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33. Hadith Al-Ikhtiyar, 'Ali: The True Second Of Two

In the cave, the Messenger of Allah, *sallallahu 'alaihi wa alihi*, *repeatedly* assured Abu Bakr of Allah's Presence. But it did not work:

إذ يقول لصاحبه لا تحزن إن الله معنا

When he was saying to his companion: "Do not fear, surely Allah is with us."

Al-Hafiz Ibn Kathir (d. 774 H) comments about this verse:

عام الهجرة ، لما هم المشركون بقتله أو حبسه أو نفيه ، فخرج منهم هاربًا صحبة صديقه وصاحبه أبي بكر بن أبي قحافة ، فلجأ إلى غار ثور ثلاثة أيام ليرجع الطلّبُ الذين خرجوا في آثارهم ، ثم يسيرا نحو المدينة ، فجعل أبو بكر ، رضي الله عنه ، يجزع أن يَطلّع عليهم أحد ، فيخلص إلى الرسول ، عليه السلام منهم أذى ، فجعل النبي صلى الله "عليه وسلم يُسكّنه ويتُبّته ويقول : " يا أبا بكر ، ما ظنك باثنين الله ثالثهما

During the year of the *Hijrah*, the pagans tried to kill, imprison or expel him (i.e the Prophet). So, he escaped with his friend and companion, Abu Bakr b. Abi Quhafah, to the *Thawr* Cave. They remained in there for three days. So the scouts who were sent in their pursuit returned, and they proceeded to Madinah. (While in the cave), Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, was afraid that they might be discovered by someone, that some harm might come to the Messenger, peace be upon him, from them.

Therefore, the Prophet, peace be upon him, kept reassuring him and strengthening his resolve, saying, "O Abu Bakr! What do you think of two, the *third* of whom is Allah?"1

Apparently, one word was *not* enough for Abu Bakr. When the Prophet mentioned the presence of Allah the first time, he obviously noticed that his companion was not convinced. So, he kept repeating it, telling him not to fear. The Sunni argument is that Abu Bakr only had great, uncontrollable fears for the life and

safety of the Messenger of Allah. Well, there is nothing in the verse or hadith remotely suggesting that.

By contrast, the words of the Prophet, "Allah is with *us*", suggest that Abu Bakr's fears were about both of them together in the cave. Otherwise, he would have said, "Allah is with *me*", placing the emphasis upon himself. Abu Bakr's fears about the Prophet could also have actually been self–serving! Their fates were interconnected in that dire situation. If the Messenger fell into any danger, Abu Bakr was sure to have a good taste of it too. So, he wanted the Prophet safe, so that he too could be safe.

What support our contention – that Abu Bakr did not really care about the Prophet's life – are his latter actions on the battlefields. For instance, he abandoned the Messenger of Allah to the mercy of the pagans on different days of battle, and fled away, again and again, with his life from *jihad*. Imam Muslim (d. 261 H) records:

Muhammad b. Abi Bakr al-Muqaddami, Hamid b. 'Umar al-Bakrawi and Muhammad b. 'Abd al-A'la – al-Mu'tamar (and he is Ibn Sulayman) – father – Abu 'Uthman:

"None remained with the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, on some of the days in which the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, was fighting apart from Talhah and Sa'd. They both (i.e. Talhah and Sa'd) narrated that to me."2

On several expeditions of the Prophet, Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman fled and escaped from battle! They ran way, and did not look back, knowing fully well that their actions could get the Prophet killed, injured or imprisoned.

In any case, what matters to our discussion in this chapter is that Abu Bakr *doubted* the assurances of the Messenger of Allah while they both were in danger, in the cave. He was unconvinced by them. Therefore, when Allah sent down His *sakinah*, He excluded him. The same thing happened with 'Umar later on the Day of al-Hudaybiyyah. Imam Ibn Hibban (d. 354 H) records his own words concerning what he did on that day:

So, 'Umar b. al-Khassab, may Allah be pleased with him, said (about the Day of al-Hudaybiyyah): "By Allah! I never doubted since I accepted Islam EXCEPT on that day. So, I went to the Prophet, peace be upon him, and said, 'Are you not truly the Messenger of Allah?"3

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

صحيح

Sahih4

Moreover, Shaykh al-Arnau® agrees:

حديث صحيح

It is a sahih hadith5

He doubted the *nubuwwah* of Muhammad on that day! This removed him from the ranks of believers. So, when Allah sent down His *sakinah*, He excluded 'Umar, and whoever was like him:

So, Allah sent down His sakinah upon His Messenger and upon the believers.6

And:

He knew what was in their hearts. Therefore, He sent down sakinah upon them.7

At this point, it is apposite to quote this verse:

The believers are only those who have believed in Allah and His Messenger, **and do not doubt afterwards**, and they do *jihad* with their wealth *and with their lives*, for the Cause of Allah. They are the truthful ones.8

Did Abu Bakr and 'Umar ever doubt Allah or His Messenger after they had accepted Islam? Did Abu Bakr and 'Umar ever shield their lives from *jihad* by running away? Were they true believers then? Can people like them really be the best ones in this Ummah after our Prophet? What about those of the Sahabah, like Imam 'Ali, 'alaihi al-salam, and perhaps others, who never doubted after their acceptance of Islam, and who never fled the battlefield? How could they have been inferior?

How can a doubter be superior to a firm, unshakable believer? How can someone who escapes with his life from *jihad* be better than someone who completely sold his life to Allah? How can someone who abandoned the Messenger of Allah in fatal danger and ran to save his own life be more valuable than another who placed his life in the midst of pagan swords so that the Prophet could live?

Most importantly, the Messenger also specifically named the second best of the entirety of this Ummah – during his lifetime – after himself. It is in *Hadith al–Ikhtiyar*, recorded by Imam al–Tabarani (d. 360 H):

حدثنا محمد بن جابات الجند نيسابوري و الحسن بن علي المعمري قالا: ثنا عبد الرزاق عن معمر عن ابن أبي نجيح عن مجاهد عن ابن عباس قال لما زوج النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم فاطمة عليا قالت فاطمة : يا رسول الله زوجتني من رجل فقير ليس له شيء فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم : أما ترضين يا يا فاطمة أن الله عز و جل اختار من أهل الأرض رجلين أحدهما أبوك والآخر زوجك

Muhammad b. Jabat al-Jund Naysaburi AND al-Hasan b. 'Ali al-Ma'mari – 'Abd al-Razzaq – Ma'mar – Ibn Abi Najih – Mujahid – Ibn 'Abbas:

When the Prophet, peace be upon him, married Fasimah to 'Ali, Fasimah said, "O Messenger of Allah! You are marrying me to a poor man who has nothing." So, the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said, "Are you not pleased, O Fasimah, that **Allah the Almighty the Most Glorious chose, from the people of the earth, two men**: one of them is your father and the other is your husband?"9

Concerning the First Narrator B, 'Allamah al-Albani states:

Al-Hasan b. 'Ali al-Ma'mari ... He is saduq (very truthful), a hafiz (hadith scientist). 10

Al-Hafiz (d. 852 H) says something similar:

Al-Hasan b. 'Ali b. Shabib al-Ma'mari: **the** *hafiz* (*hadith* **scientist**), **very knowledgeable** and widely travelled (in search of knowledge). 11

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

.المعمرى :الامام، الحافظ، المجود، البارع، محدث العراق، أبو على، الحسن بن على بن شبيب البغدادي المعمري

Al-Ma'mari: **the Imam, the** *hafiz* (*hadith* **scientist**), the generous, the pious, **the** *hadith* **master of** '**Iraq**, Abu 'Ali al-Hasan b. 'Ali b. Shabib al-Baghdadi al-Ma'mari. 12

Imam al-Hakim (d. 403 H) has equally documented his chain in his *Mustadrak*:

Abu Sa'id Ahmad b. Ya'qub al-Thaqafi – **al-Hasan b.** '**Ali al-Ma'mari** – Abu Mus'ab al-Zuhri – Hisham b. 'Ammar al-Sulami....13

Al-Hakim says about the chain:

This hadith has a sahih chain. 14

And al-Dhahabi corroborates him:

صحيح

Sahih 15

This proves that al-Ma'mari was thiqah (trustworthy).

Al-Hafiz also states about the second narrator:

'Abd al-Razzaq b. Hammam b. Nafi' al-Humayri, their freed slave, Abu Bakr al-San'ani: *Thiqah* (trustworthy), *hafiz* (a *hadith* scientist). 16

He further says about the third narrator:

Ma'mar b. Rashid al-Azdi, their freed slave, Abu 'Urwah al-Basri, he lived in Yemen: *Thiqah* (trustworthy), *thabt* (accurate), *fadhil* (meritorious). 17

The fourth narrator is like him, as confirmed by Imam al-Dhahabi:

'Abd Allah b. Abi Najih al-Makki: the scholar of *tafsir*. He learnt from Mujahid and 'Ana **and was one of** the *thiqah* (trustworthy) Imams. 18

