

Imam Ali b. Abi Talib (a)

‘**Alī b. Abī Ṭālib** (Arabic: علي بن أبي طالب) known as **Imam ‘Alī (a)** (b. [23 BH/600](#) - d. [40/661](#)) is the first [Imam](#) of all the branches of the [Shi'a](#), a [companion](#), a narrator, and a [scribe of the Qur'an](#). He is the fourth [caliph](#) of the [Rightly Guided Caliphs](#) in [Sunni](#) Islam. Ali (a) is the cousin, and son-in-law of the [Prophet \(s\)](#), the husband of [Lady Fatima \(a\)](#), the father of [Imam al-Hasan \(a\)](#) and [Imam al-Husayn \(a\)](#). The rest of the [Imams of the Shi'a](#) are his descendants. According to Shi'i historians and many Sunni scholars, he was born inside the [Ka'ba](#). He was also the first Muslim.

Ali b. Abi Talib

1st [Imam](#) of the [Shi'a](#)



[The Holy Shrine of Imam 'Ali \(a\), Najaf](#)

Teknonym	Abu l-Hasan • Abu Turab • Abu l-Sibtayn • Abu l-Rayhanatayn • Abu l-A'emma
Born	Rajab 13, 23 BH/September 28, 600
Birthplace	Ka'ba, Mecca
Imamate	From Safar 28, 11/May 25, 632 (for 29 years)
Reign	656 – 661
Martyrdom	Ramadan 21, 40/January 28, 661 in Mosque of Kufa
Cause of Martyrdom	While performing morning prayer, he was struck with a sword by Abd al-Rahman b. Muljam al-Muradi and martyred from its injury two days later.
The Twelve Imams	
Father	Abu Talib b. Abd al-Muttalib
Mother	Fatima bt. Asad

Spouse(s)	Fatima • Umama • Umm al-Banin • Asma' • Khawla
Son(s)	Al-Hasan • al-Husayn • Muhsin • 'Abbas • 'Abd Allah • Ja'far • Uthman • Ubayd Allah • Abu Bakr • Muhammad • 'Umar ,...

['Ali](#), [al-Hasan](#), [al-Husayn](#), [al-Sajjad](#), [al-Baqir](#), [al-Sadiq](#), [al-Kazim](#), [al-Rida](#), [al-Jawad](#), [al-Hadi](#), [al-'Askari](#), [al-Mahdi](#)

Based on evidence from the Qur'an, hadith, and history, the Shi'a believe that 'Ali (a) was the direct designated [successor](#) of the Prophet (s). Some verses of the Qur'an point to his [infallibility](#). According to Shiite and some Sunni sources, roughly three-hundred verses of the Qur'an were revealed with regards to his virtues. When the [Quraysh](#) plotted to assassinate the Prophet (s), it was 'Ali (a) who slept where the Prophet (s) used to sleep, and thus helped the Prophet (s) to secretly leave for [Medina](#). In the [pact of brotherhood](#) in Medina, the Prophet (s) chose 'Ali (a) as his brother. Except for the [Battle of Tabuk](#) when he stayed in Medina as the deputy of the Prophet (s), 'Ali (a) was with the Prophet (s) in all the battles. He was the most proud commander of Islam.

After the Prophet's (s) demise, a group of people pledged [allegiance](#) with [Abu Bakr](#) in [Saqifa](#) as the [caliph](#) contrary to what the Prophet had explicitly stipulated in [Ghadir](#). Twenty-five years later after the caliphate of Abu Bakr, ['Umar b. al-Khattab](#) and ['Uthman](#), 'Ali (a) accepted the caliphate at the overwhelming insistence of the Muslims. During his short rule, he was faced with three rebellions and was ultimately assassinated by one of the [Kharijites](#) while praying in the [Mihrab](#) (the prayer niche) of the [Kufa Mosque](#), and was then secretly buried in [Najaf](#). Ali (a) is considered as the father of many Islamic sciences including [Arabic literature](#), Islamic [theology](#), [jurisprudence](#), and [exegesis](#). Scholars of different sciences have tried to trace back the chain of their hadiths to him. [Nahj al-balagha](#) is a selection of his speeches and letters.

His Status

Ali b. Abi Talib (a) has always had a high status in the eyes of the Shia. He was the most pious and the most knowledgeable companion of the Prophet (s) and his rightful successor. Because of his virtues, a number of the Companions loved and were attached to Ali (a) at the Prophet's (s) time and were called "Shi'at Ali" (the partisans of Ali) since then. However, the word "Shi'a" came to indicate those who consider Ali (a) the rightful successor of the Prophet (s), in contrast to "Sunnis" who maintain that the rightful successor of the Prophet (s) was chosen by the people. In the Shiite view, the coming to power of Imam Ali (a) as the caliph on [Dhu l-Hijja 19, 656](#), was the late execution of the Prophet's (s) multiple instructions in different occasions, especially in [Ghadir Khumm](#), that Ali (a) should succeed him and lead the Muslim community after him. The Shia maintain that the Prophet (s) appointed Ali (a) as his successor by the statement "For whomever I am the master, Ali will be his master." This is what the audience understood at the time and thus congratulated Ali (a) for this appointment, calling him [Amir al-Mu'minin](#) (the Commander of the Faithful).

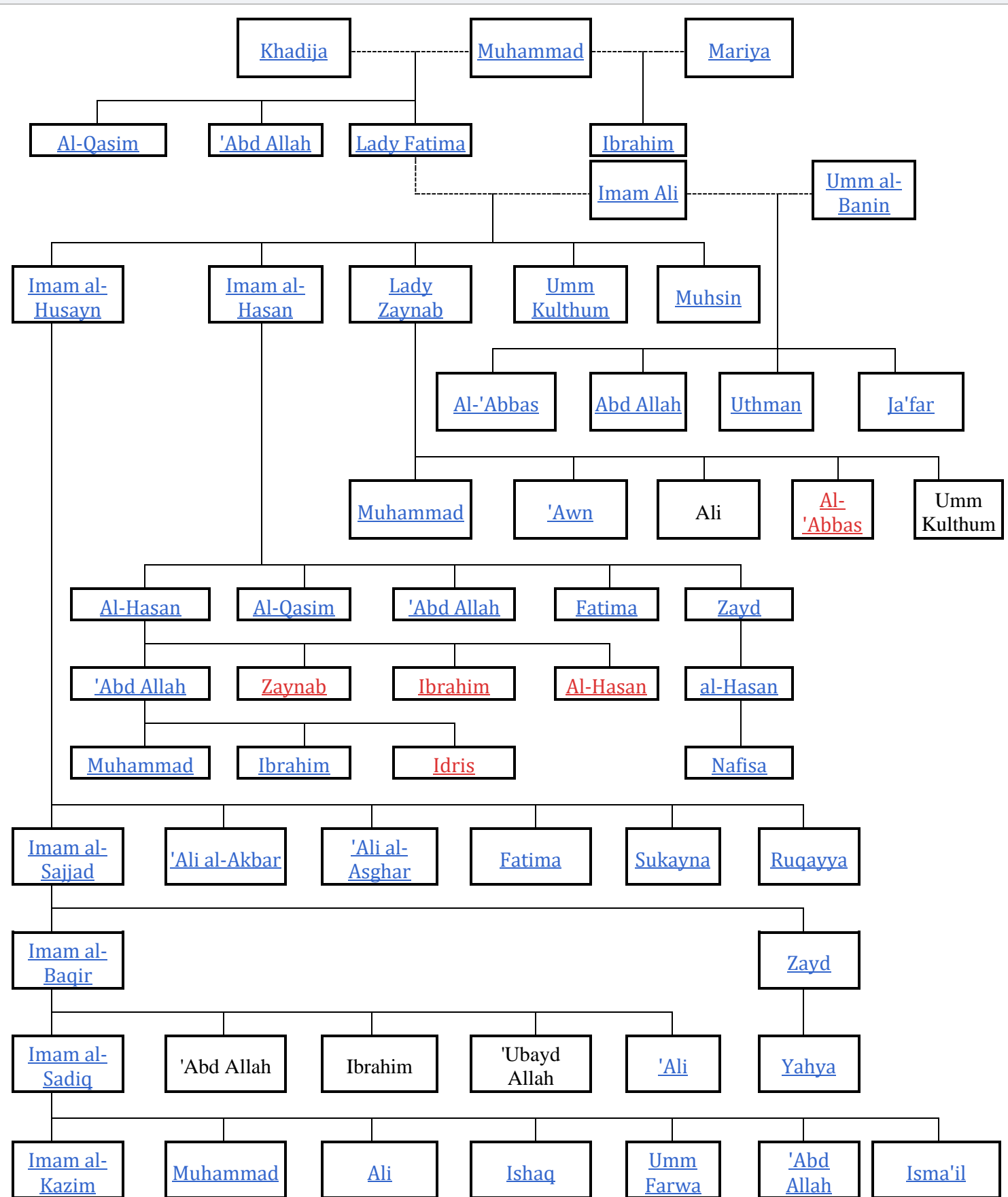
Lineage, Titles and Physical Attributes

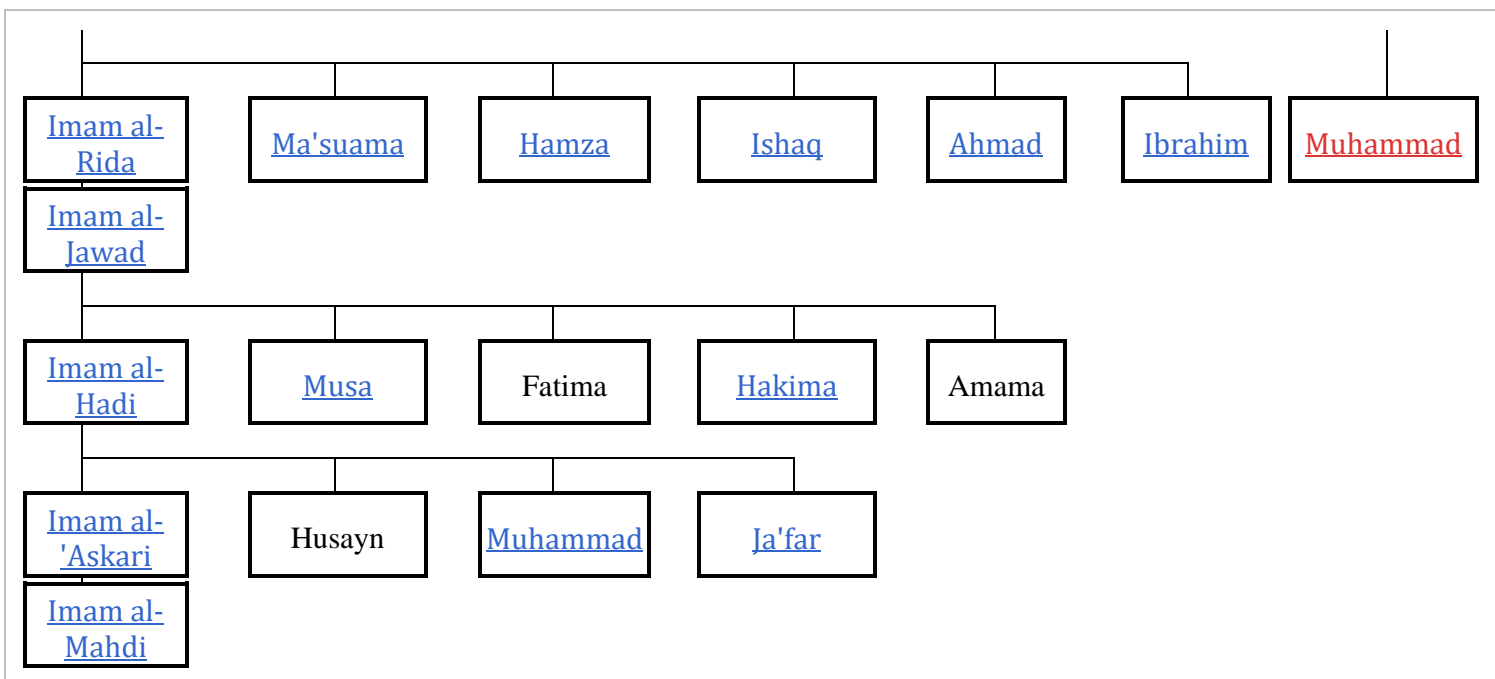
Lineage

His lineage is Ali b. Abi Talib b. 'Abd al-Muttalib b. Hashim b. Qusayy b. Kilab. He was from [Banu Hashim](#) branch of [Quraysh](#). Ali's (a) father, [Abu Talib](#), was a generous and just man who was respected by various Arab tribes. He was the uncle and guardian of the [Prophet \(s\)](#) and was amongst the most noble personalities of the [Quraysh](#).^[6] Ali's (a) mother was [Fatima bt.](#)

Asad.[7] His brothers were Talib, 'Aqil, and Ja'far and his sisters were Hind (or Umm Hani), Jumana, Rayta (or Umm Talib) and Asma'. [8] According to the historians, the marriage of Abu Talib and Fatima b. Asad was the first marriage between two individuals who were both from the Banu Hashim clan. [9] Thus, Ali (a) was the first person who was a Hashimite from both his father's and his mother's sides. [10]

Family tree of Ahl al-Bayt (a)





Teknonyms and Titles

His teknonyms were Abu l-Hasan, Abu l-Husayn, [Abu l-Sibtayn](#), [Abu l-Rayhanatayn](#), [Abu Turab](#), and Abu l-A'imma.

