

## Was the verse “ومن عنده علم الكتاب” sent down about Imam “Ali” [AS]?

Scientific position and authority of “Ahl al-Bayt” [AS] – commander of the faithful Ali [AS] in particular – in Quran and Sunnah are amongst issues that have been discussed amongst Islamic sects from long time ago.

Now this question is made that if scientific position and personality of commander of the faithful Ali [AS] have been said in “Quran” like the political and religious leadership of commander of the faithful Ali [AS] which have been restated in “Quran” and “Sunnah”?

Is this verse going to say the scientific authority of commander of the faithful “Ali” [AS]?

“فُلْ كَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ وَمَنْ عِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ الْكِتَابِ”

Say: 'Allah is a sufficient witness between me and you, and whosoever possess knowledge of the Book.

Sura Al-Ra'd – verse 43

Getting to the response of this question we announce the opinion of two sects' exegetes {Shia and Sunni} about mentioned verse.

**Response:**

**A: Shias' opinion**

In the perspective of Shia, “Ahl al-Bayt” [AS] – commander of the faithful Ali [AS] in particular – have had high scientific position and divine knowledge so that Prophet [PBUH] has said about the authority of “Ahl al-Bayt” [AS]:

“إني تارك فيكم ما إن تمسكتم به لن تضلوا كتاب الله وعترتي”

And he has said about the scientific position of commander of the faithful Ali [AS]:

**“أنا مدينة العلم وعلي بابها فمن أراد المدينة فليأت الباب”**

“I’m the city of knowledge and “Ali” [AS] is its gate and if someone wants to enter the city should go through its gate.”

It’s clear that this science and knowledge are not common, but it’s divine knowing and god has given it for the guidance and leadership of humanity.

Thus, the opinion of Shia scholars is that this verse **“من عنده علم الكتاب”** was sent down in “Mecca” and the meaning of **“الكتاب”** {Book} is holy Quran and the real instance of this verse is commander of the faithful Ali [AS].

And there are numerous authentic document narratives in both Shia and Sunni resources which have said that this verse “whosoever possess knowledge of the Book” is about commander of the faithful “Ali” [AS]. We mention to some of these narratives.

“Ali Ibn Abraham Qumi” quotes from Imam “Sadiq” [AS] with authentic document:

**حدثني أبي عن ابن أبي عمير عن ابن أذينة عن أبي عبد الله عليه السلام قال : الذي عنده علم الكتاب هو أمير المؤمنين عليه السلام .**

The one who possesses the knowledge of the book is commander of the faithful Ali [AS].

**Tafsir al-Qumi – vol. 1, p 367**

“Muhammad ibn Hasan Saffar” quotes from Imam “Baqir” [AS] that we “Ahl al-Bayt” [AS] are the instance of this verse and after Prophet [PBUH] the first and the best of us is “Ali” [AS].

He writes in this regard:

“حدثنا محمد بن الحسين و يعقوب بن يزيد عن ابن أبي عمير عن بريد بن معاوية قال قلت لأبي جعفر عليه السلام قل كفي بالله شهيدا بيني و بينكم و من عنده علم الكتاب قال إيانا عني و علي أو لنا و أفضلن و خيرنا بعد النبي صلي الله عليه وآله”

“Yazid ibn Muawiyah” has said: we said to Imam “Baqir” [AS]: what’s the meaning of this verse: “Say: 'Allah is a sufficient witness between me and you, and whosoever possess knowledge of the Book.” He said: it means “Ahl al-Bayt” and after prophet [PBUH], “Ali” [AS] is the first and the best of us “Ahl al-Bayt”.

**Basa’ir al-Darajat – p 236**

Sheikh “Saduq” has quoted an authentic document narrative from messenger of god [PBUH] in “Amali” book:

“حدثنا محمد بن موسى بن المتوكل قال : حدثنا محمد بن يحيى العطار ، قال : حدثنا أحمد بن محمد بن عيسى ، عن القاسم بن يحيى ، عن جده الحسن بن راشد ، عن عمرو بن مغلس ، عن خلف ، عن عطية العوفي ، عن أبي سعيد الخدري ، قال : سألت رسول الله صلي الله عليه وآله عن قول الله : قال الذي عنده علم من الكتاب . قال : ذاك وصي أخي سليمان بن داود . فقلت له : يا رسول الله ، فقول الله عز وجل : قل كفي بالله شهيدا بيني وبينكم ومن عنده علم الكتاب ، قال : ذاك أخي علي بن أبي طالب”

“Abi Sa’id Khederi” has said: we asked Imam Prophet Muhammad [PBUH] about this verse: “and whosoever possess knowledge of the Book”, he answered: the one who possesses knowledge of the god’s book and that person is my executor and brother “Salomon ibn David”. Then I asked about this verse: “Say: 'Allah is a sufficient witness between me and you, and whosoever possess knowledge of the Book”, he said: that person is my brother “Ali ibn abi Talib”.

