**The Tabi’un**



9.100. The first and foremost (to embrace **Islam** and excel others in virtue) among the Emigrants and the Helpers, and those who follow them in devotion to doing good, aware that God is seeing them – God is well-pleased with them, and they are well-pleased with Him, and He has prepared for them Gardens throughout which rivers flow, therein to abide forever. That is the supreme triumph.(A)



59.10. And all those who come after them (and follow in their footsteps) pray: "O our Lord! Forgive us and our brothers (and sisters) in Religion who have preceded us in faith, and let not our hearts entertain any ill-feeling against any of the believers. O our Lord! You are All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate (especially toward Your believing servants).(B)



60.4. Indeed, you have had an excellent example to follow in Abraham and those in his company, when they said to their (idolatrous) people (who were their kin): "We are quit of you and whatever you worship besides God. We have rejected you (in your polytheism), and there has arisen between us and you enmity and hate forever until you believe in God alone (as the only One to be worshipped. " (So it was) except for Abraham's saying to his father: "I most surely will plead for God's forgiveness for you, though I have no power at all to do anything for you against God. " (And their prayer was:) "O Our Lord! It is in You that We have put our trust, and it is to You that we turn in utmost sincerity and devotion; and to You is the homecoming.(C)

**The Tabi’un**

In many of the places where the Qur’an praises the Companions, it also mentions the blessed generations following in their way. For example:

The Outstrippers (the first to embrace Islam and excel others in virtue), the first of the Emigrants and the Helpers, and those who followed them in doing good, God is well-pleased with them and they are well-pleased with Him. He has prepared for them gardens underneath which rivers flow, therein to dwell forever; that is the mighty triumph. (9:100)

The Tabi’un, first of all, must be among those praised together with the Companions. Like them, they were well-pleased with God regardless of whether He sent them good or bad, blessing or misfortune. Conscious of their servanthood before God, they worshipped Him in deep respect and reverence. Like **the Companions**, they loved Him deeply and trusted Him completely. The Messenger praised them, saying: “Good tidings for those who have seen me and believed in me, and good tidings for those who see those who saw me.” [1]

The Tabi’un followed in the Companions’ footsteps and showed them due respect. They cherished no rancor and enmity against any of the believers, and wished everyone well:

As for those who came after them, they say: “Our Master, forgive us and our brothers, who preceded us in belief, and put not into our hearts any rancor towards those who believe. Our Master, surely You are the All-Gentle, the All-Compassionate.” (59:10)

As described in 9:100, this blessed generation followed the Companions in doing good (ihsan). In addition to meaning respect, being well-wishing and altruistic, one hadith says that ihsan also means: “Doing good (ihsan) is that you worship God as if you were seeing Him; if, however, you do not actually see Him, surely He sees you.” [2]

This generation came at a time when conspiracies and hypocrisy caused great internal dissension. At this critical juncture, they protected, defended, and practiced Islam in deep consciousness and devotion. They became the referents of: Our Master, in You we trust, to You we turn, and to You is the homecoming (60:4).

Some of them performed 100 rak’as of nightly prayers, recited the whole Qur’an every 2 or 3 days, always did their obligatory prayers in congregation in a mosque, always slept (like Masruq) in prostration before the Ka’ba, and did not laugh loudly during their whole lives.

Uways al-Qarani is generally regarded as the greatest Tabi’un. Although old enough to have seen the Prophet, he had no opportunity to do so. One day while sitting with his Companions, the Messenger advised them: “If you see Uways al-Qarani, ask him to pray for you.” [3] During his caliphate, ‘Umar asked Yemeni pilgrims about Uways. When he was found one year among the pilgrims, ‘Umar requested him to pray for him. Uncomfortable at being identified, Uways was never seen again among people until he was martyred at the Battle of Siffin fighting for ‘Ali. [4]

There were many illustrious Tabi’un, among them Masruq ibn al-Ajda’, Ata’ ibn Abi Rabah, Hasan al-Basri, Muhammad ibn Sirin, ‘Ali Zayn al-‘Abidin, Qasim ibn Muhammad, and Muhammad ibn Munkadir, who were peerless in knowledge, piety, and righteousness.

