

27. Hadith Al-Tair, Examining Some Shawahid

The *hadith* proves that Amir al-Muminin, '*alaihi al-salam*, is the most beloved of all creatures to Allah after His Messenger, *sallallahu 'alaihi wa alihi*. This goes directly counter to the claims of the majority of the Ahl al-Sunnah that Abu Bakr, after the Prophet, is the most beloved to Allah in this Ummah. Therefore, a lot of their '*ulama* struggle hard to bring down *Hadith al-Tair* in order to salvage their sect from collapse or confusion. So, they bring up a lot of "ifs" and "maybes" without ever presenting any explicit, *positive* evidence for their claims. Meanwhile, apart from the *hadith*, there are numerous other proofs which nullify the Sunni position. Let us have a look at some of them.

We start with the Verse of *al-Mubahala*:

فمن حاجك فيه من بعد ما جاءك من العلم فقل تعالوا ندع أبناءنا وأبنائكم
ونسائنا ونسائكم وأنفسنا وأنفسكم ثم نبتهل فنجعل لعنت الله على الكاذبين

And whoever disputes with you concerning him after what has come to you of knowledge, then say: "Come, let us call *our* sons and your sons, *our* women and your women, *ourselves* and yourselves, then we place the Curse of Allah upon the liars."¹

It is clear from the verse that some people were debating with the Prophet, opposing what had been revealed to him from his Lord. The Qur'an is explicit: the debate was with the Messenger of Allah *alone*. It was not with the Ummah. The "yous" in the verse, as well as the phrase "say", are all singular. Therefore, all the "ours" in it are exclusive to the Prophet. "Our sons", for instance, do not mean the "sons of the Ummah".

Rather, they were *his* sons. His opponents were refusing to accept the Truth which he had brought from his Lord. So, he was commanded to challenge them to a *mubahala*, where each side would invoke the Curse of Allah upon "whoever" was lying in his claims between the two sides. A condition of the *mubahala* was that each party must participate in it with his sons and women. As such, the effect of the

curse would affect the wrong disputant along with his sons and women.

The question is – why did the Qur'an name the “sons” and “women” as compulsory participants? The reason is apparent. A man usually cares most for himself, his sons, his daughters and his wives. He would not want any harm to come their way. Therefore, if he must involve himself *and* them together in a *mubahala*, he is most likely to think twice, and to withdraw from it if he has the slightest doubt in his claims. Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 H) agrees:

والنفوس تحنوا على أقاربها ما لا تحنوا على غيرهم وكانوا يعلمون انه رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم ويعلمون انهم ان باهلوه نزلت البهلة عليهم وعلى أقاربهم واجتمع خوفهم على أنفسهم وعلى أقاربهم فكان ذلك أبلغ في امتناعهم وإلا فالإنسان قد يختار أن يهلك ويحيا ابنه والشيخ الكبير قد يختار الموت إذا بقي أقاربه في نعمة ومال وهذا موجود كثير

The hearts (lit: the souls) care for their closest people what they do not care for others. They (the non-Muslim disputants) knew that he was the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, and they knew that if they did *mubahala* with him, curse would descend upon them and upon their closest people. So, their fear over themselves became combined with their fear over their closest people.

This caused their withdrawal (from the *mubahala*). Otherwise, the human being prefers to lose his life in order to save his son from death (if the need arises). Moreover, the old man prefers death if his closest people will be in comfort and wealth. And this is very common.²

In simple words, each party in the *mubahala* was to involve in it the people *closest* to his heart, those people whom he cared most for. So, who were the *closest* persons to the heart of the Messenger of Allah during his lifetime? This is where trouble sets in for our dear Shaykh:

فعلم انه أراد الأقربين إلينا من الذكور والإناث من الأولاد والعصبة

ولهذا دعا الحسن والحسين من الأبناء ودعا فاطمة من النساء ودعا عليا من رجاله ولم يكن عنده أحد أقرب إليه نسبا من هؤلاء وهم الذين أدار عليهم الكساء والمباهلة إنما تحصل بالأقربين إليه وإلا فلو بأهلهم بالابعدين في النسب وان كانوا أفضل عند الله لم يحصل المقصود فان المراد انهم يدعون الأقربين

كما يدعوا هو الأقرب إليه

Know that He (Allah in the Verse of *al-Mubahala*) intended the closest people to us – males and females – from the children and the blood relatives. **This was why he called al-Hasan and al-Husayn from the sons and called Faṭimah from the women and called ‘Ali from his men. There was no one else who was closer to him, in terms of blood relationship, than these people.**

