

## Chapter 12: The Death

The five paladins of Makka had trampled upon the covenant of the Quraysh to boycott the Bani Hashim. Thanks to their chivalry and gallantry, the Bani Hashim could return to the city, and live in their homes once again. But they had barely begun to recover from the rigors of living in a mountain hideout for three years, when Khadija, the wife, the companion and the friend of Muhammad Mustafa, the Messenger of Allah; and the benefactress of Islam and the Muslims, fell ill. Her illness was brief but fatal. All her life she had lived in the midst of abundance and luxury but the three years of exile had been a time of excessive austerity for her which inevitably took its toll.

As noted before, Khadija was the first woman to declare that the Creator was One, and that Muhammad was His Messenger. The glory and honor of being the First Believer in the whole world, is hers to all eternity.

When Islam came under mounting pressure from its enemies, Khadija sacrificed her comfort, her wealth and her home for it; and now it would appear that she sacrificed her life also. Without a doubt, if she had lived in her palatial house in Makka, surrounded by her maid-servants, she might have lived for many more years. But she preferred to stand by her husband and his clan, and to share the bitters of life with them. During the siege, she had to endure not only the pangs of hunger and thirst but also the extremes of heat in summer and cold in winter; yet she never complained to her husband about them. Whether times were good or bad, whether she had plenty or she had nothing, she was always cheerful. Austerity and privation never soured her. It was this temperament that was an unfailing source of comfort, courage and strength for her husband during the bleakest moments of his life.

During the years of the siege, Khadija spent all her fortune on buying essentials like food and water for the clan of her husband. When she returned to her house, her last cent was gone; and when she died, there was not enough money available in the house even to buy a shroud. A cloak of her husband was used as a shroud for her, and she was given burial in it.

Muhammad Mustafa never took another wife as long as Khadija lived, and if she had not died, it is most probable that he would never have married any other woman.

## Edward Gibbon

During the 24-years of their marriage, Khadija's youthful husband abstained from the right of polygamy, and the pride or tenderness of the venerable matron was never insulted by the society of a rival. After her death, the Prophet placed her in the rank of four perfect women, with the sister (sic) of Moses, the mother of Jesus, and Fatima, the best beloved of his daughters (sic).

(The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire)

Muhammad ibn Ishaq, the biographer of the Prophet, says that when there was resumption of Divine revelation, after its cessation following the first two visits of Gabriel, Khadija received a tribute and a salutation of peace from Allah Ta'ala. The message was communicated to Muhammad by Gabriel, and when he conveyed it to Khadija, she said: "Allah is Peace (as-Salam), and from Him is all Peace, and may peace be on Gabriel."

Muhammad forever remembered Khadija with affection, gratitude and love. During her illness, he kept a nightlong vigil nursing her, comforting her and praying for her. He told her that Allah had promised Eternal Bliss to her, and had built for her a palace of pearls in Paradise. Toward morning her frail frame could not endure the attack of fever any more and her sanctified and noble soul left this earth for its destination in Heaven where it entered the company of the immortals. Her death filled Muhammad's heart with sorrow.

Khadija died on the tenth of Ramadan of the tenth year of the Proclamation of Islam.

Khadija was buried in Hujun above Makka. Muhammad Mustafa, the Messenger of Allah, himself descended into her grave to lie in it for a few moments. Then he assisted the other mourners in lowering the body into it. After the burial, he smoothed the earth on her grave.

Thus died Khadija, the first woman to believe in the Oneness of the Creator.

Peace on Khadija to whom Allah Ta'ala sent His greetings and salutations.

Peace on Khadija for whom Allah Ta'ala built a palace of pearls in Paradise.

Peace on Khadija, the best of women, and the chief of all women.

Khadija died in 619. One month after her death, Muhammad Mustafa had to sustain another shock in the death of Abu Talib, his uncle and guardian, and the bulwark of Islam. The death of these two friends – Khadija and Abu Talib – was the greatest shock that the Apostle of God had to endure in the fifty years of his life. The two lamps of his life were extinguished. He was overwhelmed with sorrow. He called the year of their death "the Year of Sorrow."

The year 619 turned out to be a year of sorrow for Muhammad Mustafa in more than one sense. The death of one's loved ones is naturally an occasion for sorrow. But in the case of Muhammad, the death of these two friends was not merely a subjective experience for him. He was soon made conscious of

the meaning of their death by a series of extraneous events.

### **Muhammad ibn Ishaq**

Khadija and Abu Talib died in the same year, and with Khadija's death troubles came fast one after another. She had been a faithful supporter for him in Islam, and he used to tell her of his troubles. With the death of Abu Talib he lost a source of strength in his personal life and a defence and protection against his tribe. Abu Talib died three years before he (Muhammad) migrated to Medina, and it was then that Quraysh began to treat him in an offensive way which they did not dare to follow in his uncle's lifetime. A young lout actually threw dust on his head.

Hisham on the authority of his father, Urwa, told me that the Prophet went into his house, and he was saying: "Quraysh never treated me like this when Abu Talib was alive."

(The Life of the Messenger of Allah)

### **Washington Irving**

Mohammed soon became sensible of the loss he had sustained in the death of Abu Talib who had been not merely an affectionate relative, but a steadfast and powerful protector, from his great influence in Mecca. At his death there was no one to check and counteract the hostilities of Abu Sofian and Abu Jahl.

