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1) Hadith Al-Khilafah

Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 H) says:

والجواب أن هذا ليس مسندا بل هو مرسل لو ثبت عن عمرو بن ميمون وفيه ألفاظ هي كذب على رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم كقوله أما ترضى أن تكون مني بمنزلة هارون من موسى غير أنك لست بنبي لا ينبغي أن أذهب إلا وأنت خليفتي فإن النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم ذهب غير مرة وخليفته على المدينة غير علي

The reply is that this (*hadith*) is not fully–connected in its chain (*musnad*). Rather, it is *mursal* (narrated by a Tabi'i directly from the Prophet), (even) if it is authentically transmitted from 'Amr b. Maymun. It (also) contains **statements that are lies upon the Messenger of Allah** such as his statement: "Are you not pleased that you are to me of the status of Harun to Musa, with the exception that you are not a prophet? **It is not right that I depart except with you as my** *khalifah*." Verily, the Prophet, peace be upon him, departed many times and his *khalifah* over Madinah was other than 'Ali (on each occasion). 1

First, our dear Shaykh grades the *hadith* of 'Amr b. Maymun to be *mursal*. This means that there is no Sahabi in the chain. The last narrator transmitting directly from the Messenger of Allah, *sallallahu 'alaihi wa alihi*, is only a Tabi'i. Second, Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah claims that it contains clear lies upon the Messenger of Allah, especially the statement that 'Ali, *'alaihi al–salam*, was his *khalifah*. He also interprets "depart" in the *hadith* to mean "depart from Madinah", rather than "depart from this world". It would be appropriate to examine its full chain, context and texts in order to determine the validity of the Shaykh's claims.

Hadith al-Khilafah has come in three sighahs (versions). The first sighah is documented by Imam Ibn Abi 'Asim (d. 287 H). He records:

ثنا محمد بن المثنى، حدثنا يحي بن حماد، عن أبي عوانة، عن يحيى بن سليم أبي بلج عن عمرو بن ميمون، عن ابن عباس قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم لعلي: أنت مني بمنزلة هارون من موسى إلا أنك لست نبيا وأنت عباس قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم لعلي: أنت مني بمنزلة هارون من موسى إلا أنك لست نبيا وأنت عباس قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم لعلي:

Muhammad b. al-Muthanna – Yahya b. Hammad – Abu 'Awanah – Yahya b. Sulaym **Abu Balj** – 'Amr b. Maymun – **Ibn 'Abbas**: The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said to 'Ali: "You are to me of the status of Harun to Musa, with the exception that you are not a prophet. **And you are my** *khalifah* **over every believer after me**."2

Dr. al-Jawabirah says:

Its chain is *hasan*. Its narrators are narrators of the two Shaykhs, except Abu Balj, and his name is Yahya b. Sulaym b. Balj. Al-Hafiz said: "*Saduq* (very truthful), *maybe* he made mistakes." **There are witnesses for it (i.e. the** *hadith*)."3

'Allamah al-Albani (d. 1420 H), in his annotated version of Ibn Abi Asim's *Kitab al-Sunnah* surprisingly added some new words in brackets:

Muhammad b. al-Muthanna – Yahya b. Hammad – Abu 'Awanah – Yahya b. Sulaym **Abu Balj** – 'Amr b. Maymun – **Ibn 'Abbas**: The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said to 'Ali: "You are to me of the status of Harun to Musa, with the exception that you are not a prophet. [**Verily, it is not right that I depart except**] with you as my *khalifah* over every believer *after me*."4

Nonetheless, 'Allamah al-Albani also comments:

Its chain is *hasan*. Its narrators are trustworthy, and are narrators of the two Shaykhs (i.e. al–Bukhari and Muslim) except Abu Balj. His name is Yahya b. Sulaym b. Balj. Al–Hafiz said: "*Saduq* (very truthful), *maybe* he made mistakes."5

This *hadith*, in the Sunni book, is narrated by Ibn 'Abbas, *radhiyallahu 'anhu*, a Sahabi. Therefore, it is not *mursal*, as claimed by Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah. Rather, its chain is *musnad* (well–connected) and *hasan* (good). Moreover, since the *hadith* has been authentically transmitted, the Shaykh's grading of it as "a lie" also has absolutely no basis at all.

