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4) Hadith Al-Wilayah, What Does Wali Mean?

The word *wali* has a range of different meanings. Hans Wehr lists its various definitions:

Helper, supporter, benefactor, sponsor; friend, close associate; relative; patron, protector; legal guardian, curator, tutor; a man close to God, holy man, saint (in the popular religion of Islam); **master**, proprietor, possessor, owner.[1]

Usually, its exact definition in any given situation is dictated by its context. ‘Allamah al-Albani (d. 1420 H) records that the Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa alihi*, said:

> ما تريدون من علي؟ ما تريدون من علي؟ ما تريدون من علي؟ إن عليا مني وأنا منه وهو ولي كل مؤمن بعدي (صحيح).

“What do you want from ‘Ali? What do you want from ‘Ali? Verily, ‘Ali is from me and I am from him, and he is the *wali* of every believer after me.” (*Sahih*)[2]

But, despite weirdly denouncing the authenticity of this *hadith*, which is graded *sahih* above by ‘Allamah al-Albani, Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 H) also attacks the word *wali* in it:

> و كذلك قوله هو ولي كل مؤمن بعدي كذب على رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم بل هو في حياته و بعد مماته ولي كل مؤمن و كل مؤمن وليه في المحيا و الممات فالولاية التي هي ضد العداوة لا تختص بزمان وأما الولاية التي هي الإمارة فيقال فيها والي كل مؤمن بعدي

And similarly his statement “he is the *wali* of every believer after me”, it is a lie upon the Messenger of Allah. Rather he (the Prophet), during his life and after his death, was the *wali* of every believer, and every believer is his *wali* in life and death. The *walayah* which means the opposite of enmity (i.e. friendship) is not restricted by time. As for the *wilayah* that means authority, then it is said concerning it: *wali* of every believer after me.[3]

In other words, *wali* (ولي) only means “friend”. It cannot refer to anyone with authority. Rather, the only related word that means “master” is *wali* (والي). So, if the Messenger of Allah had intended ‘Ali, *‘alaihi al-salam*, to be the ruler of the Muslims after him (as the Shi’ah assert), he would have used the second word, and not the first.

Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah also proposes another word:

> فقول القائل علي ولي كل مؤمن بعدي كلام يمتنع نسبته إلى النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم فإنه إن أراد الموالاة لم يحتج ان يقول بعدي و إن أراد الإمارة كان ينبغي أن يقول وال على كل مؤمن

Therefore, the statement of the speaker “’Ali is the *wali* of every believer after me”, it is a statement that cannot be attributed to the Prophet, peace be upon him. This is because if he had intended friendship, he did not need to say “after me”, and if he intended authority, he was supposed to say: *walin* over every believer.[4]

According to Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah, the use of *wali* (ولي) to mean “master” is a serious linguistic blunder. Rather, the correct word is *wali* (والي). Alternatively, the word *walin* (وال) should be used, but immediately coupled with “over”.

Interestingly, Shaykh al-Albani agrees with him:

> فالحديث ليس فيه دليل البتة على أن عليا رضي الله عنه هو الأحق بالخلافة من الشيخين كما تزعم الشيعة لأن الموالاة غير الولاية التي هي بمعنى الإمارة، فإنما يقال فيها: والي كل مؤمن. هذا كله من بيان شيخ الإسلام وهو قوي متين كما ترى

There is no proof at all in the *hadith* that ‘Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, was more deserving of the *khilafah* (succession to the Prophet) than the two Shaykhs (i.e. Abu Bakr and ‘Umar) as the Shi’ah claim. This is because friendship is different from the *wilayah* which means authority. In the latter, one only says: *wali* of every believer. All of this is from the explanations of Shaykh al-Islam (Ibn Taymiyyah), and it is extremely strong as you can see.[5]

But, how can it be strong at all when it is only a fallacious submission? As indicated by Hans Wehr – a neutral party – *wali* (ولي) also means “master”! Moreover, ‘Allamah al-Albani has misrepresented the Shi’ah position. Rather, they assert that Imam ‘Ali was *the* only legitimate ruler of the Muslim world immediately after the death of the Messenger of Allah, on the strength of this *hadith*! This is different from saying that he was *more* deserving of the succession than others. In the view of the Shi’ah, others do not deserve it at all; and it was not open for competition. So, the question of comparison does not even arise!

