

Home > Hayat Al-Qulub Vol.3 > Chapter Two: Description of Verses revealed summarily about the status of the Imams > Part 5: The Imams are the most exalted and the most respected

Part 5: The Imams are the most exalted and the most respected

The Infallible Imams (a.s.) are the most exalted of the creatures and the most respected of Ibrahim's progeny. There are some verses in this.

The First Verse:

The Lord Almighty says:

ثُمَّ أَوْرَثْنَا الْكِتَابَ الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَيْنَا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا فَمِنْهُمْ ظَالِمٌ لِنَفْسِهِ وَمِنْهُمْ مُقْتَصِدٌ
وَمِنْهُمْ سَابِقٌ بِالْخَيْرَاتِ بإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيرُ. جَنَّاتٌ عَدْنٌ يَدْخُلُونَهَا
يُحَلَّونَ فِيهَا مِنْ أَسَاوِرَ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ وَلُؤْلُؤًا وَلِبَاسُهُمْ فِيهَا حَرِيرٌ.

Then We gave the Book for an inheritance to those whom We chose from among Our servants; but of them is he who makes his soul to suffer a loss, and of them is he who takes a middle course, and of them is he who is foremost in deeds of goodness by Allah's permission; this is the great excellence. Gardens of perpetuity, they shall enter therein. (Sura Fatir 35:32-33)

It means: We gave the book in heritage which is Quran or Torah or the wholly books of Allah.

whom We chose from among Our servants

Some have said that the selected servants are the messengers of Allah and some say that they are scholars in the Ummah of the Holy Prophet (S). After this will be mentioned many traditions which will show that these gentlemen are, specially, the Ahle-Bayt (a.s.).

but of them is he who makes his soul to suffer a loss

There is a difference of opinion about the source of the pronoun “of them”. Sayyid Murtuza (r.a.) and a group of commentators have said that this pronoun refers to “Servants” which means some among Our slaves are oppressing themselves and some have said it refers to the selected people.

but of them is he who makes his soul to suffer a loss, and of them is he who takes a middle course, and of them is he who is foremost in deeds of goodness by Allah’s permission; this is the great excellence.

Commentators have differed about the three groups mentioned in the verse. Some say all of them will get salvation. Some say that those who are oppressors will not be saved from the Divine punishment. Thus Qatada said that the oppressors are “companions of the left hand” and the “middle course” are “companions of the right hand” and “foremost” are among the “who are drawn nigh (to Allah)”. Garden of Adn is their abodes wherein they will enter.

The commentators have differed as to what the pronoun of “they shall enter therein” refers. Some say that it refers to all the three groups and hence all of them would be admitted to Paradise and some say it refers to those selected persons about whom it has been said: “those whom We chose.” And some are of the opinions that it refers to he who takes a middle course and “foremost” and that he who makes his soul to suffer a loss is not included in it as some traditions related to this matter show.

For instance it is reported in Maniul Akhbar that Imam Sadiq (a.s.) said that the oppressor always obeys his desires and that a he who takes a middle course always goes on thinking in his heart, that is, he is always trying to improve his beliefs or is busy reforming his soul or he worships constantly and that even in the matter of worldly affairs he keeps religion in his mind. And the “he who is foremost in deeds of goodness” revolves round his Lord and he empties his soul of all desires and ambitions and is not concerned with anything but the pleasure of his Lord.

Likewise, Imam Baqir (a.s.) is reported to have said that among the pure progeny of the Messenger (S) of Allah the oppressor is the one does not recognise the rights of the Imam and the middle course is one who believes in the leadership of the Imam and the foremost in deeds of goodness is the Imam himself.

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) is quoted in *Majmaul Bayan* that he adds after the aforesaid quotation “all of them will be pardoned” and that *Gardens of perpetuity, they shall enter therein...* means that the foremost and the middle course ones would be admitted to the Gardens of Adn.

