

A Detailed Analysis of Āyah al-Tablīgh

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يَأْتِيهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ

“Oh Apostle! Convey what has been revealed to you from Your Lord; and if you do not do so, then you have not conveyed His Message. And Allāh will protect you from the people. Indeed, Allāh does not guide the disbelieving folk.” (Sūrah al-Mā'idah verse 67)

Among the most highly contentious verses of the Qur'ān is Sūrah al-Mā'idah verse 67, also known as **āyah al-tablīgh** or **āyah al-balāgh**. A great deal of the dispute regarding this verse surrounds the understanding of the phrase *mā unzila ilayka min rabbika* (what has been revealed to you from Your Lord). The Shī'ah are unanimous that the message which the Prophet is being instructed to deliver is the proclamation of the wilāyah of Imām 'Alī (as) at Ghadīr Khumm. Meanwhile, the Ahl al-Sunnah are generally quite opposed to this view, although they have nonetheless alluded to this possibility in their tafsīr works.¹ It should be said that this opposition is quite natural from the Sunnis, as conceding this verse has to do with Ghadīr would imply that the event was a Divine prescription with theological implications.

The Sunni line of reasoning in refuting that this verse has anything to do with Ghadīr is derived from two sources of evidence: firstly, they quote some narrations that present an alternative sabab al-nuzūl (circumstance of revelation). Secondly, and most importantly, they argue that the context is clearly about the Ahl al-Kitāb (People of the Book), both before and after this verse; therefore, it should be interpreted in this context. Rather—they surmise—positing that it has anything to do with Ghadīr is a completely contrived interpretation.²

In this context, we will seek to analyze this verse in detail, both from the standpoint of the Qur'ānic context and then from the standpoint of the naqlī sources; we will divide our discussion into four parts:

- 1) Establishing a mafhūm of the phrase “*mā unzila ilayka min rabbika*” based on the Qur'ānic syntax and context;

¹ For example, al-Suyūfī narrates that this verse was revealed for Ghadīr in his al-Durr al-Manthūr. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī narrates ten opinions about the reason for revelation of this verse, among which he includes the incident of Ghadīr.

² Unfortunately, we have come to know that many of the Shī'ah have been duped by this shoddy line of reasoning. We examine the probativity of Qur'ānic context (ḥujjiyah al-siyāq) in a great deal of detail here under Contention #1: <https://iqraonline.net/an-in-depth-analysis-of-the-verse-of-tathir-who-are-the-ahl-al-bayt-part-2/>. In gist, the context is not necessarily a ḥujjah unless both rational and narrational sources affirm that a verse is connected to its context. Nonetheless, there is always a wisdom underlying the placement of the verses in the Qur'ān, which will attempt to show here for the āyah of tablīgh.

- 2) Narrowing down to an appropriate miṣḍāq for the phrase based on the asbāb al-nuzūl proposed by Ahl al-Sunnah;
- 3) Strengthening the miṣḍāq identified with the riwāyāt on this topic; and
- 4) Answering some common contentions raised by polemicists against the Shī'ah view.

Finally, we will conclude with three appendices whereby we briefly touch on contentions about historical aspects of Ghadīr as well as the verse of Ikmāl al-Dīn. We would humbly request the reader to please be patient with us in this extended investigation, as we do not believe anything of its like has heretofore been published in the English language.

Understanding Al-Mafhūm and Al-Miṣḍāq

Before we begin, we ought to clarify an important distinction that we will continue to employ in this discussion, namely the difference in Arabic logic between a mafhūm (a conceptual understanding) and a miṣḍāq (a particular instantiation). The Qur'ānic parlance often alludes to a concept with its generalities in a manner whereby its framework is made clear. Then it is up to the Holy Prophet (saw) to deduce the real-world extension of that framework for the Muslims.³ This applies equally in the contemporary world; for instance, we may have the theoretical conception of a car as a “four-wheeled engine-powered form of transportation” (al-mafhūm). The various instantiations of this conception (al-maṣāḍīq) would then be specific car makes such as Toyota Corolla, Mercedes Benz A-Class, Rolls-Royce Ghost, etc.⁴ Sometimes, multiple mafāhīm may have a single miṣḍāq in the real-world; for instance, we have conceptions of God's attributes (mercy, wrath, justice, etc.), but there is only one miṣḍāq in the real-world for these mafāhīm: Allāh. Sometimes there is a one-to-one correspondence: a single mafhūm has a single miṣḍāq. For instance, the conception of the 16th president of the United States has a single instantiation in Abraham Lincoln.⁵

In the below analysis, we will attempt to first outline the general framework wrought by the Qur'ānic context regarding the generalized criteria (mafḥūm) of “what was revealed to you from Your Lord” (*mā unzila ilayka min rabbika*). Subsequently, we will show from the naqlī sources via a process of elimination that the only proposed historical miṣḍāq that would fit this criterion is *The Event of Ghadīr*.

³ We find a beautiful exposition of this principle mentioned in the Qur'ān itself where it states: “...And We sent down to you the Remembrance so that you (oh Prophet) may make clear to mankind what has been sent down to them; in order that they may reflect.” (Sūrah al-Naḥl verse 44)

⁴ This is a very important distinction; for instance, laypeople often mistake criticism of Muslims (maṣāḍīq) for critique on Islam (mafḥūm).

⁵ This is of course a very basic introduction to this dichotomy but more advanced readers are encouraged to review this discussion in *Al-Mantiq* of Shaykh al-Muzaffar.

Establishing the Mafhūm of *Mā Unzila Ilayka min Rabbika*

We will seek to establish the mafhūm of this phrase from the Qur’ānic context itself. We will first start with analyzing the word choice and phraseology of Āyah al-Tablīgh; this will then be followed by analyzing the verses immediately preceding and following the verse in question. We will then endeavor to examine the whole passage in context, from verses 49 to 68 of Sūrah al-Mā’idah.⁶ Finally, we will make a few other observations about the mafhūm drawn out from intertextual analysis with other Qur’ānic verses.

Step 1: Analyzing the Verse

We will break down the verse into segments as follows:

يا أيها الرسول (“Oh Apostle!”)

The address “*yā ayyuhā al-rasūl*” has only occurred twice in the entire Qur’ān; in contrast, the address “*yā ayyuhā al-nabī*” has occurred a total of thirteen times. The address to the Holy Prophet with the epithet of al-rasūl is to emphasize that the Prophet is a messenger and must deliver that with which he has been sent; it emphasizes his official capacity as an emissary of God. In contrast, the word al-nabī emphasizes his being given prophecy and knowledge through revelation.⁷ The other verse in the Qur’ān which utilizes the address “*yā ayyuhā al-rasūl*” is verse 41 of Sūrah al-Mā’idah, as follows:

يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ لَا يَحْزُنْكَ الَّذِينَ يُسْرِعُونَ فِي الْكُفْرِ مِنَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَلَمْ تُؤْمِن قُلُوبُهُمْ
“Oh Apostle! Do not be grieved by those who race towards disbelief among those who say “We believe” with their mouths while their hearts have not believed...” (5:41)

As we can see, this address of “*yā ayyuhā al-rasūl*” specifically appears in the Qur’ān to quell the Prophet’s emotions in reference to the Message and to affirm his role in delivering God’s revelation. In 5:41, God addresses the Prophet’s grief and in this verse—as we will see—He addresses the Prophet’s fear. Meanwhile, the address “*yā ayyuhā al-nabī*” in the Qur’ān is more general and is often employed to address the Prophet as it pertains to his day-to-day functions in the Muslim community.⁸

⁶ The basis of the discussion here is derived from two sources: 1) Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī al-Ṭehrānī’s discussion about this verse in his Ma’rifat al-Imām volume 7 Lesson 94 and 2) A Persian paper entitled “Vākāvī-ye-Mafhūm-o-Miṣdāqī-ye-Āye-ye-Tablīgh Bar Asās-e-Dilālat-e-Siyāq” (An Analysis of Mafhūm and Miṣdaq in the Āyah of Tablīgh Based on the Contextual Import) by Dr. Ābedin Momeni and Dr. Ḥamid Ziāfar

⁷ A beautiful tafsīr point elucidated by the Qur’ānic commentator al-Sha’rāwī is that the Holy Prophet is the sole individual in the Qur’ān who is referred to with these epithets “al-nabī” and “al-rasūl.” Otherwise, all other Prophets of God are referred to by their proper names: Ibrāhīm, Yūsuf, Mūsā, ‘Īsā, etc. This emphasizes that Prophet Muḥammad is the “Prophet” and the “Messenger” par excellence.

⁸ This point is beautifully discussed by Dr. Fāḍil al-Sāmarrā’ī in his tafsīr discussions and the advanced reader is directed to this material for further details.

بَلِّغْ (“Convey”)

This word as a command implies delivery of a message to a group; it implies much more than the commonplace Qur’ānic commands enjoining towards a Prophetic statement (al-qawl or the command qul), a recitation (al-qirā’ah or the command iqra’), or a remembrance (al-dhikr or the command udhkur). In the entire Qur’ān, the command to “convey” has only been issued once, namely in this verse.⁹ Another verse where this word has been employed as a present-tense (muḍāri’) verb is the following, whereby we derive that the role of God’s Messengers is always conveyance of His Message without trepidation:

مَا كَانَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ مِنْ حَرَجٍ فِيمَا فَرَضَ اللَّهُ لَهُ سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ فِي الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ قَدَرًا مَقْفُورًا * الَّذِينَ يُبَلِّغُونَ
رِسَالَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَخْشَوْنَهُ وَلَا يَخْشَوْنَ أَحَدًا إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ حَسِيبًا

“There is no blame on the Prophet in that which Allāh has ordained for him. Such was Allāh’s way with those who passed aforesaid: and Allāh’s command has always been certain destiny. Such is the way of those who convey Allāh’s messages and fear Him, not fearing any save Allāh. And Allāh suffices as a reckoner.” (33: 38-39)

مَا أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ (“What has been revealed to you from Your Lord”)

The verse does not specify exactly what has been revealed here, rather it is left implied with the relative particle “what” (*mā al-mawṣūliyyah*); this is for the *purpose of aggrandization (ta’zīm)*. The reader will notice that the verb is in the *passive past tense (al-māḍī al-majhūl)* to indicate the importance and primary of the message, and that it is something which has already been revealed by God (al-manzūl) prior to this verse, not something which is issuing forth from the Prophet (saw) himself in the current time. If the active voice had been used (i.e. *mā anzala ilayka rabbuka*), the semantic focus would have been on the subject rather than the object; however, the syntactical construction as it stands places all the grammatical focus on the message itself being a revealed entity.

Another delicate point is the use of the expression “from Your Lord” (min rabbika) to indicate that this message is being revealed by a God who is Nurturing and Constantly Guiding the Prophet through His Providence; if the word “Allāh” (lafz al-jalālah) had been used instead here, it would not have carried the same personal connotation. Therefore, the question naturally poses itself: given that Your Lord has revealed this commandment, how can there be any sense of postponement issuing from the Messenger?¹⁰

⁹ Those who are knowledgeable in Arabic will realize that the command here is a Form II verb derived from the maṣdar تبليغ. Another verb employed often in the Qur’ān is the Form IV ابلاغ derived from ابلاغ. The difference in the meaning between the two verbs is subtle, and some such as Rāghib al-Isfahānī have noted that the Form II verb is simply used for denoting increased emphasis in delivering the message. However, some recent commentators such as Muḥammad Shahrūr have noted a difference between the words in that al-tablīgh denotes deliverance to a great number of people whereas al-iblāgh denotes directed and comprehensive delivery. The strength of this thesis is somewhat debatable.

¹⁰ The mafhūm of this word is highly disputed, and like we discussed it is the crux of the contention between the Shī’ah and Ahl al-Sunnah. The Ahl al-Sunnah say that the meaning of mā unzila ilayka min

وإن لم تفعل فما بلغت رسالته (“And if you do not do so, you have not delivered His Message”)

This statement is a conditional sentence that alludes to the importance of “what was revealed to you from Your Lord.” Although it issues in the form of a threat (*fī maqām al-tahdīd*), it is inconceivable that the Holy Prophet (saw) would need to be threatened to deliver God’s revelation. Therefore, the semantic function of this sentence is in fact to emphasize the importance of the message being delivered. In other words, the Holy Prophet (saw) is being told that this particular revelation is so paramount that if he does not deliver it, it is as if he has not delivered God’s Message at all. The tone here is indirect, whereby *the import is meant for the Muslims even if the literal address may be directed towards the Holy Prophet (iyyāka a’anī wa ismā’ī yā jārah)*. In other words, it is as if the Muslims are being told, “pay attention to this message, because if the Prophet does not deliver it, it is as though he has not delivered God’s message at all.”¹¹

والله يعصمك من الناس (“And Allāh will protect you from the people”)

This part of the verse indicates that the Prophet was worried about delivering this message to the people and that God therefore seeks to comfort him here. The use of the word “Allāh” emphasizes God’s Omnipotence (compare with *min rabbika* earlier) and that He is the one who shall protect the Prophet.¹²

Secondly, the present-future tense (*muḍāri’*) “will protect” (*ya’šimuka*) emphasizes that when the Prophet delivers this message, God will protect him both in the present and in the future. The type of protection here is not specified, therefore implying generality (*al-ta’mīm*). In other words, the Prophet will be protected from every possible harm that could negatively impact the religion.

Thirdly, the use of the phrase ‘the people’ here (*al-nās*) implies that the fear of the Prophet in delivering this message was not in relation to a specific group of people; rather, he was hesitant to deliver it to the entire society because of a perceived threat from them.

إن الله لا يهدي الكافرين (“Indeed Allāh does not guide the disbelieving folk”)

rabbika here is the entirety of the Qur’ān, whereas the Shī’ah posit that it refers to a specific message that was revealed to the Holy Prophet (saw). We will discuss this point in detail later in contention #1 and whether it really makes a difference in the *miṣdāq*.

¹¹ Interestingly, there is one *qirā’ah* of this verse that replaces *risālatahū* (His Message) with *risālātihī* (His Messages); this further emphasizes that all the Prophet’s efforts in delivering the Divine Messages come to vain if he does not disclose the message he is being instructed to deliver.

¹² Another subtle point is that Arabic is a VSO language (verb-subject-object) meaning that the standard order would require that the verb should come first. However, we see in this sentence that the subject (*fā’il*) Allāh is brought before the verb to emphasize that it is God Himself that will protect the Prophet.

This sentence issues as a causative sentence (jumlah ta'līyiyah); in other words, the Prophet is being assured not to worry, since God does not guide the efforts of those who try to cover the truth.

Two observations are specifically relevant here: firstly, that the meaning of disbelievers (al-kāfirīn) here does not appear to be the terminological meaning directed to the Christians, Jews, or polytheists. Rather, it implies the meaning of كفر (kufr) derived from the Arabic language of “someone who attempts to cover the truth.” The meaning of non-Muslim is not a correct implication here, as the context indicates the focus is on those who seek to obfuscate the Prophet’s message. Secondly, the guidance referred to here is not in the sense of credal guidance to faith; rather, it appears to mean that God does not guide their endeavors in covering the truth to any fruition.¹³

Therefore, the mafhūm on *mā unzila ilayka min rabbika* that we have derived thus far from analyzing this verse is as follows:

1. The message that the Apostle is being commanded to deliver is indeed a revelation from His Lord, not wrought of his own desire.
2. The matter which is being revealed is so important that not delivering it is equivalent to not delivering the entirety of the message.
3. There is a palpable fear that the Prophet possesses regarding the message he is being commanded to deliver.
4. The fear that the Prophet has is not in relation to any one group in particular; rather his fear is in relation to the general society.
5. There will be individuals who try to cover up this message and harm the Prophet; but Allāh will safeguard him and will not allow their efforts to succeed.

Thus far, this is the criteria for *mā unzila ilayka min rabbika* that we have substantiated based on the verse itself. Now we will examine the verses immediately surrounding this one to derive a further understanding of the mafhūm.

Step 2: Analyzing the Verses Immediately Surrounding the Verse in Question

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ أَقَامُوا التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَأَكْلُوا مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَمِنْ تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِهِمْ ۗ مِنْهُمْ أُمَّةٌ مُقْتَصِدَةٌ ۗ
وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ سَاءَ مَا يَحْمِلُونَ

يَأْتِيهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ۗ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ
الْكَافِرِينَ

¹³ The clearest evidence of this is that many of the kuffār of Makkah guided to the right path. God himself states in the Qur’ān: “...and God guides whomsoever He wills to the Straight Path.” (2: 221)

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَسْتُ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ تُتَيَّمُوا التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ وَمَا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ مِنَ رَبِّكُمْ ۖ وَلَيَزِيدَنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنْهُمْ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا ۖ فَلَا تَأْسَ عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ

*“If they had observed the Torah and the Gospel and **what was revealed to them from their Lord**, they would have surely eaten from above themselves and from beneath their feet. Among them are people who are moderate but many of them are of evil conduct.*

*Oh Apostle! Convey **what has been revealed to you from Your Lord**; and if you do not do so, then you have not conveyed His Message. And Allāh will protect you from the people. Indeed, Allāh does not guide the disbelieving folk.*

*Say: Oh People of the Book! You are upon nothing until you observe the Torah and the Gospel and **what was revealed to you (the Ahl al-Kitāb) from Your Lord**. And **what has been revealed to you from Your Lord (Oh Muḥammad)** is certain to increase the transgression and disbelief of many of them. But grieve not for the disbelieving folk.”*
(Sūrah al-Mā'idah verses 66-68)

In the above verses, we notice something very peculiar: the phrase *mā unzila ilay(him, ka, kum) min rabbi(him, ka, kum)* (“what was revealed to you/them from your/their Lord”) is mentioned several times in quick succession (highlighted in bold above).¹⁴ We notice here that in reference to the People of the Book, this phrase is placed in apposition with the Torah and Gospel. This would imply that what is being referenced here for the People of the Book is a form of revelation outside the Torah and the Gospel, which God is stating that they ought to have upheld. In other words, they are being told that their religiosity does not hold any ground unless they uphold their formal scriptures plus a supplementary form of revelation (*mā unzila ilayhim min rabbihim*).¹⁵ By parallelism then, perhaps this is an allusion that the *mā unzila ilayka min rabbika* in Āyah al-Tablīgh is a revelation that has been given to the Prophet outside of the Holy Qur’ān. In other words, the message that the Prophet has been wary to deliver here has been revealed by God, but it is a form of supplementary revelation to the Qur’ān.¹⁶

¹⁴ In fact, this phrase is mentioned approximately **seven times** in the context of this entire passage in these various slight grammatical variations. Of note, there is no other passage in the Qur’ān where this phrase appears like this repeatedly.

¹⁵ As an aside, we are told in the aḥādīth that this “*mā unzila ilayhim min rabbihim*” was in fact wilāyah: محمد بن يعقوب عن محمد بن إسماعيل عن الفضل بن شاذان عن حماد بن عيسى عن ربيعي بن عبد الله عن أبي جعفر عليه السلام في قول الله عز وجل: ولو أنهم أقاموا التوراة والإنجيل وما أنزل إليهم من ربهم قال الولاية From Muḥammad bin Ya’qūb narrating from Muḥammad bin Ismā’īl narrating from Faḍl ibn Shādhān narrating from Ḥammād bin ‘Īsā narrating from Rab’ī bin ‘Abdillāh on the authority of Abū Ja’far (as) regarding God’s words: “If only they upheld the Torah, Injīl, and what was revealed to them from their Lord...” He said, “al-Wilāyah.” (Uṣūl Al-Kāfi)

¹⁶ This would therefore imply that sufficing with the Qur’ān is not valid; rather a Muslim is bound to follow the non-scriptural forms of revelation revealed to the Holy Prophet as well. It would also imply that what the Prophet is being instructed to deliver is not the Qur’ān; nonetheless, this is a subtle theoretical point that we will not rely on for our argument.

While this hint may become apparent to those who really reflect on the context deeply, we do not need this point to formulate our argument. The most obvious further conception we derive from these verses is that what was revealed to the Holy Prophet (*mā unzila ilayka min rabbika*) will increase many of the Ahl al-Kitāb in transgression and disbelief. This is the main addition to our mafhūm we can draw from these verses.

Step 3: Analyzing the Entire Passage

Many often stop at simply analyzing the immediately preceding and subsequent verses without looking at the entire passage in context, and we contend that this is a huge mistake. For if a careful observer were to read the passage in context, we believe that the mafhūm of *mā unzila ilayka min rabbika* becomes amply clear.

Before we begin, we would like to remind the reader that our goal here is simply analyzing the context without regard for historical considerations at this time (i.e., when certain verses were revealed). The Qur’ān is not necessarily arranged in a historical way, rather it is by its themes; while historical discussion has its place and ought not to be ignored, it should not feature as prominently in a primary contextual analysis of the passage.¹⁷ Therefore, it is incorrect for someone to contend with us that we are interpreting these verses “against their historical context” because all we are attempting to do in this discussion is demonstrate the general concepts and themes of the preceding verses to build a mafhūm.¹⁸ We will start with verse 49 of Sūrah Mā’idah and progress forward from there, selecting the āyāt that are most relevant for our analysis:

وَأَن أَحْكُم بَيْنَهُمْ بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ وَأَحْذَرُوا أَن يَفْتِنُوكَ عَنِ بَعْضِ مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ ۚ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَن يُصِيبَهُم بِبَعْضِ ذُنُوبِهِمْ ۗ وَإِن كَثِيرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ لَفَاسِقُونَ
 أَفَحُكْمَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ يَبْغُونَ ۗ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ حُكْمًا لِّقَوْمٍ يُوفِقُونَ

*“And judge between them by what Allāh has revealed and (do) not follow their vain desires; and **beware of them lest they tempt you away from some (of) what Allah has revealed to you.** And if they turn away, then know that Allāh only intends to afflict them for some (of) their sins. And indeed, many of the people (are) defiantly disobedient.*

Is it then the judgement of the Age of Ignorance they seek? And who (is) better than Allāh (in) judgment for a people (who) firmly believe?” (5: 49-50)

These verses serve as a preamble to the entire discussion, as they allude to the fact that there was a group of people who were inclined towards Jāhiliyyah and sought to dissuade

¹⁷ The historical context is of course an important qarīnah for the verse of Tablīgh and we will discuss these issues in the final section of the context analysis.

