

Khutbat'ul-Iftikhár
The Sermon of Glorification
by
Imam 'Alí ibn 'Abu-Talib(a.s)



Introduction

This is a translation of the Sermon of Glorification [*Khutbat'ul-Iftikhár*] uttered by the Imám 'Alí^(a.s)

Imám 'Alí(a.s) said:

‘ I am the brother of the Messenger of God and the Heir to His knowledge, the treasury of His wisdom, and the Companion of His secret. There is not a letter revealed by God in any of His Books whose intention does not point towards me. He hath vouchsafed unto me the knowledge of what was from eternity and what will happen unto the Day of Resurrection. To me hath been vouchsafed the knowledge of past and future generations and their genealogies. And to Me hath been given a thousand keys to a thousand doors. The knowledge of the destinies of all things hath been granted unto me. All these Gifts shall continue to flow through my Appointed Successors (*wasi's*) as long as day is followed by night and night followed by day and until all things return to God. For verily, He is the True Inheritor of all things.

Unto me, too, hath been vouchsafed the Path, the Balance, the Banner, and the Kawthar. I am the one who shall face the children of Adam on the Day of Judgement and shall bring them to account and shall direct them to their habitations. And verily, I am the punishment of fire meted unto the damned. These are the bounties of God unto me. And should anyone deny that I shall return after the Return, or deny that I shall come back after the Raj'at, or should anyone reject the truth that I shall appear again, even as I have done from the beginning that hath no beginning or even unto the end that hath no end, he, verily, hath denied the truth of all of Us. And verily I say unto you, he who denies any one of Us, hath denied God. I am the one who hath

summoned you; I am the companion of your prayers and invocations. I am the Lord of retribution, and I am the Master of the signs and the Lord of the wondrous symbols of guidance. I am cognisant of the mysteries of creation; I am the One who brought the iron unto Men^[1]. I am forever new and forever pre-existent, the One who brought the Angels from out of their habitations, the One who pledged an everlasting covenant with your spirits on the dawn of creation and Who, on that day, asked, through the will of God, the Self-subsisting, these words: "Am I not your Lord?" I am the Word of God [*Kalimat'u'lláh*] which hath been uttered in the world of creation, the Object of the covenant that hath been promised in the prayers and salutations which lie in the reality of all created things. I am the name that hath been invoked by orphans and by widows, the door to the city of knowledge and the refuge of patience and forbearance. I am the upraised flag of God, the companion of the banner of divine praise, the Lord of infinite bounty and of infinite grace. But should I tell you all that I am, you would doubtless disbelieve Me. For I am also the slayer of oppressors, the treasury of divine favours in this world and of the next. I am the master of the believers, the guide of those who seek the way. The truth is Mine and certitude is at My side. Leadership is Mine and the righteous shall follow Me. I am the first to acknowledge faith, the Cord of God that shall not be broken, the One who will raise the world to justice even as it hath been brought low by oppression. I am the companion of Gabriel and the archangel Michael is beside Me. I am the tree of guidance, and the essence of righteousness. I shall gather together the world of creation through the Word of God that gathers together all things. I give life unto humanity and I am the treasury of all divine commands. To Me hath been given the Luminous Pen and the Crimson Camel^[2].

I am the gate-keeper of certitude, the Commander of the Faithful, the friend of Khidir. I am the One who shall conquer Syria and destroy the arrogant. I have existed throughout the past, and, verily, I have never uttered a falsehood. Through a word from Me, truth hath been separated from error, for I speak through divine inspiration and know of the stars and constellations. God hath commanded me to ordain their orbit and vouchsafed unto me their knowledge. With Me are the saffron and crimson coloured flags and I shall remain concealed until the time shall come for My manifestation in a great Cause. Then, shall I grant and withhold as I wish. None can describe Me except Myself, for I shall protect the faith of my Lord. I am the One Whom my Cousin chose, Who was present when His sacred remains were shrouded. I am the Guardian appointed by God, the Most Merciful God, the companion of Khidir^[3] and Aaron, and the friend of Moses and Joshua, the son of Nun. I am the Lord of Paradise, He Who hath caused the rain to fall and the earth to quake and the sun and moon to be eclipsed. I am the Object of the creation of multitudes and it is I who shall slay those who do not believe. Verily, I am the leader of the righteous, the Sacred Fane frequented by all, the upraised firmament, the fathomless ocean. I am the Holy of Holies, the pillar that supports humanity. I am the Possessor of the Greatest Cause. Is there anyone who can speak beside Me? I am fire itself. At a single Word of God, at one utterance of the Prophet, I would put within you My sword's length and send you hurrying unto your next abode. I am the meaning of Ramadán and the night of Qadr^[4] mentioned in the Mother Book. My utterance is decisive, for I am the Súrah of Praise^[5]. I am the purpose of prayer itself, whether at home or when travelling. I am the purpose of fasting, and the sacred anniversaries in the months of the year. I am the Lord of Resurrection and Judgement, the One who can remove the yoke that lies heavy on the people of Muhammad. I am the Gate through which all shall pass who

