

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

THE MIRACULOUS NAME

Before I tell you who Ibn Abi Kabshah was, whether he was a *sahaabi*, a *taabi'ie* or an outstanding *wali*, let me take you to Abu Sufyaan (ra)'s encounter with the Roman emperor, Heraclius.

Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* had sent a letter to Heraclius inviting him to Islam. This letter was delivered to him in Baytul-Maqdis. Having read its contents, he enquired if there were any Arab visitors visiting Syria that time. Thus, Abu Sufyaan (who was not yet a Muslim) and a group of other Arab traders were summoned to Heraclius' court. In the court, the rest of the group was instructed to stand behind Abu Sufyaan. They were then informed that Heraclius was going to ask Abu Sufyaan a few questions and if he lied, they should contradict him (by shaking their heads). Thus, Abu Sufyaan was forced to speak the truth. Employing an interpreter, Heraclius thereafter questioned Abu Sufyaan about Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*. What is his family status among you? Before him, did anybody else among you claim to be a Nabi? Were any of his ancestors a king? Do the wealthy or the poor follow him? Are his followers increasing or decreasing? Do any of them renege from his religion . . . After Abu Sufyaan answered the tenth question, Heraclius explained that all Abu Sufyaan's answers proved that Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* was definitely

talking the truth. "If you are talking the truth, he will soon rule the ground under my feet, I knew that he was going to appear, but I did not know that he would be among you. If I knew that I could reach him, I would go and meet him; and if I was with him, I would wash his feet." He thereafter read aloud the letter of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*. Abu Sufyaan narrates that by the time Heraclius finished reading the letter, there was a commotion in the court. The audience was shouting (in disapproval) and the Arabs were removed. "When we were removed, I said to my companions: *The case of Ibn Abi Kabshah has gained so much of prominence that even the king of the Romans is afraid of him.*"

Now you know who *Ibn Abi Kabshah* was. He was Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*. At least, that is what Abu Sufyaan called him. But Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*'s father's name was Abdullah, not Abu Kabshah! In fact, there was no Abu Kabshah in his ancestry. So why did Abu Sufyaan call him *Ibn Abi Kabshah* (the son of Abu Kabshah)?

The answer is mockery; he was ridiculing Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*. One theory is that while the Arabs of that time were idolaters, Abu Kabshah was a star worshipper. He worshipped Sirius, the Dog Star. By referring to Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* as Abu Kabshah's son, Abu Sufyaan meant that with regards shunning idol worship, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* is just like Abu Kabshah; kind-of his son. A second explanation is that Abu Kabshah was one of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*'s maternal ancestors. One of the things that Arabs of those days would do to insult a

person is that they would attribute him to one of his maternal ancestors. Another explanation is that there was more than one Abu Kabshah among Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*'s paternal and maternal ancestors. However, none of them was commonly known by this name. The reason why Abu Sufyaan called Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* Abu Kabshah's son is that when pagan Arabs intended defaming someone, they would attribute him to one of his relatively unknown ancestors (or an uncommon name of one of them).

Whatever the case may be, the point that we wish to drive home is that the term *Ibn Abi Kabshah* was derogatory and slanderous. This also shows us that mockery of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* is nothing new. It started a long time ago, in Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*'s own lifetime.

Another Example

The Quraysh would call Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* مُذَمَّم (disgraceful). In this regard, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* said, "Are you not amazed how Allah deflects from me the slander and curse of the Quraysh? They slander and curse a مُذَمَّم (disgraceful) whereas I am مُحَمَّد (praiseworthy)."¹

The Miraculous Name

This takes us to the topic of this article, The Miraculous Name. Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*'s name is a miracle. By merely calling him Muhammad, you are praising him. Hence, even those who criticize him inadvertently praise him. This is

¹ *Saheeh-ul-Bukhaari*, Hadith 3340

probably why the Jews of Madinah never called him by his name. They always referred to him as *Abul-Qaasim*. Besides, the extent to which Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* is praised in the world and the extent to which he will be praised in the Hereafter leaves no doubt that his name is most befitting. Thus, As-Suhayli describes it as:

عَلَّمَ مِنْ أَعْلَامِ نُبُوَّتِهِ

“A sign from among the (many) signs of his *nubuwwah*.”²

The Name Ahmad

One of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*’s other names is Ahmad. This is his name in the previous scriptures and this is what Sayyiduna Moosa and Sayyiduna ‘Eesa (*alaihimas-salaam*) called him.

