

Explanation of Al-Baqarah Surah Verse: 30.

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By: Shaykh Abul-Hasan 'Ali ar-Ramli

{وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَن يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ}

"And (remember) when your Lord said to the angels: "Verily, I am going to place (of mankind) a khaleefah (caliph) on earth." They said: "Will You place therein those who will make mischief therein and shed blood, - while we glorify You with praises and thanks (Exalted be You above all that they associate with You as partners) and sanctify You." He (Allâh) said: "I know that which you do not know."
(Al-Baqarah 2:30)

"And (remember) when your Lord said": i.e. and remember o Muhammad when your Lord said to the angels, and tell this to your people. This verse is an evidence that Allah [Exalted be He] speaks real speech in the way that suits His Glory and Majesty and the angels can hear His speech. Yet His speech does not match or resemble, in any way, the speech of the creatures. This is the aqeedah (creed) of Ahlus-sunnah as-haabul-hadeeth (people of Sunnah who are the people of hadeeth). Al-Mu'attilah (obstructors) contradicted Ahlus-sunnah in this creed as they deny the attribute of speech which Allah has affirmed for Him in His book and in the Sunnah of His prophet (peace be upon him).

"to the angels": malaa'ikah (angels) is plural of malak (angel) which was derived from mala'ak and the origin of mala'ak is the message, as the angels were called so because of the message as the angels are the messengers between Allah [Exalted be He] and His prophets as well as some of His slaves.

The angels are created from brightness or glow. The purpose for their creation is to obey and worship Allah [Exalted be He] and they are entrusted to carry out certain deeds. Allah [Exalted be He] created wings for them and there are many of them; Allah has informed us of the names of some of them and their missions like: Gabriel, Michael, Israfeel, Malik and the angel of death (some people call him

'Uzra'eel and this is wrong as it is not mentioned neither in the book nor in the Sunnah and since it relates to the Ghaib "unseen" then it cannot be known except by the revelation). Believing in the angels is obligatory and he who denies them is a disbeliever.

"Verily, I am going to place (of mankind) a khaleefah (Caliph) on earth.": Sheikh Muhammad Ameen Ash-shanqitee (may Allah have mercy upon him) said, in nutshell,: " The scholars have two explanations to His say "khaleefah (caliph)":

The first: what is meant by "khaleefah" is our father Adam (peace be upon him) because he is Allah's caliph on His earth to carry out Allah's commands. Or, as it was said, because he (Adam) has become the successor of Jinn who were the inhabitants of earth before him. It was also said that he was called so because when he dies he will be succeeded by the one after him. What is apparent of the verse context is that the khaleefah (successor) is Adam.

The second: His say: "khaleefah" is singular with the meaning of plural, so it means: generations after generations. This meaning was also selected by Ibn Katheer...and although this verse can have these two explanations, there are other verses which point to the second meaning which explains that "khaleefah" means generations not only from Adam alone but from his children, as Allah's say: "They said: "Will You place therein those who will make mischief therein and shed blood" and it is well-known that Adam (peace be upon him and upon our prophet) is neither of those who make mischief nor of those who shed blood. And like His say: "He it is Who has made you khalaa'if (successors generations after generations) in the earth." (Fatir 35:39), and His say: "And it is He Who has made you khalaa'ifa (generations coming after generations, replacing each other) on the earth." (Al-An'am 6:165) and also His say: "...and makes you khulafaa' (inheritors of the earth, generations after generations). (An-Naml 27:62) and the likes.

However this (the second say) can be refuted by the say that it was Adam who was meant by the word "khaleefah" and that Allah [Exalted be He] has told His angels that there would be of Adam's children who would make mischief therein and shed blood therefore the reply of the angels was:"Will You place therein those who will make mischief therein and shed blood, - while we glorify You with praises and thanks" and what is meant by the succession of Adam is the legal succession (i.e. caliphate) and the succession of his children is more common than that, which means that a generation passes a way and another one succeeds it.