Muhammad ibn Munkadir was called al-Bakka’ (the one who cries much), due to his fear of God. Once his mother told him: “O my son, if I had not known you since childhood, I would think you are crying for some sin. Why do you cry so much?” He said that he did so because he was deeply conscious of God’s Majesty, of the terror of the Day of Judgement, and of Hell. [5] When asked on his death-bed why he was crying, he replied: “I am afraid I’ll be included in the meaning of the verse: Yet there will appear to them from God that they never reckoned with (39:47).”

Masruq ibn al-Ajda’ worshipped God very earnestly. He used to sleep in prostration before tha Ka’ba. When they suggested that he should lie down during his last illness, he answered: “By God, if someone appeared and told me that God wouldn’t punish me, even then I would continue to pray with the same earnestness as before.” [6] He did so because he was following the Prophet, who, when asked by ‘A’isha why he tired himself so much with praying, answered: “Shall I not be a thankful servant?”

Sa’id ibn Jubayr was a student of Ibn ‘Abbas. He spent the day preaching Islam and the night praying. He fought against Hajjaj on the side of ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Kindi. When finally he was seized, the soldiers taking him to Hajjaj spent a night in a monastery in a big forest. Sa’id wanted to pray in the forest. The soldiers let him, thinking that wild animals would tear him to pieces. The soldiers watched him pray through a window, and saw wild animals gather around him also to watch.

When his captors used torture to force him to swear allegiance to Hajjaj, he always refused: “You are in the wrong, wronging the Prophet’s descendants. I’ll never take the oath of allegiance to you.” Before he was executed, he recited the verse **Muslims** recite during the animal sacrifice: I have turned my face to Him who originated the Heavens and the Earth, a man of pure faith; I am not of those who associate partners with God (6:79). When they turned his face away from the prayer direction (qibla), he recited: To God belong the East and the West; Wherever you turn, there is the Face of God (2:115). They struck his neck with a sword and from his lips came out: “There is no god but God, Muhammad is the Messenger of God.” [7]

Such were the people who received the Traditions from **the Companions** and transmitted them to succeeding generations. Among them, the following few are also worth some fuller mention to recognize that blessed generation more closely:

**Sa’id Ibn al-Musayyib** the Tabi’un’s foremost Traditionist, jurist, and Qur’anic interpreter, was born in 15 ah. He met most of the Companions, among them ‘Umar, ‘Uthman, and ‘Ali. Sa’id was a renowned for his reflection and memory, as well as for his piety, righteousness, and profound devotion. These characteristics caused everyone to consider him, even during his lifetime, the greatest Traditionist of his time.

At the early age of around 20, Sa’id began to give opinions and deliver legal verdicts, just as Hasan al-Basri had done in Basra. The Companions admired him greatly. ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Umar once remarked: “If the Messenger had seen that young man, he would have been very pleased with him.” [8]

He was extremely careful about performing his daily prayers in congregation in the mosque. “I always have said the opening takbir of the daily prayers just after the imam for 50 years,” he used to say. He never neglected even one item of the Sunna. Once when he was ill and doctors advised him to stay in ‘Aqiq valley for a month, he objected: “Then how can I come to the mosque for the night and dawn prayers?” He was not content to perform the prescribed prayers anywhere except in the Prophet’s Mosque.

He did not swear allegiance to Caliph Walid. Although Hisham, governor of Madina, had him beaten daily until the stick was broken, he did not yield. When his friends, such as Masruq and Tawus, advised him to give an oral consent to Walid’s caliphate to end the beatings, he always replied: “People do what we do. If we consent, how will we be able to explain this to them?” [9]

Sa’id had married Abu Hurayra’s daughter in order to be nearer to him and to improve his knowledge and understanding of Abu Hurayra’s Traditions. When Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik appealed to him that his son Hisham be allowed to marry Sa’id’s daughter, he refused and, in the face of increasing pressure and threats, offered her to Ibn Abi Wada’, who stayed in the madrasa.

Imam Shafi’i considered all of Sa’id’s Traditions unquestionably authentic, even if the Companion from whom he had received it was not mentioned. This means that for Imam Shafi’i, Sa’id was of the same rank as the Companions in knowledge and narration of the Prophetic Traditions. Among those who received Traditions from him, Ata’ ibn Abi Rabah, Qatada, Muhammad al-Baqir (‘Ali’s great-grandson), Zuhri, and Yahya ibn Sa’id al-Ansari are worthy of special mention.

**Alqama ibn Qays al-Nakha’i** During the time of the Tabi’un, Basra was honored by, in particular, Hasan al-Basri; Yemen by Tawus ibn Qaysan; Madina by Sa’id ibn al-Musayyib; and Kufa by Alqama ibn Qays al-Nakha’i. Kufa was first enlightened by ‘Abd Allah ibn Mas’ud during ‘Umar’s caliphate, and then directly by ‘Ali, when he moved the caliphate there. This gave Alqama a splendid opportunity to meet many Companions and to learn about the Messenger’s life and Traditions at first hand.

Alqama is the founder of the Kufa school of **Islamic religious** sciences. Those who saw him remembered ‘Abd Allah ibn Mas’ud, for he followed the latter’s footsteps in prayer, conduct, and in practicing Islam. ‘Amr ibn Shurahbil, among the great scholars who narrated Traditions from Alqama, frequently suggested to those near him: “Let’s go to the one who resembles Ibn Mas’ud the most in conduct and attitudes.” [10] Ibn Mas’ud represented the Messenger wholly. As the Messenger desired to listen to Ibn Mas’ud recite the Qur’an, so Ibn Mas’ud liked to listen to Alqama. [11]

Imam Abu Hanifa, generally accepted as the greatest Muslim jurist and a man famous for his piety and austerity, admired Alqama so much that he would say: “Alqama is probably more profound in [knowledge] of Tradition and jurisprudence than some Companions.”

One day, someone came to Alqama and insulted him greatly. The illustrious scholar showed no indignation and, after the man had finished, recited the verse: Those who hurt believing men and believing women, without their having earned it, have laid upon themselves calumny and manifest sin (33:58). The man retorted: “Are you a believer?” Alqama answered humbly: “I hope so.” [12]

Alqama struggled with falsehood in his time, and did not obey the misguided Umayyad administrators. As he received Traditions from hundreds of Companions, many leading figures among his own and succeeding generations narrated from him. Alqama brought up the most illustrious scholars of the Kufan school, people such as Aswad ibn Yazid al-Nakha’i, Ibrahim al-Nakha’i, and Hammad ibn Abi Sulayman, and provided Kufa with a propitious ethos for bringing up Sufyan al-Thawri, Abu Hanifa, and many others.

**‘Urwa ibn Zubayr ibn Al-‘Awwam’s** father was one of the ten for whom **Paradise** was promised while alive. ‘Urwa’s grandmother was Safiyya, the Prophet’s paternal aunt, and his mother was Asma’ bint Abu Bakr, who spent much of her life with ‘A’isha. ‘Urwa can be considered a student of his aunt ‘A’isha. He also was taught by Sa’id ibn al-Musayyib, who was 7 or 8 years his senior.

‘Urwa was one of the seven greatest jurists of his time. He transmitted most of the Traditions narrated by ‘A’isha. He also received Traditions from ‘Ali, ‘Umar, Ibn ‘Abbas, Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, and many other Companions. Many illustrious figures of succeeding generations, among them Qatada ibn Di’ama, Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri, Yahya ibn Sa’id al-Ansari, and Zayd ibn Aslam, narrated from him.

