

*Academic Debates of Ahlul Bayt**

Muhammadriza Izadpour

Abstract: *One of the greatest activities of Ahlul Bayt in revitalizing the teachings of Islam and clarifying them was the attention they paid to formal or informal debates sessions. The importance of such debates was magnified by collected several heavy books. Following, a debate between Imam Ali and a Jewish is narrated.*

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* Translator: Hamid Shahedi

*A*bu Tofail Amer ibn Va'eleh said:

After giving the title of "Commander of the Faithfuls" to the second Caliph, one day, we were sitting besides him when a Jewish man from Medina entered. He believed that he was one of the progeny of Haroun, brother of Moses. He stood besides Caliph addressing him: oh, Commander of the faithfuls! Which one of you does know the Prophet Muhammad and his holy Book more? I have some questions.

Caliph pointed to Ali (*as*). He asked: is this true? "Yes, now ask whatever you like", said Imam Ali.

"I am going to ask you about three things, then about other three things and then about one thing." said Jewish man. "Why don't you ask about those seven things?" asked Imam Ali.

Jewish man answered: first I am going to ask you three questions if you answered correctly I will ask you the other three ones, when the answers are all right, the last question will be asked. Moreover, if the first three ones are not accepted, you will not be asked more.

Imam asked: how do you justify the truth of my answers?

Meanwhile, the Jew took an old book out of his pocket and said: I inherited this book from my fathers and them from their fathers. This book is signed by Moses and handwrote by Haroun. It includes the answers.

Imam Ali said: so if I answered correctly you should confess to their truth immediately.

He said: I swear to God! If you answer me correctly, I will surrender.

Imam said: alright, ask me.

The Jews: tell me what was the first stone placed on the earth? What was the first tree which grew? And the first spring gurgled on the earth?

Imam Ali replied: oh, Jewish man! The first stone was Hajar al-Asvad. God put it for Adam in heavens. Then He descended it to the earth as the pillar of His house. People touch it, kiss it and refresh their promises with God through it. Though, Jews believe the first stone is the rock which is in Jerusalem. Man upon hearing this answer said: I take God as our witness, your answer is correct.

Imam Ali continued: the first tree was the date tree whose fruit called Aj'va and it was in heaven when Adam was there. But Jews think that the first three was olive tree.

Again the man cried: I take God as our witness, your answer is correct.

Imam: the first spring was the Life Spring which Moses's accompany forgot and leave salted fish in it and when the water of that spring touched it, the fish became alive and moved. The man said: you are right.

Imam Ali, then, said: now, ask.

He asked: let me know if there is a leader after passing the Prophet among Islamic nation? Let me know where is the eternal habitat of Muhammad and in which part of heaven he resides? And who are the people residing there and living besides him?

Imam Ali: oh, Jewish man! For this nation, twelve just leaders were chosen whom may not be bothered or mitigated by the enmity of their enemies.

The man again confirmed his answer.

Imam said: but the place of Muhammad in Heaven, it is the same Garden of Eden locating in the heart of heaven, the nearest point to the Throne of God.

Jews confessed: you are right!

Imam said: and those who are going to be lived besides him are that twelve leaders.

Jews said: “exactly”. “Ask me!” said Imam. The Jews asked: tell me about the inheritor of Muhammad who is regarded one of his family. How much will he live in this world after the Prophet Muhammad? Will he die naturally or he will be killed?

Imam said: oh, the Jewish man! He will live for 30 years after the death of Prophet Muhammad (*as*).

Then his holiness, pointing to his head, said: his head will be colored by his blood.

The Jewish man again confirmed these words and said:

I confess that there is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His Messenger and you are his inheritor¹.

¹ Sheikh Al-Saduq, *Kamal Al-Din*, p.172; Al-Majlesi, *Bihar Al-Anwar*, vol.10, p.20-22.