

DEFENCE AGAINST DISASTER

IN ACCURATELY DETERMINING
THE POSITIONS OF THE COMPANIONS
AFTER THE DEATH OF THE PROPHET
BY QADI ABU BAKR IBN AL-'ARABI
WITH COMMENTARY BY
MUHIBB AD-DIN AL-KHATIB

*In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate
And may Allah bless Muhammad and his family.*

SALIH IBN 'Abd al-Malik ibn Sa'id said that he read this to Imam Muhammad Abu Bakr ibn al-'Arabi, may Allah be pleased with him:

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds.

Imam Ibn al-'Arabi began the first section of his book, *Defence against Disaster*, with this praise and this exact supplication. We have used it to begin this section from the second part (from pp. 98-193 of the Algerian edition, 1347). We decided to make this section, which is devoted to the accurate assessment of the status of the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, after the death of the Prophet ﷺ, a book on its own, as we indicated in the preface of this book.

O Allah! Bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad as You

blessed Ibrahim and the family of Ibrahim! Grant *baraka* to Muhammad and the family of Muhammad as You granted *baraka* to Ibrahim and the family of Ibrahim. You are the Praiseworthy, Glorious.

O Allah, we ask You to grant us benefit, just as we ask You to repel affliction from us. We ask You for protection and we ask You to give us mercy.

O our Lord, do not lead our hearts astray after You have guided us. Make the actions You have taught us easy for us to perform. Grant us thankfulness for what You have given us. Make a path clear to us that will lead us to You. Open a door between us and You by which we can come to You. You possess the keys of the heavens and the earth. You have power over all things. .

THE BACK-BREAKING DISASTER

ALLAH TOOK His Prophet ﷺ back to Himself, having perfected the *Adeen* for him and us and completed His blessings on him as Allah says, “*Today I have perfected your deen for you and completed My blessing upon you and am pleased with Islam as a deen for you.*” (5:3)

Nothing in this world is perfected but that imperfection then comes to it, since perfection is only that which is meant for Allah alone: righteous actions and the Next World, which is the perfect Abode of Allah.

Anas said, “We had not shaken the earth of the grave of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ from our hands before we doubted our own hearts.”

The Algerian edition has “our selves”. “Our hearts” is related in the *hadith* in several variants. Ibn Kathir indicated this in *al-Bidaya wa an-Nihaya*.¹ One of them is reported by Ahmad ibn Hanbal from Anas: “On the day when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ came to Madina, all of it was illuminated. On the day he died, all of it was darkened.” He said, “We had not shaken the earth of the grave of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ from our hands before we began to doubt our own hearts.” At-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah related this. At-Tirmidhi said, “This is a *hadith* which is *sahih gharib*.” Ibn Kathir said, “Its *isnad* is sound according to the preconditions of the *Sahih* collections.

The situation became unsettled and then Allah restored Islam by the

oath of allegiance given to Abu Bakr. The death of the Prophet ﷺ was the Back-breaking Disaster and the Terrible Calamity.

‘Ali kept himself out of sight in his home with Fatima.

Because Fatima was angry with Abu Bakr when he insisted on acting by the words of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: “We do not leave any legal inheritance. All we leave is *sadaqa*.” The details of this will be dealt with later. Fatima lived for six months after the Prophet’s death secluded in her house and ‘Ali remained with her.

Ibn Kathir said in *al-Bidaya wa an-Nihaya*:² “When she became ill, Abu Bakr as-Siddiq went to her to try to make amends with her and she accepted his overture.” Al-Bayhaqi related that by means of Isma’il ibn Abi Khalid from ash-Sha’bi. Then he said that is a good *mursal hadith* with a sound *isnad*. Al-Bukhari reported the *hadith* of ‘Urwa via ‘A’isha: “When Fatima died, her husband ‘Ali buried her at night without informing Abu Bakr about it and prayed over her. During Fatima’s lifetime, ‘Ali had a good standing among the people. When she died, ‘Ali saw disapproval in people’s faces and made peace with Abu Bakr and gave him his allegiance...” This was the second allegiance which ‘Ali gave after his first *bay’a* in the hall of the Banu Sa’ida. Ibn Kathir adds in *al-Bidaya wa an-Nihaya*³ that ‘Ali did not cease to perform his prayers behind Abu Bakr. He went out with Abu Bakr when he marched out to Dhu al-Qassa and unsheathed his sword to fight the apostates in the Ridda War.

