

# MESSAGE OF THAQALAYN

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

IN THE NAME OF GOD,  
THE MOST GRACIOUS, THE MOST MERCIFUL

MESSAGE OF THAQALAYN  
A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC STUDIES



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# MESSAGE OF THAQALAYN (UK ED.)

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The *Message of Thaqaalayn* feels responsible to present the teachings of Islam in general and the School of the Ahlul Bayt (a) in particular with complete honesty and accuracy and at the same time to emphasise the common ground that binds all Muslims together. Strengthening ties of brotherhood amongst all Muslims, whatever school of Islam they may adhere to, and establishing genuine, enduring and intimate friendship between all those who believe in God are two of the main aims and tasks of the *Message of Thaqaalayn* and indeed, any responsible media.

**Editor-in-Chief**

# UNDERSTANDING GOD'S MERCY

## PART VI

MOHAMMAD ALI SHOMALI<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** In the previous part, we studied the role of God's mercy in aiding humanity through sending messages of guidance from Prophets Noah and Salih, as well as sending books of guidance such as the Torah and the Qur'an. We also studied the ways God supports human beings through His mercy, which includes protecting people from following Satan,<sup>2</sup> from the plots of enemies to misguide them<sup>3</sup> and from the tempting soul.<sup>4</sup> We also looked at the role of divine mercy in the purification of the soul<sup>5</sup> and preventing people from despair<sup>6</sup> as His mercy is far greater than people's sins. In this part, we will explore the different types and levels of divine forgiveness and understand how God may even transform one's immoral deeds into good ones. Afterwards, we will refer to people's response to divine mercy and finally examine how those who practice patience receive additional mercy from God.

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### *The role of God's mercy in forgiveness*

Out of His mercy, God forgives the sins of those who repent:

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<sup>2</sup> The Qur'an 4:83

<sup>3</sup> 4:113

<sup>4</sup> 12:53

<sup>5</sup> 24:21

<sup>6</sup> 39:53

فَتَلَقَّى آدَمُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

*Then Adam received certain words from his Lord, and He turned to him clemently. Indeed He is the All-clement, the All-merciful. (2:37)*

Allah first taught Adam the words, and when Adam used those words to repent, Allah accepted. Thus, Allah Himself initiated this. It is important to note that this is not restricted to Adam: Allah forgives everyone who sincerely and honestly tries to change for the better:

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

*Say [that God declares], ‘O My servants who have committed excesses against their own souls, do not despair of the mercy of God. Indeed God will forgive all sins. Indeed He is the All-forgiving, the All-merciful.’ (39:53)*

### ***Transforming immoral deeds into good ones***

Not only does God forgive the repentant, but He also may transform one’s bad deeds into good ones:

إِلَّا مَن تَابَ وَ ءَامَنَ وَ عَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا فَأُوْلَئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ حَسَنَاتٍ وَ كَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا

*...excepting those who repent, attain faith, and act righteously. For such, God will replace their misdeeds with good deeds, and God is all-forgiving, all-merciful. (25:70)*

This is more than merely forgiving someone's wrong actions. People certainly do not possess this trait. When people forgive someone, they may not punish the sinners for what they have done, but they may still remember the sinner's actions and reveal it to others. And even if we supposedly forgive them and forget what they have done completely, we do not usually consider the immoral actions of people as good actions and reward them accordingly. It is not common for people to reward someone who betrays or disobeys them. Conversely, God not only forgives, but He may transform your immoral actions into good actions, and as a result, He rewards you for it.

When we read the record of our deeds on the Day of Judgment, we may see that we spent our lives missing many opportunities. Moreover, our record shows our many good deeds in helping people although we know that we may not have helped anyone. There were, for example, a hundred people in need of your help and you did not help them, though it is displayed in your record that you have helped those hundred people. Though it is difficult to believe, your record would read, "These hundred people are those people that you did not help, but when you genuinely repented and felt terrible for what you failed to do, you truly and sincerely felt that you did something wrong. By the time you wanted to help, there was no opportunity. Either your time was up or those people were not available. But since you sincerely regretted that, we have written that you have helped a hundred people." This is the way God, out of His vast generosity treats us, although this is for those who sincerely and wholeheartedly move towards Him without cheating or taking advantage of His mercy. They truly desire to change for the better with honesty and sincerity.

*The role of God's mercy in easing our affairs*

Sometimes God, out of His mercy, eases our affairs by giving us some exemptions or somehow reducing our obligations. For example, regarding ‘*qisās*’ (retaliation), the Qur’an says:

*O you who have faith! Retribution is prescribed for you regarding the slain: freeman for freeman, slave for slave, and female for female. But if one is granted any extenuation by his brother, let the follow up [for the blood-money] be honourable, and let the payment to him be with kindness. That is a remission from your Lord and a mercy; and should anyone transgress after that, there shall be a painful punishment for him. (2:178)*

If someone has killed another person, the victim’s guardians have the right to demand punishment for the perpetrator. But if those who have lost a loved one ask for blood money instead of retaliation, God accepts this. This is a type of facility God provides you with, so that if the guardians of the victim are satisfied, it is as if God is saying, “I’m happy and indeed God loves us to forgive one another (though if the perpetrator is determined to repeat his crime it is another matter).” God gives us the right to demand the perpetrator’s execution, but if you forgive your brother or sister in Islam who committed this wrong action and you know that he is remorseful, God accepts it, and He does not insist that you kill that person.

### ***Types of response to divine mercy***

God gives mercy to people in different ways. But when people receive divine mercy they respond differently: there are those who are appreciative and grateful and who use this mercy wisely, and there are those who are ungrateful or fail to acknowledge it. Sometimes they do not take it as a gift from God; rather, they take it to happen by chance or firmly believe it to be their own achievement. If they have a good family, upright children, a respectable reputation, or a decent education,

they believe it to be a result of their own accomplishments instead of God's generosity. Allah says to Prophet Muhammad:

فَإِنْ أَعْرَضُوا فَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا إِنَّ عَلَيْكَ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ

*If they [the people that you speak to them to guide them] turn away, you are not sent to be controlling them [and holding them] your responsibility is just to deliver [the message]. (42:48)*

The task of the prophets was to deliver the divine message. Whether or not people believe it is not the prophets' responsibility nor will they be questioned for it. The prophets are accountable for delivering the message in the best possible way: no one is asked or even able to force others to believe. Faith dwells in the heart and the only one who has control over his heart is the individual himself. Therefore, no guide or propagator should feel disappointed if people do not appreciate what he offers after having made sure that he has carried out his responsibility properly. Similarly, a very capable doctor who diagnoses illness correctly and prescribes a good medicine to a patient who in turn chooses not to take it may feel sad, although he should not be blamed, and nor should he blame himself for the patient's wrong choice.

Prophet Noah is a great example. He toiled for nine hundred and fifty years<sup>7</sup> and after such a long ministry, only some eighty people believed in his message - an average of one person in every 12 years - but by no means can this be taken as a sign of his failure or shortcoming. On the contrary, Prophet Noah is one of the five greatest prophets who are called 'Prophets of Great Determination' (*ulu'l-'azm*).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The Qur'an 29:14

<sup>8</sup> The Qur'an 46:35

Thus, what is important is to deliver the message properly. For example, if someone gives you an envelope with a letter inside and asks you to deliver it, your responsibility is to ensure that this letter reaches him. You are not expected to give it to another person to deliver it; that person may forget. You should not merely put it in the post; it may get lost. If you place it outside his door, it may be windy or there may be children who could misplace it. Your responsibility is to ensure that it reaches the hand of that person. However, whether he opens the letter, reads it, or acts upon it after having read it is not your responsibility. He may throw it away, skim through it, or read it and not act upon it. As far as you are concerned, you have done your job well when you took all the trouble and ensured that this message reached him.

Unfortunately, what happens many times is that we do not ensure that the message of God is properly delivered. For example, even if we are familiar with the message of God, we may not know how to appropriately deliver it to those who live under certain circumstances in a way they receive it well and take it seriously. Sometimes we create productive books and essays, but they are never published or if they are published they may not be written in proper language usage and style and even if so, they may not be well distributed. Most of our books are distributed in our own circles and many outsiders are unfamiliar with them. And if by chance they come to know about them, there is no system to order them as they do with other books. If they go to the bookstores or visit mainstream booksellers on the internet, they still may not be able to find them. We have to ensure that in the same way people receive a myriad of other messages from business corporations and the media, Allah's message reaches them in a very honorable and respectful way, in a way that they can appreciate it, and not just by, say, placing it on their doorstep. Afterwards, the decision to act upon it rests with them. We have to ensure that the message is reaching them. Today we are far behind this point. Many people really do not have access to

good materials that present Islam wisely. Instead, they have to make efforts to find it.

In any case, after mentioning the above point, the Qur'an says:

وَإِنَّا إِذَا أَذَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنَّا رَحْمَةً فَرِحَ بِهَا وَإِنْ تُصِيبُهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ  
أَيْدِيهِمْ فَإِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ كَفُورٌ

*... Indeed when We let man taste Our mercy, he exults in it; but should an ill visit them because of what their hands have sent ahead, then man is indeed very ungrateful. (42:48)*

Human beings tend to become overjoyed when they receive God's mercy and consequently they may get carried away, feel smug, and forget God. On the other hand, when severe difficulties occur to them, they may forget the blessings God gave them in the past and complain over their current ones. After having received thousands of different types of mercy, now having to face one problem makes them nag and grumble. When people are given their daily necessities they easily become complaisant and forget the role they are obliged to take; on the other hand, and when not given the same thing for one day, they complain and question the good qualities of the Giver. This common reaction in human beings that happens often can be purged with enough training and education.

### ***How to receive more mercy from God***

For those who appreciate divine mercy in the first place, God provides them with extra mercy. In this way, the mercy will not be wasted nor turned against them, because those who do not appreciate divine blessings and benefit from them will be questioned and will be worse off compared to those who were not given it at all. And if such

ungrateful people are given more, their problems will only increase. For example, if God has given me a child and I do not look after him it would be better for me if I am not given more. Or if He has given me money when I lack money management skills, it would be better if He withholds it from me. However, if one is grateful and knows how to appreciate God's bounties, He will offer him even more:

لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ

*If you are grateful, I will surely enhance you [in blessing] (14:7)*

Elsewhere, the Qur'an says:

يُدْخِلُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ وَ الظَّالِمِينَ أَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا

*He admits whomever He wishes into His mercy, and as for the wrongdoers, He has prepared for them a painful punishment. (76:31)*

The mercy that God gives to the people with whom He is pleased is an additional mercy to the general mercy everyone is given. God gives mercy to everyone, but He gives more to those who are appreciative, and lets them go deeper into the ocean of His mercy. On the other hand, those who are unjust and ungrateful will lose and suffer. It is noteworthy that in Islam, any bad action is considered an act of injustice whether it affects others or the agent himself. Indeed, even when someone does injustice to other people, he first does injustice to himself and wrongs himself before he wrongs and harms others. For example, if I use unpleasant words when speaking, this is disrespectful to the addressee, but it is first harming my own personality and will bring shame to me. When people hear me speaking in such a way, they will feel sympathetic with the addressee, but they all will become

against me. So, though I wanted to humiliate someone, I have only humiliated myself. Honorable and dignified people do not treat others disrespectfully, but you cannot expect the dishonorable to do everything.<sup>9</sup> A person who has no honour for himself may do anything. There is nothing to stop him. Imam Hadi (a) is quoted as saying:

مَنْ هَانَتْ عَلَيْهِ نَفْسُهُ فَلَا تَأْمَنَ شَرَّهُ

*Do not feel secure from the bad actions of those who have no respect for themselves.*<sup>10</sup>

Thus, those who have honour for themselves would not commit sins and acts of injustice and therefore would not be deprived from receiving extra mercy from God.

### ***I. The patient receives extra mercy***

One group that receives more mercy from God is the patient:

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَ  
الثَّمَرَاتِ وَ بَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَ إِنَّا  
إِلَيْهِ رَاغِبُونَ أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَ رَحْمَةٌ وَ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ  
الْمُهْتَدُونَ

*We will surely test you with a measure of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth, lives, and fruits; and give good news to the patient —those who, when an affliction*

<sup>9</sup> A person who has honour for himself does not dress everything, even if he is alone. It is said that once one of *Ulamā* who was always wearing ‘*abā*’ (veil) and ‘*amāmah*’ (turban) in a very formal way in his own house was told by someone: “No one is here. Why do you put on this official dress?” He replied: “I am myself here.”

<sup>10</sup> *Bihar al-Anwar*, v.72, p. 301, h.11 & v.75, p. 366 h.5; *Mizan al-Hikmah*, v.2, p. 982, h.10.

*visits them, say, "Indeed we belong to God, and to Him do we indeed return." It is they who receive the blessings of their Lord and [His] mercy, and it is they who are the [rightly] guided. (2:155-157)*

We are certainly going to be tried and examined in different ways. Sometimes there is fear in general or due to lack of security. There may be hunger; you may not have food for yourself, your children, or your friends. Or there may be losses in fruits, in money, or in life. We may lose the things or the people who are dear to us. These are all different occurrences with which God tests us with.

Let us clarify the above verse (2:155-157) and the like. Some may assume that when God says that He tests you it means that He is deliberately causing these problems to happen to you specifically. Quite the contrary; there may be many cases in which God Himself is not pleased at all with bad events happening such as murder or theft. If someone murders my child, this is not an action that God wanted, but now that it is happening it can serve as a test for me. Therefore, whatever happens to you for any reason, it is to be interpreted as a test that if passed, you will be upgraded in this world and the hereafter. For example, suppose I am a driving instructor who sits next to my trainee as he drives in the city. All of a sudden, a person for whatever reason ignores the red light and turns in front of us. As the trainer, I am expected to watch my trainee to test him. Though I had not asked the careless driver to pass us so suddenly, this can still serve as a test. With careful observation of my student's performance, I may either tell him he demonstrated good driving skills or I may tell him that he still needs more training. Although the careless driving of the third party was unforeseen, I can still take this incident as a test. Hence, people's wrong decisions and the negative consequences others suffer as a result can serve as tests, even though God has not intended for those bad actions and negative events to happen.

To clarify, when God says, “I test you with everything,” it does not mean that He purposely takes away your dear ones, or causes lack of security and in short, is behind every problem.<sup>11</sup> What this means is that whatever happens, good or bad, He observes your performance and how well you deal with the circumstances. This is also by itself a blessing for those who want to improve their book of deeds; at any time and under all circumstances they have the opportunity to make progress. This is not normally the case in worldly records and competitions. If you are a swimmer, for example, you fervently practice to strike a good record and move upwards, but unfortunately, the only time the judges accept your work is when you perform it in an official competition. So if during your exercises or friendly competitions you manage to raise your record, they will not accept it from you even if it is filmed and watched by a large audience.

In any case, those who prove to be patient after experiencing all the tests and trials, God says, “Give glad tidings to the people who are patient!”<sup>12</sup> There must be a great reward for such people for God to ask His Prophet to give *bishārah* (glad tidings) to them. Thus, God is not going to give people everything they desire.<sup>13</sup> But God will give the

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<sup>11</sup> There needs to be a subtle line drawn between unity with respect to actions (*tawhid-e af'ali*) and attributing bad actions of people to God. These two should not be confused.

<sup>12</sup> The Qur'an 2:155

<sup>13</sup> There is a beautiful story that can help us to understand this point better. Nādir Shāh Afshār (1688 – 1747, the Iranian ruler who enlarged his empire from the Indus River to the Caucasus Mountains) was once going for a battle with his troop when he met a very young boy carrying a book. He asked the boy what his name was. He replied: “*Nasr Allah*” (God's victory). The king became very happy and took it as a sign of victory in that battle. Then the king asked where the boy was going. He said that he was going to “*Maktab*,” where they had lessons on the Qur'an. When asked by the king what they studied in Maktab the boy replied: “Chapter *Al-Fath*.” The king became even happier. And gave the boy one *dinār* (golden coin), but the boy started crying. Nādir asked him why he cried. He replied, “I cry because when I go home and my mother sees this in my hand, she would ask me, ‘Where did this come from?’” Nādir said, “Tell her that the king has given this to me.” He said, “I would certainly tell her that this is given by the king, but she would not accept.” Nādir asked why. He said, “My mother would tell me that if king gives something, he doesn't give just one *dinār*. Kings give in bulk, so this cannot be from the king.” Nādir Shāh decided to give him a bunch of *dinārs* and then he took it and went home.

patient so much that they would be fully satisfied and indeed it will go beyond their expectations, since it will be without any measure:

إِنَّمَا يُؤَفِّي الصَّابِرُونَ أَجْرَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

*...Indeed the patient will be paid in full their reward without any reckoning. (39:10)*

It is not one thousand times more, or even one million times more. Rather, it is similar to giving a blank cheque to someone. So as far as God is concerned, there is no limit and any limit that may be there is because of their own capacity.

One of the things that we find in the Qur'an about the patient is that "God would send His salutations and mercy to them" (39:10).<sup>14</sup>

The patient are those who receive extra mercy in addition to the general blessings everyone receives because of their appropriate attitude towards God's bounties as well as the difficulties and trials that they experience.

Interestingly, we read in Ziyarah of Ashura that those who truly mourn for Imam Husayn (a) and share with him his suffering and tragedies can expect to be given the reward of the patient and to receive His salutations and mercy:

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْنِي فِي مَقَامِي هَذَا مِمَّنْ تَنَالُهُ مِنْكَ صَلَوَاتٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ

Oh Allah! Please include me right now among those who receive from you salutations, mercy and forgiveness.

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<sup>14</sup> The Qur'an 2:157

Thus, any problem that happens to you can turn it into a bonus for yourself, if you exercise patience, remain persistent, and continuously walk on the right path. On the Day of Judgement you will see that what you have achieved in this way can be much more than what you expected, such as your good deeds of prayer and fasting. The good deeds are certainly very important and necessary, but the one act that we know to be rewarded without measure is patience. Of course, such patience is only possible for those who perform their duties and seek assistance from their acts of worship and charity.



# MORAL GOVERNANCE OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD (S)

## PART II: ETHICAL MANAGEMENT OF THE ECONOMY

MOHAMMAD NASR ISFAHANI<sup>1</sup>

TRANSLATED BY HANNANEH FATHOLLAHI

**ABSTRACT:** The Prophet Muhammad was sent to refine people's character as well as establish a community based on moral principles. In the power structure he formed, he encouraged public participation, eradicated idol worship in Mecca, and instead constructed places of worship for Muslims. The Prophet also created a comprehensive system of fundamental laws in which the duties of each person was considered to form an independent and unified nation. According to these guidelines, the Prophet succeeded in creating a system grounded on perfect principles in which all believers have equal rights rather than abiding by rules based on tribe, gender, race, or social class. In this part, Prophet Muhammad's ethical management of the economy in the Islamic state will be studied. He sought various ways of solving the economic difficulties of the Muslims by maintaining fair distribution of property and wealth through sources of income for Muslims such as zakāt (legal charity), spoils of war, khums (the Islamic tax), and tribute.

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<sup>1</sup> Lecturer of Isfahan Medical University.

While economics in any establishment has its laws and regulations, injustice and inequality persist within the system. However, from the onset, the Prophet (s) of Islam established a just society as he propagated and practiced the equal and fair distribution of funds. Even during the beginning of his mission, when poverty engulfed the Muslims, he attempted to eradicate neediness while maintaining a fair distribution of any amount of property or wealth that existed at the time.

Contrary to many political and social leaders who are inattentive to the economic problems of others and merely manage their own and their relatives, The Prophet (s) could not tolerate the pain of hunger faced by Muslims in Mecca and Medina. From the beginning of his presence in Medina, he strived with great effort to eliminate poverty in the newly established Islamic community.

Medina had severe problems in their livelihood and the *Muhajireen* (Emigrants) were the poorest in the city. Their property had been seized by the polytheists of Mecca who forced the Muslims to leave their own city. Unemployment was another problem in the agricultural city of Medina and because the Muhajireen were not skilled in farming, they could not gain any income, and even if they were skilled, there was no land available to them for farming. Moreover, the income of the *Ansār* (Helpers) was not sufficient to feed even their own families.

Additionally, the Emigrants did not have any place to reside. They were forced to live in a small corner of the Ansār's homes. The Prophet (s) managed to build rooms for himself and a few companions beside the mosque. It also became a place of residence for the homeless and those living alone. They lived primarily through charity and later became known as Companions of the Ledge (*Ashāb-u Suffah*).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 1, p. 256.

Poverty had not only engulfed the companions. The Prophet (s) himself also lived like the poor in the community even though he was the leader of the Muslims. Regardless of whether he was financially stable or not, he lived in a simple manner to feel the hunger of the Muslims and prevent them from feeling any sort of spiritual pressure. Contrary to self-serving leaders who cared only for themselves and their social circles, the Prophet (s) gave everything he had to the needy Muslims to relieve some of their difficulties.

One day, Lady Fatima (a) brought a piece of bread for the Prophet (s). He put it in his mouth and said, “My daughter! This is the first food which was put in your father’s mouth after three days.”<sup>3</sup> It is mentioned that one time three months passed without smoke rising from the Prophet’s (s) home as a result of baking bread and cooking food. People would wonder as to what they have eaten and would later come to realize it was water and dates. Sometimes, the Ansār or the Prophet’s neighbours brought milk for him.<sup>4</sup> Ibn Abbās said, “There were many nights that the Holy Prophet’s (s) family slept hungry.”<sup>5</sup> Āyisha narrated, “One night, we were sitting in the dark. Someone came and asked, “Do you not have castor-oil?” I replied, “If we had it, we would have eaten.” She said, “Sometimes we did not have oil to light our home for forty days.”<sup>6</sup>

Not only did these issues occur during the early years of Hijra, but they continued up to the last days of the Holy Prophet’s (s) life. It is narrated from Āyisha that “The Prophet (s) never ate two kinds of food and he used to stop eating before he was full.”<sup>7</sup> When the Prophet (s) overcame on Naṭāh, Kunānah hid a camel’s skin in which they had set their own gold and jewellery in an abandoned area. When The Prophet

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., vol.1, p. 400.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., vol.1, p. 401.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., vol.1, p. 402.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., vol.1, pp. 405 & 406.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., vol.1, p. 404.

(s) found it, it included many gold bracelets, anklets, armllets, necklaces, some strings of emerald and pearl, and a ring of plating stones with Yemeni gold. There was a necklace of pearl that The Prophet (s) had given to Āyisha or one of his daughters. She had sold it and divided its money among the poor and widows. At night, The Prophet (s) came to ‘Āyisha or his own daughter and asked for the necklace to be returned. After explaining what she had done with it, he praised God and left.<sup>8</sup>

The report of Imam Āli (a) is very clear about the Holy Prophet’s (s) living conditions. In *Nahjul Balāgha*, he (a) states:

The Prophet took the least share from this world and did not take a full glance at it. Of all the people of the world, he was the least satiated and had the most empty of stomachs. The world was offered to him but he refused to accept it. When he knew that Allah, the Glorified, hated a thing, he too hated it; that Allah held a thing low, he too held it low; that Allah held a thing small, he too held it small. If we love what Allah and His Prophet hate and hold great what Allah and His Prophet hold small that would be enough isolation from Allah and transgression of His commands.

He used to eat on the ground, and sat like a slave. He repaired his shoe with his hand, and patched his own clothes. He would ride an unsaddled donkey and would seat someone behind him. If there was a curtain on his door with pictures on it he would say to one of his wives, "O [so-and-so], take them away because if I look at it I recall the world and its allurements." Thus, he removed his heart from this world and destroyed its remembrance from his mind. He loved that its

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<sup>8</sup> Maghāzī, p. 513.

allurements should remain hidden from his eye so that he should not secure good dress from it, should not regard it a place of stay and should not hope to live in it. Consequently he removed it from his mind, let it go away from his heart and kept it hidden from his eyes. In the same way he who dislikes a thing should dislike looking at it or hearing about it.

Certainly there was in the Prophet of Allah all that would apprise you of the evils of this world and its defects, namely that he remained hungry along with his chief companions, and despite his great nearness, the allurements of the world remained remote from him. Now, one should see with one's intelligence whether Allah honoured Muhammad - the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his descendants - as a result of this or disgraced him. If he says that Allah disgraced him, he certainly lies and perpetrates a great untruth. If he says Allah honoured him, he should know that Allah dishonoured the others when He extended the (benefits of the) world for him but held them away from him who was the nearest to Him of all men.

Therefore, one should follow His Prophet, tread in his footsteps and enter through his entrance. Otherwise he will not be safe from ruin. Certainly, Allah made Muhammad - the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his descendants - a sign for the Day of Judgment, a conveyor of tidings for Paradise and a warner of retribution. He left this world hungry but entered upon the next world safe. He did not lay one stone upon another (to make a house) till he departed and responded to the call of Allah. How great is Allah's

blessing in that He blessed us with the Prophet as a predecessor whom we follow and a leader behind whom we tread.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Incomes of an Islamic government***

The methods of earning an income varied among the pre-Islamic Arabs. One of the usual unethical ways of doing so was to plunder and rob the tribes which were militarily weak, an act which is forbidden in Islam. The Prophet acted differently. During the battle of Ghābah, when Muslims reached beside the well of Hamm, they asked The Prophet (s), "O Messenger of Allah! Will you not confiscate this well?" He replied, "No, buy it and donate it as a charity." Ṭalḥah ibn 'Ubadullah bought it and then endowed it.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, The Prophet (s) sought various ways of solving the economical difficulties of the Muslims and eradicating poverty in Muslim society. He also tried to benefit from the opportunities and events in the best possible way to enable others to earn a living. In that time, property was spent on defending the Muslims and buying arms. This increased the Muslims' state of poverty. In these circumstances, the only possible sources of income for Muslims were the spoils of war and for the government were *zakat* (legal charity) and *khums* (one fifth).

#### ***a) Zakat***

In Islam, honourable work and effort is the ideal way to make a living. In the beginning, when the Muhajireen moved to Medina, economic activity by work was the way to provide a livelihood. In principle, *zakat* is a source of income for the government in order to provide for the public costs in an Islamic society. People were voluntarily paying a

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<sup>9</sup> Nahj al-Balaghah, sermon 154.