Sheikh "Tusi" – Amali – p 659

There are many narratives in this regard that we suffice to above narratives.

### **Conclusion:**

Narratives that Shia exegetes have quoted about the instance of this verse "and whosoever possess knowledge of the Book" have authentic document and their implication is certain; thus, mentioned verse wants to say about the high scientific position of commander of the faithful Ali [AS].

### **B: the opinion of Sunni:**

The scientific authority of "Ahl al-Bayt" [AS], commander of the faithful Ali [AS] in particular, has been confessed and accepted by Sunni elders and most of Sunni exegetes and scholars have said about interpretation of this verse "and whosoever possess knowledge of the Book": it means commander of the faithful Ali [AS] and have said many narratives that show that the main instance of this verse is Hadrat "Ali" [AS].

However some of Sunni exegetes say that the instance of this verse is "Abdullah ibn Salam", "Salman Farsi" or even "Gabriel" but this saying of them doesn't have conclusive reason and narratives that they have quoted to prove their saying have either implication or document fault. Sunni exegetes who have said that instance of this verse is commander of the faithful Ali [AS] have relied on many narratives that we mention to some of them.

### **Looking into Sunni narratives:**

"Tha'labi" has quoted a narrative from "Abi Ja'far" [AS] who has said that the meaning of this verse is commander of the faithful Ali [AS]:

ابن عطاء قال : كنت جالسا مع أبي جعفر في المسجد فرأيت ابن عبد الله بن سلام جالسا في ناحية فقلت لأبي جعفر : زعموا أن الذي عنده علم الكتاب عبد الله بن سلام . فقال : إنما ذلك علي بن أبي طالب عليه السلام عنده علم الكتاب.

“Abi Ja’far” [AS] was asked that if this verse “and whosoever possess knowledge of the Book” means “Abdullah ibn Salam”? Imam “Baqir” [AS] said: No, it’s not. “Ali” [AS] is the one who possesses knowledge of the book.

Tafsir Ta’labi – vol. 5, p 303

“Hakim Haskani” quotes several narratives that the meaning of the one who possesses the knowledge of book is Hadrat “Ali” [AS]. Now we mention to some of these narratives.

“Hakim Haskani” quotes a narrative via “Ibn Abbas” and “Muhammad ibn Hanafiyyah”:

عن ابن عباس في قوله تعالى : « ومن عنده علم الكتاب » قال هو علي بن علي طالب .  
عن ابن الحنفية في قوله تعالى : « ومن عنده علم الكتاب » قال : هو علي بن أبي طالب.

“Ibn Ababs ” and “Muhammad ibn Hanafiyyah” were asked about this verse: the one who possesses the knowledge of the book is commander of the faithful Ali [AS].

عن أبي عبد الله عليه السلام: «أَنَّ المراد بمن عنده علم الكتاب علي بن أبي طالب و  
أئمة الهدى عليهم السلام»

Imam “Sadiq” [AS] said: the meaning of “and whosoever possess knowledge of the Book” is Ali ibn abi Talib [AS] and Shia Imams [AS].

روي بريد بن معاوية عن أبي عبد الله عليه السلام أنه قال : « إِيَّانا عني ، و علي أولنا ، و  
أفضلنا ، و خيرنا بعد النبيِّ صَلَّى اللهُ عليه و آله و سلَّم »

“Yazid ibn Muawiyah” quotes from Imam “Sadiq” [AS] that the meaning of this verse is “Ahl al-Bayt” that after Prophet [PBUH], commander of the faithful Ali [AS] is the first and the best of us.

And he writes in continue:

و يؤيد ذلك ما روي عن الشعبي أنه قال : ما أحد أعلم بكتاب الله بعد النبي من علي بن أبي طالب عليه السلام .

What confirms this issue is the narrative quoted by “Shu’bi”: after Prophet no one knows holy Quran better than commander of the faithful Ali [AS].