Al-Hafiz adds:

'Abd Allah b. Abi Najih Yasar al-Makki, Abu Yasar al-Thaqafi, their freed slave: *Thiqah* (trustworthy), accused of believing in fatalism, and *maybe* he practised *tadlis*. 19

There is a *probability* that he practised *tadlis*. It is not definite. In any case, his *'an-'an* reports from Mujahid are accepted as *sahih*. For instance, Imam Muslim records this chain in his *Sahih*:

Hasan b. 'Ali al-Halwani - Zayd b. al-Habab - Ibrahim b. Nafi' - '**Abd Allah b**. **Abi Najih** - **Mujahid** - 'Aishah, may Allah be pleased with her.20

Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal (d. 241 H) also records:

'Abd Allah (b. Ahmad) – my father (Ahmad b. Hanbal) – '**Abd al-Razzaq** – **Ma'mar** – **Ibn Abi Najih** – **Mujahid** – 'Abd al-Rahman b. Abi Layli – Ka'b b. 'Ujrah.21

And Shavkh al-Arnanu® comments:

Its chain is sahih upon the standard of the two Shaykhs.22

Imam al-Hakim is not left out:

أخبرني عبد الرحمن بن الحسن القاضي بهمدان ثنا إبراهيم بن الحسين ثنا آدم بن أبي إياس ثنا ورقاء عن ابن أبي نجيح عن مجاهد عن ابن عباس رضى الله عنهما

'Abd al-Rahman b. al-Hasan al-Qadi – Ibrahim b. al-Husayn – Adam b. Abi Iyas – Waraqa – **Ibn Abi Najih** – **Mujahid** – Ibn 'Abbas, may Allah be pleased with them both.23

Al-Hakim states:

This hadith is sahih upon the standard of the two Shaykhs.24

Imam al-Dhahabi concurs:

(Sahih) upon the standard of al-Bukhari and Muslim.25

Imam al-Tirmidhi (d. 279 H) has documented a similar chain:

Ibn Abi 'Umar – Sufyan – **Ibn Abi Najih** – **Mujahid** – Abi Ma'mar – Ibn Mas'ud26

Al-Tirmidhi says:

This hadith is hasan sahih.27

'Allamah al-Albani agrees too:

صحيح

Sahih28

Imam Abu Ya'la (d. 307 H) records as well:

حدثنا زهير أخبرنا يزيد بن هارون أخبرنا محمد بن إسحاق عن عبد الله بن أبي نجيح عن مجاهد عن ابن عباس

Zuhayr - Yazid b. Harun - Muhammad b. Ishaq - 'Abd Allah b. Abi Najih - Mujahid - Ibn 'Abbas.29

Shaykh Dr. Asad comments:

إسناده صحيح

Its chain is sahih30

And finally, Imam Ibn Khuzaymah (d. 311 H) has documented this chain in his Sahih too:

Al-Fadhl b. Ya'qub al-Hirzi - 'Abd al-A'la - Muhammad - '**Abd Allah b. Abi Najih** - **Mujahid** - **Ibn** '**Abbas**.31

Shaykh Dr. al-A'zami states:

إسناده صحيح

Its chain is sahih.32

At this point, it is needless to prove that Mujahid, the last narrator of *Hadith al-Ikhtiyar* – was also *thiqah* (trustworthy). However, we shall still do so, in case there is someone who prefers that. Al-Hafiz says about him:

Mujahid b. Jabr, Abu al-Hajjaj al-Makhzumi, their freed slave, al-Makki: *Thiqah* (trustworthy), an Imam in *tafsir* and in (religious) knowledge. 33

With this, it becomes absolutely proven that *Hadith al-Ikhtiyar* is *sahih*. All its narrators are *thiqah* (trustworthy), and there is no disconnection whatsoever in the chain. The *hadith* establishes that Allah chose only Muhammad and 'Ali – in a special selection – out of all the people of the earth. It is clear from the text that Allah had not chosen anyone else among them before He chose the two. As such, whatever other selections were made by Him, apparently, came *after* this first, unique selection.

The Qur'an makes it absolutely clear that creation and choosing are *exclusive* divine functions:

And your Lord creates whatever He wills, and He chooses. They have no right to choose.34

Among those He chose was His Messenger, Musa:

And I have chosen you. So listen to that which is inspired to you.35

He equally chose the Israelites:

And We had knowingly chosen them above the worlds.36

The chosen ones, of course, are also the best:

And with Us, they are verily from the chosen ones, the best.37

So, when Allah chose His Messenger and Amir al–Muminin out of all the people of the earth, He was basically declaring them both as the best of all. Since Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthman were alive at that time, it is obvious that both Muhammad and 'Ali were better than them, by Allah's Own Decree. These facts are *very* uncomfortable to mainstream Sunni teachings, and pose an existential threat to Sunni Islam as a whole.

