The Quranic station of the Prophet’s Family (peace be upon them)  
(Based on Nahj Al-Balaghah teachings)

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Abstract

Undoubtedly, if we know the triple relationships between Quran and the Prophet’s Family – that is, knowledge (knowledge of Quran), companionship (accompanying Quran), and capacity (manifestation of station in Quran) – capacity, which is the station and level of the Prophet’s Family in Quran and has theological and exegetic functions, is one of the main relationships. Discussion of this issue is important in the light of Quran and the Prophet’s Family (p.b.u.t). The sentence so you should set them in the best stations of Quran in the 86th sermon and the sentence in them are the nobilities of Quran in the 153rd sermon of Nahj Al-Balagheh contain this great meaning, where the first sentence expresses the manifestation of the special level of the Prophet’s Family in Quran or their similarity in enjoying the levels of Quran and the second one states the superlative meaning of the level of the Prophet’s Family (p.b.u.t), not its linguistically female-maker meaning. Our examination shows that these points and senses of meaning have gone unnoticed by translators and most of the exegetes, and consequently, their epistemological points regarding the Prophet's Family (p.b.u.t) have not been referred to. This writing aims at depicting a suitable picture of the Quranic level of the Prophet's Family in the utterances of the Commander of the Faithful (p.h.u.h).

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1. Introduction

One of the discussions that has obsessed thoughts of the Islamic scholars for a long time and has brought about discussions regarding the mentioning of the Prophet's Family in Quran is the quality of the manifestation of their level in it.

The levels of manifestation and appearance express the stations and positions that Quran has presented and depicted regarding the personality of the Prophet's Family (p.b.u.t). In this regard, although some people have attributed the strong and harsh verses of Quran to the Prophet's Family and have tried to speak about the disapproval of the Prophet's Family (p.b.u.t) in Quran (Ibn Teymyyah,1985,p.65), but some others have considered many Quranic verses as

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praising and showing the station of the Prophet's Family (p.b.u.t) and have regarded Quran a container for manifestation of their levels and virtues†. Even, the earlier scholar Mohammad Ibn Ali Ibn Othman Karajaki (died at 449 LAH‡) has written the book Al-Tafzil to prove the superiority of the Prophet's Family to the prophets in the light of their virtues and levels§. But it seems that Imam Ali’s utterances are among the best sources to achieve the true levels and station of the Prophet's Family in Quran and are accepted index and criterion for both sects of Shi’a and Sunni. Out of the works to the Prophet's Family (p.b.u.t), Nahj Al-Balagheh is of specific reputation, station, and importance. So, this article aims at discussing the issue at hand from the viewpoint of Nahj Al-Balagheh.

Discussion of this issue is comes to be important in view of two perspectives:

a) The Prophet's Family: that is, one of the main kinds of knowledge is knowledge of the Imamat station and knowing the Prophet's Family (p.b.u.t) which have been referred in the Noble Quran (the Allies chapter, 33rd verse).

b) Quran: this is to say, knowing the Quranic teachings is one of the main necessities of knowledge and one of the issues of these teachings is knowing the station and position of the Prophet's Family (p.b.u.t) in Quran.

Therefore, discussion of this topic is bilateral. On the one hand, it considers knowing the Prophet's Family, which means knowing them through Quran. On the other hand, it regards knowing Quran, which denotes knowing it by way of the Prophet's Family.

Regarding the meaning of the terminology, it seems necessary to specify the key term the Prophet's Family. Religious scholars know that from the viewpoint of Imam Ali (p.b.u.h) and Nahj Al-Balagheh, the term the Prophet's Family (p.b.u.t) is intended to mean the fourteen Infallibles, including the Holy Prophet, Ali, Fatima, and her (11) decedents (p.b.u.t). In this regard, Sheikh Koleini (died at 329 LAH) has narrated some traditions regarding Imamat and 12 the deputyship types that the Prophet's Family have (koleini, p.534.). Likewise, there are some narrations in the valid Sunni sources in which, the Holy Prophet (p.b.u.h) announces the 12 deputies and Imams of this religion who are all from Quraish (Ibn Hanbal, 1992, pp. 86, 87,88; Muslem, 2006, p.4.). If we are to find the referents of the 12 Imams announced by the Holy Prophet, Shi’a Imams can be considered the best and the most suitable instances.

