

# Ayat ut Tatheer: To Whom Does the Purification Verse Refer To?

## Author(s):

Dr. Hatem Abu Shahba [3]

This text, written by Dr. Hatem Abu Shahba and translated into English by Jerrmein Abu Shahba, is a brief research to identify without any reasonable doubt whom the verse of purification in Surat Al Ahzaab (33) refers to. Using logical reasoning, authentic prophetic tradition, context of the verses, and grammatical analysis, all arguments and possibilities are investigated and refuted leaving only one convincing conclusion pointing to none other than the purified Household of the Holy Prophet (SA), the Ahlul Bayt (AS).

## Translator(s):

Jerrmein Abu Shahba [4]

## Category:

Prophet Muhammad [5]

## Topic Tags:

Al-Ahzaab [6]

Purification [7]

Verse [8]

Sunni-Shia [9]

reasoning [10]

tradition [11]

context [ 12]

## Featured Category:

Introducing the Ahlul Bayt [ 13]

# Translator's Foreword

## *In the Name of Allah, the Merciful the Compassionate*

Each and every verse of the Holy Qur'an deserves a lot of research, contemplation, and analysis so that we may begin on the road of discovering the vast treasures that are hidden with each word revealed. Some verses have an obvious meaning while others are vague and need interpretation by those who bear that special knowledge. As Allah (SWT) states in the Qur'an:

***"He it is Who has revealed the Book to you; some of its verses are decisive, they are the basis of the Book, and others are allegorical..." [3:7]***

From among the many interesting verses in the Qur'an, the verse of purification (33:33) in Surat Al Ahzaab has aroused a great deal of attention at the time of the Holy Prophet (SA) among his companions, and is still a topic of contention today. Many ideas and theories have been shared regarding the interpretation of this verse by the different schools of thought.

History records that the verse of purification was revealed in the event of the *Narration of the Cloak* (Hadeeth Al Kisaa) where it was revealed in honor of the Holy Prophet (SA), Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husain (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon them). This particular verse is one of the scriptural proofs for the inerrancy of the Household of the Prophet which points to their utter purity and unique character.

Only a few people witnessed the Prophet (SA) casting his cloak over the People of the House, so in order to disseminate news of it as broadly as possible among the people and make them aware of the special position of his progeny, he would pass by the house of Imam Ali (SA) for a period of nine months and he would call out: *"Peace be upon you, O People of the House!"* and then he would recite the: "purification verse." Whenever the Ahlul-Bayt (AS) found it necessary to draw attention to their unique spiritual rank, they would proudly refer to this verse.

So significant is the honor which underlies the revelation of this verse in the event of the Cloak such that even Archangel Jibrael (AS) sought permission from Allah (SWT) to join the People of the Cloak in order to share in that historical moment!

It is important for us to realize the great significance of this verse and the importance of understanding

and recognizing the one and true interpretation because it is related to the foundations of our faith. Without being able to identify the real owners of Ayat At Tat-heer, we will be misguided and loose our focus very easily.

For that reason, those believers who recite the famous Narration of the Cloak in a gathering where they recognize the virtues of the AhlulBayt (AS) and their purification by divine will are promised to be showered with mercy, forgiveness, removal of grief and distress, and will have their prayers answered!

This brief research is a mere attempt to shed some light on the selected verses revealed in Surat Al Ahzab and assist us in utilizing our minds by the help of Allah (SWT) to better understand the reasoning behind our beliefs such that we may reach the point of certitude and further be able to explain and convey it to others as well. May Allah (SWT) gather us with those whom Imam Ali (AS) referred to at the conclusion of Hadeeth Al-Kisaa as *“those who attained success and felicity!”*

## The Purification Verse in Surat Al Ahzaab

﴿بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ﴾

**In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful**

﴿Surah Al-Azhaab, 33﴾

### Verse 28



يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِّأَزْوَاجِكَ إِن كُنْتُنَّ تُرِدْنَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا فَتَعَالَيْنَ أُمَتِّعْكُنَّ وَأُسَرِّحْكُنَّ سَرَاحًا جَمِيلًا



***Oh Prophet! Say to your wives: If you desire the life of this world and its adornment, then come! I will give you a provision and allow you to depart a goodly departing.***

## **Verse 29**



وَأِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُرِيدُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَالْأَرْضَ وَالْآخِرَةَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ أَعَدَّ لِلْمُحْسِنَاتِ مِنْكُمْ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا



***And if you desire Allah and His Messenger and the home of the Hereafter, then surely Allah has prepared for the good-doers among you a mighty reward.***

## **Verse 30**



يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ مَنِ يَاْتِ مِنْكُنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ يُضَاعَفْ لَهَا الْعَذَابُ ضِعْفَيْنِ ۗ وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا



***O wives of the Prophet! Whoever of you commits an open indecency, the punishment for her will be doubled; and this is easy to Allah.***

## **Verse 31**



وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ لِلَّهِ وَأَنْتُمْ لَكُمْ رِزْقًا كَرِيمًا



***And whoever of you is obedient to Allah and His Apostle and does righteous good deeds, We shall give her, her reward twice, and We have prepared for her an honorable sustenance.***

## **Verse 32**



يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ لَسْتُنَّ كَأَحَدٍ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ ۚ إِنَّ اتَّقَيْتُنَّ فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَيَطْمَعَ الَّذِي فِي قَلْبِهِ مَرَضٌ وَقُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا



***O wives of the Prophet! You are not like any of the other women. If you will be on your guard, then be not soft in your speech, lest he in whose heart is a disease should be moved with a desire; but speak in an honorable manner.***

## Verse 33



وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَى ۚ وَأَقِمْنَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتِينَ الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِعْنَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ۚ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا



***And stay in your houses and do not display yourselves like that of the times of ignorance; and keep up prayer, and pay the poor-rate, and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah surely wants to keep the sin away from you, O People of the House! And to purify you an absolute purification.***

## **Verse 34**



وَأذْكُرْنَ مَا يُتْلَىٰ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ لَطِيفًا خَبِيرًا



***And remember that which is recited in your houses of the verses of Allah and the wisdom; surely Allah is Ever Most Courteous, Acquainted with all things.***

## **Truthful is Allah, The Great**

### **Introduction**

There has been a long and endless controversy among the Muslim Ummah, as to whom the purification verse refers to. There are those who say that it refers to the wives of the Prophet (SA) alone, and they

support their argument by saying that because this verse was present before and after a group of verses in which Allah (SWT) was directing His words to the wives of the Prophet, then it is also included in that monologue.

