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# Chapter 1: Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (as)

# Question 1: Do Shias worship Ali ibn Abu Talib (as)?

Shias do not worship Imam Ali (as). Shias worship Allah (SwT). How can anyone believe that Shias worship Imam Ali (as) when he himself tells us to worship Allah (SwT)?

### Nahjul Balagha

In the famous book, Nahjul Balagha, a compilation of the sermons and sayings of Imam Ali (as), the first recorded sermon begins with:

"Praise is due to Allah whose worth cannot be described by speakers, whose bounties cannot be counted by calculators and whose claim (to obedience) cannot be satisfied by those who attempt to do so, whom the height of intellectual courage cannot appreciate, and the divings of understanding cannot reach; He for whose description no limit has been laid down, no eulogy exists, no time is ordained and no duration is fixed. He brought forth creation through His Omnipotence, dispersed winds through His Compassion, and made firm the shaking earth with rocks."

Imam Ali (as) continues: "The foremost in religion is the acknowledgement of Him, the perfection of acknowledging Him is to testify Him, the perfection of testifying Him is to believe in His Oneness, the perfection of believing in His Oneness is to regard Him Pure, and the perfection of His purity is to deny Him attributes, because every attribute is a proof that it is different from that to which it is attributed and everything to which something is attributed is different from the attribute.

Thus whoever attaches attributes to Allah recognises His like, and who recognises His like regards Him two; and who regards Him two recognises parts for Him; and who recognises parts for Him mistook Him; and he who mistook Him, pointed at Him; and he who pointed at Him, admitted limitations for Him; and he who admitted limitations for Him, numbered Him."

This sermon, and others in Nahjul Balagha show that Imam Ali (as) is the most eloquent exponent of Allah's existence, His unity (Tawhid).

#### **Other followers**

There are other groups, chief among them the Nuzayris, the various groups of the Ghuluww, the extremists, who have worshipped Ali, but not the Shias.

Shias take pride that Ali (as) was not Allah but was the first male to worship Allah, with the Prophet (S); the first to bow down behind Muhammad (S), in prayer (salah), in worship of the one true Lord, Allah (SwT).

The Ghuluww, the Nuzayris and others, who take delight in their worship of Ali (as), are not friends or allies, of the Shias. They are people who have abandoned Islam, who have traduced Ali (as) by ascribing divinity to him. Too many Shias over the years have praised the Nuzayris and the Ali worshippers in their hymns (marthiyas) and in their religious poetry. This is wrong, un–Islamic and this is something the Prophet (S) warned against.

In a famous tradition (hadith) of the Prophet (S), narrated by Ahlul Sunnah and Shia scholars alike, the Holy Prophet said: "O Ali, you have a resemblance to Prophet Jesus (Isa), the son of Virgin Mary whom some Jews hated so much that they slandered him and his mother Mary and whom some Christians loved so much that they placed him in a position not rightly his."

Shias love Ali (as) but do not, and should not, put him in a position which is not rightly his, that is, above the Prophet (S) or in place of Allah (SwT)

As Imam Ali (as) himself said, "Two kinds of people will be damned on my account. Those who form an exaggerated opinion about me and those who underestimate me because they hate me." (Nahjul Balaghah, list of short sayings no.116).

So the historical evidence, the consensus of the Shia ulema and common sense are all proofs that that Shias worship Allah (SwT), not Imam Ali (as).

# Question 2: Do Shias believe that Ali ibn Abu Talib (as) is superior to the Prophet (S)?

Some enemies of the Shias claim that, we believe, Imam Ali (as) was better or superior to Muhammad (S); some have suggested that we believe that the revelation of the Holy Qur'an was intended for him but mistakenly given to his cousin Muhammad (S). This is nonsense.

#### **Common sense**

Ali ibn Abu Talib (as) was either 10 or 12 years of age when the Prophet (S) received his first revelation, (wahi), from the archangel Jibraeel (Gabriel) in a cave. Does it make sense to believe that Shias would claim Jibraeel, an infallible angel, mistook a 12-year-old boy for a 40-year-old man?

Shias do not believe this but rather take pleasure in pointing out how Imam Ali (as) slept in the bed of the Prophet (S) to protect the Prophet's life. Ali (as) slept in the Prophet's bed on the night of Hijra so that the Prophet (S) could migrate to Madinah safely. How could we then believe he is superior to the Prophet (S)?

