

Chapter 5: Imamate in the Qur'anic Verse of Sadiqin

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴾

“O you who believe! Be careful of (your duty towards) Allah and be with the truthful”. (9: 119)

At first glance the verse we are about to consider seems to be concerned with a moral injunction: it orders believers to observe piety and hold fast to the truthful. We do, however, know that we should always avoid looking at the surface of things and concerning the Qur'an, we are always requested to study it deeply over and over in order to acquire its lofty knowledge and fathom its profound meaning.

The Holy Qur'an says,

“Look once again; can you see any flaws? Then look still another time”. (67:3-4)

We must, therefore, avoid looking at the Qur'an outwardly; we should, instead, meditate upon its verses.

If we study the above-mentioned Qur'anic verse in this way, we will find in it one of the most important and genuine Qur'anic disciplines delicately expressed; that is of Imamate and (religious) guidance. That is why this verse has a special importance when examining the verses relating Imamate. The issues of the verse are centred on the following points:

1. Examining words and their meanings
2. The relationship between the verse and the one preceding it.
3. The relationship between the verse and Imamate, and evaluation of its clues.
4. The comments of the scholars and interpreters

A Discussion on the Vocabulary of the Verse

The two words “*Sidq*, truthfulness” and “***Sadiqin***, the truthful” need to be studied. We will, therefore, review their literal meaning and then see how they are used in the Qur'an.

Literal Usage

The following are definitions given by two lexicographers:

1. In his *Lisan al-Arab*, ibn Manzur presents various meanings of *sidq*, such as:

Al-Sidq (truthfulness) is the opposite of *kidhb* (lying); as an example: *Rajulu sidq naqiz rajulu su'* meaning “a good person” is the opposite of “a bad person”. Here, *sidq* and *su'* are opposites.

Another example is *thowbu sidq* meaning a “nice dress”, and *khomaroon sidq* meaning “nice veil”.

The expression *Rajulu Sidq* means “nice person”.

Rajulun Sidq al-Liqa wa sidq al-nazar which means “a sociable and optimistic person”.

Sedq with fathah, means a straight lance, or a straight sword.

Ibn Dorstawayh says that the word *sidq* refers to all praiseworthy qualities.

Al-Khalil says *sidq* indicates complete perfection.

2. In his *Mufradat al-Qur'an*, Ragib says, “Anything that is outwardly and inwardly agreeable is referred to as *sidq*, to which a qualified noun may be attached.

Examples of Qur'anic Usage of the Word Sidq

In the Holy Qur'an, we can find verses in which “*sidq*” is used as an adjective of things which are irrelevant to speech. Such as:

﴿وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنَّ لَهُمْ قَدَمَ صِدْقٍ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ﴾

a) “... **and give good news to those who believe that they have a sure footing with their Lord**”.
(10:2)

﴿وَلَقَدْ بَوَّأْنَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ مَبُوءًا صِدْقٍ﴾

b) “... **and we settled the children of Israel in a sure settlement**”. (10:93)

﴿وَقُلْ رَبِّ ادْخُلْنِيْ مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ وَّاَخْرِجْنِيْ مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ﴾

c) “...**and say: My Lord! Lead me in with a just ingoing and lead me out with a just outgoing**”. (17:80)

The words *madkhal* means “ingoing”, and *makhraj* means “outgoing” in this verse either function as adverbs of place for entering and leaving, or infinitives meaning *to lead in* and *to lead out*. They are, nevertheless, irrelevant to speech.

﴿فِي مَّقْعَدِ صِدْقٍ عِنْدَ مَلِيْكَ مُقْتَدِرٍ﴾

d) “**In a sure abode, in the presence of a King Omnipotent**”. (54:55)

e) “**It is not righteous that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but righteous is this that one should believe in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the Book and the Prophets, and give away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and the beggars and for (the emancipation of) the captives, and keep up prayers and pay the poor-rate; keep up their word when they make a promise, and the patient in distress and affliction and in time of conflicts – these are they who are true (to themselves) and these are they who are the truly god-fearing**”. (2: 177)

In the above verse, God, the Mighty and High, first mentions righteousness of belief in God, the Last Day, the angels, the Divine Book and prophets. Then, He points to righteousness in practice including giving away one’s wealth, *infak*, to the relatives, the needy, the wayfarers, the beggars, or for the emancipation of captives for the sake of God, and keeping of promise.

He also refers to righteousness of morality, represented in patience in time of conflicts and endurance in time of hardships. He praises those who enjoy these three kinds of righteousness and calls them the truthful and the pious.

