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## An account of Ishmae'il, Talut and Jalut

Almighty Allah says in Qur'an:

Have you not considered the chiefs of the children of Israel after Musa, when they said to a Prophet of theirs: Raise up for us a king that we may fight in the way of Allah. (2:246)

'Ali ibn Ibrahim and others have narrated from Imam al-Baqir that after Musa, The Israelites committed many sins and deformed the religion of Allah and defied His commandments and disobeyed their Prophet who used to give them divine orders. Allah gave a Copt named Jalut control over them who disgraced them, killed their men and drove them out of their homes and enslaved their women and robbed their properties and wealth. Then they sought shelter with Allah's Prophet and requested him to pray Allah so that He may send a king for them with whom they might fight the infidels. It was a rule in the Israelites that the Prophet was from one family and the king from another because until then Allah had not amalgamated Prophethood and kingship in one family. Therefore they said, appoint for us a king.

They said, And what reason have we that we should not fight in the way of Allah, and we have indeed been compelled to abandon our homes and our children.

But when fighting was ordained for them, they turned back, except a few of them, and Allah knows the unjust

And their Prophet said, Surely Allah has raised Talut to be a king over you.

They said, How can he hold kingship over us while we have a greater right to kingship then he, and he has not been granted an abundance of wealth. (2:246-7)

Imam al-Baqir said, the Prophethood was in the family of Lawi and kingship in the progeny of Yusuf and Talut was one of the sons of Binyamin the real brother of Yusuf. Thus he was not from the family of a Prophet or a king.

He said, Surely Allah has chosen him in preference to you, and He has increased him abundantly

## in knowledge and physique, and Allah grants His kingdom to whom He pleases, and Allah is Ample giving, Knowing. (2:247)

Imam said, "Talut was better in physique, that is, stronger and more courageous and he was also the wisest of them all but he did not have wealth. Therefore people considered him low and they said that Allah did not give him much wealth."

And the Prophet said to them: Surely the sign of His kingdom is, that there shall come to you the chest in which there is tranquility from your Lord and residue of the relics of what the children of Musa and the children of Harun have left, the angels bearing it; most surely there is a sign in this for those who believe. 1

Imam says, "The chest which was sent by Allah for Musa from heaven and in which Musa's mother had put him and pushed into the sea was the same chest which was with The Israelites. They used to seek Barakah (abundance) from it. When the time of Musa's death arrived, he put his amour, tablets of Torah and some relics of his Messengership in it and entrusted it to his Wasi (legatee) Yusha'. That chest always remained with them, until they gave up honoring it and began to disrespect it. Children began to play with it on roads. The Israelites lived a life of honor until that chest was respected. But when they gave up respecting it Allah lifted it from among them. And now He exposed it for them in the time of Talut's kingship. It is mentioned in a true hadith that angels brought the chest to The Israelites. Another hadith days that they took it to The Israelites in the form of a cow. It is recorded with authentic proof that residue of the relics of what the children of Musa and the children of Harun have left means the rest of Prophets, with whom the chest used to remain. It is mentioned in Tafsir of the word 'Sakina' that the Israelites had left the chest between the ranks of Muslims and infidels. A fragrant air came out of it and took the form of a man seeing which the unbelievers ran away."

It is authentically mentioned that Imam al-Ridha said that *Sakina* is a breeze, which had arrived from Paradise. Its face was like a human being. When that chest was put between the believers and the nonbelievers, whoever went ahead of it was killed or defeated and who turned his face from it and ran away became a Kafir and the Imam used to kill him.

