

32. Hadith Al-Ikhtiyar, Examining The Verse Of The Cave

Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 H) states:

يقول الله إلا تنصروه فقد نصره الله إذ أخرجه الذين كفروا ثاني اثنين إذ هما في الغار إذ يقول لصاحبه لا تحزن أن الله معنا

و مثل هذه الفضيلة لم تحصل لغير أبي بكر قطعا ... و الأفضلية إنما تثبت بالخصائص لا بالمشاركات ... و قد قال العلماء ما صح لعلي من الفضائل فهي مشتركة شاركه فيها غيره بخلاف الصديق فان كثيرا من فضائله وأكثرها خصائص له لا يشركه فيها غيره

Allah says: {If you help him not, for Allah did indeed help him when the disbelievers drove him out, the second of two, when they both were in the cave, when he was saying to his companion: “Do not fear, surely Allah is with us.”} (9:40)

This merit never reached absolutely anyone other than Abu Bakr ... **And superiority is established only through *exclusive* merits, and not through shared qualities** ... The scholars have said: “What has been authentically transmitted among the merits of ‘Ali are only shared qualities, which others too share with him, as opposed to al-Siddiq, for lots of his merits and most of them are exclusive to him, and not shared with him by anyone.”¹

In other words, the above verse establishes the superiority of Abu Bakr over all the Sahabah. It contains his *exclusive* merit. Our Shaykh says further:

فيقال لا ريب أن الفضيلة التي حصلت لأبي بكر قي الهجرة لم تحصل لغيره من الصحابة بالكتاب و السنة و الإجماع فتكون هذه الأفضلية ثابتة له دون عمر و عثمان و علي و غيرهم من الصحابة فيكون هو الإمام

So, it is said that there is no doubt that the merit achieved by Abu Bakr during the *Hijrah*, **none other of the Sahabah achieved it**, in accordance with the Book, the Sunnah and the consensus (of the Sunni scholars). Therefore, this superiority becomes established for him, and not for ‘Umar, ‘Uthman, ‘Ali or other Sahabah. As such, he was the Imam.[2](#)

Our Shaykh’s line of argument goes like this:

1. Whichever of the Sahabah had a merit which none other possessed was the best of them.
3. Such a Sahabi was also the true Imam among them.

In line with this reasoning, he argues – citing unnamed Sunni scholars as support – that most of Abu Bakr’s “merits” were exclusive to him, and none of Amir al-Muminin’s merits was exclusive to him! This is very strange though. Throughout this book of ours, we have investigated only authentic *ahadith* on *exclusive* merits of ‘Ali, *‘alaihi al-salam*, in the most authoritative Sunni sources! Our esteemed readers can themselves verify this. Moreover, Imam al-Nasai (d. 303 H) authored a well-known book – *Khasais Amir al-Muminin ‘Ali* (The *Exclusive* Merits of Amir al-Muminin ‘Ali) – in which he compiled only Sunni *ahadith* on the *exclusive* merits of Imam ‘Ali! No similar book has ever been written for Abu Bakr, ‘Umar or ‘Uthman.

Anyway, Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah thinks that the Verse of the Cave above contains an exclusive merit of Abu Bakr, which establishes his overall superiority and *Imamah* over the Sahabah. In our view – as we will prove – the verse actually does the direct opposite! It basically exposes Abu Bakr and all the Sunni-only “ahadith” about him in very uncomfortable lights. It also totally brings down the Sunni creed, leaving it no chance of revival!

We will begin our analysis by looking first at the full text of the verse:

إلا تنصروه فقد نصره الله إذ أخرجه الذين كفروا ثاني اثنين إذ هما في الغار إذ يقول لصاحبه لا تحزن إن الله معنا
فأنزل الله سكينته عليه وأيده بجنود لم تروها وجعل كلمة الذين كفروا السفلى وكلمة الله هي العليا والله عزيز
حكيم

If you help **him** not, for Allah did indeed help **him** when the disbelievers drove **him** out – the second of two *when* they both were in the cave – when **he** was saying to **his** companion: “Do not fear, surely Allah is with us.” So, Allah sent down His *sakinah* upon **him**, and helped **him** with forces which you saw not, and made the word of those who disbelieved the lowermost, while it was the Word of Allah that became the uppermost, and Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise.[3](#)

The verse is primarily about the Messenger of Allah, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa alihi*. The following points can be deduced from it:

1. The disbelievers drove him out of Makkah. So, he was ordered to migrate to Madinah by Allah.
3. He was the *second* of two people, *when* they both were together in the cave.
5. Abu Bakr was the *first* of the two, as he was the only one present with him in the cave. He has also been called the Prophet's companion.
7. Abu Bakr exhibited fear. So, the Messenger ordered him not to fear. The meaning of the phrase "Allah is with us" will be discussed in detail soon.
9. Allah ignored Abu Bakr, and sent down His *sakinah* upon His Prophet *alone*, and further helped him *alone* with unseen forces.
11. Through these actions, Allah made the plan of the disbelievers to fail, and His Own Plan to succeed.