The fortunes of Mohammed were becoming darker and darker in his native place. Khadija, his original benefactress, the devoted companion of his solitude and seclusion, the zealous believer in his doctrine, was dead; so also was Abu Talib, once his faithful and efficient protector. Deprived of the sheltering influence of the latter, Mohammed had become, in a manner, an outlaw in Mecca, obliged to conceal himself and remain a burden on the hospitality of those whom his own doctrines had involved in persecution (sic). If worldly advantage had been his objective, how had it been attained?

(The Life of Mohammed)

Washington Irving has erred in stating that Muhammad had become "a burden on the hospitality of those whom his own doctrines had involved in persecution." Muhammad was never a burden to anyone at any time. The members of his clan – the Bani Hashim – considered it an honor and a privilege to defend him and to protect Islam – both of them their greatest treasures. They were aware that with Muhammad in their midst, they had become the recipients of the blessings of Heaven, and they had no intention of forfeiting those blessings at any price.

Who else but the clan of Bani Hashim would defend Muhammad and protect Islam? Muhammad was its flesh and its blood, and Islam was its life and its love.

Another error that the distinguished historian has made is in the question which he has posed: "If worldly

advantage had been his (Muhammad's) objective, how had it been attained?"

Attaining worldly advantage was not Muhammad's objective. The Quraysh had offered him all the worldly advantages; they offered him wealth, kingdom and beauty. They were all his for the asking. But he kicked at them. Could they offer him anything else?

Muhammad had only one objective and that was to carry out the duty imposed upon him by Allah Ta'ala, namely, to promulgate Islam – the Religion of Allah.

### **Sir William Muir**

The sacrifices to which Abu Talib exposed himself and his family for the sake of his nephew, while yet incredulous of his mission (sic), stamp his character as singularly noble and unselfish. They afford at the same time strong proof of the sincerity of Mohammed. Abu Talib would not have acted thus for an interested deceiver; and he had ample means of scrutiny.

(The Life of Mohammed, London, 1877)

**Sir William Muir** further says in this connection:

"If indeed, it had not been for the influence and steadfast protection of Abu Talib, it is clear that the hostile intentions of the Coreish would have imperilled the liberty, perhaps the life, of Mohammed."

(The Life of Mohammed, London, 1877)

### **Jurji Zaydan**

The reason why Abdul Muttalib made Abu Talib the guardian of Muhammad, was that Abu Talib and Abdullah were the children of the same mother. Without a doubt, the protection of Abu Talib was the major cause not only of the success of Muhammad's mission but also of his physical survival. Abu Talib was a dignitary of Quraysh, and a man of great prestige. Muhammad lived in his house like one of his children...

(Complete Works, published by Dar-ul-Jeel, Beirut, Lebanon, Volume I, page 91. 1981)

Lt. General Sir John Glubb writes in his book, The Life and Times of Mohammed, that Abu Talib is not considered a hero by Muslims because he died in unbelief. But he adds, "Nevertheless, if it had not been for the staunch courage with which he stood by his nephew, Islam might have died in its cradle."

Both **Sir William Muir** and Sir John Glubb and many other historians have insinuated that Abu Talib died in unbelief. If challenged to prove this, they would advert to an authority like Imam Bukhari. Bukhari says in one of the "traditions" that he has collected that when Abu Talib was on his deathbed, the Apostle urged him to become a Muslim but he said that doing so would embarrass him with his Qurayshi friends.

The authors of this "tradition" forgot one thing. Abu Talib was dying, and knew that he was not going to see his Qurayshi "friends" any more. He knew that he was going into the presence of his Creator. At a time like this he could not have cared less for the Quraysh. His anxiety at all times was to win the pleasure of Allah. He proved by his deeds more than anyone else could ever prove by his words that his faith in the Oneness of God and in the mission of Muhammad as His messenger, was rocklike and unshakable.

Amin Dawidar, the modern Egyptian historian, says that Abu Talib was like a fortress for Muhammad which sheltered him from all the heat and cold and the contrariness and cussedness of the world outside. "And when Abu Talib died," he says, "Muhammad found himself face to face with the enemy for the first time in his life. Without a doubt, the death of Abu Talib was a great tragedy for him."

Abu Talib could not but be a Muslim and a Momin. No man can love Muhammad and idolatry at the same time; the two loves are mutually exclusive. And no man can love Muhammad yet hate Islam. The love of Muhammad and the hatred of Islam cannot coexist. Whoever loves Muhammad, must inevitably love Islam. If there is any one thing beyond any doubt in the history of Islam, it is the love of Abu Talib for Muhammad. As noted before, Abu Talib and his wife, loved Muhammad more than they loved their own children. Such love could have had only one fountainhead, namely, their conviction that Islam was divine in its origins.

Abu Talib was proud that Allah had chosen Muhammad, the son of his brother Abdullah, in all creation, to be His last and greatest messenger to mankind. Muhammad was the greatest love and the greatest pride of his uncle, Abu Talib.

In His Book, Allah Ta'ala identified the protection that Abu Talib gave to Muhammad Mustafa, as His Own protection as per the following verse:

***Did He not find thee an orphan and give thee shelter (and care)? (Chapter 93; verse 6)***

Allah Ta'ala gave shelter (protection) and care to His Messenger, Muhammad Mustafa, through His slave – Abu Talib.

Abu Talib worked in Makka for the glory and power of Islam, and he was the guardian of its absolute and incontestable values. For ten years, he steered the "vessel" of Islam through dark and turbulent seas with a skill, vision and faith that became the dismay of the guardians of the idols of the pagans of Arabia. His deeds are an integral part of the story of Islam, and they are also the most eloquent testimony of his faith in Allah and His Messenger – in Islam!

May Allah bless His loving slaves, Khadija and Abu Talib. Both of them put obedience to Him ahead of everything else in life.

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