Sofia Rehman

كنوز من عائشة

A TREASURY OF ʻAISHA



A Guidance from the Beloved of the Beloved

A Treasury of ʿĀ'ishah

THE TREASURY SERIES IN
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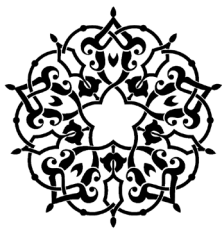
VII. *A Treasury of ʿĀ'ishah*, Sofia Rehman

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my beloved parents,
Sajida Rehman and the late Mahmud Rehman.

رَّبِّ ٱرۡحَمۡهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا ﴿٢٤﴾

(ألإسرآء ١٧ : ٢٤)

My Lord, have mercy on them, as they raised
me when I was a child. (al-Isrā' 17: 24)

Transliteration Table

Arabic Consonants

Initial, unexpressed medial and final: ء ’

ا	a	د	d	ض	ḍ	ك	k
ب	b	ذ	dh	ط	ṭ	ل	l
ت	t	ر	r	ظ	ẓ	م	m
ث	th	ز	z	ع	ʿ	ن	n
ج	j	س	s	غ	gh	هـ	h
ح	ḥ	ش	sh	ف	f	و	w
خ	kh	ص	ṣ	ق	q	ي	y

with a *shaddah*, both medial and final consonants are doubled.

Vowels, *diphthongs*, *etc.*

Short:	ـَ	a	ـِ	i	ـُ	u	
Long:	ـَا	ā	ـِي	ī	ـُو	ū	
Diphthongs:			ـَوْ	aw			
			ـَيْ	ay			

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

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Words do not encompass the gratitude I wish to express to my mother Sajida Rehman, my brother Omar Rehman and my sister-in-law Leyla, who gave me the time, support and space to finish writing this book during one of the most difficult periods in our lives. My mother lost her husband, Mahmud Rehman, and we lost our father, just as I needed to finish this challenging task—your love and support made it possible. May the good of this book be a *ṣadaqat jāriyah* for daddy.

Finally, but most fervently, all praise and thanks are to Allah, who heard the *duʿā* of this undeserving servant and out of His infinite generosity said "Be" and so it was.

Introduction



ʿĀ'ishah bint Abu Bakr ﷺ is an icon among the giants of the first community of believers in Islam. She is famed as the daughter of Abu Bakr al-Ṣiddīq ﷺ, the first Caliph of Islam, and as the most beloved wife of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Whilst both of these positions earned her great esteem, she proved herself worthy of the elevated rank she acquired through her own intellectual inquisitiveness, piety, commitment to justice, compassion for the Muslim community, and absolute loyalty to Allah and His Messenger ﷺ.

This is not a biographical book on ʿĀ'ishah bint Abu Bakr ﷺ, though such a book would be important and timely; it is a collection of forty statements made by her, each being followed by my commentary based on years of research on ʿĀ'ishah bint Abu Bakr ﷺ rooted in the Qur'an, hadith, and the wider Islamic tradition. The book is divided into thematic sections: ʿĀ'ishah's exegesis of the Qur'an (*tafsīr*); her jurisprudence (*fiqh*); matters pertaining to belief (*ʿaqīdah*); her political activism (*siyāsah*); and heart softeners *(al-raqā'iq*). Each of these sections contains a varying number of statements.

The final section, 'At the First Sign of Hardship the Believer's Refuge is in Allah', stands alone and

breaks away from the design of the rest of the book and, indeed, the rest of the Treasury series. It presents only one of ʿĀ'ishah's statements for which I then provide a lengthy explanation. This is because the statement refers to one of the most defining moments in ʿĀ'ishah's life: the *Ifk*, the slander that was promulgated by the hypocrites of Madinah in an attempt to defame our Mother ʿĀ'ishah and to bring hurt and injury of every sort to the blessed Messenger of Allah ﷺ. This event was deeply instructive for the first community of believers, and indeed all these centuries later it continues to be a source of instruction and inspiration. I hope, therefore, that the reader benefits from the extended attention granted to this statement.

