

Imam ‘Ali’s Testimony to the Miracle of the Holy Qur’ān: An Interpretation of the Qur’ān, ١٣:٤٣

Abstract

The miraculous nature (*i’jāz*) of the Qur’ān remains perpetually relevant as it has served as definitive proof of Muhammad’s (PBUH) the prophethood since the advent of his mission (*bi’tha*). Qur’ānic scholars have identified various aspects of this *i’jāz*, which is evident in the Book itself: linguistic eloquence (*faṣāḥa*), substantive depth, and the exceptional character of its Bearer. On the one hand God presents the evidence for the truthfulness of his Messenger’s (PBUH) prophesy in Q. ١٣:٤٣, saying, “*he who possesses the knowledge of the Book*”. According to both Shi’a and Sunni scholars, the referent of it is Imam ‘Ali. Like the Holy Prophet (PBUH), Imam ‘Ali possessed comprehensive knowledge of the meanings of the Qur’ān. He was also infallible (*ma’ṣūm*) in understanding and interpreting Qur’ān. Thus, After the Prophet (PBUH), he was the foremost exegete being aware of all meanings of the Book. In *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Imam ‘Ali describes manifest (*ẓāhir*) and esoteric (*bāṭin*) meanings of Qur’ān and his interpretations of the Words of God are thought-provoking. The present analytical-descriptive study aimed to find a new aspect of the *i’jāz* of the Qur’ān based on the testimony of God in the Book, the phrase “*he who possesses the knowledge of the Book*”, and also through determining the meaning of “the knowledge of the Book” and emphasizing the scholarly authority of Imam ‘Ali, his testimonies regarding the *i’jāz* of Qur’ān. By synthesizing these elements, the research establishes Imam ‘Ali’s definitive role in attesting to the Qur’ān’s miraculous nature.

Keywords: Qur’ān, *i’jāz*, Imam ‘Ali, *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Q. ١٣:٤٣; “he who possesses the knowledge of the Book”

1. Introduction

The belief in the miraculous nature (*i'jāz*) of the Qur'ān is unanimously affirmed by all Islamic thinkers. However, there have always been disagreements regarding the specific aspects that constitute its *i'jāz*. For centuries, Qur'ānic scholars have identified various aspects of the Qur'ān's miracle using Qur'ānic evidence, broadly categorized into two types: ١. Linguistic and Semantic *i'jāz*; ٢. *i'jāz* Concerning Its Bearer.

Linguistic *i'jāz* Pertains to the Qur'ān's eloquence (*faṣāḥah*) and rhetorical superiority (*balāghah*), while the semantic *i'jāz* encompasses multiple aspects including the absence of contradictions in the Qur'ān (Q ٤:٨٧), prophecies of the unseen, and scientific miracles, etc.

The second aspect centers on the Prophet's personality, the Bearer of the Qur'ān. the Prophet's unlettered nature (being *ummīyyah*)—his lack of formal education—emphasized in verses such as *al-Ankabūt* (٧٩:٤٨) and *al-A'rāf* (٧:١٥٧-١٥٨).

although scholars have extensively debated these aspects, a profound understanding of the aspects of Qur'ān's *i'jāz* requires insights from those who were constant companions of the Prophet (PBUH) and witnesses to revelation. Among them, Imam 'Ali's words are invaluable; he witnessed the revelation directly and is universally acknowledged, even by Sunni and non-Muslim scholars, as the most distinguished companion.

The present descriptive-analytical study aims to examine whether, alongside the established aspects of the Qur'ān's *i'jāz*, an additional aspect can be identified. Given that the Qur'ān is the eternal divine miracle and proof of the Prophet's (PBUH) truthfulness, Q. ١٣:٤٣ is pivotal. Here, the Almighty God responds to disbelievers' enquiry by invoking His own testimony and that of "he who possesses the knowledge of the Book" (١٣:٤٣). In this study, exegesis of Surah *Ar-Ra'd* ٤٣, first, is examined, identifying the referent of "he who possesses the knowledge of the Book" (١٣:٤٣) from Shi'a and Sunni perspectives. Then, by analyzing Imam 'Ali's scholarly status and his various interpretations about the Qur'ān's *i'jāz*, the Prophet's (PBUH) truthfulness is confirmed and a new aspect of the Qur'ān's miracle is demonstrated.

2. Literature Review

Regarding the first part of the study- i.e., Imam 'Ali's testimony to the miraculousness of the Qur'ān- no independent research has been conducted. However, some articles have been written on Imam 'Ali's perspective on the Qur'ān, including:

Zarūndī, N., & Zarūndī, J. (٢٠١٩). The Qur'ān in the Words of 'Ali, and 'Ali in the Qur'ān's Expression. *Bayyināt*.

١. 'Abd al-Ḥakīm, D. (٢٠٠٠). Reciprocal Expressions of the Qur'ān and the Amīr al-Mu'minīn, *Qur'ānic Research*, ٢٣-٢٤.
٢. 'Alī Khānī, 'A., 'Alawī-Nejād, S. Ḥ. (٢٠٠٠). Imam 'Ali and the Qur'ān, *Qur'ānic Research*, ٢٣-٢٤.

As for the second part of the study- concerning Q. 13:43 - the following researches has been conducted:

١. Dārābī, S. Ḥ., Aḥmadī Aṭḥar, 'I, B. (٢٠١٩). A Critical Review of Sunni Exegetes' Views on the Meaning of "The One Who Possesses the Knowledge of the Book". *Qur'ānic and Hadith Studies*, 2.
٢. Pūr-Rustamī, Ḥ. (٢٠٠٦). Manifestations of Harmonious Truth Between the Qur'ān and 'Ali. *Shi'a Studies*, 16.

