

Preface

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Two questions stand at the centre of the Sunni–Shi'i disagreement:

(i) Did the Messenger of Allah, *sallallahu 'alaihi wa alihi*, ever appoint any *khalifah* to stand in his command position and substitute for him in his command roles after his death?

(ii) If he did, *who* exactly did he designate?

Our brothers from the Ahl al–Sunnah resolutely submit that the Prophet *never* appointed a *khalifah*. Rather, he – according to them – died without any designated heir to his command, and gave no indication whatsoever as to the method of appointing future commanders of the *Ummah*. Therefore, *any* Sunni Muslim can become the Sunni caliph by inheritance, or through a popular vote, an electoral college, a coup, or an armed rebellion. By contrast, the Shi'ah Imamiyyah argue that the Messenger of Allah actually appointed twelve *khalifahs* from his bloodline – by Divine Order – to assume his command roles after him. In line with the Shi'i doctrine, the first of these *khalifahs* was Amir al–Muminin 'Ali b. Abi Talib, '*alaihi al-salam*, followed by Imam al–Hasan, '*alaihi al-salam*, then Imam al–Husayn, '*alaihi al-salam*, and then nine others from the progeny of al–Husayn, '*alahim al-salam*. The twelfth of them, according to Shi'is, is Imam al–Mahdi, '*alaihi al-salam*.

Another crucial difference between the Sunni and Shi'i positions is outlined below:

1. According to Sunni Islam, it is primarily political and military power which determines legitimacy.

Therefore, whoever is to *seize* full political and military control of most of the Sunni communities is their legitimate *khalifah*. Whoever is not able to achieve that is not the *khalifah*.

2. On the other hand, Shi'is maintain that it is only divine appointment that determines legitimacy. Even if the divine appointee is denied political or military power, he still remains the legitimate *khalifah*. Whoever exercises political or military control over him is nothing but a rebel, and so is whosoever fails to

recognize his authority. All the messengers of Allah, *'alaihim al-salam*, were commanders of their respective *Ummahs* till their deaths¹. Yet, most of them were denied both political and military authority. That, of course, never stripped them of their legitimate command over even the rebel leaders.

However, there are authentic *ahadith* in the Sunni sources which firmly establish that the Prophet – by the Command of Allah – *did* appoint twelve *khalifahs* from his bloodline, with the first of them really being 'Ali! This then is exactly where the supreme problem lies for the Sunni claims, and – of course – the entirety of Sunni Islam as a whole.

The *khalifah* is the one who takes the place of another one, who is physically absent for one reason or another. Imam Ibn al-'Athir (d. 606 H), an ace Sunni lexicographer, explains:

الخليفة من يقوم مقام الذاهب ويسد مسده

The *khalifah* is whoever stands in the position of the one who is physically absent and substitutes for him.²

So, the *khalifah* is basically the “substitute” of the one who is physically absent. The cause of the absence does not matter – whether distance, death or others. What is important is that someone who occupies/occupied a certain position is physically absent, and another – the *khalifah* – “substitutes” for him *in it*. This often happens in football matches. A player is substituted by another who then plays his *exact* role on the pitch. The substitute is the *khalifah* of the substituted footballer. With regards to our *Ummah*, the Messenger of Allah is our *amir* (commander)³. His command endures over, and binds, all Muslims – civilian and military – till the End Time. In particular, he had, and still has, full command of all Muslim armed forces. No Muslim can ever validly claim that the Prophet's command has ceased over *any* of the believers. None has ever, and none will ever, do such. The Messenger of Allah is, and will forever remain, the *amir* of the believers (*amir al-muminin*).

However, it was impossible for the Prophet to personally exercise all his command roles over the *Ummah*, even during his lifetime. Therefore, whenever he was unable to do so by himself, he used to deputize people to fill the roles for him. Whoever he appointed was therefore known as his *amir* (i.e. the *amir* appointed by him)⁴. Imam Ahmad (d. 241 H) records one of his explicit instructions concerning such deputies:

حدثنا عبد الله حدثني أبي ثنا روح ثنا بن جريج أنا زياد عن بن شهاب ان أبا سلمة بن عبد الرحمن أخبره انه سمع أبا هريرة يقول قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم من أطاعني فقد أطاع الله ومن عصاني فقد عصى الله ومن أطاع أميرى فقد أطاعني ومن عصى أميرى فقد عصاني

'Abd Allah (b. Ahmad) – my father (Ahmad b. Hanbal) – Ruh – Ibn Jurayj – Ziyad – Ibn Shihab – Abu

Salamah b. ‘Abd al-Rahman – Abu Hurayrah:

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said: “Whosoever obeys me has obeyed Allah and whosoever disobeys me has disobeyed Allah. Also, **whosoever obeys my *amir* has obeyed me, and whosoever disobeys my *amir* has disobeyed me.**”[5](#)

Shaykh al-Arnaut says:

إسناده صحيح على شرط الشيخين

Its chain is *sahih* upon the standard of the two Shaykhs.[6](#)

These *amirs* were generally appointed either as army commanders or civilian governors. In the latter case, they were also referred to as *khalifahs*[7](#). They stood in the position of the Messenger of Allah – often in a limited capacity – and substituted for him within his *Ummah*. The question then is about the command roles of the Prophet *after his death*. Did he appoint *amirs* to fill them for him or not? He knew for certain that he was going to die one day, and would no longer be able to personally perform his command roles at all anymore within his *Ummah*. So, what did he do about these roles? Did he follow his Sunnah of appointing *amirs* to perform them for him whenever he was unable to do by himself? Or, did he abandon his own Sunnah?! Our brothers from the Ahl al-Sunnah say: *Yes, he abandoned his own Sunnah!*

He knew that he still had those roles in his *Ummah* which would endure after his demise, and that he would soon be unable to carry them out personally. Yet, he deputized no one to perform them for him in his absence (due to death). Meanwhile, the Shi’ah contradict the Ahl al-Sunnah on this matter. They argue that it was absolutely impossible for the Messenger to have departed without taking steps to ensure the continued fulfillment of his command roles over his *Ummah* after him. They submit instead that he actually appointed twelve *amirs* to fill his full command roles for him among his followers till the Hour.

The Shi’i claim apparently has support in authentic Sunni reports. For instance, this is an authentic *hadith* documented in the *Musnad* of Imam Ahmad:

حدثنا عبد الله حدثني سريج بن يونس عن عمر بن عبيد عن سماك بن حرب عن جابر بن سمرة قال سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم يقول يكون من بعدي اثنا عشر أميرا فتكلم فخفي علي فسألت الذي يليني أو إلى جنبي فقال كلهم من قریش

‘Abd Allah – Shurayh b. Yunus – ‘Umar b. ‘Ubayd – Simak b. Harb – Jabir b. Samurah:

I heard the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, saying, “**THERE WILL BE AFTER ME TWELVE**

AMIRS". Then he said something which I did not hear clearly. So I asked the one next to me, and he said, "**All of them will be from Quraysh.**"[8](#)

Shaykh al-Arnaut comments:

حديث صحيح وهذا إسناد حسن من أجل سماك

It is a **sahih hadith**, and this chain is *hasan* due to Simak.[9](#)

Imam al-Tirmidhi (d. 279 H) says about the same *hadith*:

هذا حديث حسن صحيح

This *hadith* is *hasan sahih*[10](#)

And 'Allamah al-Albani (d. 1420 H) agrees:

صحيح

Sahih[11](#)

Imam Ahmad further records:

حدثنا عبد الله حدثني أبي ثنا مؤمل بن إسماعيل ثنا حماد بن سلمة حدثنا داود بن هند عن الشعبي عن جابر بن سمرة قال سمعت النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم يقول يكون لهذه الأمة اثنا عشر خليفة

'Abd Allah (b. Ahmad) – my father (Ahmad b. Hanbal) – Mumal b. Isma'il – Hamad b. Salamah – Dawud b. Hind – al-Shu'bi – Jabir b. Samurah:

I heard the Prophet, peace be upon him, saying: "**There will be FOR this Ummah TWELVE KHALIFAHS.**"[12](#)

Shaykh al-Arnaut says:

حديث صحيح

It is a **sahih hadith**.[13](#)

Note that the *hadith* says "*for this Ummah*" and not "*in this Ummah*". So, it explicitly and very

emphatically *limits* the number to twelve till the extinction of the *Ummah* at the Last Hour. The phrase “*in this Ummah*” – although having the same effect too – would have been weaker.

Ahmad again documents:

حدثنا عبد الله حدثني أبي ثنا هاشم ثنا زهير ثنا زياد بن خيثمة عن الأسود بن سعيد الهمداني عن جابر بن سمرة قال سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم أو قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يكون بعدي اثنا عشر خليفة كلهم من قريش

‘Abd Allah (b. Ahmad) – my father (Ahmad b. Hanbal) – Hashim – Zuhayr – Ziyad b. Khaythamah – al-Aswad b. Sa’id al-Hamdani – Jabir b. Samurah:

I heard the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, saying, or the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said: “**THERE WILL BE AFTER ME TWELVE *KHALIFAHS*, all of them from Quraysh.**”¹⁴

Al-Arnaut comments:

حديث صحيح

It is a *sahih hadith*¹⁵

In some other *ahadith*, their direct appointment by the Prophet is stated, as well as their primary identities. Imam Ibn Abi ‘Asim (d. 287 H) records:

ثنا أبو بكر، ثنا عمرو بن سعد أبو داود الحفري، عن شريك، عن الركين عن القاسم بن حسان، عن زيد بن ثابت قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: إني تارك فيكم الخليفين من بعدي، كتاب الله وعترتي أهل بيتي وإنهما لن يتفرقا حتى يرثا علي الحوض.

