

# Saqīfah Banī Sā'idah

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## Transliteration key

أ - 'ā	ض - ḍ
آ - ā	ط - ṭ
ب - b	ظ - ḏ
ت - t	ع - 'a
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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## Saqīfah Banī Sā'idah

### Allegation

The Shī'ah claim [Quote], “Abū Bakr and ‘Umar conspired to steal the Khilāfah from Imām ‘Alī عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ. After Rasūlullāh’s صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ death, these two fools rushed to Saqīfah in order to quickly bring Abū Bakr to power in a coup d’état against the Ahl al-Bayt. Meanwhile, Imām ‘Alī عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ was unable to attend the meeting in Saqīfah because he was too busy attending the funeral of Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. Yet, Abū Bakr and ‘Umar did not even have the decency to attend Rasūlullāh’s صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ funeral and instead were so greedy that they used that time to declare Abū Bakr the Khalīfah.

How can you follow such people who are so greedy and power hungry that they did not even attend the funeral of Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ and instead used that time to aggrandize themselves?”

### Answer

The matter was not at all as the Shī'ah claim. Abū Bakr and ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا did not at all intend to steal the Khilāfah, nor did they miss Rasūlullāh’s صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ funeral. Let us give a detailed account of the sequence of events that exonerate them from all blame.

### Grief over Rasūlullāh’s صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ Death

Rasūlullāh’s صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ death sent shock waves of grief throughout the Muslim Ummah.

The tragic news (of Rasūlullāh’s صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ death) was soon known by everybody in Madīnah. Dark grief spread on all areas and horizons of Madīnah ... ‘Umar was so stunned (by grief) that he almost lost consciousness.<sup>1</sup>

The Shī'ah often bring up ‘Umar’s رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ denial as some sort of proof against him. If anything, it serves as strong proof that ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ loved Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ so deeply that he could not face the loss of his beloved. It was in the first stage of

<sup>1</sup> Al-Raḥīq al-Makhtūm, pg. 559.

grief that ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ reportedly said in a state of great emotion:

By Allah, he (Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) is not dead but has gone to his Lord as Mūsā ibn ‘Imrān went and remained hidden from his people for forty days. Mūsā returned after it was said that he had died. By Allah, the Messenger of Allah will (likewise) come back and he will cut off the hands and legs of those who claim his death.<sup>1</sup>

As for Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, he was in his home when he heard of Rasūlullāh’s صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ death. Upon hearing this tragic news, he immediately hastened towards Rasūlullāh’s صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ Masjid.

Abū Bakr came from his house at al-Sunḥ on a horse. He dismounted and entered the (Prophet’s) Masjid, but did not speak to the people until he entered upon ‘Ā’ishah and went straight to Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ who was covered with ḥibarah cloth (i.e. a kind of Yemeni cloth). He uncovered Rasūlullāh’s صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ face, bowed over him, kissed him and wept, saying, “Let my father be sacrificed for you.”<sup>2</sup>

The ḥadīth states, “Abū Bakr kissed Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ after his death.”<sup>3</sup>

Quite contrary to the callous and diabolic view that the Shī’ah are portraying, Abū Bakr’s رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ first action was not at all to rush for the Khilāfah. Rather, he made haste to see Rasūlullāh’s صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ first. Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was so deeply affected by Rasūlullāh’s صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ death that he broke down in tears whilst kissing Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ then reassured the Muslims:

أما بعد فمن كان منكم يعبد محمدا صلى الله عليه وسلم فإن محمدا صلى الله عليه  
وسلم قد مات ومن كان يعبد الله فإن الله حي لا يموت قال الله تعالى وما محمد  
إلا رسول إلى الشاكرين

To proceed, if anyone of you worshipped Muḥammad, then Muḥammad has passed away, but if (anyone of you) worshipped Allah, then Allah is Alive and shall never die! Allah said: “Muḥammad is no more than a Messenger...

1 *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 9, pg. 184.

2 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ḥadīth: 1242.

3 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ḥadīth: 4457.

Allah will reward those who are thankful.”<sup>12</sup>

Ibn ‘Abbās رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا commented:

والله لكأن الناس لم يكونوا يعلمون أن الله أنزل حتى تلاها أبو بكر رضي الله عنه  
فتلقاها منه الناس فما يسمع بشر إلا يتلوها

By Allah, it was as if the people never knew that Allah revealed this verse until Abū Bakr recited it and all the people received it from him, and I heard everybody reciting it (then).<sup>3</sup>

‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ said:

والله ما هو إلا أن سمعت أبا بكر تلاها أهويت إلى الأرض حين سمعته تلاها أن  
النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قد مات

By Allah, when I heard Abū Bakr reciting it, my legs could not support me and I fell down the very moment I heard him reciting it, declaring that Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ had passed away.<sup>4</sup>

So great was ‘Umar’s رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ love for Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ that he fell down in grief when Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ made him come to terms with the reality.

## News of a National Emergency

Abū Bakr and ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا stayed by Rasūlullāh’s صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ body. After some time, Mughīrah ibn Shu‘bah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ approached ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and notified him of an impending emergency.

It is related by ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ that as they were seated in Rasūlullāh’s صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ house, a man cried out all of a sudden from outside: “O Son of Khaṭṭāb (i.e. ‘Umar), please step out for a moment.” ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ told him to leave them alone and go away as they were busy in making arrangements for the burial of Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. The man explained that something of importance is happening currently: the Anṣār are gathering in force at Saqīfah Banī

1 Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān: 144.

2 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ḥadīth: 1242.

3 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ḥadīth: 1242.

4 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ḥadīth: 4453.

