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THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF MORAL PURIFICATION

Syed Manzoor-ul-Hasan

The foundation of both the virtues and vices of character is ‘righteous action’ (*amal salih*). According to my esteemed teacher, Javed Ahmed Ghamidi, in the Quran’s terminology this refers to “every deed that accords with the wisdom by which the universe has been created and in accordance with which its affairs are administered. All its foundations are established in reason and in human nature, and God’s Shariah was revealed to guide human beings to precisely this kind of action.” This means that if an action is righteous, it will be counted among the virtues of character; if it is not righteous, it will be reckoned among its vices. My teacher writes:

This is the very ‘righteous action’ that is expressed in terms of the moral virtues; and in contrast, actions that are not righteous are expressed in terms of their vices. The Prophet (PBUH) said: ‘I have only been sent to bring noble character to its completion.’ He also said that the best among you are those who are best in character, and such people are the dearest to me. On the Day of Resurrection, nothing will weigh heavier in a person’s scale than good character, and a believing servant attains by the excellence of his character the same rank that another attains through fasting by day and praying by night. (Meezan, 201)

The virtues and vices of actions can be numerous, and their forms may vary with circumstances. Therefore, God Himself has specified their governing principles to guide humankind. Whatever the human nature demands in adopting the well-known moral goods (*marufāt*), in fulfilling commands, and in acquiring virtues is encompassed here; likewise, whatever it recoils from among evils (*munkirāt*), avoids among prohibitions, and deems to be vices is also included. It is stated:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ، يَعِظُكُم لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ

Indeed, God directs you [in it] to justice, virtue and to give to the kin and stops you from lewdness, evil and rebelliousness. He counsels you so that you receive a reminder. (Quran, 16:90)

This verse is a summary of all the Quran’s commands and prohibitions. Imam Amin Ahsan Islahi writes:

...The basis of what the Quran commands have also been made clear herein, and it also alludes to the foundations of what it forbids. All Quranic commands are grounded in justice, excellence, and spending for those of kin; and among its prohibitions fall all things animated by the corrupting spirit of indecency, wrongdoing, and transgression. Citing this verse here aims to warn those who were exerting every effort in opposing the Quran, so that they might reflect on the teaching they were opposing—and realize that by opposing it they were necessarily opposing justice and good, and supporting evil and corruption. (Tadabbur-e-Quran, 4/438)

In this verse of Surat al-Nahl, the fundamental principles of the religion’s *marufāt* and *munkarāt*, the Shariah’s commands and prohibitions, and the virtues and vices of character are laid down—that is, both the affirmative and the negative dimensions of conduct are specified. Accordingly, in my teacher’s view, the Quran’s guidance on what is lawful and unlawful in ethics rests upon these very foundational principles, and all its moral injunctions amount to their explication and detailing. He writes:

.. The foundations of the moral virtues that human nature seeks to attain—and of the vices it seeks to avoid—are made explicit here. These principles of good and evil are entirely natural; hence, they have always been accepted in God’s religion. The Ten Commandments of the Torah are based upon them, and the Quran, in all of its moral injunctions, provides their detailed elaboration. (Meezan, 206)

These are six principles or six categories in total: three are enjoined and three are forbidden.

Those enjoined are:

1. *Adl* (justice)
2. *Ihsan* (excellence/beneficence)
3. *Ita dhi al-qurba* (giving to near-kin)

Those prohibited are:

1. *Fahsha'* (indecentcy/lewdness)
2. *Munkar* (wrongdoing/deniable evil)
3. *Baghy* (transgression/oppression)



THE TREASURE OF PROPHETIC TEACHINGS

Muhammad Hassan Ilyas

— 1 —

Abu Qatadah relates that he heard the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) say: *“A good dream is from Allah Most High, and thus it contains glad tidings. So, when any one of you sees in a dream something he finds pleasing, he should mention it only to one whom he holds dear. Likewise, an evil (disturbing) dream is from Satan. Accordingly, when any one of you sees in a dream something he dislikes, he should not relate it to anyone. Rather, upon waking he should seek refuge from Satan’s mischief, blowing lightly to his left three times, and then be at ease—for it will not harm him.”* (Jami Muammar bin Rashid, No. 965)

— 2 —

It is narrated from Abu Hurayrah (RA) that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: *“The believer’s dream is one part out of forty-six parts of prophethood.”* (Sahih Bukhari, No. 6501)

— 3 —

Abu Hurayrah (RA) relates that the Prophet (PBUH) said: *“Dreams are of three kinds: glad tidings from Allah; reflections (dialogues) of the human self; and terrifying suggestions from Satan. If any one of you sees a good dream, he may relate it if he so wishes. But if he sees a dream he dislikes, he should not relate it to anyone; instead, he should rise and perform prayer.”* (Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah, No. 29917)



PRINCIPLES OF ISLAMIC JURISPRUDENCE (USUL AL-FIQH)

Javed Ahmed Ghamidi

The guidance granted by Allah through His prophets has, at its core, the Quran and the Sunnah. The principles necessary for the understanding and explication of these two sources have already been set forth in the introduction *Usul wa Mabadi'* of my book, Meezan. A concise summary under this same heading may also be consulted in the present work. Beyond these, derivatively, if there is any legitimate means of reaching God's intent, it is through *ijtihad*. By this method, together with other means, we seek to comprehend those rulings which are not stated explicitly in the revealed texts, but which—by their very nature—are extensions and applications of the same. In this regard, *qiyas* constitutes a category of *ijtihad*. The Quran itself employs the term *istinbat* for such derivations. The body of knowledge that arises through this process is called *fiqh*. A major portion of it is what we may designate *Fiqh al-Nabi* (Jurisprudence of the Prophet). Following this are the juristic efforts of scholars and jurists. The expression *Usul al-Fiqh* is employed precisely to denote the principles required to understand and explain matters within this sphere. These principles are as follows:

1. Every opinion concerning religion must be founded upon the purpose of religion itself, as defined in the Quran. In our view, this purpose is the purification (*tazkiyah*) of man's knowledge and deeds in all dimensions of his individual and collective life. In assessing solitary reports (*akhbar ahad*), and in adopting or rejecting any opinion or exercise of *ijtihad*, this objective of religion must remain the guiding principle.
2. By 'Quran and Sunnah' in this context we mean not only their explicit rulings but also the underlying causes (*ilal*) and general maxims (*qawaid ammah*) upon which the Shariah is constructed—whether they are explicitly mentioned in the texts or identified through inductive reasoning. An example of the first case is: "Allah has declared all good things (*tayyibat*) lawful and all impure things (*khabaith*) unlawful." An example of the second is: "All acts of worship are symbolic expressions of the servant's relationship with Allah."
3. Fiqh is entirely a derivative of these rulings, causes, and general maxims. It must always remain in this subordinate position. Should it transgress its subordinate role, displacing or altering the purport of the originals, it must necessarily be rejected.
4. Every ruling of religion is bound to its intrinsic reality—its meaning and cause. The application of this ruling to new circumstances, as well as exemptions or dispensations from it, must be determined on the basis of that intrinsic reality.
5. The recognized modes of reasoning employed are three:
 - a. First, reasoning from the branch (*far'*) to the root (*asl*), for the existence of the branch presupposes the root.
 - b. Second, reasoning from the root to the branch, since the root necessarily entails its branches; thus, contemplation of the root discloses all its implied branches. For this reason, the root is called *asl* and the branch *far'*.

- c. Third, reasoning from one branch to another, mediated by the proof of the root. The branch first indicates its root, which then establishes connection with all related branches.
6. The importance of *Fiqh al-Nabi* in this discipline is extraordinary. Much of it has reached us through solitary reports. Given the gravity of attributing anything to the Prophet (PBUH), such reports may only be accepted when they are at least of the status of *Hasan* according to the terminology of the *muhaddithun*. Weak reports, if transmitted through multiple chains, may be cited in matters of administrative or regulatory decisions, to provide additional reassurance. The reason is that in such matters the primary foundation for reasoning is the self-evident truths of knowledge and reason. For instance, if divorce is pronounced in a manner that contravenes the prescribed procedure, the response to this situation is essentially an administrative ruling. In such a case, the presence of a weak hadith to support the ruling adds a measure of reassurance. The case of Rukanah bin Abd Yazid's divorce is a pertinent example. The narrations of Abu Dawud, Ibn Majah, Tirmidhi, and Musnad Ahmad have been cited in my book *Meezan* under *Qanun-e-Muasharat* precisely in this capacity, with the clarification noted in the footnotes that while the reports are weak in *isnad*, their collective attestation compensates for individual weakness.

[2022]



HISTORY VS HADITH

Dr. Mohammad Akram Nadwi

Introduction

The original meaning of the Greek word from which ‘history’ is derived is ‘inquiry’, that is, asking questions, seeking knowledge. However, history is not, and never has been, a disinterested questioning about what happened in the past, still less a disinterested, impartial recording of events. History is storytelling about the past, a construction in the present about the past, even though historians (especially Western ones) claim that their story, their construction of the past is true, non-fictional, because (they claim) it agrees with researched and established facts. Historians can use many different techniques to determine whether or how far their sources for reconstructing past events are reliable. The sources may be oral traditions or written documents or material artefacts, which the serious, scholarly historian will compare and cross-check, while also applying a measure of common sense or general human experience to determine if what is presented in the sources could indeed have happened as presented, or if details have been invented or embellished or in some other way distorted. But even if this critical activity has been done honestly and rigorously, it is at most a preparatory stage before the history writing begins. In the course of that writing of history, the historian weaves the researched matter into a coherent narrative that puts incidents in a meaningful order, decides what is most important for understanding what happened and why, and its significance for how later events unfolded. In sum, history writing is a literary effort, albeit the historian’s imagination is substantially constrained by having to refer to what ‘really’ happened. This constraint does not, by itself, suffice to make the historian’s narrative any more or any less ‘true’ than a fiction whose author is constrained only by the limits of his or her imagination. The ‘truth’ of a historical or ordinarily fictional narrative depends on the intellectual and professional integrity of their authors, on these authors’ commitment to being true to the demands of their craft.

The core of my talk today will be about precisely this truth to craft, the professional integrity, of the great compilers of hadith, who were necessarily also great exponents of the craft of hadith criticism, which they had to be in order to compile -- as best they could -- only the most reliable reports of the Prophet’s sayings, without neglecting to record variants among them or to record other reports they deemed less reliable or weak or fabricated. But before going on to that I want to clarify further the point I have just made about history-writing.

History’s claim of a connection to actual events, to a reality external to its narrative, means that a historical narrative is subject to revision if new sources are found or if new techniques of interrogating the existing sources are discovered and applied. Usually, the scholarly effort preparatory to the writing up of the history-narrative is not invalidated by the revision, rather it is re-worked into a different narrative. However, political histories are often declared by the revised narrative to be false, to have been consciously or unconsciously fitted by the historian to suit the biases of the audience of that historian’s time and place. Literary effects in a debunked history can nevertheless linger in the culture: for example, one still hears people accuse political leaders of ‘fiddling while Rome burns’, an allusion to the Roman emperor Nero playing his fiddle, unaware or careless of his city being on fire. Apparently, there was a great fire in Rome during Nero’s rule, but he was not in the city at that time. The literary ‘truth’ of a particular tyrant’s indifference to the condition of his people survives in spite of its ‘falsehood’ as historical fact.

Sadly, there are people, Muslim scholars among them, arguing that modern techniques of interrogating reports about the past are superior to the techniques available to the classical Muslim hadith criticism. Classical Muslim

scholars were deceived by their own piety or by a demand for conformity to religious doctrine into believing that they were commenting and interpreting the sayings of the Prophet (PBUH), when (most likely) much of this material was made up by later generations.

I do not deny that scholarly techniques evolve and improve. Let me give a simple example. Suppose in most versions of an ancient legend transmitted by oral tradition and later written down, the hero of the poems is represented as wielding a magical bow, but in other versions he wields a magical axe. Obviously the two versions are not incompatible. Now suppose that pottery fragments are discovered and pieced together, on which incidents from the legend are depicted. The vast majority show the hero as an archer, a very few show him as an axe-man. Coincidentally, the majority of the written verses of the legend also present him as mainly an archer, though a few verses here and there also mention his prowess with the axe. Suppose further that a new scanning technique applied to the pottery relics establishes decisively that the archer depictions are two hundred years later than the axe-man ones. Then, a scholar working in a different discipline is able to show that the date of the archer pottery is some 50 years after the arrival in the region of an invading army which featured skilled archers. This scholar now looks for, and duly finds, subtle hints in the lexicon of the texts recording the legend, and in the way the hero's name has been adapted to suit the metre, that lead to the conclusion that in his 'original' form the hero was indeed an axe-man and that references in the poems to a magical bow are later alterations. The scholar then explains that what 'must' have happened is that the conquering people took over the legend and in the process of making the hero their own, they changed his super weapon from axe to bow. The written versions of the legend, of later date, necessarily favor the archer version of the legend.

The discovered pottery fragments and what the scanning technique revealed may be categorized as 'historical facts'. The scholar's explanatory narrative refers to these 'facts' but is not based on them. It is the scholar's familiarity with this kind of explanation, a cultural preference for a material cause, that converts mere facts into evidence. The same preference is the reason why non-Muslims explain the sudden political unity and military prowess of the first generation of Muslims as necessitated by population pressure among the Arab tribes which forced them to exploit political upheavals in the great empires to the north and east of the Peninsula.

The general Western skepticism about the hadith corpus, which some Muslim scholars have adopted as rational and hard-headed, is an instance of cultural bias: it repeats for Muslim sources the same procedures of critical textual history applied to the Christian religious texts. The most charitable explanation for this attitude among Muslim scholars is that they want to demonstrate a willingness to view their own scholarly tradition as intellectually docile and inferior compared to the modern West, which is vigorous and honest, and which has matured out of credulous submissiveness to religious authority.

I have tried to argue that we readily distinguish the preparatory scholarship that precedes historical narrative from the narrative itself. Skepticism about particular hadiths in the corpus, and about particular narrators and certain chains of narrators, is commonplace among classical scholars. The accusation of intellectual docility is patently absurd. The assumption that all hadiths must be assumed to be pious fabrications unless their veracity can be demonstrated is incompatible with belief in the Qur'an as God's final guidance. That belief depends on the trustworthiness of the Prophet (PBUH) by whom it was conveyed and by whom it was practically embodied. No doubt the great hadith scholars were deeply pious, and therefore strongly motivated to seek out those who had heard from those who had heard from those who had heard from the Messenger (PBUH) himself how to conceive of God, how to not conceive of Him, how to understand human relation and responsibility to Him, and how to live accordingly. There is very little in the hadith corpus that can support historical story-telling -- certain incidents like the Ifk, some situations associated with the sending down of a very few Qur'anic passages, some particulars of some battles and raids during the Prophet's lifetime. By contrast, there is very much in the corpus

that relates to the practice of the religion in respect of obeying and loving God, of devotional rites, of how to conduct oneself with family, neighbors, friends and enemies, how to live in circumstances of wealth and poverty, when to be strict with oneself and others and when not, and so on.

The chief prompt to general skepticism about the hadith corpus is the sheer number of variants. Why is the same teaching not recorded and reported in the same words? Apparently, this means the reports must have been made up by different persons with different motivations and agendas. But ordinary human experience confirms the opposite. The variations in the wording of hadiths on similar topics is the strongest argument for their veracity in general. Ask the audience of any lecture or indeed the witnesses to any event what they heard or saw, and there will be a stable core of information within the natural variety in how different individuals remember and report what they report. The only case when two persons would use exactly the same wording when reporting what they heard is if the wording is itself critical (i.e., not just the intended meaning, but the words themselves) -- for example, when a teacher sets a homework task -- or if the two persons are colluding. Independently, different people not only remember different elements of the same experience, but they convey them in different words and in a different order.

The usefulness and worth of Prophetic hadiths has nothing to do with the historical factuality of what they convey. In the rare cases when precise wording matters (when one expression is distinguished from another, or when a certain style of speech is commended or condemned), the hadiths are found to have the same or almost the same words. In sum, there is no discovery of new information, nor a new technique of information processing, on which general skepticism about the hadith corpus can be based. It is based instead on a cultural attitude. Particular skepticism about particular hadiths and particular pathways through which the hadiths were conveyed is the bread and butter of classical hadith scholarship. And it is this that I will now illustrate by comparing the presentation of the same hadiths in the Sahih of Bukhari and Muslim.



THE NIGHT JOURNEY AND ASCENSION (ISRA AND MI'RAJ)

Syed Manzoor ul Hassan

From the book Javed Ahmed Ghamidi's Stance On Prophet Muhammad's Night Journey and Ascension - Derived from a dialogue with Muhammad Hassan Ilyas. This book is part of '23 Objections Series'.

Traditionally, the *Isra* and *Mi'raj* are believed to be the same event. The diverse details narrated in the Quran and hadith are considered parts of the single event. As a result, it is generally believed that the Prophet's night journey was one particular event that occurred at night, in a state of wakefulness, began from Masjid al-Haram, proceeded to Masjid al-Aqsa, and culminated at the highest assembly.

Javed Ahmed Ghamidi, however, disagrees with this traditional viewpoint, arguing that the texts of the Quran and hadith do not support it. He believes that these were not one but four distinct events that occurred on different occasions, took different forms, and happened in different states of consciousness. The textual evidence from the Quran and hadith clearly proves that they are separate independent events. Additionally, he suggests that not all these events took place in the state of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) wakefulness. Two of them happened in the realm of dreams (*al-ru'ya*), and two occurred in an awakened state.

The first event is the *Isra*, which is described in Surah Al-Isra of the Holy Quran, and occurred in a dream.

The second event is the encounter at the *Sidratul-Muntaba* (The Lote Tree at the Farthest Limit), mentioned in verses 1 to 12 of Surah Al-Najm, and took place in a state of wakefulness.

The third event is described in verses 13 to 18 of Surah.

Al-Najm and relates to *Qaba Qawsayn*, also happening in an awakened state.

Lastly, the fourth event of *Mi'raj* is recorded in Sahih Bukhari, No. 7517, and other narrations, concluding that it transpired within a dream.

These four incidents are from Allah. Their nature is that of divine signs, and their significance is of revelation and inspiration. The mentioned reports, information, events, and observations are related to the Prophethood and Messengership of the Prophet (PBUH). Thus, they should be understood in this context and interpreted accordingly. In this matter, it is essential to stay confined to the understanding of the texts. Therefore, one should not speculate about these events, make them subject to storytelling, or search for ways to deny them by basing arguments on raw and incomplete human knowledge and experiences.

[To be continued...]

TAFHEEM AL-ATHAR (UNDERSTANDING THE TRADITIONS)

Dr. Ammar Khan Nasir

The narrations of the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt concerning the Companions

The narrations of Ali (RA) regarding Abu Bakr (RA) and Umar (RA) (12)

(7)

عَنْ جَابِرٍ، قَالَ: قَالَ عَلِيٌّ: كُنْتُ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، فَأَقْبَلَ أَبُو بَكْرٍ وَعُمَرُ فَقَالَ: "هَذَانِ سَيِّدَا كُهُولِ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ مِنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ وَالْآخِرِينَ إِلَّا النَّبِيِّينَ وَالْمُرْسَلِينَ، لَا تُخْبِرُهُمَا يَا عَلِيُّ"

Jabir bin Abdullah (RA) relates that Ali (RA) said: 'I was sitting with the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) when Abu Bakr (RA) and Umar (RA) appeared. He said: "These two will be the chiefs of the mature men of the people of Paradise—from the earlier and the later generations—excepting the Prophets and the Messengers. Do not inform them of this, O Ali." (Musnad al-Bazzār, No. 490)

Lexical Explanation

كُهُول is the plural of كَهْل. It denotes men in the prime of maturity, roughly between thirty and fifty years of age. Here, the intent is all those who have passed youth and reached old age.

Explanation

Commentators have asked why the Holy Prophet (PBUH) forbade Ali (RA) from informing Abu Bakr (RA) and Umar (RA) of this. Some hold that the purpose was lest any complacency in deeds arise or self-admiration enter the heart; others suggest that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) intended to convey it to them personally at an appropriate moment, hence he restrained Ali (RA) (Khatib al-Baghdadi, *Sharaf Ashab al-Hadith*, 1/90; Mulla Ali al-Qari, *Mirqat al-Mafatih*, 9/3913). These two explanations, however, do not appear most persuasive. More likely, the intent was that the distinction awaiting them on the Day of Resurrection remain hidden from them in this world, so that they would not be deprived of the joy that comes when an honor is conferred without prior expectation.

