



Supplementary Notes:

SAYYIDUNĀ ABŪ BAKR

AL-ŞIDDĪQ رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ



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Birth, Name and Lineage

Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ was born two years after Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. His name is ‘Abd Allāh ibn Abī Quḥāfah. He was from the noble tribe of the Quraysh and his entire lineage is as follows,

‘Abd Allāh ibn Abū Quḥāfah ibn ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Āmir ibn ‘Amr ibn Ka‘b ibn Sa‘d ibn Tīm ibn Murrah ibn Lu‘ay ibn Ghālib al-Qursahī, al-Taymī

Murrah is a common ancestor to both Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ and Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, thus they share a common lineage. Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ is better known by his agnomen, Abū Bakr, than his actual name. In fact, very few Muslims actually know that his name was ‘Abd Allāh.

Title

Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ became famous by two titles: *al-‘Atīq* and *al-Şiddīq*. He received the title of “‘Atīq” when Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ signalled towards him saying:

من سره ان ينظر الى عتيق من النار فلينظر الى ابي بكر

If anyone wishes to see a person who has been freed from the fire of Jahannam then he should look at Abū Bakr.¹

Sayyidunā ‘Abd Allāh ibn Zubayr رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ narrates that Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ was famous by the name ‘Abd Allāh but when Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said to him:

انت عتيق الله من النار

You have been freed from the fire of Jahannam.²

He became famous by the title ‘Atīq.³

‘Atīq means one who has been freed. Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ received this glad tidings from Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ that he will be protected from Jahannam and will enter Jannah, on numerous occasions in his lifetime. What a great honour that is indeed.

His other title is *al-Şiddīq*, which means truthful or honest. His honesty and truthfulness was praised even during the days of ignorance. Another reason which has been mentioned for this title, as reported from Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ on the authority of Ibn Iṣḥāq, is that Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ accepted the risālah of Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ immediately, without a second thought and did not request any miracle to be displayed by Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, and was thus awarded the title of *al-Şiddīq*.

It has been reported in *Ḥākim* that when Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ informed the mushrikīn of the journey of Mi‘rāj, they immediately ran to Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ and said to him:

Abū Bakr! Will you attest to what your friend Muḥammad has said today, that he has travelled from Makkah to Bayt al-Maqdis in one night?

1 Reported by Abū Ya‘lā in his *Musnad*, Ibn Sa‘d and Ḥakim, who graded it as ṣaḥīḥ.

2 *Tirmidhī*, Ḥadīth: 3779, *Al-Ḥākim* v. 2 p. 315-316.

3 *Ṭabarānī*.

Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه replied:

If he has said this then it must undoubtedly be true. I believe in something even more astonishing than that and that is the revelation which is sent to him from the heavens every day and night.

It was from that day that his title became al-Ṣiddīq.

Nazzāl ibn Sabrah narrates that they asked Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه to enlighten them with something about Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه. Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه replied:

Abū Bakr is that individual who was awarded the title of al-Ṣiddīq by the mouth of Sayyidunā Jibrīl عليه السلام and Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم. He was the true successor of Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم. Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم selected him for our dīn (when Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم appointed him as imām for ṣalāh during his lifetime) so we selected him to attend to our worldly affairs as well (when we appointed him as our leader and khalīfah).¹

Childhood and Youth

Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه grew up in Makkah and even after reaching adulthood continued to reside in Makkah. He never left Makkah except to conduct trade in neighbouring countries. He was regarded among the leaders and nobility of Makkah. He was a person of outstanding character and benevolent nature. He was well-known for his keeping of family ties and generosity. He would help the poor and weak as well as aid those who were in difficulty.

Imām al-Nawāwī رحمته الله has stated that Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه was among the chiefs of his people and his opinion was highly regarded amongst them. He was greatly loved by his people. When the era of Islam dawned, he gave no thought to his rank or position and immediately accepted Islam, challenging the forces of falsehood.

