

(1) The Holy Prophet (S)'s Succession Was Raised During His Lifetime

Clear evidences and logic prove that the Holy Prophet (S) raised the question of his succession since the first stages of his Divine Mission until the last sparks of his life. This point was also acceptable and normal, yet it stands out against Sunni reference books claiming that he did not nominate any for his succession and that Muslims never discussed or put forth such an idea before him. Anyhow, numerous Hadiths have shown that the Holy Prophet (S) referred to the Imamate of the Ahl al-Bayt. Let us refer to some of these evidences.

First Evidence

Many texts bear out that the Holy Prophet (S) invited the tribes to the new religion at the beginning of his Divine Mission and asked them to protect him during the promulgation of his Lord's epistle. Some of these tribes accepted this invitation provided that they would have the leadership after him. The Holy Prophet (S)'s answer was that he was no more than a messenger who had no choice in the affair for which they were asking. It was Almighty Allah only Who may nominate anyone He desires. The most evident points in this regard are the story of the tribe of `Amir ibn Sa`sa`ah and that of the tribe of Kindah both of which had occurred on the first days of the Holy Prophet (S)'s promulgation, while the story of `Amir ibn al-Tufayl occurred on the last days of the Holy Prophet (S)'s lifetime.

Story of the Tribe of `Amir Ibn Sa`sa`ah

The following is quoted from Ibn Husham, al-Sirah 2/289:

The Holy Prophet (S) came to the [tribe of] `Amir ibn Sa`sa`ah and invited them to the “new” religion. A man called Baiharah ibn Firas addressed to him, ‘By Allah I swear, I will overcome the Arabs if I only assent to this Qurayshite young man. If we will support you in this matter and Allah will give you victory over your opponents, will you hold us your position thereafter?’ ‘This matter is decided by Allah only,’ answered the Holy Prophet (S), ‘He holds it to whomever He desires.’ Hence, they rejected saying, ‘We

will make our necks the target of whatsoever is thrown at you and when Allah gives you triumph it goes to others? Nay, we are not in need for you.' After they had returned from that season of Hajj, they told a man who was too old to accompany them and to whom they used to refer all their affairs about the story of the Holy Prophet (S) and their rejection to his call. The old man struck his head with both hands and shouted, 'Oh for the `Amir! Can you catch him and change your situation? I swear by Him Who prevails on my soul, no single son of [Prophet (S)] Ishmael can lie in this affair. It is the very truth. Where were your minds when you rejected his offer?"¹

Story of the Tribe of Kindah

This is the story as quoted from Ibn Kathir, al-Sirah 2/159:

`Abdullah ibn al-Ajlah said that his father, relating the story of the tribe of Kindah to his chiefs, said: As the Holy Prophetsought the tribe of Kindah's support in the promulgation of his Mission, they stipulated that he should hold them the position of authority after his death. 'Authority is Allah's,' he answered, 'He hands it over to whomever He desires.' Therefore, they rejected his request.

Story of the Tribe of `Amir Ibn al-Tufayl

Ibn Kathir, in al-Sirah 4/114, records the following:

[`Abdullah] Ibn `Abbas reported that Arbad ibn Qays ibn Juz` ibn Khalid ibn Ja`far ibn Kalab and `Amir ibn al-Tufayl ibn Malik came to al-Madinah and sat before the Holy Prophet (S) asking, 'O Muhammad! What will you give me if we accept Islam?' 'You will be given what Muslims are given and forbidden from what Muslims are forbidden,' answered the Holy Prophet (S). 'Will you hold me your position after you?' asked `Amir. 'This position is neither yours nor your people's. I may give you the commandments of the army,' said the Holy Prophet (S). 'I am now the commander of the armies of Najd. You may give me the leadership of the Bedouins exclusively,' `Amir said, but the Holy Prophet (S) rejected. 'I will fill in your area with horses and fighters,' `Amir threatened as he went out. 'Allah will protect against you,' commented the Holy Prophet (S).

Second Evidence

The second evidence is that Ansar paid homage to the Holy Prophet (S) on three terms,

- (1) to protect him against anything they protect themselves against,
- (2) to protect his people and progeny as same as they protect their peoples and progenies and
- (3) not to contend on matters of leadership with the worthy, because Muslims are not given the right to choose personally for this position. In other words, they must comply with the one selected by the Lord for this position.

