

# Imamate

*According to the School of Ahlul Bayt (as)*

**Imamate** is the Leadership or Authority of the Muslim Ummah. Imamate can also encompass the stations of Risalaa (Messengership), Nubawaa (prophethood), Walia (nearness to Allah and guidance to mankind) and Khilafa (government).

The Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) was an Imam, but he did not hold the position of Khilafa, we know from Al-Quran that he did hold the positions of Risaala, Nubuwwa and Walia. These Quranic Verses clarify the positions of Ibrahim (a.s.): - *And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commands which he fulfilled; He said: "I will appoint thee an Imam to the nations." He pleaded: "And also (Imams) from my offspring!" He answered: "But my promise is not within the reach of evil-doers." (2: 124)*

*Allah did choose Adam and Noah the family of Abraham and the family of Imran above all people. (3: 33)*

*Or do they envy mankind for what Allah hath given them of His bounty? But We had already given the people of Abraham the Book and Wisdom and conferred upon them a great kingdom. (4: 54)*

*Who can be better in religion than one who submits his whole self to Allah does good and follows the way of Abraham the true in faith? For Allah did take Abraham for a friend. (4: 125)*

All the Prophets (a.s) were Imams and Walis (Guardians) of the people, some of them had a large number of followers and others did not. Not all the Prophets were Messengers (Rasul), in fact there were only five Messengers out of the One hundred and twenty four thousand that were sent to us. The Messenger was the prophet who brought with him a new Law (Shariath) and a new Book (kithab Allah) and they were; Noah , Ibrahim, Musa, Isa and Muhammed (a.s.). All the prophets left behind them an executor

of their message and will (wasi) and they were Imams and Guardians over the people.

Muhammed (s.a.w.a.s.) was the Last Prophet and Messenger but the position of Imamate is continuous and remains with the descendants of Ibrahim (a.s.), since Allah made a covenant with [Ibrahim](#) (a.s.) that all Prophets and Imams will be from his progeny hence forth, because before the advent of Ibrahim (a.s.) this position could be occupied by all the children of Adam (a.s.).

*And We sent Noah and Abraham and established in their line Prophethood and Revelation(messengership): and some of them were on right guidance but many of them became rebellious transgressors. (57:26)*

*Without doubt among men the nearest of kin to Abraham are those who follow him as are also this Apostle and those who believe; and Allah is the Protector of those who have faith. (3:68)*

*And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commands which he fulfilled; He said: "I will make thee an Imam to the nations." He pleaded: "And also (Imams) from my offspring!" He answered: "But my promise is not within the reach of evil-doers." (2:124)*

From the above verses we learn that:

- the [Imams](#) will only be from the descendants of Ibrahim
- they will be safe from wrong actions (masum).

Allah also says in Al-Quran that it is an obligation to obey the Imams:

*59. O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the messenger and those of you who are in authority; and if ye have a dispute concerning any matter, refer it to Allah and the messenger if ye are (in truth) believers in Allah and the Last Day. That is better and more seemly in the end. (4:59)*

Here Allah is commanding the Believers to obey:

- 1. Himself

- 2. The Holy Prophet
- 3. Those in Authority

We have to question ourselves:

*Who are those in Authority? Are they to be elected by some of the people? Or are they to be nominated or elected by one or a handful of the Muslims? Or are the Imams to be chosen by Allah and appointed by the Prophet?*

Some may argue that since Muhammed (s.a.w.a.s.) is the Last Prophet and Messenger and the Imam after him can be from amongst any of the Muslims, this belief is however, contrary to the above verse (2:124) and also contrary to their own belief that the Last Imam ( Al-Mahdi) being from the descendants of Muhammed i.e. Ibrahim (peace be upon them all). The following hadeeth from Bukhari may clarify this point:

Narrated Jabir bin Samura: I heard the Prophet saying, "There will be twelve imams of the Muslims. He then said a sentence which I did not hear. My father said, "All of them (caliphs) will be from Quraish." (Sahih Bukhari vol.9 no.329)

Compare the Hadith narrated by [Imam Jafar al-Sadiq \(as\)](#) from Salman Farsi (ra)in his book *"Lantern of the Path"* to Bukhari's hadeeth:

One day I was very troubled and visited Rasulullah (s) and asked him," Oh Prophet, what are we to do when you are no longer with us, who will give us guidance ?" Rasul (s) replied," After me the Ummah will be left with twelve successors from my Ahlul Bayt and it will be an obligation on my Ummah to follow and aid them in all that they command."