Sā'idah. As the situation was grave, it was necessary that 'Umar رضي الله عنه go and look into the matter lest the Anṣār do something which would lead to (civil) war. Upon this, 'Umar said to Abū Bakr, "Let us go."<sup>1</sup>

We see that the matter was not at all as the Shī'ah like to portray. Abū Bakr and 'Umar رضي الله عنهما were devastated by Rasūlullāh's صلى الله عليه وسلم death and they wanted very much to stay with Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم. In fact, 'Umar رضي الله عنه told the man to leave them alone and go away as they were busy arranging the burial of Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم. 'Umar رضي الله عنه was only convinced when the man said that the Anṣār were about to do something that would lead to a civil war. Likewise, when 'Umar رضي الله عنه first informed Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه that they must head out towards Saqīfah, Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه refused to come out and disregarded 'Umar رضي الله عنه. It was only when Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه was convinced of the dire situation that he was able to pull himself away from Rasūlullāh's صلى الله عليه وسلم side.

'Umar learned of this (i.e. the gathering of the Anṣār at Saqīfah). He sent a message to Abū Bakr to come to him. Abū Bakr sent back (a message) that he was occupied (i.e. with caring for Rasūlullāh's صلى الله عليه وسلم body), but 'Umar sent him another message, saying, "Something has happened that you must attend to personally." So he (Abū Bakr) came out to him ...<sup>2</sup>

Abū Bakr and 'Umar رضي الله عنهما very much wanted to stay with Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم throughout his funeral, and they were only persuaded to come out because of the warnings of a third man who implored them to save the Ummah from civil war. It was this precarious situation that Abū Bakr and 'Umar رضي الله عنهما sought to diffuse. We read:

(The) Anṣār said, "In case they reject our Khalīfah, we shall drive them out from Madīnah at the point of our swords." However, the few Muhājirīn in the assembly protested against this attitude and this led to a dispute and disorder of a serious nature and a war between the Muhājirīn and Anṣār seemed possible. When the situation took this ugly turn, Mughīrah ibn Shu'bah left the trouble spot and came to Rasūlullāh's صلى الله عليه وسلم Masjid to relate what was going on in Saqīfah Banī Sā'idah.<sup>3</sup>

1 'Allāmah Shiblī Nu'mānī: *al-Firaq*, vol. 1, pg. 87.

2 *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 10, pg. 3.

3 *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 1, pg. 273-274.

Sometimes, the Shī'ah fail to realise (or rather, insist on not understanding) how volatile the situation was. The Anṣār were ready to elect their own man and fight those who rejected their leader. Abū Bakr and 'Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا therefore went as peacemakers and conflict resolvers, to prevent the Anṣār from placing themselves at loggerheads with the rest of Arabia.

The Anṣār were about to nominate Sa'd ibn 'Ubādah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ as Khalīfah. If Sa'd رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ were to declare his Khilāfah, the Muhājirīn would protest his nomination. The Muhājirīn would then rush to nominate their own Khalīfah, and the Ummah would be splintered into two rivalling nation-states.

Furthermore, if the Anṣār declared their own Khilāfah, nothing would prevent other tribes—not only the Makkans but others—from declaring their own leaders, which would result in a civil war between all the rivalling claimants to the Khilāfah. When Abū Bakr and 'Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا set out for Saqīfah, they did so with no intention of seeking the Khilāfah for themselves but rather only to prevent the Anṣār from doing so by force. Abū Bakr and 'Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا went as peacekeepers in order to calm the situation down.

Abū Bakr and 'Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا took along with them Abu 'Ubaydah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, another Muhājir. These three Ṣaḥābah were from amongst the ten Companions promised Jannah by Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, and it was hoped that the influence of these three great personalities could avert a civil war and potential disaster. In times of national crisis, the leaders of a country must be strong and steadfast in order to deal with pressing matters of state, and they cannot allow personal woes and feelings to hamper or hinder their effectiveness. If Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ were alive, he would not want Abū Bakr and 'Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا to delay. He would indeed want them to act swiftly to save the Muslim Ummah, which would be the best way to honour the memory of Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ.

So the two of them (Abū Bakr and 'Umar) hurried toward them (the Anṣār). They met Abu 'Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrāḥ (on the way), and the three of them marched towards them (the Anṣār).<sup>1</sup>

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1 *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 10, pg. 3.

‘Umar رضي الله عنه said:

I told Abū Bakr that we should go to our brothers, the Anṣār, so we set off towards them, when two honest fellows met us (on the way) and told us of the conclusion the people (the Anṣār) had come to. The two asked us where we were heading, and when we told them, they said that there was no need for us to approach them and we must make our own decision (i.e. elect our own Muhājir Khalīfah).<sup>1</sup>

What they meant by this was what one of the Anṣār suggested:

Let us have a leader from ourselves, and you (Quraysh) a leader from yourselves.<sup>2</sup>

Of course, Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, and Abu ‘Ubaydah (ram) were wise enough to know that this would reduce the Muslim union into nothing but disjointed and warring fiefdoms led by rivalling warlords. Abū Bakr and ‘Umar رضي الله عنهما would in their respective Khilāfahs transform the Muslim state into a powerful empire that would propel the Muslims to greatness. These two men not only saved Islam from extinction (i.e. at Saqīfah) but also expanded the Islamic world far and wide, ensuring a unified and stable Muslim empire, an accomplishment for which all Muslims worldwide should thank them.

