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Superior Position of The Ahlulbayt

وَقَالَ : اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنَّ هٰؤُلَاءِ اَهْلُ بَيْتِيْ وَ خَاصَّتِيْ وَ حَامَّتِيْ ، لَحْمُهُمْ لَحْمِيْ وَ دَمُهُمْ
دَمِيْ

And he prayed, "O Allah! These are my true household, my unique people, and my kin. Their flesh is my flesh; their blood is my blood,

The Prophet (SA) raises his hand to pray and directs his words to Allah (SWT) as he announces that the individuals under the cloak are indeed his AhlulBayt (members of his household) and that they are his special ones and from his kin. As we have learned so far, the members who are under the cloak are Ali his cousin, Fatima his daughter, and Hasan and Husain who are his grandsons.

Surely, any person can understand that the relations of cousin, daughter, and grandsons are kin-related and considered to be family and members of a household. Then why does the Prophet (SA) need to emphasize the obvious in this case? Furthermore, isn't Allah (SWT) All-Aware of the identity of the individuals under the cloak and their relation to the Prophet (SA)?

Surely the Prophet (SA) does not act out of his own will nor personal desire and every action of his is filled with divine wisdom and insight. Yes, the words he is uttering is addressing his Lord, but it is in reality directed to us – the Muslims and all those who will encounter and recite this narration in the future. History records that there has indeed been a controversy over whom exactly are the “Ahlul-Bayt” of the Holy Prophet (SA). The question begs itself why is it so important to know and identify who exactly are AhlulBayt referring to and whom does it exclude.

Knowing exactly who AhlulBayt are becomes a very vital matter when one considers the following tradition of the Prophet (SA) as well as many other traditions which unequivocally state that adherence to AhlulBayt is the only way of salvation:

"It seems the time approached when I shall be called away (by Allah) and I shall answer that call. I am leaving for you two precious things and if you adhere to them both, you will never go astray after me. They are the Book of Allah and my Progeny, which is my Ahlul-Bayt. The two shall never separate from each other until they come to me by the Pool (of Paradise)."

We all know what the Holy Qur'an is, however, we need to ascertain who exactly are the "AhlulBayt" mentioned in this this authentic narration whose importance are obvious by virtue of their association to the divine Book.

There are two major opinions regarding the identity of the Prophet's "AhlulBayt". The mainstream opinion is that the AhlulBayt includes the Prophets daughter (Fatima), grandsons (Hasan and Husain), his cousin Ali and his wives.

However, the Shi'a school of thought is of the opinion that the household of the Prophets refers only to Fatima, Ali, Hasan, and Husain, and the nine descendants of Imam Husain (not including the wives of the Prophet). Of course, at the time of the Holy Prophet only five of them (including the Prophet) were alive and the rest were not born yet.

The authentic *Tradition of the Cloak* is one of the key proofs which settles this argument via the words of the Holy Prophet (SA) as he clearly identifies the AhlulBayt by saying *أَهْلُ بَيْتِي أَللَّهُمَّ إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ* (O Allah! These are my true household) after they have entered under the cloak.

The Prophet (SA) further mentions that *"they are my خاصتي unique people, and my حامتي kin."* The Arabic word *خاصتي* is related to the derivative words *خصوص* (khusoos) and *مخصوص* (makhssoos) which means special. And the word *حامتي* is related to the Arabic word *يحمي* which means to protect. Hence, when the Prophet (SA) says the AhlulBayt are my *حامتي*, it means they are my "protectors" or those who care very much for him such that they would do anything to defend him.

This behavior is typical with family members and that is certainly the case with the Household of the Prophet (SA) but to a much higher degree. With the Prophet's testimony that those under the cloak are his special and unique ones and they are his kin, this description gives assurance and elaboration to his first statement that they are his true household (AhlulBayt).

Thereafter, the Prophet (SA) continues to describe the status of the *Members of the Cloak* whom he has defined to be his AhlulBayt, his kin, and his special ones. *"Their flesh (لحم) is my flesh and their blood (دم) is my blood."* This is a very profound statement which exceeds the literal meaning.

The obvious meaning indicates that the AhlulBayt belong to the same origin as the Prophet (SA) as they share the same flesh and blood – and this is an indication of family relations. One may wonder why the Prophet (SA) is emphasizing this fact when no one can deny that his daughter, cousin, and grandsons are related to him by blood and flesh.

But it is not any flesh and any blood that is being mentioned now. The individuals under the cloak are being associated with the flesh and blood of the Holy Prophet and the Seal of Messengers, Prophet Muhammad who is the best of creation in the eyes of the Creator! What great honor and blessing is that?

Shouldn't we pause here to reflect on this reality and conclude what should be concluded? In fact, it is not distant blood relation where a person may be related to a person distantly. Rather, it is direct and immediate relation where the pure blood of the Prophet (SA) is directly transferred physically in the bodies of the holy AhlulBayt (AS) which also carries with it the spiritual purity as Allah (SWT) has willed.

Furthermore, we should be cognizant of the fact that the Prophet (SA) shares the same blood and flesh as his household because they are all created from the same light and from the same origin as cited in many narrations such as the Prophetic statement,

خلق الله الناس من أشجار شتى وخلقني وأنت (يا علي) من شجرة واحدة.

"Allah created the people from different trees and He created me and you (Oh Ali) from the same tree."

In the books *Musnad* by Ibn Hanbal and *Manaqib* by Ibn Maghazili, the Prophet (SA) is recorded to have said, *"I and Ali Bin Abi Talib both were a single light in the presence of Allah 14,000 years before the creation of Adam. When Allah created Adam, he deposited that light in Adam's loins. We remained together as one light until we separated in Abul-Muttalib's loins. Then I was endowed with Prophethood and Ali with the caliphate."*

The words "flesh" and "blood" are selectively used by the Prophet (SA) as the example in the *Tradition of the Cloak* although we understand that all the body parts are also from the same origin and developed from the flesh and blood of the Prophet. After all, a fetus is developed from a drop of semen which is formed from the blood in the veins and mixed with flesh, which is also the origin. Hence, all of the *Members of the Cloak* come from the shared origin of the Prophet (SA).

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