

An Event That Led to their Divergence from the Prophet's Sunnah

That was their refusal to join Usamah's army which was personally raised by the Messenger of Allah who ordered them, two days before his demise, to enlist under Usamah's leadership. They went as far as casting doubt about the wisdom of the Messenger of Allah and criticizing him for having appointed a 17-year old young man, who did not even grow a beard, as the army's leader.

Abu Bakr and Umar, as well as many other *sahaba*, refused to join the army in the pretext of taking care of the issue of caliphate despite the Prophet's curse upon all those who would not join Usamah.¹

As for Ali and his followers, they were not assigned by the Messenger of Allah to join Usamah's army in order to circumvent dissension, and in order to thus remove the obstacle of the presence of the stubborn ones who opposed Allah's Commandment, so that they might not come back from Mu'ta before Ali was in full control of the reins of government, as Allah and His Messenger wanted him to, as a successor to the Prophet.

But the shrewd Arabs among Quraysh anticipated the Prophet's plan and refused to get out of Medina. They waited till the Messenger went back to his Lord. It was then that they carried out their own scheme as they had planned, going against what Allah and the Messenger of Allah had willed; in other words, they rejected the Prophet's Sunnah.

Thus does it become obvious to us, and to all researchers, that Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf, and Abu Ubaydah Amir al-Jarrah always refused to be bound by the Prophet's Sunnah, preferring to follow their own views. They always pursued their worldly interests and desired to attain political dominance even if the price of doing so was transgression against Allah and His Messenger.

As for Ali and the *sahaba* who followed him, they always upheld the Prophet's Sunnah and acted upon implementing it to the letter as much as they could. We have seen how Ali during that crisis carried out

the Prophet's will to give him his funeral bath, prepare the coffin, perform the funeral prayers for him, and to lay him to rest in his grave.

Ali carried out all these orders without being diverted by anything even though he knew that the others were racing to Banu Sa`ida's *saqeefa* (shed) in order to promote one of them as the caliph. He could do the same and sabotage their plan, but his respect for the Prophet's Sunnah, and his implementation thereof, dictated that he remain by the side of the Prophet.

Here we have to pause, though for a short while, to observe such great manners which Ali had learned from the Prophet. While sacrificing his position as the caliph in order to carry out the injunctions of the Sunnah, he witnessed the others rejecting the Sunnah as they sought the caliphate.

Another Incident Juxtaposed the Shi`as versus the Sunnis

This was the very serious stand taken by most of the *sahaba* at Banu Sa`ida's shed which clearly contradicted the Prophet's statements appointing Ali as the caliph and which they all witnessed on the Day of the Ghadeer following Hijjatul Wada`.

Despite the differences of views among the Muhajirs (Meccan immigrants) and the Ansars (Medenite helpers) with regard to the issue of caliphate, they all impudently raced with one another to forsake the Prophet's binding statements by advancing Abu Bakr to the caliphate even if it cost them perdition, thus demonstrating their readiness to kill anyone who even remotely considered opposing them, and even if he were the closest person to the Prophet.²

This incident also underscored the fact that the vast majority of the *sahaba* assisted Abu Bakr and Umar in rejecting the Sunnah of their Prophet and replacing it with their own *ijtihad*, personal viewpoints, for they surely were in favor of *ijtihad*. It also distinguished from the rest of the community a Muslim minority that upheld the Prophet's statements and boycotted the allegiance to Abu Bakr, namely Ali and his Shi`as, supporters and followers.

Yes; the distinct identity of each of these two groups, or parties, became apparent in the Muslim society immediately following the incidents stated before. One party attempted to respect and implement the Prophet's Sunnah, whereas the other attempted to defeat it, obliterate it, and replace it with *ijtihad*, a concept which attracted the majority, tempting it to be hopeful of reaching the seat of government or at least participating in it.

The first Sunni party was headed by Ali ibn Abu Talib and his Shi`as, whereas the other party which advocated *ijtihad* was headed by Abu Bakr and Umar and most of the *sahaba*. The second party, led by Abu Bakr and Umar, took upon itself to crush the first one, and many measures were planned to wipe out the other opposition party such as the following:

1) Isolation of the Opposition and its Economic Paralyzation

The first attempt undertaken by the ruling party was to exclude its opponents from having a free access to the sources of livelihood and finance. Abu Bakr and Umar dismissed the farmers who had been hired by Fatima to cultivate the land of Fadak³, considering it a Muslim commonwealth rather than the sole property of Fatima as her father had stated.

