



JUMU'AH LECTURE:

BATTLE OF JAMAL



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Jumu'ah Bayaan

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ نَحْمَدُهُ وَنَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ وَنُؤْمِنُ بِهِ وَنَتَوَكَّلُ عَلَيْهِ وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شُرُورِ أَنْفُسِنَا وَمِنْ سَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا مَنْ يَهْدِهِ اللَّهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ لَهُ وَمَنْ يَضِلَّهُ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ وَنَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَنَشْهَدُ أَنَّ سَيِّدَنَا وَمَوْلَانَا مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدَهُ وَرَسُولَهُ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَأَصْحَابِهِ وَبَارَكَ وَسَلَّمَ تَسْلِيمًا كَثِيرًا أَمَّا بَعْدُ فَأَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ وَإِنْ طَائِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اقْتَتَلُوا فَأَصْلَحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا ۖ فَإِنْ بَغَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا عَلَى الْأُخْرَىٰ فَقَاتِلُوا الَّتِي تَبْغِي حَتَّىٰ تَفِيءَ إِلَىٰ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ ۚ فَإِنْ فَاءَتْ فَأَصْلَحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلَحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

We have discussed previously the incidents that led to the martyrdom of Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه, the beloved son-in-law of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The resultant incidents which occurred after this tragic event, as unfortunate and regretful as they were, needs to be understood in its proper context. Failing to do so may leave one harbouring doubts or perhaps even ill-feelings towards those illustrious personalities whom Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى had crowned with the title *Raḍiyallāhu ‘anhum*, Allah is pleased with them.

Thus, in today’s discussion we are going to shed light on what actually transpired after the murder of the Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه, examining the emotions and challenges at that hour, which were subsequently exploited by those who harboured enmity for Islam.

When we look back into the life of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, we find an incident which gives us understanding of the emotions at that hour. This is the incident of Bay‘at al-Riḍwān which took place in the 6th year after hijrah. The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم after seeing a dream in which he saw himself and his Companions performing ṭawāf around the Ka‘bah, set out to perform ‘Umrah. They took no weapons along with them, except for a sword, which was customary to carry during those days while travelling. The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the Ṣaḥābah arrived at Ḥudaybiyyah, some nine miles outside of Makkah, and the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم sent Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه to the Quraysh to tell them that he had not come for war but merely to perform the ‘Umrah. [Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah]

‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه in accordance with the Prophet’s instructions went to Makkah and delivered his message to Abū Sufyān and other leaders of the Quraysh. The Makkans, however, refused to allow the Muslims to enter Makkah, and instead said to him, “If what you want is to do Ṭawāf [circumambulation of the Ka‘bah], then you are free to do so now.” Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān declined, saying, “I will not do so until the Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم has gone round the Ka‘bah.” The Quraysh were offended by this and prevented ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه from returning after he declined their offer of Ṭawāf.

When Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān did not return, a rumour soon spread in the Muslim camp that ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه had been killed, which is why he had not returned. It was at this juncture that the Beloved of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم set beneath a tree in Ḥudaybiyyah and summoned the Ṣaḥābah to pledge their allegiance to him to avenge ‘Uthmān’s death. “We will not leave before engaging them in battle!” he said. The first to step forward was Abū Sinān al-Asadi who pledged to fight to the death to avenge ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه. The Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم took the same oath from the fourteen hundred men standing around him and after they had all taken the oath, the Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم struck one of his hands on the other, saying, “This is the pledge on behalf of ‘Uthmān.” [Tirmidhī]

This is how beloved ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān رضي الله عنه was to the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and Ṣaḥābah رضي الله عنهم. The Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم was willing to fight to the death to avenge his blood. It is this beloved personality of the Ummah for whom the Ṣaḥābah and the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as their leader, pledged to fight to the death. ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه was so beloved to Allah that Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى makes mention of this incident in the Qur’ān:

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

Allah was well pleased with the believers when they swore allegiance unto you beneath the tree, and He knew what was in their hearts, and He sent down the peace of reassurance on them, and has rewarded them with a near victory. [Sūrah Fath: 18]

This is how this pledge became known as the pledge of Ridwān, Allah ﷻ further added His stamp of approval to the devotion the Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ showed at this juncture:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُبَايِعُونَكَ إِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُونَ اللَّهَ يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ فَمَنْ نَكَثَ فَإِنَّمَا يَنْكُثُ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ أَوْفَىٰ بِمَا عَاهَدَ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ فَمَآ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

Indeed, those who pledge allegiance to you, [O Muḥammad], they are actually pledging allegiance to Allah. The hand of Allah is over their hands. So he who breaks his word only breaks it to the detriment of himself. And he who fulfils that which he has promised Allah, He will give him a great reward. [Sūrah Fath: 10]

As soon as the Mushrikīn learnt of the intention of the Prophet ﷺ and the Ṣaḥābah, they quickly released ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, and once he was safely back in the Muslim camp, the Prophet ﷺ began negotiations with the Quraysh. And the Muslim slogan was the same as before: we are here for **‘Umrah and not battle**.

