

## Hadith al-Kisa, The Narration of the Cloak

### Author(s):

Gholam Hossein Masoud [1]

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The Tradition of the Cloak, or Hadith al-Kisa', is a narrative of an incident where the Prophet Muhammad assembled Hasan, Husayn, Ali, and Fatima under his cloak.

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# Hadith al-Kisa, The Narration of the Cloak

Gholam Hossein Masoud<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

**The Tradition of the Cloak**, or *Hadith al-Kisa'*, is a narrative of an incident where the Prophet Muhammad assembled Hasan, Husayn, Ali, and Fatima under his cloak. Followers of the school of Ahlul Bayt customarily hold meetings in which this tradition is recited.

**The Tradition of the Cloak** introduces the pure servants of God to the people of the world such that if the public follow them, they would live ideal lives and achieve perfection. By pondering over the great personalities mentioned in this tradition,<sup>2</sup> as well as the prevalence of this behaviour in society, a pure, wise, and noble culture associated with extreme love, respect, modesty, and courtesy towards one other can be established.

## Introduction

Ahl al-Kisa, or the People of the Cloak, refers to Prophet Muhammad, his daughter Lady Fatima, his cousin and son-in-law, Imam Ali, and his grandsons Hasan and Husayn. Narrated by Jabir ibn Abdullah al-Ansari, this hadith is widely accepted by Shi'a Muslims. It is one of the foundations of the Shi'i conception of Imamate, which states that the patrilineal descendants of Muhammad have a special divine spiritual leadership over the Muslim community. The Ahl al-Kisa, along with their descendant Imams, form the Shi'i definition of Ahlul Bayt or the People of the House, a term used to designate the family of Muhammad. This paper presents a line-by-line commentary of the tradition.

### **“Quoted from Lady Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet...**

Such a narration and quotation of what has happened and the expression of history follows a specific style more customary in the method of expressing narratives and traditions of the Ahlul Bayt. When something is quoted, the narrator is initially mentioned to assure readers or listeners of the authenticity of the tradition, or so that the narrator can generally be known. Since it is the beloved Lady Fatima who is the narrator, this tradition is considered special.

### **He [Jabir ibn Abdullah Ansari] said, “I heard Fatima stating...”**

The fact that the name of Lady Fatima is the first name mentioned in the tradition – and is not narrated by Imam Ali, Hasan, or Husayn who are impeccable leaders of the Muslim nation – indicates her active presence in communicating the message. A young infallible woman who is approved by the *ummah* (Muslim community) has been chosen to narrate it.

**“One day, my father, the Messenger of God, entered my house.”**

The Messenger of Allah’s entrance into the house of his daughter and son-in-law reveals his deep regard for kinship. Indeed, kinship relations are highly valued in Islam, and the Prophet modeled this connection. Thus, with this narration, people are taught to respect those who are younger than they and to be humble and to visit them. Moreover, the Prophet’s entrance into his son-in-law’s house reveals his high regard for him and that we should not deem our own son-in-law a stranger.

The words ‘One day’ indicate that the Prophet’s visit was not on a special occasion. It was not on one of the great Eids or on a Friday. The Prophet’s visit to his daughter on a regular day teaches the addressee that performing regard for kinship does not necessarily involve awaiting an occasion to visit our beloved ones. Thus, it is praiseworthy to accustom ourselves to this good deed.

**Then he said, “Peace be upon you, O Fatima.” I replied, “Peace be upon you.”**

Several words of advice can be derived here:

1. When arriving to anyone’s home, we should humbly request peace for them, even if they are younger than us. Although a younger person is usually expected to initiate a salam to his or her elders, upon walking into a person’s home, the visitor is expected to greet the members of the house with a decent salam.
2. Whereas it is recommended for a person to initiate a greeting, it is mandatory for the addressee to reply. As mentioned in a narration, there are ten rewards for the person who initiates the greeting, and one reward for the person who replies.
3. The feeling of honouring the addressee through this salam brings about kindness and harmony amongst one another so much so that if there had once been a ground for resentment, it would be removed.
4. The salam is an introduction to intimate and amicable conversations.
5. The salam leads the addressee to respond sympathetically.<sup>3</sup>

**He said, “I feel some fatigue in my body.”**

When ill or tired, the home is the first place to take shelter in while it is even better to retreat to one’s child’s home. When going through a period of hardship, our refuge and shelter should be our homes, so that when there are problems, we can solve them among ourselves. In today’s world, retreating to indecent places where alcoholic beverages are served when one is tired, such as cabarets and bars, is commonplace. This unfortunate act has led to separating oneself from one’s family, resulting in destroying the warm familial atmosphere.