¹⁸ As the common adage goes, “al ‘ibrah bi ‘umūm al-lafz lā bi khuṣūṣ al-sabab” (the import is by the generality of the utterance, not the specific reason).

the Prophet from disclosing a part of the revelation sent down to him by Allāh.¹⁹ What exactly is the judgement of the Age of Ignorance that they seek? This is what the next verses will clarify for us.

يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصْرَىٰ أَوْلِيَاءَ ۚ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ۚ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ مِنكُمْ فَإِنَّهُ مِنْهُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ

فَتَرَى الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ يُسْرِعُونَ فِيهِمْ يُؤْتُونَ نَحْسَىٰ أَنْ تُصِيبَنَا دَائِرَةٌ ۚ فَعَسَىٰ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ بِالْفَتْحِ أَوْ أَمْرٍ مِّنْ عِنْدِهِ فَيُصِيبُوا عَلَىٰ مَا أَسْرَوْا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ نَدِيمِينَ

“O you who believe! Do not take the Jews and the Christians as awliyā’. They are awliyā’ of one another. And whoever takes them as awliyā’ among you, then indeed, he is of them. Indeed, Allāh does not guide the wrongdoing people.

And you see those in whose hearts is a disease hasten to them saying, "We fear that we may be stricken with a misfortune." But perhaps Allāh will bring the victory or a decision from Him. Then they will become regretful for what they had concealed within themselves.” (5: 51-52)

In understanding these verses, we ought to first understand the meaning of the Arabic root *wly* in order that we may better understand the plural here (*awliyā’*), which we have deliberately left untranslated). In his *Mufradāt Gharīb al-Qur’ān*, al-*Iṣfahānī* states: *الولاء والتوالي أن يحصل شيان فصاعدا حصولا ليس بينهما ما ليس منهما، ويستعار ذلك للقرب من حيث المكان ومن حيث النسبة ومن حيث الدين ومن حيث الصداقة والنصرة والاعتقاد والولاية النصره، والولاية تولى الامر*. “Al-walā’ and al-tawālī implies that two or more things have achieved a state whereby there is nothing else between them; as such, it is used to imply proximity in distance, lineage, religion, friendship, assistance, or belief. Al-wilāyah is assistance and al-walāyah is disposing of affairs.

In interpreting the word *awliyā’* (plural of the active participle *walī*) the majority of *mufassirīn* interpret the word as implying love (al-*maḥabbah*) or assistance/alliance (al-*nuṣrah/al-taḥāluf*). However, the other meaning which posits itself is leadership or authority (al-*sulṭah*), especially when we consider the context that the believers are being told that if they do *tawallī* of the Christians and Jews, they become of their ilk.²⁰

¹⁹ This serves as a powerful *qarīnah* that what is being alluded to in the *Āyah* of *Tablīgh* is not the entire revelation, as some have posited. Rather, the Prophet is clearly being instructed to deliver part of what has been revealed to him—a part which some are endeavoring to prevent him from revealing.

²⁰ In his *tafseer al-Furqān fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*, *Āyatullāh Ṣādeqī Tehrānī* has a beautiful elucidation of this point where he states:

الولاية المنهي عنها تعم سائر الولايات إلى ولاية السلطنة بل هي المقصودة العليا من سلبية الولاية فإن ولاية الحب هنا منفية بقضية الإيمان وولاية النصره هي عوان بينهما...فالمؤمنون طول التاريخ هم بحاجة إلى تحزب صامد دفعا عن كل سلطة كافرة عليهم هكذا على سائر الأحزاب التي ليست فيها ولاية الله الموحدة المثلثة

The *wilāyah* that is being prohibited here is comprehensive, encompassing the *wilāyah* of authority as well. Rather, this is the ultimate import in stripping them of *wilāyah*; indeed, the prerogative of faith already negates the *wilāyah* of love for them and the *wilāyah* of assistance is in an intermediary position between these two imports...this is because throughout history, the believers have needed a strong consolidation to repel away every disbelieving authority as well as those parties that do not relent to this triangle of *wilāyah*.

Hence, we garner from these two verses that there was a party among the Muslims with diseased hearts who hearkened to the Christians and Jews, yielding to their friendship, alliance, and authority. They did so based on the excuse that “perhaps an unfortunate circumstance will occur” whereby Islām will lose hold in society.²¹

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مَنْ يَرْتَدَّ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِينِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي اللَّهَ بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ أَذِلَّةٌ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَعِزَّةٌ عَلَى
الْكَافِرِينَ يُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَخَافُونَ لَوْمَةَ لَائِمٍ ذَلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَسِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

“O you who believe! Whoever turns back among you from his religion, then soon Allāh will bring forth a people whom He loves while they love Him, humble towards the believers and stern towards the disbelievers; striving in the way of Allāh and not fearing the blame of any critic. That is the Grace of Allāh, He grants whom He wills. And Allāh is All-Encompassing, All-Knowing.” (5: 54)

In analyzing these verses it becomes clear that this was a major problem in the Islāmic society whereby individuals were conceding to the friendship, alliance, and authority of the Christians and Jews. This was not a menial group of apparent Muslims at all, because the verse says Allāh will replace these individuals with a “people” in their entirety. In other words, there was an inclination among a great number of those who professed belief to turn back from Islām and gravitate towards the wilāyah of the Christians and Jews.²²

This takes us back to the previous verse 5:50 which mentions that some individuals were hearkening back to the Age of Jāhiliyyah, trying to re-establish its order in their society. Before Islām, the Jews and Christians on the Arab peninsula had a degree of wilāyah in these three capacities (love, assistance, and authority):

1. **Wilāyah al-Mahabbah:** the Jāhilī Arabs and the Jews had close ties of affection such that they used to share cultural heritage and ideas. For instance, the Arabs of

²¹ Some commentators of the Qur’ān such as Sayyid Quṭb in his *Zilāl al-Qurān* have stated that interpreting wilāyah of authority into the import of this verse is not feasible (فيعيد جدا أن يكون بين المسلمين من يميل إلى اتباع) (اليهود والنصارى في الدين), because none of the Muslims sought the leadership of Christians and Jews in religion.

In fact, there were indeed Muslims after Uḥud who sought out the Christians and Jews as their religious authorities:

قال السدي : لما كانت وقعة أحد اشتدت على طائفة من الناس وتخوفوا أن يدال عليهم الكفار فقال رجل من المسلمين : أنا الحق بفلان اليهودي وأخذ منه أمانا إني أخاف أن يدال علينا اليهود ، وقال رجل آخر : أما أنا فالحق بفلان النصراني من أهل الشام وأخذ منه أمانا ، فأنزل الله تعالى هذه الآية بينهما

Al-Sadī states: “After Uḥud, a group of people became grieved and scared that the disbelievers would reassume reign, therefore a man among the Muslims said “I will join such-and-such Jew and get his protection because I am afraid the Jews will become sovereign over us.” Another man said: “I will join such-and-such Christian in Damascus and get protection from him.” Then Allah revealed this verse.

²² Also consider the Qur’ānic verse: “That it is because they state to those who have repeatedly hated what God has sent down that we will obey you in some issues...” (Sūrah Muḥammad verse 26)

Madīnah would learn magic and sorcery from their Jewish neighbors. Unfortunately, these close ties extended even through the Islāmīc era. Therefore, we find a famous ḥadīth known as Ḥadīth al-Tahawwuk as follows:

وَعَنْ جَابِرٍ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ جِئَ أْتَاهُ عُمَرُ فَقَالَ إِبْنَا نَسْمَعُ أَحَادِيثَ مِنْ يَهُودٍ تُعْجِبُنَا أَفْتَرَى أَنْ نَكْتُبَ بَعْضَهَا؟ فَقَالَ: «أَمْتَهُوْكُمْ أَنْتُمْ كَمَا تَهَوَّوْكُمْ الْيَهُودُ وَالنَّصَارَى! لَقَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِهَا بَيْضَاءَ تَفِيئَةً وَلَوْ كَانَ مُوسَى حَيًّا مَا وَسِعَهُ إِلَّا اتِّبَاعِي

“Jabir narrates that ‘Umar came to the Prophet saying, “We hear from Jews traditions which charm us, so do you think we should write down some of them?”

The Prophet replied, “Are you in a state of confusion as the Jews and the Christians were? I have brought (the message) to you white and pure, and if Moses were still alive, he would have no option but to follow me.”²³

Unfortunately, even though both the Qur’ān and the Sunnah warned about this, the advice to be wary of taking fancy towards the religious traditions of the Jews and Christians was not heeded. Thus, we see trend continued even after the demise of the Prophet, as we observe the First and Second Caliphs befriending the storytellers (al-qasṣāṣīn) of the People of the Book (individuals such as Ka’b al-Aḥbār) who transmitted many of the Isrā’īliyyāt present in our religious literature today.²⁴

2. **Wilāyah al-Nusrah:** The Jews formed alliances with the Jāhilī Arabs to protect them from threats, contracting with them a yearly penance for this protection. In turn, the Jews of Yathrib would hire Arabs to work on their farmlands and agricultural property. This continued in the Prophetic era where many of the Jews of Yathrib maintained their previous relationships with Arabs on this basis. The confederacy of the Jewish tribes with the polytheists of Makkah was also very well-known.
3. **Wilāyah al-Sultah:** This authority was not necessarily political or religious more than it was cultural and intellectual. Manifestations of this form of wilāyah in the Jāhilī society were as follows:
 - a. The Arabs would often seek consultation with the Jews in their Dār al-Nadwah where a great number of rabbis and Jewish leaders would collude.
 - b. A rabbi known as Ka’b al-Ashraf was among the top leaders of the Jews at the time of the Prophet; his stature was such that the major tribes in Yathrib (Aws and Khazraj) would go to him to mediate their disputes.
 - c. The Arabs often resorted to the Jews about the Holy Prophet and his revelation; in fact, a delegation of the mushrikīn from Makkah was

²³ Mishkāt al-Maṣābiḥ Book 1 Hadith 169

²⁴ See the Persian article “Vākāvī-ye-Mafhūm-o-Miṣdāqī-ye-Āye-ye-Tablīgh Bar Asās-e-Dilālat-e-Siyāq” for more details.

specifically sent to Yathrib to inquire about the Holy Prophet. In turn, the Jews would challenge the Prophet with convoluted questions about their history to try to stump him and cast aspersions on his Prophethood.

- d. The Arabs would rely on the Jews to create talismans for them and perform sorcery.
- e. The Jews were considered experts in the fields of agriculture and farming; meanwhile the Christians (especially those in Yemen and Damascus) were considered expert merchants.²⁵

Therefore, we see that the Qur’ān is emphasizing a grave dilemma in the Islamic society whereby a sizeable group of believers seeks a return to the old social order in the pre-Islāmic Jāhilī society. In the previous society, the Jews and Christians had maintained a sense of wilāyah with the Arabs whereby they were befriended, aided, and sought after for intellectual and cultural guidance. However, God prohibits the believers from forming these connections with the Ahl al-Kitāb and warns them that this would be tantamount to reneging on Islām.²⁶ We see an indication here that God promises He will replace this group of people with another that fulfills His commands without hesitation.²⁷

إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ

“Your only walī is Allāh and His Messenger, and those who believe who establish the prayer and give alms while they are in the state of bowing.” (5: 55)

Naturally, this famous verse (the Verse of Wilāyah) is worthy of a separate discussion about its mafhūm and the miṣdāq, given that it is also somewhat disputed among the Shī’ah and the Ahl al-Sunnah. However, deeply delving into its meanings is not necessary for our argument per se (perhaps we will receive the tawfiq to do a proper analysis of this verse in the future).

The least common denominator in contextually understanding the verse is that after categorically negating the wilāyah of the Christians and Jews, this verse serves to affirm

²⁵ For more details on the state of relations in the Era of Jāhilīyyah between the Arabs and Jews/Christians, advanced readers may refer to Dr. Jawād ‘Alī’s excellent encyclopedic work on this topic entitled “Al-Mufaṣṣal fī Tārīkh al-‘Arab qabl al-Islām,” Volume 12, Chapter 77 and Chapter 82.

²⁶ Of course, the reference here is specifically to the Ahl al-Kitāb who oppose and mock the religion of Islām, cooperating with the polytheist forces that aim to dismantle it. Otherwise, neutral parties are not subject to this Divinely commanded dissociation (as per Sūrah al-Mumtaḥinah verse 8).

²⁷ Although this is not necessarily directly related to our discussion, commentators such as Ṣādeqī Tehrānī have proposed that this is a reference to the followers of the Mahdī who will come at the end of times. They base this on the fact that “sawfa” is an Arabic particle used for the distant future. Please refer to his tafsīr for more details.

the exclusive wilāyah of Allāh. By extension, this wilāyah also encompasses the Holy Prophet (saw) and the believer(s) who gives alms while in genuflection.²⁸

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ يَدُ اللَّهِ مَغْلُولَةٌ غُلَّتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَلَعْنُوا بِمَا قَالُوا بَلْ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَتَانِ يُنفِقُ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ وَلَيَزِيدَنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنْهُمْ مَا
أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا وَأَلْقَيْنَا بَيْنَهُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ كُلَّمَا أَوْقَدُوا نَارًا لِلْحَرْبِ أَطْفَأَهَا اللَّهُ
وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَسَادًا وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

*“And the Jews say, “Allāh’s hand is shackled!” It is their own hands that are shackled; and they are cursed because of their statement. Nay, both His Hands are stretched out: He dispenses as He wills. And **what has been revealed to you from Your Lord** (mā unzila ilayka min rabbika) is certain to increase the transgression and disbelief of many of them. And We have cast enmity and hatred among them until Resurrection Day; every time they light the fires of war, Allāh extinguishes them; and they labor hard to spread corruption on earth: and Allāh does not love the spreaders of corruption.” (5:64)*

If we are to read this statement of the Jews in context, it would imply that they are stripping God of His wilāyah in claiming that His Hands are tied.²⁹ They are postulating that God is the one whose wilāyah no longer plays an active role in the world, while their wilāyah is still active (as in, they are awlā bi al-taṣarruf—free to act as they please). In response, God curses them and states that it is rather their hands that are shackled; this is a highly salient statement after God prohibits the believers from yielding to the wilāyah of the Christians and Jews.

Next, we see the statement that God’s hands are both open, again an allusion to the fact that His wilāyah is living and free-flowing in the world. The extension of His Hands and His free dispersal refers to His bestowing His wilāyah to whomsoever He wills.

We then see a very interesting statement that we have highlighted in bold; the same phraseology that we see in the verse of tablīgh is being used here. God states that *mā unzila ilayka min rabbika* (what is revealed to you from Your Lord) will increase many of the Ahl al-Kitab in transgression and disbelief. Notice that this statement is repeated

²⁸ Of course, the Shī’ah commentators are unanimous that the verse, specifically “those who believe and pray while giving alms in the state of genuflection” was revealed regarding Imām ‘Ali (as). They base this view on several narrations from both Shī’ah and Sunnī sources. The Ahl al-Sunnah largely accept this view as well, although they believe it is only one miṣdāq of the verse (for instance, see al-Ālūsī’s commentary on the verse).

²⁹ The tafāsīr on this verse mention two other possible interpretations of the Jewish statement “God’s hand is shackled”:

- 1) that the God of Islām is poor as the Muslims are not wealthy like them
- 2) that they are exempted from the punishment of God.

However, considering the context, these views seem farfetched. Rather, the more appropriate meaning appears to be that they stated God created the world but then sat back, i.e. that He no longer plays an active role in the world (please see Tafsīr al-‘Ayyāshī and Tafsīr al-Qummī for narrations that support this interpretation).

exactly as is after the Āyah of Tablīgh in 5:68 as well, as though to highlight this passage in between brackets.

Finally, the verse ends by noting that there is no true wilāyah between the disbelievers of the Christians and Jews; rather God has inspired hatred and enmity between them such that their efforts amount to nothing. Their plans to dismantle Islām via igniting mischief are continuously dashed by God.

In other words, the context immediately suggests that something was revealed to the Holy Prophet related to wilāyah that has made those who disbelieve from the Jews even more inclined towards transgression and disbelief. It is something which definitively puts a nail in the coffin of their hopes regarding Islām with God dousing all their stratagems.³⁰

Hence, from the entire contextual analysis above, we can derive the following maḍāmīn (imports) in gist from these verses:

1. The Prophet is told to beware lest the people try to tempt him away from delivering a part of God’s revelation.
2. The people referenced include a sizeable portion of those who professed Islam who were inclining back towards the Days of Jāhiliyyah. These individuals sought to reinstitute the old social structure and re-establish their ties with the Jews and Christians.
3. God declares that Christians and Jews have no wilāyah of love, assistance, or authority with the Muslims and those who incline towards them have left Islām and joined them.
4. God then proposes the exclusive substitute for the believers: His Own wilāyah and by extension that of the Prophet and the believers (who meet the criterion of giving alms while in the state of rukū’).
5. God rebukes the Jews for negating God’s authority and then He states that His wilāyah is freely dispensed as He pleases.
6. There is then an indication that in this entire context, **something has been revealed to the Holy Prophet from His Lord** that increases the disbelief and transgression of the Jews.

In the face of the above context, a discerning reader can therefore easily surmise that what has been revealed to the Holy Prophet (*mā unzila ilayka min rabbika*) is something

³⁰ Notice here the perfect parallelism of the import here with Āyah Ikmāl al-Dīn, which we contend is also intimately tied with Āyah al-Tablīgh: “...this day the disbelievers have despaired of your religion so do not fear them but fear Me. This day I have perfected your religion and have completed my favor onto you, and have chosen Islām for you as the religion.” (5:3)

related to wilāyah, as the entire preceding passage before this phrase is entirely about this topic!

Step 4: Other Important Qur'ānic Verses to Examine

Before our miṣḍāq analysis, there are a few other important points we may derive that can help us in constructing our mafhūm. We can derive these pieces of data from a more detailed analysis of other Qur'ānic verses related to the Verse of Tablīgh. We would specifically like to address the following questions:

1. Where was the Verse of Tablīgh revealed?

In general, Muslim scholars are unanimous that Sūrah al-Mā'idah was among the last sūrahs revealed to the Holy Prophet in the Medinite period, with many of its verses revealed during the Prophet's last pilgrimage (ḥajjat al-wadā'). However, there have been some individuals who propose that the Verse of Tablīgh was revealed in the early Makkan period in the beginning of the Prophet's appointment (al-bi'thah). They claim that the fear of the Prophet is tied to the disbelievers of Quraysh, since he was apprehensive to spread the Islamic message and feared the social repercussions.³¹ However, this argument falls on its face because of several reasons:

- A. Firstly, the context does not support this contention; as we observed the verse is about Ahl al-Kitāb before and after, and therefore one has no choice but to include the Ahl al-Kitāb among the folks that were attempting to subvert the message (*mā unzila ilayka min rabbika*). However, the Ahl al-Kitāb were in fact quite sympathetic to Islām at the beginning of the Prophet's mission, as the story of Warāqah ibn Nawfal illustrates.³² They were enthusiastic and impressed with the monotheistic teachings of the Prophet. It was only much later when they realized that the Prophet's influence in society was increasing that they rose against the Muslims.³³ Therefore, there is absolutely no reason why the Prophetic message would "increase many of them in transgression and disbelief" during this stage.
- B. Secondly, when we examine the conditional sentence within this verse, we can become quite confident that this is a later verse. It states, "if you don't (do so), you have not delivered His Message." In order for this threat to hold water, a significant portion of Islāmic teachings must have already been delivered by the Prophet. In other words, the apodosis (jawāb al-shart) immediately implies that a very significant portion of the Islamic message had already been received by the audience. Otherwise, this whole statement

³¹ One of these individuals is the famous Salafī polemicist 'Uthmān al-Khamīs.

³² Warāqah was the paternal first cousin of Lady Khadīja (as) and was one of the first converts from Christianity to Islām.

³³ This fact is expounded in detail in Chapter 77 of Dr. Jawād 'Alī's "Al-Mufaṣṣal fi Tārīkh al-'Arab qabl al-Islām."

becomes futile (laghwī);³⁴ for how would this threat hold any weight when the Prophet hasn't yet delivered much of the message anyway?

