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Twelve Imams (as): A Study on the Number and the Names

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Abstract:

Imāms (as) of the Shī'a are twelve men from the family of the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) who are, according to Shi'a teachings, successors of the Prophet (pbuh) and the guardians and leaders of the society after the Prophet (pbuh). The first Imam is Imam 'Ali (as) and the other Imams (as) are his and lady Fatima's (as) sons and grandsons. There are a lot of hadiths those prove Imams after prophet are twelve and mention their names. Hadith of Twelve Caliphs is a hadith by Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) according to which his caliphs or successors are only twelve people, all of whom are from Quraysh. Hadith of Jabir in the exegesis of the verse, *ulul Amr* is a hadith from Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) to which the Shi'a appeal to demonstrate the imamate and specify their Imams. The hadith was transmitted by Jabir b. 'Abd Allah al-Ansari. In this hadith, the Prophet (pbuh) explicitly mentioned the Twelve Imams (as) of the Shi'a as well as the title of the Fifth Imam. Hadith of *Lawh* (the Tablet) of Fatima al-Zahra (as) is among the authentic narrations which is reported in various traditional sources. Its authenticity and the explicit mention of the names of true successors of the Prophet (pbuh), has placed it among the significant evidences to prove Shi'a Imams' Imama and their rightful immediate successor-ship after the Prophet (pbuh).

Keywords: Imams, Successors of Prophet, Imam Ali (as), Hadith of Twelve Caliphs, Hadith of Jabir, Hadith of *Lawh*, Vers of *Ulul Amr*. Names of Imams.



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Introduction

The Imamate of Imam Ali (as) is proven due to the repeated affirmation of the Prophet (pbuh) and the Imamate of the other eleven people is also proven according to the text of the Prophet (pbuh) and the text of the previous Imam (as).

The Shia group has many documents to prove its claim. Imams (as) are appointed by Almighty Allah. Divine knowledge, infallibility and the right of intercession [for people] are bestowed them by Allah. Verses of the Qur'an have discussed the issue of imamate ; such as the verses of *ulul Amr, Tathir, al-Wilaya, al-Ikmal, al-Tabligh* and *al-Sadiqin*.

In some narrations from the Prophet (pbuh), the qualities, the names and the number of Imams (as) have been mentioned; such as Hadith al-Thaqalayn, Hadith of Manzila, Hadith of Safina, Hadith of Yawm al-Dar, Hadith of Madinat al-'Ilm, Hadith al-Tayr al-Mashwiyy, Hadith al-Rayat, Hadith al-Kisa', Hadith of Jabir and Hadith of the Twelve Caliphs. According to these narrations, all of Imams (as) are from Quraysh and they are the Ahl al-Bayt (as) (household) of the Prophet (pbuh) and the last Imam is the Promised Mahdi (May Allah hasten his reappearance).

Accordingly, the successors of the Prophet (pbuh) are the following twelve individuals: Ali b. Abi Talib (as), al-Hasan b. 'Ali (as), al-Husayn b. 'Ali (as), 'Ali b. al-Husayn (as), Mohammad b. 'Ali (as), Ja'far b. Mohammad (as), Musa b. Ja'far (peace be upon them), 'Ali b. Musa (as), Mohammad b. 'Ali al-Jawad (as), 'Ali b. Mohammad (as), al-Hasan b. 'Ali (as) and Al-Hujjat ibn al-Hasan al-Mahdi (May Allah hasten his reappearance)

Among Muslims, those who believe in the Imamate and caliphate of these great men and follow them are called " Imami Shia " or "Twelfth Shia". This group of Shias is considered the largest and most important Shia sect today . Shia also has other sects - such as the Zaydiyya and Isma'ilism who do not share the same number of Imams.



Proofs of Imamate

Proofs for Imamate have always been an important topic of books for Twelver Shi'a and Shi'a scholars have many works with different approaches about that. *Kitab Sulaym b. Qays al-Hilali's* written in late 1st/7th century is among the oldest works in which the Twelve Imams are mentioned. (Sulaym b. Qays al-Hilali. p. 227; Al-Najashi, Rijal, p. 440)

About the explicit mentioning of the Twelve Imams (peace be upon them), there are works such as Ibn 'Ayyash al-Jawhari's *Muqtadhab al-athar Fi al-Nass 'Ala al-A'immah al-Ethnayi ashar* (d. 401/1010-1) and al-Khazzaz al-Qummi's *Kifayat al-athar Fi al-Nass 'Ala al-A'immah al-Ethnayi ashar* (late 4th/10th century) in which their authors have made efforts to collect narrations about the explicit mentioning of the Twelve Imams (peace be upon them) from different Shi'a and Sunni sources.

In addition to the books of nusus (explicit references), other works under the general title of "Dala'il al-Imama" (proofs for imamate) about the Imams' (peace be upon them) acts of wonder and miracles can be mentioned such as *Dala'il al-imama* attributed to Ibn Rustam al-Tabari (printed 1383/1963, Najaf), or works under the general title of "al-Wasiyya" which explain the transmission of deputyship in the chain of the Twelve Imams (as) such as al-Mas'udi's *Ithbat al-wasiyya* (printed Najaf, Haydariyyah library).

