

Authentic Expressions: “*Hadith-ul-Thaqalayn*”

The readers may not find some of our translations to be similar to some of the popular ones online, this is because we put an extra effort to try and translate each expression in the most accurate way, based on the traditional Arabic dictionaries, not the modern ones.

(1.a)

قام رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يخطبنا بماء يدعى خم بين مكة والمدينة ، فحمد الله وأثنى عليه ، ووعظ ، وذكر

[The messenger of Allah (saw) stood and addressed us in a pond called Khumm between Makkah and Madinah, He praised God and extolled Him and preached and reminded (us)]

This text defines the location of the event, it was in Ghadeer Khum, while resting around the pond on their way back from Hajj, the Prophet (saws) stood in front of his companions and began his sermon.

(1.b)

قَدِمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ، صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ، فَتَزَلَّ بِوَادٍ بَيْنَ مَكَّةَ وَالْمَدِينَةِ فَخَطَبَنَا

[The messenger of Allah (saw) came down a valley between Makkah and Madinah, He (then) addressed us in a sermon]

The area between Makkah and Madinah is again Ghadeer Khum, this is where the narration of Thaqalayn took place, not in the farewell sermon, because the narrations related to the farewell sermon are numerous and none of the authentic texts of the farewell sermon contain any words regarding the household.

This is what we find in the farewell sermon at `Arafat based on the authentic narrations of Jabir (ra) and Ibn `Umar (ra) in abu Dawud and Muslim and others:

وقد تركتُ فيكم ما لن تضلوا بعده إن اعتصمتم به . كتابَ الله . وأنتم تُسألون عني . فما أنتم قائلون ؟ قالوا : نشهد أنك قد بلغت وأديت ونصحت

[I have left among you the Book of Allah, and if you hold fast to it, you would never go astray. And you would be asked about me (on the Day of Resurrection), (now tell me) what would you say? They (the audience) said: We will bear witness that you have conveyed (the message), discharged (the ministry of Prophethood) and given wise (sincere) counsel.]

Notice that in the sermon of farewell, when the majority was gathered, there is absolutely no mention of the household, the only information we receive is that if the Muslims hold on to the Qur'an, they will never go astray.

(2.a)

أما بعد ، ألا أيها الناس ، إنما أنا بشر يوشك أن يأتيني رسول ربي فأجيبه ، وإنني تارك فيكم الثقلين

[Lo, O people, I am only a human being and I am about to respond to the messenger of my Lord. I am leaving behind two heavy burdens (Thaqalayn) among you]

It is important to note what Thaqalayn means. It is the dual form of Thaqal. Thaqal means "weight", "burden", and "heavy". Obviously, Thaqal has a general connotation of a weight which burdens and elicits responsibility.

Out of all the definitions of Thaqal and its various forms and their various explications, "important" or "importance" is not one of them. "Importance" would be an inference at most, but definitely not a definition. Even if Thaqal is to be understood as "important" it must be understood that it is an importance regarding its characteristic of eliciting responsibility, burden and cumber rather than being momentous and splendid.

Obviously, Thaqal and its various forms unanimously allude to burden, responsibility and cumber. It also refers to what is precious or valuable because taking care of such an item is surely cumbersome.

The "form" of the narration of al-Thaqalayn is similar to other narrations such as this one from Sunan al-Nasa'i:

أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ جَعَلَ يُوَصِّي أُمَّتَهُ فِي مَرَضِ الْمَوْتِ يَقُولُ : الصَّلَاةُ الصَّلَاةُ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ . فَجَعَلَ يَرِدُّهَا حَتَّى مَا يَفِيضُ بِهَا لِسَانُهُ

[The Prophet (saw) started to advise his nation in his last sickness from which he died, he said: "Prayer, prayer, and those whom your right hand possesses!" Then he (saw) began to repeat this continuously.]

This does not make the female servants equal in importance and value to the prescribed prayer, the Prophet (saw) wanted us to take care of both of these. However, each one is taken care of in a different way. The prayer is from the essentials of Islam and he who leaves it has technically left Islam, it cannot be compared to what the right hand possesses.

