

1. The House of the Prophet Muhammad

All Muslims glorify the Members of the House of the Holy Prophet Muhammad who are called Aal Muhammad or Ahlul Bayt Muhammad. This attitude is in accord with the instructions of the Holy Prophet who commanded Muslims to pray simultaneously for the members of his House whenever they pray for him. By so commanding them he actually required the Muslims to reserve a place for them next to his. The Holy Qur'an made it mandatory to offer prayers for Muhammad and to greet him:

"Certainly God and His Angels honor the Prophet (Muhammad) O believers pray (God to honor) him and greet him repeatedly." The Holy Qur'an Chapter 33 Verse 57.

Many companions asked the Prophet to teach them how to comply with this command. Many highly respected hadith recorders (including Al-Bukhari and Muslim) reported in their "Sahihs" (authenticities) that Kaab Ibn Ujrah stated that the Prophet said:

"Say: God bestow honor on Muhammad and the members of the House of Muhammad as Thou bestowed honor on the members of the House of Abraham Thou Art praised and Glorious. God bless Muhammad and the members of the House of Muhammad as Thou had blessed the members of the House of Abraham. Certainly Thou Art Praised and Glorious."[1](#)

When instructing his followers on a religious matter the Messenger of God did not speak out of his human desire.

The Qur'an testifies that he only said what was revealed to him.:

"Nor does he (Muhammad) say (aught about religion) of (his own) desire. It is not but a revelation sent to him." The Holy Quran, Chapter 53, verse 4-5.

Is the Honor Due to the relationship?

It may appear that inclusion of the members of the House of Muhammad in prayers for him is due to their blood-relationship. If so it would not be in accord with the spirit of the Islamic teachings. To bestow

on them such a unique honor because of their relationship to Muhammad is to advocate a family supremacy and is in conflict with the following principles:

1. All people in the eyes of God are equal for the Holy Qur'an declared:

"Surely the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most righteous of you."

The Holy Qur'an, Chapter 49 verse 13.

2. God does not penalize or reward a servant of His for the sins or good deeds of his parents or his close or distant relatives. From the Holy Qur'an:

"And beware a day on which no parent avails his child; nor will a child avail his parent." The Qur'an Chapter 31 verse 33.

3. God does not penalize nor reward a human being for what is beyond his ability and without his choice.

Being related or unrelated to the Prophet is not a matter of personal choice. None of us chose before our birth to be related or unrelated to a particular family nationality or race.

Therefore it would be very difficult for Muslims to believe that they should include Muhammad's relatives in their prayers simply because they are his relatives.

It Is Due to Their Merits Not Their Inheritance

To dispel this apparent conflict it is important to know that the word "Aal Muhammad" which is repeatedly mentioned in the daily prayers does not include all his relatives.

Only a very small number of them are included. Had they all been included it would be a clannish or a tribal discrimination because many of them did not walk in the path of Muhammad and to place them above others is to advocate a clannish supremacy.

Kinship to the Prophet Muhammad does not mean acceptance by God; nor does it secure for his relatives a place in Paradise or insure them against Divine punishment. God according to Islamic teachings has created Paradise for whoever obeys Him and the place of punishment for whoever disobeys Him regardless of family affiliation nationality or race. The Holy Qur'an even contains a chapter defaming Abu Lahab who was an uncle of the Prophet Muhammad.

"Perish the two hands of the Father of Flame and perished he. His wealth and whatever he gained did not avail him.... " The Holy Qur'an Sura Lahab Chapter 111.

The truth is that the word Aal Muhammad means only the "chosen" relatives of Muhammad. These chosen individuals are not chosen nor honored because of their relationship to Muhammad but because of their virtues. They lived the true Islamic life followed the instructions of the Holy Qur'an and the

Messenger and never parted with them in word or deed.

When God informs us in His Book that the noblest among His human creatures are the most righteous and His Messenger commands us to honor the members of his house when we honor him we infer that they are the most righteous after the Prophet.

Had they not been so they would not deserve such a unique honor and the Prophet would not have instructed us to honor them whenever we honor his name. To do otherwise would not be in accord with the Holy Qur'an. Thus by commanding us to pray for them whenever we pray for him the Prophet was actually informing us of their high merit being the most obedient to God and His Messenger.

The Record Attests to their merit

All Muslims agree that 'Ali the Prophet's cousin whom the Prophet "brothered" and his wife Fatimah (the Lady of Light) the dearest child of the Messenger and their two children Al-Hassan and Al-Hussein are from the chosen members of the House of Muhammad and that they are included in our prayers for him. The high qualifications of the chosen relatives of Muhammad are the main reason for the very unique honor bestowed upon them.

Imam 'Ali stood above all others after the Prophet. He was the strongest supporter of the Messenger of God. He never hesitated to give his life for the promotion of Islam.