There are those who say that it refers to Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husain (Peace be upon them) alone, and they support their argument using the well and frequently known Tradition of the Cloak (Hadeeth Al-Kisaa) and many other traditions that has been narrated by Rasulullah (SA).

And finally, there are those who say that it refers to both: the wives of the Prophet (SA) as well as Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husain (Peace be upon them), in an attempt to combine the first two theories and also because of their presumption that the word "Ahlul-Bayt" includes all these family members. Hence, they argue "why couldn't *all* the members of the family of Rasulullah (SA) be the ones referred to in the Purification verse?

Reality shows that there are a lot of motives and incentives behind this controversy. There existed political motives during the first centuries of Islam. There were personal motives that originated due to hatred and animosity that has been inherited generation after generation. There were utilitarian motives that were present as a result of a force that sought for its persistence for its own advantages. Therefore, it presents the advantages to those who work for the continued presence of this controversy.

There were also motives that originated due to naivety, foolishness, narrow-sightedness, weak judgment, and the lack of patience and reflection. And finally, there exists fanatic motives that originated from the division of the Muslim Ummah into many different sects and schools of thought; each that is fanatical to its own opinion, school of thought, and sect. Fanaticism or extremism is ignorance and blindness that causes a person not to see the truth even if it is clear. It causes him not to see the light even if it is bright. It causes him not to see except what he wants to see, and not believe except what he or his fanaticism leans to.

In this text, we shall try with the help of Allah (SWT) to spend some time scrutinizing, analyzing, and dissecting these great verses in order to end this controversy and reach a decisive conclusion and answer for every seeker of truth who will be ready to abide by it. It will be for every seeker of truth who is not fanatical, neither does he have any bias or advantage. Rather, he seeks the guidance and success from Allah (SWT), promising that he will follow the truth if he sees and becomes convinced of it, and he will not deviate from it.

It is very important to find out and identify to whom does the purification verse refer to because the knowledge of this piece of information will result in a lot of grave and critical consequences. That is because we do not find any other verse of purification in the Qur'an except for this verse, and we do not see any other person(s) whom Allah (SWT) officially announced their purification in the Qur'an after the prophets, except those referred to by this purification verse.



# Importance of the Purification Verse

Hence, if we found out to whom the purification verse refers to, we will come to recognize that these individuals have been purified by Allah (SWT). And if we became certain that these individuals are purified from Allah (SWT), it would be very foolish, imprudent, and even insane of us to take our religious knowledge from other sources. After all, those individuals *are* the purified source!

For example, imagine that you have a pool of water in front of you and the government that you trust in assured to you that they cleansed and purified this water and that it is totally suitable for drinking. Wouldn't it be very foolish and ridiculous of you to abandon this refined and cleansed water that has been guaranteed for its purity, and instead went to seek other sources of water which you do not know or are not sure of its degree of purity and sanitization?! Wouldn't it be very unwise of you to actually drink from that water that is "in question" and expose yourself to the risk of danger, sickness, or poison which would cost you your life and bring you to your end?! No sane person would ever do that!

Knowing exactly the identity of these individuals is equivalent to knowing the purified and cleansed source (that has been purified by Allah), which we can drink confidently and take advantage for the best interest of our religion, the life of this world, and the Hereafter.

This way, we can live feeling assured and safe without needing to divide or deviate from our way nor to seek multiple sources. In such case, we would not accept any other source that is questionable in purity or reliability as a substitute for this purified and clean source. And if we actually did so and left this purified source and instead seek other doubtful, and un-guaranteed sources in purity, which would certainly lead to our misguidance, loss and failure; then we have no one to blame but ourselves.

At that point, we have no excuses to present to Allah (SWT) since we chose to go for the doubtful, misguided, and unpurified source although we found the cleansed and purified origin in which the Almighty Himself has purified. We had not even taken the effort to investigate the true source, for if we did, we would have certainly found the right source to drink and utilize while feeling complete satisfaction and security, along with gratitude towards our Lord.

From this logic, the importance of identifying and specifying these individuals who have been referred to in the purification verse becomes very clear and vivid to us, since these immaculate personalities will serve as our source of knowledge, religion, and school of thought. They will be our guardians whom we follow after the Holy Prophet (SA). They will be the leaders, governors, scholars, and guiders of our Ummah after the Book of Allah (SWT) and the Sunnah of His Messenger (SA).

Therefore, recognizing the purified personalities is not only important, but it is the most crucial task in the life of a person. This is because a person without faith (iman) and religion is not considered to be human. After all, there cannot exist faith and religion without an Imam, a leader, a guardian, a scholar,

and a guider who would guide the people, teach them, lead them, and direct them in their journey of life until they reach the safe haven that could not be reached alone.

Otherwise, the Shaytan (devil) will kidnap them just like a sheep would get misguided and therefore “kidnapped” when it is without a caretaker who would lead and guide it. This argument is logical and cannot be argued against except by someone foolish, arrogant, stubborn, or an apostate, and all those are not considered to be believers.

Our discussion here is directed to believers who are smart, intelligent, wise, and those who are humble to Allah (SWT) and surrender themselves to Him. Those who are looking for the truth and are willing to follow it without fanaticism, personal desire, arrogance, or close-mindedness! Those are the people who have been guided by Allah (SWT) and they are the ultimate winners and victors!

## Our Focus

Let us begin from where the people left off and let us focus our research and analysis in putting an end to this controversy. The matter is clear and the avenues for our research are limited. We do not have to search for those purified individuals (who have been referred to by the purification verse) among all the Muslims, or even a group of them.

