Imamate and Wilayah Part 4

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Abstract

It is necessary for people to have a leader and a guide who draws them nearer to righteousness and abandoning corruption. Having such a leader is a blessing and grace of God. In Shi'i Islam, the concept of Imamate is the necessity of having a leader who is appointed by God and will lead the ummah after the Prophet's death. The Imam surpasses the people in all admirable qualities such as piety, knowledge, courage, and wisdom. He must also be infallible (ma'soum) as this trait ensures that he is trusted, obeyed, and is capable of defending divine law.

Thus, the Imam carries the role of both continuing the task of the Prophet in presenting true Islam as well as being a political leader. An Imam is appointed only by God; the Prophet merely announces an Imam's infallibility to the people. On the other hand, the Sunnis in theory believe that it is the

responsibility of the people to appoint a caliph. In what follows, we will refer to the appointments of the Imams by God and the particular case of who was appointed after the Prophet's death.

Part 1: Imamate in the Qur'an

There are many verses in the Qur'an that refer to imamate, or divinely appointed leadership. God refers to Himself as having rule (amr), governance (hukm), full sovereignty (mulk), and the power to choose (ikhtiyar). God is our guardian (Wali) and He is to be obeyed (ta'a). The resultant descriptions of these attributes ascertain God's full sovereignty and governance and His sole power to choose and legitimize a leader. That is, leadership belongs only to Him and He gives it to whomever He pleases. Moreover, people are commanded to obey Him, the Prophet, and those "vested with authority among the people" i.e. the infallibles. Reflection of these verses leaves no doubt that the Shi'a understanding of Imamate is compatible with the Qur'an. These verses are grouped into several classes presented in the following:

Amr

Bearing in mind that amr means 'to rule', amir means 'ruler', and imarah means 'ruler ship', 'kingdom' or 'government', human beings cannot decide on the system of ruling based on their desires. It is God who decides who rules and how one must do so. Several verses in the Qur'an refer to God as the sole sovereign of both the creation (khalq) and rule (amr):

> يُغْشِي اللَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ يَطْلُبُهُ حَثِيثًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُومَ مُسَخَّرَاتٍ بِأَمْرِهِ ۗ أَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْأَمْرُ ۗ تَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ

... He draws the night's cover over the day, which pursues it swiftly, and [***He created***] ***the sun, the moon, and the stars,*** [***all of them***] ***disposed by His command. Look! All creation and command belong to Him. Blessed is Allah, the Lord of all the worlds.*** (***7:54***)

> وَلَوْ أَنَّ قُرْآنًا سُيِّرَتْ بِهِ الْجِبَالُ أَوْ قُطِّعَتْ بِهِ الْأَرْضُ أَوْ كُلِّمَ بِهِ الْمَوْتَىٰ ۗ بَلْ لِلَّهِ الْأَمْرُ جَمِيعًا

If only it were a Qur'an whereby the mountains could be moved, or the earth could be toured, or the dead could be spoken to . . . Rather all dispensation belongs to Allah... (***13:31***)

Wali

Wilaya is the special relationship between a legitimate leader and a community. This relationship excludes outsiders who are not a part of the community of faith. A legitimate Imam within a society is similar to a brain connected to the bloodstream which connects all the cells of the body:

قُلِ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثُوا ۖ لَهُ غَيْبُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ أَبْصِرْ بِهِ وَأَسْمِعْ ۚ مَا لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا يُشْرِكُ فِي حُكْمِهِ أَحَدًا

Say, 'Allah knows best how long they remained. To Him belongs the Unseen of the heavens and the earth. How well does He see! How well does He hear! They have no guardian besides Him, and none shares with Him in His judgment.' (***18:26***)

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

وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فَإِنَّ حِزْبَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْغَالِبُونَ

...faithful who maintain the prayer and give the zakat while bowing down. Whoever takes for his guardians Allah, His Apostle and the faithful [***should know that***] ***the confederates of Allah are indeed the victorious.*** (***5:55–56***)

Here, wali does not merely mean 'friend' because anyone can be a friend and the criteria for friendship is not specified in the verse. Also, to be just friends would not lead to formation of the confederates of Allah. Wilaya refers to the 'leadership' that belongs to God, and He gives this to whomsoever He pleases. He is pleased with both the Messenger and with the one who gave zakat while bowing down in prayer.

The words ***"those who believe"*** refers to Imam Ali (a) and the ***"...faithful who maintain the prayer and give the zakat while bowing down"*** refers to a particular event in which Imam Ali gave charity while bowing in prayer. This action does not apply to all believers given that there is no verse or narration that recommends people to give charity while bowing. Thus, wilaya belongs to Allah, then the Prophet, and afterwards to whomever is appointed by God. Otherwise, God would have stated that whoever is appointed by the people can be a legitimate leader.

God is the true guardian (wali): no one has a wali other than Him, and no one can interfere in this relationship. Therefore, hukm and wilaya are related to each other. God is the wali, and He appoints the wali. He has the hukm, and he appoints the hakim. He has mulk, and He appoints the malik.

Ayat al-Tahkim

فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا

But no, by your Lord! They will not believe until they make you a judge in their disputes, then do not find within their hearts any dissent to your verdict and submit in full submission. (***4:65***)

In this verse, a true believer (mu'min) is the one who refers unclear cases to the Prophet, and any judgment the Prophet makes, he wholeheartedly accepts it. This verse also shows that part of wilaya is to act as a judge; as was stated before, no one can judge unless approved by God. Naturally, people can make agreements on an issue by themselves, but they cannot appoint someone to act as a judge for the people. Although the people are free to obey or not, this judge must be authorized by God.