- C. The style of the address is quite reminiscent of the Medinite period; when one examines the type of direct addresses used for the Prophet in the Makkan period, there is a sense of lenience without any threat (al-tahdīd). However in this verse, there is no such leniency rather the emphasis is quite direct that the Prophet must complete the revelation. In contrast, the style of the Makkan revelation is charged with a soothing and comforting tone. For example, consider the following verses:

أَقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ

“Read in the name of your Lord who created; who created man from a clot.”
(Surah al-‘Alaq verses 1-2)

أَيُّهَا الْمُدَّثِّرُ قُمْ فَأَنذِرْ وَرَبَّكَ فَكَبِّرْ

“Oh cloaked one! Stand and warn; and revere Your Lord.” (Surah al-Mudaththir verses 1-3)

- D. Given that Sūrah al-Mā'idah is one of the very last sūrahs revealed in the Medinite period, this would imply that a single verse in Sūrah al-Mā'idah was left hanging for nearly 23 years before finally being appended to the rest of its context! This is a ludicrous proposition as noted by some commentators.³⁵
- E. The biography (al-sīrah) of the Prophet himself and his courageous personality goes against this proposition, since it is known that he never faltered at all in delivering the message to the disbelievers. In fact, he was one of the most fearless of Prophets in delivering the Qur'ānic message to his people. As God states in the Qur'ān, he was the Muṣṭafā (chosen one) for a reason, God's mercy and blessings be upon him and his family:

اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ حَيْثُ يَجْعَلُ رِسَالَتَهُ

³⁴ Some like al-Rāzī and al-Ālūsī have assumed that the verse is not commanding the Prophet to deliver any message but is rather of a more general import that the Prophet must deliver the whole revelation in its entirety. We will address this contention in-depth in our contentions section.

³⁵ For instance, regarding this idea, ibn ‘Āshūr states the following in his al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr: فنحن إذن بين احتمالين أحدهما أن تكون هذه الآية نزلت سبب خاص اقتضى إعادة تثبيت الرسول على تبليغ شيء مما يثقل تبليغه وثانيهما أن تكون هذه الآية نزلت من قبل نزول هذه السورة وهو الذي توأمت عليه أخبار في سبب نزولها. فأما هذا الاحتمال الثاني فلا ينبغي اعتباره لاقتضائه أن تكون هذه الآية بقيت سنين غير ملحقة بسورة ولا جائز أن تكون مقروءة بمفردها وبذلك تندحض جميع الأخبار الواردة في أسباب النزول التي تذكر حوادث كلها حصلت في أزمان قبل زمن نزول هذه السورة “We are therefore between two possibilities: the first is that this verse was revealed for a specific reason that necessitated a further encouragement of the Apostle to deliver something which was difficult for him to deliver; the second is that this verse was revealed much before the revelation of this Sūrah as some narrations suggest. As for this second possibility, it is not worthy of consideration because it implies that this verse remained for years not attached to any sūrah. It is not feasible for it to have been recited in isolation; therefore, by this are demolished all the narrations among the circumstances of revelation that mention events that transpired before the revelation of this sūrah.”

“...God is most knowledgeable about where to deposit His message...”
(Sūrah al-An’ām verse 124)

We see a further indication that the Holy Prophet would actually hasten to deliver the Qur’ān in the Makkan period:

لَا تُحْرِكْ بِهِ لِسَانَكَ لِتَعْجَلَ بِهِ

“Do not move your tongue with it to make haste with it” (Sūrah al-Qiyāmah: verse 16)

When this was the habit of the Prophet in the Makkan period, how could one feasibly propose that he held back on disclosing the message, fearing for his life amidst the Makkan society?! Indeed, he was the most foremost in bearing calamities and tribulations, doing so without the least bit of hesitation as the Makkans hurled insults of “sorcerer,” “soothsayer,” “madman,” “poet,” etc. upon him; as he himself is reported to have said (saw):

مَا أُوذِيَ نَبِيٍّ مِثْلَ مَا أُوذِيَْتُ قَطُّ

“No Prophet has ever been harmed the way that I have been.”³⁶

From all the above reasons, it becomes clear that it is completely untenable to propose that this verse was revealed in the Makkan period. Therefore, it follows that it was revealed in the Medinite period, most likely at the end of the Prophet’s life like the rest of Sūrah al-Mā’idah; that is, after the Islāmic message had already spread far and wide in the Arab peninsula.

2. What was the nature of the fear that the Prophet possessed in delivering the message?

If Islām was already firmly entrenched in the Arab society at the time of this verse, what could it possibly have been that the Prophet feared? As we refuted above, the Prophet never feared for his life or was intimidated by loss of possible reputation/social standing among the people in the Makkan period. In the Medinite period, what would he possibly have had to personally fear given he had already achieved prominence and repute in his society? Thus why was the Prophet worried in the Medinite period about this message?

Another very important verse in the Qur’ān informs us of another incident where the Prophet had been fearful of delivering God’s command:

وَإِذْ تَقُولُ لِلَّذِي أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِ أَمْسِكْ عَلَيْكَ زَوْجَكَ وَاتَّقِ اللَّهَ وَتُخْفِي فِي نَفْسِكَ مَا اللَّهُ مُبْدِيهِ وَتَخْشَى النَّاسَ وَاللَّهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَخْشَاهُ فَلَمَّا قَضَىٰ زَيْبٌ مِنْهَا وَطَرًا زَوَّجْنَاكَهَا لِكَيْ لَا يَكُونَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ حَرَجٌ فِي أَنْزَاجِ أَدْعِيَائِهِمْ إِذَا قَضَوْا مِنْهُنَّ وَطَرًا وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ مَفْعُولًا

And when you said to the one upon whom Allāh and you had bestowed favor, "Hold onto your wife and fear Allāh." But you concealed within yourself what

³⁶ Kanz al-‘Ummāl volume 3 page 130. This narration is mentioned in other sources with different variations in wording such as ما أُوذِيَ أَحَدًا ما أُوذِيَْتُ فِي اللَّهِ. Al-Albāni has graded two versions of it as *Hasan*.

Allah (was to) disclose; you feared the people when Allāh is more worthy for you to fear. Then when Zaid divorced her, we married her to you so that there would be no discomfort for the believers concerning the wives (of) their adopted sons when they have been divorced. And the Command of Allāh is always accomplished. (Sūrah al-Aḥzāb: verse 37)

As this verse indicates, there was a taboo among the Arabs in marrying the divorced wife of one's adopted son, as adopted sons were considered equivalent to one's own actual kin. Therefore, in breaking this taboo, we see that the Prophet had felt a sense of trepidation; this was not for his own life or for his reputation. Rather it was because he was afraid that reneging on an age-old custom of the Arabs could lead them to rebellion and threaten the dissolution of the risālah.

Therefore, we garner from this cross-textual comparison that the Prophet's hesitation in delivering God's messages was never borne out of any fear for his person. Rather, it was because of his fear that the risālah could be compromised if he delivered this message. Hence, in the verse of al-tablīgh, we substantiate that the Prophet was worried the message he was going to deliver threatened to destroy the entire risālah delivered to the people up until that point.³⁷

3. What is the nature of the protection that Allāh promises the Prophet?

If we were to take this verse in an absolute sense and say that the verse means that God would protect the Prophet from every type of injury or hardship, we would certainly be incorrect because this contradicts the Qur'ān itself:

وَكَايِن مِّن نَّبِيٍّ قَاتَلَ مَعَهُ رِئِيُونَ كَثِيرٌ فَمَا وَهَنُوا لِمَا أَصَابَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَمَا ضَعُفُوا وَمَا اسْتَكَانُوا ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ
الصَّابِرِينَ

“And how many a Prophet had God-devoted men fought alongside; they did not lose heart for what befell them in the way of Allāh and they did not weaken nor give in. And Allāh loves the patient ones.” (Sūrah Āl-‘Imrān: verse 146)

Rather, the meaning of the protection (al-‘iṣmah) here is given to us by the end of 5:67 whereby God states that he “does not guide (the efforts) of those who cover the truth.” As we discussed in the detailed discussion of the Verse of Tablīgh, this is a causative sentence. In other words, it means that ‘Oh Apostle, God will protect you in your delivery of this message since he will not let the efforts of those who try to hide the truth reach any fruition.’

Therefore, the type of protection being promised by God is one that would safeguard the Prophet in delivering the message and ensure the preservation of

³⁷ Āyatullāh Ṣādeqī Tehrānī corroborates this observation in his tafṣīr:

وحتى إن كان يخشى الناس أحيانا لم يكن يخشاهم على حياته بل كان يخشاهم على رسالته أن تهتك أو يفتك بها كما في قصة زواجه بزوجة زيد بعد أن قضى منها وطرا لأنه خلاف سنة جاهلية عريقة ولكنه طبق أمر الله على خشيته تلك التي هي في الحق خشية على رسالة الله “Even if the Prophet feared the people at times, this was never due to fear of his life rather it was due to fear of the message being dissolved or disintegrated. This can be seen in the story of his marriage to the wife of Zayd after he divorced her, because this was an old Arab custom; but nonetheless he applied God's command despite his fear—a fear for the sake of God's message.”

said message. It is a guarantee that the Prophet will be able to achieve his objective in making this announcement without the least bit of harm reaching him. There may be attempts by others to hide the truth of the message, but God's Truth will not be suppressed.

4. What could the Ahl al-Kitāb mentioned before and after this verse possibly have to do with the message the Prophet was going to deliver?

The final question we would like to address in this segment is that if this was a message in the late Medinite period that the Prophet was delivering, why would it increase the Ahl al-Kitāb in their disbelief and transgression?

As many mufasssīrīn have pointed out, the Ahl al-Kitāb had been completely subjugated close to the end of the Prophet's life and they could not possibly pose any threat.³⁸ However, the Qur'ān informs us that the Ahl al-Kitāb were longing to do away with Islām and have the Muslims revert back to their old Jāhilī ways:

وَدَّ كَثِيرٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يَرُدُّوكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِكُمْ كُفَّارًا حَسَدًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ أَنفُسِهِمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْحَقُّ ۗ فَاعْتُوا وَاصْفَحُوا حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرِهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

“Many of the Ahl al-Kitāb wish that you would revert after your belief to disbelievers; this is wrought out of jealousy from within themselves after the truth has become clear to them. Therefore, pardon and overlook until Allāh comes with His command; indeed Allāh is powerful over all things” (Sūrah Baqarah verse 109)

Therefore, it stands to reason that during this period, the Ahl al-Kitāb along with the hypocrites were waiting for the Prophet's life to come to an end so that they could do away with Islām and re-establish the previous Jāhilī customs. In fact, they tried many times to assassinate the Prophet with precisely this goal in mind. However, it appears that the Prophet made an announcement here towards the end of his life that would perpetuate Islām; in turn, this renewed many of the Christians and Jews in their disbelief and transgression against the religion.³⁹

³⁸ Unfortunately, the common trend among the mufasssīrīn is to therefore deny that the Āyah of Tablīgh has anything to do with the context about Ahl al-Kitāb. However, we do not believe that this is a proper conclusion as we will explain.

³⁹ Āyatullāh Sādeqī Tehrānī is one of the very few scholars who has astutely made this observation: وما ذلك الاحتفاف الخاص بأيتي أهل الكتاب إلا لأنهم هم الذين كانوا يأملون ختام هذه الرسالة بختام حياة الرسول ويعملون لإنهائها بحيل كتابية أكثر مما يحتاله المشركون

“The bracketing of this verse by two verses regarding the Ahl al-Kitāb is for no other reason except the following: they were the ones who were longing for the end of this message at the end of the Prophet's life. Therefore, they tried to assassinate him with all sorts of stratagems, even more so than the polytheists themselves.”

The Gist of the Mafhūm Derived from this Discussion

In concluding this section, we will consolidate the various mafāhīm we were able to ascertain through this contextual analysis regarding the phrase *ma unzila ilayka min rabbika* as follows:

1. This verse was most certainly revealed in the late Medinite period, towards the end of the Prophet's lifetime.
2. This verse will increase the Ahl al-Kitāb in their transgression and disbelief because this message is guaranteeing the continued integrity of the Islāmic message even after the Prophet's demise.
3. The message that the Apostle is being commanded to deliver is indeed a revelation from His Lord, not wrought of his own desire.
4. The matter which is being revealed is so important that not delivering it is equivalent to not delivering the entirety of the Prophetic message.
5. There is a palpable fear that the Prophet possesses regarding the message he is being commanded to deliver. This fear is not in relation to any one group in particular; rather his fear is in relation to his entire society. He is not afraid for a personal reason, rather he is afraid that the message will be completely disintegrated upon his delivery of the command.
6. There will be individuals who try to cover up this message and harm the Prophet; but Allāh will safeguard its delivery and will not allow their subversions to succeed.
7. It is very likely based on the context that this message has to do with wilāyah (in all the meanings of love, assistance, and authority), as the entire passage preceding it pertains to **exactly** this very theme.

In the next section, we shall examine the various possible maṣādīq proposed for the reason of revelation (sabab al-nuzūl) of Āyah al-Tablīgh and compare them to the above mafhūm.

Establishing the Miṣdāq: Introductory Remarks⁴⁰

As we discussed earlier, there are generally two means of arriving at the intended meaning of Āyah al-Tablīgh; the first relies on the conceptual-instantiation framework (al-mafhūm and al-miṣdāq) that we are presenting here. We have already examined the

⁴⁰ The following discussion is derived from an excellent discussion by the esteemed Shaykh Muḥammad al-Obaydān in Arabic regarding this verse. Advanced readers may find the article here: <https://www.alobaidan.org/archives/5789>

contextual indicators in the previous section in great depth to derive a mafhūm. Now, we will aim to expand the analysis further by examining the proposed maṣāḍīq for the circumstance of revelation and their degree of compatibility with what we have derived from the contextual analysis.

The second method is to utilize the Prophetic sunnah through referencing the narrations about this verse from both Shī'ah and Sunnī sources (i.e. the riwāyāt narrated from the Ahl al-Bayt and the Companions). We will certainly aim to present this approach in Part 2 of this analysis, as the evidence is extremely robust and serves to confirm what we shall demonstrate here.

We have elected to begin our analysis with the first methodology because its starting point is the Qur'ān rather than the narrations themselves. This is because the second methodology is predicated upon several introductory beliefs concerning whether the narrators of said narration are reliable, whether its sources are accurate, and whether the import is clear. Hence, we have adopted the approach of establishing the premises based on the first methodology and then buttressing it via the riwāyāt only after that.

The Proposed Circumstances for Revelation (asbāb al-nuzūl)

We will endeavor to study this verse in light of the proposed circumstances for revelation, examining whether they truly fit the mafhūm we established in the previous section. One of the most meticulous expositions regarding the possible circumstances that precipitated this verse's revelation comes from the Ash'arī Sunnī exegete Fakhr al-Dīn Al-Rāzī. In his Qur'ānic commentary, he elaborates ten possible reasons for what the term *mā unzila ilayka min rabbika* (“what was revealed to you from your Lord”) in the verse could mean, listed as below:⁴¹

- The verse was revealed regarding the issues of stoning (al-rajm) and corporeal retribution (al-qiṣāṣ).
- The verse was revealed in criticism of the Jews for mocking religion; the Prophet (saw) had been silent about this and therefore this verse was revealed that he should proclaim it openly and without fear.
- The verse was revealed after the verse of al-takhyīr was revealed regarding the wives of the Holy Prophet (saw).⁴² He felt hesitant to proclaim this verse to his

⁴¹ Tafsīr Al-Kabīr li al-Rāzī, vol 6, pg. 52-53.

⁴² The verse is 33:28 and reads, “Oh Prophet! Tell your wives that if you had wanted this worldly life and its glitter, then come I will provide for you and then release you (from wedlock) beautifully.”

wives, as he was afraid that they would elect this world and that he would have to divorce them as a result. Therefore, this verse was revealed.

- This verse was revealed about Zayd ibn Ḥārithah (the adopted son of the Prophet) who was married to Zaynab bint Jaḥsh (the cousin of the Prophet). As we discussed before, there was a pre-Islāmic Arab taboo that after one's adopted son had divorced his wife, his adopted father could not remarry her. Therefore the Holy Prophet was afraid of violating this convention when God commanded him to do so.
- This verse was revealed about jihād because the hypocrites despised it; as a result the Prophet would sometimes abstain from encouraging them towards it.
- This verse was revealed in reference to criticizing the polytheistic practices of the pre-Islāmic Arabs. It is assumed that after Sūrah al-An'ām verse 108 was revealed⁴³, the Holy Prophet (saw) adopted silence in criticizing their gods. However, this verse was then revealed stating "convey what was revealed to you from Your Lord" regarding their deficiencies. Do not fear them for God will protect you from them.
- It was revealed regarding the rights of the Muslims upon the Holy Prophet (saw). Therefore, in the Farewell Hajj upon clarifying the Islāmic ordinances and rituals, the Holy Prophet asked "Have I not delivered it?" The Muslims then answered: "Yes." The Holy Prophet then responded: "Oh God, bear witness."
- It has been narrated that the Holy Prophet settled under a tree during one of his travels and hung his sword around it. A Bedouin came to him while he was reclining, seized his sword, and then drew it saying: "O Muḥammad, who will guard you from me?" He retorted: "Allāh." The hand of the Bedouin then began to tremble and the sword fell from his hand. His head suddenly began pounding against the trunk of the tree until he expired. Then God revealed this verse and made it clear that he would protect his Prophet from the people.
- The Holy Prophet (saw) had been frightened by the Quraysh, the Jews, and the Christians, so God relinquished that fear from his heart with the revelation of this verse.
- It was revealed in the merit of 'Alī bin Abī Ṭālib (as), and when it was revealed, the Holy Prophet clasped his hand and said: "Whoever I am his master, then let 'Alī also be his master. Oh God! Become a friend of one who befriends him and become an enemy of one who hates him. Thereafter, 'Umar came to him and said, "Congratulations to you, for you have become my master and the master of every male and female believer."

⁴³ The verse reads: "And do not insult those they invoke other than Allāh, lest they insult Allāh in enmity without knowledge..." (6:108)

Clearly, when we study each of these reasons, we find that most of them do not conform to the language of the honorable verse and the style of its address. The apparent meaning of the verse suggests a charge to convey a certain affair that equals the entire Prophetic message in importance; not doing so is tantamount to not relaying the message at all. We have addressed this view in detail in Contention #1 later. But suffice it to say that proposing that the verse simply means, “Reveal the entirety of the revelation, since if you don’t do so you haven’t revealed His Message” is not a genuine interpretation. What is the remainder of the revelation that the Prophet is reluctant to deliver such that he is being threatened like this?⁴⁴

Additionally, many of the issues that Al-Rāzī has mentioned have already been addressed in other places in the Holy Qur’ān, such as the case of Zayd and Zaynab, jihād, or corporeal retribution. Therefore, it seems strange that these issues would present themselves again at the end of the Prophet’s life.

Yet another issue is that several reasons seem to partition the verse and do not address it in totality. For instance, believing that a Bedouin Arab precipitated the revelation of “God will protect you from the people” is proposed; however, what is the message that the Prophet is being commanded to deliver then?

Furthermore, nearly all these interpretations contradict the personal integrity of the Holy Prophet (saw) in implying he was personally fearful of the Quraysh, his wives, the Jews, and/or the Christians. They contradict what history tells us about the many stances he adopted against the infidels of Makkah, such as when they came to negotiate with him to cease his proselytization. In response, the Holy Prophet (saw) told his uncle: “Oh uncle! By God if they were to put the Sun in my right hand and the Moon in my left in exchange for leaving this affair, I would not do so and would rather perish in its pursuit.” This is of course but one of the many positions he took since the beginning of his Prophethood which illustrate his self-sacrifice and willingness to erect the Islāmic message, regardless of personal cost.

The Personal Choice of al-Rāzī

After presenting these myriad reasons for the revelation of the verse, Al-Rāzī elects the ninth reason: that is, to reassure the Holy Prophet (saw) from fearing the deception of the Jews/Quraysh and to remove the apprehension for them from his heart.

⁴⁴ Fakhr al-Rāzī proposes in his tafsīr that the verse means “deliver the entire religion, for if you do not do so you have not delivered the entire religion.” This interpretation of course smacks of redundancy that is certainly unbecoming of a Divine scripture. Therefore, al-Rāzī makes an analogy with an Arabic line of poetry which states, “I am Abū Najm and my poetry is my poetry.” However, it is clear in this line is not an appropriate proof here, because the Divine revelation is not like poetry whose origin could be questioned. In other words, Abu Najm’s import is that his poetry is unlike any other and is clearly identifiable, while this is a given fact already for the Divine revelation such that it would not require this type of a statement.

In electing this reason, he cites the exigency of maintaining consistency in the context. The verse is included within an address to the People of the Book and therefore it appears that the reason for revelation should follow this import.⁴⁵

A Critical Analysis of Al-Rāzī's Selection:

This argument from al-Rāzī is not acceptable, because in the first place, there is no evidence that these verses were uttered altogether during a single historical circumstance. As such, a contextual harmony is not necessarily required (even though we have sought to establish one in our discussion of the *mafhūm* earlier), especially when we consider that the Qur'ānic verses were not organized according to chronology.⁴⁶

Secondly, as we discussed previously this verse was revealed during the end of the Prophet's life, during his Farewell Pilgrimage. At this time, the Jews and Christians would not have specifically been a cause for fear for the Holy Prophet (saw); most of them had surrendered and were giving *jizyah* (martial tax), even though they continued to bear secret enmity for the new religion. Nonetheless, during this stage there was no clear reason why the Holy Prophet (saw) should directly fear the *Ahl al-Kitāb*.⁴⁷

God had already dismantled their locus of power, and therefore the further Divine promise of protection mentioned in the verse becomes superfluous. In other words, there is no reason for the Prophet to hold off from delivering God's revelation until receiving a guarantee of Divine protection from the *Ahl al-Kitāb*. This is a strong indicator that the view that al-Rāzī has proposed cannot be correct.

