

thought have quoted that preceding question. Among them are Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Ibn Majah, an-Nasa'i and at-Tirmidhi.

- The following prayer which the Holy Prophet uttered just after this declaration: "O Allah! Befriend those who befriend Ali, and be the enemy of those who are the enemies of Ali."

This prayer shows that Ali, on that day, was entrusted with a responsibility which, by its very nature, would make some people his enemy; and in carrying out that responsibility, he would need helpers and supporters. Are helpers ever needed to carry on a friendship?

- The declaration of the Holy Prophet that: "It seems imminent that I will be called away (by Allah) and I will answer that call." This clearly shows that he was making arrangements for a pivotal issue in light of his imminent death: the leadership of the Muslim Ummah.

- The congratulations of the companions and their expressions of joy do not leave room for doubt concerning the meaning of this declaration.

- According to the verse revealed before the announcement (5:67), Allah had commanded something of great importance and concern to the Prophet [s] which, if not delivered, would have jeopardized the entire message of Islam. This matter was of such significance that the Prophet feared opposition and interference and had been awaiting suitable circumstances to proclaim it, until finally there came a definite and urgent order from Allah to execute this command without delay and not to fear anyone.

- The verse revealed immediately after the proclamation (5:3) shows that the non-believers had hopes that a day would come when Islam would die out. But Allah, through the actualization of this particular event, made them lose forever the hope that Islam would be destroyed. The same verse shows that this very event was the cause of the perfection of Islam and the completion of Allah's bounty upon humanity. Of necessity, therefore, Ghadeer Khum could not have been a minor occasion, such as the announcement of a simple injunction of religion or the announcement that Ali was just a "friend" of the Prophet Muhammad [s].

## An Appeal to Common Sense

Allah, the All-Knowing, describes the sublime character of the Prophet Muhammad [s] as follows:

*"Certainly a Messenger has come to you from among yourselves; grievous to him is your falling into distress, excessively solicitous respecting you; to the believers (he is) compassionate..." [Qur'an 9:128]*

The Prophet [s] was an extremely kind-hearted and compassionate person. He always took every effort to ensure the well-being and comfort of his followers and was never known to impose any extra burden or hardship upon others. He was even known to shorten his prayers upon hearing the voice of a baby crying. It is impossible to infer that the Prophet, who was sent as "a mercy unto the worlds," had ordered his followers to sit in the burning heat of the Arabian desert, without any shade, for several hours, only to announce to them that Ali ibn Abi Talib was his "friend."

Such a claim is yet more absurd when one considers the fact that Ali already had an exalted status in comparison with the other Muslims:

- He was the first male to embrace Islam [Sahih Tirmidhi, Musnad Ibn Hanbal, Mustadrak al-Hakim]
- He had been given the title "Brother" of the Prophet [Sahih Tirmidhi, Sirah Ibn Hisham]
- He held the same position to the Prophet Muhammad [s] as Haroon had held to Musa. [Sahih Bukhari]

In light of all this, it does not seem logical for the Prophet [s] to keep more than a hundred thousand people in such unbearable heat and uncomfortable conditions just to tell them that Ali was their "friend."

## Conclusion

Although the Messenger of Allah [s] had made several statements throughout his Prophethood that indicated the superiority of Ali over other Muslims, Ghadeer Khum represented the formal and undeniable appointment and proclamation of Ali as "leader of the Muslims." The Prophet Muhammad [s] went through great lengths to ensure that all the Muslims knew he had appointed Ali as his successor and Ali was even congratulated afterwards by many companions for his newly-announced rank. Once the declaration was made, Islam had become perfect and complete. With all this evidence from undisputed texts, it is impossible to conclude that the Prophet [s] did not appoint a successor.

# What Happened at Ghadeer Khum?

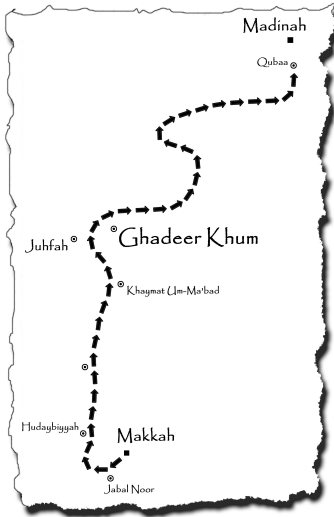
*Understand the significance of this great event and why we commemorate it*



# What Happened at Ghadeer Khum?

## Background

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of Thul-Hijjah, after completing his farewell pilgrimage (*Hajjatul-Wadaa'*), the Messenger of Allah [s] had departed Makkah en route to Madinah. He and the entire Muslim caravan, numbering over 100,000 pilgrims, were stopped at Ghadeer Khum – a deserted yet strategically-situated area that lies between Makkah and Madinah (near today's Juhfah). In those days, Ghadeer Khum served as a point of departure, where the various Muslims who had come to perform the pilgrimage from neighboring lands would disperse and embark upon their own routes back home.



