

REFUTING THE SHIITE MANIPULATIVE EXPLOITATION OF THE TERM “WELI” MENTIONED IN SURAH AL- MA’IDAH TO SUPPORT THEIR CREED OF THE APPOINTED IMAMS ◌

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ABSTRACT

A major deflection in the Shiite creed that widened the gap between them and the Islamic faith is their belief in the continuation of the religious message after the departure of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The Shiites called this belief pillar Al-Welayah, and they defined it as “Leadership with divine authority”. The Shiite claimed that Allah SWT appointed men whom He chose from the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to continue leading the Muslim nation righteously. The failure of Shiite theologians to find clear evidence from the Holy Qur’an supporting this alleged creed provoked them to exploit certain verses, assuming they would indirectly serve their purpose. This article aims to reveal the falsehood in the Shiite devious explanation, and the Muslim scholars’ invalidation of the incorrect interpretation of verse no. 55 of chapter 5, Surah Al-Ma’idah. In conclusion, the term “weli” did not mean a leader in this verse, as this meaning will lead to false implications. Moreover, the exegesis of Ibn Kathir refuted the authenticity of the incident made up to imbue the idea that the verse indicated a person per se. Yet, it was an instruction for the Muslim nation to consider allies from the believers rather than the non-believers. Furthermore, the context of the verses testifies to the forged incident of the Shiite story. Therefore, this verse does not stand as evidence to support the Shiite belief, neither from the linguistic view nor from the logical, and contextual aspects of the verse.

Keywords: *Al-Ma’idah, leader, Shiite, Welayah, Weli*

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1. INTRODUCTION

A The deceptive use of certain verses from the Holy Quran is a dangerous misleading approach that would eventually cause people who adopt an incorrect meaning and divert their faith away from the path of Allah SWT. This deviation becomes more detrimental if that individual claims that the verse addresses a fundamental principle in religion.

A well-recorded example in which the Shiite “scholars” cunningly swayed a Qur’anic verse away from its correct meaning to serve their doctrine is verse 55 of Surah Al-Ma’idah, the Shiite referred to as “The verse of Welayah”³. The Shiite theologians claimed that, in this verse, Allah had ordered every Muslim to accept Ali Bin Abi Talib, may Allah be pleased with him (RAA) as the supreme religious leader along with the Prophet Muhammad⁴.

In this article, we elaborate on the erroneous and baseless argument used by Shiite scholars in their attempt to swerve the direct meaning of the verse mentioned above.

2. DISCUSSION:

To demonstrate the falsehood in this Shiite unsupported heresy, this article focused on linguistic aspects and scrutinized the historical authenticity of the exegesis regarding the reason for the revelation of the verse. Additional contextual, logical, and consequential outcomes of the Shiite claim are subsequently explained.

Before going into the details for stepwise disproval of the misinterpretation of the verse under study, a preliminary question might be asked. Why would the Shiite textbooks writers be interested in diverting the meaning of any verse in the Holy Quran? The direct, straightforward answer to this question is that Shiites have invented a heresy and false belief to become the most fundamental among the pillars of their “*Madhhab*” that is, “*Welayah*” الولاية. Among the Arabic meanings of this word are alliance, support, and leadership. However, the Shiites unsubstantially claimed that Allah ﷻ meant the leadership in this verse of the

³ Majlesi, Mohammad Baqer. (1983). *Bihār al-Anwār*. (Vol. 25). Beirut: al-Wafa' Foundation, Second Reprint, pp. 231.

⁴ *Ibid.*, (Vol. 37), pp. 157.

