



Did Abu Bakr Really Lead The Salat?

A Facts Check

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In this book, the author is thoroughly investigating the Sunni reports on the alleged leadership of salat by Abu Bakr during the fatal illness of the Messenger. He will be analyzing the bewildering contradictions between the so-called “sahih” Sunni ahadith on the claim; and he will be questioning the historicity of the whole episode. In particular, he will be examining the correct implications of leadership in salat, according to orthodox Sunni Islam. Does it indicate superiority? Does it confer the khilafah? Do our brothers from the Ahl al-Sunnah really have any case, even if the tale about Abu Bakr had been true?

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Dedication

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*This research is dedicated to the master
of all prophets, messengers and Imams,
Muhammad b. ‘Abd Allah,
sallallahu ‘alaihi wa alihi*

Acknowledgments

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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Preface

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Let us imagine that an authentic hadith of the Prophet, sallallahu ‘alaihi wa alihi, reads:

أبو بكر خليفتي في كل مؤمن من بعدي

Abu Bakr is my khalifah over every believer after me.

How would the Ahl al-Sunnah have interpreted it?

What about this one:

أبو بكر ولي كل مؤمن بعدي

Abu Bakr is the wali of every believer after me.

Or this:

أبو بكر أخي وصاحبي ووارثي ووزير

Abu Bakr is my brother, and my companion, and my inheritor and my wazir.

We have absolutely no doubt that the Ahl al-Sunnah would cite these statements as unassailable proofs of Abu Bakr’s legitimate khilafah over the Ummah immediately after the Messenger of Allah. However, as we have discussed in our second book, On the Khilafah of ‘Ali over Abu Bakr, the above ahadith and similar others actually exist with reliable chains in the Sunni books – except that instead of “Abu Bakr”, it is the name of Amir al-Muminin ‘Ali b. Abi Talib, ‘alaihi al-salam, that is mentioned in them. This is why the Ahl al-Sunnah do not like, and always struggle against, them.

When we quote the actual ahadith with the name of ‘Ali to our Sunni brothers, they usually instinctively respond with a tired counterargument: the Prophet deputized Abu Bakr to lead the salat during his fatal illness. To them, that, in a weird way, is a stronger, and more explicit, proof of khilafah than any of the ahadith about ‘Ali! Apparently, the world is indeed a very strange place. When the Messenger of Allah said “ ‘Ali is my khalifah over every believer after me”, Sunnis think he was NOT naming ‘Ali as his khalifah! But, when he allegedly appointed Abu Bakr to lead salat as he had similarly appointed many others before him – to our brothers from the Ahl al-Sunnah - he was somehow naming him his khalifah!

In this book, we are thoroughly investigating the Sunni reports on the alleged leadership of salat by Abu Bakr during the fatal illness of the Messenger. We will be analyzing the bewildering contradictions between the so-called “sahih” Sunni ahadith on the claim; and we will be questioning the historicity of the whole episode. In particular, we will be examining the correct implications of leadership in salat, according to orthodox Sunni Islam. Does it indicate superiority? Does it confer the khilafah? Do our brothers from the Ahl al-Sunnah really have any case, even if the tale about Abu Bakr had been true?

We seek Allah’s Help in this effort, and we implore Him to forgive us all our mistakes in it, and to accept it as a worthy act of ‘ibadah. And may Allah send His salawat and barakat upon our master, Muhammad b. ‘Abd Allah, and upon his purified offspring.

1. An Exclusive “Merit”?

Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 H) says:

وكان إذا سافر عن المدينة استخلف من يستخلفه يصلي بالمسلمين كما استخلف ابن أم مكتوم تارة وعليها تارة في الصلاة واستخلف غيرها تارة
فأما في حال غيبته ومرضه فلم يستخلف إلا أبا بكر لا عليا ولا غيره واستخلافه للصديق في الصلاة متواتر ثابت في الصحاح والسنن والمسند من غير وجه

Whenever he (the Prophet) left Madinah on a journey, he would appoint a khalifah (to govern the city on his behalf). Whoever he appointed as a khalifah would lead the Muslims in salat, as he once made Ibn Umm Maktum a khalifah, and also ‘Ali once, to lead the salat. He equally appointed others apart from them both as khalifahs at other times.

However, during his absence or illness, he never appointed anyone as khalifah except Abu Bakr – neither ‘Ali nor anyone else. And his appointment of al-Siddiq as khalifah to lead salat is mutawatir, and authentically narrated in the Sahih books, and the Sunan books, and the Musnad books through many routes.¹

Basically, our Shaykh confesses to the following points:

1. Abu Bakr was NOT the first or the only to lead Muslims in salat in the mosque of the Prophet, sallallahu ‘alaihi wa alihi, in Madinah.

2. Amir al-Muminin ‘Ali, ‘alaihi al-salam, and Ibn Umm Maktum, radiyallahu ‘anhu, were among those Sahabah, radiyallahu ‘anhum, who also led the Muslims in salat in that mosque on the order of the Messenger of Allah.

But, our Shaykh then proceeds to make some garbled remarks:

i. Abu Bakr was the only one ever deputized to lead salat in the mosque of the Prophet during his absence from Madinah.

ii. He was also the only one ever commanded to lead the salat in that mosque during the Messenger’s illness.

Somehow, Ibn Taymiyyah thinks that these were “exclusive merits” of his first khalifah, Abu Bakr. But, when the Messenger of Allah appointed Imam ‘Ali, Ibn Umm Maktum and others as khalifahs over his Madinah, was he then not also “absent” from the city?! The Shaykh himself answers:

وكان إذا سافر عن المدينة استخلف من يستخلفه يصلي بالمسلمين

Whenever he (the Prophet) LEFT MADINAH on a journey, he would appoint a khalifah (to govern the city on his behalf). Whoever he appointed as a khalifah would lead the Muslims in Salat

With this admission, one wonders: on what basis then was Abu Bakr the only one ever appointed khalifah to lead salat in Madinah during the Prophet’s absence? How on earth did that submission of Ibn Taymiyyah even ever make any sense to him at all?! Why do these people suddenly lose their simple logic whenever discussions involving Amir al-Muminin ‘Ali b. Abi Talib come up?

As for our Shaykh’s insistence on the “uniqueness” of Abu Bakr’s khalifah in salat during the Prophet’s illness, then, there are two issues. One,

as we will demonstrate in this book, there is NO reliable proof of it - to begin with! All that our Sunni brothers can muster together are nothing but a set of severely contradictory riwayat which only muddle up the entire picture. Such kinds of irreconcilable reports are never accepted as valid testimonies. Two, even if it is agreed, for the sake of argument, that Abu Bakr ever led the salat on the order of the Prophet, then there is very little “merit” in it for him, if any at all. He then would have been a khalifah in salat only, which was the weakest form of khilafah. He would have had no authority whatsoever to give commands to the Muslim soldiers, or to administer the Muslim society, or to pass judgments in disputes. Basically, he had no administrative, military or judicial authority in his alleged khilafah. By contrast, when Amir al-Muminin was made the khalifah of Madinah by the Messenger during the Battle of Tabuk, the former had full authority to lead Muslims in salat in the Prophet’s mosque, command the Muslim armed forces stationed with him in the city, administer the affairs of its inhabitants and give judgments in any disputes that arose among them! How can anyone rationally consider the largely empty khilafah of Abu Bakr as superior to that of ‘Ali? How do these people reason?

The issue of Abu Bakr’s alleged appointment as prayer-leader is usually raised by our brothers from the Ahl al-Sunnah in debates over khilafah. Their logic always is – since the Prophet deputized Abu Bakr to lead the salat in his mosque, then he was automatically declaring the latter, implicitly, as his khalifah after his death. However, even Ibn Taymiyyah is unable to completely ignore the fallacy of this mainstream Sunni premise:

ليس كل من يصلح للاستخلاف في الحياة على بعض الأمة يصلح إن يستخلف بعد الموت فإن النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم استخلف في حياته غير واحد و منهم من لا يصلح للخلافة بعد موته

Not all who are qualified to be appointed khalifahs during the lifetime (of the Muslim ruler) over part of the Ummah are equally qualified to be appointed as khalifahs after the death (of the ruler). The Prophet, peace be upon him, appointed during his lifetime many people as khalifahs, and among them were those who were not qualified for the khilafah after his death.²

Notes

1. Abu al-‘Abbas Ahmad b. ‘Abd al-Halim b. Taymiyyah al-Harrani, Minhaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah (Muasassat Qurtubah; 1st edition, 1406 H) [annotator: Dr. Muhammad Rashad Salim], vol. 8, p. 558

2. Abu al-‘Abbas Ahmad b. ‘Abd al-Halim b. Taymiyyah al-Harrani, Minhaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah (Muasassat Qurtubah; 1st edition, 1406 H) [annotator: Dr. Muhammad Rashad Salim], vol. 7, p. 339

2. A Game of Contradictions (Part 1)

There actually is no valid Sunni proof to establish that Abu Bakr was ever deputized by the Messenger, sallallahu ‘alaihi wa alihi, as prayer-leader during the latter’s fatal or other illness. The reports about Abu Bakr’s alleged appointment were narrated mainly by both Umm al-Muminin ‘Aishah and Anas. Most of the reports on the matter trace directly to them both, and to ‘Aishah in particular. There were other Sahabah – such as Ibn Mas’ud, Ibn ‘Abbas, Ibn ‘Umar, Abu Musa al-Ash’ari, Buraydah, Salim b. ‘Ubayd, and Ibn Zam’a. However, their reports were mostly carbon copies of the severely contradictory riwayat of both ‘Aishah and Anas. In this chapter, we will be dissecting primarily the narrations of ‘Aishah and Anas – and by extension, those of all the others too. We will be exposing their extreme weakness as valid proofs in the issue at hand.

Imam Muslim (d. 261 H) has compiled many of these reports under the chapter: “The Imam is authorized to appoint someone as khalifah who will lead the people in salat when there is a valid reason for it, for example illness, or journey or others. And whoever performs salat behind a sitting Imam who is unable to stand should do so standing if he can. And there is an abrogation of performing salat sitting behind a sitting Imam for whoever is able to stand.” So, we will be examining the landmark reports in it in this investigative research.

Exhibit A

Muslim records:

حدثنا محمد بن المثنى وهارون بن عبد الله قالوا حدثنا عبد الصمد قال سمعت أبي يحدث قال حدثنا عبدالعزيز عن أنس قال لم يخرج إلينا نبي الله صلى الله عليه و سلم ثلاثا فأقيمت الصلاة فذهب أبو بكر يتقدم فقال نبي الله صلى الله عليه و سلم بالحجاب فرفعه فلما وضع لنا وجه نبي الله صلى الله عليه و سلم ما نظرنا منظرا قط كان أعجب إلينا من وجه النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم حين وضع لنا قال فأومأ نبي الله صلى الله عليه و سلم بيده إلى أبي بكر أن يتقدم وأرخى نبي الله صلى الله عليه و سلم الحجاب فلم نقدر عليه حتى مات

Muhammad b. Al-Muthanna and Harun b. ‘Abd Allah – ‘Abd al-Samad – my father – ‘Abd al-‘Aziz – Anas:

The Prophet of Allah, peace be upon him, did not come out to us for three days. When the salat was about to start, ABU BAKR STEPPED FORWARD TO LEAD. The Prophet of Allah, peace be upon him, was near the curtain and he lifted it. When the face of the Prophet of Allah, peace be upon him, became visible to us, we had never seen anything as wonderful to us as the face of the Prophet, peace be upon him when it became visible to us. So, the Prophet of Allah, peace be upon him, gestured to Abu Bakr with his hand to lead. The Prophet of Allah, peace be upon him, then drew the curtain, and we were unable to see him until he died.¹

This report explicitly states that the Messenger of Allah was unable to lead the Sahabah in salat for a total of four days – the initial three days and

his day of death. Basically, he did not participate in salat with the Muslims in his mosque throughout the last four days of his lifetime.

Exhibit B

In another report, Anas indicated that the Messenger died on a Monday. Muslim again documents:

حدثني عمرو الناقد وحسن الحلواني وعبد بن حميد (قال عبد أخبرني وقال الآخران حدثنا يعقوب) (وهو ابن إبراهيم بن سعد) وحدثني أبي عن صالح عن ابن شهاب قال أخبرني أنس بن مالك أن أبا بكر كان يصلي لهم في وجع رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم الذي توفي فيه حتى إذا كان يوم الاثنين وهم صفوف في الصلاة كشف رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم ستر الحجر فنظر إلينا وهو قائم كأن وجهه ورقة مصحف ثم تبسم رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم ضاحكا قال فبهتتنا ونحن في الصلاة من فرج بخروج رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم ونكص أبو بكر على عقبيه ليصل الصف وظن أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم خارج للصلاة فأشار إليهم رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم بيده أن أتموا صلاتكم قال ثم دخل رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم فأرخي الستة قال فتوفي رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم من يومه ذلك

‘Amr al-Naqid, Hasan al-Halwani and ‘Abd b. Hamid – Ya’qub b. Ibrahim b. Sa’d – my father – Salih – Ibn Shihab – Anas b. Malik:

Abu Bakr led them in salat during the fatal illness of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, UNTIL IT WAS A MONDAY and they had stood in congregational rows PERFORMING salat. The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, drew aside the curtain of the room and looked at us while he was standing. His face was like the page of the mushaf. Then, the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, felt happy and smiled. And we were confounded with joy DURING THE SALAT due to the coming out of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him. Abu Bakr stepped back upon his heels to continue the salat in the congregational row, thinking that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, had come out for the salat. The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, gestured to them with his hand to “complete your salat”. Then, the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, entered and drew the curtain.

He (Anas) said: The Messenger of Allah breathed his last ON THAT VERY DAY of his.²

This hadith is interesting. Anas made it absolutely clear that they were already performing the salat (في الصلاة), in their congregational rows, before the appearance of the Prophet. Yet, the Sahabah were able, during salat, to see the Messenger of Allah draw the curtain, to view his bright face and his happy smile, to witness how Abu Bakr stepped back, to notice how the Prophet’s hand gesture to him, and to look at him returning to his room. What kind of salat was that?! Where were they really looking during the prayer? Were they even concentrating at all?

Muslim has this further riwayah as well:

وحدثني عمرو الناقد وزهير بن حرب قال حدثنا سفيان بن عيينة عن الزهري عن أنس قال آخر نظرة نظرتها إلى رسول الله عليه وسلم كشف الستارة يوم الاثنين

‘Amr al-Naqid and Zuhayr b. Harb – Sufyan b. ‘Uyaynah – al-Zuhri – Anas:

The last glance which we had of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, was when he drew the curtain aside ON MONDAY.³

Therefore, the Prophet did not participate in congregational salat on Monday, the day of his death. He also did not pray in his mosque throughout the three days before that. That means that he stopped leading his Sahabah on Thursday, most probably in its afternoon or evening. So, on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, he did not come out to his followers at all. On Monday, the day he died, he showed himself to them but did not join them in the salat. The direct implication of all this is that his last ever salat with his Sahabah was offered on Thursday.

Al-Hafiz Ibn Kathir (d. 774 H) agrees with our conclusions:

قلنا فعلى هذا يكون آخر صلاة صلاها معهم الظهر كما جاء مصرحا به في حديث عائشة المتقدم، ويكون ذلك يوم الخميس لا يوم السبت ولا يوم الأحد كما حكاه البيهقي عن مغازي موسى بن عقبة وهو ضعيف

We say: based upon this, the last salat which he performed with them would be Zuhr, as it is explicitly reported in the foregoing hadith of ‘Aishah, and that would be on Thursday – and not on Saturday or Sunday as al-Bayhaqi quoted from Maghazi of Musa b. ‘Uqbah, and it (i.e. that submission of Musa) is da’if.⁴

Imam al-Salihi al-Shami (d. 942 H) has a backup for him:

قال الحافظ: اختلف في مدة مرضه، فالأكثر على أنه ثلاثة عشر يوما وقيل: بزيادة يوم وقيل: بنقصه. وقيل: تسعة أيام رواه البلاذري عن علي رضي الله تعالى عنه وقيل: عشرة، وفيه جزم سليمان التيمي، وكان يخرج إلى الصلاة إلا أنه انقطع ثلاثة أيام. قال في العيون: أمر رسول الله ﷺ أن يصلي بالناس فصلى بهم فيما روينا سبع عشرة صلاة

Al-Hafiz (Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani) said: “There is disagreement about the length of his (i.e. the Prophet’s fatal) illness. The majority are of the opinion that it lasted thirteen days. Some say: it was a day more. Some say: it was a day less.” Some also say: it was nine days. This opinion was narrated from ‘Ali, may Allah the Most High be pleased with him, by al-Baladhari. Some say: it lasted ten days. This was explicitly stated by Sulayman al-Tamimi.

He (the Prophet) used to come out for the salat (throughout his illness) except that he missed three days.

The author of al-‘Uyun said: “The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, ordered that he (Abu Bakr) lead the people in salat, and he led them in seventeen salats, according to what was narrated to us.”⁵

One glaring omission from Anas’ reports is that of any explicit order from the Prophet concerning Abu Bakr’s leadership of salat. As such, we do

not know – from Anas’ narrations – whether he led the Sahabah in salat from Thursday till Monday on the order of the Messenger of Allah or not. What is clear from them, however, is that the Prophet was allegedly pleased with Abu Bakr’s leadership of salat when he saw it on the Monday of his demise. This is also the best – based upon Anas’ reports above – that can be said about Abu Bakr’s leadership of salat for the three previous days: that the Prophet knew about it, and silently approved it by not objecting. Nothing more can be claimed from those texts. Of course, an approval is not always the same thing as an order.

Exhibit C

Ibn Kathir makes reference to a hadith of Umm al-Muminin ‘Aishah. This is it, as recorded by Imam Muslim:

حدثنا أحمد بن عبدالله بن يونس حدثنا زائدة حدثنا موسى بن أبي عائشة عن عبيدالله بن عبدالله قال دخلت على عائشة فقلت لها ألا تحدثيني عن مرض رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم؟ قالت بلى ثقل النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فقال أصلى الناس؟ قلنا لا وهم ينتظرونك يا رسول الله قال ضعوا لي ماء في المخضب فغسلت ثم ذهب لينوء فأغمي عليه ثم أفاق فقال أصلى الناس؟ قلنا لا وهم ينتظرونك يا رسول الله فقال ضعوا لي ماء في المخضب فغسلت ثم ذهب لينوء فأغمي عليه ثم أفاق فقال أصلى الناس؟ قلنا لا وهم ينتظرونك يا رسول الله فقال ضعوا لي ماء في المخضب فغسلت ثم ذهب لينوء فأغمي عليه ثم أفاق فقال أصلى الناس؟ قلنا لا وهم ينتظرونك يا رسول الله قالت والناس عكوف في المسجد ينتظرون رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم لصلاة العشاء الآخرة

قالت فأرسل رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم إلى أبي بكر أن يصلي بالناس فأتاه الرسول فقال إن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يأمرك أن تصلي بالناس فقال أبو بكر وكان رجلاً رقيقاً يا عمر صل بالناس قال فقال عمر أنت أحق بذلك قالت فصلى بهم أبو بكر تلك الأيام ثم إن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم وجد من نفسه خفة فخرج بين رجلين أحدهما العباس لصلاة الظهر وأبو بكر يصلي بالناس فلما رآه أبو بكر ذهب ليتأخر فأومأ إليه النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم أن لا يتأخر وقال لهما أجلساني إلى جنبه فأجلساه إلى جنب أبو بكر وكان أبو بكر يصلي وهو قائم بصلاة النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم والناس يصلون بصلاة أبي بكر والنبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قاعد

قال عبيدالله فدخلت على عبدالله بن عباس فقلت له ألا أعرض عليك ما حدثتني عائشة عن مرض رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم ؟ فقال هات فعرضت حديثها عليه فما أنكر منه شيئا غير أنه قال أسمت لك الرجل الذي كان مع العباس؟ قلت لا قال هو علي

Ahmad b. ‘Abd Allah b. Yunus – Zaidah – Musa b. Abi ‘Aishah – ‘Ubayd Allah b. ‘Abd Allah:

I visited ‘Aishah and said to her, “Would you tell me about the illness of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him?” She replied, “Yes, I will. The Prophet, peace be upon him, was seriously ill, and he asked, ‘Have the people performed salat?’ We said, ‘No, they are waiting for you (to lead them), O Messenger of Allah’. He said, ‘Put some water for me in the tub’. We complied. So, he performed ablution. Then, he was about to move with difficulty but fainted. Then, he woke up and said, ‘Have the people performed salat?’ We said, ‘No. They are waiting for you, O Messenger of Allah.’ He said, ‘Put some water for me in the tub’. We complied. So, he performed ablution. Then, he was about to move with difficulty but fainted. Then, he woke up and said, ‘Have the people performed salat?’ We said, ‘No. They are waiting for you, O Messenger of Allah.’ He said, ‘Put some water for me in the tub’. We complied. So, he performed ablution. Then, he was about to move with difficulty but fainted. Then, he woke up and said, ‘Have the people performed salat?’ We said, ‘No. They are waiting for you, O Messenger of Allah.’