In Hadith al-Thaqalayn, we are also ordered to hold on to two things, the Qur'an and the household, but this in no way makes the household equal to the Qur'an as the Imami Shia scholars claim. Only a mind that is foreign to Islam, a mind that does not understand the book of Allah nor the teachings of his prophet, only such a confused mind would elevate the household to be on the same level as the holy words of God.

What is evident from the authentic texts is that holding on to the Qur'an means: Adhering to its rulings and following its orders and prohibitions, it is the true guidance. Whereas, holding on to the household, means to protect them, and respect them, and to not mistreat them or rob them of their rights.

In other words, guarding the Qur'an and following it and spreading its teachings is a heavy responsibility,

also protecting the household and offering them their rights and fulfilling the duties towards them is a heavy responsibility as well.

(2.b)

أَمَّا بَعْدُ ، أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ ، إِنَّمَا أَنْتَظِرُ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ رَسُولٌ مِنْ رَبِّي فَأَجِيبُ ، وَإِنِّي تَارِكٌ فِيكُمْ الثَّقَلَيْنِ

[Lo, O people, I am only awaiting the messenger of my Lord so that I may respond, and among you I am leaving behind two heavy burdens]

This text is similar to the previous one. However, here he (saws) says that he is now simply "awaiting" a messenger from his Lord, this means that he knows his message had ended or was at its final stages and it was simply a matter of time until he departs.

(3.a)

أحدهما : كتاب الله ، فيه الهدى والنور ، فتمسكوا بكتاب الله وخذوا به - فرغب في كتاب الله وحث عليه ثم قال : « وأهل بيتي . أذكركم الله في أهل بيتي » ثلاث مرات

[One of them (is): The book of Allah, in it is guidance and light, so get hold of the Book of Allah and adhere to it. Then he urged and motivated (us) regarding the Book of Allah. Then he said: And my household, by Allah I remind you of my household (Three times).]

The Prophet (saws) defines these two heavy elements, the book of Allah contains the words of God, in it is the pure wisdom, the guidance of the soul and the light that extinguishes the darkness of ignorance. He (saws) informed them of the importance of the book and urged them to hold on to it and encouraged them to stick to its teachings.

The second element was his household, he reminded the Muslims of his household, just like any responsible man on his death-bed, he (saws) was worried about his family after his passing, so he reminded the Muslims of them, that they must honor them and love them and support them, he (saws) entrusted the nation with the fate of his family. Some of the scholars said this expression also means that we must follow their guidance and good example, this is why the Muslims take a big part of their religion from the narrations of the scholars of the prophetic-household such as: `Ali ibn abi Talib (ra), `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas (ra), `Abdullah bin Ja`far al-Tayyar (ra) and others...

(3.b)

أولهما كتاب الله فيه الهدى والنور فتمسكوا بكتاب الله وخذوا به فحث على كتاب الله ورغب فيه

[The first of them (is): The book of Allah, in it is guidance and light, so get hold of the Book of Allah and adhere to it (The rest is the same as the one above it)]

In this text the Prophet (saws) uses the expression "The first of them is the book of Allah" so the word of God is given priority and precedence as it is more worthy.

As for his household, he (saws) did not say: "They are infallible and their orders must be obeyed." but he told them to fear God concerning them and to be aware of how they treat them after his death.

This is the belief adopted by the majority of this blessed nation, that it is necessary for every single one of us to love the prophetic household as they have not only gathered faith but also added to it the closeness to the messenger of Allah (saws).

(3.c)

كتاب الله فيه الهدى والنور من استمسك به وأخذ به كان على الهدى ومن أخطأه ضل

[The book of Allah, in it is guidance and light, he who holds onto it and adheres to it will be upon guidance, and he who leaves it will be misguided (The rest is the same as the one above it)]

In this text it is clear that the protection from misguidance is tied to the Qur'an, following its teachings is guidance and success, and abandoning them is misguidance and failure.