Qur'an, then they further upgraded the meaning to become "supreme leadership with the divine authority".⁵

This "*Welayah*" or supreme leadership in the Shiite creed is nothing less than believing that God appoints a person other than the Prophet to guide and rule the Muslim nation religiously and politically⁶. The Shiite claimed that Allah SWT appointed Ali bin Abi Talib and eleven other men of his descendants to become the successors of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ both in deciding religious and political matters.⁷ They further claimed that God gave each of the twelve descendants the title of "*Imam*". Hence, the term "*Imam*" became synonymous in the Shiite religion with the term "*Weli*", which means, according to the Shiite, a man appointed by God to execute the legislative decisions and political responsibilities for the Muslim nation⁸. In practical terms, this Shiite heretic belief of the mandatory presence of a Godly appointed "*Imam*" meant that an "*imam*" is equivalent to a Prophet in every Prophetic privilege except the title.⁹ More than that, the Shiites gave the Imam the power of God over everything in the universe, which they called "Cosmic governance"¹⁰. Nevertheless, when the recognized Muslim scholars requested the Shiites to provide evidence from the Holy Quran to prove their claims for the claim of "divine appointment" of persons after the demise of Prophet Muhammad, the Shiites failed to find direct supporting evidence from the verses of the Holy Quran. Thus, the ancient Shiite theologians and textbook writers had to twist the meaning of certain verses and divert them from their direct and correct meaning to another indirect, concealed heretic interpretation to suit their formed belief of the twelve Godly appointed imams. Verse 55 of Chapter 5 of the Holy Quran is among the leading and primary statements that Shiites exploited to serve their doctrine, for which they found no explicit Qur'anic proof to support their claim.

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

(Al-Ma'idah: 55)

⁵ Al-Kulaini, Muhammad bin Ya'qūb. (1999) *Usūl Al-Kāfi*.. New York. (Vol.2, CH 10, H 1485, h 8), pp.18.

⁶ Ibid., (Vol.1 Ch. 109, h 7), pp.623

⁷ Ibid., (Vol.1 Ch. 126. H 14), pp. 740

⁸ Ibid., (Vol.1 Ch. 126. H 15-17), pp. 740

⁹ Ibid.,)Vol.1 H 708, Ch. 53, h 7), pp. 390.

¹⁰ Al-Khomeini. (1977). *Islamic Governance*. Tehran. pp. 59.

The translation: Verily, your Weli (Protector or Helper) is none other than Allah, His Messenger, and the believers - those who perform prayers (Iqamat-as-Salat) and give Zakat, and they are submissive with obedience to Allah in prayer).

When considering the verse mentioned above and its authentic translation, one can by no means understand that it is exclusively indicating Ali bin Abi Talib nor can a reader comprehend that Allah was appointing a supreme leader from amongst the companions of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. However, The Shiite scholar, Al-Kulaini, recorded in his book of hadith "Al-Kafi" what he claimed that he had compiled from the sayings of different Shiite *imams* based on a chain of narrators who were all Shiite and thus, trusted people according to him. Among the sayings included in his book was a Shiite interpretation of verse 55 from Surah Al-Ma'idah. Al-Kulaini narrated that one of the Shiite *imams* explained "Weli" as the leader and informed that Ali Bin Abi Talib is the one who offered his charity in the Masjid while he was bowing in his prayer "ruku". The story continues that the companions of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ conspired to disobey Ali bin Abi Talib and deny him his supreme leadership with the divine authority that was given to him by God through this verse.^{11,12}

It is essential for Muslims to remember that Allah SWT in the Holy Qur'an has warned us from those who deliberately misuse certain verses of the Qur'an and divert their meanings to achieve malicious goals. Allah SWT described them as people with deviation in their hearts. This description is read in Surah Ali-Imran (3:7).

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ﴾

(Ali-Imran: 7)

The translation: It is He who has sent down to you, [O Muhammad], the Book; in it are verses [that are] precise - they are the foundation of the Book - and others unspecific. As for those in whose hearts is deviation [from truth] will follow that of it which is unspecific, seeking to mislead and seeking an interpretation [suitable to them].

Since the direct meaning of the verse is general, unspecific, and does stand alone for the Shiites' explanation, thus, employing this verse to impose a belief in

¹¹ Al-Kulaini, *USūl Al-Kāfi*. (Vol.1, Ch. 108, h 76), pp. 610.

¹² Shirāzī, Naser Makarem. (2013) *Al-Amthal fi Tafsīr Kitāb Allah al-Munzal*. (2nd ed., Vol. 4). Beirut, pp. 45-46.

religion is considered aberrant and falls under the warning that Allah presented to Muslims in Surah Ali-Imran (3:7).

