

## Letter 108

### The Recommendation as Evidence

#### **Rabi' al-Thani 22, 1330**

Yes, indeed, they did. The Commander of the Faithful (as) mentioned it while preaching from the pulpit, and we have in Letter No. 104 quoted its text. Anyone who quotes the tradition of the Household on the day of warning has done so, quoting 'Ali (as). We have also quoted it in Letter No. 20. It contains the explicit text recommending him for the caliphate.

Imam Abu Muhammad al-Hasan (as), grandson of the Prophet (S), and master of all the the young of Paradise, delivered a sermon when his father the Commander of the Faithful (as) was assassinated in which he said: "I am the descendant of the Prophet (S), and the son of his vicegerent," as quoted by al-Hakim on page 172, Vol. 3, of his authentic *Mustadrak*.

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (as), as on page 254, Vol. 3, of *Sharh Nahjul Balaghah*, at the end of the commentary on the *qasi'a* sermon, has said: "Even before the [Islamic] Message became public, 'Ali (as), while in the company of the Messenger of Allah (S), used to see the light and hear the voice [of angels]." He also quotes him (S) saying: "Had I not been the seal of Prophets, you ['Ali (as)] would have been made a partner in my Prophethood; yet since you cannot be a prophet, you certainly are the *wasi* and the heir of a Prophet," according to Buraydah. Such usage is common among all the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt, and it is a necessity among them and their followers from the time of the *sahabah* till now.

Salman al-Farisi is reported saying that he heard the Messenger of Allah (S) saying: "The one who is my *wasi*, confidant, the best I leave behind me to execute my will and cancel my debts, is 'Ali ibn Abu Talib (as)."

Abu Ayyüb al-Ansari has reported a tradition in which he says that he heard the Messenger of Allah (S) saying to Fatima (as): "Have you not come to know that Allah, the Exalted and omni-Scient, cast a look at the inhabitants of the earth and chose your father for His Messenger, then He cast a second look and chose your husband, then He inspired me to marry you to him and take him as my vicegerent?"

Buraydah has narrated a tradition in which he says that he heard the Messenger of Allah (S) saying: "For every Prophet there is a vicegerent and heir, and my vicegerent and heir is 'Ali ibn Abu Talib (as)," and both ahadith of Abu Ayyub and Salman have already been quoted above in Letter No. 68. Whenever Jabir ibn Yazid al-Ju'fi narrated a tradition from Imam al-Baqir (as), he used to say, as stated in Jabir's biography in al-Thahbi's *Al-Mizan*, "The *wasi* of *wasīs* has narrated a tradition to me..., etc."

Umm al-Khayr daughter of al-Harish al-Bariqi delivered an eloquent speech in Siffin urging the Kufians to fight Mu'awiyah in which she said: "Hurry, may Allah be merciful unto you, to support the just Imam, the faithful *wasi*, the greatest truthful," as quoted by Imam Abul-Fadl Ahmad ibn Abu Tahir al-Baghdadi on page 41 of his work *Balaghat al-Nisa'* stating his source to be al-Sha'bi.

This is what some ancestors have quoted while lauding the recommendation in their sermons and speeches, and whoever researches their biographies will find them applying the title "*wasi*" to the Commander of the Faithful (as) as freely as they would call anything by its name, so much so that the author of *Taj al-'Arūs* says on page 392, Vol. 10, while explaining the term "*wasi*": "[Pronounced] like *ghani*, *wasi* is the title of 'Ali (as), may Allah be pleased with him."

As regarding dealing with this theme in their poetry, this cannot all be cited here due to its abundance, but we quote of it what serves the purpose to make a point. 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas ibn 'Abdul-Muttalib has described him as:

The Messenger's *wasi*, chosen from his Household;

His valiant knight when a challenge is posed.

Al-Mughirah ibn al-Harith ibn 'Abdul-Muttalib has said these verses in which he encourages the people of Iraq to fight Mu'awiyah in Siffin:

The *wasi* of the Messenger of Allah is your chief,

His son-in-law, promoted Allah's Mushaf Sharif.

