

The Twelve Caliphs after the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.)

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It is necessary for the researcher on the traditions of the twelve Imams (a.s.) to know what Tabaraani has written in his al-Mo'jam al-Kabeer. He writes, '...Shafi al-Asbahi narrates that I heard Abdullah Ibn Umar say that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) said, 'There will be twelve caliphs after me. (The first amongst them is) the caliph Abu Bakr al-Siddique. He will not live after me but less. (He will be followed by) the chief of my tribe, who will live in a praiseworthy manner and die as a martyr.

He (s.a.w.a.) was asked, 'Who is he, O Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.)?' He (s.a.w.a.) replied, 'Umar Ibn al-Khattaab.' Then he (s.a.w.a.) turned to Usman and prophesied, 'Soon the people will ask you to remove the shirt with which Allah, Mighty and Blessed be He, has clothed you. I swear by the One in Whose hand is my life, if you remove it, you will never enter paradise till a camel passes through the eye of the needle.'

He has brought the same narration with minor changes in another place.²

I say: Know that we will certainly not accept the one who argues with this additional false attribution to the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) in the guise of explaining these traditions and thereby, attempting to legally establish the caliphate of the first three with documentary evidence. He (Tabarani) conveniently forgot that the Ahle Sunnah are unanimous that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) has not appointed the three as his caliphs and there is no document to prove that. Undoubtedly, this is the fabrication of the Ottoman kings and their attempts to hide the evils and distortions of Usman in Islam, which were even repudiated by the likes of Talha, Ayesha and Ammaar (r.a.) in the most severe manner possible, thereby opening the door of mischief and civil war amongst the Muslims and leading to a great unrest among the Muslims and their demanding from Usman to apply his deeds and laws as per the Islamic Shariah. But Usman refused to relent due to his fiscal and governmental policies, finally resulting in his murder.

For further explanations concerning the additional and concocted part of this tradition, we shall bring forth the discussion from two aspects: The chain of narrators of this tradition and Text of the tradition

(a) **Chain of narrators:** Among the narrators of this tradition, is a person called as Abdullah Ibn Saaleh (exp. 222 A.H.). Regarding him, Zahabi writes in his Tazkerah, 'His traditions were drawn on the scale of authenticity and were rejected due to lack of evidence. Whatever he has narrated has been repudiated.'

Ibn Ahmad says, 'I asked my father about him.' He said, 'Initially he was firm and solid but later became corrupt and hence, he is of no consequence.'

Saaleh Ibn Muhammad says, 'In the view of Ibn Moeen, he was reliable but according to me, he used to lie in traditions.'

Ibn al-Madeeni says, 'I have rejected his traditions and do not narrate anything from him.'

Ahmad Ibn Saaleh says, 'He is accused and is of no consequence.'

Nisaai says, 'He is not reliable. His tradition 'Surely, Allah chose my companions upon the entire universe' is a fabricated one and there are many who have discredited him.'

Ibn Habaan says, 'He is a denier of traditions and narrates with assurance that which has not been narrated by the reliable ones. He had a neighbor whose writing was similar to that of Abdullah. He wrote things and placed it between the writings of Abdullah, who thought that it was his own writing and narrated from it.'

Another narrator of this tradition is Lais Ibn Sa'd (exp. 175 A.H.) described as knowledgeable, a commentator of Quran and other praiseworthy characteristics as has been recorded in his biography.

Like Ibn Abi Lailaa and Ibn Shabramah, Lais was amongst the jurists of the government. He was an agent of Mansoor al-Abbasi, the oppressive and murderous tyrant, whose oppression, rebellion, persecution of the Shias and usurpation of the caliphate was proclaimed publicly by the likes of Abu Hanifah, who refused to accept his gifts, saying, 'This is from the public treasury of the Muslims and none has any right in it except those who fight in the way of Allah, the needy and those who work for religion, while I am none of these.' Mansoor ordered his (Abu Hanifah) arrest and whipped him till he died because of it or due to poisoning. Abu Hanifah had willed that he should be buried in a land that has not been usurped by the Caliph, or any of his men and workers.

But the Abbasi tyrants who followed Mansoor and were the contemporaries of Lais, relied heavily on him. He was a very important figure for them in Egypt and they were in need of

people like him. For, the Egyptians were the followers of Imam Ali (a.s.) and his children, and therefore considered them to be worthier of caliphate and leadership than the Abbasids, whose misdeeds, bloodshed and misappropriation of public wealth, despite their non-eligibility for caliphate and leadership of the Muslims, were witnessed by one and all.