Finally, it is established that at the beginning of the Prophetic mission, he (saw) had propagated religious messages graver still, and to people even more aggressive and persecutory than the *Ahl al-Kitāb*. Therefore, since this is a latter verse, it seems very disproportionate for the nature of the Prophetic delivery being proposed.

The Selected *Miṣdāq* for the Circumstance of Revelation

Since none of the first nine reasons for revelation are substantive, it follows by a process of elimination that the reason for its revelation must be the tenth reason that Al-Rāzī has mentioned in his work. This possibility is the only one which confirms with the *mafhūm* we previously discussed; it does not contradict the sublime integrity of the Holy Prophet (saw) and it appears very plausible that the delivery of a message of this magnitude could

⁴⁵ As we demonstrated in our discussion regarding the *mafhūm*, the contextual analysis of al-Rāzī is patently incomplete and this has resulted in his erroneous deduction.

⁴⁶ Although some believe that the Holy Qur'ān's verses were arranged by the companions, it is the thesis of these writers that the arrangement of its verses was per Divine commandment. *Wallāhu A'lam* (Allāh is All-Knowing).

⁴⁷ As we discussed in the contextual discussion, the Prophet's fear was of the hypocrites who were inclined to the Jews and Christians; not of the Christians and Jews directly.

threaten the Muḥammadan mission. The Islāmic society was prone to rejecting this proclamation categorically, because they would assume that the Holy Prophet was demonstrating nepotism in favor of his son-in-law and cousin. Hence, the Prophet would easily have feared delivering such a message, not for his own life but rather on account of the Muslim nation and its fate.

Let us examine the mafhūm that we derived earlier point-by-point so that we may confirm this:

1. This verse was revealed in the late Medinite period.

This is congruent with the declaration of Imām ‘Alī’s wilāyah at Ghadīr, which occurred during the period of the Farewell Pilgrimage on the 18th of Dhū al-Ḥijjah, 10 AH.

2. This verse will increase the Ahl al-Kitāb in their transgression and disbelief.

Of course, given that the Jews and Christians had already surrendered by this time, one may question how this would increase their transgression. As we proposed earlier, al-Ghadīr is a beautiful miṣḍāq for this, since appointing a successor ensures the continued integrity of the Islāmic message even after the Prophet’s departure. Therefore, it entirely makes sense that those who disbelieve among the Ahl al-Kitāb would redouble their efforts after this proclamation.

3. The message that the Holy Prophet is delivering is indeed a revelation from his Lord, not wrought of his own desire.

The declaration of ‘Alī’s wilāyah was not based on the Prophet’s own whim, and he made this abundantly clear during many instances. For instance, after Ghadīr it is narrated that a man by the name of Nu’mān ibn Ḥārith al-Fihrī asked the Prophet whether this declaration was truly from God or from him. When the Prophet affirmed it was Divine, he exclaimed, “We have borne witness to everything you say about God, your Messenger, prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage. But you weren’t satisfied until you also favored your cousin over us!” He then supplicated to God that he should be struck with a Divine meteor if the Prophet was truthful, whereupon it descended and he died instantly⁴⁸. Another such example was after the revelation of Sūrah al-Tawbah, after which the Prophet sent Imām ‘Alī (as) to deliver the chapter to the Quraysh. It is widely reported that he stated regarding this, “I have been commanded that no one should deliver it except me or a man from me/my Ahl al-Bayt.”⁴⁹

⁴⁸ This is discussed in Sunnī tafāsīr also such as al-Qurṭubī. There is a related discussion about this being the occasion of revelation for Surah 70:1. We have deliberately abstained from a detailed treatment in this piece given it is a separate discussion heavily dependent on riwāyāt.

⁴⁹ This is widely narrated and has been quoted by various Sunnī muḥaddithīn including ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, al-Haythamī, and ibn Abī ‘Āsim.

4. The matter was so crucial that not doing so was equivalent to not delivering the entirety of the Prophetic message.

The Prophet had already informed the Muslim nation of his impending departure, and therefore it follows that appointing a successor is a vital issue that ought not to be overlooked. Without doing so, the Prophetic message is placed into grave danger, especially given that there were elements who were awaiting the demise of the Holy Prophet (saw) to reclaim hegemony. In other words, the preservation of the Prophetic message is contingent upon electing a successor.

There are some who may posit that this is not the case, since Imām ‘Alī (as) was not made the Caliph directly after the Prophet anyway, and the religion still survived. However, they neglect that the providence of ‘Alī (as) was always respected, even though the Muslim nation refused to concede his political leadership.⁵⁰

As we will discuss further in our contentions section, this compartmentalization of authority was wholly unacceptable.

5. There is a palpable fear the Prophet possesses about delivering this proclamation. Not for his own safety, but rather due to fear the religion will collapse.

This issue was indeed quite grave, as the hypocrites and Ahl al-Kitāb could easily seize upon this to accuse the Prophet of personal interest. Appointing one’s cousin-brother and son-in-law over the Muslims would apparently smack of self-interest, and there is reason why the Prophet should feel trepidation about it. Many had believed the Prophet was simply an ordinary man, a king or a poet who would soon relent to the vicissitudes of time⁵¹. Appointing a successor from the Prophet’s family would resemble tribal norms and dynastic customs, thus precipitating accusations that could cause believers to doubt.

6. God will protect the Prophet and His Message, despite the individuals who seek to cover up this proclamation.

This is substantiated by the fact that Ghadīr is one of the most highly attested events in the entire Prophetic sīrah. It has been immaculately preserved by over one hundred eyewitnesses, such that doubting its occurrence is not possible. The efforts of those who try to cover it up have been thoroughly unsuccessful.⁵²

⁵⁰ Therefore, there are well-recorded statements from ‘Umar acknowledging ‘Alī’s superiority in religious knowledge. Consider the statement recorded from Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal in his Faḍā’il al-Ṣaḥābah: “On the authority of Sa’īd ibn al-Musayyab: كان عمر يتعوذ ب الله من معضلة ليس لها أبو حسن

⁵¹ Consider the verse of the Qur’ān: “Or do they say: He is a poet for whom we eagerly await an ill-fate?” (52:30)

⁵² Thus, you will find them instead questioning the meaning of “al-mawlā” and resorting to various stratagems to undermine the meaning of political/religious successorship. Of course, given that 5:67 is related to al-Ghadīr, this thoroughly refutes any possible doubt regarding its signification.

Islām survived despite making this appointment clear to the public. Secondly, the Holy Prophet (saw) was entirely protected in making this declaration, and not the least bit of harm befell him.

7. This message has to do with wilāyah given the context of the preceding passage.

Indeed, it most certainly does; a wilāyah that surpasses all the meanings of love, assistance, alliance, and most importantly authority. This was a Divinely vested authority, not one wrought through political election or representation. While the previous allusions to ‘Alī’s authority had been implicit, this one was as clear as can be. Yet there are still some who doubt!⁵³

Part 2: The Discussion from the Riwāyāt

After having engaged in the extensive discussion above to derive the proper miṣdāq, we now aim to strengthen our thesis via resorting to the narrations. We aim to demonstrate that both Shī’ah and Sunnī books have a preponderance of narrations about this, such that it is hard to propose any other possible interpretation. The famous scholar ‘Allāmah al-Amīnī has put it best when he states about the alternative opinions regarding the circumstance of revelation for this verse:

هي لاتعدو أن تكون تفسيراً بالرأي؛ أو استحساناً من غير حجة؛ أو تكثيراً للغد أمام حديث الولاية، فتأ في عضدها، وتخذياً عن تصديقها، وبأبي الله إلا أن يُبَيِّن نوره

“They do not exceed being mere interpretations by opinion (al-tafsīr bi al-ra’y) or fanciful reasonings without any proof (istiḥsān bi ghayr ḥujjah), or superfluous obfuscation in front of the Ḥadīth of Ghadīr—mere vain attempts to weaken it and evade its truth. And God rejects but to perfect His Light!”⁵⁴

Therefore, we will aim to first discuss the narrations from the Shī’ah books, which are unanimous about this verse having been revealed about al-Ghadīr. Then, we will endeavor to examine the narrations from the Sunnī books about the topic and provide some critical commentary about the alternative narrations:

The Shī’ah Riwāyāt

This is nearly universally accepted among the Shī’ah scholars; we will suffice with quoting approximately five narrations here although it is possible to extract even more:

1. عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع قَالَ: قَلَّمَا رَجَعَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص مِنْ حَجَّةِ الْوَدَاعِ نَزَلَ عَلَيْهِ جِبْرَائِيلُ ع فَقَالَ (يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ...) فَتَادَى النَّاسَ فَاجْتَمَعُوا وَأَمَرَ بِسُمُرَاتٍ فَعَمَّ شَوْكُهُنَّ ثُمَّ قَالَ ص يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ مَنْ وَلِيكُمْ مِنْ أَوْلَى بِكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ فَقَالُوا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ فَقَالَ مَنْ كُنْتُ مَوْلَاهُ فَعَلَى مَوْلَاهُ اللَّهُمَّ

⁵³ For further discussion, refer to Tafsīr Al-Mizān, vol.6, pg.42; Tafsīr Al-Amthal, vol.4, pg.77.

⁵⁴ See al-Amīnī’s “al-Ghadīr,” volume 1 page 226

وَالِ مَنْ وَالَاهُ وَ عَادِ مَنْ عَادَاهُ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ فَوَقَعَتْ حَسَكَةُ النَّفَاقِ فِي قُلُوبِ الْقَوْمِ- وَ قَالُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ جَلَّ ذِكْرُهُ هَذَا عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ قَطُّ وَ مَا يُرِيدُ إِلَّا أَنْ يَرْفَعَ بِضَنْعِ ابْنِ عَمِّهِ

“On the authority of Abū ‘Abdillāh (as): When the Prophet (saw) returned from the Farewell Ḥajj, Gabriel (as) descended upon him and said: “Oh Apostle! Deliver that which has been revealed to you from Your Lord... ” Thereupon he called the people and they gathered around him; he ordered that the acacia trees be removed of their thorns (to make room). Then he said, “Oh people! Who is your master and more worthy of you than yourselves?” They answered, “God and His messenger.” He said, “He whose master I am, then ‘Alī is his master. Oh God befriend he who befriends him; and oppose he who opposes him.” He repeated this three times. Then, the spines of hypocrisy entered the hearts of the people and they said, “God Almighty has not revealed anything to Muḥammad and he only wants to raise up the arm of his cousin.”⁵⁵

2. عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ ع قَالَ أَمَرَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ رَسُولَهُ بِوِلَايَةِ عَلِيٍّ وَ أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْهِ- «إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَ رَسُولُهُ وَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا...» وَ فَرَضَ وَ لَايَةَ أُولَى الْأَمْرِ فَلَمْ يَدْرُوا مَا هِيَ فَأَمَرَ اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدًا ص أَنْ يُعَسِّرَ لَهُمُ الْوِلَايَةَ كَمَا فَسَّرَ لَهُمُ الصَّلَاةَ وَ الزَّكَاةَ وَ الصَّوْمَ وَ الْحَجَّ فَلَمَّا أَتَاهُ ذَلِكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ ضَاقَ بِذَلِكَ صَدْرُ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ص وَ تَخَوَّفَ أَنْ يَرْتَدُّوا عَنْ دِينِهِمْ وَ أَنْ يُكذِّبُوهُ فَضَاقَ صَدْرُهُ وَ رَاجَعَ رَبَّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ فَأَوْحَى اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ إِلَيْهِ- يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَ إِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ وَ اللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ فَصَدَعَ بِأَمْرِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى ذِكْرَهُ فَقَامَ بِوِلَايَةِ عَلِيٍّ ع يَوْمَ غَدِيرِ حُمِّ فَنَادَى الصَّلَاةَ جَامِعَةً وَ أَمَرَ النَّاسَ أَنْ يُبَلِّغَ الشَّاهِدَ الْعَائِبَ
- “On the authority of Abū Ja’far (as) who said: God Almighty commanded His Apostle towards the wilāyah of ‘Alī and revealed to him, “Your walī is only God, His Messenger, and those who believe...”” He then made the wilāyah of those vested with authority mandatory, however they did not know & understand what that was. Therefore, God ordered Muḥammad (saw) to explain wilāyah the way he had explained ṣalāt, zakāt, ṣawm, and ḥajj; when this prescription came, the Prophet’s chest straitened and he became scared that the people would abandon their religion and belie him. Therefore, his breast straitened and he turned back to his Lord; upon this, God inspired to him the verse, “Oh Apostle, deliver that which was revealed to you from your Lord...” Thereafter, the Prophet executed God’s command and stood up with the message of ‘Alī’s wilāyah at Ghadīr Khumm. He then convened the congregational payer and instructed the people who were present to convey the message to those who were absent.”⁵⁶

3. عن ابن عباس و جابر بن عبد الله قالوا أمر الله تعالى نبيه محمدا ص أن ينصب عليا ع علما للناس ليخبرهم بولايته، فتخوف رسول الله ص أن يقولوا: جابى ابن عمه- و أن تطغوا في ذلك عليه فأوحى الله إليه يا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ- وَ إِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ- وَ اللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ
- “On the authority of ibn ‘Abbās and Jābir bin ‘Abdillāh who said: “God commanded his Prophet Muḥammad (saw) to appoint ‘Alī (as) as a luminary for the people to inform them about his wilāyah. Then the Prophet (saw) got worried

⁵⁵ Uṣūl al-Kāfi, volume 1, Kitāb al-Ḥujjah, Bab al-Naṣṣ ‘Alā Amīr al-Mu’minīn, ḥadīth 3

⁵⁶ Uṣūl al-Kāfi, volume 1, Kitāb al-Ḥujjah, Bab Mā Naṣṣa Allāhu ‘Alā al-A’immah, ḥadīth 4

that they would say, “He is showing favoritism for his cousin” and that they would rebel against him. But then God revealed, “Oh Apostle! Deliver...”⁵⁷

4. عَنْ زَيْدِ بْنِ أَرْقَمٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: لَمَّا نَزَلَتْ هَذِهِ الْآيَةُ فِي وَلايَةِ عَلِيِّ بْنِ أَبِي طَالِبٍ ع يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ قَالَ فَأَخَذَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص يَدَ عَلِيٍّ ثُمَّ رَفَعَهَا وَقَالَ اللَّهُمَّ مَنْ كُنْتُ مَوْلَاهُ فَهَذَا عَلِيٌّ مَوْلَاهُ اللَّهُمَّ وَالِ مَنْ وَالَاهُ وَ عَادِ مَنْ عَادَاهُ

“On the authority of Zayd ibn Arqam who said: When this verse was revealed regarding the wilāyah of ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib (as): “Oh Apostle! Deliver...” the Holy Prophet took the hand of ‘Alī and raised it then said, “By God for whomsoever I preside as master, ‘Alī is his master; Oh God, befriend he who befriends him and oppose he who opposes him.”⁵⁸

5. قال أبو عبد الله جعفر الصادق عليه السلام: لم يمض بعد كمال الدين وتمام النعمة ورضى الرب إلا أنزل الله تبارك وتعالى على نبيه صلى الله عليه وآله بكراخ الغميم: يا أيها الرسول بلغ ما أنزل إليك من ربك علي - وإن لم تفعل فما بلغت رسالته والله يعصمك من الناس فذكر قيام رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله بالولاية بغدير خم قال: ونزل جبرئيل عليه السلام بقول الله عز وجل: اليوم أكملت لكم دينكم وأتممت عليكم نعمتي ورضيت لكم الإسلام ديناً. بعلي أمير المؤمنين في هذا اليوم أكمل لكم معاشر المهاجرين والأنصار دينكم وأتم عليكم نعمته ورضي لكم الإسلام ديناً. فاسمعوا له وأطيعوا تفوزوا وتغنمو

“On the authority of Abū ‘Abdillāh al-Šādiq: The completion of religion, perfection of favor, and Divine pleasure did not actualize until when God Almighty revealed to his Holy Prophet (saw) at the Valley of Karā’ al-Ghamīm “Oh Apostle! Deliver...” Then the Imām mentioned the station of the Messenger (saw) in announcing wilāyah at Ghadīr Khumm and said, “Angel Gabriel (as) descended then with God’s words, “Today I have perfected your religion and completed my favor unto you, and I am pleased with Islam as your religion.” Oh Muhājirūn and Anṣar! On this day, by ‘Alī—the Prince of the Believers—God has completed your religion, completed His favor, and is pleased with Islām as your religion. Therefore, listen to him and obey; you will be successful and prosperous.”⁵⁹

Suffice it to say that within the Shī’ah ḥadīth corpus, the question of the circumstance of revelation for Āyah al-Tablīgh is unanimous: the appointment of ‘Alī (as) at al-Ghadīr.

The Sunni Riwāyāt

The narrations to this effect in Sunnī books are immense and include narrations from al-Barrā’ ibn ‘Āzib, Jabir bin ‘Abdillāh al-Anṣārī, ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas’ūd, Ibn ‘Abbās, Muḥammad bin ‘Alī al-Bāqir (as), Sa’īd al-Khudrī, Zayd bin Arqam, Abu Hurayrah, etc.

⁵⁷ This is simply one ḥadīth from Tafsīr al-‘Ayyāshī volume 1 page 332; you will find there are in fact 4 other narrations in this chapter about this verse narrated from Imām al-Bāqir, Imām al-Šādiq, Jābir bin ‘Abdillāh al-Anṣārī, and ibn ‘Abbās.

⁵⁸ Tafsīr Furāt al-Kūfī volume 1 page 130; there are three other narrations quoted here from Imām Bāqir, Imām al-Šādiq, and ibn ‘Abbās.

⁵⁹ Kitāb al-Yaqīn of Sayyid ibn Ṭawūs page 212

Below, we will mention the names of some of the Sunnī top scholars that have mentioned that this verse is related to the event of al-Ghadīr in their books; given the limited space, we will avoid quoting every ḥadīth in depth but anyone with this expertise may consult the relevant sources.⁶⁰

1. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 327 AH)⁶¹
2. Abū Bakr ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Shīrāzī (d. 411 AH)⁶²
3. Aḥmad bin Mūsā ibn Mardawayh al-Iṣfahānī (d. 410 AH)⁶³
4. Aḥmad bin Muḥammad al-Tha’labī al-Nīsābūrī (d. 427 AH)⁶⁴
5. Abū Na’īm Aḥmad bin ‘Abdillāh al-Iṣfahānī (d. 430 AH)⁶⁵
6. ‘Alī ibn Aḥmad al-Wāhidī al-Nīsābūrī (d. 468 AH)⁶⁶
7. Abū Sa’īd Mas’ūd ibn Nāṣir al-Sijistānī (d. 477 AH)⁶⁷
8. ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Ubaydillāh al-Ḥaskānī al-Ḥanafī (d. 480 AH)⁶⁸
9. Abū al-Qāsim ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Asākir (d. 571 AH)⁶⁹
10. Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad bin ‘Umar al-Rāzī (d. 606 AH)⁷⁰
11. Abū Sālim Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad bin Ṭalḥah al-Shāfi’ī (d. 652 AH)⁷¹
12. ‘Izz al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ras’anī al-Ḥanbalī (d. 661 AH)⁷²
13. ‘Allāmah Niẓām al-Dīn al-Ḥasan al-Qummī al-Nīsābūrī (d. 728 AH)⁷³

⁶⁰ This list is derived from an excellent book entitled “Jawāb Mas’alah Fī Sha’n ‘Āyah al-Tablīgh” by al-Shaykh Asadullah ibn Muḥammad al-Kāzimī, critically edited by Maytham al-Khaṭīb. This work was generously shared with me by Sayyid Muḥsin al-Kashmīrī. We also recommend checking out the encyclopedic al-Ghadīr of Allāmah al-Amīnī where he mentions several dozen other Sunnī scholars and their chains. One can access this resource here in English: <https://www.al-islam.org/ghadir/contextfb58.html?context=balligh> or refer to the original Arabic work.

