

## Chapter 2: Quraysh Group

٤ مَا أَصَابَكُمْ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنْ نَفْسِكُمْ وَأَرْسَلْنَاكُمْ لِلنَّاسِ رَسُولًا وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا

***Whatever good happens to you is from Allah. But whatever evil (calamities) happens to you is from your (own) soul. And We have sent you as an apostle to (instruct) humankind. And enough is Allah as a witness. (Holy Qur'an, 4:79)***

### **Development of the Quraysh Group**

While some of the Quraysh truly believed in and supported the message of Islam and the Messenger of God without any self-ambition, others also believed but aspired for more. They saw an opportunity on the horizon for future power and that path was through political means.

Thus, a group formed that consisted of several companions who belonged mainly to the Quraysh tribe. Amongst those who were at the forefront of this power group were some of the most prominent companions, such as Abu Bakr Abdullah Ibn Abi Quhafah, 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab, 'Uthman Ibn al-Affan, Al-Mugheerah Ibn Shu'bah, Abu Musa al-Ashari, Salim Mawla Abi Hudayfah, Husayd Ibn Hudayr, Basheer Ibn Sa'd, Muhammad Ibn Muslim, Ma'adh Ibn Jabal, and Zayd Ibn Thabit.

This Quraysh group began its development at a time when the Prophet was setting roots in Madinah. In the span of a few years, the Prophet had revolutionized, empowered, and united dissident tribes to form an Islamic nation. His word was the word of God and the faithful flocked to his calling.

All the same, he was still a mortal human being whose mortal life would eventually come to an end. The Quraysh group, who sought future ambition, knew that their power was limited, that is as long as the Prophet was alive. Aware that the Prophet was mortal, hence they bided their time and craftily considered the future structure of the Muslim leadership that would come after the death of the Prophet and what their role would be.

## **Objective of the Quraysh Group**

Having lost their past influence as the keepers to the House of Idols, the Quraysh group foresaw an even greater opportunity to master an entire nation and its sizable wealth upon the death of the Prophet. Thus, they patiently waited to seize control of the leadership after the death of the Prophet, and they succeeded in their plans, for they held the first three caliphates and spawned the first Muslim dynasty – the Bani Umayyah.

Consequently, this group resolved to complete rule of the Muslim ummah to be in their hands. They might have begun some internal conflicts had some not agreed amongst themselves to allow three subdivisions of the Quraysh to hold power successively: the tribe of Taym, the tribe of Uday, and the tribe of Fihir.

Initially, they planned to first allow Abu Bakr to represent his tribe of Taym; then ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattab would represent his tribe of Uday, and then Abu Ubaydah Ibn al-Jarrah would represent his tribe of Fihir; however, as it happened, ‘Uthman Ibn al-Affan (from the Umayyah tribe) later replaced Abu Ubaydah Ibn al-Jarrah. Finally, after the tribe of Fihir had completed its turn, the tribe of Taym would then take control again and the cycle would continue. They felt that this rotating agreement would ensure harmony within the Quraysh group and preserve the stability of their order.

However, the group excluded one vital section of Quraysh, namely the Bani Hashim tribe, the one to which the Prophet belonged. They did so overtly, under the pretext that Bani Hashim was already too powerful since the Prophet sprang from them. As ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattab explained, “The reason we did not want Bani Hashim to assume power after the death of the Prophet was that Quraysh disliked seeing both prophethood and leadership (*imamah*) vested in the family of Bani Hashim.”<sup>1</sup>

This is precisely where the start of the problem began for Muslims. Initially it did not stem from Islamic ideology, or interpretation of the revelations, or the *sunnah*, but rather, from the old Arab rivalry that was deeply entrenched and seeded into the jealous veins of some of the branches of the Quraysh tribes. Just as ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattab said, they “disliked” seeing another family invested with so much interest.

