

# التفسير التاريخي لآية "مُلْكٌ عَظِيمٌ" في التفاسير الشيعية

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## الملخص

## معلومات المقال

يكشف التفسير التاريخي للقرآن، الذي يهتم بوصف وتبيين ونقد تفسيرات المفسرين للآيات القرآنية عبر التاريخ، حقائق خفية عن آيات القرآن. وقد تم في هذا البحث تفسير آية "مُلْكٌ عَظِيمٌ" (النساء، ٥٤) بالاعتماد على نفس المنهج مع الاستناد إلى التفاسير الشيعية. وتم دراسة هذه الآية في ثلاث فترات زمنية: قرآنية وما بعد قرآنية. تشير هذه الآية بحسب ظاهرها وسياقها والآيات المشابهة لها إلى عظمة المُلْكِ الدنيوي لبني إسرائيل، وتحديدًا ملك سليمان، وهو ما ذهب إليه تفاسير أهل السنة والعديد من التفاسير الشيعية؛ إلا أن روايات الغلاة من الشيعة طبقت "المُلْكِ العظيم" على إمامة أئمة الشيعة، كما سار بعض مفسري الشيعة متأثرين بهذه الروايات في تبرير مثل هذا التطبيق. ويوضح هذا البحث أن غلاة الشيعة انطلقوا في هذا التطبيق من خلفيتهم الاجتماعية والثقافية الخاصة، وأن أئمة الشيعة قد رفضوا هذا التطبيق وعدّوه مخالفًا للقرآن.

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### المقدمة

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تتبع مسار تطور تفسير الآية ٥٤ من سورة النساء (المعروفة بآية المُلْك العظيم) عبر التاريخ، مع التركيز على التفاسير الشيعية، وتتمحور الإشكالية الرئيسية للبحث حول تتبع التحولات التفسيرية لهذه الآية عبر أربعة عشر قرناً، وتحديد العوامل الاجتماعية والثقافية المؤثرة في هذه التحولات. لطالما كانت الآية ﴿أَمْ يَحْسُدُونَ النَّاسَ عَلَىٰ مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ فَقَدْ آتَيْنَا آلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَآتَيْنَاهُمْ مُلْكًا عَظِيمًا﴾ موضع جدل بين المفسرين بسبب الاختلاف في معاني الكلمات المفتاحية: "الناس"، "آل إبراهيم"، و"مُلْكًا عَظِيمًا". وتكمن أهمية هذا البحث في كشفه لكيفية تأثير المستلزمات التاريخية والتيارات داخل المذهب الواحد، مثل الغلو، في قراءة النص المقدس، ونشر تفسير مخالف لظاهر القرآن وسياقه. والهدف العام للبحث هو رسم خريطة لتطور تفسير هذه الآية وتقويم مدى انسجام كل من هذه القراءات مع مضامين القرآن. أما السؤال المحوري فهو: ما هي هذه التحولات التفسيرية، وما العوامل التي أدت إليها، وأي التفاسير المقدمة يتوافق مع ظاهر القرآن وسياقه والآيات المشابهة له؟ ويشمل نطاق الدراسة التفاسير الشيعية من الفترات المتقدمة حتى المعاصرة، مع الأخذ بعين الاعتبار، للمقارنة، وجهات النظر التفسيرية لأهل السنة أيضاً.

### منهجية البحث

هذا البحث من نوع البحوث الأساسية النظرية، وقد تم إجراؤه باعتماد "منهج التفسير التاريخي" والمنهج التحليلي-النقدي. ويكون تصميم البحث قائماً على الدراسة المكتبية وتحليل محتوى النصوص التفسيرية. وتشمل عينة البحث الإحصائية التفاسير الشيعية المهمة (من الكلاسيكية إلى المعاصرة)، وكذلك المجموعات الحديثية المتعلقة بالآية موضوع البحث. وقد تم أخذ العينات بطريقة قصدية، من خلال اختيار أشهر التفاسير وأكثرها تأثيراً في كل فترة (مثل تفسير الميزان، والتفسير الأمثل، والتفسير الكاشف، وكذلك كتب الحديث مثل الكافي وبصائر الدرجات). وكانت الأداة الرئيسية لجمع البيانات هي عملية التلخيص واستخلاص آراء المفسرين والروايات مباشرة من هذه النصوص. ولقياس مدى صحة البيانات الحديثية، مع الاهتمام بمكانتها السندية في المصادر الشيعية، جُعل المعيار الرئيسي هو موافقة محتوى الرواية للقرآن والسنة القطعية أو مخالفتها لها، وذلك بالاستناد إلى التوصيات المنسوبة إلى الأئمة في نقد الغلاة. أما طريقة تحليل البيانات فهي

