

## 28. Hadith Al-Ta'rif, Understanding Its Background

Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 H) states:

الحديث الذي روى عن ابن عمر ما كنا نعرف المنافقين على عهد النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم إلا ببغضهم عليا فإن هذا مما يعلم كل عالم أنه كذب لأن النفاق له علامات كثيرة وأسباب متعددة غير بغض علي فكيف لا يكون على النفاق علامة إلا بغض علي

The *hadith* which is narrated from Ibn 'Umar, "We were not able to recognize the hypocrites during the lifetime of the Prophet, peace be upon him, except through their hatred of 'Ali", **verily this is known to all scholars that it is a lie**. This is because hypocrisy has several signs and causes apart from hatred of 'Ali. So, how could the hatred of 'Ali have been the *only* sign of hypocrisy?<sup>1</sup>

Our Shaykh then proceeds:

لو قال كنا نعرف المنافقين ببغض علي لكان متوجها كما أنهم أيضا يعرفون ببغض الأنصار بل وببغض أبي بكر وعمر وببغض هؤلاء فإن كل من أبغض من يعلم أن النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم يحبه ويواليه وأنه كان يحب النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم ويواليه كان بغضه شعبة من شعب النفاق

If he had said "We used to recognize the hypocrites through their hatred of 'Ali" then he would have been correct. They (the hypocrites) were also recognized through their hatred of the Ansar, rather through the hatred of Abu Bakr and 'Umar, and through the hatred of these people. This is because everyone who hates anyone who is known to have been loved by the Prophet, peace be upon him, and who also loved the Prophet, peace be upon him, such hatred is a sign of hypocrisy.<sup>2</sup>

This was during the lifetime of the Prophet, *sallallahu 'alaihi wa alihi*. Our Shaykh accepts that hatred of 'Ali, *'alaihi al-salam*, was truly then a sign of hypocrisy. What he rejects is the possibility that hatred of Amir al-Muminin was the *only* sign to recognize hypocrisy – something that is NOT claimed in the *hadith*

anyway! To him, the determining question is: did the Prophet love the person being hated? If the answer were positive, then such hatred was unmistakable evidence of hypocrisy.

Under this principle, anyone who hated Amir al-Muminin *during the lifetime of the Messenger* was certainly a hypocrite. Our Shaykh has no problem with that. But then, he further insists that the same rule applied in favour of Abu Bakr and 'Umar too. It is his belief that the Prophet loved both of them more than Amir al-Muminin. Therefore, hatred of either Abu Bakr or 'Umar would be an even bigger form of hypocrisy.

What about events after the death of the Messenger? Was love or hatred of someone, by the Prophet *during his lifetime*, evidence of their permanent, *immutable* status? In simpler words, once an individual was able to earn the love of Allah and His Messenger, was it *ever* possible for him to forfeit it? This question stands at the centre of our research in this chapter. The Qur'an states categorically several times that *any* individual who has become Allah's beloved can also turn into His enemy *anytime*! For instance, Allah says to all His prophets:

ولقد أوحى إليك وإلى الذين من قبلك لئن أشركت ليحبطن عملك ولتكونن من الخاسرين

And indeed it has been revealed to you (O Muhammad), as it was revealed to those before you: **if you commit idolatry, then surely all your deeds will be in vain**, and you will certainly be among the losers.<sup>3</sup>

The Qur'an also states:

قل إنني أخاف إن عصيت ربي عذاب يوم عظيم

Say: "I fear, **if I disobey my Lord**, the torment of a Mighty Day."<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, the love of Allah for Muhammad and all His promises of Paradise to him were conditioned upon his continued obedience and servitude to his Lord Alone. Should he have become otherwise during his lifetime, Allah would have hated him and thrown him into Hellfire. As such, Muhammad remained in constant fear of disobeying his Lord till his death. This was the case with the most beloved of all creation to Allah. Apparently, the same condition applied indiscriminately to all the Sahabah, and to all beings till the Hour. So, even if any of them had earned the love of Allah and His Prophet, the story did not end there. If he *ever* did certain acts, before or after the Messenger's death, he would forfeit such love.