These applications of the word “*Sidq*” and verses of the Holy Qur’an show that *Sidq* has an extensive meaning which is not always connected to discourse, word, promise and narration, but it can also come together with such things like thought, belief, human disposition, behaviour, etc. where the word has real meaning.

The Relationship of This Verse with the Preceding One

As stated in the books of commentary and *hadith*, this verse concerns those believers who refused to accompany the holy Prophet (saws) to the Tabuk war. Upon the order of the Prophet, may God bless him and his descendants, Muslims stopped having ties with them to the extent that even their wives decided not to talk to them.

Remorseful of what they had done, these people later on repented for their mistake. They went outside the town and began to supplicate to God, augmenting their entreaty. So, God accepted their repentance and they returned home happily.

In the next verse, God, the Mighty and High, orders people not to disobey the Prophet (saws) reminding them of the value of the hardship, thirst and hunger they suffer for the sake of God.

In the verse in question, God, the Mighty and High, orders the believers to observe piety, refrain from disobeying God, and be with the *Sadiqin* (the truthful). We need now to see who “the truthful” are.

The Relationship of the Holy Verse with the Imamate of the Infallible Imams

When the meaning of *sidq* was explained, it was stated that the phrase “كونوا مع الصادقين” seems to be an order (for us) to be with the truthful. It should be noted that to tell the truth and to avoid telling lies is obligatory, but to be with the truthful is not.

But (we see that) the idea of being with the truthful in the Qur’anic verse represents an order and the order is used to express necessity. The coming of the phrase “be with the truthful” in the same context as the phrase اتقوا الله (*be careful of your duty to Allah*) where we are ordered to observe piety and definitely expresses necessity of being with the truthful, confirm the idea of being with the truthful.

Because of the wide shade of meaning of the word *sidq*, that is, it is not associated only with discourse but extends to thought, morality, and behaviour, and since according to the Qur’anic verse it is obligatory to be with the truthful, the phrase to “be with the truthful” does not mean to be physically with the truthful, but to abide by all the things implied by truth and correctness.

By *sadiqin* (the truthful) it is meant those who possess absolute truth, not mere truth and a truthful person, in its absolute sense, is the one who is true (and sincere) in all aspects – one whose way of thinking, his word, his conduct and his disposition, know no crookedness and deviation. Such a person is none other than the infallible one, the (*m’asum*).

Being with such a person means following him and complying with his way of thinking, his actions and his conduct.

Muslims unanimously agree that except the fourteen Infallible ones the Prophet and the Household of the Prophet, no one possesses the rank of *ismah*, and is true in his words; therefore, by *sadiqin* (the truthful) it is meant the Prophet, may God bless him and his descendants, and the Infallible Imams, may God bless them all.

Scholars and Interpreters' Remarks

Below, are the words of two great religious scholars:

A) Allamah Behbahani

Let us first consider the words of one of the Imamiyyah Shi'ite scholars, a great religious authority and prominent thinker, the late Allamah Sayyid Ali Behbahani. When explaining the holy Qur'anic verse, in his *al-Misbah al-Hidayah*, a precious book on Imamate he states:

“Multitudinous narrations presented in both Shi'ite and Sunni sourced state that the “*Sadiqin*” –in the holy Qur'anic verse – are the Prophet's *Ahl al-Bayt* (p.b.u.th.). Late Behbahani has cited in his book, *Ghayat al-Maram*, ten narrations from Shi'ite sources and seven narrations from Sunni sources.

To prove that by “the truthful”, in the holy verse, it is meant the Infallible Imams (p.b.u.th.) – as stated in the *hadiths* quoted by both the Shi'ites and the Sunnis– we can say: if by “truth” component of it is meant “truth” in its absolute sense in any degree, and if “the truthful” has a general meaning which includes anyone endowed with truth at any level.

The Qur'anic verse would have said “...and be one of the truthful”, which entails that every Muslim has to be one of the truthful and has to avoid telling lies. The phrase “with the truthful”, however, indicates that “truth” has a special status and “the truthful” is a special group. It is evident this perfect status is only “truth” freedom from sin and error (*ismah*) and purity (*taharah*).

The verse of the *Tatheer* and unanimity of Muslims prove that in the Muslim community there exists a “*Ma'sum*” (infallible one). But if we say that the truthful means people other than the Infallible Imams, it will be incumbent on all Muslims, even the Infallible Imams, to follow a non-*Ma'sum* person, which is not sensible. Therefore the qualities of *ismah* and *taharah* can be attributed to no one other than the Household of the Prophet, may God bless them all.

