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9. Finding The True Mahdi: He Is A Sinless Fatimid Imam

It is without question that the Mahdi, 'alaihi al-salam, is from the House of Muhammad, sallallahu 'alaihi wa alihi. Imam Ibn Majah (d. 273 H) records:

حدثنا عثمان بن أبي شيبة ثنا أبو داود الحفري ثنا ياسين عن إبراهيم ابن محمد بن الحنفية، عن أبيه، عن علي، قال: "قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم"المهدى منا، أهل البيت، يصلحه الله في ليلة

'Uthman b. Abi Shaybah – Abu Dawud al-Hafari – Yasin – Ibrahim b. Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyyah – his father – 'Ali:

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said: "The Mahdi is from us, the Ahl al-Bayt. Allah will make him fit within a night." 1

Commenting on this *riwayat*, 'Allamah al-Albani (d. 1420 H) declares:

صحيح

Sahih2

Obviously, the phrase "Ahl al-Bayt" in the *hadith* is a reference to that of the Prophet himself. Imam Abu Dawud (d. 275 H) also documents a witness, in this report about the Mahdi:

حدثنا عثمان بن أبي شيبة ثنا الفضل بن دكين ثنا فطر عن القاسم بن أبي بزة عن أبي الطفيل عن علي رضي الله تعالى عنه عن النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم قال "لو لم يبق من الدهر إلا يوم لبعث الله رجلا من أهل بيتي يملؤها عدلا تعالى عنه عن النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم قال "لو لم يبق من الدهر إلا يوم لبعث الله رجلا من أهل بيتي يملؤها عدلا تعالى عنه عن النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم قال "لو لم يبق من الدهر إلا يوم لبعث الله رجلا من أهل بيتي يملؤها عدلا تعالى عنه عن النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم قال "لو لم يبق من الدهر إلا يوم لبعث الله رجلا من أهل بيتي يملؤها عدلا تعالى عنه عن النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم قال "لو لم يبق من الدهر إلا يوم لبعث الله رجلا من أهل بيتي يملؤها عدلا تعالى عنه عن النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم قال "لو لم يبق من الدهر إلا يوم لبعث الله ولم يبتي يملؤها عدلا تعالى عنه عن النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم قال "لو لم يبق من الدهر إلا يوم لبعث الله يبتي يملؤها عدلا تعالى عنه عن النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم قال "لو لم يبق من الدهر إلا يوم لبعث الله يبتي يملؤها عدلا تعالى عنه عن النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم قال "لو لم يبق من الدهر إلا يوم لبعث الله يبتي يملؤها عدلا تعالى عنه عن النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم قال "لو لم يبق من الدهر إلا يوم لبعث الله عليه و سلم قال "لو لم يبق الله عليه الله عليه الله عليه عنه عنه الله عليه و سلم قال "لو لم يبق الله عليه عل

'Uthman b. Abi Shaybah – al-Fadhl b. Dukayn – Fir – al-Qasim b. Abi Barzah – Abu al-Tufayl – 'Ali, may Allah the Most High be pleased with him – the Prophet, peace be upon him:

"Even if there remains only one more day left before the end of Time, **Allah will surely SEND a man** from MY AHL AL-BAYT. He will fill it with justice just as it had been filled with injustice."3

'Allamah al-Albani says:

صحيح

Sahih4

Dr. al-Bastawi, commenting upon the same hadith, also states:

إسناده صحيح.

Its chain is sahih.5

Therefore, the Mahdi's membership of the Ahl al-Bayt of the Messenger is undisputable. As such, we can only look for him within the Prophetic Family of our *Ummah*, and nowhere else. With that, one can confidently declare that whosoever is not from the House of Muhammad is automatically disqualified from being the Awaited Imam.

Moreover, the Imam – being from the Ahl al–Bayt – is apparently one of those intended in this noble *ayah*:

Allah intends but only to keep impurity away from you, O Ahl al-Bayt, and to purify you absolutely.6

The above revelation – better known as the "Verse of Purification" – is part of the thirty–third *ayah* of *Surah al–Ahzab*. However, its history must be understood, in order to truly understand its meaning. That statement was revealed as an independent verse, with no connection whatsoever to the surrounding verses and sentences. This fact is extremely crucial, since the mainstream Sunni *tafsir* of it is based entirely upon reading the neighbouring verses into it? This approach, however, is both very incorrect and very misleading, in view of its history. Unfortunately, this failure to take the history of the *ayah* into consideration in its interpretation has led to unnecessary tensions and divisions within our blessed *Ummah*.

