THE TEN PROMISED PARADISE · BOOK FOUR

Ali ibn Abi Talib

Courage Without Pride



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What the Father of Dust Teaches the Mind, the Heart and the Life of the One Who Walks After Him

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PREFACE

A Word Before You Begin

There are ten men whom the Prophet ﷺ named in a single breath and promised Paradise. The first three books in this series walked with Abu Bakr, who said yes without delay, with Umar, who said the true thing without fear, and with Uthman, who gave without counting. This book walks with the fourth.

Ali ibn Abi Talib grew up in the Prophet's ﷺ own house. He was a boy when he believed, a young man when he slept in the Prophet's ﷺ bed on the night of the Hijrah, and the husband of Fatimah, the Prophet's ﷺ daughter. He was the bravest fighter of his generation, and the Prophet ﷺ gave him the banner at Khaybar with words no one forgot: a man who loves Allah and His Messenger, and whom Allah and His Messenger love. He was also the most learned judge among the Companions, a man who lay down on the dust of the mosque and was given a nickname for it that he loved more than any other.

He is the companion for everyone who has been given strength, of body, of mind or of position, and wants to know how to carry it without becoming proud. He is the proof that the bravest man in the room can also be the most humble, and that knowledge is meant to be served, not displayed.

For every claim in this book there is evidence: a verse of the Quran, a hadith with its reference, or a report from the early historians, named as such. Every verse and every hadith is given in full, in Arabic and in English, with nothing cut short on either side. Where a report is outside the two Sahihs we say so and give its grading where one exists.

Ali's life ended in a time of trial among the Muslims, and much has been written about that time by people with something to prove. We have kept to what the reliable sources say, and to the position the scholars of the Sunnah have held for fourteen centuries: that the Companions are to be loved, that their disputes are to be spoken of with care, and that Ali was among the best of them.

Read it slowly. Then go and do one thing he did.

How this book is arranged

Part One introduces the ten again, explains why the fourth book is about Ali, and describes the boy who grew up in the Prophet's ﷺ house and the night he slept in his bed.

Parts Two to Six each take one thing he was or did: he was loved, he was brave, he was close to the Prophet ﷺ, he judged with knowledge, and he returned to his Lord. Each claim comes with its evidence.

Part Seven shows how to walk with him: the words he carried to us, seven habits drawn from his life, and a forty-day plan for making them your own.

Verses are given in Arabic with their meaning in English and their reference. Hadith are given in full, with the numbers of the standard printed editions as used on sunnah.com, and gradings are noted where a narration is outside Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim.

Reports from the books of history and sirah appear in boxes marked From the Sources. They are the accounts of Ibn Ishaq,

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PART ONE

The Ten, and the Fourth of Them

Who the ten were, why the fourth book is about Ali, the boy in the Prophet's ﷺ house, and the night of the Hijrah.

1 Ten Names, One Promise

2 The Boy in the Prophet's ﷺ House

3 In the Prophet's ﷺ Bed

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CHAPTER ONE

Ten Names, One Promise

Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf, who was himself one of them, reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said ten names and after each name said the same thing: in Paradise. He did not say they would be judged kindly, or that there was hope for them. He said where they would be, as a man describes a place he has seen.

HADITH

أَبُو بَكْرٍ فِي الْجَنَّةِ، وَعُمَرُ فِي الْجَنَّةِ، وَعُثْمَانُ فِي الْجَنَّةِ، وَعَلِيٌّ فِي الْجَنَّةِ، وَطَلْحَةُ فِي الْجَنَّةِ، وَالزُّبَيْرُ فِي الْجَنَّةِ، وَعَبْدُ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنُ عَوْفٍ فِي الْجَنَّةِ، وَسَعْدٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ، وَسَعِيدٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ، وَأَبُو عُبَيْدَةَ بْنُ الْجَرَّاحِ فِي الْجَنَّةِ

"Abu Bakr is in Paradise, Umar is in Paradise, Uthman is in Paradise, Ali is in Paradise, Talhah is in Paradise, al-Zubayr is in Paradise, Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf is in Paradise, Sa'd is in Paradise, Sa'id is in Paradise, and Abu Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah is in Paradise."

JAMI' AT-TIRMIDHI 3747; ALSO SUNAN ABI DAWUD 4649 FROM SA'ID IBN ZAYD. GRADED SAHIH BY AL-ALBANI.

The fourth name

Abu Bakr, then Umar, then Uthman, then Ali. The fourth name in the list belongs to the fourth caliph, the last of the four whom the Muslims call the Rightly Guided Caliphs. And he is the only one of the ten who grew up inside the Prophet's ﷺ own house, ate at his table as a child, and saw the message arrive from the first day.

The Quran describes the first believers without naming them.

وَٱلسَّـٰبِقُونَ ٱلْأَوَّلُونَ مِنَ ٱلْمُهَـٰجِرِينَ وَٱلْأَنصَارِ وَٱلَّذِينَ ٱتَّبَعُوهُم بِإِحْسَـٰنٍ رَّضِىَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا۟ عَنْهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّـٰتٍ تَجْرِى تَحْتَهَا ٱلْأَنْهَـٰرُ خَـٰلِدِينَ فِيهَآ أَبَدًا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ ٱلْفَوْزُ ٱلْعَظِيمُ

"And the first forerunners [in the faith] among the Muhajireen and the Ansar and those who followed them with good conduct - Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him, and He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever. That is the great attainment."