**Then I said, “I seek refuge from God, O father, from fatigue.”**

In reaction to such an expression of weakness, we usually say, “God forbid!” Lady Fatima’s reply to her great father is a decent way to handle this situation. She immediately deems the Almighty as the only refuge. It is as if she means to say, “I seek God’s refuge from the weakness which has occurred to you.” She remembers God first and utters His Name based on the declaration “I witness there is no god but the Unique God, Allah.”

From this we learn that Muslims have been advised to assign their commandments to God before anyone else. This reaction of Lady Fatima Zahra derives from the Qur’an:

***“Soon you will remember what I tell you, and I entrust my affair to God. Indeed God is All-Seeing of His worshippers.” (40:44)***

**He said, “O Fatima, bring me a Yemeni cloak and cover me with it.”**

After she prays for him, the Prophet respectfully requests his daughter to cover him with a cloak.

**“And I looked at him and saw his face glittering, like the full moon on the night of its fullness and perfection.”**

She describes the face of her father, revealing her utmost love for him and their intimate and mutual father–daughter relationship.

**“No more than a while passed when my child, Hasan, entered.”**

Here, Lady Fatima Zahra portrays the issue in a favorable and sweet manner that both explains the subject and attracts the listener eloquently. When Fatima wants to describe her son, she describes him using good words.

**And he greeted me saying “Peace be upon you, mother”. I said, “Peace be upon you, O delight of my eye and fruit of my heart.”**

Again, we see the respect displayed by a son to his mother. Moreover, when we consider the reply of Lady Fatima, we learn that it is so pleasing and passionate that it causes kindness and love to flow into the depth of man’s existence so that both sides brim with love and passion towards each other. Here, we see how a child should greet his mother, and in turn, how a mother lovingly responds.

The science of educational psychology and modern education reveals that respecting and honouring one’s children causes their personalities to develop, and growth of personality is a major factor in developing intelligence. Respecting children raises their self–esteem, which provides the ground and basis for their perception of life experiences. It is thus an especially valuable and powerful force in providing the grounds for children to resist future problems.<sup>4</sup>

**Then he said, “O mother, I smell a pleasing scent as if it is the scent of my grandfather, the Messenger of God.”**

The fragrance of the Holy Prophet affected his grandson so much that when he smelled this fragrance at home, he immediately finds that his grandfather is present. Though still too young, the child uses extreme respect to honour his grandfather, as he uses the expression ‘The Messenger of God.’

**Then I said, “Yes, your grandfather is now under the cloak.” Then Hasan moved towards the cloak and said, “Peace be upon you O Holy grandfather, the Messenger of God. Would you please let me come sit with you under this cloak?”**

When Imam Hasan walks towards his grandfather, he greets him with a *salam* and respectfully requests his permission to enter.

**He said, “Peace be upon you O my child and the owner of my Pond. I have permitted you to enter.” Then he went under the cloak.**

The reply to his *salam* and the acceptance of his request is accompanied with respect and honour, just like the *salam* and the request themselves followed with, ‘Peace be upon you’. We know that greeting with a *salam* is recommended in Islam, but replying to it is compulsory. Yet, it is recommended that the reply be performed much better than the initiated *salam*. As we see, the Holy Prophet both replies to his grandchild’s greeting and treats him kindly and generously when he adds, “O my child and the owner of my Pond. I have permitted you.”

Regarding some comments of the word ‘abundance’ in the holy Qur’an, the first verse of the chapter *Abundance* has been expressed by commentators that one of the streams and ponds in paradise is called *Abundance* from which the believers nourish themselves. As the Holy Prophet said in the narration of Tha’alayn, “The Holy Qur’an and my Family will not separate from each other until, on the Day of Resurrection, they will join me at the pond.”<sup>5</sup>

**Not so long had passed when my child, Husayn, entered and said, “Peace be upon you, O my mother,” I answered, “Peace be upon you, O my son, delight of my eye and fruit of my heart.” He said, “O mother, I can smell a pleasing scent as if it is the scent of my grandfather, the Messenger of God.” I said, “Yes. Your grandfather and brother are under the cloak.” Then, Husayn approached it.**

Imam Husayn, resembles his older brother in behaviour and speech as both were raised in the same household. The fragrance of the Holy Prophet is apparently so clear that the second child finds the presence of his grandfather at his arrival through the fragrance of the Messenger of God.

Lady Fatima reveals her just and equal treatment of her sons as she replies using the same wording as she used for Hasan.

