

An analysis of the historic Fadak sermon of Sayyida Fatima (S.A.)

By: Ayatullah al-Uzma Lutfullah as-Safi al-Gulpaygani

In one of his writings, Grand Ayatullah Shaykh Lutfullah Safi Gulpaygani elucidated upon some issues in regards to the personality of Sayyidah Zahra, peace be upon her. In speaking about commemorating the [days] of Fatimiyyah¹, he stated that, "...in every religious event and at every opportunity [which we are given], we must speak about her standpoints, life, her traits of asceticism, worship [of God], and her knowledge..."

In the Name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

What can be said when trying to express the status of the Ahlul Bayt, peace be upon them, specifically the eminence of Sayyidah Fatima Zahra, peace be upon her, and the blessings which emanate from all of them – and from where shall we start!?

These people are individuals whom God, the Most High, had created the entire world of existence for, just as the Messenger of God, peace be upon him and his family, had stated: Had it not been for us (the Prophet and the Ahlul Bayt), God would not have created Adam nor Eve nor the paradise nor the hell-fire nor the sky nor the earth.²

In addition, the Commander of the Faithful, peace be upon him, had written the following in his letter to Mu'awiyah in regards to the status of the Ahlul Bayt, peace be upon them: The wordings of this passage are extremely important.³ There are some people who claim that the meaning of this statement is that "The people have been trained or have had their nurturing and upbringing under our school of teachings (the Ahlul Bayt)" however there is no problem in stating that the meaning of this statement is (also that), "The ultimate purpose of creation is the manifestation and existence of Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, peace be upon all of them."

There is also a sacred tradition (hadith al-qudsi) in which God has said: I created you (Muhammad – and as an extension the Ahlul Bayt) for Me (God).⁴

In yet another tradition we read: Had it not been for you (Muhammad) I (God) would not have created the entire universe.⁵

It is impossible for the human mind to fathom what the meaning of the words of God, the Most High, are when He says, "I created you (Muhammad) for Me and I created the entire world of existence for you."

What Does This Mean!?

That which we generally derive from all of these statements is that their (Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him and his family, and his Ahlul Bayt, peace be upon all of them) relationship with God, the Most High, is something extremely extraordinary just as He Himself is elevated and superior [than everything else in existence]. Of course the Noble Prophet, peace be upon him and his family, expresses his own inability [to reach the level of truly 'knowing' God] and openly states: We fell short in truly recognizing You as You deserve to be known.

Therefore first off, we must appreciate the fact that whatever we have is due to the Ahlul Bayt, peace be upon them. Other than them, whatever else any other person says [about matters of the faith or otherwise] - when one takes their words and reviews them, one will see that their words lack clarity and we cannot rely on their assertions. Rather, we see that everything is contained with the teachings which emanate from the Ahlul Bayt, peace be upon them and it is for this reason that the Prophet has said: I leave behind you two weighty things – the book of God [Qur'an] and my family [the Ahlul Bayt].

This statement means: take everything [that you need in your life] from the Ahlul Bayt, peace be upon them, and reject everything that comes from other than them.

The Noble Prophet, peace be upon him and his family, has also said: "Do not seek to precede them (the Ahlul Bayt) nor fall back from them (the Ahlul Bayt) as if you seek to precede them, you will go astray, and if you stay behind, you will be destroyed."

He, peace be upon him and his family, also said: Do not seek to teach them (Ahlul Bayt) as they are more knowledgeable than all of you.

Amongst the Ahlul Bayt, peace be upon them, Sayyidah Zahra, peace be upon her, enjoys a distinct pivotal role and significance. When the Ahlul Bayt, peace be upon them, are

introduced, she is placed in the midst of them all, as we read: They [those who are under the cloak during the revelation of 33:33] are Fatima and her father and her husband and her sons.⁶

Indeed, amongst the Ahlul Bayt, peace be upon them, Sayyidah Zahra, peace be upon her, has a pivotal role, status and greatness for which all of the Imams, peace be upon them all, take pride in.

