211865 - The Rightly-Guided Caliphs (may Allah be pleased with them) were more knowledgeable and more virtuous than the rest of the Sahabah

the question

Is it proven that `Uthman (may Allah be pleased with him) prayed and recited the entire Quran in one rak`ah?

Who are the Sahabah who memorized the Quran?

When the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said “The most knowledgeable of the people of what is lawful and what is prohibited is Mu`adh ibn Jabal”, or when he said that Ibn Mas`ud was the most knowledgeable of this ummah about the Quran, does that mean that Mu`adh and Ibn Mas`ud were more knowledgeable than the Rightly-Guided Caliphs?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

It is soundly narrated from the Commander of the Faithful `Uthman ibn `Affan (may Allah be pleased with him) that he recited the entire Quran in one rak`ah. This was narrated from him via several chains of narration:

At-Tabarani narrated in *Al-Kabir* (130) that Muhammad ibn Sirin said: The wife of `Uthman (may Allah be pleased with him) said, when they surrounded his house, wanting to kill him: Whether you kill him or not, he used to spend the entire night in praying one rak`ah in which he would recite the entire Quran.

Al-Bayhaqi (4782) narrated that `Abd ar-Rahman ibn `Uthman said: I stood behind Maqam

Ibrahim, and I was keen that no one should get there before me on that night. Suddenly a man poked me, but I did not turn around, then he poked me again and I did turn around, and I saw `Uthman ibn `Affan, so I stepped away from the Maqam and he went forward, and he recited the entire Quran in one rak`ah.

Ibn al-Mubarak narrated in *Az-Zuhd* (1275) from Sulayman ibn Yasar that `Uthman ibn `Affan stood in prayer after `Isha' and recited the entire Quran in one rak`ah, and he did not offer any other prayer before or after that.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It is soundly narrated from `Uthman (may Allah be pleased with him) that he recited the entire Quran in one rak'ah.

End quote from *Minhaj as-Sunnah an-Nabawiyyah* (4/32).

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

It was narrated via more than one chain of narration that he prayed and recited the Holy Quran in a single rak`ah at the Black Stone during the days of Hajj.

End quote from *Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah*, 7/214. Classed as authentic (sahih) by Ibn Hajar in *Al-Fat-h* (2/482).

Shaykh al-Albani (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

In the book of Muhammad ibn Nasr and elsewhere, it was narrated with a sound isnad from as-Sa'ib ibn Yazid that `Uthman recited the entire Quran at night in one rak`ah.

End quote from *Salat at-Tarawih* (98).

This is to be understood as meaning that Allah, may He be Exalted, blessed this time for him so that he was able to recite the entire Quran during that time.

A similar report was narrated by Muslim (772) from Hudhayfah, who said: I prayed with the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) one night, and he started to recite al-Baqarah and I thought: he will bow when he reaches one hundred, but he carried on. Then I thought that he would finish it in one rak`ah, but he carried on. Then I thought he would bow after finishing it, but he started to recite al-Nisa' and recited it all, then he started to recite Al 'Imran and recited it all, reciting with a slow and measured pace. When he reached a verse that spoke of glorifying Allah, he glorified Allah; when he reached a verse that spoke of asking of Him, he asked of Him; when he reached a verse that spoke of seeking refuge with Him, he sought refuge with Him. Then he bowed and started saying, 'Subhana Rabbiy al-'Azim (Glory be to my Lord the Almighty)." And his bowing was almost as long as his standing. Then he said: "Sami`a Allahu liman hamidah (Allah hears those who praise Him)." Then he stood for a long time, almost as long as he had bowed. Then he prostrated and said, "Subhana Rabbiy al-A`la (Glory be to my Lord Most High)," and his prostration was almost as long as his standing.

For more information, please see the answer to question no. 156299.

Secondly:

We have not come across any report which states exactly the number of those of the Prophet's Companions who memorized the Quran.

More than one of the scholars named some of them, who are the most prominent and well-known of them, but that does not mean that there were other companions who also memorized the Quran, but their names have not been narrated.

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

Abu `Ubayd mentioned those of the Companions of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) who memorized the Quran. Among the Muhajirin, he mentioned the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, Talhah, Sa`d, Ibn Mas`ud, Hudhayfah, Salim, Abu Hurayrah, `Abdullah ibn as-Sa'ib and the 'Abdullahs [Ibn `Umar, Ibn `Abbas, Ibn az-Zubayr and Ibn `Amr ibn al-`As]. Among the women, there were `A'ishah, Hafsah and Umm Salamah.

Ibn Abi Dawud, in *Kitab ash-Shari`ah*, also listed Tamim ibn Aws ad-Dari and `Uqbah ibn `Amir among the Muhajirin; and `Ubadah ibn as-Samit, Mu`adh who was known by the kunyah Abu Halimah, Mujammi` ibn Harithah, Fadalah ibn `Ubayd, Maslamah ibn Makhlad, and others among the Ansar.

Those who memorized the Quran also included Abu Musa al-Ash`ari, as was mentioned by Abu `Amr ad-Dani. Some of the later scholars also listed `Amr ibn al-`As, Sa`d ibn `Abbad and Umm Waraqah among those who had memorised the Quran.