The religious scholars of the Muslim Ummah have made it easier for us by narrowing down the possibilities of individuals who might be the ones referred to by the purification verse. Also, the purification verse itself has limited the possibilities by using the term “Ahlul-Bayt”. Therefore, we can focus our research on the following possibilities without a fourth, as the prospects for being the ones referred to in the purification verse:

- 1) The purified individuals referred to are the wives of Rasulullah (SA) alone.
- 2) The purified individuals indicated by the purification verse are Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husain (Peace be upon them) alone.
- 3) The purified individuals are the wives of Rasulullah (SA) *in addition* to Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husain (Peace be upon them).

Only one of these three possibilities can be correct in identifying those purified souls who have been purified by Allah (SWT), while the other two possibilities are wrong and invalid. This makes sense and is logical, since it is not possible for all three possibilities to be correct; neither can two of them be acceptable.

So the matter is easier for us now. All that is required for us to do is to search and reach a conclusion as to which of these possibilities is correct. We will then be guided by Allah's grace to our desired mission to identify these purified individuals whom we seek their guardianship and guidance to the right path. So, let us open our ears and minds to research and analyze until we reach a logical, convincing, and satisfying answer in this controversy.

Let us reach a solution that is conclusive and decisive such that the sincere hearts and minds rest afterwards and would be convinced of the truth after recognizing it clearly and vividly, without having any confusion or doubts. Let us start our journey in finding out which of the three above-mentioned possibilities is correct, while depending first and foremost on Allah (SWT), secondly on the Qur'an, and thirdly on our minds, our logical reasoning, and our intelligence.

## **Supporting Arguments For The 1st Possibility**

Let us begin first by studying the first possibility to investigate whether it is reliable, reasonable, logical, and to see whether our minds will accept it or not.

The first possibility states that the purified individuals are the wives of Rasulullah (SA) alone. The supporters of this theory build their argument on the basis of the context and structure of the verses in the Qur'an in which the verse of purification was revealed.

They argue that because the verses preceding and following the purification verse were clearly directed to the wives of the Prophet (SA), and since they are the ones being addressed in speech by Allah (SWT), then the purification verse is considered to be part of the monologue that is directed to the wives of Rasulullah (SA).

Because the verses before and after the purification verse are not directed to anyone else, the assumption is made that the wives of the Prophet (SA) are the ones referred to by the purification verse.

The advocates of this hypothesis also support their conclusion by arguing that the meaning of the purification verse makes sense and fits to be the next idea within the context. The reason why is because after directing guidance, orders, and warnings to the wives of the Prophet (SA), Allah (SWT) says to them that His guidance and directions is for the purpose of cleansing and purifying them.

The advocates also support their opinion and attempt to strengthen their argument by indicating that the term "Ahlul-Bayt" which was used in the purification verse, is known in the Arab community at that time to be in reference to the wives of a man. They support this point due to Allah's words in the Qur'an directed to Sarah, the wife of Prophet Abraham (AS), when she was given glad tidings with the

pregnancy of Isaac (AS) and she laughed:

***“Do you wonder of Allah’s biddings? The mercy of Allah and His blessings are on you, O People of the house.” [11:73]***

So, if Allah (SWT) meant the wife of Abraham when He used the term “Ahlul-Bayt” in this verse, then why couldn’t we use this example and apply it in the case of the purification verse? From this example, the advocates conclude that Allah (SWT) meant the wives of the Prophet (SA) since He used the same term in another verse.

Let us now examine the validity of these arguments that are often raised by the supporters and advocates of the first possibility, who based on these arguments build their beliefs, thinking, and conviction.

## **Lack of Harmony in the Context of Verses**

Any meticulous researcher who carefully analyzes these verses of Surat Al Ahzaab from its beginning to end, will realize the following:

The first verse contains a clear and frank threat of divorce from Allah (SWT) to the wives of the Holy Prophet (SA) *if* they desire the life of this world and its ornaments.

The second verse bears incitement and conditional promise from Allah (SWT) to the wives of Rasulullah (SA) that if they desire Allah and His Apostle and the Hereafter, He will reward them greatly.

The third verse holds an intense warning and admonition of double punishment from Allah (SWT) to the wives *if* they commit an open indecency.

The fourth verse contains a conditional promise from Allah (SWT) to the wives that *if* they obey Him and His Messenger and do good, He will double their reward and prepare for them an honorable sustenance.

The fifth verse reminds them that they are not like the rest of the women since they are the wives of the Prophet (SA). Therefore, what may be accepted from other women is not accepted from them due to their position and great responsibility that they carry on their shoulders. This same verse also warns them that if they seek to fear Allah (SWT) and be on their guard, they *must* be very careful of what they say and how they say it. This verse orders the wives not to be soft in their speech, to speak the good word, and it carries in its implication some blame or prediction to what may come from one of them. This is to prevent the houses of Rasulullah (SA) from becoming grounds for bad talk from the jealous, the envious, the haters, and the hypocrites.

The sixth verse contains four direct orders and one prohibition from Allah (SWT) to the wives of the Prophet (SA).

The orders are as follows:

- 1) To stay in their houses
- 2) To perform prayers
- 3) To pay the Zakat (poor-rate)
- 4) To obey Allah and His Messenger

As for the prohibition, Allah (SWT) has forbidden them from displaying their finery or committing indecencies that has been forbidden in Islam, like the women of the days of ignorance. Indecencies such as not observing Hijab, displaying their beauty and ornaments to those whom Allah (SWT) forbid, engaging in loquacious talk, unnecessary socialization with men and women, and other habits that was common with women in the days of ignorance.

Then comes the verse of purification (second part of the 6th verse), which is not in harmony with the verses before and after that were just presented. The 7th verse follows, which contains the fifth order from Allah (SWT) which completes the package of instructions presented by Allah (SWT) to the wives of the Prophet (SA).

