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An Examination of the Different Interpretations of the Concept of Caliphate in Sunni and Shi'i Tafsirs in Four Qur'anic Verses

Sünnî ve Şîî Tefsirlerinde Hilafet Kavramının Dört Kur'an Âyetinde Bulunan Farklı Yorumlarının İncelenmesi

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Abstract

The discourse surrounding the caliphate provides a critical lens through which to examine the conceptual foundations of power, authority, and legitimacy within Islamic intellectual tradition. This debate has engendered divergent hermeneutical and theological approaches concerning the interpretation of scriptural texts, the mechanisms of communal consensus, and the principles underpinning political legitimacy. This study undertakes a comparative analysis of the exegetical treatments of four Qur'anic verses within Sunni and Shi'i scholarly literature to elucidate the theological and jurisprudential dimensions of the caliphate. Employing qualitative methodology, the research adopts a document-based analytical framework, with primary sources selected through purposive sampling to ensure methodological rigor. The findings demonstrate that both Sunni and Shi'i scholarly traditions engage with the question of succession through the lens of divine designation (naşş), albeit with fundamentally differing theological presuppositions. Sunni exegetes predominantly invoke the Irtidād verse (Q 5:51) and the Şiddiğ verse (Q 4:69) as textual evidence in support of their positions, whereas Shi'i scholars anchor their arguments in the Wilāyah verse (Q 5:55) and the Tabliğ verse (Q 5:67). A close reading of these exegetical traditions reveals that each school interprets these verses through distinct hermeneutical frameworks, resulting in divergent conclusions regarding rightful succession: Sunni scholarship prioritizes the legitimacy of Abū Bakr, while Shi'i scholarship asserts the exclusive right of 'Alī. This analysis underscores the necessity of contextualizing early Islamic historical developments, suggesting that the socio-political contingencies of the formative period remain indispensable to a nuanced understanding of the caliphate debate.

Keywords: Ali, Abu Bakr, Imamate, Caliphate, Divine Designation.

Öz

Halifelik etrafındaki söylem, İslam entelektüel geleneği içinde güç, otorite ve meşruiyetin kavramsal temellerini incelemek için eleştirel bir merceğe sunar. Bu tartışma, kutsal metinlerin yorumlanması, toplumsal uzlaşımın mekanizmaları ve siyasi meşruiyetin altında yatan ilkeler hakkında farklı hermeneutik ve teolojik yaklaşımlar doğurmuştur. Bu çalışma, halifeliğin teolojik ve fikhî boyutlarını aydınlatmak amacıyla, Sünni ve Şii bilimsel literatüründe yer alan dört Kur'an ayetinin tefsirsel yaklaşımlarını karşılaştırmalı olarak analiz etmektedir. Niteliksel metodoloji kullanan araştırma, metodolojik titizliği sağlamak için amaçlı örnekleme yoluyla seçilen birincil kaynaklarla belge tabanlı bir analitik çerçeve benimser. Bulgular, hem Sünni hem de Şii bilimsel geleneklerin, her ne kadar temelden farklı teolojik varsayımlarla olsa da veraset meselesini ilahi atama (nass) merceğinden ele aldığını göstermektedir. Sünni müfessirler, pozisyonlarını desteklemek için ağırlıklı olarak İrtidat ayetini (Mâide Suresi 51. Âyet) ve Şiddik ayetini (Nisa Suresi 69. Âyet) metinsel kanıt olarak ileri sürerken, Şii âlimler argümanlarını Velayet ayeti (Mâide Suresi 55. Âyet) ve Tebliğ ayetine (Mâide Suresi 67. Âyet) dayandırmaktadır. Bu tefsir geleneklerinin yakından okunması, her bir ekolün bu ayetleri farklı hermeneutik çerçeveler aracılığıyla yorumladığını ortaya koymakta ve bu da halifelik konusunda farklı sonuçlara yol açmaktadır: Sünni âlimler Ebu Bekir'in meşruiyetini önceliklendirirken, Şii âlimler Ali'nin münhasır hakkını savunmaktadır. Bu analiz, erken İslam tarihsel gelişmelerini bağlamsallaştırma gerekliliğinin altını çizerek, biçimlenme döneminin sosyo-politik koşullarının halifelik tartışmasının incelikli bir şekilde anlaşılması için vazgeçilmez olduğunu öne sürmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hz. Ali, Hz. Ebu Bekir, İmamet, Hilafet, Nas

