

Qurṭubī. *Tafsīr*.  
 Qushayrī. *Tafsīr*.  
 Rāghīb. *Mufradāt*.  
 Rāzī. *Tafsīr*.  
 Suyūṭī. *Itqān*.  
 Ṭabarī. *Tafsīr*.  
 Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*.  
 Thaʿlabī. *Kashf*.  
 Tirmidhī. *Sunan*.  
 Zajjāj. *Maʿānī*.  
 Zamakhsharī. *Kashshāf*.

**See also:** ABLUTION; ĀDAM, UPON HIM PEACE; ANIMALS;  
 CHILDREN OF ISRĀʿĪL; CREATION; FIRʿAWN; SPIRIT OF  
 HOLINESS; HUMANS; ʿĪSĀ, UPON HIM PEACE; JIBRĪL;  
 LŪṬ, UPON HIM PEACE; MAKKA; MIRACLES; PEOPLE OF  
 THE ELEPHANT; PHARAOH; SATAN.

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## CLIENT(S) AND PATRON(S)

MAWLĀ (MAWĀLĪ), WALĪ (AWLIYĀ<sup>3</sup>), WĀLĪ

This article comprises the following sections: (i) Definitions and usage; (ii) Synonymy, antonymy and homonymy in *walī*, *mawlā* and *wālī*; (iii) *Walī*, *Mawlā* and *Wālī* as divine names; (iv) The *walāya*, *wilāya*, and *awliyā<sup>2</sup>* of Allah; (v) Pre-Islamic clientship and the abrogation of inheritance for non-relatives; (vi) Manumission, contract and conversion as causing non-blood-related *walā<sup>2</sup>*; (vii) The *mawālī* in later times and in End times; (viii) Bibliography.

### Definitions and usage

Clientship and patronage (*walā<sup>2</sup>*, *walāya*, *wilāya*) concern the rights that pertain to (i) manumission (see FREEDOM AND EMANCIPATION) and inheritance (*q.v.*) in this world, particularly in the absence of blood-related heirs, and (ii) the ramifications of friendship (*q.v.*), especially friendship with Allah, in this world and the next. They are the two contrasting denotations in more than 100 of the 233 Qurʾānic occurrences of the cognates of the root *w-l-y*, infinitive noun *waly*, verb *waliya*, “to be near” (Jawharī, 6:2528; Ibn Fāris, *sub w-l-y*), “both spatially (*bil-makān*) and by rank (*bil-makāna*)” (Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Amad*, 2:148-149, *sub walī*). These cognates are:

- the noun *walī* (pl. *awliyā<sup>3</sup>*) (86 times);
- the noun *mawlā* (pl. *mawālī*) (21 times), both *walī* and *mawlā* meaning “strong helper(s), patron(s),

ally/ies” among other meanings including, most notably, that of “inheritors” as in Q 33:5 (see next paragraph) and the verse *and for all [wealth] We have appointed mawālī—of what parents, near relatives, and those with whom your right hands have pledged an alliance leave—so give them their due share...* (Q 4:33);

- the noun *wālī/in* (pl. *wulāt* not in the Qurʾān) (Q 13:11), “benevolent caretaker” (Zajjāj, *Asmā<sup>2</sup>*, p. 61);
- and the verbs *wallā*, *ywallī* (Form II) in the transitive sense of “give as patron” (Q 4:115; 6:129) and *tawallā* (Form V) in the reflexive sense of “undertake” (Q 24:11), “follow” (Q 22:4), “take as patron/ally” (Q 5:51, 56, 80; 9:23; 16:100; 22:4; 58:14; 60:9 x2, 13), and “take as client” (Q 7:196). All of the latter twelve instances convey a sense of clientship, as do *mawlā* and its plural *mawālī* in the verses *the Day when no mawlā shall avail his mawlā at all, nor shall they be helped* (Q 44:41) and *...Proclaim their real parentage... and if you know not their fathers, then they are your brethren in the faith and your mawālī...* (Q 33:5) respectively. (For the importance of the latter verse in abolishing pre-Islamic customs in adoptive fosterage, see CHILDREN.)

### Synonymy, antonymy and homonymy in *walī*, *mawlā* and *wālī*

The three nouns *walī*, *mawlā* and *wālī* are all synonyms since “*walī* and *mawlā* in the language of the Arabs are one and the same” (Farrā<sup>2</sup>; Ṭabarī, *sub* Q 19:5), while “a *wālī* is one who takes care of a person’s concerns, like a *walī*, both being derived from *wilāya* in the way ‘*alīm* and ‘*alīm* are both from ‘*ilm*” (Ibn ‘Aṭīyya, *sub* Q 13:11). *Mawlā* is glossed as “both manumitter and manumitted, companion and ally, agnate (*ibn ‘amm*), supporter, and neighbor; all these connotations stem from *al-waly*, which means closeness (*al-qurb*); and anyone who undertakes (*waliya*) someone else’s affair is his *walī*” (Ibn Fāris, *sub w-l-y*).

*Walī* and *mawlā* are also auto-antonyms (*aḍḍād*), meaning that they are able to signify either one thing or its opposite: “*Mawlā* is one of the auto-antonyms: it can mean a benefactor who frees from slavery (*al-mun‘im al-mu‘tiq*), as well as a beneficiary who is freed (*al-mun‘am ‘alayh al-mu‘taq*)” (Ibn al-Anbārī, *Aḍḍād*, p. 46); “*walī* and *mawlā* are both used for help and support, whether in the sense of agent or of recipient” (Rāghīb, *sub w-l-y*); “a *walī* is one who undertakes help and support, or who disposes of affairs... and he is one who is deserving of the help he receives in his