Abu Bakr – ‘Amr b. Sa’d Abu Dawud al-Hafri – Sharik – al-Rakin – al-Qasim b. Hisan – Zayd b. Thabit:

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said, “**I AM LEAVING BEHIND AMONG YOU the two *khalifahs* after me: the Book of Allah and my bloodline, my Ahl al-Bayt.** Both shall never separate from each other until they meet me at the Lake-Font.”¹⁶

‘Allamah al-Albani declares:

حديث صحيح

It is a *sahih hadith*.¹⁷

Imam Ahmad too documents:

حدثنا عبد الله حدثني أبي ثنا الأسود بن عامر ثنا شريك عن الركين عن القاسم بن حسان عن زيد بن ثابت قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم انى تارك فيكم خليفتين كتاب الله حبل ممدود ما بين السماء والأرض أو ما بين السماء إلى الأرض وعترتي أهل بيتي وإنهما لن يتفرقا حتى يردا على الحوض

‘Abd Allah (b. Ahmad) – my father (Ahmad b. Hanbal) – al-Aswad b. ‘Amir – Sharik – al-Rakin – al-Qasim b. Hisan – Zayd b. Thabit:

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said, “**I AM LEAVING BEHIND AMONG YOU two khalfahs: the Book of Allah** – a rope stretching between the heaven and the earth or from the heaven to the earth – **and my bloodline, my Ahl al-Bayt**. Both shall never separate from each other until they meet me at the Lake-Font.”[18](#)

Shaykh al-Arnaut comments:

حديث صحيح بشواهده دون قوله : " وإنهما لن يتفرقا حتى يردا علي الحوض " وهذا إسناد ضعيف لسوء حفظ شريك

The hadith is sahih through its shawahid (witnesses), except his statement “Both shall never separate from each other until they meet me at the Lake-Font.”[19](#)

Ahmad further records:

حدثنا عبد الله حدثني أبي ثنا أبو أحمد الزبيري ثنا شريك عن الركين عن القاسم بن حسان عن زيد بن ثابت قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم إنى تارك فيكم خليفتين كتاب الله وأهل بيتي وإنهما لن يتفرقا حتى يردا على الحوض جميعا

‘Abd Allah (b. Ahmad) – my father (Ahmad b. Hanbal) – Abu Ahmad al-Zubayri – Sharik – al-Rakin – al-Qasim b. Hisan – Zayd b. Thabit:

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said: “**I AM LEAVING BEHIND AMONG YOU two khalfahs: the Book of Allah and my Ahl al-Bayt**. Both shall never separate from each other until they meet me together at the Lake-Font.”[20](#)

Al-Arnaut again says:

" حديث صحيح بشواهده دون قوله : " وإنهما لن يتفرقا حتى يردا علي الحوض جميعا "

The *hadith* is *sahih* through its *shawahid*, except his statement, “Both shall never separate from each other until they meet me together at the Lake-Font.”[21](#)

Imam al-Haythami (d. 807 H) too copies this report from *Musnad Ahmad*:

عن زيد بن ثابت قال : قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم: إني تارك فيكم خليفتين : كتاب الله عز و جل حبل ممدود ما بين السماء والأرض – أو ما بين السماء إلى الأرض – وعترتي أهل بيتي وإنهما لن يتفرقا حتى يردا علي الحوض

Narrated Zayd b. Thabit:

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said, “**I AM LEAVING BEHIND AMONG YOU two *khalifahs*: the Book of Allah** – a rope stretching between the heaven and the earth or from the heaven to the earth – **and my bloodline, my Ahl al-Bayt**. Both shall never separate from each other until they meet me at the Lake-Font.”[22](#)

And he passes this verdict:

رواه أحمد وإسناده جيد

Ahmad has narrated it **and its chain is good (*jayyid*)**.

