



REVEALING  
THE TRUTH

## Obedience to the Prophet[saww]; the pen & paper episode

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### Is obedience to Rasulullah (s) conditional or unconditional

We read in Surah al Hadeed "**Oh you who believe, fear Allah and believe in his Prophet**". The words "oh you who believe" illustrate that Allah is addressing the Muslims and in particular addressing the Companions of the Prophet during the time of the verse's revelation. Allah's command to the Companions to "believe in the Prophet" suggests that even during the Prophet's (s) lifetime there existed those who believed in Allah but did not possess a correct belief in the Prophet (s), hence necessitating the revelation of such a verse. Thus, as Muslims we cannot truly believe until we believe in the Prophet (s). Consequently if we have doubts in what the Prophet says and commands, then naturally our belief in the Prophet is flawed.

#### Clear Unconditional Obedience

Surah al Maidah verse 92 "**Obey Allah and Obey his Prophet and worry, and be warned that the Prophet's duty is only to deliver the message clearly**"

Surah Mujadilah verses 12-13 "**Perform Salat (Prayer), give Zakat and Obey Allah and his Prophet**"

Both these noble verses clarify the matter unambiguously. Allah commands the Muslims in the Qur'an to obey Allah - unconditionally - and furthermore to obey the Prophet - once more, unconditionally.

#### Duty only to convey the message clearly

Surah Nur verse 54 "**Obey Allah and his Prophet and if you dispute, then on him is what is imposed on him, and on you is what is imposed on you; and if you obey him you are guided aright; and there is no duty on the Prophet save the clear delivery**".

This verse also makes it clear that if one obeys the Prophet in this way, only then will one be rightly guided, and that the Prophet's duty is only to convey the message.

Surah Aal-e-Imran verse 32 Say, "**Obey Allah and the Prophet, but if they turn back, then verily Allah does not love the disbelievers**"

#### Never dismiss the words of the Prophet (s)

Surah Anfal verse 20: "**O ye who believe! Obey Allah and His Messenger, and turn not away from him when ye hear (him speak).**"

#### No one can overrule anything that the Prophet (s) said

Surah AL-AHZAB, verse 36: "**It is not fitting for a Believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by Allah and His Messenger to have any**

**option about their decision: if any one disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he is indeed on a clearly wrong Path**"

Thus, whatever decision the Prophet makes, is from Allah and any attempt to change this by a Muslim shows that this person has gone astray from the Right Path.

#### An invitation to Ahl'ul Sunnah to ponder and think

Now with these verses in mind let us turn to the famous sermon delivered by the Prophet (s) during the Hajj at Mount Arafat: "**I am leaving you two weighty things, if you follow them you will never go astray, they are the Qur'an and my Ahlul'bayt**". The words here "Lum ta'zilo bah'dee" is an absolute guarantee that if one follows these two things, one will **never** go astray. The sermon was announced to the Companions, thus proving that even they were liable of going astray if they turned away from these two sources, since the Prophet was informing the Companions - and all Muslims who hear the message - that if they leave these two sources, they will go astray.

### The traditions (s) relating to the pen and paper episode

#### The Prophet (s) wanted to compose a will

We learn from the traditions that towards the end of his noble life, the Prophet's (s) condition was deteriorating. The majority opinion holds that the Prophet (s) left no will before his death, and made no attempt to do so. However, according to the Qur'an it is absolutely obligatory on all Muslims to leave a will. Allah (swt) says in his Glorious Book:

**"It is prescribed for you when death approaches one of you, if he leaves behind any goods that he makes a bequest for Parents and (the nearest kinsmen) in goodness, this is a duty upon the pious"** (The Qur'an 2:180).

We may thus ask the question: Would the Prophet of Allah (s) of all Muslims - the one whose Sunnah we are obliged to follow - disregard an order stipulated in the Holy Qur'an?

#### The Holy Prophet (s) requests that writing materials be brought to him

This is what we read in Sahih al-Bukhari as narrated by Ibn 'Abbas: **When the time of the death of the Prophet approached while there were some men in the house, and among them was 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab, the Prophet said:**" Come near let me write for you a writing after which you will never go astray." 'Umar said: "**The Prophet is seriously ill, and you have the Qur'an, so Allah's Book is sufficient for us.**" The People in the house differed and disputed. Some of them said, "**Come near so that Allah's Apostle may**

**write for you a writing after which you will not go astray," while the others said what 'Umar said. When they made much noise and quarrelled greatly in front of the Prophet, he said to them, "Go away and leave me." Ibn 'Abbas used to say, "It was a great disaster that their quarrel and noise prevented Allah's Apostle from writing a statement for them. [Sahih al Bukhari Arabic-English Volume 9 hadith number 468 and Volume 7 hadith 573 ]**

