سلمان الفارسی



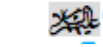
Salmān al-Fārsī

قدس الله سره

notes for a bayān given by:
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سلمان هو من أهل البيت

The Prophet ﷺ says: Salman is neither Muhajir nor Ansar.
He is one of us. He is one of the People of the House.
(°ahlu-l-bayt/أهل البيت)



The grove on the cover is where Salmān al-Fārsī ﷺ toiled for more than four years. One day while he was high up in one of the date palms in this very grove he heard the cousin of his Jewish master relaying to the master, as he was relaxing in the shade of his grove, that the man people had been proclaiming to be a Prophet had just arrived in Quba. Salmān al-Fārsī ﷺ almost fell from the tree as a mixture of hope and expectation rippled through him. He had spent years pursuing tales he had heard that a Prophet would appear and now he could not believe that his search might almost be over…his master berated him and told him to get back to work…but later Salmān al-Fārsī ﷺ slipped away to see with his own eyes if it truly was the Prophet ﷺ who had just arrived…

[Error of Ommission: When I completed this essay and began the final proofing I realised I had ommitted an important part of the story. It was Salmān ﷺ in 627 CE who came up with the idea of digging a great trench around the city of Madīnah to defend the city and its people from a large army of Quraysẖ. The Prophet ﷺ and his companions ﷺ agreed and accepted Salmān's ﷺ plan because it was safer and there would be a better chance that the non-Muslim army of Quraysẖ and its confederates would have a larger number of casualties. The battle is known as the Battle of the Trench or the Battle of Kẖandaq (غـزوة الـخـنـدق) and was a decisive battle causing Quraysẖ and their allies to lose much of their trade and prestige.]

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

ʾIslām began as something strange and will return in strangeness. Blessed are the strangers. Salmān al-Fārsī ﷺ typifies the case of the stranger guided from distant lands by his own personal effort and whose exile is stamped with the seal of a purely spiritual ʾIslām as opposed to all the legalistic pretensions and claims resting on the right of tribal, blood or genetic descent. It is we who, like him, are strangers seeking refuge – waiting in order to return after our exile.

This is the widely received story of a seeker of Truth, the story of Salmān the Persian, begining with a brief preface, and then, mainly, gleaned from his own words, followed by two differrent prespectives.

According to the investigations and researches of historians, Salmān ﷺ was born in or around the year 568 A.D., in a small town in Persia called Jiyye, the site of the modern city of Isfahan. Salmān was not the name given to him at his birth. His Persian name was Rozeba. Many years later when he became a Muslim, his master, the Messenger ﷺ, changed his name to Salmān. Later his Muslim friends gave him his *kunya* (nickname) of ʾAbū ʿAbdullāh.

His father was a rich landlord and a powerful political figure in Jiyye and the surrounding areas. He had extensive properties in the city, and vast estates in the country as well as numerous slaves and large herds of horses and flocks of sheep and goats. Since Salmān was his only son, he lavished all his love upon him.

In those days most Persians (Iranians) were Magians or Zoroastrians (followers of the Persian prophet Zoroaster). Zoroastrians in Iran are the oldest religious community of the nation. Zoroastrianism was the primary religion of Iran until the ʾIslāmic opening of Persia (637–651) which led to the end of the Sassanid Empire and the eventual decline of that religion in Persia. However, the achievements of the previous Persian civilizations were not lost, but were to a great extent absorbed by the new ʾIslāmic polity. ʾIslām has been the official religion of ʾIslām since then.

Although before the ʾIslāmic conquest, the Persians had been mainly Zoroastrian, there were also large and thriving Christian and Jewish communities. Eastern Iran was predominantly Buddhist. There was a slow but steady movement of the population toward ʾIslām. The nobility and city-dwellers were the first to accept ʾIslām but, on the other hand, ʾIslām spread more slowly among the peasantry and the *dihqans*, or landed gentry.

By the late 11th century, the majority of Persians had become Muslim, at least nominally. Although Iran is known today as a stronghold of the *ʾItẖnāʾasẖariyyah* (Twelver) Sẖiᶜah Muslim school, it did not become so until much laterwhen the Safavid dynasty made Sẖiᶜah ʾIslām the official state religion by *fiat* in the early sixteenth century and aggressively proselytized on its behalf so that by the mid-seventeenth century most people in Iran had become, mainly, Sẖiᶜah, an affiliation that has continued till the present day Islamic Republic of Iran (جمهوری اسلامی ایران).

Zoroastrianism arose in the eastern region of the ancient Persian Empire, when the religious philosopher Zoroaster simplified the pantheon of early Iranian gods into two opposing forces (religious principle of dualism): Ahura Mazda (Illuminating Wisdom) and Angra Mainyu (Destructive Spirit) in the 7th century BCE.

Zoroaster's ideas led to a formal religion bearing his name by about the 6th century BCE and have influenced other later religions including Judaism, Gnosticism, Christianity and certain aspects of the ʾIsmaᶜili school (*madẖab*/مذهب)

Zoroastrians believe that there is one universal, transcendent, supreme god, Ahura Mazda, or the 'Wise Lord'. (Ahura means 'Being' and Mazda means 'Mind' in the Avestan language). Zoroaster keeps the two attributes separate as two different concepts in most of the Gathas and also consciously uses a masculine word for one concept and a feminine for the other, as if to distract from an anthropomorphism of his divinity. Some Zoroastrians claim Ahura Mazda as the uncreated Creator to whom all worship is ultimately directed, thereby formulating a *panentheistic* (a philosophy which posits Ultimate Reality interpenetrates every part of Nature) faith with a transcendent divinity, which is believed by some to have influenced the theology of ʾIsmaᶜili thought to some degree. Other scholars assert that since Zoroastrianism's concept of divinity covers both being and mind as immanent entities, it is better described as a belief in an immanent self-creating universe with consciousness as its special attribute, thereby putting Zoroastranism more in the *pantheistic* fold where it can be easily traced to its shared origin with montheistic Sethian Advaita Hinduism. In any case, Ahura Mazda's creation – widely known as *asha* or truth and order – is the antithesis of chaos, which is evident as *druj*, falsehood and disorder. The resulting conflict involves the entire universe, including humanity, which has an active role to play in the conflict.

The religion states that active participation in life through good deeds is necessary to ensure happiness and to keep chaos at bay. This active participation is a central element in Zoroaster's concept of free will, and Zoroastrianism rejects all forms of monasticism. Ahura Mazda will ultimately prevail over the evil Angra Mainyu or Ahriman, at which point the universe will undergo a cosmic renovation and time will end. In the final renovation, all of creation – even the souls of the dead that were initially banished to "opacity" – will be reunited in Ahura Mazda, returning to life as a living light form. At the end of time, a savior-figure (a Saoshyant) conceptually similar to al-Mahdi ﷺ or the Budhhist Maitreya will bring about a final renovation of the world (*frashokereti*).

At the end of the "third time" (the first being the age of creation, the second of mixture, and the third of separation), there will be a great battle between the forces of good (the *yazatas*) and those of evil (the *dævas*) in which the good will triumph. On earth, the Saoshyant will bring about a resurrection of the dead in the bodies they occupied before they died. This is followed by a last judgment through ordeal. The *yazatas* Airyaman and Atar will melt the metal in the mountains, and molten metal will then flow across the earth like a river. All mankind, both the living and the resurrected, will be made to wade through that river, but for the righteous (*aša̧van*) it will seem to be a river of warm milk, while the wicked will be burned. The river will then flow down to hell, where it will annihilate Angra Mainyu and the last vestiges of wickedness in the universe.

It was in this world, and with these ideas, that Salmān ﷺ grew up and learned the principles and doctrines of Zoroastrianism. He was highly religious and in his early teens he reportedly grasped the highly complex, sometimes esoteric doctrines and dogmas of the Persian national belief and was reputed to know as much as his own teachers and the priests of the Zoroastrian fire temples of Jiyye.

As Salmān ﷺ himself says, "Since I was an only child my father loved me, more than he loved any other. As time went by his love for me became so strong and overpowering that he feared to lose me or have anything happen to me. So he kept me at home, a veritable prisoner, in the same way that young girls were kept.

"I became devoted to the Magian religion so much so that I attained the position of custodian of the fire which we worshipped."

"My duty was to see that the flames of the fire remained burning and that it did not go out for a single hour, day or night."

In those days in Persia, it was considered a great honor to be a priest in one of the fire-temples. Service in a fire-temple provided the priests with status, prestige and numerous perquisites. Since in Persi also, the priests could reach high position in local and "national" governments, Salmān's ﷺ father actively strove to and managed to get him appointed as a priest in the local fire-temple while he was only sixteen years old.

For three years, Salmān ﷺ acted as a priest in the fire-temple of Jiyye but then he began to lost interest in his work. It had become too monotonous and wearisome for him. The priests were men of limited vision and limited knowledge and they were too dogmatic. If he posed any creedal question to them, they were, in most cases, unable to answer him; or, they spoke in a language of allusions, historical allegories and parallels.

One day in spring (circa 586 A.D.), Salmān's ﷺ father had some important business to attend to at one of his country estate and houses. But before he could go to the country, some merchants arrived in Jiyye from the ancient city of Balkh and to entertain them he had to stay in Jiyye itself. He, therefore, asked Salmān ﷺ to go in his stead, and briefed him on what he had to do at the estate.