Introduction

The Prophet Muhammad functioned as the singular locus of religious and political authority during his lifetime. Aisha's poignant analogy compared the Muslims' uncertainty post-prophetic era to the disarray of a flock of sheep on a tempestuous winter night, deprived of their shepherd's guidance (Ibn Hisham, 1990: 4/179). The concept of the caliphate was introduced as a means of ensuring continuity in leadership following the Prophet Muhammad's death. Sunni scholars maintain that, in the absence of a designated successor, the Prophet's companions assumed the authority to select a new leader. The immediate aftermath of the Prophet's death was marked by the initiation of the burial process, in which Ali was actively involved (Kennedy, 2019: 29-30). The Muslims of Medina (Ansar) gathered at the Sakifa of the sons of Sa'd and nominated Sa'd ibn Ubadah for the caliphate. Upon being informed of this situation by one of the companions, Umar ibn al-Khattab informed Abu Bakr and urged him to go to the Sakifa immediately. Consequently, Abu Bakr and Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah went to the Sakifa of the sons of Sa'd. Sa'd, one of the leaders of the Ansar and in poor health, delivered a speech at the Sakifa, discussing the Ansar's contributions to the Prophet Muhammad and Islam and asserting their right to both religious and political authority. Witnessing this, Abu Bakr felt compelled to speak. While not denying the contributions of the Ansar, he emphasized that the Muhajirun, those who had migrated from Mecca to Medina for Islam, had been by the Prophet's side when no one else was, had endured hardships, and were among the first Muslims. Furthermore, he argued that the Arabs would only accept to rally under the banner of the Quraysh. Continuing his speech, Abu Bakr suggested that allegiance should be pledged to either Umar ibn al-Khattab or Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah. Umar and Ubaydah, both from the Quraysh, addressed Abu Bakr saying, 'You led us in prayer when the Prophet was ill, and you were with him in the cave during the migration. The caliphate is your right,' and Umar said, 'Give me your hand so that I may pledge allegiance to you.' While these events were unfolding, Bashir ibn Sa'd from the Ansar pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr. Bashir's action led the other Ansar present to also pledge allegiance (Tabari, 1989: 2/243; Ashari, 2005: 27-31).

The Sunni narrations regarding the election of the first caliph indicate that the companions did not cite any specific Quranic verses or hadiths, suggesting that there was no explicit divine guidance on this matter. The controversy surrounding the succession of the caliphate between the Meccans and Medinans was as contentious as the Shi'a conviction that the caliphate should have been determined through divine appointment, a concept that is frequently contested within Sunni interpretations (Ukberi, 2003: 178-180). Shi'a doctrine posits that, just as acts of worship are divinely mandated, the caliphate, encompassing both religious and political authority, should be a divinely appointed institution. Shi'a assert that this matter is unequivocal and not open to human discretion. The concept of Imamate is thus considered a foundational tenet of Shi'a belief (Ayyashi, 1990: 1/334; Tusi, 1979: 300; Juwayni, 1992: 352-355; Shahrastani, 1992: 1/144-160; Ibn Khaldun, 1989: 1/489-492; Çağatay and Çubukçu, 1985: 52-59; Dalkılıç, 2011: 15-30, 48-56). Shi'a rely on selected Quranic verses and hadiths as foundational support for this doctrine (Hilli, 1962: 16-58).



