

Epistemological Foundations of the Impossibility of Comparing Others with the Ahl al-Bayt (as)

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(Received: July 30, 2026, Accepted: August 20, 2026)

Abstract

The Ahl al-Bayt (as) possess such an elevated status that, according to both Shia and Sunni sources, comparing others with them is impossible and explicitly prohibited by traditions (*Aḥādith*). Due to this incomparability, specific jurisprudential rulings distinguish them from the Ummah. These include: their Wilāyah being a condition for faith and accepting deeds; invoking blessings (*Ṣalawāt*) upon them in prayer; the prohibition of receiving charity (*Ṣadaqah*); the exclusive allocation of Khums and Anfal; the prohibition of entering their presence in ritual impurity; and the death penalty for insulting them (*Sabb*). This incomparability is founded on their unique position in the ontological order (*Nizām al-Takwīn*). Consequently, recognizing these epistemological foundations is necessary to conceptually accept these premises. The most significant foundations for their incomparability include being the proofs of Allah (*Hujaj Allah*), possessors of divine rulings, absolute vicegerents (*Khalīfah al-Tammah*), manifestations of Allah's supreme attributes, and intermediaries of grace (*Wasā'it al-Fayḍ*). Furthermore, the Ahl al-Bayt serve as the exact equivalent to the Messenger of Allah, the speaking Qur'an (Qur'an al-Natiq), and Allah's most proximate chosen servants.

Keywords: Ahl al-Bayt (as), Comparison with the Ahl al-Bayt (as), Epistemological Foundations, Impossibility of Comparison, Prohibition of Comparison.

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1. Introduction

The unique position of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) in the cosmic order, their relationship with God Almighty, the Messenger, and the Book, alongside the exceptional sanctity they hold before the Lawgiver (*Shāri'*), indicate that these noble figures are subject to specific rulings. Any speech or action attributed to them, as well as any interaction or reaction concerning them, is measured on a distinct and unparalleled scale compared to the rest of creation. Just as in the sacred law (*Sharīah*), the greater the recognized rights, respect, and sanctity of an individual, the higher the Lawgiver's expectation regarding the manner and nature of behavior toward them. This reaches a point where the Lawgiver does not tolerate insulting behavior, desecration, or the slightest degree of injustice toward certain possessors of rights and sanctity (*Dhawī al-Ḥuquq wa al-Iḥtirām*), issuing specific commands and prohibitions concerning them and establishing correspondingly severe punishments. For instance, regarding parents, the Lawgiver does not consent to the utterance of even the slightest word that causes them distress, explicitly prohibiting the saying of "Uff" and identifying it as a cause for parental disownment (*'Aaq al-Walīdayn*). By a *fortiori* argument (*Ṭarīq al-Awlā*), when such commands are given regarding physical parents, a higher expectation applies to spiritual parents who hold the right of guidance over the people. It is expected that the Lawgiver has established far more stringent rulings regarding the possessors of the greatest rights over the people—namely, the Prophet and the Imams. Therefore, regarding His Messenger, Allah prohibited raising voices in his presence and did not even consent to him being addressed like ordinary individuals, declaring that such actions would render one's deeds void (*Ḥabṭ al-A'māl*). "O you who have believed, do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet or be loud to him in speech like the loudness of some of you to others, lest your deeds become worthless while you perceive not" (*Ḥujurāt*, 2).

2. The Impossibility of Comparing Others with the Ahl al-Bayt

According to numerous traditions expressed with various terminologies in the sources of both sects, the Holy Prophet of Islam and his infallible Ahl al-Bayt (as) occupy such an elevated status among creation that no one can be compared to them. The Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali (as), states: "None of the Islamic community can be compared with the progeny of Moḥammad (peace be upon them), and those who were nourished by their favors cannot be equated with them. They are the foundation of religion and the pillar of certainty" (*Nahj al-Balaghah*, Sermon 2: 45).



As previously noted, the incomparability of the Ahl al-Bayt with others and the prohibition thereof are supported by abundant evidence in Shia (*Khasah*) sources and have been articulated through various expressions.

2-1. In Shia Sources:

A. In the noble *Al-Kāfi*, Imam al-Riḍā (as) is reported to have described the position of the Ahl al-Bayt as being at a level where hands fall short of reaching it and tongues are incapable of describing its reality: “And how can he be fully described, or how can his inner essence be characterized, or how can anything of his affair be comprehended, or how can anyone be found to take his place and suffice in his stead? How and by what means? While he is like the star, far beyond the reach of those who stretch out their hands and the description of those who describe” (Kulayni, 1365: Vol. 1, p. 201).

B. In the *Ziyārat Jāmi’ah Kabīrah*, transmitted by Shaykh al-Tusi in *Al-Tahdhīb* and Al-Saduq in *Al-Faqīh*—which many traditionalists (*Muhaddithin*) consider among the best visitations (*Ziyārat*) in terms of text and chain of transmission—it is narrated from Imam al-Hādī (as) that the rank and station of the Ahl al-Bayt reside in the highest degrees of the messengers. This is to such an extent that no one can catch up to their station, surpass them, precede them, or even hope to attain it: “Thus, Allah has elevated you to the most honorable station of the honored ones, the highest ranks of those drawn near, and the most exalted degrees of the messengers, where no pursuer can reach, no surpasser can excel, no preceder can overtake, and no aspirer can ever hope to attain” (Saduq, 1366: Vol. 2, p. 613; Tusi, 1370: Vol. 6, p. 98).

C. Ibn Mashhadi in *Al-Mazār al-Kabīr*, within the profound and lofty *Ziyārat al-Ghadirīyyah*, quotes Imam al-Hadi (as) declaring that anyone who equates another with the Commander of the Faithful is cursed: “May Allah curse whoever equates you with those who oppose you; while Allah, Exalted is His mention, says: ‘Are those who know equal to those who do not know?’ And may Allah curse whoever sets an equal to you, [you] whose guardianship Allah has made obligatory” (Ibn Mashhadi, 1415 AH: p. 270).

2-2. In Sunni Sources:

A. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) addressed Abd al-Rāhman ibn Awf, saying: “O Abd al-Rahman, you are my companions, but Ali ibn Abi Talib is from me and I am from Ali; whoever compares him to anyone else has surely wronged me” (Hamuwaiy Juwayni, 1428 AH: Vol. 2, p. 68, Chapter 15).

In another narration, an addition is included: Narrated from Ibn Abbas, who said: The Messenger of Allah said to Abd al-Rahmān ibn Awf: “O Abd al-Rahman, you are my companions, and Ali ibn Abi Talib is from me and



I am from Ali. So whoever compares him to anyone other than me has wronged me, and whoever wrongs me has harmed me, and whoever harms me, upon him is the curse of my Lord” (Khawarizmi, 1423 AH: Vol. 1, p. 60, Chapter 5).

B. According to the noble *Hadīth of the Tree* (*Ḥadīth al-Shajarah*), the Creator fashioned the Prophet, the Commander of the Faithful, and consequently the other infallible Imams, from a single tree, while creating the rest of creation from another tree; thus, these two groups are incomparable. (Shia sources: Saduq, 1403 AH: Vol. 1, p. 21, Ch. 72; Saduq, 1380: Vol. 2, p. 73 & 340. Sunni sources: Muttaqi Hindi, 1398 AH: Vol. 6, p. 54, Hadīth 2561 & 2562; Haskani, 1399 AH: Vol. 1, p. 375).

In some traditions within this chapter, it is further stated that the Commander of the Faithful and the other Imams cannot be compared even with the Prophets (excluding the Seal of the Prophets), as the Prophet of Islam and the pure Imams are described as originating from one tree, and the other Prophets from a different tree: “Indeed, Allah created the Prophets from various trees, and He created me and Ali from a single tree” (Haskani, 1399 AH: Vol. 1, p. 554).

C. Ibn Abbas states: “Indeed, Allah reproached the companions of Moḥammad in more than one place [in the Qur’an], and He did not mention Ali except with goodness” (Haskāni, 1399 AH: 1: 49-54; Tarikh al-Khulafa of Suyuti: 171; and other Sunni sources).

D. Abdullah ibn Umar says: “When we used to enumerate the companions of the Prophet, we would say Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman. Someone asked: ‘What about Ali?’ Ibn Umar replied: ‘Ali is from the Ahl al-Bayt; no one can be compared to him, and he is with the Messenger of Allah in his degree’” (Haskani, 1399 AH: 2: 197; Qunduzi, 1422 AH: 178 & 253, Chapters 55 & 56).

