

5. Brother and Minister

During the first three years of the Prophethood the Prophet did not call people publicly to the new faith. The message remained an unannounced conversation for its announcement would necessarily lead to a confrontation with the clans of Mecca. The Prophet knew that the Meccan clans and the Masses of Arabia would not hesitate to use any violent means against him if he demanded from them to change their religion.

Yet this confrontation was inevitable and expected to be fraught with danger. The message was not revealed in order to be kept secret. It came down to reform mankind and to change the beliefs of the people and the ways of their lives. This could not be realized except by calling to them loudly warning them openly and informing them about the message.

For a new religious message or a new ideology to succeed the man of the message and his followers have to have freedom of speech and practice. Average individuals do not have the courage to embrace a new ideology when its embracement causes them to confront a society that does not sanctify the individual's freedom.

Such a society by its nature is inclined to violence and there are not many individuals who are ready to suffer the loss of position wealth and life for ideals. Just to make the spread of the new ideology feasible in such a society the freedom of speech and practice must be protected and secured for the potential converts.

Otherwise they would be too terrified to change their religion. This means that the new ideology will have only a limited success if any. Only the heroes of an unusual courage would rise above fear and these are not many.

As to the man of the message the chance of his success is very slim when his life and relative freedom are not protected though he may be a big hero. His rise above fear does not secure success in a violent society. His death by assassination or other means before establishing his religion will bring his whole mission to an end.

Thus the first requirement for the success of a new religion in a non-democratic society is a protective shield around the life of the man of the message and his relative freedom. He needs strong supporters who will be ready to give their lives for protecting their leader and his message.

If such people are not available it would be necessary to have at least one supporter of an unusual quality who is similar to the Messenger in sincerity courage and strength.

Such a person would be expected to be found among the relatives of the man of the message since the relatives are expected to be more sympathetic to him than others.

The Holy Qur'an informs us that when Moses received the Command of God: "Go to Pharaoh certainly he has exceeded the limit

"He asked his Lord to strengthen him through a minister from his own family! "He (Moses) said: O my Lord expand my breast. Ease my task for me and remove the impediment from my speech. So they may understand what I say. And give me a minister from my family Aaron my brother. Add to my strength through him and make him share my task." The Holy Quran Chapter 20 verses 25–32.

Muhammad is the final of the prophets. His message is the conclusion of all heavenly messages. His message therefore must succeed and stay forever. God runs the affairs of the world usually according to the law of cause and effect and through natural courses.

Therefore He did not order His Messenger Muhammad to face the whole society at once with the invitation to Islam because this might lead to the failure of the mission rather than to its success. Wanting him to go gradually in his invitation He issued to him a command (after three years from the beginning of his Prophethood) to begin with his close relatives. From the Holy Qur'an:

"And warn thy nearest kinsmen. And lower thy wing to the believers who follow thee." The Holy Quran Chapter 26 verses 214–215.

When this command came down the Messenger of God invited the descendents of Abdul-Muttalib (they were forty men) to a banquet which contained little amounts of food and milk. They ate and drank until they became full.

Then the Messenger spoke saying: "O children of Abdul-Muttalib by God I do not know any young man from among the Arabs who has ever brought to his people better than I brought to you. I brought to you the goodness of this world and of the Hereafter and God has commanded me to invite you to it. Who is among you willing to be my minister in this mission and he will be my brother my executor and my successor in you?"

None of them responded but 'Ali who was the youngest among them. He stood up and said: "Messenger of God I will be your minister in this mission."

The Prophet repeated his invitation but none responded except 'Ali who repeated his words. The Prophet put his hand on the neck of 'Ali and said:

"This is my brother my executor and my successor in you. Listen to him and obey him."

They laughed saying to Abu Talib: "He ordered you to listen to your son and to obey him."¹ Thus the Messenger of God invited his close relatives to embrace Islam but his main purpose was to find among them a person who would assist him in spreading the message.

Embracing Islam is very important but more important is to find among the converts a person who will be willing to pay a high price for its success. And how many millions of Muslims of today are unwilling to pay the least for Islam!

Conflicting Hadiths

The two sheikhs: Al-Bukhari and Muslim did not mention this important event though it was reported by many historians and hadith-recorders. Muslim and other hadith-recorders reported an event that took place after this event.

