

UNCLEAR (*MUTASHABIH*) VERSES  
ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF LADY  
FATIMA AL-ZAHRA<sup>1</sup>

SAYYID JAWAD HUSSAINI  
TRANSLATED BY MAHBOOBEH MORSHEDIAN

**ABSTRACT:** One of the mandatory and sometimes recommended actions in Islam is writing a will – where a person puts forth a legal document expressing a number of purposes – how his or her property is to be distributed, for socio-political reasons, offering moral recommendations and advice for others to heed, especially for the testator’s beloved ones. Historically, religious leaders have left their wills; Prophet Muhammad wrote his for his Ahlul Bayt, and Imam Ali left his for his son, Imam al-Hasan. Lady Fatima al-Zahra, the daughter of the Prophet, renowned for her flawless character and well-educated on Qur’anic instructions, also left a will for generations to come. This article examines the personal requests and counsel in her will, and offers an analysis of the events that revolved around socio-political issues.

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## Introduction

Among the obligatory and sometimes recommended and desirable actions is to write a will. Throughout history, religious leaders have left their wills. For example, Prophet Muhammad wrote his will for Imam Ali, Lady Zahra, his companions, and his Ummah. Imam Ali left his will – found in *Nahj ul-Balaghah* – to his children, his Shi'a, and to whomever seeks to benefit from it. The wills of Imam Hassan, Imam Husayn, and a few other Imams are also available.

Sometimes wills are personal for the purpose of giving beneficial advice and moral lessons to others, and the testator wants his inheritors to perform their obligations, good actions, and/or pay his debts on his behalf. The testator may also give extra advice to his offspring, relatives, and followers. A will may also have political and social aspects, for example, Imam Husayn's will to his brother, Muhammad Hanafiyyah, in which he referred to objectives of his uprising as the reform of the Islamic Ummah, enjoining the good, forbidding evil, and the revival of his grandfather and father's conduct; or Imam Khomeini's politico-religious will written a few decades ago.

As Lady Zahra was trained in the house of revelation and was familiar with Qur'anic instructions profoundly, she also wrote a will, divided into three parts:

- A) Her personal will and her request to do good deeds on her behalf.
- B) Her will regarding her offspring and others.
- C) Her socio-political will.

## A. Her personal will

### 1. Her call for recitation of the Qur'an and supplication on the first night after her burial.

Indeed, the first night after one's death when being transferred from this world to the realm of the grave and Barzakh is a very crucial night. A person is transferred from a world where good deeds can be performed to a world where he or she is unable to do so. Upon entering Barzakh, a person is alone with his or her deeds in the heaven or hell of Barzakh, and it is only the good deeds of relatives and inheritors that can add to the deceased's good deeds, alleviate her fear, and increase her joy.

Lady Zahra, who was infallible and whose soul was not contaminated with any sins, beseechingly asked Imam Ali to stay by her grave and recite the Qur'an and pray for her that first night. Indeed, where Lady Zahra with numerous acts of worship and good deeds considered herself needy and helpless, how are we—thoroughly sinful— not destitute of everything? During her moments of death, Lady Zahra made a will, telling Imam Ali:

When I die, perform my funeral ghusl, enshroud me, perform funeral prayer on me, place me in the grave, put the *lahad* stone on me, throw soil on it, and flatten it. Then sit beside my grave facing me, recite the Qur'an a lot and pray [for me] because at this

moment the dead one needs to company of the alive. I entrust you to God, the Almighty.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. A reminder

A right of the dead is that their relatives do not forget them by performing good deeds and giving charities and alms on her behalf. For example, regarding doing good to parents after their death, the Prophet was asked: “Yes, [performing] prayer for them, seeking God’s forgiveness for them, fulfilling their commitments, visiting those who become your blood kin through your parents, and respecting your parents’ friends.”<sup>3</sup> Also, Imam Baqir said,

A servant of Allah may do good to his parents when they are alive, but after their death he does not pay their debts and does not seek Allah’s forgiveness for them, so Allah considers him disowned by his parents. Likewise, somebody may be disowned by his parents during their lifetime, not doing good to them then, but after their death he pays their debts and seeks Allah’s forgiveness for them, so Allah considers him righteous.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Bihar-al-Anwar*, Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, Beirut, Dar-ul-Ihya a-Turath al-Arabi, vol. 79, p.27.