تحليل المحتوى النوعي والمقارن. ووفق هذه الطريقة، بعد جمع الآراء، تم تصنيفها في مجموعتين رئيسيتين: "التفسير القرآني/الظاهري" و"التفسير الغالي/التأويلي"، ثم نُقدت وقُوِّمت بالاستناد إلى القرائن النصية الداخلية في القرآن (السياق، الآيات المشابهة) وكذلك الشواهد التاريخية. ومراحل تنفيذ البحث كانت على النحو التالي: أولاً، جمع واستخلاص آراء مفسري أهل السنة والشيعة حول الآية؛ ثانياً، دراسة وتصنيف الروايات الواردة بشأن الآية في المصادر الشيعية؛ ثالثاً، التحليل المقارن لهذه الآراء مع ظواهر القرآن؛ رابعاً، تحليل الخلفيات التاريخية والفكرية لنشوء القراءات المخالفة لظاهر القرآن؛ وأخيراً، استخلاص النتائج.

## النتائج

تُظهر نتائج هذا البحث أن تفسير آية المُلْك العظيم تبلور في تيارين رئيسيين متميزين. التيار الأول هو تفسير يتوافق كلياً مع ظاهر وسياق آيات سورة النساء وكذلك الآيات المشابهة في القرآن كله. وبناءً على ذلك، فإن "النَّاس" موضوع الحسد هم مسلمو المدينة (النبي وأصحابه)، و"آل إبراهيم" إشارة إلى أسلاف اليهود المقيمين في المدينة (بني إسرائيل)، و"المُلْك العظيم" يشير إلى المُلْك المادي والعظمة الدنيوية التي أعطيت لبني إسرائيل خاصة في عهد النبي سليمان عليه السلام. وهذا الرأي، الذي تبناه مفسرو أهل السنة المتقدمون وكذلك بعض مفسري الشيعة مثل الحائري الطهراني والمغنية، يتأكد بشواهد داخلية متعددة في القرآن (مثل الآيات ٥١ إلى ٥٣ من سورة النساء وأوصاف مُلْك سليمان المادية في سورتي النمل وسبأ). التيار الثاني، متأثر بروايات منسوبة إلى الأئمة، نَقَلَهَا رِوَاةٌ يُعْرَفُونَ فِي الْمَصَادِرِ الرَّجَالِيَةِ الشَّيْعِيَّةِ بِأَنَّهُمْ مِنْ ذَوِي الْمِيُولِ الْغَالِيَةِ فِي الْغَالِبِ (مثل المغيرة بن سعيد أو أصحاب أبي الخطاب). وفي هذه الروايات، طُبِّقَ "النَّاس" و"آل إبراهيم" على النبي صلى الله عليه وآله وأهل بيته عليهم السلام، وطُبِّقَ "المُلْك العظيم" على مقام الإمامة والولاية لهم (تارة تشريعية وتارة تكوينية). وبيّن هذا البحث أن العديد من مفسري الشيعة المتأخرين قبلوا هذه الروايات دون نقد جدي، ثم حاولوا تبريرها والتوفيق بينها وبين الآية. فعلى سبيل المثال، يحاول العلامة الطباطبائي في الميزان، من خلال تقديم تأويلات خاصة (كحمل "النَّاس" على شخص النبي بطريقة الكناية، وتفسير "المُلْك العظيم" بأمر معنوي)، التوفيق بين ظاهر الآية ومضمون هذه الروايات، ولكن يرى كاتب المقال أن هذه التبريرات تتعارض مع سياق الآية والاستعمالات القرآنية لكلمة "مُلْك". وكذلك آية الله مكارم الشيرازي، وإن قبل ضمناً التفسير الظاهري في تفسيره الأمثل، إلا أنه في مؤلفاته الأخرى يصادق

على تطبيقات أهل البيت متأثراً بالروايات. ويستدل هذا المقال، بالاعتماد على روايات أخرى عن الأئمة أنفسهم (منقولة من كتب مثل رجال الكشي) التي تحذر الأتباع من قبول الروايات المخالفة للقرآن وتكذب الرواة الغلاة، على أن تطبيق "المُلك العظيم" على الإمامة من مختلقات الغلاة وليس له أساس قرآني. كما يُرجع أصل هذه النوعية من التفاسير المنحرفة إلى الخلفيات الفكرية والثقافية في مناطق شرق العالم الإسلامي مثل الكوفة والحيرة، والتأثر بالأفكار الغنوصية والمانوية، الأمر الذي أدى إلى الاستهانة بالشريعة والاتجاه نحو التفاسير الباطنية والشخصانية.

