

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

## On the Excellence of the Quraysh

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And just before I begin, the Quraysh *aren't* the Saudi ruling family. What? You think I'm joking? There are loads of Muslims out there who believe that the current Arabs in Saudi are the modern-day Quraysh you know...

Also, there are still remnants of the Quraysh in the world today despite what many Muslims on the other end of the stick might believe, but you might be wasting your time looking for them in Saudi or the Hijāz. Actually, there are good numbers to be found in Yemen, but more to be found in Kenya and even more to be found in Indonesia.

Goes slightly against what you might have had in your mind right?

So firstly, let's remind ourselves that the Quraysh were the leading Arab tribe in Makkah at the time of Prophethood. The Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) came from Bani Hāshim, a sub-clan of Bani 'Abd Manāf who were one of the key clans from the Quraysh. And the Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) established the excellence of the Quraysh in many different narrations, directly and indirectly.

The very first evidence for the excellence is that the Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) comes from their tribe and he shares their lineage. And the Prophets only come from the greatest of tribes and families in honour, standing and respect. The Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) said as narrated in Sahīh Muslim:

إن الله اصطفى كنانة من ولد إسماعيل، واصطفى قريشاً من كنانة، واصطفى من قريش بني هاشم، واصطفاني من بني هاشم

*“Allāh chose Kinānah from the progeny of Ismā'īl, chose Quraysh from Kinānah, chose Bani Hāshim from Kinānah and chose me from Bani Hāshim.”*

Secondly, the Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) said in Imām al-Bukhāri's *al-Adab al-Mufrad* in a *hasan* narration:

عَنْ رَفَاعَةَ بْنِ رَافِعٍ ، أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ لِعُمَرَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ : “ اجْمَعْ

لي قَوْمِكَ“ ، فَجَمَعَهُمْ ، فَلَمَّا حَضَرُوا بَابَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ دَخَلَ عَلَيْهِ عُمَرُ  
فَقَالَ : قَدْ جَمَعْتُ لَكَ قَوْمِي ، فَسَمِعَ ذَلِكَ الْأَنْصَارُ فَقَالُوا : قَدْ نَزَلَ فِي فُرَيْشِ الْوَحْيِ ،  
فَجَاءَ الْمُسْتَمِعُ وَالنَّاطِرُ مَا يُقَالُ لَهُمْ ، فَخَرَجَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ، فَقَامَ بَيْنَ أَظْهُرِ  
هِمْ فَقَالَ : “ هَلْ فِيكُمْ مِنْ غَيْرِكُمْ ؟ ” قَالُوا : نَعَمْ ، فِينَا حَلِيفْنَا وَابْنُ أُخْتِنَا وَمَوَالِينَا ، قَالَ  
النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ” : حَلِيفْنَا مِنَّا ، وَابْنُ أُخْتِنَا مِنَّا ، وَمَوَالِينَا مِنَّا ، وَأَنْتُمْ تَسْمَعُونَ :  
إِنْ أَوْلِيَانِي مِنْكُمْ الْمُتَّقُونَ ، فَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ أَوْلِيَاكَ فَذَلِكَ ، وَإِلَّا فَانظُرُوا ، لَا يَأْتِي النَّاسُ بِالْأَعْمَالِ  
يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ، وَتَأْتُونَ بِالْأَثْقَالِ ، فَيُعْرَضَ عَنْكُمْ ، ” ثُمَّ نَادَى فَقَالَ : “ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ –  
وَرَفَعَ يَدَيْهِ يَضَعُهُمَا عَلَى رُءُوسِ فُرَيْشٍ - أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ ، إِنَّ فُرَيْشًا أَهْلُ أَمَانَةٍ ، مَنْ بَعَى  
بِهِمْ - قَالَ زُهَيْرٌ : أَظُنُّهُ قَالَ : الْعَوَائِرَ - كَبَّهُ اللَّهُ لِمُنْخَرَبِيهِ ” ، يَقُولُ ذَلِكَ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ

*Rifā'ah b. Rāfi' (radhy Allāhu 'anhu) reported that the Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa  
sallam) said to Umar (radhy Allāhu 'anhu) , "Gather your people for me." He  
gathered them, and once they were at the door of the Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa  
sallam), Umar entered and said, "I've gathered for you my people." The Ansār heard  
this and said, "Revelation has been sent down regarding the Quraysh." People came  
to hear and see what would be said, so the Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam)  
came out and stood amongst them and said, "Are there any amongst you who are not  
from your own selves?" They replied, "Yes, there are those who we are in alliance  
with, our nephews and our mawlās." The Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) said,  
"Our allies are from us, our nephews are from us, our mawlās are from us. O those  
who are listening: my friends are those amongst you with you taqwā. If you are from  
them then good, but if not, then be careful lest people come on the Day of Standing  
with good deeds whereas you come with burdens, and you are cast aside." Then he  
called out and said, "O People – and he lifted his hands and placed them on the heads  
of the Quraysh – O People! The Quraysh are the most trustworthy people. Whoever  
wishes for them – and Zuhayr said, "I think he said "problems" – Allāh will throw him  
on his face." He said that three times.*

This narration in which the Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) was addressing the Muslims in Madinah indicates the excellence of the Quraysh. The Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) raising his hands for them and then putting them on the heads of the Quraysh strengthens the main message of this hadīth which is how close they are to the Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) .

The statement that they are the people of amānah has been explained in Faydh'l-Qadīr in various ways; they are the foremost in the choice for leadership, and that is due to

their trustworthiness, reliability, honesty and all other such qualities that a successful leader needs. They also said that the Quraysh's supporting of the Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam), their love for him, their respect for him and their closeness to him in kin (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) is an amānah that the people have to take on with respect to how they treat and deal with the Quraysh. All of this is possible in interpretation. Remember, with the importance of amānah being so emphasised in Islam, and such a difficult characteristic to achieve in our lives and also being the first quality that the Nation will lose as the Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) told us, then to be the "people of amānah" is a true praise.

Also, the phrase "Awāthir" in the deserves further study. It comes from a root word عثر which means "to fall over, to stumble, to trip up." The more advanced forms of the word such as عتور mean a trap that is set up for animals like a snare for a lion or a pit that is dug for an animal to fall into. Likewise عثار means that thing which someone stumbles over or causes one to fall and the plural of that is عواثير which is like the narrated word above with a ي but it also correct without the ي as in the version narrated here. That's why we get the understanding that whoever wants the Quraysh to "trip up" or is trying to "plot their downfall". Also, the word means places of danger and death, making it even more serious. Also, it means "to cause someone difficulty, hardship and distress." That's why I have translated the word as "problems" although clearly the word has a much higher connotation – "problems" combines all the evil intentions of those who wish harm, distress and a bad name for the Quraysh whilst at the same time trying to plot their downfall, diminish their status and cause them to literally fall from grace.

The last portion of the above narration has been narrated by Imām Ahmed as "throw him in the fire on his face" but here it means to basically humiliate and shame anyone who would oppose the Quraysh; the face and especially the nose has always been mentioned in Arabic and the word مخرجه literally means "his nostrils". The understood meaning of this final statement though is that any one who becomes an enemy to the Quraysh will be destroyed and why not, when Allāh himself has purified their hearts, despite their late entry into Islam but their excellence is established. As Ibn Hajr said, no-one opposes them except that they are defeated in this world and punished in the Hereafter.

The Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) also said about the Quraysh in the Musannaf and Kanz al-'Ummāl:

خيار قريش خيار الناس , وشرار قريش شرار الناس , والذي نفس محمد بيده , لولا أن

تبطر قريش لأخبرتها بما لخيرها عند الله أو ما لها عند الله

*“The best of Quraysh are the very best of mankind and the worst of the Quraysh are the very worst of mankind. By the One in Whose Hand lies the soul of Muhammad, if it was not for the fact that the Quraysh become proud, I would have informed them of their position of excellence with Allāh.”*

In the Musnad of Imām Ahmed, the Prophet (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said in the authentic narration:

إن للقرشي مثل قوة رجلين من غير قريش

*“Certainly, a man from the Quraysh has the strength of two men from other than the Quraysh.”*

Imām al-Zuhri was asked about the meaning of this statement and he replied,

*“in their superior opinions.”*

There are many other narrations in the praise of the Quraysh but this is sufficient for now.