إذا أنا ميت فتقول أنت غسلي وجمي فباله وجمي فأكثر من تلاوه والدعاء فإياها ساعة يحتاج الميت فيها إلى أئس الأحياء و أنا أستودعك الله تعالى

<sup>3</sup> *Mustadrak-ul-Wasa'il*, Mirza Hussain Noori, Al-al-Bait, Qum, 1408 A.H., vol. 2, p. 114, section 2.

نعم ، الصلاة عليهما ، والاستغفار لهما ، وإنفاذ عهدهما من بعدهما ، وإكرام صديقيهما ، وصلاة  
الرحم التي لا رحم لك إلا من قبلهما ، فهذا الذي بقي عليك

<sup>4</sup> Kulaini, researched by Ali Akbar Ghaffari, Dar-e Sa'b and Dar-a-Ta'aruf, Beirut, the fourth edition, 1401 A.H., vol. 2, p. 159, no. 9, p. 348, no. 1:

According to Shaikh Abbas Qummi, Imam Sadiq used to perform a two-Rak'at prayer for his children at nights and for his parents on days, reciting the chapter *al-Qadr* in the first Rak'at and the chapter *al-Kawthar* in the second Rak'at.<sup>5</sup>

Considering that the dead one is unable to do any good deed, though the living ones can do so on his behalf to benefit him, Lady Zahra enjoined Imam Ali not to forget her:

O' Abal-Hasan! My life is going to end in just a few seconds, and it is the time of leave-taking. Listen to me because you will never hear the voice of Fatimah anymore. O' Abal-Hassan! I want you not to forget me [and to do good deeds on my behalf].<sup>6</sup>

### 3. Visiting their graves is recommended.

Another recommended act regarding the dead, particularly the prophets, imams, and the Awliya' (friends of God) is to visit their graves. There are many narrations on visiting the graves and its impacts in both Shi'a and Sunni sources. In what follows, a few examples are referred to:

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إِنَّ الْعَبْدَ لَيَكُونُ بَارًا بِوَالِدَيْهِ فِي حَيَاتِهِمَا، ثُمَّ يَمُوتَانِ فَلَا يَقْضِي عَنْهُمَا دُيُوتَهُمَا وَلَا يَسْتَغْفِرُ لَهُمَا  
فَيَكْتُبُهُ اللَّهُ عَاقًا. وَإِنَّهُ لَيَكُونُ عَاقًا لَهُمَا فِي حَيَاتِهِمَا غَيْرَ بَارٍ بِهِمَا، فَإِذَا مَاتَا قَضَى دِيْنَهُمَا وَاسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمَا  
فَيَكْتُبُهُ اللَّهُ عَزَّوَجَلَّ بَارًا

<sup>5</sup> *Manazil-al-Akhirah*, Sahikh Abbas Qummi, Islamiyyah bookstore, no date, p.32; *Kowkab a-Durri*, vol. 1, p. 253; *Zuhra-a-Riyadh*, recounted from Fatimah Zahra encyclopedia; *Nahj-al-Hayat*, Muhammad Dashti, Mashhur Publications, Qum, the first edition, 1380 solar, p. 229.

<sup>6</sup> *Zuhra-a-Riyadh*, Kowkab a-Durri, no publications, no date, vol. 1, p. 253.

