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Abdullah Ibn Saba Part 4

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Who Started The Battle Of Camel?

The battle of Camel (Jamal) was the first war declared against Imam 'Ali (as) in Basra in year 36/656 after people appointed 'Ali as their leader of the Muslim community. It was called so, because Aisha, one of the leaders of the opposition group was riding a camel. The other leaders among the opposition were Talha and Zubair who were two well–known companions of the messenger of Allah. This war is also known in the history as the battle of Basra. The result was shedding the blood of more than ten thousand Muslims.

The circulators of false accusation against the Followers of the Members of the House of the Prophet quote from Sayf that the followers of Ibn Saba started the battle of Basra at night just before the negotiations between Imam 'Ali and his three opponents (Aisha, Talha, and Zubair) were about to succeed.

They started the battle at night by attacking the two armies simultaneously in order to make them plunge into battle. Ibn Saba wanted to make each of the two armies accuse the other of starting the battle. This would abort the peaceful efforts whose stipulations were supposed to include the punishment of Uthman's killers.

This allegation is in contradiction with many clear historical facts, of which the following events were recorded by the Sunni historians and traditionists:

1. al-Sha'bi (Amir Ibn Sharahil al-shi-abi) reported the following:

The right side of the army of the Commander of Believers ('Ali) attacked the left side of Basra's army. They fought each other and people resorted to Aisha and most of them were from Dhubbah

and al-Azd tribes. The Battle started after sunrise and continued until afternoon. The Basrites were defeated and a man from the tribe of al-Azd said: 'Come back and attack.' Muhammad (Ibn al-Hanafiya), son of 'Ali, hit him with his sword and severed his hand. The man shouted: 'Azdites, run away.' When the Azdites were overwhelmed by the army of the 'Ali, the Azdites shouted: 'We belong to the religion of 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib.'

Sunni reference: History of al-Tabari, Arabic version, Events of year 36 AH v4, p312. (The English version of this part is not yet published at the time of writing of this article)

The above report gives evidence to the fact that the fight did not start during the night as the inventor of lbn Saba claimed. Rather it started after the sunrise. This collapses the whole alleged conspiracy of simultaneous attack to both armies during the night.

2. Qatadah reported the following:

When the two armies faced each other, Zubair appeared on his horse while he was well armed. People said to 'Ali, 'This is Zubair.' Upon that 'Ali said: 'Zubair is the more expected of the two to remember God, if he is reminded.' Talha also came to face 'Ali. When 'Ali faced them, he said: 'Certainly you have prepared arms, horses, and men. Did you prepare an excuse for the Day of Judgment when you meet your Lord?

Fear God and do not be like the lady who unravels her weaving after she had woven it strongly. Was I not your brother and you used to believe in the sanctity of my blood? Did anything happen to make it legal for you to shed my blood?' Talha said: 'You have instigated people against Uthman.'

Imam 'Ali replied, quoting from the Qur'an:

'On that day (the day of judgment), Allah will pay them their just due, and they will know that, indeed, Allah is the Manifest Truth (Qur'an 24:25).'

Then 'Ali continued: 'Talha, you are fighting for the blood of Uthman?

May God curse those who killed Uthman. Zubair, do you remember the day when you passed by with the Messenger of God at Banu Ghunam and he looked at me and smiled? I smiled back at him and you said to him: 'Ibn Abu Talib is always conceited. 'The Messenger of God said to you: 'He is not conceited, and you shall fight him unjustly.'

Zubair said: 'By God, this is true. Had I remembered that, I would not have made this journey. By God, I shall never fight you.' Then Zubair left and informed Aisha and his son Abdullah that he took an oath to never fight 'Ali. His son counseled him to fight against 'Ali and pay atonement (Kaffaarah) for breaking his oath. Zubair agreed and made his atonement by freeing his slave Mak'hul.

Sunni references:

- History of al-Tabari, Arabic version, Events of year 36 AH, v4, pp501-502
- History of Ibn al-Athir, v3, p240
- al-Isti'ab, Ibn Abd al-Barr, v2, p515
- Usdul Ghabah, v2, p252
- al-Isabah, by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, v2, p557

This event clearly tells us that Talha and Zubair confronted Imam 'Ali (as) BEFORE the start of the battle, and the confrontation was in the day time rather than at night. Otherwise, people could not have seen the confrontation or heard the conversation between the Imam and his opponents and recognize each other in the Helmet (metal head-cover). We are sure that there was no electricity for light, nor was there any voice amplifier to make conversations heard.

Since the conversation and the confrontation took place before the start of the battle, it is clear that the report of Sayf about the battle starting during the dark night and unpredictably, is a sheer lie.

