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The First Session, Thursday night, 23rd Rajab, 1345 A.H.

Hafiz Muhammad Rashid, Sheikh Abdu's-Salam, Sayyid Abdu'l-Hayy, and other scholars of that region were present. The discussion began in the presence of a large gathering. In the magazines and newspapers, they referred to the writer as "Qibla-o-Ka'ba," but in these pages I have referred to myself as "Well-Wisher" and to Hafiz Muhammad Rashid as "Hafiz."

Hafiz: We are very pleased to have this opportunity to discuss the basic points on which we differ. We should first decide how we should proceed.

Well-Wisher: I am willing to participate in discussions on the condition that we cast aside all pre-conceived ideas, and discuss matters reasonably, like brothers.

Hafiz: I may also be permitted to make one condition: that our discussions should be based on the injunctions of the Holy Qur'an.

Well-Wisher: This condition is not acceptable since the Holy Qur'an is so concise that its deep significance must be interpreted through reference to other facts and hadith.

Hafiz: Right. This is sensible, but it is also necessary that reference be made to hadith and events that are based on indisputable evidence. We should refrain from referring to doubtful sources.

Well-Wisher: Agreed. For a man like me, who is proud enough to claim relationship with the Prophet, it is not fair to go against the examples set forth by my ancestor, the Prophet of Islam. He has been addressed in the Holy Qur'an as follows:

"And, most surely you conform (yourself) to sublime morality." (68:4)

It is also unbecoming to act against the injunctions of the Holy Qur'an which says:

"Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and have disputations with them in the best manner...." (16: 125)

Relationship with the Holy Prophet

Hafiz: Excuse me; you refer to your relationship with the Holy Prophet. It is commonly known, but I ask that you let me know your genealogy so that I may know how your ancestral line reaches the Prophet.

Well-Wisher: My ancestral line reaches the Prophet through Imam Musa Kazim as follows: Muhammad, son of 'Ali Akbar (Ashrafu'l-Wa'adhim), son of Isma'il Mujtahidal-Wa'iz, son of Ibrahim, son of Salih, son of Abi 'Ali Muhammad, son of 'Ali (known as Mardan), son of Abi'l-Qasim Muhammad Taqi, son of (Maqbulu'd-din) Husain, son of Abi 'Ali Hasan, son of Muhammad ibn Fathullah, son of Ishaq, son of Hashim, son of Abi Muhammad, son of Ibrahim, son of Abi'l-Fityan, son of Abdullah, son of Hasan, son of Ahmad (Abu Tayyib), son of Abi 'Ali Hasan, son of Abu Ja'far Muhammad al-Hairi (Nazil al-Kirman), son of Ibrahim Az-Zarir (known as Mujab), son of Amir Muhammad al-Abid, son of Imam Musa Kazim, son of Imam Jafar Sadiq, son of Imam Muhammad Baqir, son of Imam 'Ali Zainu'l-Abidin, son of Imam Husain, son of the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali bin Abi Talib.

Hafiz: This line of descent reaches the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali (may Allah bless him) although you have said that it ends with the Holy Prophet. In fact, with this genealogy, you should call yourself among the relations of the Holy Prophet and not among his direct descendants. A descendant is one who is directly linked with the Prophet.

Well-Wisher: Our ancestral line reaches the Prophet through Bibi Fatima Zahra, the mother of Imam Husain. I don't understand why you insist so much on this point.

Hafiz: I think I am misunderstood. It is my point of view that descent is recognized from the male side only. I quote an Arabic couplet: "My sons, grandsons, and daughters are from me, but my daughter's sons are not from me." If you can prove otherwise, please do so.

Well-Wisher: There is strong evidence, both from the Holy Qur'an and from authentic hadith, to establish my point.

Hafiz: Please relate it so that we may understand.

Well-Wisher: While you were speaking just now, I recalled a discussion between Harun ar-Rashid, the Abbasid caliph, and our Imam Musa Kazim on this topic. The Imam gave such a convincing reply that the caliph himself accepted it.

Hafiz: I would like to hear about that discussion.