The Purity of his Character

One is able to gauge the purity of Sayyidunā Abū Bakr’s رضي الله عنه character by the fact that he was the friend of Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم. The person whom Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم chose as his friend would undoubtedly be purest in character and personality. Sayyidunā ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها narrates:

I take an oath by Allah; Abū Bakr never indulged in poetic renditions, neither during the period of ignorance nor after accepting Islam. Both he and ‘Uthmān had made consuming alcohol ḥarām upon themselves before the advent of Islam.²

The Appearance of Sayyidunā Abū Bakr

Ibn Sa’d has reported a narration that a certain person came to Sayyidunā ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها and asked her regarding the appearance of Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه, she replied:

He was fair in complexion and had a slim build. He had little hair on his cheeks (meaning his beard was not very thick). His face would become sweaty. He had thick eyebrows and a broad forehead.

In another narration, Ibn Sa’d has reported from Sayyidunā ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها that Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه began to apply henna to his beard after it became white.

1 Ḥākim.

2 Ibn ‘Asākir.

Embracing Islam

Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه narrates that the first among the men to accept Islam was Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه.¹

Sayyidunā Zayd ibn Arqam رضي الله عنه narrates that the first person to perform ṣalāh behind Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم was Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه.²

There are various narrations reported from many Ṣaḥābah with regards to who was the first to accept Islam, which Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمته الله reconciled in the following manner, the first man to accept Islam was Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه, the first woman to accept Islam was Sayyidunā Khadījah رضي الله عنها, and the first amongst the youth to accept Islam was Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه.

‘Abd Allāh ibn Ḥusayn al-Tamīmī رضي الله عنه narrates that Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

Whoever I invited towards Islam had doubts at first and after thinking carefully they accepted Islam, except for Abū Bakr; when I invited him towards Islam he did not hesitate for even a moment and accepted immediately.³

Imām al-Bayhaqī رحمته الله says that the reason for this is Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه had already seen the qualities of Nubuwwah in Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم and even before accepting Islam, he had heard about Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم from the ‘ulamā’ of the Ahl al-Kitāb.

The humble translator wishes to add, a clear and evident proof of the nubuwwah and risālah of Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم is that the first to believe in him and accept him were those who knew him the best and the well-acquainted with his noble personality. They had complete conviction that Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم would not say anything untrue or contrary to reality. Who can know a person better than one’s own wife? Sayyidunā Khadījah رضي الله عنها was staying with Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم for fifteen years prior to him receiving Nubuwwah and was entirely familiar with his habits and tendencies. When Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم informed her regarding his Nubuwwah, her heart naturally accepted the truth of his statement.

Even before embracing Islam, Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه was the friend of Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم and after accepting Islam he never left the side of Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم, except on those occasions when Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم himself ordered him to, for example to lead the expeditions of ḥajj or jihād. He participated alongside Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم in all the battles that transpired and was the only person to have attained the honour of accompanying Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم on the journey of hijrah, as attested to by the verse:

ثَانِي اثْنَيْنِ إِذْ هُمَا فِي الْغَارِ إِذْ يَقُولُ لِصَاحِبِهِ لَا تَحْزَنْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَنَا

He was the second of the two (the other being his bosom friend Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه) when they were (hiding from the kuffār) in the cave (outside Makkah) and he (Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم) told his companion (Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه) (when the kuffār were on the verge of capturing them): “Do not grieve (do not fear for my safety). Verily Allah is with us (and He will protect us from the kuffār).”⁴

It was Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه who remained firm and did not flee on the occasion of the Battles of Uḥūd and Ḥunayn, during the sudden attack of the mushrikīn. Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه narrates that Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم addressed both him and Sayyidunā Abū Bakr on the occasion of the Battle of Badr saying:

1 Ibn ‘Asākir.

2 Ibn Khaythamah.

3 Al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyah by Ibn Hishām v. 1 p. 159.

4 Sūrah al-Tawbah: 40.

One of you is accompanied by Jibrīl while the other is accompanied by Mikā'īl.¹

On the occasion of the Battle of Uḥud, a tent was erected for Rasūlullāh ﷺ, wherein he spent the entire night weeping and supplicating to Allah ﷻ to assist and grant the Muslims victory. At that time the other Ṣaḥābah were making preparations for battle and it was only Sayyidunā Abū Bakr ﷺ who was with the Rasūl of Allah ﷺ. He stood guard over the tent of Rasūlullāh ﷺ and whenever any enemy tried to reach the Rasūl of Allah ﷺ, Sayyidunā Abū Bakr ﷺ would pounce upon him like a ferocious lion. It is mentioned that none of the enemy could pluck up the courage to advance on the tent of Rasūlullāh ﷺ. This incident was narrated by Sayyidunā 'Alī ﷺ who then stated:

Sayyidunā Abū Bakr ﷺ was the most courageous of all of us on that day.²

The Bravery and Courage of Sayyidunā Abū Bakr

Sayyidunā 'Urwah ibn Zubayr ﷺ narrates that he asked Sayyidunā 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ ﷺ:

What is the worst of all the difficulties that the mushrikīn inflicted upon Rasūlullāh ﷺ?

Sayyidunā 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ ﷺ replied:

I saw 'Uqbah ibn Abī Mu'ayṭ taking a shawl and going towards Rasūlullāh ﷺ, while he was in ṣalāh. Then this vile individual wrapped this shawl around the neck of Rasūlullāh ﷺ, trying to strangle him. Abū Bakr arrived just in time, struck him and separated him from Rasūlullāh ﷺ. He then turned to the disbelievers and said:

اتقتلون رجلا ان يقول ربي الله و قد جاءكم بالبينات من ربكم

Do you kill a person merely because he says my Rabb is Allah, and he has come to you with proof from his Rabb.³

Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah ﷺ narrates that when the number of Muslims reached thirty-eight in Makkah, Sayyidunā Abū Bakr ﷺ asked Rasūlullāh ﷺ for permission to preach Islam openly. Rasūlullāh ﷺ advised him against it, as it could result in him being severely beaten by the mushrikīn. It just so happened that one day when all the Muslims were present in the Ḥaram, each of them sitting in different corners, and a large number of mushrikīn had also gathered; Sayyidunā Abū Bakr ﷺ stood up and openly invited all of them towards the worship of one Allah ﷻ and to accept the Nubuwwah of Muḥammad ﷺ. As soon as he said this all the mushrikīn pounced upon him and began beating him so savagely that he fell unconscious. A few members of his tribe were present, who even though were not Muslims, attended to him and took him to his home, out of tribal loyalty. When he regained consciousness the first words out of his mouth were:

How is the Rasūl of Allah ﷺ? Has he been harmed?⁴

Sayyidunā 'Alī ﷺ narrates that he saw the Quraysh surrounding the Rasūl of Allah ﷺ, some were pushing him, others were scoffing at him and a few were ridiculing him, saying:

1 Musnad Aḥmad, Ḥākim, Abū Ya'lā.

2 Bazzār.

3 Bukhārī.

4 Ibn 'Asākir.

You are the one who has made all the gods into one God (by denouncing the idols of the mushrikīn and encouraging the worship of One Allah).

There was none among us who had the courage to go to his aid. (Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه was very young at time as this incident took place in the early days of Islam.) Only Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه was brave enough to step forward and pushing the disbelievers away one by one he said to them: “May you all be destroyed, do you kill a man merely because he says my Rabb is Allah.” Thereafter Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه began crying so profusely that his beard became wet with the excessive tears. He then addressed his audience saying:

I take an oath by Allah, who is more superior, the one who brought īmān from the family of Fir‘awn (as mentioned in Sūrah al-Taḥrīm) or Abū Bakr?