#### References from books of Ahlul Sunnah

In fact, the Prophet (S) famously predicted, in a tradition (hadith) narrated by very famous Ahlul Sunnah scholars like Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal in his Musnad and Imam Hakim in his Mustadrak: "In truth there will be, among you, one who shall fight over the ta'wil of the Qur'an, the interpretation of the Qur'an, just as I fought over its tanzil, its revelation." Abu Bakr and Umar asked: "Am I he?" The Prophet said: "No, it is the one who is mending the shoes." The companions turned to the side to see Imam Ali (as) mending the Prophet's shoes.

This hadith shows that:

- Imam Ali (as) was the one the Prophet (S) singled out to his companions as the protector of Qura'nic interpretation;
  - Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (as) used to mend the Prophet's shoes and take pride in it.

After the Prophet (S), Ali (as) is the most superior and the greatest being created by Allah (SwT) – but the key point to note here is "after" the Prophet.

# Question 3: Where is the proof that Ali (as) was appointed by the Prophet (S)?

This is one of the most important questions to ponder and needs a detailed review. The Shias point to the hadith of Ghadeer Khumm, narrated by the Ahlul Sunnah (see below) in which the Holy Prophet (S) declared: "Man kunto mawla hu fa haadha Aliyyun mawla" – "Of whomsoever I am mawla, Ali is also his mawla, i.e. leader."

#### Does "mawla" mean friend?

This comes up again and again – especially that "mawla" means friend, not leader, imam or amir. We can analyse this by the following:

### Meaning of "mawla"?

According to one study, the word mawla has between 20 and 30 different definitions in Arabic, but only one of which translates as "friend". Most translate it as "owner", "leader", "benefactor", "guide", "helper". Look at the Holy Qur'an, the words, mawla, awla, wali, wilayat, all come from the same root word, "wali", and are all used in the Holy Qur'an to refer to guidance and leadership. For friendship or companionship, the Holy Qur'an tends to use the words, khaleel, sadig and hameem.

#### Context when word "mawla" was used

The word "mawla" was used at Ghadeer Khumm, on the return journey from the last pilgrimage (Hajj) of the Prophet. The Prophet (S) calls back all those who had gone ahead. He calls forward all the people at the back. He then builds a pulpit from camels' saddles, goes up on it and addresses over 100,000 people in the burning heat of the Arabian Desert, to make an important announcement.

Then the Prophet (S) asked just before the declaration, "Do I not have more authority upon you (alastu awla bi kum) than you have over yourselves?" All the people replied, "Yes, surely." Then the Prophet (S) declared: "Of whomsoever I am mawla, Ali is also his mawla."

Surely the word "mawla", in this context, refers to authority, to leadership. The earlier reference is from the verse:

# "The Prophet has a greater claim on the faithful than they have on themselves." (33:6). [Surah Ahzab]

As Sunni scholar Sibt ibn Jauzi says, "The saying of the Holy Prophet that Ali has authority or is the master over the selves of all the believers clearly proves the Imamate or vicegerency of Ali and that obedience to him is obligatory."

After the declaration, the Prophet (S) uttered the following prayer: "O Allah! Love him who loves Ali, and be enemy of he who is the enemy of Ali; help him who helps Ali, and forsake him who forsakes Ali."

This prayer shows that Imam Ali (as), on that day, was being entrusted with a position that would make some people his enemies and therefore he would need supporters in carrying out his responsibilities. This could not be anything but the position of the mawla in the sense of ruler, master and lord. Are helpers ever needed to carry on or protect a 'friendship' from enemies?

### The body language

Sunni scholar Allama ibn Hajar Asqalani narrates in his book, al-Isabah, how the Prophet (S) stood next to Imam Ali (as) on a raised pulpit or mimbar built from the saddles of camels, raised Ali's hand, his arm in the air, and placed a turban on his head. Now, if that's not a coronation, then what is?

#### **Common sense**

Why would the Prophet (S) waste time in the hot Arabian Desert, to tell over 100,000 people that Ali (as) was his "friend"? Didn't they know that? Wouldn't you be annoyed if you were in that crowd? Why waste everyone else's time, and that too after an exhausting Hajj and in all that heat, unless you have something important to announce?

### **Evidence from the Holy Qur'an**

Ponder over the Qura'nic verse which was revealed prior to Ghadeer Khumm:

"O Messenger! Convey what had been revealed to you from your Lord; if you do not do so, then [it would be as if] you have not conveyed His message [at all]. Allah will protect you from the people." (5: 67) [Surah Maidah]

Countless classical Ahlul Sunnah scholars have said that this verse was revealed ahead of the event of Ghadeer Khumm, perhaps the most famous of all being Imam Fakhruddin al-Razi in his Tafisr al-Kabir.

