

## 5) Hadith Al-Wilayah, The Implication of “After Me”

The phrase “after me” in Arabic is either *ba'di* (بعدي) or *min ba'di* (من بعدي). Both mean the same thing and are considered as one and the same. *Hadith al-Wilayah* has been transmitted with both terms. Imam al-Salihi al-Shami (d. 942 H) for instance says:

وروى ابن أبي شيبه وهو صحيح عن عمران - رضي الله تعالى عنه - قال: قال رسول الله - صلى الله عليه وسلم  
" -: " علي مني وأنا منه، وعلي ولي كل مؤمن من بعدي

Ibn Abi Shaybah narrated, **and it is *sahih***, from ‘Imran, may Allah be pleased with him, saying: The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said: “Ali is from me and I am from him, and ‘Ali is the *wali* of every believer after me (*min ba'di*).”<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, al-Hafiz (d. 852 H) also states:

أخرج الترمذي بإسناد قوي عن عمران بن حصين في قصة قال فيها قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ما  
تريدون من علي إن عليا مني وأنا من علي وهو ولي كل مؤمن بعدي

Al-Tirmidhi records in a narrative **with a strong (*qawi*) chain** from ‘Imran b. Hasin: “The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said: ‘What do you want from ‘Ali? Verily, ‘Ali is from me and I am from ‘Ali, and he is the *wali* of every believer after me (*ba'di*).”<sup>2</sup>

The Shi'i lexicographer, al-Turayhi (d. 1085 H), explains what *ba'da* (“after”) means in medieval Arabic:

بعد: خلاف قبل. قال تعالى: ولله الامر من قبل ومن بعد (أي قبل الفتح وبعده، وقد يكون بمعنى مع مثل قوله تعالى  
): عتل بعد ذلك زنيم (أي مع ذلك

**Ba'da: This is the opposite of "before".** Allah says: (To Allah belongs the Command before and after) [30:4], meaning before the Conquest of Makkah and after it. Also, it also has the meaning of "with", like in His Words, (Cruel, after that base-born) [68: 13], meaning "with that".<sup>3</sup>

Classical Sunni lexicographers, Ibn Manzur (d. 711 H) and Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Qadir (d. 721 H), also state:

وبعد ضد قبل

*Ba'da* is the opposite of "before".<sup>4</sup>

The definitions are general. As such, *ba'di* refers to any "after", especially "after in time", "after in status" or "after in sequence". A rarer meaning of *ba'di* is "in my absence" or "during my absence", as in these verses:

قال فإنا قد فتنا قومك من بعدك وأضلهم السامري

He (Allah) said: "Verily! We have tried your people **in your absence**, and al-Samiri has led them astray."<sup>5</sup>

And:

ولما رجع موسى إلى قومه غضبان أسفا قال بئسما خلفتموني من بعدي

When Musa returned to his people, angry and grieved, he said, "What an evil thing is that which you have done **during my absence!**

So, what does "after me" mean in *Hadith al-Wilayah*? Was 'Ali, *'alaihi al-salam*, thereby the *wali* of the *Ummah* in the event of Muhammad's death, *sallallahu 'alaihi wa aalihi*? Or, was he their *wali* next in rank to the Messenger with the latter alive? Or was he the *wali* only in the temporary absence of the Prophet? In the event of any of these cases, what exactly would *wali* and "after me" mean?

In order to determine these, one must first analyze the text and grammar of the *hadith* itself. There is a clear difference between these two statements:

علي ولي كل مؤمن بعدي

'Ali is **THE** *wali* (wali) of every believer after me.

And:

علي ولي لكل مؤمن من بعدي

‘Ali is a *wali* (waliyyun) of every believer after me.

The actual word in *Hadith al-Wilayah* is *al-wali* (الولي) – THE *wali*. However, since it is immediately followed by *kulli* (كل), its first two letters are hidden for a smoother pronunciation. Yet, the word remains pronounced as *wali* – indicating that it is a definite noun. Its indefinite form is *waliyyun*. This indefinite form can only be followed by *likulli* (لكل) in order to retain its indefinite status.