3. al-Dhabbi narrated:

We were in the camp of 'Ali on the day of Battle of Camel, where 'Ali sent for Talha to talk to him (before the beginning of war). Talha came forward, and 'Ali told him: I adjure you by Allah! Didn't you hear the Messenger of Allah (S) when he said: `Whoever I am his MAWLA, this 'Ali is his MAWLA. O God, love whoever loves him, and be hostile to whoever is hostile to him'?"Talha replied: "Yes."'Ali said: "Then why do you want to fight me?"

Sunni references:

- al-Mustadrak, by al-Hakim, v3, pp 169,371
- Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, on the authority of Ilyas al-Dhabbi
- Muruj al-Dhahab, by al-Mas'udi, v4, p321
- Majma' al-Zawa'id, by al-Haythami, v9, p107

4. Yahya Ibn Sa'id narrated:

Marwan Ibn al-Hakam who was in the ranks of Talha, saw Talha is retreating (when his army was being defeated in the battlefield).

Since he and all Umayad recognized him and al–Zubair as the murderers of Uthman, he shot an arrow at him and severely wounded him. He then said to Aban, the son of Uthman, that: "I have spared you from one of your father's murderers." Talha was taken to a ruined house in Basra where he died.

Sunni references:

- Tabagat, by Ibn Sa'ad, v3, part 1, p159

- al-Isabah, by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, v3, pp 532-533
- History of Ibn al-Athir, v3, p244
- Usdul Ghabah, v3, pp 87-88
- al-Isti'ab, Ibn Abd al-Barr, v2, p766
- History of Ibn al-Kathir, v7, p248
- A similar report is given in al-Mustadrak, by al-Hakim, v3, pp 169,371

5. al-Zuhri, another important Sunni narrator who is famous for his dislike of Ahlul-Bayt, reported the following dialogue of Imam 'Ali with Zubair and

Talha before the battle:

"'Ali said: 'Zubair, do you fight me for the blood of Uthman after you killed him? May God give the most hostile to Uthman among us the consequence which that very person dislikes.' He said to Talha: 'Talha, you have brought the wife of the Messenger of God (Aisha) to use her for war and hid your wife at your house (in Medina)! Did you not give me your allegiance?' Talha said: 'I gave you the allegiance while the sword was on my neck.'

(At this point, 'Ali tried to invite them to peace, leaving them no excuse.) 'Ali addressed his own army saying: 'Who among you will display this Qur'an and what is in it to the opposing army with the understanding that if he loses one of his hand he will hold the Qur'an with his other hand...?'

A youth from Kufa said: 'I will take the mission.' 'Ali went through his army offering them the mission. Only that youth accepted it. Then 'Ali said to him: 'Exhibit this Qur'an and say to them: It is between you and us from its beginning to its end. Remember God, and spare your blood and our blood.'

As the youth called upon them to resort to the Qur'an and surrender to its judgment, the Basrites army attacked and killed him. At this time, 'Ali said to his army: 'Now the fight has become legal.' The battle then started.

Sunni reference: History of al-Tabari, Arabic version, Events of year 36 AH v4, p905

All these reports and the similar ones clearly indicate that the battle started in the day time rather than at night as Sayf Ibn Umar alleged. The breaking war was not abrupt since the two armies met and talked to each other just before the start of battle. Had the confrontation between Imam

'Ali and Talha and Zubair taken place at night, the final call of Imam 'Ali would have had no benefit because the two armies would not have been able to witness it or hear their conversation. Also, the confrontation between the carrier of the Holy Qur'an and the Basrites would have been useless.

None of the opposing soldiers could have seen the Qur'an in the hands of the young man at night.

Furthermore, the alleged agreement between the Imam and the three rebellious leaders, to punish the

individuals who murdered Uthman, would be logical only if the three leaders were serious in seeking punishment for the killers. But the three leaders (Aisha, Talha, and Zubair) were the main agitators who provoked people to kill the Third Caliph. As we see in the above tradition, Imam 'Ali clearly stated that Zubair was among those who killed Uthman.

Had the revolters elected Talha or Zubair instead of Imam 'Ali (as) as Caliph, they would have given the killers of Uthman the biggest prize. Certainly the leaders did not seek revenge for the blood of Uthman, for they themselves were behind the plot. They only pretended to do that as a means of destroying the Imam's caliphate.

Imam 'Ali said in the battle of Camel:

"Truth and falsehood can not be identified by the virtue of people. First understand the truth, you will then realize who is adhering to it." (Nahjul Balaghah, by Imam 'Ali)

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