She (‘Aishah) said, “The people were standing in the mosque waiting for the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, FOR THE ‘ISHA PRAYER.”

She (‘Aishah) said, “Then, the Messenger of Allah sent a messenger to Abu Bakr to tell him to lead the people in salat. When the messenger (of the Prophet) got to him, he said, ‘The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, orders you to lead the people in salat.’ So, Abu Bakr, who was a man of tenderly feelings, said, ‘O ‘Umar, lead the people in salat.’ ‘Umar replied, ‘You are more entitled to that.’

She (‘Aishah) said, ‘So, Abu Bakr led them in salat during those days. THEN, the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, felt some relief and he went out, supported by two men, one of whom was al-‘Abbas, FOR THE ZUHR PRAYER while Abu Bakr was already leading the people in salat. When Abu Bakr saw him, he began to move backwards. But the Prophet, peace be upon him, indicated to him not to move backwards. He also told them both (i.e. the two men with him), ‘Sit me beside Abu Bakr.’ Therefore, they sat him beside Abu Bakr. Abu Bakr was performing salat while standing, and he was following the salat of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and the people were following the salat of Abu Bakr. The Prophet, peace be upon him, was sitting.”

‘Ubayd Allah said: I visited ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Abbas and said to him, “Should I tell you what ‘Aishah told me concerning the illness of the Messenger of Allah?” He said, “Tell.” So, I presented her hadith to him, and he did not deny anything from it, except that he asked, “Did she tell you the name of the other man who was with al-‘Abbas?” I said, “No”. He said, “He was ‘Ali.”⁶

But, ‘Aishah has only blown up everything here! The Messenger of Allah became unable to lead salat on Thursday, according to the hadith of Anas. In this report of ‘Aishah, that was at the time of the ‘Isha prayer – and not Zuhr as al-Hafiz Ibn Kathir wants us to believe. That ‘Isha prayer, as well as the subsequent salats for a few days, were led by Abu Bakr on the explicit order of the Prophet. These are claims of ‘Aishah which are missing in the reports of Anas. But, according to Anas, the Messenger of Allah never again joined the Muslims in salat once Abu Bakr started leading.

By contrast, ‘Aishah claimed that her blessed husband actually took over the leadership of salat from her father after some “days”! In the Arabic, the word ayam is used for the days of Abu Bakr’s leadership after the initial ‘Isha. That word is plural, and refers to at least three days. This means that Abu Bakr led the salats on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Then, the Prophet of Allah intervened in his salat and took over from him on Monday. Here, Anas and ‘Aishah clash again. He submitted that the Messenger never participated in congregational salat on the Monday of his death, while she insisted that her husband did in the Zuhr prayer of that day!

Exhibit D

Yet, ‘Aishah proceeded to contradict herself too in a very fundamental way. Muslim records:

حدثنا أبو بكر بن أبي شيبة حدثنا أبو معاوية ووكيع ح وحدثنا يحيى بن يحيى (واللفظ له) قال أخبرنا أبو معاوية عن الأعمش عن إبراهيم عن الأسود عن عائشة قالت لما ثقل رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم جاء بلال يؤذنه بالصلاة فقال مرو أبا بكر فليصل بالناس قالت فقلت يا رسول الله إن أبا بكر رجل أسيء وإنه متى يقيم مقامك لا يسمع الناس فلو أمرت عمر فقال مرو أبا بكر فليصل بالناس قالت فقلت لحفصة قولي له إن أبا بكر رجل أسيء وإنه متى يقيم مقامك لا يسمع الناس فلو أمرت عمر فقالت له فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم إنكن لأنتن صواحب يوسف مرو أبا بكر فليصل بالناس قالت فأمر أبا بكر يصلي بالناس قالت فلما دخل في الصلاة وجد رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم من نفسه خفة فقام يهادي بين رجلين ورجلاه تخطان في الأرض قالت فلما دخل المسجد سمع أبو بكر حسه ذهب يتأخر فأوماً إليه رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم قم مكانك فجاء رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم حتى جلس عن يسار أبي بكر قالت فكان رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم يصلي بالناس جالسا وأبو بكر قائما يقتدي أبو بكر بصلاة النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم ويقتدي الناس بصلاة أبي بكر

Abu Bakr b. Abi Shaybah – Abu Mu’awiyah and Waki’ AND Yahya b. Yahya – Abu Mu’awiyah – al-A’mash - Ibrahim – al-Aswad – ‘Aishah:

When the Messenger of Allah became seriously ill, Bilal came to summon him to salat. He said, “Ask Abu Bakr to lead the people in salat.”

She said: I said, “O Messenger of Allah! Verily, Abu Bakr is a tenderly man. If he stood in your place, he would not be able to make the people hear anything. You should instead order ‘Umar.” He said, “Ask Abu Bakr to lead the people in salat.”

She said: “So, I told Hafsah my statement to him, ‘Abu Bakr is a tenderly man. If he stood in your place, he would not be able to make people hear anything. You should instead order ‘Umar.” She told him. On that, the Messenger of Allah said, “You are like the women who gathered around Yusuf. Ask Abu Bakr to lead the people in salat.”

She said: “Therefore, Abu Bakr was asked to lead the people in salat.” She said: “As he (Abu Bakr) began the salat, the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, felt some relief. So, He got up and moved, supported by two men, and his feet dragged on the ground.

She said: “When he entered the mosque, Abu Bakr heard his sound. He moved backwards, but the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, indicated to him to ‘stand in your place.’ The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, then came and sat on the left side of Abu Bakr.”

She said: “The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, was leading the people in salat in a sitting posture. Abu Bakr was following the salat of the Prophet, peace be upon him, in a standing posture and the people were following the salat of Abu Bakr.⁷

The contradictions between this report and Exhibit C above are tremendous:

1. According to Exhibit C, Bilal did not come to summon the Prophet for salat. In Exhibit D, he came.

2. According to Exhibit C, the Messenger of Allah attempted to join the Muslims in the mosque but fainted three times. In Exhibit D, the Prophet did not faint at all, and made no attempt whatsoever to join his followers in his mosque.

3. According to Exhibit C, the Prophet only ordered Abu Bakr to lead the salat after three failed attempts to do so by himself. In Exhibit D, he gave the order immediately Bilal came to him, without making any attempt to lead the salat by himself.

4. According to Exhibit C, the Prophet sent a specific messenger to Abu Bakr to lead the Salat. Moreover, Abu Bakr too offered the “honour” to ‘Umar, who politely turned it down. However, in Exhibit D, the Messenger of Allah did not send any specific messenger to Abu Bakr. Rather, he only gave a general order to inform Abu Bakr to lead the salat. Besides, Abu Bakr did not offer the “honour” to ‘Umar.

5. According to Exhibit C, ‘Aishah did not object to the Prophet’s order to Abu Bakr to lead the salat. However, in Exhibit D, she allegedly fiercely objected to it.

6. According to Exhibit C, after the Prophet’s order to Abu Bakr to lead the salat, he continued to do so for days, till Monday before the Messenger of Allah felt a relief and “took over” an already ongoing salat from him. In Exhibit D, the Prophet felt a relief and “took over” from Abu Bakr, on that same Thursday, only minutes after giving his order to him to lead the salat! ‘Aishah’s “frantic” objection to Abu Bakr’s appointment, especially the text

of her arguments - as narrated in Exhibit D - shows that Abu Bakr had never led Muslims in salat before then!

7. According to Exhibit C, Abu Bakr led the salat for several days before the Prophet's intervention. By contrast, in Exhibit D, Abu Bakr did not even lead a single salat before the take-over!

8. According to Exhibit C, the Messenger – on his order - was taken by two men to the side of Abu Bakr. But, in Exhibit D, the Prophet went to the left side of Abu Bakr by himself, with no support.

What exactly are we supposed to believe from all these terrible contradictions?!

Notes

1. Abu al-Husayn Muslim b. al-Hajjaj al-Qushayri al-Naysaburi, Sahih Muslim (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi) [annotator: Muhammad Fuad 'Abd al-Baqi], vol. 1, p. 315, # 419 (100)

2. Abu al-Husayn Muslim b. al-Hajjaj al-Qushayri al-Naysaburi, Sahih Muslim (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi) [annotator: Muhammad Fuad 'Abd al-Baqi], vol. 1, p. 315, # 419 (98)

3. Ibid, vol. 1, p. 315, # 419 (99)

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. 5, p. 256

5. Muhammad b. Yusuf al-Salihi al-Shami, Subul al-Huda al-Rashad fi Sirah Khayr al-'Ibad (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1414 H) [annotators: 'Adil Ahmad 'Abd al-Mawjud and 'Ali Muhammad Ma'ud], vol. 12, p. 244

6. Abu al-Husayn Muslim b. al-Hajjaj al-Qushayri al-Naysaburi, Sahih Muslim (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi) [annotator: Muhammad Fuad 'Abd al-Baqi], vol. 1, p. 311, # 418 (90)

7. Abu al-Husayn Muslim b. al-Hajjaj al-Qushayri al-Naysaburi, Sahih Muslim (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi) [annotator: Muhammad Fuad 'Abd al-Baqi], vol. 1, p. 311, # 418 (95)

3. A Game Of Contradictions (Part 2)

Suddenly, the whole drama gets out of hand.

Exhibit E

Ibn Zam'a makes things much worse with his own set of new contradictions! Imam Abu Dawud (d. 275 H) records:

حدثنا عبد الله بن مُجَّد النفيلي ثنا مُجَّد بن سلمة عن مُجَّد بن إسحاق قال حدثني الزهري قال حدثني عبد الملك بن أبي بكر بن عبد الرحمن بن الحارث بن هشام عن أبيه عن عبد الله بن زمعة قال لما استعز برسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم وأنا عنده في نفر من المسلمين دعاه بلال إلى الصلاة فقال مروا من يصلي للناس فخرج عبد الله بن زمعة فإذا عمر في الناس وكان أبو بكر غائبا فقلت يا عمر قم فصل بالناس فتقدم فكبر فلما سمع رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم صوته وكان عمر رجلا مجهرا قال " فأين أبو بكر ؟ يأبي الله ذلك والمسلمون يأبي الله ذلك والمسلمون " فبعث إلى أبي بكر فجاء بعد أن صلى عمر تلك الصلاة فصلي بالناس.

‘Abd Allah b. Muhammad al-Nufayli – Muhammad b. Salamah – Muhammad b. Ishaq – al-Zuhri – ‘Abd al-Malik b. Abi Bakr b. ‘Abd al-Rahman b. al-Harith b. Hisham – his father – ‘Abd Allah b. Zam’a:

When the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, was seriously ill, and I, with a number of Muslims, was with him, Bilal summoned him to salat. He said, “Tell SOMEONE to lead the people in salat.” So, ‘Abd Allah b. Sam’a went out (into the mosque), and found ‘Umar. Meanwhile, Abu Bakr was absent. I said, “O ‘Umar! Get up and lead the people in salat.” Therefore, he stepped forward and made the takbir (thereby starting the congregational salat). When the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, heard his voice, and ‘Umar was a man with a loud voice, he (the Prophet) said, “Where is Abu Bakr? Allah and the Muslims forbid that (i.e. the leadership of ‘Umar in salat). Allah and the Muslims reject that.” As such, he sent a messenger to Abu Bakr. HE CAME AFTER ‘UMAR HAD PERFORMED THAT SALAT. Then, he (Abu Bakr) led the people in salat (again).¹

‘Allamah al-Albani (d. 1420 H) comments:

حسن صحيح

Hasan sahih.²

Abu Dawud also records a supplementary report, which gives further details:

حدثنا أحمد بن صالح ثنا ابن أبي فديك قال حدثني موسى بن يعقوب عن عبد الرحمن بن إسحاق عن ابن شهاب عن عبيد الله بن عبد الله بن عتبة أن عبد الله بن زمعة أخبره بهذا الخبر قال لما سمع النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم صوت عمر قال ابن زمعة خرج النبي صلى الله

عليه و سلم حتى أطلع رأسه من حجرته ثم قال " لا لا لا ليصل للناس ابن أبي قحافة " يقول ذلك مغضبا.

Ahmad b. Salih – Ibn Abi Fudayk – Musa b. Ya'qub – ‘Abd al-Rahman b. Ishaq – Ibn Shihab – ‘Ubayd Allah b. ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Utbah – ‘Abd Allah b. Zam’a:

When the Prophet, peace be upon him, heard the voice of ‘Umar, the Prophet, peace be upon him, went out until his head appeared from his room. Then, he said, “No. No. No. Certainly, it is the son of Abu Quhafah (i.e. Abu Bakr) that shall lead the people in salat.” He was saying it in a state of ANGER.³

Al-Albani says:

صحيح

Sahih⁴

It is interesting. Is it not? The Prophet, sallallahu ‘alaihi wa alihi, allegedly knew that it was haram for anyone other than Abu Bakr to lead the salat. Yet, he ordered them to tell “someone” to do so?! Was it not his mission to “deliver the message clearly”?⁵ So, what was he allegedly angry about exactly? According to this Sunni riwayat, it was the Prophet himself who caused the confusion – and may Allah protect us from such blasphemous thoughts! So, logically, none was to blame except him. Thus, why was he angry, and at whom? What is this drama which the Ahl al-Sunnah have attributed to the Messenger of the Lord of the worlds?! In any case, this report of Ibn Zam’a opens a new can of worms for our Sunni brothers, which severely complicate an already horrible situation.

Exhibit F

In order to analyze the reports of Ibn Zam’a, we must first pinpoint them within a specific timescale. So, this hadith of Imam Ahmad (d. 241 H) comes in handy:

حدثنا عبد الله حدثني أبي ثنا عبد الأعلى عن معمر عن الزهري عن عبيد الله بن عبد الله عن عائشة قالت لما مرض رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم في بيت ميمونة فاستأذن نساءه ان يمرض في بيتي فأذن له فخرج رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم معتمدا على العباس وعلى رجل آخر ورجلاه تخطان في الأرض وقال عبيد الله فقال بن عباس أتدري من ذلك الرجل هو علي بن أبي طالب ولكن عائشة لا تطيب لها نفسا قال الزهري فقال النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم وهو في بيت ميمونة لعبد الله بن زمعة مر الناس فليصلوا فلقي عمر بن الخطاب فقال يا عمر صل بالناس فصلى بهم فسمع رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم صوته فعرفه وكان جهير الصوت فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم ليس هذا صوت عمر قالوا بلى قال يأبي الله جل وعز ذلك والمؤمنون مروا أبا بكر فليصل بالناس قالت عائشة يا رسول الله ان أبا بكر رجل رقيق لا يملك دمه وانه إذا قرأ القرآن بكى قالت وما قلت ذلك الا كراهية

ان يتأثم الناس بأبي بكر ان يكون أول من قام مقام رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم فقال مروا أبا بكر فليصل بالناس فراجعته فقال مروا أبا بكر فليصل بالناس انكم صواحب يوسف

‘Abd Allah (b. Ahmad) – my father (Ahmad b. Hanbal) – ‘Abd al-A’la – Ma’mar – al-Zuhri – ‘Ubayd Allah b. ‘Abd Allah – ‘Aishah:

When the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, became ill in the house of Maymunah, he sought the permission of his wives to stay in my house during his illness. So, they permitted him. Then, the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, came out (of Maymunah’s room) supported by al-‘Abbas and another man and his feet were dragging on the ground.

‘Ubayd Allah said: “Ibn ‘Abbas asked, ‘Do you know that man? He was ‘Ali b. Abi Talib. But, ‘Aishah did not like him.’”

Al-Zuhri (narrating from ‘Ubayd Allah from ‘Aishah) reported: The Prophet, peace be upon him, said while he was (still) in the house of Maymunah to ‘Abd Allah b. Zam’a, “Tell THE PEOPLE to perform the salat.” So, he met ‘Umar b. al-Khattab and said, “O ‘Umar! Lead the people in salat.” Therefore, he led them in salat. Then, the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, heard his voice and recognized him, as he was someone with a loud voice. The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said, “Is that not the voice of ‘Umar?” They said, “Yes, it is.” He said, “Allah the Almighty and the believers forbid that. Tell Abu Bakr to lead the people in salat.” ‘Aishah said, “O Messenger of Allah, verily, Abu Bakr is a tenderly man. He cannot control his tears. As he recites the Qur’an, he cannot help weeping.”

She (‘Aishah) said: “I did not say that except through worry that the people may take an evil omen with Abu Bakr, that he would become the first to occupy the position of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him.” He said, “Tell Abu Bakr to lead the people in salat.” But, I dissuaded him. He said (again), “Tell Abu Bakr to lead the people in Salat. You are like the women around Yusuf.”⁶

Shaykh al-Arnaut says:

إسناده صحيح على شرط الشيخين

Its chain is sahih upon the standard of the two Shaykhs⁷

So, it was before the Prophet moved to the house of ‘Aishah. This was during the initial stages of his fatal illness, at the start of his inability to join the congregational salats. That apparently was on Thursday. Imam Muslim (d. 261 H) records another hadith which confirms this:

حدثنا محمد بن رافع وعبد بن حميد (واللفظ لابن رافع) قالوا حدثنا عبدالرزاق أخبرنا معمر قال قال الزهري وأخبرني عبيدالله بن عبدالله بن عتبة أن عائشة أخبرته قالت أول ما اشتكى رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم في بيت ميمونة فاستأذن أزواجه أن يمرض في بيتها وأذن له قالت فخرج ويد له على الفضل بن عباس ويد له على رجل آخر وهو يخط برجليه في الأرض فقال عبيدالله فحدثت به ابن عباس فقال أتدري من الرجل الذي لم تسم عائشة ؟ هو علي

Muhammad b. Rafi' and 'Abd b. Hamid – 'Abd al-Razzaq – Ma'mar – al-Zuhri - 'Ubayd Allah b. 'Abd Allah b. 'Utbah – 'Aishah:

“It was in the house of Maymunah that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, first fell ill. He asked permission from his wives to stay in my house during his illness. They granted him permission.”

She said: “Then, he went out with one of his hands over (the shoulder of) 'al-Faḍl b. 'Abbas and the other hand on (the shoulder of) another man. His feet dragged on the earth.

