

Letter 32

Thul-Hijjah 24, 1329

I. Among Its Sources: the Prophet's Visit to Umm Salim

1) One of its sources is the discourse of the Prophet (S) with Umm Salim,¹ a woman of lengthy achievements, a woman of wisdom who enjoyed a special prestigious status with the Messenger of Allah (S) due to being among the foremost in accepting Islam, and because of her sincerity, contributions, and sacrifices in the cause of Islam.

The Prophet (S) used to visit her and talk to her at her own house. One day, he said to her: "O Umm Salim (mother of Salim)! 'Ali's flesh is of mine, and his blood is of my own; he is to me like Aaron to Moses."² It is obvious that this hadith is only an excerpt of his lengthy hadith which is stated for the purpose of conveying the truth and providing advice for the sake of Allah in order to highlight the status of his vicegerent, the one who would take his own place (of responsibility) once he is gone, and it cannot be confined to the Battle of Tabuk.

II. The Case of Hamzah's Daughter

2) A similar hadith was made in the case of Hamzah's daughter in whose regard 'Ali, Ja'far and Zayd disputed. The Messenger of Allah (S) said then: "O 'Ali! You are to me like Aaron to Moses, etc."

III. Leaning on 'Ali

3) Another incident occurred when Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and Abu 'Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah were in the company of the Prophet (S) who was leaning on 'Ali. The Prophet (S) patted 'Ali's shoulder and said: "O 'Ali! You are the strongest among the believers in faith, the first (man) to embrace Islam, and your status to me is similar to that of Aaron to Moses."³

IV. The First Fraternity

4) The ahadith narrated during the First Fraternity also include this text. These were made in Mecca prior to the migration, when the Messenger of Allah (S) consummated brotherhood among the emigrants in particular.

V. The Second Fraternity

5) On the occasion of the Second Fraternity, while in Medina, five months after the migration, the Prophet (S) made fraternity between the emigrants (Muhajirun) and the supporters (Ansar). In both events, he (S) chose 'Ali as his brother,⁴ thus preferring him over all others, saying to him: "You are to me like Aaron to Moses except there will be no Prophet after me." Narrations in this regard are consecutively reported. Refer to what others state about the First Fraternity such as the hadith narrated by Zayd ibn Abu 'Awfah. Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal has included it in his book *Manaqib 'Ali*, Ibn 'Asakir in his *Tarikh*,⁵ al-Baghwi and al-Tabrani in their *Mujma's*, al-Barudi in his *Al-Ma'rifa*, by Ibn 'Adi⁶ and others.

The hadith under discussion is quite lengthy, and it contains guidelines about how to establish brotherhood. It ends with: "Ali said: 'O Messenger of Allah! My soul has expired, and my spine has been broken, having seen what you have done for your companions while leaving me alone. If this is a sign of your anger with me, then I complain only to you and beg your pardon.' The Messenger of Allah said: 'I swear by the One Who sent me to convey the truth about Him, I have not spared you except for my own self. You are to me like Aaron to Moses, except there will be no Prophet after me. You are my Brother, heir and companion.' 'Ali (as) asked him: 'What shall I inherit from you?'

He (S) answered: 'Whatever Prophets before me left for those who inherited them: the Book of their Lord, and the Sunnah of their Prophet. You will be my companion in my house in Paradise together with my daughter Fatima. You are my Brother and Companion.' Then he, peace be upon him and his progeny, recited the verse: 'They are brethren seated conveniently facing each other,'" referring to the brethren whose hearts Allah has joined in affection who look at each other with sincere compassion.

Refer also to the events of the Second Fraternity. Al-Tabrani, in his *Al-Tafsir Al-Kabir*, quotes Ibn 'Abbas reporting one hadith stating that the Messenger of Allah (S) said to 'Ali (as): "Are you angry because I have established brotherhood between the Ansar and the Muhajirun and have not selected a brother for you from among them? Are you not pleased that your status to me is like that of Aaron to Moses, except there will be no Prophet after me?"⁷

VI. Closing the Doors

6) The same hadith was also said when the companions' doors overlooking the Prophet's mosque in

Medina were ordered closed except that of 'Ali. Jabir ibn 'Abdullah quotes the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him and his progeny, saying: "O 'Ali! It is permissible for you to do at this mosque whatever is permissible for me, and you are to me like Aaron to Moses, except there will be no Prophet after me."

Huthayfah ibn 'Asid al-Ghifari has said that the Prophet, peace be upon him and his progeny, once delivered a *khutba* on the occasion of closing those doors in which he said: "There are some men who have disliked that I got them out of the mosque while keeping 'Ali. Allah, the Dear and Mighty, inspired to Moses and his brother to reside with their people in Egypt and make their homes a *qibla* and say their prayers," till he said: "'Ali to me is like Aaron to Moses. He is my Brother, and none of you is allowed to cohabit therein other than he."

The sources of this hadith are numerous, and they cannot all be counted in a brief letter like this, yet I hope that what I have stated here suffices to falsify the claim that the status hadith is confined only to the Battle of Tabuk. How much can such a claim weigh in the light of abundance of sources of this hadith?

VII. The Prophet Comparing 'Ali and Aaron to the Two Stars

7) Anyone who is familiar with the biography of the Prophet (S) will find him, peace be upon him and his progeny, describing 'Ali and Aaron as the two bright stars arranged alike, neither one differing from the other. This by itself is a testimony to the generality of status of this hadith, yet the generality of the status is what comes to mind regardless of any pretext, as we have explained above, and peace be with you.

Sincerely,

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[1.](#) She is daughter of Milhan ibn Khalid al-Ansari and sister of Haram ibn Milhan. Her father and brother were martyred in the company of the Prophet (S). She possessed a great deal of accomplishment and wisdom. She narrated a few ahadith of the Prophet (S), and she is quoted by her son Anas, in addition to Ibn 'Abbas, Zayd ibn Thabit, Abu Salamah ibn 'Abdul-Rahman, and by others.

