما نظرنا منظرا قط كان أعجب إلينا من وجه النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم بيده إلى أبي بكر أن يتقدم وأرخى نبى الله صلى الله عليه و سلم الحجاب فلم نقدر عليه حتى مات

Muhammad b. Al-Muthanna and Harun b. 'Abd Allah - 'Abd al-Samad - my father - 'Abd al-'Aziz -

Anas:

The Prophet of Allah, peace be upon him, did not come out to us for three days. When the *salat* was about to start, ABU BAKR STEPPED FORWARD TO LEAD. The Prophet of Allah, peace be upon him, was near the curtain and he lifted it. When the face of the Prophet of Allah, peace be upon him, became visible to us, we had never seen anything as wonderful to us as the face of the Prophet, peace be upon him when it became visible to us. So, the Prophet of Allah, peace be upon him, gestured to Abu Bakr with his hand to lead. The Prophet of Allah, peace be upon him, then drew the curtain, and we were unable to see him until he died. 1

This report explicitly states that the Messenger of Allah was unable to lead the Sahabah in *salat* for a total of *four* days – the initial three days and his day of death. Basically, he did not participate in *salat* with the Muslims in his mosque throughout the last four days of his lifetime.

Exhibit B

In another report, Anas indicated that the Messenger died on a Monday. Muslim again documents:

حدثني عمرو الناقد وحسن الحلواني وعبد بن حميد (قال عبد أخبرني وقال الآخران حدثنا يعقوب) (وهو ابن إبراهيم بن سعد) وحدثني أبي عن صالح عن ابن شهاب قال أخبرني أنس بن مالك أن أبا بكر كان يصلي لهم في وجع رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم الذي توفي فيه حتى إذا كان يوم الاثنين وهم صفوف في الصلاة كشف رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم ستر الحجرة فنظر إلينا وهو قائم كأن وجهه ورقة مصحف ثم تبسم رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم ضاحكا قال فبهتنا ونحن في الصلاة من فرج بخروج رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم ونكص أبو بكر على عقبيه ليصل الصف وظن أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم خارج للصلاة فأشار إليهم رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم بيده أن أتموا صلاتكم قال ثم دخل رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم فأرخي الستر قال فتوفي رسول الله عليه و سلم بيده أن أتموا صلاتكم قال ثم دخل رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم فأرخي الستر قال فتوفي رسول الله عليه و سلم من يومه ذلك

'Amr al-Naqid, Hasan al-Halwani and 'Abd b. Hamid – Ya'qub b. Ibrahim b. Sa'd – my father – Salih – Ibn Shihab – Anas b. Malik:

Abu Bakr led them in *salat* during the fatal illness of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, UNTIL IT WAS A MONDAY and they had stood in congregational rows PERFORMING *salat*. The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, drew aside the curtain of the room and looked at us while he was standing. His face was like the page of the *mushaf*. Then, the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, felt happy and smiled. And we were confounded with joy DURING THE *SALAT* due to the coming out of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him. Abu Bakr stepped back upon his heels to continue the *salat* in the congregational row, thinking that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, had come out for the *salat*. The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, gestured to *them* with his hand to "complete your *salat*". Then, the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, entered and drew the curtain.

He (Anas) said: The Messenger of Allah breathed his last ON THAT VERY DAY of his.2

This *hadith* is interesting. Anas made it absolutely clear that they were already performing the *salat* (الصلاة), in their congregational rows, before the appearance of the Prophet. Yet, the Sahabah were able, during *salat*, to see the Messenger of Allah draw the curtain, to view his bright face and his happy smile, to witness how Abu Bakr stepped back, to notice how the Prophet's hand gesture to him, and to look at him returning to his room. What kind of *salat* was that?! Where were they really looking during the prayer? Were they even concentrating at all?

