

Lesson 14

Supplementary Notes

Awliyā'



In the Name of Allāh, the Merciful, the Compassionate

The lexical meaning of **waliyy** (plural: awliyā') is : a supporter, ally or protector. This lexical meaning occurs in the Qur'an. "Allāh is the waliyy of those who believe, bringing them out from the darknesses into the light." Qur'ān [2:257] "Your awliyā' are only Allāh, and His Messenger, and those who believe—who establish Ṣalāh, and pay Zakāh, and they bow. And, whoever takes Allāh and His Messenger, and those who believe as **awliyā'**, then indeed, the party of Allāh shall be the victorious ones." Qur'ān [5:55-56] So, in this sense, every Muslim is a **waliyy**, because merely by accepting Islām, he is swelling the ranks of the believers and supporting Islām. However, the technical meaning of **waliyy** is, of course, more specific.

"Lo! The awliyā' of Allāh, there is no fear upon them, nor do they grieve; those who believe and keep their duty to Allāh. theirs are glad tidings in the life of this world, and in the Hereafter." Qur'ān [10:63-65] This verse gives two conditions for a person to be a waliyy :

- 1) That he be a believer (i.e. a Muslim)
- 2) That he be **muttaqī** ('pious') i.e. one who performs all of the obligatory deeds and avoids all of the major sins, and does not persist upon any minor sin. There is a third condition:
- 3) That he persist upon at least something from among the optional deeds, even if it be little. This comes from the authentic **hadith qudsī**: "Allāh said, 'I will declare war against him who shows hostility to a waliyy of Mine. And the most beloved things with which My slave comes nearer to Me, is that which I have made obligatory upon him; and My slave continues coming closer to Me through supererogatory deeds (**nawāfil**) until I love him, so I become his sense of hearing with which he hears, and his sense of sight with which he sees, and his hand with which he grasps, and his foot with which he walks; and if he asks Me, I will give him, and if he asks My protection (Refuge), I will protect him; (i.e. give him My Refuge)." [Bukhārī]

It is not essential that the waliyy be a scholar, but he must at least know the essentials of his religion (in both belief and practice). The converse, however, does hold - i.e. every genuine scholar, who acts on his knowledge, is necessarily a waliyy. It is reported that Imāms Abū Ḥanīfah and al-Shāfi'ī said that if the practising scholars are not awliyā' of Allāh, then Allāh does not have a single waliyy. It is not essential that the waliyy exhibit any supernatural feats (karāmāt).

So, **a waliyy is** : a pious Muslim who performs all of the obligations, avoids major sins, does not persist on any minor sin, and performs some optional deed(s) on a regular basis, and who dies as a Muslim (although it is possible for someone to be a waliyy for some time and then later drop from the station of wilayah before his/her death, as was the case of a pious man among the Palestinians who disobeyed Allāh and lost his station:

"Narrate to them the story of him to whom We gave Our signs, but he withdrew himself from them, so Satan overtook him and he then became one of the deluded. If We had willed, We would have exalted him thereby, but he clung to the earth and followed his desires. So, his likeness is the likeness of a dog; if you provoke it, it will loll out its tongue at you, and if you leave it alone, it will (still) loll out its tongue at you. That is the parable of those who reject Our signs, so relate the narrative in order that they might reflect." Qur'ān [7:175-176]

If someone sees the signs of **wilāyah** in a Muslim, he can regard that person as a **waliyy**, but cannot oblige others to agree with him. He does not know if the person is really a waliyy before Allāh, because the person may not have the correct intention for all of his good deeds, and even if he does, we do not know if he will die as a waliyy. However, we can consider him as a waliyy in this world if he exhibits the signs of wilayah, just as we regard people as Muslims if they exhibit the signs of Islām, although there is no certainty in either case. Of course, there are some whose wilayah is beyond question, such as the **Khulafā ar-Rāshidīn** and other **Ṣaḥābah** who were promised Paradise. It is also important to realize that even if someone is a waliyy, it does not make him *infallible* - he might still occasionally commit sins (although generally he would quickly repent), and of course he might make honest mistakes. Hence, claiming that a particular scholar is a waliyy does not serve to validate each and every verdict of his. Our ultimate references are the **Qur'ān** and **Sunnah**, and if it should turn out that an extremely pious waliyy has overlooked or contradicted some aspect of the **Shari'ah** or related matters, we will not follow him in that mistake, although our good opinion and esteem for him would lead us to hope that he will be rewarded a single reward for his honest effort in spite of having been mistaken in his final conclusion.

