

Passing of Muhammad

Sirat Rasul Allah (Ibn Ishaq)

Rescension by Ibn Hisham

The Beginning of the Apostle's Illness

While matters were thus the apostle began to suffer from the illness by which God took him to what honour and compassion He intended for him shortly before the end of Safar or in the beginning of Rabi'u'l-awwal. It began, so I have been told, when he went to Baqi'u'l-Gharqad in the middle of the night and prayed for the dead. Then he returned to his family and in the morning his sufferings began.

'Abdullah b. 'Umar from 'Ubayd b. Jubayr, a freedman of al-Hakam b. Abu'l-'As, from 'Abdullah b. 'Amr b. al-'As from Abū Muwayhiba, a freedman of the apostle, said: In the middle of the night the apostle sent for me and told me that he was ordered to pray for the dead in this cemetery and that I was to go with him. I went; and when he stood among them he said, 'Peace upon you, O people of the graves! Happy are you that you are so much better off than men here. Dissensions have come like waves of darkness one after the other, the last being worse than the first.' Then he turned to me and said, 'I have been given the choice between the keys of the treasures of this world and long life here followed by Paradise, and meeting my Lord and Paradise (at once).' I urged him to choose the former, but he said that he had chosen the latter. Then he prayed for the dead there and went away. Then it was that the illness through which God took him began.

Ya'qub b. 'Utba from Muhammad b. Muslim al-Zuhri from 'Ubaydullah b. 'Abdullah b. 'Utba b. Mas'ūd from 'A'isha, the prophet's wife, said: The apostle returned from the cemetery to find me suffering from a severe headache and I was saying, 'O my head!' He said, 'Nay, 'A'isha, O my head!' Then he said, 'Would it distress you if you were to die before me so that I might wrap you in your shroud and pray over you and bury you?' I said, 'Methinks I see you if you had done that returning to my house and spending a bridal night therein with one of your wives.' The apostle smiled and then his pain overcame him as he was going the round of his wives, until he was overpowered in the house of Maymuna. He called his wives and asked their permission to be nursed in my house, and they agreed (918).

*The Apostle's Illness in the House of 'A'isha.*¹

The apostle went out walking between two men of his family, one of whom was al-Fadl b. al-'Abbas. His head was bound in a cloth and his feet were dragging as he came to my house. 'Ubaydullah told this tradition to 'Abdullah b. al-'Abbas who told him that the other man was 'Ali (T. but that 'A'isha could not bring herself to speak well of him though she was able to do so).

Then the apostle's illness worsened and he suffered much pain. He said, 'Pour seven skins of water from different wells over me so that I may go out to the men and instruct them.' We made him sit down in a tub belonging to Hafsa d. 'Umar and we poured water over him until he cried, 'Enough, enough!'

Al-Zuhri said that Ayyub b. Bashir told him that the apostle

went out with his head bound up and sat in the pulpit. The first thing he uttered was a prayer over the men of Uhud asking God's forgiveness for them and praying for them a long time; then he said, 'God has given one of his servants the choice between this world and that which is with God and he has chosen the latter.' Abu Bakr perceived that he meant himself and he wept, saying, 'Nay, we and our children will be your ransom.' He replied, 'Gently, Abu Bakr,' adding, 'See to these doors that open on to the mosque and shut them except one from Abu Bar's house, for I know no one who is a better friend to me than he' (919).

Abdu'l-Rahman b. 'Abdullah told me from one of the family of Sa'id b. al-Mu'alla that the apostle said in his speech that day, 'If I were able to choose a friend on earth I would choose Abu Bakr, but comradeship and brotherhood in the faith remain until God unites us in His presence.'

Muhammad b. Ja'far b. al-Zubayr told me from 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr and other learned men that the apostle found the people tardy in joining the expedition of Usama b. Zayd while he was suffering, so he went out with his head bound up until he sat in the pulpit. Now people had criticized the leadership of Usama, saying, 'He has put a young man in command of the best of the emigrants and the helpers.' After praising God as is His due he said, 'O men, dispatch Usama's force, for though you criticize his leadership as you criticized the leadership of his father before him, he is just as worthy of the command as his father was.' Then he came down and the people hurried on with their preparations. The apostle's pain became severe and Usama and his army went out as far as al-Jurf, about a stage from Medina, and encamped there and men gathered to him. When the apostle became seriously ill Usama and his men stayed there to see what God would decide about the apostle.

Zuhri said that Abdullah b. Ka'b b. Malik told him that the apostle said on the day that he asked God's forgiveness for the men of Uhud, 'O Muhajirs, behave kindly to the Ansar, for other men increase but they in the nature of things cannot grow more numerous. They were my constant comfort and support. So treat their good men well and forgive those of them who are remiss.' Then he came down and entered his house and his pain increased until he was exhausted. Then some of his wives gathered to him, Umm Salama and Maymuna and some of the wives of the Muslims, among them Asma' d. 'Umayy while his uncle 'Abbas was with him, and they agreed to force him to take medicine. Abbas said, 'Let me force him,' but they did it. When he recovered he asked who had treated him thus. When they told him it was his uncle he said, 'This is a medicine which women have brought from that country,' and he pointed in the direction of Abyssinia. When he asked why they had done that his uncle said, 'We were afraid that you would get pleurisy,' he replied, 'That is a disease which God would not afflict me with. Let no one stop in the house until they have been forced to take this medicine, except my uncle.' Maymuna was forced to take it although she was fasting because of the apostle's oath, as a punishment for what they had done to him.

(T. Muhammad b. Ja'far b. al-Zubayr told me from 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr that 'A'isha told him that when they said that they were afraid that he would get pleurisy he said, 'That is something which comes from the devil, and God would not let it have power over me.')

Sa'id b. 'Ubayd b. al-Sabbag from Muhammad b. Usama

¹ I.I.'s tradition from 'A'isha continues.

from his father told me that when the apostle's illness became severe he and the men came down to Medina and he went in to the apostle who was unable to speak. He began to lift his hand towards heaven and then bring it down upon him, from which he knew that he was blessing him.

Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri told me from 'Ubayd b. 'Abdullah b. 'Utba from 'A'isha that she used to hear the apostle say, 'God never takes a prophet to Himself without giving him the choice.' When he was at the point of death the last word I heard the apostle saying was, 'Nay, rather the Exalted Companion of paradise.'" [cf. Sura 4. 71] I said (to myself), Then by God he is not choosing us! And I knew that that was what he used to tell us, namely that a prophet does not die without being given the choice.

Al-Zuhri said, Hamza b. 'Abdullah b. 'Umar told me that 'A'isha said:

'When the prophet became seriously ill he ordered the people to tell Abu Bakr to superintend the prayers. 'A'isha told him that Abū Bakr was a delicate man with a weak voice who wept much when he read the Quran. He repeated his order nevertheless, and I repeated my objection. He said,

"You are like Joseph's companions; tell him to preside at prayers." My only reason for saying what I did was that I wanted Abu Bakr to be spared this task, because I knew that people would never like a man who occupied the apostle's place, and would blame him for every misfortune that occurred, and I wanted Abu Bakr to be spared this.'

Ibn Shihab said, 'Abdullah b. Abu Bakr b. 'Abdu'l-Rahman b. al-Hārith b. Hisham told me from his father from 'Abdullah b. Zama'a b. al-Aswad b. al-Muttalib b. Asad that when the apostle was seriously ill and I with a number of Muslims was with him Bilal called him to prayer, and he told us to order someone to preside at prayers. So I went out and there was 'Umar with the people, but Abu Bakr was not there. I told 'Umar to get up and lead the prayers, so he did so, and when he shouted Allah Akbar the apostle heard his voice, for he had a powerful voice, and he asked where Abu Bar was, saying twice over, 'God and the Muslims forbid that.' So I was sent to Abu Bakr and he came after 'Umar had finished that prayer and presided. 'Umar asked me what on earth I had done, saying, 'When you told me to take the prayers I thought that the apostle had given you orders to that effect; but for that I would not have done so.' I replied that he had not ordered me to do so, but when I could not see Abu Bakr I thought that he was most worthy of those present to preside at prayers.

