Ahlul Bayt (`a): Its Meaning and Origin

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The term “ahl” signifies the members of a household of a man, including his fellow tribesmen, kin, relatives, wife (or wives), children, and all those who share a family background, religion, housing, city, and country with him. “Ahl” and “al” are both the same term with the exception that “al” is exclusively used for human beings and should come before the family name, but such a condition is not existent in the case of “ahl”.

“Bayt” refers to habitation and dwelling, including tents and buildings both. The “Ahlul Bayt” of any person refers to his family members and all those who live in his house (c.f. “Mufradat al-Qur'an” by Raghib Isfahani; “Qamus” by Firoozabadi; “Majm`a al-Bahrayn”.

The term “Ahlul Bayt” (people of the house) has been repeated twice in the Holy Qur'an:

1. “... the mercy of Allah and his blessing are on you, O people of the house, ... (11:73)”

This verse refers to the people of the House of Ibrahim (S) (c.f. “Kashf al-Asrar wa `Uddat al-Abrar”, 416/4 and other interpretations).

2. “... Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O people of the House! And to purify you a (thorough) purifying (33:33)”.

This verse, known as the “Tathir verse”, refers to the Members of the Household of the Holy Prophet (S). The Imamiyyah scholars of hadith and fiqh, as well as some Sunni `Ulama, consider the “Ahlul Bayt” cited in the “tathir verse” to include exclusively Muhammad, `Ali, Fatimah, Hasan, and Husayn (peace be upon them all). They do not consider the Holy Prophet's other offspring, wives, sons of paternal uncles, and dwellers of his house as the Messenger's “Ahlul Bayt”.

They base their argument on the genuine and authentic traditions narrated by the companions of the Prophet (S) recorded in the Sunni and Shi`i sources. Under the following headings, this article will delve into some of the said traditions and refer to some features of the “Ahlul Bayt” as narrated by the Sunnis:

1. Kisa' tradition; 2. Mubahalah tradition; 3. Mawaddat al-Qurba tradition; 4. Safinah tradition; .5. Other traditions

Kisa' Tradition .1

A. Jalaluddin `Abdul-Rahman bin Abi Bakr Suyuti (d 911 A.H.) in his commentary “Al-Dur al-

Manthur", 198/5-199, Muhammad ibn `Isa Tirmidhi (3 279 A.H.) the author of "Jami' Sahih", Hakim Nishaburi (d 405 A.H.) in "Al-Mustadrak ala al-Sahihayn", Ahmad ibn Husayn Bayhaqi (d 458 A.H.) in "Sunan" (all three of whom have considered the Kisa' tradition as authentic), Muhammad ibn Jarir Tabari (d 315 A.H.), Ibn Munzir Muhammad ibn Ibrahim (d 319 A.H.), Ibn Mardawayh Isfahani, and Ahmad ibn Musa (d 410 A.H.) have quoted Ummu Salamah, the wife of the Holy Prophet (S) as saying that the verse

"... Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O people of the House! And to purify you a thorough purifying (33:33)"

was revealed in her house. At that time, `Ali, Fatimah, Hasan, and Husayn (peace be upon them all) were in her house. The Holy Prophet (S) spread his cloak over them and stated: "These are the members of my Household, and Allah has purified them of all (sins and faults and uncleanness)."

B. Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Hanbal, the Hanbali Imam, (d 241 A.H.), in "Musnad" 229/2 quotes Ummu Salamah as saying: "The Holy Prophet (S) was in my house. Fatimah (`a) came to her father holding a stone bowl filled with "harirah" (type of food made up of flour, milk, and vegetable oil). The Holy Prophet (S) stated: Invite your husband and two sons to come as well." `Ali, Hasan, and Husayn also came there and all sat down to eat "harirah". Then, the Holy Prophet (S) was sitting on a cloak in his resting place and I was reciting the prayer in the chamber. At this time, Almighty Allah revealed the verse "Allah only desires to ...". The Holy Prophet (S) covered `Ali, Fatimah, Hasan, and Husayn (peace be upon them all) with the cloak and then stretched his hand toward the sky and said: "Allah! These are the Members of my Household, so purify them of all uncleanness'. Ummu Salamah said: "I asked him: "Am I also with you?" He stated: "You are on good and virtue" (but did not say that you are a member of my Household)'."