It is possible that when he said that ‘Ali kept out of sight the author meant what he and az-Zubayr did just before people were meeting in the hall of the Banu Sa’ida. ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab indicated that in the great speech which he made in Madina at the end of Dhu al-Hijja after the last *hajj* which he performed.⁴

In fact, there is confusion in the *riwayats* about the position of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib during the caliphate of Abu Bakr as-Siddiq. Many intrigues played their part. Lies and fabrications have been woven around this whose

The Back-Breaking Disaster

intention is to unsettle confidence in Islam in general and the Companions in particular. They display fear and enthusiasm concerning positions and property, even when this is in opposition to the Shari'a. In what follows, we will present the soundest of the *riwayat*s regarding 'Ali's position. Then we also mention some of the *riwayat*s which say that he refused to take the oath of allegiance until Fatima, the daughter of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, had died. We will make the forgeries and lies clear.

Muhammad 'Izza Daruza said in *The Arab Race*:⁵ "At-Tabari related from 'Abdullah ibn Sa'id az-Zuhri from his uncle, Ya'qub from Sa'id ibn 'Umar from al-Walid ibn 'Abdullah from al-Walid ibn Jami' az-Zuhri that 'Amr ibn Harith asked Sa'id ibn Zayd, 'When was Abu Bakr given the oath of allegiance? Were you present at the death of the Prophet ﷺ?' He replied, 'Yes. On the day that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ died, they did not want for even part of the day to pass without meeting together.' 'Amr asked, 'Did anyone oppose him (Abu Bakr)?' He replied, 'No, except for those who were apostates or who would have apostatised if Allah had not delivered them from the Ansar.' He asked, 'Did any of the Muhajirun abstain?' He answered, 'No, they followed in giving him allegiance without being summoned to do so.'"

It is evident that what the speaker meant by saying what he did about the Ansar was the position taken by Sa'd ibn 'Ubadah and his helpers on the 'Day of the Verandah' and their striving for leadership. Allah saved them and made them back down and follow Abu Bakr rather than bring about division, opposition and contention. This demonstrates the strong desire of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, both the Muhajirun and the Ansar, to be very quick in settling the problem of leadership. It also shows that the Hashimites, who were among the Muhajirun, followed in giving the oath of allegiance to Abu Bakr and that none of them abstained from it.

At-Tabari related the tradition of 'Ali giving his allegiance to Abu Bakr immediately and openly when it is related with his *isnads* from Habib ibn

Abi Thabit that 'Ali was in his house when the news came to him that Abu Bakr was sitting taking the oath of allegiance. He went out in his unbuttoned shirt, without a cloak, in haste, not wanting to delay giving him allegiance. Then he sat with him, sent for his outer garment to be brought to him, put it on and stayed in the assembly.⁶

In any case, what is agreed upon, in the Shi'ite accounts and elsewhere, is that 'Ali and the Banu Hashim immediately offered their allegiance to Abu Bakr or, as at-Tabari related from one Shi'ite account, after some hesitation, and they gave him their assistance. This indicates a decisive proof that there was neither a clear will nor implicit bequest from the Prophet ﷺ that authority should go to 'Ali after him.

At-Tabari related the same as that with other *isnads* in his report that 'Ali and the Banu Hashim refused to pay homage to Abu Bakr as long as Fatima was alive because Fatima and al-'Abbas had come to Abu Bakr asking for their inheritance from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, which consisted of his land at Fadak and his share of Khaybar, but Abu Bakr told them, "I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say, 'We do not leave any legal inheritance. What we leave is *sadaqa*.' Muhammad's family will have provision from this money. By Allah, I will not leave anything that I saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ do. I will do the same." Fatima left him and did not speak to him until she died six months after the death of the Prophet ﷺ. 'Ali saw people turning their faces from him and neither he nor any of the Banu Hashim offered their allegiance to Abu Bakr. The story is a long one, but in the end 'Ali gave his homage to Abu Bakr, i.e. after the death of Fatima.

