

THE POSITION OF LADY FATIMA AL-ZAHRA (A) IN THE VERSE OF *MUBĀHALAH*¹ FROM A SUNNI PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT: The verse of *Mubāhalah* indicates the infallibility of the People of the Cloak (*Aṣḥāb-e Kisā*) in their words and deeds. This verse refers to the famous event of al-Mubahalah which took place in the year 10 A.H. against the Christians of Najran. Both Shi'a and Sunni scholars have narrated this event. Imam Ali (a) was considered as 'our souls' (*anfusanā*), Lady Fatima (a) as 'our women' (*nisā'anā*), and Imam Hasan (a) and Imam Husayn (a) as 'our sons' (*abnā'anā*). Some Sunni scholars believe that this report is fully authentic. Traditions about *Mubāhalah* have been reported in 51 different ways and quoted from 37 major religious scholars.

Introduction

The interpretation of verses on the high status of Lady Fatima are found in both Shi'a and Sunni traditional and exegetical sources. According to Sunni traditional and exegetical sources, more than 135 verses in 49 chapters and two complete chapters (*Dahr* and *Kawthar*) are related to Lady Fatima's persona. Verses interpreted concerning Lady Fatima (a) in Shi'a sources are not included in these numbers, demonstrating the abundance of verses with reference to her. Among

¹ 3:61

² MA in Qur'an and hadith sciences from Imam Khomeini school

her titles include *Ummi Abīhā*³ (or ‘the mother of her father’), the great woman of all women⁴, *Kawthar*⁵ (‘abundance’) in the Qur’an, and a piece of the Prophet’s (s) heart.⁶

Hundreds of related verses and many exegetical traditions in both Shi‘a and Sunni sources indicate infallibility, purity, honesty, self-devotion, sincerity, and other spiritual excellences of Lady Fatima (a). However, her character still remains unknown; she is the one whose pleasure is a sign of Allah’s pleasure and whose wrath is a sign of Allah’s wrath. Truly, no pen can bear the burden of writing about the different dimensions of her character. Therefore, from among many verses revealed about Lady Fatima (a), the only verse discussed in this article is the verse of *Mubāhalah* from a Sunni point of view.

The verse of Mubāhalah

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

Should anyone argue with you concerning him, after the knowledge that has come to you, say, ‘Come! Let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, our selves and yourselves, then let us pray earnestly and call down Allah’s curse upon the liars.’ (3:61)

³ See: ‘Iz al-Dīn ibn Athīr, *Asad al-Ghābah fī Ma‘rifah al-Ṣaḥābah*, Beirut, Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, vol. 5, p. 52.

⁴ See: Muhammad ibn Ismā‘īl Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Beirut, Dār al-Jayl, vol. 4, p. 248; Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-Manthūr fī al-Tafsīr al-Ma‘thūr*, Dār al-Fikr, 1993, vol. 2, p. 19.

⁵ Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, 1985, in the commentary of chapter of Kawthar.

⁶ Maḥmūd ibn Ismā‘īl Bukhārī, *Ibid*, vol. 5, p. 36; Ḥākim Nayshābūrī, *al-Mustadrak ‘ala al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, Beirut, Dār al-Ma‘rifah, vol. 3, p. 158.

Literal meaning of Mubāhalah

According to Jawharī⁷ (d. 393 A.H) in his *Sihah al-Lughah*, the term *Mubāhalah* means ‘to curse each other’ and *ibtihāl*,⁸ means ‘to pray to Allah (swt) earnestly’.⁹ Moreover, Ibn Fāris (d. 395 A.H) in his *Mu‘jam Maqā’is al-Lughah* says: “b-h-l”¹⁰ has three meanings: a) to empty and set free, b) to invoke and pray fervently, and c) shortage of water.

The term *Mubāhalah* and the verse of Mubahala¹¹ (3:61) refers to the second meaning, that is, ‘to invoke and pray fervently’, because when two people engage in *Mubāhalah*, one curses the other and begs Allah (swt) to punish the addressee.

Definition and incident of Mubāhalah

Mubāhalah occurs when one person or group invokes the curse of Allah (swt) on another person or group about a religious issue and they implore Allah to disgrace those who lie about it.

According to both Shi‘a and Sunni sources, a group of Christians from Najrān went to the Prophet (s) and talked about Prophet Jesus (a). The next day when the Prophet (s) decided to do *mubahalah*, he chose Imam Ali (a) to represent the Muslims as ‘ourselves’, Lady Fatima (a) as ‘our women’, and Imam Hasan (a) and Imam Husayn (a) as ‘our sons’ from amongst all Muslims to confirm his prophethood. This act of the Prophet (s) is a proof for the infallibility and honesty of Lady Fatima al-Zahra (a).

⁷ Abu Nasr Isma‘il ibn Hammad al-Jawhari, the author of a notable Arabic dictionary

⁸ In Arabic, verbal noun of Mubāhilah

⁹ Ismā‘il Jawharī, *Al-Ṣiḥāh*, Beirut, Dār al-‘Ilm li al-Mullā‘īn, 1987, under root form “b-h-l”.

¹⁰ In Arabic, past root of Mubāhilah

¹¹ Ahmad ibn Fāris, *Mu‘jam Maqāyis al-Lughah*, Beirut, Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabīyah, under root form “b-h-l”.

