

Chapter 7: Prophecy and Imāmate: Two Inseparable Metaphysical Realities

For Sunnī Muslims, the legitimacy of the Caliphate is an issue of secondary or relative importance. According to Sunnī thought, even an illegitimate Caliph is acceptable as long as he has sufficient strength and ability to resolve the socio-economic problems of the society.¹ It is easily understood how individuals with stubborn tribal mentalities and notions of superiority could perceive the Caliphate as being the pinnacle of Arabism.

Even the trials and tribulations they suffered due to their loyalty to Islām and the Prophet could not make them forget their prior status as oligarchic tribal chiefs. It is therefore not surprising that the election of Abū Bakr as Caliph was based on pre-Islamic tribal customs. The Caliphate allowed the tribal chiefs to satisfy their nostalgia for the old order by giving the emerging system, despite its radical transformation, traits of political and economic centralism which has been abolished by Islām.²

Abū Bakr assumed the Caliphate, not through the legitimacy of his aspiration, but through the complicity of his peers from the tribe of Quraysh. He gained the unanimous support of the leaders of his tribe and maneuvered himself into power at a time when differences in opinion and division of loyalties prevailed.

History will never understand the cause of such a phenomenon without considering the rivalry between the Quraysh and the non-Quraysh and the *muhājirīn* [the emigrants] and the *ansār* [the allies].

Without such an understanding, any explication of the development of Shī'ism would be nothing but a deceitful distortion. Was not the rise of Shī'ism the case of a revolt of the new over the old established order? Indeed it was. The political and economic centralism of the elders of Quraysh from the days of ignorance [*jāhiliyyah*] was not extinguished with the arrival of Islām. The partisans of the old order mobilized against the new Islamic order established by Muhammad and embodied by 'Alī.

The Quraysh defended the old order with the same drive and determination they demonstrated during the lifetime of the Prophet when the Makkan oligarchy had resisted with all their strength against

Muhammad's divine and revealed message. The ruling classes were particularly disturbed by the fact that, from the very beginning of his mission, the Messenger of Allah had rejected concepts such as social superiority, pride in ancestry, and Arabism.³ Muhammad viewed himself, first and foremost, as an “admonisher” [*nadhīr*] and a “guardian” of his people rather than its “king” [*malik*].⁴

As he put it himself, “Surely I am not a king [*malik*] ... I am but the son of a woman who ate dried meat” (Tirmidhi). And to the scandal of the Makkan oligarchy, he abolished all distinction between race and class with the decisive declaration that: “All human beings are equal like the teeth of a comb. There is no superiority of an Arab over a non Arab, of a non-Arab over an Arab, of a white man over a black man or of a male over a female. The only merit in God's estimation is righteousness.”⁵

In truth, the Prophet never manifested in any of his sayings or *ahādīth* that belonging to the tribe of Quraysh or social status were necessary conditions for being elected Imam or Caliph. Abū Bakr, on the other hand, always maintained, in accord with his background, that the right to the Caliphate belonged to the members of the tribe of Quraysh by the simple fact that they were descendants of “the most honorable Arabs.”⁶

Whoever examines the Islamic accounts of the period will notice with great surprise that the sector of Muslims who proclaimed Abū Bakr as the First Caliph in the *saqāfah* soon lost the esoteric and spiritual significance of the Imamate or the Caliphate, if they ever possessed it at all. For them, as we have said, spiritual authority and temporal power were united in the person of Muhammad by the fact that he was the Messenger of God and the Intercessor between God and man.⁷

When it came to Imam 'Alī, he was viewed by the old oligarchy, in the best of cases, as merely a half-Muhammad, blessed with an inspired character and the spiritual wisdom of a prophet.⁸ They did not, however, consider him fit to assume the functions of legal administrator and political leader. For the followers of 'Alī, among whom were the closest and most famous companions of the Prophet,⁹ this separation between spiritual authority and temporal power was intolerable. It was not so much the political Imamate that 'Alī inherited from Muhammad which drew the Shī'ah. Rather, it was the esoteric sense of the Prophethood that continued to pulse within him: Imamate was the amplification of Prophethood, a more interiorized complement.

