

Islam of Abu Talib (Part 1 of 4)

It would be interesting if we analyze the verses that some Sunni commentators have alleged to have revealed for the disbelief of Abu Talib (RA). The first one is:

Surah VI - The Cattle (An'aam) - Verse 26

And they prohibit (others) from it and go far away from it, and they only bring destruction upon their own souls while they do not perceive it.

- Tabari relates from Sufiyan Soori who relates it from Habeeb ibn Abu Sabit who narrated it from somebody saying that Ibn Abbas said 'that this verse came down for Abu Talib, because he used to protect Muhammad from the Kufar but he never recited the Kalima.'

Sunni references

- Tabaqat of Ibne Sa'ad, v 2 p 105

- History of Tabari, v 7 p 100

- Tafseer Ibn Katheer, v 2 p 127

- Tafseer Kashaf, v 1 p 448

- Tafseer Qurtubi, v 6 p 406

- ... and many many more

Now let us see for ourselves if the ideology behind the above interpretation

is correct or not, so that we would have no doubts in our minds. Further scrutiny of the above interpretation would lead us to believe that it is nothing but a futile effort to discredit Abu Talib:

- The verse talks about living people, since the verse mentions that ' people who prevent others from doing it and neither do it '. Of course a dead person can't think of preventing others from a course of action, and they have to be living to do so.

This convinces us to believe that this verse can't be for Abu Talib.

- The chain of narrators terminates after Habeeb ibn Abu Sabit and Sufyan doesn't mention who narrated it from Habeeb ibn Abu Sabit, and all he says that he (Habeeb) narrated it from some one who heard it from Ibn Abbas.

This criterion is not acceptable according to the standards of hadeeth, since the chain of narrators is incomplete, therefore this hadeeth is unacceptable.

But for argument sake if we still accept the chain of narrators, and the fact that Habeeb ibn Abu Sabit is the only person who narrates it, the books of Rijal testify to the fact that we can't accept this tradition, for the following reasons

- In the eyes of Ibn Habban, Habeeb is a 'deceiver', and Aqeeli Ibn Aun has 'avoided' Habeeb since Habeeb has copied hadeeths from Ata'a which are ' absolutely unacceptable '.

Qita'an says that Habeeb's hadeeths other than Ata'a are also unacceptable and are not safe from being fake. Abu Dawood quotes from Ajri that the hadeeths narrated by Habeeb from Ibn Zamrah are not correct. Ibn Khazeema comments that Habeeb is a 'deceiver'

Sunni reference

- Tahzeeb al-Tahzeeb, by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, v 2 p 179

Therefore the tradition narrated by Habeeb is his personal innovation, and after reading the views of so many Rijal experts how can we accept his hadeeth?

But this shouldn't stop us from further investigating the issue, and if we accept the fact that Habeeb can be trusted, let us look at Sufyan who is the last narrator in the chain of the tradition against Abu Talib. We still have to declare this hadeeth void, because, al-Dhahabi writes about him that

"Sufyan narrations are lies"

Sunni reference

- Mizan al-Itidal, by al-Dhahabi, v 1 p 396

I find it very difficult to believe that despite the fact the commentators who have written down the traditions are respectable personalities, they have copied it down from cheap people such as above, without any hesitation.

Despite all these weak traditions that have been narrated by weak narrators, we find hadeeths related by Ibn Abbas that are genuine and state the opposite of what we find in the hadeeth mentioned above. Let see what they have to offer

- Tabari states that the above verse came down for all the mushrikeen who used to stay away from the Prophet and used to advise others to

stay away from him (the Prophet).

Sunni reference

- Tafseer Tabari, v 7 p 109

- Tafseer Durre Manthoor, v 3 p 8

The fact is that Abu Talib never advised others to stay away from Prophet (PBUH&HF). Even many of those who accused him for not uttering Shahadah, confess that he helped the Holy Prophet (PBUH&HF) during those days of tribulations of the young Islam with all his means. Also he raised the Prophet when he was child, and then accepted that Imam Ali (AS) to be raised by Prophet. He, in fact, was Muslim from the beginning, but was ordered by Prophet to practice Taqiyya (to conceal his belief) so that he could play as a mediator between Prophet and chiefs of unbelievers in Mecca (like Abu Sufyan).

Also it is important to note that we do NOT believe that the parents of Prophets and Imams were necessarily perfect (Infallible). However we believe that their parents and all their forefathers were righteous and believers and monotheist during their entire life.