In different sources, variety of titles and attributes are mentioned for him, such as: [Amir al-Mu'minin](#) (the Commander of the Faithful), [Ya'sub al-Din wa l-Muslimin](#), Haydar, al-Murtada, Qasim al-Nar wa l-Janna, Sahib al-Liwa', [al-Siddiq al-Akbar](#), [al-Faruq](#), Mubir al-Shirk wa l-Mushrikin, Qatil al-Nakithin wa al-Qasitin wa al-Mariqin, Mawla al-Mu'minin, Shabih Harun, Nafs al-Rasul, Akh al-Rasul, [Zawj al-Batul](#), Sayf Allah al-Maslul, Amir al-Barara, Qatil al-Fajara, Dhu l-Qarnayn, al-Hadi, Sayyid al-'Arab, Kashshaf al-Kurab, al-Da'i, al-Shahid, [Bab al-Madina](#), al-Wali, al-Wasi, Qadi Din Rasul Allah, Munjiz Wa'dih, al-Naba' al-'Azim, al-Siraṭ al-Mustaqim, and al-Anza' al-Batin.

Amir al-Mu'minin

"Amir al-Mu'minin" (the Commander of the Faithful) is a title which is, according to Shiite belief, exclusively reserved for Imam Ali (a). Based on narrations, Shiites believe that this title was used for Imam Ali (a) in the time of the Prophet (s) and is exclusive to him. They believe that this title is not only inappropriate to use for other caliphs, it should also not be used for other.

External Characteristics

It is reported in different sources that he was a little smaller than average height, and had wide black eyes, long and joined together eyebrows, a beautiful light brown face and full beard. His shoulders were wide.^[15] Regarding Ali's (a) physical strength, it is reported that all those who fought him were defeated by him.^[16] [Ibn Abi l-Hadid](#) says, "'Ali's (a) physical prowess was well-known. He was the one who lifted the gate of [Khaybar](#), even when a whole group of the troops could not take it back to its place. He was the one who threw down the idol of Hubal (which was a large idol), from the top of the [Ka'ba](#) to the ground. He was also the one who lifted up a huge rock with his hands, while a spring gushed forth beneath it."

Life



[Fatima bt. Asad](#) emerges from the opening in the wall of [Ka'ba](#) with the newborn 'Ali in his hands. "Born in Ka'ba", Painted by [Mahmud Farshchiyan](#)

From Birth to Hijra

Imam 'Ali (a) was born inside the [Ka'ba](#) in [Mecca](#) on Friday, [Rajab 13](#), in the thirtieth year after the [year of the elephant](#) ([23 BH/September 28, 600 CE](#)).^[18] His birth inside the Ka'ba is widely accepted ([Mutawatir](#)) by many Shi'a scholars (including [al-Shaykh al-Saduq](#), [al-Sayyid al-Radi](#), [al-Shaykh al-Mufid](#), [Qutb al-Rawandi](#), and [Ibn Shahrashub](#)) and many Sunni scholars (including [al-Hakim al-Nishaburi](#), al-Hafiz al-Ganji al-Shafi'i, Ibn al-Jawzi al-Hanafi, Ibn Sabbagh al-Maliki, al-Halabi, and [al-Mas'udi](#)).^[19]

When Ali (a) was 6 years old (17 BH/606-7 CE), there was a famine in [Mecca](#). [Abu Talib](#) had a large family and supporting them was difficult, especially during the famine. Therefore, [Prophet Muhammad \(s\)](#) and his uncle, [al-'Abbas](#), decided to help Abu Talib and his family by taking care of his children. Therefore, al-'Abbas took [Ja'far](#), and Prophet Muhammad (s) took 'Ali (a).^[20] Ali (a) would speak of those days fondly:

"When I was a young child, the Prophet (s) took care of me. He would bring me to his chest and I would sleep in his bed, so close to him that I could even smell his scent. He would chew food for me and then feed me with it. He found no lies in my speech, nor any shortcomings in my actions."^[21]

When the Prophet's mission began in [13 BH/610](#), Ali (a) was the first man and [Khadija \(a\)](#) was the first woman to have accepted the Prophet's call and believed in him.^[22] Ali (a), who was ten years old at the time, would pray with the Prophet (s) on the mountains around [Mecca](#).^[23] When the Prophet (s) announced his mission publicly, in the event of [Warning the Close Kin](#), Ali (a) supported him and, in response, the Prophet (s) called Ali his brother, wasi (executer of his will), and successor.^[24]

In the very beginning of [7 BH/615](#), the [Muslims were besieged](#) in the [valley of Abu Talib](#) by the polytheists and were prohibited from trade and placed under curfew.^[25] In this period and in several occasions, Abu Talib ordered Ali (a) to sleep where the Prophet (a) used to sleep in order to preserve the Prophet's life.^[26] Shortly after the siege ended, Ali (a) lost his father in [4 BH/619](#).^[27] With the demise of Abu Talib, the situation became more difficult for the Muslims, and the Prophet (s) decided to emigrate to Medina. The Prophet (s) was informed of the conspiracy of the polytheists to murder him on the night he had planned to embark on his emigration, so Ali (a), 23 years old at the time, slept where the Prophet (s) used to sleep so that the Prophet (s) could secretly leave his house, which was under surveillance by the polytheists.^[28] A few days later, and after paying the Prophet's (s) debts, Ali (a) emigrated to Medina together with a group of people among whom were his mother [Fatima bt. Asad](#) and [Lady Fatima \(a\)](#) the Prophet's daughter. ^[29]

After Hijra

Timeline of Imam 'Ali's (a) life



Mecca

599	Birth
605	The beginning of the presence in the house of the Prophet (s)
610	The first person who believes in Islam
613	Supporting the Prophet (s) in the event of Yawm al-Dar
616	Presence in the siege of Shi'b Abi Talib
619	Demise of Abu Talib (Father)
622	Laylat al-Mabit : Ali (a) risked his life by sleeping in the Prophet's (s) bed

Medina

622	Emigration to Medina
624/2	Participating in the Battle of Badr
624/2	Marriage with Lady Fatima (s)
625/3	Participating in the Battle of Uhud
626/4	Demise of Fatima bt. Asad (Mother)

627/5	Participating in the Battle of Khandaq and killing ' Amr b. 'Abd Wadd
628/6	Writing the content of Hudaybiyya peace treaty by order of the Prophet (s)
629/7	Victorious of Khaybar castle in the Battle of Khaybar
630/8	Participating in Conquest of Mecca and breaking idols by the order of the Prophet (s)
630/9	Successor of the Prophet (s) in Medina in the Battle of Tabuk
631/9	Delivering the Bara'a Verses to the polytheists
631/9	Presence in the event of Mubahala
632/10	Participating in Hajjat al-Wida'
632/10	Event of Ghadir
632/11	Demise of the Prophet (s) and his burial by Imam 'Ali (a)

Three caliphs period

632/11	Incident of Saqifa and beginning of Caliphate of Abu Bakr
632/11	Attacking the house of Imam 'Ali (a) to take allegiance from him
632/11	Martyrdom of Lady Fatima (a) (wife)
634/13	Beginning of Caliphate of ' Umar b. al-Khattab
644/23	Participating in Six-Member Council to appoint the caliph
644/23	Beginning of Caliphate of Uthman b. Affan
655/35	Sending al-Hasanayn (a) to protect ' Usman

Caliphate

655/35	Beginning of his Caliphate
656/36	The Battle of Jamal
657/37	The Battle of Siffin
658/38	The Battle of Nahrawan
661/40	Martyrdom (about 62 years old)

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When the Prophet (s) reached Quba region on his way to [Medina](#), he waited fifteen days so that Ali (a) joins him.^[30] In Medina and after he constructed [his mosque](#), the Prophet (s) set up the formal [pact of brotherhood](#) between the [Helpers](#) and the Immigrants; however, he chose Ali (a) as his brother.^[31] In [2/624](#), in the [Battle of Badr](#) between the Muslims and the polytheists of Mecca, a large number of the latter's troops, including some of the chiefs of Quraysh, were killed by Ali (a).^[32] After the battle,^[33] Ali (a) at the age of 25 married Fatima (a) the daughter of the Prophet (s),^[34] despite the fact that there were several prominent figures who had proposed marriage to her.^[35] The Prophet (s) himself solemnized their marriage.^[36] In [3/625](#), the polytheists of Mecca waged the [battle of Uhud](#) against the Muslims to compensate their defeat in the Battle of Badr.^[37] In this Battle, Ali (a) was among the few ones who did not flee the battleground and protected the life of the Prophet (s).^[38] It is reported that He was severely wounded sixteen times in that battle.^[39] Al-Kulayni and al-Tabari mention that the well-known formula "There is no sword but [Dhu l-Faqar](#) and no man of courage but Ali" was said in this battle in praise of Ali (a).^[40] In the same year, Ali's (a) first child, [al-Hasan \(a\)](#), was born.^[41] In [4/625-6](#), when Ali (a) was 27, his mother [Fatima bt. Asad](#) passed away.^[42] Ali's (a) second child, [al-Husayn \(a\)](#), was born in this year.^[43] In [5/627](#), the [Battle of Khandaq](#) took place,^[44] which ended with the bravery of Ali (a) in killing '[Amr b. 'Abd Wadd](#)'.^[45] The third child of Ali (a) and Fatima (a), [Zaynab \(a\)](#), was born in the same year.^[46] In [6/628](#) AH, the [treaty of Hudaibiyya](#) was signed between the Prophet (s) and the Quraysh, whose scribe was Ali (a).^[47] In this year, [Umm Kulthum](#), Ali's (a) fourth child was born.^[48] In the [Sha'ban](#) of the same year, the Prophet (s) sent Ali (a) on a preemptive battle against some of the [people of Fadak](#) who had planned to support the Muslims' enemies.^[49] In [7/628](#), the [Battle of Khaybar](#) took place.^[50] Ali (a) was one of the flag-bearers of the Muslim army,^[51] which was able to conquer [Khaybar](#) under his leadership.^[52] In [8/630](#), Ali (a), 31 years old at the time, was among the flag-bearers of the Muslim army in the [conquest of Mecca](#).^[53] He helped the Prophet (s) destroy the idols in Ka'ba.^[54] In [9/630](#), the [Battle of Tabuk](#) took place, and the Prophet (s) left Ali (a) as his successor in Medina. This was the only battle in which Ali (a) was not present.^[55] When certain rumors were disseminated by the Hypocrites as to the reason why Ali (a) was left in Medina, Ali (a) joined the Prophet (s), who had left Medina with the Muslim army, and informed him about the rumors. In response, the Prophet (s) told him, "Aren't you happy that you are to me like Aaron to Moses?"^[56] This saying came to be known as the [Hadith al-Manzila](#).^[57] In the same year, Ali (a) was sent by the Prophet (s) on the mission to proclaim the first verses of [Quran 9](#) to the polytheists.^[58] Ali (a) accomplished the mission in the afternoon of [Eid al-Adha](#).^[59] On [Dhu l-Hijja 24, 9/April 3, 631](#),^[60] the Prophet (s), together with Ali (a), Fatima (a), al-Hasan (a), and al-Husayn (a) engaged in [mubahala](#) with a Christian delegation from [Najran](#).^[61] In [10/631-2](#), the Prophet (s) send Ali (a) on a mission to call the people of [Yemen](#) to Islam.^[62] In the same year, the Prophet went on his [last pilgrimage](#) to Mecca,^[63] and Ali joined him in Mecca from Yemen.^[64] After the [hajj](#), on his way back to Medina in an area called [Ghadir Khumm](#), the Prophet (s) proclaimed Ali to be his successor and the executor of his will.^[65] This event is known as the [Event of Ghadir Khumm](#). Ali (a) was 33 years old at the time.