Considering the laws of Arabic morphology, Ahmad could either mean:

1. The one who praises Allah more than anybody else or
2. The one who is praised more than anybody else.

One of the reasons behind the first meaning is that on the day of Qiyaamah, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* will be the first person to intercede to Allah. Thinking that commencement of the reckoning may ease their anxiety, the people will eventually request Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* to intercede to Allah to commence the reckoning. Before doing so, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* will make *sajdah* to Allah. In this *sajdah*, he will praise Allah in such a manner regarding

² Abul-Qaasim As-Suhaily, *Ar-Rawd Al-Unf* (V.1 Pg.281)

which he said, “Allah will inspire me to utter such praises of Himself which presently I also do not know”.³ The reason behind the second meaning is obvious. How many thousands of people praised and continue to praise Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*! He was praised during his lifetime and thereafter. In his lifetime too, he was praised before *nubuwwah* and thereafter. After the intercession in the Hereafter, he will again be praised by countless people.

An Interesting Observation

Taking the first meaning of Ahmad into consideration, some ‘*ulamaa* have noted that the reason why Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* is called Ahmad in the previous scriptures and Muhammad in the Qur’aan, is that he was first Ahmad and then Muhammad. First he praised Allah and thereafter the people praised him. Similarly, in the Hereafter too, he will first praise Allah, and then when his intercession is accepted, he will again be praised.⁴

Another Observation

The Qur’aan and *sunnah* encourage us to praise Allah upon termination of all activities. Thus, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* would praise Allah after eating and drinking. Upon returning from a journey, he would say:

آئبوں تائبون عابدون لربنا حامدون

We have returned making tawbah,

³ Saheeh-ul-Bukhaari, Hadith 7072

⁴ Ibn Hajar Al-‘Asqalaani, *Fath-ul-Baari* (V.6 Pg.641) and Abul-Qaasim As-Suhaily, *Ar-Rawd Al-Unf* (V.1 Pg.281)

*worshipping our Rabb and praising Him.*⁵

After judgment will be passed among the creation on the Day of Qiyaamah, it will be said الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (All praise is to Allah, Sustainer of all the worlds).⁶ This will also be the last call of the dwellers of *jannah* after their entry therein.⁷ Now, did *nubuwwah* not terminate with Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*? Is he not the last Nabi and Rasool? Furthermore, his appearance is a sign of Qiyaamah and an indication that the end of the world is close. Does this not explain why his name is Ahmad and Muhammad?⁸

Question

Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* was named Muhammad by his grandfather, Abdul Muttalib. Certainly, Abdul Muttalib never knew any of the above. He never knew that his grandson was going to be a Nabi, let alone being the greatest Nabi ever.

Answer

The name Muhammad was divinely inspired. Abdul-Muttalib dreamt that a silver chain emerged from his back. It had four ends. One in the sky, another on the earth and the third and fourth were in the east and the west. The chain then became a tree with *noor* (celestial light) emanating from all its leaves. It seemed as if the inhabitants of the east and the west were clinging to it. Upon enquiring about the interpretation of this dream, he was told that it signified the birth of a child in his