2. Examination of Nahj Al-Balagheh evidences

1.2 The first evidence

It has been stated in Nahj Al-Balagheh “the Prophet's Family (p.b.u.h) are among you, those who are incumbents of the Law, rulers of the religion, and the true tongues, so you should set them in the best stations of Quran” (Nahj Al-Balagheh, sermon 86).

The intended evidence is the sentence so you should set them in the best stations of Quran. Regarding the meaning of this sentence, the researchers and translators have not presented the same ideas, but rather, have provided different senses of meaning, which include

1. The Prophet's Family should be respected like as Quran††.
2. The Prophet's Family should be set in the best stations where Quran is kept – that is, in the clean hearts – and should love them††.
3. Set the Prophet's Family in the best stations of Quran, stations better than all other ones‡‡.
Among the commentators of Nahj Al-Balagheh, Ibn Meitham Bahrani has considered the intention of His Holiness as the necessity of showing respect, love kindness, and glorification to the Prophet's Family, and has argued that Quran has different stations:

- The heart, which has two station in itself: one is the station of glorification and respect, and the other is the station of conceiving (setting Quran) without glorification
- The literal and verbal station of Quran which is realized through its recitation.
- Its station in manuscripts and books.

He then considers the heart station as the best one, and therefore believes that Imam’s intention has been respect and glorification of the Prophet's Family (Ibn Abi al-Hadid,1985,p. 300).

Most of Nahj Al-Balagheh commentators have not provided meanings different from Ibn Meitham’s, and have considered Imam Ali’s (p.b.u.h) sentence in the same direction and with same meaning. For example, Ibn Abi Al-Hadid Motazeli says, “there is a big secret in this sentence of Imam (p.b.u.h), and that secret is that His Holiness orders all responsible people to respect and glorify the Prophet's Family and obey their order like as Quran.” (Ibn Abi al-Hadid,1985,p. 376)

Regarding the aforementioned sentence of Imam Ali (p.b.u.h), Navvab Lahiji also comments as following, “the sentence set them in the best stations of Quran means that it may set affection in your hearts; and the heart is the best station of Quran, because the station means the heart’s Quran. Although, Quran has verbal and book stations, too.” (Lahiji,Ibid, p. 85)

Under Imam Ali’s aforementioned sentence, Mohammad Javad Moghnyyah expresses some stations and positions for Quran: Quran memorization- good recitation- and grasping the intention. He then declares grasping and performing its teachings and orders as the best station. In his viewpoint, Imam’s intention has been that regarding the Prophet's Family, the best stations – that is, knowing and obeying them – should be set realized(Moghnyyah,1972,p. 437).

From among these scholars, it seems that just the idea of Mohammad Taghi Shushtari is different from others. He considers the intention of Imam’s speech as pertinent to noble verses that have talked about the virtues and glorious deeds of the Prophet's Family. In this regard, Shushtari refers to 12 verses of Quran which are about the status of the Prophet's Family (p.b.u.t), including the verses of the Rulers (The Women chapter, verse 59), Purification (The Allies chapter, verse 33), Affection (The Council chapter, verse 23), Mutual Cursing (The Family of Imran chapter, verse 61), and Possessor of Remembrance (The Bee chapter, verse 43).

