

The Meaning of Hadith al-Thaqalayn

In each of the parts of the *'Abaqat* dealing with a particular hadith, the author, Sayyid Hamid Husayn – *quddisa sirruh* – after dealing with its *tawatur* goes on to deal with the meaning and doctrinal import of the hadith. In fact, this is the method which he is forced to follow in order to refute the statements of Shah 'Abd al-Aziz in the *Tuhfah* regarding the *tawatur* of the traditions mentioned by him as well as their doctrinal import.

In the second section of the part of the *'Abaqat* dealing with *Hadith al-Thaqalayn*, Sayyid Hamid Husayn deals with Shah 'Abd al-Aziz's objections, the first of which relates to its transmission and the rest to its doctrinal impact.

The first objection dealt with is the statement of Shah 'Abd al-Aziz that only Zayd ibn Arqam from among the Prophet's Companions has narrated the tradition. This objection is met by pointing out that at least thirty-four Companions have narrated the tradition. The sources which narrate the tradition from each of them – which were mentioned earlier in this article – are pointed out by him.

Moreover, he points out, Zayd's narration of the tradition has two lengthier versions as recorded by al-Nasa'i in *al-Khasa'is*, al-Hakim in *al-Mustadrak*, al-Tabarani and 'Ali al-Muttaqi. Moreover, he points that the wording of the tradition as quoted by Shah 'Abd al-Aziz has not been narrated or recorded by any Sunni authority on tradition.

The next statement of Shah 'Abd al-Aziz that is dealt with is his outright denial that *Hadith al-Thaqalayn* implies the religious leadership of the Ahlul Bayt (A). The author points out that since the Prophet (S) has placed the Ahlul Bayt (A) by the side of the Qur'an, it means that the Ahlul Bayt (A) have to be followed, like the Qur'an, as the living guides of the Ummah in matters of doctrine, ritual and law.

He cites the statements of numerous leading Sunni authorities in affirmation of this. The author points out that the words *'thaqalayn'* and the command to hold on to them (*al-i'tisam*, *al-akhdh* or *al-ittiba'* in accordance with the different wordings) unambiguously imply that in the same way as it is obligatory to follow the Qur'an, so also it is equally obligatory to follow the Ahlul Bayt (A) in the matters of Islamic teachings.

Moreover, the inseparability of the Qur'an and the Ahlul Bayt (A), as well as the repeated emphasis on holding on to the two and the specific emphasis on adherence to the Ahlul Bayt (A) and the observance of their rights clearly establish the obligation to follow the Ahlul Bayt (A) as the religious leaders, authorities and guides of the Ummah. The author points out that this interpretation of the *Hadith al-Thaqalayn* is also confirmed by some verses of the Holy Qur'an such as:

...قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَىٰ...

Say: 'I do not ask of you a wage for this, except love for the kinsfolk.' (42:23)

وَقَفُّوهُمْ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ مَسْئُولُونَ

And halt them, to be questioned. (37:24)

The author cites a number of Sunni scholars, such as al-Sakhawi in *al-Istijlab*, al-Suyuti in *al-Durr al-manthur* (vi, 7), 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Bukhari in *Tafsir Anwari*, al-Khatib al-Sharbini in *al-Siraj al-munir* (v, 538), al-Tayyibi in *al-Miqat* (v, 594), al-Munawi in *Fayd al-Qadir* (iii, 14), al-Zarqani in *Sharh al-Mawahib* (vii, 7) and others, regarding the interpretation of the first verse. Others, including al-Samhudi, al-Wahidi, al-Shaykhani, Mawlawi Wali Allah Lakhnowi, and Mawlawi Muhammad Mubin, have affirmed that the questioning on the Day of Judgment referred to in the second verse refers to the attitude of the individual Muslim vis-a-vis the Prophet's Ahlul Bayt (A).

Sayyid Hamid Husayn then goes on to point that *Hadith al-Thaqalayn* also affirms the freedom of the Imams of the Ahlul Bayt (A) from sin and error (*'ismah*) because: the hadith commands adherence to them and the Qur'an together and since the Qur'an is free from every trace of falsehood and error, so is the guidance of the Ahlul Bayt (A); adherence to the two of them is considered as a guarantee against misguidance for the Ummah, which is only possible if the Imams of the Ahlul Bayt (A) are free from error and sin. This conclusion is also supported by other traditions of the Holy Prophet (S) in favor of 'Ali (A) and the Ahlul Bayt (A), some of which were mentioned earlier.

Furthermore, the author points out, the *Hadith al-Thaqalayn* implies the preeminence of the Ahlul Bayt (A) within the Ummah from the viewpoint of knowledge (*a'lamiyyah*) and excellence (*afdaliyyah*). He cites statements of several non-Shi'i scholars in confirmation of this conclusion.

Moreover, the author states, there are many traditions which indicate that *Hadith al-Thaqalayn* and *Hadith al-Ghadir* were proclaimed by the Prophet (S) in the course of a single sermon at Ghadir Khumm. Some of these traditions have been recorded by al-Muttaqi in *Kanz al-'ummal* (i, 167), Ibn Kathir in *Ta'rikh* (v, 209), al-Sakhawi in *al-Istijlab* (MS), al-Samhudi in *Jawahir al-'iqdayn* (MS), Ibn Hajar in *al-Sawa'iq* (25) from al-Tabarani and many others.

According to still some other versions of the narration, *Hadith al-Thaqalayn*, *Hadith al-Ghadir* and *Hadith al-Manzilah* were mentioned in the course of the same sermon at Ghadir Khumm as mentioned by Ibn Hajar in *al-Fatawa al-fiqhiyyat al-kubra*, ii, 122.