The Almighty says:

{This is the Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of Allah} [2:2]

As for Ahlul-Bayt, loving them is a sign of belief per-consensus of the nation and its leaders. It was Abu Bakr al-Siddeeq (ra), the best man after the prophets (as) who said to the Muslims:

ارْقُبُوا مُحَمَّدًا صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ

[Look at Muhammad peace be upon him through his family]

Meaning, if you are not good to his family then you are not good to him.

He may Allah be pleased with him also said:

وَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ لَقَرَابَةُ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ أَنْ أَصِلَ مِنْ قَرَابَتِي

[By Allah in Whose Hands is my life. I love to do good to the relatives of Allah's Apostle rather than to my

own relatives]

(3.d)

أحدهما كتاب الله عز وجل هو حبل الله من اتبعه كان على الهدى ومن تركه كان على ضلالة

[One of them is the book of Allah the mighty and majestic, it is the rope of Allah, whoever follows it will be upon guidance, and whoever leaves it shall be on misguidance (The rest is the same as the one above it)]

In this text the Qur'an is described as "The rope of Allah". It is as if Allah threw this rope so we can hold on to it saving us from sinking in the deep sea of darkness. A rope is like a link between the heavens and the earth, it is the connection between the slave and his Lord who wishes for his guidance.

(3.e)

إِنِّي تَرَكْتُ فِيكُمْ مَا إِنِ أَخَذْتُمْ بِهِ لَنْ تَضِلُّوا : كِتَابَ اللَّهِ ، سَبَبُهُ بِيَدِ اللَّهِ ، وَسَبَبُهُ بِأَيْدِيكُمْ ، وَأَهْلَ بَيْتِي

[I am leaving among you that which if you adhere to it you will never go astray: The book of Allah, one end of which is in His Hand and the other end in yours, and my household]

This is a slightly different form of text, narrated by `Ali (ra) with a somewhat acceptable chain. This text says that the Prophet (saws) is leaving among the Muslims a thing that if they hold on to it they shall never go astray, and this is the book of Allah, as mentioned above this book is like a rope with two ends, one end is in the hand of Allah and the other is in the hand of the slave who is ordered to hold on to it firmly so that he may be saved. The Prophet (saws) tells them that he is also leaving them his household so that they may remember to treat them justly and behave with them in a God fearing manner.

(3.f)

إِنِّي تَارِكٌ فِيكُمْ الثَّقَلَيْنِ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَعِترَتِي أَهْلَ بَيْتِي وَإِنهُمَا لَنْ يَتَفَرَّقَا حَتَّى يَرِدَا عَلَيَّ الْحَوْضِ

[I am leaving with you the two heavy burdens (Thaqalayn), the book of Allah and my household, and they will not separate until they reach me at the pond]

In this text we come across the expression "Kitab Allah wa `Itrati Ahlu-Bayti", we know that Ahlu-Bayt refers to the household, let's discover what the `Itrah means in Arabic.

In the traditional Arabic dictionary Lisan al-`Arab by ibn Manzour 9/34 we read:

عترة الرجل أقرباؤه من ولد و غيره ، وقيل هم قومه ، أو عشيرته ، ومن قال إن عترة النبي عليه الصلاة والسلام هم أولاد

فاطمة فقط فهم العامة الذين انغردوا بهذا الرأي دون العرب ، فعترة قريش ، فعلى هذا حديث العترة المعروف يقصد بهم أصحابه الأذنون و أهله جميعا إلا في لفظ أهل بيتي فإنهم معروفون.

[The `Itrah of a man are his relatives from children and others, and it was said his folks, or his tribe, and those who said the `Itrah of the Prophet (saw) are only the children of Fatima, they are the general laypeople who exclusively adopt this opinion, NOT the Arabs. His `Itrah is Quraysh, and this is how the famous narration of `Itrah is understood, (meaning) his close companions and all of his family, except when it is followed by "My household" then they are known.]