This tradition has also been narrated by Ahmad ibn Muhammad Tahawi (d 321 A.H.) in "Mushkil al-Athar" 332 and 334; Wahidi in "Asbab al-Nuzul" 268 and Muhib Tabari (d 694 A.H.) in "Zakhair al-`Uqba" 23 have related this tradition. In continuation of this tradition, Tabari has written that the Prophet (S) stated: "I am a friend of whosoever is friends with them and an enemy of whosoever is an enemy of them."

The said tradition of similar statements have been recorded in "Manaqib" by Ibn Hanbal, 44, the microfilm copy of the book is available in the Parliament Library. Tabari remarked: "This tradition has been narrated from Umma Salamah by Ibn al-Qubabi in "Mu'jam" and Siyuti in "Al-Dur al-Mnthur" under the title of the "tathir verse", as well as by Ibn Jarir, Ibn Munzir, Ibn Mardawayh, Ibn Abi Hatam and Ibn Tabrani."

C- Khatib Baghdadi, Ahmad bin `Ali, (d 463 A.H.) in “The History of Baghdad” 278/10, has quoted Abu Saeed Khidri S`ad bin Malik (d 74 A.H.) as saying that after the revelation of the “tathir verse”, the Holy Prophet (S) summoned `Ali, Fatimah, Hasan, and Husayn (peace be upon them all) and covered them with the cloak he had on and said: “These are the members of my Household, and Allah has purified them (of every wrong and sin).” The same tradition has been narrated from Ummu Salamah by Muhammad ibn Jarir Tabari in “Jam`a al-Bayan” 7/22.

D- In “Sahih Muslim” (narrated by Sayyid Murtada Firoozabadi in “Fadail al-Khamsah min Sihah al-Sitah” 214/1), Safiyah, the daughter of Shayba, has narrated `Aishah, the wife of the Holy Prophet (S), as saying: “One morning, the Messenger of Allah left the house with a cloak made of black material and bearing the design of a camel's saddle. Hasan ibn `Ali entered the place, and the Prophet (S) covered him with the cloak. Then came Husayn, Fatimah, and `Ali one after another, and all of them were also covered by the cloak. The Prophet (S) then stated: “... Allah only desires to keep away uncleanness from you, O people of the House! And to purify you a (thorough) purifying.”

This tradition has been narrated by Hakim Nishaburi in “Al-Mustadark” 14/3; Bayhaqi in “Sunan” 149/2; Tabari in the “Jami al-Bayan” Siyuti in “al-Durri al-Manthur” under the title of the “tathir verse”. In addition, Ibn Abi Shaybah, Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Hanbal, Ibn Abi Hatam have narrated it from `Aishah. Zamakhshari in “Kashshaf” and Fakhr Razi in “Tafsir Kabir” have also related this tradition. It seems that the recorders of traditions are unanimous about the authenticity of this tradition (“Fadail al-Khamsah” 224/1).

E- In the “Jami al-Bayan” Muhammad bin Jarir Tabari has quoted Shahr bin Hushab Ash'air (d 100 A.H.) as saying: “When Ummu Salamah heard news of the martyrdom of Husayn bin `Ali (`a), she cursed the people of Iraq and said: `May Allah kill the people of Iraq who deceived him and left him alone. May Allah curse them. Verily, I saw Fatimah while bringing a stone bowl of sweet paste for the Holy Prophet (S). The Holy Prophet (S) stated: `Where is your cousin?' She said: `At home.' The Prophet (S) said: `Go bring him here with his two sons.' Fatimah returned while holding the hands of Hasan and Husayn. `Ali also followed them, and they came to the Holy Prophet (S).

