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10) Hadith Al-Salat: The Prophetic Families

In every Ummah, there exists a prophetic family. This is the family of its prophet. On a more specific note, the family of Nuh, ‘alaihi al-salam, were the prophetic family of his Ummah. In the same manner, the family of Ibrahim, ‘alaihi al-salam were the prophetic family of his own Ummah too.

In our own case, Muhammad, sallallahu ‘alaihi wa alihi, is our Prophet, and his family are our prophetic family. This fact is recognized by ‘ulama of the Ahl al-Sunnah as well. For instance, al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani (d. 852 H) states:

> ويستفاد من قصة العباس استحباب الاستشفاع بأهل الخير والصلاح وأهل بيت النبوة

It is learnt from the story of al-‘Abbas that it is recommended to seek the intercession of righteous people and the Prophetic Family.[1]

Imam al-Mubarakfuri (d. 1282 H) too, while commenting on a hadith, submits:

> ما اختصنا {أي أهل البيت يريد به نفسه وسائر أهل بيت النبوة}

{What has been bestowed to us exclusively}, meaning the Ahl al-Bayt. He meant with it himself and the other members of the Prophetic Family.[2]

Concerning the family of Prophet Ibrahim, Imam al-Zamakhshari (d. 538 H) says as well:

> وإلى ذلك أشارت الملائكة صلوات اللّه عليهم في قولهم {رحمت الله وبركاته عليكم أهل البيت } أرادوا أن هذه وأمثالها مما يكرمكم به رب العزة ويخصكم بالإنعام به يا أهل بيت النبوّة

It was towards this that the angels, peace of Allah be upon them, indicated in their statement {***Mercy of Allah and His Blessings be upon you, O Ahl al-Bayt***} [***11:73***]. They meant that this and its likes are

part of what the Lord of Honour has honoured you with, and He has specially bestowed good unto you with it, O Prophetic Family.[3]

Here, the family of Prophet Ibrahim are referred to as an “Ahl al-Bayt” by the angels. They were the Prophetic Family of his Ummah too.

Al-Hafiz Ibn Kathir (d. 774 H) also mentions a report about the family of Prophet Dawud, ‘alaihi al-salam:

> وروي عنه أيضا أنه قال: وقف سائل على باب داود عليه السلام، فقال: يا أهل بيت النبوة تصدقوا علينا بشئ رزقكم الله

It is also narrated from him that he said: “A beggar stopped at the door of Dawud, peace be upon him, and said, ‘O Prophetic Family! Give to us something that Allah has granted you.’”[4]

Expectedly, prophetic families hold special positions in their respective Ummahs. For instance, Allah informs us about two of them in these verses:

> إن الله اصطفى آدم ونوحا وآل إبراهيم وآل عمران على العالمين ذرية بعضها من بعض والله سميع عليم

Verily, Allah chose Adam, Nuh, the family of Ibrahim and the family of Imran above the worlds. (They are) offspring, one of the other, and Allah is the All-Hearing, All-Knowing.[5]

There are two crucial points here:

The prophetic families of Ibrahim and Imran were chosen above all the worlds. This means that none outside those families can exercise authority or leadership over them. Naturally, therefore, all masters and leaders over all others must come from them.

Members of the prophetic families are “offspring” of one another. As a result, anyone outside the offspring of a prophet can never be part of his chosen family.

Concerning the families of Prophet Nuh and Prophet Ibrahim, Allah informs us of how He chose them:

> ولقد أرسلنا نوحا وإبراهيم وجعلنا في ذريتهما النبوة والكتاب فمنهم مهتد وكثير منهم فاسقون

And indeed, We sent Nuh and Ibrahim, and We placed prophethood and the Book in their offspring. Among them was he who was guided, but many of them were disobedient to Allah.[6]

Explaining this verse, al-Hafiz Ibn Kathir states:

وقال فيه وفي إبراهيم (وجعلنا في ذريتهما النبوة والكتاب) [الحديد: 26] أي كل نبي من بعد نوح فمن ذريته. وكذلك إبراهيم

He (Allah) says concerning him (i.e. Nuh) and Ibrahim {***And We placed prophethood and the Book in the offspring***} [***al-Hadid: 26***]**,** meaning: all prophets after Nuh were from his offspring. That was the case of Ibrahim too.[7]
Imam al-Tabari (d. 310 H) too says:

وجعلنا في ذريتهما النبوة والكتاب {وكذلك كانت النبوة في ذريتهما، وعليهم أنزلت الكتب: التوراة، والإنجيل،} والزبور، والفرقان، وسائر الكتب المعروفة

