

260366 - Attitude of the Sahaabah to hardship during the life of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)

the question

When hazrat muhammad saw tied stone to his stomach and said to companion that he never see white bread so why companions not asked from prophet to give him food or money and why prophet is poor and allah almighty not give him money or food and if i was on that day than i spend all my property to prophet so he become wealthy but why companions not asked him so prophet not tied stone!!

Detailed answer

The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) tied a rock to his stomach as an act of asceticism, and as a way of practising patience and steadfastness, and as an act of solidarity with ordinary people. He would sometimes go through times of ease and plenty, when he would store in his house enough food for his family for one full year, and so that he would be able to give some to his companions and others, and Allah would be generous to him in such a way that he would be able to give in charity, allocate some wealth as a waqf and meet the needs of the treasury of the state and the Muslims.

He (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) also wanted to teach his ummah and all people that wealth belongs to Allah, so pursuit of wealth should not become the main focus and interest of people, and it should not be their ultimate hope and aspiration. So he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) would often spend on charitable causes whenever he acquired abundant wealth. Once the wealth ran out (after spending it on charitable causes) and he no longer had any wealth, he would bear a time of hardship with patience, and he would show steadfastness and tie a rock to his stomach, and be content with whatever was available of dates and water, thus setting a sublime example of living a simple life, far removed from worries and distress caused by thinking of how to earn a living and make money. So whoever is content with such a simple life and has that attitude will live happy and die happy, and he will be content with what

Allah allocates to him of provision, after taking all appropriate measures to earn a living, and without falling short in that regard. His example in that is our Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

It is narrated in a saheeh hadith that Abu Hurayrah said: Jibreel sat with the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and he looked at the sky and saw an angel coming down. Jibreel said: This angel has never come down since the day he was created, until now. When he had come down, he said: O Muhammad, your Lord has sent me to you (to give you the choice of being) either a Prophet-king or a Messenger-slave. Jibreel said: Be humble before your Lord, O Muhammad. He said: "Rather (I choose to be) a Messenger-slave."

Narrated by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (7160). The commentators on *al-Musnad* said: Its isnaad is saheeh according to the conditions of the two shaykhs (al-Bukhari and Muslim).

According to the hadith of Abu Umamah, from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him): "My Lord offered to turn the land of Makkah to gold for me, but I said: No, O Lord, I would rather eat my fill one day and go hungry one day – or he said, for three days, or the like – and thus, when I go hungry, beseech You and remember You, and when I eat my fill, give thanks to You and praise You." Narrated by at-Tirmidhi in *as-Sunan* (2347); he said: It is a hasan hadith, then he classed one of its narrators as da'eef (weak).

There are also some reports which explain the reason why the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) alternated between poverty and wealth; the reason for this alternation was that he would receive a large number of visitors and guests, and because there were Muslims there whom he had to help, so he would not eat any food at all, but there would be some companions and people in need with him, whom he would feed in the mosque. Then when Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, enabled him to conquer Khaybar, the people became somewhat better off, yet there was still some hardship and earning a living was still difficult, for it was a land in which there was no agriculture; rather the food of its people was dates, and they subsisted on that.

See: *Subul al-Huda war-Rashad fi Seerat Khayr al-'Ibad* (7/101).

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said: People fall into three categories:

The rich, who have more than they need;

The poor, who are not able to earn enough to meet their needs;

And the third category, which is those who have just enough to meet their needs.

Hence there were some prominent Prophets, Messengers and people among the early generations (namely the Sahabah) who were rich, such as Ibraheem al-Khaleel, Ayyoob, Dawood, Sulayman, ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan, ‘Abd ar-Rahman ibn ‘Awf, Talhah, az-Zubayr, Sa‘d ibn Mu‘adh, Usayd ibn al-Hudayr, As‘ad ibn Zurarah, Abu Ayyoob al-Ansari, ‘Ubadah ibn as-Samit and others who were among the best of mankind, such as Prophets and siddeeqs (those who are strong and true in faith).