The following day Salmān ﷺ left Jiyye for his father's estate. When Salmān had traveled a few miles from the city, he came upon a fork in the road, and standing upon the brow of a hill, he paused for a few minutes to survey the surroundings and to determine the direction of his destination.

The light was now rapidly advancing from the east, and was tinting the landscape. Presently the sun rose and as Salmān was still basking in the stream of it's rays, a grey stone edifice, partly veiled in golden mist, caught his eye. It was some distance from the road, and Salmān decided to find out what it was and to whom it belonged to and went nearer to take a closer look.

Salmān thus propelled by his curiosity, entered the building to investigate. Inside, people were conducting a religious service and a choir was singing a hymn in a foreign language which he did not understand. When the service was over, one member of the congregation came to him, greeted him, and asked him who he was and the purpose of his visit.

Salmān ﷺ told him who he was, and explained that he wished to know who they were, and what religion they professed.

He was, in turn, taken to the "high priest" who told him that they were Syriac Christians (*masḫiḥāiūṭā suryāiṭā*) and explained to him the Oneness of G-d, the Day of Judgment, and the role of the Apostles, Messengers and Prophets of G-d of whom Jesus (ʿIsā ﷺ) was the last. Salmān ﷺ questioned the Christian priest regarding their beliefs and by day's end he was initiated him into Christianity.

When Salmān ﷺ was late coming home, his father became very anxious and sat, racked with nameless fears and dark forebodings, in the court of his palatial house, surrounded by his friends who were trying to comfort him when out of the dark suddenly Salmān ﷺ entered through the front gate. His father threw his arms around him and asked him where he had been so late.

Salmān ﷺ began to explain to his father that he had ridden past a church of Christians and wound up spending the day with them. His father then said that he hoped that those people hadn't misled him. Salmān ﷺ told his father, to the contrary, he found the religion of these people was better than Zoroastrianism.

Angered by this, his father threatened him with imprisonment and torture if Salmān ﷺ did not swear that he had not and would not change his religion. Salmān ﷺ, however, refused and was beaten, tortured, and kept both hungry and thirsty in his prison in the strong room of his father's house day after day.

One of the servants of the father of Salmān ﷺ was a young man called Mehran who had reared Salmān ﷺ from infancy and loved him as his own son. Salmān ﷺ knew that he could trust Mehran, and asked him one day if he could put him touch with the Christian priest who might assist him in escaping to Syria.

Mehran was only too glad to give this service to his young master and he arranged for his escape. After a few days Mehran came to see Salmān ﷺ and informed him that a caravan was ready to leave for Syria. The following night Mehran entered the strong room, removed the shackles from his feet, gave him a new set of clothes to wear, and led him quietly out of the house while everyone was asleep.

Outside the house, a horse was awaiting Salmān ﷺ. He thanked Mehran for his invaluable help, bade him a silent and tearful farewell, and rode away from his father's house in Jiyye.

Upon arrival the next morning in the church, Salmān thanked his new Christian friends for the help they were rendering him. The priests gave special instructions to the leader of the caravan regarding the welfare of Salmān. The high priest then committed Salmān to the protection of G-d and the caravan left Jiyye that night, and, moving at a rapid pace, put considerable distance between itself and the city before daybreak.

The Years in the Wilderness

Nearly a month after its departure from Jiyye in Persia, the caravan finally arrived in the ancient city of Damascus (*Dimashq*/دمشق). Salmān had come to the end of one journey and the beginning of another. This new journey would be in the realm of spirit.

Salmān at this time was in the nineteenth year of his life. He was rangy and muscular, and he had a powerful build. He was endowed with a highly retentive memory, and a most penetrating intelligence. He had a critical, and an analytic and logical mind. Both in his mental attributes and physical characteristics he surpassed most young men of his age. Just as he was tall, broad and robust beyond his years, he was also wise, prudent, and sagacious. Early in his life, he had cultivated a temperate personality. In Jiyye, his hometown, he had riches, luxury, and high status – all within easy grasp but he spurned them all, and he did so not withstanding his extreme youth. Instead of seeking power and pleasure, as other young men of his generation did, he made the pursuit of Knowledge and Truth the "vocation" of his life. He was the idealist *par excellence*.

After leaving Jiyye in Persia, Salmān lived in four other cities.

He lived for ten years in Damascus, and then during the next twenty years, he lived in Mosul, Nasibin and ᶜAmmuria. In each of these cities, he read, studied, observed, and gradually assimilated all the religious knowledge that was available. He also spent much time in devotions in the hope of finding the gift of enlightenment and inner peace. But his religious experience during this period was almost entirely subjective. It arose out of and was identified by means of his awareness of his own mental states and psychological processes. There were times when his interior world became so vivid that he lost touch with the exterior world. This alarmed him as he often no longer knew where or even what or who he was.

One question that arose persistently in his mind was whether it was right to turn one's back upon the world and its problems, and to try to win happiness and inner peace for his self whilst ignoring the sufferings of others.

With the passage of time, doubt began to enter into Salmān's ﷺ thoughts. He felt that Truth – the Ultimate Truth – was still hidden from him, and this after an effort to find it that had spanned by now almost a quarter century. When Salmān ﷺ was tormented too much by these thoughts, and when he knew he had come to an impasse, he turned more deeply to G-d, and prayed for deliverance from doubt and skepticism to be led to Guidance and Firm Truth.

Partially this was due to his being disillusioned by the first of the "teachers" he had met and studied under.

When Salmān had first arrived in Syria (*Bilād asḫ-Sḫām*/بلاد الشام) and asked who the people knew to be the most learned man in this religion, in order that he may go and study under the greatest. He was told to go to the Bishop of a particular church. He went to that bishop and told him of his situation and his long journey and that he wanted to study under him. The bishop told Salmān that he was welcome to stay with him which he did and lived in the church.

Salmān, in telling his own story, said, "This man used to ask the people to donate and then he would end up keeping it for himself, rather than re-distributing it to the poor. He was an evil man and I began to despise him. Nevertheless I remained with him and when he died, the Christians at that church wanted to bury him."

Salmān then told them that he was an evil man and they asked him how he could dare to say such a thing?!

In turn Salmān told them, "I'll show you the proof." and he took them to the place under the church where the bishop used to hide all of the money and pulled out seven clay jugs which contained all the gold and silver, which the bishop had kept for himself.

The people were so angered, they ended up crucifying his dead body upside down and stoning it.

Salmān said about this man, "Then the church fathers brought another man to take his place and I never saw a man who offered his prayers more regularly than this man; nor more aesthetic; nor more enthusiastic about the afterlife; nor more devoted both day and night. I loved him as I had never loved anyone before."

But soon death approached this man, who was already old when he arrived and Salmān began to study with him.

Salmān recalls, “I went to him when he was on his death bed and I told him, ‘You know my story and how I came all this way to study this religion, and now since the decree of Allāh ﷻ is befalling you, who will you entrust me to? Who do you recommend to me to continue my studies?’”

The man told him, “My son, I don't know anyone who has done as I have. People have either died or changed or abandoned most of their prior practises, except for one man in Moṣul (الموصل) who practises as I did, so go join him and gather what you can from him.”

The bishop died and Salmān embarked on a journey all the way from asẖ-Sẖam to Moṣul in Iraq by foot in search of knowledge.

He immediately made contact with the bishop of al-Mosul and told him his story and that he had been recommended to him by the bishop in asẖ-Sẖam and asked the bishop if he would accept him. The bishop readily replied in the affirmative to Salmān’s request.

Now Salmān spent time with this new teacher, who was also an old man and approaching death. After a short while he too was dying and Salmān told him, “I came to you on the recommendation of my last teacher and now you too are passing away. You see my state. Who do you recommend?”

To which his teacher replied, “I don't know of anyone who is following this same path of ours except the bishop of Nusaybīn.”

Once again, Salmān set off seeking the Truth and was now travelling, from Iraq to Nusaybīn (*Mtsbin/*Νίσιβις) in Kurdish Turkey. He went to the man to whom he had been sent and told him his story, of how he had gone from one teacher to another and, although he has learned many things, he still had not learned *the* Truth.

In any case Salmān spent some time with this new teacher, who, also, was approaching death. This school of bishops was a dying one, leaving no one behind them to carry on the teahings. The bishop said to him, “I don’t know of anyone who is following our way, except a man in ᶜAmuriyyah (which is also in Turkey).”

So Salmān set off once again, this time to ᶜAmuriyyah, where in addition to his studies and participation in group worship services and personal practices, he started a business and soon accumulated enough wealth to purchase some sheep and cows.

When death was approaching this latest teacher in Turkey, Salmān asked him who he would recommend him to study with. The bishop responded and said, "My son. I don't know anyone who is like us to send you to. But, the time is drawing near for a Prophet being sent with the religion of Ibraḥīm ﷺ (*dīn al-ḥunafāʾ*/دِن الحنفاء)[1] who will come in the land of the Arabs and will move to a refuge somewhere with date palms growing between two scorched black lava plains.

He will have signs that are unmistakeable. He only eats things given to him as a gift but not as alms or charity, and between his shoulders there is the seal of prophethood. If you can go there, do so."