“Al-Hakim Haskani” – Shawahid al-Tanzil – vol. 1, p 402

“Sulaiman Qundoozi” quotes a narrative regarding the interpretation of mentioned verse:

عن عطية العوفي عن أبي سعيد الخدري رضي الله عنه قال : سألت رسول الله صلي الله عليه وآله وسلم عن هذه الآية « الذين عنده علم من الكتاب » قال : ذاك أخي سليمان بن داود عليهما السلام . وسألته عن قوله الله عز وجل « قل كفي بالله شهيدا بيني وبينكم ومن عنده علم الكتاب » قال : ذاك أخي علي بن أبي طالب صاحب المناقب .

“Abi Sa’id Khederi” says I asked messenger of god [PBUH] about this verse “and whosoever possess knowledge of the Book”, he said: that person was my executor “Solomon ibn David”, I said: O’ messenger of god what about this verse: Say: 'Allah is a sufficient witness between me and you, and whosoever possess knowledge of the Book”, he said: it means my brother “Ali ibn abi Talib”.

روي عن محمد بن مسلم وأبي حمزة الثمالي وجابر بن يزيد عن الباقر عليه السلام . وروي علي بن فضال والفضيل عن الرضا عليه السلام ، وقد روي عن موسى بن جعفر ، وعن زيد بن علي عليه السلام ، وعن محمد بن الحنفية ، وعن سلمان الفارسي ، وعن أبي سعيد

الخدري وإسماعيل السدي أنهم قالوا في قوله تعالى : « قل كفي بالله شهيدا بيني وبينكم ومن عنده علم الكتاب » هو علي بن أبي طالب عليه السلام .

It's written in another narrative that this verse is about commander of the faithful Ali [AS].

"Al-Qundoozi"- Yanabi' al-Mawaddah - vol. 1, p 307

In addition to what was said, there are other narratives about scientific position of Imam "Ali" [AS] in Sunni resources which are the witnesses of this issue and confirm that certain instance of this verse is commander of the faithful Ali [AS], we mention to some of these narratives:

**الف : أنا مدينة العلم و علي بابها ...**

"Hakim Nishapuri" quotes a narrative from "Ibn Abbas" that Prophet [PBUH] said: I'm the city of knowledge and Ali [AS] is its gate and anyone who wants to enter this city should go through its gate. "Hakim Nishapuri" says that this narrative is authentic and writes in this regard:

**"حدثنا أبو العباس محمد بن يعقوب ثنا محمد بن عبد الرحيم الهروي بالرملة ثنا أبو الصلت عبد السلام بن صالح ثنا أبو معاوية عن الأعمش عن مجاهد عن بن عباس رضي الله عنهما قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه و آله: « أنا مدينة العلم و علي بابها فمن أراد المدينة فليأت الباب ». هذا حديث صحيح الإسناد و لم يخرجاه و أبو الصلت ثقة مأمون ..."**

He quotes from "Ibn Abbas" that Prophet [PBUH] said: I'm the city of knowledge and Ali [AS] is its gate and anyone who wants to enter this city should go through its gate. This narrative has authentic document but "Bukhari" and "Muslim" have not quoted it in their books while "Aba Salt Hirawi" has been reliable and honest.

"Al-Nishapuri" – Mustadrak alaa al-Sahihain - vol. 3, p 126

“Abd al-Barr” writes: “Umar Ibn Khattab” has said that “Ali” [AS] was more knowledgeable than other Sahaba in judgment and saying divine rules.

قال عمر بن الخطاب: علي أفضانا ...

“Ibn Abd al-Barr” – al-Isti’ab fi Ma’rifat al-Ashab – vol. 3, p 1102

قال صلي الله عليه و سلم في أصحابه : أفضاهم علي بن أبي طالب عليه السلام أنا مدينة العلم و علي عليه السلام بابها ...

“Ali” [AS] is more knowledgeable than all of you in judgment and I’m the city of knowledge and “Ali” is its gate.

“Al-Juwayni”- kitab al-Talkis fi Usul al-Fiqh- vol. 3, p 12

ب: سلوني عن كتاب الله تعالى

“Al-Baladhuri” quotes a narrative from Imam “Ali” [AS] who said:

. سلوني عن كتاب الله تعالى فوالله ما من آية إلا وأنا أعلم أبليل نزلت أم بنهار أفي سهل أو في جبل .

Ask me from “Quran”. Swear by there isn’t any verse that I don’t know about it. Either it’s been sent down in night or day or in mountain or on even ground.

