

# Ghadir Khum

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**Abstract:** *This article is mainly about the historical and religious event of Ghadir Khum known as the backbone in the history of Islam; in which the prophet of Islam introduced Imam Ali as his successor on every occasion of his proclamations, according to the will of God. The writer describes briefly the location of Ghadir Khum as well as its sermon. This is the time when the prophet bestowed the title of 'Amirul Muminin' to Ali.*

*Event of Ghadir is not the only proof or authority to establish the caliphate of Ali. There are several other traditions of the prophet as well which in the continuing, the writer has mentioned some of them. Among them, is the famous Hadith of Saqalain.*

*The article continues by a very short biography of Imam Ali, referring to some moral characteristics of him from viewpoint of some scholars such as Khaja Naseeruddin Tusi, Thomas Carlyle, Poles Salama, etc. Finally, the main issues that we should conclude from the event of Ghadir Khum are put in discuss.*

**Keywords:** *event of Ghadir Khum, Johfa, Hadith of Ghadir Khum, Hadith of Saqalain, Prophet's Successor, Hajjatu l- Wida( the holy Prophet's last pilgrim to Mecca)*

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Ghadir Khum is located in a place called Johfa, between Mecca and Medina. A place in a desert where water gathers is named Ghadir Khum. Since it was like a barrel of die and some of the tribes used to wash their dyed clothes there, it became known as Khum.

The Prophet traveled from Medina to Mecca to perform the Hajj pilgrimage there.

It was in the tenth year of Hijra. News of his journey had reached the Muslims in various locations. In order to perform the pilgrimage along with the Prophet, many groups and classes of people had gathered in Mecca.

The Prophet completing the pilgrimage delivered several speeches among the crowds. He then decided to return to Medina. The crowds continued to accompany the Prophet. On his journey back the Prophet reached the hilly spot of JOHFA in the desert, also known a GHADIR KHUM. It was here that the Angel of Revelation, Gabreil, descended upon the Prophet with this verse of the holy Qur'an:

*"Oh, Messenger. Proclaim what descended to you from your Lord; and if you do not so, you have not proclaimed His message. God protects you from the people."*

The event of Ghadir Khum reveals that the Prophet's life was soon to end, because he lived only seventy days thereafter. On the other hand there was no Divine decree or commandment that the Prophet did not proclaim to the people. Hence, it is quite evident from this verse that the issue of succession to him is the point. The Prophet acted accordingly, then and there. After the noon prayer, he gave order to have a pulpit made which was done so by heaping the camel's saddles on top of each other. The people gathered around this pulpit.

#### 14. Safinah

According to historians the gathering of that day was 120,000 people.

The Prophet went on the pulpit. The people were anxious to know the importance and the magnitude of the reason why the Prophet had stopped them in that heat desert to speak. Not allowing him to postpone it to be made in the ease and the comfort of a town. Every indication was to show that the matter was of great importance. The Prophet had predicted the nearness of his death, which he had also said in Mecca. Then he spoke of his being the Prophet and that he had acted upon the will of God in announcing the revelations to them; and that he had to announce the last issue in completion of the religion. After these words he called Ali Bin Abi Taleb. Ali went next to him on the pulpit. The Prophet then took his hand and lifted it above his head so that as historians say, the whiteness of their armpits were visible.

There in the hot searing desert, holding Ali's hand high above his head, automatically stopping all passing caravans, the holy Prophet's voice rang out:

"To whomsoever I was the master, Ali to be his master." Then the Prophet blessed those who would help Ali, and cursed those who would refrain from helping him.

Under such a ceremony Ali was installed by the Prophet as his "successor". The religion of Islam, according to this verse, was made consummate and perfect.

"Today I have completed for you your religion and completed my bounties upon you, and am pleased for Islam to be your religion."

People from that gathering approached Ali, one by one, congratulated him and shake his hand as a token of their resignation to him. After all this the Prophet bestowed the title of "Amirul Muminin", Master of the Believers, to Ali and asked the community to call him by his new title. According to some historians, the Prophet remained three days and nights at Ghadir Khum, so that all the people could shake his hand - the act of surrendering to his authority.

The event of Ghadir, that we briefly passed over, is the backbone in the history of Islam. All the scholars such as Abu Rihan Bironi, and Khaja Naseeruddin Tosi, and the famous philosopher Farabi have mentioned it. Farabi has analyzed the IMAMAT on that basis. Avcina, in his book, SHIFA, has mentioned the event of Ghadir with great importance and suggested it as the best method of appointing a successor. Apart from the Shia scholars, who are all authorities in this field, tens and tens of Sunni scholars, historians, and interpreters have also mentioned this event. Among them are Tabari, Ibn Atheer, and Ahmad Hanbal....

In our own time, Allama Amini, in his great book AL-GHADIR, has expounded the event by quoting 360 sources from the Sunni scholars.

The event of Ghadir is not the only proof or authority to establish the caliphate of Imam Ali. There are several traditions of the Prophet to show that Ali is his only successor. Of those several, we will only briefly mention here an event that occurred in the third year of the Prophet's prophethood.

The holy Prophet had not made his mission public for three years after his message. Then he was assigned to invite his tribe to Islam. The holy Prophet ordered Ali to invite forty men from their tribe, Quraish. In the meeting, the holy Prophet disclosed to them the mission and his prophethood.

