

The debate that became the cause of the death of Hisham

That very day, Baghdad witnessed the most sensational struggle of the champion of speech Hisham ibn Hakam – the debate between truth and falsehood, the interesting and hilarious debate!

Yes, it was a wonderful scene. The scene ended in Hisham's victory as usual, but it was so much a cause of unrest for Haroon that when he came out of the meeting, he was extremely irritated and had become just like a wounded wild animal. Upon leaving the meeting Haroon uttered some ominous threats such as: By God, I will kill him. Who was he? By God, I will kill him! I will make him burn in fire!

Hazrat Abdul Azim¹ Hasani quotes: "Haroon al-Rashid said to Ja'far ibn Yahya Barmaki: I would like you to gather all speculative theologians (orators) at a meeting and have them discuss on the subjects concerning themselves. I will hide myself in a place where they will not be able to see me but where I will be able to hear their speeches and listen to their disagreements. Yahya ibn Khaled fulfilled the caliph's order and asked the speculative theologians to gather at his home and he decorated a place for the caliph, a bit removed from their sight.

The caliph and a huge number of speculative theologians gathered together and were waiting for Hisham ibn Hakam. Hisham suddenly entered the meeting. He paid respect to all the people present and did not pay any attention to Ja'far Barmaki. In the meantime, some one in the gathering asked him:

O' Hisham, why do you think Ali (a) is more pious than Abu Bakr? God says: "The second one of them (i.e. the Prophet (s) and Abu Bakr hid themselves in the cave "Thaur" on the night of migration) said to his friend: Don't be sad, God is with us."

Hisham: O' man, tell me, why was Abu Bakr sad? Was God happy and pleased about his sadness or was He not pleased? That man remained silent and avoided giving an answer.

Hisham: If you think, God was pleased about the sadness of Abu Bakr, then why did the Apostle of God tell him not to be sad. Did the Prophet (s) prohibit him from committing the acts to please God? If you

deem, God was not pleased with the grief of Abu Bakr, then can you be proud of a thing which was contrary to that of God's pleasure. O' man you yourself know better what God has said in their respect: Thus the Creator sent His peace and tranquillity to His Prophet and believers."2

(It is obvious that this verse of the Qur'an does not prove any superiority of Abu Bakr. Whereas a group of Sunni learned men have taken this verse as a token of honour and virtue for the caliph there is a reference to another verse of the Qur'an which notes clearly: "Thus the creator sent down His peace and tranquillity on His Apostle."3 This is the clear proof that the above verse is not related to Abu Bakr rather the pronoun in the verse of the cave refers to the Holy Prophet.4

Then Hisham turned towards that man and said: "You have quoted traditions and we have also quoted the Prophet that paradise is waiting to receive four persons: Ali ibn Abi Taleb, Miqdad ibn Aswad, Ammar Yaser and Abu Dharr al-Ghaffari. The name of our lord Ali ibn Abi Taleb has been referred to in the tradition, but the name of your respectful Abu Bakr is not among them. So the superiority of Ali to Abu Bakr is indisputable.

Similarly, you have said and we also believe and the people also say. There are four persons who have defended the sanctity of Islam: Ali ibn Abi Taleb, Zubair ibn Awam, Abu Dajjanah Ansari and Salman Farsi. Here, the name of our Imam is at the top but your leader is deprived of this honour too. So for this reason, we prefer our leader to yours.

Similarly, you believe and we have also said and every one says that there are four reciters of the Qur'an from the Prophet's period:

Ali ibn Abi Taleb, Abdullah Masoud, Ali ibn and Zayd ibn Thabet. Ali ibn Abi Taleb has been given this honour but Abu Bakr is not graced by this virtue. For this reason, we prefer Ali to him.

Moreover, you have quoted and we, shias have also quoted and other people are also in agreement with us that there are four sacred and purified persons: Ali ibn Abi Taleb (a), Fatimah (a), Hasan (a) and Husayn (a). The lofty place of our leader Ali ibn Abi Taleb is seen among those exalted people also but your leader is deprived of this virtue here too. So for this reason Ali (a) is preferred over Abu Bakr.

Furthermore, you and others have said and we have also quoted that there are four pious and good men: Ali ibn Abi Taleb, Fatimah, Hassan and Husayn (a). The name of our respected leader is among them but the name of your leader is not found there. This is the reason that we consider our leader to be more able and count him higher than others.

And after all, you have narrated and we have also quoted and other people also say the same thing that there are four martyrs on the right path: Ali ibn Abi Taleb, Ja'far ibn Abi Taleb, Hamzah and Obaidullah ibn Harith. It is obvious that the name of our spiritual leader is at the top of the list of the Martyrs on the Right Path and he is the leader of the martyrs, but Abu Bakr is deprived of this virtue also. For this reason we prefer Ali to others. Hazrat Abdul Azim Hasani says: Haroon who was carefully listening to the speech of Hisham, suddenly put the curtain aside and Ja'far also asked the people to leave the

house. All of them in a very frightened state went out. Haroon also left the meeting furiously as he was uttering:

"Who was he? By God, I will kill him and make him burn in fire."

1. Hazrat Abdul Azim ibn Abdullah ibn Ali. Zaid ibn Hasan ibn Hasan Mujtaba (a). the exalted son, his burial place is at the city of Rey which is a sacred visiting place for shias. Sheikh Mufid has quoted this story in his book Ekhtesas, with reference to that holy man.

2. A part of verse No. 40 of Surah Taubah.

3. Surah 9. verse 40.

4. Surah 9. verse 40.

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/hisham-ibn-hakam-muhammad-reza-atai/debate-became-cause-death-hisham#comment-0>