The readers of history can easily know that Imam 'Ali was the top defender of Islam and the most adherent to its rules.

Imam 'Ali's attitude towards personal power and prestige was unique. Whenever he had to choose between adherence to his ideals and the pleasures of the earthly life he unhesitatingly chose the former. History testifies that he preferred to lose the leadership of the Muslim World rather than to accept a condition in which he did not believe.

He was offered this leadership contingent on his pledge to follow the Book of God the instructions of the Messenger and the traditions of the first two Caliphs in the absence of the Quranic and the Messenger's instructions. He replied:

"(I shall follow the Book of God and the instructions of His Messenger; and in the absence of specific teachings of the two sources) I shall endeavor to the best of my knowledge and ability."2

His knowledge was amazing in its depth and extensiveness.

His sermons lectures and the words contained in Nahjul-Balaghah (Path of Eloquence) testify to the authenticity of the reported statement of the Messenger:

"I am the city of knowledge and 'Ali is its gate; so whoever wants to enter the city should come through

the gate."[3](#)

The record of the other three distinguished members of the House of Muhammad Fatimah and her two children Al- Hassan and Al-Hussein shows that they were the most sincere servants of Islam.

The authentic hadiths spoke of their distinctions and qualifications as permanent allies of justice and truth. Zayd Ibn Arqam reported that the Messenger of God said to 'Ali Fatimah Al-Hassan and Al-Hussein:

"I am at peace with whomever you are at peace; and I am at war with whomever you are at war."[4](#)

Abu Huraira reported that the Messenger of God said:

"Whoever loves Al-Hassan and Al-Hussein loves me; and whoever hates them hates me."[5](#)

Hubshi Ibn Janadah said that he heard the Messenger saying:

"'Ali is from me and I am from 'Ali and no one represents me but 'Ali."[6](#)

The Messenger did not intend to distinguish 'Ali simply because he was related to him. Al-Abbas (his uncle) and the rest of the Hashimites including Jaafar (the brother of 'Ali) are all related to the Messenger. All of them would have been qualified to represent him. But he said "No one represents me but 'Ali".

At one time Muawiya was criticizing 'Ali in the presence of Saad Ibn Abu Waqass. Saad said to him: "I heard the Messenger of God saying to 'Ali: 'You are to me like Aaron to Moses. But there shall be no Prophet (of God) after me.' "[7](#)

Thus the Messenger gave 'Ali a position next to his own for the position of Aaron was next to that of Moses.

Al-Bukhari recorded in his Sahih that the Messenger said: "Fatimah is the leader of the women of Paradise."[8](#)

No one enters Paradise but through righteousness and whoever enters Paradise is noble in the sight of God. If Fatimah is the leader of the women of Paradise she must be the most righteous and the noblest woman in God's view.

Al-Hakim recorded in his Mustadrak that Abu Dharr (a famous companion of Muhammad whose truthfulness is known to the Muslims) said that the Messenger said: "The example of the members of my House is like that of Noah's ark. Whoever embarked on it was safe and whoever failed to embark was drowned.... "[9](#)

The Messenger of God commanded the Muslims to follow his chosen relatives. Therefore the relatives of

Muhammad are considered to be the party of truth distinguished because of their merit and work as they rank among the most righteous servants of God.

Why were they so meritorious?

Why did the members of the House of Muhammad surpass other Arabs or non-Arabs in righteousness?

Precedents in History

To understand the reason we ought to remember that what took place in the House of Muhammad was not unprecedented in the history of Prophethood. There are many similar precedents. The Almighty God made Aaron a partner to his brother Moses in his heavenly mission. He did not bestow this honor on any other person from the Israelites. This was due to the high qualification of Aaron and in response to the prayer of Moses as mentioned in the Holy Qur'an:

"He (Moses) said: My Lord Open my mind and loosen a knot from my tongue; that they may understand my word. Appoint for me a minister from my folk Aaron my brother. Confirm my strength by him and let him share my task..." Holy Qur'an Chapter 20 verses 25-32.

The Prophet Abraham prayed to the Lord to make some of his offsprings imams of the people. God responded to his prayer and promised to make imams from his good offsprings without allowing any of their wrong doers reach that high rank. From the Holy Qur'an:

"And We gave (Abraham) Isaac and Jacob and We made recipients of Prophethood and revelation from among his progeny and We granted him his reward in this life and he was in the Hereafter of the company of the righteous." The Holy Qur'an Chapter 29 verse 27.

God also has chosen along with the relatives of Abraham the relatives of Imran and preferred them above others.

"God chose Adam and Noah the family of Abraham and the family of Imran above all people. Offsprings related to each other and God hears and knows all things." The Qur'an Chapter 3 verses 33 and 34.