Salmān was also told to go walking in a certain field located outside of the town where he met a man who replied to his question saying.

"There is no-one today who is following the same path of ʿĪsā ﷺ or the al-Ḥunafāʾ (the Way of ʾIbrahīm ﷺ). They have all passed on. Therefore, it is time for a new message to come, as the world is void of guidance and now is the time to fill that void.

He is approaching. His time is near and he has unmistakeable signs:

1 – He will take refuge in a place which grows palm trees and it is between two rocky tracks of volcanic rock.

2 – He does not eat from sadaqa (صدقة), but he does accepts gifts.

3 – There is a seal of prophethood (a sign) between his shoulders, on his back.

This corroborated the earlier message so Salmān ﷺ then made up his mind to go to Arabia to see if he could find the the new prophet who forbade the worship of idols and images and preached the doctrine of the absolute sovereignty and Oneness of G-d as soon as his circumstances would allow, and to interrogate him personally on the various questions which had been perplexing him.

Toward late summer in that year, some travelers arrived in ʿAmmuria from the south. The enquiries of Salmān ﷺ revealed that these travelers were horse traders from a city called Yathrib in Arabia. They told him that after selling their horses, they would return to Damascus to make connection with a caravan that was being assembled there for the return journey to Yaṯrib.

1. Such seekers of the truth were known as *Ḥunafah* (sing. *Ḥānif*), a word originally meaning "those who turn away" (from idol-worship), but coming in the end to have the sense of "upright" or "by nature upright," because such persons held the way of truth to be right conduct. These *Ḥunafah* were a lossely knit group of individuals and did not form a community as such.

Salmān ﷺ met the leader of these horse traders and requested him to allow him to travel with them to Damascus, and thence to Yaṯŗib. In return for this, he offered to pay him from his modest savings.

Salmān ﷺ himself said, "I was trying to find a way to the land of the Arabs [which is far away], until I met some merchants from the tribe called Kalb. I asked them to take me with them in their caravan, and I would pay them all of the money I had; additionally all my cows and sheep would be theirs."

The journey was long and arduous. But Salmān ﷺ endured the travail with stoical courage. While others rode their camels or horses, Salmān ﷺ walked, a feat of endurance that astonished them.

Eventually, the caravan arrived in the oasis of Wadi-ul-Qura in the *Ḥijāz* (الحجاز), called the Desert of Paran (מדבר פארן) in the Bible, and the caravan leader announced they would halt there for three days and nights. Salmān ﷺ now made plans for the last leg of his journey from Yaṯŗib to Makkah. What he did not know was that bitter disappointment was lying in wait for him just around the corner in the form of some Jews looking for slave laborers.

The leaders of the caravan offered Salmān ﷺ for sale to the highest bidder among them. Salmān ﷺ protested that he was not a slave, and could not be sold or bought but could not produce any "witnesses" who would vouch that he was a free man and he was soon sold. On top of it his Jewish master made him a prisoner, and the caravan left for its destination without him.

In Wadi-ul-Qura due to his large stature Salmān ﷺ attracted much attention and many showed interest in buying him. One of the bidders was a date farmer cousin of Salmān's new master; He lived in Yaṯŗib and was visiting Wadi-ul-Qura on business. He was so insistent on buying Salmān that Salmā's master agreed to sell him.

Before long, in Yaṯŗib also, a competition began among the Jews to buy Salmān ﷺ. His master did not want to sell him but he found one of the offers so attractive that he accepted it, and sold him. The new master sold him again and thus he ﷺ passed through many hands until a rich Jew – ʿUṯŗmān bin Asḫhel – bought him.

ʿUṯŗmān and the other date growing Jews had never seen a slave like Salmān ﷺ. They noted that he didn't talk much but whenever he did, he spoke words of profound wisdom. His judgment, they noted, was like the judgment of the Prophet Sulaymān ﷺ himself.

His master benefited, not only from his work but also from his advice and his opinions, which he sought quite frequently. But he was a vicious and brutal taskmaster, and made Salmān ﷺ work non-stop. His work ﷺ was difficult and laborious and he ﷺ was forced to spend many hours each day picking dates from the the trees but he did not allow his adverse circumstances to extinguish the flame that the hope of meeting the coming Prophet ﷺ had kindled in his breast. The hope of meeting gave him life and revived him every day. Whenever he had a rough day, he reminded himself that he had a *rendezvous* with the Prophet ﷺ of the age, and he bounced back.

One morning when Salmān ﷺ was gathering dates at the very top of one of the trees in the grove, he noticed that his master, who was sitting at its foot, was engaged in talking with a stranger. From this stranger he heard that someone claiming to be a prophet had come to Yaṯŗib on the request of the tribes of ʾAws and Kẖazraj in order to make peace among them. Indeed they had taken an oath of loyalty to him in Makkah. Immediately upon hearing this Salmān ﷺ began to try to work out how he could meet this Prophet ﷺ, who he had no doubt was the one he was destined to be with.

Salmān ﷺ himself recalls, "One day, I was working on top of a palm tree and my master was sitting under the palm tree. One of his cousins came to him [the cousin of the Jewish master] and he was angry and he said, 'May G-d damn the children of Kaylah[2]. They have assembled in Quba, in support of a man who came from Makkah and claims to be a Prophet.'"

Salmān ﷺ continues, "When I heard that, a chill went down my spine and I started to tremble and I was almost going to fall off the palm tree and land on my master below."

This was it! Salmān ﷺ had been waiting for this moment for years. He had given up his life; left his family; left his homeland and come into foreign lands with different languages, different people, etc.

It was not easy to travel to different countries and be amongst foreigners. Unlike today, when travel is easy and one has access to interpreters and access to people who can speak their language.

Salmān left Persia and went to asẖ-Sẖam, followed by Turkey and Iraq and now he was in the Ḥijāz a mostly desolate harsh area with a few oasis surrounded by deserts and barren mountains.

2. *Kaylah* was a name given by the Jews to the tribes of Aws and Khazraj

Salmān ﷺ was living alone in this harsh land amongst strangers and as a slave. One can imagine the feelings of home sickness that such a sensitive person in his position would have. Sold unjustly as a slave and living in a foreign land and now he had finally heard the news he had been waiting for to hear for years.

Salmān ﷺ says, "I came running down the tree and I went to the man and began questioning him. Then my master grabbed me and punched me in the face and told me, "It's none of your business, go back to work.'"

Ne goes on to say that, "Later on that evening, I prepared some food and travelled to Quba on the outskirts of Madinah and went to visit the Prophet ﷺ at night after work. I came in to where he was sitting and I told him ﷺ, 'I heard that you are a very good man and that you have companions who are poor and needy. So I have brought you this food as charity (*ṣadaqah*/صدقة) and I think that you are the one who deserves it most.' I handed him the food, which he received from me and then told his companions to go ahead and eat, but he did not join in with them."

This is the first sign of prophethood, as prophets do not eat charity.

The first test was verified by Salmān ﷺ and he went back home. Later on the next day, he prepared some more food and dates and went back to the Prophet ﷺ who was on his way to Madinah.

Salmān ﷺ recalls, "I went up to him. I greeted him and then I told him, 'Last night I presented you with food and I told you that this is charity and you refused to eat from it. Therefore, I want to honor you with this gift.' I handed the food to him ﷺ, who then invited his companions ﷺ to come in and eat and he ﷺ joined them."

This was the second sign, relayed to him by the man he met in the field in Turkey: prophets do eat from gifts but not from charity.

Salmān ﷺ next went to the Prophet ﷺ and visited him in the cemetery of Madinah, following a funeral prayer (*al-janāzah*/ الجنازة).

Salmān ﷺ said, "I went up to the Prophet ﷺ and greeted him. Then I went around him to see the sign on his back. He ﷺ sensed that I was trying to look for something which was described for me, so he uncovered his back. He threw off the cloak which was covering his shoulders, and right there, in front of my eyes, was the Seal of Prophethood."

This was the third sign which Salmān had been told to look for.

Salmān continues, "When I saw the Seal of Prophethood on his back, I fell down and I prostrated (*sujūd*/سجود) myself before the Prophet ﷺ and I started kissing his feet and crying."

The Prophet ﷺ immediately told him to stand up, as he ﷺ did not accept prostrations made to him. The Prophet ﷺ told Salmān ﷺ to tell him who he was and what was his story. Salmān ﷺ narrated his story, and the Prophet ﷺ told him, "I want you to narrate this same story to my companions. I want you to tell them this story of a man who was searching for truth for all of his life."

Salmān ﷺ continues, "And I narrated my story to them just as I am narrating it to you [Ibn ᶜAbbas]."

"Because I was a slave, I ended up missing the Battle of Badr and the Battle of Uhud. Then the Prophet ﷺ one day told me, 'Oh Salmān, free yourself from slavery(*mukātabah*/مكاتبه)."[3]

Salmān ﷺ then went to his owner and told him he wanted to be free, to which his owner replied that he had to plant 300 palm trees and they all must survive and he must pay him 40 ounces of gold.

Salmān returned to the Prophet ﷺ and told him that this deal required a large amount of money that he would need to ransom himself with and he didn't see how he could possibly do it.