The focal point of the caliphate controversy is the dispute between Hazrat Ali (ra) and Hazrat Abu Bakr (ra). Shi'a contend that Hazrat Ali (ra) was the rightful claimant to the caliphate, which was unjustly taken from him by Hazrat Abu Bakr (ra). This claim was first advanced by Hazrat Abbas, the Prophet Muhammad's (saw) uncle (Yaqubi, 1960: 11/128; Ibn Qutaybah, 1990: 1/33; Ibn al-Athir, 1989: 1/196; Fıđlalı, 1996: 60-63; Ibn A'sam, 1986: 3/326; Akbar, 1971: 28-31; Ibn al-Nadim, 1971: 248- 251). Sunni theology provides counter-narratives to the Shi'a narrative that the caliphate was wrongfully taken from Hazrat Ali (ra) by Hazrat Abu Bakr (ra) and Hazrat Umar (ra). Sunni scholars offer alternative exegeses of the Quranic verses cited by Shi'a in support of their position (Yaqubi, 1960: 11/128; Ibn Qutaybah, 1990: 1/33; Ibn al-Athir, 1989: 1/196; Fıđlalı, 1996: 52-60). This research seeks to conduct a comparative analysis of the diverse interpretations of the caliphate concept within four specific Qur'anic verses, as expounded upon in the exegetical works of Sunni and Shia scholars. Utilizing a qualitative research approach, this study conducts a document analysis. The sources for this study were selected through purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique. This issue has been examined numerous times throughout Islamic history. However, scholars have frequently been unable to transcend the influence of their sectarian affiliations, historical context, and the socio-political conditions of their time, which has compromised the objectivity of their academic work. Consequently, this study seeks to fill a significant gap in the academic literature.

The Assertion of the Divine Appointment of the Imam/Caliph Within Shi'a and Sunni Theological Frameworks

Within Shi'a theology, the concept of Imamate is considered a foundational pillar of faith, an indispensable element of belief, and a logically coherent doctrine (Ukbari, 1993: 42-45; Tusi, 1979: 291-293; Bozan, 2007: 40-46). The selection of an individual to succeed the Prophet in the role of Caliph, a position combining religious and political authority, is not open to debate (Kummı, 1975: 1/92-98; Muzaffer, 1978: 50-52). The appointment of the Caliph is determined solely by divine decree, and is not subject to human reasoning, emotion, or legal interpretation (Ukbari, 1993: 52-53). The Caliphate is frequently posited as a religious obligation within Islamic theological discourse, juxtaposed with other fundamental acts of worship including prayer, jihad, fasting, zakat, and pilgrimage (Ayyashi, 1990: 1/334; Tusi, 1979: 300; Tabatabaei, 1997: 1/270). The primary objective of Shi'a theology in grounding the concept of the Caliphate is to establish the legitimacy of Ali ibn Abi Talib as the first rightful Caliph. To this end, scholars such as Ibn Mutahhar al-Hilli (d. 726/1325) have presented arguments to demonstrate that those who accepted Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman as caliphs acted against reason and tradition. Among these rational arguments, one central claim is that the prerequisite for the Caliphate or Imamate is infallibility (masumiyyat), and that no one but Ali possessed this quality. Furthermore, they argue that a Caliph/Imam must have been sinless even before converting to Islam, a condition that only Ali, who converted at a young age, fulfills. The first three Caliphs, having worshipped idols before Islam, are thus deemed ineligible. Additionally, Shi'a maintain that the Caliph must be divinely appointed, and while no such divine

appointment is claimed for the first three Caliphs, there is clear evidence, according to Shi'a, for Ali's appointment. Al-Hilli cites eighty Qur'anic verses and twenty-eight hadith as evidence. The most significant of these verses are those concerning apostasy (al-Ma'ida 5:54), guardianship (al-Ma'ida 5:55), and the delivery of the message (al-Ma'ida 5:67) (Hilli, 1987: 171-190; Kummî, 1909: 1/48; Ayyashi, 1990: 1/326; Meclisi, 2008: 1/436).

Sunni theology does not rely on the notion of a divine appointment for the Caliphate/Imamate. It maintains that the selection of Abu Bakr was a consequence of historical developments. Nonetheless, some commentators have advanced interpretations to justify Abu Bakr's position as the first Caliph.

Qur'an 5:54: The Verse on Apostasy: A Comparative Study of Shi'a and Sunni Interpretations

Among the verses that are the subject of much debate is the verse concerning apostasy. This verse prognosticates that a segment of people will deviate from the faith, abandoning Islam after having converted to it.

Verse:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَنْ يَرْتَدَّ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِينِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي اللَّهَ بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ أَذِلَّةٌ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَعِزَّةٌ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ يُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَخَافُونَ لَوْمَةَ لَائِمٍ ذَلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

O believers, if any of you should apostatize from their faith, know that Allah will bring into being a community whom He will both love and be loved by. They will exhibit humility towards fellow believers while maintaining a resolute stance against the unbelievers. They will engage in jihad in the path of Allah and remain undeterred by the censure of any detractor. This is the grace that Allah bestows upon whomever He wills. Indeed, Allah's grace is boundless, and His knowledge encompasses all things (al-Ma'idah 5/54).

In Shi'a thought, according to Sheikh Mufid (d. 413/1022), this verse indicates the imamate/caliphate of Ali (ra) due to three reasons: firstly, the verse was revealed concerning the people of Basra, who had apostatized. Imam Ali fought against the people of Basra, whereas Abu Bakr did not fight against any apostates but against those who refused to pay zakat despite being people of the qibla. Secondly, Allah states that He loves the community that fights against the apostates. Muhammad (pbuh) said that this person was Ali on the day of Haybar. Abu Bakr, on the other hand, oppressed Fatima and her children. Imam Ali is humble towards believers and very harsh towards disbelievers, while Abu Bakr oppressed the believers (Ukberi, 2003: 178-183). Both Muhammad b. Hasan at-Tusi and Fadl b. Hasan at-Tabarsi, eminent exegetes of the 5th and 6th centuries AH respectively, concurred with this interpretation (Tusi, 1980: 3/553-557; Tabarsi, 2005: 3/291-292; Bahraini, 2006: 2/473). Despite Sheikh Mufid's contention that Abu Bakr did not combat apostasy, historical records provide evidence to the contrary (Wahidi, 1994: 2/199-200; Huwwari, 1990: 1/479-480; Tabari, 2001: 8/518-524; Zamakhshari, 1998: 2/252-254).

Zeccaaj, a prominent Sunni exegete of the 4th century AH, posits that the Quranic verse referring to those who 'revert from their religion' was specifically addressed to certain



Muslims following the setback at Uhud. Moreover, he interprets this verse as a prediction of future apostasy among the Muslim community after the Prophet's demise (Zeccac, 1988: 2/182-183). Based on the accounts of Tabari, whose chain of transmission includes Ali ibn Abi Talib, and the preponderance of historical narrations, it is Abu Bakr and his companions who are identified as those who engaged in military campaigns against apostates (Wahidi, 1994: 2/200; Mawardi, 2005: 2/48-49). An alternative interpretation suggests that the community commended in the verse refers to the people of Yemen. This interpretation is based on a narration where the Prophet Muhammad explicitly identified Abu Musa al-Ash'ari and his tribe as the group destined to combat apostasy (Tabari, 2001: 8/521-523). Nasafi posits that the Quranic verse in question attests to the prophethood of Muhammad and the caliphate of Abu Bakr (Nesefi, 1997: 1/454-455). In his exegesis, Zamakhshari contends that the verse demonstrates a prophetic attribute, as it predicts events that would occur in the future. He further subdivides those who apostatized into two groups: those who rejected the faith during the Prophet's lifetime and those who did so after his death, providing a nuanced understanding of the verse's temporal context (Zamakhshari, 1998: 2/252-254). In his exegesis, Maturidi advances the argument that the verse in question serves as a theological foundation for Abu Bakr's caliphate. He supports this claim by citing Abu Bakr's immediate response to the apostasy crisis, where he led the Muslim community in military campaigns against those who had rejected the faith (Maturidi, 2005: 3/541).

Fahreiddin Razi argues that Shi'a interpretations of this verse are fundamentally flawed, offering a counterargument that challenges their theological perspective. Shi'a doctrine posits that those who acknowledged Abu Bakr's caliphate were apostates, having rejected verses that, in their view, clearly establish Ali's rightful claim to the imamate. However, Razi highlights the Quranic verse promising divine intervention in cases of apostasy. According to this verse, God would send a community to rectify such deviations. Therefore, Razi argues, if the Shi'a assertion were accurate, Allah would have intervened to restore the caliphate to Ali (Razi, 1981: 12/22). In his exegesis, Fahreiddin Razi offers a twofold interpretation of the verse to substantiate the legitimacy of Abu Bakr's caliphate. Firstly, he contends that the verse's command to engage in military action against apostates is a direct reference to Abu Bakr's leadership during the Ridda wars. Secondly, Razi argues that the contextual specificity of the verse excludes the possibility of applying it to other groups like the Yemenis or Persians, who did not participate in these conflicts. Thus, Razi concludes that the verse unequivocally refers to Abu Bakr and his companions (Razi, 1981: 12/24). Al-Baqillani, a prominent theologian, contends that this verse can be interpreted as a justification for Abu Bakr's assumption of the caliphate (Baqillani, 2000: 61-63).

Qur'an 5:55, the 'Verse of Wilayah': Its Role in Shi'a and Sunni Interpretations of Leadership

The verse of wilayah has been a focal point of theological discourse, particularly concerning the question of legitimate authority within the Muslim community.

Verse:

لَنْمَّا وَلِيكُمْ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ

Only Allah, His Messenger, and the believers who establish prayer and give zakah while they are in prostration have authority over you (al-Ma'idah 5/55).

There are two narrations concerning the reason for the revelation of this verse. According to the first, after the revelation, the Prophet Muhammad encountered a needy person in the mosque. The Prophet asked the person if anyone had given him anything. The person replied that he had been given a ring. The Prophet then asked who had given him the ring. The person indicated Ali ibn Abi Talib while he was in prostration. Upon this, the Prophet Muhammad said: 'Whoever I am the wali of, Allah is also his wali. O Allah, be a friend to his friend and an enemy to his enemy. (Ayyaşi, 1990: 1/327; Kummî, 1909: 1/170). Sunni thought presents various hadith narrations on this subject (Tabari, 2001: 8/532-533; Ibn Kathir, 1997: 3/138). The second narration concerning the revelation of this verse posits that it was revealed following Abdullah ibn Salam's conversion to Islam and the subsequent ostracism he faced from the Jewish community (Tabari, 2001: 8/534-535).

A consensus among scholars, including Tusi, Tabarsi, Sheikh Mufid, Muhammad ibn Masud al-Ayyashi (d. 320/932), and Fayd al-Kashani, is that this verse is a reference to Imam Ali (Ukbari, 2003: 182-183; Tabarsi, 2005: 3/296-298; Tusi, 1980: 3/559-565; Ayyashi, 1990: 1/327; Kashani, 1960: 2/45). Based on the interpretations of Ayyashi and Kashani, the revelation of this verse coincided with the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) desire to publicly proclaim Imam Ali's succession. However, concerns regarding the Quraysh's rejection led to a delay. It was only after the revelation of the verse of Notification that the Prophet felt emboldened to formally announce Imam Ali's designated role (Ayyaşi, 1990: 1/327; Kashani, 1960: 2/45). According to the tafsir scholars, when this verse was revealed, a group of the companions gathered in the mosque and discussed what they should do. Knowing that rejecting this verse would make them unbelievers, they decided to accept the truth of what the Prophet Muhammad had brought but to reject the caliphate of Ali. Upon this, the verse 83 of Surah An-Nahl was revealed: 'They know the favor of Allah, yet they deny it. And most of them are disbelievers (Kashani, 1960: 2/45-47; Bahraini, 2006: 2/475). Both Imam Maturidi and Tabari posit that the verse does not provide explicit evidence for Ali's claim to the caliphate or imamate. Their exegesis, however, acknowledges the meritorious nature of Ali's actions and posits that the verse's scope extends to the entire community of believers (Maturidi, 2005: 3/545; Huwwari, 1990: 1/481-482; Tabari, 2001: 8/534-535; Bayzawi, 2003: 2/132; Nesefi, 1997: 1/454-455; Ibn Kathir, 1997: 3/137-138; Suyuti, 2004: 12/52).