In reality, this blessed woman is actually a hujjah (proof or argument) over all of the Ahlul Bayt, peace be upon them – meaning that in order to prove their own truthfulness and to devoid the usurpers and oppressors, they have all made use of this magnanimous lady in their arguments.

Absolutely, all of the members of the Ahlul Bayt, peace be upon them, are a hujjah (proof or argument), however Sayyidah Fatima Zahra's, peace be upon her, hujjah is, from various aspects, greater than all of the Imams!

Fatima Zahra, peace be upon her, is the chief of all of the women of the entire universe; she is a part and parcel of the Messenger; and she is the wife of the [first] Representative of God. She is such a [significant] woman that she alone [from amongst the women-folk] was chosen to take part in the event of Mubahilah, based upon the order of the Noble Qur'an.

In addition, from the members of the Ahlul Bayt, peace be upon them, she is the only woman who was granted the status of 'ishmah [infallibility] and spiritual purity just as her father, husband and her two sons were graced with. In that gathering [in which her spiritual purity was confirmed through the revelation of the Qur'anic verse in chapter 33, verse 33], the wife of the Prophet, peace be upon him and his family, Umm Salama, blessings of God be upon her, was not permitted to partake in the sacred event in instead, the Prophet, peace be upon him and his family, told her: You (Umm Salama) are on [a path of] goodness.

And thus, the only woman who was included in the verse of purification was Fatima Zahra, peace be upon her.

In every aspect – other than in the status of prophethood - she is a carbon copy of her father: in terms of her mannerisms (akhlaq), knowledge (ilm) and perfection (kamalat) and just as all of the Imams, peace be upon them, in her life, her actions and her speech, the way she practiced her religion and followed the religious precepts, she is a guide towards the religious injunctions of the Divine.

Infact, she possesses [a level of] imamate (Divinely-appointed leadership) in the sense of her knowledge and guidance and her honour, infallibility, munificence and the way in which she [spiritually] protected herself and thus, she is known as the 'first woman of Islam' and is a role-model for all.

Being active in the outside work force (outside of the house) and working along-side men (whom a woman is not related to) is beneath the status of every single woman who enjoys a special status [such as that of Fatima Zahra, peace be upon her] and as such, today when compelled to be in such situations, [our women] must ensure to [properly] cover and safe-guard their modesty – so what can be said about that woman whose status has been described as: Indeed God, the Most High, becomes angry with the anger of Fatima and is pleased at her pleasure.

Thus, for a woman such as her, to being present in those places [within the society] which are the exclusive domain of men, is something which would diminish her from the status of being 'the greatest', 'the most preventative' and 'the most scared'.

The Sermon of Fadak⁷

One of the miracles of Sayyidah Fatima, peace be upon her, is her spontaneously delivered sermon [the Sermon of Fadak].

This grand woman, during that atmosphere [in Medina] of spiritual-asphyxiation and [during that period of the] major coup d'état which had taken place, and [shortly after] the tragic demise of the Messenger of God, peace be upon him and his family, and all of the other heartrending events which had transpired, delivered a sermon which is at the pinnacles of eloquence and oratory prowess.

This sermon is one the likes of which even the Commander of the Faithful, peace be upon him, even though he is the Leader (Imam) of the Eloquent Ones and the Commander (Amir) of those with Oratory Prowess, never had the opportunity to deliver such a comprehensive, illustrative, thrashing and ineffaceable sermon keeping in mind that he [Ali b. Abi Talib, peace be upon him] is the same person who has pronounced: Certainly, we are the masters

of speaking. Its veins are fixed in us and its branches are hanging over us...8

The grandeur of Sayyidah Fatima, the Truthful and Chaste One, peace be upon her, resulted in the fact that in that major historical gathering and that large court proceeding [in the Masjid of the Prophet in which she delivered this historic sermon], the masses were not able to prevent her from delivering her words and [for those in that gathering] it was as if the Noble Prophet of Islam, peace be upon him and his family, himself was present and speaking to the masses! In fact, many of the people present, heard the truths being presented as they were [by her], and broke down in tears.