{***And We placed prophethood and the Book in the offspring***} in the same manner, prophethood was in their offspring, and to them were revealed the divine scriptures: al-Tawrat, al-Injil, al-Zabur, al-Furqan, and the other well-known scriptures.[8]

With regards to Prophet Ibrahim specifically, we read:

ووهبنا له إسحاق ويعقوب وجعلنا في ذريته النبوة والكتاب وآتيناه أجره في الدنيا وإنه في الآخرة لمن الصالحين

And We bestowed on him Ishaq and Ya'qub, and We placed prophethood and the Book in his offspring, and We granted him his reward in this world, and verily, in the Hereafter he is indeed among the righteous.[9]

Al-Hafiz Ibn Kathir has this exegesis:

وجعلنا في ذريته النبوة والكتاب...{ وجعل في ذريته النبوة والكتاب فكل نبي بعث بعده فهو من ذريته وكل كتاب} نزل من السماء على نبي من الانبياء من بعده فعلى أحد نسله وعقبه

{***And We placed prophethood and the Book in his offspring...***} and He placed prophethood and the Book in his offspring. Therefore, all prophets sent after him were from his offspring. Also, every scripture revealed from heaven to any prophet after him was sent to someone from his offspring and progeny.[10]

This is expected, of course. None from outside the family of Nuh was qualified to exercise authority or leadership over them. Allah placed him and his family above all the worlds. So, all prophets, messengers, leaders and guides must naturally be from them. The same goes for the family of Ibrahim. His family was above all others, by Allah's Decree. Therefore, all his successors, and all masters of mankind after him, were automatically from his offspring, his family.

This process started with Adam, ‘alaihi al-salam, the first prophet. The Qur’an states:

أولئك الذين أنعم الله عليهم من النبيين من ذرية آدم

Those were they unto whom Allah bestowed His Grace among the prophets from the offspring of Adam. [11]

Logically, the immediate khalifahs of Adam would be from his children. The line of prophets continued among his descendants until the time of Nuh. It was Nuh who then founded a new dynasty – chosen above all creation – by Allah’s Decree, and the line of prophets shifted to his offspring alone. Ibrahim was from the descendants of Nuh, and he too founded a new dynasty – which was placed over the worlds; and all subsequent prophets naturally emerged from it.

Meanwhile, the family of Ibrahim had some minor branches. One of them was founded by his grandson, Ya’qub, ‘alaihi al-salam – who was also known as Israil. Commenting about his branch of the Ibrahimic tree, Allah states:

ولقد آتينا بني إسرائيل الكتاب والحكم والنبوة ورزقناهم من الطيبات وفضلناهم على العالمين

And indeed, We gave the offspring of Israil the Book, and authority and prophethood, and We provided them with good things, AND WE MADE THEM SUPERIOR ABOVE THE WORLDS. [12]

We equally read about the families of Musa and Harun, ‘alaihima al-salam, also from the offspring of Ibrahim:

وقال لهم نبيهم إن آية ملكه أن يأتيكم التابوت فيه سكينة من ربكم وبقية مما ترك آل موسى وآل هارون تحمله الملائكة

And their Prophet said to them, “Verily! The sign of his (i.e. Talut’s) kingdom is that there shall come to you a wooden box, wherein is al-sakinah from your Lord, and a remnant of that which was left behind by the family of Musa and the family of Harun, carried by the angels.” [13]

This verse shows the high spiritual status of the families of Musa and Harun. Their relics were protected in a box, and kept by angels. One may conclude that members of these families too were high prophets, or at least some very great saints of Allah. Otherwise, angels had no business keeping their relics.

Moreover, the angels were made to bring these relics to the Israelites as a proof of the legitimacy of Talut’s divine kingdom. This fact alone establishes that the Israelites held the families of Musa and Harun in the highest spiritual regards, and obviously considered them as masters as well.

The family of Dawud, ‘alaihi al-salam, was another branch of the Ibrahimic lineage. Allah says:

آل داوود شكرا وقليل من عبادي الشكور

“Work you, O family of Dawud, with thanks.” But few of My slaves are grateful.[14]

Dawud, the founder of this branch, was a prophet, and a king. He was succeeded by his son, Sulayman, ‘alaihi al-salam, who was also a prophet and king.

Then, there are two other branches of the tree of Ibrahim that we have not mentioned. Imam al-Bukhari (d. 256 H) records about them:

إن الله اصطفى آدم ونوحا وآل إبراهيم وآل عمران على العالمين ـ إلى قوله ـ يرزق من يشاء بغير حساب} قال{ ابن عباس }وآل عمران{ المؤمنون من آل إبراهيم وآل عمران وآل ياسين وآل محمد صلى الله عليه و سلم يقول {إن أولى الناس بإبراهيم للذين اتبعوه} وهم المؤمنون .