يَا أَبَا الْخَسَنِ لَمْ يَبْقَ لِي إِلَّا رَمَقٌ مِنَ الْخِيَاةِ وَ حَانَ زَمَانُ الرَّجُلِ وَالْوَدَاعَ فَاسْتَمِعْ كَلَامِي فَإِنَّكَ لَا  
تَسْمَعُ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ صَوْتَ فَاطِمَةَ ابْنَتِي، يَا أَبَا الْخَسَنِ أَنْ لَا تَنْسَانِي

1. Ibn Majah quoted Prophet Muhammad as saying, “I had forbidden you from visiting the graves before, but right now I say: Visit the graves because this leads to asceticism and remembrance of the hereafter.”<sup>7</sup>

The reason for the beginning sentence of the hadith referring to the Prophet’s forbidding visiting the graves may be that:

- a) It was forged because it cannot be found in Shi’a sources.
- b) During the early prophetic mission, people had just distanced themselves from idol-worship and were forbidden from visiting the graves temporarily so that idol-worship might not emerge again in another form. However, later when people had forgotten idol-worship completely, the Prophet emphasized visiting the graves.

2. Kulayni reported from Imam Sadiq who quoted Imam Ali as saying, “Visit the departed; indeed, they become delighted by your visit. And you should pray to Allah, making your request to Him at your parents’ graves.”<sup>8</sup>

Taking her father and Imam Ali’s words into account and having deep awareness of the doctrine of revelation, Lady Zahra emphatically enjoined all to visit her grave frequently so that both she would be elevated to a higher spiritual rank, and it would have

<sup>7</sup> *Sunan Ibn Majah*, Dar-al-Fikr, Beirut, the first edition, p. 501, no.1571; *Jami a-Saqir*, Soyuti, Beirut, Dar-al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1401 A.H., vol. 2, p.279, no.6430; *Kanz-ul-Ummal*, Muttaqi Hindi, Beirut, a-Risalah Publications, vol. 15, no 42555.

كُنْتُ نَبِيَّتِكُمْ عَنْ زِيَارَةِ الْقُبُورِ ، أَلَا فَزُورُوهَا ، فَإِنَّهَا تُذَكِّرُ الْآخِرَةَ

<sup>8</sup> *Kafi*, ibid, vol. 3, p.229, no. 1; *Wasa'il-a-Shi'a*, Hurr Amili, Ahlu Bayt, Qum, 1412 A.H., vol. 3, p.233, section 54, in the sections on burial, no. 5.

زُورُوا مَوْتَانَكُمْ فَإِنَّهِنَّ يَفْرَحُونَ بِزِيَارَتِكُمْ ، وَ لِيَطْلُبَ أَحَدُكُمْ حَاجَتَهُ عِنْدَ قَبْرِ أَبِيهِ وَ عِنْدَ قَبْرِ أُمِّهِ بِمَا يَدْعُو لَهُمَا

profound impacts on the visitors to her grave. Hence her request, “O’ Abal-Hassan! I want you not to forget me and always visit me after my death.”<sup>9</sup>

#### 4. Only Imam Ali and Asma’ should perform her ghusl.

Lady Zahra strongly emphasised that Imam Ali perform her Ghusl and shrouding with the help of Asma: “O’ Asma’! When I pass away, you and Ali ibn Abi-Talib perform my ghusl and do not allow anybody to enter my house while my body is still in it.”<sup>10</sup>

### B. Her wills about her offspring and others

#### 1. Her offspring

An affectionate and exemplary mother is not inattentive to or ignorant of her children, and Lady Zahra was the kindest mother to her children. Whenever Imam Hassan and Imam Husayn gave their *salam* (greetings of peace) to her, in response she affectionately and whole-heartedly said, “Greetings to you, O’ the apple of my eyes!”<sup>11</sup>

It is not possible that such a mother does not advise about her children. Thus, one sentence of her will reads as follows: “I entrust you to Allah and recommend that you do good to my children.”<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Nahj-ul-Hayat*, encyclopedia of Fatimah Zahra’s words, p.229.

أوصيك يا أبا الحسن أن لا تنساني و تزورني بعد مماتي

<sup>10</sup> *al-Isti’ab, ibn Abd-al-Birr*, Dar al-Jibal, Beirut, 1412 A.H., vol.4, p. 1897; *al-Sunan-al-Kubra*, vol. 3, p.396; *Awn-al-Ma’bud*, Adim-Abadi, Dar-ul-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1415 A.H., vol. 8, p. 337.