Similarly, according to reliable sources, Imam Baqir (a.s.) is reported to have said that, (when people asked from him the explanation of the above mentioned verse): It has been revealed in praise of we, Ahlul Bayt (a.s.).

Abu Hamza Thumali (r.a.) says I asked: Who from among you is the one who oppresses his soul? The Hazrat replied: From us Ahlul Bayt such person is he whose sins and rewards would be equal. He would be considered as the one who oppressed his self as he has been found wanting in the Worship of Allah. I asked: Who from you is of the middle course? He replied: He is the one who worships Allah both in

difficulties and in ease or both when truth is dominant or untruth is in power until he breathed his last.

Then I asked: Who is the foremost in deeds of goodness among you? He replied: He who commands the people to walk on the straight path of Allah and guides them to good deeds and the worship of Allah and prevents them from evil and sins and does not help the deviated ones and does is angry upon anyone on behalf of those who betray the trust and is not pleased with the command of the oppressors except him who fears harm to himself or to his religion at a time when he does not have helpers who may oppose the sinners and hence he mixes with them by way of Taqaiyyah [dissimulation].

Ali bin Ibrahim says that “*whom We chose from among Our servants*” means the Imams (a.s.) and the oppressors among Aale Muhammad are, excepting the Imams (a.s.) those who deny the right of the Imam but accept the leadership of the Imam (a.s.). The foremost are the Imams.

And there is a narration from Imam Sadiq (a.s.) regarding “*about those whom We chose from among Our servants*” that they are Aale Muhammad and that the ‘foremost’ are the Imams.

Imam Baqir (a.s.) is reported to have said that this verse has been revealed in our praise and that the ‘foremost’ is the Imam (a.s.).

According to another report, he has also said that ‘foremost’ is the Imam and that this verse has been revealed in the praise of the sons of Fatima and Ali (a.s.)

In *Kashaful Ghumma*, there is a narration from *Dalaile Humairi* that Abu Hashmi Ja’fari said that I requested Imam Askari (a.s.) to explain this verse. He said that all the three groups are from Aale Muhammad and the one who is oppressor himself is he who does not accept the Imam. Abu Hashim says: Hearing this, tears rolled down from my eyes and I wondered what kind of ‘greatness’ is this which has been granted by Allah to Aale Muhammad?!

The honourable Imam understood my confusion and said looking at me: The matter of Imam is higher and the rank of the Imam is greater than what has come to your mind about the honour and dignity of Muhammad (S). So praise Allah for having connection with them and for you belief in their Imamate. On the Day of Qiyamat, you will be called with them. So, O Abu Hashim! Be happy because you are on the right path.

In *Majmaul Bayan*, Abu Darda is reported to have said: In the explanation of this verse, I have heard the Holy Prophet (S) saying that the ‘foremost’ would enter Paradise without questioning and the questioning of the middle course ones would be easy and the oppressor of his own soul would be detained during interrogation for a long time and thereafter he would be admitted to Paradise. In short, these are the people who would say:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَذْهَبَ عَنَّا الْحَزْنَ.

(All) praise is due to Allah, Who has made grief to depart from us. (Sura Fatir 35:34)

Imam Baqir (a.s.) said that the oppressor of his own soul is the one who commits both good and bad actions and the one of the middle course is one who endeavours a lot in worship and the foremost are Ali, Hasan, Husain (a.s.) and those from Aale Muhammad (a.s.) imply the martyrs.

Sayyid Ibne Tawoos has, in *Kitabus Saadus Saood* quoted from the *Tafsir* of Muhammad bin Abbas and similarly, the author of *Tawilul Aayaatul Bahira* has also narrated with his authority from Abi Ishaq Sabeai that: I went for Hajj and met Muhammad bin Ali, that is, Muhammad bin Hanafiya and asked him about the explanation of this verse.