<sup>10</sup> Maqhāzī, p. 414.

sum of money annually to governmental officers from their own extra income as a form of worship. The Prophet (s) practiced equity in collecting zakat. He had ordered the managers of zakat to treat the tribes with acceptance and not seize their most excellent and valued property and leave them for the owners. Instead, they were to collect zakat by randomly selecting sheep from among cattle. He would send tax officers who were well-liked by the people. In one incident, when the Prophet (s) asked Bani al-Muṣṭalagh as to whom they would like for a zakat officer, they recommended ʿAbād ibn Bashīr, and the Prophet (s) employed him.<sup>11</sup>

According to the order of God in the Holy Qur'an, public use of zakat has been allocated to provide for the needs of the poor and the collectors of zakat, to console the Muslims, to providing credit to freeing slaves, and to assist debtors who are unable to pay their debts and travellers.<sup>12</sup>

### ***b) Tribute***

Muslims paid zakat to provide for defence and public expenses. As the Islamic empire spread, non-Muslims received protection under this government as well. They paid a sum called tribute (*jizyah*) for the use of public facilities and for the protection of their own security. The Islamic government determined the amount of tribute while considering the financial ability of the people.<sup>13</sup>

### ***c) Charity, loans, and gifts***

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. pp. 741-747.

<sup>12</sup> *Charities are only for the poor and the needy, and those employed to collect them, and those whose hearts are to be reconciled, and for] the freedom of [the slaves and the debtors, and in the way of Allah, and for the traveller.] This is [an ordinance from Allah, and Allah is all-knowing, all-wise. (The Qur'an 9:60)*

<sup>13</sup> Ḥur al-ʿĀmulī, Muḥammad Ḥasan, Wasā'il al-Shīa, vol. 11, chapter 68, pp. 113, 114.

Charity was another way of paying government's expenses and for the livelihood of the needy. In the first year of Hijra, the extent of unemployment, sanctions, and commercial closures caused destitution among many Muslims. In this period, an attempt was made to reduce economical gaps through donations, charity, and gifts. God in the Holy Qur'an considers charity a vital part of faith and piety and has encouraged people to practice it.<sup>14</sup>

The Prophet (s) also encouraged people to help each other and collect provisions for the hereafter by being generous. He said, "If one can protect himself from the fire of Hell by donating half of a date, then do this, but if he cannot, then speak a good word."<sup>15</sup> Through this action,

<sup>14</sup> Charity and its dimensions have been mentioned in the chapter The Cow (Sura al-Baqarah). Verses 261 to 274 are about charity. Verses 275 - 281 deal with anti-ethical loans. Verses 282 - 283 deal with the ways of paying a loan by the people to God.

ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

*This is the Book, there is no doubt in it, a guidance to the Godwary, (2:2)*

الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ

*who believe in the Unseen, and maintain the prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them; (2:3)*

يَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ قُلْ مَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَ

الْمَسَاكِينِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ.

*They ask you as to what they should spend. Say, "Whatever wealth you spend, let it be for parents, relatives, orphans, the needy, and the traveller." And whatever good that you may do, Allah indeed knows it. (2:215)*

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ لَا يُتْبِعُونَ مَا أَنْفَقُوا مَنًّا وَلَا أَذًى لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ

عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ.

*Those who spend their property for the cause of God and do not make the recipient feel obliged or insulted shall receive their reward from God. They will have no fear nor will they be grieved. (2:262)*

<sup>15</sup> Ibn Hishām, Al-Sirah al-Nabawīyyah, vol. 2, p. 114.

he managed to develop and institutionalize the feelings of responsibility and kindness towards others.

Sometimes the poor from amongst the Muhajireen and even the Ansar regularly approached the Prophet (s) and complained about the unfavourable economic conditions. They would say, "We do not have sufficient provisions nor does anyone care to help us or give us food." The Prophet (s) advised people to donate in the way of God and to refrain from greed, because self-indulgence would be the reason for their perdition. They would say, "How can we give while we do not have anything to eat?" He responded, "Give to others even with a half of a date to satisfy their hunger or tip of an arrow by which someone can struggle in God's way to attack the enemy."<sup>16</sup> Charity consists of any kind of assistance in religion. A man once asked the Prophet (s), "O Messenger of Allah! What charity is the best?" He replied, "Everything which is given in God's way; whether it be the shadow of a tent, service, or providing a horse for a brave and warlike man."<sup>17</sup>

One day a poor man requested help in a bad language as if the Prophet (s) was allocating the public treasury to himself. The Prophet replied, "God has not allocated charity to any angel close to Him nor any prophet; it is for one of the eight groups: 1) the poor Muhajireen who did not request anything from the people; 2) the homeless who were temporarily living in the mosque, such as the Companions of the Ledge; 3) the agents and officers who were collecting zakat and receiving a sum of money moderately for their expenditure and journeys; 4) for the individuals or tribes who received charity from the Prophet (s) in order to attract them to Islam, known as "those whose hearts are won over", 5) the mukātab and slaves who had signed a free contract with their owner but had no money; 6) the needy debtors; 7) the soldiers and those who strive for the Islamic country and, 8) the

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<sup>16</sup> Maghāzī, p. 588.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p. 787.

travellers who do not have sufficient money to return to their land; hence, charity was given to secure their necessities.<sup>18</sup>

The Prophet (s) assisted anyone with financial needs. When orphan boys reached maturity, they were expected to work and no longer needed charity. If one of them requested khums, the khums officer would give khums the first time provided that the receiver realizes that khums does not belong to those who are competent.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, the Prophet (s) was not able to comfortably sleep unless he gave what he had attained. One day he had six dinars and sent five of it to five families of the Ansar and ordered to give the remaining dinar to a poor person as soon as possible. He said, "I do not want to have anything."

It is narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās that when the Prophet (s) passed away, no dinar or slave remained with him. Even at the time of his death, his armour was pledged to a Jewish man in return of 30 šā' [equal 4 mudds] of wheat.<sup>20</sup>

The Prophet (s) observed fairness when accepting charity. When he went to visit Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ, Sa'd said to him, "I am a rich man and do not have any heir except my daughter. Is it all right that I give two-thirds of my property as charity? The Prophet (s) replied, "No." He said, "What about its half?" Again, he replied with a "No." And then he continued, "If you like to give charity, one-third of it is enough, if not too much, because it is better to leave your heirs rich and needless than leaving leave them poor. Any generosity you do in God's way, you will receive the reward in the hereafter even if it is a morsel of food that you put in your wife's mouth."<sup>21</sup>

While the Prophet (s) assisted people, he protected their reputation as well. Once, the Prophet (s) requested Jābir ibn ʿAbdillāh, an

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 813.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 306.

<sup>20</sup> Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, pp. 226, 227, 292.

<sup>21</sup> *Maghāzī*, p. 853.

underprivileged man, to sell his camel to him, but Jābir wanted to present it to him instead. The Prophet (s) refused by saying, "I will buy it from you, but you can still benefit from it just as before."<sup>22</sup> Moreover, presents were equally divided among the Muslims. On the way to Ḥudaybiyyah, when The Prophet (s) and Muslims reached Abwā', Imā'ibn Raḥḍah sent some plump calves, a hundred sheep, and two camels to The Prophet (s) with his son, Khafāf. The Prophet (s) accepted his gift, and prayed and asked God to forgive him. Then, he ordered that the sheep be divided between the companions. They poured milk into a container and all drank from it.<sup>23</sup>

The Prophet (s) did not differentiate between his relatives and others. Umme Salamah, the Holy Prophet's (s) wife said, "We received the same amount of meat as others."<sup>24</sup>

The Prophet (s) appreciated those who presented him with gifts and if possible, he offered them gifts in return. On the way to Ji'rānah, a shepherd came to The Prophet (s) and gave him a sheep as a gift. He said, "I do not receive any gifts from pagans." He said, "O Messenger of Allah! I believe in Allah and His Messenger and I also pay the zakat from my own wealth." The Prophet (s) told him, "When we reach Ji'rānah, come to us but do not bring your own sheep." When they reached there, he gave the man a hundred sheep in gratitude for his benevolence.<sup>25</sup>

On the way to the battle of Tabūk, the Prophet (s) stopped in Wādī al-Qurā where the Jewish inhabitants brought some food to him. He ate from them and ordered forty loads of dates to be allocated to them annually. This in turn softened their hearts and encouraged them to peacefully coexist with the Muslims. Concerning this generosity of the

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p. 298

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p. 437

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 449

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p. 717

Prophet (s), a Jewish woman said, "The goodness which Muḥammad (s) did toward the Jews is more than the entire amount of inheritance which they had received from their own fathers."<sup>26</sup>

When the financial condition of Muslims improved, the Prophet (s) offered gifts to the agents who had come to make contacts, negotiations, or familiarize themselves with Islam. Indeed, he observed justice and equality in allocating these gifts. When he offered gifts to the representatives of Banī Tamīm, he asked them, "Is there anybody who did not receive presents from us?" They replied, "Yes, there is a little boy who is watching our goods." He stated, "Send him to me to receive his gift." Qays ibn 'Āṣim said, "He is just a child." The Prophet (s) said, "In any case, he has come as an agent and has a right."<sup>27</sup>

#### ***d) Spoils of war and ransom of captives***

Before the advent of Islam, many Arabs sought their livelihoods by plundering from other tribes. With the advent of Islam in Mecca and the gathering of Muslims in Medina, the pagans of Mecca felt that their own existence was in danger. The Jews and the nobles of Medina found that the present situation would be difficult for their own position. All three groups were eager to create conditions to destroy Islam or return to the state of affairs that existed in the past. For this reason, plots, sabotages, and military aggressions were being carried out one after the other, leaving no room to achieve any sound economic activities necessary for social security such as agriculture, animal husbandry and trade for Muslims. Although Islam spread peace and security and God commanded the Muslims to demonstrate it,<sup>28</sup> they also prepared themselves, by the order of God, against possible invasions.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid. p. 766

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. p. 746

<sup>28</sup> *And if they incline toward peace, then you] too [incline toward it, and put your trust in Allah. Indeed He is the All-hearing, the All-knowing.* (The Qur'an 8:61)

<sup>29</sup> *Mobilize your (defensive) force as much as you can to frighten the enemies of God and your own enemies. This also will frighten those who are behind them whom you do not know but*

Considering the imposed condition by the enemy, the Muhajireen and the Ansar provided the security of the city and managed their own life through the income obtained from these spoils of war. Of course, taking into consideration that in Islam, the goal of war must not be to earn spoils; rather, the goal is to defend oneself and to fight in the way of God (*jihād*). The criterion of *jihād* is not the existence or non-existence of spoils. In *jihād*, it is possible that the spoils do not exist.

During the battle of Khaybar, the Prophet (s) told his companions to be ready to fight. At this time, some people who had not participated in *jihad* in Ḥudaybiyyah wanted to accompany the Prophet (s) in this battle for taking spoils, because they believed that Khaybar was the most abundant village in terms of meat, food, and property. The Prophet (s) ordered a town crier to proclaim that those who come in order to join *jihad* are welcome, but those who come for taking spoils should not come.<sup>30</sup> What Muslims could earn from war included movable and immovable spoils and captives. Movable spoils were divided between fighters after appointing one-fifth of it as the share of God and the Prophet (s). The Prophet (s) was optimistic that the difficulties of the Muslims would be solved largely through fair distribution of income obtained from spoils of war and the ransom which Muslims received by freeing the captives. During the battle of Badr, the ransom for captives of war who had wealthy families had an important role in providing the economic needs of the community, but those captives who belonged to poor families, the Prophet (s) freed them without receiving ransom.<sup>31</sup>

In the first confrontation with pagans in Badr, the Prophet (s) prayed for a resolution of the Muslims' poverty and was hopeful to resolve social poverty this way. The Prophet (s) implored God, "O God! They

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*God knows well. Whatever you spend for the cause of God, He will give you sufficient recompense with due justice.* (The Qur'an 8:60)

<sup>30</sup> Maghāzī, p. 482.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 96.

are on foot and do not have any horse, give them a horse; they are nude, clothe them; they are hungry, feed them; they are needy, make them needless."<sup>32</sup>

Perhaps the prayer of the Prophet (s) was answered after the battle with the Banī Naḍīr Jews since following it, the distribution of their property and lands were divided among the Muhajireen.<sup>33</sup>

After the victory of Muslims over the Meccan pagans in the battle of Badr, the order of distribution of spoils of war was sent down to the Prophet (s) through the first verses of the chapter *Anfāl*. According to these verses, spoils were divided into two unequal parts: one-fifth of it was considered as khums belonging to the government and used for the poor's public affairs on the expediency of the Prophet (s), and four-fifth of it was equally divided among the fighters who were present in the battle.

Before the emergence of Islam, it was customary among Arabs that one-fourth of the spoils of war belonged to the chiefs of the tribes. But after the emergence of Islam, according to God's order,<sup>34</sup> one-fifth of the spoils was allocated to the Prophet (s) as the governor of Muslims and the rest of it was distributed among Islam's soldiers in accordance to the norms of that era, their fair customs, and the Holy Prophet's (s) discretion.

Some have said that the Prophet (s) had considered a special share for children. For example, Sahlah, daughter of 'Āṣim who was born during the battle of Khaybar and was also a newborn whom God had granted to 'Abd Allāh ibn Anīs in this battle. And some have said that

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., vol.1, p. 19.

<sup>33</sup> Sīrah, Ibn Hishām, vol. 2, p. 716.

<sup>34</sup> The Qur'an 2:219

the Prophet (s) gave them a share of spoils, but not as much as the share of the fighters for the faith (*Mujāhidīn*).<sup>35</sup>

The Prophet (s) took ten people from the Jews of Medina along with himself to the battle of Khaybar and allocated them a share similar to the Muslims. Some have said that their share was not as much as Muslims, but the Prophet (s) granted them a part of the spoils. He gave rewards to all of the slaves. 'Umayr, slave of Abi al-Luḥm stated, "The Prophet (s) granted me some furniture."<sup>36</sup> He also allocated a share of spoils to the slaves and servants who were present in the battle of Badr and had assisted the fighters.<sup>37</sup>

### *Ethics in maintaining the treasury*

It was very important for the Prophet (s) to maintain the treasury of the Islamic state and public property such as the spoils of war and he reacted strongly against wrongfully taking it. After the battle of Ḥunayn, the Prophet (s) ordered fighters to collect the spoils and warned against committing treason against the spoils if they believe in God and the day of Resurrection. For this reason, when Aqīl ibn Abī Ṭālib had given only a needle of spoils to his own wife, the Prophet (s) took it back and returned it. Also, 'Abdillāh ibn Zayd returned a bow which he had taken from the spoils and had even used it against the pagans.<sup>38</sup>

Before the division of the spoils from the battle of Khaybar, somebody requested something from the spoils from the Prophet (s). He said, "Even a string and a piece of cloth is not lawful and I will not take any possession from it or also give something from it." Another man

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<sup>35</sup> Maghāzī, p. 524.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 522.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 700.

requested from him fetters of camel. He said, "Let us divide the spoils so that I can give it to you."<sup>39</sup>

After the battle of Ḥunayn, a man came to the Prophet (s) with a package and requested him for it. The Prophet (s) stated, "From these spoils, what is my share and the sons of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib will be for you." In this battle, a man had found a rope and tied himself with it he requested it from the Prophet (s) as his own share of spoils. He said, "My share belongs to you, but what do you do about people's shares?"<sup>40</sup> After the battle of Khaybar, the town crier of the Prophet (s) loudly proclaimed, "Even if someone has taken a string or a piece of cloth, he must return it to the spoils, because fraud will be the cause of misfortune, humiliation, and the fire of Resurrection." Before the battle, the Prophet (s) had told companions that Muslims must not sell anything from the spoils before its position becomes clear and if they have ridden on a horse, to return it, and if they have put on a cloth of spoils, to return it before it becomes old.<sup>41</sup>

During the battle of Khaybar, a man named Kirkirah who accompanied the Prophet (s) and used to hold the Prophet's horse was killed. Some asked the Prophet (s), "Does he die a martyr?" He replied, "He is burning in fire because of a bath towel which he had stolen from the spoils of Khaybar." Another man asked, "I took two old shoelaces from the spoils." He said, "Both of the two laces is fire."<sup>42</sup> At this time, a man from Ashja' tribe passed away and the news of his death reached the Prophet (s). He stated, "Say prayer on the body of your friend!" The audience became disturbed because the Prophet (s) had not recognized him as a martyr and needless of a ritual bathing." He said, "He has committed fraud in the way of God." People searched his goods and

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 519.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 700.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 520, 521.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 541.

found several cheap beads from the Jews which cost only two dirhams.<sup>43</sup>

Likewise the Prophet (s) did not permit the unlawful use of people's property for himself and his own companions, or the unethical use of enemy's property as well.

Yasār Ḥabashī, an African slave who grazed sheep for his Jewish master 'Āmir, learned about the prophethood of Muḥammad (s) approached him and said, "What are you inviting us towards?" He stated, "To Islam. Testify there is no god except Allah and I am His messenger." Yasār asked, "If I accept it, how will I benefit by it?" He replied, "Paradise will be for you." Yasār said, "These sheep are a deposit." The Prophet (s) then stated, "Take those sheep out of the military camp and lead them toward their owner. God will remove that deposit from your charge." The sheep went to their owner and the Jewish man informed that his slave has become a Muslim.<sup>44</sup>

In another narration, Mughayrah had gone on a journey along with some pagans who had drunk wine although Mughayrah refused to drink. He took their goods and property and went to give one-fifth of it as khums to the Prophet (s). However, the Prophet (s) refused to accept it and said, "Because this property has been achieved by deceit and trickery, I do not accept it as khums."<sup>45</sup>

Even if the property gained was unlawful, the Prophet (s) gave it back to its owners. Imam Āli (a) reached Zayd ibn Ḥārithah who had gone in a venture and said, "The Prophet (s) has ordered that you must return any captive and property you have seized from this tribe." Zayd said, "Do you have any proof from the Prophet (s)?" Imam Āli (A)

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 520.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. p. 494

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. p. 452

answered, "This is his sword." Zayd recognized it and ordered those who have seized a captive or property to return it.<sup>46</sup>

### *Cases of usage of the Holy Prophet's private spoils*

The Prophet (s) spent these properties to provide for himself, his family, and the Muslims.<sup>47</sup> Because of the people's poverty, the Prophet (s) did not take khums from the spoils of the battle of Badr. In this battle, his financial share was as much as the other fighters. The sword "Dhulfiqār" and the camel of Abū Jahl which was sacrificed later for the Hajj ceremony in Ḥudaybiyyah were his only share of spoils. After the verse (8:41) was revealed, the Prophet (s) allocated a share for himself.<sup>48</sup> He had three cases of private spoils: One was for the Banī Naḍīr, which belonged to the Prophet (s) who distributed among his relatives and granted it to anyone that he deemed proper while providing the share to the wives and descendants of Abd ul-Muṭallib with the products and incomes of its palm groves; the rest of it was spent for buying arms, war equipment and horses used in the time of Abū Bakr and Umar. The income derived from Fadak was granted to the poor and the needy. The income of Khaybar had been divided into three parts: Two parts for the Muhajireen and one for the poor relatives of the Prophet (s).<sup>49</sup> He bought some arms and clothes from his own share of khums from the spoils and gave some furniture, clothes, and valuable beads to his own close family such as women and men of Abd ul-Muṭallib and also allocated some to the poor and orphans.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid. p. 423

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. p. 13

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. pp. 73-7

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. p. 280

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# LADY FATIMA'S ROLE AND INFLUENCE ON MUSLIM SOCIETY

MAHMOUD TAQIZADEH DAWARI ET AL.  
TRANSLATED BY: ZAINAB MOHAMMED

**ABSTRACT:** The present article is a collection of ideas and opinions on Lady Fatima's influence in society and the reasons behind her impact in history gathered from the words of three scholars: Huj. Dr. Mahmoud Taqizadeh Dawari, Huj. Ali Akbar Reshad, and Huj. Dr. Ahmed Beheshti. She was titled Abundance (*Kawthar*)<sup>1</sup> as she performed a great service to society through her virtues that quenched the thirst of society throughout history. Lady Fatima is known for her merits, noble traits, and accomplishments. She upheld the roles of being a considerate daughter, a devoted wife, an affectionate mother, and a concerned educator for the community of Muslim women. As her father was the best exemplar for the human race, she was the ideal woman as she served as the perfect example for Muslim women.

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Mahmoud Taqizadeh Dawari: In the history, culture, and civilisation of Iran after the emergence of Islam, Lady Fatima (s) is and has been an inspiring figure for people of all fields including the religious, male and female political and social activists, peace-makers, teachers, theorists, fundamentalists, religious and traditional artists, family-loving poets, calligraphers, specialists in matters related to marriage, family, and child-rearing, affectionate spouses, and loving mothers.

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<sup>1</sup> The Qur'an, Chapter 108

Many aspects of her influence and affect can be found in all types of literature, including religious teachings, mystics, art, and political and revolutionary slogans. Lady Fatima (s), through her exemplary children - Hasan, Husayn, Zainab, and Umm Kulthoom, - has also been affective in keeping the Shi'i school of thought alive. Thus, we can say that this great woman's role in our lives is not a matter of debate. Without a doubt, she is one of the most remarkable spiritual personalities throughout Islamic history. Our discussion will be about her role and influence in society from a historical, cultural, and religious perspective.

### *Lady Fatima's influence*

Lady Fatima's influence is the outcome of her merits, noble traits, and accomplishments. Some of these merits and traits have been given to her and are non-acquired, such as family values. Because she is the daughter of the Prophet (s) and Lady Khadijah, the wife of Imam Ali (a) and mother of Hasan and Husayn, she is part of a unique noble household. She was born to a monotheist family whose faith descended from the religion of Prophet Abraham. These are rare merits that have assembled under her name, and though she has not struggled to gain them, they still result in her nobleness and elevation.

I will clarify this matter with an example: Take a diamond, which is highly valued compared to all other stones. Its luxuriousness is because of its natural merits as it is irreplaceable and is rarely found. Also, its strength and transparency is unmatched. Likewise, peacocks are attractive and unmatched in its beauty. So we see that peacocks and diamonds are very much loved and treasured, yet their merits are not acquired and are given to them by God. Their value is not the result of hard work and struggle. On the whole, we humans are attracted to unique creatures and objects, and Lady Fatima (s) is similar: she is unmatched and is a rarity.

To further explain this, let us investigate the birth of this great woman with the aim of understanding these non-acquired merits. According to a well-known narration, she was born on the 20<sup>th</sup> of Jamadi al-Thani in the second year after the advent of Islam. The Prophet (s) was commanded to distance himself from Lady Khadija for forty days and to occupy himself in prayer and invocation of God. He spent this time at the house of Fatima bint Asad, the mother of Imam Ali (a). He would fast during the day and stand in prayer throughout the night. During sunset, he would ask for the doors of this house to be opened so that whosoever may wish could be his guest and join him for a meal.

Thus, the Prophet (s) willingly distanced himself from Lady Khadija. Although the distance between the house of the Prophet (s) and that of Fatima bint Asad was short, what is important is that the temporary distance made between spouses is known to be effective in creating a strong and long-lasting affectionate relation between a husband and wife. Thus, the best and most accurate conditions were prepared for the coming of Lady Fatima (s), and all conditions for a healthy child were observed. Imam Ali (a) who was the host of the Prophet for these few days narrates that on the fortieth day, the Prophet broke his fast with dates, grapes, and water, and then returned to his house.

In hadiths, it is recommended that the couple be in the state of ablution (*wudhu*) before intercourse, that the physical contact be preceded by prayer and supplication, and that it should not take place on a full stomach. These recommendations are effective in balancing the physical and mental faculties which result in a healthy foetus. Of course, other aspects effective in the character of the child, such as the environment and heredity, are not to be overlooked by parents. A child is moulded as a result of various features, primarily the purity of the parents' body and soul.

Additionally, the mental and spiritual conditions of the parents can only be effective when they are habitual. In other words, the habitual good thoughts and actions should have penetrated into the heart and have become strong and firm. A temporary spiritual condition or a brief gentle emotion will not suffice in its transmission to the future generation. On the other hand, a rooted emotion or a firm desire affects the foetus whether it is good or bad. If the soul is overflowing with sincerity such as that of the Prophet's (s), then only a pure and healthy embryo will be conceived. Time, repetition, and distance are needed to acquire noble traits and virtues, the example of which can be found in this narration. Therefore, for the conception of Lady Fatima (s), a strong and pure basis was prepared. Indeed, the account of her birth clearly draws attention to the importance of the parents' emotional condition on the child at the time of conception, and medical studies today have confirmed this.

Another interesting point in this narration is its subtle indication to family planning. Parents should agree and decide to have a child before conceiving. Children are not merely the result of short-lived lusts and desires, because if such is to happen, children will be unwantedly handed over to society. It is quite clear in the above narration that the Prophet (s) and Lady Khadijah had carefully planned for the birth of a child and had prepared the grounds for it.

Thus, Lady Fatima's (s) importance is because of her great merits and attributes, some of which were not acquired, but were a part of her because of her family, lineage, and relations. In addition to these merits, she possessed virtues which she acquired. These virtues resulted in her elevation and it distinguished her character in the eyes of many throughout history. They created the greater part of her character as they include her spiritual state, generous way of life, rational behaviour, wise words, pleasant manners, and other qualities which have made her

a role model in our society and culture. Each of her virtues will be explained to enable us to follow and imitate her path.

Another essential factor in elevating Lady Fatima's (s) prominence amongst us is the Prophet's (s) praise of her, although a deeper understanding of his words would need to be explored separately.

### ***Lady Fatima's (s) role as an educator in society***

Ali Akbar Rashad: With every great Prophet and every Imam there exists a woman who plays the role of a guide, educator, and upbringing. Alongside the great men such as Prophets Abraham, Jesus, Moses, and Muhammed (s) along with the Imams, there has always been a distinguished woman. An example of this is seen in the life of Prophet Moses, who was brought up by his mother and sister. Also, in the time of Prophet Jesus, there was no man worthy of being his father, yet there was a woman who was capable of nurturing a Prophet, and it was because of her that he came into society, that is, only through the rearing of a mother. Moreover, the first trustee and helper of Prophet Mohammed (s) was Lady Khadija. She was also the first person to accept the religion of Islam and to follow him. After her demise, it was the young Fatima who stood by her father during hardships, which gave her the title 'The Mother of her Father.'<sup>2</sup> The young Lady Fatima (s) was a kind and gentle companion to him, just as a mother would be. Afterwards, Lady Fatima (s) was a great support for her husband, Imam Ali (a). Although it is generally assumed that family lineage is kept alive through the male gender, in Islam, infallibility and leadership have been transferred from the Prophet (s) through Lady Fatima (s).

If Lady Fatima (s) is '*Kawthar*'<sup>3</sup> meaning 'Abundance' as is understood from the 108<sup>th</sup> chapter of the holy Qur'an, it is because her

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<sup>2</sup> *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 43, p. 19, narration number 19.

<sup>3</sup> "Kawther" is also the name of a spring in heaven.

level of knowledge and understanding is like a bubbling spring, continuously overflowing and quenching the thirst of the people throughout history. Lady Fatima Masuma<sup>4</sup> (s) who is buried in Qum is a mere branch of this spring, and yet she has become the source of considerable religious activity and blessings. And it is from the blessing of the Islamic Seminary that a personality such as Imam Khomeini was nurtured. Throughout Shi'i history, every philosopher, thinker, and scholar are in fact the spiritual children of the Prophet.