Particular attention must be paid to this part:

إلا تنصروه فقد نصره الله إذ أخرجه الذين كفروا ثاني اثنين إذ هما في الغار إذ يقول لصاحبه

If you help **him** not, for Allah did indeed help **him** when the disbelievers drove **him** out – the second of two when they both were in the cave – and **he** was saying to **his** companion

The expression "the *second* of two" is a description of the one who was driven out by the disbelievers and helped by Allah. He was the *second* of two people in the cave, and it was he who said what he said to his companion. This is so obvious from the text of the verse. Meanwhile, Prof. Ibn Yasin, a contemporary Sunni *mufassir*, also states in support of our proposition under the verse:

أخرج الطبري بسنده الصحيح عن مجاهد: (إلا تنصروه) ذكر ما كان في أول شأنه حين بعثه يقول الله: فأنا فاعل ذلك به وناصره، كما نصرته إذ ذاك وهو ثاني اثنين.

Al-Tabari records **with his *sahih* chain** from Mujahid that he said: "(If you help him not) He mentioned what was his affair since He appointed him (on a prophetic mission). Allah says: I do that with Him and I am his Helper, and I helped him when he was like that, **and he was the *second* of two.**[4](#)

In very simple terms, the Messenger of Allah was the *second* of two as we have stated. Abu Bakr was the *first*. Getting this part of the verse straight is extremely crucial to our discussion. This is because the alleged "exclusive merit" of Abu Bakr in it is only a widespread Sunni misconception that he was the one referred to as "the second of two"! For instance, Imam al-Bukhari (d. 256 H) records:

حدثنا إبراهيم بن موسى أخبرنا هشام عن معمر عن الزهري

أخبرني أنس بن مالك رضي الله عنه أنه سمع خطبة عمر الآخرة حين جلس على المنبر وذلك الغد من يوم توفي النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم فتشهد وأبو بكر صامت لا يتكلم قال كنت أرجو أن يعيش رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم حتى يدبرنا يريد بذلك أن يكون آخرهم فإن يك محمدا صلى الله عليه و سلم قد مات فإن الله تعالى قد جعل بين أظهركم نورا تهتدون به بما هدى الله محمدا صلى الله عليه و سلم وإن أبا بكر صاحب رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم ثاني اثنين فإنه أولى المسلمين بأموركم فقوموا فبايعوه وكانت طائفة منهم قد بايعوه قبل ذلك في سقيفة بني ساعدة وكانتبيعة العامة على المنبر

Ibrahim b. Musa – Hisham – Ma'mar – al-Zuhri – Anas b. Malik, may Allah be pleased with him:

I heard 'Umar's second sermon which he delivered while he was sitting on the pulpit on the day following the death of the Prophet, peace be upon him. He testified while Abu Bakr was silent and did not say anything. He ('Umar) said, "I wish that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, had outlived all of us. But if Muhammad is dead, Allah nonetheless has kept a light amongst you from which you can receive the same guidance as Allah guided Muhammad, peace be upon him, with that. **And Abu Bakr is the companion of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him. He is (also) the *second* of two.** He is the most entitled person among the Muslims to manage your affairs. Therefore get up and swear allegiance to him."⁵

Imam 'Abd al-Razzaq (d. 211 H) has recorded the same report with the same chain:

أخبرنا عبد الرزاق قال: أخبرنا معمر عن الزهري قال: أخبرني أنس بن مالك ... ثم قال عمر: أما بعد ... فإن يك محمد قد مات فإن الله قد جعل بين أظهركم نورا تهتدون به، هذا كتاب الله فاعتصموا به، تهتدون لما هدى الله به محمدا صلى الله عليه وسلم ثم إن أبا بكر رحمه الله – صاحب رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم وتاني اثنين، وإنه أولى الناس بأموركم، فقوموا، فبايعوه

'Abd al-Razzaq – Ma'mar – al-Zuhri – Anas b. Malik:

... Then 'Umar said: "... But if Muhammad is dead, Allah nonetheless has kept a light amongst you from which you can receive guidance. This is the Book of Allah. So, hold fast to it. You will receive the same guidance as Allah guided Muhammad, peace be upon him, with that. **Then, Abu Bakr, may Allah be merciful to him, is the companion of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, AND the *second* of two.** He is the most entitled person among mankind to manage your affairs. Therefore get up and swear allegiance to him."⁶