The Holy Prophet (S) embraced Hasan and Husayn and made `Ali sit on his right and Fatimah on left. He then the cloak as the carpet on which we slept in Medina and placed it over Fatimah, `Ali, Hasan, and Husayn. He held the two sides of the cloak with his left hand. He raised his right hand toward the sky addressing Almighty Allah by saying: `O Allah, purify them of any uncleanness . O Allah, these are the members of my Household. Purify and cleanse

them of any vice, wrong, and sin,' (He repeated this twice). I asked: `O Messenger! Am I also a member of your Household?' He said: `You come under the cloak.' I also went under the cloak, but only after the Prophet (S) finished his prayer for his cousin, his two sons, and Fatimah (peace be upon them all)."

This tradition has been related by Ahmad bin Muhammad ibn Hanbal in "Musnad" 292/6: Tahwi in "Mushkil al-Athar" 335/1; and Muhib Tabari in "Zakhair al-`Uqba" 22/1. The Kisa' tradition which has been narrated in different forms by the Shias and the Sunnis is very sacred for the entire Imamiyyah, especially the Shia of Iran, the Indian subcontinent, Iraq, and Yemen. It is recited in "rawdah" sessions (mourning ceremony) to have the wishes fulfilled and problems removed. Some narration provide more details on this tradition. Some say that Jibraeel and Mikaeel were also among the disciples of the Kisa' or were present there. A divine revelation was descended on the Holy Prophet (S) to the effect that the world and whatever is in it is indebted to these five pure ones.

Mubahalah Tradition .2

Sixty chiefs and `Ulama of Najran, headed by Sayyid, Aqib, and Usquf (religious personalities) of the region in the 10th year A.H. came to Medina to clarify their religious and political stance vis-a-vis Islam which had spread over the Arab peninsula and to engage in discussions with the Messenger (S) of Allah to realize the essence and truth of Islam.

After lengthy discussions which have been presented in details in Ibn Husham's "Sirah" 573/1, no agreement was reached on the position and standing of Jesus. The Christians of Najran believed in the divinity of Jesus and considered him as the son of God.

This is while, based on the explicit wording of the Holy Qur'an (3:59), the Messenger (S) of Allah considered him as a prophet and the servant of God. At the end of the discussions, the Prophet (S) suggested that the two sides engage in "mubahalah", in other words, to invoke divine malediction for the lying side. The following verse was descended in this regard:

"But whoever disputes with you in this matter after what has come to you of knowledge, then say: come let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our near people and your near people, then let us be earnest in prayer, and pray for the curse of Allah on the liars." (3:61)

The 10th (and some say the 24th) of Dhul-Hijjah was chosen for "mubahalah". The Messenger (S) of Allah ordered that in a field outside Medina a thin black "aba" (men's loose sleeveless cloak open in front) be used as a shade between two trees. The Christian chiefs and dignitaries of Najran stood in orderly ranks on one side of the field, on the other side, the Prophet, together

with `Ali, Fatimah, Hasan and Husayn came from the direction of Medina to the shade. Along this path, the Prophet (S), holding the hand of `Ali (`a), Hasan and Husayn walked in front with Fatimah behind them (c.f. "Majm`a al-Bayan". Interpretation of the Mubahalah Verse). With such simplicity and grandeur, they reached the shade and stood below the "aba". The Holy Prophet (S) recited the "tathir verse" and addressed the "Ahlul Bayt" by saying: "I will invoke malediction for them and you say `amin'." Seeing such glory and grandeur, the Najran chiefs lost their self-confidence and felt that they were very puny and could not stand against Prophet Muhammad (S) and his Household. They, therefore, accepted to pay "jaziyyah" and offered to give in to peace. On behalf of the Holy Prophet (S), the commander of the Faithful, `Ali (`a), signed a peace treaty with the Christians.

The Christians were to annually offer twelve thousand exquisite clothes, a thousand mithqal of gold, and some other items to remain Christians under the umbrella of Islam.