The Imam al-Tawrbashti said in Al-Marqah 5/600:

العترة" على أنحاء كثيرة بينها رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم " عترة الرجل: أهل بيته ورهطه الأذنون، ولاستعمالهم بقوله: "أهل بيتي" ليعلم أنه أراد بذلك نسله وعصابتة الأذنون وأزواجه

[The `Itrah of the man: It means the members of his household and his closest companions. Due to their usage of the word `Itrah with many meanings, the Messenger of Allah (saw) explained it here with his statement, "Ahli Bayti" (my family members or the members of my household), so that it may be known by this that he meant his progeny, and his closest relatives and his wives.]

In Taj al-`Arus 12/521, Murtada al-Zubaydi al-Husayni says:

الْعِتْرَةُ: (نَسْلُ الرَّجُلِ) وَأَقْرَبَاؤُهُ مِنْ وَلَدٍ وَغَيْرِهِ. (و) قِيلَ: عِتْرَةُ الرَّجُلِ: (رَهْطُهُ وَعَشِيرَتُهُ الْأَدْنَوْنَ) ، أَيْ الْأَقْرَبُونَ (مِمَّنْ مَضَى وَغَبَرَ) ، وَمِنْهُ قَوْلُ أَبِي بَكْرٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ: (تَحْنُ عِتْرَةُ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ الَّتِي خَرَجَ مِنْهَا، وَبَيَضَتْهُ الَّتِي تَقَقَّاتُ عَنْهُ، وَإِنَّمَا جِيئَتْ الْعَرَبُ عَنَّا كَمَا جِيئَتْ الرَّحَى عَنِ قَطِيبِهَا) . قَالَ ابْنُ الْأَثِيرِ: لَأَنَّهُمْ مِنْ قُرَيْشٍ. (وَالْعَامَّةُ تَطَنَّ أَنَّهُمَا وَلَدُ الرَّجُلِ خَاصَّةً) ، وَأَنَّ عِتْرَةَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَلَدُ فَاطِمَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا، هَذَا قَوْلُ ابْنِ سَيِّدِهِ

[al-`Itrah: The progeny of a man and his relatives from children and others. It is said: They are his folks and the closest from his tribe from those who passed, from this is the saying of Abu Bakr (ra): "We are the `Itrah of the messenger of Allah (saw) that he came from, etc..." Ibn al-Athir said: "Because they are from Quraysh." And the laypeople believe that it means only the progeny of a man, and that the `Itrah of the messenger (saw) are the children of Fatima (ra).]

Regardless, we will translate "`Itrati Ahli-Bayti" as "My household", whether it is his wives, his children, his cousins or uncles. This is the most correct translation that no one will disagree with, especially since in these narrations "`Itrati Ahlu-Bayti" and "Ahlu-Bayti" are used interchangeably.

The second part is "They will not separate until they reach me at the pond" meaning, that the Prophet (saws) told his nation to take responsibility for two things, the Qur'an and the household, so if a slave held on to the Qur'an yet he wronged the household and oppressed them and harmed them, then he has not fulfilled the wish of the Prophet (saws) and he (saws) will not be pleased with him when he reaches him at the pond. On the other hand, if a slave was loyal to the household and loved them extremely, yet he abandoned the teachings of the Qur'an and deviated and innovated, the Prophet (saws) will not be pleased with him when he meets him at the pond because the responsibility of following the Qur'an and taking care of the household are linked.

Some scholars interpreted this expression differently, they said that the household cannot agree on anything which opposes the Qur'an, and that the consensus of the household on a certain matter is binding upon the Muslims. This however, they stated is mainly related to the pious Muslim scholars from among them and not just any ignorant or random member of the household.

(3.g)

وإنني تارك فيكم اثنين أحدهما كتاب الله فيه حبل الله من اتبعه كان على الهدى ومن تركه كان على ضلاله وأهل بيتي

[I am leaving among you two, one of them is the book of Allah, in it is the rope of Allah, he who follows it will be upon guidance and he who abandons it will be upon misguidance, and my household]

In this text, the Prophet (saws) says that he is leaving behind two things, one is the Qur'an which contains guidance and protects from misguidance, and the other thing he (saws) is leaving behind is his household.