Note: Al-qurtubee, explaining this noble verse, said:" This verse is a source evidence for the obligation of installing an Imam (caliph) who should unite the nation and the nation in return should obey him and carry out his rulings. There is

no dispute neither among the nation of Islam nor among the distinguished scholars concerning the obligation of this issue, except what was narrated about of Al-'Asamm.[\[1\]](#) "

Then Imam Al-qurtubee continued to say: " And our evidence is Allah's say: "Verily, I am going to place (of mankind) a khaleefah (Caliph) on earth.", His say: "O Dâwûd (David)! Verily! We have placed you as a successor on earth." (Sad 38:26) and His say: "Allâh has promised those among you who believe, and do righteous good deeds, that He will certainly grant them succession to (the present rulers) in the earth." (An-Nur 24:55) i.e. He will place khulafaa' (caliphs) out of them, and the likes of the noble verses. The companions have agreed upon Abu Bakr As-siddiq (may Allah be pleased with him) when the dispute between the Muhajirûn (immigrants) and the Ansâr (helpers) occurred during the selection of the caliph at the saqeefah (house) of Banee saa'idah. Therein the Ansâr said: "There should be an ameer (caliph or prince) from among us and another one from among you (O Muhajirûn)" but Abu Bakr, Umar and the Muhajirûn opposed them and told them that the Arabs do not accept any governor except from Quraish, and narrated to them the hadeeth of the prophet (peace be upon him) which states that the caliph must be a descendant of the Quraish tribe, so they gave up and obeyed Quraish. This clarifies that the Imamah (caliphate) is obligatory otherwise there would not be such a debate and such a dialogue upon this matter. Moreover nobody at that time came out to tell them: "Hold it, the Imamah is not obligatory neither in Quraish nor in any other tribe, so no need for your conflict". Also when Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) nominated Umar as his successor on his deathbed and nobody has told him that this matter is not obligatory neither upon you nor upon us. So this indicates that it is obligatory and one of the religion pillars." End of Imam Al-qurtubee quotation.

Sheikh Muhammad Ameen Ash-shanqitee (may Allah have mercy upon him) continued to say:" From among the necessities of the religion is the obligation upon the Muslims to install an Imam (caliph) so that the word is united through him, and the Ahkam (laws) of the Caliph are implemented through him. No one contradicted this except the inconsiderable Mu'tazili Abu Bakr Al-Asamm, who was mentioned in the quotation of Imam Al-qurtubee, Dhirar and Hisham Al-qurtubee and the likes. Therefore the majority of the scholars stated that the obligation of the grand Imamah (caliphate) is derived from the shari'ah (Islamic law) as indicated by the Ayah (verse) and its likes and the consensus of the companions (may Allah be pleased with them) as well. And because Allah may deter by the ruler what may not be deterred by the Qur'an, as Allah [Exalted be He] said:"Indeed We have sent Our Messengers with clear proofs, and revealed with them the Scripture and the Balance (justice) that mankind may keep up justice. And We brought forth iron wherein is mighty power (in matters of war), as well as

many benefits for mankind." (Al-Hadid 57:25) because His say: "And We brought forth iron wherein is mighty power" indicates using the sword against refusal after fulfilling the evidences and clarifications.

Imamiyyah (Shia Twelver doctrine) said: "The Imamah is obligatory by reasoning and not by shari'ah (Islamic Law)". Al-Hasan Al-basri, Al-jahidh and Al-Balkhi said that it is by reasoning and shari'ah together. And be aware that all the claims that the Imamate shi'a formed upon Abu Bakr, Umar and the likes from among the rightly guided companions and on the other side upon the twelve Imams and the expected impeccable Imam and the likes, all of those are lies and superstitions. Shall you wish to find out the truth about this subject you can refer to a great book named " Minhajus-sunnah an-nabawiyyah fee naqdi kalami ash-shee'ah wal qadariyyah" (The method of the Prophetic Sunnah in refuting the claims of the shi'ah and qadariyyah) by the eminent scholar sheikh Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allah have mercy upon him) as he gathered the evidences which refutes all those fake claims and superstitions.