٣. Naṣīrī, ‘A, & Naṣīrī, M. H. (٢٠١٣). Identifying the Referent of ‘The One Who Possesses the Knowledge of the Book’. *Imamate Studies*, 11.

These studies have partially addressed the identification of the referent of "the one who possesses the knowledge of the Book" (13: 43). However, the present research focuses on proving the truthfulness of the Prophet’s (PBUH) prophecy through the Qur’ān’s miracle from Imam ‘Ali’s perspective, based on two premises: ١. Imam ‘Ali is the referent of “*the one who possesses the knowledge of the Book*” (١٣: ٤٣); ٢. The profound expressions Imam ‘Ali used regarding the Qur’ān’s *i’jāz* in Nahj al-Balāgha.

3. Discussion

٣,١ Analysis of Q. ١٣:٤٣ from Shi‘a and Sunni perspective

The disbelievers rejected the Qur’ān, the greatest miracle of the Prophet (PBUH), and demanded other tangible miracles, which was nothing but a mere pretext. That’s why the Prophet did not present such miracles, leading them to deny his Prophethood outright (Khoei, 2004, pp. 105-١١٥). In response, Allah states in Q. ١٣:٤٣: “*The faithless say, ‘You have not been sent [by Allah].’ Say, ‘Allah suffices as a witness between me and you, and he who possesses the knowledge of the Book.’*”

In jurisprudential terminology, *shahādah* (testimony) has two possible meanings: *Tahammul al-shahādah* (bearing witness), *Adā’ al-shahādah* (giving testimony) (Muḥaqqiq Dāmād, ١٩٨٥, vol. ٣, p. ٥٩). *Tahammul al-shahādah* is the act of witnessing an event directly through sensory perception (i.e., seeing and hearing) (Hāshimī Shahrūdī, ٢٠١٣, p. ٣٨١).

Considering the types of testimony, Allah’s testimony in this verse is *Adā’ al-shahādah* not the *Tahammul* one. Interpreting it as *Tahammul al-shahādah* would distort the verse’s meaning, since *Tahammul al-shahādah* connotes witnessing, observing, and possessing knowledge of the actual occurrence; It is inconceivable to attribute the matter under discussion, namely, the truth of the Prophets’ Prophethood, to the *‘ilm al-llāh* (divine knowledge) alone, and to consider the *‘ilm al-llāh* as evidence against the opponent. This is because the adversary has no access to divine *‘ilm al-llāh* to see whether the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) correctly claims Prophethood or falsely attributes to Allah (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, ١٩٩٦, vol. ١١, p. ٥٢٧). In addition, *Adā’ al-shahādah* mean what the witness knows (either through seeing or hearing). It can be *qawlī* (spoken testimony) or *fi’lī* (demonstrative testimony).

Fakhr al-Rāzī argues that Allah’s testimony here is *fi’lī*, arguing testimony means Allah’s manifestation of miracles through the Prophet, implying the truthfulness of Prophet’s claim; and this is *fi’lī*, not *qawlī*, and the highest level of *shahādah* (Fakhr al-Rāzī, ١٩٩٩, vol. ١٩, p. ٦٩). However, Nīshābūrī (١٩٩٥, vol. ٤, p. ١٦٧) argues this interpretation is incorrect since *shahādah*, here, is *qawlī* not *fi’lī*, because the evidence showing the truthfulness of Muhammad’s Prophethood is either Qur’ān itself being the eternal miracle or other miracles but Qur’ān. Surah Ar-Ra’d explicitly rejects the disbelievers’ demand for other miracles than Qur’ān. This means no miracle was sent down to them, so it would be illogical for God to testify to Muhammad’s (PBUH) Prophethood through a means He Himself has negated. Therefore, God’s testimony here refers to citing the Qur’ān as evidence, and relying on the Qur’ān is valid because it is the miracle and sign (āyah) attesting to the truth of the Prophet’s mission. In other words, it is the Divine Word that bears witness to the Prophethood of Muhammad (PBHH). And since the Qur’ān belongs to the category of speech (*kalām*), it becomes clear that God’s testimony to His Prophet’s (PBUH) Prophethood is *qawlī* (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, ١٩٩٦, vol. ١١, p. ٣٨٦).

۳.۲ Shi'a and Sunni perspectives on Identifying the referent of “he who possesses knowledge of the Book”

The scholarly authority of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS), particularly Imam ‘Ali, is obvious among Shi'a scholars and acknowledged by many Sunni authorities. Most Shi'a scholars identify Imam ‘Ali as the referent of "*the one who possesses knowledge of the Book*" (۱۳: ۴۳). However, in this research, based on the premise that the testimony of God and “*he who possesses the knowledge of the Book*” (13:43) is sufficient to prove the *i’jāz* of the Qur’ān, as well as establishing the referent of “*he who possesses the knowledge of the Book*”, and, further, emphasizing the scholarly status of Imam ‘Ali and the terminology he employed regarding the Qur’ān’s *i’jāz*, we are to uncover another aspect of the Qur’ān’s miraculousness.

