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Part 4: Leadership (Imamate)

Lesson 1: When Did Imamology Begin?

We know that after the death of the Prophet of Islam, the Muslims were divided into two groups:

One group believed that the Holy Prophet did not designate a successor to himself. This group believes that he left it up to his ummah to meet and decide among themselves who their leader should be. This group is called Sunnis.

The other group believes that the Holy Prophet was infallible, immaculate and free of sin and error and had knowledge so that he could spiritually and materially lead the people and preserve the essence of Islam so that it would find continuation.

They believe that the selection of such a person could only come from God through the Holy Prophet of Islam and that the Holy Prophet did this and he selected Imam Ali as his successor. This group is called Shi'ites.

Our goal in these brief discussions is to follow-up these issues by using intellectual and historic reasoning, verses of the Holy Quran and Traditions of the Holy Prophet.

But before we begin the main discussion, several points should be mentioned.

1. Is this discussion one that will cause differences?

The moment that the discussion centers on imamate, some people immediately say something to the effect that, "Today is not a day for such discussions!"

Today is the day to discuss Muslim unity and any discussion about the successor to the Holy Prophet only causes differences and separation!

Today we have common enemies and we have to do something about them, namely, Zionism and eastern and western colonialism. Conflicting issues must be put aside. But this way of thinking is completely wrong.

In the first place, that which causes differences and separation are discussions and debates which are based on prejudice, illogic and hatred.

But discussions which are logical and reasonable, free of discrimination and quarreling, held in a friendly environment, are not only not a cause for differences of opinion and separation, but rather they decrease the distances and common points of belief are strengthened.

In my journey to the hijaz, with the intention of the pilgrimage to God's House, I held many discussions with the scholars and learned Sunni men. Both of us felt that these discussions were not only not ineffective but that they caused greater unity and understanding; they decreased the distance between the two sects and everyone washed away their prejudices.

The important thing is that which will become clear in these lessons; we have many points in common with one another and we can rely upon them in face of our common enemy.

Sunnis are divided into four sects: Hanafis, Hanbalis, Shafi's, and Malikis. The existence of these four groups has not caused separation among them and when they, at least, accept Shi'ism as a fifth school of thought, many of the differences fall away. Recently, the great Muftis and head of the al-Ahzar University, Shaykh Shaltut, took an effective step and formally announced the acceptance of the Shi'ite school of thought among the Sunnis. This was a step towards the understanding of Islam and establishing friendly relations between himself and the late Burujerdi, the great leader of the Shi'ites.

Secondly, we believe that Islam is crystallized in Shi'ism. While we have respect for all of the Islamic sects, we believe that Shi'ism can better introduce the real Islam in all of its dimensions and solve the problems related to the leadership of the Islamic community.

Why should we not teach our children this school with reason and logic and if we do not do this, clearly we have committed an act of treason.

We are certain that the Holy Prophet selected his successor. What is wrong with following up this belief with reason and logic?

But in these lessons we must be careful that the religious emotions of other's are not slighted.

Thirdly, in order to destroy the principles and unity of Muslims, the enemies of Islam tell such lies and so instigate Sunnis against Shi'ites, tell so many lies and so insult Shi'ites about the Sunnis so that in some countries, in general, they have grown distant from each other.

When we discuss the issue of imamate in the method described above, and mention the points which

the Shi'ites emphasize, and we use proof from the books of the Sunnis, it becomes clear that the propaganda was lies and that the common enemy has tried to poison the environment.

As an example, in one of my trips to the hijaz, I held a meeting with one of the important religious leaders of the Sunnis. He said, "I have heard that the Shi'ites have a Quran which is different from our Quran." I was very surprised. I said, "Proving that this was not true is very simple. I invite you or your representative to come to Iran after the hajj umrah, without any previous notification. You will see. That on every street, in every bazaar or mosque or home, there are Qurans. We will go into any mosque that you chose, and study the Qurans there so that it becomes clear that our Quran and yours are exactly the same. Most of the Qurans which we use are printed in the hijaz or in Egypt and other Islamic countries."

This very friendly conversation clearly did away with the amazing misconceptions which had been planted in the mind of one of the famous religious leaders.

The point is that a discussion on imamate, in this manner, confirms the unity of Islamic society, helps in clarifying the truths and decreasing the differences of opinion.

What is Imamate?

Imam means leader, leader of the Muslims. In the principles of belief of the Shi'ites, an immaculate or pure Imam refers to a person who is the successor to the Holy Prophet in all areas, with the difference that the Holy Prophet is the founder of the school and the Imam is the guardian and preserver of it. Revelation was revealed to the Holy Prophet but not to the Imams. They learned from the Holy Prophet and they had an extraordinary knowledge. From the point of view of Shi'ism, an immaculate

Imam does not just mean leader of Islamic rule, but rather, includes spiritual and material, internal and external leadership as well. In other words, they are responsible for leadership on all levels; they are responsible for the preservation and guardianship of Islamic beliefs and ideology, without any errors or deviation and they are the selected people of God.

But the Sunnis do not see imamate in this way. They only understand imamate as leader of the rule of Islamic society. In other words, leadership in every age and time is the caliph of the Prophet and the Imam of the Muslims!

Of course, in the future lessons we will prove that in every age and era, there must be a divine representative; a prophet or a pure Imam must be upon the earth to preserve the precepts of truth and guide those who long for the truth. If one day this person is hidden from the people, a person, as his representative, is responsible for the preservation of the precepts and the formation of a government.

Think and Answer

1. What is the reason behind people saying that today is not a day to hold such discussions about imamate?

2. In response to this, how many answers can you give for the necessity of this discussion?

3. How does the enemy cause disputes among the Muslims and what is the way to seal these breaks?

4. Can you recall an example of a dispute which is caused by the enemy?

5. What is the meaning of imamate in Shi'ism and what is the difference with the definition given by the Sunnis?

Lesson 2: The Philosophy Of The Existence Of The Imam

The discussion which we had about the necessity for the sending of the Holy Prophet by God, makes us familiar, to a certain extent, with the necessity for the existence of an Imam after the Prophet because in many of the important issues, they hold things in common , but here it is important to mention other reasons, as well.

Spiritual Perfection along with Divine Leadership

Before anything else, we must seek out the goal for the creation of human beings which is the highest creature of the world of Creation. They take a way which is long and full of twists and turns towards God, towards Absolute Perfection, towards spiritual perfection in all of the dimensions.

Without doubt, this way cannot be taken and the goal cannot be attained without the presence of a pure leader and it is not possible to undertake this way without a leader who is a heavenly teacher because: It is a way full of darkness and the dangers of becoming lost.

It is clear that God created the human being with their own free will and choice and gave them a conscience and a heavenly book and sent his prophets to them but it is possible that the human being, in spite of all of these facilities and possibilities, err upon the way. Clearly, the presence of an infallible leader will help to prevent the danger of deviation and going astray to a great extent, and in this way, all existence of the Imam is necessary to complete the goal of the creation of human beings.

This is that very thing which is called 'the law of kindness'. What is meant by this is that God, the Wise, has seen to all of the affairs of the human being to reach the goal of creation among which is the sending of the prophets and the selection of pure Imams, otherwise there would be an imperfection in motive. (Note this carefully).

Guardian of the Heavenly Laws

We know that the Divine religions, at the time of their descent to the prophets, are like a drop of min water, pure, life-giving and nurturing, but the moment one enters an environment which is polluted and brains become weak or impure, gradually they are polluted and superstitions are added to them so that the purity of the first day is lost; in this state, neither do they have attractions, nor any educational effects, nor do they quench the thirst, nor do they blossom forth in flowers of virtue.

It is here that an infallible leader must always act as a guardian of the authenticity of a school, and the being pure of the religious programs alongside it so that they guard against any deviation, extremism, alien ideas and superstitions because if religious precepts be without such a leader, in a very short period of time, they will lose their authenticity and sincerity.

For this reason, 'Ali, peace be upon him, in his Sermon 147 in the Nahj al-Balaghah says, "Yes. The earth will never be empty of a person who has arisen with the proof of God, whether through appearing of being known or being hidden, so thatt the Divine proof and signs not be falsified."

In truth, the heart of the Imam, peace be upon him, is just like a safety deposit box in which important documents arc always placed, so that they be preserved against thieves and other accident and this is another of the reasons for the existence of the Imam .