After the Prophet (s)

The Prophet (s) passed away on [Safar 28, 11/May 25, 632](#),^[66] and after his demise, the rightful successor of the Prophet (s) and the leader of the Muslim community, according to the Shia, was

Ali (a). However, when Ali (a) was occupied with performing the burial rituals and ceremony for the Prophet (s), a group of the Companions gathered in [Saqifa](#) and elected [Abu Bakr](#) as the caliph and successor of the Prophet (s). Ali (a) initially refused to pledge his allegiance to Abu Bakr,[\[67\]](#) but he did so afterwards.[\[68\]](#) The Shiite scholars maintain that the allegiance was pledged under compulsion,[\[69\]](#) and some scholars, such as [al-Shaykh al-Mufid](#), hold that the Imam (a) never pledged his allegiance to Abu Bakr.[\[70\]](#) The Shia also maintain that the companions of Abu Bakr invaded Ali's (a) house to force him to pledge allegiance,[\[71\]](#) during which incident Fatima (a) was hurt and had a miscarriage.[\[72\]](#) Abu Bakr also [confiscated Fadak](#),[\[73\]](#) to which Ali (a) objected in defense of Fatima (a).[\[74\]](#) The invasion of the Imam's (a) house resulted in Fatima's (a) illness, and led to her martyrdom in [11/632](#).[\[75\]](#) Abu Bakr passed away in [13/634](#).[\[76\]](#) Before his death, he appointed [Umar b. al-Khattab](#) as his successor.[\[77\]](#) In [Muharram, 14/February-March, 635](#), Umar b. al-Khattab embarked on a military expedition against the [Sasanids](#). He camped in an area called Sirar, but some prominent figures, including Imam Ali (a), advised him to remain in Medina, so he returned and sent [Sa'd b. Abi Waqqas](#) to the battle in his place.[\[78\]](#) Ibn Athir reports that Ali (a) was a judge during the caliphate of Umar b. al-Khattab, except in its first few years.[\[79\]](#) In [16/637-8](#) (or [17/638-9](#)),[\[80\]](#) upon Ali's (a) suggestion, Umar b. al-Khattab set the year of the emigration of the Prophet (s) to Medina as the beginning of the [Islamic calendar](#).[\[81\]](#) In [17/638-9](#), Umar b. al-Khattab led a military expedition to conquer Jerusalem and announced Ali (a) as his successor in Medina.[\[82\]](#) In the same year,[\[83\]](#) after insistence and threatening, Umar married [Umm Kulthum](#) the daughter of Imam Ali (a).[\[84\]](#) It is reported that Umar announced Ali (a) as his successor in Medina in [18/639-40](#) as well, when he decided to travel to [Syria](#).[\[85\]](#) When Umar was assassinated in [23/644](#) and before his death,[\[86\]](#) he appointed a [council of six members](#), including Imam Ali (a), to choose the next caliph.[\[87\]](#) Umar also granted [Abd al-Rahman b. Awf](#) a decisive vote in the council. Abd al-Rahman first asked Imam Ali (a) whether he was ready to accept the caliphate with the condition of acting according to the Qur'an and according to the conduct of the Prophet (s), Abu Bakr, and Umar. The Imam (a) refused to accept the condition of acting according to the conduct of the first two caliphs and said, "I hope I will act according to the book of God and the conduct of the Prophet to the extent of my knowledge, capacity, and ijtihad."[\[88\]](#) Abd al-Rahman then asked Uthman the same question; Uthman accepted the condition, and thus became the next caliph after Umar.[\[89\]](#) Ibn Jawzi reports that Ali (a) continued to be a judge in [24/644-5](#).[\[90\]](#) In [25/645-6](#), Uthman commanded that the copies of the [Qur'an be collected](#) and unified, for which decision, according to [al-Suyuti](#), he consulted Ali (a).[\[91\]](#) In [26/647](#), Ali's (a) fifth son, [al-'Abbas \(a\)](#), was born.[\[92\]](#) In [35/656](#), public dissatisfaction with Uthman's conduct reached its peak, and a group of people besieged his house.[\[93\]](#) Prior to this incident, Imam Ali (a) had reportedly left Medina to [Yanbu'](#) per Uthman's request.[\[94\]](#) However, the Imam (a) asked al-Hasan (a) and al-Husayn (a) to protect the caliph.[\[95\]](#) Notwithstanding, the rebels murdered Uthman, and afterward, the people gathered around Imam Ali (a), urging him to accept the caliphate.[\[96\]](#)

His Caliphate

In [Dhu l-Hijja, 35/June, 656](#) and after the assassination of Uthman, Ali (a) became the caliph and the leader of the Muslim ummah.[\[97\]](#) Except some of the close people to Uthman and some Companions (the [Qa'idun](#) "the sitting ones"), all the Companions in Medina pledged their allegiance to Imam Ali (a). Two days after the beginning of his caliphate, in his first sermon, Ali (a) urged that all the wealth and properties that had been unjustly taken must be returned, and emphasized justice with regard to the distribution of public properties and wealth. In [36/656](#), [Talha b. Ubayd Allah](#) and [Zubayr b. Awam](#) broke their allegiance to Ali and headed to Mecca to join [Aisha](#), who had called for revenge against the murderers of Uthman. With their supporters, Aisha, Talha, and Zubayr left Mecca for Basra to start the [Battle of the Camel](#), the first

civil war in the Muslim community. The battle broke out near [Basra](#) between Imam Ali (a) and the [Nakithun](#) ("Those Who Broke Their Allegiance") and ended with the latter's defeat. Talha and Zubayr were killed and A'isha was sent to Medina. The Imam (a) went to Basra and declared general amnesty. Then, in [Rajab 36/January 657](#), he entered [Kufa](#) and made the city his capital. In the same year, Imam Ali (a) called [Mu'awiya](#) to pledge his allegiance to him. When Mu'awiya rebelliously refused to recognize the Imam's caliphate, Imam Ali (a) decided to remove him from the governorship of Syria and embarked on a military expedition to [Damascus](#) against Mu'awiya in [Shawwal 36/March-April 657](#). Thus, a battle that took place between the two parties in an area called [Siffin](#) (hence the name "the [Battle of Siffin](#)") towards the end of the year [36/657](#) and the beginning of [37/657](#). Some scholars maintain that unlike what al-Tabari and Ibn Athir have mentioned, the peak of the war was in [38/658-9](#), not in [Safar 37/July-August 657](#). As the army of the Imam (a) was about to win the battle, [Amr b. al-'As](#) advised Mu'awiya to have his troops lift copies of the Qur'an on their lances and call the army of Ali (a) to the Quran's arbitration. Under the pressure of his army, the Imam (a) accepted the [arbitration](#) and was forced to introduce [Abu Musa al-Ash'ari](#) as the arbitrator from his side. However, shortly after the Imam's acceptance of the arbitration, a number of his troops objected to his decision and, referring to [Qur'an 5:44](#) and [49:9](#), demanded that the war with Mu'awiya should continue. They considered the acceptance of arbitration an act of [apostasy](#), from which they repented. While some of them were among the ones who had forced the Imam (a) to accept the arbitration, the objectors demanded that the Imam (a) also must repent and violate his agreements with Mu'awiya. The Imam (a) rejected their demands and announced that he would continue the war with the Syrian army if the two arbitrators did not arbitrate based on the Qur'an.

During the arbitration, Amr b. al-'As, the arbitrator from Mu'awiya's side, deceived Abu Musa into announcing that they had agreed on the removal of both Mu'awiya and Ali (a) from power. When Abu Musa announced so, Amr rose and announced that he also removed Ali (a) from power but made Mu'awiya the sole ruler of the Muslim community. The Imam's (a) companions objected to the arbitration, and some of them, who later formed the first [Kharijites](#), considered the acceptance of the arbitration an act of apostasy, left the Imam's army, and gathered in [Harura](#) instead of returning to Kufa.

The objections of the Kharijites continued for six months. Imam Ali (a) sent ['Abd Allah b. al-'Abbas](#) and [Sa'sa'a b. Sawhan](#) to talk to them and convince them to end their protest—a request which the Kharijites refused. Afterwards, the Imam (a) asked them to choose twelve people for a dialogue with twelve representatives of the Imam (a). He also wrote a letter to the leaders of the Kharijites and asked them to return to the community, but 'Abd Allah b. Wahb, one of the Kharijite leaders, reminded the Imam (a) that he had committed an act of apostasy and must repent. The Imam (a) also called the Kharijites several more times through prominent figures such as [Qays b. Sa'd b. 'Ubada](#) and [Abu Ayyub al-Ansari](#) to return and granted them amnesty if they did so. However, when none of the solutions worked, Imam Ali (a) decided to confront them with an army of fourteen thousand men. The two armies met in an area called [Nahrawan](#). Imam Ali (a) emphasized that his troops should not begin the battle. So the Kharijites started the battle and were soon defeated; all of them were either killed or wounded, whereas only less than ten soldiers from the Imam's (a) army were killed in the battle. The wounded (about 400 men) from the Kharijites were given to their families. Only ten Kharijites could flee the battleground, one of whom was [Abd al-Rahman b. Muljam al-Muradi](#), the assassin of Imam Ali (a). Ibn Muljam attacked the Imam (a) on the eve of [Ramadan 19, 40/January 26, 661](#) in the [mosque of Kufa](#) and wounded him with his poisoned sword. Two days later, on [Ramadan 21/January 28](#), Imam Ali (a) was martyred at the age of 63^[98] and was secretly buried.

Spouses and Children

Main article: [Marriage of Imam Ali \(a\) and Lady Fatima \(a\)](#)

The first wife of 'Ali (a) was [Fatima \(a\)](#), the daughter of the [Prophet \(s\)](#).^[99] Before 'Ali (a), a few others like [Abu Bakr](#), ['Umar b. al-Khattab](#) and ['Abd al-Rahman b. 'Awf](#), had voiced their readiness to marry her. However, the Prophet (s) had told them that he was waiting for the divine [revelation](#) with regards to her marriage and gave them a negative answer.^[100] Historians disagree on the date of the [marriage of 'Ali \(a\) and Fatima \(a\)](#). Some have mentioned that it was on [Dhu l-Hijja 1, 2/May 25, 624](#).^[101] Others have mentioned that it was in [Shawwal](#) or on [Muharram 21](#).^[102] Together, they had five children named [al-Hasan](#), [al-Husayn](#), [Zaynab](#) and [Umm Kulthum](#)^[103] and also [al-Muhsin b. 'Ali (a)|al-Muhsin]], who was aborted before his birth.^[104]

Other wives

Imam Ali (a) did not marry another woman during the life of Fatima (a). After her martyrdom, 'Ali (a) married other women, namely:

- [Umama](#), the daughter of [Abu l-'As b. Rabi'](#). Umama's mother, [Zaynab](#), was the daughter of the Prophet (s).
- [Umm al-Banin](#), the daughter of Hazam b. Darim. Together, they had four children: ['Abbas](#), ['Uthman](#), [Ja'far](#) and ['Abd Allah](#) who all were martyred in the [event of Karbala](#).
- Layla, the daughter of Mas'ud b. Khalid al-Nahshali.
- [Asma' bt. 'Umays](#), with whom he had two children: Yahya and 'Awn.
- Umm Habib, the daughter of Rabi'a al-Taghlabi named al-Sahba'.
- Khawla, the daughter of Ja'far b. Qays b. Maslama al-Hanafi (or according to another account, she was the daughter of Ayas). Together, they had [Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyya](#).
- Umm Sa'id, the daughter of 'Urwat b. Mas'ud al-Thaqafi
- Muhayyat, the daughter of Imru' al-Qays b. 'Adi al-Kalbi.^[105]

Children

[Al-Shaykh al-Mufid](#) has narrated that Ali (a) had 27 children. He also mentions that some Shi'a scholars have mentioned an additional child to the children of Fatima (a) whom the Prophet (s) had named al-Muhsin (mentioned above), Including him, 'Ali (a) had 28 children^[106]:

1. [Al-Hasan](#)
2. [Al-Husayn](#)
3. [Zaynab al-Kubra](#)
4. [Zaynab al-Sughra](#) (Umm Kulthum)
5. [Al-Muhsin](#) (These were the five children of Fatima (a))
6. [Muhammad](#) whose mother was Khawla bt. Qays b. al-Hanafiyya
7. ['Umar](#)
8. [Ruqayya](#) ('Umar and Ruqayya were twins and their mother was Umm Habib bt. al-Rabi'a)
9. [Al-'Abbas](#)
10. [Ja'far](#)
11. ['Uthman](#)
12. ['Abd Allah](#) (These four were the children of Umm al-Banin, all martyred in the [event of Karbala](#))

13. [Muhammad al-Asghar](#) (whose epithet was Abu Bakr)
14. 'Ubayd Allah (These two were the children of Layla bt. Mas'ud, and martyred in the event of Karbala)
15. Yahya (whose mother was Asma' bt. 'Umays)
16. Umm al-Hasan
17. Ramla (The mother of these two was Umm Sa'id bt. 'Urwa)
18. Nafisa
19. Zaynab al-Sughra
20. Ruqayya al-Sughra
21. Umm Hani
22. Umm al-Kiram
23. Jumana (whose epithet was Umm Ja'far)
24. Amama
25. Umm Salama
26. Maymuna
27. Khadija
28. [Fatima](#) ([Al-Shaykh al-Mufid](#) has not mentioned the mothers of last eleven children, and has said that their mothers are different)