**And he said, “Peace be upon you, Oh my great grandfather. Oh he who has been authorized by God, would you please let me come under the cloak with you too?”**

At his arrival, Imam Husayn greets the Holy Prophet as his brother did. Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn’s greeting are similar, yet Imam Hasan uses the expression, ‘the Prophet of God’ whereas Imam Husayn says, ‘O he who has been authorized by God.’

**Then he said, “Peace be upon you my child, the intercessor of my nation. I have permitted you.”  
Then, he came under the cloak.**

Prophet Muhammad’s reply to Imam Husayn’s greeting is similar to his reply to Imam Hasan. After giving his salam, once again he says ‘my child.’

When addressing a child by using expressions such as ‘my son,’ ‘my daughter,’ or ‘my child,’ a parent has expressed his utmost compassion and has attracted the attention of his child to the fact that he is adored by his or her parent(s).

After the greeting, the Holy Prophet permits him to come under the cloak. Instead of the reply, ‘O the owner of my Pond’ used for Imam Hasan, he says, ‘O the intercessor of my nation’ for Imam Husayn.

The science of educational psychology concludes that in order to instil confidence in our children, we should make an effort to express their good and prominent characteristics. We clearly and frequently observe this same point in the conduct of the Holy Prophet towards his two grandchildren, including this specific occasion.

**At the same time, Abul Hasan Ali ibn Abu Talib Imam Ali (as) approached and said, “Peace by upon you, Oh the daughter of the Messenger of God.”**

The entrance of Imam Ali to his house and his conduct towards his wife is important in that even his greeting is associated with perceptiveness when he says, “Peace be upon you O the daughter of the Messenger of God.” His greeting to his wife displays his utmost respect for her. He is also aware of and observes the fact that his wife is the daughter of the Holy Prophet. His love and respect for the Prophet is so much that he does not lose a single opportunity to respect her and mention her position.

Imam Ali, though a man of high status of holiness and dignity, precedes his wife in initiating his *salam*. Again, the emphasis initiating a greeting upon entering one’s home is implied.

**Then I said, “Peace be upon you O father of Hasan and the Commander of Believers.”**

Lady Fatima kindly replies in a manner that shows the respect they each have for one another. With such communication, extreme love and compassion will be established in the hearts of a couple and will remain forever.

Lady Fatima mentions two attributes: her husband's fatherhood and his being the Commander of Believers. Such expressions uttered in a respectful form bring about high spirits and hope to Imam Ali (as). Moreover, this style of address by a wife to her husband who has just arrived to the home is a lesson for couples on how to communicate with one another.

**Then he said "O Fatima."**

Though Lady Fatima has many titles such as *Zahra* (The Brilliant), *Siddiqah* (The Truthful), and *Taherah* (The Pure), her principal name in which her family and relatives use is Fatima, and Imam Ali addresses her as such.

**"I smell a fragrance with you as though it is the fragrance of my brother and cousin, the Messenger of God."**

Imam Ali smells the fragrance of his father-in-law once he enters his home. From this we understand that:

1. The Holy Prophet had a unique fragrance and it was well-known among his relatives. This fragrance belonged exclusively to him.
2. The expression 'with you' is indicative of a type of intimacy and cordiality of the husband towards his wife. Imam Ali wants to express his satisfaction with the presence of the Holy Prophet in his house. Yet, he attributes it to Lady Fatima. Otherwise, he would not have used the expression 'with you.'
3. Such a welcome to both the presence of the Prophet and presence of his fragrance is to be noted. It is indicative of Imam Ali's joy and happiness.
4. Here, when he intends to mention his holy presence, he talks of him so highly and intimately, at the same time, endearing him without exaggeration when saying, 'My brother, my cousin, the Messenger of God.' Through this way of mentioning his father-in-law, he has communicated intimacy.

**Then I said, "Yes, they are. He with your two children under the cloak."**

Lady Fatima says "*your* two children" instead of, "*my* two children." The possessive adjective "your" used by Lady Fatima in characterizing the children is indicative of honouring and magnifying the husband by the wife, and prioritizing the husband over herself in her expression. If she had said "our children," such intent would not have been expressed.

**Then Ali turned to the cloak.**

It is interesting that it seems that no other issue or subject is as important to Imam Ali as visiting the Holy Prophet. Instead of engaging himself in relaxing or eating, he turns his face to his father-in-law, approaches him, and gives him his full attention and respect as a dignified son-in-law is expected to.