'Abdullah ibn Abu Sufyan ibn al-Harth ibn 'Abdul-Muttalib has said:

Among us is 'Ali (as), hero of Khaybar, now in ruin,

The hero of Badr, too, when troops retreated;

He is *wasi* of the Chosen Prophet (S) and his cousin,

So, who can attain his lofty status, only to him meted?

Abul-Haytham ibn al-Tihan, one of the heroes of Badr, composed verses to recite during the Battle of the Camel in which he said:

The *wasi* is our Imam and *wali* in word and deed,

No secret left; what was hidden is now revealed.

Khuzaymah ibn Thabit, of the two *Shahadas*, a hero of Badr, recited verses which he, too, composed during the Battle of the Camel in which he said:

O *wasi* of the Prophet! The battle has shaken the foes,

And caravans have been dispatched to deal blows.

He, may Allah be pleased with him, has also said:

O 'Ayesha! Leave 'Ali and the names you call him, too,

For what you call him is certainly not true;

He is but the *wasi* from the Prophet's clan,

The one to testify to that is but you, says everyone.

'Abdullah ibn Badil ibn Warqa' al-Khuza'i, a hero among the *sahabah*, who was martyred in Siffin together with his brother 'Abdul-Rahman, said the following on the incident of the Battle of the Camel:

O my people! What a great calamity Satan brought,

Battle the enemy, for the *wasi* of the Prophet is fought.

Among the verses said by the Commander of the Faithful himself in Siffin were these:

If Ahmad were told that his *wasi* is indeed

Equalled to a wretch, he would surely be displeased.

Jarir ibn 'Abdullah al-Bijli, a *sahabi*, sent verses to Shurhabil ibn al-Samt in which he mentioned 'Ali (as) saying:

Among all other members of the Prophet's clan,

He is *wasi* of the Messenger of ar-Rahman,

His Messenger's protecting knight,

A man proverbial in courage and might.

'Umar ibn Harithah al-Ansari, in a poem lauding Muhammad son of the Commander of the Faithful,

better known as Ibn al-Hanafiyya, said:

Like the *wasi*, and after the Messenger named,

The colour of his standard is crimson red.

When people swore the oath of allegiance to 'Ali (as) after 'Uthman, 'Abdul-Rahman ibn Ja'il said these verses:

I swear you have allied yourselves to one

Whose concern about the faith is well-known,

Supported by the Almighty: virtuous, with no sin,

'Ali, *wasi* of the Chosen one and his cousin,

The first to offer ritual prayers,

One endowed with piety and honours.

A man of the Azd tribe said the following during the Battle of the Camel:

This is 'Ali;

The Prophet's *wasi*

On the Day of Salvation;

The Prophet told the nation:

"This is a brother of mine!

"And successor when my sun ceases to shine."

The wise heeded and kept it in mind,

The wretch forgot and left it behind.

During the Battle of the Camel, a young man from the tribe of Zabbah, who was trained in 'Ayesha's camp, came out and said:

We are children of Zabbah, enemies of 'Ali,

The one who is known for long as the *wasi*,

A brave knight during the time of our Nabi,

I am not blind about the virtues of 'Ali,

I only mourn the murder of the son of 'Uthman, the *taqi*.

Sa'id ibn Qays al-Hamadani, who fought in 'Ali's camp, said the following on the Battle of the Camel:

What a battle that has kindled a fire!

Breaking the spears of every knight,

Tell the *wasi*: Qahtan approaches in desire,

Call upon them to aid Hamadan with their might,

They are their kin,

They are their children.

Ziyad ibn Labid al-Ansari, one of 'Ali's companions, composed these verses during the Battle of the Camel:

How do you see the Ansar in a fierce battle faring?

We are people never afraid to die;

In supporting the *wasi*, we attack with daring,

The Ansar are serious, their spirits high.

'Ali son of 'Abdul-Muttalib do we support

Against those who, about him, lied in their import.

Tell the liars, whose conscience is cheap,

A miserable harvest shall they forever reap.