Well-Wisher: Abu Ja'far Muhammad Ibn 'Ali, entitled Sheikh Saduq, in the fourth century A.H. in his

Uyun al-Akbar ar-Ridha (Major Sources for Imam Ridha), and Abu Mansur Ibn 'Ali Tabarsi, in his Ehtijajj (Supports) give a detailed account of the conversation that took place between Harun ar-Rashid and Imam Musa Ja'far in the caliph's court.

The caliph asked the Imam, "How can you claim that you are a descendant of the Holy Prophet? The Prophet Muhammad had no descendant. It is acknowledged that descendants are from the male side and not from the female side. You belong to the generation of his daughter." The Imam recited verses 84-85 from Chapter VI of the Holy Qur'an:

"And, We gave to him Isaac and Jacob; each did We guide, and Noah did We guide before, and of his descendants David and Solomon and Job and Joseph and Aaron; and thus do We reward those who do good. And, Zakariyya and John and Jesus and Elias; every one was of the good." (6:84-85)

The Imam asked the caliph: "Who was Jesus's father?" Harun replied that Jesus had no father. The Imam said: "There was no one, and yet Allah included Jesus in the progeny of the prophets through Mary. Similarly, He has included us in the progeny of the Holy Prophet through our ancestor Bibi Fatima."

Moreover, Imam Fakhru'd-Din Razi, in his Tafsir al-Kabir (Great Commentary), Bk IV, P. 124, Problem V, says regarding this verse that the verse proves that Hasan and Husain are the descendants of the Prophet of Islam. Since in this verse God has verified Jesus as a descendant of Abraham, and Jesus had no father, this relationship is from the side of the mother.

In the same manner, Hasan and Husain are truly the descendants of the Prophet. Imam Musa Kazim asked Harun if he wanted further proof. The caliph asked the Imam to continue. The Imam read verse 60 from Chapter III, "Aal-'Imran," of the Holy Qur'an:

"But, whoever disputes with you in this matter after what has come to you of knowledge, then say: come, let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our selves, and your selves, then let us be earnest in prayer and pray for the curse of Allah on the liars." (3:61)

He continued, saying that no one has ever claimed that on the occasion of the spiritual contest (Mubahala) against the Christians of Najran that the Prophet took with him anyone except 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib, Fatima, Hasan, and Husain. It follows, therefore that "selves" (anfusana) means 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib. "Women" (nisa'ana) means Fatima and "sons" (abna'ana) means Hasan and Husain whom Allah has identified as the Prophet's own sons.

Upon hearing this argument, Harun exclaimed, "Bravo, O Abu'l-Hasan." Clearly, this reasoning proves that Hasan and Husain are the sons of the Prophet and that the 'Sa'dat Fatima' (descendants of Bibi Fatima) are of the progeny of the Holy Prophet.

Additional evidence proving that the descendants of Bibi Fatima are of the progeny of the Holy Prophet

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid Mu'tazali, one of your greatest scholars, in his 'Sharh-i-Nahju'l-Balagha' (Commentary on the Peak of Eloquence [writings of Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali]), and Abu Bakr Razi in his commentary, have cited the same verse, arguing that Hasan and Husain are, from the side of their mother, the sons of the Holy Prophet in the same way that Allah in the Holy Qur'an has included Christ in the progeny of Abraham from the side of his mother, Mary.

Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i, in his book Kifayatu'l-Talib, and Ibn Hajar Makki on pages 74 and 93 of 'Sawa'iq Muhariqa' from Tabrani and Jabir Ibn Abdullah Ansari, and Khatib Khawarizmi in 'Manaqib' from Ibn Abbas – all relate that the Prophet said: "Allah created the progeny of every Prophet from his own generation, but my progeny was created in the generation of 'Ali."

Also, Khatib al-Khawarizmi in 'Manaqib', Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani Shafi'i in Mawaddatu'l-Qurba, Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, in 'Musnad', and Sulayman Hanafi Balkhi in 'Yanabiu'l-Mawadda' relate, in more, or, less the same words, that the Holy Prophet said:

"These, my two sons, are two flowers of this world, and both of them are Imams (leaders), whether they are Imams openly, or, silently sitting at home." And, Sheikh Sulayman Hanafi, in his Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, devotes Chapter 57 to this topic, and cites many hadith from his own learned men, like Tabrani, Hafiz Abdu'l-Aziz Ibn Abi Shaiba, Khatib al-Baghdadi Hakim, Baihaqi, Baghawi and Tabari – all relating in slightly differing versions that Hasan and Husain are the sons of the Prophet.