⁵ Saheeh-ul-Bukhaari, Hadith 2920

⁶ Surah Az-Zumar, Aayah 75

⁷ Surah Yoonus, Aayah 10

⁸ Abul-Qaasim As-Suhaily, *Ar-Rawd Al-Unf* (V.1 Pg.281-282)

progeny who would be followed by the inhabitants of the east and west and who would be praised by the dwellers of the sky and earth. In addition to this, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*'s mother also informed Abdul-Muttalib that she had heard a voice telling her, "You have conceived the leader of this *ummah*. When you give birth to him, name him Muhammad". Thus, when Abdul-Muttalib was asked why he named his grandson Muhammad, he replied, "I hope that that all the people of the earth will praise him".⁹

A Unique Name

The reason for enquiring from Abdul-Muttalib why he kept the name Muhammad is that none of his ancestors had this name. In fact, it was almost non-existent among the Arabs in general. The reason for saying *almost* non-existent is that there were a few people before Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* by the name Muhammad. However, they were not just few. They were extremely few! According to As-Suhaily, they were only three. Ibn Hajar Al-'Asqalaani is of the opinion that there were fifteen of them.¹⁰ Are fifteen among an entire nation not negligible?

Nevertheless, the reason why they were named Muhammad was that their parents were informed of a Nabi who would soon appear in the Hijaz and whose name would be Muhammad. Thus, each of their parents named him Muhammad with the hope that he would be this Nabi.

⁹ Abul-Qaasim As-Suhaily, *Ar-Rawd Al-Unf* (V.1 Pg.280)

¹⁰ Ibn Hajar Al-'Asqalaani, *Fath-ul-Baari* (V.6 Pg.643)

The ‘*ulamaa* explain that the rationale behind this unique name was avoidance of confusion with regards Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*’s identity. Hence, just as so few people before Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* enjoyed the name Muhammad, history is testimony that none of them claimed to be a Nabi.¹¹ Consequently, when Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* announced his *nubuwwah*, there was little doubt among the scholars of the previous scriptures that he was talking the truth.

How Many Names

Some ‘*ulamaa* claim that Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* had ninety-nine names. Ibn-ul-‘Arabi has quoted from one of the *soofis* that Allah and his Rasool *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* have one thousand names each. The truth, however, is that most of these names are actually attributes of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* instead of names. For example, the word *labinah* (which means brick).

Explaining that he is the last Nabi, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* said that a man constructed a beautiful palace. When the building was completed, people visited it and marveled at its beauty. However, they all noticed that one brick was missing. Comparing *nubuwwah* to this palace, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* said, “I am that brick”. The word that Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* used for brick is *labinah*. Thus, Ibn Dihya regards *labinah* as one of Rasulullah *sallallahu*

¹¹ Qadi ‘Iyaad, *Ash-Shifaa Bi-Ta’reef Huqooq-il-Mustafa* (V.1 Pg230)

alaihi wasallam's names.¹² Nonetheless, nobody can deny that Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* had many names.

Another Question

What about the *hadith*:

لِي خَمْسَةُ أَسْمَاءَ أَنَا مُحَمَّدٌ وَأَحْمَدُ وَأَنَا الْمَاحِي الَّذِي يَمْحُو اللَّهُ بِي الْكُفْرَ وَأَنَا الْحَاشِرُ الَّذِي يَحْشُرُ النَّاسَ عَلَى قَدَمِي وَأَنَا الْعَاقِبُ

“I have five names. I am Ahmad and I am Muhammad. I am *Maahi* by means of whom Allah eradicates disbelief. I am *Haashir* at whose feet the people will be gathered (on the Day of Qiyaamah) and I am ‘*Aaqib* (The Last Nabi).”¹³

Does this *hadith* not indicate that Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* had only five names?