⁶¹ Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-Karīm, volume 4, page 1172, ḥadīth 6609

⁶² Mā Nazala min al-Qur’ān fī Amīr al-Mu’minīn derived from Khulāṣah ‘Abaqāt al-Anwār volume 8 page 211

⁶³ Manāqib ibn Mardawayh, page 239 ḥadīth 345

⁶⁴ Tafsīr al-Tha’labī, volume 4 page 92

⁶⁵ Ma’rifah al-Ṣaḥābah volume 4 page 468, ḥadīth 6820

⁶⁶ Asbāb al-Nuzūl, page 135

⁶⁷ Kitāb al-Dirāyah, as extracted from Bihār al-Anwār volume 37 page 130

⁶⁸ Shawāhid al-Tanzīl volume 1 page 250 ḥadīth 245

⁶⁹ Tārīkh Madīnah Dimishq volume 42, page 237

⁷⁰ Tafsīr Fakhr al-Rāzī, volume 12 pages 49-50

⁷¹ Maṭālib al-Sa’ūl fī Manāqib Āl al-Rasūl, pages 95-97

⁷² Tafsīr al-Ras’anī, derived from Khulāṣah ‘Abaqāt al-Anwār volume 8 page 238

⁷³ Tafsīr Gharā’ib al-Qur’ān wa Raghā’ib al-Furqān, volume 2 page 616

14. Al-Sayyid ‘Alī ibn Shihāb al-Dīn al-Hamadānī al-Shāfi’ī (d. 786 AH)⁷⁴
15. ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Mālikī ibn al-Ṣabbāgh (d. 855 AH)⁷⁵
16. Al-Qāḍī Maḥmūd ibn Aḥmad al-‘Aynī al-Ḥanafī (d. 855 AH)⁷⁶
17. Abū al-Faḍl Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī al-Shāfi’ī (d. 911 AH)⁷⁷
18. Jamāl al-Dīn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh bin Faḍlillāh al-Shīrāzī (d. 930 AH)⁷⁸
19. Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852 AH)⁷⁹
20. Al-Mīrzā Muḥammad ibn Mu’tamad Khān al-Ḥārithī (d. 1126 AH)⁸⁰

Just for the sake of demonstrating some of these ḥadīth, we will list ten here with their translation. Although the full chains are left as they are in Arabic, we have appended them in English translation to conserve space:

1. حدثنا عثمان بن حرزاد حدثنا إسماعيل بن زكريا حدثنا علي بن عباس عن الأعمش عن أبي الجحاف عن عطية العوفي عن أبي سعيد الخدري قال: نزلت هذه الآية يا أيها الرسول بلغ ما أنزل إليك من ربك في علي بن أبي طالب
“...on the authority of Abū Sa’īd al-Khudrī: “This verse, “Oh Apostle! Deliver...” was revealed about ‘Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib.”⁸¹”
2. أخبرنا الحاكم أبو عبد الله الحافظ جملة، قال: أخبرنا علي بن عبد الرحمن بن عيسى الدهقان بالكوفة، قال: حدثنا الحسين بن الحكم الحبري قال: حدثنا الحسن بن الحسين العرنى قال: حدثنا حبان بن علي العنزي قال: حدثنا الكلبي عن أبي صالح: عن ابن عباس في قوله عز وجل: (يا أيها الرسول بلغ ما أنزل إليك من ربك) الآية، قال: نزلت في علي، أمر رسول الله (صلى الله عليه) أن يبلغ فيه، فأخذ رسول الله بيد علي فقال: من كنت مولاه فعلي مولاه اللهم وال من والاه و عاد من عاداه
“...on the authority of ibn ‘Abbās regarding the words of the Almighty, “Oh Apostle! Deliver...” he said, “It was revealed about ‘Alī, the Apostle of God (saw) was commanded to deliver (the message) regarding him so the Apostle of God (saw) took the hand of ‘Ali and said, “For whomsoever I am the master, ‘Alī is the master; oh God, befriend he who befriends him and oppose he who opposes him.””⁸²

⁷⁴ Mawaddah al-Qurbā printed in Yanābī’ al-Mawaddah li Dhawī al-Qurbā, volume 2, pages 284-285 ḥadīth 812

⁷⁵ Al-Fuṣūl al-Muḥimmah fī Ma’rifat al-A’immah volume 1 page 245

⁷⁶ ‘Umdah al-Qārī volume 18 page 206

⁷⁷ Al-Durr al-Manthūr volume 2 page 298

⁷⁸ Al-Arba’īn fī Faḍā’il al-Imām Amīr al-Mu’minīn, pages 45-47 ḥadīth 13

⁷⁹ Faṭḥ al-Bārī volume 7 page 61

⁸⁰ Nuzul al-Abrār bi mā Ṣaḥḥa min Manāqib Ahl al-Bayt al-Aṭḥār, pages 52-54

⁸¹ From Abū Ḥatim al-Rāzī’s “Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-Karīm” volume 4 page 1172 ḥadīth 6609

⁸² From al-Ḥaskānī’s Shawāhid al-Tanzīl, volume 1, page 251

3. أخبرنا : أبو سعيد محمد بن علي الصفار ، قال : أخبرنا : الحسن بن أحمد المخلدي ، قال : أخبرنا: محمد بن حمدون بن خالد ، قال : حدثنا : محمد بن ابراهيم الخلوتي ، قال : حدثنا : الحسن ابن حماد سجادة ، قال : حدثنا : علي بن عابس ، عن الأعمش وأبي حجاب ، عن عطية ، عن أبي سعيد الخدري ، قال : نزلت هذه الآية : { يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ } يوم غدیر خم في علي بن أبي طالب “...on the authority of Abū Sa’īd al-Khudrī who said, “This verse “Oh Apostle! Deliver...” was revealed on the day of Ghadīr Khumm regarding ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.””⁸³
4. أخبرنا : السيد أبو الحسن محمد بن علي بن الحسين الحسني رحمه الله قراءة ، قال : أخبرنا : أبو الحسن محمد بن محمد بن علي الأنصاري بطوس ، قال : حدثنا : قريش بن خدّاش بن السائب ، قال : حدثنا : أبو عصمة نوح بن أبي مريم ، عن إسماعيل ، عن أبي معشر ، عن سعيد المقبري ، عن أبي هريرة ، عن النبي (ص) ، قال : لما أسرى بي إلى السماء سمعت نداء من تحت العرش أن عليا راية الهدى وحبیب من يؤمن بي بلغ يا محمد ، قال : فلما نزل النبي (ص) أسر ذلك ، فأُنزل الله عز وجل : { يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ } في علي بن أبي طالب : { وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْصُمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ } “...on the authority of Abū Hurayrah that the Prophet said, “When I ascended to Heaven (during the Isrā’) I heard a call from under the Throne of God that “‘Alī is the banner of guidance and the beloved of those who believe in Me; deliver this Oh Muhammad!” Abu Hurayrah said, “When the Holy Prophet (saw) descended, he kept that hidden, but then the verse was revealed, “Oh Apostle! Deliver...” regarding ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, “and if you do not do so you have not delivered His Message; and God will protect you from the people.””⁸⁴
5. أخبرنا : أبو بكر وجيه بن طاهر ، أنا : أبو حامد الأزهری ، أنا : أبو محمد المخلدي ، أنا : أبو بكر محمد بن حمدون ، أنا : محمد بن ابراهيم الحلواني ، أنا : الحسن بن حماد سجادة ، أنا : علي بن عابس ، عن الأعمش وأبي الجحاف ، عن عطية ، عن أبي سعيد الخدري ، قال : نزلت هذه الآية : { يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ } على رسول الله (ص) يوم غدیر خم في علي بن أبي طالب “...on the authority of Abū Sa’īd al-Khudrī who said, “The verse, “Oh Apostle! Deliver...” was revealed to the Holy Prophet (saw) on Ghadīr Khumm regarding ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.””⁸⁵
6. أخبرنا أبو بكر السكري قال: أخبرنا أبو عمرو المقري قال أخبرنا الحسن بن سفيان، قال: حدثني أحمد بن أزهر قال: حدثنا عبد الرحمان بن عمرو بن جبلة، قال: حدثنا عمر بن نعيم بن عمر بن قيس الماصر، قال: سمعت جدي قال: حدثنا عبد الله بن أبي أوفى قال: سمعت رسول الله (ص) يقول بيوم غدیر خم وتلا هذه الآية: (يا أيها الرسول بلغ ما أنزل إليك من ربك، وإن لم تفعل فما بلغت رسالته) ثم رفع يديه حتى يرى بياض إبطيه ثم قال: ألا من كنت مولاه فعلي مولاه، اللهم وال من والاه و عاد من عاداه. ثم قال: اللهم اشهد
“...on the authority of ‘Abdullāh ibn Abī Awfā who said: I heard the Messenger of God (saw) say on the Day of Ghadīr Khumm reciting this verse “Oh Apostle! Deliver...” then he raised his hands until the whites of his armpits showed and he said, “Whoever’s master I am, then ‘Alī is his master. Oh God, befriend he who

⁸³ From al-Wāhidi’s Asbāb al-Nuzūl volume 1, page 204

⁸⁴ From al-Haskānī’s Shawāhid al-Tanzīl volume 1 page 249

⁸⁵ From ibn ‘Asākir’s Tārīkh Dimishq part 42 page 237

befriends him and be an enemy to one who is his enemy.” Then he said, “Oh God, bear witness!”⁸⁶

7. أخبرنا : أبو عبد الله الدينوري قراءة ، قال : حدثنا : أحمد بن محمد بن اسحاق بن ابراهيم السني ، قال : أخبرني : عبد الرحمن بن حمدان ، قال : حدثنا : محمد بن عثمان العيسى ، قال : حدثنا : ابراهيم بن محمد بن ميمون ، قال : حدثنا : علي بن عابس ، عن الأعمش ، عن أبي الجحاف داود بن أبي عوف ، عن عطية ، عن أبي سعيد الخدري ، قال : نزلت هذه الآية في علي بن أبي طالب : ﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ﴾
“...on the authority of Abū Sa’īd al-Khudrī who said: “This verse was revealed about ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib: “Oh Apostle! Deliver...”⁸⁷
8. حدثنا : محمد بن منصور ، عن عباد ، عن علي بن هاشم ، عن أبيه ، عن كثير الثوري كذا : عن أبي جعفر أن رسول الله (ص) أمر أن يقوم بولاية علي فضايق بذلك ذرعا حتى نزلت : ﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ ﴾ فقال : اللهم وال من عاداه ووالاه ، وعاد من عاداه
“...on the authority of Abū Ja’far that the Holy Prophet was ordered to proclaim the wilāyah of ‘Alī but he felt constrained by that until the verse was revealed, “Oh Apostle! Deliver...” Then he took ‘Alī’s hand and said, “Oh God befriend he who befriends him and be an enemy to he who is his enemy”⁸⁸
9. وأخرج ابن مردويه ، عن ابن مسعود ، قال : كنا نقرأ على عهد رسول الله (ص) : ﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ﴾ أن عليا مولى المؤمنين ﴿ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ ﴾
“...on the authority of Ibn Mas’ūd who said, “We used to recite during the time of the Holy Prophet that “Oh Apostle! Deliver what was revealed to you from your Lord” that ‘Alī is the master of the believers “and if you do not do so you have not delivered His Message, and God will protect you from the people.”^{89 90}
10. عن البراء بن عازب في قوله تعالى : ﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ﴾ أي بلغ من فضائل علي ، نزلت في غدير خم ، فخطب رسول الله (ص) ، قال : من كنت مولاه فهذا علي مولاه ، فقال عمر : يخ لك يا علي ، أصبحت مولاي ومولى كل مؤمن ومؤمنة
“On the authority of Barrā’ ibn ‘Āzib regarding God’s words “Oh Apostle! Deliver...” as in deliver the merits of ‘Alī. It was revealed in Ghadīr Khumm so the Holy Prophet (saw) said, “For whomsoever I am master, ‘Alī is his master.”

⁸⁶ From al-Ḥaskānī’s Shawāhid al-Tanzīl volume 1 page 252

⁸⁷ From al-Ḥaskānī’s Shawāhid al-Tanzīl volume 1 page 250

⁸⁸ From al-Ḥaskānī’s Shawāhid al-Tanzīl volume 1 page 255

⁸⁹ From al-Suyūfī’s Al-Durr al-Manthūr volume 3 page 117

⁹⁰ Regarding this ḥadīth, some have accused it of being a fabrication because it implies that the qirā’ah of the Qur’ān of ibn Mas’ūd had distortion (al-tahrīf) with entire interpolated phrases within verses. However, a careful observer will note that these are scribal commentaries by ibn Mas’ūd, not textual distortion. For more details, see this Sunnī site which clearly admits this: <https://www.islamweb.net/ar/fatwa/55282/>

Then ‘Umar said, “Bravo bravo oh ‘Alī! You have become my master and the master of every believing man and woman.””⁹¹

There are of course many more ḥadīth from the books of the Ahl al-Sunnah but we will suffice with this here. It is indeed quite surprising that Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī therefore states:

واعلم أن الشيعة يزعمون خلافاً للأحاديث المتقدمة أن الآية المذكورة نزلت يوم غدِير خُم في علي رضي الله عنه ويذكرون في ذلك روايات عديدة مراسيل ومعاضيل أكثرها

“Know that the Shī’ah assert in contrary to the aforementioned ḥadīths that the verse in question was revealed in Ghadīr Khumm regarding ‘Alī (rh) and they mention a number of riwāyāt most of which are mursal (the omission of the first narrator from the sanad) and mu’ḍal (the omission of two or more consecutive narrators from the sanad).”⁹²

In response, one of our great scholars Shaykh ‘Alī al-Kūrānī al-‘Āmilī states the following:

تعال أيها الشيخ الألباني ، لننظر هل صدقت في حكمك على حديث نزول آية : ﴿ ... وَاللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ ... ﴾ ، في بيعة الغدير ، بأنه باطل منكر ، وقلت عن طريقه : (مراسيل ومعاضيل أكثرها) ! فلماذا قلت أكثرها ولم تأت بغير الأكثر الذي استثنيت من الإرسال والإعضال؟! ...وهل رأيت طرق الثعلبي ، وأبي نعيم ، والواحدي ، وأبي سعيد السجستاني ، والحسكاني ، وبحثت أسانيدهم فوجدت في روايتها من لم تعتمد أنت عليهم؟! ...أقول : كتبت هذا الموضوع في حياة الشيخ الألباني قبل وفاته بنحو سنتين ، وأرسلته له إلى الأردن ، مع طرق الحديث من شواهد التنزيل للحاكم الحسكاني ، وهي عدة طرق وفيها الصحيح على مبناه ، ولم يجيني

“Come Shaykh al-Albānī let us see if you have been honest in your judgement against the ḥadīth that show 5:67 pertains to the allegiance at al-Ghadīr. You say that it is invalid and ambiguous, calling its chains “mostly mursal” and “mu’ḍal.” How come you have said “most of them” and you don’t pay attention to those that you have excluded from being mursal and mu’ḍal?!...Have you looked at the chains of al-Tha’labī, Abu Na’īm, al-Wāhidī, Abu Sa’īd al-Sijistānī, and al-Ḥaskānī and have seen among their narrators those upon whom you do not rely?!”

Regarding the above: I wrote this piece during the lifetime of Shaykh al-Albānī about 2 years before his demise and sent it to Jordan, along with the chains from Shawāhid al-Tanzīl of al-Ḥākīm al-Ḥaskānī (and they are a number of chains some of which are authentic based on his criteria), however he did not respond to me!”⁹³

Examining the Alternative Aḥādīth on this Topic

There are some other narrations that are mentioned regarding why this verse was revealed, some of which we have already addressed in brief in the discussion about the miṣdāq of the Verse of Tablīgh. However, we will explain in more detail here regarding

⁹¹ From al-Qandūzī’s Yanābī’ al-Mawaddah volume 2 page 249

⁹² Mawsū’ah al-Albānī fī al-‘Aqīdah volume 8 page 381

⁹³ See al-Kūrānī’s essay about Āyah al-Tablīgh entitled “Āyah al-Tablīgh ma’a Siyāqihā”

the other aḥādīth.⁹⁴ These narrations are related by al-Ṭabarī, and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī in their respective commentaries on the Qur’ān.

Among the narrations from al-Ṭabarī and al-Rāzī are as follows:

1. On the authority of ibn ‘Abbas that it was revealed to mean “if you hide any verse revealed to you from Your Lord you have not delivered My Message.”
2. On the authority of Qatādah that it means “God will suffice him from the people and protect him in his delivering the message.”
3. On the authority of ‘Ā’ishah that the Prophet had bodyguards until this verse was revealed, after which the Prophet told them to disperse because God has protected him.
4. On the authority of ibn Ka’b al-Qarzī that it was revealed when a Bedouin Arab approached the Holy Prophet while he was sleeping alone under a tree and voiced intentions to kill him with his sword. He asked the Prophet, “Who will stop you from me?” and the Prophet responded “God.” The weapon then fell from his hand and he began to strike his head against the tree until he died.”
5. On the authority of ibn Jurayj that the Prophet used to fear Quraysh until this verse was revealed, then he said: “Whoever wishes to abandon me let him do so” three times.
6. On the authority of ‘Ā’ishah that she said, “Whoever claims that the Prophet hid anything from the Book of God has fabricated against God,” and then she recited this verse.
7. There are several other odd narrations that state that this verse was revealed during Makkah after which the Prophet told Abū Ṭālib that he does not need his protection. There is also a narration that says this was revealed at the start of the Prophet’s mission and that his uncle ‘Abbās came to his rescue.

In analyzing the above narrations, ‘Allāmah al-Amīnī astutely points out that there is no contradiction between narrations # 1, 2, and 6 and the thesis that the Verse of Tablīgh was revealed regarding Imām ‘Alī’s appointment at al-Ghadīr. This is because these aḥādīth are only saying that the Prophet generally delivered everything that was revealed to him without specifying the exact circumstance that led to the revelation of the verse. Therefore, they are in the place of commentary describing the general implication of the verse and are not meant to clarify the circumstance of its revelation.

⁹⁴ We have translated this discussion in an abridged format as derived from ‘Allāmah al-Amīnī’s encyclopedia on al-Ghadīr volume 1 page 223

As for the two ḥadīths # 3 and #5, these are only describing in general that the Prophet was anxious against his enemies and had guards to protect him; it is very possible that the reason was because he was being commanded to disclose Imām ‘Alī’s wilāyah.

Ḥadīth #4 is not tenable because it only explains the latter half of the verse, “God will protect you from the people,” and is completely disjointed from the previous sentences “Deliver what was revealed to you from your Lord,” and “If you do not, you have not revealed His Message.”

Finally the aḥādīth regarding the Prophet obviating himself of Abū Ṭālib’s protection and/or taking assistance from his uncle ‘Abbās are untenable, because as we demonstrated earlier this verse is not from the Makkan period; furthermore, there is a clear agenda underlying these narrations in attempting to downplay the role of Abū Ṭālib and magnify the role of ‘Abbās.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ In other words, it is not far-fetched that the Abbasids fabricated these narrations to aggrandize their status and render support for their claim to the caliphate.

Common Contentions on the Verse of Tablīh

After presenting all the evidence above, we hope that the educated and unbiased reader will be able to adjudicate the signification of this verse for themselves. Nonetheless, there are often several contentions that are brought up in understanding the verse. Below, we will discuss some of the most common ones; we will present the arguments here using a Devil's Advocate style. Where possible we will mention who has particularly mentioned these contentions:

1. The meaning of “mā unzila ilayka min rabbika” (what has been revealed to you from your Lord) simply means the “entirety of the Qur’ān” and has nothing to do with any specific message. In other words, Allāh is telling the Prophet if you don’t deliver the whole book, it is as if you have not delivered the message at all.⁹⁶

As we demonstrated in our contextual discussion of the mafhūm, this verse was revealed in the Medinite period, likely at the end of the Prophet’s life. Given that this is the case, there is in fact no significant difference in the mafhūm even if we take the meaning of mā unzila ilayka min rabbika to mean “the entire Qur’ān” here. The Holy Prophet had already delivered a great portion of the revelation preceding this and the implication of stating “deliver the whole message” is that there is still a vitally important part of the religion remaining which he must still deliver. In Arabic terms, this phrase mā unzila ilayka min rabbika has a signification of partial accord (al-dalālah al-taḍammuniyyah) for a particular revelation. This is based on a pragmatic understanding of language, as we will explain below.

To demonstrate what we mean, consider an analogy; suppose you have a friend who has sent you three separate packages in the mail. The mailman has delivered two of them but still has not delivered one package to you. Therefore, you tell him: “Deliver all the packages, otherwise you have not truly delivered the shipment.” The pragmatic understanding of this statement is that there is a final package which is yet to be delivered.

In other words, even if we propose that the meaning is “deliver the entire Qur’ān,” given this is a late Medinite verse, the implication automatically becomes that a part of the revelation has not yet been delivered.

Therefore, the only way in which this interpretation holds water is if it is an early Makkan verse; if the Prophet had not delivered a single part of the revelation yet and God commanded him in this fashion, it would only be then that the meaning of “mā unzila ilayka min rabbika” would be “the entire Qur’ānic revelation.” In terms of our analogy, if the mailman has not delivered any packages to you at all and you chide him saying, “deliver the shipment given to you otherwise you haven’t done your job,” only then would the implication be the entire shipment. But as we demonstrated earlier, there is a

⁹⁶ This contention has been brought forth by several prominent Sunnī polemicists including ‘Uthmān al-Khamīs. In his Rūḥ al-Ma’ānī, al-Ālūsī also makes a similar statement.

preponderance of rational and traditionist evidence to suggest that this verse was a late Medinite revelation.

Now someone may argue that “well of course some revelation hadn’t been delivered yet. There may have still been some verses left of the Qur’ān related to the final rules of inheritance or usury.” However, the contender is forgetting that the message referenced in the verse was something that the Prophet was reluctant to reveal to the people. He was worried that after its delivery, his message would disintegrate. This is why God promises him His protection. Therefore, based on pragmatics, the mafhūm remains as is: that there was something residual of the revelation that was going to be a bombshell. The rules of Islām (aḥkām) or verses that pertain to basic tawḥīd cannot possibly be the maṣādīq, because there was never any hesitation from the Prophet about delivering these things in the first place.⁹⁷

2. This verse is simply to affirm that the Prophet did not hide anything of the revelation; the protection God is promising to him is against the people claiming that he had hid anything of the Qur’ān. These Shī’ah believe that the Prophet hid the revelation from others and was doing taqiyyah his whole life, and this verse is the strongest proof against their claim.⁹⁸

The mental acrobatics that are employed to escape the apparent meaning (al-zuhūr) of this verse are quite interesting. Our answer will come in two parts: firstly, why this interpretation is untenable and secondly, why this is primarily an appeal to emotions.

