

## Sermon 67: Why didn't you argue ...

*When after the death of the Prophet, news reached Amir al-mu'minin about the happening in Saqifah of Bani Sa'idah, 1 he enquired what the Ansar said. People said that they were asking for one chief from among them and one from the others, Amir al-mu'minin said:*

ومن كلام له (عليه السلام)

في معنى الانصار

قالوا: لما انتهت إلى أمير المؤمنين (عليه السلام) أنباء السقيفة بعد وفاة رسول الله (صلى الله عليه وآله)،

قال (عليه السلام): ما قالت الانصار؟

قالوا: قالت: منا أمير ومنكم أمير، قال عليه السلام: .

Why did you not argue against them (*ansar*) that the Prophet had left his will that whoever is good among Ansar should be treated well and whoever is bad should be forgiven.

**People said:** "What is the proof against them in it?"

**Amir al-mu'minin said:**

"If the Government was for them there should have been no will in their favour."

**Then he said:**

"What did the Quraysh plead?"

**People said:** "They argued that they belong to the lineal tree of the Prophet.

**Then Amir al-mu'minin said:**

"They defended themselves with the plea of the tree but neglected the fruit."

قال (عليه السلام): فَهَلَّا احْتَجَجْتُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ: بِأَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ (صلى الله عليه وآله) وَصَّى بِأَنَّ يُحْسَنَ إِلَى مُحْسِنِهِمْ، وَيُتَجَاوَزَ عَنْ مُسِيئِهِمْ؟

قالوا: وما في هذا من الحجّة عليهم؟

فقال (عليه السلام): لَوْ كَانَتْ اِامَارَةٌ فِيهِمْ لَمْ تَكُنِ اِوَصِيَّةً بِهِمْ.

ثم قال: فَمَاذَا قَالَتْ قُرَيْشٌ؟

قالوا: احتجت بأنها شجرة الرسول (صلى الله عليه وآله).

فقال (عليه السلام): احْتَجُّوا بِالشَّجَرَةِ، وَأَضَاعُوا الثَّمَرَةَ.

## Alternative Sources for Sermon 67

- (1) Al-Nuwayri, *Nihayah*, VIII, 168;
- (2) al-'Amidi, *Ghurar*, 326;
- (3) al-Karajiki, *al-Ta'ajjub*, 13;
- (4) al-Jawhari, *al-Saqifah*, see Ibn Abi al-Hadid, II, at the beginning;
- (5) al-Tabari, *Ta'rikh*, VI, 263;
- (6) Ibn 'Abd al-Birr, *al-'Isti'ab*, in the account of 'Awf ibn Athathah;
- (7) al-Mas'udi, *Muruj*;
- (8) al-Tawhidi, *al-Basa'ir*, 59;
- (9) al-Murtada, *al-'Amali*, I, 198.

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1. From what happened in the Saqifah of Bani Sa'idah it appears that the greatest argument of muhajirun against ansar and the basis of the former's success was this very point that since they were the kith and kin of the Prophet no one else could deserve the Caliphate. On this very ground the big crowd of ansar became ready to lay down their weapons before three muhajirun, and the latter succeeded in winning the Caliphate by presenting their distinction of descent. Thus in connection with the events of Saqifah al-Tabari writes that when the ansar assembled in Saqifah of Bani Sa'idah to swear allegiance on the hand of Sa'd ibn 'Ubadah, somehow Abu Bakr, 'Umar and Abu 'Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah also got the hint and reached there. 'Umar had thought out something for this occasion and he rose to speak but Abu Bakr stopped him, and he himself stood up. After praise of Allah and the immigration of the muhajirun and their precedence in Islam he said: They are those who worshipped Allah first of all and accepted belief in Allah and his Prophet's friends and his Kith and Kin. These alone therefore must deserve the Caliphate. Whoever clashes with them commits excess.

When Abu Bakr finished his speech al-Hubab ibn al-Mundhir stood up and, turning to the ansar, he said: "O' group of ansar ! Do not give your reins in the hands of others. The populace is under your care. You are men of honour, wealth and tribe and gathering. If the muhajirun have precedence over you in some matters you too have precedence over them in other matters. You gave them refuge in your houses. You are the fighting arm of Islam. With your help Islam stood on its own feet. In your cities prayer of Allah was established with freedom. Save yourselves from division and dispersion and stick to your right unitedly. If the muhajirun do not concede to your right tell them there should be one chief from us and one from them."

No sooner al-Hubab sat down after saying this then 'Umar rose and spoke thus:

This can't be that there be two rulers at one time. By Allah, the Arabs will never agree to have you as the head of the state since the Prophet was not from amongst you. Certainly, the Arabs will not care the least objection in that the Caliphate is allowed to one in whose house Prophethood rests so that the ruler should also be from the same house. For those who dissent clear arguments can be put forth. Whoever comes in conflict with us in the matter of the authority and rulership of Muhammad (S) he is leaning towards wrong, is a sinner and is falling into destruction.

After 'Umar, al-Hubab again stood up and said to the ansar, "Look, stick to your point and do not pay heed to the views of this man or his supporters. They want to trample your right, if they do not consent turn him and them out of your cities and appropriate the Caliphate. Who else than you can deserve it more?"

When al-Hubab finished `Umar scolded him. There was use of bad words from that side also, and the position began to worsen. On seeing this Abu `Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah spoke with the intention of cooling down ansar and to win them over to his side and said: "O' ansar ! You are the people who supported us and helped us in every manner. Do not now change your ways and do not give up your behaviour." But the ansar refused to change their mind. They were prepared to swear allegiance to Sa`d and people just wanted to approach him when a man of Sa`d's tribe Bashir ibn `Amr al-Khazraji stood up and said:

"No doubt we came forward for jihad, and gave support to the religion, but our aim in doing thus was to please Allah and to obey His Prophet. It does not behove us to claim superiority and create trouble in the matter of the caliphate. Muhammad (S) was from Quraysh and they have a greater right for it, and are more appropriate for it." As soon as Bashir uttered these words division occurred among the ansar, and this was his aim, because he could not see a man of his own tribe rising so high. The muhajirun took the best advantage of this division among the ansar, and `Umar and Abu `Ubaydah decided to swear allegiance to Abu Bakr. They had just got forward for the act when Bashir first of all put his hand on that of Abu Bakr and after that `Umar and Abu `Ubaydah swore the allegiance. Then the people of Bashir's tribe came and swore allegiance, and trampled Sa`d ibn `Ubadah under their feet.

During this time Amir al-mu'minin was occupied in the funeral bath and burial of the Prophet. When afterwards he heard about the assemblage at the Saqifah and he came to know that the muhajirun had won the score over ansar by pleading themselves to be from the tribe of the Prophet he uttered the fine sentence that then argued on the lineal tree being one but spoiled its fruits, who are the members of his family. That is, if muhajirun's claim was acceded for being from the lineal tree of the Prophet, how can those who are the fruits of this tree be ignored? It is strange that Abu Bakr who connects with the Prophet in the seventh generation above and `Umar who connects with him in the ninth generation above may be held of the tribe and family of the Prophet and he who was his first cousin, he is refused the status of a brother.

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