The Prophet ﷺ told him not to worry and gathered the companions ﷺ and told them to help their brother.

Salmān ﷺ said that some of the companions would bring 30 seedlings of palm trees and others would bring 20 and some would bring 15 seedlings. Every companion would bring as much as they were able, until there was a total of 300 seedlings.

The Prophet ﷺ told Salmān ﷺ, "When you collect the 300 seedlings, go and dig the holes for them, but do not plant them. Come and tell me first."

After collecting the 300 seedlings, Salmān ﷺ prepared the holes for them and then told the Prophet ﷺ that they were all ready to be planted.

Salmān ﷺ said "The Prophet ﷺ went by himself and carried the seedlings and planted them one by one with his own blessed hands. None of those 300 palm trees died. They all survived." No doubt from the blessings from the hands, he being the Prophet ﷺ.

3. A contract made between a slave and a master, where the slave works for a certain time and generates a certain income and ransoms himself or herself."

Normally, many seedlings would not survive due to their fragility and the hot weather. This is why the Prophet ﷺ wanted to plant them himself, in order that they might live.

Now, Salmān ﷺ still had the burden upon him to pay 40 ounces of gold (in today's market worth some fifty thousand dollars) to his master and had no idea where he would obtain such a large amount of gold. But later the same day, a small amount of gold was given to The Prophet ﷺ who said, "Where is the Persian?" Salmān was called and the Prophet ﷺ told him, "Take this gold and free yourself."

When Salmān saw the amount of gold, he saw that it was very small and not at all sufficient to free himself and. He said, "Oh Rasūlu-l-llah, what good will this do?"

The Prophet ﷺ told him, "Take it! It will be enough."

Salmān says, "I took it and when it was weighed it ended up weighing exactly 40 ounces. Then I was freed and I never missed anything with the Prophet ﷺ after that."

Salmān ﷺ became known as "Salmān the Good". He was a scholar but one who lived a rough and ascetic life. He had one cloak which he wore and on which he slept. He would not seek the shelter of a roof but stayed under a tree or against a wall. A man once said to him: "Shall I not build you a house in which to live?" "I have no need of a house," he replied.

The man persisted and said, "I know the type of house that would suit you." "Describe it to me," said Salmān ﷺ.

"I shall build you a house which if you stand up in it, its roof will hurt your head and if you stretch your legs the wall will hurt them."

Later, as a govenor of al-Madāʾin (المدائن) (Ctesiphon/Κτησιφῶν) near Baghdad, Salmān ﷺ received a stipend of five thousand dirhams which he would distribute as ṣadaqah (صدقة). He lived from the work of his own hands. When some people came to Madaʿin and saw him working in the palm groves, they said, "You are the *amīr* here and your sustenance is guaranteed and you do this work?" "I like to eat from the work of my own hands," he replied.

ʾAbū Juhayfa narrated: "The Prophet ﷺ made a bond of brotherhood between Salmān and ʾAbū Darda (أبو ذر). Salmān ﷺ paid a visit to ʾAbū Darda ﷺ and found his wife, Umm Darda ﷺ, dressed in shabby clothes and asked her why she was in such a state.

"She replied, 'Your brother ʾAbū Darda is not interested in (the luxuries of) this world.' In the meantime ʾAbū Darda came and prepared a meal for Salmān ﷺ. Salmān requested ʾAbū Darda ﷺ to eat (with him), but ʾAbū Darda ﷺ said, "I am fasting." Salmān ﷺ said, "I am not going to eat unless you eat." So, ʾAbū Darda ﷺ ate (with Salmān). When it was night and (a part of the night passed), ʾAbū Darda ﷺ got up (to offer the late night voluntary prayer (*tahajjud* /تهجد)), but Salmān told him to sleep and ʾAbū Darda ﷺ slept. After sometime ʾAbū Darda ﷺ got up again but Salmān ﷺ told him to sleep. When it was the last hours of the night, Salmān ﷺ told him to get up then, and both of them offered the prayer. Salmān ﷺ told ʾAbū Darda ﷺ, "Your Lord has a right on you, your soul has a right on you, and your family has a right on you; so you should give the rights of all those who have a right on you."

ʾAbū Darda ﷺ went to the Prophet ﷺ and narrated the whole story. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Salmān has spoken the truth."

The Prophet ﷺ said concerning ʾAbū Darda that "Heaven has not shaded, nor has the earth carried a person more straight forward than ʾAbū Darda. He walks on earth with the immaterialistic attitude of ʿIṣa bin Maryam." Ṣaḥīh al-Tirmidhī, v5, p334,

As a scholar, Salmān ﷺ was noted for his vast knowledge and wisdom. ʿAlī عليه السلام said of him that he was like Luqman the Wise. And Kaʿb al-Ahbar ﷺ said: "Salmān is filled with knowledge and his wisdom is like an ocean that does not dry up."

Salmān ﷺ had a knowledge of both the Christian scriptures and the Qurʾān in addition to his earlier knowledge of the Zoroastrian religion. Salmān in fact translated parts of the Qurʾān into Persian during the life-time of the Prophet ﷺ. He was thus the first person to translate the Qurʾān into a foreign language.

Christianity appears to be a religion of peace, humility and acceptance. In its early periods it also possessed a strong element of bigotry inherited from Jewish thought. As time passed by, this underlying element became more entrenched, leading it to reject ʾIslām. Religion had been hijacked by its leaders. G-d could no longer be found in revealed religion. But the search did not stop. This was the quest of Salmān al-Fārsī ﷺ and ʾAbū Darda ﷺ. To the seekers of Allāh ﷻ, religion is purely a road and pathway, not the destination: any religion must not act as an obstacle in the path of finding G-d.

Salmān al-Fārsī ﷺ laid down principles and guidelines of this search.

Relying on his road map, the traveller to Allāh ﷻ did not stop until he reached his destination, but Christianity and Judaism had changed the goals of religion. Instead of seeking G-d they made religion into an institution governed by legalistic principles which agreed with their own personal ambitions and desires.

Knowledge was thus sacrificed to bigotry. Open-mindedness gave way to shallow thinking. G-d was gradually pushed out as the main concern and abiding principle of these religions. The personal rule of the rabbi and priest had begun. It is this that led Salmān al-Fārsī ﷺ to look for Allāh ﷻ outside the institutional religions of his time.

Salmān, because of the wealthy household in which he grew up, might easily have been a major figure in the sprawling Persian Empire of his time. His search for truth however led him, even before the Prophet ﷺ had appeared, to renounce a comfortable and affluent life and to suffer the indignities of slavery. He died in the year thirty five of the hijrah, at al-Madāʾin (المدائن) (Ctesiphon) .

This is the more or less standard story [See ‘Note of Omission on inside of the front cover] of Salmān al-Fārsī ﷺ that appears in countless books of sirah (سـيـرة) and other books on the lives of the companions ﷺ of the Prophet ﷺ, but there is far more to the story and, ʾīnsẖa-llāh, we will now relate some of its more hidden aspects. .

For instance: ʾAsim ibn Umar ﷺ said that he was told that Salmān al-Fārsī ﷺ told the Prophet ﷺ (as we mentioned in passing) that his master in ʿAmmuriya told him to go to a certain place in Syria where there was a man who lived between two thickets.

Every year this went from one thicket to the other, the sick stood along his way and everyone he prayed for was healed. He said, “Ask him about this religion which you seek, for he can tell you of it.” So I went on until I came to the place of which I had been told. I found that people had gathered there with their sick until he came out to them that night passing from one thicket to the other. The people came to him with their sick. Everyone he prayed for was healed. They prevented me from getting to him. I could not approach him until he entered the thicket to which he was headed. I took hold of his shoulder. He asked me who I was as he turned to me and I said, “G-d have mercy on you, I am called Salmān, and I beg you to tell me about the Ḥanafiya, the religion of Ibrahīm ﷺ.”

He replied, "You are asking about something men do not ask about today. I tell you the time has come near when a prophet will be sent with this religion from the people of the sacred area (Makkah or al-Ḥaram asf-Sẖarīf). Go to him, for he will bring you to it." Then he went into the thicket. The Prophet ﷺ said to Salmān, "If you have told me the truth, you met ᶜIsā bin Maryam عليه السلام."

Among his titles Salmān al-Fārsī ﷺ is known as "the ᵓImām," "the Inheritor of ᵓIslām," "the Wise Judge," "the Knowledgeable Scholar" and "One of the House of the Prophet (*Ahlu-l-Bayt*/أهـل الـبـيـت)." for even if one is not from the Family of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, that is he is, not al-Hassani عليه السلام or al-Husayni عليه السلام or a direct genetic and spiritual descendant of the Family of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and yet he is able to reach that distinguished spiritual level, then he is said to inherit the Muḥammadan Reality from Salmān al-Fārsī ﷺ, for the Prophet ﷺ included him as a member of Ahlu-l-Bayt and told his wife not to cover herself in front of Sayyid Salmān, saying, "*Salmān minī wa huwa min Ahlu-l-Bayt*." ("Salmān is from me and he is from the Ahlu-l-Bayt.")

All of the above were titles given to Salmān ﷺ by the Prophet ﷺ.