In fact, the commentators who have advocated this interpretation have very conveniently redirected the entire verse to attack the Shī’ah. However, this interpretation is extremely contrived and cannot possibly be the circumstance that precipitated the revelation of this verse. Firstly, there is no evidence in the Qur’ān that the Prophet was ever even accused of hiding the revelation given to him by anyone; in fact, it was the exact opposite situation. They wanted the Prophet to hide the revelation and he was repeatedly instructed to respond that he cannot do so. The Qur’ān reports the disbelievers as saying the following:

وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٌ قَالُوا الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا أَنتُمْ بُقُرَاءٌ أَمْ أَوْ بَدَّلَهُ قُلْ مَا يَكُونُ لِي أَنْ أُبَدِّلَهُ مِنْ تِلْقَائِي نَفْسِي إِنْ أَتَّبِعُ إِلَّا مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ وَإِنِّي أَخَافُ إِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ

“When Our clear revelations are recited to them, those who do not expect to meet Us say, “Bring us a different Quran or make some changes in it.” Say, “It is not for me to change

⁹⁷ For advanced readers, we would recommend reading through the discussion of ‘Allāmah Ṭabātabā’ī regarding this issue in his Tafsīr al-Mizān.

⁹⁸ This contention is mentioned by Rashīd Riḍā in his Tafsīr al-Manār as well as ibn ‘Āshūr in his al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr. Some also utilize the ḥadīth of ‘Ā’ishah in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī which states, “Whoever states that Muḥammad hid something of what God revealed to him has lied.” However, this ḥadīth is not a proper argument, because it does not appear that Ā’ishah is talking about the reason for the revelation of this verse at all. Rather, she is merely stating that a secondary implication of the verse is that the Prophet did not hide anything, which we completely agree.

it on my own. I only follow what is revealed to me. I fear, if I were to disobey my Lord, the punishment of a tremendous Day.”” (Sūrah Yūnus: verse 15)

Therefore, to claim that this verse was revealed because people were accusing the Prophet of hiding what God revealed to him is completely untenable. There is no evidence for such a claim from the Prophet’s biography.

Secondly, the phraseology of God’s promise here goes against this interpretation. The Prophet is told that God will protect him “from the people” (min al-nās); if the meaning here had specifically been accusations of shortcoming (al-taqṣīr) then why didn’t the verse mention that? Furthermore, the end of the verse also points against this view; it says that God does not guide the kāfirīn (literally, those who seek to cover the truth). If the meaning had been those who attribute lies to the Prophetic risālah or fabricate claims that it is incomplete, it would have been more appropriate for the verse to mention “al-muftarīn” (the fabricators) or “al-zālimīn” (the oppressors).

Finally, if we were to assume this argument were correct for a moment, the protection that God is offering the Prophet becomes ineffective; if as this argument goes the Shī’ah really claim that the Qur’ān is incomplete and the Prophet did taqiyyah, then the Prophet has not been protected from claims by the people that his revelation is incomplete!

In the second place, the claim being made about the Shī’ah here is patently incorrect; it is interesting that the individuals who make this claim do not bring forward any Shī’ah scholar to substantiate that this is what they believe. We concede that while there have been some heretical movements among the Shī’ah who have claimed this, the Shī’ah orthodoxy believes that the Qur’ān has no deficiencies, additions, or alterations.⁹⁹ It is in this vein that we find one of the forerunners of the Shī’ah school of thought Shaykh al-Ṣadūq (d. 381 AH) stating the following:

اعتقادنا أن القرآن الذي أنزله الله تعالى على نبيه محمد صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم هو ما بين الدفتين، وهو ما في أيدي الناس، ليس بأكثر من ذلك، ومبلغ سوره عند الناس مائة وأربع عشرة سورة وعندنا أن الضحى وألم نشرح سورة واحدة، ولا يلاف وألم تر كيف سورة واحدة والأنفال والتوبة سورة واحدة. ومن نسب إلينا أنا نقول إنه أكثر من ذلك فهو كاذب

“Our belief is that the Qur’ān which God Almighty revealed to the Holy Prophet (saw) is what is between the two covers; it is what the people now have without anything more than that. The number of sūrahs per the common people (i.e. the Sunnis) is 114 while we believe that al-Ḍuḥā and al-Inshirāḥ are one sūrah; al-Fīl and al-Quraysh are one sūrah; and al-Anfāl and al-Tawbah are one sūrah. As for he who ascribes to us the statement that the Qur’ān is more than this, he is a liar.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ There have of course been some rare individuals who have fallen out of the scope of the orthodox view. Among these was the great muhaddith Mirzā Ḥusayn al-Nūrī in his “Faṣl al-Khiṭāb fī Taḥrīf Kitāb Rabb al-Arbāb.” However, this book has been thoroughly refuted by Shī’ah scholars. It should also be said that the Sunnis also contain some narrations in their Ṣiḥāḥ which suggest taḥrīf, but this should not be used to substantiate that Sunnis believe in this doctrine. Although space does not allow for a detailed treatment of the issue, suffice it to say that there is a clear double standard at play here.

¹⁰⁰ Al-I’tiqādāt fī Dīn al-Imāmiyyah by Shaykh al-Ṣadūq page 84

Hence, both the interpretation that the contender proposes and his accusation against the Shī'ah are thoroughly refuted.

3. If Imām 'Alī's wilāyah is so important as you state, then why wasn't he mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān explicitly by name? The Qur'ān itself states that it is all-comprehensive and contains all that is needed for salvation. Then why isn't this extremely important message properly mentioned?¹⁰¹

The entire underlying methodology of this question is highly presumptuous and problematic. The questioner is demanding that the level of evidence for Imām 'Alī's wilāyah be provided at the level of his/her specifications, similar to how the polytheists of Makkah told the Prophet:

وَقَالُوا لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ بِكَ حَتَّىٰ تُفَجِّرَ لَنَا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ بَيْنُوعًا أَوْ تُكُونَ لَكَ جَنَّةٌ مِّنْ نَّحِيلٍ وَعَنْبٌ فَتَفَجِّرَ الْأَنْهَارَ خِلَالَهَا تَفْجِيرًا أَوْ تُسْفِطَ السَّمَاءَ كَمَا رَعَمْتَ عَلَيْنَا كِسْفًا أَوْ تَأْتِيَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ قَبِيلًا أَوْ يَكُونَ لَكَ بَيْتٌ مِّنْ زُخْرَفٍ أَوْ تَرْقَىٰ فِي السَّمَاءِ وَلَنْ نُؤْمِنَ لِزُفَيْكَ حَتَّىٰ تُنَزِّلَ عَلَيْنَا كِتَابًا نُّفَرِّقُ بِهِ فُلَّ سُبْحَانَ رَبِّي هَلْ كُنْتُ إِلَّا بَشَرًا رَسُولًا

“And they (the disbelievers) say, “We will never believe in you (Oh Muḥammad) until you cause to gush forth for us a spring from the earth; or you possess a garden of date-palms and grapes, and cause rivers to gush forth within them abundantly; or you cause the sky to fall upon us—as you have claimed—in pieces; or you bring Allāh and the Angels before (us); or you have a house of gold or ascend into the sky. And never we will believe in your ascension until you bring down to us a Book which we could read.” Say, “Glorified (is) my Lord! “What am I but a human messenger!”” (Sūrah al-Isrā', verses 90-93)

In other words, just as the polytheists had demanded of the Prophet a certain level of evidence to necessitate their belief, this contender is also dictating the type of proof that must be given. Therefore, the underlying presumption of this question in dictating to God the type of evidence needed is completely fallacious. God provides the signs that He chooses and we have no right to demand that the proof ought to match a certain preconceived format. Rather, the proofs for the wilāyah of Imām 'Alī (as) that have been given are abundant in the Qur'ān and Sunnah for the discerning folk.¹⁰²

Nonetheless, we may be able to suggest some possible reasons why the Qur'ān didn't specifically mention the name of Imām 'Alī although these remain mere possibilities (al-iḥtimālāt), and Allah knows best:

- a. Neither 'Alī nor Abū Ṭālib were unique names among the Arabs. Therefore, even if the name had been mentioned it would not have at all been definitive as the contender assumes. Rather in clarifying the heir to the Prophet, the better route is

¹⁰¹ This contention is brought up by even some Shī'ah laity, although it is a common argument among the polemicists as well such as Rāmī 'Isā and 'Uthmān al-Khamīs.

¹⁰² Entire books have been written solely about examining this topic, most illustrious among them being the encyclopedic 'Abaqāt al-Anwar of Sayyid Ḥāmid Ḥusayn al-Mūsawī in 30 volumes, may Allāh have mercy on his soul. For the curious reader, a summary of some volumes of the book in English can be found here: <https://alabaqat.com/1.html>

- to employ descriptions of his status which we find quite amply employed in the Qur’ān. This does not allow anyone to change the labels such that a case of identity obfuscation could be rendered feasible. The descriptions stand on their own merit, and those who are worthy of them are not ambiguous.¹⁰³
- b. As we discussed throughout this analysis, there were a great number of individuals who bore animosity against ‘Alī and this is precisely why the Prophet was hesitant to make the proclamation. Declaring your son-in-law and cousin as the successor and caliph did not sit well with many of those who professed the faith. A clear and unequivocal statement within the Qur’ān would have predisposed this group towards tampering with the text and/or potentially reneging on the religion altogether. In other words, the very fear which the Prophet carried would have been actualized; hence the approach that the Qur’ān employed in alluding to Imām ‘Alī’s wilāyah was the very manifestation of the ‘iṣmah in delivery promised to the Holy Prophet (saw).
 - c. There is a clear double standard that the contender carries with this question. There are a great number of practices found in the Prophetic exposition (al-sunnah al-qaṭ’iyyah) that do not feature in the Qur’ān except as wide general principles. For instance, the details of ṣalāt and ḥajj are not clearly expounded in the Qur’ān but are rather sought in the Prophetic sunnah.¹⁰⁴ However, when it comes to wilāyah and imāmah, the questioner suddenly turns blind to this reality and refuses to concede that the Qur’ān need only discuss the principle of wilāyah and imāmah in its generalities!¹⁰⁵
4. If Āyah al-Tablīgh is telling the Prophet that he hasn’t delivered the message of Imām ‘Alī being his successor, then this invalidates all the proofs that Shī’ah try to use to substantiate Imām ‘Alī’s wilāyah which had taken place before Ghadīr.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Among these āyāt are as follows: Āyah al-Taḥrīr (33:33), Āyah al-Mubāhalah (3:61), Āyah al-Wilāyah (5:55), Āyah al-Tā’ah (4:59), Āyah al-Mawaddah (42:23), Āyah Mīrāth al-Kitāb (35:32), Āyah Ulū al-Arḥām (33:6), Āyah Dhū al-Qurbā (17:26), Āyah al-Imāmah (2:124), Āyah al-Shāhid (11:17), Āyah ‘Ilm al-Kitāb (13:43), and Āyah al-Naṣb (94:7), among many other āyāt.

¹⁰⁴ Let not any individual state that these are parts of practice and not belief, therefore this is not a proper analogy. Rather, these practices are cornerstones of Islām just as we contend Imāmah is; it is unanimously agreed upon that one who abandons prayers is a disbeliever. In a similar manner, it is narrated by both Shī’ah and Sunni sources that one who dies without an Imām dies the death of ignorance.

¹⁰⁵ I am indebted to the excellent answers on this topic by Sādeqī Tehrānī in his tafsīr on Āyah al-Tablīgh as well as Sayyid ‘Alī Abu Ḥusayn’s excellent answer on this topic in Arabic, found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=azeuv0W-qQ8>

¹⁰⁶ This is a clever argument employed by ‘Uthmān al-Khamīs in one of his videos where he attempts to address the Shī’ah arguments on Āyah al-Tablīgh.

Rather we will go one step further than the contender because we have understood the Qur’ānic verse properly. It states very clearly that if the Prophet does not reveal the message he is being commanded to give, his entire message becomes null and void. Could we then state based on this that all the teachings the Holy Prophet had delivered up to the appointment of ‘Alī (as) were invalidated and worthless?! This type of malicious rhetoric and twisted logic is precisely the problem with some polemicists.

Rather, we state that all the statements that the Holy Prophet (saw) delivered prior to Ghadīr were implicit affirmations of ‘Alī’s qualifications and suitability for being the Prophet’s successor. However, God then commanded His Prophet to state this fact plain and openly as to leave no doubt about the matter (itmām al-ḥujjah). Yet we still have some today who question the entire event.¹⁰⁷

It is as the great poet of the Ahl al-Bayt, al-Sayyid Ismā’īl al-Ḥimyarī (d. 179 AH) has beautifully put it in his famous Qaṣīdah al-‘Ayniyyah:

عجبت من قوم أتوا أحمداً	I wonder at a folk who to Aḥmad brought
بخطبة ليس لها موضع	Speech that was not of wisdom wrought
قالوا له: لو شئت أعلمتنا	They said: "If you wish, then to us do pray tell
إلى من الغاية والمفرع	To whom is your standard—with whom should we dwell
إذا توفيت وفارقتنا	When us you depart and your soul is raised?"
وفيه في الملك من يطمع	While stood among them those who power craved!
فقال: لو أعلمتكم مفرعاً	He said, "Had I named for you whom to hold
كنتم عسيتم فيه أن تصنعوا	Perchance you would follow that selfsame mold
صنيع أهل العجل إذ فارقوا	Of those folk that bowed to a calf that was golden
هارون فالترك له أودع	When they belied Aaron—nay to veil I’m behoven!"
وفي الذي قال بيان لمن	But in what he said there was no opacity
كان إذا يعقل أو يسمع	For he who takes heed or shows sagacity
ثم أنته بعد ذا عزيمة	But then came to him that holy decree

¹⁰⁷ This is precisely what prompted the scholar ‘Allāmah ‘Abdul Ḥusayn al-Amīnī to publish his encyclopedic work called “Al-Ghadīr” in 20 volumes. In this book, he substantiates that Ḥadīth al-Ghadīr is authentic in source (qat’iyy al-ṣudūr) and unequivocal in import (qat’iyy al-dilālah) for the appointment of Imām ‘Alī (as) as the Prophet’s rightful heir.

من ربه ليس لها مدفع	By his Lord, from which none can ever flee
أبلغ وإلا لم تكن مبلغا	“Deliver it! Lest you fall short in His message
والله منهم عاصم يمنع	And God will protect and defend you from wreckage!”
فعندها قام النبي الذي	Right then and there, that Prophet then rose
كان بما يأمره يصدع	For God’s commands he did always disclose
يخطب مأمورا وفي كفه	He spoke by God’s order, clasped in his palm
كف علي ظاهرا تلمع	Was that palm of ‘Alī, manifestly shone
رافعها أكرم بكف الذي	How awesome those palms of the raiser and raised
يرفع والكف الذي يرفع	In nobility paired, transcending all praise
يقول والاملاك من حوله	Then he said—while angels around him surrounded
والله فيهم شاهد يسمع	While God was his witness in what he resounded:
من كنت مولاه فهذا له	“Whoever to whom as his Mawlā I’m meant
مولى فلم يرضوا ولم يقتعوا	Then ‘Alī is his Mawlā”—but they’re still not content! ¹⁰⁸

5. The Shī’ah believe that all the Companions became kuffār because they claim they attempted to hide Imām ‘Alī’s appointment. In fact, the biggest proof that their claim is wrong is that the Ṣaḥābah of the Prophet unanimously did not accept the Ghadīr appointment as evidence that Imām ‘Alī was the Prophet’s successor. This invalidates God’s promise to protect the message and not guide the efforts of those who seek to cover the message, because the purported claim was not even accepted by the Muslims themselves.¹⁰⁹

There are several superimposed misconceptions in this answer. Firstly, there is a blatant generalization that the Shī’ah think “all the Ṣaḥābah” denied this fact. In fact, the Shī’ah corpus demonstrates that we revere a great number of companions of the Prophet.¹¹⁰ As

¹⁰⁸ Alḥamdulillāh we have been granted the great honor to render this poem completely in rhyming English couplets; may Allāh grant us His tawfīq to publish it soon.

¹⁰⁹ This is a contention elaborated by the infamous scholar al-Borqē’ī in his discussion about Āyah al-Tablīgh.

¹¹⁰ For instance, the Shī’ah scholar Al-Sayyid Sharaf al-dīn al-Mūsawī has written an article entitled الصحابة الشيعة الإمامية in which he enumerates righteous companions exceeding over 150 names. Ḥurr al-‘Āmilī

we discussed in our contextual analysis of the verse, the meaning of *kāfir* in the verse is not the meaning of “disbeliever” but rather the original etymological implication of the word meaning “those who cover (the truth).” Therefore, it is incorrect to surmise that the *Shī’ah* believe that the *Ṣaḥābah* became apostates.¹¹¹ However, they do believe that political aspirations and desire for leadership led to the usurpation of the right of *Imām ‘Alī*; this was a monumental crime, and its repercussions are still felt today.

As for the claim that the *Ṣaḥābah* unanimously believed that *al-Ghadīr* was not an explicit appointment of *Imām ‘Alī* as the heir of the Prophet, we draw the reader’s attention to several crucial points:

- a. There was in fact no consensus on this point; in fact *Abū Bakr’s* caliphate was not primarily enacted except on the basis of a handful of individuals (what the *Sunnīs* term “*ahl al-‘aqd wa al-ḥill*”).¹¹²
- b. Many of the *Muhājirūn* and most of the *Anṣār* actually withheld their initial allegiance to *Abū Bakr* precisely because they knew that *Imām ‘Alī* was appointed to the position.¹¹³
- c. There was a great deal of animosity against *‘Alī*; he had wiped out many of the elites of *Quraysh* during the Prophetic battles. There was also animosity against the Holy Prophet and repressing his family was a method to exact requital.¹¹⁴

(d. 1104 AH) in his treatise *Risālah fī Ma’rifah al-Ṣaḥābah* (A Memorandum on Recognition of the Companions) recounts the names of 481 righteous companions of the Prophet.

¹¹¹ There are some narrations that one may find to this effect in the *Shī’ah* books, however these narrations are classically misinterpreted; the meaning of apostasy (*irtidād*) in these *aḥādīth* is not leaving the religion. Rather it is the etymological meaning of turning one’s back on the pledge made at *al-Ghadīr*. Regardless, it should be said that *Sunnī aḥādīth* themselves implicate the *Ṣaḥābah* of doing *irtidād*! For example, consider the following *ḥadīth* from *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*:

عن أبي هريرة أنه كان يحدث أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: يرد عليّ يوم القيامة رهط من أصحابي، فيخْلُون عن الحوض، فأقول: يا ربّ أصحابي. فيقول: إنك لا علم لك بما أحدثوا بعدك، إنهم ارتدوا على أديبارهم القهقري
 “On the authority of *Abū Hurayrah* that he used to say the Holy Prophet (saw) had said: “A people from among my Companions will come to me and they will be driven away from my Pond. I will say, “Oh my Lord (these are) my Companions!” He will respond, “You don’t know at all what they innovated after you; they completely turned (*irtidād*) on their backs.””

¹¹² Hence the *Sunnī ‘ulamā* differ on how many individuals need to give allegiance (*al-bay’ah*) to establish a government. For instance, *al-Māwurdī* in his *Kitab al-Aḥkām al-Sultāniyyah* states that *Abū Bakr’s* leadership was established by the allegiance of five men and that *‘Uthmān’s* leadership was established through the consensus of five individuals in a party of six.

¹¹³ Therefore, we find one of the early *Sunnī* historians *Al-Zubayr ibn Bakkār* (256 AH) writes in his *al-Akhbār al-Muwaffaqiyyāt*: “وكان عامة المهاجرين وجل الأنصار لا يشكون أن عليا هو صاحب الأمر بعد رسول الله:

¹¹⁴ Thus *al-Haythamī* narrates in his *Majma’ al-Zawā’id*:

عن علي قلت: يا رسول الله ما بيكيك، قال: ضغائن في صدور أقوام لا يبذونها لك الا من بعدي، قال: قلت يا رسول الله في سلامة من ديني، قال: في سلامة من دينك

- d. There were those who attempted to view the caliphate as a purely political decision rather than a religious one. Therefore, they justified using excuses such as the youth of Imām ‘Alī (as) or his love for his kinsmen to preclude him from the position.¹¹⁵
- e. Imām ‘Alī himself used al-Ghadīr to level his protest against the Companions when they elected others to the caliphate.¹¹⁶
- f. There is a huge fallacy latent in the doctrine of the Absolute Impeccability of the Companions (‘adālat al-ṣaḥābah). In fact, the Qur’ān is quite clear that there was a large group of individuals who were on the brink of leaving the religion and were only bridled by the Holy Prophet’s existence among them:
- وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ أَفَإِن مَّاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِكُمْ
- “And Muḥammad is nothing but a messenger; other messengers have passed before him. If he dies or is killed, will you turn back on your heels?” (Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān: verse 144)*

Furthermore, we ought to consider the famous ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet, agreed upon by both sects:

عن أبي سعيد رضي الله عنه، أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: لَتَتَّبِعُنَّ سَنَنَ مَنْ قَبْلَكُمْ شِدْرًا بِشِدْرٍ، وَذِرَاعًا بِذِرَاعٍ، حَتَّىٰ لَوْ سَلَكُوا جُحْرَ ضَبٍّ لَسَلَكْتُمُوهُ؛ قلنا: يا رسول الله؛ اليهود والنصارى؟ قال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فَمَنْ؟!¹¹⁷

On the authority of Abu Sa’īd (rh) that the Holy Prophet (saw) said: “You will follow the paths of those who preceded you: span by span and cubit by cubit; so much so that if they entered the hole of a lizard you will follow them.” We asked, “Do you mean the Christians and Jews, Oh Apostle of God?” He retorted, “Whom else?”¹¹⁷

When we consider the fact that the Jews and Christians commonly repudiated the successors of their Prophets then we ought not to be surprised if the Muslim ummah has done the same.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ As attributed to ‘Umar in Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah: كرهناه على حدائث السن وحبه بني عبد المطلب

¹¹⁶ For example, this narration from al-Khawārizmī al-Ḥanafī in his book al-Manāqib: عن أبي الطفيل عامر بن واثلة، قال: كنت على الباب يوم الشورى مع علي، وسمعته يقول لهم: فأنشدكم الله: هل فيكم أحد قال له رسول الله: من كنت مولاه فعلي مولاه

¹¹⁷ This ḥadīth is narrated in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and is also found in Shī’ah sources with slight differences in wording.