End of Part 1 of 4

Islam of Abu Talib (Part 2 of 4)

A number of historians and hadith recorders reported that Abu Talib died while he was a pagan. Some of them reported the verse ' It is not permissible to the Prophet and the believers to ask God to forgive the pagans even if they were akin to them, after it became clear to them that those pagans are from the people of hell .'

Such false commentaries and statements were fabricated as a part of the smear campaign which the Omayyads and their allies waged against Imam Ali (AS). By fabricating such traditions they tried these to convince people that Abu Sufyan, father of Muawiyah was better than Abu Talib, father of Imam Ali, claiming that Abu Sufyan died while he was a Muslim and Abu Talib died while he was a pagan.

The recorders of the hadiths and the historians took these hadiths without paying attention to the evidence of their forgery. They did not try to examine these hadiths, yet the date of the revelation of the above mentioned verse testifies that it was not revealed about a matter pertaining to Abu Talib (May Allah be well pleased with him).

Now coming to the hadith by itself, let see what the most authenticated book in the eyes of the Sunnis has to say.

al-Bukhari in his Sahih writes

Narrated Al Musaiyab : When Abu Talib's death approached, the Prophet (saw) went to him while Abu Jahl and Abdullah bin Abi Umaiyah were present with him. The Prophet (saw) said : ' O Uncle, say : None has the right to be worshipped except Allah, so that I may argue for your case with it before Allah. ' On that Abu Jahl and Abdullah bin Abi Umaiyah said : ' O Abu Talib ! Do you want to renounce Abdul Muttalib's religion ? ' Then the Prophet (saw) said, ' I will keep on asking (Allah for) forgiveness for you unless I am forbidden to do so. ' Then there was revealed

It is not fitting for the Prophet and those who believe that they should pray for forgiveness for pagans even though they be of kin, after it has become clear to them that they are the companions of the fire. [9 : 113]

Sahih Bukhari Kitabul Tafseer

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The above mentioned verse is a part of the Chapter of Baraat (number 9).

A few points on this Chapter

- this is a totally medinite Chapter, with the exception of the last two verses (128 and 129)

- the verse which is the subject of our discussion is Verse 113

- the Chapter of Baraat was revealed during the ninth (9th) year of Hijra. The chapter speaks of the events that took place during the campaign of Tabuk, which was during the month of Rajab in the ninth Year. The Prophet (saw) had ordered Abu Bakr to announce first part of it during the days of the pilgrimage of that year when he sent him as an ' Amir Al Hajj '. Then he sent Imam Ali to take that part from him and announce it, because God commanded him that no one should deliver the revelation other than himself or a man from the members of his House. The chapter speaks of the events that took place during the campaign of Tabouk, which was during the month of Rajab in the ninth Year.

Many Sunni traditionist reported that:

The Messenger of Allah send Abu Bakr to the people of Mecca with the Chapter of al-Bara'ah and when he proceeded, (the Prophet) sent for him and asked him to return the chapter and said: "No one takes it to them except one of my Ahlul-Bayt." and thus he sent Ali for this mission."

Sunni references:

- Sahih al-Tirmidhi, v2, p183, v5, pp 275,283
- Musnad of Ahmed Hanbal, v1 pp 3,151, v3, pp 212,283
- Fadha'l al-Sahabah, by Ahmad Hanbal, v2, p562, Tradition #946
- Hakim in his Mustadrak, v 3 p 51
- Al Nisai in his Khasais al Awliyah, p 20
- Fadhail al Khamsah, v 2 p 343
- Siratun Nabi by Shibli Numani, v 2 p 239

Ahmad in his musnad added that Abu Bakr said : The Prophet (saw) had sent me with the chapter of Baarat to the people of Mecca

No pagan should make pilgrimage after this year. No naked shall circumnavigate around the Ancient House. No one shall enter paradise except a Muslim soul. Any pagan community that has been between them and the Messenger of God a peace accord, the accord will end by the end by the end of the specified period (without extension), and God and His Messenger are clear of pagans

Also Shibli Numani in his work on the Seera of the Prophet (saw) writes as follows (p 239 --> p 240)

Now in the year 9th Hijri, the Kaaba was for the first time, consecrated as the central House of Worship for the followers of Abraham On return from Tabuk the Holy Prophet (saw) sent out a caravan of three hundred muslims from Mecca to Medina to perform the Hajj at Mecca.

Now coming back to the verse of [9 : 113], the verse could not mean Abu Talib, because he died in Mecca at least two years before the Hijrah !

