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16) Hadith Al-Siyadah, Examining The Background Arguments

Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 H) states:

> ففي هذا الخبر إخبار عمر بين المهاجرين والأنصار أن أبا بكر سيد المسلمين وخيرهم وأحبهم إلى رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم ذلك علة مبايعته فقال بل نبايعك أنت فأنت سيدنا وخيرنا وأحبنا إلى رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم ليبين بذلك أن المأمور به تولية الأفضل وأنت أفضلنا فنبايعك

In this report is the declaration of 'Umar among the Muhajirun and the Ansar that **Abu Bakr was the *sayyid* of the Muslims** and the best of them, and the most beloved of them to the Messenger of Allah. This is the reason for following him. **So, he ('Umar) said, "Rather, we will follow you because you are our *sayyid***, and the best of us, and the most beloved of us to the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him". 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.[1]

'Umar apparently referred to Abu Bakr as "our *sayyid*"[2]. Our Shaykh interprets that "our" as referring to all Muslims of that time, who were only the Sahabah. In other words, 'Umar was speaking on behalf of his colleagues as a whole. Therefore, on the basis of 'Umar's testimony, Abu Bakr was the *sayyid* of the Sahabah. So, what does this mean?

First and foremost, it is important to note that the word *sayyid* has different meanings and can be used in various contexts. Dr. Baalbaki, a contemporary lexicographer, defines *sayyid* in this manner:

master, lord, chief, head, leader; Mr.; gentleman; a descendant of Prophet Mohammad; sovereign; independent.[3]

As such, in a cultural context, the word *sayyid* means "descendant of the Prophet". In a political context, it refers to the ruler. In a tribal context, the title belongs to their chief. In the family setting, the husband –

being its head – is the *sayyid*. The examples go on and on. What matters to our research, however, is solely the *spiritual* context. Therefore, all references to "sayyid" or "siyadah" henceforth in this and other chapters on *Hadith al-Siyadah* relate to spirituality only. Abu Bakr was not the political leader of Muslims, nor was he their tribal or other chief, when 'Umar addressed him as "our *sayyid*". This reveals that he too was referring to Abu Bakr's alleged spiritual *siyadah* over the *Ummah*.

In order to determine what the term *sayyid* indicates in the spiritual context, we must examine the following *hadith*, documented by Imam Muslim (d. 261 H):

> حدثني الحكم بن موسى أبو صالح حدثنا هقل (يعني ابن زياد) عن الأوزاعي حدثني أبو عمار حدثني عبدالله بن فروخ حدثني أبو هريرة قال قال رسول الله أنا سيد ولد آدم يوم القيامة

Al-Hakam b. Musa Abu Salih – Hiql b. Ziyad – al-Awza'i – Abu 'Ammar – 'Abd Allah b. Farukh – Abu Hurayrah:

The Messenger of Allah said: "I am the *sayyid* of the descendants of Adam on the Day of Resurrection."[4]

Imam Ahmad (d. 241 H) also records:

> حدثنا عبد الله حدثني أبي ثنا يحيى بن سعيد قال ثنا أبو حيان قال ثنا أبو زرعة بن عمرو بن جرير عن أبي هريرة قال ... رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم ... أنا سيد الناس يوم القيامة

'Abd Allah (b. Ahmad) – my father (Ahmad b. Hanbal) – Yahya b. Sa'id – Abu Hayyan – Abu Zur'ah b. 'Amr b. Jarir – Abu Hurayrah:

... The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said: "... I am the *sayyid* of mankind on the Day of Resurrection."[5]

Shaykh al-Arnaut comments:

> إسناده صحيح على شرط الشيخين

Its chain is *sahih* upon the standard of the two Shaykhs.[6]

Obviously, the *siyadah* of the Prophet, *sallallahu 'alaihi wa alihi*, in these *hadiths* falls within the spiritual context, especially since they are connected with the Hereafter. This is how the scholars of the Ahl al-Sunnah understand the reports too. Imam al-Nawawi (d. 676 H), for instance, states:

تفضيل نبينا صلى الله عليه وسلم على جميع الخلائق

قوله صلى الله عليه وسلم أنا سيد ولد آدم يوم القيامة ... وهذا الحديث دليل لتفضيله صلى الله عليه وسلم على الخلق كلهم لأن مذهب أهل السنة أن الآدميين أفضل من الملائكة وهو صلى الله عليه وسلم أفضل الآدميين وغيرهم وأما الحديث الآخر لا تفضلوا بين الأنبياء فجوابه من خمسة أوجه الأول: أنه صلى الله عليه وسلم قاله قبل أن يعلم أنه سيد ولد آدم فلما علم أخبر به

Superiority of our Prophet, peace be upon him, over the entire creation

His statement, peace be upon him, "I am the *sayyid* of the descendants of Adam on the Day of Resurrection".... **This *hadith* is proof of his superiority, peace be upon him, over all the creation**. This is because the doctrine of the Ahl al-Sunnah is that human beings are superior to angels, and he, peace be upon him, is the most superior of the human beings and others. As for the other *hadith* "do not give superiorty to any among the prophets", the answer is from five aspects. The first is: he, peace be upon him, said it before he knew that he was the *sayyid* of the descendants of Adam. When he knew, he informed of it.[7]

Imam al-Mubarakfuri (d. 1282 H) has a similar view:

قوله أنا سيد ولد آدم يوم القيامة ولا فخر أي ولا أقوله تفاخرا بل اعتداد بفضله

His statement, "I am the *sayyid* of the descendants of Adam on the Day of Resurrection, and I am not boastful", meaning: I am not saying it for pride. **Rather, it was in consideration of his superiority**.[8]

Therefore, in the spiritual context, *siyadah* means superiority in the Sight of Allah. Whoever is the *sayyid* of the Muslims is their best. Moreover, anyone who is a *sayyid* in the Hereafter is equally a *sayyid* in this world in the same capacity.

Our brothers from the Ahl al-Sunnah often quote a relevant Sunni-only report to prove the superiority of both Abu Bakr and 'Umar over the *Ummah*. 'Allamah al-Albani (d. 1420 H) states:

قال عبد الله بن أحمد في " زوائد المسند " (1 / 80) : حدثني وهب بن بقية الواسطي حدثنا عمر (في الأصل: عمرو) بن يونس اليمامي عن عبد الله بن عمر اليمامي عن الحسن بن زيد بن حسن حدثني أبي عن أبيه عن علي رضي الله عنه قال: " كنت عند النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم، فأقبل أبو بكر وعمر رضي الله عنهما، فقال: " يا علي هذان سيدا كهول أهل الجنة وشبابها بعد النبيين والمرسلين ".

'Abd Allah b. Ahmad said in *Zawaid al-Musnad* (1/80):

Wahb b. Baqiyyah al-Wasiti – ‘Umar (in the original: ‘Amr) b. Yunus al-Yamami – ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Umar al-Yamami – al-Hasan b. Zayd b. Hasan – my father – his father ‘Ali, may Allah be pleased with him:

I was with the Prophet, peace be upon him, when Abu Bakr and ‘Umar, may Allah be pleased with them both, approached. So, he said, “O ‘Ali! **These two are the two *sayyids* of THE ELDERLY ONES of the people of Paradise (*Ahl al-Jannah*) and of its youth**, after the prophets and messengers.”[9]

Our ‘Allamah comments:

قلت: وهذا سند حسن

I say: This chain is *hasan*.[10]

The problem of the above *hadith* is primarily in its *matn* (content). It disturbingly assumes that there will be elderly people in Paradise, alongside its youth! This embarrassing mistake raises several red flags concerning its true origin. The correct opinion of the Messenger of Allah, which is universally confirmed, is that there will be only youth in *Jannah*. Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal records, for instance:

حدثنا عبد الله حدثني أبي ثنا سليمان بن داود ثنا عمران عن قتادة عن شهر بن حوشب عن عبد الرحمن بن غنم عن معاذ بن جبل انه سأل النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم أو سمع النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم يقول يدخل أهل الجنة الجنة جردا مردا مكحلين بنى ثلاثين أو ثلاث وثلاثين

‘Abd Allah (b. Ahmad) – my father (Ahmad b. Hanbal) Sulayman b. Dawud – ‘Imran – Qatadah – Shahr b. Hawshab – ‘Abd al-Rahman b. Ghanam – Mu’adh b. Jabal:

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, “The people of Paradise will enter Paradise hairless, beardless with their eyes anointed with kohl, **aged thirty or thirty-three years**.”[11]

Shaykh al-Arnaut declares:

حسن لغيره

Hasan li ghayrihi[12]

In his *Sahih al-Jami’ al-Saghir*, the ‘Allamah copies a similar *hadith*:

يدخل أهل الجنة الجنة جردا مردا كأنهم مكحلون أبناء ثلاث وثلاثين

The people of Paradise will enter Paradise hairless, beardless, with their eyes anointed with kohl, **aged**

thirty-three years.[13]

And the ‘Allamah says:

> صحيح

Sahih[14]

Imam al-Tirmidhi (d. 279 H) also documents a *shahid*:

> حدثنا محمد بن بشار و أبو هشام الرفاعي قالا حدثنا معاذ بن هشام عن أبيه عن عامر الأحول عن شهر بن حوشب عن أبي هريرة قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم أهل الجنة جرد مرد كحل لا يفنى شبابهم ولا تبلى ثيابهم

Muhammad b. Bashar and Abu Hisham al-Rufa’i – Mu’adh b. Hisham – his father – ‘Amir al-Ahwal – Shahr b. Hawshab – Abu Hurayrah:

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said, “The people of Paradise will be hairless and beardless, with their eyes anointed with kohl. **Their YOUTH will never end**, and their clothes will never become worn.”[15]

Al-Tirmidhi says:

> هذا حديث حسن غريب

This *hadith* is *hasan gharib*.[16]

‘Allamah al-Albani supports him:

> حسن

Hasan[17]

Since there will be no elderly folks in Paradise, how then will Abu Bakr and ‘Umar be their *sayyids* in there? Al-Mubarakfuri – apparently troubled by these facts – attempts to explain away the fatal problem:

> لم يكن في الجنة كهل ... وقيل سيدا من مات كهلا من المسلمين فدخل الجنة لأنه ليس فيها كهل

There will be NO elderly person in Paradise ... And it is said they (i.e. Abu Bakr and ‘Umar) both will

be *sayyids* of **those who died as elderly people** among the Muslims and thereby entered Paradise, because there will be no elderly person in it.[18]

So, “elderly ones of the people of Paradise” only refers to those who died elderly in this world and were later admitted to *Jannah* in the Hereafter. Their official title, according to the Ahl al-Sunnah, is “elderly ones of the people of Paradise”. What about those who died young in this world and then made it to Paradise? In line with the Sunni logic, they are “the youth of the people of Paradise”. Things however get out of hand when questions are asked about the fortunate people of *Jannah* who died as infants, babies or children in this world? The *hadith* mentions only two categories for the people of Paradise:

> " يا علي هذان سيدا كهول أهل الجنة وشبابها بعد النبيين والمرسلين ".

“O ‘Ali! These two are the two *sayyids* of the elderly ones of the people of Paradise (*Ahl al-Jannah*) and of its youth, after the prophets and messengers.”

The youth, of course, are people above the ages of adolecence. It would be ridiculous to put babies of two months or foetuses, for instance, in the category of youth! So, there are only two possibilities here:

1. People who died in pregnancy, infancy or childhood will all automatically go to Hellfire. No category is listed for them, thereby suggesting that they have no place in Paradise. Otherwise, the *hadith* should have mentioned “the, foetuses, infants and children of the people of Paradise” as well.

2. People who died in infancy or childhood will all be superior to Abu Bakr and ‘Umar, in Paradise! After all, the duo are described as being *sayyids* of only the elderly as well as the youth of the people of Paradise. The infants and children are conspicuously excluded.

Apparently, neither of the above is acceptable to our brothers from the Ahl al-Sunnah. As such, the absurdity of al-Mubarakfuri’s linguistic gymnastics, even by Sunni standards, is unmistakable. Clearly, the Sunni *hadith* is not about the age of death here in the world *at all*. It rather informs the Ahl al-Sunnah that the people of Paradise will be in two categories only: the elderly as well as the youth. Of course, such a scandalous error could never have emerged from the noble Messenger of Allah.