The third term shows obviously that the principle of the divine selection of the Imams following the Holy Prophet (S) was admissibly settled since the first stages of the Mission. Ansar however fulfilled the first term completely but unfortunately they breached the two others very badly. These three terms have

been mentioned in the most reliable reference books of Hadith. Let us refer to some of such narrations hereinafter:

Al-Bukhari, in al-Sahih 8/122, records the following:

It has been narrated that `Abadah ibn al-Samit said: We paid homage to the Messenger of Allah to listen to and obey him in good and bad conditions, not to contended with the worthy of leadership, to practice and say the truth wherever we are and to scorn any blame for sake of Allah.²

Al-Bukhari, in 8/88, records:

...The Holy Prophet (S) asked us to pay homage, and we did. We submitted to his stipulations that we should listen and comply with him in auspicious and misfortunate situations, should prefer him to ourselves and should not contend for the leadership unless we see a notorious evidential atheism.³

Ahmad (ibn Hanbal), in al-Musnad 5/321, records the following:

`Abadah ibn Al-Samit narrated that the Holy Prophet stated, "You should listen and obey in auspicious and misfortunate situations, prefer me to yourself and avoid contending against the people of leadership even if you conceive it as your right."

These two additions are suspicious since homage occurred before the Holy Prophet (S)'s immigration when there was no single exception from obedience. The question of the priority of people of Quraysh came to existence only after the compulsory declaration of loyalty to Abu-Bakr and the objection of Sa`d ibn `Abadah. This demonstrates that the two additions were the result of the new relationship between Ansar and the Qurayshite leadership after the Holy Prophet (S)'s decease. Moreover, no single narration refers to the Holy Prophet (S)'s stipulating the term of avoiding contending against the people of leadership.

In Majma` al-Zawa`id 6/49, the following is recorded:

`Abadah ibn al-Samit narrated that As`ad ibn Zurarah shouted, "O people! Do you realize what you are giving Muhammad? You are swearing that you will wage wars against the Arabs and the foreigners and the jinn and mankind." However, Ansar declared, "We are rivals of his foes and friends of his adherents." Then they asked the Holy Prophet (S) to speak out his stipulations. He spoke, "You should declare that there is no god but Allah and that I be His messenger, and you should perform prayers, defray the zakat, listen and obey, avoid contending against the people of leadership and protect me as same as you protect your souls and people."

Husayn ibn `Ali narrated that in al-`Aqabah, Ansar came to pay homage to the Messenger of Allah. `Ali was ordered to acknowledge their homage: "What should they swear for, Allah's messenger?" asked `Ali. The Holy Prophet (S) instructed, "You should stipulate obedience to the Lord and protection of the Holy Prophet (S) and his household and progeny as same as they protect their souls and progenies."

The pro-Qurayshite books of Hadith have concentrated on the point of avoiding contending against the people of leadership so as to use it as a proof on depriving Ansar of positions of leadership. On the other hand, they have avoided recording the term of protecting the Holy Prophet (S), his household and progeny as same as they protect their souls, households and progenies since this stipulation disagrees

with the benefits of the Qurayshite leaders who attacked and set fire on the house of Fatimah and `Ali because they had objected against the illegal leadership of Abu-Bakr.

Third Evidence

The third evidence is the famous narration of ‘al-Dar.’ Reference books of Tafsir and history refer to this narration as they pass through Allah’s saying,

‘And warn your nearest relations. (26:214)’

This holy verse indicates that the Lord ordered the Holy Prophet (S) to invite the Hashimites exclusively to the religion at the first stages of the Mission. So, what procedures did the Holy Prophet (S) take in this stage?⁴ How long did this private invitation last? Was it a number of months or years, until a divine commandment of expanding the Mission was revealed? What was the purport of the divine commandment of dedicating Muhammad’s Prophethood to the Hashimites before it was extended to include people of Quraysh, the Arabs and all humankind? What was the purport of the Qurayshite’s decision of laying siege to the Hashimites who, after the enforcement of this decision, surrounded the Holy Prophet (S) and tolerated that six-year siege? The Hashimites, despite their various classes of faithfulness, showed no weakness at all. What was the purport of the fact that except the Hashimites, none could endure the misfortunes that Muslims had suffered?

During the Battle of Uhud, all Muslims absconded, but the Hashimite struggled alone.

