

[Home](#) > [The Shia Rebutts](#) > Question 22: Why do the Shi'ah regard the sons of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a) (Hasan and Husayn ('a)) as the sons of the Messenger of Allah (S)?

Question 22: Why do the Shi'ah regard the sons of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a) (Hasan and Husayn ('a)) as the sons of the Messenger of Allah (S)?

Reply: A study of the exegesis {*tafsir*}, history and *hadith* books will show that this idea is not accepted only by the Shi'ah but by almost all Muslim researchers from all Islamic groups.

Now, let us consider this issue by citing evidences from the Glorious Qur'an, *hadiths* and statements of renowned commentators {*mufasssirun*}:

In essence, the Holy Qur'an regards a person's consanguineous children as his children. Also, it deems as his children (both male and female) those who are born from his children.

In the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*, there are plenty of proofs substantiating this fact. Here are some of them:

1. In the verse below, the Holy Qur'an considers Hadrat 'Isa (Jesus) ('a) among the children of Ibrahim al-Khalil (Abraham the Friend {of Allah}) ('a) whereas 'Isa, the child of Maryam (Mary) ('a), can be traced back to Hadrat Ibrahim ('a) through his mother:

﴿وَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ كُلًّا هَدَيْنَا وَنُوحًا هَدَيْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِ دَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُوسُفَ وَمُوسَىٰ وَهَارُونَ وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ * وَزَكَرِيَّا وَيَحْيَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ﴾

“And We gave him (Abraham) Isaac and Jacob and guided each of them. And Noah We had guided before, and from his (Abraham's) offspring, David and Solomon, and Job, Joseph, Moses and Aaron—thus do We reward the virtuous—and Zechariah, John and Jesus.”¹

Muslim scholars regard the stated verse as a clear proof that Imam al-Hasan and Imam al-Husayn ('a) are children of the Messenger of Allah (S) as well as his offspring.

Below is one of the instances:

Jalal ad-Din as-Suyuti narrates:

أرسل الحجاج إلى يحيى بن يعمر فقال: بلغني أنك تزعم أن الحسن والحسين من ذرية النبي صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم - تجده في كتاب الله وقد قرأته من أوله إلى آخره فلم أجده. قال: ألسنت تقرأ سورة الأنعام: ومن ذريته داوود وسليمن حتى بلغ ويحيى؟ وعيسى قال: بلى. قال: أليس عيسى من ذرية إبراهيم وليس له أب؟ قال: صدقت

One day, Hajjaj (ibn Yusuf) ordered that Yahya ibn Ya'mur should be brought and when he saw him he said to him: "I have been told that you opine that al-Hasan and al-Husayn are the children and offspring of the Prophet (S) and you say that you have found this in the Book of Allah whereas I have read the Qur'an from the beginning to the end but I have not found such a thing."

Yahya asked: "Have you not read this verse in *Surah al-An'am*: 'and from his (Abraham's) offspring, David and Solomon' and continued up to, 'and John and Jesus'?" He replied: "Yes, I have."

Yahya asked: "In this Qur'anic verse, has Jesus not been considered among the offspring of Abraham eventhough Abraham was not his father {and Jesus can be traced back to Abraham through his mother (Mary)}?" Hajjaj said: "You are correct."²

From the aggregate of the quoted verses and the words of Qur'an exegetes, it becomes obvious that not only the Shi'ah but in fact all Muslim scholars regard Imam al-Hasan and Imam al-Husayn (‘a) as the children and offspring of the Messenger of Allah (S).

2. One of the explicit verses of the Qur'an which testifies to the truthfulness of the said view is the verse of imprecation {*ayah al-mubahilah*} in *Surah Al 'Imran*. Below is the verse along with the exegetes' notes:

فَمَنْ حَاجَّكَ فِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ فَقُلْ تَعَالَوْا نَدْعُ أَبْنَاءَنَا وَأَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَنِسَاءَنَا وَنِسَاءَكُمْ وَأَنْفُسَنَا وَأَنْفُسَكُمْ ثُمَّ نَبْتَهِلْ فَنَجْعَلْ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾

"Should anyone argue with you concerning him, after the knowledge that has come to you, say, 'Come! Let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, our selves and your selves, then let us pray earnestly and call down Allah's curse upon the liars'."³

Exegetes say: The stated verse which is known as the verse of *mubahilah* tells about the debate of the Holy Prophet (S) with the chiefs of the Christians of Najran after their expression of obstinacy. By a Divine command, the Prophet went out along with 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, Fatimah az-Zahra, and Imam al-Hasan and Imam al-Husayn (‘a) with the aim of imprecation.