Revelation of the verse of Mubāhalah

1. ‘Albā’ ibn Ahmad Alīshkarī says, “When the verse of *Mubāhalah* (3:61) was revealed, the Prophet (s) called Ali (a), Lady Fatima (a), Hasan (a) and Husayn (a) and invited the Jews for *Mubāhalah*. As soon as a young man from among them was informed of the Prophet’s (s) suggestion, he told them, “Woe to you! Have you forgotten that your brothers were mutated into monkeys and pigs? Avoid *Mubāhalah*, otherwise you would suffer the same.”¹²

2. Jābir ibn ‘Abdullāh reports that the verse of *Mubāhalah* is about Ali (a), Lady Fatima (a), Hasan (a) and Husayn (a). He believes that the word ‘ourselves’ refers to the noble Prophet (s) and Ali (a), ‘our sons’ refers to Hasan (a) and Husayn (a), and ‘our women’ refers to Lady Fatima (a).¹³

3. Sa’d ibn Abī Waqqāṣ reports: “When the verse of *Mubāhalah* was sent down, the noble Prophet (s) summoned Ali (a), Lady Fatima (a), Hasan (a) and Husayn (a), and stated, ‘O Allah! These are my household.’”¹⁴

The three above-mentioned traditions show that the verse of *Mubāhalah* has been revealed concerning the People of the Cloak (*Aṣḥāb-e Kisā’*).

In his commentary, *Al-Tafsir al-Kabir*, Imam Fakhr Rāzī writes, “Once the Prophet (s) left his house toward the place of *Mubāhalah*. As his black hair hung down to his shoulders, he (s) was carrying Husayn (a)

¹² Muhammad ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī, *Jāmi’ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl Āyāt al-Qur’ān*, Dār al-Fikr, 1988, vol. 3, p. 301; Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūṭī, *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 233.

¹³ Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūṭī, *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 231; Ismā’īl ibn Kathīr Damishqī, *Tafsīr al-Qur’an al-‘Azīm*, Beirut, Dār al-Ma’rifah, 1987, vol. 1, p. 379; Ali Wāḥidī, *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, Riyadh, Dār al-Thaqāfah al-Islāmiyyah, 1984, pp. 90-91.

¹⁴ Muslim ibn Ḥajjāj Nayshābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Sharḥ-e Nawawī, Beirut, Dār al-Qalam, 1987, vol. 15, p. 185; Muhammad ibn Sūrah, *Sunan Tirmidhī*, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, 1994, vol. 5, p. 407; Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūṭī, *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 233.

on his shoulders - or cuddling him - and holding Hasan's (a) hand. Lady Fatima (a) followed him and Ali (a) was behind her. When they reached their journey's end, the Prophet (s) told them, 'After each prayer of mine, say 'Amen.'"

When the bishop of Najrān saw this great scene, he said, "I see such faces that if they were to ask Allah (swt) to uproot mountains He (swt) would do so. O Christians! Avoid doing *Mubāhalah* with this man, or you will be destroyed and not a single Christian will survive in the world until the day of Resurrection."

Then the Prophet (s) said: "I [swear] by Allah (swt) to Whom my life belongs, if they did *Mubāhalah*, they would have been destroyed. They would have been mutated into monkeys or pigs. A fire would occur in their land [Najrān] and all its inhabitants, including the birds on the trees, would be consumed. Nothing would prevent destruction and all Christians would die."¹⁵

The verse of Mubāhalah according to Sunnis

The main part of the story, which is the fact that the Prophet (s) chose Ali (a) as 'ourselves', Lady Fatima (a) as 'our women', and Hasan and Husayn (a) as 'our sons' is accepted by all scholars of exegesis and hadith, as some Sunni exegetes such as Imam Fakhr Rāzī¹⁶ and Nizām al-Dīn Nayshābūrī¹⁷ have confirmed it as well. Nayshābūrī adds, "'Ourselves' refers to Ali (a) and the majority of scholars of exegesis and hadith have accepted it."¹⁸

¹⁵ Fakhr Rāzī, *Ibid*, vol. 8, p. 89.

¹⁶ *Ibid*. d. 604 A.H

¹⁷ d. 728 A.H

¹⁸ Nizām al-Dīn Nayshābūrī, *Gharā'ib al-Qur'an wa Raghā'ib al-Furqān*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1996, vol. 2, p. 178.

Imam Abū Bakr Jaṣṣāṣ¹⁹ wrote: “All historians and narrators agree that on the day of *Mubāhalah*, the Prophet (s) approached the Christians and invited them for *Mubāhalah* while he (s) held Hasan and Husayn’s (a) hands and Ali (a) and Lady Fatima (a) accompanied him.”²⁰

Ḥākim Nayshābūrī²¹ believes that the story of *Mubāhalah* has been narrated by successive transmitters and says, “It has been related in commentaries of Qur’an by successive transmitters such as ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbās that the Prophet (s) on the day of *Mubāhalah* held Ali (a) and Hasan (a) and Husayn’s (a) hands and put Lady Fatima (a) behind them. Then he (s) called them ‘ourselves,’ ‘our sons,’ and ‘our women.’”²²

On the authenticity of the verse, Zamakhsharī²³ wrote, “There is no proof better than this [verse] that indicates the high status of People of the Cloak (*Aṣḥāb-e Kasā’*) who are Ali (a), Lady Fatima (a), Hasan (a), and Husayn (a).”

Other Sunni scholars such as ibn Taymīyyah,²⁴ ibn Kathīr,²⁵ ibn Yāsīn,²⁶ Muhammad ibn Sūrah,²⁷ ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Mahdī²⁸ and

¹⁹ d. 370 A.H

²⁰ Ahmad Rāzī Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370 A.H), *Aḥkām al-Qur’an*, Mecca, al-Maktabah al-Tijārīyyah, vol. 2, p. 23.