A great scholar is reported to have said, "Once in a dream I was told that Lady Fatima (s) is the night of Power (*Qadr*). When he asked Ayatollah Sha'rani about this, he was told that a similar phrase with the same meaning has been reported from Imam Ja'far (a). It is true that there are many similarities between Lady Fatima (s) and the Night of Power. For example, we can compare the eleven other months, which do not have a night of power to the eleven infallible Imams who were born from her.

### ***Literary work remaining from the knowledge of Lady Fatima (s)***

It is unfortunate that although we may know much about the historical events surrounding Lady Fatima (s), we do not know as much about her knowledge. Until today, we do not have a decent and comprehensive commentary on her sermon regarding Fadak.<sup>5</sup> Once I had the pleasure of meeting Ayatollah Jawadi Amuli, and I happened to be talking about

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<sup>4</sup> The daughter of the 7<sup>th</sup> Imam, Imam Musa al-Kathim (a) who is buried in the city of Qum, Iran.

<sup>5</sup> A garden located in Khaybar, a strip of land located in Saudi Arabia. Found roughly thirty miles from Medina, Fadak was known for its water-wells, dates, and handicrafts. When the Muslims won the Battle of Khaybar, Fadak was part of the proceeds given to the Prophet Muhammad. Much before his death, he bestowed it to Fatima. Upon Prophet Muhammad's death, Lady Fatima declared her right to own Fadak as the estate of her father which was gifted to her. The claim was rejected by the first caliph Abu Bakr. After realizing the detrimental consequences of Abu Bakr's attempt to seize the land, Lady Fatima (s) delivered a sermon called *The Sermon of Fadak*.

the *Dāneshnāme Fatemi*<sup>6</sup> during which I complained about the lack of sources, narrations, and documents. He said, “The narrations and traditions may be few, but they are rich.” He added, “Lady Fatima’s (s) sermon is the mother of Nahjul Balāgha, and all of Imam Ali’s letters, sermons, and words are a commentary and explanation of her sermon.”

It is very unfortunate that this great woman’s teachings have been left aside; we should feel apologetic to her. When conversing with Professor Mohammed Hakimi in the same regard (*Daneshname Fatemi*) he held the same opinion as that of Ayatollah Amuli. He said, “Nahjul Balagha is a commentary of the sermon of Fadak of Lady Fatima (s). Is there a greater injustice than the fact that Imam Ali - the first and last of the oppressed - is the exegesis of the existence of Lady Fatima (s), yet her teachings should be left aside and neglected?”<sup>7</sup>

### *Lady Fatima’s knowledge*

Dr. Ahmad Beheshti: Lady Fatima (s) did not have an official education, and nothing has been mentioned in historical reports about her being educated by any teacher or scholar other than the Prophet (s). Although she had not been educated in the common way, she still had a high level of understanding and knowledge, and therefore we cannot presume she was illiterate. Likewise, Imam Ali (a) had not been taught in a class or by a private tutor, yet he carried out numerous compilations, including the compilation of the Qur’an. And although nothing has been reported about Lady Fatima’s literacy in historic contexts, there are many indications that prove her ability to read and write. For example, a story has been reported in which Imam Hasan and Husayn (a) had written something which they brought to Lady

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<sup>6</sup> A collection of information, with a similar format as that of an encyclopaedia.

<sup>7</sup> We thank Allah (swt) that we have at least been able to assemble a group of specialised scholars with the aim of taking a step towards understanding Lady Fatima’s teachings and knowledge by writing the *Dāneshnāme Fatemi*. In order to present this piece of work, we have planned thirty stages, including the entrees, sources, and system.

Fatima (s) to evaluate the one with the better handwriting. She then referred the matter to the Prophet (s) and Imam Ali (a), and they in reverse asked her to make the decision. This clearly indicates her ability to differentiate in this matter, because had it not been so, the Prophet (s) and Imam Ali (a) would not have asked her to decide.

Another point which helps us understand Lady Fatima's (s) knowledge is a phrase used by Imam Sajjad (a) in his description of her to his aunt Lady Zainab (s). He said, "By the praise of Allah, you are a learned person who has not been taught." This phrase is most definitely true about Lady Fatima (s) as well; she was a learned person who had not been taught, and therefore her knowledge must have been God-given. In the traditions and narrations she has been named The Learned Lady (*Muhadditha*), and it has been reported that the angels would converse with her. They would tell her about the future events and she would dictate it to Imam Ali (a) who would take note of the information.

Also, with reference to *Ziyārat Jāmi'a Kabira* and other narrations, she is the place where God's verses were revealed and conversed. Thus, she most definitely had the status of a learned person who had not been taught, and she had the highest level of knowledge and infallibility compared to other great female figures.

Lady Mary is another woman who spoke to the angels, and according to the verses of the Qur'an, she is one of the few chosen women of the world:

*And when the angels said: 'O Mary! Surely Allah has chosen you and made you pure, and has preferred you above all (the women of creation).'* (4:42)

*'O Mary! Be obedient to your Lord, prostrate yourself and bow with those who bow in worship.'* (4:43)

Here it is quite clear that she is a distinguished woman whom, due to this high level, is given the merit of being able to talk to the angels.

Prophet Moses' mother also conversed with the angels as revealed in the Qur'an:

*And We revealed to Moses' mother saying: Suckle him. Then when you fear for him, cast him into the river and do not fear nor grieve, Surely We will bring him back to you and make him one of the messengers. (28:7)*

Was this a revelation carried out through the angels or was it direct? Some may ask, is it even possible for people other than the prophets to speak to the angels? Some of those who are of the Sunni school of thought do not accept this. They claim that it is not possible. Yet in these verses we clearly see that women who most definitely were not prophets have spoken to the angels.

Therefore, Lady Fatima (s), who has an elevated status amongst the chosen women of the world, unquestionably holds such high virtues and merits. Martyr Murtada Mutahari in his lectures has said:

It is quite possible that Lady Fatima's (s) status is higher than that of the Imams. We know that the status of the Imams is higher than that of some of the Prophets and therefore she is higher than that.

There is a narration which I heard from a scholar - though I have not seen or read it anywhere yet - in which Imam Hasan Askari (a) says, "Fatima is a proof over us Imams." And when the Imams are proofs over the people and Fatima is a proof over them, then surely her knowledge cannot be underestimated.

Therefore, if the Prophet taught Imam Ali (a) a thousand doors of knowledge, and said, "I am the city of knowledge and Ali (a) is its gate", then without a doubt Lady Fatima (s) is positioned in front of this gate.

### ***Is there anything left of Lady Fatima's commentary on the Qur'an?***

The women of that time most definitely benefitted from her knowledge, but these were women who were either illiterate or their knowledge was mediocre, and therefore they could not completely benefit from her vast knowledge. It is similar to a top mathematician teaching at the advanced level to beginners. Those women were not on the level needed to benefit completely from this great woman. Nonetheless, given that she would narrate traditions and engage in conversations with the angels is sufficient proof of her knowledge and understanding. Moreover, Imam Ali (a) took notes on those conversations, though Imam Ali (a) himself was very knowledgeable. It is reported later in history that Imam Ali (a) once pointed to his chest and said, "Surely in here there is a lot of knowledge" and "I am more knowledgeable with regards to the pathways of the skies than those of the earth."

Lady Fatima's sermon of Fadak reveals her vast amount of knowledge. Interestingly, Lady Zainab, who was very young during the delivery of the sermon, memorised it at the mosque and afterwards related it to others. Papers and books can be written about this sermon, but still it would be limited to the author's knowledge and cannot do full justice to the sermon.

### ***The sermon of Fadak***

The teachings of the sermon of Fadak can be found in the Qur'an and Nahjul Balāgha. It can then be compared to the narrations which remain with us today from the Imams. In other words, the only source

of all the teachings of the Qur'an and the words of Lady Fatima (s) and Imam Ali (a) is God. And when the source of a group of things is one, their content will also be consistent, keeping in mind that we do not have anything higher than the Qur'an.

### *Notable features of the Lady's life*

As an author of sources on child upbringing and family, her life is inspiring and it has strongly influenced me. All of her invocations, prayers, and acts of worship are a manifestation of her inner being. Even though I accept the fact that the external side of every person's life stems from their inner being, I feel that we are incapable of understanding the peak of this aspect in the life of Lady Fatima (s). Nevertheless, if we ponder on her daily life, we may be able to easily understand her, and this in turn opens doors to a deeper understanding of her teachings and ideas.

When I look at her family life, a few points come to mind:

1. Her marital life: although she was a greatly revered person, she continuously humbled herself in front of Imam Ali (a). She also bore all of problems faced by her family and yet she never complained. When Imam Ali (a) would return from a war with a blood-stained sword, she would not ask about the booty he brought. When her family felt hungry because of giving away their food for three days whilst they had been fasting, she did not object. She consistently maintained her household duties, while keeping in mind that this did not hinder her from modestly participating in any necessary socio-political affair. All of this was done with full contentment. Her personality was beyond our mental perception, although we know she was undoubtedly the best role model for all women who desire to be an ideal wife.

2. Her efforts in matters of upbringing children are also very instructive and should not be overlooked. During those hard times, she nurtured boys and girls in a firm yet gentle manner. Each of these characteristics helped people model them and were passed on to society.

### ***Lady Fatima's rank amongst the Ahlul Bayt***

Whenever the Lady entered a room in which the Prophet Muhammad (s) was present, he stood up each time and would kiss her hand. Thus, there must have been a stronger and deeper meaning behind this action. Additionally, whenever the Prophet (s) left the city, Lady Fatima (s) was the last person he would bid farewell to, and upon his return, she was the first one he visited.

In *The Story of the Cloak (Hadith ul-Kisa)*,<sup>8</sup> when God explains to Angel Gabriel as to whom are under the blanket, he said, "They are Fatima, her father, her husband and her two sons." Lady Fatima (s) is the focal point in this event. God did not say, "They are the Prophet's (s) family." Thus, in this incident, even the Prophet is not made central.

Imam Ali (a), to whom the Prophet had taught "a thousand doors of knowledge", would sit humbly in front of her in order to note down her dictations of what the Archangel Gabriel had said to her. This reveals that Lady Fatima's status was at the climax, this being at a time when the women around her were illiterate and so uneducated that they were unable to benefit very much from this ocean of knowledge.

### ***Conclusion***

Lady Fatima maintained the roles of being a considerate daughter, a loyal wife, a loving mother, and an accomplished educator for her

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<sup>8</sup> An account of an incident when Prophet (s) gathered Hasan, Husayn, Imam Ali (a) and Lady Fatima (s) under his cloak and prayed for them.

community and for women for centuries to come. With the limited amount of information within our reach about this “Mistress of all Women,” it is sufficient to know of the Prophet’s boundless love and respect to comprehend her status towards God and the Ahlul Bayt. Not only has her noble birth resulted in her renowned status and elevation, but the greater part of her character, spiritual state, generosity, wisdom, knowledge, and pleasant manners as seen in several narrations affirm her eminence and give us the motive to select her as our exemplar as it, indeed, pleases God and His Prophet, and guides us towards the straight path.



# SHI'ITE AUTHORITIES IN THE AGE OF THE MAJOR OCCULTATION

## PART II: SAYYID RADI

ALI NAGHI ZABIHZADEH<sup>1</sup>

TRANSLATED BY SEYYEDEH ZAHRA MIRFENDERSKI

**ABSTRACT:** Abu al-Hasan Muhammad ibn al-Husayn, known as Sayyid Radi, was a highly distinguished Muslim scholar and poet. His brilliance blossomed under the celebrated Shaykh Mufid as well as other prominent scholars. Sayyid Radi demonstrated proficiency in various Islamic sciences and had mastered the Arabic language as well. He was also the founder of Dar al-'Ilm, a large school held for various lectures, meetings, and academic debates. Due to his pure faith and intellectual capability, Sayyid Radi was appointed as the Chief of the Shi'ites during his era, the head of the High Court, and the supervisor of the Hajj pilgrimage. This article presents a brief account of his life, his teachers, and students, as well as his services and achievements that attested to his great influence during his era as well as years to come.

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### *Childhood*

Abu al-Hasan Muhammad ibn Husayn al-Musawi, also entitled 'Raḍī', was a descendant of the Prophet (s) and a Shi'a Muslim scholar and

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<sup>1</sup> Researcher of the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute, Qum.

poet who lived in Baghdad. His brief life (359 AH/970 CE – 406/1015) coincided with the era of the Buyid Dynasty,<sup>2</sup> the golden age of Arabic literature.

Sayyid Radī was born in a renowned household directly descended from the Prophet Muhammad (s). His father, Abū Ahmad, was a well-respected man, renowned for his purity, honesty, sincerity, and faithfulness. Bahā' al-Dawla, son of 'Aḍud al-Dawla, titled him 'the good-natured' (*al-Ṭāhir al-Awjad*) and 'the possessor of all honorable attributes' (*Dhu al-Manāqib*). He was given political responsibilities such as chieftainship of the Shi'ites, organizing manager of the Hajj pilgrimage, and supervisor of the Courts of Justice, the highest rank in the High Court of Appeal. Because the great authorities of religion trusted him, he often exchanged confidential letters between the 'Abbasid Caliphs, the Buyid kings, and the Syrian rulers (Āle Ḥamdān).

His mother, Fatima, also a descendant of the Prophet (s), was the daughter of Nāṣir Ṣaghīr and granddaughter of Nāṣir Kabīr, the conqueror of Mazandaran and Gilan. She was known for her chastity, virtuousness, and knowledge. Sources report that Shaykh Mufīd wrote the book *Aḥkām al-Nisā'* for her, mentioning her name in the introduction and describing her as a knowledgeable and respectable woman.<sup>3</sup>

From his childhood, when his father lived in exile, Sayyid Radī and his elder brother, Sayyid Murtaḍā, began learning the arts and sciences, two common subjects at that period, which consisted of Arabic syntax, grammar, recitation, jurisprudence, hadith, theology, poetry, and literature. He was educated by his mother and other prominent scholars,

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<sup>2</sup> 334-447/946-1056

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Sayyid Muḥsin Amīn, *A'yān al-Shi'ah*, vol. 9, pp. 216, 220 & 221; 'Abd al-Malik Tha'ālibī, *Yatīmat al-Dahr*, vol. 3, p. 131, quoted from Ali Davānī, *Mafākhir-e Islam*, p. 3, pp. 266 – 270; Muhammad Ibrāhīm Nijād, *Sayyid Raḍī bar Sāhil-e Nahj al-Balaghah*, pp. 15, 16.

such as Shaykh Mufīd, Abū ‘Abdullāh Marzbānī, Qāḍī ‘Abdul Jabbār, Abū Sa’īd Sīrāfī, Hārūn ibn Mūsā Tal’ukburā, Abū Bakr Khārazmī, Abū ‘Alī Fārsī, and Abul Faṭḥ ibn Janbī.<sup>4</sup>

From the accounts of Yāfi’ī and Ibn Khallakān, Sayyid Raḍī was highly intelligent from the time he was a child.<sup>5</sup>

### *His father’s imprisonment*

In 367 AH, ‘Aḍud al-Dawla Daylamī, the strongest king of the Būyid dynasty, attacked Baghdad. He disposed Bakhtīyār, son of Mu’izz al-Dawla, and took his place. Since ‘Aḍud al-Dawla thought that Abū Aḥmad, Sayyid Raḍī’s father, might cause him trouble, Abū Aḥmad was arrested and exiled when Sayyid Raḍī was only ten years old. Since then, Sayyid Raḍī was deprived of his father’s care and affection for many years. From then on, life was a struggle for him and his brother, Sayyid Murtaḍā.

Abū Aḥmad’s imprisonment lasted throughout the rest of the governance of ‘Aḍud al-Dawla and the reign of his son Ṣamsām al-Dawla over Baghdad. His imprisonment ended when Sharaf al-Dawla, another son of ‘Aḍud al-Dawla who ruled over Ahwaz, traveled to Baghdad through Kerman with the intention of overthrowing his brother’s government. Sharaf al-Dawla released all the prisoners who had been imprisoned by his father, and took them to Baghdad.<sup>6</sup>

Sayyid Raḍī composed an ode to Sharaf al-Dawla and sent it to the court to thank him. His show of appreciation established good relations with the Būyid dynasty, which resulted in the return of all the previously confiscated property of his father.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *A’yān al-Shī’ah*, vol. 9, p. 221; cf. Sayyid Ibrāhīm, Sayyid ‘Alawī, *Yādnāmeḥ-ye ‘Allāmeḥ Sharīf Raḍī*, speech of ‘Alī Davānī, p. 23.

<sup>5</sup> Yāfi’ī, *Mir’āt al-Jinān*, vol. 3, p. 19.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Ibid.* p. 217.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Sayyid Raḍī’ bar Sāḥil* ..., pp. 22-23.

## *Sayyid Radi's roles*

### *1. Chieftainship*

Chieftainship can be defined as the guardianship of Abū Ṭālib's descendants (the chieftainship of Ṭālibites). Regarding chieftainship, the late 'Allamah Amīnī writes in *Al-Ghadīr*:

Chieftainship was a position established to protect the dignity of families so that they would not engage in disputes with immoral people.

Chieftainship was a responsibility assigned by the people who spontaneously surrounded a prominent, amiable, and virtuous scholar and acknowledged his guardianship and authority. After some time, in an effort to gain popularity, caliphs and kings began to order people to do so. According to *Al-Ghadīr*, this position existed since the time of Imam al-Riḍā (a) and the chief guardian was called 'Chieftain of all Chieftains.' Ma'mūn gave this position to Imam Riḍā (a), which seems to be the origin of the Shi'a ('Alawi) chieftainships. Because the people passionately loved Imam Ali and his family, Ma'mūn feared an Alawite rebellion. In order to gain popularity in his political plots, Ma'mūn called the Imam (a) 'Chieftain of all Chieftains' simultaneous with or after nominating the Imam (a) as his successor. Gradually, this position was established within the society, and during the reign of Mu'taḍid 'Abbāsī (279 A.H), it was generally accepted in the public sphere. People began to consider it a socio-political principle to show respect to the Alawi community and to appoint a guardian for them, as they believed this position worthy for a renowned and honorable person.<sup>8</sup>

Since the Alawites rebelled many times in the past, they were escaping in some areas. The greatest among them would become their guardian,

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Commemoration of 'Allāmeḥ Sharīf Raḍī*, speech of Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn Parvar, a brief look at positions of 'Allameḥ Sharīf Raḍī, p. 36.

organizing and gathering them under an independent power rather than under the Caliph's government, even though the government issued decrees for guardianship, possibly similar to a party which is opposed to the government but gains license for its activities from that same government.

Caliphs were never satisfied with these circumstances although they were aware of the power of Alawite rebellions and their overthrow of the government in Mazandaran and Egypt in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Since ignoring them could lead to destruction of the 'Abbasids, the 'Abbasid Caliphs inevitably accepted the chieftainship and appointed Sharīf Raḍī. After his father, Abū Aḥmad, Sayyid Raḍī accepted the chieftainship of Alawites in order to return their rights.<sup>9</sup>

During his father's life, Sayyid Raḍī's father held the position of vicegerent. However, towards the end of his father's life and after he died, Sayyid Raḍī held this position himself. Yāfi'ī wrote:

His father was the guardian of the scholars (of religious sciences) and was an authority among them. He was the authority of the High Court and the supervisor of the Hajj pilgrimage. In 380 A.H, when Sayyid Raḍī was at the age of 21 and his father was still alive, he took over these responsibilities under the approval of Ṭā'ī 'Abbāsī.<sup>10</sup>

## 2. *Head of the High Court of Justice*<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Commemoration of 'Allāmah Sharīf Raḍī*, speech of Sayyid Jamāl al-Ddīn Dīn Parvar, pp. 35 – 37.

<sup>10</sup> Ibn 'Atabah, *Imād al-Ṭālib fī Anṣāb Āl-e Abī Ṭālib*, p. 193; cf. *A'yān al-Shī'ah*, vol. 9, p. 216; *Majālis al-Mu'minīn*, vol. 1, p. 504; cf. Ibn Ḥalkān, *Wafayāt al-A'yān*, vol. 4, p. 414; Tha'ālibī, *Yatīmat al-Dahr*, vol.3, p. 132; cf. 'Abdulhussein Amīnī, *Al-Ghadīr*, vol. 4, p. 209. Quoted from Ibrāhīm Sayyid "Alawī, *Ibid*, pp. 118 – 120.

<sup>11</sup> Since this position was the supreme position of the court, it demanded a person in charge who was not only a jurisprudent with authority, but was also the most knowledgeable jurisprudent who knew the different jurisprudential and legal rulings so he would be able to answer questions of the followers of different Islamic schools. 'Abd al-Hussein Ḥillī, in his

The head of the High Court of Justice is a position comparable to that of a public prosecutor in today's judicial system. Establishing such a position was necessary because each town in the 'Abbāsīd territory had a judicial system that worked to resolve the complaints of its people. A judge held the foremost position of this system to pass verdicts, although several towns together also had a magistrate. If a case was beyond the capacity of all of them, then it was referred to the Central Court. The caliph himself made the final decision or would assign it to a religious jurist, the head of the High Court. Therefore, to achieve position of the head of the High Court, besides having interpretive reasoning (*ijtihād*) and expertise, one must have been a social figure, pious, and devout, all qualities of which Sayyid Raḍī possessed.<sup>12</sup>

### 3. *Supervisor of the Hajj Pilgrimage*

In addition to the above-mentioned positions, because of his superior status in scientific and spiritual matters, Sharīf Raḍī took charge of looking into the problems of the Hajj pilgrims and supervising their affairs.<sup>13</sup> Since hajj is a religious duty of all Muslims, it could not be exclusive to the 'Abbāsīd government. Because of the great number of pilgrims who lived in the Fatimid territories and other Shi'ite

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introduction to *Ḥaqā'iq al-Ta'wīl*, where he describes different dimensions of Sharīf Raḍī's personality, wrote: "Caliphs and kings held levee two or three days a year in which they investigated complaints and directly listened to the words of (religious) authorities. After a while, due to social changes, a special court was established that continuously worked and was presided over by religious leaders, conscientious people, and those who have no grounds for slander." This position was similar to the head of Supreme Court or High Court of cassation in today's judicial system since those complaints that were investigated and whose sentences were passed by judges were to be resolved. Accordingly, the head of Supreme Court must be the most virtuous and learned judge and must be competent in the jurisprudences of all Islamic schools. (*Ḥaqā'iq al-Ta'wīl*, introduction 85, quoted from Sayyid Ibrāhīm, Sayyid 'Alawī, *Ibid*, p. 118)

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Sayyid Muhsin Amīn, *Ibid*, p. 216; Ibrāhīm Nijād, *Ibid*, pp. 34-35.

<sup>13</sup> After quoting from Māwardī (the author of *al-Aḥkām al-Sultānīyyah*) about the position of authority of the High Court and the Supervisor of the Hajj pilgrimage, 'Allāmah Amīnī quotes from *Iḥāf al-Warā bi Akhbār al-Qurā* that Sharīf Murtaḍā and Sharīf Raḍī made a pilgrimage to Mecca in 389 A.H. and Ibn al-Jirāh Ṭā'ī blocked their way. They paid nine thousands Dinars from their own possessions and unblocked the way for pilgrims (cf. *al-Ghadīr*, vol. 4, p. 209, quoted from Sayyid 'Alawī, *Ibid*, p. 119).

governments, in addition to Muslims of the 'Abbasid territory, gathered at the great congress of Hajj, it was necessary for the 'Abbasid Caliph to appoint someone who was known throughout the Islamic world. Sayyid Raḍī was a good choice, even though he lived in Baghdad and his political views radically differed with that of the 'Abbasid's. Another reason for this selection, as has been mentioned, was the existence of the Buyid's Shi'ite government in the capital city of the 'Abbasids.

### ***Sayyid Raḍī's Political Position and His Goals***

Sayyid Raḍī had an intimate relationship with Ṭā'i 'Abbāsī. Sayyid Raḍī also had gained a pre-eminent position during the time of Qādir 'Abbāsī, though he never considered their caliphate legitimate. He considered the 'Abbasid Caliphs as usurpers and expressed his disgust with the oppressive government of Qādir 'Abbāsī in his poems.

Sayyid Raḍī entered into politics with the purpose of administering justice and protecting the oppressed. He used these positions as a bridge to reach his ideals as defined in the following verses:

*Surely my hope is that you be a way for my will  
and guide me to my wishes.  
I only intend to do what I suppose you are its entry  
for I know that some suppositions are not wrong.*

His high positions never caused him to act arrogantly. When necessary, he would oppose the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs openly, as evident in one of his famous poems that he addressed to Qādir 'Abbāsī:

*Why should I endure humiliation while I have  
a sharp sword and a high rank? Just like a wild bird, my  
dignity flees from lowliness and oppression.  
Should I endure humiliation in territory of my enemies*

*while the caliph of Egypt is of the Alawites?*<sup>14</sup>

To fulfill his religious duties, Sayyid Raḍī accepted these positions during the lives of his well-known father, Ṭāhir dhul-Manāqib, his honorable brother, and his distinguished teachers, such as Shaykh Mufīd - the most knowledgeable religious authority of his time - and other great leaders. In addition to holding these influential positions, he would teach, write, and compose fine books and poetry.

In spite of his many occupations, Sayyid Raḍī founded *Dār ul-'Ilm* (House of Knowledge). He did so eighty years before the Nizāmīyah School of Baghdad, which was established by Nizām al-Mulk Ṭūsī on a large sum of government money. It is likely that Nizām al-Mulk imitated the Dar al-'Ilm founded by Sayyid Raḍī and Sayyid Murtaḍā. Sayyid Raḍī also made time to run *Dār al-'Ilm*. He also wrote many great works, the most famous of which is *Nahj al-Balāghah* which he compiled six years before his death in 400 (A.H). He also wrote some other books, such as *Khilāf al-Fuqahā'*, on the judges of Baghdad, *Haqā'iq al-Ta'wīl fī Masābih al-Tanzīl*, *Ma'ānī al-Qur'an*, *Majāzāt al-Āthār al-Nabawīyah*, a commentary on a book of his teacher, Abū Ali Fārsī, and *Khaṣā'is al-A'imma*. He also made time for teaching.

Sharīf Raḍī took up these positions to serve people and religion. Therefore, when the 'Abbasid Caliph dismissed him from all three of his jobs because of the poem he composed praising the Fatimid Caliph, he proudly wrote the following ode:

*I was dismissed from these jobs, but I did not lose my  
dignity  
Nor my great status.  
And if I remain alive, you will see that it is if I am  
Several thousand people confronting you.*

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<sup>14</sup> Sayyid Muḥsin al-Amīn, *A'yān al-Shī'ah*, vol. 9, pp. 217-218.

