

## Lecture 3: Discussion on Ayat al-Tatheer

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

***“Verily, verily Allah intends but to keep off from you (every kind of) uncleanness, O you the people of the House, and purify you (with) a thorough purification.” (33:33)***

The Ahlul Bayt are informed that God wishes to keep all impurities away from them and to purify them in a manner truly deserving of this purification.

The Quranic verse I have selected as my topic today is well known by the name of Ayat al-Tatheer. Our ears are familiar with this ayat (verse) and we recognize not only the text but to a large extent its meaning as well. If our ears are tuned to the words of this verse, then our hearts too recognize the people to whom this verse is addressed.

Anyway, the style of expression adopted here is unique and different from other verses. The first special treatment is that this verse starts with the word **“innama”**(33:33). In Arabic this word is referred to as ‘harf e hisar’, the enclosing or restricting word.

To explain this word I will give you an example. To fend or ward off difficulties or to create favourable conditions some people practice a particular procedure known as ‘chilla’. That is, they rehearse a specific procedure (amal) for forty days and read a particular text. The practitioner (aamil) of this activity, before starting draws a boundary (hisaar) so that this difficult task is protected from the interference of the Shaytan.

The words ‘hisar’ and ‘hisaar’ imply the same thing. Now just as a practitioner draws a boundary first and then commences his practice, God draws a hisaar of “innama” before proceeding with the process of

purification. God Almighty draws this protective boundary.

A regular practitioner draws a hisaar to ensure that those capable of obstructing this procedure are kept out of the area of practice. In the same manner the word “innama” is used by the Almighty to restrict all, except those worthy of absolute purification from the domain of this verse. They are to be restricted and not allowed to pass even close to this territory of piety. The ground of purity is not to be traversed by any, save those whom God selects as the purest of pure.

Thus, the first protective step in this context is the use of the word “innama”. God has used this word for these selected people at other places, too. This is Ayat al-Tatheer and it is adorned by the subject of purification. In this very Quran there is another verse by the name of Ayat al-Wilayat and this verse determines the focal points of Wilayat and identifies the recipients of this honoured title. This title is so sublime that God has not wished to keep Himself aloof from it. In this verse too God has placed the word “*innama*” (5:55) at the beginning.

إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ

**“Verily, your guardian is Allah and His Messenger...” (5:55)**

Only God is your wali and the Prophet is your wali.....

If you use ‘only’ as the translation for “innama” then it implies sufficient or enough; but if you translate with greater clarity in everyday language, such that it is easily understood by all then the translation could be ‘no one else’.

Your Wali is Allah and His Prophet. This is Wilayat. If it was Risalat (Prophethood) than no other name could follow it and also God’s name could not precede it. But this is Wilayat. Before naming the Prophet, God uses His own name and after the Prophet’s name He considers another name worthy of mention. The next part of the verse leads us to this name,

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يَتْلُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ

**“and those who believe and establish prayer and give zakat while they are bowing down (in rukuh)” (5:55)**

Anyway it is not my intention to go into the depth of this verse. I only wish to convey that God considered it necessary to draw the enclosure of “innama”. Similarly, in the narrative of purification, that is, at the highest level of purity, God used the same word “innama” to preside over Ayat al-Tatheer.

Every beginning is somehow linked to its ending and every outcome is connected to its introduction. So, if the beginning of this verse is remarkable due to the usage of the term “*innama*”, then it can be said with authority that its ending is extraordinary, too.

The word selected to conclude this verse is so special that even prophets cannot match its standard or significance. In fact, I would be justified to claim that none of the Books sent by God and even His House cannot come close to this standard. You may perhaps feel that I am making large claims, but let me reassure you that we definitely believe that all the prophets are pious and pure. In fact, if you ask the truth, we are the flag bearers of their genuine and immaculate purity.

Our scholars from the earlier and the later periods have all tried their level best to educate us that prophets do not make mistakes and they do not engage in sinful activity of any kind, major or minor. Even this is not a sufficient statement of their purity. The prophets cannot make mistakes intentionally or unintentionally. Their past is not polluted by sin and their future too cannot be visited by sinful activity. In fact, we believe that a prophet cannot even contemplate doing something wrong.