He asked me: What does your community say about the meaning of this verse? [He meant the people of Kufa]. I said: They say it means the Shias. He said: Why do they fear when they are the people of Paradise? I replied: I may be sacrificed for you, what do you say? He said: O Abu Ishaq. It refers specially to us, Ahlul Bayt (a.s.). But the foremost are Ali, Hasan and Husain (a.s.) and also every Imam who would be from us.

It is said in some books that he added 'also every martyr from us' and the middle course one is he who fasts during the day and rises for worship at night and the oppressor refers to those who repent and, according to some narrations, which are for all, they are those who have been mentioned as the forgiven ones.

So, O Abu Ishaq! The merciful Allah dispels your sins because of us and He frees your necks from the ropes of disgrace and pardons your sins because of us or repays your debts and initiates Caliphate and the Imamate through us and also concludes it on us not on you. And like the People of the cave it is only we who are the cave and the place of shelter for you. And only we are like the Ark of Nuh (a.s.), the Ark of salvation for you and, like the Gate of repentance of Bani Israel, we are the Gate of repentance for you.

The Sayyid (r.a.) says that Muhammad bin Ayyash has narrated the meaning of this verse in twenty manners with a slight addition or omission and Furat bin Ibrahim has also quoted from the commentary of Muhammad bin Ayyash with a little variance in the book *Aayaatul Bahira*.

It is narrated with trustworthy chains from Surah bin Kaleeb that: I asked Imam Baqir (a.s.), the explanation of this verse. He replied: The oppressor is one who does not know the Imam. I asked: Then who is the middle course one? He said: One who knows the Imam. I further inquired: Who is the foremost? He replied: He is the Imam. Then I asked: What about your Shias? He said: They will be pardoned and their debts will be paid and we are their Bab-e-Hitta and their sins will be forgiven because of us.

Similarly, trustworthy chains quote Imam Baqir (a.s.) that: "*those whom We chose from among Our servants*" are the Aale Muhammad (a.s.) who have been selected by Allah and the one who does

injustice to himself will be destroyed and the ones of the middle course are the pious and righteous people and the foremost is Ali (a.s.). The Lord of the worlds says: *this is the great excellence. Gardens of perpetuity, they shall enter therein* meaning that the Aale Muhammad will enter the palaces of Paradise each one of which is made of a single pearl having no hole or joint. It will accommodate all the faithful collectively. Their rooms are made of Emeralds having two corridors, each one of which will be twelve miles long.

Therefore Allah Almighty says that, while entering them, they will say: *Praiseworthy is the Lord who removed grief and sorrow from us.* The Hazrat (a.s.) said: The grief is what they had to suffer in the world, that is, the troubles given to them by the people of their time.¹

The Second Verse:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَىٰ آدَمَ وَنُوحًا وَآلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَآلَ عِمْرَانَ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ. ذُرِّيَّةً بَعْضُهَا مِن بَعْضٍ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ.

Surely Allah chose Adam and Nuh and the descendants of Ibrahim (Aale Ibrahim) and the descendants of Imran (Aale Imran) above the nations. Offspring one of the other; and Allah is Hearing, Knowing. (Sura Ale-Imran 3:33-34)

Meaning that Allah selected Adam and Nuh and Aale Ibrahim from all the people of the worlds and so the Holy Prophet (S) as well as the guiding Imams who are from his progeny are also included in them. But there is difference of opinions about Aale Imran as to who are they. Some have said they are Moosa and Haroon and their progeny because Moosa and Haroon are the sons of Imran. Some say they are Mary am and Isa (a.s.) because Maryam was the daughter of Imran.

Shaykh Tabarsi (r.a.) says that in the *Furat* of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) instead of the descendants of Imran is mentioned the descendants of Muhammad (a.s.) above the nations. And that as mentioned by the Imams (a.s.) Aale Ibrahim (a.s.) means Aale Muhammad (a.s.)