### Abū Bakr did not Desire Khilāfah

It should be noted that ‘Umar رضي الله عنه mentioned in detail during his Khilāfah that Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه went to Saqīfah only in order to caution the Anṣār against taking any action that would spark a civil war. When Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه left for Saqīfah, he had no intention whatsoever of becoming Khalīfah. Had this been the case, surely Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه would have brought along more than two of his supporters. If what the Shī‘ah portray is true, then should not Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه have brought with him a whole mass of his supporters and friends? Instead, he went with only two Companions to a large group of the Anṣār. At Saqīfah, there were thus only three Muhājirīn who were far outnumbered by the Anṣār. This would be a less than ideal situation for a Muhājir like Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه. Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه would have

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1 Ibn Ishāq, *Sīrat Rasūlillāh*, pg. 685

2 *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 10, pg. 3.

only two supporters whereas Sa'd ibn 'Ubādah رضي الله عنه had a whole gathering of Anṣār to back him. Common sense dictates that if Abū Bakr and 'Umar رضي الله عنهما had conspired to take the Khilāfah for themselves, then surely they would have brought along with them more Muhājir friends.

This fact cannot be stressed enough, as it completely vindicates Abū Bakr and 'Umar رضي الله عنهما of all suspicion. These two men were so unaware of such a happening that they went to Saqīfah with no more than one man with them! Had they desired to take the Khilāfah, what prevented them from taking along with them a strong group of their supporters? Why did they not take along 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān رضي الله عنه, Khālīd ibn al-Walīd رضي الله عنه, Mu'āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān رضي الله عنه, etc.? If this was a coup d'état as the Shī'ah claim, then it had to be the worst planned operation ever in the history of humanity. The Anṣār were the great majority at Saqīfah and they were ready to pledge Bay'ah to one of their own men. If Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه wanted to further his own claim to the Khilāfah, he should have brought enough of his supporters to overwhelm the Anṣār. Instead, he came with only two Companions. Indeed, it was not a grab for power at all, but rather Abū Bakr, 'Umar, and Abu 'Ubaydah (ram) set out only to counsel the Anṣār, hoping that their veteran status would set right the Anṣār.

### Why 'Alī رضي الله عنه remained behind

Abū Bakr and 'Umar رضي الله عنهما did not take along 'Alī رضي الله عنه and Zubayr رضي الله عنه because they were immediate relatives of Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم and it would not be fitting to bother them with such a matter during their time of grief. We read in an authentic hadīth:

A person's family and relatives are the ones responsible for arranging his burial.<sup>1</sup>

Al-Ṭabarī highlights:

Now 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib was busy preparing the Messenger (for burial), so 'Umar sent a message to Abū Bakr (instead)...<sup>2</sup>

1 *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, vol. 2, pg. 102.

2 *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 10, pg. 3.

We read further:

(They) left ‘Alī and other (close relatives) to arrange the burial of Rasūlullāh  
 صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ.<sup>1</sup>

The reality is that it is not right to complain about how ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ was not taken along to Saqīfah. How can anyone complain of this when Abū Bakr and ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمَا did not even bring along their closest friends and supporters? Abū Bakr and ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمَا did not find the need to bring along ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ—or any of the other Muhājir Ṣaḥābah for that matter—because they had no idea whatsoever that an election would take place.

### Practical and Socio-Political Issues

In the times of Jāhiliyyah before the advent of Islam, Arabia consisted of various independent and sovereign city-states. Although they were not united as one nation, the Arabs did nonetheless recognize Makkah as the centre and helm of Arabia. The Quraysh of Makkah had become very powerful and influential due to the fact that they took care of the Ka’bah. The Arabs from all over would pay the Quraysh to have them house their gods. Because of this special honour, the Quraysh of Makkah were generally honoured by all the other tribes. Meanwhile, whereas the sanctuary in Makkah was off limits to fighting and warfare, the rest of Pre-Islamic Arabia was steeped in violence from incessant tribal warfare and in-fighting.

This changed with the advent of the Prophet Muḥammad صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ who united all the various tribes together under the banner of Islam. Rasūlullāh’s صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ powerful personality brought peace to the warring factions. First, Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ united the Aws and the Khazraj of Yathrib (i.e. Madīnah), who had been locked into a hundred year long war. These two tribes agreed to make Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ their arbiter and broker of peace. This unity between the Aws and Khazraj bolstered the strength and prestige of Madīnah in the eyes of Arabia. Even so, the various tribes of Arabia still recognised the Quraysh of Makkah to be the leaders of Arabia. When the Quraysh polytheists declared a state of hostility

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1 *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 1, pg. 274.

with Madīnah, the rest of Arabia joined suite and collectively came to be known as the Confederates.

It was based on this situation that Rasūlullāh ﷺ and the Ṣaḥābah (ram) realised that Makkah was the key to ruling Arabia. Until Makkah was not conquered, the Muslims would never be recognised as the leaders of Arabia. For this reason, the Muslim armies marched out against Makkah and conquered it. As soon as Makkah was converted to a land of Islam, the tribes all over Arabia paid tribute to the supremacy of the Islamic State. Tribe after tribe then converted to Islam, and the Muslims were recognised as the new leaders of Arabia. It was only after Makkah was conquered by the Muslims—and the tribe of Quraysh, the unwritten leaders of Arabia, converted en masse to Islam—were the people of Arabia willing to accept the supremacy of Islam under the leadership of a Prophet from the tribe of Quraysh. We read:

The conquest of Makkah was considered the most serious advantage achieved by Muslims during those years, for it affected the course of events and consequently affected the Arabs' whole life [sic]...for the tribe of Quraysh, at that time, were in the eyes of Arabs the defenders and helpers of (all of the) Arabs. Other Arabs were only (considered) their subordinates. The submission of the Quraysh (to Islam) is therefore estimated to be a final elimination of paganism in the Arabian Peninsula... (after which) people began to convert to Islam in very large numbers.<sup>1</sup>

We read further:

The destruction of idols installed in the Ka'bah meant the destruction of the idols all over Arabia. Likewise, the entry of the Quraysh into Islam implied the whole of Arabia coming to the fold of Islam, for all eyes were fixed on the Quraysh of Makkah to see whether they accepted Islam or not.<sup>2</sup>

The Anṣār of Madīnah were intending to declare themselves the leaders of the Muslim state, and this is how the gathering at Saqīfah began. There was a great fear that if the Anṣār declared their own man to be the Khalīfah, then the tribes of Arabia would reject them, as being inferior and unfit to rule. Most of

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1 *Al-Raḥīq al-Makhtūm*, pg. 474.