Proving the imamate of the Twelve Imams (as) based on hadith has also been a focus of Twelver Shi'a theologians and many important theological works have been dedicated to this topic. (Al-Sharif al-Murtada. p. 502-503; Al-Hilli, p. 314) Among the most famous of these hadiths are Hadith al-Thaqalayn, Hadith al-Manzila, Hadith al-Safina, Hadith Yawm al-Dar, Hadith Madinat al-'Ilm, Hadith al-Tayr al-Mashwiyy, Hadith al-Rayah, Hadith al-Kisa', Hadith of Jabir, and Hadith of the Twelve Caliphs. We will introduce some hadiths that contain the number of Twelve Imams and the names of them (as):



1. **Hadith of Twelve Caliphs** that explicitly mentions the number of the Twelve.
2. **Hadith of Jabir** that completely mentions the names of Twelve Imams (as).
3. **Hadith of Lawh** that completely mentions the names of Twelve Imams (as) and describes some of their outward and spiritual characteristics.

1. **Hadith of Twelve Caliphs**

Hadith of Twelve Caliphs (successors) is a hadith by Prophet Mohammad (pbuh). according to this hadith his caliphs or successors are only twelve people, all of them are from Quraysh.

The hadith was quoted with different wordings, and is taken as reliable by Sunni scholars of hadiths. The Shi'as deal with this hadith as evidence for the imamate of their twelve Imams (as). Sunni scholars have no consensus over the instances of the twelve caliphs referred to this hadith. In addition to Shi'a hadiths, there are certain hadiths narrated in Sunni sources referring to twelve caliphs or imams after the Prophet (pbuh). During the 1st/7th century, there are hadiths narrated from some of the Companions of the Prophet (pbuh), give in the good news about twelve imams (as) after the Prophet (pbuh) which were being circulated in various meetings. Among those hadiths, the hadith narrated by Jabir b. Samura which is mentioned in both *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* is the most famous one. In this hadith, it is mentioned that emirs (imams or caliphs) after the Prophet (pbuh) are 12 from Quraysh.

Theme of the Hadith of Twelve Caliphs in Shia sources

Who are the Twelve Caliphs? There is no doubt among Shi'as that the instances of the Twelve Caliphs are the twelve Imams.

- A. Sheikh Tabarsi has narrated in his book *E'lam Al-Wara be Aalam Al-Huda*, from Abu Ja'far ibn Babawayh Sheikh Al-sadough, that the Prophet of Islam, peace be upon him and his family, said:



"The Imams after me are twelve. The first of them is Ali ibn Abi Talib and the last of them is the Qa'im. They are my caliphs, successors and friends, and after me they are the proof of Allah among my nation. Whoever loves them is a believer, and whoever denies them is a disbeliever. (Tabarsi, vol. 1, p. 539.).

- B. In Hadith of Jabir ...prophet (pbuh)says; ... هم خلفائى يا جابر وأئمة "They are my successors and the imams of Muslims after me. (Tabarsi, vol. 2, p. 182; Qunduzi, vol. 3, p. 398-399)

2. Hadith of Jabir and the verse of *ulul Amr*

Hadith of Jabir is a hadith from Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) to which the Shi'a appeal to demonstrate the imamate and specify their Imams (as). The hadith was transmitted by Jabir b. 'Abd Allah al-Ansari. In this hadith, the Prophet (pbuh) explicitly mentioned the Twelve Imams (as) of the Shi'a as well as the title of the Fifth Imam.

Text of the Hadith after the revelation of *ulul Amr* Verse

يا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ فَإِن تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِن كُنتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا

"O, you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority (*ulul Amr*) 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 favorable in outcome." (Qur'an 4:59)

Jabir b. 'Abd Allah al-Ansari asked the Prophet (pbuh): "O the messenger of Allah! We know Allah and His messenger; but we need to know the *Ulul Amr*." The Prophet (pbuh) replied:

هم خلفائى يا جابر وأئمة المسلمين من بعدى أولهم على بن أبى طالب ثم الحسن ثم الحسين ثم على بن الحسين ثم محمد بن على المعروف فى التوراة بالباقر، ستركه يا جابر فإذا لقيته فأقرئه منى السلام ثم الصادق جعفر بن محمد، ثم موسى بن جعفر، ثم على بن موسى، ثم محمد بن على، ثم على بن محمد، ثم الحسن بن على، ثم سمى وكنى حجة الله فى أرضه وبقيته فى عباده ابن الحسن بن على... ذاك الذى يغيب عن شيعته وأوليائه غيبة لا يثبت فيها على القول بإمامته الا من امتحن الله قلبه للإيمان....