The Political and Social Lcadership of the Ummah

Doubtlessly, no social group or gathering can continue to be alive if 1t is not led by a strong leader. Because of this, from the earliest time to the present, all tribes and nations havc selected a leader for themselves who was, sometimes, a good person and very often, not so. It was often the case, that by ma kin use of the needs of the ummah for a leader, a tyrant, who had coercion and who deceived the people, was imposed upon them and he took the power in hand.

0n the other hand, in order for human beings to be able to reach spiritual perfection they must take this way, not alone, but with a group or a society because the power of an individual from the intellectual, physical, material and spiritual point of view, is very limited whereas the power of a group is very strong.

But for a society, it is necessary that a correct system rule over it and human talents blossom to struggle against deviations, preserve the rights of all individuals and for reaching this great goal, programming and organization is necessary and the motives be mobilized for motion in a free environment in all of

society,

It is a fact that human beings sin. Because of this, human beings have always born witness to the political deviation of the world. The necessity for a pure leader, sent on behalf of God Almighty to supervise this important issue and, also, making use of the people's power and the great thoughts of scholars, prevents any kind of deviation.

This is another of the philosophies behind the existence of the Imam and another, we repeat, is to be a guide. Thus the duty of the people at the special times when the pure imam is in occultation has become clear and, with the will of God, we will speak about it in later lessons.

The Necessity for the Final Proof

Not only must the heart be guided by the rays of the existence of the Imam, and follow its way towards absolute perfection, but for those who knowingly and consciously follow the wrong way and who have gone astray, there must be a final proof so that if they are promised a chastisement, it will not be without reason and no one can complain that no one had showed them the way and if they had been shown, they would not have gone astray.

In other words, it is to close the way to excuses that the proof of the truth be given to the necessary extent, and awareness is given to the unaware and to the aware, to gain strength of will power.

The Imam is a Great Intermediator for Divine Grace

Many of the scholars following the Islamic Tradtions compare the existence of the Prophet and the Imam in the human society in the total world of Creation to the existence of a heart in the body of the human being. We know that when the heart beats, blood is sent to all the parts of the body and it nurtures all of the cells of the body.

Because the pure Imam, in the form of a perfect human being and leader of human society, is the cause for the descent of Divine Favor or Grace, and every individual, to the extent of their being in touch with the Prophet, and the Imam, can benefit from this Grace or Favor, and the Imam benefits from this very Grace, it must be said that to the same extent that the existence of the heart is necessary for a human being, the existence of this intermediator for Divine Grace is also necessary for the activities of the world of humanity. (Note this with care).

Let it not be mistaken. The Prophets and Imams have nothing of themselves to give to others, that whatever is given is given by God, but just like the heart is an intermediator for the transmission of Divine Grace to the body. The Prophets and Imams, also, are intermediators for Divine Grace for human beings in all groups.

Think and Answer

1. What is the role of the Imam, (peace be upon him) in the spiritual perfection of the humnn being?

2. What is the role of the Imam, (peace be upon him) in the guarding of the Divine law?

3. What is the role of the Imam, (peace be upon him), in the issue of leadership of rule and the system of society'?

4. What does 'final proof' mean and what role does the Imam play in this?

5. What does the intermediation of Grace mean? What is the best analogy which can be given for the role of the Prophets and Imams from this point of view?

Lesson 3: The Conditions and Special Qualities of the Imams

Before anything else, in the discussion of this issue, we must note one necessary point and that is that:

It can clearly be seen in the Holy Quran that the position of leadership is the highest station that a human being can possibly attain and that it is even higher than the station of prophethood and having a Divine mission because in the story of Abraham, the idol destroyer, peace be upon him it says,

وَإِذِ ابْتَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ ۖ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا ۖ قَالَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي ۖ قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ

"And remember that Abraham was tried by his lord with certain commands which he fulfilled: He said, 'I will make thee a leader to the nations.' He pleaded, 'And also (Imams) from my offspring?" He answered, 'But my promise is not within the reach of evil·doers.'" (***2: 124***)

In this way, Abraham, after moving through the Station of prophet hood and his Divine mission and victory in the various Divine tests made of him, is then given tile valuable position of external and internal, material and spiritual leadership of the people.

The Prophet of Islam, peace and the mercy of God be upon him and his descendants, also, in addition to the position or station of prophethood and mission, has the station of leadership and imamate as well. Others among the prophets also had this station. This is one point to note.

On the other hand, we know that the conditions and qualities necessary for the receiving of any position relates to the duties and responsibilities which a person must perform in that position or station. That is, however much the station is elevated, the responsibilities are heavier and greater, in the same proportion, the conditions and qualities necessary for the position are greater.

For instance, in Islam, a person who has the responsibility to judge and even to bear witness and becomes the congregational prayer leader, must be just. Wherever the necessity for bearing witness arises or the duty to recite the surah hamd and another verse in the congregational ritual prayer, justice is necessary. It is clear what conditions are honored in order to reach the position or station of imamate, with the extraordinary importance which it has.

In general, the following conditions are vital for an Imam:

Infallibility or Being Free From Sin and Error

An Imam, must, like a Prophet, have the station of purity, that is, be free of sin and error, otherwise he cannot lead and be a model for the people and receive the trust of society.

The Imam must consume the heart and soul of the people and his command be accepted without questioning. A person who has sinned can never receive such trust and from all points of view, be trusted and confirmed.

How can a person who in his daily life, commits errors, have his opinions be relied upon in the work of society, and be followed without questioning?

Doubtlessly, the Prophet must be immaculate and this quality is necessary for the Imam as well, as we pointed out above.

This can be proven in another way as well. That is the 'law of kindness' which the existence of the Prophet and Imam rely upon requires the infallibility of the Prophet or the Imam and the mission which we pointed out in the last lesson, will be incomplete.

Overflowing with Knowledge

The Imam, like a Prophet, is a place of refuge of knowledge for the people. He must know all principles and practices of the religion, the external and internal meanings of the Holy Quran, the Traditions of the Prophet and whatever relates to Islam, and, in a complete way, be aware because he is the preserver and guardian of the Divine Law as well as the leader and guide of the people.

A person who when a complicated issue is presented either becomes conscious or asks another person for the answer, their knowledge and information will not answer the needs of an Islamic society. They can never be given the position or station of imamate and leadership of the people.

In conclusion, the Imam must be the most aware and most knowledgeable person in relation to the religion of God after the death of the Holy Prophet who does not allow Islam to deviate.

Courage

The Imam must be the bravest individual of Islamic society because without that courage of the leader, it is not possible to accept him as leader. He must have courage in face of the difficult events of life and sudden and unexpected happenings, courage before those who use coercion and who are oppressive and courage before external and internal enemies of Islam.

Austerity

We know that those who are captives of the gold and attractions of this world, are easily deceived and it is possible that they deviate from the way of truth and justice.

Sometimes this happens by way of greed and sometimes by way of threats, whereby this captive of this world is deviated from the straight path.

The Imam must be above the possibilities of gifts of this world and not be a captive to it.

He must be free from any chains or bonds of the material world, from all whims and lusts, from any ambition, from wealth and position so that he cannot be deceived and influenced and he then surrender and compromise because of these desires.

Ethical or Moral Attractions

The Holy Quran says about the Holy Prophet,

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ ۖ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ ۖ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ

"It is part of the Mercy of God that you deal gently with them. Were you to be severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about thee."(***3:159***)

Not only the Holy Prophet, but the Ima m and any leader of society is in need of goodness so that the people are magnitized towards him.

Without doubt, any kind of harshness and evil intentions towards the people for the Prophet and the Imam is a great defect and they are free from any such defect, otherwise, many of the philosophies of existence would not be fulfilled.

These are the most important conditions which the great 'ulama have mentioned for the Imam to have.

Of course, in addition to these five qualities mentioned above, there are other qualities in the Imam as well, but we have just mentioned the most basic ones.

Think and Answer

1. Why is the station of leadership of the highest station of a human being?

2. Why do the Prophet of Islam and other prophets who brought a divine law have the station of leadership or imamate?

3. If the Imam is not immaculate, what problem will arise?

4. What is an abundance of knowledge necessary for the Imam to have?

5. For what reason must the Imam be brave, austere and the most pure from the point of view of attracting the ethics of the people?

