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6) Hadith Al-Thaqalayn: The Prophet At Ghadir Khumm (Part 4)

The Messenger of Allah, sallallahu 'alaihi wa alihi, proclaimed at Ghadir Khumm to all humanity:

I am leaving behind over you the Two Weighty Things (al-thaqalayn): the Book of Allah and my offspring, my Ahl al-Bayt. Verily, both shall never separate from each other until they meet me at the Lake-Fount.

The Qur'an and the offspring of the Prophet are referred to as "the Two Weighty Things" (al-thaqalayn) in the ahadith. Both of them are "left behind over" us by him, and are further described as being eternally inseparable till the Day of al-Qiyamah. What exactly did the Rasul intend with these statements?

When the leader of a nation or community tells his people "I will die soon. But, I have left behind over you so-and-so", what possibly could he be telling them? It is clear, of course. The designated person – "left behind over" his people – is to take his place and perform his role among them. Hadith al—Thaqalayn, obviously, is in this sense too. The Prophet was declaring the Qur'an and his offspring as his substitutes over his Ummah after him. Shaykh al-Arnaut too has something for us in this regard:

."التُّقلين: الثقل، بفتحتين: كل شيء نفيس مصون، ومنه هذا الحديث، كذا في "القاموس

...أحدهما أكبر: هو الكتاب، لأنه إمام الكل: العترة، وغيرهم

وعترتي: كأنه صلى الله عليه وسلم جعلهم قائمين مقامه، فكما كان في حياته القرآن والنبي، كذلك بعده القرآن وأهل بيته، ولكن قيامهم مقامه في وجوب المحبة والمراعاة والإحسان، لا في العمل بأقوالهم وآرائهم، بل المرجع في . العمل: الكتاب والسنة، والله تعالى أعلم

Al-Sindi said: "His statement {I am leaving behind over you}: that is, after me death.

{The Two Weighty Things}: every priceless treasure is called a 'weighty thing', and this hadith is from it, as stated in al-Qamus.

{One of them is greater}: that is the Book, because it is the Imam for everyone – whether the offspring (of the Prophet) or others...

{and my offspring}: it is like he, peace be upon him, appointed them TO STAND IN HIS PLACE, such that just as it was the Qur'an and the Prophet during his lifetime, it was the Qur'an and his Ahl al-Bayt after him. However, their standing in his place is (only) with regards to the (Ummah's) obligation of love, kindness and care (to them), not in adherence to their words and opinions. Rather, the reference for actions are the Book and the Sunnah, and Allah the Most High knows best."1

This is further strengthened by the fact that he called them both "the Two Weighty Things", al-thaqalayn. Imam Ibn Manzur (d. 711 H), the leading classical Sunni linguist, explains what this means:

وروي عن النبي، صلى الله عليه وسلم، أنه قال في آخر عمره: إني تارك فيكم الثقلين: كتاب الله وعترتي، فجعلهما كتاب الله عز وجل وعترته، وقد تقدم ذكر العترة. وقال ثعلب: سميا ثقلين لأن الأخذ بهما ثقيل والعمل بهما ثقيل، قال: وأصل الثقل أن العرب تقول لكل شئ نفيس خطير مصون ثقل، فسماهما ثقلين إعظاما لقدرهما وتفخيما لشأنهما

It is narrated from the Prophet, peace be upon him, that he said during the end of his lifetime: "I am leaving behind over you the Two Weighty Things (al-thaqalayn): the Book of Allah and my offspring." So, he identified them both as the Book of Allah the Almighty and his offspring. The word "itrah (offspring)" has already been explained. Tha'lab said: "He named them thaqalayn because holding fast to them both and following them both are weighty (responsibilities)." He said: "The origin of (the word) thaqal is that Arabs referred to every priceless weighty thing as a thaqal. Therefore, he named them thaqalayn to highlight their significance and to extol their importance 2

Imam Ibn al-Athir (d. 606 H), an ace Sunni hadith linguist, has the same submission:

[I am leaving among you the Two Weighty Things: the Book of Allah and my offspring], he named them both thaqalayn because holding fast to them both and following them are weighty (responsibilities). And every priceless weighty thing is called thaqal. Therefore, he named them thaqalayn to highlight their significance and to extol their importance.3

Another leading Sunni linguist, al-Zubaydi (d. 1205 H), backs him:

وكذلك الحديث} إني تارك فيكم الثقلين، كتاب الله وعترتي {جعلهما ثقلين إعظاما لقدرهما وتفخيما لهما. وقال ثعلب: سماهما ثقلين؛ لأن الأخذ بهما والعمل بهما ثقيل.

