



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

## History and Development of the Shia

Teacher: Sayed Saleh al-Qazwini

### Lesson: 1

### Topic: Origins of the Shia

«سَلَامٌ عَلَى نُوحٍ فِي الْعَالَمِينَ؛ إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ؛ إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ؛ ثُمَّ أَعْرَفْنَا الْأَخْرِينَ؛ وَإِنَّ مِنْ شِيعَتِهِ لِإِبْرَاهِيمَ؛ إِذْ جَاءَ رَبَّهُ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ»

(37: 79 – 84)

#### Introduction:

The Shia have been one of the most persecuted groups throughout history. It has survived all the odds and has greatly influenced the Muslim world and the geopolitical, economic, and social aspects of global life today.

#### Demographics of the Shias

- The countries where most Shias live are Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, and India.
- Shias comprise roughly 10-15% of the world Muslim population; between 150 million and 300 million.
- It is not the number that makes one significant, but what makes one crucial is following the right path.

Allah ﷻ in the Quran says:

«وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِنَ النَّاسِ لَفَاسِقُونَ»

*A lot of people are evil-doers. (5:49)*

In some verses, the smaller number is counted more powerful. E.g.,

«كَمْ مِنْ فِئَةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيرَةً بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ»



*It's happened so often that, by Allah's permission, a small force vanquished a big one?! (2:249)*

## Persecution of Shias

One of the most essential ways of persecuting the Shias was **narrative persecution**. Shias did not have control over the narrative.

Propagandas and systematic attacks against the Shias started even before the reign of the Umayyads when an army of writers and orators was designated to fabricate hadiths and narrations against the Ahlulbayt عليه السلام. Imam Ali was cursed from the *minbar* (pulpit) for 80 years.

## Shias faced severe persecution.

- Since the status of the Ahlulbayt عليه السلام was defined by Quran and Hadiths, the enemies could not harm them directly. Hence, they persecuted their Shias, who loved them.
- Some portrayed that the Shia school of thought was started by a Jewish (fictional) character named Abdullah ibn Saba'.
- We need to re-examine and reclaim not only the Shia history but also the history of Islam altogether.

## What does Shia mean?

The literal meaning:

- 1. «الأتباع والأعوان»: The followers and supporters.
- 2. «كل قوم اجتمعوا على أمرٍ»: Every group of people united over one matter.

The term "Shia" can be used both in positive and negative forms:

1. Positive connotation:

«وإن من شيعته لإبراهيم» *"Indeed Abraham was among his followers."* 37:83

2. Negative connotation:

«ثُمَّ لَنَنْزَعَنَّ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْعَةٍ أَيُّهُمْ أَشَدُّ عَلَى الرَّحْمَنِ عِتِيًّا» *"Then from every group We shall draw whichever of them was more defiant towards the All-beneficent."* 19:69

After due course, the term 'Shia' was only used for the followers Imam Ali عليه السلام.



### Different viewpoints on when the Shias came into existence:

1. After the demise of the Prophet ﷺ: Some Muslims gathered in the house of Ali and Fatima عليهما السلام and refused to pay allegiance to Abu Bakr.
  2. After the death of Othman: People revolted and went to Imam Ali's عليه السلام house, begging him to accept allegiance.
  3. After the battle of Jamal (the first civil war in Islam).
  4. After the tragedy of Ashura.
  5. After the time of Imam al-Sadiq عليه السلام.
  6. During the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.
- The Prophet ﷺ himself coined this term and called some of his companions, like Salman, Abu Dharr, Miqdad, Ammar, Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, Jabir ibn Abdullah al-Ansari, etc., the '**Shias of Ali** عليه السلام'.
  - Al-Suyuti, in his book *Al-Durr al-Manthur* (v. 8, p. 589), mentions a hadith that describes **Ali عليه السلام and his followers as the best of the creation.**

### Conclusion:

Shi'ism started with the advent of Islam and was founded by the Prophet ﷺ himself. The term Shia was coined by the Prophet ﷺ, and many of the Prophet's companions were known as the Shias of Ali عليه السلام during his lifetime.