

‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib (‘a), the Incomparable

One of the youths who can be introduced as an exemplary youth is ‘Alī (‘a). ‘Alī (‘a) is a good example of an ideal adolescent and one from whom other youths can profit by imitating his ways. From the very beginning up to the end of his life, he was always beside the Noble Prophet (S) and continually rendering valuable services to Islam. The Noble Prophet (S) admired ‘Alī (‘a) because he played a vital and effective role in all the scenes of activity or conflict.

We shall now recount some of the activities of ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib (‘a).

‘Alī (‘a) was the son of Abī Tālib. Abī Tālib came from the biggest and most famous Arab tribe called the Quraysh. ‘Alī’s (‘a) mother was a great and honorable woman called Fātimah, the daughter of Asad ibn Manf. She, too, came from the tribe of Quraysh. That is why ‘Alī (‘a) is considered as the first baby from Hashemite father and a Hashemite mother. [1](#)

‘Alī was born miraculously in the Ka‘bah. The honor of being born in the House of Allah (the Ka‘bah) has not been granted to any one else in the entire history of the world save ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib (‘a). He stayed in the Ka‘bah for three days after birth. After that, held firmly in his mother’s arms, he was brought out of that holy place. There are a lot of sources that prove this assertion. [2](#)

Abī Tālib, ‘Alī’s (‘a) father, defended and protected Allah’s Prophet (S) during the days when Islam suffered ostracism and at a time when everyone had united against the Noble Prophet (S). He passed away in the tenth year of the prophetic mission.

After a short period of time, the honorable wife of Allah’s Prophet (S) Khadījah also passed away in the same year that Abī Tālib died. That is why the Holy Prophet (S) named that year ‘The Year of Sorrow’. After the death of Abī Tālib, Allah’s Prophet (S) brought ‘Alī (‘a) to his house. It is for this reason that ‘Alī (‘a) was brought up in the Prophet’s (S) house. He grew up, received instruction and developed under the Prophet’s (S) direct supervision. [3](#)

When the archangel Gabriel (Jibrīl) descended from heaven upon Allah’s Prophet (S) in the cave of

Hir[ؓ] and that noble man got appointed to the prophetic mission, ‘Al[ؓ] (‘a) was ten years of age. When he heard about this incident, ‘Al[ؓ] was the first male to accept the Prophet’s (S) invitation and become a Muslim.^{[4](#)}

When Allah’s Prophet (S) was appointed to the prophetic mission, he did not reveal or expose his mission for a period of three years. In the third year, however, he received orders from Allah to publicly invite the people to Islam. The first few people that the Noble Prophet (S) invited to join the religion of Allah were his kindred. He prepared a feast for them. During the banquet, he addressed them,

“O children of ‘Abd al-Mttalib! Allah has appointed me to lead all mankind, especially you, my kinsfolk. He has given me orders first to warn my family and to tell my relatives not to be disobedient to Allah.”^{[5](#)}

During that feast, the Noble Prophet (S) repeated this three times but no one, save ‘Al[ؓ] (‘a) responded to his call. ‘Al[ؓ] ibn Ab[ؓ] T[ؓ]lib (‘a) at that time was an adolescent, thirteen years of age. The Prophet (S) stated, “O Al[ؓ]! You are my brother and successor. You will be my inheritor and vizier.”^{[6](#)}

During the course of his worthy life, ‘Al[ؓ] ibn Ab[ؓ] T[ؓ]lib (‘a) always strove for the advancement of Allah’s divine religion. History recounts a lot of instances of ‘Al[ؓ] (‘a)’s valuable services, but we will cite a few of them here:

[1. Risking his life for the Noble Prophet \(S\) by sleeping in the Prophet’s \(S\) bed](#)

In the fourteenth year of the prophetic mission, the chiefs of the tribe of Quraysh decided and planned to kill Allah’s Prophet (S). In order to achieve this plan, they selected a youth from every tribe and planned to attack and martyr the Noble Prophet (S) during the night.

The Prophet (S), who was aware of their evil intentions, requested ‘Al[ؓ] (‘a) to sleep in his bed in order to make it possible for Allah’s Prophet (S) to escape out of the city without being noticed by the enemies.

