

ومن كلام له (عليه السلام)

From one of his statements

لابنه محمد بن الحنفية لما أعطاه الراية يوم الجمل

Delivered in the Battle of Jamal when Amīr al-Mu'minīn gave the standard to his son Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah [1]

تَزُولُ الْجِبَالُ وَلَا تَزُلُّ، عَضَّ عَلَى نَاجِذِكَ، أَعْرَى اللَّهُ جُمُوعَتَكَ، تَدُ فِي الْأَرْضِ قَدَمَكَ، إِرْمِ بِبَصْرِكَ أَقْصَى الْقَوْمِ، وَغَضَّ بِبَصْرِكَ،
واعلم أن النصر من عند الله سبحانه.

Mountains [2] may move from their position but you should not move from yours. Grit your teeth. Lend to Allāh your head (in fighting for Allāh, give yourself to Allāh). Plant your feet firmly on the ground. Have your eye on the remotest foe and close your eyes (to their numerical majority). And keep sure that succour is but from Allāh, the Glorified.

Notes:

[1] Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah was Amīr al-Mu'minīn's son but called Ibn Ḥanafīyyah after his mother. His mother's name was Khawlah bint Ja'far. She was known as Ḥanafīyyah after her tribe, Banū Ḥanīfah. When people of Yamāmah were declared apostates for refusing to pay zakāh (religious tax), they were killed and their women-folk were brought to Madīnah as slave girls, this lady also came to Madīnah with them. When her tribesmen came to know it, they approached Amīr al-Mu'minīn and requested him to save her from the blemish of slavery and protect her family honour and prestige. Consequently, Amīr al-Mu'minīn purchased her, freed her, and later married her, after which Muḥammad was born.

Most historians have written his kunya as Abū al-Qāsim. Thus, the author of al-Istī'āb (vol. 3, pp. 1371–1372) has quoted Abū Rāshid ibn Ḥafṣ az-Zuhrī as saying: "I have seen four individuals from among the sons of the companions (of the Prophet), every one of whom was named Muḥammad and whose kunya was Abū al-Qāsim: (1) Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah, (2) Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr, (3) Muḥammad ibn Ṭalḥah, and (4) Muḥammad ibn Sa'd." After this he writes that Muḥammad ibn Ṭalḥah's name and kunya was given by the Prophet.

al-Wāqidī has written: The name and kunya of Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr was

suggested by 'Ā'ishah. (al-Istī'āb, vol. 3, p. 1366)

Apparently the Holy Prophet's giving both the name and kunya to Muḥammad ibn Ṭalḥah seems incorrect, since from some traditions it appears that the Prophet had reserved this combination for a son of Amīr al-Mu'minīn, and that was Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah. Thus, Ibn Khallikān has written regarding the circumstances of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah: As regards his kunya being Abū al-Qāsim, it is said that the Prophet had particularised it and that he had told 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib: a son would be born to you after me, and I have given him my name and kunya, and it is not permissible for anyone in my Ummah after him to combine both. (Wafayāt al-a'yān, vol. 1, p. 449)

With this opinion before us, how can it be correct that the Prophet had given this very name and kunya to anyone else, since particularisation means that no one else would share it. Moreover, some people have recorded the kunya of Ibn Ṭalḥah as Abū Sulaymān instead of Abū al-Qāsim, and this further confirms our view point. Similarly, if the kunya of Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr was on the ground that his son's name was Qāsim, who was among the jurists of Madīnah, then what is the sense in 'Ā'ishah having suggested it? If she had suggested it along with the name, how could Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr tolerate it later on since having been brought up under the care of Amīr al-Mu'minīn, the Prophet's saying could not remain concealed from him. Moreover, most people have recorded his kunya as Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān, which weakens the report of Abū Rāshid.