Recently in my studies, reading and writings on the subject of *walāyah* and *nubuwwah*[4] (ولاية و النبوة) I came across this essay posted in 2010. which reflects an ᵓIsmāᶜīlīh (الإسماعيلية) view of Salmān al-Fārsī ﷺ (Note: this may be difficult even shocking for a Sunni reader to accept or grasp and, indeed, may be rejected outright but, closely read, it contains important understandings that must be considered in talking and thinking about Salmān al-Fārsī ﷺ.)

"Here is the Truth about Salmān Pak (the Pure):

"Since walayah is superior to prophecy of which it is the source, it follows that the person of the *walī* – that is to say the ᵓImām – takes precedence over that of the Prophet; and the ᵓImāmate always has and always will take precedence over the Prophetic mission. One may possess knowledge of his person (the *walī*) in his physical form – a knowledge of which even animals are capable. One may possess knowledge of his official name and of his earthly genealogy, a knowledge to which even his enemies have access.

4. See the videos of my recent essays on "*al-Bayᶜah is for Allāh*" and *al-Mahdi* عليه السلام and *al-Khidr* عليه السلام at GreenMountainSchool.Org or get the actual essays from our bookstore.

"There is the knowledge which recognizes his ʾImāmate – a knowledge shared by all the members of the *daʿwah* (دعـوة). Finally, there is the knowledge of his Essence according to the eternal reality of his attributes – a knowledge, that is, which presupposes a transcendence of all other modes of knowing. Such knowledge dazzles the soul, and is the privilege of the Ḥujjah (الحجة). Likewise, there is a quadruple line of descent relative to the ʾImām, as follows: according to the flesh; in the spiritual sense; according both to the flesh and in the spiritual sense; *and, lastly, according to the flesh, the spiritual sense and the eternal reality of his essence*. (emphasis added). The ʾImām's *purely spiritual descendant* is the Ḥujjah (the proof/الحجة), – a status which has its archetype in Salmān al-Fārsī, and which, according to the promise of the ʾImām, is exemplified in every faithful initiate. With the promotion of the Ḥujjah to the highest rank, the entire traditional hierarchy is modified. It is ʾImāmology and the philosophy of resurrection. One can speak here of a radical shift. It is always the case that the hierarchy of the *ḥudūd* (limits/حـــدود) denotes their respective degree of proximity to the ʾImām. But now the meaning of this hierarchy tends to become more interior, and 'the limits' indicate rather the degrees of conformity with the ʾImām that correspond to stages in the progress of one's own inner consciousness. The *ṭawīl* (inner meaning or esoteric interpretation/طـويـل) makes the hierocosmos (the esoteric hierarchical brotherhood) symbolize with the microcosm. The consequence of this is a fall in the rank assigned to the naṭīq (speaking prophet/نـطـيـق), the prophet who proclaims a Law, and a different appreciation of the cycle of prophecy. Both these are corollaries of the elevation of the rank of Ḥujjah. The predominance of the binary syzygy Prophet – ʾImām is replaced by that of the ʾImām – Ḥujjah. In later Twelver Shiite theosophy, the mission of the Prophet of ʾIslām marked the full noonday hour (the equilibrium between *ḍhahir* and *bāṭin*/exoteric and esoteric). Shortly after began the decline towards evening, the return into the night of esotericism, the beginning, again, of a cycle of the pure *walayah*. In early Twelver Shiite theosophy, the entry of the *ḥaqīqah* (حـقـيـقـه) – the pure spiritual religion – into the night of esotericism began not with Muḥammad, Seal of the Prophets, but with the very first prophet, ʾĀdam, who initiated our present cycle of occultation – that is to say, it began with the beginnings of present humanity.

The six great periods of 'legislative prophecy'(the 'prophecy of institution', of legality, of *sẖariᶜah* (*nubuwwatu-l-tasẖrī*) are always seen as the hexaemeron, ᵓŪlu-l-ᶜAzm (أُوْلُواْ ٱلعَزم) or the Possessors of strong will and perseverance. (Q33:7) (ᵓĀdam, Nūh, ᵓIbåraḥīm, Mūsā, ᶜIsā, Muḥammad ﷺ), the 'six days' of the creation of the religious cosmos or hierocosmos, each 'day' being counted as a 'millennium'. But in point of fact, the six 'days' are the night of divine religion, the night of the ᵓImām, because during these six days the literal Law or sẖariᶜah of the legislative prophets is the veil hiding the reality (*ḥaqq*/حق) or hiding the sun of the ᵓImām.

Just as the sun is replaced by the moon in illuminating the night, the ᵓImām is replaced by him who is his Ḥujjah, his proof or guarantor (his '*Salmān*').

Knowledge of the ᵓImām in his true Essence will only become manifest on the seventh day, that is, on the day after the still-continuing hexaemeron. Only the seventh day will truly partake of the nature of day, that on which the sun shines forth on the Day of the Resurrection (*yawm al-qiyamah*/يوم القيامة). Within the context of this vision of things, the drop in rank of the prophet-legislator needs no explanation. Whereas in later Twelver Imamism, as in Fāṭimid ᵓIsmāᶜīlīsm, he ranked first (being the earthly homologue of the First Intelligence), in the early Twelver ᵓImāmism he ranks third. It seems, indeed, that in this the ᵓImāmology of early Twelver ᵓImāmism merely reproduces an order of precedence that existed in pre-Mujtahid ᵓUsūlism, one represented by the order of succession of the three symbolic letters *ᶜayn* (ع) (ᶜAlī, the ᵓImām), *sīn* (س) (Salmān, the Ḥujjah), and *mīm* (م) (Muḥammad, the Prophet).

The Prophet, in fact, in his capacity as a *naṭīq* (نـطـيـق) – the annunciator of a sẖariᶜah – has the rank and function of a dāᶜī (داعـــي) who 'calls' (دعـــوة) men towards the ᵓImām who is the secret meaning of the sẖariᶜah he annunciates, which is why each prophet, at the beginning of his vocation as dāᶜī, has met with the Ḥujjah of the ᵓImām of his time, who stands in the same relation to him as al-Kẖidr (Mūsā's initiator), stood to Mūsā. In the Early Twelver Sẖiᶜah exegesis of the history of the steadfast prophets, ᵓŪlu-l-ᶜAzm, The Garden for ᵓĀdam, the Ark for Noah, the Burning Bush for Musā, Maryām for ᶜĪsa, and Salmān for Muḥammad are all interpreted as figurations of the meeting with the ᵓItmāmu-l-ḥujjah (اتمام الحجة) "completion of proof" of their cycle.

Every initiate in his turn follows the example of the Prophet – Dāᶜī and advances towards the same encounter, towards spiritual union with the ḥujjah: they become gnostics or knowers by Allāh (*ᶜarif bi-llāh*/العارف بالله) who share in the same gnosis. This is the meaning of the promise of the ᵓImām to his disciple when he tells him that he will make him as similar to himself as Salmān. The Imam stands in the same relation to his Ḥujjah as the creative *Esto*[5] to the first Intelligence. Such is the privileged situation of the Ḥujjah, of all those whose archetype is Salmān: those of whom it is said that from the very beginning the spiritual essence or true meaning (*maᶜna*/معنى) of each of their persons is the same as the ᵓImām's (whence comes the fourth of the modes of knowledge and filiation described above). 'To be raised to the rank of Ḥujjah is to exemplify in one's own person the case of Salmān, it is to attain to the 'Salmān of your being' – the 'Salmān of the microcosm', as it is called in the ancient treatise *ᵓUmmu-l-Kitāb* or the Mother of the Book.

With regard to the secret of such an attainment, the following few lines may perhaps yield the supreme message of Ismaili philosophy: "The ᵓImām has said: I am with my friends wherever they seek me, on the mountain, in the plain and in the desert. The man to whom I have revealed my Essence, that is to say the mystical knowledge of myself, has no further need of my physical proximity. And this is the Great Resurrection."

The texts of the early Twelvers (*ᵓItẖnāᵓasẖariyyah*) show us both the way in which ᵓImāmology fructifies mystical experience, and how it presupposes such an experience. The conjunction of ᵓItẖnā-ᵓasẖariyyah ᵓImāmism and Ṣūfism, which took place after the time of the Mongol (1219-1220 CE) invasion, refers us to the as yet unsolved problem of origins. If we agree with the Sẖiᶜah spirituals that Sunni Ṣūfism is something which, by endowing the Prophet alone with the attributes of the ᵓImām and thereby making the *walayah* into an Imamology without an ᵓImām, parted company with Sẖiᶜism at a given moment, then the early ᵓItẖnāᵓasẖariyyahh actually do no more than restore the old order of things. Hence its importance for Sẖiᶜah Ṣūfīsm after this period. We have just seen how the replacement of the pair Nabī – ᵓImām by the pair ᵓImām – Ḥujjah reflects the process of mystical interiorization.

5. (*Esto* = Latin second-person singular future active imperative of *sum* or "you shall be")

In a commentary on Mahmud al-Shabistari's 'Rosary of Mystery' (*Gulshan-i Rāz*) by an anonymous ᵓIrfāni writer, the *unio mystica* of the ᵓImām and the Ḥujjah is mediated in the magnificent symbol of the olive tree growing at the top of Sinai (Q95:1-2). There are two mountains, the mountain of intelligence and the mountain of love.