I now quote Shibli Numani, in his most celebrated work on the Seera of the Prophet, Siratun Nabi (v 1, p 219 and 220)

Death of Khadija and of Abu Talib

(10th Year of Revelation)

On return from the mountain, the Prophet had hardly passed a few days in peace when Abu Talib and Khadija both died. He paid his last visit to Abu Talib when he was dying. Abu Jahl and Abd Allah ibn Ummaya were already there. The Prophet asked Abu Talib to recite the credo of Islam, so that he might bear witness to his faith in the presence of Allah. Abu Jahl and Ibn Umayya expostulated with Abu Taleb and asked if he was going to turn away from the religion of Abd Al Muttalib. In the end Abu Talib said that he was dying with is belief in the religion of Abd Al Muttalib. Then he turned to the Prophet and said that he would have recited the creed but he feared lest the Quraish should accuse him of fear of death. The Prophet said that he would be praying to Allah for him till He forbade (Bukhari on the Chapter of Funeral. The last sentence has been taken from Muslim and not Bukhari). This is the version of Bukhari and Muslim. Ibn Ishaq says that while dying Abu Talib's lips were in motion. al-Abbas who was till then a nonbeliever, put his ear to his lips and then said to the Prophet that he was reciting the KALIMA the Prophet had wanted of him. (Ibn Hisham, Cairo Edition, p 146).

[Please do bear in mind that all the references cited in the above para are * NOT * my addition, and * NEITHER * are the block letters my addition, they have been rendered by Shibli Numani himself]

Then Shibli Numani further writes

But from a traditionist's point of view this report of Al Bukhari is not worthy taking as reliable because the last narrator is Musaiyyab who embraced Islam after the fall of Mecca, and was not himself present at the time of Abu Talib's death. It is on this account that al Aini in his commentary has remarked that this tradition is MURSAL (Al Aini, Chapter Janaiz or Funeral, VOL IV, p 200).

Also he writes on page 221

Abu Talib made great sacrifices for the Prophet none can deny that. He would even sacrifice his own children for his sake. For his sake he had exposed himself to the odium of the whole country, and for his sake he had passed years in state of siege, suffering starvation as an exile, unprovided with food or drink. Will all this love, sacrifice and devotion go unrewarded ?

- asking God to forgive a deceased usually takes place at the time of the funeral prayer. The wording of the verse ' It is not permissible to the Prophet and the believers to ask God to forgive the pagans ', indicates that the Prophet was with other believers (in a congregational prayer) when he asked forgiveness for the pagans.

- as a matter of fact, the funeral prayer was not instituted before the Hijrah (migration to Medina). The first prayer offered by the Messenger for a deceased was his prayer for Al Bura Ibn Maarour. It is likely that this verse was revealed after the Prophet offered a funeral prayer for one of the hypocrites who used to pretend Islam and conceal paganism. It is very likely that the verse was revealed when the Holy Prophet (saw) offered a funeral prayer for Abdullah bin Obai bin Salool who died during the ninth year and who was well noted in his hypocrisy, his hatred towards the Messenger of Allah and his adversary to the faith of Islam. About him and his followers, the Chapter of Al Munafiqoon (the Hypocrites) was revealed before that time. Had historians and hadith recorders thought with some depth and logic, they would not have committed this terrible historical error !

Here is another hadeeth from Sahih Bukhari that mentions the event similar to the previous hadeeth

Narrated Al Musaiyab : When Abu Talib was on his death bed, Allah's Apostle came to him and found Abi Umaiyah bin Al Mughira. Allah's Apostle said : ' O uncle ! say : None has the right to be worshipped except Allah, a sentence with which I will defend you before Allah. ' On that Abu Jahl and Abdullah bin Abi Umaiyah said to Abu Talib : ' Will now you leave the religion of Abdul Mutallaib ? ' Allah's apostle kept on inviting him to say that sentence while the other two kept on repeating their sentence before him till Abu Talib said as a last thing then he said to them , ' I am on the religion of Abdul Muttalib ' and refused to say : None has the right to be worshipped except Allah. On that Allah's Apostle said : ' By Allah I will keep on asking Allah's forgiveness for you unless I am forbidden (by Allah) to do so. So Allah revealed

It is not fitting for the Prophet and those who believe that they should invoke (Allah) for forgiveness for pagans (9 : 113)

And then Allah revealed especially about Abu Talib :

Verily ! You (O, Muhammad) guide not whom you like, but Allah guides whom He will (28:56)

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Readers will be surprised to know that the two hadeeths cited above, prove that the two verses descended one after the other. But this is contrary to another hadeeth that Bukhari cites in his Sahih, and it proves that Surah Baarat was among the last revealed chapters. Here is the hadith Narrated Al Bara : The last Sura that was revealed was Bara'a ...

