

The Ḥadīth “*My Companions are like the stars...*”

by GF Haddad – Shawwāl 1425

“*My Companions are like the stars, whoever among them you use for guidance, you will be rightly guided.*”

أَصْحَابِي كَالنَّجُومِ،
بِأَيِّمِ أَتَدْتُمُ اهْتَدَيْتُمْ

This ḥadīth is either fair due to its many chains (*ḥasan li-ghayrihi*) or, at worst, weak; but not forged, and its meaning is true.

Chains

The ḥadīth is narrated through many weak chains as stated by Ibn Ḥajar in *al-Kāfī al-Shāf fī Takhrīj Ahādīth al-Kashshāf* (4:94) from:

[1] Ibn ‘Umar C by ‘Abd ibn Ḥumayd in his *Musnad* (*Muntakhab* Kuwait ed. 2:28= Cairo ed. p. 250), Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr in *Jāmi‘ Bayān al-‘Ilm* (2:924 §1759), and Ibn ‘Adī in *al-Kāmil* (2:785-786), all with very weak chains through the forger Ḥamza ibn Abī Ḥamza al-Ju‘fī al-Jazīrī cf. al-Suyūṭī in *Manāhil al-Ṣafā* (p. 193 §1027), Ibn ‘Adī in *al-Kāmil*, and *Talkhīṣ al-Ḥabīr* (4:190);

[2] Jābir ibn ‘Abd Allāh C by al-Dāraquṭnī in *Faḍā’il al-Ṣaḥāba* and *al-Mu’talif wal-Mukhtalif* (4:1778), Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr in *Jāmi‘ Bayān al-‘Ilm* (2:925 §1760=2:110-111 *ḍa’īf*), and Ibn Ḥazm in *al-Iḥkām* (6:244 *mawḍū‘*) with a weak chain because of Sallām ibn al-Ḥārith although **this is the best chain in this chapter and al-Bayhaqī declares it strong** in *al-Itiqād* (p. 319); Ibn Ḥazm narrates it through Sallām ibn Sulaymān (ibn Sawwār) who is also weak;

[2a] Jābir by al-Dāraquṭnī in *Gharā’ib Mālik* through an unknown from Imām Mālik cf. *Talkhīṣ al-Ḥabīr*;

[3] Abū Hurayra ؓ by al-Qudā’ī in *Musnad al-Shihāb* (2:275 §1346) with a very weak chain because of Ja‘far ibn ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Hāshimī who is accused of lying as stated by Ibn Ḥajar;

[4] ‘Umar ؓ (a *ḥadīth qudsī*) by al-Bayhaqī in *al-Madkhal* (p. 162=1:145-146 §151), al-Khaṭīb in *al-Kifāya* (p. 48=p. 66=p. 95), al-Bazzār who graded it *ḍa’īf munkar* as quoted by Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr in *Jāmi‘ Bayān al-‘Ilm* (2:924), Niẓām al-Mulk (408-485) in *Majlisān min Amālī Niẓām al-Mulk* (p. 52), al-Sijzī in *al-Ibāna*, and Ibn ‘Asākir, all with a very weak chain because of ‘Abd al-Raḥīm ibn Zayd al-‘Ammī who is discarded cf. Ibn al-Jawzī, *‘Ilal* (1:282), al-Dhahabī, *Mizān (bāṭil)*, al-Suyūṭī, *Jāmi‘ Saḡhīr* (§4603 *ḍa’īf*), al-Ṣan‘ānī, *Tawḍīḥ al-Afkār* (p. 264), al-Munāwī, *Fayḍ al-Qadīr* (4:76 *bāṭil*), and al-Ghumārī, *al-Mughīr* (p. 56 *mawḍū‘*);

[5] Ibn ‘Abbās C *munqaṭi‘* by al-Khaṭīb in *al-Kifāya* (p. 48=p. 65-66=p. 95), al-Bayhaqī in *al-Madkhal* (p. 163-164=1:147-148), and Ibn ‘Asākir cf. al-Suyūṭī, *Miftāḥ al-Janna* (p. 45=p. 93-94 §180), all with a very weak chain because of Juwaybir ibn Sa‘īd al-Azdī (cf. *Taqrīb*) in addition to its being broken between al-Ḍaḥḥāk and Ibn ‘Abbās;

[6] Anas ؓ through al-Bazzār cf. Ibn Ḥajar in *Talkhīṣ al-Ḥabīr* (4:191 *isnād wāḥin*) and *al-Maṭālib al-‘Alīya* (4:146 *isnād ḍa’īf*).

[7] Jawwāb ibn ‘Ubayd Allāh the *Tābi‘ī*, *mursal* by al-Bayhaqī in *al-Madkhal* (p. 163=1:148 §153) through Juwaybir.

Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ attributes it positively to the Prophet ﷺ in *al-Shifā’* (p. 535 §1302). Al-Bajawī said in his commentary of the *Shifā’* (2:613): “The ḥadīth Master al-‘Irāqī said: The author (‘Iyāḍ) should not have cited it as if it were definitely a ḥadīth of the Prophet.” Al-Ḥalabī said: “The author should not have cited it as if it were definitely a ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ as per what is known about it among the experts of the science, and he has done the same thing several times before.” Al-Qārī replies in his *Sharḥ al-Shifā’* (2:91): “It is possible that he [‘Iyāḍ] had established a chain for it or that he considered the multiplicity of its chains to raise its grade from *ḍa‘īf* to *ḥasan* due to his good opinion of it, not to mention the fact that even the weak ḥadīth may be put into practice for meritorious acts (*fāḍā’il al-a‘māl*), and Allāh knows best.” See also Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmi‘ al-Uṣūl* (8:556–557).

Al-Bayhaqī in *al-Madkhal* concludes “Its *matn* is well-known and its chains are weak, not one of them being sound” but **he declares one of its chains strong and adduces it in *al-I‘tiqād*** (p. 319), **confirming its meaning while Ibn Ḥajar supports him in *Talkhīṣ al-Ḥabīr*** (4:191) cf. al-Mubārakfūrī, *Tuḥfāt al-Aḥwadhī* (10:156).

Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr rejects al-Bazzār’s ruling of *munkar* and also tends to strengthen it cf. Ibn Ḥajar in *Takhrīj Aḥādīth Mukhtaṣar Ibn al-Ḥājjib* (i.e. Ibn al-Ḥājjib’s abridgment of his own *Muntahā al-Sūl wal-Amal fī ‘Ilm al-Uṣūl wal-Jadal*) as cited in al-Ṣan‘ānī’s *Tawḍīḥ al-Aḥkār* (p. 264).

Al-Ṣaghānī declared it fair (*ḥasan*) as stated by Ḥasan al-Ṭibī and al-Sayyid’s respective commentaries on the *Mishkāt* and al-Lacknawī’s *Iqāmat al-Ḥujja* (p. 49). Shaykh ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda in his commentary on al-Qārī’s *Fath Bāb al-‘Ināya* (1:13) rejects the grading of *mawḍū‘* and tends to accept al-Lacknawī’s grading of *ḥasan* in his marginalia to the *Iqāma* but he petulantly rejects his suggestion of *ṣaḥīḥ bil-kashf* – in his marginalia on the latter’s *Tuḥfāt al-Akhyār* titled *Nukhbat al-Anzār* (p. 53) and in the introduction to his *al-Āthār al-Marfū‘a fī al-Akḥbār al-Mawḍū‘a* – for which the latter cites al-Sha‘rānī’s phrase in the *Mizān al-Kubrā*: “Even if the authenticity of this ḥadīth is questioned among the Scholars of ḥadīth, nevertheless it is sound among the people of spiritual unveiling (*kashf*).” See also the Tamīm brothers’ marginalia on al-Qārī’s *Sharḥ Sharḥ Nukhbat al-Fikar* (p. 557).

The “Salafī” scribbling Sa‘īd Ma‘shāsha in his tract *al-Muqallidūn wal-‘Immat al-Arba‘a* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī and Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1999) (p. 102) said, “this ḥadīth is forged (*mawḍū‘*) as Ibn Ḥazm said in *Uṣūl al-Aḥkām* (§810), al-Shawkānī in *al-Qawl al-Mufīd* (p. 30), and al-Albānī in *al-Silsila al-Ḍa‘īfa* (§58) and a number of the scholars.” This statement is a flat untruth as al-Shawkānī **adduces this narration as a proof** in his *Irshād al-Fuḥūl* (1:337, 1:394) and all he said in *al-Qawl al-Mufīd fī Adillat al-Ijtihād wal-Taqlīd* on page 9 of its original 1347/1929 edition is: “This ḥadīth was narrated through different routes from Jābir and Ibn ‘Umar, and the Imāms of narrator-criticism have explicitly said that none of them are sound (*lā yaṣīḥḥu minhā shay’*) and that this ḥadīth is not firmly established as a Prophetic narration.... In sum, this ḥadīth forms no proof.” This is the same opinion as what we have quoted from other scholars but it is a far cry from saying the ḥadīth is forged. Furthermore, it is untrue that “a number of the scholars” have declared it forged as the only scholar who did so was Ibn Ḥazm, imitated in our time by various semi-Ulema. One of the ironies of Ma‘shāsha’s book is that he attacks *taqlīd* on every page yet relies blindly on Albānī for ḥadīth authentication, without reference to the ḥadīth Masters!