E. Abdullah ibn Ahmad ibn Hanbal said: “I asked my father about the superiority of the companions of the Prophet. He said: ‘Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman.’ I said: ‘Then what about Ali ibn Abi Talib?’ He said: ‘He is from the Ahl al-Bayt; no one is compared with the Ahl al-Bayt’” (Qunduzi, 1422 AH: 152 & 253, Chapters 52 & 56).

Based on the numerous pieces of evidence, some of which have been mentioned, it becomes clear that in the sources of both sects, comparing others with the Ahl al-Bayt is strictly prohibited, to the extent that the one who makes such a comparison is subjected to a curse. This fact signifies the absolute prohibition (*Ḥurmah*) of comparing others with the Ahl al-Bayt.



3. Foundations of the Incomparability of the Ahl al-Bayt with Others

The impossibility of comparing others with the Ahl al-Bayt (as) essentially roots back to ontological (*Takwīni*) truths regarding their position. If knowledge of these truths is not acquired, accepting this concept might be difficult for the listener. However, knowledge of these truths facilitates the heart of the scholar to bear difficult matters that are hard for the ignorant, and makes the sound heart (*Qalb al-Salīm*) submissive to it. These foundations include divine knowledge (*'Ilm al-Ilahi*), infallibility in action (*'Ismah fi al-'Amal*), the answering of prayers (*Istijābat al-Da'wah*), being the noblest of creation (*Ashraf al-Khalā'iq*), and being those whose obedience is obligatory (*Muftariḍ al-Ṭa'ah*). For the sake of brevity, only five of the most important of these epistemological foundations will be discussed here.

3-1. The Ahl al-Bayt (as) as Divine Proofs (*Hujaj Allah*) and Vicegerents of Allah (*Khulafā Allah*)

In literal terms, *Hujjah* means reason and proof. However, in the traditions of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), various usages are mentioned for it, including reason, guide, and the remover of excuses and pretexts. If the Ahl al-Bayt (as) are introduced as the Proofs of Allah (*Hujaj Allah*), it means they are the guiding reasons and the removers of excuses and pretexts for disobedience.

Through the existence of the Imams (as), Allah has completed the proof upon the people and left no excuse. This matter is not possible except through the infallible Imam (as); therefore, they are the sole divine proofs in every era. The culture, knowledge, and teachings of these noble figures prove prophethood, resurrection, and the existence of Allah.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) states: “Since we have proven that we have a Creator and Maker who is more exalted than us and all created beings... then it is proven that in every age and era, messengers have been sent with reasons and proofs they brought to establish their truthfulness, so that Allah’s earth is never devoid of a proof (*Hujjah*) who has with him knowledge or a sign testifying to the truthfulness of his speech and his justice” (Kulayni, 1365 SH: Vol. 1, p. 167).

The earth is never devoid of an Imam (as), so that if the believers in the religion go astray, he can bring them back from this deviation, and if they diminish anything from the religion, he can complete it. The proof of Allah holds an exalted position; he is infallible, possesses ontological guardianship (*Wilāyat al-Takwīniyyah*) by Allah’s permission, and is superior in all domains—this is why he is the proof of Allah. Among the undeniable dogmatic beliefs of the Shia is that the Imam in his time must be the most superior of the people of that era. The late 'Allamah al-Hilli, in



his commentary *Sharh al-Tajrid*, states: “The Imam must be superior to his followers (*Al-Imāmu yajib an yakun afdal min ra'īyyatih*), because three scenarios can be assumed: 1. The Imam is equal to them in virtue; in this case, his Imamate is unjustified because preference without a preferrer (*Tarjīh bilā Murajjih*) is rationally repugnant (*Qabih*). 2. The Imam is inferior to some of the followers; this is also impossible because preferring the inferior over the superior (*Tarjīh al-Mafḍul 'alā al-Fāḍil*) is repugnant, as indicated by both intellect and the Holy Qur'an: ‘...Then is He who directs to the truth more worthy to be followed, or he who guides not unless he is guided? Then what is [wrong] with you - how do you judge?’ (Yunus, 35). 3. The Imam is superior to others. With the invalidation of the previous two assumptions, this assumption takes the seat of truth. Therefore, the Imam must be superior to others in all domains: knowledge of religion, generosity, courage, and all virtues of the soul and body” (Hilli, 1413 AH: Vol. 1, p. 366).

The position of Imamate in the view of the prominent figures of the Shia school is such an exalted station. Therefore, for some to introduce the infallible Imams merely as pious and righteous scholars, and nothing more, is to lower the exalted level of the infallibles to that of ordinary scholars and is a dereliction of their rights (*Taqsīr*)! Just as exaggeration (*Ghuluww*) regarding the status of the infallibles (as) and the belief that they have no Lord or Creator is a great deviation, failing to recognize their divine and sacred stations is also a dereliction (*Taqsīr*) regarding the Ahl al-Bayt and a great deviation. Thus, such a perspective stems from the speakers' lack of knowledge regarding the exalted station of the infallibles (peace be upon them all) and is a deviation that must be countered, just like *Ghuluww*. Because just as exaggeration regarding the infallibles is prohibited and condemned, falling short (*Taqsīr*) regarding them, their knowledge, and their rights is also prohibited and condemned. Truly, who has known them according to the true right of their knowledge and fulfilled their rights!? The late Sha'rani, in his commentary on *Tajrid al-I'tiqad*, says: “It should be known that discussing the extent of the virtues, sciences, merits, the degree of proximity of the infallibles, their connection with the beings of the unseen world, their power to perform miracles, and the like is outside the duties of the science of scholastic theology (*Ilm al-Kalām*). These belong to the subtleties of sciences and must be deduced from the authentic traditions (*Ahādīth Mu'tabarāh*) on Imamate and by contemplation on their meanings. It is astonishing that an ignorant group in our time is so oblivious to the necessities of the religion (*Daruriyyāt al-Madhab*) to the extent that they even deny the Imam's grace (*Luṭf*), infallibility (*'Ismah*), and



knowledge in religious matters...” (Sha’rani, 1413 AH: Vol. 1, pp. 512-513).

In a supplication that Imam Ṣādiq (as) taught to Zurarah, it is stated: “O Allah, make me know Yourself, for if You do not make me know Yourself, I will not know Your Prophet. O Allah, make me know Your Messenger, for if You do not make me know Your Messenger, I will not know Your Proof. O Allah, make me know Your Proof, for if You do not make me know Your Proof, I will deviate from my religion” (Kulayni, 1365 SH: Vol. 1, p. 337). Can the Imams, whom numerous traditions have called the Gates of Allah (*Abwāb Allah*), the Pervaders of Allah’s Knowledge (*‘Urafa’ Allah*), the Pillars of the Earth (*Arkan al-Arḍ*), and the Supports of Truth (*Da’ā’im al-Ḥaqq*), be seen merely as ordinary pious scholars?!! Can the Imams, who are the treasurers of Allah’s knowledge, the heirs of the Prophets, and the most knowledgeable of people, be seen as ordinary prominent scholars? Can the Imams, whose love is the love of Allah and the love of the Messenger of Allah, whose love is the foundation of Islam, whose love is the highest act of worship, and whose love is a divine gift, be seen as ordinary scholars?! (Moḥammadi Reyshahri, 1387 SH: p. 254).

Numerous traditions have been narrated bearing the theme of the following tradition: Imam Ṣādiq (as) said: “Indeed, Allah... has made us His eye among His servants, His speaking tongue among His creations, His extended hand of compassion and mercy over His servants, His face through which He is approached, His gate that guides to Him, and His treasurers in His heaven and earth. Through us, trees bear fruit, fruits ripen, and rivers flow. Through us, the rain of the sky descends and the herbage of the earth grows. By our worship, Allah is worshipped, and had it not been for us, Allah would not have been worshipped” (Kulayni, 1365 SH: Vol. 1, p. 144).

The infallible Imam (as), as the proof of Allah and the vicegerent on earth, is the representative of the beautiful names (*Asmá al-Husná*) and the supreme attributes (*Ṣifāt al-'Ulyá*) of Allah. In terms of ruling (*Ḥukm*), all divine rulings are completely applicable to him, and the Book and the *Sunnah* contain abundant evidence that the ruling of the Messenger of Allah and the Ahl al-Bayt in various matters is equivalent to the ruling of Allah. Among these, the Holy Qur’an has called pledging allegiance to the Messenger of Allah as pledging allegiance to Allah, and obedience to the Messenger of Allah as obedience to Allah: “Indeed, those who pledge allegiance to you, [O Moḥammad] - they are actually pledging allegiance to Allah” (Fath, 10). “He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah” (Nisa, 80). In numerous traditions, obedience to the Ahl al-Bayt is termed obedience to Allah, disobedience to them as disobedience to Allah, love for

them as love for Allah, hatred and enmity towards them as hatred and enmity towards Allah, their satisfaction and anger as the satisfaction and anger of Allah, and so forth.

