

Islam of Abu Talib Part 4

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Certainly what has been said about this topic in the last parts, must have left some questions unanswered, and this article would focus on the attitude adopted by Abu Talib (May Allah bless his soul) towards his nephew, the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him and his cleansed progeny), and his contribution towards spreading Islam, and the declaration of his faith in several occasions reported by the Sunnis.

The readers of Islamic History know how the Quraish clans delivered to Abu Talib an ultimatum, to stop his nephew from defaming their fathers and belittling their gods and ridiculing their minds; otherwise, they would confront him and the Prophet (S) on a battlefield until one of the two parties perished. Abu Talib had no doubt that his acceptance of the Quraishite challenge meant his death and total annihilation of his clan; yet he did not pressure his nephew to stop his campaign. He only informed him of the Qurashite ultimatum, and he told him kindly

Save me and yourself, my nephew, and burden me not with what I cannot bear.

When the messenger rejected the ultimatum, declaring to his uncle that he would not exchange his message with the possession of the whole universe, Abu Talib immediately reversed his attitude and decided to go along with the Messenger to the end. This is evident from the statement he made to the prophet (S)

Come back, my nephew, go on, say what ever you like. I shall never let you down at any time.

Sunni references

- Ibn Husham, Biography of the Prophet, v 1 p 266
- Tabaqat of Ibn Sa'ad, v 1 p 186
- History of Tabari, v 2 p 218

- Deewan e Abu Talib, p 24
- Sharah of Ibn al Hadid, v 3 p 306
- History of Ibn Katheer, v 2 p 258
- History of Abul Fida, v 1 p 117
- Al Seerah al Halabiyyah, v 1 p 306

Abu Talib fulfilled this huge promise with distinction. When a Meccan threw some dirt on the Messenger while he was prostrating, Abu Talib went on brandishing his sword and holding the hand of his nephew until he came to the sacred mosque. A group of the enemies were sitting there, and when some of them tried to stand for Abu Talib, he said to them

By the One in whom Muhammad (S) believes, if any one from you stands up I will hit him with my sword.

See few lines later below for the Sunni references.

When a person wants to swear, he swears by something that has sanctity for him, and not something that he does not believe in it. The above diplomatic/political statement proves for those who have intelligence that he believed in the God of Muhammad (S), The One, The Great.

Then Abu Talib asked the Prophet (S) who was the person responsible for the shameful act, and upon his (Prophet's) answer, Hamza as instructed by Abu Talib smeared the dust on the individuals who showed animosity towards the Prophet (S). It was on this occasion that Abu Talib said:

I believe that Muhammad's faith is the best of all the religions of the Universe.

Sunni references

- Khazanatal Adaab by Khateeb Baghdadi, v 1 p 261
- Tareekh of Ibn Katheer, v 3 p 42
- Sharh of Ibn al Hadid, v 3 p 306
- History of Abul Fida, v 1 p 120
- Fath al Bari (Sharah of Sahih Bukhari), v 7 p 153
- Al Isaba, v 4 p 116
- Al Seerah Al Halebiyyah, v 1 p 305
- Talba tul Talib, p 5

The above highlighted part is another obvious statement which proves his Islam.

The Quraish could see that despite their obstructive efforts the progress of Islam had continued. They now decided to put an end to the Prophet and his family in a state of siege and excommunication till they were all done away with.

With this end in view a pact was drawn, to which each tribe was a party and it was to the effect that none

should have marital ties with Banu Hashim or do any buying or selling with them; and none was to associate with them or allow any provision to them. This was to continue till the Prophet's family handed him over for execution. This pact was then hung on the door of the Kaaba.

Thus forced Abu Talib with the whole family moved to a mountain cave known as ' Shi'b Abi Talib '. Now the Hashmites were entirely alienated from the rest of the town dwellers. The fortress was also beleaguered at times by the Quraish to enforce the ban in all its rigour, and to prevent the possibility of supplies.

They found themselves sometimes reduced to starvation for want of supplies. Under constant surveillance by the Quraish, Abu Talib even feared night attacks and for this reason he was on guard for the safety of Muhammad (S), and often changed room as a precaution against sudden violence.

