

Horrible Events

Lady Zaynab lived under the custody of her grandfather, Prophet Muhammad (S), for a period of her early life. During this period, she was so tranquil and at ease, as he used to receive her with hospitality and honor. Her parents, too, showed her sympathy, love, and cordiality. She also saw the great triumphs of Islam and the defeats of its enemies.

The most significant thing, however, that Lady Zaynab noticed in her childhood was the Prophet's special care for her parents and brothers.¹ She realized the fact that such care and special treatment was not mere emotion or personal view. It originated from divine instructions to express appreciation for the perfect character those individuals enjoyed and to express their worthiness for being the leaders of the Islamic ummah.

These were the happiest days in the life of Lady Zaynab.

Nevertheless, that happiness did not continue. Prophet Muhammad (S) felt death approaching him, and told his daughter about it². This news spread grief and feelings of sadness over the Prophet's family as well as Muslims who had to think of a new life empty of their leader and Prophet.

[Lady Zaynab's Dream](#)

Once, Lady Zaynab saw in sleep something horrible; so, she hurried to her grandfather to tell her dream. The Prophet (S) seated her in his lap, kissed her repeatedly, and asked her to tell her dream. She began:

“Last night, I saw as if a violent wind made everybody look black and dark. Hence, I ran towards a great tree and hung strongly to its leaves so that the wind would not take me away. The wind unfortunately tore away that tree and threw it to the ground. I hung to a strong branch from that tree, but the wind took it off. So, I hung to another, but the wind broke that too. I then hurried to hang on to one of two leaves from that tree, but the stormy wind broke it. I then woke up.”

As he heard the dream, the Prophet (S) burst into tears and said, explaining her dream:

“The tree is your grandfather. The first branch is your mother and the other is your father. The two other branches are your brothers, al-Hasan and al-Husayn. The world will be blackened when they leave it, and you will put on mourning dress for their misfortunes.”³

The Farewell Pilgrimage

When the Prophet (S) realized that he would soon depart life, he decided to hold a public meeting with Muslims and nominate the authorities and leaders who would lead them after him. For that very purpose, the Prophet (S) performed his final Hajj (ritual pilgrimage), which was called the Farewell Pilgrimage. He took from one place to another among Muslims so as to lead them to the courses of salvation and guide them to the leaders whom they should follow after him. He repeatedly said:

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، إِنِّي تَرَكْتُ فِيكُمْ الثَّقَلَيْنِ: كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَعِترتي أَهْلَ بَيْتِي.

“O People, I have left among you the two precious things: the Book of Allah and my progeny—my household.”⁴

The Prophet (S) then stopped near the well of Zamzam and delivered a great speech in which he referred to all the issues that people would need to know about after him. Regarding the leadership of the ummah, he (S) declared openly:

إِنِّي خَلَفْتُ فِيكُمْ مَا إِنْ تَمَسَّكْتُمْ بِهِ لَنْ تَضِلُّوا بَعْدِي أَبَدًا: كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَعِترتي أَهْلَ بَيْتِي. أَلَا هَلْ بَلَغْتُ

“I am leaving among you that which will save you from deviation forever if you only adhere to: the Book of Allah and my progeny—my household. Have I conveyed (to you this matter)?”

In one voice, all the one hundred thousand people in the audience responded by saying: “Yes, you have.”⁵

After he had accomplished the ritual of his final Hajj, Prophet Muhammad (S) received from the heavens a missive instructing him to nominate Imam Ali as his successor and as a general authority for the ummah. The missive was Almighty Allah’s saying:

النَّاسُ مِنْ يَعْصِمُكَ وَاللَّهُ ۖ رِسَالَتُهُ بَلَغَتْ فَمَا تَفْعَلْ لَمْ وَإِنْ ۚ ۙ رَبِّكَ مِنْ إِلَيْكَ أَنْزَلَ مَا بَلَغَ الرَّسُولُ أَيُّهَا يَا ۚ

الْكَافِرِينَ الْقَوْمَ يَهْدِي لِأَلْهَى إِنَّ .

O Apostle! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord; and if you do it not, then you

have not delivered His message, and Allah will protect you from the people; surely Allah will not guide the unbelieving people. (5:67)[6](#)

Hence, he ordered the caravans of the pilgrims to stop and gather at a place called ‘Ghadir Khumm’. It was so hot then that the men had to stand with the edges of their cloaks tucked under their feet so as to avoid the heat arising from the ground.