Towards the end of the same Chapter, Abu Salih writes: Hafiz Abdu'l-Aziz Ibn Al-Akhtar, Abu Nu'aim, Tabari, Ibn Hajar Makkion page 112 of 'Sawa'iq Muhariqa', from Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i at the end of Part I after 100 Chapters of Kifayatu'l-Talib, and Tabari in the narration of the life of Imam Hasan relate that the second caliph, 'Umar Ibn Khattab, said:

"I heard the Prophet say that on the Day of Judgement every ancestry will be disconnected except my generation. Every generation of a daughter is from the father's side except the generation of Fatima, which is connected with me. I am their father, and ancestor."

Sheikh Abdullah Ibn Muhammad Ibn Amir Shabrawi Shafi'i, in his book Kitabu'l-Ittihaf bi Hubbi'l-Ashraf, quoted this hadith from Baihaqi and Darqutni from Abdullah Ibn 'Umar, and he from his father, on the occasion of the wedding of Umm Kulthum.

And, Jalalu'd-din Suyuti quoting from Tabrani in his 'Ausat', has related from Caliph 'Umar and Sayyid Abu Bakr Ibn Shahabu'd-din Alawi on pages 39-42 of Chapter III of 'Rishfatu's-sadi min Bahra Faza'il Bani Nabiu'l-Hadi' (printed in Maktabi A'lamiyya, Egypt in the year 1303 A.H.), proving that the descendants of Fatima are of the progeny of the Prophet of Islam.

Hence, the couplet that you quoted has no force in the face of all this contrary evidence. Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i, in his "Kifayatu't Talib," proves that the sons of the Prophet's daughter are the sons of the Holy Prophet. Our ancestral line goes back to Imam Husain; we are, therefore, descendants of the Prophet.

Hafiz: Your argument is reasonable and convincing. The people dispersed for the Isha prayer.

During the recess Nawab Abdu'l-Qayum Khan, who belongs to a noble family of the 'Sunnis', asked permission to ask Well-Wisher some questions.

Why Shi'as combine their prayers

Nawab: Why do the Shi'as combine the prayers of Zuhr and Asr and Maghrib and Isha? This is not in keeping with the practice of the Holy Prophet.

Well-Wisher: In the first place, among your own learned men, there is much difference of opinion concerning this issue. Secondly, you say that we go against the practice of the Prophet. Here you are mistaken since the Holy Prophet used to offer these prayers in both ways, sometimes separately, and sometimes together. Nawab Sahib, turning to his learned men, asked them if it was true that the Prophet offered the prayers in both ways.

Hafiz: He did, but only when he was on a journey, or, when there was some other hindrance, like rain. Otherwise, when he was at home, he always offered his prayers separately.

Well-Wisher: It is recorded in your own 'hadith' that the Prophet used to offer prayers separately as well as combined at home, and without any obstruction. Many hadith confirm this fact. Muslim Ibn Hajjaj in his Sahih, in the Chapter "Jam'a Baina's-salatain fi'l-Hazar," says that Ibn Abbas said:

"The Prophet used to say Zuhr and Asr as well as Maghrib and Isha prayers jointly without being constrained to do so, or, when he was at home." Again Ibn Abbas narrated: "We said eight rak'ats of Zuhr and Asr, and later seven rak'ats of Maghrib and Isha prayers jointly with the Holy Prophet.

"The same hadith' has been related by Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in his 'Musnad', Part 1, Page 221. Similarly, Imam Muslim quotes a number of 'hadith' concerning this issue. He quotes Abdullah Ibn Shaiqas having said that one day Abdullah Ibn Abbas was reading an address after the Asr prayers until the sun set and the stars were visible.

People cried, "Prayers, Prayers," but Ibn Abbas paid no heed to them. Then one of the Bani Tamimi shouted "Prayers, Prayers." Ibn Abbas then said: "You remind me of the 'Sunna', but I myself have seen the Holy Prophet combine Zuhr and Asr as well as Maghrib and Isha prayers."