**And he said, “Peace be upon you O Messenger of God...”**

When Imam Ali faces the Holy Prophet, he precedes him in offering his salam. His greeting is indicative of the extreme satisfaction and happiness of a son-in-law’s approach to his father-in-law as well as revealing his extreme respect to his guest, especially in uttering the Prophet’s being ‘The Messenger of God.’

**“Would you please let me be with you under the cloak?”**

Although Imam Ali is the owner of the house, and routinely, it is the guest that asks the host for permission to take action, he maintains the conduct of respectfully and humbly acknowledging his impeccable guest.

**He said, “Peace be upon you O my brother, my successor, my vicegerent, and the owner of my banner.”**

In addition to replying to Imam Ali’s *salam*, he respects his own son-in-law by repetitively putting emphasis on Imam Ali’s successorship after himself, by mentioning four attributes of his son-in-law:

- a) He first addresses Ali as his own brother. This attribute is indicative of the profound intimacy between him and the Imam.
- b) He calls Imam Ali his ‘legatee.’
- c) He mentions Imam Ali as his successor.
- d) He calls Imam Ali ‘the owner of my banner.’

The three attributes of ‘legatee’, ‘successor’ and ‘owner of my banner’ expressed by the highest heavenly creature and the last Prophet cannot be an exaggeration. It can be by itself a perfect evidence of the truthfulness of Imam Ali. The above-stated attributes can be mentioned as all the characteristics required by a successor. Even if he did not mention them and if he merely addressed him as, for instance, “Dear Ali,” it would suffice. Yet, he states these attributes in order to express the extreme confidence he has in Imam Ali.

Meanwhile, this visit is a familial meeting. Yet, perhaps because the report of this visit is destined to be narrated in the form of this famous tradition, for peace of mind and cordial assurance, these attributes are remembered both in his reply to the Imam’s *salam* and at the beginning of this visit which is associated with the expression of satisfaction with visiting him.

**“I have permitted you.” Ali thus went with them under the cloak.**

The Prophet says, “I have permitted you.” This shows his appreciation of Imam Ali, since the permission is given without any hesitation. With the Prophet’s permission, Imam Ali comes under the cloak.

### **Then I came near the cloak.**

Lady Fatima herself decides to come under the cloak after her family's arrival. Prior to her husband's arrival, she did not deem it decent to come under the cloak as she prioritizes him over herself. Let's remember that Lady Fatima is herself the narrator of this tradition. Lady Fatima is the last person to have come under the cloak. One may say that the major host is Lady Fatima, for the arrival of the Prophet himself to this home was because she was present.

**And I said, "Peace be upon you O my dear father, O Messenger of God. Would you please let me be with you under the cloak?"**

Although there are others under the cloak, and this is Imam Ali's house, Lady Fatima asks the Holy Prophet for permission. The guardianship of the Holy Prophet himself is prior to any other guardianship, even to the husband's. She respects him with her decent words and asks for his permission prior to anyone else.

**He said, "Peace be upon you O my daughter, O part of my flesh. I have permitted you." I thus went with them under the cloak.**

The point observed in this expression is the way the Holy Prophet replies to Lady Fatima in which one mere salam does not suffice him. He also shows his great respect for his daughter in this simple reply. For expressing intimacy, love and passion, he says, "O my daughter" and "O part of my flesh". He does not use the exclamation "O" once. That is, not one "O" for both expressions. Yet, for any expression he uses to address Fatima Zahra, he applies one separate exclamation, "O". Meanwhile, we know well that when somebody addresses his daughter like this, calling her part of the flesh of his body, he intends to express his extreme love and passion to her. More importantly, when he says, "I verily permitted you", the adverb 'verily' is an emphasis on the permission, which is again indicative of intimacy, confidence and cordial assurance.

**Then after we all gathered under the cloak, my father, the Messenger of God, took both sides of the cloak, pointed to the sky with his right hand and said, "These are the true members of my family..."**

Expressing "the members of my family," the Holy Prophet intended to specify his family and exclude any other person who may want to be included in the family of the Prophet. We know that the Prophet had esoteric knowledge, and in many cases, he used to foresee the future. Thus, he presented the truthful path. With this in mind, the Prophet deprives other people whose conducts do not sufficiently deserve our considering them as members of the Prophet's family.

**"And these are my special people."**

The Prophet considering these members as "special" and excludes those who are incomparable to them

from this circle.

**“Only these are supported by me.”**

This may mean that the Prophet intends to state that “O people, O my nation and O you who are coming, know that only these people deserve my special support.”

**Their flesh is my flesh and their blood is my blood.**

There are many subtleties in the wording of the expression of the Holy Prophet. It is as if he is saying, “For fear that you mistake others for them, or lest you underestimate them, know that these people are my own self.”