In such a situation, he led a congregational prayer and asked his companions to make a platform like a pulpit. He stood towering over it and delivered the most important speech in the lives of all Muslims. The most important aspect of that speech was that he took Imam Ali (a) by the hand and raised him as much as he could, and declared openly and frankly:

مَنْ كُنْتُ مَوْلَاهُ فَهَذَا عَلِيٌّ مَوْلَاهُ. اَللّٰهُمَّ وَالِ مَنْ وَالَاَهُ، وَعَادِ مَنْ عَادَاهُ، وَاجِبْ مَنْ احَبَّهٗ، وَابْغِضْ مَنْ ابْغَضَهُ، وَاَنْصُرْ مَنْ نَصَرَهُ، وَاخْذُلْ مَنْ خَذَلَهُ، وَاَدِرْ الْحَقَّ مَعَهُ حَيْثُ دَارَ. اَلَا فَلْيُبَلِّغِ الشَّاهِدُ الْغَائِبَ

“Ali shall be the master of him whoever has taken me as master. O Allah, (I implore to You to) accede to him who accedes to Ali, be the enemy of him who makes an enemy of Ali, love him who loves Ali, hate him who hates Ali, give victory to him who supports Ali, disappoint him whoever disappoints Ali, and direct the right to the direction that Ali takes. It is obligatory upon those present here to convey this instruction to the absent.”[7](#)

As the Prophet (S) conveyed his Lord’s missive so completely, the Lord revealed,

اَلْاِسْلَامَ دِيْنًا لَكُمْ وَرَضِيْتُ اَنْ نَعْمَتِي عَلَيْكُمْ وَاَتَمَمْتُ دِيْنَكُمْ لَكُمْ اَكْمَلْتُ الْيَوْمَ .

This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor on you and chosen Islam for you as a religion. (5:3)[8](#)

From her early life, Lady Zaynab realized this instruction of the Prophet and the homage that was due from the ummah to her father – Imam Ali (a). She also realized that the leadership of her father was a divine instruction and, hence, was one of the foundation pillars of this religion.

The Prophet’s Final Ailment

When he returned from the Farewell Pilgrimage, the Holy Prophet (S) felt sick. He was attacked by a very violent fever that obliged him to stay at bed. When Muslims heard of this bad news, they hastened to visit him in groups. He instructed them not to leave the leadership of Imam Ali (a) after his departure.[9](#)

Because the issue of Imam Ali’s next leadership was the most important, the Prophet (S) repeatedly focused on it at every situation. He used to say:

هَذَا عَلَيَّ مَعَ الْقُرْآنِ، وَالْقُرْآنُ مَعَ عَلِيٍّ؛ لَا يَفْتَرِقَانِ حَتَّى يَرِدَا عَلَيَّ الْحَوْضَ.

“Ali is most certainly with the Quran and the Quran is most certainly with Ali. They shall never leave each other until they join me by the Divine Pool.” [10](#)

He anticipated the violation of this decision after his death, so the Prophet (S) ordered the individuals who were suspected [11](#) of doing so to join a phalanx and travel to Syria in a military campaign so as to avoid their rebellion after his death. [12](#) Those individuals however understood the purpose of Prophet’s instruction. Therefore, they decided to rebel against his instructions and refused to join that campaign.

Despite his illness, the Prophet (S) went out, ascended the minbar [13](#) and ordered his companions to join that campaign. And then finally, cursed anyone who would break this order. [14](#) This strong threat made his view very clear to those individuals who did everything to avoid leaving Medina on these days.

The Calamity of Thursday

As a second, more visionary attempt to frustrate the conspirators’ wicked plots, the Prophet (S) in his final hours, when he was surrounded by his companions among whom were the conspirators, asked them to bring to him an inkwell and a pen so as to record for them his last, most important will. He instructed that the will would save them from going astray forever. [15](#)

The conspirators understood the Prophet’s intention; so, they aroused a cacophony by arguing noisily – some supported the Prophet’s demand while others rejected tenaciously. It was strange to witness such individuals, who realized the reality of the Prophet (S) that he would never speak out of personal desire, [16](#) to object to his last will.