Ponder over the reaction of the Prophet ﷺ in this incident, as well as the Ṣaḥābah, when a rumour spread that ‘Uthmān had been wrongfully killed. One cannot even imagine what went through the minds of the Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ on that day when they entered the home of Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and found him, 83 years of age now, slain on the ground. Sayyidunā ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ himself expressed the shock he had on receiving the news:

I lost my mind the day ‘Uthmān was killed, I could not believe it. I was beside myself with grief. [Ḥākim, 3/95, who said it is Sahih, and al-Dhahabī concurred with him.]

This gives us an idea of the emotional state of the Companions. The Ṣaḥābah then pledged allegiance to Sayyidunā ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and he was appointed as Khalīfah. The first duty he is urged to attend to was dealing with the murderers of Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ. Sayyidunā ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ tried to restore order to the situation, but the rebels who had marched on Madīnah from Egypt, Baṣrah, and Kūfah were not a small group—approximately 2000—even though those who carried out the actual murder were only a few. Nonetheless, Jāhilī tribalism overcame their senses and they refused to hand over the culprits. On the contrary, they vowed to defend them.

Sayyidunā ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ seeing the situation, felt it best to delay the execution of the murderers until such a time when stability had been restored. He did not deny that they needed to be brought to justice, he just felt that it could not be done without embroiling the entire Islamic empire—in all regions—in civil war. The murderers and the other rebels were mostly recent converts to Islam from the neighbouring countries of Iraq and Egypt, whose minds were still enshrouded by the pagan customs of tribalism. Thus, apprehending the culprits would require fighting the rebels who defended them, who would then in turn be defended by their tribesmen from Iraq and Egypt, which would effectively lead to an all-out civil war. This is why Sayyidunā ‘Alī felt it best to let it rest for the time being until such time where action could be taken.

The rebels kept raising complaints against the governors of ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, amongst their chief complaints against Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, even though unfounded and void of substance. Nonetheless, in an effort to appease them and return stability to the Khilāfah, Sayyidunā ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ decided to replace all the governors. He then instructed all the rebels from the various regions to return to their countries, as now no excuse remained for them. A few returned but many stayed behind under the pretext that they wished to protect ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ. Sayyidunā ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ insisted that they depart but they refused.

Sayyidunā Mu‘āwiyah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, who was the cousin of ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, and the governor of Syria since the Khilāfah of Sayyidunā ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, refused to step down until the murderers were brought to justice or handed over to him to deal

with. Thus, another possible problem seemed to be looming on the horizon.

Six months later, Sayyidunā Ṭalḥah and Sayyidunā Zubayr took permission to perform 'Umrah. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها when returning to Madīnah after Ḥajj had received the news of the martyrdom of 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه and, thus, returned to Makkah. The governor of Sayyidunā 'Uthmān of Yemen, Sayyidunā Ya'lā ibn Umayyah, when he learnt of 'Uthmān being surrounded had left with an army to defend him. However, when he reached Makkah, he received the news of his martyrdom. Sayyidunā 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Āmir ibn Kurayz, who was the governor of Baṣrah under Sayyidunā 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه also came to Makkah, with his wealth and some men.

Here they began to discuss the situation: the instability in Madīnah, the rebels refusal to obey, the murderers of 'Uthmān still free, and the possibility of confrontation between Sayyidunā 'Alī and Sayyidunā Mu'āwiyah رضي الله عنه. All agreed that the unity of the Ummah had been fragmented by the insurrection of the rebels and that steps needed to be taken for reconciliation. This is further supported by the verse:

وَإِنْ طَائِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اقْتَتَلُوا فَأَصْلَحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا

The core issue lay in the issue of bringing the murderers of 'Uthmān to justice. Thus, they thought that the best way to achieve this would be to travel to the various regions and seek assistance from the noble people of each region by informing them of the wrong that had been done to 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه. In so doing, the support of the rebels would be cut off and the rebels be brought to justice swiftly thereafter. They, thus, decided to set out towards Iraq, and first of all to Baṣrah. Sayyidunā Ṭalḥah and Sayyidunā Zubayr رضي الله عنه urged Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها to accompany the army, as her presence—being the beloved wife of the Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم and Mother of the Believers—would only inspire others to join this reconciliatory movement. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها agreed, and accompanied by her nephew, 'Abd Allāh ibn Zubayr—her sister Asmā's son—accompanied the army.