Participation in Battles

Ali (a) had an influential role in the [Ghazwas](#) (battles in which the Prophet himself was also present), save for the [Battle of Tabuk](#).^[107] in which he remained in [Medina](#) as the deputy of the Prophet (s). He was the main Standard-bearer of the Islamic army in many Ghazwas.^[108] He remained with the Prophet (s) in the battles that other Muslims escaped, and continued to fight.^[109]

Battle of Badr

Main article: [Battle of Badr](#)

The Battle of Badr was the first battle between the Muslims and the idolaters of [Mecca](#). It took place on [Friday](#), the [Ramadan 17](#), [2/March 13](#), [624](#) along the wells of [Badr](#).^[110] In this battle, the Muslims killed seventy of the idolaters, including a few influential chiefs like [Abu Jahl](#)^[111] and [Utba b. Rabi'a](#).^[112]

It was an Arab custom to precede the general battle with a few one-on-one combats. So, Utba b. al-Rabi'a, his son, Walid, and his brother, Shayba came forward and wanted the Prophet (s) to send a few worthy opponents to the battlefield to fight with them. The Prophet (s) sent Ali (a), [Hamza](#) and [Ubayda b. Harith](#). Ali (a) struck Walid quickly, as did Hamza to Utba, killing them quickly. They then went on to help 'Ubayda against Shayba, killing him too.^[113]

In this battle, Ali (a) killed many combatants, including prominent figures of the Meccan army such as Walid b. Utba, Nawfal b. Khuwaylid (whom the Prophet (s) had cursed),^[114] Hanzala b. Abi Sufyan, 'As b. Sa'id.^[115]

Battle of Uhud

Main article: [Battle of Uhud](#)

In this battle, after the victory of the polytheists, many Muslims fled the battleground and left the Prophet (s) alone. Ali (a) was one of the few ones who did not leave the Prophet (s) and defended him.^[116] The Imam (a) is reported to have said, "The Immigrants and Helpers were fleeing to their houses, but, despite having seventy wounds, I [stayed and] defended the Messenger of God."^[117]

Paying tribute to the dedication that Ali (a) showed, the archangel [Gabriel](#), in praise of Ali's self-sacrifice, said to the Prophet (s): "This is the ultimate devotion that 'Ali has shown." The Prophet (s) agreed with Gabriel and said, "I am from 'Ali and he is from me." A voice then echoed in the sky, saying, "La fata illa 'Ali, la sayf illa Dhu l-faqar" which means "There is no youth like 'Ali (a), and there is no sword like [Dhu l-Faqar](#) (the sword of 'Ali (a))"^[118]

Battle of Khandaq

Main article: [Battle of Khandaq](#)

In the Battle of Khandaq (trench), as suggested by [Salman al-Farsi](#), the Muslims dug a trench around [Medina](#) in order to keep the enemy away from the city.^[119]

For several days, the two armies confronted each other on opposite sides of the trench. They would sometimes fight, throwing stones and arrows. Finally, '[Amr b. 'Abd Wad](#) (from the army of the polytheists), along with a few others, jumped over the trench at its narrowest part and managed to reach the other side. 'Ali (a) asked the [Prophet \(s\)](#) to give him permission to fight 'Amr, and the Prophet (s) accepted. After fighting with 'Amr, 'Ali (a) knocked him down and killed him.^[120]

After the battle the Prophet (s) said, "The hit of Ali (a) [to 'Amr] during this battle, is more valuable than the worship of all jinns and human beings."^[121]

Battle of Khaybar

Main article: [Battle of Khaybar](#)

The Battle of Khaybar occurred in the beginning of [7 AH/628](#), when the [Prophet \(s\)](#) issued a command to attack the Jewish fortresses due to their threats.^[122] After a few men, like [Abu Bakr](#) and [Umar](#), could not conquer the forts, the Prophet (s) said, "Tomorrow I will give the flag to a man who loves God and His prophet, and God and His prophet also love him."^[123] The next morning, the Prophet (s) called Ali (a) and gave the flag to him. Al-Shaykh al-Mufid reports that in the Battle of Khaybar Imam Ali (a) proceeded towards the fort's door, tore it off, and used it as his shield until the end of the battle. ^[124]

Conquest of Mecca

Main article: [Conquest of Mecca](#)

In the beginning of [Ramadan](#) in [8/630](#), the Prophet (s) traveled to [Mecca](#) from [Medina](#) with the intention of conquering Mecca. After [Sa'd b. 'Ubada](#), one of the standard bearers, chanted slogans about revenge; the Prophet (s) sent Ali (a) to take the flag from Sa'd and chant a slogan about mercy.^[125] After the Conquest of Mecca, the Prophet (a) entered [Ka'ba](#) and broke the idols in it, then 'Ali (a) climbed onto the shoulders of the Prophet (s) and threw down the idol of [Khuza'a](#) tribe.^[126]

Battle of Hunayn

Main article: [Battle of Hunayn](#)

This battle took place in Shawwal, [8/January, 630](#), and Ali (a) was a flagbearer in it.[\[127\]](#) During the battle, the polytheists conducted a sudden raid, and most of the Muslims fled to save their lives. Only Ali (a) and a few others remained and defended the Prophet (s).[\[128\]](#)

Battle of Tabuk

Main article: [Battle of Tabuk](#)

The battle of Tabuk was the only battle led by the [Prophet \(s\)](#) in which Ali (a) did not participate. He stayed in [Medina](#) at the Prophet's command in order to protect the city in the Prophet's (a) absence against the plots of the [hypocrites](#).

Soon after the Prophet (s) left for war, the hypocrites began to spread rumors about the Prophet (s) being not pleased with Ali that he didn't want him to go. In order to put a quick end to the vicious rumors, Ali (a) immediately rushed towards the Prophet (s) who was outside of the city and informed him of the matter. It was here that [Hadith al-Manzila](#) ('the hadith of position') was narrated by the Prophet (s). He stated, "My brother, Ali! Return to Medina, since nobody except me or you, has the competence to handle these affairs. Thus, you are my vicegerent and successor amongst my [Ahl al-Bayt](#) and my people. Are not you pleased [to know] that you are in the same position (Manzilah) to me as that of [Aaron](#) to [Moses](#), except that after me there will be no other prophet?" [\[129\]](#)

Saraya

[Saraya](#) (plural of sariyya) are the battles which took place during the time of the Prophet (s) but in which the Prophet (s) himself was not present. Ali (a) led the following saraya:

1. The Sariyya of Ali (a) to [Fadak](#) to confront Banu Sa'd in Sha'ban, [6/December, 627](#)[\[130\]](#)
2. The Sariyya of Ali (a) to destroy an idol's temple called Fals belonging to the tribe of Banu Tayy in Rabi' II, [9/July, 630](#).[\[131\]](#)
3. The Sariyya of Ali (a) to Yemen in [Ramadan, 10/December, 631](#).[\[132\]](#)

Mission to Yemen

After the conquest of Mecca and the victory in the Battle of Hunayn in [8/630](#), Prophet Muhammad (a) decided to expand his mission. He sent [Mu'adh b. Jabal](#) to Yemen, but Mu'adh was not completely successful. Then, the Prophet (s) sent [Khalid b. Walid](#), who did not succeed either and thus returned to Medina after six months. Afterwards, the Prophet (s) sent Ali (a) to Yemen with a letter which he wrote for the Yemenites. Ali (a) read the Prophet's (s) letter for the people and called them to Islam. As a result of Ali's (a) efforts, the [tribe of Hamdan](#) embraced Islam. Ali (a) informed the Prophet (s) of Hamdan's conversion; the news made the Prophet (s) happy, and he prayed for the Hamdanids.[\[133\]](#) In some sources, a conflict is reported between Ali (a) and the tribe of [Madhhij](#). According to these reports, Ali (a) went to their land and called them to Islam. They rejected him, and a battle broke out, in which Madhhij was defeated. Ali (a) collected the spoils of the battle and delivered them together with the [zakat](#) of the people of [Najran](#) to the Prophet (s) during the [Farewell Pilgrimage](#).[\[134\]](#) The Prophet (s) also appointed Ali (a) as a judge in Yemen and prayed for him to have sound judgments. Instances of these judgments are reported in historical sources.[\[135\]](#)

Event of Ghadir

Main article: [Event of Ghadir](#)

In [10/632](#), the Prophet (s) decided, for the first time after [migration](#), to perform [hajj al-tamattu'](#).[\[136\]](#) He informed the Muslims of his decision, and many of them decided to accompany him on the pilgrimage.[\[137\]](#) The Prophet (s) also wrote a letter to Ali (a), who was on an expedition to Yemen,[\[138\]](#) and called him to hajj.[\[139\]](#)

When the hajj ended, on the way back to Medina, in an area called [Ghadir Khumm](#), where people would part and go to their respective towns, God commanded the Prophet (s) to stop and proclaim to the people the message that He had given him.[\[140\]](#)

The Prophet (s) performed the noon prayer and then delivered a sermon. In his sermon, he asked the Muslims, "Do you not know that I am closer to the believers than their own soul?"[\[141\]](#) The people said, "Yes indeed, we know." Then the Prophet (s) raised the hand of Ali (a) and stated, "For whomever I am the master, Ali will be his master. O God! Support whomever supports him, and be the enemy of whomever shows enmity to him."[\[142\]\[143\]](#) It is reported that some of the Companions asked the Prophet, "Is this the command of God and His Prophet (s)?" and the Prophet answered, "Yes, this is the command of God and His messenger."[\[144\]](#) When Prophet Muhammad (s) finished his sermon, a number of Companions, such as [Umar b. al-Khattab](#), congratulated Ali (a).[\[145\]](#)

According to Shiite and some Sunni commentators, the verse "Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion" ([Qur'an 5:3](#)) was revealed on this day.[\[146\]](#)

After the demise of the Prophet (s), Imam Ali (a) reminded the people of this event on several occasions and of the sayings of the Prophet (s) in Ghadir Khumm to emphasize his right to caliphate.[\[147\]](#) Considering the context and the details of this event and other evidence (including the subsequent conversations and poems related to the event), the Shia believe that the message that the Prophet (s) delivered on the day of Ghadir was clearly the appointment of Imam Ali (a) as his successor by God's command.[\[148\]](#)

The Event of Saqifa

Main article: [Incident of Saqifa](#)

After the demise of the Prophet (s), while Ali (a) and [Banu Hashim](#) were busy with the burial rituals and ceremony,[\[149\]](#) the [Helpers](#) (Ansar) gathered in the [Saqifa Bani Sa'ida](#) to choose a successor for the Prophet (s) from themselves. They were afraid that the Quraysh might seek to revenge for their casualties and knew that the Prophet's (s) command regarding his successor would not be accepted.[\[150\]](#) When Abu Bakr and Umar were informed of this gathering, they headed toward Saqifa together with [Abu Ubayda al-Jarrah](#), [Abd al-Rahman b. Awf](#), and [Uthman b. Affan](#). After heated debates, those who had gathered at the Saqifa chose Abu Bakr as the caliph and successor of the Prophet (s), with no regard for the Prophet's commands regarding the succession.[\[151\]](#)

The Background of the Disfavor for Imam Ali (a)

The lifetime of Imam Ali (a) was replete with extremely sensitive and influential events, especially during his caliphate which witnessed vast conflicts in the Muslim community. According to Abd al-Rahim Qanawat, the origin of many conflicts in the time of the Prophet (s) and Imam Ali (a) was tribal rivalries among the members of the Quraysh and the descendants of [Abd Manaf](#).[\[152\]](#) Considering the disagreement between the children of Abd Manaf over who should hold the high social positions in Mecca,[\[153\]](#) Qanawat mentions the declining status of Banu Hashim against Banu Umayya after [Abd al-Mutallib](#)[\[154\]](#) and states that the opposition of Mu'awiyah to Imam Ali's (a) marked the peak of the enmity of the [Umayyads](#) towards Banu Hashim. The Umayyads even questioned [Abu Talib](#)'s faith and accused him of polytheism.[\[155\]](#)

Moreover, during the Battle of Badr Imam Ali (a) inflicted substantial casualties on the Meccan army: 22 men according to al-Waqidi, 35 according to [Ibn Abi l-Hadid](#), and 36 according to [al-Mufid](#),^[156] thirteen of whom are said to have been prominent figures of the Quraysh, such as [Abu Jahl](#). This great loss significantly tarnished the reputation of the Qurayshite polytheists^[157] and made them hold grudges against the Imam (a), which persisted even after they converted to Islam, leading them to encourage the people to break their allegiance to Ali (a) and oppose him.^[158]

In addition, the envy of some fellow-Muslims towards him because of his braveries and other merits and because of the Prophet's (s) love for him also contributed to the intensification of disfavor for the Imam (a).^[159]

The Prophet (s):

"Verily, my successor and my inheritor, who pays my debts and fulfills my promises is Ali son of Abu Talib."