The last verse advices the wives to keep in mind what is communicated to Rasulullah (SA) in their houses [from the verses of the Qur'an, and the traditions (hadeeths) that Rasulullah (SA) relays in their presence which holds great wisdom and insight]. They are to remember and pass it on to others such that they become role models and good examples to the Muslims. As roles models, they should watch their actions and not behave the way that other women might behave. Hence, this verse is in harmony with the previous verses in which Allah (SWT) gives his instructions to the wives of the Prophet (SA).

In summary, the verses contain the following in this order: threat, encouragement, warning, advice, conditional promise, reminder, direction, blame, five orders, and prohibition. Are all these types of speech consistent with the rank of purification? Could such persons who are directed all these kinds of speech be the ones purified by Allah (SWT)? Could such persons be the origin and fountainhead of purity and chastity from which we will use and take advantage of?

If that was the case, then all of the people are considered to be purified because Allah (SWT) has used the same kinds of speech to the general public, as to the wives. He guides the people at one instant and advice them at another; He promises them at instances and reminds them at others. He also directs them, warns and threats them, blames, orders, and forbids them.

This is the language of the Qur'an, which is directed to all mankind through its verses and in which Allah (SWT) Himself said about it that the Qur'an is a glad-tider, warner, reminder, and guider to all humans. So, where is the status and rank of purification in those who are directed all that talk? They are thus, like all humans and are not special or different from them in this aspect.

This is what the mind and logic first notices after displaying the verses. For example, if a teacher scolds a student, and warns, threatens, blames, reminds, and directs them, would it then be fit for someone to say that this student is purified and infallible? It is not logical at all!

## What Happens When Allah (SWT) Desires Something to Happen?

A mature person who seeks the truth should wonder about this: Allah (SWT) says in the purification verse,

***“Allah surely wants to keep sins away from you, O People of the House! And to purify you a complete purification.”***

We know from the verses of the Qur’an that Allah (SWT) said,

***“His command, when He wants anything, is only to say to it: Be, so it is.” [36:82]***

Therefore, if Allah (SWT) wants, His desire does not at all depend on the will or intention of the humans. For example, Allah (SWT) does not say, “Allah only wants to let this person enter Paradise if that person wishes.” Nor did He say, “If this person prays and fasts, then I want him to enter Paradise.”

Find for us any example from the verses of the Qur’an or prophetic narration that would resemble these types of words from Allah (SWT). Allah never connects His will with the will of the people such that if people want His will, then it shall be carried out. It is not fit or proper with the Glory of Allah (SWT) for Him to connect His will with others and it is absolutely impossible!

Whoever says that, believes that, or even thinks of that is an apostate (Kafir) because he thought of Allah (SWT) what is not proper of Him at all, just like those who claim that Allah (SWT) has a son. Furthermore, he would be contradicting the holy verse in Surat Yaseen which indicates that the will of God is defined only by *“Be: so it is.”*

If we take a look at the verses in question, we find that Allah (SWT) desires the purification of a group of individuals and to keep the sins away from them. So, if Allah (SWT) wants, *“Be: so it is”*, and so they are automatically purified by His order. His will does not depend and is not determined by what those purified individuals would or would not do. Rather, it is an automatic, immediate, and direct action that takes place instantly.

However, the wives of Rasulullah (SA) whom the previous verses are addressing, were given the choice

of obedience or disobedience in the sense that Allah (SWT) said to them, *“if you want...”*. Therefore, the choice and will are theirs. So, how can we combine that with Allah’s will which is immediate in action, does not depend on the will of anyone, and that which is mentioned in the verse of purification as *“Allah desires”*?

This is a clear and vivid proof which confirms the fact that the wives of the Prophet (SA) are not and could not be the ones referred to in the purification verse. That is because the purified individuals referred to in this verse have already been purified by the desire and will of Allah (SWT), which is simply *“Be: so it is”*, without any interference from anyone.

On the other hand, the wives of the Prophet have been given the freedom to choose either the life of this world and its ornaments, or Allah (SWT) and His Messenger. If they willed one, they will have done good, and if they willed the other, they will have committed wrong. In this, they are just like the rest of the people except for one difference: the good-doer from the wives of the Prophet (SA) will be given double reward for her deeds, while the sinner from them will be given a double share of punishment for her acts. Other than that, they are just like everyone else, given the freedom and choice to do what they choose.

As for the purified individuals who have been referred to by the purification verse, Allah (SWT) have purified them by His free will, by *“Be: so it is”*, and they themselves have no choice or will over that. So, based on this logic, the verses are very clear in showing that it is *impossible* for the wives of the Prophet (SA) to be the ones referred to in the purification verse.

This is as clear as the bright sun and every meticulous and scrutinizing eye that searches for the truth, without any fanaticism can recognize it. This vivid truth surely eliminates the wives of the Prophet (SA) just like the majority of the people from being the ones referred to in the purification verse. So, the argument about the context of the verses that were presented in the Qur’an (which is often used by the advocates of the first possibility) is totally invalid. Not only that, but these verses itself stand as a proof against their argument that the purification verse refers to the wives of the Prophet (SA).

There is yet another important point that should lift the attention of those who study the Islamic history and the events that actually took place at that time which cannot be ignored as we search for the truth in this matter. From among the truths that are believed and mentioned in the Qur’an numerous times and cannot be denied by anyone except by a nonbeliever or a polytheist, is that whenever Allah (SWT) desires something, he completes it and lets it happen. That is supported by His saying in the Qur’an,

- ***“The great doer of what He intend.”*** [85:16]

- ***“Surely Allah attains His purpose.”*** [65:3]

- ***“His Command, when He intends something, is only to say to it: Be, so it is.”*** [36:82]

- ***“Our word of a thing, when We intend it, is only that we say to it, Be, and it is.”*** [16:40]

- ***“When He has decreed an affair, He only says to it: Be, so it is.” [(2:117), (3:47), (19:35), (40:68)]***

So, if Allah (SWT) was referring to the wives of the Prophet (SA) in the purification verse, then His order is obeyed; so they are purified and cleansed immediately and it is impossible for them to disobey Allah (SWT) or sin after that. If any of the wives did commit a sin or transgression after the revelation of the purification verse, then it is impossible for them to be the ones referred to. That is because we speak about the wives as a whole.