يا أسماء إذا مت فاعبئيني أنت و علي بن أبي طالب (ع) و لا تدخل علي أهدأ

<sup>11</sup> Addendum to *Mafatih-al-Jinan*, Hadith al-Kisa.

عليك السلام يا فرة عيني و ثمرة فؤادي

<sup>12</sup> *Bihar-al-Anwar*, ibid, vol.43, p.217; *Ilalu-Sharayi’*, vol.1, p.188.

Elsewhere, she addressed Imam Ali, saying:

“O’ the company of Batul [a name of Lay Zahra]! I enjoin you to do good to my children; Who are accustomed to [my] eagerness and affection. Those separated will start a day while they are perplexed orphans, wandering; They choose Allah [over anybody else]; that day is the time of separation.<sup>13</sup>

## 2. Her advice about Imam Husayn

In addition to her general advice about her children, Lady Zahra gave advice about Imam Husayn because she knew about his martyrdom. In a poem, she gave this news as follows:

My children spent last night hungry;  
The youngest will be killed in a battlefield;  
In Karbala, he will be martyred through deceit and guile;  
Woe to his killers! And painful punishment, abasement and degradation be upon them!  
Those who will enter the lowest ranks of Hell by this crime;  
And their downfall and abasement will increase constantly.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, addressing Imam Ali, she advised about Imam Husayn as follows:

O’ the best guide! If you want to weep, weep for me;  
And shed tears because today is the time of separation;

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أَسْتَوْدِعُكَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى وَ أَوْصِيكَ فِي وَآدِي خَيْرًا

<sup>13</sup> *Bihar-al-Anwar*, vol. 43, pp. 174, 178.

<sup>14</sup> يا قرين البتول اوصيك باللسل- فقد اصبحا حليف اشتياق- فارقوا فاصبحوا يتامى حيارى- يخلف الله فهو يوم الفراق  
*Bihar-al-Anwar*, vol.35, p.239, on the revelation of the Qur’anic chapter a-Dahr, section 6.  
امسوا جيعا و هم اشبالى -اصغرهم يقتل فى القتال -بكرلاء يقتل باغتتيال -لقاتليه الويل مع  
وبال -يهوى به النار الى سفال -كبوله زادت على الاكبال

Weep for me and my orphans; And do not forget the one who will be killed out of hostility in Iraq (i.e., Imam Husayn).<sup>15</sup>

Shedding tears on Imam Husayn is an issue which the Prophet and Imams recommended strongly, and it needs to be dealt with in another discussion. Regarding this recommendation, Imam Rida is said, “O’ Ibn Shabib! If you want to weep for something, shed tears for Husayn because he was beheaded as a sheep is.”<sup>16</sup>

### 3. Her greetings to all of her offspring (*Sadats*)

The affection of Lady Fatima, the exemplary mother, does not limit to her immediate children or at most to her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She is the Prophet’s *Kawthar*, and *Sayyids*, an honorific title denoted to the Prophet’s descendants, are her progeny. Lady Zahra sent her regards to all her offspring who would be born from then on to the Day of Judgment. And in her will, she gave her special Salam to them:

“O’ Ali! I am Fatimah...Give my regards to all my offspring who will be born from now on to the Day of Judgment.”<sup>17</sup>

### 4. Enjoining Imam Ali to marry Amamah after her demise

<sup>15</sup> *Bihar-al-Anwar*, vol. 43 , pp. 174, 178.

ابكى ان بكيت يا خير هادٍ- واسبل الدمع فهو يوم الفراق- ابكى وابك للبتامى  
ولانس قتيلا العدا بطف العراق

<sup>16</sup> *Wasa'il a-Shi'a*, vol.14, p.502.