Further evidence: Another evidence which supports idea that the Infallible Imams are meant by “the truthful”, is that, God, the Mighty and High, orders in the verse all Muslims to observe piety and to keep away from sins and then orders them to be with “the truthful”. Being with them means nothing but obeying them and refraining from disobeying them. Imamate means that God has made obeying the Imam incumbent on the Imam's follower.

B) Fakhr al-Razi's Remarks

Interpreting the Holy Qur'anic verse, Fakhr al-Razi, the famous Sunni commentator says:

“In the verse God, the Mighty and High, has ordered the believers to be with the truthful. This requires the presence of “the truthful” at all times which indicates that the community can never resort to falsehood. So, if the community unanimously agree on something, it will be on the right path. This proves that the unanimity of the community is a convincing argument.

If someone asks: Why is it not allowed to say that “be with the truthful” means “follow the truthful way” – just like a father's saying to his son “be with the good” means “follow the way of the good”? This does not mean that there is a truthful person at all times.

The answer will be: This opposes the apparent meaning (of the verse), because “*Be with the truthful*” suggests that there must be a truthful person..

If someone says: This statement is connected only with the time of the Prophet (saws) because the Prophet was the only truthful person of the time which indicates that the truthful person does not exist at all times.

The answer will be: Like other Qur'anic discourses, this statement addresses all those who according to Islamic law, have to perform the obligations. It is not connected only to the time of the Prophet (saws) but, because of the validity of “exception” it includes.

Besides, God, the Most High, has first ordered the believers to observe piety even those who are possibly not pious. The verse thus indicates that the erring must always follow the inerrant so the inerrant will prevent them from committing error, at all times. As a result, the verse extends in time forever it is not specifically limited to time of the Prophet (saws)”.

So far it is understood from Fakhr al-Razi's words that *Sadiqin* (the truthful) refers to those who are free from sin (*ma'sum*), and these people exist at all times. Such an idea is correct.

However, Fakhr al-Razi continues: “By the infallible truthful, it is meant the community as a whole, not particular individuals in the community, otherwise, it would be necessary for everyone to know who those particular individuals are so that they can be with them.

Discerning such people is impossible. We do not know who these people who are protected error are. Thus, this (*ma'sum*) means the whole community, and so the consensus of the community will be a convincing argument”.

Responding to Fakhr al-Razi

There are two focal points in Fakhr al-Razi's remarks:

a) The infallible truthful cannot be particular individuals because we have no knowledge of them.

The above saying is an evident fallacy because it is possible for anyone to know who they are by referring to the evidence which proves the inerrancy of the Shi'ite Imams. The traditions that clearly mention the names of the Infallible Imams are greater in number than what makes a tradition *mutawater*, authenticated. These traditions are presented in some Sunni sources and in many Imamiyyah Shi'ite sources.

b) The weakness in the words, "By the infallible truthful it is meant the whole community" lies in the fact that:

1. To say that there are infallible people other than the fourteen Infallible (members of the Household of the Prophet, God's peace and blessing be on them all) opposes the definite consensus of all Muslims.

2. The phrase "*the truthful*", used in the Qur'anic verse, is apparently a generic title. It is *istigraqi title* (referring to certain people in the community) not *majmo'i title* – referring to the whole. On the basis of Fakhr al-Razi's words *ismah* (inerrancy) belongs to the whole community. *Majmo'i* group is an arbitrary combination, linking individuals together. It is "*istigraqi state*" that is genuine in a generic title, because the *majmo'i* state is a figurative element that needs a contextual clue (to be clearly understood). What is genuine is *istigraqi* where a word is used in its real sense.

3. Divine inerrancy (*ismah*), is a real title requiring a real subject, whereas *majmo'i* state is arbitrary. It is impossible for a real existent to get strength from an unreal one.

4. Fakhr al-Razi's words contradict the indication to the contrast between "*the truthful*" and "*O you who believe*". The contrast between these two demands that "*those who believe*" be different from "*the truthful*".

5. To take "*the truthful*" as the plural of *majom'i* nature disagrees with what Fakhr al-Razi himself has said because while arguing that "the truthful" is not limited to the Prophet (saws) Fakhr al-Razi says "The Qur'anic verse points to (the fact) that at all times there are believers who are liable to make mistakes and there are always "the truthful" who are unerring.

The errant must be with the truthful who are infallible". He has thus considered the believers to be liable to make mistake and the truthful to be infallible (*ma'sum*).

[Traditions of the Shi'ites and the Sunnis on this Verse](#)

Hakim Hasakani¹ has quoted in his *Shawahid al-Tanzeel*² traditions indicating that by "*the truthful*" in the Qur'anic verse, it is meant either the Prophet and Ali, God's peace and blessing be on them, or the Household of the Prophet, God bless them all. Below is one of these traditions.