According to Shī'ite thought, divine guidance takes two forms: *nubuwwah* and *wilāyah*.¹⁰ The first is co-substantial to the “Muhammadan Truth” [*al-haqīqah al-muhammadiyah*], in an absolute, integral, primordial, pre-eternal, and post-eternal sense. The second is constituted by the partial realities of the first: its emissions and luminous epiphanies [*mazhar*]; in other words, the Imams of the Prophetic Household who initiated and continued the “Cycle of Initiation” [*dīrat al-nubuwwah*] that was sealed by the Prophet and which, like his luminaries, are identified with the pleroma of the “Light of Light” [*nūr al-anwār*] of the “Muhammadan Light” [*al-nūr al-muhammadī*].

From this metaphysical point of view, the Twelve Imams belong, in their condition of luminous

epiphanies of “Muhammadan Light,” to the same spiritual and temporal category as the Prophet without them been truly and properly prophets.¹¹ This notion is repeated in many *ahādīth* [traditions] in relation to 'Alī, like the one which says “You are to me as Aaron was to Moses except there will be no prophet after me” (Bukhārī, Muslim, Hākim, Saḍq, Mufīd, Kulaynī).¹²

The bond that exists between Muhammad and 'Alī goes far beyond that of blood. What exists between them is a special spiritual tie [*nisbah ma'nawīyyah*] which surpasses the relation of impossibility that “there will be no prophet after me.” The bond between Muhammad and 'Alī is the result of their common pre-existence in eternity where they were two spiritual entities united in the same luminous identity.

As Prophet has explained in various *ahādīth*, “'Alī and I are from the same Light”¹³ (Kulaynī, Majlisī, Ma'sūm 'Alī) “People are from various trees, but 'Alī and I are from the same Tree” (Tirmidhī, Ibn al-Maghazalī).¹⁴ The eminence and spiritual supremacy of the First Imām is also established in the significant tradition in which the Prophet states: “'Alī has been sent secretly with every Prophet; but with me he has been sent openly” (Kāshānī qtd. in Ahmed 'Alī 1157).¹⁵

It can also be seen in the tradition which states that: “Every prophet has an executor [*wasī*] and a successor [*khalīfah*] and surely my executor and successor is 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib” (Muttaqī, al-Baghdādī). There is also the tradition that “'Alī is part of me and I am part of 'Alī and nobody acts on my behalf except 'Alī” (Ahmad, Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājāh, Nasā'ī, Ibn Kathīr, Suyūṭī, Saḍq, Mufīd, Kulaynī).

In a passage from the well-known tradition of Ghadīr, delivered shortly before the Prophet's death, 'Alī successorship is once again confirmed: “Oh People!” said the Prophet, “Allāh granted me the *wilāyah* [guardianship], placing me above all believers. To whom I have been the *mawlā* [master, protector, lord and guardian], 'Alī is also his *mawlā* [*fa man kuntu mawlāhu fa 'Alī mawlāhu*] (Hākim, Dhahabī, Ahmad, Tirmidhī, Saḍq, Mufīd, Kulaynī).”¹⁶

In relation to this Shī'ite doctrine of the “Muhammadan Light” there is a *hadīth* from the Prophet which affirms he and 'Alī are two identical and pre-existing lights that God manifested separately and simultaneously during the “reign” of Adam and in the hidden worlds.¹⁷

After having passed from one “reign” to another they were finally placed in the persons of Hasan and Husayn who were, simultaneously, two luminous epiphanies that emanated from the “Primordial Light” through which the “Lord of the Worlds” [*rabb al-'ālamīn*] illuminated all of creation through the “light of the logos” [*nūr al-kalām*] or initial *fiat lux*.¹⁸ This “primordial light” protects the Prophet and the Imāms from sin, making them immaculate¹⁹ [*ma'sūmīn*]. At the same time, it confers on them the status of supremacy of the poles [*aqṭāb*] of the universe and vicars [*khalīfah*] of God as well as spiritual legatees [*wasī*] of the *baytīn* [esoteric aspects] of the scripture.

