

# The Last Sermon of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

## ***Introduction.***

All praise is to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds. And may His blessings descend upon His Beloved Messenger, Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

The last perceived sermon of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is well documented and known amongst the Muslims. On his farewell Hajj, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) ascended the Mountain of Arafah and delivered a beautiful sermon, surrounded by his devout Companions (may Allah be pleased with them). In an eloquent address, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) ordered Muslims to firmly adhere to the Qur'an and Sunna, and to treat one another fairly and justly.

Though the Prophet's sermon at Arafah was undoubtedly one of the largest he ever delivered, it was not his last public speech to the Muslims. This paper aims to highlight the *last* public sermon delivered by the Beloved Messenger, which he conducted in Madina Sharif. Like the one he delivered at Arafah, this sermon too is full of guidance and understanding. Additionally, the Prophet used this opportunity to express his confidence that he did not expect his followers to commit *Shirk* after him; he did however fear Muslims after him would fight over the world and in its contents. The Hadith also clearly indicates the true rank and status of the Beloved Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as given to him by Allah Almighty.

We know that this sermon was after the one he delivered in Arafah for the following reasons;

- The Hajj sermon took place in the fields of Arafah, in the outskirts of Makka in the month of Zul-Hajj, 10 A.H. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) returned to Madina Sharif, where he passed away in the month of Rabi al-Awwal. This sermon was definitely delivered in Madina Sharif, because it mentions the martyrs of Uhud; the Mountain of Uhud is on the outskirts of Madina.
- Secondly, the narrator of the Hadith is Uqba ibn Amir (may Allah be pleased with him). In the version mentioned by Imam Bukhari in his *Sahih*, Uqba states that 'this was my last glimpse of the Messenger of Allah.'<sup>1</sup> This clearly indicates that the sermon was one of the last acts of the Beloved Prophet.

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<sup>1</sup> *Sahih al-Bukhari*. Book of Maghazi (Expeditions); Chapter, the Battle of Uhud. Hadith no. 3736.

• Thirdly, the same report mentioned above includes the words ‘like a farewell for the alive and the deceased.’ In other words, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) meant this to be his farewell address to his followers. His prayer for the martyrs of Uhud was his farewell to the deceased, and his brief speech on the pulpit was the farewell to those still alive. Imam Nawawi adds that when the Prophet concluded his sermon, Nawas ibn Sam’an reports,

‘We said, O Messenger of Allah! As if this is the farewell advice (*Maw’iza*).’<sup>2</sup>

Based upon this evidence, it is erroneous to claim that the Prophet’s sermon in Arafa was his farewell speech. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) lived for at least another three months after Arafa. It is inconceivable that the Prophet did not make a public speech between this period and his worldly demise.

It is hoped that this Hadith Sharif will provide guidance for Muslims of this day and age. Readers will undoubtedly be astonished by the Prophet’s insight and words of wisdom. Owing to the importance of this sermon, a detailed analysis will be offered of it, as outlined by the great scholars of the past.

## **The Hadith.**

حدثنا عبد الله بن يوسف قال حدثنا الليث قال حدثنا يزيد بن أبي حبيب عن أبي الخير عن عقبه بن عامر :

أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم خرج يوماً فصلى علي أهل أحد صلواته علي الميت , ثم انصرف الي المنبر فقال : اني فرط عليكم و أنا شهيد عليكم , و اني و الله لانظر الي حوضي الان , و اني أعطيت مفاتيح خزائن الارض أو مفاتيح الارض , و اني ما أخاف عليكم أن تشركوا بعدي , و لكني أخاف عليكم أن تنافسوا فيها .

Abd Allah ibn Yusuf informed us; he said, Laith informed us; he said, Yazid ibn Abu Habib, from Abu al-Khair, from Uqba ibn Amir;

‘Indeed the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) left one day and performed Salah on the People of Uhud, the Salah of the deceased. Then he turned to the pulpit and said,

‘I am preceding you; and I am a witness over you. And indeed, by Allah, I am undoubtedly looking towards the *Hawdh* [right] now. And indeed I have been given the keys to the treasures of the earth, or the keys of the earth. And verily, I do not fear that you will commit polytheism after me. But I verily fear you will dispute with one another in it (i.e. the world).’

<sup>2</sup> *Sharh Sahih Muslim*. Imam Muhy al-Din ibn Sharf al-Nawawi (d. 676 A.H.) Vol. VIII, part XV, p. 60. Dar al-Fikr Publications, Beirut, 1981.

