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30. Hadith Al-Tashbih, Establishing Its Authenticity

Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 H) states:

> بل حمله على ذلك ممتنع لان أحدا لا يساوي رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم لا عليا ولا غيره

Rather, interpreting it like that is impossible, because there is none who is equal to the Messenger of Allah, neither ‘Ali nor any other person.[1]

We agree with our Shaykh that neither Abu Bakr nor ‘Umar was like, similar or equal to, the Messenger of Allah, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa alihi*, in absolutely *any* way or form. However, it seems that the Shaykh has not properly understood the Shi’i position. We never claim *total* equality between the Prophet and the Amir.

What we profess, instead, is that ‘Ali, *‘alaihi al-salam*, reached the level of the Messenger in *many* of his merits. In other words, in a lot of qualities, ranks and statuses, both the Prophet and the Amir were, and are, *equal*. However, in all others, the Messenger of Allah was, and is, infinitely superior to ‘Ali. Overall, the Prophet was, and is, the master, teacher and saviour of ‘Ali in both this world and the next.

Imam al-Nasai (d. 303 H) records an authentic *hadith* that confirms just that:

> أخبرنا العباس بن محمد قال حدثنا الأحوص بن جواب قال حدثنا يونس بن أبي إسحاق عن أبي إسحاق عن زيد بن يثيع عن أبي ذر قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم لينتهين بنو وليعة أو لأبعثن إليهم رجلا كنفسي ينفذ فيهم أمري فيقتل المقاتلة ويسبي الذرية فما راعني إلا وكف عمر في حجزتي من خلفي من يعني فقلت ما إياك يعني ولا صاحبك قال فمن يعني قلت خاصف النعل قال وعلي يخصف نعلا

Al-‘Abbas b. Muhammad – al-Ahwas b. Jawab – Yunus b. Abi Ishaq – Abu Ishaq – Zayd b. Yathi’ – Abu Dharr:

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said, “If the Banu Wali’ah do not desist, I will appoint over them **a man who is exactly like myself** to implement my command among them. So, he will execute the combatants and take the offspring as war captives.”

I had not even moved when ‘Umar held my cloth and asked, “Who is he referring to?” I replied, “He is not referring to you or your companion (i.e. Abu Bakr).” He said, “In that case, who is he referring to?” So, I said, “(He is) referring to the one repairing the shoe.” And ‘Ali was repairing a shoe.[2]

‘Allamah al-Albani (d. 1420 H) says about this report:

> قلت: وهذا إسناد رجاله ثقات؛ لكن أبا إسحاق ـ وهو السبيعي ـ مدلس، وكان اختلط، وابنه يونس روى عنه بعد اختلاطه.

I say: **This chain, all its narrators are trustworthy**. However, Abu Ishaq – and he is al-Sabi’i – was a *mudalis*, and he became confused, and his son Yunus narrated from him after he had become confused.[3]

So, all the narrators are trustworthy. However, Abu Ishaq was a *mudalis*, and has narrated in an *‘an-‘an* manner. Moreover, his son, Yunus, allegedly narrated from him only after he (Abu Ishaq) had become confused. These are ‘Allamah al-Albani’s only objections to the authenticity of the *hadith*.

The arguments of our ‘Allamah are a bit disappointing. While it is true that Abu Ishaq was a *mudalis*, his *tadlis* was largely of the harmless grade. Therefore, his *‘an-‘an* reports are accepted without objection. Let us briefly examine how the *muhadithun* of the Ahl al-Sunnah have treated a well-known, strictly *‘an-‘an* narration of Abu Ishaq. Imam Muslim (d. 261 H) records:

> حدثنا عبدالله بن مسلمة بن قعنب حدثنا معتمر بن سليمان عن أبيه عن رقبة بن مسقلة عن أبي إسحاق عن سعيد بن جبير عن ابن عباس عن أبي بن كعب قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم إن الغلام الذي قتله الخضر طبع كافرا ولو عاش لأرهق أبويه طغيانا وكفرا

‘Abd Allah b. Musalamah b. Qa’nab – Mu’tamir b. Sulayman – his father – Raqabah b. Masqalah – **Abu Ishaq** – Sa’id b. Jubayr – Ibn ‘Abbas – Ubayy b. Ka’b:

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said, “Verily, the boy killed by al-Khidhr was created an unbeliever. If he had lived, he would have grieved his parents with his obstinate rebellion (against Allah) and disbelief (in Allah)”.[4]

Abu Ishaq has narrated it *‘an-‘an*, and Imam Muslim has nonetheless accepted the *hadith* as *sahih*. Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal (d. 241 H) has also included the same *riwayah* with the same *‘an-‘an* chain in his *Musnad*[5]. Shaykh al-Arnau[illegible] comments about it this way:

إسناده صحيح على شرط الشيخين

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

Imam al-Tirmidhi (d. 279 H) has equally documented it with Abu Ishaq's *'an-'an* narration[7]. Al-Tirmidhi says:

هذا حديث حسن صحيح غريب

This *hadith* is *hasan sahih gharib*.[8]

Interestingly, even 'Allamah al-Albani accepts its authenticity:

صحيح

Sahih[9]

Elsewhere, the 'Allamah explains his decision:

ثنا محمد بن أبي بكر المقدمي ثنا معتمر بن سليمان عن أبيه عن رقبة بن مسقلة عن أبي إسحاق عن سعيد بن جبير عن ابن عباس عن أبي بن كعب عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: الغلام الذي قتله الخضر طبع كافرا.

إسناده صحيح على شرط الشيخين مع ما في النفس من عنعنة أبي إسحاق وهو عمرو ابن عبد الله السبيعي فإني لم أجد تصريحه بالتحديث في شيء من الروايات عنه مع أنه كان اختلط لكن لعل رقبة بن مسقلة سمعه منه قبل الاختلاط فإنه قديم الوفاة فقد مات سنة 129 وهي السنة التي مات فيها ابو إسحاق نفسه فهو من أقرانه.

Muhammad b. Abi Bakr al-Muqaddami – Mu'tamir b. Sulayman – his father – Raqabah b. Masqalah – **Abu Ishaq** – Sa'id b. Jubayr – Ibn 'Abbas – Ubayy b. Ka'b – the Prophet, peace be upon him:

"The boy killed by al-Khidhr was created an unbeliever."

Its chain is *sahih* upon the standard of the two Shaykhs, despite what is in the heart concerning its *'an-'an* narration by Abu Ishaq, and his real name was 'Amr b. 'Abd Allah al-Sabi'i. **I have NOT found any explicit *tahdith* (i.e. non-*'an-'an* transmission) of it by him in the reports**, despite that he also became confused. However, maybe Raqabah b. Masqalah heard it from him before he became confused because he (Raqabah) died early (in history). His (i.e. Raqabah's) death was in 129 H, and it was the year of Abu Ishaq's death too. Therefore, they both were contemporaries.[10]

So, the *'an-'an* report of Abu Ishaq is accepted as *sahih* upon the standard of both al-Bukhari and Muslim by the leading *muhadithun* of the Ahl al-Sunnah, including 'Allamah al-Albani himself. But then, al-Hafiz (d. 852 H) documents a rather interesting dissenting viewpoint concerning Abu Ishaq's *'an-'an* reports:

> قال شعبة وكان أبو إسحاق إذا أخبرني عن رجل قلت له هذا أكبر منك فإن قال نعم علمت أنه لقى وإن قال انا أكبر منه تركته.

Shu'bah said: "Whenever Abu Ishaq narrated to me in an *'an-'an* form from any person, I used to say to him, 'Is he older than you?' If he answered, 'Yes', then I would know that he met (the narrator) [i.e. there was no *tadlis* in the report]. But, if he said, 'I am older than him', I would abandon him."[11]

In other words, Shu'bah assured us that *whenever* Abu Ishaq transmitted from people older than him, he never did *tadlis*, even if he narrated in an *'an-'an* manner from them. This is *very* crucial. Shu'bah was of an ultra-strict attitude towards Abu Ishaq's *tadlis*. So, he would not accept even the above *hadith* of the boy, since Sa'id b. Jubayr was far younger than Abu Ishaq[12]. Yet, despite this, *Hadith al-Tashbih* passes his ultra-strict standards and is covered by his expert assurance. Zayd b. Yathi' was much older than Abu Ishaq. Al-Hafiz states:

> زيد بن يثيع ... الهمداني الكوفي ثقة مخضرم

Zayd b. Yathi'.... al-Hamadani al-Kufi: *Thiqah* (trustworthy). **He witnessed both the *Jahiliyyah* and the Islamic era.**[13]

Therefore, Zayd b. Yathi' was born even before any verse of the Qur'an was revealed! This means that he was even older than a lot of the Sahabah. Meanwhile, al-Hafiz further records this about Abu Ishaq:

> وعن أبي بكر بن عياش قال مات أبو إسحاق وهو ابن مائة سنة أو نحوها

Abu Bakr b. 'Ayyash said: Abu Ishaq died while he was 100 years old or thereabout.[14]

Since he died in 129 AH, that means he was born in 29 AH. As such, Zayd b. Yathi' was decades older than him. Based upon the testimony of Shu'bah, the *'an-'an* reports of Abu Ishaq from him were, without doubt, free from *tadlis*. But, even if we ignored Shu'bah's assurance, *Hadith al-Tashbih* would still pass through, considering the lenient attitude of Sunni *muhadithun* to Abu Ishaq's patently *'an-'an* reports generally. With these facts, the first leg of 'Allamah al-Albani's criticism against *Hadith al-Tashbih* is cut off from its root completely.

The 'Allamah further asserts that Yunus heard from his father, Abu Ishaq, only after the latter had

become confused due to memory loss. The question is: where is the evidence? There is none! In fact, this submission of our ‘Allamah is more farfetched statement than the other. Yunus was largely contemporaneous with his father. He even met Anas, one of the senior Sahabah! Imam al-Dhahabi (d. 748 H) states about him:

> يونس بن أبي إسحاق عمرو بن عبد الله الهمداني السبيعي الكوفي. عن أنس ... قلت: مات يونس سنة تسع وخمسين ومائة، وهو في عشر التسعين، إن لم يكن تجاوزها.

Yunus b. Abi Ishaq ‘Amr b. ‘Abd Allah al-Hamdani al-Sabi’i al-Kufi: **He narrated from Anas** ... I say: Yunus died in 159 AH, and he was close to 90, if not older.[15]

So, when Abu Ishaq died in 129 AH, Yunus was already about 60 years old. Does it make sense to claim that such a person narrated from Abu Ishaq only during the latter’s last days when his memory deteriorated?[16] He even narrated from Anas who apparently died decades before his father![17] Al-Hafiz tells us more why ‘Allamah al-Albani’s submission was completely out-of-touch with reality, while writing about Abu Ishaq:

> وعنه ابنه يونس وابن ابنه إسرائيل بن يونس وابن ابنه الآخر يوسف بن إسحاق

His son (Yunus) narrated from him, **as well as his grandson** Israil b. Yunus and his other grandson Yusuf b. Ishaq.[18]

If Yunus could not hear any *ahadith* from his father until the latter’s last period on earth, when exactly did the grandsons take from Abu Ishaq? Obviously, Yunus heard *ahadith* from Abu Ishaq long before the latter lost his memory. No wonder, Imam Ibn Khuzaymah has included a chain in which Yunus has narrated *‘an-‘an* from Abu Ishaq, who in turn has also transmitted *‘an-‘an* from the Sahabi, in his *Sahih*[19] while Shaykh Dr. al-A’zami further declares that *sanad* to be *sahih*.[20]

Shaykh Dr. Asad has equally graded an exactly similar chain as *sahih*.[21] Meanwhile, Shaykh al-Arnau prefers to class an identical *sanad* only as *hasan*.[22] Basically, ‘Allamah al-Albani has no valid objection to *Hadith al-Tashbih*. It has a *sahih* chain. The narration (including *‘an-‘an*) of Yunus from his father, Abu Ishaq, is *sahih*. Furthermore, the *‘an-‘an* transmission of Abu Ishaq from Zayd b. Yathi’ is equally of the perfectly *sahih* grade, in any circumstance.

Hadith al-Tashbih, as narrated by Abu Dharr, is supported by this *shahid* documented by Imam ‘Abd al-Razzaq (d. 211 H):

> أخبرنا عبد الرزاق عن معمر عن ابن طاووس عن أبيه عن المطلب بن عبد الله بن حنطب قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم لوفد ثقيف حين جاءوا: لتسلمن أو لنبعثن رجلا مني ـ أو قال: مثل نفسي فليضربن أعناقكم،

وليسبين ذراريكم، وليأخذن أموالكم، فقال عمر: فوالله ما تمنيت الامارة إلا يومئذ، جعلت أنصب صدري رجاء أن يقول: هو هذا، قال: فالتفت إلي علي، فأخذ بيده ثم قال: هو هذا، هو هذا.

‘Abd al-Razzaq – Ma’mar – Ibn Tawus – his father – al-Mu□alib b. ‘Abd Allah b. Han□ab:

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, when the delegation of (Banu) Thaqif came (to him), said (to them), “You either submit or **I appoint a man from me or who is my similarity**, and he will hit your necks and take your offspring as war prisoners, and will confiscate your properties.” So, ‘Umar said, “I swear by Allah, I never wished for power except on that day. I volunteered for it, wishing that he would say, “This is the one”. But, he instead looked towards ‘Ali, and held his hand and said, “This is the one. This is the one.”[23]

‘Allamah al-Albani comments about this report:

قلت: وهذا إسناد صحيح؛ ولكنه مرسل.

I say: **This chain is *sahih***. However, it is *mursal*.[24]

There is no doubt that this is an effective strengthening *shahid* for the report of Abu Dharr. So, even if, for the sake of argument, the invalid submissions of ‘Allamah al-Albani concerning Abu Dharr’s *hadith* are accepted, the above narration of al-Mu□alib nonetheless raises its grade to at least *hasan*.

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. 7, p. 123
2. 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. 127, # 8457
3. Muhammad Nasir al-Din b. al-Hajj Nuh al-Albani, Silsilah al-Ahadith al-□a’ifah wa al-Mawdhu’ah wa Atharihah al-Sayyiah fi al-Ummah (Riyadh: Dar al-Ma’arif; 1st edition, 1412 H), vol. 10, p. 678, # 4960
4. 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. 2050, # 2661 (29)
5. Abu ‘Abd Allah Ahmad b. Hanbal al-Shaybani, Musnad (Cairo: Muasassat Qurtubah) [annotator: Shu’ayb al-Arnaut], vol. 5, p. 118, # 21156
6. Ibid
7. Abu ‘□sa Muhammad b. ‘□sa al-Sulami al-Tirmidhi, al-Jami’ al-□ahih Sunan al-Tirmidhi (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-‘Arabi) [annotator: Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani], vol. 5, p. 312, # 3150
8. Ibid
9. Ibid
10. Abu Bakr b. Abi ‘□sim, Ahmad b. ‘Amr b. al-□ahhak b. Mukhlid al-Shaybani, Kitab al-Sunnah (al-Maktab al-Islami; 1st edition, 1400 H) [annotator: Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani], vol. 1, p. 86, # 194
11. Shihab al-Din Ahmad b. ‘Ali b. Hajar al-‘Asqalani, Tahdhib al-Tahdhib (Dar al-Fikr; 1st edition, 1404 H), vol. 8, p. 59, # 100
12. Sa’id b. Jubayr was 49 years old when he was murdered by al-Hajjaj in 95 AH. See Shihab al-Din Ahmad b. ‘Ali b. Hajar al-‘Asqalani, Tahdhib al-Tahdhib (Dar al-Fikr; 1st edition, 1404 H), vol. 4, p. 12, # 14. As such, Sa’id was born in 46 AH, decades after Abu Ishaq.

13. 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. 332, # 2166

14. Shihab al-Din Ahmad b. ‘Ali b. Hajar al-‘Asqalani, Tahdhib al-Tahdhib (Dar al-Fikr; 1st edition, 1404 H), vol. 8, p. 58, # 100

15. 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. 4, pp. 482-483, # 9914

16. Abu Ishaq’s memory weakened only during the tail-end of his lifetime. See 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. 739, # 5081

17. Abu al-Ṭufayl was the last of the Ṣahabah to die, and he died in 110 AH. See 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. 464, # 3122

18. Shihab al-Din Ahmad b. ‘Ali b. Hajar al-‘Asqalani, Tahdhib al-Tahdhib (Dar al-Fikr; 1st edition, 1404 H), vol. 8, p. 57, # 100

19. Abu Bakr Muhammad b. Ishaq b. Khuzaymah al-Salami al-Naysaburi, Ṣahih (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami; 1390 H) [annotators: Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani and Dr. Muhammad Mustafa al-A’zami], vol. 1, p. 326, # 647

20. Ibid

21. 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. 12, p. 97, # 6731

22. Abu ‘Abd Allah Ahmad b. Hanbal al-Shaybani, Musnad (Cairo: Muasassat Qurtubah) [annotator: Shu’ayb al-Arnaut], vol. 4, p. 375, # 19367

23. Abu Bakr ‘Abd al-Razzaq b. Hamam al-Ṣa’nani, al-Musannaf [annotator: Habib al-Rahman al-A’zami], vol. 11, p. 226, # 20389

24. Muhammad Nasir al-Din b. al-Hajj Nuh al-Albani, Silsilah al-Ahadith al-Ṣa’ifah wa al-Mawdhu’ah wa Atharihah al-Sayyiah fi al-Ummah (Riyadh: Dar al-Ma’arif; 1st edition, 1412 H), vol. 10, p. 677, # 4960

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