

# Why Seek Islam through Muhammad's Family as Successors?

The Shī‘a have a great deal of evidence to support their point of view, so much so that the great scholar al-Ḥillī composed a book named *al-alfayn* ‘the two thousand’ in which he mentioned two thousand proofs for the Shī‘ite point of view many of which are sourced from Sunnite books and collections of traditions. In what follows, a few of these evidences will be mentioned:<sup>298</sup>

## The Evidence for the Successorship of Ali

The Messenger of Allāh Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdullāh (ṣ) alluded to and indicated, stated and reiterated time and again about the successorship of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.). For example:

### 1. The Warning of his close family

This occasion known as the day of warning has been documented by many top Sunnite scholars such as Ibn Ishāq, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Hātim, al-Ṭabarī and others.<sup>299</sup>

This happened at the beginning of the Prophet’s mission, before Islam appeared openly in Mecca after Allāh had revealed to the Prophet (S) the words: “And warn thy close family”<sup>300</sup> The Messenger of Allah (S) invited his relatives to the house of his uncle Abi Talib (a.s.) and there were forty men there more or less, including his uncles Abi Talib, ‘Amr, al-Abbas, and Abi Lahab. At the end of the discussions the Prophet said to them: ‘O sons of Abd al-Mutalib, I swear by Allah that I do not know of a young

man of the Arabs who has brought his people something better than that which I bring you - I bring you the best of this world and the next. Allāh has ordered me to invite you to this [Islam], so which of you will aid me in this affair of mine so that he will be my brother and my trustee and my successor amongst you?’

All were silent except for ‘Alī (a.s.) who was the youngest of them. He stood up and said: ‘O Prophet of Allāh, I will be your aid in this affair.’ Then the Messenger of Allāh (ṣ) put his hand on

‘Alī’s shoulder and said: ‘This is my brother and my trustee (*waṣīy*) and my successor (*khalīfa*) amongst you so hear him and obey him.’

## **2. The Day of Ghadīr**

The tradition of Ghadīr has been related by one hundred and twenty of the companions of the Messenger of Allāh (ṣ) and eighty-four of the generation after them (*al-tābi‘ūn*). The number of prominent traditionists who narrated this tradition exceeds three hundred and sixty.<sup>301</sup><sup>302</sup> Those who have written about this tradition in books from both the Sunni and Shī‘a schools number more than 166 people.

In brief, when the Messenger of Allāh Muḥammad (ṣ) returned from the final ‘farewell’ Ḥajj pilgrimage he reached a location named ‘*Ghadīr Khumm*’. There he halted the people and mounted

a pulpit in the noonday heat and delivered a long sermon in front of more than one hundred thousand people. During this speech he took hold of the hand of ‘Alī (a.s.) and said: ‘O people, Allāh is my master (*mawlā*) and I am the master of the believers and I have more authority over them than they do over their own selves. So whoever I am the master of then this man - ‘Alī - is his master. O Allāh, be allied with who is allied with him and the enemy of he who is his enemy. I will surely ask you, when we meet again [in the afterlife] about the two weighty matters and how you act towards them after I am gone - the greater weighty thing is the Qur’ān, the book of Almighty Allāh. It is a heavenly course one end of which is in the hand of Allāh and the other end is in your hands so hold firmly on to it and go not astray and do not take any substitute for it. And [secondly] my family, the people of my house, for the Subtle and All-Aware [Allāh] has informed me that they will never perish until they meet me at the well of Paradise.’<sup>303</sup>

Imam Aḥmad mentions in his *musnad*: ‘that the Prophet (ṣ) took the hand of ‘Alī (a.s.) and said to those present: ‘Do you not know that I have more authority over the believers than they do over their own selves?’ They said: ‘Indeed we do.’ He said: ‘Do you not know that I have more authority over every believer than he does over his own self?’ They said: ‘Indeed we do.’ Then he said: ‘Whoever I am his master (*mawlā*: lit. place of authority) then ‘Alī is his master. O Allāh, be allied to his allies and be an enemy to his enemies.’ The narrator continues: ‘Then ‘Umar went to him afterwards and said to him: ‘Congratulations O son of Abū Ṭālib, you have now become the master of every believing man and woman!’<sup>304</sup>

In his book *al-wilāya*, al-Ṭabarī relates that after this the Messenger of Allāh (ṣ) ordered that his companions greet ‘Alī in

acknowledgment of him as commander of the believers. Hence, the companions used to come to him and say to him ‘Peace be upon you O Commander of the Faithful (as)!’