## **The Source of the Hadith.**

The above Hadith is taken from *Sahih al-Bukhari*, which is deemed as the most authentic book after the Holy Qur'an. Additionally, the chain for this particular Hadith has been declared as 'the most sound of chains.'<sup>3</sup> Imam Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bukhari mentions the Hadith in the following places in his *Sahih*;

- Book of Funeral Prayers.<sup>4</sup>
- Book of Expeditions (*Maghazi*).<sup>5</sup>
- Book of *Riqaq*.<sup>6</sup>

Other Hadith scholars who have recorded the same Hadith include;

- Imam Muslim ibn Hajjaj in *Sahih Muslim*.<sup>7</sup>
- Imam Nisa'i in *Sunan Nisa'i*.<sup>8</sup>
- Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal in *Musnad Ahmad*.<sup>9</sup>

## **Commentary on this Hadith from the renowned scholars.**

What follows is a brief analysis and commentary on this particular narration from the classical scholars.

**'Indeed the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) left one day and performed Salah on the People of Uhud, the Salah of the deceased.'**

Before leaving this world, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said his farewell to the martyrs of the Battle of Uhud. This battle occurred in the month of Shawwal in the third year of Hijrah<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> See *Irshad al-Sari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*. Allama Abu Abbas Shihab al-Din Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Qastalani (d. 923 A.H.), vol. II, p. 440. Dar al-Kitab al-Arabiyya Publications, Beirut, 1984.

<sup>4</sup> Chapter, the prayer upon the martyr; Hadith no. 1258.

<sup>5</sup> Chapter, *Uhud* loves us and we love *Uhud*. Hadith no. 3776.

<sup>6</sup> Chapter, the *Hawdh* (Pool), Hadith no. 6102; Chapter, what is warned against from the fruits of the world and dispute within it. Hadith no. 5946.

<sup>7</sup> Book of Superiorities; Chapter, the proving of the *Hawdh* of our Prophet; Hadith no. 4248.

<sup>8</sup> Book of Funeral Prayers, Chapter, the Prayer upon the martyrs. Hadith no. 1928. This narration does not mention the last part 'And verily, I do not fear that you will commit polytheism after me. But I verily fear you will dispute with one another in it.'

<sup>9</sup> The chains of the *Shamis*, The reports of Uqba ibn Amir. Hadith no. 16705.

<sup>10</sup> *Umda al-Qari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*. Allama Badr al-Din al-Aini (d. 855 A.H.) Vol. VII, p. 70. Mustafa al-Babi al-Halbi Publications, Egypt, 1972.

The *Fuqaha* (Jurists) dispute whether a martyr is buried and washed like a conventional Muslim deceased. Imam Shafi, Imam Malik, Imam Ahmad state that a *Shaheed* is not given a bath and the Funeral Prayer is not performed either. They use the Hadith of Jabir as evidence, in which ‘the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) ordered for their burial (the martyrs of Uhud) and they were not washed and the Salah was not performed upon them.’<sup>11</sup> Imam Abu Hanifa states that the Funeral Prayer is performed upon the *Shaheed*. His evidence is the above Hadith, in which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did perform the Salah for the People of Uhud. The narrator of the Hadith Uqba ibn Amir (may Allah be pleased with him) clarifies that the *Salah* the Prophet performed was the *Salah al-Janaza*. This is a refutation who those believe the word *Salah* in the Hadith means he merely performed a supplication for them, which can also be a form of *Salah*.<sup>12</sup> For instance, Imam Nawawi interprets the Hadith to mean that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) performed a *Du’a* for them.

### **‘Then he turned to the pulpit.’**

By mentioning the ascending on the pulpit, it clearly highlights that this sermon of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was a public sermon, rather than a private conversation with some of his Companions. This point is proved further in the narration of Imam al-Bukhari found in the Book of Expeditions, where Uqba says, ‘like a farewell for the living and dead.’

### **‘I am preceding you.’**

The Arabic word used by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) here was *Farat*. Allama Badr al-Din Aini (d. 855 A.H.) writes that this means ‘I am preceding you.’ In the olden days, travelling caravans would designate a person to travel faster than the others. His task would be to prepare the stopping point for when the others reach there. Such a person would be called a *Farat*.<sup>13</sup>

In the context of this Hadith, it can be mean two things. Firstly, it can mean that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was informing his Companions that he was soon leaving this world. The author of *Irshad al-Sari* writes that ‘this was an indication that his passing away was imminent.’<sup>14</sup>

Secondly, it can mean that on the Day of Judgement, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) will precede his followers and will wait for them at the *Hawdh* (the Pool of the Prophet). The latter opinion is more correct, because in one variation of the report, Uqba (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, ‘I am preceding you at the *Hawdh*.’

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<sup>11</sup> *Sahih al-Bukhari*. Book of Funeral Prayers; Chapter, the prayer upon the martyr; Hadith.