Lesson 4: Who Is To Select The Imam?

A group of Muslims (Sunnis) believe that the Prophet of Islam died not having selected his successor and they believe that this responsibility belongs to Muslims themselves to select their leader. They undertake this act through ‘ijma (consensus) which is one of the reasons given in the Divine Law.

They add that this program was implemented the first time for the first caliph who was selected with the consensus of the ummah.

And he selected the second caliph and introduced him as such. And the second caliph selected a Council of six people to select the person who should succeed him.

This Council consisted of: Imam 'Ali, peace be upon him, 'Uthman, Abdal Rahman ibn Awf, Talha, Zubayr and Sa'd bin Abi Waqas. This Council, with a majority of Sa'd ibn Waqas, Abdal Rahman and Talha voted for 'Uthman. (The second caliph had directed that if the Council should be divided three to three, the side that Abd al Rahman ibn 'Awf ('Uthman's son-in-law) was on would be the person selected).

Towards the end of 'Uthman's reign, the people arose against him for several reasons und before he had a chance to select his successor or select a Council, he was killed.

At this time, the majority of the people turned to 'Ali, peace be upon him, and selected him as their caliph. They pledged their allegiance to him as the successor of the Prophet, other than Mu'awiyah who

was the governor of Damascus and who was certain that Imam 'Ali would not support him. He then raised the flag of opposition which was the beginning of disgraceful events in the history of Islam and caused the shedding of the blood of a great many innocent people.

Here, in order to intellectually and historically clarify what happened, several questions arise, a few of which will be mentioned here:

Can the Ummah Select the Successor to the Prophet?

The answer to this question is that if we take the meaning of imamate to be external leadership of an Islamic society, the selection of a leader on behalf of society with the vote of the people is possible.

But if we take imamate to mean that which we have previously mentioned and as the Holy Quran has described, doubtlessly, no one other than God can chose the Imam and the caliph.

The conditions for imamate, according to the commentaries upon the Holy Quran, is knowledge of all of the principles and practices of Islam, a knowledge whose base is in heaven and relies upon the knowledge of the Prophet so that he can guard and preserve the Divine Law of Islam.

Another condition is that the Imam must be immaculate and infallible, free from sin and error and is the selected of the Divine immaculateness so that the station of imamate and spiritual and material, external and internal leadership of the imamate can be assumed as well as austerity, piety, courage which is necessary to confirm this important post.

The discrimination of these conditions can clearly only be done through God and the Prophet. It is He Who knows in whose spirit immaculateness has shown its rays, and it is He Who knows who has the highest knowledge needed for leadership, the sufficient courage and spiritual strength.

Those who placed the selection of the Imam and the caliph of the Prophet in the hands of the people, in truth, changed the meaning of imamate in the Holy Quran and limited it to meaning only leadership and giving organization to the affairs of this world of the people. Otherwise the conditions of imamate in the general and complete sense can only be determined by the Creator and it is He who knows who has these qualities.

The Holy Prophet, as well, could not have been selected by the vote of the people, but must rather have most definitely been selected by God Almighty, because other than God, no one can discern the necessary qualities in the Prophet.

Did the Prophet Not Select a Person to Succeed Him?

There is no doubt that the precepts of Islam were universal and eternal and according to the direct verses of the Holy Quran, special to no time or place.

There is, also, no doubt that at the time of the death of the Holy Prophet, the precepts of Islam had not moved beyond the Arabian Peninsula.

On the other hand, 13 years of the life of the Prophet in Makkah were spent in struggle against polytheism and idol worship and 10 years of the life of the Prophet, which began from the time of the migration to Madinah which was the period of the blossoming of Islam, was spent mainly in conflicts and wars imposed upon him by the enemies.

Even though the Holy Prophet spent night and day endeavoring to have Islam be better understood and to teach the precepts of Islam, but is it clear that many of the Islamic issues needed more time and a person similar to the Holy Prophet was needed to be able to do so and to accept this heavy responsibility.

Beyond this, the foreseeing of future events and providing the preliminaries for the school was among the most important tasks which was something that every leader thought about and would never allow himself to forget. Beyond this, the Prophet of Islam had provided commands for all of the affairs of life from the most simple possible. Could it be, then, that he would not have provided for the important issue of the person who was to succeed him and not determine the imamate for the Muslims?

The totality of these three directions are clear reasons why the Prophet most certainly took steps for the determination of his successor which we will mention in the later lessons so that this logical reality will become more clear, because the Holy Prophet was never negligent in this area even though many political waves, after the Prophet, tried to fill the people's minds with the idea that he had neglected to select a successor.

Can one really believe that considering that when the Holy Prophet left the city for just a few days for a conflict (like Tabuk), he did not leave Madinah empty of his successor and he took steps to assign a person to succeed him and act in his place, he not guarantee the future generations after his death by selecting his successor but rather left the ummah in the middle of an abundant number of groups who had differences of opinion on the method of the continuity of Islam?

It is clear that the lack of the assigning of a successor would have been a great error for Islam which was recently formed and developing. Our intellect and logic tells us that such a situation is impossible to have come from the Prophet of Islam.

Those who say that this was the responsibility of the ummah must at least show that the Prophet directed this issue whereas no such proof of this is offered.

Consensus and Council

Let us assume that the Prophet of Islam ignored this vital issue and the Muslims themselves were duty-bound to choose his successor, but we know that consensus means the consensus of the Muslims and

such a consensus did not exist in relation to the first caliph. Only a group of the Companions who lived in Madinah made the decision to do this and the rest of the cities of Islam were not in agreement and did not participate in this decision. In Madinah itself, 'Ali, peace be upon him, and a large number of the Bani Hashim, did not participate in any way. Thus, such a consensus cannot be accepted as such.

And if this method be correct, why did the first caliph not use the same method in choosing the second caliph?

Why did he personally select his successor? If the determination of one person is sufficient, the Holy Prophet, who was of the highest station should have his method of selection be accepted and if the later allegiance of the people would solve this problem, in relation to the Holy Prophet, they solve it better. Beyond this, a third difficulty arises as to the third caliph and that is why did the second caliph not use the method which was used to select the first caliph? Why did he ignore it as well as the tradition which had been used in his own case, that is, neither did he choose consensus nor did he chose election of an individual but chose a council to do so.

If a council, or the idea of consultation is correct, then why just six people? And how can the vote of three people out of six be sufficient?

These are questions which arise for every scholar of Islamic history and they have remained unanswered showing that the way to select the Imam was none of these.

Ali, Peace Be upon Him, Was the Most Worthy of All.

Let us assume that the Prophet of Islam did not determine who was to succeed him. Let us also assume that it was the responsibility of the people but can it be that at the time of choosing a person, from the point of view of a person who has knowledge and piety and other qualities, and is superior to all others, be put aside and that a person who is lower on this ladder be chosen?

A large group of Islamic scholars, even those who are among the Sunnis, have directly stated that 'Ali, peace be upon him , was the most aware person of Islamic affairs and the Traditions and traces which have remained from him bear witness to this truth. The history of Islam says that he was a place of refuge for the ummah in all intellectual knowledge and difficulties and even if the other caliphs were asked difficult and complicated questions, they asked 'Ali to answer them.

His courage, piety and austerity and other outstanding qualities which he possessed were superior to those of any other. Thus, if we assume that the people should select the most superior person, 'Ali, peace be upon him, was the most deserving. (Of course, this discussion has many, many documents which are beyond the range of this brief study to be presented here. Students who are interested may study further in this area).

Think and Answer

1. Why can the people not select and chose the successor to the Prophet?

2. Does our intelligence and logic tell us that the Prophet did not select anyone to succeed him or not?

3. What method was used to choose the first three caliphs?

4. Was their method of selection based on Islamic precepts and logic?

5. Why was 'Ali most deserving of all?

Lesson 5: The Quran and Imamate

The Quran, this great heavenly book of ours is the best guide in all areas and in the area of imamate, also, it presents the issue from its various dimensions.