They reported the appearance of the Messenger on Al-Safa and his call to the Qureshite clans (the Meccans) and his invitation to them to believe in the new faith. Muslim and these reporters mentioned this late event and tied it with the verse of the warning of the closest relative of the Holy Prophet. Muslim recorded that Abu Huriarah reported the following:

When this verse was revealed: "And warn thy closest relatives " the Messenger of God called the Qureshites and they came together. He addressed them in general and in particular. He said: "O children of Kaab Ibn Lu-ay save yourselves from Hell. O children of Murrah Ibn Kaab save yourselves from Hell. O children of Hashim save yourselves from Hell. O Fatima save yourself from Hell. For I do not possess any protection for you from God except that you have relations to me which I would like to observe."²

It is amazing that God commanded His Messenger to warn the closest of his relatives who were the children of Abdul-Muttalib but the Prophet called upon the children of Kaab Ibn Lu-ay and the children of Murrah Ibn Kaab who are from the remotest of his relatives. It is inconceivable that the Messenger of God disobeys what his Lord commanded him to do.

And what is more amazing is that the messenger called upon his daughter (Fatima) publicly to save herself from Hell yet she was the purest Muslim girl whose father and mother were the purest parents.

Fatima at the time of the revelation of the above verse was according to the historians either two years or eight years old.³ It would be illogical that the Prophet addresses himself to a two year old child or that he put a pure Muslim girl (who was still a minor not exceeding eight years of age) on the same level with

the pagans of Banu Kaab and Banu Murrah.

And more curious is the hadith of Ayeshah which Muslim recorded in his Sahih as follows: "When the verse of warning was revealed the Messenger of God said: 'O Fatima daughter of Muhammad Safia daughter of Abdul-Muttalib I have nothing in my power to protect you against God. Ask me from my wealth whatever you want.'" [4](#)

This hadith does not agree with the previous one. For this hadith reported that the Holy Prophet addressed himself to the children of Abdul-Muttalib alone while the other hadith reported that the Holy Prophet publicly addressed himself mostly to other than the Prophet's clan And most curious in this hadith is that the Messenger addressed himself publicly while on the Safa mainly to his youngest daughter Fatima while she was living with him where he sees her every hour. It is also curious that the address which he directed to her and to the other members of the children of Abdul-Muttalib did not contain any message such as calling upon them to worship God or to avoid idol-worshipping.

Furthermore Ayeshah was not born at the time of the event. The Messenger died when she was still eighteen years old. [5](#) And this event took place ten years before the Hijrah (twenty years before his death). Abu Hurairah also was not an eye-witness to the event because he saw the Messenger for the first time when the Messenger was coming back from Khaibar. (In the 7th year after the Hijrah). [6](#)

And more curious than all is that Al-Zamkh-Shari reported that Ayeshah daughter of Abu Bakr and Hafsa daughter of 'Umar were among the ones whom the Holy Prophet addressed after the revelation of this verse of warning (which was revealed before the birth of Ayeshah). [7](#) This clearly indicates that recorders or the reporters of these hadiths were seriously confused. They overlooked the fact that the verse commands the Prophet to warn his closest relatives who were the children of Abdul-Muttalib and that the Holy Prophet is not expected to disobey the order of God. What these hadiths reported is opposed to the verse itself and whatever disagrees with the Holy Qur'an has to be disregarded.

The event which the historians and many hadith re-corders reported of holding a conference with his immediate relatives is the only logical course which the Holy Prophet was expected to follow after the revelation of the verse.

The Offered Reward

The Prophet was about to come to a confrontation with the idol-worshippers. Therefore he needed a minister who had his courage sincerity and firmness. Forty men from the children of Abdul-Muttalib would be an important asset for Islam if they adopted it. But if they were ordinary people they would not be able to face the masses of Mecca and Arabia.

God will soon command His Messenger to extend his invitation to all of the Arabs then to other nations as well and they will violently resist the invitation for years to come.

Forty average persons will be terrified by the hostiles of Mecca and Arabia; yet one man of high courage will be able to face whatever the Messenger will face.

For this the Prophet spoke to them about this important goal after a very short introduction saying:

"Who is among you willing to be my minister in this mission? (Whoever is willing to be so) will be my brother executor and successor."

How Could the Prophet Make Such a Promise? Suppose all or most of them had accepted Islam at the meeting and promised him their assistance. What could he do? It may be conceivable that all of them would become his brothers but it is very hard to conceive that all of them would be his executors. And if this is probable it is not conceivable that everyone of them would be his successor.