Things get even a lot messier when one considers the case of Bilal b. Rabah, the well-known *muezzin* of the Prophet. Imam Ibn Sa’d (d. 230 H) records about him:

> قال أخبرنا محمد بن عمر قال أخبرنا موسى بن محمد بن إبراهيم بن الحارث التيمي عن أبيه قال توفي بلال بدمشق سنة عشرين ودفن عند الباب الصغير في مقبرة دمشق وهو بن بضع وستين سنة قال أخبرنا محمد بن عمر سمعت شعيب بن طلحة من ولد أبي بكر الصديق يقول كان بلال ترب أبي بكر قال محمد بن عمر فإن كان هذا هكذا وقد توفي أبو بكر سنة ثلاث عشرة وهو بن ثلاث وستين سنة فبين هذا وبين ما روي لنا في بلال سبع سنين وشعيب بن طلحة أعلم بميلاد بلال حين يقول هو ترب أبي بكر فالله أعلم

Muhammad b. ‘Umar – Musa b. Muhammad b. Ibrahim b. al-Harith al-Tamimi – his father: “Bilal died in Damascus in the year 20 AH, and was buried at the *al-Bab al-Saghir* in the cemetery of Damascus, **and he was more than sixty years old**.”

Muhammad b. ‘Umar – Shu’ayb b. Talhah, from the descendants of Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, used to say: “**Bilal was an age mate of Abu Bakr**.” Muhammad b. ‘Umar said, “If this was the case, and Abu Bakr had died in 13 AH at the age of sixty three, then the difference between this and what is narrated to us concerning Bilal (i.e. his date of death) is seven years. Shu’ayb b. Talhah was the most knowledgeable of the date of birth of Bilal when he used to say that he (Bilal) was an age mate of Abu Bakr. And Allah knows best.”[19]

He was over 60 years old when he passed away. That puts him far into the elderly category. Yet, he was the *sayyid* of ‘Umar in the same way that Abu Bakr was, as the son of al-Khattab himself testified! Imam al-Hakim (d. 403 H) records:

> حدثنا أبو عبد الله الصفار أحمد بن عبد الله ثنا أحمد بن مهران الأصبهاني ثنا خالد بن مخلد وحدثنا أبو العباس محمد بن يعقوب ثنا بحر بن نصر ثنا عبد الله بن وهب قالا : ثنا عبد العزيز بن أبي سلمة الماجشون عن محمد بن المنكدر عن جابر قال قال عمر : رضي الله عنه أبو بكر سيدنا وأعتق سيدنا يعني بلالا

Abu ‘Abd Allah al-Saffar Ahmad b. ‘Abd Allah – Ahmad b. Mahran al-Isbahani – Khalid b. Mukhlid AND Abu al-‘Abbas Muhammad b. Ya’qub – Bahr b. Nasr – ‘Abd Allah b. Wahb – ‘Abd al-‘Aziz b. Abi Salamah al-Majishun – Muhammad b. al-Munkadar – Jabir:

‘Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, said, “Abu Bakr is our *sayyid*, **and he emancipated OUR *SAYYID*, THAT IS BILAL**.”[20]

Al-Hakim comments:

> صحيح ولم يخرجاه

It is *sahih*, and they both (i.e. al-Bukhari and Muslim) have not recorded it.[21]

Imam al-Dhahabi (d. 748 H) also states:

> صحيح

Sahih[22]

Contrary to the mistake of al-Hakim, Imam al-Bukhari (d. 256 H) has actually recorded it:

حدثنا أبو نعيم حدثنا عبد العزيز بن أبي سلمة عن محمد بن المنكدر أخبرنا جابر بن عبد الله رضي الله عنهما قال : كان عمر يقول أبو بكر سيدنا وأعتق سيدنا . يعني بلالا

Abu Na'im – 'Abd al-'Aziz b. Abi Salamah – Muhammad b. al-Munkadar – Jabir b. 'Abd Allah, may Allah be pleased with them both:

'Umar used to say, "Abu Bakr is our *sayyid*, **and he emancipated our *sayyid*, that is Bilal**".23

Siyadah – in the spiritual sense – in this world only reflects that of the Hereafter. For instance, our Prophet will be the *sayyid* of all humanity in the Hereafter. This, as we have shown, is why he is our *sayyid* here as well. As such, since Bilal was the *sayyid* of 'Umar, he will *surely* also be the latter's *sayyid* in the Hereafter. *Siyadah* in the Hereafter reflects in this world, and *siyadah* in this world is evidence of that of the Hereafter.

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17. Ibid
18. 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. 103
19. Muhammad b. Sa'd, al-Tabaqat al-Kubra (Beirut: Dar al-Sadir), vol. 3, p. 238

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