### الخاتمة

خلص هذا البحث إلى أن التفسير الأصيل المتوافق مع القرآن لآية المُلك العظيم هو ذاته التفسير الشائع بين المفسرين المتقدمين والمطابق لظاهر الآيات، الدال على منح المُلك المادي لبني إسرائيل. في المقابل، فإن تطبيق هذه الآية على إمامة أئمة الشيعة، له جذور في روايات موضوعة للغلاة، تتعارض مع معايير نقد الحديث من وجهة نظر الأئمة أنفسهم (المطابقة للقرآن والسنة). وقد أدت محاولات بعض مفسري الشيعة المتأخرين لدمج أو تبرير هذه الثنائية، في الغالب، إلى تقديم تفاسير مشوبة بالخلل ومتناقضة مع سياق القرآن. وتؤكد هذه الدراسة من الناحية النظرية على أهمية منهج "التفسير التاريخي" ونقد الحديث كمعيار في فهم تطورات الفكر الديني، وتُظهر كيف يمكن للتيارات الفرعية أن تؤثر في قراءة النص المقدس. ومن الناحية العملية، يمكن لنتائج البحث أن تكون مفيدة في مجال علوم القرآن والحديث، لتصحيح التصورات الشائعة والعودة إلى التفسير القائم على القرائن النصية الداخلية في القرآن. ومن محدوديات هذا البحث تركيزه بشكل أساسي على التفاسير الشيعية وعدم معالجته المتعمقة لكل أوجه الرأي المخالف الكلامية والتاريخية. ويُقترح للبحوث المستقبلية دراسة هذا الموضوع بشكل مقارن أعمق بين المذاهب الإسلامية، واستكشاف الدور الأكثر دقة للخلفيات الاجتماعية والسياسية في كل فترة في تشكيل هذه التفاسير، باستخدام مناهج بينية.

# The Historical Interpretation of the Verse of the Great Kingdom in Shia Exegeses

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## ABSTRACT

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Historical interpretation of the Quran, which describes, explains, and critiques the exegeses of Quranic interpreters throughout history, reveals hidden truths within the Quranic verses. This study employs this method to interpret the verse of the "Great Kingdom" (Quran 4:54), relying on Shia exegeses. The verse is examined across three historical periods: the Quranic era and the post-Quranic era. According to the apparent meaning and context of the verse, as well as similar verses, it refers to the apparent grandeur of the kingdom of the Children of Israel, specifically the kingdom of Solomon. Sunni exegeses and many Shia exegeses have also expressed this meaning. However, narratives propagated by Shia extremists (ghulat) applied the "Great Kingdom" to the Imamate of the Shia Imams, and some Shia exegetes, influenced by these narratives, justified such an application. This study explains that the Shia ghulat, based on their own socio-cultural background, made this application, and that the Shia Imams considered such an application contrary to the Quran and rejected it.

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## 1. Problem Statement

The focus on the historical interpretation of the verse of the Great Kingdom is based on the premise that interpretations of Quranic verses evolved throughout history under the influence of the social and cultural conditions of the Quran's interpreters. Accordingly, the central question of this study is: What have been the interpretive developments of the verse of the Great Kingdom over the past fourteen centuries, what exigencies led to such developments, and which of these interpretations aligns with the apparent meaning and context of the verse and similar Quranic verses?

The text of the verse is as follows:

﴿أَمْ يَحْسُدُونَ النَّاسَ عَلَىٰ مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ فَقَدْ آتَيْنَا آلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ  
وَآتَيْنَاهُمْ مُلْكًا عَظِيمًا﴾

"Or do they envy the people for what Allah has given them of His bounty? But We had already given the family of Abraham the Scripture and wisdom and conferred upon them a great kingdom." (Quran 4:54)

In this verse, the meaning of three terms has primarily been disputed by exegetes: first, the term "الناس" (the people); second, the term "آل" (the family of Abraham); and third, the term "ملك عظيم" (a great kingdom). Sunni exegetes and a few Shia exegetes, in accordance with the apparent meaning, context, and similar verses, considered "الناس" to refer to the Prophet and his companions, "آل إبراهيم" to refer to the Children of Israel, and "ملك عظيم" to refer to the kingdom of the Children of Israel, especially the kingdom of Solomon. However, some Shia scholars, influenced by narratives from the extremists (*ghulat*), applied "الناس" to "the Shia Imams," "آل إبراهيم" to the descendants of Ishmael, and the term "ملك عظيم" to the Imamate of the Prophet and his family.

## 2. Literature Review

Published articles on the interpretation of the verse of the Great Kingdom have all been influenced by the narratives of Shia extremists.

For example, Mr. Asghar Gholami, in an article (2007) titled "بررسی [An Examination of the Concept of Imamate in Light of the Verse of the Great Kingdom]", relying on narratives under this verse which describe it as denoting the imposition of obedience (*ifrad al-ta'ah*) to the Shia Imams, considered its meaning to be the legislative authority (*wilayat al-tashri'iyyah*) of the Shia Imams. In his view, according to these narratives, the highest rank of the Imams is the rank of the imposition of obedience, and therefore the "Great Kingdom" refers to this rank. His reference to the statements of Shaykh Muhammad Jawad Khorasani (d. 1976) indicates that he derived his theory from him. The latter wrote under this verse that although the Imams possess cosmic authority (*wilayat al-takwiniyyah*), the foundation of the station of Imamate is legislative authority (see: Khorasani, *Al-Imamah 'ind al-Shi'ah al-Imamiyyah bi-akhir ihtijaj wa akhir hujjah*, p. 42).