'Ubayd Allah said: “I narrated it to Ibn 'Abbas and he said, ‘Do you know the man whose name 'Aishah did not mention? He was 'Ali.’”⁸

There is a fresh contradiction in these last two reports of 'Aishah. In the first, she claimed that the partner of Amir al-Muminin 'Ali, 'alaihi al-salam, when he was supporting the Messenger of Allah out of Umm al-Muminin Maymunah's room was al-'Abbas. In the second, she said that the same partner was al-Faḍl b. al-'Abbas! That, apparently, is an irreconcilable contradiction.

One cannot help but notice the strange inconsistencies between the reports of Zam'a and Exhibit F on the one hand and the other reports of 'Aishah and Anas (in the last chapter) on the other:

1. In one report, the Prophet gave the order that Abu Bakr - specifically naming him - should lead the salat immediately when Bilal came to him. However, in other reports, the Messenger only said, “Tell someone to lead the people in salat” or “Tell the people to perform the salat” without naming Abu Bakr.

2. In some reports, 'Umar was mistakenly chosen, by Ibn Zam'a or another messenger of the Prophet, to lead the salat, and he ('Umar) did so, before Abu Bakr. In other reports, 'Umar was never selected for leadership of the salat by any messenger of the Prophet, and he ('Umar) never led it.

3. In one report, after Abu Bakr's designation as the prayer leader, he went ahead to offer the position to 'Umar, who politely turned it down. By contrast, according to other reports, Abu Bakr never offered the position to 'Umar. Rather, 'Umar himself had already held the position, by mistake, before him! So, it would have been illogical to ask him to lead the same salat again.

4. By one report, Abu Bakr was one of those waiting in the mosque for the Messenger of Allah in the evening of Thursday. The messenger of the Prophet came to him in the mosque, while 'Umar too was present with him, to convey the order to lead. Meanwhile, in other reports, Abu Bakr was absent from the mosque, while the other Muslims were waiting for salat! Where was he? What could he possibly be doing where he was? The messenger of the Prophet had to quickly locate him to bring him into the mosque so that he could take over from 'Umar who was already leading the salat by mistake. But, before Abu Bakr arrived, 'Umar had already finished.

At this point, let us make a final recap of the some of the words of 'Aishah concerning that same event, about that same 'Isha prayer of that same Thursday. This is the first one:

قالت والناس عكوف في المسجد ينتظرون رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم لصلاة العشاء
الآخرة

قالت فأرسل رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم إلى أبي بكر أن يصلي بالناس فأتاه الرسول
فقال إن رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم يأمرك أن تصلي بالناس فقال أبو بكر وكان رجلاً
رفيقاً يا عمر صل بالناس قال فقال عمر أنت أحق بذلك
قالت فصلى بهم أبو بكر تلك الأيام

She ('Aishah) said, "The people were standing in the mosque waiting for the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, FOR THE 'ISHA PRAYER.

She ('Aishah) said, "So, the Messenger of Allah sent a messenger to Abu Bakr to tell him to lead the people in salat. When the messenger (of the Prophet) got to him, he said, 'The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, orders you to lead the people in salat.' So, Abu Bakr, who was a man of tenderly feelings, said, 'O 'Umar, lead the people in salat.' 'Umar replied, 'You are more entitled to that.'

She ('Aishah) said, 'So, Abu Bakr led them in salat DURING THOSE DAYS.

This is her second claim on that same event:

فأمروا أبا بكر يصلي بالناس قالت فلما دخل في الصلاة وجد رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم من نفسه خفة فقام يهادي بين رجلين ورجلاه تخطان في الأرض قالت فلما دخل المسجد سمع أبو بكر حسه ذهب يتأخر فأوماً إليه رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم قم مكانك فجاء رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم حتى جلس عن يسار أبي بكر قالت فكان رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم يصلي بالناس جالسا وأبو بكر قائما يقتدي أبو بكر بصلاة النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم ويقتدي الناس بصلاة أبي بكر

She said: "Therefore, Abu Bakr was asked to lead the people in salat." She said: "As he (Abu Bakr) began the salat, the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, felt some relief. So, He got up and moved, supported by two men, and his feet dragged on the ground.

She said: "When he entered the mosque, Abu Bakr heard his sound. He moved backwards, but the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, indicated to him to 'stand in your place.' The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, then came and sat on the left side of Abu Bakr."

She said: "The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, was leading the people in Salat in a sitting posture.

Here, we have her third:

فقال النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم وهو في بيت ميمونة لعبد الله بن زمعة مر الناس فليصلوا فلقي عمر بن الخطاب فقال يا عمر صل بالناس فصلى بهم فسمع رسول الله صلى الله عليه

و سلم صوته فعرفه وكان جهير الصوت فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم أليس هذا صوت عمر قالوا بلى قال ياأبي الله جل وعز ذلك والمؤمنون مروا أبا بكر فليصل بالناس

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said while he was (still) in the house of Maymunah to ‘Abd Allah b. Zam’a, “Tell the people to perform the salat.” So, he met ‘Umar b. al-Khattab and said, “O ‘Umar! Lead the people in salat.” Therefore, he led them in salat. Then, the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, heard his voice and recognized him, as he was someone with a loud voice. The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said, “Is that not the voice of ‘Umar?” They said, “Yes, it is.” He said, “Allah the Almighty and the believers forbid that. Tell Abu Bakr to lead the people in Salat.”

What exactly are we supposed to believe, O Umm al-Muminin ‘Aishah?

Notes

1. Abu Dawud Sulayman b. al-Ash’ath al-Sijistani al-Azdi, Sunan (Dar al-Fikr) [annotator: Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani], vol. 2, p. 627, # 4660
2. Ibid
3. Ibid, vol. 2, p. 627, # 4661
4. Ibid
5. See Qur’an 5:92, 14:4, 16:44, 16:64, 24:54 and 64:12
6. Abu ‘Abd Allah Ahmad b. Hanbal al-Shaybani, Musnad (Cairo: Muassasat Qurtubah) [annotator: Shu’ayb al-Arnaut], vol. 6, p. 34, # 24107
7. Ibid
8. Ibid, vol. 1, p. 311, # 418 (91)

4. Did Abu Bakr Lead The Prophet?

As if the crisis is not bad enough yet, ‘Aishah threw in one more unnerving contradiction into the mess.

Exhibit G

Imam Ibn Hibban (d. 354 H) records about it:

أخبرنا محمد بن إسحاق بن خزيمة قال حدثنا محمد بن بشار قال حدثنا بدل بن المحبر قال حدثنا شعبة عن موسى بن أبي عائشة عن عبيد الله بن عبد الله عن عائشة أن أبا بكر صلى بالناس ورسول الله ﷺ في الصف خلفه

Muhammad b. Ishaq b. Khuzaymah – Muhammad b. Bashar – Badal b. al-Muhabbar – Shu’bah – Musa b. Abi ‘Aishah – ‘Ubayd Allah b. ‘Abd Allah – ‘Aishah:

Abu Bakr led the people in salat while the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, was in the congregational row BEHIND him.¹

‘Allamah al-Albani (d. 1420 H) comments:

صحيح

Sahih²

And, Shaykh al-Arnaut concurs:

إسناده صحيح على شرط البخاري

Its chain is sahih upon the standard of al-Bukhari.³

Imam al-Tirmidhi (d. 279 H) also documents:

حدثنا محمود بن غيلان حدثنا شبابة [بن سوار] عن شعبة عن نعيم بن أبي هند عن أبي وائل عن مسروق عن عائشة قال صلى رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم خلف أبي بكر في مرضه الذي مات فيه قاعدا

Mahmud b. Ghilan – Shubabah b. Sawar – Shu’bah – Na’im b. Abi Hind – Abu Wail – Masruq – ‘Aishah:

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, performed salat in a sitting posture BEHIND Abu Bakr during his fatal illness.⁴

Al-Tirmidhi says:

حديث عائشة حديث حسن صحيح غريب

The hadith of ‘Aishah is hasan sahih gharib.⁵

‘Allamah al-Albani comments too:

صحيح

Sahih⁶

When did this take place? At the best, one may only attempt to fix it either in the ‘Isha prayer of Thursday or in the Zuhr of Monday, the Prophet’s last day. By the narration of Anas, the Messenger of Allah did not step into the mosque at all on the Friday, Saturday and Sunday preceding his death. So, we are left with only the evening of Thursday, when he first stopped leading the salat and the Monday of his demise. According to one report of ‘Aishah, the Messenger of Allah took over the ‘Isha on Thursday,

shortly after giving the order to Abu Bakr to lead it. But, in another narration by her, the Prophet actually never intervened in that ‘Isha at all, and Abu Bakr led it and all subsequent salats till the Zuhr of the following Monday. Yet, even on that Monday, Abu Bakr only prayed beside him as a surrogate Imam. As such, there really is nowhere to place this new claim of ‘Aishah – that her father was our Prophet’s Imam – within the possible timeframe.

However, Anas b. Malik made a frantic attempt to save her! Imam Ibn Hibban documents:

أخبرنا عمر بن مُجَدِّد الهمداني قال حدثنا إسحاق بن إبراهيم بن سويد الرملي قال حدثنا أيوب بن سليمان قال حدثني أبو بكر بن أبي أويس عن سليمان بن بلال عن حميد الطويل عن ثابت البناني عن أنس بن مالك قال آخر صلاة صلاها رسول الله ﷺ مع القوم في ثوب واحد متوشحا به برد قاعدا خلف أبي بكر

‘Umar b. Muhammad al-Hamdani – Ishaq b. Ibrahim b. Suwayd al-Ramli – Ayub b. Sulayman – Abu Bakr b. Abi Uways – Sulayman b. Bilal – Humayd al-Tawil – Thabit al-Banani – Anas b. Malik:

The last salat performed by the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, with the people was done in a single garment wrapped around him in a sitting posture BEHIND Abu Bakr.⁷

‘Allamah al-Albani comments:

صحيح

Sahih⁸

Shaykh al-Arnaut agrees:

إسناده صحيح

Its chain is sahih⁹

Imam al-Tirmidhi also records:

حدثنا عبد الله بن أبي زياد شيبابة بن سوار حدثنا مُجَدِّد بن طلحة عن حميد عن ثابت عن أنس قال صلى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم في مرضه خلف أبي بكر قاعدا في ثوب متوشحا به

‘Abd Allah b. Abi Ziyad - Shubabah b. Sawar – Muhammad b. Talhah – Humayd – Thabit – Anas:

He (the Prophet), peace be upon him, during his illness, performed salat in a sitting posture BEHIND Abu Bakr, wrapped in a garment.¹⁰

Al-Tirmidhi comments:

هذا حديث حسن صحيح

This hadith is hasan sahih¹¹

‘Allamah al-Albani agrees:

صحيح الإسناد

Its chain is sahih¹²

So, it was the last congregational salat of the Prophet, after all. But, even Anas' intervention rescues nothing! We still do not know when that last salat was. Anas himself narrated that the final congregational salat of the Messenger of Allah – and it was led by him, obviously before the 'Isha prayer - was on Thursday, followed by three days when he never stepped into the mosque at all. On the Monday of his departure, he came into the mosque, but did not join the congregational salat. He retreated into his room, and that was the very last time his Sahabah saw him alive. He apparently died shortly after his appearance. Basically, it is practically impossible to fix his alleged salat behind Abu Bakr anywhere within his lifetime!

There is another similarly unfixable riwayat by this same 'Aishah, concerning the same period. Imam al-Nasai (d. 303 H) records:

أخبرنا محمود بن غيلان قال حدثني أبو داود قال أنبأنا شعبة عن موسى بن أبي عائشة قال سمعت عبيد الله بن عبد الله يحدث عن عائشة رضي الله عنها أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم أمر أبا بكر أن يصلي بالناس قالت وكان النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم بين يدي أبي بكر فصلى قاعدا وأبو بكر يصلي بالناس والناس خلف أبي بكر

Mahmud b. Ghilan – Abu Dawud – Shu'bah – Musa b. Abi 'Aishah – 'Ubayd Allah b. 'Abd Allah – 'Aishah, may Allah be pleased with her:

“The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, ordered Abu Bakr to lead the people in Salat.”

She said: “The Prophet, peace be upon him, was IN FRONT of Abu Bakr, and he performed the salat in a sitting posture while Abu Bakr led the people in salat and the people were behind Abu Bakr.”¹³

'Allamah al-Albani declares about it:

صحيح

Sahih¹⁴

Where does this belong? Was it the 'Isha prayer of the Messenger's last Thursday? Well, 'Aishah herself had also narrated that he led that salat, sitting beside her father! Of course, Anas denied completely the Prophet's participation in that Isha' prayer or any other, from that period, till his death! 'Aishah also claimed in another report that the Prophet did not join the 'Isha prayer on that Thursday! But, what about the salat on the Monday of his death? Still, the problem adamantly persists. 'Aishah had narrated that her blessed husband led that salat beside Abu Bakr! He neither stayed in front of her father, nor behind him. Therefore, it is once more impossible to fix another riwayat of Umm al-Muminin 'Aishah within the lifetime of her master and prophet, sallallahu 'alaihi wa alihi.

Understandably, the 'ulama of the Ahl al-Sunnah are very disturbed by these grave, irreconcilable inconsistencies in 'Aishah's, and of course Anas', reports. Al-Hafiz (d. 852 H) himself is unable to hide this fact:

ورواه مسلم بن إبراهيم عن شعبة بلفظ أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم صلى خلف أبي بكر أخرجه بن المنذر وهذا عكس رواية أبي موسى وهو اختلاف شديد ووقع في رواية مسروق عنها أيضا

اختلاف فأخرجه ابن حبان من رواية عاصم عن شقيق عنه بلفظ كان أبو بكر يصلي
بصلاته والناس يصلون بصلاة أبي بكر

Muslim b. Ibrahim narrated from Shu'bah with the wording, "The Prophet, peace be upon him, performed salat behind Abu Bakr". Al-Mundhir recorded it. This is in contrast to the narration of Abu Musa, AND IT IS A SEVERE CONTRADICTION. Moreover, there is A FURTHER CONTRADICTION in the report of Masruq. It is recorded by Ibn Hibban in the report of 'Asim, from Shaqiq from him (i.e. Masruq) with the wording, "Abu Bakr was following his salat (i.e. that of the Prophet), and the people were following the salat of Abu Bakr."¹⁵

So, what answer do the Sunni 'ulama have to these contradictions? They, of course, attempted to devise a way out, as 'Allamah al-Albani explains, after quoting the contradictory stories:

ففي هذه الرواية أن النبي ﷺ كان إماما بخلاف الأولى؛ ففيها أنه كان مقتديا، وقد
اختلف العلماء في التوفيق بين الروايات على وجوه ذكرها الحافظ في "الفتح"؛ وأولها أن
النبي ﷺ صلى صلاتين في المسجد؛ كان في إحداهما مأموما، وفي الأخرى إماما. وإليه ذهب
ابن حزم في "المحلى" (47/3)، والبيهقي، وقبله ابن حبان

In this report, it is stated that the Prophet, peace be upon him, was the Imam (in the salat), in contradiction to the first one which states that he was a follower (in the salat). The 'ulama are in disagreement over the methods to harmonize the two reports. Al-Hafiz mentioned them (i.e. those methods) in al-Fath. The first of them is that the Prophet, peace be upon him, performed two salats in the mosque. In one of them, he was a follower (of Abu Bakr), and in the other, he was the Imam (of Abu Bakr). This was the opinion of Ibn Hazm in al-Muhalla (3/47) and al-Bayhaqi, and before him, Ibn Hibban.¹⁶

The 'Allamah does not cite any other of those methods. This suggests that he most probably considers the two-salat "solution" as the strongest possibility. But, does it really help the Sunni case? Apparently, it does not. Even if we ignore Anas' claim that the Messenger of Allah never participated in congregational salat in his mosque since the last Thursday of his fatal illness, it is still impossible to fix his alleged salat behind Abu Bakr anywhere within his lifetime! No matter where it stays, it clashes with some other "sahih" ahadith of the Ahl al-Sunnah and creates a new commotion. Besides, even finding a comfortable seat for that riwayat (about Abu Bakr's leadership of the Prophet) does not in any way resolve the innumerable, severe contradictions in the various reports about the Messenger of Allah's last congregational prayers and his alleged order(s) to Abu Bakr to lead in salat.

Notes

1. Abu Hatim Muhammad b. Hibban b. Ahmad b. Hibban b. Mu'adh b. Ma'bad al-Tamimi al-Darimi al-Busti, Sahih Ibn Hibban bi Tartib Ibn Balban (Beirut: Muasassat al-Risalah; 2nd edition, 1414 H) [annotators: Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani and Shu 'ayb al-Arnaut], vol. 5, p. 483, # 2117

2. Ibid
3. Ibid
4. Abu 'Isa Muhammad b. 'Isa al-Sulami al-Tirmidhi, al-Jami' al-Sahih Sunan al-Tirmidhi (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi) [annotator: Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani], vol. 2, p. 196, # 362
5. Ibid
6. Ibid
7. Abu Hatim Muhammad b. Hibban b. Ahmad b. Hibban b. Mu'adh b. Ma'bad al-Tamimi al-Darimi al-Busti, Sahih Ibn Hibban bi Tartib Ibn Balban (Beirut: Muasassat al-Risalah; 2nd edition, 1414 H) [annotators: Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani and Shu 'ayb al-Arnaut], vol. 5, p. 496, # 2125
8. Ibid
9. Ibid
10. Abu 'Isa Muhammad b. 'Isa al-Sulami al-Tirmidhi, al-Jami' al-Sahih Sunan al-Tirmidhi (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi) [annotator: Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani], vol. 2, p. 197, # 363
11. Ibid
12. Ibid
13. Abu 'Abd al-Rahman Ahmad b. Shu'ayb al-Nasai, al-Mujtaba min al-Sunan (Halab: Maktab al-Matbu'at al-Islamiyyah; 2nd edition, 1406 H) [annotator: Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani], vol. 2, p. 83, # 797
14. Ibid
15. 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. 2, p. 130
16. Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani, Asl Sifat Salat al-Nabi (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Ma'arif li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi'; 1st edition, 1427 H), vol. 1, p. 84

5. Was Abu Bakr Even Qualified To Lead?

Apart from the severe contradictions in the ahadith on Abu Bakr's alleged leadership of salat during the Prophet's fatal illness, there is also the question of its factual possibility. It is one thing for something to be possible; it is another for it to have truly occurred. Where it is impossible, then all reports of its occurrence are false by default. However, where it is possible, then additional, consistent and authentic evidence of its actual occurrence must be produced by whoever seeks to rely on that fact. With regards to Abu Bakr's alleged leadership of the salat, there are only conflicting, irreconcilable "proofs" of it. As such, there actually are none. In this chapter, we seek to explore the possibility of it even ever happening. This way, we bury it for good.

Without a doubt, the very first step in determining the possibility of Abu Bakr's leadership of the salat is to establish or discredit his qualification for it. Unless it is proved that he was qualified to lead, then every effort to claim that he did is futile. If he was not qualified, apparently his appointment as prayer leader by the Prophet, sallallahu 'alaihi wa alihi, would have been impossible. However, if he was qualified, it would, in that case, be at least possible. Then, additional, unquestionable evidence would become admissible to establish its factual occurrence.

So, was Abu Bakr qualified to lead the Messenger of Allah in salat? Moreover, was he equally qualified to lead the Sahabah in salat in the Prophet's mosque?