Zakaria prayed to the Almighty to grant him a righteous child. God answered his prayer and the angels gave him good tidings:

"There did Zakaria pray to his Lord saying: O my Lord grant unto me from Thee a progeny that is pure; for Thou Art He that hears prayer."

"While he was standing in prayer in chamber the angels called unto him: God doth give thee glad tidings of Yahya (John) witnessing the truth of a word from God and (besides) noble chaste and a Prophet of the (goodly) company of the righteous." The Qur'an Chapter 3 verses 38 and 39.

According to these verses the Prophethood which preceded that of Muhammad took the same course. From among the offspring and kinsmen of these Messengers there were chosen persons who reached the highest degree of piety and therefore deserved to be commissioned by God.

Why Did God Give Those Prophets Such Distinguished Children and Relatives?

The Almighty God created persons among the kinsmen and offspring of these Messengers in response to their prayers or as a reward to them for their endeavors in spreading the Message of God.

Like other prophets Muhammad was given unusual relatives and offspring as a reward for his endeavor in the service of God and in response to his prayers.

He commanded us to say: "God honor Muhammad and the members of his House" and he prayed for the purity of these members on various occasions.

Al-Hakim reported that the Prophet covered 'Ali Fatimah Al-Hassan and Al-Hussein with a garment and prayed saying:

"God these are my family. I ask Thee to honor Mohammad and the family of Muhammad." In response to his prayer the following revelation came: "God wants only to keep abomination away from you and make you members of the family of Muhammad spotless."[10](#)

Thus it was not unusual to have in the kinsmen and offspring of Muhammad distinguished men and women of the highest degree of righteousness. On the contrary if such persons did not exist among the relatives of the Prophet it would have been very unusual.

God honored Abraham Moses Zakaria and other Prophets by creating in their progeny and relatives distinguished persons preferring them above other people. Why should He not honor His final and most important Prophet by creating in his offspring and relatives some people with highest distinction?

The Prophet's Reward

The Holy Qur'an makes it explicitly clear that the love of relatives of Muhammad is an Islamic duty. God commanded Muhammad to ask the Muslims to reward him for his fulfillment of the heavenly mission by loving his close kins.

"That is (the bounty) whereof God gives glad tidings to His servants who believe and do righteous deeds. Say: No reward do I ask of you for this except the love of (my) near kins. And if any one earns good deeds We shall give him an increase of good in respect thereof God is Oft-Forgiving. Most ready to appreciate (service)." *The Holy Qur'an Chapter 42 verse 23.*

God is telling Muhammad to inform all Muslims that the only reward he wants for fulfilling his Heavenly mission is that the Muslims love his relatives.

This is only because those members are the most obedient to God and his most beloved servants among the Muslims.

By commanding His Messenger to do so He actually commanded the Muslims to glorify the chosen relatives of Muhammad place their confidence in them and walk in their path.

In compliance with this heavenly command the Holy Prophet asked all his followers to love them. He stated that he is at peace with whomever they are at peace and that he is at war with whomever they are at war. He considered them to be similar to the ark of Noah. Whoever embarked on it was safe and whoever failed to be on it was drowned.

The House of Muhammad can be a means of unity to the Muslims. This unity can be realized when Muslims take the attitude which God and His Messenger wanted them to take toward these people. It would be erroneous for the Muslims to separate Muhammad from the Members of his House while he himself wanted to be united with them. This is clearly evident by his instruction that his followers couple his name with his chosen relatives whenever they pray for him whether within or outside their daily prayers.

1. Of these hadith-recorders are the following:

- A. Al-Bukhari, "Sahih Al-Bukhari" (Authentic of Al-Bukhari) Part 6 p. 101 (in the Book of the interpretation of the Holy Qur'an)
- B. Muslim Sahih Muslim Part 4 (in the Prayer on the Prophet after the declaration of the Faith p. 136).
- C. Muhammad Ibn Majah Sunan Ibn Majah, Vol. 1, hadith No.904.
- D. Al-Tirmidhi, hadith No. 483, Part No. 1. Other hadiths are reported by Abu-Sa-eed Abu Masud Talhah and Ibn Masud. All Acoord with the above-mentioned hadith of Kaab Ibn Ujrah.

2. Ibn-Athir, Al-Kamil (the complete history Part 3 p. 35.

3. Al-Hakim, Al-Mustadrak Part 3 p.26.

4. Ibn Majah, Sunan Ibn Majah hadith No.145.

5. Ibid. hadith No. 143.

6. Ibid. hadith No. 119.

7. Ibn Majah hadith No.121.

8. Al-Bukhari Sahih Al-Bukhari Part 5 (Chapter of distinction of relatives of the Messenger) p. 25.

9. Al-Hakim Sahih Al-Musradrak Part 3 p.151.

10. Al-Hakim Al-Mustadrak Part 3 p. 148.

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