Accordingly, Gholami considered the interpretation of 'Allamah Tabataba'i-that the "Great Kingdom" means sovereignty over material and spiritual affairs-or the interpretation of Mulla Sadra-that it means the kingdom of the Hereafter-as lacking evidence and rejected them (see: *Safinah Quarterly*, pp. 66-91).

Hamed Dezh-Abad and Mehdi Faramarzi, in an article (2017) titled "بررسی دیدگاه مفسران فریقین درباره مصداق ملک عظیم" [An Examination of the Viewpoints of Exegetes from Both Schools Regarding the Referent of the 'Great Kingdom'], accepted the meaning of the Imamate of the Shia Imams as mentioned in the narratives and, without any explanation in the article, applied it to cosmic authority (*wilayat al-takwiniyyah*) (see: *Journal of Interpretive Studies*, pp. 75-90).

Seyed Mohammad Hasan Saleh and Mohammad Jafari, in an article (2018) titled "نقد و بررسی قلمرو ولایت بر اساس مفهوم قرآنی ملک عظیم" [A Critique and Examination of the Scope of Authority Based on the Quranic Concept of the Great Kingdom], again under the influence of Shia narratives, claimed that "Great Kingdom" refers to Imamate, but specifically legislative authority, not cosmic authority. They cited narratives as evidence and rejected the narrative of Hisham ibn al-

Hakam, which includes the obedience of Hell on the Day of Resurrection, due to issues with its chain of transmission (*sanad*) (see: *Quranology Quarterly*, pp. 95-110).

Sakineh Akhond and Ma'edeh Akhond, in an article (2018) titled "تحليل حسادت به مقام خليفة الله في آية ٥٤ نساء" [An Analysis of Envy Towards the Station of God's Vicegerency in Verse 54 of Surah al-Nisa'], again influenced by Shia narratives, applied the "Great Kingdom" to the Imamate of the Shia Imams, but understood it as meaning absolute authority encompassing both legislative and cosmic authority (see: *Journal of Interpretive Studies*, pp. 67-82).

Ali Roshan and Rahim Dehqan, in an article (2019) titled "نظريه يكساني مفهوم امامت و مقام افتراض طاعت، تحليل مستندات و پيامدها" [The Theory of the Identity of the Concept of Imamate and the Station of Imposed Obedience: An Analysis of Evidences and Consequences], again influenced by Shia narratives, attempted to resolve the apparent contradiction between these narratives and concluded that imposed obedience (*ifrad al-ta'ah*) is itself the Imamate (see: *Islamic Wisdom Quarterly*, pp. 151-173).

#### 4. The Quranic Interpretation of the Verse of the Great Kingdom

Multiple Quranic indicators demonstrate that "الناس" refers to the Muslims of Medina (the Prophet and his companions), "آل ابراهيم" refers to the Children of Israel, and "ملك عظيم" refers to the kingdom of the Children of Israel, specifically the kingdom of Solomon-that is, a material kingdom. These indicators are as follows:

First, in Quran 4:51, it is stated that the Jews ("الذين أوتوا نصيبا من الكتاب") said to the polytheists ("الذين كفروا"): "These [Muslims] are better guided than the believers" ("هؤلاء أهدى من الذين آمنوا"). This verse shows that those who are envied, mentioned in verse 54 of Surah al-Nisa' ("يحسدون"), are the Muslims of Medina. Therefore, "الناس" in this verse refers to the Muslims of Medina.

Second, verse 52 states that if the Jews had a share of the kingdom, they would not give the "people" (*al-nas*) even a speck: "أَمْ لَهُمْ نَصِيبٌ مِّنْ أَلْمُلْكِ فَإِذَا لَا يُؤْتُونَ النَّاسَ نَقِيرًا" (Quran 4:53). It is clear that "kingdom" (*al-mulk*) here refers to a material kingdom, as it mentions a "speck" (*naqir*), the dimple of a date stone. What is termed spiritual kingdom, dominion (*malakut*), Imamate, or divine authority is not something in the possession of the Children of Israel to give to others.

Third, verse 54 says that the Jews envy the bounty (*fadl*) that God has given to the "people" (*al-nas*), i.e., the people of Medina: "أَمْ يَحْسُدُونَ" (Quran 4:54). The meaning of "bounty" (*fadl*), given the context of the previous verse mentioning "kingdom," is that same "kingdom"-the rule that had become the lot of the Muslims of Medina, which the Jews envied.