2 *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 1, pg. 223-224

these tribes had converted to Islam after the conquest of Makkah. Before the Islamic conquest of Makkah, these Arab tribes had submitted to the leadership of the Makkan Quraysh; after the Islamic conquest of Makkah, these Arab tribes continued to submit to the same Makkan Quraysh who were now Muslim. If, however, the leadership were to suddenly switch to Madīnah—and if the Anṣār declared their own man to be Khalīfah—then nothing prevented these other Arab tribes from similarly declaring their own leaders. The Anṣār themselves knew this and they were satisfied with this idea that every tribe have their own leader, but Abū Bakr and ‘Umar رضي الله عنهما knew that this would be unacceptable for the Muslims to become disunited after they had been once united under the banner of Islam. Allah Almighty says:

And hold fast, all of you together, by the Rope of Allah and be not divided amongst yourselves.<sup>1</sup>

Worse still was the fact that after Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم’s death, many of the new converts to Islam apostatised.

It was in this precarious situation that the Ummah needed a strong and capable leader to replace Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم quickly before the various groups split apart in complete disarray and utter chaos. It was in this atmosphere that the people needed to declare a Khalīfah post-haste in order to quell any rebellion. We read:

‘Āmir asked, “When was the oath of allegiance given to Abū Bakr?”

“The very day the Messenger of Allah died,” he (Sa‘īd) replied, “People disliked to be left even part of the day without being organized into a community (Jamā‘ah).”<sup>2</sup>

And this new leader could not at all come from a weak and unpopular tribe, because the Arabians would definitely not have accepted him as a leader. Such a thing would have resulted in all out rebellion and collapse of the Muslim union. What the Muslims needed was a candidate from a powerful and popular tribe with mass appeal that could secure the vote from all of the other tribes.

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1 Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān: ١٠٣.

2 *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 9 pg. 195

## Sequence of Events at Saqīfah

After Rasūlullāh's ﷺ death, the Anṣār had gathered at Saqīfah and were intending on nominating their own man as Khalīfah, namely Sa'd ibn 'Ubādah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ. We read:

Being informed of the proceedings of the Anṣār, Abū Bakr, 'Umar, and Abu 'Ubaydah hastened to the meeting place and were there just in time to interrupt the finalisation of the Anṣār's choice of Sa'd ibn 'Ubādah to the successorship of Rasūlullāh ﷺ.<sup>1</sup>

Sa'd ibn 'Ubādah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ conveyed the following message to his fellow Anṣār:

Company of the Anṣār! You have precedence in religion and merit in Islam that no other tribe of the Arabs can claim. Muḥammad remained ten-odd years in his tribe, calling them to worship the Merciful and to cast off idols and graven images, but only a few men of his tribe believed in him, and they were able neither to protect the Apostle of Allah, nor to render his religion strong, nor to divert from themselves the oppression that befell them all.

Until, when He intended excellence for you (O Anṣār); He sent nobility to you and distinguished you with grace. Thus, Allah bestowed upon you faith in Him and in His Apostle, and protection for him and his Companions, and strength for him and his faith, and Jihād against his enemies. You (O Anṣār) were the most severe people against his enemies who were not from among you, so that the Arabs became upright in Allah's Cause, willingly or unwillingly. Through you (O Anṣār), Allah made great slaughter (of the infidels) in the earth for His Apostle, and your swords (O Anṣār) abased the Arabs for him. When Allah took (Rasūlullāh ﷺ) to Himself, he was pleased with you (O Anṣār) and consoled by you.

So keep control of this matter (i.e. the Khilāfah) to yourselves, to the exclusion of others, for it is yours and yours alone.<sup>2</sup>

After the Anṣār expressed this, 'Umar رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ was ready to respond. However, Abū

1 *A Short History of Islam*, pg. 57.

2 *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 10 pg. 2.

Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ refrained him and advocated a more conciliatory tone.

In a situation packed with confusion, disorder, anger, and emotion, only a man like Abū Bakr could do what was necessary. When ‘Umar attempted to say something, Abū Bakr put a check on him for he knew that the emotionally charged ‘Umar could mishandle the already deteriorating situation. Abū Bakr himself rose to speak.<sup>1</sup>

Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ said:

O Anṣār! You deserve all the qualities that you have attributed to yourselves, but this question (of Khilāfah) is only for the Quraysh.<sup>2</sup>

Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ explained:

(O Anṣār) you are our brethren in Islam and our partners in religion...but the Arabs will not submit themselves except to this clan of Quraysh. We (the Quraysh) are in the centre among the Muslims with respect to our position.<sup>3</sup>

Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ reminded the Anṣār that the leader should be from the Quraysh because they commanded the political authority of all of Arabia. Indeed, had the Arabs back then had a sophisticated system of polling and voting, the Arabs of the peninsula would have voted for the Quraysh to be the leaders, not the Anṣār. Therefore, based on the principles of self-determination and popular sovereignty, the leader of the Muslims should be from the Quraysh (i.e. Muhājirīn). ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ warned the Anṣār, “The rest of Arabia would never accept a non-Quraysh (leader).”