In answer to those who say that the Prophet (ﷺ) did not nominate a successor we would say that this is not sensible or logical especially as the Prophet was the most intelligent and sensible of people. He would not ever leave Medina even for a few days without nominating someone to lead the community in his place so when it came to his death it is not possible that he should leave his community rudderless.<sup>305</sup>

### **3. The tradition of the ‘station’**

The tradition of the ‘**station**’ (*manzilah*), which has been mentioned by Imams Aḥmad and al-Nasā’ī and others, was when the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said to ‘Alī (a.s.): ‘Will you not be content for your station to me to be as that of Aaron to Moses except that there is no prophet to come after me?’<sup>306</sup> ‘I cannot go unless you are my successor (*khalīfa*).’<sup>307</sup>

And there are great many other traditions and evidences to this effect.

### **4. Successorship of other Imams from Prophet’s family**

The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) spoke, by the authority of Allāh, about the successorship of the Imams after him saying: ‘There will be twelve successors after me.’<sup>308</sup> This has been narrated by Abū Dāwūd, Muslim, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, and others.

The Prophet (ﷺ) nominated them and mentioned their names on many occasions as is mentioned in the book *yanābī‘ al-mawadda*<sup>309</sup> for example related from the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) in a tradition where someone asked him about the *awṣiyā’*

(trustees) those who would execute his will after him. The person asked him, “inform me of your *waṣī*.” The prophet said: ‘My executor is ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, and after him my two grandsons Ḥasan and Ḥusayn followed by nine Imams from the line of Ḥusayn.’ The man said: ‘O Muḥammad, name them!’ He said: ‘When Ḥusayn has gone there will be his son ‘Alī; when ‘Alī has gone there will be his son Muḥammad; when Muḥammad has gone there will be his son Ja‘far; when Ja‘far has gone there will be his son Mūsā; when Mūsā has gone there will be his son ‘Alī; when ‘Alī has gone there will be his son Muḥammad; when Muḥammad has gone there will be his son ‘Alī; when ‘Alī has gone there will be his son Ḥasan; when Ḥasan has gone there will be his son Muḥammad – the Mahdi – the Guided – the Ḥujjah – Proof of Allāh.’

## **5. The tradition of the two weighty things**

The Messenger of Allāh (ṣ) left two weighty things (*al-thaqalayn*) in his will - the Qur’ān and his family, and he ordered the Muslims to follow these two in a well known tradition which has been recorded by both Sunni and Shī‘a schools.

The Prophet (ṣ) said: ‘I am leaving with you the two weighty things - the book of Allāh and my family the people of my house (Ahl al-Bayt). As long as you adhere to these two you will never ever go astray after me.’<sup>310</sup>

In another tradition he said: ‘I am leaving with you two successors (*khalīfatayn*) - the book of Allāh which is a rope extending between heaven and earth, and my family the people of my house (Ahl al-Bayt). They will never separate until they join me at the well of Paradise.’<sup>311</sup>

He also said: 'I am leaving with you two successors - the book of Allāh and the people of my house. These two will never separate until they both join me at the well of Paradise.'<sup>312</sup>

He also said: 'I am leaving behind me two things so you will never go astray - the book of Allāh and my lineage. They will never separate until they join me at the well of Paradise.'<sup>313</sup>

He also said: 'I shall shortly die and I have left with you the two weighty things - the book of Allāh and the people of my house. You will never go astray with these two things.'<sup>314</sup>

## **6. The tradition of the Ark**

The Messenger of Allāh (ṣ) likened the people of his house to the ark of the prophet Noah (a.s.) saying: 'The similitude of the people of my house (Ahl al-Bayt) amongst you is as the ark of Noah amongst his nation - whoever boards it will be saved and whoever lags behind it will drown.'<sup>315</sup>

He also said: 'The stars protect the people of the earth from drowning. The people of my house protect my nation from disputing. If an Arab tribe goes against them they will fall into dispute and they will become the party of the devil.'<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> For more details refer to such works as *al-Murāja‘āt* by Sayyid Sharaf al-Din al-‘Āmili, and *al-Ghadir* by ‘allāmah Amini.