Some ladies who knew about this matter hurried to reproach these individuals for raising a disgraceful dare to challenge Prophet’s orders. The party who supported the Prophet’s demand was about to win, but someone (namely, Umar ibn al-Khattab) intruded hastily to declare these disastrous words: “The Prophet is hallucinating!” [17](#)

This incident was the most calamitous in the Islamic history. Abdullah ibn Abbas, the grand authority of the Islamic ummah, used to weep whenever he mentioned this incident. He called it ‘The Calamity of Thursday’. [18](#)

Lady Zaynab, observing these events, realized the purposes of those individuals who aimed at taking her father away from the position that Almighty Allah and Prophet Muhammad (S) chose for him. This incident however led to other adversities, one of which was that of Karbala.

Lady Fatimah al-Zahra's Grief

Lady Fatimah al-Zahra (a) was the most grief stricken due to her father's disease. She sat by him with a heart torn by grief and pain as if she was the one who was suffering agonies of death.¹⁹ Seeing his daughter and dearest one to his heart in such a state, the Holy Prophet (S) tried to entertain her and alleviate her grief. Hence, he said to her something confidentially. She burst into tears. He (S) then said something else, also confidentially, but this time she smiled.

When Aishah, the prophet's wife, asked Lady Fatimah (a) about the secret behind her tears and then her smile, she turned her face away and did not tell her. She, however, told some righteous ladies about the matter. She said: "The first time, my father (S) told me that he would soon depart from this life. This news made me break into tears. The second time, he told me that I would be the first to join him in the heavens. He also told that I am the Chief of the Women of this ummah. This news gladdened me."²⁰

Lady Zaynab took part in her mother's grief and pains. She was sad for her mother and grandfather. In his final moments, the Holy Prophet (S) supplicated to Almighty Allah to be the custodian of his household and to make the heart of every believing man and woman to ache for them.

In his final moments, he also asked the attendants to attend to his household and progeny:

قَدْ خَلَفْتُ فِيكُمْ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَعِترتي أَهْلَ بَيْتِي. فَالْمُضَيِّعُ لِكِتَابِ اللَّهِ كَالْمُضَيِّعِ لِسُنَّتِي، وَالْمُضَيِّعُ لِسُنَّتِي كَالْمُضَيِّعِ لِعِترتي. إِنَّهُمَا لَنْ يَفْتَرِقَا حَتَّى يَرِدَا عَلَيَّ الْحَوْضَ.

"I have left among you the Book of Allah and my progeny — my household. To waste the Book of Allah is as same as wasting my Sunnah, and to waste my Sunnah is as same as wasting my progeny. They (the Book of Allah and the Ahl al-Bayt) shall never leave each other until they join me on the Divine Pool."²¹

Prophet Muhammad Departs Life

Thus, the Prophet (S) took his last breath in this world and departed life while he was in the lap of Imam Ali (a).²²

The Imam then, prepared for the funeral ceremonies while he was hugely affected with deep sorrow. He bathed the Prophet's dead body, put it in the coffin, offered the prayer for the deceased, and allowed Muslims to offer prayers for the body, saying: "Peace, Allah's mercy, and blessings be upon you, O Prophet of mercy. O Allah, we declare honestly that he has conveyed to his nation everything that was revealed to him and he fought for Allah's sake until Almighty Allah reinforced His religion and accomplished His Word. O Allah, guide us to follow that which was revealed to him, make us continue on this course, and join us to him."²³

Thereafter, Imam Ali (a) put the holy body of the Prophet (S) in the tomb and stood at the edge of the tomb shedding tears and uttering words of grief.

Lady Fatimah al-Zahra (a) was the saddest individual and appeared to be about to lose her soul because of grief and bitter weeping. In such horrible hours, she said:

“O Father, O Messenger of Allah, O Prophet of Mercy. From now on, the heavenly revelation will cease. From now on, Gabriel will not visit us. O Allah, (I implore to You to) join my soul to his and have mercy upon me by letting me see his face. O Allah, I implore to You not to deprive me of his recompense and intercession on the Day of Resurrection.”^{[24](#)}

After the demise of Prophet Muhammad (S), his household was overtaken by waves of sadness and grief. Besides this, they were surrounded by waves of horror and fear because they anticipated that the Arabs would harm them so as to avenge themselves against the Prophet (S) who was seen as responsible for mourning to occur every house. In this regard, Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a) said:

“When the Holy Prophet (S) departed life, his household felt as if they were left unsheltered; nothing, not even the heavens, would protect them from above, and nothing, not even the earth, would protect them from beneath.”