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Other Sunni references that affirm to the fact that Sura Baarat was among the last revealed chapters and a Medianite Sura, please refer to

- Tafseer Kashshaf, v 2 p 49

- Tafseer Qurtubi, v 8 p 273

- Tafseer Itqan, v 1 p 18

- Tafseer Showkani, v 3 p 316

But where is the fault in the Hadeeths? The verse cited from Surah Qasas, was revealed at least ten (10) years before Surah Baarat, and that it was revealed in Mecca, where as Surah Baarat was revealed in Medina. Please think about it, and you shall find out that in a futile effort to discredit Abu Talib and declare him as an unbeliever, the order of the revelation of the Quran was not taken into consideration. Just imagine the time gap in between the revelation of the two chapters, and the matter will be very clear.

Also history tells us that Al Musaiyab

- disliked Imam Ali

- refused to say the funeral prayers for the grandson of Imam Ali, and the son of Imam Hussain, Imam Zainul Abidin

Sunni Reference

- Sharah of Ibn al Hadid, v 1 p 370

One could conclude that this fabrication was done to simply elevate Umayyad over Hashimites.

Also I came across a very astonishing commentary, by the most revered Sunni commentator, Fakr ar Din Al Razi in his Tafseer, with reference to Surah Qasas (28:56). He has mentioned this verse about Abu Talib, * not * because of his personal opinion; because of the opinion of some other scholars '. Surprisingly, he admits, that this verse could not be associated with Abu Talib's beliefs ...

Reference: Tafseer Kabir, v 25 p 3 (Fakhr ar Din al Razi)
End of Part 2 of 4

Islam of Abu Talib (Part 3 of 4)

Quran and the unbelievers

It is not (fit) for the Prophet and those who believe that they should ask forgiveness for the polytheists, even though they should be near relatives, after it has become clear to them that they are inmates of the flaming fire. [9 : 113]

Now since we have already proved that the above verse was not revealed for Abu Talib, where the Prophet and the Muslims have been advised not to pray for the polytheists, it would help us to look at those verses that asked the Prophet and the Believers not to establish relations for the polytheists, let alone pray for them, out of love and respect !

Surah 58 - The Pleading One (Mujadilah) - Verse 22

You shall not find a people who believe in Allah and the latter day befriending those who act in opposition to Allah and His Apostle, even though they were their own fathers, or their sons, or their brothers, or their kinsfolk; these are they into whose hearts He has impressed faith, and whom He has strengthened with an inspiration from Him: and He will cause them to enter gardens beneath which rivers flow, abiding therein; Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him; these are Allah's party: Surely the party of Allah are the successful ones.

This was revealed in the Battle of Badr and this event occurred in the 2 year of the Hijra. However there are some commentators that relate its revelation with The Battle of the Uhud, that occurred in the 3 year of the Hijra. However, the verse advises us not to make friends with the non believers or even love them. This Chapter was revealed well before Surah Baarat (Chapter 9, for the verse cited in the beginning)

Sunni references

- Tafseer Ibn Katheer, v 4 p 329
- Tafseer Sho Kafi, v 5 p 189
- Tafseer Aloosi, v 28 p 37

Surah IV - Women (Surah Al Nisa)- Verses 139 and 144

Those who take the unbelievers for guardians rather than believers.

Do they seek honor for them ? Then surely all honor is for Allah.

O you who believe ! do not take the unbelievers as protectors instead of than believers; do you desire that you should give to Allah a manifest proof against yourselves ?

This is a Meccan Surah, where the above verses advise the believers not to take unbelievers as helpers or protectors. How could the Prophet get help from an unbeliever if we assume Abu Talib is unbeliever?! Ofcourse, this verse was revealed well before Chapter 9, that has been the focus our attention!

Sunni reference :

- Tafseer Qurtubi, v 5 p 1

Surah III - The Family Of Imran (Surah Ale Imran) - Verse 28

Let not the believers take the unbelievers for friends rather than the believers; and whoever does this, he shall have nothing of (the guardianship) Allah, but you should guard yourselves against them, guarding carefully; and Allah makes you cautious of (retribution from) Himself; and to Allah is the eventual journey.

According to reference (1) the first eighty (80) verses of this Chapter were revealed during the beginning of the Hijra. The latter references indicate that the above verse (verse 28) was revealed during the Battle of Uhud (5 Hijra). The last reference indicates that Surah Ale Imran and Surah Baarat were revealed with a difference of four Surahs.

Sunni references

- Seera of Ibn Hisham, v 2 p 207
- Tafseer Qurtubi, v 4 p 58
- Tafseer Khazan, v 1 p 235
- Tafseer Itqan, v 1 p 17

Surah IX - Repentance - Verses 23 and 80 (Surah Baarat)

O you who believe ! do not take your fathers and your brothers for guardians if they love unbelief more than belief; and whoever of you takes them for a guardian, these are they who are the unjust.