The singular definite personal noun, followed by *kulli* (كل), is sometimes adopted to name a rank, status or quality that is *absolutely exclusive* to someone. The Qur’an too has used it in this sense, with regards to Allah. For instance, it says:

قل أغير الله أبغي ربا وهو رب كل شيء

Say: “Shall I seek a lord (*rabbān*) other than Allah, while He is **THE** Lord (*Rabb*) of every thing?”<sup>6</sup>

The last part of this verse adopts the exact same grammatical format as *Hadith al-Wilayah*. It apparently seeks to declare that *absolutely* no other lord of everything exists besides Allah – *not at a higher, equal or even lower level* – and has used that format to strongly and completely convey its message. For all intents and purposes, only Allah exists as the *sole* Lord of everything. There is no superior, concurrent or inferior lord – for any purpose – besides Him.

Another similar verse is this:

قل من رب السماوات والأرض قل الله .... قل الله خالق كل شيء

Say: “Who is **THE** Lord of the heavens and the earth?” Say: “Allah”.... Say: “Allah is **THE** Creator of every thing.”<sup>7</sup>

He is the *only* Lord of everything, and the *only* Creator of everything. It is obvious that the Qur’an absolutely restricts the *rububiyyah* (lordship) and *khalq* (creation) of everything exclusively to Him through the adoption of this grammatical style. Meanwhile, the fact that the *wilayah* in the *hadith* is absolutely exclusive to ‘Ali after the Messenger is clearly confirmed by Ibn ‘Abbas, *radhiyallahu ‘anhu*, a very prominent Sahabi. Imam al-Hakim (d. 403 H) records:

أخبرنا أبو بكر أحمد بن جعفر بن حمدان القطيعي ببغداد من أصل كتابه ثنا عبد الله بن أحمد بن حنبل حدثني أبي

ثنا يحيى بن حماد ثنا أبو عوانة ثنا أبو بلج ثنا عمرو بن ميمون قال إني لجالس عند ابن عباس إذ أتاه تسعة رهط فقالوا : يا ابن عباس : إما أن تقوم معنا وإما أن تخلو بنا من بين هؤلاء قال : فقال ابن عباس بل أنا أقوم معكم قال وهو يومئذ صحيح قبل أن يعمى قال : فابتدؤوا فتحدثوا فلا ندري ما قالوا قال فجاء ينفض ثوبه ويقول أف وتف وقعوا في رجل له بضع عشرة فضائل ليست لأحد غيره وقعوا في رجل .... قال له رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم أنت ولي كل مؤمن بعدي ومؤمنة

Abu Bakr Ahmad b. Ja'far b. Hamdan al-Qati'i – 'Abd Allah b. Ahmad b. Hanbal – my father (Ahmad b. Hanbal) Yahya b. Hamad – Abu Awanah – Abu Balj – 'Amr b. Maymun:

I was sitting in the company of Ibn 'Abbas when nine men came to him and said, "O Ibn 'Abbas! Either you debate with us, or tell these folks that you prefer a private debate." So, Ibn 'Abbas said, "I would rather participate with you." In those days, he had not lost his eye-sight yet. So they started talking, but I was not sure exactly what they were talking about. Then he came, squeezing his robe, and saying: "Nonsense! **They are attacking a man who has ten EXCLUSIVE merits....** They are attacking a man ... to whom the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said: "**You are THE wali of every male and female believer after me.**"[8](#)

Al-Hakim says:

هذا حديث صحيح الإسناد

This *hadith* has a *sahih* chain.[9](#)

Al-Dhahabi (d. 748 H) corroborates him:

صحيح

*Sahih*.[10](#)

'Allamah al-Albani (d. 1420 H) confirms them both:

وأما قوله: "وهو ولي كل مؤمن بعدي" فقد جاء من حديث ابن عباس، فقال الطيالسي (2752) : حدثنا أبو عوانة . عن أبي بلج عن عمرو بن ميمون عنه " أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال لعلي: " أنت ولي كل مؤمن بعدي ". وأخرجه أحمد ( 1 / 330 – 331 ) ومن طريقه الحاكم ( 3 / 132 – 133 ) وقال: " صحيح الإسناد "، ووافقه الذهبي، وهو كما قالوا.

