

The foundations of the Ka'bah

source: silsilat ul-ahādīth us-sahīha ~ the series of authentic narrations ~

hadīth no. 43

On the authority of 'Āaisha (that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said to her:) “O 'Āaisha, if your people had not recently been polytheists and (if it wasn't for) me not having enough means that would support its construction, I would have spent the treasure of the Ka'bah in the path of Allāh, and demolished the Ka'bah to join it to the ground. Then I would build it upon the (original) foundation of Ibrāhīm (Abraham) and make for it two doors attached to the ground – a door facing toward the east through which people would enter and a door facing toward the west from which they would exit. And I would expand (the Ka'bah) by six cubits[1] of al-Hijr[2] – {in one narration: I would include al-Hijr in it} – for the Quraish had reduced (the area of the Ka'bah) when they (re)built (it). So if it seems good to your people to (re)build it after me, then come so that I could you show what they left out from it.’ Then, he showed her about seven cubits (of area from al-Hijr).”

In another narration from ('Āaisha), she said: “I asked the Messenger of Allāh (صلى الله عليه وسلم) about the wall {i.e., al-Hijr}: ‘Is it a part of the House (the Ka'bah)?’ He said, ‘Yes.’ I said, ‘Then why didn't they include it in the House?’ He said, ‘The means was not enough for your people (to do so).’ I said: ‘But what's the matter with its door being raised (like this)?’ He said, ‘Your people did that to admit whoever they wished and to prevent whoever they wished – {in one narration: (They did it) out of pride so that no one could enter it except who they wanted. Therefore, if the man wanted to enter it, they would call him to climb until he would almost enter; they would (then)

push him and he would fall}. If your people had not recently been in jāhiliyyah[3] and so I fear that their hearts would deny (what I wish to do), I would have considered including the wall in the House and joining its door to the ground.’

Then, when Ibn uz-Zubayr ruled, he demolished (the Ka’bah) and made two doors for it – {in one narration: That was what urged Ibn uz-Zubayr to demolish it. Yazīd bin Rūmān said, ‘I saw Ibn uz-Zubayr at the time when he demolished it, (re)built it and included al-Hijr in it. And I saw the (original) foundation of Ibrāhīm (‘alayhi ssalām) as stones joined together like camel humps that are joined together.’}

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Shaykh al-Albānī comments:

“This hadīth indicates two things:

First: that it is obligatory to delay carrying out rectification if an evil greater than (its good) results from it. And the scholars of fiqh took their famous principle – ‘repelling the evil (comes) before bringing the good’ – from (this).

Second: that the noble Ka’bah is now in need of the reconstructions that the hadīth includes, due to the disappearance of the reason for the sake of which the Messenger of Allāh (صلى الله عليه وسلم) left that; (the reason) was that the hearts of those who were recently polytheists in his time (صلى الله عليه وسلم) would have a dislike (for these reconstructions). And Ibn Battāl has reported from some of the scholars ‘that the dislike that he (صلى الله عليه وسلم) feared was that they would accuse him of boasting by himself over them.’

It is possible to list those reconstructions in the following:

1- Expanding the Ka’bah and building it upon the foundation of Ibrāhīm (‘alayhi ssalaat wa ssalaam) by adding approximately six cubits of al-Hijr

2- Leveling its ground with that of the Haram (Al-Masjid ul-

Harām)

3- Opening another door for it from the Western side

4- Lowering the two doors to the ground in order to arrange and facilitate entering it and exiting it for whoever wishes

And indeed, ‘Abdullāh bin uz-Zubayr (radiAllaahu ‘anhumaa) had accomplished this reconstruction completely during his rule in Makkah, but the unjust political administration returned the Ka‘bah to its previous state after him! And the following below is a detailed explanation of that as Muslim and Abu Nu‘aym narrated with their authentic chain of narration on the authority of ‘Atā, who said:

‘When the House was burnt during the time of Yazīd bin Mu‘āwiyah just after the people of Shām[4] attacked (Makkah), and whatever was meant to happen to (the Ka‘bah) happened, Ibn uz-Zubayr left it (in that state) until the people reached the season (of Hajj). He wanted to encourage them or provoke them against the people of Shām. So when the people came, he said, ‘O people, advise me about the Ka‘bah. Do I demolish it then (re)build it, or do I repair that which has fallen from it (due to damage)?’ Ibn ‘Abbās said, ‘An idea has occurred to me about it; I am of the opinion that you repair that which has fallen from it (due to damage), and leave a House upon which the people embraced Islām, and (leave) stones upon which the people embraced Islām and upon which the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) was sent.’ So Ibn uz-Zubayr said, ‘If the house of one of you was burnt, he would not be pleased until he rebuilds it, then how about the House of your Lord?! Indeed, I will ask my Lord for guidance three times, then I will decide on my affair.’

When the three times passed, he fixed his opinion to demolish it. So the people kept away from it (incase) something from the sky would befall the first people to climb on it!, until a man

climbed it and threw down stones from it. Thus, when the people did not see anything (bad) befalling him, they followed in succession and demolished (the Ka'bah) until they brought it to the ground. Then, Ibn uz-Zubayr made pillars and placed coverings over them until its building went up. And Ibn uz-Zubayr said, 'Indeed I heard 'Āaisha saying that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: {he then mentioned the first part of the hadīth, then said,} 'Today, I have that which I will (need to) spend and I don't fear the people.' So he expanded (the Ka'bah) by five cubits of al-Hijr until he displayed a foundation that the people looked upon and he built the building upon (this foundation). The height of the Ka'bah was eighteen cubits, so when he had expanded it (from the width), he found it to be short; therefore, he expanded its height by ten cubits. And he also made two doors for (the Ka'bah), one of them was to be entered through and the other was to be exited from.