When they arrived at Baṣrah, the newly appointed governor of 'Alī رضي الله عنه, Sayyidunā 'Uthmān ibn Ḥunayf رضي الله عنه, enquired their reason for coming. They replied that they had come for the purpose of reconciliation in the Ummah, as the rebels have spread anarchy and until they are not brought to justice, the Ummah cannot reconcile.

When the people of Baṣrah heard of their intentions, they were joined by many from Baṣrah. 'Uthmān ibn Ḥunayf رضي الله عنه tried his best to maintain calm but a group from Baṣrah who had been part of those that had laid siege upon 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه came out to confront them. They insisted upon fighting and a battle ensued with the majority of them being killed. The few who did escape, fled to their tribes who gave them refuge. Thereafter, Sayyidunā Ṭalḥah and Zubayr's army entered Baṣrah and letters were sent to the other regions informing them of what had transpired.

While this was transpiring, Sayyidunā 'Alī رضي الله عنه had already begun making preparations to go to Kūfah, thinking that in this way he would be closer to Syria and be able to get a better insight into what was happening there. He was now informed of what had transpired in Baṣrah. He felt it wiser to ascertain what was going on there first then attending to the situation in Syria. Keep in mind that this was a time very different to our own, information could not be conveyed by a phone call or even text message. Information was shared via correspondence, and this being a time of fitnah, was also compromised. Sayyidunā 'Alī رضي الله عنه thus felt it best to travel there himself.

Many Ṣaḥābah advised Sayyidunā 'Alī رضي الله عنه against this; in fact, they advised him not to leave Madīnah at all. And instead send reliable men to do so on his behalf. Nonetheless, Sayyidunā 'Alī رضي الله عنه left Madīnah with some 700 men and proceeded towards Kūfah first, from where his army was reinforced and now numbered 9700 men. Sayyidunā 'Alī رضي الله عنه then proceeded to Baṣrah.

When Sayyidunā 'Alī رضي الله عنه arrived, he sent Sayyidunā Qa'qā' ibn 'Amr al-Tamīmī to negotiate with them and ascertain

their motives. Sayyidunā Ṭalḥah and Sayyidunā Zubayr رضي الله عنه explained their stance: they have set out to bring about reconciliation in the Ummah. Sayyidunā Qā'qā' ibn 'Amr explained the view point of 'Alī رضي الله عنه, and emphasized the circumstances faced by him that has prompted him to delay the matter. These negotiations were successful and an agreement was reached. Both armies spend the night in peace, thinking that unity was going to be achieved and the next day the forces of 'Alī رضي الله عنه would be strengthened.

One group, however, did not rest easy. They spent the worst night of their lives. These were the rebels. They were besides themselves with worry. They were worried that if 'Alī رضي الله عنه was ready to reconcile with the army of Ṭalḥah and Zubayr رضي الله عنه—who were calling for the apprehending of the culprits—it could only mean that he too has agreed to hand them over or fight them. Ibn Saba' offered them the solution, he told them that they should split into two groups: a group should mix with their friends and tribesmen from the army of Ṭalḥah and Zubayr, while the other group should mix with their tribesmen in the army of 'Alī. As soon as first light dawns each party should begin attacking the opposite party, and before anyone realizes what is going on they will fight each other. “This way our necks will be saved and they will kill each other,” and this is exactly what they did.

The next morning, Ṣaḥābah were awoken to the clanging of swords and arrows raining down. Ṭalḥah and Zubayr tried to restrain their troops, but their members inform them they are pulling back, it is the opposite army that insists on advancing; we are merely defending ourselves. 'Alī tries to call his troops back, but they respond in a similar fashion that it is the opposite party that insists on advancing. The rebels making sure that the battle continues. However, the efforts of Sayyidunā 'Alī, Ṭalḥah, and Zubayr رضي الله عنه did manage to contain the situation somewhat and the only fighting that took place was defensive in nature, with those who insisted on advancing, while the rest desisted. Each army was not determined to destroy the entire opposite army.

When the fighting did not stop, Sayyidunā Zubayr رضي الله عنه left the battlefield, as he felt this was not what he had wanted nor what he was working to achieve. Sayyidunā Zubayr رضي الله عنه in addition to being the cousin of Sayyidunā 'Alī رضي الله عنه, had handed over his right to be appointed as Khalīfah to Sayyidunā 'Alī رضي الله عنه when he was appointed to the electoral committee by Sayyidunā 'Umar رضي الله عنه. He saw Sayyidunā 'Alī رضي الله عنه as the most worthy for the post of Khalīfah at that time and did not dispute this in the least. Thus, he did not wish to participate in any fighting against him, and thus left. He was pursued by Ibn Jurmuz, who then attacked and killed him while he was performing ṣalāh.