Similarly Tabarsi (r.a.) has said that the people of a group which has been selected by Allah should necessarily be free from all sins and drawbacks and that they must be purified as well as infallible, because Allah does not choose anyone but like them and He never selects those whose inward may not be like their outward (appearance) and that Infallibility, on the basis of “We chose” would be reserved for the one who is from Aale Ibrahim and Aale Imran, be they Prophets or Imams.

‘Descendants’ means some of the sons and children. ‘They are some from some’ means they are assisting one another in the affairs of religion or they are from the race of one another because, indeed, they are the progeny of Adam then of Nuh, then of Ibrahim. Hence Imam Sadiq (a.s.) is reported to have

said that those whom Allah has selected are some from the progeny of some.

Here end the words of Tabarsi (r.a.).

Ali bin Ibrahim (a.s.) has mentioned that Imam Moosa Kazim (a.s.) said that this verse was revealed as follows:

“And the descendants of Ibrahim (Aale Ibrahim) and the descendants of Imran (Aale Imran) and the descendants of Muhammad (Aale Muhammad) above the nations...”

The Aale Muhammad has been removed from the Quran.

Shaykh Tusi (r.a.) has, in *Majalis*, reliably quoted Ibrahim Abdus Samad that he said: I have heard Imam Sadiq (a.s.) reciting this verse in this way: “Surely Allah chose Adam and Nuh and the descendants of Ibrahim (Aale Ibrahim) and the descendants of Imran (Aale Imran) above the nations.”

But Aale Muhammad (a.s.) has been removed from Quran.

The Hazrat said: This verse has been revealed like this only.

Imam Baqir (a.s.) is quoted in *Kitab Tawilul Aayaat* that the Holy Prophet (S) said: Woe unto those people who become happy when they mention Aale Ibrahim and Aale Imran but when Aale Muhammad are mentioned their hearts become unhappy. By the same Allah in Whose control is the life of Muhammad (S), if anyone of them had performed the good deeds of seventy messengers, Allah will not accept them if the love and Wilayat of me and of Ali (a.s.) is absent.

Similarly, Ibne Abbas is quoted that: I went to Amirul Momineen (a.s.) and said: O Abul Hasan! Please let me know of the will which the Holy Prophet (S) has made to you. The Amir (Ali) said: Doubtlessly, Allah has selected the True Faith for you and preferred it for you and completed His bounty on you because you were the most eligible among all for it.

And verily, Allah revealed to His Messenger that he should give me a will. So he (the Holy Prophet (S)) told me: O Ali! Remember my will. Maintain my surety, fulfil my promise, complete my oath, keep my Sunnah alive and go on inviting people towards my faith because Allah Almighty has selected me and preferred me.

So I remembered the prayer of my brother Moosa and I prayed: O Allah! Appoint a vizier for me from my family as you had made Haroon, the vizier of Moosa. Then Allah revealed to me that ‘I have made Ali your vizier and your helper and, after you, your Caliph and your vicegerent. O Ali! You are from the Imams of Guidance and so also from your progeny, are Imams like you.

So, O Ali! You people are those who attract people towards guidance and forgiveness and you people are the tree the root of which is I and you people are its trunk and branches and whoever will turn from it

would be destroyed and enter the lowest region of Hell and you are the people whose love and affection is made compulsory and He has made the acceptance of your Imamate compulsory and you are the group whose mention has been made for you by Allah in His Book saying: *Surely Allah chose Adam and Nuh and the descendants of Ibrahim (Aale Ibrahim) and the descendants of Imran (Aale Imran) above the nations.* So you people are selected by Allah from Adam and Nuh and Aale Imran and Aale Ibrahim and you are the best tribe and group of Ismail (a.s.) and you are the Progeny of Muhammad (S) who are to guide the creation.

Ayyashi has reported that Imam Baqir (a.s.), explaining the verse: *Surely Allah chose Adam and Nuh and the descendants of Ibrahim (Aale Ibrahim) and the descendants of Imran (Aale Imran) above the nations.* That: We are from the said descendants and Progeny.