‘Al[ؓ] ibn Ab[ؓ] T[ؓ]lib (‘a) was twenty three years of age when he responded affirmatively (with his life and soul) to the Noble Prophet’s (S) divine call by sleeping in his bed. Allah’s Prophet (S) secretly left the city and went to a cave called Thawr near Mecca. During the last part of the night, forty armed men made an attack on the Noble Prophet’s (S) house but were shocked to find themselves confronted with ‘Al[ؓ] ibn Ab[ؓ] T[ؓ]lib (‘a), who was sleeping in the Prophet’s (S) bed.^{[7](#)}

[2. The War of Badr](#)

The War of Badr was the first battle in the history of Islam between truth and falsehood. This war took place in the year 2 AH^{[8](#)}, between the polytheists and the Muslim army at a place called the Wells of

Badr which is located between Mecca and Medina.

The forces of disbelief [*kufir*] numbered up to more than nine hundred and fifty strongmen, well-armed with enough supplies, whereas, the Noble Prophet's (S) companions [*sahābah*] were not more three hundred and thirteen people in all. Three very famous and strong war heroes of the unbelievers by the names of 'Utbah, his brother Shaybah and his son Walīd were successively killed by 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib ('a), Hamzah ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib and 'Ubaydah ibn Hārith, respectively.

'Alī ibn Abī Tālib ('a) was twenty five years of age when this war was fought.⁹

3. The War of Uhud

One year had passed after the War of Badr when the unbelievers [*kuffār*] of Mecca rebuilt and restored their forces. Three thousand fighters with enough supplies descended upon the foothills of Mount Uhud, which is about six kilometers in length, under the command of Abī Sufyān. Allah's Prophet (S) confronted the unbelievers with seven hundred people.

At first he sent fifty highly skilled archers under the command of 'Abd Allāh ibn Jabbir to the narrow passage of Mount Uhud, which was behind the Muslims. The Noble Prophet (S) gave his companions [*sahābah*] explicit orders not to leave that strait under any circumstances.

War heroes from the army of the unbelievers by the names of Talhah ibn Abī Talhah, Abī Sa'ād ibn Talhah, Harath ibn Abī Talhah, Abī 'Azīz ibn Talhah, 'Abd Allāh ibn Abī Jamālah, Irtāq ibn Sharhabīl were all killed one by one (in the order mentioned) by 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib ('a).

At that time, 'Alī ('a) was twenty six years of age. The Muslim armies were initially victorious, but because the Muslim archers breached the orders of their commander and quit the narrow passage of Mount Uhud, the infidel Khālid ibn Walīd, leading a number of horsemen, attacked the Muslims from behind. As a result of this insubordination, the Muslims lost the war and seventy of them got martyred.

One of the people who got martyred in this war was the Prophet's (S) uncle Hamzah (r). In this battle, a good number of the Prophet's (S) companions [*sahābah*], including 'Alī ('a), were diligently and efficiently guarding the Noble Prophet (S). 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib ('a) sustained ninety wounds in this war. It was during this battle that a voice was heard from heaven, "There is no ideal success without 'Alī, and there is no worthy sword except the Dhī al-Faqār."¹⁰

4. The War of Khandaq (al-Ahzāb)

In the month of Dhī al-Qa'dah in 5 AH, the polytheists of Mecca planned a joint operation with the treacherous Jews, who had remained under the protection of Islam, in Medina, to attack the Muslims and exterminate Islam.

In order to achieve their aims, they secured the cooperation and help of a number of other tribes residing in Medina. Together, the conspirators recruited four thousand fighters. The renowned war champion of the Mecca polytheists, called ‘Amru ibn ‘Abduwadd, also took part in this war.

‘Amru ibn ‘Abduwadd had been wounded during the battle of Badr. For this reason, he held a strong grudge against the Muslims in his heart. He had made a vow to himself not to apply any oil on his body until he exacted his vengeance on Allah’s Prophet (S) and his followers, the Muslims. [11](#)

When the polytheists of Mecca reached Medina, the traitorous Jewish tribe of Banī Qurayzah, who had made a pact of peace and cooperation with the Noble Prophet (S), broke their pledge and (in a clear act of treachery) got ready to collaborate and work jointly with the infidels of Mecca.