¹¹⁸ Consider how Banū Isrā’īl refused to follow Hārūn; how only a handful of them followed Ṭālūt; how the Christians turned to Paul instead of Peter for their religious guidance. If the nations of old had done this, why do we assume that the Companions are incapable of doing the same?

Therefore, claiming that the Companions were unanimous on the issue of the Caliphate is at best an oversimplification and at worst an obfuscation of the nuanced political scene at the time.

Finally, as we discussed before God did not promise the Holy Prophet (saw) that the message would be followed by the people; He only promised that the Prophet and his message would be safe despite its deliverance. Therefore, whether the Companions observed the commandment of Ghadīr or not has no bearing on God's promise to protect the message. The clearest indication that God has protected the Ghadīr proclamation is that the event is still widely attested to in numerous resources of the Sunnīs, to the extent that it has been deemed a mutawātīr ḥadīth!¹¹⁹

6. Even if we submit to your entire thesis, wilāyah at al-Ghadīr was simply about friendship and assistance of 'Alī (al-maḥabbah wa al-nuṣrah). Even if we propose it means authority as you claim (al-sulṭah), it could simply mean intellectual authority here and not necessarily religious or political authority.

In fact, this is the purpose of writing this entire piece substantiating that the Verse of Tablīgh was specifically revealed regarding the proclamation at al-Ghadīr. When this is substantiated, it becomes impossible to believe that the meaning of mawlā in the statement of the Prophet, "Whoever's mawlā I am, then 'Alī is his mawlā" simply means "love" or "assistance." This is what we call in Arabic terminology "taḥṣīl al-ḥāṣil" (a foregone conclusion); Imām 'Alī as a believer already warrants love and assistance and hence the Prophet's stopping the entire procession of pilgrims to make this announcement is extremely far-fetched.

Furthermore, given that we have substantiated that the verse of Tablīgh is explicitly related to al-Ghadīr, this completely demolishes any claim that the wilāyah referenced here is simply that of intellectual authority. If God is telling his Holy Prophet (saw) that without making this declaration his entire message is futile, this means that accepting the authority of Imām 'Alī (as) in matters of religion is a compulsory religious obligation.

In an attempt to reconcile the facts, there are those who attempt to separate the Prophet's successorship into two parts: the political component (what they term al-khilāfah al-zāhirah) and the religious/spiritual component (what they term al-khilāfah al-bāṭinah).¹²⁰ However there are two arguments against this type of fallacious reasoning:

¹¹⁹ That is, a narration wherein such a large number of narrators have reported its occurrence that it is impossible to fathom that it is a fabrication. The event of al-Ghadīr has been narrated by at least 110 companions of the Holy Prophet.

¹²⁰ Many Ṣuffī orders are quite notorious for making this claim, stating that 'Alī was their qutb while the political leadership was to the first three caliphs before him. The famous Sunni commentator Al-Ālūsī was among those who advocated this view; for more information, advanced readers are recommended to check out his tafsīr of Āyah al-Wilāyah (5:55).

- A. The first argument is that there is no explicit proof that such a differentiation is valid. If the Prophet had clarified this dichotomy, then perhaps this type of reasoning may be proposed. However, when there is no clear appointment from the Prophet for Abū Bakr in the first place, how can one arbitrarily impose this division?
- B. The Prophet was as much a religious leader as he was a political authority. Therefore, it follows that his successor should also combine both these traits.¹²¹

APPENDICES

Appendix A: If Imām ‘Alī’s Appointment was So Important, Why Did the Prophet Wait until Al-Ghadīr to Give the Announcement?

Among the common arguments presented by Sunnī polemicists is the question of why the Prophet would wait until al-Ghadīr to announce the appointment of Imām ‘Alī (as). In other words, they claim that if this message was truly as important as the Shī’ah claim, it doesn’t seem to be rational that the Prophet would postpone it until his route of return from the Farewell Pilgrimage. Rather, he would have made this proclamation in the middle of his sermon at ‘Arafah. They claim that the Shī’ah constantly portray the Holy Prophet (saw) as doing dissimulation (al-taqiyyah) and that the Ahl al-Sunnah are those who project the Prophet as a fearless individual who always delivered what he was commanded. Using this impressive rhetorical flourish, they state that the Shī’ah narrative is one that makes the Prophet look weak (God forbid) and scared of his Companions, while the truth was that the Prophet was ever ready to deliver the truth and never feared them. Furthermore, the Ṣahābah had been with the Prophet through thick-and-thin and would not question his commands.¹²²

We will address this argument backwards, first unpacking all the rhetoric and then discussing the exigencies underlying the appointment at al-Ghadīr. Firstly, as we demonstrated in the contentions section, the Companions were not a monolith; there were some righteous individuals, some who had a disease in their hearts, and some who were outright hypocrites.¹²³ There were some who were duped by the allure of this world and

¹²¹ I am indebted to Hujjatul Islām Muḥammad Qaisar for this answer in his Urdu discussion entitled, “Imamat ki taqsim mumkin nahi hai” that can be found here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IMQuB8hIgYo>

¹²² For instance, see here for an example of how this rhetoric is used by the opposition:
<https://mahajjah.com/shia-beliefs-the-verse-of-tabligh/>

¹²³ This is a correct picture of the Companions derived from the Qur’ān itself; as for the notion that all the Companions were righteous this is a huge fallacy not wrought but through a naïve understanding of the Qur’ānic verses, as we demonstrated previously.

there were others that were sincere in their aspirations for the Hereafter.¹²⁴ There were those who put their own *ijtihād* over that of the Holy Prophet and those who obeyed his commands.¹²⁵ Therefore, to assume that the *Ṣaḥābah* were all of one mold smacks of an extreme level of historical gullibility.¹²⁶

Secondly, regarding the Prophet's fear: it is quite ironic that the *Shī'ah* are being demonized about this when they are precisely the ones defending the Prophet's honor. As we mentioned in the contextual discussion, the Prophet never feared for his life and struggled to spread God's message regardless of any personal cost incurred. However, it is a fact that the Prophet still did fear the people in delivering some specific messages, specifically because he was worried that they would compromise his *risālah* or renege on their creed.¹²⁷ This is a natural anxiety and does not indicate any weakness on the part of the Prophet; rather it indicates his keen insight into the multifaceted nature of his society and his Companions. On the contrary, we would contend that it is in fact many of the *Sunnī* narratives regarding the reason of revelation for *Āyah al-Tablīgh* that portray the Prophet as psychologically weak (God forbid).¹²⁸

Thirdly, although this contention might seem powerful at first glance, it is quite impotent; there is no rational exigency for the Prophet to deliver a message to the largest number of people. Rather, there were rules of *ḥajj*, fasting, *zakaat*, and *ṣalāt* that those around the Prophet witnessed at any given time and then transmitted to others. Not everyone saw the Messenger doing all compulsory acts in front of them, even during their lifetime. Instead,

¹²⁴ Recall the verse describing the Companions of the Holy Prophet (saw): "...among you are those who desire the world and among you are those who desire the Hereafter..." (3:152)

¹²⁵ We can reference several events quickly to show that the Companions repeatedly did not follow the Holy Prophet's commands: consider the battle of *Uḥud*, the battle of *Ḥunayn*, the tragedy of Thursday, and their disobedience to join the army of *Usāmah*. Also consider the repeated assassination attempts on the Holy Prophet (saw), especially at *al-Aqabah* by around 12-15 companions. Recall that 2 individuals, who are highly esteemed by the *Sunnīs*, argued with each other loudly in the presence of the Holy Prophet (saw), prompting the revelation of the first verses of *Surah Ḥujurāt*.

¹²⁶ Unfortunately, this is precisely the unnuanced narrative that is promulgated in *Sunnī* circles, namely the doctrine of *'Adālat al-Ṣaḥābah* (the absolute impeccability of all the companions). This is done under the pretext of believing that anyone who questions the *Ṣaḥābah* is questioning the Holy Prophet (saw), because they transmit his actions to us. However in reality there is nothing pious (*ta'abbudī*) about believing all the Companions were righteous. The *Qur'ān* is the strongest proof against this, as it presents a nuanced milieu of the various individuals who surrounded the Holy Prophet (saw).

¹²⁷ Recall 3:144 which is quite clear in censuring the Companions about whether they will turn back after the Holy Prophet's demise. This is a proper and correct viewpoint derived from the Holy *Qur'ān* itself: "Perhaps you may feel inclined to leave some of what is revealed to you and your chest feels straitened, lest that they say, "Why is a treasure not sent down to him or why does an angel not come down upon him?..." (11:12). Also consider 33:37, which is quite clear that the Holy Prophet feared the people in marrying the divorced wife of his adopted son *Zayd*.

¹²⁸ Review the previous circumstances of revelation in the *miṣḍāq* section: that the Prophet used to keep guards for himself due to fear of the enemy, that he was scared since the start of his Prophethood to reveal God's message, etc.

conveying this message to many people suffices for its probativity (al-ḥujjiyyah).¹²⁹ When we consider the fact that there were ten to seventy thousand people at Ghadīr, this definitively renders it probativity. The fact that this is a mutawātir ḥadīth renders it sufficient from an evidentiary standpoint, and it really makes no difference that the Prophet delivered the message at al-Ghadīr instead of ‘Arafah.

Nonetheless, the question persists as to the possible wisdom behind why the Prophet did not disclose this wilāyah during ‘Arafah. While knowing the precise reason is not necessary as the ḥujjah is still binding, we may consider several possibilities as below:

1. The Holy Prophet was given the message of Imām ‘Alī’s wilāyah at ‘Arafah, but did not disclose it until afterwards and specifically after being promised protection by Angel Gabriel.¹³⁰ There were hypocrites during the pilgrimage at Ḥajj who were attempting to suppress the Prophetic declaration of successorship, and therefore al-Ghadīr was a better choice because it caught these individuals by surprise.¹³¹ Nonetheless, the Prophet had tried to deliver the message at ‘Arafah but then postponed it due to the commotion he noted among the pilgrims.¹³²
2. Al-Ghadīr is a better place because it has its own independent significance. In other words, erecting a separate location ensures that this message cannot be confounded or hidden. Given that the explicit purpose of the Prophet stopping was ONLY to declare Imām ‘Alī’s successorship, no one can obfuscate as to why the Holy Prophet (saw) stopped at this site or attempt to confound it within the ceremonies of Ḥajj.¹³³

¹²⁹ During the Ghadīr sermon, several versions indicate that the Holy Prophet instructed the Companions to relay the wilāyah of ‘Alī to others. We ought to also consider the clear ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet (saw) regarding this: *فَلْيُحَدِّثِ الْحَاضِرُ مِنْكُمْ الْغَائِبَ* ، *إِنِّي أَحَدَيْتُكُمْ الْحَدِيثَ* (recorded by al-Albānī in his *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi’* ḥadīth 2446)

¹³⁰ Please review the *riwāyāt* section again for these references.

¹³¹ This circumstance is alluded to in the famous *Ziyārah* of al-Ghadīr narrated from al-Imām al-Hādī (as): *وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى اسْتَجَابَ لِنَبِيِّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ فِيكَ دَعْوَتَهُ ثُمَّ أَمَرَهُ بِإِظْهَارِ مَا أَوْلَاكَ لِأُمَّتِهِ إِعْلَاءَ لِسَانِكَ وَإِعْلَانًا لِبِرْهَانِكَ وَدَحْضًا لِلْأَبَاطِيلِ وَقَطْعًا لِلْمَعَادِيرِ فَلَمَّا أَشْفَقَ مِنْ فِتْنَةِ الْفَاسِقِينَ وَاتَّقَى فِيكَ الْمُنَافِقِينَ أَوْحَى إِلَيْهِ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ...*

¹³² In fact, the Prophet did indeed allude to the successorship at al-Ghadīr with two ḥadīths: Ḥadīth al-Thaqalayn (which clearly identifies his family as the stronghold after him) and the Ḥadīth of the Twelve Caliphs. There is clear indications in the Ḥadīth of the Twelve Caliphs that the Companions began to raise commotion upon this statement by the Holy Prophet (saw) (cf. the ḥadīth from Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal narrated from Jābir bin Samrah:

عن عامر بن سعد ، قال : سألت جابر ابن سمرة ، عن حديث رسول الله (ص) ، قال : قال رسول الله (ص) لا يزال الدين قائما حتى يكون اثنا عشر خليفة من قريش

¹³³ Consider an analogy: a schoolteacher makes a special separate announcement to the students after the general assembly finishes to emphasize that a given teacher is being promoted to take on his position.

3. Given that al-Ghadīr is the final juncture point before the pilgrims go back to their homes, it serves as an even stronger reminder that Imām ‘Alī’s successorship is the Prophet’s very last testament to the Companions.

The next contention is slightly more involved; Sunnī polemicists claim that the verse of al-Ikmāl was revealed prior to the verse of al-Tablīgh, and therefore they state that this refutes the significance of al-Ghadīr’s proclamation. This is because the religion had already been completed at ‘Arafah before this announcement. In order to properly dissect this issue, we will examine the Verse of al-Ikmāl carefully in the next section.

Appendix B: The Verse of Ikmāl al-Dīn- When Was It Revealed?

In this section, we would like to address some of the contentions regarding a related verse of al-Ghadīr that may be found in the Qur’ān, namely the verse of Ikmāl al-Dīn (Sūrah al-Mā’idah, verse 3).¹³⁴ The full verse reads as follows:

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةُ وَالْدَّمُ وَلَحْمُ الْخَنزِيرِ وَمَا أُهْلِيَ لِعَنِينِ اللَّهِ بِهِ وَالْمُنْحَنِقَةُ وَالْمَوْفُوذَةُ وَالْمُتَرَدِّيَةُ وَالنَّطِيحَةُ وَمَا أَكَلَ
السَّبُعُ إِلَّا مَا ذَكَّيْتُمْ وَمَا ذُبِحَ عَلَى النُّصُبِ وَأَنْ تَسْتَقْسِمُوا بِالْأَزْلَمِ ذَٰلِكُمْ فِسْقٌ يَوْمَ النَّارِ يَوْمَ نَبِّسُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ دِينِكُمْ فَلَا
تَحْسَبُوهُمْ وَآخِشُونَ ۗ الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا ۗ فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ فِي مَخْمَصَةٍ
غَيْرِ مُتَجَانِفٍ لِإِثْمٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

*“Forbidden to you is carrion, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allāh; that which is strangled, beaten to death, killed by a fall, gored to death, and savaged by beasts of prey excepting what you kill by your own hands; what is sacrificed on the stone altars, and that you perform divination by arrows – that is grave disobedience. **This day those who disbelieve have despaired of your religion, so do not fear them, but fear Me. This day, I have perfected for you your religion and I have completed upon you My Favor and I have approved for you Islam (as) a religion. But whoever is forced by hunger and not inclining to sin, then indeed, Allāh is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.**” (5:3)*

The Shī’ah and Ahl al-Sunnah are generally in agreement regarding two major things in reference to this portion of the verse:

1. It was revealed during the period of the Farewell Pilgrimage of the Holy Prophet (saw).
2. The term “this day” (al-yawm) referenced in both clauses of the verse refers to the same day.

Although we could discuss this verse in the same level of exhaustive detail as we had done for the Āyah of Tablīgh, we will attempt to abridge the discussion somewhat by

¹³⁴ This discussion is derived from three sources: 1) an English paper by Dr. Omid Qorbakani entitled “An Examination of the Linguistic Contextual Elements of al-Ikmāl Verse in Determining the Meaning of al-Yawm,” https://is.urdc.ac.ir/article_140842.html, 2) an Arabic paper by the esteemed Shaykh ‘Alī al-Kūrānī entitled “Āyah Ikmāl al-Dīn ma’a Siyāqihā,” and 3) the Arabic work of Āyatullāh Nāshir Makārim Shirāzī entitled ‘Āyāt al-Wilāyah fī al-Qur’ān.”

explaining the maṣādīq that are theorized and their plausibility, without going into great depth about the mafhūm and the riwāyāt.

There are generally six major hypotheses regarding when this verse was revealed, which we will outline below with their associated critique:

Theory #1: It refers to the same day in which the rules surrounding this phrase regarding forbidden consumption were revealed.¹³⁵

Critique:

1. The rules about meat are not new and are rather espoused in other parts of the Qur’ān, albeit in less detail.¹³⁶ Furthermore, they do not garner such a level of importance that they would cause despair for the disbelievers. Why should the disbelievers care about what the Muslims deem permissible and impermissible to eat?!
2. These verses were not the last ones revealed about the rules of Islām; rather there are other ones that are deemed to be among the last ones revealed, such as the rules of inheritance (specifically in terms of al-kalālah) and usury.¹³⁷ Therefore, what is the special significance of these rules such that they are being tied with the perfection of religion?

Theories #2 and #3: It refers to the Day of the Conquest of Makkah (Yawm Faṭḥ Makkah) in 8 AH, as this was the day when the idols were completely purged from the Ka’bah and their hopes were completely shattered.¹³⁸ Another theory is that this refers to when Sūrah al-Tawbah was revealed in 9 AH, as the remaining traces of polytheism disappeared.¹³⁹

Critique:

1. Both these theories suffer from the same problems as the previous one; namely that there were many religious rules (al-aḥkām) that were revealed after this time period and therefore the religion had not yet been completed.
2. They go against the consensus that this verse was revealed during the Farewell Pilgrimage.

Theory #4: it refers to the start of the Prophetic proclamation (al-bi’tḥah) because this was the day that the Islāmic message was first promulgated.

¹³⁵ This view is discussed by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, ibn ‘Āshūr, al-Zamakhsharī, and al-Bayḍāwī in their respective tafsīr works.

¹³⁶ For instance, in Sūrah al-Naḥl verse 115 and Sūrah al-An’ām verse 145

¹³⁷ This is per the opinion of ‘Umar in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī.

¹³⁸ This view has been discussed by al-Qurṭubī in his tafsīr.

¹³⁹ This view has been discussed by al-Ṭabarī in his tafsīr.

Critique:

1. As we discussed previously, Sūrah al-Mā'idah is one of the last chapters revealed to the Holy Prophet and therefore it is quite far-fetched to believe that there was a verse revealed at the start of the Prophetic message that remained suspended without a sūrah for 23 years.
2. The declaration of Prophethood was not when the disbelievers despaired of the religion. If anything, it was the start of the Prophet's journey and they tried various stratagems to dismantle his promulgation.
3. The perfection of Islām can hardly be deemed at the start of the Prophetic mission. Religion's perfection requires that it should be properly elucidated first with all of its rules and core tenets. This had not been done yet when the Prophet first began preaching Islām.

Theory #5 (The Majority Sunnī Opinion): It refers to the Day of 'Arafah, 9th of Dhūl al-Ḥijjah 10 AH when the Prophet applied the rules of Ḥajj himself for everyone to see. This opinion is based on a ḥadīth from 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb narrated in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī as follows:

عن عمر بن الخطاب أن رجلاً من اليهود قال له: يا أمير المؤمنين، آية في كتابكم تقرؤونها، لو علينا معشر اليهود نزلت لاتخذنا ذلك اليوم عيدًا. قال: أي آية؟ قال: {اليوم أكملت لكم دينكم وأتممت عليكم نعمتي ورضيت لكم الإسلام دينًا} قال عمر: قد عرفنا ذلك اليوم، والمكان الذي نزلت فيه على النبي ص، وهو قائم بعرفة يوم الجمعة
“On the authority of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb that a man from among the Jews told him: “Oh Commander of the Faithful, there is a verse in your scripture which you recite: had it been revealed to us Jews we would have taken that day as an Eid.” He said, “Which verse?” The Jews answered, “Today I have perfected your religion for you and completed my favor...” Then 'Umar replied, “We know that day and the place where it was revealed to the Prophet (saw): while he was standing in 'Arafah on Friday.”¹⁴⁰

In other words, the glory of Islām was in full display as the Muslims were able to perform the Ḥajj without any interference from the disbelievers. Its ceremonies were carried out to utmost perfection under the guidance and supervision of the Holy Prophet (saw).¹⁴¹

Critique:

1. Firstly, this theory entails a separation between the two “this day” mentions in the verse, because there is no reason why the disbelievers would despair of the Muslims upon seeing them perform the Ḥajj rituals in the first place.
2. The outward perfection of these rituals cannot constitute a completion of religion; given that the major pillars of Islām (ṣalāt, ṣawm, ḥajj, zakāt, and jīhad) had already been expounded, it seems unclear what is really being added on the Day

¹⁴⁰ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī volume 1 page 18

¹⁴¹ This is the major Sunnī opinion and is espoused by several commentators including al-Ālūsī and al-Suyūṭī.