The answer to the first question is in this verse:

يا أيها الذين آمنوا لا تقدموا بين يدي الله ورسوله واتقوا الله إن الله سميع عليم

O you who believe! Do not lead in front of Allah and His Messenger, and fear Allah. Verily, Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.¹

This effectively makes it absolutely haram to lead the Prophet of Allah in anything – including in battles and salat. Imam al-Mubarakfuri (d. 1282 H) also states:

حكى ذلك القاضي عياض قال ولا يصح لأحد أن يؤم جالسا بعده ﷺ قال وهو مشهور قول مالك وجماعة أصحابه قال وهذا أولى الأقاويل لأنه ﷺ لا يصح التقدم بين يديه في الصلاة ولا في غيرها ولا لعذر ولا لغيره

That is narrated from Qaḍi 'Iyaḍ. He said, "It is not correct for anyone to lead in salat in a sitting posture other than him, peace be upon him." He said, "And this is the famous statement of Malik and the majority of his companions." He said, "And this is the most correct of the opinions, because it is NOT correct to lead in front of him in salat or in anything else, whether due to an excuse or otherwise."²

Al-Hafiz (d. 852 H), while relating the submissions of Qaḍi Iyaḍ, reports: واحتج أيضا بأنه ﷺ إنما صلى بهم قاعدا لأنه لا يصح التقدم بين يديه لنهي الله عن

ذلك

He cited as proof also the fact that he, peace be upon him, led them in salat in a sitting posture, because it is NOT correct to lead in front of him, due to the prohibition of that by Allah.³

In simpler words, it was absolutely impossible that Abu Bakr ever led Muhammad in salat or in any anything else. Allah has totally forbidden that; and so, Abu Bakr was NOT qualified in any way or by any means to lead the Messenger in salat or in any other situation or circumstance. Even Abu Bakr too realized this, as documented by Imam Muslim (d. 261 H):

قال أبو بكر ما كان لابن أبي قحافة أن يصلي بين يدي رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم

Abu Bakr said, “It is NOT for the son of Abu Quhafah (i.e. Abu Bakr) to lead salat in front of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him.”⁴

So, all the reports about how the Prophet was led in salat by Abu Bakr or anyone else from this Ummah are fallacious and hold no truth at all. The Book of Allah rejects them, and Abu Bakr too denounced them. There is also an element of high blasphemy in those ahadith. The only way Abu Bakr could have legitimately led the Messenger of Allah in salat was if the latter had lost or forfeited his risalah (messengership) and had become inferior to the former in many areas.

Moreover, we ask our Sunni brothers: who was the ruler of Madinah at that moment when – as your sect claims - Abu Bakr led the Prophet in salat? Was it the Messenger? Or, was it Abu Bakr? This question is crucial in the light of some authentic narrations in your books. For instance, Imam al-Tirmidhi (d. 279 H) records:

حدثنا هناد حدثنا أبو معاوية عن الأعمش عن إسماعيل بن رجاء عن أوس بن ضممع
عن أبي مسعود أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم قال لا يؤم الرجل في سلطانه ولا يجلس
على تكرمته إلا بإذنه

Hanad – Abu Mu’awiyah – al-A’mash – Isma’il b. Raja - Aws b. Ḍam’aj – Abu Mas’ud:

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said: “No one can lead a man in salat in his place of authority, and no one can sit in his place of honour except with his permission.”⁵

Al-Tirmidhi says:

هذا حديث حسن صحيح

This hadith is hasan sahih⁶

‘Allamah al-Albani (d. 1420 H) also comments:

صحيح

Sahih⁷

Imam al-Nasai (d. 303 H) also documents:

أخبرنا إبراهيم بن محمد التيمي قال حدثنا يحيى بن سعيد عن شعبة عن إسماعيل بن رجاء
عن أوس بن ضممع عن أبي مسعود قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم لا يؤم الرجل
في سلطانه ولا يجلس على تكرمته إلا بإذنه

Ibrahim b. Muhammad al-Taymi – Yahya b. Sa'id – Shu'bah – Isma'il b. Raja – Aws b. Dam'aj – Abu Mas'ud:

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said: “No one can lead a man in salat in his place of authority, and no one can sit in his place of honour except with his permission.”⁸

And 'Allamah al-Albani declares again:

صحيح

Sahih⁹

So, if the Prophet of Allah was really still the amir of the Muslims at that moment, then Abu Bakr was further disqualified from ever leading him in salat ! Whoever insists that Abu Bakr was his Imam is telling us that he (the Messenger) had lost authority over Madinah. Meanwhile, the authority of the Prophet was, and still is, tied to his risalah, among others. As such, if he had lost authority over Madinah, then he must have lost all his divine ranks. The direct implication of this is – the only way Abu Bakr could have been the Prophet's Imam was if the latter was no longer a messenger of Allah, at the least! Therefore, whoever claims that Abu Bakr led him in salat has thereby rejected his (i.e. the Prophet's) risalah! There is simply no second way to it.

In other ahadith, the Messenger of Allah mentions some other conditions with farther reaching implications. Imam Muslim records:

وحدثنا أبو بكر بن أبي شيبة وأبو سعيد الأشج كلاهما عن أبي خالد قال أبو بكر حدثنا أبو خالد الأحمر عن الأعمش عن إسماعيل بن رجاء عن أوس بن ضميج عن أبي مسعود الأنصاري قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم يؤم القوم أقرؤهم لكتاب الله فإن كانوا في القراءة سواء فأعلمهم بالسنة فإن كانوا في السنة سواء فأقدمهم هجرة فإن كانوا في الهجرة سواء فأقدمهم سلما ولا يؤمن الرجل الرجل في سلطانه ولا يقعد في بيته على تكرمته إلا بإذنه

Abu Bakr b. Abi Shaybah and Abu Sa'id al-Ashja' – Abu Khalid: Abu Bakr – Abu Khalid al-Ahmar – al-A'mash – Isma'il b. Raja – Aws b. Dam'aj – Abu Mas'ud al-Ansari:

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said: “The people should be led in salat by the best reciter of the Book of Allah among them. But, if they are equal in recitation, then the one who is the most knowledgeable among them concerning the Sunnah. If they are equal regarding the Sunnah, then the earliest of them to do the hijrah. If they are equal in the hijrah, then the earliest of them to embrace Islam. No man can lead another in salat in a place where the latter has authority, or sit in his place of honour in his house without his permission.”¹⁰

There is need to quickly highlight a point here. Where someone is the ruler or administrator of a place, as long as he is a Muslim, none can lead him in salat in it. He is the automatic Imam, even if he is not the best of them in Qur'anic recitation, or in knowledge of the Sunnah. His political authority overrides all the other set conditions. However, where none in the

mosque is the ruler of its area, then the various criteria are examined in the specified order. Imam al-Mubarakfuri (d. 1282 H) confirms:

وفي رواية مسلم لا يؤمن الرجل الرجل في سلطانه ... ولذا كان ابن عمر يصلي خلف

الحجاج وصح عن ابن عمر أن إمام المسجد مقدم على غير السلطان

In the report of (Imam) Muslim, it is stated “No man can lead another in salat in a place where the latter has authority.”... This was why Ibn ‘Umar used to offer salat behind al-Hajjaj. It is also authentically narrated that Ibn ‘Umar stated that the Imam of the mosque leads (only) the non-ruler.¹¹

These facts reveal that leadership in salat is no indicator of superiority before Allah at all. Ibn ‘Umar was superior – in the eyes of Sunni Islam – over al-Hajjaj in all ways and by all means. So, even a drunken Sunni governor can validly be the Imam for a saint of Allah. The other criteria in the hadith are of the same effect as well. The best reciter in the Ummah, who is the most qualified to lead the salat after the ruler or governor, may – just like the executive leader - not necessarily be the best of the Muslims, or their most knowledgeable. Something we wonder about though is – how many of the Sunni kings, sultans, emirs, presidents and sheikhs today lead salat in their grand mosques?

Imam Ahmad (d. 241 H) also documents:

حدثنا عبد الله حدثني أبي ثنا محمد بن جعفر ثنا شعبة عن إسماعيل بن رجاء قال سمعت
أوس بن ضمعج يقول سمعت أبا مسعود يقول قال لنا رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم يؤم
القوم أقرؤهم لكتاب الله تعالى وإقدمهم قراءة فان كانت قراءتهم سواء فليؤمهم أقدمهم هجرة
فان كانوا في الهجرة سواء فليؤمهم أكبرهم سنا ولا يؤمن الرجل في أهله ولا في سلطانه ولا
يجلس على تكرمته في بيته الا ان يأذن له أو بإذنه

‘Abd Allah (b. Ahmad) – my father – Muhammad b. Ja’far – Shu’bah – Isma’il b. Raja – Aws b. Dam’aj – Abu Mas’ud:

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said to us: “The people should be led in salat by the best reciter of the Book of Allah the Most High among them. But, if their recitations are equal, then the earliest of them in hijrah should lead them in salat. If they are equal in the hijrah, then the oldest of them should lead them in salat. No man can be led in salat among his family members or in a place where he has authority, or none can sit in his place of honour in his house without his permission.”¹²

Shaykh al-Arnaut comments:

إسناده صحيح على شرط مسلم

Its chain is sahih upon the standard of (Imam) Muslim¹³

It is undisputed that Abu Bakr was not the ruler over the Messenger of Allah at any point in time. Therefore, he was automatically and absolutely disqualified from ever leading his Prophet in salat. Besides, was Abu Bakr a better reciter of the Qur’an than the Messenger of Allah? Was he more knowledgeable of the Sunnah than the Prophet? Did Abu Bakr do the hijrah before him? Was he older than his Messenger? Did he accept Islam before

his Prophet? We ask – on what basis exactly was Abu Bakr ever qualified lead the Master and Best of all creation in salat? Apparently, there is none, and there can never be any! As such, all the Sunni riwayat about how he supposedly was the Imam of the Messenger are only Sunni exaggerations and hallucinations!

Interestingly, Abu Bakr was equally unqualified to lead even the other Sahabah! In order to be qualified, he had to be their best reciter. But, was he? Imam al-Bukhari (d. 256 H) records the answer of ‘Umar:

حدثنا عمرو بن علي حدثنا يحيى حدثنا سفیان عن حبيب عن سعيد بن جبیر عن ابن

عباس قال قال عمر رضي الله عنه: أقرؤنا أبي وأقضانا علي

‘Amr b. ‘Ali – Yahya – Sufyan – Habib – Sa’id b. Jubayr – Ibn ‘Abbas:

‘Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, said: “The best reciter among us is Ubayy, and the best judge among us is ‘Ali.”¹⁴

‘Allamah al-Albani has equally copied the Prophetic confirmation of this:

عن أنس بن مالك، أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: أرحم أمتي بأمتي أبو بكر وأشدهم في دين الله عمر وأصدقهم حياء عثمان وأقضاهم علي بن أبي طالب. وأقرؤهم لكتاب الله أبي بن كعب.

Narrated Anas b. Malik:

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said, “The most merciful of my Ummah to my Ummah is Abu Bakr. The most severe of them in the religion of Allah is ‘Umar. The most shy of them is ‘Uthman. And the best judge among them is ‘Ali b. Abi Talib. And the best reciter of the Book of Allah among them is Ubayy b. Ka’b.”¹⁵

صحيح

Sahih.¹⁶

So, it was not Abu Bakr?! Therefore, it was Ubayy who was qualified for the leadership of the salat and NOT Abu Bakr! With the presence of Ubayy among the Sahabah, Abu Bakr – the first Sunni khalifah – was thereby disqualified from leading either the Prophet or his followers in salat in the grand mosque of Madinah. With this, all the reports about Abu Bakr’s leadership of the salat drown in the Sunni ocean of fabrications. The Messenger of Allah would never place the wrong rod in the right hole – neither by nepotism nor by mistake. The Sunnah is that the best reciter should lead in salat – unless where the ruler is present. Abu Bakr was neither the best reciter nor the ruler. Those facts alone terminate the entire story.

Notes

1. Qur’an 49:1
2. Abu al-‘Ala Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Rahman b. ‘Abd al-Rahim al-Mubarakfuri, *Tuhfat al-Ahwazi bi Sharh Jami’ al-Tirmidhi* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1410 H), vol. 2, p. 294
3. 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. 2, p. 146

4. Abu al-Husayn Muslim b. al-Hajjaj al-Qushayri al-Naysaburi, Sahih Muslim (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi) [annotator: Muhammad Fuad 'Abd al-Baqi], vol. 1, p. 316, # 421 (102)
5. Abu 'Isa Muhammad b. 'Isa al-Sulami al-Tirmidhi, al-Jami' al-Sahih Sunan al-Tirmidhi (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi) [annotator: Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani], vol. 5, p. 99, # 2772
6. Ibid
7. Ibid
8. Abu 'Abd al-Rahman Ahmad b. Shu'ayb al-Nasai, al-Mujtaba min al-Sunan (Halab: Maktab al-Matbu'at al-Islamiyyah; 2nd edition, 1406 H) [annotator: Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani], vol. 2, p. 77, # 783
9. Ibid
10. Abu al-Husayn Muslim b. al-Hajjaj al-Qushayri al-Naysaburi, Sahih Muslim (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi) [annotator: Muhammad Fuad 'Abd al-Baqi], vol. 1, p. 465, # 673 (290)
11. Abu al-'Ala Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Rahman b. 'Abd al-Rahim al-Mubarakfuri, Tuhat al-Ahwazi bi Sharh Jami' al-Tirmidhi (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1410 H), vol. 2, p. 29
12. Abu 'Abd Allah Ahmad b. Hanbal al-Shaybani, Musnad (Cairo: Muassasat Qurtubah) [annotator: Shu'ayb al-Arnaut], vol. 4, p. 121, # 17133
13. Ibid
14. 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. 4, p. 1628, # 4211
15. Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani, Sahih Sunan Ibn Majah (Maktabah al-Ma'arif li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi'; 1st edition, 1417 H), vol. 1, pp. 67-68, # 125
16. Ibid

6. Imamah of Bastards and Children

The most qualified to lead salat in any circumstance is the Muslim administrator within his domain, according to Sunni Islam. He may be righteous or a drunkard. He may be a good reciter or a poor one. He may be knowledgeable or ignorant. He is the automatic Imam. Where he is absent in the mosque, then the most qualified is the best reciter among those present. This best reciter too may also be the best of them in the Sight of Allah – in terms of taqwa (piety) and knowledge – or one of their worst. Leadership in salat has nothing to do with righteousness or spiritual superiority. A lot of Sunni ahadith testify to this. We have discussed some of them in the last chapter. Let us briefly quote a few more before proceeding. Imam Ahmad (d. 241 H) records:

حدثنا عبد الله حدثني أبي ثنا يحيى بن سعيد ثنا هشام قال ثنا قتادة عن يونس بن جبیر عن حطان بن عبد الله الرقاشي ان الأشعري صلى بأصحابه صلاة... فقال الأشعري... ان نبي الله صلى الله عليه و سلم خطبنا فعلمنا سنتنا وبين لنا صلاتنا فقال أقيموا صفوفكم ثم ليؤمكم أقرؤكم

‘Abd Allah (b. Ahmad) – my father (Ahmad b. Hanbal) – Yahya b. Sa’id – Hisham – Qatadah – Yunus b. Jubayr – Hittan b. ‘Abd Allah al-Raqashi:

Al-Ash’ari led his companions in a salat ... So, al-‘Ashari said, “... Verily, the Prophet of Allah, peace be upon him, gave us a sermon and taught us our Sunnah, and explained to us our salat. So, he said, ‘Establish your congregational rows. Then, the best reciter among you should be your Imam.’”¹

Shaykh al-Arnaut says:

إسناده صحيح على شرط مسلم

Its chain is sahih upon the standard of (Imam) Muslim.²

Imam Muslim (d. 261 H) also documents:

حدثنا قتيبة بن سعيد حدثنا أبو عوانة عن قتادة عن أبي نضرة عن أبي سعيد الخدري قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم إذا كانوا ثلاثة فليؤمهم أحدهم وأحقهم بالإمامة أقرؤهم

Qutaybah b. Sa’id – Abu ‘Awanah – Qatadah – Abu Nadrah – Abu Sa’id al-Khudri:

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said: “Whenever there are three persons, one of them should be their Imam. The most entitled to be the Imam among them is the best reciter among them.”³

Imam Ahmad again records:

حدثنا عبد الله حدثني أبي ثنا عبد الرزاق أنا بن جريج قال لي عبد الملك ان أنس بن مالك قال عن النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم قال يؤم القوم أقرؤهم للقرآن

‘Abd Allah (b. Ahmad) – my father (Ahmad b. Hanbal) – ‘Abd al-Razzaq – Ibn Jurayj – ‘Abd al-Malik – Anas b. Malik:

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: “The people are to be led in salat by the best reciter of the Qur’an among them.”⁴

Al-Arnaut submits:

صحيح لغيره

It is sahih li ghayrihi⁵

The Sahabah too put this into practice. Imam al-Bukhari (d. 256 H) documents such an instance:

حدثنا إبراهيم بن المنذر قال حدثنا أنس بن عياض عن عبيد الله عن نافع عن ابن عمر قال : لما قدم المهاجرون الأولون العصابة موضع بقاء قبل مقدم رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم كان يؤمهم سالم مولى أبي حذيفة وكان أكثرهم قرآنا

Ibrahim b. al-Mundhir – Anas b. ‘Iyaḍ – ‘Ubayd Allah – Nafi’ – Ibn ‘Umar:

When the earliest Muhajirun came to al-‘Usbah, a place in Quba, before the arrival of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, Salim, the freed slave of Abu Hudhayfah, used to lead them in salat, and he was the most knowledgeable of the Qur’an among them.⁶

Al-Hafiz (d. 852 H) comments about this hadith:

قوله) وكان أكثرهم قرآنا (إشارة إلى سبب تقديمهم له مع كونهم أشرف منه وفي رواية للطبراني لأنه كان أكثرهم قرآنا

His statement (and he was the most knowledgeable of the Qur’an among them) is an indicator towards their reason for making him their leader (in salat) despite that they were of more noble statuses than him. In the report of al-Tabarani, it is narrated: “because he was the most knowledgeable of them of the Qur’an”⁷

The explanation is confirmed by this riwayat of Imam Ibn Abi Shaybah (d. 235 H):

حدثنا ابن نمير عن عبيد الله عن نافع عن ابن عمر أن المهاجرين حين أقبلوا من مكة نزلوا إلى جنب بقاء فأمهم سالم مولى أبي حذيفة لأنه كان أكثرهم قرآنا فيهم أبو سلمة بن عبد الأسد وعمر بن الخطاب.

Ibn Numayr – ‘Ubayd Allah – Nafi’ – Ibn ‘Umar:

When the Muhajirun fled Makkah, they camped near Quba and Salim, the freed slave of Abu Hudhayfah, led them in salat because he was the most knowledgeable of the Qur’an among them. Among them were Abu Salamah b. ‘Abd al-Asad and ‘Umar b. al-Khattab.⁸

Grading another hadith with this same exact chain, ‘Allamah al-Albani (d. 1420 H) declares:

وهذا إسناد صحيح على شرط الشيخين

This chain is sahih upon the standard of the two Shaykhs.⁹

Al-Bukhari further records:

حدثنا عثمان بن صالح حدثنا عبد الله بن وهب أخبرني ابن جريج أن نافعا أخبره أن ابن عمر رضي الله عنهما أخبره قال كان سالم مولى أبي حذيفة يؤم المهاجرين الأولين وأصحاب

النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم في مسجد قباء فيهم أبو بكر وعمر وأبو سلمة وزيد وعامر بن ربيعة

‘Uthman b. Salih – ‘Abd Allah b. Wahb – Ibn Jurayj – Nafi’ – Ibn ‘Umar, may Allah be pleased with him:

Salim, the freed slave of Abu Hudhayfah, used to lead the earliest Muhajirun and the Sahabah of the Prophet, peace be upon him, in Salat in the mosque of Quba. Among them were Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, Abu Salamah, and Amir b. Rabi’ah.¹⁰

So, the most senior Muhajirun – including Abu Bakr and ‘Umar – unanimously appointed Salim, a freed slave, as their Imam in salat pending the arrival of the Messenger of Allah, sallallahu ‘alaihi wa alihi, because he was more knowledgeable of the Qur’an than all of them. This, obviously, was in line with the Sunnah of Muhammad.