DIFFERENCES between a **prophet** and a **waliyy**:

1. **Prophets are sinless**, while awliya' are not.
2. **Prophets receive revelation**, awliya' do not. A waliyy can receive some

kind of communication from Allāh, and it is usually called **ilhām**. There is the hadith whose basic meaning is that prophethood has ended, and only communications of glad tidings remain - they are one fortieth of prophethood, and they are true dreams. Also there is indication in the Qur'ān, and support from the hadith, which indicate that a believer can sometimes see things which others cannot. Hence, it is conceivable for a waliyy for sometimes receive extraordinary insight, or a vision, which conveys to him something which for others remains in the realm of the unseen. The lexical meaning of **wahy** (informing someone in an inapparent manner) could cover **ilhām** also, but technically, **wahy** is used to refer to that communication which Allāh transmits to a Prophet.

Some **DIFFERENCES** between **wahy** and **ilhām**

- **wahy** is intended to be communicated to people, as part of the Prophet's message, whereas **ilhām** need not be told to anyone.
 - it is a FARḌ to accept **wahy** of a Prophet; one denying it commits **kufr**. On the other hand, one is not obliged to accept the content of **ilhām**. The waliyy himself might believe it, but he cannot force others to do so. (But see next point also).
 - **wahy** is inevitably binding. **ilhām**, on the other hand, must be referred back to the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Then, if it agrees with them, it may be accepted (although that is still not conclusive proof that it is **ilhām**). However, if it conflicts with them then it is essential to reject it as being imaginings, delusions or Satanic whisperings. Following a claimed '**ilhām**' which makes a Ḥalal Ḥaram or a Ḥaram Ḥalal is **kufr** and **shirk**.
3. **Prophethood is a selection by Allāh**, such that a person cannot attain that rank by his own efforts, no matter how pious he might become. Wilāyah, on the other hand, is a status which can potentially be acquired through fulfilling the conditions mentioned earlier.
4. **The best waliyy does not reach the rank of the lowest prophet.** As for **Khidir** (the wise companion of Prophet Moses (عليه السلام)), mentioned in the Qur'an in *Surah al-Kahf* (Qur'ān [16:60:82]) : the majority of scholars are of the view that he was a prophet, and the following arguments weigh strongly in their favor:
- "they found one of Our servants, whom We had given mercy from Us ..." In the Qur'an, various Prophets of Allāh are described as haven been "given mercy from Allāh," which suggests that this term is an allusion to prophethood. "[Noah(عليه السلام)] said, 'O my people! Have you considered, if I am upon clear proof from my Lord, and He has given me mercy from Him, but it has been obscured from you, shall we compel it upon you while you are averse to it?'" Qur'ān [(11) Hūd, 28] "Ṣālih (عليه السلام) said, 'O my people!

Have you considered, if I am on clear proof from my Lord, and He has given me mercy from Him, then who will Ismail, Idris.”

- “and We taught him knowledge from Us.” He told the future: again in keeping with the idea of his prophethood.
- “I have not done it by my own decision.” This implies that he did it either based on revelation (**wahy**), or because he did not have control of his actions.
- Killing the boy because of his future. This tips the scale in favor of prophethood, for **ilhām** can never be used to kill a person before he has committed a crime.

In any case, even one were to postulate that a prophet learned something from a waliyy, the distinction in that portion of knowledge does not by itself imply an overall distinction of the waliyy. *Ḥāfiza’d-Dīn an-Nasafī* says, in his exegesis (**Tafsīr**) of Sūrah al-Kahf, “Some deviant people have slipped up in ascribing to the **waliyy** an excellence above the prophet, and this is lucid kufr . . . the waliyy cannot be a waliyy without his believing in the prophet, and it is impossible then that the prophet be lower than the waliyy!” [*Madārik al-Tanzīl wa Ḥaqā’iq al-Ta’wīl*] Wonders (**karamāt**) of the awliyā’ A karāmah is an extraordinary event occurring at the hands of a pious person. Not every waliyy need necessarily have a karāmah. The best honor or wonder is to remain on the straight path.