Imam al-Tirmidhi (d. 279 H) has documented how the verse descended:

حدثنا قتيبة حدثنا محمد بن سليمان بن الأصبهاني عن يحيى بن عبيد عن عطاء بن أبي رباح عن عمر بن أبي سلمة ربيب النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم قال لما نزلت هذه الآية على النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم { إنما يريد الله ليذهب عنكم الرجس أهل البيت ويطهركم تطهيرا } في بيت أم سلمة فدعا فاطمة و حسنا و حسينا فجللهم بكساء و علي خلف ظهره فجللهم بكساء ثم قال اللهم هؤلاء أهل بيتي فأذهب عنهم الرجس وطهرهم تطهيرا قالت أم سلمة وأنا معهم يا نبى الله ؟ قال أنت على مكانك وأنت على خير

Qutaybah – Muhammad b. Sulayman b. al-Asbahani – Yahya b. 'Ubayd – 'Asa b. Abi Rabah – 'Umar b. Abi Salamah, the dependent of the Prophet, peace be upon him:

When THIS VERSE {Allah intends but only to keep impurity away all from you, O Ahl al-Bayt, and to purify you absolutely} was revealed upon the Prophet, peace be upon him, in the house of Umm Salamah, he called Falimah, Hasan and Husayn and spread a cloak over them while 'Ali was behind him. Then, he covered them with a cloak. Then, he said, "O Allah! These are my Ahl al-Bayt. So, keep impurity away from them and purify them absolutely". Umm Salamah said, "Am I with them, O Prophet of Allah?" He replied, "You are upon your place and you are upon a good thing."8

'Allamah al-Albani comments:

صحيح

Sahih9

Imam al-Hakim (d. 403 H) also records:

حدثنا أبو بكر أحمد بن سلمان الفقيه وأبو العباس محمد بن يعقوب قالا : ثنا الحسن بن مكرم البزار ثنا عثمان بن عمر ثنا عبد الرحمن بن عبد الله بن دنيار عن شريك بن أبي نمر عن عطاء بن يسار عن أم سلمة قالت : في بيتي نزلت { إنما يريد الله ليذهب عنكم الرجس أهل البيت } قالت فأرسل رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم إلى علي وفاطمة والحسن والحسين فقال : هؤلاء أهل بيتي

Abu Bakr Ahmad b. Salman al-Faqih and Abu al-'Abbas Muhammad b. Ya'qub – al-Hasan b. Mukram al-Bazzar – 'Uthman b. 'Umar – 'Abd al-Rahman b. 'Abd Allah b. Dinar – Sharik b. Abi Nimr – 'A\overland a b. Yasar – Umm Salamah:

In my house, it was revealed {Allah intends but only to keep impurity away all from you, O Ahl al-Bayt, and to purify you absolutely}. Then, the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, sent for 'Ali, Fasimah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn and said: "O Allah! These are my Ahl al-Bayt." 10

Al-Hakim says:

This hadith is sahih upon the standard of al-Bukhari. 11

Imam al-Dhahabi (d. 748 H) agrees with him:

Upon the standard of al-Bukhari. 12

It is clear that the statement was revealed as an independent "verse" in the house of Umm Salamah. We also see that the "Ahl al-Bayt" in it are only those of Muhammad, according to his own *tafsir*. The Prophet equally went ahead to physically identify his "Ahl al-Bayt" as 'Ali, Fa®imah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn, 'alaihim al-salam. Our righteous mother, Umm Salamah, radhiyallahu 'anha, understood from his declaration "O Allah! These are my Ahl al-Bayt" that he was excluding everyone else alive. 'Ali, Fa®imah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn alone were being identified as the "Ahl al-Bayt" in the *ayah*. So, she asked, to clarify:

Am I with them, O Prophet of Allah?