Lady Zaynab, while she was in her early years, suffered bitterly from this grand misfortune. She had to encounter its effects. She was only five years old when this adversity invaded her youthful heart. She saw her beloved grandfather depart forever, saw her father swallow grief because of losing his cousin, and saw her mother mourn and ardently weep for her father’s passing away. That day in fact marked the beginning of Lady Zaynab’s griefs and sufferings.

¹. Prophet Muhammad (S) referred to his household at almost every occasion and situation. He instructed Muslims to follow and take them alone as their guide, since deviation from religion would surely occur if their course were abandoned. In other words, Prophet Muhammad (S) presented his household as the one and only source of guidance for attaining Almighty Allah’s satisfaction. The following narration, for example, is recorded in al-Tabari’s *Dhakhair al-Uqba*, 24; *Majma al-Zawaid*, 9:169, *Ansab al-Ashraf*, 1:157, and many other reference books of Hadith:

Prophet Muhammad (S) said: “The likeness of my household (Ahl ul-Bayt) among you (i.e. Muslims) is of the Noah’s Ark; anyone who embarks upon that ark will certainly be saved, but anyone who leaves it will certainly drown. Also, the like of my household among you is the Gate of Forgiveness for the Israelites, anyone who enters from that gate will be forgiven.”

². See Ibn Shahrashub’s *Manaqib Ali (i) Abu-Talib*, 1:167.

³. See al-Tirmidhi’s *al-Sahih*, 2:308

⁴. See al-Yaqubi’s *al-Tarikh*, 2: 91-2.

⁵. See al-Ghadir, 2:34

⁶. See al-Wahidi’s *Asbab al-Nuzul*, al-Razi’s *al-Tafsir*, and many other books of Tafsir (exegesis of the Holy Quran)

⁷. See Ahmad ibn Hanbal’s *al-Musnad*, 4:281

⁸. See al-Khatib al-Baghdadi’s *Tarikh Baghdad*, 8:29, al-Suyuti’s *al-Durr al-Manthur*, and many other reference books of history and Hadith.

⁹. See Ahmad Husayn Yaqub’s *The Conception of the Sahaba’s Ultimate Decency and the Political Authority in Islam*; translated by Badr Shahin, Published by Ansariyan Publications – Qum, 1998.

¹⁰. See al-Sawaiq al-Muhriqah, 124.

- [11.](#) Abu-Bakr, Umar ibn al-Khattab, Abu-Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah were the major individuals whom the Prophet (S) asked insistently to join that military campaign. Yet, they later on became the leaders of the rebellion.
- [12.](#) See al-Muttaqi al-Hindi's Kanz al-Ummal; 5:312, Ibn Saad's al-Tabaqat; 4:46, and Tarikh al-Khamis, 2:46.
- [13.](#) Minbar is a small set of steps in a mosque from which speeches are delivered.
- [14.](#) See al-Sirah al-Halabiyyah, 3:34.
- [15.](#) This famous incident was recorded in the most reliable books of Hadith of the Sunnis, such as al-Bukhari's al-Sahih, Muslim's al-Sahih, al-Tabarani's al-Mujam al-Awsat, and many others.
- [16.](#) Referring to Prophet Muhammad (S), Almighty Allah says (53:2-5):

مَا ضَلَّ صَاحِبُكُمْ وَمَا غَوَىٰ وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَىٰ

“Your companion does not err, nor does he go astray; nor does he speak out of desire. It is naught but revelation that is revealed.”

- [17.](#) See Ibn Abil-Hadid's Sharh(u) Nahj al-Balaghah; 3:114.
- [18.](#) Though all reference books of Hadith have recorded this incident, most of them refused to mention the name of the one who said that calamitous statement openly.
- [19.](#) See Ahmad ibn Hanbal's al-Musnad; 1:355
- [20.](#) See Baqir Sharif al-Qarashi's Hayat al-Imam al-Hasan; 1:113.
- [21.](#) See al-Khwarizmi's al-Manaqib; 1:114
- [22.](#) See al-Muttaqi al-Hindi's Kanz al-Ummal; 2:55, Ibn Saad's al-Tabaqat, and many other reference books of history.
- [23.](#) See al-Muttaqi al-Hindi's Kanz al-Ummal; 4:54.
- [24.](#) See Tarikh al-Khamis; 2:192