They were those over whom he spread the *kisa* (cloak), **AND THE MUBAHALA WOULD ONLY SUCCEED THROUGH THE CLOSEST OF PEOPLE TO HIM.** Otherwise, if they (both parties) had done it with their distant blood relatives, even if such had been superior in the Sight of Allah, its purpose would have been defeated. **This was because the intention was that they (the non-Muslim party) should call their closest people, as he (Muhammad) should also call the closest people to him.**³

So, ‘Ali, Fatimah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn, *‘alaihim al-salam*, were the closest people to the Prophet’s heart. He cared for them more than he did for anyone else on the face of the earth. At the practical level, the Messenger of Allah, for instance, cared more for ‘Ali than he did for Abu Bakr and ‘Umar! He equally cared more for *Umm Abiha* Faṭimah than he did for Umm al-Muminin ‘Aishah. If this had not been the case, then the *mubahala* challenge would have been worthless, as the non-Muslim opponents were directed to summon people closest to their hearts. For a proper *mubahala*, things had to be equal on both sides.

Our Shaykh asserts that the Messenger’s care for ‘Ali, Faṭimah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn was based upon their blood relationship to him. He however misses the fact that al-‘Abbas was legally a *closer* blood relative to the Prophet than ‘Ali! This is why the right of the uncle to inherit overrules that of the cousin, as Imam al-Hakim (d. 403 H) states:

ولا خلاف بين أهل العلم إن ابن العم لا يرث مع العم

There is no difference of opinion among the scholars that the cousin cannot inherit with the presence of the uncle.⁴

Therefore, if the Prophet was choosing people on the basis of their blood closeness to him, he would have picked al-‘Abbas – who was already a practising Muslim then – and not ‘Ali. Alternatively, he could have selected both al-‘Abbas and ‘Ali, and possibly some other cousins like Ibn ‘Abbas. Sensing the frailty of his own submission, Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah attempts to apply some cosmetics to it:

وآية المباهلة نزلت سنة عشر لما قدم وفد نجران ولم يكن النبي صلى الله عليه

و سلم قد بقي من أعمامه إلا العباس والعباس لم يكن من السابقين الأولين ولا
كان له به اختصاص كعلي و أما بنو عمه فلم يكن فيهم مثل علي وكان جعفر
قد قتل قبل ذلك

The Verse of *al-Mubahala* was revealed in 10 AH when the delegation of Najran arrived. The Prophet, peace be upon him, had no other uncle other than al-‘Abbas then, and al-‘Abbas was not among the early converts to Islam, and did not have the exclusive qualities of ‘Ali. As for his (i.e. the Prophet’s) cousins, none of them was like ‘Ali, and Ja’far had been killed before then.⁵

Here, our Shaykh contradicts his other position. Was the choice of the Prophet for the participants in the *mubahala* from his side based solely upon their blood relationship to him or upon their individual merits? A question also arises as to why ‘Aishah and all other wives of the Prophet were excluded. After all, the word used in the Verse of *al-Mubahala* is *nisa*, which literally means “women”.

As such, it covered *both* wives and daughters. In fact, everywhere else in the Qur’an, the phrase “women (*nisa*) of the Prophet” *always* referred to his wives⁶! In addition, in over 90% of cases, the word “women (*nisa*)” in the Book of Allah means “wives”⁷. So, it is safe to conclude that the phrase “our women” in the Verse of *al-Mubahala* is addressed *first* to the wives, and *then* to the daughters. Our Sunni brothers have never been able to explain why the wives were not called to join in the *mubahala*.

In any case, none of the wives of the Prophet – and they were also his primary “women” – was from his closest blood relatives. That would have been incest anyway, and therefore impossible. The fact that the word “women” has been used in the verse, and not “daughters”, strengthens the theory that the selection process was NOT based upon blood relationship. Allah Himself selected the people whom He knew to be the closest to the heart of His Messenger to participate with him in the *mubahala*. He mentioned the categories to which they belonged, deliberately leaving them open *for a clear point*. Then the Prophet filled in the names. Imam al-Hakim (d. 403 H) declares:

وقد تواترت الاخبار في التفاسير عن عبد الله بن عباس وغيره أن رسول الله
صلى الله عليه وسلم أخذ يوم المباهلة بيد علي وحسن وحسين وجعلوا فاطمة
وراءهم ثم قال هؤلاء أبناءنا وأنفسنا نساؤنا فهلّموا أنفسكم وأبناءكم ونساءكم ثم
نبتهل فنجعل لعنة الله على الكاذبين