We know that first, no one uses such expressions for anybody, and secondly, he does not say so for mere cordiality. The fact that it is the Prophet saying this is important. He is perhaps foreseeing future events and intends to show the right path of God and we see the amount of respect he holds for his nation.

**Whatever causes them pain causes me pain, and whatever saddens them, saddens me.**

After the Prophet’s death, Lady Fatima was deprived of her right to the Fadak Garden<sup>6</sup>, Imam Ali was deprived his Imamate, Imam Hasan’s corpse was shot at and the Imam Husayn was martyred in Karbala.

These events show why the Holy Prophet has greatly stressed on their rightfulness, and why the *Narration of the Cloak* is so significant.

The Prophet’s statement gives us the criterion of right and wrong. Can a criterion more descriptive and more affirmative than this be found to know who is right and what is true in connection with the events after the departure of the Prophet and even at present?

Besides the criterion of truth and truthfulness, which can be found from the Holy Prophet’s expression, it is a special expression of respect, love, and passion of the Holy Prophet for Imam Ali, Lady Fatima, Imam Hasan, and Imam Husayn.

**I am at war against those who wage war against them, and I am at peace with those who are at peace with them.**

Here, the Holy Prophet has provided a very clear criterion to the Muslims to conveniently distinguish truth from falsehood. The Prophet clarifies which side he is on, even though he was not alive during the Battle of Karbala or any other war waged against his household.

**I am the enemy of whoever shows enmity towards them, and I love whoever loves them.**

For anyone who has love for the Prophet's family, he or she will be favoured by the Prophet and in turn, favoured by God. The very basic point is that the enemies of Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husayn are the enemies of the Prophet and evidently those who are deemed the Prophet's enemies will be afflicted with depravity, adversity, and villainy. They are misguided and doomed in the afterlife.

**They are a part of me, and I am a part of them.**

This expression can perhaps be seen as the clearest and the most obvious indicator of truthfulness of and closeness to Imam Ali, Lady Fatima, Imam Hasan, and Imam Husayn to the Holy Prophet. We know that Imam Ali was not the Prophet's son, yet the Prophet has counted him as belonging to himself in this tradition. Yet, more importantly, the Prophet has reckoned himself, who is the noblest of creatures, as being one of them, and we know that the Prophet does not exaggerate nor does he say anything ineffectual.

**Therefore bestow on me and them Your blessings, favours, mercies, forgiveness and consent.**

The reason why the Holy Prophet asks the Almighty for mercy upon himself and the Ahlul Bayt is that he intends to teach his followers that the five People of the Cloak are a part of each other and are all one. Here, the Holy Prophet has taught us how to pray, that is, to send salutations to the Prophet and his pure family, and ask for God's mercy and benediction for them.

**And remove from them filth and purify them with a thorough purification."**

It is known that when the Holy Prophet says such profound prayers for some people they must enjoy such merits, since his prayers are accepted. The People of the Cloak are thus impeccable, sinless, and profoundly pure. This will establish and communicate their truthfulness. That is, even if the Holy Prophet would not express those previous descriptions that he did express in their favour, the fact that they deserve such prayers by the noblest of creatures of the world reveals their authenticity.

**Then God said, "O my angels and the inhabitants of my heavens! I did not create any well-established sky, extended land, glowing moon, shining sun, revolving planet, flowing ocean, or moving ark except for the love of these five..."**

This expression is the peak of this narration. God has not revered any other creatures as highly as He does with these five. He has created all existence for the sake of these five ones. At the beginning of His discourse, God says to the angels who are themselves seen as His pure creatures and then to the other residents of the heavens and the earth that His love for these esteemed five is the reason for His creation of life.

God even addresses the people of today, the past, and the future to heed to these exemplars and follow their praiseworthy conduct and behaviour. Thus, if one wants success in this world and the next, we are instructed to love these five and view them as our leaders and guardians.

**... who are under this cloak.”**

Here, the five impeccable ones are officially presented. We know they are: Muhammad, Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husayn. This symbolic presentation can perhaps be better appreciated if one is familiar with drama and its effects on people’s mind.

**Then Gabriel, the trustworthy, asked...**

Gabriel’s attribute of being ‘trustworthy’ is not the Holy Prophet’s personal statement because what the Prophet utters is a declaration of God Himself. The communicator is trustworthy. The Holy Qur’an is God’s direct statement.

**... “O Lord, who are those under the cloak?” The All-Mighty and Majestic Lord answered, “They are the Family of the Prophet.**

Because disagreements exist as to who the Family of the Prophet are, they are thus clearly specified in this narration.