If the *khilafah* of Abu Bakr collapses, nothing else can survive from the Sunni *madhhab*. This is why Sunnis generally feel very uneasy about *Hadith al–Ikhtiyar*. Perhaps, it is also why 'Allamah al–Albani grades the authentic *hadith* in this manner:

Mawdu' (fabricated) 38

Fabricated?! By who? By the thigah (trustworthy) narrators?! Then, our 'Allamah states:

It is narrated by Abu Hurayrah, 'Abd Allah b. 'Abbas, Abu Ayub al-Ansari, 'Ali al-Hilali and Ma'qil b. Yasar.39

Five Sahabah! That is enough to make it *mutawatir* by the standards of some Sunni *muhadithun*! What exactly is the problem with our dear 'Allamah al–Albani? The worst part of it all is that the 'Allamah – whether deliberately or by mistake – omits the *sanad* of al–Ma'mari above in his extensive discussion against the authenticity of the *hadith*!

This, of course, makes it possible for him to reject it! However, if he had included that *sahih* chain in his analysis, the story would have been far different. It is unclear how the 'Allamah misses that *sanad* of al-Ma'mari, despite that he has quoted other chains of the same *hadith* from the same *Mu'jam al-Kabir* of al-Tabarani! In any case, 'Allamah al-Albani's verdict upon the *hadith* is based upon incomplete research. As such, it is void.

Sadly, our 'Allamah takes things even more disturbing levels – to an all–time low – with this comment of his over a chain that has some common names with that of al–Ma'mari:

Even if it is established from him (i.e. 'Abd al-Razzaq), there is still another defect in it which discredits its authenticity. It is the *possibility* that this *hadith* too is one of those things which the nephew of Ma'mar inserted into the books of Ma'mar, for he (that nephew) was a Rafidhi.40

Possibility?! Mere conjecture? So, there is no concrete evidence? But even then, no such possibility *ever* exists, to begin with! We will simply round off this chapter with this angry reply of the Sunni *hadith* master, 'Allamah al-Maghribi:

I say: This is complete nonsense! The reason for this is: **That nephew of Ma'mar was only an imaginary figure**. **He never existed!** Ma'mar was not known to have any brother. How could a son exist without a father, apart from 'Isa, peace be upon him?41