They also deprived her of all the rest of her father's inheritance, claiming that prophets left no inheritance. They terminated her share of the *khums* which the Messenger of Allah had assigned for himself and his family because they were prohibited from receiving charity.

Thus did Ali become paralyzed economically: the land tract of Fadak, which used to yield excellent profits for him, was confiscated from him; he was deprived of his cousin's inheritance which, at the same time, was also the legitimate right of his wife; moreover, his share of *khums* was also cut off.

Ali and his wife and children suddenly found themselves in need of those who could feed and clothe them, and this is exactly what Abu Bakr meant when he said to Fatima al-Zahra once: "Yes; you have the right to receive the *khums*, but I will fare with it just as the Messenger of Allah had fared, so that I do not let you be without food or without clothes."

As we have already indicated, the companions who sided with Ali were mostly slaves who had no wealth; so, the ruling party did not fear them or their influence, for people incline to the rich and despise the poor.

2) Isolating the Opposition and Paralyzing it Socially

In order to discard the opposition party headed by Ali ibn Abu Talib, the ruling party also isolated it socially. The first thing which Abu Bakr and Umar did was the removal of the psychological and emotional barrier which obligated all Muslims to respect and revere the relatives of the Greatest Messenger of Allah.

Since Ali is the cousin of the Prophet and the master of the Purified Progeny, there were some among the *sahaba* who hated him and envied him for the favors which Allah had bestowed upon him, not to mention the hypocrites who were waiting in ambush for him. Fatima was the only offspring of the Prophet who survived him.

She was, as the Messenger of Allah said, the leader of all the ladies of the world; therefore, all Muslims respected and revered her due to the status which she had earned with her father and because of the traditions which he stated about her virtues, honor, and purity.

But Abu Bakr and Umar deliberately tried to remove such respect and regard from the hearts of the public. Umar ibn al-Khattab once approached Fatima's house bearing a torch of fire and threatened to

burn the house and everyone inside it if its residents refused to come out to swear the oath of allegiance to Abu Bakr. In his *Al-'Iqd al-Fareed*, Ibn Abd Rabbih says,

As regarding Ali, al-Abbas, and al-Zubayr, these stayed at Fatima's house till Abu Bakr sent them Umar ibn al-Khattab to get them out of Fatima's house. He said to him: "If they refuse, fight them." So he came bearing a torch of fire in order to burn the house on them. Fatima met him and asked him, "O son of al-Khattab! Have you come to burn our house?" "Yes," said he, "unless you accept that regarding which the Ummah has agreed."⁴

If Fatima al-Zahra is the Leader of the women of all the world, as indicated in the *Sahih* books of "Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`ah," and if her sons al-Hasan and al-Husayn are the masters of the youths of Paradise and the Prophet's fragrant flower in this nation are thus humiliated and demeaned to the extent that Umar swears in front of everyone to burn them and their house if they refused to swear the oath of allegiance to Abu Bakr, can anyone expect others to retain any respect for Ali ibn Abu Talib when most of them hated and envied him? After the Prophet's demise, Ali became the leader of the opposition, yet he did not have any wealth to attract people to him.

Al-Bukhari indicates in his *Sahih* how Fatima demanded that Abu Bakr return what she had inherited from the Messenger of Allah, whatever Allah had allocated for him in Medina in addition to Fadak and the spoils of Khaybar, but Abu Bakr refused to give anything to her.

Fatima, therefore, became very angry with Abu Bakr whom she boycotted and to whom she did not say a word after such unfair confiscation till she died only six months after the death of her father the Prophet. When she died, her husband Ali buried her at night. Abu Bakr did not perform the funeral prayers for her.

And Ali used to be held in high esteem by the public so long as Fatima was alive, so when she died, Ali saw how people turned away from him; therefore, he sought reconciliation with Abu Bakr and allegiance to him, whereas he never did so during all those months.⁵

Thus did the ruling party score a big success in isolating Ali ibn Abu Talib economically and socially, and in removing the respect people used to have for him, for they did not maintain any respect or regard for him especially following the death of Fatima al-Zahra, so much so that he was surprised to see how people's attitude towards him had changed.