Salim was a freed slave. But, the ‘ulama of the Ahl al-Sunnah actually allow leadership in salat by even serving slaves and bastards too, as long as they are the best in Qur’anic recitation, as al-Hafiz declares:

وإلى صحة إمامة العبد ذهب الجمهور وخالف مالك ... وإلى صحة إمامة ولد الزنا

ذهب الجمهور

The majority (of the scholars) accepted the correctness of leadership in salat by a slave. But, (Imam) Malik objected.... Also, the majority accepted the correctness of leadership in salat by a bastard.¹¹

The supreme Salafi fiqh council in Saudi Arabia and across the world, al-Lajnah al-Daimah, also states:

تصح إمامة العبد وولد الزنا في الصلاة، إذا كان كل منهما أهلا لذلك، من جهة الدين؛

لعموم قوله: يؤم القوم أقرؤهم لكتاب الله " ولا نعلم دليلا يمنع ذلك.

The leadership of the slave or the bastard in salat is correct, as long as each of them is qualified for it, from the religious aspect, due to the generality of his (i.e. the Prophet’s) statement, “The people are to be led in salat by the best reciter of the Book of Allah among them.” We do not know any proof forbidding that.¹²

Even a small child can lead his grandfathers in salat, according to the same council:

تصح إمامة الصبي الذي يعقل الصلاة؛ لقول النبي (ص) " يؤم القوم أقرؤهم لكتاب الله "

The leadership of salat by a small child, who understands salat, is correct, due to the statement of the Prophet, peace be upon him: “The people are to be led in salat by the best reciter of the Book of Allah among them.”¹³

As such, if the Messenger of Allah ever truly designated Abu Bakr as Imam in salat during the former’s fatal illness – and he never did – then it would have been only because he considered him as having the best recitation among the Sahabah – nothing more, nothing less. Most importantly, even if Abu Bakr had been a bastard – and he was NOT – he would still have been appointed Imam in salat over the Sahabah by the Prophet at that point in time, according to Sunni Islam, as long as he had the

best Qur'anic recitation among them. The problem however is that Abu Bakr was never the overall best reciter among his colleagues.

So, he was unqualified, and therefore could never have been appointed as Imam during the period of the illness. Still, even if he had been qualified and had been designated, it would have indicated absolutely nothing of spiritual status or choice for the khilafah after the Messenger.

However, the 'ulama of the Ahl al-Sunnah go to desperate lengths in exaggerating about the event – which, in the first place, is narrated only in severely contradictory reports. For instance, Imam al-Nawawi (d. 676 H) claims about the alleged leadership of the Sahabah in salat by Abu Bakr:

فيه فوائد منها فضيلة أبي بكر الصديق رضي الله عنه وترجيحه على جميع الصحابة رضوان الله عليهم أجمعين وتفضيله وتنبه على أنه أحق بخلافة رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم من غيره ومنها أن الإمام إذا عرض له عذر عن حضور الجماعة استخلف من يصلي بهم وأنه لا يستخلف إلا أفضلهم

There are benefits from it. Among them is the excellence of Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, may Allah be pleased with him, and his preference over all the Sahabah, *ridwanullah 'alaihim ajma'in*, and his overall superiority and his notice that he (Abu Bakr) was more entitled to the khilafah of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, than anyone else. Among them (i.e. the benefits) is that the Imam, if he has an excuse for not attending the congregational prayer, he should deputize someone to lead them in salat, and that he cannot deputize except the best of them.¹⁴

For Allah's sake, where exactly did he get all that? We are certain that this same Nawawi and his followers would object to these words about Salim – the freed slave of Abu Hudhayfah, concerning his leadership over Abu Bakr, 'Umar and the other Sahabah in salat:

There are benefits from it. Among them is the excellence of Salim, may Allah be pleased with him, and his preference over all the Sahabah, *ridwanullah 'alaihim ajma'in*, and his overall superiority and a notice that he (Salim) was more entitled to the khilafah of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, than anyone else.

It is amusing how almost everything about Abu Bakr – whether true or not – is easily interpreted by the Ahl al-Sunnah as “evidence” of his “excellence”, “superiority” and “khilafah”. Sometimes, the ridiculousness of such submissions gets to extreme lengths, as in this case of his alleged leadership in salat. For instance, they claim that Abu Bakr's leadership in salat over the Sahabah was evidence of his overall superiority above them. Of course, such a conclusion actually contradicts the authentic Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah. Nonetheless, did Abu Bakr not lead the Prophet in salat according to Sunnis? So, did the Messenger consider himself to have lost his overall superiority over Abu Bakr? Moreover, Abu Bakr allegedly offered the leadership of the salat to 'Umar. Was he then admitting thereby the superiority of 'Umar over himself?

Notes

1. Abu 'Abd Allah Ahmad b. Hanbal al-Shaybani, *Musnad* (Cairo: Muassasat Qurtubah) [annotator: Shu'ayb al-Arnaut], vol. 4, p. 409, # 19680
2. Ibid

3. Abu al-Husayn Muslim b. al-Hajjaj al-Qushayri al-Naysaburi, Sahih Muslim (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-‘Arabi) [annotator: Muhammad Fuad ‘Abd al-Baqi], vol. 1, p. 464, # 672 (289)
4. Abu ‘Abd Allah Ahmad b. Hanbal al-Shaybani, Musnad (Cairo: Muassasat Qurtubah) [annotator: Shu‘ayb al-Arnaut], vol. 3, p. 163, # 12687
5. Ibid
6. 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. 246, # 660
7. 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. 2, p. 156
8. ‘Abd Allah b. Muhammad b. Abi Shaybah Ibrahim b. ‘Uthman b. Abi Bakr b. Abi Shaybah al-Kufi al-‘Ubsi, Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah fi al-Ahadith wa al-Athar (Dar al-Fikr; 1st edition, 1409 H) [annotator: Prof. Sa’id al-Laham], vol. 1, p. 379, # 11
9. Abu ‘Abd al-Rahman Muhammad Nasir al-Din b. al-Hajj Nuh b. Tajati b. Adam al-Ashqudri al-Albani, Sahih Abi Dawud (Kuwait: Muassasat al-Gharas li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi’; 1st edition, 1423 H), vol. 3, p. 270, # 688
10. 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. 6, p. 2625, # 6754
11. 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. 2, p. 155
12. Fatawa al-Lajnah al-Daimah li al-Buhuth al-‘Ilmiyyah wa al-Ifta, compiled and arranged by Ahmad b. ‘Abd al-Razzaq, al-Duwaysh, vol. 7, pp. 414-415
13. Ibid, vol. 7, p. 415
14. Abu Zakariyah Yahya b. Sharaf al-Nawawi, Sharh Sahih Muslim (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-‘Arabi; 1407 H), vol. 4, p. 137

7. Abu Bakr's Presence in the Army of Usamah

There is another fundamental twist to the whole saga about Abu Bakr's alleged leadership of the salat during the Prophet's fatal illness, sallallahu 'alaihi wa alihi, which creates a new major crisis for the official Sunni narrative. Imam al-Bukhari (d. 256 H) records:

حدثنا خالد بن مخلد حدثنا سليمان قال حدثني عبد الله بن دينار عن عبد الله بن عمر رضي الله عنهما قال : بعث النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم بعثنا وأمر عليهم أسامة بن زيد فطعن بعض الناس في إمارته فقال النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم إن تطعنوا في إمارته فقد كنتم تطعنون في إماره أبيه من قبل وإيم الله إن كان لخليقا للإمارة وإن كان لمن أحب الناس إلي وإن هذا لمن أحب الناس إلي بعده

Khalid b. Makhlad – Sulayman – ‘Abd Allah b. Dinar – ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Umar, may Allah be pleased with him:

The Prophet, peace be upon him, sent troops and appointed Usamah b. Zayd as their amir (commander). But, some people criticized his appointment as amir. Then, the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, “If you criticize his appointment as amir, you used to criticize the appointment of his father as amir before. I swear by Allah, he (Usamah's father) deserved the appointment as amir indeed, and he used to be one of the most beloved persons to me, and now this (Usamah) is certainly one of the most beloved persons to me after him.”¹

Dr. al-Bagha has some comments on this narration:

(فطعن) قدح وتكلم فيها (بعض الناس) وكان أشدهم في هذا عياش ابن أبي ربيعة

المخزومي رضي الله عنه.

(criticized) disparaged and condemned. (Some people) the most severe of them in this was ‘Ayyash b. Abi Rabi’ah al-Makhzumi, may Allah be pleased with him.²

Al-Hafiz (d. 852 H) also has these words on the hadith:

قوله (باب بعث النبي ﷺ أسامة بن زيد في مرضه الذي توفي فيه) إنما أخر المصنف هذه

الترجمة لما جاء أنه كان تجهيز أسامة يوم السبت قبل موت النبي ﷺ بيومين

His statement (Chapter on the Appointment of Usamah b. Zayd by the Prophet, peace be upon him, during his Fatal Illness): The author (i.e. al-Bukhari) has only given this biography a late timing due to what is narrated that the mobilization of Usamah (for war) was on Saturday, two days before the death of the Prophet.³

This was well into the period when Abu Bakr was supposed to be leading the salat! What is going on here? Well, al-Hafiz has some more information:

وكان ممن انتدب مع أسامة كبار المهاجرين والأنصار منهم أبو بكر وعمر وأبو عبيدة وسعد وسعيد وقتادة بن النعمان وسلمة بن أسلم فتكلم في ذلك قوم منهم عياش بن أبي ربيعة المخزومي فرد عليه عمر

Among those conscripted with Usamah were senior Muhajirun and Ansar, among them Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, Abu ‘Ubaydah, Sa’d, Sa’id, Qatadah b. al-Nu’mān, and Salamah b. Aslam. So, a group criticized that, among them ‘Ayyash b. Abi Rabi’ah al-Makhzumi, and ‘Umar opposed him.⁴

So, the Messenger of Allah deployed Abu Bakr and ‘Umar as ordinary foot soldiers under the command of Usamah, just two days before his death. This is huge indeed.

Elsewhere, al-Hafiz submits further:

قال بن سعد ولد أسامة في الاسلام ومات النبي ﷺ وله عشرون سنة وقال بن أبي خيثمة ثمانى عشرة وكان أمره على جيش عظيم

Ibn Sa’d said: “Usamah was born during the Islamic era, and the Prophet, peace be upon him, died while he (Usamah) was twenty years old.” Ibn Abi Khaythamah said, “He was eighteen years old”. He (the Prophet) made him the amir (commander) of a huge army.⁵

Usamah was old enough only to be a grandson of Abu Bakr. He was barely a teenager. Yet, the Messenger of Allah, in his divinely-inspired wisdom, made him the amir over Abu Bakr and ‘Umar. Besides that, Usamah was amir just a few days before the Prophet’s death, during the most serious phase of his fatal illness when he was no longer able to appear in the mosque. The direct implications of this are clear:

1. Abu Bakr and ‘Umar were under the command of Usamah. Therefore, they both were supposed to be at the army camp, and Usamah was their appointed Imam in salat as long as their deployment lasted.
2. The Messenger never intended either Abu Bakr or ‘Umar to be his khalifah. Otherwise, he would not have sent them away from Madinah during what obviously were his very last days on the earth.
3. The story of Abu Bakr’s leadership of salat in the Prophet’s mosque is false. If Abu Bakr was in Madinah, it was only because he had mutinied from the Islamic army. Mutineers are never rewarded with any form of leadership in Islam.

Understandably, Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 H) was very disturbed:

قال الرافضي التاسع أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم قال جهزوا جيش أسامة وكرر الأمر بتنفيذه وكان فيهم أبو بكر وعمر وعثمان ولم ينفذ أمير المؤمنين لأنه أراد منعهم من التوثب على الخلافة بعده فلم يقبلوا منه

والجواب من وجوه أحدها المطالبة بصحة النقل فإن هذا لا يروي بإسناد معروف ولا صححه أحد من علماء النقل ومعلوم أن الاحتجاج بالمنقول لا يسوغ إلا بعد قيام الحجة بثبوتها وإلا فيمكن أن يقول كل أحد ما شاء

الثاني أن هذا كذب بإجماع علماء النقل فلم يكن في جيش أسامة لا أبو بكر ولا عثمان وإنما قد قيل إنه كان فيه عمر وقد تواتر عن النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم أنه استخلف أبا بكر على الصلاة حتى مات وصلى أبو بكر ﷺ الصبح يوم موته وقد كشف سجد الحجر

فراهم صفوفا خلف أبي بكر فسر بذلك فكيف يكون مع هذا قد أمره أن يخرج في جيش
أسامة

The Rafidi said: “The ninth (point) is that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said: “Mobilize the army of Usamah” and repeatedly gave the order for its dispatch. And among them (i.e. the soldiers under Usamah) were Abu Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthman. But, he did not conscript Amir al-Muminin, because he (the Prophet) intended to prevent them (i.e. those in the army) from jumping over the khilafah after him. But, they did not accept it from him”.

The answer is from a number of angles. One of them is request for evidence of the authenticity of the report. This is because this (claim) is not narrated with any known chain, and none of the scholars of narrations ever declared it authentic. It is, of course, known that the use of reports as evidence is not permissible except after providing proof of their authenticity. Otherwise, everyone would say whatever he likes.

The second (answer) is that this (report) is a lie by the consensus of the scholars of narrations. Therefore, neither Abu Bakr nor ‘Uthman was in the army of Usamah. It is only said that ‘Umar was in it. Meanwhile, it has been narrated in mutawatir reports from the Prophet, peace be upon him, that he deputized Abu Bakr to lead the salat until he (the Prophet) died. Moreover, Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, performed the Subh (early morning) prayer of the day of his (i.e. the Prophet’s) death. He (the Prophet) had drawn the curtain of the room, and saw them in congregational rows behind Abu Bakr, and he was pleased with that. So, with this, how could he (i.e. the Prophet) have ordered him (i.e. Abu Bakr) to go out with the army of Usamah?⁶

Here, our Shaykh has muddled things up. First and foremost, according to the “sahih” hadith of ‘Aishah, the Messenger – during his lifetime - literally took over the salat from Abu Bakr, thereby effectively terminating the latter’s alleged appointment (assuming it ever existed). It was the Zuhr prayer of that Monday, and that was the last recorded salat of the Prophet. As such, Abu Bakr’s prayer leadership – even if it had been true – was cut off before the Messenger’s death.

Besides, Ibn Taymiyyah submitted that the reports about Abu Bakr’s conscription into Usamah’s army had no known chains. How true was this claim? Our Shaykh further stated that all the Sunni scholars of narrations, without a single exception, from the time of the Prophet up to his own lifetime, had explicitly declared those same narrations as “a lie”. So, we should be able to easily harvest from hundreds, or perhaps thousands, of ancient Sunni books tons of statements to that effect.

The truth, however, is the opposite. Malik b. Anas (d. 179 H), Ibn al-Mubarak (d. 181 H), al-Shafi’i (d. 204 H), al-Tayalisi (d. 204 H), ‘Abd al-Razzaq al-San’ani (d. 211 H), al-Humaydi (d. 219 H), Ibn Ja’d (d. 230 H), Ibn Sa’d (d. 230 H), Ibn Abi Shaybah (d. 235 H), Ibn Rahwayh (d. 238 H), Ahmad b. Hanbal (d. 241 H), al-Darimi (d. 255 H), al-Bukhari (d. 256 H), Muslim (d. 261 H), Ibn Majah (d. 273 H), Abu Dawud (d. 275 H), Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276 H), al-Tirmidhi (d. 279 H), Ibn Abi ‘Asim (d. 287 H), al-

Bazzar (d. 292 H), al-Nasai (d. 303 H), Ibn Khuzaymah (d. 311 H), al-‘Aqili (d. 322 H), Ibn Abi Hatim (d. 327 H), Ibn Hibban (d. 354 H), al-Tabarani (d. 360 H), al-Daraqutni (d. 385 H), Ibn Shahin (d. 385 H), al-Hakim (d. 403 H), al-Bayhaqi (d. 458 H), al-Baghdadi (d. 463 H), Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr (d. 463 H), al-Khawarazmi (d. 568 H), Ibn Asakir (571 H), and al-Nawawi (d. 676 H) did NOT declare riwayat about Abu Bakr’s conscription into Usamah’s army as “a lie” in any of their books! In fact, Ibn Taymiyyah – from all indications – was the first ever human being to describe them as “a lie”.

Further exposing the “lie” of Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah is this report by Imam Ibn Asakir:

أخبرنا أبو بكر وجيه بن طاهر أنا أبو حامد الأزهري أنا أبو مُجَدِّ المخلدي أنا المؤمل بن الحسن نا أحمد بن منصور نا أبو النضر هاشم بن القاسم نا عاصم بن مُجَدِّ عن عبيد الله بن عمر عن نافع عن ابن عمر أن رسول الله ﷺ استعمل أسامة بن زيد على جيش فيهم أبو بكر وعمر فطعن الناس في عمله فخطب النبي ﷺ الناس ثم قال قد بلغني أنكم قد طعنتم في عمل أسامة وفي عمل أبيه قبله وإن أباه لخليق للإمارة وإنه لخليق للأمرة يعني أسامة وإنه لمن أحب الناس إلي فأوصيكم به

Abu Bakr Wajih b. Tahir – Abu Hamid al-Azhari – Abu Muhammad al-Makhladi – al-Muammal b. al-Hasan – Ahmad b. Mansur – Abu al-Nadr Hashim b. al-Qasim – ‘Asim b. Muhammad – ‘Ubayd Allah b. ‘Umar – Nafi’ – Ibn ‘Umar:

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, appointed Usamah b. Zayd as the commander over an army WHICH INCLUDED ABU BAKR AND ‘UMAR. But, the people criticized his appointment. So, the Prophet, peace be upon him, addressed the people, and then said: “News has reached me that you have criticized the appointment of Usamah and the appointment of his father before him. His father deserved the appointment as amir, and he too deserves the appointment as amir, that is Usamah. He is also one of the most beloved people to me. Therefore, I advise you concerning him.”⁷

We know that – contrary to the wild claim of Ibn Taymiyyah – the narration actually has a known chain of transmission! So, what is its authenticity? Imam al-Dhahabi (d. 748 H) states about the first narrator:

وجيه بن طاهر ابن مُجَدِّ بن مُجَدِّ بن أحمد، الشيخ العالم العدل، مسند خراسان، أبو بكر، أخو زاهر الشحامي النيسابوري

Wajih b. Tahir b. Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Ahmad, the Shaykh, the scholar, the trustworthy, the top scholar of Khurasan, Abu Bakr, brother of Zahir, al-Shahami, al-Naysaburi.⁸

Concerning the second narrator, al-Dhahabi similarly declares:

الأزهري: العدل، المسند، الصدوق، أبو حامد، أحمد بن الحسن بن مُجَدِّ ابن الحسن بن أزهري الأزهري، النيسابوري، الشروطي، من أولاد المحدثين.