## Command From Allah

It was in this place that the angel Jibra'eel descended upon the Prophet Muhammad [s] and revealed the following urgent command of Allah:

*"O Apostle! Deliver what has been sent down to you from your Lord; and if you do not do it, you have not delivered His message (at all); and Allah will protect you from the people ..."* [Qur'an 5:67]

Some of the famous commentators of the Qur'an who have verified the revelation of this verse at Ghadeer Khum include Tabataba'i, Fakhruddeen ar-Razi, Hafiz Abu Nu'aym, as-Suyuti, and Muhyaddeen an-Nawawi.

## Preparations

Immediately upon revelation of this verse, The Prophet [s] stopped the caravan. He ordered that all the people who had gone ahead should be called back, and waited for those who had fallen behind to catch up. It was around noon time in the summer, and due to the

extreme heat in that valley, the Muslims had taken shade under their cloaks from the burning sun and were sitting on their robes to protect themselves from the scorching desert sands. When the entire caravan had converged, the Prophet [s] ordered his companions to use rocks and the saddles from the Muslims' camels to set up a makeshift pulpit.

## The Sermon

Upon ascending the pulpit, the Messenger of Allah [s] delivered a lengthy, three-hour sermon in which he recited nearly one hundred verses from the Qur'an and warned people of their deeds and future. Then he delivered a long speech, in which he said:

"It seems the time approached when I shall be called away (by Allah) and I shall answer that call. I am leaving for you two precious things and if you adhere to both of them, you will never go astray after me. They are the Book of Allah and my progeny, that is my Ahlul-Bayt. The two shall never separate from each other until they come to me by the Pool (of Paradise)."

## The Declaration

The Messenger of Allah [s] then continued, "Do I not have more authority over the believers than what they have over themselves?" The people cried out in response, "Yes, O Messenger of God." The Prophet then held up the hand of Ali and said:

"For whoever I am his leader (Mawlaa), Ali is his leader (Mawlaa). O Allah! Befriend those who befriend Ali, and be the enemy of those who are the enemies of Ali."

This incident has been recorded by so many Muhaditheen (recorders of ahaadeeth) that it is considered mutawaatir (undeniably authentic). The list of sources includes Al-Kafi, Sahih Tirmidhi, Sunan ibn Majah, Khasa'is an-Nisa'i, Mustadrak al-Hakim, Musnad ibn Hanbal, Fadha'il as-Sahaba of ibn Hanbal, Tafseer al-Kabir by Fakhruddeen ar-Razi, al-Bidayah wa Nihaya by Ibn Kathir, and many others. All of these scholars are among the most renowned and well-respected scholars in Islamic history.

## Divine Revelation

Immediately after the Prophet [s] finished his sermon, the following

verse of the Holy Qur'an was revealed:

*"This day have those who disbelieve despaired of your religion, so fear them not, and fear Me. This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion."* [Qur'an 5:3]

Some of the scholars who mention the revelation of this verse at Ghadeer Khum include as-Suyuti, ibn Askir, ibn Katheer, Tabataba'i, Abu Nu'aym, and many others.

## The Muslims Congratulate

After his speech, the Messenger of Allah [s] asked everyone to give the oath of allegiance to Ali and congratulate him. Among the first Muslims to congratulate Ali was Umar ibn Al-Khattab, who said, "Well done, O son of Abu Talib! Today you have become the leader (Mawlaa) of all believing men and women."

This narration is found in Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Tafsir al-Kabir by Fakhruddeen ar-Razi, Kitabul Wilayah by at-Tabari, and many other collections.

## The Meaning of Mawlaa

The schools of thought differ on the interpretation of the word *Mawlaa*. In Arabic, the word *Mawlaa* has many meanings. It can mean master, friend, slave, or even client. If a word has more than one meaning, the best way to ascertain its true connotation is to analyze the association and the context. There are scores of associations in this hadith which undeniably show that the only meaning fitting the occasion can be "master." Some of them are as follows:

■ The question which the Holy Prophet [s] asked just before this declaration: "Do I not have more authority (awlaa) upon you than you have upon yourselves?" When the Muslims replied, "Yes, surely," then the Prophet [s] proceeded to declare: "For whoever I am his Mawlaa, Ali is his leader Mawlaa." Without doubt, the word "mawlaa" in this declaration has the same meaning as "awlaa" (having more authority upon another). Numerous traditionalists from both schools of



"Man kuntu mawlaa, fa haathaa Aliyyun mawlaa..."