Muslim has this further riwayah as well:

وحدثنيه عمرو الناقد وزهير بن حرب قالا حدثنا سفيان بن عيينة عن الزهري عن أنس قال آخر نظرة نظرتها إلى رسول الله عليه وسلم كشف الستارة يوم الاثنين

'Amr al-Naqid and Zuhayr b. Harb - Sufyan b. 'Uyaynah - al-Zuhri - Anas:

The last glance which we had of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, was when he drew the curtain aside ON MONDAY.3

Therefore, the Prophet did not participate in congregational *salat* on Monday, the day of his death. He also did not pray in his mosque throughout the three days before that. That means that he stopped leading his Sahabah on Thursday, most probably in its afternoon or evening. So, on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, he did not come out to his followers at all. On Monday, the day he died, he showed himself to them but did not join them in the *salat*. The direct implication of all this is that his last ever *salat* with his Sahabah was offered on Thursday.

Al-Hafiz Ibn Kathir (d. 774 H) agrees with our conclusions:

قلنا فعلى هذا يكون آخر صلاة صلاها معهم الظهر كما جاء مصرحا به في حديث عائشة المتقدم، ويكون ذلك يوم الخميس لا يوم السبت ولا يوم الأحد كما حكاه البيهقي عن مغازي موسى بن عقبة وهو ضعيف

We say: based upon this, **the last** *salat* **which he performed with them would be** *Zuhr*, as it is explicitly reported in the foregoing *hadith* of 'Aishah, **and that would be on Thursday** – and not on Saturday or Sunday as al–Bayhaqi quoted from *Maghazi* of Musa b. 'Uqbah, and it (i.e. that submission of Musa) is $\mathbb{E}a'if.4$

Imam al-Salihi al-Shami (d. 942 H) has a backup for him:

قال الحافظ :اختلف في مدة مرضه، فالأكثر على أنه ثلاثة عشر يوما وقيل :بزيادة يوم وقيل :بنقصه .وقيل :تسعة أيام رواه البلاذري عن على رضى الله تعالى عنه وقيل :عشرة، وفيه جزم سليمان التيمى، وكان يخرج إلى الصلاة

إلا أنه انقطع ثلاثة أيام .قال في العيون :أمر رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم أن يصلي بالناس فصلى بهم فيما روينا سبع عشرة صلاة

Al-Hafiz (Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani) said: "There is disagreement about the length of his (i.e. the Prophet's fatal) illness. The majority are of the opinion that it lasted thirteen days. Some say: it was a day more. Some say: it was a day less." Some also say: it was nine days. This opinion was narrated from 'Ali, may Allah the Most High be pleased with him, by al-Baladhari. Some say: it lasted ten days. This was explicitly stated by Sulayman al-Tamimi.

He (the Prophet) used to come out for the *salat* (throughout his illness) except that he missed three days.

The author of *al-'Uyun* said: "The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, ordered that he (Abu Bakr) lead the people in *salat*, **and he led them in seventeen** *salats*, according to what was narrated to us."5

One glaring omission from Anas' reports is that of any explicit order from the Prophet concerning Abu Bakr's leadership of *salat*. As such, we do not know – from Anas' narrations – whether he led the Sahabah in *salat* from Thursday till Monday on the order of the Messenger of Allah or not. What is clear from them, however, is that the Prophet was allegedly pleased with Abu Bakr's leadership of *salat* when he saw it on the Monday of his demise. This is also the best – based upon Anas' reports above – that can be said about Abu Bakr's leadership of *salat* for the three previous days: that the Prophet knew about it, and silently approved it by not objecting. Nothing more can be claimed from those texts. Of course, an approval is not always the same thing as an order.

Exhibit C

Ibn Kathir makes reference to a *hadith* of Umm al-Muminin 'Aishah. This is it, as recorded by Imam Muslim:

حدثنا أحمد بن عبدالله بن يونس حدثنا زائدة حدثنا موسى بن أبي عائشة عن عبيدالله بن عبدالله قال دخلت على عائشة فقلت لها ألا تحدثيني عن مرض رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم؟ قالت بلى ثقل النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم فقال أصلى الناس ؟ قلنا لا وهم ينتظرونك يا رسول الله قال ضعوا لي ماء في المخضب ففعلنا فاغتسل ثم ذهب لينوء فأغمي عليه ثم أفاق فقال أصلى الناس ؟ قلنا لا وهم ينتظرونك يا رسول الله فقال فعلنا فاغتسل ثم ذهب لينوء فأغمي عليه ثم أفاق فقال أصلى الناس ؟ قلنا لا وهم ينتظرونك يا رسول الله فقال ضعوا لي ماء في المخضب ففعلنا فاغتسل ثم ذهب لينوء فأغمي عليه ثم أفاق فقال أصلى الناس ؟ فقلنا لا وهم ينتظرونك يا رسول الله كنا الله ومعالية ماء في المخضب ففعلنا فاغتسل ثم ذهب لينوء فأغمي عليه ثم أفاق فقال أصلى الناس ؟ فقلنا لا وهم ينتظرونك يا رسول الله