Fourth, the meaning of "آل ابراهيم" in the latter part of Quran 4:54 refers to the very ancestors of the Jews of Medina who were mentioned in the preceding verses, not the Muslims of Medina. If it referred to the Muslims of Medina, there would be no need to mention "آل ابراهيم"; rather, using the pronoun "them" (*-hum*) would suffice. That is, it would have required saying "...فقد آتيناهم" instead of "فَقَدْ آتَيْنَا آلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْكِتَابَ" (Quran 4:54).

Furthermore, the pronoun "them" (*-hum*) in the following verse refers back to this same "family of Abraham," i.e., the ancestors of the Jews of Medina, as it states that some of them believed in that bounty given to the Muslims, and some turned away from it: "فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ آمَنَ بِهِ" (Quran 4:55).

Fifth, in Surah al-Baqarah, it is also stated that the People of the Book (that is, the Jews of Medina) and the polytheists (example, the idolaters of Medina) do not wish for God to bestow any bounty and mercy upon you Muslims: "مَا يَوَدُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَلَا الْمُشْرِكِينَ أَنْ يُنَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ" (Quran 2:105).

Furthermore, it continues that many of the People of the Book wish, out of envy, to turn you Muslims back from your faith after you have believed: "وَدَّ كَثِيرٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يَرُدُّونَكُمْ مِن بَعْدِ إِيمَانِكُمْ كَفَارًا حَسَدًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ أَنفُسِهِمْ" (Quran 2:109).

Sixth, numerous verses state that We gave "آل ابراهيم," that is, Saul, David, and Solomon, a kingdom, and according to the Quran's description, the "Great Kingdom" primarily refers to the kingdom of Solomon, to whom God gave a kingdom like no one after him deserved: "قَالَ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَهَبْ لِي مُلْكًا لَا يَنْبَغِي لِأَحَدٍ مِّنْ بَعْدِي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ" (Quran 38:35).

Seventh, the material description of Solomon's kingdom—possessing swift horses (Quran 38:31), an irresistible army (Quran 27:37), a palace of glass (Quran 27:44), and lofty temples, sculptures, images, and large vessels like reservoirs of water and great, stationary cooking pots (Quran 34:13)—all indicate that "ملك عظيم" refers to a material kingdom.

Moreover, in Quranic usage, "kingdom" (*mulk*) never includes spiritual matters like Imamate, prophethood, or wisdom. Otherwise, there would be no point in "ملك عظيم" being conjoined with "the Book and wisdom" in the verse under discussion: "فَقَدْ آتَيْنَا آلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْكِتَابَ" "وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَآتَيْنَاهُمْ مُلْكًا عَظِيمًا" (Quran 4:54).

Even the "great kingdom" (*mulk kabir*) promised to the inhabitants of Paradise is described materially: "وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ ثَمَّ رَأَيْتَ نَعِيمًا وَمُلْكًا كَبِيرًا" (Quran 76:20). The context of this verse speaks of the people of Paradise reclining on couches, feeling neither heat nor sun, with the shade of trees over them, fruits within reach, and immortal youths circulating among them with vessels of silver and goblets of crystal, filled with a drink mixed with ginger from a spring called Salsabil. They are adorned with garments of fine green silk and heavy brocade, and bracelets of silver.

### 5. The Post-Quranic Interpretation of the Verse of the Great Kingdom

Almost all Sunni exegetes and even some Shia exegetes, such as al-Ha'iri al-Tehrani (d. 1921) and al-Mughniyah (d. 1979), interpreted the verse of the Great Kingdom according to the Quranic discourse. That is, they considered "الناس" to mean the Muslims of Medina (the Prophet and his companions), "آل ابراهيم" to mean the Children of Israel, and "ملك عظيم" to mean the kingdom given to the Children of Israel, especially to Solomon. Ibn 'Abbas, Mujahid, al-Suddi, 'Ikrimah, Qatadah, al-Kalbi, Muqatil, and later exegetes interpreted it this way. However, in many narratives transmitted by Shia extremists (*ghulat*) from Imam 'Ali, Imam al-Baqir, Imam al-Sadiq, Imam al-Kazim, and Imam al-Rida, "الناس" and even "آل ابراهيم" are taken to mean the Prophet and his family, and "ملك عظيم" is considered to mean the Imamate of the Imams or the obligation of obedience to the Imams.

Most Shia scholars transmitted these very narratives from the Shia *ghulat* without any explanation. However, a few, primarily in the contemporary period, attempted to reconcile these narratives with the apparent meaning of the verse. From the apparent meaning of these narratives, it is understood that in them, "ملك عظيم" is taken to mean "legislative authority" (*wilayat al-tashri'iyyah*), especially since in the narration of Zayd al-Shahham and Musa ibn Ashim from Imam al-Sadiq, it is stated that something greater than what was given to Solomon was given to the Prophet of Islam, and then this verse is cited as evidence: "مَا آتَاكُمْ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا" (al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, Vol. 1, p. 268; al-Saffar, *Basa'ir al-Darajat*, Vol. 1, p. 384).