In a good tradition it is mentioned that when, after Musa the Israelites became rebellious and sinners Allah frowned on them and lifted the chest up in the sky. When Jalut overpowered The Israelites and when they requested their Prophet to pray to Allah so that He may send for them a king for leading them in jihad Allah made Talut their king and sent the chest for them and angels brought it to earth. When the chest was put between them and their enemies, one who turned away from it became unbeliever.2

The Prophet told them, "In your path in this desert you will see a canal. Whosoever will drink from it Allah will have nothing to do with him and the one who does not drink will be obeying Allah." When they reached the canal Allah made it known to them that He won't mind if they drank a cupful from it. But excepting a few of them all drank profusely. There were 60,000 who drank full throat and this was a test

for them. According to the narration of Ibn Babawayh which has been authentically narrated from Imam as–Sadiq those who did not drink more than even a handful were 313 males. After passing by the canal they confronted the army of Jalut and observed the strength and the awe of that army. Those who had drank much water said, today we do not have guts to fight with the army of Jalut. As Allah says,

So when he had crossed it, he and those who believed with him, they said, we have today no power against Jalut and his forces. (2:249)

Those who were sure that they would meet their Lord said, How often has a small party vanquished a numerous host by Allah's permission, and Allah is with the patent).

(And when they went out against Jalut and his forces they said, Our Lord! Pour down upon us patience, and make our steps firm and assist us against the unbelieving people. (2:250)

Imam said, "These were the words of those who had quenched their thirst from the canal. (War started and) Dawud came up and stood in front of Jalut. He was mounted on an elephant. He had a crown on his head and a Ruby on his forehead shone, and his army had lined up before him. Dawud took one out of the three stones that he had picked up from his path, put it in the sling and flung it toward the army on the right of Jalut. That stone rose high in air and fell on the right flank of the army. It killed whomsoever it hit instantly until all fled. He flung his second stone at the left ranks and the soldiers on that side also ran away. He threw the third stone on Jalut. It rose up and hit the jewel shining on his forehead, pierced it and reached his brain. Jalut fell down and went to Hell as the Almighty says,

So they put them to flight by Allah's permission. And Dawud slew Jalut, and Allah gave him kingdom and wisdom, and taught him of what He pleased. And were it not for Allah's repelling some men with others, the earth would certainly be in a state of disorder; but Allah is Gracious to the creatures. (2:251)

It is mentioned in authentic traditions that Imam al-Ridha said, "Sakina is a breeze from Paradise. It is in the form of a human being and possesses a lovely fragrance. The same was sent to Ibrahim when he was raising the walls of Kaʻbah. Sakina was moving at the places of idols and Ibrahim was laying the foundations of Kaʻbah at those points thereafter. The same Sakina was within the chest of the Israelites. The plate in which the hearts of Prophets were washed was also in that chest. It was a tradition in The Israelites that Prophethood was in the families wherein the chest was kept. Imamate will be where these things will be. It is mentioned in another reliable tradition that the Chest of Musa, that is, the chest in which his mother had put Musa and pushed it in the sea, was three hands (in length) and two hands (in width) and that the Staff of Musa was also in it and so was Sakina. People asked, "What is Sakina?" Imam said, "It was the spirit of Allah. Whenever there was a dispute among them about any matter, Sakina used to talk with them and to make them aware of what they wanted."

It is narrated authentically from Imam as-Sadiq that when Yusha' went toward eternity and remained hidden from his legatees and Imams and leaders for four hundred years for fear of the oppressors of his

time from the time of Yusha' to Dawud and fifteen Imams had come in that period his followers used to come to him secretly and obtain solutions to their problems. When the period of his last days ended he appeared and gave them good tidings that Dawud would soon appear, liberate them from the evil of the oppressors, clear the land from the calamity of Jalut and his armies and save them from all the troubles.

Thereafter they remained ever in await for him, until the time of appearance of Dawud drew near. They were four brothers (including Dawud) who was to free people from the oppression of Jalut and his army men. His Shi'ahs (partisans) Imam knew that Dawud was born already and had also become major. They were seeing him (Dawud) but they (Dawud's brothers) did not know that he was Dawud despite talking with him. When Talut assembled The Israelites for a fight with Jalut, Dawud's father accompanied the army of Talut with his four sons. But the brothers were not prepared to take Dawud with them thinking that he was too weak and hence insignificant and so they said that he should be left at home for grazing their sheep. Anyway fighting began between The Israelites and Jalut. The Israelites were frightened much and so began to demoralize. Dawud's father returned home and sent Dawud with provisions for his brothers so that their strength might get a boost. Dawud was short stature, having livid eyes and scanty hair. His soul was quite pure and his character clean. Dawud reached when both armies had come face to face and everyone had taken up his position. He passed by a stone in the path. The stone cried loudly, "O Dawud! Pick me up and kill Jalut with my hit, because I have been created for killing Jalut." Dawud took up the stone and put it in the bag in which he was putting other stones to be flung with his sling while grazing his sheep.