During the Battle of al-Khandaq, no single Muslim had the courage to face the champion who had challenged them, except the Hashimite hero—Imam `Ali (a.s.).

During the Battle of Hunayn, ten thousand Muslims absconded while the Hashimites alone stood firm. These facts and events suggest a satisfactory explanation for the Hadiths related in Shi'ite reference books quoting the Holy Prophet (S)’s saying, ‘I have been sent to my household in private and to people in general.’

The aforementioned holy Verse points out that warning the Hashimites was a matter outlined by the Lord. It also refers to the fact that the Holy Prophet (S)’s nominating his successor from among them was a step within that divine plan.

Al-Suyuti, in al-Durr al-Manthur 5/97, records the following:

... `Ali narrated that when the Verse, ‘And warn your nearest relations,’ was revealed, the Holy Prophet summoned me and said, “Ali: Almighty Allah ordered me to warn my nearest relations, but I was depressed since I had realized that they would answer me disgracefully whenever I would call them to this matter. Hence, I tried to evade it until Archangel Gabriel came and threatened my Lord’s chastisement if I would not carry out. Now, I ask you to prepare some food on which you should cook a leg of a sheep and make us a skin of milk. Then, you should invite sons of `Abd al-Muttalib so that I will speak to them and convey this mission.” I carried out the Holy Prophet (S)’s orders completely and invited sons of `Abd al-Muttalib who were about forty men. Abu-Talib, Hamzah, al-`Abbas and Abu-

Lahab were also invited. As they all were present, the Holy Prophet (S) asked me to serve them the food I had prepared. With his teeth, he incised that piece of meat, threw its parts on the edges of that trencher and said, ‘Here you are, by the Name of Allah.’ They all ate to excess. By Allah I swear, each one ate as much as I had cooked for them all. Then, the Holy Prophet (S) asked me to serve them with that milk. They all drank from that skin. I swear by Allah, each one drank full skin of milk. As soon as the Holy Prophet (S) tried to speak, Abu-Lahab interrupted and said, ‘See how your man cast witchcraft on you.’ Therefore, they left before he could speak to them.

The next day, the Holy Prophet said to me, ‘You saw how that man interrupted me. Today, you should prepare food as same as you did yesterday and invite them again.’ I did the same and invited them, and they came, ate and drank. The Holy Prophet (S) then spoke, ‘O sons of `Abd al-Muttalib! By Allah, I do not know an Arab man who can bring to his people a matter better than what I am bearing to you. I am conveying to you the welfare of this world as well as the Hereafter. Almighty Allah has ordered me to invite you to this matter. Who will support me in this affair?’ I was the youngest among them when I shouted, ‘I will,’ but they began to laugh at me and left the place.

Relating the same report to another series of narrators, al-Suyuti says:

...Al-Barra` ibn `Azib narrated that when the Verse, ‘And warn your nearest relations’ was revealed, the Holy Prophet (S) invited sons of `Abd al-Muttalib who were about forty men...etc.

Hence, al-Suyuti interrupts the report at this point so that he would not mention the rest of the Holy Prophet (S)’s words. This style is commonly followed by the pro-Qurayshite reporters as they refer to the Narration of al-Dar, which shows that the Lord and the Holy Prophet selected the successor from among the nearest clan since that day.

Al-Amini, in al-Ghadir 1/207 records the following:

The following is a literal quotation of al-Tabari’s narration that distinguishes the right from the wrong. In Tarikh 2/217 (first edition), he records: ... ‘Who will support me in this regard and he will be my brother, successor and inheritor amongst you?’ said the Holy Prophet (S). They all stopped talking when I, the youngest among them, said, ‘I will, Prophet (S) of Allah! I will be your backer in this affair.’ Hence, the Holy Prophet (S) took me from the neck and stated, ‘This is my brother, successor and inheritor. You should listen to and obey him.’ They all went out laughing and saying to Abu-Talib, ‘Well, he orders you to listen to and obey your son.’ [Al-Amini, al-Ghadir; 2/279]