There are also alternative interpretations including:

۱. Interpretations that consider the "Book" as Preserved Tablet (*al-Lawh al-Mahfuz*), and Allah as its knower (al-Ṭūsī, n.d., vol. ۶, p. ۲۶۷; al-Ṭabrisī, ۱۹۹۳, vol. ۱۳, p. ۹۱).
۲. Interpretations that consider all Imams (AS), alongside Imam ‘Ali, as referents of “*he who possesses the knowledge of the Book*” (ibid).
۳. Interpretations that consider the "Book" as either the Qur’ān, with Imam ‘Ali as being its knower, or Torah and Gospel, with either Jewish/Christian scholars generally being the men of the Book (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, ۱۹۹۶: vol. ۱۱, p. ۳۸۷) or certain believers of the Book such as Abdullah ibn Salam, Salman al-Farsi, and Tamim al-Dari (al-Ṭūsī, n.d., vol. ۶, p. ۳۶۷; al-Ṭabrisī, ۱۹۹۳, vol. ۱۳, p. ۹۱).
۴. Interpretations that consider Gabriel, Imam ‘Ali, believers, and Abdullah ibn Salam as referents (Kāshānī, ۲۰۲۴, vol. ۵, p. ۲۵۵).

Notably, even in these alternative interpretations, Imam ‘Ali remains the definitive (*qadr-e mutayaqqan*) referent, being accepted by all Shi'a commentators.

Many Sunni scholars also affirm Imam ‘Ali as the referent of “he who possesses the knowledge of the Book” (Al-Ḥaskānī, ۱۹۹۰: vol. ۱, p. ۴۰۰; Ibn al-Jawzī, ۲۰۰۱, vol. ۲, p. ۵۰۲; Miybūdī, ۱۹۹۲, vol. ۵, p. ۲۱۶; Al-Tha’labī, ۲۰۰۱, vol. ۵, p. ۳۰۳, ۴۰۲; Al-Qundūzī, ۱۹۹۵, vol. ۱, p. ۳۰), though some have mentioned other referents, too. Alternative Sunni views include:

Interpretations that consider the “Book” as Torah/Gospel, with Jewish/Christian scholars affirming the Prophet as the referents of “*he who possesses the knowledge of the Book*” (al-Al-Baghawī, ۱۹۹۹, vol. ۳, p. ۲۹; Fakhr al-Rāzī, ۱۹۹۹, vol. ۱۹, p. ۵۵; al-Baydawī, ۱۹۹۷, vol. ۳, p. 191). Some also mention individuals like Abdullah ibn Salam, Tamim al-Dari, and Salman al-Farsi as the referents (Marāghī, n.d., vol. ۱۳, p. ۱۲۰; Mawardī, n.d., vol. ۳, p. ۱۱۹). In addition, some exclusively take Abdullah ibn Salam as the referent (al-Ṭabarī, ۱۹۹۱, vol. ۱۳, pp. ۱۱۸-۱۱۹; Nasafī, ۱۹۹۵, vol. ۱, p. ۴۸۱).

۱. Interpretations reject these opinions in some way, and don’t specify a certain referent, having merely contented themselves with stating the phrase, “Allah knows best” (al-Baghawī, ۱۹۹۹, vol. ۳, p. ۲۹; Qāsimī, ۱۹۹۷, vol. ۶, ۲۹۴).

Some argued that Allah Himself is the One who possesses the knowledge of the Book (al-Ṭabarī, ۱۹۹۱, vol. ۱۳, P. ۱۲۰; Fakhr al-Rāzī, ۱۹۹۹, vol. ۹, p. ۵۴; al-Zamakhsharī, ۱۹۸۶, vol. ۲, p. ۵۳۶)

3-3 Critical evaluation of exegetes Views

First View: the Book as Preserved Tablet, the Knower being Allah

This is improbable because it, first, contradicts the apparent grammatical function of the conjunction ('atf): that the conjoined phrase (*ma tūf*) and the phrase it is conjoined to (*ma tūf 'alayhi*) should differ. Here, the first phrase has already *established divine sufficiency*, making a repetition semantically redundant. (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ۱۹۹۶, vol. ۱۱, p. ۳۸۸). And as Fakhr al-Rāzī states: It is incorrect to say, “Both Zayd and the jurist testified this,” and if ‘the jurist’ refers to Zayd himself. Rather, one must say, ‘Zayd the jurist testified.’ (Fakhr al-Rāzī, ۱۹۹۹, vol. ۱۹, p. 55).

Secondly, Secondly, conjoining an adjective (*ṣifa*) to its referent (*dhāt*) is erroneous and is considered inelegant and non-eloquent (*ghayr faṣīḥ*). Accordingly, Al-Zamakhsharī reinterpreted the phrase [in question] and transformed the first phrase into a descriptive phrase; “That is, “*Sufficient is He Who is worthy of worship and He Who possesses the knowledge of the Preserved Tablet—He is the witness between me and you*” (al-Zamakhsharī, ۱۹۸۶, vol. ۲, p. ۵۳۶). Here, instead of using the term ‘Allāh, which denotes the Divine Essence (*dhāt*), he employs the descriptive phrase “the One Who is worthy of worship.” However, merely rephrasing an expression, that does not convey a direct meaning, into another form to make it meaningful does not justify claiming that the original expression was correct and semantically valid. For if this argument were accepted, the entire science of linguistic rulings (*aḥkām al-alfāz*) would be rendered void, every false word could be deemed valid, and every true statement could be invalidated” (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ۱۹۹۶, vol. ۱۴, pp. ۵۲۷-۵۲۸).

Second view: the Book as Torah/Gospel, the Knowers being (a) Jewish/Christian Scholars or (b) certain referents.