Shall you have acknowledged the obligation of installing the grand Imam upon the Muslims; you should to be aware that the Imamah can be approached by one of the following ways:

The first: The selection by the Prophet himself; when he states that a particular person is the Imam, so the Imamah has to be concluded to that person. Some scholars said that the Imamah of Abu Bakr As-siddeeq is of this type, because the Prophet (peace be upon him) advanced him to lead the prayer, which is the most important, which point to the grand Imamah and this is apparent.

The second: The agreement of those in power (i.e. scholars and wise men) upon the pledge of allegiance to the suggested Imam. Some scholars said that the Imamah of Abu Bakr As-siddeeq is also of this type, because those in power from among the Muhajirûn and the Ansâr have agreed upon his Imamah after the conflict which occurred at the beginning and there is no consideration for the unsatisfactoriness of some of them like Sa'd Bin Ubadah (may Allah be pleased with him) as he contradicted the pledge of allegiance to Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him).

The Third: A nomination by the preceding caliph or Imam, as what Abu Bakr did when he nominated Umar as his successor on his deathbed. And like what Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) did, as he determined to leave the matter of caliphate for shûrâ (consultation), so he encouraged the companions to choose one out of six of the companions, whom the Prophet was pleased with them till he died, in a consultation manner.

The fourth: Choosing the Imam through the use of force. If a person has already grasped power, then to avoid Muslim disunity and bloodshed that person should be accepted if he upholds his duties as the Khaleefah of the Muslim Ummah. Some scholars stated that what Abdul-Malik Bin Marwan did when he overthrew Abdullah Bin Az-zubair and killed him in Mecca by the hand of Al-Haj-jaj Bin Yusuf and soon the matter was stabled for him. This was mentioned by Ibn Qudaamah in his book "Al-Mughnee". Yet, other scholars say that Imamah can be concluded by one pledge of allegiance like when Umar pledged the allegiance to Abu Bakr at the saqeefah of Bani Saa'idah. Imam Al-Qurtubee favored this say and Imamul-Haramayn has reported the consensus upon it. It is also said that Imamah can be concluded by four pledges of allegiance and others said unlike that.

Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allah have mercy upon him) has summarized this, in his book "Al-Minhaaj", by saying: "The Imamah is concluded by a pledge of allegiance to whom he seized the power and is able to implement the Imamah laws, yet if he is unable to do that, like normal individuals, then he is not an Imam. He also said:

Issues: The first:

If the grand Imam becomes fasiq (i.e. rebellious or sinner) or calls for bid'ah (innovation in religion), does this justify overthrowing him or dismissing him or not?

Some scholars said that it is permissible, in this case, to remove him,^[2] yet the scholarly inspection leads, with no doubt, to the prohibition of overthrowing the Imam, even if he becomes a fasiq, unless he falls into apparent kufr (disbelief) which has to be proven by the book and Sunnah. Al-Bukharee and Muslim narrated on the authority of Ubadah Bin As-samit who said:

"The Messenger of Allâh (peace be upon him) called us and we took the oath of allegiance to him. Among the injunctions he made binding upon us was: Listening and obedience (to the Amir) in our pleasure and displeasure, in our adversity and prosperity, even when somebody is given preference over us, and without disputing the delegation of powers to a man duly invested with them (Obedience shall be accorded to him in all circumstances) except when you have clear signs of his disbelief in (or disobedience to) God-signs that could be used as a conscientious justification (for non-compliance with his orders)."

Imam Muslim narrated in his saheeh on the authority of 'Auf bin Malik that the Messenger of Allâh (peace be upon him) said:

"The best of your rulers are those whom you love and who love you, who invoke God's blessings upon you and you invoke His blessings upon them. And the worst of your rulers are those whom you hate and who hate you and whom you curse

and who curse you. It was asked (by those present): Shouldn't we overthrow them with the help of the sword? He said: No, as long as they establish prayer among you. If you then find anything detestable in them. You should hate their administration, but do not withdraw yourselves from their obedience."

Imam Muslim also narrated in his saheeh on the authority of Umm Salama (wife of the Prophet) that he said:

"Amirs (rulers) will be appointed over you, and you will find them doing good as well as bad deeds. One who hates their bad deeds is absolved from blame. One who disapproves of their bad deeds is (also) safe (so far as Divine wrath is concerned). But one who approves of their bad deeds and imitates them (is doomed). People asked: Messenger of Allâh, shouldn't we fight against them? He replied: No, as long as they pray."

