



Stories from the Hijaz

THE MAKKAH CHRONICLES



The keys to Allah's House



SALIM PARKER

ONLY one verse of the Quran was revealed inside the Kaabah. It involved someone who was not a Muslim but whom Allah instructed our Prophet (SAW) to trust.

As a result of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) obeying this command from our Creator, the non-Muslim was enlightened to accept Islam. It also led to a particular family being entrusted with guardianship of the key to the Kaabah.

This trust and right to this honour has been respected for centuries and no king or prince would interfere in the duties bestowed upon this family. In fact, the key of the Kaabah is not in the hands of the Saudi government nor with a particular religious or authoritative body but with the Bani Shaiba family.

During the time of the Prophet (SAW), each aspect of the rites of Hajj was in the hands of a different family of the Quraish. Every one of these families would eventually lose control of their guardianship of a particular rite, except the Bani Shaiba.

In the 8th year of Hijrah, the Muslims captured Makkah. Nabi Muhammad (SAW) and his Companions entered the Grand Mosque and went to the Kaabah, which they wanted to enter. They, however, found that it was locked. Members of the ummah who saw this indicated that the keys were with Uthman Ibn Talha, who had not accepted Islam.

Uthman later recollected the following: 'Once I met the Prophet (SAW) before the Hijrah and he (SAW) preached to me the message of Islam. I refused and remarked that he had opposed the religion of his nation and concocted a new religion.'

After the conquest of Makkah, Uthman was hiding on the roof of the Kaabah. The Prophet (SAW) commanded his cousin Ali Ibn Abi Talib (RA) to get the keys from

Uthman. The latter refused to hand over the keys and Ali (RA) snatched them from him, unlocked the door of the Kaabah and the Prophet (SAW) entered and proceeded to offer salaah inside.

While they were inside the Kaabah, the Prophet (SAW) received the revelation that was brought by Jibreel: 'Indeed Allah commands you to render back

those trusts to whom they are due, and when you judge between people to judge with justice.

'Excellent is that which Allah instructs you. Indeed, Allah is ever hearing and seeing.' (Surah an-Nisaa:58)

One key in private hands: a 12th century Kaabah key was sold for 18 million dollars in 2008 to an anonymous buyer. There are 58 other known keys; 54 of them in the Topkapi museum, in Istanbul, two in the Nuhad Es-Said collection, one in the Louvre, in Paris, and one is in the Islamic Art Museum, in Cairo.

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As soon as Prophet Muhammad (SAW) heard these verses of the Holy Quran, he commanded Ali (RA) to return the keys to Uthman Ibn Talha. He also requested Ali to apologise for forcefully taking the keys from him.

Uthman Ibn Talha was completely shocked when Ali (RA) returned the keys to him. Uthman was informed that it was on Allah's command that the keys had been returned to him. He then accepted Islam and recited the Shahada.

It is narrated that Abbas, whose family was responsible for providing water to the pilgrims, asked the Prophet (SAW) to also put them in charge of the keys to the Kaabah.

The Prophet (SAW) replied: 'This day is not the day of revenge, rather, it is the day of kindness and munificence.'

The honour of guarding the keys was then bestowed upon the family of Uthman with the following words by the Prophet (SAW): 'Take them, O Bani Talha, eternally up to the Day of Resurrection, and they will not be taken from you unless by an unjust, oppressive tyrant.'

The keys have been passed down the generations of the Bani Shaiba since then. Shaikh Abdul-Aziz Al-Shaibi, who died in November 2010, kept the key for eighteen years.

His brother, Abdul Qader Al-Shaibi, became the new key-bearer.

Abdul Qader Al-Shaibi, who was the 108th successor of Uthman Ibn Talha, died on October 23, 2014. Saleh Ibn Taha Al-Shaibi, the oldest member of the Shaibi family, succeeded him as the keeper of the key to the Kaabah. The title of Sadin, or keeper of the key, is bestowed on the person in charge of the key.

A newly built lock was fixed on the Kaabah door in 2013 following the ceremonial washing of the House of Allah. The lock and key are made of nickel and polished with 18-carat gold. The Shahada – I bear witness that indeed Allah is one and Muhammad (SAW) is the messenger of Allah – is written on the front side of the lock.

The key of the Kaabah is still with the family of Uthman Ibn Talha (RA) and his family is protected by the Saudi government.



The lock of the Kaabah was replaced in 2013 after the ceremonial washing of the inside of the Kaabah. The Shahada – I bear witness that indeed Allah is one and Muhammad (SAW) is the messenger of Allah – is written on the front side of the lock.

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