By the grace of God I have an appreciative audience, so let me just mention something in the passing and move on. The historical minded among you would know that Mamun Rashid was a highly intellectual scholar and a great orator of his time. He would mesmerize even the most gifted of public speakers with his rhetoric and in-depth knowledge of whatever he touched upon. I am briefly referring to an incidence in his period. Mamun Rashid was a scholar with a sophisticated taste. I have deliberately emphasized the word ‘taste’ for in my opinion scholarship without good taste is of no merit. Every field of knowledge requires people of good taste and inclination. So Mamun was an elegant scholar and one of the best of his time.

Now just as a period in time cannot be devoid of learned people, so we believe that every era is blessed with the presence of an Imam. So Mamun was the best scholar of his time and this period also witnessed the presence of an Imam. You have often heard his name, Imam Raza who is even today remembered for his wealth of knowledge. Mamun knew that our knowledge is acquired, whereas the source of the Ahlul Bayt’s knowledge is different. They are gifted from up there while we have acquired it from down here!

There are major differences between the knowledge of prophets and their appointed helpers and that of the worldly scholars. We are those who struggle and labour to acquire knowledge after we are born and we are very well aware of the limitations of our scholarship. To become a scholar on arrival here is one thing and to be born with the gift of scholarship from God is another thing!

As an example consider the conversation of Prophet Isa who as a matter of necessity, spoke from the cradle to uphold his mother’s chastity. The Lord be Praised! The amazing oratory of the infant and the spoken words recorded in verses (30–33) of Surah Maryam (chapter 19) spelt out the absolute and true picture of Prophethood. Let’s go through these verses,

قَالَ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ

**“(Isa) said, Verily, I am servant of Allah” (19:30)**

The first word “**qala**” (said) is what God said. Isa began his sentence with “**Verily, I am servant of Allah**”. Perhaps people who were present and listened, might have thought these words spoken by the newborn were not even required for they did not doubt his status as the servant of Allah. So, if no one differed then where was the need to state this and to say it with emphasis, that certainly “**I am the servant of Allah**”.

Apparently, it seems out of context with the situation or even unnecessary, but God is great! The initial glance of infancy could see and reflect: ‘You are not aware of the conflict that would develop in your outlook. I know now that a time will come when you will not refer to me as the servant of Allah. You will call me the son of Allah. That is your future and I at this stage desire my testimony to be recorded in the past tense with respect to your future. You will make your claim at some later stage but I want to refute these claims today, right now. Definitely, I am the servant of God’.

Using the word “**abdullah**”(19:30) (servant of Allah) in such an emphatic manner suggests that the future labeling as ‘ibnallah’ (son of God) is being negated at the very time of birth. This assertion is possible only on the basis of knowledge.

قَالَ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ إِنِّي أَنْتَى الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلَنِي نَبِيًّا

**“(Isa) said, Verily I am a servant of Allah. He has given me a book and made me a Prophet” (19:30)**

If Isa had said, ‘God will give me a book and He will make me a Prophet’ and if he had used the future tense that would have been perfectly justified. People would have understood, for he was to receive a book and he would be appointed a Prophet. If he had made this announcement from the cradle that he was to receive a book and was to be appointed a Prophet, it would have been just right from our point of view for both were due in the future.

But no, Isa did not say God will give me Prophethood and He will give me a book. Even a beginner learning Arabic knows that the future tense of ‘ata’ is ‘yuta’ and the future tense of ‘jaala’ is ‘yajalo’.

Isa said, “**Ata niyal kitab**” (19:30). God has already given me the book and God has made me a Prophet.

Also this appointment is valid

أَيَّنَ مَا كُنْتُ

**“wherever I may be” (19:31).**

Now this is a strange sentence, **“wherever I may be” (19:31)** and it is not very frequently used. It gives insight into the depth of knowledge of the one in the cradle who knows he has to live in various places. ‘Sometime I will stay on this Earth and sometimes up above in the Heavens. I am blessed if I stay here and will be blessed when I am there.’

The words **“aina ma kuntu” (19:31)** suggest that the mind of the infant knew that he will have to stay in different places at different times. ‘Sometimes I will be here and sometimes there but wherever I may be my glory will not undergo any change. I will be blessed here and I will be blessed there. Subsequently when I return here I will still be blessed! I am blessed wherever I may reside.’ He also mentions that these blessings have already been endowed!

وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيَّ يَوْمَ وُلِدْتُ وَيَوْمَ أَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ أُبْعَثُ حَيًّا

**“And peace be on me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I shall be raised alive” (19:33)**

‘There is peace for me, peace for my faith and peace for my actions. Also there is peace for my personality, for my name and honour and in short for my very existence. The day of my birth is blessed, the day of my death is blessed and so is the day of Banishment (mehshar) when I shall be raised again’.

I am sure my audience has not yet forgotten that Isa spoke from his cradle as an arrangement by God for providing relief to the increasing agitation of Maryam. The entire sketch must be present in your mind. When Isa was born his mother uttered these words, duly reproduced and recorded by the Quran,

يَلَيْسَ لِي مِنَ الشَّيْءِ عِلْمٌ إِذْ فَضَلْتَنِي بِهِ نِسَاءً مِمَّنْ سَاءَ مَا يَكْتُمُونَ

**“Would that I had died before this, and had been a thing forgotten, lost in oblivion”. (19:23)**

This lament suggests that the mother was disturbed that she gave birth to a child and wished she had died a long time ago so no one would remember her. She wished that people would have forgotten who she was (and that she had not lived to see herself giving birth to a child).

The Almighty calmed her ruffled heart. His Mercy was alongside in the earlier decision and it also guided her in this perturbed state. God addressed Maryam,

أَلَّا تَحْزَنِي قَدْ جَعَلَ رَبُّكِ تَحِيَّاتِكِ سَرِيًّا

**“Do not grieve”**

**“Cool (your) eye” (19:24)**

A tremendous word is used here. You have been blessed with a **“quratul ain”** (coolant for the eye). Keep your eyes cool. Anyway it was a way to say don't lose heart, do not be sad, do not be afraid and

فَأَمَّا تَرِينَ مِنْ الْبَشَرِ أَحَدًا

**“if you come across a human being (19:26)”**

Then the following words are implied but not present in the script: if they lodge a complaint, they will definitely object when they see a child in your lap – then at that instance say to them,

إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ صَوْمًا فَلَنْ أُكَلِّمَ الْيَوْمَ إِنْسِيًّا

**“Verily I have vowed a fast to Ar Rahman and I shall not speak to anyone today”. (19:26)**

and point to the child. After that he will handle the rest. So these instructions were given to Maryam. After this when people saw her they remarked,

قَالُوا يَا يَمْرُؤُا لَقَدْ جِئْتِ شَيْئًا فَرِيًّا

**“O Maryam! Indeed you have brought a strange thing”.(19:27)**

أَبُوكَ إِمْرَأٌ سَوَاءٌ وَ مَا كَانَتْ أُمُّكَ بَغِيًّا

**“Your father was not a bad man, nor was your mother an unchaste woman” (19:28)**

‘What have you done’? The people who objected were praising the parents and relatives of Maryam. ‘Your father was not a bad man and your mother was a virtuous lady but you have brought dishonour to them.’

فَأَشَارَتْ إِلَيْهِ

**“Then she pointed towards the child” (19:29)**

I am leading you to the question, why did she point to the child? What did she want Isa to say? Why was it necessary for Isa to speak? What was the need to do so? Which issue was to be addressed? Which particular need demanded this action or intervention?

The issue here was not of Prophethood, nor was there any controversy regarding Isa’s status as a son or a servant. The issue was not pertaining to the Bible (Injeel) or the revelation of any book. There was only one issue at that time. How can a woman who does not have a husband and who has not committed sin give birth to a child? This issue was the reason for the child’s proclamation.

After I have reminded you of the reason for Isa’s discourse, you will be surprised to note that he said everything about himself but he did not utter a single word regarding the issue at hand. Perhaps my observation is to be blamed for not sighting the required words, but I am looking at:

قَالَ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ ؕ آتَنِي الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلَنِي نَبِيًّا

**“Verily I am a servant of Allah. He has given me a book and made me a Prophet.(19:30)**

وَجَعَلَنِي مُبَارَكًا أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُ وَأَوْصَانِي بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ مَا دُمْتُ حَيًّا

**And He has made me blessed wherever I may be, and He has enjoined on me salat and zakat as long as I live.(19:31)**

وَبِرًّا بِوَالِدَتِي وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْنِي جَبَّارًا شَقِيًّا

**And duteous to my mother, and He has not made me insolent, unblessed.”(19:32)**

These were the words. Not a single word was uttered in defense of his mother or her need. So even though Isa spoke, he did not say what he was expected to say with regard to his mother.