As the Imāms have stated, “We are the first and the last. We are the logos of God. We are the executors of the revelation.”²⁰ As can be seen, the parallel between Moses' position and that which

Muhammad would occupy in later times becomes evident in light of these words.

It was also at this time that the Imāmate was established as part and parcel of the Prophethood. The true Imām and Prophet was Muhammad; and Muhammad had a successor, his Aaron, in the person of 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib.²¹ It is for this reason that Shī'ite Muslims consider descent from 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib to be an obligatory requirement for any candidate to the Caliphate along with the criteria considered necessary by Sunnī Muslims. The Shī'ite, however, differ with the Sunnī in that they categorically reject election through *shūrāh* [consultative assembly].

In their eyes, the pre-Islamic process of *shūrāh* does nothing but continue the timocratic orientation of Abū Bakr and the representatives of the old Quraysh oligarchy established in the *saqāfah*. Since spiritual authority and temporal power come from God above, it is impossible for a man to receive the sacred investiture of Imām or *khalīfah* through a classicist covenant or a political plot between parties. The word *khalīfah* appears twice in the Qur'ān. In the first case it refers to Adam [2: 28]. In the second case, it refers to David [38: 257] with the sense of “legislator:” “We have made you a *khalīfah* on earth,” says God to Adam, “decide among men with justice!” For Muslims, David was both a Prophet and an Imām, combining both spiritual and political authority.²² The word appears several times in the Qur'ān in the plural, *khulafā'* and *khalā'if*.

The plural “Caliphs” appears in contexts which, in relation to the descendants of Muhammad, can be translated as “successors” and, at times, as “inheritors,” “proprietors” and even as “vicars” and “substitutes.” The Arabic word *khalīfah*, from which the English word “Caliph” is derived, comes from a root that is found in several Semitic languages. At times, it has the meaning of “to pass on” or “to transmit.”

This would make the word the equivalent of the Latin word *traditio* and the Greek word *paradosis*. In Arabic, however, the generally accepted meaning is that of “following” or “coming in place of.” By far, the most common interpretation by the majority of Sunnī 'ulamā' [scholars], with the sole exception of the Sūfi Masters, is that the Caliph is the vicar or successor of the Prophet. The Caliph is the custodian of his moral and legal inheritance as founder of the faith and legislator for the Islamic government and community.

The Caliph is not, however, in the eyes of most Sunnī scholars, the successor to the spiritual office of the Prophet, the executor of his *bay'at* or the esoteric interpreter of the word of God. This interpretation, however, is inconsistent with the meaning of the word *wilāyah* which appears to indicate that the function of the Prophet was not destined to disappear after his death but rather, on the contrary, to continue by means of the spiritual authority and temporal power of the Imāms until the end of times.

1. Editor's Note: Among Sunnī Muslims, there are many traditions justifying submission and obedience to Islamic rulers, whether legitimate or illegitimate, including: “Behold, he who is ruled by a ruler who disobeys Allāh, he should dislike what

he commits as a disobedience to Allāh but should not rise in revolt against him” (Muslim); where the Prophet is asked about rulers who deprive their subjects of their due rights and he responds “Listen to them and obey them because they are responsible for what they are ordained to do and you are responsible for what you are ordained to do” (Muslim); “Listen to the ruler and obey him” (Ahmad); “The Sultan is the shadow of Allāh on earth; whosoever insults him will be humiliated by Allāh, and whosoever honors him will be honored by Him” (Albānī 475). These traditions may have been fabricated by the authorities to ensure the submission of their subjects.

2. Editor's Note: The author's point is elusive but absolutely correct. The opponents of Ahlul Bayt then built a logic to buttress what had already been done.

3. Editor's Note: Almighty Allāh criticizes the Arab love for ancestors saying: ”[C]elebrate the praises of Allāh, as ye used to celebrate the praises of your fathers,—yea, with far more Heart and soul (2:200).

4. Editor's Note: As the Almighty Allāh says in the Holy Qurʾān: “Verily We have sent thee in truth as a bearer of glad tidings and a Warner” (2: 119). See also 5: 19; 7: 118; 7: 184; 13: 7; 27: 92; 32: 3; 33: 45; 35: 23; 46: 9; 48: 8; 51: 51; 79: 45 and others.