In the literal sense, the word "Ahl al-Bayt" customarily includes the wives of the master of the house. This obviously was Umm Salamah's understanding too, until when she saw that the Messenger of Allah was giving the term – as used in the verse – a special, *restricted* meaning. Her blessed husband gave her a beautiful reply:

You are upon your place and you are upon a good thing.

She was right there and then standing *upon* her own place *outside the cloak*, and her place too was good. However, she did not belong under the cloak with those covered with it. Their place was under the cloak of the Messenger, and her place was outside of it. So, she was not with them, and they were the Ahl al-Bayt13.

Even after the descent of the *ayah* in the room of our blessed mother, Umm Salamah, the Prophet, on some other occasions, made sure to publicly display that the phrase "O Ahl al–Bayt" in it referred to none but 'Ali, his wife and his sons. Imam Muslim (d. 261 H) has documented one of those instances:

حدثنا أبو بكر بن أبي شيبة ومحمد بن عبدالله بن نمير (واللفظ لأبي بكر) قالا حدثنا محمد بن بشر عن زكرياء عن مصعب بن شيبة عن صفية بنت شيبة قالت قالت عائشة

خرج النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم غداة وعليه مرط مرحل من شعر أسود فجاء الحسن بن علي فأدخله ثم جاء الحسين فدخل معه ثم جاءت فاطمة فأدخلها ثم جاء علي فأدخله ثم قال إنما يريد الله ليذهب عنكم الرجس أهل [البيت ويطهركم تطهيرا [33/الأحزاب/33]

Abu Bakr b. Abi Shaybah and Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah b. Numayr – Muhammad b. Bishr – Zakariya – Mu'sab b. Shaybah – Safiyyah bint Shaybah – 'Aishah:

The Prophet, peace be upon him, **went outside one morning** wearing a striped cloak, made from the black (camel's) hair. Then, **al-Hasan b**. '**Ali** came, and he (the Prophet) entered him (under the cloak). Then, **al-Husayn** came, and he (the Prophet) entered him (i.e. al-Husayn) with him (i.e. al-Hasan). Then, **Fa®imah** came and he entered her; then, '**Ali** came and he entered him. Then he said, "Allah intends but only to keep impurity away all from you, **O Ahl al-Bayt**, and to purify you absolutely." [*Al-Ahzab* 33:33] 14

So, the matter is settled. Here is the Prophet himself addressing 'Ali, his wife and his sons with the verse – and with the phrase "O Ahl al–Bayt" in the verse. This shows that it was revealed for them, and that they were the ones meant by the address "O Ahl al–Bayt" from Allah, the Lord of the Mighty Throne.

Meanwhile, Prof. Ibn Yasin has for us the *fahm* (understanding) of one of the "righteous" *Salaf* concerning the purpose of this blessed verse:

أخرج الطبري بسنده الحسن عن قتادة قوله: (إنما يريد الله ليذهب عنكم الرجس أهل البيت ويطهركم تطهيرا) فهم أخرج الطبري بسنده الحسن عن قتادة قوله: (إنما يريد الله لينت طهرهم الله من السوء، وخصهم لرحمة منه

Al-Tabari recorded with **his** *hasan* **chain** from Qatadah, concerning His Statement (Allah intends but only to keep impurity away all from you, O Ahl al-Bayt, and to purify you absolutely): **They are an Ahl al-Bayt**. **ALLAH PURIFIED THEM FROM EVIL, and He gave them a special mercy from Himself**."15

As such, Allah purified 'Ali, Fa®imah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn *absolutely* from impurity, from evil. So, they were absolutely pure. Of course, the master of the *Bayt* (the House) in the *ayah* was the Prophet himself. Therefore, he was naturally covered by it. That "Ahl al-Bayt" had a merit that Allah never gave to any other among His creatures: absolute purity from anything impure or anything evil. He never, and has never, qualified anyone else – apart from the Ahl al-Bayt of Muhammad – with absolute purity. They are the only absolutely pure creatures of the Lord of the worlds.

But then, the Messenger – in some other *ahadith* of his – included some other persons under the verse.

Those were not alive during his lifetime. So, it was impossible for him to have entered them too under his cloak. However, he indicated in his statements that the verse was revealed about them too. Therefore, had they been alive, he would have joined them with the other four under the cloak. One of such *ahadith* is this (which we quoted above):

The Mahdi is from us, the Ahl al-Bayt.

