

Battle of Şiffīn

adapted from

‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib: His Life and Times

by

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Transliteration key

أ- 'ā	ض - ḍ
آ - ā	ط - ṭ
ب - b	ظ - ḏ
ت - t	ع - 'c
ث - th	غ - gh
ج - j	ف - f
ح - ḥ	ق - q
خ - kh	ك - k
د - d	ل - l
ذ - dh	م - m
ر - r	ن - n
ز - z	و - w, ū
س - s	ه - h
ش - sh	ي - y, ī
ص - ṣ	

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The Battle of Şiffin (37 A.H)

Chain of events leading up to the battle

1. Umm Ḥabībah bint Abī Sufyān sends Nu‘mān ibn Bashīr with ‘Uthmān’s chemise to Mu‘āwiyah and the people of Syria

After ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه was killed, the Mother of the Believers Umm Ḥabībah bint Abī Sufyān رضي الله عنها sent word to ‘Uthmān’s رضي الله عنه family, saying: “Send me the garment in which ‘Uthmān was killed.” They sent her his blood-stained chemise, along with pieces of hair that had been plucked from his beard. Umm Ḥabībah called Nu‘mān ibn Bashīr and sent him to Mu‘āwiyah, so he left carrying that and her letter.¹

According to one report, Nu‘mān ibn Bashīr took with him the blood-stained chemise of ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه and the fingers of Nā’ilah that had been cut off when she tried to defend him with her hand.² Nā’ilah bint al-Farāfiṣah al-Kalbiyyah was the wife of ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه, from the tribe of Kalb in Syria.³

Nu‘mān came to Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه in Syria; Mu‘āwiyah placed him on the mimbar so that the people could see him, and he hung the fingers on the sleeve of the chemise, raising it sometimes and lowering it sometimes. The people around him were weeping, urging one another to seek vengeance.⁴ Shuraḥbīl ibn al-Samaṭ al-Kindī came and said to Mu‘āwiyah:

‘Uthmān was our khalīfah. If you are able to bring his murderers to justice, then do so; otherwise, resign.⁵

1 *Tārīkh al-Islam, ‘Ahd al-Khulafā’ al-Rāshidīn*, p. 359

2 *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, 7/539

3 Muḥammad Jamīl: *Tārīkh al-Da’wa l-Islamiyyah*, p. 398

4 *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, 7/539. Its chain of narration is weak.

5 *al-Ansāb*, 4/418; *Tārīkh al-Da’wah al-Islamiyyah*, p. 398

The men of Syria swore that they would not be intimate with their wives or sleep on their beds until they killed the murderers of ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه and those who tried to prevent them from doing so, or they died trying.¹

The picture that Nu‘mān ibn Bashīr presented to the people of Syria was an ugly one: the murder of the khalīfah, swords unsheathed by the thugs and wielded over the people’s necks, the public treasury plundered and the fingers of Nā’ilah cut off. The people were deeply moved; their hearts were shaken and their eyes filled with tears. After this, it is little wonder that the people’s feelings ran high and that Mu‘āwiyah, and the people who were with him in Syria, insisted on bringing the murderers of ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه to justice. They wanted the murderers to be handed over for retaliatory punishment before they would agree to swear allegiance. Can we imagine the khalīfah and leader of the Muslims being murdered by haters and conspirators who had come from outside Madīnah and taken over the city, and the Muslim world not becoming outraged and sending demands from the farthest corners of the Islamic regions for the perpetrators of this heinous crime to be brought to justice?²

2. Mu‘āwiyah’s motives for not swearing allegiance

Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه had been the governor of Syria during the khilāfah of ‘Umar and ‘Uthmān. When ‘Alī رضي الله عنه was appointed as khalīfah, he wanted to dismiss Mu‘āwiyah and appoint ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنه in his place, but Ibn ‘Umar apologised and declined the post. ‘Alī رضي الله عنه sent Sahl ibn Ḥunayf instead, but he had hardly reached the border of Syria (Wādī al-Qurā) when he was met by Mu‘āwiyah’s cavalry under the leadership of Ḥabīb ibn Maslamah al-Fihri, who said to him:

If you have been sent by ‘Uthmān, then you are welcome, but if you have been sent by anyone else, then go back.³

1 *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, 5/600

2 Al-Ghaḍbān: *Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān*, p. 178-183

3 *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, 5/466

He turned around and went back.

Mu'āwiyah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and the people of Syria refused to swear allegiance to 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ. They thought that 'Alī should bring the murderers of 'Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ to justice first, and then they would swear allegiance to him.¹ They said:

We will not swear allegiance to one who gives refuge to the murderers.²

They feared for their lives because of the murderers of 'Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ who were in 'Alī's army; his killers were in 'Alī's camp, and they were powerful. They thought that swearing allegiance to 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was not obligatory for them and that if they fought him, they would be the ones who were being wronged because 'Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ had been killed wrongfully, according to the consensus of the Muslims. They said:

If we swear allegiance, they will wrong us and transgress against us and the blood of 'Uthmān will go un-avenged.

Mu'āwiyah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was related to 'Uthmān, and he thought that it was 'Alī's duty to stand up for 'Uthmān and bring to justice those who had killed him. Allah says:

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ۗ وَمَنْ قُتِلَ مَظْلُومًا فَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا لَوْلِيهِ سُلْطَانًا فَلَا يَسْرِفُ فِي الْقَتْلِ ۗ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مُنْصُورًا

And whoever is killed wrongfully [Maẓlūman intentionally with hostility and oppression and not by mistake]; We have given his heir the authority [to demand Qiṣāṣ - Law of Equality in punishment - or to forgive, or to take diyah (blood money)]. But let him not exceed limits in the matter of taking life [i.e. he should not kill except the killer]. Verily, he is helped [by the Islamic law].³

1 Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah, 7/129

2 al-'Awāṣim min al-Qawāṣim, p. 162

3 Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl: 33

Hence Mu'āwiyah رضي الله عنه brought the people together and addressed them concerning 'Uthmān's case, stating that he had been killed unlawfully at the hands of foolish hypocrites who did not respect sacred blood (referring to blood that was protected by sharī'ah); they had shed his blood during the sacred month in the sacred land. The people were agitated, and their voices grew loud in denouncing the murder of 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه. Among them were a number of the Ṣaḥābah of the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم. One of them, whose name was Murrah ibn Ka'b, stood up and said:

Were it not for a ḥadīth I heard from the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم, I would not have spoken. Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم mentioned the turmoil and gave some details concerning it. Then a man passed by whose face was covered with a cloth, and Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم said: "This man will be following true guidance at that time." I went up to him and found that he was 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān. I turned to Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم and asked: "This man?" He said: "Yes."¹

There is another ḥadīth that had an effect on the pursuit of justice for the killers of 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه; it motivated Mu'āwiyah and his followers and strengthened their resolve to achieve this goal. It was narrated from Nu'mān ibn Bashīr that 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها said:

The Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم sent for 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān. He came, and the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم turned to him. The last words he said, when tapping his shoulder, were: "O 'Uthmān, Allah may clothe you with a chemise which, if the hypocrites want you to take it off, do not take it off until you meet me." He said it three times.

Nu'mān said to her:

O Mother of the Believers, why did you not tell us this before?

1 Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Ibn Mājah, 11240

She said:

I forgot it, and by Allah I did not remember it.

He said:

I told Mu'āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān about it, and he did not like what I told him. He wrote to the Mother of the Believers, asking her to write to him about it, and she wrote a letter to him about it.¹

This great keenness to implement the ruling of Allah on the murderers was the main reason for the refusal of the people of Syria, led by Mu'āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān رضي الله عنه, to swear allegiance to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib رضي الله عنه. They thought that implementing the ruling of retaliation took precedence over swearing allegiance.

It was not a matter of Mu'āwiyah's رضي الله عنه having ambitions in Syria or his demanding something that was not rightfully his; he fully understood that the issue of khilāfah was limited to whoever was left of the six members of the consultative committee, and that 'Alī رضي الله عنه was superior to him and more entitled to it than he was.²

However, allegiance had been sworn to 'Alī رضي الله عنه on the basis of the consensus of the Ṣaḥābah in Madīnah, so Mu'āwiyah's view was contrary to what was correct.

3. Mu'āwiyah responds to Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib

'Alī رضي الله عنه sent letters to Mu'āwiyah رضي الله عنه, but he did not respond. This happened several times in the first few months after the murder of 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه, and then Mu'āwiyah sent a man to take a letter to 'Alī رضي الله عنه in the month of Safar. 'Alī رضي الله عنه said to him: "Tell me what you have for me." He said:

1 *Musnad Aḥmad*, no. 24045; a sound ḥadīth

2 'Abd al-Ḥamīd: *Khilāfah 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, p. 112

I have come to you from people who do not want anything but the punishment for the murderers, and each of them is seeking vengeance. I have left behind sixty thousand men who are weeping in front of ‘Uthmān’s chemise, which is on the mimbar of Damascus.

‘Alī رضي الله عنه said:

O Allah, I declare my innocence before you of the blood of ‘Uthmān.

As the envoy of Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه left ‘Alī رضي الله عنه, some of those rebels who had killed ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه tried to kill him, and he only escaped with difficulty.¹

4. Amīr al-Mu‘minīn ‘Alī’s preparations for the march to Syria, and Ḥasan’s objection to that

After Mu‘āwiyah’s رضي الله عنه response reached Amīr al-Mu‘minīn ‘Alī, the khalīfah decided to fight the people of Syria. He wrote to Qays ibn Sa’d in Egypt, instructing him to mobilise people to fight them, and he sent similar instructions to Abū Mūsā in Kūfah and to ‘Uthmān ibn Ḥunayf. He addressed the people, urging them to join the fight and he started to make preparations. He was determined to fight with those who obeyed him against those who disobeyed him and did not swear allegiance to him.

His son Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī came to him and said:

O my father, do not do this, because it involves shedding the blood of the Muslims and creating division among them.

‘Alī رضي الله عنه did not accept that from him, though; he insisted on fighting. He organised the army, giving the banner to Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyyah and putting Ibn ‘Abbās in charge of the right flank and ‘Umar ibn Abī Salamah in charge of the left. It was also said that he put ‘Amr ibn Sufyān ibn ‘Abd al-Asad in charge of the left flank and Abū Laylā ibn ‘Umar ibn al-Jarrāh, his nephew, in charge of the vanguard.

¹ *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, 7/240

He appointed Qutham ibn ‘Abbās to be in charge of Madīnah in his absence, and there was nothing left to do except to leave Madīnah and head for Syria, when something happened to distract him from that.¹

We have discussed in detail how ‘Ā’ishah, Ṭalḥah and Zubayr went out to Baṣrah and the Battle of the Camel.

5. After the Battle of the Camel, Amīr al-Mu’minīn ‘Alī sent Jarīr ibn ‘Abd Allāh to Mu‘āwiyah

It is said that the period between the appointment of Amīr al-Mu’minīn ‘Alī عليه السلام to the khilāfah and the second Saba’ī fitnah, which is called Baṣrah or the Battle of the Camel, was five months and twenty-one days. Between that and his entering Kūfah was one month, and between his entering Kūfah and his going out to Ṣiffīn was six months,² or it was said that it was two or three months.³

Amīr al-Mu’minīn ‘Alī عليه السلام entered Kūfah on Monday, 12 Rajab 36 A.H. It was suggested to him that he should stay in the white palace, but he said:

No, ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه would not like to stay there, so I dislike it too.

He stayed in al-Raḥbah and prayed two raka‘āt in the great masjid, and then he addressed the people, urging them to do good and forbidding them from doing evil. He praised the people of Kūfah in his speech, and then he sent word to Jarīr ibn ‘Abd Allāh, who had been the governor of Hamadhān from the time of ‘Uthmān, and Ash‘ath ibn Qays, who had been governor of Azerbaijan from the time of ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه, telling them to accept the oath of allegiance to him from the people there, then to come to him, and they did that.

1 *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, 7/240, 241

2 *Murūj adh-Dhahab*, 21360

3 *Bukhārī: at-Tārīkh as-Saghīr*, 11102

When ‘Alī رضي الله عنه wanted to send word to Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه calling on him to swear allegiance to him, Jarīr ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Bajalī said:

I will go to him, O Amīr al-Mu‘minīn, for there was friendship between me and him, and I will accept his oath of allegiance to you.

Ashtar said:

Do not send him, O Amīr al-Mu‘minīn, for I fear that he is inclined towards him.

‘Alī رضي الله عنه said: “Let him be!” and he sent him with a letter to Mu‘āwiyah. The letter told him that there was consensus among the Muhājirīn and Anṣār on swearing allegiance to ‘Alī رضي الله عنه, informed him of what had happened at the Battle of the Camel, and called on him to join the people in swearing allegiance.

When Jarīr ibn ‘Abd Allāh reached Mu‘āwiyah and gave him the letter, Mu‘āwiyah summoned ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ and the leaders of the people of Syria and consulted them.

They refused to swear allegiance to ‘Alī رضي الله عنه until the murderers of ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه were executed or handed over to them. They said that if ‘Alī رضي الله عنه did not do that, they would not swear allegiance to him, and they would fight to the last man.

Jarīr went back to ‘Alī رضي الله عنه and told him what they had said. Ashtar said:

Did I not tell you, O Amīr al-Mu‘minīn, not to send Jarīr? If you had sent me, Mu‘āwiyah would not have opened any door but I would have closed it.

Jarīr said to him:

If you had gone there, they would have killed you in retaliation for ‘Uthmān.

Ashtar said:

By Allah, if you had sent me, I would have found an answer to Mu'āwiyah's questions, and I would have given him an answer before he even asked. If Amīr al-Mu'minīn had listened to me, he would have detained you and others like you until the affairs of this ummah were straightened out.

Jarīr got up angrily and went to stay in Qarqaysa'. He wrote to Mu'āwiyah, telling him what he had said and what had been said to him; Mu'āwiyah wrote back, telling him to come to him.¹ Thus Ashtar was a factor in the alienation of the Ṣaḥābī Jarīr ibn 'Abd Allāh, who was 'Alī's governor in Qarqaysa' and elsewhere, and the leader of his tribe Bajalah. This Ṣaḥābī, Jarīr ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Bajalī said:

The Rasūl of Allah ﷺ never saw me without smiling at me.

Rasūl ﷺ said concerning him:

There will enter upon you from this door a man who is the best of those who are blessed; on his face there is an angelic look.²

6. 'Alī's march to Syria

Amir al-Mu'minīn 'Alī رضي الله عنه prepared to go on the campaign to Syria, and he sent word to mobilise the people.³ He prepared a huge army; the reports differ concerning the size, but they are all weak reports⁴ apart from one with a reliable

1 *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, 7/265

2 *Muslim*, no. 2475 [However, this ḥadīth is not found in *Muslim*, but has been reported in *Musnad Ahmad*, *Mustadrak al-Ḥākim*, *Ṣaḥīḥ ibn Khuzaymah*, *al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr*, and *Majma' al-Zawā'id*]

3 *Al-Iṣābah*, 1/123, 124, quoted from al-Hakim with a reliable chain of narration

4 Some said one hundred and fifty thousand or more, *al-Bidāyah wan Nihāyah*, 7/260; one hundred and twenty thousand, *al-Ma'rifa wa Tārīkh*, 3/13, with an interrupted chain of narration; or ninety thousand, *Tārīkh Khalīfah ibn Khayyāt*, p. 193

chain of narration, which states that he set out with fifty thousand men.¹

The place where the troops of Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ gathered was al-Nukhaylah,² which was two miles from Kūfah. The tribes came to it from all regions of Iraq.³

Amīr al-Mu'minīn appointed Abū Mas'ūd al-Anṣārī and sent Ziyād ibn al-Nadhīr al-Ḥārithī from al-Nukhaylah ahead of the army with eight thousand fighters, and Shurayḥ ibn Hānī' with four thousand. Then 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ set out with his army towards Baghdad, where he was joined by more men; he appointed Sa'd ibn Mas'ūd al-Thaqafī in charge of them. From there he sent a detachment of three thousand to Mosul.⁴ 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ travelled on the main road to al-Jazīrah along the eastern bank of the Euphrates, until he drew close to Qarqasiya'.⁵

News reached him that Mu'āwiyah had set out to meet him and was camping in Ṣiffīn, so 'Alī went to al-Raqqah,⁶ from which he crossed the Euphrates, heading west, and came to Ṣiffīn.⁷

7. Mu'āwiyah's going out to Ṣiffīn

Mu'āwiyah was serious about bringing the murderers of 'Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ to justice. He managed to ambush and kill a group of Egyptians who had invaded Madīnah, including Abū 'Amr ibn Budayl al-Khubzā'ī, as they were returning to Egypt.⁸

1 *Tārīkh Khalīfah*, p. 193, with a reliable chain of narration

2 A place near Kūfah in the direction of Syria. *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, 5/278

3 Abdul-Ḥamīd: *Khilāfah 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, p. 188

4 *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, 5/603

5 Qarqasiya' is a city on the al-Khabūr river, where it joins the Euphrates. *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, 4/328

6 Al-Raqqah: a well-known city, now in Syria, on the eastern bank of the Euphrates. *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, 3/153

7 *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, 5/605

8 Abū al-'Arab al-Tamīmī: *al-Milḥan*, p. 124; 'Abd al-Ḥamīd: *Khilāfah 'Alī*, p. 191

Moreover, he had supporters in Egypt and among the people of Kharbata who were also seeking vengeance for the murder of ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه. This group managed to defeat Muḥammad ibn Abī Ḥudhayfah in a number of confrontations in 36 A.H. Mu‘āwiyah also managed to capture the Egyptian leaders and planners of the invasion of Madīnah, such as ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Udaysi, Kinānah ibn Bishr and Muḥammad ibn Ḥudhayfah, whom he detained in Palestine during the period that preceded his going out to Ṣiffīn. He executed them in Dhū al-Ḥijjah 36 A.H.¹

When Mu‘āwiyah learned of the movements of the Iraqi army, he gathered his consultants among the prominent people of Syria and addressed them, saying:

‘Alī is coming towards you with the people of Iraq.

Dhū al-Kilā’ al-Ḥimyarī said:

Tell us what to do, and we will do it.²

The people of Syria gave their pledge to Mu‘āwiyah that they would fight to seek vengeance for the murder of ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه.³

‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ رضي الله عنه prepared the army and appointed commanders, and he stood up to address and encourage the army, saying:

The people of Iraq are divided and weak. The people of Baṣrah are opposed to ‘Alī because he killed some of them, and the strongest of the people of Kūfah were killed in the Battle of the Camel. ‘Alī is marching with a small group, among whom are those who killed your khalīfah, so do not fail in your duty to bring them to justice.⁴

1 ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd: *Khilāfah ‘Alī*, p. 191

2 *Al-Iṣābah*, 11480; ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd: *Khilāfah ‘Alī*, p. 192

3 *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 2/52, *Khilāfah ‘Alī*, p. 192

4 *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, 5/601

Mu'āwiyah set out with a huge army. Reports differ on the number, but they all have interrupted chains of narration; they are the same reports that estimated the size of 'Alī's army. The number was put at one hundred and twenty thousand,¹ or seventy thousand, or much more than that.²

The closest to the truth is a report that they numbered sixty thousand. Although the chain of narration of this report is interrupted, its narrator is Safwān ibn 'Amr al-Saksī, a Homsī from Syria who was born in 72 A.H and is proven to be trustworthy. He met a number of those who had been present at Şiffīn, as is clear from studying his biography.³ The chain of narration to him is sound.⁴

The commanders of Mu'āwiyah's ﷺ army were as follows: 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ ﷺ in charge of the entire cavalry of Syria; Dhaḥḥāk ibn Qays in charge of the entire infantry; Dhū al-Kilā' al-Ḥimyarī in charge of the right flank of the army; Ḥabīb ibn Maslamah in charge of the left flank, and Abū al-A'war al-Sulamī in charge of the vanguard.

These were the senior commanders; with each of these commanders, there were other officers, organised along tribal lines. They marched to Şiffīn in this order, but during the battle, some of the commanders were changed and other commanders appointed, as dictated by circumstances. This may be the reason for the differences concerning the names of the commanders in some sources.⁵

Mu'āwiyah ﷺ sent Abū al-A'war al-Sulamī in the vanguard of the army, and their route led northeast from Damascus. When he reached Şiffīn, by the lower part of the Euphrates, he camped in a vast plain beside a branch of the Euphrates;

1 *Khilāfah 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, p. 194; *al-Ma'rifah wa al-Tārikh*, 3/313

2 *Khilāfah 'Alī*, p. 194; *Tārikh Khalīfah*; p. 193

3 *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, 61380

4 *Khilāfah 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, p. 194

5 Ṣaliḥ al-'Alī: *Imtidād al-'Arab fī Ṣadr al-Islām*, p. 73; *Khilāfah 'Alī*, p. 194

in that place there was no other branch on the river. So he made it his own.¹

8. The fight for the water

The army of ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ reached Şifḥīn, where Mu‘āwiyah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was already camping. ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ could not find sufficient level ground for the army, so they camped in a place that was somewhat rugged, on land that was mostly covered with jagged rocks.² His army was caught by surprise when Mu‘āwiyah prevented them from reaching the water, and some of them rushed to complain to ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ about that. He sent Ash‘ath ibn Qays out with two thousand men, and the first battle took place between the two sides. Ash‘ath was victorious and gained control of the water.³

However, there is a report denying that any fighting took place at all. This report says that Ash‘ath ibn Qays went to Mu‘āwiyah and said:

I urge you by Allah, O Mu‘āwiyah, to think of the ummah of Muḥammad صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. Suppose you kill the people of Iraq. Who will guard the border and the women and children? Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَعَلَى says:

وَإِنْ طَائِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اقْتَتَلُوا فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا

And if two parties [or groups] among the believers fall to fighting, then make peace between them both⁴

Mu‘āwiyah asked: “What do you want?” They replied: “Let us reach the water.” He said to Abū al-A‘war:

1 Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim: *Şifḥīn*, p. 160, 161

2 ‘Abdul-Ḥamīd: *Khilāfah ‘Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib*, p. 196; *an-Nasr al-Mubīn*

3 *Muṣannaḥ Ibn Abi Shaybah*, 15/24

4 Sūrah al-Ḥujarāt: 9

Let our brothers reach the water.¹

The alleged fight for the water took place on the first day they met at the beginning of Dhū al-Ḥijjah, and this was a hard start for both parties of Muslims, because fighting continued between them for the entire month. The fighting took the form of encounters between small groups. ‘Alī عليه السلام would send out a small group led by a commander, and it would engage in fighting once a day, either in the morning or the afternoon; on a few occasions they fought twice in a day. On most occasions, the commanders in ‘Alī’s عليه السلام army who would go out with small groups to fight were Ashtar, Ḥujr ibn ‘Adī, Shabath ibn Rab’i, Khālīd ibn al-Mu‘tamir and Ma‘qil ibn Yasār al-Riyāḥī.

In Mu‘āwiyah’s عليه السلام army, those who went out most often were Ḥabīb ibn Maslamah, ‘Abd al-Rāḥmān ibn Khālīd ibn al-Walīd, ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, Abū al-A‘war al-Sulamī and Shuraḥbīl ibn al-Samat. They avoided fighting with the entire army for fear of complete destruction and ruin of the ummah, and in the hope of reaching a peace deal between the two sides where by loss of lives and bloodshed could be avoided.²

9. Cooling off and attempts at reconciliation

No sooner had the month of Muḥarram begun than the two sides hastened to suspend the fighting and call for a truce, in the hope of reconciliation that would protect Muslim lives. They took advantage of this month to correspond with one another, but the information about the correspondence during this period - the month of Muḥarram - was narrated via weak but well-known chains of narration.³

The fact that they are weak does not mean that it did not take place, though. The one who started the correspondence was Amīr al-Mu‘minīn ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib

1 *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’*, 2/41; *Marwiyāt Abī Mikhnaf*, p. 296

2 ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd: *Khilāfah ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, p. 197, 198; *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, 7/266; *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, 5/614

3 *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, 5/612, 613; *Khilāfah ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, p. 199

رضي الله عنه. He sent Bashīr ibn ‘Amr al-Anṣārī, Sa‘īd ibn Qays al-Hamadānī and Shabath ibn Rab‘i al-Tamīmī to Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه, calling on him as he had before to join the main body of Muslims and swear allegiance to ‘Alī رضي الله عنه.

Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه responded in the same manner as he had previously, demanding that ‘Alī رضي الله عنه hand over ‘Uthmān’s رضي الله عنه killers or bring them to justice before he would give him his oath of allegiance. We have already discussed ‘Alī’s رضي الله عنه attitude concerning this matter.¹

The pious worshippers on both sides, of whom there was a large number, had camped in an area separate from Şifḥīn. They tried to mediate between the two sides, but their efforts did not succeed because each group insisted on its own opinion.²

Two of the Ṣaḥābah, Abū al-Dardā’ and Abū Umāmah رضي الله عنهما, also tried to reconcile the two parties but were not able to, and for the same reasons; they abandoned both parties and did not get involved in this issue of fighting.³

Masrūq ibn al-Ajda’, one of the senior Tābi‘īn, also came and exhorted them and told them to fear Allah سبحانه وتعالى, but did not participate in the fighting.⁴

Ibn Kathīr criticised the lengthy details that were narrated in reports of Abū Mikhnaf and Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim with regard to the correspondence between the two sides. He said:

...Then the biographers mentioned a lengthy discussion that took place between them and ‘Alī. The soundness of this material is subject to further examination. In the reports, there are some words which are attributed to ‘Alī in which there is criticism of Mu‘āwiyah and his father; it says that

1 *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, 5/613; *Khilāfah ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, p. 19

2 op. cit., 5/614

3 *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, 7/270

4 *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’*, 4/67

they entered Islam but still had some doubts about it, and other things that undermine Mu'āwiyah. It also says that 'Alī said concerning that: 'I do not say that 'Uthmān was killed unlawfully or lawfully.' In my view, this cannot be soundly attributed to 'Alī عليه السلام.¹

The attitude of 'Alī عليه السلام concerning the murder of 'Uthmān عليه السلام is quite clear. I have discussed it in my book about 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān عليه السلام and in the present volume.

Outbreak of fighting

Fighting resumed after the sacred months, in the month of Dhū al-Ḥijjah, with encounters between battalions, groups and individuals, for fear of all-out fighting taking place. More than twenty skirmishes had taken place between the two sides during the first week of Dhū al-Ḥijjah; it was also said that the number was ninety.²

'Alī عليه السلام announced to his army that on the next day, Wednesday, there would be an all-out battle involving the entire army; then he sent word to Mu'āwiyah informing him of that.³ That night, the people rushed to repair and sharpen their weapons. 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ عليه السلام brought weapons out of storage for those whose weapons had worn out and who needed them, and he encouraged people to be steadfast in fighting.⁴ Both armies spent the night planning and organising the commanders and banners.

1. The first day of the battle

On Wednesday morning, the two armies had organised their ranks in the manner

1 *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, 7/269

2 *Al-Anbā' bī Tawārīkh al-Khulafā'*, p. 59; *Ṣiffīn*, p. 202; *Shadharāt al-Dhahab*, 1145

3 *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, 7/273

4 *Sunan Sa'īd ibn Manṣūr*, 2/240 - weak

followed in major battles, with a core, a right flank and a left flank. ‘Alī’s ﷺ army was organised in the following manner:¹ ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib ﷺ was in charge of the core, ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās was in charge of the left flank, ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir was in charge of the infantry, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah was carrying the flag, Hishām ibn ‘Utbah (al-Marqāl) was carrying the banner and Ash‘ath ibn Qays was in charge of the right flank.

As for the Syrian army, Mu‘āwiyah ﷺ was in charge of the al-Shahba’ battalion, with their helmets and shields, on a hill, and he was the commander of the army; ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ was in charge of the entire Syrian cavalry; Dhū al-Kilā’ al-Ḥimyarī was in charge of the right flank, which was composed of Yemeni troops; Ḥabīb ibn Maslamah al-Fihrī was in charge of the left flank, which was composed of Muḍar tribesmen; and Makhāriq ibn al-Ṣabāh al-Kilā’ī was the banner carrier.²

The two Muslim armies faced one another, filling the horizon with their vast numbers. Ka‘b ibn Ju‘ayl al-Taghlabī,³ one of the Arab poets, said when he saw the people on Tuesday night, rushing to mend their arrows and swords in preparation for battle:

This Ummah is in a very odd situation;

Power will belong tomorrow to the one who prevails.

I shall say something true, not a lie:

Tomorrow prominent Arabs are going to die.⁴

Some weak reports say that ‘Alī ﷺ addressed his troops and urged them to be

1 *Tārīkh Khalīfah ibn Khayyāt*, p. 193, with a reliable chain of narration going back to an eyewitness.

2 *Tārīkh Khalīfah ibn Khayyāt*, p. 193, with a reliable chain of narration going back to an eyewitness.

3 He was the poet of Taghlab during his time; he lived at the time of ignorance and early Islam. He was the poet of Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān and the people of Syria, and he was present at Ṣiffīn with Mu‘āwiyah, Al-Zarkalī: *al-A‘lām*, 6/180.

4 *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, 7/273; *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, 5/262

patient and courageous and to remember Allah a great deal.¹

They also say that ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ inspected his troops and instructed them to straighten their ranks.²

There is no reason not to accept these reports, because all commanders encourage and motivate their troops and pay attention to anything that may lead to victory. The two armies met in a violent conflict that remained intense until sunset, and they only stopped to offer the prayers. Each group prayed in its own camp, with the bodies of the slain in the battlefield between them. When ‘Alī عليه السلام finished praying, one of his troops asked him:

What do you say about our dead and their dead, O Amīr al-Mu‘minīn?

He replied:

Whoever has been killed among us and them, seeking the countenance of Allah and the home of the hereafter will enter paradise.³

The two armies stood firm, and neither prevailed; no one was seen fleeing until that day ended. In the evening, ‘Alī عليه السلام went out to the battlefield and looked at the people of Syria, and he called upon his Rabb, saying: “O Allah, forgive me and them.”⁴

2. The second day

On Thursday, the reports say that ‘Alī عليه السلام prayed Fajr ṣalāh when it was still quite dark. He prepared to attack, and he changed some of his commanders. He put ‘Abd Allāh ibn Buḍayl al-Khuzā‘ī in charge of the right flank instead of al-

1 *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, 5/622, via Abū Mikhnaf.

2 *Al-Ṭabaqāt*, 41255, via al-Wāqidī.

3 *Sunan Sa‘īd ibn Manṣūr*, 2/344, 345, with a weak chain of narration.

4 *Muṣannaf Ibn Abī Shaybah*, 15/297, with a weak chain of narration.

Ash‘ath ibn Qays al-Kindī, whom he moved to the left flank.¹

The two parties marched towards one another and engaged in fighting that was even more intense than the day before. The people of Iraq began to advance, and they started to gain the upper hand over the people of Syria. ‘Abd Allāh ibn Buḍayl managed to penetrate Mu‘āwiyah’s ﷺ left flank, which was led by Ḥabīb ibn Maslamah, and he advanced towards Mu‘āwiyah’s ﷺ battalion (al-Shahba’), demonstrating unparalleled courage and zeal. This partial advance was accompanied by a general advance of the Iraqi army, until Mu‘āwiyah ﷺ thought of leaving the battlefield, but he stood firm and urged his battalion al-Shahba’ to do likewise. They managed to kill ‘Abd Allāh ibn Buḍayl, who was replaced by Ashtar as commander of the right flank.

The people of Syria stood firm, and some of them swore to fight to the death. They attacked again with firm resolve, and a number of them were killed, the most prominent of whom were Dhū al-Kilā’, Ḥawshab and ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ﷺ.

Then the balance tipped in favour of the Syrian army, and they gained the upper hand, while the Iraqi army started to fall back, with many of them being killed and wounded. When ‘Alī ﷺ saw that his army was falling back, he began calling out to them and encouraging them.

He fought fiercely, aiming for the core where the Rabī‘ah tribe was. They were incensed by this, and their commander Khālīd ibn al-Mu‘tamir swore to fight to the death, for they were people who excelled at fighting.²

‘Ammār ibn Yāsir ﷺ, who was over ninety-four years old, fought fiercely and encouraged and motivated the people to do likewise, but he was far removed

1 *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, 5/630

2 *Al-Iṣābah*: 1/454; *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 2/56, with a mursal reliable chain of narration going back to Qatādah

from extremism. He heard a man next to him saying:

The people of Syria have become disbelievers.

‘Ammār رضي الله عنه rebuked him for saying that and said:

Rather they have transgressed against us, and we are fighting them because of their transgression. Our God is One, our Rasūl is one, and our qiblah is one.¹

When ‘Ammār رضي الله عنه saw his companions falling back and his opponents advancing, he started encouraging them and telling them that they were in the right and should not be deceived by the heavy blows of the Syrians. He said:

Whoever would like the *ḥūrīʾīn* to surround him, let him advance between the ranks, seeking reward with Allah, for I can see that the Syrians are fighting us so fiercely that it may create doubt in the minds of some. By the One who controls my life, if they pushed us back until they made us reach Saʿfāt Ḥajar, we would still believe that we are in the right and they are in the wrong; we would still believe that our righteous people are in the right, and they are the wrong.²

Then he began to advance with a spear in his hand, trembling because of old age. He was urging the banner carrier Hishām ibn ‘Utbah ibn Abī Waqqās to advance and seek the blessings that are with Allah and encouraging his companions too, saying:

Paradise is close at hand, and the *ḥūrīʾīn* are adorned. Whoever would like to be surrounded by the *ḥūrīʾīn*, let him advance between the ranks,

1 *Muṣannaf Ibn Abī Shaybah*, 15/290. The chain of narration is reliable because of corroborating evidence.

2 *Majmaʿ al-Zawāʾid*, 7/243; ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd: *Khilāfah ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, p. 219. Its chain of narration is reliable.

seeking the reward of Allah.

This was a moving scene, for he was a great Ṣaḥābī who had been present at Badr. He was over ninety-four years of age and possessed great zeal, resolve, high morale and strong faith. He was an important factor in the enthusiasm of the Iraqī army and in raising their morale, which made them tougher and fiercer and willing to sacrifice until they managed to tip the balance in their favour. Hishām ibn ‘Utbah ibn Abī Waqqās advanced as ‘Ammār was saying:

Advance O Hishām, for paradise lies in the shade of the swords, and death is at the edges of the spears; the gates of heaven are open and the ḥūrī‘īn are adorned. Today I will meet my loved ones, Muḥammad and his Ṣaḥābah.¹

When the sun set that Thursday, ‘Ammār asked for a drink of milk, and then he said:

The Rasūl of Allah ﷺ said to me: “The last drink you will drink in this world will be a drink of milk.”²

Then he advanced and urged the banner carrier Hishām ibn ‘Utbah ibn Abī Waqqās al-Zuhrī to advance with him, and neither of them came back; both were slain.³ May Allah have mercy on them and be pleased with them.

3. The night of clamour and Friday

Fighting resumed the same night, with energy that had not been seen before. The people of Iraq fought with enthusiasm and high spirits until they pushed the people of Syria back from their positions. Amīr al-Mu‘minīn ‘Alī رضي الله عنه fought fiercely and pledged to fight to the death.⁴

1 *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, 5/652

2 *Muṣannaf Ibn Abī Shaybah*, 15/302, 303, with an interrupted chain of narration.

3 *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, 5/653

4 *Al-Mustadrak*, 3/402 - al-Dhahabī said, It is weak; *Khilāfah ‘Alī*, p.226

It was said that ‘Alī عليه السلام led his army in praying the fear prayer at the time of sunset.¹

Al-Shāfi‘i said:

It was narrated from ‘Alī عليه السلام that he offered the fear prayer on the night of clamour.²

An eyewitness said:

We fought for three days and three nights until the spears were broken and the arrows ran out, then we started using swords. We battled until the middle of the night, until we reached the point of hand to hand combat. When the swords became like sickles, we started hitting one another with pieces of iron, and we could hear nothing except the grunting and groaning of the people. Then we threw stones at one another, threw dust at one another, and bit one another with our teeth until morning came on Friday and the sun rose, although it could not be seen because of the dust of battle. The banners and flags fell, and the army was worn out; our hands were exhausted, and our throats were dry.³

Ibn Kathīr said, describing the night of clamour and the following Friday:

They started fighting one another, and two men would fight until they were exhausted. Then they would sit down to rest, each one grunting at the other; then they would get up and fight again. To Allah we belong, and unto Him is our return. They continued like that until Friday morning came, and the people prayed the Fajr ṣalāh with gestures while still fighting, until it became very light outside, and the people of Iraq began to

1 Al-Bayhaqī: *al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, 31252. Al-Albānī said: It was narrated by al-Bayhaqī who described it as weak- *lrwa’ al-khalīl*, 3/42

2 *Talkhīs al-Ḥabīb*, 2/78

3 *Shadharāt al-Dhahab*, 1/45; *Waq’at Ṣiffīn*, p. 369

gain the upper hand over the people of Syria.¹

4. The call for arbitration

After the night of clamour, the two armies found themselves in such a state that they could not withstand any more fighting. Al-Ash'ath ibn Qays, the leader of Kindah, addressed his companions after the night of clamour and said:

O Muslims, you have seen what happened yesterday and how many of the Arabs were killed. By Allah, I have reached old age as Allah willed, and I have never seen anything like this. Let those who are present tell those who were absent. If we resume fighting tomorrow, that will be the end of the Arabs, and there will be no one left to protect what is sacred. By Allah, I am not saying this for fear of fighting, but I am an old man, and I fear that there will be no one to protect the women and children if we all die tomorrow. O Allah, You know that my intention is to do what is best for my people and my co-religionists, and I have not fallen short.²

News of that reached Mu'āwiyah, who said:

He is right, by the Lord of the Ka'bah. If we meet in battle tomorrow, the Byzantines will attack our women and children, and the Persians will attack the people of Iraq and their children. Only those with wisdom and understanding can see that.

Then he said to his companions:

Tie the muṣḥafs to the ends of the spears.³

This is an Iraqi report in which there is no mention of 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ or any trick

1 *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, 7/283

2 *Waq'at Ṣiffīn*, p. 479

3 *op. cit.*, p. 881-884

or deceit; rather it was the desire of both parties. Neither Mu‘āwiyah nor ‘Amr رضي الله عنه would be harmed if one of them had the courage to take this initiative and save what was left of the strength of this ummah that was fighting itself. It was only the Saba’iyyah who were upset by that; they had started this turmoil, and they left for us a pile of misleading reports, which presented truth as falsehood and virtue - such as calling for referral to the Qur’ān for judgment in order to protect Muslim life - as a crime, a conspiracy and a trick.¹

They attributed to Amīr al-Mu’mīnīn ‘Alī رضي الله عنه words that he did not say and that were contrary to what is mentioned in the sound reports. They attributed to him the words:

They never held it in high esteem, and they will never act upon it; they have only raised it as a trick and a plot to appease us.²

One of the obscene things that they said about the lifting up of the muṣḥaf was:

This is the idea of the son of the promiscuous woman.³

They also widened the circle of propaganda against ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ رضي الله عنه, to the extent that you can hardly find any book of history that does not contain words undermining ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ and claiming that he was a trickster and plotter; this is because of the fabricated reports made up by the enemies of the noble Ṣaḥābah and transmitted by al-Ṭabari, Ibn al-Athīr and others.

Many contemporary historians, such as Ḥasan Ibrāhīm Ḥasan in *Tārīkh al-Islām*, Muḥammad al-Khuḍarī Beg in *Tārīkh al-Dawlah al-Umawiyyah*, ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Najjār in *Tārīkh al-Khulafā’ al-Rāshidīn* and others were fooled by them and played a role in distorting the historical facts.

1 *Al-Dawlah al-Islamiyyah fi ‘Aṣr al-Khulafā’ al-Rāshidīn*, p. 316

2 *al-Kāmil*, 2/386

3 *Tārīkh al-Ṭabari*, 5/662

The report of Abū Mikhnaf suggests that ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ rejected the idea of referring to the Qur’ān for judgment when it was first suggested by the people of Syria, then he accepted it due to pressure from the worshippers who later became known as Khawārij.¹

This report suggests that ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ slandered Mu‘āwiyah and his ‘Ṣaḥābah, which is beneath the people of that blessed generation, so how about their leaders, foremost among whom being Amīr al- Mu’minīn ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ? It is sufficient reason to reject the report that it was narrated by the Rāfiḍī fabricator Abū Mikhnaf.

It is a report that cannot stand up to unbiased review, and it cannot stand before other reports whose narrators cannot be accused of bias, such as that which was narrated by Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal via Ḥabīb ibn Abī Thābit, who said:

I came to Abū Wā’il, one of the men of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, and he said: “We were in Ṣiffīn, and when many of the people of Syria were killed, ‘Amr said to Mu‘āwiyah: ‘Send the muṣḥaf to ‘Alī, and call him to the Book of Allah; he will not refuse.’ A man brought the muṣḥaf to ‘Alī and said: ‘Between us and you is the Book of Allah:

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا نَصِيبًا مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ يُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى كِتَابِ اللَّهِ لِيَحْكَمَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ يُتَوَلَّى فِرْقًا مِّنْهُمْ
وَهُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ

Have you not seen those who have been given a portion of the Scripture? They are being invited to the Book of Allah to settle their dispute, then a party of them turn away, and they are averse.”²

‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ said: “Yes, I should be the first to accept that.’ The worshippers (those who rebelled later on and became known as Khawārij) stood up with their swords on their shoulders and said: ‘O Amīr al-Mu’minīn, should we not keep on fighting

1 *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, 5/662, 663

2 *Sūrah, Āl Imrān*: 23

these people until Allah decides the matter between us and them?’ Sahl ibn Ḥunayf al-Anṣārī رضي الله عنه stood up and said: ‘O people, you should be suspicious of your motives. We were with the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم on the day of Ḥudaybiyyah, and if we had the opportunity to fight, we were ready to fight.’ (He was referring to the peace deal that was drawn up between the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم and the polytheists. Then he told them about ‘Umar’s objection to the treaty on the day of Hudaibiyah and the revelation of Sūrah al-Faṭḥ to the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم.) ‘Alī رضي الله عنه said: “O people, this is a victory.” ‘Alī رضي الله عنه accepted the offer and went back, and the people went back too.”¹

Sahl ibn Ḥunayf رضي الله عنه expressed his annoyance with those who called for continuing the war between brothers, saying:

O people, you should be suspicious of your motives.²

He explained to them that there was no option except dialogue and a peace deal, because the alternative was ongoing internal conflict, the consequences of which no one knew. He said:

Before this, whenever we went out to fight for a cause, we were certain of the result and how far we would go with it; we do not finish with one opponent but another opponent appears to us, and we do not know how to deal with him.³

In these sound reports is a refutation of those who advocated fitnah and hated the Ṣaḥābah, who fabricated false reports and poetry, which they then falsely attributed to the most prominent Ṣaḥābah and Ṭābi‘īn who took part in the Battle of Ṣiffīn. They tried to make them appear very eager for this war, so as to instil hatred in people’s hearts; they did their utmost to perpetuate the turmoil.⁴

1 *Muṣannaf ibn Abī Shaybah*, 8/336; *Musnad Aḥmad ma’a al-Faṭḥ al-Rabbānī*, 8/483

2 *Bukhārī*, no. 4189

3 *ibid.*

4 *Al-Insāf fī mā waqa’a fī Tārīkh al-‘Aṣr al-Rāshidīn min al-Khilāfah*

The call for referring to the Book of Allah for judgment without any assurance that the killers of ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه would be handed over to Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه, and the acceptance of this arbitration without any assurance that Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه would obey ‘Alī رضي الله عنه and swear allegiance to him, are developments that were dictated by the consequences of Ṣiffīn.

The battle had led to the killing of a large number of Muslims, and it created a common inclination towards the idea that stopping the fighting and bloodshed had become a necessity because it was important to preserve the ummah’s strength against its enemies. This was indicative of the vitality and awareness of the ummah and its impact on decision-making.¹

Amīr al-Mu‘minīn ‘Alī رضي الله عنه agreed to stop fighting at Ṣiffīn and he agreed to arbitration, which he regarded as a breakthrough; then he went back to Kūfah.² He hoped that the arbitration would put an end to the dispute, unite the ummah, strengthen the state and revitalise the conquest movement. A number of factors contributed to both sides reaching the idea of arbitration and accepting it:

- a. It was a final attempt to stop the conflict and bloodshed. Previous attempts, both collective and individual, had begun after the Battle of the Camel but had not succeeded. The letters that had been exchanged between the two sides, expressing the view of each, did not lead to any resolution either. The last of these attempts was that made by Mu‘āwiyah during the days when fighting had intensified. He wrote to ‘Alī رضي الله عنه, asking him to stop fighting; he said:

I think that if you and we had known that the fighting would reach the level that it has reached; we would not have brought it upon ourselves. If we did not use our reason before, then it is not too late to refer to reason so

1 *Dirāsah fī Tārīkh al-Khulafā’ al-Umawiyīn*, p. 38

2 *ibid.*

that we may regret what has passed and put right what is left.¹

- b. Many had been slain, and a great deal of blood had been shed. There was the fear that the ummah might be wiped out; thus the call to stop the fighting was something that everyone was hoping for.
- c. The people were exhausted from the fighting that had gone on for so long; it was as if the call for a peace deal and reconciliation came at the right time. The majority of ‘Alī’s army was inclined towards making peace, and they kept saying:

War has consumed us. We think that we cannot survive unless we make a peace deal.²

This is contrary to the worthless view alleging that raising the Muṣḥafs on the spears was a trick suggested by ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ. In fact, the idea of raising the Muṣḥafs was not invented by ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ; the Muṣḥaf had been raised during the Battle of the Camel when its carrier Ka‘b ibn Sūr, the judge of Baṣrah, was struck by an arrow and killed.

- d. This was a response to the verse that calls for peace. Allah says:

فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ

[And] if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Rasūl.³

This is supported by what ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib رضي الله عنه said when he was called to refer to the Book of Allah for judgment. He said:

1 Ad-Dīnūri: *al-Akhbār aṭ-Ṭiwāl*, p. 187; *Dirāsāt fi ‘Ahd an-Nubuwwah*, p. 432

2 *Ṣiffīn*, p. 482-485; *Dirāsāt fi ‘Ahd an-Nubuwwah*, p. 433

3 Sūrah al-Nisā’: 59

Yes, I should be the first to accept that; between us and you is the Book of Allah.¹

5. Noble conduct during battle

The Battle of Siffin was one of the most remarkable battles among Muslims. This conflict was so amazing that the reader cannot believe what he is reading, and he is shocked by the behaviour of people on both sides. Each of them stood in the midst of battle, with his sword unsheathed and firmly convinced of the cause for which he was fighting. It was not a battle in which people were driven by leaders who were pushing the troops into a fight of which they were not convinced. Rather it was a battle that was unique in its motives and in the way it was conducted, as well as the impact it left behind.

The motives in the hearts of the participants were highlighted by some stories that have reached us in the historical sources. They were like brothers, going together to the water source, all drinking from it and crowding one another, scooping up the water, but no man harmed another.² When the fighting stopped, they behaved like brothers living together. One of the participants said: “When we had a break from fighting, we would go to one another’s camp and speak to one another.”³

They were members of one tribe, each with his own opinion, so people of one tribe on one side might fight bitterly with people of the same tribe on the other side,⁴ each believing that he was in the right and prepared to be killed for his cause. Two men would fight until they were exhausted, then they would sit and rest and talk to one another a great deal, then they would get up and fight again.⁵ They belonged to one religion, which was dearer to them than their own souls. When

1 *Muṣannaḥ Ibn Abī Shaybah*, 8/336

2 *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, 5/610

3 *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, 2/41; *Marwiyāt Abī Mikhnaf*, p. 296

4 *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, 7/270; *Dirāsāt fī 'Ahd al-Nubuwwah*, p. 424

5 *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*. quoted in *Dirāsāt fī 'Ahd al-Nubuwwah*, p. 424

the time for prayer came, they would stop fighting so that they could pray.¹

When ‘Ammār رضي الله عنه was killed, both sides offered the Ṣalāt al-Janāzah for him.²

An eyewitness who took part in the Battle of Ṣiffīn said:

Fighting broke out at Ṣiffīn, and we kept fighting for days; many of us were killed until even the horses were stabbed and killed. ‘Alī رضي الله عنه sent word to ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ telling him that the number of slain had increased, and he should stop fighting so that each side could bury its dead. He agreed, and the people mixed with one another until they were like that...” and he intertwined his fingers.

One of the ‘Ṣaḥābah of ‘Alī would charge and be killed in the camp of Mu‘āwiyah, then he would be brought out from it. The companions of ‘Alī رضي الله عنه, carried one of their dead before ‘Amr, and when he saw him, he said: “He strove hard and adhered strongly to the command of Allah.”³

They would hasten to forbid evil, even in this situation. There was a group of pious people who were among the Syrian students of ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd; they did not join either Amīr al-Mu‘minīn ‘Alī or Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān. They said to Amīr al-Mu‘minīn:

We will go out with you, but we will not join your camp. We will camp on our own until we see how things turn out between you and the people of Syria. If we see someone wanting that which is not permissible for him or transgressing, then we will be against him. ‘Alī رضي الله عنه said: “Welcome; this is a deep understanding of Islam and knowledge of the Sunnah. Whoever

1 *Tārīkh Dimashq*, 18/2239; *Dirāsāt fī ‘Ahd al-Nubuwwah*, p. 424

2 *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 6/56, with a reliable chain of narration going back to ‘Utbah; ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd: *Khilāfat ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, p. 241

3 *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 6/56, with a reliable chain of narration going back to ‘Utbah; ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd: *Khilāfat ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, p. 241

does not approve of this is a transgressor and betrayer.”¹

In fact, this attitude is based on conviction and views that were deeply rooted in their souls, and they fought on that basis.²

6. Treatment of captives

Good treatment of the captives and kindness towards them is something to be expected at Şifḥīn, since we have discussed the noble conduct of both sides when fighting. Islam has outlined how captives are to be treated. The Rasūl of Allah ﷺ encouraged kind treatment of captives and giving them the best available food. This was in the case of non-Muslims, so how about if the captives are Muslims? Undoubtedly honouring them and treating them kindly is emphasised even more. However, a prisoner of war is regarded as a potential reinforcement for his group if he is released.³ Hence ‘Alī ﷺ instructed that they should be detained. If any prisoner swore allegiance to him, he was to be released; if he refused, his weapon and mount were to be confiscated or given to the one who had captured him, and he was asked to swear an oath that he would not fight. According to one report, he would give him four dirhams.⁴

‘Alī’s ﷺ aim in doing that is quite clear; it was to weaken the rebel side. A prisoner was brought to him on the Day of Şifḥīn, and he said: “Do not kill me in captivity.” ‘Alī ﷺ said: “I will not kill you in captivity, for I fear Allah, the Lord of the worlds.” He let him go, and then he said: “Is there any goodness in you to swear allegiance?”⁵

From these reports, it seems that the treatment of captives was as follows:

1 Şifḥīn, p. 115; *Dirāsāt fi ‘Ahd al-Nubuwwah*, p. 424

2 *Dirāsāt fi ‘Ahd an-Nubuwwah*, p. 424

3 *Kitāb Qitāl Ahl al-Baghy min al-Ḥāwi al-Kabīr*, p. 133, 134

4 ‘Abdul-Ḥamīd: *Khilāfah ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib*, p. 243

5 ash-Shāfi‘ī: *al-Umm*, 4/224, 8/243

- They were honoured and treated kindly.
- They were given the option of swearing allegiance and obeying the khalīfah, in which case they would be released.
- If a prisoner refused to swear allegiance, his weapon would be confiscated and he would be asked to swear an oath that he would not go back to fighting; if he did so, then he would be released.
- If the prisoner insisted on fighting, then he would be kept in captivity, but he would not be killed.¹

On one occasion, fifteen prisoners were brought to ‘Alī رضي الله عنه and it seems that they were wounded. Those who died were washed and shrouded, and the funeral prayer was offered for them.²

Muḥibb ad-Dīn al-Khaṭīb said, commenting on this battle:

Nevertheless, this exemplary battle was the first humane war in history, in which both sides adhered to the principles of virtue that the wise men of the West wish were implemented in their wars, even in the twenty-first century. Many of the principles of war in Islam would not have been known and written down were it not for this battle taking place, and Allah has wisdom in all affairs.

Ibn al-‘Adīm said:

I say: All of that shows the rulings and guidelines on fighting the transgressing group (rebels). Hence Abū Ḥanīfah said: “Were it not for ‘Alī’s treatment of them, no one would know how to deal with Muslims (who rebel against authority).”³

1 ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd: *Khilāfah ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, p. 243

2 *Tārīkh Dimashq*, with commentary by al-Munajjid, 11331; *Khilāfah ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, p. 243

3 *Baghiyat al-Ṭalab min Tārīkh Ḥalab*, 309; *Khilāfah ‘Alī*, p. 245

7. The number of people slain

The scholars have conflicting views concerning the number of people slain at Şifīn. Ibn Abī Khaythamah said that it was seventy thousand: twenty-five thousand of the people of Iraq and forty-five thousand of the people of Syria.¹ Ibn al-Qayyim said that it was seventy thousand or more.² Undoubtedly these numbers are not accurate; they are wildly inflated.

The real fighting and all-out battle lasted for three days, during which the fighting was stopped at night except for the Friday evening, so the total period of fighting was approximately thirty hours.³

No matter how violent the fighting was, it could not have been more intense than Qādisiyyah, where the number of martyrs was 8 500.⁴ Logically, it is difficult to accept the reports that mention these huge figures.

8. Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī's inspection of the dead and praying for mercy for them

After the end of each round of the battle, Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī عليه السلام would check on the dead. An eyewitness said:

I saw 'Alī on the Rasūl's mule al-Shahba', going around among the slain.⁵

While he was checking on the slain, accompanied by Ashtar, he passed by the body of a man who had been one of the well-known judges and worshippers in Syria. Ashtar (or according to another report, 'Adī ibn Ḥātīm) said:

1 al-Qaḍā'i: *al-Anbā'*, p. 59, quoted in *Khilāfah 'Alī*, p. 246

2 *Al-Şawā'iq al-Mursalāh*, 1/377, with no chain of narration, ed. by Muḥammad Dakhīl-Allah

3 *Al-Dawlah al-Umawiyyah*, p. 360-362

4 *Tārikh al-Ṭabarī*, 4/388

5 *Muṣannaf Ibn Abī Shaybah*

O Amīr al-Mu'minīn, is Ḥābis¹ with them? I thought he was a good believer and had strong faith.

‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ replied:

He is still a good believer today.

It is possible this man who had been killed was the judge who came to ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and said:

O Amīr al-Mu'minīn, I had a dream that alarmed me.

‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ enquired what the dream was and he replied:

I saw the sun and moon fighting, and the stars were divided between them, half and half.

‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ said:

Which of them were you with?

He replied:

With the moon against the sun.

‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ said:

وَجَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ آيَاتَيْنِ فَمَحَوْنَا آيَةَ اللَّيْلِ وَجَعَلْنَا آيَةَ النَّهَارِ مُبْصِرَةً

Allah says: And We have appointed the night and the day as two signs.. Then, We have obliterated the sign of the night [with darkness] while We have made the sign of the day illuminating.²

1 Ḥābis ibn Sa'd al-Ṭa'i a Mukhdaram (one who lived during the lifetime of Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ but embraced Islam after his demise), who was killed at Ṣiffīn

2 Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl: 12

Depart, for by Allah you will never do any work for me.

The narrator said:

I heard that he was killed fighting for Mu'āwiyah at Şifḥīn.¹

‘Alī عليه السلام stood over the slain of his party and the slain of Mu'āwiyah's party and said: "May Allah forgive you, may Allah forgive you." for both parties.²

It was narrated that Yazīd ibn al-Aṣam said:

When the peace deal was agreed between ‘Alī and Mu'āwiyah عليه السلام, ‘Alī عليه السلام went out and walked among the slain of his party and said: "They are in paradise." Then he went to the slain of Mu'āwiyah's عليه السلام party and said: "They are in paradise, and then judgment will be passed between me and Mu'āwiyah."³

He used to say of them that they were believers.⁴ What ‘Alī عليه السلام said about the people who were killed at Şifḥīn was not much different from what he said about the people who were killed at the Battle of the camel.⁵

9. Attitude of Mu'āwiyah towards the Byzantine ruler

The ruler of Byzantium tried to take advantage of the difference of opinion that occurred between Amīr al-Mu'minīn ‘Alī and Mu'āwiyah عليه السلام by acquiring some of the lands that were under Mu'āwiyah's control.

Ibn Kathīr said:

The ruler of Byzantium got his hopes up of attacking Mu'āwiyah, after

1 *Muṣannaf Ibn Abī Shaybah*, 11/74, with an interrupted chain of narration.

2 ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd: *Khilāfat ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib* p. 250

3 *Muṣannaf Ibn Abī Shaybah*, 15/303, with an interrupted chain of narration.

4 *Tārīkh Dimashq*, 11329, 331; *Khilāfat ‘Alī*, p. 251

5 ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd: *Khilāfat ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib* p. 251

Mu'āwiyah had scared and humiliated him and had defeated him and his troops. When the ruler of Byzantium saw that Mu'āwiyah was preoccupied with fighting 'Alī عليه السلام, he marched to some Muslim territory with a large number of troops, hoping to gain control of it. Mu'āwiyah wrote to him, saying: "By Allah, if you do not give up and go back to your own country, O cursed one, I shall reconcile with my cousin against you, and I shall drive you from all of your land and leave you no room on earth, vast as it is." At that point, the ruler of Byzantium got scared and refrained from fighting, and he sent a message asking for a truce.¹

This is indicative of Mu'āwiyah's عليه السلام integrity and his love of Islam.

10. A false story about 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ at Šiffīn

Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim al-Kufi said:

The people of Iraq charged and engaged in fighting with the Syrians, and they fought hard. 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ charged but was intercepted by 'Alī.

The story goes on to say:

Then 'Alī stabbed 'Amr and threw him down, and 'Amr tried to protect himself with his legs, and his 'awrah (the part of a person's body that must be screened from public view) became uncovered. 'Alī turned his face away from him and looked away. The people said: "The man has gotten away, O Amīr al-Mu'minīn." He said: "Do you know who he is?" They said: "No." He said: "He is 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ. He showed me his 'awrah, so I turned my face away."²

This story was also mentioned by Ibn al-Kalbī, as stated by al-Suhaylī in al-Rawḍ al-Anīf. 'Alī عليه السلام supposedly said:

He protected himself by showing his 'awrah and reminded me of the ties

1 *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, 8/122

2 *Waq'at Šiffīn*, p. 406-408; Sulaymān al-Kharāshi: *Qasas la tathbut*, 6/19

of kinship.

Something similar is narrated from ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ رضي الله عنه with regard to the day of Ṣiffīn.¹

The response to this fabrication and blatant lie is as follows: the narrator of the first report, Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim al-Kūfī, the author of the book Waq‘at Ṣiffīn, was an extreme Shī‘ah, so it comes as no surprise that he would tell lies and fabricate stories about the Ṣaḥābah. Al-Dhahabī said concerning him in al-Mizān:

Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim al-Kūfī is an extreme Rāfiḍī, and they rejected him.

Al-‘Uqaylī said concerning him:

He is a Shī‘ah and his aḥādīth contain a lot of flaws and mistakes.

Abū Khaythamah said:

He was a liar.²

Ibn Ḥajar said concerning him:

Al-‘Ajli said: “He was an extreme Rāfiḍī and is not trustworthy at all.”³

Hishām ibn Muḥammad ibn d-Sā’ib al-Kalbī said:

They were agreed that he was an extreme Shī‘ah.

Imām Aḥmad said:

Who narrates from him? I do not think that anyone narrates from him.

1 *Al-Rawḍ al-Anīf*, 5/462; *Qasas lā tathbut*, 6/19

2 *Mizān al-I’tidāl*, 4/253-254

3 *Lisān al-Mizān*, 6/157

Al-Dāraqūṭnī said:

He is rejected.¹

Via these two Rawāfiḍ, this story became widely known, and the Shīʿī historians who came after them welcomed it warmly, as did some of the Sunnīs who were deceived by the lies of the Rawāfiḍ.²

This story may be regarded as an example of the lies and fabrications of the Rāfiḍī Shīʿah against the Ṣaḥābah of the Rasūl of Allah ﷺ. The enemies of the Ṣaḥābah among the Rāfiḍī historians fabricated bad qualities that they ascribed to the Ṣaḥābah of the Rasūl of Allah ﷺ and they wrote them in the form of stories and poetry that could be spread easily among the Muslims, aiming to undermine the status of the righteous Ṣaḥābah رضي الله عنهم.

Sunnī Muslims were not paying attention; they started at a late stage to examine and verify the reports of Islamic history, after those poems and stories had spread everywhere and become widely known among the storytellers. By then, many of them had unfortunately come to be accepted, even among Sunnī historians.³

11. Amīr al-Muʿminīn ʿAlī رضي الله عنه visits a graveyard on his way back from Ṣiffīn

After Amīr al-Muʿminīn ʿAlī رضي الله عنه had finished at Ṣiffīn, he passed by a graveyard and said:

Peace be upon you, people of the desolate and isolated abode, believing men and women, Muslim men and women. You have gone before us, and we are following in your footsteps and will join you soon. O Allah, forgive us and them, and bestow Your mercy on us and them. Praise be to Allah

1 Ibn Ḥibbān: *al-Majrūhīn*, 3/91; *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāz*, 11343; *Muʿjam al-Uḍabāʾ*, 19/287; *Qasas lā tathbut*, 1/18

2 *Qaṣaṣ lā tathbut*, 1120

3 op. cit., 1110

Who has made the earth a receptacle for the living and the dead. Praise be to Allah, Who has created you, and on it He will gather you, and from it He will raise you. Glad tidings to the one who remembers the Resurrection, prepares himself for the Reckoning and is content with the little that he has been given.¹

12. Insistence of ‘Uthmān’s murderers that the battle should continue

The murderers of ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه were very keen that the battle between the two sides should continue until the people were wiped out and the strength of both sides was lessened, so that they would be safe from retaliation and punishment. They panicked when they saw the people of Syria raising up the muṣḥafs and ‘Alī رضي الله عنه responding to their request by ordering that the fighting and bloodshed be stopped.

They tried to make ‘Alī رضي الله عنه change his mind, but the battle stopped; as a result, they felt helpless and had no alternative but to rebel against ‘Alī رضي الله عنه. So they fabricated the idea that the ruling belongs to Allah (and not to people), and they kept away from both sides.

What is strange is that the historians did not pay as much attention to what these people did at this stage as they did with regard to the Battle of the Camel, even though they were present in ‘Alī’s رضي الله عنه army, or to the reason why these negotiations that went on for many months failed, or the role that the murderers of ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه may have played in the Battle of Ṣiffīn to cause the failure of all attempts at reconciliation between the two sides - because reconciliation between ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه would have been like reaching a deal to bring them to justice and execute them. It does not make sense to suggest that they strove hard during the Battle of the Camel to make the fighting continue, but did not do the same thing at Ṣiffīn.²

1 al-Jāhīdh: *al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn*, 3/128; *Farā’id al-Kalām li l-Khulafā’ al-Kirām*, p. 327

2 *Aḥdāth wa al-Aḥādīth Fitnat al-Ḥaraj*, p. 147

13. Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī forbids impugning Mu'āwiyah and cursing the people of Syria

It was narrated that when 'Alī رضي الله عنه heard that two of his companions were openly reviling Mu'āwiyah رضي الله عنه and cursing the people of Syria, he sent word to them telling them to stop what they were doing. They came to him and said:

O Amīr al-Mu'minīn, are we not in the right and they in the wrong?

He said:

Yes indeed, by the Rabb of the Ka'bah.

They said:

Then why are you stopping us from reviling and cursing them?

He said:

I do not want you to be people who curse; rather you should say: "O Allah, protect our blood and theirs, reconcile between us and them. Save them from their misguidance, so that truth will become clear to those who are unaware of it and those who got carried away in misguidance will give up their stubborn ways."¹

With regard to what is said about 'Alī رضي الله عنه cursing Mu'āwiyah رضي الله عنه and his companions in his supplications during the prayer, and Mu'āwiyah رضي الله عنه cursing 'Alī, Ibn 'Abbās, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn رضي الله عنهم when he said supplications during the prayer, this is not true, because the Ṣaḥābah were more eager than others to adhere to the commands of the Allah, which forbids reviling or cursing a Muslim.²

It was narrated that the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

1 Al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl, p. 165, quoted in *Tahqīq Mawāqif al-Ṣaḥābah fī l-Fitnah*, 2/232

2 *Tahqīq Mawāqif al-Ṣaḥābah*, 2/232

Whoever curses a believer, it is as if he killed him.¹

He ﷺ also said:

The believer is not given to slandering and cursing.²

And he ﷺ said:

Those who are given to cursing cannot be intercessors or witnesses on the Day of Resurrection.³

Moreover, the report in which it is narrated that Amīr al-Mu'minīn cursed Mu'āwiyah ﷺ and his companions in his supplications, and that Mu'āwiyah ﷺ cursed Amīr al-Mu'minīn, Ibn 'Abbās, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn ﷺ, is not proven in terms of its chain of transmission. It includes Abū Mikhnaf Lūt ibn Yaḥyā, the extreme Rāfiḍī, so these reports are not to be trusted. Furthermore, in the soundest books of the Shī'ah, there is a prohibition on reviling the Ṣaḥābah, and 'Alī ﷺ denounced those who reviled Mu'āwiyah ﷺ and the people with him, saying:

I do not want you to be people who revile others; if you describe their actions and attitudes, which is better to say and is more helpful in leaving no excuse for them. Instead of reviling them, you can say: "O Allah, protect our blood and theirs from being shed and reconcile between us and them."⁴

This reviling and denouncing them as disbelievers was not part of 'Alī's ﷺ practice, according to the soundest Shī'ī book.⁵

1 *Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-Adab, 7/84

2 Al-Albānī: *al-Silsilah al-Ṣaḥīḥah*; no. 320; *Ṣaḥīḥ. Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, 2/189 no 1110

3 *Muslim*, 4/2006, no. 2589

4 *Nahj al-Balāghah*; p. 323

5 *Asūl Madh-hab ash-Shi'ah*, 2/934

Arbitration

Both sides agreed to refer to arbitration after the end of the Battle of Şiffin. Each side was to appoint a man as an arbitrator to represent it, and then the two arbitrators were to reach an agreement that was in the best interests of the Muslims.

Mu'āwiyah رضي الله عنه appointed 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ رضي الله عنه, and 'Alī رضي الله عنه appointed Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī رضي الله عنه, and a document was written concerning that. The place where the two arbitrators were to meet was Dowmat al-Jandal, in the month of Ramadan 37 A.H.

Some of 'Alī's army thought that this action was a sin that implied disbelief and that he should repent to Allah, they rebelled against him and became known as the Khawārij. 'Alī رضي الله عنه sent Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه to debate with them, then 'Alī رضي الله عنه himself debated with them. A group of them re-joined him, but others refused, and there were battles between them and 'Alī رضي الله عنه, which weakened and exhausted his forces. They kept causing trouble until they assassinated him; we will discuss this in detail below.

The issue of arbitration is regarded as one of the most serious issues in the history of the Rightly Guided Khulafā'. Many writers lost their way when discussing it and wrote about it in a confused manner in their books. They relied on weak and fabricated reports that distorted the image of the noble Ṣaḥābah, especially Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī. He was described as a feeble-minded and weak character who was easily deceived with words, and as a man who was so heedless that he was tricked by 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ with regard to the matter of arbitration.

They described 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ رضي الله عنه as a crafty and deceitful man. These writers, who had ulterior motives; and a grudge against Islam, tried to ascribe to these two great men many blameworthy characteristics, even though these were the two men whom the Muslims chose to make a decision regarding a serious dispute that had led to the killing of many Muslims. Many historians, writers and researchers

treated these reports, which were fabricated by the opponents of the Ṣaḥābah, as if they were historical facts.

People accepted them without examining them, as if they were sound and as if there was no doubt concerning them. It may be because of the exciting, narrative style in which they were written, or because the claims of trickery and deceit made people interested in it and made the historians keen to write it down. We are speaking about the details of what happened, not the issue of arbitration itself; because there is no doubt that it took place.¹

I decided to begin this discussion with a look at the biography of the two great Ṣaḥābah, Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī and ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ رضي الله عنهما.

1 *Marwiyāt Abū Mikhnaf fī Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, p. 378; *Tanzīh Khāl al-Mu‘minīn Mu‘āwiyah*; p. 38

Biography of Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī

His full name was ‘Abd Allāh ibn Qays ibn Haḍḍār ibn Ḥarb. He was the great leader and Ṣaḥābī of the Rasūl of Allah ﷺ, Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī al-Tamīmī, the prominent scholar and reciter of Qur’ān.¹

Abū Mūsā became Muslim during the early days in Makkah. Ibn Sa‘d said:

He came to Makkah and formed an alliance with Sa‘īd ibn al-‘Āṣ. He became Muslim early on and migrated to Abyssinia.²

Some reports say that he went back to his people to call them to Allah. Ibn Ḥajar reconciled the reports about his becoming Muslim, saying:

There is some confusion about the reports that said that Abū Mūsā migrated to Abyssinia, because what is mentioned in the sound report is that Abū Mūsā left his land with a group of people, heading towards Rasūl ﷺ in Khaybar. It is possible to reconcile these reports by noting that Abū Mūsā migrated first to Makkah, where he became Muslim, and Rasūl ﷺ sent him with those whom he sent to Abyssinia. Abū Mūsā went to his people’s land, which was opposite Abyssinia on the eastern side. When he realised that Rasūl ﷺ and his Ṣaḥābah had settled in Madīnah, he headed for Madīnah, along with those of his people who had become Muslim, but the ship that was carrying them ended up in Abyssinia because the wind blew it off course. That is possible and thus the reports may be reconciled and should be adopted.³

1 *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’*, 2/381

2 *Al-Ṭabaqāt*, 4/107

3 *Fath; al-Bārī*, 7/189

The badge of honour that the Rasūl of Allah ﷺ pinned to the chest of Abū Mūsā

a. “You migrated twice: your migration to Abyssinia and your migration to me.”

It was narrated that Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه said:

We set out from Yemen with more than fifty of my people. We were three brothers: I, Abū Ruhm and Abū ‘Āmir. But our ship took us to Abyssinia, where Ja’far and his companions were, and we came when Khaybar was conquered. The Rasūl of Allah ﷺ said: “You migrated twice: your migration to Abyssinia and your migration to me.”¹

It was also narrated that Anas رضي الله عنه said:

The Rasūl of Allah ﷺ said: “Tomorrow people will come to you whose hearts are more receptive to Islam than yours.” The Ash’arīs came, and when they drew close they began to recite poetry: “Tomorrow we will meet all our loved ones, Muḥammad and his party.” When they arrived, they shook hands; they were the first ones to start the tradition of shaking hands.”²

b. “They are your people, O Abū Mūsā.”

It was narrated that ‘Iyād al-Ash’arī said:

فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ

When the verse, (Allah will bring a people whom He will love and they will love Him).³ was revealed, the Rasūl of Allah ﷺ said: “They are your

1 *Muslim*, no. 2502

2 *Siyar A’lām al-Nubalā’*, 2/384. Its chain of narration is sound.

3 Surah, al Māidah: 54

people, O Abū Mūsā.” and he pointed to him.¹

c. “O Allah forgive ‘Abd Allāh ibn Qays for his sins, and admit him to a gate of great honour on the Day of Resurrection.”

It was narrated that Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه said:

When Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم had finished with Ḥunayn, he sent Abū ‘Āmir al-Ash‘arī at the head of an army to Awṭās, where he met Durayd ibn al-Sammah. Durayd was killed, and Allah caused his Ṣaḥābah to be defeated. Abū ‘Āmir was struck in the knee with an arrow, and it was stuck in his knee. I came to him and said: “O uncle, who struck you?” Abū ‘Āmir pointed him out, and I went and caught up with him, but he ran away when he saw me. I started saying: “Do you not feel ashamed? Are you not an Arab? Will you not stand firm?” So he stopped, and we met and traded blows; then I killed him. I went back to Abū ‘Āmir and said: “Allah has killed your opponent.” He said: “Pull this arrow out.” I pulled it out, and water came out of the wound. He said: “O son of my brother, go to the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم and convey greetings of salām to him from me, and say to him: ‘Abū ‘Āmir says to you: Pray for forgiveness for me.’” Abū ‘Āmir appointed me in charge of the people, and it was not long before he died. When we returned, I told Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم what had happened. He made wuḍū’, then he raised his hands until I could see the whiteness of his armpits, and he said: “O Allah, forgive Abū ‘Āmir. Then he said: “O Allah, on the Day of Resurrection make him above many of Your creation.” I said: “And me, O Rasūl of Allah?” He said: “O Allah, forgive ‘Abd Allāh ibn Qays (Abū Mūsā) for his sins, and admit him to a gate of great honour² on the Day of Resurrection.”³

1 *al-Mustadrak*, 2/313 - classed as sound by al-Ḥākim and adh-Dhahabi agreed with him; *Siyar A ‘lam an-Nubala’*, 4/238

2 See an-Nisā’ 4:31

3 *Muslim*, no. 2498

d. “This one has rejected glad tidings; you two should accept it.”

It was narrated that Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه said:

I was with the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم in al-Ji'rānah¹ when a Bedouin came and said: “Will you fulfil your promise to me, O Muḥammad?” The Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said to him: “Be of good cheer.” The Bedouin said to him: “How often you say to me, ‘Be of good cheer.’” The Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم turned to Bilāl and me, saying: “This one has rejected glad tidings; you two should accept it.” We said: “We accept it, O Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم.” The Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم called for a vessel of water. He washed his hands and face in it and rinsed his mouth, then he said: “Drink from it and pour some on your heads and chests.” We did that, and Umm Salamah called out to us from behind the curtain: “Leave some of that which is in your vessel for your mother.” So we left some of it for her.²

e. “He has been given a beautiful voice like that of Dāwūd.”

It was narrated from ‘Abd Allāh ibn Buraydah that his father said:

I came out of the mosque one night and saw Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم standing at the door of the mosque, and a man was praying. He said to me: “O Buraydah, do you think he is showing off?” I said: “Allah and His Rasūl know best.” He said: ‘Rather he is a devoted believer. He has been given a beautiful voice like that of Dāwūd.’ I went to him and saw that he was Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī, and I told him.³

f. “O ‘Abd Allāh ibn Qays, shall I not tell you of one of the treasures of paradise?”

It was narrated that Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī رضي الله عنه said:

1 al-Ji'rānah: between Makkah and aṭ-Ṭa'if, closer to Makkah.

2 *Muslim*, no. 2497

3 *Muslim*, no 793; *Majma' az-Zawā'id*, 9/358

We were with Rasūl ﷺ on a journey, and the people were climbing a hill. Every time a man reached the top of a hill, he would say: “There is none worthy of worship other than Allah and Allah is the Greatest.” -and I think he said it at the top of his voice. The Rasūl of Allah ﷺ was on his mule, climbing up the mountain. He said: “O people, you are not calling upon One Who is deaf or absent.” Then he said: “O ‘Abd Allāh ibn Qays - or O Abū Mūsā - shall I not tell you of one of the treasures of paradise?” I said: “Yes, O Rasūl of Allah.” He said: “Say: “There is no might and no power except with Allah.”¹

g. “Be easy going, and do not be harsh. Give glad tidings, and do not put people off.”

The Rasūl of Allah ﷺ appointed Abū Mūsā in charge of Zubayd and ‘Adn.² It was narrated from Abū Mūsā that when Rasūl ﷺ sent him to Yemen with Mu‘ādh رضي الله عنه, he advised them:

Be easy going, and do not be harsh. Give glad tidings, and do not put people off.

Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه said to him:

In our land, there is a drink called *al-tabagh* that is made from honey, and there is another drink called *al-mizr* that is made from barley.

Rasūl ﷺ said:

Every intoxicant is ḥarām.

Then both of them went on their way and later Mu‘ādh رضي الله عنه asked Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه:

1 Muslim, no. 2704

2 Tārīkh Khalīfah ibn Khayyāt, p. 97; Taḥqīq Mawāqif al-Ṣaḥābah, 2/226

How do you recite the Qur'ān?

Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه replied:

I recite it in my prayer and when riding my mount, standing and sitting, a little at a time.

Mu'ādh رضي الله عنه said:

I sleep then I get up, so I hope for reward from Allah when I sleep as I seek reward from Him for my night prayer.¹

The status of Abū Mūsā in the view of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb

Abū Mūsā was one of the pillars of the Muslim state at the time of 'Umar رضي الله عنه. He was a commander of the army during the conquest of Qum² and Qāthān and the Battle of Tastar.³

He was also one of the founders of the Baṣrī school at the time of 'Umar رضي الله عنه; he went to Baṣrah and taught there.⁴

He was regarded as one of the most knowledgeable of the Ṣaḥābah. He was influenced by 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه, and there was correspondence between them; this is mentioned in the discussion of the institutions of governors and judges.

Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه was famous for his knowledge, worship, piety, modesty, dignity, lack of interest in worldly gains and steadfastness in adhering to Islam. He is regarded as one of the senior scholars, jurists and muftis among the Ṣaḥābah.

1 *Muslim*, no. 1733; *al-Bukhārī*, 4344

2 *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, 7/114

3 *Op. cit.*, 7/88

4 *Tafsīr at-Tābi'īn*, 1143

He was mentioned by al-Dhahabī in Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāz as being at the highest level of the Ṣaḥābah. He was knowledgeable and acted upon his knowledge. He was a righteous man who constantly recited the Book of Allah, and he had the most beautiful voice when reciting Qur’ān. He was the most knowledgeable of the people of Baṣrah in Qur’ān and in deep understanding of Islam, and he conveyed that excellent and blessed knowledge.

He spent a great deal of time with Rasūl ﷺ and he learned from senior Ṣaḥābah such as ‘Umar, ‘Alī, Ubay ibn Ka‘b and ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ. Abū Mūsā was influenced in particular by ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, who gave him a great deal of advice and sent letters to him during his lengthy governorship of Baṣrah.

Abū Mūsā used to refer to ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ concerning all cases that came to him, to the extent that al-Sha‘bī regarded him as one of the leading and most famous judges of the ummah. He said:

The judges of the ummah are ‘Umar, ‘Alī, Zayd ibn Thābit and Abū Mūsā.¹

When Abū Mūsā came to Madīnah, he was keen to attend ‘Umar’s رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ gatherings and sometimes spent a long time with him. It was narrated from Abū Bakr ibn ‘Umar that Abū Mūsā رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ came to ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ after the evening prayer, and ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ said to him: What brings you here?

He replied: I have come to talk to you.

‘Umar رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ said: At this hour?

He said: It is to discuss a matter of knowledge.

So ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ sat down, and they talked for a long time, then Abū Mūsā رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ said: The prayer, O Amīr al-Mu‘minīn.

¹ *Siyar A‘lām an-Nubala’*, 2/389

‘Umar رضي الله عنه said: We are in a state of prayer.¹

Just as Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه was keen to seek knowledge, he was also enthusiastic about spreading that knowledge and teaching people. In his sermons, he would teach the people and encourage them to learn. It was narrated that Abū al-Muḥallab said:

I heard Abū Mūsā on his mimbar saying: “Whoever is granted knowledge by Allah let him teach it, but he should not speak of that of which he has no knowledge, lest he become one of those who make things up and thus go beyond the pale of Islam.”²

Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه made the maṣjid of Baṣrah a centre for his academic activity, and he allocated a large portion of his time to academic gatherings. He did not stop there, though; he did not let any opportunity pass without making the most of it to teach and educate the people. After he said the salām at the end of the prayer, he would turn to face the people, teaching them and checking on their recitation of the noble Qur’ān.

Ibn Shawdhab said:

When Abū Mūsā had prayed the dawn prayer, he would turn to face the rows of people and ask them to recite, one by one.³

Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه was well known among the Ṣaḥābah for his beautiful voice and recitation. The people would gather around him when they heard him reading. When Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه sat with him, ‘Umar رضي الله عنه would ask him to recite for him whatever he could of Qur’ān.⁴

1 Muḥammad Taḥmāz: *Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī al-Ṣaḥābī al-‘Ālim al-Mujāhid*, p. 121

2 *Al-Ṭabaqāt*, 4/107

3 *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’*, 2/298

4 *Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī al-Ṣaḥābī al-‘Ālim*, p. 125, 126; *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’*, 2/391

Allah enabled him to teach the Muslims, and he did all he could to teach Qur'ān and spread it among the people in every land he stayed in. The people would gather around him to hear his beautiful voice and recitation. Seekers of knowledge crowded around him in the masjid of Baṣrah, and he divided them into groups arranged in circles. He would go around reciting to them, listening to them and correcting their recitation.¹

The noble Qur'ān was his main preoccupation; he devoted most of his time to it, whether or not he was not travelling. It was narrated that Anas ibn Mālik رضي الله عنه said:

Al-Ash'arī sent me to 'Umar, and 'Umar said: "How was al-Ash'arī when you left him?" I said: "I left him teaching people the Qur'ān." He said: 'He is wise and smart,² but do not tell him (that I said that).'³

Even when he went out for jihād, he would teach and educate others. It was narrated that Ḥaṭṭāb ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Riqāshī said:

We were with Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī رضي الله عنه in an army on the banks of the Tigris when the time of prayer came, so his caller gave the call for the zuhr ṣalāh. The people went to perform wuḍū', and he made wuḍū'. He led them in ṣalāh, and then they sat in a circle. When the time came for the 'Asr ṣalāh, his caller gave the call for that prayer, and the people got up to do wuḍū' again. His caller said: "No wuḍū' is required except for the one who broke his wuḍū'."

His academic efforts bore fruit, and he had the joy of seeing large numbers of people around him who had memorised the noble Qur'ān and had become scholars. In Baṣrah alone, their number was more than three hundred. When 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه asked his employees to send him the names of those who had memorised the Qur'ān, so that he could honour them and increase their

1 *Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī al-Ṣaḥābī al-'Ālim*, p. 127; *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, 2/389

2 *Al-Ṭabaqāt*, 4/108. Its men are trustworthy.

3 *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, 2/390

stipends, Abū Mūsā wrote to him, telling him that the number of people with him who had learned the Qur’ān by heart were three hundred plus.¹

Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه also paid attention to teaching and narrating the Sunnah. A number of Ṣaḥābah and senior Tābi‘īn narrated from him. Al-Dhahabī رحمته الله said:

Buraydah ibn al-Ḥuṣayb, Abū Umāmah al-Bāhilī, Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī, Anas ibn Mālik, Ṭāriq ibn Shihāb, Sa‘īd ibn al-Musayyab, Aswad ibn Yazīd, Abū Wā‘il Shaqīq ibn Salamah, Abū ‘Uthmān al-Nahdī and others narrated from him.²

He (Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه) adhered strongly to the Sunnah of Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم this is indicated by his conduct during his life and by what he instructed his children to do after he died. Despite his great enthusiasm for the Sunnah, he did not narrate a large number of aḥādīth, and this was true of the senior Ṣaḥābah; they were very cautious in narrating from Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم.

One of the people who were close to Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه in Baṣrah was Anas ibn Mālik رضي الله عنه, who is regarded as one of his inner circle. It was narrated from Thābit that Anas رضي الله عنه said:

We were with Abū Mūsā on a journey, and the people were talking and mentioning worldly matters. Abū Mūsā said: “O Anas, these people are talking too much. Come; let us remember our Rabb for a while.” Then he said: “What slowed the people down (in pursuing matters of the hereafter)?” I said: “Worldly matters, Satan and whims and desires.” He said: “No, it is the fact that this world is close, and they can see it, while the hereafter is hidden from them. By Allah, if they could see it with their own eyes, they would not drift or turn away from it.”³

Since Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه trusted Anas رضي الله عنه, he appointed him to be his envoy to

1 *Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī*, p. 129

2 *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’*, 2/381

3 ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Ṭamhāz: *Anas ibn Mālik al-Khādīm al-Amīn*, p. 135

Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Umar رضي الله عنه. Anas رضي الله عنه said:

Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī sent me from Baṣrah to 'Umar, who asked me about the people's situation.

After the battle of Tastar, Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه sent him to 'Umar رضي الله عنه with the prisoners and booty, and he took its Persian commander Hurmuzan to 'Umar.¹

Governorship of Abū Mūsā at the time of 'Umar and 'Uthmān

Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه is rightfully regarded as the most famous of the governors of Baṣrah during the time of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه. During the time of Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه, many places in Persia were conquered; he used to go out for jihad himself, and he would send the commanders in different directions from Baṣrah. The period of his governorship was filled with jihad, and the people of Baṣrah managed to conquer a number of important places, including al-Aḥwāz and its environs. Abū Mūsā cooperated with neighbouring governors in many wars and conquests. He put a great deal of effort into organising the conquered regions, appointing governors over them, securing them and organising their affairs.

There was a great deal of correspondence between Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه and 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه concerning different issues, and 'Umar gave him valuable advice about how he should deal with the people when he received them in his councils, and about fearing Allah and trying to help the people. 'Umar رضي الله عنه said:

The most blessed of people is the one whose subjects are blessed because of him, and the most wretched of people is the one whose subjects are wretched because of him. Beware of indulging in the people's wealth, lest the people working for you also indulge; then your example would be like that of the animal that looks at the green land and starts grazing in order to get fat, but its death will be caused by its fatness.²

1 *Tārikh al-Ṭabari*, 5/66

2 Ibn al-Jawzī: *Manāqib 'Umar*, p. 130

There are a number of letters between ‘Umar and Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه relating to various administrative and executive issues that Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه was taking care of with the help of instructions from ‘Umar رضي الله عنه. Most of this correspondence has been compiled by Muḥammad Ḥamīd Allāh in his valuable book on political documents.¹

The period of Abū Mūsā’s رضي الله عنه governorship in Baṣrah is regarded as one of its best periods, to the extent that one of the descendants of the people of Baṣrah, namely Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رضي الله عنه said:

No rider ever came and brought more blessing to its people than Abū Mūsā.²

That was because Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه, in addition to being a governor, was the best teacher of its people, as he taught them the Qur’ān and various matters of religion.³

A number of cities in Persia were conquered during the khilāfah of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه. They were put under the administration of Baṣrah and run by its governor, who appointed workers to be in charge of them; these employees were under his authority and reported to him directly. Thus Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه is regarded as one of the greatest governors of ‘Umar رضي الله عنه, and the correspondence between ‘Umar and Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه is regarded as one of the most important sources for shedding light on Umar’s رضي الله عنه conduct with his governors and explaining the way he dealt with them.⁴

‘Umar رضي الله عنه, in his instructions to the khulafā’ who would come after him, recommended that no governor whom he had appointed should be left in his post for more than a year except for Abū Mūsā al-Ash’arī, whom he said should be left in his post for four years.⁵

1 *Al-Wathā’iq al-Siyāsiyyah li l-‘Ahd al-Nabawī wa l-Khilāfah al-Rāshidah*

2 *Siyar A’lām al-Nubalā’*, 2/389

3 *Al-Wilāyah ‘alā al-Buldān*, 11120

4 *ibid.*

5 *Siyar A’lām al-Nubalā’*, 2/391

Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه was also appointed as the judge during the time of ‘Umar رضي الله عنه, and ‘Umar رضي الله عنه wrote him a letter about judiciary matters. The guidance in this letter may benefit any judge, or indeed any administrator, in any time or place.¹

Ibn al-Qayyim said concerning it:

This is an important letter, which the scholars welcomed and used as a basis for rulings on passing judgment and giving testimony. Muftīs are in urgent need of studying it and learning what is in it.²

Abū Mūsā was also appointed as a governor at the time of ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه, who asked him to be the judge in Baṣrah. When ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه was killed, Abū Mūsā was the governor of Kūfah, and when ‘Alī رضي الله عنه was appointed as khalīfah, Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه accepted the oath of allegiance for him from the people of Kūfah, because he had been its governor for ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān رضي الله عنه.

When ‘Alī رضي الله عنه was in Dhū Qār and urged the people of Kūfah to lend him their support, Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه saw the beginning of fitnah and division among the Muslims. He advised the people of Kūfah to stay in their houses and keep away from this issue, because it was fitnah in which one who was sitting would be better than one who was standing, and one who was standing would be better than one who were walking. Because of his difference of opinion with the khalīfah, he was dismissed from his position as governor of Kūfah.³

From the time he became a Muslim, Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه spent his life spreading Islam and teaching knowledge to the people, especially the Qur’ān, as he was famous for his recitation; taking part in jihad for the sake of Allah and encouraging others to do so; judging disputes between people; spreading justice; and running the affairs of the province by means of the judiciary and administration.

1 ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd: *Khilafah ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, p. 262

2 *A’lām al-Muwaqqi’in*, 11186

3 *Fath al-Bārī*, 13/53; *Al-Tārīkh al-Saghīr*, 11/109

There is no doubt that these tasks are difficult and require unique skills and characteristics of knowledge, understanding, quick wit, cleverness, piety and asceticism. Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه had an abundant share of these characteristics. The Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم and then the four Rightly Guided Khulafā' after him relied on Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه.¹

Can it be imagined that the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم then the khulafā', who succeeded him, relied on a man who could be tricked in such a way as is narrated in the story of arbitration?²

The fact that Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه was chosen by 'Alī رضي الله عنه and his companions to be an arbitrator on behalf of the people of Iraq is in complete harmony with the sequence of events, because the next stage was to be the stage of reconciliation and uniting the Muslims. Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī رضي الله عنه was one of those who had called for reconciliation and peace; at the same time, he was loved and trusted by the tribes of Iraq. The earlier sources state that 'Alī رضي الله عنه is the one who chose Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī رضي الله عنه. Khalīfah says in his *Tārīkh*:

In that year (37 A.H) the two arbitrators met: Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī on behalf of 'Alī and 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ on behalf of Mu'āwiyah.³

Ibn Sa'd said:

The people got fed up with war and were calling for peace. They appointed two arbitrators. 'Alī appointed Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī, and Mu'āwiyah appointed 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ.⁴

Hence we can say that the reports about the role attributed to the pious, devoted

1 'Abd al-Ḥamīd: *Khilāfah 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, p. 262

2 *Tahqīq Mawāqif al-Ṣaḥābah fi l-Fitnah*, 2/227

3 *Tārīkh Khalīfah*, p. 191, 192

4 *Al-Ṭabaqāt*, 3/32

worshippers at Şifḥīn - of being responsible for stopping the fighting and resorting to arbitration, and imposing Abū Mūsā as an arbitrator - are no more than historical lies that were fabricated by the Shī'ah storytellers, who never stopped fabricating and distorting the history of Islam by means of false reports.

It annoyed them that 'Alī رضي الله عنه seemed to be someone who showed compassion to Mu'āwiyah رضي الله عنه and the people of Syria and wanted to reconcile with their traditional enemies. On the other hand, these Shī'ah considered their enemies the Khawārij to be responsible, but they made the Khawārij's actions contradict themselves; the Khawārij are the ones who allegedly forced 'Alī رضي الله عنه to accept the arbitration, and they are also the ones who rebelled against him because of his accepting the arbitration.¹

This brief look at the character of Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه is strongly connected to our topic, the life and times of Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī رضي الله عنه. Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه was one of the people who had a profound impact on his era, but his character has been subjected to distortion. In most cases, whenever anyone discussed Şifḥīn and the arbitration, the characters of Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه and 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ رضي الله عنه were subjected to distortion, lies and fabrications because of weak and fabricated reports. Hence it is necessary to talk about the biographies of these two great men and this is one of the aims of writing this book.

1 *Tahqīq Mawāqif al-Şahābah*, 2/215

The biography of ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ رضي الله عنه

His full name was ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ ibn Wā’il al-Sahmī; his kunyahs are Abū Muḥammad and Abū ‘Abd Allāh. Ibn Ishāq¹ and Zubayr ibn Bakkār² agreed that he became Muslim while he was with the Negus in Abyssinia, and he migrated to Madīnah in Safar 8 AH. Ibn Ḥajar stated that he became Muslim in 8 AH before the conquest of Makkah, and it was said that it was between Hodaybiyah and Khaybar.³

His becoming Muslim

‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ رضي الله عنه himself told the story of his coming to Islam. He said:

When we came away from the Battle of the Trench, I gathered together some men who shared my opinion and would listen to me, and I said: “You know, by Allah, that in my opinion, this affair of Muḥammad will go to extraordinary lengths. I am thinking of something, and I would like to know what you think of it.” They said: “What are you thinking of?” I said: “I think that we should go to the Negus and stay with him. If Muḥammad conquers our people, we will be with the Negus, and we would prefer to be subject to his authority rather than to Muḥammad. On the other hand, if our people prevail, they know us and will treat us well.” They thought that my suggestion was excellent, so I told them to collect something that we could take as a gift to the Negus. Leather was the product of our land that he most valued, so we collected a large quantity and took it to him. “By Allah, while we were with him, ‘Amr ibn Umayyah al-Damrī came to him; he had been sent by the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم to find out about Ja‘far and his Ṣaḥābah. He had an audience with the Negus. When he came out, I said to my companions that if I were to go to the Negus and ask him to let me have him, he would give him to me. Then we could cut off his head, and if I did that, Quraysh would see that I had served them well by killing Muhammad’s Rasūl. So I went in to the Negus and prostrated before him

1 *Al-Ṭabarānī: al-Mu‘jam al-Kabīr*, 9/53; it was narrated in a mursal report by Ibn Ishāq

2 *Al-Iṣābah*, 3/2; ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd: *Khilāfah ‘Alī*, p. 263

3 *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, 8/56

as I usually did. He welcomed me as a friend and asked if I had brought anything from our country. When I told him that I had brought a large quantity of leather, and I produced it, he was greatly pleased and wanted it. I said: “O King, I have just seen a man leave your presence. He is the Rasūl of an enemy of ours, so let me have him that I may kill him, for he has killed some of our chiefs and best men.” He was enraged, and reaching out his hand he gave my nose such a blow that I thought he must have broken it. If the ground had opened up, I would have gone into it to escape his anger. Then I said to him: “O King, by Allah, if I had thought that this would be distasteful to you, I would not have asked it.” He said: “Are you asking me to give you the Rasūl of a man to whom the great Namūs [Jibrīl عليه السلام] comes as he used to come to Mūsā عليه السلام - so that you can kill him? I said: “O King is he really like that?” He said: “Woe to you, O ‘Amr! Obey me and follow him, for by Allah, he is right. He will triumph over his adversaries as Mūsā triumphed over Pharaoh and his armies.” I said: “Will you accept my oath of allegiance to him in Islam?” He said: “Yes,” and stretched out his hand and I swore my allegiance to him in Islam. Then I went out to my companions; my opinion had changed from what it was before, but I concealed my Islam from them. Then I went out, heading towards the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم so that I might become Muslim, and I met Khālīd ibn al-Walīd. That was just before the conquest of Makkah, and he was coming from Makkah. I said: “Where are you going, O Abū Sulaymān?” He said: “By Allah, the way has become clear. The man is indeed a Rasūl, and I am going to become Muslim, by Allah. How much longer should I delay?” I said: “By Allah, I have only come to become Muslim.” So we went to Madīnah, to the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم. Khālīd ibn al-Walīd went ahead of me and became Muslim and gave his oath of allegiance, then I came close and said: “O Rasūl of Allah, I will give you my oath of allegiance on the basis that my previous sins will be forgiven and no mention will be made of what went before.” The Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said: “O ‘Amr, give your oath of allegiance, for Islam erases all that came before it and hijrah erases all that came before it.” So I gave my oath of allegiance and departed.¹

1 *Saḥīḥ al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyah*, p. 494; *Sīyar A’lām al-Nubalā’*, 3/60; Ibn Hishām: *Al-Sīrah*, 2/276

According to another report, he said:

...when Allah put Islam in my heart, I came to Rasūl ﷺ and said: “Hold out your right hand so that I might swear allegiance to you.” He held out his right hand, but I withdrew my hand.” He said: “What is the matter, O ‘Amr?” I said: “I want to stipulate a condition.” He said, “What do you want to stipulate?” I said: “That I will be forgiven.” He said: “Do you not know, O ‘Amr; that Islam destroys whatever came before it, and that hijrah destroys whatever came before it, and that hajj destroys whatever came before it?”¹

‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ leads a campaign to Dhāt al-Salasil 7 A.H

Rasūl ﷺ prepared an army, led by ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, to go to Dhāt al-Salasil in order to punish Quḍā‘ah, who had gathered with the aim of advancing on Madīnah. They had developed a high level of confidence against the Muslims because of what had happened at Mu‘tah, where they had taken part in the battle on the Byzantine side. ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ went to their land, accompanied by three hundred of the Muhājirīn and Anṣār.

When he reached the place of the enemy’s gathering, he heard that they had gathered in huge numbers, so he sent word to the Rasūl of Allah ﷺ asking for reinforcements, who arrived under the leadership of Abū ‘Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrāh.²

The Muslims fought the disbelievers, and ‘Amr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ penetrated deep into the land of Quḍā‘ah, whose people scattered and ran away. ‘Amr succeeded in reinstating the position of Islam on the Syrian border and restoring the allies of the Muslims to the way they had been. Other tribes also entered into an alliance with the Muslims, and many people from the tribes of Banū ‘Abs, Banū Murrah and Banū Dhubyān became Muslim.

1 *Muslim*: Kitāb al-‘Imān, no. 121

2 *Al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyah al-Ṣaḥīḥah*, 2/471; Ibn Hishām: *Al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyah*, 3/280

The tribe of Fazārah and its chief ‘Uyaynah ibn Ḥuṣn also entered into an alliance with the Muslims, and they were followed by Banū Sulaym, under the leadership of al-Abbās ibn Mirdās and Banū Ashja’. The Muslims became the strongest power in northern Arabia, if not in the entire land.¹

From this campaign we learn a number of lessons and issues regarding ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, including the following:

a. The sincerity of ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ

‘Amr رضي الله عنه said:

The Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم sent word to me saying: “Put on your garment and take up your weapon, then come to me.” I came to him while he was making wuḍū’. He looked up at me, and then he looked away and said: “I want to send you as the head of an army. Allah will keep you safe and grant you booty, and I hope that you will acquire some wealth from it.” I said: “O Rasūl of Allah, I did not become Muslim for the sake of wealth; I became Muslim out of love for Islam and to be with the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم.” He said: “O ‘Amr, good (ḥalāl) wealth is good for the good man.”²

This attitude is indicative of the strong faith and sincerity of ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ رضي الله عنه and his desire to be close to the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم. The Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم explained that ḥalāl wealth is a blessing when it is possessed by a righteous man, because he is seeking the countenance of Allah and will spend it in good ways, such as sponsoring orphans and widows, calling people to Islam, supporting the mujāhidīn, charitable projects and other good causes, as well as maintaining dignity for himself and his family³ and helping Muslims.

From this ḥadīth, we may understand that if a person strives to acquire ḥalāl wealth, this is something praiseworthy that was encouraged by Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم. If a man has

1 Ibn Shuhbah: *as-Sīrah an-Nabawiyyah*, 2/433; Ibn Hishām: *as-Sīrah an-Nabawiyyah*, 4/280

2 Narrated by Ibn Ḥibbān in *al-Mawārid*, 2277; *Ṣaḥīḥ as-Sīrah*, p. 508; classed as sound by al-Albānī.

3 Al-Ḥumaydi: *at-Tārīkh al-Islami*, 7/133

wealth, and we can manage to guide him and make him righteous, then he may combine ḥalāl wealth with righteousness, as in this ḥadīth. This is also something desirable and praiseworthy; it is good for him and for Islam and the Muslims.

b. ‘Amr’s keenness to keep his troops safe

When the Rasūl of Allah ﷺ sent ‘Amr رضي الله عنه on the campaign to Dhāt al-Salāsīl, it got cold, but ‘Amr رضي الله عنه told his troops that no one should light a fire. When they came back, they complained about him. He explained:

O Rasūl of Allah, they were few in number, and I was afraid that the enemy might realise that they were few in number. I told them not to pursue the enemy lest they be ambushed.

The Rasūl of Allah ﷺ was impressed by that.¹

c. ‘Amr’s understanding of Islam

‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ رضي الله عنه said:

I had a wet dream on a cold night during the campaign to Dhāt al-Salāsīl. I was afraid that I would die if I did ghusl, so I performed tayammum, then I led my companions in praying the Fajr ṣalāh. They mentioned that to Rasūl ﷺ and he said: “O ‘Amr, did you lead your companions in prayer when you were in a state of impurity?” I told him what had prevented me from doing ghusl, and I said: “I heard that Allah says:

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا

And do not kill yourselves [nor kill one another]. Surely, Allah is Most Merciful to you.²

The Rasūl of Allah ﷺ smiled and did not say anything.³

1 *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’*, 3/66

2 *Sūrah al-Nisā’*

3 op. cit., 3/67. Its chain of narration is sound and was classed as such by Ibn Ḥibbān, no. 202.

This ijtihād on the part of ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ is indicative of his deep understanding of Islam, his mature thinking and his subtle derivation of the ruling from the evidence.¹

The scholars derived many rulings from this incident, but what is particularly notable² is the speed with which ‘Amr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ established a connection with the Qur’ān, to the point that he was able to understand matters through these verses although he had only been a Muslim for four months. This is indicative of his keenness to learn about the religion of Allah

It may be, and this is likely, that ‘Amr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ had been in touch with the Qur’ān before he became Muslim, following whatever verses he could hear. In that case, we have another example of the greatness of this Qur’ān, which had a great impact even on the disbelievers and made them, despite their great enmity towards the religion, try to listen to it. We saw that during the Makkah period, and this is supported by what we see here of his knowledge of the Qur’ān when he suggested that the Negus ask the Muslims who had immigrated to Abyssinia about their opinion of ‘Īsā عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ.³

Virtues of ‘Amr

a. The Rasūl of Allah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ testified to his faith

The Rasūl of Allah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said:

The people have become Muslims, but ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ has become a believer.⁴

According to another ḥadīth, the Rasūl of Allah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said:

1 Abū Fāris: *Ghazwat al-Hudaybiyyah*, p. 210

2 *Ma‘īn al-Sīrah*, p. 381

3 op. cit., p. 38 1; *Musnad Aḥmad*, 11203. The men of its chain of narration are trustworthy.

4 *Silsilat al-Aḥādīth. al-Ṣaḥīḥah*, 11238, no. 155; classed as sound.

The two sons of al-‘Āṣ are believers: ‘Amr and Hishām.¹

‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ رضي الله عنه said:

The people in Madīnah with Rasūl صلی الله علیه وسلم panicked and scattered, but I saw Sālim put on a sword and sit in the mosque, and when I saw that I did the same. The Rasūl of Allah صلی الله علیه وسلم came out and saw Sālim and me, and he said: “O people, your refuge should be with Allah and His Rasūl; why did you not do what these two believing men did?”²

b. The Rasūl of Allah صلی الله علیه وسلم gave him precedence over others and testified that he was one of the righteous men of Quraysh

It is narrated that ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ رضي الله عنه said:

Since we became Muslim, the Rasūl of Allah صلی الله علیه وسلم never regarded anyone as equal to Khālīd and me in fighting.³

It was narrated that Abū Mulaykah said:

Ṭalḥah ibn Ubayd Allāh said: “I heard the Rasūl of Allah صلی الله علیه وسلم say: “‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ is one of the righteous men of Quraysh.”⁴

This is an example of the Rasūl’s صلی الله علیه وسلم knowledge of people’s qualities and of how to make the most of those qualities.

c. Supplication of the Rasūl of Allah صلی الله علیه وسلم for him

It was narrated from Zuhayr ibn Qays al-Balawī that his paternal uncle ʿĪlqimah ibn Ramthah al-Balawī said:

1 *Al-Ṭabaqāt*, 4/191; *Al-Silsilah al-Ṣaḥīḥah*, 11240, no. 156.

2 *Musnad Aḥmad*, 203, with a reliable chain of narration.

3 *Sunan al-Bayhaqī*: Bāb Islam ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ 4/43

4 *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, Kitāb al-Manāqib, Bāb Manāqib ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, no. 3844

The Rasūl of Allah ﷺ sent ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ to Bahrain, and then the Rasūl of Allah ﷺ dozed off. He woke up and said: “May Allah have mercy on ‘Amr.” We discussed which ‘Amr it was, and then he dozed off a second time. He woke up and said: “May Allah have mercy on ‘Amr.” He dozed off a third time, then he woke up and said: “May Allah have mercy on ‘Amr.” We said: “Which ‘Amr, O Rasūl of Allah ﷺ?” He said: “‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ.” We said: “What about him?” He said: “I remembered him because every time I asked people to give in charity, he would bring his charity and be very generous. I would ask him: ‘Where did you get this from, O ‘Amr?’ and he would say: ‘From Allah.’ ‘Amr spoke the truth; ‘Amr has a great deal of good with Allah.”

Zuhayr said:

When the fitnah broke out, I said: “I will follow this man, of whom the Rasūl of Allah said what he said, and I never left him.”¹

His deeds at the time of Abū Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthmān

The Rasūl of Allah ﷺ sent ‘Amr رضي الله عنه to call the two sons of al-Jilindi, Jayfar and ‘Abbād, to Islam. He called them to Islam, and they believed in Rasūl ﷺ they allowed ‘Amr رضي الله عنه to collect zakāh and judge disputes between their people, and they supported him against those who opposed him.²

After the death of the Rasūl of Allah ﷺ Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه sent ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ رضي الله عنه with an army to Palestine, after giving him the choice between staying in the post to which the Rasūl of Allah ﷺ had appointed him or choosing something that would be better for him in this world and the hereafter. ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ رضي الله عنه wrote to him, saying:

1 *Al-Mu‘jam al-Kabīr*, 18/5; *al-Mustadrak*, 3/455. classed as sound by al-Ḥākīm. Al-Dhahabī said: Its chain of narration is sound reliable.

2 *Al-Ṭabaqāt*, 11262; Ibn Ḥazm: *Jawāmi‘ al-Sīrah*, p. 24, 29

I am one of the arrows of Islam, and after Allah, you are the one to shoot it and collect (the arrows). So choose the strongest, most pious and best of them and use it.¹

When he came to Madīnah, Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه told him to stay outside Madīnah and camp until he had urged the people to join him, then he sent him with an army to Syria.²

During the Battle of Yarmūk, ‘Amr رضي الله عنه was in charge of the right flank and his participation had a great impact on the Muslim victory.

After the death of Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه, ‘Amr رضي الله عنه remained in Syria and played an effective role in the Islamic conquest of Syria. Along with Shuraḥbīl ibn Ḥasanah رضي الله عنه, he conquered Bīs, Tiberias and Ajnadīn.³ He also conquered Gaza, *al-Ludd* (Lad), Yubna, ‘Amwās (Emmaus), Bayt Jibrīn, *Yafa* (Jaffa), Rafaḥ and Jerusalem. Not only did ‘Amr رضي الله عنه conquer Syria; he also conquered famous cities in Egypt. ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه issued instructions to ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ رضي الله عنه, after he had finished conquering Syria, to march to Egypt with the troops who were with him. He set out until he reached al-‘Arīsh and conquered it, and he also conquered al-Farma, al-Fuṣṭāṭ, the Fortress of Babylon, ‘Ayn Shams, al-Fayyūm, al-Ashmūnīn, Akhmīm, al-Bashrūd, Tanīs, *Dimyāṭ* (Damietta), Tūna, Daqḥalah, Alexandria and other North African cities such as Barqah, Zuwaylah, and Tripoli.⁴

‘Umar رضي الله عنه testified to his leadership qualities by saying:

Abū ‘Abd Allāh (‘Amr) should not walk on the earth except as a leader.⁵

At the time of ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه, he was one of those who were close to the khalīfah

1 *Itmām al-Wafā’ bī Sīrat al-Khulafā’*, p. 55

2 Al-Azdi: *Futūḥ al-Shām*, p. 48-51

3 *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, 3/605; Ibn al-Athīr: *al-Kāmil*, 2/498

4 *Siyar A’lam al-Nubalā’*, 3/70; Al-Qiyād al-‘Askariyyah fī ‘Ahd al-Rasūl, p. 634-942

5 *Siyar A’lam al-Nubalā’*, 3/70

and one of his consultants. When ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه was besieged, ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ رضي الله عنه left Madīnah and headed for Syria, saying:

O people of Madīnah, anyone who stays there while this man is killed will be humiliated by Allah. Whoever cannot support him, let him flee.

He left, and his two sons ‘Abd Allāh and Muḥammad left with him, after which Ḥassān ibn Thābit رضي الله عنه and many others followed suit.¹

When news came of the murder of ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه and the people’s swearing allegiance to ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib رضي الله عنه, ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ رضي الله عنه said:

May Allah have mercy on ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه and forgive him.

Salāmah ibn Zanbā’ al-Judhāmi said:

O Arabs, there was between you and the fitnah a door, so find another door when that door is broken.

‘Amr رضي الله عنه said:

That is what we want, but nothing can fix the door except a drill, a drill that can ensure justice between the people.

He left on foot, weeping and saying:

O ‘Uthmān, I weep for the death of modesty and religious commitment.

Then he went to Damascus.²

This is a true picture of ‘Amr رضي الله عنه, which is in harmony with his character, his biography and his closeness to ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه.

1 *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, quoted in al-Ghaḍbān: ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, p. 464

2 *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, quote in ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, p. 464

As for the distorted image that shows him as a man of personal interests and ambitions who ran after worldly gains, this is based on the weak and rejected report of al-Wāqidī from Mūsā ibn Ya‘qūb.¹ A number of writers and historians were influenced by these weak reports, so they depicted ‘Amr رضي الله عنه in the worst possible manner, as in the descriptions given by Maḥmūd Shīṭ Khaṭṭāb² and ‘Abd al-Khāliq Sayyid Abū Rābiyah.³

‘Abbās Maḥmūd al-‘Aqqād stubbornly refused to examine the chains of narration; he insulted the intelligence of his readers by presenting an image of Mu‘āwiyah and ‘Amr رضي الله عنه as opportunists who were pursuing personal interests. All historical critics agree that the reports to which he refers in his analysis are false, but that does not mean anything to al-‘Aqqād. After narrating weak and strange reports, on which no argument can be based, he said:

Let the historical critics say what they want about whether this conversation took place and whether these words are sound. Regardless of whatever is proven to be sound or otherwise with regard to the chain of narration or the text, what there can be no doubt about, even if all history books got together to prove the opposite, is that the deal between the two men was a deal to share authority and power, and the deal between them was based on the share of authority that each of them would have. Were it not for that, there would have been no deal.⁴

The true character of ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ رضي الله عنه is that of a man of principle. He left Madīnah when he found himself unable to defend ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه, for whom he wept bitter tears when he was killed. He was part of the consultative committee at the time of ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه, even though he was not a governor. He went to join Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه and cooperated with him to fight the killers of ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه.

1 al-Ghaḍbān: *‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ*, p. 481

2 Maḥmūd Shīṭ Khaṭṭāb: *Sufarā’ al-Nabi* صلى الله عليه وسلم, p. 508

3 ‘Abd al-Khāliq Sayyid Rābiyah: *‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ*, p. 316

4 Al-‘Aqqād: *‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ*, p. 231, 232

and seek justice for the martyred khalīfah.¹

The murder of ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was sufficient to make him very angry with all those criminals who shed blood. He thought it essential to choose a place other than Madīnah as a base for seeking vengeance against those who had the audacity to transgress against the sanctuary of the Rasūl of Allah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ and slay the khalīfah before the people’s eyes. What is strange about ‘Amr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ getting angry for the sake of ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ? If anyone doubts this matter, then his doubt is based on fabricated reports, which depict ‘Amr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ as a man whose main concern was authority and power.²

1 Al ‘Aqqād: *‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ*, p.489-490

2 op. cit., p. 492

The text of the arbitration document

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

1. This is what has been agreed upon between ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān and their supporters, as they have agreed to refer to the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Rasūl ﷺ for judgment.
2. In this case, ‘Alī represents the people of Iraq, both those who are present and those who are absent, and Mu‘āwiyah represents the people of Syria, both those who are present and those who are absent.
3. We have agreed to accept the ruling of the Qur’ān and adhere to what is mentioned in the Book from beginning to end; we will do what it commands and refrain from what it tells us to refrain from. This is the basis of our agreement.
4. ‘Alī and his supporters accept ‘Abd Allāh ibn Qays [Abū Mūsā] as a representative and arbitrator, and Mu‘āwiyah accepts ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ as a representative and arbitrator.
5. ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiyah have taken from ‘Abd Allāh ibn Qays and ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ a pledge to adhere to the covenant of Allah and His Rasūl, to take the Qur’ān as their guide and not to refer to anything else with regard to arbitration, which will be done on the basis of what is written in the Book. With regard to that which they do not find in the Qur’ān, they will refer to the comprehensive Sunnah of the Rasūl of Allah, and they will not accept anything that goes against it or overlook the Sunnah for some specious argument.
6. ‘Abd Allāh ibn Qays and ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ have taken a pledge from ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiyah to accept their verdict, which is based on the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Rasūl. They have no right to reject that or to go against it.
7. Both arbitrators are to be granted safety and security when they give their verdict. Their lives, wealth, hair, skin, families and children are safe as long as they do not transgress the limits, no matter who agrees or disagrees with them, and the

Ummah should support their verdict, which is based on the Book of Allah.

8. If one of the two arbitrators dies before reaching a verdict, his party has the right to appoint someone else in his place from among the people of good character and piety, on the same basis as the covenant to which his predecessor agreed.
9. If one of the two leaders dies before the set time for deciding this matter ends, his group may appoint a man in his place with whose character they are pleased.
10. The two parties agree, with immediate effect, to engage in negotiations and lay down their weapons.
11. What we have mentioned in this document is binding with immediate effect on the two leaders, the two arbitrators and the two parties. Allah is the best of witnesses and is sufficient witness. If they transgress the limits, then the ummah has nothing to do with their verdict, and their covenant is to be rejected.
12. The people are safe; their lives, families, children and wealth are safe until the end of the set period. Weapons are to be laid aside, the roads are to be safe, and anyone of either party who is absent is like those who are present in this regard.
13. The two arbitrators may stay in a place in the middle between the two camps of the people of Iraq and Syria.
14. No one should attend their meetings except with the approval of both arbitrators.
15. The set time for reaching a verdict is the end of the month of Ramaḍān. If the two arbitrators decide to reach a verdict earlier, then they may do so. If they decide to delay it until the end of the specified time, they may do so.
16. If they do not rule in accordance with the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Rasūl by the end of the fixed time, then the two groups will resume fighting.

17. The ummah is bound by the deal that is reached with regard to this matter; all of the ummah should be united against any party that inclines to evil actions and does wrong.¹

The contents of this document were witnessed by Ḥasan and Ḥusayn عليهما السلام, the two sons of ‘Alī, ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās, ‘Abd Allāh ibn Ja‘far ibn Abī Ṭālib, Ash‘ath ibn Qays al-Kindī, Ashtar ibn al-Ḥārith, Sa‘īd ibn al-Qays al-Hamadānī, Ḥusayn and al-Ṭufayl the two sons of al-Ḥārith ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, Abū Sa‘īd ibn Rabī‘ al-Anṣārī, ‘Abd Allāh ibn Khabbāb ibn al-Aratt, Sahl ibn Ḥunayf, Abū Bishr ibn ‘Umar al-Anṣārī, ‘Awf ibn al-Ḥārith ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, Yazīd ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Aslamī, ‘Uqbah ibn ‘Āmir al-Juhanī, Rāfi‘ ibn Khadīj al-Anṣārī, ‘Umar ibn al-Ḥamaq al-Khuziā‘ī, Nu‘mān ibn ‘Ajlān al-Anṣārī, Ḥujr ibn ‘Adī al-Kindī, Yazīd ibn Ḥajjiyyah al-Kindī, Mālik ibn Ka‘b al-Hamadhānī, Rabī‘ah ibn Shurahbīl, al-Ḥārith ibn Mālik, Ḥajar ibn Yazīd and ‘Ulbah ibn Hujjiyyah.

Among the people of Syria, it was witnessed by Ḥabīb ibn Maslamah al-Fihri, Abū al-A‘war al-Sulamī, Bishr ibn Artā‘ah al-Qurashī, Mu‘āwiyah ibn Khadīj al-Kindī, Makhāriq ibn al-Ḥārith al-Zubaydī, Muslim ibn ‘Amr al-Saksī, ‘Abd Allāh ibn Khālīd ibn al-Wālīd, Ḥamzah ibn Mālik, Subay‘ ibn Yazīd ibn Abjar al-‘Absī, Masrūq ibn Jablah al-‘Akki, Yusr ibn Yazīd al-Himyarī, ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Āmir al-Qurashī, ‘Utbah ibn Abī Sufyān , Muḥammad ibn Abī Sufyān , Muḥammad ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, ‘Ammār ibn al-Aḥwaṣ al-Kalbī, Mas‘adah ibn ‘Amr al-‘Utbī, al-Ṣabbāḥ ibn Jalhamah al-Ḥimyarī, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Dhī al-Kilā’, Tamāmah ibn Hawshab and ‘Ilqimah ibn Ḥakam.

It was written on Wednesday 17 Safar 37 A.H.²

The famous story of the arbitration, which is incorrect for many reasons

A great deal has been said about the story of the arbitration, which was narrated

1 See Al-Ḥajj 22: 25

2 See: *Al-Wathā‘iq al-Siyāsiyyah*, p. 537, 538;

by historians and writers on the basis that it was true and proven, with no doubt about it. Some narrated lengthy versions, and some summarised it; some commented on it and derived lessons from it, basing their rulings on the contents of the story. It is very rare to find anyone who examined it in a critical manner. Ibn al-‘Arabī did well when he rejected it in general terms, even though he did not go into detail. This is indicative of his strong critical sense in examining texts, because none of the texts of this arbitration story can stand up to critical academic examination. They are false for a number of reasons:¹

1. All of its chains of transmission are weak. The strongest chain by which it was narrated is that narrated by ‘Abd al-Razzāq and al-Ṭabarī, with a chain of narration whose men are trustworthy, from al-Zuhrī with a missing link. They said:

Al-Zuhrī said: “In the morning, the people of Syria put up their muṣḥafs and called for applying what they contained and the people of Iraq were filled with awe, at which point they appointed the two arbitrators. The people of Iraq chose Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī, and the people of Syria chose ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ. The two armies at Ṣiffīn parted when the arbitrators were appointed. They (the two arbitrators) stipulated that what the Qur’ān enjoined was to be followed and what it forbade was to be avoided, and that they would choose what was best for the ummah of Muḥammad ﷺ. They were to meet in Domat al-Jandal, and if they did not meet for some reason, they would meet the following year in Adhraḥ.

When ‘Alī left, the Khawārij disagreed and rebelled. This was the first time they appeared as a group, and they declared war against him. The reason for their rebellion was that human beings had been appointed to decide about the ruling of Allah. They said that there is no ruling except the ruling of Allah, so they fought.

When the two arbitrators met in Adhraḥ, Mughīrah ibn Shu‘bah joined

1 *Marwiyāt Abī Mikhnaf fi Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, p. 404

them, along with some other people. The two arbitrators sent for ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and ‘Abd Allāh ibn Zubayr, and they came to them with many men. Mu‘āwiyah came with the people of Syria, but ‘Alī and the people of Iraq refused to come.

Al-Mughīrah ibn Shu‘bah said to some prominent people of Quraysh: “Do you think there is anyone out there who can tell whether these two arbitrators will agree on something or will never agree?” They said: “We do not think that anyone knows that.” He said: “By Allah, I think that I should be able to find that out from them when I speak to each one on his own and discuss it with him.”

He entered upon ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, starting with him. He said: “O Abū ‘Abd Allāh, tell me about what I am going to ask you. What do you think of those of us who remained neutral, for we were unsure about the matter that was clear to you, namely fighting, and we thought that it was better to take our time until we became certain and the ummah became united?” He said: “I think of you who remained neutral as being behind the righteous and ahead of the evildoers.”

Al-Mughīrah left and did not ask him about anything else. Then he entered upon Abū Mūsā and said something similar to what he had said to ‘Amr. Abū Mūsā said: “I think you are the wisest of people; you are what is left of the righteous Muslims.”

Al-Mughīrah left without asking him about anything else. Then he met with the wise people of Quraysh, to whom he had spoken earlier, and said: “These two will never agree on anything.” “The two arbitrators met and talked. ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ said: “O Abū Mūsā, I think the first thing we should decide about is to rule in favour of those who fulfilled their promise and against those who betrayed, because of their betrayal.” Abū Mūsā said: “What do you mean?” He said: “Do you not know that Mu‘āwiyah and the people of Syria fulfilled their promise and came to the appointment that we made with them?” He said: “Yes.” ‘Amr said: “Write it down.” So Abū Mūsā wrote it down. ‘Amr said: “O Abū Mūsā, would you like to suggest a

man to be in charge of this ummah? Tell me his name. If I agree with it, I will follow you in that; otherwise I will suggest a name and you should follow me.” Abū Mūsā said: “Do you want me to suggest Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān to you?” They did not end their meeting before trading insults; then they went out to the people, and Abū Mūsā said: “I found the likeness of ‘Amr to be the likeness of the one of whom Allah says:

وَأْتَلُّ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ الَّذِي أُتِينَاهُ الْبَيِّنَاتِ فَأَنْسَلَخَ مِنْهَا فَأَتْبَعَهُ

And recite [O Muḥammad] to them the story of him to whom We gave Our verses [proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.], but he threw them away.¹

Then when Abū Mūsā fell silent, ‘Amr spoke, saying: “O people, I found the likeness of Abū Mūsā to be the likeness of those of whom Allah says:

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ حُمِّلُوا التَّوْرَةَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَحْمِلُوهَا كَمَثَلِ الْحِمَارِ يَحْمِلُ أَسْفَارًا

The likeness of those who were entrusted with the [obligation of the] Torah [i.e. to obey its commandments and to practise its laws], but who subsequently failed in those [obligations], is as the likeness of a donkey which carries huge burdens of books [but understands nothing from them].²

Each of them wrote a letter explaining his opinion to the various regions.³

Al-Zuhrī was not present at this incident, so this report is missing a link in its chain of narration, and his reports with missing links carry no weight and cannot be taken as evidence,⁴ as determined by the scholars.

1 Sūrah al-A‘rāf: 175

2 Sūrah al-Jumu‘ah: 5

3 *Al-Muṣannaḥ*, 5/463; *Marwiyāt Abī Mikhnaf fi Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, p. 406

4 Abū Ḥātim: *al-Marāsīl*, p. 3; *al-Jarḥ wa al-Ta‘dīl*, 1/246

There is another chain of transmission, through which Ibn ‘Asākir narrated this report with his chain of narration going back to al-Zuhrī. It is also missing a link, and it includes Abū Bakr ibn Abī Sabrah, of whom Imām Aḥmad said:

He was a fabricator of ḥadīth.¹

Its chain of narration also includes al-Wāqidī, whose reports are rejected.² This is the text of his report:

The people of Syria lifted up the muṣḥafs and said: “We call you to the Book of Allah and to rule in accordance with what it contains.” This was a plot by ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ. They reached a deal and wrote a document stating that they would meet at the beginning of the year in Adhraḥ. They appointed two arbitrators to judge between the people, and everyone was to accept their verdict. ‘Alī appointed Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī, and Mu‘āwiyah appointed ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ. Then the people parted; ‘Alī went back to Kūfah with divisions and trouble among his party. Some of his companions disagreed with him, and the Khawārij among his party rebelled against him. They objected to his appointing an arbitrator, and they said: “There is no ruling except the ruling of Allah.” Mu‘āwiyah went back to Syria with his followers in harmony and united. One year later, the two arbitrators met in Adhraḥ in Shaḥbān 38 A.H, and the people gathered around them. There was a discussion between them in which they agreed on something in private, but ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ went against it in public. He let Abū Mūsā speak first and declare that he was deposing both ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiyah, then ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ spoke, deposing ‘Alī but affirming Mu‘āwiyah. The two arbitrators and those who were with them parted, and the people of Syria swore allegiance to Mu‘āwiyah in the month of Dhū al-Qa‘dah 38 A.H.³

1 *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, 12/27; *Marwiyāt Abī Mikhnaf fi Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, p. 406

2 *Marwiyāt Abī Mikhnaf fi Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, p. 406

3 *Tārīkh Dimashq*, 16/53

All of the chains of narration of Abū Mikhnaf are weak because of him. The first reason is that Abū Mikhnaf Lūt ibn Yaḥyā is weak and not trustworthy.¹ He was a dishonest narrator and an extreme Rāfiḍī.

The second reason is that Ibn Sa'd said concerning him: "He was weak."² Bukhārī and Abū Ḥātim said: "Yaḥyā al-Qaṭṭān regarded him as weak."³ 'Uthmān al-Dārimī said: "He is weak."⁴ Al-Nasā'ī said: "He is weak."⁵

These are the versions of the well-known story of the arbitration and the alleged debate between Abū Mūsā and 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ. Can proof be based on something like this, or can these reports be relied on with regard to the history of the noble Ṣaḥābah and the era of the Rightly Guided Khulafā', the most exemplary of eras? If there was nothing wrong with these reports except some contradictions in their texts; that would be sufficient to regard them as weak. So how about if we add to that the weakness of their chains of narration?⁶

2. This issue is very important with regard to belief and legislation. Despite its importance, it is not transmitted by any sound chain of narration. It is impossible that the scholars would unanimously ignore it, even though it is so important and there is such a great need for it.⁷
3. There is a report which refutes these reports completely. It was narrated in brief by al-Bukhārī in his *Tārīkh*, with a chain of narration whose narrators are trustworthy. It was also narrated by Ibn 'Asākir from Ḥusayn

1 *Taḥqīq Mawāqif al-Ṣaḥābah*, 2/223

2 *Marwiyāt Abī Mikhnaf fi Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, p. 407

3 *Al-Tārīkh al-Kabīr*, 4/2/267; *Al-Jarḥ wa al-Ta'dīl*, 9/138

4 *Al-Dārimī: Al-Tārīkh*, p. 238; *Taḥqīq Mawāqif al-Ṣaḥābah*, 2/223

5 *Al-Ḍu'afā' wa l-Matrūkīn*, p. 253

6 *Marwiyāt Abī Mikhnaf fi Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, p. 408

7 *ibid.*

ibn al-Mundhir, that Mu'āwiyah رضي الله عنه sent him to 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ رضي الله عنه, instructing him:

I have heard about 'Amr something that I dislike; go to him and ask him about the matter concerning which 'Amr and Abū Mūsā met, and what happened in their meeting.” 'Amr said: “People talked too much about this issue, but nothing of what they describe happened. When I met Abū Mūsā, I said to him: ‘What do you think about this matter?’ He said: ‘I think that he (‘Alī) is one of those with whom the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم was pleased with when he died.’ I said: ‘How about me and Mu'āwiyah? Where do we fit in?’ He said: ‘If he (‘Alī) seeks your help, then you are a good help, and if he decides not to seek your help, he can run his affairs without your help.’”¹

Abū Mūsā spoke of 'Amr's رضي الله عنه piety and how he used to take stock of himself and remember the lives of Abū Bakr and 'Umar رضي الله عنهما, as well as his worries about what had happened after they were gone. Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه said: 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ said to me:

By Allah, if Abū Bakr and 'Umar forsook this wealth when it was permissible for them, is it possible that they had an unfair deal and were wronged, or was it a misjudgement on their part? By Allah, they did not have an unfair deal and they were not wronged, and their decision was not based on misjudgement. By Allah, weakness only came to us because of our deeds.²

4. Mu'āwiyah رضي الله عنه affirmed 'Alī's رضي الله عنه superiority over him and that he was more entitled to the khilāfah than him. He did not dispute with him for the khilāfah or seek it for himself during 'Alī's رضي الله عنه lifetime.

Yahyā ibn Sulaymān al-Ju'fī narrated, with a good chain of narration, from Abū Muslim al-Khawlanī that he said to Mu'āwiyah رضي الله عنه:

1 *Al-Tārīkh al-Kabīr*, 5/398

2 *Al-'Awāṣim min al-Qawāṣim*, p. 178-180

Are you disputing with ‘Alī for the khilāfah or are you like him?

He said:

No; I know that he is better than me and is more entitled (to the khilāfah). But do you not know that ‘Uthmān was killed wrongfully, and I am his paternal cousin and next of kin, who should seek retaliation for him? Go to ‘Alī and tell him to hand over the killers of ‘Uthmān to us, and I will submit to his rule.

They went to ‘Alī and spoke to him, but he did not hand them (the murderers) over to him.¹

This is the basis of the dispute between ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه, and the arbitration was aimed at resolving this matter of conflict, not choosing or dismissing a khalīfah.²

Ibn Ḥazm said concerning this matter that ‘Alī رضي الله عنه fought Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه because the latter refused to carry out his instructions in Syria, and he was the khalīfah who was to be obeyed. Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه never denied ‘Alī’s رضي الله عنه superiority and entitlement to the khilāfah, but his reasoning led him to think that bringing the murderers of ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه to justice took precedence over swearing allegiance to ‘Alī رضي الله عنه, and he thought that he was more right to seek retaliation for the murder of ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه and to speak of it than the sons of ‘Uthmān and al-Ḥakam ibn Abī l-‘Āṣ, because of his age and his ability to pursue the matter. He was correct in that regard, but he was wrong with regard to giving this matter precedence over swearing allegiance to the khalīfah.³

Understanding the dispute on this basis — which is the reality of the

1 *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’*, 3/140

2 *Marwiyāt Abī Mikhnaf fi Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, p. 409

3 *Al-Faṣl fi l-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, 41160

dispute — highlights the extent to which the reports quoted above about the arbitration are mistaken in the way in which they depicted the ruling of the two arbitrators. The two arbitrators were given authority to issue a verdict concerning the dispute between ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه, but the dispute between them was not concerning the khilāfah and which of them was more entitled to it; rather it had to do with carrying out a retaliatory punishment on the murderers of ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه. This had nothing to do with the issue of khilāfah at all.

If the two arbitrators had ignored this basic issue that they had been asked to decide about, and taken a decision concerning the khilāfah instead, as the widely circulated reports claim, then what that means is that they did not solve the disputed issue and did not understand the issue of this case, and this is something that is very unlikely.¹

5. The conditions that must be met by the khalīfah are good character, knowledge and wisdom to enable him to conduct his subjects’ affairs and take care of their interests. He should also be of Qurayshī descent.² These conditions were met by ‘Alī رضي الله عنه. Was allegiance to him valid or not? If it was valid - and there is no doubt concerning that - and the Muhājirīn and Anṣār, the decision makers, swore allegiance to him, and his opponents confirmed that to him, then the words of Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه indicate that “If the khalīfah is not devoid of the qualities of a leader and those who appointed him decide to depose him; they have no right to do that according to consensus, because once a khalīfah is appointed and allegiance is sworn to him, obedience to him becomes binding, and there is no option of deposing him without a reason that dictates that. A khilāfah cannot be effective, and the position cannot achieve the required purpose, unless obedience is binding. If the people are given the option of

1 *Tahqīq Mawāqif al-Ṣaḥābah fi l-Fitnah*, 2/225

2 Al-Mawardī: *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah*; Abū Ya‘lā: *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah* p. 20; *Ghiyāth al-Umam*, p. 79, etc.

deposing the khalīfah because they prefer someone else, then the khalīfah can never be in full control, and he will have no power or ability. The post of khalīfah would make no sense at all.”¹

Therefore the issue is not as depicted in these reports, which suggest that anyone who does not like a khalīfah may depose him. No one has the right to depose the khalīfah except those who appointed him, namely the decision makers, provided that the khalīfah has gone against the conditions of his appointment. Did ‘Alī رضي الله عنه do anything to make the decision-makers decide to dismiss -him from the khilāfah, when he was the Rightly Guided Khalīfah, in which case it might be suggested that the two arbitrators had agreed on that? He did nothing until he died that might dictate dismissing him from his post; he did nothing except act justly, strive hard, fear Allah and do good.²

6. The time when the arbitration took place was a time of fitnah, and the Muslims were in a situation of confusion despite the fact that they had a khalīfah, so how would they have ended up if the khalīfah was deposed? Undoubtedly the situation would have gotten worse, but the Ṣaḥābah were too wise and rational to do such a thing. Hence it is clear that this idea is invalid according to both reason and the texts.
7. ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه limited the khilāfah to the members of the consultative committee, of whom there were six, and the Muhājirīn and Anṣār approved of that. This was a hint that the khilāfah should not go beyond these six men as long as any of them were still alive. At the time of the arbitration, none of them was left except Sa‘d ibn Abi Waqqās who withdrew, showing no interest in any position of authority, and ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib رضي الله عنه, who held the position of khalīfah and was the best of the

1 *Ghiyāth al-Umam*, p. 128; *Marwiyāt Abī Mikhnaf fī Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, p. 410

2 *Al-Faṣl fī l-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, 4/238

six after ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه. So how could this matter of khalīfah be passed to someone else?¹

8. The reports state that the people of Syria swore allegiance to Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه following the arbitration. The question is; what reason prompted the people of Syria to swear allegiance to Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه? The two arbitrators did not reach any conclusion, so there was no reason to attribute that action to the results of the arbitration. Moreover, Ibn ‘Asākir narrated, with a chain whose narrators are trustworthy, that Sa‘īd ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Tanūkhī,² the most knowledgeable of the people about Syrian affairs,³ said:

‘Alī in Iraq was called “Amīr al-Mu‘minīn”, and Mu‘āwiyah in Syria was called “the Amīr”. When ‘Alī passed away, Mu‘āwiyah in Syria was called “Amīr al-Mu‘minīn.”⁴

This text shows that allegiance was not given to Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه as khalīfah until after the death of ‘Alī رضي الله عنه. This was also the view of al-Ṭabarī, who said, concerning the last events of the year 40 A.H:

In this year, allegiance was sworn to Mu‘āwiyah in Ayliya.⁵

Ibn Kathīr commented on this, saying:

In other words, when ‘Alī رضي الله عنه died, the people of Syria swore allegiance to Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه as khalīfah, because in their view there was no one left to dispute this position with him.⁶

1 *Marwiyāt Abī Mikhnafī Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, p. 411

2 Sa‘īd ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Tanūkhī, a trustworthy imam – al-Taqrīb.

3 *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, 4/60

4 *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, 6/76

5 *ibid.*

6 *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, 8116

The people of Syria knew that Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه was not equal to ‘Alī رضي الله عنه in terms of being qualified for the khilāfah and that it was not permissible for him to become khalīfah when it was possible to appoint ‘Alī رضي الله عنه, whose virtue, seniority, knowledge, religious commitment, courage and all other virtues were well known to them, just like the virtues of his brethren Abū Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنهم.¹

In addition to that, the texts forbid swearing allegiance to a new khalīfah when the first khalīfah is already present. Muslim narrated in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* that Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī said: yahaa

The Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said: “If allegiance is sworn to two khulafā’, then execute the second one.”²

There are many similar texts.³ It is impossible that the Ṣaḥābah would have unanimously agreed to go against that.⁴

9. Bukhārī narrated in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* that Ibn ‘Umar said:

I entered upon Ḥaḥṣah and said: “You see the fitnah that is taking place among the people and I was not asked to get involved at all.” She said: “Go and catch up with them, because they are waiting for you, and I fear that you staying away from them may lead to division.”

She kept on at him until he went. After the meeting ended, Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه said:

Whoever wants to say anything concerning this issue let him raise his head, for we have more right to it than him and his father.

1 *al-Fatāwa*, 35/73

2 *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 311480

3 *Sunan al-Bayhaqi*, 8/144

4 *Marwiyāt Abi Mikhnaf*, p. 412

Ḥabīb ibn Maslamah said:

Why don't you answer him?

‘Abd Allāh said:

So I changed the way I was sitting, and I wanted to say: “The one who is more entitled to this position than you is the one who fought you and your father for the sake of Islam.” But I was afraid to say something that might cause division and bloodshed and could be misinterpreted, so instead I talked about what Allah has prepared in paradise.”

Ḥabīb said:

Allah has protected you from causing any fitnah.¹

It may be understood that this report is referring to the time when allegiance was sworn to Mu‘āwiyah as khalīfah, but it does not contain any clear indication to that effect. Some of the scholars said that this report refers to the meeting in which Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī رضي الله عنه reconciled with Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه. Ibn al-Jawzī said:

This speech was given at the time of Mu‘āwiyah, when he wanted to make his son Yazīd his heir (to the khilāfah).

And Ibn Ḥajar said that it was at the time of arbitration.²

However, the apparent meaning of the text supports the first two views. The words: “I was afraid to say something that might cause division and bloodshed” are indicative of the unity that existed at the time of Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه,

1 *Bukhārī*, 5/48

2 *Fatḥh al-Bārī*, 7/466

because at the time of the arbitration there was division and dissent, not unity and harmony.¹

10. The real conclusion of the arbitration. There is no doubt that the disputed issue, which the two arbitrators decided to refer to the ummah and to the members of the consultative committee, was nothing other than the point of dispute between ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه, namely the issue of the murderers of ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه. Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه was not laying claim to the khilāfah or denying ‘Alī’s رضي الله عنه right to it, as has been established above. Rather, he refused to swear allegiance to him and obey his instructions in Syria, since he had authority there (in reality, if not legitimately), and what helped him was the people’s obedience to him, for he had been its governor for twenty years.²

Ibn Diḥyah al-Kalbī said in his book *A’lām al-Naṣr al-Mubīn fi l-Mufaḍalah bayna Ahl Ṣiffīn*:

Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Ṭayyib al-Ash‘arī - al-Bāqillānī - said in *Manāqib al-A’immah*: “The two arbitrators never reached a decision to depose ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib رضي الله عنه. Even if they had reached a decision to depose him, he could not have been deposed unless the Qur’ān or Sunnah, which were the reference points for them both, dictated that he should be deposed, provided that the two arbitrators both agreed to that, or until they could explain what dictated deposing him on the basis of the Qur’ān and Sunnah. The text of ‘Alī’s letter stipulated that the two arbitrators should judge in accordance with the Book of Allah from beginning to end, and that they should not go beyond that, drift away from it, follow their whims and desires or be biased. He took the most solemn pledge from them that if they went beyond the Book of Allah, their verdict would not count. The Qur’ān and Sunnah confirmed his position as khalīfah and praised him, and they testified to his sincerity, good character, leadership, seniority

1 *Marwiyāt Abī Mikhnaf fi Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*

2 *Tahqīq Mawāqif al-Ṣaḥābah Fi l-Fitnah*, 2/134

in Islam, impressive efforts in jihād against the polytheists, closeness to the leader of the *ambiyā'*, unique qualities of deep knowledge of rulings, wisdom and the fact that he was entitled to leadership and qualified to carry the burden of *khilāfah*.¹

11. Where the meeting was held. The appointment for the meeting between the two arbitrators, as it says in the document, was to be in Ramadan 37 A.H, if nothing happened to prevent it, in a place between Iraq and Syria. The place chosen was Dowmat al-Jandal,² according to trustworthy reports, and Adhraḥ,³ according to other reports which are less authentic. Perhaps the fact that the two places are close to one another is the reason for the difference in the reports, as Khalīfah ibn Khayyāt⁴ said:

Adhraḥ, which is close to Dowmat al-Jandal, was also mentioned. The meeting took place at the appointed time with no problems.⁵

The place where the two arbitrators met was Dowmat al-Jandal. This is contrary to what was stated by Yaqūt al-Ḥamawī, who said that the arbitration took place in Adhraḥ and mentioned as evidence for that some reports, which he did not actually quote, as well as some lines of poetry.⁶

12. Was Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās رضي الله عنه at the appointed time and place, each of them accompanied by a few hundred people who represented the two delegations, one group representing the people of Iraq and the other representing the people of Syria. The two arbitrators asked a number of prominent people from Quraysh to be present so that they could consult them and ask for their opinions, but many of the senior Ṣaḥābah, who

1 *A'lām al-Naṣr al-Mubīn fī l-Mufaḍḍalah bayna Ahl Ṣiffīn*, p. 177

2 Dowmat al-Jandal: to the west of the city of al-Jawf, in northern Arabia.

3 Adhraḥ: a town on the border of Syria, near al-Balqa'.

4 *Tārīkh Khalīfah*, p. 191, 192

5 'Abd al-Ḥamīd: *Khilāfah 'Alī ibn 'Abī Ṭālib*; p. 267

6 *Diwān Dhī al-Rammah*, p. 361, 362, quoted in *Khilāfah 'Alī*, p. 272

had kept out of the fight from the beginning, were not present. The best of these was Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās رضي الله عنه, who was not present at the arbitration; he did not want that, and he never thought of it.¹

It was narrated from 'Amr ibn Sa'd that his brother 'Umar went to Sa'd رضي الله عنه, who was tending his sheep outside Madīnah. When he came to him, he said:

O my father, are you content to be like a Bedouin, tending your sheep, while the people are disputing power in Madīnah?

Sa'd رضي الله عنه struck 'Umar on the chest and said:

Be quiet! I heard the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم say: "Allah loves the slave who is pious, pure and not prominent."²

Attitude of Ahl al-Sunnah towards these wars

The attitude of Ahl as-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah towards this war that took place between the Ṣaḥābah رضي الله عنهم is to refrain from discussing what happened between them except in a manner that is befitting to them رضي الله عنهم, because deliberating about what happened among them may generate enmity, hatred and resentment against one of the two parties.

It is obligatory for every Muslim to love all of the Ṣaḥābah, to ask Allah to be pleased with all of them and to have mercy on all of them, to acknowledge their virtues and recognise their great deeds and noble character. What happened between them was based only on independent judgments (ijtihād), and they will all be rewarded, whether they were right or wrong, but the reward of those who got it right will be double that of those who got it wrong on the basis of their

1 'Abd al-Ḥamīd: *Khilāfah 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, p. 272

2 *Al-Musnad*, 1/168. Aḥmad Shākir said: Its chain of narration is sound (3/26); Al-Sulmi: *Khilāfah 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, p. 107

independent reasoning. Among the Ṣaḥābah, both the one who killed and the one who was killed will be in paradise. Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah do not regard it as permissible to debate about the conflict between them.

Before quoting the opinions of a number of Sunnī scholars explaining their attitude towards the dispute among the Ṣaḥābah, I shall quote some texts relating to the fighting that occurred among the Ṣaḥābah, to see how it was described in those texts:¹

وَإِنْ طَائِفَتَيْنِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ائْتَلَوْا فَاصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا ۚ فَإِنْ بَعَثَ إِحْدَهُمَا عَلَى الْأُخْرَى فَقَاتِلُوا الَّتِي تَبْغِي حَتَّى تَفِيءَ إِلَى أَمْرِ اللَّهِ ۚ فَإِنْ فَاءَتْ فَاصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ

Allah ﷻ says: (And if two parties [or groups] among the believers fall to fighting, then make peace between them both. But if one of them rebels against the other, then fight you [all] against the one that which rebels till it complies with the Command of Allah. Then if it complies, then make reconciliation between them justly, and be equitable. Verily, Allah loves those who are the equitable.).²

In this verse, Allah enjoins reconciliation among the believers if fighting occurs among them. They are brothers, and this fighting does not mean that they are no longer believers, since Allah calls them believers here and enjoins reconciliation among them. If fighting does take place among ordinary believers, and it does not mean that they are no longer believers, then the Ṣaḥābah of the Rasūl of Allah ﷺ who fought at the Battle of the Camel and in subsequent battles are the first who should be included under the heading of believers that is mentioned in this verse. Before their Lord, they are still true believers, and the conflict that

1 'Aqīdah Ahl as-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah fiṣ-Ṣaḥābah: al-Kirām, 2/727; Tanzīh Khāl al-Mu'minīn Mu'āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān min adh-Dhulm wal-Fisq fi Muṭālibatihi bi Damm Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Uthmān, p. 41
2 Sūrah al-Ḥujirāt: 9

arose among them does not affect their faith at all because it came about on the basis of independent reasoning.¹

It was narrated that Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī رضي الله عنه said:

“The Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said: “There will be a group who will go beyond the pale of Islam at the time of Muslim division, and they will be killed by the group that is closer to the truth.”²

The division referred to in this ḥadīth is the dispute between ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه. Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم described both groups as being Muslims and connected to the truth. This ḥadīth is one of the signs of his nubuwwah; because things turned out exactly as foretold by Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم. The ḥadīth also rules that both groups were Muslims, both the people of Syria and the people of Iraq. It is not true that the people of Syria were regarded as disbelievers, as the Rawāfiḍ and ignorant folk claim.

This also indicates that the Ṣaḥābah of ‘Alī رضي الله عنه were the closer of the two groups to the truth. It is the view of Ahl as-Sunnah wa l-Jamā‘ah that ‘Alī رضي الله عنه was in the right, but that Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه will be rewarded, Allah willing, since he acted on the basis of what he thought was correct. ‘Alī رضي الله عنه was the ruler, though, and he will have two rewards, as is proven in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*:

If the ruler or judge strives to reach a verdict and gets it right, he will have two rewards; if he strives to reach a verdict and gets it wrong, he will have one reward.³

It was narrated that Abū Bakrah رضي الله عنه said:

While Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم was delivering a sermon, Ḥasan came, and Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم

1 *al-‘Awāṣim min al-Qawāṣim*, p. 169, 170; *Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, 4/1717

2 *Muslim*, 745

3 *Bukhārī ma’a Sharḥihi fi Fath al-Bārī*, 13/318

said: “This son of mine is a leader, and perhaps Allah will reconcile two great groups of the Muslims through him.”¹

In this ḥadīth, we see the Rasūl’s ﷺ testimony that both the people of Iraq and the people of Syria are Muslim. This ḥadīth is also a clear refutation of the Khawārij, who regarded both ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiyah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمَا, and their supporters, as disbelievers; the testimony included in this ḥadīth is that they were all Muslims. Hence Sufyān ibn ‘Uyaynah used to say:

We liked it very much that he referred to the two groups as being two groups of Muslims.

Al-Bayhaqī said:

He liked it because Rasūl ﷺ called them all Muslims. This is a case of the Rasūl of Allah ﷺ foretelling that after the death of ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ would hand the reins of power to Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ.²

The ḥadīth mentioned above refers to the people of Iraq who were with ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ and the people of Syria who were with Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ. Rasūl ﷺ described them as being part of his ummah³ and also described them as all being connected to the truth and not going beyond it. He testified that they would continue to be believers and would not go beyond that because of the fighting that took place between them; they were included in the general meaning of the verse in which Allah ﷻ says:

وَإِنْ طَافَتْنِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فَاصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا ۗ

And if two parties [or groups] among the believers fall to fighting, then make peace between them both.⁴

1 Bukhārī, Kitāb al-Fitan, no. 7109

2 Al-Bayhaqī: *Al-I‘tiqād*, p. 198; *Fath al-Bārī*, 13/66

3 In *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* it says: “There will be two groups of my Ummah.”

4 Sūrah al-Ḥujarāt: 9

We have seen above that this verse encompasses all of them, may Allah be pleased with them all. They did not become disbelievers or evildoers because of that fighting; rather their actions were based on what they thought was correct. The ruling on their fighting was explained by ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib رضي الله عنه, as we have seen.

What the Muslim must do with regard to what he believes about what happened among the noble Ṣaḥābah رضي الله عنهم is to follow the way of Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā‘ah, which means refraining from taking sides concerning what happened among them and not indulging in discussing that except in a manner that befits their status.

The books of Ahl al-Sunnah are full of explanations of their sound and pure belief with regard to those who were chosen to be the Ṣaḥābah of Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم. Ahl al-Sunnah defined their attitude towards the war that broke out among them in good terms, such as the following:

1. ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz رضي الله عنه was asked about the fighting that took place among the Ṣaḥābah, and he said:

This is blood that Allah kept our hands free from, so why should I not keep my tongue out of it, too? The likeness of the Ṣaḥābah of the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم is that of the eye; the best way to heal the eye is not to touch it.¹

Al-Bayhaqī said, commenting on these words of ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz رضي الله عنه:

This is very good, because keeping quiet about what does not concern one is the right thing to do.²

1 Al-Bāqillānī: *Al-Insāf*, p. 69 ; *Al-Ṭabaqāt*, 5/349

2 *Manāqib al-Shāfi‘ī*; p. 136

2. Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was asked about the Ṣaḥābah fighting amongst themselves, and he said:

That was fighting in which the Ṣaḥābah of Muḥammad صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ were present, and we were not; they knew, but we do not know. In the issues, on which they agreed, we follow; on the issues on which they differed, we refrain from taking a stance.¹

The meaning of these words of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī is that the Ṣaḥābah had more knowledge of what they got involved in than we do. All we have to do is follow them in that on which they were agreed, refrain from taking a stance on that concerning which they differed, and not introduce our own opinion. We may be certain that they based their actions on what they thought was correct, seeking Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى thereby, because they were sincere in their commitment to Islam.²

3. Ja‘far ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq was asked about what happened among the Ṣaḥābah, and he replied:

I say what Allah said:

قَالَ عَلِمَهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّي فِي كِتَابٍ ۚ لَا يَضِلُّ رَبِّي وَلَا يَنْسَى

The knowledge there of is with my Lord, in a record. My Lord neither errs nor does He forget.³

Imam Aḥmad (may Allah have mercy on him) said, after he was asked about what happened between ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiyah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا:

1 *Al-Jāmi‘ li Aḥkām al-Qur‘ān*, 16/332

2 *ibid.*

3 *Sūrah Ṭāhā*: 52

I do not say anything about them except that which is best.¹

It was narrated that Ibrāhīm ibn Āriz al-Faqīh said:

I was with Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal when a man asked him about what happened between ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه. He turned away from him, and it was said to him: “O Abū ‘Abd Allāh, he is a man of Banū Hāshim.” So he turned towards him and recited the verse:

تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ ۗ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلكُمْ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ ۗ وَلَا تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

That was a nation who has passed away. They shall receive the reward of what they earned, and you of what you earn. And you will not be asked of what they used to do.²

4. Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī said, in the context of his discussion about what the Muslim is obliged to believe about the Ṣaḥābah of the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم and how they should be mentioned:

None of the Ṣaḥābah of Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم should be mentioned except in the best way, and we should refrain from debating about the dispute that occurred among them because they are the most deserving of people of finding the best way of interpreting what they said and did, and of being thought of in the most positive manner.³

5. Abū ‘Abd Allāh ibn Baṭṭah said, in his discussion on the belief of Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā‘ah:

Moreover, we refrain from deliberating about the dispute that arose among the Ṣaḥābah of the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم. They were with him during major

1 Ibn al-Jawzī: *Manāqib al-Imām Aḥmad*, p. 164

2 Sūrah al-Baqarah: 141

3 *Al-Risālah ma‘a Sharḥiha al-Thamr al-Dānī*, p. 23

events, and they have precedence over others for that reason. Allah has forgiven them and has enjoined you to pray for forgiveness for them and to draw close to Him by loving them; that was enjoined on the lips of His Rasūl ﷺ. He knew what would happen between them and that they would fight; the reason they were given precedence over all other people is because all their mistakes, deliberate or otherwise, have been pardoned, and all their disputes have been forgiven.¹

6. Abū Bakr ibn at-Ṭayyib al-Bāqillānī said:

It must be noted that with regard to the disputes that occurred among the Ṣaḥābah of Rasūl ﷺ we should refrain from examining them and ask Allah to have mercy on all of them; we praise them and ask Allah to be pleased with them and to grant them safety (in the hereafter), victory and Paradise. We believe that ‘Alī رضي الله عنه was right in what he did and will have two rewards, and that what the Ṣaḥābah رضي الله عنهم did was based on what they thought was best, so they will have one reward; they are not to be regarded as evildoers or innovators. The evidence for that is the verse in which Allah says:

لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ يُبَايِعُونَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ فَعَلِمَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ فَأَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ عَلَيْهِمْ
وَآتَاهُمْ فَتْحًا قَرِيبًا

Indeed, Allah was pleased with the believers when they gave the *Bay'ah* [pledge] to you [O Muḥammad ﷺ] under the tree, He knew what was in their hearts, and He sent down *al-Sakīnah* [calmness and tranquillity] upon them, and He rewarded them with a near victory²,

and the words of Rasūl ﷺ:

If the ruler or judge strives to reach a verdict and gets it right, he will have

1 *Al-Shām wa l-Ibānah ‘alā Uṣūl al-Sunnah wa l-Diyānah*; p. 268

2 *Sūrah al-Fatḥ*: 18

two rewards; if he strives to reach a verdict and gets it wrong, he will have one reward.

If the judge in our time will have two rewards for his effort to reach the right judgment, then what do you think about the effort of those with whom Allah is pleased and they are pleased with Him? The soundness of this view is indicated by the words of Rasūl ﷺ to Ḥasan رضي الله عنه:

This son of mine is a leader, and perhaps Allah will reconcile two great groups of the Muslims through him.¹

The greatness of each of the two groups was confirmed, and it was ruled that their Islam was sound. Allah promised to remove the resentment from their hearts when He said:

وَنَزَعْنَا مَا فِي صُدُورِهِمْ مِّنْ غِلٍّ إِخْوَانًا عَلَىٰ سُرُرٍ مُّتَقَابِلِينَ

And We shall remove from their breasts any deep feeling of bitterness [that they may have]. [So they will be like] brothers facing each other on thrones.²

So we must refrain from debating about the conflict that occurred among them and keep quiet about it.³

7. Ibn Taymiyyah said, when discussing the belief of Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah concerning the conflict among the Ṣaḥābah:

They refrain from debating the conflict among the Ṣaḥābah and say: “These reports that mention bad conduct on their part includes reports to which things have been added, or from which things have been omitted,

1 *Bukhārī*: al-Fitan, no. 7109

2 *Sūrah al-Ḥijr*: 47

3 *Al-Insāf fi mā yaajib l'tiqāduhu wa lā yajūz al-Jahl bihī*, p. 67-69

or which have been interpreted in the wrong way. As for those reports that are sound, they are excused for their conduct; or they based their conduct on what they thought was right, and they got it right; or they based their conduct on what they thought was right, but they got it wrong.”¹

8. Ibn Kathīr said:

With regard to that concerning which they differed amongst themselves after the death of Rasūl ﷺ some of it happened without their intending it to, such as the Battle of the Camel; some of it was based on what they thought was correct, such as the Battle of Şifīn. A decision may be mistaken, but the person is excused, even if it is wrong, he will be rewarded for it, and the one who gets it right will have two rewards.²

9. Ibn Ḥajar said:

Ahl as-Sunnah are unanimously agreed that it is not allowed to criticise any of the Şahābah because of what happened to them, even if we know who was in the right, because they did not fight these battles except on the basis of what they believed was right. Indeed, it is proven that (the one who got it wrong) will have one reward, and the one who got it right will have two rewards.³

Ahl as-Sunnah are unanimously agreed that it is obligatory to refrain from becoming too involved in examining the fitnah that occurred among the Şahābah after the murder of ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه, and that we should pray for mercy for them, recognise the virtues of the Şahābah, acknowledge their precedence and spread reports of their good qualities.⁴

1 *ibid.*

2 *Al-Bā’ith al-Ḥathīth*, p. 182

3 *Fath al-Bārī*, 13/34

4 *‘Aqīdah Ahl al-Sunnah*, 2/740

Warning against some books which Distort the history of the Ṣaḥābah

1. *Al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah*

One of the books that distort the history of early Islam is *al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah*, which is [falsely] attributed to Ibn Qutaybah. Dr. ‘Abd Allāh ‘Usaylān, in his book *al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah fī Mizān al-Taḥqīq al-‘Ilmī*, lists a number of points proving that this book attributed to Imām Ibn Qutaybah is false and is a fabrication. The evidence to that effect includes the following:

- None of those who wrote biographies of Ibn Qutaybah said that he wrote a book on history called *al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah*, and we do not know of any book of history that he wrote except for a book called *al-Ma‘ārif*.
- Reading through the book gives one the impression that Ibn Qutaybah lived in Damascus and the Maghrib¹; whereas, he never left Baghdad except to go to al-Daynūr.
- The methodology and style used by the author of *al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah* is completely different from the methodology and style of Ibn Qutaybah, as seen in those of his books that still exist. Ibn Qutaybah wrote lengthy introductions to his books, explaining his methodology and his aim in writing the book. In contrast, the author of *al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah* writes a very short introduction that is no more than three lines. In addition, there are differences in style. We do not see this methodology in the books of Ibn Qutaybah.
- The author of *al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah* narrates from Ibn Abī Laylā in a way that gives the impression that he met him. But this Ibn Abī Laylā is

1 The Maghrib literally means the place of sunset, or the west. It is also used to refer to the countries of North Africa (excluding Egypt), or specifically to Morocco. [Editor]

Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Laylā al-Faqīh, the judge of Kūfah, who died in 148 A.H. It is well known that Ibn Qutaybah was not born until 213 A.H, sixty-five years after the death of Ibn Abī Laylā.

- The narrators and Shuyūkh from whom Ibn Qutaybah usually narrates in his books are not mentioned anywhere in this book.
- A large segment of his reports are narrated using phrases that indicate a problem with the reports. It often says:

“They mentioned from some of the Egyptians”, “They mentioned from Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān from some of the Shuyūkh of the people of Egypt”, “Some of the Shuyūkh of the Maghrib told us”, or “They mentioned from some of the Shuyūkh.” Such phrases are far removed from the usual style and phraseology of Ibn Qutaybah and are not used in any of his books.

- The author of *al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah* narrates from two of the senior scholars in Egypt, but Ibn Qutaybah never went to Egypt and never learned from these two scholars.¹
- Ibn Qutaybah is held in high esteem by the scholars, who regard him as one of Ahl as-Sunnah, trustworthy in his knowledge and religious commitment. Al-Salafī said:

Ibn Qutaybah was one of the trustworthy and one of Ahl al-Sunnah.

- Ibn Ḥazm said concerning him:

He was trustworthy in his knowledge and religious commitment.

- Al-Khatīb al-Baghdadī said likewise.

1 Alī al-‘Alyānī: *‘Aqīdat al-Imām Ibn Qutaybah*, p. 90

- Ibn Taymiyah said concerning him:

Ibn Qutaybah is one of the followers of Aḥmad and Ishāq and one of the supporters of the Sunnī madhab.¹

If a man is held in such high esteem by the authentic scholars, does it make sense for him to be the author of a book like *al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah*, which distorts history and attributes to the Ṣaḥābah that which is no true?²

- Dr. ‘Alī Nufay’ al-‘Alyānī says in his book *‘Aqīdat al-Imām Ibn Qutaybah*, concerning *al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah*:

After a critical reading of the book *al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah*, in my view it is most likely that the author of *al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah* was an evil Rāfiḍī who wanted to attribute this book to Ibn Qutaybah because his books are numerous and because he was well known among the people for supporting *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* (the people of aḥādīth). He may have been one of the Rawāfiḍ of the Maghrib, as Ibn Qutaybah enjoyed a good reputation in the Maghrib.³

What makes it likely that the author of *al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah* was a Rāfiḍī is the following:

- » The author of *al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah* claims that ‘Alī رضي الله عنه said to the Muhājirīn:

I urge you by Allah, O Muhājirīn, not to take the authority of Muḥammad among the Arabs out of his house and home to yours and not to deprive his family of their rights, for by Allah, O Muhājirīn; we are more entitled to that because we are *Ahl al-Bayt* (the members of the Rasūl’s صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم household)

1 *Lisān al-Mizān*, 3/357; *Taḥqīq Mawāqif al-Ṣaḥābah*, 2/144

2 *Taḥqīq Mawāqif al-Ṣaḥābah*, 2/144

3 Ibn Taymiyah: *Al-Fatāwa*, 17/391

and are more entitled to this than you. By Allah, this is our right; do not follow whims and desires lest you go astray from the path of Allah.¹

No one believes that the Khilāfah is the hereditary right of Ahl al-Bayt except the Shī'ah.

- » The author of *al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah* harshly criticises the Ṣaḥābah of the Rasūl of Allah ﷺ. He depicts Ibn 'Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ as a coward and Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ as jealous; he says that Muḥammad ibn Maslamah got angry with 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ because he killed the Jew Marḥab in Khaybar, and that 'Ā'ishah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا ordered that 'Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ be killed.² Criticism of the Ṣaḥābah is one of the most well-known characteristics of the Rawāfiḍ; the Khawārij do something similar, but they do not criticise the majority of the Ṣaḥābah.³
- » The author of *al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah* says that Mukhtār ibn Abī 'Ubayd was killed by Muṣ'ab ibn Zubayr because he called people to rally behind the household of the Rasūl of Allah ﷺ but he neglects to mention the myths introduced by Mukhtār or his claim of receiving revelation.⁴ The Rawāfiḍ are the ones who love Mukhtār ibn Abī 'Ubayd because he took revenge on the murderers of Ḥusayn رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ. It should also be noted that Ibn Qutaybah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ mentioned Mukhtār among those who rebelled against legitimate authority, and he said that Mukhtār used to claim that Jibra'īl عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام came down to him.⁵
- » The author of *al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah* wrote only about twenty-five pages concerning the khilāfah of the first three khulafā' Abū Bakr; 'Umar and 'Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, whereas he wrote two hundred pages about the fitnah

1 *Al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah*, 1/12

2 *Al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah*, 1/54,55

3 Al-'Alyānī: *'Aqīdah al-Imām Ibn Qutaybah*, p. 91

4 *Al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah*, 2/20

5 *Al-Ma'ārif*, p. 401

that occurred among the Ṣaḥābah. In other words, he reduced the greatest period of history to a few pages but wrote pages upon pages of false history, of which nothing is proven except a little. This is one of the known attributes of the Rawāfiḍ. We seek refuge with Allah from misguidance and betrayal.

» Al-Sayyid Maḥmūd Shukrī al-Ālūsī says in *Mukhtasar al-Tuḥfah al-Ithnā ‘Ashariyyah*:

Part of their (the Rawāfiḍ) crafty tricks is that they look at the names of scholars who are respected by Ahl as-Sunnah, and whenever they find one who has the same name as one of their own scholars, they attribute the reports of that Shī‘ah scholar to him (the Sunnī scholar). Those Sunnīs who are unaware of this will think that this is one of their (Sunnī) A‘immah and will accept his words and rely on his reports.

For example, al-Suddī is the name of two men, one of whom is al-Suddī the elder and the other is al-Suddī the younger. The elder al-Suddī is one of the trustworthy Sunnī scholars, whereas the younger is one of the fabricators and liars and is an extreme Rāfiḍī. ‘Abd Allāh ibn Qutaybah is an extreme Rāfiḍī whereas ‘Abd Allāh ibn Muslim ibn Qutaybah is a trustworthy Sunnī scholar who wrote a book called al-Ma‘ārif, the Rāfiḍī wrote a book which he also called al-Ma‘ārif, with the aim of misleading people.¹

This is what makes it likely that the book *al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah* was written by the Rāfiḍī Ibn Qutaybah and not by the trustworthy Sunnī Ibn Qutaybah; people got confused by the similarity of names.² And Allah knows best.

2. *Nahj al-Balāghah*

One of the books that played a role in distorting the history of the Ṣaḥābah is the book called *Nahj al-Balāghah*. This book is faulty in terms of both its chains

1 Al-Ālūsī: *Mukhtasar al-Tuḥfah. al-Ithnā ‘Ashariyyah*, p. 32

2 ‘Aqīdah al-Imām Ibn Qutaybah, p. 93

of narration and its text. It was compiled three and a half centuries after ‘Alī عليه السلام passed away, without any chain of narration. The Shī‘ah attributed *Nahj al-Balāghah* to al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, who was not accepted by the ḥadīth scholars even when he gave a chain of narrators, in cases where the reports support his innovations, so how about if no chain of narration is given at all, as is the case in *Nahj al-Balāghah*? As for the one whom the scholars accused of lying, that is his brother ‘Alī.¹ The scholars discussed him and said:

» Ibn Khallikān said in *Tarjamat al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍī*:

The scholars differed concerning the book *Nahj al-Balāghah*, which is a compilation of the words of Imām ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام, as to whether it was compiled by ‘Alī or his brother al-Raḍī. It was said that these were not the words of ‘Alī; rather the one who compiled it and attributed it to him was the one who fabricated it. And Allah knows best.²

» Al-Dhahabī said:

The one who studies *Nahj al-Balāghah* will be certain that it is falsely attributed to Amīr al-Mu‘minīn ‘Alī عليه السلام. It contains blatant insults and criticism of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar عليه السلام as well as contradictions, and is written in a weak and pallid style such that anyone who knows anything about the Qurayshī Ṣaḥābah and those who came after them, and their way of thinking, will be certain that most of it is false.³

» Ibn Taymiyyah said:

The scholars know that most of the speeches in this book are fabricated and falsely attributed to ‘Alī عليه السلام, hence we do not find most of it in earlier books, and it has no known chain of transmission.⁴

1 Nāyif Ma‘rūf: *Al-Adab al-Islāmī*, p. 53

2 *Al-Waḥyāt*, 3/124

3 *Mizān al-I’tidāl*, 3/124

4 *Minhāj al-Sunnah*, 4124

- » Ibn Ḥajar accuses al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍī of fabricating it and says:

The one who studies it will be certain that it is falsely attributed to Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī رضي الله عنه, and most of it is false.¹

Based on the above comments and others, a number of researchers discussed this topic and said that this book cannot be soundly attributed to Imām 'Alī رضي الله عنه.²

We may note some of the most important reasons why the early and modern scholars doubted the attribution of *Nahj al-Balāghah* to Imām 'Alī رضي الله عنه:

- » It is devoid of documented chains of narration that would support the attribution of its words to 'Alī رضي الله عنه.
- » It contains a large number of lengthy speeches, which would have been difficult to memorise without getting mixed up at that time, before the era of compiling and writing things down. Even the speeches of the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم have not reached us in complete form, despite the great deal of care and attention given to them.
- » We can see many of its statements and speeches in trustworthy sources where they are attributed to someone other than 'Alī رضي الله عنه, but the author of *Nahj al-Balāghah* attributes them to him.
- » This book contains words that criticise the Rightly Guided Khulafā' who preceded 'Alī رضي الله عنه, in a manner that is not befitting for him or them; these words contradict what is known about 'Alī's رضي الله عنه respect for them. One example is the report of the speech known as Shaqshaqiyyah, in which his keenness to become khalīfah is demonstrated, even though he was known to be an ascetic who cared little about worldly matters.

1 *Lisān al-Mizān*, 4/223

2 *Nayāf Ma'rūf: Al-Adab al-Islāmī*, p. 53

- » The prevalence of rhymed prose in the book. A number of literary critics think that so much rhymed prose is not in accordance with the spirit of ‘Alī’s عليه السلام era, when people sought to avoid overdoing things, even though the kind of rhymed prose that comes without much effort was not far removed from the spirit of that time.
- » Writing in a very ornate manner, which is a demonstration of literary ability. This is a feature of the ‘Abbasid era, with its love of flowery speech such as we find in the description of peacocks, bats, bees, ants, plants, clouds and so on.
- » The philosophical style that is scattered throughout the book was unknown to the Muslims until the third century A.H, when Greek, Persian and Indian books were translated. This is more like the words of the philosophers and orators than the words of the Ṣaḥābah and the Rightly Guided Khulafā’.¹

We should be wary of this book when talking about the Ṣaḥābah and what happened between them and Amīr al-Mu’minīn ‘Alī عليه السلام. We should measure its texts against Qur’ān and Sunnah; whatever is in accordance with the Qur’ān and Sunnah, there is nothing wrong with referring to it, but whatever is contrary to them, we should pay no attention to it.

3. *Al-Aghānī by al-Isfahānī*

The book *al-Aghānī* by Abū al-Faraj al-Isfahānī is regarded as a book of literature, entertainment and poetry that is to be sung; it is not a book of knowledge, history and Islamic jurisprudence. It is very famous in the realm of literature and history, but that does not mean that we should keep quiet about what is mentioned in it of Shu’ūbiyyah,² fabrication, blatant lies, slander and criticism. The Iraqi poet,

1 *Al-Adab al-Islāmī*, p. 54, 55

2 Derived from the Arabic word sha’b meaning people, nation, or race. The Shu’ūbiyyah movement advocated equality of Arabs and non-Arabs. The term is often used by Arabs in a more specific context that refers to the resentment of Arabs by Persians that occurred in the 9th and 10th century CE [Editor]

Professor Walīd al-Aḏhamī, has written a valuable book called *al-Sayf al-Yamānī fī Naḥr al-Isfahānī Ṣāḥib al-Aghānī*, in which he makes a serious effort to distinguish between what is rubbish and what may be accepted, what is poison and what is honey.

He highlights what the book contains of lies, inflammatory Shu‘ūbiyyah and hatred, which seethes in the heart like a boiling cauldron. He refutes the false and unauthenticated reports that al-Isfahānī compiled, which undermine the people of the Rasūl’s ﷺ household and distort their history and their image. He also discusses the false claims made by al-Isfahānī with regard to Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ and the Umayyad khulafā’, as well as the reports that are fabricated and falsely attributed to them. In this valuable book, the great scholar and poet Professor Walīd al-Aḏhamī also discusses other kinds of falsehood, including the fabricated stories that undermine Islamic belief and religion and give precedence to ignorance over Islam.¹

The early scholars commented on Abū al-Faraj al-Isfahānī:

» Al-Khatīb al-Baghdadī said:

Abū al-Faraj al-Isfahānī was the worst of liars; he used to buy a lot of worthless books, then all that he wrote was based on them.²

» Ibn al-Jawzī said:

The reports of such a man cannot be trusted, and you will find in his books evidence to prove that he is an evildoer. He encourages the drinking of alcohol and may even attribute that to himself. The one who studies the book *al-Aghānī* will see all kinds of evils.³

1 Al-Aḏhamī: *Al-Sayf al-Yamānī fī Naḥr al-Isfahānī Ṣāḥib al-Aghānī*,

2 *Tārīkh Baghdad*, 11/398

3 *Al-Muntadhim*, 7/40, 41

» Al-Dhahabī said:

I saw our Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah classifying him as weak, criticising him with regard to his reports and finding what was in his book outrageous.¹

4. *Tārīkh al-Ya'qūbī*

The author's full name is Aḥmad ibn Abī Ya'qūb Iṣḥāq ibn Ja'far ibn Wahb ibn Wāḍiḥ. He was from Baghdad, and he died in the year 290 A.H. He was an Imāmī Shī'ah historian who worked as a scribe in the ministries of the 'Abbasid state, so he was known as 'the 'Abbasid scribe'. Al-Ya'qūbī presented the history of the Islamic state from a purely Imāmī Shī'ī point of view. He did not acknowledge the khilāfah of anyone except 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and his sons رضي الله عنه, in the sequence of A'immah accepted by the Shī'ah, and he referred to 'Alī as the rightful, appointed heir of the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم. When he spoke of the khilāfah of Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه, he did not give them the title of 'khalīfah'; rather he said:

So-and-so took charge.

He did not mention any of them without reviling him. He narrated bad reports about 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها and treated other senior Ṣaḥābah in like manner, narrating corrupt reports about 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه² and also about Khālid ibn al-Walīd,³ 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ⁴ and Mu'āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān.⁵ He discussed in, a very negative light the meeting in which Abū Bakr was first given the oath of allegiance after the death of the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم,⁶ claiming that it was a conspiracy to take the khilāfah away from 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib رضي الله عنه who, in his view, was the rightful successor. His

1 *Mizān al-I'tidāl*, 3/123

2 *Tārīkh al-Ya'qūbī*, 2/180-183

3 op. cit., 2/131

4 op. cit., 2/222

5 op. cit., 2/232-238

6 op. cit., 2/123-126

way of fabricating false accusations is typical of the way of his fellow Shī'ah and Rawāfiḍ; it involves either fabricating the report altogether,¹ adding something to the report,² or quoting it out of context to distort its meaning.

When he mentions the Umayyad khulafā', he describes them as kings, but when he mentions the 'Abbasid khulafā', he calls them 'Khulafā'. In his book *al-Buldān*, he also calls their state 'the blessed state',³ which is a reflection of his hypocrisy and practice of taqiyyah (dissimulation). This book is an example of the deviation and distortion to be found in the writing of Islamic history, but it was used as a reference by many Orientalists and westernised Muslims who undermined Islamic history and the images of its figures. In fact, this book is worthless from an academic point of view; the first part is mostly filled with stories, myths and legends, and the second part is written from a partisan point of view. It is also lacking the simplest principles of academic authentication.⁴

5. *Murūj al-Dhahab* by Al-Mas'ūdī

The book *Murūj al-Dhahab wa Ma'ādin al-Jawhar* was written by al-Mas'ūdī, whose full name is Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī al-Mas'ūdī; he was one of the descendants of 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه.⁵

It was said that he was a man from 'the Maghrib',⁶ but al-Mas'ūdī himself stated that he was from Iraq and that he moved to Egypt.⁷ If what was meant by 'the Maghrib' was the western part of the Arab world as opposed to the eastern

1 *Manhaj Kitābat at-Tārikh al-Islami*, p. 431

2 *ibid.*

3 *al-Ya'qūbi: Kitāb al-Buldān*, p. 432

4 *Manhaj Kitābat at-Tārikh al-Islami*, p. 432

5 *Ibn an-Nadīm: al-Fihrist*, p. 171; *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*

6 *Al-Fihrist*, p. 117.

7 *Mu'jam al-Udaba'*, 13/91-93

part, then Egypt is part of the western part of the Muslim world, so there is no contradiction.¹

Al-Mas‘ūdī was a Shī‘ah, of whom Ibn Ḥajar said:

His books are filled with proof that he was a Shī‘ah and Mu‘tazilite.²

Al-Mas‘ūdī argued that the concept of the rightful, appointed heir for the imamate was known and established from the time of Ādam عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام and that it was transmitted from generation to generation until the time of our Rasūl صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. Ibn Ḥajar mentioned the differences among the people after that with regard to whether there is a divine text or it is to be left for people to choose, and the Imāmī Shī‘ah believe that there is a text.³

In his book *Murūj al-Dhahab*, Al-Mas‘ūdī paid a great deal of attention to the events surrounding ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ; he paid more attention to him than he did to the life of the Rasūl of Allah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ in the same book.⁴ He focused his attention on the household of ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and followed reports on them very clearly in his book *Murūj al-Dhahab*.⁵ He tried shamelessly to distort the history of the first generation of Islam.

These are some of the classical books that we warn against, and which had a great impact on the writings of some contemporary authors such Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (*al-Fitnat al-Kubrā - ‘Alī wa Banūhū*) and al-‘Aqqād ((*al-‘Abqariyāt* series). They quoted numerous fabricated and weak reports and based their analysis on them; hence they were mistaken in their conclusions and made serious errors concerning the Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ.

1 *Manhaj al-Mas‘ūdī fi Kitābat al-Tārīkh*, p. 44; *Athar al-Tashayyu’*, p. 243

2 *Lisān al-Mizān*, 4/225; *Athar al-Tashayyu’* p. 246.

3 *Murūj al-Dhahab wa Ma‘ādin al-Jawhar*, 1138

4 *Athar al-Tashayyu’ ‘alā al-Riwāyāt al-Tārīkhiyyah*, p. 248

5 *ibid.*

The same is true of ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Najjār in his book *al-Khulafā’ al-Rāshidīn*, where he quotes texts of the reports from *al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah*, and Ḥasan Ibrāhīm in his book *‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ*, in which he concludes, on the basis of fabricated Rāfiḍī reports, that ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ was a man in pursuit of his own interests and ambitions who would not get involved in any matter unless he could see some worldly interest or benefits for himself.¹

There are also other researchers who followed the same methodology and thus entered dark tunnels because of their being far removed from the methodology of Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā‘ah when dealing with the huge accumulation of historical reports.

The Orientalists and Islamic history

One of the worst groups when it comes to distorting Islamic history is the Rāfiḍī Shī‘ah, of all groups and types. They were among the earliest of the groups to emerge, and they have a hierarchical political system and their own set of deviant beliefs and ideology.

This is the group that tells the most lies against its opponents, and they are among the most vehemently opposed of people towards the Ṣaḥābah, as we will see. Among the basic foundations of their belief are impugning the Ṣaḥābah and denouncing them as disbelievers, especially the ‘two shuyūkh’ Abū Bakr and ‘Umar رضي الله عنهما, whom they refer to as ‘sorcery and evil’.²

The Shī‘ah have the greatest number of narrators and storytellers who took on the mission of spreading their lies and fabrications and compiling them in books and essays about the events of Islamic history, especially internal events. Shu‘ūbiyyah and tribalism also had an effect on the fabrication of historical reports and

1 Ḥasan Ibrāhīm: *Tārīkh ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ*, p. 206, 207

2 Iḥsān Ilāhī Ḥāhīr: *Al-Shī‘ah wa al-Sunnah*, p. 32. This refers to verse 4:51 in the Quran: “... They believe in sorcery and Evil..”

stories aimed at distorting Islamic history and ‘proving’ the superiority of one sect or people or race over another, ignoring the sharī‘ah criterion of superiority, namely taqwā.

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ

Verily, the most honourable of you with Allah is that [believer] who has Taqwā.¹

The deviant sects took advantage of the prevalence of storytellers, the ignorance and lack of knowledge of the Sunnah on the part of most of the people, and the fact that some of them had drifted away from the truth while seeking to earn a living. They spread their lies and fabricated stories, which these storytellers welcomed and spread among the common folk, without realising the situation.

Hundreds of fabricated reports about the Ṣaḥābah, Tābi‘īn and Muslim scholars, which undermined them and distorted their history, were disseminated through them. But by His grace and blessing, Allah guided a number of scholarly critics, who strove hard to examine the narrators and narrations, distinguishing between true and false and defending the beliefs and history of the ummah. The Sunnī scholars put a great deal of effort into pointing out the fabricated reports by quoting them and highlighting those narrators who were weak, suspicious, or followers of whims and desires. They drew up a methodology for examining the reports and determining which to accept, and they were successful in these efforts.

Among the most prominent of those who took on the mission of explaining historical errors and pointing out flaws in the false reports were: al-Qāḍī Ibn al-‘Arabi in *al-‘Awāṣim min al-Qawāṣim*; Imām ibn Taymiyyah in many of his books and essays, especially his valuable book *Minhāj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah fī Naqḍ Kalām al-Shī‘ah wa al-Qadariyyah*; the critic al-Dhahabī in many of his historical writings such as *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’*, *Tārīkh al-Islām* and *Mizān al-I‘tidāl fī Naqḍ al-Rijāl*; al-

1 Sūrah al-Ḥujarāt: 13

Ḥāfiẓ¹ Ibn Kathīr, the interpreter of Qur’ān and historian, in his book *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*; al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqallāni in his books *Fath al-Bārī fī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *Lisān al-Mizān*, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb* and *Al-Iṣābah fī Tamīz al-Ṣaḥābah*.

With regard to the methods used by the Shī‘ah to distort the historical events and images of the early generation of the Ṣaḥābah and Tābi‘īn, there were many ways, including:

- * Outright fabrications and Lies
- * Mentioning a true story or incident, but adding or omitting details so as to distort it and give the opposite idea.
- * Quoting reports out of context, so that the meaning is distorted, and a false interpretation of events is given.
- * Highlighting shortcomings and mistakes while concealing well-established facts.
- * Fabricating poetry and attributing it to some poets, in order to support some so-called historical events, because Arabic poetry is regarded as a historical document and proof that helps to authenticate reports.
- * Fabricating books and essays and falsely attributing them to scholars and well known characters, as the Rawāfiḍ fabricated the book *al-Imāmah al-Siyāsah*, which they attributed to Abū Muhammad ‘Abd Allāh ibn Muslim ibn Qutaybah al-Dīnwarī because he was famous among and trusted by the Sunnīs, as we have seen above.

In the last century, these lies and distortions were welcomed by Western scholars and writers, such as Orientalists and missionaries, during the period in which

1 ‘Al-Ḥāfiẓ’ is an honorific title meaning ‘the one who has memorised (the Qur’ān)’. [Editor]

they invaded and colonised Muslim countries. They found in this material what they were looking for, and they started to highlight it and focus on it. Motivated by their fanaticism and hatred of the Muslims, they added lies by inventing events that never happened or misinterpreting historical events, purposely distorting and misinterpreting the facts to support their beliefs.

This group was then supported by a large number of the students of the Orientalists from Arab and Muslim countries, who adopted their research methodology and their ideas and concepts for analysing and interpreting history; they took up the banner after the Europeans departed from the Muslim lands.

Thus the harm that they did was worse and greater than that of their Orientalist teachers and their predecessors among the misguided and innovating groups. That is because they, like their teachers, claimed to be following a pure academic spirit and scientific method in research by giving up any and all preconceptions, but in fact most of them gave up nothing but their faith.

They had no sincerity towards the truth and no knowledge of following a sound academic methodology in proving historical events, such as comparing reports, knowing the value of the sources to which they were referring and the extent to which the narrators were authentic and accurate, and studying the context of those narrators in terms of human nature and development.¹

They did not learn anything of scientific or academic methodology except for superficial matters such as how to write footnotes and put together bibliographies, and so on. This is probably what scientific methodology meant to them.²

Muḥib al-Dīn al-Khatīb said:

Those who received a foreign education are controlled by the illusion

1 Muḥammad Ṣāmil: *Manhaj Kitābat al-Tāriḫ al-Islāmī*, p. 502

2 *ibid.*

that they are disconnected from that past, and their attitude towards its figures is like that of a public attorney towards the accused. Indeed, some of them even went to extremes to appear in front of others as if they had no connection with any part of Arab and Muslim history, following in the footsteps of the Orientalists with their suspicious views of the past. They have a sense of contentment and follow their whims and desires, at the time when fairness dictates that they should verify the matter, in order to reach a conclusion and feel at ease with it before they have enough evidence to prove it.¹

One of the most important means by which the Orientalists and their students sought to distort the facts of Islamic history are:

Misinterpreting historical events on the basis of modern concepts and ideas and in accordance with whatever crossed their minds, without even verifying the historical events in the first place and without paying any attention to the historical context in which the event took place, the people's circumstances at that time, or the beliefs that were guiding them and that they were following. Before discussing any event, it is essential to first verify that it took place; the fact that it is mentioned in some book is not sufficient to prove it.² The stage of verifying precedes the stage of discussing and interpreting historical events.

The interpretation should also be in accordance with the wording of the historical report, as well as the context of the research and the general nature of the society, era and environment in which the event took place. This interpretation of the historical event should not contradict another incident or series of incidents that are proven to have happened.

Examination of an event should not be limited to one aspect only, as is the habit of many contemporary schools of thought when studying history; instead, all

1 *al-Maṣādir al-Ūla li Tārīkhinā, Majallat al-Azhar*, 1374 A.H

2 *Manhaj Kitābat al-Tārīkh al-Islāmī*, p. 504

the factors that have an impact on the event should be scrutinised, especially ideological and intellectual factors. Even after paying attention to all of the above, the interpretation of historical events is no more than a human effort, which may be right or wrong. Some have given prominence to the history of misguided groups and tried to exaggerate their role, depicting them as reformers who were wronged or oppressed.

They have tried to suggest that Muslim historians were unfair to groups like the Qarāmitah, Isma'īlī, Imāmī Rāfiḍah, Fātimids, Zanj, Ikhwān al-Ṣafa and the Khawārij. In the view of these historians, all of these groups were advocates of reform, justice, freedom and equality, and their uprisings were aimed at putting an end to injustice and oppression.

This propaganda against Islamic history, and trying to crowd out the biographies of heroes and callers to Islam with the biographies of the leaders of misguided groups, is something that comes as no surprise from people who are not Muslims, because they are motivated by their own beliefs and aims to plot against Islam with all possible efforts by night and day, in secret and openly. One cannot expect people who have no faith and who belong to the disbelieving groups to do anything other than to support their brothers in misguidance.

What some may find strange however is that after the collapse of Orientalism, the banner of distortion was taken up by writers who have Muslim names and are Muslims, who tried to spread this poison among their fellow Muslims so as to divert the ignorant away from the straight path. These writers rely on dubious, weak, worthless reports which they pick up from literature, fairy stories, folktales and weak or falsely attributed books.

These books are what they use as proof, along with what they find of fabricated reports in al-Ṭabarī and al-Mas'ūdī; even though they know that they are not regarded as reliable academic references. This transgression against and distortion of Islamic history - especially the history of the early generations - has been done by a number of means, namely:

- a. Choosing and focusing on particular events, such as battles and wars, and depicting them incorrectly so as to take away the idea of jihad for the sake of Allah, or focusing on events and internal turmoil with the aim of presenting the dispute among the Ṣaḥābah رضي الله عنهم as if it were a typical example of conflict and political scheming like those of modern times.
- b. Concealing and ignoring everything that could set a good example and motivate people.
- c. Shedding doubt by targeting history and its celebrated figures, as well as the Muslim historians themselves, and casting aspersions on their knowledge and authenticity.
- d. Fragmenting Islamic history into small, disparate parts as if there is no connection between them, such as dividing Islamic history on the basis of regions, race and so on.

All of these means are attempts to destroy our Islamic history and its beautiful features, and to prevent it from becoming a good example to follow and a means of sound education.

Hence the Muslim historians have to know about these things and be wary of them. They should also be aware of those who followed the Orientalists in their views and methodology, and they should not accept anything from them except with great caution.

If our scholars رحمهم الله criticise many narrators of history and regard their reports as weak because they quote from the People of the Book and their Jewish and Christian sources, then we should be equally cautious in accepting the views and interpretations of those who learned from the Orientalists. As a matter of fact, we should reject and disregard them unless there is clear proof to support them.¹

¹ *Manhaj Kitābat al-Tārīkh al-Islāmī*, p. 507