



JUMU'AH LECTURE: SAYYIDUNĀ 'ALĪ IBN

ABĪ ṬĀLIB رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ



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SAYYIDUNĀ ‘ALĪ IBN ABĪ ṬĀLIB

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ نَحْمَدُهُ وَنَسْتَعِیْنُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ وَنُؤْمِنُ بِهِ وَنَتَوَكَّلُ عَلَیْهِ وَنَعُوْذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنْ شُرُوْرِ اَنْفُسِنَا وَمِنْ سَبَاْتِ اَعْمَالِنَا مَنْ یَّهْدِهِ اللّٰهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ لَهُ وَ مَنْ یُضِلِّهِ فَلَا هَادِیَّ لَهُ وَ نَشْهَدُ اَنْ لَا اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِیْكَ لَهُ وَ نَشْهَدُ اَنَّ سَیِّدَنَا وَ مَوْلَانَا مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَ رَسُوْلُهُ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَیْهِ وَ عَلٰی اٰلِهِ وَ اَصْحَابِهِ وَ بَارَكَ وَ سَلَّمَ تَسْلِیْمًا كَثِیْرًا اَمَّا بَعْدُ فَاَعُوْذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنَ الشَّیْطَانِ الرَّجِیْمِ بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ لَقَدْ تَابَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰی النَّبِیِّ وَ الْمُهَاجِرِیْنَ وَ الْاَنْصَارِ الَّذِیْنَ اتَّبَعُوْهُ فِیْ سَاعَةِ الْعُسْرَةِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا كَادَ یَزِیْغُ قُلُوْبَ فَرِیْقٍ مِنْهُمْ ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَیْهِمْ اِنَّهٗ بِهَمِّ رَعُوْفٍ رَّحِیْمٍ

السلام علیکم ورحمة الله و بركاته

When Islam first began, it was an unknown and new religion. Its mission began in secret, with the Prophet ﷺ, at first, preaching only to those close to him, until Allah ﷻ ordered him to declare his message openly. Those who accepted Islam in its early stages became known as *Al-Sābiqūn al-Awwalūn* (the forerunners to Islam). They were the first to embrace Islam and establish its foundations. They were severely tortured and persecuted mercilessly; however, despite this, knowing full well the difficulty they would have to endure, they answered the call of Islam and remained firm on their belief.

Amongst these *Sābiqūn Awwalūn* (forerunners to Islam) is Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه, who was the first amongst the youth to embrace Islam. His entire life, from youth till his martyrdom was spent for the service of Islam. Humble, brave, and just, Sayyidunā ‘Alī was also amongst those *Ṣaḥābah* who were given glad tidings of Paradise by the Prophet ﷺ.

Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه was practically raised in the home of the Prophet ﷺ and in the shadow of the master of the former and later generations, Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم, he gained brilliant virtues and praiseworthy characteristics.

How exactly did Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه come to be raised in the home of the Prophet ﷺ? Makkah was afflicted with severe deprivation which negatively impacted them especially those with large families and not wealthy. Abū Ṭālib was of this group. When this happened, the Prophet ﷺ told ‘Abbās, his uncle, who was one of the most prosperous of the Banū Hāshim, “O ‘Abbās, your brother Abū Ṭālib has a large family and you are aware of the famine that people have been afflicted with. Let us go to him and lessen his burden. I will take one of his sons and you will take one of his sons, and we will care for them on his behalf.” ‘Abbās agreed.

They approached Abū Ṭālib and proposed, “We intend relieving you of some of your dependants until people are relieved of their predicament.”

Abū Ṭālib said to them, “If you leave ‘Aqīl for me, then you may do as you please.”

Subsequently, the Prophet ﷺ took ‘Alī, and ‘Abbās took Ja‘far into their respective families. [Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī, 2/57-58]

Thus, Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه was granted the opportunity to be raised under the guardianship of the Prophet ﷺ.

Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه then came in one day, while they (the Prophet ﷺ and Khadijah رضي الله عنها) were performing ṣalāh. ‘Alī said, “O Muḥammad, what is this?”

The Prophet ﷺ explained, “This is the dīn of Allah which Allah selected for Himself and sent His Messengers with. I, thus, invite you to Allah, He is alone with no partner and, to His worship; and to belie Lāt and ‘Uzzā.”