Zurarah narrates from Imam al-Baqir (as) regarding the verse “And they did not wrong Us, but they were wronging themselves” (Hud, 101) [Note: verse citation translated exactly as provided in the source text]. The Imam (as) said: “Indeed, Allah the Exalted is greater, mightier, more majestic, and more impregnable than to be wronged; however, He has associated us with Himself, making the wrong done to us as the wrong done to Himself, and our guardianship (*Wilāyah*) as His guardianship, where He says: ‘Your wali is none but Allah and His Messenger and those who have believed’—meaning the Imams from among us. Then He said in another place: ‘And they did not wrong Us, but they were wronging themselves,’ mentioning the like of it in His Qur’an (such as the anger and satisfaction of Allah, and His regret and sorrow, where in these instances we are also intended)” (Kulayni, 1365 SH: Vol. 1, p. 146).

Based on this foundation, the divine proofs assume divine rulings, and their distinction from others in all characteristics becomes apparent. Just as Allah the Exalted is incomparable with others, His absolute vicegerent (*Khalīfat al-Tāmmah*) is also incomparable with others, and his rulings are not comparable to those of others.

3-2. The Ahl al-Bayt (as) as the Intermediaries of Divine Grace between the Creator and Creation

Among the matters that distinguish the Ahl al-Bayt (as) from other creations is that they are the intermediaries of divine grace (*Wasitah al-Fayḍ al-Ilāhi*) in its absolute sense between the Creator and the creation. Regarding the Ahl al-Bayt being the intermediaries of grace and their ontological guardianship (*Wilāyah al-Takwīniyyah*), the prominent figures and leading jurists of the Imami School are in consensus based on the received traditions. Here, examples of their statements are mentioned.

Sheikh Moḥammad Husayn Isfahani (Kumpani) states: “The Prophet and the Imams possess spiritual guardianship (*Wilāyah al-Ma’nawiyyah*) and esoteric sovereignty (*Saltanah al-Batiniyyah*) over all ontological and legislative matters. Just as they are the conduits of ontological emanations (*Fuyudat al-Takwīniyyah*), they are also the conduits of legislative emanations (*Fuyudāt al-Tashri’iyyah*). Thus, they are the intermediaries of creation and legislation. Furthermore, the Prophet and the Imams, by virtue of being the conduits of the grace of existence, possess the capacity of instatement (*Jā’iliyyah*) and encompassment in that respect; meaning they are the intermediary *in* existence (*Mā bihi al-Wujūd*), not the bestower of existence (*Mā minhu al-Wujūd*), because bestowing existence is exclusive



to the Necessary Being (*Wājib al-Wujud*)” (Gharavi Isfahani, 1418 AH: Vol. 2, pp. 379-381).

Mr. Khoei, who is considered among the leading contemporary jurists, also states: “The apparent meaning is that there is no doubt regarding their guardianship over all creations, as it appears from the traditions, because they are considered the intermediary in creation. Existence is through them, and they are the cause of creation. Had it not been for them, the people would not have been created at all; people were created for their sake, and their existence is by virtue of them. They are the intermediary in the emanation of existence. Rather, they possess ontological guardianship (*Wilāyah al-Takwīniyyah*) over everything other than the Creator God. This guardianship, like the guardianship of Allah the Exalted over the creation, is an affirmative guardianship (*Wilāyah Ijābiyyah*), even though it is weaker compared to the guardianship of Allah over the creation” (Khoei, 1377: Vol. 5, p. 35).

Mirza Naeini, one of the greatest jurists, also has a noteworthy statement in this regard. He states: “Know that their guardianship has two degrees. One of them is ontological guardianship (*Wilāyah al-Takwīniyyah*), which consists of the subjugation and sovereignty over the created beings under their will and volition by the power and strength of Allah; as it has come in the *Ziyārat* of Hazrat Hujjah—may our souls be sacrificed for him—‘There is nothing of us except that you are its cause.’ This is because they (as) are the loci of manifestation (*Māẓahir*) of the names and attributes of Allah the Exalted. Thus, their action is His action, and their speech is His speech. This degree of guardianship is exclusive to them and cannot be granted to others, because it is among the requisites of their luminous essences and sacred souls, whose lowest degree no one else can reach.

The second of those two degrees is the divine legislative guardianship (*Wilāyah al-Tashrīʿiyyah al-Ilāhīyyah*), which is established for them from Allah the Exalted in the realm of legislation. It means the obligation of following them in everything, and that they are legally (*Sharʿan*) more worthy of the people in everything than their own selves and wealth. The difference between these two degrees of guardianship is evident, inasmuch as the first degree is guardianship in the realm of creation, and the second is guardianship in the realm of legislation. The second degree is not established except for the one who possesses the first degree, because not everyone is worthy of assuming that exalted position and lofty station unless Allah the Exalted has specifically granted him His honor, and that is the possessor of the first degree. This is according to the truth with us [the Shia], contrary to the general public [the Sunnis], who hold that the second



degree is established for anyone who takes charge of the affairs of the Ummah, whether righteous or wicked" (Amoli, 1413 AH: Vol. 2, p. 233).

Therefore, according to Mirzā Nāeini, the ontological guardianship of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) means that all existent beings are subjected to them, and they can exercise any disposal (*Tasarruf*) in them as they wish by divine power and strength. They are the cause of all matters in the universe and the loci of manifestation for all the names and attributes of the Lord, such that their actions are entirely the actions of Allah, and their words are the words of Allah and the manifestation of His will. This is a station in the universe that is exclusively theirs and no one else's. However, he subsequently derives an important point: only the one who has guardianship in creation can have guardianship in legislation. That is, he considers legislative guardianship a branch of ontological guardianship. Furthermore, in refuting the view of some who have considered the legislative guardianship of the infallibles limited to non-customary (*Ghayr 'Urfi*) matters, he states:

"There is no problem for us in the establishment of both degrees of guardianship for the Prophet and his successors—blessings of Allah be upon him and upon them—who are from his progeny. The four proofs (*Adillah al-Arba'ah*) denote it, just as the author [of *Al-Makāsib*] argued for it in that book. Therefore, no heed is paid to the opposition of one who restricts legislative guardianship solely to the obligation of following them in Islamic rulings and gives no importance to accepting what they convey of the rulings... The weakness and absurdity of this statement is not hidden; rather, the four proofs stand to refute it, and it seems that the one who holds this view has followed the opponents [Sunnis] in this matter."

In support of Mirza Naeini's view, Sheikh Ansari also in the book *Al-Matajir* [*Al-Makāsib*], after discussing in detail with proofs regarding the establishment of guardianship for the Prophet and the Imams (as), states: "The purpose of all that has been said is to repel the illusion that the obligation of obeying the Imam (as) is restricted to legislative commands (*Awāmir al-Shar'iyyah*), and that there is no proof for the obligation of obeying the Imam in customary commands (*Awāmir al-'Urfiyyah*) or his sovereignty over properties and lives. In summary, what is derived from the four proofs after investigation and contemplation is that the Imam has absolute sovereignty (*Saltanah Muṭlaqah*) over the subjects from Allah the Exalted, and that their disposal (*Tasarruf*) regarding the subjects is absolutely effective and decisive" (Sheikh Ansari, 1385: Vol. 2, p. 46).

3-3. The Ahl al-Bayt (as) as Equivalent to the Messenger of Allah

Abundant (*Mustafīd*), and even multiply-attested (*Mutāwatir*), traditions denote that the Ahl al-Bayt of the Prophet (as) are not separate from him;



rather, they stand at the status and equivalency (*Biman-zilat*) of the Messenger of Allah. The Ahl al-Bayt of the Prophet consist of Ali, Fatimah, Hasan, Husayn, and the nine descendants of Husayn (as), among whom today only the Proof of the Age (*Hujjah al-Zamān*), Imam Mahdi (as), is living.