How can Muslims believe, as the Holy Qur'an warns, that the whole of the Prophet's mission was about to be rendered null and void if he didn't tell the people that he and Ali (as) were friends? This verse shows how important the announcement was – and how controversial Allah (SwT) knew it would be. The Holy Qur'an says: "Allah will protect you from the people".

Why might the Prophet need protecting? Because; the issue of succession was being clarified and confirmed, once and for all, explicitly and publicly, and some people in the crowd were going to be upset and rebellious.

And what happened after the sermon at Ghadeer was over? What verse was revealed? According to all the major classical books of the Ahlul Sunnah (Hafiz Jalaluddin as Suyuti, Shaykh Sulayman al-Qandoozi Hanafi, Allama ibn Kathir, among them):

"This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favour on you and chosen for you Islam as your religion" (5:3) [Surah Maidah].

This is the final verse of the Holy Qur'an! And what an occasion it was revealed on!

Again, some common sense is needed: would Allah (SwT) really be unable or unwilling to "perfect" his religion and name it "Islam" unless the issue of the Prophet's "friendship" with Ali was cleared up for the Muslims? This is illogical and an insult to our intelligence! The truth is that Islam was completed and named for the Prophet (S) only after the Prophet (S) announced Ali (as) as his successor. Islam wasn't complete until the caliphate of Ali (as) was announced, revealed, made clear, to the Muslim masses.

Otherwise, you have to believe that that the 22-years mission of the Prophet (S) was being invalidated

over the issue of his "friendship" with Ali (as). And ask yourself this: was it the announcement of a friendship or the appointment of a successor to the Prophet that perfected the religion of Islam? What do you think?

### Second caliph's reaction

It is narrated that after the sermon was over, the Prophet set up a tent with Ali (as) and the companions lined up to give allegiance (bay'at) to Imam Ali (as), led by, Umar ibn Khattab, second caliph of the Ahlul Sunnah.

According to, among others, Sunni scholars like Imam Fakhruddin al-Razi in his book, and Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal, in his Musnad, Umar ibn Khattab was the first to arrive on the scene, and looking at Ali, he said: "Well done ibn Abu Talib! Today you became the master of all believing men and women, 'Ameer al-Mo'mineen'!"

This title, Ameer al-Mo'mineen, (Commander of the Faithful), that Shias use today to refer to Imam Ali (as), and for which they are often condemned and criticised by the Ahlul Sunnah, was first used by none other than Umar ibn Khattab. How ironic! Ameer al-Mo'mineen has only one meaning – commander, leader, master of the faithful. When Mullah Umar of the Taliban set up the Islamic Emirate of Afganistan, what did he call himself? Ameer al-Mo'mineen.

Yet we know from Ghadeer Khumm, from the public testimony of Umar ibn Khattab, that the first and only legitimate Ameerul Momineen, appointed by Allah (SwT) via His Messenger, is Ali ibn Abu Talib (as).

### Imam Ali (as) invoked Ghadeer later on

Imam Ali (as) himself offered the event of Ghadeer Khumm, as evidence for his leadership, his caliphate and imamat, later on in his life, after the Prophet's death. There are numerous examples and one of the most famous is as follows: The Sunni scholars ibn Qutaybah, ibn Hanbal, Muttaqi al–Hindi and Abu Nuaym Isfahani, all record in their books that during the caliphate of Ali, (as) when his authority was being questioned and rebellions were brewing, Imam Ali (as), in public, said to Anas ibn Malik, the famous companion of the Prophet (S): "Why don't you stand up and testify what you heard from the Messenger of Allah on the day of Ghadeer?"

Anas answered, "O Ameer al-Mo'mineen! I have grown old and do not remember." To which Ali (as) responded: "May Allah mark you with a white spot (of leprosy) unconcealable with your turban, if you are intentionally withholding the truth." And when Anas got up from his place he bore a large white spot on his face. From that day onwards, Anas used to say, "I am under the curse of the righteous servant of Allah, Ali ibn Abu Talib!"

