

Answering Shī'ah Allegations: Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ was influenced by the devil

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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	

Answering Shī'ah Allegations:

Sayyidunā Abū Bakr was influenced by the devil

ALLEGATION

Abū Bakr would complain in his sermons and other speeches of a devil that would influence him:

ان لي شيطاناً يعتريني

I have a devil that troubles me.

He also said:

وان زغت عنها فقوموني

If I stray from obedience, then correct me.

How can such a person be worthy of being followed?

ANSWER

If this speech is proven to be authentically transmitted from Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه, then it is actually a merit in his favour and a sign of his humility. The complete wording for this is as follows:

إن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم كان يعتصم بالوحي وإن لي شيطاناً يعتريني فإن استقممت فأعينوني وإن زغت فقوموني

Verily the Nabī (saw) was protected by revelation, [as for me] I have a devil that afflicts me. If I remain steadfast then assist me and if I stray then correct me.

Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه was making it apparent that he is not infallible and he is not safe from error, unlike the Nabī (saw) who was divinely protected from the same.

As for the devil afflicts him, this is the same for all of mankind as attested to by

Nabī (saw):

ما منكم من أحد إلا وقد وكل به قرينه من الجن قالوا وإياك يا رسول الله قال وإياي إلا أن الله أعانني عليه
فأسلم فلا يأمرني إلا بخير

“There is none amongst you with whom is not an attache from amongst the Jinn (devils).”

The Companions asked, “O Allah’s Messenger, with you too?”

Thereupon he said, “Yes, but Allah helped me against him and so I am safe from his hand and he does not command me but for good.”¹

The interpretation of the rest of the statement is as follows:

فقال إن أستقمت على الطاعة فأعينوني عليها وإن زغت عنها فقوموني

You should help me in that which is best and in taqwā. If I remain firm upon obedience (the Qur’ān and the Sunnah), then help me and if I stray from obedience, then correct me.²

The senior scholars often mentioned statements like this at times. The answer is that on account of being overwhelmed by the fear of Allah ﷻ, they mention statements such as this. Moreover, this form of expression was uttered by the Imāms as well, as recorded in the books of the Shī’ah. The very interpretation they will afford to the statements of their Imāms will be the same for Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه.

In *al-Kāfi* of al-Kulaynī, there is a narration from Imām Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq رضي الله عنه, “There is a devil with every believer that turns him away from the straight path.”³

Moreover, Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه said in a speech recorded in *Nahj al-Balāghah*:

لا تكفوا عن مقالة بحق أو مشورة بعدل فإنني لست في نفسي يفوق أن أخطى ولا آمن ذلك من فعلي

1 *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, # 2814 a.

2 *Al-Muntaqā*, p. 336.

3 *Tuḥfah Ithnā ‘Ashariyyah*, p. 270.

Do not stay away from me in saying the truth or in giving me counsel of the truth. I am not beyond error and I am not safe from error in my deeds.¹

Sayyidunā ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ used to supplicate:

اللهم إغفر لي ما تقربت به إليك بلساني ثم خالفه قلبي اللهم إغفر لي رمزات الألفاظ وسقطات الألفاظ وشهوات الجنان وهفوات اللسان

O Allah, forgive me for that speech through which I acquired closeness to You then my heart went against it. O Allah, forgive me for the indications of my eye and my useless words and desires of my heart and the errors of my tongue.²

Imām ‘Alī ibn Ḥusayn Zayn al-‘Ābidīn رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ used to supplicate:

ها أنا ذا يا رب مطروح بين يديك أنا الذي أوقرت الخطايا ظهري وأنا الذي أفنت الذنوب عمره وأنا الذي بجعله عصاك ولم تكن اهلا منه لذاك... الخ

Here I am, O Rabb, thrown before You, I am the one that attests to my sin that has burdened by back and I spent my life in sin, and I am the one that disobeyed You out of ignorance...³

In another place, he says:

واغفر لي ما تعلم من ذنوبي إن تعذب فأنا الظالم المفرط المضيع اللائم المقصر المضجع المغفل... الخ

And forgive me for those of my sins that You are aware of. If You punish, then I am the oppressor, the one who has been extreme in my life, the extravagant in sin, the one who falls short, one asleep, one who is negligent...⁴

Moreover, Imām Zayn al-‘Ābidīn رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ supplicates elsewhere:

اللهم اجعل ما يلقي الشيطان في روعي من التمني والتظني والحسد ذكرا لعظمتك وتفكرا في قدرتك

1 *Nahj al-Balāghah*, vol. 1 p. 436; *Furū‘al-Kāfi* vol. 3 p. 165.

2 *Nahj al-Balāghah*, vol. 1 p. 127.

3 *Al-Ṣahīfah Kāmilah Sajjādiyyah*, p. 83.

4 *Ibid.*, p.301.

وتديرا على عدوك وما أجرى على لساني من لفظة فحش أو هجر أو شتم عرض أو شهادة باطل أو اغتياب مؤمن غائب أو سب حاضر وما اشبه ذلك نطقا بالحمد لك وإغراقا في الثناء عليك وذهابا في تمجيدك وشكرا لنعمتك واعترافا بإحسانك واحصاء لمننك... الخ

O Allah, whatever Shayṭān has placed in my heart of hopes and jealousy, make it into mention of Your greatness and into pondering over Your power and whatever lewd talk Shayṭān has placed on my tongue: futile talk, dishonouring someone, baseless testimony, backbiting of a Muslim and speaking ill of a person in his presence; turn it into praise for You, exaggeration in Your glory, gratitude for Your bounty, confession of Your favour, counting Your bounty...¹

In summary

From the speech of the Imāms quoted above, whatever words have been narrated, there is confession of sin, Shayṭān affecting the heart etc., just as it is found within the ‘infallible’ Imāms, and it did not negatively affect their Imāmah in any way, so too these things are found in the speech of the senior Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ like Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, and cannot form the basis of any objection or criticism.

1 Ibid, p. 106.