Lais strove to weaken the love of the Egyptians for the progeny of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.).

The Egyptians used to disparage and detest Usman because of his misdeeds and the unrest against Usman had arisen from Egypt. Now, Lais began to mention the virtues and merits of Usman to the Egyptians. Naturally, a scholar like him in a place like Egypt was a great political hope of the government for the negation of the love of the Ahle Bait (a.s.).

Hence, we see that as per the demands of political contingencies, no matter was decided in Egypt but with his counsel. Thus, key affairs like the appointment of governors and judges were decided only after consultations with him.

Thus, Lais did not belong to the category of people like Abdullah Ibn Saaleh who fabricated traditions or someone else used to interpolate traditions in his writings. We do not like to accuse Lais of fabricating traditions or deliberately narrating false ones but he was not from those who stopped at the traditions, which they disregarded.

Nay, he believed that the Divine Text did not carry merely an apparent meaning which could suffice. They were not only words; rather they also had a spiritual aspect embracing proofs, imports and reasons. Perhaps, he considered that the threat of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) for the one who attributed a lie to him (s.a.w.a.), like in the famous tradition, 'Whoever attributes a lie to me deliberately, his seat will be surrounded with hell fire', its esoteric is more limited than its apparent. For, these lies do not include the narration of a fabricated tradition attributed to him (s.a.w.a.), if done due to political and governmental demands and general welfare.

It seems quite likely that this addition in the tradition is the fabrication of Abdullah Ibn Saaleh and the other narrators of this tradition. But what leads to a negative perception of Lais for a researcher is the pompous and luxurious way in which he led his life. It is said that he built a palatial mansion which had twenty doors. He developed a garden in it, full of trees and flowers, whose fragrance spread far and wide. His wardrobe constituted of a year's clothes and for each day he had a special dress. He never wore one dress for two consecutive days.

Abu al-Abbas al-Sarraaj writes, 'We were traveling with Lais from Alexandria and he had three ships, one ship was carrying his kitchen, another his family and third one his guest.' There is no doubt that at that given time in Egypt, there were many poor people, destitute and workers who were patiently bearing severe hunger and were even deprived of basic facilities like housing to protect them from heat and cold. While you just read about the condition of Lais.

Even more shocking than his lifestyle, is the mode of his issuing fatwas when the kings and those in power asked him to so. Indeed, they have mentioned that there occurred a conversation between Haroon and his wife, Zubaidah. Haroon said, 'You are divorced if I did not enter paradise'.

All the jurists congregated to find a solution for this problem, but none had the cunningness and shrewdness to make permissible (حلال) for the two what in their view had become prohibited (حرام). Lais was seated at the end of the gathering. On being asked for the solution of this problem, he replied, 'When the caliph dissolves the assembly, I will speak to him.' Accordingly, when the crowd had dispersed, Lais asked Haroon to bring a copy of the Quran. Lais said, 'Open the Surah Rahman from the Quran and start reciting it.' Haroon duly obliged till he reached to the verse

And for him who fears to stand before his Lord are two gardens (Qur'an Surah Rahman 55: 46)

Lais ordered him, 'Stop and say, 'By Allah! Surely, I fear the position of my Lord'.' Haroon did as ordered, to which Lais remarked, 'So there are two paradises and not just one (means your marriage with Zubaidah is still valid and not void because you can still enter the second paradise).' Zubaidah, who was hearing this conversation along with her slave-girls from behind the curtain, raised a huge roar of applause, hand clapping and celebration. Haroon appreciated, 'By Allah! You are excellent' and conferred him with rewards and thousands of gold coins. Zubaidah too ordered the same. Haroon also gifted him with the land of Jeezah which is the most fertile land of Egypt.

We can't make out anything from this jurisprudence except that it was a trade with the laws of Allah and converting His prohibition to permission just for the sake of acquiring the satisfaction of Haroon, the Emperor of his time, and Zubaidah, the Empress of her era, and not the chief of the faithfuls.

We do not understand whether or not Zubaidah could fathom the far reaching mischievous consequences of this edict? Or whether even Haroon could follow its implications? Or perhaps he understood but intended to exonerate himself from the blame of the people or just to have Zubaidah for himself. By Allah! It is truly amazing that how two people, one of them calls himself as the caliph of the Muslims and the second considers himself as a jurist of the religion as well as the government, can play and toy with the laws of Allah.

