

A Useful Debate on the Merits of Being a party of BAI'AT-E-RIZWAN

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You said that since the sahaba were at the Bai'at-e-Rizwan and pledged their fealty to the Prophet, they were not subject to condemnation, but deserved praise because they are the referents of the holy verse you cited (48:18). Research scholars and ulema have commented extensively on this topic, saying that the divine pleasure of this verse refers only to the particular action, Bai'at (allegiance), and that it does not extend indefinitely.

You are aware yourselves that on the occasion of the Bai'at in Hudaibiyya, there were 1,500 people of the community present, of whom afterwards a number of people were included in the 'verses of hypocrisy'. Allah promised them Hell for ever. Is it possible that Allah and the Prophet might be pleased with some people and that some of them might remain in hell forever? It follows that the divine pleasure was not due to the Bai'at-e-Shajara (allegiance under the tree) alone, but was based on sincere faith and good deeds. Those who believed in divine unity and Prophethood and pledged fealty deserved divine pleasure. They were declared to be the people of Paradise. But those who paid allegiance without faith, or who did not pay allegiance, deserved His wrath. Obviously, the Sahaba performed commendable actions, and for their good actions (like allegiance under the tree) they should be praised. And even if a believer, whether he be a sahabi or not, commits a fault, he may be criticized.

SHIAS DO ACKNOWLEDGE MERITS OF SAHABA

The Shia sect has always reported the good performances of the sahaba. Moreover, it acknowledges the good performance even of those who have been the targets of sharp criticisms. For instance, it appreciates their allegiance under the tree, their migration with the Holy Prophet, taking part in battles, but it also criticizes and condemns their bad actions. Hafiz: I'm surprised to hear you say that the Prophet's companions committed misdeeds. The Prophet declared each of them the guide and leader of the community. He said in a well known hadith: "Verily, my companions are like stars; if you follow any one of them, you will be guided."

Your faith is distinctly unconventional, and we do not accept unconventional faith.

HADITH OF "FOLLOWING COMPANIONS" EXAMINED

Well-Wisher: I am constrained to discuss some aspects of this hadith before I venture to reply. Of course we will not talk about the source, correctness, or weakness of the hadith by way of

criticism, for we would drift from the main point. Our discussion will focus on its meaning. Those who were blessed with the honor of seeing the Holy Prophet, or who had narrated hadith from him, are called sahaba and ashab (companions) whether they were emigres (muhajir) from Mecca or those who helped them (ansars) in Medina or others. The greatest misunderstanding among you is that, on account of your good will towards the companions, you consider all of them free from all faults although the fact is otherwise. Among the companions of the Holy Prophet, there were both good and bad people, of whom Allah and His Prophet were fully aware. This can well be proved by the chapter Munafiqun (Hypocrites) and verses of some other chapters, like Tauba also known as Al-Bara'a (The Immunity) and Ahzab (The Clans), which were revealed in condemnation of companions who were hypocrites and sinners. Your own prominent ulema have recorded some of the companions' faults and misdeeds in their authentic books. Hisham Bin Muhammad Sa'yib Kalbi, one of the illustrious ulema of your sect has compiled a book on the faults and defects of the sahaba.

The hypocrites, whom Allah Almighty (in the Holy Qur'an) and the Holy Prophet have condemned, were two-faced people, who were Muslims in appearance only. Their hearts were stained with corruption and misguidance; and all of them were included in the companions. So how can we have goodwill towards all the companions? And how can we be sure that following any of them will ensure salvation? Is it not a fact that in the affair of Aqaba there were companions who appeared to be faithful but were determined to kill the Holy Prophet?

AQABA AFFAIR AND DESIGN TO KILL HOLY PROPHET

Hafiz: Some ulema consider the Aqaba affair the invention of the Shias.

Well-Wisher: It is unkind of you to rely on the beliefs of some who have the mentality of the Kharijis and Nasibis. This affair is so clearly known to all that your own ulema have acknowledged it.