In his meditation on the secret of the earthly human Form, in which is concealed the love of 'The Hidden Treasure which longed to be Known and therefore created the World', the mystical pilgrim discovers that his own person, like that of Mūsā, is the Sinai at the summit (or the heart) of which is revealed the theophanic Form of the eternal ᵓImām. Upon this summit, or within this sanctuary, the 'Soul of the soul' is revealed to the soul as the mystical olive tree which stands on the invisible heights of the Sinai of love. The pilgrim must climb the Sinai of Love, which is higher than the mountain of Intelligence; for although the intellect is the guide leading to the secret of the theophany, it is also the guide who ultimately steps aside, like Virgil in the presence of Beatrice. The Roman poet Virgil guides Dante through Hell and Purgatory; but it is Beatrice, Dante's ideal woman, who guides him through Heaven. As we have seen, in performing this inner pilgrimage the disciple does no more than repeat the initial step of each prophet in search of the ᵓImām. To reach the summit of the Sinai of his soul is, for the mystic, to realize the state of Salmān the Pure (Salmān Pāk/سلمان پاك), of the Ḥujjah: it is to attain to the Soul of the Soul (*jaan-i jaan*/جان الجن). This Soul is the ᵓImām, the olive tree growing on the top of the Sinai of love; and the soul of the mystic is this very love, since the Sinai is the Sinai of his being. Thus, what the soul discovers at the summit, or the heart, of her being is the ᵓImām as the eternal beloved. The conjunction of the ᵓImām and his Ḥujjah becomes the inner dialogue between the Beloved and the Lover. The Soul of his soul is her to whom he is able to say *thou*, it is his 'I' in the second person (*esto*). As it was for Mūsā on Sinai, in the presence of the Soul of his soul, the 'Mūsā of his being', his 'I' in the first person, is obliterated. In contemplating herself in the Soul of the soul, the soul becomes the object of contemplation of the Soul of the soul, and this latter, in its place and time, utters the words: *Ego sum Deus*. In this manner the famous pronouncement of al-Hallaj, "*I am* the Truth" (*ana-l-ḥaqq*/أنا الحق), repeated over the centuries by the Ṣūfīs, acquires a truly Sẖiᶜah flavor.

ᵓImāmology frees it from the trap of transcendental monism, which created so many problems for reflexive thought. Ultimately, the mystical experience of the Ṣūfis encompasses a metaphysic which baffles both the dialectic of philosophers pure and simple, and that of the theologians of the kalām (علم الكلام). It will be clear, from what has been said here, that there is yet another form of metaphysics in ᵓIslām, without which it may be impossible to explain the beginnings and the development of Ṣūfism. This other form is essentially Sẖiᶜah gnosis which goes back to the ᵓImāms themselves.

In conclusion, the mediator, who is a necessary condition of Sẖiᶜah prophetology, is technically known as the *Ḥujjah* (the proof or the guarantee of Allāh). Nevertheless, idea and function transcend the limits of any particular epoch: the presence of the Ḥujjah needs to be continuous, even if it is an invisible presence to which the majority of men are oblivious. If, therefore, the term is applied to the Prophet, it is in turn applied even more emphatically to the Imams. (In the hierarchy of early *ᵓItẖnāᵓasẖariyyah* thought, the Ḥujjah becomes in some sense a spiritual double of the ᵓImām) The idea of the Ḥujjah thus already presupposes the inseparability of Prophetology from Imamology; and because it transcends time, it originates in a metaphysical reality, the vision of which takes us back to the gnostic theme of the celestial Anthropos.

This variant, for example, emanates from the ᵓImām: "Salmān is one of us, the members of the House (*Salmān minna Ahl al-Bayt*), a Sun of the divine Light, an integral part of ourselves. The heart of the True Believer is the Light of Allāh; no one measures his measure, for the True Believer is forever living in the two universes." Or yet again: "Salmān is part of myself, and I myself am part of Salmān." In primitive Sẖiᵓism, or more precisely in early *ᵓItẖnāᵓ-asẖariyyah* ᵓImāmiyyah, this assumption of Salmān is reflected in the speculations developed around the three symbolic letters ᶜAYN, SĪN, MĪM, typifying respectively the ᵓImām, Salmān the Adopted One (his Spiritual Child), and the Prophet ﷺ.

The *Book of the Glorious One* of Jabir ibn Hayyan starts from these highly abstruse speculations. The apotheosis of Salmān shows him as archetype of the True Believer, as the Adopted One, the Spiritual Child, exemplifying the bond between the True Believer and the ᵓImām. ᵓAmīru-l-Muᵓminīn says, "Consecrate to me your devotion and your knowledge, and you will become, as a Salmān, to me."

‘To become as a Salmān’ is to become oneself a Ḥujjat, the Proof and Adopted One of the ᵓImam, and thereby to become “like the ᵓImām”; such is the ultimate metamorphosis to which the initiate will aspire. Thus Salmān the Mazdean, then the Christian, then the Exile in “Quest” of the True Prophet, then the Spiritual Child of the ᵓImām who solemnly attests his “adoption”, has become the “Threshold” or Entry Way; so will it be with all the ‘Salmāns’; with every soul that exemplifies his case; each one, as a very ancient text declares, becomes the “Salmān of the microcosmos.”

Like Salmān, Jābir (جابر بن حيان) becomes, as it were, the Hujjat, the mirror in which is revealed (*maẓhar*/*maḍḥar*) the ᵓImām. For this the ᵓImām must be epiphanized in him, must become “manifest” (*ḍḥāhir*) to him in a vision which is not that of the senses. But to have this vision is to assume in oneself the light of the ᵓImām, it is to become oneself the mirror in which he reveals himself. Thus the circle is closed. For what you see is the part that the measure of your being can assume or carry or conceive. Then too, the ᵓImām becomes “through you” what he is in relation to the Hidden Being: he is the mirror that reveals him, because Allāh ﷻ is for him and through him the Manifested One for and through Salmān, in the measure in which Salmān – Jābir, as he to whom the ᵓImām manifests himself (*ḍḥāhir*), is thereby the place and form of his Manifestation (*maẓhar*): he is his “coming into this world”. In other words, the Hidden Being stands in the same relation to the ᵓImām as the ᵓImām to Salmān. And this is the epiphanic mediation of the eternal ᵓImām. To achieve the capacity for this vision is the supreme metamorphosis: it is to become the pure mirror in which the epiphanies are accomplished. It is to be the “Salmān of the microcosm,” to reach and be at the end of the “Quest for the ᵓImām”.

– and it is to keep his personal secret inviolable –

Those of you who may have had trouble reading or understanding the more hidden reality of Salmān al-Fārsī, please read the below:

The fifth ᵓImām, Muḥammad al-Baqir ﷺ, as every ᵓImām after him, declared, “Our cause is difficult; it requires great effort; it can be espoused only by an Angel Brought Near (*muqqarabīn*), a Prophet who is sent (*nabī mursāl*/النبي مرسال), or a faithful initiate whose heart Allāh ﷻ has tested for faith.”

The sixth Imam, Jaᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ, specified further: "Our cause is a secret (*sirr*/سـر) within a secret, a secret of something which remains hidden, a secret which may only be disclosed by yet another secret; a secret upon a secret which is supported by a secret." And again: "Our cause is the truth and the truth of truth (*ḥaqqu-l-ḥaqq*); it is the exoteric aspect, and the esoteric aspect of the exoteric aspect, and the esoteric aspect of the esoteric aspect. It is the secret, and the secret of something which remains hidden, a secret which is supported by a secret." The significance of these remarks was already observed in a poem written by the fourth ʾImām, ᶜAlī Zayn al-ᶜAbidīn ﷺ (d. 95/714): "I conceal the jewels of my Knowledge – for fear that some ignorant man, on glimpsing the truth, should crush us. Oh Lord! if I were to reveal one pearl of my gnosis – they would say to me: are you then a worshipper of idols? – And there would be Muslims who would see justice in the shedding of my blood! – By Allāh they find abominable the most beautiful things they are offered." All those who have sought or who seek to confine the teaching to the exoteric aspect – to questions of law and of ritual – mutilate the very essence of our Dīn.

الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ
أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمْ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

ʾalladẖīna yastamiᶜūna-l-qawla fayattabiᶜūna ʾaḥsanahu
ʾulaʾika-l-ladẖīna hadāhum-llāhu wa ʾulāʾika hum ʾūlu-l-albāb

Those who listen well to what is said and follow the best of it,
they are the ones whom Allāh has guided,
they are the people of understanding.
(Sūratu-l-Zumar 39:18)

Differences of opinion and understanding, when properly channelled, are not only as the Prophet ﷺ said, "a blessing" but an asset to the intellectual growth of the Muslim ʾummah and are a sign of the vitality of ʾIslāmic culture. The competition arising between different scholars, from all schools of thought, should encourage them to strive with their maximum effort to reach the best decisions, and ultimately, the Truth. Diversity should not lead to division and fragmentation; on the contrary, it is part of the unity, just as it was in the society created by the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ 1,400+ years ago.