God Himself appointed Prophet David, who was made a caliph, and was asked to rule and judge. The verse below shows that people who are chosen by God, such as the Prophet, are the only ones permitted to act as a judge:

Ta'a

يَا دَاوُودُ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيفَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ فَاحْكُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوَىٰ فَيُضِلَّكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَضِلُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ بِمَا نَسُوا يَوْمَ الْحِسَابِ

O David! Indeed We have made you a vicegerent on the earth. So judge between people with justice, and do not follow desire, or it will lead you astray from the way of Allah. Indeed those who stray from the way of Allah — there is a severe punishment for them because of their forgetting the Day of Reckoning. (***38:26***)

Muslims are commanded to obey God, the Prophet, and the ulul amr or "those vested with authority":

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ ۖ فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا

O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you. And if you dispute concerning anything, refer it to Allah and the Apostle, if you have faith in Allah and the Last Day. That is better and more favourable in outcome. (***4:59***)

Since this verse was addressed to Muslims during the time of the Prophet, Muslims were commanded to obey them in that specific period. An ulul amr existing during that era verifies that there lived an individual known to the Muslims as the one who would be the deputy of the Prophet. Moreover, Muslims were able to address their problems to the Prophet during his life.

The words ***"...and those vested with authority among you"*** refers to people who must be unconditionally obeyed. They are none other than the infallibles (ma'soumeen) because those who sin and make mistakes that render them untrustworthy cannot be followed. Also, doubt would exist as to whether one should follow the Qur'an and sunna, or follow a fallible person chosen by the people.

When a report of safety or alarm comes to them, they immediately broadcast it; but had they referred it

to the

وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَىٰ أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ ۗ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَاتَّبَعْتُمُ الشَّيْطَانَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

Apostle or to those vested with authority among them, those of them who investigate would have ascertained it. And were it not for Allah's grace upon you and His mercy, you would have surely followed Satan, [***all***] ***except a few.*** (***4:83***)

Again, the words ***"...those vested with authority among them, those of them who investigate would have ascertained it"*** indicates that Imam Ali was known during that period as the Prophet's representative and the future legitimate leader.

Hukm

Hakim means 'king' or 'ruler' while hukumah means 'government.' According to the Qur'an, hukm, or governance, belongs to God and to those who are appointed by Him. Only God and the appointees can hold this position:

ثُمَّ رُدُّوا إِلَى اللَّهِ مَوْلَاهُمُ الْحَقِّ ۚ أَلَا لَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَهُوَ أَسْرَعُ الْحَاسِبِينَ

Then they are returned to Allah, their real master. Look! All rule belongs to Him, and He is the swiftest of reckoners. (***6:62***)

قُلْ إِنِّي عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّي وَكَذَّبْتُمْ بِهِ ۚ مَا عِنْدِي مَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِهِ ۚ إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ ۖ يَقُصُّ الْحَقَّ ۖ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْفَاصِلِينَ

Say, "Indeed I stand on a manifest proof from my Lord and you have denied it. What you seek to hasten is not up to me. Rule belongs only to Allah; He expounds the truth and He is the best of rulers." (***6:57***)

The above verse is known to have been misused and misinterpreted by the Kharijites[2] to declare the illegitimacy of Imam Ali's governance. They hold this verse to confirm that leadership cannot be practiced by anyone other than God. However, the above verse does not state that a leader is uncalled for; rather, the verse indicates that governance belongs to God, and it is only He who can legitimize a ruler.

قُلِ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثُوا ۖ لَهُ غَيْبُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ أَبْصِرْ بِهِ وَأَسْمِعْ ۚ مَا لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا يُشْرِكُ فِي

حُكْمِهِ أَحَدًا

Say, "Allah knows best how long they remained. To Him belongs the Unseen of the heavens and the earth. How well does He see! How well does He hear! They have no guardian besides Him, and none shares with Him in His rule." (***18:26***)

Although other verses refer to the notion of governance belonging to God, the above verse states that God alone has authority and is the sole giver of this authority. Moreover, He does not allow one's interference with His rule, nor does He have a partner in His governance. We can infer from this verse that one of the cases of polytheism (shirk) is to believe in the appointment and legitimization of a leader by anyone other than God Himself.

Imams do not receive their legitimacy from society, although people do play a great role in giving their support to a leader since leaders cannot rule without society's obedience. For example, Imam Ali was not able to exercise his leadership after the demise of the Prophet and the people were deprived of a necessary leader. After the death of the third caliph, Uthman, many people demonstrated in favor of Imam Ali's leadership. In reaction to this uproar, the Imam simply said:

If it were not for the gathering and pressure and this huge presence of people to support me; and if it were not the case that Allah has made a covenant with the 'Ulama not to be silent when they see that oppressors are dying because they have eaten too much, and the oppressed do not have anything to eat; if it were not for all this, then you would have found that I would have rejected this caliphate (khilafah). It is less precious to me then the nasal mucus of a sheep.

Though the caliphate was of little importance to the Imam, he knew God ordered scholars not to be silent and indifferent to oppression. And due to the large crowd's support for the Imam, he could not reject taking the role. Thus, though people are not authorized to give legitimacy to make a person an Imam, whether people accept him or not, he is the Imam when authorized by God. Moreover, if people accept and support his leadership, he is more so able to exercise his power and authority in order to establish peace and justice within society.