Answer

“I have five names” does not mean, “I have only five names”. When Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* said, “I have five names”, he did not mean that he does not have any other names. Instead, he meant that although he has many names, he has five very special names that stand out from the rest of his names. The specialities of these names are:

- > They are more famous than the others
- > They are mentioned in the previous scriptures
- > They were known to the previous nations.¹⁴

¹² Ibn Hajar Al-‘Asqalaani, *Fath-ul-Baari* (V.6 Pg.644)

¹³ *Saheeh-ul-Bukhaari*, Hadith 3339

¹⁴ Ibn Hajar Al-‘Asqalaani, *Fath-ul-Baari* (V.6 Pg.645)

Some Names of Allah

No, we are not discussing any names of Allah in this paragraph. The, point, however, is that Allah Ta'aala honoured many *Ambiyaa* by conferring on them one or more of His names. For example, he called Ishaq '*aleem*, Isma'il and Ibrahim *haleem*, Nooh *shakoor*, Moosa *kareem* and *qawi*, Yoosuf *hafeedh* and '*aleem*, Ayoob *saabir* and 'Eesa and Yahya *birr*. (May peace and salutation be on all the *Ambiyaa*.) Rasulallah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*'s speciality in this regard is that Allah blessed him with much more of His names than any other Nabi. Qadi 'Iyaad (ra) identified thirty such names.¹⁵ *Ra-oof* (compassionate) and *Raheem* (merciful) are two examples.

لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ

"Such a Rasool has come to you from among yourselves that your adversity distresses him, he is desirous of your welfare and he is compassionate and merciful unto the Believers."¹⁶

Two Types of Names

Rasulallah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*'s names are of two types:

1. Those that were specifically his – Their meanings were not found in any other Nabi. For example: Muhammad, Ahmad, '*Aaqib*, *Haashir*, *Muqaffaa* (The one who was sent after everybody else) and *Nabi-ul-Malhamah* (Nabi of the Battlefield)
2. Those that were not specifically his – Their meanings were found in other *Ambiyaa*. For example: Rasulallah, *Nabiullah*, *Abdullah*, *Shaahid* (witness), *Mubash-shir* (Giver

¹⁵ Qadi 'Iyaad, *Ash-Shifaa Bi-Ta'reef Huqooq-il-Mustafa* (V.1 Pg236)

¹⁶ Surah At-Tawbah, Aayah 128

of Glad-Tidings), *Nadheer* (Warner), *Nabi-ur-Rahmah* (Nabi of Mercy) and *Nabi-ut-Tawbah* (Nabi of Repentence)

- > The names of the first type are obviously specialities of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*.
- > Although the names of the second type apply to other Ambiyaa, they do not apply to them as much as they apply to Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*. In fact, their presence in Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* is perfect. Ibn-ul-Qayyim (ra) says in this regard:

فهو مختص بكماله دون أصله

“The name itself is not Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*’s speciality. His speciality is its perfect suitability (it befits him most perfectly).”¹⁷

In simple words, every Nabi is *Basheer*, *Nadheer* and *Shaahid*, but the greatest *Basheer*, *Nadheer* and *Shaahid* is Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*. Similarly, every Nabi is a Nabi of Mercy and Repentence, but the greatest Nabi of Mercy and Repentence is Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*.

Conclusion

We commenced this article with reference to Ibn Abi Kabshah and the idolaters’ mockery of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*. This discourse on his blessed names proves that such mockery never reduced and will never reduce the lofty status of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*. Add this discussion to all of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*’s other specialities

¹⁷ Ibn-ul-Qayyim, *Zaad-ul-Ma’aad* V.1 Pg.54

and his achievements and you will conclude that his critics are merely shining a torch at the sun.

The important issue is our *imaan*. Such mockery and criticism will never harm Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*. The question is, '**Will such critics succeed and harm our *imaan*?**'

اللهم إنا نسألك حُبَّكَ وَحَبَّ مَنْ يُحِبُّكَ وَ الْعَمَلَ الَّذِي يُبَلِّغُنَا حُبَّكَ
وَ آخِرَ دَعْوَانَا أَنَّ الْحَمْدَ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

Abu Hudhaifa Muhammad Karolia

30 Rabi-ul-Awwal 1435

01 February 2014

Persida, Springs