Regarding the first view, this proves untenable for a number of reasons. The Arabic particle "man" (من) in this verse is a relative pronoun (*mawṣūla*) that can only refer to a single individual. If the intent were to refer to more than one person, the phrases *alladhāni* (الذان) or *alladhīna* (الذین) (The two or those who) would have been used. It is also highly likely that the knowledge referred to in the verse transcends the ordinary, apparent knowledge—such as the knowledge of Āṣif ibn Barkhiyā, which encompasses realms like mastery over hidden secrets (*asrār*) and the ability to influence ontological affairs (*takwīniyāt*); A hallmark of his knowledge was the instantaneous retrieval of Queen Bilqīs's throne from a great distance (Al-Ṭūsī, ۱۹۸۶, pp. ۸۰-۹۸). If so, the Prophet's argument (*iḥtijāj*) against the polytheists of Quraysh would be based on the knowledge of the People of the Book (*Ahl al-Kitāb*). However, this *surah* was revealed in Mecca, where not a single Jewish or Christian scholar had believed in the Prophet or testified to his Prophethood. It would thus be illogical for the Prophet to base his claim of Prophethood on the testimony of someone who had not, in fact, testified to it (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ۱۹۹۶, vol. ۱۱, p. ۵۲۸). Had this interpretation been acceptable, the Prophet would be better citing the polytheists' own since Qur'ānic miracles had been acknowledged by them and the proof was conclusive against them (Husseini Tehrani, 2005, vol. 4, p. 238).

Regarding the second view that holds the Referents are Specific Jewish/Christian Scholars who embraced Islam and testified to the Prophet's Prophethood, such as 'Abdullah ibn Salam, Salman al-Farisi, Jarud, and Tamim al-Dari, is also invalid. Interpreting the verse as referring to 'Abdullah ibn Salam or certain scholars of the People of the Book contradicts historical facts, as all these individuals converted to Islam in Medina, while verse ۴۳ of Surah al-Ra'd was revealed in Mecca. It would make no sense for the Prophet in Mecca to argue with the Quraysh

polytheists using the testimony of individuals who would only embrace Islam later in Medina. The Shī'ī exegete, Sa'id ibn Jubayr, when questioned about this verse and whether it referred to 'Abdullah ibn Salam, replied: "How could this be, when this is a Meccan surah and 'Abdullah ibn Salam embraced Islam after the *Hijrah* in Medina?" (al-Ṭabarī, ۱۹۹۱, vol. ۱۳, p. ۱۷۸; al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ۱۹۹۶, vol. ۱۱, p. ۳۸۵).

Notably, the prominent scholar Sha'bi stated that no Qur'ānic verse was ever revealed about Abdullah ibn Salam (Al-Shawkānī, n.d., vol. ۳, p. ۱۱۰; al-Muẓaffar, ۲۰۱۶, vol. ۲, p. ۱۳۵). Interestingly, Abdullah ibn Salam himself reported Imam 'Ali (AS) as the verse's true referent (al-Ḥusaynī al-Mar'ashī, n.d., vol. ۳, p. ۲۸۴; al-Qundūzī, ۱۹۹۵, vol. ۲, p. ۲۵۰). The Imams (AS), as the true interpreters of Qur'ān, in an effort to expose distorted interpretations, consistently emphasized this verse's revelation about Imam 'Ali (al-Ḥaskānī, ۱۹۹۰, vol. ۱, p. ۴۰۲; al-'Arūsī al-Ḥuwayzī, ۱۹۹۴, vol. ۲, p. ۵۲۲), while rejecting alternative interpretations as fabrications (al-'Ayyāshī, ۲۰۰۱, vol. ۲, p. ۲۲۰; al-'Arūsī al-Ḥuwayzī, ۱۹۹۴, vol. ۲, p. ۵۲۳).

Third view (The Preferred View): The intended meaning of "he who possesses the knowledge of the Book" refers to Imam 'Ali

Shi'a exegesis unanimously affirms Imam 'Ali as the exclusive referent of "*he who possesses the knowledge of the Book*" (al-Tusi, n.d. vol. ۶, p. ۴۸۵; Ṭabrisī, ۱۹۹۳, vol. ۶, p. ۴۸۲; Tabataba'ī, 1996, vol. 11, p. 83).

Numerous traditions from the *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS) unexceptionally identify Imam 'Ali as the verse's cause of revelation (al-'Ayyāshī, ۲۰۰۱, vol. ۲, p. ۲۲۱; al-Baḥrānī, ۱۹۹۵, vol. ۲, p. ۳۰۲; Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, ۱۹۹۴, vol. ۳, p. ۷۷; Ṣaffār, ۱۹۸۳, p. ۲۳۶). While ample traditions include other Imams (AS), as well.

Numerous narrations indicate that the phrase "*he who possesses the knowledge of the Book*" refers to Imam 'Ali and the Imams of Guidance (AS). These narrations do not imply exclusivity but rather point to their specific and most perfect manifestations. Thus, applying this verse to the Imams (AS) is flawless (al-'Ayyāshī, ۱۹۶۰, vol. ۲, p. ۲۲۱; Al-Baḥrānī, ۱۹۹۵, vol. ۲, p. ۳۰۲; al-'Arūsī al-Ḥuwayzī, ۱۹۹۴, vol. ۱, pp. ۷۲۳–vol. ۲, pp. ۵۲۱, ۵۲۲).

In his commentary on this verse, Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī emphasizes that this noble verse was revealed concerning Imam 'Ali and that the narrations on this matter are confirmed. Therefore, if the phrase "he who possesses the knowledge of the Book" is applied to those who believed in the Messenger of God (AS), it will undoubtedly apply 'Ali as well. This is because, as attested by numerous authentic narrations, he was the most knowledgeable in the Book of God among the entire Muslim *Ummah*. Even if none of those narrations existed, the Hadith *al-Thaqalayn*, transmitted through both Shi'a and Sunni chains, would suffice as proof for this claim (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ۱۹۹۶, vol. ۱۱, p. ۵۳۰).

