

Islamic Factsheets

Shiite beliefs & Practices explained

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Chapter 1

Did the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) Appoint a Successor?

O Messenger, Proclaim what has been sent down to you from your Lord; and if you don't do it, you have not delivered His Message (at all); and Allah will protect you from the people[1]

The Shi'ah believe that the proclamation mentioned by the Qur'anic verse was fulfilled by the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) when he appointed Imam 'Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) as his successor on the day of Ghadir Khumm.

[1] Holy Qur'an (5:67)

What happened on the day of Ghadir Khumm?

Ghadir Khumm is a location some miles from Makkah on the road to Madinah. When the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) was passing by this place on 18 Dhu'l Hijja (10 March 632) on his return from the Farewell Pilgrimage, the verse "O Messenger, Proclaim what has been sent down..." was revealed. He therefore stopped to make an announcement to the pilgrims who accompanied him from Makkah and who were to disperse from that junction to their respective destinations. By the orders of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) a special pulpit made of branches of trees was erected for him. After the noon prayer the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) sat on the pulpit and made his last public address to the largest gathering before his death three months later.

The highlight of his sermon was when, taking Imam 'Ali (a.s.) by the hand, the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) asked his followers whether he was superior in authority (awla) to the believers themselves. The crowd cried out in one voice: "It is so, O Apostle of Allah".

He then declared:

"He of whom I am the master (mawla), of him 'Ali is also the master (mawla). O God, be the friend of him who is his friend, and be the enemy of him who is his enemy."

Immediately after the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) finished his speech, the following verse of the Qur'an was revealed:

Today I have perfected your religion and completed my favor upon you, and I was satisfied that Islam be your religion.[1]

After his speech, the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) asked everybody to give the oath of allegiance to 'Ali (a.s.) and congratulate him. Among those who did so was 'Umar bin al-Khattab, who said: "Well done Ibn Abi Talib! Today you became the master of all believing men and women."

An Arab, having heard of the event of Ghadir Khumm, came up to the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and said: "You commanded us to testify that there is no deity but Allah and that you are the Messenger of Allah. We obeyed you. You ordered us to perform the prayers five times a day and we obeyed. You ordered us to observe fasts during the month of Ramadhan and we obeyed. Then you commanded us to offer pilgrimage to Makkah and we obeyed. But you are not satisfied with all this and you raised your cousin by your hand and imposed him upon us as our master by saying 'Ali is the mawla of whom I am mawla.' Is this imposition from Allah or from you?" The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said:

"By Allah who is the only deity! This is from Allah, the Mighty and the Glorious."

On hearing this reply the man turned back and proceeded towards his she-camel saying: "O Allah! If what Muhammad said is correct then fling on us a stone from the sky and subject us to severe pain and torture." He had not reached his she-camel when Allah flung at him a stone which struck him on his head, penetrated his body and left him dead. It was on this occasion that Allah, the exalted, caused to descend the following verses:

A questioner questioned about the punishment to fall. For the disbelievers there is nothing to avert it, from Allah the Lord of the Ascent.[2]

[1] Holy Qur'an (5:3)

[2] Holy Qur'an (70:1-3)

Do the Sunni scholars consider this event authentic?

The number of Sunni authorities who narrate this event, both in detail and in summary, is mind boggling! This historic event was narrated by 110 Companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.), 84 Successors from the following generation and then by many hundreds of scholars of the Islamic world, from the first to the fourteenth century AH (seventh to twentieth century CE).

These statistics only include transmitters appearing in narrations recorded by Sunni scholars!

A very small selection of these sources is given below. Many of these scholars not only quote the Prophet's declaration but also call it authentic:

q alHakim alNaysaburi, alMustadrak `ala al-Sahihayn (Beirut), volume 3, pp. 109-110, p. 133, p. 148, p. 533. He expressly states that the tradition is sahih in accordance with the criteria of al-Bukhari and Muslim; alDhahabi has confirmed his judgment.

q alTirmidhi, Sunan (Cairo), vol. 5, p. 633

q Ibn Majah, Sunan, (Cairo, 1952), vol. 1, p. 45

q Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, Fath al-Bari bi Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari, (Beirut, 1988), vol. 7, p. 61

q Al-'Ayni, 'Umdat al-Qari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari, vol. 8, p. 584

q Ibn al'Athir, Jami` al'usul, i, 277, no. 65;

q Al-Suyuti, al-Durr al-Manthur, vol. 2, p. 259 and p. 298

q Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, Tafsir al-Kabir, (Beirut, 1981), vol. 11, p. 53

q Ibn Kathir, Tafsir Qur'an al-'Azim, (Beirut), vol. 2, p. 14

q Al-Wahidi, Asbab al-Nuzul, p. 164

q Ibn al-'Athir, Usd al-Ghaba fi Ma'rifat al-Sahaba, (Cairo), vol.3, p. 92

q Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, (Hyderabad, 1325), vol. 7, p. 339

q Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah, (Cairo, 1932), vol. 7, p. 340, vol. 5, p. 213

q Al-Tahawi, Mushkil al-Athar, (Hyderabad, 1915), vol. 2, pp. 308-9

q Nur al-Din al-Halabi al-Shafi'i, al-Sirah al-Halabiyya, vol. 3, p. 337

q Al-Zurqani, Sharh al-Mawahib al-Ladunniyya, vol. 7, p. 13

But doesn't the word mawla mean friend?

Although a huge number of Sunni scholars from all ages and from all points of view have confirmed the event and the historic words of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.), they have found it difficult to reconcile it with what actually happened after the demise of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.). It is outside the scope of this short document to detail those incidents. The important point is that many Sunni scholars claimed that the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) merely wished to declare 'Ali (a.s.) as a friend and helper to the Muslims!

There are many aspects to this event that show that it was much more significant. The revelation of the various verses of the Qur'an, the large gathering, the final stages of the Prophet's life, the confirmation by the people that the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) was superior in authority, the subsequent congratulations by 'Umar as well as many other factors which are difficult to cover in this short document, all point to the occasion as one of designation of successor by the Prophet (s.a.w.a.). It is evident that the word mawla was used in the sense of absolute authority after the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) including, but not restricted to, temporal power.

The Final Word

If there still remains doubt about the historic importance of this statement and the efforts of some people to cover it up, let this be the final word:

When Imam ‘Ali (a.s.), during the time of his caliphate and decades after the event of Ghadir, said to Anas bin Malik, the Companion of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.): “Why don’t you stand up and testify what you heard from the Messenger of Allah on the day of Ghadir?” He answered, “O Amir al-Muminin! I have grown old and do not remember.” Thereupon ‘Ali (a.s.) said: “May Allah mark you with a white spot (of leprosy) unconcealable with your turban, if you are intentionally withholding the truth.” And before Anas got up from his place he bore a large white spot on his face.”

q Ibn Qutaybah al-Dinawari, Kitab al-Ma’arif, (Cairo, 1353 AH), p. 251

q Ahmad bin Hanbal, al-Musnad, vol. 1, p. 119

q Abu Nu`aym al-’Isfahani ,Hilyat al-Awliya’, (Beirut, 1988), vol. 5, p. 27

q Nur al-Din al-Halabi al-Shafi’i, al-Sirah al-Halabiyya, vol. 3, p. 336

q Al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, Kanz al-’Ummal, (Halab, 1969-84), vol. 13, p. 131

Chapter 2

Who are these Twelve Successors Of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.)?

Narrated Jabir ibn Samura: I heard the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) saying: “There will be Twelve Commanders.” He then said a sentence which I did not hear. My father said, the Prophet added, “All of them will be from Quraysh.”[1]

The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said:

“The Religion (Islam) will continue until the Hour (Day of Resurrection), having Twelve Caliphs for you, all of them will be from Quraysh.”[2]

[1] Sahih al-Bukhari (English), Hadith: 9.329, Kitabul Ahkam; Sahih al-Bukhari, (Arabic), 4:165, Kitabul Ahkam

[2] Sahih Muslim, (English), Chapter DCCLIV, v3, p1010, Tradition #4483; Sahih Muslim (Arabic), Kitab al-Imaara, 1980 Saudi Arabian Edition, v3, p1453, Tradition #10

What the Sunni scholars say:

Ibn al-'Arabi: We have counted the Amirs after the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) as twelve. We found them as follows: Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, Ali, Hasan, Mu'awiyah, Yazid, Mu'awiyah ibn Yazid, Marwan, 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan, Yazid bin 'Abd al-Malik, Marwan bin Muhammad bin Marwan, As-Saffah... After this there were twenty-seven caliphs from the Bani Abbas.

Now if we consider twelve of them we can reach only till Sulayman. If we take the literal meaning we have only five of them and to these we add the four Righteous Caliphs, and 'Umar bin 'Abd al-'Aziz...

I cannot understand the meaning of this Hadith.[1]

Qadi 'Iyad al-Yahsubi: The number of Caliphs are more than that. To limit their number to twelve is incorrect. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) did not say that there will be only twelve and there is no scope for more. Hence it is possible that there can be more.[2]

Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti: There are only twelve Caliphs until the Day of Judgement. And they will continue to act on truth, even if they are not continuous. We see that from the twelve, four are the Righteous Caliphs, then Hasan, then Mu'awiyah, then Ibn Zubayr, and finally 'Umar bin 'Abd al-'Aziz. They are eight. Four of them remain. Maybe Mahdi, the Abbasid could be included as he is an Abbasid like 'Umar bin 'Abd al-'Aziz was an Umayyad. And Tahir 'Abbasi will also be included because he was a just ruler. Thus two more are yet to come. One of them is Mahdi, because he is from the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.).[3]

Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani: No one has much knowledge about this particular hadith of Sahih Bukhari.

It is not correct to say that these Imams will be present at one and the same time.[4]

Ibn al-Jawzi: The first Caliph of Bani Umayya was Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah and the last, Marwan Al-Himar. Their total is thirteen. 'Uthman, Mu'awiyah and ibn Zubayr are not included as they were among the Companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.).

