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8. Were The Sahabah Expecting Abu Bakr's Reign?

Or, was it a sudden affair for them? The Ahl al-Sunnah often insist that Abu Bakr's alleged leadership of *salat* was effectively his appointment by the Prophet, *sallallahu 'alaihi wa alihi*, as the first *khalifah* over the *Ummah*. Normally, if this had been the case, then all of the Sahabah would have regarded Abu Bakr's "succession" to the Messenger a natural process. In fact, every single one of them would have considered Abu Bakr the *khalifah*-designate; and they all would have been shocked if he had not become the ruler after Muhammad. However, it seems that the reverse was the reality. The Sahabah were surprised when they learnt that Abu Bakr was claiming the *khilafah*. They apparently were not expecting him to be their next ruler. This is what Imam al-Bukhari (d. 256 H) reports:

حدثنا عبد العزيز بن عبد الله حدثني إبراهيم بن سعد عن صالح عن ابن شهاب عن عبيد الله بن عبد الله بن عتبة بن مسعود عن ابن عباس قال : كنت أقرئ رجالا من المهاجرين منهم عبد الرحمن بن عوف فبينما أنا في منزله بمنى وهو عند عمر بن الخطاب في آخر حجة حجها إذ رجع إلى عبد الرحمن فقال لو رأيت رجلا أتى أمير المؤمنين اليوم فقال يا أمير المؤمنين هل لك في فلان ؟ يقول لو قد مات عمر لقد بايعت فلانا فوالله ما كانت بيعة أبي بكر إلا فلتة فتمت فغضب عمر ثم قال إنى إن شاء الله لقائم العشية في الناس فمحذرهم هؤلاء الذين يريدون أن يغصبوهم أمورهم ... فجلس عمر على المنبر فلما سكت المؤذنون قام فأثنى على الله بما هو أهله ثم قال أما بعد ... إنه بلغنى قائل منكم يقول والله لو قد مات عمر بايعت فلانا فلا يغترن امرؤ أن يقول إنما كانت بيعة أبى بكر فلتة وتمت ألا وإنها قد كانت كذلك ولكن الله وقى شرها وليس فيكم من تقطع الأعناق إليه مثل أبى بكر من بايع رجلا من غير مشورة من المسلمين فلا يتابع هو ولا الذي تابعه تغرة أن يقتلا وإنه قد كان من خبرنا حين توفى الله نبيه صلى الله عليه و سلم أن الأنصار خالفونا واجتمعوا بأسرهم في سقيفة بني ساعدة وخالف عنا على والزبير ومن معهما واجتمع المهاجرون إلى أبى بكر فقلت لأبى بكريا أبا بكر انطلق بنا إلى إخواننا هؤلاء من الأنصار فانطلقنا نريدهم فلما دنونا منهم لقينا منهم رجلان صالحان فذكرا ما تمالاً عليه القوم فقالا أين تريدون يا معشر المهاجرين ؟ فقلنا نريد إخواننا هؤلاء من الأنصار فقالا لا عليكم أن لا تقربوهم اقضوا أمركم فقلت والله لنأتينهم فانطلقنا حتى أتيناهم في سقيفة بني ساعدة فإذا رجل مزمل بين ظهرانيهم فقلت من هذا ؟ فقالوا هذا سعد بن عبادة فقلت ما له ؟ قالوا يوعك فلما جلسنا قليلا تشهد خطيبهم فأثنى على الله بما هو أهله ثم قال أما بعد فنحن أنصار الله وكتيبة الإسلام وأنتم معشر المهاجرين رهط وقد دفت دافة من قومكم فإذا هم يريدون أن يختزلونا من أصلنا وأن يحضنونا من الأمر . فلما سكت أردت أن أتكلم وكنت قد زورت مقالة أعجبتنى أردت أن أقدمها بين يدي أبى بكر وكنت أداري

منه بعض الحد فلما أردت أن أتكلم قال أبو بكر على رسلك فكرهت أن أغضبه فتكلم أبو بكر فكان هو أحلم مني وأوقر والله ما ترك من كلمة أعجبتني في تزويري إلا قال في بديهته مثلها أو أفضل منها حتى سكت فقال ما ذكرتم . فيكم من خير فأنتم له أهل ولن يعرف هذا الأمر إلا لهذا الحي من قريش هم أوسط العرب نسبا ودارا