Al-Zuhri said that Anas b. Mālīk told him that on the Monday (T. the day) on which God took His apostle he went out to the people as they were praying the morning prayer. The curtain was lifted and the door opened and out came the apostle and stood at 'A'isha's door. The Muslims were almost seduced from their prayers for joy at seeing him, and he motioned to them (T. with his hand) that they should continue their prayers. The apostle smiled with joy when he marked their mien in prayer, and I never saw him with a nobler expression than he had that day. Then he went back and the people went away thinking that the apostle had recovered from his illness. Abū Bakr returned to his wife in al-Sunh.

Muhammad b. Ibrahim b. al-Harīth told me from al-Qasim b. Muhammad that when the apostle heard 'Umar saying

Allah Akbar in the prayer he asked where Abu Bakr was. 'God and the Muslims forbid this.' Had it not been for what 'Umar said when he died, the Muslims would not have doubted that the apostle had appointed Abu Bakr his successor; but he said when he died, 'If I appoint a successor, one better than I did so; and if I leave them (to elect my successor) one better than I did so.' So the people knew that the apostle had not appointed a successor and 'Umar was not suspected of hostility towards Abu Bakr.²

Abu Bakr b. 'Abdullah b. Abu Mulayka told me that when the Monday came the apostle went out to morning prayer with his head wrapped up while Abu Bakr was leading the prayers. When the apostle went out the people's attention wavered, and Abū Bakr knew that the people would not behave thus unless the apostle had come, so he withdrew from his place; but the apostle pushed him in the back, saying, 'Lead the men in prayer,' and the apostle sat at his side praying in a sitting posture on the right of Abu Bakr. When he had ended prayer he turned to the men and spoke to them with a loud voice which could be heard outside the mosque:

'O men, the fire is kindled, and rebellions come like the darkness of the night. By God, you can lay nothing to my charge. I allow only what the Quran allows and forbid only what the Quran forbids.'

When he had ended these words Abu Bakr said to him: 'O prophet of God, I see that this morning you enjoy the favour and goodness of God as we desire; today is the day of Bint Kharija. May I go to her?' The apostle agreed and went indoors and Abu Bar went to his wife in al-Sunb.

Al-Zuhri said, and 'Abdullah b. Ka'b b. Malik from 'Abdullah b. 'Abbas told me: That day 'Ali went out from the apostle and the men asked him how the apostle was and he replied that thanks be to God he had recovered. Abbas took him by the hand and said, "Ali, three nights hence you will be a slave. I swear by God that I recognized death in the apostle's face as I used to recognize it in the faces of the sons of 'Abdu'l-Muttalib. So let us go to the apostle; if authority is to be with us, we shall know it, and if it is to be with others we will request him to enjoin the people to treat us well.' 'Ali answered: 'By God, I will not. If it is withheld from us none after him will give it to us.' The apostle died with the heat of noon that day.

Ya'qub b. 'Utba from al-Zuhri from 'Urwa from A'isha said: The apostle came back to me from the mosque that day and lay in my bosom. A man of Abu Bakr's family came in to me with a toothpick in his hand and the apostle looked at it in such a way that I knew he wanted it, and when I asked him if he wanted me to give it him he said Yes; so I took it and chewed it for him to soften it and gave it to him. He rubbed his teeth with it more energetically than I had ever seen him rub before; then he laid it down. I found him heavy in my bosom and as I looked into his face, lo his eyes were fixed and he was saying, 'Nay, the most Exalted Companion is of paradise.' I said, 'You were given the choice and you have chosen, by Him Who sent you with the truth!' And so the apostle was taken. Yahya b. 'Abbad b. 'Abdullah b. al-Zubayr from his father told me that he heard A'isha say: The apostle died in my bosom during my turn: I had wronged none in regard to him. It was due to my

² Abu Bakr appointed 'Umar to succeed him; the prophet made no appointment.

ignorance and extreme youth that the apostle died in my arms. Then I laid his head on a pillow and got up beating my breast and slapping my face along with the other women.

Al-Zuhri said, and Sa'id b. al-Musayyib from Abu Hurayra told me: When the apostle was dead 'Umar got up and said: 'Some of the disaffected will allege that the apostle is dead, but by God he is not dead: he has gone to his Lord as Moses b. 'Imran went and was hidden from his people for forty days, returning to them after it was said that he had died. By God, the apostle will return as Moses returned and will cut off the hands and feet of men who allege that the apostle is dead.' When Abu Bar heard what was happening he came to the door of the mosque as Umar was speaking to the people. He paid no attention but went in to A'isha's house to the apostle, who was lying covered by a mantle of Yamani cloth. He went and uncovered his face and kissed him, saying, 'You are dearer than my father and mother. You have tasted the death which God had decreed: a second death will never overtake you.' Then he replaced the mantle on the apostle's face and went out. 'Umar was still speaking and he said, 'Gently, 'Umar, be quiet.' But 'Umar refused and went on talking, and when Abu Bakr saw that he would not be silent he went forward to the people who, when they heard his words, came to him and left 'Umar. Giving thanks and praise to God he said: 'O men, if anyone worships Muhammad, Muhammad is dead: if anyone worships God, God is alive, immortal.' Then he recited this verse: 'Muhammad is nothing but an apostle. Apostles have passed away before him. Can it be that if he were to die or be killed you would turn back on your heels? He who turns back does no harm to God and God will reward the grateful.'" [Sura 3.138] By God, it was as though the people did not know that this verse (T. concerning the apostle) had come down until Abu Bakr recited it that day. The people took it from him and it was (constantly) in their mouths. 'Umar said, 'By God, when I heard Abu Bakr recite these words I was dumbfounded so that my legs would not bear me and I fell to the ground knowing that the apostle was indeed dead.'

The Meeting in The Hall of B. Sa'ida

When the apostle was taken this clan of the Ansar gathered round Sa'd b. 'Ubada in the hall of B. Sa'ida, and 'Ali and al-Zubayr b. al-Awwam and Talba b. 'Ubaydullah separated themselves in Fatima's house while the rest of the Muhajirin gathered round Abū Bakr accompanied by Usayd b. Hudayr with the B. 'Abdu'l-Ashhal. Then someone came to Abu Bakr and 'Umar telling them that this clan of the Ansar had gathered round Sa'd in the hall of B. Sa'ida. 'If you want to have command of the people, then take it before their action becomes serious.' Now the apostle was still in his house, the burial arrangements not having been completed, and his family had locked the door of the house. 'Umar said, 'I said to Abu Bakr, Let us go to these our brothers of the Ansar to see what they are doing.'

In connexion with these events **'Abdullah b. 'Abu Bakr told me from Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri from 'Ubaydullah b. 'Abdullah b. 'Utba b. Mas'ud from 'Abdullah b. 'Abbas who said,** I was waiting for 'Abdu'l-Rahman b. 'Auf in his station in Mina while he was with 'Umar in the last pilgrimage which I performed. When he returned he found me waiting, for I was teaching him to read the Quran. 'Abdu'l-Rahman said to me:

'I wish you could have seen a man who came to the

commander of the faithful and said, "O commander of the faithful, would you like a man who said, By God, if 'Umar were dead I would hail So-and-so. Fealty given to Abu Bakr was a hasty mistake and was ratified.'" 'Umar was angry and said, 'God willing, I shall get up among the men tonight and warn them against those who want to usurp power over them.' I said, 'Don't do it, commander of the faithful, for the festival brings together the riff-raff and the lowest of the people; they are the ones who will be in the majority in your proximity (T. your assembly) when you stand among the people. And I am afraid lest you should get up and say something which they will repeat everywhere, not understanding what you say or interpreting it aright; so wait until you come to Medina, for it is the home of the sunna and you can confer privately with the lawyers and the nobles of the people. (T. you will come to the home of the hijra and the sunna and you can confer privately with the apostle's companions both muhajirin and ansar.)³ You can say what you will and the lawyers (T. they) will understand what you say and interpret it properly.' 'Umar replied, 'By God, if He will I will do so as soon as I get to Medina.'