5. Editor's Note: This tradition, in part or in whole, is found in the following sources: Ibn Abū Ḥatīm al-Rāzī's 'Ilal al-hadīth, al-Bayhaqī's Sunan, Ibn Ishāq's Sīrat Rasūl Allāh, Kulaynī's al-Kūfī, as well as Daylamī, as cited in 'Ajlūnī's Kashf al-Khafī, among many others.

6. Editor's Note: The Prophet, however, had stressed repeatedly that Islām had come to destroy class privilege.

7. Editor's Note: We would argue that the Companions of the Prophet were divided into two groups: one group, led by 'Alī, accepted the Messenger of Allah as both a spiritual and temporal leader. The other group led by Abū Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthmān accepted him as a spiritual leader, but not as a temporal, political leader. In that area, they felt their opinions were equally valid. This would explain the numerous instances of insolence and insubordination from a certain sector of the saḥābas.

8. Editor's Note: The Prophet said of 'Alī: “He who wants to see Noah in his determination, Adam in his knowledge, Abraham in his clemency, Moses in his intelligence and Jesus in his religious devotion should look at 'Alī ibn Abū Tālib” (Ahmad, Bayhaqī, al-Hadīd, Rāzī, Ibn Batah). In Ḥayāt al-qulūb, Majlisī relates a similar tradition in which Muhammad says: “Let him who pleases look to Adam for his glory, to Shays for his wisdom, to Idrīs and his nobleness, to Nūḥ and his thanksgiving and devotion, to Ibrāhīm and his fidelity and friendship, to Mūsā and his hostility to the enemies of God, to 'Isā and His love and familiarity with every believer, —and then let him look to 'Alī ibn Abū Tālib” (170–71). Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān all called upon 'Alī's expertise in legal matters during their respective reigns as Caliph (see Mufīd, Chapter V)

9. Editor's Note: The Shāh of 'Alī from among the Companions of the Prophet included all the Banū Ḥāshim, Hudhayfah b. al-Yamān, Khuzaymah b. Thābit, whom the Prophet called dhu al-shahādātayn, the one with two testimonies, Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī, Sahl b. Hunayf, Uthmān b. Hunayf, al-Barqī b. 'Azīb al-Anṣārī, Ubayy b. Ka'b, Abū Dharr b. Jundab al-Ghifārī, 'Ammār b. Yāsīr, al-Miqdād b. 'Amr, Salmān al-Fārisī, Khālid b. Sa'īd, Jābir b. 'Abdullāh al-Anṣārī, Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī, Bilāl b. Arwah, Miqdād ibn al-Aswad and Muhammad b. Abū Bakr. Umm Salamah, a pious wife of the Prophet, was also among the followers of 'Alī.

These and people like them among the emigrants and the Anṣār, all these maintained that he was the successor [khalīfah] of the Messenger of Allāh, and the Imām. For the Shāh of 'Alī, see S.H.M. Jafrī, The Origins and Early Development of Shāh Islām (Qum: Ansariyan, 1989): 51–53; and Muhammad al-Tājīnī, Then I was Guided 2nd ed. (Bayrūt: N.P., 1989): 161; Shaykh al-Mufīd, Kitāb al-irshād: The Book of Guidance into the Lives of the Twelve Imāms, Trans. I.K.A. Howard (London: Muhammadī Trust, 1981): 2.

10. Editor's Note: In the previous versions of this study, the author explained that: “In Shī'ite thought there exists an absolute Prophethood [nubuwwah mutlaqah] which is common and universal and a partial Prophethood [muqayyadah] which is determined and limited by time.” However, as was kindly pointed out by Sayyid Muhammad Rizvī, the division of nubuwwah into mutlaqah and muqayyadah is unknown in mainstream Twelver Shī'ah writings. In fact, such a concept contradicts the concept of khitāmiyyah, the finality of nubuwwah and risālah of the Prophet Muhammad. The division of Prophethood into “absolute” and “partial” was drawn by the author from the works of Henry Corbin who may have taken it from Ismā'īlī sources. As this concept is erroneous, the author has retracted them.