worship God; I am His worshipper, and one created by Him. I am both the witness and the One witnessed to, the possessor of the green canopy, He Whose name is mentioned in the heavens and the earth, Who is the travelling companion of the Messenger of God throughout the heavens, for with Me is the Book and the sacred Arc. I am the One who befriended Seth, the son of Adam^[6], the companion of Moses and Irám, and all metaphors and analogies pertain unto Me. Who indeed is there to compare with Me? For I am the heaven-sent rain that causeth each blade of green to grow, the Lord of this nether realm Who brings forth the rains when all have lost their hope in its downpour. I am He Who summoneth the mighty lightning and causeth the ocean to rise and swell, the One who speaketh to the sun and causeth the stunning trumpet to blast forth. I am the refuge of all that have obeyed God, and verily, God is my Lord and there is no other God but He. For falsehood offers illusions, but truth giveth thee everlasting sovereignty.

I shall soon depart from amongst you, but be watchful and aware; be on your guard against the tests and tribulations caused by the 'Ummayyds and their worldly powers. And after they shall pass away, the kingdom will revert to the 'Abbasids^[7] who will bring both sorrow and happiness to mankind. And they shall build a city called Baghdád, which shall be between the Tigris and the Euphrates. Woe betide men in those latter days, for amongst them will rise the oppressors among My people, who shall build palaces for themselves and courts and tabernacles. For they shall seek supremacy through intrigue and impiety. Two score and two kings shall rule among the children of the 'Abbasids, after whose reign shall come to pass the Most Great Tribulation on the surface of the earth. Then shall the True Qá'im (a.s) rise up once more. Then shall I show My Face amongst men, and it shall be as luminous as the face of the moon amid the other stars. But note well the ten signs associated with my coming. The first sign shall be the inversion of banners on the highways of Kúfa^[8]; the second, the abeyance of true worship and the prescribed prayers; the third, the end of true pilgrimage. The fourth sign shall be an eclipse in the lands of Khorasán^[9], the gathering of constellations and the appearance of comets in the sky. There shall be chaos and confusion, massacre, pillage and robbery in the world. Many other signs shall there be too, surpassing all these signs, among which is the sign of wonderment. But when all these signs have passed away, then, verily, shall the Qá'im (a.s) Himself arise in truth.

O people, sanctify the Lord your God from all similitudes, for every reference to Him fails, and whosoever tries to limit the Creator by description or comparison hath verily disbelieved in His Book, which is the Book of God's Own Utterance.

Then He^[10] said: How great the blessedness of those who love Me and who sacrifice their life in My path and who get exiled because of Me! They truly are the repositories of God's knowledge, nor shall they be put to fear on the Day of the Great Terror.

I am the Light of God, Who can never be extinguished; I am the Mystery of God that can not be concealed.'

Notes

^[1] Reference to the Súrah of Iron in the Holy Qur'án.

^[2] Oblique reference to the Thamud, their Prophet Salíh and the She-Camel so often referred to in the Holy Qur'án (11:61-65)

^[3] In Islamic tradition, Khadír was a servant of God who had been taught special knowledge and was sent to be a companion and teacher to Moses (see Qur'án 18:65-82; Bukharí, Vol. 1, Bk 3, #74, 78, 124 and also Vol. 9, Bk. 93, #570). Khadír may not be a reference to a person, but, rather, to the inspirational Source. In this sermon, the Imám 'Alí(a.s) is, in a sense, the Muse to all those inspired before, similar to Gabriel in the Qur'án (2:97).

^[4] See Qur'án 97:1-3.

^[5] The first Súrah in the Holy Qur'án and endowed with amazing powers.

^[6] Seth is named in Genesis as the son of Adam, and he lived for 912 years. (See Gen. 4:25-5:8.) Here, however, the reference is to the notion that Companion (*Sahib*), in a sense, means that the Eternal "I" was with Seth (in Arabic, Shayth, the son of Adam). In Luke, Seth is an ancestor to Christ

^[7] The family of Abbas, the uncle of Muhammad.(S.A)

^[8] A city near the Euphrates River, 177km south of Baghdád. Formerly a Mesopotamian city, Kúfa was re-founded by the Arabs in 638, and was the capital of the Islamic Empire during the caliphate of the Imám 'Alí.(a.s) For a time, it also served as the centre for the 'Abbasid caliphate. This and the following references are to catastrophes and spiritual reverses in the fortunes of truth. [MF's note, based on information from the on-line Columbia Encyclopaedia and from a personal e-mail received from the translator, dated Thursday, March 1, 2001.]

^[9] A mountainous and arid province in northeastern Irán. The territory served as the capital of the eastern provinces of Islám during the time of the early 'Abbasid Caliphs. Khorásan was first invaded by the Oghuz Turks in 1153 and again in 1157. The Mongols devastated the region between 1220 and 1222. Timur invaded in 1383

^[10] Imám 'Alí(a.s)