Many Shia exegetes, relying on this narration, took "ملك عظيم" to mean legislative authority (see: Makarim Shirazi, *Bahuth Fiqhiyyah Muhimmah*, pp. 525-526). However, some, relying on the latter part of the narration of Hisham ibn al-Hakam from Imam al-Sadiq, took "ملك عظيم" to mean cosmic authority (*wilayat al-takwiniyyah*) or absolute authority encompassing both cosmic and legislative authority (see:

al-Karbala'i, *Al-Anwar al-Sati'ah*, Vol. 4, pp. 331-332). Their evidence for the cosmic nature of "ملك عظيم" is this phrase in the aforementioned narration: that Hell also obeys the Imam: "فَرَضَ الطَّاعَةَ وَمِنْ ذَلِكَ طَاعَةُ جَهَنَّمَ" (al-Saffar, *Basa'ir al-Darajat*, Vol. 1, p. 35).

Some of the justifications offered by Shia scholars for their narrative-based interpretation are as follows:

Ibn Tawus (d. 1266) stated that God gave Muhammad and his family kingdom, prophethood, and wisdom, just as He had given them to the family of Abraham; otherwise, how could He have given Muhammad something similar to what He gave the family of Abraham? He added that God combined kingdom and prophethood in Muhammad and his family (Ibn Tawus, *Sa'd al-Su'ud*, p. 155). In this statement, he took "آل" in the verse to mean the descendants of Isaac, stating that just as God gave David and Solomon prophethood, wisdom, and kingdom, He also gave them to Muhammad and his family, with the difference that in Muhammad and his family, He combined kingdom and prophethood (*Sa'd al-Su'ud*, p. 153).

His interpretation has the closest connection to the Quranic text, except that he took "الناس" to mean Muhammad and his family instead of the Muslims of Medina. However, it is evident that in the Quranic discourse, just as it speaks of giving the Book, wisdom, and kingdom to the Children of Israel, it is very natural that when this verse speaks of giving bounty to "الناس," it refers to those who believed in the Prophet of Islam, not the Prophet himself, as they are not separate from their followers: "وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ" (Quran 45:16). "وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ"

'Allamah Tabataba'i (d. 1981) considered "الناس" in the verse, according to the context, to mean the believers, i.e., the Muslims of Medina, and "مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ" to mean prophethood, the Book, and religious knowledge. However, he inferred from the latter part of the

verse, "فَقَدْ آتَيْنَا آلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ", that "الناس" does not refer to the general body of believers, but rather specifically to the Messenger of God (peace be upon him), who is from the family of Abraham, and that if others derived any benefit from this bounty of God, it was through him and by his blessing. He also considered "آل إبراهيم" in Quran 3:33, "إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَىٰ آدَمَ وَنُوحًا وَآلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَآلَ عِمْرَانَ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ", to mean the Messenger and the Imams from his progeny. This is despite the fact that the context of this verse never implies such a meaning; on the contrary, it appears to indicate that "آل إبراهيم" refers to the ancestors of the Jews, given that the phrase "آل عمران" follows it, which in the Quranic discourse refers to the descendants of 'Imran, such as Jesus and his mother.

'Allamah Tabataba'i adds that using "الناس" to refer to a single person is not problematic, as it is a form of metonymy (*kinayah*); similar to when someone bothers us, we say, "Don't bother people," meaning, "Don't bother me." However, this argument of his seems flawed because "الناس," like "بني إسرائيل," is a plural term and refers to the general body of Muslims, as the Book, wisdom, and kingdom were given to him by virtue of him being the Prophet of the Muslims.

According to 'Allamah Tabataba'i, "آل إبراهيم" in the verse either refers to the companions of the Messenger of God (peace be upon him) or to him and his Household (peace be upon them), who are from the descendants of Ismael, and in any case, it does not include the Jews, who are from the descendants of Isaac, because the discourse would become corrupt. If it included the Jews, it would necessitate that God praise the Jews who envied the Messenger (peace be upon him) by saying, "We gave them the Book and wisdom." However, this argument is flawed because, according to the explicit text of the Quran, God gave the Children of Israel the Book, wisdom, and kingdom, and this is not in denial of that; rather, it is in reproach of the Jews of Medina who envied the Muslims because they had been blessed with things similar to what the Jews had (Book, wisdom, and kingdom).

Also, according to 'Allamah Tabataba'i, this sentence indicates that "الناس" refers only to the Messenger of God (peace be upon him), not all believers, because not all of them were from the family of Abraham. Furthermore, ordinary descendants of the Messenger of God, like other Muslims, had no superiority over others for the verse to include them as well. Therefore, "آل ابراهيم" refers only to the Messenger of God (peace be upon him) or to him and his family. This argument is also flawed because not all Jews were from the Children of Israel, and not all the Children of Israel were prophets or kings. Yet, it is stated that God gave them prophethood and kingdom. This is by virtue of the fact that it is not the individual prophet or king that is central, but the people who were endowed with prophethood and kingship. It is very clear that 'Allamah Tabataba'i's purpose in making such statements is to justify the Shia narratives under the verse of the Great Kingdom, in which it is applied to the Imamate of the Shia Imams.