Hajar ibn 'Adi al-Kindi said on the same occasion:

Lord! Protect 'Ali whose deeds You bless,

The pious believer, the caller for Your Oneness.

This is the view not of a depraved nor a deceiver,

He is but a divinely inspired and guided leader,

Protect him, Lord, and protect Your Prophet's Call

Through his *wali* and the *wasi* of each and all.

'Umar ibn Ahjyah composed a poem lauding the address of al-Hasan, delivered after that of Ibn al-Zubayr, during the Battle of the Camel saying:

Hasan of goodness, like your father in virtue and grace,

Among us you have taken a lofty, exemplary place.

You have delivered a speech whereby Allah exposed

The lies of the enemies of your father who posed

Prattling, like Ibn al-Zubayr, the man of shame.

Ask even skeptics, and they will tell you his name.

Allah has insisted to lower in infamy his head,

And raise that of the clement son of *al-wasi* instead.

Thou hast undoubtedly chosen Thy own Nabi,

And Thou also appointed his honourable *wasi*.

Zajr ibn Qays al-Ju'fi composed these verses also during the Battle of the Camel:

The Lord salutes Ahmad, Messenger of the King

Who grants him many a blessing,

After the Messenger of the King our Caliph will succeed,

A man worthy of authority—a knight true in word and deed:

Ali I meant, the Prophet's *wasi*, bringing to the Path

All the depraved and strayers who incurred the divine Wrath.

Al-Ash'ath ibn Qays al-Kindi has said:

The messenger of the Imam has come to us, so be it

That every Muslim in Ali's army speedily enlist,

He is messenger of the *wasi*, the *wasi* of the Messenger,

Foremost in feats, virtues, piety of every believer.

... and Also:

A message from the Imam we have received

From Ali the virtuous, Ali of Hashim,

Son-in-law of the Prophet (S), his vizier indeed,

The best in the nation and in every realm.

Al-Nu'man ibn al-'Ajlān al-Zarqī al-Ansari said the following during the Battle of Siffin:

Since the *wasi* is our leader, how can there be division?

Nay! No bewilderment, no confusion, do not slacken;

So, leave the depraved Mu'awiyah and follow the religion

Of the *wasi*, and praise the Lord of man and jinn.

'Abdul-Rahman ibn Thu'ayb al-Aslami has said the following in a poem threatening Mu'awiyah with the Iraqi troops:

They are led by none other than the *wasi*

To rid you of misguidance and uncertainty. [1](#)

'Abdullah ibn Abu Saufyan ibn al-Harith ibn 'Abdul-Muttalib has said:

The one in charge after Muhammad is 'Ali who

On all occasions did defend, support and stand.

He is the *wasi* of the Messenger, nothing is new;

His peer, the first to pray with him and lend him hand.

Khuzaymah ibn Thabit, of the two *shahadas*, has said:

He is *wasi* of the Messenger out of all his clan

His defending knight since the very beginning,

The first to pray, preceded by no man

Save the Lady chosen by the One Who Grants blessing.

Zafar ibn Huthayfah al-Asdi has said:

Surround Ali, O men, and support him,

For he is the *wasi* and the first Muslim.<sup>2</sup>

Abul-Aswad al-Du'ali has said:

I love Muhammad passionately, and to me

Very dear are: 'Abbas, Hamzah, and the *wasi*.

Al-Nu'man ibn 'Ajlan, an Ansar poet and dignitary, said these verses in a poem addressed to Ibn al-'?'s narrated by al-Zubayr ibn Bakkar in his *Muwaffaqiyyat*. It is transmitted by the Mu'tazilite scholar on page 13, Vol. 3, of his *Sharh Nahjul Balaghah*, but Ibn 'Abd al-Birr quotes this poem stating the biography of al-Nu'man in his *Isti'ab*, omitting the name of the witness from it

**("... and thus do they behave (Qur'an, 27:34)":**

You underestimated Ali who is the most fit,

Albeit if you knew, or did not know it;

For he, assisted by Allah, guides unto Him and indeed

Forbids debauchery, oppression and every wrongful deed;

The *wasi* of the Chosen Prophet (S) and his cousin

Killer of knights who are misguided, unbelieving.