His odes to the Caliphs were generally in response to their kindness. He never wrote poetry to flatter the Caliphs or for the purpose of using them to serve him. He addressed Muhallabī, the minister, in an ode saying:

*This is my praise through which I do not want to pile up  
wealth  
for my pride and dignity restrain me from praising  
another to achieve my goals.*

In another ode he wrote:

*I have been offered worldly goods many times  
but I declined each time.<sup>15</sup>*

As mentioned before, when Sayyid RaḌī took an extreme political position, referring to the caliphate of Egyptian 'Alawites in his poem, he mentioned the difficult conditions of life under the power of the 'Abbasid Caliph. When Qādir 'Abbāsī learned of it, he was extremely angry and called a meeting, to which he invited Sharīf RaḌī's father and brother, Shaykh Muḑīd, and other Shi'ites and Sunnis. He wanted Sharīf RaḌī to explain the cause of his hatred towards 'Abbasid government, but Sayyid RaḌī courageously declined the Caliph's invitation and did not attend the meeting.

In that meeting, Sayyid RaḌī's father tried to make it appear as though the poem did not belong to him, but the Caliph did not accept his excuses or explanations. The Caliph ordered someone to take notes of their meeting and in them the rulers of Egypt were cursed. The minutes were brought to Sayyid RaḌī to sign, but he refused.<sup>16</sup> According to the

<sup>15</sup> C.f. Sayyid 'Alawī, *Ibid*, speech of Ali Davanī, pp. 25 – 26.

<sup>16</sup> *Dā'iratul Ma'ārif al-Qarn al-'Ishrīn* [Encyclopedia of the Twentieth Century], vol. 4, p. 253; c.f. *A'yān al-Shī'ah*, vol. 9, pp. 217 – 218.

author of *Rīyād al-‘Ulamā*, Sayyid Raḍī attended the meeting but refused to sign the minutes.

Abu al-Hassan al-Ṣaḥābī and his son, Gharas al-Ni’mah Muhammad, wrote in their book of history that one day Qādir ‘Abbāsī invited Abū Aḥmad Ṭāhir Mūsawī, and his son, Abu al-Qāsim Murtaḍā, and a number of judges, witnesses, and jurisprudents, and held a meeting in which he read poems composed by Sayyid Raḍī. Then he told Abū Aḥmad, the chieftain:

What offence has our government committed against your son, and what has the ruler of Egypt done to him that, despite appointing him as the chieftain, head of the High Court, and supervisor of the Hajj pilgrimage, he has composed such a poem?

Qādir wanted him to compose a poem and deny his relationships with the Egyptians, but Sayyid Raḍī refused. Qādir dismissed him from his chieftainship and appointed Muhammad ibn ‘Umar instead.<sup>17</sup>

Sharīf Raḍī waited for an opportunity to eliminate despotic and tyrannical rulers with the aim of forming an Islamic government that would administer Imam Ali’s (a) justice. He expressed his revolutionary thoughts to his close friends, including Abū Ishāq Ṣābī, in private meetings through epic poems. Abū Ishāq admired them and advised him to take care of his family when he attained power. Through an ode, Sayyid assured him that he would fulfill this promise when he was successful.<sup>18</sup>

Sayyid Raḍī did not see any superiority of the Caliph over himself. In an ode he said to the arrogant and conceited Qādir:

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<sup>17</sup> Afandī, *Rīyād al-‘Ulamā*, vol. 5, p. 81.

<sup>18</sup> Sayyid Ali Khān Madanī Shīrāzī, *al-Darajāt al-Raḥī’ah*, p. 471.

Beware the commander of the faithful! We both are descended from one holy family and we are both proud of them, so your dignity is not more than mine. Certainly there is no difference between us (since we both have great roots) except the Caliphate that you hold. You have worn the necklace of the Caliphate, while I have been deprived of it.

This ode made the Caliph furious. However, because of the Sayyid's popularity, the Caliph could not punish him.<sup>19</sup>

Sayyid Raḍī displayed hatred only towards the 'Abbasid government and so asserted his superiority over the kings when able. In the meantime, he continuously reminded them of their usurpation of the Caliphate.

One day, he was sitting by al-Ṭā'i Billāh, ignoring the Caliph, and was drawing his beard up towards his nose. To boast about his great power, the Caliph said, "I think that you smell the Caliphate!" With utmost dignity and bravery, Sayyid Raḍī replied, "Maybe I smell prophethood!"<sup>20</sup> With this witty remark, not only did he question the political legitimacy of the 'Abbāsīd caliphate, but he also reminded the Caliph that the Shi'ites are those who hold the right to rule owing to prophecy and guardianship (*wilāyah*), not him.

In an inauguration of the Millenium conference held in 1986 to commemorate the 1000<sup>th</sup> demise of Sayyid Raḍī, Hujjat al-Islam Hāshimī Rafsanjānī brought up a historical question: "How could someone who considered the caliphate of the 'Abbāsīds as illegal be given the authority over three important governmental positions (chieftainship, supervision of the Hajj pilgrimage, and direction of the High Court)?" In response, disproving of any kind of compromise,

<sup>19</sup> C.f. Ibid, p. 470; *Tārīkh Ādāb al-Lughah al-'Arabīyyah*, vol. 1, p. 567.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 470.

Hujjat al-Islam Hāshimī Rafsanjānī described the special political conditions of the Islamic world and Shi‘ites’ rule. He clarified that the ‘Abbasid Caliphs were afraid of the Fatimid government in Egypt and the powerful Shi‘ite government of the Buyids, and the Abbasid Caliphs’ fear led to the support of intense political activities of Sayyid Raḍī, his father, and his brother. He insisted that although Sayyid Raḍī never accepted political compromise, the weak ‘Abbasid Caliphs had to offer these positions to him and his family.

Twelver Shi‘ites, under the guidance of the Imams (a) and the struggles of their followers as well as the determination of Imam Hasan’s (a) children, the children of Zayd ibn Ali ibn al-Husayn and the Ismā‘īlītes formed a very strong elite community. In scattered regions, particularly in north of Iran and Khorasan, they disseminated Islamic culture and gradually made their way into politics as well. Because Shi‘ite culture and politics dominated other cultures and politics at that time, Shi‘ism in Baghdad was under the protection of the Shi‘ite powers around the world. Thus, the Caliphs were obliged to protect them. At that time, the reign of the Fatimids in Egypt spread from the Atlantic Ocean in western Africa to the Red Sea in the East, including a part of the Arabian Peninsula. The entire southern coast of the Mediterranean Sea was controlled by the Fatimids, who rejected the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs.

The Twelver Shī‘īte Buyids had gathered in various regions of Iran, such as Fars and Isfahan. Their main settlement was in Baghdad, which was occupied by Mu‘izz al-Dawlah 334 – 336 AH, and the ‘Abbasid Caliphs were their pawns.

Sayyid Murtaḍā and Sayyid Raḍī’s births in 355 AH and in 359 AH were many years after the Buyid entered Baghdad. Even at that time, their father, Abū Aḥmad, was a highly respected chieftain. The Caliph had a formal position and collaborated with the Buyids. He played the role of a ruler, but had no power. Even Sayyid Raḍī, as previously mentioned, got away with treating the Caliph harshly.

The Sayyid would not accept the gifts sent by Fakhr al-Mulūk, the minister of Bahā' al-Dawlah, even though he was a fellow Shi'a.<sup>21</sup> At the birth of Sayyid Raḍī's child, minister Abū Muḥammad Mahlabī sent him one thousand Dinars. The Sayyid rejected the gift, claiming that the minister knew he would not accept it from anyone.<sup>22</sup>

He was constantly stimulated by great ideas and although he would compose his thoughts into poetry, he never had the opportunity to make them a reality.

### ***His Accomplishments***

Sayyid Raḍī and his brother, Sayyid Murtaḍā, were pupils of the great jurispudent, Shaykh Mufīd, and reached a high level of religious authority. Although Sayyid Raḍī's fame from his poetry and literature have overshadowed his other scientific dimensions, as historians often introduce him as a master in poetry, his scientific position is comparable with it. He was a man of literature, a great exegete, and a prominent religious authority. According to some scholars:

During the absence of Sayyid Raḍī, Sayyid Murtaḍā would be the master of poets; and in absence of Sayyid Murtaḍā, Sayyid Raḍī was the most knowledgeable and the best of jurists.<sup>23</sup>

Sayyid Raḍī wrote a book on jurisprudence called *Ta'liq 'alā Khilāf al-Fuqahā'*. His jurisprudential debates with scholars and jurispudents of his time are also recorded in his works. Additionally, he was a judge

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<sup>21</sup> C.f. *Yād-nāme-ye 'Allāmah Sharīf Raḍī*, pp. 10 – 13; Ibn Abi al-Ḥadīd Mu'tazilī Madā'inī in the preface of *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah*, vol. 1, writes about the great personality of Raḍī, saying that: "He never accepted gifts or rewards from anyone, even from his father. This suffices to show us his dignity. Buyid kings made every effort to convince him to accept their gifts, but he always refused." (C.f. *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah*, vol. 1, p. 31, quoted from Tustarī; *Qāmūs al-Rijāl*, vol. 9, p. 228)

<sup>22</sup> *A'yān al-Shī'ah*, vol. 9, p. 217; c.f. Sayyid Ali Khān, *Ibid*, p. 473.

<sup>23</sup> *A'yān al-Shī'ah*, vol. 9, p. 218.

and the head of the High Court. These jobs certainly require one to have *ijtihād* (interpretive reasoning) and proficiency in jurisprudence, indicating that Sayyid Raḍī was a prominent jurist.

Sayyid Raḍī wrote three great commentaries of the Holy Qur'an:

1. *Talkhīṣ al-Bayān 'an Majāzāt al-Qur'an*: In this book he presented his studies of those Qur'anic verses whose understanding depended upon other Qur'anic and non-Qur'anic sciences. The subject of this commentary is figurative language in the Qur'an, i.e. those verses whose actual meaning is different from their literal meaning.
2. *Ḥaqā'iq al-Ta'wīl fī Mutashābih al-Tanzīl*: Scholars believe it was very unique at its time. Unfortunately, only the fifth chapter of this commentary is available today.<sup>24</sup>
3. *Tafsīr al-Qur'an*.

Some of his other books are *Khaṣā'is al-A'immaḥ*, *Majāzāt Āthār al-Nabawīyyah*, and *Ta'liqah*<sup>25</sup> on *Īdāḥ Abī Ali*, which is a compilation of his complete poetical works. His most influential book that has been popular since it was published is *Nahj al-Balāghah*.<sup>26</sup>

In the *History of Baghdad*, Khaṭīb Baghdādī wrote:

*He was the brother of Abu al-Qāsim, known as Murtaḍā. He was a man of literature and knowledge. Aḥmad ibn Rūḥ reported that when Raḍī entered old age he decided to memorize the Qur'an and he did so within a short time. He also mentioned that Raḍī wrote some*

<sup>24</sup> The author of *A'yān al-Shī'ah* wrote that in a book about his teacher, Ibn Junay once said: Raḍī wrote a commentary on the Qur'an that was incomparable.

<sup>25</sup> Comments.

<sup>26</sup> C.f. *A'yān al-Shī'ah*, vol. 9, p. 218; c.f. *al-Darajāt al-Raḍī'ah*, p. 467.

*commentaries on the Qur'an that are unmatched in its expertise.*<sup>27</sup>

### ***His Teachers***

1. Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn Aḥmad Ṭabarī (d. 393 AH): A great jurist and a distinguished writer who taught Sayyid Raḍī the Qur'an at an early age.
2. Abū Ali Fārsī (d. 377 AH): He was famous in science and literature, and the leading expert in Arabic syntax during his time.
3. Abū Sa'īd Sīrāfī (d. 368 AH): A great scientist, famous grammarian, and a judge in Baghdad.
4. Judge 'Abd al-Jabbār Baghdādī: A specialist in Hadith sciences and literature.
5. 'Abd al-Raḥīm Nabātah (d. 374 AH): A famous Shī'ite propagator known as Khaṭīb Miṣrī [Egyptian preacher]. Sayyid learned some poetic structures from him.
6. Abū Muhammad 'Abdullah ibn Muhammad Asadī (d. 405 AH): An educated and virtuous judge.
7. Abu al-Faṭḥ 'Uthmān ibn Junay (d. 392 AH): An expert in grammar and syntax.
8. Abu al-Ḥasan Ali ibn 'Īsā (d. 402 AH): Specialized in semantics, literature, and poetry.
9. Abū Ḥaḍḥ 'Umar ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Aḥmad Alkanānī: A transmitter of hadith.

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<sup>27</sup> *History of Baghdad*, vol. 2, p. 246, quoted from Tustarī, *Ibid*.

10. Abu al-Qāsim ‘Īsā ibn Ali ibn ‘Īsā ibn Dāwūd ibn Jarrāḥ (d. 350): A lexicographer, a prominent and authentic transmitter of hadith.
11. Abū ‘Abdullah Marzbānī (d. 384 AH): A famous transmitter of hadith whom Shaykh Ṣadūq trusted.
12. Abū Bakr Muhammad ibn Mūsā Khārazmī (d. 403 AH): A great jurist and hadith scholar.
13. Abū Muhammad Hārūn Tal’ukburā (d. 385 AH): An outstanding and brilliant jurist.
14. Abū ‘Abdullah Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Nu’mān, known as Shaykh Mufīd (d. 413 AH).

### ***His Students***

Among Sayyid Raḍī’s students were great scholars, such as: Sayyid Abū ‘Abdullah Jurjānī, Shaykh Muhammad Ḥalawātī, Shaykh Ja’far Durīyastī (d. 473 AH), Aḥmad ibn Ali ibn Qudāmah known as ibn Qudāmah (d. 486 AH), Abu al-Ḥasan Hāshimī, Mufīd Niyshābūrī (d. 445 AH), Abū Bakr Niyshābūrī, Judge Abū Bakr ‘Ukburā, et al.<sup>28</sup>

### ***Death***

Although Sayyid Raḍī had a short life, his services were numerous. He passed away in 406 AH when his brother Sayyid Murtaḍā was still alive. His death left the Muslim community in grief, as seven years earlier his teacher, Shaykh Mufīd, had also passed away. Two years after his demise, Shaykh at-Ṭā’ifah from Khurasan went to Baghdad.

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<sup>28</sup> C.f. *A’yān al-Shī’ah*, vol. 9, p. 217; *Mafākhir-e Islam*, vol. 3, pp. 297 – 298; *Yād-nāme-ye ‘Allāmah Sharīf Raḍī*, article of Ali Davānī, p. 31; and Ibrāhīm Nijād, *Ibid*, pp. 50 – 55.

### ***Conclusion***

The accomplishments of the brilliant and highly distinguished scholar and activist continue to flourish years after his death. Sayyid Radi took on the roles of being a magistrate, establishing educational institutes, leading the Shi'ites, supervising the Hajj pilgrimage, composing persuasive poems, compiling *Nahj ul-Balaghah*, and writing commentaries of the Holy Qur'an. He took up these positions to serve the people and protect the oppressed with the aim of forming an Islamic government that would administer Imam Ali's justice. These positions, which were a bridge to reach his divine goals, rendered Sayyid Radi a distinguished Shi'a scholar.



# THE STATUS OF KNOWLEDGE IN ISLAM<sup>1</sup>

MOHAMAMD HOSSEIN FARYAB<sup>2</sup>

TRANSLATED BY FATEMEH SOLTANMOHAMMADI

**ABSTRACT:** Acquiring and possessing knowledge (*'ilm*) has a great status in Islam, as knowledge is highly encouraged by the Holy Qur'an and Muslim scholars. God the Exalted introduces Himself using the adjective 'All-knowing' (*'aleem*) 122 times in the Qur'an. Moreover, the Qur'an on multiple occasions has glorified those with knowledge, such as scholars (*'ālim*) and teachers (*mu'allim*). This article will present a brief look at the importance of knowledge in Islam, as well as the high status educators and scholars enjoy as a result. This knowledge is only efficient once it is seen through the seeker's actions. Upon glancing at the verses of the Qur'an and narrations, the outcome of knowledge and learning is gnosis of God (*ma'rifah*), sincerity in actions (*ikhlās*), and a sense of responsibility before God and His creation.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is the translation of an extract of the Introduction of the following: Hashemi, Sayyid Mahmud and the Board of Experts of the Comparative Islamic Jurisprudence Encyclopedia, *Comparative Islamic Jurisprudence Encyclopedia* (Mawsū'ah al-Fiqh al-Islāmī al-Muqārin), Qum: 1423 A.H. (2002), Islamic Jurisprudence Encyclopedia Institute. pp. 20-31.

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### *The importance of knowledge*

Islam was revealed in a land where the people were known for their ignorance. Their beliefs, sayings, and actions were clear signs of their distance from knowledge and civilization. For years, people engaged in battles against one another over petty issues, resulting in a high number of deaths. Fathers would bury their newborn daughters in cold-blooded machoism. Worshipping materials such as rocks, wood, dates, circumambulating naked around the house of God, holding a strong caste system, and devaluing the status of women are clear examples of the ignorance during the time before Islam, called the 'Age of Ignorance' (*Jāhiliyyah*).

This reveals the difficulty the Holy Prophet of Islam experienced in bringing his message. One of Islam's main goals was to motivate people to learn and acquire gnostic knowledge (*ma'ārif*). The Qur'an emphasizes on the status of knowledge, the importance of learning, and the value of scholars, teachers, and students. The Holy Qur'an has also encouraged people to attain knowledge through sending the Prophet as one who integrated learning and instilled a yearning for knowledge in the people's hearts:

كَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِيكُمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْكُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِنَا وَيُزَكِّيكُمْ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ  
الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُم مَّا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ

*As We sent to you an Apostle from among yourselves, who recites to you Our signs, and purifies you, and teaches you the Book and wisdom, and teaches you what you did not know. (2:151)*

On many accounts, the Holy Qur'an repetitively glorifies scholars and condemns the ignorant as a method of encouraging the Muslims to seek knowledge and dishearten them from remaining in a state of ignorance:

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو  
الْأَلْبَابِ...

...Say, "Are those who know equal to those who do not know?" Only those who possess intellect take admonition. (39:9)

In the Holy Qur'an, God the Exalted praises the ignorant man who follows a knowledgeable man and at times has advised people to find the truth by seeking out knowledgeable individuals even if they are from other religions:

فَسْئَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

If ye realize this not, ask of those who possess the Message. (16:43; 21:7)

This verse portrays the rational necessity for the ignorant to refer to the knowledgeable.<sup>3</sup> Since the people of the Abrahamic faith are educated in answering questions regarding the existence of messengers and prophets before Prophet Muhammad (s),<sup>4</sup> God has commanded the polytheists, who are skeptical on this matter, to refer to them for their knowledge.

<sup>3</sup> Fakhr-Razi, Muhammad bin 'Umar, *Mafātih al-Ghayb*, Vol. 7, p. 211; Tabataba'i, Seyyed Muhammad Husayn, *al-Mizan*, Vol. 12, p. 257.

<sup>4</sup> Fakhr-Razi, Muhammad bin 'Umar, *Mafātih al-Ghayb*, Vol. 7, p. 211; Ibn Kathir Qarshi, Isma'eel bin Amr, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Adheem*, Vol. 2, p. 493; Kashani, Mulla Fath-Allah, *Manhaj as-Sādiqeen*, Vol. 5, p. 191; Maraaghi, Ahmad Mustafa, *Tafsir al-Marāghi*, Vol. 14, p. 78; Qarashi, Seyyed Ali Akbar, *Ahsan al-Hadith*, Vol. 5, p. 446; Qumi Mashhadi, Muhammad, *Kanz al-Daqā'iq*, Vol. 7, p. 211; Razi, Abul Futuh, *Tafsir Rawd al-Jinān*, Vol. 12, p. 42; Shathili, Seyyed Qutb, *Fi Zilāl al-Qur'an*, Vol. 4, p. 2,172; Tabarsi, Fadhl bin Hasan, *Majma' Bayān*, Vol. 6, p. 557; Zahili, Wahbah, *al-Tafsir al-Mizān*, Vol. 14, p. 143; Zamakhshari, Mahmud, *al-Kashshāf*, Vol. 2, p. 607.

The Prophet of Islam spoke of status of knowledge and understanding on multiple occasions. He once said, “Knowledge is the root of all good and ignorance is the root of all bad.”<sup>5</sup>

Truly, attaining eternal and worldly bliss, a level which the prophets of God had reached, cannot be achieved if one does not know what path to follow. With regards to this, Prophet Muhammad said, “The closest of men to the status of prophethood are those who are accustomed to knowledge and struggle (*jihād*).”<sup>6</sup>

The Holy Prophet of Islam has discussed the superiority of knowledge over worship (*ibādah*) multiple times, where he says, “In the eyes of God, the virtue of knowledge is more favorable than worship.”<sup>7</sup> He has also said, “A small amount of knowledge is better than much worship.”<sup>8</sup>

It was based on this given status of knowledge that the Holy Prophet encouraged Muslims to seek it: “Seek knowledge even if it be in China, because seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim.”<sup>9</sup> He has also said, “In the eyes of God, seeking knowledge is more valuable than prayer (*salāt*), fasting (*sawm*), pilgrimage (*hajj*), and struggle (*jihād*).”<sup>10</sup>

The practical life story (*sirah*) of the Holy Prophet was such that he preferred a scholarly gathering over one devoted entirely to worship: One day the Prophet entered the mosque, and upon arrival he noticed two groups of people. He said, “Both groups are good. One group is glorifying and beseeching God and the other is seeking knowledge and

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<sup>5</sup> Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 74, p. 177.

<sup>6</sup> Faydh Kashani, Mulla Muhammad Muhsin, *al-Mahajjah al-Baydā*, Vol. 1, p. 14, narrated from Muhammadi Reyshahri, Muhammad, *Mizān al-Hikmah*, Vol. 6, p. 456.

<sup>7</sup> Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 1, p. 167; Shaykh Saduq, *al-Khisāl*, Vol. 1, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 1, p. 175.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 170; Muttaqi Hindi, Ali bin Hisam al-Deen, *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, Vol. 10, p. 138; Qazwini, Muhammad bin Yazid, *Sunan* of ibn Mājah, Vol. 1, p. 71.

<sup>10</sup> Muttaqi Hindi, Ali bin Hisam al-Deen, *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, Vol. 10, p. 131.

conveying it to the uneducated. However, the latter group is the better of the two, for I have been sent to teach men.” Subsequently, the Holy Prophet sat amongst those who were busy obtaining knowledge.<sup>11</sup>

Imam Ali (a),<sup>12</sup> considered knowledge as a source of life for one’s heart and the light for one’s eyes against the blindness and weakness of the body.<sup>13</sup> He has said:

Oh people! Seeking knowledge is more necessary than seeking wealth, because wealth has been distributed amongst you. God, the Just, has divided it amongst you and He will make it available to you, but knowledge is kept amongst certain individuals and you are responsible for seeking it from them; thus, you should ask for it.<sup>14</sup>

Also, Imam Ali (a) in his conversation with one of his close companions, Kumayl bin Ziyad, said the following on comparing knowledge and wealth:

Knowledge is better than wealth, for knowledge guards you but you must guard wealth. Wealth is reduced when given away, but knowledge grows when given. An individual who is built by his wealth will be obliterated when his wealth is wiped out.<sup>15</sup>

Imam Sajjad (a)<sup>16</sup> said the following regarding this topic: “If people know how beneficial it is to seek knowledge, they will obtain it even if it is with bloodshed or going in a whirlpool.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 1, p. 206.

<sup>12</sup> The first Imam of the Shi‘i school of thought.

<sup>13</sup> Ibn Shu‘bah Harrani, Hasan, *Tuhaf al-‘Uqūl*, p. 28; Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 2, p. 166; Shaykh Saduq, *Amāli*, p. 616.

<sup>14</sup> Kulayni, Muhammad bin Ya‘qub, *Al-Kāfi*, Vol. 1, p. 30.

<sup>15</sup> *Nahjul-Balāghah*, Hikmah 147.

<sup>16</sup> The fourth Shi‘i Imam

<sup>17</sup> Kulayni, Muhammad bin Ya‘qub, *al-Kāfi*, Vol. 1, p. 35.

The Holy Qur'an has firmly condemned ignorance and lack of knowledge and has warned their followers from falling into it. In the Qur'an, after the narration of Prophet Noah's story and his request from God to save his son from the storm, God says the following:

قَالَ يَا نُوحُ... فَلَا تَسْأَلْنِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنِّي أَعْطُكَ أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنَ  
الْجَاهِلِينَ

*O Noah! ...So ask not of Me that of which thou hast no knowledge! I give thee counsel, lest thou act like the ignorant! (11:46)*

God the Exalted not only warned his Prophet from ignorance and lack of knowledge, but He also advised him to distance himself from them:

خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ

*Hold to forgiveness; command what is right; But turn away from the ignorant. (7:199)*

It is from such viewpoints in Islam that the Holy Prophet considered providing a platform for education and learning to be one of the responsibilities of a parent toward his child.<sup>18</sup>

### ***The best knowledge***

Mankind's inclination to seek the truth along with his sense of curiosity has led him to become familiar with a wide scope of intellectual understandings. Various universities across the globe have attracted numerous students, and a new field in education and learning is discovered every day. Yet, with the growth of science and knowledge, people's problems and sufferings have also increased. It is not

<sup>18</sup> Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 71, p. 80.

surprising to think mankind's advancement in science has created a number of difficulties and obstacles for him. So the question that remains is: what kind of knowledge should be learned? Moreover, what is considered to be the best knowledge?

Centuries ago, Prophet Muhammad (s) said the following in regards to seeking new sciences and knowledge: "Knowledge cannot be quantized, so seek the best of it."<sup>19</sup> Imam Ali (a) has also said, "Know that there is no good in knowledge that does not benefit anyone."<sup>20</sup>

From a Qur'anic viewpoint, knowledge without an honorable motive - or with mere material motives - is not considered knowledge; rather, it is an aberration and deviation. With enough research, we see that today's problems - wars, bloodshed, oppression, transgressions, corruption, and demoralization - all root from this hopeless and deviated knowledge. It stems from the ideology of people whose knowledge is geared only towards materialism, and their vision does not surpass that of an animalistic view. Indeed, knowledge is ignorance when it is not used as a means for honorable goals and is corrupt unless it becomes a tool and a source of light for reaching faith.<sup>21</sup>

From an Islamic perspective, man has been created for a clear and obvious reason; hence, he should adjust his practical and theoretical activities to reach that goal. In Islam, man is a composition of body and soul, and God created him to reach perfection (*kamāl*) and to achieve happiness in this world and the hereafter. Islam is not such that it advises mankind to have no regard for this world. However, it also does not leave people free to do as they wish as they make this world the limit for their aspirations with no regard for their actions. Islam advises its followers to set this world as a preface for the next world, while

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 219.

