

## Chapter 57: On What Ar-Ridha' (a.s.) said on the Subject of Divine Leadership to Yahya ibn ad-Dhahhak al-Samarqandi in the Presence of Al-Ma'mun

57-1 Al-Hakim Abu Ali Al-Husayn ibn Ahmad al-Bayhaqi narrated that Muhammad ibn Yahya al-Sowli said that there have been various forms of narration transmitted from Ar-Ridha' (a.s.) in various wordings for which I have not found any authentic document. I have seen the various forms. I will include the meaning of this narration here, even though it has been narrated in different words.

“Al-Ma'mun wished in his heart that Ar-Ridha' (a.s.) would fail in the arguments and be overcome by the opposing sides. However, Al-Ma'mun acted differently on the surface. Then Al-Ma'mun gathered together the jurists and the masters of eloquent speech, and privately told them to argue with the Imam (a.s.) on the subject of Divine Leadership. Then Ar-Ridha' (a.s.) told them, ‘Please choose one person from among yourselves to argue with me on your behalf. Then whatever becomes imperative for him is going to be imperative for all of you.’ Then they chose a man known as Yahya ibn adh-Dhahhak al-Samarqandi for whom there was no man in Khorasan (in Persia) to challenge. Then Ar-Ridha' (a.s.) told him, ‘O Yahya! Ask me about anything you wish.’ Yahya said, ‘I will ask about Divine Leadership. How do you claim one to be a Divine Leader who did not lead the people (perhaps he was referring to Imam Ali (a.s.)), and abandon one who has led the people and the people are content with his Divine Leadership?’ Ar-Ridha' (a.s.) told him, ‘O Yahya! Tell me, which of the following two people are right: One who acknowledges a person who denounces himself, and one who acknowledges a person who considers himself to be honest! Which of the two are right, and which one is wrong?’ Then Yahya remained silent. Al-Ma'mun told him, ‘Answer him.’ Yahya said, ‘O the Commander of the Faithful (i.e. Al-Ma'mun)! Please excuse me from answering.’ Al-Ma'mun said, ‘O Abal Hassan (Ar-Ridha' (a.s.))! We understand your intentions behind asking this question.’ Then the Imam (a.s.) said, ‘Now Yahya must inform us about which of his leaders have denounced themselves and which ones have

acknowledged themselves. If he thinks that they have denounced themselves, then they do not deserve to be Divine Leaders. And if he

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بَابُ ذِكْرِ مَا كَلَّمَ بِهِ الرِّضَا عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ يَحْيَى بْنَ الضَّحَّاكِ السَّمَرَقَنْدِيِّ

فِي الْإِمَامَةِ عِنْدَ الْمَأْمُونِ

حَدَّثَنَا الْحَاكِمُ أَبُو عَلِيٍّ الْحُسَيْنِيُّ بْنُ أَحْمَدَ الْبَيْهَقِيُّ قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يَحْيَى الصُّوْلِيُّ قَالَ يُحْكِي لِلرِّضَا عَلَيْهِ - 1  
السَّلَامُ خَبْرٌ مُخْتَلَفٌ الْأَلْفَاظِ لَمْ تَقَعْ لِي رِوَايَتُهُ بِإِسْنَادٍ أَعْمَلُ عَلَيْهِ وَقَدْ اخْتَلَفَ الْأَفَاطُ مَنْ رَوَاهُ إِلَّا أَنِّي سَأَتِي بِهِ وَبِمَعَانِيهِ  
وَإِنْ اخْتَلَفَتْ الْأَفَاطُ كَانَ الْمَأْمُونُ فِي بَاطِنِهِ يُحِبُّ سَقَطَاتِ الرِّضَا عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ وَأَنْ يَعْلُوهُ الْمُحْتَجُّ وَإِنْ أَظْهَرَ غَيْرَ  
ذَلِكَ فَاجْتَمَعَ عِنْدَهُ الْفُقَهَاءُ وَالْمُتَكَلِّمُونَ فَدَسَّ إِلَيْهِمْ أَنْ نَاطِرُوهُ فِي الْإِمَامَةِ فَقَالَ لَهُمُ الرِّضَا عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ اقْتَصِرُوا عَلَيَّ  
وَاحِدٍ مِنْكُمْ يَلْزِمُكُمْ مَا لَزِمَهُ فَرَضُوا بِرَجُلٍ يُعْرِفُ بِيَحْيَى بْنَ الضَّحَّاكِ السَّمَرَقَنْدِيِّ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ بِخُرَاسَانَ مِثْلَهُ فَقَالَ  
الرِّضَا عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ يَا يَحْيَى سَلْ مَا شِئْتَ فَقَالَ تَتَكَلَّمُ فِي الْإِمَامَةِ كَيْفَ ادَّعَيْتَ لِمَنْ لَمْ يَوْمٌ وَتَرَكَتَ مَنْ أُمَّ وَوَقَعَ  
الرِّضَا بِهِ فَقَالَ لَهُ يَا يَحْيَى أَخْبِرْنِي عَمَّنْ صَدَقَ كَاذِبًا عَلَى نَفْسِهِ أَوْ كَذَبَ صَادِقًا عَنْ نَفْسِهِ أَيْكُونُ مُحِقًّا مُصِيبًا أَمْ  
مُبْطِلًا مُخْطِئًا فَسَكَتَ يَحْيَى

فَقَالَ لَهُ الْمَأْمُونُ أَجِبْهُ فَقَالَ يُعْفِينِي أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ جَوَابِهِ فَقَالَ الْمَأْمُونُ يَا أَبَا الْحَسَنِ عَرَفْنَا الْغَرَضَ فِي هَذِهِ  
الْمَسْأَلَةِ فَقَالَ لَا بُدَّ لِيَحْيَى مِنْ أَنْ يُخْبِرَ عَنِ أَيْمَتِهِ أَنَّهُمْ كَذَبُوا عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَوْ صَدَقُوا فَإِنْ زَعَمُوا أَنَّهُمْ كَذَبُوا فَلَا إِمَامَةَ  
لِكُذَّابٍ وَإِنْ زَعَمُوا أَنَّهُمْ صَدَقُوا فَقَدْ قَالَ

thinks that they have acknowledged themselves, then the first one said, 'I have attained mastery over you but I am not the best of you.' And the one who comes next will say, 'It was a mistake to pledge allegiance to the first one. Kill anyone who does this again.' Then, by God, he was not pleased with anything but killing those who repeated that. Then when someone is not the best of the people – given that to be the best is only possible by having such characteristics as knowledge, struggling in the way of God, and possessing other nobilities – none of which he possessed; then how can the pledge of allegiance to someone be proper if the pledge of allegiance to one has made such a mistake which deserves that anyone doing such an act (pledge of allegiance) be killed. How can his leadership be acceptable for others while he is as such? Then he himself said the following on the pulpit, 'Indeed there is a Satan within me which may overcome me. Please direct me to the straight way whenever he (the Satan within me) makes me go astray. And please advise me whenever I make a mistake.' Therefore, they themselves declare that they are not Divine Leaders whether they are telling the truth or lying.' Then Yahya had no answer to give. Then Al-Ma'mun got surprised about what the Imam (a.s.) had said and said, 'O Abal Hassan Ar-Ridha' (a.s.)! There exists no one else but you on the Earth who can speak

so eloquently.”

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