Please refer to Dala'ilu'n-Nabuwat compiled by Hafiz Abu Bakr Ahmad Bin Husain Baihaqi Shafi'i, who is one of your eminent scholars and jurists. He has recorded the story of Batn-e-Aqaba with an authentic chain of narrators; and also Imam Ahmad Bin Hanbal, towards the end of v. V of his Musnad, reports from Abu Tufail, and Ibn Abi'l-Hadid writes in his Sharhe Nahju'l-Balagha, and it is known to all the ulema, that the Holy Prophet on that night cursed a group of the companions.

Nawab: What was the matter, and who were those who wanted to kill the Holy Prophet?

Well-Wisher: The great ulema of both sects have written that on Muhammad's way back from

the Tabuk expedition, fourteen hypocrites conspired to kill him. The plan was to push him from his camel into a precipice as he rode by night over al-Aqaba, a narrow passage through which only one man could pass. When they tried to execute their design, the Angel Gabriel informed the Holy Prophet of it. The Holy Prophet sent Hudhaifa Nakha'i to hide behind a hill. When the conspirators arrived and talked together, he recognized them all. Of them seven belonged to the Umayyads. Hudhaifa came to the Holy Prophet and named all of them. The Holy Prophet ordered him to keep the plot secret and said that Allah was their guard. In the early part of the night, the Holy Prophet began the journey, followed by his army. Ammar-e-Yasir led the camel from the front and Hudhaifa drove it from behind. When they reached the narrow passage, the hypocrites threw their leather bags full of sand (or their oil-cans) before the camel making a huge noise, hoping that the frightened animal would throw the Holy Prophet down the steep cliff. But Allah Almighty protected him and the conspirators fled away in the crowd. Were these people not included among the companions? Is it true that to follow them means the path of guidance? When we talk of the companions of the Holy Prophet of Allah why should we shut our eyes to their faults?

THE PROPHET NEVER BADE US FOLLOW LIARS

I have referred in past nights to Abu Huraira's character, telling you that Caliph Umar had lashed him because he used to quote false hadith from the Prophet. Was he not among the companions? Had he not falsely narrated a large number of hadith? Similarly, were not the other companions, like Sumra Bin Junda, included among them? Can the Holy Prophet of Allah order the community to follow liars and forgers? If this hadith is correct, that is, that if we follow any one of the companions, we will be guided, then please let us know whom we should follow, if two companions go in opposite directions. Or if there are two groups of them, each fighting against the other, or each contrary to the other, whom should we support?

Hafiz: First, the revered companions of the Prophet of Allah were never hostile to each other. And even if one opposed the other, we should assess the facts properly. The one who is purer and whose statement is more logical should be followed.

Well-Wisher: If, according to your statement, we made careful inquiries and found one of them pure and on the right side, then the opposite group of the ahab must be impure and on the wrong side. Then this hadith basically loses credence because it is impossible that disagreeing companions can both be sources of guidance.

OPPOSITION OF COMPANIONS AT SAQIFA

If this hadith is genuine why do you raise objection against the Shias because they followed a group of the companions like Salman, Abu Dharr, Miqdad, Ammar-e-Yasir Abu Ayyub Ansari, Hudhaifa Nakha'i and Khuzaima Dhu'sh-Shahadatain, etc., to whom I have referred in past nights? These men certainly did not pledge fealty to Abu Bakr. Therefore, of the companions who opposed each other, who was on the right side? Decidedly one was on the wrong side though the hadith you have quoted tells us that we may follow any of the companions and be guided.

SA'D BIN UBAIDA'S OPPOSITION TO ABU BAKR AND UMAR

Was Sa'd Bin Ubaida not one of the companions who did not pay allegiance to Abu Bakr and Umar? All the Shia and Sunni historians unanimously hold that he went to Syria and lived there until in the middle of the caliphate of Umar, he was murdered. So following him and opposing .Abu Bakr and Umar, according to this hadith is the path of guidance