We came to Medina at the end of Dhū'l-Hijja and on the Friday I returned quickly when the sun had set and found Sa'id b. Zayd b. 'Amr b. Nufayl sitting by the support of the pulpit and I sat opposite him knee to knee. Immediately 'Umar came out and when I saw him coming I said to Sa'id, 'He will say something tonight on this pulpit which he has never said since he was made caliph.' Sa'id was annoyed and asked, 'What do you suppose that he is going to say that he has never said before?' 'Umar sat in the pulpit, and when the muezzins were silent he praised God as was fitting and said: 'I am about to say to you today something which God has willed that I should say and I do not know whether perhaps it is my last utterance. He who understands and heeds it let him take it with him whithersoever he goes; and as for him who fears that he will not heed it, he may not deny that I said it. God sent Muhammad and sent down the scripture to him. Part of what he sent down was the passage on stoning; we read it, we were taught it, and we heeded it. The apostle stoned (adulterers) and we stoned them after him. I fear that in time to come men will say that they find no mention of stoning in God's book and thereby go astray by neglecting an ordinance which God has sent down. Verily stoning in the book of God is a penalty laid on married men and women who commit adultery, if proof stands or pregnancy is clear or confession is made. Then we read in what we read from God's book: "Do not desire to have ancestors other than your own for it is infidelity so to do."⁴

³ The difference between the two reports of what I.I. said is interesting. Ziyad makes the lawyers and the sharifs the ultimate authority while T. has nothing to say about them and regards the prophet's companions as the real authorities. If the tradition is genuine T.'s version must be authentic because there can hardly have been lawyers in 'Umar's day. However, it is possible that at that time fiqh did not hear its later meaning.

⁴ This citation, which on the face of it has nothing to do with adultery, shows that the aya of which it is the beginning was well known in I.I.'s time. It continues: 'If an adult man or woman commit adultery stone them without exception as a punishment from God. God is mighty and wise.' See Noldeke-Schwally, Gesh. d. Qorans, i. 248, where the authorities are given. If it was part of the Quran it is difficult to see where it

Did not the apostle say, 'Do not praise me extravagantly as Jesus son of Mary was praised and say The servant and the apostle of God?' I have heard that someone said, 'If 'Umar were dead I would hail So-and-so.' Don't let a man deceive himself by saying that the acceptance of Abū Bakr was an unpremeditated affair⁵ which was ratified. Admittedly it was that, but God averted the evil of it. There is none among you to whom people would devote themselves as they did to Abu Bakr. He who accepts a man as ruler without consulting the Muslims, such acceptance has no validity for either of them: they are in danger of being killed. What happened was that when God took away His apostle the Ansar opposed us and gathered with their chiefs in the hall of B. Sa'ida; and Ali and al-Zubayr and their companions withdrew from us; while the Muhajirin gathered to Abu Bakr.

I told Abū Bakr that we should go to our brothers the Ansar, so we went off to go to them when two honest fellows met us and told us of the conclusion the people had come to. They asked us where we were going, and when we told them they said that there was no need for us to approach them and we must make our own decision. I said, 'By God, we will go to them,' and we found them in the hall of B. Sa'ida. In the middle of them was a man wrapped up. In answer to my inquiries they said that he was Sa'd b. 'Ubada and that he was ill. When we sat down their speaker pronounced the shahada and praised God as was fitting and then continued: 'We are God's Helpers and the squadron of Islam. You, O Muhajirin, are a family of ours and a company of your people have come to settle.' ('Umar) said, 'And lo, they were trying to cut us off from our origin and wrest authority from us.'⁶ When he had finished I

stood originally. Muslim authorities suggest Sura 33, but the rhyme forbids this; and Sura 24, but there the punishment is scourging. Most commentators hold that the verse is one of those that was afterwards abrogated, while others say that it was accidentally lost owing to a domestic animal eating the part of the page on which the revelation was written. Cf. Zamakhshari on Sura 33, and others. This tradition which is carried back to 'A'isha is condemned as the invention of sectarians. There is a real problem which can hardly be satisfactorily solved: on the one hand, the Quran teaches that adulterers must be scourged; on the other hand, this exceeding early tradition - much older than the later canonical collections of hadith - that they must be stoned is evidently the authority which lies behind the penalty prescribed by Muslim lawbooks to this day. See the authorities quoted op. cit., p.251.

Since the words shaykha and albatta occur nowhere in the Quran and since the first part of the verse appears in a slightly different form as a saying of Muhammad in Muslim's Sahib (Iman 27), the probability is that it never formed part of the Quran. However, if the traditional form of Umar's speech as given by I.I. (and by T. on another authority) is authentic, it remains to be explained why 'Umar, who was a most truthful man, should have stated publicly in the strongest possible terms that the verse was to be read in the Quran.

⁵ falta. I have translated this 'hasty mistake' on p. 684. The exact meaning is somewhat elusive.

⁶ The crucial word qala indicating that 'Umar was the speaker is missing from W. T. 1822 makes the passage perfectly clear. 'He said When I saw that they wanted to cut us off from (yakhtazila) our origin and wrest authority from us and I had prepared,' &c. The passage is of great importance in that it

wanted to speak, for I had prepared a speech in my mind which pleased me much. I wanted to produce it before Abu Bakr and I was trying to soften a certain asperity of his; but Abu Bakr said, 'Gently, 'Umar!' I did not like to anger him and so he spoke. He was a man with more knowledge and dignity than I, and by God he did not omit a single word which I had thought of and he uttered it in his inimitable way better than I could have done.

He said: 'All the good that you have said about yourselves is deserved. But the Arabs will recognize authority only in this clan of Quraysh, they being the best of the Arabs in blood and country. I offer you one of these two men: accept which you please.' Thus saying he took hold of my hand and that of Abu 'Ubayda b. al-Jarrah who was sitting between us. Nothing he said displeased me more than that. By God, I would rather have come forward and have had my head struck off - if that were no sin - than rule over a people of whom Abu Bakr was one.

One of the Ansar said: 'I am the rubbing post and the fruitful propped-up palm.'⁷ Let us have one ruler and you another, O Quraysh.' Altercation waxed hotter and voices were raised until when a complete breach was to be feared I said, 'Stretch out your hand, Abu Bakr.' He did so and I paid him homage; the Muhajirin followed and then the Ansar. (In doing so) we jumped on Sa'd b. 'Ubada and someone said that we had killed him. I said, 'God kill him.'

Al-Zuhri said that 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr told him that one of the two men whom they met on the way to the hall was 'Uwaym b. Sa'ida and the other was Ma'n b. 'Adiy, brother of B. al-'Ajlani. Concerning 'Uwaym we have heard that when the apostle was asked who were those of whom God said 'In it are men who love to purify themselves and God loves those who purify themselves' [Sura 9. 109.], the apostle said that the best man of them was 'Uwaym b. Sa'ida. As to Ma'n, we have heard that when men wept over the apostle's death and said that they wished that they had died before him because they feared that they would split up into factions, he said that he did not want to die before him so that he could bear witness to his truth when he was dead as he had done when he was alive. Ma'n was killed on the day of al-Yamama as a martyr in the caliphate of Abū Bakr, the day of Musaylima the arch-liar.