The Ghadeer Khumm incident makes it clear that Ali (as) was the Prophet's successor. But there are

other examples from the Prophet's life too. For example, at start of the Prophethood, according to the Tarikh, or History, of Allama Tabari, the famous Sunni historian: The Prophet (S) asked three times, at a dinner for his friends and relatives, who will help him in his prophetic mission? On each of the three occassions, only Ali (as) stood up and said he would. On the first two occasions, the Prophet asked Ali (as) to sit down. But, on the third occasion, the Prophet said: "Verily this is my brother, my successor, and my caliph amongst you. Therefore, listen to him and obey." Abu Lahab (the Prophet's paternal uncle) said to Abu Talib (his brother and Ali's father) "the Prophet (S) has told you to obey your own son!"

The tragedy is that the majority of the Muslims do not understand today what Abu Lahab understood on the first day of the introduction of Islam in Makkah.

# Question 4: Why do Shias think Ali (as) is superior to the first three caliphs?

This is not just a Shia view, that Imam Ali (as) is superior to the rest of the caliphs and sahabah. A number of Ahlul Sunnah scholars and books agree with this view.

#### References from books of Ahlul Sunnah

Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, one of the four Ahlul Sunnah Imams of fiqh, said: "There is no Companion about whom as many merits are reported as Ali ibn Abu Talib."

The prominent Ahlul Sunnah scholar of India, Shah Ismail Muhaddith Dehlvi, wrote: "Ali al–Murtadha has also an edge over Abu Bakr as–Siddiq and Umar Faruq and this edge lies because of the greater number of his followers and all the highest spiritual and saintly activity, from his days to the end of the world, has to be mediated through him, and he has a say in the kingdom of the kings and the leadership of the leaders and this is not hidden from those who are familiar with the world of sovereignty. Most spiritual chains are directly derived from Ali al–Murtadha. So, on the Day of Judgment, Ali's army, including followers of high status and great reputation, will outnumber and outshine others to be a source of wonder for all the spectators."

In fact, to even compare Ali ibn Abu Talib (as) with any of the companions is absurd. It is a misunderstanding of who Ali (as) is, what Ali (as) represented and stood for. Imam Ali (as) was on a different level; he wasn't a mere companion like Abu Bakr or Umar or even Ammar and Salman.

### **Evidence from the Holy Qur'an**

The Sunni scholar Allama Muttaqi al-Hindi, in his famous book, Kanz al-Ummal, narrates a tradition (hadith) from the Prophet (S), in which the Prophet (S) was asked by a visitor to Madinah to name his favourite companion. When he omits the mention of Imam Ali (as), he was asked: "But what about Ali?

"To which the Prophet (S) replied: "Look at this man, he asks me about my own self."

This hadith of course is a reflection of the Ayat of Mubahela of the Holy Qur'an, (Ch.3: V61) [Surah Ali Imran] which states:

"But whoever disputes with you in this matter after what has come to you of knowledge, then say: Come let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our selves and your selves, then let us be earnest in prayer, and pray for the curse of God on the liars" (3:61)

All of the Ahlul Sunnah historians, including Muslim in his Sahih, Book 31, Hadith Number 5915, testify that the Prophet (S) took Hasan (as) and Husayn (as) with him as his "sons", Lady Fatima (as) with him as the representative of "women", and Imam Ali (as) as his self, (as his nafs).

The reason why Ali (as) is not just superior to the rest of the companions, including the first three caliphs is because he went beyond what a companion was: he wasn't just a companion of the Prophet (S); he was, as Allah (SwT) says in the Holy Qur'an, and the Prophet (S) says in his tradition (hadith), a self of the Prophet, nafs al-Rasoolallah.

# Question 5: Why did Ali (as) not fight for the leader- ship if it was his God-given right?

Imam Ali (as) never took up arms against Abu Bakr or Umar or Uthman. Some Ahlul Sunnah scholars try and argue that this shows he was not opposed to them. This is an incorrect analysis and a misunderstanding of Imam Ali's (as) thinking and motivations.

#### The reasons

The reason Ali ibn Abu Talib (as) did not fight after the death of the Prophet (S) is because he did not want to divide the nascent, infant Muslim community. He did not want innocent Muslims to die in battle, killing each other, in order to take power. The historians, Sunni and Shia, record how Abu Sufyan offered him troops but Imam Ali (as) turned him down and criticised his divisive offer.

# His divinely-appointed role as Imam

Imam Ali's (as) imamat, his caliphate, his wilayat, was given to him by the Prophet (S) on the command of Allah (SwT). He was not expected to go and force the Muslims, the people, to follow him; it was their job to find him and follow him. His position as the Imam was not a political or elected position. It was bestowed upon him by Allah (SwT). Kanz al-Ummal, the Sunni book of ahadith, narrates the tradition in which the Prophet (S) told Imam Ali (as): "[O Ali], You are like the Kabah, people go the the Kabah, the Kabah does not come to the people...."