I replied. " Oh Rasulullah., how are we to recognise them". Rasul(s) replied" Oh, Salman you know Allah is AL-Hamid ( the Praise worthy) and I am Mohammed (the one with praise) and you Know Allah is AL-Aliy (the Most Exalted) and you have Ali (the one exalted above others) and you know Allah is al-Fathir (the Creator out of Nothing) and you have Fathima the mother of my descendants and you know Allah is Al-Ihsan and you have Hasan and you know Allah is al-Muhsin and you have Al-Hussein. My first successor will be Ali, my brother, the one who is loved by Allah, then

after him Hasan and then Hussein the sons of Ali and Fathima and then Ali ibn Hussein then Mohammed ibn Ali and then Jafar ibn Mohammed and the Musa ibn Jafar and the Ali ibn Musa and then Mohammed ibn Ali and then Ali ibn Mohammed and then Hasan ibn Ali and finally ibne Hasan, the one named after me, the one with my kunya Abul Qasim, he will be known as Mim Ha Dal al-Mahdi the one with Authority Al-Qaim. He will be awaited by those who are weak and oppressed." I replied, "Oh Rasullullah may I and my parents be your ransom, a great burden has been removed from my heart."

I then left the prophet (s) at peace with the World and the World at peace with me and prayed to Allah, " Oh Allah your servant Salman is now ready to meet death when ever it is your will." [See: [The Lantern of the Path](#)]

We are also told in Al-Quran that the Imam must be the most qualified among ourselves; he must be:

- the most knowledgeable
- a Mu'min
- the most trustworthy.

*Their Prophet said to them: "Allah hath appointed Talut in authority over you." They say: "How can he exercise authority over us when we are better fitted than he to exercise authority and he is not even gifted with wealth in abundance?" He said: "Allah hath chosen him above you and hath gifted him abundantly with knowledge and bodily prowess; Allah granteth His authority to whom He pleaseth. Allah careth for all and He knoweth all things." (2:247)*

From the above discussion the following can be concluded about Imamate:

- There are [twelve Imams](#)
- Imams are of the line of Ibrahim and therefore of Muhammed
- Imams must be free from committing mistakes
- Imams must be the most knowledgeable
- The Imam must be the most trust worthy
- Imams are chosen by Allah and appointed by the Prophet before them

- Following the Imam is an obligation for the Muslims
- Al-Mahdi (a.s) is the Last Imam.

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### Ali the Deputy and Successor of the Prophet

Sura Ta Ha chapter 20 verses 25-36:

25. *He said: O my Lord! Expand my breast for me,*
26. *And make my affair easy to me,*
27. *And loose the knot from my tongue,*
28. *(That) they may understand my word;*
29. *And give to me an aider from my family:*
30. *Haroun, my brother,*
31. *Strengthen my back by him,*
32. *And associate him (with me) in my affair,*
33. *So that we should glorify Thee much,*
34. *And remember Thee oft.*
35. *Surely, Thou art seeing us.*
36. *(He) said: You are indeed granted your petition, O Musa.*

Muhammed (saws) is the Last and Final of the Prophets. His message is conclusive and therefore, must succeed and stay forever.

