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15) Hadith Al-Qital, Mu’awiyah B. Abi Sufyan: A Case Study

The fiercest enemy of Amir al-Muminin, *‘alaihi al-salam*, and the most successful armed rebel against his government, was Mu’awiyah. He was the only one of the rebel leaders with firm control over vast territories, namely modern Syria, Palestine, Israel, Jordan and Lebanon. He was ‘Uthman’s governor over these countries. However, when ‘Ali became accepted as the *khalifah*, Mu’awiyah refused to accept the former’s authority.

He therefore took the territories under his governorate and their territorial armies with him in a bloody insurgency against the central government. The others – mainly Umm al-Muminin ‘Aishah’s army and the Khawarij – had no such advantage. Unlike them, Mu’awiyah had large well-equipped, handsomely-paid, highly experienced and very loyal armed forces. In the end, Imam ‘Ali was assassinated in cold blood by a Khariji. Mu’awiyah’s rebellion succeeded, and he became the new *khalifah*. He eventually founded the Umayyad dynasty.

The Messenger of Allah, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa alihi*, had predicted Mu’awiyah’s insurrection, and had described him and his armies in some very strong terms. Imam al-Bukhari (d. 256 H) records:

> حدثنا مسدد قال حدثنا عبد العزيز بن مختار قال حدثنا خالد الحذاء عن عكرمة قال لي ابن عباس ولابنه علي انطلقا إلى أبي سعيد فاسمعا من حديثه فانطلقنا فإذا هو في حائط يصلحه فأخذ رداءه فاحتبى ثم أنشأ يحدثنا حتى أتى ذكر بناء المسجد فقال كنا نحمل لبنة لبنة وعمار لبنتين لبنتين فرآه النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم فينفض التراب عنه ويقول (ويح عمار تقتله الفئة الباغية يدعوهم إلى الجنة ويدعونه إلى النار) . قال يقول عمار أعوذ بالله من الفتن

Musaddad – ‘Abd al-‘Aziz b. Mukhtar – Khalid al-Khudha – ‘Ikrimah:

Ibn ‘Abbas said to me and to his son ‘Ali, "Go to Abu Sa'id and listen to what he narrates." So we went and found him in a garden looking after it. He picked up his garment, wore it and sat down and started narrating to us until he mentioned the construction of the mosque. Therefore, he said, “We were carrying

one adobe at a time while ‘Ammar was carrying two. The Prophet, peace be upon him, saw him and started removing the dust from his body and said, ‘May Allah be merciful to ‘Ammar. **He will be murdered by a *baghi* group. He will be inviting them (i.e. the *baghi* group) to Paradise and they (i.e. the *baghi* group) will be inviting him to Hell-fire**.’ ‘Ammar said, ‘I seek refuge with Allah from affliction.’”[1]

This *hadith* is *mutawatir*, as Imam Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr (d. 463 H) states:

> وتواترت الآثار عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم أنه قال تقتل عمار الفئة الباغية وهذا من إخباره بالغيب وأعلام نبوته صلى الله عليه وسلم وهو من أصح الأحاديث

The reports are *mutawatir* from the Prophet, peace be upon him, stating that he said, “’Ammar will be murdered by a *baghi* group”. This was one of his prophecies, and one of the proofs of his prophethood, peace be upon him, and it is one of the most authentic *ahadith*.[2]

Al-Hafiz (d. 852 H) also submits:

> وتواترت الأحاديث عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم أن عمارا تقتله الفئة الباغية وأجمعوا على أنه قتل مع علي بصفين

The *ahadith* are *mutawatir* from the Prophet, peace be upon him, that ‘Ammar would be murdered by the *baghi* group, and they (i.e. the scholars) had a consensus that he (‘Ammar) was murdered on the side of ‘Ali at Siffin.[3]