## **Emergence of the Quraysh Group**

During the early developing stages of the Islamic state, the Quraysh group had yet to crystallize. It was not until the departure of the Holy Prophet that the group fully emerged onto the scene. Two factors hastened its assembly and emergence: the first was the news of the Prophet’s impending death; and second was the Prophet’s repeated orders that ‘Ali Ibn Abi Talib was to succeed him in leading the Muslim ummah.<sup>2</sup>

In the tenth year of the Hijrah (632 CE), the day came when the Prophet stunned the ummah by indicating that he would soon leave the world while returning from his first and last pilgrimage, forever

known as the “Farewell Pilgrimage.” Surrounded by over 100,000 *hujjaj* (pilgrims) in the blazing heat, near the oasis pond of Ghadir Khum,<sup>3</sup> the Prophet was intercepted with a revelation that forced him to stop the pilgrims in their track to hear a new revelation from Allah. The revelation was as follows:

يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي إِلَّا قَوْمًا كَافِرِينَ

**O Messenger! Convey what had been revealed to you from your Lord; if you do not do so, then [it would be as if] you have not conveyed His message [at all]. Allah will protect you from the people. (5:67)**

After revealing this verse, the Prophet then gave his famous last sermon known as *Khutbatul Widah* (The Farewell Sermon).

After praising God, the Prophet openly spoke to the pilgrims that the Angel Gabriel had reviewed the Holy Qur'an with him twice that year instead of once, and this was a sign that his time of death was near.<sup>4</sup>

Then the critical question was at hand, the Prophet asked the pilgrims if he had more authority (*wilayah*) over the believers than they had over themselves, to which they all replied, “yes.” Then the Prophet raised the hand of ‘Ali Ibn Abi Talib and said, “Whosoever’s master (*mawla*) I am, this ‘Ali is also his master (*man kuntu mawlahu fa hadha Aliyun mawlahu*).”

The order was sealed and ‘Ali Ibn Abi Talib became the Prophet’s successor by Divine order. At this point, the Prophet publicly took the oaths from those present, including Abu Bakr, ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattab,<sup>5</sup> Ammar Ibn Yasir, Abu Dharr al-Ghfari, Salman al-Farsi, al-Miqdaad Ibn al-Aswad, and Abdullah Ibn al-Abbas. Some even approached ‘Ali to congratulate him personally, like ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattab, who said, “Congratulations Ibn Abi Talib! Today you became the leader (*mawla*) of all believing men and women.”<sup>6</sup>

An excerpt of the Prophet’s farewell sermon:

It is probable that I will be called soon and I will respond. So I leave behind me among you two weighty [very worthy and important] things: the Book of Allah, which is a rope stretched between the heavens and the Earth; and my progeny [Ahlul Bayt]. For verily Allah, the Merciful, the Aware informed me that these two would never become separated from each other until they meet at the Fount of Abundance.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, be careful how you will treat these two in my absence.

This was not the first time that the Holy Prophet had named ‘Ali Ibn Abi Talib as his successor (aside from referring to the designated members of his Ahlul Bayt that were to succeed him) on numerous occasions, such as in the “Feast of the Clan” (*al-Indhar*).<sup>8</sup> Moreover, portions of the Holy Qur'an refer to

'Ali Ibn Talib's successionship.<sup>9</sup>

## **Quraysh Group Appears on the Scene**

Prior to the Prophet's departure, the Quraysh group had been quiescent. The time was nearing and they sensed it. The first wave of the emergence began when the group distinguished itself from the population by refusing the Prophet's orders to join the dispatch of Usama Ibn Zayd to combat the Romans, which was one of the last military maneuvers during the Prophet's lifetime.

Although critically ill and approaching his final days, the Prophet repeatedly ordered them to join the dispatch of Usama, but they (the first three-caliphs and other companions who were present) declined to do so. Sensing that the Prophet would soon depart, the elite members of the group wanted to be in Madinah for the moment of the Prophet's death in order to assume power, quite possibly, the precise reason why the Prophet wanted them to be away.

The situation escalated to the point where the Prophet strongly warned them by saying, "May the curse of Allah be upon the one who stays behind and does not join the army of Usama."<sup>10</sup> Aside from that, they still refused and the imminent time of the death of the Prophet was drawing near.

## **"Calamity of Thursday"**

Three days later, after refusing to join the dispatch of Usama, was when that mournful day came and the Quraysh group was ready. As the Prophet was on his deathbed, they made their most decisive move that would ensure their transitory success – a shift that would eventually divert the course of Islamic history forever. This act later became known as the "Calamity of Thursday." This event is recorded in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, which is considered to be the most authentic book after the Holy Qur'an in the Sunni tradition.