And he quotes from “Musayyib”:

و قال ابن المسيب ما كان أحد من الناس يقول سلوني غير علي رضي الله عنه و قيل لعطاء أكان أحد في أصحاب رسول الله أعلم من علي كرم الله تعالى و جهه قال والله.

“Musayyib” has said that so far no one has been like “Ali” [AS] to say: ask me. “Ata” was asked if there was anyone amongst Sahaba who was more knowledgeable than commander of the faithful Ali [AS]? “Ata” said: No there wasn’t, swear by god.



“Al-Baladhuri” - Genealogies of the Nobles, vol. 1, p 279

After he was notified of the martyrdom of commander of the faithful Ali [AS], “Muawiyah” said about his personality:

و قال معاوية رضي الله عنه حين بلغه قتل علي رضي الله عنه و الله لقد ذهب العلم و  
الفقه

Indeed knowledge and Fiqh left us.

“Ibn Tufayl” quotes a narrative from commander of the faithful Ali [AS] who said:

ابن يونس أخبرنا أبو بكر بن عياش عن نصير عن سليمان الأحمسي عن أبيه قال قال علي  
عليه السلام : و الله ما نزلت آية إلا و قد علمت فيما نزلت و أين نزلت و علي من نزلت إن  
ربي و هب لي قلبا عقولا و لسانا طلقا .

No verse has been sent down unless I know that when it was revealed and about whom it was sent down and in fact my god has given me understanding heart and expressive language.

“Abi Tufayl” quotes from Hadrat “Ali” [AS]:

أخبرنا عبد الله بن جعفر الرقي أخبرنا عبيد الله بن عمرو عن معمر عن و هب بن أبي دبي  
عن أبي الطفيل قال قال علي عليه السلام : سلوني عن كتاب الله فإنه ليس من آية إلا و  
قد عرفت بليل نزلت أم بنهار في سهل أم في جبل .

Ask me about book of god, indeed there isn't any verse that I don't know about, whether it was sent down in night or day or mountain or on even land.

“Ibn Sa’d” – Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra, vol. 2, p 338

“Yahya ibn Ma’in” writes:

حدثنا يحيى قال حدثنا سفيان بن عيينة عن يحيى بن سعيد عن سعيد بن المسيب قال ما كان في أصحاب النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم أحد يقول سلوني غير علي بن أبي طالب .

“Ibn Ma’in” quotes a narrative from “Ibn Sa’d” that not of companions of Prophet [PBUH] said: ask me, except “Ali” [AS].

“Yahya ibn Ma’in” – Tarikh ibn Ma’in- vol.3, p 143

“Ibn Hanbal” quotes such narrative:

حدثنا عبد الله نا عثمان بن أبي شيبة نا سفيان عن يحيى بن سعيد قال أراه عن سعيد قال لم يكن أحد من أصحاب النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم يقول سلوني الا علي بن أبي طالب.

“Ahmad Ibn Hanbal” – the virtues of Sahaba – vol. 2, p 646

“Ibn Jawzi” says several possibilities about the instance of this verse “and whosoever possess knowledge of the Book” that one of them is that commander of the faithful Ali [AS] is the instance of this verse:

أنه علي بن أبي طالب ، قاله ابن الحنفية.

The meaning of this verse is commander of the faithful Ali [AS].

Those who say that “Abdullah ibn Salam” is the instance of this verse, write:

هو عبد الله بن سلام ؟ قال : و كيف ، و هذه السورة مكية ؟ و أخرج ابن المنذر عن الشعبي قال : ما نزل في عبد الله بن سلام رضي الله عنه شيء من القرآن.

This Sura was sent down in “Mecca” and is not about “Abdullah ibn Salam”. “Shu’bi” quotes no verse of Quran was sent down about “Abdullah ibn Salam”.

“Ibn al-Jawzi” – Zad al-Masir – vol. 2, p 16 /// “Al-Suyuti” – al-Durr al-Manthur – vol. 6 – p  
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**Final conclusion:**

According to the tendency of Sunni exegetes in interpreting this verse of Sur Al-Ra’d and narratives that they relied on we conclude that this verse was sent down about commander of the faithful Ali [AS] and clarifies the scientific, spiritual and political authority and position of Ali [AS] amongst Muslims after messenger of god [PBUH] and there are narratives in which messenger of god [PBUH] has restated on scientific position of Imam “Ali” [AS]

The End