According to the Verse of Mubalahah, the Commander of the Faithful, Ali ibn Abi Talib (as), is the self and soul (*Nafs*) of the Prophet (pbuh), and this signifies the equality of all the statuses (*Shu'ūn*) of the Commander of the Faithful with those of the Prophet and his equality in rank with him, with the exception of the matters that have been specifically excluded. On the other hand, numerous traditions have introduced the rest of the infallible Ahl al-Bayt as holding the exact ruling (*Hukm*) of the Commander of the Faithful. Therefore, the Ahl al-Bayt (as) share with the Prophet (pbuh) in the sanctity (*Hurmah*), dignity (*Karāmah*), and rights (*Huquq*) that Islam has established for the Prophet.

According to the belief of Shia scholars, any sanctity established for the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) is equally established for Hazrat Amir al-Mu'minin, Hazrat Fatimah, and their infallible descendants (as). Consequently, whatever we observe in the verses of the Qur'an regarding the status and rank (*Sha'n wa Manzilat*) of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) holds true for all the Infallibles (as).

The minimum level of knowledge (*Ma'rifah*) of the Imam—the absence of which is equivalent to ignorance (*Jāhiliyyah*) and misguidance—is recognizing the co-equality in status between the Imam and the Noble Prophet (pbuh). Imam Sadiq (as) stated: “The lowest degree of knowledge of the Imam is the belief that he is equal in weight and equivalent to the Prophet (pbuh) in all statuses, except in the status and degree of prophethood, and in this respect, the Imam is the inheritor of the Prophet (pbuh). Furthermore, it includes the confession that obedience to the Imam is obedience to Allah and the Prophet, as well as submitting to him, delegating affairs to him, acting upon his words, and believing in the matter that after the Prophet (pbuh), Ali ibn Abi Talib (as), and after him, Hasan and Husayn up to Hazrat Hujjah (as) are the successors of the Prophet and the leaders (*Pishwayān*) of the Muslims.”

Imam Sadiq (as) stated:

«أَدْنَى مَعْرِفَةِ الْإِمَامِ أَنَّهُ عَدْلُ النَّبِيِّ إِلَّا دَرَجَةَ النَّبَوَةِ وَوَارِثُهُ وَأَنْ طَاعَتَهُ طَاعَةُ اللَّهِ وَطَاعَةُ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ وَالتَّسْلِيمُ لَهُ فِي كُلِّ أَمْرٍ وَالرَّدُّ إِلَيْهِ وَالْأَخْذُ بِقَوْلِهِ وَيَعْلَمُ أَنَّ الْإِمَامَ بَعْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ (ص) عَلَى بَنِ أَبِي طَالِبٍ وَبَعْدَهُ الْحَسَنُ ثُمَّ الْحُسَيْنُ ثُمَّ عَلِيُّ بْنُ الْحُسَيْنِ ثُمَّ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَلِيٍّ ثُمَّ أَنَا ثُمَّ بَعْدِي مُوسَى ابْنِي وَ



بَعْدَهُ عَلَى ابْنِهِ وَبَعْدَ عَلِيِّ مُحَمَّدٍ ابْنَهُ وَبَعْدَ مُحَمَّدٍ عَلَى ابْنِهِ وَبَعْدَ عَلِيِّ الْحَسَنِ ابْنَهُ وَالْحُجَّةُ مِنْ وَلَدِ الْحَسَنِ»

(Khazzaz Razi, 1400 SH: p. 263; Majlisi, 1403 AH: Vol. 4, p. 55 and Vol. 36, p. 407). Furthermore, Imam Sadiq (as) stated:

«الأئمة بمنزلة رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله إلا أنهم ليسوا بأنبياء، ولا يحل لهم من النساء ما يحل للنبي صلى الله عليه وآله، فأما ما خلا ذلك فهم فيه بمنزلة رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله»

(Kulayni, 1365 SH: Vol. 1, p. 270). Imam Sadiq (as): The Imams stand at the status of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh), except that they are not prophets. And whatever is lawful for the Prophet (pbuh) regarding women is not lawful for them (having more than four permanent wives simultaneously), but in all matters other than that, they are considered to be at the status of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh).

Likewise, by referring to the verses of the Qur'an, we realize that the progeny (*Dhurriyyah*) of the Prophet (pbuh) have been the object of special attention and distinct divine grace, and for this reason, they possessed the qualification for the station of Imamate and vicegerency (*Wisayat*) and have been presented alongside the Holy Prophet. Among them:

1. The Messenger of Allah, at the onset of his prophetic mission (*Bi'thah*), is commanded to begin his warning (*Indhār*) and propagation (*Tablīgh*) with his close family:

«وَأَنْذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ»

[And warn your closest relatives] (Al-Shu'ara: 214) [In the original Persian text, the verse number is inadvertently listed as 211; preserved as 211 to reflect your source text directly: (Al-Shu'ara: 211)].

2. The Almighty God's ontological will (*Irāda al-Takwīniyyah*) has attached itself to the infallibility (*'Ismah*) and purity (*Tahārah*) of the Ahl al-Bayt of the Prophet (as):

«إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا»

[Indeed Allah desires only to remove defilement from you, O Ahl al-Bayt, and to purify you with a thorough purification] (Aḥzāb: 33).

3. The Almighty God granted such a distinct capacity to the progeny and Ahl al-Bayt of the Prophet of Islam (as) that only they were permitted to participate alongside him in the Mubalah (mutual imprecation) to establish the legitimacy (*Haqqāniyyah*) of Islam, and He made the fulfillment of His Messenger's supplication contingent upon their *Amīn*:

«فَمَنْ حَاجَكَ فِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ فَقُلْ تَعَالَوْا نَدْعُ أَبْنَاءَنَا وَأَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَنِسَاءَنَا وَنِسَاءَكُمْ وَأَنْفُسَنَا وَأَنْفُسَكُمْ ثُمَّ نَبْتَهِلْ فَنَجْعَلْ لَعْنَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكَاذِبِينَ»



[And whoever disputes with you concerning him after what has come to you of knowledge, say: ‘Come, let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves, then let us supplicate earnestly and invoke the curse of Allah upon the liars’] (Imran: 61).

4. God addresses the Prophet (pbuh), stating: Tell the people that I ask of you no reward except love for the near of kin:

«قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَىٰ»

[Say, ‘I ask of you no reward for it except love for my near relatives’] (Shura: 23).

5. He commands the Prophet (pbuh) to have a private emphasis and injunction regarding prayer upon his household:

«وَأْمُرْ أَهْلَكَ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَاصْطَبِرْ عَلَيْهَا»

[And command your family to establish prayer, and be steadfast in it] (Taha: 132).

In general, based on abundant and universally agreed-upon (*Muttafaq*) traditions of both Islamic denominations (*Fariqayn*), the Messenger of Allah introduced the Ahl al-Bayt as being from himself, and himself as being from them, restricting this exclusive attribute solely to them. He introduced their flesh and blood as his own flesh and blood, and even their understanding and knowledge as his own understanding and knowledge. He declared friendship and enmity, and cursing (*Sabb*) and warfare against them to be friendship and enmity, and cursing and warfare against himself, describing their relation to him as the head to the body and the soul to the physical frame (*Jism*), such that no expressions more eloquent or profound could be employed to articulate the intensity of connection, union, and the identification (*Yeki Engashtan*) of them with himself (to observe these traditions in Sunni sources, refer to: Firuzabadi, *Faḍā'il al-Khamsah min al-Ṣiḥāḥ al-Sittah*).

On the other hand, we know that the Almighty God established a special and distinguished position for His Noble Messenger, singling him out in the Holy Qur'an for specific honors and venerations, and issuing special directives and recommendations concerning him. Since the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) also stand at the status of the Messenger of Allah and are equal in rank (*Ham-Sha'n*) to him, therefore all these venerations and honors are inevitably concomitant with them as well, and the ruling (*Hukm*) applicable to the Messenger of Allah runs and operates (*Sari wa Jari*) concerning them. In what follows, several of these special Qur'anic honors and venerations directed at the Messenger of Allah along with their corresponding directives are outlined:



1. The Holy Qur'an considers one of the attributes of true believers to be not leaving the assembly of the Messenger of Allah without his permission, a matter which signifies the necessity of preserving the utmost sanctity and reverence for the Messenger of Allah:

«إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَإِذَا كَانُوا مَعَهُ عَلَى أَمْرٍ جَامِعٍ لَمْ يَذْهَبُوا حَتَّى يَسْتَأْذِنُوهُ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَأْذِنُونَكَ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ»

(Nur: 62). True believers are only those who believe in Allah and His Messenger (with complete submission), and when they are with him on a matter of collective concern, they do not leave until they have asked his permission. Indeed, those who ask your permission—they are the ones who truly believe in Allah and His Messenger.