The Muslims, acting on Salmān Fārsī’s suggestion, dug a ditch, or Khandaq, [12](#) around the city of Medina with the aim of preventing the attacking infidels from entering or penetrating the inside of the city of Medina. This blockade of the idol-worshippers lasted for twenty seven days.

Finally, the renowned war hero of the unbelievers, ‘Amru ibn ‘Abdu Wadd, managed to jump over the trench or Khandaq and enter the city of Medina. He demanded that a challenger from the Muslims should come forward and fight him. No one save ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib (‘a) dared to challenge him because ‘Amru ibn ‘Abduwadd was a brave and courageous man. ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib (‘a) set foot on the battleground and at that very moment, the Noble Prophet (S) said, “All belief is confronting all disbelief.”

After a brief encounter, ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib (‘a) killed the war champion of the unbelievers and sent him to perdition. ‘Alī (‘a) beheaded ‘Amru ibn ‘Abduwadd and threw his head at the Noble Prophet’s (S) feet. The Noble Prophet (S) said, “Verily ‘Alī’s stroke during the battle of Khandaq is of greater value than seventy years of worship of all the jinn and all mankind.”

‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib (‘a) provided these valuable services to Islam and the Muslims when he was only twenty seven. After this war, the Noble Prophet (S) dispatched an army under the command of ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib (‘a) to confront the traitorous Jewish tribe of Banī Qurayzah at war because of their deceit and disloyalty.

The elder of the Jews of Medina by the name of Huyy ibn Akhtab was killed during that war and the danger of further conspiracies and plots by the Jews was completely eliminated. The wealth and property of the Jews fell into the hands of the Muslims and the Noble Prophet (S) and his followers lived in peace, tranquility and comfort thereafter.

This great victory was attained because of the courage and devotion of ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib (‘a). [13](#)

5. The Conquest of Khaybar

In 7 AH, the Jews of Khaybar conspired against the Muslims, and used the seven fortifications of

Khaybar, two hundred kilometers north of Medina, as warehouses for different kinds of weapons. Four thousand Jews used to live in these fortifications and were considered a great danger for the Muslims.

In order to eliminate this danger, the Noble Prophet (S) moved towards Khaybar with one thousand and four hundred foot soldiers and two hundred mounted soldiers. He entrusted the banner of the Muslim army to 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib (‘a), who was then thirty.

In this war, the First Caliph (Abū Bakr) and the Second Caliph (‘Umar) were the first to be entrusted with launching this attack but they both returned unsuccessful. The Noble Prophet (S) was left with no option but to send 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib (‘a) to the battlefield. 'Alī (‘a) struck Marhab, the war champion of the Jews, a deadly blow which sent Marhab crashing to the ground.

When they saw the war hero and leader of the enemies lying dead on the ground, the Muslims made a wide scale attack on the Jews. 'Alī (‘a) lifted the heavy iron gate of Khaybar and used it as a shield for himself.

During this war, Marhab, Hārith and Yāsir, three war champions of the enemies of Islam, were all killed by 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib (‘a). Also, all the seven fortifications of Khaybar were conquered. At the end of the war, forty people helped each other to lift and return that same iron gate to its former position, which 'Alī (‘a) had lifted with only one hand.[14](#)

6. The Conquest of Mecca

In the eighth year of the Islamic calendar (Hijrah), Mecca was conquered peacefully, without any blood shedding and war. Allah’s Prophet (S) entered the city of Mecca with twelve thousand people. The Noble Prophet (S) broke and destroyed all the idols that were in Allah’s House, the Ka’bah, all by himself.

Then, he gave orders to 'Alī (‘a) to climb upon on his shoulders and destroy all the idols that were placed on top of the Ka’bah. 'Alī (‘a) obeyed the orders; he got onto the Prophet’s (S) shoulders, went on top of the Ka’bah and destroyed all those idols. While coming down, however, 'Alī (‘a) did not step on the Prophet’s (S) shoulders. Instead, he jumped from the roof of the Ka’bah directly to the ground. The Noble Prophet (S) asked him, “Why did you not step on my shoulders while coming down?” 'Alī (‘a) answered, “You ordered me to step on your shoulders to climb up. But when I intended to come down, you did not say anything. Therefore, I jumped down. I thank Allah that I did not behave with impudence toward His Prophet (S).”[15](#)

Indeed, what you have just read are some of the valuable services which the prolific youth of history 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib (‘a) rendered to Islam. He played an active role in all the events which came to pass and all the problems that the Muslims faced. He struggled for the welfare of the Muslims with all his body and soul during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (S) and after his passage to the Hereafter.

