



EXEMPLARY

WOMEN:

LADY

UMM

SALAMAH

xkp

FAHIMEH FAHIMINEJAD

Chapter 1

ABSTRACT:

Lady Umm Salamah was the highest-ranking wife of the Prophet after Lady Khadijah. Her two migrations - one to Medina and the other to Abyssinia (*Habasha*) - alongside her presence in many wars and her defense of the household of the Prophet resulted in her elevated status. She was so trustworthy that at the time of leaving Mecca to go to Iraq, Imam Husayn left behind some deposits with her which were be handed to Imam Sajjad (a). Furthermore, 378 narrations have been reported from her through the Sunni sect, the most important being the Hadith of the Cloak (*hadith al-kisa'*). This paper offers a biography of Umm Salamah along with the attributes that distinguish her from the rest of the Prophet's wives, namely her role in Fatima al-Zahra's upbringing, her political activism, her accounts of the Prophet's narrations, and her unwavering defense of Imam Ali's personality and leadership.

Chapter 2

INTRODUCTION

In the Era of Ignorance, a female was considered as an immature existence who was forced to live on the sidelines of social life. The protection of a woman was very difficult for clans and tribes who were busy migrating and/or in war. Women were not fighters and needed extra protection because being captured by the enemy would result in shame and humiliation for the tribe as she would be made into a servant for the enemy, and if she were saved she would be subjected to much humiliation from her own tribe. Some women, however, were recognized and appreciated because of certain attributes they possessed. For example, female singers who would be recognized within tribes, but many a time these songs would result in tragic outcomes like war or inciting tribesmen to attack and participate in hostilities. Nevertheless, the Prophet Muhammad's arrival created a new identity for women.

This meant that women were able to enjoy a special status in society, some of whom were the wives of the Prophet. In this work, a brief description of the status of the wives of the Prophet in the Islamic society has been offered with an elaborated account of Umm Salama, known to be the most prominent wife after Lady Khadija, and the significant role she played in Islamic history.

Chapter 3

THE STATUS OF THE WIVES OF THE PROPHET IN THE ISLAMIC SOCIETY

In verses 30 and 32 of chapter Ahzab (33) in the holy Qur'an, in which the wives of the Prophet have been honoured by being addressed as "O the wives of the prophet!", there are several reasons for their distinction:

'MOTHER OF THE BELIEVERS': The greatest attribute of the wives of the Prophet is demonstrated as 'Mother of the believers' and according to the verse 'and his wives are your (pl) mothers'. They have truly been honoured by this title. Additionally, it was prohibited for them to marry any other man:

You may not torment the Apostle of God, nor may you ever marry his wives after him. Indeed that would be a grave [matter] with God. (33:53)

Here, it is clearly specified that they are not allowed to remarry after the Prophet; however, in rulings about modest dressing (*hijab*), and other similar rules, they have the same obligations as other women.

ROLE MODELS IN SOCIETY: The Qur'an indicates that the wives of the Prophet are expected to be exemplars for the public:

O Ye wives of the Prophet! Whosoever of you shall commit a manifest indecency, doubled for her would be the punishment twice over; and with God that is easy. And whosoever of you shall be obedient unto God and His apostle and shall work righteously, her hire we shall give her twice over, and we have gotten ready for her a

generous provision. Wives of the prophet! ye are not like any other of women. (33:30-32)

From these holy verses it can be understood that, however high the rank and status of a wife of a Prophet is, her punishment in the case of committing a sin will be bigger and harder, and in the case for obedience her reward will be doubled. As for her doubled reward, one reward is for her obedience to God and the other for the positive impact that it has on others.

DIVINE REVELATION PROCLAIMED IN THEIR HOMES: Another excellence the wives of the Prophet hold over all other women is the fact that the divine revelation took place in the house where they lived. The verse above continues by saying:

And remember what is recited in your homes of the signs of God and wisdom. Indeed God is All-attentive, All-aware. (33:34)

NARRATORS OF HADITH: Some of the wives of the prophet were also his companions and they played an important role in relating a number of hadith. For example, Lady Umm Salamah narrated 378 hadith, among them the revelation of the Verse of Purification, the narrative of The Blanket, and the narrative of The Two Weighty Things. Twenty-four people from amongst the companions have related this narrative, Umm Salamah being one of them.¹

It is worth mentioning that even though the wives of the Prophet were among prominent members of their community, the Verse of Purification excludes them from the Ahlul Bayt.

