

The Significance of Ghadir

By: Seyyed Ali Shahbaz

This day I have perfected for you, your religion, and have completed My favor on you and chosen for Islam as the religion (Holy Qur'an 5: 3) What was that day on which God revealed this verse to Prophet Muhammad (SAWA)? It was the 18th of Zilhijja in the year 10 AH on the plain of Ghadir-Khum when the Almighty's last Messenger to mankind while returning from his farewell Hajj pilgrimage, stopped the huge gathering of pilgrims and declared his cousin and son-in-law Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (AS) as his successor, with the words: Man Kunto Mowlahu Fa Haza Aliyyun Mowlah (For whomsoever I am master this Ali is his master).

The great Sunni scholar Allama Zahabi in his book Ghayat ul-Maram has confirmed the revelation of this verse on the Day of Ghadir through six different chains of authority from the companions of the Prophet who were present on the occasion and who along with the 100,000-plus congregation pledged their allegiance to Imam Ali (AS) as the Amir ul-Mo'menin (Commander of the Faithful).

Greetings to the readers of the Echo of Islam on the auspicious Eid of Ghadir, the day which according to the narrations of the Prophet's Ahl ul-Bayt has been considered the greatest of Islamic festivals.

The 18th of Zilhijja is the day of felicities. It is the day on which Almighty Allah completed His blessings by granting Wilayat al-Mutlaqa (absolute authority) to Imam Ali (AS) by designating him as the Prophet's vicegerent.

In the Islamic Republic of Iran we are celebrating the current solar calendar year (ending March 20) as the Year of Imam Ali (AS) to mark the auspicious Day of Ghadir which occurs twice this year (the lunar year, according to which religious occasions are observed is 11 or 12 days shorter than the solar year). We celebrate Ghadir on March 25, 2001 and again on March 14, 2001.

But why are most of the Muslim countries ignorant of the significance of Ghadir? The cause of this negligence is politics and political developments, especially the unfortunate event of Saqifa Bani Sa'dah which took place in Medina immediately after the passing away of the Prophet. Those who assembled at that gathering to elect a caliph, disregarded divine commandments and practically broke their pledge of allegiance to Imam Ali (AS) on the Day of Ghadir over two months earlier.

I do not want to delve into the controversies of the past, which have sadly kept the umma divided. But what I intend to say is that the pledge of allegiance to Imam Ali (AS) was taken in broad daylight under the scorching midday sun at Ghadir, where the Prophet had to halt on revelation of the verse:

O Messenger convey what has been revealed to you from Your Lord, for if you do not do so, you will not have conveyed His message at all. And Allah will protect you from the (sedition of) people. (Holy Qur'an 5:67)

The urgency of the message is clear for any reader of the Holy Qur'an, because the matter dealt with the issue of divine guidance, which has to be continued even after the Prophet, and could not be left to such flawed methods as elections, selections or nominations.

We are living in the age of reason when man is penetrating the space and we ought to do research on the vital issue of wilaya. Since space does not permit me to go into details, I suggest that those still in doubt, should do some deep thinking on the concept of divine guidance which started with Adam, and critically analyze the great number of books which mention the event of Ghadir.