Meaning

Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī in *Nawādir al-Uṣūl* (3:62) and others consider the meaning of this ḥadīth true. Its meaning is confirmed by countless corroborative evidence such as the following:

- The ḥadīth from Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī ؓ narrated by Muslim and Aḥmad, “*My Companions are trustees for my Community,*” part of a longer ḥadīth in which the Prophet ﷺ compares himself and his Companions ؓ to the stars. This comparison is unique in the ḥadīth and, together with the verse ﴿and by the stars they find a way﴾ (16:16), shows the truth of the ḥadīth “*My Companions are like the stars.*”

- The ḥadīth from Anas ؓ in the *Musnad* and *Zuhd* of Imām Aḥmad, “*The simile of the people of learning (al-‘ulamā’) on the earth is the stars in the sky by which one is guided in the darkness of the land and the sea. When the stars are clouded over, the guides are about to be lost.*”

- The ḥadīth from Anas in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* and *Sunan*, “*You are the witnesses of Allāh on earth! You are the witnesses of Allāh on earth! You are the witnesses of Allāh on earth!*”

- The ḥadīth from Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī, Rāfi‘ ibn Khadij, and Zayd ibn Thābit ؓ by Aḥmad, al-Ṭabarānī, al-Ḥākim, Ibn Abī Shayba, al-Ṭayālīsī, al-Qudā‘ī, and al-Bayhaqī, “*Mankind makes up one portion (ḥayyiz) and I and my Companions make up one portion [counter-balancing it].*”

- The report that our liege-lord Abū Bakr ؓ said to a desert Arab who had objected to the allotment for him agreed upon by the Muslims: “If the Emigrants are satisfied, you are but followers!”¹ – using the word “followers” (*taba‘un*) to mean ‘without any prerogative to consider, question, or discuss.’” Similar to this is the word of Allāh ﷻ: ﴿When those that were followed (uttubi‘ū) disown those that followed (ittaba‘ū)﴾ (2:166), which uses follow (*ittibā‘*) for the most basic blind imitation.

- The fact that our liege-lord ‘Umar ؓ referred to this paradigmatic guidance of the Companions when he defined them as “*Those whom people look at and take (knowledge) from*” at the time he disapproved of the difference of opinion between Ubay ibn Ka‘b and ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd.²

- The fact that Imām Aḥmad confirmed this understanding in his definition: “**The Religion is nothing but imitation itself**” (*al-dīn innamā huwa al-taqlīd*) and he continued, “**This imitation is for the Companions of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ.**”³ To al-Ṣayrafī who was asking him whether it is permissible to verify the variant positions of the Companions “in order to know which is correct so that we may follow it,” Aḥmad replied: “**It is not permissible to verify [the differences] among the Companions of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ!**” Al-Ṣayrafī said: “Then what do we do?” He replied: “**You imitate whomever of them you like!**” (*tuqallidu ayyahum aḥbabt*).⁴ (This is an explicit stipulation (*nass*) from Imām Aḥmad that by *taqlīd* he means *taqlīd*, not “following the proof” or “*ittibā‘*” or some such invented distinctions aimed at diluting or nullifying the meaning of *taqlīd*.)

¹Narrated by al-Muḥibb al-Ṭabarī in *al-Riyāḍ al-Naḍira* (2:235-236).

²Narrated by Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr in *Jāmi‘ Bayān al-‘Ilm* (Miṣr: Dār al-Ṭibā‘at al-Muniriyya 2:84).

³Narrated from Abū Muḥammad al-Barbahārī by Ibn Abī Ya‘lā in *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila* (1:29).

⁴Narrated by Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr in *Jāmi‘ Bayān al-‘Ilm* (2:909 §1705).

- Similarly, Aḥmad said to al-Maymūnī: “Abū al-Ḥasan! Never speak over any matter in which you do not have an Imām [to imitate].”⁵

As for the objection of Ibn Ḥazm that “not through every star is one guided,” it is refuted at the root by the verse ﴿and by the stars they find a way﴾! (16:16) and was anticipated by al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī who said in *Nawādir al-Uṣūl*: “Not everyone that met him ﷺ and followed him or saw him once is meant by the ḥadīth ‘*My Companions are like the stars*’ but only those that studiously kept his company morning and evening, received his conveyance of the Revelation, took from him the Law that became the path of the Umma, and looked to him for the ethics of Islām and to his noble traits. Those became, after him, the **Imāms and proofs in which resides right guidance and in whose path is found right emulation and in them is safety and right belief.**”⁶ And Allāh knows best.

⁵Narrated by Ibn al-Jawzī in *Manāqib Aḥmad* (p. 178).
⁶Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir al-Uṣūl* (Aṣl 222).