Order Abu Bakr to lead the people in prayer

Ibn ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: When the illness of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) intensified, he was asked about leading the prayer and he said: "Order Abu Bakr to lead the people in prayer." Upon that, ‘Ā'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: "Abu Bakr is a soft-hearted man; he is overcome by weeping when he recites the Qur’an." So the Messenger of Allah repeated: "Order him to lead the prayer." In another narration: ‘Ā'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: "If Abu Bakr stands in your place, the people will not hear his recitation of the Qur’an on account of (his) weeping.”

[Authentic hadith] [Narrated by Bukhari & Muslim]

When the last illness of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) became more intense, he was not able to lead the people in prayer, so he ordered those who were with him to tell Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) to lead the prayer. Abu Bakr used to weep much whenever he recited the Qur’an, so ‘Ā'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) made an excuse for him on account of his weeping. However, in the Hadīth mentioned here, her real intention was not that Abu Bakr should not lead the prayer because of his weeping while reciting the Qur'an; rather, she feared that people would regard her father, Abu Bakr, as a bad omen for taking the place of the Prophet in leading the prayer (i.e. heralding his imminent death). So she did not show what she was hiding in her heart. In a narration in Sahīh Muslim, ‘Ā'ishah said: "By Allah, there is nothing disturbing in it for me but the idea that people may see a bad omen in the first person to take the place of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him)." She said: "I tried to dissuade him twice or thrice (from appointing my father as Imām in prayer), but he ordered Abu Bakr to lead the people in prayer and said: 'You women are like the women who surrounded Yūsuf.'" He intended by saying "the women who surrounded Yūsuf" that they are like those women in the story of Prophet Yūsuf in showing outwardly what was contrary to what is in their hearts. Although he used the plural form, he intended only one woman, which is ‘Ā'ishah, just as he intended by saying "those women who surrounded Yūsuf" only one woman, which is Zulaykha, wife of the ruler of Egypt at the time of Yūsuf. The aspect of similarity between the two women is that Zulaykha invited the women and outwardly showed them hospitality, but her inward intention behind inviting them was to make them look at the beauty of Yūsuf so that they would excuse her for loving him. Likewise, ‘Ā'ishah outwardly expressed that the reason she wanted her father to be exempted from leading the prayer was that the worshipers would not hear his recitation of the Qur’an because of his weeping, whereas her real intention was her fear that people would find a bad omen in him, as explicitly mentioned in other narrations of the Hadīth, where she said: "... the only reason that I argued with him (about this matter) was that I did not feel in my heart that after him (the Prophet) the people would ever love a man who had taken his place.”