It is to be noted that the text of the report of at-Tabari makes the question of the inheritance the reason for 'Ali and the Banu Hashim refusing to give their allegiance to Abu Bakr. Their seeking this legacy from Abu Bakr means that they must have first recognised that he was the Caliph. This involves a contradiction which makes the story break down. If it has any basis at all, it is only possible after they had given their allegiance to Abu

The Back-Breaking Disaster

Bakr. They tried to get what they considered to be their inheritance from the Prophet ﷺ. Abu Bakr told them the *hadith* of the Prophet ﷺ which he had heard and the business stopped at this point. Anything beyond that is an addition on the part of the Shi'a and one of their intrigues because it is not possible that 'Ali, Fatima and the Banu Hashim did not confirm Abu Bakr in the *hadith* which he related because they did not argue and persist after they had heard it.

It is strange that the enemies of Islam attack Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, for denying Fatima her inheritance from Fadak and her share of Khaybar while when 'Ali himself became Caliph, he did not give any of her heirs nor any of the Banu Hashim what the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had left, precisely because of the *hadith*, "We do not leave inheritance." When Abu Bakr forbade it, he also denied his daughter 'A'isha this inheritance.

There are other mixed and false reports about 'Ali and the Banu Hashim rejecting the act of allegiance to Abu Bakr. We have ignored them since they are discredited. There are many which confirm that 'Ali hastened to offer his allegiance to Abu Bakr and to help him in the affairs of the caliphate. He, of all people, knew best how excellent Abu Bakr was.

As for 'Uthman, he was silent. As for 'Umar, he spoke foolishly, saying, "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ has not died! Allah has allotted a time for him as He did for Musa!..."

This is an allusion to the words of Allah in *Surat al-Baqara*,⁷ "When We allotted to Musa forty nights." Allah says in 7:142, "We set aside thirty nights for Musa and then completed them with ten, so the appointed time of his Lord was forty nights in all."

"...The Messenger of Allah ﷺ will return and cut off the hands and feet of some people!"

The *Musnad* of Ibn Hanbal⁸ has the *hadith* of Anas ibn Malik about the day of the death of the Prophet ﷺ: "Then the curtain was let down and he died on that day. 'Umar stood up and said, 'The Messenger of Allah ﷺ has not died, but his Lord has sent for him as He sent for Musa. He remained away from his people for forty days. I expect the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to live until he cuts off the hands and tongues of some men among the hypocrites who claim that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has died!'"

In the 'Virtues of the Companions' in the *Sahih* of al-Bukhari⁹ it is reported that 'A'isha said, "'Umar got up saying, 'By Allah, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has not died! By Allah, I can only assume that Allah will bring him to life and he will cut off the hands and feet of some men!'"

Ibn Kathir quoted in *al-Bidaya wa an-Nihaya*¹⁰ what al-Bayhaqi related from Ibn Lahi'a from Abu al-Aswad from 'Urwa ibn az-Zubayr. He said, "'Umar ibn al-Khattab stood up and addressed the people and threatened those who said, 'He has died' with death and having their hands cut off. He said, 'The Messenger of Allah ﷺ has fainted. When he comes to, he will have people killed and their hands cut off.'" *Al-Bidaya wa an-Nihaya* contains an excerpt from a *hadith* of 'A'isha¹¹ where she mentions the time when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ died, "'Umar and al-Mughira ibn Shu'ba came and asked permission to enter. She gave them permission. Then they got up. When he was near the door, al-Mughira said, "'Umar, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is dead.' 'Umar said, 'You lie! You are a man with whom sedition has been mixed. The Messenger of Allah will not die until Allah has eradicated the hypocrites!'"

The meaning of the verb *ahjara* is to talk irrationally, to mix words and to talk a lot. It arose from the panic which 'Umar felt because of this terrible event. He almost could not believe it.

Al-'Abbas and 'Ali were concerned with their position during the illness of the Prophet ﷺ. Al-'Abbas said to 'Ali, "I can recognise imminent death in the faces of the Banu 'Abd al-Muttalib. Let us ask

The Back-Breaking Disaster

the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Then we will know if this business is ours or not.”

‘Ali answered, “By Allah, if we ask the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and he denies it to us, the people will never give it to us after him. By Allah, I will not ask the Messenger of Allah ﷺ for it.”¹²

Al-‘Abbas and ‘Ali were concerned about their inheritance of the property the Prophet left from Tabuk, the Banu an-Nadir and Khaybar.”

Details of this will come in the discussion about the hadith of ‘We do not leave legal inheritance. What we leave is *sadaqa*.’

The Ansar were in a state of great agitation, not knowing whether to seek authority for themselves or share it with the Muhajirun.

