

A TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY OF IBN  
`ĀBIDĪN'S *AL-`ILM AL-ZĀHIR FĪ NAF'I AL-NASAB*  
*AL-ṬĀHIR (EVIDENT KNOWLEDGE ON THE BENEFIT OF*  
*PURE LINEAGE)*

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**Abstract**

*This article consists of the translation of Ibnu Abidin's views on the position of the family of the Prophet Muhammad by virtue of their blood ties to him here and the Hereafter. The work also covers critically the opinions of both sides of the argument as to their standing. Ibnu Abidin himself was a "Sayyid" and in his work extols his position as one. Nevertheless, his article provides a number of hadiths that can help provide a balanced look at the claims of a special position of the family of the Prophet as defined by history, tradition and culture.*

The work of Ibn `Ābidin entitled *Evident Knowledge on the Benefit of Pure Lineage*, written in mid 1200s A.H., discusses the position of the descendants of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to him in the Hereafter. The write-up covers arguments presented for and against the privileged position of the members of the family of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. By members of the family of the Prophet, we are examining the designation as understood in its strictest sense, that is, to mean Ali, Fatima, Hassan and Hussein which is mentioned in several hadiths. Here several definitions of the term *ahl al bait* are used. In order to place the argument in context, this article provides a brief introduction of Ibn `Ābidin, his other works and, more importantly, a complete translation, commentary and documentation of his first treatise.

## About the Author

Muhammad Amīn Ibn ‘Umar Ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, better known as Ibn ‘Ābidin al-Ḥusayni or al-Shāmi,<sup>1</sup> was born in 1198 A.H./1784 A.D. in Damascus where he died in 1252 A.H./1836 A.D.

He was a prolific writer who wrote commentaries (*al-Ḥawāshī*) and treatises (*al-rasāil*). Some of his works include *Al-Ḥāshiyah*<sup>2</sup>, *Ḥāshiyah Manḥat al-Khāliq ‘alā al-Baḥr al-Rāiq*<sup>3</sup>, *Al-‘Uqūd al-Durriyah fī Tanqīḥ al-Fatāwa al-Ḥāmidiyah*,<sup>4</sup> *Nasmāt al-Ashār ‘alā Ifāḍat al-Anwār ‘ala Kitāb al-Manār*, *‘Uqūd al-lālī fī al-Asānīd al-Awālī*, *Maqāmat fī Madḥ al-Sheik Shākir al-‘Uqqād*, and *Nazhat al-Nawāzīr ‘ala al-Ashbāh wa al-Nazāir*.

Of the thirty-one treatises he published under different topics and subjects, most of them were detailed exploration on issues of *fiqh*. These treatises were first published in his work *‘Uqūd al-lālī fī al-Asānīd al-‘Awālī* in Istanbul in 1287 A.H and 1325 A.H. and in Damascus in 1301 A.H.<sup>5</sup> Presently all these treatises have been compiled as a book under the title *Majmū‘at Rasāil Ibn ‘Ābidin* and published by Dār Aḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabi, Beirut and Lebanon and Suhail Academy, Lahore, Pakistan in 1976 A.D.

His unpublished manuscripts (*makhṭūṭāt*) include *Ḥāshiyah ‘ala Sharḥ al-Taqrīr wa al-Taḥbīr*<sup>6</sup>, *Ḥāshiyah Fath Rabb al-Arbāb ‘alā Lubb al-Albāb Nabdhāt al-I’rāb*, *Al-Durr al-Maḍiyyah fī Sharḥ Nazm al-Abḥār al-Sha’riyyah*, and *Fatāwa fī al-Fiqh al-Ḥanfi*.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn ‘Ābidin’s lineage links upto Ali (May Allah Be pleased with him) the Companion, cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). See Muhammad Muti‘al-Hāfīz & Nazar Abāzah, *‘Ulamā’ al-Dimashq*, 406, vol.1.

<sup>2</sup> The work is now known as *Durr al-Muhtār ala Durr al-Mukhtār* and is considered the *magnum opus* of Ibn ‘Ābidin. The work is a commentary of *Durr al-Mukhtār Sharḥ Tanwīr al-Absār* and was written by Ala’ al-Din Muhammad Ibn Ali al-Ḥaṣkafī (d. 1088 A.H.).

<sup>3</sup> *al-Baḥr al-Rāiq* is the work of Ibn Nujaym (d. 970 A.H.).

<sup>4</sup> *al-Fatāwa al-Ḥāmidiyah* is the fatāwa work of Ḥāmid Ibn Ali al-‘Imādi (d.1171 A.H.).

<sup>5</sup> Muti‘al-Hāfīz & Nazar Abāzah, *‘Ulamā’ al-Dimashq wa a’yānuhā fī al-qarn al-thālīth ‘ashar al-hijri*, Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1991, 413, vol.1.

<sup>6</sup> *Sharḥ al-Taqrīr wa al-Taḥbīr*, a work of Ibn Amir al-Hāj.