#### **Common sense**

Imam Ali (as) may not have fought against Abu Bakr and Umar; but he never fought for them either, as part of their armies. Why not? He also refused to give allegiance (bay'at) to Abu Bakr for at least six months after the death of the Prophet and his beloved wife Lady Fatima (as), who died soon after the Prophet. Why didn't he? The Shias, of course, would also argue that he never pledged any formal allegiance to them at any point in his lifetime. Again, why? What was his problem with them?

This is explained in Nahjul Balagha where Imam Ali (as) devotes entire sermons to questioning how Abu Bakr and others robbed him of his right to caliph (caliphate) but this is a Shia book. So consider instead the words of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (as) to the six-man committee appointed by Umar on his deathbed to pick a new caliph – and narrated by all of the Sunni ulema.

The committee requested Imam Ali (as) to take over the position as caliph but on the condition that he abides with the following:

- The Holy Qur'an
- The Prophet's traditions
- The laws and regulations, the "sunnah", introduced by the first two caliphs.

Imam Ali (as) replied that the first two conditions were acceptable to him but, he had his own views and opinion on the third condition. All of the Sunni historians agree that Imam Ali (as) rejected the sunnah of Abu Bakr and Umar, upon the death of the latter. Why would he do that if he had accepted the legitimacy of their leadership?

# Question 6: Why do Shias refuse to accept that the Prophet (S) did not leave a successor?

Some Muslims are of the opinion that the Prophet (S) left it to the people to decide. Wouldn't he have written a will if he wanted to leave behind a successor or appoint Imam Ali (as)?

#### **Common sense**

The idea that the Prophet of Islam who never left Madinah without appointing someone to take charge of the city in his absence, left behind an Islamic state without appointing a successor and without even laying out the rules for how to appoint a successor, is just unbelievable, fanciful and absurd. It is illogical to believe such a thing.

Then there is the issue of the will – or lack thereof. In Islam, making a will is vitally important. The idea that the Holy Prophet (S) who told his followers to make sure they left wills behind, when they died, even

if they were the poorest of the poor, would die without leaving a will behind is equally absurd – and an insult to the Prophet (S).

#### References from books of Ahlul Sunnah

The truth is that the Prophet did try to make a will but was prevented from doing so by a group of his companions.

According to Sahih Bukhari, Volume 4, Book 53, Hadith Number 393, Said ibn Jubair narrated: I heard Ibn Abbas saying, "Thursday! And you know not what Thursday is? After that Ibn Abbas wept till the stones on the ground were soaked with his tears. On that I asked Ibn Abbas, "What is (about) Thursday?" He said, "When the condition (i.e. health) of Allah's Apostle deteriorated, he said, 'Bring me a bone of scapula, so that I may write something for you after which you will never go astray'. The people differed in their opinions although it was improper to differ in front of the Prophet."

They said, 'What is wrong with him? Do you think he is delirious? Ask him (to understand). The Prophet (S) replied, 'Leave me as I am in a better state than what you are asking me to do.' Then the Prophet ordered them to do three things saying, 'Turn out all the pagans from the Arabian Peninsula, show respect to all foreign delegates by giving them gifts as I used to do." The sub–narrator (Said ibn Jubair) added, "The third order was something beneficial which either Ibn Abbas did not mention or he mentioned but I forgot."

How can it be possible that the people who memorized the Holy Qur'an forgot the last, dying instruction of the Prophet (S)?

According to this tradition (and others) in Sahih Bukhari the Prophet (S) went to write his will but was prevented by a group of his companions, led according to most of the narrations by Umar ibn Khattab, who defied the Qur'anic injunction against raising one's voice in front of the Prophet (S) and who accused the Prophet (S) of being delirious, of having lost his mind. When the Prophet tried verbally telling them the contents of his will, his final commands, they claim to have forgotten what he said.

Abu Bakr had the foresight to leave behind a will; Umar appointed a six-man election committee – but the Prophet (S)? He died without leaving behind any guidance or will... Does this make any sense?

The reason there was no written, public will is because the Prophet (S) wanted to write such a document but some of his companions knew he was going to put in writing what he had said at Ghadeer Khumm and so they stopped him from doing so. This important event, this act of rebellion on their part at the deathbed of the Prophet (S) is narrated in Sahih Bukhari, in Sahih Muslim, in the Musnad of Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal and countless other Ahlul Sunnah books of ahadith and history.