**... and the base of the Message.**

‘The base’ can perhaps be interpreted as where the core of the Message of Prophet Muhammad can be found. Interestingly ‘messenger-ship’ is used here, whereas ‘prophecy’ was previously used. We know that the Holy Prophet was both a prophet and a messenger, each of which have its own definitions. Yet here, both have been used for this family. In order for the prophecy and messengership to continue from Prophet Adam to Prophet Muhammad, reliable models and exemplars are presented.

**They are Fatima, her father, her husband, and her sons.”**

This expression is unique in that it centralizes Lady Fatima. The Holy Prophet is the noblest of creatures, with no one superior to him. Yet, it is the name of Lady Fatima which is the axis, and the other four impeccable men are mentioned around her name. We also know that one of her nicknames was *umm-abiha*, or ‘Mother of her Father’ which portrays the magnitude of Lady Fatima’s position.<sup>7</sup>

From this tradition, the status that the clear faith of Islam has held for women can be deduced, and this is perhaps a reply to those who have a disdainfully low impression of women’s role.

**Then Gabriel said, “O Lord, would you please allow me to descend onto the earth to be the sixth of them?” Then the Lord said, “Yes. I have permitted you.” Then, Gabriel descended.**

Being chosen as the sixth of the five holy lights portrays Gabriel’s status. This reminds us of Gabriel’s trustworthiness and special spiritual station. The Holy Qur’an which we hold in our hands has reached us through two trustworthy ones: Gabriel, the Trustworthy, the one who directly communicated with God, and the Prophet, who both communicates the word of God and is trustworthy. The Prophet was well-

known for his trustworthiness before prophethood and Gabriel has been quoted as being trustworthy several times. This indicates that the word of God in the Holy Qur'an is a direct speech of God Himself.

**And Gabriel said "Peace be upon you, O Messenger of God, the Highly Supreme Lord extends His salam (peace) upon you.**

Here, the status of *salam* and greeting upon others performed both by praiseworthy people and the angels are known, and it is learnt that greeting one another is a good act not only among human beings but also for relations between Angel Gabriel and the noblest of creatures of the world, the Prophet. More importantly, this act of *salam* performed by God Himself who is remembered in this event using the attributes 'very highly ranked' and 'the Most Supremely High.' God is greeting upon His slave. This communicates the importance of both the Creator and of this special creature, and the importance of greeting others with a *salam* as well.

**And He expresses His special salutation and honor to you.**

In the description of the previous point, we noticed that God bestowed his *salam* upon the Holy Prophet of Islam through Gabriel. The *salam* is a special and specific one, communicated only to a servant who is the noblest of His creatures. More importantly, the *salam* is associated with the expression of salutation and respect, that is, special respect and holding special virtue for the Holy Prophet of Islam.

If we study *The Supplication of Sha'baniyyah* quoted from the fourth Shi'a Imam, Imam Zayn ul-Abidin, and look at the meaning of each of its expressions which dominantly describes the virtues of the Prophet Muhammad, we will partially find the status and magnificence of the Holy Prophet's position. Thus it is not surprising that God bestows such a special *salam* upon our Holy Prophet through Gabriel, the trustworthy angel of revelation.

**And the Almighty says to you [the Holy Prophet], 'I did not create the extended land, glowing moon, shining sun, revolving planet, flowing ocean, or moving ark except for your sake and for your love.'**

This statement of the Glorified God is so great that a reader will find himself surprised before it. When God says He has created the universe for the sake of their existence, we ask ourselves if anyone can be so great in the eyes of God. Yet, in the above expression, God refers to not only the Prophet, but all five members of the Cloak, which include Imam Ali, Lady Fatima, Imam Hasan, and Imam Husayn.

Perhaps the Supreme Lord has separately mentioned the sky, the earth, the moon, the sun, the galaxy, and the sea to state prominent samples of His creation, and every wise man knows that each of these is an ocean of God's power, magnificence and might. Yet, these are not comparable to the People of the Cloak. Here, of course, the priority of spirituality over materiality can be seen. The galaxy, earth, sky, sea, and so forth are prominent samples of God's creation. Yet, they are among the manifestations which are not reckoned as spiritual. The five Ones of the Family of the Cloak, however, simultaneously

enjoy a material existence, and something which others lack, i.e., spirituality.

**And God allowed me to join you under the cloak. Would you please permit me, O Messenger of God?”**

God has permitted Angel Gabriel, the trustworthy, to come under the cloak (with the Family of the Holy Prophet). We know that God does whatsoever He wishes. He permits everybody and everything settles in its place. Yet, for respect towards the presence of the Holy Prophet – even though the Glorified God has permitted him – Angel Gabriel asks the Holy Prophet himself to also let him come under the cloak.