<sup>299</sup> See for example: The *tafsīr* of al-Ṭabarī: vol.19, p.74, Bulaq edition; also the *ta‘rīkh* of al-Ṭabarī: vol.2, p.319; and the *musnad* of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal: vol.1, p.111; and *al-kāmil fil-ta‘rīkh* of Ibn Athīr: vol.2, p.62; and *al-durr al-manthūr* of al-Suyūṭī: vol.5, p.97; and *ta‘rīkh dimashq* of Ibn ‘Asākir: vol.1, p.85, trads.138 & 140.

<sup>300</sup> The Holy Qur’ān: The Poets (26): 214.

<sup>301</sup> See, for example: *al-mustadrak* of al-Ḥākim: vol.3, pp.118, 127, & 613; and the *musnad* of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal: vol.1, pp.84, 88, 118, 119, & 152, and vol.4, pp.368 & 370; and *al-sunan al-kubrā* of al-Nasā‘ī: vol.5, pp.45, 130, 132, 134, 135, 136, & 154; and *al-ta‘rīkh al-kabīr* of al-Bukhārī: vol.4, p.193; and *ta‘rīkh baghdād* of al-Baghdādī: vol.8, p.289; and the *tafsīr* of Ibn Kothayr: vol.2, p.15; and *faḍā’il al-ṣaḥāba* of al-Nasā‘ī: vol.1 p.15; and the *ṣaḥīḥ* of Ibn Ḥabān: vol.15, p.176.

<sup>302</sup> See: *al-ṣawā‘iq al-muḥriqa*: p.25.

<sup>303</sup> See: *al-ṣawā‘iq al-muḥriqa*: p.43-44.

<sup>304</sup> See: the *musnad* of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal: vol.4. p.281, trad.18502, Egypt: Mu’assassa Qurṭuba.

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<sup>305</sup> The Messenger of Allāh (ṣ) charged ‘Alī with leadership of the Medinan community when he went to the battle of Tabūk. See: the *ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī: vol.5, p.129; and the *ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim: vol.3, p.360; and the *ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Tirmidhī: vol.5, p.301, trad.3808; and the *sunan* of Ibn Māja: vol.1, p.42, trads.115 & 121; and the *ta’rīkh* of al-Ṭabarī: vol.3, p.104; and *ta’rīkh dimashq*: vol.1, trad.30, 125, 148, 150, 251.

<sup>306</sup> See footnote 202 of this book.

<sup>307</sup> See, for example: *al-mustadrak* of al-Ḥākim: vol.3, p.143; and the *musnad* of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal: vol.1, p.330.

<sup>308</sup> See footnote 13 of this book.

<sup>309</sup> See: *yanābī‘ al-mawadda* of al-Qandūzī al-Ḥanafī: p.529. See also: *farā‘id al-simṭayn*: vol.2, p.132, trad.431; and *ghāyat al-marām*: p.742, trad.57.

<sup>310</sup> See footnote 20 of this book.

<sup>311</sup> See: the *musnad* of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal: vol.5, p.181, trad.21618.

<sup>312</sup> See: the *musnad* of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal: vol.5, p.189, trad.21697.

<sup>313</sup> See: *majma‘ al-zawā‘id* of Abū Bakr al-Haythamī: vol.9, p.162.

<sup>314</sup> See: *majma‘ al-zawā‘id* of Abū Bakr al-Haythamī: vol.9, p.162.

<sup>315</sup> See: *al-mustadrak* of al-Ḥākim: vol.2, p.373, and vol.3, p.163 (dār al-kotob al-‘ilmiyyah, Beirut). *Majma‘ al-zawā‘id*: vol.9, p.168. *kifāyat al-ṭālib*: p.378 (haydariyyah edition). *Al-mu‘jam al-ṣaghir*: vol.2, p.22. *ḥilyat al-awliya’*: vol.4, p.306. *al-jāmi‘ al-ṣaghir*: vol.2, p.132. *noor al-abṣār*: p.104 (al-maymaniyyah edition). *Al-manāqib* of al-Maghāzili: p.132, hadith 174-177. *‘uyoun al-akhbār* of Ibn Qutaybah: vol.1, p.211. *al-fath al-kabir*: vol. 1, p.414, and vol. 2, p.113. etc.

<sup>316</sup> See: *al-mustadrak* of al-Ḥākim: vol.3, p.149.

<sup>317</sup> The Holy Qur’ān: The Prophets (21): 92.

<sup>318</sup> *mīzān al-i‘tidāl*: vol.1, p.5.