"They are my successors and the imams of Muslims after me. The first is Ali b. Abi Talib, and then Hasan, then Husayn, then Ali b. al-Husayn, then Mohammad b. Ali known in the Torah as "Baqir", whom you will see at an old age, and whenever you see him, send my regards to him. After Mohammad b. Ali, Ja'far b. Mohammad, then Musa b. Ja'far, then Ali b. Musa, then Mohammad b. Ali, then Ali b. Mohammad, then Hasan b. Ali, and then his son who is my namesake and has the same kunya as mine... He is the one who will hide from his people's view, and his occultation will be so long that only people with firm beliefs will continue to believe in him". (Tabarsi, vol. 2, p. 182; Qunduzi, vol. 3, p. 398-399)

The Content of the Hadith

The hadith was transmitted from the Prophet (pbuh) by Jabir b. 'Abd Allah al-Ansari. Thus, it came to be known as Hadith of Jabir. The Hadith of Jabir explicitly mentions the Twelve Imams of the Shi'a and their imamate. When the Prophet (pbuh) mentions the Fifth Shiite Imam (as), he points to his title (Baqir), asking Jabir to send his regards to Imam al-Baqir (as). The hadith also points to the long Occultation of the Twelfth Imam of the Shi'a, analogizing the hidden Imam to the sun behind the clouds. (Tabarsi, vol. 2, p. 181-182)

Sources

The hadith was also cited in some Shiite sources, such as *Kifayat al-Athar Fi al-Nass 'Ala al-A'imma al-Ethnaya 'Ashar* Khazzaz al-Razi, p. 54-55 (Kamal al-din) Saduq, vol. 1, p. 253-254 (and Bihar al-anwar,) Majlisi, vol. 36, p. 251 (as well as some Sunni sources such as Yanabi' al-mawadda) Qunduzi, vol. 3, p. 398-399. (Some Shiite exegetes of the Qur'an have cited the hadith under the discussion of the Uli l-Amr Verse) Bahrani, vol. 2, p. 103-104; Fayhd al-Kashani, vol. 1, p. 217



In addition to the Hadith of Jabir there are also other hadiths in exegesis of the *ulul Amr* verse. The belief in the imamate of the Twelve Imams (as) is among fundamental beliefs of the Twelver Shi'a and many reports from the Prophet (pbuh) and Imams (as) in available hadiths references support it. Shi'a exegetes and theologians believe that the Qur'an has referred to this belief implicitly in the *ulul Amr*, *al-Tathir*, *al-Wilayah*, *al-Ikmal*, *al-Tabligh*, and *al-Sadiqin* verses.

Explanation of the *Ulul Amr* verse

Ulul Amr verse is the verse 59 of Qur'an 4 (Sura Nisa') which commands believers to obey Allah, the Prophet (pbuh), and *Ulul Amr* (those vested with authority). The verse of *ulul Amr* is one of the Qur'anic proofs for the infallibility and imamate of Imam 'Ali (as) and other Imams (as).

Context of Revelation

A Muslim and a Jew had a dispute over a subject. The Jew said, "Let's go to Mohammad (pbuh) for judgment", the Jew knew that the Prophet (pbuh) would not accept bribe; but the Muslim said, "Let's go to Ka'b b. Ashraf" because the Muslim knew that he will accept bribe and will judge for him. After the event, the verse of "Ulul Amr" revealed and commanded the believers to obey Allah, the Prophet (pbuh), and *ulul Amr*; and in times of any dispute refer to Allah and his Prophet (pbuh). (Tabarsi.vol.2, p. 264)

The *Ulul Amr* are Infallibles

In the view of the Shi'a exegetes, there's no doubt that the verse indicates the infallibility of *ulul Amr*. The reasoning is based on two main points:

1. When Allah commands to obey someone unconditionally, it results in his infallibility; because if he is fallible and commands us to commit a sin, at the same time, we must obey him (because Allah commanded us to do so), and not obey him (because we must not commit sins). (Muzaffar. vol. 2, p. 17)



2. The word *ulul Amr* is mentioned immediately after the word *al-Rasul* (Prophet) and because the obedience of the Prophet (pbuh) is unconditionally necessary, due to his infallibility, so the obedience of *ulul Amr* is also unconditional. So, it results in the infallibility of Ulul Amr (Tabrisi, vol. 2, p. 64)

In addition to Shi'a scholars, some Sunni scholars, such as Fakhr al-Din al-Razi accepts that the verse indicates the infallibility of *ulul Amr*. (Fakhr al-Razi, vol. 10, p. 113). Although Fakhr al-Din al-Razi accepts that the verse indicates the infallibility of *ulul Amr*; he considers its instance, the consensus of Muslims and claims that we cannot identify the infallible and recognize them. (Ibid).

Who are the *Ulul Amr*?