²¹ d. 405 A.H

²² Muhammad Ḥāfiz Nayshābūrī, *Ma’rifah al-‘Ulūm al-Hadīth*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyyah, 1977, p. 50.

²³ d. 538

²⁴ Ibn Taymīyyah al-Ḥarrānī al-Damishqī, (d. 728 A.H) *Minhāj al-Sunnah al-Nabawīyyah fī Naqdi Kalām al-Shī‘ah wa al-Qadrīyyah*, Cairo, Maktabah ibn Taymīyyah, 1998, vol. 4, p. 35.

²⁵ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Rāzī, (d. 774 A.H.) *Tafsīr al-Qur’an al-‘Azīm Sanadan ‘an Rasūl Allah wa al-Ṣaḥābah wa al-Tābi‘īn*, Beirut, al-Maktabah al-Miṣrīyyah, 1999, vol. 1, p. 421.

²⁶ Ḥikmah ibn Yāsīn, *Al-Tafsīr al-Ṣaḥīḥ Mawsū‘ah al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Masbūr min al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma’tḥūr*, Medina, Dār al-Athar, 1999, vol. 1, p. 421.

²⁷ Muhammad ibn Sūrah, (d. 279 A.H.) *Ibid*, vol. 5, p. 407.

²⁸ Muhammad Shūkānī, *Fath al-Qadr al-Jāmi‘ fī fann al-Riwāyah wa al-Dirāyah min ‘Ilm al-Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 449. In its marginal note, the researcher of the book has acknowledged authenticity of the hadith related by Sa’d.

Ḥākim Niyshābūrī²⁹ have acknowledged the authenticity of the above-mentioned hadiths.

The verse of *Mubāhalah* indicates the greatness and honesty of Lady Fatima (a) and her high status in this world and the next. Ālūsī³⁰ has also acknowledged the prominence of this hadith. He says, “The indication of this verse as to superiority of the family of His messenger (s) is a matter no faithful person doubts and [it is a fact that] hostility against the family of the Prophet (s) undermines one’s faith.”³¹

The unsurpassed greatness of Lady Fatima (a)

The Prophet (s) took only Lady Fatima (a) as ‘*nisā’anā*,’ ‘our women’ for *Mubāhalah* in the presence of some of the wives of the Prophet (s). Nevertheless, he (s) took none of them for *Mubāhala*. He (s) needed to take people with himself that could be his support on his prophetic mission, and Lady Fatima (a) was so. If the Prophet (s) had taken with himself someone who had lied even once in his/her life he (s) could not have cursed liars, because if he had done so he would have cursed the one who was with him as well. This elucidates Lady Fatima’s infallibility: she (a) was a perfect exemplar of honesty which confirms her high status and greatness. Even the bishop of Najrān spoke of Lady Fatima’s (a) greatness to his people by saying, “I see such faces who if they were to ask God to uproot mountains and He would do so. O Christians! Avoid doing *Mubāhalah* with this man, or you will be destroyed and even one Christian will no longer survive in this world.”³²

The Prophet (s) took Lady Fatima (a) as a proof of his prophethood for *Mubāhalah*. Before going to the meeting, he (s) gathered Ali (a), Lady

²⁹ Ḥākim Nayshābūrī, *Ibid*, vol. 3, p. 150.

³⁰ Maḥmūd Ālūsī, (d. 1270 A.H.) *Rūḥ al-Ma’ānī fī Tafsīr al-Qur’an al-‘Azīm wa al-Sab‘ al-Mathānī*, Tehran, Jahān, p. 168.

³¹ *Ibid*, vol. 3, p. 167.

³² Fakhr Rāzī, *Ibid*, vol. 8, p. 89.

Fatima (a), Hasan (a) and Husayn (a) together and said, “O Allah! These are my family.”³³ Indeed, the Prophet (s) introduced his true household to the Muslims. Especially among women, it is Lady Fatima (a) who is meant to be “our women.”³⁴

Transmitters of traditions of Mubāhalah

The event of *Mubāhalah* has been transmitted in 51 different ways,³⁵ from 37 companions [of the Prophet (s)], followers of the companions, and household of the Prophet (s), including Imam Ali (a),³⁶ Imam Hasan (a),³⁷ Imam Ali ibn Husayn (a),³⁸ Abī Ja‘far Muhammad ibn Ali al-Bāqir (a),³⁹ Imam abī ‘Abdullah Ja‘far ibn Muhammad al-Šādiq (a),⁴⁰ and Imam Mūsā ibn Ja‘far (a).⁴¹

Companions, followers, and prominent people include: Ibn ‘Abbās,⁴² Jābir ibn ‘Abdullah,⁴³ Sa‘d ibn abī Waqqāṣ,⁴⁴ Ḥudhayfah ibn Yamān,⁴⁵

³³ Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Jawzī, *Zād al-Masīr*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyyah, 2000, vol. 1, p. 324; Muslim ibn Ḥajjāj Nayshābūrī, *Ibid*, vol. 15, p. 185; Muhammad ibn Sūrah, *Ibid*, vol. 5, p. 407; Rashīd al-Din Meybūdi, *Tafsīr Kashf al-Asrār Wa’dah al-Abrār*, Tehran, Amir Kabir, 1376, vol. 2, p. 151; Ḥikmah ibn Yāsīn, *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 421; Khālīd Āl ‘Uqdah, *Jāmi‘ al-Tafsīr min Kutub al-Aḥādīth*, Riyadh, Dār Tayyibah, 1421 A.H, vol. 1, p. 370.