Al-Azhari: the trustworthy, the top scholar, the highly truthful, Abu Hamid, Ahmad b. al-Hasan b. Muhammad b. al-Hasan b. Azhar al-Azhari, al-Naysaburi, al-Shuruti, from the descendants of hadith scholars.⁹

So, what about the third narrator? Al-Dhahabi has this verdict about him too:

المخلدي: الإمام الصادق المسند، أبو مُجَدِّ، الحسن بن أحمد بن مُجَدِّ بن الحسن بن علي بن مخلد بن شيبان المخلدي النيسابوري العدل

Al-Makhladi: The truthful Imam, the top scholar, Abu Muhammad, al-Hasan b. Ahmad b. Muhammad b. al-Hasan b. ‘Ali b. Mukhlid b. Shayban al-Mukhlidi al-Naysaburi, the trustworthy.¹⁰

Then, we proceed to the fourth narrator, and the words of al-Dhahabi concerning him:

المؤمل بن الحسن ابن عيسى بن ماسرجس المولى، الرئيس الامام المحدث المتقن، صدر خراسان، أبو الوفاء الماسرجسي النيسابوري.

Al-Muammal b. al-Hasan b. ‘Isa b. Masarjisa the freed slave, the leader, the Imam, the hadith scientist, the extremely precise narrator, the foremost in Khurasan, Abu al-Wafa al-Masarjisi al-Naysaburi.¹¹

The fifth narrator is like that too, as stated by al-Hafiz:

أحمد بن منصور بن سيار البغدادي الرمادي أبو بكر ثقة حافظ طعن فيه أبو داود لمذهبه في الوقف في القرآن

Ahmad b. Mansur b. Sayyar al-Baghdadi al-Ramadi, Abu Bakr: Thiqah (trustworthy), a hadith scientist. Abu Dawud criticized him due to his opinion of neutrality concerning (the creation of) the Qur’an.¹²

Imam al-Dhahabi confirms:

الرمادي: الامام الحافظ الضابط، أبو بكر، أحمد بن منصور بن سيار بن معارك، الرمادي البغدادي.

Al-Ramadi: the Imam, the hadith scientist, the accurate narrator, Abu Bakr, Ahmad b. Mansur b. Sayyar b. Mu’arik, al-Ramadi al-Baghdadi.¹³

Al-Hafiz has these words on the sixth narrator as well:

هاشم بن القاسم بن مسلم اللبثي مولاهم البغدادي أبو النضر مشهور بكنيته ولقبه قيصر ثقة ثبت

Hashim b. al-Qasim b. Muslim al-Laythi, their freed slave, al-Baghdadi, Abu al-Nadr, well-known with his kunya and nickname Qaysar: Thiqah (trustworthy), thabt (accurate).¹⁴

About the seventh narrator, al-Hafiz proceeds:

عاصم بن مُجَدِّ بن زيد بن عبد الله بن عمر بن الخطاب العمري المدني ثقة

‘Asim b. Muhammad b. Zayd b. ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Umar b. al-Khattab al-Umari al-Madani: Thiqah (trustworthy).¹⁵

He equally states concerning the eighth narrator:

عبيد الله بن عمر بن حفص بن عاصم بن عمر بن الخطاب العمري المدني أبو عثمان ثقة
ثبت

‘Ubayd Allah b. ‘Umar b. Hafsa b. ‘Asim b. ‘Umar b. al-Khattab al-‘Umari al-Madani, Abu ‘Uthman: Thiqah (trustworthy), thabt (accurate).¹⁶

And, with regards to the last narrator, he declares:

نافع أبو عبد الله المدني مولى ابن عمر ثقة ثبت فقيه مشهور

Nafi’, Abu ‘Abd Allah al-Madani, freed slave of Ibn ‘Umar: Thiqah (trustworthy), thabt (accurate), a well-known jurist.¹⁷

So, the chain is fully connected and all the narrators are trusted people. Therefore, it is sahih, or at least hasan.

Furthermore, there is a mutaba’ah for Asim b. Muhammad, documented by Imam al-Bazzar:

حدثنا محمد بن حسان الأزرق، حدثنا أبو النضر، حدثنا عاصم بن عمر، عن عبيد الله بن عمر، عن نافع، عن ابن عمر أن النبي ﷺ استعمل أسامة بن زيد على جيش فيهم أبو بكر وعمر فطعن الناس في عمله ، فخطب النبي ﷺ فقال قد بلغني أنكم طعنتم في عمل أسامة وفي عمل أبيه من قبله، وإن أباه كان خليقا للإمارة وإنه خليق للإمارة يعني أسامة وإنه لمن أحب الناس إلى وإني أوصيكم به أحسبه قال خيرا.

Muhammad b. Hassan al-Azraq – Abu al-Nadr – ‘Asim b. ‘Umar – ‘Ubayd Allah b. ‘Umar – Nafi’ – Ibn ‘Umar:

The Prophet, peace be upon him, appointed Usamah b. Zayd as commander over an army which included Abu Bakr and ‘Umar. So, people criticized his appointment. As a result, the Prophet, peace be upon him, delivered a sermon and said, “News has reached me that you criticized the appointment of Usamah and the appointment of his father before him. Verily, his father deserved the appointment as amir, and he too deserves the appointment as amir, that is Usamah. He is also one of the most beloved of mankind to me. I advise you to think good of him.”¹⁸

Al-Bazzar comments:

وهذا الحديث لا نعلم رواه عن عبيد الله بن عمر إلا عاصم بن عمر، وإنما يعرف من حديث موسى بن عقبة ، عن سالم، عن أبيه.

We do not know anyone who has narrated this hadith from ‘Ubayd Allah b. ‘Umar except ‘Asim b. ‘Umar, and it is only known through the hadith of Musa b. ‘Uqbah, from Salim, from his father.¹⁹

The mistake of al-Bazzar is apparent. ‘Asim b. Muhammad also narrated it from ‘Ubayd Allah b. ‘Umar, apart from Asim b. ‘Umar. Obviously, al-Bazzar did not have sufficient information concerning the transmission of this hadith. In fact, his mistake becomes clearer when we consider his statement that the narration is known only through the hadith of Musa b. ‘Uqbah. If, by the hadith of this Musa, he meant the narration on Usamah’s army without the explicit mention of Abu Bakr and ‘Umar (and this is most likely al-Bazzar’s position), then certainly he was in error, as ‘Abd Allah b.

Dinar also related that. In any case, the misjudgements of scholars are never accepted as proofs in academic researches.

In the chain of ‘Asim b. ‘Umar above, we already know that Abu al-Nadr, ‘Ubayd Allah b. ‘Umar and Nafi’ were thiqah (trustworthy). So, we are left with only Muhammad b. Hassan al-Azraq and ‘Asim b. ‘Umar to investigate. Well, al-Azraq too is thiqah (trustworthy) according to al-Hafiz:

مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ حَسَّانِ بْنِ فَيْرُوزِ الشَّيْبَانِيِّ الْأَزْرَقِ أَبُو جَعْفَرِ الْبَغْدَادِيِّ التَّاجِرِ أَسْلَمَهُ مِنْ وَاسِطِ ثِقَّةٍ

Muhammad b. Hassan b. Fayruz al-Shaybani al-Azraq, Abu Ja’far al-Baghdadi al-Tajir, his root was from Wasit: Thiqah (trustworthy).²⁰

However, as confirmed by al-Hafiz, ‘Asim b. ‘Umar was weak:

عَاصِمُ بْنُ عَمْرِ بْنِ حَفْصِ بْنِ عَاصِمِ بْنِ عَمْرِ بْنِ الْخَطَّابِ الْعَمْرِيُّ أَبُو عَمْرِوَ الْمَدِينِيُّ ضَعِيفٌ

مِنَ السَّابِعَةِ وَهُوَ أَخُو عَبْدِ اللَّهِ الْعَمْرِيِّ.

‘Asim b. ‘Umar b. Hafs b. ‘Asim b. ‘Umar b. al-Khattab al-‘Umari, Abu ‘Umar al-Madani: Da’if (weak). He was from the seventh (tabaqah), and he was the brother of ‘Ubayd Allah al-‘Umari.²¹

Yet, the chain of al-Bazzar is sahih li ghayrihi due to the corroboration of ‘Asim b. ‘Umar by ‘Asim b. Muhammad, from ‘Ubayd Allah in the riwayah of Ibn Asakir.

Finally, Imam Ibn Sa’d has a third report:

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الْوَهَّابِ بْنُ عَطَاءِ الْعَجَلِيُّ قَالَ أَخْبَرَنَا الْعَمْرِيُّ عَنْ نَافِعٍ عَنْ بَنِي عَمْرِو أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ

ﷺ بَعَثَ سَرِيَّةً فِيهِمْ أَبُو بَكْرٍ وَعَمْرٌ اسْتَعْمَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ أَسَامَةَ بْنَ زَيْدٍ فَكَانَ النَّاسُ طَعَنُوا فِيهِ أَيُّ

فِي صِغَرِهِ فَبَلَغَ ذَلِكَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ فَصَعِدَ الْمَنْبِرَ فَحَمِدَ اللَّهَ وَأَثْنَى عَلَيْهِ وَقَالَ إِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدْ طَعَنُوا

فِي إِمَارَةِ أَسَامَةَ وَقَدْ كَانُوا طَعَنُوا فِي إِمَارَةِ أَبِيهِ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ وَإِنَّمَا لَخَلِيقَانِ لَهَا وَإِنَّهُ لَمَنْ أَحَبَّ النَّاسَ

إِلَى آلا فَأَوْصِيكُمْ بِأَسَامَةَ خَيْرًا

‘Abd al-Wahhab b. ‘Ata al-‘Ijli – al-‘Umari – Nafi’ – Ibn ‘Umar:

The Prophet, peace be upon him, deployed an army. Among them were Abu Bakr and ‘Umar. He appointed Usamah b. Zayd over them as their commander. So, people criticized it, that was his young age. News of that reached the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him. Therefore, he climbed the pulpit, thanked Allah and extolled Him, and said, “People have criticized the appointment of Usamah as amir. They had earlier criticized the appointment of his father as amir before him. Yet, both of them (i.e. Usamah and his father) deserve it (i.e. the commandership), and he (Usamah) is one of the most beloved of mankind to me. Verily, I advise you to be good to Usamah.”²²

We know about Nafi’ already. So, we only have to investigate the first and second narrators. Al-Hafiz says about the first narrator:

عَبْدُ الْوَهَّابِ بْنُ عَطَاءِ الْخَفَّافِ أَبُو نَصْرِ الْعَجَلِيُّ مَوْلَاهُمُ الْبَصْرِيُّ نَزِيلُ بَغْدَادٍ صَدُوقٌ رُبَّمَا

أَخْطَأَ أَنْكَرُوا عَلَيْهِ حَدِيثًا فِي الْعَبَّاسِ يُقَالُ دَلَّسَهُ عَنْ ثَوْرٍ

‘Abd al-Wahhab b. ‘Ata al-Khaffaf, Abu Nasr al-‘Ijli, their freed slave, al-Basri, a resident of Baghdad: Saduq (very truthful), maybe he made

mistakes. They denied a hadith from him about al-‘Abbas. It is said that he narrated it in an ‘an-‘an manner from Thawr.²³

The second narrator is al-‘Umari. His name is ‘Abd Allah. Al-Hafiz declares concerning him:

عبد الله بن عمر بن حفص بن عاصم بن عمر بن الخطاب أبو عبد الرحمن العمري المدني

ضعيف عابد

‘Abd Allah b. ‘Umar b. Hafs b. ‘Asim b. ‘Umar b. al-Khattab, Abu ‘Abd al-Rahman al-‘Umari al-Madani: Ḍa’if (weak), a great worshipper of Allah.²⁴

However, this defect in the chain of Ibn Sa’d is removed by the corroboration of ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Umar by ‘Ubayd Allah b. ‘Umar. Both have transmitted the same report from the same Nafi’. As such, the sanad of Ibn Sa’d is hasan li ghayrih due to al-Khaffaf.

So, there is a sahih li dhatihi (i.e. independently sahih) or hasan li dhatihi (i.e. independently hasan) chain for the hadith of Ibn ‘Umar which places Abu Bakr and ‘Umar in the army of Usamah. There is another, which is sahih li ghayrihi (i.e. sahih by corroboration), and there is a third that is hasan li ghayrihi (i.e. hasan by corroboration). Each of these chains sufficiently establishes the fact that both Abu Bakr and ‘Umar were conscripts under Usamah’s command. Of course, the army of Usamah was mobilized on Saturday, two days before the final breath of the Messenger of Allah.

Among the Sunni scholars of narrations, one of their earliest to affirm this fact was ‘Urwah b. al-Zubayr. Imam Ibn Hibban says concerning him:

عروة بن الزبير بن العوام القرشي أخو عبد الله بن الزبير أمهما أسماء بنت أبي بكر

الصدیق من فقهاء المدينة وأفاضل التابعين وعباد قريش

‘Urwah b. al-Zubayr b. al-‘Awwam al-Qurshi, the brother of ‘Abd Allah b. al-Zubayr. Their mother was Asma bint Abi Bakr al-Siddiq. He was one of the jurists of Madinah, and one of the best of the Tabi’in, and one of the devout worshippers from Quraysh.²⁵

Al-Hafiz, who grades him “thiqah” (trustworthy)²⁶, further states that he narrated from many of the Sahabah, including his father (al-Zubayr b. al-‘Awwam), his mother Asma bint Abi Bakr, Umm al-Muminin ‘Aishah, Amir al-Muminin ‘Ali b. Abi Talib, ‘alaihi al-salam, Zayd b. Thabit, Ibn ‘Abbas, Ibn ‘Umar, Usamah b. Zayd, Abu Ayub al-Ansari, Abu Hurayrah, Umm Salamah, and Jabir b. ‘Abd Allah al-Ansari²⁷. Apparently, ‘Urwah was no small fish in Sunni hadith scholarship. So, did he really claim that the report – which states that Abu Bakr and ‘Umar were part of Usamah’s army - was “a lie”, as alleged by Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah?

Imam Ibn Abi Shaybah records his clear testimony here:

حدثنا عبد الرحيم بن سليمان عن هشام بن عروة عن أبيه أن رسول الله ﷺ كان قطع

بعثا قبل موته وأمر عليهم أسامة بن زيد، وفي ذلك البعث أبو بكر وعمر

‘Abd al-Rahim b. Sulayman – Hisham b. ‘Urwah – his father (‘Urwah b. al-Zubayr):

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, deployed an army before his death and appointed Usamah b. Zayd as the amir over them. In that army were Abu Bakr and ‘Umar.²⁸

The first narrator is thiqah (trustworthy), as stated by al-Hafiz:

عبد الرحيم بن سليمان الكناني أو الطائي أبو علي الأشل المروزي نزيل الكوفة ثقة

‘Abd al-Rahim b. Sulayman al-Kanani or al-Tai, Abu ‘Ali al-Ushil al-Maruzi, a resident of Kufah: Thiqah (trustworthy).²⁹

Hisham too, the son of ‘Urwah, was like that, according to al-Hafiz:

هشام بن عروة بن الزبير بن العوام الأسدي ثقة فقيه ربما دلس

Hisham b. ‘Urwah b. al-Zubayr b. al-‘Awwam al-Asadi: Thiqah (trustworthy), a jurist, maybe he did tadlis.³⁰

So, the chain is sahih up to ‘Urwah. Shaykh Dr. Asad confirms this while treating another riwayah:

حدثنا أبو بكر بن أبي شيبة حدثنا عبد الرحيم بن سليمان عن هشام بن عروة عن أبيه

عن عائشة... إسناده صحيح

Abu Bakr b. Abi Shaybah – ‘Abd al-Rahim b. Sulayman – Hisham b. ‘Urwah – his father – ‘Aishah ... Its chain is sahih.³¹

He actually believed the incident to have been true, and had taught it to his son! So, basically, the following claims of Ibn Taymiyyah are false:

1. The hadith mentioning Abu Bakr in the army of Usamah is false.
2. All the Sunni scholars of narrations, up till his time, had each explicitly declared that hadith to have been “a lie”.
3. The hadith does not have any known chain of narration.

The truth, as we have proved through Allah’s Grace, is below:

1. That hadith has been narrated by one independently sahih or hasan chain.
2. It has also been narrated by one sahih li ghayrihi chain, as well as another which is hasan li ghayrihi.
3. No scholar before Ibn Taymiyyah ever called the hadith “a lie” – not a single one!
4. Instead, ‘Urwah, who was one of the greatest scholars of narrations in Sunni Islam affirmed that both Abu Bakr and ‘Umar were really in the army of Usamah!

So, Abu Bakr was conscripted into the army of Usamah during the Prophet’s fatal illness. Moreover, it was only the despatch of the army for war that occurred on Saturday, two days before the Messenger’s death. The army itself had been formed long before then. Al-Hafiz comes in once again:

قوله (باب بعث النبي ﷺ أسامة بن زيد في مرضه الذي توفي فيه) إنما أخر المصنف هذه الترجمة لما جاء أنه كان تجهيز أسامة يوم السبت قبل موت النبي ﷺ بيومين وكان ابتداء ذلك قبل مرض النبي ﷺ فندب الناس لغزو الروم في آخر صفر ودعا أسامة فقال سر إلى موضع مقتل أبيك فأوطئهم الخيل فقد وليتكم هذا الجيش... فبدأ برسول الله ﷺ وجعه في اليوم

الثالث فعقد لأسامة لواء بيده فأخذه أسامة فدفعه إلى بريدة وعسكر بالجرف وكان ممن انتدب مع أسامة كبار المهاجرين والأنصار منهم أبو بكر وعمر... ثم أشتد برسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم وجعه فقال أنفذوا بعث أسامة

His statement (Chapter on the Appointment of Usamah b. Zayd by the Prophet, peace be upon him, during his Fatal Illness): The author (i.e. al-Bukhari) has only given this biography a late timing due to what is narrated that the mobilization of Usamah (for war) was on Saturday, two days before the death of the Prophet, peace be upon him. Meanwhile, the beginning of that was before the illness of the Prophet, peace be upon him. He had delegated people to go to war with Rome at the end of Safar and called Usamah and said, “Go to the place where your father was martyred. Equip them with the horses, for I have appointed you as the wali of this army...”

Then, the illness of the Messenger of Allah began on the third day (of the next month, Rabi’ al-Awwal), and he passed the flag to Usamah, who in turn passed to Buraydah. Solders were (camped) at al-Jurf. Among those conscripted with Usamah were senior Muhajirun and Ansar, among them Abu Bakr, ‘Umar ... Then, the illness of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, became serious, and he said, “Dispatch the army of Usamah.”³²

The Prophet of Allah died on the 12th of Rabi’ al-Awwal. His formation of the army of Usamah occurred in the end of the preceding month – Safar - before his fatal illness. On the 3rd day of Rabi’ al-Awwal, nine days from his death, he passed the flag of war to Usamah, the commander. His soldiers were already at their military camp at al-Jurf. He included the senior Muhajirun and Ansar in the army, and made Usamah – a teenager – their amir. Abu Bakr and ‘Umar were among the soldiers under him. The Messenger’s illness became very serious on Thursday, such that he was unable to lead the ‘Isha prayer of its evening. On the following Saturday – two days before his demise - he gave an order for the dispatch of the army for war.

Both Abu Bakr and ‘Umar were soldiers under Usamah in this expedition. So, they were supposed to be with their colleagues at al-Jurf. But, they both jumped camp and stayed in Madinah instead! This, undeniably, was in unmistakable disobedience to the Command of Allah and His Messenger. This made them mutineers. Interestingly, our brothers from the Ahl al-Sunnah want us to believe that one of these mutineers was then rewarded by the Rasul with leadership of the salat in his mosque?! How is that even logical? Moreover, their only evidence are only a bunch of warring reports, each of them slashing the throat of the other! Besides, Abu Bakr was NOT even qualified to lead either the Messenger or the Sahabah in salat, to begin with! Why then would the Prophet of Allah appoint an unqualified mutineer as salat leader for his obedient, qualified disciples?