<sup>7</sup> Most of Ibn ‘Ābidin’s manuscripts are preserved in the Library of Āl ‘Ābidin, Damascus.

From his productive and long career, we know, through reliable documentation and historical accounts, that nine of his works have been lost. These are *Hāshiyah `ala Sharḥ al-Multaqā*, *Nazm Kanz al-Daqāiq*, *Hāshiyah `ala Tafsīr al-Qāḍi al-Baydhāwāi*, *Sharḥ al-Kāfi fi al-`Urūd wa al-Qawāfi*, *Majmū` al-Nafāis wa al-Nawādir*, *Qissah al-Mawlūd al-Nabi*, *Hāshiyah `ala al-Muṭawwal*, *Dhail Silk al-Durar of al-Murādi*.

This present work is the first treatise in a collection of 31 called *Majmu`āt al-Rasā'il Ibn `Ābidīn*.<sup>8</sup> The complete translation of the first treatise is reproduced here.

## TRANSLATION

### EVIDENT KNOWLEDGE ON THE BENEFIT OF PURE LINEAGE<sup>9</sup>

#### [INTRODUCTION (*MUQADDIMAH*)]

All praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds. May He bless and grant salvation to Muhammad, the most excellent of His creation and to Muhammad's family, companions, and descendants who are pure and to those who maintain adherence to Allah's *sharī'ah* and follow Muhammad's footsteps and ways. In the case of salvation from Muhammad, his followers did not rely on lineage or action, but feared and revered Allah. Hence, they were the rescued ones.

Proceeding from this position, this captive of the prison of sins and mistakes, Muhammad Amīn Ibn `Umar, better known as Ibn `Ābidīn, may Allah forgive him and his parents, *Āmīn*, who dependent on the mercy of the Lord of the Worlds, relates that a discussion took place in a polite gathering, attended by a number of noble, knowledgeable people, on whether individuals with the correct lineage to the Messenger of Allah—peace be upon him—would

<sup>8</sup> Muhammad Amin Ibn Abidin, *Majmuat rasail Ibn Abidin*, (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1976).

<sup>9</sup> The translation was jointly done by the authors of this article. It is a balance between a literal rendering of the original and approximate meaning. As such, some of the expressions may appear wordy in the English language. However, it provides the reader a short excursion into the mode of expression in the Arabic Language.

benefit from it in the Hereafter by entering Paradise and escaping Hellfire despite being sinners or would Allah judge them with justice and by entrusting them to His divine will like other sinful people. Some of the people in the gathering agreed with the advantage of the lineage, while some did not. Each group had arguments for their claim. One of the eminent, who was present in the gathering, asked me Ibn ʿĀbidin to write on the subject. He gave me a book on the virtues of the members of the Prophet's excellent household. The work of his sheikh, Sheikh al-ʿAllāmah al-Ḥasīb al-Nasīb, who was better known as Jamal al-Layl al-Madanī, included information that would unveil the intended arguments. I selected from the work the prophetic sayings, which I will mention here (blessings on the narrator, salvations and pure salutations), and collected from it the sources that would state [the position of] both the parties. Then, I combined the contents to conclude correctly that which is apparent to the sight and named it *al-ʿIlm al-Zāhir fī Nafʿi al-Nasab al-Ṭāhir* (*Evident Knowledge on the Benefit of Pure Lineage*).

### **ARGUMENTS OF THE DISAPPROVERS OF THE ADVANTAGE**

So I will narrate—seeking the aid of the King, the Worshipped, Benefactor of the good and the generous—the sources used by the opposing group, starting out with the verse of the Qurʿān:

Then when the Trumpet is blown, there will be no more relationships between them that day, nor will one ask after another!<sup>10</sup>

The authority of the exegesis (*qāḍī al-mufasssīrīn*) on the commentary of the above verse said that there is no lineage between people that could benefit them in the Hereafter because mutual affection and mercy would vanish because of the tremendous confusion and astonishment so much so that a man would run away from his brother, his mother, his father, his friend and his children. There would be no lineage amongst people to boast about. The

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<sup>10</sup> *Al-Qurʿān, al-Muʿminūn* (23: 101). Translation by Muhammad Yusuf.

second reason—boasting—is akin to the first—benefit—since amongst the reasons for not boasting is the absence of benefit in that world.

The word of Allah, the Elevated:

O Mankind; We created you from a single (pair) of a male and female and made you into nations and tribes that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (He Who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).<sup>11</sup>

As far as the Prophet's hadiths are concerned, Imam Ahmad—may Allah be Merciful with him—narrated from Abu Naḍrah that a person who witnessed the Prophet's sermon in Mīna, while he was on a camel, told him:

O people! Indeed your Lord is one, and your father is one, there is no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab, neither dark over fair except one with regards to *taqwā'* (righteous), the best of you near Allah is the most righteous<sup>12</sup>.