³⁴ In some commentaries by Sunni scholars, this hadith is continued as follows: Then, Gabriel (a) came and said, ‘O Muhammad! What if I be a member of your household?’ The Prophet (s) answered, ‘O Gabriel! You are one of us.’ Then, Gabriel (a) went back to skies, boasted and said, ‘Who is like me? I am the chief of angels in the skies and a member of Muhammad’s (s) household on the earth.’ Rashīd al-Din Meybūdi, *Ibid*, vol. 2, pp. 151-152.

³⁵ Alī Ṭāwūs, *Su‘ad al-Su‘ūd*, Qom, Dalīl, 1379, p. 182.

³⁶ Ahmad ibn Ḥijr Haythamī, *al-Šawā‘iq al-Muḥarraḡah fī al-Rad ‘alā ahl al-Bad’ wa al-Zunduḡah*, Cairo, Maktabah al-Qāhirah, 1965, p. 156.

³⁷ Alī Ṭāwūs, *Ibid*, p. 183.

³⁸ *Ibid*.

³⁹ Abd al-Raḥmān ibn abī Ḥātam, *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 667.

⁴⁰ Muhammad Ālūsī, *Ibid*, vol. 3, p. 168.

⁴¹ Nūrullah Ḥusaynī Mar‘ashī Tustarī, *Iḡāq al-Ḥaḡ wa Azhāq al-Bāḡil*, vol. 9, p. 91, quoted from: Shahāb al-Dīn Ahmad Nuwayrī, *Nahāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab*, vol. 8, p. 173.

⁴² Ḥākīm Nayshābūrī, *Ma‘rifah ‘Ulūm al-Hadīth*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyyah, p. 50.

⁴³ Alī Wāḡidī, *Ibid*, p. 68.

⁴⁴ Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūṭī, *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 233; Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Jawzī, *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 324.

⁴⁵ Ḥākīm Ḥaskānī, *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl Liqwā‘id al-Tafḡīl*, Beirut, al-A‘lami Lilmatbū‘āt, vol. 1, p. 126.

Abī Rāfi‘ (slave of Prophet (s)),⁴⁶ ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān,⁴⁷ Ṭalḥah ibn ‘Abdullah,⁴⁸ Zubayr ibn al-‘Awām,⁴⁹ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf,⁵⁰ Barā’ ibn ‘Āzib,⁵¹ Anas ibn Mālik,⁵² Bakr ibn Mismār,⁵³ Munkadir ibn ‘Abdullah from his father,⁵⁴ Hasan Baṣrī,⁵⁵ Qutādah,⁵⁶ Suddī,⁵⁷ Ibn Zayd,⁵⁸ ‘Albā’ ibn Aḥmar Alīshkarī,⁵⁹ Zayd ibn Ali,⁶⁰ Sha‘bī,⁶¹ Yaḥyā ibn Ya‘mar,⁶² Mujāhid ibn Jabr Makkī,⁶³ Shahr ibn Ḥawshab,⁶⁴ Abī Ṭufayl ‘Āmir ibn Wāthilah,⁶⁵ Jurayr ibn ‘Abdullah Sajistānī,⁶⁶ Abī Uways Madanī,⁶⁷ ‘Amr ibn Sa‘īd ibn Ma‘ādh,⁶⁸ Abī al-Bakhtarī,⁶⁹ Abī Sa‘īd,⁷⁰ Salmah ibn ‘Abd Yashū’ from his father,⁷¹ and ‘Āmir ibn Sa‘d.⁷²

⁴⁶ Abu al-Faraj Iṣfahānī, *al-Ghānī*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyyah, 1992, vol. 12, p. 7.

⁴⁷ Ali Ṭāwūs, *Ibid*, p. 183.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*.

⁵¹ Ismā‘īl ibn Kathīr Damishqī, *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 379.

⁵² Ali Ṭāwūs, *Ibid*, p. 183.

⁵³ *Ibid*.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*.

⁵⁵ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn abī Ḥātam, *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 667.

⁵⁶ Muhammad ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī, *Ibid*, vol.2, p.301.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*.

⁵⁹ Ibn ‘Aḥyāyah Andulusī, *al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz*, Beirut, Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1996, p. 447.

⁶⁰ Muhammad ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī, *Ibid*, vol.3, p.300.

⁶¹ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Ḥātam, vol. 2, p. 667.

⁶² Ali Ṭāwūs, *Ibid*, p. 183.

⁶³ *Ibid*.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*.

⁶⁸ Ḥākim Ḥaskānī, *Ibid*, vol. 1, pp. 120-128.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*.

⁷⁰ Ahmad Ṭabarī, *Dhakhā’ir al-‘Uqbā*, Beirut, Dār al-Ma‘rifah, p. 25.

⁷¹ Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūṭī, *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 229.

⁷² Muslim ibn Ḥajjāj Nayshābūrī, *Ibid*, vol. 15, p. 185.