There have been *mutawatir* reports in the *tafsir* books from ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Abbas and others that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, on the Day of *al-Mubahala*, held the hands of ‘Ali, Hasan and Husayn, and they positioned Faṭimah behind them. Then he said, “**These are our sons, ourselves**

and our women. So, bring yourselves, your sons and your women. Then we do *mubahala* and place the Curse of Allah upon the liars (among us).”⁸

Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah corroborates him:

وأما آية الإبتهال ففي الصحيح أنها لما نزلت أخذ النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم بيد علي وفاطمة وحسن وحسين ليباهل بهم لكن خصهم بذلك لأنهم كانوا أقرب إليه من غيرهم فإنه لم يكن ولد ذكر إذ ذاك يمشي معه ولكن كان يقول عن الحسن إن ابني هذا سيد فهما ابناه ونساؤه إذ لم يكن قد بقي له بنت إلا فاطمة رضي الله عنها

As for the Verse of *al-Ibtihal* (another word for *al-Mubahala*), what is narrated **in the *sahih* (hadith)** is that when it was revealed, the Prophet, peace be upon him, held the hand of ‘Ali, Faḥimah, Hasan and Husayn to do *mubahala* with them (against the Najranis). **However, he limited that to them because they were the closest of all people to him.**

This was because he did not have a son who would have walked with him. However, he used to say about al-Hasan, “This son of mine is a master”. Therefore, both of them (i.e. al-Hasan and al-Husayn) were his sons. As for his women, he had no other surviving daughter except Faḥimah, may Allah be pleased with her.⁹

Well, the Prophet had other “women”, such as ‘Aishah, Hafsa, Umm Salamah, and several others. Why did he not call them?

No doubt, the people that the Messenger of Allah cared most for were ‘Ali, Faḥimah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn. Luckily, by Allah’s Mercy, these people – who were the closest to his heart – fell into the same categories as what obtains in most similar cases. Therefore, it was possible to organize a *mubahala* with the Najrani delegation on the same terms. There is a particular point on the word “ourselves”.

It is represented by two people, namely the Prophet and Amir al-Muminin, in the *mubahala*. The obvious implication of this is that the Messenger of Allah cared of ‘Ali at the same level as he cared for himself. In other words, Imam ‘Ali was as close to the heart of the Prophet as the latter himself was to his own heart. This was why it was possible for Amir al-Muminin to fit into the same category as the Messenger in the *mubahala*.

Of course, when someone is close to your heart and you care for them, that is love! So, the most beloved of mankind to the Prophet of Allah were ‘Ali, Faḥimah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn, and this is confirmed by the Qur’an. Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah would have us believe that this love was based only

upon blood relationship. However, Imam Ahmad (d. 241 H) records:

حدثنا عبد الله حدثني أبي ثنا إسماعيل ثنا ليث عن عمرو بن مرة عن معاوية بن سويد بن مقرن عن البراء بن عازب قال كنا جلوسا عند النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم فقال ... ان أوسط عرى الإيمان ان تحب في الله وتبغض في الله

‘Abd Allah (b. Ahmad) – my father (Ahmad b. Hanbal) – Isma’il – Layth – ‘Amr b. Marrah – Mu’awiyah b. Suwayd b. Muqarran – al-Bara b. ‘Azim:

We were sitting with the Prophet, peace be upon him, and he said ... “Verily, **the central handhold of faith (*iman*) is that you love for the sake of Allah** and that you hate for the sake of Allah.”¹⁰

Shaykh al-Arnau⁹ says:

حديث حسن بشواهده

It is a *hadith* that is *hasan* through its witnesses.¹¹

‘Allamah al-Albani (d. 1420 H) also records this *hadith*:

إن أوثق عرى الإسلام: أن تحب في الله و تبغض في الله

Verily, **the strongest handhold of Islam is that you love for the sake of Allah** and hate for the sake of Allah.¹²

The ‘Allamah states:

حسن

*Hasan*¹³

Is there anyone with a better faith (*iman*), or who is a better Muslim, than the Messenger of Allah? Of course, there is none! Therefore, his love for ‘Ali, Fa’imah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn was purely *for the sake of Allah*. They were the most beloved creatures to Allah after His Messenger. So, he loved them

too more than everyone else. Our Lord also loves Amir al-Muminin ‘Ali b. Abi Talib more than Faṭimah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn. As such, His Prophet loved ‘Ali as he loved himself. These facts were *very* widely known throughout the Islamic world during the Messenger’s lifetime.