As for his statement "and he (*huwa*) is the *wali* of every believer after me", it has been narrated in the *hadith* of Ibn 'Abbas, for al-Tayalisi (2752) said: Abu 'Awanah – Abu Balj – 'Amr b. Maymun, from him

(i.e. Ibn ‘Abbas), “that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said to ‘Ali: ‘You are **THE wali** of every believer after me.” Ahmad (1/330–331) recorded it, and from his route al-Hakim (3/132–133), **and he (al-Hakim) said, “a *sahih* chain” and al-Dhahabi concurred with him, and it is indeed as both have stated.**[11](#)

The full *hadith* elaborates on all ten exclusive merits. However, we have highlighted the most relevant of them to our current discourse, which is *Hadith al-Wilayah*.

As such, grammatically and based upon the explicit testimony of Ibn ‘Abbas, the *wilayah* of Amir al-Muminin in the *hadith* is a “merit” that is *absolutely exclusive* to him *alone*. To him alone, to the exclusion of all other creatures, belonged the *wilayah* of the *Ummah* immediately after the Prophet.

A rather relevant fact is that the Messenger of Allah too was the only *wali* of the believers throughout his lifetime. This is explicitly stated in another *hadith* copied by al-Hafiz Ibn Kathir (d. 774 H):

أنا ولي كل مؤمن

I am **THE wali** of every believer.[12](#)

Ibn Kathir has this comment about it:

قال شيخنا أبو عبد الله الذهبي حديث صحيح

Our Shaykh, Abu ‘Abd Allah al-Dhahabi, said: (It is) a *sahih hadith*.[13](#)

Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal (d. 241 H) also records that the Prophet said:

أنا ولي المؤمنين

I am **THE wali** of the believers.[14](#)

Al-Arnaut says:

إسناده صحيح على شرط مسلم

Its chain is *sahih* upon the standard of (Imam) Muslim.[15](#)

He was the only one. There was absolutely no other among humans – none above him, none with him, and none below him. After him, the exact same status passed onto ‘Ali from him:

علي ولي كل مؤمن بعدي

‘Ali is **THE** *wali* of every believer after me.

So, what was that totally exclusive type of *walayah* or *wilayah* that the Messenger of Allah held during his lifetime? Was it friendship with the Muslims? Was it help of the Muslims? Was it support of the Muslims? Or, was it rule over the Muslims?

As for *walayah* (friendship, help and support), this was NOT exclusive to the Prophet during his lifetime, nor was it ever exclusive to him and/or ‘Ali or any other Muslim! Allah says:

والمؤمنون والمؤمنات بعضهم أولياء بعض

The believers, men and women, are *awliya* (plural of *wali*) of one another. [16](#)

Al-Hafiz Ibn Kathir explains the verse:

بعضهم أولياء بعض} أي : يتناصرون ويتعاضدون ، كما جاء في الصحيح: "المؤمن للمؤمن كالبنان يشد بعضه بعضا" وشبك بين أصابعه وفي الصحيح أيضا : "مثل المؤمنين في توادهم وتراحمهم ، كمثل الجسد الواحد ، إذا اشتكى منه عضو تداعى له سائر الجسد بالحمى والسهر"

{are *awliya* of one another}, meaning **they help one another and they support one another**, as it is recorded in the *Sahih*: “Each believer to another believer are like the fingertip, **each strengthening the other**” and he interlocked his fingers. Also, in the *Sahih*, it is recorded: “The example of the believers in **their love of one another, and their mercy to one another**, is like a single body. If a body part complains, the remaining parts of the body come to its rescue with strength and care.” [17](#)

With this reality, we are left with only one explanation: the Messenger of Allah was the sole ruler of the *Ummah* – which fits perfectly with history! In *Hadith al-Wilayah*, he apparently indicates the transition of this same exclusive *wilayah* after him, and its direction.