Al-Bukharee and Muslim also narrated, in their saheehs, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas that the messenger of Allâh (peace be upon him) said:

"One who found in his Amir something which he disliked should hold his patience, for one who separated from the main body of the Muslims even to the extent of a hand span and then he died would die the death of one belonging to the days of Jahiliyya."

Imam Muslim narrated in his saheeh on the authority of Ibn Umar who said:

I heard the messenger of Allâh (peace be upon him) say:

"One who withdraws his hand from obedience (to the Amir) will find no argument (in his defence) when he stands before Allâh on the Day of Judgment, and one who dies without having bound himself by an oath of allegiance (to an Amir) will die the death of one belonging to the days of Jahiliyya."

There are many more hadeeths concerning this matter. These texts clearly prevent from overthrowing the Imam even if he commits sins unless he falls into a clear kufr which has to be proven by the Book and the Sunnah. A practical example for that is what has happened during the caliphate of Al-Ma'moon, Al-Wathiq and Al-Mu'tasim. They called for the bid'ah of khalq (creation) of the Qur'an. They punished the scholars, for that sake, by killing, beating, imprisoning and other types of offense while nobody would legalize overthrowing them because of that bid'ah or those crimes. That agony lasted for more than ten years till the caliphate of Al-Mutawakkil who stopped that agony by burying that bid'ah and raising the Sunnah. And be aware that all Muslims agree upon that there is no submission in

matters involving God's disobedience or displeasure. This consensus has been supported by the sound and explicit hadeeths, from among those the hadeeth of Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

"It is obligatory upon a Muslim that he should listen (to the ruler appointed over him) and obey him whether he likes it or not, except that he is ordered to do a sinful thing. If he is ordered to do a sinful act, a Muslim should neither listen to him nor should he obey his orders." Related by Bukharee, Muslim and Abu Dawood.

It has been also narrated on the authority of 'Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allâh (peace be upon him) sent a force (on a mission) and appointed over them a man. He kindled a fire and said: Enter it. Some people made up their minds to enter it (the fire), (carrying out the order of their commander), but the others said: We fled from the fire (that's why we have come into the fold of Islam). The matter was reported to the Messenger of Allâh (peace be upon him). He said to those who contemplated entering (the fire at the order of their commander): If you had entered it, you would have remained there until the Day of Judgment. He commanded the act of the latter group and said: There is no submission in matters involving God's disobedience or displeasure. Submission is obligatory only in what is good (and reasonable).

Allah [Exalted be He] says in the Qur'an:

"and that they will not disobey you in any Ma'rûf (Islâmic Monotheism and all that which Islâm ordains) then accept their Bai'â (pledge), and ask Allâh to forgive them" (Al-Mumtahinah 60:12)

The second (issue): Is it permissible to install two caliphs at the same time each of them is completely independent?

There are three answers to this question:

The first: The position of the karramiyyah[3] who say that it is absolutely permissible. They argued that Ali and Mu'awiyah (may Allah be pleased with them) were two independent Imams and obedience was obligatory upon the followers of each of them. They believe that this independence makes the two Imams sounder and more accurate. They also say that since it was permissible to send two prophets in the same era and that did not lead to nullify the Prophethood, so the Imamah is more suited.

The second: The position of the majority of scholars who say that it is

impermissible to install more than one grand Imam and it is obligatory to select one only. The grand Imam then sends his deputies to be Amirs for the other countries (of the Muslim Ummah). They argued that the hadeeth which is related by Muslim, in his saheeh, on the authority of Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri that the Messenger of Allâh (peace be upon him) said:

"When oath of allegiance has been taken for two caliphs, kill the one for whom the oath was taken later." Prevents from installing two Imams.

Muslim also narrated on the authority of 'Arfaja who said: I have heard the Messenger of Allâh (peace be upon him) say:

"When you are holding to one single man as your leader, you should kill who seeks to undermine your solidarity or disrupt your unity."

In another narration:

"You should strike him with the sword whoever he be."