Commenting on these reports, al-Hafiz (d. 852 H) states:

قوله) وإن أبا بكر صاحب رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم الخ (قال ابن التين قدم الصحبة لشرفها ولما كان غيره قد يشاركه فيها عطف عليها ما انفرد به أبو بكر وهو كونه ثاني اثنين وهي أعظم فضائله التي استحق بها ان يكون الخليفة من بعد النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم ولذلك قال وإنه أولى الناس بأموركم

His statement (Abu Bakr is the companion of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, etc): Ibn al-Tin said: “He mentioned the companionship first due to its honour. However, since others shared it with him (i.e. Abu Bakr), he (‘Umar) conjoined it with **what was exclusive to Abu Bakr, and that was his being the *second* of two, and it is the greatest of his merits which entitled him to be the *khalifah*** after the Prophet, peace be upon him. This was why he (‘Umar) said: “He is the most entitled person among mankind to manage your affairs”.⁷

It is apparent that the Ahl al-Sunnah, based upon the submissions of ‘Umar and others, consider Abu Bakr to have been the one referred to by Allah as “the *second* of two” in this verse:

إلا تنصروه فقد نصره الله إذ أخرجه الذين كفروا ثاني اثنين إذ هما في الغار إذ يقول لصاحبه لا تحزن إن الله معنا
فأنزل الله سكينته عليه وأيده بجنود لم تروها

If you help **him** not, for Allah did indeed help **him** when the disbelievers drove **him** out – the second of two *when* they both were in the cave – when **he** was saying to **his** companion: “Do not fear, surely Allah is with us.” So, Allah sent down His *sakinah* upon **him**, and helped **him** with forces which you saw not.

If the Sunni theory were correct, then the following would be true:

1. Allah helped Abu Bakr when the disbelievers drove him out. Allah did *not* help His Messenger.
3. It was Abu Bakr who said to the Prophet “Do not fear, surely Allah is with us”. The Messenger was the “companion” of Abu Bakr.
5. Allah sent down *sakinah* upon Abu Bakr and helped him with unseen forces. He did *not* send *sakinah* upon His Prophet and did *not* strengthen him with any forces.

Would a believer ever make any of the above submissions? This is the grand Sunni dilemma!

The patent Sunni logic is this:

1. Abu Bakr was the *second* of two in the cave with the Messenger.
3. Therefore, he was *second* in rank only to the Prophet.

The truth, however, is that Abu Bakr was actually the *first* of two, while the Messenger of Allah was the *second*! By the Sunni logic, the Prophet was in reality second in rank to Abu Bakr!

Well, let us agree, for the sake of argument, that Abu Bakr was the one referred to as “the *second* of two” in the Verse of the Cave. In that case, the Messenger was the *first* of two. By Sunni logic, Abu Bakr then is the second highest ranking Muslim in this Ummah, after the Prophet, due to his status in that verse. In other words, the first of two is the first in the Ummah; and the *second* of two is the *second* in

the Ummah. But, does this arrangement really help the Ahl al–Sunnah? The best way to find out is through this *hadith* recorded by Imam al–Bukhari:

حدثنا محمد بن سنان حدثنا همام عن ثابت عن أنس عن أبي بكر رضي الله عنه قال: قلت للنبي صلى الله عليه و سلم وأنا في الغار لو أن أحدهم نظر تحت قدميه لأبصرنا فقال ما ظنك يا أبا بكر باثنين الله ثالثهما

Muhammad b. Sinan – Hamam – Thabit – Anas – Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him:

I said to the Prophet, peace be upon him, while I was in the cave, “If any of them should look under his feet, he would see us.” He said, "O Abu Bakr! **What do you think of two, the *third* of whom is Allah?**”⁸

So, the Messenger is *first* of three, Abu Bakr the *second*, and Allah the *third*. By Sunni logic therefore, Abu Bakr is superior to Allah?! May Allah forgive us and save us from such blasphemies. The above question of the Prophet was picked from this verse:

ألم تر أن الله يعلم ما في السماوات وما في الأرض ما يكون من نجوى ثلاثة إلا هو رابعهم ولا خمسة إلا هو سادسهم ولا أدنى من ذلك ولا أكثر إلا هو معهم أين ما كانوا

Have you not seen that Allah knows whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is on the earth? **There is no private conversation of three, except He is *their fourth*, nor five except He is *their sixth*, nor of less than that or more, except He is with them wherever they may be.**⁹

Let us connect everything now. First, we have the verse:

إذ يقول لصاحبه لا تحزن إن الله معنا

When he was saying to his companion: “Do not fear, **surely Allah is WITH US.**”

Then the *hadith*:

فقال ما ظنك يا أبا بكر باثنين الله ثالثهما

He said, “O Abu Bakr! **What do you think of two, the *third* of whom is Allah?**”

Both sentences are then connected by Allah Himself:

ما يكون من نجوى ثلاثة إلا هو رابعهم ولا خمسة إلا هو سادسهم ولا أدنى من ذلك ولا أكثر إلا هو معهم أين ما كانوا

There is no private conversation of three, except He is *their fourth*, nor five except He is *their sixth*, nor of less than that or more, except He is WITH THEM wherever they may be. [10](#)

It is obvious. Allah was with His Prophet and Abu Bakr, only in the sense that He was present with them both in the cave. He was *with them* solely on account of His being their third. However, this was no merit at all, much less an exclusive achievement! Allah is similarly present with every single individual, or any number of individuals, staying secretly anywhere. As such, He is present with even pagans and criminals whenever they plot their disbelief and evil deeds!

Here, we get to the most serious aspect of the Verse of the Cave. The first undeniable fact, at this stage, is that Allah ignored Abu Bakr and did not help him, even though there were two of them together in the cave:

إِلا تنصروه فقد نصره الله إذ أخرجه الذين كفروا ثاني اثنين إذ هما في الغار

If you help him not, for Allah did indeed help **him** when the disbelievers drove him out – the second of two when they both were in the cave.

We ask: why? Allah has made a promise in His Book:

O you who believe! If you help Allah, He will help you. [11](#)

So, was Abu Bakr a believer? Was he helping the Cause of Allah with his *Hijrah*? If the answers to both questions were “yes”, then why did Allah refuse to help him? Or, is it that Abu Bakr actually needed no help? In that case, why was he hiding with the Prophet in the cave? The fact that Allah ignored Abu Bakr and did not help him raises red flags concerning his *iman* and his real intentions with his migration.

Allah provided two kinds of help in the cave:

فأنزل الله سكينته عليه وأيده بجنود لم تروها

So, Allah sent down His *sakinah* upon **him**, and helped **him** with forces which you saw not.

Al-Hafiz Ibn Kathir (d. 774 H) comments:

فأنزل الله سكينته عليه { أي : تأييده ونصره عليه ، أي : على الرسول في أشهر القولين ... ولهذا قال : { وأيده } ، بجنود لم تروها { أي : الملائكة

{So, Allah sent down His *sakinah* upon him}: meaning, (He sent down) His assistance and help upon him, that his, upon the Messenger according to the more popular of two views ... This is why He said:

{and helped him with forces which you saw not}, that is, the angels. [12](#)

When this verse was revealed – about ten years after the incident – some (if not all) of the disbelievers who wanted to kill the Prophet that day had become Muslims. So, the phrase “which you saw not” was apparently directed at them. Allah sent His *sakinah* upon His Messenger, and further helped him with unseen forces, namely the angels. Abu Bakr was ignored. The foundational fact to note about *sakinah* is that it is revealed into the heart:

هو الذي أنزل السكينة في قلوب المؤمنين ليزدادوا إيمانا مع إيمانهم

He it is **Who sent down *sakinah* into the hearts of the believers, that they may grow more in faith (*iman*)** along with their (present) faith (*iman*). [13](#)

The following points are clear from the verse:

1. *Sakinah* is revealed into the heart.
3. It only strengthens the already existing *iman* (faith) in the heart.
5. As such, it never enters a heart with no *iman* (faith), since there would be nothing for it to strengthen.

In particular, before Allah sends down *sakinah* to any heart, He first looks at what is inside it to find *iman*:

لقد رضي الله عن المؤمنين إذ يبايعونك تحت الشجرة فعلم ما في قلوبهم فأنزل السكينة عليهم

Indeed, Allah was pleased with the believers when they gave their *ba'yah* to you (O Muhammad) under the tree. **He knew what was in their hearts. Therefore, He sent down *sakinah* upon them.** [14](#)

The question is: why did Allah send down *sakinah* into the heart of His Prophet alone, despite the presence of Abu Bakr with him? In similar cases, He had equally revealed it to whichever believer was with him:

فأنزل الله سكينته على رسوله وعلى المؤمنين

So, Allah sent down His *sakinah* upon His Messenger **and upon the believers.** [15](#)

And:

ثم أنزل الله سكينته على رسوله وعلى المؤمنين وأنزل جنودا لم تروها

Then Allah sent down His *sakinah* upon His Messenger **and upon the believers**, and sent down forces which you saw not. [16](#)

So, why did He exclude Abu Bakr in the cave? It is obvious that He checked the latter's heart, alongside that of His Prophet. Then, He decided to send His *sakinah* to His Messenger only. We again ask our Sunni brothers: why? According to the Ahl al-Sunnah, Abu Bakr was the *sayyid* of believers. If that were true, then his *iman* would be the greatest among the Sahabah. In that case, Allah would certainly have blessed him with His *sakinah* as He did with His Messenger. But, He did not! We ask once more: why would Allah refuse to send *sakinah* into a heart filled with strong, undiluted *iman*? Looking at everything, the only logical explanation is that Allah looked at the heart of Abu Bakr and found no *iman* there. Therefore, He decided to send down His *sakinah* upon His Prophet alone.

