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Sermon 68: I had intended to send ...

When Amir al-mu'minin appointed Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr[1] *Governor of Egypt and he was overpowered and killed, Amir al-mu'minin said:*

(ومن كلام له (عليه السلام

لمّا قلد محمّد بن أبي بكر مصر فملكت عليه وقتل

I had intended to send Hashim ibn 'Utbah to Egypt and had I done so he would not have made way for the opponents nor given them time (to get hold of him). This is without reproach to Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr as I loved him and had brought him up.

وَقَدْ أَرَدْتُ تَوْلِيَةَ مِصْرَ هَاشِمَ بْنَ عُتْبَةَ، وَلَوْ وَلَّيْتُهُ إِيَّاهَا لَما خَلَّى لَهُمُ الْعَرْصَةَ، وَلاَ أَنْهَزَهُمُ الْفُرْصَةَ، بَلاَ ذَمٍّ لِمحَمَّدِ بْنِ أَبي بَكْر، فَلَقَدْ كَانَ إِلَيَّ حَبِيباً، وَكَانَ لي رَبِيباً.

Alternative Sources for Sermon 68

(1) Al-Thaqafi, *al-Gharat*;

(2) al-Tabari, *Ta'rikh,* VI, 63 (events of the year 36);

(3) al-Baladhuri, *Ansab,* II, 404.

1. Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr's mother was Asma' bint `Umays whom Amir al-mu'minin married after Abu Bakr's death. Consequently, Muhammad lived and was brought up under the care of Amir al-mu'minin and he imbibed his ways and manners. Amir al-mu'minin too loved him much and regarded him as his son, and used to say "Muhammad is my son from Abu Bakr." He was born in the journey for the last hajj (of the Prophet) and died as martyr in 38 A.H. at the age of twenty eight years.

On accession to the Caliphate Amir al-mu'minin had selected Qays ibn Sa`d ibn `Ubadah as the Governor of Egypt but circumstances so developed that he had to be removed and Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr had to be sent there as Governor. The policy of Qays there was that he did not want to take any serious step against the `Uthmani group but Muhammad's view was different. After the lapse of a month he sent them word that in case they did not obey him their existence there would be impossible. Upon this these people organised a front against him, and engaged themselves in secret wire-pullings, but became conspicuous soon. After arbitration they started creating trouble with the slogan of vengeance. This polluted the atmosphere of Egypt. When Amir al-mu'minin came to know these deteriorated conditions he gave the governorship of Egypt to Malik ibn al-Harith al-Ashtar and sent him off there in order that he might suppress insurgent elements and save the administration from getting worse, but he could not escape the evil designs of the Umayyads and was killed by poison while on his way. Thus, the governorship of Egypt remained with Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr.
On this side, the performance of `Amr ibn al-`As in connection with the Arbitration made Mu`awiyah recall his own promise. Consequently, he gave him six thousand combatants and set him off to attack Egypt. When Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr knew of the advancing force of the enemy he wrote to Amir al-mu'minin for help. Amir al-mu'minin replied that he would be soon collecting help for him but in the meantime he should mobilise his own forces. Muhammad mobilised four thousand men under his banner and divided them into two parts. He kept one part with himself and on the other he placed Kinanah ibn Bishr at-Tujibi in command and ordered him to go forward to check the enemy's advance. When they settled down in camp before the enemy various parties of the enemy began attacking them but they faced them with courage and valour. At last Mu`awiyah ibn Hudayj as-Sakuni al-Kindi made an assault with full force. These people did not turn away from the enemy's swords but faced them steadfastly and fell as martyrs in action. The effect of this defeat was that Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr's men got frightened and deserted him. Finding himself alone Muhammad fled away and sought refuge in a deserted place. The enemy however got news about him through someone and traced him out when he was dying with thirst. Muhammad asked for water but these cruel men refused and butchered him thirsty. Then they put his body in the belly of a dead ass and burnt it. Malik ibn Ka`b al-Arhabi had already left Kufah with two thousand men but before he could reach Egypt it had been occupied by the enemy.

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