There are many hadiths in Shi'a and sunny sources which explain that the instance of *ulul Amr* are the Shia Imams (as). Many Shia narrations interpret the term " Ulul Amr " as referring to the infallible Imams (peace be upon them) (Sadugh, vol. 2, p. 131; Furat al-Kufi, p. 108; al-Ayashi, vol. 1, pp. 250 and 260). In some Sunni narrations, it is also interpreted as referring to Ali (as) (al-Hakim al-Haskani , vol. 1, pp. 190-191) and in some, it is interpreted as referring to Ali, Hasan, and Husayn (pbuh) (Ibid). The Prophet (pbuh) , Imam al-Baqir (as) and Imam al-Sadiq (as) mentioned the Twelve Imams (as) in the exegesis of the verse, "Ulul Amr and named them one by one.

- The Prophet (pbuh) explicitly mentioned the Twelve Imams (as) when Jabir b. 'Abd Allah al-Ansari asked him who are *ulul Amr*? (Hadith of Jabir)
- Imam al-Baqir (peace be upon him) says in the exegesis of the verse, "Ulul Amr are from the children of 'Ali (as) and Fatima (peace be upon her), till the Day of Judgment." He also said, "By Ulul Amr, Allah only intended us and commanded all the faithful to obey us until the Day of Judgment." (Baḥrānī, p. 383, 386)
- Imam al-Sadiq (as) says: "*Ulul Amr* are 'Ali b. Abi Talib, al-Hasan, al-Husayn, 'Ali b. al-Husayn, Mohammad b. 'Ali and me, praise Allah that introduced your imams and leaders to you when people deny them. (Ayyāshī, p. 252)



- Mohammad ibn Yaqub al-Kulaini narrated from Ali ibn Ibrahim , and he narrated through seven intermediaries from Abu Basir : He said: I asked Imam al-Sadiq (as) about this verse, and he said: It was revealed about Ali ibn Abi Talib, al-Hasan, and al-Husayn (as). Then he said: I said: O son of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh), the people say: None of them are mentioned in this verse. The Imam said: Tell the people that when the verses of prayer were revealed to the Prophet, the number of rak'ahs for the five prayers had not been determined, so the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) stated the number of *rak'ahs*. (Kulaini, vol. 1, p. 286, h 1)

3. Hadith of *Lawh*

Hadith of *Lawh* (the Tablet) of Fatima al-Zahra (as), is among the authentic narrations which is reported in various traditional sources. Its authenticity and the explicit mention of the names of true successors of the Prophet (pbuh), has placed it among the significant evidences to prove Shi'a Imams' Imama and their rightful immediate successor-ship after the Prophet (pbuh).

The well-known version of this hadith is narrated from the famous companion of the Prophet (pbuh), Jabir b. 'Abd Allah al-Ansari. The *Lawh* on which this Hadith is engraved, was descended from Heaven to the Prophet (pbuh) as a gift for the birth of his second grandson, Imam al-Husayn (as). As a present, the Prophet (pbuh) gave this Tablet to his daughter, Lady Fatima al-Zahra (as). The Hadith of *Lawh*, has been reported in different accounts, with slight differences in the phrasing and the length

The reliability of the Hadith

The Hadith of *Lawh* is among the narrations that have been reported in authentic Shi'a sources. Also, there are contextual indications that affirm its authenticity and increase its value. Thiqat al-Islam al-Kulayni reports this hadith in *al-Kafi* through a trustworthy chain of transmission. (Kulaynī, vol. 1, p. 527)



Additionally, other scholars have considered this Hadith authentic and reported it in their collections with the same chain of transmission or other chains. Al-Nu'mani in *al-Ghayba*; (Nu'mani, p. 62). al-Shaykh al-Saduq in 'Uyun akhbar al-Rida (a)] (Saduq, vol. 1, p. 41). and Kamal al-Din; (Saduq, vol. 1, p. 3. (Shaykh al-Mufid in al-Ikhtisas (Mufid, al-Ikhtisas, p. 210) and al-Shaykh al-Tusi in *al-Ghaybah* (Tūsī al-Ghayba, p. 142.) have reported this hadith. Also, in other sources like: *al-Ihtijaj*, *al-ihitijāj 'alā ahl al-lijaj* (known as al-Ihtijaj (is written by Abū Manṣūr, Aḥmad b. 'Ali b. Abi Ṭalib al-Ṭabarsī (died in 599 AH/1202 CE) *Irshad al-qulub of Al-deylami*, *Ta'wil al-ayat*, *Taqrib al-ma'arif*, *Fada'il of Fadl b. Shadhan*, *Manaqib Al Abi Talib* known as al-Manaqib written by the Shi'a scholar, Mohammad b. 'Ali b. Shahrashub Al-Mazandarani (d. 588/1192), *Kashf al-ghumma*, *al-Fusul al-mukhtara*, *al-Sirat al-mustaqim* and *al-Irshad* of al-Shaykh al-Mufid, this hadith has been reported, partly or entirely, sometimes without mentioning its chain of transmission.