This is neither hidden nor unknown to many Sunni scholars; they identify Imam 'Ali as the referent of "*he who possesses the knowledge of the Book*." Among them, al-Ḥākim al-Al-Ḥaskānī in his exegesis *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl* cites through numerous narrations where Imam 'Ali is exclusively the referent (al-Al-Ḥaskānī, ۱۹۹۰, vol. ۱, pp. ۴۰۰, ۴۰۶). Similarly, al-Tha'labī, in his commentary on this verse, provides examples indicating that the verse's sole referent is Imam 'Ali (AS) (al-Tha'labī, ۲۰۰۱, vol. ۵, p. ۳۰۲; see also al-Ṭabrisī, ۱۹۹۱, vol. ۱۳, pp. ۱۱۸, ۱۹۹; al-Nasafī, ۱۹۹۵, vol. ۱, p. ۴۸۱; Ibn al-Jawzī, ۲۰۰۱, vol. ۲, p. ۵۰۲).

۳, ۴ The Scholarly Status of Imam ‘Ali

Both allies and adversaries agree that Imam ‘Ali’s peerless eloquence; This is evident in his Sermons, letters, and wise sayings. A meticulous study of his life in both Shi‘a and Sunni texts clearly substantiates this claim. As Dhahabi writes: “‘Ali was an ocean of knowledge with powerful reasoning, sound deduction, mature intellect, and penetrating insight into truths!” (al-Dhahabī, ۲۰۰۲, vol. ۱, p. ۸۹).

Citing reliable Sunni narrational sources regarding Imam ‘Ali and his scholarly status, it is recorded: “The Prophet (PBUH) said: I am the city of knowledge, and ‘Ali is its gate. The Prophet (PBUH) also said: ‘Ali is with the Qur’ān, and the Qur’ān is with ‘Ali.” (Nishābūrī, ۱۹۹۰, vol. ۳, p. ۱۲۶; Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī, ۱۹۷۰, vol. ۲, p. ۱۰۰).

Moreover, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, in the prolegomena to his Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah, elucidates the preeminent station of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (AS) within Islamic studies, asserting:

The Qur’ānic exegesis (tafsīr) derives its foundational principles from his teachings. A cursory examination of the exegetical works substantiates this claim, as the majority of transmitted narrations are narrated through his chain of transmission and that of ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās; his scholarly symbiosis with the Imam ‘Ali and leering from him is attested. When Ibn ‘Abbās was asked regarding the comparative scope of his knowledge against his cousin, he responded: “like a raindrop measured against the boundless ocean!” (Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, ۱۹۱۸, vol. ۱, P. ۱۹).

Elsewhere he writes:

“...His words are truly inferior to the Creator’s speech yet superior to the creation’s speech. The merit of his words is evident in that all orators learned rhetoric and all writers acquired their style from him. It suffices to say that not even one-tenth, nor one-twentieth, of what people have collected and preserved of ‘Ali’s words has been narrated from any companion of the Messenger of God (PBUH), despite the presence of eloquent speakers among them.” (Ibid., pp. 24-25).

Furthermore, in many Sermons of Nahj al-Balāgha, Imam ‘Ali himself refers to his scholarly status. For instance, in the Shiqshiqiyya Sermon, he affirms his qualifications through two attributes: “Knowledge reaches people through me” and “No advanced thought can attain my scholarly rank”. He has employed these two qualities as metaphors to describe himself (Ibn Mītham al-Baḥrānī, ۱۹۴۳, vol. ۱, p. ۴۹۷).

۳, ۵ The Testimony of Imam ‘Ali on the Qur’ān’s i’jāz

Imam ‘Ali devoted his entire life to establish, preserve, and correctly understand the Qur’ān in its comprehensive meaning and true structure (Dilshād-e Tehrānī, ۲۰۱۰, p. ۱۸۲).

Surah Ar-Ra‘d (۱۳:۴۳) reveals this truth that if you yourselves cannot discern [the truth], then Imam ‘Ali’s testimony to the Prophet’s (PBUH) truthfulness, through demonstrating the Qur’ān’s *i’jāz*, suffices. In Sermon ۱۲۲ of Nahj al-Balāgha, Imam ‘Ali’s explicitly declare his constant companion with Qur’ān, stating: “The Qur’ān is with me, I have been its companion since I embraced it, never parting from it.” In Sermon ۱۲۰, he emphasizes the need for Qur’ānic interpreters: “This Qur’ān is a written text between two covers. It does not speak by itself. It requires interpreters, men interpret it.”

۳, ۵, ۱ Testimony to the Qur'ān's Truthfulness Due to Its Comprehensive Knowledge (Reports of Past and Future Events)

The disclosure of unseen events (*ikhbār al-ghayb*) is one aspect of the Qur'ān's *i'jāz*. The Noble Qur'ān has predicted future events in some of its verses, and all that it reported has come true after a while without a single discrepancy. These predictions are the enduring witnesses to the truth of the Qur'ān's miraculous nature.

Some scholars categorized unseen reports into three temporal dimensions: past, present, and future (e.g., Ma'rifat, ۱۹۹۲, vol. ۴, p. ۲۹). Others, however, consider only future-related prophecies as evidence of the Qur'ān's *i'jāz* (e.g., Khoei, ۲۰۰۴, p. ۶۹).

In Sermon ۱۵۸ of Nahj al-Balāgha, Imam 'Ali's states: "Ask the Qur'ān to speak to you, but the Qur'ān will never speak. Instead, I will inform you of it. Know that within the Qur'ān lies the knowledge of the future, the narratives of the past, the cure for your ailments, and the order (*nizām*) of your life."