2. The Almighty God has commanded in the Holy Qur'an to assist, venerate, and honor the Messenger of Allah:

«إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ شَاهِدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا * لَتُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَتُعَزِّرُوهُ وَتُوَقِّرُوهُ وَتُسَبِّحُوهُ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا»

(Fath: 8-9). Indeed, We have sent you as a witness, a bearer of good tidings, and a warner; so that you [people] may believe in Allah and His Messenger, and assist him and honor him, and glorify Him morning and evening.

3. The Holy Qur'an has made it obligatory (*Wājib*) that we love His Messenger more than anyone else, even more than family, parents, spouse, and children:

«قُلْ إِنْ كَانَ آبَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ وَإِخْوَانُكُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ وَعَشِيرَتُكُمْ وَأَمْوَالٌ اقْتَرَفْتُمُوهَا وَتِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا وَمَسَاكِنُ تَرْضَوْنَهَا أَحَبَّ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَجِهَادٍ فِي سَبِيلِهِ فَتَرَبَّصُوا حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرِهِ»

(Tawbah: 24). Say: 'If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your relatives, wealth which you have acquired, commerce wherein you fear decline, and dwellings with which you are pleased are more beloved to you than Allah and His Messenger and striving in His way, then wait until Allah brings about His command.'

4-3. The Ahl al-Bayt (as) as Equivalent to the Speaking Qur'an

After himself, the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) left behind two weighty sources—the Holy Qur'an (the silent book) and the Progeny (*'Itrah* / the speaking Qur'an)—for the guidance of humanity, stating:

«إِنِّي تَارِكٌ فِيكُمْ الثَّقَلَيْنِ مَا إِنْ تَمَسَّكْتُم بِهِمَا لَنْ تَضِلُّوا كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَعِترَتِي أَهْلَ بَيْتِي وَإِنَّهُمَا لَنْ يَفْتَرِقَا حَتَّى يَرِدَا عَلَى الْحَوْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ تَخْلُقُونِي فِيهِمَا»

[Indeed, I am leaving among you two weighty things; as long as you hold fast to them, you will never go astray: the Book of Allah and my progeny, my Ahl al-Bayt. And indeed, they will never separate until they



return to me at the Pond (of Kawthar), so observe how you treat them after me] (Shaykh Mufid, 1413 AH: Vol. 1, p. 233).

Based on the multiply-attested (*Mutawātir*) Hadīth of *Thaqalayn*, the Ahl al-Bayt (as) are the peers of the Qur'an; holding fast to one of the two without the other is equivalent to abandoning both, and attaining the complete religion is only possible in the light of holding fast to the verses of the Qur'an and their traditions. Of course, since the Ahl al-Bayt embody all the truths of the Qur'an, possess them, are the elucidators (*Mubayyin*) of the correct and actual intent of the divine speech, and are the incarnate Qur'an, whoever holds fast to them has definitively held fast to the Qur'an as well. However, this concomitance (*Mulāzamah*) does not hold in reverse; holding fast to the Qur'an does not necessarily entail holding fast to the Ahl al-Bayt. Rather, by claiming the sufficiency of the Qur'an, one can distort the divine intent of His speech, interpret it to mean the exact opposite, and ultimately place the apparent (*Zāhir*) meaning of the Qur'an in opposition to its truth (*Ḥaqiqah*). It is narrated from Fayḍ Kashani that if someone says the Qur'an is sufficient for us, they have gone astray and are placed on the path of misguidance and deviation. However, if someone says the Ahl al-Bayt are sufficient for us, they have not gone astray and are on the path of guidance, because wherever the Ahl al-Bayt are, the Qur'an is also present... because the true exegetes (*Mufasssir*) of the Qur'an are the Ahl al-Bayt. But one who relies solely on the Qur'an falls into interpretation by personal opinion (*Tafsīr bi al-Ra'y*) and interprets the Qur'an according to their own desires, the result of which is misguidance. The relationship between the Qur'an and the Ahl al-Bayt is one of absolute general and specific (*'Ummum wa Khuṣuṣ Muṭlaq*); meaning, wherever the speaking Qur'an (the Ahl al-Bayt) is, the silent Qur'an definitely exists as well, but wherever the silent Qur'an is alone, it cannot be made to speak and requires a speaker (*Nātiq*), and consequently loses its critical efficacy (Ganji, 1386 SH: pp. 45-46).

In reality, the difference between the language of the Ahl al-Bayt and the Qur'an lies only in elaboration (*Tafsīl*) and brevity (*Ijmāl*); otherwise, both are revelation (*Wahy*) and divine speech. However, the divine book has been articulated in the language of brevity, and its elaboration has been delegated to the Sunnah of the Infallible, manifesting in their speech and actions.

The Holy Qur'an is the Word of God, and despite its simplicity, it is highly complex and profound; its deep concepts are not clear to everyone. Therefore, for a precise understanding of the Qur'an, its correct exegesis, and the prevention of malicious esoteric interpretations (*Ta'wīl*) and



erroneous deductions, the Qur'an requires an exegete and elucidator. God Almighty introduced the Prophet (pbuh) himself as its primary exegete:

«وَأَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ»

[And We revealed to you the message that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought] (Nahl: 44). After the Prophet, based on the Hadīth of *Thaqalayn* and other proofs, his Ahl al-Bayt bear this responsibility and serve as the speaking tongue of the Qur'an, or the "speaking Qur'an" among the Ummah. No one other than them is completely aware of the apparent (*Zahir*) and hidden (*Bāṭin*) meanings of the Qur'an and the actual and definitive purposes of the divine speech. Others are indebted to them in this regard, and attaining correct Qur'anic teachings without them and by referring solely to the Qur'an is neither possible nor feasible. The Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali (as), states:

«ذَلِكَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَنْطِقُوهُ وَلَنْ يَنْطِقَ، وَلَكِنْ أُخْبِرُكُمْ عَنْهُ»

[This is the Qur'an, so ask it to speak, but it will never (itself) speak; rather, I will inform you about it] (*Nahj al-Balaghahh*, Sermon 158). Imam Saādiq (as) also states:

«ذَلِكَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَنْطِقُوهُ وَلَنْ يَنْطِقَ لَكُمْ أُخْبِرُكُمْ عَنْهُ إِنَّ فِيهِ عِلْمٌ مَا مَضَىٰ وَعِلْمٌ مَا يَأْتِي إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَحُكْمٌ مَا بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيَانٌ مَا أَصْبَحْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ فَلَوْ سَأَلْتُمُونِي عَنْهُ لَعَلَّمْتُكُمْ»

[This is that same Qur'an, ask it to speak, it will never speak to you; I will inform you as an interpreter of it, that within it is the knowledge of what has passed and the knowledge of what is to come until the Day of Resurrection. The Qur'an is the judge between you, and it has a decisive clarification regarding whatever you differ in; if you ask me, I will teach you] (Kulayni, 1365 SH: Vol. 1, p. 61). The terms "speaking Qur'an" and "silent Qur'an" are derived from the narration of the Commander of the Faithful, Ali (as), who states:

«أَنَا كَلَامُ اللَّهِ النَّاطِقُ وَهَذَا كَلَامُ اللَّهِ الصَّامِتُ»

[I am the speaking Word of God, and this (the Qur'an) is the silent Word of God] (Majlisi, 1403 AH: Vol. 30, p. 546).

The reason for naming the Imam as the speaking Word of God and the Qur'an as the silent word is that the infallible Imams (as) elucidated the divine verses and applied them to their correct instances. The divine book, without the existence of a person who has the power from God to make it speak, cannot be a reference for guidance and the resolution of disputes. The evidence for this is that although all Islamic sects and denominations believe in the Qur'an, and this book is the reference of discernment for all of them, by clinging solely to the Qur'an, they have been unable to find the



path of growth and guidance; despite the Qur'an, there are vast differences among them, which is clear testimony to the impossibility of guidance by sufficing with the Qur'an alone. Those who consider the Qur'an to be independent of the Infallible are like those who say: "Medical books are sufficient for us, and we have no need for a doctor." In truth, the reality of the Qur'an, according to its own statement, is nothing but those same sciences and clear verses within the breasts of those who have been granted knowledge, namely the Prophet and his Ahl al-Bayt:

«بَلْ هُوَ آيَاتٌ بَيِّنَاتٌ فِي صُدُورِ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ»

[Rather, the Qur'an is distinct verses [preserved] within the breasts of those who have been given knowledge] (Al-'Ankabut: 49). And no one except the purified ones (*Muṭahharun*)—whom the Verse of Purification (*Āyat al-Taḥhīr*) has introduced—has access to its primary purposes, correct meanings, realities, and esoteric depths:

«أَلَا يَمْسُهُ إِلَّا الْمُطَهَّرُونَ»

[None touch it except the purified] (Wāqī'ah: 79). Abu Basir says: Regarding the verse:

«هَذَا كِتَابُنَا يَنْطِقُ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْحَقِّ»

[This is Our record; it speaks about you in truth] (Jāthiyah: 29), I asked Imam Sadiq (as), and he replied: "The Qur'an does not speak; rather, Moḥammad and his Ahl al-Bayt (as) are the speakers of the book—meaning the Qur'an" (Majlisi, 1403 AH: Vol. 23, pp. 197-198).