Verse 33 of chapter Ahzab has been named the Verse of Purification due to the last phrase:

And stay quietly in your houses, and make not a dazzling display, like that of the former Times of Ignorance; and establish regular Prayer, and give regular Charity; and obey God and His Messenger. And God only wishes to remove all abomination from you, ye members of the Family, and to make you pure and spotless. (33:33)

In fact, the verse contains two distinct addressees:

1. The wives of the Prophet, and
2. The family of the Prophet (the Ahlul Bayt).

There are three opinions about who is counted among the Ahlul Bayt:

a) Those who because of their relation to the prophet are prohibited from accepting offerings and alms, such as the families of Ali and Aqeel;²

b) The wives of the Prophet;

c) Ali ibn Abi Taleb, Fatima, Hasan, and Husayn.

According to a consensus of the Shi'a scholars and the majority of Sunni scholars, the third opinion is deemed to be correct. The second opinion is rejected for the following reasons:

Early on in the verse, the wives of the Prophet are reprimanded while later in the verse we see that God glorifies and purifies the Ahlul Bayt in such a manner that if both parts were addressing the same group of people, the verse would be discordant. This is because from an intellectual point of view, glorification and reprimand are incompatible.

1. Umm Salamah narrates that this verse was revealed in her house at time a when only the Prophet, Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husayn were present. As will be discussed later in this paper, the Ahlul Bayt does not even include Umm Salamah even though she was present in the house at the time of revelation.³

2. If the Verse of Purification referred to the wives of the Prophet, the pronouns would have been in the feminine form just as they are in the beginning of the verse. If the latter part of the verse referred to the wives of the Prophet it would read:

Instead, we see that the masculine form has been used:

1 Hindi, 1381, p. 481-2

2 Aqeel was the second of four sons of Abu Talib, and brother of Ali ibn Abu Talib. Abu Talib was the uncle and protector of the Prophet Muhammad.

3 Feiz Kashani, 1356, vol. 2, p. 351-352

Chapter 4

WIVES OF THE PROPHET

The number of the Prophet's wives is disputed. According to some, collectively they were 11; Khadijah, Umm Salamah, Hind, Umm Habibah Ramlah, Joweyra, Hafsah, Sawdah, Ayyishah, Meeymunah, Zainab daughter of Jaysh, and Zainab Halaliyah. Of the 11, nine were alive at the time of the Prophet's death, and Khadijah and Zainab Halaliyah had already passed away.

THE REASON BEHIND THE PLURALITY OF THE WIVES OF THE PROPHET

The following are possible reasons for the plurality of the wives:

1. All of the Prophet's speech and traits were in line with the will of God. There is a narrative from the Prophet in which he confirms this opinion: "I have not married a single woman, nor given my daughter's hand in marriage to anyone except after having received a heavenly revelation which Gabriel had brought down to me from my glorious Lord."¹

2. Some women wanted to marry the Prophet in order to gain honour for themselves or their families. According to the belief of commentators and jurists, the first part of verse 33:33 refers to four of the wives - Umm Shareek, Khule daughter of Hakeem, Zainab daughter of Khazeemah, and Maymunah daughter of Hareth - who gifted themselves to the Prophet (that is, they became wives of the Prophet without demanding dowry).

3. These marriages could have been in order to create harmony and friendship through the union of marriage between tribes in order to prevent tribal wars or to remove obstacles of conversion to Islam. Thus, the aim of these marriages was never of a sexual nature, because history is a witness that the majority of these women were widows and not young at the time of their union with the Prophet. It is noteworthy to mention that the actual reason behind some of the marriages may be beyond our intellect.