The interesting aspect is that not a single word was said in the context of the immediate issue, yet it assuaged the concern of Bani Israel and all criticism was halted. Whatever doubts we have now, that the real issue was not addressed, arise from the fact that we have not witnessed the appointment of one

prophet after another and the sketch of what the parents of a prophet are supposed to be like has faded from our minds.

We have known only one Prophet whose kalima we are supposed to recite and that we do recite, and this Prophet too lived in our distant past. Besides our Prophet was appointed after a gap of centuries from his predecessor. The interim vacant period between Isa and our Prophet was spread over centuries.

Suppose we transport our nation from the present time period to the era of the Prophet. If we make believe that we exist in the times of the Prophet, that we belong to the class that lived during his lifetime, even then we face a situation where we have not seen an influx of prophets. We are not familiar with the circumstances or the environment inhabited by the prophets. On the other hand Bani Israel were visited by prophets day and night (they were famous for their numerical strength). Prophets came to them day and night. They came one after another and in fact many were simultaneously appointed.

Now, since Bani Israel were living in a time period where they interacted frequently with the prophets, they were aware of the lineage of the prophets. They knew that the prophets' parents and ancestors far from being infidels were not even liable to commit a major mistake. They had knowledge of what a prophet's mother should not be, what a prophet's father cannot be and what a grandfather is not. They had all this knowledge.

There is a famous proverb, talk to people according to their level of intelligence. Now if Isa were to address us today, he would have to inform us of his mother's sanctity and how God had ordained and enabled his birth without a father. If he was talking to us he would have to tell us all that, for we unfortunately, are even prepared to label the Prophet's ancestors infidels.

Bani Israel had seen hundreds of prophets. They came to them day and night. They knew what kind of wombs gave birth to prophets and what a prophet's mother was like. Hence, there was no need for Isa to establish his mother's piety. It was sufficient for him to say that God had selected and sent him as a Prophet, and hence his mother was a Prophet's mother. They very well knew what a prophet's mother was like.

I have digressed very far. I was saying that all the prophets are pure and pious. The prophets no doubt occupy an eminent position, but even the angels are pure, every Book from God is pure. All the places and houses used for worship by God's chosen people were clean and pure. Hence, the purity of the Ahlul Bayt was not something new. Pure and pious people from amongst God's creation had existed before. The prophets, the pious leaders, the angels and the House of God designated as Qibla, they are all clean and pure. The Ahlul Bayt are clean and pure too, but purity alone is not an exclusive or a defining characteristic for them.

Now if you are listening carefully then I have to say something here. The word *tatheer* or the word *taharat*, which means clean and pure, has been used in the Quran at several places and for different

people. It is used for the hours (spouses) in heaven. The words used are,

وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُطَهَّرَةٌ \* وَهُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

***“There will be mutahhira spouses for the inmates of heaven” (2:25)***

This word “**mutahhira**” is derived from the word tatheer and God has proclaimed these spouses pure and clean.

An announcement has been made for Prophets Ibrahim and Ismail.

وَعَهَدْنَا إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ أَنْ طَهِّرَا بَيْتِيَ

***“We had made a covenant with Ibrahim and Ismail to keep my house clean and pure”. (2: 125)***

I do not wish to accept a translation that suggests a pledge was undertaken from Prophets Ibrahim and Ismail to cleanse and purify the House of God. We clean or we purify something that is impure and unclean. Prophet Ibrahim and Prophet Ismail constructed the Kaaba, the entire House, with their own hands. Now if that House is not clean and if they could not keep it clean while making it, how are they expected to clean it now and ensure its purity, subsequently?

In my opinion if we were to select Muslim masons and task them to construct a mosque, then even they, while laying each brick, would remember that a house of God was being constructed. The angels that lay the foundations of the House of God would surely avoid unclean water and keep their hands clean. After all no ordinary house is being constructed. The House of God was being constructed!

So, if a reckless human being in the name of God, while laying the foundations of a house dedicated to His name, can ensure cleanliness then if this task is entrusted to learned people, to God fearing pious persons and to highly responsible people, then how clean that mosque is likely to be. If each and every brick is laid by a scholar, a responsible person and a God fearing and pious human being who is well conversant with the requirements of purity, then surely he will ensure high standards of cleanliness.