When he entered the army of The Israelites he came to know that Jalut was proving very hard for his army (of The Israelites). So he said, "How do you consider him (Jalut) so Big? By Allah, if I see him I will kill him at once." His word reached the army until Jalut too heard it. He called Dawud and told him, "O Young man! How much strength have you and how much experience of war that you dare fight with Jalut?" Dawud replied, "Once a tiger pounced upon my herd of sheep and began to walk away with one of my sheep. I followed that tiger, twisted his neck and released my sheep from his mouth." Allah had informed Talut through revelation that the man on whose body your armor will fit exactly (as if made only for him) will kill Jalut. Talut called for his armor and gave it to Dawud to wear. He wore and despite being quite thin physically it fitted him perfectly. Then Talut and The Israelites became fearful and realized his status. Talut said, I hope this young man will kill Jalut. Next day when both the armies readied for confrontation Dawud asked Talut to show him who was Jalut. (People) showed him Jalut. Dawud took out from his bag the stone that he had picked up from the path, put it in his sling and flung it toward Jalut. It hit him between his two eyes and went up to the brain in his head. He fell down from his horse and a word spread in the army that Dawud killed Jalut. People made him (Dawud) their king.

Thereafter nobody obeyed Talut. Allah revealed Zabur (Book of Psalms) to him (Dawud), taught him how to make armors and made iron as soft as wax in his hands. And Allah commanded birds and mountains to sing praise of Allah along with Dawud. Allah gave Dawud such a melodious voice that none before him had ever heard. He also made Dawud perfect in worship. He lived among The Israelites with both

Prophethood and terrestrial rulership.

According to another hadith, among The Israelites, Prophethood and kingship had always remained separate before. Allah amalgamated them in the time of Dawud. Earlier the king used to wage Jihad along with the army and the Prophet used to administer his affairs, and to convey Allah's words to him. Therefore, in the time of Jalut, The Israelites wished for a king for them and made a plea for it before their Prophet. He told them, "You people are not inclined toward truthfulness, faithfulness and fearlessness (for Jihad)." They replied, "Why will we not fight when these oppressors have driven us out of our house and have separated us from our family members?" Allah appointed Talut as their king. But then they said, "What status has Talut to be our king when he is neither from the Prophet's family nor from the kings? The Prophets are from the family of Lawi and the king from Yehuda's and this person is from the progeny of Binyamin. The Prophet said, Allah has given him physique, courage and wisdom and the kingdom is in the hand of Allah; that He gives it to whomsoever He likes; that you are not authorized to reject the appointment of Allah. The sign of his kingship is that the Chest (chest) which was among you for a long time and which was snatched away from you will be brought back to you by angels and you will always defeat the enemy armies with the Grace of the Chest." They said, "If the Chest arrives we are ready to obey him." Imam said, "The Chest contained the pieces of the tablets of Musa with inscription thereon of Divine knowledge give to Musa as revealed from heavens."

It is mentioned in another reliable tradition about the inauspiciousness of the last Wednesday of a month that it was on this day that the community of Amaaligah had taken away the Chest from The Israelites.3

Shaykh Tabarsi says some have said that when The Israelites committed many sins Allah imposed Amaaliqah on them who snatched away the Chest from them. It remained with them until angels lifted it up from them and then brought it for The Israelites. Imam as–Sadiq also is reported to have said so. Some have said that when the people of Amaaliqh took away the Chest and placed it in their temple all the idols fell upside down. Then it was taken out from there and put at one corner of the town. It resulted in the spread of plague and an illness of throat. In short wherever they put it resulted in one or another trouble for them. Finally they put it on an Araawah, tied it with two oxen and drew it away out of the town. Then angels came and drew it to The Israelites.