1 Madras Tabrizi, 1374, vol. 8, pg 448

THE SUPERIORITY OF UMM SALAMAH AFTER LADY KHADIJA

Hind (Umm Salamah), the daughter of Abi Umayyah Hazfiyah, was the most superior wife of the Prophet after Khadija, and from among all the wives, she was the last one to pass away and reach the mercy of her Lord.¹

1 Madras Taabrizi, 1374, vol. 8, p. 307-308

Chapter 5

DATE OF BIRTH AND DEATH

Hind, the daughter of Soheil - also known as Abu Umayyeh - was born in the year 28 BH, which coincides with the year 596 CE¹ The date of her death is a matter of dispute. Records vary from the year 59 to the year 64 AH; it seems that the latter date is more accurate because she was still alive after the martyrdom of Imam Husayn. As for her age, it has been reported by her son that she lived until she was 84 years old. Her grave lies in the Baqi', a cemetery where many of the Prophet's relatives and companions are also buried, located outside the Prophet's mosque in Medina.²

1 Zar Kuli, 1986, vol. 8, p. 97

2 Bujnordy, 1381, vol. 10, p. 219

Chapter 6

LINEAGE AND NAME

Hind was the daughter of Abi Umayyah Abi Mughayrah ibn Abdullah ibn Umar ibn Makhzune ibn Qurashi. Her father, Abu Umayyah, was among the most generous from amongst the Arabs and hence his title Zaad-e-Rakeb.¹ Her mother was Atika, daughter of Aamir son of Rabi'e Kanani, although others say she was Atika daughter of Abdul Muttalib.² From her first husband, Hind had four children: Salamah (hence her title Umm Salamah - mother of Salamah), Umar, Dore, and Zainab from her first husband hence she has been called by the title Umm Salamah, meaning mother of Salamah.³

1 Zar Kuli, 1986, vol. 8, p. 97

2 Majlisi, 1403. vol. 22, p. 203

3 Madras Tabrizi, 1374, vol. 8, p. 307

Chapter 7

BIOGRAPHY

Umm Salamah is known as one of the superior and distinctive companions of the Prophet, in addition to being his wife. It has been mentioned with indications in certain narrations that she was the most worthy wife of the Prophet after Hazrat Khadijah. Before marrying the Prophet, she was the wife of Abu Salamah, the son of Abdulasad Makhzuni, with whom she had migrated to Habashe. All the narratives concerning the Quraishi messengers to Abyssinia and their discussions with Ja'far ibn Abu Taleb in the presence of King Najashi, have been related by Umm Salamah. She then returned to Mecca with her husband and thereafter migrated to Medina as the first woman from the Quraish tribe to do so. Her husband's family did not agree with his migration and so she migrated alone, with her husband and children left behind. For a year Umm Salamah stayed in a place called Abtah and wept.

In the year 4 AH Abu Salamah died as a result of the wounds he had received in the battle of Ohud, after which the Prophet married Umm Salamah. It has been reported that after the passing of Eddah (a period of time after a woman's marriage has ended during which she is not allowed to marry) both Abu Bakr and Umar proposed to her, but she refused all proposals until the Prophet proposed to her. She addressed the Prophet saying, "Someone like me is not suitable to marry you; I am quite old and cannot bear any more children. I am a jealous woman and have four children."¹ The Prophet replied to her saying, "As for your age, I am older than you. As for your jealousy, God will remove that. And as for your children, they are the responsibility of God and his Messenger"; thus, she accepted the proposal.²

1 Jealousy here is used as a translation for the Arabic term '*ghirah*' which here means not to want her husband to be married to someone else.

2 Zar Kuli, 1986, vol. 8, p. 97

3 Zar Kuli, 1986, vol. 8, p. 97 / Madras Tabrizi, 1384, vol. 8, p. 307

UMM SALAMAH'S SPECIAL ATTRIBUTES FROM AMONG THE WIVES OF THE PROPHET

Some of the characteristics that are exclusive to Umm Salamah as a wife of the Prophet are as follows:

Migrant to Abyssinia

As mentioned earlier by the command of the Prophet, Umm Salamah migrated twice-once to Abyssinia and once to Medina. She also participated in multiple battles such as Mesri' (6 AH), Khaybar (7 AH) Hodaybiyah, Khandaq (5 AH) the conquest of Mecca (8 AH) and Hunayn (8 AH). She would also salute the martyrs of the Battle of Uhud every time she visited the battlefield.