{Verily, Allah chose Adam, Nuh, the family of Ibrahim and the family of Imran above the worlds ... Allah provides sustenance to whom He wills, without limit.} Ibn ‘Abbas said: “{and the family of Imran} They are the believers from the family of Ibrahim, the family of ‘Imran, the family of Yasin AND THE FAMILY OF MUHAMMAD, peace be upon him. He (Allah) says: {***Verily, the most entitled to Ibrahim are those who followed him***} They are the believers”.[15]

Prof. Ibn Yasin also submits:

} إن الله اصطفى آدم ونوحا وآل إبراهيم وآل عمران على العالمين{

أخرج الطبري وابن أبي حاتم بسنديهما الحسن عن علي بن أبي طلحة عن ابن عباس قال: هم المؤمنون من آل إبراهيم وآل عمران: آل ياسين وآل محمد يقول الله عز وجل (إن أولى الناس بإبراهيم للذين اتبعوه).

{***Verily, Allah chose Adam, Nuh, the family of Ibrahim and the family of Imran above the worlds***}

Al-Tabari and Ibn Abi Hatim record with their hasan chain from ‘Ali b. Abi Talhah from Ibn ‘Abbas that he said, “They are the believers from the family of Ibrahim, the family of ‘Imran, the family of Yasin AND THE FAMILY OF MUHAMMAD. Allah the Most Glorious say: {***Verily, the most entitled to Ibrahim are those who followed him***}.”[16]

As authentically transmitted from Ibn ‘Abbas, radhiyallahu ‘anhu, the family of Muhammad is part of the family of Ibrahim mentioned in this verse:

إن الله اصطفى آدم ونوحا وآل إبراهيم وآل عمران على العالمين ذرية بعضها من بعض والله سميع عليم

Verily, Allah chose Adam, Nuh, the family of Ibrahim and the family of Imran above the worlds. (They are) offspring, one of the other, and Allah is the All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [17]

In fact, the family of Muhammad is the only family in our entire Ummah that is included as part of the family of Ibrahim in that verse. Ibn ‘Abbas has mentioned none other. As such, we know from the ayah that:

The family of Muhammad have been chosen by Allah above all of His other creatures of their times.

The family of Muhammad are offspring of one another. Therefore, anyone who is not from the offspring of Muhammad is automatically excluded by Allah Himself.

The direct implication of the verse is that none from outside the family of Muhammad can legitimately exercise authority or leadership over them. Moreover, all masters, leaders and guides of the Ummah must always be from them. This way, the master, leader or guide would be able to exercise authority over them, and over everyone else.

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2. Abu al-‘Ala Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Rahman b. ‘Abd al-Rahim al-Mubarakfuri, Tuhfat al-Ahwazi bi Sharh Jami’ al-Tirmidhi (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1410 H), vol. 5, p. 288
3. Abu al-Qasim Jarullah Mahmud b. ‘Umar al-Zamakhshari, al-Kashaf (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-‘Arabi; 1407 H), vol. 2, p. 411
4. Abu al-Fida Isma’il b. Kathir al-Dimashqi, al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah (Dar Ihya al-Turath al-‘Arabi; 1st edition, 1408 H) [annotator: ‘Ali Shiri], vol. 9, p. 326
5. Qur’an 3:33-34
6. Qur’an 57:26
7. Abu al-Fida Isma’il b. Kathir al-Dimashqi, al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah (Dar Ihya al-Turath al-‘Arabi; 1st edition, 1408 H) [annotator: ‘Ali Shiri], vol. 1, p. 120
8. Abu Ja’far Muhammad b. Jarir b. Yazid b. Kathir b. Ghalib al-Amuli al-Tabari, Jami al-Bayan fi Tawil al-Qur’an (Dar al-Fikr; 1415 H) [annotator: Sidqi Jamil al-‘Attar], vol. 27, p. 308
9. Qur’an 29:27
10. Abu al-Fida Isma’il b. Kathir al-Dimashqi, al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah (Dar Ihya al-Turath al-‘Arabi; 1st edition, 1408 H) [annotator: ‘Ali Shiri], vol. 1, p. 172
11. Qur’an 19: 58
12. Qur’an 45:16
13. Qur’an 2:248
14. Qur’an 34:13
15. Abu ‘Abd Allah Muhammad b. Isma’il b. Ibrahim b. Mughirah al-Bukhari al-Ju’fi, al-Jami’ al-Sahih al-Mukhtasar (Beirut: Dar Ibn Kathir; 3rd edition, 1407 H) [annotator: Dr. Mustafa Dib al-Bagha], vol. 3, p. 1263
16. 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. 1, p. 411
17. Qur’an 3:33-34

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