Expectedly, Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah feels severely troubled by this conclusion:

وأما قول الرافضي إن القرآن حيث ذكر إنزال السكينة على رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم شرك معه المؤمنين إلا هذا الموضع ولا نقص أعظم منه

فالجواب أولاً أن هذا يوهم أنه ذكر ذلك في مواضع متعددة وليس كذلك بل لم يذكر ذلك إلا في قصة حنين ... وقد ذكر إنزال السكينة على المؤمنين وليس معهم الرسول في قوله إنا فتحنا لك فتحاً مبيناً سورة الفتح 1 إلى قوله هو الذي أنزل السكينة في قلوب المؤمنين سورة الفتح 4 الآية وقوله لقد رضي الله عن المؤمنين إذ يبايعونك تحت الشجرة فعلم ما في قلوبهم فأنزل السكينة عليهم سورة الفتح 18

As for the statement of the Rafidhi that “the Qur’an, whenever it mentions the descent of *sakinah* upon the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, always conjoined the believers with him, except in this one place (i.e. in the cave), and there is no disgrace worse than it.”

The first answer is that this one (i.e. the Rafidhi) hallucinates that it (i.e. the Qur’an) mentions that (i.e. the descent of *sakinah* upon the Prophet and the believers together) as having occurred at several places. But this is not so. Rather, it has not mentioned that except in the story of Hunayn... It has (also) mentioned the descent of *sakinah* upon the believers and the Messenger was not included with them in His Statement {Verily, We have given you [O Muhammad] a manifest victory} (48:1) until His Statement {He it is Who sent down *sakinah* into the hearts of the believers} (48:4) and His Statement {Indeed, Allah was pleased with the believers when they gave their *ba'yah* to you [O Muhammad] under the tree. He knew what was in their hearts, and He sent down *sakinah* upon them} (48:18) [17](#)

First and foremost, the Rafidhi did not claim that *sakinah* was revealed upon the Prophet and the believers together at several places. His statement is very clear:

وأما قول الرافضي إن القرآن حيث ذكر إنزال السكينة على رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم شرك معه المؤمنين إلا

هذا الموضوع ولا نقص أعظم منه

As for the statement of the Rafidhi that “the Qur’an, **whenever it mentions the descent of *sakinah* upon the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, always conjoined the believers with him**, except in this one place (i.e. in the cave), and there is no disgrace worse than it.

To refute him, our Shaykh only has to show us a single place in the Qur’an where Allah has revealed His *sakinah* upon His Prophet alone, without joining the believers with him. The truth is: the Rafidhi was correct! The only instance where *sakinah* descended upon the Messenger alone was during his stay in the cave with Abu Bakr. That indeed is a severe slur on the latter.

Secondly, our Shaykh’s claim that *sakinah* descended upon the Prophet and the believers together only at Hunayn (8 H), and at no other place, is equally untrue! The same thing occurred at al-Hudaybiyyah (6 H) too:

إذ جعل الذين كفروا في قلوبهم الحمية حمية الجاهلية فأنزل الله سكينته على رسوله وعلى المؤمنين وألزمهم كلمة التقوى وكانوا أحق بها وأهلها وكان الله بكل شيء عليما لقد صدق الله رسوله الرؤيا بالحق لتدخلن المسجد الحرام إن شاء الله آمنين محلقين رءوسكم ومقصرين لا تخافون فعلم ما لم تعلموا فجعل من دون ذلك فتحا قريبا

When those who disbelieve had put in their hearts pride and haughtiness, the pride and haughtiness of *Jahiliyyah*, **then Allah sent down His *sakinah* upon His Messenger and upon the believers**, and made them stick to the Word of Piety, and they were well entitled to it and worthy of it. And Allah is the All-Knower of everything. Indeed Allah shall fulfil the true vision which He showed to His Messenger. Certainly you shall enter the *Masjid al-Haram* (in Makkah), *insha Allah*, secure, (some) having your heads shaved, and (some) having your hair cut short, having no fear. He knew what you knew not, and He granted besides that a near victory. [18](#)

This was two years before Hunayn, when the unbelievers – who were still in control of Makkah – arrogantly prevented the Messenger and the believers from performing *Hajj* there. Instead, the Muslims, headed by the Prophet, entered into a peace agreement with the pagan Makkans, granting the latter lots of concessions. Allah then promised the believers of a near conquest of Makkah. It happened soon thereafter, in a bloodless manner.