If we exclude Marwan bin al-Hakam because of the controversy about his being a Companion or that he was in power even though Abdullah ibn Zubayr had the support of the people. Then we can get the figure of Twelve. ... When the Caliphate came out of the Bani Umayya, a great disturbance arose. Until the Bani Abbas established themselves. Hence, the original conditions had changed completely. [5]

Al-Nawawi: It could also mean that the twelve Imams will remain during the period of Islam's supremacy. The time when Islam will be a dominant religion. These Caliphs will, during their tenure, glorify the religion.[6]

Al-Bayhaqi: This number (twelve) is found till the period of Walid ibn 'Abd al-Malik. After this, there was chaos and disturbance. Then came the Abbasid dynasty. This report has increased the number of Imams. If we neglect some of their characteristics which came after the disturbance, then their number will be much higher.”[7]

Ibn Kathir: Whosoever follows Bayhaqi and agrees with his assertion that Jama'ah means those Caliphs who came intermittently till the time of Walid ibn Yazid ibn 'Abd al-Malik the transgressor comes under the purview of the tradition quoted by us criticising and denouncing such people.

And if we accept the Caliphate of Ibn Zubayr before 'Abd al-Malik the total shall be sixteen. Whereas their total should be twelve before 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz. In this method Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah will be included and not 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz. However, it is established that the majority of the 'ulama accept 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz as a truthful and a just Caliph.[8]

[1] Ibn al-'Arabi, Sharh Sunan Tirmidhi, 9:68-69

- [2] Al-Nawawi, Sharh Sahih Muslim, 12:201-202; Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, Fath al-Bari, 16:339
- [3] Al-Suyuti, Tarikh al-Khulafa, Page 12; Ibn Hajar al-Haytami, Al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqa Page 19
- [4] Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, Fath al-Bari 16:338-341
- [5] Ibn al-Jawzi, Kashf al-Mushkil, as quoted in Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, Fath al-Bari 16:340 from Sibt Ibn al-Jawzi
- [6] Al-Nawawi, Sharh Sahih Muslim ,12:202-203
- [7] Ibn Kathir, Ta'rikh, 6:249; Al-Suyuti, Tarikh al-Khulafa Page 11
- [8] Ibn Kathir, Ta'rikh, 6:249-250

Confused?

We need another Sunni scholar to finally clarify who these Twelve Successors, Caliphs, Amirs and Imams really are:

The famous scholar al-Dhahabi says in *Tadhkirat al-Huffaz*, vol. 4, p. 298, and Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani says in *al-Durar al-Kaminah*, vol. 1, p. 67 that Sadruddin Ibrahim bin Muhammad bin al-Hamawayh al-Juwayni al-Shafi'i was a great scholar of Hadith. The same Al-Juwayni reports from Abdullah ibn Abbas (r) from the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) who said, "I am the chief of the Prophets and Ali ibn Abi Talib is the chief of successors, and after me my successors shall be twelve, the first of them being Ali ibn Abi Talib and the last of them being Al Mahdi."

Al-Juwayni also narrates from Ibn 'Abbas (r.a.) from the Prophet (s.a.w.a.): "Certainly my Caliphs and my legatees and the Proofs of Allah upon his creatures after me are twelve. The first of them is my brother and the last of them is my (grand) son." He was asked: "O Messenger of Allah, who is your brother?" He said, "Ali ibn Abi Talib" Then they asked, "And who is your son?" The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) replied, "Al Mahdi, the one who will fill the earth with justice and equity like it would be brimming with injustice and tyranny. And by the One Who has raised me as a warner and a give of good tidings, even if a day remains for the life of this world, the Almighty Allah will prolong this day to an extent till he sends my son Mahdi, then he will make Ruhullah 'Isa ibn Maryam (a.s.) to descend and pray behind him (Mahdi). And the earth will be illuminated by his radiance. And his power will reach to the east and the west."

Al-Juwayni also narrates that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) informed: "I and Ali and Hasan and Husayn and nine of the descendants of Husayn are the purified ones and the inerrant." [1]

Amongst all the Islamic schools of thought, only the Shi'ah Imamiyyah Ithna 'Ashariyyah (Twelver Shi'ites) believe in these individuals as the Twelve rightful successors of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and obtain their understanding of Islam from them.

[1] Al-Juwayni, *Fara'id al-Simtayn*, Mu'assassat al-Mahmudi li-Taba'ah, Beirut 1978, p. 160

Chapter 3

Why Follow the Family of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.)?

Verily Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O People of the House (Ahl al-Bayt) and to purify you a thorough purifying.[1]

Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) was asked by his Companions:

“How should we invoke blessings for you?” ... He said:

“Say: ‘O Allah! Send Your blessings on Muhammad and the Family of Muhammad, as You sent Your blessings on Abraham and on the Family of Abraham, for You are the Most Praiseworthy, the Most Glorious.’”[2]

The Shi’ah believe that the twin legacy of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) is the Qur’an and the Ahl al-Bayt (specific members of his family). The Ahl al-Bayt are the source for the authentic Sunnah of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.). Only by obtaining instruction from both these sources can a Muslim hope to attain true guidance.

[1] Verse of Purification from Qur’an 33:33

[2] Sahih al-Bukhari, volume 4, book 55, number 589

Prophet Muhammad's Legacy

“I am about to answer the call (of death). Verily, I leave behind two precious things (thaqalayn) amongst you: the Book of Allah and my Ahl al-Bayt. Verily, the two will never separate until they come back to me by the side of the Pond.”

This authentic hadith from the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) is narrated by over 30 of his Companions and recorded by a large number of Sunni scholars. Some of the famous sources for this hadith include:

q al-Hakim al-Naysaburi, *al-Mustadrak `ala al-Sahihayn* (Beirut), volume 3, pages 109-110, 148, and 533). He expressly states that the tradition is sahih in accordance with the criteria of al-Bukhari and Muslim; al-Dhahabi has confirmed his judgement

q Muslim, *al-Sahih*, (English translation), book 031, numbers 5920-3

q al-Tirmidhi, *al-Sahih*, volume 5, pages 621-2, numbers 3786 and 3788; volume 2, page 219

q al-Nasa'i, *Khasa'is 'Ali ibn Abi Talib*, hadith number 79

q Ahmad b. Hanbal, *al-Musnad*, volume 3, pages 14, 17, 26; volume 3, page 26, 59; volume 4, page 371; volume 5, pages 181-2, 189-190

q Ibn al-Athir, *Jami' al-usul*, volume 1, page 277

q Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidayah wa al-nihayah*, volume 5, page 209. He quotes al-Dhahabi and declares this hadith to be sahih.

q Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim*, volume 6, page 199

q Nasir al-Din al-Albani, *Silsilat al-Ahadith al-Sahihah* (Kuwait: al-Dar al-Salafiyya), volume 4, pages 355-8. He lists many chains of narration that he considers reliable.

There are many more sources for this hadith than it is possible to list here.

Didn't the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) say "I leave behind the Book of God and my Sunnah?"

This is a popular misconception. The fact is that there is no reliable basis for this statement attributed to the Prophet's (s.a.w.a.) Final Sermon. It is completely absent from any of the six Sihah books!! The version in Malik's *Muwatta'*, Ibn Hisham's *Sirat Rasul Allah*, and from him in al-Tabari's *Ta'rikh*, all suffer from incomplete chains of narration with several links in the chain missing! The other versions that have a full chain of narration (isnad) - of which there are very few - all contain narrators that are unanimously considered to be highly unreliable by leading Sunni scholars of rijal. These remarkable facts can be confirmed by those interested in research by referring to the relevant books. Clearly, no one is suggesting that the Sunnah of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) should not be followed. As stated before, the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) wished for the Muslims to refer to his Ahl al-Bayt as a reliable, pure and inerrant source for his Sunnah.

What is so special about the Family of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.)?

When the verse “(O Muhammad) Say, ‘I do not ask for any reward for this (bringing of Allah’s message) except the love for the near kinship.’” (42:23) was revealed, the Muslims asked the Prophet: “Who are these near kin of yours whose love is obligatory upon us?” He replied, “‘Ali, Fatima, and their two sons.’”

q alHakim alNaysaburi, alMustadrak `ala al-Sahihayn, volume 2, page 444

q al-Qastallani, Irshad al-Sari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari, volume 7, page 331

q al-Suyuti, al-Durr al-Manthur, volume 6, pages 6-7

q al-Alusi al-Baghdadi, Ruh al-Ma’ani, volume 25, pages 31-2

The position of truthfulness and virtue of the Ahl al-Bayt was further confirmed by the Qur’an during the disputation with the Christians of Najran. When the verse was revealed “But whoever disputes with you in this matter after what has come to you of knowledge, then say: come let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our near people and your near people, then let us be earnest in prayer, and pray for the curse of Allah on the liars.” (3:61), the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) called ‘Ali, Fatima, al-Hasan and al-Husayn and said: ‘O Allah, these are my Family (Ahli)’.

q Muslim, al-Sahih, (English translation), book 031, number 5915

q alHakim alNaysaburi, alMustadrak `ala al-Sahihayn, volume 3, page 150. He states that it is sahih in accordance with the criteria of al-Bukhari and Muslim

q Ibn Hajar al-’Asqalani, Fath al-Bari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari, volume 7, page 60

q al-Tirmidhi, al-Sahih, kitab al-manaqib, volume 5, page 596

q Ahmad b. Hanbal, al-Musnad, volume 1, page 185

q al-Suyuti, History of Khalifas Who Took The Right Way, (London, 1995), page 176

Isn’t it enough to show respect towards the Ahl al-Bayt?

Is it sufficient to just show respect towards the Qur’an? Surely the Muslims have no choice but to follow it, as a source of Divine guidance, in all their affairs. The Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) left two things as legacy to the Muslims, and promised that they will never separate from each other until the Day of Judgement. By twinning the Ahl al-Bayt with the Qur’an, the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) was telling us to not only show respect towards them, but also to take explanations of Islamic doctrine, practices, hadith and tafsir from them.

“Behold! My Ahl al-Bayt are like the Ark of Noah. Whoever embarked on it was saved, and whoever turned away from it perished”

q alHakim alNaysaburi, alMustadrak `ala al-Sahihayn, volume 3, p. 151 and volume 2, page 343. He states that it is sahih in accordance with the criteria of Muslim

q al-Suyuti, al-Durr al-Manthur, volume 1, pages 71-72

q Ibn Hajar al-Makki, al-Sawa’iq al-Muhriqa, page 140. He states that this tradition has come down through many chains of narration that strengthen each other.

Who are included in the Ahl al-Bayt?