Imam Ali's (a) Standpoint

On the day of Saqifa, Ali (a) did not pledge his allegiance to Abu Bakr, and there is disagreement among the scholars as to whether and when the Imam (a) pledged allegiance.^[160] It is reported that Imam Ali (a) had a calm but lengthy and straightforward debate with Abu Bakr, in which he denounced the latter for his misdeed in the Event of the Saqifa and for neglecting the right of the family of the Prophet (s). According to this report, the sayings of the Imam (a) affected Abu Bakr such that he was about to pay his allegiance to Ali (a), but he changed his mind when he consulted with some of his companions.^[161] On different occasions, Ali (a) objected to the decision at the Saqifa and reminded the people of his right to caliphate. [Al-Shiqshiqiyya Sermon](#) is one of the most well-known sermons in which the Imam (a) refers to that event.^[162] Moreover, it is reported that after the Event of Saqifa, Ali (a) and his wife Fatima (a) would go to the houses and gatherings of the Helpers, reminding them of Ali's (a) right to caliphate. In response, the Helpers would say, "O Daughter of the Prophet! We have pledged our allegiance to Abu Bakr. Had Ali asked us for allegiance, we would not have rejected him." And the Imam (a) would respond, "Did you expect me to compete for caliphate before burying the Prophet?!"^[163] Another important occasion on which Imam Ali (a) emphasized his right to succeed the Prophet (s) was when the Imam (a) asked the Companions in a gathering to testify and relate what they had heard from the Prophet (s) regarding succession. According to [Allama Amini](#), many Shiite and Sunni sources report that this event took place in [Ruhba](#) in 35/656—that is, in the beginning of the Imam's (a) caliphate.^[164] Shiite sources report another such request from the Imam (a) in the [six-member council](#) that was appointed by Umar to choose his successor. The Imam (a) reportedly mentioned a list of events in which his right to succession was proclaimed by the Prophet (s) and then asked the members of the council whether they remembered the Prophet's (s) sayings in those events, and the members answered in the positive.^[165]

During the Rule of the First Three Caliphs

Under the governance of first three caliphs, which lasted 25 years, Imam 'Ali (a) did not alienate himself from the affairs of the Muslim community. In fact, he contributed to many scholarly endeavors and social services. This included activities like the compilation of the [Qur'an \(Mushaf of Imam 'Ali\)](#), and advising the three caliphs with regards to religious issues, conquests, and governance. He continued to give extensive charity to the poor and the orphans, and bought and freed a thousand slaves. He would farm and plant trees, dig canals, build mosques (like the [Fath mosque](#) in [Medina](#), a mosque near the grave of [Hamza](#), in [Miqat](#), in [Kufa](#), and in [Basra](#)). He would also dedicate ([waqf](#)) real estates and places for religious causes, whose annual income was 40,000 dinars.^[166] Some of the most important historical events of the period is as follows.

During the Caliphate of Abu Bakr

With the beginning of the caliphate of Abu Bakr some tragic events occurred to the [Ahl al-Bayt \(a\)](#), such as: [invasion to the house of hiAli \(a\)](#) in order to secure his [allegiance](#) for [Abu Bakr](#),^[167] the illegal confiscation and [usurpation of Fadak](#),^[168] and the martyrdom of the [Lady Fatima \(a\)](#).

Forced Allegiance

When Imam 'Ali (a) and a few companions refused to swear [allegiance](#) to [Abu Bakr](#), this proved to be a serious problem for Abu Bakr and ['Umar](#). The two decided to address this problem by forcing Imam 'Ali (a) into pledging allegiance with Abu Bakr.^[169]

After refusing to pledge allegiance several times, [Qunfudh](#) was sent by Abu Bakr to Imam 'Ali's house in order to secure allegiance for Abu Bakr. Imam 'Ali (a) refused again. 'Umar then advised Abu Bakr: "You yourself should get up and go to Imam 'Ali." Thus, Abu Bakr, Umar, ['Uthman](#), [Khalid b. al-Walid](#), [al-Mughira b. Shu'ba](#), [Abu 'Ubayda al-Jarrah](#) and Qunfudh went to the house of Imam 'Ali (a).

When they arrived at his house, they insulted [Lady Fatima \(a\)](#) and slammed the door on her such that she became stuck between the door and the wall (which caused her a severe injury which later lead to her martyrdom). When she came out of house, they whipped her^[170] and attacked Imam Ali (a), wrapping his clothes over his neck, and taking him by force towards [Saqifa Bani Sa'ida](#).

When he was taken towards Saqifa Bani Sa'ida, they asked him to pledge allegiance with Abu Bakr. Imam 'Ali (a) replied: "I am worthier than you with regards to the caliphate and I shall never pledge allegiance to you. Rather, you ought to pledge allegiance to me, since you took the caliphate over the [Ansar](#) according to your relationship with the Prophet (s) [while my relationship is closer], and now you usurp it from me...."^[171]

There is disagreement among the historians as to Imam Ali's (a) pledge of allegiance to Abu Bakr. Some believe that it occurred after the martyrdom of Lady Fatima (a), some maintain that it occurred forty days (or six months, according to others) after the Event of Saqifa.^[172] However, al-Shaykh al-Mufid holds that Ali (a) never pledged his allegiance to Abu Bakr.^[173]

Imam's performance during the caliphate of Abu Bakr

During the caliphate of Abu Bakr, which lasted two years, despite all the problems, Imam Ali (a) tried to guide the caliph to what was right and good for the Muslim ummah as much as his words were accepted. Sunnis maintain that Abu Bakr used to consult with Ali (a) for important decisions^[174] and follow his advice so much so that he did not allow Ali (a) to go out of Medina so that he can use his advice when needed.^[175] Although Imam Ali (a) would refrain from accepting any official positions, he would not refrain from offering his advice to the caliph for the welfare of the Muslim ummah. In this regard, Ya'qubi writes, "Among the ones from whom jurisprudence was learned in the time of Abu Bakr was Ali b. Abi Talib."^[176] With regard to the battles and conquests in the time of Abu Bakr, Imam Ali (a) had a neutral standpoint, or merely helped as a consultant, but never participated in any on them. It is reported that Abu Bakr consulted with the Companions regarding the conquest of Syria, and eventually accepted Ali's (a) opinion.^[177]

During the Caliphate of Umar

In his will, which was written by Uthman, Abu Bakr called the people to Umar's caliphate: "I appointed Umar b. al-Khattab as your ruler. Listen to, and obey, him!"^[178] Some years later,

Imam Ali (a) described this appointment as unjust and wrong: "It is strange that during his lifetime, Abu Bakr wished to be released from the caliphate [as he would say, "Leave me! I am not the best of you!"] but he confirmed it for the other one after his death."[\[179\]](#) Umar's caliphate lasted ten years. The Imam (a) continued to refuse holding official positions, but did not refrain from offering his advice when needed.[\[180\]](#) Sunni historians have reported that Umar did not do anything without consulting with Ali (a), because he believed in Ali's (a) wisdom and piety.[\[181\]](#) Ali's (a) standpoint regarding the conquests remained the same, as there is no report of his participation in any conquests during Umar's caliphate, but since the conquests drastically increased in this period, the role of Imam Ali (a) as a consultant was reinforced. According to a hadith from [Imam al-Baqir \(a\)](#), Umar consulted with Imam Ali (a) for various affairs of the caliphate, the most important of which was the issue of the conquests.[\[182\]](#) The supporters of Ali, on the other hand, played significant roles in the conquests in Umar's time. [\[183\]](#)

The Six-Member Council

Members of the Six-Member Council

selecting the third caliph

[Imam Ali \(a\)](#) • [Uthman b. Affan](#) • [Abd al-Rahman b. Awf](#) • [Sa'd b. Abi Waqqas](#) • [Zubayr b. al-Awam](#) • [Talha b. Ubayd Allah](#)

Prior to Umar death in [23/644](#), Umar appointed a six-member council to choose the next caliph and obliged all to accept the decision of the council or otherwise be executed. The members of the council were Imam Ali (a), [Uthman b. Affan](#), [Talha b. Ubayd Allah](#), [Zubayr b. Awamm](#), [Sa'd b. Abi Waqqas](#), and [Abd al-Rahman b. Awf](#).[\[184\]](#) As the Imam (a) had predicted, taking into account the inclinations of the members, the council chose Uthman b. Affan as the third caliph of the Muslim ummah.[\[185\]](#)

During the Caliphate of Uthman

With the beginning of Uthman's caliphate, Imam Ali's (a) presence and role in the caliphate's decisions decreased. There is no mention in the historical sources of any consultation with the

Imam (a) regarding the conquests. This was a result of Uthman's ruling style, in which the Quran and the Sunna of the Prophet (s) were explicitly violated, the public treasury was distributed unjustly, the high positions of the caliphate were given to Uthman's relatives, including the Umayyads and Banu Abi Mu'it, and the Companions of the Prophet (s) were persecuted and banished. Such wrong actions led to an increasing separation between the Imam (a) and Uthman. However, some of the companions of Imam Ali (a), such as [Hudhayfa b. Yaman](#), [Salman al-Farsi](#), and reportedly [al-Bara' b. 'Azib](#) participated in the conquests in the time of Uthman.^[186]

Imam Ali's (a) Standpoint Regarding Uthman's Assassination

Ali (a) was against the assassination of Uthman. It is even reported that the Imam (a) tasked his two sons, al-Hasan and al-Husayn, and some others with guarding Uthman's house^[187] and that he rebuked the guards for not adequately protecting Uthman. However, considering historical evidence related to this incident, some scholars have doubted the authenticity of these reports. They maintain that even if these reports were authentic, the motivation behind such measures was guarding al-Hasan (a) and al-Husayn (a) against the accusation of participation in the assassination of Uthman.^[188] After questioning the authenticity of these reports, [al-Sharif al-Murtada](#) also states that the reason behind Imam Ali's (a) tasking al-Hasan (a) and al-Husayn (a) with guarding Uthman's house—assuming that the Imam (a) did so—was preventing Uthman's assassination and providing his family with food and water, not preventing the overthrow of his caliphate, because the caliphate of Uthman deserved to be overthrown due to his wrong and unjust conduct.^[189] [Sayyid Ja'far Murtada](#) explains that although Imam Ali (a) did not regard Uthman's caliphate as legitimate and was aware of his unjust conduct, he was against his assassination, because he knew that it would provide an excuse for the opportunists to cause dissension and conflict in the ummah (nation). Thus, he adds, assuming that the Imam (a) did task al-Hasan (a) and al-Husayn (a) with guarding the house of Uthman, it was meant to prevent accusations of participating in the assassination of Uthman against himself.^[190] It is reported that the Imam (a) said, "By God, I defended him so much that I was afraid I was committing a sin."^[191]

Caliphate

Main article: [Caliphate of Imam Ali \(a\)](#)

[Imam 'Ali \(a\)](#)
First [Imam](#) of [Shi'a](#)

Life

[Event of Ghadir](#) • [Laylat al-Mabit](#) • [Yawm al-Dar](#) • [Caliphate](#) • [Timeline](#)

Heritage

[Nahj al-Balagha](#) • [Ghurar al-hikam](#) • [Al-Shiqshiqiyya Sermon](#)

Excellences

[Excellences of Ahl al-Bayt \(a\)](#) • [Al-Wilaya Verse](#) • [Ahl al-Dhikr Verse](#) • [Ulu l-Amr](#)

[Verse](#) • [Al-Tathir Verse](#) • [Al-Mubahala Verse](#) • [Al-Mawadda Verse](#) • [Al-Sadiqin Verse](#) • [Hadith Madinat al-'Ilm](#) • [Hadith al-Thaqalayn](#) • [Hadith al-Raya](#) • [Hadith al-Safina](#) • [Hadith al-Kisa'](#) • [Al-Ghadir Sermon](#) • [Hadith al-Manzila](#) • [Hadith Yawm al-Dar](#) • [Hadith Sadd al-Abwab](#) • [Hadith al-Wisaya](#) • [La Fata Illa Ali](#) • [The First Muslim](#)

Companions

['Ammar b. Yasir](#) • [Malik al-Ashtar](#) • [Abu Dhar al-Ghifari](#) • ['Ubayd Allah b. Abi Rafi'](#) • [Hujr b. 'Adi](#) • [others](#)

