

[Home](#) > [The Shia Rebutts](#) > [Question 3 : Why is ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib \(‘a\) regarded as the wasi {executor of will} and successor of the Prophet \(S\)?](#) > 3. In the 10th Year after Hijrah

Question 3 : Why is ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib (‘a) regarded as the wasi {executor of will} and successor of the Prophet (S)?

Reply: As we already stated, the Shi‘ah have a firm belief that the position of caliphate is determined through revelation {*tansisi*} and that after the Holy Prophet (S) the *Imamah* {leadership} is in some respects like prophethood {*nubuwwah*}.

Just as the Prophet (S) has to be appointed through Divine decree, the *wasi* {executor of will} of the Prophet (S) too must be designated by Him, the Glorious and Sublime.

The biography of the Messenger of Allah (S) is a testimony to this belief; for, in many occasions he designated ‘Ali (‘a) as his successor {*khalifah*}. Here, we shall mention only three of these occasions:

1. At the Commencement of the Prophetic Mission

When the Prophet (S) received from God the commission to invite his relatives to the doctrine of monotheism as it is confirmed by the the verse,

وَأَنْذِ عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ

“Warn the nearest of your kinsfolk,”^{[1](#)}

he addressed them by saying:

فَأَيُّكُمْ يُوَازِرُنِي فِي هَذَا الْأَمِّ عَلَى أَنْ يَكُونَ أَخِي وَوَزِيرِي وَخَلِيفَتِي وَوَصِيِّي فَيَكُم؟

“Which of you will assist me in this affair so that he would my brother {*akhi*}, minister {*waziri*}, successor {*khalifati*}, and the executor of my will {*wasi*} among you?”

The only person who gave a positive response to this heavenly call was ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib (‘a). Then, facing his relatives, the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

"إِنَّ هَذَا أَخِي وَوَصِيِّي خَلِيفَتِي فَيَكُم فَاسْمَعُوا لَهُ وَأَطِيعُوهُ"

“Verily, he (‘Ali) is my brother, the executor of my will and my successor among you. So, listen to him and obey him.”²

2. During the Tabuk Expedition

The Prophet (S) said to ‘Ali (‘a):

أَمَا تَرْضَى أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنِّي بِمَنْزِلَةِ هَارُونَ مِنْ مُوسَى إِلَّا أَنَّهُ لَا نَبِيَّ بَعْدِي؟

“Are you not satisfied that you are to me as Harun (Aaron) is to Musa (Moses) except that there will be no prophet after me?”³

That is to say, “Just as Harun (‘a) is the executor of will and the immediate successor of Musa (‘a), you are my successor.”

3. In the 10th Year after Hijrah

On his return from the Farewell Pilgrimage {*Hajjah al-Wida*}, at a place called Ghadir Khumm the Messenger of Allah (S) introduced ‘Ali (‘a) before a mammoth assembly (of pilgrims) as the *wali* {guardian} of the believers, male or female, saying:

"مَنْ كُنْتُ مُوَلَّاهُ فَهَذَا عَلِيٌّ مُوَلَّاهُ"

“Of whosoever I am master {*mawla*}, then ‘Ali is also his master {*mawla*}.”

The important and noteworthy point is that at the beginning of his speech, the Prophet (S) asked:

أَلَسْتُ أَوْلَى بِكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ؟

“Have I more authority over you than you have over yourselves?”

And the Muslims unanimously replied in the affirmative. Therefore, it must be noted here that in this *hadith* the Prophet (S) meant by the word, “*mawla*” the absolute guardianship over the believers, and we can conclude that the Prophet (S) had established ‘Ali (‘a) in the same position which he had. And on that very day Hassan ibn Thabit versified the historic event of Ghadir as follows:

يناديهم يوم الغدير نبيهم بخمّ واسمع بالرسول مناديا فقال: فمن مولاكم ونبيكم؟ فقالوا: ولم يدلوا أهنك التعاميا
إلهك ومولانا أنت نبيّ ولم تلق منا في الولاية عاصيا فقال له: قم يا عليّ فإنني رضيتك من بعدي إماماً وهادياً فمن
كنت مولاه فهذا وليه فكونوا له اتباع صدق مواليا هناك دعا: اللهم وال وليّه وكن للذي عادى عليّاً معاديا

*Their Prophet calls on them on the day of Ghadir Khumm; now, listen to the call of the Prophet:
Then he said to the people: “Who is your Master {mawla} and your guardian {wali}? Then, without
showing inattention, they said:*

*“Your Lord is our Master {mawla} and you are our guardian {wali}, and no one among us today disobeys
you.”*

*Then he said: “Stand up O ‘Ali! For, I am indeed well pleased that you are the Imam and guide after
me.”*

*{Then he said:} “Therefore, of whomsoever I am master, ‘Ali is his master also. May you be their true
supporters!”*

*He then prayed, saying: “O Allah! Be Thou a Friend of those who are his (‘Ali s) friends, and be Thou an
Enemy of those who are his enemies.”⁴*

The *hadith* on Ghadir is among the *mutawatir*⁵ *hadiths*, which is narrated not only by the Shi‘ah ‘*ulama*’ but also by approximately 360 Sunni scholars⁶ and the number of transmitters reaches 110 Companions. Twenty six prominent Muslim ‘*ulama*’ have written a separate book about the chain of transmission and transmitters of this *hadith*.

Abu Ja‘far Tabari, the renowned Muslim historian, has compiled the chain of transmission and transmitters of this *hadith* in two bulky volumes. For further information, one may refer to the book, *Al-Ghadir*.

¹. Surah ash-Shu‘ara’ 26:214.

². Tarikh at-Tabari, vol. 2, pp. 62–63; Tarikh al-Kamil, vol. 2, pp. 40–41; Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal, vol. 1, p. 111; Ibn Abi’l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah, vol. 13, pp. 210–212.

³. Sirah Ibn Hisham, vol. 2, p. 520; Ibn Hajar (al-‘Asqalani), As-Sawa‘iq al-Muhriqah (Egypt, 2nd Edition), Book 9, Chapter 2, p. 121.

⁴. Khwarazmi al-Maliki, Al-Manaqib, p. 80; Sibṭ ibn Jawzī al-Hanafī, Tadhkirat Khawas al-Ummah, p. 20; Ganji Shafi‘i, Kifayah at-Talib, p. 17; and others.

⁵. Mutawatir: a tradition from the Prophet (S) or an infallible Imam, repeatedly and widely narrated in an uninterrupted sequence, through successive reliable narrators. {Trans.}

[6.](#) See, for example, Ibn Hajar, *As-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah* (Egypt, 2nd Edition), Book 9, Chapter 2, p. 122.

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/shia-rebuts-sayyid-rida-husayni-nasab/question-3-why-ali-ibn-abi-talib-regarded-wasi-executor-will#comment-0>