Like his contemporaries, ‘Urwa was extremely pious. For example, one of his feet became infected with gangrene and he had to have it amputated. While it was being amputated with a saw, he did not complain, but only said: We have encountered weariness from this journey of ours (18:62). When one of his four sons died some time later, he stretched his arms before the Ka’ba and glorified God, saying: “O God, You gave me four limbs, two arms and two legs, and four sons. You have taken one from both groups and left to me the remaining three. Many thousands of thanks to Yoe!” [13] ‘Urwa was certainly included in the meaning of: God is well-pleased with them, and they are well-pleased with Him (98:8).

**Muhammad ibn Muslim ibn Shihab al-Zuhri** known as Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri, narrated one-fourth of the Prophetic Traditions coming from the Tabi’un. His father, Muslim, had struggled against the Umayyads, particularly Hajjaj. As a result, the Umayyad government usually kept him under surveillance—he did not, as alleged, support the Umayyads.

Like others honored by God as the most reliable narrators of the Prophetic Traditions, Ibn Shibab al-Zuhri had an extraordinarily keen memory. He memorized the Qur’an before he was 7 years old—it took him only 8 days. When he was 18 years old, he began to practice ijtihad (ruling on Islamic religious or legal matters based on the principles laid down in the Qur’an and the Sunna). He forgot nothing after he learned it: “I have betrayed nothing that God put in my heart as a trust.” [14]

Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri received his first education from Sa’id ibn al-Musayyib, who taught him for 8 years. He was also taught by ‘Ubaydullah ibn ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Utba, one of the seven leading jurists of the time. His life was wholly dedicated to Hadith: “I shuttled between Hijaz and Damascus for 40 years for the sake of Hadith.” [15]

Some accuse him of flattering the Umayyads. This lie is contradicted by historical facts. It is true that he tutored Caliph Hisham’s sons. However, this is not a fault and does not mean that he supported the Umayyads. He should, in fact, be praised for trying to guide the future rulers of the **Muslim community** to truth.

In his first meeting with Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri, Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik reminded him that his father had supported ‘Abd Allah ibn Zubayr in his dispute with the Umayyads for many years. But Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri never feared to speak the truth to the Umayyad rulers. Some Umayyads alleged that ‘Ali was referred to in: as for him among them who took upon himself the greater part of it, a mighty chastisement awaits him, coming after: Those who came with slander are a band of you; do not reckon it evil for you; rather it is good for you. Every man of them shall have the sin that he has earned charged to him (24:11). (This verse was revealed on the occasion of the slander against ‘A’isha).

This was, of course, a great lie against ‘Ali. Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri openly stated in the Umayyad court that this verse refers to ‘Abd Allah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul, leader of Madina’s Hypocrites. When the Caliph frowned, Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri retorted: “May you be left without a father! I swear by God that if a herald were to announce from heaven that God allows lying, I would not lie at all!” [16]

Although Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri defended ‘Ali to the Umayyads, he was accused of fabricating pro-Umayyad Traditions by Ya’qubi, a Shi’ite historian. Abu Ja’far al-Iskafi, another Shi’ite historian, made the same claim against Abu Hurayra. According to Ya’qubi’s false account, Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik had Jerusalem’s Masjid al-Aqsa’ repaired to encourage the Muslims to circumambulate it instead of the Ka’ba. He asked Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri to fabricate a Tradition to that effect, which (it was claimed) he did: “It is not worth traveling [for prayer] except to the three mosques: Masjid al-Haram, Masjid al-Aqsa’, and my Masjid here [in Madina].”

Earlier in this book, I argued in favor of this Tradition’s authenticity. In fact, Ya’qubi laid himself open to ridicule through such an unreasonable account, for:

• No Jewish, Chrisitan, or Islamic history book has recorded that Masjid al-Aqsa’ has been circumambulated as the Ka’ba is.