Gravely ill, and surrounded by some of the companions, the Prophet requested a pen and paper to narrate his will, a hadith he said that would guard the nation from misguidance.<sup>11</sup> Sensing that the Prophet again wanted to name his successor ('Ali Ibn Abi Talib) one last time, the companion, 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab spearheaded the Quraysh group by interceding and declaring, "We have the book of Allah, and it suffices for us." He then accused the Prophet of Islam of hallucinating (*yahjor*) because of his illness.<sup>12</sup> An argument ensued over 'Umar's comment and the Prophet angrily requested them to leave.<sup>13</sup> & <sup>14</sup>

The power ambition was too much to let pass, because long afterwards and during his reign, 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab said regarding that day, "I knew the Prophet was going to mention the name of 'Ali as his successor, so I objected to that and refused."<sup>15</sup>

After challenging the will of the Prophet, it is not surprising to witness centuries of unsettling political and

ideological differences within the ummah. Perhaps, during the eras of the first four caliphs, Islam was still a spiritually inclined faith and united and bonded by primarily one following – one ummah – but the aspirations of some permitted the way of division. The institute of the *khalifah* was reduced to a mere political acquisition and many Muslims began their slow turn away from what Islam had intended. Corruption and greed earmarked the powerhouses of government and institutes that later sprung up during the Bani Umayyah and Bani Abbas dynasties. It can be said that the era of corruption by these dynasties had been intricately connected to the “Calamity of Thursday.”

[1.](#) Ibn al-Atheer, Al-Kamil fil-Tarikh, 3:24; Al-Tabari, Tarikh al-Tabari, 2:223

[2.](#) Successorship (*khalifah* or *imamah*) according to both schools of thought, Ahlul Bayt and Companions, is the representation of Prophet Muhammad, in the affairs of deen (faith) and duniyah (life).

[3.](#) Ghadir Khum (which is close to today's al-Juhfah in the Arabian Peninsula). It was the center point where routes from different provinces met and then parted to go their separate ways.

[4.](#) Al-Tabari, Tarikh al-Tabari, 2:435

[5.](#) Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Musnad Ahmad, 4:281; Sirr al-Alamin; Al-Tabari, Al-Riyadh al-Nadhirah, 2:169

[6.](#) Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Musnad Ahmad 4:81, Ibn Abu Yallah al-Musilli, Musnad; Abu Bakr Ibn Abi Shibah, Al-Musnaf; Abu Bakr al-Baghda; Sirr al-Alamin, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali; Al-Milal wal-Nihal, Abu al-Fattah al-Shahrestani; Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihaya, 5:209; Ibn Katheer al-Shami; Al-Sawaeq al-Muhriqah, Ibn Hajar al-Askalani, p.26; Tafseer al-Tabari, 3:310; Muhammad Ibn Jarrer, Allamah Amini in Al-Ghadeer, 1:283, has compiled over sixty prominent Sunni sources that narrated the congratulations of Abu Bakr and ‘Umar to Imam ‘Ali on his succession by the Prophet on the Day of Ghadir.

[7.](#) See Holy Qur'an, 108:1-3

[8.](#) “Feast of the Clan,” after the revelation of c. 26:214 (“And warn thy nearest relations”), the Prophet made a feast and invited his extended family, so he could announce his prophethood and invite them to embrace his message. It was also the same event, in which the Prophet first declared that ‘Ali Ibn Abi Talib would be his successor and caliph after him.

[9.](#) See Holy Qur'an, 5:55 and 4:59

[10.](#) Shahristani, Al-Milal wal-Nihal, 1:29

[11.](#) The Messenger of God said, “Bring me a tablet (lawh) and an inkpot (dawat), so that I can write for you a document, after which you will not go astray.” A person said that the Messenger of God was talking “deliriously.” Tarikh al-Tabari, Vol. 9 translated by Ismail. K. Poonawala p. 175.

[12.](#) In the older Sahih al-Bukhari books, the term “yahjor” can be found, but in the latest versions, the hadith has been modified as, “that the Prophet has been overwhelmed by pain.”

[13.](#) Sahih al-Bukhari, Kitab al-Jihad wal-Seer, 2:118; Sahih al-Muslim; Ithbat al-Wasyah; Musnad Ahmad, 3:346

[14.](#) For full details read Inquiries about Shi'a Islam by the same author.

[15.](#) Ibn Abil Hadid, Sharh Nahjul-Balaghah, 3:114

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