At the close of the third year of the Interdict, Muhammad (S) told his uncle Abu Talib, that Allah had shown His disapproval of the convention against him, and had sent out worms to eat every word of the document placed in the Kaaba, except His own name written thereon. Abu Talib believing his nephew (S) as the receiver of the revelations from heavens, unhesitatingly went to the Quraish and told them what Muhammad (S) had spoken. The discussion is recorded as follows Muhammad has informed us and I ask you to confirm it for yourselves.

For if it is true then I ask you to rethink, instead of troubling Muhammad or putting our patience to the test. Believe us, we would prefer to lay down our lives; rather hand over Muhammad to you. And if Muhammad proves to be wrong in his words, then we would hand over Muhammad to you unconditionally. Then you have the liberty of treating him any way you like; kill him or keep him alive.

To these proposals of Abu Talib, the Quraish agreed upon to inspect the document, and to their astonishment they found it worm eaten; only the name of Allah was still there and no more, and they said that it was an enchantment of Muhammad (S). Abu Talib enraged upon the Quraish and demanded that the document be declared void and the ban be removed. Then he clutched to one end of the cloth of the Kaaba, as he raised the second hand in the air and prayed

O Lord! Help us against those, who have subjugated us to torture ...

Sunni references:

- Tabaqat of Ibne Sa'ad, v 1 p 183
- Seerah of Ibn Hisham, v 1 p 399 and p 404
- Aiwanul Ikbar by Qutaiybah, v 2 p 151
- Tareekhe Yaqoobi, v 2 p 22
- Al Istiab, v 2 p 57
- Khazantul Ihbab by Khateeb Baghdadi, v 1 p 252
- History of Ibn Katheer, v 3 p 84

- Al Khasais al Kubra, v 1 p 151
- Al Seerah Al Halebiyyah, v 1 p 286

Once during the childhood of the Prophet (S) on the occasion of a scarcity of rains Abu Talib took him (S) to the Holy Kaaba and standing with his back touching the wall of the sanctuary lifted up the Prophet (S) in his lap and sought medium in his prayers to the Almighty for the rains. The Prophet (S) also joined him in his prayers with his face upturned. The prayers were not finished when the clouds began to appear and the rain fell in torrents. This incident is alluded in the following verses composed by Abu Talib:

Don't you see that we have found Muhammad a prophet like Moses; he is already predicted in the previous Scriptures. He is the illumined face which is the medium for the rains; he is the spring for the orphan and a protector for the widow.

Sunni references

- Sharah of Bukhari by Qastalani, v 2 p 227
- Al Seerah Al Halebeyah, v 1 p 125

Another verse that testify's to the belief of Abu Talib is as follows

To exalt him He derived his name from His own; the One on High is called Mahmud while He named him Muhammad

There is no doubt that Allah appointed Muhammad as a prophet, therefore Ahmed is the most exalted personality in the entire Universe.

Sunni references

- Dalail al-Nubuwwah, by Abu Nu'aym, v 1 p 6
- History of Ibn Asakeer, v 1 p 275
- Sharah of Ibn al Hadid, v 3 p 315
- History of Ibn Katheer, v 1 p 266
- Tareekhe Khamees, v 1 p 254

Abu Talib was a man of great faith and had strong belief in the truthfulness of Muhammad (S). He lived with that mission for about eleven years, and the difficulties for Muhammad and him increased in size by the passage of time. This was especially noticeable after his death, since the Quraish subjected him to more sufferings; sufferings that were not imaginable during the life time of Abu Talib. Ibn Abbas narrates a tradition that when a person from the Quraish put dirt on his head, he went home. It was on this occasion that the Prophet (S) remarked:

... The Quraish never met me with such treatment during the life time of Abu Talib, since they were cowards ...