Leave aside the scholars. If the masons are of the order of Khaleel Allah (Allah’s friend) and Zabeeh Allah (sacrificed in the name of Allah) and if such eminent Prophets are the architects who have constructed His House then how come Kaaba emerged unclean and impure? Who is to be blamed for this? Ibrahim and Ismail? No. I may redirect this blame to God, for He selected them as masons to construct His House. If these sacred hands constructed an impure House then what was the specific advantage of commissioning these hands? What was the need to designate Prophets for this task when the world was full of expert masons?

There is another point in my mind that I want you to reflect upon. When Kaaba was being constructed Prophet Ibrahim was quite old and his son Ismail was still a child. Strenuous labour can be difficult both in old age and in childhood. Yet Ibrahim and Ismail built the House of God. As far as we know or hope to know, we can confidently say no third person was assigned to assist the two in the construction of the House. They could have hired labour or contracted masons to work for them but I am sure you have not heard of it and the Quran has not informed us. The Quran says,

وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ

**“And (remember) when Ibrahim and Ismail raised the foundations of the House”. (2: 127)**

Both have been named. If there was a third one, he too would have been named. Here one name followed by the second one suggests that the owner of the Book paid attention that all involved in the process be named. No third hand was employed for this was a sacred place and those building it had to be worthy of the task. The unworthy could not be associated with this House.

Just as these two got together to build the House in the initial stages, so at a later stage, two others got together to revive the House. The first was the evident external construction and Ibrahim and Ismail were the two engaged in this construction. Then a time came for the internal renovation of the House, for Kaaba had been turned into a sanctuary for the idols and the House of God was packed with these idols.

When it was time to cleanse the House of these idols so that those offering prayers could bow and prostrate in peace and those seeking sanctity were able to worship, then the initial task of cleansing was phased into the final and conclusive stage. If there were two in the beginning then there should be two for the ending too. Thus our Prophet requested,

‘Climb on my shoulders Ali and break all the idols’!

There was no shortage of people to assist Ibrahim at that time and there was no shortage of people to carry out our Prophet’s command at this juncture. The idols in the Kaaba were demolished at a time when Islam was at its peak and thousands of people had entered its fold. A minor command from the Prophet would have been sufficient to destroy or remove and eliminate these idols. However, just as God desired pure and clean hands for the earlier task, so He desired that this mission should also be accomplished by hands that were never likely to do any wrong.

I was saying that when God asked Ibrahim and Ismail to keep Kaaba clean He used the word **“tahirah” (2: 125)**. All praise to the Almighty for doing justice and for giving due consideration to the potential of those tasked with the mission. He said,

أَنْ تَطَهَّرَ الْبَيْتَ

### **“Purify my House” (2: 125)**

but He did not say purify it as it deserves to be purified. How could Ibrahim and Ismail have fulfilled this aspect of the task? After all this was not their privilege or entitlement. In technical terms we refer to it as task beyond capacity if we thrust a task on someone who does not possess the ability to fulfill it. So God asked them to keep it clean but not as clean as it deserves to be.

There is a verse in the Quran regarding Hazrat Maryam,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَىٰ طُفُّكَ وَ طَهَّرَكَ وَ اصْطَفَىٰ طُفُّكَ عَلَىٰ نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ

**“Verily, Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above (all) the women of the worlds”. (3:42)**

God pronounced Maryam pure and clean but He made no addition that she was kept as pure as could possibly be. I want you to notice that the word **“tahharake” (3:42)** (made you pure) is used only once here. It has not been repeated. For Prophet Isa the word used is **“mutahhiraka” (3:55)** (keep you clean). God accepts responsibility to keep Isa clean, but did not promise the ultimate degree of cleanliness. In Heaven there will be partners who are **“mutahharatun” (2:25)** (purified) but they are not as pure as can possibly be.

You will be amazed to know the Quran itself informs us that the Books sent by God are pure. They have been declared pure but it does not say they are as pure as pure can be. Now if that had been said, then no one would have even dared to relocate the beginning to the end, or to exchange its zabar with zayr. You could not possibly make any kind of mistakes or change the order of the revelations. Who would have had the courage to do so? God knew He had given us a pure Book, and now it was in our hands and it was our responsibility to protect and preserve it.

So, what I am trying to say is that for prophets, for Kaaba, for heavenly partners, for Maryam and for many others Quran has used the word tatheer and in all these places this word is used once. The word **“tatheera” (33:33)** is not coupled with any of these. The absence of this word is an indicator that the absolute limit of purification is not projected at any of these locations.