According to another narration the Holy Prophet (S) said that peace, ease, help, comfort and richness and pleasure and conquest over enemies and the nearness to Allah and his Prophet are for him who befriends Ali (a.s.) and who, after Ali (a.s.), obeys his legatees. I am bound to intercede for them and it is incumbent on my Lord to accept my mediation in their favor because they are my followers and the one who follows me is from me. My case is just like that of Ibrahim who had said:

then whoever follows me, he is surely of me (Sura Ibrahim 14:36)

because Ibrahim is from me and I am from him and his religion is my religion and my religion is his religion and his way (Sunnah) is my way and my way is his way and my grace is his grace and I am superior to him and the testimony to it is my Lord's statement:

Offspring one of the other; and Allah is Hearing, Knowing.

Ibne Bitreeq in *Kitab Amadah*, quotes Thalabi through Abu Waail that he said: I have read: And the descendants of Ibrahim (Aale Ibrahim) and the descendants of Imran (Aale Imran) and the descendants of Muhammad (Aale Muhammad) above the nations... in Abdullah bin Masood's copy of Quran

The Third Verse:

قُلْ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَسَلَامٌ عَلَىٰ عِبَادِهِ الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَىٰ ۗ أَلَّا يَكْفُرُوا بِاللَّهِ خَيْرٌ أَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ .

Praise be to Allah and peace on His servants whom He has chosen. (Sura Naml 27:59)

Ali bin Ibrahim said the selected servants are Aale Muhammad (a.s.).

The Fourth Verse:

رَبَّنَا إِنِّي أَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِي زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ رَبَّنَا لِيُقِيمُوا
 الصَّلَاةَ فَاجْعَلْ أَفئِدَةً مِنَ النَّاسِ تَهْوِي إِلَيْهِمْ وَارْزُقْهُمْ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ
 يَشْكُرُونَ.

O our Lord! surely I have settled a part of my offspring in a valley unproductive of fruit near Thy Sacred House, our Lord! that they may keep up prayer; therefore make the hearts of some people yearn towards them and provide them with fruits; haply they may be grateful. (Sura Ibrahim 14:37)

This refers to the time when Ismail (a.s.) and his respected mother Hajrah (s.a.) were taken by Ibrahim (a.s.) to Mecca by the order of Allah and he had prayed to Allah saying: O Lord! Verily I have made some of my family members dwell in a barren valley where there is no agriculture nor is it tillable, it being mountainous [stony].

Near Your House which is respectable since eternity. O our Lord! So that they may establish Prayer. So make some people's hearts incline towards them enthusiastically and lovefully or they may become their fast friends, and grant thus provision of food, so they may thank Thee for these bounties.

Ayyashi and Ibne Shahr Aashob have quoted Imam Baqir (a.s.) that: We are the remnants of that Progeny.

In *Tafsir Furat Bin Ibrahim*, Ibne Abbas is quoted that the Holy Prophet (S) said: The hearts of our Shias who race in our love and turn towards us. And Imam Baqir (a.s.) is quoted that the Lord of the world said: *make the hearts of some people yearn towards them* wherein the pronoun refers to the Progeny because He has not used the words "towards it" which would have made the pronoun refer to the Ka'ba.

Thus you imagine that Allah has made it a must for you to come towards stones and rub your hands on it, and not to turn towards us and ask us questions and to love us, the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.)?! By Allah, Allah has not made it compulsory for you to follow any religion except our religion.

The Fifth Verse:

إِنَّ أَوْلَى النَّاسِ بِإِبْرَاهِيمَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ وَهَذَا النَّبِيُّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَاللَّهُ وَلِيُّ
 الْمُؤْمِنِينَ.

Most surely the nearest of people to Ibrahim are those who followed him and this Prophet and those who believe and Allah is the guardian of the believers. (Sura Ale-Imran 3:68)

In *Kafi*, Imam Baqir (a.s.) is quoted that: “Those who put faith” are the Imam (a.s.) and their followers.