A meeting took place in the hall of the Banu Sa‘ida. Sa‘d ibn ‘Ubada was among them. They thought that the leadership should be given to them because it was their land and they were the Ansar (Helpers) of Allah and the squadron of Islam. Quraysh were a troop who had emigrated little by little. Authority should not be denied to the Ansar. One of their speakers (al-Hubab ibn al-Mundhir) said, “I am the rubbing-post and the fruitful propped-up palm. Let there be a ruler from us and a ruler from you.” In contrast to that, a man of the Ansar, Bashir ibn Sa‘id al-Makhzumi, the father of an-Nu‘man ibn Bashir, went before ‘Umar in offering allegiance to Abu Bakr. Before that, there were two righteous men in the hall, ‘Uwaym ibn Sa‘ida al-Awsi and Ma’n ibn ‘Adi, the ally of the Ansar. They did not like this contention on the part of the Ansar. They left, thinking that the Muhajirun would finish the business without turning to anyone. But the wisdom of Abu Bakr and the light of faith which filled his heart was a match for the situation and he was more than adequate in dealing with the community at the time of its greatest calamity.

Those who had gone out on the expedition with Usama ibn Zayd stopped at al-Jurf.

There were seven hundred in this army. The commander was Usama ibn Zayd. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ had ordered them to travel to the area of al-Balqa' (east Jordan) where Zayd ibn Haritha, Ja'far ibn Abi Talib and Ibn Rawaha had been killed. When the Prophet ﷺ died, many of the Companions, including 'Umar, suggested that Abu Bakr should not send this army out because of the disturbance which had arisen among the people, especially among the tribes. In *al-Bidaya wa an-Nihaya*¹³ Ibn Kathir quoted the *hadith* which al-Qasim and 'Amra reported from 'A'isha. She said, "When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ died, the Arabs apostatised and drank in hypocrisy. By Allah, something happened to me and if it had come down on the firm mountains, they would have broken. The Companions of Muhammad ﷺ became like agitated goats put out to grass on a stormy night in the wilderness. By Allah, they did not disagree about a single dot without my father nullifying their prattle, their doubts and their conclusions."

DEFENCE

Allah helped Islam and the people and caused their grief to pass just as clouds pass. The promise of Allah was fulfilled when Allah took the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to Himself...

Allah takes people to Himself when they die.

...and established His *deen* in its full perfection. Islam was afflicted by the calamity which befell it, and Allah helped it through Abu Bakr as-Siddiq, may Allah be pleased with him.

Allah helped both Islam and the people by Abu Bakr.

When the Prophet ﷺ died, Abu Bakr was away at his property at as-Sunh.

The Back-Breaking Disaster

In *al-Bidaya wa an-Nihaya*¹⁴, Ibn Kathir reports that Abu Bakr led the Muslims in the morning prayer. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ had fainted due to the pain caused by his illness shortly before this, but during the prayer the curtain of the room was raised and he looked at the Muslims who were lined up for the prayer behind Abu Bakr. He liked that and smiled until the people were so moved that they almost left the prayer because of their joy at seeing him. Abu Bakr wanted to go back into the rows. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ indicated to them to continue as they were and the curtain came down again. When Abu Bakr finished the prayer, he came to the Prophet and said to 'A'isha, "I cannot see the Messenger of Allah ﷺ without feeling his pain." That day was the turn of Bint Kharija, one of Abu Bakr's two wives, who lived in Sunh in the eastern part of Madina. He rode to his house there on his horse. The Prophet ﷺ died during the heat of the mid-morning. Salim ibn 'Ubayd went after Abu Bakr and informed him that the Prophet ﷺ had died and Abu Bakr came as soon as he heard. He did what the author mentioned. Sunh consisted of some houses of the Banu al-Harith ibn al-Khazraj in the upper part of Madina about one mile from the Prophet's mosque.

He came to the room of his daughter 'A'isha, in which the Prophet ﷺ had died and uncovered his face. He bent over him and kissed him. He said, "May my father and mother be your ransom, Messenger of Allah! You were good in life and in death! By Allah, Allah will not give you two deaths. As for the death which Allah has written for you, you have come to it."

Then he went out to the mosque where the people were gathered and 'Umar had already begun to speak foolishly as has already been stated. Abu Bakr ascended the *minbar*. He praised Allah and then said, "O people! Whoever worships Muhammad, he is dead. Whoever worships Allah, Allah is the Living who does not die." Then he recited, "*Muhammad is only a Messenger. Messengers have passed away before him. If*