Narrator of hadith from the Prophet She had related many narrations from the Messenger which have also been recorded in Sunni books. Masnad of Ahmad ibn Hanbal contains 378 of her narrations.³ The following are some of her most important narrations:

Participation in event of revelation of the Verse of Purification and the Hadith of the Cloak (Hadith al-Kisa)

Commentators of the Qur'an such as Tabarsi and Tha'labi have narrated from the *Musnad* of Ahmad ibn Hanbal that Umm Salamah narrates: "One day Lady Fatima having cooked some food brought it to my house for the Prophet. The Prophet said, 'O the light of my eyes, call Ali and your sons so that we may eat this food together.' When all had gathered and they had eaten from that food, Angel Jibra'eel descended and revealed the following verse:

Indeed God desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification.

Upon hearing the verse, the Prophet laid out a cloak over them and said:

Oh God, these are the people of my household. They are my confidants and my supporters. Oh God, remove impurity from them and keep them thoroughly pure.

Umm Salamah relates, "As I heard this prayer from the Prophet, I said: 'O Messenger of God! Am I also with you?' To which he replied: 'You do not have the level of my Ahlul Bayt, but you are a lady of noble traits.'"¹ It has also been related from Imam Baqir that this verse was revealed regarding the Prophet, Ali ibn Abi Taleb, Fatima, Hasan, and Husayn in the house of Umm Salamah, the wife of the Prophet.²

1 Bahrani, 1393, vol. 3, p. 321-351

RESPONSIBILITY FOR LADY FATIMA'S UPBRINGING

Umm Salamah said, "When the Messenger of God married me, he left it upon me to take care of his daughter, and so I engrossed myself with her upbringing. I swear by God that she had better conduct than I, and she displayed more knowledge than I in all affairs."¹

¹ Feiz Kashani, 1356, vol. 2, p. 351-352

DEFENDING LADY FATIMA'S RIGHT TO THE LAND OF FADAK

Fadak is a land situated outside Medina. In those days it would take two days to cover the distance between Fadak and Medina, and between Fadak and Khaybar there is approximately the distance of a day's journey. It was something that God gave the Prophet as war booty.¹

The Prophet victoriously conquered Fadak, and after having done so, he returned to Medina, and upon his visit with Lady Fatima, he said, "My dear daughter! God has bestowed Fadak to your father's property and has made it special for him. So Fadak is your father's property, and the people have no right to it; I may do as I wish with it. My daughter! For Khadijah there was a dowry upon your father and I your father grant Fadak to you in replacement of your mother's dowry, so that during your life it will be yours and after you it will be for your children." Then the Prophet called Imam Ali and told him to bring a piece of animal skin. He then ordered him by saying, "Write that I have granted Fadak to Fatima." And to this Imam Ali, the Prophet's servant, and Umm Aieman bore witness.

When the Prophet passed away and Abu Bakr seized the caliphate, the latter sent someone to Fadak in order to remove Lady Fatima's lawyer from there.²

In defense of her right, Lady Fatima gave a sermon in the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina in the presence of Abu Bakr and others. When Umm Salamah heard Abu Bakr's words regarding Lady Fatima, she said:

Should such words be uttered in regard to Fatima al-Zahra, daughter of the Messenger of God who by God is a *houri* [heavenly woman] from amongst the humans? She is the best and most distinguished of all women and the mother of the youth of paradise, and she is the parallel to Maryam. It was through her father that prophethood was sealed...Be calm! The Prophet sees you and on day you will stand before God. Woe unto you! It is only then that you will see the result of your actions.

It was then decided that her yearly rations would be cut for that year - a price she paid for having defended the Prophet's

daughter, and speaking the truth, her yearly rations would be cut from that year.³

1 Farahidi, 1414, vol. 3, p. 1379

2 Kazvini, 1404, p. 320

3 Bujnordy, narrating from Ibn Rostam, 1381, vol. 10, p. 219
/ Kazvini, 1404, p. 488-489

ADVISING OTHMAN IBN AFFAN

At the time of Othman's caliphate, Umm Salamah offered him plenty of advice, and at the end of her words she would say, "This was your motherly right which I have carried out for you. Now it is left for you to obey."¹

1 Madras Tabrizi, 1374, vol. 8, p. 308

GUIDANCE TO JABIR BIN ABDULLAH ANSARI

When Muawiya failed to attract some of the people towards him through corruption, he began to threaten them. Jabir, being one of the victims of this approach, sought guidance from Umm Salamah saying, "Surely I have fear that I will be killed, but paying allegiance in such a situation is surely a path to misguidance. What should I do?" Umm Salamah replied by saying, "Whenever such a situation arises, pay allegiance, because dissimulation (*taqiyya*)¹ forced the People of the Cave (*As-hab al-Kahf*) to wear the cross around their necks and attend the pagan festivals of the Romans with their families."