Muslim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* narrated from Abu Hurairah<sup>13</sup>—may Allah be pleased with him—said that when the verse “And admonish the nearest of kinsmen” was revealed, the Messenger of Allah—peace be upon him—called the Quraish. So all of them gathered, the commoners and the elect. Then he said:

O children of Ka'b Ibn Lu'ī! Save yourselves from the

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<sup>11</sup> Al-Qur'ān, al-Hujrāt (49: 13).

<sup>12</sup> *Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith: 22391, *al-Kitāb bāqī musnad al-Anṣār, Bāb hadīth rajul min aṣḥāb al-nabī*. Note: According to the report of *Musnad Ahmad*, the hadith ends with the word *bi al-taqwā*. If the extension *khair kum `inda Allāhi atqākum* is not found in any other report, then most probably it is the words of the author who used it for elaboration purposes.

<sup>13</sup> His full name is 'Abd al-Rahmān Ibn Sakhr al-Dawsi al-Yamani.

Fire! O sons of Hāshim! Save yourselves from the Fire!  
O sons of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib! Save yourselves from the  
Fire! O Faṭimah! Save yourself from the Fire! because I  
do not have anything for you from Allah, except my  
relationship with you which I will moisten with its  
moistness i.e. I will connect it to its connection<sup>14</sup>.

Imām al-Bukhārī narrated this ḥadīth from Abu Hurairah  
without [narrating] the exception<sup>15</sup>. Abu al-Sheikh related to  
Thawbān—may Allah be pleased with him—who reported that the  
Messenger of Allah said:

O sons of Hāshim! People on the Day of Judgment will  
not obtain *Ākhirah* (the Hereafter) lifting it on their  
chest to me, but you will get to me with the *al-Duniyā*  
(the world) on your backs. I will not benefit in anyway  
for you in relation to Allah<sup>16</sup>.

Imam Bukhari in *al-Adab al-Mufrad* and Ibn Abi al-Duniyā  
narrated from Abu Hurairah—may Allah be pleased with him—that  
the Messenger of Allah said:

Indeed my close friend on the Day of Judgment will be  
the righteous people (*al-muttaqūn*), though lineage of  
the nearest lineage would be present. The people will  
not “get deeds to me”, and you will be getting the world  
lifting it on your shoulders. You will say, O  
Muhammad! And I will say this and that.

Abu Hurairah elaborating on the Prophet’s response said, “He

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<sup>14</sup> *Sahih Muslim*, Hadith: 303, *Kitāb al-Īmān*, *al-Bāb fī qawlihi ta`āla wa andhir`ashirataka al-`aqrabin*. Note: Imam al-Nawawi in his commentary on *lā amliku lakum...*(I do not possess...) wrote “Do not depend on your relationship [to me] because I do not have power to defend any unpleasantness Allah intends for you.”

<sup>15</sup> *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith: 4398, *Kitāb tafsiir al-qur`ān*, *Bāb wa andhir`ashirataka al-`aqrabin*.

<sup>16</sup> See footnote no. 10

ﷺ renounced those who were on both his sides, right and left.”<sup>17</sup> Al-Ṭabrānī related from Mu‘ādh Ibn Jabal—may Allah be pleased with him—that when the Messenger of Allah sent him to Yemen, he went out with him advising. Then he turned towards Medina and said:

Indeed my close friends from you are the righteous people, whoever they are or wherever they are<sup>18</sup>.

Abu Sheikh also reported this *hadith* and added at the end, “O Allah! I do not approve their corruption of what you have placed in order”. Bukhari and Muslim narrated the words of Abu ‘Abd Allāh ‘Amar Ibn al-‘Āṣ Ibn Walīd Ibn Hishām—may Allah be pleased with him—who said he heard the Messenger of Allah expressing publicly:

Indeed the families of so and so (*inna āla banī fulān*) are not my close friends. Except for only those who are close friends of Allah and pious from among the faithful people<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> Muhammad Ibn Ismā‘il al-Bukhari, *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, Beirut: ‘Ālam al-Kutub, 1985, 300; Abu Shujā‘ Shirawayh Ibn Shahrādār Ibn Shirawayh al-Dailami, *Al-Firdaus bima’t’hūr al-khiṭāb*, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub, 1986, 295, vol.5. Hadith: 8669. Note: These two reports can be understood by another report by al-Dailami. The latter reported that ‘Imrān Ibn Husayn said: “O sons of Hāshim I will definitely not assist you if you go after the world lifting it on your back while the other people go after *Ākhirah*.” This means: the Prophet ﷺ will not entertain those members of his family on the Day of Judgment who carried the world on their shoulders, when they should have focused on their Akhirah.