The issue though that some people find difficult is whether Islam promotes favouritism here with respect to the Quraysh? What happened to the Islamic ideal of equality and everyone being judged the same and on the merit of their own actions? Is the love of the Prophet (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) for his tribe and family *biased*?

In brief, the first response to this is mentioned in the same hadīth above narrated in *al-Adab al-Mufrad* where the Prophet (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) censures the Quraysh and warns them to not fall short in good deeds. He also clarifies that when it actually comes down to it, then it’s the people of *taqwah* who are his true friends and supporters. The word “*waliyy*” in the first narration above has all these connotations – he (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) doesn’t make his friends those who are just related to him as al-Qastalāni said in explanation of this statement; it’s as if he (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) is saying, “I don’t befriend simply those who are related to me. I love only Allāh because that is His obligatory right from His servants, and I love the righteous believers for His Sake alone, and I love those who are loved because of their righteousness and their imān, whether he is a relative or not – I look after and fulfil the rights of my relatives in order to maintain the ties of kinship.”

This is of course supported by the narration in the *Sahīh* of Imām al-Bukhāri:

آل أبي طالب ليسوا إلي بأولياء, إنما وليي الله وصالح المؤمنين

*The family of Abu Tālib are not necessarily my friends; my friend is only Allāh and the Righteous Believers.*

No-one should have any doubt that the Quraysh or the *Hāshimis* or *Syeds* or the *Hābā'ib* or whoever wants to be from the Prophet's (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) lineage will have no advantage over anyone else unless they are people of *taqwah* and they come with good deeds. In another authentic hadīth narrated in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, the Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) said:

*“O Bani Ka'b b. Lu'ay! Save yourselves from the Fire! O Bani 'Abd Manāf! Save yourselves from the Fire! O Bani Hāshim! Save yourselves from the Fire! O Bani 'Abd al-Muttalib! Save yourselves from the Fire! O Fātima daughter of Muhammad! Save yourself from the Fire! I cannot do anything for you with respect to Allāh's decision other than that you have ties of kinship which I shall maintain.”*

Thus this is a point which needs no further explanation and the narrations on this point are too numerous to mention.

Secondly, we need to make an important clarification: there is **no** such thing as “equality” in Islam. Many Muslims have some mistaken idea, probably due to the influences of our modern-day culture, that everyone is in someway equal with respect to everything and anything.

This is not correct. Allāh chooses some people to better than others, blesses some with understanding that He doesn't give to others, gives some people strength that He doesn't give to others, makes some from the Prophetic family and not others, makes some Companions and not others, and indeed blesses some with Prophet hood and not others. This is all under His Divine Will and Wisdom of which we know little about, yet there is no doubt of Allāh's justice in all that He chooses. Whether we are the chosen ones or not with respect to any particular advantage, absolutely everyone has to opportunity to make it to the top. You don't have to be from Quraysh to get *al-Firdaws*. Dying as a martyr in battle is probably easier, but who's up for it?

Also, men and women have different qualities and they will likewise use those different qualities to accumulate good deeds in different ways, one sex having an advantage one day whereas the other sex will have the advantage the other day. And the examples for this in creation are many.

Also, people with advantages are held more accountable as well so it isn't all necessarily plain sailing. If you are meant to be blessed like being from the Quraysh, you will be more under the microscope and you can expect your punishment to be equal to the amount of your advantage if you are to slip up. Ask any of the real people of *Ahl'l-Bayt* or the Imāms and the scholars and see what they tell you about the pressures of expectation.

But of which there is no doubt is that everyone has an equal chance to become the very, very best. When the Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) emphasised that neither Arab had superiority over a non-Arab, or a white man over a black man etc, then this is to close the door to discrimination by the creation themselves and to allow everyone the same opportunity to gain *taqwah*.

To explain how those who have extra blessings on their side because of their lineage, their tribe, or other such good fortune etc, will actually *use* that advantage, we see various understandings from the scholars; if we take the above narrations for the Quraysh then it is understood that they will find achieving *taqwah* more easy, they will suffer less temptations, they will find more support from their community etc. This doesn't mean though that if another normal person gains the same level of *taqwah*, that they will be rewarded differently in the After-life. Rather, the very basics of Islam affirm that everyone will be rewarded according to their efforts and their results and Allāh knows best.