In the light of the above fact, the fallacy of this submission of Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah also comes to the fore:

وقد ذكر إنزال السكينة على المؤمنين وليس معهم الرسول في قوله إنا فتحنا لك فتحا مبينا سورة الفتح 1 إلى قوله هو الذي أنزل السكينة في قلوب المؤمنين سورة الفتح 4 الآية وقوله لقد رضي الله عن المؤمنين إذ يبايعونك تحت الشجرة فعلم ما في قلوبهم فأنزل السكينة عليهم سورة الفتح 18

It has (also) mentioned the descent of *sakinah* upon the believers and the Messenger was not included with them in His Statement {Verily, We have given you [O Muhammad] a manifest victory} (48:1) until His Statement {He it is Who sent down *sakinah* into the hearts of the believers} (48:4) and His Statement {Indeed, Allah was pleased with the believers when they gave their *ba'yah* to you [O Muhammad] under the tree. He knew what was in their hearts, and He sent down *sakinah* upon them} (48:18)

All of those verses were revealed about al-Hudaybiyyah! Allah mentions His revelation of *sakinah*, on that occasion, upon His Prophet only once, and mentions its descent upon the believers on the same occasion thrice – all of them in the same *Surah* which was specifically sent down about that *singular* event. Yet, the bottomline remains that the *sakinah* came upon the Messenger *and* the believers *together* at Hudaybiyyah!

Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah's lowly attempt to wreck the verses out of context and to impose a misleading tag upon them does not augur well for his image as a scholar. The truth remains: whenever *sakinah* descended upon the Prophet, it always also descended upon all believers with him, excluding only the hypocrites and the pagans. Moreover, Allah never excluded His Messenger from His *sakinah* while sending it upon the believers present with him.

This takes us back to the beginning. Why did Allah exclude Abu Bakr from His *sakinah*, even though he was with His Prophet?

Having failed woefully in his "first answer", our Shaykh attempts a second:

ويقال ثانياً الناس قد تنازعوا في عود الضمير في قوله تعالى فأَنْزَلَ اللهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَيْهِ سورة التوبة 40 فمنهم من قال إنه عائد إلى النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم ومنهم من قال إنه عائد إلى أبي بكر لأنه أقرب المذكورين ولأنه كان محتاجاً إلى إنزال السكينة فأَنْزَلَ اللهُ السكينة عليه كما أنزلها على المؤمنين الذين بايعوه تحت الشجرة والنبي صلى الله عليه وسلم كان مستغنياً عنها في هذه الحال لكمال طمأنينته بخلاف إنزالها يوم حنين فإنه كان محتاجاً إليها لانهازم جمهور أصحابه وإقبال العدو نحوه وسوقه ببغلتته إلى العدو

It is said, secondly: people disagree on exactly who was intended with His statement {So Allah sent down His *sakinah* upon him) in *Surah al-Tawbah* (9), verse 40 [i.e. the Verse of the Cave]. Some of them say that it refers to the Prophet, peace be upon him, and some of them say it refers to Abu Bakr, because he was the last mentioned character before the statement, and because he needed the descent of *sakinah*. Therefore, He sent down *sakinah* upon him as He sent it down upon the believers who gave the *ba'yah* under the tree. And the Prophet, peace be upon him, did not need it in this condition, due to his perfect calm, as opposed to its descent on the Day of Hunayn, for he was then (i.e. at Hunayn) in need of it due to the flight of the majority of his Sahabah (from the battlefield), and the approach of the enemy troops, and his drive with his female mule towards the enemy troops. [19](#)

This one is even far worse! To begin with, suggesting that the *sakinah* descended upon Abu Bakr in the Verse of the Cave, and not the Prophet, is high blasphemy. Let us have a renewed look at the verse:

إلا تنصروه فقد نصره الله إذ أخرجه الذين كفروا ثاني اثنين إذ هما في الغار إذ يقول لصاحبه لا تحزن إن الله معنا
فأنزل الله سكينته عليه وأيده بجنود لم تروها

If you help him not, **for Allah did indeed help him** when the disbelievers drove him out – the second of two *when* they both were in the cave – when he was saying to his companion: “Do not fear, surely Allah is with us.” So, Allah sent down His *sakinah* upon him, **and helped him with forces which you saw not.**