And among them were some who were poor, such as the Messiah ‘Eesa ibn Maryam, Yahya ibn Zakariyya, ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, Abu Dharr al-Ghifari, Mus‘ab ibn ‘Umayr, Salman al-Farisi and others who were also among the best of mankind, Prophets and siddeeqs.

And among them were some who alternated between the two; they were rich at some times and poor at other times. Thus they were able to attain the virtue of those who are rich and charitable, and the virtue of those who are poor and have patience, such as our Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), Abu Bakr and ‘Umar.

End quote from *Majmoo‘ al-Fatawa* (11/124).

Thus you will be able to understand what was narrated in some saheeh hadiths, such as the hadith which says that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) stood up with a rock tied to his stomach, as for three days we had not tasted any food. Narrated by al-Bukhari (4101). And it was narrated that no fire was lit in the house of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) for one or two months; and it was narrated that he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “What caused me to come out is the same thing that caused you to

come out” – namely hunger. Narrated by Muslim (2038). And it was narrated that he never ate his fill of barley bread. Narrated by al-Bukhari (5414).

We may understand all these reports as referring to what happened during some periods of hardship that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) went through; that was not how things were all the time. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) would seek refuge with Allah from poverty, and would call upon Him, saying: “O Allah, grant sufficient provision to the family of Muhammad.” Narrated by al-Bukhari (6460). His Lord, may He be glorified and exalted, did not abandon him to a state of poverty; rather He bestowed upon him a great deal of wealth, but he was more generous than the blowing wind, so sometimes he would spend all of it and leave nothing for his own household, and thus he would go through some temporary periods of hardship. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and the Muslims became well off especially after Qurayzah and Khaybar, because of what they acquired of wealth on the basis of the deal that they concluded with the people of Khaybar.

What is proven from the books of the Prophet’s biography provides a great deal of evidence that such poverty was periodic and temporary. So it is essential to understand what happened to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) of episodes of hunger as something that was temporary and connected to specific circumstances.

The noble Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) were the best of helpers to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) during these times of hardship. They never withheld their wealth or food from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) or his household. They would send them gifts of what they had of food, and they would give to the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) some of that which Allah bestowed upon them. Thus those few hadiths that speak of the hardship that befell the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) – by his own choice and not something that was forced upon him – speak of the generous attitude of the noble Companions and their keenness to help the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

It was narrated from ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) that she said to ‘Urwah: O son of my sister, we used to look at the crescent moon, then the crescent moon; three crescent moons in

two months, and no fire would be lit in the houses of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). I said: O aunt, what did you live on? She said: The two black ones, dates and water, but the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) had some neighbours from among the Ansar and they had milch-animals, and they would send some of their milk to the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and he would give it to us to drink.

It was narrated that ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: A whole month would pass when we would light no fire; we only had dates and water, unless we were given a little meat. Narrated by al-Bukhari (6458).

It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) went out one day – or one night – and he met Abu Bakr and ‘Umar. He said: “What brings you out of your houses at this hour?” They said: Hunger, O Messenger of Allah. He said: “Me too, by the One in Whose hand is my soul, what caused me to come out is the same thing that caused you to come out. Let’s go.” So they went with him, and he came to an Ansari man, but he was not at home. When his wife saw him (the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)), she said: Welcome! The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said to her: “Where is So and so?” She said: He has gone to bring us some fresh water. When the Ansari came, he saw the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and his two companions, then he said: Praise be to Allah, no one has more honourable guests today than me. He went and brought them a bunch of unripe dates, dried dates and fresh dates, and said: Eat some of this. Then he picked up a long knife, and the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said to him: “Beware (of slaughtering) a milch animal.” He slaughtered a sheep for them and they ate from it, and from that bunch of dates, and they drank. When they had eaten and drunk their fill, the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said to Abu Bakr and ‘Umar: “By the One in Whose hand is my soul, you will be asked about this blessing on the Day of Resurrection; hunger brought you out of your houses and you did not go back until this blessing came to you.”