Contrary to the absurd claims of both Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah and ‘Allamah al-Albani, the word *wali* (ولي)

is actually the most common – of the three words – in references to authority and power. In fact, it has been used in that sense in several places in the Qur'an! The Shi'i *mufassir*, Shaykh al-Tabarsi (d. 548 H), for instance, says:

والذين كفروا أولياؤهم الطاغوت (أي :متولي أمورهم وأنصارهم(

(And those who disbelieve, their *awliya* [plural of *wali*] are the evil ones) [2:257], meaning: **their rulers and helpers**.[6]

Al-Kashani (d. 1091 H) supports him:

الله ولي الذين آمنوا (متولي أمورهم(

(Allah is the *Wali* of those who believe) [2:257] **their Ruler**.[7]

'Allamah al-Majlisi (d. 1111 H) also says:

والولي المتولي للأمور والناصر والمحب

The *wali* is the **ruler**, and the **helper**, and the **lover**.[8]

The Sunni position is the same as well. Imam Ibn Jawzi (d. 597 H) submits:

قوله تعالى) :الله ولي الذين آمنوا (أي: متولي أمورهم، يهديهم، وينصرهم، ويعينهم.

Allah the Most High's Statement: (Allah is the *Wali* of those who believe) [2:257] meaning: **their Ruler**, Who guides them, and helps them, and supports them.[9]

Imam al-Baydhawi (d. 685 H) supports him:

الله ولي الذين آمنوا (محبهم أو متولي أمورهم(

(Allah is the *Wali* of those who believe) [2:257] their Lover or **their Ruler**.[10]

Al-Tha'labi (d. 427 H) says something similar too:

الله ولي الذين آمنوا (أي ناصرهم ومعينهم وقيل محبهم وقيل متولي أمرهم(

(Allah is the *Wali* of those who believe) [257], meaning their Helper and Supporter. It is said: their Lover. And it is said: **their Ruler**.[11]

The same submission was made by al-Khazan (d. 725 H):

والله ولي الذين آمنوا (أي ناصرهم ومعينهم وقيل محبم ومتولي أمورهم)

(Allah is the *Wali* of those who believe), meaning: their Helper and Supporter. It is said: their Lover and **Ruler**.[12]

Al-Mahalli (d. 864 H) and al-Suyuti (d. 911 H) in their *Tafsir al-Jalalayn*, mince no words about this:

أنت ولينا {متولي أمورنا}

(You are our *Wali*) **our Ruler**.[13]

They also say:

إن وليي الله} متولي أموري{

{My *Wali* is Allah) [7:196] **my Ruler**.[14]

And:

فهو وليهم} متولي أمورهم{

{he is their *wali*} [16:63] **their ruler**.[15]

Imam al-Nasafi (d. 710 H) confirms them as well:

الله ولي الذين آمنوا} [البقرة : 257] .... أي ناصرهم ومتولي أمورهم{

{Allah is the *Wali* of those who believe} [Baqarah:257] .... meaning, their Helper and **Ruler**.[16]

Shaykh Ibn 'Ashur, in turn, corroborates al-Nasafi:

فهو وليهم اليوم....(والمعنى : فالشيطان وليّ المشركين اليوم ، أي متولّي أمرهم(

(he is their *wali* today) [16:63].... the meaning is: “Shaytan is the *wali* of the pagans today”, meaning **their ruler**.[17]

‘Allamah Rashid Ridha (d. 1354 H), a Salafi scholar, says too:

> (وهو وليهم بما كانوا يعملون) .... و{وليهم { متولي أمورهم)