Similarly, he inferred from this sentence that "ملك عظيم," according to the context, has a meaning broader than material kingdom and includes spiritual kingdom, that is, prophethood and true authority over guiding and directing people. His reason is that it describes the kingdom as "great," and God does not consider worldly kingdom great unless it leads to a spiritual virtue or religious merit. Furthermore, God mentioned the Book and wisdom among the virtues of the family of Abraham but did not mention prophethood and authority; therefore, it is highly probable that "ملك عظيم" refers to prophethood and authority, or at least encompasses them. This inference is also flawed because "kingdom" (*mulk*) in the Quranic discourse is never used except in a material sense, and it never includes prophethood. If it did, there would be no need in Quranic usage for "kingdom" to be conjoined with "prophethood."

Ayatollah Makarim Shirazi agrees with 'Allamah Tabataba'i that "الناس" refers to the Prophet and his family. However, contrary to Tabataba'i's view, he considers "آل ابراهيم" to refer to the Jews to whom God gave the Book, wisdom, and kingdom, with the explanation that just as God gave you (Jews) the Book, wisdom, and kingdom, He did the same for the Prophet and his family; therefore, there is no reason for you to envy (Makarim Shirazi, *Tafsir al-Namuna*, Vol. 3, p. 423).

Ayatollah Makarim did not comment on the meaning of "ملك عظيم" in his exegesis, but in one of his works titled *Bahuth Fiqhiyyah Muhimmah*, under the narration of Zayd al-Shahham from Imam al-Sadiq, he states that this narration indicates the delegation of the authority to give and withhold in matters of financial distributions from the public treasury (*bayt al-mal*) to the Imams (p. 526). Also, under the narration of Musa ibn Ashim from Imam al-Sadiq, he writes that this narration indicates the delegation of the exposition of truths and the secrets of rulings to the Imams (ibid., p. 527).

In any case, if he considers "ملك عظيم" to mean the Imamate or governance of the Imams, he would have to take "آل ابراهيم" similar to 'Allamah Tabataba'i as the descendants of Ismael or the progeny of Abraham in general. Otherwise, it would not align correctly with his interpretation of the Jews' envy towards the Prophet and his family, because in that case, the Jews would be both the envious and the envied. 'Allamah Tabataba'i, in order to reconcile the verse with the narratives, took "آل ابراهيم" to be the same as "الناس," i.e., the Prophet, his family, and his ancestors. However, if the meaning of both were the same, there would be no reason to use two different terms in one verse to express one meaning.

Sayyid Bahr al-'Ulum (contemporary, d. 2007) is another contemporary scholar who resorted to justification to reconcile the narratives with the verse of the Great Kingdom. The summary of his statements is that "ملك عظيم" means cosmic authority (*wilayat al-takwiniyyah*) because, from the family of Abraham, only David and Solomon received power and sovereignty, and this is not consistent with the collective expression and the bestowal of favor upon all of the family of Abraham.

Sayyid Bahr al-'Ulum wanted to argue with this that therefore "آل ابراهيم" must include the Shia Imams for its meaning to be correct. This is while "آل ابراهيم" or the progeny of Abraham includes all his descendants, and if kingdom and sovereignty were given to some of them, it was by virtue of all of them, not specific individuals.

Sayyid Bahr al-'Ulum adds: "If we consider the preceding verse, 'أَمْ لَهُمْ نَصِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُلْكِ فَإِذَا لَا يُؤْتُونَ النَّاسَ نَقِيرًا' (Quran 4:53), this 'kingdom' is not something that if the Children of Israel possessed it, they would give the people even a speck. This 'kingdom' cannot be an apparent, material kingdom."

With this argument, he wants to say that the reason the Children of Israel cannot give a share of the kingdom to others is because it refers to a spiritual, cosmic kingdom. However, in the Quran, whenever giving kingdom to humans is mentioned, it never refers to a spiritual or cosmic matter; rather, it is a material, conventional matter, like what was given to David and Solomon. And if it is said that if the Children of Israel had a kingdom, they would not give anything to anyone, it is to state that they are miserly.

Also, according to Sayyid Bahr al-'Ulum, "آل ابراهيم" refers to the Prophet and his family, not the prophets of the Children of Israel, because the context is one of argumentation (*hujjah*), and the envious are from the Children of Israel. If it referred to the prophets of the Children of Israel, it would strengthen their argument, not refute it (see: Bahr al-'Ulum, *Al-Imamah al-Ilahiyyah*, Vol. 1, pp. 375-379).

However, this argument is flawed because the Jews envied the bounty given to the Muslims, not what was given to themselves, i.e., "آل ابراهيم." His problem essentially stems from not taking "آل ابراهيم" to mean the Children of Israel, thus leading to contradiction.