It should be clear for you that in the jurisprudence of the Ahle Bait (a.s.) it is firmly established that divorce cannot take place unless all its conditions are fulfilled, regardless of the fact whether these are done in the present or are achieved in the future. Divorce takes place with clear words and after all obligations are discharged and none remains unexecuted.

But even on the basis of the jurisprudence of governmental sects, there was no need to resort to such cunning mischief when the divorce pronounced was not the third one in which the husband is not allowed to remarry his wife till she marries somebody else. He can return to her during the period of iddah if she is not a menopause and did not have intercourse. But if she is a menopause, and had intercourse, the Nikah has to be pronounced again.

Lais subscribed to the sect that believed in the occurrence of the conditional divorce and said, 'If the condition is not fulfilled, the judgment of its occurrence cannot be given unless the conditions are realized or simply the knowledge of their occurrence. In case of doubt, they can offer to keep company of each other and conjugal enjoyment is permissible.

Apparently, Lais did not have any solution for this religious problem except devilish deceit whose mischief could be understood by anybody who has little insight in the laws of the Shariah. Thus, firstly, fear from Allah is not stronger than believing in Him because belief is the foundation of fear. For, fear can be fruitful and beneficial only if a person meets Allah with belief. Hence, the acquisition of this reward is dependant on the person remaining steadfast on his fear from Allah and that he should not let go of this fear throughout his life.

Secondly, perhaps the tyrannical misdeeds of Haroon, his oppression, his giving preference to himself, his relatives, his poets, his slave-girls, his singers and his singing girls over the poor and the downtrodden, his persecution of the Shias and throwing them behind bars, his murder of Imam Kazim (a.s.), the greatest personality of his time, etc. were all legal and valid in the eyes of Lais.

Meanwhile, Haroon was the first caliph from the Bani Abbas to play chess³ and he was the first to give high regard and respect to the singers.⁴

Sawli writes: Haroon left behind properties worth one billion dinars while his cattle and other stocks exceeded one billion and fifteen thousand dinars.⁵ In one gathering, he gifted Ishaq al-Mosuli with two hundred thousand dinars.⁶

This is apart from the fact as to what the people witnessed of his tyranny and oppression and absolute lack of fear from Allah. So, what was the point in making him take this oath that he feared Allah except to obtain the satisfaction of Haroon and his wife? May Allah not forgive the one who plays with His laws in this manner! Allah, the Almighty, declares in the Holy Quran,

Surely they who deviate from the right way concerning Our communications are not hidden from Us. What! is he then who is cast into the fire better, or he who comes safe on the day of resurrection? Do what you like, surely He sees what you do. (Qur'an Surah Fusselat 40: 40)

It should be known that this was not the first violation in Islam since such apostasy and attempts at legitimizing the prohibitions were not confined to Lais. Rather, it was the approach of all the official jurists who strove to lend propriety to the actions of the rulers.

Salafi in his book Tuyuriyyaat, an account of the history of the caliphs, narrates on the authority of Ibn al-Mubarak, 'When Rashid became the caliph, he intended to acquire a slave-girl of Mahdi. He made his intentions known to her. She responded, 'It is not proper for you because your father slept with me.' But he was passionately infatuated with her. Hence, he sent across his problem to Abu Yusuf, asking for the solution.

Abu Yusuf replied, 'O Ameerul Momineen! It is not necessary to rely on the statement of a slave-girl and even if it is true, don't testify her statement.' Ibn al-Mubarak notes, 'I don't know who is more shocking; this man, who soaks his hands in the blood of the Muslims and their wealth, refuses to restrain himself from the concubine of his own father; or this Islamic ummah which inclines itself towards such chief of the faithful; or this jurist who declares, 'rape the wife of your father, let loose your desire and let me take the blame for it.'⁷

I say: He did not restrain himself from the concubine of his father, who was prohibited for him, despite being surrounded by hundreds of mates who were even more beautiful and better than her but he did not have patience to keep away from what Allah had prohibited. He referred to the jurists of his government only to procure a pretext and justification before the

people in this regard.

Abdullah Ibn Yusuf and Ishaq Ibn Raahwayh also issued similar edicts and Haroon rewarded the latter with a hundred thousand dirhams.

This was about Lais who is one of the narrators of this tradition.

The third narrator of this tradition is Khaled Ibn Yazid al-Jamhi al-Misri. Regarding him, the author of 'al-Jarho wa al-Ta'deel' writes, 'I asked my father about him', he replied, 'He is unknown (مجهول).'

