

From the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* Chapter 73, question 13:

If you ask: **'Who is worthy to be the Seal of the Friends [of God, *khātam al-awliyā'*], in the way that Muhammad, may God bless him and greet him with peace, is worthy to be the Seal of the Prophets?'**, then we reply that the Seal is [actually] two seals: a seal through whom God seals Friendship, and a seal through whom God seals Muhammadian Friendship.

As regards the Seal of Friendship in an unlimited sense, that is Jesus, upon him be peace, for he is [God's] Friend with absolute prophethood in the time of this community, having been prevented from legislative prophethood and envoyship. He is to descend at the end of time as heir and seal, and after him there will be no Friend with absolute prophethood, just as Muhammad is the Seal of prophethood and after him there is no legislative prophethood, even if after him there is someone like Jesus, who is one of the people of great resolve among the Messengers and one of the special ones of the prophets – yet [Jesus'] authority over that station [of prophethood] came to an end due to the property of time ruling over it, which belongs to someone other than him. So he [Jesus] will descend as [God's] Friend possessing absolute prophethood, which he will share with the Muhammadian friends - for he is one of us, and he is our master! The first of this order as a prophet was Adam, and the last was Jesus - and by this I mean the prophethood of those who are specifically appointed [as prophet]. On the Day of Resurrection he [Jesus] will have two gatherings: he will be gathered with us, and he will be gathered with the envoys and he will be gathered with the prophets.

As for the Seal of Muhammadian Friendship, he is a man of the Arab race, one of the noblest in lineage and the most generous in helping.¹ He is alive in our time today, and I came to know (*or*: met) him in the year 595H. I saw the distinctive sign which he possesses, which God has hidden within him from the eyes of His servants, but which He unveiled to me in the town of Fez, so that I might see in him the Seal of Friendship. He is the Seal of absolute prophethood, about which most people know nothing. God has tested him by people denying him in regard to what he has verified of the Truth in his inmost being as regards knowledge of Him. Just as God sealed legislative prophethood through Muhammad, may God bless him and greet him with peace, in the same way God has sealed through the Muhammadian Seal the Friendship which comes from the Muhammadian inheritance, not that which comes from the inheritance of the other prophets. For among the Friends there are some who inherit from Abraham, some from Moses, some from Jesus, and these can be found after this Muhammadian Seal. But after him no Friend will be found on the heart of Muhammad, may God bless him and greet him with peace. This is the meaning of the Muhammadian Seal.

As for the Seal of Universal Friendship, after whom no Friend [of God] will exist, that is Jesus, upon him be peace. We have met a group of [God's] Friends who were on the heart of Jesus, upon him be peace, or of the

¹ Ar: *aṣl^{an} wa-yad^{an}*. These refer to two sides of a person: 'lineage' (*aṣl*) denotes the ancestral background (genetics), while 'helping' (*yad*, lit. 'hand') indicates what someone accomplishes in life – 'hand' in Arabic suggests what is in one's power to give, as in the English notion of 'a helping hand'.

Messengers, upon them be peace. I brought together my companions ‘Abd Allāh [al-Habashī] and Isma‘īl Ibn Sawdakīn with this Seal: he prayed for them both, and they benefited from him/it. Praise be to God!²

² Part of Ibn ‘Arabī’s responses to al-Tirmidhī’s questionnaire. *Fut.*II.49 (Beirut, n.d.); Mansub ed., 4/406–407.

From the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* Chapter 73, question 14:

If you ask: ‘By what quality is he [the Seal] worthy of this?’, we reply: by the quality of fidelity to the sacred trust (*amāna*). In his hand are the keys of the breaths, and the condition of divesting (*tajrīd*) and movement (*ḥaraka*).³ All this is the characteristic of Jesus, upon him be peace: he used to give life through the blowing [of the breath], and he was one of the renunciant envoys (*zuhhād*), and he used to journey (*siyāḥa*)⁴ – he preserved fidelity and fulfilled its true meaning. For this reason the Jews were hostile to him, but *the blame of the blamers* (Q 5:54) did not take hold of him in regard to God.

I have had many meetings with him in visions – it was through his helping hand that I turned [to God], and he prayed for me that I be established in religion (*dīn*), both in this life and in the hereafter, and he called me ‘beloved’ (*ḥabīb*), and ordered me to [practise] renunciation (*zuhd*) and detachment (*tajrīd*).

