



Purification of the Household of Prophet

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1. Introduction

This is a short essay discussing Verse 33:33 of the Holy Qur'an. The verse mentions that “People of the Prophet’s Household” are purified by Allah (SWT). Who are these individuals? What does it mean that Allah (SWT) has purified them? Please join us to have a fresh unbiased look using both Shia and Sunni resources. This discussion is mostly based on the interpretation of the Holy Qur'an by Dr. Muhammad Ansari.

وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَىٰ وَأَقِمْنَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتِينَ الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِعْنَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ
إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

*And abide in your houses and do not display yourselves as [was] the display of the former times of ignorance. And establish prayer and give zakah and obey Allah and His Messenger.
Allah intends only to remove from you the impurity, O people of the [Prophet's] household, and to purify you with [extensive] purification. 33:33*

Various opinions about the 2nd part of this verse (in green) are summarized below.

- A- It applies to the prophet’s wives since verses 28 to 34 talk about them.
- B- It applies to the prophet’s wives, his two grandchildren, daughter, and Ali (AS).
- C- It applies to all humans.
- D- Finally, it applies to the prophet’s daughter (Fatimah A.S.), his two grandchildren (Hassan A.S. and Hussain A.S.), and Ali A.S.

Let us examine not only the narrations (hadith) but also the linguistic and logical dimensions, along with the interpretation that the Prophet himself demonstrated through his actions. Every word in the Holy Qur'an is the Word of Allah (SWT), chosen with divine wisdom and placed with precise intent. Nothing in the Qur'an is random or incidental; each expression carries meaning, purpose, and guidance. It is essential to keep this in mind as we reflect upon and review the verses.

2. The use of Feminine plural pronouns

Arabic pronouns are divided into masculine and feminine forms, and they also distinguish between singular, dual, and plural numbers across first, second, and third persons. From Verse 28 to 34, anytime the wives of the prophet are discussed, the feminine plural pronoun is used except the 2nd part of Verse 33. Please see below the words with feminine pronouns (22 times) in green color.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لَأَرْوِّجَنَّكَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُرِيدُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا فَتَعَالَيْنَ أُمَتِّعَنَّ وَأَسْرَحَنَّ سَرَاحًا جَمِيلًا

O Prophet, say to your wives, "If you should desire the worldly life and its adornment, then come, I will provide for you and give you a gracious release. 33:28

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُرِيدُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَالْدارَ الْآخِرَةَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ أَعَدَّ لِلْمُحْسِنَاتِ مِنْكُمْ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

But if you should desire Allah and His Messenger and the home of the Hereafter - then indeed, Allah has prepared for the doers of good among you a great reward." 33:29

يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ مَنْ يَأْتِ مِنْكُمُ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُبَيَّنَةٍ يُضَاعَفْ لَهَا الْعَذَابُ ضِعْفَيْنِ وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا

O wives of the Prophet, whoever of you should commit a clear immorality - for her the punishment would be doubled two fold, and ever is that, for Allah , easy. 33:30

وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ مِنْكُمْ خَيْرًا فَلِلَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَتَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا نُؤْتِهَا أَجْرَهَا مَرَّتَيْنِ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لَهَا رِزْقًا كَرِيمًا

And whoever of you devoutly obeys Allah and His Messenger and does righteousness - We will give her reward twice; and We have prepared for her a noble provision. 33:31

يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ لَسْتُنَّ كَأَحَدٍ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ إِنْ أَتَقَيْنَنَّ فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَيَطْمَعَ الَّذِي فِي قَلْبِهِ مَرَضٌ وَقُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا

O wives of the Prophet, you are not like other women. If you fear Allah , then do not be soft in speech [to men], lest he in whose heart is disease should covet, but speak with appropriate speech. 33:32

وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَى وَأَقِمْنَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتِينَ الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِعْنَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

And abide in your houses and do not display yourselves as [was] the display of the former times of ignorance. And establish prayer and give zakah and obey Allah and His Messenger.

Allah intends only to remove from you the impurity, O people of the [Prophet's] household, and to purify you with [extensive] purification. 33:33

وَأَذْكُرَنَّ مَا يُتْلَى فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ لَطِيفًا خَبِيرًا

And remember what is recited in your houses of the verses of Allah and wisdom. Indeed, Allah is ever Subtle and Acquainted [with all things]. 33:34

From Verse 28 to 34, feminine pronouns are used except in the 2nd part of Verse 33 (يُطَهِّرْكُمْ) (عَنْكُمْ) that it changes to masculine form. Surely, the masculine pronoun changes the meaning of the verse. Why would Allah (SWT) suddenly change the pronoun from feminine to masculine only in the 2nd part of Verse 33? There is no valid logical answer except that the 2nd part of Verse 33 is not talking about the wives of the prophet.

...إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمْ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

Allah intends only to remove from you the impurity, O people of the [Prophet's] household, and to purify you with [extensive] purification. 33:33

3. Switching the subject

Some people continue to argue that verses 28 to 34 address the wives of the prophet and therefore question why the second part of verse 33 would suddenly shift to speak about others. In other words, they ask why a seemingly unrelated subject would be inserted in the midst of the original theme. This line of reasoning leads them to challenge the linguistic and structural coherence of the Holy Qur'an.

However, this style of composition appears throughout many surahs of the Holy Qur'an. In Arabic rhetoric, the device known as **استطراد** (*istitrād*)—meaning **digression** or **diversion**—is a recognized literary technique. It refers to the practice of beginning with one subject, then gracefully transitioning to another theme or idea, before possibly returning to the original topic. Such shifts are not accidental; they serve deliberate artistic and persuasive purposes, enriching the discourse and deepening its impact.

For instance, Verse 2:75 directly addresses the Muslims, even though it appears in the midst of a passage largely concerned with the Children of Israel. This sudden shift in audience highlights the Qur'an's unique rhetorical style, where a verse may stand independently within a broader context, serving a distinct purpose before the discourse returns to its original theme.

4. It will be done unconditionally

Furthermore, the second part of verse 33 begins with the phrase **يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ** ("Allah intends"). This expression signifies that the purification is absolute, unconditional, and rooted in the divine will. When Allah (SWT) intends something, He simply commands "Be," and it comes into existence—unchangeable and eternal. Thus, whoever is encompassed within the designation of the "Prophet's Household" will be purified in a unique and special manner, and that state of purity will remain permanently. The verse does not imply a temporary purification that could later be lost; rather, it affirms a lasting, perpetual purity, because Allah (SWT) Himself declares His intent, His will, and His wish.

5. Not about everyone in this world

The intention of Allah (SWT) in this verse is directed exclusively toward the “Household of the Prophet,” as emphasized by the word **إِنَّمَا** (“only”). This restriction makes clear that the promise of purification does not extend to all humanity. It is evident that not everyone was pure during the Prophet’s time, nor is everyone pure today. Therefore, the verse cannot be understood as applying universally; rather, it is a specific declaration concerning the Prophet’s Household alone.

In Arabic, the marks placed on letters to guide pronunciation and reading are called **diacritical marks** (known collectively as **تَشْكِيل** – tashkīl). In the 2nd part of Verse 33, the word **أَهْل** (members) appears with the mark Fatha (**فَتْحَة**) over the letter “L” to signify that the “members” of the household are **known**.

أَهْلُ الْبَيْتِ

6. Not about the prophet’s wives

As noted in Section 2, the verses from 28 through the first part of verse 33 consistently employ feminine pronouns. In the second part of verse 33, however, the pronoun shifts abruptly to the masculine form, before returning again to the feminine in verse 34. This clear change in grammatical structure strongly indicates that the second part of verse 33 cannot be referring to the Prophet’s wives.

Some have suggested that it might include both the Prophet’s wives and his immediate family—his daughter, his grandchildren, and Imam Ali (A.S.), a view sometimes referred to as the theory of “Five.” Yet this interpretation does not hold, because the verse speaks of unconditional purification. If the Prophet’s wives were included in this divine purification, then how could some of them later commit sins after the revelation of this verse? The outcome itself demonstrates that the verse cannot apply to them.

Moreover, both Sunni and Shia narrations record the fact that one of the prophet’s wives, Zaynab bint Jahsh, would serve him a special honey when he stayed at her house.

Bukhari (9th-century) who is widely regarded as one of the most important hadith scholars in the history of Sunni Islam states in his Book 6, Section 527:

The prophet would often eat a special honey at the house of Zaynab bint Jahsh. Aisha bint Abi Bakr, one of his wives, later recounted that she and another wife, Hafsa bint Umar, conspired to complain to the Prophet
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about an unpleasant smell whenever he returned from Zaynab's house—even though this was not true. When one of them voiced the complaint, the prophet felt distressed and told her that he would refrain from eating the honey again. He also asked that the matter remain confidential.