'Abd al-'Aziz b. 'Abd Allah – Ibrahim b. Sa'd – Salih – Ibn Shihab – 'Ubayd Allah b. 'Abd Allah b. 'Utbah b. Mas'ud – Ibn 'Abbas:

I used to teach *qirat* to some men from the Muhajirun, among them were 'Abd al-Rahman b. 'Awf. So, while I was in his house in Mina, and he was with 'Umar b. al-Khattab during the last *Hajj* which he performed, 'Abd al-Rahman came to me and said, "If only you had seen a man who came to Amir al-Muminin today, saying: 'O Amir al-Muminin! What do you say about so-and-so? He says, "When 'Umar dies, I will pledge allegiance to so-and-so, for, I swear by Allah, the pledge of allegiance given to Abu Bakr was nothing but an error and it succeeded." So, 'Umar became angry. Then, he said, 'Insha Allah, I will stand before the people tonight and will warn them against these people who want to usurp their affairs...".

So, 'Umar sat on the pulpit, and when the muezzins became silent, he stood up. He praised Allah as He deserved. Then he said:

"Now then ... I have been informed that a speaker amongst you says, 'I swear by Allah, when 'Umar dies, I will pledge allegiance to so-and-so.' One should not deceive oneself by saying that the pledge of allegiance given to Abu Bakr was an error and it succeeded. NO DOUBT, IT WAS SURELY LIKE THAT. However, Allah saved from its EVIL. And there is none amongst you towards whom throats are slit like Abu Bakr. Whosoever pledges allegiance to anyone without consultation with the Muslims, then neither that person nor the person to whom the pledge of allegiance was given, is to be supported. Rather, they both should be killed.

And, verily, there was someone who informed us when Allah took the life of His Prophet, peace be upon him, that the Ansar opposed us and gathered, all of them, at Saqifah Bani Sa'idah; and 'Ali, al-Zubayr and whoever was with them both, also opposed us; and the Muhajirun gathered towards Abu Bakr.

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So, I said to Abu Bakr, 'O Abu Bakr! Let us go to these brothers of ours from the Ansar'. As a result, we went, seeking them. When we approached them, two righteous men from them met us, and informed us of the final decision of the people, and both of them said, 'O group of Muhajirun, where are you going?' Then, we said, 'We are going to these brothers of ours from the Ansar.' They said, 'You should not go near them. Decide your affair.' So, I said, 'I swear by Allah, we will go to them.' Therefore, we went until we reached them at Saqifah Bani Sa'idah. There was a wrapped man amongst them. Then, I said, 'Who is that?' They said, 'This is Sa'd b. 'Ubadah.' Then, I said, 'What is wrong with him?' They said, 'He is sick.'

After we had sat for a little period, their speaker testified. He praised Allah as He deserved. Then, he said, 'Now then, we are the Ansar (Helpers) of Allah and the battalion of Islam, and you Muhajirun are a small group. Some people from your people have come, seeking to cut us off from our root and to prevent us from authority.' When he became silent, I intended to talk and I had prepared a speech which I really loved. I intended to deliver it in the presence of Abu Bakr, and I used to avoid provoking him. So, when I wanted to speak, Abu Bakr said, 'Wait a while', and I hated to make him angry.

Therefore, Abu Bakr spoke, and he was more patient and more dignified than I was. I swear by Allah, he did not miss a sentence that I really loved from my prepared speech, except that he said the like of it or better than it spontaneously, until he fell silent. So, he said, 'What you stated about yourself in terms of good things, you truly deserve it. And this authority will never be recognized except for this living person from Quraysh. They are the best of the Arabs in terms of lineage and family." 1

'Umar, who told his staunchly pro-Abu Bakr version of what happened, nonetheless gives us insights into the state of the *Ummah* immediately after the death of its Prophet. The Sahabah were divided into three political camps:

- (a) the camp of Abu Bakr and his supporters;
- (b) the camp of 'Ali, 'alaihi al-salam, supported by al-Zubayr, and their supporters; and
- (c) the camp of the Ansar.