Ask forgiveness for them or do not ask forgiveness for them; even if you ask forgiveness for them seventy times, Allah will not forgive them; this is because they disbelieve in Allah and the Apostle, and Allah does not guide the transgressing people.

These two verses were revealed before Verse 9:113 (the verse used against

Abu Talib), and as I conclude this discussion, let me pose a question to these accusers:

- Is it possible that the Prophet (saw) would ask for forgiveness for Abu Talib (May Allah bless his soul), especially when these two verses declare that it is futile to do so, assuming that Abu Talib died as an unbeliever? If your answer is yes, then isn't it against the text of the Holy Book and the Will of Allah, the Almighty?!!

- The fact is that the verse 9:113 is just a command to Prophets in general, and not apprehension for what Prophet Muhammad did not! This will become clear when one looks at the next verse that (i.e., 9:114) which shows this is the command of Allah to Prophet Abraham who prayed for his uncle Azar (not to be confused with his father whose name was Tarokh. This needs a separate discussion) before it was known to him that he is the enemy of Allah. Quran states:

.. But when it became clear to him that he (Azar) was an enemy to Allah he dissociated himself from him; for Abraham was most tender-hearted forbearing. [9:114]

End of Part 3 of 4

Islam of Abu Talib (Part 4 of 4)

Certainly what has been said about this topic in the last parts, must have left some questions unanswered, and this article would focus on the attitude adopted by Abu Talib (May Allah bless his soul) towards his nephew, the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him and his cleansed progeny), and his contribution towards spreading Islam, and the declaration of his faith in several occasions reported by the Sunnis.

The readers of Islamic History know how the Quraish clans delivered to Abu Talib an ultimatum, to stop his nephew from defaming their fathers and belittling their gods and ridiculing their minds; otherwise, they would confront him and the Prophet (PBUH&HF) on a battlefield until one of the two parties perished. Abu Talib had no doubt that his acceptance of the Qurashite challenge meant his death and total annihilation of his clan; yet he did not pressure his nephew to stop his campaign. He only informed him of the Qurashite ultimatum, and he told him kindly

Save me and yourself, my nephew, and burden me not with what I cannot bear.

When the messenger rejected the ultimatum, declaring to his uncle that he would not exchange his message with the possession of the whole universe, Abu Talib immediately reversed his attitude and decided to go along with the Messenger to the end. This is evident from the statement he made to the prophet (PBUH&HF)

Come back, my nephew, go on, say what ever you like. I shall never let you down at any time.

Sunni references

- Ibn Husham, Biography of the Prophet, v 1 p 266
- Tabaqat of Ibn Sa'ad, v 1 p 186
- History of Tabari, v 2 p 218
- Deewan e Abu Talib, p 24
- Sharah of Ibn al Hadid, v 3 p 306
- History of Ibn Katheer, v 2 p 258
- History of Abul Fida, v 1 p 117
- Al Seerah al Halabiyyah, v 1 p 306

Abu Talib fulfilled this huge promise with distinction. When a Meccan threw some dirt on the Messenger while he was prostrating, Abu Talib went on brandishing his sword and holding the hand of his nephew until he came to the sacred mosque. A group of the enemies were sitting there, and when some of them tried to stand for Abu Talib, he said to them

By the One in whom Muhammad (PBUH&HF) believes, if any one from you stands up I will hit him with my sword.

See few lines later below for the Sunni references.

When a person wants to swear, he swears by something that has sanctity for him, and not something that he does not believe in it. The above diplomatic/political statement proves for those who have intelligence that he believed in the God of Muhammad (PBUH&HF), The One, The Great. Then Abu Talib asked the Prophet (PBUH&HF) who was the person responsible for the shameful act, and upon his (Prophet's) answer, Hamza as instructed by Abu Talib smeared the dust on the individuals who showed animosity towards the Prophet (PBUH&HF). It was on this occasion that Abu Talib said :

I believe that Mohammed's faith is the best of all the religions of the Universe.

Sunni references

- Khazanatal Adaab by Khateeb Baghdadi, v 1 p 261
- Tareekh of Ibn Katheer, v 3 p 42

- Sharh of Ibn al Hadid, v 3 p 306
- History of Abul Fida, v 1 p 120
- Fath al Bari (Sharah of Sahih Bukhari), v 7 p 153
- Al Isaba, v 4 p 116
- Al Seerah Al Halebiyyah, v 1 p 305
- Talba tul Talib, p 5

The above highlighted part is another obvious statement which proves his Islam.