As for the quality through which the Seal of Muhammadian Friendship is worthy of being a seal, that is through the completion of the noble/generous qualities (*makārim al-akhlāq*) with regard to God⁵. All that comes about for human beings from [the Seal’s] side in terms of virtue, is from the fact that such virtue is in line with the way he exercises these qualities with God. It is only like this because individual aims are different. ‘Noble qualities’, in the eyes of the one who is characterised by them with Him, is an expression for the alignment of his aim, regardless of whether he is praised or blamed in this by others. Since there cannot exist a universal alignment of the world with the Beautiful and the Good, which is in his eyes beautiful [as the world is in God’s eyes], he observes this with the observation of a wise man, who acts appropriately, as he should, when he should. He looks at the things of existence, and finds no companion like God, and no companionship better than His companionship. He sees how happiness resides in interacting with Him and aligning to His Desire. He observes the limits that He delineates and prescribes, and stays with them and follows them.

Part of what He prescribes for him is that He teaches him how to associate with what is other than God (*Allāh*), from a purified angel and an ennobled messenger, and a leader in whose hands God puts the affairs of created beings – from one who is in ultimate charge to a chief,⁶ a close friend and wife, family and children,⁷

³ The term *tajrīd* (‘divesting’) has several connotations: to divest something of anything extra to what it is essentially, to peel off and be free of the outer aspects, to detach oneself, and to write without any additions (diacritical pointing or vowing). The term *ḥaraka* means not only ‘movement’ but also ‘vowelling’.

⁴ The term *siyāḥa* suggests moving abode, with the implication that the journeyer divests himself of the familiar and is not known to the inhabitants of each new place of abiding. This applies both exteriorly and interiorly. There is a famous verse attributed to the poet Abū Tammām: ‘Transport your heart (*naqil fu’āda-ka*) wherever you wish in the land of Love – love is only for the first beloved. How many abodes on earth are home to a youth, but his love is always for his first abode.’

⁵ See various hadiths: ‘I have been sent to complete the noble/generous qualities’; ‘I was sent to complete the beautiful qualities (*ḥusn al-akhlāq*)’; and ‘Among the best of you is the most beautiful in character’.

⁶ This refers to the chain of command and people who are responsible for those in their charge: the *khalīfa* is the one ultimately in charge and gives orders to the *‘arīf*, the chief who oversees people on a day-to-day basis. According to Ibn Manẓūr (*Lisān al-‘Arab*, 2899), ‘the *‘arīf al-qawm* is the people’s leader... the *‘arīf* is below the rank of *ra’is*... the position of *‘arīf* is rightfully needed (as beneficial to people), and the *‘urafā’* (pl. of *‘arīf*) are in the Fire (as a warning to anyone

servants and domestic animals, animals, plants and minerals – [how to associate with them] in [the fixity of] essential nature and in [the changing nature of] contingency, and in terms of possessions, if he is someone who owns things.⁸ He takes care of all that we have mentioned with the protective care of the Real Companion and Owner, so that he does not exercise the virtues except under the direction of his Master. When he is like this, he is spoken of like His Messenger was spoken of: *Indeed you are according to a magnificent character* (Q 68:4). ‘A’ishah said: ‘His character was the Quran’, praising what God praises and censuring what God finds blameworthy, with a true tongue, *in a seat of truthfulness, in the presence of an Omnipotent King* (Q 54:55). Since his ancestry is good, his virtues embrace the world and his sweet company spreads to the furthest horizons, then it is worthy that the Muhammadian Friendship be sealed by the one who possesses this quality. As He says: *Indeed you are according to a magnificent character*.

May God make us one of those for whom He clears the path of His guidance and to whom He gives success in walking upon it and acting as a guide.

translated by Stephen Hirtenstein and Rahim Hassan

who nominates himself as a leader)... When Ibn ‘Abbās was asked what is the meaning of “the people of Quran are the ‘*urafā*’ of the people of Paradise?”, he replied: “they are the chiefs of the people of Paradise”. Note that both terms have spiritual overtones here: the *khalīfa* of God, who is divinely appointed over all, and the one who knows God (‘*arīf*’ = ‘*ārif*’).⁷ This responsibility for those close to you and in your charge is in sharp contrast to the people mentioned in the Quran, who are trying only to look after themselves: ‘when the Crack of Doom comes, on the day when a man will flee from his brother, and from his mother and father, and from his wife and his children...’ (Q 80:33–36).

⁸ The essential nature (*dhāt*) corresponds to the *khalīfa*; the changing nature (‘*arād*’) corresponds to the ‘*arīf*’, who is appointed and can be dismissed; possessions (*milk*) refers to all the outer aspects, non-essential, which a person may or may not possess.