

The Caliphs' Reign

The Holy Quran has depicted adeptly the tragedy that inflicted the Islamic ummah because of the absence of Prophet Muhammad (S) in a way that no one else can depict such a vision. Listen to the Holy Quran say:

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ ۚ أَفَإِنْ مَاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِكُمْ ۚ وَمَنْ يَنْقَلِبْ عَلَىٰ عَقْبَيْهِ فَلَنْ يَضُرَّ اللَّهَ شَيْئًا ۚ وَسَيَجْزِي اللَّهُ الشَّاكِرِينَ

And Muhammad is no more than an apostle; the apostles have already passed away before him; if then he dies or is killed will you turn back upon your heels? And whomever turns back upon his heels will by no means do harm to Allah in the least, and Allah will reward the grateful. (3: 144)

In fact, the most disastrous tragedy that inflicted the Islamic ummah after Prophet's demise was removal of the Prophet's Household from the political field and handing the leadership to other unworthy individuals. Besides many adversities that the Islamic ummah suffered because of these events, the matter also resulted in coming to power of the Umayyad rulers. They behaved savagely with Muslims in general and with the Prophet's Household in particular.

In a few words, the plot of taking Imam Ali away from the leadership was the major reason behind slaying of the Prophet's Household and the genuine companions of Imam Husayn in Karbala, at the hands of the Umayyad army.

Thus the events that occurred during the reigns of the first three caliphs had left a clear imprint on the life of Lady Zaynab. Let us then refer briefly to these events.

[The Plot of al-Saqifah](#)

While Prophet Muhammad's dead body had not been buried, some individuals from the Ansar¹ hurried to hold a secret congress in Saqifah – shed – of Banu-Saidah for proposing one of them for the leadership of the Islamic ummah because they anticipated that the Muhajirun² would seize power.

Saad ibn Ubadah, the chief of al-Khazraj tribe, delivered a speech in which he applauded the Ansar's struggle for sake of Islam and that they were more worthy of leading the Islamic ummah than the tribes of Quraysh who antagonized the Prophet (S) and tried to assassinate him.

Another chief from the Ansar, namely al-Habbab ibn al-Mundhir, delivered a speech in which he warned his people from the people of Quraysh and advised them to give the people of Quraysh a share in power because he anticipated that the descendants of those whose fathers, sons, and brothers were killed during the Prophet's campaigns would come to power and revenge themselves on the Ansar.

Unfortunately, the anticipation of al-Habbab ibn al-Mundhir came true; when Muawiyah ibn Abu Sufyan, whose relatives were killed by those who defended Islam during the Prophet's campaigns, came to power, he intentionally humiliated the Ansar and spread poverty among them. His son, Yazid, made what is worse; he usurped their properties, shed their blood, and abused their honors.

Sudden arrival of the Muhajirun

While the Ansar were discussing the affairs of the next leadership, they were surprised by the arrival of Abu Bakr, Umar ibn al-Khattab, Abu Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah, Salim, and others from the Muhajirun. Despite secrecy of their congress, the Ansar were revealed and all their plots failed.

Taking advantage of the situation, Abu Bakr delivered a smooth-tongued speech in which he referred to the Muhajirun as the foremost in embracing and defending Islam. He then offered the position of vizier to the Ansar and kept the position of leadership for his people and him.

In his speech, Abu Bakr did not refer to the death of Prophet Muhammad (S) or to the Ahl al-Bayt (a). He should, at least, have demanded with postponing that congress for some time because the Prophet's holy body had not been buried yet. He also should have referred to the Prophet's repetitive instructions of nominating Imam Ali as his successor and representative.

However, his party hurried to support him and pay homage to him as the next leader. Umar ibn al-Khattab, by using his famous stick and tough style, played the greatest role in this play. In fact, they did their roles so successfully, because their plot had been already known and agreed upon. Omitting participation in the funeral ceremonies of the Prophet (S), the party of Abu Bakr carried him to the Prophet's Masjid like a bridal procession.

Imam Ali and the illegal homage

When he heard of their plots, Imam Ali Amir al-Muminin refused to pay homage to the illegal government of Abu Bakr, because he considered this matter as flagrant violation of his rights. Imam Ali's position in relation to the leadership of the Islamic ummah is as same as the position of the axis in relation to the hand-mill. The floodwater flows down from him and the bird cannot fly up to him.[3](#)

However, Abu Bakr and his party agreed to coerce Imam Ali to pay his homage by any means. They therefore sent their forces to arrest him at home and bring him out forcibly. The Imam's claims against them were so strong and effective that they could not say anything of logic to him.⁴ He then came back home without paying homage to Abu Bakr.