The battle of Siffin was between Amir al-Muminin ‘Ali and the Syrian rebels commanded by Mu’awiyah. ‘Ammar, *radhiyallahu ‘anhu*, was in the army of ‘Ali, and was murdered by the troops of Mu’awiyah. As such, Mu’awiyah and his armies were the *baghi* group. Al-Hafiz Ibn Kathir (d. 774 H) explains further:

> وهذا مقتل عمار بن ياسر رضي الله عنه مع أمير المؤمنين علي بن أبي طالب قتله أهل الشام وبان وظهر بذلك سر ما أخبره به الرسول صلى الله عليه وسلم من أنه تقتله الفئة الباغية وبان بذلك أن عليا محق وأن معاوية باغ

This was the murder of ‘Ammar b. Yasir, may Allah be pleased with him, on the side of Amir al-Muminin ‘Ali b. Abi Talib. He was murdered by the Syrians. From this, the secret of what the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, had predicted that he (‘Ammar) would be murdered by a *baghi* group became clear. **It became clear from this that ‘Ali was upon the Truth and that Mu’awiyah was a *baghi* person**.[4]

Al-Hafiz agrees, but with some caution:

وذهب جمهور أهل السنة إلى تصويب من قاتل مع علي لامتثال قوله تعالى وان طائفتان من المؤمنين اقتتلوا الآية ففيها الامر بقتال الفئة الباغية وقد ثبت ان من قاتل عليا كانوا بغاة وهؤلاء مع هذا التصويب متفقون على أنه لا يذم واحد من هؤلاء بل يقولون اجتهدوا فأخطأوا

The majority of the Ahl al-Sunnah are of the opinion that those who fought on the side of ‘Ali were correct, based on His statement, “If two groups from the believers fight each other” and in it is an order to fight the *baghi* group. **It is firmly established that those who fought against ‘Ali were *baghi* people**. Yet, these people (i.e. Sunnis), despite their commendation (of the troops of ‘Ali) have a consensus that none of these people (i.e. the *baghi* people) should be criticized. **Rather, they (i.e. Sunnis) say: they did *ijtihad* and made mistakes**.[5]

In simpler words, the murderers of ‘Ammar were free from blame, according to the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama’ah! Imam al-Nawawi (d. 676 H) reiterates this:

قال العلماء هذا الحديث حجة ظاهرة في أن عليا رضي الله عنه كان محقا مصيبا والطائفة الأخرى بغاة لكنهم مجتهدون فلا إثم عليهم لذلك

The scholars said: This *hadith* is explicit proof that ‘Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, was upon the Truth and was correct, **and that the other side were *baghi* people**. However, they (i.e. the *baghi* people) did *ijtihad*. **Therefore, there was no sin upon them due to that**.[6]

Whatever the case, there is Sunni agreement that Mu’awiyah and his troops were the *baghi* group in the *mutawatir hadith*. Meanwhile, there are a number of crucial points about Mu’awiyah and his armies in the *hadith* that need to be looked into in order to deal with their acquittal by the Ahl al-Sunnah. First, we must understand that being a *baghi* person or group is *haram*, as Allah has declared:

إن الله يأمر بالعدل والإحسان وإيتاء ذي القربى وينهى عن الفحشاء والمنكر والبغي يعظكم لعلكم تذكرون

Verily, Allah commands you to do justice and kindness, and to give to kith and kin, and **forbids** corrupt behaviours, evil deeds **and *al-baghi* (i.e. being a *baghi* person or group)**. He admonishes you, that you may take heed.[7]

Therefore, Mu’awiyah and his armies were an *illegitimate* group. Allah Himself BANNED them. In line with this, it is obligatory for Muslims as a whole to rise in arms against every *baghi* group within the *Ummah*:

وإن طائفتان من المؤمنين اقتتلوا فأصلحوا بينهما فإن بغت إحداهما على الأخرى فقاتلوا التي تبغي حتى تفيء إلى أمر الله

If two groups among the believers fight each other, then make peace between them both. **But if one of them is the *baghi* against the other, then fight you against the *baghi* one** till it complies with the Command of Allah.[8]

This is the case where the *baghi* group were "believers". What then about a case where they were haters of 'Ali, and therefore "hypocrites" according to the Messenger? Apparently, the group of Mu'awiyah were in a far worse situation. In any case, by describing them as a *baghi* group, the Prophet was indicating that they were a *banned* group, and that fighting them was compulsory upon all living Muslims at the time of the Battle of Siffin.