<sup>18</sup> *Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith: 21040, *al-kitāb Musnad al-Anṣār, al-Bāb hadith Mu‘ādh ibn Jabal*. Note: The author has quoted al-Ṭabrānī’s report; the wording in *Musnad Ahmad*’s report is slightly different. According to Imam Ahmad’s report the wording is “*inna awlā al-nāsi bi al-muttaqūn man kānū wa min haithu kānū*.” The translation reads “indeed the best of people near me are the righteous people, whoever they are or wherever they are.” See (Hadith: 8229), al-Dailami, *al-Firdaus*, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyah, 1986, 295, vol.5.

<sup>19</sup> *Sahih Bukhārī*, Hadith: 5531, *Kitāb al-Adab; Sahih Muslim*, Hadith: 316, *Kitāb al-Imān*. Note: The wording of Imām Bukhārī’s report is “*Inna āl Abi*” (Indeed family of my father). The word in Imām Muslim’s report is slightly different. He reported “*Alā inna āl abi ya’ni fulānan laisū li awliyā’...*” The translation reads

Muslim related to Abu Hurairah—may Allah be pleased with him—a *hadith*, [where] the Messenger of Allah said:

He who is slowed down by his deeds, his lineage will not speed [things up for] him.

There are many famous *ahādith* to this effect.

### ARGUMENTS OF THE APPROVERS OF THE ADVANTAGE

Arguments of the approvers of the benefit of pure lineage are as follows: Imam al-Tirmidhi related to Zayd Ibn Arqam رضي الله عنه, who classified the *hadith* as *hasan*, reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

I am leaving two valuable things (*al-thaqalayn*) to which if you hold strongly to will never lead you astray after me. One is greater than the other: First, the book of Allah, a rope stretched from the heaven to earth and second, the people of my house. The two things will not separate until they reach the Fountain. So look as to how you follow me in those two things<sup>20</sup>.

Al-Hāfiḍ Jamāl al-Dīn Muhammad Ibn Yūsuf al-Zarnadī reported in his work, *Naḍm Durar al-Simṭīn* from Zayd Ibn Arqam رضي الله عنه that:

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ came forward on the day of the farewell pilgrimage and said, “I am your access to the Fountain, and you are my followers. You will be on

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“Indeed the family of my father, meaning [to say] so and so, are not my close friends...” Imām Nawawī said of this *hadith* that according to some of the reporters, the prophet did not name the relative to avoid trouble (*mufsidah wa fitnah*) either for himself or for others. The inconsistency of Ibn ‘Ābidīn’s word in this work is either because of a typing error or because he merged the two reports and wrote the common implication of both, i.e., family of unnamed person.

<sup>20</sup> See (Hadith: 194) al-Dailami, *al-Firdaus*, 66, vol.1.



the verge of reaching the Fountain, when I will ask about my two valuable things; how did you follow me through them?” A person stood up from the *muhājirīns* and asked what the two things were. The Prophet answered, “The larger of the two is the Book of Allah because one end of the Book is in Allah’s Hand and the other end is in your hands, so hold strong to it. The smaller of the two are the people of my house. He who faces my *qiblah* and accept my propagation, then he should be good to the people of the house, so do not kill them, neither coerce them, nor deny them. I requested from Allah—the Gracious and the Knowing One—for them to reach the Fountain in this manner.” The reporter was not sure which word the Prophet used, *katayni* or *kahātayni*—and gestured with his two forefingers (*al-musabbiḥatayn*).<sup>21</sup>

Al-Daylami related to ‘Abd Raḥmān Ibn ‘Awf رضي الله عنه that the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

I am enjoining you to be good to the people of my house, and certainly their place is the Fountain.

Abu Sa‘īd narrated from ‘Abd al-‘Azīz on the nobility of the prophet hood, linking the chain to the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He said:

I and the people of my house are like a tree in Heaven whose branches are in this world. He who holds strong to it has taken a path to Allah.

Al-Ṭabrāni in *al-Awā’il* related to Ali رضي الله عنه that the latter said:

I heard the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم saying that the first to reach the Fountain are the members of my house and

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<sup>21</sup> *Al-Musabbihah* and *al-Sabbahah* are the index or forefinger; the finger next to the thumb. See under (sin), E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Cambridge: The Islamic Text Society, 1291, vol.1.

the ones who love me the most from my *ummah*.

Al-Ṭabrāni, al-Dār Quṭni, and the author of *Kitāb al-Firdaus* reported from Ibn Umar رضي الله عنه who said that the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

The first persons I will intercede for on their behalf on the Day of Judgment are the members of my house, then close relatives according to their hierarchy, then the *Anṣār* (the helpers), then those who believed in me and followed me from the people of Yemen, then all the Arabs, and then all the non-Arabs. On whose behalf I intervene first is more excellent.<sup>22</sup>

Al-Ṭabrāni in *al-Saḡīr* narrated from ‘Abd Allah Ibn Ja‘far رضي الله عنه that I heard the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم saying:

O children of Hāshim! I requested from Allah عز وجل to make you a noble family and requested to guide those among you who are astray, safeguard those among you who are fearful, and feed those among you who are hungry.