With this mentioned, it can be summarized that the Shiite theologists based their misinterpretation of this verse on the following premises:

1- The meaning of “*weli*” in this verse, regarded by the Shiites as a “supreme leader with the divine authority”, is a diversion from its original meaning (*protector or helper*).

2- Because the term “*weli*” was connected to the pronoun (كم) addressing the believers, it meant to the Shiites that Allah is appointing only one man in this verse to become a “supreme leader with divine authority” to all believers.

3- The Shiite further misinterpreted the attribute of the believers at the end of the verse:

((وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ))

as those who are paying their “Zakat” charity while they are bowing during their prayer.!

4- Historically, Shiite writers claimed that the only believer, in the Prophet’s time, who was reported offering his Zakat while bowing during praying was Ali bin Abi Talib.¹³

5- Therefore, the false conclusion by the Shiite to support their belief was that the divinely appointed supreme leader after the departure of Prophet Muhammad must be Ali bin Abi Talib.

6- The serious ramification of the Shiite interpretation is that anyone who does not acknowledge Ali bin Abi Talib as the divinely appointed supreme leader after the departure of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is considered a disbeliever (Kafir)¹⁴ and that Allah SWT will not accept any act of worship from that Muslim according to the Shiite.¹⁵

¹³ Tabataba'I, Muhammad Husayn. (2006). *Al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*. (1st ed., Vol. 6), Beirut. pp. 8.

¹⁴ Al-Qummi, Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Babawayh. (1993). *The Creeds in the religion of Imamiyyah*. (2nd ed), Beirut: Dar al- Mufid., pp. 104.

¹⁵ Al-Khomeini. (2010). *Al-Arba'ūn Ḥadīthan*. Beirut. pp. 631-633.

Therefore, to refute the above premises and expose the Shiite theologists' defective approach and conclusion, the reply will consider several aspects, including linguistic, historical, contextual, logical, and outcome-related views.

1- *Linguistic Point of View*

- a- The adjective “*weli*” is derived from the root verb “*Wālā, Welayah*” (support, help, and protect), not derived from verb *wellā, Wilayah* (leadership or chief commander) as the Shiite theologist tried to indoctrinate. The evidence for the meaning above is understood from the Qu’ranic context itself. The adjective “*weli*” appeared many times in the Holy Quran in its singular form (*Weli*) and more commonly in its plural form (*Awliyā’*), such as the verse that immediately follows *ayat Al-Kursi*:

﴿اللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَوْلِيَاؤُهُمُ الطَّاغُوتُ يُخْرِجُونَهُم مِّنَ النُّورِ إِلَى الظُّلُمَاتِ أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ﴾

(Al-Baqarah: 257)

The translation: Allah is the Weli (Protector or Guardian) of those who believe. He brings them out from darkness into light. But as for those who disbelieve, their Auliya’ (supporters and helpers) are Taghut [false deities and false leaders], they bring them out from light into darkness. Those are the dwellers of the Fire, and they will abide therein forever.

Furthermore, the plural form of the same adjective “*weli*” is once more found in verse 71 of Surah At-Tawbah, chapter 9, with the meaning of supporters.

﴿وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ﴾

(Al-Tawbah: 71)

The translation: The believers, men, and women, are Auliya’ (helpers, supporters, allies, protectors) of one another; they enjoin (on the people) Al-Ma’ruf (i.e., Islamic Monotheism and all that Islam orders one to do) and forbid (people) from Al-Munkar (i.e., polytheism and disbelief of all kinds, and all that Islam has forbidden).

In another verse, Allah forbids making allies (*Auliya’*) from the non-believers. *Auliya’* does not mean leaders with divine authority since Allah will certainly not appoint a non-believer for a divine mission.

﴿لَا يَتَّخِذِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾

(Ali-Imran: 28)

The translation: Let not the believers take the disbelievers as Auliya' (supporters, helpers) instead of the believers.

﴿وَإِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ وَاللَّهُ وَبِيُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ﴾

(Al-Jathiyah: 19)

The translation: And indeed, the wrongdoers are allies of one another; but Allah is the Protector of the righteous.