Then, when Ibn uz-Zubayr was killed, al-Hajjāj wrote to 'Abd ul-Malik bin Marwān informing him about that, and telling him that Ibn uz-Zubayr had set up the structure (of the Ka'bah) upon a foundation which the reliable persons of the people of Makkah had seen. So 'Abd ul-Malik wrote to him: 'Indeed, we having nothing to do with soiling Ibn uz-Zubayr with disgrace in anything. As for what he added to its height, safeguard it; and as for what he added to it from al-Hijr, return it to its (previous) structure, and close up the door which he opened.' Thus, (al-Hajjāj) demolished it and returned it to its (previous) structure.[5]

That is what al-Hajjāj the oppressor did by the command of 'Abd ul-Malik the mistaken one, and I don't think that his regret later on justifies his mistake. Muslim and Abu Nu'aym have also narrated from 'Abdullāh bin 'Ubayd who said:

‘Al-Hārith bin ‘Abdillāh came to ‘Abd ul-Malik bin Marwān as an envoy during his Khilāfa (Caliphate), and ‘Abd ul-Malik said, ‘I don’t think that Abu Khubayb – i.e., Ibn uz-Zubayr – heard from ‘Āaisha that which he claimed to hear from her.’ Al-Hārith said: ‘But of course, I (myself) heard it from her.’ (‘Abd ul-Malik) said, ‘What did you hear her say?’ (Al-Hārith) said, ‘She said that the Messenger of Allāh (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: {he then mentioned the hadīth}.’ ‘Abd ul-Malik said to Al-Hārith, ‘You heard her saying this?’ He said, ‘Yes.’ So (‘Abd ul-Malik) scratched the ground with his staff for a while, then said, ‘I wish that I had left (the Ka‘bah with Ibn uz-Zubayr’s reconstructions)...’[6] And in one narration from both (Muslim and Abu Nu‘aym) from Abu Qaza‘ah, (it is mentioned) that: ‘While ‘Abd ul-Malik bin Marwān was going around the House, he said, ‘May Allāh fight Ibn uz-Zubayr as he told a lie upon the mother of the believers (‘Āaisha), saying, ‘I heard her say: {he then mentioned the hadīth}.’ So Al-Hārith bin ‘Abdillāh bin Abī Rabī‘ah said, ‘Don’t say this O leader of the believers!, for I (myself) heard the mother of the believers narrating this.’ (‘Abd ul-Malik) said, ‘If I had heard it before demolishing (the Ka‘bah), I would have left it upon that which Ibn uz-Zubayr had built.’[7] I (Shaykh al-Albānī) say: it was obligatory upon him, before the demolition, to make sure and ask the people of knowledge about whether it was allowed for him to criticize ‘Abdullāh bin uz-Zubayr and accuse him of telling a lie upon the Messenger of Allaah (صلى الله عليه وسلم)! And his (radiAllāhu ‘anhu) truthfulness became clear to ‘Abd ul-Malik by Al-Hārith’s agreeing with him, as many a group from ‘Āaisha (radiAllāhu ‘anhā) agreed. And I have combined their narrations with one another in this hadīth, so the hadīth is detailed from ‘Āaisha. Therefore, I fear that ‘Abd ul-Malik had prior knowledge of the hadīth before he demolished the

House, but he pretended that he did not hear about it except by way of Ibn uz-Zubayr. So when Al-Hārith bin ‘Abdillāh opposed him that he also had heard (the hadīth) from ‘Āaisha, (‘Abd ul-Malik) showed regret for what he had done, (but) it was too late for regrets.

On the other hand, it has reached us that there is an idea or plan to expand the area of tawāf (circumambulation) around the Ka’bah and transfer the Maqām Ibrāhīm[8] (‘alayhi ssalaat wa ssalaam) to another place. So in relation to this, I suggest to those responsible (for the Ka’bah) that they hasten to expand the Ka’bah before everything (else) and rebuilt it upon the foundation of Ibrāhīm (‘alayhi ssalaam), fulfilling the clear, noble Prophetic wish in this hadīth, and saving the people from the problems of crowding at the door of the Ka’bah that is witnessed every year and from the domination of the guard over the door who prevents whoever he wishes from entering and allows whoever he wishes, for the sake of a few pennies!”[9]

~ asaheeha translations ~

[1] 1 cubit is approximately ½ a meter

[2] the area which is at present surrounded by a semicircular wall at the northern side of the Ka’bah

[3] the pre-Islamic days of ignorance

[4] Syria

[5] Sahīh Muslim #1333

[6] Sahīh Muslim #1333

[7] Sahīh Muslim #1333

[8] Station of Ibrāhīm

[9] Shaykh al-Albānī adds the following footnote: “I say, then it reached us that the above-mentioned project has been realized; so the Maqām (Ibrāhīm) has been transferred to a place far from the Ka’bah and it was not built upon but rather a crystal box was placed on top of it so that the Maqām could be seen beneath it. Thus, perhaps they will also carry out this suggestion of ours, and Allāh is the granter of success.”

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