I would like to acknowledge that when I began to write this book I was under the impression that it was the first of its kind, and in many ways it is; it is the first in the Treasury series to be written by a woman about a woman, it is also extensive in that it uses a range of sources beyond al-Bukhārī and Muslim, including history books such as *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī* and works of exegesis such as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzi's *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, Ibn Kathīr's *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm* and al-Qurṭubi's *al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* alongside other works that include more contemporary scholarship. It is not, however, the first time that forty hadith of ʿĀ'ishah ﵂ have been recorded in a single compilation. In 2018, Nurideen Knight self-published 40 *ḥadīth*

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1

Tafsīr of ʿĀ'ishah bint Abu Bakr رضي الله عنها

In the Mustadrak, al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī relays the following anecdote:

> One day, the first Umayyad Caliph, Muʿāwiyah asked a man in his entourage, 'Who is the most knowledgeable of all people?' Presumably calculating that giving a forthright answer might not be the most advantageous course of action, the man replied, 'Leader of the Believers, it is you!' But when the Caliph pressed him for a more honest response, he answered, 'Well, if you insist – then, it is ʿĀ'ishah.'[4]

The authority and knowledge of ʿĀ'ishah bint Abu Bakr رضي الله عنها is undisputed, but sadly, as the above anecdote illustrates, it has often been deemed more gainful to overlook her opinion in favour of someone else's.[5] In this chapter the breadth of her knowledge is

presented as she demonstrates a multifaceted understanding of the Qur'an: she can speak to its context, grammar, spirit, and theological philosophy. That she is so profoundly dexterous in her understanding of the Qur'an is a source of inspiration and clarity for all Muslims.

The power of *duʿā'* and the nearness of Allah to the believer

> Never does a believer supplicate to Allah, except that they are either granted that *duʿā'* immediately in this world or that it is delayed until the afterlife, as long as they are not hasty or despairing.[6]

This statement by ʿĀ'ishah ﷺ is found in the exegeses of Ibn Kathīr and al-Ṭabarī, for the beautiful verse of the Qur'an wherein Allah ﷻ states: *And when my servants ask you about Me, then verily, I am near. I respond to the supplication of the one who calls out to Me, so ask of Me and believe in Me, so that they may be rightly guided* (*al-Baqarah* 2: 186).

Upon hearing this statement, ʿUrwah ﷺ asked, 'O Mother, what does it mean to be hasty or to despair?' She replied, 'It is to say, I asked, but was not given, I supplicated but received no reply.'

For the believer in all of their states, whether their life is flourishing during a season of success and ascent or being tested by a season of difficulty

2

Fiqh of ʿĀ'ishah رضي الله عنها

This section discusses some of ʿĀ'ishah's jurisprudential positions. These are offered as an illustration of her consideration and understanding of some of the practicalities of being a Muslim woman seeking to live according to the precepts of Islam. Some of the positions run counter to dominant *fiqh* positions, and the reader is advised to research and consult authorities whom they trust in order to come to their own conclusions. I also refer the reader back to the introductory comments of the previous chapter on ʿĀ'ishah's contributions to the *tafsīr* tradition.

Nonetheless, the status of ʿĀ'ishah رضي الله عنها in matters of jurisprudence is unrivalled. The famous fifteenth-century scholar Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī wrote that 'one-quarter of the laws of Shariah are based on the [the traditions of] ʿĀ'ishah,' a formidable feat for any Companion of the Prophet ﷺ, and indicative of the mastery she had over the various facets of Islamic

knowledge production in line with the objectives of Allah, the mission of the Prophet ﷺ and the eternal trajectory of the Qur'an in setting Muslims on an ascending path to the *tawḥīdic* vision.

Women's Travel

> It is recorded that ʿĀ'ishah ؓ was informed that Abū Saʿīd al-Khuḍri ؓ was claiming that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had forbidden women from traveling unless accompanied by a *maḥram*. The narrator, ʿAmrah ؓ said, "ʿĀ'ishah ؓ then turned to the womenfolk in her company and said, "Not all of you has a *maḥram*."'[17]