(And He will be their *Wali* because of what they used to do) [6:127].... And {their *Wali*} is **their Ruler**.[18]

He also says:

> والله وليهما (أي متولي أمورهما(

(And Allah is their *Wali*) [3:122] meaning, **their Ruler**.[19]

As such, due to dishonesty or ignorance, Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah (supported by ‘Allamah al-Albani) effectively attributes linguistic incompetence to Allah, His Messenger and the mostly Sunni Muslim scholars! We have reasons to believe that Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah deliberately misrepresents the truth about the word *wali*, but does not intend the blasphemous implications. He only seeks to undermine the Shi’i claims by all means, including by crook. We say this because Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah himself has said these words in the same *Minhaj al-Sunnah*:

> وكل هؤلاء العلماء الذين ذكرناهم يعلمون أن عدل عمر كان أتم من عدل من ولي بعده وعلمه كان أتم من علم من ولى بعده

All of these *‘ulama* that we have mentioned knew that the fairness of ‘Umar is more perfect that the fairness of anyone **who became the *wali* after him**, and his knowledge was more perfect than the knowledge of anyone **who became the *wali* after him**.[20]

He also writes:

> و وجدنا عليا إذ ولي قد استعمل أقاربه

And we found that **when ‘Ali became the *wali***, he appointed his relatives as governors.[21]

Is there *any* possibility that Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah is only discussing about friendship above?

An even more surprising stunt pulled by Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah is in these words:

الفرق بين الولاية بالفتح و الولاية بالكسر معروف فالولاية ضد العداوة و هي المذكوره في هذه النصوص ليست هي الولاية بالكسر التي هي الإمارة و هؤلاء الجهال يجعلون الولي هو الأمير و لم يفرقوا بين الولاية و الولاية و الأمير يسمى الوالي لا يسمى الولي و لكن قد يقال هو ولي الأمر كما يقال وليت أمركم و يقال أولو الأمر و أما إطلاق القول بالمولى وإراده الوالي فهذا لا يعرف بل يقال في الولي المولى و لا يقال الوالي

The difference between *walayah* and *wilayah* is well-known. The *walayah* which is the opposite of enmity is what is mentioned in these texts, not *wilayah* which is authority. But these ignorant people make *wali* the ruler, and do not differentiate between *walayah* and *wilayah*. The ruler is called the *wali* and not the *wali*. However, the ruler is also called *wali al-amr* as it is said, "I am the *wali* of your *amr* (affairs)". The rulers are further called *ulu al-amr*. As for the use of the word *mawla*, with the meaning of *wali*, this is not known (to be applied in relation to rulers). Rather, the *wali* is called *mawla*, and he is not called *wali*.[22]

In simpler terms:

1. The words *walayah* and *wilayah* are different.

2. *Walayah* applies only to friendship, and is related with *wali* (ولي).

3. *Wilayah* means authority, and is related with *wali* (والي).

4. Every *hadith* about 'Ali only uses *wali* (ولي), and not *wali* (والي).

5. Therefore, 'Ali has only friendship (*walayah*) through those *ahadith*, and not *wilayah*.

6. Both *mawla* (مولى) and *wali* (ولي) are synonymous, and are related to *walayah* only.

7. A ruler is never called a *mawla* (مولى) or a *wali* (ولي).

8. Rather, a ruler is only called *wali* (والي), or *wali al-amr* (ولي الأمر).

9. The *wali al-amr* (ولي الأمر) is the one who is the *wali* (ولي) of the *amr* (affairs) of the people.

10. For *wali* (ولي) to mean ruler, it **must** be conjoined with *amr*.

None of these submissions is true! Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah himself has used the word *wali* (ولي) above, without conjoining it with *amr*, to mean ruler! Elsewhere, he has also employed the same word, in the same form, along with *amr*:

وكان أبو بكر معلما للصبيان في الجاهلية وفي الإسلام كان خياطا ولما ولي أمر المسلمين منعه الناس عن الخياطة فقال إني محتاج إلى القوت فجعلوا له كل يوم ثلاثة دراهم من بيت المال