The Quraish could see that despite their obstructive efforts the progress of Islam had continued. They now decided to put an end to the Prophet and his family in a state of siege and excommunication till they were all done away with. With this end in view a pact was drawn, to which each tribe was a party and it was to the effect that none should have marital ties with Banu Hashim or do any buying or selling with them; and none was to associate with them or allow any provision to them. This was to continue till the Prophet's family handed him over for execution. This pact was then hung on the door of the Kaaba. Thus forced Abu Talib with the whole family moved to a mountain cave known as ' Shi'b Abi Talib '. Now the Hashmites were entirely alienated from the rest of the town dwellers. The fortress was also beleaguered at times by the Quraish to enforce the ban in all its rigour, and to prevent the possibility of supplies. They found themselves sometimes reduced to starvation for want of supplies. Under constant surveillance by the Quraish, Abu Talib even feared night attacks and for this reason he was on guard for the safety of Muhammad (PBUH&HF), and often changed room as a precaution against sudden violence.

At the close of the third year of the Interdict, Mohammad (PBUH&HF) told his uncle Abu Talib, that Allah had shown His disapproval of the convention against him, and had sent out worms to eat every word of the document placed in the Kaaba, except His own name written thereon.

Abu Talib believing his nephew (PBUH&HF) as the receiver of the revelations from heavens, unhesitatingly went to the Quraish and told them what Muhammad (PBUH&HF) had spoken. The discussion is recorded as follows

Muhammad has informed us and I ask you to confirm it for yourselves.

For if it is true then I ask you to rethink, instead of troubling Muhammad or putting our patience to the test. Believe us, we would prefer to lay down our lives; rather hand over Muhammad to you. And if Muhammad proves to be wrong in his words, then we would hand over Muhammad to you unconditionally. Then you have the liberty of treating him any way you like; kill him or keep him alive.

To these proposals of Abu Talib, the Quraish agreed upon to inspect the document, and to their astonishment they found it worm eaten; only the name of Allah was still there and no more, and they said that it was an enchantment of Muhammad (PBUH&HF). Abu Talib enraged upon the Quraish and demanded that the document be declared void and the ban be removed. Then he clutched to one end of the cloth of the Kaaba, as he raised the second hand in the air and prayed

O Lord ! Help us against those, who have subjugated us to torture ...

Sunni references :

- Tabaqat of Ibne Sa'ad, v 1 p 183
- Seerah of Ibn Hisham, v 1 p 399 and p 404
- Aiwanul Ikbār by Qutaybah, v 2 p 151
- Tareekh-e Yaqoobi, v 2 p 22
- Al Isti'ab, v 2 p 57
- Khazantul Ihab by Khateeb Baghdadi, v 1 p 252
- History of Ibn Katheer, v 3 p 84
- Al Khasais al Kubra, v 1 p 151
- Al Seerah Al Halebiyyah, v 1 p 286

Once during the childhood of the Prophet (PBUH&HF) on the occasion of a scarcity of rains Abu Talib took him (PBUH&HF) to the Holy Kaaba and standing with his back touching the wall of the sanctuary lifted up the Prophet (PBUH&HF) in his lap and sought medium in his prayers to the Almighty for the rains. The Prophet (PBUH&HF) also joined him in his prayers with his face upturned. The prayers were not finished when the clouds began to appear and the rain fell in torrents. This incident is alluded in the following verses composed by Abu Talib:

Don't you see that we have found Mohammed a prophet like Moses; he is already predicted in the previous Scriptures.

He is the illumined face which is the medium for the rains; he is the spring for the orphan and a protector for the widow.

Sunni references

- Sharah of Bukhari by Qastalani, v 2 p 227
- Al Seerah Al Halebiyyah, v 1 p 125

Another verse that testifies to the belief of Abu Talib is as follows

To exalt him He derived his name from His own; the One on High is called Mahmud while He named him Mohammed There is no doubt that Allah appointed Muhammed as a prophet, therefore Ahmed is the most exalted personality in the entire Universe.

Sunni references

- Dalail al-Nubuwwah, by Abu Nu'aym, v 1 p 6
- History of Ibn Asakeer, v 1 p 275
- Sharah of Ibn al Hadid, v 3 p 315
- History of Ibn Katheer, v 1 p 266
- Tareekhe Khamees, v 1 p 254

Abu Talib was a man of great faith and had strong belief in the truthfulness of Mohammed (PBUH&HF). He lived with that mission for about eleven years, and the difficulties for Muhammad and him increased in size by the passage of time. This was especially noticeable after his death, since the Quraish subjected him to more sufferings; sufferings that were not imaginable during the life time of Abu Talib. Ibn Abbas narrates a tradition that when a person from the Quraish put dirt on his head, he went home. It was on this occasion that the Prophet (PBUH&HF) remarked : ... The Quraish never met me with such treatment during the life time of Abu Talib, since they were cowards ...