The Prophet asks to write final instructions before his death, and evidently these instructions were to be his last will and testament, to prevent the Muslim Ummah from going astray. He commands in the capacity of the Seal of the Prophets and Allah's Messenger: **'Bring me a bone of scapula, so that I may write something for you after which you will never go astray.'** What is our obligation as Muslims here at this crucial time in particular? No doubt, to hear and obey, for as the Qur'an says in Surah al Maidah verse 92 **"Obey Allah and Obey his Prophet and worry, and be warned that the Prophet's duty is only to deliver the message clearly";**

But what is the reaction of the Companions to the Prophet's apparent attempt to write his will, and to guide the Ummah? Bukhari reports from Ibn Abbas: **'The people differed in their opinions although it was improper to differ in front of a prophet, They said, 'What is wrong with him? Do you think he is talking no sense (delirious)? Ask him (to see if he is talking no sense). [Sahih Bukhari V 9 #468]** Indeed, not only did they disobey the Prophet and quarrel with each other in front of him in contradiction to the clear command of Allah to obey the Prophet and not to turn away from him, they even spoke down to the Seal of Prophets: **"What is wrong with him?"**

### **The Holy Prophet (s) was accused of speaking deliriously**

The Prophet was clearly not asking something out of the ordinary - just a pen and paper. Yet we read that some of the companions intervened and said the Prophet was talking no sense! The phrase 'no sense' is in itself extremely insulting, particularly since it was directed to someone as great as the Prophet (s) the greatest man of all time. The words they used in response to the Prophet's order were **'this man is speaking yahjur'**; the word actually means 'incoherent speech - nonsense'. In that there is no doubt, Yahjur comes from the root word **"hajara"**. According to Hans Wehr's "A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic edited by J. Milton Cowan" Hans Wehr's "A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic"6 edited by J. Milton Cowan, 3rd edition - Publishers Ithaca, New York" - page 1019

Hajara means "To emigrate; to give up; to abandon; **TO TALK NONSENSE**"

In other words, the Companions actually accused the Messenger of Allah [s] of being in a state of delirium. In the English translation of Tabari, the translator has

remained faithful to the Arabic text. He narrates from Ibn Abbas: **"The Messenger of God said bring me a tablet (lawh) and an inkpot (dawat), so that I can write for you a document, after which you will not go astray". Some people said that the Messenger of God was talking deliriously". [History of Tabari, Volume 9 translated by Ismail. K. Poonawala p 175 ]**

### **Elucidation of the Truth**

The words used by Rasulullah (s) are particularly of significant: **"Come near let me write for you a writing after which you will never go astray."** The Prophet (s) at Arafat said similar words as we have mentioned **"I am leaving among you two things if you follow them you will never go astray"**. These two sources - the Qur'an and the Ahlul Bayt -complimented one another, and would be the eternal source of guidance. Whilst some people may assert that no one can pre-empt what the Prophet (s) wanted to write, there is nevertheless a clear link between what the Prophet (s) was saying on his death bed and what he had said at Mount Arafat. At Arafat the Prophet spoke of two things, adherence to which would prevent the people from going astray for all eternity. Similarly on his deathbed the Prophet (s) likewise wanted to write a document in the form of clear and final instructions which would ensure that the Ummah would never go astray after him, and which would suffice as written proof of the Prophet's last will. This can be read in Commentary of al Bukhari, Ibn Hajr al Asqalani, commenting on the Prophet's words, **"I will write a document" states that "the Prophet's (s) intention was to nominate a successor after him"**. [Fath al Bari, by Ibn Hajr al Asqalani, Vol 8 p 101]

### **The consequence of the Pen and paper episode**

Allamah Shahrastani in his famous books on divisions in Islam states that the origin of dispute amongst the companions owes its origin to this very tragic episode. He writes:

**"the first dispute that took place during the Prophet's sickness, according to what the Imam Abu Abdullah Muhammad b. Isma'il al-Bukhari relates on the authority of Abdullah b. Abbas, is as follows: When the last sickness of the Prophet became acute, he said, 'Bring me an inkpot and writing material; I shall write something for you so that you will not be led astray after my departure'. Umar said, 'the Prophet has been overcome by pain, God's Book is sufficient for us'. A noisy argument arose among those gathered; whereupon the Prophet said 'Go away there should be no quarrelling in my presence'. Ibn Abbas says, 'What a tragedy which prevented us from having some writing of the Prophet!'"**

Al Mihal al Nahal, by Allamah Muhummud b. Add'al Karim Shahrastani, page 18 - English translation by A.K.Kazi and J.G.Flynn (publishers Kegan Paul International, First Edition 1984)