يا ابن شبيب ان كنت بايا لشيء فابك للحسين بن على، فانه ذبح كما يذبح الكباش

<sup>17</sup> *Bihar-al-Anwar*, vol.43, p.214; *Wasa'il a-Shi'a*, vol.13, p.311; *Dala'il al-A'immah*, p.42.

يا على انا فاطمة.....استودعك الله و اقرء على ولى السلام الى يوم القيامة

A reasonable woman eliminates her jealousy and takes the family's interests into account. She takes into consideration that a man needs to marry after the demise of his wife given that this is a necessity of life. It may occur that some men do not dare to remarry after their wife's death due to their children's sensitivity or their wife's advice. Adopting the motto "We cannot tolerate anybody replacing our mother," they deprive their father of this blessing, causing him to face an array of challenges. Similarly, a woman does not dare to remarry after her husband's death.

But Lady Zahra, a pure and far-sighted infallible was exempt from inadvisable conventional limitations. She explicitly talked of Imam Ali's remarriage after her demise and its necessity:

O' Prophet's cousin! May Allah give you a good reward! I enjoin you to remarry because men need to marry. After my death, get married to my sister's daughter, Amamah, because she is as kind to my children as I am.<sup>18</sup>

### C. Her political and social will

Lady Zahra considered an array of socio-political issues, the main issue being lack of regard for Imam Ali and lack of recognition for his right as the successor of the Prophet.

<sup>18</sup> *Bihar-al-Anwar*, vol.43, pp. 191, 217; *Ilalu-Sharayi'*, vol.1, p. 188.

خِزَاكَ اللهُ عَنِّي خَيْرَ الْجَزَاءِ نَائِنَ عَمَّ رَسُولِ اللهِ أَوْصِيكَ أَوْلَا أَنْ تَتَزَوَّجَ بَعْدِي بِابْنَتِهِ أَمَامَةَ  
فَلَيْتَهَا تَكُونُ لَوْلِيٍّ وَمِثْلِي فَلَيْتَ الرَّجَالَ لَا يَهْدُ لَهُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ

### 1. Her burial was in secret.

She strongly advised that her ghusl, shrouding, and burial be hidden and nobody but a few particular people be informed of it. She tells Imam Ali:

1. "I want nobody but you to perform my ghusl and shrouding. When I pass away, bury me at night and do not inform anybody of my death."<sup>19</sup>
2. "Perform the funeral prayer on me, bury me at night, and do not inform anybody."<sup>20</sup>
3. "When I die, do not inform anybody of my death, and do not show my grave to anybody [so that it remains hidden]."<sup>21</sup>

### 2. Some were not allowed to attend her burial.

In order to have usurpers and oppressors disgraced and to show her disapproval of them, she wanted Imam Ali not to permit her oppressive enemies to attend her burial:

I want none of those who oppressed me and usurped my rights to attend my burial because they are enemies of mine and the Prophet. Do not permit any of them or their followers to recite the funeral prayer on me. Bury me at night when everybody is asleep.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *Bihar-al-Anwar*, vol.43, p. 159, vol.78, p.255; *Kashf-ul-Qummah*, vol. 2, p.68.

<sup>20</sup> *Bihar-al-Anwar*, vol.43, p. 214; *Wasa'il-a-Shi'a*, vol.13, p.311; *Dala'il al-A'immah*, p.42.

<sup>21</sup> *Bihar-al-Anwar*, vol.78, p. 310; *Dala'il al-A'immah*, p.44; *Sahih Bukhari*, vol.5, p. 139.

<sup>22</sup> *Bihar-al-Anwar*, vol.43, p.209; *Ilalu-Sharayi'*, vol.1, p.188; *Ihtijaj Tabarsi*, p.59.