Narrated by Muslim (2038).

It was narrated that Jabir ibn ‘Abdillah said: When the trench (al-khandaq) was dug, I saw that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was very hungry. I went to my wife and said to her: Do you have anything? For I have seen that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) is very hungry. She brought out a bag in which there was a saa‘ of barley. We had a lamb, which I slaughtered and she ground [the barley], and she finished when I finished. I cut up (the lamb) and put it in the pot, then I went back to the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). She said: Do not embarrass me before the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and those who are with him. I came to him and whispered to him, (saying) O Messenger of Allah, we have slaughtered an animal of ours, and we have ground a saa‘ of barley that we had, so come with a small group. The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) called out: “O people of the trench! Jabir had made food for you, come along!” And the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Do not move your pot from the hearth or bake your bread until I come. I came and the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) came ahead of the people. I came to my wife and she said: Woe to you, woe to you! I said: I did what you told me. She brought out our dough for him and he spat in it and blessed it. Then he went to our pot and spat in it and blessed it. Then he said: “Call a woman to bake with you, and serve food from your pot but do not remove it from the hearth.” There were one thousand men, and I swear by Allah that they ate until they at their fill and left, and our pot was still brimming as before, and our dough was still being baked as before.

Narrated by Muslim (2039)

It was narrated from Ishaq ibn ‘Abdillah ibn Abi Talhah that he heard Anas ibn Malik say: Abu Talhah said to Umm Sulaym: I have heard the voice of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) sounding weak, and I can tell that he is hungry. Do you have anything? She said: Yes, and she brought out some loaves of barley, then she took a head-cover of hers and wrapped the bread in part of it, then she put that beneath my garment, then she sent me to the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). I took it and I found the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) sitting in the mosque, and the people were with him. I stood near them and the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of

Allah be upon him) said: “Has Abu Talhah sent you?” I said: Yes. He said: “Is it concerning food?” I said: Yes. The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said to those who were with him: “Let’s go.” He set out and I set out ahead of them, until I came to Abu Talhah, and I told him. Abu Talhah said: O Umm Sulaym, the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) has come with the people, and we do not have enough to feed them. She said: Allah and His Messenger know best. Abu Talhah went out and met the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) came with him until they both entered. The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Bring me what you have, O Umm Sulaym.” She brought that bread and the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) ordered that it be broken into small pieces. Then Umm Sulaym squeezed ghee over it from a small skin and seasoned it, then the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said over it what Allah willed he should say. Then he said: “Give permission for ten to enter.” He gave them permission and they ate until they were full, then they left. Then he said: “Give permission for ten to enter.” He gave them permission and they ate until they were full, then they left. He said: “Give permission for ten to enter,” until all the people had eaten their fill, and there were seventy or eighty men.

Imam at-Tabari (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

If someone were to say to us:

How may we understand these reports, when we know that there are other reports from the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) which prove that he used to set aside food for one year for his family from the booty that Allah granted him from an-Nadeer and Fadak, then he would allocate what was left to buy mounts and weapons for fighting in Allah’s cause; and he divided among a few people approximately one thousand camels that belonged to him, from that which Allah granted him of wealth that was captured from Hawazin in a single day; and during his Farewell Pilgrimage, he brought one hundred camels which he sacrificed and fed the poor and others who were in Makkah; and he would issue instructions that Bedouin who came to him from the desert and became Muslim would be given a flock of sheep. There are

so many stories that speak of his gift-giving and generosity, that cannot be matched by the generosity of the kings of previous nations. Moreover, he was surrounded by Companions who had a great deal of wealth and property, such as Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq, ‘Umar and ‘Uthman (may Allah have mercy on them), and others like them who were known to have a great deal of wealth and were known for their willingness to offer their souls, children and wealth for the sake of Allah; one of them would be willing to give him all that he possessed in order to draw closer to Allah, may He be exalted, by doing so. And we know that the Ansar shared their wealth with those who came to them of the Muhajireen, and they spent the best of their wealth for the sake of Allah, may He be glorified and exalted. Wouldn't they spend on the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) when his need for it was so great in order to ward off what befell him of famine and hunger? This is very strange and weird, because some of these reports contradict others, and some prove that others are not sound. So it is not possible to reconcile the reports that speak of hardship and poverty with those that speak of ease and plenty.