Some say that Yusha' had put it in the desert of Tiyah and angels brought it from there. Some have said it was three hands long and two hands wide and was made of boxwood; that golden sheets were fixed on it and that it was kept in front while waging a war. A kind of voice used to come out of it. When it became high in pitch people advanced with courage and won the war. Whenever that voice stopped they also stopped fighting. It is well known that there were eighty thousand men with Talut. Some say they were 70,000. Many have said that those who did not drink more than a handful of the canal water were 313 like the number of those who were with the holy Prophet during the war of Badr, who had remained steadfast with him and who had faith in Allah's help. Those who had drunk more water had run away from war. It is understood from 'Ali 's 'Sermon of Talut' and all other hadiths that those who had

remained steadfast with him were these 313. Some traditions say those who did not drink the water at all were these 313 men and that those who did not drink more than a handful were more.

It should be remembered that most of the Commentators of Qur'an and non-Shi'ahs historians have considered Talut as one who committed error and Kufr and they have said that after the killing of Jalut he had become an enemy of Dawud and also had intended to kill him. They had begun to attribute many such undesirable thoughts about him. But the Shi'ah traditions do not mention such absurdities. Rather the apparent meaning of the verses and most of the narrations show that he was on the side of truth and some of the not so famous narrations even say that Amir al-Mu'minin said, "I am the Talut of this community." When Talut went to fight with Jalut he had told his army men that Allah would take their test through a canal. The one who will drink water from it is not from me, the one who will not drink is from me or there is no blame on the one who will drink only a handful." As has been mentioned earlier.

It should be kept in mind that these verses are a proof showing that Amir al–Mu'minin 'Ali is more eligible for Imamate and Caliphate than those who usurped his Khilafat because these verses are a clear proof of the fact that superiority of courage and knowledge is essential for kingship and for the statesmanship of the kingdom of Allah and it is unanimously agreed that 'Ali was more courageous and more knowledgeable than all other companions. There is no difference of opinion regarding this and hence he was more rightful of Khilafat and Imamate, in comparison to those who ran away from jihad, expressed their ignorance in many case and referred them to 'Ali.

- 1. Surah Baqarah 2:248
- 2. Now we conclude the hadith. Then Allah sent a revelation to their Prophet informing him that Jalut will be killed by a man on whose body the armor of Musa will fit properly and that he will be from the sons of Lawi. His name will be Dawud. Dawud 's father was a shepherd having ten sons. Dawud was the youngest of all. Anyway, when Talut gathered The Israelites for a fight with Jalut, he also called for father of Dawud along with his sons. When he arrived Talut called the sons one by one and made them wear the armor but it did not fit on anyone's body. So Talut asked him whether he had left out any of his sons? He said, Yes, as my sheep are yet young I have left my youngest son for their protection. Talut sent someone for him. He was Dawud. While leaving his home Dawud took with him a sling and a bag. In his way, three stones called him out: O Dawud! Pick us up. So he put them in his bag. Dawud was very strong and courageous. When he came to Talut, he made him (Dawud) wear the armor of Musa and it fitted him properly. When the army marched toward Jalut Talut marched toward the army of Jalut as says Almighty Allah in the Holy Qur'an: So when Talut departed with the forces, he said, Surely Allah will try you with a river; whoever then drinks from it, he is not of me, and whoever does not taste of it, he is surely of me, except he who takes with his hand as much of it as fills the hand; but with the exception of a few of them they drank from it vide Surah Bagarah: 249.
- <u>3.</u> There is a difference of opinion about the Prophet of that age. Some say he was Shamoun bin Safiyah who was from the sons of Lawi. Some say he was Yusha' and most of them have said that he was Ishmoil (Arabic version Isma'il). Imam Muhammad al-Baqir has said that he was Isma'il. 'Ali Ibrahim has said that according to another narration he was Arsiyaa.

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