Al-Zuhri told me on the authority of Anas b. Malik: On the morrow of Abū Bakr's acceptance in the hall he sat in the pulpit and 'Umar got up and spoke before him, and after praising God as was meet he said, 'O men, yesterday I said something (T. based on my own opinion and) which I do not find in God's book nor was it something which the apostle entrusted to me; but I thought that the apostle would order our affairs (T. until) he was the last of us (alive). God has left His book with you, that by which He guided His apostle, and if you hold fast to that God will guide you as He guided him. God has placed your affairs in the hands of the best one among you, the companion of the apostle, "the second of the two when they were in the cave", [Sura 9. 40.] so arise and swear fealty to him.' Thereupon the people swore fealty to Abu Bakr as a body after the pledge in the hail.

Abu Bakr said after praising God: 'I have been given

shows how the Emigrants were then the dominating party and henceforth the Ansar would have to take a subordinate place.

⁷ i.e. a man who can cure people's ills and is held in high esteem because of his great experience.

authority over you but I am not the best of you. If I do well, help me, and if I do ill, then put me right. Truth consists in loyalty and falsehood in treachery. The weak among you shall be strong in my eyes until I secure his right if God will; and the strong among you shall be weak in my eyes until I wrest the right from him. If a people refrain from fighting in the way of God, God will smite them with disgrace. Wickedness is never widespread in a people but God brings calamity upon them all. Obey me as long as I obey God and His apostle, and if I disobey them you owe me no obedience. Arise to prayer. God have mercy on you.'

Husayn b. 'Abdullah told me from 'Ikrima from Ibn 'Abbas who said: 'When 'Umar was caliph I was walking with him while he was intent on business of his. We were alone and he had a whip in his hand, and as he talked to himself he swished the side of his legs with his whip. As he turned to me he asked me if I knew what induced him to speak as he did when the apostle died. I said that only he could know that, and he went on: "It was because I used to read 'thus we have made you a middle people that you may be witnesses against men and that the apostle may be a witness against you,' [Sura 2. 137] and by God I thought that the apostle would remain among his people until he could witness against them as to the last things they did. That was what induced me to say what I did.'"

The Burial Preparations

When fealty had been sworn to Abu Bakr men came to prepare the apostle for burial on the Tuesday. 'Abdullah b. Abu Bakr and Husayn b. 'Abdullah and others of our companions told me that 'Ali and 'Abbas and his sons al-Fadl and Qutham, and Usama b. Zayd, and Shuqran freedman of the apostle were those who took charge of the washing of him; and that Aus b. Khauli, one of B. 'Auf b. al-Khazraj, said, 'I adjure you by God, 'Ali, and by our share in the apostle.'⁸ Aus was one of the apostle's companions who had been at Badr. 'Ali gave him permission to enter and he came in and sat down and was present at the washing of the apostle. 'Ali drew him on to his breast and 'Abbas and al-Fadl and Qutham turned him over along with him. Usama and Shuqran poured the water over him, while 'Ali washed him, having drawn him towards his breast. He still wore his shirt with which he rubbed him from the outside without touching the apostle's body with his hand the while he said, 'Dearer than my father and my mother, how sweet you are alive and dead!' The apostle's body did not present the appearance of an ordinary corpse.

Yahya b. 'Abbad b. 'Abdullah b. al-Zubayr from his father 'Abbad from 'A'isha: When they wanted to wash the apostle dispute arose. They did not know whether they were to strip him of his clothes as they stripped their dead or to wash him with his clothes on. As they disputed God cast a deep sleep upon them so that every man's chin was sunk on his chest. Then a voice came from the direction of the house, none knowing who it was: 'Wash the apostle with his clothes on.' So they got up and went to the apostle and washed him with his shirt on, pouring water on the shirt, and rubbing him with the shirt between him and them (T. 'A'isha used to say, 'Had I known at the beginning of my affair what I knew at the end of it none but his wives would have washed him').

Ja'far b. Muhammad b. 'Ali b. al-Husayn from his father

from his grandfather 'Ali b. al-Husayn, and al-Zuhri from 'Ali b. al-Husayn, said that when the apostle had been washed he was wrapped in three garments, two of Suhar make⁹ and a striped mantle wrapped the one over the other.

Husayn b. 'Abdullah told me from 'Ikrima from Ibn 'Abbas: Now Abu 'Ubayda b. al-Jarrah used to open the ground as the Meccans dig, and Abū Talba Zayd b. Sahl used to dig graves for the Medinans and to make a niche in them and when they wanted to bury the apostle al-'Abbas called two men and told one to go to Abu 'Ubayda and the other to Abu Talha saying, 'O God, choose for (T. thy) the apostle.' The one sent to Abu Talha found his man and brought him and he dug the grave with the niche for the apostle.¹⁰

When the preparations for burial had been completed on the Tuesday he was laid upon his bed in his house. The Muslims had disputed over the place of burial. Some were in favour of burying him in his mosque, while others wanted to bury him with his companions. Abu Bakr said, 'I heard the apostle say, "No prophet dies but he is buried where he died";' so the bed on which he died was taken up and they made a grave beneath it. Then the people came to visit the apostle praying over him by companies: first came the men, then the women, then the children (T. then the slaves). No man acted as imām in the prayers over the apostle. The apostle was buried in the middle of the night of the Wednesday.

Abdullah b. Abu Bakr told me from his wife Fatima d. (T. Muhammad b.) 'Umara from 'Amra d. 'Abdu'l-Rahman b. Sa'd b. Zurara that 'A'isha said: We knew nothing about the burial of the apostle until we heard the sound of the pickaxes in the middle of the Wednesday night. Ibn Ishaq said: Fatima told me this tradition.

Those who descended into the grave were 'Ali and al-Fadl and Qutham the sons of 'Abbas, and Shuqran. Aus implored 'Ali in the name of God and his share in the apostle to let him descend, and he let him go with the others. When the apostle was laid in his grave and the earth was laid over him Shuqran his freedman took a garment which the apostle used to wear and use as a rug and buried (T. cast) it in the grave saying, 'By God, none shall ever wear it after you,' so it was buried with the apostle.

Al-Mughira b. Shu'ba used to claim that he was the last man to be with the apostle. He used to say, 'I took my ring and let it fall into the grave and said, My ring has dropped. But I threw it in purposely that I might touch the apostle and be the last man to be with him.'

My father Ishaq b. Yasar told me from Miqsam, freedman of 'Abdullah b. al-Harith b. Naufal, from his freedman 'Abdullah b. al-Harith: I went on the little pilgrimage with 'Ali in the time of 'Umar or 'Uthman and he visited his sister Umm Hāni' d. Abu Talib. When he had finished his pilgrimage (T. I poured out) ablution water was poured out for him and he washed. When he had finished some Iraqis came in saying that they had come to ask him about a matter on which they would like him to give them some information. He said, 'I suppose that al-Mughira tells you that he was the last person to be with the apostle?' When they said that that was so, he said, 'He lies. The last man to

⁸ sc. 'that you will let me take part' or some such apodosis.

⁹ There are two towns of this name, one in the Yaman and the other in al-Yamāma in B. Tamim territory.

¹⁰ All Muslim graves contain this niche or recess.

be with the apostle was Qutham b. 'Abbās.'

Salib b. Kaysan told me from al-Zuhri from 'Ubaydullah b. 'Abdullah b. 'Utba that 'A'isha told him: The apostle wore a black cloak when he suffered severe pain. Sometimes he would put it over his face, at others he would take it off, saying the while, 'God slay a people who choose the graves of their prophets as mosques,' warning his community against such a practice.

On the same authority I was told that the last injunction the apostle gave was in his words 'Let not two religions be left in the Arabian peninsula.' (T. The apostle died on the 12th Rabi'u-l-awwal on the very day that he came to Medina as an emigrant, having completed exactly twelve years in his migration.) When the apostle was dead the Muslims were sore stricken. I have heard that 'A'isha used to say, 'When the apostle died the Arabs apostatized and Christianity and Judaism raised their heads and disaffection appeared. The Muslims became as sheep exposed to rain on a winter's night through the loss of their prophet until God united them under Abū Bakr' (920).