After the assassination of ['Uthman](#) in [35/656](#), a group of the companions came to Imam Ali (a) and said, "we do not know anyone better than you for the [caliphate](#)". He responded by saying, "it is better for me to be your helper as opposed to your leader." They said, we will not accept anything short of pledging our [allegiance](#) to you as the next [caliph](#)." However, he said that this allegiance would have to be given to him publicly in the mosque, as opposed to secretly.[\[192\]](#) Except for few, all of the [Ansar](#) pledged allegiance to Imam 'Ali (a). But he did not make the opposition to allegiance.[\[193\]](#)

As to why he did not initially accept the caliphate, it should be noted that he knew the community was too corrupt to be led by him and to comply with his uncompromising moral standards.[\[194\]](#)

Governors

Main article: [List of the Companions of Imam Ali \(a\)](#)

With the start of his caliphate, Imam Ali (a) began to send his governors to different parts of the Muslim territories: He sent [Uthman b. Hunayf](#) to [Basra](#), [Imara b. Shihab](#) to [Kufa](#), ['Ubayd Allah b. 'Abbas](#) to [Yemen](#), [Qays b. Sa'd b. 'Ubada](#) to [Egypt](#), and [Sahl b. Hunayf](#) to [Syria](#). On his way to Syria, Sahl b. Hunayf reached [Tabuk](#), and there he had a conversation with the people, which led to his return.[\[195\]](#) When Ubayd Allah b. Abbas reached Yemen, [Ya'la b. Munya](#), the previous governor, took everything from the treasury and went to Mecca.[\[196\]](#) When Imara b. Shihab, the appointed governor of the Imam (a) for Kufa, reached [Zubala](#) (a place between Medina and Kufa), a man called [Tulayha b. Khuwaylid](#), who had started a revolt to revenge for Uthman, came to him and said, "Return! The people here will not accept anyone except their own commander; and if you do not accept, I will behead you" and thus forced him to return. Afterwards, with Malik al-Ashtar's advice, Imam Ali (a) accepted the continuation of the governorship of [Abu Musa al-Ash'ari](#) over Kufa.[\[197\]](#)

Battles

Battle of Jamal

'Ali (a)

"One who goes too far in quarreling has sinned, and one who falls short in it [quarreling], becomes oppressed. And someone who quarrels is unable to be God-wary."

[Nahj al-balagha](#), Maxim no. 298 or 290

Main article: [Battle of Jamal](#)

The first battle that Imam 'Ali (a) engaged in during his caliphate was with the [Nakithun](#). Since [Talha](#) and [al-Zubayr](#) and their followers first pledged [allegiance](#) to Imam 'Ali (a) but later broke it, they were called the Nakithun i.e. "the violators".^[198] The battle took place in [Jumada II](#) of 36/656.^[199]

Talha and al-Zubayr had hoped to be elected as [caliph](#),^[200] but since they failed to achieve this and Ali (a) had assumed the [caliphate](#), they wanted and expected a share in the caliphate. As such, they asked 'Ali (a) to appoint them as rulers of [Basra](#) and [Kufa](#). However, Ali (a) did not deem them worthy of it.^[201] Therefore, even though they were themselves suspected to have been involved in the assassination of ['Uthman](#), and Talha had been eager to kill 'Uthman,^[202] they allied with ['A'isha](#) in a strategic move to supposedly avenge his murder. However, during the siege of 'Uthman, 'A'isha did nothing to help him, and had even called the invaders, "the seekers of truth". However, when 'A'isha heard that following his murder, people were pledging allegiance with Imam 'Ali (a), she decided to raise the issue that 'Uthman had been killed unjustly and sought his revenge. 'A'isha bore some rancor towards 'Ali (a) and hence allied with Talha and al-Zubayr against him.^[203] They mobilized an army of 3,000 troops and moved toward Basra.^[204] In this battle, 'A'isha mounted a camel named 'Askar, and thus the battle was named "Jamal" meaning "camel".^[205]

Upon his arrival in Basra, Imam Ali (a) urged those who broke their allegiance to avoid the battle. However, he was not successful and they began the battle by killing one of Imam 'Ali's (a) companions.^[206] Also, al-Zubayr withdrew from the army before the battle began due to a hadith that Imam 'Ali (a) had reminded him of: a hadith in which the [Prophet \(s\)](#) had told al-Zubayr: "You will rise up in a battle against 'Ali (a)". He was then killed outside Basra by 'Amr b. Jurmuz.^[207]

After several hours of fighting and suffering many losses, the camp of Jamal was defeated. In this battle, Talha was killed and thereafter 'A'isha was sent back to Medina in a respectful manner.^[208]

Battle of Siffin

Main article: [Battle of Siffin](#)

The Battle of Siffin broke out between the armies of Imam Ali (a) and Mu'awiya in [Safar, 37/July, 657](#) in the greater Syria, in an area called [Siffin](#) near [Euphrates](#), and ended with the [arbitration](#) in [Ramadan, 38/February, 659](#).^[209]

Though he was capable, Mu'awiya did nothing to help 'Uthman when he was under siege. After the killing of 'Uthman, Mu'awiya tried to introduce 'Ali (a) as the murderer of 'Uthman to the people of Syria. In the beginning of his rule, Imam 'Ali (a) wrote a letter to Mu'awiya, calling on him to pledge allegiance. However, he responded with the condition that 'Ali (a) first had to surrender the murderers of 'Uthman who were supposedly around 'Ali (a) and to punish them. Only then would he pledge allegiance. After several letters and dispatching a few delegates to Mu'awiya, Imam 'Ali (a) saw that Mu'awiya was pursuing a fight, and so, Imam 'Ali (a) took his armies towards Syria. Mu'awiya also set out with his army, and the two armies encamped in Syria near the [Euphrates](#) in a place called [Siffin](#). As Imam 'Ali (a) refrained from war wherever possible, he sent some letters to Mu'awiya. However his attempts were futile, and the battle began in [Safar 37/July 657](#).^[210]

In the last confrontation of the battle, when Imam 'Ali's (a) armies were about to win, Mu'awiya, on advice from ['Amr b. al-'As](#), ordered his soldiers to hoist any [Mushaf](#) (part or complete copies of the [Qur'an](#)) available in the camp on their spears and to move towards the front of 'Ali's army, calling on them to accept the Qur'an. The decoy worked and some of Imam 'Ali's (a) army, especially those amongst the reciters of the Qur'an, came to Imam 'Ali (a) and said, "We shall not fight these people and we need to accept whatever they say". Although Imam 'Ali (a) had told them that it was a trick that they were using to escape fighting, they did not accept it.^[211] Imam Ali (a) was thus forced to accept [arbitration](#) through a letter to Mu'awiya, but said, "We know that you are not the people of the Qur'an".^[212] It was agreed that one arbitrator from each of the armies of Syria and Iraq would meet and judge the situation by referring to the Qur'an's edict. The army of Syria appointed 'Amr b. al-'As. [Al-Ash'ath](#) and a group from Imam 'Ali's (a) army (who later became members of the [Kharijites](#)) proposed [Abu Musa al-Ash'ari](#). However, 'Ali (a) recommended [Ibn 'Abbas](#) and/or [Malik al-Ashtar](#), who were rejected by al-Ash'ath and his friends. They were rejected under the pretext that Malik supported the war and that Ibn 'Abbas was not suitable because 'Amr b. al-'As was from [Mudar](#), thus the other party had to be from [Yemen](#).^[213] Finally, 'Amr b. al-'As managed to trick Abu Musa and ended the arbitration in favor of Mu'awiya in [Ramadan 38](#)/February 659.^[214]

Battle of Nahrawan

Main article: [Battle of Nahrawan](#)

Addressing the Kufans, Imam 'Ali (a) said:

"Yesterday, I would give command, and today I am given commands! Yesterday, I prescribed [people from doing things], and today I am being prescribed to! You only like to live, so it is not appropriate for me to force you to do what you dislike."

[Nahj al-balagha](#), Sermon no. 208.

The arbitration in the battle of Siffin ended in protest and opposition from some of Imam 'Ali's (a) companions, who were upset with what had happened, asking: "Why did he accept the arbitrator's judgment upon divine edict?" They said this even though Imam 'Ali (a) had opposed the arbitration and it was them who had forced him into accepting the arbitrator's judgment.^[215] This group split off and later became known as the [Kharijites](#) or Mariqun. They eventually proceeded to assassinate people. They killed ['Abd Allah b. Khabbab](#) whose father was one of the [companions of the Prophet \(s\)](#) and tore his wife's stomach open even though she was pregnant, and killed the child as well.^[216] Because of this, Imam 'Ali (a) was forced to fight with them. Before the battle began, he sent [Abd Allah b. al-Abbas](#) to speak with them, but this was futile. Finally, Imam 'Ali (a) himself went to them and talked to them. Some of them repented, but many held on to their beliefs. Eventually, the battle began and none of them survived except nine, whilst only seven or nine companions of 'Ali (a) were killed.^[217]

Martyrdom

On the morning of [Ramadan 19, 40/January 26, 661](#), (during the days in which 'Ali (a) was mobilizing an army for Siffin), he was struck with a sword by [Abd al-Rahman b. Muljam al-Muradi](#) and martyred from its injury two days later.^[218] After the [Battle of Nahrawan](#), 'Ali (a) tried again to mobilize the Iraqis for a battle against Mu'awiya. However, none except a few accompanied him. On the other hand, [Mu'awiya](#), who was aware of the situation in Iraq and their passivity, invaded regions under 'Ali's control (a) and attempted to debilitate his power by invading Iraq.^[219]

Historical accounts have reported the collaboration of three [Kharijites](#) in an attempt to kill three individuals: 'Ali (a), [Mu'awiya](#), and ['Amr b. al-'As](#). Ibn Muljam was the one who chose to kill Ali (a). Some accounts have also mentioned the role of a woman named [Qatam](#) in this assassination, however, this seems to be more of an embellishment as opposed to fact.^[220]

[Al-Hasan \(a\)](#), [al-Husayn \(a\)](#), and [Muhammad b. al-Hanfiyya](#), accompanied by ['Abd Allah b. Ja'far](#) buried him in Ghariyyayn (present day [Najaf](#)) and hid his grave.^[221] This was because if the [Banu Umayya](#) or the Kharijites knew about his burial place, they would exhume his body and treat it with disrespect.^[222]

The Shrine of Imam 'Ali (a), [Najaf](#)

Only his children and a few companions knew of his burial place. It was hidden until the first years of [Abbasid Dynasty](#) when [Imam al-Sadiq \(a\)](#) revealed that the location of his grave was in [Najaf](#).^[223]

Will and Advice

There are a few hadiths narrated from 'Ali (a) that contain his advice to his children with regards to his funeral rites: the way of his [burial](#), [ablution](#), [Shroud](#) and the performing of [prayers](#) over his body.^[224] He also asked al-Hasan (a) and al-Husayn (a) to refrain from mutilating Ibn Muljam and to strike him only once. Imam Ali (a), moreover, emphasized in his final words on paying attention to the Quran, prayer, commanding good and forbidding evil, jihad, and visiting the House of God, as well as fearing God, being organized, reconciliation, and caring for the orphans and neighbors.^[225]

Burial Place

Main article: [Holy Shrine of Imam 'Ali \(a\)](#)

Imam Ali (a) was martyred in [40/661](#) and was buried secretly at his request.^[226] The Imam's (a) grave remained hidden for about one century. With the decline of the Umayyad dynasty, the hiddenness of the Imam's grave was no longer necessary.^[227] It is not known for sure when exactly the burial place of the Imam (a) was made known to the people.^[228] The meeting between [Imam al-Sadiq \(a\)](#) and [al-Saffah](#), the first Abbasid caliph (r. 132/749 – 136/754) in Kufa during the reign of the latter is suggested by some scholars as the time when the burial place of Imam Ali (a) was disclosed by Imam al-Sadiq (a).^[229] However, other scholars maintain that Imam al-Sadiq (a) revealed the burial place of his forefather during the reign of [al-Mansur](#), the second Abbasid caliph (r. 136/754 – 158/775).^[230] Despite this difference, all agree that it was Imam al-Sadiq (a) who made known the burial place of Imam Ali (a).^[231]

Virtues

Main article: [Virtues of Imam Ali \(a\)](#)

Birth Inside the Ka'ba

Main article: [The Child of Ka'ba](#)

According to [Allama Amini](#), sixteen Sunni sources, fifty Shiite sources, and forty-one poets since the second/eighth century have mentioned the birth of Imam Ali (a) inside the [Ka'ba](#). [Allama Majlisi](#) also reports the birth of Imam Ali (a) inside the Ka'ba from eighteen (mostly Shiite) sources. According to these reports, [Fatima bt. Asad](#), the mother of Imam Ali (a), prayed to God near the Ka'ba to make the delivery easy for her. Afterwards, the wall of the Ka'ba was torn, and

Fatima went inside. She stayed there for three days, and on the fourth day she came out while holding her son, Ali (a), in her arms.