## 16. *Safinah*

Then he asked, "Now who is there among you to help me in this mission so that he can be my successor and my Caliph after me?"

Nobody replied him except Ali, who said, "I will help you." The Prophet repeated his question three times. No one responded to him except Ali. On the third time the holy Prophet turned to Ali and said: "You will be my caliph and my successor after me."

There is a famous tradition from the holy Prophet. Most of the scholars, both Shia and Sunni, have narrated it. And the tradition is this:

"I leave, behind me, two great things amidst you - The Book of God (the Qur'an), and my own family (that is Ali and the other Imams, from his sons). You Muslims will not go astray as long as you follow the both."

It becomes evident that the successor of the Prophet should be fixed or appointed by God Himself. In support of this we refer to the incident of Bani Aqmer Bin Sasa'a. The incident runs thus: The Prophet invited a tribe to Islam. The head of the tribe asked: "If we follow you, and if you succeeded in establishing your religion; then would you give us the charge of the affairs after your death?"

The Prophet replied: "The matter belongs to God. He does however He wishes."

Reason too dictates the same. There comes a Messenger from God; he then leaves his people and the religion without a guardian, giving the people a room to do whatever they desire. Reason spurns such a thing. In such a case what would remain

of the religion? When things go such, Yazid Bin Mawiya and Motawakkil Abbasi could have easily become the caliph of the Prophet. It is common sense that a religion has a system regulated by God.

Therefore, everything of it should be regulated by God. The Prophet was quick aware of that fact. He introduced Ali as his successor on every occasion of his proclamations of the Divine decrees. Ghadir was one among others.

Now let us see who Ali was, and what distinction(s) he had, that he became the choice of God for the office of the leadership of the Muslims in succession to the Prophet.

Since his childhood, Ali was brought up by the holy Prophet. (The year of drought had hit Mecca. The Prophet by way of sympathy with his uncle, Abu Taleb, took Ali, one among his cousins, and kept him with himself in his home. Ali (then was a boy of six years.) Amidst all the people Ali was the first one to accept the call of the Prophet. Ali was then between ten or twelve years of age. This shows that since his infancy Ali was acquainted with Islam and Islam became rooted in him, as blood in his veins. Next to the Prophet there was no one else except Ali who had deeply rooted faith in Islam.

Khaja Naseeruddin Tosi describes, "Ali was cleverer than others. He was a man of strong sense. He was always in the company of the Prophet. In generosity, he was the foremost of all. Besides the Prophet he was one of the most pious ones and great worshippers. Among all, the preference of faith goes only to him. He was the man of eloquence in which his word was strength and faith to which others were short. His opinion was to the point and most correct, while others erred. Towards protection of the Qur'an and towards the execution of its commands his attention surpassed all."

According to the English thinker and historian, Thomas Carlyle, Ali was a man of brave nature, and a great soul. Love and virtue flowed from the fountain of his conscience, while flames of bravery leaped from his heart. His courage surpassed that of a lion but blended with kindness.

Poles Salama, a Lebanese Christian law scholar says, "In judgment he never allowed a distinction. Whatever to be distributed among the people he used to do equally and on parity. He never drew a line of distinction between a servant and a master. The condition of the miserable ones used to upset him. It was always before his sight that the pains and misery of life, like the rhyme of a verse, is felt by all people."

This shows the merit that qualified Ali to be the choice of God. And on the pedestal of these realities the Shia people adhered to the path pointed out by the Prophet. In other words, they obeyed Ali in his capacity as the leader of Islam, the Imam of the nation, leader of the people, executor of the commandments of the holy Qur'an, the protector of justice and law, and the guardian of the rights of the masses; in short, the immediate successor and the rightful caliph of the Prophet. They recognized him as the leader who translated the Qur'anic banners into practice. Ali always adhered to the contents of the Ghadir that had taken place by God's decree. He thus remained faithful to Islam, to the Prophet of Islam, and to the commandments of Islam to such extent that he neither added anything thereto nor did he reduced there from. He did not walk where the Prophet had not set his foot. He only followed the footprints of the Prophet.

Had they acted, after the demise of the Prophet, in line with the command of the holy Prophet? Ghadir, or in line with the Prophet's declarations in various occasions to the effect that Ali was his successor, Islam would have had been much

stronger worldwide. Wolter, the French philosopher, says, "The last wish of Muhammad was not acted upon. He had appointed Ali in his own place."

It is a remarkable fact to mention here that the event of Ghadir is not only a historical one, but a religious event based on truth. Hence, its importance binds every Muslim to investigate the truth and stick to it once found. The main thing that comes to light in Ghadir is the right and correct choice of the leadership, guardianship, and the guidance for the people of truth. One should believe in the just government of the just leader. An example of such a government can not be found beyond that of Ali himself, which lasted nearly five years when he was the caliph, the torch of Ghadir is burning from age to age in our minds. Its spirit is in the bodies of societies. To discuss this issue of Ghadir so often and repeatedly is only to point to the truth and preserve its challenge, so as to keep the banner of justice high against tyranny and ignorance. As such, Ghadir is the issue of mankind. The voice of the Prophet is still ringing in the ears of those who seek truth and defend the truth. It is the obligation of man to accept the fact and remind others of it. And it shall be as long as man is alive.