She is considered to be in the first row of those who accepted and supported the Islamic faith, and she herself was a caller to Islam. During the pre-Islamic period of jahiliyya, she was in love with Malik ibn al-Nadar from whom she conceived her son Anas ibn Malik. At the dawn of Islam, she was among the foremost to embrace it, and she invited her husband Malik to believe in Allah and His Messenger, but he refused; so, she deserted him, and he in his rage moved to Syria where he died as a kafir. She advised her son, who was then ten years old, to serve the Prophet (S), and the Prophet (S) accepted his service in order to please her.

Many Arab men of prestige sought her hand, but she always used to say: "I shall not get married except when Anas reaches manhood;" so, Anas always used to say: "May Allah reward my mother, for she took very good care of me." Due to her own influence, Abu Talhah al-Ansari became Muslim. He sought her hand when he was still kafir, but she refused to marry him unless he embraced Islam; so, he accepted her invitation to embrace the new faith, and his dowery to her was his own acceptance of Islam.

She conceived a son by him, but the baby fell sick and died; so, she said: "Nobody should mention his death to his father before me." When her husband came home and inquired about his son, she said: "He is in most content;" so he thought that she meant their son was asleep. She served him his dinner, then she put on her best clothes and perfume, and he went to bed with her. The next day she said to him: "Pray for your son's soul."

Abu Talha narrated this story to the Messenger of Allah (S) who said to him: "Allah blessed you last night." She continues to say that he (S) invoked Allah to provide me with what I wanted and even more. In that same night, she conceived 'Abdullah ibn Abu Talha upon whom Allah showered His blessings. He is the father of Ishaq ibn 'Abdullah ibn Abu Talha, the faqih, and his brothers were ten; each one of them was a man of knowledge.

Umm Salim used to participate in the Prophet's military campaigns. On the Day of Uhud, she had a dagger to stab any infidel who would come near her. She rendered Islam a great service, and I do not know any woman besides her whom the Prophet (S) used to visit in her own house and she would offer him a present. She was aware of the status of his progeny, knowledgeable of their rights... May Allah shower His choicest mercy on her.

2. This hadith, I mean Umm Salim's, is number 2554 of the ones numbered in Kanz al-'Ummal as narrated on page 154 of its sixth volume. It also exists in Muntakhab al-Kanz; so, refer to the last line of the footnote on page 31 of Volume 5 of Ahmad's Musnad, where you will find it verbatim.

3. This is quoted by al-Hasan ibn Badr, al-Hakim in his chapter on kunyat, al-Shirazi in his chapter on surnames, volume six, and by Ibn al-Najjar. It is hadith 6029 and also 6032 of the ones numbered in Kanz al-'Ummal, page 395.

4. Discussing the biography of 'Ali (as) in his Isti'ab, Ibn 'Abd al-Birr describes him thus: "He made brotherhood with the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him and his progeny, among the immigrants, then between the immigrants and the supporters. In each of these instances, he (S) said to 'Ali (as): 'You are my brother in this life and the life hereafter,' then he made brotherhood between himself and 'Ali (as)." The details are in the books of traditions and history. For the details of the first brotherhood, refer to page 26, Vol. 2, of Al-Sira al-Halabiyya, and in the second brotherhood on page 120, Vol. 2, also of Al-Sira al-Halabiyya, where you will find how the Prophet (S) favoured 'Ali (as) in both occasions over everyone else. In Al-Sira al-Dahlaniyya, the details of the circumstances of the first brotherhood and those of the second are similar to what is published in Al-Sira al-Halabiyya. The author also stated that the second brotherhood took place five months after the migration.

5. This is quoted from Ahmad and Ibn 'Asakir by a group of trusted authorities such as al-Muttaqi al-Hindi; so, refer to hadith 918 of his Kanz al-'Ummal at the beginning of page 40 of its fifth volume. It is also quoted on page 390, Vol. 6, from Ahmad's book Manaqib 'Ali, numbering it hadith 4972.

6. This is quoted from these Imams by a group of trusted authorities such as al-Muttaqi al-Hindi at the beginning of page 41, Vol. 5, of his Kanz al-'Ummal, numbering it hadith 919.

7. This is quoted by al-Muttaqi al-Hindi in his Kanz al-'Ummal and Al-Muntakhab; so, refer to the Muntakhab's footnote on page 31 of its fifth volume regarding Ahmad's Musnad, and you will find it verbatim just as we have quoted it here. It is not difficult to sift the gist of the phrase "You have angered 'Ali (as)" and comprehend the meanings of companionship, compassion, and the love of a compassionate and kind father to his son. If you wonder how 'Ali had some doubts in the second time he was left behind, although in the first time he had some doubt, too, then he found out that the Prophet, peace be upon him and his progeny, had kept him there just for himself, and why he did not consider the second incident in the light of the first. The answer is that the second incident could not be compared with the first one, for the first was regarding the immigrants in particular; so, the comparison did not forbid the prophet (S) from creating brotherhood with 'Ali (as), contrary to the second which was between the immigrants and the supporters. One immigrant in the second instance may be joined in brotherhood to a supporter, and vice versa. Since the prophet and the wasi were both immigrants, the assumption in the second instance was that they should not be brothers; so, 'Ali thought that his brother would be a supporter, just like others by way of comparison. When the Messenger of Allah (S) did not create brotherhood between him and any of the supporters, some doubt entertained his mind, but Allah and His Messenger insisted on favouring him, and so it was: he and the Messenger of Allah (S) became brothers, contrary to the common norm of practice among all the immigrants and supporters at that time and place.

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