Al-Fadl ibn al-'Abbas has said these verses which are quoted by Ibn al-Athir at the end of the latter's discussion of 'Uthman, on page 43, Vol. 3, of his work *Al-Tarikh al-Kamil*, commenting that 'Uthman is "the best of people besides the three men of the [Prophet's] house."

The best of people and of every believer

After the one chosen to be Messenger

Is the *wasi* according to people who remember.

And he is first to perform the rite of prayer

And the like of the Messenger;

The first at Badr to deal a deadly blow

To those who broke the divine Law.

Hassan ibn Thabit has said these verses in which he praises Ali on behalf of all the Ansar. They are quoted by al-Zubayr ibn Bakkar in his *Muwaffaqiyyat*, and recorded by Ibn Abul-Hadid on page 15, Vol. 2, of his work *Sharh Nahjul Balaghah*:

You are the most faithful to the Prophet among us

Worthy of his recommendation; for who else surapss

You in it, who else? Aren't you his brother

In true guidance, and his *wasi*,

The best scholar of the Qur'an and all other

Ahadith of the blessed Nabi?

Some poets said these verses addressing al-Hasan ibn 'Ali (as), peace be upon both of them, as quoted by Shaykh Muhammad 'Ali Hashshu al-Hanafi al-Saydawi in the footnote to page 65 of his book *A'ithar Thawat al-Siwar*, when he discussed both Ghanima daughter of 'mir, and Mu'awiyah, saying that she recited this verse before Mu'awiyah in a statement she made responding to his own:

The most dignified of men, son of the *wasi*,

Grandson of the Prophet, son of Ali.

Umm Sinan daughter of Khayth'amah ibn Kharsha'ah al-Mathhaji has said the following verses addressing and lauding Ali (as); they are mentioned by Imam Abul-Fadl Ahmad ibn Abu Tahir al-Baghdadi when he discusses Umm Sinan on page 67 of *Balaghat al-Nisa'*. They are also quoted from Umm Sinan by Shaykh Muhammad 'Ali Hashshu al-Hanafi al-Saydawi at the end of page 78 of his *?thar Thawat al-Siwar*.

You were among us, after Muhammad, his trusted successor

He selected you, and of his trust you proved a protector.

This much of the poetry contemporary to the Commander of the Faithful (as) is what we have been able to quote in such a short letter. If we review the poetry composed after him, then we will be authoring a voluminous book beyond the writing of which we would still apologize for our work being incomplete. Yet to quote all such poetry may become boring, and it may cause us to digress from the main subject-

matter. So, let us be satisfied with quoting only the most famous poets, and let us judge the rest according to what is quoted here.

In his celebrated poem, al-Kumait ibn Ziyad has thus lauded the descendants of Hashim:

He is the *wasi* protecting the throne of the nation

Against collapse and disintegration,<sup>3</sup>

The embodiment of virtue, glory and goodness,

Solving the problems with order and firmness.

The *wasi*, the wali,<sup>4</sup> the knight

Courageous, brave: his star was bright,

The *wasi* of the *wasi*, determined and wise

In battle-fields, you hear his enemy's agony cries.

Kuthayyir ibn 'Abdul-Rahman ibn al-Aswad ibn 'mir al-Khuza'i, better known as Kuthayyir 'Azza, has said:

The *wasi* of the Chosen Prophet and his cousin; he

Emancipates those in bondage, and judges with equity.

Abu Tammam al-Ta'i has said the following in one of his poems the rhyme of which rhymes with "r's":<sup>5</sup>

You plotted against his *wasi* and deceived before;

You cooked it, unprecedented, unmatched in lore,

Against the Prophet's brother, son-in-law, who bore

Feats of valour, while your plots opened the door

To mischief: peerless in brother, son-in-law...; say no more;

To the Prophet he was like Aaron to Moses of yore...