11. Editor's Note: Shī'ite scholars hold that the Imāms are equal to Muhammad in all regards with the exception of prophecy. Furthermore, the majority of Shī'ite scholars believe that the Imāms are superior to all prophets, with the

exception of Muhammad.

12. Editor's Note: The Messenger of Allāh also said that: "The flesh of 'Alī is from my flesh, and his blood is from my blood, and he holds the same position in relation to me as Aaron held in relation to Moses" (Ahmad).

13. Editor's Note: In another tradition, Imām 'Alī says that: "Ahmad [Muhammad] and I are of one Light. The only difference between my light and his is that one preceded the other in time" (Shahrastānī 2:226). Another version of this tradition relates that "Muhammad and I are of one light, which by Allāh's command was split in two halves. To the one half Allāh said, 'Be Muhammad,' and to the other, 'Be 'Alī'" (al-Yamanī 127).

14. Editor's Note: Likewise, Imām Ja'far al-Sādiq relates that the Prophet said: "I am the root of the good tree; 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib is its trunk; the divinely chosen ones of the descendants of 'Alī are its branches; and the faithful ones attached to the Ahlul Bayt are its leaves" (qtd. in Ahmed 'Alī 820).

15. Editor's Note: Similarly, al-Hajj Ma'sūm 'Alī reports in his Tarḡīq al-haqīq that Imām 'Alī said that: "I am Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus, assuming different forms, however I will. He who has seen me has seen them all" (7:43).

In another tradition related by Jābir al-Ja'fī, Imām 'Alī proclaims that: "I am the Messiah, who heals the blind and the leper, who created the birds and dispersed the storm clouds. I am he, and he is I...Jesus the Son of Mary is part of me, and I am part of him. He is the supreme Word of Allāh. He is the witness testifying to the mysteries and I am that to which he testifies" (Yaman 8-9).

The Messenger of Allāh is reported to have said that "I am all the prophets" (Majlisī) a tradition widely quoted by the Bahā'īs. The statements quoted from Ma'sūm 'Alī and Jābir, however, would not be accepted by mainstream Shā'ah Ithnā-'Ashariyyah scholars as they sound, at face value, very similar to the ideas of the ghulāt.

16. Editor's Note: The tradition ends with the Messenger of Allāh imploring: "O Allāh, love those who love 'Alī and hate those that hate him."

17. Editor's Note: The Messenger of Allāh said: "I was a Prophet while Adam was still between the water and the clay" (Moosa 61); "I was the first man in the creation and the last one in the Resurrection" (54); "The first thing which Allāh created was my soul (60);" "My soul was the Primal Element" (46); "Myself and 'Alī were created one light, and we ascribed glory to Allāh on the right side of the empyrean two thousand years before Allāh formed Adam" (Majlisī, Hay'at al-qulūb 4). For more on the pre-existence of the Muhammadan Logos, see Moosa 54-59.

18. Editor's Note: As Imām al-Sādiq has said "Allāh does not accept to appoint to it [the Imāmate] two brothers after al-Hasan and al-Husayn" (Kulaynī 1:2, 341: hadīth 753). As Imām al-Sādiq explains in another tradition, "The Imāmate will never be diverted between two brothers after al-Hasan and al-Husayn; it proceeds from 'Alī ibn al-Husayn... There was no-one after 'Alī ibn al-Husayn except that it went to the next descendant or the next descendant of the next descendant" (340: hadīth 752).

19. Editor's Note: According to 'Allamah Sadīq,

Our belief concerning the prophets [anbiyyī], messengers [rusul], Imāms and angels is that they are infallible [ma'sūm]; purified from all defilement [danas], and that they do not commit any sin whether it be minor [saghīrah] or major [kabīrah]. They do not disobey Allāh in what He has commanded them; they act in accordance with His behests. He who denies infallibility to them in any matter appertaining to their status is ignorant of them, and such a one is a kāfir [unbeliever]. Our belief concerning them is that they are infallible and possess the attributes of perfection, completeness and knowledge, from the beginning to the ends of their careers. Defects [naqs] cannot be attributed to them, nor disobedience [īsyān], nor ignorance [jahil], in any of their actions [ahwāl]. (140-141)

As Imām Khumaynī explains, "The quality of 'ismah that exists in the prophets is the result of belief. Once one truly believes, it is impossible for one to sin" (Islam and Revolution 374).