At home, waves of grief and sorrow surrounded the Imam whose right was usurped before his own eyes. The same waves surrounded his family members among whom was the little Zaynab who saw her father resist grief and opt for patience, and saw her mother weep for her father's departure and her husband's grievance.

Strict procedures against the Ahl al-Bayt

As he failed to coerce Imam Ali to pay homage to him, Abu Bakr resorted to a number of shameful means, hoping they would oblige the Imam (a) to renounce his right. They first canceled the Khums (one-fifth) tax that Almighty Allah gave exclusively to Prophet Muhammad and his family (a).

Abu Bakr then imposed an economic blockade on the Prophet's Household by confiscating their properties and counting them on the public treasury so that they would not be able to revolt against his illegal government. He also confiscated the land of Fadak, which the Prophet (S) gifted to his daughter, Lady Fatimah al-Zahra (a), in particular before the very eyes of all Muslims, including Abu Bakr himself.⁵

Lady Fatimah al-Zahra (a) was very angry at the behavior of Abu Bakr who shut all doors in her face in all aspects of life. Accompanied by a number of pious women, she entered the session of Abu Bakr in her father's Masjid where many men from the Muhajirun and the Ansar were present. When a screen was put between her and the attendants, Lady Fatimah al-Zahra (a), first, moaned so pathetically that everybody could not resist weeping. She then delivered an astounding speech.

At first, she referred to the Islamic knowledge, philosophy of the Islamic laws, and then took up some important issues. She mentioned her father's great favors on those peoples who, before him, had lived in dimness of ignorance, incivility, and humiliation. She also referred to the virtue and precedence of her cousin uncle and husband, Imam Ali, and his struggle for the sake of Islam while others lived in luxury and did not make a single effort in this regard.

Before entering upon the main issue, Lady Fatimah al-Zahra (a) expressed her great sorrow for the deviation and perversion that inflicted the Islamic ummah, and predicted the ummah's imminent collapse and incurrence of adversities and misfortunes because of taking the Ahl al-Bayt (a) away from the positions that Almighty Allah and His Apostle chose for them. She then cited the question of depriving her of her father's heritage by giving examples from the Holy Quran and the Islamic laws in this regard.

In point of fact, Lady Fatimah al-Zahra (a) disproved the claims of Abu Bakr so unquestionably that nobody could answer her. She then put before his eyes the bitter future that he would most certainly

encounter when he shall be judged by Almighty Allah and His Prophet (S). She then addressed to the Muslims, attempting to awaken their conscience regarding her right and revolting against the illegal government.[6](#)

However, she knew that they were too weak to be stirred up by any word or any situation. At any rate, the speech is regarded as the most impressive innovative speech throughout history of humankind.

Abu Bakr could not contain the situation, which was about to explode, so with his craftiness and use of an amazing diplomacy, he answered Lady Fatimah al-Zahra (a) with words of welcome and honoring. He lowered himself before her and showed that those strict procedures had not been his own opinion. Rather, they had been the Muslims' decisions.

In summary, no rational individual could excuse Abu Bakr who, in addition to dressing himself with the position of leadership of the Islamic ummah, confiscated the Prophet's heritage, seizing Fadak and other personal properties, and imposed an economical blockade on the Prophet's family. He lied to fabricate against the Holy Prophet (S) and when he told that all Muslims had decided in unison to deprive Imam Ali (a) of his right to leadership.[7](#)

Lady Zaynab, witnessing all these events, understood the reality of those individuals who had caused troubles, pain and grief to her mother.

It is worth mentioning that Lady Zaynab, while she was only five year old, memorized her mother's long and eloquent speech. She was the major narrator of that speech. This is in fact a clear sign of her extraordinary genius.

Rejected apologies

Abu Bakr and Umar tried to please Lady Fatimah al-Zahra (a) in every way, but she refused to receive them. They then turned towards Imam Ali and begged him to arrange a meeting with her. The Imam did and Lady Fatimah (a) permitted them.

When they both sat before her, she turned her face away from them. They then apologized for her, but she asked them:

“Now if I tell you something said by the Prophet of Allah (S), will you accept and follow it.”

“Of course we will,” answered they.

She asked,

“I ask you by Allah, have you heard the Prophet of Allah (S) say: ‘To please Fatimah is my pleasure and to enrage her is my anger. Hence, anyone who loves my daughter Fatimah has in fact loved me, anyone pleases my daughter Fatimah has in fact pleased me, and anyone who enrages Fatimah has in fact

enraged me.' Have you or not?"