A similar tradition is also reported by Ibn Abī Shaybah, and again he too reports ʿĀ'ishah's response as being, 'not all women have a *maḥram*.' Some scholars have chosen to read ʿĀ'ishah's response as an affirming of the apparent prohibition of the Prophet ﷺ on women travelling alone, while others have said that she was bringing to attention the inconvenience such a stance creates and the impracticality of it especially in the lives of Muslim women who do not have any *maḥram* who could escort them on their travels. Indeed, there are women who do have *maḥram*, but cannot rely on them to be available for every journey they wish to make. It is most likely that she was in fact of the latter belief, having herself travelled from Madinah

3

ʿĀ'ishah ﵂ on Matters of ʿAqīdah

This chapter provides an insight into ʿĀ'ishah's stance on several issues pertaining to ʿaqīdah, *or theological/creedal positions in Islam.*

Al-Bukhārī and Muslim both record in their respective *ṣiḥāḥ*, that ʿAmr ibn al-ʿāṣ ﵁ narrates that he had been selected by the Prophet ﷺ as the commander of his army being deployed to Dhāt al-Salāsil. Feeling encouraged by this show of favour from the Prophet ﷺ, ʿAmr ﵁ decided to ask the Prophet ﷺ who was his dearest Companion. The Prophet ﷺ replied, 'ʿĀ'ishah.' Unsatisfied with this answer, ʿAmr ﵁ clarified he meant from amongst the men. The Prophet ﷺ said, 'Her father.' Ibn ḥazm stated in his *al-Aḥkām fī Uṣūl*

al-Aḥkām, that this hadith was evidence that the Prophet ﷺ had preferred ʿĀ'ishah ؓ above all his other Companions and family members, even above Fatima ؓ, his daughter whom he was known to love with great intensity. As a result, he argued, ʿĀ'ishah ؓ should be given preference in all our affairs in keeping with the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ. Truly to do so is to be on a path of truth, intelligence, righteousness, and loyalty to both the words of the Qur'an and the Prophet ﷺ.

Women as a source of bad luck

It is reported that Abū Hurayrah ؓ said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, 'Bad luck is found in three things: the house, the woman, and the horse.' ʿĀ'ishah ؓ responded:

> Abū Hurayrah has not remembered. He entered upon the Messenger of Allah ﷺ as he was saying, 'May Allah curse the Jews [for] saying, bad luck is found in three things: the house, the woman, and the horse.' He heard the last part of the statement but not the first.[38]

In another version of this hadith, recorded by Aḥmad, ʿĀ'ishah ؓ is reported to have been enraged upon hearing this statement being attributed to the honourable Prophet ﷺ, and responded saying, 'By the One who revealed the Qur'an upon Abū al-Qāsim, he never said such a thing, but rather the Prophet of

5

ʿĀ'ishah ﵂ on Heart Softeners, Al-Raqā'iq

The world pushes us towards wanting designer labels, holidays in far flung destinations, and luxury cars. It entices us with the promise of clout and status as it enslaves us to the routine of snap–caption–post–repeat, ensuring that even those who are not present to witness our material gains are made aware of them. We add filters to perfect the picture, we edit out the blemishes, but what of the heart in all of this enterprise? Along the way the heart is in danger of being filtered out too.

Allah, on the other hand, calls us to a consciousness about the state of our hearts. Something that can't be snapped, captioned, and posted on social media. An endeavour so private it sits as an intimate whisper, a promise of sincere affection and devotion between the believer and Allah, the lover and the

6

At the first sign of hardship the believer's refuge is in Allah

Zaynab bint Jaḥsh ﷺ and ʿĀ'ishah ﷺ were in a playful exchange with each other over their respective status with Allah. Zaynab boasted about her marriage being validated from above the sky, while ʿĀ'ishah ﷺ responded, 'I was the one for whom exoneration was revealed in His Book when Ibn al-Muʿaṭṭal carried me on his ride.' Zaynab ﷺ asked ʿĀ'ishah ﷺ what she said at that time, and ʿĀ'ishah ﷺ replied, 'I said: *ḥasbi Allah wa niʿmal wakeel*,

حَسْبِيَ اللهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ

Allah is sufficient for me and what an excellent Disposer of affairs [is He].'[87]