<sup>20</sup> *Nahjul Balāgha*, Letter 31.

<sup>21</sup> Makarem Shirazi, Naser, *Tafsir Nemuneh*, Vol. 22, p. 534.

adhering to moderation in the various realms of life, and to carry out their activities with the objective of reaching eternal bliss.

Considering what has been said thus far, the best knowledge is that which helps man draw near to happiness in this world and the next. Not every field of knowledge can help man achieve this objective. Indeed, Prophet Muhammad (s) had clarified various fields of knowledge that proved to be futile. One day he entered the mosque and saw several people gathered around a man. The Prophet asked, "Who is that man?" They answered, "He is a great scholar ('*allāmah*)." He said, "What is an '*allāmah*?" They said, "He is the most knowledgeable in Arab lineage, the events of the past, the history of the 'Time of Ignorance' (*jahiliyyah*), and poetry." The Prophet replied, "This is the type of knowledge in which he who is heedless to it will not lose anything and he who is aware of it will not gain anything."<sup>22</sup>

Without a doubt, reaching happiness in this world and the next will only be achieved when one acquaints himself with God, his purpose in this world, his destination, and the practical steps in attaining eternal happiness, all of which can be achieved through learning and becoming familiar with religious sciences. Familiarizing oneself with the abovementioned knowledge is required to such an extent that God the Exalted has said the following in the Holy Qur'an:

وَمَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لِيَنْفِرُوا كَافَّةً فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِن كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ طَائِفَةٌ لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّينِ وَلِيُنذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ

*Nor should the Believers all go forth together: if a contingent from every expedition remained behind, they could devote themselves to studies in religion, and admonish the people when they return to them, - that*

<sup>22</sup> Shaykh Saduq, *Amāli*, p. 267.

*thus they (may learn) to guard themselves (against evil).*  
(9:122)

This verse is connected with the verse of struggle (*jihād*), and it implies a reality that plays a vital role for Muslims: though struggle has been greatly stressed and any deviation from it is a sin, at times when it is not necessary for all believers to participate in the warfare, all must not be excluded. Rather, it is necessary for a Muslim population to divide their people into two groups: those who are responsible for warfare, and those who engage in teaching Islamic gnostic knowledge (*ma'ārif*) and jurisprudence (*ahkām*). It is based on this idea that the religious leaders consider seeking Islamic knowledge a collective obligation (*wājib kifā'i*)<sup>23</sup> so that those who have attained knowledge may travel to various areas to convey the message (*tabligh*), and more specifically, to return to their people and familiarize them with Islamic issues and rulings.<sup>24</sup>

According to Islamic leaders, the best knowledge is that which helps one become more familiarized with religion. The Holy Prophet has said the following: “The best of people is the religious scholar. If he is needed, he will help people and be beneficial for them, and if his knowledge is not desired, then he himself will make use of it.”<sup>25</sup>

It is worth mentioning that when using the term “Islamic scholars,” it is not simply and solely referring to those who have mastered Islamic jurisprudence; rather, it refers to all religious sciences which have been divided into the three branches of Islamic Theology, Islamic Ethics, and Islamic Jurisprudence.

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<sup>23</sup> It refers to what is compulsory on all men, as a group, till some of them discharge/s it and exonerates the entire group of that responsibility.

<sup>24</sup> Makarem Shirazi, Naser, *Tafsir Nemuneh*, Vol. 8, p. 193-194.

<sup>25</sup> Ibn Idris Helli, Muhammad bin Mansour, *al-Sarā'ir*, Vol. 3, p. 578; Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 1, p. 216.

The science of religious theology is the foundation and grounds of becoming familiar with principles of the Existence and Oneness of God (*tawhid*), prophethood (*nubuwwah*), leadership (*imāmah*), the Day of Resurrection (*qiyāmah*), and other matters of belief. Imam Sadiq (a) has said the following regarding this topic: “The best act of worship is having knowledge of God.”<sup>26</sup>

One day a man came to see the Holy Prophet and asked him, “What action holds the highest merit?” The Holy Prophet said twice, “Knowledge of God and knowing His religion.” The man said, “Oh Prophet of God, I asked about an act and your answer is about knowledge?” The Prophet said, “A small amount of actions are highly beneficial if there is knowledge, while lots of actions are useless if there is no knowledge.”<sup>27</sup>

Familiarizing oneself with God has been advised to such a large extent; thus, a great segment of knowledge and the sciences can be placed in this realm. For instance, when an individual becomes familiar with his surroundings and the world around him; when he learns about the skies and sees the order in the stars, moon, and sun, his certainty (*yaqeen*) in the Just God will develop. At that point, when he focuses on the specific aspects of birds and animals, when he notices their great variety and their unique capabilities, when he contemplates the reproduction of fish and other aquatic beings and when he studies plants and trees and mountains, he will have no other choice but to confess the existence of the Great and All-Knowing God. Furthermore, the extraordinary wonders of the human body, such as the digestive, circulatory, and reproductive system are so astounding that it leaves every individual amazed. Indeed, when an individual accepts this knowledge with the intention of seeking and gaining knowledge about God, it will be placed under the umbrella of theology. It is on this

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<sup>26</sup> Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 1, p. 215.

<sup>27</sup> Abul Qasim, *Nahj al-Fasāhah*, p. 228; Ibn Abi Faras, Warram, *Majmū'at al-Warrām*, Vol. 1, p. 82.

account that God the Exalted has advised mankind to study the wonders of creation:

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِي  
تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَّاءٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ  
الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيَّاحِ وَالسَّحَابِ  
الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

*Behold! in the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of the night and the day; in the sailing of the ships through the ocean for the profit of mankind; in the rain which God Sends down from the skies, and the life which He gives therewith to an earth that is dead; in the beasts of all kinds that He scatters through the earth; in the change of the winds, and the clouds which they Trail like their slaves between the sky and the earth;- (Here) indeed are Signs for a people that are wise. (2:164)*

In other verses, God the Exalted offers hints for people to think and ponder:

أَفَلَا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَى الْإِبِلِ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ وَإِلَى السَّمَاءِ كَيْفَ رُفِعَتْ وَإِلَى الْجِبَالِ  
كَيْفَ نُصِبَتْ وَإِلَى الْأَرْضِ كَيْفَ سُطِحَتْ

*Do they not look at the Camels, how they are made? And at the Sky, how it is raised high? And at the Mountains, how they are fixed firm? And at the Earth, how it is spread out? (88:17-20)*

On occasions, the Holy Qur'an makes reference to the astounding beauty of the creatures such as the honeybee, ant, camel, fly, and cow, and marvels at the process in which milk, honey, pomegranate, and dates are formed. Through this method, traces of various kinds of human sciences can be found in the Holy Qur'an.<sup>28</sup>

Additionally, in the realm of ethics and jurisprudence, many statements have been made by religious leaders in this regard. Imam Ali (a) has said, "The root of science is to tell between different characteristics, and to express good character while refraining from bad character."<sup>29</sup> He has also said, "The best science is that which leads to your improving yourself (*islāh*)."<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, it has been narrated that one day a man told Imam Sadiq (a), "I have a son who would like to ask you a few questions about that which is lawful (*halāl*) and forbidden (*harām*)."<sup>31</sup> In response, the Imam said, "Is there any topic better than the lawful and forbidden for people to set forth their questions?"<sup>31</sup>

Another important question that should be investigated is the sort of science that must not be learned. In a general statement, Imam Ali (a) warns people not to seek out merely any knowledge, since "certain kinds of knowledge can lead one astray."<sup>32</sup> In a more comprehensible statement, he says, "Any knowledge that cannot be legitimized with reasoning is misleading."<sup>33</sup> This wise saying assists people in choosing a correct path when setting out to gain knowledge. For example, the science in which its destination is solely to kill innocent lives or leads the youth into the arms of addiction or to the collapse of humane ethics

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<sup>28</sup> Rezai, Muhammad Ali, *A Research on the Scientific Miracles of the Holy Quran*, Vol. 1, p. 33.

<sup>29</sup> Tamimi Amadi, Abdul Wahid, *Ghurar al-Hikam*, p. 63.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>31</sup> Shaykh Saduq, '*Ilal al-Sharā'i*', Vol. 2, p. 394.

<sup>32</sup> Tamimi Amadi, Abdul Wahid, *Ghurar al-Hikam*, p. 95.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

is not justifiable with reason and hence should not be learned as it will lead one astray.

It should be noted that the vast amount of worldly sciences is not related to religious sciences. At the same time, these sciences do not conflict the dictates of our mind and intellect. For example, pharmacy, biology, aerospace, microbiology, nuclear engineering, and tens of other fields are all sciences that upon first look, one would think they are not linked to mankind's happiness in the next world. Thus, what is Islam's stance on these sciences?

As we have discussed thus far, the purpose of creation in Islam is to attain happiness in this world and the next. Based on this idea, any sort of knowledge that is sought with the intention of reaching this fulfilling happiness is recommended in Islam. For instance, consider an individual who is on the pathway to learning medicine. If this individual recognizes the brilliance of the human body and through that reflects upon the greatness of its Creator, and if he uses his knowledge to serve mankind, this type of knowledge will lead him to happiness in this world and the next. However, if pursuing medicine leads him to become a self-centered person or arrogant; or if it makes him feel superior to others and draws him into a path where he thinks about the destruction of mankind, then this knowledge is the grounds for his misery in both worlds.

By looking at this matter from another perspective, bearing in mind other Islamic advice, we can see which fields and sciences are approved in the Islamic framework. For example, caring for people and solving their problems greatly pleases God the Exalted, and it results in His generous reward. With regards to this, Imam Sadiq (a) has been narrated to have quoted God the Exalted:

الخلق عيالي فأحبهم إلى أطفئهم بهم و أسعاهم في حوائجهم

My people are like my family, therefore I love the most he who has been the kindest towards them and has worked the hardest to resolve their problems.<sup>34</sup>

Taking this criterion into account, we can say for instance if pharmaceuticals is pursued in order to provide medicine for patients, then it is a science approved and recommended in Islam. However if this science is practiced with the intention of destroying people's lives, then this science has truly deviated one from the path to happiness. If nuclear sciences are learned for the sake of contributing to the improvement of man, it is approved by Islam; however, if it is pursued with the intention of making nuclear weapons and serving as a means for mass destruction, then it is definitely unacceptable in Islam.

### *Islam and the status of those who seek knowledge*

We can understand the status of one who seeks knowledge from the accounts Islam gives about such a person. The Holy Prophet has said, *"All creatures - be it the fish in the sea, the insects in the ground, and the mammals on land - seek forgiveness for the seeker of knowledge."*<sup>35</sup>

He has also stated, "He who sets out to seek knowledge and succeeds in acquiring it will be given two rewards from God, and if he is unable to acquire that knowledge, one reward will be given to him."<sup>36</sup>

The Holy Prophet has discussed the value of seeking knowledge in many other of his statements. He addresses Abu Dharr al-Ghifāri with the following:

Oh Abu Dharr, whoever leaves his home with the intention of seeking knowledge, for every step he takes God will give him the reward of one of the Prophets and

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<sup>34</sup> Kulayni, Muhammad bin Ya'qub, *al-Kāfi*, Vol. 2, p. 199.

<sup>35</sup> Shaykh Mufid, *Amāli*, p. 29.

<sup>36</sup> Bayhaqi, Ahmad bin Husayn, *al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, Vol. 10, p. 119.

for every word he hears or writes, a city will be built for him in the heavens; and God, the angels, and the Prophets love the seekers of knowledge.<sup>37</sup>

He has also said, “He who seeks knowledge is like a person who fasts during the day and stands in prayer at night; and the knowledge he seeks is better than giving charity in the amount of Mt. Abu Qubays in the way of God.”<sup>38</sup>

The Holy Prophet has also said the following about the virtue of seeking knowledge: “For he who seeks knowledge, heaven seeks him.”<sup>39</sup>

The importance of seeking knowledge is such that religious leaders have divided people into three groups: educators, seekers of knowledge, and the shavings on water.<sup>40</sup> The “shavings” are those who have no ability on their part and it is the water that will direct them from one direction to another. An ignorant person who does not reflect and think is dependent on a wave, and is taken in a new direction every day. Imam Sadiq (a) has said the following to one of his companions about this matter: “Either be a scholar or teacher or one who loves knowledge.”<sup>41</sup> Imam Ali (a) has also said, “Honour in this world and salvation in the next is for he who seeks knowledge.”<sup>42</sup>

Naturally, seeking knowledge is accompanied with financial difficulties. While acknowledging this fact, Islam gives the seeker of knowledge such value that it ensures his day-to-day provisions from

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<sup>37</sup> Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 1, p. 178.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 184.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 10, p. 162.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 34; Shaykh Saduq, *al-Khisāl*, Vol. 1, p. 123.

<sup>41</sup> Kalini, Muhammad bin Ya'qub, *al-Kāfi*, Vol. 1, p. 199.

<sup>42</sup> *Ghurar al-Hikam*, p. 43.

God. The Holy Prophet says, “God will guarantee the daily sustenance of he who seeks knowledge.”<sup>43</sup>

The state of affairs and position of the seeker of knowledge during death and in heaven is another subject that has been explored by previous religious leaders. The Holy Prophet has stated, “One who dies while acquiring knowledge dies the death of a martyr.”<sup>44</sup>

He has also said, “When death approaches a person while he is seeking knowledge, he will meet God where he and the Prophet are only one level apart.”<sup>45</sup>

Indeed, the great status of the seeker of knowledge confirms the importance of knowledge and acquiring it. The Holy Prophet spoke of the status of he who seeks knowledge where he says, “The seeker of knowledge is the seeker of mercy; the seeker of knowledge is the pillar of Islam and his reward will be given with the Prophets.”<sup>46</sup>

He has also said, “He who searches for a door of knowledge so that he can keep Islam alive, there will be only one rank difference between him and the Prophet in heaven.”<sup>47</sup>

In Islam, the seeker of knowledge should not feel superior when he has acquired knowledge. Imam Ali (a) has given the following advice to the seekers of knowledge:

Refrain from learning knowledge for the following four reasons: 1) for showing your self-importance and superiority to scholars. 2) To argue with the ignorant and uneducated. 3) To use it as a means to boast and show-off

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<sup>43</sup> Muttaqi Hindi, Ali bin Hisam al-Deen, *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, Vol. 10, p. 139; Payandeh, Abul Qasim, *Nahj al-Fasāhah*, p. 742.

<sup>44</sup> Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 1, p. 186.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 186; Muttaqi Hindi, Ali bin Hisam al-Deen, *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, Vol. 10, p. 160.

<sup>46</sup> Muttaqi Hindi, Ali bin Hisam al-Deen, *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, Vol. 10, p. 141.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 161.

in a gathering. 4) Or to use it for drawing the masses to yourself in order to attain a position, management, or rank...<sup>48</sup>

Furthermore, the Holy Prophet has said, “The smell of heaven will not reach he who seeks knowledge in order to boast it to others or to argue and quarrel with the ignorant.”

Certainly, the seeker of knowledge has been praised and honored in such a way. It is for this reason that he carries a great responsibility. He who is the basis for the continuation of Islam and he who the spiritual existence of mankind lies in his hands. His intention and motive for seeking knowledge should be to guard the teachings of religion, to reach eternal bliss, and to show others its path.

### *The Status of Educators in Islam*

Islam has given special attention to the matter of teaching and education. It is obvious that when knowledge has been given such a high status in this religion, the status of teachers and instructors cannot be overlooked.

In account with the luminous verses of the Holy Qur'an, God was the first instructor of mankind:

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ

*He has created man; He has taught him speech (and intelligence). (55:3-4)*

In the Islamic worldview, the Prophets of God were all instructors and teachers for mankind. The Holy Qur'an considers one of their responsibilities as instructing and teaching:

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<sup>48</sup> Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 2, p. 31; Shaykh Mufid, *al-Irshād*, Vol. 1, p. 230.

كَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِيكُمْ رَسُولًا مِّنكُمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِنَا وَيُزَكِّيكُمْ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ  
الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُم مَّا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ

*A similar (favor have ye already received) in that We have sent among you a Messenger of your own, rehearsing to you Our Signs, and sanctifying you, and instructing you in Scripture and Wisdom, and in new knowledge. (2:151)*

In an interesting statement made by the Holy Prophet of Islam, he explains the status of teachers as the following: “Certainly God, the angels, and even the ants in their underground lair and the fish in the sea send their praise upon a teacher who teaches the good to people.”<sup>49</sup> He has also said, “The greatest charity and contribution is for someone to gain knowledge and then teach it to his brother.”<sup>50</sup> Additionally, the Holy Prophet said the following when talking about the status of the greatest men:

God is the most superior and I am the most superior amongst man and the most superior from amongst you is he who gains knowledge and then after provides it for the public.<sup>51</sup>

Imam Baqir (a), the fifth Shi‘a Imam, has said the following in this regard: “He who teaches a fraction of the truth to another individual, his reward is equivalent to one who has followed that truth in action.”<sup>52</sup>

Imam Sadiq (a), the sixth Shi‘a Imam, gave the following explanation about the reward of instructors: “The creatures on land and fish in the

<sup>49</sup> Muttaqi Hindi, Ali bin Hisam al-Deen, *Kanz al-Ummāl*, vol. 10, p. 145.

<sup>50</sup> Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 2, p. 25.

<sup>51</sup> Muttaqi Hindi, Ali bin Hisam al-Deen, *Kanz al-Ummāl*, vol. 10, p. 151.

<sup>52</sup> Ibn Shu‘bah Harrani, Hasan, *Tuhaf al-Uqūl*, p. 297; Kulayni, Muhammad bin Ya‘qub, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, p. 35; Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 2, p. 19.

sea and every small and big in the skies and on ground seek forgiveness for he who teaches the good.”<sup>53</sup>

Conversely, those who have knowledge but hide it and deprive others access to it have been severely condemned. The Holy Prophet has said, “All creatures, even the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, curse he who conceals knowledge.”<sup>54</sup>

Verily the message of Islam was for all intellectuals of the world. The Prophet says, “Any individual who possess a beneficial and valuable knowledge and conceals it, on the Day of Judgment God will tie a chain of fire around his neck.”<sup>55</sup>

Islam has placed a great burden upon the shoulders of students, which reveals the important status of teachers. Pertaining to this subject matter, Imam Sajjad (a) has made an everlasting statement to all students with regards to the rights of teachers and instructors:

And the right of the one who instructs you and teaches you is to honor him, to respect his meetings, to listen well to his words, to be responsive to him, and to help him (for it is to your benefit) so that he is able to teach you what you are in need of being taught; by freeing your mind for him [for listening to his words], to utilize your understanding for him, to listen to him with a purified heart, and to fix your eyes on him by means of abandoning leisure and diminishing lust. And you should know that regarding what he teaches you, you are responsible to pass on his knowledge to the ignorant. Therefore, you must properly deliver the knowledge given to you from your teacher to the ignorant, not cheat

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<sup>53</sup> Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 2, p. 17; Saffar, Muhammad bin Hasan, *Basā'ir al-Darjāt*, p. 24;

<sup>54</sup> Muttaqi Hindi, Ali bin Hisam al-Deen, *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, vol. 10, p. 190.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

him in his mission, and to carry out his mission by delivering it.<sup>56</sup>

In another narration from Imam Sajjad (a), he has said:

Your teacher's right over you is that you should not raise your voice above his; when someone asks him a question, you should not answer and allow him to do so; do not talk to others or backbite in his presence; if someone speaks ill of him, defend him and hide his faults, speak of his good qualities; distance yourself with his enemies and do not make enemies from his friends. If you do these, the angels will be your witness that you did what was required of you and that you obtained knowledge only for God the Glorified and not to please others.<sup>57</sup>

### *The Status of Scholars in Islam*

In a school of thought where knowledge and learning have a high status, it is natural for the scholars to be given the same standing. On multiple occasions, the Holy Qur'an has commended scholars upon their greatness and has placed them above the believers:

يَرْفَعُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ

*God will rise up, to (suitable) ranks (and degrees), those of you who believe and who have been granted (mystic) Knowledge. (58:11; 30:56)*

<sup>56</sup> Ibn Shu'bah Harrani, Hasan, *Tuhaf al-'Uqoul*, p. 260.

<sup>57</sup> Shaykh Saduq, *Amāli*, p. 369.

According to this verse, those who have obtained and hold knowledge about God the Exalted, without a doubt outrank those who have simply settled to having faith in Him.<sup>58</sup>

At times, putting forth the name of scholars, along with His and the angels' name, God the Exalted shows that they alone pledge to the oneness of God:

شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُو الْعِلْمِ قَانِمًا بِالْقِسْطِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ  
الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

*There is no god but He: That is the witness of God, His angels, and those endued with knowledge, standing firm on justice. There is no god but He, the Exalted in Power, the Wise. (3:18)*

In other verses, it is shown and made clear to the Holy Prophet that it is the scholars who know what is revealed to you; that it is the truth and is from God:

وَيَرَى الَّذِينَ أُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَيَهْدِي إِلَى صِرَاطٍ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ

*And those to whom knowledge has come see that the (Revelation) sent down to thee from thy Lord - that is the Truth, and that it guides to the Path of the Exalted (in might), Worthy of all praise. (34:6)*

In Islam, where scholars and students carry out the same responsibilities and mission as the Prophets to guide the people, they

<sup>58</sup> Tabataba'i, Sayyid Muhammad Husayn, *al-Mizān*, Vol. 19, p. 188.

are considered to be the inheritors of the Prophets,<sup>59</sup> seeing that the Prophet has stated the following: “Scholars and students are the illumination on earth, and the successors of prophets and my inheritors.”<sup>60</sup>

In another statement, the Holy Prophet explains the specifics of how scholars succeed the Prophets. He says, “He who welcomes and greets scholars, has greeted me; he who visits a scholar, has visited me; and he who accompanies a scholar, has accompanied and has become my companion, and he who is a companion of mine, it is as if he is accompanying God.”<sup>61</sup>

The Holy Prophet said the following statement to Imam Ali (a) when comparing a scholar and a worshipper (*‘ābid*): “The sleep of a scholar is greater and more valuable than that of a worshipper. Oh Ali, a two *rak’ah*<sup>62</sup> of prayer made by a scholar is more valuable than seventy *rak’ah* of a worshipper.”<sup>63</sup>

Imam Baqir (a) has also said, “A scholar whose knowledge is used is greater than the worship of seventy-thousand worshippers.”<sup>64</sup>

In other words, a scholar is not only beneficial for himself. His knowledge is made available to others and they are able to make use of it. On the contrary, the prayer of one who worships has no gain or benefit for others and is only benefitting himself. It is based on this idea that religious leaders have explained the superiority of scholars over worshippers as such:

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<sup>59</sup> Kulayni, Muhammad bin Ya’qub, *al-Kāfi*, Vol. 1, p. 32; Shaykh Saduq, *Amāli*, p. 10; Qazwini, Muhammad bin Yazid, *Sunan of Ibn Mājah*, Vol. 1, p. 81; Sijistani, Sulayman bin Ash’ath, *Sunan Abu Dawūd*, Vol. 2, p. 175; Tirmidhi, Muhammad bin ‘Isā, *Sunan of al-Tirmidhi*, Vol. 4, p. 153.

<sup>60</sup> Muttaqi Hindi, Ali bin Hisam al-Deen, *Kanz al-‘Ummāl*, Vol. 10, p. 134.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 10, p. 170.

<sup>62</sup> The prescribed bowing movement and words followed by Muslims during prayer.

<sup>63</sup> Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 2, p. 25.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 18.

When Satan circulates and introduces false innovations amongst the people, is it the scholar who enlightens the people and warns them about it. On the other hand, one who performs much worship is occupied with his prayer and does not recognize the false and immoral innovation, and for the same reason does not warn people about it.<sup>65</sup>

The superiority of a scholar over a worshipper will be made known to all in the hereafter. Imam Sadiq (a) has said the following about this matter:

When the Day of Resurrection approaches, God will call forth the scholar and worshipper. When standing before God, the worshipper will be told, 'Go to heaven.' However the scholar will be told, 'Stand here and take those you have trained with you to heaven as well.'<sup>66</sup>

In Islam, a scholar holds such a high and grand status that just as looking at the *Ka'bah*<sup>67</sup> is considered a form of worship by the Holy Qur'an, gazing upon a scholar is similarly regarded as worship.<sup>68</sup>

The religious leaders have also given ample advice about comportment in the presence of a scholar and they have compared and likened the respect one has towards a scholar to that which one must have towards God.<sup>69</sup> Respect for scholars has been advised to such an extent that Imam Sadiq (a) has said, "Respecting a scholar makes God happy and disrespecting a scholar is what causes God's displeasure."

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 24; Nayshaburi, Muhammad bin Hasan, *Rawdah al-Wā'izin*, Vol. 1, p. 12.

<sup>66</sup> Muttaqi Hindi, Ali bin Hisam al-Deen, *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, Vol. 10, p. 256; Shaykh Saduq, *'Ilal al-Sharā'i'*, Vol. 2, p. 394;

<sup>67</sup> The house of pilgrimage and the most sacred site in Islam.

<sup>68</sup> Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 1, p. 195; Shaykh Saduq, *Man lā Yahduruhu al-Faqih*, Vol. 2, p. 205.

<sup>69</sup> Tamimi Amadi, Abdul Wahid, *Ghurar al-Hikam*, p. 47.

Imam Ali (a) has said, “When you see a scholar, accompany him.”<sup>70</sup> Imam Baqir (a) has also said, “When you are sitting in the presence of a scholar, be greedy to hear more than to speak, and the same way you learn to listen well, learn to speak well, and do not ever cut his words short.”<sup>71</sup>

### ***Knowledge with action***

As discussed thus far, in Islam, knowledge and learning has purpose and meaning when there is a practical and pragmatic message followed by wisdom and intuitive knowledge. In other words, knowledge that is most valuable is that which can be seen through one’s actions and is the grounds for transcending to the ethics of humankind. For this reason, religious leaders have come to the conclusion that the outcome of knowledge and learning is the gnosis of God (*ma’rifah*), sincerity in actions (*ikhlas*), worship, humility and modesty, patience, fortitude, and sense of responsibility before God and his creations.<sup>72</sup>

In Islam, a scholar whose knowledge leads him to arrogance and self-pride and a sense of superiority above others is nothing more than an ignorant person. A scholar whose knowledge is not made available to people, which distances between him, God, and God’s creations, and is only pursued for material gains, is not considered a scholar. Imam Ali (a) states the following:

The highest level of knowledge is humility, modesty, and its outcome is virtue and God-consciousness (*taqwā*), refraining from carnal desires and impulses (the whims of the soul), supporting the truth, abstaining from sin, affection towards your brother in faith, hearing the words of scholars

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 2, p. 43.