The Anṣār responded by extolling their own virtues and attempted to use this as evidence of their right to Khilāfah. To counter this, the three Muhājirīn reminded them that the Muhājirīn also had many qualities and accomplishments. Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ said:

(We were) the first on earth to worship Allah (in Islam) and we were the

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1 *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 1 pg. 274.

2 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ḥadīth: 6830; *Musnad Aḥmad*, Ḥadīth: 391.

3 *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 9 pg. 193.

patrons (of Rasūlullāh ﷺ) and the supporting group of Rasūlullāh ﷺ. (It is we) who tolerated (great suffering) and suffered with him (through many) adversities.<sup>1</sup>

The Anṣār had praised themselves, using this as a proof for their Khilāfah. However, the truth of the matter was that the Muhājirīn were the most senior in rank amongst the Muslims. The Muhājirīn were the first ones to stand up for Islam. After Rasūlullāh ﷺ declared Islam in the land, the Muhājirīn were the next after him to do so. The Muhājirīn were turned out by their own people and who emigrated in the Path of Allah. Therefore, if anyone deserved the Khilāfah based upon merit and service for Islam, then the Muhājirīn took precedence in greatness over the Anṣār. Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ said:

Now the Arabs found it most distressing that they should leave the religion of their forefathers; so from among his (Rasūlullāh's ﷺ) tribe Allah singled out the first Muhājirīn, by having them affirm that he spoke the truth and by their belief in him, and consoling him and enduring patiently with him the harsh insults their tribe (directed) against them and (their tribe), calling them liars. All the people were opposed (to the Muhājirīn) and rebuked them; but they were not distressed by their small numbers or by (the people's) single-minded opposition to them, for they were the first who worshipped Allah on the earth and who believed in Allah and the Apostle.

O company of the Anṣār, your superiority in religion and great precedence in Islam are undeniable. May Allah be satisfied with you as Helpers (Anṣār) for His religion and His Apostle. He made his Hijrah to you, so—after the Muhājirīn—there is no one among us who is in your station. We (the Muhājirīn) are the leaders, and you (Anṣār) are the helpers; matters shall not be settled without consultation, nor shall we decide on them without you.”<sup>2</sup>

Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ explained that although he himself was well aware of the Anṣār's greatness, it was the Quraysh who commanded the popularity of the masses of Arabia. It would not be justice for a less popular candidate to rule over a country,

1 *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 3 pg. 219.

2 *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 10 pg. 4-5.

one who did not command the confidence of the masses. A man must have the acceptance and Bay‘ah of the people in order to become Khalīfah. While the Anṣār may have secured the vote and support of many in Madīnah, they would not be able to do so in any other part of Arabia. These other Arab tribes would then demand the Khilāfah for themselves and thereby break away from the Muslim union. Therefore, in order to prevent this scenario, a leader must be chosen from a group that had the acceptance of the masses of Arabia, and this could only be a man from the Quraysh. Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه explained:

The people of Arabia are not aware of anyone’s political leadership except that of the Quraysh.<sup>1</sup>

Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه then clarified:

Allah is my witness that we are not pressing the claim of the Quraysh because of any selfish interest. The proposal is prompted in the interest of the solidarity of Islam (i.e. to maintain unity and prevent civil war). To give you a proof of our sincerity, I declare before you that I do not covet the office. Here are ‘Umar and Abu ‘Ubaydah. You may choose any one of these.<sup>2</sup>

Ibn Ishāq narrates it as follows:

He (Abū Bakr) said: “All the good that you have said about yourselves (O Anṣār) is deserved. Nevertheless, the Arabs will recognise authority only in this clan of Quraysh, they being (considered) the best of the Arabs in blood and country. I offer you one of these two men (‘Umar and Abu ‘Ubaydah); accept whom you please.<sup>3</sup>

The Anṣār made their counter-offer, saying:

O Quraysh. There should be one ruler from us and one from you.<sup>4</sup>

Of course, this was an unacceptable solution to the problem, because nothing would prevent the other tribes from similarly demanding that they each get to

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1 *Musnad Aḥmad*, vol. 1 pg. 56.

2 *Khalīfah ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb*, chapter on the Death of Rasūlullāh.

3 Ibn Ishāq, *Sīrat Rasūlillāh*.

4 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ḥadīth: 3668.

nominate their own Khalīfah. If this were to happen, the Muslim union would dissolve into various small and competing emirates. Not only this, but Rasūlullāh ﷺ never sanctioned the idea of having more than one leader, something which would create confusion and disarray. Therefore, ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ rebuffed this offer, saying:

How preposterous! Two swords cannot be accommodated in one sheath. By Allah, the Arabs will never accept your rule...<sup>1</sup>

The Anṣār and Muhājirīn fell into argumentation. Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ reminded them of Rasūlullāh’s ﷺ declaration:

يا سعد أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال وأنت قاعد قريش ولاة هذا الأمر فبر  
الناس تبع لبرهم وفاجرهم تبع لفاجرهم

O Sa’d (ibn ‘Ubādah)! You know very well that Rasūlullāh ﷺ had said in your presence that the Quraysh shall be given the Khilāfah because the noble among the Arab (masses) follow their (Quraysh) nobles and their ignoble follow their (Quraysh) ignoble.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, the Anṣār assented and said:

صدقنا نحن الوزراء وأنتم الأمراء

What you say is correct: we are your advisors and you are our rulers.<sup>3</sup>

Then Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ repeated his proposal, asking the Anṣār to accept either ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ or Abu ‘Ubaydah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ as their next leader. We read:

Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq said, “‘Umar and Abu ‘Ubaydah are here: choose any one of them.”

