

[Home](#) > [Brief Commentary On Hadeeth Al-Kisaa \(Tradition of the Cloak\)](#) > Imam Ali – Commander of The Faithful

Imam Ali – Commander of The Faithful

فَقُلْتُ : وَعَلَيْكَ السَّلَامُ يَا أَبَا الْحَسَنِ وَيَا أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

"Peace be upon you too, O Abul-Hasan and Commander of the Faithful," I replied.

After Imam Husain (AS), Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (AS) enters and conveys his greetings to the Holy Prophet (SA) who replies back to him by pronouncing the *Salam* and addressing him as “Abal Hasan” (the father of Hasan) and “Ya Ameer Al Momineen” (Commander of the Faithful). The label of “Ameerul Momineen” exclusively belongs to Imam Ali (AS) and has been divinely bestowed from above the heavens.

In his book *Al Kafi*, Al Kileeni narrates from Fudail ibn Yassar that Imam Al Baqir (AS) said: “*Oh Fudail, any person who names himself with this title other than Ali is a liar.*” According to the Sunni School of thought, Umar ibn Al Khattab was the first to use that title, however that is false information.

In fact, it was the Holy Prophet (SA) who gave Imam Ali (AS) that title and this is cited in many traditions such as, “*Oh Ali, you are Ameerul Momineen (Commander of the Faithful) and the Imam of the Muslims, and قائد الغر المحجلين (the Leader of the Resplendent), and يعسوب المتقين (the dragonfly of the pious).*” (Amaali)

It is also narrated consecutively by Imam Al Sadiq (AS) that his father Imam Ali (AS) said: “*The Prophet (SA) said to me, O Ali You are Ameerul Momineen and the leader of the pious, O Ali you are chief of the successors and heirs of the Prophets and the best of the truthful (sidiqeen).*” (Kanz Al Fawaed)

According to the Sunni School of thought as narrated by Al Hafiz Abu Na’eem Al Asfahani in his book *Helyat Al Awliyaa*, that Qasem ibn Jundub ibn Anas said: The Prophet (SA) said: “*Oh Anas, help me prepare for ablution.*” Then he got up and prayed two-unit prayer, then he said, “*Oh Anas, the first person who will enter from that door is Ameerul Momineen and the Master of the messengers, and قائد الغر المحجلين (the Leader of the Resplendent) and the Seal of Successors.*” That person was none other

than Ali ibn Abi Talib (AS)!

Hence, it is not appropriate to use that title even to the other Infallible Imams from the sons of Ali, including Imam Hasan who actually became Caliph after his father. That is because attaining the position of Caliphate is not the criteria for being named Ameerul Momineen even though the person may be infallible such as Imam Hasan (AS).

This title is unique only to Ali and no one can share that title with him. The great scholar Ibn Tawoos has actually written a book called *Al Yaqeen Bi Ikhtisaas Mawlana Ali Bi Emrat Al Momineen* (Faith in the uniqueness of Mawla Ali with the title of Ameerul Momineen) which aims to verify the specialization of Ali with this title.

In fact, there is an interesting story where the title of “Ameerul Momineen” was granted officially to Ali. It is narrated by one of the close companions of the Prophet (SA), Hudaifah ibn Al Yaman, as cited in *Irshad Al Qulub*, that in his conversation with a lad he said: “O lad, since you asked and wanted to investigate, then listen and understand what I am going to tell you. As for those caliphs who were before Ali ibn Abi Talib (AS), who were called Ameerul Momineen; the people called them by that title.

But Ali ibn Abi Talib was called with this name by Archangel Gabriel (AS). It was an order from the Prophet (SA) who bore witness of Gabriel’s (AS) salutation to Ali by the title of Ameerul Momineen, and the companions (Sahaba) of the Prophet were calling Ali (AS) with the title of Ameer Al-Momineen during the life and presence of the Prophet (SA).”

The Lad said: “Tell us how this came to be, may Allah have mercy on you.”

Hudhayfah answered: “The people used to enter upon the Prophet (SA) whenever they wanted. The Prophet (SA) then prohibited them from entering upon him while he was in meeting with Dihyatul Kalbi. The Prophet (SA) used to exchange letters with Caesar and Bani Hanifah and the kings of Bani Ghassau through him (Dihya). Jibrael (AS) would sometimes descend to the Prophet (SA) in the image of Dihya. Therefore, the Prophet (SA) prohibited the Muslims from entering upon him, if he was in meeting with Dihya.”

Hudhayfah added, “One day I came to the Prophet (SA) for some matter hoping to meet him alone. When I arrived at the door, I looked and found a curtain covering the door. I raised it and was about to enter. That’s what we were accustomed to do. Then I saw Dihya sitting beside the Prophet (SA) who was sleeping and his head was on the lap of Dihya. When I saw that, I left. Then I met Ali ibn Abi Talib (AS) on my way. He said, ‘Oh Ibn Al Yaman, where did you just come from?’ I answered him and said, ‘I wanted to enter but I found Dihya with him.’

I asked Ali’s help with the matter I had wanted to speak with the Prophet (SA). Then Imam Ali (AS) suggested me to come back with him. So I returned back with him and when we arrived at the door of the Prophet (SA), I sat beside the door and Imam Ali (AS) lifted the curtain. He entered and greeted.

Then I heard Dihya reply and say, ‘And peace be upon you O Ameerul Momineen and Allah’s blessings and mercy be upon you.’ Then Dihya told him, ‘Sit down and take the head of your brother and cousin from my lap, for you are the most deserving of him than other people.’ So Imam Ali (AS) sat and took the head of the Prophet (SA), placed it on his lap, and Dihya then left the house.

Then Imam Ali (AS) asked me to enter so I entered and sat down. Soon after that, the Prophet (SA) woke up and he smiled when he saw the face of Imam Ali (AS). Then he told him, ‘Oh Abul Hasan, from whose lap did you take my head?’ Ali answered, ‘From the lap of Dihyatul Kalbi.’ Then the Prophet (SA) replied, ‘This was Gabriel (AS). So what did you tell him when you entered and what did he tell you?’

Imam Ali (AS) answered, ‘I entered and said *Assalamu Alaikum* and he answered *Wa alaika assalam O Ameer Al-Momineen*, and Allah’s mercy and blessings be upon you.’ Then the Prophet (SA) said, ‘O Ali, the angels of Allah and the dwellers of His heaven have greeted you by the title of Ameer Al-Momineen even before the dwellers of the earth. O Ali, Gabriel (AS) did that by orders from Allah, Glory be to Him. And Gabriel (AS) has revealed to me from my Lord before you entered that I impose it upon the people. And I will do that God-willing.’”

“The next day, the Prophet (SA) sent me (Hudhayfah) to Fadak for some matter. I stayed there for some days. Then I came back and I found the people saying that the Prophet (SA) had ordered them to greet Ali by the title of Ameerul Momineen and that Jibrael had ordered him from Allah (SWT) to do so. When I heard that, I said to the people that the Prophet (SA) had spoken the truth and that I heard Jibrael (AS) greet Imam Ali (AS) using the title Ameerul Momineen and I narrated to them the whole story. (Irshad Al Qulub)

Unfortunately, the title of “Ameer Al Momineen” was used instead of the term “Caliph of the Prophet” after Umar ibn Al Khattab ordered that the latter be replaced with the former. It is sad to note that as with other rights of Imam Ali (AS) that was confiscated unjustly, some of his unique titles were also stolen such as “Ameerul Momineen” and used by others who are not worthy of that title.

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