Abdullah ibn Shaiq said that he felt uncertainty about these words and went to Abu Huraira to ask him

about it. He verified what Ibn Abbas had said. Through another chain of narrators, Abdullah ibn Shaqiq has narrated from Aqil that once Abdullah ibn Abbas spoke to the people from the pulpit.

He remained there so long that darkness fell. When someone shouted thrice, "Prayer, Prayer, Prayer," Abdullah Ibn Abbas became annoyed and said: "Woe be to you. You dare remind me of prayer, even though during the Holy Prophet's days we used to combine Zuhr with Asr as well as Maghrib with Isha prayers."

Zarqani in Sharhe Mawatta' of Imam Malik, Part I, in the Chapter of "Jama'a Baina's-Salatain," p. 263, states, "Nisa'i related through Amru Ibn Haram from Abi Sha'atha that Ibn Abbas said his Zuhr and Asr prayers as well as Maghrib and Isha prayers jointly in Basra without any time lag, or, action between them. He said that the Holy Prophet offered his prayers in the same way."

Also, Muslim in 'Sahih' and 'Malikin Mawatta', Chapter "Jam'a Baina's-salatain", and Imam Hanbal in Musnad quotes Ibn Abbas through Sa'id Ibn Jabir that the Holy Prophet offered his Zuhr and Asr prayers together in Medina without being constrained to do so by fear, or, bad weather.

Abu Zubair said he asked Abu Sa'id why the Prophet combined the two prayers. Sa'id said that he too asked Ibn Abbas the same question. Ibn Abbas replied that he combined the two prayers so that his followers might not be put to undue hardship and suffering.

Also, in many other 'hadith', Ibn Abbas is related to have said that the Holy Prophet of Islam combined Zuhr and Asr as well as Maghrib and Isha prayers without being constrained to do so. These hadith in your 'Sahih' and in many other authentic books prove the permissibility of the combination of the two prayers, both at home and during travel.

Hafiz: There is no such quotation of hadith in 'Sahih Bukhari.

Well-Wisher: Because all the authors of 'Sahih', like Muslim, Nisa'i, Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, and exponents of the Sahihain, of Muslim, Mubhari, and other great 'Sunni' scholars have quoted these things, this is sufficient for us to win our point.

But in fact, Bukhari, too, has recorded these 'hadith' in his 'Sahih', but he has deceitfully put them away from their proper place, the section concerning the combination of two prayers.

If you go through the Chapters "Bab al-Ta'akhiru'z-zuhr li'l-Asr Min Kitabe Mawaqitu's-salat" and "Bab al-Dhikru'l-Ishawa'l-Atma" and "Bab al-Waqtu'l-Maghrib," you will find all these 'hadith' there. Recording these hadith under the heading, "Permission and Authorization to Combine Two Prayers" proves that it is the common belief of learned men of the two sects. The authenticity of these hadith has already been acknowledged in the books of 'Sahih'.

Accordingly, Allama Nuri in 'Sharhe Sahih' Muslim, Asqalani, Qastalani, Zakariyya al-Razi, in the commentaries that they have written on 'Sahih' Bukhari, Zarqani in his commentary on the Mawatta' of

Malik, and others related these 'hadith'. After quoting the 'hadith' of Ibn Abbas, they acknowledged their authenticity and admitted that these 'hadith' are proofs of the acceptability of combining two prayers.

Nawab: How is it possible that these 'hadith' have been put into practice since the time of the Holy Prophet, but learned men have adopted a different path?

Well-Wisher: This situation is not confined to this topic alone. You will see many such examples later. In this matter, 'Sunni' scholars of jurisprudence, apparently without much serious thought, or, for other reasons which I do not understand, have given unintelligible explanations contradicting these 'hadith'.

For instance, they say that perhaps these 'hadith' refer to situations involving fear, danger, rains, or, winds. Some of your older scholars, like Imam Malik, Imam Shafi'i, and some other jurists of Medina gave the same explanation. This, despite the fact that the 'hadith' of Ibn Abbas clearly says that the two prayers were offered without the constraint of fear, or, the possibility of rainfall.

Others have suggested that perhaps the sky was overcast, and those offering prayers did not know the time. Perhaps, when they finished their Zuhr prayers, the clouds dispersed, and they saw that it was time for Asr prayers.