Even non-Muslims were aware of the names of the most beloved human beings to Muhammad. This was why the Najrani delegation raised no objection whatsoever to anyone in the Prophet’s team for the *mubahala*. They knew that those were the closest people to his heart, whom he cared for most, above everyone else. As such, they were the perfect and the only valid selection for the *mubahala* from his side.

The Messenger was absolutely trustworthy. He never would have cheated. Since he expected the other side to involve their most beloved people in the *mubahala* – in line with the rules of the game, he too would certainly have done like that. Moreover, if it had been known that there had been other people more beloved to him than his team, his own followers would have suspected the truth of his prophethood and his personal honesty. Otherwise, why would he need to cheat if he was correct in his claims? What would he have been afraid of?

Besides, the Najrani delegation too would have objected to his selection. They would have firmly demanded for an equal playing field. Since all parties were required to bring the most beloved of people to them into the *mubahala*, why should the Prophet do otherwise? In fact, it was most probably what convinced them to opt out of the *mubahala*. Muhammad would *never* have involved his team in it – knowing the implications – unless he was absolutely truthful in his claims. The Najrani delegation, on their part, never dared involve their own teams, since they had doubts about their submissions!

As expected, Umm al-Muminin ‘Aishah was not happy about the state of things, and did challenge the Messenger of Allah on it. Al-Hafiz (d. 852 H) states:

وأخرج أحمد وأبو داود والنسائي بسند صحيح عن النعمان بن بشير قال
استأذن أبو بكر على النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فسمع صوت عائشة عاليا وهي
تقول والله لقد علمت أن عليا أحب إليك من أبي

Ahmad, Abu Dawud and al-Nasai have recorded **with a *sahih* chain** from al-Nu’man b. Bashir:

Abu Bakr sought permission to enter the house of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and heard the voice of ‘Aishah, very loud, and she was saying (to the Prophet), “**I have known that ‘Ali is more beloved to you than my father.**”¹⁴

Imam Ahmad also has this:

حدثنا عبد الله حدثني أبي ثنا أبو نعيم ثنا يونس ثنا العيزار بن حريث قال قال
النعمان بن بشير قال استأذن أبو بكر على رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم
فسمع صوت عائشة عاليا وهي تقول والله لقد عرفت ان عليا أحب إليك من
أبي ومنى مرتين أو ثلاثا فاستأذن أبو بكر فدخل فأهوى إليها فقال يا بنت فلانة
الا أسمعك ترفعين صوتك على رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم

‘Abd Allah (b. Ahmad) – my father (Ahmad b. Hanbal) – Abu Na’im – Yunus – al-‘Ayzar b. Hurayth – al-
Nu’mān b. Bashir:

Abu Bakr sought the permission of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, to enter his house, and heard the voice of ‘Aishah, very loud. She was saying, **“I swear by Allah, I have discovered that ‘Ali is more beloved to you than my father and me.”** She said it twice or thrice. So, Abu Bakr sought permission (again) and entered, and reached for her, and said, “O daughter of such-and-such woman! Did I hear you raising your voice upon the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him?”¹⁵

Shaykh al-Arnau[®] says:

إسناده حسن

Its chain is *hasan*.¹⁶

Apparently, the Prophet had tried to conceal the matter from her due to her notorious jealousy. But, it was too obvious, especially after the Incident of *al-Mubahala*. So, she went on the offensive, and never relented thereafter. Eventually, she commanded a very bloody armed insurrection against Amir al-Muminin during his *khilafah*, and thousands of Muslims died tragically as a result. It is very significant that the Messenger of Allah did not deny her claim. If she was wrong, he would have told her.

Yet, despite that, Umm al-Muminin ‘Aishah continued to re-write history after the death of the Messenger. ‘Allamah al-Albani reports her:

فقال الإمام أحمد (6/241) : حدثنا عبد الواحد الحداد عن كهمس عن عبد الله
بن شقيق، قال: قلت لعائشة: أي الناس كان أحب إلى رسول الله صلى الله
عليه وسلم؟ قالت: عائشة، قلت: فمن الرجال؟ قالت: أبوها ."