The Ansar held the military advantage, being the overwhelming majority of the Islamic soldiers. The Muhajirun were only a small group, with little or no numerical or military significance. Yet, they were nonetheless divided into the opposing camps of Abu Bakr and 'Ali. What we get from all this, is that the Ansar – who had numerical and military strength – were united while the Muhajirun – despite their serious numerical and military disadvantages – were divided.

Naturally, whoever controlled the Ansar would hold the real political and military powers. 'Umar was well aware of this. Therefore, instead of going to the camp of 'Ali to resolve the political dispute, he took the party of Abu Bakr to the Ansar, to try to win them over. Moreover, looking at the arguments of Abu Bakr against the Ansar, one understands fully why he would never have gone to 'Ali anyway, even if the latter had had the numerical and military advantages. Abu Bakr argued on the strengths of lineage and family. The tribe of Quraysh were of the best human lineage, and they were the best family. So, the Muslims – especially those in other parts of Arabia – would never recognize the rule of a *khalifah* from the Ansar. This tactic was clearly to make the Ansar see the futility of their political efforts. They were not from Quraysh, and the generality of the Muslims would never accept the rule of a non–Qurayshi. The strategy worked, and the Ansar backed down, and supported Abu Bakr instead.

As for 'Ali, he was also from Quraysh. As such, Abu Bakr's arguments about lineage and family would not have worked in his case. In fact, they would have backfired terribly. Imam Muslim (d. 261 H)

documents that the Messenger of Allah had declared the Banu Hashim as the best of Quraysh:

حدثنا محمد بن مهران الرازي ومحمد بن عبدالرحمن بن سهم جميعا عن الوليد قال ابن مهران حدثنا الوليد بن مسلم حدثنا الأوزاعي عن أبي عمار شداد أنه سمع واثلة بن الأسقع يقول سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم يقول إن الله اصطفى كنانة من ولد إسماعيل واصطفى قريشا من كنانة واصطفى من قريش بني هاشم واصطفاني من بني هاشم

Muhammad b. Mihran al-Razi and Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Rahman b. Sahm – al-Walid b. Muslim – al-Awza'i – Abu 'Ammar Shaddad – Wathilah b. al-Asqa':

I heard the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, saying: "Verily, Allah chose Kinanah from the children of Isma'il, and chose Quraysh from Kinanah, and He chose Banu Hashim from Quraysh, and He chose me from Banu Hashim".2

Commenting on this *hadith*, Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 H) states:

وهذا كله بناء على أن الصلاة والسلام على آل محمد وأهل بيته تقتضي أن يكونوا أفضل من سائر أهل البيوت وهذا مذهب أهل السنة والجماعة الذين يقولون بنو هاشم أفضل قريش وقريش أفضل العرب والعرب أفضل بني آدم وهذا هو المنقول عن أئمة السنة كما ذكره حرب الكرماني عمن لقيهم مثل أحمد وإسحاق وسعيد بن منصور وعبد الله بن الزبير الحميدي وغيرهم وذهبت طائفة إلى منع التفضيل بذلك كما ذكره القاضي أبو بكر والقاضي أبو يعلى في المعتمد وغيرهما و الأول اصح فإنه قد ثبت عن النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم في الصحيح أنه قال لأن الله اصطفى كنانة من ولد إسماعيل واصطفى قريش من كنانة واصطفى هاشما من قريش واصطفاني من بني هاشم

All of this is based upon the fact that sending *salat* and salam upon the family of Muhammad and his Ahl al-Bayt establishes absolutely that they are better than all other people. And this is the position of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah, who say that Banu Hashim are the best of Quraysh, and that Quraysh are the best of the Arabs, and that Arabs are the best of the Children of Adam. This is narrated from the Imams of the Sunnah – as Harb al-Kirmani mentioned from those who met them – such as Ahmad, Ishaq, Sa'id b. Mansur, 'Abd Allah b. al-Zubayr al-Humaydi and others. A group are of the opinion that superiority cannot be established through that, as stated by al-Qa®i Abu Bakr, and by al-Qa®i Abu Ya'la in *al-Mu'tamad*, and others. However, the first opinion is more correct, for it is authentically narrated in the *sahih hadith* that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "Verily, Allah chose Kinanah from the children of Isma'il, and chose Quraysh from Kinanah, and He chose Hashim from Quraysh, and He chose me from Banu Hashim"3

Meanwhile, Amir al-Muminin 'Ali b. Abi Talib was from Banu Hashim like the Messenger, while Abu Bakr was not. Therefore, in terms of lineage, 'Ali was superior to Abu Bakr.