The Sunni and Sẖiᶜah schools of thought form the two wings of the ᵓIslāmic nation that allow it to fly. A great Muslim scholar once said, "Those who attempt to cause division between the Sẖiᶜah and Sunni are neither Sẖiᶜah nor Sunni." If what you have heard or read concerning Salmān al-Fārsī ﷺ differs instead of dismissing the differences or ignoring them you look into them there is much that will allow you to broaden your understanding of not just this one subject but many of the subjects which divide the ᵓummah today for in the end we all face the same qibla, we all worship Allāh ﷻ and we all read the same Qurᵓān and follow the *sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ.

This is just an aside in the bayān on Salmān al-Fārsī ﷺ but I ask every Muslim who reads or hears this to ask themselves at the deepest possible level who benefits (*cui bono*) from what is going on today in, for instance, Syria, though one can name a half dozen other places that are equally distressed by the problems rising from division and deadly murderous disputation between different schools.

To continue on the subject of Salmān al-Fārsī ﷺ. At the beginning of this bayān I quoted the ḥadīṯ on how ᵓIslām began as something strange and blessed are the strangers of whom Salmān ﷺ was one.–

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم بَدَأَ الإِسْلاَمُ غَرِيبًا وسيعُودُ كَمَا بدأَ غريبا فطُوبى لِلْغُرَبَا: صحيح مسلم كتاب الإيمان تُعرض الفتن على القلوب كالحصيرَ عوداعودا فَأي قلب أشربها نكت فيه نكتة سوداَ

This hadîth comes to use from many chains of transmission with variations in wording. Roughly twenty Companions relate it from the Prophet ﷺ. The basic most quoted one is on Abū Hurayrah who related that the Messenger ﷺ said: "Islam began as something strange, and it will become strange again just like it was at the beginning, so blessed are the strangers." [Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim (145)]

When the Prophet ﷺ was first sent, he was alone, a stranger in a world full of idolatry, heresy, and corruption. The Prophet ﷺ was sent to change these circumstances and to bring people to the worship of Allāh ﷻ, establish them on the right way, and convey to them the Message of their Lord. A few people of noble and uncorrupted character believed in him. They rallied around him and supported him in his mission. Most of them were from Makkah, and a few of them came from other tribes that inhabited the surrounding areas. All of these believers were strangers in their own lands, alienated from their own people after saying *lāā ᵓillāha illa-llāh*.

In many of my bayān over the past few years, expecially since the beginning of the so-called "Arab Spring", I have quoted this ʾāyat emphasizing that from our perspective as Ṣūfīs we view our selves as definitely being of those of the middle way or what can also be translated as the way of the heart or the way of the center.

﴿وَكَذَٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِّتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا﴾

jaᶜalnākum ʾummatan wasaṭan li-takūnū sḫuhadāʾa ᶜala-n-nāsi
wa yakūna-r-rasūlu ᶜalaykum sḫahīdā

"We have made of you an ummah of the center, that you might be witnesses over the nations, and the Messenger a witness over you."
(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:143)

So as Ṣūfis when we say the Sunni and Sḫiᶜah schools of thought form the two wings of the ʾIslāmic nation that allow it to fly we say this with the deep understanding that we are the bird itself. The center, the heart and the middle between these two schools (and the many sects they have spawned). As Ṣūfīs we occupy precisely that position which was the position both of the Prophet ﷺ and the ʾImām ᶜAlī ؑ who continued his spiritual (and other) works, among which was creating the school that came to calledd Ṣūfism which seeks to steer a path that, whilst it is the fast HOV lane, balancing out the many points of view and differences of thought within the Muslim *ʾummah* mindful of the following ḥadīṯ.

Aḥmad reported that the Prophet ﷺ said,

"Beware of excess in religion; people before you have perished as a result of such excess in religion."

…seeking always that gate to which Allāh ﷻ referred in His Saying:

﴿فَضُرِبَ بَيْنَهُم بِسُورٍ لَّهُ بَابٌ بَاطِنُهُ فِيهِ الرَّحْمَةُ وَظَاهِرُهُ مِن قِبَلِهِ الْعَذَابُ﴾

faḍuriba baynahum bi-sūril-lahu bābun bāṭinuhu fihi-r-raḥmatu
wa ḍḫ-ḍḫahirūhu miñ qibalihi-l-ᶜaḍḫabå

"Between them a wall is raised up in which there is a gate, on the inside is mercy, and on the outside is suffering."
(Sūrah al-Ḥadīd 57:13)

and always mindful that:

﴿اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ﴾

Allāhu bi-kumu-l-yusra wa la yurīdu bi-kumu-l-ᶜusra
Allāh wills you shall have ease, and not that you suffer hardship.
(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:185)

Welcome, Stranger!

« بدأ الإسلام غريبًا، وسيعود غريبًا كما بدأ، فَطُوبي للغرباء »

badᵓa-l-ᵓislāmu gẖariban, wa sayaᶜudu gẖarīban kamā badaᵓā
fā ṭūbā li-l-gẖurabāᵓ

"Islām began as something strange and it will return as it began.
So bliss to the strangers!"

The Prophet ﷺ was talking about The Hour and about the Days of Allāh ﷻ, the coming Days mentioned in The Book ... and he talked about how ᵓIslām would raise up his people, the Arabs, beyond what anyone could imagine, and, simultaneously, how their success would lead to disaster and yet be a blessing to all the peoples of the world.

Prophecy is given from the perspective of the Prophet ﷺ: looking east, north, south, west, and back or forward in time. Sometimes the Prophet ﷺ saw a place, sometimes he saw a direction and distance, near or far. Looking forward in time, "distance" is relative – "next" and "soon" and "then" and "after that" are not necessarily what *we* usually gather from those terms, and "forward in time" and "back in time" are not distinguishable – there is only an endless "Now."

And he ﷺ talked about the End of Days and the Last Day and all of the things that would happen until then, how ᵓIslām would disappear from the world of human beings and then would reappear.

Strange things. New things. "...a Day the measure of which is a thousand years as you reckon" and "... a Day the measure of which is fifty thousand years" and "The Hour" and a Day "After."

And how ᵓIslām would again – at that then-distant time – be "something new" as The Hour approaches and as the new Day begins with a new Dawn, like a sunrise in the far west where the sun sets...

There are two prefixes that mean "after" in Semitic languages – one indicates something that immediately follows, one indicates something that follows after some time has passed. Here the Arabic words rendered "... and, then, it will return ..." are the latter, a return at some time after – necessarily – a departure.

And people began to ask him ﷺ about these "Strangers".

I was with the Prophet ﷺ when the sun rose and he said, "There shall come to Allāh ﷻ some people on the day of resurrection whose light is like sunlight." Then Abu Bakr ﷺ said, "Are we the ones, Yā Rasūlu-llāh?" He said, "No, tho you have much goodness.

They are the poor and the immigrants who will be gathered from the very ends of the earth." Then he ﷺ said, repeating it thrice, "Bliss to the strangers.". "Bliss Yā Rasūlu-llāh?" He ﷺ replied, "Good people among many bad people. Those who will disobey them are more than those who will obey them."

Strangers the Prophet ﷺ called "my brothers" and of whom he said:

"They will believe in me without ever having seen me."

They ﷺ continued asking "Who are the strangers?" and he ﷺ said:

"They are those who follow my ways when my *ʾummah* is corrupt."

"They are of those who will have moved away from their tribes."

"Allāh ﷻ will bring them together to join ᶜĪsā son of Maryam عليه السلام."

Strangeness is many things. There is the strangeness from the land or from one's country, and this strangeness could be praiseworthy or blameworthy. And this is connected to the intention (*niyah*/نيّة) of a particular individual.So for instance, if a person were to travel to a strange land for the purpose of *ḥalāl* (حلال) trade or calling others (*daᶜwah*/دعوة) to Allāh ﷻ , then his strangeness would be a praiseworthy strangeness, but if a person were to travel to a land for the purpose of open sin (*fisq*/فسق) or corruption or crimes against the social order (*fasād*/فساد), this strangeness would be blameworthy.

Characteristics of the Strangers

The scholars spoke about some of the characteristics of the strangers. Their characteristics may be many but the first is *ʾifradu-llāhi taᶜala* meaning that they single out Allāh ﷻ for worship (*ᶜibada*), knowing that He is alone without partner. So they do not worship except Allāh ﷻ; they do not pray save to Allāh ﷻ; they do not fast save for Allāh ﷻ; they do not perform *dḫikr* except for Allāh ﷻ; they do not recite Qurʾān except for Allāh ﷻ; they do not seek refuge except with Allāh ﷻ; they do not seek aid except from Allāh ﷻ; and they do not rely on anyone or anything but Allāh ﷻ. So if he says *lāā ʾilāha ʾilla-llāh* and he understands its meaning and puts it into practice. For this reason when new Muslims said *lāā ʾilāha ʾilla-llāh*, they abandon all things that are worshipped other than Allāh ﷻ. Those new Muslims who entered ʾIslām at the hand of the Prophet ﷺ would leave all their idols, and throw them behind their backs, because they *knew* the meaning of *lāā ʾilāha ʾilla-llāh.* [there is no deity except Allāh].