Thus, any sin from any wife will affect the rest of the wives in the issue of purification since the verses addresses them as a whole, and the purified individuals referred to are also addressed as a whole. By any one of the wives disobeying Allah (SWT), she/they would be preventing His will from completing and happening, and that is impossible because His will could not be prevented from happening!

## History Testifies

Let us ask ourselves this question:

**Did any one of the wives commit any sin or disobedience to Allah and His Messenger *after* the revelation of the purification verse that would contradict the notion of them/her being purified? Does history give us any example of such event?**

Let us search in the history of Islam, and if we search, we will certainly find the truth.

After the revelation of the purification verse, A'isha and Hafsa, two of the wives of Rasulallah (SA) got together against Rasulallah (SA) and planned a trick to separate between him and one of his other wives. The verses in the beginning of Surat Al-Tahreem (Prohibition) descended in regards to their inappropriate actions (verses 1–5). Do those verses fit with the notion of them being purified, as the ones referred to in the purification verse?

After the revelation of the purification verse, Rasulallah (SA) confided a secret to A'isha/Hafsa and ordered her not to reveal it to anyone. But, she disobeyed the orders of Rasulallah (SA) and she announced the secret to others.

Could the act of disobeying Rasulallah (who does not speak out of his own desire, and whom Allah (SWT) forbid his disobedience), come from a purified person who have been purified by the will of Allah (SWT)? Could this disobedience be the stage that is set for that person to attain the status of purification? How could she be from among the ones referred to by the purification verse, which removes any sin from those “purified” individuals?



What A'isha/Hafsa committed is considered to be a sin and disobedience to Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SA). Except if we said that Allah (SWT) desired something but was unable to do it! God forbid that we say such a statement or even think it!

After the revelation of the purification verse and the demise of Rasulullah (SA), A'isha did not abide by the orders of Allah (SWT) to stay in her house. She disobeyed that order and went out of her house on the back of a camel to lead an army of rebels. She instigated mischief/troubles, planted the seeds of war, and resulted in the death of thousands of Muslims.

She did something that never happened before in the history of Islam, but because of her it became easier on the Muslims afterwards to fight and kill among themselves and commit the forbidden. It became easier on them to disobey, turn back on their oaths of allegiance, and shed each other's blood.

A'isha went out to fight Ameer Al-Momineen (AS) and she forgot the orders of Rasulullah (SA) to her and the Ummah, to obey Ali, support him and be faithful to his leadership. She did not remember the verses of Allah (SWT) and the wisdom which was recited in her house and others which she heard and memorized.

Rather she forgot it, lost it, and disobeyed the orders of Allah (SWT) to keep in mind what is recited in her house from the communications of Allah (SWT) and the wisdom in order to be good examples to be followed. She was the first one to leave on him. She went out to fight Ali (AS) while he was her guardian along with the other wives of the Prophet (SA).

Therefore, are these repulsive and hideous actions of hers an indication of her purification from Allah (SWT)? Is it expected or accepted from the purified individuals who have been purified by Allah (SWT) to commit such offensive acts?! Could the disobedience of Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SA) in this repugnant form, and the killing of Muslims, originate from individuals whom Allah (SWT) have cleansed and purified?! That is absolutely impossible!

This is a testimony from history itself which indicates that if we believe in the absolute, free, and independent will of Allah (SWT), then it could not be possible that the wives be the ones referred to in the purification verse. That is because one sin will affect all of them since the verses address the wives as a group, and the "purified individuals" are also referred to as a whole.

Hence, either all the wives are purified *or* none of them are purified. Based on the events that took place after the revelation of the purification verse, we can conclude that it is impossible and implausible that the wives of the Prophet (SA) be the ones referred to in the purification verse. Is there anything more clear from this irrefutable proof which the brain cannot help but accept?!

# Grammatical Alteration

The scrutinizer of the purification verse also finds that this verse in question deviates from the verses before and after it. There is no consistency in the speech of the speaker. Since the verses before the purification verse are directed to the wives of the Prophet (SA), Allah (SWT) uses the grammatical ending of “noon” which is often used in the Arabic language in reference to females. For example, Allah (SWT) uses this female-related suffix in the following words: *kontona, toredna, ta’alayna, umat’okona, usarehokona, menkona, lastona, itaqaytona, takhda’na, qolna, qarna, tabarogna, aqemna, atayna, ata’na, odhkorna, and boyootikona*. Those terms are used in all of the verses which address the wives of the Prophet (SA).

As for the purification verse, Allah (SWT) says in it, “*Innama yureed Allah leyudh-heb ‘ankom...*”. If the wives of the Prophet (SA) were really the ones referred to and addressed in this verse of purification, Allah (SWT) would have instead said, “*Inama yureed Allah leyudh-heb ‘ankon...*”, thus using the suffix “*noon*” which He used in all of the verses before and after the purification verse which was addressing the wives of the Prophet (SA).

Therefore, the lack of use of the suffix “noon” here in the purification verse as opposed to the verses before and after it, proves without any doubt that this verse does not address the wives at all, as was the case before and after it.

Or else, Allah (SWT) would have used the female suffix just like He used in the other verses, since it is communicating in the same context. So, why did Allah (SWT) modify His speech here, if it is not because the addressee have changed and are not anymore the wives? Rather, they are other individuals that include males, whom Allah (SWT) is referring to in the purification verse.

## Absence of Grammatical Conjunction

In addition, there does not exist any grammatical conjunction (*Harf ‘Atf*, and in the Arabic language, these tools are used to connect two sentences or phrases, or add them together; such tools include *wa, thumma, fa*, etc.) before the purification verse which would connect it with the statement before it. Neither do we find any indication whatsoever that this verse is a continuation to the one before it.