And it is like that in the hadith: "I am leaving among you the Two Weighty Things (al-thaqalayn): the Book of Allah and my offspring". He called them thaqalayn to highlight their significance and to extol them both. Tha'lab said: "He named them thaqalayn because holding fast to them both and following them both are weighty (responsibilities)."4

Yet another leading Sunni linguist, Abu Mansur al-Azhari (d. 370 H), confirms them:

روي عن النبي (صلى الله عليه وسلم) أنَّه قال في مرضه الذي مات فيه: (إني تارك فيكم الثقلين: كتابَ الله وعِتْرتي، ولن يفترقا حتى يردا علي الحوض)، فسَّر النبي (صلى الله عليه وسلم) الثقلين فجعلهما كتاب الله جلّ وعزّ وعِترته عليه السلام؛ وقد فسرت العترة فيما تقدّم وهم جماعة عشيرته الأذنون. وقال أبو العباس أحمد بن يحيى: سميا . ثقلين لأن الأخذ بهما ثقيل، والعمل بهما ثقيل

It is narrated from the Prophet, peace be upon him, that he said in his fatal illness: (I am leaving behind over you the Two Weighty Things: the Book of Allah and my offspring. Both shall never separate from each other until they meet me at the Lake–Fount). The Prophet, peace be upon him, explained the Two Weighty Things and identified them both as the Book of Allah the Almighty and his offspring, peace be upon him. The word "itrah (offspring)" has already been explained, and they are his closest blood relatives. Abu al–'Abbas Ahmad b. Yahya said: "They are named thaqalayn because holding fast to them both is a weighty (responsibility), and following them both is also a weighty (responsibility)."5

Imam al-Nawawi (d. 676 H), the well-known hadith scientist, tables the view of the classical Sunni scholars as well:

قوله صلى الله عليه وسلم) وانا تارك فيكم ثقلين (فذكر كتاب الله وأهل بيته قال العلماء سميا ثقلين لعظمهما وكبير شأنهما وقيل العمل بهما

His statement, peace be upon him (I am leaving behind over you Two Weighty Things) and he mentioned the Book of Allah and his Ahl al-Bayt. The 'ulama said: He named them thaqalayn due to

their magnificence and the greatness of their significance. It is also said: (they are named thaqalayn due to the fact that) both are to be followed.6

And Shaykh 'Abd al-Baqi, in his annotation of Sahih Muslim, writes these words under Hadith al-Thaqalayn:

(Two Weighty Things [thaqalayn]): The 'ulama said: He named them thaqalayn due to their magnificence and the greatness of their significance. It is also said: (they are named thaqalayn due to the fact that) both are to be followed.7

So, our Prophet indicated that he was leaving behind the Qur'an and his offspring as his replacements over us after him. He equally very strongly emphasized that we must "adhere to" and "follow" both the Qur'an and his offspring after him, by naming them "the Two Weighty Things" (al-thaqalayn). It is thus impossible to miss his message in any circumstance: the offspring of the Messenger of Allah are his khalifahs and the masters and guides over his Ummah after him.

Meanwhile, the Rasul also described his offspring as being eternally inseparable from the Qur'an until the Day of Resurrection:

Verily, both shall NEVER separate from each other until they meet me at the Lake-Fount.

What does this mean?

There is no doubt: the Messenger of Allah is the most eloquent of all of his Lord's creation. This is why he was able to convey some of his most significant messages through that single statement. He absolutely ruled out the possibility of any form of separation between the Qur'an and his offspring at any moment in the lifetime of this earth. So, we ask:

Does sin cause a separation between us and the Qur'an in our sinful acts? Of course, there is no doubt about this! This means then that the offspring of the Prophet never commit sinful acts. Otherwise, they would be separated from the Qur'an, at least for the duration of their sinful acts.

Does heresy – whether in beliefs or actions – cause a separation between us and the Qur'an? There is no doubt about this too. Heresies of all sorts contradict the Qur'an, and whoever possesses any heresy is in contradiction to the Book of Allah.