The Quranic Verse on the Obligation to Convey the Message (Surah al-Ma'idah, Verse 67) or the Historical Event of Ghadir Khum

Another verse that has been extensively debated is the verse of conveyance, which underscores the Prophet Muhammad's unequivocal obligation to communicate the divine revelation to humanity. This verse serves to highlight the fundamental duty of the Prophet



to transmit God's message in its entirety, a matter that has been central to scholarly discussions on the scope and authority of the Prophet's mission.

Verse:

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

O Prophet, convey that which has been revealed to you from your Lord. Indeed, if you fail to do so, you will not have conveyed His message. And Allah will protect you from the people. Indeed, Allah does not guide the disbelieving community. (al-Ma'idah 5/67).

According to Shi'a beliefs, during the Farewell Pilgrimage, Gabriel revealed to Muhammad that he should declare the wilayah (divine authority) of Imam Ali. However, fearing potential reactions, Muhammad delayed the announcement for three days (Ayyashi, 1990: 1/332-334; Kummî, 1909: 1/168-172; Tabarsi, 2005: 3/313-314; Tusi, 1980: 3/588-589). Upon arriving at Ghadir Khum, the Prophet Muhammad declared, 'Whoever is my mawla, Ali is his mawla; he is to me as Moses was to Aaron, except that there will be no prophet after me.' Ayyaşı, in his interpretation, connects this declaration with Quran 11:12, where God warns the Prophet of almost abandoning a part of the revelation. According to Ayyaşı, these verses were revealed when Muhammad hesitated to proclaim Ali's imamate/caliphate. Subsequently, God reassured the Prophet with a revelation commanding him to convey this message, after which Muhammad announced Ali's leadership (Ayyashi, 1990: 2/98). However, Ibn Kathir argues that this verse is not related to the imamate/caliphate of Ali, asserting that its addressees were the polytheists and that it belongs to the early revelations (Ibn Kathir, 1997: 4/310). The incident of Ghadir Khum is also mentioned in the authoritative sources of Sunni thought (Ibn Hanbal, 1994: 4/281; Muslim, 1991: 36; Ibn Majah, 1997: 106). However, al-Tabari (d. 310/923), while mentioning the narrations related to this verse, does not mention the Ghadir Khumm incident at all. Before this verse was revealed, the Companions exerted great effort to protect the Prophet Muhammad. After this verse was revealed, the Prophet Muhammad stated that there was no longer a need for this protection and that God had taken on the task of protection (Razi, 1981: 12/51-53; Demircan, 1996: 21-45). Ibn Hisham, however, narrates a different account. He states that the words, 'Would you not like to be to me as Aaron was to Moses? But there will be no prophet after me,' were spoken by the Prophet Muhammad to Ali ibn Abi Talib when he left him in charge of his household during the Tabuk expedition. According to Ibn Hisham, Ali, upon hearing rumors spread by hypocrites suggesting that the Prophet found him burdensome and wished to be rid of him, came to the Prophet and it was in this context that these words were spoken. Ibn Hisham further specifies that this incident occurred in a region called Jurf, located approximately three miles from Medina (Ibn Hisham, 2018: 4/240).

Ibn Taymiyyah asserts that there is no inherent connection between the incident at Ghadir Khumm, where Ali was designated as the wali, and the verse of notification. He maintains that the temporal context and the circumstances surrounding the revelation of the verse of notification are separate and distinct from those of the Ghadir Khumm event.

As he contends, if such a significant matter as the caliphate had been announced to the Companions, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) would have mentioned it in his Farewell Sermon. However, no narration supports such a claim. It is incorrect to interpret the term 'maula' in the narration to mean 'caliph'. If it had meant so, the Companions would undoubtedly have expressed this and mentioned it during the election of the caliph (Ibn Taymiyyah, 2001: 4/82-87). Imam Maturidi criticizes the Shiite belief that the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) example of appointing Hazrat Ali as his successor, similar to the appointment of Hazrat Harun as the successor of Hazrat Musa, justifies their pursuit of the caliphate. According to this view, since Hazrat Harun was the successor of Hazrat Musa, Hazrat Ali should have been the successor of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Those who did not hand over the caliphate to Hazrat Ali are thus considered to have committed injustice. Imam Maturidi provides two responses to this. Firstly, he argues that this situation is related to the brotherly bond between Hazrat Musa and Hazrat Harun, and therefore cannot be used as evidence for the caliphate. Secondly, if the intention is to imply the imamate/caliphate, then this refers to the election of Hazrat Ali as the fourth caliph (Maturidi, 2005: 3/545-546; Nesefti, 1997: 1/421-422; Ibn Taymiyyah, 2001: 4/87-90; Ibn Kathir, 1997: 3/150-151; Ibn Ashur, 1984: 6/259-261; Aycan and Söylemez, 1998: 207).