"Yes, we have," they confirmed, "We have heard the Prophet of Allah (S) say so."

Furiously then, she addressed to Abu Bakr and his companion:

"I now call upon Allah and His angels to witness that you have enraged me and that you have never pleased me. I will certainly complain against you as soon as I will meet the Prophet (S)."

Moreover, she addressed even more intense words when she said,

"By Allah I swear that I will invoke Allah against you in every prayer I offer."

Hence, Abu Bakr and his companion left without obtaining the satisfaction of Lady Fatimah al-Zahra (a).

Naturally, Lady Zaynab who witnessed these events closely took the same attitude and participated in her mother's rage at Abu Bakr.

Sorrows of Lady Fatimah al-Zahra

Since her father's demise, Lady Fatimah al-Zahra (a) did not live a single moment of happiness or even a moderate temper. She used to weep day and night to the degree that some 'powers' in Medina asked her husband, Imam Ali (a), to persuade her to weep either in day or at night, not in both. She therefore started taking al-Hasan, al-Husayn, and Lady Zaynab to a place out of Medina and sit under a tree there to weep freely as much as she could. Her weeping reminded those people of Medina of their unjust situations and their evil hands extended to cut that tree.

Hence, she had to sit under sun's heat to mourn the loss of her father. But it was very hard for Imam Ali (a) to let his wife and most beloved one to be exposed to the heat of the sun. He therefore hurried to build for her a house he called '*Bayt al-Ahzan*' (House of Grievs) so that she would take for weeping and mourning her father (S). Thus, she, accompanied by her sons and daughter, used to sit at that gloomy house all the day, and the Imam (a) used to take them back home when night would fall. Her only source of pleasure was visiting her father's tomb. She would want to go there, throw herself on the tomb and complain about what had happened to her after his departure.⁸

Demise of Lady Fatimah

As grief prevailed in her soul, the Prophet's daughter lost all her strength; she could hardly stand up and do her daily activities. Lady Zaynab would help her mother as much as she could. She felt her grief, offered to aid her, and rested with her. Nevertheless, her health was declining, her body was exposed to illnesses, and she had to stay in bed.

Once, some ladies visited her. With a faint, sorrowful voice, she answered: "I have hated this world and I

will be happy only if I depart you. I will meet Allah and His Prophet (S) with numerous sadness; my rights have been violated, my relationship to the Prophet (S) has not been respected, his will concerning me has not been regarded, and nobody has considered my sanctity.”[9](#)

Like a rose losing its bloom, the Prophet’s daughter began to wither, and death walked to her in speedy steps while she was in the vigor of youth.

When Imam Ali (a) attended on her request, she told him about her will, which included many points the most important of which were that: her holy body must be buried at the darkest hour of night, those who aggrieved, wronged, and violated her rights must never participate in her funeral ceremonies, and her tomb must not be known by anybody so that her issue and grievances would be objects of wonderment to the coming generations.

The Imam left her after he had guaranteed for her all these matters while he was sinking in sadness.

She also asked her daughter, Lady Zaynab, to do something prophetic in the future in a certain situation. The daughter promised her mother that she would do. She then asked Asma bint Umayy to make for her a bedstead that would cover her pure body.[10](#)

On the last day of her life, Lady Fatimah al-Zahra (a) seemed to be in a better state; because she realized that she would very soon join her father, she was glad. She washed her sons, made food for them, and asked them to visit their grandfather’s tomb. She then looked at them so deeply, turned to Lady Zaynab, and looked at her with the same look.

She then asked Asma to fetch her some water, then dress of mourning, and then put her bed in the centre of the house. Asma knew that these were the last moments of Lady Fatimah al-Zahra’s life; therefore, she became astounded.

Afterward, Lady Fatimah al-Zahra (a) began to recite verses of the Holy Quran until her holy soul ascended to the heavens to meet her father (S) after whose passing away, she had come to detest the worldly life. As Lady Zaynab’s eyes fell on the motionless body of her mother, she began to wail and cry out in grief.

As soon as al-Hasan and al-Husayn knew about their mother’s death, they threw themselves on her body and wept. But Asma asked them to go to the Masjid and tell their father about this heartbreaking news.

When their father heard, he felt as if his heart had cleft and wished he had departed life. He hurried to the house with tearful eyes, looked at the dead body, and said words full of sufferings. Lady Zaynab was there beside the body, crying out in grief after she had lost all hopes. For a child, there is nothing more difficult to cope than her mother departing forever.