# Question 7: Why is Ali's (as) name not mentioned in the Holy Qur'an?

There are four responses to this common and provocative question.

## **Evidence from the Holy Qur'an**

Imam Ali's (as) name might not be mentioned in the Holy Qur'an but there are countless verses of the Holy Qur'an devoted to the praise of Ali (as) and to announcing his superiority over the rest of the Muslims, proving his leadership, his wilayat and his imamat.

Allama ibn Hajar Makki, the famous Sunni aalim, quotes the companion and cousin of the Prophet, Abdullah ibn Abbas, saying that he heard from the Prophet (S) himself that 300 verses of the Holy Qur'an were revealed specifically in praise of Imam Ali (as).

For example, the famous verse of the ring:

"Your master [wali] can be only Allah; and His messenger and the those who believe, who establish worship and pay the poor rate, and pay the zakat while bowing down (in prayer), in ruku" (5:55) [Surah Maidah].

Ahlul Sunnah and Shia commentators of tafasir unanimously agree that this particular verse refers to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (as), who gave his ring to a beggar while in the state of bowing (ruku) in the middle of his (salah) prayer, as narrated by Abu Dharr al-Ghafari.

#### **Importance**

Why is it so important to have Imam Ali's (as) name in the Holy Qur'an? Are we ranking people's importance on whether their name appears in the Holy Qur'an or how many times? If so, then it is worth mentioning that the name of the human being mentioned most in the Holy Qur'an is Prophet Musa (Moses) – 136 times in 34 different chapters (surahs). Then there is Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) mentioned by name 27 times, and Prophet Isa (Jesus) mentioned 25 times.

The Holy Prophet, however, Muhammad (S), the Messenger of Islam and the Seal of the Prophets, is mentioned by name just four times, in surah numbers 3, 33, 47 and 48. Are Muslims expected to believe that Musa is higher in status or more important than the Holy Prophet? Or Yusuf is? Or Isa is? This is what happens when you start determining people's status on the crude and arbitrary basis of how many times their name is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. Allah (SwT) decides in His wisdom whose name appears in His book.

#### What if his name had been mentioned?

What if Imam Ali's (as) name was mentioned in the Holy Qur'an? Would that change anything? Would that change his opponents' minds about the validity and legitimacy of his imamat? Of course not! Those who do not want to follow Imam Ali (as) would not do so no matter where his name appeared in the Qur'an. After all, the Holy Prophet explicitly said at Ghadeer Khumm: "Of whomsoever I am mawla, Ali is also his mawla". Imagine this sentence as a verse of the Holy Qur'an – how would life be any different? Some would still say it meant friend not leader, others would try and deliberately misrepresent and misinterpret it, or simply ignore it.

It's a diversionary tactic to bring up the fact that Allah (SwT) in His Infinite Wisdom decided not to refer to Imam Ali (as) by name in the Holy Qur'an, even though He did make around implicit or indirect 300 references to Imam Ali (as) – as testified by Ibn Abbas.

#### **Common Sense**

Imagine if we extended this argument – Ali (as) is not the leader because his name isn't mentioned in the Holy Qur'an; Ali (as) is not important because his name is not explicitly cited in any of the verses of the Holy Qur'an– to the rest of our religious principles, beliefs and obligations. How would we know how to pray morning (Fajr) prayers? Or know that evening (Maghrib) is three units (rakaat) and night (Isha) is four units (rakaat)? The Holy Qur'an doesn't say so; it was left to the Prophet (S) to explain the details of the Qur'anic diktats, the Qur'anic commandments.

As the sixth Shia holy Imam Jafar as Sadiq (as) famously told his companions: "The Qur'an says to pray Fajr salah (morning prayers) but it is the Prophet who tells us that Fajr is two units of prayer (rakatain), the Qur'an tells us to pay zakaat, but it is the Prophet who tells us how to calculate zakaat; in the same way, the Qur'an tells us to obey the "ulul-amr", the people charged with authority, and it is the Prophet who tells us that the "ulul-amr" are: Ali ibn Abu Talib (as) and the Imams of the Ahlul Bayt."

# Question 8: Why do you call yourselves "Shias", or "Shias of Ali", and not just Muslims?

The word "Shia" in Arabic simply means follower, friend, lover, partisan. It is a word that has no negative connotations. In fact it is used in the Holy Qur'an twice with reference to prophets of God.