### 3. Some were not supposed to be informed and recite the funeral prayer on her body.

In order to provide a clear historical account, Lady Zahra sometimes had to explicitly name these oppressors who were not supposed to be informed of her burial or to attend it, “When I die, bury me at night and do not inform Abu-Bakr and ‘Umar. By Prophet Muhammad, do not allow them to perform funeral prayer on me.”<sup>23</sup>

### 4. Only specific people were permitted to attend her burial.

In another part of her will, she specifically referred to those who were entitled to attend her burial. She also commanded that her death was not announced publicly, and her grave had to be hidden. According to Imam Sadiq, Lady Zahra addressed Imam Ali, saying in the last moments of her life:

When I die, inform nobody but Umm Salamah, Umm Ayman, Fiddah [from among people], and from among men my two sons [Imam Hassan and Imam Husayn], Abbas, Salman, Ammar, Miqdad, Aba Dharr, and Hudhayfah. Bury me at night and do not show my grave to anybody [so that it remains hidden].<sup>24</sup>

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أوصيك أن لا يشهد أحد جنازتي من هؤلاء الذين ظلموني و أخذوا حتى فانيهم عدوي و عدو رسول الله و لا تتزك أن يصلني على أحد منهم و لا من أتباعهم و اذفني في الليل إذا هذات العيون و نامت الأبصار

<sup>23</sup> *Bihar-al-Anwar*, vol.43, p. 159, vol.78, p.255; *Kashf-ul-Qummah*, vol. 2, p.68.

و إذا أنا مت فاذفني ليلاً و لا تؤذنتن بي أحداً، و لا تؤذنتن بي أبابكر و عمر و بحق محمد رسول الله(ص) أن لا يصلني على أبوبكر و لا عمر؛

<sup>24</sup> *Bihar-al-Anwar*, vol.78, p.310.

Indeed, through her will, Lady Zahra planted two questions in the minds of those who visited Medina: Why was she buried at night and why is her grave hidden?

### Her written will

In the name of Allah. This is the will of Fatimah, the Prophet's daughter. I make a will while I testify that there is no god but Allah, and Prophet Muhammad is His servant and Messenger. Heaven and Hell are certain to exist, and no doubt the Day of Judgment will occur. Allah will revive the dead [and will make them enter gathering the plane of Resurrection. O' Ali! I am Fatimah, the daughter of Muhammad, Messenger of Allah. He gave my hand to you in marriage so that I am yours in both this world and the hereafter. You are more deserving of me than others. At night perform my Ghusl and shrouding, say funeral prayer on me, and bury me. Do not inform anybody of my demise. I entrust you to Allah. Give my Salam to my all offspring who will be born until the Day of Judgment.<sup>25</sup>

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إذا توفيت لا تعلم إلا أم سلمة و أم أيمن و فصة و من الرجال ابني و العباس و سلمان و عمارة و  
 المقداد و أبان و حذيفة و لا تدفني إلا ليلاً و لا تعلم قبري أحداً  
<sup>25</sup> ibid., vol. 43, p.214; *Wasa'il-a-Shi'a*, ibid., vol. 13, p.311; *Dala'il al-A'immah*, p.42.  
 بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ. هذا ما أوصت به فاطمة بنت رسول الله، أوصت و هي تشهد أن لا إله  
 إلا الله و أن محمداً عبده و رسوله و أن الجنة حق و النار حق و أن الساعة آتية لا ريب فيها و  
 أن الله يبعث من في القبور، يا علي أنا فاطمة بنت محمد (ص) زوجتي الله منك لاكون لك  
 في الدنيا و الآخرة، أنت أولى بي من غيري، خطنني و غتيلني و كفتي بالليل و صل علي و  
 ادفني بالليل و لا تعلم أحداً و استودعك الله و اقرء علي و لي السلام إلى يوم القيامة

Two important points indicated in her will:

1. She acknowledged the main principles of core Islamic beliefs, namely Unity of God, prophethood of Prophet Muhammad, and the Day of Judgment.
2. She pointed out that she was the only match for Imam Ali in both this world and the hereafter.
3. She assigned Imam Ali the task of her ghusl, shrouding and embalmment.
4. She wanted her burial to be hidden so that usurpers and oppressors would not attend it.
5. She conveyed her *salam* to all her offspring from then to the Day of Judgment.