In another tradition, Imam Sadiq (as) stated: "Amir al-Mu'minin (as) says: I am the knowledge of God and the speaking tongue of God" (Saduq, 1362 SH: p. 164). Also, expressions such as "His speaking tongue" or "We are the speaking tongue of God" (Kulayni, 1365 SH: Vol. 1, p. 144) and similar statements regarding Imam Ali (as) and the other infallible leaders found in the traditions, convey that they are the true exegetes of the Qur'an, the manifestation of divine knowledge, and knowledgeable of all sciences related to the Qur'an. As such, they have expressed various traditions on different occasions regarding its exegesis, esoteric interpretation, and otherwise, of which others have been deprived. It is for this reason that applying the term "speaking Qur'an" to those noble figures is correct.

It is also mentioned in Sunni traditions that:

«وَمَنْ عِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ الْكِتَابِ»

[And whoever has knowledge of the Scripture] (Al-Ra'd: 43), the one who possesses the knowledge of the entire book is Ali ibn Abi Talib, who was knowledgeable of its apparent, esoteric, exegesis, esoteric interpretation, abrogating (*Nāsikh*), abrogated (*Mansūkh*), lawful (*Halāl*),



and unlawful (*Ḥarām*) aspects (Tha'labi, 1422 AH: Vol. 5, p. 303). It is also narrated from him that he said: "By the One in whose hand is my soul, no verse was revealed except that I know where it was revealed and concerning whom it was revealed" (Muttaqi Hindi, 1398 AH: Hadīth 36404).

According to the Hadīth of *Thaqalayn* and numerous other traditions, the Ahl al-Bayt (as) are the sole equivalents, partners, and soul of the Qur'an, and their guardianship (*Wilāyah*) is the pole (*Qutb*) of the Qur'an. A vast portion of the divine verses was revealed regarding their status and virtues (*Manāqib*), or regarding the flaws (*Mathālib*) and condemnation of their enemies. God Almighty has described His book with various attributes in the Holy Qur'an, and considering that the Ahl al-Bayt are the peers of the Book of Allah and hold the status of the speaking Qur'an, all these attributes apply to them and correspond to them as well.

Based on the preceding, at the very least, the equivalence of the Ahl al-Bayt with the Qur'an is established; however, beyond that, the superiority of the Ahl al-Bayt over the Qur'an becomes clear through various aspects, just as some prominent figures have explicitly stated the superiority of the Ahl al-Bayt over the Qur'an according to the Shia. Mirza Habibullah Khui, in his commentary on *Nahj al-Balaghah* under Sermon 86, quoting Ibn Maytham Bahrani (d. 7th century AH), says: "For us (the Imamiyyah), the Progeny (*'Itrah*) of the Prophet is superior to the Qur'an, and they are its custodians (*Qayyim*)" (Khui, 1400 AH: Vol. 6, p. 215). In the language of the traditions, the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt are referred to as the Tongue of God (*Lisān Allah*) in contrast to the Qur'an which is the Word of God (*Kalām Allah*). It is clear that all divine speech is not the Qur'an, and the expression "divine tongue" represents a station preceding divine speech, encompassing all words and whatever has been revealed by God Almighty and all revelatory sciences. Hence, it is recorded in the traditions of the Ahl al-Bayt: "Indeed, a part of the knowledge given to us is the exegesis of the Qur'an" (Fayḍ Kashani, 1399 AH: Vol. 1, p. 21). Or regarding the Scroll (*Ṣaḥīfah*) of Fatimah (as), it is recorded that it is three times the size of the Qur'an, yet there is nothing of this Qur'an within it. Describing the Ahl al-Bayt as the speaking Qur'an in contrast to the silent Qur'an also demonstrates the silent Qur'an's need for a speaker for elucidation. Thus, Sunni principles (*Usuliyyin*) have also explicitly stated that the Qur'an is more in need of the Sunnah than the Sunnah is in need of the Qur'an. In *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, the Hadīth of *Thaqalayn* is narrated from the Messenger of Allah as follows: "I am leaving among you two weighty things, the Book of Allah and Ali ibn Abi Talib; and Ali (as) is better for you than the Book



of Allah because he is the translator and elucidator of the Book of Allah for you” (Bahrani, 1419 AH: Vol. 1, p. 132).

As mentioned, according to numerous traditions, the guardianship (*Wilāyah*) of the Ahl al-Bayt is the pole of the Qur’an, and the major part of the verses of the Qur’an was revealed concerning the status of the Ahl al-Bayt, introducing them, and their enemies. Undoubtedly, this portion of the verses constitutes the mother (foundation) of the book and the axis of the Qur’an, taking precedence over moral discussions, rulings (*Aḥkām*), and the like. This matter indicates that the fundamental reason for the revelation of the Qur’an was to introduce the Ahl al-Bayt and to guide towards the Imam (as), just as they were the fundamental reason for creation. Undoubtedly, the most superior of creatures are situated as the ultimate cause (*‘Illat-i Ghā’i*) of creation, and the ultimate cause of creation is superior to any created thing, including the Qur’an. Therefore, under the verse:

«إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ يَهْدِي لِلَّتِي هِيَ أَقْوَمُ»

[Indeed, this Qur’an guides to that which is most suitable] (Al-Isra: 9), Imam Ṣādiq (as) stated: “It guides to the Imam” (Kulayni, 1365 SH: Vol. 1, p. 216). As noted, the guardianship of the Ahl al-Bayt is the pole of the Qur’an, and the Holy Qur’an was in fact revealed in praise and description of the Messenger of Allah and his Ahl al-Bayt, and it is clear that the praised and described subject is superior and more noble than the act of praise and description itself.

Another point is that just as the Qur’an is the miracle of the Messenger of Allah, the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt are also the miracle of the Messenger of Allah; rather, they are the greatest miracle of the Messenger of Allah through whom the magnificent miracle of God becomes manifest. In the Holy Qur’an, the term “miracle” (*Mu’jizah*) is not used, and a miracle is referred to as a “sign” (*Āyah*); hence, the author of *Tafsir al-Mizan* states: “The meaning of *Āyah* in the Qur’an is a miracle” (Tabatabai, n.d.: Vol. 1, p. 73). However, the expression of being the miracle of the Prophet’s mission is used in the *Ziyārat* of Amir al-Mu’minin, Ali (as), which Muhaddith Qummi relates from Shaykh Mufid, Shahid, and Sayyid: “The one whom You made the sword of his prophethood, the miracle of his mission, and a clear proof for his argument (*Hujjah*)” (Qummi, 1393 SH: p. 834). Furthermore, the expression “sign of the Prophet’s mission” is used for him, as Muhaddith Qummi relates from *Al-Mazar* by Ibn Mashhadi in the absolute *Ziyārat* of His Eminence: “The one whom You made the sword of his prophethood, the sign of his mission, and a witness over his Ummah” (Qummi, 1393 SH: p. 779). Therefore, both the Qur’an and Ali (as) are divine signs and miracles, but the greatest divine miracle and sign,



according to the explicit declaration of the Commander of the Faithful himself, is he himself. Ali (as) said: “God has no message greater than me, and God has no sign greater than me” (Majlisi, 1403 AH: Vol. 23, p. 206). And in a Ziyārat that Muhaddith Qummi relates from the *Misbah* of Sayyid ibn Tawus, we address him thus: “Peace be upon you, O greatest sign and miracle of God (*Āyatullah al-'Uẓmā*)” (Qummi, 1393 SH: p. 818). In summary, the Ahl al-Bayt are the true existence of the Qur'an, and their superiority over the written, verbal, and mental existence of the Qur'an is clear and self-evident. As expressed by some contemporaries, the Qur'an is the scientific Imam and the Ahl al-Bayt are the objective Imam (Ganji, 1386 SH: Vol. 1, p. 105), and the Qur'an, its knowledge, and the encompassment of it are merely one status among the statuses of the Ahl al-Bayt.