So, they had to offer Zuhr and Asr prayers together. I don't think a more unlikely explanation could be found. Perhaps these interpreters did not care to think that the person offering prayers was the Holy Prophet of Islam (S). Clouds did not mean to him what they might to others. He understood all causes and effects.

Apart from the fact that this explanation is unconvincing, the combining of Maghrib and Isha prayers rejects their explanation. At that time clouds have no relevance to this question.

As we said: the 'hadith' of Ibn Abbas clearly states that his address continued so long that the audience repeatedly cried, "prayers, prayers." They reminded him that the stars had appeared and it was time for prayers. But, he purposely delayed the Maghrib prayer so that he might offer both Maghrib and Isha prayers together. Abu Huraira also verified this action, saying that the Prophet also acted in the same manner. Such spurious explanations, in light of clear guidance, are regrettable.

Your own learned men reject them. Sheikhu'l-Islam Ansari, in his 'Tuhfatu'l-Bari fi Sharhe Sahihu'l-Bukhari' in the Chapter "Salatu'z-zuhr ma'l-Asr wa'l-Maghrib ma'al Isha," page 292, Part II, and similarly, Allama Qastalani, on page 293, Part II of 'Irshadu's-Sari fi Sharhe Sahihu'l-Bukhari', as well as other exponents of Sahih Bukhari admit that this kind of explanation is against the obvious meaning of the 'hadith', and that to insist that every ritual prayer be offered separately is a groundless requirement.

Nawab: Then how did this controversy arise so that the two sects of Muslims are after the blood of each other, and condemn each other's actions?

Well-Wisher: You say that the two sects of Muslims are inimical to each other, but I disagree. We Shi'as

do not look down upon any of the learned men, or, common people of our brothers, the 'Sunnis'. We regret that propaganda of the 'Kharijis', the 'Nasibis', and the 'Umayyads' have affected the hearts of some people. Unfortunately, some 'Sunnis' regard their Shi'as brothers (who are one with them as regards the Qibla (Ka'ba), the Holy Book (Qur'an), and the Prophet as Rafizis (dissenters), idolaters, and infidels.

As for your question regarding how this difference originated, perhaps we can discuss this in later meetings. Concerning the saying of prayers separately, or, together, 'Sunni' legal scholars have recorded 'hadith' which permit the offering of Zuhr with Asr, and Maghrib with Isha prayers as a matter of ease, comfort, or, safety. I do not know why some do not consider it permissible to offer the two prayers together in the absence of any obstruction.

Some authorities, like Abu Hanifa, and his adherents, forbid it under any circumstances, whether there is any obstruction or not; or whether the prayers are said during travel, or, at home. The 'Shafi'ites', 'Malikites', and 'Hanbalites', with all of their differences in essential and non-essential tenets, have permitted the combining of the prayers during a lawful journey. But, the 'Shi'as' 'ulama', in obedience to the Holy Imams and the progeny of the Holy Prophet, have unconditionally permitted the offering of prayers together.

Of course the offering of prayers at the time specified for each ritual prayer is preferable to praying in one interval, as has been clearly stated in expository books dealing with problems of religious performance written by 'Shi'as' 'ulama'. Since people are often busy with their own affairs, and have their own cares and anxieties, they fear they might miss their prayers. Hence, for their own convenience, and to avoid hardship, and suffering, the Shi'as say their two prayers in one interval, whether early, or, late, during the appointed time.

Now, I think this much is sufficient to enlighten our 'Sunni' brothers who look at us with indignation. Perhaps we can return to our discussions about the fundamentals, after which the questions concerning practice will be solved.

How the Allama's ancestors migrated from the Hijaz to Iran

Hafiz Sahib asked 'Allama Sultanu'l-Wa'adhim' to tell him how his ancestors migrated from the Hijaz to Iran. He gave a history of his ancestors who were murdered in Shiraz on the order of the Abbasid King. Their mausoleums still attract pilgrims from distant places.

Notable among them are Sayyid Amir Muhammad Abid, Sayyid Amir Ahmad (Shah Charagh), and Sayyid Alau'd-din Husain, all sons of Imam Musa Kazim. The details concerning his family are omitted.