In *al-Mustadrak* in a *hadith* whose chain is authentic al-Ḥākim reported from Anas رضي الله عنه that the Messenger of Allah said:

My Lord promised me that the people of my house who amongst them confess to the unity of God (*al-tawḥīd*) and my message will not be punished.

Abu Sa‘īd, al-Munlā in his *Sīrah*, al-Dailamī and his son related to ‘Imrān Ibn Huṣayn who reported that the Messenger of Allah said:

I asked my Lord not to send anyone from the members

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<sup>22</sup> See (Hadith: 29) *al-Firdaus*, 23, vol.1.

of my house to the Fire and He granted me that<sup>23</sup>.

Imam Ahmad in *al-Manāqib* related to Ali عليه السلام that the Messenger of Allah said:

Oh! people of Hāshim, by the One who sent me with truth of the prophecy, if I take a circle in Heaven, I will not start except with you.

Al-Tabrani related to Ibn Abbās in *al-Kabīr* (and the narrators are reliable) that the Messenger of Allah said to Fāṭimah:

Certainly Allah ﷻ will not punish you or your children.

Imam Ahmad, al-Hākim in his *Sahīh*, and al-Baihaqī reported from Abu Sa'īd that he heard the Messenger of Allah saying on the *mimbar* (pulpit):

What has happened? People are saying that relation to the Messenger of Allah will not benefit his people on the Day of Judgment. Yea, by Allah my relation will be linked from this world to the Hereafter to me. O people I will be your access to the Fountain.

Abu Šāliḥ al-Mu'adhdhin in his *Arba'īn*, al-Hāfīz 'Abd al-Azīz Ibn al-Akhḍar and Abu Na'im in *Ma'rifah al-Sahābah* related to 'Umar رضي الله عنه that the Prophet said:

All the causes and lineages will break on the Day of Judgment except my cause and lineage. And every son of Adam, their paternal relation is to their father other than for the children of Faṭimah, I am their father and paternal relative<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> See (Hadith: 3403) Ibid. 310, vol.2.

<sup>24</sup> Abu Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ al-Rāzi in his *Ahkām al-Qur'ān* in explanation of the lineage of a daughter's children clarifies that generally the lineage of a child is through his/her father. In the case of Ḥasan and Ḥussein (peace be upon them) the lineage is

There are many more words similar to these with many chains of narrations from the Prophetic sayings (*aḥadith*) mentioned on this subject that promises them (people of the Prophet's house) salvation, a good state, even after their death.

## COMPARISON OF THE TWO ARGUMENTS

As far as the verse on the Trumpet is concerned, according to contextual evidence it is mentioned in connection to the disbelievers (*al-kuffār*). Hence the verse is not general, and if generality is claimed, it is a general verse that should be understood as a special verse (*al-khuṣūṣ*) because of the evidence of the texts mentioned, which indicates that the Prophet's noble lineage will be beneficial to his pure descendants and that they are the most fortunate of humankind in this world and in the Hereafter.

When the associates of the Prophet's family (*mawālīhim*)<sup>25</sup> is distinguished even through the issue of accepting *zakah* which was made illegal for them because of their affiliation with the Prophet's family, without making any distinction between the obedient and the disobedient among them, then what more can we say about those who are honored because of their lineage—who gained superiority over others because of its excellence, and their affiliation to the prime lineage—the most honored of creations, most excellent of earth and heavens, whom Almighty Allah honored with that whose smallest amount is uncountable, and created existence because of him, and gave him the power of intercession for the infinite sinners who persists on carrying out major sins beside minor sins and gave place to those sinners in spacious Gardens and lowered the curtain of pardon and forgiveness upon them because of him. So why then can

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Faṭimah (peace be upon her) the daughter of the Prophet ﷺ, and this is an exception. See Abu Bakr al-Rāzi al-Jaṣṣās, *Ahkām al-Qur'ān*, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1994, 19, vol. 2.

<sup>25</sup> According to the preferred opinions of the Hanafīs, Hanbalīs, Shafīs' and one of the opinion of the Malikīs, *mawālī* of the Prophet's family are those [slaves] whom the Hāshimis or Muṭṭalibīs freed. See the word *Āl* in *al-Mawsū'ah al-Fiqhiyah*. For the *mawālī* of the Prophet see Ibn Sa'ad, "Account of the servants and the mawlas of the apostle of Allah may Allah bless him." in *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-Kabir*, translated from Arabic by S. Moinul Haq, New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan, n.d., 590-592.

the Prophet not be honored with salvation of his descendants, who are part of his body and have been elevated to a high level as they are elevated in the eyes of mankind in this world? It is far from [the trait of] the Prophet to intercede on behalf of non-relatives and forgo and forget his own relatives and break his relation with them. O! Allah, O! the King of the kingship and kings make it correct for us. Because I, praise to Allah, am elevated amongst them, whose lineage is authentic to the respected Master of the worlds through his grand son, Hussein peace be upon Him.<sup>26</sup>