Mulk

Mulk means 'rule' or 'governance' while milk refers to 'ownership' or 'possession.' Malik means 'king' or 'ruler' while malak means 'angel.' As mentioned in the Qur'an, all sovereignty (al-Mulk) belongs to Him:

مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

Master of the Day of Judgment. (***1:4***)

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَالِكَ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

***Say, "O Allah, Master of all sovereignty! You give sovereignty to whomever You wish, and strip of sovereignty whomever You wish; You make mighty whomever You wish, and You abase whomever You wish; all good is in Your hand. Indeed You have power over all things."* (*3:26*)**

This verse denotes two meanings: a) legitimate rule is divine, and b) when governors are given the chance to rule, it does not necessarily prove their legitimacy. Umawid rulers such as Mu'awiya claimed that God legitimized them; however, their attaining authority does not imply that God is pleased with it. Again, the only legitimate rulers are those who act according to the commands of God – prior to assuming leadership – and, consequently, God has authorized them. They were given the caliphate because of God's generative and legislative will (al-iradah al-takwiniyyah and al-tashri'iyyah). To understand why good and bad happens in the world or, more specifically, why oppressors are able to exercise their authority on this earth, a clarification of God's generative and legislative will is required.

All the good and bad that happen in this world are because of God's generative will. Some ask: was the act of murdering Imam Husayn acceptable by God? If He was not pleased with it, He could have prevented the incident from happening. To explain this, think of a father who, in order to test his child, gives him some money to buy something useful. However, the child uses the money for an immoral purpose instead. His father is not pleased with his son's action although he gave his son a chance.

God's generative will is always at work. He allows for actions to take place, although this does not mean He is pleased with the immoral decisions people can make, especially given that we are instilled with a sense of morality. Furthermore, with this conscientiousness, He sent down prophets and revelations that clearly explain how to live our lives peacefully. He gave us free will and capability to test us in this world, and we choose to act with or against His legislative will. What is more, with the wrong actions we tend to commit, instead of hurriedly incurring His wrath and punishment on us, God's unlimited kindness and mercy gives people an opportunity to change and ask for forgiveness and redeem themselves.

Therefore, God may allow an oppressor to become a king, though this does not necessarily mean God is pleased with his actions. Yazid ruled without God's permission to be a ruler and committed his crimes regardless. God was definitely not pleased with Imam Husayn's martyrdom, and for this, the Imam's enemies will undoubtedly be punished.

Another hint of God's legitimacy is seen in the Qur'an when Saul (Taliit) was appointed by God as a ruler (malik):

وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ بَعَثَ لَكُمْ طَالُوتَ مَلِكًا قَالُوا أَنَّىٰ يَكُونُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ عَلَيْنَا وَنَحْنُ أَحَقُّ بِالْمُلْكِ مِنْهُ وَلَمْ يُؤْتَ سَعَةً مِنَ الْمَالِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَزَادَهُ بَسْطَةً فِي الْعِلْمِ وَالْجِسْمِ وَاللَّهُ يُؤْتِي مُلْكَهُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ

وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

Their prophet said to them, "Allah has appointed Saul as king for you." They said, "How can he have kingship over us, when we have a greater right to kingship than him, as he has not been given ample wealth?" He said, "Indeed Allah has chosen him over you, and enhanced him vastly in knowledge and physique, and Allah gives His kingdom to whomever He wishes, and Allah is all- bounteous, all-knowing." (***2:247***)

When God appointed Saul as a ruler, the people argued against it, stating that Saul had neither been given the right nor has he been given enough wealth to rule, and thinking themselves as better fitted to exercise authority. However, God replies that He has given Saul knowledge and physique. Moreover, this verse elucidates God's right to solely decide on this matter as well as the people's inability to interject on the subject of leadership.

Ikhtiyar

There are verses in the Qur'an which refer to ikhtiyar, meaning 'to choose'. In other words, God is the sole selector of a leader.

وَرَبُّكَ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيَخْتَارُ ۗ مَا كَانَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ ۚ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

Your Lord creates whatever He wishes and chooses. They have no choice. Immaculate is Allah and exalted above [***having***] ***any partners they ascribe*** [***to Him***]. (***28:68***)

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُكِنُّ صُدُورُهُمْ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ

Your Lord knows whatever their breasts conceal, and whatever they disclose. (***27:74***)

وَهُوَ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ لَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي الْأُولَىٰ وَالْآخِرَةِ ۖ وَلَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

He is Allah, there is no god except Him. All praise belongs to Him in this world and the Hereafter. All judgment belongs to Him, and to Him you will be brought back. (***28:70***)

The option of choosing a legitimate leader is only through God's decision.

The verse

"Your Lord knows whatever their breast conceal..."

refers to those who interfere with this divine decision. However, our Sunni brothers justify the events of Saqifa according to the Qur'an's stand on consultation (shura). They believe that a) through consultation, people are to choose a legitimate leader,[3] and b) that God commanded the Prophet to consult with the believers.[4] Thus, they conclude from the Qur'an that people must elect instead of following a divinely appointed leader. Some of them also appeal to democracy and suggest that their idea is more democratic than the Shi'a understanding of governance.

With a brief study of the Qur'anic idea of consultation we can examine why the Qur'an speaks of it and why people are not to interfere in the legitimacy of a ruler. Resolving the believers' affairs according to consultation (shura) does not give legitimacy to a leader. A legitimate ruler is advised to consult, but this does not imply that by consultation someone becomes a legitimate ruler. The Prophet, who was the leader, was obliged to consult with the Muslims, though this does not prove that Muslims gave legitimacy to the Prophet.

وَالَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ

...those who answer their Lord, maintain the prayer, and their affairs are by counsel among themselves, and they spend out of what We have provided them with; (***42:38***)

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ ۖ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ ۖ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ ۖ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ

It is by Allah's mercy that you are gentle to them; and had you been harsh and hardhearted, surely they would have scattered from around you. So excuse them, and plead for forgiveness for them, and consult them in the affairs, and once you are resolved, put your trust in Allah. Indeed Allah loves those who trust in Him. (***3:159***)

According to the non-Shi'a interpretation of consultation (shura) in the Qur'an, people are responsible for electing a legitimate leader; thus, this leader is not divinely appointed.

There are two problems with this view: a) it does not comply with the way the first three caliphs were appointed, and b) it lacks theological or jurisprudential support.

First problem: Abu Bakr, the first caliph, was supposedly elected in Saqifa, an old assembly area in Medina where the people conversed and resolved their problems. Immediately after the announcement of the Prophet's death, some people gathered to decide as to whom will be their next leader. It is alleged that a legitimate leader was elected in Saqifa; however, no real democratic election took place. The Immigrants (muhajirin) chose the first caliph as their leader, and they forced this desire onto the Helpers (ansar). The second caliph, 'Umar, described the event as having been ignited by an argument which

turned into a fight. Afterwards, the Muslims who were not present at the scene were asked to pay allegiance to the chosen caliph.

Even if we were to accept the first caliph has having been elected by the people, the second caliph was not elected through counsel (shura). Although there was a counsel of six people for the third caliph, these six were neither elected, nor were they free to choose because ‘Umar restricted them with strict rules and regulations which stated that they had to choose one among themselves and that they had to gather in a house, guarded by fifty companions till they would choose a caliph. If five people chose someone with whom one person disagreed, he had to be beheaded; if two of them disagreed with four people’s decision, they had to be killed; if three people were on one side and three on the other side, they were enforced to agree with ‘Abd Allah Ibn ‘Umar’s arbitration and if they did not accept it, the group in which was ‘Abd al– Rahman ‘Awf was preferred. And if the other three people disagreed with them, they had to be killed.[5]

A case of real democracy only occurred during the time of Imam Ali’s six–year caliphate in which the pressure of the people’s urgency to have him elected drove the Imam to accept the caliphate. The people then came to realize that Imamate is not merely political leadership, that it is a divine position which involves a heavier duty than a politician. The Imam, who must be infallible, is obliged to continue the role of the Prophet’s task of representing Islam. Therefore, Imam must be appointed by God. Of course, an Imam can only reach his potential as a political leader if the people pay allegiance to him.

Second problem: The Qur’an does not contradict itself. It is not possible for the verses on consultation to contradict those many verses of the Qur’an which pertain to God’s rule. The verses on consultation suggest that when there is a legitimate leader who has been given authority by God – i.e. the Prophet or Imam – he must consult with the people. Consultation is not about who is to rule; rather, it is about how to rule. The Prophet was not chosen by shura, but when God says ***“consult with the believers”***, the Prophet, not the counsel, makes decisions. And ***“once you are resolved”***, trust God and do what you think is appropriate, even if the majority of the people whom you have consulted with disagree. The Qur’an says:

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ ۖ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ ۖ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ ۖ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ

إِنْ يَنْصُرْكُمُ اللَّهُ فَلَا غَالِبَ لَكُمْ ۖ وَإِنْ يَخْذُلْكُمْ فَمَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَنْصُرُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ ۗ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

It is by God’s mercy that you are gentle to them; and had you been harsh and hardhearted, surely they would have scattered from around you. So excuse them, and plead for forgiveness for them, and consult them in the affairs, and once you are resolved, put your trust in God. Indeed God loves those who trust in Him. If God helps you, no one can overcome you, but if He forsakes you,

who will help you after Him? So in God let all the faithful put their trust. (***3:159–160***)

Elsewhere the Qur'an says:

وَالَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ

And those who respond to their Lord and keep up prayer, and their rule is to take counsel among themselves, and who spend out of what We have given them. (***42:38***)

Thus, ***"...and their rule is to take counsel among themselves"*** refers to an established system for decision–making and consultation of the people who have legitimate power to make decisions. An example of this is seen in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Members of the Parliament who are elected by people make decisions as a counsel. There is also the Expediency Council in which the experts who are appointed by the supreme leader study important issues and give consultation to him. After much consideration, they give their consultation to the leader who then makes his final decision.

Part 2: Appointment of Imam Ali

In the beginning of this article, the point was made that leadership must be made through divine appointment. From this point forward, with a glimpse into evidence from the Qur'an and hadith, the person appointed after the Prophet's death will be discussed.

Verse #1

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

Your guardian is only Allah, His Apostle, and the faithful who maintain the prayer and give the zakat while bowing down. (***5:55***)

As stated earlier in this article, the person implied in this verse is Imam Ali (a). According to both Sunnis and Shi'as, he was the only person who paid charity (zakat) while bowing in prayer. Furthermore, Imam al–Tha'labi, a Sunni Qur'anic exegete, narrates the context and anecdote of this verse from Abu Dharr al–Ghifari[6]:

One day, I was praying with the Prophet in the mosque when a beggar walked in. No one responded to his pleas. The beggar raised his hands towards heavens and said, 'Allah! Be a witness that I came to the Prophet's mosque and no one gave me anything.' Imam Ali (a) was bowing (ruku') during his prayer at that time. He pointed his little finger, on which was a ring, towards the beggar who came forward and took away the ring. This incident occurred in the Prophet's presence, and he raised his face towards heaven and prayed: 'O Lord! my brother Musa had begged of Thee to open his breast and to make his

work easy for him, to loosen the knot of his tongue so that people might understand him, and to appoint from among his relations his brother, as his vizier, and to strengthen his back with Harun and to make Harun his partner in his work. O Allah! Thou said to Musa, ***'We will strengthen thy arm with thy brother. No one will now have access to either of you!'*** (20:25– 36). O Allah! I am Muhammad and Thou hast given me distinction. Open my breast for me, make my work easy for me, and from my family appoint my brother Ali as my vizier. Strengthen my back with him".

The Prophet had not yet finished his prayers when Angel Gabriel revealed the above-quoted verse (5:55). He intended that he wanted someone from his own house, his own people, to help him as his deputy.

The debate lies in the idea that perhaps the word 'believers' in verse 5:55 refers to all believers. However, this cannot be accepted, because there is no general recommendation that asks people to give charity when they are bowing in prayer. This verse refers to that particular event where God identified a trait that was exclusive to Imam Ali (a). Additionally, 'believers' may not always refer to any or all believers. For example, take this verse:

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُتْرَكُوا وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا مِنْكُمْ وَلَمْ يَتَّخِذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَا رَسُولِهِ وَلَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلِيجَةً وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

Do you suppose that you will be let off while Allah has not yet ascertained those of you who wage jihad and those who do not take, besides Allah and His Apostle and the believers, anyone as [***their***] ***confidant? Allah is well aware of what you do.*** (***9:16***)

God says He wants to make it known to the people as to who is prepared to do jihad (mujahid) and to by no means develop a personal relationship with someone other than God, the Prophet, and the believers (mu'minoon). Who are these 'believers'? This does not refer to all believers; rather, this verse suggests that even during the life of the Prophet, Muslims were asked to refer to God, then the Prophet, and then a select group of people who are full-fledged believers, par excellence, not a mu'min in the general sense. Thus, 'mu'minoon' here signifies Imam Ali and the Ahlul Bayt. Additionally, this confirms the idea of ulul amr being present during the Prophet's time.

Verse #2

وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَىٰ وَأَقِمْنَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتِينَ الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِعْنَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

Stay in your houses and do not display your finery with the display of the former [***days of***] ***ignorance. Maintain the prayer and pay the zakat and obey Allah and His Apostle. Indeed Allah***

desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification. (***33:33***)

According to this verse, the Ahlul Bayt are completely purified by God. To be infallible cannot be decided by people since people may realize who has already done mistakes and sins, but they are not necessarily able to decide who never makes a mistake or commits a sin. According to our Sunni brothers, this verse was revealed regarding Lady Fatima, Imam Ali, and Imam Hasan and Husayn. It should also be noted that it is not acceptable to suggest that there can be infallibles among people, but the ruler can be chosen by people from the fallible ones.

Verse #3

ذَٰلِكَ الَّذِي يُبَشِّرُ اللَّهُ عِبَادَهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ ۗ قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَىٰ ۗ وَمَنْ يَقْتَرِفْ حَسَنَةً نَزِدْ لَهُ فِيهَا حُسْنًا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ

That is the good news Allah gives to His servants who have faith and do righteous deeds! Say, "I do not ask you any reward for it except love of [***my***] ***relatives." Whoever performs a good deed, We shall enhance for him its goodness. Indeed Allah is all-forgiving, all- appreciative.*** (***42:23***)

ذَٰلِكَ الَّذِي يُبَشِّرُ اللَّهُ عِبَادَهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ ۗ قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَىٰ ۗ وَمَنْ يَقْتَرِفْ حَسَنَةً نَزِدْ لَهُ فِيهَا حُسْنًا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ

I do not ask you any reward for it, except that anyone who wishes should take the way to his Lord. (***25:57***)

In verse 42:23, the Prophet does not ask for a reward for undertaking his duties except that his followers love and devote themselves to his family. God also mentions that one of the characteristics the prophets shared was that they asked people for nothing in return for their work. Prophet Muhammad is the only Prophet in the Qur'an who says ***"I do not ask you any reward for it, except that anyone who wishes should take the way to his Lord."*** Thus, love for the Ahlul Bayt is a path towards God because of the abovementioned verse.

The reason for Prophet Muhammad being the only prophet to ask this of the people is because he is the Seal of the Prophets (khatam al- nabiyyeen). After him, the task of prophethood would be finished, though the path of presenting true Islam must continue. The Prophet himself was a sabil, a path towards God.

وَيَوْمَ يَعَضُّ الظَّالِمُ عَلَىٰ يَدَيْهِ يَقُولُ يَا لَيْتَنِي اتَّخَذْتُ مَعَ الرَّسُولِ سَبِيلًا

يَا وَيْلَتَىٰ لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أَتَّخِذْ فُلَانًا خَلِيلًا

لَقَدْ أَضَلَّنِي عَنِ الذِّكْرِ بَعْدَ إِذْ جَاءَنِي ۗ وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِلْإِنْسَانِ خَذُولًا

وَقَالَ الرَّسُولُ يَا رَبِّ إِنَّ قَوْمِي اتَّخَذُوا هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنَ مَهْجُورًا

A day when the wrongdoer will bite his hands, saying, "I wish I had followed the Apostle's way! Woe to me! I wish I had not taken so and so as a friend! Certainly he led me astray from the Reminder after it had come to me, and Satan is a deserter of man." And the Apostle will say, "O my Lord! Indeed my people consigned this Qur'an to oblivion." (***25: 27–30***)

On the Day of Judgment, the unjust oppressor will wish to have followed the Prophet because he is a path towards God, the Seal of the Prophets, and no further Prophet will carry on this task. Thus, the Ahlul Bayt are a 'path' as well.

Now the question arises: who is capable of being a path towards God (sabil)? None other than an infallible. And who can choose an infallible? None other than God. Only God can decide to choose those whom, if we love them, we have 'recompensed' the Prophet. Moreover, this 'compensation' is for our benefit because it acts as a road towards God. For example, if I do something for you and you want to repay me, my action and your payment must be proportionate. Of course, this may not be repayment in money; it could be offering supplication, respect, and so forth.

The Prophet did his best to present the risala (message) of Allah to the people. Risala includes all that was revealed in the Qur'an and all of the hardships the Prophet underwent to guide Muslims. Now, upon reading the verse, we want to repay him, or give him ajr. He says he does not ask for ajr, but if we want to gain proximity to God, if we really want to give Him something, we must love His Ahlul Bayt. This is the right path.

If love for the Ahlul Bayt can be accepted as ajr, then it must be proportionate to risala. It is a profound idea to say that Imamate can actually weigh the same as risala. Love on its own is not enough. Imamate is equal to risala because this is how we can ensure that risala is not lost. And as the Prophet was a 'path' (sabil), an Imam is also inherently a sabil. For this reason, the Qur'an says:

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

O Apostle! Communicate that which has been sent down to you from your Lord, and if you do not, you will not have communicated His message, and Allah shall protect you from the people.

Indeed Allah does not guide the faithless lot. (***5:67***)

To paraphrase, God tells the Prophet, “If you do not declare the imamate of Ali, you have not performed your mission.”

To restate, the risala would not have been delivered if Imamate was not declared. It was so important that if Imamate was not declared, the complete message would not have been conveyed. Believing in Imamate and love of the Ahlul Bayt is not merely carrying out actions such as fasting, prayer, charity and pilgrimage to Mecca because these commands are part of the risala. You may have all of Islam, but without Imamate, that spirit of wilayah, Islam is incomplete. For this reason, love for Ahlul Bayt can be taken as ajr for risala. Of course, this ajr is different from customary ones. This is not giving a gift or money to someone in return to his services; rather, it is similar to trying to take advantage of your teacher’s instruction to please him. You study hard and learn something and this becomes your ajr for him. Thus, sometimes ajr is a result of your accomplishments. The payment for the Prophet delivering the message was to believe in Imamate so that his message would be appreciated and preserved.

Verse #4

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

O Apostle! Communicate that which has been sent down to you from your Lord, and if you do not, you will not have communicated His message, and Allah shall protect you from the people. Indeed Allah does not guide the faithless lot. (***5:67***)

According to both Sunni and Shi‘a sources, this verse was revealed on the 18th of Dhil Hijja on the Day of Ghadir. The great Shi‘a scholar Abdul Husayn Amini, author of a masterpiece on Imamate called al-Ghadir, has researched to demonstrate how the Hadith of Ghadir and relevant hadith are narrated by Sunni narrators throughout the generations and how this was also echoed through poetry. In his research of over tens of thousands of books and during his travels around the world to find these manuscripts, Allama Amini proved the hadith of Ghadir as mutawatir, or a successive narration that has been transferred many times through multiple chains that we can accept with no doubt that the Prophet or Imams said it.

In al-Ghadir[7] he narrates from many Sunni scholars, including Jalaluddin Abdul Rahman al-Suyuti, a Shafi’i scholar and prolific author from Egypt. He quotes from one of Suyuti’s books, al-Dur al-Manthur[8]. Suyuti and others narrate from Ibn Mas’ood[9]:

We were reciting this verse in the time of the Prophet Muhammad: ***“O Apostle! Communicate that which has been sent down to you from your Lord...”*** and afterwards they recited in brackets: “Ali is

the leader, Master of the believers. And if you fail to do so, you have not communicated to the people the message that Allah has given you."

Al–Tabari, another famous Sunni scholar, narrates from Zaid ibn Arkam:[10]

When the Prophet reached Ghadir Khumm, he stopped there during midday while the winds were scorching hot. He asked others to stop, and the ones who were in front of the caravan were asked to return. They waited until the others reached them and then they called for prayer. Afterwards, the Prophet spoke in his sermon, and said, 'God has asked me to communicate to you something which, if I do not mention, I have not performed my duty.' And then he said the above verse: ***'O Apostle! Communicate that which has been sent down to you from your Lord, and if you do not, you will not have communicated His message, and Allah shall protect you from the people. Indeed Allah does not guide the faithless lot.'*** (5:67).

The Prophet then said, 'Gabriel has brought me a command from my Lord to stop here and announce to all people, whether black or white, that Ali, the son of Abu Talib, is my son, my wasiy, my successor, and my caliph and Imam after me.' Then Zaid ibn Arkam says, 'The Prophet continued, 'Allah has appointed Ali as your master and Imam and has made obedience to Ali compulsory for all people. All people must obey Ali. Thus, whatever he commands must be performed and whatever he says must be accepted. Whoever disobeys him is cursed. And Allah's mercy is upon the one who accepts him and confirms what he says. Listen to him and obey him. Surely Allah is your maula, the real maula is Allah above all, and Ali is your Imam. The Imamate of my offspring will be through Ali and his children up until the day of Resurrection.'

Afterwards, the Prophet raised Imam Ali ['s hand] so that the Imam was visible to all those who stood there, and said, "Oh people! This is my brother, my successor, the one who has grasped my knowledge. He is like a container for my knowledge. My knowledge is transmitted to him. He is the [strongest] one who believed in me [before anyone else]."

Al–Tha'labi, another Sunni scholar, narrates a hadith regarding the context of verse one of chapter al–Ma'arij, the Ascension: ***"An asker asked for a punishment bound to befall".*** This verse was revealed when the Prophet gathered the people on the Day of Ghadir and asked them to believe in the Imamate of Ali and pay allegiance to him. A person named al–Harith son of Nu'man heard of Imam Ali's appointment. He approached the Prophet on his camel, came down, and asked:

Oh Prophet, you asked us to declare that there is no god but Allah and that you are His Prophet, to say our prayers five times a day, to pay zakat, to fast during the month of Ramadhan, and to perform the Hajj pilgrimage and we accepted to perform all of these duties. However, you are still not satisfied with this until you raised your cousin's hand and asked us to believe in him and you said, "Whomever I am his leader, Ali is also his leader." Is this information from you or from God?