In any case, this sermon is comprised of extremely lofty content and is, as we once again state, one of the miracles of the Ahlul Bayt and has even been narrated in a book compiled in the second century after the migration (hijrah) entitled 'Balaghat al-Nisa' of Ibn Tayfūr9.

Of course, the greatness of this lady [which has been mentioned in the Islamic sources] is numerous – just reflect on the famous Prophetic tradition in which he, peace be upon him and his family, said: Indeed God, the Most High, becomes angry with the anger of Fatima and is pleased at her pleasure.10

Even though this tradition is extremely brief, however it is exceptionally sublime and notable in its import. The actualities and critical particulars [of this statement] are so impressive that Imam al-Mahdi, peace be upon him, himself has used this tradition as substantiation [in his own statements and declarations].

We can also consider the tradition in which the Noble Prophet, peace be upon him and his family, whenever he wished to console and reassure his daughter Sayyidah Fatima, peace be upon her, would tell her: I give you the glad tidings O Fatima! Indeed al-Mahdi is from you.11

This statement is extremely important as the Noble Prophet, peace be upon him and his family, is the first individual in the creation of the world of possibilities - and to grant comfort to his only beloved daughter and prepare her to bear the tribulations and everything which will transpire in the future, he comforts her by telling her that "al-Mahdi is from you" – meaning that everything originates from you (Fatima) and everything exists solely for you (Fatima); the gradual forward march of the entire world is one which is moving towards you (Fatima) and the victory of truth over falsehood and the eventual victory of the Divine Light over the spiritual darkneses are all for you (Fatima).

In any case, as we have said, the words which speak about the greatness of Fatima Zahra, peace be upon her, are too numerous [to enumerate].

Honouring Fatimiyyah and the stances of Fatima, and the life history of Fatima, and the asceticism of Fatima and the worship of Fatima and the knowledge and wisdom of Fatima must always be a part of our religious regiment and in our spiritual discourses, writings and at every possible juncture and opportune moment we find out selves in, we must speak about these things.

We must also always speak about the tribulations which befell this woman which are so openly acknowledged and accepted that they are even recounted in books such as Al-Nihayah fi al-gharib al-hadith wa al-athar of Ibn Athir – even though he is a Sunni and this book is one of Arabic lexicon – when he writes about the death of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him and his family, he was not able to withhold himself and thus, he too was forced to allude to these tribulations!

In his work, Al-Nihayah fi al-gharib al-hadith wa al-athar, Ibn Athir, refers to the word "هنيئث", after which he quotes the following two lines of poetry from Sayyida Zahra, peace be upon her, as proofs of, those tragedies and the breaking of her sanctity which this illustrious women of Islam possessed – and if any aware person would read these lines of poetry, he would understand much [of the history of what transpired]. These words clearly explain the intense level of displeasure of Fatima Zahra, peace be upon her, and also allude to the pains and sorrow which she faced and also the protests which she raised in regards to what befell her. When she spoke and addressed her noble father, she said the following words:

قد كان بعدك أنباء و هنيئة لو كنت شاهدا لو يكثر الخطب
أنا فقدناك فقد الأرض وأبها فاختل قومك فاشهدهم و لا تغيب

Shortly after you such troubles and incidents came up, that if you had been alive they would not have increased; your death upon us is similar to the Earth that is devoid of rain - your nation defaulted (from their promise) after your departure, then you be witness and do not neglect it.

He then says:

الهنيئة واحدة الهنابت و هي الأمور الشداد المختلفة و أشار إلى عتبتها على أبي بكر: إنها خرجت في لمة من نسانها تتوطأ ذيلها إلى أبي بكر فعاتبته

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We must work at teaching the Islamic history to the peoples of the world; we must carry the words of Sayyidah Zahra, peace be upon her, specifically that grand and expressive sermon which is counted as one of her miracles, to the people of the entire world.