How the grave of the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali, was discovered

Mention was also made of the discovery of the sacred grave of the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali.

Hafiz: But, in what state was the grave of the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali, discovered 150 years after his death?

Well-Wisher: Because Umayyad oppression was so intense during 'Ali's later life, he stipulated in his will that his body should be laid in a grave secretly at night, and that no trace of the grave should be left. Only a few of his close companions and his sons attended the burial.

On the morning of the 21st of Ramadhan when he was to be buried, two conveyances were prepared. One was instructed to go to Mecca, the other to Medina. That is why for years his grave remained unknown, except to a few companions and his own sons.

Hafiz: Why was the grave's location kept a secret?

Well-Wisher: Probably out of fear of the irreligious Umayyads. They were particularly inimical to the members of the progeny of the Prophet. They could have desecrated the grave.

Hafiz: But, is it possible that a Muslim, even though an enemy, might violate the grave of a brother Muslim?

Well-Wisher: Have you studied the history of the Umayyads? From the day this wretched dynasty came to power the door of oppression was opened among Muslims. Good Heavens! What atrocities they committed! What blood they shed, and what honors they spoiled! With deep shame, your eminent scholars recorded their many crimes. Allama Maqrizi Abu'l-Abbas Ahmad ibn 'Ali Shafi'i recorded the heart-rending atrocities of the Umayyads in his book 'Annaza' Wa't-takhasum fima baina Bani Hashim wa Bani Umayya'.

Desecration of graves by Bani Umayyad

As examples of what they were capable of, I will cite only two events: the martyrdom of Zaid ibn 'Ali ibn Husain, known as Zaid Shahid (i.e., the Martyr) and the martyrdom of his son, Yahya. Historians of both Shi'as and 'Sunnis' recorded that when Hisham ibn Abdul-Malik became the caliph, he committed many atrocities.

With regard to the Bani Hashim, he was particularly cruel. At last, Zaid ibn 'Ali, the son of Imam Zainu'l-Abidin, and well known as a great scholar and a pious theologian, went to see the caliph to seek redress for the grievances of the Bani Hashim.

But, as soon as Zaid arrived, the caliph, instead of greeting him as a direct descendant of the Holy Prophet, abused him with such abominable language that I cannot repeat it. Because of this disgraceful treatment, Zaid left Syria for Kufa, where he raised an army against the Bani Umayyad. The governor of Kufa, Yusuf ibn 'Umar Thaqafi, came out with a huge army to face him. Zaid recited the following war poem:

"Disgraceful life and honorable death: both are bitter morsels, but if one of them must be chosen, my choice is honorable death."

Although he fought bravely, Zaid was killed in the battle. His son, Yahya, took his body from the field, and buried him away from the city near the river bank, causing the water to flow over it. However, the grave was discovered and, under Yusuf's orders, the body was exhumed, Zaid's head was cut off and sent to Hisham in Syria. In the month of Safar, 121 A.H., Hisham had the sacred body of this descendant of the Prophet placed on the gallows entirely naked. For four years the sacred body remained on the gallows.

Thereafter, when Walid Ibn Yazid ibn Abdu'l-Malik ibn Marwan became caliph in 126 A.H., he ordered that the skeleton be taken down from the gallows, burnt, and the ashes scattered to the wind.

This accursed man committed a similar atrocity to the body of Yahya ibn Zaid of Gurgan. This noble man also opposed the oppression of the Bani Umayya. He too was martyred on the battlefield.

His head was sent to Syria and, as in the case of his revered father, his body was hung on the gallows for six years. Friend and foe alike wept at the sight. Waliu'd-din Abu Muslim Khorasani, who had risen against the Bani Umayya on behalf of Bani Abbas, took his body down and buried it in Gurgan, where it is a place of pilgrimage.

Misdeeds of this dynasty

In view of the misdeeds of this accursed dynasty, the body of the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali was buried during the night, and no trace of his grave was left. The grave remained virtually unknown until the days of Caliph Harun ar-Rashid. One day Harun came hunting in the locality of Najaf, where deer lived in large numbers.

When the hounds chased the deer, they took refuge on the mound of Najaf, a small hill which the hounds would not ascend. Several times, when the hounds retreated, the deer would come down, but when the hounds again leapt at them, the deer took refuge on the mound.