This action once again indicates the dignity and status of our esteemed Prophet, both with God and with the angels. Yet it is still a moral lesson and an exemplar for life on how to socialize with and observe the status of others.

**Then the Messenger of God said, “And peace be upon you O the trustee of God’s Revelation. Yes, I allow you.” Then Gabriel joined us under the cloak. He thus said to my father, “God has revealed to you saying, “Allah only desires to keep away uncleanness from you, O people of the House, and to purify you a thorough purification.”**

Gabriel is willing to be a part of this group and his request for permission to enter under the cloak shows this. At the same time, Gabriel has been the driving force of this special mission. He is ordered to announce that God has stated that He will remove any impurity from the Family of the Prophet and bestow on them a thorough purification.

We know that God possesses the knowledge of the future and is fully aware of everyone’s behaviour and actions, their intentions and what they will succeed in doing or fail to do. Thus, God has known from the very beginning of His creation as to who His best creatures are. He therefore created existence for the sake of the Family of the Prophet.

Meanwhile, He knows that they will not commit sins since they proved to be true servants of God. God Himself knew that no one will perform the duty of His obedience and servitude as well as these five. This is why He purified them in a special way.

The Prophet’s family’s conduct in obeying God after his death is a very clear implication of the conduct of those who are included in the verse,

***“God has verily willed to remove any impurity off you, the Family of the Prophet, and purify you with a great purification” (33:33).***

God knows every individual’s capacity and He creates them according to His knowledge of the future. He bestows or does not bestow some things upon them and creates them. Thus, even if He had not bestowed His special inerrancy upon the fourteen Infallibles, they would not have committed any sin, and would not fail to display true servitude to God. Having the knowledge of such a reality, God bestows

His special infallibility and purity upon them.

We know that God exposed Prophet Joseph to major trials based on His knowledge of the future, and that Prophet Joseph successfully passed them in high spirits. Joseph deserved to be a prophet. God knew that such a man would be exposed to committing a sin in the future and yet he would refrain from it. God has thus willed from the very beginning to make Joseph a prophet, and here is where the difference between man and angels becomes apparent. Man can, but does not, commit sins. This is called *taqwa* or God-wariness.

**Then the Prophet said, “By the Lord who appointed me as a true Prophet and has chosen me as holding communion to convey the message.**

The Holy Prophet swears in the above-mentioned expression, and we know that the Infallibles swear only on important issues.

**Whenever the tale of this gathering of us is mentioned in an assembly of the people of the earth in which a group of our adherents and lovers are present, the (divine) mercy shall certainly be poured down on them...**

This seems to be the single narrative that is mentioned for the Ahlul Bayt’s followers who gather to read this: they will indeed be showered with mercy.

**...And the angels will surround them...**

Angels are instinctively inclined to worship. It is known then that such a meeting, upon which the causality of the origin of creation and the purification of the infallible family of the Prophet are spoken of, is a meeting of worship onto which angels descend.

**...asking forgiveness for them until they depart.”**

For those who make a habit of participating in gatherings that include worshipping God with prayers and invocations, as well as holding academic discussions that revere the Ahlul Bayt, angels seek forgiveness for them.

**Then Ali said, “Then, by God I swear it, we are saved...**

Salvation is prosperity. The Holy Prophet quotes this reassuring report from God who displays His satisfaction with the servitude and purification of the Ahlul Bayt. And Imam Ali states, “By the Lord! We accomplished God’s salvation.” We should not forget that God assigns this privilege to each of them according to His knowledge of the future of each of the Infallibles. Each one of the Infallibles – the Holy Prophet, Imam Ali, Lady Fatima, Imam Hasan, and Imam Husayn – have been tested many times with many trials and have succeeded in patiently tolerating them as well as passing the tests with God’s satisfaction. Thus, Imam Ali rightfully expresses his satisfaction with the Prophet’s report.

**and so have our adherents. I swear it by the Lord of the Kaaba.”**

Interestingly, Imam Ali brims with satisfaction with the report of his own salvation, as though his worries are removed. Additionally, he expresses his satisfaction with the fact that their followers, the Shi'a, also enjoy salvation.

In many historical scenes of the life of the Infallibles we witness their continuous concern for their followers and God has bestowed upon them the intercession of the ummah to remove such concerns.