He, therefore, felt forced to reconcile with Abu Bakr and give his allegiance to him according to the narration of al-Bukhari and Muslim. In other words, the phrase "Ali was surprised to see how people's attitude towards him had changed," borrowing al-Bukhari's own words, provides us with a clear indication of the extent of grudge and animosity the father of al-Hasan had to face after the death of his cousin then of his wife. Some *sahaba* may have even taunted and ridiculed him upon seeing him in public places; this is why he was surprised and resented such an abomination.

This chapter is not meant to narrate history or detail the injustices inflicted upon Ali in as much as we would like to demonstrate the bitter and painful fact: The standard-bearer of the Prophet's Sunnah, and the gate of the Prophet's knowledge, became a pariah. Ironically, those who supported the concept of deriving their own personal religious views, from those who rejected the Prophet's Sunnah, became the rulers whom the vast majority of the *sahaba* supported.

3) Isolating the Opposition Politically

Despite enforcing a severe blockade, the confiscation of the monetary rights, and the isolation of Ali ibn Abu Talib from the society, which turned people's attention away from him as we have explained, the ruling party was not satisfied with all these measures, so it resorted to isolating Ali politically, excluding him from all apparatuses of the state and not permitting him to participate in any official position or any responsibility.

Although they appointed permissive Umayyads who fought Islam during the life-time of the Prophet, such rulers kept Imam Ali away from the stage of political activity for one quarter of a century during the life-time of Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman. While some *sahaba* who were appointed governors were hoarding wealth and treasuring gold and silver at the Muslims' expense, Ali ibn Abu Talib was watering the palm trees owned by the Jews in order to earn his livelihood with the sweat of his brow.

Thus did the gate of knowledge, the nation's scholar, and the standard-bearer of the Sunnah remain confined inside his house not appreciated except by a handful of the downtrodden who remained loyal to him, receiving guidance from him, and upholding his rope.

During his own caliphate, Imam Ali tried in vain to bring people back to the Qur'an and the Prophetic Sunnah because they became fanatical in their support of the *ijtihad* which Umar ibn al-Khattab had invented, and some of them even publicly cried out: *Waa Sunnata Umarah!* ("O what a great Sunnah Umar has brought us!").

This is not an allegation but the fact agreed upon by the consensus of all Muslims and which they recorded in their *Sahih* books and with which every researcher and man of fairness is familiar. Imam Ali used to know the entire text of the Holy Qur'an by heart and was familiar with all its injunctions. He was the first person to compile it as al-Bukhari himself testifies, whereas neither Abu Bakr nor Umar nor Uthman knew it by heart, nor did they know its injunctions.⁶

Historians went as far as counting as many as seventy instances when Umar said: *Lawla Ali la halaka Umar* (Had it not been for Ali, Umar would have surely perished), and his own telling Abu Bakr: "May I not live in any period of time without al-Hasan's father."

^{1.} Read on p. 29, Vol. 1, of al-Shahristani's book *Kitab al-milal wal nihal* the Prophet's statement: "Allah curses whoever lags behind Usamah's army."

^{2.} The most glaring testimonial is Umar ibn al-Khattab's threat to burn the house of Fatima and everyone inside it. This

incident is quite famous in history chronicles.

3. Fadak's story is well known in history books and so is al-Zahra's dispute with Abu Bakr. She died angry with him. This is a famous incident recorded by both Bukhari and Muslim.

4. This is stated in Volume Four of Al-`Iqd al-Fareed where the author discusses those who refused to swear the oath of allegiance to Abu Bakr.

5. Al-Bukhari, Sahih (original Arabic text), Vol. 5, p. 82 in the discussion of the Battle of Khaybar, and it is also recorded in the "Book of Itihad" in Muslim's Sahih.

6. Umar's ignorance regarding the distribution of the legacy of a man who leaves neither parents nor offspring behind, and who has no will, is quite famous in the books of Sunnah. The same is true about his ignorance of the injunctions relevant to tayammum; these are all known to everyone as al-Bukhari indicates on p. 90, Vol. 1, of his Sahih.

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