<sup>72</sup> Tamimi Amadi, Abdul Wahid, *Ghurar al-Hikam*, p. 45, 64, 153, 190.

and accepting it, and preventing yourself from revenge when you are in power...”<sup>73</sup>

The Holy Qur’an says the following about scholars whose knowledge can be seen through their actions:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ إِذَا يُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ يَخِرُّونَ لِلْأَذْقَانِ سُجَّدًا

*...it is true that those who were given knowledge beforehand, when it is recited to them, fall down on their faces in humble prostration. (17:107)*

According to this verse, the true scholars are those who have delved into and comprehended the greatness of God and have bowed their heads before Him.

In truth, as previously explained in more depth, the character-building religion of Islam’s goal is to assist people to reach happiness and tranquility in this world and the next. This cannot be achieved if one does not learn the path to happiness and does not carry it out in his or her actions. Therefore, the state of knowing only composes half of the path to happiness and the other half is to carry out that knowledge through your actions. Based on this understanding, the Holy Prophet has said, “A scholar is he who carries out what he knows in his actions.”<sup>74</sup>

Imam Ali (a) has also said, “Knowledge is a source of guidance when one carries it out in his actions.”<sup>75</sup>

In the culture of the Holy Qur’an – where the objective in its revelation is to guide mankind – not every individual is worthy of the title ‘scholar.’ People who are honored with this title are those whose

<sup>73</sup> Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 75, p. 6.

<sup>74</sup> Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 73, p. 373.

<sup>75</sup> Tamimi Amadi, Abdul Wahid, *Ghurar al-Hikam*, p. 152.

actions are in sync with their knowledge and are taking steps towards happiness. The Holy Qur'an describes the true scholars as such:

إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ

*Those truly fear God, among His Servants, who have knowledge. (35:28)*

In other words, from amongst all people, it is the scholars that are raised to the great status of being in fear; meaning the fear of falling short in carrying out their responsibilities along with realizing the greatness of the Lord. This state of being “in fear” is the birth of a journey through the signs upon the horizons and souls, being aware of the knowledge and power of the Lord, and the purpose of creation.

An additional conclusion that can be drawn from this statement is that true scholars are those who have a strong sense of duty and are people of knowledge, not people of talk. If knowledge is not put into action, it results in the lack of being fearful and conscious of God and as we saw in the aforementioned verse: if an individual is not God-fearing and God-conscience, then he is not of the scholars and the knowledgeable.

This truth has also been narrated by Imam Sajjad (a), the fourth Shi'a Imam, as follows:

Knowledge and action are two close friends. He who knows God is fearful of Him, and this fear is what leads him to act according to God's decree. The knowledgeable and their followers are those who have gotten to know God well and take action for Him, and show love and affection towards Him.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Kulayni, Muhammad bin Ya'qub, *al-Kāfī*, Vol. 8, p. 16; Shaykh Mufid, *Amāli*, p. 202.

In the explanation of the aforesaid verse, Imam Sadiq (a) says, “What is meant by scholar is an individual whose actions are in sync with his words; he whose actions and words are not synchronized is not a scholar.”<sup>77</sup>

### **Conclusion**

According to the beliefs held by the religious leaders in Islam, the knowledge of a scholar is needed and it is beneficial to the people when he acts according to it. It is because of this point that people are wary of being led by a scholar who is worldly-minded and materialistic.<sup>78</sup> Imam Sadiq (a) has said. “It is when a scholar practices what he preaches that his words will affect the hearts of people.”<sup>79</sup>

Upon looking at this matter from another angle, scholars are the leaders in society. For this reason, their faults and lapse in judgment and actions will lead people to do the same. Imam Ali (a) has said the following in this regard: “A scholar’s mistakes are like a ship being punctured; it will eventually cause him and others to drown.”<sup>80</sup>

Although the verses in the Qur’an and the words of our leaders have illustrated a high status for our scholars, a firm and severe warning has been given to scholars who lack in action. The Holy Prophet has said, “The dwellers of the hellfire are bothered by the smell of a scholar who did not practice what he knew.”<sup>81</sup> Imam Baqir (a) has also said, “On the Day of Resurrection, the one who will be the most regretful is he who advocated and preached about certain actions, but acted contrary to that.”<sup>82</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 2, p. 59.

<sup>78</sup> Kulyni, Muhammad bin Ya’qub, *al-Kāfi*, Vol. 1, p. 47.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 44.

<sup>80</sup> Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 2, p. 58.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 37.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 30.

Thus, based on the logic of the Qur'an, 'scholars' are not people whose heads simply play the role of a chest that holds snippets of peoples' sayings and beliefs, who hold a heap of formulas and rules, their tongues merely tools for communicating these, and their resting place is in the schools, universities, and libraries. Rather, they are that group of intellectuals where the light of knowledge and learning has encompassed their entire existence and has radiated, allowing them to see the light of God, faith, and piety. They have a strong sense of duty before their responsibilities and are the most dedicated people.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Makarem Shirazi, Naser, *Tafsir Nemuneh*, Vol. 18, pp. 246-248.

# HADITH AL-KISĀ: THE NARRATION OF THE CLOAK

GHOLAM HOSSEIN MASOUD<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** The *Tradition of the Cloak*, or *Hadith al-Kisa'*, is a narrative of an incident where the Prophet Muhammad assembled Hasan, Husayn, Ali, and Fatima under his cloak. Followers of the school of Ahlul Bayt customarily hold meetings in which this tradition is recited. *The Tradition of the Cloak* introduces the pure servants of God to the people of the world such that if the public follow them, they would live ideal lives and achieve perfection. By pondering over the great personalities mentioned in this tradition,<sup>2</sup> as well as the prevalence of this behaviour in society, a pure, wise, and noble culture associated with extreme love, respect, modesty, and courtesy towards one other can be established.

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## *Introduction*

Ahl al-Kisā, or the People of the Cloak, refers to Prophet Muhammad, his daughter Lady Fatima, his cousin and son-in-law, Imam Ali, and his grandsons Hasan and Husayn. Narrated by Jabir ibn Abdullah al-

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<sup>2</sup> This noble tradition, which is generally printed at the end of the book *Mafātih al-Jinān* was not included in this book by the author i.e. Shaykh Abbas Qummi. It was added by the publishers of this book later, citing from the book *'Awālim* by a valid document from Jabir ibn 'Abdullah Ansari.

Ansari, this hadith is widely accepted by Shi'a Muslims. It is one of the foundations of the Shi'i conception of Imamate, which states that the patrilineal descendants of Muhammad have a special divine spiritual leadership over the Muslim community. The Ahl al-Kisā, along with their descendant Imams, form the Shi'i definition of Ahlul Bayt or the People of the House, a term used to designate the family of Muhammad. This paper presents a line-by-line commentary of the tradition.

***“Quoted from Lady Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet...”***

Such a narration and quotation of what has happened and the expression of history follows a specific style more customary in the method of expressing narratives and traditions of the Ahlul Bayt. When something is quoted, the narrator is initially mentioned to assure readers or listeners of the authenticity of the tradition, or so that the narrator can generally be known. Since it is the beloved Lady Fatima who is the narrator, this tradition is considered special.

***He [Jabir ibn Abdullah Ansari] said, “I heard Fatima stating...”***

The fact that the name of Lady Fatima is the first name mentioned in the tradition - and is not narrated by Imam Ali, Hasan, or Husayn who are impeccable leaders of the Muslim nation - indicates her active presence in communicating the message. A young infallible woman who is approved by the *ummah* (Muslim community) has been chosen to narrate it.

***“One day, my father, the Messenger of God, entered my house.”***

The Messenger of Allah's entrance into the house of his daughter and son-in-law reveals his deep regard for kinship. Indeed, kinship relations are highly valued in Islam, and the Prophet modeled this connection. Thus, with this narration, people are taught to respect those who are

younger than they and to be humble and to visit them. Moreover, the Prophet's entrance into his son-in-law's house reveals his high regard for him and that we should not deem our own son-in-law a stranger.

The words 'One day' indicate that the Prophet's visit was not on a special occasion. It was not on one of the great Eids or on a Friday. The Prophet's visit to his daughter on a regular day teaches the addressee that performing regard for kinship does not necessarily involve awaiting an occasion to visit our beloved ones. Thus, it is praiseworthy to accustom ourselves to this good deed.

***Then he said, "Peace be upon you, O Fatima." I replied, "Peace be upon you."***

Several words of advice can be derived here:

1. When arriving to anyone's home, we should humbly request peace for them, even if they are younger than us. Although a younger person is usually expected to initiate a salam to his or her elders, upon walking into a person's home, the visitor is expected to greet the members of the house with a decent salam.
2. Whereas it is recommended for a person to initiate a greeting, it is mandatory for the addressee to reply. As mentioned in a narration, there are ten rewards for the person who initiates the greeting, and one reward for the person who replies.
3. The feeling of honouring the addressee through this salam brings about kindness and harmony amongst one another so much so that if there had once been a ground for resentment, it would be removed.
4. The salam is an introduction to intimate and amicable conversations.

5. The salam leads the addressee to respond sympathetically.<sup>3</sup>

***He said, “I feel some fatigue in my body.”***

When ill or tired, the home is the first place to take shelter in while it is even better to retreat to one’s child’s home. When going through a period of hardship, our refuge and shelter should be our homes, so that when there are problems, we can solve them among ourselves. In today’s world, retreating to indecent places where alcoholic beverages are served when one is tired, such as cabarets and bars, is commonplace. This unfortunate act has led to separating oneself from one’s family, resulting in destroying the warm familial atmosphere.

***Then I said, “I seek refuge from God, O father, from fatigue.”***

In reaction to such an expression of weakness, we usually say, “God forbid!” Lady Fatima’s reply to her great father is a decent way to handle this situation. She immediately deems the Almighty as the only refuge. It is as if she means to say, “I seek God’s refuge from the weakness which has occurred to you.” She remembers God first and utters His Name based on the declaration “I witness there is no god but the Unique God, Allah.”

From this we learn that Muslims have been advised to assign their commandments to God before anyone else. This reaction of Lady Fatima Zahra derives from the Qur’an: “*Soon you will remember what I tell you, and I entrust my affair to God. Indeed God is All-Seeing of His worshippers.*” (40:44)

***He said, “O Fatima, bring me a Yemeni cloak and cover me with it.”***

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<sup>3</sup> *Methods of Increasing Self-Esteem in Children and Juveniles.*

After she prays for him, the Prophet respectfully requests his daughter to cover him with a cloak.

***“And I looked at him and saw his face glittering, like the full moon on the night of its fullness and perfection.”***

She describes the face of her father, revealing her utmost love for him and their intimate and mutual father-daughter relationship.

***“No more than a while passed when my child, Hasan, entered.”***

Here, Lady Fatima Zahra portrays the issue in a favorable and sweet manner that both explains the subject and attracts the listener eloquently. When Fatima wants to describe her son, she describes him using good words.

***And he greeted me saying “Peace be upon you, mother”. I said, “Peace be upon you, O delight of my eye and fruit of my heart.”***

Again, we see the respect displayed by a son to his mother. Moreover, when we consider the reply of Lady Fatima, we learn that it is so pleasing and passionate that it causes kindness and love to flow into the depth of man’s existence so that both sides brim with love and passion towards each other. Here, we see how a child should greet his mother, and in turn, how a mother lovingly responds.

The science of educational psychology and modern education reveals that respecting and honouring one’s children causes their personalities to develop, and growth of personality is a major factor in developing intelligence. Respecting children raises their self-esteem, which provides the ground and basis for their perception of life experiences. It

is thus an especially valuable and powerful force in providing the grounds for children to resist future problems.<sup>4</sup>

***Then he said, “O mother, I smell a pleasing scent as if it is the scent of my grandfather, the Messenger of God.”***

The fragrance of the Holy Prophet affected his grandson so much that when he smelled this fragrance at home, he immediately finds that his grandfather is present. Though still too young, the child uses extreme respect to honour his grandfather, as he uses the expression ‘The Messenger of God.’

***Then I said, “Yes, your grandfather is now under the cloak.” Then Hasan moved towards the cloak and said, “Peace be upon you O Holy grandfather, the Messenger of God. Would you please let me come sit with you under this cloak?”***

When Imam Hasan walks towards his grandfather, he greets him with a *salam* and respectfully requests his permission to enter.

***He said, “Peace be upon you O my child and the owner of my Pond. I have permitted you to enter.” Then he went under the cloak.***

The reply to his *salam* and the acceptance of his request is accompanied with respect and honour, just like the *salam* and the request themselves followed with, ‘Peace be upon you’. We know that greeting with a *salam* is recommended in Islam, but replying to it is compulsory. Yet, it is recommended that the reply be performed much better than the initiated *salam*. As we see, the Holy Prophet both replies to his grandchild’s greeting and treats him kindly and generously when he adds, “O my child and the owner of my Pond. I have permitted you.”

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<sup>4</sup> *The Methods of Increasing Self-Esteem in Children and Juveniles.*

Regarding some comments of the word ‘abundance’ in the holy Qur’an, the first verse of the chapter *Abundance* has been expressed by commentators that one of the streams and ponds in paradise is called *Abundance* from which the believers nourish themselves. As the Holy Prophet said in the narration of Thaḳalayn, “The Holy Qur’an and my Family will not separate from each other until, on the Day of Resurrection, they will join me at the pont.”<sup>5</sup>

*Not so long had passed when my child, Husayn, entered and said, “Peace be upon you, O my mother,” I answered, “Peace be upon you, O my son, delight of my eye and fruit of my heart.” He said, “O mother, I can smell a pleasing scent as if it is the scent of my grandfather, the Messenger of God.” I said, “Yes. Your grandfather and brother are under the cloak.” Then, Husayn approached it.*

Imam Husayn, resembles his older brother in behaviour and speech as both were raised in the same household. The fragrance of the Holy Prophet is apparently so clear that the second child finds the presence of his grandfather at his arrival through the fragrance of the Messenger of God.

Lady Fatima reveals her just and equal treatment of her sons as she replies using the same wording as she used for Hasan.

*And he said, “Peace be upon you, Oh my great grandfather. Oh he who has been authorized by God, would you please let me come under the cloak with you too?”*

At his arrival, Imam Husayn greets the Holy Prophet as his brother did. Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn’s greeting are similar, yet Imam Hasan uses the expression, ‘the Prophet of God’ whereas Imam Husayn says, ‘O he who has been authorized by God.’

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<sup>5</sup> *The Interpretation of Light*, Vol. 12, p. 611.

***Then he said, “Peace be upon you my child, the intercessor of my nation. I have permitted you.” Then, he came under the cloak.***

Prophet Muhammad’s reply to Imam Husayn’s greeting is similar to his reply to Imam Hasan. After giving his salam, once again he says ‘my child.’

When addressing a child by using expressions such as ‘my son,’ ‘my daughter,’ or ‘my child,’ a parent has expressed his utmost compassion and has attracted the attention of his child to the fact that he is adored by his or her parent(s).

After the greeting, the Holy Prophet permits him to come under the cloak. Instead of the reply, ‘O the owner of my Pond’ used for Imam Hasan, he says, ‘O the intercessor of my nation’ for Imam Husayn.

The science of educational psychology concludes that in order to instil confidence in our children, we should make an effort to express their good and prominent characteristics. We clearly and frequently observe this same point in the conduct of the Holy Prophet towards his two grandchildren, including this specific occasion.

***At the same time, Abul Hasan Ali ibn Abu Talib Imam Ali (a) approached and said, “Peace by upon you, Oh the daughter of the Messenger of God.”***

The entrance of Imam Ali to his house and his conduct towards his wife is important in that even his greeting is associated with perceptiveness when he says, “Peace be upon you O the daughter of the Messenger of God.” His greeting to his wife displays his utmost respect for her. He is also aware of and observes the fact that his wife is the daughter of the Holy Prophet. His love and respect for the Prophet is so much that he does not lose a single opportunity to respect her and mention her position.

Imam Ali, though a man of high status of holiness and dignity, precedes his wife in initiating his *salam*. Again, the emphasis initiating a greeting upon entering one's home is implied.

***Then I said, "Peace be upon you O father of Hasan and the Commander of Believers."***

Lady Fatima kindly replies in a manner that shows the respect they each have for one another. With such communication, extreme love and compassion will be established in the hearts of a couple and will remain forever.

Lady Fatima mentions two attributes: her husband's fatherhood and his being the Commander of Believers. Such expressions uttered in a respectful form bring about high spirits and hope to Imam Ali (a). Moreover, this style of address by a wife to her husband who has just arrived to the home is a lesson for couples on how to communicate with one another.

***Then he said "O Fatima."***

Though Lady Fatima has many titles such as *Zahra* (The Brilliant), *Siddiqah* (The Truthful), and *Taherah* (The Pure), her principal name in which her family and relatives use is *Fatima*, and Imam Ali addresses her as such.

***"I smell a fragrance with you as though it is the fragrance of my brother and cousin, the Messenger of God."***

Imam Ali smells the fragrance of his father-in-law once he enters his home. From this we understand that:

1. The Holy Prophet had a unique fragrance and it was well-known among his relatives. This fragrance belonged exclusively to him.

2. The expression ‘with you’ is indicative of a type of intimacy and cordiality of the husband towards his wife. Imam Ali wants to express his satisfaction with the presence of the Holy Prophet in his house. Yet, he attributes it to Lady Fatima. Otherwise, he would not have used the expression ‘with you.’
3. Such a welcome to both the presence of the Prophet and presence of his fragrance is to be noted. It is indicative of Imam Ali’s joy and happiness.
4. Here, when he intends to mention his holy presence, he talks of him so highly and intimately, at the same time, endearing him without exaggeration when saying, ‘My brother, my cousin, the Messenger of God.’ Through this way of mentioning his father-in-law, he has communicated intimacy.

***Then I said, “Yes, they are. He with your two children under the cloak.”***

Lady Fatima says “*your* two children” instead of, “*my* two children.” The possessive adjective “*your*” used by Lady Fatima in characterizing the children is indicative of honouring and magnifying the husband by the wife, and prioritizing the husband over herself in her expression. If she had said “*our* children,” such intent would not have been expressed.

***Then Ali turned to the cloak.***

It is interesting that it seems that no other issue or subject is as important to Imam Ali as visiting the Holy Prophet. Instead of engaging himself in relaxing or eating, he turns his face to his father-in-law, approaches him, and gives him his full attention and respect as a dignified son-in-law is expected to.

***And he said, “Peace be upon you O Messenger of God...”***

When Imam Ali faces the Holy Prophet, he precedes him in offering his salam. His greeting is indicative of the extreme satisfaction and happiness of a son-in-law's approach to his father-in-law as well as revealing his extreme respect to his guest, especially in uttering the Prophet's being 'The Messenger of God.'

***“Would you please let me be with you under the cloak?”***

Although Imam Ali is the owner of the house, and routinely, it is the guest that asks the host for permission to take action, he maintains the conduct of respectfully and humbly acknowledging his impeccable guest.

***He said, “Peace be upon you O my brother, my successor, my vicegerent, and the owner of my banner.”***

In addition to replying to Imam Ali's *salam*, he respects his own son-in-law by repetitively putting emphasis on Imam Ali's successorship after himself, by mentioning four attributes of his son-in-law:

- a) He first addresses Ali as his own brother. This attribute is indicative of the profound intimacy between him and the Imam.
- b) He calls Imam Ali his 'legatee.'
- c) He mentions Imam Ali as his successor.
- d) He calls Imam Ali 'the owner of my banner.'

The three attributes of 'legatee', 'successor' and 'owner of my banner' expressed by the highest heavenly creature and the last Prophet cannot be an exaggeration. It can be by itself a perfect evidence of the truthfulness of Imam Ali. The above-stated attributes can be mentioned as all the characteristics required by a successor. Even if he did not

mention them and if he merely addressed him as, for instance, “Dear Ali,” it would suffice. Yet, he states these attributes in order to express the extreme confidence he has in Imam Ali.

Meanwhile, this visit is a familial meeting. Yet, perhaps because the report of this visit is destined to be narrated in the form of this famous tradition, for peace of mind and cordial assurance, these attributes are remembered both in his reply to the Imam’s *salam* and at the beginning of this visit which is associated with the expression of satisfaction with visiting him.

***“I have permitted you.” Ali thus went with them under the cloak.***

The Prophet says, “I have permitted you.” This shows his appreciation of Imam Ali, since the permission is given without any hesitation. With the Prophet’s permission, Imam Ali comes under the cloak.

***Then I came near the cloak.***

Lady Fatima herself decides to come under the cloak after her family’s arrival. Prior to her husband’s arrival, she did not deem it decent to come under the cloak as she prioritizes him over herself. Let’s remember that Lady Fatima is herself the narrator of this tradition. Lady Fatima is the last person to have come under the cloak. One may say that the major host is Lady Fatima, for the arrival of the Prophet himself to this home was because she was present.

***And I said, “Peace be upon you O my dear father, O Messenger of God. Would you please let me be with you under the cloak?”***

Although there are others under the cloak, and this is Imam Ali’s house, Lady Fatima asks the Holy Prophet for permission. The guardianship of the Holy Prophet himself is prior to any other

guardianship, even to the husband's. She respects him with her decent words and asks for his permission prior to anyone else.

***He said, "Peace be upon you O my daughter, O part of my flesh. I have permitted you." I thus went with them under the cloak.***

The point observed in this expression is the way the Holy Prophet replies to Lady Fatima in which one mere salam does not suffice him. He also shows his great respect for his daughter in this simple reply. For expressing intimacy, love and passion, he says, "O my daughter" and "O part of my flesh". He does not use the exclamation "O" once. That is, not one "O" for both expressions. Yet, for any expression he uses to address Fatima Zahra, he applies one separate exclamation, "O". Meanwhile, we know well that when somebody addresses his daughter like this, calling her part of the flesh of his body, he intends to express his extreme love and passion to her. More importantly, when he says, "I verily permitted you", the adverb 'verily' is an emphasis on the permission, which is again indicative of intimacy, confidence and cordial assurance.

***Then after we all gathered under the cloak, my father, the Messenger of God, took both sides of the cloak, pointed to the sky with his right hand and said, "These are the true members of my family..."***

Expressing "the members of my family," the Holy Prophet intended to specify his family and exclude any other person who may want to be included in the family of the Prophet. We know that the Prophet had esoteric knowledge, and in many cases, he used to foresee the future. Thus, he presented the truthful path. With this in mind, the Prophet deprives other people whose conducts do not sufficiently deserve our considering them as members of the Prophet's family.

***"And these are my special people."***

The Prophet considering these members as “special” and excludes those who are incomparable to them from this circle.

***“Only these are supported by me.”***

This may mean that the Prophet intends to state that “O people, O my nation and O you who are coming, know that only these people deserve my special support.”

***Their flesh is my flesh and their blood is my blood.***

There are many subtleties in the wording of the expression of the Holy Prophet. It is as if he is saying, “For fear that you mistake others for them, or lest you underestimate them, know that these people are my own self.”

We know that first, no one uses such expressions for anybody, and secondly, he does not say so for mere cordiality. The fact that it is the Prophet saying this is important. He is perhaps foreseeing future events and intends to show the right path of God and we see the amount of respect he holds for his nation.

***Whatever causes them pain causes me pain, and whatever saddens them, saddens me.***

After the Prophet’s death, Lady Fatima was deprived of her right to the Fadak Garden<sup>6</sup>, Imam Ali was deprived his Imamate, Imam Hasan’s corpse was shot at and the Imam Husayn was martyred in Karbala.

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<sup>6</sup> A garden oasis located in Khaybar, a tract of land in northern Arabia now part of Saudi Arabia. Situated approximately thirty miles from Medina, Fadak was known for its water-wells, dates, and handicrafts. When the Muslims defeated the people of Khaybar at the Battle of Khaybar, the oasis of Fadak was part of the booty given to the Prophet Muhammad. Much before his death, he bequeathed it to Fatima. Upon Prophet Muhammad’s death, Lady Fatima declared her right to inherit Fadak as the estate of her father. The claim was rejected by the second caliph Abu Bakr. After realizing the detrimental consequences of Abu Bakr’s attempt to seize the land, Lady Fatima (s) delivered a sermon called “*The Sermon of Fadak.*”

These events show why the Holy Prophet has greatly stressed on their rightfulness, and why the *Narration of the Cloak* is so significant.

The Prophet's statement gives us the criterion of right and wrong. Can a criterion more descriptive and more affirmative than this be found to know who is right and what is true in connection with the events after the departure of the Prophet and even at present?

Besides the criterion of truth and truthfulness, which can be found from the Holy Prophet's expression, it is a special expression of respect, love, and passion of the Holy Prophet for Imam Ali, Lady Fatima, Imam Hasan, and Imam Husayn.

***I am at war against those who wage war against them, and I am at peace with those who are at peace with them.***

Here, the Holy Prophet has provided a very clear criterion to the Muslims to conveniently distinguish truth from falsehood. The Prophet clarifies which side he is on, even though he was not alive during the Battle of Karbala or any other war waged against his household.

***I am the enemy of whoever shows enmity towards them, and I love whoever loves them.***

For anyone who has love for the Prophet's family, he or she will be favoured by the Prophet and in turn, favoured by God. The very basic point is that the enemies of Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husayn are the enemies of the Prophet and evidently those who are deemed the Prophet's enemies will be afflicted with depravity, adversity, and villainy. They are misguided and doomed in the afterlife.

***They are a part of me, and I am a part of them.***

This expression can perhaps be seen as the clearest and the most obvious indicator of truthfulness of and closeness to Imam Ali, Lady

Fatima, Imam Hasan, and Imam Husayn to the Holy Prophet. We know that Imam Ali was not the Prophet's son, yet the Prophet has counted him as belonging to himself in this tradition. Yet, more importantly, the Prophet has reckoned himself, who is the noblest of creatures, as being one of them, and we know that the Prophet does not exaggerate nor does he say anything ineffectual.

***Therefore bestow on me and them Your blessings, favours, mercies, forgiveness and consent.***

The reason why the Holy Prophet asks the Almighty for mercy upon himself and the Ahlul Bayt is that he intends to teach his followers that the five People of the Cloak are a part of each other and are all one. Here, the Holy Prophet has taught us how to pray, that is, to send salutations to the Prophet and his pure family, and ask for God's mercy and benediction for them.

***And remove from them filth and purify them with a thorough purification."***

It is known that when the Holy Prophet says such profound prayers for some people they must enjoy such merits, since his prayers are accepted. The People of the Cloak are thus impeccable, sinless, and profoundly pure. This will establish and communicate their truthfulness. That is, even if the Holy Prophet would not express those previous descriptions that he did express in their favour, the fact that they deserve such prayers by the noblest of creatures of the world reveals their authenticity.