On the basis of the "mubahalah verse", Sunni interpreters such as Zamakhshari, Baydawi, Imam Fakhr Razi and others regard `Ali, Fatimah, Hasan and Husayn (peace be upon them all) superior to all other people and argue that Hassan and Husayn are the sons of the Messenger of Allah (S).

The term "anfusina" in the "mubahalah verse" proves the unity of the heart and soul of Prophet Muhammad and `Ali. The Holy Prophet (S) stated: "`Ali is of me and I am of `Ali." ("Fadail al-Khamsah" 343/1). The "mubahalah tradition" has been recounted in different books of "sirah" and history with various wordings. These include those of Tirmidhi ("Sahih" 166/2) which quotes S`ad ibn Abi Waqqas as follows: "When the mubahalah verse was recited, the Holy Prophet (S) summoned `Ali, Fatimah, Hasan, and Husayn and said: `O Allah, these are the Members of my Household." This tradition has been narrated by Hakim Nishaburi in "Al-Mustadrak" 150/3 and Bayhaqi in "Sunan" 63/7. Hakim regards this tradition as authentic.

Mawaddat al-Qurba Tradition .3

Based on the consensus of the exegesists ("Jam`a al-Bayan" Tabari 16/25, 17; "Hilyat al-Awlia" 251/3; "Al-Mustadrak" 172/3; "Usd al-Ghabah" 367/5; "Al-Sawa'iq al-Muharaqah" 101), the following verse has been revealed about the members of the Household of the Holy Prophet (S):

"...Say: I do not ask of you any reward for it but love for my near relatives ..." (42:23)

The term "Al-Qurba" in this verse, based on the traditions narrated from the Holy Prophet (S), embraces only `Ali, Fatimah, Hasan, and Husayn and no one else. The tradition from Ibn `Abbas' has it that when the "mawaddat al-qurba" verse was revealed, the Prophet (S) was

asked: “O messenger, who are your near relatives who should be loved?” He stated: “`Ali, Fatimah, and their sons.”

This tradition has been narrated by Muhib Tabari in “Zakhair al-`Uqba” 25/1; Ibn Hanbal in “Manaqib” 110; Mo'min Shabilenji “Nural-Absar” 101; and Zamakhshari in “Kashshaf” as annotation to the said verse. In the “Tafsir al-Kabir”, Fakhr Razi has related the said narration from “Kashshaf” and has said that based on this verse, `Ali, Fatimah, Hasan, and Husayn should be revered and sanctified. He has also cited lines of verse from the Shafii' Imam, Muhammad bin Idris Shafii' (d 240 A.H.) in this regard. A line of it is as follows: “If love for the members of the Household of the Holy Prophet is heresy, then the world should stand witness that I am a heretic”.

Safinah Tradition .4

The virtues of the “Ahlul Bayt” have been amply mentioned in the authenticated and Tawatur traditions narratted by both Shia and Sunni `Ulama. Using different words and phrases, these traditions have asked people to love the “Ahlul Bayt” and follow thier teachings. For instance, the Holy Prophet (S) has compared his “Ahlul Bayt” to Noah's ark. Whoever loves and follows them will attain salvation and whoever violates their sanctity will drown.

The servant of the Holy Prophet (S), Anas bin Malik (d 93 A.H.), has been related as quoting the Prophet (S) as saying: “The example of the members of my Household among you is like the example of Noah's ark. Whoever boards it will attain salvation and whoever does not board it will drown.” This tradition has been narrated by Hakim Nishaburi in “Al-Mustadrak” 343/2; Khatib in “Tarikh Baghdad” 91/12; and other great recorders of traditions (“al-Ghadir” 300/2-301). In this regard, Imam Shafii' has said the following:

“When I saw different schools of thought directing people toward the seas of ignorance and deviation, I boarded the ark of salvation in the Name of Allah. This arc is verily crystallized in the “Ahlul Bayt” of the Seal of the Prophets, Mustafa (S).” Among very famous traditions in which the “Ahlul Bayt” have been resembled to the ark of salvation, reference can be made to the famous “Ishbah tradition” which has been narrated from the Holy Prophet (S) by Abu Hurayrah `Abdul-Rahman bin Sakhar (d 59 A.H.).