Being one of *them* – the Ahl al–Bayt – he naturally is also *absolutely* pure from all impurities and evil, like the other members. What further strengthens this submission, is this *hadith* of Imam al–Tabarani (d. 360 H):

حدثنا علي بن عبد العزيز ثنا عمرو بن عون الواسطي ثنا خالد بن عبد الله عن الحسن بن عبيد الله عن أبي الضحى عن زيد بن أرقم قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم : إني تارك فيكم الثقلين كتاب الله وعترتي أهل بيتي و يرد على الحوض

'Ali b. 'Abd al-'Aziz – 'Amr b. 'Awn al-Wasi⊡i – Khalid b. 'Abd Allah – al-Hasan b. 'Ubayd Allah – Abu al-Dhuha – Zayd b. Argam:

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said: "I am leaving behind over you the Two Weighty Things (*al-thaqalayn*): the Book of Allah and my offspring, my Ahl al-Bayt. **Verily, both shall** *never* **separate from each other until they meet me at the Lake-Fount**." 16

Shaykh al-Arnau® says about this *hadith*:

It is sahih 17

Of course, whosoever *never* separates from the Qur'an for even a single millisecond in any situation or circumstance – in his thoughts, words, feelings and actions – is certainly an *absolutely* pure creature of Allah. In fact, purity means adherence to the Qur'an; and, the purer we are, the more inseparable we become to the Book of our Lord. Therefore, from the last part of the *hadith* above, we know that the "Ahl al–Bayt" mentioned in it are equally included in the Verse of Purification. Interestingly, these "Ahl al–Bayt" are only from the "offspring" of Muhammad, and they exist continuously on the earth till *al–Qiyamah*.

The Mahdi, without any doubt, is from these "pure" offspring of the Prophet. Imam Abu Dawud

documents the confirmation:

حدثنا أحمد بن إبراهيم ثنا عبد الله بن جعفر الرقي ثنا أبو المليح الحسن بن عمر عن زياد بن بيان عن علي بن نفيل عن سعيد بن المسيب عن أم سلمة قالت سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم يقول " المهدي من عترتي من " ولد فاطمة

Ahmad b. Ibrahim – 'Abd Allah b. Ja'far al-Raqqi – Abu al-Mulayh al-Hasan b. 'Umar – Ziyad b. Bayan – 'Ali b. Nufayl – Sa'id b. al-Musayyab – Umm Salamah:

I heard the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, saying: "The Mahdi is from my offspring, from the descendants of Fa®imah." 18

Al-Albani declares:

صحيح

Sahih 19

Obviously, our Imam, al-Mahdi, is a Fa®imid too – from the descendants of our mistress, Fa®imah, 'alaiha al-salam. This is equally crucial in determining the true Mahdi from the huge list of claimants and sponsored candidates. Whoever is not a Fa®imid is not the Mahdi, even if he claims the title for himself.

We must note too that Imam al-Mahdi is – without question – a *khalifah* from the offspring, the Ahl al-Bayt of our Prophet. Therefore, this *hadith* copied by 'Allamah al-Albani definitely covers him:

إني تارك فيكم خليفتين: كتاب الله حبل ممدود ما بين السماء والأرض وعترتي أهل بيتي وإنهما لن يتفرقا حتى يردا على الحوض

I am leaving behind over you two *khalifahs*: the Book of Allah – a rope stretching between the heaven and the earth – and my offspring, my Ahl al-Bayt. Verily, both shall *never* separate from each other until they meet me at the Lake-Font.20

Then, the 'Allamah comments:

صحيح

Sahih21

This then strengthens the conviction that the Mahdi is absolutely pure too, like Muhammad, 'Ali,

Fasimah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn. He is included in the divine purification mentioned in the Verse of Purification; and he is from the pure offspring who never separate from the Book of Allah in absolutely any instance, circumstance, situation or millisecond – in their thoughts, feelings, deeds and words. Anyone who cannot meet all these criteria is not the Awaited Mahdi.