Hassan said mourning the apostle:

Tell the poor that plenty has left them
With the prophet who departed from them this morning.
Who was it who has a saddle and a camel for me,
My family's sustenance when rain fails?
Or with whom can we argue without anxiety
When the tongue runs away with a man?
He was the light and the brilliance we followed,
He was sight and hearing second only to God.
The day they laid him in the grave
And cast the earth upon him
Would that God had not left one of us
And neither man nor woman had survived him!
The Banu'l-Najjar were utterly abased,
But it was a thing decreed by God.
The booty was divided to the exclusion of all the people
And they scattered it openly and uselessly among
themselves.¹¹

Hassan also said:

I swear that no man is more careful than I
In swearing an oath true and without falsehood.
By God, no woman has conceived and given birth
To one like the apostle the prophet and guide of his people;
Nor has God created among his creatures
One more faithful to his sojourner or his promise
Than he who was the source of our light,
Blessed in his deeds, just, and upright.
Your wives stripped the tents in mourning
And did not strike the pegs behind the curtains.
Like nuns they put on garments of hair
Certain of misery after happiness.
O best of men, I was as it were in a river
Without which I have become lonely in my thirst (921).

Nahj al-Balāghah

From Sermon 196

When the Prophet - the peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him and his descendants - died his head was on my chest, and his (last) breath blew over my palms and I passed it over my face. I performed his (funeral) ablution, may Allāh bless him and his descendants, and the angels helped me. The house and the courtyard were full of them.

One party of them was descending and the other was ascending. My ears continually caught their humming voice, as they invoked Allāh's blessing on him, till we buried him in his grave. Thus, who can have greater rights with him than I during his life or after his death? Therefore depend on your intelligence and make your intentions pure in fighting your enemy, because I swear by Him who is such that there is no god but He, that I am on the path of truth and that they (the enemy) are on the misleading path of wrong. You hear what I say; and I seek Allāh's forgiveness for myself and for you.

The Message

A will which was not written

The last chapter of the life of the Prophet of Islam, when he was confined to bed, is one of the most delicate and subtle chapters of the history of Islam. In those days the Muslims were passing through very tragic moments. Open disobedience on the part of some companions and their refusal to join the army of Usamah was an evidence of a series of underground activities and the earnest determination of the persons concerned that after the demise of the Prophet they would take possession of the governmental and political affairs of Islam, and would push back the person, who had been formally appointed on the day of Ghadir as the successor to the Prophet.

The Prophet also knew to some extent their intentions and, in order to neutralize their activities, insisted that all the senior companions should join the army of Usamah and should leave Madina as early as possible to fight against the Romans. However, in order to put their own plans into operation, the political jugglers excused themselves from joining Usamah's army on various pretexts and even prevented the army from marching off, so much so that the Prophet passed away but the army of Islam did not depart from Jurf (camping-place at Madina) and returned to Madina after sixteen days. Their detention was due to the death of the Prophet. Thus the desire of the Prophet that on the day of his death Madina should be free from political mischief-makers, who might indulge in activities against his immediate successor, was not fulfilled. They did not only fail to leave Madina but endeavoured to forestall every action, which could possibly confirm the position of Ali as the uninterrupted successor of the Prophet and to prevent the Prophet, by different means, from talking on this subject.

The Prophet came to know about the shocking actions, and secret activities of some of their daughters, who happened to be his wives. In spite of the fact that he was suffering from high fever, he entered the mosque, stood by the side of the pulpit, turned his face to the people and said with a loud voice which could be heard even outside the mosque: "O people! The mischief has been sparked off and rebellion has appeared like the pieces of a dark night. You have no excuse against me. I did not declare lawful anything except

¹¹ Apparently 'the people' are the Ansar and 'they' are the Quraysh. The connexion of this line with the preceding is obscure. This and the following poem come via I.I.

that which the Qur'an declared lawful and did not declare unlawful anything except that which the Qur'an declared unlawful.[724] This sentence shows the Prophet's grave anxiety about the future and about the fate of Islam after his own death. What did he mean by the mischief which had been sparked off? Could it be anything other than the mischief and dispersion which was created after the death of the Prophet and its flames have not yet extinguished but continue to flare up?

Bring a pen and an ink-pot so that I may write a will

The Prophet was aware of the activities which were in the offing outside his house, to take possession of the caliphate. In order to check the deflection of the caliphate from its real pivot and the appearance of differences and disputes he decided to affirm the Caliphate of Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, and the position of Ahl al-Bayt in writing so that the document in question might serve as a clear-cut evidence on the subject of caliphate.

One day, when the senior companions came to enquire about his health, he lowered his head a little and reflected for some time. Then he said to them: "Bring me a sheet of paper and an ink-pot so that I may write something for you, after which you will never be misguided".[725]

At this moment the Second Caliph broke the silence and said: "Sickness has overpowered the Prophet. The Qur'an is with you. The Divine Book is sufficient for us".

The view expressed by the Caliph became the subject of discussion, some persons opposed him and said: "The orders of the Prophet must be obeyed. Go and bring him pen and paper so that whatever he has in mind should be recorded". Some others took the side of the Caliph and prevented the procurement of pen and ink. The Prophet was extremely annoyed on account of their dispute and presumptuous words and said: "Get up and leave the house". (Be off from here).

After narrating this incident Ibn Abbas says: "The greatest calamity for Islam was that the discord and dispute of some companions prevented the Prophet from writing the deed which he intended to write".[726]

This historical event has been quoted by a number of Sunni and Shi'ah traditionalists and historians, and from the viewpoint of a critical study of tradition they consider it as falling under the category of the authentic and correct reports.

The point, which needs attention is that the Sunni traditionalists have quoted only the purport of the words of Umar and have not reproduced his presumptuous remarks. Evidently they have refrained from quoting the original remarks not because reproduction of such presumptuous remarks amounts to taking liberty with the Prophet but have altered the words of the Caliph with a view to protecting his position, so that the posterity might not form an adverse view about him on coming across such insulting remarks of his. Hence when Abu Bakr Jauhari, author of al-Saqifa, reaches at this point in his book he says, while quoting the remarks of Umar: "Umar said something the purport of which is that the sickness had overpowered the Prophet".[727]

However, when some of them wish to quote the text of the remarks of the Caliph, they refrain, with a view to protecting his position, from mentioning his name clearly and write only this: "And they said: The Prophet of Allah has spoken in a delirious state of mind".[728]

It is an admitted fact that whosoever utters such an indecent and repulsive sentence cannot be forgiven, because, as clearly mentioned by the Qur'an the Prophet was immune from every kind of mistake and whatever he said was revealed to him.

The dispute of the companions in the presence of the infallible Prophet was so repugnant and annoying that some of his wives, who were sitting behind a curtain, asked, by way of objection, as to why his orders were not being obeyed. In order to silence them the Caliph replied: "You women are like the companions of Prophet Yusuf. As and when the Prophet falls ill you shed tears and when he regains health you rule over him".[729]

Although some fanatics have apparently coined excuses for the Caliph having opposed the demand of the Prophet[730] they have condemned him from the standpoint of logic, and have considered his remark (The Book of Allah is sufficient for us) to be baseless. All of them have admitted it very clearly that the Sunnah of the Prophet is the second pillar of Islam and the Book of Allah cannot at all relieve the Muslim Ummah from the need of the Prophet's Sunnah.