# **Evidence from the Holy Qur'an**

"And, verily, of among the followers, among the Shias, of Nuh (of Noah), was Ibrahim (Abraham) (37:83)[Surah Saffat].

"And he (Musa /Moses) went into the city at a time when people (of the city) were not watching,

so he found therein two men fighting, one being his Shia – min SHIAtehe – and the other being his enemy, and the one who was his Shia cried out to him for help against the one who was of his enemy." (28:15)[Surah Kahf].

So Shia is a word used by Allah (SwT) Himself! But these Shias weren't, of course, Shias of Ali (as). Where does this phrase, "Shia of Ali", come from? It comes from the Prophet's own lips, during the Prophet's own lifetime.

#### **References from books of Ahlul Sunnah**

Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal, Allama ibn Hajar Makki, Hafiz Abu Nuaym Isfahani, and countless other classical scholars of the Ahlul Sunnah all narrate that the Prophet said: "Glad tidings, O Ali! Verily you and your companions and your Shia (your followers) will be in Paradise."

Hafiz Jalaluddin al-Suyuti, the famous Ahlul Sunnah scholar of Egypt, in his book, al-Durr al-Mansur, narrates a tradition (hadith) in which the companions say: "We were with the Holy Prophet when Ali came towards us. The Holy Prophet said: He and his Shia will acquire salvation on the Day of Judgement."

Allama ibn Hajar Asqalani, another famous Ahlul Sunnah scholar of hadith, narrates the following tradition of the Prophet (S): "The parable of Ali is like a tree, in which I am the root, Ali is the branch, Hasan and Husayn are the fruits, and the Shias are the leaves."

Allama ibn Hajar al-Haythami al-Makki – of the Ahlul Sunnah says in his book al-Sawaiq al-Muhriqa that the Shias are "rafidhi" (liars, deviants) and yet in the same book he narrates a tradition from Abdullah ibn Abbas in which ibn Abbas says that: When the verse: "Those who believe and do righteous deeds are the best of the creation" (98:7) [Surah Al Bayyina] was revealed, the Messenger of Allah said to Ali: "They are you and your Shia."

He continued: "O Ali! (on the Day of Judgment) you and your Shia will come towards Allah well-pleased and well- pleasing, and your enemies will come angry with their head forced up. Ali said: "Who are my enemies?" The Prophet (S) replied: "He who disassociates himself from you and curses you. And glad tiding to those who reach first under the shadow of al-Arsh on the Day of Resurrection." Ali asked: "Who are they, O the Messenger of Allah?" He replied: "Your Shia, O Ali, and those who love you."

Now, here is an important point to consider: some Muslims ask why there is a sect called Shias? They tend to call themselves Sunni Muslims. But where is the word Sunni in the Holy Qur'an or in the ahadith of the Holy Prophet? Where is the hadith in which the Prophet (S) refers to his "Sunnis" or even to the "Ahlul Sunnah wal Jamaah"? There isn't one. But the Shias have been around since the time of the Prophet (S) and Shia is a title of distinction used in the Holy Qur'an.

# Question 9: Isn't Shia'ism a product of Abdullah ibn Saba, a Jewish convert to Islam?

#### Who is he?

There is a question as to whether Abdullah ibn Saba even existed! In Ahlul Sunnah tradition, he was a Yemenite Jew who embraced Islam very late in life. During the time of Ali ibn Abu Talib (as) he is alleged to have introduced a number of concepts that later were ascribed to both the Shias and the Ghuluww: the exaltation of Ali (as), his divine appointment by the Islamic Prophet Muhammad (S) as a successor, and his alleged divinity. These are all claimed to be concepts that were first formulated and expressed by Ibn Saba and his followers, who are also accused of killing the third caliph of the Ahlul Sunnah, Uthman ibn Affan, and dividing the Muslims into two sects.

Yet neutral modern western historians, non-Muslims like Godfrey Hodgson, Leone Caetani, Israel Freidlander and Bernard Lewis have all concluded that he probably did not exist and even if he did, he certainly wasn't responsible for all the intrigues, plots and religious conspiracies that have been attributed to him by some anti-Shia scholars.