The First Muslim

Main article: [The First Muslim](#)

It is a well-known and widely transmitted hadith that 'Ali (a) was the first Muslim who believed in the prophet (s).^[232] According to some Shi'a hadiths, the Prophet (s) described Imam Ali (a) as the first Muslim, the first believer and the first person who acknowledged him. [Al-Shaykh al-Tusi](#) mentioned a hadith from [Imam al-Rida \(a\)](#) who mentioned Imam Ali (a) as the first believer in the Prophet (s). Al-Khasibi, the Shi'a author of the fourth/tenth century, mentioned Imam Ali (a) as the first Muslim and [al-Allama al-Majlisi](#) mentioned the order of believers as following, "First, Imam Ali (a), then [Khadija \(a\)](#) and then [Ja'far b. Abi Talib](#) believed in the Prophet (s)." Some researchers considered the consensus of Shi'a believing on the fact that Imam Ali (a) was the first Muslim man.

Some Sunni historians including al-Tabari, al-Dhahabi and others have mentioned reports suggesting that Imam Ali (a) was the first Muslim. In another narration, the Prophet (s) said to his daughter, Fatima (a) that, "Does it not please you that I urge you to marry a man from my Umma, who believed in Islam prior to anyone else, and who is the most learned and the most patient among them?"^[233]

Helping the Prophet from very first moments

Main article: [Hadith Yawm al-Dar](#)

According to sources of Islamic history and Qur'anic exegesis, when the [al-Indhar Verse](#) was revealed to the Prophet (s) three years after Bi'tha, the Prophet (s) ordered Ali b. Abi Talib (a) to provide some food and invite the sons of '[Abd al-Muttalib](#) to a banquet so that he calls them to Islam. Around forty people, including Abu Talib, Hamza, and Abu Lahab went to the meeting. After having the food, the Prophet (s) said: "O' sons of 'Abd al-Muttalib! I swear to God that I do not know any youth among Arabs who brought for his tribe something better than what I brought to you; I have brought to you the best in this world and in the afterlife, and God has ordered me to call you to it. So which of you assists me in this mission so that I make him my brother and my successor and my caliph among you?" Nobody responded to him except Ali (a) who was the youngest of all. He said: "O' the prophet! I will assist you". The Prophet (s) said: "This is my brother and my successor among you. Listen to him and obey him".

Sacrifice in the Night of Migration

Main article: [Laylat al-Mabit](#)

After the Muslims were severely persecuted by the [Quraysh](#), the Prophet (s) ordered his companions to [emigrate to Medina](#), and so they gradually left Mecca.^[234] After exchanging ideas in the [Dar al-Nadwa](#) meeting, the [Quraysh](#) decided to designate brave young men from each tribe to assassinate the Prophet (s) in his house. The archangel [Gabriel](#) came to the Prophet (a), informed him of their plot, and commanded him not to sleep in his bed and to leave [Mecca](#) and emigrate to [Medina](#) that same night. The Prophet (s) informed 'Ali (a) of the enemy's plot and asked him to sleep in his bed to fool the enemy.^[235]

Exegetes of the Qur'an regard the following verse to have been revealed about this event and about the virtues of 'Ali (a):^[236]

And among the people is he who sells his soul seeking the pleasure of Allah, and Allah is most kind to [His] servants.

Brother of the Prophet (s)

Main article: [Pact of Brotherhood](#)

After his emigration to Medina, the Prophet (s) created bonds of brotherhood between the [Muhajirun](#) and the [Ansar](#). Both times, he told 'Ali (a), "You are my brother in this world and in the hereafter", and so he established a bond of brotherhood between himself and 'Ali (a).[\[237\]](#)

Returning of the Sun

Main article: [Radd al-Shams](#)

In 7/628, the Prophet (s) and 'Ali (a) prayed the [noon prayer](#). The Prophet (s) then sent 'Ali (a) on a mission when he had not yet prayed the [Asr prayer](#). After 'Ali (a) returned, the Prophet (s) laid his head on 'Ali's (a) lap and slept until the sun set, and the time for prayer had expired. When the Prophet (s) woke up, he prayed to [God](#) saying, "O God! Your servant, 'Ali (a), dedicated himself for his Prophet (s). Turn the sun back for him." The sun returned, and 'Ali (a) made an ablution before prayer and performed his Asr prayer after which the sun set again.[\[238\]](#)

Delivering the Bara'a Verses

The first verses of [Quran 9](#) state that the [polytheists](#) had four months to accept [monotheism](#) and to become Muslims. However, if they were to refuse stubbornly, the Qur'an warns that they should be ready for war. When the verses were revealed, the Prophet (s) was not planning on attending the [hajj](#) to deliver its message. So, according to the divine decree that, "such messages should be delivered by the Prophet (s) himself, or by one who is from him and nobody else is competent to do so"[\[239\]](#), the Prophet (s) called 'Ali (a) and ordered him to go to Mecca so that on the [Eid al-Adha](#) he could deliver these verses to the polytheists in [Mina](#).[\[240\]](#)

Truth Hadith

The Prophet (s) said, "Ali (a) is with the truth, and the truth is with 'Ali (a)."[\[241\]](#)

Closing the Doors except Ali's house

Main article: [Sadd al-Abwab](#)

The Prophet (s) ordered that all doors opening to the mosque of Medina ([al-Masjid al-Nabawi](#)) should be locked except for the door of 'Ali's house (and his own). When the Prophet (s) was asked of the reason, the Prophet (s) said, "I was ordered to lock the doors except that of 'Ali's (a). However, there is a lot of talk about it. I swear by God that I never locked or opened any door, except that I was ordered to do so and thus did it."[\[242\]](#)

Compiling the Qur'an

Main articles: [Qur'an](#) and [Mushaf of Imam 'Ali \(a\)](#)

Both [Shi'a](#) and [Sunni](#) scholars agree that Imam 'Ali (a) was the pioneer in compiling the Qur'an according to the will and advice of the Prophet (s).[\[243\]](#) It is related in a tradition that Imam 'Ali (a) swore an oath not to wear his robe [and exit his house] until he had finished compiling the Qur'an.[\[244\]](#) It is also said that Imam 'Ali (a) compiled the Qur'an within six months of the demise of the Prophet (s).[\[245\]](#)

Beginning of Islamic Calendar

Main article: [Islamic Calendar](#)

Imam 'Ali (a) was the one who suggested that 'Umar set the [immigration](#) of the Prophet (s) from Mecca to Medina as the beginning of [Islamic calendar](#).^[246]

Ali's Virtues in the Qur'an

Several verses of the [Qur'an](#) were revealed about the virtues of 'Ali (a) and the number of these verses is so great that it is narrated from [Ibn 'Abbas](#) that more than 300 verses of the Qur'an are related to 'Ali.^[247] Some of these verses include:

Al-Mubahala Verse

Main article: [al-Mubahala Verse](#)

Say, 'Come! Let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, our souls and your souls, then let us pray earnestly and invoke the curse of Allah upon those who lie.

Quran, 3:61

On the day of [mubahala](#) in [9/631](#), the Prophet (s) and the [Najran](#) Christians agreed to curse one another, until [Allah](#) punished those who were on the wrong path. So, the [Prophet \(s\)](#) took 'Ali (a), [Fatima \(a\)](#), [al-Hasan \(a\)](#), and [al-Husayn \(a\)](#) with him. When the Christians saw that he was so confident in his success that he had only brought his closest relatives, they grew apprehensive and accepted to pay the [jizya](#) instead of going through with the challenge. In the verse 'Ali (a) is mentioned as the soul of the Prophet (s) ("our souls and your souls").

Al-Tathir Verse

Main article: [al-Tathir Verse](#)

Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from only you, O Ahl al-Bayt, and purify you with a thorough purification.

Quran, 33:33

According to Shi'a scholars, this verse was revealed to the Prophet (s) in the house of his wife [Umm Salama](#). During its [revelation](#), 'Ali (a), Fatima (a), al-Hasan (a), and al-Husayn (a) were also there with him. After the verse was revealed, the Prophet (s) used his cloak to cover himself, 'Ali (a), Fatima (a), al-Hasan (a), and al-Husayn (a)—the [Ashab al-Kisa'](#) (people of the cloak). Raising his hands in prayer, he said, "O God! My Household are these four people. Remove any impurities from them."^[248]

Al-Mawadda Verse

Main article: [al-Mawadda Verse](#)

Say, 'I do not ask you any reward for it (the mission) except love of [my] relatives.'

Quran, 42:23

Ibn 'Abbas says: "When this verse was revealed, I asked the Prophet (s) who were those whom love for them had become obligatory. He (s) stated, "'Ali, Fatima, al-Hasan, and al-Husayn". He repeated this three times."[\[249\]](#)

Other Virtues

The Founder of Islamic Sciences Imam Ali (a) is believed to have been the founder of many Islamic sciences. [Ibn Abi l-Hadid](#), a [Mu'tazili](#) scholar, maintains that Imam Ali (a) was the pioneer of all virtues, and thus all sects and denominations try to attribute themselves to him. This is why despite all the hostilities towards him and his followers, his reputation has remained high. Ibn Abi l-Hadid also believes that Ali (a) was the founder of Islamic sciences such as theology, jurisprudence, exegesis, recitation, and Arabic grammar and rhetoric. He states that Ali (a) started the elaboration of theological issues, and that the Mu'tazila are his students through Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyya. [Ash'arites](#), [Twelver Shiites](#), and [Zaydis](#) are similarly his students. In jurisprudence, [Ahmad b. Hanbal](#), [Malik b. Anas](#), [al-Shafi'i](#), and [Abu Hanifa](#) were indirectly his students. In the science of recitation, the reciters are his students through [Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami](#). Finally, Ali (a) is regarded as the founder of Arabic grammar, since his student [Abu l-Aswad al-Du'ali](#) disseminated the rules of this discipline.

Sufi Orders The majority of Sufi orders trace back their chains of spiritual descent (silsila) to the Prophet (s) through Imam Ali (a).

Imamate and Wilayah

Main articles: [Imamate](#) and [Imamate of the Twelve Imams \(a\)](#)

The Prophet's (s) repeated designation of Imam Ali (a) (s) as his successor shows, according to some scholars, that the Prophet's (s) greatest concern was the leadership of the Muslim community after himself.[\[250\]](#) These recurrent designations started since the early years of the Prophet's (s) mission when he gathered his close kin and invited them to Islam,[\[251\]](#) and continued until the final days of his life when he asked the Companions to bring him a [pen and paper](#) to write them something that would protect them against deviation.[\[252\]](#)

Some of the evidence for the Imamate of Ali (a) explicitly indicate his designation for [imamate](#) and [wilaya](#) after the Prophet (s) and some indicate his virtues and excellence. The former includes the [Wilaya Verse](#) (Qur'an 5:55), which was revealed when Ali (a) gave his ring, while bowing down in his prayer, to a poor man;[\[253\]](#) [Qur'an 5:3](#) "Today the faithless have despaired of your religion. So do not fear them, but fear Me. Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion" and [Qur'an 5:67](#) "O Apostle! Communicate that which has been sent down to you from your Lord, and if you do not, you will not have communicated His message, and Allah shall protect you from the people. Indeed Allah does not guide the faithless lot," which were revealed during the [Event of Ghadir](#), in which the Prophet (s) was tasked by God with designating Ali (a) as his successor; and [Hadith al-Ghadir](#), which is the most important proof for the imamate of Ali (a) and which occurred in the final year of the Prophet's (s) life.

Other evidence that are regarded as indirect indications of the imamate and wilayah of Ali (a) are the following verses and hadiths that point out his virtues and excellence: [Quran 33:33; 3:61; 9:119; 98:7; 16:43; 2:207; 58:12; 66:4; 4:59](#) (Uli l-Amr Verse); [hadith al-Thaqalayn](#), the [hadith of the City of Knowledge](#), the [hadith of Flag](#), [hadith al-Kisa'](#), [hadith al-Wisaya](#), [hadith Yawm al-Dar](#), the [hadith of Brotherhood](#), [hadith al-Manzila](#), [hadith al-Wilaya](#), the [hadith al-Safina](#), and the [hadith of Closing the Doors](#).

Moral Characteristics

Generosity and Openhandedness

The Shelter, painted by [Mahmoud Farshchian](#), about taking care of orphans by Imam 'Ali (a) [Ibn Abi l-Hadid](#) says, "Regarding generosity, 'Ali's (a) position is clear. He fasted and gave what he would break his fast with ([iftar](#)) to the poor to the extent that the following verse was revealed about him:

They give food, for the love of Him, to the needy, the orphan and the prisoner.

Quran, 76:8

Exegetes of the Qur'an have said that one day, 'Ali (a) had only four dirhams. He gave one of them as charity at night, another as charity during the day, the third secretly as charity, and the fourth openly as charity. The following verse was revealed regarding this and it says:

Those who give their wealth by night and day, secretly and openly, they shall have their reward near their Lord, and they will have no fear, nor will they grieve.