The Imam asked Salman (the Persian) to inform the people who had quietly gathered at the door that

the funeral would be at night. Nobody was allowed to see the dead body of Lady Fatimah al-Zahra (a), not even Aishah, the Prophet's widow. [11](#)

When the big part of that night went by, Imam Ali (a) washed the pure body while the two sons, the daughter, and Asma were looking with tearful eyes and broken hearts. He then put the body in the coffin and asked his children to take the last look at their mother. They hence threw themselves on their mother's body. When only a few hours remained from that night, the Imam (a) offered the Prayer for Deceased, carried the body to the final resting place with the help of the choice ones, such as Salman and some Hashemite men, put it in the grave, heaped dust, and removed any sign of the grave. The Imam's tears wetted the dust while he was referring to his wife, Lady Fatimah al-Zahra the Veracious (a), with words that expressed his deep sadness and great suffering. [12](#)

The Imam (a) then returned home to join his children weeping for their mother.

Thus, sadness and pain colored the childhood of Lady Zaynab who lost her grandfather (S), the compassionate, then, only a few weeks later, her tender mother. While she was in such an early age, Lady Zaynab realized the major goals that made those people oppress her mother and violate her rights. She therefore decided to follow her mother's course and never succumb to the tyrants and the illegal rulers of the Islamic ummah.

[Umar's reign](#)

After about two years of ruling, diseases surrounded Abu Bakr who nominated Umar ibn al-Khattab as his successor though many celebrated personalities of the Islamic State objected this matter and complained about Umar's rudeness. Nevertheless, Abu Bakr did not respond to such protests and went on stressing his unjustifiable decision. [13](#)

The most distinctive feature of Abu Bakr's regime was persecution of the Prophet's family and divesting them of the sacredness that the Prophet (S), due to a divine instruction, had cast on them. This matter in fact opened doors for the illegal rulers who reigned over the Islamic ummah in later times to illegally persecute them and treat them severely. This means that Abu Bakr gave green light to the Umayyad rulers to perpetrate the massacre of Karbala during which Imam al-Husayn, along with his relatives and virtuous companions, was slain and his pure body was severed so crudely, and his harem, headed by Lady Zaynab, were taken as captives for nothing but their being the Ahl al-Bayt (S).

After Abu Bakr's death, Umar held the affairs of the Islamic ummah with an iron hand. His ruling was so rude that even the major companions of the Prophet (S), such as Abdullah ibn Abbas, kept themselves away from him. [14](#)

Imam Ali (a), the true leader of the Islamic ummah, isolated himself from the social and political life during Umar's reign in the same way as he had done during Abu Bakr's reign. In fact, they tried their

best to keep him away from any affair related to their government. [15](#) Yet, they had to refer to him for every problem they faced. [16](#)

The Imam thus confined himself to his house while grief, bitterness, and gloom were his only companions. Like their father, Imam Ali's sons took part in the grief that overcame their house, and were very angry with Umar. Imam al-Husayn (a), once, shouted at Umar who was climbing the Prophet's minbar and asked him to descend since he – Umar – was unworthy of that place. [17](#)

Lady Zaynab, too, had the same feelings towards Umar to whom she referred in a statement included by her historical speech addressed to Yazid in his palace:

"...وَسَيَعْلَمُ مَنْ سَوَّلَ لَكَ وَمَكَتَكَ مِنْ رِقَابِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ"

“The one who seduced you and gave you the power due to which you are ruling over the Muslims shall certainly know...”

At any rate, Umar acted towards the Islamic ummah on the basis of his personal opinions. For example, he hated the Persians very much and they, in return, have hated him. He prevented any of them to enter Medina city, the capital of the Islamic state, unless he would be under full age and decided that they have no right to inherit except those who were born in the Arab lands. [18](#)

As a result, Umar was assassinated by a Persian slave whom he humiliated and ridiculed. [19](#)

In his final days, Umar thought for quite a while about whom he should assign the leadership of the Islamic ummah. As he recalled his old associates who participated actively in the implementation of the plan of taking the Prophet's family away from leadership, he showed sadness for them, for death had wrenched them away.

Finally, he put a mean plot due to which Imam Ali would never be able to hold the position of leadership. He named his unsubstantiated play as Shura. He decided to choose six personalities who should nominate one of them for the caliphate. After Umar's death, the six persons held their meeting.

After long discussions and disputations, Uthman ibn Affan, the representative of the Umayyad dynasty, was selected as the coming caliph. From its very first spark of life, the one and only purpose beyond fabrication of the emaciated play of Shura and its funny stipulations put in place by Umar, was to nominate Uthman as the caliph and to take Imam Ali away from this position.