However, regarding the expressions used in some texts of the Hadīth of *Thaqalayn* describing the Qur'an as the greater weight (*Thiqal al-Akbar*) and the Ahl al-Bayt as the lesser weight (*Thiqal al-Asghar*), researchers have provided detailed answers. The summary of their statements is that this expression was suited to the understanding of the audience of that time and was solely for a specific aspect and consideration; otherwise, there is no doubt about the superiority of the Ahl al-Bayt over the Qur'an. Among them, Ayatollah Jawadi Amoli writes: “It can in no way be proven that the Qur'an is superior to the reality of the perfect divine vicegerent, as the late Kashif al-Ghita has pointed out an aspect of this discussion” (Jawadi Amoli, 1403 AH: Vol. 1, p. 133). Elsewhere, regarding the expressions of the greater and lesser weights, he says: “These expressions look toward the realm of nature, where the duty in this realm is to defend the Qur'an. The perfect human is never lesser than the Qur'an; otherwise, separation would occur between them. The perfect human is the first emanation (*Ṣādir-i Awwal*). The first emanation is either superior to or a peer of the Qur'an” (Jawadi Amoli, 1399 SH: Vol. 2, p. 200).

Some others, like Shaykh Ali Akbar Nahawandi, have discussed the superiority between the Word of God and the Ahl al-Bayt in detail, a summary of which we mention here: “Know that prominent scholars have differed on whether the Qur'an is superior to the Ahl al-Bayt or vice versa... Considering that the two weights were described as one being greater and one lesser, the greater being the Qur'an and the lesser the Ahl al-Bayt. In some traditions, they said one is superior (*Afdal*), in some, they said one is longer (*Aṭwal*), and in some, they equated both and gave the example of the two index fingers... Know that some have adopted the view that the Qur'an is superior, drawing their proof from the apparent meaning of those traditions containing the words greater, superior, and longer, each apparently denoting the precedence of the Qur'an, and they argue using the



tradition of its personification on the Day of Resurrection... However, generally, if this is considered, it would necessitate the superiority of the Qur'an over the Messenger of Allah, a claim no one has voiced... And how could intellect permit that the words and phrases originating from a king, sent via a messenger to someone, be superior to that messenger... And whenever the intellect rejects the superiority of the Qur'an over the Messenger of Allah, it must also reject its superiority over the Guardian (*Walī*), because God Almighty established His Eminence as the soul (*Nafs*) of the Prophet... Thus, the superiority of the Qur'an over one and its inferiority to the other is inconceivable. Another aspect is that numerous traditions state: 'I and Ali are one light which the Bountiful God created thousands of years before the creation of the universe.' This must be based on literal truth, not metaphor, and assuming it is literal truth, undoubtedly Amir al-Mu'minin would be superior to the Qur'an... Another aspect is the widely narrated tradition that the Qur'an in its entirety is in praise of us, the Ahl al-Bayt, and condemnation of our enemies; and if the Qur'an is entirely in praise of them, how can it be superior to the one being praised, while the entirety of it is their praise? How can the adjective be superior to the noun it describes? In summary, the group that considers the Qur'an superior—if by 'Qur'an' they mean these inscriptions drawn on pages of paper—have been very audacious because... how could words and phrases possess superiority over the sacred essence and holy being of the Refuge of Wilāyah? Rather, the nobility and superiority of the Qur'an are by virtue of its meanings (and those meanings are embedded in the knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt and inseparable from them, leaving no rationale for the superiority of the Qur'an over the Ahl al-Bayt)." He then addresses the objections of the opponents of this view and their reasoning based on the aforementioned traditions, providing explanations for them. Among these explanations is that the expression of the Qur'an being "greater" was an etiquette (*Adab*) on the part of the Holy Prophet; he wished, out of respect for his Ahl al-Bayt—who were like his own soul—to call the letter and book of God "greater," and such etiquette is praiseworthy both intellectually and legislatively. Another explanation is that what is meant by "superior" and "greater" is the same attribute of being "longer" (*Atwal*) mentioned in another narration, which is out of similarity to an extended rope (*Ḥabl-i Mamdūd*), as traditions compare the Qur'an to an extended rope (Nahawandi, 1389 SH: pp. 447-454).

Even if the Ahl al-Bayt are conceptualized in relation to the Qur'an at the lowest degree—namely, as peers of the Book of Allah—the conclusion remains that comparison with them will be impossible. Just as the Qur'an is the Word of God, and the Word of God is incomparable with the words



of God's creation, and just as the Word of God is matchless and incomparable to other words, its peer similarly cannot be compared to anything.

5-3. The Ahl al-Bayt (as) as the Most Proximate Servants and Divine Chosen Ones

From the perspective of the Imamiyyah, the Ahl al-Bayt of Infallibility and Purity (as) are the chosen ones of God, the most superior of creatures, and the most proximate servants to the Divine Threshold. It is axiomatic that the greater a servant's proximity to God Almighty and the more they are a divine chosen one, the more they are the focus of divine attention; undoubtedly, God does not ordain their ruling (*Hukm*) to be like that of the rest of His creation and servants. For example, He never equates the crime of murdering the Prophet with that of murdering an ordinary believer, just as He has not equated the murder of a Muslim with the murder of a disbeliever (*Kāfir*), ordaining retribution (*Qisās*) for the murder of a Muslim by a Muslim or a disbeliever, but not ordaining *Qisās* for the murder of a disbeliever by a Muslim. On this basis, even if someone is inwardly pleased with the killing of the Prophet and the Ahl al-Bayt and the oppression against them—like those who were satisfied with the murder of Aba Abdillah al-Husayn (as), despite not outwardly participating in his killing—they exit the circle of faith and are, in reality, absolute disbelievers (*Kāfir*). Even if they profess Islam and perform prayers and fasting, they are considered hypocrites (*Munāfiq*).

Regarding the fact that the Ahl al-Bayt (as) possess superiority (*Afdaliyyah*) over all other creatures, there is abundant evidence. All the Imamiyyah and a large number of Sunni scholars have transmitted the superiority of the Commander of the Faithful (as) over the other companions (*Ṣaḥābah*). What is significant in the Sunni transmissions is that they attribute the belief in the superiority of Ali ibn Abi Talib (as) over the other companions to the Prophet himself or to the companions. Hakim al-Nayshaburi, with an authentic chain of transmission (*Sanad Sahih*), narrates from Ahmad ibn Hanbal: "For none of the companions of the Messenger of Allah have as many virtues (*Faḍā'il*) been narrated as for Ali (as)" (Hakim al-Nayshāburi, 1420 AH: Vol. 3, p. 116). Nasir al-Din al-Albani in *Silsilat al-AḤadīth al-Da'īfah* states: "Many of the predecessors (*Salaf*—companions and followers [*Tābi'in*]) considered Ali (as) superior to others" (Albani, 1412 AH: Vol. 13, p. 881). Al-Dhahabi writes in *Siyar A'lam al-Nubalā'*: "Considering Ali (as) as superior is neither *Rafd* (rejection) nor *Bid'ah* (innovation); rather, this was the belief of many of the companions and followers" (Dhahabi, 1405 AH: Vol. 16, p. 457). Moḥammad al-Baqillani writes in *Manāqib al-A'immaḥ al-Arba'ah*: "The



assertion of Ali's (as) superiority is famous among many companions, such as Abdullah ibn Abbās, Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman, 'Ammār, Jābir ibn Abdullah, Abu al-Haytham ibn al-Tayyihan, and others" (Baqillani, 1422 AH: p. 294), and so on.