The author of A'ayn al-Shi'a believes that she was a jurist who understood the complicated religious rulings, and this was why Jabir would refer to her.²

1 A practice emphasized in Shi'a Islam whereby one conceals or disguises one's beliefs, convictions, ideas, feelings, opinions, and/or strategies at a time of eminent danger, whether now or later time, to save oneself from physical and/or mental injury.

2 Ya'qubi, 2536, vol. 2 p. 105 / Amin, 1403, vol. 10, p. 372

DEFENDING IMAM ALI'S LEADERSHIP

The following are some of the many indications that prove her advocacy of Imam Ali after the death of the Prophet, some of which we will point out here:

Defending Imam Ali concerning the Battle of Jamal:

Imam Ali succeeded Othman after his death in the leadership of the Islamic nation, and thereafter Talha and Zubayr took Imam Ali's permission to leave the city under the pretext of seeking to perform Umra. Upon reaching Mecca, they joined forces with Ayesha and encouraged her to wage war against Imam Ali. Ayesha then approached Umm Salamah, "My cousin and brother-in-law have informed me that Othman was killed innocently, and that the majority of the people did not agree to paying allegiance to Ali. A group of people have instigated opposition in Basra. If you join us maybe God will amend the matters of Mohammed's nation through our hands." Umm Salamah said to her, "The pillars of religion will not be erected by us women. That which is praiseworthy in women is that they lower their gaze, hide the shape of their body, and hold their skirts. Surely God has removed this duty from our shoulders."¹ Umm Salamah then continued to warn about her decision in standing against Imam Ali, but Ayesha did not pay attention to her. When Umm Salamah lost hope in convincing Ayesha, she informed Imam Ali about the plans of the people of Jamal and dispatched her son Umar to be at Imam Ali's service. Afterward, Imam Ali made this son the governor of Bahrain, and Fars, and according to some he was also made the governor of Halwan, Mah, and Masbandan (some areas in current western provinces of Iran).

Attesting to the qualities and attributes of Imam Ali:

Mohammed ibn Hashub has said, "One day I was sitting in the presence of Umm Salamah, when suddenly a man entered and greeted her. He was asked, "Who are you?" to which he replied, "I am Abu Thabet, the servant of Abathar." Umm Salma said, "You are most welcome. Please come and sit down." As he was sitting down Umm Salamah said to him, "O

Aba Thabet! On that day in which the hearts flew to different places, where did your heart fly to?" Abu Thabet said, "My heart flew towards Ali. Umm Salamah said, "May you be successful. I swear by God that I heard the Prophet saying, "Ali is with the Quran, and the Quran is with Ali." They will not separate until they come before me near the Fountain of Kawthar. And so I sent my son Umar, and my nephew Abdullah bin Abi Umayyah to fight alongside Ali, and if it were not that the Prophet denied us from leaving the house, surely I would have left Medina in order to take part in the army of Ali.²

Preventing Imam Ali from being cursed:

It has been related from Imam Sadiq that Umm Salamah had a servant who disparaged Imam Ali. When she heard of this, she immediately called her and said to her, "O my child! I hear that you have been using abusive language in relation to Ali?" The servant confessed. Umm Salamah having heard his reply asked him to sit down and listen to a narrative she heard from the Prophet: "We were nine women in the house of the Prophet, and the Prophet had allocated one night and day for each one of us. When it was my turn, the Prophet came to the door of the house and in one of his hands was Ali's hand and with his other hand he was leaning on Ali's shoulder. He said to me, "Please distance yourself from the room and let us be at peace." I went outside and asked for permission to enter a few times, but was refused. After the third time that I asked I was granted permission to enter, I saw Ali sitting in front of the Prophet. He was saying; "May my mother and father be sacrificed for you! If such and such were to happen what would you command me to do?" The Prophet replied, "I command you to be patient." Then Ali repeated his question and was given the say reply, when he asked for a third time the Prophet said, "If such were to happen unsheathe your sword and fight so that when you meet me in that world, blood would trickle from your sword." Then the Prophet turned to me and said; "O Umm Salamah, listen and bear witness that he Ali is my brother in this world and in the hereafter. O Umm Salamah, listen and bear witness that he Ali ibn Abi Taleb, is my minister in this world and in the Hereafter. O Umm Salamah, listen and bear witness that he, Ali ibn Abi Taleb, is my flag bearer in this