From the verses mentioned above, it is observed that the word “weli” appeared in singular and plural forms with the meanings of supporter, helper, ally, and Protector. If the reader tried to substitute any of the words “weli” or “Auliya” with the word “leader”, the verse will make no more sense or will even give an incorrect meaning. This defect indicates that Allah did not intend the meaning of ‘leadership’ in these verses. Nevertheless, the Shiites insisted on propagating the false and unintended meaning.

b- The Shiite claim that the particle “واو” at the end of this verse ” وَهُمْ ” is an adverbial *الحالية* “واو الحالية”, i.e., what came after that “waw” is an adverb for what is before the “waw”. Therefore, in the Shiite understanding, the verse denotes someone who paid his zakat while ruku’ (bowing) during his prayer.¹⁶

The correction of the previous false claim is by knowing that the “waw” is conjunctive *العطف* “واو العطف”, not the adverbial “waw” *الحال*. For if it were an adverbial particle, according to the context of the verse, every caliphate would have been compelled to offer obligatory zakat in a bowing position for the believers to accept him as a leader. The reason for this implication is that the verse started with the word “Innamā, إنما” which restricts the subsequent statement to the given description. i.e., “your weli is exclusively Allah, His Messenger, and the believers who maintain their prayers and deliver zakat while bowing during their prayer.” This linguistic restriction with the word “Innamā” would obligate any leader to offer his zakat the same way the Shiite narrative described before the Muslim community would consider him a true leader. Moreover, when the Holy Qur’an praises an action performed by one of the companions, this action becomes at least a highly encouraged Sunnah to be

¹⁶ Shirāzī, Naser Makarem. (2013). *Al-Amthal fi Tafsīr Kitāb Allah al-Munzal*. (2nd ed., Vol. 4). Beirut, pp. 45-46.

followed by the next generations of Muslims. However, we found no historical evidence that a Muslim leader or scholar offered his charity while bowing down during his prayer.

Additionally, if the reason for the verse revelation was to praise Ali after he offered his charity during prayer, then the verb of “offering” charity in the verse would have been in the past tense “آتوا الزكاة”, not the present tense “يؤتون”. Hence, the “waw” is not an adverbial particle, but it is a conjunction letter. Therefore, the correct meaning of the verse from the Islamic perspective is that “Your supporter is exclusively Allah, His Messenger and those who have believed - those who establish prayer and give zakah, and they are submissive”.¹⁷

Moreover, the verse mentioned the believers (in plural form), (الذين) صيغة جمع, while Ali bin Abi Talib RAA is one person. If Allah SWT wanted to decree a matter regarding one person of the Muslim Ummah for the future Muslim community to follow, why would it be in a plural form? Isn't it misleading to be willing to refer to one person in the plural form? This is why restricting the meaning of the word “believers” in this verse to Ali alone is against the expected straightforwardness of the Qur'an.

2- Historical Authenticity View

a- The reliable exegesis of the Holy Quran mentioned that this verse was revealed after some Jews in the Madinah were close allies to Ubadah bin Al-Samit RAA. They approached him to appeal and seek forgiveness from Prophet Muhammad after they betrayed Muslims and broke the set peace treaty.¹⁸ Additionally, Ibn Katheer, in his exegesis, confirmed that he had perused all the stories related to the ring charity during praying by Ali bin Abi Talib, and he concluded that all chains of narrators are weak and unauthentic.

b- There is no historical evidence, even from the Shiite textbooks, that Ali bin Abi Talib mentioned this verse as referring exclusively to himself as a divinely appointed supreme leader after the demise of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. In other words, the Shiite theologians are claiming for Ali RAA what he did not claim for himself. Ali bin Abi Talib RAA did not utilize this verse to prove what the Shiite claimed about him as a “divinely appointed Imam.”

¹⁷ Imād Ad-Din Ismā'īl ibn 'Umar ibn Kathīr al-Qurashī Al-Dimashqī. *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Azīm*

¹⁸ Al-Qurtubi, Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Abu Bakr al-Ansari. (2003). *Tafsir Al-Jami' li Ahkām al-Qur'an*. Dar al-Taqwa.

c- Historically, Ali bin Abi Talib RAA was poor at the time when the verse was revealed. Therefore, Zakat was not an obligation to him.