Imam Ahmad (6/241) records: ‘Abd al-Wahid al-Hadad – Kahmas – ‘Abd Allah b. Shaqiq:

I said to ‘Aishah, “Which of mankind was the most beloved to the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him?” ‘Aishah said, “Aishah”. I said, “What about among the men?” She replied, “Her father.”¹⁷

The ‘Allamah states:

قلت: وهذا إسناده صحيح رجاله كلهم ثقات رجال الصحيح.

I say: **This chain is *sahih***. Its narrators are trustworthy, narrators of the *Sahih*.¹⁸

Is that not strange? Despite “knowing” and “discovering” what she did, she still went ahead to claim this! Meanwhile, was she really the best of *mankind* after the Messenger of Allah as she was telling people? Besides, why did the Prophet exclude her from the *mubahala* despite that she was one of his “women”? Was ‘Aishah telling the people that the Messenger cheated?!!

1. Qur’an 3:61

2. Abu al-‘Abbas Ahmad b. ‘Abd al-Halim b. Taymiyyah al-Harrani, Minhaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah (Muassasat Qurtubah; 1st edition, 1406 H) [annotator: Dr. Muhammad Rashad Salim], vol. 7, p. 126

3. Ibid, vol. 7, p. 125

4. Abu ‘Abd Allah Muhammad b. ‘Abd Allah al-Hakim al-Naysaburi, al-Mustadrak ‘ala al-‘Ahihayn (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1411 H) [annotator: Mustafa ‘Abd al-Qadir ‘Ata], vol. 3, p. 136, # 4634

5. Abu al-‘Abbas Ahmad b. ‘Abd al-Halim b. Taymiyyah al-Harrani, Minhaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah (Muassasat Qurtubah; 1st edition, 1406 H) [annotator: Dr. Muhammad Rashad Salim], vol. 7, p. 126

6. See for instance, Qur’an 33:30, 33:32

7. The word nisa (women) has been used in the following verses: 2:49, 2:187, 2:222–223, 2:226, 2:231–232, 2:235–236, 3:14, 3:42, 3:61, 4:1, 4:3–4, 4:7, 4:11, 4:15, 4:19, 4:22–24, 4:32, 4:34, 4:43, 4:75, 4:98, 4:127, 4:129, 4:176, 5:6, 7:81, 7:127, 7:141, 12:30, 12:50, 14:6, 24:31, 24:60, 27:55, 28:4, 33:30, 33:32, 33:52, 33:55, 33:59, 40:25, 48:25, 49:11, 58:2–3, 65:1 and 65:4.

8. Abu ‘Abd Allah Muhammad b. ‘Abd Allah al-Hafiz al-Naysaburi, Kitab Ma’rifah ‘Ulum al-Hadith (Beirut: Manshurah Dar al-‘Ifaq al-Hadith; 4th edition, 1400 H) [annotator: Sayyid Mu’zam Husayn], p. 50

9. Abu al-‘Abbas Ahmad b. ‘Abd al-Halim b. Taymiyyah al-Harrani, Minhaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah (Muassasat Qurtubah; 1st edition, 1406 H) [annotator: Dr. Muhammad Rashad Salim], vol. 4, p. 27

10. Abu ‘Abd Allah Ahmad b. Hanbal al-Shaybani, Musnad (Cairo: Muassasat Qurtubah) [annotator: Shu’ayb al-Arnaut], vol. 4, p. 286, # 18547

11. Ibid

12. Abu ‘Abd al-Rahman Muhammad Nasir al-Din b. al-Hajj Nuh b. Tajati b. ‘Adam al-Ashqudri al-Albani, ‘Ahih al-Jami’ al-‘Aghir wa Ziyadatuhu (Al-Maktab al-Islami), vol. 1, p. 342, # 883 (2009)

13. Ibid

14. Shihab al-Din Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani, Fath al-Bari Sharh ‘Ahih al-Bukhari (Beirut: Dar al-Ma’rifah li al-‘Aba’ah wa al-Nashr; 2nd edition), vol. 7, p. 19

15. Abu ‘Abd Allah Ahmad b. Hanbal al-Shaybani, Musnad (Cairo: Muassasat Qurtubah) [annotator: Shu’ayb al-Arnaut],

vol. 4, p. 275, # 18444

16. Ibid

17. Muhammad Nasir al-Din b. al-Hajj Nuh al-Albani, *Silsilah al-Ahadith al-ḥaṣiḥah wa al-Mawdu'ah wa Athariḥah al-Sayyiah fi al-Ummah* (Riyadh: Dar al-Ma'arif; 1st edition, 1412 H), vol. 3, p. 254, # 1124

18. Ibid

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