Moreover, there is a clear indication in the above verse that the non-*baghi* group is upon the Command of Allah, and has not strayed from it in the least. This is another point in the *hadith*: 'Ali and his army were upon the Command of Allah in the war. This fact is strengthened even further by the Prophet's description of 'Ammar as calling the *baghi* group to Paradise.

A rather disturbing quality of Mu'awiyah and his armies is that they were callers to Hellfire, according to the *mutawatir hadith*. Apparently, this nullifies *any* acquittal or defence of them. In the Sight of Allah, that *baghi* group were not a collection of mistaken fellows. Rather, they were full-scale callers to Hellfire, *undoubtedly* working for Shaytan. We will say more on this below. Meanwhile, even *if* they had truly been people who made mistakes (as the Ahl al-Sunnah claim), would that have exonerated them from the crimes they committed? The Qur'an says "no":

إن فرعون وهامان وجنودهما كانوا خاطئين

Verily, Fir'aun and Haman and their soldiers were people **who made mistakes**.[9]

Yet, they will fully answer for their crimes on the Day of Resurrection. Moreover, we read this in the Book of Allah:

قالوا يا أبانا استغفر لنا ذنوبنا إنا كنا خاطئين

They said: "O our father! Ask forgiveness for our sins. Indeed, we have been people **who made mistakes**."[10]

This is a similar verse:

إنا آمنا بربنا ليغفر لنا خطايانا

We have believed in our Lord, that He may forgive us **our mistakes**.[11]

As such, the defence of mistake can never work as a shield from culpability for crimes. But then, even if we accepted it as a valid excuse (in opposition to the Qur'an), Mu'awiyah and his *baghi* armies still had a lot to answer for. They murdered 'Ammar and several other righteous soldiers of Amir al-Muminin. Let us say, for the sake of argument, that the *baghi* group had *mistakenly* killed those pious people. Still, the Book of Allah has clear provisions concerning such a case:

> وما كان لمؤمن أن يقتل مؤمنا إلا خطأ ومن قتل مؤمنا خطأ فتحرير رقبة مؤمنة ودية مسلمة إلى أهله إلا أن يصدقوا ... فمن لم يجد فصيام شهرين متتابعين توبة من الله وكان الله عليما حكيما ومن يقتل مؤمنا متعمدا فجزاؤه جهنم خالدا فيها وغضب الله عليه ولعنه وأعد له عذابا عظيما

It is NOT for a believer to kill a believer except by mistake. **And whoever kills a believer *by mistake*, he must set free a believing slave** and a compensation be given to the deceased's family, unless they remit it ... **And whoever finds this beyond his means, he must fast for two consecutive months IN ORDER TO SEEK REPENTANCE FROM ALLAH**. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. And whoever kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hellfire to abide therein forever, and the Wrath and the Curse of Allah are upon him, and a great punishment is prepared for him.[12]

So, even if you killed a believer *by mistake*, you must still seek "repentance from Allah". To do that, you must set free a slave for each life mistakenly taken, and pay compensation to the families of the deceased. If you were unable to manumit a slave (as in modern times), or you lacked the financial capability to pay the compensation, then you must fast consecutively for two months. Unless you did these, there would be no forgiveness for you for the *accidental* killing(s), and you would be in serious trouble in the Hereafter. Mu'awiyah and his *baghi* colleagues never did any of these things! Therefore, they never sought or earned Allah's forgiveness.

The most important issue for consideration here is that only *intentional* murder has been associated with Hellfire. Interestingly, Mu'awiyah and his troops were also branded callers to it. In other words, they were themselves inmates – in fact, officials – of Hellfire. They were only drawing more people to join them in it. Imagine if the Sunni claim that the *baghi* group had no blame had been true, would such have been the case? Would Allah and His Messenger have described them as callers to Hellfire if they had solely been killing believers *by mistake*?