The Shī'ite belief in the sinlessness of the Prophets and Imāms is uniquely Shī'ite and without a trace of Jewish or Christian influence (Donaldson 330-38). The 'ismah of the prophets is accepted by Sunnis to a limited extent and was developed under Shī'ite influence (Fyze 99). The Zaydīs do not accept the concept of 'ismah (Moosa 98).

20. Editor's Note: This tradition seems to be an echo of Revelation 22:13: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." It resembles Khutbat al-bay'ān, the Manifestation Speech, in which 'Alī allegedly says: "I am the Face and the Side of Allāh, I am the Beginning and the End, I am the Outward [zāhir] and the Inward [bātin]" (al-Amulī)

1348, fols 5a).

The speech, however, is spurious. In his *Kashf al-zun*, Hajj Khalifah refers to the seventy phrases reportedly used by 'Alī to describe his excellence as “seventy words of falsehood” (Moosa 180). The speech is not even recorded in Shi'ite books of hadith (179). Ayatullah al-Uzma Sayyid Ab al-Qasim al-Khufi was asked: “What is your opinion about Khutbat al-bay'at that is attributed to Imam 'Alī?” He responded that: “It has no foundation” (<http://www.shiachat.com/forum/index.php?s=cb55e2e5549c0973a0f18ad1288a88...> [1] 25980).

Despite the fact that, from the point of view of chains of narration, the Sermon of Manifestation is spurious, some Shi'ite mystics accept it as authentic from a philosophical and spiritual sense. According to some scholars, it is not 'Alī who is speaking the Manifestation Speech but al-insan al-kamil, the Perfect Person. According to others, including Massignon, the Manifestation Speech is actually a hadith quds [sacred saying] and it is Almighty Allah who is speaking. For more on the Perfect Person, see chapter five of our *Arabic, Islam, and the Allah Lexicon*, a version of which appears in the journal *Saf*.

The spiritual status and authority of the Imams is expressed in the following trustworthy traditions:

When the pledge of allegiance was made to 'Alī ibn Abū Tālib, the Commander of the Faithful, for the Caliphate, he went out to the mosque wearing the turban and cloak of the Messenger of Allah, and giving admonition and warning, he sat down confidently, knitted his fingers together and placed them on his stomach. He then said:

Question me before you lose me. Question me, for I have the knowledge of those who came earlier and those who will come later. If the cushion [on which a judge sits] was folded for me [to sit on], I could give judgment to the people of the Torah by their Torah, to the people of the Gospel by their Gospel, to the people of the Psalms by their Psalms and to the people of the Furqan [ie. Qur'an] by their Furqan, so that each one of these books will be fulfilled and will declare, 'O Lord, indeed 'Alī has given judgment according to Your decree.' By Allah, I know the Qur'an and its interpretation [better] than anyone who claims knowledge of it. If it were not for one verse in the Book of Allah, Most High, I would be able to inform you of what will be until the Day of Resurrection.

Then he said:

Question me before you lose me, for by Him Who split the seed and brought the soul into being, if you questioned me about [it] verse by verse, I would tell you of the time of its revelation and why it was revealed, I would inform of the abrogating [verse] and the abrogated, of the specific and general, the clearly defined and the ambiguous, of the Meccan and the Medinan. By Allah, there is not a party who can lead astray or guide until the Day of Resurrection, without me knowing its leader, the one who drives it forward and the one who urges it on. (Mufid 21–22; Kulayn)

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq used to say:

Our knowledge is of what will be [ghābir], of what is past [madr], of what is marked in hearts [naksh fī al-qulūb], and what is tapped into ears [naqr fī al-asm']. We have the red case [jafr], the white case, and the scroll of Fatimah, peace be upon her, and we have [the document called] al-jāmi'ah in which is everything the people need.