With a little analysis one may know the answer.

The Messenger was well aware that the majority of them would not have the courage to pledge to him a genuine support of Islam. For such a pledge would put them face to face with the whole society and draw them into a war which might end with the loss of their lives. A true assistant of the Messenger must be an unusual person and the majority of the attendants were just average people.

What happened at the meeting clearly substantiates the truth of what the Prophet expected. None of them was willing nor had the daring spirit to pledge to him assistance except one person and the following years proved that he was the man for the job.

Why These Specific Rewards? The Prophet evidently wanted to follow the footsteps of Moses. Moses asked his Lord to give him a minister from his own family and here the Prophet Muhammad gathered his close relatives seeking from among them a minister. The minister of Moses was his brother Aaron.

The Prophet Muhammad did not have a brother because he was the only child of his parents Abdullah and Aminah. To follow the course of Moses he wanted to make his minister also his brother.

The same applies to the position of successor. Aaron was the successor of Moses among his people when Moses went to the mountain to hear the words of his Lord and secluded himself for forty nights. Before going to the mountain he said to Aaron according to the Holy Qur'an:

"Be my successor among my people and do good and follow not the path of mischief makers."
The Holy Quran Chapter 7 verse 142.

What the Prophet said to 'Ali many years after this event supports this understanding and confirms its soundness. Leaving him in Medina when he took his long journey to Tabouk he said to him:

"Ali will it not satisfy you to be to me like Aaron to Moses except that there will be no prophet after me?"[8](#)

Giving 'Ali all the ranks of Aaron with the exception of the Prophethood means that 'Ali was like Aaron in

the rest of the ranks: The ministry the brotherhood and the succession. The statement of the Prophet at the above mentioned conference and this statement are consistent with each other and they aim at one purpose.

Why Such a Big Reward for a Ministry?

It may be said: Why should the Holy Prophet give 'Ali such a big reward for his ministry? Is not the rank of assistant (or minister) to the Prophet a high reward by itself? The answer is that the ministry of 'Ali is not a reward from the Prophet as much as it is a gift from 'Ali. This ministry or assistance is a tremendous sacrifice on the part of the minister. To make this clear I would like to say that there are two types of ministry:

1. A Ministry of Administrating the Affairs of an established state. The man of such a ministry is a counselor to the head of the state by authorization from his superior or from the congress or from the people.
2. A Ministry of Founding and Establishing a State.

The minister here would be the assistant of his superior in bringing into being a state which did not exist yet or in spreading a new faith which is not yet known to the people. The mission of a minister of this kind is to carry with his superior the tremendous responsibility of establishing a faith and a state and to face with him all dangers. He would be his protective shield constantly ready to sacrifice himself for the safety of his superior.

A ministry of the first kind is a gift from the head of the state to his minister and a great honor bestowed on him by elevating him to a high office.

The ministry of the second kind is not a gift from the superior as much as it is a gift from the minister. It is a tremendous sacrifice which the minister offers continuously for the protection of his superior and for making his mission a success. A minister of this kind faces with his superior dangers and difficulties which could not be faced by a human multitude.

The minister whom the Holy Prophet was seeking from among the members of his clan was from the second rather than from the first kind. There was no established state nor was there yet any Muslim community.

The Messenger of God was not (and even after the Islamic State was established) in need of a counselor to advise him how to spread the message or to found a state. He was in need of a person of unusual sincerity and heroism with an absolute obedience to God and His Messenger.

A person that deserves to be the brother of the Messenger of God and his successor after his absence from this world must have a soul that is virtuous enough to be an extension of the soul of the Prophet

himself. He must resemble him to a high degree in knowledge wisdom and rise above self interest. In other words he must be a replica of the great Prophet.

Yes the Messenger of God was not in need of a person who advises him about the wise course he should take. The Messenger was the most intelligent and the wisest. He only was in need of a minister who would assist him by his big action sacrifices and heroic work. That minister would be the recipient of his knowledge and when the need arises he will be able to represent the Messenger and sit on his chair after him.

The Prophet Wanted to Have No Excuses

One should not doubt for a minute that the Messenger of God was aware of who will be his minister before he spoke to the members of his clan. He knew that there was none among the group that had the quality of the needed minister but 'Ali.