Is there any way to reconcile all the reports and thus confirm all of them to be true, or is it not possible to do that and therefore we reject them, or is it that the meaning of some reports may be sound and the meaning of others cannot possibly be sound? In that case, please confirm to us which reports are sound and which are not, so that we may know what is true and what is false.

The response to that is as follows:

There is no report that I mentioned or did not mention, that has a sound chain of narration and was narrated by trustworthy narrators from the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), but we believe it to be true and it is obligatory for Muslims to accept it. No proven report should be the cause of rejecting another proven report or be contradicted by another proven report. We shall explain that on the basis of sound proof and arguments, in sha Allah.

As for the report that we narrated from ‘Umar, from the Messenger of Allah (sa) (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), which says that he would spend an entire day suffering because of hunger, not finding anything with which to fill his stomach, even poor-quality dates, and similar

reports, that is something that happened from time to time, for even though there were people at that time who possessed wealth, because of their duties of spending on the Muhajireen and the poor and weak among the Muslims, or on guests and people who came to them as delegations from the Arabs, and what they spent on jihad in Allah's cause – all of that would consume most of their wealth, so that what was left would be little or nothing.

How could that not have been the case, when we have narrated from 'Umar ibn al-Khattab that the Messenger of Allah (sa) (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) enjoined the Muslims to give charity, and Abu Bakr brought all of his wealth and said: This is charity for the sake of Allah? How can anyone find it strange on the part of such generous people that they would not be able to come to the aid of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and would not have any means of helping him and making him independent of means?

Such was the attitude of his followers and companions (may Allah be pleased with them). Likewise, it was narrated from 'Uthman that he equipped an entire army from his wealth, so that they did not lack even a rope or a saddle. And it was narrated from 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn 'Awf that the Messenger of Allah (sa) (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) urged people to give charity, and he brought four thousand dinars that he gave in charity.

It is well-known that whoever does such deeds and has such an attitude will inevitably go through occasional periods of poverty in which he would have nothing, due to his wealth being exhausted by his generous giving, and if a brother or close friend of his needs some help – as any human being may need – he would not find any way to help him because he has no means of doing so, unless he manages to some wealth or some wealth is allocated to him.

Thus we may answer the one who mistakenly says: How could it be possible that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) gave his shield in pledge to a Jewish man for some measures of barley, when among his companions were people who were known to be rich and well off? How can it be possible that the reports say that he used to spend many days hungry, when his companions would offer him their wealth, and would even give their wealth to his companions who were lower in status than him, so how about him?

As it is well-established that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was very kind and generous, and would give precedence to his guests and visitors who came as delegations from different Arab tribes, and he would offer them whatever he had of food and wealth, giving them precedence over himself and his family, and he would show steadfastness in putting up with hardship and hunger for the sake of Allah, and it is well-known that his companions and followers followed his example in that regard, if a person is like that and his followers are like that, then it should not be regarded as strange and odd for him and his followers to go through some times of hardship in which he and they would need to borrow whatever could get them through that hard time, and it should not be regarded as strange that they went through days of hunger and hardship.