In Sunni Sources

Tabarsi writes in *I'lam al-wara* that there are implicit and partial references to the hadith of Lawh in Sunni sources; however the entire hadith cannot be found in Sunni hadith collections. (Tabarsi, p. 258).

The Famous Version

The famous version of Hadith of Lawh, which has been narrated by Jabir b. 'Abd Allah al-Ansari is as follows: Mohammad b. Yahya and Mohammad b. 'Abd Allah narrated from: 'Abd Allah b. Ja'far from Hasan b. Zarif and 'Ali b. Mohammad from Salih b. Abi Hammad, from Bakr b. Salih, from 'Abd al-Rahman b. Salim from Abu Basir, from Imam al-Sadiq (as) who said: One day my father, Mohammad b. 'Ali al-Baqir(peace be upon them) , told Jabir b. 'Abd Allah al-Ansari "O' Jabir! I have something to tell you, what time is suitable for you so I can talk to you?" "Whenever you wish" Jabir replied.



So, in a proper occasion, they gathered together and talked. In this session, the Imam wanted Jabir to tell him about the Lawh that he once had seen with his grandmother, Lady Fatima (as), and narrate for the Imam (as) what she had told Jabir about the inscriptions of that Tablet. "I testify that" Jabir started, "during the lifetime of the Prophet (pbuh) I visited your mother to congratulate her on the birth of her son, Husayn, there I saw a green Tablet in her hands which I thought had been made of emerald. There was a bright inscri May my parents be your sacrifice, what is this tablet?" she said: 'this is a tablet which Allah, the exalted one, has gifted to his Apostle (pbuh). In this tablet, the names of my father, my husband, my two sons and the Imams who are form my descendants have been listed. My father, the Prophet of Allah (pbuh), has given it to me so that my heart feels happy and pleased whenever I look at it." Here Jabir Added "then your mother gave the tablet to me and I read its inscription and made a copy of it. Jabir brought a thin parchment sheet, opened it and showed it to my father. My father said to Jabir: Jabir! Now look at the sheet that you have so that I can recite it to you from memory. Jabir looked at the sheet in his hand and my father recited the entire contents of the sheet to Jabir from memory. By Allah, not a word of the Imam's words contradicted a word of the sheet in Jabir's hand. After the Imam's recitation was finished, Jabir said: I call Almighty Allah to witness that what I saw on the sheet with Fatima (pbuh) is what you recited. The text of this tablet is as follows, according to the narration.

The Hadith

This is what was written on that tablet:

«هَذَا كِتَابٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ لِمُحَمَّدٍ نَبِيِّهِ وَ نُورِهِ وَ سَفِيرِهِ وَ حِجَابِهِ وَ دَلِيلِهِ نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ عَظِيمٍ يَا مُحَمَّدُ أَسْمَائِي وَ اشْكُرْ نِعْمَائِي وَ لَا تَجْحَدُ الْآلِيَّ إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا قَاصِمُ الْجَبَّارِينَ وَ مُدِيلُ الْمُظْلُومِينَ وَ دِيَانُ الدِّينِ إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَمَنْ رَجَا غَيْرَ فَضْلِي أَوْ خَافَ غَيْرَ عَذْلِي عَذَابًا لَا أُعَذِّبُهُ أَحَدًا مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ فَايَايَ فَاغْبُدْ وَ عَلَيَّ فَتَوَكَّلْ إِنِّي لَمْ أُبْعَثْ نَبِيًّا فَكَمَلْتُ أَيَامَهُ وَ انْقَضَتْ مُدَّتُهُ إِلَّا جَعَلْتُ لَهُ وَصِيًّا وَ إِنِّي فَضَّلْتُكَ عَلَى الْأَنْبِيَاءِ