He was asked to explain these words and he said:

Ghābir is knowledge of what will be; madr is knowledge of what was; what is marked in the hearts [naksh fī al-qulūb] is inspiration; and what is tapped into the ears [naqr fī al-asm'] are words of angels; we hear their speech but we do not see their forms. The red case [jafr] is a vessel in which are the weapons of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and his Family. It will never leave us until the one [destined] among us Members of the House [Ahlul Bayt] to arise [qā'im], arises. The white case [jafr] is a vessel in which are the Torah of Moses, the Gospel of Jesus, the Psalms of David and the [other] Books of Allah.

The scroll of Fatimah, peace be upon her, has in it every even which will take place and the names of all the rulers until the [last] hour comes. [The document called] al-jāmi'ah is a scroll seventy yards long which the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and his Family, dictated from his own mouth and 'Alī ibn Abū Tālib, peace be upon him, wrote in his own handwriting. By Allah, in it is everything which people need until the end of time, including even the blood-wit for wounding, and whether a [full] flogging or half a flogging [is due]. (Mufid 414; Kulayn)

The Prophet said of 'Alī: “You can hear what I hear and see what I see, but you are not a prophet; you are a vizier and you are well off” (Nahj al-balaghah, ed. 'Abd al-Hamid 2: 182–83)

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq used to say:

My traditions are my father's traditions; my father's traditions are my grandfather's traditions; my grandfather's traditions are the traditions of 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib, the Commander of the Faithful; the traditions of 'Alī, the Commander of the Faithful, are the traditions of the Messenger of Allāh, may Allāh bless him and his Family; and the traditions of the Messenger of Allāh, may Allāh bless him and his Family, are the word of Allāh, the Mighty and High. (Mufīd 414; Kulaynī)

Imām Ja'far al-Sādiq said: "We have the tablets of Moses, peace be upon him, and we have the rod of Moses, peace be upon him. We are the heirs of prophets" (Mufīd 414–15; Kulaynī).

Imām Ja'far al-Sādiq said:

I have the sword of the Messenger of Allāh, may Allāh bless him and his Family. I have the standard of the Messenger of Allāh, may Allāh bless him and his Family, and his breast-plate, his armor and his helmet... Indeed the victorious standard of the Messenger of Allāh is with me, as are the tablets and rod of Moses. I have the ring of Solomon, the son of David, and the tray on which Moses used to offer sacrifice and I have [knowledge] of the [greatest] name [of Allāh] which when the Messenger of Allāh, may Allāh bless him and his Family, used to put it between the Muslims and the polytheists no arrow of the polytheists could reach the Muslims.

I have the same as what the angels brought. We have the weapons in the same way that the Banī Isrā'īl had the ark of the covenant. Prophecy was brought to any house in which the Ark of the Covenant was present; the Imāmate will be brought to which ever of us receives the weapons. My father dressed in the armor of the Messenger of Allāh, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace, and it made marks on the ground. I put it on and it was [like] it was [for my father]. The one [destined] to rise up [qā'im] from among us, will fill it [so that it fits him exactly] when he puts it on, if Allāh wishes. (Mufīd 415–416)

Imām Ja'far al-Sādiq was asked about what the people were saying that Umm Salamah, the mercy of Allāh be on her, had been handed a sealed scroll. He said: "When the Messenger of Allāh, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace, died, 'Alī, peace be upon him, inherited his knowledge, his weapons and what there was. Then that went to al-Hasan, peace be upon him, then to al-Husayn, peace be upon him." "Did it go to 'Alī ibn al-Husayn, peace be upon them, after that, then to his son and now has it come to you?" he was asked. "Yes," he replied (Mufīd 416).

21.] Editor's Note: The author alludes to the tradition where the Messenger of Allāh said to 'Alī: "You are to me as Aaron was to Moses, but there will be no prophet after me" (Bukhārī, Muslim, Hākim, Saḍḍiq, Mufīd, Kulaynī).

22. Editor's Note: As we read in the Qur'ān, Ibrāhīm was also an Imām:

And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commands, which he fulfilled: He said: "I will make thee an Imām to the Nations." He pleaded: "And also [Imāms] from my offspring!" He answered: "But My Promise is not within the reach of evil-doers. (2:124)

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