It is, however, surprising that Dr Haykal, the author of the book Hayat-i Muhammad has undertaken to side with the Caliph by way of a hint and writes: "After this event Ibn Abbas believed that on account of not writing what the Prophet wanted to be written the Muslims had lost something important but Umar stuck to his view, because Allah says in the Qur'an:

We have neglected nothing in the book.[731]

If, however, he had studied the preceding and succeeding words of the verse he would not have explained it in such an unjustified manner and would not have risen in support of the Caliph against the clear-cut words of the infallible Prophet, because the meaning of the word 'book' in the said verse is the creation and the pages of existence and the various species in the world of existence are different pages of the book of creation and these innumerable pages give shape to the book of creation. Here is the text of the verse: All the beasts on land and flying birds have different communities just as you (men) have. We have not neglected anything in the book. They will be brought into the presence of their Lord. (Surah al-An'am, 6:39)

As the words preceding the sentence under consideration relate to the animals and the birds and the words succeeding it relate to the Day of Resurrection it can be said definitely that in this verse the meaning of the word book, from which nothing has been left out, is the book of creation.

Besides this, even if we admit that what is meant by the word book in this verse of the Qur'an is the Qur'an itself even then, as specified by the Qur'an itself, it is an admitted fact that it can be understood only in the light of the hadith and the guidance of the Prophet of Islam. The Holy Qur'an says:

Whom we had sent with miracles and revelations, 'Ask those who know about the Books, if you do not know about this'. We have revealed the Qur'an to you, so that you may explain to mankind what has been revealed to them and so that perhaps they will think. (Surah al-Nahl, 16:44) In this verse it has not been said: "You may read to mankind". The words used are: "You may explain to mankind". Hence even if the Book of Allah be sufficient for mankind it stands in great need of explanation by the Prophet.

If the Muslim ummah could really dispense with such a document (i.e. the one which the Prophet proposed to write) why should Ibn Abbas have said the following words, while tears were trickling down his cheeks: "What a painful day was Thursday; when the Prophet said: "Bring me a shoulder-bone and an ink-pot or a paper and an ink-pot so that I may write something for you and you may not be misguided in future"; some persons said "The Prophet is....."[732]

How can it be said that in spite of the sentiments expressed by Ibn Abbas and the insistence made by the Prophet himself, the Qur'an has enabled the Muslim Ummah to dispense with the will in question. And as the Prophet did not succeed in dictating such a will, can it be guessed by means of any definite indications as to what he intended to record in his will?

What did the will aim at?

One of the best method of explaining the verses of the Qur'an, which even now commands the attention and favour of the research scholars and the ulema of the present times, is that the brevity and the ambiguity of a verse which may have been revealed on a subject, may be removed by means of another verse on the same subject, which may, from the point of view of expression, be more clear than the former one. In the terminology of exegesis, it is called explaining one verse with the help of another.

This method is not peculiar to the explanation of the verses of the Holy Qur'an; it applies to the Islamic traditions as well and the ambiguity of one hadith can be removed with the help of another tradition, because our great leaders have given emphatic and repeated directions on delicate and appreciable matters, the expression of which with regard to the aim is not identical and at the same level. Sometimes the aim has been expressed clearly and at another time it has been considered advisable only to allude to it.

As has been stated above the Prophet, while confined to bed, asked his companions to bring him pen and paper so that he might dictate a will and the same should be recorded. He also told them that the will would ensure their not going astray at anytime. (As is clear, the reason mentioned by the Prophet for writing the will was that people might not go astray). Later, on account of differences between those present, the Prophet abandoned the idea of writing the will.

It may possibly be asked: "On what subject did the Prophet want to write a will?" Reply to this question is quite clear, because, keeping in view the basic facts mentioned at the beginning of this discussion, it must be said that the aim of the Prophet in writing the will was nothing except confirming the Caliphate and succession of Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, and making it obligatory for the people to follow the members of his household. This conclusion can be arrived at by studying the Hadith Thaqalayn which has been accepted by the Sunni and the Shi'ah traditionalists unanimously, because he spoke thus with regard to the will which he wanted to execute: "I am writing this document to ensure that you do not go astray after me". And in the Hadith Thaqalayn also he used identical words and insisted that the people should follow the two Siqils (weighty or precious things viz. the Holy Qur'an and his progeny) so that they might not go astray after him. Here is the text of the Hadith Thaqalayn:

I am leaving two weighty (valuable) things amongst you. So

long as you follow both of them you will not go astray. These two valuable things consist of the Book of Allah (the Qur'an) and my progeny and Ahl al-Bayt".

Can it not be concluded from the wording of these two traditions, and the similarity present in them, that the aim of the Prophet in asking for pen and paper was to record the contents of the Hadith Thaqalayn in a more clear manner and to confirm the rulership and direct caliphate of his successor, which had been announced verbally on the 18th of Zil Haj when the Iraqi, the Egyptian and the Hijazi pilgrims were parting company (at Ghadir Khum).

Furthermore, the strong opposition of one, who immediately after the demise of the Prophet constituted a consultative body in Saqifah bani Sa'idah for the selection of a caliph and made his old friend a candidate for it in a special manner and the latter's nominating him as a caliph in violation of all principles, perhaps in recompense for his help, shows that there were indications in the gathering and into the speech of the Prophet that he wanted to dictate something about the caliphate and the rulership of the Muslims. He, therefore, strongly opposed the bringing of pen and paper, for otherwise there was no reason why he persisted so much that the pen and the paper should not be brought.

Why did the prophet not persist in writing the will?

Why did the Prophet not exercise his power to write the will when, in spite of the opposition by some persons, he could very well call his secretary and dictate the same to him?

The reply to this question is also clear. If the Prophet had persisted in writing the will, they, who were saying that illness had overpowered him, would have persisted more in their impoliteness and their supporters would also have given publicity to this view and endeavoured to prove their viewpoint. In that case, besides the fact that impoliteness towards the Prophet would have spread and continued, the will, too, would have lost its value. Hence, when some persons in order to make amends for the ill treatment, asked the Prophet, whether they might bring pen and paper he was much disturbed and said: "After all that has been said, do you want to bring pen and paper? I recommend only that you should behave well with my progeny". Having said this he turned his face from those present and they too got up and dispersed. Only Ali, Abbas and Fadl remained there.[733]

Making amends for the matter

Although the open opposition by some companions made the Prophet abandon the writing of the will, he made his object known in another manner. History testifies that while he was very seriously ill he placed one hand on the shoulder of Ali and the other on the shoulder of Maiymunah, his slave-girl, and proceeded towards the mosque. In spite of severe pain and inconvenience he made himself reach the pulpit and mounted it. Tears trickled from the eyes of the people and perfect silence prevailed over the mosque. People were waiting to hear his last words and recommendations. The Prophet broke the silence of the gathering and said: "I am leaving two valuable things amongst you". At this moment a man stood up and asked: "What is meant by two valuable things?" Then he added: "One of them is the Qur'an and the other is my progeny".[734]

Ibn Hajar Askalani has given another version of making amends for the matter and it is not incompatible with the

former. He says: "One day, while the Prophet was unwell and his bed was encircled by his companions, he turned his face towards them and said: "O people! The time of my death has arrived and I will be leaving you soon. Be it known to you that I am leaving the Book of Allah and my progeny and Ahl al-Bayt amongst you . Then he held and raised the hand of Ali and said Ali is with the Qur'an and the Qur'an is with Ali and they will not separate from each other till the Day of Resurrection".[735]

The Prophet had narrated Hadith Thaqalayn on different occasions and in various ways, before he fell ill and had drawn the attention of the people to these two weighty things but the fact that, even when bed-ridden, he once again gave attention to the correlation between the Book and his progeny and stressed their importance before the same persons, who had opposed his writing the will, would make one believe that the object of this repetition was to make amends for the non-execution of the will.[736]

Distribution of dinars

The policy of the Prophet with regard to public treasury (Baytul Mal) was that at the very earliest opportunity he distributed its property amongst the needy persons and refrained from keeping the contents of the treasury in custody for a long time. Hence, when he was confined to bed, and some Dinars were lying with one of his wives, he asked her to bring them to him. When the Dinars were placed before him he took them in his hand and said: "How will Muhammad expect anything of Allah if he meets Him and has these with him?" Then he ordered the Commander of the Faithful to distribute the money among the poor.[737]