قالت والناس عكوف في المسجد ينتظرون رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم لصلاة العشاء الآخرة

قالت فأرسل رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم إلى أبي بكر أن يصلي بالناس فأتاه الرسول فقال إن رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم يأمرك أن تصلي بالناس فقال أبو بكر وكان رجلا رقيقا يا عمر صل بالناس قال فقال عمر أنت أحق بذلك

قالت فصلى بهم أبو بكر تلك الأيام ثم إن رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم وجد من نفسه خفة فخرج بين رجلين أحدهما العباس لصلاة الظهر وأبو بكر يصلي بالناس فلما رآه أبو بكر ذهب ليتأخر فأوما إليه النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم أن لا يتأخر وقال لهما أجلساني إلى جنبه فأجلساه إلى جنب أبو بكر وكان أبو بكر يصلي وهو قائم بصلاة النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم والناس يصلون بصلاة أبى بكر والنبي صلى الله عليه السلام قاعد

قال عبيدالله فدخلت على عبدالله بن عباس فقلت له ألا أعرض عليك ما حدثتني عائشة عن مرض رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم ؟ فقال هات فعرضت حديثها عليه فما أنكر منه شيئا غير أنه قال أسمت لك الرجل الذي كان مع العباس؟ قلت لا قال هو على

Ahmad b. 'Abd Allah b. Yunus – Zaidah – Musa b. Abi 'Aishah – 'Ubayd Allah b. 'Abd Allah:

I visited 'Aishah and said to her, "Would you tell me about the illness of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him?" She replied, "Yes, I will. The Prophet, peace be upon him, was seriously ill, and he asked, 'Have the people performed *salat*?' We said, 'No, they are waiting for you (to lead them), O Messenger of Allah'. He said, 'Put some water for me in the tub'. We complied. So, he performed ablution. Then, he was about to move with difficulty but fainted. Then, he woke up and said, 'Have the people performed *salat*?' We said, 'No. They are waiting for you, O Messenger of Allah.' He said, 'Put some water for me in the tub'. We complied. So, he performed ablution. Then, he was about to move with difficulty but fainted. Then, he woke up and said, 'Have the people performed *salat*?' We said, 'No. They are waiting for you, O Messenger of Allah.' He said, 'Put some water for me in the tub'. We complied. So, he performed ablution. Then, he was about to move with difficulty but fainted. Then, he woke up and said, 'Have the people performed *salat*?' We said, 'No. They are waiting for you, O Messenger of Allah.'

She ('Aishah) said, "The people were standing in the mosque waiting for the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, **FOR THE** *'ISHA PRAYER*."

She ('Aishah) said, "Then, the Messenger of Allah sent a messenger to Abu Bakr to tell him to lead the people in *salat*. When the messenger (of the Prophet) got to him, he said, 'The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, orders you to lead the people in *salat*.' So, Abu Bakr, who was a man of tenderly feelings, said, 'O 'Umar, lead the people in *salat*.' 'Umar replied, 'You are more entitled to that.'

She ('Aishah) said, 'So, Abu Bakr led them in *salat* during those days. THEN, the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, felt some relief and he went out, supported by two men, **one of whom was**

al-'Abbas, FOR THE ZUHR PRAYER while Abu Bakr was already leading the people in salat.

When Abu Bakr saw him, he began to move backwards. But the Prophet, peace be upon him, indicated to him not to move backwards. He also told them both (i.e. the two men with him), 'Sit me *beside* Abu Bakr.' Therefore, they sat him beside Abu Bakr. Abu Bakr was performing *salat* while standing, **and he was following the** *salat* **of the Prophet**, peace be upon him, and the people were following the *salat* of Abu Bakr. The Prophet, peace be upon him, was sitting."