- 1. Ibn Majah Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad b. Yazid al-Qazwini, Sunan (Dar al-Fikr) [annotator: Muhammad Fuad 'Abd al-Baqi], vol. 2, p. 1367, # 4085
- 2. Abu 'Abd al-Rahman Muhammad Nasir al-Din b. al-Hajj Nuh b. Tajati b. Adam al-Ashqudri al-Albani, Sahih al-Jami' al-Saghir wa Ziyadatuhu (al-Maktab al-Islami), vol. 2, p. 1140, # 6735
- 3. Abu Dawud Sulayman b. al-Ash'ath al-Sijistani al-Azdi, Sunan (Dar al-Fikr) [annotator: Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani], vol. 2, p. 509, # 4283
- 4. Ibid
- 5. Dr. 'Abd al-'Alim 'Abd al-'Azim al-Bastawi, al-Mahdi al-Muntazar fi Dhaw-i al-Ahadith wa al-Athar al-Sahihah wa Aqwal al-'Ulama wa Ara al-Firaq al-Mukhtalifah (Beirut: Dar Ibn Hazm; 1st edition, 1420 H), p. 238
- 6. Qur'an 33:33
- 7. For the purpose of qirat (recitation), this independent verse is recited together with the surrounding sentences and verses. This obviously was the arrangement made by the Prophet for its recitation. Its case is similar to that of the Verse of Perfection, which though revealed independently according to the sahih Sunni ahadith is now inserted and recited within the middle of another in Qur'an 5:3. However, in both cases, it is their history that determines their meaning, and not their surroundings.
- 8. Abu 'Isa Muhammad b. 'Isa al-Sulami al-Tirmidhi, al-Jami' al-Sahih Sunan al-Tirmidhi (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi) [annotator: Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani], vol. 5, p. 351, # 3205
- 9. Ibid
- 10. Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah al-Hakim al-Naysaburi, al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Sahihayn (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1411 H) [annotator: Mustafa 'Abd al-Qadir 'A🗈a], vol. 3, p. 158, # 4705
- **11.** Ibid
- **12.** Ibid
- 13. There is no doubt that the wives of the Prophet were part of his "Ahl al-Bayt" in the literal sense; and they were part of his "Ahl al-Bayt" in several cases. The issue here is whether the term "Ahl al-Bayt" has been used in its literal sense in the ayah, or in a special, restricted sense. Various terms have been used with both their literal and special, restricted meanings in the Qur'an, e.g. salat, imam, rasul, zakat, hajj and so on. Without doubt, judging from the ahadith, the Messenger understood "Ahl al-Bayt" in the verse to have had a special, restricted meaning, rather than its customary connotations. This was why he was limiting its membership to 'Ali, his wife and their two sons only.
- 14. Abu al-Husayn Muslim b. al-Hajjaj al-Qushayri al-Naysaburi, Sahih Muslim (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi) [annotator: Muhammad Fuad 'Abd al-Baqi], vol. 4, p. 1883, # 2424 (61)
- 15. Prof. Dr. Hikmat b. Bashir b. Yasin, Mawsu'at al-Sahih al-Masbur min al-Tafsir bi al-Mathur (Madinah: Dar al-Mathar li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi' wa al-Taba'at; 1st edition, 1420 H), vol. 4, p. 126
- 16. Abu al-Qasim Sulayman b. Ahmad b. Ayub al-Tabarani, Mu'jam al-Kabir (Mosul: Maktabah al-'Ulum wa al-Hukm; 2nd edition, 1404 H) [annotator: Hamadi b. 'Abd al-Majid al-Salafi], vol. 5, p. 169, # 4980
- 17. Muhammad b. Ibrahim al-Wazir al-Yamani, al-'Awasim wa al-Qawasim fi al-Dhabb 'an Sunnah Abi al-Qasim (Beirut: Muasassat al-Risalah; 2nd edition, 1416 H) [annotator: Shu'ayb al-Arnau®], vol. 1, p. 178, footnote # 1
- 18. Abu Dawud Sulayman b. al-Ash'ath al-Sijistani al-Azdi, Sunan (Dar al-Fikr) [annotator: Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani], vol. 2, p. 509, # 4284
- 19. Ibid
- 20. Abu 'Abd al-Rahman Muhammad Nasir al-Din b. al-Hajj Nuh b. Tajati b. Adam al-Ashqudri al-Albani, Sahih al-Jami' al-Saghir wa Ziyadatuhu (Al-Maktab al-Islami), vol. 1, p. 482, # 2457
- 21. Ibid

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