“When Almighty Allah created Adam, the father of mankind, and breathed His spirit into him, Adam looked to the right hand side of the empyrean. There he saw five figures in the form of silhouettes engaged in prostration and genuflection. He asked: “God, have you created any one from the dust before me?” God replied: “No.” Adam said, “So who are these five figures which I see resembling my own shape and form?” God answered, “These are five of your offspring. If it

were not for them, I would have not created you. They are five people whose names are derived from My Own. If it were not for them, I would have not created paradise or hell, the heavens and the earth, the skies and the lands, the angels, the human beings and the jinn. I am “Mahmud” and this Muhammad. I am “Aala” and this is `Ali. I am “Fatir” and this is Fatimah, I am “Ihsan” and this is Hasan. I am “Muhsin” and this is Husayn. By My Glory, whoever bears even an atom's weight of grudge against them will be cast into hell. O Adam! They are My chosen ones. For them, I will save or cast others to perdition. If you want anything from me, you should resort to these five people.”

The Holy Prophet (S) said: “We serve as the ark of salvation. Whoever holds fast to this ark will reach salvation and whoever deviates from it will be cast into perdition. Whoever wants Allah to grant him something should resort to the `Ahlul Bayt'.” This tradition has been narrated by Shaykh al-Islam Hamu'i in the first chapter of “Fara'id al-Samtayn” and Khatib Khwarazmi in “Manaqib” 252 (c.f. “al-Ghadir” 300/2). The Ashbah tradition has been narrated by `Allamah Amini in another part of the al-Ghadir” (301/7) quoting Abul-Fath Muhammad bin `Ali al-Natanzi in “Alfaz.”

5. Other Traditions about the Virtues and Characteristics of the “Ahl al-Bayt”

A- In the interpretation of the verse “And enjoin prayer on your household ...” (20:132), Jalaluddin Siyuti in “al-Durr al-Manthur”, has related Ibn Mardawayh, Ibn `Aker, and in al-Najjar as quoting Abu Saeed Khidri as saying that after this verse was revealed, for eight months, the Prophet went to the house of `Ali every morning at the time of morning prayers and read this verse:

“... Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O people of the House! And to purify you a (thorough) purifying (33:33).”

(“Al-Durr al-Manthur” 198/5 and 199; “Fadail al-Khamsah”; 226/1).

Another tradition has it that from the fortieth day after the consummation of the marriage of `Ali (`a) and Fatimah (`a), the Prophet (S) every morning went to their house and said: “Peace be upon you, O members of the House and the mercy and blessings of Allah. I will fight with whoever fights with you and I will be reconciled with whoever is reconciled with you.” He then recited the “tathir verse”.

Ibn `Abdul-Bar in “al-isti`ab” 598/2; Abu Dawud Tialisi in “Sahih” 274/8; and Firoozabadi in “Fadail al-Khamsah” 236/1 have put at forty the number of mornings when the Prophet (S) went to the house of `Ali (`a) and Fatimah (`a). In the “Jami al-Bayan” interpretation, Tabari has said that this was done for seven months. Siyuëi (in “Al-Durr al-Manthur”, 199) has quoted Ibn

`Abbas as saying that after the verse

"And enjoin prayer on your household ..." (20:132)

was revealed, the Holy Prophet (S) for nine months went to the house of `Ali (`a) five times a day at the time of daily prayers and called on the members of the house to keep up the prayer. Each time, he recited the "tathir verse".

This is possible because the Holy Prophet's house was close to that of `Ali (`a). Its door opened inside the mosque. So whenever the Messenger (S) of Allah wanted to go to the mosque, he had to pass the house of `Ali (`a) and Fatimah (`a).