Sunni references

- History of Tabari, v 2 p 229
- History of Ibn Asakeer, v 1 p 284
- Mustadrak of Al Hakim, v 2 p 622
- History of Ibn Katheer, v 3 p 122
- Al Faiq by Al Zamakshari, v 2 p 213
- Tareekhe Khamees, v 1 p 253
- Al Serah Al Halebiyyah, v 1 p 375
- Fathul Bari, v 7 p 153 and p 154
- Seerah of Ibn Husham, v 2 p 58

The Marriage Ceremony Of The Prophet (S)

Abu Talib addresses the men of Quraysh, who were present at the marriage ceremony as follows:

Praise be to Allah Who made us from the seed of Abraham and progeny of Ishmael. He granted us a Sacred house and a place of pilgrimage. He made us to dwell in a secure sanctuary (haram), to which the fruits of everything are brought. He made us, moreover, arbiters in men's affairs, and blessed for us this land in which we dwell. Then he said:

Were Muhammad (S), the son of my brother 'Abdullah son of Abdul Muttalib ', to be weighed any man among the Arabs, he would excel him. Nor would any man be comparable to him. He is peerless among men, even though he is a man of little wealth. Yet riches are only transient possessions, and an ephemeral security. He has expressed a desire for Khadijah, and she likewise has shown interest in him. As for any bride gift (mahr) you demand, both the part to be presented now and the one presented at a later date – it will be of my own wealth.

Sunni reference:

- Seerah al-Halabiyyah, vol 1 p 139

Abu Talib's (May Allah Bless His Soul) Last Breath

In spite of his concealing his faith, Abu Talib, on more than one occasion made his belief in Islam clearly known (as already mentioned above) long before his death. But it would be interesting to quote his saying at his deathbed.

While on his death bed, Abu Talib said to the Hashimites:

I command you to be good to Muhammad. He is the most trustworthy of the Quraish and the ever truthful of the Arabs. He brought a message which is accepted by the heart and denied by the tongue for

fear of hostility. By God whoever walks in the way of Muhammad shall be on the right road and whoever follows his guidance shall have the happy future.

And you Hashimites, respond to Muhammaed's invitation and believe him. You will succeed and be well guided; certainly he is the guide to the right path.

Sunni references

- Al Muhabil Dunya, v 1 p 72
- Tareekhe Khamees, v 1 p 339
- Balughul Adaab, v 1 p 327
- Al Seerah Al Halebeyah, v 1 p 375
- Sunni al Mutalib, p 5
- Uruzul Anaf, v 1 p 259
- Tabaqat of Ibn Sa'ad, v 1 p 123

It is reported in the book of al-Bayhaqi (Dalail al-Nubuwwah) that when Abu Talib was at the point of death, he was seen moving his lips. al Abbas (the Prophet's uncle) bent down to listen to what he was saying. he then lifted his head and said:

By Allah, he has uttered the word which you requested, O Messenger of Allah!.

Sunni references:

- Dalail al-Nubuwwah by al-Bayhaqi, vol 2 p 101
- Ibn Hisham, Cairo Edition, p146 as quoted in Siratun Nabi, by Shibli Numani, v1, pp 219–220

Also in the same book, it is related that the Prophet (saw) stood at the funeral of Abu Talib and said:

You have indeed acted kindly to your next of kin; may you be well rewarded, O uncle.

Sunni references:

- Dalail al-Nubuwwah by al-Bayhaqi, vol 2 p 101
- Ibid, vol 2 p 103
- History of Khateeb Baghdadi, vol 13 p 196
- History of Ibn Katheer, vol 3 p 125
- al Isaba, vol 4 p 116
- Tadhkirat Sibt, p 2
- History of Yaquubi, vol 2 p26

Some Shi'ite references on Abu Talib

Abu Abdillah, Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (as) said:

The case of Abu Talib was like that of the people of the Cave (Qur'an 18:9–26); they concealed their faith and disclosed shirk. Yet Allah bestowed upon them double reward.

Shi'a Reference:

- al Kulayni in al Kafi, vol 1 p 448
- al Amini, al Ghadir, vol 7 p 330

In another tradition, Imam Jafer al-Sadiq (as) said:

While Imam 'Ali (as) was sitting with Ruhbah in Kufa, surrounded by a group, a man stood up and said: ' Commander of the Believers, you are in this great position at which God has placed you while your father is suffering in hell. ' The Imam replied, saying: Be silent. May God disfigure your mouth. By the One Who sent Muhammad (S) with the truth, if my father intercedes for every sinner on the face of the earth, God would accept his intercession.