Referencing and Variance in Narration Chains

This exchange between the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and Ali (RA) is transmitted not only by Jabir bin Abdullah (RA) among the Companions, but also by Abdullah bin Umar (RA) and Anas bin Malik (RA) (Ibn Asakir, *Tarikh Dimashq*, 44/173). In addition, numerous Successors report it from Ali (RA). Details follow:

1. Via al-Harith al-Awar from Ali (RA): recorded in *al-Tirmidhi*, no. 3757; *Ibn Majah*, no. 94; *al-Tabarani*, *al-Mujam al-Awsat*, no. 1359; Ibn Hanbal, *Faza'il al-Sahabah*, nos. 87, 183, 274; al-Ajurri, *al-Shariah*, no. 1283; Ibn Asakir, *Tarikh Dimashq* 44/169.

At the end of al-Ajurri's chain there is the addition:

qala: fama dbakartu dhalika lahuma batta balaka (al-Shariah, No. 1283) — “He [Ali] said: ‘I did not mention this to them until both had passed away.’”

Since al-Shabi transmits from al-Harith, some routes omit al-Harith's intermediary and attribute it directly to al-Shabi (Musnad Abi Yala, No. 94).

2. Via Ali bin al-Husayn Zayn al-Abidin: recorded in *al-Tirmidhi*, no. 3756; Ibn Hanbal, *Fazail al-Sahabah*, no. 231; al-Ajurri, *al-Shariah*, no. 1752; Ibn Asakir, *Tarikh Dimashq* 44/168.
3. Via al-Hasan bin Zayd bin al-Hasan: in *Musnad Ahmad*, no. 593; Ibn Hanbal, *Fazail al-Sahabah*, no. 133; al-Ajurri, *al-Shariah*, no. 1751. Al-Ajurri provides the following background: *An al-husayn bin zayd bin al-hasan qala: ja'a nafara min ahl al-iraq... (al-Shariah, no. 1751) — “Al-Hasan bin Zayd bin al-Hasan said: A group from Iraq came to him and said: ‘Abu Muhammad, news has reached us that you transmit a hadith from Ali bin Abi Talib (RA) concerning Abu Bakr and Umar (RA)—’ He replied: ‘Yes...’”* In Ahmad's chain there is the addition at the end: *ya ali, hadhani sayyida kuhul ahl al-jannah wa shababaha bad al-nabiyyina wa al-mursalina.* (Musnad Ahmad, No. 593) — “O Ali, these two—after the Prophets and Messengers—are the chiefs of the mature men of Paradise and of its youth.” This addition appears *shadh* (anomalous), for it is absent from the other chains and also conflicts with reports designating Hasan and Husayn (RA) as the chiefs of the youth of Paradise (*al-Tirmidhi*, No. 3859; *Ibn Majah*, No. 117; *Musnad Ahmad*, No. 10785).
4. Via Zur b. Hubaysh: recorded in *al-Dulabi*, *al-Kuna wa al-Asma'*, no. 1683; *Hadith Abi al-Fazl al-Zubri*, no. 486; Ibn 'Asakir, *Tarikh Dimashq* 30/172. Its ending reads: *Qala: fama akhbaratu huma wa law kana hayyina ma baddathtu bihadha.* (*Tarikh Dimashq* 30/177) — “He [Ali] said: ‘I did not inform the two of them; and had they been alive, I would not have narrated this either.’”
5. Via Zayd bin Yuthay: reported by al-Ajurri and al-Tahawi (*al-Shariah*, No. 1578; *Mushkil al-Athar*, No. 1679).
Al-Ajurri's chain includes an apparent narrator's insertion:
Ya ali, wa hasan wa Husayn sayyida shababi ahl al-jannah. (*al-Shariah*, No. 1578) — “O Ali, and Hasan and Husayn will be the chiefs of the youth of Paradise.”
6. Via Abu Khattab al-Wasiti: recorded by Ibn Abi Shaybah and Ibn Asakir (*al-Musannaf*, No. 31302; *Tarikh Dimashq* 44/172).
7. In one report through Abu Matar, it is related that during Umar's (RA) final illness, Ali (RA) visited him and, finding him anxious about his hereafter, conveyed this glad tiding to him: *Faqltu labu: Absir bi al-jannah... sayyida kuhulu ahl al-jannah abu bakr wa umar.* (*Tarikh Dimashq*, 44/168; Ibn Abi al-Dunya, *al-Muhtadarin*, No. 223) — “I said to him: ‘Rejoice in Paradise, for I repeatedly heard the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) say: ‘The chiefs of the mature men of the people of Paradise are Abu Bakr (RA) and Umar (RA).’” This report appears untenable in light of the

above-mentioned transmissions in which Ali (RA) explicitly states that, in obedience to the Holy Prophet's (PBUH) instruction, he did not inform them of this until both had passed away.

(8)

عَنْ ابْنِ أَبِي مُلَيْكَةَ أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ ابْنَ عَبَّاسٍ يَقُولُ: وَضِعَ عُمَرُ عَلَى سَرِيرِهِ فَتَكَفَّفَهُ النَّاسُ يَدْعُونَ وَيُصَلُّونَ قِيلَ أَنْ يُرْفَعَ وَأَنَا فِيهِمْ، فَلَمْ يُرْعِنِي إِلَّا رَجُلٌ أَخَذَ مِنْكَبِي، فَإِذَا عَلَيَّ بَنُ أَبِي طَالِبٍ، فَتَرَحَّمَ عَلَى عُمَرَ وَقَالَ: مَا خَلَفْتَ أَحَدًا أَحَبَّ إِلَيَّ أَنْ أَلْقَى اللَّهَ بِمِثْلِ عَمَلِهِ مِنْكَ، وَإِنَّمَا اللَّهُ إِنْ كُنْتُ لَاظُنُّ أَنْ يَجْعَلَكَ اللَّهُ مَعَ صَاحِبَيْكَ، وَحَسِبْتُ إِنِّي كُنْتُ كَثِيرًا أَسْمَعُ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ: دَهَبْتُ أَنَا وَأَبُو بَكْرٍ وَعُمَرُ، وَدَخَلْتُ أَنَا وَأَبُو بَكْرٍ وَعُمَرُ، وَخَرَجْتُ أَنَا وَأَبُو بَكْرٍ وَعُمَرُ.

Ibn Abi Mulaykah relates that he heard Ibn Abbas (RA) say: 'When Umar (RA) was placed upon his bier, people gathered around him, supplicating and sending blessings upon him before he was carried away, and I was among them. Suddenly someone grasped my shoulder—it was Ali b. Abi Talib (RA). He invoked mercy for Umar (RA) and said: "You have not left behind anyone whose record of deeds I would more love to take with me to meet Allah than yours. By Allah, I always believed that Allah would place you with your two companions; and I think I often heard the Holy Prophet (PBUH) say: 'I went—with Abu Bakr and Umar (RA); I entered—with Abu Bakr (RA) and Umar (RA); I came out—with Abu Bakr and Umar (RA).'"

Explanation

The phrase “*yaj'alakallahu ma 'a sahibayka*” (that Allah would place you with your two companions) alludes to the burial alongside the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and Abu Bakr (RA). Their graves were in the chamber of Aisha (RA). According to reports, Umar (RA) sought her permission to be buried there; although she had reserved the remaining place for herself, she gave precedence to Umar (RA) and relinquished it for him (Sahih Bukhari, No. 3530).

Referencing and Variance in Narration Chains

This report from Ibn Abbas (RA) via Ibn Abi Mulaykah is also recorded in: Sahih Muslim, no. 4507; Ibn Majah, no. 97; Musnad Ahmad, no. 884; al-Nasa'i, al-Sunan al-Kubra, no. 7850; al-Hakim, al-Mustadrak, no. 4401; Musnad Abdullah b. al-Mubarak, no. 255; Ibn Hanbal, Fazail al-Sahabah, no. 307.

The opening clause of Ali's (RA) words—“*ma khalaqta ahadan ahabbu ilayya an alqallahu bimithli amalih minka*”—is transmitted, with slight verbal variation, by several other narrators. For example, in the narration of Abu Juhayfah Wahb b. Abdullah it is stated: *kuntu inda umar... Thumma qala: rahmatullahi Alayka aba hafs...* (Musnad Ahmad, No. 853) — “I was present when Umar (RA) had been shrouded. Ali (RA) came, uncovered his face and said: ‘Allah’s mercy be upon you, Abu Hafs. By Allah, after the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) there is no one with whose record of deeds I would more love to meet Allah than yours.’”

This wording is also recorded in: Ibn Sad, al-Tabaqat al-Kubra, no. 3905; Ibn Hanbal, Fazail al-Sahabah, no. 326; Ibn Shabbah, Tarikh al-Madinah, no. 1493.

Beyond these, the phrase is transmitted through Jabir bin Abdullah (RA) (al-Hakim, al-Mustadrak, No. 4498; Ibn Sa'd, al-Tabaqat, No. 3898), and via Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (Ibn Abi Shaybah, al-Musannaf, No. 31378; Abu Yusuf, al-Athar, No. 945; Ibn Hanbal, Fazail al-Sahabah, No. 324); Abdullah bin Abi al-Hudhayl also narrates it through a man from Banu Asad (Musnad Ahmad, No. 848). With Ibn Sad it further occurs through Zayd bin Ali, Ayyub, Amr bin Dinar, and Abu Jahzam (al-Tabaqat, Nos. 3906, 3907).

Al-Ajurri relates this episode with additional sentences through Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami, in the following words:

Akhbarani abu abd al-rahman... Lam takun ayaban wa la madahan. (al-Shariah, No. 1185) — “Abu ‘Abd al-Rahman said: Ali bin Abi Talib (RA) entered while Umar (RA) lay shrouded and said: ‘There is no one whose record I would prefer to take to Allah above this one wrapped among you.’ Then he said: ‘May Allah have mercy on you, Ibn al-Khattab! Indeed, you were truly knowledgeable of Allah; your breast was filled with His greatness; you feared Allah concerning the people and did not fear the people concerning Allah; you were generous in following the truth and miserly in following falsehood; you took but a meagre share of this world and a full share of the hereafter; you were neither a fault-finder nor a flatterer.’”

[To be continued...]



A REVIEW OF THE ‘HONEY’ NARRATIVE REPORTED IN THE SAHIHAYN - 1

Dr. Muhammad Ghatrif Shahbaz Nadwi

The ‘Point of View’ column is reserved for writings by various thinkers. The institution is not necessarily in agreement with the views expressed in the articles published therein.

Hadith Narrated by Urwah

Ali bin Mus-hir al-Kufi transmitted from Hisham bin Urwah, who transmitted from his father Urwah, that Aisha (RA) related that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) liked honey—or, she said, he was fond of sweet things. After finishing the Asr prayer, he would visit all his wives, pausing briefly with each (and he would spend the night with the one whose turn it was). One day, he remained with Hafsa bint Umar (RA) longer than usual. I felt jealous, so I sought out the reason. I learned that a female relative of Hafsa (RA) had sent her, as a gift, a leather container filled with honey, and that Hafsa (RA) had given the Holy Prophet (PBUH) some of that honey to drink. I said to myself: We will devise a plan to ensure that, henceforth, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) will not drink honey at Hafsa's (RA) quarters.

So, I said to Sawdah bint Zama (RA): When the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) visits you, say to him: “Have you eaten *maghafir* (the resin of the *urfut* tree, which has a sweetness)?” If he says, “No,” then say: “What, then, is this odor that I notice?” He will say: “Hafsa (RA) gave me a drink of honey.” Say to him: “The bees that produced that honey must have fed on the nectar of the *urfut* tree.” And when he comes to me, I will say the same; and, O Safiyyah, you say the same as well. Ayshah (RA) reports: (Sawdah followed my plan to the letter.) Sawdah (RA) used to say: As soon as the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) arrived at my door, I felt like calling out that the smell of *maghafir* was present—such was my fear of you, O Aisha. In short, Sawdah (RA) said what I had prompted her to say. When he came to me, I also said the same. Then, when he went to Safiyyah (RA), she too said the same.

Then, when (the next day) he came to Hafsa (RA), she said: “O Messenger of Allah, shall I give you to drink from that honey I gave you yesterday?” He replied: “I have no need of it.” (When it became known that he had declined to drink honey at Hafsa's (RA) quarters,) Sawdah (RA) said: “We have deprived the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) of it; that was not good of us.” I said: “Now be quiet.”

This hadith, whose sense I have rendered, appears in Sahih Bukhari with this chain and wording:

حَدَّثَنَا فَرْوَةُ بْنُ أَبِي الْمَغْرَاءِ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا عَلِيُّ بْنُ مُسْهِرٍ، عَنْ هِشَامِ بْنِ عُرْوَةَ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ عَائِشَةَ، قَالَتْ: كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يُحِبُّ الْعَسَلَ وَالْحُلُوءَ، وَكَانَ إِذَا انْصَرَفَ مِنَ الْعَصْرِ دَخَلَ عَلَى نِسَائِهِ، فَيَذْنُو مِنْ إِحْدَاهُنَّ، فَدَخَلَ عَلَى حَفْصَةَ بِنْتِ عُمَرَ، فَاحْتَبَسَ عِنْدَهَا أَكْثَرَ مَا كَانَ يَحْتَبِسُ، فَعِزْتُ، فَسَأَلْتُ عَنْ ذَلِكَ، فَقِيلَ لِي: أَهَدَيْتُ لَهَا امْرَأَةً عَكَّةً مِنْ عَسَلٍ، فَسَقَتِ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مِنْهُ شَرِبَةً، فَقُلْتُ: أَمَا وَاللَّهِ لَنَحْتَالَنَّ لَهُ؛ فَقُلْتُ لِسَوْدَةَ بِنْتِ زَمْعَةَ: إِنَّهُ سَيَذْنُو مِنْكَ، فَإِذَا دَنَا مِنْكَ فَقُولِي: أَكَلْتُ مَغَافِيرَ؟ فَإِنَّهُ سَيَقُولُ لَكَ: لَا، فَقُولِي لَهُ: مَا هَذِهِ الرِّيحُ الَّتِي أَجِدُ مِنْكَ؟ فَإِنَّهُ سَيَقُولُ لَكَ: سَقَيْتَنِي حَفْصَةُ

شَرِبَ عَسَلٍ، فَقُولِي لَهُ: جَرَسَتْ تَحْلُهُ الْعَرْفُطُ، وَسَأَقُولُ ذَلِكَ، وَقُولِي أَنْتِ يَا صَفِيَّةُ ذَلِكَ. قَالَتْ: يَقُولُ سَوْدَةُ: يَقُولُ اللَّهُ مَا هُوَ إِلَّا أَنْ قَامَ عَلَى الْبَابِ، فَأَرَدْتُ أَنْ أُنَادِيَهُ بِمَا أَمَرْتَنِي بِهِ فَرَقًا مِنْكَ؛ فَلَمَّا دَنَا مِنْهَا، قَالَتْ لَهُ سَوْدَةُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، أَكَلْتَ مَغَافِيرَ؟ قَالَ: لَا. قَالَتْ: فَمَا هَذِهِ الرِّيحُ الَّتِي أَجِدُ مِنْكَ؟ قَالَ: سَقَنْتَنِي حَفْصَةُ شَرِبَ عَسَلٍ، فَقَالَتْ: جَرَسَتْ تَحْلُهُ الْعَرْفُطُ؛ فَلَمَّا دَارَ إِلَيَّ قُلْتُ لَهُ نَحْوُ ذَلِكَ؛ فَلَمَّا دَارَ إِلَيَّ صَفِيَّةُ، قَالَتْ لَهُ مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ؛ فَلَمَّا دَارَ إِلَيَّ حَفْصَةُ، قَالَتْ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، أَلَا أَسْقِيكَ مِنْهُ؟ قَالَ: لَا حَاجَةَ لِي فِيهِ. قَالَتْ: يَقُولُ سَوْدَةُ: وَاللَّهِ لَقَدْ حَرَمْنَا، قُلْتُ لَهَا: اسْكُتِي.

(Sahih Bukhari, No. 5268)

Like Ali b. Mus-hir al-Kufi, this report is also narrated by Abu Usamah (Hammad bin Usamah al-Kufi) from Hisham bin Urwah (Sahih Bukhari, No. 6972). It is likewise extracted by Sahih Muslim Muslim, No. 1474).

To be sure, Urwah bin al-Zubayr (or his son, the distinguished Hisham bin Urwah) erred in transmitting this baseless tale. May Allah forgive Urwah (or Hisham) for this mistake. However, Urwah did not hear this story directly from our Mother, the Truthful Lady Aisha (RA). Certainly, Urwah heard many hadiths from her and benefited greatly from her knowledge; yet we also find multiple reports which he did not hear directly from Aisha (RA), but which another person ascribed to her and related to Urwah. Out of confidence and trust, Urwah then transmitted those reports ascribed to Aisha (RA) without naming that intermediary. In such reports we have found only errors. This story belongs to that very category; had Urwah reflected more carefully, he would never have narrated it. The reasons for judging this story to be false and baseless are as follows:

1. The report implies that at Hafsa's (RA) quarters the Holy Prophet (PBUH) drank the honey only once; the next day, when he went to her and she asked leave to present honey again, he declined—because he had been influenced by Aisha's (RA) stratagem and had become averse to that honey. Yet the logic of the story requires that he should have drunk the honey again on the second day and only declined on the third. For, according to the tale, it was when the Holy Prophet (PBUH) remained longer than usual at Hafsa's (RA) due to drinking the honey that Aisha (RA) grew concerned to discover the cause; after inquiry, she devised the plan and coached the *maghafir* line to our Mothers Sawdah and Safiyyah (RA). Evidently, that *maghafir* remark would have occurred on the second day; only then would the Holy Prophet (PBUH) have declined the honey on the third. This inconsistency shows it was not an event that truly occurred, but a fabricated yarn. Those who concocted it slandered the Mothers of the Believers and the Holy Prophet (PBUH). One should count it among the miracles of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) that, however cleverly a forged report may be crafted, there remains a flaw in its content that reveals to careful minds its falsity.
2. From the story it follows that when the Holy Prophet (PBUH) would visit the Mothers of the Believers in succession after Asr, he would come to Sawdah (RA) after Hafsa (RA); then to Aisha (RA); and after her to Safiyyah (RA). The actual order was otherwise. After the passing of Khadijah (RA), the Holy Prophet (PBUH) married Sawdah (RA), then Aisha (RA), then Hafsa (RA) in 2 AH after Badr, then Umm Salamah (RA) in 4 AH, then Zaynab bint Jahsh (RA) after the battles of Ahzab and Qurayzah in 5 AH, then Juwayriyyah bint al-Harith (RA) after Banu al-Mustaliq in 6 AH, then Umm Habibah bint Abi Sufyan (RA)—who was in Abyssinia and came to the Holy Prophet (PBUH) after Khaybar—then Safiyyah bint Huyayy (RA) soon after Khaybar, and a few months later in the same year Maymunah bint al-Harith (RA). In keeping with this sequence, his just and balanced nature set their turns; and in this order he would visit each briefly daily to inquire after their conditions and needs. Thus, he would visit Sawdah and Aisha (RA) before Hafsa (RA)—that is, before drinking any honey. This is decisive evidence that Aisha (RA) never related

the *maghafir* tale; rather, it was composed by someone ignorant of the established order among the Mothers of the Believers.

3. According to this report, the *maghafir* line was coached by Aisha (RA) only to Sawdah and Safiyyah (RA). Yet after drinking the honey at Hafsa's (RA), the Holy Prophet (PBUH) also visited Umm Salamah, Zaynab bint Jahsh, Juwayriyyah, Umm Habibah, and Maymunah (RA). None of them said to him that they noticed the odor of *maghafir*. If only Sawdah, Aisha, and Safiyyah (RA) had raised the matter, he would have taken it as their misperception. Would he not have reflected that the sense of smell was not deficient in the other six wives? If six perceived nothing, how did only these three notice it? In that case, he would necessarily have realized that the *maghafir* line was an artifice devised by these three.
4. The report explicitly states that Sawdah (RA) feared Aisha (RA). This is utterly meaningless. Sawdah (RA) was older in age, larger in build and stature, and she had entered the Holy Prophet's (PBUH) household before Aisha (RA)—indeed, for years she alone was his companion. And Aisha (RA) was neither quarrelsome nor ill-tempered. Why, then, would Sawdah (RA) fear her?
5. Lying is prohibited; prompting another to lie is also sinful; and to lie for a frivolous end—while coaching others to do so as well—is sin compounded. Likewise, to lie at someone else's prompting is sin, pure and simple. This report casts multiple stains of sin upon the pure character of the Mothers of the Believers—Ayshah, Sawdah, and Safiyyah (RA)—whereas the wives of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), rightly titled “the Purified Wives,” were devout servants of Allah, free from the moral defects that are imagined in women; they remained pure until the very end.
6. Even if, hypothetically, the Aisha (RA) had, under the provocation of jealousy and rivalry, fallen into this fault of untruth, she would later have felt deep remorse and would never have narrated the episode. When a person commits a sin and Allah veils it so that none discovers it, it is incumbent upon that person, whenever he remembers it, to seek forgiveness from Allah—and not to disgrace himself by publicizing it. Yet in the report before us there is not a word indicating that our Mother Aisha (RA) regretted any grave misdeed. The report suggests, rather, that she recounted the tale with relish. Was she so naïve? Never—by Allah, never. Our Mother Ayshah the Truthful did not relate this story at all. How could she assert what did not occur? Neither did this event take place, nor did she narrate it. It is the nonsense composed by an enemy of hers, relayed to Urwah b. al-Zubayr (or to Hisham b. Urwah), and Urwah (or Hisham), setting aside sound reason, believed it and transmitted it.