For Allah’s sake, why would He help Abu Bakr with angels, at the expense of His Messenger?! Besides, is the verse not clear enough about who was helped? The world is strange, indeed. The context of the verse has perfectly removed any need for any grammatical acrobatics in understanding its meaning. What our Shaykh suggests only applies where there is ambiguity in the statement. There is none here. Anyway, as stated by al-Hafiz Ibn Kathir, the majority of Sunni scholars agree with the apparent teaching of the verse:

فأنزل الله سكينته عليه { أي : تأييده ونصره عليه ، أي : على الرسول في أشهر القولين }

{So, Allah sent down His *sakinah* upon him}: meaning, (He sent down) His assistance and help upon him, that his, **upon the Messenger according to the more popular of two views.**[20](#)

Our Shaykh also suggests that *sakinah* is revealed to remove fear and restore calm, a submission completely contradictory to the Qur’an:

هو الذي أنزل السكينة في قلوب المؤمنين ليزدادوا إيمانا مع إيمانهم

He it is **Who sent down *sakinah* into the hearts of the believers, THAT THEY MAY GROW MORE IN FAITH (IMAN)** along with their (present) faith (*iman*).[21](#)

It is not about fear. It is about *iman*. Since growth in *iman* is needed in both periods of calm and unrest, then the foundation of Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah’s second “answer” collapses at this point. Besides, the Messenger of Allah was perfectly calm at al-Hudaybiyyah, as our Shaykh himself confesses. Yet, Allah sent down His *sakinah* upon him. Interestingly, the believers were also calm then, and He still sent down His *sakinah* upon them! Where has our Shaykh got his idea that the Prophet did not need *sakinah* at al-Hudaybiyyah or in the cave? Is he accusing Allah of doing needless things, by sending down His *sakinah* upon His Messenger when the latter did not need it? This reveals the extent to which some

people can go to blaspheme Allah and His Prophet just to uplift Abu Bakr!

Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah now moves to his final “answer”:

يقال على هذا لما قال لصاحبه إن الله معنا والنبى صلى الله عليه و سلم هو المتبوع المطاع وأبو بكر تابع مطيع وهو صاحبه والله معهما فإذا حصل للمتبوع في هذه الحال سكينه وتأييد كان ذلك للتابع أيضا بحكم الحال فإنه صاحب تابع لازم ولم يحتج أن يذكر هنا أبو بكر لكامل الملازمة والمصاحبة التي توجب مشاركة النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم في التأيد

It is said upon this: when he said to his companion, “Allah is with us”, the Prophet, peace be upon him, was the leader while Abu Bakr was the follower and was his companion, and Allah was with them both. So when *sakinah* and help got to the leader in this circumstance, it also got to the follower in the same circumstance. This is because he was a companion and a sticking follower, and there was no need here to mention Abu Bakr here, due to the perfect connection and companionship, which necessitated his benefitting in the help along with the Prophet, peace be upon him.[22](#)

Put in clearer words, Abu Bakr was a necessary beneficiary of Allah’s Help to His Messenger. So, the Qur’an sees no need to mention the former’s name again. Well, it might truly be said that Abu Bakr also benefitted from Allah’s provision of security to His Prophet. However, the same cannot be said about His *sakinah*, which has to do only with the growth of *iman* in the heart:

هو الذي أنزل السكينة في قلوب المؤمنين ليزدادوا إيمانا مع إيمانهم

He it is **Who sent down *sakinah* into the hearts of the believers, THAT THEY MAY GROW MORE IN FAITH (*IMAN*)** along with their (present) faith (*iman*).[23](#)

It would be *very* illogical to claim that a growth in *iman* by the Messenger of Allah somehow also means a similar situation for Abu Bakr. This is why, at al-Hudaybiyyah, despite that the believers among the Sahabah present there were also “companions” and “sticking followers” of the Prophet, Allah still saw the need to separately send down *sakinah* upon them:

فأنزل الله سكينته على رسوله وعلى المؤمنين

So, Allah sent down His *sakinah* upon His Messenger **and upon the believers**.[24](#)

Interestingly, the believing Sahabah at al-Hudaybiyyah – along with the Prophet – were in perfect calm, and not in fear. Nonetheless, Allah revealed His *sakinah* upon them. This further debunks the notion of Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah that *sakinah* is sent down only to remove fears in precarious situations. How would he explain what Allah did at al-Hudaybiyyah? On the other hand, Abu Bakr displayed demeaning

levels of fear in the cave:

إذ يقول لصاحبه لا تحزن إن الله معنا

When **he was saying** to his companion: “**Do not fear**, surely Allah is with us.”

He did not say it once! He was *repeatedly* saying it to him. The meaning would have been different if Allah had said “while he was saying....” or “when he said....”. Abu Bakr, apparently, did not have sufficient belief in the words of the Messenger of Allah. This was why he did not calm down even though the Prophet had assured him of Allah’s Presence. Allah was certainly aware of their situation, and would surely help them both if He found *iman* and sincerity in their hearts. But, even after repeated assurances by the Messenger of Allah, Abu Bakr was still in fear.