Arguments for the verse of Mubāhalah

1. On the day of *Shurā* (*Consultation*), Imam Ali (a) reminded the audience that the verse of *Mubāhalah* has been sent down about him [and the rest of the household of the Prophet (s)].⁷³
2. ‘Āmir ibn Sa’d ibn Abī Waqqāṣ has quoted from his father, “One day, Mu‘āwīyah ibn Abī Sufyān ordered Sa’d to curse Ali (a). Sa’d disobeyed him. Mu‘āwīyah asked him, “Why do you refuse to swear at Ali (a)?” Sa’d answered, “Once the Prophet said that Ali (a) possessed three attributes. So, I would never swear at him. If I had just one of them, I would count it better than having camels with red hair...”⁷⁴
3. When the verse of *Mubāhalah* was sent down, the Prophet (s) summoned Ali (a), Lady Fatima (a), Hasan (a) and Husayn (a) and said, ‘O Allah! These are my family.’⁷⁵
4. Imam Mūsā Kāẓim (a) used the verse of *Mubāhalah* as a convincing argument when Hārūn al-Rashīd protested.⁷⁶

Objectors’ view

This section describes some of the objections on the significance of *Mubāhalah*.

1. Ibn Taymīyyah’s view

Ibn Taymīyyah⁷⁷ acknowledges that the Prophet (s) took Ali (a), Lady Fatima (a), Hasan (a) and Husayn (a) for *Mubāhalah* and believes that

⁷³ Ahmad ibn Ḥujr Haythamī, *Ibid*, p. 156.

⁷⁴ *Sahih* of Muslim, Vol. 4, p. 1871, no. 2408. (Kitab Fada’il al-Sahabah, Sakhr serial No. 4420).

⁷⁵ Muslim ibn Ḥajjāj Nayshābūrī, *Ibid*, vol. 15, p. 185; Muhammad ibn Sūrah, *Ibid*, vol. 5, p. 407.

⁷⁶ Sulaymān Qundūzī, *Yanābī’ al-Mawaddah*, Qom, Basirati, chapter 63, p. 362.

⁷⁷ d. 728 A.H

it is an authentic hadith; however, he says he (s) took them because they were his closest relatives.⁷⁸

Reply: If the Prophet (s) took them because they were just his close relatives, he (s) should have taken at least three persons of his relatives as ‘our souls’ (*anfusanā*), since Sunnis believe that Ali was not the only son in law of the Prophet (s). He (s) could have also taken his wives as ‘our women,’ but he (s) took only Lady Fatima (a). In spite of the fact that ‘our women’ is a plural noun and includes at least three people, the noble Prophet (s) took only Lady Fatima (a).

On the other hand, ‘Abbās was a closer relative to the Prophet (s) than Ali (a), because he was the Prophet’s (s) uncle. Nevertheless, he (s) took Ali (a) and not ‘Abbās. Therefore, Ibn Taymīyyah’s view is not correct. The Prophet (s) chose his household because of their high spiritual status, and not because of their relationship.

2. ‘Abduh’s view

Muhammad ‘Abduh says: All hadiths and traditions agree unanimously that the Prophet (s) chose Ali (a), Lady Fatima (a) and their two sons for *Mubāhalah*, and that “our women” meant Lady Fatima (a), and “ourselves” meant Ali (a). These Shi‘a traditions were spread among the Muslims; those who did so succeeded in their attempt spread them among the Sunnis as well. However, those who fabricated these hadiths could not reconcile their false traditions on the verse of *Mubāhalah*. They argue that the word “*nisā‘ana*” - ‘our women’ - in the verse is a plural noun in Arabic, and Arabic-speaking people do not use this word for one woman, especially not for a woman who is the daughter of a narrator who has several wives.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Ibn Taymīyyah al-Harrānī al-Damishqī, *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 118.

⁷⁹ Muhammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Minār*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1999, vol. 3, p. 265.

Reply: ‘Abduh has unfairly said that the source of traditions is the Shi‘as, although many Sunni exegetes and narrators of hadiths have reported this tradition in their commentaries and collections of hadiths and have acknowledged it, such as: Imam Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241 A.H),⁸⁰ Imam Muslim (d. 273 A.H),⁸¹ Muhammad ibn Sūrah (d. 279 A.H),⁸² Ṭabarī (d. 310 A.H),⁸³ Ibn abī Ḥātam (d. 375 A.H),⁸⁴ Abu al-Faraj Isfahānī (d. 356 A.H),⁸⁵ Imam Abū Bakr Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370 A.H),⁸⁶ Samarqandī (d. 375 A.H),⁸⁷ Ḥākim Nayshābūrī (d. 405 A.H),⁸⁸ Tha‘labī (d. 427 A.H),⁸⁹ Māwardī (d. 450 A.H),⁹⁰ Beyhaqī (d. 458 A.H),⁹¹ Wāḥidī (d. 468 A.H),⁹² Ḥākim Ḥaskānī (d. 471 A.H),⁹³ Imam Baghawī (d. 516 A.H),⁹⁴ Zamakhsharī (d. 538 A.H),⁹⁵ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah,⁹⁶ Ibn Jawzī (d. 597 A.H),⁹⁷ Fakhr Rāzī (d. 604 A.H),⁹⁸ Qurṭubī (d. 671 A.H),⁹⁹ Muḥib Ṭabarī (d. 694 A.H),¹⁰⁰ Nusufī (d. 710

⁸⁰ Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Al-Musnad*, vol. 1, p. 185.

⁸¹ Muslim ibn Ḥajjāj Nayshābūrī, *Ibid*, vol. 15, p. 185.

⁸² Muhammad ibn Sūrah, *Ibid*, vol. 5, p. 407.

⁸³ Muhammad ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī, *Ibid*, vol. 3, p. 299.

⁸⁴ Ismā‘īl ibn Kathīr Damishqī, *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 667.

⁸⁵ Abu al-Faraj Isfahānī, *Ibid*.

⁸⁶ Ahmad Rāzī Jaṣṣāṣ, *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 23.