The fourth narrator is Saeed Ibn Abi Hilaal, about whom Ahmad writes, 'He could not follow what he has mixed in the traditions.'

The fifth narrator is Rabeeah Ibn Saif and he is the one who made known the word of Ibn Ayyaash, the third century scholar that he made additions in his traditions. Thus, Rabeeah is also derided because he committed a number of mistakes and had many detractors. Nisaai too has deemed him to be weak.

The sixth narrator of this tradition is Abdullah Ibn Amr. I don't think there is any need for introduction about him and his father because both belonged to the rebellious group and quite a few verses of the Holy Quran about hypocrisy were revealed concerning them. But it appears that this addition is not the fabrication of Ibn Amr, rather it is attributed to him. Allah knows the best.

This is the state of the chain of narrators of this tradition. In other words, as you must have observed, they are extremely weak and unreliable. It is clear that political factors made them interpolate lies and fabrications in the tradition.

(b) **Text of the Tradition:** I don't think anybody who bears little insight in history and the life of Usman, with whom none of the companions of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) were satisfied except the Bani Marwan, Bani Umayyah and their henchmen, will accept that Allah, the Wise, the Cognizant of the conditions of His servants, has enrobed him.

And that if he discards this robe, he will not enter paradise. For, Usman was the weak and miserable sycophant, who gave preference to the likes of Hakam and Marwan over the esteemed companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.). He was the one with whom Marwan played till he became his rabble, dragging him wherever he pleased. Can anyone ever imagine that Allah, the High, places the cloak of caliphate on such a person and then threatens him that if he removes it, he will not enter paradise?

Sayed Qutb writes: It was a misfortune that Usman reached to the caliphate while he was weak and indecisive in Islamic resolve. He lacked the steadfastness to withstand the cunningness of Marwan and the conspiracies of Umayyah after him. He granted from the public treasury two hundred thousand dirhams to his son-in-law Haaris Ibn al-Hakam on his wedding day. Such instances abound in Usman's life. Like, one day he gave Zubair six hundred thousand dirhams, Talhah two hundred thousand dirhams and presented Marwan Ibn al-Hakam with one-fifth of all land taxes of Africa.

Sayed Qutb quotes Masoodi, 'The day Usman was murdered, he left behind with his treasure one hundred and fifty thousand dinars (gold coins), one million dirhams (silver coins), his estates in the valleys of Quraa, Hunain, etc. valued up to one hundred thousand dinars and plenty of camels and war-horses.⁸

We do not intend to extend the discussion concerning the criticism of Usman and his misdeeds. We have only mentioned what we have done to inform a just person that to attribute such statements to the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) that Allah has placed the cloak of the people's leadership on Usman, is an insult to the elevated status of Prophethood. Allah, the Wise, the Pure is free from such blunders and is Higher than what the unjust attribute to Him, a great lie.

Finally, the easier way out and the best proof that this part is an addition, fabricated in the tradition is its absence in the literature of reliable books. Thus, we see No'maani, who is Tabaraani's contemporary, narrates the same tradition as follows: Muhammad Ibn Usman reports to us on the authority of Ahmad Ibn Abi Khaisamah from Yahya Ibn Moeen, from Abdullah Ibn Saleh, from Lais, from Sa'd, from Khaled Ibn Yazid, from Saeed Ibn Ali al-Hilal, from Rabiah Ibn Saif who narrates: We were with Shafee al-Asbahee when he said, 'I heard Abdullah Ibn Amr say, 'There will be twelve caliphs after me.'⁹

References:

1. Al-Mo'jam al-Kabeer, vol. 1, pg. 7, Tr. No. 12.
2. Al-Mo'jam al-Kabeer, vol. 1, pg. 47, Tr. No. 142.
3. Tarikh al-Khulafa, pg. 295
4. Tarikh al-Khulafa, pg. 295
5. Tarikh al-Khulafa, pg. 292
6. Tarikh al-Khulafa, pg. 286
7. Tarikh al-Khulafa, pg. 291

8. Murooj al-Zahab, vol. 2, pg. 332.

9. Al-Ghaibah al-No'maani, pg. 104, Chap. 4, Tr. No. 34; Ghaibah of Shaykh, pg. 89; Al-Insaaf, Tr. No. 190; Behaar al-Anwaar, vol. 36, pg. 237, Chap. 41, Tr. No. 30; Al-Manaaqeb of Ibn Shahr Al-Aashob, vol. 1, pg. 291.