The second sighah is recorded by Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal (d. 241 H), in his Musnad:

حدثنا عبد الله حدثني أبي ثنا يحيى بن حماد ثنا أبو عوانة ثنا أبو بلج ثنا عمرو بن ميمونقال بن عباس وخرج بالناس في غزوة تبوك قال فقال له علي أخرج معك قال فقال له نبي الله لا فبكى علي فقال له أما ترضى أن تكون منى بمنزلة هارون من موسى الا أنك لست بنبي انه لا ينبغي أن أذهب الا وأنت خليفتي

'Abd Allah – my father (Ahmad b. Hanbal) – Yahya b. Hammad – Abu 'Awanah – **Abu Balj** – 'Amr b. Maymun Ibn 'Abbas said:

.... He (the Messenger of Allah) went out for the battle of Tabuk. So, 'Ali said to him, "Let me go out with you." Therefore, the Prophet of Allah, peace be upon him, said, "Do not weep, 'Ali. Are you not pleased that you are to me of the status of Harun to Musa, with the exception that you are not a prophet? **Verily, it is not right that I depart except with you as my** *khalifah*."6

Al-Arnaut strangely says:

Its chain is *dha'if* with this context. **Abu Balj**, the fairest that has been said about him is that his *hadith* is accepted only when he is corroborated.7

However, he contradicts himself elsewhere:

'Abd Allah – my father (Ahmad b. Hanbal) – 'Affan – Abu 'Awanah – **Abu Balj** – Muhammad b. Hatib **Its chain is** *hasan* **due to Abu Balj**.8

Al-Arnaut also states:

'Abd Allah – my father (Ahmad b. Hanbal) – Hasan – Zuhayr – **Abu Balj** – 'Amr b. Maymun – Abu Hurayrah **This chain is** *hasan*.9

Apparently, *Hadith al–Khilafah* is *hasan* by the standards of Shaykh al–Arnaut too! Commenting about the same *hadith* in *Musnad Ahmad*, 'Allamah Ahmad Shakir (d. 1377 H) declares:

إسناده صحيح، أبو بلج، بفتح الباء وسكون اللام و آخره جيم: اسمه يحيى بن سليم ويقال يحيى بن أبي الأسود الفزاري، وهو ثقة، وثقه ابن معين وابن سعد والنسائي والدارقطني وغيرهم. وفي التهذيب أن البخاري قال: فيه نظر! وما أدري أين قال هذا؟، فإنه ترجمه في الكبير 279/4 ـ 280 ولم يذكر فيه جرحاً، ولم يترجمه في الصغير، ولا دكره هو والنسائي في الضعفاء، وقد روى عنه شعبة، وهو لا يروي إلا عن ثقه

Its chain is *sahih*. Abu Balj: his name is Yahya b. Sulaym. He is also called Yahya b. Abi al-Aswad al-Fazari, and he is *thiqah* (trustworthy). Ibn Ma'in, Ibn Sa'd, al-Nasai, al-Daraqutni and others declared him *thiqah*. It is said in *al-Tahdhib* that al-Bukhari said: "There is a problem in him"! I do not know: where has he said that? This is because in his (al-Bukhari's) biography of him in *al-Kabir* 4/2/279–280, he does not mention any criticism against him, and he (al-Bukhari) does not write his biography in *al-Saghir*, and neither he nor al-Nasai has mentioned him in (his respective) *al-Dhu'afa*. Moreover, Shu'bah has narrated from him, and he does not narrate except from *thiqah* narrators. 10

Imam al-Hakim (d. 403 H) records the hadith too:

أخبرنا أبو بكر أحمد بن جعفر بن حمدان القطيعي ببغداد من أصل كتابه ثنا عبد الله بن أحمد بن حنبل حدثني أبي ثنا يحيى بن حماد ثنا أبو عوانة ثنا أبو بلج ثنا عمرو بن ميمونقال ابن عباس وقعوا في رجل له بضع عشرة فضائل ليست لأحد غيره.... وخرج رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم في غزوة تبوك وخرج بالناس معه قال فقال له علي : أخرج معك قال : فقال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم لا فبكى علي فقال له : أما ترضى أن تكون مني بمنزلة هارون من موسى إلا أنه ليس بعدى نبى إنه لا ينبغى أن أذهب إلا وأنت خليفتى

Abu Bakr Ahmad b. Ja'far b. Hamadan al-Qati'i - 'Abd Allah b. Ahmad b. Hanbal - my father (Ahmad b. Hanbal) - Yahya b. Hammad - Abu 'Awanah - **Abu Balj** - 'Amr b. Maymun Ibn 'Abbas said:

.... They are attacking a man who has ten EXCLUSIVE merits.... The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, went out for the battle of Tabuk, and the people went out with him. So, 'Ali said to him, "Let me go out with you." Therefore, the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "Do not weep, 'Ali. Are you not pleased that you are to me of the status of Harun to Musa, with the exception that there is no prophet after me? Verily, it is not right that I depart except with you as my *khalifah*."11

Al-Hakim says:

هذا حديث صحيح الإسناد

This hadith has a sahih chain. 12

Al-Dhahabi (d. 748 H) backs him:

Meanwhile, Imam al-Nasai (d. 303 H) has documented the third *sighah*, through the same *hasan* chain of transmission as the first:

.... He (the Messenger of Allah) went out with the people for the battle of Tabuk. So, 'Ali said to him, "Let me go out with you." Therefore, he (the Prophet) said, "Do not weep, 'Ali. Are you not pleased that you are to me of the status of Harun to Musa, with the exception that you are not a prophet? **You are my** *khalifah*, that is, over every believer *after me*."14

This third *sighah* reveals that the second *sighah* actually misses some words. When the Messenger of Allah declared Amir al–Muminin as his *khalifah*, he explicitly explained what he meant, so that the *khilafah* is not confused with 'Ali's governorate over Madinah. In the end, all three *sighahs* actually say the same thing: 'Ali was the *khalifah* of the Messenger of Allah over *every* believer *after him*.

These various reports record varying degrees of details of the text of *Hadith al–Khilafah*. However, by combining the *sighahs*, a clear picture emerges:

- 1. The Messenger of Allah made Amir al-Muminin his khalifah over Madinah during the battle of Tabuk.
- 2. The Prophet himself led the army to Tabuk.
- 3. 'Ali was very distressed with the appointment and preferred to participate in the battle as a soldier. This displeasure made him weep.
- 4. His request to the Prophet to let him participate as a soldier in the battle was turned down.
- 5. To make him happy and pleased, the Prophet stated that he was exactly the Harun of this *Ummah*, except that while Harun was a prophet, he was not.
- 6. The Messenger of Allah also informed him that he would become his *khalifah* over his *entire Ummah* after him. 15
- 7. The Prophet further added that it was not right for himself to depart except with 'Ali being his *khalifah* over the *entire Ummah* after him.
- 8. Lastly, 'Ali's khilafah in the hadith is part of his ten **exclusive** merits, according to Ibn 'Abbas.

Interestingly, Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah seeks to capitalize on the fact that the *hadith* was delivered during 'Ali's *khilafah* over Madinah. He therefore restricts the *khilafah* in the *hadith* to mere governorate over a

town or city within the *Ummah*. On that basis, he kicks it out:

Verily, the Prophet, peace be upon him, departed many times and his *khalifah* over Madinah was other than 'Ali (on each occasion). 16

His submission however fails for two reasons. First, the Messenger wanted to tell 'Ali something to make him happy, considering the latter's deep distress over his appointment as governor of Madinah. How then would he have still mentioned that *same* governorate to cheer him up? Does that make any sense? Besides, the Prophet specifically indicated that the *khilafah* he was speaking about would be over the entire *Ummah* after him. This certainly is different from the governorate of Madinah, which was over a tiny portion of the *Ummah* while the Messenger of Allah was still alive! How on earth did our dear Shaykh miss this simple, clear difference?

As if the weird actions of Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah on *Hadith al-Khilafah* are not enough, 'Allamah al-Albani sinks even deeper:

As for what the Shi'ah mention about this *hadith* and others that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said about 'Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, that "he is my *khalifah* after me", it is NOT authentic for many reasons. Rather, it is one of their (i.e. Shi'is') several fabrications, which are exposed as lies by history. If truly the Prophet, peace be upon him, had said it, it would have occurred as predicted, because it is *wahy* revealed, and Allah never betrays His Promise. 17

Has the 'Allamah really forgotten that he has personally authenticated the chain of that *hadith*? Or, did he choose to become economical with truthfulness and sincerity after realizing that *Hadith al–Khilafah* simply cannot be twisted to kill its true meaning? It is rather unfortunate that 'Allamah al–Albani plays this lowly "Ibn Taymiyyah" card despite his high calibre.

The only excuse he has actually tabled for attacking the *hadith* (despite his claim of the existence of many) is that it contradicts historical reality. Rather than 'Ali, Abu Bakr became the *khalifah*. *Therefore*, 'Ali could not have been the designated successor?! This reasoning further exposes another aspect of 'Allamah al–Albani: his shocking ignorance of the meaning of the word *khalifah*! Does he even read the Qur'an at all?