Sayyidunā Ṭalḥah رضي الله عنه on the other hand was in the battlefield, trying to stop the fighting. He was then struck by an arrow and also martyred. The two main leaders were, thus, martyred and this only led to the fighting intensifying. Seeing this, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها tried get both groups to stand down. So, she sent, Ka'b ibn Sūr—the Qāḍī of Baṣrah—with a Muṣḥaf to call the people to resolve their matter according to the Qur'ān, namely the verse:

وَإِنْ طَائِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اقْتَتَلُوا فَأَصْلَحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا

But he was attacked and martyred. She then spurred her camel on the Battlefield, hoping that people would lower their swords in her honour. However, the rebels now made her a target of their attack, and fired numerous arrows in her direction. The more the rebels tried to reach her, the more the opposite army sought to defend her.

Sayyidunā 'Alī رضي الله عنه seeing that the battle was now revolving around her carriage, sent her brother, Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr and his own sons, to sever the legs of the camel and bring her to safety. They acted as instructed and after the camel was killed and Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها brought to safety, the battle ended.

This was indeed a grievous day for this Ummah, and it brings tears to the eyes when we think of it; this was the day in which we lost the Ḥawārī of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم—Sayyidunā Zubayr رضي الله عنه—and Sayyidunā Ṭalḥah رضي الله عنه—the protector

of the Prophet ﷺ.

When Ibn Jurmuz came to Sayyidunā ‘Alī with the sword of Sayyidunā Zubayr, informing him that he had killed the latter, hoping for some reward or congratulations, Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه said, “Give the tidings of Hell Fire for the one who has killed the son of Ṣafīyyah رضي الله عنها,” that is Sayyidunā Zubayr رضي الله عنه. He then held the sword of Zubayr رضي الله عنه in his hand and said, “I don’t know how many times I have seen Zubayr defending the Prophet ﷺ with this very sword, and the tears were streaming down his cheeks.

Later, when Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه was walking in the battlefield, looking at the slain he came across the body of Sayyidunā Ṭalḥah رضي الله عنه, he fell to his knees besides it and exclaimed, “O Abū Muḥammad, how it grieves me to see you here lying slain beneath the sun.” He then kissed the hand of Sayyidunā Ṭalḥah رضي الله عنه—the hand that had become paralyzed while defending the Prophet ﷺ during the Battle of Uḥud. And he began to weep, and said to his son Ḥasan رضي الله عنه, “O my son, how I wish I had died twenty years before this day.” This was a sad and tragic day, one cannot even imagine the anguish that was going through the heart of Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه. They had barely had time to fully mourn the loss of Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه and recover from his departure, when he was afflicted with the loss of another of his two friends: Ṭalḥah and Zubayr رضي الله عنهما.

Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه instructed his army, “Do not attack any woman, do not take any captive, do not pursue those who flee, do not gather any of the spoils.” Showing that Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه did not regard this as a proper battle, but rather as an unintended skirmish or clash of swords that happened against all their wishes. This is the reality of what transpired. Neither party set out with the intention to fight the other, it was the rebels and hypocrites who took advantage of the situation and exploited it to their advantage.

The enemies of Islam love to portray this event as the Ṣaḥābah fighting the Ṣaḥābah, intending thereby to tarnish their reputation; whereas the reality is that the vast majority of the Ṣaḥābah did not join either party. The bulk of the armies were made up of people from Kūfah and Baṣrah. Those Ṣaḥābah who were present, tried their level best to prevent the fighting and thereafter end it after it began against their wishes.

In order to lend credence to their allegation against the Ṣaḥābah, the enemies of Islam exaggerated the number of people that were slain in this skirmish. Some say 20 000, others 30 000, and even greater numbers were reported, whereas the armies from both sides jointly do not reach this amount. The names of those whose names have been recorded as slain in the Battle of Jamal does not reach 100, were we to double that, then the more accurate figure would be approximately 200 people, especially when we consider that the bulk of the fighting was of a defense nature, rather than offensive. Furthermore, the battle lasted for only a part of the day and was concluded by the mid-afternoon.

In battles such as Yarmūk, which was an all out battle against the Roman empire that lasted for six days only 3000 were martyred. Then in the Battle of Qādisiyyah which was another great battle that took place, this time against the mighty Persian Empire who had an army of elephants, there too we find only 8500 were martyred. This supports the conclusion that the number of those slain in this incident was not as the enemies of Islam have portrayed.

This is the incident of Jamal, and needs to be understood according to reliable sources and authentic narrations, and be wary of those false reports that seek to tarnish the names of the Ṣaḥābah and paint them in a way other than how Allah has described them:

رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ

Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Allah.

We end of with the verse of the Qur'ān:

وَالَّذِينَ جَاءُوا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلًّا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ رَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ

Those who come after them [the Ṣaḥābah], say, “Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in faith and put not in our hearts [any] resentment toward those who have believed. Our Lord, indeed You are Kind and Merciful.” [Ḥashr: 10]