Notes

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. 3, p. 1365, # 3524

2. Ibid

3. 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. 8, p. 115
4. Ibid
5. 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‘uq], vol. 1, p. 202, # 89
6. Abu al-‘Abbas Ahmad b. ‘Abd al-Halim b. Taymiyyah al-Harrani, Minhaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah (Muassasat Qurtubah; 1st edition, 1406 H) [annotator: Dr. Muhammad Rashad Salim], vol. 8, pp. 292-293
7. Abu al-Qasim ‘Ali b. al-Hasan b. Habat Allah b. ‘Abd Allah, Ibn Asakir al-Shafi‘i, Tarikh Madinah Dimashq (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr; 1415 H) [annotator: ‘Ali Shiri], vol. 8, p. 60
8. Shams al-Din Muhammad b. Ahmad b. ‘Uthman al-Dhahabi, Siyar A‘lam al-Nubala (Beirut: Muassasat al-Risalah; 9th edition, 1413 H) [annotators of the twentieth volume: Shu‘ayb al-Arnaut and Muhammad Na‘im al-‘Arqisusi], vol. 20, p. 109, # 67
9. Ibid, vol. 18, p. 254, # 127
10. Shams al-Din Muhammad b. Ahmad b. ‘Uthman al-Dhahabi, Siyar A‘lam al-Nubala (Beirut: Muassasat al-Risalah; 9th edition, 1413 H) [annotators of the sixteenth volume: Shu‘ayb al-Arnaut and Akram al-Bushi], vol. 16, p. 539, # 395
11. Shams al-Din Muhammad b. Ahmad b. ‘Uthman al-Dhahabi, Siyar A‘lam al-Nubala (Beirut: Muassasat al-Risalah; 9th edition, 1413 H) [annotators of the fifteenth volume: Shu‘ayb al-Arnaut and Ibrahim al-Zaybaq], vol. 15, pp. 21-22, # 9
12. Ahmad b. ‘Ali b. Hajar al-‘Asqalani, Taqrib al-Tahdhib (Beirut: Dar al-Maktabah al-‘Ilmiyyah; 2nd edition, 1415 H) [annotator: Mustafa ‘Abd al-Qadir ‘Ata], vol. 1, p. 47, # 113
13. Shams al-Din Muhammad b. Ahmad b. ‘Uthman al-Dhahabi, Siyar A‘lam al-Nubala (Beirut: Muassasat al-Risalah; 9th edition, 1413 H) [annotators of the fifteenth volume: Shu‘ayb al-Arnaut and Ibrahim al-Zaybaq], vol. 15, p. 389, # 170
14. Ahmad b. ‘Ali b. Hajar al-‘Asqalani, Taqrib al-Tahdhib (Beirut: Dar al-Maktabah al-‘Ilmiyyah; 2nd edition, 1415 H) [annotator: Mustafa ‘Abd al-Qadir ‘Ata], vol. 2, p. 261, # 7282
15. Ibid, vol. 1, p. 459, # 3089
16. Ibid, vol. 1, p. 637, # 4340
17. Ibid, vol. 2, p. 239, # 7111
18. Abu Bakr Ahmad b. ‘Amr b. ‘Abd al-Khaliq al-Bazzar, Musnad al-Bazzar (Madinah al-Munawwarah: Maktabah al-‘Ulum wa al-Hukm; 1st edition) [annotator: ‘Adil b. Sa‘d], vol. 12, p. 155, # 5754
19. Ibid
20. Ahmad b. ‘Ali b. Hajar al-‘Asqalani, Taqrib al-Tahdhib (Beirut: Dar al-Maktabah al-‘Ilmiyyah; 2nd edition, 1415 H) [annotator: Mustafa ‘Abd al-Qadir ‘Ata], vol. 2, p. 66, # 5827
21. Ibid, vol. 1, p. 458, # 3079
22. Muhammad b. Sa‘d, al-Tabaqat al-Kubra (Beirut: Dar al-Sadir), vol. 2, p. 249
23. Ahmad b. ‘Ali b. Hajar al-‘Asqalani, Taqrib al-Tahdhib (Beirut: Dar al-Maktabah al-‘Ilmiyyah; 2nd edition, 1415 H) [annotator: Mustafa ‘Abd al-Qadir ‘Ata], vol. 1, pp. 626-627, # 4276
24. Ibid, vol. 1, p. 516, # 3500
25. Abu Hatim Muhammad b. Hibban b. Ahmad al-Tamimi al-Busti, Mashahir ‘Ulama al-Amsar (Dar al-Wafa li al-Taba‘at wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi‘; 1st edition, 1411 H) [annotator: Marzuq ‘Ali Ibrahim], p. 105, # 428
26. See Ahmad b. ‘Ali b. Hajar al-‘Asqalani, Taqrib al-Tahdhib (Beirut: Dar al-Maktabah al-‘Ilmiyyah; 2nd edition, 1415 H) [annotator: Mustafa ‘Abd al-Qadir ‘Ata], vol. 1, p. 671, # 4577
27. See Shihab al-Din Ahmad b. ‘Ali b. Hajar al-‘Asqalani, Tahdhib al-Tahdhib (Dar al-Fikr; 1st edition, 1404 H), vol. 7, pp. 163-164, # 352
28. ‘Abd Allah b. Muhammad b. Abi Shaybah Ibrahim b. ‘Uthman b. Abi Bakr b. Abi Shaybah al-Kufi al-‘Ubsi, Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah fi al-Ahadith wa al-Athar (Dar al-Fikr; 1st edition, 1409 H) [annotator: Prof. Sa‘id al-Laham], vol. 7, p. 532, # 3

29. Ahmad b. ‘Ali b. Hajar al-‘Asqalani, Taqrib al-Tahdhib (Beirut: Dar al-Maktabah al-‘Ilmiyyah; 2nd edition, 1415 H) [annotator: Mustafa ‘Abd al-Qadir ‘Ata], vol. 1, p. 598, # 4070
30. Ibid, vol. 2, p. 267, # 7328
31. Abu Ya’la Ahmad b. ‘Ali b. Muthanna al-Mawsili al-Tamimi, Musnad (Damascus: Dar al-Mamun li al-Turath; 1st edition, 1404 H) [annotator: Dr. Husayn Salim Asad], vol. 7, p. 425, # 4447
32. 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. 8, p. 115

8. Were The Sahabah Expecting Abu Bakr's Reign?

Or, was it a sudden affair for them? The Ahl al-Sunnah often insist that Abu Bakr's alleged leadership of salat was effectively his appointment by the Prophet, sallallahu 'alaihi wa alihi, as the first khalifah over the Ummah. Normally, if this had been the case, then all of the Sahabah would have regarded Abu Bakr's "succession" to the Messenger a natural process. In fact, every single one of them would have considered Abu Bakr the khalifah-designate; and they all would have been shocked if he had not become the ruler after Muhammad. However, it seems that the reverse was the reality. The Sahabah were surprised when they learnt that Abu Bakr was claiming the khilafah. They apparently were not expecting him to be their next ruler. This is what Imam al-Bukhari (d. 256 H) reports:

حدثنا عبد العزيز بن عبد الله حدثني إبراهيم بن سعد عن صالح عن ابن شهاب عن عبيد الله بن عبد الله بن عتبة بن مسعود عن ابن عباس قال : كنت أقرئ رجلا من المهاجرين منهم عبد الرحمن بن عوف فبينما أنا في منزله بمى وهو عند عمر بن الخطاب في آخر حجة حجها إذ رجع إلي عبد الرحمن فقال لو رأيت رجلا أتى أمير المؤمنين اليوم فقال يا أمير المؤمنين هل لك في فلان ؟ يقول لو قد مات عمر لقد بايعت فلانا فوالله ما كانت بيعة أبي بكر إلا فلتة فتمت فغضب عمر ثم قال إني إن شاء الله لقائم العشية في الناس فمحذروهم هؤلاء الذين يريدون أن يغضبهم أمورهم ... فجلس عمر على المنبر فلما سكت المؤذنون قام فأثنى على الله بما هو أهله ثم قال أما بعد ... إنه بلغني قائل منكم يقول والله لو قد مات عمر بايعت فلانا فلا يغترن امرؤ أن يقول إنما كانت بيعة أبي بكر فلتة وتمت ألا وإنما قد كانت كذلك ولكن الله وقى شرها وليس فيكم من تقطع الأعناق إليه مثل أبي بكر من بايع رجلا من غير مشورة من المسلمين فلا يتابع هو ولا الذي تابعه تغرة أن يقتلا وإنه قد كان من خبرنا حين توفي الله نبيه صلى الله عليه و سلم أن الأنصار خالفونا واجتمعوا بأسرهم في سقيفة بني ساعدة وخالف عنا علي والزبير ومن معهما واجتمع المهاجرون إلى أبي بكر فقلت لأبي بكر يا أبا بكر انطلق بنا إلى إخواننا هؤلاء من الأنصار فانطلقنا نريدهم فلما دنونا منهم لقينا منهم رجلا صالحا فذكرنا ما تمالأ عليه القوم فقالا أين تريدون يا معشر المهاجرين ؟ فقلنا نريد إخواننا هؤلاء من الأنصار فقالا لا عليكم أن لا تقرّبوهم اقضوا أمركم فقلت والله لنأتينهم فانطلقنا حتى أتيناهم في سقيفة بني ساعدة فإذا رجل مزمل بين ظهرانيهم فقلت من هذا ؟ فقالوا هذا سعد بن عبادة فقلت ما له ؟ قالوا يوعك فلما جلسنا قليلا تشهد خطيبهم فأثنى على الله بما هو أهله ثم قال أما بعد فنحن أنصار الله وكتيبة الإسلام وأنتم معشر المهاجرين رهط وقد دفت دافة من قومكم فإذا هم يريدون أن يختزلونا

من أصلنا وأن يحضنونا من الأمر . فلما سكت أردت أن أتكلم وكنت قد زورت مقالة أعجبتني أردت أن أقدمها بين يدي أبي بكر وكنت أداري منه بعض الحد فلما أردت أن أتكلم قال أبو بكر على رسلك فكرهت أن أغضبه فتكلم أبو بكر فكان هو أحلم مني وأوقر والله ما ترك من كلمة أعجبتني في تزويري إلا قال في بديهته مثلها أو أفضل منها حتى سكت فقال ما ذكرتم فيكم من خير فأنتم له أهل ولن يعرف هذا الأمر إلا لهذا الحي من قريش هم أوسط العرب نسبا ودارا.

‘Abd al-‘Aziz b. ‘Abd Allah – Ibrahim b. Sa’d – Salih – Ibn Shihab – ‘Ubayd Allah b. ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Utbah b. Mas’ud – Ibn ‘Abbas:

I used to teach qirat to some men from the Muhajirun, among them were ‘Abd al-Rahman b. ‘Awf. So, while I was in his house in Mina, and he was with ‘Umar b. al-Khattab during the last Hajj which he performed, ‘Abd al-Rahman came to me and said, “If only you had seen a man who came to Amir al-Muminin today, saying: ‘O Amir al-Muminin! What do you say about so-and-so? He says, “When ‘Umar dies, I will pledge allegiance to so-and-so, for, I swear by Allah, the pledge of allegiance given to Abu Bakr was nothing but an error and it succeeded.”” So, ‘Umar became angry. Then, he said, ‘Insha Allah, I will stand before the people tonight and will warn them against these people who want to usurp their affairs...’.

So, ‘Umar sat on the pulpit, and when the muezzins became silent, he stood up. He praised Allah as He deserved. Then he said:

“Now then ... I have been informed that a speaker amongst you says, ‘I swear by Allah, when ‘Umar dies, I will pledge allegiance to so-and-so.’ One should not deceive oneself by saying that the pledge of allegiance given to Abu Bakr was an error and it succeeded. NO DOUBT, IT WAS SURELY LIKE THAT. However, Allah saved from its EVIL. And there is none amongst you towards whom throats are slit like Abu Bakr. Whosoever pledges allegiance to anyone without consultation with the Muslims, then neither that person nor the person to whom the pledge of allegiance was given, is to be supported. Rather, they both should be killed.

And, verily, there was someone who informed us when Allah took the life of His Prophet, peace be upon him, that the Ansar opposed us and gathered, all of them, at Saqifah Bani Sa’idah; and ‘Ali, al-Zubayr and whoever was with them both, also opposed us; and the Muhajirun gathered towards Abu Bakr.

So, I said to Abu Bakr, ‘O Abu Bakr! Let us go to these brothers of ours from the Ansar’. As a result, we went, seeking them. When we approached them, two righteous men from them met us, and informed us of the final decision of the people, and both of them said, ‘O group of Muhajirun, where are you going?’ Then, we said, ‘We are going to these brothers of ours from the Ansar.’ They said, ‘You should not go near them. Decide your affair.’ So, I said, ‘I swear by Allah, we will go to them.’ Therefore, we went until we reached them at Saqifah Bani Sa’idah. There was a wrapped man

amongst them. Then, I said, ‘Who is that?’ They said, ‘This is Sa’d b. ‘Ubadah.’ Then, I said, ‘What is wrong with him?’ They said, ‘He is sick.’

After we had sat for a little period, their speaker testified. He praised Allah as He deserved. Then, he said, ‘Now then, we are the Ansar (Helpers) of Allah and the battalion of Islam, and you Muhajirun are a small group. Some people from your people have come, seeking to cut us off from our root and to prevent us from authority.’ When he became silent, I intended to talk and I had prepared a speech which I really loved. I intended to deliver it in the presence of Abu Bakr, and I used to avoid provoking him. So, when I wanted to speak, Abu Bakr said, ‘Wait a while’, and I hated to make him angry.

Therefore, Abu Bakr spoke, and he was more patient and more dignified than I was. I swear by Allah, he did not miss a sentence that I really loved from my prepared speech, except that he said the like of it or better than it spontaneously, until he fell silent. So, he said, ‘What you stated about yourself in terms of good things, you truly deserve it. And this authority will never be recognized except for this living person from Quraysh. They are the best of the Arabs in terms of lineage and family.’”¹

‘Umar, who told his staunchly pro-Abu Bakr version of what happened, nonetheless gives us insights into the state of the Ummah immediately after the death of its Prophet. The Sahabah were divided into three political camps:

- (a) the camp of Abu Bakr and his supporters;
- (b) the camp of ‘Ali, ‘alaihi al-salam, supported by al-Zubayr, and their supporters; and
- (c) the camp of the Ansar.

The Ansar held the military advantage, being the overwhelming majority of the Islamic soldiers. The Muhajirun were only a small group, with little or no numerical or military significance. Yet, they were nonetheless divided into the opposing camps of Abu Bakr and ‘Ali. What we get from all this, is that the Ansar – who had numerical and military strength – were united while the Muhajirun – despite their serious numerical and military disadvantages – were divided.

Naturally, whoever controlled the Ansar would hold the real political and military powers. ‘Umar was well aware of this. Therefore, instead of going to the camp of ‘Ali to resolve the political dispute, he took the party of Abu Bakr to the Ansar, to try to win them over. Moreover, looking at the arguments of Abu Bakr against the Ansar, one understands fully why he would never have gone to ‘Ali anyway, even if the latter had had the numerical and military advantages. Abu Bakr argued on the strengths of lineage and family. The tribe of Quraysh were of the best human lineage, and they were the best family. So, the Muslims – especially those in other parts of Arabia – would never recognize the rule of a khalifah from the Ansar. This tactic was clearly to make the Ansar see the futility of their political efforts. They were not from Quraysh, and the generality of the Muslims would never accept the rule of a non-Qurayshi. The strategy worked, and the Ansar backed down, and supported Abu Bakr instead.

As for ‘Ali, he was also from Quraysh. As such, Abu Bakr’s arguments about lineage and family would not have worked in his case. In fact, they would have backfired terribly. Imam Muslim (d. 261 H) documents that the Messenger of Allah had declared the Banu Hashim as the best of Quraysh:

حدثنا مُحَمَّد بن مهران الرازي و مُحَمَّد بن عبدالرحمن بن سهم جميعا عن الوليد قال ابن مهران حدثنا الوليد بن مسلم حدثنا الأوزاعي عن أبي عمار شداد أنه سمع واثلة بن الأسقع يقول سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم يقول إن الله اصطفى كنانة من ولد إسماعيل واصطفى قريشا من كنانة واصطفى من قريش بني هاشم واصطفاني من بني هاشم

Muhammad b. Mihran al-Razi and Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Rahman b. Sahm – al-Walid b. Muslim – al-Awza’i – Abu ‘Ammar Shaddad – Wathilah b. al-Asqa’:

I heard the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, saying: “Verily, Allah chose Kinanah from the children of Isma’il, and chose Quraysh from Kinanah, and He chose Banu Hashim from Quraysh, and He chose me from Banu Hashim”.²

Commenting on this hadith, Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 H) states:

وهذا كله بناء على أن الصلاة والسلام على آل مُحَمَّد وأهل بيته تقتضي أن يكونوا أفضل من سائر أهل البيوت وهذا مذهب أهل السنة والجماعة الذين يقولون بنو هاشم أفضل قريش وقريش أفضل العرب والعرب أفضل بني آدم وهذا هو المنقول عن أئمة السنة كما ذكره حرب الكرماني عمّن لقيهم مثل أحمد وإسحاق وسعيد بن منصور وعبد الله بن الزبير الحميدي وغيرهم وذهبت طائفة إلى منع التفضيل بذلك كما ذكره القاضي أبو بكر والقاضي أبو يعلى في المعتمد وغيرهما و الأول اصح فإنه قد ثبت عن النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم في الصحيح أنه قال لأن الله اصطفى كنانة من ولد إسماعيل واصطفى قريش من كنانة واصطفى هاشما من قريش واصطفاني من بني هاشم

All of this is based upon the fact that sending salat and salam upon the family of Muhammad and his Ahl al-Bayt establishes absolutely that they are better than all other people. And this is the position of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama’ah, who say that Banu Hashim are the best of Quraysh, and that Quraysh are the best of the Arabs, and that Arabs are the best of the Children of Adam. This is narrated from the Imams of the Sunnah - as Harb al-Kirmani mentioned from those who met them - such as Ahmad, Ishaq, Sa’id b. Mansur, ‘Abd Allah b. al-Zubayr al-Humaydi and others. A group are of the opinion that superiority cannot be established through that, as stated by al-Qaḍi Abu Bakr, and by al-Qaḍi Abu Ya’la in al-Mu’tamad, and others. However, the first opinion is more correct, for it is authentically narrated in the sahih hadith that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, “Verily, Allah chose Kinanah from the children of Isma’il, and chose Quraysh from Kinanah, and He chose Hashim from Quraysh, and He chose me from Banu Hashim”.³

Meanwhile, Amir al-Muminin ‘Ali b. Abi Talib was from Banu Hashim like the Messenger, while Abu Bakr was not. Therefore, in terms of lineage, ‘Ali was superior to Abu Bakr.

Moreover, Imam Ahmad (d. 241 H) further records:

حدثنا عبد الله حدثني أبي ثنا أبو نعيم عن سفیان عن يزيد بن أبي زياد عن عبد الله بن الحرث بن نوفل عن المطلب بن أبي وداعة قال قال العباس بلغه بعض ما يقول الناس قال فصعد المنبر فقال من أنا قالوا أنت رسول الله فقال أنا مُحَمَّد بن عبد الله بن عبد المطلب ان الله خلق الخلق فجعلني في خير خلقه وجعلهم فرقتين فجعلني في خير فرقة وخلق القبائل فجعلني في خير قبيلة وجعلهم بيوتا فجعلني في خيرهم بيتا فأنا خيركم بيتا وخيركم نفسا

‘Abd Allah (b. Ahmad) – my father (Ahmad b. Hanbal) – Abu Na’im – Sufyan – Yazid b. Abi Ziyad – ‘Abd Allah b. al-Harith b. Nawfal – al-Mutalib b. Abi Wada’ah – al-‘Abbas:

The words of some people reached him. So, he climbed the pulpit and asked, “Who am I?” They answered, “You are the Messenger of Allah.” So, he said, “I am Muhammad, the son of ‘Abd Allah, the son of ‘Abd al-Mutalib. Verily, Allah created the creation and put me among the best of His creation. He made them into two groups, and put me in the best group. He created the tribes and put me in the best tribe. He created homes and put me among those of them with the best home. So, I am of the best home among you, and I am of the best personality among you.”⁴

Shaykh al-Arnaut comments:

حسن لغيره

It is hasan due to supporting evidence⁵.