Proof for the existence of karamāt

The following incidents from the Qur’ān and Sunnah are evidence that **karāmāt** are a reality:

1. The Karāmāt of Mary (peace be upon her)

(i) “Whenever Zacharias entered upon her, he found sustenance with her. He said, ‘O Mary! How did you get this?’ She said, ‘It is from Allāh.’” Qur’ān [3:37] Zacharias was Mary’s guardian when she was young. When he would come into her chamber, he would find that she had food; it is said that in the summer she would have fruits of the winter, and in the winter she would have fruits of the summer. In days before the discovery of refrigeration and the like, such an occurrence is indeed extraordinary and miraculous. According to the majority view, Mary (peace be upon her) was not a Prophet, and hence this was a karāmah.

(ii) “And shake the trunk of the date-palm toward you, it will let fall fresh, ripe dates upon you.” Qur’ān [19:25]

2. The Karāmah of Āsif ibn Barkhiyyah

“ [Solomon (ﷺ)] said, ‘O chiefs! Which of you can bring me her (i.e. the Queen of Sheba’s) throne before they come to me in submission?’ A

powerful, scheming one ('ifrīt) of the jinn said, 'I can bring it to you before you can rise from your place. Indeed, I am one strong and trustworthy for [the job].' The one who had knowledge of the Scripture said, 'I will bring it to you within the twinkling of an eye.' Qur'ān [27:38-40] It is not remarkable for the jinn to be able to bring a throne from **Sheba** (in the south of Arabia) to Palestine in a short time, for the jinn have capabilities which humans do not. However, for the man with knowledge of the Book (whose name is given by exegetes (**Mufasssīrīn**) as *Āsif ibn Barkhiyyah*) to produce it in the twinkling of an eye is indeed extraordinary. He is described merely as someone with knowledge of the scripture, which implies that he was not a prophet, and hence the wonder which he displayed was a **karāmah**.

3. The Karāmah of the Sleepers of the Cave

"Do you think that the People of the Cave . . . were a wonder among Our signs?" Qur'ān [18:9] The People of the Cave were youths who were believers in the true message of Jesus (ﷺ), and they lived before coming of Muḥammad (ﷺ). Their people were unbelievers, and the youths were therefore being subjected to persecution. Hence, the youths left their community in order to safeguard their faith. They took refuge in a cave, and slept there. "You would think them awake, although they were asleep. And We caused them to turn to the right and to the left, with their dog stretching out its paws on the threshold. If you had come upon them, you would have turned away from them in flight, and you would have been filled with awe of them." Qur'ān [(18) Al-Kahf, 18] They remained in the cave for an extraordinarily long period of time, and then awoke and their case became known to people. Qur'ān [(18) Al-Kahf, 9-26 for more details of their story] Again, these youths were not prophets, for there was no prophet between Jesus (ﷺ) and Muhammad (ﷺ). [Abū Dāwūd and others].

These, then, are incidents in the Qur'an which are evidence that **karāmāt** are a reality. There is also abundant evidence in the authentic aḥādith, such as the Ḥadīth (reported by Bukhārī, Muslim and others) about three people of a previous nation who were trapped in a cave by a rockfall. Each of them supplicated to Allāh, on the merit of a particular good deed they had done. After each person's supplication, the rock which had blocked the entrance moved slightly, until the third time, the opening became large enough for them to escape. Imām Bukhārī has also narrated that the Companion Khubayb (رضي الله عنه), who had been captured as a prisoner by the pagans of Makkah, was seen during his captivity with a large bunch of grapes, although there were no grapes to be found in Makkah at that time. There are also reports of karāmāt from the time of the Companions, and from subsequent generations. In this century, many karāmāt were witnessed during

the Afghan jihād. Shaykh 'Abdullah 'Azzām (may Allāh show mercy to him) has documented numerous such incidents in his book "*Āyāt al-Raḥmān fī Jihād al-Aghān*" (The Signs of the Most Gracious in the Afghan Jihād). They include a martyr shaking his father's hand after death, and captured Russian prisoners telling of cavalry that had been attacking them (although the Afghans had no cavalry; what the Russians had seen must have been angels who had come to assist the believers).

There are many examples of Karāmāt in our times also..