



## **Brother of the Prophet**

***The relationship between imam Ali (as) and the Last Prophet (saw)***

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### ***Closest to the Prophet***

***Imam Ali (as) was one of the closest people to the Prophet (s).*** Imam Ali (as) was the Prophet's (s) paternal cousin, the son of his uncle Abu Talib. The Prophet (saw) chose to become the guardian of Imam Ali (as) when he was 6 years old, and Abu Talib was undergoing a period of financial difficulty. The Prophet (saw) explained his choice with the words ***'I have chosen whom Allah had chosen for me above you - Ali'***[1]. Imam Ali (as) was a product of the Prophetic raising, having himself said ***'I would follow him (saw) step by step as a baby camel follows its mother'***[2].

### ***First amongst Muslims***

***At the age of 10 or 12 years imam Ali (as) became the first male after the Prophet (saw) to accept Islam*** (Lady Khadija was the first female), when nobody else in this world had embraced Islam aside from these three. Imam Ali (as) was also the first to openly proclaim his faith in the Prophet (saw), when Allah commanded the Prophet to make his message known[3]. Imam Ali (as) was the only one to stand and answer this first call three times, and was rewarded with the reply, ***'Sit down. You are my brother, vicegerent, minister, inheritor and successor after me'***[4]. Thus in the very first part of his life, imam Ali (as) had developed a bond with the Prophet (saw) closer than any other, and had it reciprocated by the Prophet (saw) in guidance, affection and verbally in front of all of his kin.

### ***Selfless & Brave***

***As imam Ali (as) grew, the intensity of the bond between himself and the Prophet (saw) was made more evident.*** He endured many hardships with the Prophet (saw) in the early days of Islam, often placing himself in grave danger and in the path of harm out of loyalty and devotion to him. Imam Ali (as) steadfastly endured the three-year social and economic blockade imposed by the Quraish on Muslims upon the death of Abu Talib, facing starvation and destitution in a cave outside Meccah[5]. When this torture had pushed the Muslims to the limit and Allah ordered them to emigrate to Medina, imam Ali (as) risked his own life by sleeping in the Prophet's (saw) bed to foil an assassination attempt, and allow him to escape safely. Imam Ali's (as) great bravery led to the revelation of the following verse: ***'Among men, there are those who sacrifice their lives to seek Allah's pleasure. Allah is Compassionate to His servants'***[6].

### ***Brother of the Prophet***

The Prophet (saw) entrusted imam Ali (as) with the responsibility of returning trusts to the people of Meccah, and leading the 'caravan of the four Fatima's' (containing the women of the Prophet's (saw) household) across the desert to Medina[7]. In a display of the Prophet's (saw) own affection for imam Ali (as), he waited for him in Quba before entering Medina, despite urges from other members of the group to proceed. When imam Ali (as) arrived, the Prophet (saw) went to him and took him into his lap, and his (saw) tears began to flow when he saw that imam Ali's (as) feet had become swollen and bleeding as a result of the journey[7]. In Medina the Prophet (saw) established the Pact of Brotherhood, where each Muhajir was allocated an Ansari brother, except for imam Ali (as). imam Ali (as) asked the Prophet (s) about this, with tears filling his eyes, ***'You have established brotherhood amongst your companions but have not made me the brother of anyone'***. The Prophet (saw) turned to his dear friend and explained, ***'You are my brother, in this world as well as in the Hereafter'***[8].

## ***Beloved of Lady Fatima***

The Prophet's (s) lofty regard for imam Ali (as) was again made apparent in the matter of his beloved daughter Fatima's (as) marriage to the imam (as). Many rich and prominent members of society had asked for her hand, but the Prophet (saw) chose the best suitor, closest to himself in faith and moral excellence, and the most beloved of men to him, on the Divine Command. The Prophet (saw) sought his daughter's consent in the matter stating, ***'Surely I have asked my Lord to make you the wife of His best creature and most beloved to Him; and Ali has mentioned the question of marriage with you, so what do you say?'***[9]. The Prophet of Islam (saw) repeatedly confirmed the depth of his relationship with imam Ali (as) in a way which no other friend or companion of his may approach.

## ***Leader of Muslims***

This love and devotion between the Prophet (saw) and imam Ali (as) was manifested to a whole new level with the struggles facing the early Muslim community in Medina. In the Battle of Badr, imam Ali (as) was the standard-bearer for the Muslims, who were ill-equipped and outnumbered more than 3 to 1 by the opposing army. He (as) fearlessly engaged the enemy in single combat, and fought on the front lines of the battle cutting down the bravest of the Quraish - almost half of their fallen were killed by imam Ali (as) alone - until the rest panicked and fled[10]. At Uhud again the imam (as) engaged in single combat, and was one of the handful of devoted believers who stayed to defend the Prophet (saw) against incredible odds, when other Muslims had given up hope and started to flee. The bravery of imam Ali (as) was such that the Angel Gibraeel (as) announced ***'There is no (victorious) youth save Ali! there is no sword except 'Dhulfiqar!'***[11]. Imam Ali (as) received 16 grievous wounds during this battle which caused him to almost fall off his horse, until the Angel Gibraeel (as) lifted him back to his saddle. Regarding this bravery and self-sacrifice, the Prophet (saw) told the Angel, ***'No wonder! Ali comes from me and I myself come from him'***[12], in agreement with the words to the Christians of Najran, where the Prophet (saw) and imam Ali (as) are referred to by the Prophet (saw) as 'our selves'[13].