##### 5. Indicators of the Extremist Interpretation of the Verse of the Great Kingdom

As observed, the verse of the Great Kingdom, in Shia discourse, influenced by narratives transmitted by Shia extremists (*ghulat*) from the Imams, is applied to the Shia Imams contrary to the apparent meaning and context of the verse. Subsequently, Shia exegetes attempt to reconcile these narratives with the apparent meaning of the verse.

This is despite the fact that the Shia Imams warned their followers against the narratives of the extremists and explicitly stated that they had falsely attributed sayings to them. Muhammad ibn 'Isa al-Yaqini narrated that he was with Yunus ibn 'Abd al-Rahman when one of the Shia asked him:

"O Abu Muhammad! How strict you are in hadith! And how many narrations you reject that our companions transmit! What compels you to reject the narrations?"

He replied: Hisham ibn al-Hakam informed me that he heard Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) say:

"Do not accept anything from our sayings except what conforms to the Quran and the Sunnah, or you find evidence for it from our previous narrations; because Mughirah ibn Sa'id-may God curse him-inserted narrations into the books of the companions of my father that my father did not say. So fear God, and do not accept from us what contradicts the speech of our Lord and the Sunnah of our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). For when we speak, we say: God Almighty said, and the Messenger of God (peace be upon him) said."

*Then Yunus continued:*

I came to Iraq and found a group of the companions of Imam al-Baqir (peace be upon him) and saw many companions of Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him). I heard from them and took their books, then presented them to Imam al-Rida (peace be upon him). He rejected many of those narrations as being from the narrations of Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) and said to me:

"Abu al-Khattab lied against my father Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him)-may God curse Abu al-Khattab-and likewise the companions of Abu al-Khattab to this day insert these narrations into the books of the companions of Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him). So do not accept from us what contradicts the Quran; when we speak, we speak in accordance with the Quran and in accordance with the Sunnah; we narrate from God and from His Messenger, and we do not say so-and-so said such, and so-and-so said such, lest our speech become contradictory. Our last speech is like our first speech, and our first speech confirms our last speech.

Whenever someone brings you a narration that contradicts these criteria, reject it back to him and say to him: You know better (about what you have brought)! For every speech from us has a truth with it and a light upon it; and that which has no truth and light with it is the speech of Satan." (al-Kashshi, *Rijal al-Kashshi – Ikhtiyar Ma'rifat al-Rijal*, p. 224)

Also, Hamadi narrated that he said to Imam al-Sadiq: It has been narrated to me that "khamr" (wine), "al-maisir" (gambling), "al-ansab" (altars), and "al-azlam" (divining arrows) refer to persons (the enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt). He said: "مَا كَانَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لِيُخَاطَبَ خَلْقَهُ بِمَا لَا يَعْلَمُونَ" - "God Almighty would not address His creation with what they do not understand." (al-Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar Ma'rifat al-Rijal*, p. 291)

These narrations provide several indicators for detecting the fabrications of the extremists:

First, they contradict the Quran, the Sunnah, or narrations from before Imam al-Baqir.

Second, there is no truth or light upon the fabrications of the extremists.

Third, in the fabrications of the extremists, Quranic verses are applied to individuals, whether the Ahl al-Bayt or their opponents, without the verses themselves indicating such an application.

#### 6. An Analysis of the Origin of the Extremist Interpretation of the Verse of the Great Kingdom

It is very important here to understand why the Shia extremists applied Quranic verses to the Imams or the enemies of the Imams and considered themselves free from the need to follow the Shari'ah. There is no doubt that any approach cannot exist without an intellectual and cultural background; therefore, we must investigate what that intellectual and cultural background was that led them to such an approach. Most likely, this intellectual and cultural background can be traced back to their religious and historical heritage from before Islam.

Themes found in the narrations of the extremists, as well as reports in books on religions and sects (*al-milal wa al-nihal*) about their beliefs, such as the world of spirits (*'alam al-arwah*) and shadows (*al-azillah*), are the best evidence that the Shia extremists, under the influence of Gnostic/Manichaean/Hellenistic cultures and religions present in the regions of Kufa, Hira, and Mada'in, rejected the Shari'ah and turned to the authority (*wilayah*) of the Imams (see: al-Shahristani, *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, p. 744).

In addition to this, the attachment of the dependances (*mawali*), that is, non-Arabs, to the cultures and religions of their ancestors naturally prevented them from easily abandoning their ancestral attachments and submitting to the heavy burden of the newly emerged Islamic Shari'ah. A similar problem is observed in the call of polytheists to early Christianity. Paul, apparently due to the heaviness of bearing the Mosaic Law, told the polytheists that the Mosaic Law was specific to the Jews, and that having faith in Jesus was sufficient for salvation (see: Acts of the Apostles 21:17-26).

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