In this very form, Abu-Ja`far al-Iskafi, a Mu`tazilite⁵ theologian who died in 240, records the same report in Naqd al-`Uthmaniyyah confirming its authenticity: It is also recorded in Burhan al-Din’s Anba` Nujaba` al-Abna` 46–8, Ibn al-Athir’s al-Kamil fi'l-Tarikh 2/24, Abu'l-Fida `Imad al-Din al-Dimashqi’s Tarikh 1/116, Shihab al-Din al-Khafaji’s Sharh al-Shifa 3/37 (though he interrupts the last sentences of the narration and says: It is recorded in al-Bayhaqi’s Dala`il al-Nubuwwah and other reference books in authentic documentation), and Ala` al-Din al-Baghdadi’s Tafsir al-Khazin 390, and al-Suyuti’s Jam` al-Jawami` 6/392. On page 397, he also relates the narration to the six famous Hadithists—Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abu-Hatam, Ibn Mardawayh, Abu-Na`im and Al-Bayhaqi. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, in Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah 3/254, records the same report.

Al-Amini then protests against those who have distorted this narration for sake of seeking the satisfaction of people of Quraysh. Though he records the narration in his Tafsir, al-Tabari, in Tarikh, confuses the last words of the Holy Prophet (S) regarding `Ali (a.s.): "... he then said, 'This is my brother...' and so on." Imitating al-Tabari, Ibn Kathir mentions the narration in the same form.⁶ From the margin of Bihar al-Anwar 32/272, the following is quoted:

The bond of fraternity between `Ali and the Holy Prophet (S)—that was concluded according to a divine commandment in the beginning of Islam when Almighty Allah revealed the Verse 'And warn your nearest relations'⁷—was fallen in a form of a covenant. The Holy Prophet (S) would not betake a brother, representative, associate and successor other than `Ali. Likewise, `Ali would not show any blemish in supporting, backing and advising for the Holy Prophet (S) and the religion. It is as same as Prophet (S) Aaron's support to Prophet (S) Moses mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. When the Holy Prophet (S) held bonds of fraternity between each couple of his companions, he took in consideration the relationship linking each two.

He fraternized `Umar and Abu-Bakr, `Uthman and `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Awf, al-Zubayr and `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud, `Ubaydah ibn al-Harith and Bilal, Mus`ab ibn `Umayr and Sa`d ibn Abu-Waqqas, Abu-`Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah and Salim the slave of Abu-Hudhayfah and Hamzah ibn `Abd al-Muttalib and Zayd ibn Harithah al-Kalbi.⁸ At these moments, he said to `Ali, "I swear by Him Who has sent me with the truth that I delayed you so that you will be dedicated to me. For me, your standing is as same as Aaron's to Moses is. Yet, no Prophet (S) will come after me. You are my brother and successor. You will be with me in my palace in Paradise. If any disputes you, say: I am the servant of Allah and the brother of His Messenger. Except fabricators and liars, none should claim it after you."⁹

Likewise, when the Holy Prophet (S) invited the tribes to accept his Mission, none admitted him except the tribe of `Amir ibn Sa`sah. Their spokesman, Bayhara, stated, 'By Allah I swear, I will overcome the Arabs if I assent to this Qurayshite young man. Providing we will pay homage to you in this matter and Allah will give you victory over your opponents, will you hold us your position thereafter?' The Holy Prophet (S) answered, 'This is Allah's affair. He holds it to whomever He desires.' 'We will make our necks the target of whatever is thrown at you and when Allah gives you triumph it goes to others? Nay, we are not in need for your promulgation,' they answered.¹⁰

As a result, supposing the Holy Prophet (S) had not concluded that bond of fraternity and inheritance with `Ali according to a divine commandment, he would not have wasted this opportunity and refuted them in such despairing words while he was in urgent need for the support of such tribes.

Al-Nu`man al-Maghribi, in Daa`im al-Islam 1/15, writes down the following:

We have already recorded the following narration of `Ali: When Almighty Allah revealed the Verse (And warn your nearest relations), the Holy Prophet (S) invited sons of `Abd al-Muttalib to a leg of a sheep and a cup of milk. They were more than forty men. Among them, there were at least ten men who used to have a whole slaughtered animal and drink a large pot of drink. They ate and drank to excess. After that, the Holy Prophetspoke, 'O sons of `Abd al-Muttalib! Comply with me and you will be kings and rulers of the lands. The Lord selected a successor, vicegerent, inheritor, brother and supporter for each

Prophet (S) that He sent. Which one of you should be my successor, vicegerent, inheritor, brother and supporter?' They all stopped talking. He passed by them individually, but they all rejected. I was the youngest among them when I answered him, 'It is I, Allah's messenger!' 'Yes, it is you, 'Ali!' answered the Holy Prophet (S). When they left, Abu-Lahab said to them, 'He served you with a single leg of a sheep and a cup of milk and you had to excess. This is an enough proof on his sorcery.' They also laughed at Abu-Talib saying, 'See how he preferred your son to you.'