It was the Prophet himself who was personally leaving behind the Qur’an and his bloodline as *khalifahs* among his *Ummah*. In fact, in one of the reports, he called them “*the two khalifahs after me*”, thereby fixing and restricting the *khilafah* to them. In any case, both the Qur’an and his bloodline are his *khalifahs*, appointed by him, according to the authentic *ahadith* above. Something to note at this point is that the word *khalifah* is both singular and plural, as submitted by Imam al-Raghib al-Isfahani (d. 501 H):

والخليفة يقال للواحد والجمع ، وهاهنا [هو] جمع ، فإن الخليفة لم يرد به آدم عليه السلام فقط ، بل أريد هو وصالحو أولاده ، فهم خلفاؤه

The word *khalifah* is used to refer to a single person or to a group. Here (under Qur’an 2:30), it is plural. This is because the word *Khalifah* (there) does not refer to Adam, peace be upon him, alone. Rather, it refers to him and the righteous ones among his offspring. So, they are His (i.e. Allah’s) *Khalifahs*.[23](#)

Therefore, it was linguistically permissible for the Prophet to refer to his bloodline as his *khalifah*, to indicate that each of them was his *khalifah* individually. Secondly, like in the case of Adam, the word

khalifah in the *ahadith* is not a reference to all the members of the bloodline indiscriminately. Rather, as stated in the other *ahadith*, the *khalifahs* among them are only twelve of their righteous ones. Each of these *khalifahs* stands in the Messenger's position as the *amir* of the *Ummah* and substitutes for the latter in his command roles. So, each of them is also our *amir*, the *amir* of our Prophet over us.

The big questions then rise here:

1. How many are the *khalifahs* of Sunni Muslims?
2. What percentage of them were from the Prophet's bloodline, his Ahl al-Bayt?
3. What percentage of them remained eternally inseparable from the Qur'an, as stipulated by the *ahadith*?
4. And what percentage of them acted *for* the Messenger of Allah?

Without a doubt, the Sunni *khalifahs* were in their dozens. Meanwhile, the *khalifahs* for this *Ummah*, according to its Prophet, are only twelve. So, it is either none of them was a *khalifah* for the *Ummah*, or only twelve of them were. Perhaps, the worst part of it all is that none of the dozens of Sunni *khalifahs* – apart from Amir al-Muminin and Imam al-Hasan – was from the Prophet's bloodline. In particular, Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, Mu'awiyah and Yazid – the primary Sunni *khalifahs* – were all from *outside* the bloodline of the Messenger. This fact singlehandedly kicks them out of the scope of the legitimate *khilafah*!

Apparently, Sunni Islam itself survives upon the legitimacy of the *khilafah* of Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, Mu'awiyah and Yazid at the least. Should their *khilafah* – or that of any of them – collapse, the Sunni religion as a whole dies with it. So, the Sunni *'ulama* make all the desperate efforts they can and go to all desperate lengths to deny the legitimate *khilafah* of the Ahl al-Bayt and uphold the patently illegitimate *khilafah* of the others. It is a survival tactic for them. They have no other choice if they still want to maintain their flocks and the attendant benefits. However, it is indeed a very dangerous game actually, in the light of this noble verse:

ولا تلبسوا الحق بالباطل وتكتموا الحق وأنتم تعلمون

And mix not the Truth with falsehood, nor conceal the Truth while you know.[24](#)

Then, Allah adds:

إن الذين يكتُمون ما أنزلنا من البينات والهدى من بعد ما بيناه للناس في الكتاب أولئك يلعنهم الله ويلعنهم
اللاعنون

Those who conceal the clear proofs, evidences and the guidance, which We have sent down, after We have made it clear for the people in the Book, **they are the ones being cursed by Allah** and being cursed by the cursers.²⁵

In particular, these desperate Sunni *‘ulama* focus upon the *khilafah* of Amir al-Muminin ‘Ali b. Abi Talib. He was the immediate, undisputed leader of the Prophet’s bloodline after the latter. Meanwhile, the true *khilafah* had been fixed permanently within this same bloodline. Therefore, naturally, ‘Ali was the first legitimate *khalifah* of Islam. So, even if there were no other authentic *ahadith* about his *khilafah*, it is nonetheless perfectly proven through this route.

Yet, in addition to this general evidence, there are also loads of specific undeniable Sunni proofs for the *khilafah* of Amir al-Muminin over Abu Bakr and the entire *Ummah* after the Messenger of Allah. But, as a way of protecting the patently illegitimate *khilafah* of Abu Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthman, some scholars of the Ahl al-Sunnah further wage an *extreme* war against the authentic evidences in favour of ‘Ali in their own books. They instinctively deny, without tabling any academic excuse, any *sahih* Sunni *hadith* about Amir al-Muminin which threatens Abu Bakr and ‘Umar in any way – whether in merits, virtues or *khilafah*.