SURAH AT-TAWBAH 9:100

The first forerunners. Ali was among the very first. The historians record that he was the first boy to believe, at about ten years old, and that he prayed with the Prophet ﷺ and Khadijah when the Muslims in the world could be counted on one hand.

Why a series

A promise of Paradise from the mouth of the Prophet ﷺ is the highest thing that can be said about a human being, and it was said about these ten. Yet most of us know them as a list. A list cannot be followed. A man can. So this series takes them one at a time, short enough to be read in a few sittings and built so that it can be returned to, and each book ends with a forty-day plan, because a companion is someone you walk beside for a while, until some of his way of walking becomes yours.

Why Ali fourth

Because the Prophet ﷺ named him fourth, and because he is the companion the first three books could not give you. Abu Bakr teaches the yes. Umar teaches the true word. Uthman teaches the open hand. Ali teaches what to do with strength. He was the strongest fighter of his time and one of its greatest minds, and he was given a nickname for lying in the dust. Most of us have some kind of strength, and most of us are tempted to be proud of it. Ali is the companion for that temptation, which is why he is fourth, and why he is next.

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Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, then Ali: the fourth name belongs to the boy who grew up in the Prophet's ﷺ house.

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CHAPTER TWO

The Boy in the Prophet's ﷺ House

Ali ibn Abi Talib ibn Abd al-Muttalib was the Prophet's ﷺ first cousin. His father, Abu Talib, was the Prophet's ﷺ uncle, the man who had raised the orphaned Muhammad ﷺ from the age of eight and who protected him in Makkah until his own death. His mother, Fatimah bint Asad, had cared for the Prophet ﷺ as a child.

How he came to live there

The historians record why the boy Ali came to live with his cousin.

FROM THE SOURCES

Ibn Ishaq, in the recension of Ibn Hisham, records that Quraysh were struck by a severe drought, and that Abu Talib had a large family. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to his uncle al-Abbas, who was one of the wealthiest of Banu Hashim: Your brother Abu Talib has many children, and you see what hardship has come upon the people. Let us go to him and lighten his burden. You take one of his sons and I will take one. They went to Abu Talib, and al-Abbas took Ja'far and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ took Ali, and Ali remained with him until Allah sent him as a prophet, and Ali followed him and believed in him.

Repaying a debt

Notice what happened here. The Prophet ﷺ had been an orphan, taken in by Abu Talib when he had no one. Years later, when Abu Talib was struggling, the Prophet ﷺ took in his uncle's son. The kindness went round. Ali grew up in the house of the man who had grown up in his father's house.

It also means that Ali saw the Prophet ﷺ as almost no one else did. Not in the mosque, not on the battlefield, but at home: how he spoke to his wife, how he ate, how he prayed alone, how he treated a small boy who lived with him. When Ali later described the Prophet's ﷺ character, he was describing the man who had raised him.

The first boy to believe

When the revelation began, Khadijah believed first, and Ali was among the very first after her.

FROM THE SOURCES

Ibn Ishaq records that Ali was the first male to believe in the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, to pray with him and to accept what came to him from Allah, and that he was then a boy of about ten. He records that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would go out to the valleys of Makkah at the time of prayer, and Ali would go with him secretly, hiding from his father and his uncles and his people, and they would pray there and return in the evening. Ibn Ishaq adds that Abu Talib came upon them once while they were praying, and asked his nephew what this religion was, and when he was told, he said to Ali: He has called you only to good, so stay with him.

The scholars have long said that the first free man to believe was Abu Bakr, the first woman Khadijah, the first boy Ali and the first freed slave Zayd ibn Harithah. Each is first in his own way, and the first two books of this series told Abu Bakr's side. This book tells the boy's.

For the one raised in faith

Some of us came to the religion as adults, after searching. Others were raised in it, and never knew a day without it. If you are the second kind, you may wonder whether your faith counts as much, since you did not choose it the way a convert chooses. Ali is your answer. He was raised in the house of the Prophet ﷺ, and he chose it again and again, as a boy praying in the valleys, as a young man in danger, as a husband and a soldier and a caliph. Being raised in faith is a gift. Choosing it every day after that is the work.

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Taken in by the Prophet ﷺ in a year of hardship, he grew up in his house, and was the first boy to pray with him.

This is a free sample

You have read the opening of the book and two of its twenty-four chapters: the ten men promised Paradise and the fourth name among them, and the boy who grew up in the Prophet's ﷺ house and was the first boy to pray with him.

The full book carries on through the night he slept in the Prophet's ﷺ bed, the banner at Khaybar, the place of Harun, the duel at Badr and the trench, the name he would not erase, the father of dust, the hundred words before sleep, the best judge among the Companions, the years of trial, the dawn in Kufa, and the forty days of walking with him.

Ali ibn Abi Talib: Courage Without Pride

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