Our understanding is further helped by the context of the *hadith* itself. ‘Ali made an **administrative** decision, in his capacity as the overall commander of the army units. Some of the soldiers under him objected, and thereby reported him to the Messenger. The issue for determination was NOT whether or not he was their friend, helper or supporter. Rather, ‘Ali’s authority was being questioned by his subordinates.

It was in this light that the Messenger of Allah angrily rejected their objections, ordered them to desist from *any* future recurrence, and informed them that ‘Ali was their *wali* after him. In other words, “he is your next ruler after me: you should learn to be fully loyal to him and his decisions now; if you kept up

this attitude to him, you would be rebels to him later"! With the above facts in mind, there is no doubt that "after me" in the *hadith* could only have meant "after my death".

Interestingly, Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 H) reaches this same conclusion as well:

و كذلك قوله هو ولي كل مؤمن بعدي كذب على رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم بل هو في حياته و بعد مماته ولي كل مؤمن و كل مؤمن وليه في المحيا و الممات فالولاية التي هي ضد العداوة لا تختص بزمان

And similarly his statement "he is the *wali* of every believer after me", it is a lie upon the Messenger of Allah. Rather he (the Prophet), during his life **and after his death**, was the *wali* of every believer, and every believer is his *wali* in life **and death**. The *walayah* that means the opposite of enmity (i.e. friendship) is not restricted by time. [18](#)

Our dear Shaykh obviously understands from the *hadith* that "after me" indicates the end of the Prophet's *wilayah*, followed immediately by the commencement of that of 'Ali. He also knows that this termination of the Prophet's *wilayah*, according to "after me" in the *hadith*, could only have occurred with his death. But, since Ibn Taymiyyah has self-deluded himself into believing that *wali* can never mean "ruler", he becomes totally confused, or at least pretends to be so. Despite the clear illogicality and grammatical invalidity of such a stance, Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah maintains that "the *wali*" in the *hadith* only means "a friend"! Yet, on the strength of the illogicality and fallacy of interpreting *wali* in the *hadith* to mean "friend", our dear Shaykh throws it away!

Surprisingly, 'Allamah al-Albani thinks that his Shaykh actually has a point:

فمن العجيب حقا أن يتجراً شيخ الإسلام ابن تيمية على إنكار هذا الحديث وتكذيبه في " منهاج السنة " ( 4 / 104 ) كما فعل بالحديث المتقدم هناك، مع تقريره رحمه الله أحسن تقرير أن الموالاتة هنا ضد المعاداة وهو حكم ثابت لكل مؤمن، وعلي رضي الله عنه من كبارهم، يتولاهم ويتولونه.

Of the truly unbelievable is Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah's denial of this *hadith*, and his calling it a lie in *Minhaj al-Sunnah* (4/104), as he did with the previous *hadith* here, despite his *excellent* confirmation, may Allah be merciful to him, that **the friendship here is the opposite of enmity. And this is a ruling that is firmly established for every believer**, and 'Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, is one of their elders. **He loves them and they love him.** [19](#)

In simple words, there is nothing special or exclusive to anyone in the *hadith*. It only reminds that 'Ali is a friend of every believer, in the exact same way that each believer is a friend of every other believer! So, one is tempted to ask: why then has the *hadith* stated "the *wali*", rather than "a *wali*", and especially within an exclusion grammar? Secondly, why has 'Allamah al-Albani pretended not to see that "after me" exists in the *hadith*? It is not reflected at all in his "explanation"? After all, the Messenger of Allah

did not say it for fun! In a rather intriguing stunt, Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah himself reveals why ‘Allamah al-Albani and others like him do not like to see the “after me”:

فقول القائل علي ولي كل مؤمن بعدي كلام يمتنع نسبته إلى النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم فإنه إن أراد الموالاته لم يحتج ان يقول بعدي

