

# Mu`awiyah Answers Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr's Letter

*From Mu`awiyah son of Sakhr to the one who faults his own father, Muhammad son of Abu Bakr:*

## **Peace unto those who obey Allah.**

I have received your letter wherein you state what Allah has indicated of His Greatness, Might, and Omnipotence, and what He bestowed upon the Messenger of Allah, in addition to a great deal of talk which you authored to your own liking and which faults you and is offensive to your father.

In it you stated the merits of the son of Abu Talib and his age-old feats and kinship to the Messenger of Allah, his having supported and solaced the Prophet in each and every precarious and perilous situation. Your argument against me was produced by you praising someone else rather than demonstrating your own merits; so, you should praise the Lord Who has deprived you of such merits and bestowed them upon someone else.

I and your father used, during the life-time of our Prophet, to recognize the merits of Abu Talib's son, and the fact that his feats were greater than ours. When Allah chose for His Prophet (upon whom be peace and blessings) that which He has with him, completing His promise to him, permitting his mission to supersede that of all others, making his argument the uppermost, Allah caused him (blessings of Allah be upon him) to die.

Your father and his Farooq were the first to snatch his right away from him and dispute with him regarding what rightfully belonged to him. This is something which they both agreed upon and for which they coordinated their efforts. Then they invited him to swear the oath of allegiance to them, but he slackened and was hesitant, so they harbored evil intentions against him and plotted to kill him. He, therefore, swore the oath of allegiance to them later on and yielded.

Then their third person, Uthman, stood up to follow their guidance and walk in their footsteps, whereupon you and your friend faulted him for doing so. You did so to the extent that [you caused] even those who went to extremes in sinning to covet his post. You both harbored evil intentions against him till

you achieved your common goal.

So be on your guard, O son of Abu Bakr, for you will see the evil of your affair. And do measure your span according to your own measure: you will then neither equal nor parallel one whose vision weighs as much as a mountain. Do not incline to overpower him, for even the most far-sighted person cannot realize the limits of his patience.

It was your father who paved for him what he paved, building his domain. If our condition is sound, your father is the first to receive credit for it, but if it is oppression, then your father went to extremes in oppressing, and we all are his accomplices: It was his guidance that we followed and whose conduct we emulated.

Had it not been for what your father had done, we would not have disputed with the son of Abu Talib, and we would have surrendered to him. But we found your father doing so before us; therefore, we followed his example and emulated his deeds. Find fault with your father, then, for what he did, or refrain, and peace be with whoever returns to his senses, to the right guidance, and who repents. 1

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We conclude from reading this reply that Mu`awiyah does not deny any of the merits and feats of Ali ibn Abu Talib, but he dared to oppose him only to follow the path of Abu Bakr and Umar. Without the latter, he would not have undermined Ali's status, nor would anyone else have. Mu`awiyah also admits that Abu Bakr was the one who had paved for the government of Banu Umayyah and who set the foundations of their authority.

We also understand from this letter that Mu`awiyah did not emulate the Messenger of Allah, nor did he follow his guidance, admitting that Uthman followed the guidance of Abu Bakr and Umar, and that he followed in their footsteps.

Thus does it become quite obvious to us that they all had abandoned the Sunnah of the Prophet, each following the *bid'a* of the other. Mu`awiyah did not even deny his being a misguided person who traded in falsehood. Nor did he deny the fact that he and his father were cursed by the Prophet...

In order to generalize the benefit for everyone, there is no harm in mentioning the letter sent by Yazid son of Mu`awiyah to Umar's son [Abdullah] which, though brief, drives to the same conclusion.

In his *Tarikh*, al-Baladhuri states the following:

Once al-Husayn ibn Ali ibn Abu Talib (peace be upon both of them) was killed, Abdullah ibn Umar wrote a letter to Yazid ibn Mu`awiyah saying: "The calamity has surely intensified, and so has the catastrophe. An event of a great import has taken place in the history of Islam. No day can ever be like the day when al-Husayn was killed."

Yazid answered him saying, “You, fool! We only came to homes improved, beds prepared, and pillows piled up, so we fought over them! If right is on our side, then we simply defended our own right. But if right belongs to others, then your father was the first to start such a tradition, confiscating for himself that which belonged to others.”

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In Mu`awiyah's answer to the letter he received from Abu Bakr's son, as is the case with Yazid's answer to the letter he received from Umar's son, we find the same logic and the same argument. By my life, this is a necessity sanctioned by conscience and realized by any rational person, and it does not need, in truth, any testimony from Mu`awiyah or from his son Yazid.