The Verse of Companionship with the Righteous (Surah An-Nisa, Verse 69)

Within the corpus of Quranic verses that have been subject to extensive theological and exegetical analysis, the 'Verse of the Truthful' stands out as a particularly significant passage that describes a select group of believers who have earned divine favor.

Verse:

وَمَنْ يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ أُولَٰئِكَ رَفِيقًا

Indeed, those who obey Allah and His Messenger will be in the company of those whom Allah has graced with His favor: the prophets, the truthful, the martyrs, and the righteous. And excellent companions they are (An-Nisa 4/69).

Fahreddin Razi has exclusively cited this verse as evidence. He has analyzed this verse in two parts, employing the method of interpreting the Quran with the Quran. In the first part, he argues that the phrase 'Guide us to the straight path, the path of those whom You have favored' (Al-Fatiha 1:6-7) can be interpreted as 'Guide us to the path of those whom You have favored.' He further asserts that another verse explaining Al-Fatiha is verse 69 of Surah An-Nisa. Moreover, he posits that the foremost of the truthful, Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, accompanied the Prophet Muhammad in the hijrah, challenging death (Ibn Hammam, 1989: 1/296; Ibn Qutaybah, 1978: 187; Tabari, 2001: 11/463-465; Zeccac, 1988: 2/449-450; Ibn Atiyya, 2001: 3/36; Ibn Arafe, 2008: 2/308; Ibn Juzayy, 1995: 1/358; Ici, 2004: 1/66; Halebi, 1990: 6/52; Ibn Ashur, 1984: 10/203) Therefore, in this verse, Allah has commanded to ask for the guidance that He had granted to Abu Bakr and His other righteous servants (Ibn Abi Hatim, 1997: 9/3131-3132; Baghawi, 1989: 1/262; Mawdudi, 2000: 2/237-238). However, if Abu Bakr had been an oppressor, it would not have been



permissible to follow him and to be under his command to ensure that he was elected to the Imamate (Baghawi, 1989: 1/263).

The second part: In the verse, the office of righteousness is juxtaposed with the office of prophethood. Indeed, Allah (swt) said of Prophet Ismail: "انه كان صادق الوعد" he was faithful to his promise (Maryam 19/54) and for Prophet Idris: "كان صديقا نبيا" he was a confirming prophet (Maryam 19/41). In describing those upon whom Allah has bestowed His blessings, the Quran asserts that they are in the company of the prophets and the truthful. This assertion implies that there exists no hierarchical distinction between prophethood and the status of being truthful. Consequently, the Muslim community, through consensus, recognized Hazrat Abu Bakr as the most virtuous among the believers and appointed him as the rightful successor to the Prophet Muhammad. Upon his demise, he was interred in close proximity to the Prophet (Razi, 1981: 10/177-178).

Conclusion

The Shi'a school posits that the Qur'anic verse 5:54, pertaining to apostasy, primarily serves as evidence for their interpretation. They present three arguments: Firstly, they contend that Hazrat Ali engaged in military action against the apostates of Basra. Secondly, they assert that the verse indicates divine love for these individuals, as conveyed by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to Hazrat Ali on the day of Khaybar. Thirdly, they argue that Hazrat Ali's demeanor was characterized by humility towards believers and firmness towards disbelievers. Based on these premises, they conclude that the verse is specifically referring to Hazrat Ali. Conversely, the Sunni school offers two primary interpretations. One interpretation posits that the verse served as a divine challenge to prevent widespread apostasy among the Muslim community following the Battle of Uhud. Alternatively, it is argued that the verse refers to the campaigns led by Hazrat Abu Bakr against those who refused to pay zakat. Consequently, the Sunni school concludes that the verse primarily pertains to Hazrat Abu Bakr. Secondly, the Shi'a school cites Qur'an 5:55, the verse pertaining to guardianship, as evidence. They present two primary arguments. Firstly, they contend that subsequent to the revelation of this verse, an incident occurred wherein the Prophet Muhammad, upon encountering a needy individual in the mosque, inquired about the provision of charity. The needy person indicated Hazrat Ali, who was prostrating in prayer. In response, the Prophet declared a divine covenant of guardianship regarding Hazrat Ali. Secondly, they argue that the Prophet had intended to publicly proclaim Hazrat Ali's wilayat upon the revelation of this verse, but refrained due to fearing a mass apostasy among the Quraysh. However, he eventually fulfilled this intention following the revelation of the verse concerning the propagation of Islam. Based on these arguments, the Shi'a school concludes that the verse is unequivocally referring to Hazrat Ali. Conversely, the Sunni school offers two primary interpretations. The first interpretation posits that the verse was revealed in the context of Abdullah ibn Salam's conversion to Islam and subsequent abandonment by the Jewish community. The second interpretation argues that while the verse does not explicitly establish Hazrat Ali's imamate

or caliphate, it nevertheless commends his righteous act and is applicable to all believers universally.

The Shi'a school has presented the 67th verse of the Ma'ida Surah, the verse of preaching, as evidence, linking it to the incident of Ghadir Khum. According to the Shi'a school, Gabriel came to the Prophet Muhammad and told him to declare the wilayat (spiritual leadership) of Ali during the Farewell Pilgrimage. The Prophet Muhammad, fearing reactions, delayed the declaration for three days. When he arrived at Ghadir Khum, he said, "Whoever is my mawla (master), Ali is also his mawla. He is to me like Moses and Aaron, except that no prophet will come after me." According to the Sunni school, this verse was revealed in the early years of prophethood. Its addressee was the polytheists. Another view is that the Companions protected the Prophet Muhammad with a high level of security until this verse was revealed. However, after this verse was revealed, there was no need for protection. According to another view, although the verse of preaching has no connection to this event, the incident in which the Prophet Muhammad uttered the aforementioned words occurred as follows: When the Prophet Muhammad went on the Tabuk expedition, he left Ali in charge of the household in Medina. However, the hypocrites did not remain idle and spread rumors that the Prophet Muhammad was tired of Ali and had left him in Medina to get rid of him. Upon this, Ali caught up with the Prophet Muhammad in a region called Jurf, three miles from Medina. When the Prophet Muhammad learned of the situation, he said to Ali, "Whoever is my mawla, Ali is also his mawla. He is to me like Moses and Aaron, except that no prophet will come after me." According to Sunni thought, this situation is similar to the brotherhood of Aaron to Moses. The verse of the truthful, which is the subject of the claims, has been cited as evidence only by Fahreddin Razi, who belongs to the Sunni school. He examined this verse in two situations. Firstly, he mentioned the incident in the cave during the migration and emphasized that Abu Bakr was the first of the truthful. He stated that Abu Bakr was worthy of the verse "Guide us to the straight path" in the Fatiha Surah and that the believers should also be guided to the path of Abu Bakr according to the verse of the truthful. Secondly, he stated that there is no rank between prophethood and truthfulness. Therefore, he stated that Abu Bakr is the best of Muslims.

After all these discussions, no definitive verse or interpretation regarding the issue of the Caliphate has been accepted by both schools of thought. The incident of Saqifa also shows that the companions of the Prophet Muhammad did not use any specific verse. In light of all the interpretations, it is understood that the interpretations made of the verses mentioned by both schools are in accordance with their own sects. The reality is that the historical trajectory led to the situation as it ultimately unfolded. Ali, as the Prophet Muhammad's closest companion, was preoccupied with the funeral arrangements following the death of the Messenger of Allah and was unaware of the developments at Saqifa. Meanwhile, upon hearing of the Ansar's gathering, Abu Bakr recognized the urgency of the matter and intervened swiftly to prevent the political situation from



becoming more complex and to maintain unity within the Muslim community. In due course, Ali also pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr.

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