It has been shown that the Family of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) – interchangeably referred to as the Ahl al-Bayt, ‘Itrah and Aal - included his daughter Fatima al-Zahra’, her husband Imam ‘Ali, and their children Imams al-Hasan and al-Husayn (‘a). The members of this Family of five, with the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) at its head, were the ones alive at the time the Qur’anic verses regarding their virtue were being revealed to the Prophet (s.a.w.a.). However, nine other Imams from the descendants of Imam al-Husayn (‘a) are also in this chosen Family, the final one being Imam al-Mahdi (‘a). The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said:

q “I and ‘Ali and al-Hasan and al-Husayn and nine of the descendants of al-Husayn are the purified ones and the inerrant.” [al-Juwayni, Fara’id al-Simtayn, (Beirut, 1978), page 160. Note that al-Juwayni’s greatness as a scholar of hadith has been attested by al-Dhahabi in Tadhkirat al-Huffaz, volume 4, page 298, and also by Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani in al-Durar al-Kaminah, volume 1, page 67]

q “I am the chief of the Prophets and ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib is the chief of successors, and after me my successors shall be twelve, the first of them being ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib and the last of them being al-Mahdi.” [al-Juwayni, Fara’id al-Simtayn, page 160]

q “Al-Mahdi is one of us Ahl al-Bayt” and “al-Mahdi will be of my family, of the descendants of Fatima” [Ibn Majah, al-Sunan, volume 2, page 519, numbers 4085-6; Abu Dawud, al-Sunan, volume 2, page 207]

What about the Wives of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.)?

The verse of purification “Verily Allah only desires to...” was revealed to the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) in the house of his wife Umm Salama (may Allah be pleased with her); the Prophet called al-Hasan, al-Husayn, Fatima and ‘Ali, and he gathered them together and covered them with the mantle. Then he said, “O Allah, these are my Ahl al-Bayt, so keep away every impurity from the Ahl al-Bayt, and purify them with a perfect purification.” Umm Salama said, “Am I with them, O Apostle of Allah?” The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said, “You stay in your place, and you are virtuous.”

q al-Tirmidhi, al-Sahih, volume 5, pages 351 and 663

q al-Hakim al-Naysaburi, al-Mustadrak `ala al-Sahihayn, volume 2, page 416. He states that it is sahih in accordance with the criteria of al-Bukhari

q al-Suyuti, al-Durr al-Manthur, volume 5, page 197

The beginning of verse 33:33 and subsequent statements are addressed to the wives of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) as is evident from the feminine pronouns used. However, in the verse of purification, the gender changes to the masculine or mixed gender. This also shows that it was an independent revelation addressed to different individuals.

Chapter 4

Why Shi'ah?

And hold fast, all of you together, to the Rope of Allah and be not divided among yourselves.[1]

The term “Shi’ah” is an adjective used by Muslims who follow the Imams from the Family of the Prophet (Ahl al-Bayt). They use it not for reasons of sectarianism or for causing divisions amongst Muslims. They use it because the Qur’an uses it, the Prophet Muhammad used it, and the early Muslims used it - before words such as Sunni or Salafi ever came into existence.

[1] Holy Qur’an (3:103)

Shi'ah in the Qur'an

The word "Shi'ah" means "followers; members of a party". Allah has mentioned in the Qur'an that some of His righteous servants were Shi'ah of His other righteous servants.

And most surely Abraham was among the Shi'ah of him.[1]

And he (Moses) went into the city at a time when people (of the city) were not watching, so he found therein two men fighting, one being of his Shi'ah and the other being his enemy, and the one who was of his Shi'ah cried out to him for help against the one who was of his enemy.[2]

Thus Shi'ah is an official word used by Allah in His Qur'an for His high rank Prophets as well as their followers.

If one is a Shi'ah (follower) of the most righteous servants, then there is nothing wrong with being Shi'ah. On the other hand, if one becomes the Shi'ah of a tyrant or a wrong-doer, he shall meet with the fate of his leader. The Qur'an indicates that on the Day of Judgment people will come in groups, and each group would have its leader (Imam) in front of it. Allah says:

(Remember) the day when we will call every people with their Imam.[3]

On the Day of Judgment, the destiny of the "followers" of each group depends on the destiny of their Imam (provided that they really followed that Imam). Allah mentioned in the Qur'an that there are two types of Imams:

And We made them Imams who call to the fire, and on the Day of Resurrection they shall not be assisted. And We caused a curse to follow them in this world, and on the Day of Resurrection they shall be of those made to appear hideous

The Qur'an also reminds that there are Imams who are appointed by Allah as Guides for the mankind:

And We made of them Imams to guide by Our command when they were patient, and they were certain of Our communications.[4]

Certainly, the true followers (Shi'ah) of these Imams will be the real prosperous people on the Day of Resurrection.

[1] Holy Qur'an (37:83)

[2] Holy Qur'an (28:15)

[3] Holy Qur'an (17:71)

[4] Holy Qur'an (32:24)

Shi'ah in the Hadith

In the history of Islam, “Shi’ah” has been especially used for the followers of Imam ‘Ali (a.s.). This phrase is not something invented later! The first individual who used this term was the Messenger of Allah himself. When the following verse of the Qur’an was revealed:

(As for) those who believe and do good, surely they are the best of creatures.[1]

The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said to Ali:

“It is for you and your Shi’ah.”

He further said:

“I swear by the one who controls my life that this man (Ali) and his Shi’ah shall secure deliverance on the Day of Resurrection.”

q Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, Tafsir al-Durr al-Manthur, (Cairo) vol. 6, p. 379

q Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, Tafsir Jami’ al-Bayan, (Cairo) vol. 33, p. 146

q Ibn Asakir, Ta’rikh Dimashq, vol. 42, p. 333, p. 371

q Ibn Hajar al-Haythami, al-Sawa’iq al-Muhriqah, (Cairo) Ch. 11, section 1, pp 246-247

The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said:

“O Ali! (On the day of Judgment) you and your Shi’ah will come toward Allah well-pleased and well-pleasing, and there will come to Him your enemies angry and stiff-necked (i.e., their head forced up).”

q Ibn al-’Athir, al-Nihaya fi gharib al-hadith, (Beirut, 1399), vol. 4 p. 106

q al-Tabarani, Mu’jam al-Kabir, vol 1 p 319

q al-Haythami, Majma’ al-Zawa’id, vol. 9, number 14168

The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said:

“Glad tiding O Ali! Verily you and your Shi’ah will be in Paradise.”

q Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Fadha’il al-Sahaba, (Beirut) vol. 2, p. 655

q Abu Nu’aym al-Isbahani, Hilyatul Awliya, vol. 4, p. 329

q al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, Tarikh Baghdad, (Beirut) vol. 12, p. 289

q al-Tabarani, Mu’jam al-Kabir, vol. 1, p. 319

q al-Haythami, Majma’ al-Zawa’id, vol. 10, pp. 21-22

q Ibn ‘Asakir, Ta’rikh Dimashq, vol. 42, pp. 331-332

q Ibn Hajar al-Haythami, al-Sawa’iq al-Muhriqah, (Cairo) Ch. 11, section 1, p. 247

[1] Holy Qur’an (98:7)

But how could the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) use such a divisive term?

Was Prophet Abraham a sectarian? How about Prophet Noah and Prophet Moses? If Shi'ah was a divisive or sectarian term, neither Allah would use it for His high rank Prophets nor would Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) have praised them.

It should be emphasized that the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) never wished to divide Muslims into groups. He ordered all people to follow Imam Ali (a.s.) as his agent during his life time, and as his Successor and Caliph after him. Unfortunately those who heeded the Prophet's wish were few and were known as "Shi'ah of Ali". They were subjected to all types of discrimination and persecution, and suffered from the day that the Mercy to Mankind, Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.), passed away. If all the Muslims had obeyed what the Prophet wished, then there wouldn't exist any group or school within Islam. In a tradition, the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said:

"Shortly after me discord and hatred will arise among you, when such a situation arises, go and search out Ali because he can separate the Truth from falsehood"

q Ali Muttaqi al-Hindi, Kanz al-'Ummal, (Multan) vol. 2 p. 612, number 32964

Regarding the Qur'anic verse quoted earlier, some Sunni scholars narrated from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s.), the sixth Shi'ah Imam from the Family of the Prophet (Ahl al-Bayt), that:

"We are the Rope of Allah about whom Allah has said: And hold fast, all of you together, to the Rope of Allah and be not divided among yourselves

q al-Tha'labi, Tafsir al-Kabir, under commentary of verse 3:103

q Ibn Hajar al-Haythami, al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah, (Cairo) Ch. 11, section 1, p. 233

Thus, if Allah denounces sectarianism, He denounces those who separated from His Rope, and not those who hold fast to it!

Conclusion:

We have shown that the term Shi'ah has been used in Qur'an for the followers of the great servants of Allah, and in the traditions of the Prophet for the followers of Imam Ali (a.s.). One who follows such a divinely appointed Guide is safe from the disputes in the religion and has grasped the Strong Rope of Allah, and has been given the glad tidings of Paradise.

Chapter 5

Rafidi Shi'ah narrators in Sahih al-Bukhari

O you who believe! Be careful of your duty to Allah, and be with the truthful.[1]

The Shi'ah point of view was followed by many early scholars of Islam who were considered truthful and trustworthy, and their narrations of the hadith of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) were relied upon by famous Sunni scholars.

Listed below are a few of the Shi'ah scholars that al-Bukhari has relied upon in his Sahih. If we add to these the rest of them including those narrators in the Sahih of Muslim and the other four Sihah Sittah who followed the Shi'ah faith, then the number would increase significantly. To save space, reference is given to the section title (kitab) in each book for only one hadith by each person - the rest can be found using indices or hadith software.

The reader will notice the term Rafidi every now and then in the following biographies. The Sunni scholars generally define a Rafidi as a Shi'ah who openly criticizes or rejects the legitimacy of the Caliphs before 'Ali (a.s.).