'Ubayd Allah said: I visited 'Abd Allah b. 'Abbas and said to him, "Should I tell you what 'Aishah told me concerning the illness of the Messenger of Allah?" He said, "Tell." So, I presented her *hadith* to him, and he did not deny anything from it, except that he asked, "Did she tell you the name of the other man who was with al-'Abbas?" I said, "No". He said, "He was 'Ali."6

But, 'Aishah has only blown up everything here! The Messenger of Allah became unable to lead *salat* on Thursday, according to the *hadith* of Anas. In this report of 'Aishah, that was at the time of the *'Isha* prayer – and not *Zuhr* as al–Hafiz Ibn Kathir wants us to believe. That *'Isha* prayer, as well as the subsequent *salats* for a few days, were led by Abu Bakr on the explicit order of the Prophet. These are claims of 'Aishah which are missing in the reports of Anas. But, according to Anas, the Messenger of Allah never again joined the Muslims in *salat* once Abu Bakr started leading.

By contrast, 'Aishah claimed that her blessed husband actually took over the leadership of *salat* from her father after some "days"! In the Arabic, the word *ayam* is used for the days of Abu Bakr's leadership after the initial 'Isha. That word is plural, and refers to at least three days. This means that Abu Bakr led the *salats* on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Then, the Prophet of Allah intervened in his *salat* and took over from him on Monday. Here, Anas and 'Aishah clash again. He submitted that the Messenger never participated in congregational *salat* on the Monday of his death, while she insisted that her husband did in the *Zuhr* prayer of that day!

Exhibit D

Yet, 'Aishah proceeded to contradict herself too in a very fundamental way. Muslim records:

حدثنا أبو بكر بن أبي شيبة حدثنا أبو معاوية ووكيع ح وحدثنا يحيى بن يحيى (واللفظ له) قال أخبرنا أبو معاوية عن الأعمش عن إبراهيم عن الأسود عن عائشة قالت لما ثقل رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم جاء بلال يؤذنه بالصلاة فقال مرو أبا بكر فليصل بالناس قالت فقلت يا رسول الله إن أبا بكر رجل أسيف وإنه متى يقم مقامك لا يسمع الناس فلو أمرت عمر فقال مروا أبا بكر فليصل بالناس قالت فقلت لحفصة قولي له إن أبا بكر رجل أسيف وإنه متى يقم مقامك لا يسمع الناس فلو أمرت عمر فقالت له فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم إنكن لأنتن صواحب يوسف مروا أبا بكر فليصل بالناس قالت فأمروا أبا بكر يصلي بالناس قالت فلما دخل في الصلاة وجد رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم من نفسه خفة فقام يهادي بين رجلين ورجلاه تخطان في الأرض قالت فلما دخل المسجد سمع أبو بكر حسه ذهب يتأخر فأوما إليه رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم عمكانك فجاء رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم حتى جلس عن يسار أبى بكر قالت فكان رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم يصلى بالناس جالسا وأبو

بكر قائما يقتدي أبو بكر بصلاة النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم ويقتدي الناس بصلاة أبي بكر

Abu Bakr b. Abi Shaybah – Abu Mu'awiyah and Waki' AND Yahya b. Yahya – Abu Mu'awiyah – al-A'mash – Ibrahim – al-Aswad – 'Aishah:

When the Messenger of Allah became seriously ill, **Bilal came to summon him to** *salat*. **He said, "Ask Abu Bakr to lead the people in** *salat*."

She said: I said, "O Messenger of Allah! Verily, Abu Bakr is a tenderly man. If he stood in your place, he would not be able to make the people hear anything. You should instead order 'Umar." He said, "Ask Abu Bakr to lead the people in *salat*."

She said: "So, I told Hafsah my statement to him, 'Abu Bakr is a tenderly man. If he stood in your place, he would not be able to make people hear anything. You should instead order 'Umar." She told him. On that, the Messenger of Allah said, "You are like the women who gathered around Yusuf. Ask Abu Bakr to lead the people in *salat*."

She said: "Therefore, Abu Bakr was asked to lead the people in *salat*." She said: "As he (Abu Bakr) began the *salat*, the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, felt some relief. So, He got up and moved, supported by two men, and his feet dragged on the ground.

She said: "When he entered the mosque, Abu Bakr heard his sound. He moved backwards, but the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, indicated to him to 'stand in your place.' **The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, then came and sat on the** *left* **side of Abu Bakr**."