3- Contextual Point of View

Ignoring the context of the preceding and the following verses and taking one verse out of its context is a common technique used by Shiite theologians in dealing with the Qur'an whenever they fail to find direct evidence to support their false claims. If we follow the context of Surah Al-Ma'idah, before verse no. 55, we find that Allah has instructed the believers not to take the Jews and the Christians as allies, for they are close allies to each other against Muslims. So, it would be unwise for the Muslims to consider the Jews and the Christians as supporters or protectors of the Muslims whenever needed. This fact is in the Qur'an when Allah said:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصَارَىٰ أَوْلِيَاءَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنَّهُ مِنْهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ﴾

(Al-Ma'idah: 51)

The translation: "O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are [in fact] allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you - then indeed, he is [one] of them. Indeed, Allah guides not the wrongdoing people."

Then comes the correct choice of allies by the instruction from Allah SWT in verse (55) to consider Him, the Prophet ﷺ and the believers as allies/supporters/helpers rather than the non-believing Jews and Christians. In the next verse, Allah SWT mentioned that the ultimate victory will be to the allies of Allah, His messenger, and the believers.

﴿وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فَإِنَّ حِزْبَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْغَالِبُونَ﴾

(Al-Ma'idah: 56)

The translation: And whosoever takes Allah, His Messenger, and those who have believed, as protectors, then the party of Allah will be victorious.

Therefore, Allah has confirmed the alliance to the companions of the Prophet. However, the Shiite theologians denied this alliance to the companions of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and confined it to Ali bin Abi Talib alone.

5- Consequential Point of View (False Implications)

Incorrect and inappropriate consequences will be inferred if anyone considers the Shiite's explanation of the verse. These incorrect implications are:

- a- Actions that are not part of the prayer performed by a Muslim while praying indicate that the person was inattentive or at least distracted during his/her prayer to Allah SWT, even though the action involved was a charity donation. Ali bin Abi Talib RAA is one of the closest companions to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, and his prayer to Allah SWT was with complete submission as per the Qur'anic description of Surah Al-Mu'minūn which says:

﴿قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ * الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ﴾

(Al-Mu'minun: 1-2)

*The translation: Certainly, will the believers have succeeded * they who are during their prayer humbly submissive.*

Furthermore, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said in the authentic hadith: "Prayer demands whole attention".¹⁹

Therefore, the Shiite theologians who adopted this story indirectly dishonored and discredited Ali Bin Abi Talib RAA by confirming that he was absentminded during his prayer.

- b- It is inappropriate for anyone to call Allah SWT an *Imam* (leader)! If the word "*weli*" meant "*Imam*" as the Shiite believed, then by right, it should be suitable for use for the three entities mentioned in the verse. The first mentioned as *weli* to the Muslims was Allah SWT. While all Muslims agree that Allah SWT is the Helper, Guardian, and Protector of the believers, no one would agree to allow the use of the term "*imam*" to refer to Allah SWT. Therefore, the correct interpretation of the word *weli* could not be "*imam*".
- c- If the claim that Allah exclusively meant to praise Ali bin Abi Talib RAA were valid for offering his zakat while bowing during his prayer, it would have become a Sunnah afterward for Muslims to practice paying charities while praying in the same way that Allah SWT praised Ali RAA.

¹⁹ Sahih Muslim Translation. Book 4, hadith Number: 1096.
https://www.iium.edu.my/deed/hadith/muslim/004a_smt.html

However, no Muslim scholar has ever recommended that action, proving that the story is untrue.

3. CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, the term “*wali*” did not mean a leader in this verse for many reasons. First, this meaning will lead to false implications, such as naming Allah SWT as a leader, which is inappropriate. Second, it portrays Ali Bin Abi Talib RAA as inattentive while praying. Moreover, Ali bin Abi Talib was not the reason for the revelation of this verse, according to the authentic exegesis of Ibn Katheer. However, the context of the verse tells that it was a general instruction for the Muslim nation to consider allies from the believers rather than the non-believers. Therefore, this Qur’anic verse does not stand as a correct piece of evidence to support the Shiite belief in the meaning that they intended to spread, neither from the linguistic view nor from the historical, contextual, and other aspects of authentic Qur’anic exegesis.

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