[1] Holy Qur'an (9: 119)

‘Ubayd Allah b. Musa al-’Absi (died 213 AH)

Sahih Bukhari [kitab al-’iman] | Sahih Muslim [kitab al-’iman] | Sahih al-Tirmidhi [kitab al-salat] | Sunan al-Nasa’i [kitab al-sahw] | Sunan Abu Dawud [kitab al-taharah] | Sunan Ibn Majah [kitab al-muqaddamah]

q “Aboo Daawood said: He was an ardent Shee’ee, his ahaadeeth are allowable... .Ibn Mandah said: Ahmad ibn Hanbal used to point ‘Ubaydullaah out to the people, and he was well known for Rafd (extreme partisanship for ‘Alee), and he would not let anyone enter his house who was called ‘Mu’aawiyah’“.[1]

q “A pious person, one of the important Shi’ah scholars ... considered reliable by Yahya b. Ma’in, Abu Hatim said he was reliable, trustworthy ... al-’Ijli said: He was an authority on the Qur’an... ”[2]

[1] The Creed of the Imaam of Hadeeth al-Bukhari and of the Great Scholars from whom he narrated (Salafi Publications, UK, 1997), p. 89 from Al-Dhahabi, Siyar A’lam al-Nubala, vol. 9, pp .553-557

[2] Al-Dhahabi, Tadhkirat al-Huffaz under “‘Ubayd Allah b. Musa al-’Absi”

‘Abbad b. Ya’qub al-Rawajini (died 250 AH)

Sahih Bukhari [kitab al-tawhid] | Sahih al-Tirmidhi [kitab al-manaqib] | Sunan Ibn Majah [kitab ma ja’ fi al-jana’iz]

q He was a trustworthy Rafidi and his hadith is in (Sahih of) al-Bukhari.[1]

q Abu Hatim said: He was a shaykh, reliable. Ibn ‘Adi said: He used to denounce the Salaf. In him was extremism of Shi’ism. Salih b. Muhammad said: He used to denounce ‘Uthman. I heard him saying, “Allah is more just than that he would admit Talhah and al-Zubayr into heaven after they paid allegiance to ‘Ali and then fought him.” Ibn Hibban said: He was a Rafidi inviting (others to his belief). He narrated this hadith ..., “If you see Mu’awiyah on my pulpit, kill him!”[2]

[1] Ibn Hajar al-’Asqalani, Taqrib al-Tahdhib, under “‘Abbad b. Ya’qub al-Rawajani”

[2] Ibn Hajar al-’Asqalani, Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, under “‘Abbad b. Ya’qub al-Rawajani”

‘Abd al-Malik b. A’yan al-Kufi

Sahih al-Bukhari [kitab al-tawhid] | Sahih Muslim [kitab al-’iman] | Sahih al-Tirmidhi [kitab tafsir al-Qur’an] | Sunan al-Nasa’i [kitab al-’iman wa al-nudhur] | Sunan Abu Dawud [kitab al-buyu’] | Sunan Ibn Majah [kitab al-zakah]

q He was Rafidi Shi’i, one of (the people of) opinion.[1]

q He was Rafidi, reliable (saduq).[2]

q Al-’Ijli said: He was from Kufah, a Tabi’i (Successor), reliable. Sufyan said: ‘Abd al-Malik b. A’yan the Shi’i narrated to us, he was a Rafidi to us, a man of opinion. Hamid said: Those three brothers, ‘Abd al-Malik, Zurarah, and Hamran were Rawafid all of them. Abu Hatim said: He was one of the earliest to embrace Shi’ism, (he was) on the position of truthfulness, having good traditions, and his traditions are written.[3]

[1] Abu Ja’far al-’Uqayli, Du’afa al-’Uqayli, under “‘Abd al-Malik b. A’yan”

[2] Al-Mizzi, Tahdhib al-Kamal, under “‘Abd al-Malik b. A’yan”

[3] Ibn Hajar al-’Asqalani, Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, under “‘Abd al-Malik b. A’yan”

‘Abd al-Razzaq al-San’ani (died 211 AH)

Sahih Bukhari [kitab al-’iman] | Sahih Muslim [kitab al-’iman] | Sahih al-Tirmidhi [kitab al-taharah] | Sunan Nasa’i [kitab al-taharah] | Sunan Abi Dawud [kitab al-taharah] | Sunan Ibn Majah [kitab al-muqaddamah fi al-’iman]

q Ibn ‘Adi said: They (i.e. scholars) did not see any problem in his hadith except that they attributed Shi’ism to him... He was a man of honor ... he narrated traditions in praise of the Household of the Prophet (Ahl al-Bayt) and disparaging others... Mukhlid al-Shu’ayri said: I was with ‘Abd al-Razzaq when someone mentioned Mu’awiyah. ‘Abd al-Razzaq said: ‘Do not pollute our assembly by mentioning the descendant of Abu Sufyan!’.[1]

q Ibn ‘Adi narrated (a hadith) from ‘Abd al-Razzaq..., “If you see Mu’awiyah on my pulpit then kill him!”.[2]

[1] Al-Mizzi, Tahdhib al-Kamal, under “‘Abd al-Razzaq al-San’ani”

[2] Al-Dhahabi, Mizan al-’I’tidal, under “‘Abd al-Razzaq al-San’ani”

‘Awf b. Abi Jamilah al-’A’rabi (died 146 AH)

Sahih Bukhari [kitab al-’iman] | Sahih Muslim [kitab al-masajid wa mawadi’ al-salat] | Sahih al-Tirmidhi [kitab al-salat] | Sunan Nasa’i [kitab al-taharah] | Sunan Abi Dawud [kitab al-salat] | Sunan Ibn Majah [kitab al-salat]

q He was Rafidi but reliable... He was considered reliable by many scholars, and in him was Shi’ism.[1]

q ‘Awf was a Qadari, a Shi’i, a Shaytan![2]

q He was inclined towards Shi’ism. Ibn Ma’in said: reliable, Al-Nasa’i said: Very reliable.[3]

Q: But maybe al-Bukhari, Muslim, and others relied on these people without knowing their true belief?

These scholars devoted their lives to acquiring and transmitting traditions and studying the lives of the transmitters of these traditions. Most of them have books on Rijal (science of judging reliability of narrators) to their credit. Although their selectivity and choice of authorities and material clearly indicates a staunch Sunni standpoint, they still found themselves relying on those Shi’ah who they judged to be truthful. This is despite the fact that their Shi’ism is expressed with disapproval!

Thus, to say that al-Bukhari, Muslim, and others didn’t really know the belief of these Shi’ah narrators would be to call them incompetent in their field!!!

Q: But why didn’t they just rely on Sunni’s as authorities?

Perhaps they were not as bigoted and narrow-minded as some of our Sunni brethren who insist on associating the Shi’ah belief with all sorts of false allegations. It should be clear from the biographies listed that being critical of some Caliphs and Companions - based on incontrovertible historical evidence - was tolerated by Sunni scholars of previous generations.

Q: And do the Shi’ah rely on Sunni narrators in their books?

As long as the Sunni narrator is not known for his enmity towards the Household of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) (Ahl al-Bayt) and is considered truthful, he is accepted by Shi’ah traditionists.

[1] Al-Dhahabi, Siyar A’lam al-Nubala, under “‘Awf b. Abi Jamilah”

[2] Abu Ja’far al-’Uqayli, Du’afa al-’Uqayli, under “‘Awf b. Abi Jamilah”

[3] Al-Mizzi, Tahdhib al-Kamal, under “‘Awf b. Abi Jamilah”

Conclusion:

The fact is that a significant portion of the Sunni hadith literature would be lost if the material from the Shi'ah narrators was rejected. The Shi'ah faith has always been and remains a well-evidenced alternative to the Sunni point of view.

Chapter 6

Were All Companions Just and Truthful?

“O Believers, if an unrighteous person comes to you with information, you should verify it or else you might inflict harm on a people in ignorance and then end up regretting what you have done”[1]

The Shi’ah are devoted to all those Companions of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) who were loyal to his teachings in his life and remained so after his death. According to the Sunni view, even those who merely saw the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) for a few seconds are called Companions and are considered immune from criticism. This idea is not supported by the Qur’an or historical facts, and has led to much of the difference between the two schools of thought.

[1] Qur’an: Chapter 49, Verse 6

A Companion Defined

Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, the famous Sunni scholar, defined a Companion of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) as a person who met the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.), after having accepted Islam, and died while still being a Muslim. He included in this definition the following:

- q all those people who met the Prophet (s.a.w.a.), irrespective of the fact whether it was for a long period or a very brief one,
- q those who transmitted traditions from the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and those who did not,
- q those who fought along with the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and those who did not,
- q those who merely saw the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) but did not sit in a gathering with him,
- q as well as those who did not see him due to any excuse such as being blind.[1]

[1] Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, al-'Isabah fi Tamyiz al-Sahaba, (Beirut), vol. 1, p. 10

Were All Companions Just and Truthful?

The Ahl al-Sunnah are unanimous on the issue that all the Companions were just and trustworthy and that they were the best of the ummah. Many Sunni scholars have stated this belief, including:

q Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, *al-'Isabah fi Tamyiz al-Sahaba*, (Cairo), vol. 1, pp. 17-22

q Ibn Abi Hatim al-Razi, *al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dil*, (Hyderabad), vol. 1, pp. 7-9

q Ibn al-'Athir, *Usd al-Ghaba fi Ma'rifat al-Sahaba*, vol.1, pp. 2-3

This concept is difficult to accept in the light of indisputable evidence to the contrary. Consider the following example:

q "Az-Zubair told me that he quarrelled with an Ansari man who had participated in (the battle of) Badr in front of Allah's Apostle about a water stream which both of them used for irrigation. Allah's Apostle said to Az-Zubair, "O Zubair! Irrigate (your garden) first, and then let the water flow to your neighbor. "The Ansari became angry and said, "O Allah's Apostle! Is it because he is your cousin?" On that the complexion of Allah's Apostle changed (because of anger) and said (to Az-Zubair), "Irrigate (your garden) and then with-hold the water till it reaches the walls (surrounding the palms)." So, Allah's Apostle gave Az-Zubair his full right. Before that Allah's Apostle had given a generous judgment beneficial for Az-Zubair and the Ansari, but when the Ansari irritated Allah's Apostle he gave Az-Zubair his full right according to the evident law. Az-Zubair said, "By Allah ! I think the following Verse was revealed concerning that case: "But no by your Lord They can have No faith Until they make you judge In all disputes between them." (4.65)"[1]

According to the Sunni doctrine this Companion of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) would be beyond reproach as an authority on sunnah and his actions would be a model to be followed. This is despite the fact that this Companion not only refused to accept the judgment of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) but caused him grief resulting in the revelation of the Qur'anic verse.