When they remained silent, Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه said:

One moment of the life of Abū Bakr is far superior to a thousand of the believers from the family of Fir‘awn because they kept their īmān a secret, out of fear for their nation, whereas Abū Bakr proclaimed his īmān openly before everyone.¹

His Service to Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم as well as Generosity and Open-Heartedness

Allah سبحانه وتعالى says in the glorious Qur‘ān:

وَسَيُجَنَّبُهَا الْأَتْقَى ﴿١٤﴾ الَّذِي يُؤْتِي مَالَهُ يَتَزَكَّى ﴿١٨﴾

Far removed from it (Jahannam) shall be the one with the most taqwā (the mu‘min) who spent his wealth to purify (his soul from greed and from other sins by attaining Allah’s pleasure and resultant forgiveness).²

‘Allāmah Ibn al-Jawzī رحمه الله has said that it is the consensus of the scholars of knowledge that this verse was revealed regarding Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه. Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrates that Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

No person’s wealth has benefitted me as much as the wealth of Abū Bakr has benefitted me.

Upon hearing this Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه began weeping and said:

All of my wealth is only but for you.³

Sayyidunā ‘Alī, Sayyidunā ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās, Sayyidunā Anas, Sayyidunā Jābir and Sayyidunā Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī رضي الله عنه all narrated that Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم would spend from the wealth of Abū Bakr as he would from his own. In other words, Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم regarded the wealth of Sayyidunā Abū Bakr as his own.⁴

In the early period of Islam, Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه bought and freed seven such slaves who were continually beaten and punished for having accepted Islam.⁵

1 Bazzār.

2 Sūrah al-Layl.

3 Musnad Aḥmad.

4 Ibn Kathīr.

5 Ibn ‘Asākir.

In the early years of Islam prior to hijrah, Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه spent approximately forty thousand dirhams in the aid of Islam and Muslims in general.

Sayyidunā ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه narrates:

On one occasion Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم encouraged us to donate our wealth. At that time I had just come into possession of large amount of wealth and I thought to myself that today I will surpass Abū Bakr. I divided whatever wealth I possessed into two equal halves and took one half to Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم. Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم enquired as to what I had left for my family. I replied that I had left an equal half for my family. Later Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه arrived with all of his wealth and when Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم asked him what he had left for his family he replied:

I have left Allah and His Rasūl for them.

I then realised that I will never be able to surpass Abū Bakr.¹

Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrates that Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

I have repaid all the good that others have shown to me except for Abū Bakr, as his is of such an extent that Allah سبحانه وتعالى himself will repay and reward him on the Day of Qiyāmah. No person’s wealth has benefitted me as much as the wealth of Abū Bakr.²

Sayyidunā ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه narrates that Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

No one has shown me kindness as Abū Bakr has. He aided me with his wealth and person, and even gave his daughter to me in marriage.³

Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه was the Most Knowledgeable of all the Ṣaḥābah رضي الله عنهم as well as the Wisest

Imām al-Nawawī رحمه الله has written in *Tahdhīb* that our ‘ulamā have taken proof from the incident of fighting the rejecters of zakāh that Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه was the most knowledgeable of the Ṣaḥābah رضي الله عنهم. It is report in both *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* that when certain tribes refused to pay zakāh, Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه said:

والله لو منعوني عقالا كانوا يؤدون الى رسول الله لقاتلتهم على منعه

I take an oath by Allah; I will fight them even if they refuse to give me a rope which they used to give in the time of Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم as zakāh.

The humble translator writes that when Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم left this earthly abode, certain tribes refused to pay zakāh and as a result a difference of opinion arose among the Ṣaḥābah as to what to do with them. Some said that they have recited the kalimah and even perform ṣalāh, so how can we fight against them? However, Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه possessed deeper insight. He knew that the kalimah only benefits a person when a person fulfils the requisites of the kalimah. Whoever denies any law of Islam in actual fact denies the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم, and whoever denies the Qur’ān and the Sunnah of Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم leaves the fold of Islam, making fighting against them permissible.

1 *Tirmidhī*.

2 *Ibid*.

3 *Ibn ‘Asākir*.

Sayyidunā Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī رضي الله عنه narrates that Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم had said in a khuṭbah, (a few days prior to his demise):

ان الله تبارك و تعالى خير عبدا بين الدنيا و بين ما عنده فاختار ذلك العبد ما عند الله

Allah Taʿālā has given a servant a choice between remaining in this world or that which is with Him, and that servant chose that which is with Allah.

When Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه heard this he immediately began weeping and said: “O Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم, may my parents be sacrificed for you.” We were extremely astonished at the behaviour of Abū Bakr that Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم was merely informing them of the choice made by one of Allah’s servants and he begins to weep for no apparent reason. It was only later that we realised Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم was actually referring to himself and Abū Bakr was the most knowledgeable amongst us. On this occasion Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم said: “Undoubtedly Abū Bakr has been the most generous to me with his wealth and friendship. If I were to take a beloved from amongst men, then I would have made Abū Bakr my beloved but instead we have between us the bonds and love of Islam. Listen! All doors that open into the Masjid (al-Masjid al-Nabawī) should be sealed except for the door of Abū Bakr.”¹

Ibn Kathīr رحمه الله says that Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه surpassed all the other Ṣaḥābah رضي الله عنهم in knowledge of the Qurʾān. This becomes apparent from the fact that Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم selected him as imām when he has categorically stated:

يؤم القوم اقرأهم بكتاب الله

The most knowledgeable of the Qurʾān should be appointed as the imām.

In addition there was no person more knowledgeable regarding the aḥādīth of Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم then Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه. The reason being that he remained by the side of Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم throughout his lifetime. His memory and intelligence was also unmatched by the other Ṣaḥābah رضي الله عنهم. However, he did not choose to report many narrations, instead he attended to the problems affecting the Muslim Ummah. It is for this reason that many narrations have not been reported from him. However, whenever the Ṣaḥābah رضي الله عنهم encountered any hurdle then its solution from the aḥādīth of Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم could be found with Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه.

Imām al-Nawawī رحمه الله says that Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه was one of those Ṣaḥābah who had memorised the entire Qurʾān. This view has been asserted by many ʿulamā of dīn among who is Ibn Kathīr رحمه الله.

Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه is the Highest in Rank from the Ummah of Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم

It is the unanimous belief of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamāʿah that after Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم and the other Ambiyāʾ, the highest in rank is Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه, then Sayyidunā ʿUmar رضي الله عنه, then Sayyidunā ʿUthmān رضي الله عنه, then Sayyidunā ʿAlī رضي الله عنه. Thereafter it is the remaining of the ʿAsharah Mubasharah, then those Ṣaḥābah who participated in the Battle of Badr, then those Ṣaḥābah who participated in the Battle of Uḥud, and those Ṣaḥābah who participated in the Pledge of Riḍwān. Abū Mansūr al-Baghdādī has reported that there is a consensus on this matter.

Sayyidunā ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar رضي الله عنهما says that in the lifetime of Rasūlullāh they would regard Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿUthmān superior to the other Ṣaḥābah.²

1 Bukhārī, Muslim.

2 Bukhārī.

In addition it has been reported in *al-Ṭabarānī* that Rasūlullāh ﷺ was aware of this and did not reject it. Sayyidunā Ibn ‘Umar says in another narration that even when Rasūlullāh ﷺ was among them they would regard Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, and ‘Alī ﷺ as superior to the other Ṣaḥābah.

Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, who is the son of Sayyidunā ‘Alī ﷺ from a wife other than Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ, narrates:

I asked my father, ‘Alī ﷺ, who is the best after Rasūlullāh ﷺ? And he replied, ‘Abū Bakr.’ I then asked, ‘And who is the best after him?’ He replied, ‘Umar.’ I then became afraid that if asked him who was best after ‘Umar he would say ‘Uthmān, so instead I said to him, ‘After Abū Bakr and ‘Umar you are best’, to which he replied:

ما انا الا رجل من المسلمين

I am but a man from the Muslims.¹

The humble translator adds, in this narration which informs us of the high status and rank of Sayyidunā Abū Bakr and Sayyidunā Umar, we also learn of the humility, humbleness, piety, and asceticism of Sayyidunā ‘Alī ﷺ.