***Then God said, "O my angels and the inhabitants of my heavens! I did not created any well-established sky, extended land, glowing moon, shining sun, revolving planet, flowing ocean, or moving ark except for the love of these five..."***

This expression is the peak of this narration. God has not revered any other creatures as highly as He does with these five. He has created all existence for the sake of these five ones. At the beginning of His discourse, God says to the angels who are themselves seen as His pure creatures and then to the other residents of the heavens and the earth that His love for these esteemed five is the reason for His creation of life.

God even addresses the people of today, the past, and the future to heed to these exemplars and follow their praiseworthy conduct and behaviour. Thus, if one wants success in this world and the next, we are instructed to love these five and view them as our leaders and guardians.

*... who are under this cloak.”*

Here, the five impeccable ones are officially presented. We know they are: Muhammad, Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husayn. This symbolic presentation can perhaps be better appreciated if one is familiar with drama and its effects on people’s mind.

*Then Gabriel, the trustworthy, asked...*

Gabriel’s attribute of being ‘trustworthy’ is not the Holy Prophet’s personal statement because what the Prophet utters is a declaration of God Himself. The communicator is trustworthy. The Holy Qur’an is God’s direct statement.

*... “O Lord, who are those under the cloak?” The All-Mighty and Majestic Lord answered, “They are the Family of the Prophet.*

Because disagreements exist as to who the Family of the Prophet are, they are thus clearly specified in this narration.

*... and the base of the Message.*

‘The base’ can perhaps be interpreted as where the core of the Message of Prophet Muhammad can be found. Interestingly ‘messenger-ship’ is used here, whereas ‘prophecy’ was previously used. We know that the Holy Prophet was both a prophet and a messenger, each of which have its own definitions. Yet here, both have been used for this family. In order for the prophecy and messengership to continue from Prophet Adam to Prophet Muhammad, reliable models and exemplars are presented.

***They are Fatima, her father, her husband, and her sons.”***

This expression is unique in that it centralizes Lady Fatima. The Holy Prophet is the noblest of creatures, with no one superior to him. Yet, it is the name of Lady Fatima which is the axis, and the other four impeccable men are mentioned around her name. We also know that one of her nicknames was *umm-u abihā*, or ‘Mother of her Father’ which portrays the magnitude of Lady Fatima’s position.<sup>7</sup>

From this tradition, the status that the clear faith of Islam has held for women can be deduced, and this is perhaps a reply to those who have a disdainfully low impression of women’s role.

***Then Gabriel said, “O Lord, would you please allow me to descend onto the earth to be the sixth of them?” Then the Lord said, “Yes. I have permitted you.” Then, Gabriel descended.***

Being chosen as the sixth of the five holy lights portrays Gabriel’s status. This reminds us of Gabriel’s trustworthiness and special spiritual station. The Holy Qur’an which we hold in our hands has reached us through two trustworthy ones: Gabriel, the Trustworthy, the one who directly communicated with God, and the Prophet, who both communicates the word of God and is trustworthy. The Prophet was

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<sup>7</sup> For example, see *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 43, p. 19.

well-known for his trustworthiness before prophethood and Gabriel has been quoted as being trustworthy several times. This indicates that the word of God in the Holy Qur'an is a direct speech of God Himself.

***And Gabriel said "Peace be upon you, O Messenger of God, the Highly Supreme Lord extends His salam (peace) upon you.***

Here, the status of *salam* and greeting upon others performed both by praiseworthy people and the angels are known, and it is learnt that greeting one another is a good act not only among human beings but also for relations between Angel Gabriel and the noblest of creatures of the world, the Prophet. More importantly, this act of *salam* performed by God Himself who is remembered in this event using the attributes 'very highly ranked' and 'the Most Supremely High.' God is greeting upon His slave. This communicates the importance of both the Creator and of this special creature, and the importance of greeting others with a *salam* as well.

***And He expresses His special salutation and honor to you.***

In the description of the previous point, we noticed that God bestowed his *salam* upon the Holy Prophet of Islam through Gabriel. The *salam* is a special and specific one, communicated only to a servant who is the noblest of His creatures. More importantly, the *salam* is associated with the expression of salutation and respect, that is, special respect and holding special virtue for the Holy Prophet of Islam.

If we study *The Supplication of Sha'baniyyah* quoted from the fourth Shi'a Imam, Imam Zayn ul-Abidin, and look at the meaning of each of its expressions which dominantly describes the virtues of the Prophet Muhammad, we will partially find the status and magnificence of the Holy Prophet's position. Thus it is not surprising that God bestows such a special *salam* upon our Holy Prophet through Gabriel, the trustworthy angel of revelation.

***And the Almighty says to you [the Holy Prophet], ‘I did not create the extended land, glowing moon, shining sun, revolving planet, flowing ocean, or moving ark except for your sake and for your love.’***

This statement of the Glorified God is so great that a reader will find himself surprised before it. When God says He has created the universe for the sake of their existence, we ask ourselves if anyone can be so great in the eyes of God. Yet, in the above expression, God refers to not only the Prophet, but all five members of the Cloak, which include Imam Ali, Lady Fatima, Imam Hasan, and Imam Husayn.

Perhaps the Supreme Lord has separately mentioned the sky, the earth, the moon, the sun, the galaxy, and the sea to state prominent samples of His creation, and every wise man knows that each of these is an ocean of God’s power, magnificence and might. Yet, these are not comparable to the People of the Cloak. Here, of course, the priority of spirituality over materiality can be seen. The galaxy, earth, sky, sea, and so forth are prominent samples of God’s creation. Yet, they are among the manifestations which are not reckoned as spiritual. The five Ones of the Family of the Cloak, however, simultaneously enjoy a material existence, and something which others lack, i.e., spirituality.

***And God allowed me to join you under the cloak. Would you please permit me, O Messenger of God?”***

God has permitted Angel Gabriel, the trustworthy, to come under the cloak (with the Family of the Holy Prophet). We know that God does whatsoever He wishes. He permits everybody and everything settles in its place. Yet, for respect towards the presence of the Holy Prophet - even though the Glorified God has permitted him – Angel Gabriel asks the Holy Prophet himself to also let him come under the cloak.

This action once again indicates the dignity and status of our esteemed Prophet, both with God and with the angels. Yet it is still a moral

lesson and an exemplar for life on how to socialize with and observe the status of others.

***Then the Messenger of God said, “And peace be upon you O the trustee of God’s Revelation. Yes, I allow you.” Then Gabriel joined us under the cloak. He thus said to my father, “God has revealed to you saying, “Allah only desires to keep away uncleanness from you, O people of the House, and to purify you a thorough purification.”***

Gabriel is willing to be a part of this group and his request for permission to enter under the cloak shows this. At the same time, Gabriel has been the driving force of this special mission. He is ordered to announce that God has stated that He will remove any impurity from the Family of the Prophet and bestow on them a thorough purification.

We know that God possesses the knowledge of the future and is fully aware of everyone’s behaviour and actions, their intentions and what they will succeed in doing or fail to do. Thus, God has known from the very beginning of His creation as to who His best creatures are. He therefore created existence for the sake of the Family of the Prophet.

Meanwhile, He knows that they will not commit sins since they proved to be true servants of God. God Himself knew that no one will perform the duty of His obedience and servitude as well as these five. This is why He purified them in a special way.

The Prophet’s family’s conduct in obeying God after his death is a very clear implication of the conduct of those who are included in the verse, *“God has verily willed to remove any impurity off you, the Family of the Prophet, and purify you with a great purification”* (33:33).

God knows every individual’s capacity and He creates them according to His knowledge of the future. He bestows or does not bestow some things upon them and creates them. Thus, even if He had not bestowed

His special inerrancy upon the fourteen Infallibles, they would not have committed any sin, and would not fail to display true servitude to God. Having the knowledge of such a reality, God bestows His special infallibility and purity upon them.

We know that God exposed Prophet Joseph to major trials based on His knowledge of the future, and that Prophet Joseph successfully passed them in high spirits. Joseph deserved to be a prophet. God knew that such a man would be exposed to committing a sin in the future and yet he would refrain from it. God has thus willed from the very beginning to make Joseph a prophet, and here is where the difference between man and angels becomes apparent. Man can, but does not, commit sins. This is called *taqwā* or God-wariness.

***Then the Prophet said, “By the Lord who appointed me as a true Prophet and has chosen me as holding communion to convey the message.***

The Holy Prophet swears in the above-mentioned expression, and we know that the Infallibles swear only on important issues.

***Whenever the tale of this gathering of us is mentioned in an assembly of the people of the earth in which a group of our adherents and lovers are present, the (divine) mercy shall certainly be poured down on them...***

This seems to be the single narrative that is mentioned for the Ahlul Bayt’s followers who gather to read this: they will indeed be showered with mercy.

***...And the angels will surround them...***

Angels are instinctively inclined to worship. It is known then that such a meeting, upon which the causality of the origin of creation and the

purification of the infallible family of the Prophet are spoken of, is a meeting of worship onto which angels descend.

*...asking forgiveness for them until they depart.”*

For those who make a habit of participating in gatherings that include worshipping God with prayers and invocations, as well as holding academic discussions that revere the Ahlul Bayt, angels seek forgiveness for them.

*Then Ali said, “Then, by God I swear it, we are saved...”*

Salvation is prosperity. The Holy Prophet quotes this reassuring report from God who displays His satisfaction with the servitude and purification of the Ahlul Bayt. And Imam Ali states, “By the Lord! We accomplished God’s salvation.” We should not forget that God assigns this privilege to each of them according to His knowledge of the future of each of the Infallibles. Each one of the Infallibles - the Holy Prophet, Imam Ali, Lady Fatima, Imam Hasan, and Imam Husayn - have been tested many times with many trials and have succeeded in patiently tolerating them as well as passing the tests with God’s satisfaction. Thus, Imam Ali rightfully expresses his satisfaction with the Prophet’s report.

*and so have our adherents. I swear it by the Lord of the Kaaba.”*

Interestingly, Imam Ali brims with satisfaction with the report of his own salvation, as though his worries are removed. Additionally, he expresses his satisfaction with the fact that their followers, the Shi‘a, also enjoy salvation.

In many historical scenes of the life of the Infallibles we witness their continuous concern for their followers and God has bestowed upon them the intercession of the umma to remove such concerns.

Here, too, from the last part of the abovementioned expression, we observe that Imam Ali expresses the nature of his previous concern and presents joy and happiness. This expression of *the Narration of the Cloak* is truly a great gift to the Shi'a. Yet, it is at the same time an important warning about appreciating our own values: we should follow the lifestyle of the Infallibles. We should be proponents of truth, and never commit sins or submit to despotism. We should follow justice and support the poor. In summary, we should act based on what has been mentioned as good deeds in the Chapter *The Age*, which is to "exhort one another to truth, exhort one another to endurance."

***Then the Prophet said, "O Ali! By the Lord who appointed me as the Messenger and has chosen me, by holding communion, to convey the Message, whenever the tale of this gathering of us is mentioned in an assembly of the people of the earth in which a group of our adherents and lovers are present and among them there is a distressed one, Almighty Allah shall certainly relieve him from distress, or if there is among them an aggrieved one, God shall certainly relive him from grief. Or if there is among them one who needs a request to be granted, the Almighty Allah shall certainly grant him his request..."***

Here, the Holy Prophet has taught us how to implore for help and express our request to God.

***No sad person will be found except that God removes his sadness.***

This part of the tradition is the concern of our esteemed Prophet about us. We should not feel sad when we are able to remember or mention God. The solution to your worries is that you should gather together and speak of truth and exhort one another to truth.

***And you will not find any one asking for a blessing unless God fulfils it.'***

The Shi'a and lovers of the Ahlul Bayt who participate in reading the Narration of the Cloak together are guaranteed to have their desires fulfilled by God. It seems that since such a meeting is the place for worship, it becomes a ground for His satisfaction and this causes a person's desire to be granted.

The more we participate at the meetings of good people, the more we will refrain from participating in the meetings of false doers. The solution presented in this tradition for avoiding false-doers is to participate at the meetings in which the virtues of the Ahlul Bayt are discussed instead of falsehood, backbiting, and accusation. Very evidently, discussions about the Ahlul Bayt encourage the angels' presence. God willing, they will descend onto it, and a meeting at which the angels are present is surely the place of worship and where prayers are accepted. Sin and felony have no room at such a meeting, and if they ever happen to find their way into it, they can generally be prevented through performing the injunctions of enjoining good and forbidding wrong (*amr bil ma'roof wal nahy an al-munkar*).

***Then Ali said, "Then, by Allah, we are saved and have become blissful in this world and the hereafter, and our followers are saved and became blissful, by the Creator of the Kaaba."***

Imam Ali was known for remembering his followers and lovers, as seen in many narrations in which there is news of good tidings for himself. Here, Imam Ali, who fears he may have not earned God's satisfaction with his actions, will be gladdened and satisfied when he learns that God has brought good tidings through Gabriel. In such cases, he remembers his followers and reveals his satisfaction of them. His satisfaction is emphasized in his repeated expression.

In this statement, God has been sworn twice, once at the beginning and once at the end of the statement.

### ***Conclusion***

The Tradition of the Cloak highly reveres the Ahlul Bayt with regards to their status before God, their infallibility, and their Imamate, or unique divine leadership over the Muslim community. Within this tradition is a wealth of admirable traits of love and courtesy that stem from perfect faith in the Almighty. As it introduces the impeccable servants of God, people are encouraged to ponder over their faith and the actions that derive from it, and as a result, emulate their actions to lead a faithful and fulfilling life.

# IMAMATE AND WILAYAH<sup>1</sup>

## PART IV

MOHAMMAD ALI SHOMALI<sup>2</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** It is necessary for people to have a leader and a guide who draws them nearer to righteousness and abandoning corruption. Having such a leader is a blessing and grace of God. In Shi'i Islam, the concept of Imamate is the necessity of having a leader who is appointed by God and will lead the ummah after the Prophet's death. The Imam surpasses the people in all admirable qualities such as piety, knowledge, courage, and wisdom. He must also be infallible (ma'soum) as this trait ensures that he is trusted, obeyed, and is capable of defending divine law. Thus, the Imam carries the role of both continuing the task of the Prophet in presenting true Islam as well as being a political leader. An Imam is appointed only by God; the Prophet merely announces an Imam's infallibility to the people. On the other hand, the Sunnis in theory believe that it is the responsibility of the people to appoint a caliph. In what follows, we will refer to the appointments of the Imams by God and the particular case of who was appointed after the Prophet's death.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on lectures 9, 10, 11, and 12 of a series of lectures delivered by Dr Mohammad Ali Shomali in summer 2004 in Qum.

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### ***Part I: Imamate in the Qur'an***

There are many verses in the Qur'an that refer to *imamate*, or divinely appointed leadership. God refers to Himself as having rule (*amr*), governance (*hukm*), full sovereignty (*mulk*), and the power to choose (*ikhtiyār*). God is our guardian (*Wali*) and He is to be obeyed (*tā'a*). The resultant descriptions of these attributes ascertain God's full sovereignty and governance and His sole power to choose and legitimize a leader. That is, leadership belongs only to Him and He gives it to whomever He pleases. Moreover, people are commanded to obey Him, the Prophet, and those "vested with authority among the people" i.e. the infallibles. Reflection of these verses leaves no doubt that the Shi'a understanding of Imamate is compatible with the Qur'an. These verses are grouped into several classes presented in the following:

#### ***Amr***

Bearing in mind that *amr* means 'to rule', *amir* means 'ruler', and *imārah* means 'rulership', 'kingdom' or 'government', human beings cannot decide on the system of ruling based on their desires. It is God who decides who rules and how one must do so. Several verses in the Qur'an refer to God as the sole sovereign of both the creation (*khalq*) and rule (*amr*):

*... He draws the night's cover over the day, which pursues it swiftly, and [He created] the sun, the moon, and the stars, [all of them] disposed by His command. Look! All creation and command belong to Him. Blessed is Allah, the Lord of all the worlds. (7:54)*

*If only it were a Qur'ān whereby the mountains could be moved, or the earth could be toured, or the dead could*

*be spoken to . . . Rather all dispensation belongs to Allah... (13:31)*

### **Wali**

*Wilāya* is the special relationship between a legitimate leader and a community. This relationship excludes outsiders who are not a part of the community of faith. A legitimate Imam within a society is similar to a brain connected to the bloodstream which connects all the cells of the body:

*Say, ‘Allah knows best how long they remained. To Him belongs the Unseen of the heavens and the earth. How well does He see! How well does He hear! They have no guardian besides Him, and none shares with Him in His judgment.’ (18:26)*

*...faithful who maintain the prayer and give the zakāt while bowing down. Whoever takes for his guardians Allah, His Apostle and the faithful [should know that] the confederates of Allah are indeed the victorious. (5:55-56)*

Here, wali does not merely mean ‘friend’ because anyone can be a friend and the criteria for friendship is not specified in the verse. Also, to be just friends would not lead to formation of the confederates of Allah. *Wilāya* refers to the ‘leadership’ that belongs to God, and He gives this to whomsoever He pleases. He is pleased with both the Messenger and with the one who gave zakat while bowing down in prayer.

The words “*those who believe*” refers to Imam Ali (a) and the “*...faithful who maintain the prayer and give the zakat while bowing down*” refers to a particular event in which Imam Ali gave charity

while bowing in prayer. This action does not apply to all believers given that there is no verse or narration that recommends people to give charity while bowing. Thus, wilāya belongs to Allah, then the Prophet, and afterwards to whomever is appointed by God. Otherwise, God would have stated that whoever is appointed by the people can be a legitimate leader.

God is the true guardian (wali): no one has a wali other than Him, and no one can interfere in this relationship. Therefore, hukm and wilāya are related to each other. God is the wali, and He appoints the wali. He has the hukm, and he appoints the hākim. He has *mulk*, and He appoints the *mālik*.

### ***Ayat al-Tahkim***

*But no, by your Lord! They will not believe until they make you a judge in their disputes, then do not find within their hearts any dissent to your verdict and submit in full submission. (4:65)*

In this verse, a true believer (*mu'min*) is the one who refers unclear cases to the Prophet, and any judgment the Prophet makes, he wholeheartedly accepts it. This verse also shows that part of wilāya is to act as a judge; as was stated before, no one can judge unless approved by God. Naturally, people can make agreements on an issue by themselves, but they cannot appoint someone to act as a judge for the people. Although the people are free to obey or not, this judge must be authorized by God.

God Himself appointed Prophet David, who was made a caliph, and was asked to rule and judge. The verse below shows that people who are chosen by God, such as the Prophet, are the only ones permitted to act as a judge:

*O David! Indeed We have made you a vicegerent on the earth. So judge between people with justice, and do not follow desire, or it will lead you astray from the way of Allah. Indeed those who stray from the way of Allah — there is a severe punishment for them because of their forgetting the Day of Reckoning. (38:26)*

### ***Tā'a***

Muslims are commanded to obey God, the Prophet, and the *ulul amr* or “those vested with authority”:

*O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you. And if you dispute concerning anything, refer it to Allah and the Apostle, if you have faith in Allah and the Last Day. That is better and more favourable in outcome. (4:59)*

Since this verse was addressed to Muslims during the time of the Prophet, Muslims were commanded to obey them in that specific period. An *ulul amr* existing during that era verifies that there lived an individual known to the Muslims as the one who would be the deputy of the Prophet. Moreover, Muslims were able to address their problems to the Prophet during his life.

The words “...and those vested with authority among you” refers to people who must be unconditionally obeyed. They are none other than the infallibles (*ma'soumeen*) because those who sin and make mistakes that render them untrustworthy cannot be followed. Also, doubt would exist as to whether one should follow the Qur'an and sunna, or follow a fallible person chosen by the people.

*When a report of safety or alarm comes to them, they immediately broadcast it; but had they referred it to the*

*Apostle or to those vested with authority among them, those of them who investigate would have ascertained it. And were it not for Allah's grace upon you and His mercy, you would have surely followed Satan, [all] except a few. (4:83)*

Again, the words "...those vested with authority among them, those of them who investigate would have ascertained it" indicates that Imam Ali was known during that period as the Prophet's representative and the future legitimate leader.

### ***Hukm***

*Hākim* means 'king' or 'ruler' while *hukūmah* means 'government.' According to the Qur'an, *hukm*, or governance, belongs to God and to those who are appointed by Him. Only God and the appointees can hold this position:

*Then they are returned to Allah, their real master. Look! All rule belongs to Him, and He is the swiftest of reckoners. (6:62)*

*Say, "Indeed I stand on a manifest proof from my Lord and you have denied it. What you seek to hasten is not up to me. Rule belongs only to Allah; He expounds the truth and He is the best of rulers." (6:57)*

The above verse is known to have been misused and misinterpreted by the Kharijites<sup>3</sup> to declare the illegitimacy of Imam Ali's governance. They hold this verse to confirm that leadership cannot be practiced by anyone other than God. However, the above verse does not state that a

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<sup>3</sup> The Kharijites are Muslims who supported the authority of Imam Ali ibn abi Talib and then later rejected his leadership. They are distinct from Sunni and Shi'a Muslims and are the only Muslims to disagree with the concept of Imamate.

leader is uncalled for; rather, the verse indicates that governance *belongs* to God, and it is only He who can legitimize a ruler.

*Say, "Allah knows best how long they remained. To Him belongs the Unseen of the heavens and the earth. How well does He see! How well does He hear! They have no guardian besides Him, and none shares with Him in His rule." (18:26)*

Although other verses refer to the notion of governance belonging to God, the above verse states that God alone has authority and is the sole giver of this authority. Moreover, He does not allow one's interference with His rule, nor does He have a partner in His governance. We can infer from this verse that one of the cases of polytheism (*shirk*) is to believe in the appointment and legitimization of a leader by anyone other than God Himself.

Imams do not receive their legitimacy from society, although people do play a great role in giving their support to a leader since leaders cannot rule without society's obedience. For example, Imam Ali was not able to exercise his leadership after the demise of the Prophet and the people were deprived of a necessary leader. After the death of the third caliph, Uthman, many people demonstrated in favor of Imam Ali's leadership. In reaction to this uproar, the Imam simply said:

If it were not for the gathering and pressure and this huge presence of people to support me; and if it were not the case that Allah has made a covenant with the 'Ulamā not to be silent when they see that oppressors are dying because they have eaten too much, and the oppressed do not have anything to eat; if it were not for all this, then you would have found that I would have rejected this caliphate (*khilāfah*). It is less precious to me than the nasal mucus of a sheep.

Though the caliphate was of little importance to the Imam, he knew God ordered scholars not to be silent and indifferent to oppression. And due to the large crowd's support for the Imam, he could not reject taking the role. Thus, though people are not authorized to give legitimacy to make a person an Imam, whether people accept him or not, he is the Imam when authorized by God. Moreover, if people accept and support his leadership, he is more so able to exercise his power and authority in order to establish peace and justice within society.

### ***Mulk***

*Mulk* means 'rule' or 'governance' while *milk* refers to 'ownership' or 'possession.' *Mālik* means 'king' or 'ruler' while *malak* means 'angel.' As mentioned in the Qur'an, all sovereignty (*al-Mulk*) belongs to Him:

*Master of the Day of Judgment. (1:4)*

*Say, "O Allah, Master of all sovereignty! You give sovereignty to whomever You wish, and strip of sovereignty whomever You wish; You make mighty whomever You wish, and You abase whomever You wish; all good is in Your hand. Indeed You have power over all things." (3:26)*

This verse denotes two meanings: a) legitimate rule is divine, and b) when governors are given the chance to rule, it does not necessarily prove their legitimacy. Umawid rulers such as Mu'awiya claimed that God legitimized them; however, their attaining authority does not imply that God is pleased with it. Again, the only legitimate rulers are those who act according to the commands of God - prior to assuming leadership - and, consequently, God has authorized them. They were given the caliphate because of God's generative and legislative will (*al-irādah al-takwiniyyah and al-tashri'iyyah*). To understand why good

and bad happens in the world or, more specifically, why oppressors are able to exercise their authority on this earth, a clarification of God's generative and legislative will is required.

All the good and bad that happen in this world are because of God's generative will. Some ask: was the act of murdering Imam Husayn acceptable by God? If He was not pleased with it, He could have prevented the incident from happening. To explain this, think of a father who, in order to test his child, gives him some money to buy something useful. However, the child uses the money for an immoral purpose instead. His father is not pleased with his son's action although he gave his son a chance.

God's generative will is always at work. He allows for actions to take place, although this does not mean He is pleased with the immoral decisions people can make, especially given that we are instilled with a sense of morality. Furthermore, with this conscientiousness, He sent down prophets and revelations that clearly explain how to live our lives peacefully. He gave us free will and capability to test us in this world, and we choose to act with or against His legislative will. What is more, with the wrong actions we tend to commit, instead of hurriedly incurring His wrath and punishment on us, God's unlimited kindness and mercy gives people an opportunity to change and ask for forgiveness and redeem themselves.

Therefore, God may allow an oppressor to become a king, though this does not necessarily mean God is pleased with his actions. Yazid ruled without God's permission to be a ruler and committed his crimes regardless. God was definitely not pleased with Imam Husayn's martyrdom, and for this, the Imam's enemies will undoubtedly be punished.

Another hint of God's legitimacy is seen in the Qur'an when Saul (*Tālūt*) was appointed by God as a ruler (*malik*):

*Their prophet said to them, “Allah has appointed Saul as king for you.” They said, “How can he have kingship over us, when we have a greater right to kingship than him, as he has not been given ample wealth?” He said, “Indeed Allah has chosen him over you, and enhanced him vastly in knowledge and physique, and Allah gives His kingdom to whomever He wishes, and Allah is all-bounteous, all-knowing.”(2:247)*

When God appointed Saul as a ruler, the people argued against it, stating that Saul had neither been given the right nor has he been given enough wealth to rule, and thinking themselves as better fitted to exercise authority. However, God replies that He has given Saul knowledge and physique. Moreover, this verse elucidates God’s right to solely decide on this matter as well as the people’s inability to interject on the subject of leadership.

### ***Ikhtiyār***

There are verses in the Qur’an which refer to *ikhtiyār*, meaning ‘to choose’. In other words, God is the sole selector of a leader.

*Your Lord creates whatever He wishes and chooses. They have no choice. Immaculate is Allah and exalted above [having] any partners they ascribe [to Him]. (28:68)*

*Your Lord knows whatever their breasts conceal, and whatever they disclose. (27:74)*

*He is Allah, there is no god except Him. All praise belongs to Him in this world and the Hereafter. All judgment belongs to Him, and to Him you will be brought back. (28:68-70)*

The option of choosing a legitimate leader is only through God's decision. The verse "*Your Lord knows whatever their breast conceal...*" refers to those who interfere with this divine decision. However, our Sunni brothers justify the events of Saqifa according to the Qur'an's stand on consultation (*shurā*). They believe that a) through consultation, people are to choose a legitimate leader,<sup>4</sup> and b) that God commanded the Prophet to consult with the believers.<sup>5</sup> Thus, they conclude from the Qur'an that people must elect instead of following a divinely appointed leader. Some of them also appeal to democracy and suggest that their idea is more democratic than the Shi'a understanding of governance.

