

Lesson: An Analysis of Hadith al-Ghadir (summarized from the lectures of Sheikh Mansour Leghaei)

Let's explore the historical and theological significance of Hadith al-Ghadir, a pivotal event that has shaped the discourse on **succession and leadership** in Islam for centuries. We will begin by situating the Prophet Muhammad's mission within the broader **tradition of previous prophets** and conclude by examining **ten specific proofs** from the sources that support the interpretation of leadership.

Part 1: The Divine Precedent of Succession

From an Islamic perspective, all prophets were part of a continuous chain, completing the message of those before them. A fundamental part of this mission was the **appointment of a successor** by divine decree to ensure the continuity of guidance. Historically, no law-making prophet departed without leaving a designated leader:

- **Adam** appointed **Seth** (meaning "the appointed one").
- **Abraham** appointed **Ishmael**.
- **Jacob** appointed **Joseph**.
- **Moses** appointed **Joshua**, acting on a direct instruction from God to put a man in charge so the congregation would not be "like a flock without a shepherd".
- **Jesus** appointed **Simon (Peter)**, telling him to "feed my sheep," an expression of leadership over the community.

It is logically inconsistent to suggest that the Prophet Muhammad, whose message is intended to be **eternal for all nations**, would be the only prophet to leave his community without a designated successor.

Part 2: The Event at Ghadir Khumm

The appointment of Imam Ali took place during the **10th year after migration** during the "Farewell Pilgrimage". As the Prophet was returning to Medina, a revelation came (Surah al-Ma'ida, Ayah 67) commanding him: *"O Messenger, deliver what has been revealed to you... if you do it not, then you have not delivered His message"*.

The Prophet stopped the massive caravan of at least **90,000 pilgrims** at **Ghadir Khumm**, a junction where travelers would typically scatter toward their respective homes. In the extreme heat of the desert, he had a pulpit built from camel saddles and delivered his final, everlasting sermon.

Part 3: The Symbolic Act of the Turban

A key moment of the ceremony was the Prophet's use of visual symbols to communicate leadership. According to the sources, the Prophet took his own special turban—known as "**As-Sahab**" (or "**As-Sahah**" in certain linguistic contexts)—and placed it on the head of Imam Ali.

In the culture of the Arabian Peninsula, it was a recognized custom for a leader to place his turban on his successor's head to signal the transfer of authority. This specific black turban, which the Prophet wore only on momentous occasions, acted "**just like a crown**," practically demonstrating to the 90,000 witnesses that Ali was the new leader. Imam Ali later recalled this with pride, noting that the Prophet himself had crowned him with his own turban.

Part 4: Ten Proofs of Succession (Analysis)

The core of the debate between schools of thought often centers on the word "**Mawla**." While some suggest it only means "friend," the following ten proofs from the sources argue for **leadership**:

1. **Rhetorical Precedent:** If all previous prophets and even the early caliphs recognized the need to appoint successors, it is illogical to claim the Prophet neglected this duty.
2. **Context and Conditions:** It is unlikely the Prophet would stop 90,000 people in life-threatening heat just to tell them to be "friendly" with Ali, something he had already commanded many times.
3. **The Final Revelation:** The verses revealed (Ayah 67 and Ayah 3) describe this message as the **completion of religion**, implying a significance far greater than mere friendship.
4. **Linguistic "Awla":** Before saying "Whoever I am his Mawla," the Prophet asked the crowd if he had more authority (*Awla*) over them than they had over themselves.
5. **The Turban "As-Sahab":** As discussed, the act of "crowning" Ali with his turban was a traditional sign of appointing a leader.
6. **The Physical Handshake:** The Prophet commanded the people to shake hands with Ali and greet him as "**Amir**" (Commander/Leader).
7. **Congratulations from Companions:** Historical records show that Abu Bakr and Umar were among the first to congratulate Ali, saying he had become the "Master of every believer".
8. **The Poetry of Hassan ibn Thabit:** The famous poet of the Prophet recited verses on-site, explicitly describing Ali as the **Imam and Guide**.
9. **Immediate Confession:** The crowd's reaction and their witness at the pond of Khumm served as a formal confession of Ali's status.
10. **The Adjuration (Al-Munashada):** Twenty-five years later, Imam Ali stood in Kufa and asked witnesses to swear if they had heard the Prophet's declaration at Ghadir. **Thirty people**, including many companions, stood up to testify that they had heard it directly from the Prophet's lips.

Conclusion

The Hadith of Ghadir Khumm is considered **Mutawatir** (mass-transmitted), narrated by 110 companions and recorded by 360 Sunni scholars. The combination of divine revelation, symbolic crowning with the "**As-Sahab**" turban, and the immediate congratulations of the community confirms that this was a formal appointment of leadership intended to preserve the mission of Islam for all time