B- In "Al-Mustadrak alal-Sahihayn", Hakim Nishaburi quotes `Abdullah bin Ja'afar bin Talib as saying that when the Messenger (S) of Allah looked to the blessings coming down, he said, "Call on them." Safiyeh said, "O Messenger of Allah, whom should we call upon?" He replied, "The members of my Household: `Ali, Fatimah, Hasan and Husayn." They were called upon. Then the Prophet (S) placed his cloak over them and raised both hands and said, "O Allah, these are the members of my Household. Peace be upon Muhammad and upon the Household of Muhammad." Almighty Allah revealed the verse,

"... Allah only desires to keep away ... (33:33)."

Hakim Nishaburi said this tradition is an authenticated tradition. The Holy Prophet (S) taught them to send greetings upon his household ("`Ayan al-Shi`ah" 358/1; "Fadail al-Khamsah" 227/1; "Al-Mustadrak" 147/3). Ibn Jurir and Ibn Abi Hatam have quoted Qutadah as saying that in relation to the verse,

"... Allah only desires to keep away ... (33:33)",

the Prophet (S) stated, "These are the members of my Household, and Allah has purified them of any uncleanness and granted them His mercy. We serve as the tree of prophethood, the pillar of mission, the place of passage of angels, the house of mercy, and the wealth of knowledge" ("Al-Durr al-Manthur", 198/5-199).

C- In "Al-Mustadrak al-Sahihayn", Hakim Nishaburi has quoted this authentic tradition from Ibn `Abbas: The Holy Prophet (S) stated, "Love Allah who gives you food out of his bounty and love me for His love and love the members of my Household because of love for me." He also relates this tradition which he considers authentic from Abu S`ad Khidri: "Whoever shows animosity toward us the members of the Household will be cast into the fire." ("A'yan al-Shi`a", 315/1).

D- Hakim Nishaburi in "Al-Mustadrak", 149/3 and Ibn Hajar in "Sawaiq", 140 have related Ibn `Abbas as quoting the Prophet (S) as saying: "The stars are the source of the earth and the members of my Household are the source of the "ummah" (people)." Another tradition refers to

the same: “The stars are the refuge for the dwellers of the heavens and my “Ahlul Bayt” are the refuge for the “ummah” (“Kanz al-A'mal fi Sunan al-Aqwal wal-Af`al” 116/6).

Another tradition has said: “the stars are the refuge for the dwellers of the skies. So if the stars are destroyed, the dwellers of the skies will also be destroyed. The members of my Household are the refuge for the dwellers of the earth. If they are destroyed, the dwellers of the earth also be destroyed” (Muhib Tabari in “Zakhair al-`Uqba”, 17/1 and `Ali bin Sultan Muhammad Qari in “Mirqat al-Mafatih” 610/5, Egypt, 1339 A.H.).

Some Sunni `Ulama regard the “tathir verse” pertinent to all kin and relatives of the Holy Prophet (S) including the wives, children, the Bani Hashim and Bani`Adul-Mutallib (Ash'ari in “Maqalat al-Islamin”, 9). Based on a tradition narrated from Saeed bin Jubayer, Bukhari, Ibn Abi Hatam, Ibn `Aker, and Ibn Mardawayh have said that this verse has been revealed about the wives of the Prophet (S) and believe that they are the members of the Household of the Messenger (S) of Allah (“Fath al-Qadir”, 27/4, Egypt 1350 A.H.).

In addition to the wives of the Holy Prophet (S), Qurtabi and Ibn Kathir consider `Ali, Fatimah, Hasan and Husayn (peace be upon them all) as members of the Household to whom the “tathir verse” applies. But Tirmidhi, Ibn Jurir, Ibn Manzar, Hakim Nishaburi, and Bayhaqi who are all Sunni `Ulama have referred to the authentic tradition of Ummu Salamah and have thus considered the “tathir verse” applicable to `Ali, Fatimah, Hasan and Husayn (peace be upon them all). The Shias have mentioned several reasons and proofs that the “Ahlul Bayt” of the Holy Prophet (S) are exclusively `Ali, Fatimah, Hasan and Husayn to whom the “tathir verse” applies. The most important of these reasons and proofs are:

1. Based on an authentic tradition narrated from Ummu Salamah and Abu Saeed Khidri, the “tathir verse” has been revealed about the Holy Prophet (S), `Ali, Fatimah, Hasan and Husayn (peace be upon all).