With a brief study of the Qur'anic idea of consultation we can examine why the Qur'an speaks of it and why people are not to interfere in the legitimacy of a ruler. Resolving the believers' affairs according to consultation (*shurā*) does not give legitimacy to a leader. A legitimate ruler is advised to consult, but this does not imply that by consultation someone becomes a legitimate ruler. The Prophet, who was the leader, was obliged to consult with the Muslims, though this does not prove that Muslims gave legitimacy to the Prophet.

*...those who answer their Lord, maintain the prayer,  
and their affairs are by counsel among themselves, and  
they spend out of what We have provided them with;  
(42:38)*

*It is by Allah's mercy that you are gentle to them; and  
had you been harsh and hardhearted, surely they would  
have scattered from around you. So excuse them, and  
plead for forgiveness for them, and consult them in the  
affairs, and once you are resolved, put your trust in*

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<sup>4</sup> The Qur'an 42:38

<sup>5</sup> The Qur'an 3:159

*Allah. Indeed Allah loves those who trust in Him.*  
(3:159)

According to the non-Shi'a interpretation of consultation (*shurā*) in the Qur'an, people are responsible for electing a legitimate leader; thus, this leader is not divinely appointed.

There are two problems with this view: a) it does not comply with the way the first three caliphs were appointed, and b) it lacks theological or jurisprudential support.

**First problem:** Abu Bakr, the first caliph, was supposedly elected in Saqifa, an old assembly area in Medina where the people conversed and resolved their problems. Immediately after the announcement of the Prophet's death, some people gathered to decide as to whom will be their next leader. It is alleged that a legitimate leader was elected in Saqifa; however, no real democratic election took place. The Immigrants (*muhājirin*) chose the first caliph as their leader, and they forced this desire onto the Helpers (*ansār*). The second caliph, 'Umar, described the event as having been ignited by an argument which turned into a fight. Afterwards, the Muslims who were not present at the scene were asked to pay allegiance to the chosen caliph.

Even if we were to accept the first caliph has having been elected by the people, the second caliph was not elected through counsel (*shurā*). Although there was a counsel of six people for the third caliph, these six were neither elected, nor were they free to choose because 'Umar restricted them with strict rules and regulations which stated that they had to choose one among themselves and that they had to gather in a house, guarded by fifty companions till they would choose a caliph. If five people chose someone with whom one person disagreed, he had to be beheaded; if two of them disagreed with four people's decision, they had to be killed; if three people were on one side and three on the other side, they were enforced to agree with 'Abd Allah Ibn 'Umar's

arbitration and if they did not accept it, the group in which was ‘Abd al-Rahman ‘Awf was preferred. And if the other three people disagreed with them, they had to be killed.<sup>6</sup>

A case of real democracy only occurred during the time of Imam Ali’s six-year caliphate in which the pressure of the people’s urgency to have him elected drove the Imam to accept the caliphate. The people then came to realize that Imamate is not merely political leadership, that it is a divine position which involves a heavier duty than a politician. The Imam, who must be infallible, is obliged to continue the role of the Prophet’s task of representing Islam. Therefore, Imam must be appointed by God. Of course, an Imam can only reach his potential as a political leader if the people pay allegiance to him.

**Second problem:** The Qur’an does not contradict itself. It is not possible for the verses on consultation to contradict those many verses of the Qur’an which pertain to God’s rule. The verses on consultation suggest that when there is a legitimate leader who has been given authority by God - i.e. the Prophet or Imam - he must consult with the people. Consultation is not about *who* is to rule; rather, it is about *how* to rule. The Prophet was not chosen by *shurā*, but when God says “*consult with the believers*”, the Prophet, not the counsel, makes decisions. And “*once you are resolved*”, trust God and do what you think is appropriate, even if the majority of the people whom you have consulted with disagree. The Qur’an says:

*It is by God’s mercy that you are gentle to them; and had you been harsh and hardhearted, surely they would have scattered from around you. So excuse them, and plead for forgiveness for them, and consult them in the*

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<sup>6</sup> See e.g. *Al-Imāmah wa’l-Siyāsah*, vol. 1, p. 42; *Tārīkh* of Tabari, vol. 4, p. 229; *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, vol. 5, p. 504. No 1300 & 1301, cited in Ja’fariyan, Rasul, *History of The Caliphs From the Death of the Messenger (S) to the Decline of the ‘Umayyad Dynasty 11-132 AH* (Qum: Ansariyan Publications).

*affairs, and once you are resolved, put your trust in God. Indeed God loves those who trust in Him. If God helps you, no one can overcome you, but if He forsakes you, who will help you after Him? So in God let all the faithful put their trust. (3:159-160)*

Elsewhere the Qur'an says:

*And those who respond to their Lord and keep up prayer, and their rule is to take counsel among themselves, and who spend out of what We have given them. (42:38)*

Thus, "...and their rule is to take counsel among themselves" refers to an established system for decision-making and consultation of the people who have legitimate power to make decisions. An example of this is seen in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Members of the Parliament who are elected by people make decisions as a counsel. There is also the Expediency Council in which the experts who are appointed by the supreme leader study important issues and give consultation to him. After much consideration, they give their consultation to the leader who then makes his final decision.

## ***Part II: Appointment of Imam Ali***

In the beginning of this article, the point was made that leadership must be made through divine appointment. From this point forward, with a glimpse into evidence from the Qur'an and hadith, the person appointed after the Prophet's death will be discussed.

### ***Verse #1***

*Your guardian is only Allah, His Apostle, and the faithful who maintain the prayer and give the zakāt while bowing down. (5:55)*

As stated earlier in this article, the person implied in this verse is Imam Ali (a). According to both Sunnis and Shi‘as, he was the only person who paid charity (*zakat*) while bowing in prayer. Furthermore, Imam al-Tha‘labi, a Sunni Qur’anic exegete, narrates the context and anecdote of this verse from Abu Dharr al-Ghifari<sup>7</sup>:

One day, I was praying with the Prophet in the mosque when a beggar walked in. No one responded to his pleas. The beggar raised his hands towards heavens and said, ‘Allah! Be a witness that I came to the Prophet’s mosque and no one gave me anything.’ Imam Ali (a) was bowing (*rukū’*) during his prayer at that time. He pointed his little finger, on which was a ring, towards the beggar who came forward and took away the ring. This incident occurred in the Prophet’s presence, and he raised his face towards heaven and prayed: ‘O Lord! my brother Musa had begged of Thee to open his breast and to make his work easy for him, to loosen the knot of his tongue so that people might understand him, and to appoint from among his relations his brother, as his vizier, and to strengthen his back with Harun and to make Harun his partner in his work. O Allah! Thou said to Musa, ‘We will strengthen thy arm with thy brother. No one will now have access to either of you!’ (20:25-36). O Allah! I am Muhammad and Thou hast given me distinction. Open my breast for me, make my work easy for me, and from my family appoint my brother Ali as my vizier. Strengthen my back with him”.

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<sup>7</sup> A close companion of the Prophet

The Prophet had not yet finished his prayers when Angel Gabriel revealed the above-quoted verse (5:55). He intended that he wanted someone from his own house, his own people, to help him as his deputy.

The debate lies in the idea that perhaps the word ‘believers’ in verse 5:55 refers to all believers. However, this cannot be accepted, because there is no general recommendation that asks people to give charity when they are bowing in prayer. This verse refers to that particular event where God identified a trait that was exclusive to Imam Ali (a). Additionally, ‘believers’ may not always refer to any or all believers. For example, take this verse:

*Do you suppose that you will be let off while Allah has not yet ascertained those of you who wage jihād and those who do not take, besides Allah and His Apostle and the believers, anyone as [their] confidant? Allah is well aware of what you do. (9:16)*

God says He wants to make it known to the people as to who is prepared to do jihad (*mujahid*) and to by no means develop a personal relationship with someone other than God, the Prophet, and the believers (*mu’minoon*). Who are these ‘believers’? This does not refer to all believers; rather, this verse suggests that even during the life of the Prophet, Muslims were asked to refer to God, then the Prophet, and then *a select group of people* who are full-fledged believers, par excellence, not a *mu’min* in the general sense. Thus, ‘*mu’minoon*’ here signifies Imam Ali and the Ahlul Bayt. Additionally, this confirms the idea of *ulul amr* being present during the Prophet’s time.

## **Verse #2**

*Stay in your houses and do not display your finery with the display of the former [days of] ignorance. Maintain*

*the prayer and pay the zakāt and obey Allah and His Apostle. Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification. (33:33)*

According to this verse, the Ahlul Bayt are completely purified by God. To be infallible cannot be decided by people since people may realize who has already done mistakes and sins, but they are not necessarily able to decide who never makes a mistake or commits a sin. According to our Sunni brothers, this verse was revealed regarding Lady Fatima, Imam Ali, and Imam Hasan and Husayn. It should also be noted that it is not acceptable to suggest that there can be infallibles among people, but the ruler can be chosen by people from the fallible ones.

### **Verse #3**

*That is the good news Allah gives to His servants who have faith and do righteous deeds! Say, "I do not ask you any reward for it except love of [my] relatives." Whoever performs a good deed, We shall enhance for him its goodness. Indeed Allah is all-forgiving, all-appreciative. (42:23)*

*I do not ask you any reward for it, except that anyone who wishes should take the way to his Lord. (25:57)*

In verse 42:23, the Prophet does not ask for a reward for undertaking his duties except that his followers love and devote themselves to his family. God also mentions that one of the characteristics the prophets shared was that they asked people for nothing in return for their work. Prophet Muhammad is the only Prophet in the Qur'an who says "I do not ask you any reward for it, except that anyone who wishes should take the way to his Lord." Thus, love for the Ahlul Bayt is a path towards God because of the abovementioned verse.

The reason for Prophet Muhammad being the only prophet to ask this of the people is because he is the Seal of the Prophets (*khātam al-nabiyyeen*). After him, the task of prophethood would be finished, though the path of presenting true Islam must continue. The Prophet himself was a *sabil*, a path towards God.

*A day when the wrongdoer will bite his hands, saying, "I wish I had followed the Apostle's way! Woe to me! I wish I had not taken so and so as a friend! Certainly he led me astray from the Reminder after it had come to me, and Satan is a deserter of man." And the Apostle will say, "O my Lord! Indeed my people consigned this Qur'ān to oblivion." (25: 27-30)*

On the Day of Judgment, the unjust oppressor will wish to have followed the Prophet because he is a path towards God, the Seal of the Prophets, and no further Prophet will carry on this task. Thus, the Ahlul Bayt are a 'path' as well.

Now the question arises: who is capable of being a path towards God (*sabil*)? None other than an infallible. And who can choose an infallible? None other than God. Only God can decide to choose those whom, if we love them, we have 'recompensed' the Prophet. Moreover, this 'compensation' is for our benefit because it acts as a road towards God. For example, if I do something for you and you want to repay me, my action and your payment must be proportionate. Of course, this may not be repayment in money; it could be offering supplication, respect, and so forth.

The Prophet did his best to present the *risāla* (message) of Allah to the people. *Risala* includes all that was revealed in the Qur'an and all of the hardships the Prophet underwent to guide Muslims. Now, upon reading the verse, we want to repay him, or give him *ajr*. He says he does not ask for *ajr*, but if we want to gain proximity to God, if we

really want to give Him something, we must love His Ahlul Bayt. This is the right path.

If love for the Ahlul Bayt can be accepted as *ajr*, then it must be proportionate to *risala*. It is a profound idea to say that Imamate can actually weigh the same as *risala*. Love on its own is not enough. Imamate is equal to *risala* because this is how we can ensure that *risala* is not lost. And as the Prophet was a ‘path’ (*sabil*), an Imam is also inherently a *sabil*. For this reason, the Qur’an says:

*O Apostle! Communicate that which has been sent down to you from your Lord, and if you do not, you will not have communicated His message, and Allah shall protect you from the people. Indeed Allah does not guide the faithless lot. (5:67)*

To paraphrase, God tells the Prophet, “If you do not declare the imamate of Ali, you have not performed your mission.”

To restate, the *risāla* would not have been delivered if Imamate was not declared. It was so important that if Imamate was not declared, the complete message would not have been conveyed. Believing in Imamate and love of the Ahlul Bayt is not merely carrying out actions such as fasting, prayer, charity and pilgrimage to Mecca because these commands are part of the *risala*. You may have all of Islam, but without Imamate, that spirit of wilāyah, Islam is incomplete. For this reason, love for Ahlul Bayt can be taken as *ajr* for *risāla*. Of course, this *ajr* is different from customary ones. This is not giving a gift or money to someone in return to his services; rather, it is similar to trying to take advantage of your teacher’s instruction to please him. You study hard and learn something and this becomes your *ajr* for him. Thus, sometimes *ajr* is a result of your accomplishments. The payment for the Prophet delivering the message was to believe in Imamate so that his message would be appreciated and preserved.

**Verse #4**

*O Apostle! Communicate that which has been sent down to you from your Lord, and if you do not, you will not have communicated His message, and Allah shall protect you from the people. Indeed Allah does not guide the faithless lot. (5:67)*

According to both Sunni and Shi'a sources, this verse was revealed on the 18<sup>th</sup> of Dhil Hijja on the Day of Ghadir. The great Shi'a scholar Abdul Husayn Amini, author of a masterpiece on Imamate called *al-Ghadir*, has researched to demonstrate how the Hadith of Ghadir and relevant hadith are narrated by Sunni narrators throughout the generations and how this was also echoed through poetry. In his research of over tens of thousands of books and during his travels around the world to find these manuscripts, Allama Amini proved the hadith of Ghadir as *mutawatir*, or a successive narration that has been transferred many times through multiple chains that we can accept with no doubt that the Prophet or Imams said it.

In *al-Ghadir*<sup>8</sup> he narrates from many Sunni scholars, including Jalaluddin Abdul Rahman al-Suyuti, a Shafi'i scholar and prolific author from Egypt. He quotes from one of Suyuti's books, *al-Dur al-Manthur*<sup>9</sup>. Suyuti and others narrate from Ibn Mas'ood<sup>10</sup>:

We were reciting this verse in the time of the Prophet Muhammad: *O Apostle! Communicate that which has been sent down to you from your Lord...*" and afterwards they recited in brackets: "Ali is the leader, Master of the believers. And if you fail to do so, you

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<sup>8</sup> Volume I, p. 214

<sup>9</sup> An exegesis of the Qur'an based on hadith

<sup>10</sup> One of the companions of the Prophet who was imprisoned because he narrated hadiths during the time of the second caliph

have not communicated to the people the message that Allah has given you.”

Al-Tabari, another famous Sunni scholar, narrates from Zaid ibn Arkam:<sup>11</sup>

When the Prophet reached Ghadir Khumm, he stopped there during midday while the winds were scorching hot. He asked others to stop, and the ones who were in front of the caravan were asked to return. They waited until the others reached them and then they called for prayer. Afterwards, the Prophet spoke in his sermon, and said, ‘God has asked me to communicate to you something which, if I do not mention, I have not performed my duty.’ And then he said the above verse: *‘O Apostle! Communicate that which has been sent down to you from your Lord, and if you do not, you will not have communicated His message, and Allah shall protect you from the people. Indeed Allah does not guide the faithless lot.’* (5:67). The Prophet then said, ‘Gabriel has brought me a command from my Lord to stop here and announce to all people, whether black or white, that Ali, the son of Abu Talib, is my son, my *wasiy*, my successor, and my caliph and Imam after me.’ Then Zaid ibn Arkam says, ‘The Prophet continued, ‘Allah has appointed Ali as your master and Imam and has made obedience to Ali compulsory for all people. All people must obey Ali. Thus, whatever he commands must be performed and whatever he says must be accepted. Whoever disobeys him is cursed. And Allah’s mercy is upon the one who accepts him and confirms what he says. Listen to him and obey him. Surely Allah

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<sup>11</sup> A companion of the Prophet

is your maulā, the real maulā is Allah above all, and Ali is your Imam. The Imamate of my offspring will be through Ali and his children up until the day of Resurrection.’

Afterwards, the Prophet raised Imam Ali [‘s hand] so that the Imam was visible to all those who stood there, and said, “Oh people! This is my brother, my successor, the one who has grasped my knowledge. He is like a container for my knowledge. My knowledge is transmitted to him. He is the [strongest] one who believed in me [before anyone else].”

Al-Tha’labi, another Sunni scholar, narrates a hadith regarding the context of verse one of chapter *al-Ma’arij, the Ascension*: “An asker asked for a punishment bound to befall”. This verse was revealed when the Prophet gathered the people on the Day of Ghadir and asked them to believe in the Imamate of Ali and pay allegiance to him. A person named al-Harith son of Nu’man heard of Imam Ali’s appointment. He approached the Prophet on his camel, came down, and asked:

Oh Prophet, you asked us to declare that there is no god but Allah and that you are His Prophet, to say our prayers five times a day, to pay zakat, to fast during the month of Ramadhan, and to perform the Hajj pilgrimage and we accepted to perform all of these duties. However, you are still not satisfied with this until you raised your cousin’s hand and asked us to believe in him and you said, “Whomever I am his leader, Ali is also his leader.” Is this information from you or from God?

(It is noteworthy to mention the mentality of these people, supposing that Imam Ali’s appointment was something personal from the Prophet.)

The Prophet replied, “By Allah who has no partner, there is no god but Him, verily this is from Allah.” Al-Harith then turned back, remounted his camel, and said, “My Lord, if what Prophet Muhammad says is true, bring a painful punishment on us.” On his way back, a stone came from the heavens, hit his head, and he was eventually killed. Afterwards, the first verse of the chapter *The Ascension* was revealed, and it was revealed on account of the disbeliever, al-Harith, who asked for a punishment. The punishment came from Allah of “*which none can avert from the faithless.*” In other words, no one can be protected from His punishment.

Scholars Abdul Husayn Amini, Jalaluddin Abdul Rahman al-Suyuti, and Al-Tabari have confirmed that this verse was revealed on the 18<sup>th</sup> of Dhil Hijja, the Day of Ghadir, during the final pilgrimage of Prophet Muhammad. Interestingly, the verse and hadiths hint that the Prophet was reluctant to make the announcement because he knew that if he declared Ali as the Imam in this public gathering, many would resist. And this is why Allah speaks to him strongly – that if he does not communicate this to the people, he has not accomplished his duty.

*O Apostle! Communicate that which has been sent down to you from your Lord, and if you do not, you will not have communicated His message, and Allah shall protect you from the people. Indeed Allah does not guide the faithless lot. (5:67)*

And God continues, “...and Allah shall protect you from the people.” The Prophet was apprehensive over those who may rise against Islam and consequently end it completely. There were people who did not want Ali to be the Imam and were counting the days the Prophet would die so that they could seize power. God reassures the Prophet of His protection. There is no other reason why God would do so if rejection

of Ali's Imamate was unlikely. As seen in the above anecdote, al-Harith was prepared to die rather than believe in Ali as the successor.

After God's command, the Prophet made the announcement, and the people, including the first and second caliph, paid allegiance to Ali and congratulated him. The second caliph even said, "Well done, O Ali. You have become my master and the master of all the believers, male and female."

Sunnis acknowledge the accuracy of the hadith, although some have interpreted the term *maulā* to mean 'friendship' and 'love' of Ali. It is illogical to believe that a large gathering with its profound statements from the Messenger of God, in addition to the fact that he asked the people to pledge allegiance to Ali, was merely to invite them to love him. Regardless of whether it is true or not, the event of Ghadir undoubtedly gave Ali a distinctive position among the Companions of the Prophet. Given that this is the case, did the people truly love Ali? Nonetheless, after they paid allegiance, God revealed the following verse:

*Today the faithless have despaired of your religion. So do not fear them, but fear Me. Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion. But should anyone be compelled by hunger, without inclining to sin, then Allah is indeed all-forgiving, all-merciful. (5:3)*

The beginning of this verse points toward the prohibited foods. Afterwards, Allah describes the important event and then Allah continues describing the prohibited foods. The verse ends with telling people that if they have nothing to eat except some prohibited (*non-halal*) meat, then it is permissible to eat it when their own lives are in danger.

In the middle of the above verse, God opens the brackets and says, “*I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion*” and then continues with prohibited foods. A similar style is seen in the Verse of Purification (33:33). The beginning of that verse is about the wives of the Prophet. At the end, God says, “*Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification.*” God speaks in between the lines when referring to the Ahlul Bayt and Imam Ali because there was a threat that if the Imam’s appointment was clearly announced, many would have distorted the Qur’an to purge it, which is what they did with hadith.<sup>12</sup> As to why this sentence was placed out of context and or why God did not mention Ali in the Qur’an, perhaps it was to protect the Qur’an from being distorted by those who rejected Imam Ali. Moreover, God may be testing the believers.

To continue, when God says “*Today the faithless have despaired of your religion. So do not fear them, but fear Me. Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion*”, this means that Islam has now become completed and perfected. It is now so strong that nothing can damage it.

In the sentence “*But fear Me,*” does “*fear me*” mean fear God? Does it mean God may destroy His religion? First of all, there is a Qur’anic rule that states:

*He has guardian angels, to his front and his rear, who guard him by Allah’s command. Indeed Allah does not change a people’s lot, unless they change what is in their souls. And when Allah wishes to visit ill on a*

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<sup>12</sup> After the Prophet’s death, the caliphs banned narrating and recording hadiths because they were honoring Imam Ali and the Ahlul Bayt.

*people, there is nothing that can avert it, and they have no protector besides Him. (13:11)*

*That is because Allah never changes a blessing that He has bestowed on a people unless they change what is in their own souls, and Allah is all-hearing, all-knowing (8:53)*

If God gives a blessing, He will never take it away unless he or she has changed for the worse to lose that blessing. If Allah gives the blessing of Islam, or Imamate, He will not take it away, unless people act wrongly.

When Allah says “fear me” it reminds people to observe their actions and God’s blessings and then fear that God may take the blessings away from them. Thus, “fear me” essentially means “fear yourselves”, that is, if people do something wrong, they will suffer the consequences of their own actions.

Islam has become so firm that from the Day of Ghadir no unbeliever is able to damage it. If a Muslim acts wrongly, he or she may damage Islam, although Islam cannot be uprooted. As we read Islamic history, we realize the damage Muslims have done to Islam. On the other hand, what harm have the enemies done? The enemies of Islam never had a chance to refute or defeat it. Whatever they did actually strengthened it. Verse 5:3 indicates that without Imamate, Islam cannot be firm. Because it was only after Imamate was declared publicly that Allah said, “*Today the faithless have despaired of your religion...*” Even though the Prophet mentioned many cases of Imam Ali’s successorship before the Day of Ghadir, the people realized that the significance of this event verified his leadership. And afterwards, those who counted the days to defeat Islam lost hope as they now knew Islam could not end with the death of the Prophet. There would surely exist someone who would protect Islam afterwards.

Subsequently, God says, “*Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion.*” Up until that day, Islam was neither perfected nor sufficient. Islam before Imamate was not something that pleased Allah. On that day God was pleased with it. On that day it was perfected.

Why doesn't God say “*Today I have completed your religion*” instead of “*perfected your religion*”? In Arabic, we have the terms “complete” (*tamām*) and “perfect” (*kamāl*). Something which is incomplete would have some necessary parts missing from it. For example, a house that has all the required facilities such as walls, doors and windows that is not furnished with decorations, carpeting or air conditioning could be said to be complete, but not perfect. On the other hand, for something which is not perfect, it may have all the necessary parts whereas an additional feature of the part is needed in order to make it useful. Thus, Imamate is one of the blessings of God that perfects the list of requirements in Islam. Islam without Imamate is like a body with all the organs, but lacks life and functioning since it has no spirit.

We believe that verse 67 of the chapter al-Maida was revealed on the same day - the day of Ghadir - although some of our Sunni brothers disagree. For example, they believe it to be revealed when Mecca was conquered or on other occasions. But the Shi'a believe that the verse itself indicates that it must have happened a) at the very end of the life of the Prophet, and b) it must be related to something so great whose delivery is of utmost significance.

Thus, God told the Prophet to “*Communicate that which has been sent down to you from your Lord, and if you do not, you will not have communicated His message... (5:67)* on the day of Ghadir. When the Prophet asked the people to pledge allegiance, and God said, “*Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion,*” he implied that

all the details of Islam had been explained while only one final aspect was missing, rendering Islam imperfect until the revealing of this verse. Therefore, the revelation of this verse must have happened after everything was explained to the people except one thing, which stands equal to all else, and that can only be Imamate. Thus, this verse cannot have been revealed before. It was exactly on the Day of Ghadir and many narrations confirm it.

### ***Conclusion***

God's bestowal of a pious, knowledgeable, courageous, and wise leader and guide who is appointed only by Him to lead the *ummah* (Muslim nation) after the Prophet's death is indeed a part of His infinite grace (*lutf*). This leader's infallibility ensures that he is trusted, obeyed, and is capable of defending divine law when performing the duty of presenting Islam after the Prophet Muhammad (s). Many verses in the Qur'an refer to God's full governance in legitimizing a leader, as He refers to Himself as having rule (*amr*) governance (*hukm*), full sovereignty (*mulk*), and the power to choose (*ikhtiyār*). God is also our guardian (*Wali*) and He is to be obeyed (*tā'a*).

Before his demise, God ordered the Prophet to convey to the people that he does not ask for any rewards for undertaking his task of delivering the message except that his followers love and devote themselves to his family. If we do so, we have recompensed the Prophet, which only serves as our benefit as it is the straight path towards God.

As to why the verses of the Qur'an do not explicitly reveal Imam Ali's successorship is perhaps because of the threat that if the Imam's appointment was clearly announced, it would have been distorted by those who rejected him (a), just as hadiths were banned from being written after the Prophet's death for the same reason. Moreover, perhaps it is a test for the believers.

On the Day of Ghadir, God's statement of Islam being both 'completed' and 'perfected' was declared, along with the reprimand to "fear Him". The warning to "fear Him" reminds people to observe their actions and to benefit from God's blessings and then fear that God may take His blessings away from them. "Fear me" essentially means 'fear yourselves', that is, if people act wrongly, they will suffer the consequences.

Imamate is one of the blessings of God that perfects the list of requirements in Islam. The full *risala*, or message, that was successfully delivered by the Prophet would not have been fully delivered if Imamate was not declared. For this reason, love for the Ahlul Bayt can be taken as *ajr* for *risala*, as Imamate is the spirit that renders Islam perfect.