For example, Allah (SWT) does not say “*And Allah only wants to keep away the uncleanness from you...*” (*Wa inama yureedh Allah leyudh-heb ‘ankom al-regs*), or “*So, Allah only wants to keep the uncleanness from you...*” (*Fa inama yureedh Allah leyudh-heb ‘ankom al-regs*), or “*Allah only wants by*

that to keep the uncleanness from you...” (Inama yureedh Allah bedhalek leyudh–heb ‘ankom al–regs).

If Allah (SWT) stated any of that, the case would have been different and it would have been possible for the wives to be the ones addressed and referred to in the purification verse. But the absence of these grammatical tools of addition and connection indicates that individuals other than the wives are being addressed and referred to by this holy verse.

## Parenthetical Clause

If we accepted the verity of the statement that the purification verse refers to the wives of the Prophet (SA) based on its context, we will find that the purification verse here will turn into a parenthetical clause (Jumla E’teradiya). In other words, if you delete that verse from the group of verses surrounding it, you will find that it does not at all affect the verses and its flow of ideas and meaning is not interrupted because it is simply a parenthetical clause.

Indeed, if you try to recite all the verses without the purification verse, you will not find any difference at all in the context of the meaning, monologue, and speech. Rather, you will find that the flow of ideas presented is logical and this deletion does not affect the drift of verses which are as follows:

***“And stay in your houses and do not display your finery like the displaying of the ignorance of yore; and keep up prayer, and pay the poor–rate, and obey Allah and His Messenger. And keep to mind what is recited in your houses of the communications of Allah and the wisdom; surely Allah is Knower of subtleties, Aware.”***

So, do you find any difference or anything missing from these verses or not? Actually, there is no difference at all! Thus, if the purification verse were indeed addressing the wives of the Prophet (SA), then based on the observation that we just made, the purification verse would be a parenthetical clause (from a grammatical point of view). It would be an insignificant statement that would not affect the verses by its addition or deletion.

Can one ever imagine that such a great and important verse (which specifies to us the purified individuals whom we will use as our source of guidance and who will be our Imams, guides, and religious authorities) be a trivial statement that does not affect by its presence or absence?! Can such a verse that will determine the path and direction of Islam and the Muslims be insignificant within the context and structure of the other verses?!

This cannot be and it is illogical to be accepted by any mature and wise mind. The verse of purification cannot simply be a petty and pointless statement. And if it can’t be so, then it is also impossible for it to

be directing and referring to the wives of the Prophet (SA).

That is because we have already reached the conclusion that if the purification verse was referring to the wives of the Prophet (SA), then it has to be considered as a parenthetical clause since the context of the verses will force it to be so. But since it is not possible nor appropriate for this important verse to be trivial, this indicates to us a clear proof that this verse does **not** address the wives of the Prophet (SA). Rather, it addresses other individuals and completely eliminates the possibility that the wives are the ones referred to by this great, critical, and crucial verse to Islam and the Muslims.

## Relying on the Position of a Verse in the Qur'an

As for relying on the position or location of the purification verse in the Qur'an to support their argument (without providing any other evidence), they would be ignoring the fact that the verses of the Qur'an descended at different times and was not revealed all at once. Furthermore, a verse from the Qur'an or a word or phrase used to descend in different situations and different places.

These verses were later reorganized by the Holy Prophet (SA) and placed in its proper positions and Surahs, by the orders of Allah (SWT). Therefore, the mere presence of a verse in its position does not necessarily indicate a specific interpretation, except after turning back to the traditions of Rasulullah (SA) for verification.

Prophet Muhammad (SA) is the determiner in that, and he is the one who interprets, clarifies, and explicates the verses because according to Allah (SWT), he does not speak out of his own desire. As Allah (SWT) says in the Qur'an,

***"It is naught but revelation that is revealed."*** [53:4]

In addition, Rasulullah (SA) stated, *"The Qur'an has been revealed to me along with its interpretation and wisdom."* So if there is any doubt or question, one has to refer to the hadeeths and sayings of Rasulullah (SA) for clarification.

In this case, one should ask him/herself if there are any hadeeths narrated from Rasulullah (SA) that would support the claim of those who believe that the wives of the Prophet (SA) are the ones referred to by the purification verse. The truth is that there does *not* exist any such hadeeth, despite the fabrications and alterations that have been done in the narrations of Rasulullah (SA).

We do not even find one hadeeth, fabricated or not, that indicates that Rasulullah (SA) stated that "the purification verse in Surat Al-Ahzab refers to my wives." So, based on what do the advocates of this idea build their arguments on, except if they blindly interpret and say their own opinions about the Qur'an

simply based on the position and location of the verses.

This is forbidden (haraam) and prohibited because Allah (SWT) says,

***“None knows its interpretation except Allah and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge.” [3:7]***

Allah (SWT) also said, *“Those who enter into false discourses about our communications, without knowledge, without guidance, and without any opinionated interpretation that is not based on an illuminating book”.*

Along these lines, the Holy Prophet (SA) has stated, *“Whoever interprets the Qur’an with his own view and opinion, his interpretation is invalid even if it is right.”*

All the respected religious scholars of interpretation acknowledge that fact and act accordingly. They do not speculate or make a deduction based on solely the presence of a verse in its location, nor do they interpret except after referring to the traditions of Rasulullah (SA).

If they do not find such hadeeth, it is not their right or anyone’s to deduce or presume or speculate or interpret solely on the contents of the verses in the Qur’an. This is especially true if a controversy or doubt exists regarding that topic, and the proofs, evidence, or narrations from Rasulullah (SA) proved the exact opposite of what they argue. In that case, it is not their right to speculate, assume, or interpret after that.

## Meaning of “Ahl”

As for the argument that the “Ahlul-Bayt” (members of the household) of a man is known in the Arab community to be in reference to his wives, that is a big mistake. In the Arab community, the Ahlul-Bayt of a man refers to everyone living with him including his wives, sons, daughters, grandparents, and grandchildren.

The poems of the days of ignorance, the news reports, and the ancient Arab stories all indicate that. No one ever claimed that the “Ahlul-Bayt” of a man is only his wives. They are included in this expression, but it is *not* restricted to them. It is true that Allah (SWT) used the term “Ahlul-Bayt” when addressing Sarah, the wife of Abraham (AS). But He also used the term “Ahl” when referring to the sons of a man.