## ***Greater than all deeds until Qiyama***

In the battle of the Trench, imam Ali (as) was the only one to accept the challenge of the greatest warrior amongst the Quraish for single combat. He had to do so three times before the Prophet (saw) agreed to let him go, and sent him with the heartfelt prayer for his safety (as narrated), ***'O Lord! this is my brother and cousin. So, my Lord, do not let me alone. You are the best of inheritors!'*** Imam Ali (as) fought bravely and returned victorious, whereby the Prophet (saw) made the greatness of his actions known to all with the words, ***'The fighting of Ali bin Abi Talib with Amru bin Abd Wid is greater in measure than the actions of my people until the Day of Resurrection'***[14]. With such great praise from the Prophet (saw), which amongst the companions can hope to reach the same status as imam Ali (as) with Allah and His messenger (saw)?

## ***Loved by Allah & His Prophet***

Again in the battle of Khaibar, imam Ali (as) was given an honour and status beyond the dreams of any other person present. The final fortress was proving impenetrable, so the Prophet (saw) announced, ***'Tomorrow I shall hand over this banner to a man who attacks relentlessly and never flees away; he loves Allah and His Prophet and Allah and His Prophet love him, and he would not return until Allah grants him victory'***[15]. The companions vied with each other to be this man, but the Prophet (saw) refused all of them and called for imam Ali (as), and would not change his (saw) decision despite the imam's (as) sore eyes which prevented him seeing. The Prophet (saw) treated the ailment himself, and the imam (as) led the Muslims to victory with his characteristic feats of incredible bravery and spirit.

## ***Only scratching the surface...***

***These are a few amongst the innumerable virtues of imam Ali (as) recorded in history.*** In addition, he (as) has been praised in the Quran on numerous occasions such as in the verse of Purity[16], the verse of Affection[17], of Malediction[18], of Prayer[19], of Guardianship[20], of Proclamation[21] and in surat al Insan, where imam Ali (as) is amongst those who have been promised security from the Day of Judgement and a happy reward despite being alive at the time[22]. To summarise, I revert to the words of scholars and

religious personalities: **'Sacrifices of Imam Ali for Islam caused the Prophet to praise Ali's virtues'**[23]. **'None of the Sahabias had more correct and acceptable virtues than Imam Ali'**. **'No one can be compared with imam Ali'**[24]. **'The Prophet and imam Ali were dependent on each other, being together almost every day'**[25].

### **The Prophet's (s) own words**

And finally, to illustrate the relationship between the Prophet (saw) and Imam Ali (as), what better than the words of the Prophet (saw) himself, as narrated in hadeeth:

**'Ali, had I not been afraid that the Muslims would start venerating you as the Christians regard Jesus, I would have said things about you which would have made the Muslims venerate you and consider the dust of your feet as something worth venerating; but it will suffice to say that you are from me and I am from you, you will inherit me and I will inherit you; you are to me what Aaron was to Moses; you will fight for my causes, you will be nearest to me on the Day of Judgement; you will be next to me at the Fountain of Kawthar; emnity against you is emnity against me; your friendship is my friendship; to be at peace with you is to be at peace with me; your flesh is my flesh; your blood is my blood; who obeys you obeys me; truth is on your tongue, in your heart and in your mind. You have as much faith in Allah as I have. You are a door to me. As per the order of Allah, I give you these tidings that your friends will be rewarded in Heaven and your enemies doomed to Hell.'** [26]

Imam Ali (as) was the first believer, steadfast supporter, brother, friend, successor and dearest man alive to the Prophet (saw), as a result of his many excellences and virtues and not a simple blood relation. As Allah has said in the Quran:

**'Without doubt, among men, the nearest of kin to Abraham, are those who follow him, as are also this Apostle and those who believe: And God is the Protector of those who have faith'**[27].

May the blessings of Allah be upon the Last Prophet and his noble Progeny.

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[1] The commander of the Faithful: Ali bin Abi Talib, Part One and Two, Al Balagh Foundation, Iran (1993) p.22 (taken from Sharh Nahj al Balaghah by Ibn Abil Hadid)

[2] as [1] above, p.23

[3] Holy Quran, 26:214-216

[4] as [1] above, p.31

[5] as [1] above, pp.34-35

[6] Holy Quran, 2:207 - this verse was revealed on Imam Ali's (as) behalf for this occasion (taken from <http://al-islam.org/message> chapter 25)

[7] as [1] above, pp.40-41

[8] <http://al-islam.org/message/> chapter 25

[9] as [8] above, chapter 26

[10] Sayedat Nesa al Alamen, Chief of the Women of the World, M. Hosayni (2003), pp.38-40

[11] as [1] above, pp.46-7

[12] as [1] above, pp.48-52

[13] Holy Quran, 3:61, ***If any one disputes in this matter with thee, now after (full) knowledge Hath come to thee, say: "Come! let us gather together,- our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves: Then let us earnestly pray, and invoke the curse of God on those who lie!"*** it is a well known fact that 'our sons' refers to Hassan and Hussein (as), 'our women' refers to Fatima (as), and 'our selves' refers to the Prophet (saw) and Ali (as), as these were the only Muslims there.

[14] as [1] above, pp.55-56

[15] as [1] above, p.58

[16] Holy Quran, 33:33 - Ayat ut-Tathir

[17] Holy Quran, 42:23 - Ayat ul-Mawaddah

[18] Holy Quran, 3:61 - Ayat ul-Mubahala

[19] Holy Quran, 33:56 - Ayat us-Salat

[20] Holy Quran, 5:55-56 - Ayat ul-Wilaya

[21] Holy Quran, 5:67 - Ayat ut-Tabligh

[22] Holy Quran, 76:7-11 - Surat al Insan

[23] Masoody, from Lesson 1 - Imams1 F05 (2005), Etrat University

[24] Ahmad bin Hanbal, from [23] above

[25] Abu Saied Khidri, from [23] above

[26] as [1] above, pp.62-3, spoken by the Prophet (saw) to the Imam (as) at the battle of Khaibar

[27] Holy Quran, 3:68