There is also a different Sunni narration:

*After the prophet sent a letter to the ruler of Egypt inviting him to Islam, the ruler replied by sending gifts along with two bondwomen. One of them, Māriyah al-Qibṭiyyah, embraced Islam and later became the wife of the prophet. She was blessed to be the mother of the prophet's only son, **Ibrahim**, who sadly passed away in infancy. The affection the prophet showed toward Māriyah aroused jealousy among some of his other wives, particularly Aisha and Ḥafṣa. Their discontent led them to conspire against her and complain to the prophet. Distressed by the situation, the prophet vowed not to spend time with Māriyah thereafter.*

Sura al-Taḥrīm (66) provides the context for the event, regardless of which narration one consults. It describes the prophet prohibiting himself from something, and a secret that was disclosed among his wives. In verse 3, one of the prophet's wives reveals a confidential matter to another. Then, in verse 4, Allah (SWT) directly warns those two wives and calls upon them to repent. The implication is clear: these two wives were not included in the unconditional purification described in verse 33:33, for they committed an act that required repentance!

It is a well-documented historical fact that when Imam Ali (AS) assumed the caliphate, Aisha, together with Ṭalḥa and Zubayr, attempted to seize control of Basra, leading to the outbreak of the Battle of Jamal. This conflict, also known as the Battle of the Camel, took place in 656 CE during the caliphate of Imam Ali (AS). The battle was fought between the forces of the Caliph and the rebels led by Aisha, Ṭalḥa, and Zubayr, near Basra in Iraq. It was named after the striking image of Aisha riding a camel in the midst of the fighting. Ultimately, Imam Ali's forces prevailed. Following the battle, he sent Aisha back to Medina, escorted by a group of women disguised in men's clothing for her protection.

This episode stands as another example of a wife of the prophet engaging in an act of opposition against one whom Allah (SWT) had declared purified, thereby underscoring the distinction made in verse 33:33.

7. Identity of the “Household of Prophet”

The historic event of Mubahila took place in 10 A.H. against the Christians of Najran. Sixty Christians with their chief priest (Abdul Masih) came to Medina to discuss the personality of Jesus. The holy prophet told

them that Prophet Jesus (PBUH) was a human being created by God and not God Himself. Then they asked as to who the father of Jesus was. In reply to this question, the following verse was revealed:

إِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيسَىٰ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ آدَمَ خَلَقَهُ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

In fact, the example of Jesus with God is similar to that of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him, “Be,” and there he came into being immediately. 3:62

When the Christians didn't agree to any amount of reasoning, the following verse was revealed calling the Christians to “Mubahila”. It is a spiritual event invoking the curse of God upon the liar. The Christians agreed and wanted to do the Mubahila the next day.

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

So, whoever disputes with you on this issue after the knowledge that has come to you, say, “Come, let us call our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, and our souls and your souls, and let us invoke God’s curse on each other and place God’s curse on the liars.” 3:61

Early next morning, the prophet sent Salman to the designated place outside of the city to erect a small shelter for himself and those he intended to take along with him. The Christians appeared with their selected holy men, women and children. The Muslims and Christians were wondering who would accompany the prophet. At the appointed hour, everyone witnessed the prophet entering the field carrying Hussain, Hasan holding his finger, Lady Fatema following him with Ali behind her. When he reached the spot, he raised his hands to the heavens and said:

“Lord, these are the people of my house” (أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ)

At the appearance of these holy souls with the halo of the divine light radiating from their faces, the chief monk exclaimed: “By God, I see the faces which if they pray to God for mountains to move from their places, the mountains will immediately move”. He asked who these people were. He was informed who the members of prophet’s household were. He then turned towards the Christian crowd and said: “O believers in Jesus of Nazareth, I will tell you the truth that should you fail to enter into some agreement with Muhammad and if these godly souls whom Muhammad has brought with him curse you, you will be wiped out of existence to the last day of the life of the Earth”. Every one of the Christians had also witnessed the

halo of the divine light around the holy faces. They beseeched the holy prophet to give up the Mubahila and requested for themselves to be allowed to continue in their faith – offering to pay “Jazya” (Protection Tax).

- The event unquestionably establishes the truth about the spiritual purity and the holiness of the “Household of the Prophet” (أَهْلُ الْبَيْتِ).
- It proves beyond all doubts as to who the members of the family of the prophet were.
- The seriousness and the solemnity of the occasion demand absolute purity. We already know from 33:33 that the members of prophet’s household were purified by Allah (SWT).

**This is one of those cases that the prophet demonstrated
the meaning of Verse 33:33 by his actions!
No need for any interpretations.**

There are also total of 75 hadith (41 Sunni and 34 Shia) informing us that the Prophet’s Household are “Hassan, Hussain, Fatimah, and Ali”.