[To be continued]



UNCIVILIZED GAMES OF A CIVILIZED WORLD

Dr. Irfan Shehzad

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Human consciousness does not condone violence. Fighting in self-defence has never been deemed blameworthy, but violence for its own sake is something the human conscience cannot accept. As for violence as entertainment, there is no doubt about its reprehensibility. To inflict violence—or to have it inflicted—and to watch it as a spectacle are alike an insult to humanity, manifestations of savagery and barbarity. The human conscience has always raised a cry of protest against it. For this very reason the blood-soaked spectacles of gladiators have been consigned to the pages of history, and wars have been restrained. Yet despite this civilizational progress, a few relics of the age of savagery remain alive today in the form of violent sports. The modern, 'civilized' human being not only accepts them as normal and takes pleasure in them, but even advocates for them.

There are some sports of strength and agility in which injury is possible but not intended—the aim is merely to demonstrate physical superiority or skill—such as football, judo–karate, and kabaddi. But there are other sports whose very object is to injure the opponent and to prevail through violence—such as boxing and MMA. In these, points are awarded for landing blows, and a knockout secures certain victory. Under their rules, even if one player dies at the hands of another, it is regarded neither as intentional homicide nor as manslaughter.

Savage ferocity exists in human nature as an animal impulse—often described as the search for thrill—but not everyone has the courage to undergo the experience personally. Hence, to gratify this instinct, people sometimes set animals against one another and sometimes humans, creating the conditions that incite animals to fight and offering motives such as fame and wealth to induce humans to beat and be beaten, to kill and be killed. The victors in these sports are hailed as heroes; wealth and celebrity court them. Those who lose their lives in them are commemorated as martyrs, as if they had sacrificed themselves for public amusement.

The question, then, is whether such violent sports can have any justification.

It is said that since they are conducted with the consent of the participants and under set rules, they are permissible. But how can a fundamentally immoral act become moral and permissible merely by mutual consent and regulation? Striking another, winning by causing injury and harm—is that not in essence immoral? If it is, how can consent and a regulatory umbrella confer legitimacy? Human beings can be induced—by artfully crafted incentives—to do almost anything, licit or illicit.

The practice of *sati* in India is illustrative. There was a time when becoming *sati* was esteemed a mark of fidelity and honor. Women regarded it as a matter of pride. The British had to struggle hard to abolish it; they tried to dissuade women through various inducements, yet many still preferred to become *sati*. Their consent was

involved, but the human conscience did not countenance it. Today no one seeks an ethical warrant for it. If a person's suicide is not deemed acceptable merely because he consents to it, how can people be permitted—knowingly—to beat and batter one another? How can it be reasonable that more violence is impermissible but less violence is permissible?

Public indifference toward violent sports stems from their having become normalized in our civilization. Human psychology has the property that, once habituated, it ceases to perceive even grave evils as repugnant. Yet when attention is drawn to them, the sound human nature awakens.

Violent sports should be deemed oppression and aggression—morally reprehensible and legally prohibited. For Muslims, in any case, these sports are impermissible: their God forbids wrongdoing and excess and prohibits casting one's own life into destruction.



SALAT AL-TASBIH: IN THE LIGHT OF FIQH AND HADITH - 1

Dr. Amir Gazdar

Introduction

Salat al-Tasbih is a four-rakah supererogatory prayer performed in a somewhat distinctive manner, widely regarded in our society as a highly meritorious act. Because it involves frequent recitation of *tasbihat*, it is called *Salat al-Tasbih* (also *Salat al-Tasabih*). Reports ascribed to the Prophet (PBUH) from some primary hadith sources mention this prayer; hence it is known among scholars as well. Moreover, since it appears throughout the standard merits compilations used by our preachers and public speakers, this prayer has become practically popular among the general public. Even so, the attribution of this prayer to the Messenger of God (PBUH), its proof, and its legitimacy within the religion have been matters of dispute among our scholars, jurists, and hadith experts—so much so that dedicated treatises and articles have been written on it. There was, therefore, a need for a research essay that would comprehensively and impartially survey the issue on the basis of clear argument, acquaint readers with the positions of the jurists and scholars, explain the reasons for their disagreements, examine all transmitted reports about this prayer in the light of the principles of hadith criticism, and finally present the conclusions of the investigation. The present essay has been written for precisely this purpose.

Scholarly opinions and the reason for disagreement

Among jurists and scholars there is disagreement over the institutional legitimacy of *Salat al-Tasbih*. Some scholars deem it a commendable *nafl* prayer and, as evidence, adduce certain transmitted (verbal) reports. This view is reported from Abdullah bin al-Mubarak; from some Shafis such as al-Baghawi, al-Ghazali, al-Muhamali, al-Subki, and al-Haytami; and from the Hanafis, Ibn Abidin.¹ Ibn Qudamah al-Hanbali states that even if the hadith about *Salat al-Tasbih* is weak, there is no harm in performing the prayer—i.e., it is permissible—because this pertains to the domain of merits, and in matters of *fazail* and *nawafil*, the strict authenticity of a report is not a stipulation.² By contrast, many jurists, hadith scholars, and researchers hold that *Salat al-Tasbih* is not legislated, on the grounds that no report from the Prophet (PBUH) about it is soundly established, and that the method of its performance differs from the general form of prayer known from the Sunnah; thus, such a distinctive, high-merit prayer would have to be transmitted through authentic, reliable reports before it could be accepted as part of the religion.³ This latter position is held by Imam Ahmad, Imam al-Tirmidhi, Imam Abu Jafar al-Uqayli, Qazi Abu Bakr Ibn al-‘Arabi, ‘Allamah Ibn al-Jawzi, Hanbali jurists, some Hanafi jurists, Imam Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn ‘Abd al-Hadi, Siraj al-Din al-Qazwini, Ibn Diyah al-Kalbi, Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, Allamah al-Shawkani, Muhammad al-Amir al-Maliki, Imam Ibn Baz, and Imam Ibn Uthaymin.⁴

¹ See: al-Nawawī, *al-Majmū‘ Sharh al-Muhadhdhab*, 4:55; *Nihayat al-Muhtaj*, 2:123–124; Dr. Khalid al-Ḥayik, *al-Tanqih wa-l-Tarjih li-l-Ikhtilaf al-Waqi‘ fi Salat al-Tasbih*.

² See: Al-Mughanna, Ibn Qudamah 2/98

³ See: *al-Mawsu‘ah al-Fiqhiyyah al-Kuwaytiyyah* (Kuwait: Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs), pp. 27, 150–151.

⁴ See: *al-Mawsu‘ah al-Fiqhiyyah* (al-Durar al-Saniyyah), *Kitab al-Salah*, *Bab Sabi‘: Salat al-Tatawwu‘*, *al-Fasl al-Awwal: Aqam Salat al-Tatawwu‘*, *al-Mabḥath al-Thalith: al-Sunan al-Muwaqqatah*, *al-Matlab al-Khamis: Salat al-Tasbih* (al-

The real cause of this disagreement is whether the reports about this prayer are established or not. Those who deem the reports acceptable affirm its legitimacy; those who allow weak reports in the domain of *fazail* and *nawafil*, while acknowledging the weakness of the relevant hadiths, still consider performing the prayer permissible. Those researchers who hold that no report about this prayer is established from the Prophet (PBUH)—and that such a prayer cannot be admitted even under merits—regard it as unsubstantiated and non-legislated.

Primary Source and Outline of Salat al-Tasbih

What fundamentally serves as the basis of inference regarding this prayer are several verbal reports ascribed to the Prophet (PBUH) and transmitted, via certain Companions, in some hadith collections. A detailed analysis of all routes and corroborations of these reports—according to the principles of *isnad* and *matn* criticism—will be presented later in this essay. Leaving aside their *isnad* for the moment, we cite here, for a brief descriptive introduction, one version from Sunan Abi Dawud:

عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ لِلْعَبَّاسِ بْنِ عَبْدِ الْمُطَّلِبِ: ”يَا عَبَّاسُ، يَا عَمَّاهُ، أَلَا أُعْطِيكَ، أَلَا أَمْنُحُكَ، أَلَا أُحِبُّوكَ، أَلَا أَفْعَلُ بِكَ عَشْرَ خِصَالٍ، إِذَا أَنْتَ فَعَلْتَ ذَلِكَ غَفَرَ اللَّهُ لَكَ ذَنْبَكَ أَوَّلَهُ وَآخِرَهُ، قَدِيمَهُ وَحَدِيثَهُ، خَطَأَهُ وَعَمْدَهُ، صَغِيرَهُ وَكَبِيرَهُ، سِرَّهُ وَعَلَانِيَتَهُ، عَشْرَ خِصَالٍ: أَنْ تُصَلِّيَ أَرْبَعَ رَكَعَاتٍ تَقْرَأُ فِي كُلِّ رَكَعَةٍ فَاتِحَةَ الْكِتَابِ وَسُورَةَ فَإِذَا فَرَغْتَ مِنَ الْقِرَاءَةِ فِي أَوَّلِ رَكَعَةٍ وَأَنْتَ قَائِمٌ، قُلْتَ: سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ، وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، خَمْسَ عَشْرَةَ مَرَّةً، ثُمَّ تَرَكَعُ، فَقُولُهَا وَأَنْتَ رَاكِعٌ عَشْرًا، ثُمَّ تَرْفَعُ رَأْسَكَ مِنَ الرُّكُوعِ، فَقُولُهَا عَشْرًا، ثُمَّ تَهْوِي سَاجِدًا، فَقُولُهَا وَأَنْتَ سَاجِدٌ عَشْرًا، ثُمَّ تَرْفَعُ رَأْسَكَ مِنَ السُّجُودِ فَقُولُهَا عَشْرًا، ثُمَّ تَسْجُدُ، فَقُولُهَا عَشْرًا، ثُمَّ تَرْفَعُ رَأْسَكَ، فَقُولُهَا عَشْرًا، فَذَلِكَ خَمْسٌ وَسَبْعُونَ، فِي كُلِّ رَكَعَةٍ تَفْعَلُ ذَلِكَ فِي أَرْبَعَ رَكَعَاتٍ، إِنْ اسْتَطَعْتَ أَنْ تُصَلِّيَهَا فِي كُلِّ يَوْمٍ مَرَّةً فَافْعَلْ، فَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ⁵، فَفِي كُلِّ جُمُعَةٍ مَرَّةً، فَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فِي كُلِّ شَهْرٍ مَرَّةً، فَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فِي كُلِّ سَنَةٍ مَرَّةً، فَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ، فَفِي عُمْرِكَ مَرَّةً“

Abdullah bin Abbas (RA) reports that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said to al-Abbas bin Abd al-Muttalib: ‘O Abbas, O my uncle—shall I not grant you, bestow upon you, favor you, do for you ten things? If you do them, Allah will forgive your sins—first and last, old and new, committed by mistake and deliberately, small and great, secret and open. Ten things: you perform four rakahs, reciting al-Fatihah and a surah in each rakah. When you finish the recitation in the first rakah while still standing, you say: “Subhan Allah, wa-l-hamdu lillah, wa-la ilaha illa Allah, wa-Allahu Akbar” fifteen times. Then you bow (ruku) and say it ten times while bowing; then you raise your head from ruku and say it ten times; then you go down in prostration and say it ten times; then you raise your head from prostration and say it ten times; then you prostrate again and say it ten times; then you raise your head and say it ten times. That amounts to seventy-five in each rakah. You do this in all four rakahs. If you can perform it once every day, then do so; if not, then once every Friday; if not, then once every month; if not, then once every year; and if not, then at least once in your lifetime.’

According to the above report, the procedural detail is as follows: the prayer consists of four rakahs. In each rakah, after reciting Surat al-Fatihah and another portion of the Quran while standing, one recites the tasbih “سبحان الله، والحمد لله، ولا إله إلا الله، والله أكبر” fifteen times. Then, in each of the positions—ruku, after rising from ruku (*qawmah*), each of the two prostrations, the sitting between them (*jalsah*), and the sitting after the second prostration (*qadah*)—one recites the same *tasbih* ten times. Thus, there are seventy-five *tasbihat* in each rakah and three hundred in the four rakahs, all performed in this manner. As for its merit, it is stated that the one who performs it will have all sins forgiven: earlier and later, old and new, inadvertent and deliberate, small and great, hidden and manifest.

Tasabih).

And see: Dr. Khalid al-Hayik, *al-Tanqih wa-l-Tarjih lil-Ikhtilaf al-Waqi‘ fi Salat al-Tasbih*.

⁵ Sunnan Abi Daud, No. 1297

Some Historical Facts Regarding Salat al-Tasbih

Before proceeding further with inquiry and analysis, it is appropriate to present several preliminary historical observations:

1. Throughout his life, the Messenger of God (PBUH) is not reported—whether in hadith, athar, or -history—to have ever performed this prayer. There is no mention of his practice of it, neither in any reliable report, nor even in a weak or forged one.
2. Including the Rightly Guided Caliphs, no Companion is authentically reported to have performed *Salat al-Tasbih*.
3. Among the Successors (tabiun), apart from Abu al-Jawza Aws bin Abdullah al-Ruba'i, there is no evidence of this prayer being performed.
4. None of the four imams of the schools is recorded in the legal compendia as having declared this prayer recommended.
5. Of the four Imams, Imam Ahmad explicitly denied that this prayer is established.⁶
6. The principal references of Maliki and Hanafi fiqh are, as a rule, silent regarding the legitimacy and recommendation of *Salat al-Tasbih*.⁷
7. Most leading hadith scholars did not include any single report about *Salat al-Tasbih* in their hadith works. Among the primary sources of hadith and athar—listed chronologically—are the following:
 1. Jami of Mamar bin Rashid (153 AH)
 2. Al-Muwatta of Malik (179 AH)
 3. Ahadith of Ismail bin Jafar al-Madani (180 AH)
 4. Al-Athar, Qazi Abu Yusuf (182 AH)
 5. Al-Athar, Muhammad bin al-Hasan al-Shaybani (189 AH)
 6. Jami' of Ibn Wahb (197 AH)
 7. Musnad of al-Tayalisi (204 AH)
 8. Musnad of al-Shafi'i (204 AH)
 9. Musnad of al-Humaydi (219 AH)
 10. Sunan of Sa'id bin Mansur (227 AH)
 11. Musnad of Ibn Ja'd (230 AH)
 12. Al-Musannaf of Ibn Abi Shaybah (235 AH)
 13. Musnad of Ishaq (238 AH)
 14. Musnad of Ahmad (241 AH)
 15. Al-Zuhd of Hanad bin al-Sarri (243 AH)
 16. Musnad of 'Abd bin Humayd (249 AH)
 17. Sunan of al-Darimi (255 AH)
 18. Sahih Bukhari (256 AH)
 19. Sahih Muslim (261 AH)
 20. Musnad of al-Harith (282 AH)
 21. Al-Sunnah of Ibn Abi 'Asim (287 AH)

⁶ See: Al-Mughanna, Ibn Qudamah 2/98

⁷ See: *al-Mawsu'ah al-Fiqhiyyah al-Kuwaytiyyah* (Kuwait: Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs), p. 27; pp. 150–151.

22. Al-Ahad wa-l-Mathani of Ibn Abi 'Asim (287 AH)
23. Al-Sunnah of Abdullah bin Ahmad (290 AH)
24. Musnad of al-Bazzar (292 AH)
25. Al-Sunan al-Sughra of al-Nasa'i (303 AH)
26. Al-Sunan al-Kubra of al-Nasa'i (303 AH)
27. Musnad of Abi Ya'la (307 AH)
28. Al-Muntaqa of Ibn al-Jarud (307 AH)
29. Musnad of al-Sarraj (313 AH)
30. Mustakhraj of Abi 'Awanah (316 AH)
31. Sharh Ma'ani al-Athar, al-Tahawi (321 AH)
32. Sharh Mushkil al-Athar, al-Tahawi (321 AH)
33. Musnad of al-Shashi (335 AH)
34. Mujam of Ibn Arabi (340 AH)
35. Mujam al-Sahabah of Ibn Qani (351 AH)
36. Sahih Ibn Hibban (354 AH)
37. Sunan of al-Daraqutni (385 AH)
38. Fawa'id of Tammam (414 AH)
39. Mustakhraj of Abi Nuaym (430 AH)
40. Marifat al-Sahabah of Abi Nuaym (430 AH)
41. Musnad al-Shihab (454 AH)

It should therefore be kept in mind that from the second to the fifth Islamic centuries, the foregoing primary sources of hadith and athar are entirely silent regarding "Salat al-Tasbih." This list includes such renowned and widely-accepted works as the Muwatta' of Malik; the Athar of Abu Yusuf and of Muhammad bin al-Hasan; the Musnads of al-Tayalisi, al-Shafi, al-Humaydi, Ishaq, and Ahmad; the Musannaf of Ibn Abi Shaybah; Sunan al-Darimi; the Sahihayn; Musnad al-Bazzar; the two Sunans of al-Nasai; Musnad Abi Yala; al-Tahawi's two works; Sahih Ibn Hibban; and Sunan al-Daraqutni. A most significant scholarly question thus arises: why did the majority of these eminent hadith scholars omit any mention of this prayer and refrain from extracting any report in support of it?

Evidently the reason can only be one of two: either these hadith authorities did not find any report on this matter from their teachers and therefore had nothing to include; or they were aware of such reports but, by the rules of the hadith discipline, did not judge them to reach the level of authenticity, and thus deemed them unworthy of consideration. Otherwise, it is inconceivable that a nafl prayer—distinctive in its performance, and claimed to carry exceptional merit—would be ignored by the leading hadith masters if it were in fact soundly transmitted.

From this it is established that, in the judgment of the aforementioned hadith scholars, no hadith about Salat al-Tasbih was sahih or reliable; on this basis they did not accept the inclusion of any such report in their compilations.

[To be continued]



UNVEILING OVERLOOKED SYMBOLS: HOW ESCHATOLOGICAL SIGNS IN HADITH ALIGN WITH HISTORICAL EVENTS IN THE LIGHT OF THE BIBLE AND THE QURAN

Dr. Muhammad Saad Saleem

This article is last of the four-part series

Descent of Jesus – the Coming of the Messiah

The descent of Jesus (PBUH) from the heavens is one of the ten major signs of the Day of Judgment, mentioned only in the Hadith. Like other prophecies, this descent has been interpreted symbolically as a state. This symbolic interpretation corresponds to the vision presented in the Book of Daniel, where the final era of the Babylonian Empire is likened to a human figure.⁸

This state, as the saviour of humanity or the 'chosen one' by God—that is, like a Messiah—plays a decisive role in the great conflict between Gog and Magog. The alignment of European nations against each other as a result of the fascist state of Germany, which is described in Sūrah Al-Kahf as Gog and Magog "surging against each other like waves" before the trumpet is blown, reflects this catastrophic clash.⁹ Furthermore, this state also aligns itself against the Dajjāl (the false Messiah), i.e., the Soviet Union—the power that kept making false promises of delivering humanity from suffering, but in reality became a source of atheism, state oppression, and religious persecution. From World War II to the end of the Cold War, the United States played this symbolic role in this context.

It is noteworthy here that the scope of the return of Jesus (PBUH) is described in the Hadith, where his battle against the Dajjāl and confrontation with Gog and Magog are mentioned. We should limit our expectations to these events as described in the Hadith, because this return is not, in the true sense, the return of the Prophet, but rather a symbolic phenomenon. Had the United States not played a prominent role as a global power during World War II and the Cold War, the world would have been drastically different in terms of scientific progress and geopolitics, as the dominance of fascist and communist states could have severely affected global conditions.

⁸ Daniel 7:4 (New International Version), *Bible.com*, accessed May 17, 2025, <https://www.bible.com/bible/111/dan.7.4.NIV>.

⁹ Quran 18:99, *Quran.com*, accessed May 17, 2025, <https://quran.com/18/99>.