End quote from *Fat-h al-Bari* (9/52).

Thirdly:

At-Tirmidhi (3790) narrated that Anas ibn Malik said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: The most merciful of my nation to my nation is Abu Bakr, and the strictest of them concerning the commands of Allah is `Umar, and the most truly modest of them is `Uthman bin `Affan; the most knowledgeable of them regarding what is lawful and what is prohibited is Mu`adh ibn Jabal; the most knowledgeable of them concerning the shares of inheritance is Zayd ibn Thabit; and the most knowledgeable of themr of Quran among them is Ubayy ibn Ka`b. Every nation has a trustworthy one, and the trustworthy one of this ummah is Abu `Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah."

Classed as sahih by al-Albani in *Sahih at-Tirmidhi*.

The most knowledgeable of the ummah about the Quran was Ubayy ibn Ka`b (may Allah be pleased with him), as is proven in this hadith, and not Ibn Mas`ud (may Allah be pleased with him), although Ibn Mas`ud was one of the most knowledgeable of the ummah about the Quran, and one of the best reciters of the Book.

This hadith does not mean that Mu`adh ibn Jabal, Ibn Mas`ud, Ubayy ibn Ka`b or any of the others scholars, reciters and jurists among the Sahabah (may Allah be pleased with them) were more knowledgeable than the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, especially Abu Bakr and `Umar.

Rather it means that they were the most knowledgeable of the ummah with regard to the specialties mentioned after the time of the Sahabah. There can be no one in the entire ummah after the Sahabah who is more knowledgeable of what is lawful and what is prohibited than Mu`adh ibn Jabal; and there can be no one among them who has more knowledge of the Book of Allah than Ubayy ibn Ka`b; and there can be no one who has more knowledge of the shares of inheritance than Zayd, and so on.

Or it could mean that after the time of the greatest and most senior Sahabah, these men were superior in their specialties to the rest of the ummah after that time.

It is well known that the Rightly-Guided Caliphs are superior in terms of virtue and knowledge to the rest of the Sahabah (may Allah be pleased with them all). Hence the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) enjoined us to follow their way in particular.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The scholars are agreed that Abu Bakr and `Umar were more knowledgeable than the rest of the Sahabah, greater in terms of obedience to Allah and His Messenger than the others, and more qualified to recognize the truth and follow it than them.

End quote from *Majmu` al-Fatawa* (35/124).

He also said:

The Rightly-Guided Caliphs are the most knowledgeable of the ummah about the life and Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and the circumstances he went through.

End quote from *Majmu` al-Fatawa* (20/234).

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

As for the hadith “The best of you to judge between people is `Ali,” there is nothing in it to indicate that he was better in judging between people than Abu Bakr and `Umar (may Allah be pleased

with them both). Rather it means that he was better in judging between people than the others who were present when the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said that, and there is no proof that Abu Bakr and `Umar were present on that occasion. It is not necessarily the case that if someone is better in passing judgement than a particular group of people, he is better in passing judgement than everyone…

As for the question: could we learn from this that he [`Ali] was better than them [Abu Bakr and `Umar]? The response to that is: no, we do not learn that, for several reasons:

1. There is no proof that he was better than them in judging between people, because of what we have mentioned above.
2. If someone is more suited to be appointed as a judge than someone else, it does not necessarily mean that he is more knowledgeable than the other person in all fields; rather it means that he is better than him in the field of judging between people only.
3. The fact that he was more suited to judge between people and was more knowledgeable does not mean that he was better, because superiority is not limited to having knowledge of how to judge between people…

End quote from *Fatawa al-Imam an-Nawawi* (253).

Al-Manawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The one who is most knowledgeable about the shares of inheritance is the one who has the most knowledge of issues having to do with division of the estate, namely Zayd ibn Thabit. What is meant (in the hadith) was that he would become like that, hence the great scholar Ibn `Abbas would wait at his doorstep to learn from him. The most knowledgeable of them about Quran means the one who had the most knowledge about recitation of the Quran, namely Ubayy ibn Ka`b; what is meant is that he was better than some people or would become the best at a particular time, because there were others who had greater knowledge of the Quran than him. The most knowledgeable of them about what is lawful and what is prohibited means that he had greater knowledge of the rulings on what is permitted and what is forbidden, namely Mu`adh ibn

Jabal; what is meant is that he would become like that after the demise of the greatest and most senior Sahabah, otherwise Abu Bakr, `Umar and `Ali were more knowledgeable than him about what is lawful and what is prohibited, and they had more knowledge about the shares of inheritance than Zayd ibn Thabit. This was stated by Ibn `Abd al-Hadi, who said: At the time of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), Zayd was not known for having greater knowledge of the shares of inheritance than others, and I am not aware that he ever spoke about this issue during the Prophet's lifetime or during the caliphate of Abu Bakr as-Siddiq (may Allah be pleased with him).

End quote from *Fayd al-Qadir* (1/460).

Shaikh Ibn `Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

No one had more knowledge about Islamic rulings than the Rightly-Guided Caliphs (may Allah be pleased with them).

End quote from *Majmu` Fatawa wa Rasa'il al-`Uthaymeen* (222/62).

See also the answer to question no. 34577.

And Allah knows best.