‘Umar said, “No! Abū Bakr is the most excellent amongst the Muhājirīn. He has been the Companion of Rasūlullāh ﷺ in the cave [as mentioned in the Qur’ān]; Rasūlullāh ﷺ asked him to be the Imām to lead the prayers, and prayer is the most superior of all other articles of faith.

1 *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 9 pg. 194.

2 *Musnad Aḥmad*, Ḥadīth: 18.

3 *Musnad Aḥmad*, Ḥadīth: 18.

Therefore, none (neither I nor Abu ‘Ubaydah) is entitled to assume the duties of the Khilāfah in the presence of Abū Bakr.”

Saying this, ‘Umar stretched his hand first to take Bay‘ah (oath of allegiance) at the hand of Abū Bakr Ṣiddīq followed by Abū ‘Ubaydah and Bashīr ibn Sa‘d Anṣārī. After that, the people of all sides of Abū Bakr came to take Bay‘ah. As the news spread, all the believers rushed to pledge their allegiance to the Khalīfah.<sup>1</sup>

We see the qualities of a leader in the modest way Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه sought not the Khilāfah but rather asks the Muslims to choose between ‘Umar رضي الله عنه and Abu ‘Ubaydah رضي الله عنه. Meanwhile, ‘Umar رضي الله عنه rejects the Khilāfah himself, saying that Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه is more deserving of it. In addition, Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه is so modest that he says in his inauguration speech that, “I have been chosen as your chief, although I am better than none of you,”<sup>2</sup> despite the fact everyone else knew that Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه was the most worthy! We can clearly see that neither Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه nor ‘Umar رضي الله عنه desired the Khilāfah for himself and neither furthered their own cause.

It was in this manner that Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه became the first Khalīfah of the Muslims. Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه did not seek the Khilāfah let alone steal it from ‘Alī رضي الله عنه. The Anṣār were the cause of the gathering. Abū Bakr and ‘Umar رضي الله عنه were forced to proceed to Saqīfah in order to prevent a civil war. The election of Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه was something unpremeditated and purely spontaneous. To this effect, ‘Umar رضي الله عنه said:

The pledge of allegiance given to Abū Bakr was an un-premeditated spontaneous affair that was (then only later) ratified.<sup>3</sup>

### Why was the Bay‘ah not Delayed?

Some people might ask: Why did not Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, or Abu ‘Ubaydah رضي الله عنه suggest delaying the nomination of the Khalīfah until all of the Muhājirīn (such as ‘Alī) could be summoned? ‘Umar رضي الله عنه himself explained the reason:

1 *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 1 pg. 275.

2 *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 1 pg. 276.

3 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ḥadīth: 6830; *Musnad Aḥmad*, Ḥadīth: 391.

Because we were afraid that if we left the people (without rendering the oath of allegiance), they might (in our absence) give the pledge of allegiance after us to one of their men.<sup>1</sup>

In a slightly different version, ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ explained:

خشينا إن فارقنا القوم ولم تكن بيعة أن يحدثوا بعدنا بيعة فإما أن نتابعهم على ما لا نرضى وإما أن نخالفهم فيكون فيه فساد

We feared that if we left (without rendering the oath of allegiance), no agreement would be hammered out (with the Anṣār) later. (And if they then elected one of their own men) it was either to follow the Anṣār in what we did not approve of (i.e. disobey Rasūlullāh’s صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ words), or else oppose them (i.e. with the sword), which would have led to disorder (fasād).<sup>2</sup>

Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ would later say to ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ:

Had I delayed the matter, it would have posed a greater danger to the unity, integrity, and solidarity of Islam. How could I send for you when there was no time?<sup>3</sup>

When Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, and Abu ‘Ubaydah (ram) arrived at Saqīfah, the Anṣār were only moments away from nominating Sa’d ibn ‘Ubādah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ. The three Muhājirīn were able to stop the Anṣār from doing that but only momentarily, and if they left without first securing the Bay‘ah, they feared that the Anṣār would once again proceed to elect their own man. However, when the Anṣār gave their Bay‘ah to Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, this was the Anṣār taking a strong oath that would prevent them from nominating any of their own men. Therefore, it is clear that the Bay‘ah to Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was rushed in order to prevent double-mindedness on the part of the Anṣār. It was less than ideal, as expressed by ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ himself, but it was born out of dire necessity and it was only with the Grace of Allah Almighty that it worked out.

1 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ḥadīth: 6830; *Musnad Aḥmad*, Ḥadīth: 391.

2 *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 9 pg. 194; *Musnad Aḥmad*, Ḥadīth: 391.

3 *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 1 pg. 276.

## Sa'd ibn 'Ubādah

Certain fabricated and weak narrations indicate that there was a serious crisis and power struggle that occurred in the courtyard of the Banū Sā'idah. Based on authentic narrations, however, we know that no crisis or power struggle took place; rather, in a very short span of time everyone came to a unanimous agreement that Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ should become the Leader of the Believers. So in spite of what is claimed in certain false narrations, Sa'd bin 'Ubādah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was among the first to pledge allegiance to Abū Bakr. Yes, it is true that, prior the arrival of Abū Bakr and 'Umar to the courtyard of Banū Sā'idah, Sa'd did indicate that he should be appointed ruler of the Muslim nation. However, no sooner did Abū Bakr remind him of what Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said about the matter that Sa'd رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ yielded and said, "You are the leaders, and we are your ministers."