Umar's Shura, in fact, brought about seditions and disorder for the Islamic ummah. It was an important step in enabling the mortal enemies of Islam, the Umayyad family, to come to power and take revenge for their individuals who had been killed during the battle of Badr at the hands of Imam Ali, the Hashemite youths, and the pure Muslims.

Uthman's reign

Once Uthman came to power, the Umayyad and the Abu Mait's families surrounded him and controlled the ummah's destiny. Uthman loved his relatives, the Umayyad family and lost himself in his loyalty to them.²⁰ As a result, all the offices of the state were in their hands and all the fortunes of Muslims became theirs exclusively. Accordingly, disorder, rebellion, and public anarchy spread throughout the provinces of the state. Moreover, Uthman persecuted the foremost Muslims and the authorities of the ummah, such as Abu Dhar al-Ghifari, Abdullah ibn Masud, and Ammar ibn Yasir. Even Aishah, the Prophet's widow and Abu Bakr's daughter, opposed Uthman, accused him of atheism, and urged people to kill him.

The matter reached its climax when complete provinces, such as Iraq and Egypt, mutinied. Some military phalanxes, as well, directed towards Medina, surrounded Uthman's house, and demanded with taking Marwan ibn al-Hakam and the Umayyad individuals away from the state's offices or abdicating his position.

He, in the first place, promised the mutineers he would respond to them, but he did not. They therefore assassinated him so violently and left his dead body in one of the dunghills of Medina without permitting anyone to bury it. However, Imam Ali asked the mutineers to bury the dead body, and they had to accept.

By closing the final part of Uthman's reign, a new page of the Islamic history began. Without the seditious matters that Aishah, Mawiyah, Talhah, and al-Zubayr aroused against Imam Ali's government, his reign would have rectified all the problems that the three caliphs caused to the ummah.

- ^{1.} The Ansar – supporters – were people of al-Madinah (formerly Yathrib) who supported the Prophet (S) and the emigrants of Mecca after they had to leave their home country.
- ^{2.} The Muhajirun – emigrants – were the people of Mecca who had left their home country after their people had treated them severely because they embraced Islam.
- ^{3.} This is the expression that Imam Ali (a) himself used when talking about the usurpation of his position that Almighty Allah and Prophet Muhammad (S) had chosen for him. See Nahj al-Balaghah; sermon of al-Shaqshaqiyyah No. 3.
- ^{4.} See Ibn Qutaybah's al-Imamah wa al-Siyasah; 1:11–2.
- ^{5.} For details, See Fadak in History, by Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, translated by Abdullah al-Shahin, Published by Ansariyan Publications – Qum, 2002.
- ^{6.} See Alam al-Nisa, 3:208 and Balaghat al-Nisa; 12–9
- ^{7.} Abu-Bakr claimed that he had heard Prophet Muhammad (S) saying: “We, the prophets, do not leave heritages. Anything that we leave must be regarded as alms.” Lady Fatimah al-Zahra (a), however, proved the falsity of this claim through many Quranic Verses and rational evidences. For more details, See Fadak in History, by Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr.
- ^{8.} See Ibn Shahrastub's al-Manaqib, 2:131
- ^{9.} See al-Yaqubi's al-Tarikh, 2:95
- ^{10.} See al-Hakim's al-Mustadrak, 3:162
- ^{11.} See Ibn Shahrastub's al-Manaqib; 3:365
- ^{12.} See Nahj al-Balaghah; Commentary of Muhammad Abduh, 2:207.

- [13.](#) See Ibn Abil-Hadid, Sharh(u) Nahj al-Balaghah; 6:343.
- [14.](#) For more details, see Abd-al-Husayn Sharafuddin, al-Nass wa al-Ijtihad.
- [15.](#) See Ibn Abil-Hadid's Sharh(u) Nahj al-Balaghah, 9:28.
- [16.](#) For details, see for instance, Qada al-Imam Ali. In fact, all books that dealt with the Islamic history have mentioned several narrations showing Umar ibn al-Khattab's frequent reference to Imam Ali in every problem he faced. Moreover, Umar's famous saying: "Without Ali, Umar would certainly have perished," and many other like this one have been mentioned in every book dealing with Umar's reign."
- [17.](#) See Baqir Sharif al-Qarashi's al-Sayyidah Zaynab, 114; Isabah fi Marifat al-Sahabah), 2:461.
- [18.](#) See Malik ibn Anas al-Muwatta; 2: 12.
- [19.](#) See al-Masudi's Muruj al-Dhahab; 2:212, and al-Istiab (published in the margins of al- Isabah fi Marifat al-Sahabah); 2:461.
- [20.](#) See Ahmad ibn Hanbal's al-Musnad; 1:62

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