Imam Muslim also narrated on the authority of Abdullah bin Amr bin Al-Aas (may Allah be pleased with them) who said that the messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said:

"He who gave the oath of allegiance to an Imam should obey him as long as he can and shall another Imam come to emulate him then kill the latter one."

They (i. e. the majority of scholars) nullified the argument of Karramiyyah by saying that Mu'awiyah, during his conflict with Ali, did not claim Imamah for himself. He claimed the sovereignty of Ash-sham which he was appointed for by the Imams who preceded Ali. The Ummah, during their era, agreed upon that the Imam is one of them and not each of them. The majority of scholars also refuted the argument of Karramiyyah which states that each of the two Imams can be sounder and more accurate and the permissibility of sending two prophets in the same era by the hadeeth of the Prophet (peace be upon him) which commands to kill the latter Imam. They also say that installing two Imams leads to conflicts and fitan (trials) among the Islamic nation.

The third: It is impermissible to install two Imams in the same country and in the adjacent countries. But, it is permissible in the distant countries like Andalusia and Khurasan.

Imam Al-Qurtubee, while explaining this verse, said: "... but if the countries are distant like Andalusia and Khurasan, then it is permissible."

Abu Is-haaq also had the same position, as Imam Qurtubee, as stated by the Imam

of Al-Haramain and Ibn Katheer as well as Imam Al-Qurtubee reported that on his authority when explaining this noble Aayah. Ibn Katheer said: "This resembles the situation of the caliphs of the Abbasid in Iraq, the Fatimid in Egypt and the Umayyad in Morocco." [End of Quotation of Sheikh Muhammad Ameen Ash-shanqitee][4]

"They said: "Will You place therein those who will make mischief therein and shed blood, - while we glorify You with praises and thanks and sanctify You.":

Making mischief occurs through shirk (associating partners with Allah in worship) and committing sins. And shedding blood is from among the worst sins. As though the angels recognized this through a special knowledge or they understood it through their knowledge about the human nature, as Allah has told them that He would make this kind (of creation) out of sounding clay of altered black smooth mud. Or they understood it from the term "khaleefah" who conducts the trials of the people and prevents them from committing sins and transgression as stated by Imam Al-Qurtubee. Or they might have compared them with the preceding creatures, as Ibn Katheer said.

"while we glorify You with praises and thanks and sanctify You.": "Tasbeeh" means to elevate Allah far above anything which is not from His unique characteristics. So the angels meant to say: we exalt You with praises and elevate You far above all that which the Mushrikun have ascribed to You.

Wa nuqaddisu lak (and sanctify You): "Taqdees" means: purification and glorification. So the meaning is: we ascribe to You all that which is from Your attributes which are far away from impurities and from all that which the disbelievers have ascribed to You.

"He (Allâh) said: "I know that which you do not know.": i.e. Allah [Exalted be He] knew (and He is All Knower of the unseen and the seen) what Iblees (Satan) would do, as the latter concealed disbelief and arrogance. Allah also knew that there would be descendant from that "khaleefah"; Prophets, Messengers, pious people and the inhabitants of the paradise. In addition to the other great interests which Allah knew and the angels did not, and Allah knows best.

[1] Al-Asamm is one of the Mu'tazilah scholars.

[2] This say was at the beginning then it became prohibited to overthrow him because of the great blight which may occur upon that, as mentioned by Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar in "Tahtheebut-tahtheeb" under the biography of Al-Hasan Bin Saleh Bin Hayy. And Allah knows best.

[3] **Translator's Note:** Al-Karramiyyah: A group of Murji'ah, followers of Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Karram As-Sijistani who died in 255H. They believe that Iman (faith) is the name of testimony of heart and confession through tongue only. Actions through limbs are not the part of faith. The extremists of Karramiyyah say: "It is only the testimony of heart, and shahadatain is not to be proclaimed. They say that committing sins does not harm Iman, and likewise good acts do not benefit in state of kufr (disbelief).

[4] I say: The sound position is the say of the majority of scholars because of the evidences supplied by the author (may Allah have mercy upon his soul) and Allah knows best.