Many Muslims who say *lāā ʾilāha ʾilla-llāh* today but do not know the meaning. You can see one who says *lāā ʾilāha ʾilla-llāh*, but you'll find him seeking refuge in other than Allāh ﷻ. So that person did not affirm or apply *lāā ʾilāha ʾilla-llāh*. Another says *lāā ʾilāha ʾilla-llāh*, but seeks aid from other than Allāh ﷻ. So this person didn't single out Allāh ﷻ with worship, as Allāh ﷻ did not create us except to worship Him alone without partner. Allāh ﷻ says: (approximate meanings in English):

And I (Allāh ﷻ) did not create the jinns and humans except they should worship Me (Alone). (adḫ-Dḫariyat 51:56) And also: And indeed it has been revealed to you (O Muḥammad), as it was to those (Messengers of Allāh) before you: "If you join others in worship with Allāh, (then) surely your deeds will be in vain, and you will surely be among the losers." (az-Zumar 39:65)

So Allāh ﷻ has commanded us with oneness (*tawḥīd*/توحيد) and prohibited us from joining or connecting anything (*sḫirk*/شرك) with Allāh ﷻ. Therefore, the greatest of the characteristics of the strangers is they hold on to *at-tawḥīd*, singling out Allāh ﷻ in each and every act of worship; they leave off *sḫirk*, distancing themselves from it, have a strong fear of falling into it; and call (*daᶜwah*) all the creation to single out Allāh ﷻ with each and every act of worship.

The second of the characteristics that the scholars have mentioned concerning the strangers is their following of the Messenger ﷺ, and taking his words over the words of anyone of the creation.

Allāh ﷻ says: Oh you who believe! Do not put (yourselves) before Allāh and His Messenger, and be conscious (or be aware) of Allāh. Surely! Allāh is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. (al-Hujurat 49:1)

And likewise the statement of Allāh ﷻ: "Indeed in the Messenger of Allāh you have a good example to follow, for him who hopes in Allāh and the Last Day and remembers Allāh much. (al-Aḥzāb 33:21) And likewise: Say (Oh Prophet ﷺ): "If you (really) love Allāh then follow me, Allāh will love you and forgive you of your sins. And Allāh is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." (Āl-Imran 3:31)

Therefore, the sincere strangers who accept ʾIslām do not take the word of anyone over the word of Allāh ﷻ and His Prophet ﷺ. He ﷺ is their example and their guide in regard to actions, statements, unpoken words, habits, practices, and silent approvals and his ﷺ way (*sunnah*/سنة) is the smooth and easy and direct flow path leading to Allāh ﷻ and no other.

So you will not find the strangers praying except as the Prophet ﷺ prayed, nor fasting except as he fasted, and they remember Allaah with dẖikr as the Prophet ﷺ did; and likewise in other acts of worship, you will find them doing as the Prophet ﷺ did. And likewise in regards to their dealing with their wives, children, neighbors, and all others including the disbelievers (*kuffar*) and the hypocrites (*mushŗik*), you will find that the strangers (*gẖūrabāʾ*/غربـاء) are those who follow Allāh ﷻ and the Prophet ﷺ in all of their affairs.

The sẖuyukẖ ~ the "men of old" of ʾIslām – have been coming to here for decades to meet the strangers they been led or directed and expected to find here, and they say "It is plain that Allāh ﷻ has chosen these lands to be the next center of ʾIslām."

It's been happening in here for more than three generations. It's happening now. Among a nation of neighborly natives and immigrants of varying faiths and none at all, who are customarily peaceful, most often respectful, and mannerly, and almost all strangers.

Muslim America has evolved and is developing in that social environment recalling every long-lost religious heritage of the history of humanity to a commonality as diverse and pluralistic as has ever been envisioned. Nowhere in the history of the world have there ever been gathered together people of every color, culture, and creed like here in the New World. It is a tapestry of humanity from all over the earth, a gathering of tribes called to live together in peace; called, in their beginning, to be a society of friendly strangers.

Prophecy in the Tanakẖ (Jewish Old Testament) looks at and from the Promised Land. From the perspective of someone in the Holy Promised Land, Morocco is "the west" and China is "the east." But Allāh ﷻ says He is The Lord of the *Two* Easts and Lord of the *Two* Wests. (Q55:17) So the scholars and their followers in the ʾummah, when pressed for an "explanation" of these "two" easts and wests, speculated that He ﷻ meant the different places from which the sun rose and to which it set – a northerly east and west, and a southerly east and west, depending on the time of year.

But the creation of Allāh ﷻ is much vaster and bigger than those earlier scholars could imagine.

Here in the Americas are *The Other West* and *The Other East* and ʾIslām has returned – as long ago foretold, even in the Hebrew Scripture – to "the other West." where surely the sun shall rise in the West and all people seeing shall believe.

All people – *seeing* – shall believe.

It is hard to think that ˀIslām (not to mention Judaism or Chrisianity) is very much "present" today in the Promised or the Holy Land, filled as it is with *ḍẖulm* (ظلم) and the corrupters and criminals, murderers and the truly mad, except, still, in the hearts of the humble, where it may save them and their families from a fire whose fuel is men and stones, but otherwise shows few signs of a Holy Land. Otherwise, it is as we were told it would be: a terminally-collapsed millennial muslim world – and today tyranny rules the Holy Land.

The Arabs and their dis-enfranchised, dispossessed followers are still waiting for ˀIslām to reappear at the hand of an apocalyptic figure who they imagine will restore to them their lost Nation of Islam. Just as the leaders of Israel have led their people to expect a "Messiah" who they invented to restore to them the long lost kingdom of Solomon, the Messenger of the Covenant. Pauline Christians expect the Messiah Jesus to return, an event that is expected to be confirmed by the miracle of the Last Days and the conversion of thousands, if not millions, of Jews to Christianity on their long-planned *recognition* of their own invented "Messiah." And like many Muslims, they expect this will lead to a "New World Order" over which they (whoever *they* may be) will reign with "a rod of iron" and atom bombs, chemical weapons and invasive information gathering.

So as the so-called "Judeo-Christian" nations of the "civilised world", at the instigation of others, bomb Muslim populations into oblivion, and call each other to an ancient plan of eliminating ˀIslām like people calling each other to the dinner table, the faithful of the world – of all faiths – are waiting for The Hour to come.

It's pretty obvious, from the Signs, and true to prophecies known since the time of Nuḥ ﷺ, that the Stranger (if only some see him) has returned and is here among us. A lot of people are trying to stop him ﷺ – particularly those who imagine that Allāh ﷻ (whom they call G-d or God) has chosen *them* for everlasting and exclusive authority to rule over "fallen" humanity. So also there are other things masquerading as ˀIslām confusing and misleading the strangers.

But Islam is here and now in "the other west," and the trust of the Muslims is invested in Allāh ﷻ, Who fulfills His Promises and does so continually. Allāh ﷻ keeps His Promises, and the tyrants and pretenders are meeting a gruesome end. The strangers are promised something else — something no other people were ever Promised.

"bliss"

يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ • ارْجِعِي إِلَى رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً •
فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي • وَادْخُلِي جَنَّتِي •

yā ayyatuha-n-nafsu-l-muṭmaᵓinnah •
ᵓīrjiᶜī ᵓilā rabbiki rāḍiyatan marḍiyyah •
fa-då-kẖulī fī ᶜibādī • wa-då-kẖulī jannatī •

oh you whose self is at peace.
return to your Sustainer pleased and well pleasing.
Enter with My worshipper – Enter My Garden.
(Sūratu-l-Fajr 89:27-30)

Note in the above ᵓāyāt that Allāh ﷻ is speaking in the present tense and remember the ᵓayat a few pages back.

faḍuriba baynahum bi-sūril-lahu bābun bāṭinuhu fihi-r-raḥmatu
wa ḍẖ-ḍẖahirūhu miñ qibalihi-l-ᶜaḍẖabå
"Between them a wall is raised up in which there is a gate,
on the inside is mercy, and on the outside is suffering."
(Sūrah al-Ḥadīd 57:13)

This is what awaits the stranger who manages to step through the gate in the wall – from one world to another – mercy and bliss and not only in the future but most decidedly in the present – and if not every moment at least in enough moments to make one understand why one left one's parents' home – one's parents' religion– one's tribal or national allegiance, for in the "doing" of it one becomes what one was at one's birth – a Muslim. For as the Messenger ﷺ said:

"No child is born but upon *fiṭra* (as a Muslim). It is his parents who make him a Jew or a Christian or a polytheist." (Ṣaḥīh Muslim)

So what it is, is a matter of waking up to who you were at the beginning and returning to your Lord – pleased and well pleasing – passing through the gate of suffering into the world of mercy and bliss and this is what Salmān al-Fārsī ﷺ did and what everyone who makes the choice he made can do and we make sincere duᶜāᵓ that all who can will and all who will can. *wa-llāhu ᶜalim*

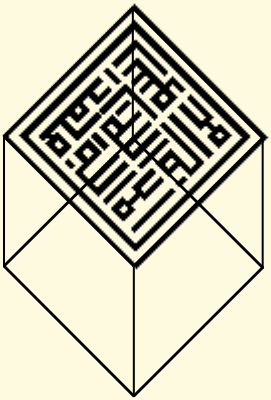


Another view of the Grove



Dates in the Grove *of* Salman al-Fārsī

ن



noon hierographers
green mountain
virginia
usa