وَ فَضَّلْتُ وَصِيكَ عَلَى الْأَوْصِيَاءِ وَ أَكْرَمْتُكَ بِشَيْبَلِيكَ وَ سَبْطِيكَ حَسَنَ وَ حُسَيْنَ فَجَعَلْتُ حَسَنًا مَعْدِنَ عِلْمِي-بَعْدَ انْقِضَاءِ مَدَّةِ أَبِيهِ وَ جَعَلْتُ حُسَيْنًا خَازِنَ وَحْيِي وَ أَكْرَمْتُهُ بِالشَّهَادَةِ وَ خَتَمْتُ لَهُ بِالسَّعَادَةِ فَهُوَ أَفْضَلُ مَنْ اسْتَشْهَدَ وَ أَرْفَعُ الشَّهَدَاءَ دَرَجَةً جَعَلْتُ كَلِمَتِي التَّامَّةَ مَعَهُ وَ حُجَّتِي الْبَالِغَةَ عِنْدَهُ بِعِزَّتِيهِ أُثِيبُ وَ أَعَاقِبُ أَوْلَهُمْ عَلَى سَيِّدِ الْعَابِدِينَ وَ زَيْنُ أَوْلِيَائِي الْمَاضِينَ وَ ابْنُهُ شِبْهُ جَدِّهِ الْمَحْمُودِ مُحَمَّدُ الْبَاقِرُ عِلْمِي وَ الْمَعْدِنُ لِحِكْمَتِي سَيِّهْلِكَ الْمُرْتَابُونَ فِي جَعْفَرِ الرَّادِّ عَلَيْهِ كَالرَّادِّ عَلَى حَقِّ الْقَوْلِ مِنِّي لِأَكْرَمِ مَنْ مَثَوَى جَعْفَرٍ وَ لَأَسْرَتُهُ فِي أَشْيَاعِهِ وَ أَنْصَارِهِ وَ أَوْلِيَائِهِ أُتِيحَتْ بَعْدَهُ مُوسَى فِتْنَةً عَمِيَاءَ جِنْدِسٍ- لِأَنَّ خَيْطَ فَرَضِي لَا يَنْقَطِعُ وَ حُجَّتِي لَا تُخْفَى وَ أَنَّ أَوْلِيَائِي يَسْقُونَ بِالْكَأْسِ الْأَوْفَى مَنْ جَحَدَ وَاحِدًا مِنْهُمْ فَقَدْ جَحَدَ نِعْمَتِي وَ مَنْ غَيَّرَ آيَةً مِنْ كِتَابِي فَقَدْ افْتَرَى عَلَى وَبِيلٍ لِلْمُفْتَرِينَ الْجَاحِدِينَ عِنْدَ انْقِضَاءِ مَدَّةِ مُوسَى عِنْدِي وَ حَبِيبِي وَ خَيْرَتِي فِي عَالِي وَ لِيْلِي وَ نَاصِرِي وَ مَنْ أَضَعُ عَلَيْهِ أَعْيَاءَ النُّبُوَّةِ وَ أَمْتَحِنُهُ بِالْأَضْطِلَاعِ بِهَا يَفْتَنُهُ عَفْرِيَّتُ مُسْتَكْبِرٌ يَذْفَنُ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ الَّتِي بَنَاهَا الْعَبْدُ الصَّالِحُ- إِلَى جَنْبِ شَرِّ خَلْقِي حَقِّ الْقَوْلِ مِنِّي لِأَسْرَتِهِ بِمُحَمَّدِ ابْنِهِ وَ خَلِيفَتِهِ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَ وَارِثِ عِلْمِهِ فَهُوَ مَعْدِنُ عِلْمِي وَ مَوْضِعُ سِرِّي وَ حُجَّتِي عَلَى خَلْقِي لَا يُؤْمِنُ عَبْدٌ بِهِ إِلَّا جَعَلْتُ الْجَنَّةَ مَثْوَاهُ وَ شَفَعْتُهُ فِي سَبْعِينَ مِنْ أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ كُلُّهُمْ قَدْ اسْتَوْجَبُوا النَّارَ وَ أَحْتِمُ بِالسَّعَادَةِ لِابْنِهِ عَالِي وَ لِيْلِي وَ نَاصِرِي وَ الشَّاهِدِ فِي خَلْقِي وَ أَمِينِي عَلَى وَحْيِي أَخْرَجَ مِنْهُ الدَّاعِيَ إِلَى سَبِيلِي وَ الْخَازِنَ لِعِلْمِي الْحَسَنَ وَ أَكْمَلَ ذَلِكَ بِابْنِهِ م. ح م د. رَحْمَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ الدَّاعِيَ إِلَى سَبِيلِي وَ الْخَازِنَ لِعِلْمِي الْحَسَنَ وَ أَكْمَلَ ذَلِكَ بِابْنِهِ م عَلَيْهِ كَمَالُ مُوسَى وَ بَهَاءُ عِيسَى وَ صَبْرُ أَيُوبَ فَيَذُلُّ أَوْلِيَائِي فِي زَمَانِهِ وَ تَنْهَادِي رُءُوسَهُمْ كَمَا تَنْهَادِي رُءُوسَ النَّارِ وَ الدَّيْلِمُ فَيَقْتُلُونَ وَ يَحْرَقُونَ وَ يَكُونُونَ خَائِفِينَ مَرَّ عَوْبِينَ وَ جَلِيلِينَ تُصْنَعُ الْأَرْضُ بِدِمَائِهِمْ وَ يَفْشُو الْوَيْلُ وَ الرَّثَّةُ فِي نِسَانِهِمْ أَوْلِيَايَ حَقًّا بِهِمْ أَدْفَعُ كُلَّ فِتْنَةٍ عَمِيَاءَ جِنْدِسٍ وَ بِهِمْ أَكْشِفُ الزَّلَّازِلَ وَ أَدْفَعُ الْأَصَارَ وَ الْأَغْلَالَ أَوْلِيَايَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَ رَحْمَةٌ وَ أَوْلِيَايَ هُمْ الْمُهْتَدُونَ.»

