

Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr: A Faithful Companion of Imam Ali (A.S)

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A Young Man Who Was An Expert Of Warfare And An Epitome Of Sincerity

This is an account of a young man who stands out prominently among the devotees of Amirul Momineen (a.s) and who spent his life like a bud just blooming. He is Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr who was born in the tenth year of Hijri. His mother was Asma. Previously Asma was the wife of Ja'far at-Tayyar. After he was martyred she married Abu Bakr, and Muhammad was born of this union. After the death of Abu Bakr, Asma married Amirul Momineen Ali Ibn Abi Talib (a.s),

the brother of Ja'far at-Tayyar. Another son was born to her through Ali (a.s), named Yahya. Muhammad was a little boy when he entered the house of Amirul Momineen (a.s) with his mother. He was brought up in the purified atmosphere of this house with Imam Hasan and Imam Husain (a.s). It is here that he reached the age of maturity. He was a courageous and a strong young man who had perfect faith in Amirul Momineen (a.s), even though his biological father, Abu Bakr and the two caliphs after him had opposed Ali (a.s). Muhammad was also

opposed to and detested the rule of the first three caliphs.

Amirul Momineen (a.s) was also very much fond of this lad, as he was brought up in his lap. It is the statement of Ali (a.s) that: Muhammad is my son, born from the loins of Abu Bakr. He

also said, "Muhammad is the son of my wife. That is, he is my son and I am his father."

Muhammad participated in the battles of Jamal and Siffin. He was the son of the paternal aunt of Abdullah Ibn Abbas and the half brother of the sons of Ja'far at-Tayyar, and also the half brother of Yahya the son of Amirul Momineen (a.s) through Asma.

Muhammad had a son named Qasim Ibn Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr. Yahya was the greatest scholar and jurist of Medina and a student of Imam Sajjad (a.s). Both Shias and Sunnis confessed to the knowledge and intellect of Yahya.

Qasim had a daughter name Umme Farwa. She was married to Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s) and she became the mother of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s), the sixth Imam of the Shias. During his caliphate, Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s) appointed Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr as the governor of

Egypt and issued him the following instructions:

Treat them (the Egyptians) with respect. Be kind and considerate with them. Meet them cheerfully. Be fair, just and impartial in your dealings so that even the influential persons may not dare take undue advantage of your leniency and the commoners and the poor may not be

disappointed in your justice and fair dealings.

O creature of Allah! Remember that the Almighty Lord is going to take an account of each one of your sins, major or minor and whether committed openly or secretly. If He punishes you for your sins, it will not be an act of tyranny and if He forgives you it will be because of His Great Mercy and Forgiveness.

O creature of Allah! Remember that pious persons passed away from this world after having led a respectable and fruitful life and they are going to be well-rewarded in the next world (when compared with the worldly-minded people they had equal opportunities of gathering fruits of this world and utilized them to the best of their abilities and at the same time kept away from all wicked and vicious ways of life). They did not jeopardize their salvation like worldly-minded persons. They led a more contented, more respectable and happier life than those who lived wickedly. They enjoyed the fruits of their labors and they had more gratifying, sober and healthy experience of the pleasures of life than the rich and the wealthy. They regaled themselves with the joys, the facilities and the bliss of this world as much as the tyrant and vicious people desired to enjoy. Yet while leaving this world they carried with them all that would be of use to them in the next world. While living in this world they enjoyed the happiness of relinquishing its evil ways.

They made themselves sure that in the life to come they will be recipients of His Grace and Blessings, their requests will not be turned down and the favors destined for them in Paradise will not be lessened or reduced.

O creature of Allah! Fear the inevitable and unavoidable death, which is so near to everybody. Be prepared to meet it. Verily, it will come as the most important and the greatest event of your life; it will either carry unmixed blessings and rewards for you or it will bring in its wake punishments, sufferings, and eternal damnation. There will be no chance of its lessening or redemption or any change for the better. It is for you to decide whether to proceed towards perpetual peace and blessings - Paradise, or towards eternal damnation - the Hell. Remember that life is actually driving you towards death, which will meet you if you are ready to face it and which will follow you like a shadow if you try to run away from it.

Death is with you as if it has been twisted and tied around your head in between your hair and life is being rolled away from behind you with each exhalation of your breath, never to be unrolled.

Be afraid of the fire - the Hell, whose depth is fathomless whose intensity is enormous and where new kinds of punishments are constantly being introduced. The Hell is an abode where there is no place for His Mercy and Blessings. Prayers of those who are thrown there will

neither be heard nor accepted and there will not be any lessening in their sufferings and sorrows.

If it is possible for you to be sincerely afraid of Allah as well as have sincere faith in His Justice, Mercy and Love of His creatures, then try to hold these two beliefs firmly because a man entertains and cherishes the love, reverence and veneration of Allah in proportion to His fear and awe that develops in his mind.