In *Majmaul Bayan*, Umar bin Yazid is reported to have said that Imam Sadiq (a.s.) said: O Umar bin Yazid! You people are from Aale Muhammad (a.s.). Umar bin Yazid asked: We ourselves? The Imam (a.s.) averred thrice: Yes, by Allah, you people are. Then the Hazrat looked at me and I looked at him when the Hazrat said: O Umar! The Almighty Lord has said in His Book: *Most surely the nearest of people.*

The Sixth Verse:

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّةِ آدَمَ وَمِمَّنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوحٍ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْرَائِيلَ وَمِمَّنْ هَدَيْنَا وَاجْتَبَيْنَا إِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُ الرَّحْمَٰنِ خَرُّوا سُجَّدًا وَبُكِيًّا.

These are they on whom Allah bestowed favors, from among the prophets of the seed of Adam, and of those whom We carried with Nuh, and of the seed of Ibrahim and Israel, and of those whom We guided and chose; when the communications of the Beneficent God were recited to them, they fell down making obeisance and weeping. (Sura Maryam 19:58)

The apparent translation of which is: They are group on whom Allah has bestowed Reward. They are from prophets, from the progeny of Adam and from the group whom We made ride the Ark of Nuh and from the progeny of Ibrahim and Israel (Yaqoob) and from the group whom we guided and whom We selected. These are the people who, when Allah’s verses are read out before them they fall down in prostration, weeping.

With reliable chains of narrators, Muhammad bin Ilyas has narrated from Imam Moosa bin Ja’far (a.s.) that people asked for the explanation of this verse from him and he replied: We are the progeny of Ibrahim (a.s.) we are those who rode the Ark with Noah (a.s.) and we are the chosen ones of Allah and by these words of Allah: “*and of those whom We guided and chose*” are meant our Shias whom Allah has guided towards our love and affection and He has selected them for our religion.

So they live on our religion and die on our religion. Allah has praised them and they worship Allah with courtesy and humility as He has said: “*When the communications of the Beneficent God were recited to them.*”²

The Seventh Verse:

وَلَقَدْ اخْتَرْنَاهُمْ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ عَلَىٰ الْعَالَمِينَ.

And certainly We chose them, having knowledge, above the nations. (Sura Dukhan 44:32)³

Muhammad bin Al-Ayyash has in his commentary quoted Imam Baqir (a.s.) that in the explanation of this verse, he said that it means: We have granted to the Imams superiority over others.

1. The writer says: The outcome of these traditions can be one of these two:

First: These pronouns refers to Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) and the entire progeny of the Hazrat will be pure and that the unjust and the corrupt all will be from among them. 'he who takes a middle course' may be their righteous ones and 'he who is foremost' may be the Imam. Thus he will not be included in this division who might have made a false claim of Imamate or his belief might not be correct in any other way. The other possibility is that wherein unjust is he whose beliefs may not be correct and yet he may not have done anything against Iman (Faith). Hence 'they shall enter therein' will refers to 'he who takes a middle course' and to 'he who is foremost', it cannot mean 'he who makes his soul to suffer a loss' only both these will be meant according to the apparent and the hidden meaning of the verse or from various secrets aspects, and 'by Allah's permission' would mean that Almighty Allah has selected them in such way than He made them Legatees and Imams and granted to everyone of them knowledge of the book and their greatness can be for everyone of their progeny provided they do not waste it.

2. The writer says: The explanation given by the Hazrat is based on 'of those whom We guided' is a reply to the query as is the opinion of a group of commentators

3. The writer says: Though the apparent pronoun of this verse refers to Moosa (a.s.) and his community, but since the affair of Bani Israel is similar to this community and as, instead of the prophets who were in their Ummah and were their vicegerent in that Ummah, the vicegerents of the Holy Prophet (S) are the holy Imams (a.s.).

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