2. In the Kisa' tradition, it has been stipulated that after placing `Ali, Fatimah, Hasan and Husayn (peace be upon all) under his cloak, the Prophet (S) said: “O Allah, these are the members of my Household.” This means that no one else apart from these is viewed as the “Ahlul Bayt”.

3. In response to Ummu Salama who asked whether she was also a member of the Household, the Prophet (S) said: “You have your own place, you are virtuous.” He said no more than this. If Ummu Salama, in whose house the “tathir verse” was revealed, is not a member of the Household of the Holy Prophet (S), the verse will surely not apply to the Messenger's other wives.

4. Some traditions state that based on a request from Ummu Salamah, the Prophet (S) allowed

her to come under the cloak but did so after saying, “Allah these are the members of my Household” and reciting the “tathir verse”.

5. `Akramah Bariri (d 105 A.H.) and Urwat bin Zubayr (d 93 A.H.) are among the people who have related that the “tathir verse” has been exclusively revealed about the wives of the Prophet (S). Of course, Akramah subscribe to Khawarij (“Al-`a'lam” Zarkali, 42/5) and Urwat (“`Ayan al-Shi`ah”, 309/1). Also the pronoun in the said verse is masculine not feminine. Such a narration cannot contrdict the famous tradition related by `Aishah, Ummu Salamah, and Abu Saeed Khidri, who have considered the “Ahlul Bayt” to be exclusively five people. They have said that the verses coming before and after the “tathir verse” are related to the wives of the Prophet (S), so this verse should also be relevant to them.

Qur'anic verses are not classified based on the order of their revelation or contents. In addition, Zayd bin Arqam who has related the authenticated Thaqalayn tradition, has stated that the wives of the Holy Prophet (S) are not regarded as the members of his Household). He was asked: “Aren't the wives of the Holy Prophet (S) considered as the members of the Household?”

He replied: “The wives of the Prophet reside in the Prophet's house but the Prophet's “Ahlul Bayt” are those to whom the grant of “sadaqah” is religiously unlawful.” Another tradition has it that Zayd was asked to name the members of the Household of the Holy Prophet (S). He was asked whether the Prophet's wives were among his “Ahlul Bayt”. He replied: “No, a wife lives with a husband for a while and then might be divorced and go back to her parents.”

6. After citing the “tathir verse”, `Ali Qari in the “Annotation to Qazi Ayaz's Shifa” (as related in “`Ayan al-Shi`ah”, 309/1) has mentioned that according to a tradition narrated by Ibn `Abbas, the Prophet's “Ahlul Bayt” include his wives as well. According to Abu Saeed Khidri and some followers, the “Ahlul Bayt” include `Ali, Fatimah, Hasan and Husayn (peace be upon all).

He says: “There is no problem if we gather these traditions together and consider both groups to be members of the Household of the Holy Prophet (S). But It would go against the Shia idea that the “tathir verse” applies only to `Ali, Fatimah, Hasan and Husayn and that they are immaculate . Even the fact that they regard the consensus of Imamiyyah `Ulama as proof to the veracity of thiswould be rejected. Abu Saeed Khidri's tradition only shows that these four are members of the Prophet's Household and does not indicate that no one else is among the “Ahlul Bayt”.

But Akramah's traditions explicitly quotes Ibn `Abbas as saying that verily the “Ahlul Bayt” refers to the wives of the Prophet. On the other hand, Khidir's tradition says that the Prophet said: “Only these (i.e. `Ali, Fatimah, Hasan and Husayn) are the Members of my Household.”

This indicates exclusive membership.

How then can these two traditions be combined? For this reason, the Imamiyyah `Ulama have consensus on following the traditions of the immaculate Imams (peace be upon them all) and the distinguished disciples to the effect that the “Ahlul Bayt” of the Prophet (S) are only the five people known as the “Al al-Aba” and “Ashab Kisa”.