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said according to the long report of al-Bazzār and al-Ṭabrānī: “What has happened to the people? They think that my relation to them will not benefit them? Certainly every cause and lineage will break on the Day of the Judgment except my cause and lineage. My relatives will be joined to me in this world and in the Hereafter.” And why should not his ﷺ relatives be connected while it is reported in the exegesis of Allah’s words of “the wall...”<sup>27</sup> that was preserved, that between the two orphans and the father was a distance of seven fathers. So there is no doubt in the protection of the Messenger of Allah’s children and his relatives, though the generations (*al-wasāiṭ*) between Him and them has increased.

On this Jafar al-Sadiq ؑ said which al-Ḥāfiẓ ‘Abd al-Azīz Ibn al-Akhḍar reported in *Ma`ālim al-`itrah al-nabawiyyah*:

For us has been preserved what the pious servant of Allah had protected for the two orphans because their father had been a righteous man.

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<sup>26</sup> The argument here is not really well constructed. If all creations are seen as equal, then they would not be sidelined because they too would receive equal attention. The argument here is if they will receive special attention. Ibn Abidin “outcry” here is emotional and personal.

<sup>27</sup> *Al-Qur’an, al-Kahf* (18: 82). The complete verse is, “As for the wall, it belonged to two youths, orphans, in the town; there was, beneath it a buried treasure, to which they were entitled; their father had been a righteous man: so thy Lord desired that they should attain their age of full strength and get out their treasure—a mercy (and favor) from thy Lord. I did it not of my own accord. Such is the interpretation of (those things) over which thou wast unable to hold patience.”

The author continues commenting in this context on an incident that one of my respected *mashā'ikh* told me about his *mashā'ikh*—may Allah give all of them a place in the House of Peace—that he was adjacent to the noble Makkah and was reading a lesson when the verse “And Allah only wishes to remove all abomination from you, ye Members of the family and to make you pure and spotless”<sup>28</sup> caught his notice. Some of the scholars concluded that the verse meant that the descendants of the Messenger of Allah would die in a perfect state. He pondered upon the evidence and found it strong, then took it as unlikely because of news that reached him regarding the nobles (*al-Shurafā'*) of the honorable Makkah. He slept and in his dream saw the owner of the prophet hood, the Prophet, turning his face away from him saying, “Are you saying it is unlikely that my family members will die in a perfect state or something to the effect?” He woke up frightened and took his words back.

This is also not opposed to the mentioned *aḥādīth* such as the words of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ “the causes and lineage will break” because the Messenger of Allah ﷺ does not possess anything for anyone in relation to, Allah neither harm nor advantage, but Allah ﷻ holds the benefit for his Prophet’s relatives, in fact for his entire *ummah* with special and common intercession. In other words the Messenger of Allah does not possess, except what his Master ﷻ allows him to possess and this is the reason why he said, *illā sababī wa nasabī* (except my cause and lineage).

Similarly, this was said in the words of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ *lā ugniya `ankum min Allāhi shai`ā* (I will not benefit you in any way in your dealings with Allah), i.e., I will not benefit you merely because of who I am except for what Allah ﷻ has bestowed upon me like intercession (*shafā`ah*) or pardon and its like. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ by his statement, “I will not benefit... said so with the intent of frightening and urging people towards *al-`amal al-khiṭāb* simultaneously and gesturing them towards the right of his relationship with his ﷻ words *gaira anna lakum rahīma sa`abulluha bibalāliha* (except my relationship with you which I will moisten with its moistness). This is a wonderful act emanating from his

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<sup>28</sup> Al-Qur`ān, al-Ahzāb (33: 33).

treasure of wisdom and height of eloquence. He ﷺ, because of his earnest endeavor for his family members, wanted his family members to have a greater share in the realm of righteousness (*al-taqwā*) and fear of Allah ﷻ. This would be the best way for scholars to reconcile the *aḥādith* we quoted.

Coming back to the words of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ “*inna awliyā’ī yauma al-qiyāmah al-muttaqūn man kānū* (indeed my close friend on the Day of Judgment will be the righteous people, whoever they are)...” and his words “*inamā wali Allāhi wa sāliḥ al-mu’minūn* (certainly the close friend of Allah and pious are the righteous people),” does not negate the benefit for his relatives and families. The same is true with regards to his ﷺ words “*man baṭa’a bihī `amluhu...* (He who is slowed down by his deeds, his lineage will not hasten him). Perhaps the meaning of this hadith—Allah ﷻ knows best—is that the deeds will not hasten him to distinct elevations (*al-darajāt*), but at the same time will not stop him from achieving salvation since in the end, the door of grace is vast.