What appears to be a nondescript conversation between two wives of the Prophet ﷺ, carries within it reference to one of the most tumultuous times in the life of ʿĀ'ishah ؓ, that brought with it many lessons for the Muslim community for generations to come. In an uncharacteristically long narration recorded in *ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ʿĀ'ishah ؓ relays the events of what was to become known as, *ḥadīth al-Ifk*, the Incident of the Slander.[88] She details how when the Prophet ﷺ would intend to make a journey, he would draw lots amongst his wives to decide on who would accompany him. On one such occasion, it was ʿĀ'ishah's lot that was drawn and so she accompanied the Prophet ﷺ as he went out to battle. She reports being seated in a palanquin that was lifted and placed on a camel to maintain her privacy during travel. The battle was a success, and the caravan was returning to Madinah. On the journey back they took a break. ʿĀ'ishah's palanquin was dismounted from her camel and she took the opportunity to disembark and relieve herself. When she returned, she realised that the necklace she had been wearing had fallen, so she retraced her footsteps in the hopes of finding it. Having retrieved her necklace, ʿĀ'ishah ؓ hurried back to where the army had camped only to find they had reassembled and had continued without her. Those who had been charged with returning the palanquin of ʿĀ'ishah ؓ back to the camel had not noticed it was empty due to how little she weighed.

Endnotes

1. Brother to the more widely known Companion, Abū Mūsā al-Ashᶜarī.
2. al-Afghani, S. *ᶜAisha wa al-Siyāsah* p. 14.
3. Masrūq ibn al-Ajdaᶜ a second generation *Tābiᶜī* was a respected jurist and transmitter of ḥadith.
4. ᶜAisha Geissinger, "ᶜAisha bint Abu Bakr and Her Contributions to the Formation of the Islamic Tradition', *Religion Compass*, 5/1 (2011), pp. 37–49.
5. For more on this, you may reference my forthcoming book, *Gendering the Hadith Tradition: Recentering the Authority of Aisha, Mother of the Believers* due to be published in 2023 by Oxford University Press.
6. *Tafsīr* of (*al-Baqarah* 2: 186) in *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm* by Ibn Kathīr and *Jāmiᶜ al-Bayān ᶜan Ta'wīl āy al-Qur'an* by al-Ṭabarī.
7. Salmān al-Fārsi reported: 'The Prophet ﷺ said, "Verily, Allah is munificent and generous. He would be shy, when a man raises his hands to Him, to turn them away empty and disappointed."' (*Sunan al-Tirmidhī*)
8. *Tafsīr* of (*al-Baqarah* 2: 284) in *Tafsīr al-Kabīr* by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzi.
9. *ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Book of *Tafsīr*.
10. *ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Book of Patience.
11. *Tafsīr* of (*al-Baqarah* 2: 224) in *Fatḥ al-Qadīr* by al-Shawkāni.
12. *Jāmiᶜ al-Tirmidhī*, in the chapter on Zuhd.
13. Reported in the *tafsīr* of (*al-Mā'idah* 5: 67) in *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī* and *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*.
14. Imam al-Ṭabarī in *al-Jāmiᶜ li Aḥkām al-Qur'an* and al-Tirmidhī, Chapters on *Tafsīr* - both acknowledge

كنوز من عائشة

A TREASURY OF ‘AISHA

‘AISHA BINT ABU BAKR ﵂ has been an inspiration and paragon for Muslims since the first generation of Believers emerged. Hailed as a guiding light, a fount of wisdom and a purveyor of the Prophetic mission, Aisha’s words have illuminated Islamic thought in all its branches. This book compiles 40 of her insights and statements in the categories of Qur’anic exegesis (*tafsīr*), Jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Theology (*‘aqīdah*), Politics (*siyāsah*) and Heart Softeners (*al-raqā’iq*) with commentary for the contemporary Muslim seeking spiritual and moral direction as they traverse through daily life and its challenges and possibilities.

Dr Sofia Rehman is an independent scholar of Islam trained both traditionally in Syria, Tukey and Wales, and through academia whose PhD focused on the statements of Aisha Bint Abi Bakr as recorded in the work of the 14th century scholar, Imam al-Zarkashi. Her book based on this thesis is entitled, *Gendering the Hadith Tradition: Recentering the Authority of Aisha, Mother of the Believers* (Oxford University Press). She is an advocate of bridging the gap between academic scholarship on Islam and the wider Muslim community, setting up critical reading groups and workshops with global reach to facilitate learning, curiosity and spiritual empowerment.

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