Had it not been for the usurpation by Abu Bakr and Umar of Ali's right, no such a tragedy would have taken place in the history of the Islamic nation. And had Ali ascended the caliphate following the demise of the Messenger of Allah and ruled the Muslims, his caliphate would have lasted till the year 40 A.H./660 A.D., that is, for thirty years.<sup>2</sup>

Such a period of time would have been sufficient to set the foundations of Islam in all its roots and branches, and he, peace be upon him, would have been able to implement the injunctions embedded in the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger without anyone's distortion or personal interpretation.

When the caliphate, after Ali's demise, fell to the hands of persons other than the masters of the youth of Paradise, namely Imam al-Hasan and Imam al-Husayn, then to the remaining infallible Imams from his progeny (peace be upon them all), the government of the righteous caliphs would have continued for three full centuries.

After that, the unbelievers, the hypocrites, and the atheists would never have had any influence or existence. The earth would have been a different one, and the servants of Allah would also have been different; so, there is no might nor power except in Allah, the most Exalted One, the Great.

Remains to be discussed is an objection to this hypothesis raised by some “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`ah” from two different angles:

**FIRST:** They say that what happened was something chosen by Allah, and that had Allah willed to let Ali and the Imams from his offspring (peace be upon them) lead the Muslims, it would have been so. And they always repeat saying: “Good is whatever Allah wills.”

**SECOND:** They argue saying that had Ali become the caliph immediately after the Prophet and was followed by al-Hasan and al-Husayn, the caliphate would have turned hereditary, with sons inheriting their fathers, something the religion of Islam, which gave people the right of *shura*, does not sanction.

In order to respond and to remove the confusion, we would like to state the following:

**FIRST:** There is not a single proof that what happened was something desired and chosen by Allah; rather, arguments to the contrary are fixed in the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah. The Qur'an, for example says,

***“Had the people of the towns believed and feared (their Lord), We would have opened unto them blessings from the heavens and the earth, but they disbelieved, so We overtook them for what they were doing” (Holy Qur'an, 7:96).***

The Holy Qur'an also states:

***“Had they upheld the Torah and the Gospel and that which was revealed to them from their Lord, they would have eaten from above them, and from beneath their feet. Some of them keep to the moderate course, while most of them are doers of evil” (Holy Qur'an, 5:66).***

The Almighty also says,

***“What would Allah do with tormenting you so long as you thank and believe in Him? And Allah is Appreciative, Knowing” (Holy Qur'an, 13:11).***

All these clear verses convey the meaning that deviation, be it on an individual basis or on that of groups and nations, is something that comes from the latter, not from Allah.

There are proofs from the Prophet's Sunnah, too. The Messenger of Allah has said, “I have left among you the Book of Allah and my Progeny: so long as you uphold them (simultaneously), you will never stray after me.” He has also said, “Let me write you a book beyond which you will never stray.”

He has also said, “My nation shall be divided into seventy-three sects all of which, with the exception of one, will go to hell.” All these sacred traditions convey the meaning that the nation strays due to its own deviation and reluctance to accept what Allah has chosen for it.

**SECOND:** Suppose the Islamic caliphate was hereditary, it is not as they conceive it, that is, the ruler oppresses his subjects then prior to his death installs his son and calls him the heir apparent to the throne, even when both the father and his son are sinners. Rather, it is a divine inheritance chosen by the Lord of the World from Whose knowledge nothing is excluded, not even the weight of a mustard seed. And it is concerns a good band selected by Allah Who granted it the Book and the wisdom in order to lead the people; He has said,

***“And We made them Imams guiding (people) as We order them, and We inspired to them the doing of good deeds, the upholding of the prayers, and the payment of zakat, and they worshipped Us” (Holy Qur'an, 21:73).*** T

heir claim that Islam does not sanction such a hereditary government, that it lets people apply *shura*, is false; it is not supported by facts or by history. Ironically, they fell exactly in the abominable hereditary

system. Nobody took charge of the nation following the death of Imam Ali except the oppressors and usurpers who handed power over to their sinning offspring despite the will of the nation.

So which party is better: should the sinners who judge according to their own views and who submit only to their desires inherit it, or should the purified Imams whom Allah chose and from whom He removed all uncleanness, bestowing the knowledge of the Book upon them so that they might judge between the people with the truth and guide them to the right path and enable them to enter the Gardens of Eternity? Allah has said,

***“And Solomon was David's heir” (Holy Qur'an, 27: 16).***

I do not doubt that any rational person would choose anything but the second option, provided he is a Muslim! Since we are talking about the *status quo*, we cannot benefit from sighing over what has passed; so, let us resume the discussion of our topic to state the following:

Having succeeded in distancing the Commander of the Faithful from his post as caliph and in usurping the government for themselves, Abu Bakr and Umar belittled and insulted Ali, Fatima, and Ahlul Bayt, peace be upon all of them. It was then that Mu`awiyah's task, as well as that of Yazid, Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan and their likes, became very easy.