The Quran Says that Imamate Comes from God

Just as we previously showed in the story of Abraham, peace be upon him, the Quran refers to the state of imamate and leadership of Abraham, peace be upon him, to follow the stage of prophethood, Divine mission and passing the difficult tests presented to him. It says,

وَإِذِ ابْتَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ ۖ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا ۖ قَالَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي ۖ قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ

"And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commands which he filled. He said, 'I will make you an Imam to the nations."(***2:124***)

The Holy Quran and various histories show that he attained this stage after struggling with the idol worshippers of Babel, his migration to Damascus, his building of the Ka'bah and taking his child, Ismail, to the place of sacrifice.

If prophethood and the Divine mission must be determined by God, imamate and leadership must also be determined by God for it relates to all aspects of the human being and it is to help direct them towards perfection. This is not something that the people may do. The Holy Quran says,

إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا

"I will make you an Imam to the nations." (***2:124***)

In another verse it says,

وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ

"And We made them leaders, guiding (***men***) ***by Our Command and We sent them Inspiration ..."*** (***21:73***)

Similar to this, it can be shown in other verses of the Quran that God must select the Imam and beyond this, at the time when we read that Abraham asked that his offspring be included, he was told,

لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ

"But My promise is not within the reach of wrongdoers.." (***2:124***)

It says that his prayer will be answered but those who had committed oppression would never reach this high station.

Noting the fact that an oppressor, both in the meaning of the word as well as in the logic of the Quran, has an extensive meaning, including the clear and hidden sins of polytheism and any kind of oppression against other people and noting that only God can know this in a complete and perfect way, because only God is aware of what goes on inside people, it is clear that only God can select the person for this stage.

The Verse on Preaching the Mission

يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ۖ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ

"O, Prophet, proclaim the (***Message***) ***which has been sent to thee from your lord. If you do not, you would not have fulfilled and proclaimed His Mission. And God will defend you from men*** (***who corrupt***) ***for God guides not those who reject Faith."***(***5:67***)

The tone of this verse shows that the assignment is a heavy one which has been placed upon the Prophet's shoulders. He was anxious about the mission which might possibly meet up with opposition from the people. Thus the verse tells the Prophet that God Commands the endeavors to have Islam be better understood and give him security and that he will be protected.

This important issue clearly does not relate to monotheism and polytheism in the struggle with the enemies from among the Jews and hypocrites, etc. because at the time of the revealing of this verse, this issue had been completely solved.

And, also, the announcing of the normal precepts of Islam did not have these dangers. From the external interpretation of the verse, it can be seen that it was a command which was of the same weight as the Divine mission. That is, if endeavors were not made, the truth of the Divine mission would not have been expressed. Can this command, then, be anything other than the selection of the successor to the Prophet? In particular, since the verse was revealed at the end of the life of the Holy Prophet and it relates to tile issue of the caliphate, which is the continuation of the issue of prophethood and the Divine mission of the Holy Prophet.

In addition, there are many Traditions recorded from a large group of the Companions of the Holy Prophet including Zayd ibn Arqam, Abu Sa'id Khudri, ibn 'Abbas, Jabir Abdallah Ansari, Abu Hurayrah, Hudaifah and ibn Ma'sud. Some of these Traditions have come to us through eleven ways and a large number of them are from the Sunni scholars, both these who transmit the Traditions, historians as well as recorders which say that the above verse was about 'Ali, peace be upon him, and that it was revealed on the day of Ghadir . (For further informa tion, see the books Ahqaq al-Haq, al-Qadir, al-Marija'at and Dala'il al-Sadaq).

We will discuss the events of Ghadir, with the will of God, in the section on Traditions but here we will simply remind ourselves that this is a clear sign because the Prophet of Islam was duty-bound to announce on the return from his last hajj and at the end of his life that he had officially selected 'Ali, peace be upon him, as his successor and introduce him to the people.

The Verse on Obedience to the Commanders

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ

"O you who believe! Obey God and obey the Prophet and those charged with authority among you ..." (***4:59***)

Here, the command to obey 'those charged with authority' directly follows the obedience to God and the Holy Prophet.

Does it mean 'those charged with authority' as leaders and rulers in every age and in every environment? But are Muslims of each age and in each country obliged to follow the commands of the leaders without question (as some of the Sunnis say)?

This does not agree with any kind of logic because most of the leaders, in the various ages, were

deviated, polluted, affiliated and oppressive.

Does this verse say to obey the rulers upon the condition that they are not rulers against the precepts of Islam? This also does not fit with the generalization of the verse. Does it mean that they are only to obey the Companions of the Prophet? This also does not agree with the extensiveness mentioned in the Holy Quran to include all ages and times.

Thus we can conclude that which is meant by the infallible leaders who exist in every age and in every era, obedience of whom is unconditional and obligatory and his commands, like the commands of God and the Prophet, must be carried out.

There are many Traditions in Islam in this area and the fact that those charged with authority has been related to 'Ali or the infallible Imams is further proof of this. (For further information see the Tafsir Nimunah, vol. 3, p. 435).

The Verse of Leadership (Wilayat)

إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ

"Your (***real***) ***leaders are*** (***no less than***) ***God, His Apostle and the*** (***fellowship of***) ***believers – those who establish regular prayers and regular charity when they bow down humbly*** (***in worship***)***."*** (***5:58***)

The Quran relies upon the word imamah which in Arabic refers to exclusiveness: the vali and leader of the Muslims is exclusive to three people: God, the Holy Prophet and those who have found faith and who pay the zakat at the time of the ruku'.

There is no doubt that what is meant by leadership is not the friendship of Muslims with one another because friendship with one another does not need to have the word 'unconditional' added to it. All Muslims are friends with each other even though, at the time of the ruku', zakat is not paid. Thus 'Wilayat' here means the spiritual and material leadership, in particular, since it is placed a long side the 'Wilayat' of God and the 'Wilayat' of the Prophet.

This point is also clear that the above verse, with the situation in which it appears, refers to a particular person who has paid the zakat while in the state of ruku' because otherwise it is not necessary that one pay the zakat while in that state; this is a sign, not a description.

The totality of this, then, shows that the above verse refers to the meaningful story of 'Ali, peace be upon him, in particular, since he was in the midst of the ruku' when a needy person came to the mosque of the Prophet to seek help. No one answered the needy person but in that state, 'Ali, peace be upon him, with his right hand, indicated his finger with a ring on it. The needy person took the valuable ring. The

Prophet saw what was going on with the corner of his eye. After his ritual prayer ended, he raised his head and said, "God. The brother of Moses has asked that you extend his spirit and make things easy for him and cut the difficulty of his tongue, and have Aaron be his helper and assistant...0 God! I am Muhammad, the Prophet, and the person you selected opened my chest and made my work easy and from among my family, have 'Ali be my helper so that through him, my back will be strong and firm..."

The Prayer of the Holy Prophet had not as yet ended when Gabriel appeared and revealed the verse above.

It is interesting to note that many of the recorders of the Traditions, who are famous Sunnis, and their historians and commentators, say that this verse refers to Hadrat Ali and more than 10 of the Companions of the Holy Prophet.

There are many verses about Wilayat but we have only mentioned four verses in relation to this issue.

Think and Answer

1. According to the Holy Quran, who is to select the Imam?

2. When was the command to endeavor to have Islam be better understood revealed and what is the content of it?

3. In relation to what person is it reasonable to have unconditional obedience?

4. For what reason does the verse, ***'Your*** (***real***) ***friends are*** (***no less than***) ***God,"*** (***5:58***)***'*** refer to the leadership and imamate?

5. In all of the verses of the Quran about the issue of 'Wilayat', what point can be made?

Lesson 6: Imamate in the Traditions of the Holy Prophet

When we study the Traditions of Islam written in books, In particular the books of the Sunnis, a researcher encounters an abundance of Traditions of the Holy Prophet which prove the station of the imamate and vicegerency of 'Ali, peace be upon him.

Researchers are surprised that with all of these Traditions, any doubt should remain on the issue, much less that a person would want to choose a way that is different from the way of the AhlulBayt.

These Traditions, which reach into the hundreds (like the Tradition of Ghadir), and tens of other Traditions recorded in tens of famous books are so clear that if one were to follow them, even if one were to put aside following the dictates of a religious authority, the issue would still be so clear that no further proof would be necessary.

As an example, several famous Traditions in this area will be presented and or those who wish to study further in this area, we will mention the sources in which they may do so. (See al-Maraj'at and al-Ghadir).