Let alone these people's kunya being Abū al-Qāsim, even for Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah this kunya is not proved. Although Ibn Khallikān has taken that son of Amīr al-Mu'minīn for whom the Prophet had particularised this kunya to be Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah, yet al-'Allāmah al-Māmaqānī (in Tanqīḥ al-Maqāl, vol. 3, p. 112) writes: In applying this tradition to Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah, Ibn Khallikān has got into confusion, because the son of Amīr al-Mu'minīn whom the Prophet's name and kunya together have been gifted by the Prophet, and which is not permissible to be given to anyone else, is the awaited last Imām (may our lives be his ransom), and not to Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah. Nor is the kunya Abū al-Qāsim established for him, rather some of the Sunnis being ignorant of the real intention of the Prophet, have taken the statement to refer to Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah.

However, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah was distinguished in righteousness and piety, eminent in asceticism and worship, elevated in knowledge and virtue, and the inheritor of his father's bravery. His performance in the battles of Jamal and Ṣiffīn had created such impression among the Arabs that even warriors of consequence

trembled at his name. Amīr al-Mu'minīn too was proud of his courage and valour, and always placed him forward in battles.

ash-Shaykh al-Bahā'ī has written in al-Kashkūl that 'Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib kept him abreast in the battles and did not allow Ḥasan and Ḥusayn to go ahead, and used to say, "He is my son while these two are sons of the Prophet of Allāh." When a Khārijite said to Ibn al-Ḥanafiyyah that 'Ali thrust him into the flames of war but saved away Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, he replied that: "I am like his right hand, and they are like his eyes; he protects his eyes with his right hand." (Kashkūl Shaykh Bahā'ī, Vol. 3, p. 92)

But al-'Allāmah al-Māmaqānī has written in Tanqīḥ al-Maqāl that this was not the reply of Ibn al-Ḥanafiyyah, but rather a statement of Amīr al-Mu'minīn himself. When during the battle of Ṣiffīn Muḥammad mentioned this matter to Amīr al-Mu'minīn in complaining tone, he replied, "You are my hand whereas they are my eyes, and the hand should protect the eyes." (Tanqīḥ al-Maqāl, vol. 3, p. 112)

Apparently it seems that first Amīr al-Mu'minīn must have given this reply and thereafter someone might have mentioned it to Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyyah and he must have repeated the same reply as there could be no more eloquent reply than this one; and its eloquence confirms the view that it was originally the outcome of the eloquent tongue of Amīr al-Mu'minīn and was later adopted by Muḥammad al-Ḥanafiyyah. Therefore, both these views can be held to be correct and there is no incongruity between them.

In any case, he was born in the reign of the second Caliph and died in the reign of 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān at the age of sixty-five years. Some writers have recorded the year of his death as 80 A.H. and others as 81 A.H. There is a difference about the place of his death as well. Some have recorded it as Madīnah, some Aylah and some Ṭā'if.

[2] When, during the Battle of Jamal, Amīr al-Mu'minīn sent Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyyah to the battlefield, he told him: "son! Become like a mountain of determination and steadfastness before the enemy, in such a manner so that the onslaught of the army should not be able to displace you from your place; and attack the enemy with clenched teeth, because pressing the teeth firmly together creates tension in the nerves of the head, as a result of which the stroke of the sword glances off." As he said at another place: Clench your teeth because this makes the sword slip off from the skull. (Nahj al-Balāghah, Sermon 65)

Then he says, “My child, lend your head to Allāh in order that you may be able to achieve eternal life in place of this one, because for a lent article there is the right to get it back. Therefore, you should fight being heedless of your life, otherwise also if your mind clings to life you will hesitate to advance towards deathly encounters and that would tell upon your reputation of bravery. Look, don’t let your steps falter because the enemy is emboldened at the faltering of steps, and faltering steps fastens the feet of the enemy. Keep the last lines of the enemy as your aim so that the enemy may be overawed with loftiness of your intentions and you may feel ease in tearing through their ranks, and their movement should also not remain concealed from you. Look, do not pay heed to their superiority in numbers, otherwise your valour and courage would suffer.” This sentence can also mean that one should not wide open the eyes to be dazzled by the shining of weapons, and the enemy may make an attack by taking advantage of the situation. “Also, always bear it in mind that victory is from Allāh. ‘If Allāh helps you no one can overpower you.’ (Qur’ān, 3:159) Therefore, instead of relying on material means seek His support and succour.”