Before proceeding further, we must ask whether the Messenger of Allah, during his lifetime, loved 'Ali or not. Imam Muslim (d. 261 H) answers with this *hadith*:

حدثنا قتيبة بن سعيد ومحمد بن عباد (وتقاربا في اللفظ) قالا حدثنا حاتم (وهو ابن إسماعيل) عن بكير بن مسمار عن عامر بن سعد بن أبي وقاص عن أبيه قال أمر معاوية بن أبي سفيان سعدا فقال ما منعك أن تسب أبا التراب؟ فقال أما ذكرت ثلاثا قالهن له رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم فلن أسبه لأن تكون لي واحدة منهن أحب إلي من حمر النعم سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم يقول له خلفه في بعض مغازيه فقال له علي يا رسول الله خلفتني مع النساء والصبيان؟ فقال له رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم أما ترضى أن تكون مني بمنزلة هارون من موسى إلا أنه لا نبوة بعدي وسمعتة يقول يوم خيبر لأعطين الراية رجلا يحب الله ورسوله ويحبه الله ورسوله قال فتناولها فقال ادعوا لي عليا فأتى به أرمم فبصق في عينه ودفع الراية إليه ففتح الله عليه ولما نزلت هذه الآية فقل تعالوا ندع أبناءنا وأبنائكم [3/آل عمران/61] دعا رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم عليا وفاطمة وحسنا وحسينا فقال اللهم هؤلاء أهلي

Qutaybah b. Sa'id and Muhammad b. 'Ibad – Hatim b. Isma'il – Bukayr b. Musmar – 'Amir b. Sa'id b. Abi Waqqas – his father (Sa'd b. Abi Waqqas):

**Mu'awiyah commanded Sa'd, and therefore said, "What prevented you from cursing Abu al-Turab (i.e. 'Ali)?"** So, he (Sa'd) replied, "As long as I remember three things which the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said about him, I will never curse him. **If just one of them had been for me, it would have been dearer to me than a red camel.** I heard the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, saying to him. He made him his *khalifah* during one of his military expeditions. So, 'Ali said to him, "O Messenger of Allah, are you leaving me behind with women and children?"

So, the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said to him, "Are you not pleased that you are to me of the status of Harun to Musa except that there is no prophethood after me?" And I heard him saying on the Day of Khaybar, "**I will give the flag to a man who loves Allah and His Messenger, and Allah and His Messenger too love him.**" So, we longed for it (i.e. the flag).

**Then he said, "Call 'Ali for me"**, and he was brought to him. He was sore-eyed. He applied saliva to his eye and gave the flag to him, and Allah granted him victory. And when this verse was revealed {Say: Come, let us call *our* sons and your sons....} [3/61], the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, called 'Ali, Faṭimah, Hasan and Husayn, and said, "O Allah! These are my family."<sup>5</sup>

There are three quick points from this *hadith*, with specific reference to this chapter:

1. Mu'awiyah commanded Sa'd to do something, *before* asking him why he (Sa'd) refused to curse 'Ali.
3. Sa'd did not have *any* of those three merits mentioned for 'Ali, and very strongly wished he did any of them.
5. Allah and His Messenger loved 'Ali, and he loved them too.

So, what did Mu'awiyah command Sa'd to do? In order to uncover what that was, we must pay attention to the former's question:

ما منعك أن تسب أبا التراب؟

What prevented you from cursing Abu al-Turab (i.e. 'Ali)?

In classical Arabic, this sentence structure was used to ask why a direct order had been disobeyed, *by the commandant himself*. In other words, if A ordered B to, say, hit C, and B refused to do so, then A would say to B, "What prevented you from hitting C?" The other manner in which it was applied was where A did not command B to do something, but was nonetheless unpleasantly surprised or shocked that B had not done it. So A would ask, "What prevented you from doing such-and-such?"