Moreover, Imam Ahmad (d. 241 H) further records:

حدثنا عبد الله حدثني أبى ثنا أبو نعيم عن سفيان عن يزيد بن أبى زياد عن عبد الله بن الحرث بن نوفل عن المطلب بن أبى وداعة قال قال العباس بلغه بعض ما يقول الناس قال فصعد المنبر فقال من أنا قالوا أنت رسول الله فقال أنا محمد بن عبد الله بن عبد المطلب ان الله خلق الخلق فجعلني في خير خلقه وجعلهم فرقتين فجعلني في خير فرقة وخلق القبائل فجعلني في خير قبيلة وجعلهم بيوتا فجعلني في خيرهم بيتا فأنا خيركم بيتا وخيركم نفسا

'Abd Allah (b. Ahmad) – my father (Ahmad b. Hanbal) – Abu Na'im – Sufyan – Yazid b. Abi Ziyad – 'Abd Allah b. al-Harith b. Nawfal – al-Mutalib b. Abi Wada'ah – al-'Abbas:

The words of some people reached him. So, he climbed the pulpit and asked, "Who am I?" They answered, "You are the Messenger of Allah." So, he said, "I am Muhammad, the son of 'Abd Allah, the son of 'Abd al-Mutalib. Verily, Allah created the creation and put me among the best of His creation. He made them into two groups, and put me in the best group. He created the tribes and put me in the best tribe. He created homes and put me among those of them with the best home. So, I am of the best home among you, and I am of the best personality among you."4

Shaykh al-Arnaut comments:

حسن لغيره

It is *hasan* due to supporting evidence<u>5</u>.

'Allamah al-Albani also says concerning the hadith:

صحيح

Sahih6

Here, we know that Quraysh – the tribe of Muhammad – is the best of all tribes. Of course, Banu Hashim are the best of the clans of Quraysh. Also, we equally know from the *hadith* that the house of Muhammad – his family – is the best of all families. 'Ali belonged to this same house of the Prophet, and Abu Bakr did not. So, 'Ali beat Abu Bakr completely on lineage and family. No wonder, Abu Bakr made no attempt to go to him. Instead, he rushed to the camp with weaker claims in terms of lineage and family, and defeated them on both accounts.

Interestingly, the fact that the Ansar submitted to Abu Bakr's arguments about lineage and family shows that the generality of the Sahabah considered both as the primary criteria for the *khilafah*. Moreover, the fact that they would not recognize the authority of any *khalifah* from the Ansar – however pious, knowledgeable and competent – reveals that they viewed the *khilafah* only as a dynasty, the dynasty of

the offspring of Quraysh. In order to make this clearer, if the Ahl al–Sunnah were to choose a *khalifah* today, they would only pick a man from Quraysh even if there are millions of far better candidates within the *Ummah* from the other tribes and races. This tells that the most very first criterion for leadership in Sunni Islam is the tribe of the ruler; and that is exactly why it is a dynasty.

The Prophet of Allah also limited the *khilafah* to a specific family within the Quraysh. Therefore, if you are not from that family, you are not a legitimate *khalifah*. Imam Ibn Abi Shaybah (d. 235 H) reports:

أبو داود عمر بن سعد عن شريك عن الركين عن القاسم بن حسان عن زيد بن ثابت يرفعه قال: إني تركت فيكم الموض الخليفتين كاملتين :كتاب الله وعترتى، وإنهما لن يتفرقا حتى يردا على الحوض

Abu Dawud 'Umar b. Sa'd – Sharik – al-Rukayn – al-Qasim b. Hassan – Zayd b. Thabit – the Prophet:

"I have left behind over you the two all-comprehensive *khalifahs*: the Book of Allah and my offspring. Verily, both shall never separate from each other until they meet me at the Lake-Fount."7

The annotators declare:

والحديث صحيح

The hadith is sahih.8

Imam Ibn Abi 'Asim (d. 287 H) has recorded it as well:

ثنا أبو بكر، ثنا عمرو بن سعد أبو داود الحفري، عن شريك، عن الركين عن القاسم بن حسان، عن زيد بن ثابت قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: إني تارك فيكم الخليفتين من بعدي، كتاب الله وعترتي أهل بيتي وإنهما . لن يتفرقا حتى يردا على الحوض

Abu Bakr – 'Amr b. Sa'd Abu Dawud al-Hafari – Sharik – al-Rukayn – al-Qasim b. Hassan – Zayd b. Thabit:

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said, "I am leaving behind over you the two *khalifahs* after me: the Book of Allah and my offspring, my Ahl al-Bayt. Verily, both shall never separate from each other until they meet me at the Lake-Fount."9

And 'Allamah al-Albani (d. 1420 H) states:

.حديث صحيح

It is a sahih hadith. 10

Apparently, if you are not from the offspring of Muhammad, from his Ahl al–Bayt, you are nothing but an illegitimate *khalifah*. It is that simple and straightforward. Abu Bakr, without any doubt, was NOT from the offspring of the Prophet, neither by blood nor by special designation. As for 'Ali, he was *specially* included within that blessed offspring by the Messenger himself, on the Command of Allah, for the specific purpose of the *khilafah*. Ibn Abi 'Asim (d. 287 H) again documents:

ثنا محمد بن المثنى، حدثنا يحي بن حماد، عن أبي عوانة، عن يحيى بن سليم أبي بلج عن عمرو بن ميمون، عن ابن عباس قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم لعلي: أنت مني بمنزلة هارون من موسى إلا أنك لست نبيا وأنت عباس قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم لعلي:

Muhammad b. al-Muthanna – Yahya b. Hammad – Abu 'Awanah – Yahya b. Sulaym Abu Balj – 'Amr b. Maymun – Ibn 'Abbas: The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, **said to 'Ali**: "You are to me of the status of Harun to Musa, with the exception that you are not a prophet. **And you are my** *khalifah* **over every believer after me**."11

Dr. al-Jawabirah says:

.اسناده حسن

Its chain is hasan. 12

And 'Allamah al-Albani (d. 1420 H) backs him:

إسناده حسن

Its chain is hasan. 13

So, obviously, the Prophet had already fully settled the issues of *al-khilafah* before he died:

- (a) 'Ali was the first *khalifah* immediately after him;
- (b) then, the *khilafah* passes, after 'Ali, to the children of Fatimah till the Day of *al-Qiyamah*.

This was the Decree of Allah, and it shall be in force till the end of our planet. Clearly, there was never any vacancy in the *khilafah* at all, and there will never be. The very moment that the Messenger of the Lord departed, all his powers, authorities and leadership responsibilities naturally passed to Amir al–Muminin, his publicly designated successor. However, Allah had also revealed to His Prophet that the *Ummah* generally would betray 'Ali after him. Imam al–Hakim (d. 403 H) records:

حدثنا أبو حفص عمر بن أحمد الجمحي بمكة ثنا علي بن عبد العزيز ثنا عمرو بن عون ثنا هشيم عن إسماعيل بن سالم عن أبي إدريس الأودي عن علي رضي الله عنه قال إن مما عهد إلي النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم أن الأمة ستغدر بي بعده

Abu Hafs 'Umar b. Ahmad al-Jamhi – 'Ali b. 'Abd al-'Aziz – 'Amr b. 'Awn – Hushaym – Isma'il b. Salim – Abu Idris al-Awdi – 'Ali, may Allah be pleased with him:

"Verily, part of what the Prophet, peace be upon him, told me is that **the** *Ummah* **would soon betray** me after him."14

Al-Hakim says:

هذا حديث صحيح الإسناد

This hadith has a sahih chain. 15

Imam al-Dhahabi (d. 748 H) agrees:

صحيح

Sahih 16

Al-Hakim also reports:

عن حيان الأسدي سمعت عليا يقول قال لي رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم إن الأمة ستغدر بك بعدي وأنت تعيش على ملتي وتقتل على سنتي من أحبك أحبني ومن أبغضك أبغضني وإن هذه ستخضب من هذا يعني لحيته من رأسه

Narrated Hayyan al-Asadi:

I heard 'Ali saying: The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said to me: "Verily, the *Ummah* will soon betray you after me; and you will live upon my religion, and you will be killed upon my *Sunnah*. Whoever loves you loves me, and whoever hates you hates me. Verily, this will soon be painted from this", he meant: his beard (will be drained with blood) from his head. 17

Then he again declares:

صحيح

Sahih 18

And al-Dhahabi, once more, concurs with him:

صحيح

Sahih 19

Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani (d. 852 H) copies as well:

حدثنا الفضل هو أبو نعيم ، ثنا فطر بن خليفة ، أخبرني حبيب بن أبي ثابت، قال: سمعت ثعلبة بن يزيد، قال :سمعت عليا رضى الله عنه، يقول : والله إنه لعهد النبي الأمى صلى الله عليه وسلم: سيغدرونك من بعدي

Al-Fa®l, Abu Na'im - Fitr b. Khalifah - Habib b. Abi Thabit - Tha'labah b. Yazid:

I heard 'Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, saying: "I swear by Allah, verily, the *Ummi* Prophet, peace be upon him, told me: "They will soon betray you after me." 20

The Salafi annotator, 'Abd Allah al-Shahri, comments:

فالحديث حسن لغيره

The hadith is hasan li ghayrihi.21

And they *did* betray him immediately after the death of the Messenger of Allah, exactly as prophesied. The Ansar opted to take advantage of their numerical and military powers by installing one of their members, instead of pledging allegiance to the divinely designated *khalifah*. They were staging a coup. But, they did not succeed, thanks to the early intervention of Abu Bakr and 'Umar. Meanwhile, Abu Bakr and 'Umar themselves were supposed to be on their way to faraway Palestine at that very moment, as foot soldiers under the command of Usamah. They both however defied the Prophet's conscription order, and refused to leave al-Madinah or to join the marching army. Moreover, rather than pledging allegiance to the *khalifah* of the Messenger, the duo successfully won the Ansar to their side and seized the political *khilafah*! To use contemporary terms, Abu Bakr and 'Umar, with the backing of the Ansar, staged a successful coup against 'Ali, who had earlier been declared *khalifah* by Muhammad himself – apparently, on the Order of Allah. No wonder, Imam 'Ali called both Abu Bakr and 'Umar traitors and dishonest liars. Imam Muslim quotes 'Umar saying to him (i.e. 'Ali) and 'Abbas:

فلما توفي رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم قال أبو بكر أنا ولي رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم ... فرأيتماه كاذبا آثما غادرا خائنا والله يعلم إنه لصادق بار راشد تابع للحق ثم توفى أبو بكر وأنا ولى رسول الله صلى الله عليه و

When the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, died, Abu Bakr said: "I am the wali of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him" ... So both of you ('Ali and 'Abbas) thought him (i.e. Abu Bakr) to be a liar, sinful, A TRAITOR and dishonest. And Allah knows that he was really truthful, pious, rightly-guided and a follower of the truth. Abu Bakr died and I became the wali of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, and the wali of Abu Bakr. So both of you thought me to be a liar, sinful, A TRAITOR and dishonest. 22

But, is that why someone said this:

When 'Umar dies, I will pledge allegiance to so-and-so, for, I swear by Allah, the pledge of allegiance given to Abu Bakr was nothing but an error and it succeeded.

It was undeniably an "error". However, it succeeded. In other words, it was illegal. The *Ummah* should not have done it. But, it succeeded and gave him power nonetheless. So, the people obeyed him. What is more interesting here is 'Umar's response to this statement:

No doubt, IT WAS SURELY LIKE THAT. However, Allah saved from its EVIL.

This is the man, who was the most instrumental in bringing Abu Bakr to power, confessing that the pledge of allegiance given to him was surely an "evil" error. However, according to him, Allah saved from its "evil". So, that somehow justifies it, in his view! But, has Allah *really* saved the *Ummah* from the "evil" of the pledge of allegiance given to Abu Bakr? When one considers how it has divded us into sects, some killing the others because of it, then one sees that its "evil" clearly still lives with us.