<sup>12</sup> *Umda al-Qari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*. Vol. VII, p. 71.

<sup>13</sup> *Lisan al-Arab*. Allama Ibn Manzur (d. 711 A.H.) Vol. X, p. 233. Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi Publications, Beirut, 1988.

<sup>14</sup> *Irshad al-Sari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*. Vol. II, p. 440.

***'I am a witness over you.'***

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used the word *Shaheed* here, or 'witness.' Allama Qastalani (d. 923 A.H.) writes,

'[It means] 'I am a witness over your actions.' Thus it is as if he still remains with his followers. He has not preceded ahead of them but rather remains with them to the extent he witnesses the actions of the last of his followers. Thus the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is overlooking their matter in both worlds; during his life and after his life. And it is in the Hadith of Ibn Masud (may Allah be pleased with him) recorded by [Imam] al-Bazzar, with a fair chain that the Prophet said, 'My living is good for you and my dying is good for you. Your actions are presented to me. Thus whatever I see from good [actions], I praise Allah for it. And whatever I see from sin, I seek forgiveness from Allah for you.'

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From Ibn Masud's Hadith, we learn that even after his worldly death, the Beloved Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) still continues to pray for us and seek forgiveness on our behalf.

***'And indeed, by Allah, I am undoubtedly looking towards the Hawdh [right] now.'***

Qadhi Iyadh (d. 544 A.H.) writes that,

'The Ahadith related to the *Hawdh* are correct and belief in it is compulsory (*Fardh*). Verifying the *Hawdh* is a part of one's Faith. And the *Hawdh* is to be taken literally; it is not interpreted or disputed.'

16

Abd Allah ibn Amr ibn al-As (may Allah be pleased with him) reports that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) described the *Hawdh* as being a square pool; each side equal to the distance covered in one month's travel. Its water is described as being extremely white and as more beautifully fragrant than musk perfume. The Prophet said that whosoever drinks from the *Hawdh*, he will never feel thirst ever again.

In this last sermon, the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) left no room for doubt that he was most definitely looking at the *Hawdh* as he delivered the words on the pulpit in Madina. This is proved from a grammatical point of view by the fact he used *Inni* twice in the sentence (which means 'verily'), he took an oath with Allah (*Wallahe*) and the additional *La* on the verb *Anzuru* that also gives the meaning of

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<sup>15</sup> *Irshad al-Sari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*. Vol. II, p. 440.

<sup>16</sup> Cited in *Sharh Sahih Muslim*. Vol VIII. p. 53.

emphasis. As Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (d. 852 A.H.) writes, ‘the text contains an oath to stress the importance of the information and its revered nature.’<sup>17</sup>

Allama Badr al-Din Aini writes, ‘it is as if the *Hawdh* was unveiled for him in that state.’

<sup>18</sup> He adds that,

‘And in this is a miracle of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in that he saw it in this world and informed others of it.’<sup>19</sup>

Allama Qastalani adds that this was a ‘real vision (*Nazr Haqiqi*) by the means of unveiling (*Kashf*).’<sup>20</sup>

**‘And indeed I have been given the keys to the treasures of the earth, or the keys of the earth.’**

The Companion Uqba (may Allah be pleased with him) was not sure whether the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said ‘the keys to the treasures of the earth’, or ‘the keys to the earth.’ Both versions equally highlight the extent of Allah’s favour upon His Beloved Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

**‘And verily, I do not fear that you will commit polytheism after me. But I verily fear you will dispute with one another in it (i.e. the world).’**

Allama Badr al-Din Aini writes that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) expresses his confidence that on a general and collective basis, his followers will not commit *Shirk* after him. As for individual cases, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not give such a guarantee.<sup>21</sup>

The word used in the Hadith is *Tanafasu*, which means desire and selfishness. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said he feared Muslims will have an inclination to the world and will desire its contents for themselves, to the exclusion of others. As for *Shirk*, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) remarked that he was not concerned that his followers would resort to it after his demise. Needless to say, this is a refutation of some Muslims today who decree the acts of devout Muslims as *Shirk* without proof and evidence. If the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not fear his followers would fall into the sin of polytheism in general, what authority do these Muslims have to declare others as *Mushriks*?

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<sup>17</sup> *Fath al-Bari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*. Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (d. 852 A.H.) Vol III, p. 23. Maktaba Salfiyya Publications, Cairo, 1408.

<sup>18</sup> *Umda al-Qari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*. Vol. VII, p. 71.

<sup>19</sup> *Umda al-Qari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*. Vol. VII, p. 71.

<sup>20</sup> *Irshad al-Sari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*. Vol. II, p. 440.

<sup>21</sup> *Umda al-Qari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*. Vol. VII, p. 71.