An example is in this verse:

قال يا إبليس ما منعك أن تسجد لما خلقت بيدي أستكبرت أم كنت من العالين

He (Allah) said, "**O Iblis! What prevented you** from prostrating yourself to one whom I have created with Both My Hands?![6](#)

Another is here:

قال ما منعك ألا تسجد إذ أمرتك

He (Allah) said, "**What prevented you (O Iblis)** that you did not prostrate **when I commanded you** personally?"[7](#)

An example of the other use of that expression can be found here:

قال يا هارون ما منعك إذ رأيتهم ضلوا

He (Musa) said, "O Harun! **What prevented you** when you saw them going astray?"[8](#)

We know that the situation of Sa'd fell into the first category. There was an explicit order to do something. As such, from Mu'awiyah's question, we realize that he had ordered Sa'd to curse 'Ali. Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah agrees:

وأما حديث سعد لما أمره معاوية بالسب فأبى فقال ما منعك أن تسب علي بن أبي طالب فقال ثلاث قالهن رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم فلن أسبه لأن يكون لي واحدة منهن أحب إلي من حمر النعم الحديث فهذا حديث صحيح رواه مسلم في صحيحه

As for the *hadith* of Sa'd, **when Mu'awiyah commanded him to curse, and he refused, and he (Mu'awiyah) therefore said, "What prevented you from cursing 'Ali b. Abi Talib?"**, and he replied, "There are three things that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said. So, I will never curse him. If just one of them had been for me, it would have been dearer to me than a red camel", **this *hadith* is *sahih*. Muslim has narrated it.**[9](#)

In simpler words, Mu'awiyah ordered Sa'd to curse someone who was loved by the Messenger during his lifetime. So, one asks: did 'Ali forfeit this love after the Prophet's death, *before* Mu'awiyah's command to Sa'd? Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah even has some more news for us:

و معلوم أن الله قد جعل للصحابة مودة في قلب كل مسلم لا سيما الخلفاء رضي الله عنهم لا سيما أبو بكر و عمر  
فان عامة الصحابة و التابعين كانوا يودونهما و كانوا خير القرون و لم يكن كذلك علي فان كثيرا من الصحابة و  
التابعين كانوا يبغضونه و يسبونهم و يقاتلونه

What is known is that Allah has certainly put the love of the Sahabah in the hearts of every Muslim, especially love of the *khalifahs*, may Allah be pleased with them, especially love of Abu Bakr and 'Umar. This is because the generality of the Sahabah and Tabi'in loved them both, and **they (i.e. Sahabah and Tabi'in) were the best of generations. But, the matter was not the same for 'Ali, for A LOT of the Sahabah and Tabi'in used to hate, curse and fight him.**[10](#)

The question is: why? Had 'Ali had forfeited the love of Allah and His Messenger for him? Had he become worthy of hatred, curses and armed hostility? This is the big test for our Sunni brothers. If 'Ali had not forfeited the love of Allah and His Messenger for himself, then those Sahabah and Tabi'in who hated, cursed or fought him had forfeited their own, if any! Allah has said:

والله لا يحب الظالمين

And Allah does NOT love the unjust people.[11](#)

It all boils down to whether those Sahabah and Tabi'in treated 'Ali justly by hating, cursing and fighting him. If they had NOT done so, then they all forfeited Allah's prior love for them with those unjust actions. In line with our Shaykh's words, they also turned hypocrites:

فإن كل من أبغض من يعلم أن النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم يحبه ويواليه وأنه كان يحب النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم  
ويواليه كان بغضه شعبة من شعب النفاق

This is because *everyone* who hates *anyone* who is known to have been loved by the Prophet, peace be upon him, and who also loved the Prophet, peace be upon him, such hatred is a sign of hypocrisy.[12](#)

The Sunni dilemma explodes here. Their theology is based on a rigid theory that all the Sahabah earned Allah's love and *never* forfeited it. How do they treat the case of those of them who hated, cursed and fought 'Ali – like Mu'awiyah and Umm al-Muminin 'Aishah? Our Sunni brothers want to eat the cake, and still have it! To them, those Sahabah were not unjust people, and therefore never forfeited Allah's love for them. Does this mean that 'Ali truly deserved their hatred, curses and armed hostility? Sunni Islam says "no" again. 'Ali remained a loyal, beloved friend of Allah throughout his lifetime, and never deserved anyone's hatred, curse or hostility!

The matter takes a new dimension with this *hadith* of the Prophet, copied by 'Allamah al-Albani (d. 1420 H):

من أحب عليا فقد أحبني ومن أحبني فقد أحب الله عز وجل ومن أبغض عليا فقد أبغضني ومن أبغضني فقد أبغض الله عز وجل.