Sunni references

- History of Tabari, v 2 p 229
- History of Ibn Asakeer, v 1 p 284
- Mustadrak of Al Hakim, v 2 p 622
- History of Ibn Katheer, v 3 p 122
- Al Faiq by Al Zamakshari, v 2 p 213
- Tareekhe Khamees, v 1 p 253
- Al Serah Al Halebiyyah, v 1 p 375
- Fathul Bari, v 7 p 153 and p 154
- Seerah of Ibn Husham, v 2 p 58

The Marriage Ceremony of the Prophet (PBUH&HF)

Abu Talib addresses the men of Quraysh, who were present at the marriage ceremony as follows:

Praise be to Allah Who made us from the seed of Abraham and progeny of Ishmael. He granted as a Sacred house and a place of pilgrimage. He made us to dwell in a secure sanctuary (haram), to which the fruits of everything are brought. He made us, moreover, arbiters in men's affairs, and blessed for us this land in which we dwell.

Then he said:

Were Muhammad (PBUH&HF), the son of my brother 'Abdullah son of Abdul Muttalib ', to be weighed any man among the Arabs, he would excel him. Nor would any man be comparable to him. He is peerless among men, even though he is a man of little wealth. Yet riches are only transient possessions, and an ephemeral security. He has expressed a desire for Khadijah, and she likewise has shown interest in him. As for any bride gift (mahr) you demand, both the part to be presented now and the one presented at a later date - it will be of my own wealth.

Sunni reference:

- Seerah al-Halabiyyah, vol 1 p 139

Abu Talib's (May Allah bless his soul) last breath

In spite of his concealing his faith, Abu Talib, on more than one occasion made his belief in Islam clearly known (as already mentioned above) long before his death. But it would be interesting to quote his saying at his deathbed.

While on his death bed, Abu Talib said to the Hashimites :

I command you to be good to Mohammed. He is the most trustworthy of the Quraish and the ever truthful of the Arabs. He brought a message which is accepted by the heart and denied by the tongue for fear of hostility. By God whoever walks in the way of Mohammed shall be on the right road and whoever follows his guidance shall have the happy future.

And you Hashimites, respond to Muhammaed's invitation and believe him. You will succeed and be well guided; certainly he is the guide to the right path.

Sunni references

- Al Muhabil Dunya, v 1 p 72
- Tareekhe Khamees, v 1 p 339
- Balughul Adaab, v 1 p 327
- Al Seerah Al Halebiyyah, v 1 p 375
- Sunni al Mutalib, p 5
- Uruzul Anaf, v 1 p 259
- Tabaqat of Ibn Sa'ad, v 1 p 123

It is reported in the book of al-Bayhaqi (Dalail al-Nubuwwah) that when Abu

Talib was at the point of death, he was seen moving his lips. al Abbas (the Prophet's uncle) bent down to listen to what he was saying. he then lifted his head and said:

By Allah, he has uttered the word which you requested,
O Messenger of Allah!

Sunni references:

- Dalail al-Nubuwwah by al-Bayhaqi, vol 2 p 101
- Ibn Hisham, Cairo Edition, p146 as quoted in Siratun Nabi, by Shibli Numani, v1, pp 219-220

Also in the same book, it is related that the Prophet (saw) stood at the funeral of Abu Talib and said:

You have indeed acted kindly to your next of kin;
may you be well rewarded, O uncle.

Sunni references:

- Dalail al-Nubuwwah by al-Bayhaqi, vol 2 p 101
- Ibid, vol 2 p 103
- History of Khateeb Baghdadi, vol 13 p 196
- History of Ibn Katheer, vol 3 p 125
- al Isaba, vol 4 p 116
- Tadhkirat Sibt, p 2
- History of Yaquubi, vol 2 p26

Some Shi'ite references on Abu Talib

Abu Abdillah, Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (AS) said:

The case of Abu Talib was like that of the people of the Cave [Quran 18:9-26]; they concealed their faith and disclosed shirk. Yet Allah bestowed upon them double reward.