The Tradition of Ghadir

Many of the historians of Islam have written that the Holy Prophet of Islam, towards the end of his life, after the ritual hajj, spoke to many of the old and new Muslims who, in faith, had come from all over the hijaz region to perform this ritual, at the time of the return from Makkah, in the area of Juhfah, between Makkah and Madinah, when they reached a wilderness known as Ghadir Khum, which was a crossroad which separated the people of the hijaz.

Before the Muslims separated from each other to each go to their particular area of the hijaz, the Prophet ordered his followers to stop. Those who were ahead were invited to return and those who had remained behind, caught up with them. The weather was very hot and burning. There was no roof to shelter them. The Prophet informed them that they should all gather to listen to a new command from God which would be expressed during a sermon.

A pulpit was prepared by saddles placed upon a camel and the Holy Prophet mounted the pulpit and addressed the gathering.

"I will soon accept God's invitation (to death) and I will leave you. I am responsible and you are responsible. How will you bear witness to me?"

The people said, "We swear that you have carried out your mission and that you have done your best to guide us. May God bless you."

The Prophet said, "Do you swear to the worship of the One God, to my Divine mission and to the truth of the day of the Resurrection when the dead shall be raised on that day?" Everyone answered, "Yes. We so swear." He said, "May God be my witness..."

Then he said, "O people! Do you hear me?" They said, "Yes," and following that, everyone was silent and other than the sound of the breeze nothing could be heard. The Holy Prophet then said, "Now say what you will do with these two valuable things which I leave behind."

A person from among the multitude cried out, "What two valuable things?"

The Holy Prophet said, "First, the Book of the Holy Quran and do not remove yourselves from it so that you be led astray. The second valuable souvenir which I leave among you is my family. God the Almighty has informed me that these two will never separate from each other; they will join me in heaven and you will be destroyed if you part from these two. If you remain behind, again, you will be destroyed."

The Holy Prophet looked around him. He was looking for someone. Then he saw 'Ali. He bent down and took his hand and pulled him up so that the whiteness under the arms of both showed and all of the people saw him and recognized him.

Here the voice of the Holy Prophet became louder and clearer. He said, "What person from among all people is the most worthy of the believers?"

They answered, "God and the Prophet know best." Then he said, "God is my Master and Leader and I am the master and leader of the believers and. I am most worthy among them." Then he added, "Whoever I am the master and leader of, 'Ali is his master and leader." He repeated this three times and according to some Traditions, four times. Then he raised his head to the heavens and said, "God loves his friends, and hates those who hate him. Befriend his friends and leave those who do not befriend him. Know that his is in the right and that he follows the right."

Then he said, "All of those present, tell all of those who are absent." The people were still gathered when Gabriel, the trustee of God's message appeared and revealed verse 58 of surah 5 to the Holy Prophet.

Then the Holy Prophet said, "I praise God. I praise God because he has completed his message and his blessings have ended for me and His satisfaction with my message and the Wilayat of 'Ali has been announced after me."

A great commotion appeared among the people and then they congratulated 'Ali for the station he had been given. Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 1n the presence of the crowd said to 'Ali, "Congratulations to you, O son of Abu Talib, you have become my leader and leader of all of the people, men and women who have faith."

The above Tradition has been recorded in varying versions, some quite lengthy and some short, by many of the scholars of Islam in their books. This Tradition is greater than for one to deny or doubt that the Prophet said it. The scholar, Allamah Amini, in his famous book al-Ghadir mentions 110 people among the Companions and followers of the Prophet and 360 famous books on Islam in which it has been recorded and it has appeared in many of the books of the Sunni brothers on Traditions. Even a large group of the scholars of Islam have written independently about this Tradition, including Allamah Amini who himself has written an excellent, independent book about the particularities of this Tradition. The names of 26 Islamic scholars have been included in a separate book.

A number of the people who have seen this Tradition as being something which cannot be denied, have tried to deny it in discussing the issue of imamate and caliphate and have said that the word mawla' (master) here means friend whereas if one notes the Tradition with care, the conditions under which it

was recorded and the place where it was recorded, it is clear that the intention behind it was none other than imamate and Wilayat in the sense of leadership of the people:

a) The verse on endeavoring to have Islam be better understood, which we have presented in the previous discussions, and before this, the situation in which it descended with the strong tone of recitation which appeared in it, well shows that the words are not about friendship and normal or average honesty because there was no place for such concern and all of this importance and emphasis was not necessary. Also the verse of 'ikmal al-din' which was revealed after that shows that the above issue was extremely important like the issue of leadership and the successor to the Prophet which was relevant.

b) The method in which the Tradition was stated with all of the introductory remarks in the burning wilderness, with the extensive sermon, having the people swear to their beliefs and in a sensitive time and place are all proof of our claim.

c) The congratulations which the various groups of people gave to 'Ali and the poems that poets recited that day and on the following days, all are proof of this expression that the words are about the selection of Hadrat. 'Ali to the position of imamate and Wilayat and nothing else.

Think and Answer

1. Describe the story of Ghadir.

2. Narrate the Tradition of Ghadir with several proofs which have been mentioned about the Prophet in several famous books on Islam.

3. Why does the word mawla' in the Tradition of Ghadir refer to imamate and leadership and not friend.

4. What prayer did the Holy Prophet recite and what were the events of Ghadir concerning the rights of 'Ali?

5. Where are Ghadir and Jahfah?

Lesson 7: The Tradition of Manzalah and the Tradition of Yaum Al-Dar

Many of the great Shi'ite and Sunni commentators upon the Holy Quran say in commenting upon 7: I 42 that it refers to Moses, peace be upon him, leaving for 40 days to go to the place of the covenant and the selection of Aaron to succeed him, which have been recorded in the famous Tradition of manzalah.

The Tradition states when 1he Prophet was moving towards the battlefield of Tabuk (Tabuk was a place in the north of the Arabian Peninsula which shared a border with the Eastern Roman Empire), he left 'Ali in his place in Madinah. They informed the Holy Prophet that the Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire had sent a great army to attack Hijaz and Madinah and Makkah so that they could kill the bud of the Islamic Revolution before its special human program and ideals of longing for the truth could be exported to its area.

'Ali said, "Do you leave me among the women and children, not allowing me to go to the battle of jihad and seek honor there?"

The Holy Prophet said, “Are you not satisfied to be to me as Aaron was to Moses except that there will be no Prophet after me?"

These words can be found in the most famous books on the Traditions as recorded by the Sunnis, that is, namely, Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim with the difference that in the former, all of the Tradition has been recorded and in the latter, all of the Tradition appears once and then in another place only the sentence, "Are you not satisfied to be with me as Aaron was to Moses except that there will be no Prophet after me?" appears by itself.

This has been recorded in many of the books of the Sunnis, including the *Sunan ibn Majah, Sunan Thirmidi, Musnad Ahmad* and many others. The Companions who have recorded it are more than 20 people, among whom are Jabir ibn Abdallah Ansari, Abu Sa'd Khadani, Abdallah ibn Mas'ud and M u'awiyah.

Abu Bakr Baghdad in the History of Baghdad records from 'Umar ibn Khattab, the following, "He saw a man who was speaking in an unworthy manner to 'Ali. 'Umar said,' I think you are a hypocrite because I have heard that the Prophet said, "Ali is in relation to me as Aaron was to Moses, other than that after me there will be no Prophet."

It is notable that from the respected source of the Traditions, it can be seen that the Prophet of Islam did not only use this sentence on the occasion of the Battle of Tabuk but that he repeated it seven times on various occasions which shows its generality of meaning:

On the day when the covenant of brotherhood (*al-rnawakhat awwal Makkah*) was made among the brothers in Makkah, the Prophet chose 'Ali as his brother and repeated this same sentence.

On the second day of al-Mawakhat, when the day of brotherhood between the Emigrants and the Helpers was repeated, this was repeated and the Prophet once again repeated the Tradition of rnanzalah.

On that day when the Holy Prophet ordered that the doors which opened from the homes onto the mosque should be closed and he only allowed 'Ali's door to remain open, he repeated this same

sentence.

Thus it was stated on the occasion of the battle of Tabuk and three other times, the documentation of which is found in the books of the Sunni scholars. There is, then, no room for doubt neither from the point of view of documentation nor from the point of view of the generality of the meaning.