They both facilitated for Mu`awiyah and empowered him in the land till he remained the ruler of Syria for more than twenty years. He was never deposed. He attained power over the people, bending their necks to him and forcing them to do his bidding.

Then he handed the caliphate over to his son who, as he himself admitted (as cited above), found improved homes, spread beds, and pillows piled up; so, it was only natural that he should fight for such largesse and kill the fragrant flower of the Prophet without feeling remorseful. He had suckled the milk of his mother Maysoon which was filled with hatred towards Ahlul Bayt, and he grew up in the lap of his father who was accustomed to cursing and condemning Ahlul Bayt. No wonder, then, that he did what he did. Some poets admitted this same fact; one of them says:

Had it not been for the swords sharpened by the *Khaleefa*3,

I would have announced interesting

Statements about Muhammad's offspring,

And that al-Husayn was killed on the Day of the *Saqeefa*...

Any researcher investigating the government of Banu Umayyah will find credit for its establishment going to Abu Bakr and Umar. So is the case with the Abbaside and other [“Islamic”] governments as well. This is why we find the Umayyads and the Abbasides doing their best to laud Abu Bakr and Umar and invent virtues and attribute to them in order to prove their being most worthy of the caliphate. The Umayyads

and the Abbasides simply realized that their legitimacy could not be justified unless the caliphate of Abu Bakr and Umar was legitimized, and unless they both are described as fair and just.

We also find all of them oppressing Ahlul Bayt for no reason except their being the rightful owners of the caliphate. They, and only they, threatened their existence and authority.

This is common knowledge with rational people who know the truth. You can see nowadays some Islamic governments headed by kings who have neither merits nor virtues except their being the offspring of kings, sultans, and emirs just as Yazid was an emir when his father Mu`awiyah was a king who forced his authority on the nation by coercion.

So it is not reasonable to expect the kings and princess of Saudi Arabia to love Ahlul Bayt and those who follow them. And it is not reasonable to expect Saudi kings and princes to hate Mu`awiyah and Yazid and the constitution they set up for the ascension of the throne as well as other institutions.

It is from the constitution established by Mu`awiyah and Yazid and the rest of Umayyad and Abbaside rulers that our contemporary monarchs derive their legitimacy and justify their continuity.

It is from here, too, that the custom of sanctifying and favoring the three caliphs came. They are always described as just, and they are always defended. Nobody is permitted to criticize them or find any fault with them because they are the foundation upon which all governments since the Day of the Saqeefa were and will be established till Allah reigns as the Sole Ruler of the earth and everyone on it.

Upon such a basis do we come to understand why they chose for themselves the title of "Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`ah" while labelling others as Rafizis or atheists. This is so because Ali and his Ahlul Bayt rejected their government, refused to swear the oath of allegiance to them, and argued with them on every occasion. The rulers, therefore, took to belittling and despising, cursing and condemning, killing and expelling them...

It is through loving Ahlul Bayt, according to the Holy Qur'an, that we can express our gratitude to Allah for having blessed us with His Divine Message. So, if they were meted with such insults and killing, no wonder, then, that their Shi`as and those who accept them as the masters and are guided through them are meted with such oppression, persecution, discrimination, insults and excommunication. The outcome: One who is rightful is turned into an antagonized pariah, while followers of misguidance become role models and masters obedience to whom is mandatory on everyone.

Hence, whoever accepted them as the masters and followed Ali is labelled as the follower of *bid`a*, whereas whoever accepted the mastership of and followed Mu`awiyah is called a follower of the Sunnah and consensus...!

All Praise is due to Allah Who granted us reason whereby we can distinguish between truth and falsehood, light and darkness, black and white, and surely my Lord is on a Straight Path.

***“The blind and the seeing are not alike, nor are the darkness and the light, nor are the shade and the heat, nor are the living and the dead. Surely Allah makes whomsoever He pleases hear: you cannot make those in the graves hear.” (Holy Qur'an, 35: 19–22)***

Surely Allah says the truth.

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1. Jamharat Rasaail al-Arab, Vol. 1, p. 477. Al-Mas`udi, Muruj al-Dhahab, Vol. 2, p. 60. The Mu`tazilite scholar Ibn Abul-Hadid, Sharh Nahjul Balagha, Vol. 1, p. 284.
  2. Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman died during the life-time of Imam Ali .
  3. Arabic original of the loan word “caliph.”

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