Here Imam 'Ali commands them to ask Qur'ān to speak, then interprets his own statement by directing them to hear the Qur'ān's speech from himself, for he is the tongue of God's Book and the Sunna. By saying "the Qur'ān will never speak," he dispels the misconception of those who were astonished and skeptical of his instruction to demand speech from the Qur'ān. He then declares that the knowledge of earlier peoples, the narratives of past generations, awareness of future events and tribulations, the conditions of the Resurrection, and the cure for your ailments all are contained within the Qur'ān (Ibn Mītham al-Baḥrānī, ۱۹۴۳, p. ۲۸۸).

۳, ۵, ۲ Testimony to the Qur'ān's *i'jāz* Due to Its Absence of Discrepancy, Inconsistency, or Deviation

One aspect of the Qur'ān's *i'jāz*, which the Qur'ān itself highlights (Q. ۴:۸۲), is the complete absence of contradiction within it.

Imam 'Ali's (AS) Testimonies on the Qur'ān's Consistency in three Sermons: In Sermon ۱۸, he states:

Allah says: "We have not neglected anything in this Book" (۶:۳۸) and "In it is the clarification of all things" (۱۶:۸۹). Moreover, some parts of the Qur'ān confirm others, and there is no discrepancy within it, "Had it been from [someone] other than Allah, they would have surely found much discrepancy in it." (۴:۸۲).

In Sermon 133, he declares:

It is the Book of Allah, through which you see, speak, and hear the truth. Some parts of it interpret others, and some parts testify to others. It contains no contradiction in the religion of Allah, nor does it lead its followers astray from Him.

In Sermon ۱۵۶, he emphasizes its lack of crookedness and deviation, saying "no crookedness enters it to require straightening, nor does it go wrong so as to need correction."

۳, ۵, ۳ Testimony to the Qur'ān's Truthfulness Due to Its Profound and Vast Knowledge

Imam 'Ali describes the depth and vastness of the Qur'ān's knowledge while mentioning its unique characteristics in Sermon ۱۹۸, stating: "An ocean whose depths cannot be comprehended." This statement refers to the hidden mysteries (*asrār*) and subtle sciences (*daqā'iq al-'ulūm*) contained within the Noble Qur'ān, knowledge that transcends human

thought and is accessible only to the elect of the divine court. (Makārim Shīrāzī, ۱۹۹۶, vol. ۷, p. 705).

He further elaborates: “It is a spring of knowledge and the seas of it are a garden of justice.” It is an ocean whose depths cannot be measured. The term “ocean” (baḥr) is a metaphor for Qur’ān in two perspectives: First. Depth of Its Mysteries, just as one cannot reach the bottom of a vast ocean, human intellects and thoughts are incapable of fully encompassing the Qur’ān’s secrets or grasping the depths of its meanings and objectives; second, Qur’ān as a mine of precious knowledge and virtues, much like the ocean as a source of priceless pearls. (Ibn Mītham al-Baḥrānī, ۱۹۴۳, vol. ۳, p. ۸۲۹; Khoei, ۲۰۰۴, vol. ۱۲, p. ۳۰۰).

۳,۰,۴ The Eternal Continuity and Immortality of Qur’ānic Knowledge

In Sermon ۱۸۹, Imam ‘Ali identifies the eternal continuity of Qur’ānic knowledge as another dimension of the Qur’ān’s *i’jāz*, describing it in awe-inspiring terms:

Thus, He revealed the Qur’ān to him, a light whose lamps are never extinguished, a flame whose radiance never diminishes, an ocean whose depths cannot be comprehend, a path whose traveler never goes astray, and a glare whose illumination is never overcome by darkness.

In Sermon ۱۳۳, he further emphasizes: ‘The Book of Allah is among you, as a speaker whose tongue never falters, a house whose pillars never crumble, and a victor whose supporters are never defeated.’”

۳,۰,۵ Testimony to the Qur’ān’s Truthfulness Through the Divine Manifestation in It

In Sermon ۱۴۷, Imam ‘Ali states: “Thus, Allah the Exalted revealed Himself to His servants through His Book without them seeing Him, through what He has shown them of His power and what He has warned them of His wrath.”

Allamah Ja‘farī (۱۹۸۷, vol. ۲۴, p. ۱۹۳), in his commentary on this Sermon, elaborates:

The verses of the Noble Qur’ān speak of existence and its phenomena in such a way that no informant except the Creator of existence could convey such knowledge. On the other hand, the divine words in the Qur’ān regarding the decline and destruction of societies are

so clear and evident that any discerning and rational individual, by studying and reflecting upon them, observes the order and lawfulness of existence and becomes certain that for every revolving entity, there is a Revolving Force behind it.

۳,۰,۶ Testimony to the Qur’ān’s Truthfulness Based on Its Disclosure of Scientific Truths

Another aspect of the Qur’ān’s *i’jāz* in Imam ‘Ali’s teachings is its disclosure of scientific truths. The Qur’ān contains references to marvels in human and cosmic creation that were unknown at the time of revelation, which have subsequently been confirmed by modern empirical sciences. While explaining such matters is not the primary purpose of the Divine Book, it, nevertheless, unveils the mysteries of creation to demonstrate God’s oneness, power, omniscience, and the purposeful design of existence, directing our attention to the signs in the horizons and within ourselves (Ruknī Yazdī, ۲۰۰۰, p. ۱۸۰). Imam ‘Ali (AS) repeatedly refers to these truths in Nahj al-Balāgha. For example, in Sermon ۱۸, he states: “the Qur’ān’s outward form is beautiful, and

its inward meaning is profound and inconceivable. Its wonders are infinite, and its marvels have no end. Darkness (i.e., ignorance) cannot be dispelled from life's path except by the Qur'ān.”

