'Ali and This Trifling World

Ann (Umameer) Stock looks at 'Ali’s approach to the hardships of this world.

Fatimah &- and Umar &- had both wanted to marry Fatimah, but it seemed the Prophet & was waiting for someone else, so he declined their offers. Both companions urged ‘Ali, now in his twenties, to ask for her hand. ‘Ali was not completely without. He did own a shield which was given to Fatimah for wedding mahr (dower), ‘Ali had been exposed as a teenager to ayat like these revealed in Makkah:

And present to them the example of the life of this world, [its being] like rain which We send down from the sky, and the vegetation of the earth mingles with it and [then] it becomes dry remnants, scattered by the winds. And Allah is ever over all things, Perfect in Ability. (Al-Anfal: 27)

Wealth and children are [but] adornment of the worldly life. But the enduring good deeds are better to your Lord for reward and better for [one’s] hope. (Al-Kahf: 45-46)

His faith was strong, and that strength was present in his heroic actions: on the battlefield as well as in his role as head of his household, an adviser and eventually the Caliph. His faith was strong, and that strength was present in his heroic actions: on the battlefield as well as in his role as head of his household, an adviser and eventually the Caliph.

‘Ali understood that this earthly life is a fleeting temporary moment. He did not strive for it and neither did Fatimah. It was not a sacrifice on their part. They genuinely did not value the Dunya because this earthly life holds no value when compared to the afterlife promised on their part. They genuinely did not value the Dunya because this earthly life holds no value when compared to the afterlife promised to those who strive in Allah’s cause. He had internalised the ayah above saying:

’O world, beguile someone other than me. Is it to me you are sighted? For me you are sighted. And it is those who are the attainers [of success]. (At-Tawbah: 19-20)

The Qur’an was then revealed, confirming ‘Ali’s opinion:

Have you made the providing of water for the pilgrim and the maintenance of al-Masjid al-Haram equal to [the deeds of] one who believes in Allah and the Last Day and strives in the cause of Allah? They are not equal in the sight of Allah. And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people. (Al-Anfal: 27)

The ones who have believed, emigrated and striven in the cause of Allah with their wealth and their lives are greater in rank in the sight of Allah. And it is those who are the attainers [of success]. (Al-Anfal: 27)

Further Reading

The Biography of ‘Ali ibn Abi Taalib, by ‘Ali Muhammad As-Salabi

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accumulating wealth was not something the companions spent time doing. Many of the companions who entered Islam with abundant wealth ended their lives with little means. The worldly pleasures of life were not an end goal. Those who remained wealthy, like ‘Uthman & spent their money in the way of Allah to equip the army, or to feed the poor, or help other Muslims with their debts. Fatimah married ‘Ali knowing full well that he was a man of little means, but it didn’t matter. Their eyes were set on something far greater.

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