What exactly did he doubt? The presence of Allah with them? The existence of Allah? The *nubuwwah* of Muhammad? His own *iman* and sincerity? Is there really any justification for Abu Bakr’s failure to believe the Prophet? That was thirteen years after he supposedly accepted Islam! Since he was like that after so many years, what guarantees were there that he became better during the ten, more prosperous and more politicized years of the Madinan era? How could he even have doubted at all a single letter uttered by the Messenger if he really was a believer? No wonder, when Allah looked into Abu Bakr’s heart during his stay in the cave, He refused to send down His *sakinah* upon him.

[1.](#) Abu al-‘Abbas Ahmad b. ‘Abd al-Halim b. Taymiyyah al-Harrani, Minhaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah (Muassasat Qurtubah; 1st edition, 1406 H) [annotator: Dr. Muhammad Rashad Salim], vol. 7, p. 121

[2.](#) Ibid

[3.](#) Qur’an 9:40

[4.](#) Prof. Dr. Hikmat b. Bashir b. Yasin, Mawsu’at al-‘Ahih al-Masbur min al-Tafsir bi al-Mathur (Madinah: Dar al-Mathar li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi’ wa al-‘Aba’at; 1st edition, 1420 H), vol. 2, p. 452

[5.](#) Abu ‘Abd Allah Muhammad b. Isma’il b. Ibrahim b. Mughirah al-Bukhari al-J’ufi, al-Jami’ al-‘Ahih al-Mukhtasar (Beirut: Dar Ibn Kathir; 3rd edition, 1407 H) [annotator: Dr. Mustafa Dib al-Bagha], vol. 6, p. 2639, # 6793

[6.](#) Abu Bakr ‘Abd al-Razzaq b. Hamam al-‘A’nani, al-Musannaf [annotator: Habib al-Rahman al-A’zami], vol. 5, pp. 437–438, # 9756

[7.](#) Shihab al-Din Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani, Fath al-Bari Sharh ‘Ahih al-Bukhari (Beirut: Dar al-Ma’rifah li al-‘Aba’ah wa al-Nashr; 2nd edition), vol. 13, pp. 179–180

[8.](#) Abu ‘Abd Allah Muhammad b. Isma’il b. Ibrahim b. Mughirah al-Bukhari al-J’ufi, al-Jami’ al-‘Ahih al-Mukhtasar (Beirut: Dar Ibn Kathir; 3rd edition, 1407 H) [annotator: Dr. Mustafa Dib al-Bagha], vol. 3, p. 1337, # 3453

[9.](#) Qur’an 58:7

[10.](#) Qur’an 58:7

[11.](#) Qur’an 47:7

[12.](#) Abu al-Fida Isma’il b. ‘Umar b. Kathir al-Qurshi al-Dimashqi, Tafsir al-Qur’an al-‘Azim (Dar al-‘Aybah li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi’; 2nd edition, 1420 H) [annotator: Sami b. Muhammad Salamah], vol. 4, p. 155

[13.](#) Qur’an 48:4

[14.](#) Qur’an 48:18

[15.](#) Qur’an 48:26

[16.](#) Qur’an 9:26

- [17.](#) Abu al-‘Abbas Ahmad b. ‘Abd al-Halim b. Taymiyyah al-Harrani, Minhaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah (Muasassat Qurtubah; 1st edition, 1406 H) [annotator: Dr. Muhammad Rashad Salim], vol. 8, pp. 488–489
- [18.](#) Qur’an 48:26–27
- [19.](#) Abu al-‘Abbas Ahmad b. ‘Abd al-Halim b. Taymiyyah al-Harrani, Minhaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah (Muasassat Qurtubah; 1st edition, 1406 H) [annotator: Dr. Muhammad Rashad Salim], vol. 8, pp. 489–490
- [20.](#) Abu al-Fida Isma’il b. ‘Umar b. Kathir al-Qurshi al-Dimashqi, Tafsir al-Qur’an al-‘Azim (Dar al-‘Aaybah li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi’; 2nd edition, 1420 H) [annotator: Sami b. Muhammad Salamah], vol. 4, p. 155
- [21.](#) Qur’an 48:4
- [22.](#) Abu al-‘Abbas Ahmad b. ‘Abd al-Halim b. Taymiyyah al-Harrani, Minhaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah (Muasassat Qurtubah; 1st edition, 1406 H) [annotator: Dr. Muhammad Rashad Salim], vol. 8, p. 490
- [23.](#) Qur’an 48:4
- [24.](#) Qur’an 48:26

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