Some historians paint an unfair and dark picture of Sa'd ibn 'Ubādah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, claiming that he plotted against the Muhājirīn to prevent them from taking away his right to the Khilāfah. The claims such historians make are founded upon accounts that are not only fabricated, but also contradict Sa'd's رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ past and lifelong dedication to the cause of Islam.

To be sure, Sa'd رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was among the best of Rasūlullāh's صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ Companions. He participated in the Second Pledge of al-'Aqabah; he was perhaps the sole native inhabitant of Madīnah that was tortured in Makkah because of his beliefs; he took part in the Battle of Badr; and he was a paragon of generosity and righteousness. Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ depended on his counsel as well as the counsel of Sa'd ibn Mu'ādh رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ during the Battle of Khandaq, and with the counsel they gave Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, they both proved their willingness to make sacrifices for the cause of Islam. It is inconceivable that a man with such a past could have had rekindled feelings of xenophobic tribalism, resenting the fact that the leader of all believers was chosen from a different tribe.

The false narrations I am referring to state that, after Abū Bakr became Khalīfah of the Muslim nation, Sa'd رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ refused to pray behind Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, acting as if he was completely withdrawing himself from Muslim society. This is categorically false. It is clearly mentioned in authentic narrations that Sa'd رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ pledged allegiance to Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and that, when Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ said to Sa'd

ﷺ, “And you indeed know, O Sa’d, that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said while you were sitting down (and listening to him), ‘The people of the Quraysh are in charge of this matter (i.e., of the Khilāfah): all righteous people are followers of their righteous people, and all evildoers are followers of their evildoers,” Sa’d replied, “You have spoken the truth. We are your ministers, and you are our leaders.”<sup>1</sup>

One cannot rely on a false narration that smears the reputation of Sa’d ﷺ and ignore many authentic narrations that remind us of the many sacrifices that Sa’d ﷺ made for the cause of Islam. As for the aforementioned false narration, we know that it is false for two main reasons. Firstly, its narrator was one of the people who were subservient to his desires, and the scholars of ḥadīth universally rejected his narrations.<sup>2</sup> Imām al-Dhahabī commented on his narration, “As you can clearly see, its chain is utterly weak.”<sup>3</sup> Secondly, the actual text of the narration contradicts every piece of information we know about Sa’d ibn ‘Ubādah ﷺ regarding his upright character and his lifelong dedication to promoting the cause of Islam.

### Rasūlullāh’s ﷺ Funeral

The Shī‘ah claim that Abū Bakr ﷺ missed Rasūlullāh’s ﷺ funeral. This is not true at all. After he saved the Ummah at Saqīfah, Abū Bakr ﷺ rushed back to help with Rasūlullāh’s ﷺ funeral. In fact, the only thing that Abū Bakr ﷺ missed was washing Rasūlullāh’s ﷺ body, something that is done by the near relatives according to Islamic custom. So we ask the Shī‘ah: What exactly did Abū Bakr ﷺ miss?

Not only did Abū Bakr ﷺ help with the burial, he was actually the one who is credited with deciding where Rasūlullāh ﷺ was to be buried. We read:

The task of washing the body being over, the Companions were divided over the place of burial. Abū Bakr then said, “I have heard from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ that every Prophet is buried at the spot where he has

1 Musnad Aḥmad, Ḥadīth: 18.

2 Imām al-Dhahabī: *Mīzān al-‘tidāl*.

3 *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’*.

breathed his last.” Rasūlullāh’s ﷺ bedding was accordingly removed from the place and a grave was dug for him at the spot.<sup>1</sup>

## General Bay‘ah

The Anṣār and a few of the Muhājirīn had given Bay‘ah to Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ at Saqīfah, but many of the Muslims had not. Therefore, a day after Saqīfah, Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ ascended the pulpit of Rasūlullāh’s ﷺ Masjid and the masses (approximately 33 000 of the Ṣaḥābah) took Bay‘ah at his hand. We read:

After the meeting at Saqīfah Banī Sā‘idah (and) the burial of Rasūlullāh ﷺ, Abū Bakr took the oath of allegiance from the general population and then rose to deliver his (inauguration) address...that was the day when 33 000 Companions pledged their allegiance to Abū Bakr.<sup>2</sup>

This came to be known as the General Bay‘ah. Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ thus became the recognised leader of the Muslim Empire. One is always astonished with the immense modesty of Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, which contrasts sharply with the monarchs and leaders of other empires. Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ said to the people:

I have been chosen as your chief, although I am better than none of you. Thus, if I do good work, it is incumbent on you to extend your help and support me. If I go wrong, it is your duty to put me on the right path. Truth and righteousness are a trust and untruth is a breach of trust. The weak among you are strong to me unless I give them full justice, and the strong among you are weak to me unless I receive what is due from them. Abandon not Jihād. When the people hold back from Jihād, they are put to disgrace. Obey me while I keep obeying Allah and His Messenger; renounce me when I disobey Allah and His Messenger, for obedience to me is not incumbent on you then.<sup>3</sup>

Ultimately, the most modest man of the Muslims became the Khalīfah of the emerging Islamic empire.

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1 *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 1 pg. 246.

2 *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 1 pg. 276.

3 *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 1 pg. 276.

## Superiority of Abū Bakr

33 000 Ṣaḥābah pledged their Bay‘ah to Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ. The Muslim masses recognised the superiority of Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ above all the other Ṣaḥābah, and they came to this conclusion after reflecting on the words of Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ himself. We read in the following ḥadīth narrated by ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ:

So, I came to him (Rasūlullāh) and asked, “Which of the people is dearest to you?”

He said, “‘Ā’ishah.”

I said, “Who among the men?”