What can one say of the word that had remained untouched and aloof since the inception of time and on a particular day God saw such dignified people beneath the cloak that He no longer wished to preserve this word. God wished to convey that the word He saved from every gathering, the word He safeguarded from all others was actually meant for the Ahlul Bayt. They are the deserving beneficiaries of this honour.

This word was not used earlier, for those deserving the dual tribute did not exist. In other words had anyone deserved this ultimate level of cleanliness and this absolute purity, then God would have granted

them this privilege. Since, such persons were not present hence this honour was not granted, but now that they are identified and are present so why should He reserve it?

I want you all to look and reflect at the emphatic nature of the words in Ayat al-Tatheer. The Most Benevolent God says,

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

***“God wishes, and will keep wishing that He keeps you away from all impurities, and keeps you clean and pure to the extent that you truly deserve”! (33:33)***

I want you to focus again on the amazing force behind the words used.

Now leave the power and the force of God’s narrative on one side and consider an ordinary orator, say a person who addresses a public gathering, someone who has addressed a hundred or even a thousand such gatherings earlier. If this person ever announces that he was about to deliver a speech that would do absolute justice to the spirit of any address, then those listening to him would know that he has delivered many speeches but never made such a bold claim before. So if he makes this claim now, it means that the speaker will use all his public speaking skills, use the depth of his knowledge and spare no effort to deliver the best possible speech. Best possible in his capacity as man with the human limitations.

Since, I have the opportunity why should I not say that God sanctioned purity for many. For this one and that one, for these and for those but He never said He was purifying them to the ultimate degree that was ever possible. This day heralds a new trend! A new tone and expression is adopted. The Creator is conferring an honour never before given to anyone!

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

***“God wishes and will continue to wish that He keeps the Ahlul Bayt clean and pure to an extent that purification is ever possible”! (33:33)***

Where had He said that before? If there is any verse or another text then please show me. He has not. This power packed narrative is not found anywhere.

Now see if you can believe this. God took a covenant from Ibrahim and Ismail that they would keep Kaaba clean. They may be Prophets or Messengers of God, even Zabeeh Allah but they are not God. They may be incapable of fault, but are mortal, likely to change and they also sleep. If they are near

Kaaba they can be far from it, too. If they are connected to Kaaba they can be separated from it, too. A person is responsible for something as long as he is awake and he is alive. If he is not present than how can he be responsible? When he is not near but in a distant place than how can he take responsibility? This implies that God entrusted the task of keeping Kaaba clean in the hands of the mumkin.

I am sure you have understood the meaning of mumkin. God is Wajib (certain); everything else is mumkin or possible. It is something that is likely to be and equally likely not to be. The prophets and the walis are included in this category and so are the fallibles and the insignificant. No one besides God is Wajib. Only He is Wajib, the rest are all mumkin. So, God entrusted the task of purification in the hands of the mumkin, which means that it is possible to remain pure and equally possible not to. How long are Ibrahim and Ismail responsible? As long as they are present, after that their responsibility ceases.

What I am trying to say is if the single word 'tatheer' was used in Ayat al-Tatheer, that God wishes to keep you clean and pure, then too the first difference would be that the responsibility of keeping Kaaba clean rests with Ibrahim and Ismail whereas God is responsible for keeping Ahlul Bayt clean. They are mortals, He is Immortal. The ones keeping Kaaba clean are terminal, whereas God who keeps the Ahlul Bayt clean is Eternal. So everlasting that

لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَّةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ

***“Slumber does not seize Him, nor does sleep” (2:255).***

God does not rest or sleep. He is not unaware nor does He go away. He does not fall sick nor avoid work due to illness. He neither sleeps nor dies.

I cannot find the right words but what I am trying to say is that Kaaba will stay clean by virtue of the pledge, till Ibrahim and Ismail live. Let me put it as a question. How long will Kaaba stay clean in the light of this pledge? Only till Ibrahim and Ismail live. How long will the Ahlul Bayt stay pure and clean? I do not want to say till God lives. Rather, let me humbly say that the Ahlul Bayt will stay clean till they live. They will remain clean as long as they exist.