The prophet is annoyed on account of the medicine given to him

During her stay in Ethiopia Asma' daughter of 'Umayy, who was a near relative of the Prophet's wife, Maiyumnah, had learnt the composition of a medicine which was the juice of some herbs. She imagined that the Prophet was suffering from pleurisy and in Ethiopia this ailment was treated with the said syrup. When the Prophet's condition was very serious and he was suffering from acute pain, she dropped some of that medicine in his mouth. When the condition of the Prophet improved somewhat, and he came to know about the incident he was very much displeased and said: "Allah does not at all make his Prophet suffer from such an ailment".[738]

Last farewell to friends

During the period of his illness the Prophet used to come to the mosque sometime or other, and offered prayers along with the people, and also talked on some matters. On one of those days he arrived in the mosque, while he had tied a piece of cloth on his head, and Ali and Fadl bin Abbas had placed their hands under his arm-pits, and he was walking with dragging feet. He mounted the pulpit and began to speak, saying: "O people! The time has arrived when I should leave you. If I have made a promise with anyone I am prepared to fulfil it, and if I owe something to somebody, he should speak out, so that I may make payment to him". At this moment a man stood up and said: "You promised me some time back that if I married, you would help me with money". The Prophet ordered Fadl to pay the required amount to him immediately. Then he dismounted the pulpit and went home. Thereafter he came to the mosque again on Friday (i.e three days before his death) and began to speak, and said inter alia: "Whoever has any right over me should get up and mention it, for

punishment in this world is lighter than the punishment on the Day of Judgement."

At this moment Sawadah bin Qays stood up and said: "At the time of return from the Battle of Ta'if, when you were riding a camel, you raised your scourge to hit your animal, but by chance it struck my belly. I now want to take revenge".

The offer made by the Prophet was not a mere formality for he was seriously inclined to compensate others even for those rights, which are not usually cared for by the people.[739] He therefore, ordered the same scourge to be brought from his house. Thereafter he pulled up his shirt so that Sawadah might take revenge. The companions of the Prophet were watching the scene with grieved hearts, and with tears in their eyes, and were awaiting as to where the matter would end, and whether Sawadah would actually take revenge. However, they suddenly saw Sawadah kissing the belly and chest of the Prophet. At this moment the Prophet prayed for him and said: "O Allah! Forgive Sawadah in the same manner in which he has forgiven the Prophet of Islam".[740]

[724] Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. II, p. 654 and Tabaqat-i Ibn Sa'd, vol. 2, p. 216.

[725] Evidently what was meant was that the Prophet might dictate the deed and one of his secretaries might write it out, because the Prophet had never held a pen in his hand or written anything.

[726] Sahih Bukhari, Kitabul 'Ilm, vol. I, page 22 and vol. II, page 14; Sahih Muslim, vol. II, page 14; Musnad Ahmad, vol. I, page 325 and Tabaqat-i Kubra, vol. II, page 244.

[727] Sharh-i Nahjul Balaghah, Ibn Abil Hadid, vol. II, page 20.

[728] Sahih Muslim, vol. I, page 14 and Musnad Ahmad, vol. I, page 355.

[729] Kanz al-Ummal, vol. III, page 138 and Tabaqat, vol. II, page 244.

[730] The late Allamah Mujahid Sharfuiddin has collected all these excuses his book entitled al-Muraji'at and refuted them in a decent manner.

[731] Hayat-i Muhammad, page 475.

[732] Musnad Ahmad, vol. I, page 355.

[733] Biharul Anwar, vol. XXII, page 469, quoted from al-Irshad by Shaykh Mufid and A'lamul Wara' by Tabarsi.

[734] Biharul Anwar, vol. XXII, page 476, quoted from Majalis by Mufid.

[735] al-Sawaiq, Chapter 9 of Part 2, page 57 and Kashful Ghummah, p. 43.

[736] The Hadith Thaqalayn is one of those traditions which are unanimously accepted by the Sunni and the Shi'ah traditionalists, and it has been narrated by the companions of the Prophet in sixty different ways. Ibn Hajar Askalani writes: "The Prophet invited the attention of the people to the correlation between the Book and his progeny on different occasions like the day of Arafah, the day of Ghadir, on return from Ta'if, and even while he was confined to bed. (al-Sawaiq al-Muhriqah, page 136). The late Mir Hamid Husayn of India has allocated a part of his book to the narration of authorities for the Hadith Thaqalayn. It has been published recently in Isfahan in six volumes. In the year 1374 A.H. a tract about this hadith

was published by the Darut Taqrib Foundation (Egypt). Its importance from the viewpoint of authorities and the esteem shown to it by the traditionalists in different eras of Islamic history have been quoted in it briefly.

[737] Tabaqat-i Kubra, vol. II, page 238.

[738] Tabaqat, vol. II, page 236.

[739] Manaqib-i Al-i Abi Talib. vol. I. page 164.

[740] Furthermore, as the Prophet did not hit Sawadah's body intentionally he had no right to take revenge, but the act could be compensated by payment of 'diya' money (prescribed compensation). In spite of this the Prophet decided to meet his demand.

The last hours of the prophet

Madina was totally engulfed in confusion and anxiety. The companions of the Prophet had gathered round his house with tearful eyes and grieved hearts. The reports which were pouring out from the house showed that his condition was extremely serious, and there was very little hope of his recovery. This showed that only a few moments of his precious life were left.

A number of the companions of the Prophet were desirous of seeing him from near, but his serious condition would not permit that anyone except the members of the family should visit the room in which he was lying.

The honoured daughter and the only souvenir of the Prophet viz Lady Fatimah was sitting beside her father's bed. She was looking at his sacred face and could see that the perspiration of death was flowing down his face and forehead. With a heavy heart, tearful eyes, and choked throat, she was reciting the following verse which Abu Talib had recited in praise of the Prophet : "The luminous face in whose honour rains are sought from the clouds. The person who is the asylum for the orphans and the guardian of the widows".

At this moment the Prophet opened his eyes and said to his daughter in a low voice: "This is a verse which Abu Talib recited about me. It will, however, be better if, instead of the same, you recite this verse of the Holy Quran: Muhammad is but a messenger. The messengers have already passed away before him. Will it be that, when he dies or is slain, you will turn back on your heels? He who turns back does no hurt to Allah, and Allah will reward the thankful. (Surah Ale Imran 3:144)[741]

The prophet speaks to his daughter

Experience shows that on account of excessive preoccupations the sentiments of big personalities with regard to their children become dim, because absorption in world affairs keep them so busy that their sentiments for their children remain suppressed. However, great spiritual personalities are an exception to this rule. Notwithstanding their great targets and universal ideals and ever-increasing activities they possess such extensive and great souls that inclination towards one part does not keep them from the other parts.

The Prophet's love for his only child was one of the most sublime manifestations of human sentiments, so much so that he never proceeded on a journey without saying farewell to his daughter and when he returned from a journey he first of all went to see her. He accorded her great respect as compared with his wives and used to tell his companions: "Fatimah is a part of my body. Her pleasure is my pleasure and her anger is my anger." [742]

Whenever the Prophet saw Fatimah he was reminded of Khadijah, the most pious and most kind woman of the world who endured extraordinary hardships and spent her enormous wealth in the path of the sacred mission of her husband.

Throughout the period of the Prophet's illness Fatimah remained by the side of his bed and was not away from him even for a moment. Suddenly the Prophet made a sign to her asking her to speak to him. The Prophet's daughter bent a little, brought her head near him and conversed with him in low tones. The persons who were present round the Prophet's bed did not become aware of what they talked about. When the Prophet ceased talking, Lady Fatimah wept bitterly. However, soon after this the Prophet made a sign to her again and spoke to her in low tones. This time she raised her head in a happy mood and with smiling lips. Those present were surprised to observe these two antithetical conditions at one and the same time and they requested Fatimah to inform them of her conversation with the Prophet. She replied: "I am not going to divulge the secret of the Prophet of Allah".