For instance, in response to Prophet Nuh (AS) when he cried out to Him,

***“Surely my son is of my family (Ahl).” [11:35]***

Allah (SWT) said,

***“Oh Nuh! Surely, he is not of your family, surely he is (the doer of) other than good deeds.”***

**[11:36]**

This indicates that the “Ahl” of a man may include his sons. Allah (SWT) also used this term in reference to the daughters of a man. For example, He said to Prophet Lut (AS),

***“So remove your family (Ahl) in a part of the night.” [11:81]***

And those whom Prophet Lut went with were his daughters while his wife perished with those who perished. Hence, the use of the terms “Ahl” and “Ahlul-Bayt” are not restricted to the wives.

In addition, Allah’s speech to Sarah, the wife of Abraham (AS) does not necessarily mean that she alone is meant by “Ahlul-Bayt”. He says to her,

***“The mercy of Allah and His blessing are on you, O People of the House.” [11:73]***

This verse refers to her, her husband, her expected newborn, all the sons of her husband, Hajar, Ismael (AS), and her grandchild, Ya’qoob (AS). All those individuals are considered to be the People of the House (Ahlul-Bayt) of Abraham (AS). So, why then, the intentional mistake of claiming that the Ahlul-Bayt of a man refers only to his wives? Why the wrong deduction and speculation on what the Angels has said to Sarah, the wife of Abraham (AS)?

## **What Does the Holy Prophet (SA) Say About This?**

There is yet another issue which we should address. We have reached the conclusion a little earlier that the verse of purification is of vital importance to us since it will reveal the pure and chaste source from which we as Muslims should use as our light, guidance, and leadership. Is it then logical considering all that importance for the fate and future of the Ummah, that Rasulullah (SA) abandon this great verse without making it clear to us whom it refers to?

He is the one who explains and interprets to us most of the verses in the Qur’an. Will he then stop here without guiding us and clarifying the interpretation of this very important verse? Would he leave this verse with an air of confusion and vagueness surrounding his Ummah, when he knows very well that it is as important as life is for them?

Is that possible or even imaginable?! It is absolutely unthinkable and illogical for that to happen!

Rather, what is and should be expected is for Rasulullah (SA) to explain, interpret, and clarify the meaning of this verse, and to identify and specify for us the purified individuals so that we don't become confused or mistaken about it.

Therefore, it is incumbent on us to search the narrations of Rasulullah (SA) to find if there are any authentic traditions existing that indicates without any doubt that the wives of the Prophet (SA) are indeed the ones referred to by the purification verse. If we do not find (and we will not find) any, then that is a clear proof that the wives are not the intended ones.

Moreover, what if we found numerous and successive hadeeths narrated by Rasulullah (SA) that indicates and specifies the purified individuals who are not the wives? This would indeed be even a stronger proof that the wives of the Prophet (SA) are *not* those purified individuals referred to by the purification verse, and are rather, totally eliminated from this reference<sup>1</sup>

## Regrouping & Reflecting

After extensively studying and analyzing the first possibility, do we find that our minds accept it? What conclusion do we reach which forces itself upon us after seeking it, finding it, and being sure of it? The mind, logic, faith, wisdom, proofs, and evidence all assure (without any doubt) the fact that this 1st possibility, which is often supported by many, is totally invalid and incorrect!

Not only that, but we also reach the important conclusion that the wives are excluded and eliminated from the possibility of being those referred to by the purification verse. It is not at all possible for them to even share in the reference or be from those purified individuals. It is as if the presence of the purification verse among the verses that addresses the wives of the Prophet (SA) made it even more clear and presented a stronger proof which proves the exact opposite of what some say!

Maybe if the purification verse was located elsewhere in the Qur'an in a different Surah, it might not have been possible to prove the elimination and exclusion of the wives of the Prophet (SA), as it was when this verse was positioned among the verses that was revealed in Surat Al-Ahzab. It is as if Allah (SWT) purposefully meant by its location to prove that the wives are **not** the ones intended or referred to by the purification verse. It is as if Allah (SWT) desired for us not to fall into that grave mistake which we would undoubtedly fall in, if this verse were revealed elsewhere in the Qur'an.

All praise and thanks be to Allah (SWT), the Lord of the Worlds who revealed the truth in His Book which does not get tainted by falsehood and is the source of guidance, clarification, and explanation for everything. The Holy Book which is a revelation from the Mighty and the Merciful, and which leaves no excuse after that for the nonbelievers, the rejecters, the stubborn, the foolish, the deniers, or the

hypocrites.

Since we've reached this logical conclusion about the wives of the Prophet (SA) and therefore excluded the first possibility, we can also eliminate the third possibility since it is without basis. The reason why is because this third possibility states that the purified individuals are the wives of the Prophet (SA) in addition to Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husain (AS).

## The Purified Progeny of the Holy Prophet (SA)

After eliminating the 1st and 3rd possibilities, what is left is the 2nd possibility and that is that the purified individuals referred to by the purification verse are specifically Ali ibn Abi Talib (AS), Fatima bint Muhammad (AS), Al-Hasan (AS), and Al-Husain (AS). Therefore, this is the *only* valid possibility left that can be accepted and believed by the mind and logic. In that case, there is no escape for us except to believe and surrender to this theory, especially if you added to it the well-known and authentic tradition of Al-Kisaa (the Cloak) and many other traditions that were narrated by the Holy Prophet (SA).

Those numerous and reliable hadeeths all indicate without any question or doubt that the purified individuals referred to and addressed by the purification verse, and by the term "Ahlul-Bayt" are none other than Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husain (Peace be upon all of them). It is expected and anticipated that Rasulullah (SA) would reveal, announce, and make that important matter clear to us.

It is only logical for him to identify and specify those purified individuals so that we can follow them, support them, abide by their instructions, and take them as an example for our way of life. This is exactly what Rasulullah (SA) did, and he did not specify any other individuals for this important role.