• The Qur’an extols Masjid al-Aqsa’ and the Muslims therefore revere it; it does not need a fabricated Tradition to secure this reverence.

• Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik, Caliph ‘Umar, Nur al-Din al-Zangi, and Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi all had it repaired.

• Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri could not have met ‘Abd al-Malik during his reign and fabricated a hadith for him at a time when his own father (along with ‘Abd Allah ibn Zubayr) was fighting against the caliph.

• Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri was not a famous Traditionist at this time. He only began to compile the Traditions in a formal manner during the Caliphate of ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz.

**• ‘Abd al-Malik** was not the sort of man to attempt such an absurd fraud. Before his caliphate, he was very pious, an authority on Traditions, and well-acquainted with the scholars of his generation. Although he did not succeed, as caliph, in retaining his former reputation among scholars for piety, he could not have lowered himself so far to fabricate a hadith.

Despite its absurdity, Goldziher used Ya’qubi’s account to defame Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri, the first formal compiler of the Traditions and a narrator of one-fourth of them. “Modern” researchers in the Muslim world, such as Ahmad Amin, ‘Ali Hasan ‘Abd al-Qadir, and Abu Rayya, who are spokesmen for the Orientalists, repeat the same claims.

The science of **Hadith** is founded on the most secure and sound pillars, and its original sources are there for anyone who wants to study them. Goldziher and his followers, on the other hand, base themselves on folkloric and poetical books, such as ‘Iqd al-Farid and Al-Aghani (Songs), and on books dealing with animals, like Kitab al-Hayawan. These books, and all similar ones, have nothing to do with **Hadith** and have no scientific approach.

**Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri** is one of the greatest Hadith authorities. Leading Hadith experts, such as Ibn al-Madini, Ibn Hibban, Abu Khatim, Hafiz al-Dhahabi, and Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, agree upon his indisputable authority. He received Traditions from many Companions, and numerous **scholars** among the first and **second generations** after the Companions narrated from him.

Among the Tabi’un are many others worthy of mention, like Aswad ibn Yazid al-Nakha’i, Nafi’ (who taught Imam Malik, founder of the Maliki legal school), and Tawus ibn Qaysan, who did not sleep for 40 years between the night and dawn prayers. However, the scope of this book does not allow me to go into further detail.(16)

 **References**

**(A) 9:100/The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal**

**(B) 59:10/The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal**

**(C) 60:4/The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal**

**[1] Hakim, Mustadrak, 4:86; Haythami, Majma’, 10:20; Hindi, Kanz al-‘Ummal, 11:530.
[2] Bukhari, “Tafsir,” 31/2; Abu Dawud, “Sunna,” 16; Muslim, “Iman,” 5-7.
[3] Muslim, “Fada’il al-Sahaba,” 223–4.
[4] Muslim, “Fada’il al-Sahaba,” 223–4.
[5] Abu Nu’aym, Hilya, 3:146.
[6] Ibn al-Jawzi, Sifat al-Safwa, 3:15.
[7] Abu Nu’aym, Hilya, 4:291–5; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidaya, 9:117.
[8] M. ‘Ajjaj al-Khatib, al-Sunna Qabl al-Tadwin, 485.
[9] Ibn Sa’d, Tabaqat, 5:126.**

**[10] Ibn Sa’d, 6:86; Abu Nu’aym, 2:98.
[11] Ibn Sa’d, 6:90–1.
[12] Ibn Sa’d, 6:86; Abu Nu’aym, 2:100.
[13] Abu Nu’aym, 2:179.
[14] Abu Nu’aym, 3:364; Dhahabi, Tadhkirat al-Huffaz, 1:109.
[15] Ibn Kathir, 9:375.**

**(16) The Infinite Light, M. Fethullah Gulen, The Light Inc.Tughrabooks**