Whosoever loves 'Ali has loved me. And whosoever loves me has loved Allah the Almighty. **Moreover, whosoever hates 'Ali has hated me. And whosoever hates me has hated Allah the Almighty.** [13](#)

The 'Allamah comments:

رواه المخلص في " الفوائد المنتقاة " ( 10 / 5 / 1 ) بسند صحيح عن أم سلمة قالت: أشهد أنني سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يقول: فذكره.

Al-Mukhlis recorded it in *al-Fawaid al-Muntaqat* (10/5/1) **with a *sahih* chain** from Umm Salamah, she said: "I testify that I heard the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, saying:" and he (al-Mukhlis) mentioned it (i.e. the *hadith*). [14](#)

Imam al-Hakim (d. 403 H) also records:

أخبرني أحمد بن عثمان بن يحيى المقرئ ببغداد ثنا أبو بكر بن أبي العوام الرياحي ثنا أبو زيد سعيد بن أوس الأنصاري ثنا عوف بن أبي عثمان النهدي قال قال رجل لسلمان ما أشد حبك لعلي قال : سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يقول : من أحب عليا فقد أحبني ومن أبغض عليا فقد أبغضني

Ahmad b. 'Uthman b. Yahya al-Maqri – Abu Bakr b. Abi al-'Awwam al-Rayahi – Abu Zayd Sa'id b. Aws al-Ansari – 'Awf b. Abi 'Uthman al-Hindi:

A man said to Salman (al-Farisi), "What do you love 'Ali severely like that?" He replied, "I heard the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, saying: 'Whosoever loves 'Ali has loved me **and whosoever hates 'Ali has hated me.**'" [15](#)

Al-Hakim says:

هذا حديث صحيح على شرط الشيخين

This *hadith* is *sahih* upon the standard of the two Shaykhs. [16](#)

Al-Dhahabi (d. 748 H) concurs:

على شرط البخاري ومسلم

(*Sahih*) upon the standard of al-Bukhari and Muslim. [17](#)

The game changes here completely. Allah made the love of ‘Ali an umbilical part of His Own love. He equally made the hatred of ‘Ali like that. This grand merit was exclusive to ‘Ali alone among all the Sahabah. A few points can be gleaned from it:

1. Allah would *never* hate ‘Ali, because doing so would mean hating Himself and His Messenger.
3. Therefore, Allah – in His infinite wisdom, justice and mercy – would always protect ‘Ali from doing anything that could harm His love for him, just as He did with His Prophet.
5. There can be no excuse or justification *ever* for hating ‘Ali – not even ignorance or mistake – just as there can be none for hating Allah or His Messenger. The love of Allah, His Messenger and ‘Ali is one, and so is their hatred.
7. Whosoever hates ‘Ali – whether by the heart, or by words, or by deeds – is guilty of hating Allah and His Messenger. As such, all the Sahabah who hated, cursed or fought ‘Ali hated Allah and His Messenger – no matter what the Sunnis believe or say.

This is the point. The Sahabah, like the rest of the Ummah, earned, lost, re-gained, re-lost, etc Allah’s love as well, depending on their current actions. This was the case even during the Prophet’s lifetime. Imam Ahmad (d. 241 H) records about the case of Buraydah, a prominent Sahabi:

حدثنا عبد الله حدثني أبي ثنا يحيى بن سعيد ثنا عبد الجليل قال انتهيت إلى حلقة فيها أبو مجلز وابن بريدة فقال عبد الله بن بريدة حدثني أبي بريدة قال: أبغضت عليا بغضا لم يبغضه أحد قط .... وقال أتبغض عليا قال قلت نعم قال فلا تبغضه وان كنت تحبه فازدد له حبا .... فما كان من الناس أحد بعد قول رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم أحب إلى من علي

‘Abd Allah (b. Ahmad) – my father (Ahmad b. Hanbal) – Yahya b. Sa’id – ‘Abd al-Jalil – Abd Allah b. Buraydah – my father, Buraydah:

**I hated ‘Ali with a hatred that I never hated anyone else....** And he (the Prophet) said (to me), “Do you hate ‘Ali?” I said, “Yes”. He said, “Do not hate him, and if you love him, then increase your love for him”.... Therefore, **after the statement of the Messenger of Allah**, peace be upon him, **there was no person among all mankind who was more beloved to me than ‘Ali.** [18](#)