“This letter is from Allah, the Almighty, the Wise, to Mohammad (pbuh), His Messenger, His Light, His Ambassador, His Gatekeeper, and His Proof, to whom the Trustworthy Spirit from the Lord of the Worlds descends. O Mohammad (pbuh)! Magnify My names, be grateful for My blessings, and do not deny My favors. Indeed, I am Allah, there is no god but Me. I am the destroyer of the oppressors, the giver of wealth to the oppressed, and the punisher of the Day of Resurrection. Indeed, I am Allah, there is no god but Me. Whoever hopes for anything other than My bounty and fears anything other than My justice, I will punish him with a punishment I have not inflicted on any of the worlds; so worship Me alone and rely on Me alone .



I did not send any prophet to complete his term and end his term except that I appointed for him a successor and a successor, and I preferred you over other prophets and your successor over other successors and I honored you with two lion cubs and your two grandsons, Hasan and Husayn, and I made Hasan the center of My knowledge after the death of his father, and I made Husayn the treasurer of My revelation, and I honored him with martyrdom and I made his end of work prosperous. He is the best of the martyrs and his position is higher than all of them. I placed My perfect word with him and My clear proof with him, and I will reward and punish him for the sake of his lineage. The first of them is the master of the worshippers and the adornment of My past saints, and his son, like his grandfather Mahmud, Mohammad, is the dispeller of My knowledge and the center of My wisdom, and Ja'far, about whom those who doubt will perish. Whoever does not accept him has not accepted Me. My word and promise is that I will honor the position of Ja'far and make him happy with his followers, companions and friends. After him is Musa, who will be in a time of confusing chaos; because the chain of the obligation of obedience to Me will not be broken and My proof will not be hidden and My friends will be quenched with a full cup. Whoever denies any of them has denied My blessing and whoever changes a verse of My Book has fabricated a lie against Me After the passing of the time of My servant, friend and chosen one Moses, woe to the liars and deniers of Ali, My friend and helper and the one on whose shoulders I will place the heavy burdens of prophethood and test him by fulfilling them. He will be killed by a wicked and stubborn man and will be buried next to the worst of My creation in the city that a righteous servant built. My command and promise have been fulfilled that I will make him happy with the presence of his son and successor and heir to his knowledge, Mohammad.



He will be the center of My knowledge, the place of My secret, and My proof over My people. I will make Paradise his abode for every servant who believes in him, and I will accept his intercession for seventy of his family, all of whom deserve Hell, and I will make the end of his son Ali , who is My friend and helper, and a witness among My creation, and the trustee of My revelation, a happy one.

I will create from him a caller to the path and a treasurer of My knowledge, Hassan , and I will complete this chain with the birth of his son “ M, H, M, D ”, who is a mercy for the worlds. He has the perfection of Moses , the prosperity of Jesus. and patience of Job. During his (occultation) time, my friends will be humiliated and (the oppressors) will send their heads as gifts to each other, just as they sent the heads of Turks and Daylam as gifts.

They will kill them and burn them and they will be afraid and fearful and terrified. The earth will be colored with their blood and wailing and lamentation will rise among their women. They are my true friends. Through them, I will remove every difficult and dark turmoil and by their blessings, I will remove doubts, calamities and chains. May the blessings and mercy of their Lord be upon them and they are the guided ones.

The position of the Hadith

Imam Baqir (as) ’s attention to the hadith of the Tablet and the comparison of this hadith that he had with what was in his possession with what was in Jabir’s possession , indicates the importance of the narration. Imam Baqir (as) also recited this hadith to his children and relatives who came to him, including Zayd ibn Ali, which shows the extraordinary importance of this hadith (Majlisi, Bihar, vol. 36, p. 201)

Imam Sadiq (as)’s companionship in this area also adds to the importance of this hadith. The Imam narrated this hadith to Ishaq ibn Ammar and said that it was in the dictation of the Prophet (pbuh) and the handwriting of Amir al-Mu’minin Ali (as), and that it is the religion of the prophets and the angels (Ibid., vol. 36, p. 201).



In another narration, he said: This is the secret of Almighty Allah and His religion and the religion of the angels. (Ibid., vol. 36, p. 200.) Abu Basir, who narrated this hadith to Abdur Rahman ibn Salim, said: If you have not heard anything but this hadith during your lifetime, it will be sufficient for you; so hide it from those who are not worthy of it. (Saduq, vol. 1, p. 311),

This hadith is a sacred hadith because it is the word of Almighty Allah. In addition to stating the dignity of Allah, ordering to worship Him, appointing a successor for all the prophets, and proving the Imamate, it is also considered one of the most important unseen news because this hadith deals with the Imamate of each of the Imams (as) and describes each one by name.

The statement of the successorship and immediate caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (as), the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (peace be upon him), the confirmation of the scientific authority of Imam Baqir (peace be upon him), the Imamate of Ali ibn Musa al-Rida (as), the news of his martyrdom at the hands of the tyrants of the time (Ma'mun), and the appointment of his burial in Tus alongside the accursed Aaron, the joy of Imam Reza (as) at the presence of his son Imam Mohammad al-Taqi (as), the glad tidings of the holy existence of the Imam of the Time (as) and his likening it to the status of the prophets, the troubles of the Shiites during the era of occultation, and the glad tidings of Allah's mercy for the Shiites are among the matters and evidences that are mentioned in the sacred hadith of the Tablet.