After the passing away of the Prophet, Fatimah informed them of the factual position on account of the insistence of A'isha and said: "In the first instance my father informed me about his death and stated that he was not likely to recover from his illness. Hence, I began weeping. However, when he talked to me for the second time he told me that I would be the first person from amongst his Ahl al-Bayt who would join him. This made me happy and I understood that I would be joining my dear father very soon".[743]

Brushing the teeth

The Prophet used to brush his teeth before going to sleep at night and after waking up in the morning. The tooth-brush of the Prophet consisted of a piece of Arak wood which is very useful for strengthening the gums, cleansing the teeth and removing the particles of food from them. One day Abdur Rahman, brother of A'isha, came to enquire about the health of the Prophet. He was then holding a fresh and green piece of branch in his hand. A'isha understood from the looks of the Prophet that he wished to brush his teeth with that branch. She, therefore, took the branch from her brother immediately and gave it to the Prophet, who brushed his teeth with it.[744]

Recommendations of the prophet

While he was confined to bed the Prophet attached great importance to reminding the people of the obligatory matters and in the last days of his illness he strongly recommended the offering of prayers and good treatment of the slaves. He said: "Behave well with your slaves, be careful about their food and dress, speak gently with them and make sociability the business of your life".

One day Ka'b Ahbar asked the Second Caliph "What did the Prophet say just before his death?" The Caliph pointed to the Commander of the Faithful, who was also present in the meeting, and said: "Ask him". Ali said: "While the head of the Prophet was resting on my shoulder, he said: "Prayers. Prayers." Ka'b Ahbar then said: "This has been the way of the previous Prophets also".[745]

During the last moments of his life the Prophet opened his eyes and said: "Call my brother so that he may come and sit by my side. All those present understood that he meant no one other than Ali. Ali sat by the side of his bed but felt that he wanted to rise from his bed. He, therefore lifted the

Prophet from his bed and made him rest on his own chest.[746]

Soon afterwards signs of death began to appear in his sacred body. Some one asked Ibn Abbas: "In whose lap did the Prophet breathe his last?" Ibn Abbas replied: "The Prophet departed while his head was in the lap of Ali." That person added: "A'isha claims that when the Prophet breathed his last his head was resting on her bosom. Ibn Abbas contradicted her claim and said: "The Prophet breathed his last in the lap of Ali and Ali and my brother Fadl bathed his body." [747]

In one of his sermons Imam Ali has mentioned this matter in these words: "The Prophet breathed his last when his head was on my chest. I bathed his body while the angels were assisting me". [748]

A number of the traditionalists have quoted that the last sentence which the Prophet uttered before breathing his last was: "No. With the Divine Companion". It appears that at the time of his last breath the Archangel Jibreel gave him the option either to recover from the illness and return to this world or the Angel of Death might take out his soul and he might proceed to the next world, and lead his life there along with the persons, who have been alluded to in this verse: These are with those upon whom Allah has bestowed favours from among the Prophets and the truthful and the martyrs and they are the best friends that one can have. (Surah al-Nisa, 4:69)

The Prophet uttered the above sentence and passed away.[749]

The last day

The sacred and sublime soul of the Messenger of Allah ascended the Paradise on Monday the 28th of Safar.[750] A Yemen sheet was spread over his sacred body and it was placed for a short period, in a corner of the room. From the wailings of the women and the cries of the near ones of the Prophet, the people outside the room knew that he had breathed his last. Soon afterwards the news of his death spread throughout the city.

For reasons which have not become clear so far the Second Caliph shouted outside the house that the Prophet had not died but had gone before Allah like Prophet Musa. He persisted on this very much and it was possible that he might have made some others share his views, but, in the meantime one of the companions [751] of the Prophet read this verse before Him: Muhammad is but a messenger. The messengers have already passed away before him. Will it be that, when he dies or is slain, would you then turn back to your pre-Islamic behaviour. (Surah Ale Imran, 3:144)

On hearing this verse he abandoned his claim and became tranquil.[752]

Imam Ali bathed the sacred body of the Prophet and shrouded him, as the Prophet had directed that his body should be bathed by one, who was nearest to him [753] and such a person could be no one except Ali. Then he opened the Prophet's face while he was bitterly weeping, said, "O Prophet of Allah! I love you more than I have loved my parents. Your death put an end to the prophethood, to revelation, and to the messengers from the Lord. While death of other Prophets had not resulted in this way. Your death caused a grief that every other grief was forgotten. The grief of your separation became common sorrow and everybody felt it. If you had not ordered us to be patient and not to lament and bemoan loudly, we would have kept

weeping and lamenting ceaselessly, though all this lamenting could not have compared with the actual loss of your separation. But death is an inevitable event, nobody can turn death back and nobody can stop it from coming. Please remember us before Allah". (Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon No. 23).

The first person who offered prayers for the Prophet was Imam Ali. Thereafter the companions came in groups and offered prayers and these rites continued till Tuesday noon. Thereafter it was decided that the sacred body of the Prophet might be buried in the same house in which he had breathed his last. The grave was prepared by Abu 'Ubaydah bin Jarrah and Zayd bin Sahl and the obsequies were performed by Imam Ali with the assistance of Fadl and Abbas.

It was the most tragic event. That great personality who changed the very fate of humanity by his efforts and sacrifices and opened new pages for human civilization passed away.[754]

No doubt, when a fair-minded person studies various aspects of the personality of the Holy Prophet as a man, head of a family, a member of the society, a judge, an administrator, a teacher, a military commander and a guide, he comes to the conclusion that his all round perfection is a definite proof of his being a Divine Messenger. Human history has not witnessed any other person reaching a similar degree of perfection.

The Holy Prophet made wonderful contributions for the welfare of humanity at large. First, he himself acted upon the Divine Message and then he asked others to follow him.

He established the rights of the people when rights were being usurped; he administered justice when tyranny was rampant everywhere; he introduced equality when undue discrimination was so common; and he gave freedom to the people when they were groaning under oppression, cruelty and injustice.

He brought a message which taught man to obey and fear Allah only, and seek help from Him alone. His universal message covers all the aspects of human life including rights, Ounce, equality and freedom.

This is a message from which the mankind has once more been deprived. Why, then, should we not come again under its patronage so that humanity may be saved from destruction, and may achieve peace, progress and happiness.

[741] Vide al-Irshad, Shaykh Mufid, page 98

[742] Sahih Bukhari, vol. V, page 21.

[743] Tabaqat-i Ibn Sa'd, vol. II, p. 247 and Kamil, vol. II, p. 219.

[744] Tabaqat-i Ibn Sa'd, vol. II, page 234 and Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. II, page 654.

[745] Tabaqat, vol. II, page 254.

[746] Tabaqat, vol. II, page 263.

[747] Tabaqat, vol. II, page 263.

[748] Nahjul Balaghah.

[749] A'lamul Wara' page 83.

[750] All the Shi'iah traditionalists and the biographers of the life of the Prophet are agreed upon this date, and in Seerah Ibn Hisham, vol. II, page 658, it has been quoted in

the form of a statement.

[751] According to Sahih Bukhari (page 7) it was Abu Bakr.

[752] Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. II, page 656.

[753] Tabaqat, page 57.

[754] After the Holy Prophet numerous difficulties cropped up in the path of his mission and the pursuance of his mission. The most patent among those was the question of the caliphate and the leadership of the Islamic society. Even before his passing away the signs of differences and dissensions could be clearly found among the Muslims. Notwithstanding the fact that this is one of the most sensitive and important chapters of the history of Islam, it is beyond the scope of our present discourse. Hence we now bring our narrative to an end and are grateful to the Almighty Allah for this great blessing. (For further details refer Islamic Seminary Publications).