Abu Bakr was a teacher of children during the *Jahiliyyah*. But, during the Islamic era, he was a tailor. When he became the *wali* of the *amr* of the Muslims, the people forbade him from tailoring. So he said, "I need food". Therefore, they gave to him three dirhams from the Public Treasury every day.[23]

Nobody is a better refuter of Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah than himself! He says somewhere:

> و وجدنا عليا إذ ولي قد استعمل أقاربه

And we found that when 'Ali became the *wali*, he appointed his relatives as governors.[24]

Elsewhere, he states:

> ولما ولي أمر المسلمين منعه الناس عن الخياطة

When he (Abu Bakr) became the *wali* of the *amr* of the Muslims, the people forbade him from tailoring.[25]

It is very apparent from these words that Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah, in truth, accepts that *wali* (ولي), *wali* (والي) and *wali al-amr* (ولي الأمر) mean the same thing! But, he wants to defeat the Shi'ah, whatever it takes! What it has taken, of course, is this disturbing linguistic acrobatics! He is distorting the meaning of *wali* (ولي) simply because it is the term used by the Prophet to describe Amir al-Muminin 'Ali. Otherwise, if the Messenger of Allah had said that Imam 'Ali would be the *wali* (والي) or *wali al-amr* (ولي الأمر) of every believer after him, Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah would certainly have turned his own arguments inside out! In any case, the top lexicographers of both the Shi'ah and the Ahl al-Sunnah also agree that *wali* (ولي) and (ولي الأمر) are synonyms.

For instance, al-Jawhari (d. 393 H), who came more than 300 years before Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 H), states:

> وكل من ولى أمر واحد فهو وليه.

Every person who is the *wali* of the *amr* of anyone, he is thereby the latter's *wali*.[26]

He is corroborated by Ibn Faris (d. 395 H), another highly recognized Sunni lexicographer:

> وكل من ولى أمر آخر فهو وليه

Every person who is the *wali* of the *amr* of anyone, he is thereby the latter's *wali*.[27]

The most well-known and highest-regarded classical Sunni lexicographer, Ibn Manzur (d. 711 H), also

submits:

كل من ولي أمر واحد فهو وليه

Every person who is the *wali* of the *amr* of anyone, he is thereby the latter's *wali*.[28]

Finally, the highly authoritative Shi'ah lexicographer, al-Turayhi (d. 1085 H) caps it all:

والولي: الوالي، وكل من ولي أمر أحد فهو وليه.

The *wali* is the *wali*, and every person who is the *wali* of the *amr* of anyone, he is thereby the latter's *wali*.[29]

The *wali* of the *amr* (or simply *wali al-amr*) of anyone is his ruler. This is why Abu Bakr is referred to as the *wali al-amr* of the Muslims after the death of the Prophet. He was in charge, and had full control. In the same manner, the king of Saudi Arabia is the *wali al-amr* of Saudis while the British Prime Minister is the *wali al-amr* of Britons. The standard linguistic principle, of course, is that a synonym for *wali al-amr* is *wali*.

With that, Abu Bakr became the *wali* of the Muslims after the Prophet – according to Sunni Islam. The Saudi king is the *wali* of Saudis, and the British Prime Minister is the *wali* of Britons. This is a solid, undeniable reality that Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah struggles so desperately to deny, conceal and distort. This, apparently, is because it poses a direct fatal threat to the survival of Sunni Islam as a whole!

At this point, the fallacy of Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah's weird claim that *wali* relates to *walayah* (friendship) only, and not to *wilayah* (authority) is very obvious. *Wali* can denote either *walayah* or *wilayah*, depending on its meaning within the specific context of each case. If, as the Shi'ah claim, it really means "ruler" in the case of *Hadith al-Wilayah*, then it is indeed *wilayah*!

A rarer meaning of *wali* is heir. We will be discussing this definition in detail at its place.

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