Allah (swt) runs the affairs of the World usually according to the law of cause and effect and through natural courses. Therefore, He did not order His Messenger Muhammed to face the whole society at once with the invitation to Islam, because this would lead to the failure of the mission rather to its success. Wanting him to go gradually in his invitation, He issued him a command (after three years from the beginning of his messengership) to begin with his close relatives. Allah says in al-Qur'an:

*"And warn thy nearest kinsman. And lower thy wing to the believers who follow thee."*  
(26:214-215)

When this command came down the Messenger of Allah <sup>1</sup> invited the descendents of

Abdul-Muttalib (they were forty men) to a banquet which contained little amounts of food and milk. They ate and drank to their fill. The Messenger then spoke, saying: "O children of Abdul-Muttalib, by Allah, I do not know of any young man from among the Arabs who has ever brought to his people better than I what I bring to you. I bring to you the goodness of the World and of the Hereafter, and Allah has commanded me to invite you to it. Who is among you willing to be my brother, my executor and my successor in you?" None of them responded but [Ali](#) who was the <sup>2</sup> youngest among them. He stood up and said: "Messenger of Allah, I will be your minister in this mission."

The Prophet repeated his invitation, but none responded except 'Ali who repeated his words. The Prophet put his hand on the neck of 'Ali and said: "This is my brother, my executor and my successor in you. Listen to him and obey him."

They laughed, saying to Abu Talib: "He ordered you to listen to your son and obey him. Thus, the Messenger of Allah invited the nearest of his relatives to embrace Islam, but his main purpose was to find among them a person who would be willing to assist him in spreading the message.

The Prophet was about to confront all the idol-worshippers of Makkah. Therefore, he needed a minister who had courage, sincerity and firmness. Forty men from the children of Abdul-Muttalib would be an important asset for Islam if they adopted it. But if they were ordinary people they would not be able to face the masses of Makkah and Arabia. Allah would soon command His Messenger to extend his invitation to all the Arabs, and eventually to the rest of the nations, all of whom would violently resist the invitation for years to come.

Forty average persons would be terrified by the hostiles of Makkah and Arabia; yet one man of high courage will be able to face whatever the Messenger would face. This man we know was Assudullah fil Ghaib (the Lion of God the Unseen) Ali ibn Abu Talib.

When Allah commanded the Prophet to invite his kinsman Allah knew only Ali would accept and become the Prophet's deputy and aid, just as Allah accepted Aaron as the minister and aid of Moses.

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## GHADEER KHUM

**Appointment** of Ali (a.s.) by the Prophet (s.a.w.s) in his <sup>3</sup> LAST Sermon to the Muslims after commandment from Allah when the following verse was revealed:

"O Apostle! Deliver 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 ..." (Quran 5:67).

There after, the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) alighted at the Pool of Ghadeer and ordered Hazrath Bilal (r.a) to call adhan so that all the Muslims be gathered together before they dispersed to the towns and villages between Makkha and Medina.

## The Sermon of Ghadeer Khumm

*(as related in Tirmidhi and Muslim)*

Al-Tirmidhi

Hadith

**Hadith 6094** Narrated by: **Al-Bara' ibn Azib and Zayd ibn Arqam**

When Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) alighted at the pool of Khumm, he took Ali by the hand and asked those present, "Do you not know that I am closer to the believers than they themselves?" They replied, "Certainly." He then asked, "Do you not know that I am nearer to every believer than he himself?" They replied, "Certainly." He then said, " Allah, he whose patron I am has Ali as his patron. O Allah, be friendly to those who are friendly to him and hostile to those who are hostile to him." After that Umar met him and said, "Congratulations, son of AbuTalib. Morning and evening you are the patron of every believing man and woman."

Ahmad transmitted it.

Sahih

Muslim

Hadith

**Hadith 5920** Narrated by: **Zayd ibn Arqam**

Yazid ibn Hayyan reported: I went with Husayn ibn Sabrah and Umar ibn Muslim to Zayd ibn Arqam and, as we sat by his side, Husayn said to him: Zayd, you have been able to