⁸⁷ Ibrāhīm Samarqandī, *Tafsīr al-Samarqandī al-Musammā Bibaḥr al-‘Ulūm*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1993, vol. 1, p. 4027.

⁸⁸ Ḥākim Nayshābūrī, *Ibid*, vol. 3, p. 150.

⁸⁹ Ahmad Tha‘labī, *Tafsīr al-Kashf wa al-Bayān*, Beirut, Dār Iḥyā‘ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 2002, vol. 3, p. 85.

⁹⁰ Ali Māwardī, *al-Nukat wa al-‘Uyūn (Tafsīr al-Māwardī)*, Egypt, al-Bunyah al-Miṣriyyah al-‘Āmmah Lilkitāb, 1979, vol. 1, p. 399.

⁹¹ Ahmad Biyhaqī, *Dalā‘il al-Nubuwwah*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1985, vol. 5, p. 388.

⁹² Ali Wāḥidī Nayshābūrī, *Ibid*, p. 68.

⁹³ Ḥākim Ḥaskānī, *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 123.

⁹⁴ Hussein ibn Mas‘ūd al-ḡarrā’ al-Baghawī, *Ma‘ālim al-Tanzīl*, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, 2002, vol. 2, p. 48.

⁹⁵ Mahmūd Zamakhsharī, *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 193.

⁹⁶ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah, *al-Daw’ al-Munīr*, vol. 2, p. 64.

⁹⁷ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Jawzī, *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 324.

⁹⁸ Fakhr Rāzī, *Ibid*, vol. 8, p. 88.

⁹⁹ Muhammad ibn Ahmad Qarṭabī, *al-Jāmi‘ li Aḥkām al-Qur’an*, Beirut, Dār Iḥyā‘ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, vol. 4, p. 104.

¹⁰⁰ Ahmad Ṭabarī, *Ibid*, p. 25.

A.H),¹⁰¹ Imam Khāzin (d. 725 A.H),¹⁰² Nizām al-Dīn Nayshābūrī (d. 728 A.H),¹⁰³ Ibn Taymīyyah (d. 728 A.H),¹⁰⁴ ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Miṣrī (d. 733 A.H),¹⁰⁵ Ibn Ḥayyān Andalusī (d. 745 A.H),¹⁰⁶ Dhahabī (d. 748 A.H),¹⁰⁷ Ibn Kathīr (d. 744 A.H),¹⁰⁸ Bayḍāwī (d. 791 A.H),¹⁰⁹ Ibn Ḥajar ‘Asqalānī (d. 852 A.H),¹¹⁰ Suyūṭī (d. 911 A.H),¹¹¹ Ibn Ḥijr Haythamī (d. 973 A.H),¹¹² Abī Sa‘ūd (d. 982 A.H),¹¹³ Muhammad Ali Ṣābūnī (d. 997 A.H),¹¹⁴ Burūsawī (d. 1137 A.H),¹¹⁵ ‘Ijlī (d. 1204 A.H),¹¹⁶ Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Ujaybah (d. 1244 A.H),¹¹⁷ Ālūsī (d. 1270 A.H),¹¹⁸ Qāsimī,¹¹⁹ Shawkānī (d. 1250 A.H),¹²⁰ Ṭanṭāwī Jawharī,¹²¹ Miybudī,¹²² Ḥikmat ibn Yāsīn,¹²³ Sa‘īd Ḥuwī,¹²⁴ Sayyid

¹⁰¹ ‘Abdullāh Nusufī, *Tafsīr al-Nusufī (Madārik al-Tanzīl wa Ḥaqā’iq al-Ta’wīl)*, Dār al-Kutub al ‘Ilmīyyah, 1995.

¹⁰² ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Ali Khāzin Baghdādī, *Tafsīr al-Khāzin*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al ‘Ilmīyyah, p. 254.

¹⁰³ Nizām al-Dīn Niyshābūrī, *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 178.

¹⁰⁴ Ibn Taymīyyah al-Ḥarrānī al-Damishqī, *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 118.

¹⁰⁵ Nūrullah Tustarī, *Ibid*, vol. 9, p. 118.

¹⁰⁶ Ibn Ḥayyān Andalusī, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al ‘Ilmīyyah, 1993, vol. 2, p. 479.

¹⁰⁷ Shams al-Dīn Muhammad Dhahabī, *Sayr A‘lām al-Nubalā’*, Beirut, al-Risālah Institute, 1996, chapter: Sayr al-Khulafā’ al-Rāshidūn, p. 230.

¹⁰⁸ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn abī Ḥātam, *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 379.

¹⁰⁹ Nāṣir al-Dīn Shīrāzī Bayḍāwī, *Tafsīr Bayḍāwī*, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, 1996, vol. 1, p. 163.

¹¹⁰ Ibn Ḥijr ‘Asqalānī, *al-Aṣābah fī Tamīz al-Ṣaḥābah*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyyah, 1995, vol. 4, p. 468, “Alī.”

¹¹¹ Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūṭī, *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 232.

¹¹² Ibn Ḥijr Haythamī, *Ibid*, p. 212.

¹¹³ Abu al-Su‘ūd Muhammad ibn Muhammad ‘Imādī, *Tafsīr abī al-Su‘ūd (Irshād al-‘Aql al-Ṣalīm Ilā Mazāyā al-Kitāb al-Karīm)*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyyah, 1999, vol. 1, p. 378.

¹¹⁴ Muhammad Ali Ṣābūnī, *Mukhtaṣar Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, Beirut, Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1996, vol. 1, p. 289.