Shaykh al–Arnau<sup>ؒ</sup> says:

حديث صحيح وهذا إسناده حسن من أجل عبد الجليل

It is a *sahih hadith*, and this chain is *hasan* due to ‘Abd al–Jalil. [19](#)

Buraydah was an extreme hater of Allah and His Messenger. At that point, he certainly had lost Allah’s love for him. However, when the Prophet advised him, and he obeyed, he re–earned Allah’s love once more. During his anti–‘Ali days, whoever hated him was NOT a hypocrite. In fact, it could be praiseworthy to hate him then. Meanwhile, the moment he loved ‘Ali above everyone else except the Messenger of Allah, it became *haram* to hate him.

The bottomline is: the Sahabah – like everyone else – fluctuated between love and hatred of Allah and His Messenger, depending upon their current actions. So, it may be compulsory to love them at one point, and *haram* to do so at another. As such, love or hatred of any of them was not (and is not) a failproof measure to determine anyone’s hypocrisy.

The only exception among them was ‘Ali. He stayed *permanently* within Allah’s love, and was protected by Him from *ever* losing it, till his death. Therefore, hatred of him – like that of the Prophet – *always* produces the same result anytime anywhere. It was, and still is – after that of the Messenger – the best bet to unearth the hypocrites.

[1.](#) Abu al–‘Abbas Ahmad b. ‘Abd al–Halim b. Taymiyyah al–Harrani, Minhaj al–Sunnah al–Nabawiyah (Muasassat Qurtubah; 1st edition, 1406 H) [annotator: Dr. Muhammad Rashad Salim], vol. 4, pp. 298–299

[2.](#) Ibid, vol. 4, pp. 299–300

[3.](#) Qur’an 39:65

[4.](#) Qur’an 6:15

[5.](#) Abu al–Husayn Muslim b. al–Hajjaj al–Qushayri al–Naysaburi, Ṣahih Muslim (Beirut: Dar Ihya al–Turath al–‘Arabi) [annotator: Muhammad Fuad ‘Abd al–Baqi], vol. 4, p. 1870, # 2404 (32)

[6.](#) Qur’an 38:75

[7.](#) Qur’an 7:12

[8.](#) Qur’an 20:92

[9.](#) Abu al–‘Abbas Ahmad b. ‘Abd al–Halim b. Taymiyyah al–Harrani, Minhaj al–Sunnah al–Nabawiyah (Muasassat Qurtubah; 1st edition, 1406 H) [annotator: Dr. Muhammad Rashad Salim], vol. 5, p. 42

[10.](#) Ibid, vol. 7, pp. 137–138

[11.](#) Qur’an 3: 57

[12.](#) Abu al–‘Abbas Ahmad b. ‘Abd al–Halim b. Taymiyyah al–Harrani, Minhaj al–Sunnah al–Nabawiyah (Muasassat Qurtubah; 1st edition, 1406 H) [annotator: Dr. Muhammad Rashad Salim], vol. 4, p. 300

- [13.](#) Abu ‘Abd al-Rahman Muhammad Nasir al-Din b. al-Hajj Nuh b. Tajati b. ‘Adam al-Ashqudri al-Albani, *Silsilah al-Ahadith al-‘Ashihah wa Shayhun min Fiqihah wa Fawaidihah* (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Ma’arif li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi’; 1st edition, 1415 H), vol. 3, pp. 287–288, # 1299
- [14.](#) Ibid, vol. 3, p. 288, # 1299
- [15.](#) Abu ‘Abd Allah Muhammad b. ‘Abd Allah al-Hakim al-Naysaburi, *al-Mustadrak ‘ala al-‘Ashihayn* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1411 H) [annotator: Mustafa ‘Abd al-Qadir ‘Ata], vol. 3, p. 141, # 4648
- [16.](#) Ibid
- [17.](#) Ibid
- [18.](#) Abu ‘Abd Allah Ahmad b. Hanbal al-Shaybani, *Musnad* (Cairo: Muassasat Qurtubah) [annotator: Shu’ayb al-Arnaut], vol. 5, p. 350, # 23017
- [19.](#) Ibid

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