There are a lot of graces which 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib (‘a) enjoyed graces which the other companions

[*sahābah*] of Allah’s Prophet (S) were deprived of. Citing and counting all of them would need an independent book. What we have mentioned suffices to prove what a valuable and prolific youth ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib (‘a) was. We will provide the documents and evidences available so that reference should be made to them whenever the need arises. [16](#)

1. Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 35, p. 68; Ibn Abī al-Hadīd, Sharh Nahj al-Balāghah, vol. 1, p. 6.
2. Al-Mustadrak ‘alī al-Sahāhayn Hākim, vol. 3, p. 483; Kifāyat al-Tālib, p. 260; Al-Ghadīr, vol. 6, p. 22.
3. Usūl al-Kāfī, vol. 2 p. 324; Al-Ghadīr, vol. 7, p. 330; Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 35, p. 16.
4. Tārīkh-e Tabarī, vol. 2, p. 212; Al-Ghadīr, vol. 3, p. 220; Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 38, p. 262; Ihqāq al-Haqq, vol. 7, p. 497.
5. Sūrat al-Baqarah 2:214; Tafsīr-e Fir‘ī p. 112.
6. Ihqāq al-Haqq, vol. 6, p. 461; Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 38, p. 244; Manāqib ibn Shahr ashshāb, vol. 2, p. 180; Kanz al-‘Ummī, vol. 6, p. 397.
7. Ihqāq al-Haqq, vol. 8, p. 334, vol. 6, p. 479; Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 19, p. 60; Sūrah al-Halabiyyah, vol. 2, p. 26.
8. The Noble Prophet’s (S) migration to Medina marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar, the Hijrah. [trans.]
9. Ihqāq al-Haqq, vol. 8, p. 348; Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 41, p. 79; Mufīd, Al-‘Irshād, vol. 1, p. 62.
10. Ihqāq al-Haqq, vol. 8, p. 366; Ibn Abī al-Hadīd, Sharh Nahj al-Balāghah, vol. 3, p. 401; Tadhkirat al-Khawās, p. 21; Tārīkh-e Tabarī, vol. 3, p. 37.
11. It was a common custom among the Arabs that whenever a group of people suffered defeat or got afflicted with misfortune at the hands of someone or a certain group of people, they used to make an oath with themselves not to apply oil on their bodies until they exacted vengeance on their enemies. They did so because according to the custom of the Arabs at that time, applying oil on the body was done when they had no kind of sorrow whatsoever and were at the peak of happiness.
12. Khandaq is the Arabic word for ditch, pit or trench. [trans.]
13. Ihqāq al-Haqq, vol. 8, p. 367; Hākim al-Nayshābūrī, Al-‘Alī al-Sahāhayn, vol. 3, p. 32; Tārīkh-e Baghdād, vol. 13, p. 19; Khwārazmī, Maqāt al-Husayn, p. 45.
14. Ihqāq al-Haqq, vol. 8, p. 383; Kanz al-‘Ummī, vol. 5, p. 114; Al-Mustadrak ‘alī al-Sahāhayn, vol. 3, p. 37.
15. Ihqāq al-Haqq, vol. 8, p. 682; Sir‘ī ibn Hāshim, vol. 2, p. 429; Ibn Sa‘d, Tabaqāt, vol. 2, p. 102; Usd al-Ghābah, vol. 3, p. 102; Al-Is‘bah fī Tamyīz al-Sahābah, vol. 1, p. 318.
16. Ihqāq al-Haqq, vol. 6, p. 439; Mufīd, Al-‘Irshād, vol. 1, p. 150; Al-Mīzān, vol. 9, p. 163; Al-Ghadīr, vol. 3, p. 330; Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 38, p. 167; Sharh Nahj al-Balāghah, vol. 3, p. 401; Ghāyat al-Marām, p. 71; Tārīkh Baghdād, vol. 13, p. 19.

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