¹¹⁵ Ismā‘īl Ḥaqqī Buruswī, *Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Bayān*, Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 2001, vol. 2, p. 55.

¹¹⁶ ‘Ijlī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Ilāhīyyah*, vol. 1, p. 432.

¹¹⁷ Ahmad ibn ‘Ujaybah, *al-Baḥr al-Madīd fī Tafsīr al-Qur’an al-Majīd*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyyah, 2002, vol. 1, p. 363.

¹¹⁸ Muhammad Ālūsī, *Ibid*, vol 3, p. 167.

¹¹⁹ Muhammad Jamāl al-Dīn Qāsimī, *Tafsīr al-Qāsimī (Maḥāsin al-Ta’wīl)*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyyah, 1997, vol. 2, p. 293.

¹²⁰ Muhammad Shawkānī, *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 449.

¹²¹ Ṭanṭāwī Jawharī, *al-Jawāhir fī Tafsīr al-Qur’an al-Karīm*, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, vol. 1. P. 127, in the commentary on the verse.

¹²² Rashīd al-Dīn Miybudī, *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 147.

¹²³ Ḥikmat ibn Yāsīn, *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 421.

Ṭantāwī (Mufti of Egypt),¹²⁵ Hasan al-Manṣūrī,¹²⁶ Nīyāz Qārī,¹²⁷ ‘Abd al-Qādir Āl ‘Uqdah,¹²⁸ Abū Bakr Jazā‘irī,¹²⁹ and Sulaymān Qundūzī Ḥanafī.¹³⁰

These scholars and many other scholars of exegesis and hadith who have narrated this tradition in more than 51 different ways are among well-known Sunni scholars. No Sunni exegete, transmitter of hadiths, historian, scholar of *rijāl*¹³¹ or criticism of traditions has claimed that this tradition is a fabrication. On the contrary, as it was mentioned before, some Sunni scholars have said that this tradition is accepted by all or majority of exegetes and traditionists and they believe that it has been narrated by successive transmitters.

Furthermore, the following statement of ‘Abduh’s is not true:

Those who fabricated this story could not reconcile it with the verse of *Mubāhalah*, because when an Arab hears the word of *nisā’ana* - which is a plural noun - does not imagine that the speaker might mean his own daughter, especially when the speaker has several wives.

Zamakhshari (d. 538 A.H), a literature scholar who has also written a commentary (*tafsir*) on Qur’an, has written the following:

¹²⁴ Sa‘īd Ḥuwī, *al-Asās fī al-Tafsīr*, Cairo, Dar es Salaam, 1996, vol. 1. P. 332.

¹²⁵ Ṭantāwī, *al-Tafsīr al-Wasīl lil-Qur’an al-Karīm*, Cairo, Dār al-Ma‘ārif, vol. 2, p. 130.

¹²⁶ Muṣṭafā Hassan al-Manṣūrī, *al-Muqtaṭaf min ‘Uyūn al-Tafsīr*, Cairo, Dar es Salaam, 1996, vol. 1, p. 332.

¹²⁷ Nīyāz Qārī, *Tafsīr Faṭḥ al-Raḥmān*, vol. 1, p. 133.

¹²⁸ ‘Abd al-Qādir Āl ‘Uqdah, *Jāmi‘ al-Tafsīr min Kutub al-Aḥādīth*, vol. 1, p. 370.

¹²⁹ Abū bakr Jazā‘irī, *Aysar al-Tafsīr Li Kalām al-‘Alī al-Kabīr*, Cairo, Dar es Salaam, vol. 1, p. 325.

¹³⁰ Sulaymān Qundūzī, *Ibid*, p. 330.

¹³¹ The knowledge of transmitters of hadiths and their validity

This event is the most convincing proof of excellence of People of the Cloak (*Ashab-e Kisa'*) and it is a clear evidence for the prophethood of the Prophet (s).¹³²

How could it be possible that such men of letters [i.e the exegetes] and eloquence have not understood that [with that interpretation of the verse] they would have made a false claim about the glorious Qur'an, despite the fact that the Qur'an has used plural nouns referring to persons, e.g. in (3:45) we read:

When the angels said, 'O Mary, Allah gives you the good news of a Word from Him

In this verse, "angels" is a plural noun that refers to one angel, i.e. Gabriel.¹³³ Moreover, in the glorious Qur'an, the word of *nisā'anā* has been used for girls as well, e.g. in the verse 2:49, God says regarding Pharaoh says:

...and slaughtered your sons and spared your women...

Or in the verse 4:7, we read:

...and women have a share in the heritage left by parents and near relatives...

If the word *nisā'* (women) could be used for girls, it makes no difference as to whether the girl is the speaker's daughter or the addressee's.

3. *Rashd Riḍā's view*

After reporting traditions of *Mubāhalah*, Rashd Riḍā' writes:

¹³² Muhammad Zamakhsharī, *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 193.

¹³³ Maḥmūd Ālūsī, *Ibid*, vol. 3, p. 141.

Regarding the verse "...come! Let us call our sons and your sons...", Ibn 'Asākir narrates from Ja'far ibn Muhammad (a) that he quoted his father (a) as saying, "The Prophet (s) took Abū Bakr and his son, 'Umar and his son, and 'Uthmān and his son for *Mubāhalah* and, apparently, he meant a group of Muslims."¹³⁴

Response: Ibn 'Asākir has quoted this tradition from Imam Ṣādiq (a) through Sa'd ibn 'Anbasah and Haytham ibn 'Uday.