I stress that even if a single word had been used in Ayat Tatheer it would still have clearly spelt the difference between the purity of Al Bait (Kaaba) and Ahl Al Bait (those worthy of the Kaaba). The reason being the purity of Al Bait is in the hands of Ibrahim and Ismail, and the purity of Ahlul Bayt is in the Hands of God. Here the reinforcing word, that I will keep you pure to the absolute degree, to the ultimate extent implies as explained in the example of oratory, that God will spare no effort and will use all His capabilities, all His potential and all His expertise to perform this task.

‘People of the House, God will keep you pure to the absolute degree, to a level that is justified for you’. The simplest of meanings that can be assigned to this would be that God will keep these mumkins (the Ahlul Bayt) as pure as it is possible and to the degree that a Wajib can keep a mumkin pure! The

intention to keep you so pure suggests that this kind of effort has not been kept in store for anyone else.

It is for this reason that the purity of the Ahlul Bayt is so glorified. It is at a level where one purity is linked to the next, the first to the second, the second to the third and so on. The final purity that is linked to all the previous ones, is our present Imam. He is so pure that when Prophet Isa, for whom God says,

إِنِّي مُتَوَفِّيكَ وَ رَافِعُكَ إِلَيَّ وَ مُطَهِّرُكَ

***“God will lift you up and keep you clean” (3:55)***

approaches this last Imam who is the final link in the chain of purity, he will spread his prayer mat behind him for this Imam is pure to an extent that his purity touches the upper limits of ultimate purity!

It is no doubt by virtue of this powerful backing of the Almighty that even enemies have not been able to point a finger at the Ahlul Bayt. Let there be no doubt in anyone’s mind that despite this eminence, the Ahlul Bayt were victimized in a manner the world has not witnessed. Their blood has irrigated the soil as no other bloodshed has. This sentence was uttered by Bibi Zainab. She used this expression when Ibn e Ziyad ordered the assassination of Imam Zain ul Abideen (the ailing son of imam Hussain) That was an extremely sensitive time. The despicable and impure Ibne Ziyad was talking to Bibi Zainab in a very rude and derogatory manner as she was standing before him as a prisoner.

Imam Zain ul Abideen tried to remain calm and patient all through this ordeal. Ah! Syed e Sajjad (another title for Imam Zain ul Abideen, implying the Leader of all prostrators) has epitomized the absolute limits of patience and tolerance. It can be said with conviction that the sort of patience demonstrated by this Imam has no parallel anywhere. Even within the Prophet’s household it has not been openly manifest in the lives of Ali or Fatima or Hasan or Hussain. True, Imam Hussain exhibited great phenomenal patience in Karbala. He offered untold sacrifices including sacrifice of his young son and also his infant one; of his brother and other children of the family. However, in terms of patience, the status of Syed e Sajjad is altogether at a different level!

Once a person saw Imam Zain ul Abideen grieve and cry and as is natural he too was perturbed. If for example you see a mother cry in distress, you will be affected and will try to comfort and console her, and try to reduce her anguish in any way possible. So when this man saw the Imam cry, he felt the Imam’s pain and immediately tried to comfort him and reduce his sorrow.

A person can be consoled in many ways but this man was not facing an ordinary situation. He was a follower of the Imam and before him was his beloved leader, the Imam. So very respectfully he said, “Who can be more patient than you? Maula be patient, Prophet’s son be patient.”

Imam Zain ul Abideen was being asked to stop crying and he did not appreciate that. In a manner of complaint he said, “Brother, you have asked me to be patient. You have asked me not to cry but you

have not done justice to me”. God knows how sensitive this issue was for he said, “In this matter you have not done justice at all. When Yousaf (Joseph) was separated from Prophet Yaqub (Jacob) he cried so much that he became blind. Brother, do you not know that in one afternoon eighteen people of my household were martyred? And who were these martyrs? La misla wa la nazeer (The world has not seen the likes of such remarkable people)! So I do not cry in vain”.

This man again attempted to console the Imam, “Maula it is a tradition in your family to offer sacrifices in the way of God. Your ancestors (from Prophet Ibrahim to the fifth member under the cloak) have always laid down their lives in the way of God”. When Imam Zain ul Abideen heard this, my heart tells me, he would have seethed in agony and would have said, ‘True it has always been a tradition for us to lay down our lives in the way of God, but tell me brother, is it also a tradition to unveil our mothers and sisters in public? To see them imprisoned? For them to be taken prisoners and marched and paraded from street to street and through the cities? Has this ever been a tradition with my ancestors”?

**God’s wrath be on the transgressors.**

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