acquire great virtue him that you saw Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him), listened to his conversation, fought by his side in (different) battles and offered prayer behind him. Zayd, you have in fact earned a great virtue. Zayd, narrate to us what you heard from Allah`s Messenger (peace be upon him). He said: I have grown old; I have almost reached the end of my life-span and I have forgotten some of the things which I remembered in connection with Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him). So accept whatever I narrate to you, and those which I do not narrate, do not compel me to narrate them. He then said: One day Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) stood up to deliver a sermon at a watering-place known as Khumm, situated between Mecca and Medina. He praised Allah, extolled Him, delivered the sermon, exhorted (us) and said: Now to our purpose, O people: I am a human being. Perhaps I am about to receive a messenger (the angel of death) from my Lord, and I, in response to Allah's call, (shall bid good-bye to you). But I am leaving among you two weighty things: the one being the Book of Allah in which there is right guidance and light, so hold fast to the Book of Allah and adhere to it. He exhorted (us) (to hold fast) to the Book of Allah, and then said: The second are the members of my household; I remind you (of your duties) to the members of my family. He (Husayn) said to Zayd: Who are the members of his household? Aren't his wives the members of his family? Thereupon he said: His wives are the members of his family (but here) the members of his family are those for whom acceptance of Zakat is forbidden. And he said: Who are they? Thereupon he said: Ali and the offspring of Ali, Aqil and the offspring of Aqil, the offspring of Ja'far and the offspring of Abbas. Husayn said: These are those for whom the acceptance of Zakat is forbidden. Zayd said: Yes.

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### **The Relationship between The Prophet (s.a.w.a.s.) and Ali (a.s)**

**The Relationship between The Prophet (s.a.w.a.s.) and Ali (a.s) was similar to the Relationship between the prophets Musa (a.s.) and Haroon (a.s.).**

Narrated

Sad:

Allah's Apostle set out for Tabuk. appointing 'Ali as his deputy (in Medina). 'Ali said, "Do you want to leave me with the children and women?" The Prophet said, "Will you not be

pleased that you will be to me like Aaron to Moses? But there will be no prophet after me." Bukhari vol. 5 no.700)

Sura                    Ar'af                    chapter                    7                    verse                    142

*142. We appointed for Moses thirty nights and completed (the period) with ten (more): thus was completed the term (of communion) with his Lord forty nights. And Moses had charged his brother Aaron (before he went up): "Act for me amongst my people: do right and follow not the way of those who do mischief."*

Sura                    Anbiya                    chapter                    21                    verse                    48

*48. In the past We granted to Moses and Aaron the Criterion (for judgment) and a Light and a Message for those who would do right.*

Sura                    Mu'mineen                    chapter                    23                    verse                    45

*45. Then We sent Moses and his brother Aaron with Our Signs and authority manifest*

Sura                    Furq'an                    chapter                    25                    verse                    35

*35. Before this We sent Moses the Book and appointed his brother Aaron with him as Minister;*

Sura                    Saafat                    chapter                    37                    verse                    114

*114. Again (of old) We bestowed Our favor on Moses and Aaron.*

### **Conclusion:**

From the above verses of al-Qur'an we can conclude that the relationship between Moses and Aaron was not just of blood brotherhood, but of Prophet and successor. This was also the same relationship between the Prophet and Ali but there would be no Prophet after him. So, with the exception of prophethood, Ali inherited from

Muhammed all that Aaron inherited from Moses. Peace be upon them all.

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### Footnotes:

1. This hadeeth is recorded by the following Authors: i. Ibn Al-Atheer, Al Kamil, part 2, p. 22 ii. Al-Tabari, History of Nations, Messengers and Kings, part 2, p217. iii. Abu Al-Fida in his History, part1 p.116. iv. Imam Ahmab bin Hambal, Al-Musnad, part 1, pp.116-119.

2. 'Ali was 9 years old.

3. The Sermon of the Mount where the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) gave his sermon after Haj is wrongly called the Last Sermon, this was done in order to mislead the people and to try to negate the Sermon at Ghadeer Khumm where Ali (a.s) is appointed successor once again. After the sermon of Ghadeer (the Last Sermon) was delivered the following verse of the Qur'an was revealed: .....This day have those who reject faith given up all hope of your religion: yet fear them not but fear Me. This day have I perfected your religion for you completed my favor upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion. But if any forced by hunger with no inclination to transgression, Allah is indeed Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful. (5:3)

- *All Qur'anic texts from "The Holy Qur'an" Translation & Commentary by Abdullah Yusuf Ali.*

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