Unfortunately, Islamic history is replete with many examples of such people who, although they meet the Sunni criteria to be called Companions, behaved in an un-Islamic way. This behavior was exhibited during the Prophet's (s.a.w.a.) life or afterwards or both!

[1] Sahih al-Bukhari (English translation), volume 3, book 49, number 871

Al-Walid bin ‘Uqbah

Is he then who is a believer like he who is a transgressor (fasiq)? They are not equal.[1]

Leading Sunni commentators tell us that the context of the revelation of this verse was an incident whereby the word “believer” referred to Imam ‘Ali b. Abi Talib and the “transgressor” (fasiq) referred to a Companion of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) called al-Walid bin ‘Uqba bin Abi Mu’ayt.

q al-Qurtubi, Tafsir, (Cairo, 1947), vol. 14, p. 105

q al-Tabari, Tafsir Jami’ al-Bayan, under commentary for this verse

q Al-Wahidi, Asbab al-Nuzul, (Dar al-Diyan li-Turath edition), p. 291

We have already seen the Qur’anic verse that forbids believers from blindly believing any news transmitted by a fasiq:

O ye who believe! if a wicked person (fasiq) comes to you with any news, ascertain the truth, lest ye harm people unwittingly, and afterwards become full of repentance for what ye have done.[2]

It is interesting to note that the exegesis of this verse indicates another incident where the same al-Walid lied about a matter that led to the revelation of this verse declaring him a transgressor (fasiq).

q Ibn Kathir, Tafsir Qur’an al-’Azim, (Beirut, 1987), vol. 4, p. 224

q al-Qurtubi, Tafsir, (Cairo, 1947), vol. 16, p. 311

q al-Suyuti and al-Mahalli, Tafsir al-Jalalayn, (Cairo, 1924), vol. 1, p. 185

q Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips, Tafseer Soorah al-Hujuraat, (Riyadh), pp. 62-63

As Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips says, “great caution must always be taken when dealing with information conveyed by people of doubtful character, those whose honesty has not yet been proven or by known sinners”. However, we find in the Sunni hadith collections traditions of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) on the authority of al-Walid! See, for example:

q Abu Dawud, Sunan, (1973), Kitab al-Tarajjul, bab fi’l-khuluq li’r-rijal, vol. 4, p. 404, hadith number 4181

q Ahmad bin Hanbal, al-Musnad, awwal musnad al-madaniyyin ajma’in, hadith 15784

Al-Walid’s wickedness did not end during the Prophet’s (s.a.w.a.) time. He was appointed governor of al-Kufah by ‘Uthman, the third caliph, where his wickedness continued. Once he led the morning prayers in a condition of intoxication and prayed four instead of two units. He was subsequently given the punishment on the orders of ‘Uthman. This incident is mentioned in countless sources including some mentioned above, as well as:

q Sahih al-Bukhari (English translation), volume 5, book 57, number 45; volume 5, book 58, number 212

q Al-Tabari, Ta’rikh, (English translation: History of al-Tabari, The Crisis of the Early Caliphate), volume XV, p.120

Sunni legal experts use precisely this precedent of the wicked (fasiq) Companion al-Walid to legalise praying behind a person who is an open sinner!!

q ‘Ali al-Qari al-Harawi al-Hanafii, Sharh Fiqh al-Akbar, under chapter ‘it is permissible to pray behind a good person or a wicked person’, p. 90

q Ibn Taymiyyah, Majmu’ Fatawa, (Riyadh, 1381), vol. 3, p. 281

[1] Qur’an: Surah al-Sajdah, verse 18

[2] Surah al-Hujurat, verse 6

But why not let bygones be bygones?

If we uncover the faults of Companions such as al-Walid, it is not because of any perverse desire to backbite. Rather, it is because Muslims need to be very careful of where they get their information from regarding the tenets of Islam and the sunnah of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.). This can only be determined by paying careful attention to the lives of all the Companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.), and letting their own deeds speak for their character and trustworthiness. After all, the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) has already warned us:

q “I shall arrive at the Pool before you, and he who passes by me will drink, and whoever drinks from it will never feel thirsty. There will come to me people that I know and they know me, but we shall be separated, then I shall say, ‘My companions’. An answer shall come, ‘You do not know what they did after you’. Then I shall say, ‘Away with those who changed after me.’”[1]

[1] Sahih al-Bukhari (English translation), volume 8, book 76, number 585

The Shi'i View on the Companions

The Shi'ah love the sincere Companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) who are praised in the Qur'an. This praise does not cover individuals such as al-Walid bin 'Uqbah who, despite meeting the Sunni criteria of Companionship, cannot be considered role models or reliable transmitters of the sunnah. The Shi'ah therefore do not believe in the universal integrity of all Companions but examine the history of each Companion to discover his or her adherence to the Prophetic message. Of course there were many such Companions including but not restricted to 'Ammar, Miqdad, Abu Dharr, Salman, Jabir, and Ibn 'Abbas. We conclude with an extract from a supplication by the fourth Shi'ah Imam Zayn al-'Abidin (a.s.) in praise of these noble Companions, may Allah be well pleased with them:

O God, and as for the Companions of Muhammad specifically, those who did well in companionship, who stood the good test in helping him, responded to him when he made them hear his messages' argument, separated from mates and children in manifesting his word, fought against fathers and sons in strengthening his prophecy, and through him gained victory; those who were wrapped in affection for him, hoping for a commerce that comes not to naught in love for him; those who were left by their clans when they clung to his handhold and denied by their kinsfolk when they rested in the shadow of his kinship; forget not, O God, what they abandoned for Thee and in Thee, and make them pleased with Thy good pleasure for the sake of the creatures they drove to Thee while they were with Thy Messenger, summoners to Thee for Thee.[1]

[1] Imam Zayn al-'Abidin , Sahifa al-Kamilah, (English translation, London, 1988), p. 27

Chapter 7

Do the Shi'ah Believe in a Different Qur'an?

Surely We have revealed the Reminder (Qur'an) and We most surely are its Guardian.[1]

The Shi'ah are frequently accused of belief in Tahrif in Qur'an which means believing that the Qur'an has been tampered with and is not the same as the one revealed to the Prophet (s.a.w.a.).

[1] Qur'an: Chapter 15, Verse 9

THIS IS not true !!!

All great Twelver Shi'ah scholars from the earliest period to the present century have believed in the complete preservation of the Qur'an. Some famous early Shi'ah scholars who have clearly stated this belief in their books include:

- q Shaykh al-Saduq (d. 381 AH), Kitabu'l-Itiqadat, (Tehran, 1370) p. 63.
- q Shaykh al-Mufid (d. 413 AH), Awa'ilu l-Maqalat, pp. 55-6;
- q Sharif al-Murtada (d. 436 AH), Bahru 'l-Fawa'id (Tehran, 1314) p. 69;
- q Shaykh at-Tusi (d. 460 AH), Tafsir at-Tibyan, (Najaf, 1376), vol 1 p. 3;
- q Shaykh at-Tabrasi (d. 548), Majma'u 'l-Bayan, (Lebanon), vol. 1 p. 15.

Some of the later scholars who spelt out the same views include:

- q Muhammad Muhsin al-Fayd al-Kashani (d. 1019 AH), Al-Wafi, vol. 1 pp. 273-4, and al-'Asfa fi Tafsir al-Qur'an, p. 348;
- q Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi (d. 1111 AH), Bihar al-'Anwar, vol. 89 p. 75

This belief has continued uninterrupted upto the present time. Shi'ah scholars of this century who have reiterated the belief that the Qur'an is completely protected and unchanged include such famous names as Sayyid Muhsin al-Amin al-'Amili (d. 1371 AH); Sayyid Sharaf al-Din al-Musawi (d. 1377 AH.); Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Kashif al-Ghita' (d. 1373 AH); Sayyid Muhsin al-Hakim (d. 1390 AH); 'Allamah al-Tabataba'i (d. 1402 AH); Sayyid Ruhullah al-Khumayni (d. 1409 AH); Sayyid Abu al-Qasim al-Khu'i (d. 1413 AH) and Sayyid Muhammad Rida al-Gulpaygani (d. 1414 AH).

This, of course, is not an exhaustive list.

Q: But what about the Shi'ah before these scholars, didn't they all believe in tahrif?

Not at all! Consider the example of 'Ubaydullah b. Musa al-'Absi (120-213 AH), a devoted Shi'ah scholar whose narrations from the Imams can be found in the famous Shi'ah hadith collections such as al-Tahdhib and al-Istibsar. Now let's see what some Sunni scholars have to say about him:

q "... a pious person, one of the important Shi'ah scholars ... he was considered reliable by Yahya b. Ma'in, Abu Hatim said he was reliable, trustworthy ... al-'Ijli said that he was an authority on the Qur'an..."[1]

q "... he was an imam in fiqh and hadith and Qur'an characterized by piety and righteousness, but he was one of the chiefs of the Shi'ah."[2]

None of these Sunni scholars would have praised him for his knowledge of the Qur'an if they thought he believed in a different Qur'an!!!

And 'Ubaydullah was considered so trustworthy, despite being a Shi'ah, that the famous Sunni traditionists al-Bukhari and Muslim as well as many others narrated scores of traditions from him in their hadith collections![3]

Q: Don't the Shi'ah believe in Mushaf Fatimah which is three times the size of the Qur'an?

The Qur'an is a Mushaf (book), but any book is not necessarily the Qur'an! There is no Qur'an of Fatimah! Mushaf Fatimah was a book written or dictated by Fatimah (a.s.) after the Prophet's (s.a.w.a.) death. It is not a part of Qur'an and has nothing to do with Allah's commandments or legal rulings.

Q: But are there not traditions in Shi'ah collections that mention verses of the Qur'an containing extra words than what we have today?