Shia Reference:

- al Kulayni in al Kafi, vol 1 p 448
- al Amini, al Ghadir, vol 7 p 330

In another tradition, Imam Jafer al-Sadiq (AS) said:

While Imam Ali (AS) was sitting with Ruhbah in Kufa, surrounded by a group, a man stood up and said : ' Commander of the Believers, you are in this great position at which God has placed you while your father is suffering in hell. ' The Imam replied, saying : Be silent. May God disfigure your mouth. By the One Who sent Mohammed (PBUH&HF) with the truth, if my father intercedes for every sinner on the face of the earth, God would accept his intercession.

Shia reference: al-Ihtijaj, by al-Tabarsi, v1, p341

Now, I would like to end this discussion with the following thoughtful questions:

- Why is it that we accuse Abu Talib of paganism, when he chose to believe in the Prophet's (PBUH&HF) message and declared it by political statements and sometimes by frank declarations?
- What benefit does it have for us to declare him Kafir when there are strong proofs to the contrary? Do we get any other benefit except to make ourselves Kafir by pronouncing one of the early Muslim as Kafir?
- Why do we accuse him of paganism when he defended the Prophet (PBUH&HF) by all of what he had of men and means? Why do we attribute paganism to such a personality who was so benevolent to all the Muslims by guarding the life of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH&HF) for 11 years ?
- Why do we attribute paganism to the man who read the Nikah for the Prophet (PBUH&HF) ? How can your mind comprehend the notion of a pagan/disbeliever carrying out the ceremony of the marriage for a Prophet?
- Isn't this ungratefulness in the worst form ?
- Isn't this the worst insult in reward of the great favor that he did for the Prophet (PBUH&HF) ?

Indeed his presence in relation to the continuity of Islam was NOT incidental and we Muslims all owe him! May Allah grant us his intercession.

End of Part 4 of 4

Some Side Comments on Abu Talib

I brother mentioned

I had a carefull examination of what you wrote but one thing is not clear wheather Abu Talib did ever uttered 'my god'. So far you informed there is that Abu Talib several times uttered ' Mohammed's god' and seemed he had faith in that god but he could never say 'my god'. That obviously reveals that he never explicitly uttered Islamic belief although it seems that he believed it.

Here I present two references that testify to the fact that Abu Talib uttered the credo of Islam before his death. I am

sure that I cited this reference in Part # 2 of my article (s), perhaps you missed it ...

Ibn Ishaq says that while dying Abu Talib's lips were in motion. Abbas who was an unbeliever till then put his ear to the lips and then said to the Prophet that he was reciting the KALIMA the Prophet had wanted of him.

- Ibn Hisham, Cairo Edition, p 146 (as quoted by Shibli Numani)

A similar tradition is as follows ...

Abu Talib moved his lips as he was about to die. Abbas then heard what he uttered, and he said to the Prophet that Abu Talib had uttered the KALIMA that was required by you.

- Tarike Abul Fida, V 1 p 120

Thus his Shahadah before his death is established by the Sunni historians. However my argument was that he **UTTERED** shahadah from the very beginning of Islam, but **NOT** in public. So it is natural that no explicit proof for that could be found in the history, for history is written based on the public news (and not private ones). However, there are implicit proofs in the history which could lead even Sunnis to believe that he was a Muslim long before his death. One could be what you referred to. He said to the unbelievers that "I swear by the God of Muhammad!". Does history have another example where an unbeliever swears by the name of God who does not believe? When one wants to swear, he/she swears by something that is eminent for him/her. Otherwise he/she does not make his statement any more credible for others. Let me give you an example. If a man goes to court here in USA, if he is Christian he will have to swear by Bible. But if he declares to be non-Christian, then he will have to swear by his holy book (or any important thing otherwise) and not the bible because his swear by bible does not make the court convinced because he performed the oath. Please think about it. Quraish have had many important Gods at that time (like Hubal and Uzza). Why should Abu Talib leave all of them beside and swears by the God that he does not believe in?!

The Sunni brother further commented:

Is it possible for some one to be a Muslim without explicitly pronouncing this belief ? True, he was a monotheist and not a Mushrik.

But All monotheists are not Muslim. Your kind opinion please

Islam is the state of submission in ones heart. A Hypocrite, though declares that he is Muslim, is indeed non-Muslim. For this very reason, it is difficult to judge if one is Muslim or not. However you are right. One has to utter Shahadah to become Muslim, but he does **NOT** have to do it in public if he fears of prosecution or if he finds out that by concealing his belief he can serve better to his noble thoughts. This is called Taqiyyah. So one can Utter his Shahadah privately (for instance when he is alone or when he is with the Prophet (PBUH&HF) alone) and he will be Muslim.

In fact Taqiyyah and hypocrisy are two opposite extremes. I have a file on that which I will send you shortly Insha Allah, which proves it from Quran and the Hadith perspective as well as Logic.