world and will be tomorrow on the Day of Judgment. O Umm Salamah, listen and bear witness that he, Ali ibn Abi Taleb, is my successor and executor after me. He is the bearer of my religion and the preventer of my enemies from my fountain. O Umm Salamah, listen and bear witness that he Ali ibn Abi Taleb is the commander of the Muslims, the Leader of the Pious and the killer of Nakeseen , Qaseteen and Mareqeen. I said, "O messenger of God! Who are the Nakeseen?" He replied saying, "Those who will pay allegiance to him in Medina and will break their allegiance in Basra. I then asked, "Who are the Qaseteen?" He said, "Muawiya and his helpers, the people of Damascus. "Who are the Mareqeen?" I asked. The Prophet said, "The people of Nahravan... ." When Umm Salamah reached this point, the servant said, "You have saved me; may God save you. I swear by God I will no longer speak abusively about Ali."³

It has been narrated that someone went to Umm Salamah, and she asked them, "Do any of you curse the Prophet?" they replied: "I take refuge in God!" Umm Salamah said, "I heard the Prophet saying, "Whosoever curses Ali has cursed me." Furthermore, when Umm Salamah heard that Imam Ali had been cursed from the pulpit, she wrote a letter to Muawiya in which she reprimanded him severely.⁴

1 Ya'qubi, 2536, vol. 2, p. 78

2 Majlisi, 1403, vol. 22, p. 221 / Amin, 1403, vol. 10, p. 727

3 Majlisi, 1403, vol. 21, p. 222

4 Amin, 1403, vol. 10, p. 272 3 Ya'qubi, 2536, vol. ol.

THE PROPHET'S NARRATIVE ABOUT THE INCIDENT OF KARBALA

Umm Salamah, the Prophet's wife, was the first person to weep in Medina, as a response to the killing of Imam Husayn. During his lifetime, the Prophet had given Umm Salamah a glass bottle that contained white-coloured sand, and he had said to her, "Jibra'eel has told me that my nation will kill Husayn. Whenever this soil turns into blood, know that Husayn has been killed." She had kept the soil with herself and when the time came, she would check on it every hour. When she saw that it has turned to blood she cried out, "Oh Husayn! Oh the son of the Messenger of God!" and it was then that the women began to weep and the sound of distress filled the city of Medina like never before.¹

In some records it has been written that when Imam Husayn decided to travel towards Karbala, he entrusted the reserves of Prophethood and the deposits of Imamate to Umm Salamah, so that after the event of Karbala, they be handed over to Imam Sajjad, and she did so.²

1, p. 182-183 / Majlisi, 1403, vol. 45, p. 228, 230, and 23

2 Kulayni, 1388, v 1, p. 304 / Majlisi, 1403, vol. 47, p. 18, 19, and 48

Chapter 9

CONCLUSION

Lady Umm Salamah was an exceptional wife of the Prophet after Lady Khadijah in her faith and morals as seen in her private and public life. As a Shi'a Muslim woman, Umm Salamah carried out and completed all of her duties. Before her marriage with the Prophet, she participated in major Islamic historical events, such as in numerous wars and during two the notable migrations - to Medina and Abyssinia - during which she migrated twice by the command of the Prophet. During her marriage with the Prophet, she strived to keep the Prophet happy and held high respect for him. And after the death of the holy Prophet, she was the supporter of the Ahlul Bayt through her speech and actions, firmly protecting their sanctity and recounting their knowledge and wisdom. With her unshakeable faith and actions, it is with no doubt that the Ahlul Bayt deeply revered her.

Chapter 10

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IGNORANCE IS A CHOICE

*"Wisdom is the lost property of the Believer,
let him claim it wherever he finds it"*

Imam Ali (as)