In addition, surely Almighty Allah considers violation of His dignity (*hurumātihi*) as an act of disdain and our Prophet ﷺ, servant of Almighty Allah, does not possess except what his Master possesses and does not achieve all that he wishes for except for what Allah ﷻ wills.<sup>29</sup> Do you not see, His verse: “It is true thou will not

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<sup>29</sup> Prophet Muhammad will benefit his *ummah* through intercession that is, a prayer for an individual’s *hidāyah*, etc., though this is not decided solely by him. They are subject to the pleasure of his Master ﷻ. This is made clear by the verse on which Ibn ‘Ābidin bases his *tafsir* of the verse: *Innaka lā tahdī man aḥbabta...* (*Al-Quran, al-Qiṣaṣ* (28: 56)). The verse was revealed on the occasion when Prophet Muhammad ﷺ approached his uncle, Abu Ṭālib, to ask him to embrace Islam when the latter was breathing his last: “O Uncle! Say *lā ilāha illah* (there is no one worthy of worship except Allah); on that I will bear witness for you.” Abu Ṭālib refused. See Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-Manthūr fi tafsir al-Ma’thūr*, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub, 1990, 253, vol. 5. Al-Shawkāni in his *tafsir* explains *Innaka lā tahdī man aḥbabta...* (You cannot give *hidāyah* to one you love) in this way: you cannot give *hidāyah* to the people and giving *hidāyah* is not your responsibility. See al-Shawkāni, *Fath al-Qadir*, Beirut: Dār al-Khair, 1991, 206, vol.4. Al-Jawzi classifies the subject of *man aḥbabta* (whom you love) into two: first, whom you love to show him light (*hidāyatahu*) and second, whom you love because of close relationship (*qirabātahu*). See Abu al-Faraj Jamal al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Rahmān Ibn Ali Ibn Muhammad al-Jawzi, *Zād al-Masir fi ‘Ilm al-Tafsir*, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub

be able to guide everyone whom you lovest; but Allah guides those whom He wills. And he knows best those who receive guidance,”<sup>30</sup> and His verse: “Not for thee, (but for Allah), is the decision: whether He turns in mercy to them or punishes them; for they are indeed wrongdoers”.<sup>31</sup> Hence not everyone knows that he ﷺ will intercede for them, even though they may be the dearest to him and their position nearer to him. This Abū Ṭālib, who helped the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, assisted him and sheltered him, despite being his father’s twin brother, his protector and nurturer. Will this benefit him and save him from a dangerous abode? And to Nūḥ, peace be upon him, who is the father of mankind, Almighty Allah said to him about his son “O Nūḥ he is not thy family: for his conduct is unrighteous.”<sup>32</sup> So everything is under the will of Almighty Allah as He said in the Holy Qur’an: “but no one can feel secure from the plan of Allah, except those (doomed) to ruin.”<sup>33</sup> For this reason the Messenger of Allah was the most fearful of his Lord, the Elevated, and was the greatest in revering and honoring Him, so were the Messenger of Allah’s pure companions and their pious followers. ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb who prepared armies for the Muslims, helped with his bravery the believers of the one God (*al-muwaḥḥidīn*), conquered countries, defeated the indignant for which, the Truthful gave him the tiding of Paradise, garment of goodness and grace. Despite all this, he said, “I wish the mother of ‘Umar would not have given birth to ‘Umar” and said that, “I do not feel secure from the plan of Almighty Allah for no one can be fully confident of it.”

Indeed the ones who would escape from amongst us would be few if Allah, the Elevated, dealt with us with His Justice. [Hence] the people of lineage should not be deluded by their lineage and consider it a strong cause. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ achieved the highest level by knowing the rights (*ḥuqūq* sing. *ḥaqq*) of the Lord (*al-rubūbiyah*) and by performing that which is required of the servant (*al-`ubūdiyyah*). It should be known that there is no line from

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al-‘Ilmiyah, 1994, 112, vol.6.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., *Āl ‘Imrān* (3: 128).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., *Hūd* (11: 46).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., *al-A`rāf* (7: 99).



him ﷺ between Fatimah, his dearest, and the Lord ﷻ the Most High and the Victorious. He loves what His Master loves and is displeased with what his Master is displeased with His creations, etc. Though a person may be the most loved of the people to him, instead displeasing His Master would be the cause of detaching his love ﷺ from the person. Allah, the Elevated, is the Dearest, the Mightiest, the Greatest, and the Most Exalted to him ﷺ compared to all other things, and this is not a surprise to even a person with the lowest capability, let alone the intellectuals. Regarding turning his back ﷺ to those who did not comply with what he brought, even though they might be his closest family [member], [there] are strong evidences and authentic supportive chains and sources to this effect. So how can one from the Prophet's ﷺ lineage, after injuring the Dignity of Allah, the Elevated—by not caring for what was compulsory on him—think that respect and position await him with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ? Does the foolish one think that he is given the greatest respect from Allah in the sight of the Prophet? Definitely not! by Allah, for such a one, his heart is drowned in the waves of ignorance and mistakes. He who relies on lineage, a bad ending is feared for him—may Allah protect us from it.