One of the most famous hadith is “**Kisa**”. Variants of this tradition can be found in Sahih Muslim, Sunan al-Tirmidhi, and Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal, all canonical collections in Sunni Islam. Other versions are reported by the Sunni scholars ibn Kathir (d. 1373), al-Wahidi (d. 1075), Qadi Baydawi (d. 1319), al-Baghawi (d. 1122), al-Suyuti (d. 1505), al-Hakim al-Nishapuri (d. 1014), and al-Tabari (d. 923), and Muhammad Husayn Tabataba’i, among many others.

Ahmad ibn Hanbal (أحمد ابن حنبل , 780–855 CE) was a prominent medieval Islamic scholar who founded the Hanbali school of jurisprudence, one of the four major Sunni schools of law. He narrates in hadith number 26570:

*The prophet was resting in his house when his daughter Fatimah brought some dates for him. The prophet asked her to go and call her children and Ali. While they were sitting and enjoying the dates, **the 2nd part of** LightofHeavens.org*

Verse 33 was revealed. *As soon as it was revealed, the prophet pulled his mantle around them and raised his hands to the sky saying “O Allah, these are my household (أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ)...”*

Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr ibn Yazīd al-Ṭabarī (أَبُو جَعْفَرٍ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ جَرِيرِ بْنِ يَزِيدَ الطَّبْرِيِّ; 839–923 CE), commonly known as Al-Ṭabarī (الطَّبْرِيُّ), was a Sunni Muslim scholar. He is widely known for his historical works and expertise in Quranic exegesis. He gives more details about the above hadith by saying that:

After the prophet raised his hands to the sky and declared who his household are, one of his wives who was present there asked him if she was also included in the “household”. The prophet twice said that “you are a good wife” but didn’t say anything more.

Tabari also writes:

The prophet used to stop everyday by Fatimah’s house before the dawn prayer and say: “AlSalat AlSalat ya Ahlul Bayt” followed by reciting Verse 33:33.

Ibn Kathir Al-Shami born in 701 H, was a Sunni Syrian Islamic scholar, historian, and commentator. About the 2nd part of Verse 33, he narrates that:

...The prophet put his black mantle around Hassan, Hussain, Fatimah, and Ali. Next, he recited the verse.

Fakhruddin Razi (فخر الدين رازی) (1149/50–1209/10) was a prominent Sunni Persian polymath, theologian, and philosopher, known for his extensive commentaries on the Holy Qur’an and his attempts to reconcile rationalism with Islamic theology. In Volume 8 of his book (Tafsir Kabir), he writes:

Ibn Abbas said, for 9 months, every day before prayers, we saw the prophet stopped in front of Fatimah and Ali’s house and said “Assalamu Alaikum va rahmatullahe va barakatahu Ahlul Bayt”, followed by reciting this verse (33:33).

8. Free Will vs. Destiny

In verse 33:33, Allah (SWT) declares His intention to purify the Household of the prophet. This is not presented as a conditional statement, but as a definitive act of divine will. Some students of philosophy may raise the question of whether this purification reflects determinism, and what role the Prophet’s Household themselves played in attaining such a state.

The purity of the soul is shaped both by Allah's grace and by the individual's own actions. The Household of the Prophet, through their sincerity, righteous deeds, and pure intentions, reached such a degree of knowledge and certainty about the Creator that even inappropriate thoughts did not enter their minds. The Light of Allah (SWT) was magnified within them to the point that they did not commit any wrongdoing throughout their lives. Raised and taught directly by the prophet, their unconditional submission to the will of Allah (SWT) and to the guidance of the prophet resulted in the increase of divine Light within them, culminating in their reward of absolute purity.

This purity is not temporary or subject to change; it is a state of infallibility granted by Allah (SWT). Could they theoretically commit a wrong? Yes, they possess human capacity. Yet their spiritual knowledge and the intensity of divine Light within them are so profound that they do not choose to do wrong. For this reason, they stand as role models—beacons of Light, knowledge, and guidance for society.

9. What about me?

Verse 33:33 declares that the Household of the Prophet was purified by Allah (SWT). What lesson can we draw from this, and how does it benefit us? The answer lies in recognizing the value of following those who embody absolute purity and submission to God. Wouldn't you want to learn from role models, teachers, advisors, guardians, and leaders who are free from selfish desires, who live only by the Will of Allah (SWT), and who serve as living examples of divine guidance?

To benefit from this verse, one must look back at the lives of the Prophet's Household—their sermons and supplications, their unwavering struggle against tyranny, and their willingness to sacrifice everything, even their lives, for the sake of Allah (SWT). Verse 33:33 is not merely a statement of their status; it is a directive for us to recognize them as our role models, beacons of light, and guides toward truth and righteousness.