Arguments Against the Physical Descent of Prophet Jesus (PBUH)

The purpose of this article is not to prove the descent of Jesus (PBUH) in a physical or symbolic sense. The renowned Islamic scholar Javed Ahmad Ghāmīdī has discussed this topic in detail.¹⁰

Evidence from the Qur'an

The arguments of Javed Ahmad Ghāmīdī, which are against the physical descent of Jesus (PBUH), are based on several Qur'anic references:

Details of the Life of Jesus (PBUH) in the Qur'an

The Qur'an describes all the significant aspects of Jesus's life (PBUH), from his miraculous birth to his death, ascension, and resurrection on the Day of Judgment. However, the Qur'an does not mention his descent before the Day of Judgment, which is a key argument against the concept of physical descent.

Mention of the Death and Ascension of Jesus (PBUH)

The Qur'an clearly mentions the death of Jesus (PBUH). It explicitly states that Jesus (PBUH) was saved from the crucifixion¹¹ and, after his death, his body was ascended.¹²

Lack of Knowledge of Divinity After Ascension

In Sūrah Al-Ma'idah, on the Day of Judgment, Jesus (PBUH) states that he never instructed people to worship him or his mother (peace be upon her). He further clarifies that after his ascension, Allah alone was a witness to the deeds of the people, and he had no knowledge of their subsequent actions.¹³ This lack of knowledge indicates that he did not return to Earth to witness these events. Some scholars argue that this statement was only for those who lived during the time of Jesus (PBUH). However, historical evidence shows that the event of granting divine status to Mary (peace be upon her) occurred at the Council of Ephesus in 431 CE, centuries after the time of Jesus (PBUH). In the early centuries of Christianity, his mother (peace be upon her) was not worshipped as divine, and this concept developed later. These facts indicate that the question posed to Jesus (PBUH) on the Day of Judgment is not limited to his followers before his ascension, but is also relevant to all Christians who came after him, which shows that Jesus (PBUH) will not return to this world after his death and ascension.

Islamic Scholars' Opinions Against the Physical Descent

Many scholars have questioned the physical return of Prophet Jesus (PBUH). Some of these opinions are presented here:¹⁴

Mawlānā Maḥmūd Ḥasan (Renowned Ḥanafī Scholar)

He considered these Hadiths to be influenced by Jewish traditions and criticised their authenticity.

Mawlānā 'Ubayd Allah Sindhi

According to him, the Jews fabricated these Hadiths to weaken the dominance of Muslims.

¹⁰ Syed Manzoor-ul-Hasan, *Nazul-e-Masīḥ* (Ghāmīdī Institute of Islamic Learning, November 2023).

¹¹ Quran 4:157, *Quran.com*, accessed May 17, 2025, <https://quran.com/4/157>.

¹² Quran 3:55, *Quran.com*, accessed May 17, 2025, <https://quran.com/3/55>.

¹³ Quran 5:116–117, *Quran.com*, accessed May 17, 2025, <https://quran.com/5/116-117>.

¹⁴ Syed Manzoor-ul-Hasan, *Nazul-e-Masīḥ* (Ghāmīdī Institute of Islamic Learning, November 2023).

‘Allāmah Maḥmūd Shaltūt (Egyptian Scholar)

He examined these Hadiths critically and questioned their authenticity.

Mawlānā Shabbīr Aḥmad Azhār Mīrūthī

He regarded these Hadiths as being in conflict with the principle of the finality of Prophethood.

Mawlānā Abū al-Kalām Āzād

He said that the descent of Jesus (PBUH) can only be accepted when the Qur’an explicitly mentions it.

‘Allāmah Muhammad Iqbal

He considered the concept of the descent of Jesus (PBUH) as a result of influences external to Islam.

Qamar Aḥmad ‘Uthmānī (Deobandi Scholar)

He regarded the principle of the Finality of Prophethood as incompatible with the possibility of the return of Jesus (PBUH).

Correction of a Common Misunderstanding

Sūrah al-Nisā’, verse 159:

Among the People of the Book, there is none but will certainly believe in (this Qur’an) before his death, and on the Day of Resurrection, he will be a witness against them.

This verse is often presented in support of the physical descent of Jesus (PBUH).

However, the context of this verse makes it clear that it refers to the People of the Book during the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It is presented as a warning, stating that these People of the Book will acknowledge the Qur’an as the Book of Allah before their death, even if they do not openly admit it. On the Day of Resurrection, this acknowledgment will serve as evidence against them.

The Symbolic Meaning of Authentic Hadith

In this article, the authentic Hadiths regarding the descent of Jesus (PBUH) have been accepted as authoritative. However, the events described in these Hadiths as occurring before the Day of Judgment are presented as allegories rather than literal physical occurrences.

The Accounts of Jesus (PBUH) and the Dajjāl in the Hadith

In this article, a separate chapter has been dedicated to the Dajjāl. Accordingly, this section includes only those details about the Dajjāl that were not mentioned in the previous chapter. The Hadith reports cited here are presented in chronological order, and the final Hadith briefly summarises the confrontation between the Dajjāl and Jesus (PBUH) — interpreted here as the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States.

The Emergence of the Dajjāl, People’s Belief in Him, Famine upon the Disbelievers, and the Extraction of Earth’s Treasures (1922–1937)

In the chapter on the Dajjāl, a detailed discussion is presented on the events ranging from his appearance to the extraction of the treasures of the earth, which can be read there. These events correspond closely with the establishment of the Soviet Union in 1922 to its Second Five-Year Plan (1933–1937).

The Dajjāl's Killing of the Young Man and the Descent of Jesus (PBUH) at the Eastern Minaret of Damascus — the Communist Takeover in Yugoslavia and the U.S. Entry into Colonial Muslim Lands (November 1942)

According to the Hadith, the Dajjāl will kill a young man and then bring him back to life, and the young man will return laughing with joy. At that very moment, Allah will cause Jesus (PBUH) to descend at the white minaret in eastern Damascus.¹⁵

As previously mentioned, the act of the Dajjāl killing people and then reviving them actually symbolises the communist revolutions, where previous governments are overthrown by force and new governments are established in their place. This young man represents Yugoslavia, which was established in 1918 and became known as the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929. During the Second World War, after the German invasion of Yugoslavia, the communist movement gained momentum. In November 1942, the communists established the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) to organise the movement for Yugoslavia's independence, and at that time, they gained control over some regions of Yugoslavia. Notably, many regions of Yugoslavia willingly accepted the new communist authority, and the young man's joyful return symbolises the nation's seamless ideological transformation—"killed" and "revived" without resistance.

In the same month of November 1942, the United States, together with the Allied forces, launched its first major ground operation—Operation Torch. In Hadith, the "minaret" is generally regarded as a symbol of a region's Muslim population and Islamic identity, and the "descent upon the white minaret" is symbolically interpreted as the entry of the United States into those Muslim-majority regions—such as Algeria and Morocco—where this military action took place. At that time, these areas were under the control of Christian colonial powers, and after the European war fronts, these regions had become significant military arenas. For this reason, the Hadith depicts the mosque as being in Damascus, just as during the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Damascus was an important military centre under the rule of the Byzantine Christian Empire.

The eastern part of Damascus historically opened towards the desert, from where, during the Byzantine era, Arab tribes or Iranian armies would often launch attacks. Similarly, in the Second World War, the United States entered North Africa via the Mediterranean Sea and carried out its first major land military operation from this very direction—the same route through which foreign invaders had repeatedly passed throughout history.

The Scene of the Descent of Jesus (PBUH) — America's Entry into the Second World War and the Beginning of Its Global Role (1942 Onward)

The Hadith states that Prophet Jesus (PBUH) will descend to earth dressed in saffron-coloured garments, with his hands resting on the wings of two angels. When he bows his head, drops like dew will fall from it, and when he raises his head, drops like pearls will scatter like dew.¹⁶

Here, the act of descending with hands placed on the wings of angels symbolises the factors that brought the United States into the Second World War—including Japan's attack on the United States and the declarations of war by Germany and Italy. Following these events, the United States abandoned its isolationist policy and decided to play an active role on the global stage. Similarly, the scene of Prophet Jesus (PBUH) bowing and then raising his head, with drops scattering like pearls of sweat, symbolises the United States' dignified entry into the Second

¹⁵ Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, *Sabih Muslim* 2937a, accessed May 17, 2025, <https://sunnah.com/muslim:2937a>.

¹⁶ Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, *Sabih Muslim* 2937a, accessed May 17, 2025, <https://sunnah.com/muslim:2937a>.

World War, while the saffron-coloured garment is a metaphor for the United States' economic greatness and boundless resources.

The Fragrance of the Breath of Prophet Jesus (PBUH) and the Death of the Disbelievers—Moral Narrative and the Defeat of Enemies in the Second World War (1942–1945)

It is stated in the Hadith that any disbeliever who encounters the fragrance of the breath of Prophet Jesus (PBUH) will not survive, but will perish, and the breath of Prophet Jesus (PBUH) will reach as far as his gaze can extend.¹⁷

This narration, found in Sahih Muslim, mentions the Dajjāl's appearance and end before the events of Gog and Magog.¹⁸ Since the emergence of the Soviet Union (Dajjāl) occurred before Nazi Germany (Gog and Magog), the Hadith mentions and concludes the account of the Dajjāl first. This sequence reflects the traditional structure of parallel narratives, in which one subject is completed before moving to another parallel topic—even if both events occurred in the same historical period. The major events of the Second World War related to the Dajjāl are concisely encapsulated in the symbolic statement "the fragrance of the breath of Prophet Jesus and the destruction of the disbelievers," and the narrative of the Hadith concludes with the destruction of the Dajjāl. After this, the Hadith separately details the events of Gog and Magog, representing the parallel yet distinct historical aspects of that era.

In this context, the "fragrance of the breath" of Prophet Jesus (PBUH) symbolically represents the moral narrative that stood against racism, aggression, and fascism, and which the United States adopted during the Second World War. Here, "disbelievers" refers to the opposing Axis powers—namely, Germany, Italy, and Japan—who rejected this narrative. Their destruction not only symbolically expresses their decisive defeat in the war, but also represents the far-reaching effects of this "breath," which attests to the success of that moral narrative. This narrative laid the foundation for a new global consensus after the war, in the form of the United Nations, human rights, and global peace initiatives.

Prophet Jesus (PBUH), the Muslims, and the Struggle Against Dajjāl

The Hadith presents two seemingly divergent reports regarding the Muslims who will stand with Prophet Jesus (PBUH) in his struggle against the Dajjāl: one in which he leads it, and another in which he declines the invitation to lead the prayer. At first glance, these narrations appear contradictory. Yet, when understood within their historical context, they reflect two distinct political realities that parallel the experiences of Muslim states during the Cold War.

This stands in contrast to those who, after three great tremors strike Medina, will rush towards the Dajjāl instead. (See the chapter on Dajjāl for the account of those who turn towards him.)

Prophet Jesus (PBUH) Leading the Prayer — Turkey's Alignment Through NATO Membership (1952 Onward)

One Hadith describes that when the time for prayer arrives, Prophet Jesus (PBUH) will descend and lead the prayer.¹⁹

¹⁷ Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, *Sahih Muslim* 2937a, accessed May 17, 2025, <https://sunnah.com/muslim:2937a>.

¹⁸ Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, *Sahih Muslim* 2937a, accessed May 17, 2025, <https://sunnah.com/muslim:2937a>.

¹⁹ Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, *Sahih Muslim* 2897, accessed May 17, 2025, <https://sunnah.com/muslim:2897>.

This narration includes successive historical references to Turkish Muslims: Muslims confronting the Romans at al-A‘māq (linked to the Battle of Antioch during the First Crusade, fought by Seljuk Turkish Muslims), the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 by the Ottomans, and finally the “hanging up of swords,” recalling the Ottomans’ surrender in 1918. Taken together, these references suggest that the Hadith points specifically to the Turkish experience. Under the chapter on the Dajjāl, see the section on the events preceding his arrival for further details.

Here, the “time for prayer” represents the decisive moment when nations arrange themselves in rows under a single leadership, while the descent of Prophet Jesus (PBUH) corresponds to the entry of the United States onto the world stage during the Second World War. After the war, Turkey decisively aligned itself with the United States—first through the Truman Doctrine in 1947, and later with its accession to NATO in 1952. In this way, Turkey practically and symbolically took its place in the congregation, standing in line behind U.S. leadership.

The Refusal of Prophet Jesus (PBUH) to Lead the Prayer — America’s Avoidance of Leading the Baghdad Pact (1955–1959)

Another Hadith states that the leader of the Muslims will invite Prophet Jesus (PBUH) to lead the prayer, but he will decline, saying: “Some of you are leaders over others.”²⁰ In another narration, it is mentioned: “Your Imām will be from among you.”²¹

These Hadiths can be understood through the lens of the early Cold War. At that time, the United States deliberately refrained from assuming direct command in leading Muslim countries against the Soviet Union. Instead, it encouraged Muslim-majority states to take on the role of leadership. The symbolic meanings within this Hadith can be interpreted as follows:

Congregational Prayer: Just as the congregational prayer (ṣalāh) requires Muslims to align themselves in orderly rows behind an imām, the Hadith presents prayer as a metaphor for collective discipline, unity, and decisive alignment under leadership.

Leader of Muslims: In this context, the leader represents Pakistan. After independence in 1947, Pakistan consciously positioned itself as a vanguard of the Muslim world. The founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah and subsequent leaders framed the state as both Islamic and strategically pivotal. Pakistan advanced its leadership vision by convening early “Islamic conferences” and cultivating ties with Arab states. U.S. policymakers similarly envisioned Pakistan as a potential “centre of gravity” for a broader Muslim bloc in South Asia.²²

Invitation to Lead the Prayer: In the early 1950s, Pakistan aligned with the United States, joining SEATO (1954) and the Baghdad Pact (later CENTO, 1955), casting itself as the natural Muslim ally against communism. The Muslim leader’s invitation to Prophet Jesus (PBUH) to lead the prayer symbolises Pakistan’s appeal for the United States to assume leadership of the Baghdad Pact—a coalition of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, and the

²⁰ Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, *Sahih Muslim* 156, accessed May 17, 2025, <https://sunnah.com/muslim:156>.

²¹ Muḥammad al-Bukhārī, *Sahih al-Bukhārī* 3449, accessed May 17, 2025, <https://sunnah.com/bukhari:3449>.

²² U.S. Department of State. 1950. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, Volume V*. Document 837. Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office. Accessed August 24, 2025. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950v05/d837>

United Kingdom.²³²⁴²⁵ Pakistan envisioned the pact on the model of NATO, where the United States had taken command, integrated allied forces, and extended the protection of its nuclear umbrella.

Refusal to Lead the Prayer: The refusal symbolises the United States' consistent unwillingness to join the Baghdad Pact as a full member, despite Pakistan's repeated appeals. In sharp contrast to its role in NATO—where it assumed decisive leadership and offered clear security guarantees—the United States deliberately avoided taking on such responsibility in the Middle East.

The Search for the Dajjāl – Uncovering Soviet Manoeuvres (from 1946 Onward)

Prophet Jesus (PBUH) searching for the Dajjāl in the Hadith²⁶ symbolises the United States' active efforts during the Cold War to identify communist activities, assess their influence and weaknesses, and sometimes use military and covert power to contain their spread.

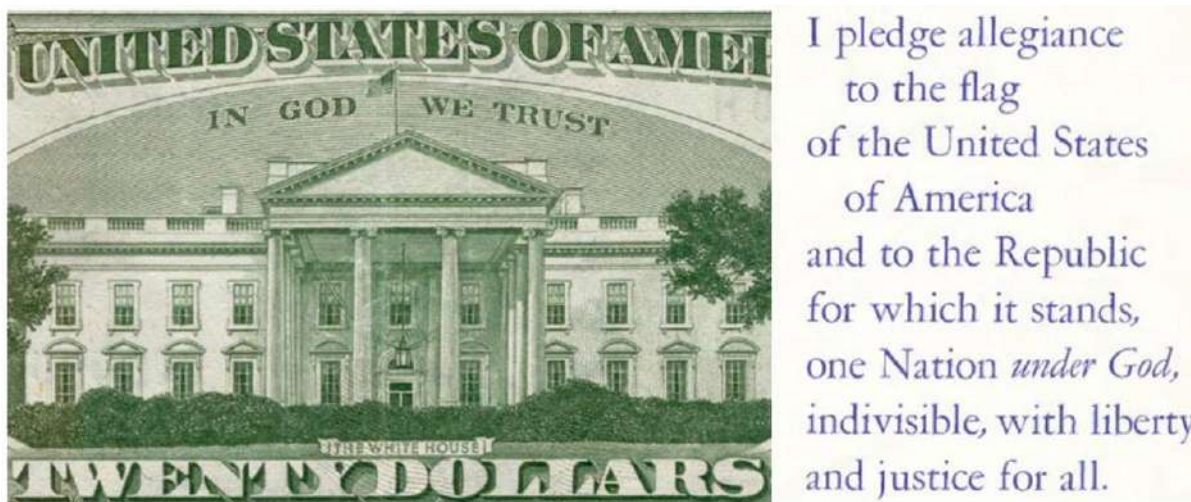


Figure 5: In 1956, the U.S. adopted “In God We Trust” as the official national motto (left), and the words “under God” (right) were added to the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954. This reinforced the U.S.'s alignment with faith, directly opposing the former USSR's atheistic ideology.²⁷

²³ U.S. Department of State. 1955–1957. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–1957, Near East Region; Iran; Iraq, Volume XII*. Document 145. Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office. Accessed September 2, 2025. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v12/d145>

²⁴ U.S. Department of State. 1955–1957. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–1957, South Asia, Volume VIII*. Document 219. Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office. Accessed September 2, 2025. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v08/d219>

²⁵ U.S. Department of State. 1955–1957. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–1957, Near East Region; Iran; Iraq, Volume XII*. Document 137. Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office. Accessed September 2, 2025. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v12/d137>

²⁶ Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, *Sahih Muslim* 2937a, accessed May 17, 2025, <https://sunnah.com/muslim:2937a>.

²⁷ “In God We Trust,” *Wikipedia*, last modified May 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/In_God_We_Trust; and “Pledge of Allegiance,” *Wikimedia Commons*, accessed May 17, 2025, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Pledge_of_Allegiance.

The Melting of the Dajjāl After Seeing Jesus (PBUH) – the Soviet Union’s Economic Drainage After the Cuban Missile Crisis (October 1962 Onward)

The Hadith describes that the Dajjāl melts away after seeing Prophet Jesus (PBUH) like salt in water.²⁸

A parallel of this Hadith can be drawn to the Cuban Missile Crisis, the only moment in the Cold War when the United States and the Soviet Union faced each other directly.

The outcome of this confrontation was not a Soviet victory, but the exposure of its structural weaknesses. The USSR’s placement of nuclear missiles in Cuba was, in effect, an admission that it lacked the long-range strike capability that the United States already possessed through intercontinental ballistic missiles and strategic bombers. The U.S. naval blockade of Cuba further revealed the weakness of the Soviet navy, which was unable to challenge American maritime power. Economically, the Soviet Union was also at a disadvantage, since its rigid system could not sustain a prolonged standoff, while the U.S. economy was flexible and capable of escalation. Politically, the resolution of the crisis highlighted the Soviet Union’s vulnerability. Although the USSR secured a quiet concession (the withdrawal of U.S. missiles from Turkey), the public perception was one of retreat. The USSR’s aura of superpower equality was shown to be fragile, and the gap between propaganda and reality became undeniable.

In response, the Soviet leadership invested heavily in building up military capabilities to prevent a repeat humiliation. Yet this effort drained vast resources, contributing to the slow “melting” of the USSR — a process that mirrors the Hadith’s imagery of the Dajjāl dissolving upon the sight of Jesus (PBUH).

The Blood of the Dajjāl on Jesus’ (PBUH) Spear – Soviet Losses in Afghanistan with American Weaponry (1986–1989)

According to the Hadith, if Allah were to abandon the Dajjāl, he would gradually melt and perish; however, Allah has decreed that Dajjāl will be slain at the hands of Jesus (PBUH). Thereafter, Jesus (PBUH) will display the Dajjāl’s blood upon his spear before the people.²⁹

This image of blood on the spear finds a striking parallel in the Afghan War of the 1980s. At the outset, the Mujāhidīn resisted the Soviet invasion largely with captured or covertly supplied Soviet-made arms, funnelled through the CIA to mask American involvement. Only later did the United States introduce its own advanced weaponry — most famously the Stinger missile — which became the true “spear” piercing Soviet air power.

The blood upon that spear was not just the visible loss of aircraft and soldiers, but the deeper draining of the USSR’s morale, economic resources, and willpower to fight. The sight of Soviet helicopters falling from the sky came to symbolise the turning of the war, and with it the unravelling of Soviet prestige.

Yet, even if such weapons had never been supplied — as the Hadith itself suggests — the Soviet Union was already melting under the weight of its internal weaknesses and economic failures. The spear simply hastened the process and displayed its cost before the world, making the U.S.-supplied arms a symbol of the USSR’s defeat.