None among them has ever been as violent in this regard as Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah. He has done this recklessly and relentlessly throughout his books, especially *Minhaj al-Sunnah*. Therefore, in this book, this author has concentrated mainly upon Ibn Taymiyyah’s claims and arguments against the doubtless Sunni proofs which firmly, explicitly and specifically establish the *khilafah* of Amir al-Muminin *immediately* after the Messenger of the Lord of the worlds.

In this book, we have adopted the same investigative research methodology as we did in our first book: *‘Ali: the Best of the Sahabah*. Through these efforts and the complete transparency of our techniques, we hope to give every truth-seeker the full opportunity to reach the truth in a safe, honest, and intellectually charged environment, devoid of sectarian propaganda or bias. We implore Allah to forgive us all our mistakes, and to accept this as a worthy act of *‘ibadah*. And may Allah send His *salawat* and *barakat* upon our master, Muhammad b. ‘Abd Allah, and upon his purified bloodline.

¹. See Qur’an 4:64

². Ibn al-Athir, Abu Sa’adat al-Mubarak b. Muhammad al-Jazari, al-Nihayah fi Gharib al-Hadith wa al-Athar (Qum: Muasassat Isma’iliyyan) [annotator: Mahmud Muhammad al-Tanahi and Tahir Ahmad al-Zawi], vol. 2, p. 69

³. There are several verses of the Qur’an which order all believers till the Day of al-Qiyamah to “obey” the Messenger – 4:64, 3:32, 3:132, 4:13, 4:59, 4:69, 4:80, 5:92, 8:1, 8:20, 8:46, 9:71, 24:47, 24:51, 24:52, 24:54, 24:56, 33:33, 33:66, 33:71, 47:33, 48:17, 49:14, 58:13, and 64:12.

⁴. This shows that it is permissible, and in fact the Sunnah, to refer to deputies and substitutes in command roles as amirs.

⁵. Abu ‘Abd Allah Ahmad b. Hanbal al-Shaybani, Musnad (Cairo: Muasassat Qurtubah) [annotator: Shu’ayb al-Arnaut], vol. 2, p. 511, # 10645

⁶. Ibid

⁷. We have discussed instances of this usage in the main body of this book, especially in the chapters on Hadith al-Khilafah and Hadith al-Manzilah.

- [8.](#) Abu ‘Abd Allah Ahmad b. Hanbal al-Shaybani, Musnad (Cairo: Muasassat Qurtubah) [annotator: Shu’ayb al-Arnaut], vol. 5, p. 99, # 20978
- [9.](#) Ibid
- [10.](#) Abu ‘Isa Muhammad b. ‘Isa al-Sulami al-Tirmidhi, al-Jami’ al-Sahih Sunan al-Tirmidhi (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-‘Arabi) [annotator: Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani], vol. 4, p. 501, # 2223
- [11.](#) Ibid
- [12.](#) Abu ‘Abd Allah Ahmad b. Hanbal al-Shaybani, Musnad (Cairo: Muasassat Qurtubah) [annotator: Shu’ayb al-Arnaut], vol. 5, p. 106, # 21051
- [13.](#) Ibid
- [14.](#) Ibid, vol. 5, p. 92, # 20890
- [15.](#) Ibid
- [16.](#) Abu Bakr b. Abi ‘Asim, Ahmad b. ‘Amr b. al-Dhahhak b. Mukhlid al-Shaybani, Kitab al-Sunnah (al-Maktab al-Islami; 1st edition, 1400 H) [annotator: Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani], vol. 2, pp. 350–351, # 754
- [17.](#) Ibid, vol. 2, p. 351, # 754
- [18.](#) Abu ‘Abd Allah Ahmad b. Hanbal al-Shaybani, Musnad (Cairo: Muasassat Qurtubah) [annotator: Shu’ayb al-Arnaut], vol. 5, p. 181, # 21618
- [19.](#) Ibid
- [20.](#) Ibid, vol. 5, p. 189, # 21697
- [21.](#) Ibid
- [22.](#) Nur al-Din ‘Ali b. Abi Bakr al-Haythami, Majma’ al-Zawaid (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr; 1412 H), vol. 9, p. 256, # 14957
- [23.](#) Abu al-Qasim al-Husayn b. Muhammad b. al-Mufadhhdhal al-Raghib al-Isfahani, Tafsir al-Raghib al-Isfahani wa Muqadimmatuh (Kulliyat al-Adab, Jami’ah Tanta; 1st edition, 1412 H) [annotator: Dr. Muhammad ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Basyuni], vol. 1, p. 139
- [24.](#) Qur’an 2:42
- [25.](#) Qur’an 2:159

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