There are some instances where extra words are indicated only by way of explanation, they do not imply that the original Qur'anic text is being distorted. This happens in both Shi'ah and Sunni sources. Consider the following two examples, both from famous Sunni commentaries of the Qur'an:

q "Ubayy b. Ka'b used to read '... then as to those whom you profit by for an appointed period give them their dowries as appointed...' (Qur'an Chapter 4, Verse 24) and this was also the recitation

of Ibn ‘Abbas.”[4]

A footnote in Ibn Kathir’s Tafsir explains that the additional words indicated above, which are not part of the Qur’an, were recited by these Companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) only by way of tafsir and explanation.

q “Ibn Mas’ud said: In the days of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) we used to recite, ‘O our Messenger (Muhammad) deliver what has been sent down to you from your Lord that ‘Ali is the master of the believers if you do not, then you have not delivered His message.’ (Qur’an Chapter 5, Verse 67)[5]

In this case as well, the part in italics is certainly not part of the Qur’anic text, however the Companion Ibn Mas’ud used to recite it in this way to explain the context of its revelation.

Q: But what about those traditions that say a number of revealed verses are no longer part of the Qur’an?

The Shi’ah do not believe in the immunity of any writer, commentator or narrator from mistakes, and, therefore, they do not take any collection of hadith to be completely valid and correct. The only book which is completely immune from any mistake is the Qur’an. These traditions are mostly considered as weak or interpreted as referring to non-Qur’anic revelation.

q It is interesting to point out that there are numerous traditions reported in Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim which allege that many verses of Qur’an are missing. [Al-Bukhari, Al-Sahih, vol. 8 p. 208; Muslim, Al-Sahih, vol. 3 p. 1317]

q Not only that, these Sunni reports allege that two chapters from the Qur’an are missing with one of them similar to the Chapter of al-Bara’ah (chapter 9) in length!!! [Muslim, Al-Sahih, Kitab al-Zakat, vol. 2 p. 726]

q Some Sunni traditions even claim that the Chapter al-Ahzab (chapter 33) was as lengthy as the Chapter of al-Baqarah (chapter 2)!!! The Chapter of al-Baqarah is the biggest Chapter of the Qur’an. The traditions in Sahih al-Bukhari and Muslim even detail some of the missing verses.[6]

Yet, fortunately the Shi’ah never accuse the Sunni brothers and sisters of believing that the Quran is incomplete. We say that either these Sunni reports are weak or fabricated.

[1] Al-Dhahabi, Tadhkirat al-Huffaz (Haydarabad, 1333 AH), vol. 1 p. 322

[2] Ibn al-’Imad al-Hanbali, Shadharat al-Dhahab (Cairo, 1350 AH), vol. 2 p. 29

[3] The Creed of the Imaam of Hadeeth al-Bukhari (Salafi Publications, UK, 1997), pp. 87-89

[4] Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, Mafatih al-Ghayb (Beirut, 1981), vol. 9 p. 53; Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur’an al-’Azim (Beirut, 1987), vol. 2 p. 244

[5] Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, Durr al-Manthur, vol. 2 p. 298

[6] Al-Bukhari, Al-Sahih, vol. 8 p. 208

Conclusion:

“It is our belief that the Qur’an which Allah revealed to His Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) is (the same as) the one between the two covers (daffatayn). And it is that which is in the hands of the people, and is not greater in extent than that... And he who asserts that we say that it is greater in extent than this (the present text) is a liar.”[1]

[1] As-Saduq, Kitabu’l-Ītiqadat (Tehran: 1370 AH) p. 63; English translation, The Shi’ite Creed, tr. A.A.A. Fyzee (Calcutta: 1942) p. 85

Chapter 8

Why do the Shi'ah prostrate on Turbah?

Therefore celebrate the praises of thy Lord, and be of those who prostrate themselves in adoration[1]

The Shi'ah Muslims prefer to prostrate on a small block of earth, called a Turbah, which is usually made from clay from the land of Karbala in Iraq.

According to the Shi'ah Ja'fari fiqh - which is one of the five main schools of law in Islam - prostration must be performed on pure earth or what grows on it, provided that it is not eaten or worn. This includes dust, stone, sand and grass, provided that it is not a mineral. Prostration on paper is permitted, because it is made of a material which grows on earth, but not cloth or carpets.

The legal scholars of all the Sunni schools of law concur regarding the validity of prostration on earth and that which grows on it.

[1] Holy Qur'an (15:98)

Did the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and his Companions ever do this?

Praying on the earth was certainly the practice of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and those around him.

q Narrated Abu Sa'id al-Khudri: I saw Allah's Apostle prostrating in mud and water and saw the mark of mud on his forehead.[1]

q Narrated Anas bin Malik: We used to pray with the Prophet in scorching heat, and if someone of us could not put his face on the earth (because of the heat) then he would spread his clothes and prostrate over them.[2]

According to this hadith only in exceptional circumstances would the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and his Companions prostrate on cloth.

The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) also used to have a Khumra on which he would put his forehead for prostration.

q Narrated Maymuna: Allah's Apostle used to pray on a Khumra.[3]

q According to al-Shawkani, a famous Sunni scholar, more than ten Companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) have narrated traditions mentioning his prostration on a Khumrah. And he lists all the Sunni sources recording these traditions which include Sahih Muslim, Sahih al-Tirmidhi, Sunan Abu Dawud, Sunan al-Nasa'i and many others.[4]

[1] Al-Bukhari, Sahih (English translation), vol. 1, book 12, no. 798; vol. 3, book 33, no. 244

[2] Al-Bukhari, Sahih (English translation), vol. 2, book 22, no. 299

[3] Al-Bukhari, Sahih (English translation), vol. 1, book 8, no. 378

[4] Al-Shawkani, Nayl al-Awtar , Chapter of Prostration on the Khumrah, vol. 2, p. 128

So what is a khumrah?

q a small mat sufficient just for the face and the hands while prostrating during prayers.[1]

Ibn al-'Athir, another famous Sunni scholar, in his Jami al-'Usul has written:

q “Khumra is [like that] upon which the Shi'ah of our time perform their prostrations.”[2]

q “Khumra is a small mat made from palm fibres or other material.... and it is like that which the Shi'ah use for prostration.”[3]

[1] Al-Bukhari, Sahih (English translation), vol. 1, book 8, no. 376 (as explained by the translator in paranthesis)

[2] Ibn al-'Athir, Jami' al-Usul, (Cairo, 1969), vol. 5, p. 467

[3] Talkhis al-Sihah, p. 81

But why the earth of Karbala?

The special characteristics of the soil of Karbala (Iraq) were known and it was an object of special attention during the time of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) as well as in later times:

q Umm Salama says: I saw Husayn (a.s.) sitting in the lap of his grandfather, the Prophet (s.a.w.a.), who had a red block of soil in his hand. The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) was kissing the dust and weeping. I asked him what that soil was. The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said: “Gabriel has informed me that my son, this Husayn, will be murdered in Iraq. He has brought this earth for me from that land. I am weeping for the suffering that will befall my Husayn.” Then the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) handed the dust to Umm Salama and said to her: “When you see this soil turn into blood, you will know that my Husayn has been slaughtered.” Umm Salama kept the soil in a bottle and kept watch over it until she saw on the day of Ashura, 10th of Muharram 61 A.H., that it turned to blood. Then she knew that Husayn bin Ali (a.s.) had been martyred.[1]

q ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, passed by Karbala after the battle of Siffin. He took a handful of its soil and exclaimed: ‘Ah, ah, on this spot some men will be slain, and will enter Paradise without reckoning!’[2]

[1] al-Hakim, al-Mustadrak, vol. 4, p. 398; al-Dhahabi, Siyar a`lam al-nubala’, vol. 3, p. 194; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa`l-nihayah, vol. 6, p. 230; al-Suyuti, Khasa’is al-kubra, vol. 2, p. 450; Jam` al-Jawami, vol. 1, p. 26; Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, Tahdhib al-tahdhib , vol. 2, p. 346

[2] Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, Tahdhib al-tahdhib , vol. 2, p. 348

Why is it compulsory to prostrate on the clay from Karbala?

It is not! But the Shi'ah prefer to prostrate on the earth of Karbala because of the importance given to it by the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and the Imams from his Family (Ahl al-Bayt). After the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (a.s.), his son Imam Zayn al-'Abidin (a.s.) picked some up, declared it to be sacred dust, and kept it in a bag. The Imams (a.s.) used to perform prostrations on it and make a tasbih out of it, and recited Allah's praises on it.[1]

They also encouraged the Shi'ah to perform prostrations on them, with the understanding that it was not compulsory, but with a view to achieving greater recompense. The Imams (a.s.) insisted that prostration before Allah must be on clean earth only and that it was preferable if it was performed on that earth of Karbala.[2]

The Shi'ah for a long time have kept this earth with them. Then, fearing that it might be desecrated, they kneaded it into small tablets or pieces, which are now called mohr or Turbah. During prayers we prostrate on it not as a compulsory act but in view of its special nature. Otherwise, when we have no pure soil with us, we prostrate on clean earth, or something that originates from it.

It is a pity that some people maliciously insist that the Shi'ah worship stones or that they worship Husayn (a.s.). The truth is that we worship Allah alone by prostrating on the Turbah, not to it. And we never worship Imam Husayn, Imam Ali, or the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.). We worship only Allah, and it is in accordance with Allah's order that we perform prostration only on pure earth.

[1] Ibn Shahrashub, al-Manaqib, vol. 2, p. 251

[2] al-Tusi, Misbah al-Mutahajjad, p. 511; al-Saduq, Man la yahduruhu'l faqih, vol. 1, p. 174

Conclusion:

This is the reason why Shi'ah Muslims carry small tablets, usually made from the earth of Karbala, which enables them to do prostration on this highly recommended object and to follow the sunnah of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.).

Chapter 9

Why do the Shi'ah avoid Tarawih congregations?

And during a part of the night, engage in the night prayer (Tahajjud) beyond what is incumbent on you; perhaps your Lord will raise you to a position of great glory.[1]

Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) said regarding the month of Ramadan:

“Whoever establishes the night prayer (Qiyam al-Layl) in it out of sincere Faith and hope for reward from Allah, all of his previous sins will be forgiven.”[2]

The Ahl al-Sunnah generally consider it a sunnah to offer specific evening prayers – the Tarawih – in congregation during the holy month of Ramadan. The Shi'ah, while being commended to offer similar nawafil (recommended prayers), are not allowed to offer them in congregation. This practice of the Shi'ah is in accordance with the orders and sunnah of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.).