Whatever hardship befell the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and his companions was due to the reasons that we have mentioned above. The reports which were narrated about him and his companions tying rocks to their stomachs because of hunger, and not finding food for many days to ward off their hunger, are describing that period that he and they went through. ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah have mercy on her) said: Two months would pass and no fire would be lit in the house of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). And there are similar reports. As for the reports which say that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not eat his fill twice in a single day until he joined Allah, may He be exalted, and that he and his family never ate their fill of barley bread until Allah took his soul in death, and similar reports, that did not happen to him (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) because of poverty and hardship. How can that be so, when Allah, may He be exalted, caused his authority to extend throughout Arabia before he died, and he received the kharaj tax from some non-Arab regions, such as Aylah, Bahrayn and Hajar? But the fact that there were days when he did not eat his fill may have been because he gave precedence to the dues of Allah on his wealth, and because he did not like to have his fill and eat a great deal, because he disapproved of doing so, and by not eating his fill he could set an example for his companions. This is how we may understand these reports, even though there are some reservations about the chain of narration of some of them.

End quote from *Tahdheeb al-Athar Musnad ‘Umar* (2/712-716)

Imam an-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The report says that he would set aside for his family what they needed for one year, but he would spend it before the year ended on charitable causes, so that the year would not end before he had already spent it. For this reason when he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) died, his shield was being held in pledge for barley that he had borrowed for his family, and he did not eat his fill for three days in a row. There are many sound hadiths which indicate that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and his family often went hungry.

End quote from *Sharh Muslim* (12/70).

Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Although the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used to set aside food for his family for one year, throughout the year he would spend some of it on delegations who came to visit him, then compensate them for it later on. Hence when he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) died, his shield was being held in pledge for barley that he had borrowed to feed his family.

End quote from *Fath al-Bari* (9/503)

Conclusion:

Most of the hadiths that describe what befell the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) of hardship at some times indicate that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was in fact content with that and preferred that way of life.

Moreover, in the same reports it speaks of what the noble Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) gave and spent in order to offer relief at those difficult times. This variation between hardship and ease in the life of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) is an indication of perfection and greatness; it is not indicative of any shortcoming whatsoever.

If the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) himself chose this way of life, when his Lord gave him the choice (between being a Prophet-king or a Messenger-slave), and he was

content with it, and he sought the help of his Lord and stood with his companions in perseverance and steadfastness, then why are you trying to discuss a matter of which you were never a part, and you cannot tell, if you were to be a part of it, what the Lord of the Worlds would have decreed concerning you?!

Or are you trying to criticise the Muhajireen and Ansar whilst praising yourself?

Or do you think that they missed out on some virtue and failed to show sincerity, but you have attained it?!

So fear Allah with regard to yourself, your religious commitment and your heart.

Fear Allah with regard to the high status of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon them), as they were the first to believe and are foremost among the believers in terms of their sacrifices.

Jubayr ibn Nufayr (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

We were sitting with al-Miqdad ibn al-Aswad one day, when a man passed by him and said: Glad tidings to those two eyes which saw the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). By Allah, we wish that we had seen what you saw and witnessed what you witnessed. He got angry, and I found it strange, because the man had not said anything but good words. Then he turned to him and said: What would make a man wish to have been present in a gathering that Allah decreed he should be absent from, and he does not know, if he had been present, how he would have fared? By Allah, there were people who met the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) whom Allah will throw on their noses in hell, because they did not respond to his call and did not believe in him. Why don't you praise Allah for having caused you to grow up not knowing anything but your Lord, and believing in what your Prophet brought, and you were sufficed against the trials and tribulations because others went through them? By Allah, Allah sent the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) when things were the worst they could be, and no Prophet was ever sent in such terrible circumstances, for no Prophet had been sent for a long time, and it was a time when ignorance prevailed, and people could find no religion better than idol worship. Then he came with the

criterion by means of which he made truth distinct from falsehood, and separated father and son, to the extent that a man would see his father or his son or his brother as a disbeliever, when Allah had opened his heart to faith, and he knew that if that relative of his died, he would enter hell, so he would not feel at ease, for he knew that his loved one might end up in hell. This is why Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, said (interpretation of the meaning):

“And those who say: "Our Lord! Bestow on us from our wives and our offspring who will be the comfort of our eyes”

[al-Furqan 25:74].

Narrated by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (23810 – ar-Risalah edition); classed as saheeh by al-Albani.

And Allah knows best.