Quran, 2:274

It is said that he would water the date gardens of the Jews in [Medina](#) with his own hands until they became calloused, and he gave all of his profits to the poor, and tied stones to his stomach (so that he could handle the pangs of his own hunger]. It is said that he never said "no" to a beggar.

Once, Mahfan b. Abi Mahfan went to [Mu'awiya](#) who asked him: "Where are you coming from?" In order to flatter Mu'awiah, he said, "From the company of the stingiest among people (i.e. 'Ali.)" Mu'awiya replied, "Woe to you! How can you say such a thing about a person who, if he had two storehouses, one filled with gold and another filled with straw, he would empty out the one with gold and spend it for the poor, before he would spend his storehouse of straw?" [\[254\]](#)

Forbearance and Endurance

Ibn Abi l-Hadid says, "'Ali (a) was greater than all with regards to forbearance, magnanimity, and in forgiving a wrongdoer. What happened in the [Battle of Jamal](#) best supports this claim. When he caught [Marwan b. al-Hakam](#), who was a hostile enemy, 'Ali (a) released him and forgave his great sin. ['Abd Allah b. al-Zubayr](#) swore at him in public, and when he came to [Basra](#) with ['A'isha](#)'s army, he delivered a speech about 'Ali, insulting him as much as he could. He even said that 'Ali was "the most inferior and the most ignoble among people" However, 'Ali

(a) forgave him when he was caught, and only told him 'Go, so I do not see you!' He also caught [Sa'id b. al-'As](#) in [Mecca](#) who was among his enemies in the Battle of Jamal. But, he turned his back on him and did not say anything to him."

His behavior towards 'A'isha after the Battle of Jamal has been famously narrated. When he won the battle, he treated 'A'isha with respect, and returned her to [Medina](#) accompanied by twenty women from the tribe of 'Abd al-Qays. They were dressed as men, and each of them carried a sword in a baldric, however, 'A'isha did not know that they were women. 'A'isha swore at 'Ali (a) throughout the journey, claiming that he had dishonored her by making a number of men accompany her. When they arrived in Medina, the women revealed that they were in fact, women, who had accompanied her.

After the Battle of Jamal, he granted freedom to all the people of Basra who had fought him and had killed a number of his men. He told his army that none should trouble them, and that anyone who had dropped their weapons was free. He took no prisoners from among them nor any spoils, and did what the Prophet (s) did in the [Conquest of Mecca](#).

In the [Battle of Siffin](#), [Mu'awiya](#)'s men blocked the waterway and prevented 'Ali's (a) army from getting water from the [Euphrates](#) River. In fact, leaders of Mu'awiya's army said 'We must kill 'Ali (a) and his men while they are thirsty in the same way that he killed ['Uthman](#) while he was thirsty.'" 'Ali's army fought and managed to get control of the water from the enemy. Thereafter, his men wanted to retaliate and not let Mu'awiya's army get water, so that they could die of thirst. Imam 'Ali (a) said, "Never will we do that. Allow them to use a part of the Euphrates."[\[255\]](#)

Geniality

Ibn Abi l-Hadid says, "He was an exemplar of geniality and cheerfulness, to the extent that his enemies criticized his geniality as a flaw in his character." [Sa'sa'a b. Sawhan](#) and other companions of Imam 'Ali said "Among us, 'Ali (a) was like one of us who did not have any special privileges. While he was humble and modest, he still had such an awe-inspiring personality that before him, we were like captivated prisoners whose hands and feet were tied, held captive by a man with a sword."[\[256\]](#)

Jihad

Ibn Abi l-Hadid says "Both friends and enemies admit that he was the master of the Mujahidun, and that compared to him, no one deserved this title. Everyone knew that the most difficult and the heaviest of the battles of Islam with polytheists was the [Battle of Badr](#), in which 70 of the polytheists were killed. Half of them were killed by 'Ali (a), and the other half were killed by other Muslims with the help of angels. His place in the battles of [Uhud](#), [Ahzab](#), [Khaybar](#), [Hunayn](#), and other battles is famous in history, and do not need to be mentioned."[\[257\]](#)

Bravery

Ibn Abi l-Hadid says, "He was the sole champion in courage, who erased his predecessors from people's memory and blurred and faded his successors. The position of 'Ali (a) in battles was so eminent that it made him an example forever. He was the brave man who never ran away, never feared a large army, never fought anyone without annihilating them, and he was the man whose strikes were so effective that they never required a second try. When he challenged Mu'awiya to a fight so that people find peace if one of them died, ['Amr b. al-'As](#) told Mu'awiya, 'Ali (a) is treating you with justice.' Mu'awiya told him, 'Since the day you have been with me, you have never deceived me like this! Are you advising me to fight a man, from whose hands no one has ever escaped? I suppose you dream ruling [Syria](#) after me!'

His enemies always boasted that they once fought against 'Ali (a) in a battle, or that someone of their relatives had been killed by him. Once, Mu'awiya was sleeping on his throne. Suddenly, he opened his eyes, and saw ['Abd Allah b. al-Zubayr](#) at his side. He sat up, and 'Abd Allah said to him

jokingly "O' Amir al-Mu'minin!, let us wrestle if you agree." Mu'awiya told him "Oh, you speak of boldness and bravery?!" 'Abd Allah said "Do you deny my bravery?! I am the man who went to fight 'Ali and was his opponent in the battle." Mu'awiya said "That is not true at all. If you would have ever stood for a moment against 'Ali (a), he would have killed you and your father using only his left hand, leaving his right hand free, waiting for a fight." [258]

Worship

Ibn Abi l-Hadid says, "Ali (a) was the greatest worshiper amongst people, and he prayed and fasted more than anyone else. People learned the [night prayers](#), persistence in the recitation of [dhikrs](#), and the [recommended prayers](#) from him. And what do you think of a man who was so persistent in recommended prayers that even on the [Laylat al-Harir](#) in the [Battle of Siffin](#), a carpet was set on the ground for him in between two lines of the armies, and he engaged in prayer without any fear while arrows flew by his ears from the left and the right. His forehead was like the knee of a camel because of his frequent and long [sajdas](#). Anyone who carefully considers his prayers and supplications will see his glorification of God, his humbleness before His glory, and his prostration before Him, and will realize the [ikhlas](#) in him. They will know from what a great heart these prayers have come and through what a grand tongue they have flowed." [259]

Zuhd

'Ali (a) was the master of the ascetics, and whoever wanted to practice self-discipline remembered him. He never ate to his full. His food and clothing were of the most coarse materials. '[Abd Allah b. Abi Rafi](#)' says, "Once I went to 'Ali (a) on a day of [eid](#). I saw that he had a sealed bag. When he opened it, I saw that it contained bits of whole-grain barley bread. He started eating them. I said, "O' [Amir al-Mu'minin](#), why have you sealed that?" He said, "I fear that my children would rub butter or olive oil on them."

His clothes were sometimes stitched with bark and sometimes with the fibers of date palms. He always wore sandals made of palm bark. He wore the coarsest canvas clothes. If he had anything besides bread to eat, it would be vinegar or salt. If it ever went beyond these, it would include some kind of plants, and if at all further, a little camel-milk. He did not eat meat except very little and said "Do not make your stomachs the graveyards of animals." Nevertheless, he was the strongest among people and hunger did not reduce his power. He had abandoned the world while the wealth of the entire Islamic empire (except that of Syria) had come to him- and so, he distributed all of it amongst the people. [260]

Sayings and Writings

During the lifetime of Imam Ali (a), the people transmitted his sayings, sermons, and poems orally. Later, Muslim scholars (both Shiite and Sunni) wrote down and collected the Imam's (a) words.

Nahj al-balagha

Main article: [Nahj al-balagha](#)

Nahj al-balagha is the most famous collection of some of Imam 'Ali's (a) sayings and writings which has been compiled by [al-Sayyid al-Radi](#), a scholar who lived in the fourth/tenth century. It is one of the most sacred Shi'a texts and widely considered to be the greatest literary text in

Arabic, after the [Quran](#). The book is divided into three sections: sermons, letters, and some short sayings which have all been attributed to 'Ali (a):

1. Sermons: 239 sermons which are divided into three parts based on their time in history
2. Letters: 79 letters of which almost all of them were written during his caliphate

Companions

Main article: [List of the Companions of Imam Ali \(a\)](#)

[Salman al-Farsi](#) was among the best friends of [the Prophet \(s\)](#) and 'Ali (a). Many [hadiths](#) about him have been quoted from the [infallibles \(a\)](#).^[265] For example, once the Prophet (s) said, "Salman is one of us, the [Ahl al-Bayt \(a\)](#)."^[266]

[Abu Dhar al-Ghifari](#) (Jundab b. Junada) was the fourth person who converted to Islam. He became 'Ali's (a) defender after the demise of the Prophet (s).^[267] He was among the few who refused to pledge allegiance with [Abu Bakr](#).^[268]

[Miqdad b. 'Amr](#) (Miqdad b. Aswad al-Kindi) was among the seven people who believed in the Prophet (s) from the beginning of his mission and became Muslim. After the Prophet (s) passed away, Miqdad did not pledge allegiance with Abu Bakr and sided with 'Ali (a) during the 25 years before he assumed the caliphate.^[269]

[Uways al-Qarani](#), (Uways b. 'Amir al-Muradi al-Qarani) was a famous ascetic who converted to [Islam](#) at the time of the Prophet (s).^[270] Uways was among the special companions of 'Ali (a) who pledged allegiance with him and promised to defend him until the last moments of his life, and in doing so, would never turn his back from the enemy [i.e. escape the enemy].^[271]

['Ammar b. Yasir](#) was one of the first people who believed in the Prophet (s) and [immigrated to Ethiopia](#) with the first group of Muslims and after the Prophet (s) immigrated to [Medina](#), he joined the Prophet (s). After the Prophet (s) passed away, Ammar stood in defense of the [Ahl al-Bayt \(a\)](#) and 'Ali (a). Under the rule of ['Umar b. al-Khattab](#), he became the governor of [Kufa](#) for a period of time, but since he was just and lived a simple life, some tried to get him dismissed. He returned to Medina and stood with 'Ali (a) and benefited from him.^[272]

[Ibn 'Abbas](#) ('Abd Allah b. al-'Abbas) was a cousin of the Prophet (s) and 'Ali (a). He narrated many hadiths from the Prophet (s).^[273] During the time of the three caliphs before 'Ali (a), Ibn 'Abbas was always of the opinion that 'Ali (a) deserved the caliphate. During the rule of 'Ali (a), Ibn 'Abbas helped him in the battles of Jamal, Siffin and Nahrawan and was appointed by 'Ali (a) to become the governor of [Basra](#).^[274]

[Malik al-Ashtar al-Nakha'i](#) (Malik b. al-Harith) was born in [Yemen](#). He was the first one who pledged allegiance with Imam 'Ali (a). He was a commander of Imam 'Ali's army (a) in the [Battle of Jamal](#), the [Battle of Siffin](#), and the [Battle of Nahrawan](#).^[275]

[Kumayl b. Ziyad al-Nakha'i](#) was one of [Tabi'un](#) of the companions of the Prophet (s) and of the special companions of Imam 'Ali (a) and Imam al-Hasan (a).^[276] He was among the Shi'a who swore allegiance to Imam 'Ali (a) and fought in all of the wars against Imam 'Ali's (a) enemies.^[277] Imam 'Ali (a) taught the Supplication of [Khidr](#) to him which later became known as [supplication of Kumayl](#).

[Muhammad b. Abi Bakr](#) (a son of the first caliph) was born in [10/632](#). He was among the special companions of Imam 'Ali (a) who believed that the previous caliphs had taken the right of 'Ali (a) and said that there was no one more deserving of the caliphate than 'Ali (a). He became the governor of [Egypt](#) in the month of [Ramadan 36/February](#) 657 and was killed by [Mu'awiya's](#) army in [Safar](#) of [38/July](#) 658.

Maytham al-Tammar al-Asadi al-Kufi was one of the special companions of Imam 'Ali (a), **Imam al-Hasan (a)** and **Imam al-Husayn (a)**. He was of the **Shurtat al-Khamis** who was a group of men who promised Imam 'Ali (a) to help him until their last breath of life.^[278]

Zayd b. Sawhan al-'Abdi was a companion of 'Ali (a) who participated in different battles against the enemies of 'Ali (a) and was finally killed by the **Nakithun** army in the **Battle of Jamal**.^[279]

Sa'sa'a b. Sawhan al-'Abdi was one of the companions of 'Ali (a) who participated in the battles imposed upon him.^[280] He was among those who pledged allegiance with 'Ali (a) after **'Uthman**'s death.^[281]