Brothers and sisters from the Ahl al-Sunnah come together in Tarawih congregations during the early evenings of the month of Ramadan. They stand in prayer and recite the Qur'an, and may Allah (swt) reward them for their sincere intentions and actions. However, the word Tarawih was never mentioned by the Qur'an or the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) to describe these extra congregational prayers during the evenings of the month of Ramadan. It is a term developed later amongst Muslims. Linguistically, the word “Tarawih” is the plural of the word ‘tarwiha’ referring to the short period of rest between every four units of the prayer. Later, the entire congregational prayers in the nights of Ramadan were called by this term.

[1] Holy Quran (17:79)

[2] Sahih al-Bukhari, volume 3, book 32, number 226

Origins of Tarawih as a Congregational Prayer

It is a well-established fact that the Tarawih, as a congregational night prayer of Ramadan, owes its existence to the order of the second caliph, 'Umar b. al-Khattab.

q Narrated Abu Hurayra: Allah's Apostle said, "Whoever prayed at night the whole month of Ramadan out of sincere faith and hoping for a reward from Allah, then all his previous sins will be forgiven." Ibn Shihab (a sub-narrator) said, "When Allah's Apostle died, the people continued observing that (i.e. Nawafil offered individually, not in congregation), and it remained as such during the Caliphate of Abu Bakr and in the early days of 'Umar's Caliphate." 'Abdur Rahman bin 'Abdul Qari said, "I went out in the company of 'Umar bin Al-Khattab one night in Ramadan to the mosque and found the people praying in different groups – a man praying alone or a man praying with a little group behind him. Then, 'Umar said, 'In my opinion I would better collect these (people) under the leadership of one Qari (reciter) [i.e. let them pray in congregation!]' So, he made up his mind to congregate them behind Ubayy bin Ka'b. Then, on another night, I went again in his company and the people were praying behind their reciter. On that, 'Umar remarked, 'What an excellent BID'A (INNOVATION in religion) this is; but the prayer which they do not perform, but rather sleep at its time, is better than the one they are offering.' He meant the prayer in the last part of the night." [1]

q "It was called BID'AH because the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) did not use to pray it in congregation, and neither was it prayed like that in the time of al-Siddiq (referring to the first Caliph), nor in the early part of night or with these number of units." [2]

q "'Umar was the first who set the example of the night prayer of Ramadan, the Tarawih, and gathered people for it, and instructed different regions regarding it. This was during the month of Ramadhan of the year 14 (hijri). He appointed for the people reciters of the Qur'an who led the Tarawih prayer for men and women." [3]

[1] Sahih al-Bukhari, volume 3, book 32, number 227

[2] al-Qastallani, Irshad al-Sari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari, volume 5, page 4; al-Nawawi, Sharh Sahih Muslim, volume 6, page 287

[3] Ibn Sa'd, Kitab al-Tabaqat, volume 3, page 281; al-Suyuti, Tarikh al-Khulafa', page 137; al-'Ayni, 'Umdat al-Qari fi Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari, volume 6, page 125

Congregation in Mosque or Individually at Home?

Offering the optional prayers individually inside the home and away from congregation in mosque is highly recommended by the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) as it brings more blessings for the home and family and helps in the Islamic upbringing of children.

q The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said: “O people! Perform your prayers at your homes, for the best prayer of a person is what he performs at his home, except the compulsory (congregational) prayer.”[1]

q Once Abdullah bin Mas’ud asked the Prophet (s.a.w.a.): “Which is better; to pray in my house or in the mosque?” The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) replied: “Do you not see how near to the mosque my house is? To pray in my house is more beloved to me than to pray in the mosque except for the obligatory prayers.”[2]

q Narrated Zayd bin Thabit: Allah’s Apostle (s.a.w.a.) made a small room (with a palm leaf mat). He (s.a.w.a.) came out (of his house) and prayed in it. Some men came and joined him in his prayer. Then again the next night they came for the prayer, but the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) delayed and did not come out to them. So they raised their voices and knocked the door with small stones (to draw his attention). He came out to them in a state of anger, saying, “You are still insisting (on your deed) that I fear this prayer might become obligatory on you. So, O you people! offer this prayer at your homes, for the best prayer of a person is the one which he offers at home, except the compulsory (congregational) prayer.”[3]

[1] Sahih al-Bukhari, volume 9, book 92, number 393; al-Nasa’i, Sunan, volume 3, p. 161, p. 198

[2] Ibn Majah, Sunan, volume 1, page 439, number 1378

[3] Sahih al-Bukhari, volume 8, book 73, number 134

Didn't the Shi'ah Imams Pray Tarawih?

Imam al-Baqir ('a) and Imam al-Sadiq ('a) were asked about the permissibility of praying optional prayers in congregation during the nights of Ramadan. They both narrated a tradition of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) where he said:

q "Verily, the offering of nafila (recommended prayers) in congregation during the nights of Ramadan is an INNOVATION... O people! do not say nafila prayers of Ramadan in congregation... Without doubt, performing a minor act of worship which is according to the sunna is better than performing a major act of worship which is an innovation." [1]

This view of the Imams from the Prophet's progeny is confirmed by a scholar well-known amongst the Ahl al-Sunnah who writes:

q "The progeny of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) say that congregation in Tarawih is an INNOVATION". [2]

[1] al-Hurr al-`Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi`ah, volume 8, page 45

[2] al-Shawkani, Nayl al-Awtar, volume 3, page 50

What do Sunni scholars say about praying Tarawih at home?

“The scholars agree on its merit, but they differ on whether it is better to pray it in one’s home individually or in congregation in a mosque.” Al-Nawawi, the famous commentator of Sahih Muslim, then goes on to list scholars who support the second and dominant view. He then writes: “Malik, Abu Yusuf, some Shafi’i scholars, and others say that it is better to pray it individually in the home”.[1]

[1] al-Nawawi, Sharh Sahih Muslim, volume 6, page 286

Conclusion

The Shi'ah always aspire to pray the night prayer – called the Tahajjud or Qiyam al-Layl or Salat al-Layl – in the last part of the nights of every month, particularly during Ramadan. They are also commended to offer additional nawafil prayers during the nights of Ramadan. However, they offer these optional prayers mostly in their homes and never in congregation. By doing so they abide by the Qur'an and the sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.).

Why do the Shi'ah Combine Prayers?

“Undertake the prayer at the time of the declining sun to the darkness of the night and the morning recitation; for indeed the morning recitation is witnessed”[1]

The Shi'ah acknowledge the five obligatory daily prayers. However, they frequently combine the Zuhr and 'Asr prayers by offering them consecutively during the time period defined by the start of Zuhr and the end of 'Asr. They also consider it permissible to combine the Maghrib and 'Isha prayers in a similar manner. This practice is in complete agreement with the Qur'an as well as authentic traditions from the Prophet (s.a.w.a.).

The Sunni schools of law (fiqh) - with the exception of the Hanafi school - allow the combining of the obligatory prayers (al-jam` bayn al-salatayn) in the case of rain, travel, fear, or other emergencies. The Hanafi school of law prohibits the combination of the daily prayers at any time, with the exception of the prayers at Al-Muzdalifa during the Hajj. The Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali schools of law all agree on the permissibility of combining the prayers when one is travelling, but have differences of opinion on other reasons. The Shi'ah Ja'fari school of law states that one can combine the prayers without any particular reason.

[1] Qur'an: Chapter 17, Verse 78

Prayer timings according to the Qur'an

Imam Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, the famous Sunni commentator on the Qur'an, wrote regarding the verse quoted (Chapter 17, Verse 78):

q “If we interpret the darkness (ghasaq) as being the time when darkness first appears then the term ghasaq refers to the beginning of Maghrib. On this basis, three timings are mentioned in the verse: ‘the time of noon, the time of the beginning of Maghrib and the time of Fajr’. This requires that noon be the time of Zuhr and `Asr, this time is shared between these two prayers. The time of the beginning of Maghrib is the time for Maghrib and ‘Isha’ so this time is also shared between these two prayers. This requires allowing the combining between Zuhr and `Asr and between Maghrib and ‘Isha’ at all times. However, there is proof to indicate that combining whilst at home without any excuse is not allowed. This leads to the view that the combining be allowed when travelling or when there is rain etc.”[1]

We will shortly point out irrefutable evidence that combining prayers without any excuse is perfectly valid. However, it is clear that the times of the obligatory prayers are only three: 1) The time of the two obligatory prayers, Zuhr (noon) and `Asr (afternoon), which is shared between the two. 2) The time of the two obligatory prayers Maghrib (dusk) and ‘Isha’ (night) which is also shared between the two. 3) The time for the Fajr (morning) prayer which is specific to it.

[1] Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, al-Tafsir al-Kabir, vol. 5, p. 428

Did the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) combine prayers?

Ibn ‘Abbas reported that the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) observed in Medina seven (rak’ahs) and eight (rak’ahs), i. e. (combined) the noon (Zuhr) and afternoon (‘Asr) prayers (eight rak’ahs) and the dusk (Maghrib) and night (‘Isha’) prayers (seven rak’ahs).[1]

q ‘Abdullah b. Shaqiq reported: Ibn ‘Abbas one day addressed us in the afternoon (after the afternoon prayer) till the sun disappeared and the stars appeared, and the people began to say: Prayer, prayer. A person from Banu Tamim came there. He neither slackened nor turned away, but (continued crying): Prayer, prayer. Ibn ‘Abbas said: “May you be deprived of your mother, do you teach me Sunnah?” And then he said: “I saw the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) combining the noon (Zuhr) and afternoon (‘Asr) prayers and the dusk (Maghrib) and night (‘Isha’) prayers.” ‘Abdullah b. Shaqiq said: “Some doubt was created in my mind about it. So I came to Abu Huraira and asked him (about it) and he testified to his assertion.”[2]

[1] Sahih al-Bukhari (English translation), volume 1, book 10, number 537; Sahih Muslim (English translation), Kitab al-Salat, Book 4, Chapter 100 Combination of prayers when one is resident, hadith no. 1522

[2] Sahih Muslim (English translation), Kitab al-Salat, Book 4, Chapter 100 Combination of prayers when one is resident, hadith no. 1523, 1524

But wasn't that due to travel, fear, or rain?

