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The Reaction of the Family and the Companions of Muhammad Mustafa to his Death

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THE MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY OF MUHAMMAD MUSTAFA were overwhelmed by a tidal wave of sorrow at his death. His daughter, Fatima Zahra, was the “Light of his eyes.” But now those eyes were closed forever; they would not greet her and her children anymore. Nor would she hear from his lips the voice of love and kindness bid her welcome home; they were silenced forever. For her, he was a father, a “mother,” a guardian angel, and Mercy of God upon earth. For her, he was the hub of existence itself.

For Muhammad, his daughter, Fatima, and her little family, were the epitome of all his love, his affections, his joys and his happiness. As long as he lived, he had treated her with the greatest respect, and had shown her the deference which is due only to a sovereign. But for him, she was far more than a sovereign. Of all the people he knew, she was the first and the foremost in his heart.

Now Fatima had only one wish – to meet her father in heaven. She realized this wish early – only ten weeks after his death. Her death left her husband and her children to endure not one but two sorrows.

Hasan and Husain were the grandchildren of Muhammad Mustafa. They were his darlings. They sat in his lap when he was in the mosque or at home, and they rode his shoulders when he walked abroad. His lap was their “haven,” and his shoulders were their “carriers.” Now the “haven” and the “carriers” were lost to them forever. Their eyes, misty with tears, searched vainly for their loving grandfather everywhere.

His pulpit and the alcove of his mosque were now empty, and its somber walls themselves appeared to be in mourning. His mosque was like a shell from which the pearl had gone. The wails and the moans of the two little children bounced back from the walls of his mosque in mournful echoes.

Both children were haunted by a strange, unfamiliar and uncomfortable feeling, and they were gripped

by vague and nameless fears. They were too young to define these feelings or to understand these fears; but even they sensed the new feeling of insecurity which assailed them. For the first time in the few years they had lived, they were preyed by insecurity. Their grandfather was, for them, the sign and symbol of security, and now he was gone.

For Ali, the death of Muhammad was the greatest disaster in life. His world had revolved around Muhammad ever since he was born. Muhammad was the center and the circumference of his world. From that world, Muhammad had disappeared, and now Ali did not know how to grapple with it. He felt cut loose from his moorings, and life suddenly appeared to have lost its raison d'être for him.

Ali was the genius of Islam. His character was sublime and his personality incomparable. But he had depended upon Muhammad to act as a catalyst for his genius and personality to burgeon. He had all the potentialities that made him indispensable for Islam but it had taken the magic touch of Muhammad to make them rise to the surface.

And now when he was 32 years old, when he was in the prime of his life, when he was at the zenith of his powers, and when he could give to Islam and to the rest of the world, far more than he had already given, Muhammad died. Muhammad's death was a setback to Ali from which he never recovered the rest of his life.

The reaction of Fatima Zahra, Hasan, Husain and Ali, to the death of Muhammad, was normal and predictable. All five of them made up a family circle, united in their love for, and obedience to God. Muhammad was the "axis" of this little circle.

With his death, the "circle" was broken, leaving the other members of the family totally disoriented. Perhaps they did not know at the moment, though they were going to know very soon, that Muhammad's death only foreshadowed a whole series of new shocks and sorrows for them.

Thenceforth, they were going to be in a state of "siege" by sorrow. Each new day was to bring a new shock, and a new sorrow. But through this welter of disaster and tragedy, their faith in the mercy of God, and in the ultimate triumph of justice and truth, remained rocklike, and constant. Their hope of winning the pleasure of God, kept growing ever stronger with each new wave of shock and sorrow.

To withstand the shock of the death of Muhammad, the members of his family, sought and found succor from the One Source that never fails – the unbounded Mercy of God.

The Death of Muhammad Mustafa and his Umma

The Muslims owed Muhammad a dual allegiance; first in his capacity as the Messenger of God; and second, in his capacity as the Sovereign of Arabia. None could withhold his loyalty and obedience to him in either capacity, and still remain a Muslim.

In his character as the Messenger of God, Muhammad had given them deliverance from the indignity of worshipping idols, and he had taught them to worship One God; and in his character as the Sovereign of Arabia, he had given them deliverance from political chaos and ruinous wars. He had given them law and order.

He had also given them deliverance from their moral anarchy, economic poverty and cultural barrenness. He had made them rich and civilized, and he had made them an imperial nation. In short, he was their greatest benefactor. The least they could do for him was to give him their loyalty and their love. Loyalty to and love for Muhammad was going to be the touchstone of the faith of the Muslims in his mission – in Islam!

There were those Muslims, most of them from the rank-and-file, who gave Muhammad their love and no one would deny that their love was genuine. When he died, they were stricken with grief; they were heart-broken, and to them the mosque, the city and the whole world looked desolate.

But the reaction of the principal companions of Muhammad to his death, was different.

When Muhammad died, his principal companions did not react to his death. If his death made them sad, they didn't show any sadness. One thing they didn't do, was to offer their condolences to the members of the bereaved family. No one among them came and said to them: “O you members of the House of Muhammad, we share with you your sorrow at his death. His death is a loss not only to you but to all of us.”

At a time when commiseration is expected even from strangers, in fact, even from enemies, it's incredible but true that the Companions of Muhammad, the Messenger of God, withheld it from his own family. They left his family to mourn his death alone.

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