- 1. Abu al-Fida Isma'il b. 'Umar b. Kathir al-Qurshi al-Dimashqi, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim (Dar al-Taybah li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi'; 2nd edition, 1420 H) [annotator: Sami b. Muhammad Salamah], vol. 4, p. 155
- 2. Abu al-Husayn Muslim b. al-Hajjaj al-Qushayri al-Naysaburi, 🗈 ahih Muslim (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi) [annotator: Muhammad Fuad 'Abd al-Baqi], vol. 4, p. 1879, # 2414 (47)
- 3. Abu Hatim Muhammad b. Hibban b. Ahmad b. Hibban b. Mu'adh b. Ma'bad al-Tamimi al-Darimi al-Busti, ⓐahih Ibn Hibban bi Tartib Ibn Balban (Beirut: Muasassat al-Risalah; 2nd edition, 1414 H) [annotators: Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani and Shu'ayb al-Arnaut], vol. 11, p. 216, # 4872
- 4. Ibid
- 5. Ibid
- 6. Qur'an 48:26
- 7. Qur'an 48:18
- 8. Qur'an 49:15
- 9. Abu al-Qasim Sulayman b. Ahmad b. Ayub al-sabarani, Mu'jam al-Kabir (Mosul: Maktabah al-'Ulum wa al-Hukm; 2nd edition, 1404 H) [annotator: Hamadi b. 'Abd al-Majid al-Salafi], vol. 11, p. 93, # 11153
- 10. Abu 'Abd al-Rahman Muhammad Nasir al-Din b. al-Hajj Nuh b. Tajati b. 🗈 dam al-Ashqudri al-Albani, Silsilah al-Ahadith al-🗈 ahihah wa Shayhun min Fiqhihah wa Fawaidihah (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Ma'arif li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi'; 1st edition, 1415 H), vol. 6, pp. 59-60, # 2520
- 11. Shihab al-Din Abu al-Fadhl Ahmad b. 'Ali b. Hajar al-'Asqalani, Lisan al-Mizan (Beirut: Manshurat Muasassat al-A'lami li al-Matbu'at; 2nd edition, 1390 H), vol. 2, p. 221, # 975
- 12. Shams al-Din Muhammad b. Ahmad b. 'Uthman al-Dhahabi, Siyar A'lam al-Nubala (Beirut: Muasassat al-Risalah;9th edition, 1413 H) [annotators of the thirteenth volume: Shu'ayb al-Arnaut and 'Ali Abu Zayd], vol. 13, pp. 510-511, # 254
- 13. Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah al-Hakim al-Naysaburi, al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Tahihayn (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1411 H) [annotator: Mustafa 'Abd al-Qadir 'Ata], vol. 2, p. 279, # 3005
- **14.** Ibid
- 15. Ibid
- 16. Ahmad b. 'Ali b. Hajar al-'Asqalani, Taqrib al-Tahdhib (Beirut: Dar al-Maktabah al-'Ilmiyyah; 2nd edition, 1415 H) [annotator: Mustafa 'Abd al-Qadir 'Ata], vol. 1, p. 599, # 4078
- 17. Ibid, vol. 2, p. 202, # 6833
- 18. Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad b. Ahmad b. 'Uthman al-Dhahabi, Mizan al-I'tidal fi Naqd al-Rijal (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah; 1st edition, 1382 H) [annotator: 'Ali Muhammad al-Bajawi], vol. 2, p. 515, # 4651
- 19. Ahmad b. 'Ali b. Hajar al-'Asqalani, Taqrib al-Tahdhib (Beirut: Dar al-Maktabah al-'Ilmiyyah; 2nd edition, 1415 H) [annotator: Mustafa 'Abd al-Qadir 'Ata], vol. 1, p. 541, # 3673
- 20. Abu al-Husayn Muslim b. al-Hajjaj al-Qushayri al-Naysaburi, ⊡ahih Muslim (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi) [annotator: Muhammad Fuad 'Abd al-Baqi], vol. 2, p. 870, # 1211 (133)
- 21. Abu 'Abd Allah Ahmad b. Hanbal al-Shaybani, Musnad (Cairo: Muasassat Qurtubah) [annotator: Shu'ayb al-Arnaut], vol. 4, p. 242, # 18138
- 22. Ibid
- 23. Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah al-Hakim al-Naysaburi, al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Bahihayn (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1411 H) [annotator: Mustafa 'Abd al-Qadir 'Ata], vol. 2, p. 527, # 3802
- 24. Ibid
- 25. Ibid
- 26. Abu 'sa Muhammad b. 'sa 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. 303, # 3138
- **27**. Ibid
- 28. Ibid
- 29. Abu Ya'la Ahmad b. 'Ali b. Muthanna al-Mawsili al-Tamimi, Musnad (Damascus: Dar al-Mamun li al-Turath; 1st edition, 1404 H) [annotator: Dr. Husayn Salim Asad], vol. 5, p. 106, # 2718
- **30.** Ibid

- 31. Abu Bakr Muhammad b. Ishaq b. Khuzaymah al-Salami al-Naysaburi, 🗈 ahih (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami; 1390 H) [annotators: Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani and Dr. Muhammad Mustafa al-A'zami], vol. 4, p. 286, # 2897
- **32.** Ibic
- 33. Ahmad b. 'Ali b. Hajar al-'Asqalani, Taqrib al-Tahdhib (Beirut: Dar al-Maktabah al-'Ilmiyyah; 2nd edition, 1415 H) [annotator: Mustafa 'Abd al-Qadir 'Ata], vol. 2, p. 159, # 6501
- 34. Qur'an 28:68
- 35. Qur'an 20:13
- 36. Qur'an 44:32
- 37. Qur'an 38:47
- 38. Muhammad Nasir al-Din b. al-Hajj Nuh al-Albani, Silsilah al-Ahadith al-sa'ifah wa al-Mawdhu'ah wa Atharihah al-Sayyiah fi al-Ummah (Riyadh: Dar al-Ma'arif; 1st edition, 1412 H), vol. 10, p. 530, # 4898
- **39.** Ibid
- 40. Ibid, vol. 10, p. 533, # 4898
- 41. Abu al-Fadhl 'Abd Allah b. al-⊡iddiq al-Maghribi, al-Qawl al-Muqni' fi Radd 'ala al-Albani al-Mubtadi', p. 8

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