‘Alī said, “This is a colossal matter which I never heard of before today. Hence, I am not going to reach a decision until I speak to Abū Ṭālib about it.”

Because Islam was still in its early days, being propagated in secret, the Prophet ﷺ urged him to keep it secret if he was not going to embrace it at the moment.

‘Alī رضي الله عنه spent that night contemplating. Thereafter, Allah placed the truth of Islam in his heart and the next morning, he came to the Prophet ﷺ and embraced Islam. [Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah, 3/34]

After receiving the message of Nubūwah, the Prophet ﷺ remained thirteen years in Makkah, and during this time Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه remained close to the Prophet ﷺ. Although he was still young at that time and unable to provide the Prophet ﷺ with much service, his enthusiasm and willingness stands out from his desire to never leave the side of the Prophet ﷺ. Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه would accompany the Prophet ﷺ and Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه when they would meet with the various tribes visiting Makkah. [Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah, 3/142, 143, 145]

It is also reported that on some occasions he would go with the Prophet ﷺ to the Ḥaram in the late hours of the night, and they would then secretly destroy a few idols the Mushrikīn kept around the Ka‘bah. [Musnad Aḥmad, # 644]

Despite the efforts of the Mushrikīn to quell the Dīn of Islam, it continued to spread and soon the city of Madīnah was ripe for emigration. This enraged them to no end, and they resolved to kill the Prophet ﷺ and extinguish this light once and for all. Allah سبحانه وتعالى informed His Prophet ﷺ about their plans and instructed him to leave for Madīnah that very night. In order to fool them, and ensure they would keep their attention focused on his home, he instructed ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib رضي الله عنه to sleep in his bed that night. Who could dare to stay in the bed of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ when his enemies were surrounding the house, lying in wait to kill him? Who would be able to stay in that house, knowing that the enemies would not see the difference between him and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in his bed? No one except the most heroic of men, and the most courageous, by the grace of Allah سبحانه وتعالى. [Ibn Hishām, 2/91]

In the fact that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ chose ‘Alī رضي الله عنه to play this important role, we can see complete and unparalleled trust and confidence in the special capabilities with which ‘Alī رضي الله عنه was distinguished, which may not be found in anyone else. He did not hesitate when the Messenger ﷺ called him to sleep in his bed, although he knew that there might be nothing else beyond that but death, since the polytheists were preparing the bravest young men of Quraysh to murder the Prophet ﷺ. ‘Alī رضي الله عنه did not let himself think about the consequences because he knew that if he sacrificed his life for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ he would attain a high honour that could not be obtained in any other way.

The next morning, ‘Alī رضي الله عنه got up. The people recognised him and realised that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had escaped. They said to ‘Alī رضي الله عنه, “Where is your companion?”

He said, “I do not know; was I watching over him? You told him to leave, and he left.”

The people were upset with this daring answer and were annoyed that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had departed from among them and that they had been blinded and did not see him. So, they rebuked ‘Alī رضي الله عنه and beat him; then they detained him for a while, before letting him go. [Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī, 2/374]

‘Alī رضي الله عنه patiently endured all that befell him. His joy at the escape of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was more important to him than any harm that could befall him, so he did not weaken and he did not tell them where the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was.

‘Alī رضي الله عنه then returned the entrusted items that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had left him behind to deal with. Finally, after spending three days in Makkah, he prepared to set out and catch up with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. ‘Alī رضي الله عنه hid by day and travelled by night, until he reached Madīnah with his feet swollen and the skin broken. [al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah, 7/335]

‘Alī رضي الله عنه endured hardships during his migration. He had no mount to ride, and he could not travel during the day because of the severe heat, but walking at night in the intense darkness was very lonely and frightening. If we add to that the fact that he covered the distance on foot, with no companion to cheer him up and keep him company, we will realise the extent of the hardship that he endured because of the roughness of the route and the hardships of travel, seeking only the pleasure of Allah. This was the hijrah of Amīr al-Mu’minīn ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib رضي الله عنه, filled with sacrifice, patience, and courage.

Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه remained close to the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in Madīnah, and the bond they shared was further strengthened in the second year after hijrah when the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم wed his beloved daughter Sayyidah Fāṭimah رضي الله عنها to him, thus making him the son-in-law of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. [Siyar A’lām al-Nubalā’, 2/118]

Sayyidunā ‘Alī’s رضي الله عنه courage and valour is legendary, and his bravery was displayed on every battle that he participated in. During the Battle of Khandaq some of the Mushrikīn soldiers decided that a group of fighters led by ‘Amr ibn ‘Abd Wudd, ‘Ikrimah ibn Abī Jahal, and Ḍirār ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, should attempt to cross the trench. They found a narrow end of the trench where they managed to crossover. ‘Amr challenged the Muslims to a duel and it was ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib رضي الله عنه who answered his challenge. ‘Amr was a legendary warrior and struck fear into his opponents, but Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه was more than a match for him and made short work of him, leaving the others to flee in panic. [Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah, 1/800]

During the Battle of Khaybar, when the Muslim were laying siege to the Na’īm fort, Marḥab, the hero and knight of the Jews, challenged the Muslims to a duel, and Sayyidunā ‘Āmir ibn al-Akwa’ رضي الله عنه accepted. While these warriors duelled, Sayyidunā ‘Āmir’s رضي الله عنه sword recoiled upon him and cut the main artery in his forearm which caused his death. Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم assured him double reward and commented, “He was really a hard-working man and a mujāhid (devout fighter in Allah’s Cause) and rarely have there lived in it (i.e., Madīnah or the battlefield) an Arab like him.” Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه then came out to fight Marḥab. Marḥab recited:

قد علمت خبير أني مرحب شاكى السلاح بطل مجرب إذ الحروب أقبلت تلهب

Khaybar knows certainly that I am Marḥab, A fully armed and well-tried valorous warrior (hero). When war comes spreading its flames.

Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه responded:

أنا الذي سميتني أُمي حيدرة كليث غابات كرية المنظرة أوفيهم بالصاع كيل السندرة

I am the one whose mother named him Ḥaydar (Lion), (And I am) like a lion of the forest with a terror-striking countenance. I give my opponents the measure of ṣandarāh in exchange for ṣā’ (i.e. return their attack with one that is much fiercer).

He then felled the infidel, leaving him in a pool of his own blood. [Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ḥadīth: 6148]

Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه participated in all the expeditions alongside the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, with the exception of the Tabūk expedition, where the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم left him to look after his family in Madīnah. There was a scarcity of resources for this expedition and the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم urged the Ṣaḥābah to donate generously for this cause. And the Ṣaḥābah rose to the occasion, most noteworthy amongst them, Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه who donated all of his wealth and Sayyidunā ‘Umar رضي الله عنه half of his wealth. [Tirmidhī] ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf رضي الله عنه donated 200 Uqiyah of silver, which amounts to approximately 40 kg of silver. [al-Raḥīq al-Makhtūm] While Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه donated 900 camels and 100 horses along with 200 uqiyah silver. He further gave 1000 gold coins which the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم kept turning over in his hands

saying repeatedly, “Nothing can harm ‘Uthmān after today.” [Tirmidhī] 30 000 Ṣaḥābah marched out to face the Romans in Battle and they all returned to receive the glad tidings of Allah ﷻ:

لَقَدْ تَابَ اللَّهُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ فِي سَاعَةِ الْعُسْرَةِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا كَادَ يَزِيغُ قُلُوبَ فَرِيقٍ مِّنْهُمْ ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّهُ بِهِمْ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ

Allah has already forgiven the Prophet and the Muhājirīn and the Anṣār who followed him in the hour of difficulty after the hearts of a party of them had almost inclined [to doubt], and then He forgave them. Indeed, He was to them Kind and Merciful. [Tawbah: 117]

When the Prophet ﷺ instructed ‘Alī رضي الله عنه to remain behind to look after his family, the Hypocrites begin to taunt him, saying, “He only left you behind because you are a burden to him,” Unable to take the taunts anymore, Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه set out to join the Prophet ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ was surprised to see ‘Alī and asked him why he had not remained in Madīnah as instructed. Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه informed him of the jeers made by the hypocrites and the Prophet ﷺ comforted him, “You are to me like Hārūn was to Mūsā, except that there is no Nabī after me.” Reassuring him that the order to remain behind was not disparaging to him in the least, but he is akin to Hārūn عليه السلام who remained behind while Mūsā عليه السلام was summoned to Mount Ṭūr by Allah ﷻ. [Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī] In this manner, he too was awarded a tremendous accolade with which he will be forever crowned.

Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه was never attracted to the charms and riches of this world, and his life conveys excellent examples of abstinence and renunciation of this world.

‘Alī said to Fāṭimah one day, “By Allah, I have drawn so much water that my chest is paining.”

He continued, “Allah has sent captives to your father. So, go and ask him for a servant.”

She said, “I am also struggling, by Allah. I have ground [wheat] to the extent that my hands have developed calluses.”

She, thus, approached the Nabī ﷺ. He asked, “What brings you here, O my daughter?”

She replied, “I came to greet you.” She was ashamed to ask him and so she went back.

‘Alī asked, “What did you do?”

She replied, “I felt shy to ask him.”

Thus, we both went to him. ‘Alī رضي الله عنه said, “O Messenger of Allah, by Allah, I have drawn water until my chest pains.”

Fāṭimah رضي الله عنها said, “I have grinded until my hands have developed calluses. Allah has brought captives to you and given you prosperity so kindly give us a servant.”

The Prophet ﷺ said, “By Allah, I will not give you and leave the people of Ṣuffah with their bellies folding [out of hunger] without having anything I may spend on them. I will sell the captives, however, and spend the money on the people of Ṣuffah.”

Thus, they returned. The Nabī ﷺ came to them after they had entered under their shawl, which if their heads were covered, their feet would be exposed and if they covered their feet, their heads would be uncovered. They jumped up but the Prophet ﷺ told them to stay at their places. He then said, “Should I not inform you of something better than what you asked of me?”

“Definitely,” they replied.

He elucidated, “Words which Jibrīl عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام taught me. He said, ‘glorify Allah 10 times after every ṣalāh, praise him ten times, and announce His greatness ten times. When you go to bed, then recite *Subḥān Allah* 33 times, *Alḥamdu lillāh* 33 times, and *Allāhu Akbar* 34 times.”

‘Alī comments, “By Allah, I never missed them since the Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ taught them to me.” [Musnad Aḥmad, 1/106, # 838]

This aspect of asceticism remained attached to Sayyidunā ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ even after he became khalīfah. It is not reported about him that he changed from his habit, rather we find a host of narrations which indicate this same level of piety and asceticism remained with him until his demise. In fact, it is narrated from Yaḥyā ibn Ma‘īn from ‘Alī ibn al-Ja‘d from Ḥasan ibn Ṣāliḥ who said:

تذاكروا الزهاد عند عمر بن عبد العزيز فقال قائلون فلان و قال قائلون فلان فقال عمر بن عبد العزيز أزهده الناس في الدنيا علي بن أبي طالب

They spoke about ascetics in the presence of ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz. Some mentioned the name of this person while others mentioned the name of that person. ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz remarked, “The most ascetic person in the world is ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.” [Al-Bidāyah wa Al-Nihāyah, 8/6]

It appears in *al-Ḥilyah* from Hārūn ibn ‘Antarah from his father who says:

دخلت على علي بن أبي طالب بالخورنق و هو يرعد تحت سمل قطيفة أي قطيفة بالية قديمة فقلت يا أمير المؤمنين إن الله قد جعل لك ولأهل بيتك في هذا المال و أنت تصنع بنفسك ما تصنع فقال والله ما أرزأكم من مالكم شيئا و إنها لقطيفتي التي خرجت بها من منزلي أو قال من المدينة

I entered the presence of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib in Khawranq¹. He was shivering [due to extreme cold] under a worn-out velvet garment. I said, “O Amīr al-Mu‘minīn, Allah has given you and your family a share from this wealth and you are treating yourself in this way.”

He said, “By Allah, I have not deprived you of anything of your wealth. This is my velvet garment with which I left my house [or he said Madīnah].” [Ḥilyat al-Awliyā’, 1/82]

May Allah سُبْحَانَكَ وَبِحَمْدِكَ shower endless mercies upon Sayyidunā ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, and grant us the ability to instil within ourselves the same qualities that he possessed so that we too can become amongst the beloveds of Allah and His Messenger صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ.

1 Al-Khawranq: a place in Kūfah. (Mu‘jam al-Buldān, vol. 2 pg. 401.)