²⁸ Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, *Sahih Muslim* 2897, accessed May 17, 2025, <https://sunnah.com/muslim:2897>.

²⁹ Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, *Sahih Muslim* 2897, accessed May 17, 2025, <https://sunnah.com/muslim:2897>.

Catching the Dajjāl at Lod and Killing Him — U.S. Pressure on the Soviet System and the End of the Communist Party’s Monopoly after the Fall of the Berlin Wall (1989–1990)

According to the Hadith, Prophet Jesus (PBUH) will “get hold of Dajjāl at the gate of Lod and kill him.”³⁰

During the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), Lod was an important commercial and administrative centre under the Byzantine Empire. Located at the crossroads of trade routes and military pathways, it held significant strategic importance in the region. Similarly, in 1989, Berlin — particularly the Berlin Wall — was a central and symbolic point of the Cold War, where two opposing systems stood directly against each other. West Berlin had become a symbol of capitalist success and a free society, while East Berlin, under Soviet bloc control, represented the ideological boundaries of communism. The United States and its allies turned West Berlin into a showcase of capitalist achievement, creating an economic disparity that became unbearable for the Soviet Union.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 was not only a symbol of the collapse of Soviet influence but also the moment when the United States effectively “got hold of” communism, cornering it ideologically and politically. The U.S. deepened its diplomatic engagement with the Soviet Union’s President, Gorbachev, pressing for multiparty democracy and economic liberalisation. NATO expanded its political reach into Eastern Europe, pulling former Soviet bloc states away from Moscow’s orbit. At the same time, American financial institutions promoted market reforms, while U.S. media and cultural influence reinforced the tide of freedom sweeping across Europe. Intelligence networks also encouraged nationalist aspirations within the Soviet republics, further weakening central control.

By 1990, the intensified U.S. pressure culminated in the abolition of the Communist Party’s constitutional monopoly on power — the very backbone of Soviet rule since 1917. This decisive moment symbolically represented the ‘killing’ of the Dajjāl, as foretold in the Hadith. Finally, in 1991, the Soviet Union itself disintegrated, and communism as a global ideology was consigned to history.

Prophet Jesus (PBUH) Showing Mercy to a Preserved Nation – Acknowledgment of West Berlin and Unified Germany (1990)

According to Hadith, Prophet Jesus (PBUH) will come to a nation that has been protected from Dajjāl's tribulation. He will show them compassion by placing his hand on their faces and speaking to them about their ranks in Paradise.³¹

This imagery finds a parallel in the fate of West Berlin. For decades, its people endured pressure, isolation, and constant threat from the Soviet bloc, yet they remained resilient. West Berlin stood as a living example of endurance, preserved from being consumed by communism despite the Wall that surrounded it.

When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, German unity was not greeted with unanimous enthusiasm. Britain and France expressed hesitation, wary of the potential resurgence of German dominance in Europe. The United States, however, adopted an unequivocal stance in favour of reunification. By reassuring its allies, exerting diplomatic pressure, and affirming Germany’s integration within NATO and the European Community, the United States transformed West Berlin’s decades of endurance into an internationally recognised triumph. In this sense, the

³⁰ Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, *Sabih Muslim* 2937a, accessed May 17, 2025, <https://sunnah.com/muslim:2937a>.

³¹ Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, *Sabih Muslim* 2937a, accessed May 17, 2025, <https://sunnah.com/muslim:2937a>.

compassion extended in the Hadith to a nation preserved through hardship finds a parallel in the U.S. acknowledgment and support of Germany, as it entered a new era of unity and prosperity.



THE QURAN: THE BOOK OF GUIDANCE

Muhammad Zakwan Nadwi

The foundational manual for issues in Hanafi fiqh is *al-Hidayah fi Sharh Bidayat al-Mubtadi* (Ali bin Abi Bakr al-Marghinani, d. 593 AH). This significant and weighty legal work comprises four large volumes. In Hanafi madrasas it is taught as a core text and treated as a primary source for legal questions. *Al-Hidayah* is, in fact, the author's own commentary on his earlier work *Bidayat al-Mubtadi*.

As a source for Hanafi jurisprudence, books like *al-Hidayah* undoubtedly hold great importance. However, among the early scholars no human composition was ever granted the status that its memorization and recitation should be made obligatory like the Quran—yet one encounters hyperbolic notions of precisely this type, as in the following verses:

إِنَّ الْهَدَايَةَ كَالْقُرْآنِ قَدْ نَسَخَتْ
مَا صَنَفُوا قَبْلَهَا فِي الشَّرْعِ مِنْ كُتُبٍ
فَاحْفَظْ قِرَاءَتَهَا وَالزَّمْ تِلَاوَتَهَا
يَسْلَمُ مَقَالُكَ مِنْ زَيْغٍ وَمِنْ كَذِبٍ

“Indeed al-Hidayah is like the Quran, for al-Hidayah too has abrogated all the books that were authored in the Shariyah before it. So, O student, keep to the recitation of al-Hidayah and persist in its tilawah; if you do so, your speech will be safe from deviation and from falsehood.” (Zafar al-Muhassilin bi-Ahwal al-Musannifin, Maulana Muhammad Hanif Gangohi, p. 852)

After citing these lines, the transmitter further writes:

“This is not exaggeration, but an expression of reality. And these two verses appear twice as well in the commentary on al-Hidayah, Ashraf al-Hidayah.” (1/8, 23)

As sources of Hanafi fiqh, works like *al-Hidayah* are unquestionably valuable. Nevertheless, beyond the Book and the Sunnah, to designate anything else as a source of religion—or to declare it equivalent to the Quran and thereby make its memorization, recitation, and *tilawah* incumbent like the Quran—is an idea for which there is no warrant in the Book or the Sunnah. For all their importance, no human composition enjoys such a station.

Ideas so baseless are gravely harmful to the intellectual and spiritual formation of seekers of the Prophetic sciences. The result is that such students typically lose their interest in the Quran and in the Prophetic teachings: they come to regard the divine Word as a sacred religious book and the hadiths as a ledger of legal sources, yet in practice the Quran and Sunnah fail to inhabit their minds and hearts as *the* sources of guidance.

A Citation from Imam al-Shawkani

On precisely such mental rigidity and sectarian prejudice, Imam Muhammad Ali al-Shawkani (d. 1250 AH), commenting on the verse “اتَّخِذُوا أَحْبَابَكُمْ وَرُبَّانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ” (Surah Tawbah, 9:31), writes to just effect:

In this verse there is a severe censure—grasped by any sound heart and any who lend an attentive ear—of blind imitation in the religion of God, and of preferring the statements of elders over the Mighty Book and the Purified Sunnah. Obedience to one’s school, to the words and practices of a given scholar of this ummah, when such obedience opposes the explicit texts and the established proofs of God (mighty and majestic), and what His books and His prophets proclaim—this is precisely like the Jews and Christians taking their rabbis and monks as lords apart from God. It is certain that they did not ‘worship’ them; rather, they obeyed them—declaring unlawful what they declared unlawful, and lawful what they declared lawful. Such is the conduct of the imitators in this ummah; it resembles that [conduct] as an egg resembles an egg, a date a date, and water as water.

O servants of God, O followers of Muhammad bin Abdullah: what is the matter with you that you have set aside the Book and the Sunnah, and fastened yourselves instead to men who, like you, were obliged to worship God by the light of those two and to act in accordance with what they indicate? You have acted upon the opinions they brought you—opinions not buttressed by the supports of truth nor reinforced by the pillars of religion—while the texts of the Book and the Sunnah call out in the clearest voice against such things. Yet you have lent them deaf ears, sealed hearts, sickly understandings... (Fath al-Qadir 2/353; see also Siddiq Hasan Khan, al-Din al-Khalis, p. 142)

His original Arabic words:

وفي هذه الآية ما يزرع من كان له قلب أو ألقى السمع وهو شهيد عن التقليد في دين الله، وتأثير ما يقوله الأسلاف على ما في الكتاب العزيز والسنة المطهرة، فإن طاعة المتهذب لمن يقتدى بقوله ويستن بسنته من علماء هذه الأمة مع مخالفته لما جاءت به النصوص، وقامت به حجج الله وبراهينه، ونطقت به كتبه وأنبيأوه، هو كاتخاذ اليهود والنصارى للأحبار والرهبان أرباباً من دون الله، للقطع بأنهم لم يعبدوه بل أطاعوهم، وحرموا ما حرموا، وحلوا ما حلوا، وبذا هو صنيع المقلدين من هذه الأمة، وهو أشبه به من شبه البيضة بالبيضة، والتمرة بالتمرة، والماء بالماء... فدعوا - أرشدكم الله وإياي - كتباً كتبها لكم الأموات من أسلافكم، واستبدلوا بها كتاب الله... وقال: دعوا كل ذي قول بقول محمد فما آمن في دينه كمخاطر

An Incident from My Student Days

This occurred in 1996. I was studying *al-Hidayah* at the madrasah. I knew, God willing, that passing the *Hidayah* examination would not be difficult; so whenever I grew weary of purely technical disputation—apart from tafsir, hadith, and literature—I would go to the dormitory or the mosque and busy myself with supplication and recitation. Once, some classmates were sent from the *Hidayah* class to fetch me, wherever I might be. They found me reciting. “Come,” they said, “you’re being called to *Hidayah*.” Without fear, I replied on the spot: “Go tell them: guidance comes from the Quran, not from *Hidayah*; I am presently engaged in the Quran.”

This statement flashed through the madrasah like lightning. In the end, before several senior teachers and administrators, I was summoned to the office. Asked how I could say such a thing, I replied—with due respect—“If I may be spared, bring *Hidayah Awwalin wa Akhirin*.” At last the book was brought. After reading out the table of contents I said: “In this long table there is no *Kitab al-Iman*. Without faith, how can there be guidance?” For such insubordination, I was suspended. Later, through the intercession of a relative, Hakim Muhammad Irfan Qasimi al-Husayni (d. 2012), I was readmitted.

Technical Questions or Religious Realities?

If one aims to become a specialist in technical legalities, then the study of such books is necessary. But if one seeks deep knowledge of religious realities, these works not only cannot guide—if relied upon exclusively they produce a conception of religion built upon issues, where attention falls on the outward legal shell while the inward, meaning-bearing core is neglected; where the outward of religion is taught and its spirit is forgotten. Just as the human being is a union of body and spirit, so too religion is a union of outward and inward.

The reality of religion is *ibadah* (devoted worship), and its purpose is *tazkiyah* (purification)—a worshipful, humble bond with God and the cleansing of the outward and the inward. If the outward of religion is neglected, the result is what may be called Christianity; if the inward is neglected, that is what the Quran and the Prophet's teachings label Judaism. Pure inwardism is Christianity, and mere ritualistic outwardness is Judaism. Hence the believers are sternly forbidden from following either tendency, and commanded instead to adhere to the *hanif* religion (al-Rum 30:30).

Islam (*deenillah*) is the balanced totality of outward and inward. It is neither mere spirituality nor mere formalism. Islam is not self-made, imam-centric sectarianism and its sources, nor the hyperbolic and harsh manifestations later propagated under various factional labels—manifestations often devoid of *hikmah* (wisdom) and *samahab* (forbearance), at odds with the spirit of the *din al-fitrah* (al-Rum 30:30).

All such manifestations stand against the original *deen* for the simple reason that they were innovated after the Messenger (PBUH); they do not enjoy the sanction of Prophetic Sunnah, Sirah, or Uswah. Their status can only be that of opinion and viewpoint—always subject to acceptance or rejection by any sincere student of the *deen*. For this reason the imams of fiqh and law, and the scholars and researchers, consistently called them merely *opinions*, open to deletion, revision, and critique: *qala Abu Hanifah: 'ilmuna hadha ra'yi wa-huwa ahsanu ma qadarna 'alayh, wa-man ja'ana bi-ahsana minhu qabilnahu minh. Wa ruwiya 'anhu annahu qal: fa-inna bashar, naqulu al-qawla al-yawma wa-narji'u 'anhu ghada.*

Accordingly, views, ideas, movements, and sects that conflict with the Book and Sunnah and the axioms of reason and fitrah are not the religion—and it is not the believer's task to present them as the religion of God. Religion is, and remains, only what is established from God and His Messenger—not any person's thought or viewpoint.

Thus, the founding, sincere imams of prevalent movements and schools have publicly declared: if our words contradict the religion, do not accept them; throw them against the wall; and take your religion from where we ourselves strive to take it.

Consider a few related citations from the imams:

وقال الإمام أحمد رحمه الله: رأي الأوزاعي، ورأي مالك، ورأي أبي حنيفة، كله رأي، وهو عندي سواء. وإنما الحجة في الآثار

Ibn al-Qayyim writes in Ilam al-Muwaqqi'in: the four imams forbade blind imitation of themselves and reproached those who took their statements without proof.

قال أبو حنيفة: هذا رأيي، فمن جاء برأي خير منه قبلناه. وقال مالك: إنما أنا بشر أصيب وأخطئ، فاعرضوا قولي على الكتاب والسنة. وقال الشافعي: إذا صح الحديث فاضربوا بقولي الحائط، وإذا رأيت الحجة موضوعة على الطريق فبهي قولي. وقال الإمام أحمد: لا تقلدني ولا تقلد مالكاً، ولا الشافعي، ولا الثوري، وتعلم كما تعلمنا. وقال: لا تقلد في دينك الرجال، فإنهم لن يسلموا من أن يغلطوا

(*Ilam al-Muwaqqi'in* 2/200)

A Comparison

To compare the Quran with any other religious book is like comparing a creature with its Creator. Still, to clarify the point—“Guidance comes from the Quran, not from anything else”—consider a simple contrast of styles between the Quran and fiqh manuals.

Both the Quran and the fiqh books have much to say about *salah*. But the difference is revealing. In the Quran, the essential components highlighted are *khushu* (humble attentiveness) and *qunut* (devout submissiveness), whereas in the fiqh books the situation is reversed: the inward components emphasized by the Quran are scarcely mentioned, while *Sifat al-Salah* focuses almost exclusively on outward elements—*hadath*, prayer times, and lists of *faraiz* (see *al-Hidayah* 1/40). There is, in these manuals, no dedicated chapter on *khushu*. By contrast, tomes are filled with the legal aspects of prayer—yet to abstract Shariah from its spirit and reality is not the method of the Quran and Sunnah.

When the Quran mentions *salah*, it teaches *khushu* at the outset (al-Muminun 23:1–2). The Messenger of God (PBUH) said: *juilat qurrata ayni fi al-salah*. (*Musnad Ahmad*, No. 14069), “The coolness of my eyes has been placed in prayer.” And he said: *sallu kama raytumuni usalli*. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, no. 818): “Pray as you have seen me pray”—i.e., observing both outward and inward *adab*.

Thus, in the Quran and Sunnah, prayer is taught in a natural and integrative mode rather than a merely legal one. In practice, however, issues of *salah* have come to be treated as though they were identical with the *reality* of *salah*. The Prophet’s prayer is our eternal exemplar in both its outward and inward dimensions; we cannot take one and neglect the other. This difference in method—between Quran and Sunnah on one side and the manuals of “issues” on the other—is precisely what has rendered our worship a largely spiritless set of imitative rites: outward forms abound, while humble devotion and believing character have become rare.

“Fiqh of the Outward” and “Fiqh of the Inward”

The *deen* granted to humankind in the Quran and Sunnah embraces both outward and inward. Without introducing any such bifurcation or imbalance, it presents *Kitab* (law/Shariah) and *Hikmah* (the philosophy of religion, faith, and ethics) together and equally as the religion of God. Thus, in the Quran’s clarifications of marriage and divorce, sacrifice (al-Hajj 22:37), hajj and umrah, one repeatedly finds exhortations to *taqwa* and fine character (see al-Baqarah 2:197, 203, 223, 231, 233, 236, 241, etc.).

By reversing this divine pedagogical order, we were driven to a later historical division known as “*fiqh al-zahir*” and “*fiqh al-batin*.” This division is unnatural, for the religion of God, in its essence, admits of no such duality. It is outward and inward at once: faith and knowledge, *taqwa* and good character. None of its legal rulings is bereft of the light of “wisdom” and “devotion.”

Summary

It is time we map our lives by the light of the Book and the Sunnah; time we perform our worship and live our faith and ethics under Prophetic guidance.

We close with a couplet by Mirza Abd al-Qadir Bedil (d. 1720):

و ’هدایه’ نتوان یافت خدا را ’در ’کنز
*!در صفحه دل بین که کتابی به ازیں نیست

You will not find God in Kanz[] and Hidayah.
Look to the pages of the heart[**]—no book is better than this!*

[*] *Kanz* here alludes to a juristic compendium (e.g., *Kanz al-Daqa'iq*).

[**] Pages of the heart = the purified inner self that receives guidance from the Revelation.



A STUDY OF THE MUSNAD AHMAD - 1

Dr. Ammar Nasir; Dr Muti Syed

Muti Syed: *Musnad Ahmad* is a very large hadith collection—highly comprehensive. What did Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal have in view when compiling it?

Ammar Nasir: His intent was to produce a comprehensive compendium of hadiths that would serve scholars as a source. To this end he traveled to many hadith centers, then in the prime of youth began arranging the material of the *Musnad*—a task that continued until his death. By his own account, he possessed a corpus of seven hundred and fifty thousand reports, from which he selected the narrations of the *Musnad*. He was, however, unable to bring the work to final, finished form before passing away. Later his son, Abdullah bin Ahmad, organized it. Hence the book contains considerable repetition, and in places the arrangement shows some disarray; the reports of many Companions appear under other Companions' sections.

Muti Syed: Allamah Tamanna Imadi, in his research on the *Musnad Ahmad*, claims that the attribution to Imam Ahmad is itself incorrect—that it was compiled later and merely ascribed to him.³² What is your view?

Ammar Nasir: In truth, with respect to the hadith corpus, Tamanna Imadi's perspective is heavily colored by a kind of conspiratorial theorizing. His temperament inclines to exaggeration, and in his research, he often inflates matters and draws sweeping conclusions from scant evidence. When a predisposition or reaction gains the upper hand, reasoning becomes subject to emotion or to preferred outcomes—and such exaggerated conclusions follow. His work on the *Musnad Ahmad* is of that sort. Maulana Abd al-Quddus Hashimi also, influenced by him, presented a similar view in one of his writings;³³ in response, Allamah al-Albani wrote his treatise *Al-Dhabb al-Ahmad 'an Musnad Ahmad*, setting out in detail its weaknesses.

Muti Syed: In your view, what is the basic weakness in his reasoning? Where has the confusion arisen?

Ammar Nasir: Historically the situation is this: the *Musnad* is transmitted from the Imam only by his son, Abdullah bin Ahmad, who held all his father's notebooks. From Abdullah, the manuscript of the *Musnad* was transmitted by Abu Bakr al-Qat'i; from al-Qat'i, by Abu Ali al-Tamimi—known as Ibn al-Mudhahhib; and from Ibn al-Mudhahhib, by Abu al-Qasim Hibat Allah bin al-Husayn. This entire chain can be found at the very beginning of *Musnad Ahmad*. Now, that only Abdullah narrates from Imam Ahmad is understandable historically: due to the *khalq al-Quran* controversy, the Abbasid caliphs restricted him to his home and barred him from public assemblies and discourse. Thus, in the last thirteen or fourteen years of his life, Imam Ahmad worked at home on his notebooks and would hand installments of the *Musnad* over to his son Abdullah. Consequently, the opportunity to hear the *Musnad* directly from him—or to have it read back to him—fell to Abdullah (along with his brother and a paternal cousin).

After Abdullah, however, a question arises: at the time of audition, Abu Bakr al-Qat'i (from Abdullah), then Ibn al-Mudhahhib (from al-Qat'i), and then Abu al-Qasim Hibat Allah (from Ibn al-Mudhahhib) were all scarcely more than twelve to fifteen years old. That is, when Abdullah bin Ahmad died, al-Qat'i was about fourteen or

³² Tamanna Imadi, *Ijaz al-Quran wa Ikhtilaf al-Qira'at*, pp. 273–309 (Karachi: al-Rahman Publishing Trust, 1993).