(It is noteworthy to mention the mentality of these people, supposing that Imam Ali's appointment was

something personal from the Prophet.)

The Prophet replied, “By Allah who has no partner, there is no god but Him, verily this is from Allah.” Al–Harith then turned back, remounted his camel, and said, “My Lord, if what Prophet Muhammad says is true, bring a painful punishment on us.” On his way back, a stone came from the heavens, hit his head, and he was eventually killed. Afterwards, the first verse of the chapter The Ascension was revealed, and it was revealed on account of the disbeliever, al–Harith, who asked for a punishment. The punishment came from Allah of “which none can avert from the faithless.” In other words, no one can be protected from His punishment.

Scholars Abdul Husayn Amini, Jalaluddin Abdul Rahman al–Suyuti, and Al–Tabari have confirmed that this verse was revealed on the 18th of Dhil Hijja, the Day of Ghadir, during the final pilgrimage of Prophet Muhammad. Interestingly, the verse and hadiths hint that the Prophet was reluctant to make the announcement because he knew that if he declared Ali as the Imam in this public gathering, many would resist.

And this is why Allah speaks to him strongly – that if he does not communicate this to the people, he has not accomplished his duty.

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

O Apostle! Communicate that which has been sent down to you from your Lord, and if you do not, you will not have communicated His message, and Allah shall protect you from the people. Indeed Allah does not guide the faithless lot. (***5:67***)

And God continues, ***“...and Allah shall protect you from the people.”*** The Prophet was apprehensive over those who may rise against Islam and consequently end it completely. There were people who did not want Ali to be the Imam and were counting the days the Prophet would die so that they could seize power. God reassures the Prophet of His protection. There is no other reason why God would do so if rejection of Ali’s Imamate was unlikely. As seen in the above anecdote, al– Harith was prepared to die rather than believe in Ali as the successor.

After God’s command, the Prophet made the announcement, and the people, including the first and second caliph, paid allegiance to Ali and congratulated him. The second caliph even said, “Well done, O Ali. You have become my master and the master of all the believers, male and female.”

Sunnis acknowledge the accuracy of the hadith, although some have interpreted the term maula to mean ‘friendship’ and ‘love’ of Ali. It is illogical to believe that a large gathering with its profound statements from the Messenger of God, in addition to the fact that he asked the people to pledge allegiance to Ali, was merely to invite them to love him. Regardless of whether it is true or not, the event

of Ghadir undoubtedly gave Ali a distinctive position among the Companions of the Prophet. Given that this is the case, did the people truly love Ali? Nonetheless, after they paid allegiance, God revealed the following verse:

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا ۚ فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ فِي مَخْمَصَةٍ غَيْرَ مُتَجَانِفٍ لِإِثْمٍ ۙ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

Today the faithless have despaired of your religion. So do not fear them, but fear Me. Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion. But should anyone be compelled by hunger, without inclining to sin, then Allah is indeed all-forgiving, all- merciful. (***5:3***)

The beginning of this verse points toward the prohibited foods. Afterwards, Allah describes the important event and then Allah continues describing the prohibited foods. The verse ends with telling people that if they have nothing to eat except some prohibited (non- halal) meat, then it is permissible to eat it when their own lives are in danger.

In the middle of the above verse, God opens the brackets and says, ***"I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion"*** and then continues with prohibited foods. A similar style is seen in the Verse of Purification (33:33).

The beginning of that verse is about the wives of the Prophet. At the end, God says, ***"Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification."***

God speaks in between the lines when referring to the Ahlul Bayt and Imam Ali because there was a threat that if the Imam's appointment was clearly announced, many would have distorted the Qur'an to purge it, which is what they did with hadith.[11] As to why this sentence was placed out of context and or why God did not mention Ali in the Qur'an, perhaps it was to protect the Qur'an from being distorted by those who rejected Imam Ali. Moreover, God may be testing the believers.

To continue, when God says ***"Today the faithless have despaired of your religion. So do not fear them, but fear Me. Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion",*** this means that Islam has now become completed and perfected. It is now so strong that nothing can damage it.

In the sentence ***"But fear Me,"*** does ***"fear me"*** mean fear God? Does it mean God may destroy His religion? First of all, there is a Qur'anic rule that states:

لَهُ مُعَقِّبَاتٌ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ يَحْفَظُونَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ ۗ وَإِذَا

أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ سُوءًا فَلَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ ۚ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَالٍ

He has guardian angels, to his front and his rear, who guard him by Allah's command. Indeed Allah does not change a people's lot, unless they change what is in their souls. And when Allah wishes to visit ill on a people, there is nothing that can avert it, and they have no protector besides Him. (***13:11***)

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يَكُ مُغَيِّرًا نِعْمَةً أَنْعَمَهَا عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ ۙ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

That is because Allah never changes a blessing that He has bestowed on a people unless they change what is in their own souls, and Allah is all-hearing, all-knowing (***8:53***)

If God gives a blessing, He will never take it away unless he or she has changed for the worse to lose that blessing. If Allah gives the blessing of Islam, or Imamate, He will not take it away, unless people act wrongly.

When Allah says ***"fear me"*** it reminds people to observe their actions and God's blessings and then fear that God may take the blessings away from them. Thus, ***"fear me"*** essentially means "fear yourselves", that is, if people do something wrong, they will suffer the consequences of their own actions.

Islam has become so firm that from the Day of Ghadir no unbeliever is able to damage it. If a Muslim acts wrongly, he or she may damage Islam, although Islam cannot be uprooted. As we read Islamic history, we realize the damage Muslims have done to Islam. On the other hand, what harm have the enemies done? The enemies of Islam never had a chance to refute or defeat it. Whatever they did actually strengthened it. Verse 5:3 indicates that without Imamate, Islam cannot be firm. Because it was only after Imamate was declared publicly that Allah said, ***"Today the faithless have despaired of your religion..."***

Even though the Prophet mentioned many cases of Imam Ali's successorship before the Day of Ghadir, the people realized that the significance of this event verified his leadership. And afterwards, those who counted the days to defeat Islam lost hope as they now knew Islam could not end with the death of the Prophet. There would surely exist someone who would protect Islam afterwards.

Subsequently, God says, ***"Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion."***

Up until that day, Islam was neither perfected nor sufficient. Islam before Imamate was not something that pleased Allah. On that day God was pleased with it. On that day it was perfected.

Why doesn't God say ***"Today I have completed your religion"*** instead of "perfected your religion"? In Arabic, we have the terms "complete" (tamam) and "perfect" (kamal). Something which is incomplete

would have some necessary parts missing from it. For example, a house that has all the required facilities such as walls, doors and windows that is not furnished with decorations, carpeting or air conditioning could be said to be complete, but not perfect. On the other hand, for something which is not perfect, it may have all the necessary parts whereas an additional feature of the part is needed in order to make it useful. Thus, Imamate is one of the blessings of God that perfects the list of requirements in Islam. Islam without Imamate is like a body with all the organs, but lacks life and functioning since it has no spirit.

We believe that verse 67 of the chapter al–Maida was revealed on the same day – the day of Ghadir – although some of our Sunni brothers disagree. For example, they believe it to be revealed when Mecca was conquered or on other occasions. But the Shi'a believe that the verse itself indicates that it must have happened a) at the very end of the life of the Prophet, and b) it must be related to something so great whose delivery is of utmost significance.

Thus, God told the Prophet to

يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ۖ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ

"Communicate that which has been sent down to you from your Lord, and if you do not, you will not have communicated His message…" (***5:67***)

on the day of Ghadir.

When the Prophet asked the people to pledge allegiance, and God said, ***"Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion,"*** he implied that all the details of Islam had been explained while only one final aspect was missing, rendering Islam imperfect until the revealing of this verse. Therefore, the revelation of this verse must have happened after everything was explained to the people except one thing, which stands equal to all else, and that can only be Imamate. Thus, this verse cannot have been revealed before. It was exactly on the Day of Ghadir and many narrations confirm it.

Conclusion

God's bestowal of a pious, knowledgeable, courageous, and wise leader and guide who is appointed only by Him to lead the ummah (Muslim nation) after the Prophet's death is indeed a part of His infinite grace (lutf). This leader's infallibility ensures that he is trusted, obeyed, and is capable of defending divine law when performing the duty of presenting Islam after the Prophet Muhammad (s). Many verses in the Qur'an refer to God's full governance in legitimizing a leader, as He refers to Himself as having rule (amr) governance (hukm), full sovereignty (mulk), and the power to choose (ikhtiyar). God is also our guardian (Wali) and He is to be obeyed (ta'a).

Before his demise, God ordered the Prophet to convey to the people that he does not ask for any rewards for undertaking his task of delivering the message except that his followers love and devote themselves to his family. If we do so, we have recompensed the Prophet, which only serves as our benefit as it is the straight path towards God.

As to why the verses of the Qur'an do not explicitly reveal Imam Ali's successorship is perhaps because of the threat that if the Imam's appointment was clearly announced, it would have been distorted by those who rejected him (a), just as hadiths were banned from being written after the Prophet's death for the same reason. Moreover, perhaps it is a test for the believers.

On the Day of Ghadir, God's statement of Islam being both ***'completed'*** and ***'perfected'*** was declared, along with the reprimand to ***"fear Him".*** The warning to "fear Him" reminds people to observe their actions and to benefit from God's blessings and then fear that God may take His blessings away from them. ***"Fear me"*** essentially means 'fear yourselves', that is, if people act wrongly, they will suffer the consequences.

Imamate is one of the blessings of God that perfects the list of requirements in Islam. The full risala, or message, that was successfully delivered by the Prophet would not have been fully delivered if Imamate was not declared. For this reason, love for the Ahlul Bayt can be taken as ajr for risala, as Imamate is the spirit that renders Islam perfect.

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2. The Kharijites are Muslims who supported the authority of Imam Ali ibn abi Talib and then later rejected his leadership. They are distinct from Sunni and Shi'a Muslims and are the only Muslims to disagree with the concept of Imamate.
3. The Qur'an 42:38
4. The Qur'an 3:159
5. See e.g. Al-Imamah wa'l-Siyasah, vol. 1, p. 42; Tarikh of Tabari, vol. 4, p. 229; Ansab al- Ashraf, vol. 5, p. 504. No 1300 & 1301, cited in Ja'fariyan, Rasul, History of The Caliphs From the Death of the Messenger (S) to the Decline of the 'Umayyad Dynasty 11-132 AH (Qum: Ansariyan Publications).
6. A close companion of the Prophet
7. Volume I, p. 214
8. An exegesis of the Qur'an based on hadith
9. One of the companions of the Prophet who was imprisoned because he narrated hadiths during the time of the second caliph
10. A companion of the Prophet
11. After the Prophet's death, the caliphs banned narrating and recording hadiths because they were honoring Imam Ali and the Ahlul Bayt.

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