Many traditions from the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) clearly indicate that he used to combine prayers without any particular reason.

q The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) prayed in Madinah, while residing there, not travelling, seven and eight (this is an indication to the seven Raka't of Maghrib and 'Isha' combined, and the eight Raka't of Zuhr and `Asr combined).[1]

q The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) prayed Zuhr and `Asr in combination and Maghrib and 'Isha' in combination without a reason for fear or travel.[2]

Indeed, we are even told in some traditions about the rationality behind this practice of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.). It was for the convenience of the ummah!

q Ibn 'Abbas reported that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) combined the noon prayer with the afternoon prayer and the sunset prayer with the 'Isha' prayer in Medina without being in a state of danger or rainfall. And in the hadith transmitted by Waki' (the words are): "I said to Ibn 'Abbas: What prompted him to do that? He said: So that his (Prophet's) Ummah should not be put to (unnecessary) hardship." [3]

q The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) observed the noon and afternoon prayers together in Medina without being in a state of fear or in a state of journey. Abu Zubair said: "I asked Sa'id (one of the narrators) why he did that. He said: I asked Ibn 'Abbas as you have asked me, and he replied that he (the Holy Prophet) wanted that no one among his Ummah should be put to (unnecessary) hardship." [4]

[1] Ahmad ibn Hanbal, al-Musnad, vol. 1, page 221

[2] Malik ibn Anas, al-Muwatta', vol. 1, page 161

[3] Sahih Muslim (English translation), Kitab al-Salat, Book 4, Chapter 100 Combination of prayers when one is resident, hadith no. 1520; Sunan al-Tirmidhi, vol. 1, p. 26

[4] Sahih Muslim, English translation, Kitab al-Salat, Book 4, Chapter 100 Combination of prayers when one is resident, hadith no. 1516

Even if it is allowed, why do it?

No one suggests that there is anything wrong with praying the individual prayers separately. Zuhr and `Asr prayers and Maghrib and `Isha` prayers can be offered either combined or separately. However, this practice of combining the two prayers by the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) reflects the Divine Grace of Allah (swt) for the convenience of the ummah, and there are good reasons why it has become customary amongst the Shi`ah:

q People are often busy with their own affairs and have their own duties and anxieties, particularly in countries where the educational or work system is not structured to cater to the requirements for Muslims to offer their daily prayers. Some professions require long hours of continuous, uninterrupted work. Hence, for convenience, and in order to avoid missing the second of the two prayers, the Shi`ah offer their two prayers in one interval, whether early or late, during the appointed time.

q Where people gather from far and wide to offer one of the two prayers and since it is permissible to combine them, they offer the two prayers one after another in congregation. This way they have both fulfilled their obligations as well as participated in the congregation (jama`ah) prayers thus gaining the increased reward. Consider the example of Friday prayers. We observe that thousands of Sunni brethren offer their Friday prayers on time but many of them fail to offer the `Asr prayers at all, let alone in congregation. On the other hand a Shi`i Muslim who offers Friday prayers will invariably perform the `Asr prayer in congregation.

q The fact that this sunnah is not generally adopted by our Sunni brothers is another reason why the Shi`ah feel they must keep it alive. We would like our children and other Muslims and the posterity to know that the practice of combining the Zuhr and `Asr, and the Maghrib and `Isha` prayers is permissible as well as from the sunnah (established practice) of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.).

Conclusion:

Combining Zuhr and `Asr prayers, and Maghrib and 'Isha' prayers, is in accordance with the Qur'an and permissible according to the sunnah of Prophet (s.a.w.a.), besides being more convenient. The fact that this well-evidenced sunnah is not generally practiced by our Sunni brothers does not make it inapplicable in our lives. As the famous Sunni commentator of Sahih Muslim, al-Nawawi, writes:

When a practice (Sunnah) is confirmed authentic, it is not abandoned just because some, most or all people abandon it.[1]

[1] al-Nawawi, Sharh Sahih Muslim, (Beirut, 1392 A.H.), vol. 8, p. 56

A Sermon Without Dots

The Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) said:

I am the house of wisdom and 'Ali is its door[1]

The knowledge, wisdom and eloquence of Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib (a.s.) is well known among Muslims of all schools of thought. One such example of his mastery over the Arabic language manifested itself in this extempore sermon which, in its written form, is devoid of any dots!!

All praise be to Allah: the praised King, the affectionate Owner, the Fashioner of all who are born, the Recourse for every downtrodden, the Outstretcher of lands, the Establisher of firm mountains, the Sender of rain, the Alleviator of difficulties, the Knower and Perceiver of secrets, the Destroyer of kingdoms and Perisher of possessions, the Renewer of eras and their Repetitor, the Source of all things and their Destination. Widespread is His generosity and sufficient are the layered clouds and the supply of rain. He responds to the one who asks or hopes, giving wide and with abundance.

I praise Him endlessly. I consider Him one as He is considered one by those who turn to Him. Lo ! He is Allah, there is no god for the nations except Him. No one can distort what He set upright and established. He sent Muhammad as the standard-bearer of submission (Islam), the leader for the rulers and preventer of their oppression, The crippler of the authorities of Wudd and Sawa` (two idols). He informed and educated, appointed and perfected. He founded the fundamentals and eased them in. He emphasized the appointed promise (Day of Judgment) and forewarned. Allah has linked him with honor and granted his soul the peace, and may Allah have mercy on his progeny and his venerated family; as long as the guiding stars shine, the crescent continues to rise, and the chant of the oneness (La ilaha illa Allah) is made to be heard around.

May God protect ye! Work towards the best of deeds. So tread the path seeking the lawful, and give up the forbidden and abandon it. Listen to the command of Allah and be aware of it. Maintain the ties with relations and nurture them. Disobey desires and repel them. Bond as kins with the righteous and pious, and discontinue the company of amusement and greed.

Your groom is the most impeccable of free men by birth, most generous and honorable with glories, and of the sweetest of descent. Here he came to you, took your kin with permission, in marriage, the gracious bride. Offered a dowry, just as the Messenger of Allah did to Umm Salamah. Certainly, he [s] was the most gracious son-in-law. Kind to his progeny. He gave them in marriage to whom he wanted. He was neither confused in his choice of wife nor had an oversight.

I ask Allah, on your behalf, for the lasting graciousness of His connection. And the continuation of His pleasures, and that He may inspire all: the reform of their own condition, and the preparation for their individual destiny and the hereafter. Gratitude is for Him forever and the praise for His Messenger Ahmad (s.a.w.a.).

This sermon appears to have been delivered by Imam 'Ali (a.s.) on the occasion of someone's marriage (nikah), and may well have been his own marriage. It has been quoted by several scholars such as:

q Muhammad Rida al-Hakimi, Saluni qabl an tafqiduni, vol. 2, pp. 442-3.

q Sayyid al-Musawi, al-Qatarah min bihar manaqib Aal-Nabi wa al-'Itrah, vol. 2, p. 179

الحمد لله الملك المحمود، المالك الودود، مصور كل مولود، ومأل كل مطرود، ساطح المهاد وموطد الأطواد، ومرسل الأمطار ومسهل الأوطار، عالم الأسرار ومدركها، ومدمر الأملاك ومهلكها، ومكور الدهور ومكررها، ومورد الأمور ومصدرها، عم سماحه وكمل ركامه، وهمل، طاوول السؤال والأمل، وأوسع الرمل وأرمل، أحمده حمدا ممدودا، وأوحده كما وحد الأواه، وهو الله لا إله إلا الله لا إله إلا هو، ولا صانع لما عدل له وسواه، أرسل محمدا علما للإسلام وإماما للحكام، سددا للرعاع ومعطل أحكام ود وسواع، أعلم وعلم، وحكم وأحكم، وأصل الأصول، ومهد وأكد الموعود وأوعد، أوصل الله له الإكرام، وأودع روحه الإسلام، ورحم آله وأهله الكرام، ما لمع رائل وملع دال، وطلع هلال، وسمع إهلال.

إعملوا رعاكم الله أصلح الأعمال، واسلكوا مسالك الحلال، واطرحوا الحرام ودعوه، واسمعوا أمر الله وعوه، و صلوا الأرحام و راعوها، وأعصوا الأهواء وأردعوها، وصاهروا أهل الصلاح والورع، و صارموا رهط اللهو والطمع، ومصاهركم أظهر الأحرار مولدا وأسراهم سؤددا، وأحلامكم موردا، وها هو إمامكم وحل حرمكم مملكا، عروسكم المكرمه، وما مهر لها كما مهر رسول الله أم سلمه، وهو أكرم صهر، و أودع الأولاد، وملك ما أراد، وما سهل مملكه ولا هم ولا وكس ملاحمه ولا وصم، اسأل الله لكم أحمد (وصاله، ودوام إسعاده، وألهم كلا إصلاح حاله والأعداد لما له ومعاده، وله الحمد السرمد، والمدح لرسوله أحمد ص).

[1] Sahih al-Tirmidhi, (Cairo edition), Kitab al-Manaqib, vol. 5, p. 637, hadith number 3723

What is so special about this sermon?

Those who know Arabic or can at least read the Qur'anic script will appreciate that certain letters of the Arabic alphabet have dots associated with them. These letters are listed below and are used all the time in Arabic speech and written texts.

ش ب ت ن ض ث ق ف غ خ ج ز ظ ذي

To create any written script of any meaningful nature, without using any of these letters, is a difficult task. To deliver such a sermon without prior preparation, as Imam 'Ali (a.s.) is known to have done with all his sermons, is truly amazing!

[Note: The letter representing taa marbutah used to be written without dots in early Arabic script]

Are there any other such sermons?

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) once delivered another beautiful sermon which was without the letter alif !!

This letter of the Arabic alphabet is undoubtedly the most commonly occurring character in the language. If composing a few meaningful sentences without dots is hard enough, how about delivering a sermon, one which is full of wisdom and which is many times the size of the one you have just seen, but without ever using a single alif !!

This sermon is usually called al-Khutbah al-Muniqah and is recorded by many Muslim scholars. Amongst the Sunni scholars who quote it can be mentioned:

q Muhammad b. Muslim al-Shafi'i, Kifayat al-Talib, p. 248

q Ibn Abi'l Hadid al-Mu'tazili, Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah, vol. 19, p. 140

How could Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) accomplish such a feat?

Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) derived his vast knowledge and striking eloquence by virtue of his long and close association with the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.). The Prophet (s.a.w.a.), with Divine inspiration, was the source of all such knowledge and wisdom and a teacher par excellence for Imam ‘Ali (a.s.).

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