- of ‘Arafah per this theory. The mere refinement of the outward aspects of religious ceremonies cannot score the perfection of an entire religion.
3. There were other rules (al-aḥkām) related to Islām that were revealed after ‘Arafah, such as rules of inheritance (al-kalālah) and usury (al-ribā); therefore, how could the religion have been completed from its obligatory aspects when these rules were still not clarified yet?¹⁴²
 4. In the naṣṣ of the ḥadīth, there is a clear doubt from Sufyān al-Thawrī (who is the rāwī) about whether Friday was really the day of ‘Arafah. Needless to say, there are contradictory reports (al-muta’arīdah) to this ḥadīth regarding the day of the week on the Day of ‘Arafah such as these below:
عن طارق بن شهاب ، قال : قال يهودي لعمر : لو علينا نزلت هذه الآية لاتخذناه عيداً : اليوم أكملت لكم دينكم قال عمر : قد علمت اليوم الذي أنزلت فيه واللييلة التي نزلت ليلة الجمعة ، ونحن مع رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم بعرفات
“On the authority of Tāriq ibn Shihāb who said: “A Jew told ‘Umar: “If this verse had been revealed to us we would have taken it as an Eid: “Today I have perfected...” ‘Umar then responded, “I know that day when this verse was revealed and the night that it was revealed was the Eve of Friday (i.e. Thursday) while we were with the Prophet at ‘Arafāt.”¹⁴³
 5. This is even further buttressed by the fact that it is well-recognized that the Prophet lived for only 81 days after the revelation of this verse,¹⁴⁴ and when you consider that the Prophet passed away on the 12th of Rabī’ al-Awwal 11 AH, this implies that the verse was in fact revealed on the 18th of Dhū al-Ḥijjah and not the Day of ‘Arafah!
 6. The day of ‘Arafah is not considered an Eid, and therefore several Sunnī scholars have been confused on how to interpret ‘Umar’s submission (al-iqrār) that ‘Arafah is an Eid in this ḥadīth.¹⁴⁵

Theory #6 (The Shi’ah and Minority Sunnī Opinion): this verse was revealed on the 18th of Dhū al-Ḥijjah after the Prophet declared the wilāyah of Imām ‘Alī at Ghadīr Khumm. This was the day in which the disbelievers among the hypocrites and those who disbelieved of the Ahl al-Kitāb despaired, because they saw Islām had been entrusted in

¹⁴² ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb admits this himself in his khuṭbah as reported in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim.

¹⁴³ See Sunan al-Nisā’ī volume 5 page 16

¹⁴⁴ This is openly admitted by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī in his tafsīr; we find the same mentioned in al-Durr al-Manthūr: عن ابن جريج قال : مكث النبي (ص) بعد ما نزلت هذه الآية إحدى وثمانين ليلة ، قوله اليوم أكملت لكم دينكم

¹⁴⁵ For instance, see the contrived justifications used by al-Kirmānī and Ibn Ḥajar in their respective commentaries on Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī.

the hands of a competent leader. This is supported by a number of Sunnī ḥadīth on this topic and the Shī'ah ḥadīth are nearly unanimous regarding this.¹⁴⁶

Nonetheless, there is a way in which some have proposed a manner of combining theories #5 and #6.¹⁴⁷ The command about the wilāyah of Imām 'Alī was revealed several days before the Day of Ghadīr, however the Prophet was concerned about how the Muslim nation would receive it and therefore did not immediately reveal it explicitly.¹⁴⁸ Therefore, it is possible that this verse was revealed on the Day of 'Arafah with a large portion of Sūrah al-Mā'idah; as a result, some companions heard it and recorded its revelation then. The Prophet attempted to disclose Imām 'Alī's wilāyah at this juncture; however, due to fear regarding how it would be received he adopted a gradual approach in doing so. Therefore, he only alluded to the wilāyah in brief with the Ḥadīth of Thaḳalayn and the Ḥadīth of the Twelve Caliphs. He was reluctant to be explicit in his appointment of Imām 'Alī (as) until the Day of al-Ghadīr, when he received a writ of Divine Protection in 5:67 regarding its disclosure. Therefore, he hastened at that very spot to make sure that the announcement was made, officially reciting the verse of al-Ikmāl separately for the Companions a second time. In this manner, we may be able to reconcile between these two theories rather nicely.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ There are approximately six riwāyāt from Sunnī sources that can be found in the works of al-Ḥaskānī, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, and Abū Na'im al-Iṣfahānī on the authority of Abū Sa'id al-Khudrī, Abū Hurayrah, and ibn 'Abbās. The Shī'ah riwāyāt are plentiful on the authority of al-Ṣadiqayn (Imām al-Baqir and al-Ṣādiq).

¹⁴⁷ This is per the research of Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn Tehrānī in his book "Ma'rifat al-Imām" volume 8 Lessons 106-109. It appears that Sayyid Ja'far Murtaḍā al-'Āmilī also endorses this view in his al-Ṣaḥīḥ fī Sīrat al-Nabī al-A'zam volume 31, pages 310-311. Allāmah Ṭabātabā'ī also advocates for this view in his Tafsīr al-Mizān.

¹⁴⁸ Nonetheless, there were implicit mentions of the authority of the Ahl al-Bayt such as Ḥadīth al-Thaḳalayn in which the Prophet exhorted the ummah to adhere to the Qur'ān and his Ahl al-Bayt (see Sunan al-Tirmidhī for instance).

¹⁴⁹ Of note, the reader should know that there are some narrations in the Shī'ah books that also state that the verse was revealed on the Day of 'Arafah although these are weak; nonetheless, this reconciliation makes it possible to accept all the narrations on the topic without issue.

APPENDIX C: Resolving the Context of Āyah Ikmāl al-Dīn

This verse is extremely peculiar in that there is a portion that speaks about the completion of religion, but it is sandwiched between a discussion about the rules of food that is illicit to consume! This portion of the verse is such that even if it were to be elided, the remainder of the verse would continue to flow without any loss in meaning. In fact, Shī'ah and Sunnī scholars are virtually unanimous that the verse of Ikmāl al-Dīn is a separate verse that is an interjectory sentence (al-jumlah al-mu'tariḍah) between the aḥkām of meat.¹⁵⁰ Thus, we find ibn 'Āshūr stating the situation beautifully when he states:

هذه جملة وقعت معترضة بين آية المحرمات المتقدمة وبين آية الرخصة الآتية وهي قوله فمن اضطر في مخمصة لأن الآية بقاء الفريع يقضي باتصالها بما تقدمها ولا يصلح للاتصال بها إلا قوله حرمت عليكم الميتة

“This (i.e. Āyah al-Ikmāl) is a sentence that is interjectory between the preceding list of illicit items and the verse of lenience (i.e. but whoever is forced by hunger...). This is because the particle “fā’ of elaboration” is used to connect to a preceding clause, and it doesn’t make sense for it to be connected to anything except the start of the verse, “Forbidden to you...”¹⁵¹

Therefore, we realize that the apparent context is not probative in this verse and should not be used to tie Āyah al-Ikmāl to rules of meat. As we discussed in Appendix B, this verse is intricately tied to the Verse of Tablīgh 5:67. In other words, the Verse of Tablīgh was revealed before the proclamation at al-Ghadīr and the Verse of Ikmāl was revealed immediately thereafter. Some often raise the question as to how this can be rationalized, as the verses which are purportedly revealed for the same purpose are separated by over sixty verses. In response to this objection, we state that the Qur’ān is not necessarily revealed in accordance with chronology. For instance, there are even some chapters of the Qur’ān that might contain a mixture of Makkan and Medinite verses within them. Therefore, the verses were compiled in accordance with the Holy Prophet’s (saw) command during his lifetime and the order of revelation has no bearing necessarily on how the Qur’ān is organized.¹⁵²

However, as we have espoused in the past, we do not believe God’s words are placed without wisdom; there is always a rationale or salience (al-munāsabah) for why a verse is placed in a certain context. We will present four explanations presented by some scholars in this vein:

¹⁵⁰ In fact, this is the biggest evidence to substantiate what we have been mentioning all along in our discussions of various āyāt: namely, that the context is not necessarily a ḥujjah when there is no internal or external qarīnah to suggest a contextual connection.

¹⁵¹ See ibn 'Āshūr’s al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr regarding this verse.

¹⁵² There are some Shī'ah scholars who believe that the order of the verses was based on the opinion of the Companions (al-ijtihādī), however we strongly oppose this contention and believe the order is prescribed by God (al-tawqīfī).

1. The keen observer will notice that nearly all the verses that pertain to the purified Prophetic progeny are couched in a manner to render them inconspicuous. Some have proposed that this was a mechanism to preserve the Qur’ān from tampering, as there were individuals who were quite recalcitrant to accept the authority of Imām ‘Alī (as) after the Holy Prophet. Hence, if the verses had not been interpolated in this fashion, there would have been serious attempts to either reformat it or change its contents.¹⁵³ Others state that this is rather a means by which to metaphorically highlight this part of the verse as being related to a separate issue because any conscientious reader would immediately note that the verse does not fit the context of rules regarding forbidden foods. The interjectory nature of this sentence conveys a sense of exigency that even amidst these mundane and complicated rules of food consumption, this matter is essential to clarify. Furthermore, given that these rules have already been clarified previously in the Qur’ān, there is an immediate stark contrast rendered that the perfection of religion is not related to the rules it surrounds.¹⁵⁴

2. Another argument advocated is that this verse is in fact tied to the first verse of Sūrah al-Mā’idah which reads as follows (i.e. radd al-‘ajz ‘alā al-ṣadr):
يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَوْفُوا بِالْعُقُودِ^٥
“Oh you who believe, fulfill your covenants...” (5:1)
Therefore, Āyah al-Ikmāl has come in this context to combine between the covenants that are bodily and the covenants that are spiritual; to fuse between those responsibilities which are related to actions and those which are related to beliefs; to consolidate between the corporeal pact of ḥalāl and ḥarām and the otherworldly one of wilāyah.¹⁵⁵ Indeed, this follows the entire theme of this sūrah, which focuses on the external aspects of religion (al-ḥajj, eating and drinking, ablution, alcohol/gambling) and the internal aspects of religious authority (wilāyah for God and his Prophet, censuring the Jews and Christians for rejecting their Divine representatives).

3. This verse covers the rules of impermissible food items, which have been repeated in three other places in the Qur’ān; namely, Sūrah al-Baqarah verse 173 (Medinite), Sūrah al-An’ām verse 145 (Makkan), and Sūrah al-Naḥl verse 114 (Makkan). In all of these preceding verses, the verses immediately after discuss the People of the Book and how they transgressed against God’s laws; as a result, they were recompensed by God through extremely harsh restrictions in their dietary codes. It is as though these verses seek to lay the foundation for negating the wilāyah of the Ahl al-Kitāb gradually and point out how their example should not be followed. Then, in the fourth and final exposition in 5:3 the substitution for the authority of Christians and Jews is proposed, contextualizing the Verse of al-

¹⁵³ This view has been discussed by a number of Shī’ah scholars, including Ja’far Subḥānī in his Mafāhīm al-Qur’ān as well as Nāṣir Makārim Shirāzī in his Āyāt al-Wilāyah.

¹⁵⁴ This has been discussed by Sayyid Ja’far Murtaḍā al-‘Āmilī in his Al-Ṣaḥīḥ fi Sīrat al-Nabī al-A’zam volume 31 page 302

¹⁵⁵ This view is espoused by Āyatullāh Ṣādeqī Tehrānī in his al-Furqān fi Tafsīr al-Qur’ān.

Ikmāl beautifully. After this establishment, the verse 5:4 continues, “They ask you what is made lawful for them...” as the wilāyah of the Jews and Christians has been replaced and the religion of God has been completed.¹⁵⁶

4. The final possibility which we will present here is one that we have not seen any scholar elucidate; rather it has been discovered by these writers after careful reflection regarding Āyah al-Tablīgh together with Āyah al-Ikmāl in their respective contexts. This observation is built upon a recognition of the fact that the Qur'ānic verses need to be examined in a meta-linear fashion, given that they are not necessarily temporally connected. We believe that this theory will delight the readers and provide some interesting insights, however we do not claim that it is a definitive explanation, for God knows best!

Firstly, we will present Sūrah al-Mā'idah verses 66-67 followed directly by verses 3-5 in order:

و لو أَنَّهُمْ أَقَامُوا التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَأَكْلُوا مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَمِن تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِهِمْ مِّنْهُمْ أُمَّةٌ مُّقْتَصِدَةٌ
وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ سَاءَ مَا يَعْمَلُونَ

يَأْتِيهَا الرِّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَإِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي
الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةُ وَالِدَمُّ وَالْحُمْ أَلْخَنْزِيرِ وَمَا أَهَلَ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ وَالْمُنْخَنِقَةُ وَالْمَوْفُوذَةُ وَالْمُتَرَدِّيَةُ وَالنَّطِيحَةُ وَمَا أَكَلَ
السَّبُعُ إِلَّا مَا ذَكَّيْتُمْ وَمَا ذُبِحَ عَلَى النَّصَبِ وَأَنْ تَسْتَقْسِمُوا بِالْأَزْلَمِ ذَلِكُمْ فِسْقٌ الْيَوْمَ يَنْسُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ دِينِكُمْ فَلَا
تُخْشَوهُمْ وَأَخْشَوْنَ الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُمْ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمْ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا فَمَنْ اضْطُرَّ فِي مَخْمَصَةٍ
غَيْرِ مُتَجَانِفٍ لِإِثْمٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

يَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا أُحِلَّ لَهُمْ قُلْ أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ الطَّيِّبَاتُ وَمَا عَلَّمْتُمْ مِنَ الْجَوَارِحِ مُكَلِّبِينَ تُعَلِّمُونَهُنَّ مِمَّا عَلَّمَكُمُ اللَّهُ فَكُلُوا مِمَّا
أَمْسَكْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَادْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ

الْيَوْمَ أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ الطَّيِّبَاتُ وَطَعَامُ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حَلَلٌ لَّكُمْ وَطَعَامُكُمْ حَلَلٌ لَهُمْ وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ
مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ إِذَا ءَاتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ أَجُورَهُنَّ مُحْصِنِينَ غَيْرَ مُسْفِحِينَ وَلَا مُتَّخِذِي أَحْدَانٍ مِّنْ يَكْفُرِ
بِالْإِيمَانِ فَقَدْ حَبِطَ عَمَلُهُ وَهُوَ فِي آخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

“If they had observed the Torah and the Gospel and what was revealed to them from their Lord, they would have surely eaten from above themselves and from beneath their feet. Among them are people who are moderate but many of them are of evil conduct.

Oh Apostle! Convey what has been revealed to you from Your Lord; and if you do not do so, then you have not conveyed His Message. And Allāh will protect you from the people. Indeed, Allāh does not guide the disbelieving folk.

Forbidden to you is carrion, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allāh; that which is strangled, beaten to death, killed by a fall, gored to

¹⁵⁶ This possible interpretation is derived from a Persian paper “Naqsh-e-Siyāq dar Tafsiṛ-e-Āye-ye-Ikmāl by Abbās Ismā’ilizadeh and Maḥboobeh Ghulāmī

death, and savaged by beasts of prey excepting what you kill by your own hands; what is sacrificed on the stone altars, and that you perform divination by arrows – that is grave disobedience. This day those who disbelieve have despaired of your religion, so do not fear them, but fear Me. This day, I have perfected for you your religion and I have completed upon you My Favor and I have approved for you Islam (as) a religion. But whoever is forced by hunger and not inclining to sin, then indeed, Allāh is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”

They ask you what (is) made lawful for them. Say, "Are made lawful for you the good things and what you have taught of (your) hunting animals, ones who train animals to hunt, you teach them of what has taught you Allah. So eat of what they catch for you, but mention (the) name (of) Allah on it, and fear Allah. Indeed, Allah is swift (in taking) account.

This day are made lawful for you the good things; and (the) food (of) those who were given the Book (is) lawful for you, and your food (is) lawful for them. And the chaste women from the believers and the chaste women from those who were given the Book from before you, when you have given them their bridal due, being chaste not being lewd and not ones (who are) taking secret lovers. And whoever denies the faith - then surely (are) wasted his deeds and he, in the Hereafter, (will be) among the losers"

Analysis:

The keen reader will observe that we have separated the verses into three parts: parts that are underlined (regarding food consumption), parts that are italicized (regarding Ahl al-Kitāb), and parts that are bolded (regarding al-wilāyah). We humbly believe that these verses show a thematic consistency with interwoven sentences that are linked to one another; this provides some unprecedented insights into what might be guiding the context of Āyah Ikmāl al-Dīn and its surrounding verses.

Firstly, we will examine the portions that are bolded; at the outset, there is a reminder about what the Ahl al-Kitāb had been revealed previously outside of their sacred scriptures (i.e. the doctrine of wilāyah).¹⁵⁷ Then there is a commandment to the Holy Prophet to deliver that which has been revealed to him regarding the wilāyah of Imām ‘Alī (as). Then God states that after this Prophetic declaration, those who disbelieve have despaired from the religion and the believers do not need to fear them any longer. It is emphasized that the religion has been completed by this covenant. Finally, there is a

¹⁵⁷ As we discussed previously, we have narrations that state that “what was revealed to the Ahl al-Kitāb from their Lord” was the doctrine of wilāyah (namely Prophetic successorship), cf. the contextual discussion on the maḥmūd of verse 66 to refresh this point. Also consider this narration from Ma’ānī al-Akhbār of Shaykh al-Ṣadūq regarding the verse 2:40:

عن ابن عباس قال: قال رسول الله (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) لما أنزل الله تبارك وتعالى ﴿وَأوفوا بعهدى أوف بعهدكم﴾ والله لقد خرج آدم من الدنيا وقد عاهد على الوفاء لولده شيث فما وفى له... ولقد خرج موسى من الدنيا وعاهد قومه على الوفاء لوصيه يوشع بن نون فما وفى أمته، ولقد رفع عيسى بن مريم إلى السماء وقد عاهد قومه على الوفاء لوصيه شمعون بن حمون الصفا فما وفى أمته، وإنى مفارقكم عن قريب وخارج من بين أظهركم وقد عهدت إلى امتي في عهد علي بن أبي طالب وإنها لراكبة سنن من قبلها من الأمم في مخالفة وصيبي وعصيانه

mention that whoever rejects the faith will be in loss in the Hereafter and their efforts will be in vain.¹⁵⁸

Secondly, we address the portions that are underlined; verse 66 mentions the Ahl al-Kitāb and how if they had only upheld their scriptures and what was revealed to them (i.e. wilāyah), they would have been granted Divine sustenance in plentitude, from both above and below themselves. Thereafter, there is the proclamation of al-Ghadīr by the Holy Prophet (saw). After this, we see that there is a highly detailed commentary on what foods are prohibited for the believers; it is as though God is saying that now that you have accepted the wilāyah of Imām ‘Alī (as), you can expect your sustenance to multiply immensely just like it would have been for the Ahl al-Kitāb if they only had fulfilled their covenant of wilāyah.¹⁵⁹ Therefore, since We will now increase your sustenance, here is a detailed exposition of all the rules you believers need to know as it pertains to your consumption of food.¹⁶⁰

Finally, we examine the italicized portions; God starts by talking about the Ahl al-Kitāb. Then there is a mention that there is a group of them who are righteous; after the declaration of wilāyah, there is no longer any need to fear the disbelievers among them. Now, there is now some leniency granted in the Muslim relations with the Ahl al-Kitāb. After the perfection of the religion with the declaration of wilāyah, God gives an allowance in establishing good relations with them, so long as they are not depraved or immoral.¹⁶¹

We believe that this theory deserves further investigation, as it provides a very satisfactory explanation because these verses diverge between several seemingly unrelated topics. However, when one combines the various verses together in the order in which they were revealed (as confirmed by the riwāyāt on this topic), new insights come to light as to why the verses are organized in this way. Indeed, this is perhaps one of the biggest signs that the Qur’ān is not at all a haphazard book (as some Orientalists claim) and that there is a special Divine Providence underlying its design. Perhaps this approach

¹⁵⁸ Consider this riwāyah from Tafsīr Furāt al-Kūfī:

عن أبي جعفر الباقر عليه السلام في قوله: [ومن يكفر بالايمن فقد حبط عمله] وهو في الآخرة من الخاسرين
أ، ب] [قال:] [فالايمان في بطن القرآن علي (بن أبي طالب. ر) عليه السلام

¹⁵⁹ Perhaps one might find an allusion to this connection between al-wilāyah and a plentitude of blessings that will occur at the End of Times when the Mahdī is accepted as God’s khalifah on Earth:

عن المفضل بن عمر قال سمعت أبا عبد الله عليه السلام يقول: وتظهر الأرض من كنوزها حتى تراها الناس على وجهها ويطلب الرجل
منكم من يصله بماله ويأخذ منه زكاته فلا يجد أحداً يقبل منه ذلك واستغنى الناس بما رزقهم الله من فضله

A similar hadīth from the Holy Prophet states the following about the Ahl al-Bayt: فوالله ما أحبهم أحد إلا ربح الدنيا والآخرة

¹⁶⁰ Of course, the Prophet’s nation did not fulfill this covenant and the wilāyah of ‘Alī that was originally accepted at al-Ghadīr was neglected and usurped after the Prophet left this world.

¹⁶¹ One can propose that the secret in this is that after the establishment of wilāyah, the religion of Islām has been crystallized as a permanent and everlasting message until the Day of Judgement. Therefore, normalizing relations with the Ahl al-Kitāb is acceptable because there is no longer any threat that they can impose after the demise of the Holy Prophet (saw).

will reap dividends if it is employed to examine other verses as well. And Allah knows best!