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Who Is the Guardian?

Lesson 20: Imamat and Wilayet

The Final Message from The Prophet

يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ {

وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ ۖ وَاللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ

{إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ

O Messenger, deliver that which has been sent down (with regards to the Wilayah of Imam Ali*) to thee from thy Lord; for if thou dost not, thou wilt not have delivered His Message. God will protect thee from (the evilness of) men (and those who are unable to tolerate hearing this message). God guides not the people of the unbelievers. (Al-Maida 5:67).

In all of the Holy Qur'an this is the one and only place that the Prophet (pbuh) has been threatened with regards to reservation in delivering the message, in that if he does not announce it, all of the 23 years of deliverance will be useless.

The Honourable Messenger (pbuh) said to Imam Ali (pbuh) that if he I do not deliver the message relating to your guardianship all of my deeds will be erased.

In this Ayah, a few points come to light relating to this topic:

1. Surah Al Maida is of the last Surahs that were revealed to the Prophet (pbuh).
2. In this Ayah, instead of saying Oh Prophet, the term Oh Messenger has been used, indicating the significance of the message.

3. In place of ابلغ the term بلغ has been used for the word “deliver”, which is a means of signifying a decisive, formal and important message.
4. The Prophet is threatened with the loss of his entire life’s work being nullified if he does not announce this single important message.
5. The Prophet is not afraid for his own life, as history shows that when he was fighting idol worshippers alone and in the battles with the disbelievers, he was never afraid of danger. (while there were showers of stone and his companions were being tortured...now why would he be afraid for his life towards the end of his life and amongst his own companions?).
6. The message of the Ayah is not related to monotheism, Prophethood or resurrection, as these fundamentals were already established at the outset of the revelation in Mecca and there is no need for all this advice at the end of his life.
7. The message of the Ayah is not related to prayers, fasting, pilgrimage, Islamic taxes or Jihad, as these were clarified over the span of 23 years of revelation and invitation to Islam, and the people also acted upon these deeds and there was no concern over them.

All exegetists of the Shia and some of the Sunni schools indicate this Ayah is proof of the guardianship of Imam Ali(pbuh) and that it was revealed on the 18th of Dhil Hijja in the tenth year of Hijra on the return trip from the Farewell Pilgrimage and is when the well-known narration was stated:

من كنتُ مولاهُ فعليٌّ مولاهُ

Whomever I was guardian over, so Ali (pbuh) is their guardian.

It was when the choices that need to be made for salvation and its path was made clear. Imam Baqir (pbuh) stated:

بني الاسلام على خمس: على الصلاة والزكاة والصوم والحج والولاية ولم يناد بشئ كما نودي بالولاية، فأخذ الناس بأربع وتركوا هذه

Islam is based upon five foundations: Prayers, Islamic Tax, Fasting, Pilgrimage, and Guardianship (of the Purified Household (pbuth)), so the people accepted four and left this (the fifth, being guardianship).

The Wilayah/Guardianship Is the Perfection and Completion of

The Message

الْيَوْمَ يَئِسَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ دِينِكُمْ فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِ

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتِمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

Today (the day of the appointment of the Guardianship to Imam Ali (pbuh)) the unbelievers have despaired of your religion; therefore fear them not, but fear you Me. Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam for your religion. (Al Maida 5:3).

According to both Shia and Sunni schools, this part of the Ayah, starting from “Today I have perfected...” was revealed after the appointment of Imam Ali (pbuh) as the guardian in Ghadir Khum¹.

Without even looking at narrations that have been passed on, from an intellectual point of view this relationship can be confirmed as the Ayah discusses four features of the day:

1. The day the disbelievers despaired.
2. The day the religion was perfected.
3. The day that the blessings of Allahﷻ upon mankind was completed.
4. The day Islam was accepted and approved as a complete religion by Allahﷻ, and no other days other than the Day of Appointment for the Prophet (pbuh), migration, the liberation of Mecca, the victories of battles... and all the rest with all their value, none could add up to the four important features identified in this Ayah.

So it is only this day in Ghadir Khum that can have the four points combined in the one place:

- As for the despair of the disbelievers, it is because the allegations, war and ill intentions towards the life of the Prophet (pbuh), would remain unsuccessful, having had his death as being their only hope. With the appointment of Imam Ali (pbuh), it became understood by all that the death of the Prophet (pbuh) no longer meant the annihilation of his religion, because a personality such as Imam Ali (pbuh) would take the Prophets (pbuh) place as guardian of the Nation. Here it was that all the disbelievers became hopeless.
- As for the perfection of the religion, it is because of all the religious requirements concerning the laws and principles of the religion were stipulated, but a Guardian over the religion was not appointed, a provision of the religion would remain missing.

- As for the completion of blessings, it is because the most significant blessing the Holy Qur'an points towards is the identification of the Guardian. The Prophet passing away and the Nation remaining without a Guardian would be an action that a shepherd would never do to his flock. How could it be that the Divine Blessing be completed without the appointment of a Guardian.
- As for the approval of Allahﷻ, it is for the reason that every time a law is completed and justly carried out, it becomes the reason for His satisfaction.

For these reasons (perfection of religion, completion of blessings, Divine Approval and despair of disbelievers), we have in narrations of the Purified Household (pbuth) that the Eid of Ghadir is considered one of the most significant festivals.

Sometimes the effect of something depends on gathering all the requirements together, such as fasting, where breaking the fast even moments before the call to prayer will render the fast void. From this point, the term “complete” is used:

{أَتِمُّوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَى اللَّيْلِ}

Then complete the Fast unto the night (Al Baqarah 2: 187).

And sometimes, it is that every part of the whole can have its own effect, such as the recitation of the Holy Qur'an, in that reciting the whole Book is its completion or reading any part of it has its own rewards.

Sometimes, some parts are such that if they were not there, a part would be missing, despite the rest of the parts being present. Look at the example of the pilot and driver where an airplane and car without them would mean they are useless. Wilayah and the True Guardianship are just like that, because mankind is connecting to Allahﷻ and without Guardianship, creations and blessings become troublesome and mankind will not reach Allahﷻ.

Who Is the Guardian?

{إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ ﷺ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رُكْعُونَ}

Your friend is only God, and His Messenger, and the believers who perform the prayer and pay the alms, and bow them down. (Al Maidah 5:55).

The reason for the revelation of this Ayah, in both Sunni and Shia schools, is that a poor man entered the Mosque of the Prophet and sought help from the people. No one paid him alms. Imam Ali (pbuh), while in a state of prayer, and specifically in rukoo', gifted him his ring. In honoring this generosity,

revealed this Ayah.

The Prophet (pbuh) in Ghadir Khum, in order to show the status of Imam Ali (pbuh), recited this Ayah, and Imam Ali (pbuh) recited this Ayah multiple times to indicate the same.

It's true that the best form of introduction is one where the quality and characteristics of the individual is stated and the audience find the individual themselves through that introduction (The Ayah does not mention the name of Imam Ali (pbuh) but describes his qualities and actions).

The Guardianship of Islamic Jurist is in line with the Guardianship of the Divinely Guided. In Maqboola of Omar Bin Handhala², we read a narration that states Imam Sadiq(pbuh) said look at he who narrates our traditions, and looks at our rules of what is permitted and forbidden, and knows our laws, so accept his judgement as it is I that have placed him as a judge over you.

قد جعلته عليكم حاكماً

¹. Ghadir Khum is the name of the location in which these Ayahs were revealed.

². مقبولة عمر بن حنظله

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