Finally, the fact that they were callers to Hellfire also casts a huge shadow over their Islamic credentials. Whenever anyone is descried as "calling to Hellfire", it means that he is a *kafir*. 'Allamah al-'Uthaymin (d. 1421 H) states:

> وجعلناهم أئمة يدعون إلى النار (يعني بذلك قادة الكفار)

(And We made them leaders inviting to the Fire), He is referring to **the leaders of the *kuffar***.[13]

In other words, those who invite to Hellfire are the *kuffar*, and their leaders are the leaders of the *kuffar*.

Imam al-Alusi (d. 1270 H) also says:

> يدعون إلى النار... { والمراد جعلهم ضالين مضلين}

{Inviting to the Fire} ... what is intended is: **He made them misled misleaders**.[14]

Therefore, those who invite to the Fire are those that have been misled by Shaytan, and who also function as his soldiers, workers and callers.

In any case, Allah Himself has given a clear Verdict about people like them:

> ولا تنكحوا المشركين حتى يؤمنوا ولعبد مؤمن خير من مشرك ولو أعجبكم أولئك يدعون إلى النار والله يدعو إلى الجنة والمغفرة بإذنه

And do not marry to **idolaters** till they believe, and verily a believing slave is better than an idolater, even though he pleases you. **Those invite to Hellfire, and Allah invites to Paradise** and Forgiveness by His Leave.[15]

In other words, the army of Amir al-Muminin were soldiers of Allah while the *baghi* group – led by Mu'awiyah – were *kuffar*, misled misleaders and idolaters.

1. Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad b. Isma'il b. Ibrahim b. Mughirah al-Bukhari al-Ju'fi, al-Jami' al-Sahih al-Mukhtasar (Beirut: Dar Ibn Kathir; 3rd edition, 1407 H) [annotator: Dr. Mustafa Dib al-Bagha], vol. 1, p. 172, # 436
2. Abu 'Umar Yusuf b. 'Abd Allah b. Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Barr b. 'Asim al-Nimri al-Qurtubi, al-Isti'ab fi Ma'rifat al-Ashab (Beirut: Dar al-Jil; 1st edition, 1412 H) [annotator: 'Ali Muhammad al-Bajawi], vol. 3, p. 1140
3. Ahmad b. 'Ali b. Hajar al-'Asqalani, al-Isabah fi Tamyiz al-Sahabah (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1415 H) [annotators: Shaykh 'Adil Ahmad b. 'Abd al-Mawjud and Shaykh 'Ali Muhammad Ma'udh], vol. 4, p. 474, # 5720
4. Abu al-Fida Isma'il b. Kathir al-Dimashqi, al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah (Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi; 1st edition, 1408 H) [annotator: 'Ali Shiri], vol. 7, p. 296
5. Shihab al-Din Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, Fath al-Bari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah li al-Taba'ah wa al-Nashr; 2nd edition), vol. 13, p. 58
6. Muhyi al-Din Abu Zakariyyah Yahya b. Sharaf al-Nawawi, Sahih Muslim bi Sharh al-Nawawi (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi; 1407 H), vol. 18, p. 40
7. Qur'an 16:90
8. Qur'an 49:9
9. Qur'an 28:8
10. Qur'an 12:97
11. Qur'an 20:73
12. Qur'an 4:92-93
13. Muhammad b. Salih al-'Uthaymin, Fatawa Nur 'ala al-Darb (Muasassat Shaykh Muhammad bin Salih b. 'Uthaymin al-Khayriyyah; 1427 H), vol. 31, p. 111
14. Abu al-Fadhl Mahmud al-Alusi, Ruh al-Ma'ani fi Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim wa Sab' al-Mathani (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-

Turath al-'Arabi), vol. 20, p. 83

15. Qur'an 2:221

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