The Content of the Tradition of Manzalah

If we study the above Tradition, and we put aside any prejudgments, we can make use of this tradition to show that all of the positions which Aaron had among the Bani Israel in respect to Moses, ·Ali had except as to the Prophet because no other conditions exist in the Tradition.

Thus, we can conclude that:

1. 'Ali was the choice of the ummah after the Prophet (as Aaron had such a position).

2. 'Ali was the minister and constant or special assistant to the Prophet and a partner in his leadership because the Quran has proven this for Aaron (see 20:29–32).

3. 'Ali was the successor to the Prophet and as long as he was present, no one else could take this position, as Aaron had this in relation to Moses.

The Tradition of the Day of Dar

According to that which has appeared in Islamic history, the Prophet in 3 AH was assigned to make open his invitation which he had kept secret until then. As the Holy Quran says)

وَأَنْذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ

"And admonish your nearest kinsmen." (***26:214***)

The Holy Prophet called his close family to the home of his uncle, Abu Talib. After they had eaten, he said, "O sons of Abdul Muttalib, I swear that I know no one among the Arabs who has brought anything better than what I have brought. I have brought the goodness of this world and the next and God has ordered me to invite you to these precepts and I will befriend one of you to be my brother and my successor."

No one showed any interest in his proposal, other than 'Ali, peace be upon him, who was the youngest among them. He arose and said, O Prophet of God, I am your helper upon this way." The Prophet put his arm around his neck and said, "This brother is my inheritor and my successor among you. Listen to his words and obey his orders." But the lost tribe did not accept and turned to magic.

The above famous Tradition is called yawmal-dar (the day of the invitation in the home). It is clear proof that many of the Sunnis scholars like ibn Abi Jarir, ibn Abi Hatam ibn Mardawiyah, Abu Na'im, Bihaqi, Thalibi, Tabari, ibn Athir, Abu al-Fada and others have recorded it (for further information see al-Marajiat, p. 130 and Kitab al-Haqaqah al-Haqq, vol. 4, p.62).

Whenever we study this Tradition, without any pre-judgments, the truth of 'Ali's caliphate and vilaya becomes clearer to us because it refers directly to caliphate and leadership.

Think and Answer

1. What is the Tradition of Manzalah? How many people have confirmed it?

2. What was the content of the Tradition of Manzalah and what position did it prove for 'Ali?

3. Aaron had what position in relation to Moses, according to the Holy Quran?

4. Which scholars have recorded the Tradition of Manzalah?

5. What does the Tradition of Yawmal-Dar and its content and documentation show?

Lesson 8: The Tradition of Thaqalain and Noah's Ark

The documentation of the Tradition of Thaqalin One of the famous Traditions among the 'ulama of the Sunnis and Shi'ites is the Tradition of Thaqalain.

A large group of the Companions, without any break, recorded this Tradition from the Prophet and some of the great 'ulama say that 30 of the Companions have mentioned it (Sirah Halabi, vol. 33, p. 308)

A large group of the recorders have mentioned this in their books and there can be no doubt as to this Tradition.

The great scholar, Sayyid Hashim Bahrani, in his book, Ghayat al-Maram, mentions this Tradition with 39 documentations from the Sunni scholars and 80 documentations from the Shi'ite 'ulama Mir Hamad Husayn Hindi, another great scholar who studied this issue further, mentioned 200 Sunnis who have recorded this Tradition and he has compiled them in 6 volumes.

Among the individuals of the famous Companions who have recorded this are Abu Sa'id Khudari, Alm Dharr Ghifari, Zayd ibn Arqam, Zayd ibn Thabit , Abu Rafa', Jabir ibn Matam, Huzaifah, Damarah Islami,

Jabir ibn Abdallah Ansari, and Umm Salimah.

The basic Tradition, according to Abu Dharr Ghifari, is that once when he was in the Ka'bah, he turned to the people and said that I heard that the Holy Prophet had said, "I leave two things of value among you: the Quran and my family. These two will never separate from each other until they enter unto me in the Fountain of Abundance (kawthar) in Paradise. Thus, take care to follow what I have recommended." (Recorded from Jama' Tarmidhi as from Niyabi' al-Mawadah, p. 37)

Titis Tradition is found in the most reliable of the Sunni sources such as Sahih Tarmidhi, Nisai', Musnad Ahmad, Kanz al-'Amal and Mustadrak Hakim, etc.

In many of the books this Tradition has been called thaqalin (two valuable things) and in some it is called khalifitin or two successors which do not differ in meaning.

It is interesting to note that in the various Traditions of Islam, this verse has been used by the prophet for the people on different occasions.

In the Tradition of Jabir ibn Abdallah Ansari, we read that he said this on the hajj on the day of Arafah.

It is recorded in a Tradition of Abdallah ibn Khattab that in Juhfah (an area between Makkah and Madinah where some of the pilgrims enter the state of ihram).

It is recorded in a Tradition of Umm Salimah where this is said at Ghadir Khum.

It is recorded in a part of the Tradition during the last days of his blessed life, while he was on his death bed.

It is recorded in a Tradition he said this upon the pulpit in Madinah (al-Marajat, p, 42)

Even famous Sunni scholars mentioned in Ibn Hajar in his book, Sawafq al-Mahraqah says from the Holy Prophet , "The Holy Prophet of Islam, after saying this Tradition , took 'Ali's hand and pulled him up and said, 'It is 'Ali and the Quran and the Quran and 'Ali. They will not separate from each other until they enter unto me m the Fountain of Abundance." (Al-sawa'in al-Malzraqah.p. 75).

In this way, it becomes clear that the Prophet has expressed this as a principle many times and emphasized this and that he made use of many opportunities to express it so that it would never be forgotten.

The Content of the Tradition of Thaqalain

Here, several points should be noted:

The introduction to the Quran and his family as 'two caliphs' or 'two valuable things' is clear proof that

Muslims must never turn away from these two, especially with the condition in many Traditions where it states that, "If these two are released or freed from each other, you will never be lost."

The placing of the Quran beside his family and his family beside the Quran is proof that the Holy Quran will never be altered and that it will be preserved, the family of the Holy Prophet had the position of infallibility.

In some of these Traditions, it has been stated that the Prophet said, "On the Day of Resurrection, I will question you about how you behaved towards these two great souveniers, to see how you have acted towards them.

No matter how we interprete the ahl al-bayt, 'Ali is the best confirmation. According to repeated Traditions, he will never be separated from the Holy Quran nor the Quran from him.

In addition to this, in repeated Traditions, we read that when the verse was revealed about mubahilah, the Holy Prophet called 'Ali, Fatimah, Hasan and Husayn, peace be upon them, and said, 'This is my ahl al-bayt.' (Mashkat al Hasbaih, p. 568, printed in Delhi and Riyadh al-Nafarah, vol. 2,p. 248, recorded from Muslim and Tarmidhi).

Even though it is not clear to us who are enclosed in this world what will be questioned of us, but on the Day of Judgment, we know from the Traditions, that the meaning of the Fountain of Abundance which is a special stream in Paradise with many special privileges is for the real believers, the prophets and the ahl al-bayt and the followers of that school.

From what has been said, it becomes clear that the leadership of the ummah of Muslims after the Prophet is through 'Ali and after him, also, through the Imams from this family.

The Tradition of Noah's Ark

An interesting statement is recorded from the Holy Prophet, in both Sunni and Shi'ite books on Traditions, which is the famous Tradition of Noah's ark.

In this Tradition, Abu Dharr says, "The Prophet said, 'My family are like Noah's ark. Whoever uses it will be saved and whoever separates from it will drown." (Mustadrak Hakam,vol. 3, p.151).

This Tradition, which is also among the famous Traditions and mentions the necessity for the people to follow 'Ali and the family of the Prophet after his death, has been emphasized.

Noting that the ark of Noah is a place of refuge and a means of salvation for when the great storm comes, this truth becomes clear that the Islamic ummah will be saved in the storm which came after the death of the Prophet through the ahl al-bayt.