Understanding that there was a reason for the hounds' behavior, Harun sent his men to inquire in Najaf. They brought an old man to him and the caliph asked about the secret of why the hounds did not climb up on the mound.

Discovery of the sacred grave of 'Ali

The old man replied that he knew the secret, but that he was afraid to disclose it. The caliph guaranteed him safety, and the man told him: "Once I came here with my father, who went on the mound and offered prayers there. When I asked him what was there, he said that they had come there with Imam Ja'far Sadiq for a visit (Ziyarat). The Imam had said that this was the sacred grave of his revered grandfather, the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali, and that it would shortly become known.

"At the caliph's behest that place was dug up, and the signs of a grave became apparent along with a tablet with an inscription in Syriac, meaning: "In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. This grave has been prepared by the Prophet Noah for 'Ali, the Vicegerent of Muhammad, 700 years before the Deluge."

Caliph Harun paid respects to the place, and ordered the restoration of the earth. He then performed two rak'ats of prayer. He wept much and laid himself on the grave. Thereafter, on his orders, the whole matter was disclosed to Imam Musa Kazim at Medina. The Imam confirmed that the grave of his revered grandfather, Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali, was at that place.

Harun then decreed that a stone building be erected over Commander of the Faithful's sacred grave, which came to be known as 'Hajar Haruni' – the stone structure built by Harun. In due course, the news spread, and Muslims visited the Holy place. Ibrahim Mujab, the great, great grandfather of 'Sultanu'l-Wa'adhim' (Well-Wisher) also left Shiraz for this Holy visit, and after performing the Ziarat, died in Karbala. He was buried near the sacred grave of his great grandfather, Imam Husain. His grave is located in the Northwestern corner of his sacred mausoleum, and is visited regularly by his admirers.

Differences about the burial place of the commander of the faithful

Hafiz: Despite these conclusive remarks, I think that the grave of 'Ali (may Allah bless him) is not located in Najaf. Scholars differ on this point. Some say it is in the State House in Kufa; some say it is in the Qibla of the Central Mosque of Kufa; some say that it is in the gate known as 'Bab al-Kinda' of the Mosque of Kufa; some hold that it is in Rahba in Kufa; still others say it is beside the grave of Fatima in Baqi.

In our Afghanistan, too, there is a place near Kabul known as the Mausoleum of 'Ali. According to one account, the sacred body of 'Ali was placed in a box, and laid on the back of a camel and sent toward Medina. A party of men snatched the box, believing it contained valuables. On opening it, they saw the sacred body, brought it to Kabul, and buried it at this place. That is why people revere this place.

Well-Wisher: These differences arose because of the details of his will, which stipulated that the

arrangements for his burial obfuscate his burial place. It is related from Imam Ja'far Sadiq that at the time of his death, the Commander of the Faithful told his son, Imam Husain, that after burying him in Najaf, he should prepare four graves for him in four different places: in the Mosque of Kufa, in Rahba, in the house of Ju'da Hira, and in Ghira. The 'Shi'as' agree that his sacred grave is in Najaf.

Whatever they have learned from the 'Ahlul Bayt is authentic. The "people of the house" know best about what relates to the house.

I really wonder at your scholars, who have neglected the sayings of the progeny of the Holy Prophet in every matter. They did not inquire about the location of the grave of the father from his own sons in order to learn the truth. It is certain that the children know more about the grave of their father than others do.

If any of these current theories had been correct, the Holy Imams would have informed their followers of it. But, they have confirmed the location in Najaf, visited the place themselves, and have exhorted their adherents to visit it. Sibt Ibn Jauzi has, in his 'Tadhkira', mentioned these differences.

He says: "The sixth view is that it is in Najaf at the well known place, which is commonly visited. To all appearances, this is the correct view." Similarly, your other scholars, such as 'Khatib-e Khawarizmi' in 'Manaqib', Muhammad ibn Shafi'i in 'Matalibu's-Su'ul', Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in 'Sharhe Nahju'l-Balagha', Firuzabadi in his lexicon, 'Qamus', under the word Najaf, and others, have held that the Commander of the Faithful's grave is located in Najaf.

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