Du'bal ibn Ali al-Khuza'i has said the following in his eulogy of the Master of Martyrs [Imam Husayn (S)]:

The head of the son of Muhammad's daughter and his *wasi*,

O men, is being raised atop a spear for all to see...!

Abul-Tayyib al-Mutanabbi, when rebuked for stopping his praise of Ahl al-Bayt, as recorded in his diwan (collection of poems) said:

I have no pretext for leaving the praise of the *wasi*

His light dominates, his shade expands unto you and me:

For when something elongates, it stands on its own,

Attributes of the sun's light are never gone.

He also said the following verses in his praise of Abul-Qasim Tahir ibn al-Husayn ibn Tahir al-'Alawi, as also recorded in his *diwan*:

He is son of the Messenger of Allah and of his *wasi*,

Alike unto them when I diligently compare and see.

Verses such as these are innumerable, uncountable, Wassalam.

Sincerely,

*Sh*

[1.](#) This verse, and all the poetic verses and martials which precede it, are quoted in the books of biographies and chronicles, especially the ones dealing with the battles of the Camel and Siffin. They have been quoted in their entirety by the researching scholar Ibn Abul-Hadid on page 47 and its following pages up to page 50, Vol. 1, of his *Sharh Nahjul Balaghah*, Egyptian edition, where he explains the khutba of the Commander of the Faithful (as) referring to Muhammad's progeny (as) and to what they have said about him, including the following: "They have the distinction of being divinely granted the right to rule, and in them the Prophet's will is preserved, and they are the ones who inherit his legacy." Having quoted these verses and martials, he says verbatim: "The verses containing this word '*wasiyya*' [will] are innumerable, but we have mentioned here some of them where there is reference to the two parties (meaning Abu Mikhnaf's book dealing with the Battle of Camel, and Nasr ibn Muzahim's book dealing with the Battle of Siffin); besides these, the references are uncountable and innumerable. We would have filled many pages of them had we not feared boredom and monotony."

[2.](#) Zafr's verse, and both couplets composed by Khuzaymah before it, in addition to the couplets composed by Abu Sufyan which preceded them, are all narrated by Imam al-Iskafi in his book *Naqd al-'Uthmaniyya*, and they are transmitted by Ibn Abul-Hadid at the end of his commentary on the qasi'a sermon on page 258 and the pages following it, Vol. 3, of *Sharh Nahjul Balaghah*, Egyptian edition.

[3.](#) When scholar Shaykh Muhammad Mahmud al-Rafi'i came to the conclusion of his commentary on this verse in his own commentary on the verses composed by the poet al-Kumait in praise of the descendants of Hashim, he said: "Meaning 'Ali, may Allah glorify his countenance, who is named *wasi* because the Messenger of Allah awsa [left a will] regarding him." The same is narrated about Ibn Buraydah who quotes his father citing the Prophet (S) saying: "For every Prophet there is a *wasi*, and 'Ali is my *wasi* and the heir of my legacy." Al-Tirmithi states that the Prophet (S) is quoted saying: "To whomsoever I have been a master, this 'Ali is his master." Al-Bukhari quotes Ibn Sa'd saying that the Messenger of Allah (S) headed to Tabuk, leaving 'Ali (as) behind. 'Ali (as) asked him: "Do you thus leave me with children and women?" He

said: "Are you not pleased that your status to me is like that of Aaron to Moses, except there will be no prophet after me?"  
Ibn Qays al-Raqiyat has said:

Among us are: Ahmad the Prophet, the truthful, the pious, the man of wisdom;

And 'Ali and Ja'far with two wings: They are the wasi, and the man of martyrdom.

This is something which poets used to always say about 'Ali (as) with a great elaboration. Then he testifies to the poetry we have first quoted by Kuthayyir 'Azzah.

[4.](#) Muhammad Mahmūd al-Rafi'i, the commentator, says verbatim: "Meaning vicegerent after the Messenger of Allah."

[5.](#) The poem starts with: "Gazelles that made the dusty dunes glitter like stars," which is included in his diwan (collection of poems).

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