During these Fatimiyyah events, we must glorify, show respect and veneration to this great celestially-sent being and must instill the love and affection for this distinct woman of Islam, the daughter of the Noble Prophet of Mercy – Fatima al-Zahra, peace be upon her, within the hearts of all people.

Today, we are all in need of taking Sayyidah Zahra, peace be upon her, as our role model. Our society needs to look towards her and follow her example in how she lived her married life and also in how she brought up her children – as indeed she had the best approach and technique in these regards.

Today, the words of this great woman must become the life-lessons in the lives of all women – rather, even in the lives of us men! This great woman conveyed to the world the true status and the true level of dignity which women possess and has proclaimed: “The best of women is that one whom does not see other strange men and whom no strange men see her.”

This is what Sayyidah Zahra, peace be upon her, has left within the hearts of all spiritually awake people and those who actively worship and serve God and are constantly on the search for truth, till today and until the end of the world.

Fatimiyyah is an era; Fatimiyyah means to oppose the leaders of oppression; Fatimiyyah means to wage war in order for truth to be victorious over falsehood and ultimately, Fatimiyyah means the global and Divinely appointed governance of Imam al-Mahdi, may Allah hasten his noble advent!

Yes indeed! Fatimiyyah is Ashura; Fatimiyyah is the night of al-Qadr; Fatimiyyah is Ghadeer; Fatimiyyah is the 15th of Sha‘ban and Fatimiyyah is, in its true essence, the day of victory of Light over darkness.

In the radiance of extolling the virtues of this great woman, all of the aspects of the faith of Islam and the supreme authority and mastership of the purified leaders of the faith (Imams) and the invitation to Islam, the Qur’an and the teachings of the Ahlul Bayt – and in summary – the messengership of the Messenger of God, peace be upon him and his family, must be conveyed to others.

One thing which we must keep in mind is that we must constantly fight against: innovations (in the religion); gravitating towards the foreign elements; instruments of turmoil (within our community); sins; the prevalence of difficulties and tribulation, immorality, obstinacy and deviation.

The school of the Ahlul Bayt, peace be upon them, is a religious school built upon knowledge and wisdom; it is a school of learning and spiritual vigilance; it is a school of immediacy and equality and one of intellectual progress and one of illuminating reflection and this is yet another thing which we must all convey to others when we have these opportunities.

All of us must be appreciative of the institution of the enlightening Majalis-e-Fatimi and take full use of the blessings contained therein. One of the most important responsibilities which we have in this regards is to make supplication with complete humility and penitence to God, the Most High, for the hastening of the advent of the dear child of Fatima, Imam al-Mahdi, may Allah hasten his noble advent.

O God! Hasten his noble advent and make us amongst his helpers and his assistants and allow us to sacrifice our lives in his presence!

Notes:

1. Fāṭimiyyah refers to the annual programs which are held throughout the Muslim world to commemorate the martyrdom of Fāṭima Zahrā, peace be upon her, the only daughter of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him and his family. As there are numerous dates in history on when she left this world and no one knows for sure on which day she died, the scholars have deemed that it is best to remember her on the two most well-known dates – 75 days after the death of the Messenger of God, peace be upon him and his family, and 95

1. days after the death of the Messenger of God, peace be upon him and his family.
2. Uyūn al-akhbār al-riḍā, volume 1, section 26, tradition 22
3. Nahj al-balāgha, letter 28
4. Al-Jawāhir al-saniyyah, Shaykh Ḥurr Amulī, pg. 710
5. Biḥār al-anwār, volume 68, section 61, tradition 1
6. Awālim al-ulūm, pg. 933
7. We have presented the entire text of this sermon at the end of this article. (Tr.)
8. Nahj al-balāgha, sermon 233
9. Available on-line in Arabic here.
10. Şaḥīfa Imām al-Riḍā, peace be upon him, pg. 45, tradition 22
11. Al-Burhān of Muttaqī al-Hindī, page 94