She said: "The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, was leading the people in *salat* in a sitting posture. Abu Bakr was following the *salat* of the Prophet, peace be upon him, in a standing posture and the people were following the *salat* of Abu Bakr.7

The contradictions between this report and *Exhibit C* above are tremendous:

- 1. According to Exhibit C, Bilal did not come to summon the Prophet for salat. In Exhibit D, he came.
- 2. According to *Exhibit C*, the Messenger of Allah attempted to join the Muslims in the mosque but fainted three times. In *Exhibit D*, the Prophet did not faint at all, and made no attempt whatsoever to join his followers in his mosque.
- 3. According to *Exhibit C*, the Prophet only ordered Abu Bakr to lead the *salat* after three failed attempts to do so by himself. In *Exhibit D*, he gave the order *immediately* Bilal came to him, without making any attempt to lead the *salat* by himself.
- 4. According to *Exhibit C*, the Prophet sent a specific messenger to Abu Bakr to lead the *Salat*. Moreover, Abu Bakr too offered the "honour" to 'Umar, who politely turned it down. However, in *Exhibit*

- *D*, the Messenger of Allah did not send any specific messenger to Abu Bakr. Rather, he only gave a general order to inform Abu Bakr to lead the *salat*. Besides, Abu Bakr did not offer the "honour" to 'Umar.
- 5. According to *Exhibit C*, 'Aishah did not object to the Prophet's order to Abu Bakr to lead the *salat*. However, in *Exhibit D*, she allegedly fiercely objected to it.
- 6. According to *Exhibit C*, after the Prophet's order to Abu Bakr to lead the *salat*, he continued to do so for *days*, till Monday before the Messenger of Allah felt a relief and "took over" an already ongoing *salat* from him. In *Exhibit D*, the Prophet felt a relief and "took over" from Abu Bakr, on that same Thursday, only *minutes* after giving his order to him to lead the *salat*! 'Aishah's "frantic" objection to Abu Bakr's appointment, especially the text of her arguments as narrated in *Exhibit D* shows that Abu Bakr had *never* led Muslims in *salat* before then!
- 7. According to *Exhibit C*, Abu Bakr led the *salat* for several days before the Prophet's intervention. By contrast, in *Exhibit D*, Abu Bakr did not even lead a single *salat* before the take–over!
- 8. According to *Exhibit C*, the Messenger on his order was taken by two men to the side of Abu Bakr. But, in *Exhibit D*, the Prophet went to the left side of Abu Bakr by *himself*, with no support.

What exactly are we supposed to believe from all these terrible contradictions?!

- 1. Abu al-Husayn Muslim b. al-Hajjaj al-Qushayri al-Naysaburi, Sahih Muslim (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi) [annotator: Muhammad Fuad 'Abd al-Baqi], vol. 1, p. 315, # 419 (100)
- 2. Abu al-Husayn Muslim b. al-Hajjaj al-Qushayri al-Naysaburi, Sahih Muslim (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi) [annotator: Muhammad Fuad 'Abd al-Baqi], vol. 1, p. 315, # 419 (98)
- 3. lbid, vol. 1, p. 315, # 419 (99)
- 4. Abu al-Fida Isma'il b. Kathir al-Dimashqi, al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah (Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi; 1st edition, 1408 H) [annotator: 'Ali Shiri], vol. 5, p. 256
- 5. Muhammad b. Yusuf al-Salihi al-Shami, Subul al-Huda al-Rashad fi Sirah Khayr al-'lbad (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'llmiyyah; 1st edition, 1414 H) [annotators: 'Adil Ahmad 'Abd al-Mawjud and 'Ali Muhammad Ma'ud], vol. 12, p. 244
- 6. Abu al-Husayn Muslim b. al-Hajjaj al-Qushayri al-Naysaburi, Sahih Muslim (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi) [annotator: Muhammad Fuad 'Abd al-Baqi], vol. 1, p. 311, # 418 (90)
- 7. Abu al-Husayn Muslim b. al-Hajjaj al-Qushayri al-Naysaburi, Sahih Muslim (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi) [annotator: Muhammad Fuad 'Abd al-Baqi], vol. 1, p. 311, # 418 (95)

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