When the chiefs of the Christians noticed the behavior of the Prophet and the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a), fear

struck in their hearts and they asked the Messenger of Allah (S) to reconsider his decision to imprecate and curse them. The Prophet (‘a) accepted their suggestion and at the end they agreed to forge a pact.

Since both the Shi‘ah and Sunni scholars have consensus of opinion on the fact that on the day of *mubahilah*, the Commander of the Faithful (‘Ali) (‘a), Fatimah az-Zahra, and Imam al-Hasan and Imam al-Husayn (‘a) were with the Prophet (S), it becomes very clear that when the Messenger of Allah (S) said “*abna’ana*” {our sons} he meant Imam al-Hasan and Imam al-Husayn (‘a). And as such, it becomes clear that in this verse al-Hasan and al-Husayn are considered the Holy Prophet’s (S) sons.

It is necessary to note that after narrating many *hadiths* pertaining to the verse of *mubahilah*, exegetes testify to the validity of this view. Here are some examples:

a. Jalal ad-Din as-Suyuti narrates on the authority of Hakim, Ibn Marudiyah and Abu Na‘im from Jabir ibn ‘Abd Allah (al-Ansari):

"أنفسنا رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم وعليّ وأبناءنا والحسن والحسين نساءنا فاطمة"

““*Anfusana*” {our selves} means the Messenger of Allah (S) and ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, “*abna’na*” {our sons} means al-Hasan and al-Husayn, and “*nisa’na*” {our women} refers to Fatimah.”⁴

b. In his exegesis {*tafsir*}, Fakhr ad-Din ar-Razi mentions the said verse and says:

"واعلم أن هذه الرواية كالمتفق على صحتها بين أهل التفسير والحديث"

“Know that this tradition is an example of *hadith* on whose authenticity the *mufasssirun* and *muhaddithun* have consensus of opinion.”⁵

Then, he says:

المسألة الرابعة: هذه الآية دالة على أن الحسن والحسين كانا إبنَي رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم – وعد أن "يدعوا أبناءه فدعا الحسن والحسين فوجب أن يكون إبنَيّه"

“The fourth issue: The said verse testifies to the fact that al-Hasan and al-Husayn (‘a) were sons of the Messenger of Allah (S) because when he was asked to call his “sons”, he called al-Hasan and al-Husayn (‘a).”⁶

c. In his exegesis, Abu ‘Abd Allah al-Qurtubi states:

"أبناءنا دليل على أن إبناء البنات يسمّون أبناءا"

“*Abna’na*” {our sons} (in the stated verse) testifies to the fact that the sons of one’s daughter are considered that one’s sons.”^{[7](#)}

3. The Messenger of Allah’s (S) words are a vivid proof that Imam al-Hasan and Imam al-Husayn (‘a) are sons of the Prophet (S).

Here are two examples of his sayings:

a. The Messenger of Allah (S) thus says concerning al-Hasan and al-Husayn (‘a):

"هذان إبنائُ من أحبَّهما فقد أحبَّني."

“These two are my sons. He who loves them loves me.”^{[8](#)}

b. Pointing to Imam al-Hasan and Imam al-Husayn (‘a), the Holy Prophet (S) also says:

"إنَّ أبنيَّ هذينَّ ريحانتي من الدنيا"

“Verily, these two sons of mine are my bunch of sweet basil in this world.”^{[9](#)}

^{1.} Surah al-An‘am 6:84–85.

^{2.} Ad-Durr al-Manthur (Beirut), vol. 3, p. 28, the commentary of the said verse in Surah al-An‘am.

^{3.} Surah Al ‘Imran 3:61.

^{4.} Ad-Durr al-Manthur (Beirut), vol. 2, p. 39, the end of the commentary of the verse under discussion.

^{5.} Tafsir Mafatih al-Ghayb (Egypt, 1308 AH), vol. 2, p. 488.

^{6.} Ibid.

^{7.} Al-Jami‘ Li Ahkam al-Qur’an (Beirut), vol. 4, p. 104.

^{8.} Ibn ‘Asakir, Tarikh Madinah Dimashq (Beirut, 1400 AH), p. 59, hadith 106.

^{9.} Ibid., p. 62, hadith 112.

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