Without doubt, the news of the Holy Prophet (S)'s invitation was spread among people of Quraysh as well as the Arabs. They for sure told each other that the 'new' Prophet (S) had gathered his relatives and warned them as he invited them to the new religion. He also asked for a supporter and successor, but none accepted except his young cousin; therefore, he betook him as supporter and successor.

The previous three evidences assert that the Holy Prophet (S)'s succession was a matter widely common for people since the earliest stages of his Divine Mission up to the last moments of his life. Furthermore, everybody recognized that Muhammad's Prophethood was a practical contrivance of a formation of a state governed by him and need for a successor. Hence, all tribes, from a material viewpoint, conceived his mission as a desirable plan that they should take a part in by gaining his promise of handing his leadership over to them.

This leads to the supposition that within the foremost Muslims there were hypocrites attracted by that contrivance, which seemed to be achieving victory in the future. Each of them might look forward to obtaining a leading position in that state. This is the only way by which we can find a suitable interpretation of Allah's saying revealed in Makkah:

"And We have not made the wardens of the Fire other than angels, and We have not made their number but as a trial for those who disbelieve, that those who have been given the Book may be certain and those who believe may increase in faith, and those who have been the Book and the believers may not doubt, and that those in whose hearts is a disease and the unbelievers may say: What does Allah mean by this parable? Thus does Allah makes err whom He pleases, and He guides whom He pleases, and none knows the hosts of your Lord but He Himself; and this is naught but a reminder to the mortals. 74/31"

From the above, it is hard to believe the chieftains of Quraysh who claimed that Muslims had not discussed the question of the Holy Prophet (S)'s succession during his lifetime, even in a form of lawful or unlawful. Correspondingly, it is unacceptable to conclude that Muslims, who asked the Holy Prophet (S) frequently about their future and narrated several reports in this regard, did not ask him about their next leader.

1. Al-Tabari, Tarikh 2/84 and Ibn Kathir, al-Sirah 2/158. In al-Ghadir 7/134, the story is related to Ibn Husham, al-Sirah 2/32, al-Rawd al-Anif 1/264, Imad al-Din al-'Amiri, Bahjat al- Mahafil 1/128, al-Sirah al-Halabiyyah 2/3, Zayni Dahlan: al-Sirah 1/302 and Muhammad Hasanayn Haykal, Hayatu Muhammad.

2. Also, Muslim: al-Sahih 6/16, al-Nassa`i's al-Sunan 7/137, Ibn Majah: al-Sunan 2/957, Ahmad: al-Musnad 5/316, Al-Bayhaqi: al-Sunan 8/145.

3. Also, al-Bayhaqi: al-Sunan 8/145.
 4. An important topic is to be mentioned in this regard; historians and biographers have attempted to obscure the stage of inviting the Hashimites exclusively and, instead, they have invented the stages of pre-Arqam's house and post-Arqam's house, using doubtful and authentic, and irrational and reasonable reports.
 5. Mu'tazilah (Arabic: Those Who Withdraw, or Stand Apart) is an Islamic school of speculative theology that flourished in Basrah and Baghdad (8th–10th centuries AD).
 6. Ibn Kathir al-Bidayah wa'l-Nihayah 3/40 and Tafsir 3/351.
 7. See, for more details, al-Tabari's Tarikh 2/321, Ibn al-Athir's al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh 2/24, Abu'l-Fida's Tarikh 1/116, Ibn Abu al-Hadid Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah 3/254, Ahmad's al-Musnad 1/159, Jami' al-Jawami' 6/408, and Kanz al-'Ummal 6/401.
 8. Ibn Husham's al-Sirah 1/504, al-Muhabbar 70–1 and Al-Baladhiri's al-Sunan 1/270.
 9. Al-Riyad al-Nadirah 2/168 and Kanz al-'Ummal 5/45–6.
 10. Ibn Husham's al-Sirah 1/424, al-Rawd al-Anif 1/264, Bahjat al- Mahafil 1/128, Zayni Dahlan's 1/302 and al-Sirah al-Halabiyyah; 2/3.
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