Shi'a reference: al-Ihtijaj, by al-Tabarsi, v1, p341

Now, I would like to end this discussion with the following thoughtful questions:

- Why is it that we accuse Abu Talib of paganism, when he chose to believe in the Prophet's (S) message and declared it by political statements and sometimes by frank declarations?
- What benefit does it have for us to daclare him Kafir when there are strong proofs to the contrary? Do we get any other benefit except to make ourselves Kafir by pronouncing one of the early Muslim as Kafir?
- Why do we accuse him of paganism when he defended the Prophet (S) by all of what he had of men and means? Why do we attribute paganism to such a personality who was so benevolent to all the Muslims by guarding the life of the Messenger of Allah (S) for 11 years ?
- Why do we attribute paganism to the man who read the Nikah for the Prophet (S) ? How can your mind comprehend the notion of a pagan/disbeliever carrying out the ceremony of the marriage for a Prophet?
- Isn't this ungratefulness in the worst form ?
- Isn't this the worst insult in reward of the great favor that he did for the Prophet (S) ?

Indeed his presence in relation to the continuity of Islam was NOT incidental and we Muslims all owe

him! May Allah grant us his intercession.

Some Side Comments On Abu Talib

I brother mentioned I had a carefull examination of what you wrote but one thing is not clear wheather Abu Talib did ever uttered 'my god'. So far you informed there is that Abu Talib several times uttered 'Muhammad's god' and seemed he had faith in that god but he could never say 'my god'. That obviously reveals that he never explicitly uttered Islamic belief although it seems that he believed it.

Here I present two references that testify to the fact that Abu Talib uttered the credo of Islam before his death. I am sure that I cited this reference in Part # 2 of my article (s), perhaps you missed it ...

Ibn Ishaq says that while dying Abu Talib's lips were in motion. Abbas who was an unbeliever till then put his ear to the lips and then said to the Prophet that he was reciting the KALIMA the Prophet had wanted of him.

- Ibn Hisham, Cairo Edition, p 146 (as quoted by Shibli Numani) A similar tradition is as follows ...

Abu Talib moved his lips as he was about to die. Abbas then heard what he uttered, and he said to the Prophet that Abu Talib had uttered the KALIMA that was required by you.

- Tarike Abul Fida, V 1 p 120

Thus his Shahadah before his death is established by the Sunni historians. However my argument was that he uttered shahadah from the very begining of Islam, but not in public. So it is natural that no explicit proof for that could be found in the history, for history is written based on the public news (and not private ones!).

However, there are implicit proofs in the history which could lead even Sunnis to believe that he was a Muslim long before his death. One could be what you refered to. He said to the unbelievers that "I swear by the God of Muhammad!". Does history have another example where an unbeliever swears by the name of God who does not believe? When one wants to seavr, he/she swears by something that is eminent for him/her.

Otherwise he/she does not make his statement any more credible for others. Let me give you an example. If a man goes to court here in USA, if he is Christian he will have to swear by Bible. But if he declares to be non-Christian, then he will have to swear by his holy book (or any imortant thing otherwise) and not the bible because his swear by bible does not make the court convinced because he performed the oath.

Please think about it. Quraish have had many important Gods at that time (like Hubal and Uzza). Why should Abu Talib leave all of them beside and swears by the God that he does not believe in?!

The Sunni brother further commented:

Is it possible for some one to be a Muslim without explicitly pronouncing this belief ? True, he was a monotheist and not a Mushrik. But All monotheists are not Muslim. Your kind opinion please

Islam is the state of submission in ones heart. A Hypocite, though declares that he is Muslim, is indeed non-Muslim. For this very reason, it is difficult to judge if one is Muslim or not. However you are right. One has to utter Shahadah to become Muslim, but he does NOT have to do it in public if he fears of prosecution or if he finds out that by concealing his belief he can serve better to his noble thoughts. This is called Taqiyyah. So one can Utter his Shahadah privately (for instance when he is alone or when he is with the Prophet (S) alone) and he will be Muslim.

In fact Taqiyyah and hypocrisy are two opposite extremes. I have a file on that which I will send you shortly Insha Allah, which proves it from Qur'an and the Hadith perspective as well as Logic.

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