Important Points in the Hadith

1. Mentioning the Imamate of the Twelve Imams (as)



2. **The divine precedent in appointing successors for previous Prophets** (pbuh): according to this hadith, Allah says: "I have not sent any apostle but when he finished his days (lifetime), I appointed for him a successor." In fact, the divine custom of appointing a successor (*Wisayah*) started from Prophet Adam (as) and continued to the final Prophet (pbuh). In a similar long hadith from Imam al-Sadiq (as) , it has been said that all the Prophets had divinely appointed successors. The names of some of these successors have also been mentioned.

3. **The Commander of the Faithful (peace be upon him) is the best of Awsiya (divinely appointed successors):** the supremacy of Imam 'Ali (as) among all other divinely appointed successors of the previous prophets is a fact that has been stated in various narrations.

4. **Continuity of Imama through the lineage of Imam al-Husayn (peace be upon him):** according to the explanations of al-Majlisi, it can be concluded that what has been meant by the word: *al-Kalima al-Tammah* (the complete word) and *al-Hujjat al-Baligha* (the ultimate evidence) and their association with Imam al-Husayn (as) by Allah, is the affairs of Imama. "I have placed my complete word and my ultimate evidence with him (al-Husayn (as))." The two mentioned features are correspondents to different aspects of the task of Imama. Also, the ultimate evidence can be interpreted as representing the proofs and evidences for the rightfulness of Shi'a Imams (as). In any case, this particular phrase affirms that later Shi'a Imams shall be among the descendants of Imam al-Husayn (as), a fact that has been stated in other mutawatir narrations. (Majlisī, vol. 26, chapter of "Imams from the progeny of Husayn (as)).

5. **The continuity of the Divine Guidance through the continuity of Imamate**



6. **Rejecting only one Imam means rejecting all of them:** As belief in all the previous Prophets is necessary for Islamic faith and rejecting one of them results in rejecting all of them; likewise rejecting one of Shi'a Imams results in disbelief in all of them.

7. **Prophecies of the events of each Imam:** some parts of the hadith of Lawh contain the prophecies of what will happen to each of the Imams.

8. **Completion of Imamate by Imam Mahdi (as)** according to the hadith of Tablet, Allah says: I shall complete it (Imamate) by his son (the son of Hasan b. 'Ali al-'askari), "M, H, M, D". (May Allah hasten his reappearance)

9. **The doctrine of Mahdawiyya in the hadith of Lawh:** Mahdawiyya means the general belief in a divinely appointed leader, savior and reformer that will rise in the end of time, who shall eradicate all forms of injustice and oppression and will establish justice in the globe. In the hadith of Lawh, Allah, the exalted one, describes this person as: "Qasim al-jabbarin and Mudil al-mazlumin" the smasher of the oppressors and helper of the oppressed ones. This, in harmony with Qur'anic verses in this regard, refers to the doctrine of Mahdawiyya.

10. Description of the outward and spiritual characteristics of Imam Mahdi (May Allah hasten his reappearance) and the statement of political, social and cultural situation of the era of the appearance as well as the events and social reforms that occur after the appearance of the Imam (May Allah hasten his reappearance).

Conclusion

Imams (as) of the Shia are twelve men who are successors of the Prophet (pbuh). These Imams (as) are appointed by Almighty Allah. In some narrations from the Prophet (pbuh) the names and the number of Imams (as) have been mentioned; such as Hadith of the Twelve Caliphs, Hadith of Jabir. The Hadith of *Lawh* of Fatima al-Zahra (as), these express the number and the names of true successors of the Prophet (pbuh).



The verse of Uli al-Amr is one of the Qur'anic proofs for the infallibility and imamate of twelve Imams (as). These hadiths are strong evidences for the Shia claim to the Imamate of the Twelve Imams (as). Also, there are hadiths from the Prophet (pbuh) and Imam Ali (as) which have explicitly mentioned the imamate of the second Imam (peace be upon him).

Afterwards, every Imam (as) explicitly has introduced the Imam (as) after himself. According to these explicit mentioning, Imams (as) and the caliphs after the Prophet (pbuh) are twelve.

These hadiths prove the belief of twelver Imami shiites in twelve Imams (as) and cancel the belief of sunnis who don't believe in any Imam as successors of the Prophet (pbuh) or other branches of Shia Islam like Zaydiyya and Isma'ilism (Musta'li Isma'ilism , Nizari Isma'ilism) wherein they differ from the Twelver Shia.

Also, the Imamate and succession of the Prophet (pbuh) is an important and fundamental issue in the Islamic world, which must be expressed and explained with strength and wisdom in terms of concept and example.



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