Therefore, the statement of the speaker “Ali is the *wali* of every believer after me”, it is a statement that cannot be attributed to the Prophet, peace be upon him. This is because **if he had intended friendship, he did not need to say “after me”**.[20](#)

We too add that he would have said “a *wali*”, and NOT “the *wali*”, if he had meant to say “friend”, “helper” or “supporter”. The full *hadith* – if ‘Allamah al-Albani were right – would have been: “Ali is a *wali* of every believer”! He apparently prefers to ignore crucial parts of the *hadith* in order to keep his fallacious explanation of it floating.

But, Imam Ibn Hibban (d. 354 H) thinks he has a final solution to this stubborn Sunni dilemma:

ما تريدون من علي ثلاثا إن عليا مني وأنا منه وهو ولي كل مؤمن بعدي

ذكر البيان بأن أبي طالب رضي الله عنه كان ناصر كل من ناصره رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم

“What do you want from ‘Ali! What do you want from ‘Ali? What do you want from ‘Ali. Verily, ‘Ali is from me and I am from ‘Ali, and he is THE *wali* of every believer after me.”

He mentioned the explanation that ‘Ali b. Abi Talib, may Allah be pleased with him, *was THE helper* of everyone whose helper *was* the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him.[21](#)

Yet, this, disappointingly, solves nothing. Was Amir al-Muminin not *an* helper of the believers during the Prophet’s lifetime? Besides, was the Messenger of Allah *the* only helper of the Muslims during his prophetic mission, such that ‘Ali became *the* only helper after him?

Seeing the utter helplessness of the situation, a prominent Sunni scholar, al-Salihi al-Shami (d. 942 H), chooses to submit to the apparent truth, while addressing *Hadith al-Wilayah*:

وهو وليكم بعدي: (أي يلي أمركم)

(He is your *wali* after me): meaning, **he will rule over your affairs**.[22](#)

Of even greater interest is that Ibn Abi ‘Asim (d. 287 H), a major classical Sunni *muhadith*, places this *hadith* under the chapter heading: **the *Khilafah* of ‘Ali:**

ثنا عباس بن الوليد النرسي وأبو كامل قالوا ثنا جعفر بن سليمان، عن يزيد الرشك، عن مطرف، عن عمران بن حصين قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: علي مني، وأنا منه، وهو ولي كل مؤمن من بعدي.

‘Abbas b. al-Walid al-Narsi and Abu Kamil – Ja’far b. Sulayman – Yazid al-Rishk – Mutarrif – ‘Imran b. Hasin: The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said: “Ali is from me and I am from him, and he is **THE wali** of every believer after me.”<sup>23</sup>

Dr. Al-Jawabirah says:

إسناده صحيح. رجاله رجال مسلم.

