

Introduction

One of the topics repeatedly discussed in Nahj al-Balaghah is that of the Ahl al-Bayt and Caliphate. Thus it is necessary to take up this discussion – which is related to the special topic of Caliphate after the Holy Prophet and the exclusive position of Ahl al-Bayt among the people.

The issues which have been set forth in this regard consist of the following:

- The distinguished and extraordinary position of Ahl al-Bayt and the fact that their knowledge and gnosis originates from an exceptional source and that they cannot be compared with others.
- Precedence and entitlement of the Ahl al-Bayt, especially Amir al-Mu'minin (A.S.), to the seat of Caliphate, whether through decree of will, merit or relationship.
- Criticism of the Caliphs.
- The philosophy behind 'Ali's forbearance and tolerance with regard to his indisputable right and its limits, in which he neither exceeded nor fell short in his criticism and objection.

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