Here, too, from the last part of the abovementioned expression, we observe that Imam Ali expresses the nature of his previous concern and presents joy and happiness. This expression of *the Narration of the Cloak* is truly a great gift to the Shi'a. Yet, it is at the same time an important warning about appreciating our own values: we should follow the lifestyle of the Infallibles. We should be proponents of truth, and never commit sins or submit to despotism. We should follow justice and support the poor. In summary, we should act based on what has been mentioned as good deeds in the Chapter *The Age*, which is to “exhort one another to truth, exhort one another to endurance.”

**Then the Prophet said, “O Ali! By the Lord who appointed me as the Messenger and has chosen me, by holding communion, to convey the Message, whenever the tale of this gathering of us is mentioned in an assembly of the people of the earth in which a group of our adherents and lovers are present and among them there is a distressed one, Almighty Allah shall certainly relieve him from distress, or if there is among them an aggrieved one, God shall certainly relieve him from grief. Or if there is among them one who needs a request to be granted, the Almighty Allah shall certainly grant him his request...”**

Here, the Holy Prophet has taught us how to implore for help and express our request to God.

**No sad person will be found except that God removes his sadness.**

This part of the tradition is the concern of our esteemed Prophet about us. We should not feel sad when we are able to remember or mention God. The solution to your worries is that you should gather together and speak of truth and exhort one another to truth.

**And you will not find any one asking for a blessing unless God fulfils it.’**

The Shi'a and lovers of the Ahlul Bayt who participate in reading the Narration of the Cloak together are guaranteed to have their desires fulfilled by God. It seems that since such a meeting is the place for worship, it becomes a ground for His satisfaction and this causes a person's desire to be granted.

The more we participate at the meetings of good people, the more we will refrain from participating in the meetings of false doers. The solution presented in this tradition for avoiding false-doers is to participate at the meetings in which the virtues of the Ahlul Bayt are discussed instead of falsehood, backbiting, and accusation. Very evidently, discussions about the Ahlul Bayt encourage the angels' presence. God

willing, they will descend onto it, and a meeting at which the angels are present is surely the place of worship and where prayers are accepted. Sin and felony have no room at such a meeting, and if they ever happen to find their way into it, they can generally be prevented through performing the injunctions of enjoining good and forbidding wrong (*amr bil ma'roof wal nahy an al-munkar*).

**Then Ali said, "Then, by Allah, we are saved and have become blissful in this world and the hereafter, and our followers are saved and became blissful, by the Creator of the Kaaba."**

Imam Ali was known for remembering his followers and lovers, as seen in many narrations in which there is news of good tidings for himself. Here, Imam Ali, who fears he may have not earned God's satisfaction with his actions, will be gladdened and satisfied when he learns that God has brought good tidings through Gabriel. In such cases, he remembers his followers and reveals his satisfaction of them. His satisfaction is emphasized in his repeated expression.

In this statement, God has been sworn twice, once at the beginning and once at the end of the statement.

## Conclusion

The Tradition of the Cloak highly reveres the Ahlul Bayt with regards to their status before God, their infallibility, and their Imamate, or unique divine leadership over the Muslim community. Within this tradition is a wealth of admirable traits of love and courtesy that stem from perfect faith in the Almighty. As it introduces the impeccable servants of God, people are encouraged to ponder over their faith and the actions that derive from it, and as a result, emulate their actions to lead a faithful and fulfilling life.

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1. PhD in law and member of the University Academic Board

2. This noble tradition, which is generally printed at the end of the book *Mafatih al-Jinan* was not included in this book by the author i.e. Shaykh Abbas Qummi. It was added by the publishers of this book later, citing from the book 'Awalim by a valid document from Jabir ibn 'Abdullah Ansari.

3. *Methods of Increasing Self-Esteem in Children and Juveniles*.

4. *The Methods of Increasing Self-Esteem in Children and Juveniles*.

5. *The Interpretation of Light*, Vol. 12, p. 611.

6. A garden oasis located in Khaybar, a tract of land in northern Arabia now part of Saudi Arabia. Situated approximately thirty miles from Medina, Fadak was known for its water-wells, dates, and handicrafts. When the Muslims defeated the people of Khaybar at the Battle of Khaybar, the oasis of Fadak was part of the booty given to the Prophet Muhammad. Much before his death, he bequeathed it to Fatima. Upon Prophet Muhammad's death, Lady Fatima declared her right to inherit Fadak as the estate of her father. The claim was rejected by Abu Bakr. After realizing the detrimental consequences of Abu Bakr's attempt to seize the land, Lady Fatima delivered a sermon called "The Sermon of Fadak."

7. For example, see *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 43, p. 19.

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