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18) Hadith Al-Siyadah, Exploring the Scope of 'Ali's Superiority

The Messenger of Allah, *sallallahu 'alaihi wa alihi*, identified Amir al-Muminin, *'alaihi al-salam*, as a *sayyid* in both this world and the next. This, without doubt, falls within the spiritual context. Of particular interest therefore is that the Prophet had described him as a *sayyid* in absolute terms. As such, he is superior – in the Sight of Allah – to all mankind, except whoever has been excluded through other irrefutable proofs. The Messenger stated the same thing about al-Hasan, *'alaihi al-salam*, the first son of 'Ali. Imam Ahmad (d. 241 H) records:

حدثنا عبد الله حدثني أبي ثنا سفيان عن أبي موسى ويقال له إسرائيل قال سمعت الحسن قال سمعت أبا بكرة وقال سفيان مرة عن أبي بكرة رأيت رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم على المنبر وحسن عليه السلام معه وهو يقبل على الناس مرة عن أبي بكرة رأيت رسول النه صلى الله عليه و سلم على الناس مرة وعليه مرة ويقول أن ابنى هذا سيد

'Abd Allah (b. Ahmad) – my father (Ahmad b. Hanbal) – Sufyan – Abu Musa, also called Israil – al– Hasan – Abu Bakrah; and Sufyan also narrated directly from Abu Bakrah at another time:

I saw the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, upon the pulpit, and Hasan, 'alaihi salam, was with him. He was turning to the people at one time and turning to him (i.e. al-Hasan) at another, and he was saying: "Verily, this son of mine is a sayyid." 1

Shaykh al-Arnaut comments:

إسناده صحيح على شرط البخاري

Its chain is sahih upon the standard of al-Bukhari.2

Imam al-Tirmidhi (d. 279 H) also states about the same hadith:

هذا حديث حسن صحيح

This hadith is hasan sahih.3

And 'Allamah al-Albani (d. 1420 H) agrees:

صحيح

Sahih4

In another report, our Prophet explains what this means. 'Allamah al-Albani copies this hadith:

These two sons of mine, al-Hasan and al-Husayn, are the two *sayyids* of the youth of the people of Paradise, **and their father is better than them both.**5

The 'Allamah comments:

صحيح

Sahih6

Imam al-Hakim (d. 403 H) also documents a similar report:

حدثنا أبو سعيد عمرو بن محمد بن منصور العدل ثنا السري بن خزيمة ثنا عثمان بن سعيد المري ثنا علي بن صالح عن عاصم عن زر عن عبد الله رضي الله عنه قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم الحسن والحسين سيدا شباب أهل الجنة وأبوهما خير منهما

Abu Sa'id 'Amr b. Muhammad b. Mansur al-'Adl – al-Sirri b. Khuzaymah – 'Uthman b. Sa'id al-Mirri – 'Ali b. Salih – 'Asim – Zirr – 'Abd Allah, may Allah be pleased with him:

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said: "Al-Hasan and al-Husayn are the two *sayyids* of the youth of the people of Paradise, **and their father is better than them both**." 7

Al-Hakim states:

هذا حديث صحيح بهذه الزيادة

This hadith is sahih with this ziyadah.8

And Imam al-Dhahabi (d. 748 H) concurs:

صحيح

Sahih9

In other words, both al-Hasan and al-Husayn, 'alaihima al-salam, are superior in the Sight of Allah to anyone who will be a youth in Paradise. Of course, everyone in Paradise will be young. Imam al-Darimi (d. 255 H) records:

أخبرنا محمد بن يزيد الرفاعي ثنا معاذ يعني بن هشام عن أبيه عن عامر الأحول عن شهر بن حوشب عن أبي هريرة عن النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم قال أهل الجنة شباب جرد مرد كحل لا تبلى ثيابهم ولا يفني شبابهم

Muhammad b. Yazid al-Rufa'i - Mu'adh b. Hisham - his father - 'Amir al-Ahwal - Shahr b. Hawshab - Abu Hurayrah:

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "The people of Paradise will be hairless, beardless youth, with their eyes anointed with kohl. Their cloths will never become worn and their youth will never end." 10

Shaykh Dr. Asad comments:

إسناده حسن

Its chain is hasan. 11

So, Imam al-Hasan and Imam al-Husayn are the best of all the people of Paradise, from Adam till the last human being to die. The only exceptions are the Prophet himself – being the *sayyid* of mankind – and Amir al-Muminin, who has been explicitly excluded. The direct implication of this is that Imam 'Ali is the *sayyid* of all inhabitants of Paradise with the sole exception of the Messenger of Allah. Expectedly, the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah are troubled by the possibility of 'Ali, al-Hasan or al-Husayn being superior to either Abu Bakr or 'Umar. Its implication is severe on the legitimacy of the Sunni *khilafah* system. Imam al-Mubarakfuri (d. 1282 H) therefore posits the various Sunni diversions of the *hadith*:

قوله الحسن والحسين سيدا شباب أهل الجنة ... قال المظهر يعني هما أفضل من مات شابا في سبيل الله من أصحاب الجنة ولم يرد به سن الشباب لأنهما ماتا وقد كهلا ... أو أنهما سيدا أهل الجنة سوى الأنبياء والخلفاء الراشدين وذلك لأن أهل الجنة كلهم في سن واحد وهو الشباب وليس فيهم شيخ ولا كهل قال الطيبي ويمكن أن يراد

هما الان سيدا شباب من هم من أهل الجنة من شبان هذا الزمان

His statement "al–Hasan and al–Husayn are the two *sayyids* of the youth of the people of Paradise" … Al–Muzaffar said: "It means that both of them are the best and most superior of whoever died young on the Path of Allah among the inhabitants of Paradise. He (the Prophet) did not intend by it the age of youth, because both of them died at elderly ages … Or both of them are *sayyids* of the people of Paradise except the prophets and the *khulafa al–rashidin*. And this is because the people of Paradise will all be of the same age, and that is youth, and there will not be any old or elderly person among them."

Al-Tayyibi said, "It is possible the intended meaning is that both of them (i.e. al-Hasan and al-Husayn) were at that moment *sayyids* of those youth who were from the people of Paradise from that era." 12

All these acrobatics are obviously aimed at propping up Abu Bakr and 'Umar. Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah explains why:

So, he ('Umar) said, "Rather, we will follow you because you are our *sayyid*.... He wanted to make clear through it that: What is ORDAINED is to give authority to the best, and you are the best of us. So, we will follow you. 13

In simpler words, if it were confirmed that both al-Hasan and al-Husayn were superior to Abu Bakr, then the latter's *khilafah* would be illegitimate! It was, and is always, *obligatory* in the religion of Muhammad to give authority and leadership to the best *only*. The direct implication of this is that *khilafah* was the exclusive right of Amir al-Muminin, after the Messenger of Allah. After all, he was, and still is, the *sayyid* of all Muslims after their Prophet.

Meanwhile, do the Sunni acrobatics really help their cause? There is a Sunni-only version of the *riwayah*, which puts a complete end to the debate. 'Allamah al-Albani copies this *hadith*:

Al-Hasan and al-Husayn are the two *sayyids* of the people of Paradise, **except the two maternal cousins: 'Isa b. Maryam and Yahya b. Zakariyah**. And Fatimah is the *sayyidah* of the women of the people of Paradise except Maryam bint 'Imran. 14

The 'Allamah says:

صحيح

Sahih 15

So, after the Messenger of Allah and Amir al–Muminin, the only other creatures who will not be under the superiority of al–Hasan and al–Husayn in Paradise are Prophet 'Isa, 'alaihi al–salam, and Prophet Yahya, 'alaihi al–salam. Now, how exactly can our Sunni brothers explain away this one to save their first two *khalifahs*?

- 1. Abu 'Abd Allah Ahmad b. Hanbal al-Shaybani, Musnad (Cairo: Muasassat Qurtubah) [annotator: Shu'ayb al-Arnaut], vol. 5, p. 37, # 20408
- 2. Ibid
- 3. Abu 'Isa Muhammad b. 'Isa al-Sulami al-Tirmidhi, al-Jami' al-Sahih Sunan al-Tirmidhi (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi) [annotator: Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani], vol. 5, p. 658, # 3773
- 4. Ibid
- 5. Abu 'Abd al-Rahman Muhammad Nasir al-Din b. al-Hajj Nuh b. Tajati b. Adam al-Ashqudri al-Albani, Sahih al-Jami' al-Saghir wa Ziyadatuhu (Al-Maktab al-Islami), vol. 1, p. 70, # 47
- 6. Ibid
- 7. Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah al-Hakim al-Naysaburi, al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Sahihayn (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1411 H) [annotator: Mustafa 'Abd al-Qadir 'Ata], vol. 3, p. 182, # 4779
- 8. Ibid
- 9. Ibid
- 10. Abu Muhammad 'Abd Allah b. 'Abd al-Rahman al-Darimi, Sunan (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi; 1st edition, 1407 H) [annotator: Husayn Salim Asad], vol. 2, p. 431, # 2826
- 11. Ibid
- 12. Abu al-'Ala Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Rahman b. 'Abd al-Rahim al-Mubarakfuri, Tuhfat al-Ahwazi bi Sharh Jami' al-Tirmidhi (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1410 H), vol. 10, p. 186
- 13. Abu al-'Abbas Ahmad b. 'Abd al-Halim b. Taymiyyah al-Harrani, Minhaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah (Muasassat Qurtubah; 1st edition, 1406 H) [annotator: Dr. Muhammad Rashad Salim], vol. 8, p. 565
- 14. Abu 'Abd al-Rahman Muhammad Nasir al-Din b. al-Hajj Nuh b. Tajati b. Adam al-Ashqudri al-Albani, Sahih al-Jami' al-Saghir wa Ziyadatuhu (Al-Maktab al-Islami), vol. 1, p. 607, # 3181
- **15.** Ibid

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