Think and Answer

1. What does the Tradition of Thaqalain say and what benefits does it prove for the ahl al-bayt?

2. Who recorded the Tradition of Thaqalain?

3. What does Thaqalain mean? And can other interpretations be given about its meaning?

4. In what situation did the Prophet say it?

5. Describe the Tradition of Noah's Ark from the point of view of its content and documentation.

Lesson 9: The Twelve Imams

The Traditions on the Twelve Imams

After proving imamate and the caliphate of Imam 'Ali, peace be upon him, we will mention the Traditions in relation to the other imams.

I. These are repeated Traditions in the Sunni and Shi'ite books in our hands today which speak about the caliphate of the twelve imams and caliphs after the Holy Prophet.

These can be found in many of the famous Traditions of the Sunni, like Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Tarmadi, Sahih Muslim, Sahih Abu Dawoud and Musnad Ahmad, etc. In the book Muntakhib al-Athar, there are 271 Traditions in this area which have been recorded and a large part of them are from Sunni scholars.

As an example, the Sahih Bukhari, the most famous book of the Sunnis says, "Jabir ibn Samarah says, 'I heard the Prophet say, "There will be twelve leaders after me." Then he said, 'I heard that my father said he heard the Prophet say, "They will be from the Quraysh..." (Sahih Bukhari, part 9, Kitabal-Maqadam, p.100).

In Sahih Muslim, this same Tradition has been recorded in this way that Jabir says, "I heard the Prophet say, 'Islam will always be dear until twelve caliphs and successors." Then he said something which I did not understand. I asked my father and he said, 'The Prophet said, "They are all from the Quraysh." (Sahih Muslim, Kitab al-amanah, bab al-mal tih al-qurasyh)

In Musnad Ahmad it has been recorded from 'Abdallah ibn Mas'ud, a famous companion that he asked the Prophet about his vicegerents. He said, "They are twelve people like the Israeli tribes who were twelve people."(Musnad Ahmad, vol .1, p.398).

The Meaning of This Tradition

In some books of the Traditions, the power of Islam is referred to as being a pawn in the twelve caliphs and in others, the survival and life of religion are in the hands of a group of them until the Day of Resurrection and all are from the Quraysh. In some, all of them are mentioned as being of the Bani Hashim. However it be, this Tradition does not conform to any sect except the Shi'ite sect because its explanation is very clear according to Shi'ism where the 'ulama of the Sunnis are at an impasse trying to explain it. Does it refer to the first four caliphs and then the Umayyid and Abbasid caliphs?

Whereas we know that the number of the first caliphs were twelve, but they did not end with the Umayyids or the Abbasids and the number twelve does not conform to anything.

In addition, among the Umayyid there are people like Yazid and among the Abbasids, people like Mansur Dawaniq, Harun al-Rashid, the oppression, arrogance and crimes of whom no one can deny and it is not possible that they be considered to be the caliphs of the Prophet and among the honor of Islam. No matter how much we simplify the criteria, they clearly do not include them.

And beyond these, the number twelve only can apply to the Shi'ites.

It is better that we now turn to a famous scholar, Sulayman ibn Abraham Qaduzi Hanafi in Yanabi'a al-Muwadat.

“Some of the scholars have said that, ‘The Tradition which mentions the rule of the caliphs after the Prophet are twelve people is famous and it has been recorded in many places. That which we can surmise is that, after the passing of time, what the Prophet of God was referring to was twelve successors from the ahl al-bayt and his family because it is not possible that this Tradition refer to the first caliphs because they are only four people and it does not conform to the Umayyids because they were more than twelve people and all of them, other than Amr ibn Abdal Aziz were oppressors and also, they were not from the Bani Hashim and the Holy Prophet said, "All twelve are from the Bani Hashim."

When Abd al Malik ibn Umar reords from Jabir ibn Sahrah and how the Prophet quietly said who they were from, he bore witness to what he said because some people were not happy about the caliphate of the Bani Hashim and the Tradition does not conform to the Bani Abbas, either, because they were more than twelve people and beyond this, they did not conform to the verse,

قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَىٰ

"No reward do I ask of you except the love of those near of kin…" (***42:23***)

Thus, the Tradition only can relate to the twelve Imams of the ahl al-bayt and the family of the Prophet. It refers to those whose knowledge is higher than that of any others, whose piety is unquestioned and

from all points of view, are more knowledgeable and who gained their knowledge from the Prophet of Islam.

That which confirms this view is the Tradition of Thaqalain and many other Traditions which have come from the Prophet. (Yanabi' al-Muwadat, p. 446).

It is interesting to note another commentary upon this Tradition, "Perhaps by twelve caliphs and amirs it is the first four, who existed at the beginning of Islam and the other eight have not appeared yet but will come in the future!"

In this way, it denies the relation and unity of the caliphs mentioned in the Tradition of the Prophet which is so clear.

But what we wish to say is this that what is the necessity for commentary upon a Tradition which is so clear and conforms to the twelve Shi'ite imams and instead cause oneself to fall into these pits and crevices?

The Imams by Name

It should be noted that in some of the Traditions which have reached us from the Sunnis, the names of the twelve Imams have clearly appeared and their names specified!

Shaykh Sulayman Qanduzi, a famous Sunni scholar, in the book, Yanabi' al-Muwaridah says, "A Jewish man named Na'thal, went to the Prophet and among the questions he asked who would succeed him. The Prophet said, specifying them, "After me, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and then my two sons, Hasan and Husayn and after Husayn, nine Imams will follow from his children."

"'The Jewish man said, 'Name them.'

"The Prophet said, 'When Husayn leaves this world, his son, 'Ali, and after him, his child Muhammad and after Muhammad, his son Ja'far and after Ja'far, his son Musa and after Musa, his son 'Ali and after 'Ali, Muhammad. After Muhammad, his child,'Ali and after 'Ali, Hasan and after Hasan, his child Muhammad al-Mahdi. These are the twelve Imams."
(Yanabi' al-Muwadat, p. 431).

In that same book, another Tradition is quoted from Kitab Manaqib with their titles and it indicates that Imam Mahdi is in occultation and then he will arise and replace the oppression and tyranny which exists upon the earth with justice." (Yanabi al-Muwadat, p. 442).

Of course, there are many Traditions relating to this in Sunni sources. (Note this with care).

"Whoever Dies and Does Not Know His Imam of Time"

It is interesting to note that in the Sunni books, it is recorded from the Prophet, "A person who dies not knowing the Imam of his Time is as a man who lived in the Age of Ignorance." (al-Majim al-Mufrist, vol. 6, p. 302). This same Tradition in Shi'ite sources says, "A person who dies and does not recognize the Imam of his, dies in a time of ignorance." (Sajad al-Aswar. vol. 6, p. 16).

These Traditions clearly show that a pure Imam lives in every age who must be recognized and whosoever does not do so, it is as if he had lived in an age of kufr and ignorance.

Is the Imam referred to in this Tradition that same person who rules the people? Ghengis', Haruns and dependent leaders?

Doubtlessly, the answer is negative because many of the leaders are corrupt and oppressors sometimes act according to the East or the West and depend on the orders of foreign governments and they will clearly be sent to hell. Thus it becomes clear that in every age and every period there is an infallible Imam who must be found and recognized.

Ofcourse, proof of the imamate of each Imam and the Traditions of each Imam who would follow, all exists.

Think and Answer

1. What books have recorded the twelve Imams?

2. What do these Traditions say?

3. What unacceptable explanations have been given about these Traditions?

4. Have the names of the twelve Imams appeared in Sunni sources?

5. What other way exists to prove the twelve Imams?

Lesson 10: The Twelfth Imam, the Great Leader and Peace Maker of the World

The End of the Night of Darkness

When we look at our present situation, and we see the increase in crimes, massacres, wars, bloodshed, conflicts, international differences and the daily increase in corruption, we ask ourselves if the situation will continue in the same way and the extent of the crimes and corruption will so grow that all of society will be included in a continuous war and destroyed? Or the ideological differences and ethical corruption will, like quick sand, take society along with it or is there still hope that one day humanity will be saved and reformed?

There are two answers to this important question:

The first answer: This is mentioned by the materialists and the pessimists and that is that the future of the world is dark and that every moment, a danger exists.

The second is of those who believe in the divinely revealed religions, in particular, the Muslims and, especially, the Shi'ites, who give another answer to this question and they say: Behind this dark night lies the morning of hope. These dark, stormy, death-like clouds and the flood of destruction will finally be eliminated and the clear heavens and the brilliant sun and a quiet environment will follow.