Meanwhile, even though the word used *faltah* (فلنة) truly means "error"23, the Ahl al-Sunnah do not like that meaning. They prefer one of its other meanings, as al-Hafiz does:

His statement (I swear by Allah, the pledge of allegiance given to Abu Bakr was nothing but a *faltah*), **meaning a SURPRISE**.24

In other words, the pledge of allegiance given to Abu Bakr was "a surprise" to the generality of the

Sahabah. When they heard about it, they wondered: how come? Well, even this meaning of *faltah*, which the Sunnis prefer, still supports our position. Why was the rise of Abu Bakr to power "a surprise", as 'Umar himself testified? If he had been leading the Sahabah in *salat*, and this had somehow translated into his appointment as *khalifah*-designate, why then would anyone find the pledge of allegiance given to him surprising?

After all, all the Sahabah would have been expecting him to assume the *khilafah*, if the Sunni claims had been true. In fact, it would have been the other way round: they would have been surprised if anyone else, other than Abu Bakr, had received the pledge of allegiance. So, apparently, the Sahabah were NOT expecting Abu Bakr to be the *khalifah* immediately after the Messenger of Allah. This was why it was "a surprise" to them when they heard his name being linked with the *khilafah*! However, he had already secured the allegiance of the Islamic army, and literally held the military power of the *Ummah*. Therefore, the Sahabah were presented with only a *fiat accompli*.

But, this definition of al-Hafiz does not explain the evil nature of Abu Bakr's authority. The fact that something is a "surprise" does not necessarily make it "evil". By contrast, when it is "illegal", then it is necessarily "evil". 'Umar himself described the pledge of allegiance sworn to Abu Bakr with evil:

No doubt, IT WAS SURELY LIKE THAT. However, Allah saved from ITS EVIL.

These words of 'Umar are extremely significant, indeed. He was the staunchest supporter and defender of Abu Bakr's rule. The fact that even he qualified that same regime of his role model with "evil" reveals that the matter was so glaring that denying it would do no good. He instead merely offered a blind defence: Allah saved from "its evil". Of course, its evil still rules the world of Islam today – with rapidly growing sectarian killings spreading everywhere. Everything, all this evil, stemmed from the pledge of allegiance given to Abu Bakr, by the Ansar, at Saqifah on that fateful day.

'Umar also added:

No doubt, it was surely like that. However, Allah saved from its evil. And there is none amongst you towards whom throats are slit like Abu Bakr. Whosoever pledges allegiance to anyone without consultation with the Muslims, then neither that person nor the person to whom the pledge of allegiance was given, is to be supported. Rather, they both should be killed.

Here, he mentioned the exact method through which Abu Bakr came to power. 'Umar, his colleagues

and the Ansar pledged allegiance to him *without* consulting the other Muslims. The son of al–Khattab then recommended the death sentence for whosoever achieved the *khilafah* again through the "Abu Bakr" method. Such a *khalifah* and all his supporters should be executed. This is very telling, especially on the meaning of *faltah* in the *athar*. If the "Abu Bakr" method had been legal, then whosoever adopted it would not have deserved death. So, it was illegal, and therefore "an error", which bore "evil" for this *Ummah*.

In any case, whether *faltah* is translated as "error" or "surprise", the direct implication is still that the Sahabah were not expecting Abu Bakr to become their *khalifah*. Imagine: would this have been the case if all those Sunni claims about Abu Bakr – including his alleged leadership of *salat* and its overstretched implications – had been true?

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- <u>3.</u> 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. 7, pp. 243–244
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- 10. Ibid, vol. 2, p. 351, # 754
- 11. Abu Bakr b. Abi 'Asim, Ahmad b. 'Amr b. al-Tahhak b. Mukhlid al-Shaybani, Kitab al-Sunnah (Dar al-Sami'i li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi') [annotator: Dr. Basim b. Faysal al-Jawabirah], vol. 1, pp. 799-800, # 1222
- **12.** Ibid
- 13. Abu Bakr b. Abi 'Asim, Ahmad b. 'Amr b. al-⊡ahhak b. Mukhlid al-Shaybani, Kitab al-Sunnah (al-Maktab al-Islami; 1st edition, 1400 H) [annotator: Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani], vol. 2, p. 565, # 1188
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- <u>15.</u> Ibid
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- **18.** Ibid
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- 21. Ibid, vol. 16, p. 67, # 3921
- 22. 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. 3, p. 1376, #1757

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