**Its chain is *sahih*.** Its narrators are narrators of (*Sahih*) Muslim.<sup>24</sup>

1. Muhammad b. Yusuf al-Salihi al-Shami, *Subul al-Huda al-Rashad fi Sirah Khayr al-‘Ibad* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1414 H) [annotators: ‘Adil Ahmad ‘Abd al-Mawjud and ‘Ali Muhammad Ma’ud], vol. 11, p. 296
2. Ahmad b. ‘Ali b. Hajar al-‘Asqalani, *al-Isabah fi Tamyiz al-Sahabah* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1415 H) [annotators: Shaykh ‘Adil Ahmad b. ‘Abd al-Mawjud and Shaykh ‘Ali Muhammad Ma’udh], vol. 4, p. 468
3. Fakhr al-Din al-Turayhi, *Majma’ al-Bahrayn* (2nd edition, 1408 H) [annotator: Sayyid Ahmad al-Husayni], vol. 1, p. 217
4. Abu al-Fadhl Jamal al-Din Muhammad b. Mukram b. Manzur al-Afriqi al-Misri, *Lisan al-‘Arab* (Qum: Nashr Adab al-Hawzah; 1405 H), vol. 3, p. 92; Muhammad b. Abi Bakr ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Razi, *Mukhtar al-Sihah* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1415 H) [annotator: Ahmad Shams al-Din], p. 37
5. Qur’an 20:85
6. Qur’an 6:164
7. Qur’an 13:16
8. Abu ‘Abd Allah Muhammad b. ‘Abd Allah al-Hakim al-Naysaburi, *al-Mustadrak ‘ala al-Sahihayn* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1411 H) [annotator: Mustafa ‘Abd al-Qadir ‘Ata], vol. 3, p. 143, # 4652
9. Ibid
10. Ibid
11. Abu ‘Abd al-Rahman Muhammad Nasir al-Din b. al-Hajj Nuh b. Tajati b. Adam al-Ashqudri al-Albani, *Silsilah al-Ahadith al-Sahihah wa Shayhun min Fiqihah wa Fawaidihah* (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Ma’arif li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi’; 1st edition, 1415 H), vol. 5, p. 263, # 2223
12. Abu al-Fida Isma’il b. Kathir al-Dimashqi, *al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah* (Dar Ihya al-Turath al-‘Arabi; 1st edition, 1408 H) [annotator: ‘Ali Shiri], vol. 5, p. 228–229
13. Ibid
14. Abu ‘Abd Allah Ahmad b. Hanbal al-Shaybani, *Musnad* (Cairo: Muasassat Qurtubah) [annotator: Shu’ayb al-Arnaut], vol. 3, p. 371, # 15026
15. Ibid
16. Qur’an 9:71
17. Abu al-Fida Isma’il b. ‘Umar b. Kathir al-Qurshi al-Dimashqi, *Tafsir al-Qur’an al-‘Azim* (Dar al-Taybah li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi’; 2nd edition, 1420 H) [annotator: Sami b. Muhammad Salamah], vol. 4, p. 174
18. Abu al-‘Abbas Ahmad b. ‘Abd al-Halim b. Taymiyyah al-Harrani, *Minhaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyah* (Muasassat

Qurtubah; 1st edition, 1406 H) [annotator: Dr. Muhammad Rashad Salim], vol. 7, p. 391

[19.](#) Abu ‘Abd al-Rahman Muhammad Nasir al-Din b. al-Hajj Nuh b. Tajati b. Adam al-Ashqudri al-Albani, Silsilah al-Ahadith al-Sahihah wa Shayhun min Fiqhahah wa Fawaidihah (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Ma’arif li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi’; 1st edition, 1415 H), vol. 5, p. 264, # 2223

[20.](#) Abu al-‘Abbas Ahmad b. ‘Abd al-Halim b. Taymiyyah al-Harrani, Minhaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyah (Muasassat Qurtubah; 1st edition, 1406 H) [annotator: Dr. Muhammad Rashad Salim], vol. 7, p. 391

[21.](#) Abu Hatim Muhammad b. Hibban b. Ahmad b. Hibban b. Mu’adh b. Ma’bad al-Tamimi al-Darimi al-Busti, Sahih Ibn Hibban bi Tartib Ibn Balban (Beirut: Muasassat al-Risalah; 2nd edition, 1414 H) [annotators: Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani and Shu’ayb al-Arnaut], vol. 15, pp. 373-374, # 6929

[22.](#) Muhammad b. Yusuf al-Salihi al-Shami, Subul al-Huda al-Rashad fi Sirah Khayr al-‘Ibad (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1414 H) [annotators: ‘Adil Ahmad ‘Abd al-Mawjud and ‘Ali Muhammad Ma’ud], vol. 6, p. 237

[23.](#) Abu Bakr b. Abi ‘Asim, Ahmad b. ‘Amr b. al-Dhahhak b. Mukhlid al-Shaybani, Kitab al-Sunnah (Dar al-Sami’i li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi’) [annotator: Dr. Basim b. Faysal al-Jawabirah], vol. 1, p. 799, # 1221

[24.](#) Ibid

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