‘Allamah al-Albani also says concerning the hadith:

صحيح

Sahih⁶

Here, we know that Quraysh – the tribe of Muhammad – is the best of all tribes. Of course, Banu Hashim are the best of the clans of Quraysh. Also, we equally know from the hadith that the house of Muhammad – his family – is the best of all families. ‘Ali belonged to this same house of the Prophet, and Abu Bakr did not. So, ‘Ali beat Abu Bakr completely on lineage and family. No wonder, Abu Bakr made no attempt to go to him. Instead, he rushed to the camp with weaker claims in terms of lineage and family, and defeated them on both accounts.

Interestingly, the fact that the Ansar submitted to Abu Bakr’s arguments about lineage and family shows that the generality of the Sahabah considered both as the primary criteria for the khilafah. Moreover, the fact that they would not recognize the authority of any khalifah from the Ansar - however pious, knowledgeable and competent - reveals that they viewed the khilafah only as a dynasty, the dynasty of the offspring of Quraysh. In order to make this clearer, if the Ahl al-Sunnah were to choose a khalifah today, they would only pick a man from Quraysh even if there are millions of far better candidates within the Ummah from the other tribes and races. This

tells that the most very first criterion for leadership in Sunni Islam is the tribe of the ruler; and that is exactly why it is a dynasty.

The Prophet of Allah also limited the khilafah to a specific family within the Quraysh. Therefore, if you are not from that family, you are not a legitimate khalifah. Imam Ibn Abi Shaybah (d. 235 H) reports:

أبو داود عمر بن سعد عن شريك عن الركين عن القاسم بن حسان عن زيد بن ثابت يرفعه قال: إني تركت فيكم الخليفتين كاملتين: كتاب الله وعترتي، وإنهما لن يتفرقا حتى يردا علي الحوض.

Abu Dawud ‘Umar b. Sa’d – Sharik – al-Rukayn – al-Qasim b. Hassan – Zayd b. Thabit – the Prophet:

“I have left behind over you the two all-comprehensive khalifahs: the Book of Allah and my offspring. Verily, both shall never separate from each other until they meet me at the Lake-Fount.”⁷

The annotators declare:

والحديث صحيح

The hadith is sahih.⁸

Imam Ibn Abi ‘Asim (d. 287 H) has recorded it as well:

ثنا أبو بكر، ثنا عمرو بن سعد أبو داود الحفري، عن شريك، عن الركين عن القاسم بن حسان، عن زيد بن ثابت قال قال رسول الله ﷺ: إني تارك فيكم الخليفتين من بعدي، كتاب الله وعترتي أهل بيتي وإنهما لن يتفرقا حتى يردا علي الحوض.

Abu Bakr – ‘Amr b. Sa’d Abu Dawud al-Hafari – Sharik – al-Rukayn – al-Qasim b. Hassan – Zayd b. Thabit:

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said, “I am leaving behind over you the two khalifahs after me: the Book of Allah and my offspring, my Ahl al-Bayt. Verily, both shall never separate from each other until they meet me at the Lake-Fount.”⁹

And ‘Allamah al-Albani (d. 1420 H) states:

حديث صحيح.

It is a sahih hadith.¹⁰

Apparently, if you are not from the offspring of Muhammad, from his Ahl al-Bayt, you are nothing but an illegitimate khalifah. It is that simple and straightforward. Abu Bakr, without any doubt, was NOT from the offspring of the Prophet, neither by blood nor by special designation. As for ‘Ali, he was specially included within that blessed offspring by the Messenger himself, on the Command of Allah, for the specific purpose of the khilafah. Ibn Abi ‘Asim (d. 287 H) again documents:

ثنا محمد بن المثني، حدثنا يحيى بن حماد، عن أبي عوانة، عن يحيى بن سليم أبي بلج عن عمرو بن ميمون، عن ابن عباس قال: قال رسول الله ﷺ لعلي: أنت مني بمنزلة هارون من موسى إلا أنك لست نبيا وأنت خليفتي في كل مؤمن من بعدي.

Muhammad b. al-Muthanna – Yahya b. Hammad – Abu ‘Awanah – Yahya b. Sulaym Abu Balj – ‘Amr b. Maymun – Ibn ‘Abbas: The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said to ‘Ali: “You are to me of the status of Harun to Musa, with the exception that you are not a prophet. And you are my khalifah over every believer after me.”¹¹

Dr. al-Jawabirah says:

اسناده حسن.

Its chain is hasan.¹²

And ‘Allamah al-Albani (d. 1420 H) backs him:

إسناده حسن

Its chain is hasan.¹³

So, obviously, the Prophet had already fully settled the issues of al-khilafah before he died:

(a) ‘Ali was the first khalifah immediately after him;

(b) then, the khilafah passes, after ‘Ali, to the children of Fatimah till the Day of al-Qiyamah.

This was the Decree of Allah, and it shall be in force till the end of our planet. Clearly, there was never any vacancy in the khilafah at all, and there will never be. The very moment that the Messenger of the Lord departed, all his powers, authorities and leadership responsibilities naturally passed to Amir al-Muminin, his publicly designated successor. However, Allah had also revealed to His Prophet that the Ummah generally would betray ‘Ali after him. Imam al-Hakim (d. 403 H) records:

حدثنا أبو حفص عمر بن أحمد الجمحي بمكة ثنا علي بن عبد العزيز ثنا عمرو بن عون ثنا هشيم عن إسماعيل بن سالم عن أبي إدريس الأودي عن علي رضي الله عنه قال إن مما عهد إلي النبي ﷺ أن الأمة ستغدر بي بعده

Abu Hafs ‘Umar b. Ahmad al-Jamhi – ‘Ali b. ‘Abd al-‘Aziz – ‘Amr b. ‘Awn – Hushaym – Isma’il b. Salim – Abu Idris al-Awdi – ‘Ali, may Allah be pleased with him:

“Verily, part of what the Prophet, peace be upon him, told me is that the Ummah would soon betray me after him.”¹⁴

Al-Hakim says:

هذا حديث صحيح الإسناد

This hadith has a sahih chain.¹⁵

Imam al-Dhahabi (d. 748 H) agrees:

صحيح

Sahih¹⁶

Al-Hakim also reports:

عن حيان الأسدي سمعت عليا يقول قال لي رسول الله ﷺ إن الأمة ستغدر بك بعدي وأنت تعيش على ملتي وتقتل على سنتي من أحببك أحبني ومن أبغضك أبغضني وإن هذه ستخضب من هذا يعني لحيته من رأسه

Narrated Hayyan al-Asadi:

I heard ‘Ali saying: The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said to me: “Verily, the Ummah will soon betray you after me; and you will live upon my religion, and you will be killed upon my Sunnah. Whoever loves you loves me, and whoever hates you hates me. Verily, this will soon be painted from this”, he meant: his beard (will be drained with blood) from his head.¹⁷

Then he again declares:

صحيح

Sahih¹⁸

And al-Dhahabi, once more, concurs with him:

صحيح

Sahih¹⁹

Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani (d. 852 H) copies as well:

حدثنا الفضل هو أبو نعيم ، ثنا فطر بن خليفة ، أخبرني حبيب بن أبي ثابت ، قال : سمعت ثعلبة بن يزيد ، قال : سمعت عليا عليه السلام ، يقول : والله إنه لعهد النبي الأمي صلى الله عليه وسلم : سيغدرونك من بعدي

Al-Faḍl, Abu Na’im – Fitr b. Khalifah – Habib b. Abi Thabit – Tha’labah b. Yazid:

I heard ‘Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, saying: “I swear by Allah, verily, the Ummi Prophet, peace be upon him, told me: “They will soon betray you after me.”²⁰

The Salafi annotator, ‘Abd Allah al-Shahri, comments:

فالحديث حسن لغيره

The hadith is hasan li ghayrihi.²¹

And they did betray him immediately after the death of the Messenger of Allah, exactly as prophesied. The Ansar opted to take advantage of their numerical and military powers by installing one of their members, instead of pledging allegiance to the divinely designated khalifah. They were staging a coup. But, they did not succeed, thanks to the early intervention of Abu Bakr and ‘Umar. Meanwhile, Abu Bakr and ‘Umar themselves were supposed to be on their way to faraway Palestine at that very moment, as foot soldiers under the command of Usamah. They both however defied the Prophet’s conscription order, and refused to leave al-Madinah or to join the marching army. Moreover, rather than pledging allegiance to the khalifah of the Messenger, the duo successfully won the Ansar to their side and seized the political khilafah! To use contemporary terms, Abu Bakr and ‘Umar, with the backing of the Ansar, staged a successful coup against ‘Ali, who had earlier been declared khalifah by Muhammad himself – apparently, on the Order of Allah. No wonder, Imam ‘Ali called both Abu Bakr and ‘Umar traitors and dishonest liars. Imam Muslim quotes ‘Umar saying to him (i.e. ‘Ali) and ‘Abbas:

فلما توفي رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم قال أبو بكر أنا ولي رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم ... فرأيتماه كاذبا آثما غادرا خائنا والله يعلم إنه لصادق بار راشد تابع للحق ثم توفي أبو بكر وأنا ولي رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم وولي أبا بكر فرأيتماني كاذبا آثما غادرا خائنا

When the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, died, Abu Bakr said: "I am the wali of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him" ... So both of you ('Ali and 'Abbas) thought him (i.e. Abu Bakr) to be a liar, sinful, A TRAITOR and dishonest. And Allah knows that he was really truthful, pious, rightly-guided and a follower of the truth. Abu Bakr died and I became the wali of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, and the wali of Abu Bakr. So both of you thought me to be a liar, sinful, A TRAITOR and dishonest.²²

But, is that why someone said this:

لو قد مات عمر لقد بايعت فلانا فوالله ما كانت بيعة أبي بكر إلا فلتة فتمت

When 'Umar dies, I will pledge allegiance to so-and-so, for, I swear by Allah, the pledge of allegiance given to Abu Bakr was nothing but an error and it succeeded.

It was undeniably an "error". However, it succeeded. In other words, it was illegal. The Ummah should not have done it. But, it succeeded and gave him power nonetheless. So, the people obeyed him. What is more interesting here is 'Umar's response to this statement:

ألا وإنما قد كانت كذلك ولكن الله وقى شرها

No doubt, IT WAS SURELY LIKE THAT. However, Allah saved from its EVIL.

This is the man, who was the most instrumental in bringing Abu Bakr to power, confessing that the pledge of allegiance given to him was surely an "evil" error. However, according to him, Allah saved from its "evil". So, that somehow justifies it, in his view! But, has Allah really saved the Ummah from the "evil" of the pledge of allegiance given to Abu Bakr? When one considers how it has divided us into sects, some killing the others because of it, then one sees that its "evil" clearly still lives with us.

Meanwhile, even though the word used faltah (فلتة) truly means "error"²³, the Ahl al-Sunnah do not like that meaning. They prefer one of its other meanings, as al-Hafiz does:

قوله) فوالله ما كانت بيعة أبي بكر إلا فلتة (بفتح الفاء وسكون اللام بعدها مثناة ثم تاء

تأنيت أي فجأة

His statement (I swear by Allah, the pledge of allegiance given to Abu Bakr was nothing but a faltah), meaning a SURPRISE.²⁴

In other words, the pledge of allegiance given to Abu Bakr was "a surprise" to the generality of the Sahabah. When they heard about it, they wondered: how come? Well, even this meaning of faltah, which the Sunnis prefer, still supports our position. Why was the rise of Abu Bakr to power "a

surprise”, as ‘Umar himself testified? If he had been leading the Sahabah in salat, and this had somehow translated into his appointment as khalifah-designate, why then would anyone find the pledge of allegiance given to him surprising?

After all, all the Sahabah would have been expecting him to assume the khilafah, if the Sunni claims had been true. In fact, it would have been the other way round: they would have been surprised if anyone else, other than Abu Bakr, had received the pledge of allegiance. So, apparently, the Sahabah were NOT expecting Abu Bakr to be the khalifah immediately after the Messenger of Allah. This was why it was “a surprise” to them when they heard his name being linked with the khilafah! However, he had already secured the allegiance of the Islamic army, and literally held the military power of the Ummah. Therefore, the Sahabah were presented with only a fiat accompli.

But, this definition of al-Hafiz does not explain the evil nature of Abu Bakr’s authority. The fact that something is a “surprise” does not necessarily make it “evil”. By contrast, when it is “illegal”, then it is necessarily “evil”. ‘Umar himself described the pledge of allegiance sworn to Abu Bakr with evil:

ألا وإنما قد كانت كذلك ولكن الله وقى شرها

No doubt, IT WAS SURELY LIKE THAT. However, Allah saved from ITS EVIL.

These words of ‘Umar are extremely significant, indeed. He was the staunchest supporter and defender of Abu Bakr’s rule. The fact that even he qualified that same regime of his role model with “evil” reveals that the matter was so glaring that denying it would do no good. He instead merely offered a blind defence: Allah saved from “its evil”. Of course, its evil still rules the world of Islam today – with rapidly growing sectarian killings spreading everywhere. Everything, all this evil, stemmed from the pledge of allegiance given to Abu Bakr, by the Ansar, at Saqifah on that fateful day.

‘Umar also added:

وإنما قد كانت كذلك ولكن الله وقى شرها وليس فيكم من تقطع الأعناق إليه مثل أبي

بكر من بايع رجلا من غير مشورة من المسلمين فلا يتابع هو ولا الذي تابعه تغرة أن يقتلا

No doubt, it was surely like that. However, Allah saved from its evil. And there is none amongst you towards whom throats are slit like Abu Bakr. Whosoever pledges allegiance to anyone without consultation with the Muslims, then neither that person nor the person to whom the pledge of allegiance was given, is to be supported. Rather, they both should be killed.

Here, he mentioned the exact method through which Abu Bakr came to power. ‘Umar, his colleagues and the Ansar pledged allegiance to him without consulting the other Muslims. The son of al-Khattab then recommended the death sentence for whosoever achieved the khilafah again through the “Abu Bakr” method. Such a khalifah and all his supporters should be executed. This is very telling, especially on the meaning of faltah in the athar. If the “Abu Bakr” method had been legal, then whosoever

adopted it would not have deserved death. So, it was illegal, and therefore “an error”, which bore “evil” for this Ummah.

In any case, whether *faltah* is translated as “error” or “surprise”, the direct implication is still that the Sahabah were not expecting Abu Bakr to become their khalifah. Imagine: would this have been the case if all those Sunni claims about Abu Bakr – including his alleged leadership of salat and its overstretched implications – had been true?

Notes

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. 6, p. 2503, # 6442
2. Abu al-Husayn Muslim b. al-Hajjaj al-Qushayri al-Naysaburi, Sahih Muslim (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-‘Arabi) [annotator: Muhammad Fuad ‘Abd al-Baqi], vol. 4, p. 1782, # 2276 (1)
3. Abu al-‘Abbas Ahmad b. ‘Abd al-Halim b. Taymiyyah al-Harrani, Minhaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah (Muasassat Qurtubah; 1st edition, 1406 H) [annotator: Dr. Muhammad Rashad Salim], vol. 7, pp. 243-244
4. Abu ‘Abd Allah Ahmad b. Hanbal al-Shaybani, Musnad (Cairo: Muasassat Qurtubah) [annotator: Shu’ayb al-Arnaut], vol. 1, p. 210, # 1788
5. Ibid
6. Abu ‘Abd al-Rahman Muhammad Nasir al-Din b. al-Hajj Nuh b. Tajati b. Adam al-Ashqudri al-Albani, Sahih al-Jami’ al-Saghir wa Ziyadatuhu (Al-Maktab al-Islami), vol. 1, p. 309, # 1472
7. Abu Bakr ‘Abd Allah b. Abi Shaybah, Musnad Ibn Abi Shaybah (Riyadh: Dar al-Watan; 1st edition, 1418 H) [annotators: ‘Adil b. Yusuf al-‘Azazi and Ahmad b. Farid al-Mazidi], vol. 1, p. 108
8. Ibid
9. Abu Bakr b. Abi ‘Asim, Ahmad b. ‘Amr b. al-Ḍahhak b. Mukhlid al-Shaybani, Kitab al-Sunnah (al-Maktab al-Islami; 1st edition, 1400 H) [annotator: Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani], vol. 2, pp. 350-351, # 754
10. Ibid, vol. 2, p. 351, # 754
11. Abu Bakr b. Abi ‘Asim, Ahmad b. ‘Amr b. al-Ḍahhak b. Mukhlid al-Shaybani, Kitab al-Sunnah (Dar al-Sami’i li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi’) [annotator: Dr. Basim b. Faysal al-Jawabirah], vol. 1, pp. 799-800, # 1222
12. Ibid
13. Abu Bakr b. Abi ‘Asim, Ahmad b. ‘Amr b. al-Ḍahhak b. Mukhlid al-Shaybani, Kitab al-Sunnah (al-Maktab al-Islami; 1st edition, 1400 H) [annotator: Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani], vol. 2, p. 565, # 1188
14. Abu ‘Abd Allah Muhammad b. ‘Abd Allah al-Hakim al-Naysaburi, al-Mustadrak ‘ala al-Sahihayn (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1411 H) [annotator: Mustafa ‘Abd al-Qadir ‘Ata], vol. 3, p. 150, # 4676
15. Ibid
16. Ibid
17. Ibid, vol. 3, p. 153, # 4686
18. Ibid
19. Ibid
20. Ahmad b. ‘Ali b. Hajar al-‘Asqalani, al-Matalib al-‘Aliyah bi Zawaid al-Masanid al-Thamaniyyah (Riyadh: Dar al-‘Asimah; 1st edition, 1420 H) [annotator: ‘Abd Allah b. Zafir b. ‘Abd Allah al-Shahri], vol. 16, p. 64, # 3919
21. Ibid, vol. 16, p. 67, # 3921
22. Abu al-Husayn Muslim b. al-Hajjaj al-Qushayri al-Naysaburi, Sahih Muslim (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-‘Arabi) [annotator: Muhammad Fuad ‘Abd al-Baqi], vol. 3, p. 1376, #1757
23. Dr. Rohi Baalbaki, al-Mawrid: A Modern Arabic-English Dictionary (Beirut: Dar al-‘Ilm li al-Malayin; 7th edition, 1995 CE), p. 833; Hans Wehr, A Dictionary of Modern

Written Arabic, ed. J. Milton Cowan (Ithaca, New York: Spoken Languages Services; 3rd edition, 1976 CE), p. 725

24. 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. 12, p. 129.

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2. Abu ‘Abd Allah Ahmad b. Hanbal al-Shaybani, Musnad (Cairo: Muasassat Qurtubah) [annotator: Shu’ayb al-Arnaut]
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5. Abu ‘Abd al-Rahman Ahmad b. Shu’ayb al-Nasai, al-Mujtaba min al-Sunan (Halab: Maktab al-Matbu’at al-Islamiyyah; 2nd edition, 1406 H) [annotator: Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani]
6. Abu ‘Abd al-Rahman Muhammad Nasir al-Din b. al-Hajj Nuh b. Tajati b. Adam al-Ashqudri al-Albani, Sahih Abi Dawud (Kuwait: Muasassat al-Gharas li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi’; 1st edition, 1423 H)
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