Musa and Harun, 'alaihima al-salam, were both messengers chosen by Allah:

So go you both to him and say: "Verily, we both are messengers of your Lord" 18

By the Order of Allah, every messenger was a ruler of his people:

We sent no messenger, but to be obeyed by Allah's Leave. 19

So, what happens when the people refuse to obey a messenger? Does he lose his status? By the reasoning system of 'Allamah al-Albani, if Allah had truly appointed someone a messenger, then the people would certainly have obeyed him. If they did not obey him, then it must have been that he was not a genuine messenger!

Harun, apart from being a messenger, was also Musa's *khalifah* over the latter's entire *Ummah*:

Musa said to his brother, Harun: "Be my khalifah over my people."20

But, what happened once Musa went away temporarily from his *Ummah*, with his brother as his *khalifah* over them? A rebel leader rose against Harun, and stole power. The people of Musa thereby disobeyed Harun and followed the rebel leader, named al–Samiri. Allah informed Musa of the situation while he was still absent from them:

He (Allah) said: "Verily! We have tried your people in your absence, and al-Samiri has led them astray."21

The Qur'an continues:

When Musa returned to his people, angry and grieved, he said, "What an evil thing is that which you have done during my absence! Did you hasten and go ahead as regards the matter of your Lord?" He

threw down the Tablets and seized his brother by his head and dragged him towards him. Harun said, "O son of my mother! Indeed the people judged me weak, and were about to murder me."22

In line with the logic of 'Allamah al–Albani, since Allah announced Harun as a messenger, and Musa too called him his *khalifah*, then the Israelites *must* have obeyed him. Otherwise, the Promise of Allah would have failed! Moreover, because they disobeyed Harun and obeyed al–Samiri – in the thinking line of 'Allamah al–Albani – the former was therefore no longer a messenger or a *khalifah*! Rather, al–Samiri became the true messenger and *khalifah* by staging a successful rebellion! How can a Muslim scholar reason like that?

- 1. 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. 5, p. 34
- 2. Abu Bakr b. Abi 'Asim, Ahmad b. 'Amr b. al-Dhahhak b. Mukhlid al-Shaybani, Kitab al-Sunnah (Dar al-Sami'i li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi') [annotator: Dr. Basim b. Faysal al-Jawabirah], vol. 1, pp. 799-800, # 1222
- 3. Ibid
- 4. Abu Bakr b. Abi 'Asim, Ahmad b. 'Amr b. al-Dhahhak b. Mukhlid al-Shaybani, Kitab al-Sunnah (al-Maktab al-Islami; 1st edition, 1400 H) [annotator: Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani], vol. 2, p. 565, # 1188
- 5. Ibid
- 6. Abu 'Abd Allah Ahmad b. Hanbal al-Shaybani, Musnad (Cairo: Muasassat Qurtubah) [annotator: Shu'ayb al-Arnaut], vol. 1, p. 330, # 3062
- 7. Ibid
- 8. Ibid, vol. 4, p. 259, # 18305
- 9. Ibid, vol. 2, p. 355, # 8645
- 10. Abu 'Abd Allah Ahmad b. Hanbal al-Shaybani, Musnad (Cairo: Dar al-Hadith; 1st edition, 1416 H) [annotator: Ahmad Muhammad Shakir], vol. 1, p. 331, # 3062
- 11. 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. 143, # 4652
- 12. Ibid
- **13.** Ibid
- 14. Abu 'Abd al-Rahman Ahmad b. Shu'ayb al-Nasai, Sunan al-Kubra (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1411 H) [annotator: Dr. 'Abd al-Ghaffar Sulayman al-Bandari and Sayyid Kasrawi Hasan], vol. 5, p. 112, # 8409
- 15. 'Ali obviously was very passionate about serving Islam. This was why he preferred to be a soldier, rather than a governor. As a soldier, he believed that his contributions would be far greater. The Prophet then informed him that he was holding, and would also be holding, ranks and positions that would afford him unprecedented opportunities to serve Islam. This was to make him happy, and it did.
- <u>16.</u> 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. 5, p. 34
- 17. Abu 'Abd al-Rahman Muhammad Nasir al-Din b. al-Hajj Nuh b. Tajati b. Adam al-Ashqudri al-Albani, Silsilah al-Ahadith al-Sahihah wa Shayhun min Fiqhihah wa Fawaidihah (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Ma'arif li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi'; 1st edition, 1415 H), vol. 4, p. 344, # 1750
- 18. Qur'an 20:47
- 19. Qur'an 4:64
- 20. Qur'an 7:142
- 21. Qur'an 20:85
- 22. Qur'an 7:150

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