In some versions of the tradition, he points out, the word '*khalifatayn*' (successors) is mentioned instead of '*thaqalayn*', as in the narrations recorded by Ahmad ibn Hanbal in *Musnad*, v, 181, as well as al-Tabarani, Ibn Abi 'Asim, Abu Bakr ibn Abi Shaybah, al-Zarqani and others. This word implies rather more explicitly the *Imamah* and *Khilafah* of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (A) and the Ahlul Bayt (A).

Some versions of the tradition, such as the one narrated by Al-Qunduzi in *Yanabi' al-mawaddah*, 20, from al-Hasan ibn 'Ali (A), contain the following statement of the Prophet (S) which signifies the perpetuity of the Imamate:

اللهم إني أعلم أن العلم لا يبديد ولا ينقطع ، وإنك لا تخلي أرضك من حجة لك على خلقك ، ظاهر ليس بالمطاع ، أو خائف مغمور لكيلا يبطل حجتك ، ولا يضل أولياؤك بعد إذ هديتهم ، أولئك الأقلون عددا الأعظمون قدرا عند الله عز وجل. ولقد دعوت الله تبارك وتعالى أن يجعل العلم والحكمة في وعقب عقبي وفي زرع زرعني إلى يوم القيامة فاستجيب لي.

O God, You don't let the earth remain devoid of Your Proof over Your creation so that Your proofs should not become invalid or that Your friends should go astray after You have guided them. They (the Proofs of God) are few in number but great in worth near God, Almighty and Glorious. Indeed, I had prayed to God, Exalted and Blessed, to place knowledge and wisdom in my descent and the descent of my descendants, and in my seed and the seed of my seed, until the Day of Resurrection, and my prayer was granted.

This closely resembles the following tradition of *Nahj al-balaghah* (*Hikam*: 147) addressed by 'Ali (A) to his pupil Kumayl ibn Ziyad.

لا تخلو الأرض من قائم لله بحجة إما ظاهرا مشهورا أو خائفا مغمورا لئلا تبطل حجج الله وبيناته. وكم ذا وأين أولئك؟ أولئك - والله - الأقلون عددا، والاعظمون عند الله قدرا. يحفظ الله بهم حججه وبيناته حتى يودعوها نظراءهم ويزرعوها في قلوب أشباههم. جَمَّ بهم العلم على حقيقة البصيرة ، وباشروا روح اليقين واستلانوا ما استوعره المترفون ، وأنسوا بما أستوحش منه الجاهلون ، وصحبوا الدنيا بأبدان أرواحها متعلقة بالمحل الأعلى ، أولئك خلفاء الله في أرضه والدعاة إلى دينه ، آه آه شوقا إلى رؤيتهم!

...But the earth is never devoid of him who stands for God with a proof (*qa'im li'llah bi hujjatin*). He is either manifest and well-known or afraid and concealed, so that God's proofs and His clear signs should not become invalid. How many are they and where are they? By God, they are few in number, but great in esteem before God. Through them God maintains His proofs and signs till they entrust them to others like themselves and implant them in the hearts of their likes.

Knowledge has led them to the reality of understanding and they have attained the spirit of certitude. That which is hard upon the seekers of comforts comes easy to them. They endear what the ignorant regard with aversion. They live in the world with their bodies, but their spirits are in a higher realm. They are the vicegerents (*khulafa'*) of God in His earth and His callers to His *Din*. Oh, how much I yearn to see them! (H: 147)

This tradition of 'Ali (A) has been widely reported and recorded by Shi'i and non-Shi'i traditionists and historians, including Ibn 'Abd Rabbih in *al-'Iqd al-farid*, i, 265, 293; al-Ya'qubi in *Ta'rikh*, ii, 400; al-Harrani in *Tuhaf al-'uqul*, 169; al-Saduq in *al-Khisal*, i, 85 and *Ikmal al-Din*, 169; Abu Talib al-Makki in *Qut al-qulub*, i, 272; al-Khatib al-Baghdadi in *Ta'rikh Baghdad*, vi, 389; al-Razi in *al-Tafsir al-kabir*, ii, 192; Ibn 'Abd al-Barr in *al-Mukhtasar*, 29 and *Jami' bayan al-'ilm*; al-Khwarazmi in *al-Manaqib*, 390 and al-Azhari in *Tahdhib al-lughah*, vi, 70.

To return to the discussion of 'Abaqat about the doctrinal import of *Hadith al-Thaqalayn*, the author next points out that 'Ali (A) referred to it in the course of his debate with the members of the six-man council (*shura*) appointed by 'Umar, the second caliph, to select a successor to him. 'Ali's arguments (*ihitijaj*) before the *shura* are recorded in detail by Ibn al-Maghazili in his *al-Manaqib*, 112. Al-Qunduzi in *Yanabi' al-mawaddah*, 35, also refers to 'Ali's reference to *Hadith al-Thaqalayn* in order to establish the incontestability of his claim to successorship of the Prophet (S).

This tradition was also referred to by al-Hasan ibn 'Ali (A) in his speech delivered after being elected as caliph following 'Ali's martyrdom. Al-Qunduzi, *op. cit.*, 21, 48 483 and Sibt ibn al-Jawzi in *Tadhkirat al-khawass*, 198, have recorded related traditions in their works.

Besides the large number of Companions who have narrated the tradition, reference to it also occurs in a letter of 'Amr ibn al-As addressed to Mu'awiyah and recorded in al-Khwarazmi's *al-Manaqib*, 128 – 130, and in a statement of al-Hasan al-Basri, a well-known Tabi'i saint, as recorded by Ibn Abi al-Hadid in *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah*, iv, 95. All these references affirm the preeminence of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (A) and the Ahlul Bayt (A) in the Ummah and their claim to the comprehensive leadership of the Ummah after the Holy Prophet (S).

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