3. Review and Analysis

The word Manaazil (Arabic term for stations) is the plural of Manzil or Manzilah, and means (in Arabic) the place of descending, house, sitting place, station, and degree(Johari,1997. p. 1828; Firuz abadidi ,1996, p. 57). That is, its meaning is the place of descending as well rank, degree, and station. However, some scholars like Johari and Firuz Abadi have contended that Manzilah cannot be pluralized(Johari,1997. p. 1828; Firuz abadidi ,1996, p. 57). The answer is that Manaazil is the regular feminine plural, not the irregular plural, and this point is referred to in Taj Al-Arus by Zobeidi(Zabidy,n.d, p. 134). So, Manaazil is the irregular plural of Manzil and Manzilah, and its two main meanings are: 1) the place of descending, and 2) position and rank.

Examination of narrations shows that when the word Manaazil is used in spiritual affairs, it usually conveys the meanings of position, rank, and virtue. In Nahj Al-Balagheh, too, the word Manaazil has been used to mean degrees and positions – for example, we request God to grant us martyr’s degrees and neighboring of the Prosperous(Sermon 23).
Therefore, we can consider the following as the meanings of the sentence *so you should set them in the best stations of Quran*:

1) Set the Prophet's Family in the best places of Quran – i.e. in the heart – and try your best to respect and glorify them. This meaning is the one referred to by commentators like Ibn Meitham, Ibn Abli Al-Hadid, Navvab Lahiji, and others, and was quoted earlier in the article at hand. In this meaning, the word *Manaazil of Quran* regards the places where Quran descends and manifests itself, like the book, the tongue, and the heart. So, the meaning of the phrase *in the best places of Quran* is the heart.

2) Descend and set the Prophet's Family (p.b.u.t) in the best virtues and positions of the Noble Quran verses. In this meaning, the article *fi* (Arabic term for *in*) in the phrase *the stations of Quran* is indirectly understood (*the best stations in the Noble Quran*).

In this case, the intention of Imam is that the Prophet's Family are the exclusive and perfect instances of the beautiful divine verses and have the humane and moral virtues and noble traits. In other words, infallibility in the Purification verse (The Allies chapter, verse 33), guardianship in the Rulers verse (The Women chapter, verse 59), charity and indulgence in the Hal Ata verse (The Man chapter, verse 5), altruism and self-sacrifice in the Laylah Al-Mabit verse (The Cow chapter, verse 206), and many other traits in the lauded verses of Quran have regarded the Prophet's Family (p.b.u.t). In this regard, we can refer to the Purification verse (*And God only wishes to remove all abomination from you, ye members of the Family, and to make you pure and spotless*) which has been considered by both Shi’a and Sunni scholars as related to the Cloak event and the magnificence of the Five People of the Cloak.

3) Set the Prophet's Family (p.b.u.t) in the best virtues and positions that is conceivable for the Noble Quran. In this meaning, the preposition *for* is understood indirectly in the phrase *stations of Quran*.

In this case, the intention of Imam would be that Quran stations like infallibility, guidance and enlightenment, divinity, and luminosity are also true for the Prophet's Family and Quran and Sunnah enjoy the same truths and virtues. For example, as Quran is enlightening or guiding, the Prophet's Family are enlightening and guiding, too.

It seems that from among these three meanings, the second and the third meanings are more suitable. The second meaning considers the manifestation of the virtues and positions the Prophet's Family in the verses of Quran, where the Prophet's Family are set in the best and highest positions and stations of the verses.

The third meaning, too, considers the sameness of all the virtues and stations of the Noble Quran and the Prophet's Family, including divinity, luminosity, and infallibility. In other words, we can consider the second meaning as pertaining to the Quran-internal station of the Prophet's Family (p.b.u.t) and the third meaning as pertaining to the Quran-external station of the Prophet's Family (p.b.u.t).