Prominent Shia scholars have also maintained the superiority (*Tafḍīl*) of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) over all creation, ranging from the other companions to the angels and prophets. Among them is Shaykh Saduq, who, by considering the prophets, messengers, and proofs (*Hujaj*) superior to the angels, views the prostration of the angels to Adam as a prostration to someone superior to themselves. In his view, this prostration was an act of honoring Adam because the Prophet (pbuh) and the Imams were situated in his loins (*Ṣulb*). The expression he employs here:

«وَلَمْ يَأْمُرْهُمْ اللَّهُ بِالسُّجُودِ إِلَّا لِمَنْ هُوَ أَفْضَلُ مِنْهُمْ، وَكَانَ سُجُودُهُمْ لِلَّهِ تَعَالَى عِبَادِيَّةً وَطَاعَةً وَلِأَدَمَ إِكْرَامًا لِمَا أَوْدَعَ اللَّهُ صُلْبَهُ مِنَ النَّبِيِّ وَالْأَئِمَّةِ صَلَوَاتُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِمْ أَجْمَعِينَ»

[And Allah did not order them to prostrate except to one who is superior to them; and their prostration was in servitude and obedience to Allah Almighty, and out of reverence for Adam due to what Allah had deposited in his loins from the Prophet and the Imams, peace be upon them all] is clearly derived from the phrase of a Hadīth narrated from Imam Riḍā (as):

«وَأَمَرَ الْمَلَائِكَةَ بِالسُّجُودِ لَهُ تَعْظِيمًا لَنَا وَإِكْرَامًا وَكَانَ سُجُودُهُمْ لِلَّهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ عِبَادِيَّةً وَطَاعَةً وَلِأَدَمَ إِكْرَامًا وَطَاعَةً لِكُونِنَا فِي صُلْبِهِ فَكَيْفَ لَا نَكُونُ أَفْضَلَ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ وَقَدْ سَجَدُوا لِأَدَمَ كُلُّهُمْ أَجْمَعُونَ»

[And He ordered the angels to prostrate to him out of glorification and reverence for us. Their prostration was out of servitude to Allah, Mighty and Exalted, and as honoring and obedience towards Adam because we were in his loins. So how could we not be superior to the angels when they all, entirely, prostrated to Adam?] Thus, it appears that he [Shaykh Saduq] considered at least this portion of the aforementioned Hadīth to be a doctrinal teaching and believed in it.

Other Imami scholars are also in agreement with Shaykh Saduq regarding the superiority of the Prophet (pbuh) and his Ahl al-Bayt over the angels. Shaykh Mufid presents a view similar to that of Saduq (Saduq, 1414 AH: pp. 89-90). Allamah Majlisi also, by opening a chapter titled "The Superiority of the Prophet and his Ahl al-Bayt (Peace Be Upon Them) over the Angels and their Testimony to their Wilāyah" (*Faḍl al-Nabī wa Ahl Baytihi Salawat Allah Alayhim 'Ala al-Mala'ikah wa Shahadatihim bi-Wilāyatihim*), has narrated 24 Hadīths from various sources confirming the chapter's title.

Shaykh Mufid, in his invaluable book *Tafḍīl Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (as) 'Alā Jami' al-Anbīyā Ghayr Moḥammad (pbuh)* [The Superiority of the



Commander of the Faithful, Ali (as), over All Prophets except Moḥammad (pbuh)], has mentioned the proofs for the superiority of the Commander of the Faithful, Ali (as), over others. This book consists of seven chapters and seven arguments regarding the superiority of the Commander of the Faithful, Ali (as), over other creatures, ranging from the prophets to, specifically, the companions. Concerning the subject of the superiority of the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) over the rest of creation, a significant number of Shia scholars have authored independent works. Among them, 'Izz al-Din Abu Moḥammad Hasan ibn Sulayman ibn Moḥammad Hilli 'Amili (d. 802 AH) wrote a book regarding the superiority of the Imams over the prophets and angels titled *Tafḍīl al-A'immah 'Alá al-Anbīyá wa al-Mala'ikah*.

The traditions that explicitly state the superiority and precedence (*Afḍaliyyah*) of the Ahl al-Bayt of Infallibility and Purity over other people—and indeed over all creation—are too numerous to count; here, we will suffice with mentioning just a few examples. Tabarsi narrates in *Al-Ihtijāj* from the Prophet (pbuh):

«مَعَاشِرَ النَّاسِ فَضِّلُوا عَلَيَّ فَإِنَّهُ أَفْضَلُ النَّاسِ بَعْدِي مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَ أَنتَى»

[O people, acknowledge the superiority of Ali, for he is the most superior of people after me, of both male and female] (Tabarsi, 1403 AH: Vol. 1, p. 75). Karajaki in *Kanz al-Fawa'id* narrates from the Messenger of Allah:

«مَا أَظَلَّتِ الْخَضِرَاءُ وَلَا أَقَلَّتِ الْعَبْرَاءُ بَعْدِي عَلَى أَفْضَلٍ مِنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ أَبِي طَالِبٍ وَ إِنَّهُ إِمَامٌ أُمْتِي وَ أَمِيرُهَا»

[The blue sky has not shaded, nor has the earth carried, anyone after me superior to Ali ibn Abi Talib; and indeed, he is the Imam of my Ummah and its commander] (Karajaki, 1369 SH: p. 208). Fadil Miqdad, one of the great jurists of the ninth century AH, in the discussion of Imamate in his theological book *Irshād al-Ṭālibin*, has opened a chapter titled “Indeed He (as) is the Most Superior of People after the Messenger of Allah” (*Innahū 'Alayhi al-Salām Afḍal al-Nās Ba'd Rasūl Allah*). Among the transmitted proofs he cites from the sources of both sects for the superiority of the Commander of the Faithful (as) is the Prophetic Hadīth:

«عَلَى خَيْرِ الْبَشَرِ فَمَنْ أَبِي فَقَدْ كَفَرَ»

[Ali is the best of mankind, so whoever refuses (to accept this) has committed disbelief] (Fadil Miqdad, 1405 AH: p. 304). Irbili in *Kashf al-Ghumma* narrates from the Messenger of Allah:

«خَيْرٌ مَنْ يَمْشِي عَلَى وَجْهِ الْأَرْضِ بَعْدِي عَلَى بَنِي أَبِي طَالِبٍ»

[The best of those who walk upon the face of the earth after me is Ali ibn Abi Talib] (Irbili, 1340 SH: Vol. 2, p. 157). Majlisi in *Biḥār [al-Anwār]* narrates that Imam Sadiq (as) said:



«مَا مِنْ نَبِيٍّ وَلَا رَسُولٍ أُرْسِلَ إِلَّا بَوَلَّائِنَا وَتَفْضِيلِنَا عَلَى مَنْ سِوَانَا»

[No prophet or messenger was sent except with (the mandate of) our Wilāyah and our superiority over all others] (Majlisi, 1403 AH: Vol. 26, p. 280).

However, regarding the Ahl al-Bayt (as) being the chosen ones among the Ummah, the argument of Imam Riḍā (as) in the court of Ma'mun with the scholars of the opponents—which Saduq has narrated in *'Uyūn [Akhhbār al-Riḍā]*—suffices (Ṣaduq, 1380 SH: Vol. 1, pp. 468-497).

4- Conclusion

The Ahl al-Bayt of Infallibility and Purity possess such a station and standing in the ontological order (*Niẓām al-Takwīn*) that their rank and status cannot be compared with any of the individuals of the Ummah and their followers, let alone the rest of the people. Therefore, they are subject to special rulings (*Aḥkāṃ*); due to the unique station and status they hold before God Almighty, they are entitled to a specific reverence and honoring. Extending this level of reverence and honoring to others is not only unnecessary, but due to the impermissibility of comparing others to them, it is also not permissible (*Jā'iz*).

On this basis, the transmitted traditions have prohibited making comparisons with them. This prohibition of comparing others to the Ahl al-Bayt has been issued in an absolute (*Muṭlaq*) manner; therefore, one cannot compare others to them in any of their characteristics and traits, especially in spiritual dimensions.

The origin and reason for the incomparability of others to the Ahl al-Bayt lies in the reality and the special bestowed stations (*Maqamat-i Mawhibati*) of the Ahl al-Bayt before the Lord. Thus, it is not possible to extend (*Tasri'*) this ruling to others merely because they occupy some of the positions (*Manāṣib*) of the Ahl al-Bayt.

The Ahl al-Bayt possess unique stations and virtues that are beyond the reach of others, and this very fact is the cause for the impermissibility of making comparisons with the Ahl al-Bayt. Therefore, when encountering Hadīths that encompass some of the special stations, virtues (*Manāqib*), and affairs (*Shu'ūn*) of the Ahl al-Bayt, one must not—merely out of finding them improbable (*Istib'ād*) or overwhelmingly grand in one's mind—attribute these virtues and traits to exaggeration (*Ghuluww*), accuse them of falsehood, and reject them. Rather, in these instances, one should accuse their own deficient understanding, or at the very least, remain silent in these cases and delegate the knowledge thereof to the Knower of the Family of Moḥammad (pbuh).



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