The distinction between the two phrases, i.e., “its wonders are infinite” and “its marvels have no end”, may be that the first phrase indicates the eternal and everlasting nature of the Qur'ān's wonders, beauties, and outstanding truths, since there were many Books that were astonishing in their time, but lost their luster over time, while the second refers to the Qur'ān's hidden mysteries that are progressively unveiled over time, with new aspects being revealed continuously (Makārim Shīrāzī, ۱۹۹۶, vol. ۱, p. ۶۲۰).

۳,۵,۷ Testimony to the Qur'ān's I'jāz in Its Guidance

In his eloquent discourses, Imam 'Ali expresses various aspects of the Qur'ān's *i'jāz*. However, his explicit emphasis on the Qur'ān's role as a guide (*hādī*) requires particular reflection. In various Sermons, he highlights the Qur'ān's guiding nature; for example, “The Qur'ān is the Book of Guidance” (Sermon ۱۶۰), “Know that this Qur'ān is an adviser whose counsel is free from deceit, a guide that never leads astray” (Sermon ۱۷۵), “Allah the Exalted revealed a guiding Book, in which He clarified virtues and vices” (Sermon ۱۶۶), and “It is a path whose traveler never goes astray... a guidance for whoever follows it” (Sermon ۱۸۹), etc.

The use of the term “*minhāj*” in Sermon ۱۸۹ refers to the Qur'ān. considering that *minhāj* means a clear, luminous, and straight path whose travelers never go astray, those who follow this manifest path and divine straight way (*al-ṣirāt al-mustaqīm*) will never fall into misguidance (Makārim Shīrāzī, ۱۹۹۶, vol. ۷, p. ۷۰۵).

Conclusion

There is a consensus (*ijmā'*) among Shi'a scholars and a majority of Sunni scholars that “he who possesses the knowledge of the Book” (Q. ۱۳:۴۳) refers to Imam 'Ali. The Messenger of God (PBUH), by divine command, addressed the disbelievers who rejected the Qur'ān and his Prophethood, stating: “Allah suffices as a witness between me and you, and he who possesses the knowledge of the Book.” In other words, the best and most sufficient witness between me and you regarding the truth of my Prophethood and the Qur'ān's divine origin is the Sacred Essence of the Lord and the testimony of the one who possesses knowledge of the Book, the one who is deeply learned in the Qur'ān, fully aware of its manifest and hidden truths.

The narratives from the *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS) unanimously affirm that this verse was revealed concerning Imam 'Ali. Thus, it can be concluded that Imam 'Ali's testimony is sufficient to prove the Qur'ān's *i'jāz*.

In his Sermons, Imam 'Ali repeatedly emphasized the Qur'ān's miraculous nature, explaining various aspects of its *i'jāz*, including ۱. comprehensive knowledge (encompassing past and future events), 2. absence of discrepancy, deviation, or distortion, 3. profound and expansive teachings, 4. Eternal continuity and immortality of its wisdom, 5. divine manifestation within its verses, 6. disclosure of scientific truths, and 7. guidance as its fundamental purpose.

Therefore, Imam 'Ali's testimony to the Qur'ān's *i'jāz*, as one of its definitive proofs, is firmly established based on verse ۴۳, surah *Ar-Ra'd* and his elucidations on the Qur'ān's miraculous aspects in *Nahj al-Balāgha*.

References

The Holy Qur'an

Nahj al-Balāgha

Al-'Arūsī al-Ḥuwayzī, 'Abd 'Alī ibn Jumū'ah. (۱۹۹۴ CE). *Tafsīr Nūr al-Thaqalayn*. Ed. 'Sayyid Hāshim Rasūlī Maḥallātī. Qom: Intishārāt-i Ismā'īliyyān.

Al-'Ayyāshī, Muḥammad ibn Mas'ūd. (۱۹۶۰ CE). *Kitāb al-Tafsīr*. Tehran: Chāpkhānah-yi 'Ilmiyyah.

Al-Baḥrānī, Sayyid Hāshim. (۱۹۹۰ CE). *Al-Burhān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an*. Tehran: Bunyād-i Ba'that. (1st ed.).

Al-Al-Baghawī, Ḥasan ibn Mas'ūd. (۱۹۹۹ CE). *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an*. Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī. (1st ed.).

Al-Bayḍāwī, 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar. (۱۹۹۷ CE). *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Ta'wīl*. Ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mar'ashī. Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī.

Al-Dhahabī, Muḥammad Ḥusayn. (۱۹۶۱ CE). *Al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*. Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīthah.

Delshād Tihrānī. (۲۰۱۰ CE). *Cheshmeh-ye Khurshīd*. Tehran: Daryā.

Fakhr al-Rāzī. (۱۹۹۹ CE). *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*. Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī.

Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, Mullā Muḥsin. (۱۹۹۴ CE). *Tafsīr al-Ṣāfi*. Tehran: Intishārāt al-Ṣadr.

Hāshimī Shahrūdī. (۲۰۱۳ CE). *Farhang-i Fiqh Muṭābiq-i Madhhab-i Ahl al-Bayt 'Alayhim al-Salām*. Qom: Mu'assasah-yi Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-Fiqh al-Islāmī bar Madhhab-i Ahl al-Bayt ('Alayhim al-Salām).

Al-Al-Ḥaskānī, 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Aḥmad. (۱۹۹۰ CE). *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl li-Qawā'id al-Tafḍīl*. Tehran: Sāzmān-i Chap wa Intishārāt-i Wizārat-i Irshād-i Islāmī. (1st ed.).

Al-Ḥusaynī al-Mar'ashī al-Tustarī, Sayyid Nūr Allāh. (n.d.). *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq wa Izhāq al-Bāṭil*. Qom: Maktabat Āyatullāh al-Ḥusaynī al-Mar'ashī.