One should ponder upon the state of past pious people from the members of the pure households—with what they characterized themselves and on what they had confidence—with what they distinguished themselves and on what they relied. If one pays attention towards achieving the causes of reaching them with pure intention, divine triumph will rush to them and good will be appended to them.

Certainly the family of the Prophet ﷺ are scrutinized and attention is on them. They are nearer to the link to their Lord. He who strives will succeed. He who endeavors for the noble position will not be turned away.

We ask Allah for continued prosperity—guidance to the most righteous path. We ask Him to accommodate us with His obedience and to execute the rights of lineage and relationship and not make it a cause of deception and derailment of character and to take our soul while on the religion of His glorified Prophet, [while] we love him and love his family members who are the honored of the honorables.

Allah is Most Generous and Most Merciful of the mercifuls. May Allah bless our Master, Muhammad ﷺ, his family and those with pure bloodlines, all his companions and their followers till the Day of Judgment. All praise be to Allah the Lord of the Worlds [Ibn 'Ābidin's treatise ends here].

## CONCLUSION

Ibn 'Ābidin's approach to the issue, though novel, does not discuss the central question, which is, who are the family members of the Prophet? This is of paramount importance in placing this issue in context. However, since he does mention, through examples from the Quran, notably with the surah about inheritance received by a child, seven times removed from his great grandfather, Ibn 'Ābidin's position embraces descendants of the Prophet to this day. Nevertheless, a clear definition of who the *ahl*, entail is important.

In his treatise, Ibn 'Ābidin's treatment of the subject begins with the argument of those opposed to the idea of a privileged position for the members of the household of the Prophet. The arguments are sound, especially since they are in line with the position of fairness and justice in Islam since it is devoid of a caste system or hierarchy. Almighty Allah states in the Qur'ān that any privileged position can only exist in terms of *taqwa*, a term summarily described to mean God-conscious, God-fearing, piety, abstinence, the propensity to do good and to stop or put off evil.<sup>34</sup>

Ibn 'Ābidin conclusively dismisses any advantage to members of the family of the Prophet who do not adhere to the teachings of the religion. He states that one who has abandoned the path of Allah should not expect a position of respect to await him. It is important for the members of this exalted household to realize that they too must emulate the pious ways and practices and manners of those family members who lived during the time of the Prophet. They were people who distinguished themselves by striving to attain noble

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<sup>34</sup> Though the word has been defined differently, according to context, the meaning stems from a singular motivation—that which an individual does or does not do when he is conscious of the presence of God. Hence, it is an attained degree of awareness of the constant presence of God.

positions in the eye of Allah. The underlining factor in all this is still the issue of righteousness. The teachings of Islam are clear on this, and Ibn ‘Ābidin’s conclusion bares this out. Those who are not righteous will not benefit from the connection. By the same token, those who are righteous, but not members of the family, will not be left out on the Day of Judgment since any advantage is reserved for those who adhere to the teachings of Islam.

Ibn ‘Ābidin’s discussion at the beginning of the article appears to contradict his conclusion since in the former, he allows the advantage to members of the family of the Prophet rather vehemently. The example on the privilege of the family of the Prophet though good, is not completely convincing since it is assumed that the honor is given without discrimination. The example he uses from the Qur’ān on the incident of the wall shows a physical inheritance, that is, a treasure, not a biologically connected advantage or a birthright. We know that the intercession of the Prophet is for all. The hope-giving *hadith* that the “cause and lineage” of the Prophet will not break on the Day of Judgment and that his relatives will be connected to him in “this world and in the Hereafter” is clear enough and indisputable, but the meaning of “cause” requires closer scrutiny. As to the restriction imposed on even the slaves working in the household of the Prophet does not extend to anything else except on accepting *zakat*. As to whether this practice is to be continued by the descendents of the slaves is not discussed. Any individual, it appears, who had the privilege of eating pure, unadulterated food in the Prophet’s household is prohibited from consuming food obtained from the money paid out for the cleansing of wealth or the expiation of sins or purification of self.

Hence, we can see from Ibn ‘Ābidin’s treatise that the noble and honorable family of the Prophet will have a chronological advantage in terms of proximity to him, provided that they are amongst the righteous. However, the very same advantage will exist for the righteous who are not members of his family. The privilege appears to be a chronological one: the members of the family will be the first to reach the fountain, together with the ones who love him the most from his *ummah*. The distinction between members of his family and the most attached to him from amongst the *ummah* is

made to show the honor and position relegated to the members of the family of the Prophet. Since such a great honor and position is assigned to them, it becomes even more imperative to define and identify the terms *ahl* and '*āl*' in these *ahadith*.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> The different usage of the word '*āl*' and *ahl* will be studied in an upcoming paper thoroughly.