4. The second evidence

The second evidence is Imam Ali’s sentence “*In them are the nobilities of Quran and they are the treasures of the most-Gracious God*”. (*Sermon 153 in Feiz Al-Islam version*)

The intended evidence is the phrase “*In them are the nobilities of Quran*” which might show the station of the Prophet's Family. That is, Imam Ali (p.b.u.h) has considered the noble verses of Quran pertaining to the Prophet's Family and has introduced the Noble Quran a framework for introduction of their nobilities and stations.
Regarding this sentence, too, it should be said that most of the translators have taken the phrase *in them are the nobilities of Quran as in them are the noble verses*, that is, they have taken the *nobilities of Quran as the noble verses*. Here are some cases: they are instances of the noble verses of Quran (Translation by Seyyed Kazim Arfa’); the noble verses of Quran are about them (Translation by Abd Al-Mohammad Ayati); the noble verses of Quran were revealed about the Prophet's Family (p.b.u.t) (Translation by Mohammad Dashti); all noble verses of Quran are about the Prophet's Family (Translation by Abd Al-Majid Ma’adikah); the noble verses of Quran have been revealed about them (Translation by Naser Makarem Shirazi); the noble verses of Quran have been revealed about them (Translation by Mohammad Ali Ansari Qomi).

5. Review and analysis

It seems that the abovementioned meanings are not exact, and have not depicted the true station of the Prophet's Family (p.b.u.t).

The explanation is that the root of the word *karaaem* is the word *karam*. The word *karam* means greatness, value, and dignity (Johari, 1997, p. 2019). Regarding humans, *karim* or *karimah* is attributed to a person who is benefactor, generous, and magnanimous. Although, there have been some other meanings for the word *karimah*.

However, an important point is that the ending *t* in the Arabic wording of *karimah* in the Failil rhythm does not always convey femininity, but sometimes is used to show superiority. This point is made by Johari (died in 393 LAH) and Ibn Athir Jerzi (died in 606 LAH) regarding the word *karimah*. So, the word *karimah* is sometimes used in its feminine meaning and sometimes in its superlative meaning. The important note here is that in its feminine meaning, the plural form of *karimah* is *karimat* – which means the generous and magnanimous women – but in the superlative meaning, its plural form is *karaaem* – which means the highest, the best, and the most exquisite.

In Nahj Al-Balagheh, too, the word *karaaem* has been used in the later meaning. For example, in utterances like “*I showed you noble manners through myself*” (Sermon 86) or “*He moved them in succession from noble fore-fathers to chaste wombs*” (Sermon 93) the phrases *the noble manners* and *noble fore-fathers* mean the best manners and the best forefathers, respectively.

Examination of Islamic resources shows that basically the word *karaaem* hasn’t been used except in its superlative meaning, and has always been employed in meanings like the best, the most exquisite, the highest, etc.

Therefore, the phrase *in them are the nobilities of Quran* does not contend the exclusiveness of the noble verses to the Prophet's Family (p.b.u.t) (as most of the translators have grasped), but rather, it intends exclusiveness of the best verses of Quran to the Prophet’s Family (p.b.u.t). In other words, these narrations contend that the most noble and superior verses of Quran and the highest virtues and stations are for the Prophet's Family, and that the Prophet's Family are either the exclusive instances of the verses (for example, in the Purification or the Guardianship verses) or the perfect instances of them (for example, the verse *be with the Truthful* (The Repentance chapter, verse 119).

6. Conclusion

1) In the verse *you should set them in the best stations of Quran*, the word *Manaazil* is the plural form of *manzilah* and is defined as the rank, station, and degree. Besides, with regard to the indirect grasp of the 3 prepositions
in, for, and three between the governor and the governed noun in the phrase stations of Quran, Imam Ali’s sentence can mean a) the manifestation of the stations and positions of the Prophet's Family in Quran, or b) the sameness of the Prophet's Family in enjoying the stations of Quran.

2) In most of the cases, the phrase in them are the nobilities of Quran has been interpreted as the noble verses of Quran are about the Prophet's Family, that is, the feminine meaning of the word karaaem has been taken into account, not its superlative meaning. However, the literal and narrative evidences contend that the word karaaem basically conveys the superlative meaning. Based on this argument, the meaning of Imam Ali’s sentence is that the best and highest verses and their stations are about the Prophet's Family.

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