These hidden hurricanes will not always be before us and in the near future, we will be taken to the shore of salvation.

The world is in anticipation of a great Reviver who will, through a revolution, transform the world to the advantage of truth and justice.

Of course, we must note that each religion calls this leader by a different name. As an Arab poet says, "We call you by different names. But your beauty is not more than one thing and all of our words are directed towards that world of beauty!"

The Primordiality and Manifestation of This Great Reviver

Our inner inspirations whose waves come through the judgment of wisdom are more powerful, not only in the issue of ontology, which can guide us in all of our religious beliefs, but also guides us in this issue.

Its signs:

First, the general love for justice of the world because all of the people of the world, in spite of all of the differences which they have, without exception, show love for peace and justice. We all cry out and make endeavors upon this way and we seek peace and justice of the world with all of our being.

A more important reason than this for the primordiality of the manifestation of a great Reviver cannot be found because the generality of such a need is proof of its primordiality. (Note this with care).

Every love and primordiality speaks of the rule of existence of a beloved and is moving to attract it.

How is it possible that God place this thirst in the inner spirit of the human being and not provide a fountain which will quench this thirst?

It is here that we say that the primordiality and nature of the seeking of justice of human beings cries out. One day justice and peace will take over the entire world. The organizations of oppression will be destroyed. Humanity will take on the form of one country and will live under one flag, with solidarity and unity and purity of life.

Another sign is the commonality which exists in all religions of the world as to the existence of a great Reviver. In more or less all of the religions, such a chapter exists and the idea of the belief in the manifestation of a savior of the people who will heal all of the wounds of humanity is not only present among Muslims but rather all of the documents show that this is a universal belief which is primordial and which exists in all of the religious groups of the East and the West, even though Islam, which is a more complete religion, places greater emphasis upon it.

Intellectual Proof

A. The order of the creation is a lesson for us that the world of humanity must in the end, be ruled by the law of justice and remain based in a system of justice and peace.

This means that the world of existence, to the point that we know, is a complex of orders, systems and laws which are proof of the unity of the world and the connection to this system.

The issue of order and law and programing and accounting is one of the most serious and basic issues of this world.

From the Milky Way to a minute atom, several million of which can be placed upon the head of a pin, all are of a special order. The various organs of our body, from the amazing structure of a cell to the system of nerves and veins to the brain and the heart and the lungs, all have a particular order which is such that some scholars say that each one is like a clock which works within the body and the greatest computers are nothing in comparison to it.

In such a world, can a human being exist as a part of this universal as an unconformed and disorderly part with war and bloodshed and oppression?

Does injustice and the real corruption of a society, a type of disorder, always rule over humanity?

The result is that the witnessing of the world of existence makes us aware of the fact that the end of human society is justice and order and that it will return to the main line of creation.

B. The evolutionary or transformative line of society is another proof for the future which is clear of the

world of humanity because we can never deny this truth that human society, from the day that it recognized itself, has never stopped at one stage and is continuously moving forward.

From the material point of view, from the view of clothes, housing, type of food and means of transportation humanity has lived through the most basic of situations and today it has reached the stage which surprises the sight and intellect and most certainly this ascent will continue.

From the point of view of knowledge and culture, also, the direction is always one of ascent or increase and every day new discoveries and new information is gained.

This Jaw of transformation or evolution will include spiritual, ethical and social aspect as well as humanness and will move towards a just law, permanent peace, justice and moral and spiritual virtues and if we see that today, moral corruption is increasing, this is also an area to prepare for a transformative revolution.

We can never say that corruption should be encouraged but we say that when corruption reaches beyond a certain point, it will bring about the reaction of a moral revolution. When human beings find themselves before a dead end as a result of their undesirable sins, their heads hit a stone wall, and their lives are near ending, they will, at least, be prepared to accept such a principle that comes on behalf of a divinely inspired leader.

The Quran and the Manifestation of the Mahdi

In the great heavenly book, there are multiple verses which give the glad tidings of a great manifestation. We will only select one verse from among all of them to show this truth.

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ

"God has promised, to those among you who believe and work righteous deeds. that He Will, of a surety, grant them in the land, inheritance {***of power***) ***as He granted it to those before them; that He will establish in authority their religion – the one which He has chosen for them; and that He will change*** (***their state***)***, after the fear in which they*** (***lived***) ***to one of security and peace. They will worship me*** (***alone***) ***and not associate aught with Me. If they do reject faith after this they are rebellious and wicked."*** (***24:55***)

This verse well shows that finally the rule on the earth will be free of tyranny and oppressors and the righteous believers will rule over the universe.

Imam 'Ali ibn 'Husayn, in commentating upon this verse, said, “This group, I swear by God, is those very followers of our school. God, by means of a man from our family, will realize this promise and he is the Mahdi of this ummah.”

The Mahdi in the Traditions

The Traditions about the world rule and its realization along with peace and justice, by means of an individual of the family of the Holy Prophet who is called the Mahdi, is so great in the Sunni and Shi'ite source books that they are beyond counting.

And Traditions in relation to the twelfth Imam and the successor to the Holy Prophet, and the ninth child of Imam Husayn and the immediate child of Imam Hasan Askari is also extensive in Shi'ite sources.

In the first part, that is, the extent of the Traditions about the appearance of the Mahdi from Sunni sources, it is sufficient that the Sunni scholars, in their books, directly recall it. In a publication from the Rabitah al-'Alim Islami, the greatest center of learning in the Hijaz, it says, "He is the twelfth orthodox caliph which the Holy Prophet mentioned in the Traditions of sahabah and these Traditions of the Mahdi have been recorded by many of the Companions of the Holy Prophet of Islam."

Then, after naming the 20 Companions of the Prophet who have recorded the traditions of the Mahdi, it continues, "Other than them, there is a large group who have recorded these Traditions... some of the Sunni scholars, have written books on the appearance of the Mahdi among whom are Abu Na'im Isfahani, ibn Hujar Haitha, Shu Kani and Idris Maghrabi, Abu Abbas ibn Abdallah Mu'min." Then it adds, "A large group of the past and today of the Sunnis directly have accepted the succession of the Traditions of the Mahdi.

Then after mentioning the name of a group of them, it ends with these words.

“A large number of commentators and memorizers have directly said that the Traditions of the Mahdi are directly, clearly and decisively successive and the belief in the appearance of the Mahdi is obligatory. This is among the clear beliefs of the Sunnis and none but the ignorant and heretics will deny it.”

But as to Shi'ite Traditions

It is sufficient for us to know that hundreds of Traditions of the Prophet and the Imams have been recorded in this area so that it is beyond succession. Among the Shi’ites, it is considered to be obligatory and no individual can be among the religious people and be unaware of it and not accept the appearance of the Mahdi, his particularities, his type of rule and his program.

The great Shi'ite 'ulama, from the beginning until today, have written many books in this area and they have gathered Traditions in this area. As an example, we will present two or three Traditions and those who are interested in further study should read *Mahdi, Inqilabi Bozorg, Nuvid Imam* and *Imam* and the translation of the book al-Mahdi written by Sayyid Sadr al-din Sadr.

The Holy Prophet of Islam said, "If only one day remains from the life of this world, God will lengthen it so that the Mahdi will be sent from God to fill the earth, which is filled with tyranny and oppression, with

justice and equity."

In a Tradition of Imam Sadiq, we read, "When the time of the arising of the rule of the Redeemer comes, he will establish it upon justice. Tyranny and oppression, during his rule, will be eliminated; roads and passage ways, during his rule, will be safe and the earth will be blessed. Every right will be given to its rightful owner and he, among the people, will judge like David and Muhammad. At this time, the earth will reveal its treasures and it will reveal its blessings. No needy person will be found because all believers will be without need."

Note: We know that at the time of the occultation of the imam of time, may God hasten his appearance, the continuity of the line of Imamate and Wilayat is by means of that imam's successor who will rule in the name of Wilayat al-faqih (leadership of the religious jurisprudent).

Think and Answer

1. What is the difference between the thoughts of the believers and the materialists as to the future of the world?

2. Can one come to understand the manifestation of the Mahdi by means of primordiality? How?

3. Or we have intellectual proof for his appearance? Which proof?

4. What does the Quran say about this?

5. What does a study of the Traditions show?

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