³³ “Mutabar aur Ghair-Mutabar Riwayat” (“Reliable and Unreliable Narrations”), in *Maqalat-e Hashmi*, ed. Thana al-Haq Siddiqi (Lahore: Dar al-Tadkir, 1993).

fifteen; when al-Qatī'i died, Ibn al-Mudhahhib was twelve or thirteen; and when Ibn al-Mudhahhib died, Abu al-Qasim was roughly the same age. In three consecutive links, then, very young narrators are auditioning and transmitting the *Musnad*. This is striking, and hadith scholars have noted it. For example, Allamah al-Kawthari, considering precisely this aspect, explains why *Musnad Ahmad* cannot match the *Sihab Sittah* in authority.³⁴

Further, hadith scholars acknowledge that al-Qatī'i and Ibn al-Mudhahhib did not possess any special expertise in hadith—one may say they were not technical hadith masters. Al-Dhahabi writes that, since they were not meticulous experts, their inexperience led to errors in the texts and *isnads* at various points in the *Musnad*.³⁵ Other weaknesses are mentioned about both as well. In light of such data, Tamanna Imadi raises the question: if a genuine *Musnad* manuscript existed, why is it that—leaving aside many of Abdullah's seasoned students—it is a youth, Abu Bakr al-Qatī'i, who narrates it? And then why, further on, do Ibn al-Mudhahhib and Abu al-Qasim (both in early adolescence) transmit it? His perplexity is: why do boys seem to be at the forefront in transmitting such an important collection?

Muti Syed: So, is there no force in his argument? On the face of it, it seems a weighty objection.

Ammar Nasir: The question is indeed worthy of reflection, and historical reasons can be explored—but the conclusion Tamanna Imadi draws from it is very weak. He claims that neither did Imam Ahmad compile any *Musnad* nor did Abdullah transmit a manuscript of it; the whole thing was put together later and ascribed to them, being passed along covertly for two or three generations. Then, when hadith scholars and the various legal and theological factions realized it contained material of interest to all, everyone embraced it. This is a hypothesis of Tamanna Imadi. The overriding question for such a hypothesis is: who, and when, produced such a massive compilation of some thirty thousand reports? Al-Qatī'i and Ibn al-Mudhahhib were neither expert hadith scholars nor major scholars who could accomplish this; so who forged all these reports? Tamanna Imadi's answer is that al-Qatī'i received the material from a certain Abu Bakr al-Shafi'i, who was in reality Shi'i though outwardly clad in Sunnism; al-Qatī'i then ascribed it to Abdullah bin Ahmad and passed it to Ibn al-Mudhahhib. But this is mere conjecture; Tamanna Imadi offers no solid historical proof for it. His claims about Abu Bakr al-Shafi'i are guesswork and sheer surmise.

Muti Syed: Beyond the *Musnad* manuscript itself, are there other historical indicators that Imam Ahmad did—or did not—compile a *Musnad*?

Ammar Nasir: Yes; there are many. Numerous statements are transmitted in historical sources from Imam Ahmad and from his son, Abdullah bin Ahmad, indicating the *Musnad*'s existence. For example, from Imam Ahmad it is reported: I compiled this *Musnad* so that it might serve scholars as a point of reference, to which one could return when differences arose concerning hadiths. It is mentioned that he selected it from seven or seven and a half hundred thousand reports. It is also related that he used to hand sections of it to Abdullah, instructing him: include this in such-and-such Companion's *musnad*. Another report from Imam Ahmad states that he told Abdullah: had I included only those reports I deemed *sahih*, it would have been very brief; I also included weak reports, because my view is that when a weak narration does not conflict with a strong proof, I prefer it.

References to the *Musnad* also appear in the statements of some contemporaries of Imam Ahmad; Abdullah bin Ahmad mentions it at various points in his own works. In addition, there is mention of different hadith scholars who auditioned the *Musnad* from Abdullah, and later from al-Qatī'i, or who obtained permission (*ijazah*) from

³⁴ Allamah al-Kawthari's remark as cited by Shaykh Abd al-Fattah Abu Ghuddah in his annotations to Abd al-Hayy al-Lakhnawi's *al-Ajwibah al-Fazilah lil-Asilah al-'Asharah al-Kamilah*, p. 97.

³⁵ Mizan al-Itidal 1/512

them. While these figures did not each transmit a complete exemplar with their isnads, the historical information shows that Abdullah and al-Qat'i possessed a collection of Imam Ahmad's narrations, and scholars turned to them to audition or transmit from that collection.³⁶ In other words, it is not the case that hadith scholars learned of some anonymous manuscript a century or two later and only then discovered that Imam Ahmad had compiled a *Musnad*. Independent historical statements attest to its existence.

Muti Syed: These two points are very important and clarify matters considerably. If the manuscript's existence is historically established, and if one cannot even identify who allegedly fabricated such a large collection, then it becomes difficult to accept Tamanna Imadi's conclusion.

Ammar Nasir: Not only that; there is another fundamental question. If someone fabricated the texts of all the reports recorded in *Musnad Ahmad*, those same hadiths are also transmitted—often with different *isnads*—by numerous other hadith scholars. If you survey the corpus, you will find only a handful of reports—if any—that appear exclusively in *Musnad Ahmad* and are not narrated by other compilers with their own chains. Virtually all the *Sihab Sittah* reports are found in *Musnad Ahmad*, but the compilers of the *Sihab* narrate them on their own chains. As for the narrations in the *Musnad* beyond what is in the *Sihab*, hadith scholars have identified them; they are found in other compendia as well. Thus, if the *Musnad*'s thirty thousand reports were forged under Imam Ahmad's name, one would have to further concede that the same forgers also created separate *isnads* under the names of all the other hadith scholars and inserted those hadiths into their books. That is an utterly fantastical hypothesis.

Muti Syed: Another point I have seen discussed is that Abdullah bin Ahmad transmitted the *Musnad* from his father but also added many narrations of his own—some hadith scholars say nearly a quarter of the *Musnad* consists of his additions. Do such additions not affect the *Musnad*'s authority?

Ammar Nasir: That the Imam's son added his own narrations to the *Musnad*'s exemplar is accepted among hadith scholars. But as to the number, people often, without investigation, estimate roughly a quarter of the *Musnad*. That estimate is incorrect. Contemporary researchers, having worked systematically on these *ziyadat*, have shown they are not so numerous—altogether around thirteen hundred reports. And even within these there is a further division: not all are new in wording; roughly a thousand are cases where Abdullah cites, via a different chain, the very same report his father narrated. Only between two hundred and two hundred fifty reports have a new *matn* that Abdullah included with his own chain.³⁷ These additions do not compromise the *Musnad*'s authority for two reasons: first, Abdullah's additions are clearly identifiable; there is no mixing between the two types of material. Second, a hadith's authenticity or weakness turns on its *isnad*; that principle applies equally to Imam Ahmad's own narrations and to Abdullah's additions. From a hadith-critical standpoint, then, including these *ziyadat* in the *Musnad* poses no methodological problem.

[To be continued]

³⁶ See: Abu Musa al-Madini, *Khaṣa'is Musnad al-Imam Ahmad*; al-Albani, *al-Dhabb al-Aḥmad an Musnad Aḥmad*.

³⁷ See: Dr. Amir Hasan Sabri, *Zawaid Abdullah bin Ahmad bin Hanbal fi al-Musnad* (Beirut: Dar al-Bashair al-Islamiyyah, 1990 ed.).

HAYAT-E-AMIN - 25

Naeem Ahmad Baloch

There is no doubt that the expulsion of more than fifty-six (56) individuals—including the Deputy Amir—from Jamaat-e-Islami was a major shock for the organization. These were not ordinary members; they were counted among opinion-shaping scholars and leaders. The Jamaat did feel the blow, but its overall posture was regrettable: it scarcely ever examined the episode with the seriousness it deserved. The Jamaat's official stance on this crisis—gleaned from *Tarjuman al-Quran* and other house journals—may be summarized as follows:

- This was not a principled disagreement; it was an expression of anger over the expulsion of members of the Review Committee, which then took an unpleasant turn and led to the incident.
- In 1956–57, distressed by the situation arising from the Review Committee established by the Majlis-e Shura and its proceedings, Maulana Maududi resigned from the office of Amir and said that henceforth he would work only as an ordinary member. To resolve matters, a national general convention of members was held at Machhi Goth. There, too, Maulana Maududi insisted on his position. At that point, Maulana Amin Ahsan Islahi delivered such an effective and forceful address—jolting Maulana Maududi as he said: “*You gathered us around yourself; now where do you think you’re running off to? We will by no means leave you, nor let you flee. You must take up this responsibility.*”—that the atmosphere of the gathering changed. Of the 935 members present, only 15 remained dissatisfied with Maulana Maududi and separated from the Jamaat; the remaining 920 members, together with Maulana Islahi, compelled him to withdraw his resignation, and thus the crisis ended. (This is the position of Miyan Tufayl Muhammad in response to an article by Janab Khalid Mas‘ud.)
- The impression is entirely false that Jamaat-e Islami had become dominated by the Amir rather than the Shura, or that it had come under an authoritarian leadership rather than democratic principles.
- Those who left were by no means of the view that the Jamaat should not take part in practical politics; rather, they thought that for the time being the Jamaat should withdraw from politics and devote itself to intellectual purification and the moral formation of society.

The statement of Miyan Tufayl Muhammad—cited above in reply to Khalid Mas‘ud—must, however, be viewed critically for the following reasons:

- The number of those who left at *that* moment was indeed fifteen; but subsequently, owing to policy and doctrinal disagreements, the total gradually reached fifty-six or fifty-seven. Maulana Islahi himself was among the last to part ways. Despite his disagreements, he had no objection in principle to continuing with the Jamaat; he separated only when, in his judgment, the malady had grown so grave that no remedy remained. It appears Miyan Sahib, perhaps to simplify the matter, cited the smaller figure tied to that specific occasion. Our analysis is that the senior leaders of the Jamaat, out of love and reverence for Maulana Maududi, did not adequately apprehend the serious ills to which Maulana Islahi had drawn attention.

***Mushabadat-e-Haram* (Observations in the Sacred Precinct)**

Maulana Islahi stepped down from Jamaat responsibilities in January 1958, deeply pained. He expressed what he was passing through in these words:

For some time I had been so disheartened by my surroundings that my heart repeatedly wished to leave this environment for a few days at least. The best place I could choose for this purpose was the House of God. God, in His grace, arranged it, and a long-standing wish I scarcely expected to be fulfilled was indeed fulfilled by Him. (Mushabadat-e-Haram, 2)

Thus, Maulana set out for hajj. He wished to be accompanied by, besides his wife, Shaykh Sultan Ahmad (Karachi), Maulana Masud Usmani (Karachi), and Hakim Maulana Abd al-Rahim Ashraf (Faisalabad). Shaykh Sultan Ahmad excused himself due to constraints. The Maulana then did not broach the matter with Maulana Usmani, knowing he had already expressed a preference to perform hajj with Hakim Sultan. Hakim Abd al-Rahim Ashraf, however, happily agreed despite adverse circumstances. In place of the two who could not go, Maulvi Barkat Ali and Malik Aslam joined the party.

Shaykh Sultan Ahmad was a capable physician based in Karachi. Dr. Masud Uthmani, after separating from Jamaat-e-Islami, had formed a group called “Jamaat al-Muslimun.” Hakim Maulana Abd al-Rahim Ashraf—editor of the monthly *al-Minbar*—was a distinguished scholar and physician. He established the renowned clinic “Ashraf Dawa-khanah” in Faisalabad; later his sons founded “Ashraf Laboratories” for Unani medicines, which still flourishes. All three gentlemen shared with Maulana Islahi the experience of leaving the Jamaat at the same time and agreeing with the Review Committee’s recommendations.

After the companions were set, applications were filed; but in the draw the names of the two Lahore gentlemen did not come up. Thus, on 10 June 1958, the Maulana departed for hajj by sea, accompanied by his wife and Hakim Abd al-Rahim Ashraf. He describes the beginning of the journey:

Having passed that stage, we reached the gangway of the ship Sardhana. From the outside it appeared splendid and spotless. The thought that no governmental formalities now remained between me and boarding this vessel for the most beloved and sought-after journey filled my heart with a joy I cannot express. I was all gratitude to my gracious, all-providing Lord. While we were still below, our brother Sultan Ahmad—separated from us in the customs mêlée—arrived. As I put my foot on the steps, my wife reminded me to place the right foot first. I acted on this advice, and with prayers for safety and wellbeing, purity of intention and success in action, I set my foot on the steps. I thought: Allahu Akbar! What dignity this journey confers, that because of it even a ship of an English company becomes so sanctified that we take care to board it with the right foot first.

On deck we first went to our cabin and checked our baggage—God be praised, everything had arrived safely. Brother Sultan Ahmad arranged the luggage neatly and acquainted us with all the features and rules of the cabin (residential regulations on board). We had boarded at the last moment; shortly thereafter the whistle for departure sounded. Brother Sultan Ahmad had to disembark. He first requested prayers for some noble aims, then embraced me; so overcome was he with affection that I too was carried away by the flood of love. I bid him and Shahidah (may she be kept safe) farewell with the Prophetic supplication and turned to attuning myself to the new environment of the ship. (Mushabadat-e-Haram, 30–31)

At journey’s end, upon reaching Lahore, he wrote:

“We spent thirty-six hours in Karachi, met friends, and set off for Lahore. I scarcely slept a minute on the train that night—not from worry, but from the sheer joy that, God willing, in the morning we would see the children and kiss our mother’s feet. When the train reached Lahore Cantonment, I caught sight of Numan Miyan (may he be preserved). He had boarded from Multan, thinking of us, but refrained from seeking us out lest we be asleep. Seeing him filled me with delight. Within minutes the train entered Lahore Station. We recited the supplication upon returning from travel, saw the children and embraced them, and exchanged greetings with the devoted friends who had come to the platform. Everyone knows the joy one feels on returning from such a journey; to me, this joy alone compensates for the hardships of travel. (Mushahadat-e-Haram, 172)

The Maulana returned to Lahore on 4 August. From the outset he had intended to write a travelogue of the hajj; upon return he fulfilled this resolve. In many respects it is a unique work of his: a purely literary composition, with all the hallmarks of fine travel writing. He himself wrote:

My travelogue is based solely on observations, experiences, and impressions. I have not included the supplications of hajj or its rulings. When it is time to publish it as a book, it is my request to Hakim ‘Abd al-Rahim Ashraf that he include, as an appendix, a translation or summary of Imam Ibn Taymiyyah’s Risalah fi Manasik al-Hajj, so that it may benefit those who wish to carry it with them on the journey. (Monthly Mithaq, June 1960, p. 31)

He serialized it in *Mithaq* (Lahore) and *al-Minbar* (Lyalpur). Though complete, it did not then appear as a book. He became absorbed in other scholarly work—especially *Tadabbur-e-Quran*—and likely did not turn to preparing other writings for publication; and Hakim ‘Abd al-Rahim Ashraf, who intended to publish his works alongside *al-Minbar*, never launched the project. The travelogue thus lay buried in the files of *al-Minbar* and *Mithaq* until our brother Muhammad Ahsan Tahami’s press, Dar al-Tadhkir, published it in 2000.

A Series of Scholarly Articles

Even after parting from the Jamaat, Maulana Islahi might never have expressed himself on these matters—but an incident took a turn that sparked major scholarly exchanges between the two elders, and a series of articles ensued.

Maulana Maududi published an essay, “The Place of Strategy (*bikmat-‘amali*) in Religion,” in *Tarjuman al-Quran*. He argued that a leader of an Islamic movement operates in the real world, not an imagined one; therefore it is not possible for him to execute every task at the highest standard of the Shariah. He must keep in view, alongside religion, the demands of strategy and practical politics. The Shariah, he said, allows him—on grounds of temporal interests—to render something ordinarily *haram* temporarily *halal*. He illustrated the point with nine examples, adding that he and the Jamaat had acted in this vein out of the sole intention to establish God’s religion in the country.

To Maulana Islahi this view was plainly erroneous. He met Maulana Maududi and drew his attention to the misguided nature of this philosophy and its consequences: it would unleash corruption and distort the very visage of the religion. He recounts:

I met him specifically to draw his attention to this misleading philosophy and its misleading results, and I said: What difference remains between your philosophy and that of those we have long opposed? Despite his well-known forbearance, Maulana took offense at my respectful submission and challenged me: if I consider this philosophy wrong, let me write a refutation; he would graciously publish it in Tarjuman and reply to it. I said that if matters have reached the point where you and I refute one another in the Tarjuman itself, it would be better for me to separate from the Jamaat first. With that, I took my leave. (Maqalat-e-Islahi, 1/87)

Note that by then he had not yet resigned. Nor did he write on the subject even after his resignation—until, having gone for hajj and returned, he learned that critiques had appeared in Maulana Manzur Nu‘mani’s *al-Furqan* (Lucknow) and in Hakim Abd al-Rahim Ashraf’s *al-Minbar* (Faisalabad).

As mentioned, Hakim Abd al-Rahim Ashraf was among those who left Jamaat-e-Islami over precisely this position of Maulana Maududi. Maulana Maududi replied to such critiques in the *Rasail wa Masail* series of *Tarjuman al-Quran*. Maulana Islahi set forth his stance in an article in the Karachi journal *Maqam-e Risalat*; later, once *Mithaq* commenced publication, he serialized his pieces there.

These essays addressed weighty and contested questions: the condition of Qurashi lineage for the caliphate (*al-aimmah min Quraysh*), the principle of choosing the lesser of two evils (*ikhtiyar ahwan al-baliyatayn*), the relationship between backbiting (*ghibab*) and the hadith-critical discipline of *jarh wa-tadil*, and the prophets’ method of establishing the *deen*.

A brief note on “Qurashi lineage as a condition for the caliphate” may be of interest, in light of remarks the Maulana made in their meetings. Maulana Maududi had taken as an example of altering settled principles for strategic reasons the following: Equality and parity are among Islam’s foundational teachings, preached by the Prophet (PBUH) throughout his life. Yet, since the demands of practical politics required that the caliphate be entrusted to Quraysh, the Prophet—contrary to that principle of equality—commanded at the end: *al-aimmah min Quraysh*, i.e., “the leaders shall be from Quraysh.” Had he not done so, Maududi wrote, Muslims—eager to test the principle of equality—might have appointed a non-Qurashi and fallen into calamity.

Maulana Islahi replied:

In my view, the Prophet’s statement al-aimmah min Quraysh—that the leaders are from Quraysh—is neither an imperative (amr), nor an informative report (khabar), nor a bequest (wasiyyah); rather, it is a judgment and resolution of a dispute. Though the case was not formally presented, it existed in people’s minds; its effects surfaced from time to time. It was not difficult for the Prophet (PBUH) to gauge that after his passing this could become a contentious matter and cause division. Therefore, he decided the issue during his lifetime: after him, Quraysh are entitled to the caliphate. (Maqalat-e-Islahi, 1/117)

Thus, in a few concise lines, he resolved a major question in the ummah’s intellectual history. The Maulana, recounting this, would quip:

Was it a small gain from our debate with the Amir al-Muminin (Maulana Maududi) that a longstanding issue of the ummah was settled once and for all?

[To Be Continued...]

THE PLACE OF THE ARAB PEOPLE AND THE ARABIC LANGUAGE AMONG THE SEMITIC PEOPLES AND LANGUAGES - 1

Dr. Khursheed Rizwi

As a result of modern scholarly research, the peoples and languages of the world have been classified into various groupings. The Arab people are counted among the Semitic peoples (The Semites), and the Arabic language among the Semitic languages (Semitic Languages).³⁸ Both terms ultimately derive from the genealogy in the Old Testament in which the three sons of Noah—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—are named, and from which all nations after the Flood are deemed to have descended. The Semitic peoples are regarded as the progeny of Shem, and the languages of these peoples are called the Semitic languages.

Within the Semitic grouping, the more notable peoples and their tongues are the Assyrian, Babylonian, Aramaean, Hebrew, Phoenician, Ethiopian, and Arab.

It has not been definitively determined where the original homeland of the Semites—whence they dispersed to different regions—was located. Various theories identify Armenia, Babylonia, Lower Mesopotamia (the lower Euphrates), Africa, and the Arabian Peninsula as the ancestral home of the descendants of Shem. Some of these hypotheses are now considered quite weak, and no conclusive proof has been adduced for any one of them. Nevertheless, in the judgment of many eminent investigators, the arguments favoring Arabia as the original Semitic homeland are comparatively weightier.

A second important question concerns the root-language from which all the Semitic languages derive. Here, too, certainty is difficult. The upshot of long scholarly debates is that the primal Semitic language (Proto-Semitic)—termed *Ursemitisch* in Western scholarship—has perished. It is, moreover, commonly accepted that although Arabic, in terms of its earliest attested remains, is younger, it has survived in a comparatively purer state; for that reason, it stands closer to the original than the other Semitic tongues and, above all, preserves more of the original's distinguishing features.

In brief, the Arab people are the best representatives of the Semitic nations, and Arabic of the Semitic languages. One reason is that Arabia's geographical environment exhibited a kind of uniformity in which change proceeded very slowly, allowing linguistic and ethnic traits to endure longer in a relatively unalloyed form. Another is that, by virtue of Islam, the Arabs were able to diffuse their traditions far and wide, stamping large parts of the world with their culture—an honor accorded to no other Semitic people. The legacy left by the other Semitic nations is scant and obscure, making it difficult to form a vivid, living picture of them.³⁹ Likewise, among the Semitic languages, the only one to have remained in sustained, continuous use in the full sense is Arabic. Ge'ez survives merely as the ecclesiastical language of Ethiopia.⁴⁰ A few remnant dialects of Aramaic in villages around Damascus

³⁸ Besides *sami* and *samiyah*, the term *samyatiqi* was also used in Urdu, but it is now obsolete. It was simply the Urdu rendering of the English term "Semitic." As regards languages, the originator of this term was the German scholar A. (August) Ludwig Schlözer (1735–1809).

³⁹ Nicholson, Introduction, XVI-XVII

⁴⁰ Enc. ox. Jnr. 4/403, Semitic Languages

keep its memory alive.⁴¹ Hebrew, as a dormant language, was transmitted across generations within Jewish religious and scholarly circles until, in the modern period, it was consciously revived;⁴² even for its scholarly study, recourse to Arabic remains indispensable.⁴³ The rest of the languages have altogether vanished. In short, the religious, scholarly, literary, and civilizational resources preserved in Arabic, the distances across which it has spread, and the scale on which it is still used—none of the other Semitic languages has been granted even a fraction of that share.

[To Be Continued]



⁴¹ Ibid, 4/183, Hebrew Language

⁴² In the revival of Hebrew, the efforts of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (1858–1922) are particularly noteworthy.

⁴³ Why Learn Arabic, 10-23

LIFE STORY: DR. SHEHZAD SALEEM - 2

Dr. Shehzad Saleem, Muhammad Hassan Ilyas

Hasan: So your modern, secular studies paused and an informal course of religious study with Javed Ahmed Ghamidi began?

Dr. Shehzad: When I went to Anis Mufti, I had one year of engineering left and a strong urge to study religion as much as possible. We started Arabic somewhat informally—some religious discussions, some lectures from Javed Ghamidi. I felt: why waste a year—better to spend even this last year in religious learning. I still remember the teacher, with firmness and affection, said: “Son, you’ve invested four years; one remains. It is neither appropriate nor wise to walk away without the degree.”

Hasan: What program were you in?

Dr. Shehzad: Electrical Engineering at the University of Engineering & Technology.

Hasan: So, you’re an electrical engineer?

Dr. Shehzad: You could say that, but after taking the degree I never practiced. When this work began, I thought the degree would be a hindrance and that I’d lose a year—because going to UET, taking exams, all that takes time. But the mentor emphasized—quite emphatically—that I should complete it, because when you do religious work, it is better for your own public profile to have an academic background; otherwise, you’ll be just “intermediate pass.” That was sound advice. Had he not insisted, I might well have dropped out. Another benefit was that my family’s regard for my mentor rose greatly. I had already announced at home that I wanted to turn to religion. I remember: just as growing a beard had once thrown the household into mourning, this decision caused an uproar too. The background was that my father, who was keen on higher education and perhaps wanted to send me abroad, passed away that same year. So, the family—my five maternal uncles, my mother, my aunt, felt I had been detracted. There was strong opposition. But when Ghamidi sahib insisted I complete engineering, and I told my family I was doing it because of him, his standing and respect in the family grew—which helped a lot.

Hasan: Right. So, you built a connection with respected Javed Ahmed Ghamidi and began an informal course of study there. Since his wife and your wife are sisters, when and how did that family tie come about?

Dr. Shehzad: Perhaps at our third or fourth meeting, Javed Ahmed Ghamidi said: “Look, if you’ve decided to pursue religious knowledge and set aside your engineering background, the most important thing is that your spouse should support your work. If you marry ‘in the ordinary way,’ your aims may diverge and you won’t be able to do your work. For this calling, a peaceful home is essential.” Then he introduced me to the woman who became my wife. When Javed Ahmed Ghamidi married, my wife was much younger than her elder sister (Mrs. Ghamidi)—a kid sister. She would come to Javed Ahmed Ghamidi and, as it happened, her own journey was similar to mine: she too wished to study religion. She was three years my senior and studied with him. When Al-Mawrid was founded in 1983 she took its classes and stood first for three years in a row. So, he himself said: “Let me introduce you to a student of mine. You consider it.” My first meeting with the mentor was in July 1988; by September 1988 I was inclined in that direction—so within a month or two both milestones were achieved. It was, of course, a major decision and again met family opposition. After a year or two of that, my nikah took place

in June 1990, with the *rukhsati* delayed another year. The nikah ceremony was held on the roof of Javed Ahmed Ghamidi's home at 51-E; he himself solemnized it. His voice choked with emotion as he recited—it was an overwhelming moment I still recall vividly.

Hasan: Tell us about the livelihood side. The expectation was: finish UET, get a job, support the family—your father had passed on. Were you well-off, or was the family counting on your income? Give us the gist of the financial journey.

Dr. Shehzad: My late father left a pension and a house we rented out, so there was no need for me to support the household. I depended on the home; the home did not depend on me. I remember my first honorarium from the mentor was Rs. 1,200 or 1,500 per month. The occasion was the launch of the English magazine *Renaissance*. The honorarium came under that head—really pocket money, a stipend for personal expenses, not something to spend on the household.

Then in 1991 an institute was established (there's a whole backstory). There were four or five of us; all were hired as employees, because each of us had, in a sense, bid farewell to our respective disciplines and entered a new phase. From there our financial association began and has continued to this day—with Al-Mawrid in Pakistan, and then expansion thereafter.

Hasan: New projects arrived—so livelihood was tied to these efforts and projects?

Dr. Shehzad: Exactly. In these 35 years I've never held any job in engineering or outside it. Early on I did receive a very good offer from LUMS. My colleague Asif Iftikhar also taught there. The VC then wished to develop Islamic or Quranic studies and wanted me to teach. I said I could do something part-time, but not full-time alongside responsibilities at Al-Mawrid. That was when I had taken on full-time duties at the institute—roles shifted between administration, scholarship, critical thinking, and outreach, but the affiliation remained with the institution.

Hasan: Let's move forward. Once you met Javed Ahmed Ghamidi, responsibilities came, and the journey of understanding his thought began—a process that typically takes eight to ten years. Did you read foundational works lesson-by-lesson? Did he assign readings—"study these four things"—with you returning with questions? Or was it like a classroom with a teacher and a set curriculum?

Dr. Shehzad: I met Javed Ahmed Ghamidi in 1988. Before that I had read quite a bit on my own: Maulana Maududi, and Urdu and English language literature. I took two Arabic courses: *Al-Lisan al-Arabi* at the International Islamic University (though it focused on speaking, it covered grammar and basic Arabic), and another in Lahore's Badshahi Mosque. I saw an ad that Egyptian scholars would run an eight-month course, with three or four classes a week. I was still at university—this was 1986–87, before meeting Javed Ahmed Ghamidi—so I took that eight-month course, traveling daily to the mosque.

Hasan: What was that course?

Dr. Shehzad: It had no special name—just "Arabic language." The teacher didn't know Urdu and we didn't know Arabic. He was from Egypt, named Abdullah. The well-known Ahl-e-Hadith scholar Abd al-Rahman Kilani had arranged the course by contacting Egypt. In the side-cells of the main mosque we were given a room. We would go daily between Maghrib-Isha or Asr-Maghrib, about an hour to an hour and a half, perhaps four days a week. Since he didn't speak Urdu and we didn't know Arabic, both sides had to exert themselves—he never spoke Urdu; *we* spoke Arabic! He taught us the first two parts of *Al-Tariqah al-Jadidah*. All this was my Arabic background before meeting Javed Ahmed Ghamidi.

When I met him, he said Arabic was essential and assigned two senior students—Rafi Mufti and Talib Muhsin—to teach me. First Talib Muhsin, then Rafi Mufti, taught me Maulana Farahi’s *Asbaq al-Nabw* lesson-by-lesson. My senior colleagues Moiz Amjad and Asif Iftikhar also joined; we studied together. We added all six parts of *Al-Nabw al-Wazih*. So, we came in with truly preliminary Arabic, and they took us to an intermediate level.

After that we read some things with Javed Ahmed Ghamidi: parts of Al-Zamakhshari’s *al-Mufasssal*, parts of *Al-Kashshaf*, parts of Fakhr al-Din al-Razi. Then he moved us to assignment-based work—read and write.

From the outset my main interest was the Quran. Of course, hadith, fiqh, history, sirah were all there, but Quranic studies drew me most. So, he directed me to works like *Al-Itqan*, *Al-Burhan*, and standard *Uloom al-Quran* texts. The books I read most attentively on the Quran’s introduction were six by Maulana Farahi—three on the Quran’s inner and three on its outer dimensions, as he put it—which Rafi Mufti taught me: *Asalib al-Quran*, *Nizam al-Quran*, *Dalail al-Nizam*, *al-Takmil fi Usul al-Tawil*, etc. I also read with him Fayz al-Hasan Saharanpuri’s commentary on the *Sabah Muallaqat*, *Riyaz al-Fayz*. I had long loved poetry, so I read all seven *Muallaqat*.

Even earlier I had a taste for Urdu and English literature—especially poetry: Milton, Shakespeare, William Blake, Wordsworth, and other classical and modern poets—so a love for Arabic poetry came naturally. I wanted to *write out* the poems as I read them—the very act helps memorization. I memorized, for instance, the *Muallaqat* of Imru al-Qays and of Labid—the latter I liked very much.

Then Javed Ahmed Ghamidi said: read Ibn Khaldun’s *Muqaddimah*. I think while I was reading it, Amin Ahsan Islahi announced that he would begin lessons in Quran and hadith. When I met Javed Ahmed Ghamidi in 1988–89 there had been a lull in Maulana Islahi’s lessons; just as I began with Javed Ahmed Ghamidi, his sessions restarted—one day a week for the Quran, one for hadith, plus a third meeting we called the *Fajr sitting*. We’d pray Fajr and spend an hour with Maulana—not a formal lesson, just conversation.

Hasan: Was Javed Ahmed Ghamidi there too?

Dr. Shehzad: Yes—he, Dr. Khalid Zahir, Dr. Munir, and others at different times. For two or three years it was a regular morning circle in which the Maulana shared his week’s reflections—with some wit and anecdotes too.

Hasan: Some of those were recorded.

Dr. Shehzad: They were recorded—and are on the internet. I recall that Maulana Islahi said Arabic was essential for us, so he began teaching *Sahih al-Bukhari* formally and asked all students to enroll. He wrote the names on a slip of paper. Since Javed Ahmed Ghamidi was also learning *Bukhari* from him, he wrote “student” by his own name; I did the same, and others too. Later we joked that Javed Ahmed Ghamidi was our class-fellow! We continued with *Bukhari* and covered *Kitab al-Buyu*, *Bad al-Wahy*, and *Al-Anbiya*—a little less than a third of the book.

Hasan: There are many lectures from that.

Dr. Shehzad: Yes. Earlier Maulana Islahi had taught the *Muwatta*, but that was before my time.

Hasan: He taught it in Khalid Masud’s time, and it’s been edited.

Dr. Shehzad: Right. So, I had the good fortune to study directly with both Javed Ahmed Ghamidi and Maulana Islahi.

[To be continued....]

Idols of Modernity

Malik Azhar Ellahi

...these are nothing but names you have invented yourselves - you and your forefathers -for which Allah has sent down no authority. They follow not except assumption and what [their] souls desire, even though guidance has already come to them from their Lord. (Quran, 53:23)

Idol worship was never merely a reverence for figure or form; it embodied entire ways of life, cultural pride, and the privileges of priestly and elite classes, with inherited tradition supplying its authority.

Striking parallels exist in modern collective movements—liberal and secular philosophies, scientific frameworks, political forces, and diverse religious iterations—that, like the idols of old, often demand unquestioning adherence and shape the way people think and act. Beneath the claims about absolute truth, often lie assumptions that are taken for facts.

Vanity and Collective Pride

Vanity is pride without substance: grasping at trifles, inflated by borrowed praise. It chases validation that may fade as a fleeting thrill or sink into outright depravity.

When magnified within collective identities—national, political, or religious—it becomes a potent, even oppressive force, especially when fueled by exceptionalist slogans or contrived claims of divine sanction.

These currents of nationalistic pride and assertions of civilizational distinctiveness often manifest in narratives that define a people's sense of self. Every nation has its origin stories and myths: some are historically grounded and harmlessly affirm belonging even when mingled with some fiction. Yet some are deliberately engineered, presenting inflated notions of glory, belonging, and destiny that serve the interests of those who craft them.

These are not mere fantasies: they have driven some of the worst excesses of human history—excesses that tragically continue to unfold today. Under the sway of collective conceit, chauvinistic agendas advance in the name of the greater good, national interest, or religious conformism, normalizing discrimination, persecution, injustice, and inevitably violence.

Enlightenment and Its Legacy

Such narratives remain in correspondence with prevailing knowledge regimes—resisting them, opposing them, or selectively appropriating from them to reinforce their power. There is always a framework of knowledge, beliefs, and assumptions within which individuals reason and societies cohere.

Those that dominant today are traceable, in large part, to the European Enlightenment. They shape modern institutions, education, politics, economics, science, and even popular culture. Even where they fuse with older traditions that otherwise insist on a religious or civilizational self-understanding, the habits and aspirations of daily life often reflect an unwitting embrace of Enlightenment norms—most visibly among ruling elites, structures of governance, and civil society activism.

It is not that the core principles of the Enlightenment were wholly novel; many had precedents in earlier thought and religious tradition, including religious jurisprudence. Yet, combined into a coherent ethos, they proved powerful in displacing entrenched dogmatism, priestly and monarchical power that claimed divine sanction.

This paved the way for both remarkable progress and unprecedented power. The Enlightenment's emphasis on reason, science, and liberty unshackled creativity, fostered a hunger for knowledge, and helped move Europe beyond the devastation of religious warfare. Advances in governance, education, and human rights followed.

Yet the same power when exercised overseas led to colonization, exploitation, and even genocides. The very movement that championed universal ideals of freedom and human dignity simultaneously revealed merciless exclusivist attitudes, many of which remain ingrained in Western imagination.

The reasons for this contradiction are not inexplicable. *Human thought often claims universal validity without allegiance to any transcendent moral code.* Yet time after time, lurking beneath the surface, are entrenched interests and cultural biases.

John Locke, often celebrated as a father of liberalism and champion of rights, illustrates the paradox well. While he argued for government by consent, natural rights, and religious toleration, he simultaneously invested in the slave trade, defended colonial expropriation of indigenous lands, and restricted full political rights to property-owning men. His vision of liberty was deeply conditioned by race, class, and property. In time, his selective freedoms were canonized in Western constitutions as if universal. Such vaunted ideals are rarely free of the limitations and prejudices of their time.

Whilst the watershed that this era marked opened new horizons of knowledge and progress, the enabling values and norms soon began to be treated as sacrosanct—unquestionable, like the idols of old. Chief among these was, and remains, the impact of science, whose power of persuasion has proved even greater because its conclusions and assertions invoke the authority of objective methods and empirical evidence. It was only a matter of time before judgements from such a powerful phenomenon began to encroach upon what had hitherto remained in the domain of philosophy, religion, and metaphysics.

Science as Origin Story

By far, the most outstanding legacy of the Enlightenment is science. Its influence permeates deep into the human psyche, structuring thought and action in ways that often go unexamined.

Building on the foundation of empirical inquiry, science now asserts its crowning claim: that it has uncovered the mother of all origin stories—the universe itself. This ultimate origin tale has implications that go far beyond science. It seeks to redefine the meaning of existence, life, and purpose, shaping how individuals and societies imagine their place in the world. It represents the very concept of modernity.

When people looked at the heavens and wondered how it all began, an explanation that dominated for centuries was that it had no beginning at all—it was always there. The Book of Genesis told a different story, pointing to a moment of creation. But human pride held firmly to the worldview of an eternal universe, confident that the cosmos itself could yield to reason alone.

This conviction endured into the modern age. Even the great Einstein, who famously revolutionized our understanding of space and time, believed in a static universe. To preserve the idea of a universe existing forever by itself, he inserted the cosmological constant into the equations of general relativity—a mathematical fudge to ensure a desired outcome that was otherwise elusive. Ironically, he later called it his “biggest blunder.” Yet it

illustrates how deeply ingrained the preference for a self-existent, eternal cosmos was, even among the most brilliant minds. It also precluded any appeal to a divine order.

The Big Bang unsettled that confidence, suggesting that space, time, matter, and energy all began in a single event—originating virtually from nothing and rapidly expanding into the vast cosmos we see today.

Religious thinkers naturally saw in this an echo of their ancient teaching of *creation ex nihilo*—before creation, nothing existed: no time, no space, no matter and no physical laws to govern them. Natural scientists, however, were not eager to concede the point. So new models were offered, claiming that even when there is nothing, that non-space is still seething with energy, fields and laws that can give rise to a universe. In the ordinary sense of its meaning, true nothingness is the absence of space, time, matter, energy, and even laws. But naturalistic models do not allow that, and some tangible is always smuggled in as the starting point.

Naturalism as Dogma

What began as a method of investigating nature gradually became a worldview. Naturalism—the conviction that only matter, energy, and natural laws constitute reality—took on the role of an ultimate explanatory framework.

What emerges is less a neutral description of reality than what may be called a **Naturalistic Ontological Dogmatism**—an insistence that nature must contain its own origins, that nothing outside its bounds can be permitted even as a possibility. As evolutionary biologist Richard Lewontin once admitted: *We take the side of science in spite of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs... because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism.*

Knowledge, Power, and the New Idols

Beyond cosmology, the same structures that shape scientific thought seep into everyday life. Foucault's concept of the *episteme* helps us see this: it embodies the underlying structure of knowledge in a given historical period—it evolves through discourse, social norms and customs, and repeated practices and forms a deep, often unconscious framework that influences how people think, what they say and believe. In modern times, the naturalistic episteme—the assumption that only material causes and empirical laws define reality—bears a significant influence on how we experience the world without necessarily our conscious awareness.

Antonio Gramsci captured the paradigm in another way. He described how ruling groups maintain dominance by influencing culture itself. They instill a *hegemonic common sense*—a set of beliefs and assumptions disseminated through institutions such as schools, media, and organized religion.

Today, the convergence of various interests produces a worldview in which life is measured in data, progress by technology, and success by consumption. This common sense enters ordinary thought almost invisibly, creating tastes, guiding assumptions, and altering moral standards. It is powerful because it feels neutral, when in fact it reflects the priorities of those who set the terms of our age—digital entrepreneurs, large corporations, and the mainstream media, with the ubiquitous secular distillation originating in the naturalistic gospel.

The Denouement of Naturalism

Life is meaningful when the choices we make are guided by a moral compass. When our search for knowledge admits limits and anchors itself in transcendence. When the marvel of creation—its staggering beauty and majestic infinite expanse—instills the humility necessary to grow in reverence and virtue rather than wallow in the hubris of imagining ourselves masters of a material destiny.

Today, however, we are told that: *“The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no purpose, no design, no good or evil—nothing but blind, pitiless indifference.”* — Richard Dawkins

This is an honest and unvarnished verdict of naturalism and atheism. Others have attempted to salvage human purpose by relying solely on expedient forms of humanism. Yet the logical implications of such declarations are stark: if morality is nothing more than a human construct, it remains forever susceptible to the vagaries of selectivity, arbitrariness, and subjectivity. In such a framework, a life of selfishness, greed, or lust for power and pleasure cannot be denounced with any ultimate authority.

Similarly, physicist Steven Weinberg (who shared the 1979 Nobel Prize in Physics with Dr. Abdus Salam) spoke of the universe’s apparent pointlessness. Together, these reflections encapsulate the **philosophical denouement of Naturalistic Ontological Dogmatism**: a cosmos in which meaning, value, and moral content are absent, leaving human beings to confront existence in the light of whichever idols are in vogue —whether exclusivist ideologies, corporate religion, or the naturalistic dogma itself.

Towards the end of his life, Weinberg himself, in a tone of melancholy, admitted: *“I do think that as we learn more and more about the universe, we see that there is no point in the laws of nature that refer specifically to human beings, there is nothing that gives us guidance. I think the position of human beings is eternally rather tragic—that we have no guidance, we have no script, we are not acting out our part in the cosmic drama.”*⁴⁴

Yet if the late scientist had been more open to possibilities beyond the atheistic manifesto, he might have realized that humanity has never been left without a script. His lament about the absence of a script could itself be read as a clue to what humanity has always sought and, in fact, received; revealed guidance in the form of scripture to establish foundational morality, purpose and accountability, and a vision of ultimate destiny.

This is a Scripture which We have sent down to you [Prophet] so that, with their Lord’s permission, you may bring people from the depths of darkness into light, to the path of the Almighty, the Praiseworthy One. (14:1)

We have sent the Scripture down to you [Prophet] with the Truth for people. Whoever follows the guidance does so for his own benefit, whoever strays away from it does so at his own peril...(39:41)

Whether it is the haughty, self-righteous indignation of the cleric who sees heresy in every reasoned exposition of religious thought, the opportunist politician leading people up the garden path or whipping up hysteria for grandiose schemes and mob rule, or the natural scientist presuming to act as the final authority on what constitutes reality—vanity finds its way into every facet of the contemporary human condition.

At times it appears as certainties garbed in religious idiom, at others as a people’s exalted destiny, and still at others as the refusal to recognize the limits of knowability while presuming mastery all the same. These patterns of thought and conduct are absorbed and perpetuated by the multitude ensuring their persistence across all levels of society.

...He has been aware of you from the time He produced you from the earth and from your hiding places in your mothers’ wombs, so do not assert your own righteousness: He knows best who is mindful of Him. (53:32)

“All conflicts arise from the vanity of claiming sole possession of truth. Stand instead in humility: I am human. I seek the truth. I may err, and I am willing to learn.” Javed Ahmed Ghamidi

⁴⁴ Closer To Truth. (2012, March 13). *Why is there “something” rather than “nothing”?* | Episode 306 [Video].

THE TALIBAN'S EXPLOITATION OF RELIGION: COERCION IN THE NAME OF FAITH

Abid Mehmood Hashmi

When Muhammad Hassan Ilyas, Director of Research & Communication at the Ghamidi Center of Islamic Learning, addressed a United Nations side event during the 80th General Assembly session in New York, his remarks struck a nerve. The session, titled “The Taliban’s Political and Social Exploitation of Religion and Its Effects,” brought together more than 200 ministers, diplomats, and global experts. In that hall, Ilyas issued a stark warning: the Taliban have turned Islam into a weapon.

By cloaking their political project in religious rhetoric, he argued, the Taliban have systematically stripped Afghans—particularly women and children—of their most basic rights. True Islam, he reminded the audience, rests on justice, mercy, and consultation. The Taliban’s model rests on coercion and fear. This was not a narrow critique of one regime, but a caution about a global danger: once religion is successfully weaponized, it can inspire imitators far beyond Afghanistan’s borders.

To evaluate the accuracy of Ilyas’s claims, one need only look at the Taliban’s policies since their return to power in 2021. From codified morality laws to sweeping restrictions on women, from the weaponization of the justice system to public spectacles of violence, their governance model shows how religion can be distorted into a machinery of control.

Codifying Coercion: The “Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice” Law

Few policies better illustrate the Taliban’s use of religion as a weapon than the Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (PVPV), formally promulgated on 21 August 2024.⁴⁵ This law builds on the Taliban’s earlier reliance on the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, a body notorious during their first rule in the 1990s for beating women in the streets and enforcing puritanical rules. The new law empowers morality inspectors to detain individuals for up to three days, confiscate or destroy property deemed “un-Islamic,” and enforce broad prohibitions. Images of living beings, music, and public gatherings considered contrary to the Taliban’s interpretation of Islam are all targeted. Women must wear hijab covering the face; their voices are banned from public broadcast.⁴⁶ According to UNAMA’s April 2025 report, the Taliban have already deployed more than 3,300 inspectors across 28 of Afghanistan’s 34 provinces.⁴⁷ The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has called the law “a regressive framework that affirms the Taliban’s agenda and invites abuse.”⁴⁸ Here we see Ilyas’s point confirmed: the principle of “enjoining good and forbidding evil,” a Qur’anic concept meant to encourage communal ethics, has been hollowed out and turned into a mechanism of fear. Religion becomes not moral guidance, but a codified tool of coercion.

⁴⁵ UNAMA, The Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in Afghanistan: Six Months of Implementation, April 10, 2025.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ OHCHR, “New Morality Law Affirms Taliban’s Regressive Agenda, Experts Call for Concerted Action,” August 2024.

The Systematic Erasure of Women and Girls

From the very first weeks after retaking Kabul, the Taliban signaled their intent to erase women from public life. In September 2021, they barred girls from attending secondary schools. In December 2022, they expanded the ban to universities, cutting off millions of Afghan women from education.⁴⁹ By 2023, women were also prohibited from working in NGOs and, later, for the United Nations inside Afghanistan.⁵⁰

UN Women has documented more than 70 formal edicts, directives, and statements targeting women: restrictions on work, travel, dress, even the sound of their voices.⁵¹ Women cannot use public transport without permission, cannot speak on radio, cannot appear on television except under tightly controlled conditions. As the International Commission of Jurists noted in 2023, these measures amount to “gender persecution”—a crime against humanity under the Rome Statute.⁵²

A recent report by the Afghan organization Farageer, Alarm Bell, documents the testimonies of 700 citizens, including 600 women from 14 provinces, regarding the consequences of Taliban rule. The report argues that the Taliban have “deliberately instrumentalized religion as a tool of political control”, using restrictions on women to enforce a system of “gender apartheid.”⁵³ It highlights that while bans on girls’ education are well known, the expansion of religious schools has also been dramatic: from approximately 5,000 in 2021 to more than 22,000 in recent years.⁵⁴ The report further documents arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, forced marriages, and extreme economic pressures on households headed by women.⁵⁵

This evidence reinforces Ilyas’s thesis: Taliban rule is not simply an accidental byproduct of tradition but an intentional political design that distorts religion to sustain domination.

Weaponizing the Justice System

Equally telling is the Taliban’s transformation of Afghanistan’s justice system. Female judges and prosecutors were dismissed immediately after the takeover. The 2004 constitution was suspended. Courts now operate on decrees issued by the Taliban’s leadership, interpreted exclusively by male clerics loyal to the regime. A joint UN Women, UNAMA, and IOM report in 2024 described Afghan women as “virtually powerless in a justice system devoid of gender equality.” Survivors of gender-based violence, once able to appeal to specialized units and shelters, now have nowhere to turn. Instead, they risk being prosecuted themselves for “moral crimes.”

The American Society of International Law concluded that the Taliban have “actively weaponized Afghanistan’s legal system.” Instead of protecting citizens, law is used to dominate and silence. This is precisely what Ilyas meant

⁴⁹ UN Women, “Women in Afghanistan Have Not Stopped Striving for Their Rights,” August 2024.

⁵⁰ International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), “Afghanistan: Taliban’s Treatment of Women and Girls Should Be Investigated as the Crime against Humanity of Gender Persecution”, 2023.

⁵¹ UN Women, “Statement on Afghanistan Morality Law,” August 2024.

⁵² ICJ, “Gender Persecution”, 2023.

⁵³ Farageer, “Alarm Bell: New Report by Farageer — Taliban Distorts Religion to Use Gender Apartheid as a Political Tool”, 2025.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

when he warned that the Taliban's model replaces consultation with coercion: religious authority becomes a cover for systemic injustice.

Silencing the Counter-Narrative: Media and Information Control

No authoritarian project survives without controlling information, and the Taliban are acutely aware of this. The PVPV law explicitly prohibits media that "insults Muslims" or "contradicts Shariah." In practice, this has meant banning music, shutting down newspapers, and forbidding images of living beings.

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has documented arrests of journalists, the closure of at least a dozen outlets in 2024 alone, and widespread intimidation that has pushed reporters into exile.⁵⁶ Afghanistan now ranks among the worst countries globally for press freedom. In September 2025, internet services were deliberately shut down in several northern provinces under the pretext of combating "immorality."⁵⁷ By monopolizing religious discourse and silencing alternatives, the Taliban ensure their interpretation of religion is the only one heard, undermining precisely the consultative ethos that Islam emphasizes.

Religion as Spectacle: Public Punishments

Since their return, the Taliban have revived practices that horrify the international community: public floggings, amputations, and executions. These events are staged in stadiums or public squares, with citizens forced to watch. In December 2022, a man was executed before hundreds of onlookers at a football stadium in Farah Province after being accused of murder. UNAMA has recorded dozens of public floggings, often of women, for charges ranging from adultery to immoral behavior. The Taliban present these punishments as enforcement of Shariah, but their function is also symbolic. They project fear, reinforce obedience, and conflate religious piety with public terror.

Here again, coercion stands where consultation should. Islam's jurisprudence historically emphasized procedural justice, mercy, and restrictions that made such punishments exceedingly rare. The Taliban strip away those nuances, wielding law as spectacle.

Exploiting Children and Youth

Perhaps the most chilling element of Taliban governance is their treatment of children and youth. By denying girls an education and indoctrinating boys with narrow religious curricula, they are shaping a generation to accept coercion as natural. The Farageer report also warns of the "unprecedented expansion" in religious schooling, which functions as a complement to the Taliban's strict control of education.⁵⁸ The shift means that for each new modern school, 85 religious schools are being created, a scale that channels children into ideologically aligned systems rather than open, critical education.

Instead of fostering critical thinking and scientific knowledge, curricula are heavily infused with ideology designed to produce conformity. For boys, that often means loyalty to the Taliban's armed project; for girls, it

⁵⁶ Reporters Without Borders (RSF), "Afghanistan Country Report", 2024.

⁵⁷ Reuters, "Afghanistan's Cellphone and Internet Services Down, Monitoring Shows," September 30, 2025.

⁵⁸ Associated Press (AP), "Taliban Carry Out First Public Execution since Return to Power," December 7, 2022.

means silence and invisibility. This is the long game of religious weaponization: shaping future generations to normalize oppression in the name of faith.

Why This Matters Globally

Ilyas's warning in New York was clear: the Taliban's exploitation of religion is not just Afghanistan's tragedy. It is a template that could spread. Human Rights Watch has documented how anti-rights movements elsewhere cite the Taliban as inspiration, pointing to their success in reversing women's freedoms despite global pressure.⁵⁹ The Taliban's survival, despite sanctions and condemnation, sends a message: it is possible to impose religious authoritarianism and withstand international outrage. The Farageer findings underscore how the Taliban's model is not accidental but intentional: religion is distorted to legitimize political control and institutionalize gender segregation.⁶⁰ This intensifies Ilyas's argument that countering this threat requires more than condemnation—it demands an intellectual and educational resistance that can pierce the theological mask and reveal the politics beneath.

The Alternative: Reclaiming Religion from Weaponization

What, then, is the solution? Ilyas's answer is both pragmatic and profound. The confrontation with the Taliban cannot be purely military. Bombs and sanctions may weaken, but they cannot dislodge an ideology rooted in the exploitation of religion.

Instead, the response must be intellectual and educational. Scholars who emphasize Islam's ethics of justice and mercy must be supported. Women and youth voices must be amplified. Fabricated fatwas—those religious decrees engineered to justify oppression—must be exposed. The oppressed must be protected not only physically but intellectually, by reclaiming the narrative of Islam as a faith of compassion and reason. This is not simply Afghanistan's task. It is a responsibility shared by the global Muslim community, international institutions, and all who value human dignity. If the Taliban's model is allowed to stand unchallenged, it risks becoming the template for other authoritarian actors seeking to exploit faith for power.

Conclusion: Beyond Afghanistan

Muhammad Hassan Ilyas's address to the United Nations was not the first warning about the Taliban, nor will it be the last. But it was among the clearest articulations of what is at stake. The Taliban have not merely governed Afghanistan badly; they have weaponized religion, turning a faith of justice into an instrument of fear.

The PVPV law, the exclusion of women, the weaponization of justice, the silencing of media, the public spectacles of violence, the indoctrination of children, all these policies prove his point. Religion, in Taliban hands, is not guidance but a mask for oppression.

The task before the world, then, is to ensure that this mask is torn away. To show that Islam's true spirit is mercy, not coercion; consultation, not domination. And to amplify the voices—of scholars, of women, of youth—who are already carrying that message, often at great personal risk. The Taliban's weaponization of religion is a threat

⁵⁹ Human Rights Watch (HRW), "The Taliban and the Global Backlash against Women's Rights," February 6, 2024.

⁶⁰ Farageer, "Alarm Bell: New Report by Farageer — Taliban Distorts Religion to Use Gender Apartheid as a Political Tool", 2025.

not just to Afghanistan but to the credibility of religion in the modern world. Meeting that threat requires more than condemnation. It requires the courage to build, amplify, and protect an alternative.

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NEWSLETTER - AL-MAWRID US

MUHAMMAD HASSAN ILYAS'S ADDRESS AT A UNITED NATIONS–HOSTED SESSION

Last month in New York, on the sidelines of the 80th session of the UN General Assembly, an important official side event was held on the theme: “The Taliban’s Political and Social Exploitation of Religion and Its Effects.” The Ghamidi Center’s Director of Research & Communication, Muhammad Hassan Ilyas, was formally invited to speak. More than 200 ministers, diplomats, and global experts attended. In his remarks, Hassan Ilyas stated that the Taliban have used Islam as a weapon, the result of which has been a severe infringement of the fundamental rights of Afghan women and children in particular. He clarified that true Islam rests on justice, mercy, and consultation, whereas the Taliban’s model is founded on coercion and oppression. He warned that the Taliban’s political and social exploitation of religion is not merely Afghanistan’s problem, but a global threat. Confronting this danger, he argued, is not only a military matter; it requires an alternative intellectual and educational narrative. He further deemed essential the amplification of the voices of scholars, women, and youth leadership, the refutation of fabricated fatwas, and the protection of the oppressed.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION AND AUDIOBOOK OF AL-ISLAM

The Ghamidi Center has completed the English translation and audiobook production of Javed Ahmed Ghamidi’s book *Al-Islam*. This work is a concise and accessible summary of Ghamidi’s celebrated treatise *Meezan*, presenting Islam in a straightforward manner, stripped of technical debates and elaborate argumentation. The English translation and audiobook of *Al-Islam* will soon be available across the Ghamidi Center of Islamic Learning’s publishing and broadcast platforms.

THE ISSUE OF TRIPLE DIVORCE

Within the Center’s ongoing video series addressing 23 objections, the current theme is “*Ijtihadi Applications*.” These sessions review Ghamidi’s ijtihad-based applications to date and scholarly critiques thereof. In the September 2025 sessions, Ghamidi presented arguments in support of his position on *talaq thalathah* (triple divorce) and divorces pronounced in anger, reaction, or heightened emotion. These sessions can be viewed on the Ghamidi Center’s YouTube channel.

HUJJATULLAH AL-BALIGHAH

The Ghamidi Center has launched a new scholarly series titled *Hujjatullah al-Balighah*. In it, Muhammad Hassan Ilyas poses his questions and difficulties regarding key discussions in Shah Waliullah al-Dehlawi’s renowned work *Hujjatullah al-Balighah*, and Javed Ahmed Ghamidi offers his analysis and commentary. The September 2025 sessions addressed foundational topics such as the basis of the religious sciences, the relationship between Quran and Hadith, the method of acquiring religious knowledge, and the objectives of the Shariah. Recordings are available on the Center’s YouTube channel.

AFKAR-E-GHAMIDI

Syed Manzoor ul Hassan, research scholar at the Ghamidi Center of Islamic Learning and editor of the monthly *Isbraq* (US), has long been advancing Islamic thought through his writings, especially by elucidating and explicating Javed Ahmed Ghamidi’s ideas. He has now also begun a series of topical talks. “Afk-e-Ghamidi” is a weekly program that presents these themes in accessible terms. Last month’s episodes were titled: “The Sole Source of Religion: Muhammad (PBUH),” “Does Islam Intend Democracy or Autocracy?,” “How Should We

Teach Religion to the New Generation?,” and “Is a Woman’s Testimony Half (compared to that of men)?” The recordings are available on the Ghamidi Center’s YouTube channel.

SOME MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT ISLAM—AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF ATHEISM

Last month, the Center’s Director of Research & Communication, Muhammad Hassan Ilyas, held a dialogue with Mr. Haris Sultan on “Some Misconceptions about Islam—Against the Backdrop of Atheism,” in which Mr. Ilyas offered reasoned and scholarly responses to various atheist critiques of Islam. Among the questions discussed were: “Is it not unjust to consign a morally upright person to Hell merely for not believing in God?,” “Has the Quran’s essential intent failed to remain preserved?,” “Why do jurists deem death the penalty for apostasy?,” and “What do Sufis hold regarding the punishment for apostasy?” The conversation also explored women’s rights in Islam and common misconceptions about women. The recording is available on the Center’s YouTube channel.

ASK GHAMIDI

In the Center’s ongoing online Q&A sessions titled “Ask Ghamidi,” some of last month’s prominent questions included: “How can Muslims build themselves as a community?,” “What distinguishes the shirk of the polytheists from that of the People of the Book?,” “What is Javed Ahmed Ghamidi’s view on the Pakistan–Saudi Arabia defense agreement?,” and “What is meant by the *nafs* (self)?” Recordings are available on the Center’s YouTube channel.

WEEKLY LESSONS IN QURAN AND HADITH

In September 2025, during the Ghamidi Center’s live sessions on Quran and Hadith, Javed Ahmed Ghamidi taught verses 21–41 of Surah al-Hajj. In the Hadith lessons, key themes discussed included: “Imitating Previous Communities and an Incident of a Companion,” “My Ummah Will Also Follow the Ways of Former Nations,” “The Prophet’s Admonition to His Ummah,” and “The Prophet’s Disavowal of Rebels Against the Public Order.” Recordings are available on the Center’s YouTube channel.

TAFHIM AL-ATHAR SERIES

Under the ongoing “Tafhim al-Athar” series, the September 2025 sessions addressed significant topics such as “The Caliphate of Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz,” “Do Not Make the Quran a Means of Worldly Gain,” “Learn the Quran and Ask Only from God,” “Teaching and Dissemination of the Sunnah in the Prophetic Era,” and “The Background to the Companions’ Jihad.” Recordings can be viewed on the Center’s YouTube channel.

Q&A WITH HASSAN ILYAS

On the well-known YouTube channel “Muslim Today,” the series “Ask Hassan Ilyas” continues. This question-and-answer program features Mr. Ilyas responding to audiences’ intellectual, theological, and religious inquiries. In September 2025, notable topics included: “Why did the Quran direct the Jews to return to the Torah?,” “How should we understand the Quran?,” “What is the best argument for the existence of God?,” and “Does Islam forbid the study of other religions?” Recordings are available on the Ghamidi Center’s YouTube channel.

THE GHAMIDI CENTER’S ONLINE KHANQAH

In last month’s sessions of the Center’s ongoing online *khanqah*, key points discussed included: “God Administers All Affairs Himself,” “The Difference Between Receiving Reward and Avoiding Punishment,” “Our Changing Motives,” and “The Four Stages of Human Development.” Recordings are available on the Center’s YouTube channel.

SUNDAY SCHOOL CURRICULUM IN BOOK FORM

The Ghamidi Center of Islamic Learning has now published its Sunday School curriculum in book form. The curriculum comprises nine books designed for Grades 1 through 9. Tailored especially for Muslim children living in non-Muslim countries, it is based on Javed Ahmed Ghamidi's teachings and his book *Meezan*. It is considered an excellent choice for Islamic Sunday schools and for parents who homeschool. The textbooks can be ordered directly from the Ghamidi Center's website.

ILM O HIKMAT: WITH GHAMIDI (ILM O HIKMAT GHAMIDI KAY SAATH)

In September 2025, the weekly program featuring Ghamidi on "Dunya News" aired three episodes on "A Five-Point Plan for the Survival of the Muslim Ummah—A Critical Appraisal" and one episode on "What Is Shirk?" Prominent questions discussed included: "Does Islam endorse the current economic order?", "Is progress possible without reforming the education system?", "Why is shirk such a grave sin?", and "Is the negation of shirk embedded in human nature?" Recordings are available on the Ghamidi Center's YouTube channel.

DR. SHEHZAD SALEEM'S ONLINE PRIVATE CONSULTATIONS

Each month, Dr. Shehzad Saleem holds online private consultation sessions. In these sessions, people seek counsel regarding various personal and family matters. Over thirty sessions were held last month, addressing parental challenges and issues faced during adolescence.

ISSUANCE OF FATWAS BASED ON RELIGIOUS OPINIONS

The Ghamidi Center of Islamic Learning, Al-Mawrid USA, is frequently approached regarding the legal applications of Shariah. Inquiries often relate to marriage and divorce, inheritance, and other socio-economic matters requiring applied opinions. Last month, several fatwas were issued to address such needs. These were prepared by Muhammad Hassan Ilyas in the light of Javed Ahmed Ghamidi's thought.

CHALLENGES FACED BY YOUNG MINDS

Last month, Dr. Shehzad Saleem delivered a detailed lecture on "Challenges faced by Young Minds," discussing the mental and emotional issues confronting youth, academic pressure, societal expectations, and the obstacles to personal development. The recording is available on the Ghamidi Center's YouTube channel.