Verily, among men is he who fully believes in His Justice and is afraid of it, as well as likes it and expects the best rewards from Allah.

O Muhammad, son of Abu Bakr! Remember that I have entrusted you with the command of the most important section of my army, which is Egyptian. Do not allow your whims and passions to overrun your judgment. Keep on guarding and defending your religion and the State given under your trust. Take care that not for a single moment in your life, you incur the Wrath of Allah, to gain the pleasure of any person. Remember that the Pleasure of Allah can substitute the pleasure of everybody else and it will be the most beneficial substitute for you but His Pleasure cannot be substituted by anything. Offer your prayers on time, do not rush through them, and never delay in offering them. Remember that piety and nobleness of all your activities are subject to sincerity and punctuality of your prayers.

Remember that a true Imam and leader cannot be equal to the one who leads humanity towards wickedness and vice and eventually towards Hell nor can there be an equality between a follower of the Prophet and his sworn enemy.

Remember the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) said that so far as his followers are concerned he was not afraid of encroachments upon any true Muslim by a heathen because Allah will protect every true Muslim from evil deeds on account of the sincerity of his faith and He will expose and avert the evils introduced by heathens, but the Prophet felt anxious about the activities of hypocrites among Muslims, activities of those outwardly wise and learned people who loudly proclaimed greatness and virtues of their good deeds but who secretly indulged in vices and sins.^[1]

When Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr arrived in Egypt, the conditions were very unfavorable. The people of Egypt were supporters of the first three caliphs and considered Muhammad among the killers of Uthman. Therefore, from day one they were ready to oppose him. Muhammad also detected this and thus he began to exercise caution regarding his own safety. On the other hand, Muawiyah, the ruler of Sham did not sit idle. He wanted Egypt to break away from the dominion of Amirul Momineen (a.s), and that Muhammad should be killed. So he began to dispatch mercenaries to Egypt to foment unrest among the people.

When Amirul Momineen (a.s) came to know this he sent Malik Ashtar to Egypt to take over the reins of the government so that it does not pass out of his control, and that a new calamity may not befall Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr. However, when Malik Ashtar landed on the coast of Mediterranean and camped at a place called Al-Areesh, an agent of Muawiyah managed to administer poison to him mixed in honey and he was martyred there, even before he could reach Egypt . Before the reinforcements accompanying Malik Ashtar could reach Egypt to support Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr, Muawiyah sent an army there to attack the forces of Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr. A fifth column accompanied this battalion and it surrounded the forces of Muhammad from all sides. Since the enemies had internal support also, Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr was attacked with greater intensity. Gradually the enemies got the upper hand and Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr fought valiantly till he was seriously wounded and martyred in the most merciless manner. In this way Muawiyah managed to gain control over Egypt .

At that time the age of Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr was only twenty-eight years. Someone from Syria came to Amirul Momineen (a.s) and said that he had never seen the Syrians in such a joyous and a festive mood. Amirul Momineen (a.s) said, "Our grief is much more than their gaiety."

After that he wrote a letter to Abdullah Ibn Abbas the maternal cousin of Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr and the governor of Basra appointed by Ali (a.s). Therein he mentioned about the martyrdom of Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr and the annexation of Egypt by Muawiyah: Ibn Abbas! Muhammad, (may his soul rest in peace), died as a martyr and Egypt has fallen in the hands of the enemies. I beseech the Reward of Allah for the sorrow I feel and the grief I suffer on account of the martyrdom of this young man who was like a son to me. He loved me. He was faithful to me. So far as the defense of the Islamic State is concerned he was like a sharp sword and an impregnable fort.

Long before this deplorable event I had issued orders to the Heads of various provinces and to the people of Kufa to reach him or send help to him when he calls for it. I had repeated these orders. Some went to his help but half-heartedly, others started submitting excuses, while some sent false reports of important engagements and did not co-operate with him. I feel disgusted and pray to Allah to relieve me of the society of such faithless and worthless people.

I swear by Allah that had I no desire of dying as a martyr, and had I not been ready for my death awaiting night and day, I would not have liked to live amongst them even for a day and I would not have come out with them to fight against the enemies of Allah and Islam.[2]

The Imam was very aggrieved upon the martyrdom of this young man who was unsurpassed in

courage and bravery on the battlefield and was also a humble worshipper of the Almighty and well versed with the teachings of Islam. That is why Abdullah Ibn Abbas arrived from Basra to Kufa to pay condolence to Amirul Momineen (a.s). Ayesha who was the sister of Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr continued to curse Muawiyah Ibn Abu Sufyan and his commander Muawiyah ibn Khadijah.[3]

References

[1] NahjulBalagha

[2] NahjulBalagha

[3] Biharul Anwar