Therefore, whatsoever the offspring of the Prophet believe, say, do or teach is the true, pure guidance

from Allah and His Messenger. It is absolutely impossible for the offspring to be heretical in absolutely anything. Otherwise, they would be separated from the Qur'an, at least for the duration of the heresy.

Allah and His Messenger have joined together the Qur'an and the offspring, and have made them eternally inseparable till the Day of al-Qiyamah. This is also a command to every believer not to ever separate them in any circumstance. If you love the Qur'an, you must love the offspring too. If you respect the Qur'an, you must respect the offspring too. If you follow the Qur'an, you must follow the offspring too. If you obey the Qur'an, you must obey the offspring too. If you consider the Qur'an to be your Imam, you must take the offspring too as your Imams. If you consider the Qur'an to be your supreme guide in any affair, you must take the offspring too as your supreme guides in all your affairs.

This last point is re-emphasized by 'Allamah al-Albani (d. 1420 H) in these words while writing about the Qur'an and Sunnah:

Rather, it is obligatory to consider the Book and the Sunnah as a single source, with no difference between them both, AS INDICATED IN THE STATEMENT of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him: "I have been given the Qur'an and its likeness with it", that is the Sunnah, AND HIS STATEMENT, "Both shall never separate until they meet me at the Lake-Fount."8

The 'Allamah considers the phrase "both shall never separate from each other" to be an order against discrimination between the two. Of course, he has applied the phrase to the Sunnah, even though its only reliable chains link with the offspring of the Prophet and nothing else. Yet, we understand from al–Albani's submission that it is "obligatory" to consider the Qur'an and the offspring as a single source of guidance and knowledge in Islam, with no difference between them both, as indicated in the words of the Prophet: "both shall never separate from each other". As such, whosoever follows the Qur'an in all matters, but does not obey the offspring in all matters, has defied the Order of Allah and His Messenger, and has thereby become a plain heretic.

- 1. Abu 'Abd Allah Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Hanbal b. Hilal b. Asad al-Shaybani, Musnad (Muasassat al-Risalah; 1st edition, 1421 H) [annotators: Shu'ayb al-Arnaut, 'Adil Murshid and others], vol. 17, pp. 174–175, # 11104. Al-Sindi's submission is indeed very weird. The Ahl al-Bayt stand in the place of the Prophet in his Ummah after him. Yet, none is obliged to follow them! Moreover, al-Sindi seems to think that following the Ahl al-Bayt leads away from the Kitab and Sunnah! Alas, they are actually the purest route to the Qur'an and the original teachings of Muhammad.
- 2. Abu al-Fadhl Jamal al-Din Muhammad b. Mukram b. Manzur al-Afriqi al-Misri, Lisan al-'Arab (Beirut: Dar Sadir; 1st edition), vol. 11, p. 85
- 3. Abu Sa'adat al-Mubarak b. Muhammad, Ibn al-Athir al-Jazari, al-Nihayah fi Gharib al-Hadith wa al-Athar (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-'Ilmiyyah; 1399 AH) [annotator: Tahir Ahmad al-Zawi and Mahmud Muhammad al-Tanahi], vol. 1, p. 216
- 4. Muhibb al-Din Abu Faydh Sayyid Muhammad Murtadha al-Husayni al-Wasiti al-Zubaydi al-Hanafi, Taj al-'Urus min

Jawahir al-Qamus (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr; 1414 H), vol. 14, p. 85

- 5. Abu Mansur Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Azhari, Tahdhib al-Lughah (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi; 1st edition, 2001 CE), vol. 9, p. 78
- 6. Abu Zakariyyah Yahya b. Sharaf al-Nawawi, Sharh Sahih Muslim (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi; 1407 H) vol. 15, p. 180
- 7. Abu al-Husayn Muslim b. al-Hajjaj al-Qushayri al-Naysaburi, Sahih Muslim (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi) [annotator: Muhammad Fuad 'Abd al-Baqi], vol. 4, p. 1873, # 2408 (36)
- 8. Abu 'Abd al-Rahman Muhammad Nasir al-Din b. al-Hajj Nuh b. Tajati b. Adam al-Ashqudri al-Albani, Manzilah al-Sunnah fi al-Islam (Kuwait: Dar al-Salafiyyah; 4th edition, 1404 H), p. 22

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