The love of the household is only reserved for the pious believers among them, as for the deviants and polytheists they will be treated as abu Lahab the uncle of the Prophet (saws) was treated. It was the apostle of God (saws) who said:

ومن بطأ به عمله لم يسرع به نسبه

[And he who lags behind in doing good deeds, his noble lineage will not make him go ahead]

(4.a)

قال : بلى إن نساءه من أهل بيته ، ولكن أهل بيته من حرم الصدقة

[He said: Yes, his wives are from his household, but his household (here) are those who were forbidden from accepting Sadaqah]

Here Zayd (ra) is answering a question by Hosayn, because according to the Arabs the wife of a man is from his household, so Hosayn asks:

أليس نساؤه من أهل بيته

[Are not his wives from his household?]

Meaning, "Do you not agree that his wives are from his household and are therefore included in this will?"

He said; "Yes, but the ones he is mentioning at this point are other than them."

(4.b)

قال نساؤه من أهل بيته ولكن أهل بيته من حرم الصدقة بعده

[He said: His wives are from his household. However, his household (here) are those who were forbidden from accepting Sadaqah after him]

Similar to the above. Zayd's (ra) opinion was that this was not directed at the wives.

(4.c)

قال لا وايم الله إن المرأة تكون مع الرجل العصر من الدهر ثم يطلقها فترجع إلى أبيها وقومها أهل بيته أصله وعصبته الذين حرّموا الصدقة بعده

[No, by Allah, a woman lives with a man for a certain period; he then divorces her and she goes back to her parents and to her people; the members of his household are his parentage (Asl), his children and his paternal-relatives (`Asbatuhu) who were forbidden from accepting Sadaqah after him]

In Taj al-`Arus lil-Zubaydi 3/382 we read:

وعَصَبَةُ الرَّجُلِ : بَنُوهُ وَقَرَابَتُهُ لِأَبِيهِ

[The `Asbah of a man are his children and relatives from his father's side.]

Whereas, the word "Asl" in Arabic points to the man's roots, his origins, or parentage.

In this narration we see an apparent contradiction, as it states that the wives are not from the household. All other narrations however, whether those of Thaqalayn or others confirm that his women are from his household. This can be reconciled in another way, it can be understood that after his (saws) death, his wives have support from their families and tribes, so the ones the Prophet (saws) was telling us to take care of are the other members who have no means of support after him.

(4.d)

بلى إن نساؤه من أهل بيته ولكن أهل بيته الذين ذكرهم من حرّموا الصدقة بعده

[Yes, his wives are from his household, but his household whom he mentioned (here) are those who were forbidden from accepting Sadaqah after him]

This expression further confirms that his wives are indeed from his household, but Zayd (ra) believes that those mentioned in this instance are the other members of the household.

(5)

هم آل علي وآل جعفر وآل العباس وآل عقيل

[They are the family of `Ali, the family of Ja`far, the family of al-`Abbas and the family of `Aqeel.]

Zayd (ra) says that the prophet's (saws) will was directed at these specific families who were prohibited from receiving Sadaqah. Also there is the family of Hamzah (ra) and the children of abu Lahab who embraced Islam. This part reveals that it was not the belief of the people at that time that the household were only five individuals.

(6)

لقيت زيد بن أرقم وهو داخل على المختار أو خارج من عنده فقلت له أسمعتم رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يقول : انى تارك فيكم الثقليين قال نعم

[I met Zayd ibn Arqam while he was entering on al-Mukhtar or leaving from him, so I told him: "Have you heard the messenger say: I am leaving among you two heavy burdens"? He said: "Yes."]

This separate event shows that Zayd (ra) was asked again to verify what he had said earlier, and that the usage of the word "Thaqalayn / Two heavy burdens" is the correct one as opposed to other wordings found in weaker narrations like "Khalifatayn" or "Ithnayn".

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