He said, “Her father.”<sup>1</sup>

In another ḥadīth, we read:

We regarded Abū Bakr as the best (of the Ṣaḥābah).<sup>2</sup>

It was Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ who was chosen by Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ to be the Imām of the prayers in Rasūlullāh’s صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ sickness, and therefore this is indeed an indication that Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ saw Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ as the most suitable successor. He did not state this directly, because then the people would view this as a religious obligation to be imposed on people, as opposed to the will of the people (as is just). But the people rightfully interpreted it as Rasūlullāh’s صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ vote for Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and it is therefore no surprise that 33 000 Ṣaḥābah pledged Bay‘ah to Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and nobody else.

As for ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, he himself did not view himself superior to Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ. Although ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ may have felt for a small stretch of time that he was more fitted for the Khilāfah, he would reverse this position, evidenced by the sayings of ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ later in life. His son, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyyah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, narrated:

I asked my father, “Whom of the people was the best after the Messenger of Allah?”

1 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ḥadīth: 3662; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Ḥadīth: 2384.

2 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ḥadīth: 3655.

He (‘Alī) answered, “Abū Bakr.”<sup>1</sup>

In another narration, ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ said:

No one is brought to me who regards me as superior to Abū Bakr and ‘Umar but I will execute the punishment of one guilty of false testimony upon him.<sup>2</sup>

Ibn Taymiyyah said:

It was narrated that he (‘Alī) used to speak from the pulpit of Kūfah and say that the best of this Ummah after our Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ was Abū Bakr and then ‘Umar. This was narrated from him via more than eighty chains, and al-Bukhārī and others narrated it.<sup>3</sup>

‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ said:

خير هذه الأمة بعد نبيها أبو بكر

The best of this Ummah after its Prophet is Abū Bakr.<sup>4</sup>

There is no doubt that the most superior of the Ṣaḥābah was Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ. This was the view of Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, the consensus of the Ṣaḥābah, and the position of the rightly guided Ahl al-Sunnah (People of the Sunnah). Therefore, based on this, it was only fitting that Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ be declared the successor of Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ.

Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ determined in his final illness:

يأبى الله والمؤمنون إلا أبابكر

Allah and the Believers rejected (for the khilāfah) except Abū Bakr.<sup>5</sup>

1 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ḥadīth: 3671.

2 *Lisān al-Mizān*, vol. 3 pg. 290.

3 *Minhāj al-Sunnah*, vol. 1 pg. 308.

4 *Musnad Aḥmad*, Ḥadīth: 834.

5 *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Ḥadīth: 2387.

## Shī'ah Account of Saqīfah

Surprisingly, the Shī'ah account of Saqīfah is similar to the Sunnī version. We read:

When Muḥammad died, his daughter, Fāṭimah, her husband, 'Alī, and the rest of the family of Hāshim, gathered around the body preparing it for burial. [A] group (of Anṣār) were gathering in the portico of Banū Sā'idah. It was reported to Abū Bakr that the Anṣār were contemplating pledging their loyalty to Sa'd ibn 'Ubadah, chief of the Khazraj. And so Abū Bakr and his group hurried to the Saqīfah. One of the Anṣār spoke first saying that as the Anṣār had been the ones who supported and gave victory to Islam and since the Makkans were only guests in Madīnah, the leader of the community should be from the Anṣār. Abū Bakr replied to this very diplomatically. He began by praising the virtues of the Anṣār, but then he went on to point out that the Muhājirūn (the Makkans) were the first people in Islam and were closer in kinship to Rasūlullāh ﷺ. The Arabs would accept leadership only from the Quraysh and so Quraysh should be the rulers and the Anṣār their ministers. One of the Anṣār proposed: "Let there be one ruler from us and one ruler from you..." And so the argument went back and forth until Abū Bakr proposed: "Give your allegiance to one of these two men: Abū 'Ubaydah or 'Umar." 'Umar replied, "While you are still alive? No! It is not for anyone to hold you back from the position in which the Apostle placed you. So stretch out your hand." Abū Bakr stretched out his hand and 'Umar gave him his allegiance. One by one, slowly at first, and then rushing forward in a mass, the others did likewise...

Shī'ī sources maintain that 'Alī did not in fact give his allegiance to the new Khalīfah until after Fāṭimah's death, which occurred six months after the death of Rasūlullāh ﷺ.<sup>1</sup>

This is extracted from *An Introduction to Shī'ī Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism*, a book highly praised in Shī'ah circles.

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1 Moojan Momen: *An Introduction to Shī'ī Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism*, pg. 18-20.

## Conclusion

An analysis of the event of Saqīfah Banī Sā‘idah strengthens the position of the Ahl al-Sunnah. Neither Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ nor ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ conspired to steal the Khilāfah, and they did not proceed towards Saqīfah with this intention. The Shī‘ah cannot reproduce even a single authentic narration to indicate that this was their plan. Instead, the Shī‘ah rely on conspiracy theories that hold no weight. Abū Bakr and ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمَا saved the Muslim Ummah from self-destruction, and in fact, it would be these two who would transform the Arabs into a world power, one that would destroy the Persian Empire and vanquish the Roman Empire. It was these two men who brought glory to the Muslim Ummah, and instead of sending curses upon them like the Shī‘ah do, we should ask Allah to bestow His Mercy and Grace upon them; following the example set by Sayyidunā ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, who said:

The best of this Ummah after its Prophet is Abū Bakr.<sup>1</sup>

We ask Allah to protect us from deviation and ever straying from the Straight Path.

All praise belongs to Allah in the beginning and the end. May Allah bless and send peace on our leader Muḥammad, his family, and his Companions.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Musnad Aḥmad*, Ḥadīth: 834.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from the English article penned by Ibn al-Hāshimi on [www.chiite.fr](http://www.chiite.fr).