Sayyidunā Salamah ibn Akwah ﷺ narrates that Rasūlullāh ﷺ has said:

After the Ambiyā’, the highest in rank is Abū Bakr.²

Another narration, which has been reported by Sayyidunā Sa’d ibn Zurārah ﷺ that Rasūlullāh ﷺ has said:

The pure soul, Jibrīl, has informed me that after you from your Ummah the best is Abū Bakr.³

Sayyidunā Anas ibn Mālik ﷺ narrates that Rasūlullāh ﷺ has said:

The most merciful of my Ummah upon my Ummah is Abū Bakr, the strictest in matters of dīn is Umar, the most modest of them is ‘Uthmān, and the best in passing verdict is ‘Alī.⁴

Abū Ya’la has reported Sayyidunā ‘Alī ﷺ saying:

لا تفضلني احد على ابي بكر الا جلده حد المفتري

Whoever says that I am better than Abū Bakr, I will mete out to him the same punishment that is given to one who gives false testimony.⁵

Those Verses That Were Revealed in Praise of Sayyidunā Abū Bakr

Allah ﷻ has said in the glorious Qur’ān:

تَانِي اثْنَيْنِ اِذْ هُمَا فِي الْعَارِ اِذْ يَقُولُ لِصَاحِبِهِ لَا تَحْزَنْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَنَا

1 *Al-Bukhārī*, Faḍā’il Aṣḥāb al-Nabī Ḥadīth: 3656.

2 *Al-Ṭabarānī*, v. 9 p. 44.

3 *Al-Ṭabarānī*, v. 9 p. 44.

4 *Abū Ya’la*.

5 *Ibn Asākir*.

He was the second of the two (the other being his bosom friend Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) when they were (hiding from the kuffār) in the cave (outside Makkah) and he (Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) told his companion (Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) (when the kuffār were on the verge of capturing them): “Do not grieve (do not fear for my safety). Verily Allah is with us (and He will protect us from the kuffār).”¹

The entire Muslim Ummah is in agreement that Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was with Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ in the cave and it is to him that this verse refers.

Regarding this incident Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى says:

فَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَيْهِ

So Allah caused His tranquillity (serenity, mercy and peace) to descend on him.

Sayyidunā ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ narrates that the tranquillity descended upon Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, as it was he who had become anxious and Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ was completely composed and calm. Mufassirīn have written that Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was not anxious because of fear for himself as he would gladly sacrifice his life for the Rasūl of Allah. Instead he was fearful that the mushrikīn might harm Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. This is why Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى allowed his tranquillity to descend upon him so as to remove his grief.

Sayyidunā ‘Āmir ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Zubayr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ narrates that when the mushrikīn of Makkah began to persecute the weak Muslims, specifically those slaves who had accepted Islam, then Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ began purchasing the old and female slaves, and setting them free, so as to save them from being tormented. His father then said to him:

“Son if only you were to purchase and set free the strong among them then at least if at any time you are in some difficulty they can come to your aid.” Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ replied: “O father, I only desire the reward from Allah.”

Sayyidunā ‘Āmir ibn ‘Abd Allāh adds:

My family informed me that these verses were revealed with regards to this incident.

Sayyidunā ‘Abd Allāh ibn Zubayr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ narrates that the verses:

فَأَمَّا مَنْ أَعْطَى وَاتَّقَى ﴿٥﴾ وَصَدَّقَ بِالْحُسْنَى ﴿٦﴾ فَسَنِيَرُهُ لِيُسْرَى

Far removed from it (Jahannam) shall be the one with the most taqwa (the mu’min) who spent his wealth to purify (his soul from greed and from other sins by attaining Allah’s pleasure and resultant forgiveness).²

were revealed regarding Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ.

Sayyidunā ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ narrates that the verse, “And consult with them in matters,” was revealed regarding Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and Sayyidunā Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ. This means that Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى had instructed Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ to consult with them in matters.³

In another narration, Sayyidunā ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ narrates that the verse in Surah al-Aḥqāf, “We enjoined (commanded) man to treat his parents kindly,” until the next verse was revealed regarding Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ.

1 Sūrah al-Tawbah: 40.

2 Sūrah al-Layl: 5-7.

3 Al-Ḥākim.