“Ya’qub ibn Sufayn al-Baswi has reported on the authority of ibn Q’anab, on the authority of Malik ibn Anas that Abdullah ibn Umar said, in these words “*Be careful (of your duty) toward Allah*” God has ordered all the Companions of the Prophet (saws) to fear God. He has also told them to be with the truthful, that is, with the Prophet (saws) and his dear *Ahl al-Bayt*, God bless them.[3](#)

Ibn Shahr Ashoob, the great Shi’ite traditionist and scholar has quoted the same tradition from Ya’qub ibn Sufayn’s commentary; on the authority of Malik ibn Anas, on the authority of Naf’i who quoted it from ibn Umar.[4](#)

Kulayni, the great Shi’ite traditionist says in his *Usool al-Kafi*:

“Ibn Ozayneh has quoted Bareed ibn Muawiyah al-Ijli to have said: When I asked Imam al-Baqir, peace be on him, about God’s words “*Be careful (of your duty) toward Allah and be with the truthful*” he answered, “God has meant us (the Household of the Prophet).”[5](#)

Jowayni, the great Sunni traditionist has reported the following in a tradition:

“Then Ali, peace be on him said, ‘I adjure you by God! Do you remember when the Qur’anic verse *Be careful (of your duty) toward God and be with the truthful* was revealed, Salman asked the Prophet:

‘O Messenger of God! Does it concern all or special people?’ And the Prophet (saws) said ‘As for the believers, it concerns the believers in general, and as for the truthful it includes my brother Ali (as), and my executors after him until the Day of Judgment’. They said ‘By God, we do’.”[6](#)

Some Sunni books of *hadith* and commentary state that the phrase “the truthful” refers to Abu Bakr and Umar or the Prophet (saws) and his Companions. Such reports are not reliable. Below are some of these reports:

1. Ibn Asaker has quoted Dhahak to have said, in the verse, “*O You who believe, be careful (of your duty) toward God and be with the truthful*” the words “with the truthful” means “With Abi Bakr, Ummar and their Companions”. He holds that “the truthful” refers to Abu Bakr, Ummar and their Companions.
2. “Tabari has quoted Sa’id ibn Jobayr to have said that Abu Bakr and Umar are meant by the truthful.”[7](#)

[Responding to These Traditions](#)

a) In the chain of transmission of the first *hadith* the name of Joybar ibn Sa’id Azdi is noticed. In his *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib*, Ibn Hajar has named many scholars of *ilm-Rijal*, such as: ibn Mo’in, Abi Dawood, ibn Adi and Nisa’ii who consider Joybar Azdi as “weak”. Al-Tabari has also quoted this tradition on the authority of Dhahak in which Joybar’s name is found.

b) In the chain of transmission of the second *hadith* the name of Ishaq ibn Bishr Kahili is found. In his *Mizan al-I’tidal*, Dhahabi says that ibn Abi Shaybeh, Musa ibn Haroon Zar’ah, and Dar-Qutni consider

Ishaq ibn Bishr Kahiliyas “liar” and “forger of *hadith*”

Having concluded from the evidence in the Qur’anic verse that “the truthful” in the verse refers to the Infallible whom we have been ordered to follow, we realize that this verse does not include those whom Muslims unanimously consider as non-ma’sum.

1. – Concerning Hasakani, Dhahabi, the great Sunni scholar of ilm-rijal, says on page 1200 of the third volume of his book Tadhkirat al-Huffaz, Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, Beirut: “He is a meticulous sheikh (master), unwavering in the science of traditions. He has good command of the chain of transmission of hadiths.
2. – Shawahid al-Tanzeel, vol. 1, p. 341.
3. – Ibid, p. 345, tradition 357.
4. –Discussing the events that took place between 581 to 590 A.H., Dhahabi says on pp. 309 – 310 of his History of Islam, that some great scholars (e.g. ibn Abi Tayy) praised Hasakani, calling him peerless leader of his time, equal to Khatib Baqdadī in the science of hadith and to Yahya ibn Mo’in in rijal, and a person of true word, wide knowledge, intense humbleness, worship and night vigilance.
5. – Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 208, Maktibat al-Saduq;
6. – Far’id al-Simtayn, vol. 1, p.317, al-Mahmoodi lil-Tibai’i wan-Nashr, Institute Beirut; Kamal al-Deen, p. 264; Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 33, p. 149; al-Misbah al-Hidaya, p. 91, Salman al-Farsi.
7. – Jami’ al-Bayan, vol. 11, p. 46

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