However the Messenger would not choose 'Ali to the high offices without leaving no excuse for the rest of his relatives. He would not let the coming generations say that if he had asked someone other than 'Ali he would have found many qualified persons. He would not let us wonder whether the Messenger had a favoritism towards 'Ali and distinguished him without a clear reason. It was necessary to give the rest of the members of his clan the opportunity to make them show their attitude and to make the merit of 'Ali evident.

The Outcome of the Conference of the House of The Prophet

The conference to which the Messenger called the children of Abdul-Muttalib produced a unique pact; history

has never witnessed its like nor has it witnessed its equal in nobility and high aim. It is a covenant between the final Prophet of God the Conveyor of the Message of the Heaven and his minister 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib who at the time of the covenant was not above the thirteenth year of his age.

The substance of the covenant was two items:

1. A pledge on the part of 'Ali to the Prophet to be his minister in fulfilling his great mission.
2. A promise by the Holy Prophet put in a form of a declaration in which he told the members of his clan while his hand was on 'Ali's head: "This is my brother my executor and my successor in you. Listen to him and obey him."

It is worthy to note that the Messenger fulfilled his promise immediately at the conference. He did not wait for 'Ali to fulfill his pledge. The Prophet put his promise in a form of an immediate reward to his minister. He declared while he was still at the conference that 'Ali was his brother and made him his

executor and successor.

He did not wait for 'Ali to fulfill his pledge because he knew that 'Ali's word carried its full meaning and that his word and his deed were united and never would contradict each other. 'Ali put himself at the disposal of the Messenger from the minute he uttered his pledge. Several years elapsed before the Holy Prophet needed 'Ali's immediate assistance.

'Ali's father was still alive and strong guarding the life of the Messenger; and the believers were not yet permitted by God to fight their adversaries. Also the danger against the Holy Prophet had not reached its peak.

The dangerous hour came ten years after the conference and after Abu Talib departed from this world. The Meccan chiefs in their "Nadwa" (club) conferred and decided to bring to an end the life of the Messenger by assassination.

The Prophet called upon his minister to start fulfilling his pledge. Thus the night of redemption came and 'Ali was the redeemer of the Messenger and his Trustee.

'Ali pronounced his word while he knew the magnitude of the mission in which he pledged to assist the Prophet.

He was fully aware that due to its magnitude the mission seemed to be impossible. The mission aimed at changing the beliefs of the society and its ways of life.

It aimed at making the society embrace Heavenly principles that do not agree with its nature. 'Ali knew that it would be opposed by all forces in society. He knew that the success of this mission could not be achieved unless it prevailed against all adversary forces and that this required the establishment of an Islamic state based on the foundation of the newly revealed principles. Such a state would protect those principles and the freedom of their followers.

Such a mission cannot be accomplished even by a whole nation regardless of what it may muster of forces. This mission is what the Messenger was determined to achieve and it is the mission which 'Ali promised to support by his assistance and by facing all what the Prophet will face in its achievement.

As the conference yielded this result it was expected that 'Ali will fulfill his huge pledge as it was expected that the Holy Prophet will declare in the future to all Muslims what he had declared to his immediate relatives concerning 'Ali.

We shall see in the following pages that 'Ali fulfilled what he pledged to the Messenger and that the Messenger after the birth of the Islamic State had declared to the Muslims what he declared to the forty men from the children of Abdul-Muttalib.

1. This hadith is recorded by the following authors:

- A. Ibn Al-Athir Al Kamil Part 2 p. 22.
- B. Al-Tabari History of Nations Messengers and Kings Part 2 p. 217.
- C. Abu Al-Fida in his History Part 1 p. 116.
- D. Imam Ahmad Al-Musnad Part 1 pp. 111-119.
- E. Ibn Ishaq Al-Bayhaqi in Al-Dalail (Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi Muntakhab Kansul-Ummal in the margin of Musnad Ahmad Part 5 pp. 41-42 printed in Beirut by Sader)
2. Muslim Sahih Muslim Part 3 pp. 79-80.
3. Al-Hakim in his Mustadrak Part 3 p. 61 reported that she was born 41 years after the birth of her father.
4. Muslim in his Sahih Part 3 pp. 79-80.
5. Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqat Part 8 p. 61.
6. Al-Tabaqat Part 4 p. 327.
7. 'Ali Ibn Burhanuddeen Al-Halabi Al-Seerat Al-Halayah (Bio- graphy of the Prophet) Part 1 p. 321.
8. Muslim in his Sahih Part 15 p. 175; Al-Bukhari reported it in his Sahih Part 5.

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