Therefore, what controversy or confusion is left after that? Except for those who are foolish, or those who returned back on their heels, or those who are stubborn and ungrateful to Allah's blessings; their fate is very unfortunate and they are not believers, nor are they considered to be Muslims.

In addition, it is to be known and kept in mind that during their lives (before and after the demise of Rasulullah up to the time of their deaths), Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husain (AS) were all great examples of purity, chastity, belief (iman), knowledge, certainty, faithfulness, loyalty, and counsel to Islam and the Muslims.

No fault, mistake, error, sin, indecency, or disobedience to Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SA) was ever known of them in any way or form. Their enemies and haters testify and bear witness to this even before their friends and followers. Not only that, but the history of Islam itself bear witness to all of that. No improper or inappropriate behavior was ever exhibited from them which would remove them from



their status of purity that Allah (SA) specified them with.

Therefore, this is yet another proof that Allah's desire and will was indeed carried out, completed, and accomplished. This makes sense because what Allah (SWT) desires will be done as it was done for them. They became purified and cleansed, as indicated in the verse and by the will of Allah (SWT).

Their purification is a reality, practicality, and actuality in this life in front of all eyes, all Muslims, and all of history. This proves that the aim and goal of the purification verse was successfully accomplished and fulfilled with those five purified souls. Therefore, this is the biggest proof that the verse was revealed in reference to them (Peace be upon them).

Throughout the whole Qur'an, we don't find one verse that corrected these five purified individuals, threatened, warned or reprimanded them about anything. Rather, we find the exact opposite! We find many verses praising them and giving glad tidings to them about their high position and great status. We find verses that order us to support them, obey them, and take them as our guardians, without doing so with others.

Doesn't this fit perfectly with the status of purity? Doesn't this indicate that they are *indeed* pure such that they attained all that praise, recognition, high rank, and uniqueness from Allah (SWT) which no one else attained (other than the prophets and messengers)? So, who would be the purified ones who were intended by this verse, if those five were not them?

Oh men of understanding and the Muslim Ummah, is there any doubt or question left in your mind that Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husain (AS) are the members of the household referred to in the purification verse, and that they are truly the ones whom Allah (SWT) purified and kept away sins from? Truthful is Allah the Great; truthful is His promise; He fulfilled His will and completed His desire, and praise be to Him, the Lord of the Worlds!

## Conclusion

By His Mercy and Generosity, Allah (SWT) have created for this Ummah a purified source, and created for it a clean fountainhead for it to use and cleanse itself with. But unfortunately, the Ummah refused and insisted on searching for every other malignant, stagnant, and polluted water to drink from, and therefore, increase in uncleanness, filthiness and misguidance! What a big shame?!

Not only that, but the Ummah weren't satisfied with their decision. They tried to wipe out and eradicate the purified source and sought to disparage, tarnish, and dehydrate this purified stream of water which Allah (SWT) blessed us with! However, they were not able to do that because Allah (SWT) will perfect

His Light, though the nonbelievers may be averse. Allah (SWT) is the one who cleansed and purified this source by His desire and will which shall continue to stay in its purified and chaste form through the times and age.

It will be available for those who want to use, take advantage of, and cleanse themselves with it, thus meeting Allah (SWT) with a good heart. This will be so until Allah (SWT) inherits the Earth, and truthful is Allah, the Great when He said,

***“Surely, We have revealed the Reminder and We will most surely be its guardian.” [15:9]***

With His Wisdom and Desire, Allah (SWT) has willed that the purification verse become a test and temptation to the people. So, He placed it in that specific location in Surat Al-Ahzab. It is a fitna (test) that is passed only by those who truly believe in Allah (SWT) and His Messenger without being obstinate, making lies, being hypocritical, or following their carnal desires.

It is passed by those who are not fanatic and do not fall as a victim of their own foolishness and narrow-mindedness. As for those who fail this great test, they are the stubborn, the hypocrites, the liars, the fanatics, the disbelievers, and the foolish from this Ummah.

There is absolutely no excuse whatsoever for those who fail this test, especially since the truth was made clear, vivid, and was revealed for all ages to come. It is not at all hard for us to understand the truth, especially since Rasulullah (SA) explained it and made clear to us the truth from falsehood, the right from wrong, and the light from darkness. After that, whoever wishes to take advantage and use this purified source which Allah (SWT) Himself have purified by His own free will, let him/her do so.

Whomsoever Allah (SWT) guides, he is the rightly guided one, and whomsoever He causes to err, you shall not find for him any friend to lead him to the right way. It is not Allah (SWT) who is unjust to them; rather they were unjust to their own selves. Whoever goes astray or disbelieves, or is uncompromising, or lies, will not at all hurt Allah (SWT) in any way or form, for surely He is Self-Sufficient and above any need of the worlds, and He will reward the thankful.

Those who act unjustly shall know to what final place of turning they shall turn back, and the end is for those who guard against evil. Peace and prayers be upon the most dignified of messengers, Muhammad, and his purified progeny, Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husain (AS), who have all been purified by the word and will of Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, despite the jealous, the rejecters, the deniers, the envious, the foolish, the obstinate, the liars, and the nonbelievers. May Allah’s curse be upon all those who are unjust, and praise is to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds!

---

**Source URL:**

<https://www.al-islam.org/ayat-ut-tatheer-whom-does-purification-verse-refer-dr-hatem-abu-shahba>

## Links

- [1] <https://www.al-islam.org/user/login?destination=node/10742%23comment-form>
- [2] <https://www.al-islam.org/user/register?destination=node/10742%23comment-form>
- [3] <https://www.al-islam.org/person/dr-hatem-abu-shahba>
- [4] <https://www.al-islam.org/person/jerrmein-abu-shahba>
- [5] <https://www.al-islam.org/library/prophet-muhammad>
- [6] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/al-ahzaab>
- [7] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/purification>
- [8] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/verse>
- [9] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/sunni-shia>
- [10] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/reasoning>
- [11] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/tradition>
- [12] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/context>
- [13] <https://www.al-islam.org/feature/introducing-ahlul-bayt>