About Sa'd ibn 'Anbasah, Abū Ḥātam Rāzi says, "He does not tell the truth."¹³⁵ 'Abd al-Rahmān says, "Once Ali ibn al-Husayn (a) stated, "Sa'd ibn 'Anbasah is a liar; I heard from my father that he does not tell the truth."¹³⁶ Also Yaḥyā ibn Mu'in says, "He is a liar."¹³⁷ Ibn Abi Ḥātam quotes from his father, "It is questionable."¹³⁸ In famous Sunni books of rijāl, not only is there no compliment about him, but rather he is strongly criticized and it is emphasized that he was a liar and rejected as a hadith narrator. Dhahab (d. 748 A.H),¹³⁹ Ibn Jawzī¹⁴⁰ and Ahmad ibn Ḥajar 'Asqalāni (d. 852 A.H)¹⁴¹ have acknowledged this issue.

About Haytham ibn 'Uday, Bukhāri said, "It is not the truth, he has lied". In addition, Yaḥyā has said the same about him. Abū Dāwūd said, "He is a liar." Nisā'i called him, "A rejected hadith narrator."¹⁴²

¹³⁴ Muhammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Ibid*, vol. 3, p. 256.

¹³⁵ Ahmad Dhahabī, *Mīzān al-I'tidāl*, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, vol. 2, p. 154.

¹³⁶ 'Abd al-Rahmān Rāzi, *al-Jarḥ wa al-Ta'dīl*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, vol. 2, p. 53.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*.

¹³⁹ Ahmad Dhahabī, *al-Mughnī fī al-Ḍu'afā'*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1997, translation of 2438; the same author, *Dīwān al-Ḍu'afā' wa al-Matrūkīn*, Beirut, Dār al-Qalam, 1988, p. 331, no. 1639.

¹⁴⁰ 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Jawzī, *al-Ḍu'afā' wa al-Matrūkīn*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1986, vol. 1, p. 324, no. 1429.

¹⁴¹ Ahmad ibn Ḥijr 'Asqalāni, *Lisān al-Mīzān*, Beirut, Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1995, vol. 3, p. 286.

¹⁴² Ahmad Dhahabī, *Mīzān al-I'tidāl*, vol. 4, p. 324.

Sa'di said, "Haytham ibn 'Uday is rejected."¹⁴³ Yahyā ibn Mu'in said, "I asked my father about him, he answered: 'he is a rejected hadith narrator'."¹⁴⁴ 'Abbās al-Dawri said, "Some friends of us quoted from Haytham ibn 'Uday's handmaid. 'There is no night except that my master gets up for praying, and when the morning comes, he lies!'"¹⁴⁵ Basti said, "He narrates from trusted people important things...while he conceals some of them."¹⁴⁶ Bukhār (d. 256 A.H) is also quoted as saying that, "I keep silent about [do not quote from] him."¹⁴⁷ Azdī believed that he was a "rejected hadith narrator".¹⁴⁸ Ibn Ḥabbān is quoted as saying that, "It is not allowed to refer to or narrate from him unless there is another way to verify the hadith."¹⁴⁹

Some scholars such as Dāraqṭanī,¹⁵⁰ Dhahabī¹⁵¹ and 'Aqīlī¹⁵² considered him as an unreliable and rejected hadith narrator. Therefore, the tradition he narrated is not authentic and it is not compatible with true and widely transmitted traditions and hence it should be rejected.

Conclusion

The verse of *Mubāhalah* undeniably indicates the infallibility and honesty of Lady Fatima (a). It is remarkable that according to this verse, Lady Fatima (a) is not one person amongst *nisā'anā* (our

¹⁴³ Ibn 'Uday, *al-Kāmil fi al-Ḍu'afā*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1989, vol. 8.

¹⁴⁴ 'Abd al-Rahmān Rāzī, *Ibid*, vol. 9, p. 85.

¹⁴⁵ Ahmad Dhahabī, *Sayr A'lām al-Nubalā'*, vol. 8, p. 426.

¹⁴⁶ Muhammad ibn Ḥayyān Bastī, *al-Majrūhīn*, Beirut, Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1992, vol. 3, pp. 92-93.

¹⁴⁷ Muhammad ibn Ismā'īl Bukhārī, *al-Ḍu'afā' al-Ṣaghīr*, Beirut, Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1986, no 390.

¹⁴⁸ 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Jawzī, *al-Ḍu'afā wa al-Matrūkīn*, vol. 3, p. 179, no 3622.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*.

¹⁵⁰ Ali Dāraqṭanī, *al-Ḍu'afā wa al-Matrūkīn*, Riyadh, Maktabah al-Ma'ārif, 1984, p. 388, no 563.

¹⁵¹ Ahmad Dhahabī, *al-Mughnī fi al-Ḍu'afā'*, vol. 2, p. 488, no 6808; the same author, *Dīwān al-Ḍu'afā wa al-Matrūkīn*, vol. 2, p. 424.

¹⁵² Muhammad 'Aqīlī, *al-Ḍu'afā' al-Kabīr*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1998, vol. 4, p. 352, no 1959.

women), but rather this word refers to Lady Fatima (a) exclusively¹⁵³ as she was the sole person capable of fulfilling the qualifications of the verse.

¹⁵³ It is similar to the verse (16: 120) in which the Glorious Qur'an calls Prophet Ibrāhīm (a) "a nation", although he (a) was only one person. Similarly, in the verse of Mubāhalah, Lady Fatima (a) is called nisā'anā (our women) because she (a) is the complete reality of Muslim women.