#### **References from books of Ahlul Sunnah**

Tabari's source for the story of Ibn Saba, Sayf ibn Umar, has been discredited by Imam Hakim, Ibn Hajar Asqalani and several other prominent Ahlul Sunnah scholars. In his acclaimed book, "The Succession to Muhammad", former Oxford University professor Wilferd Madelung writes how "few if any modern historians would accept Sayf's legend of Ibn Saba". Note the use of word "legend"!

Even the Egyptian historian, Dr Taha Husayn, one of the most influential Ahlul Sunnah scholars of the 20th century, has said that the "fabrication" of Ibn Saba was done by the enemies of the Shias and that the insertion of a "Jewish element" was aimed at discrediting the Shias. He noted that the absence of any record of Ibn Saba being present at the Battle of Siffin suggests that Ibn Saba is a fictitious person.

# Question 10: Why do you give such importance to the father of Ali (as), Abu Talib? Wasn't he a non- believer?

Some Muslims not only criticise and reject Ali (as), they even go after his father. Abu Talib is described as an unbeliever (kafir). Even the recent BBC2 documentary on the life of the Prophet (S) presented by Rageh Omaar, stated as a fact that he died as a non-believer.

Yet the following proofs from history and proofs from the Holy Qur'an prove that he was a Muslim.

### He perfomed the Prophet's wedding

Abu Talib performed the wedding ceremony (nikah) of Prophet Muhammad (S) and Lady Khadija (as) and paid the dowry (mahr). How can anyone believe that the wedding ceremony of the Holy Prophet of Islam would be performed by a non–Muslim?

# His marriage

Abu Talib was married to Fatima bint Asad, the mother of Ali (as) and stayed married to her even after the advent of Islam. If he was a non-Muslim, this would be in defiance of the injunctions contained in the Holy Qura'n.

Even the Prophet's own adopted daughters were divorced from the sons of Abu Lahab (who refused to become Muslims). Fatima bint Asad, remember, was the second lady to accept Islam (after Lady Khadija (as) the Prophet's first wife).

Imam Sajjad (as), the fourth Shia Imam, said about his great-great-grandfather: "I wonder why people doubt the faith of Abu Talib, when a woman cannot continue her matrimonial alliance with a non-Muslim husband after she has embraced Islam, and Fatima bint Asad was amongst those women who embraced Islam at a very early stage and still remained his wife till he breathed his last."

### **Evidence from the Holy Qur'an**

Ch.4:V 144 [Surah Al Nisa], says:

"O you who believe! Do not take the unbelievers as protectors instead of the believers" (4: 144) and Ch 9:V 23 [Surah Tawba] proclaims:

"O you who believe! Take not for protectors your fathers and your brothers if they love infidelity above Faith: if any of you do so, they do wrong." (9:23)

The Prophet's grandfather Abdul Muttalib died when he was 8 years old. The Prophet was looked after by Abu Talib (not by his other uncles, Harith or Abbas); from the age of 8 to 25. The Prophet lived under either the direct or indirect care and supervision of his uncle Abu Talib right up until the latter's death in 619 ad, when the Prophet was 49. The Prophet lived under the protection of his uncle, the alleged non-believer, for over 40 years! So was the Prophet (S) violating the commands of the Holy Qur'an?

The Holy Qur'an refers to Allah (SwT) and the Prophet, in Ch 93, V 6-9) [Surah Al Duha]:

"Did He not find thee an orphan and give you shelter? And He found thee wandering, and He gave thee guidance. And He found thee in need, and made thee independent." (93:6-9)

There is no disagreement, as the historical records show, that it was Abu Talib who gave shelter to the Prophet (S) took care of all his needs and gave him guidance. Now how is it that in this case Allah (SwT) is taking credit for things that a "kafir" did? How could Allah (SwT) ask for help from a "kafir" in taking care and bringing up His most beloved and final messenger? How could Allah (SwT) do something that He is prohibiting the believers from doing? The fact that the Prophet of Islam took refuge with, and guidance from Abu Talib shows that Abu Talib was not only a Muslim but a mu'min; not just one who submits, but one who believes.

Here is a challenge: can any person, Sunni or Shia, Muslim or non-Muslim, identify even one occasion on which Abu Talib publicly or privately:

- rejected the concept of unity and oneness of Allah (Tawhid)?
- condemned Islam by name, rejected Islam by name and, in doing so, rejected his nephew the Prophet (S) of Islam?
- worshipped in front of an idol?

On the contrary, when Muslims pray they should thank Abu Talib, because without him, there would have been no Prophet of Islam and, by extension, no religion of Islam. There is no Muhammad (S), without Abu Talib.

#### Source URL:

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