Al-Ḥusaynī al-Ṭihrānī, M. Ḥ. (۲۰۰۶ CE). *Nūr malakūt al-Qur'an*. Mashhad: n.p.

Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 'Izz al-Dīn Abū Ḥamid. (۱۹۰۸ CE). *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah*. Qom: Public Library of Āyatullāh Mar'ashī.

Ibn al-Jawzī, Abū al-Faraj 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Alī. (۲۰۰۱ CE). *Zād al-Masīr fī 'Ilm al-Tafsīr*. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī.

Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī. (۱۹۷۰ CE). *Lisān al-Mizān*. [No place]: Mu'assasat al-'Alamī li-l-Maṭbū'āt.

Ibn Miyytham Al-Baḥrānī, Maytham ibn 'Alī. (۱۳۶۲ SH). *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah* (۳rd ed.). [No place]: Daftar Nashr al-Kitāb.

Ja'farī, Muḥammad Taqī. (۱۹۸۷ CE). *Tarjumah wa Tafsīr-i Nahj al-Balāghah* (۳rd ed.). [No place]: Daftar Nashr-i Farhang-i Islāmī.

Al-Kāshānī, Mullā Faṭḥ Allāh. (۲۰۰۲ CE). *Zubdat al-Tafāsīr*. Qom: Bunyād-i Ma'ārif-i Islāmī.

Al-Khoei, Abū al-Qāsim. (۱۹۶۳ CE). *Al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an*. Qom: Dār al-Thaqalayn.

Al-Khoei, Ḥabīb Allāh. (n.d.). *Minḥāj al-Barā'ah fī Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah*. [No place]: Al-Maktabah al-Islāmiyyah.

Makārim Shīrāzī, Nāṣir. (۱۹۹۰ CE). *Tafsīr-i Nimūnah*. Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyyah.

Makārim Shīrāzī, Nāṣir. (۱۹۹۶ CE). *Payām-i Imām: Sharḥ-i Tāzah wa Jāmi'ī bar Nahj al-Balāghah* (1st ed.). Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyyah.

Al-Marāghī, Aḥmad ibn Muṣṭafā. (n.d.). *Tafsīr al-Marāghī*. Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī.

Ma'rifat, Muḥammad Hādī. (1991 CE). *Al-Tamhūd*. Qom: Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī.

Al-Miybūdī, Aḥmad ibn Abī Sa'd Rashīd al-Dīn. (1992 CE). *Kashf al-Asrār wa 'Uddat al-Abrār*. Tehran: Intishārāt-i Amīr Kabīr.

Al-Māwardī, 'A. ibn M. (n.d.). *Al-Nukat wa al-'uyūn*. Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah.

Al-Muzaffar, Muḥammad Ḥusayn. (1970 CE). *Dalā'il al-Ṣidq*. Qom: Manshūrāt Maktabat Baṣīratī.

Muḥaqqiq Dāmād, Sayyid Muṣṭafā. (1980 CE). *Qawā'id-i Fiqhī*. Tehran: Markaz-i Nashr-i 'Ulūm-i Insānī.

Al-Nasafī, 'Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad. (1990 CE). *Madārik al-Tanzīl wa Haqā'iq al-Ta'wīl*. Beirut: Dār al-Nafā'is.

Al-Nishābūrī, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh. (1990 CE). *Al-Mustadrak 'alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah.

Al-Nīshābūrī, Nizām al-Dīn Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad. (1990 CE). *Tafsīr Gharā'ib al-Qur'ān wa Ragḥā'ib al-Furqān*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah.

Al-Qāsimī, Muḥammad Jamāl al-Dīn. (1997 CE). *Maḥāsīn al-Ta'wīl*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah.

Al-Al-Qundūzī al-Ḥanafī, Ḥāfiẓ Sulaymān ibn Ibrāhīm. (1990 CE). *Yanābī' al-Mawaddah li-Dhawī al-Qurbā*. [No place]: Dār al-Uswah li-l-Ṭibā'ah wa al-Nashr.

Ruknī Yazdī, Muḥammad Maḥdī. (2000 CE). *Āshnāyī bā 'Ulūm-i Qur'ānī*. Mashhad/Tehran: Āstān-i Quds/Samt.

Al-Ṣaffār, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Farrukh. (1983 CE). *Baṣā'ir al-Darajāt*. Ed. Ḥājj Mīrzā Ḥasan Kūcheh Bāghī. Tehran: Manshūrāt al-'Alamī.

Al-Shawkānī, M. (1993 CE). *Fath al-qadīr*. Dār Ibn Kathīr.

Al-Ṭabarī, Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr. (1991 CE). *Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (1st ed.). Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah.

Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn. (1996 CE). *Al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*. Qom: Daftar-i Intishārāt-i Islāmī-yi Jāmi'ah-yi Mudarrisīn-i Ḥawzah-yi 'Ilmiyyah.

Al-Ṭabrisī, Faḍl ibn Ḥasan. (1993 CE). *Majma' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (3rd ed.). Tehran: Intishārāt-i Nāṣir Khusraw.

Al-Tha'labī al-Nīshābūrī, Abū Ishāq Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm. (2001 CE). *Al-Kashf wa al-Bayān 'an Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*. Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī. (1st ed.).

Al-Ṭūsī, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan. (n.d.). *Al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*. Ed. Aḥmad Qaṣīr 'Āmilī. Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī.

Al-Zamakhsharī, Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar. (1986 CE). *Al-Kashshāf 'an Haqā'iq Ghawāmiḍ al-Tanzīl*. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī.