



Criticism of Hafs as a weak reporter of hadeeth

17-2-2016 | IslamWeb

Question:

Assalaamu alaykum. Is it true that Hafs ibn Sulaymaan, the reciter, was considered a weak reporter of Hadith? Some of the criticism that I read in Tahdheeb al-Kamaal seems to be attacking the trustworthiness of Hafs. If it is correct that he was considered a liar, then how then can we trust him in narrating the Quran as he could have lied in it as well? Also, were there any other Imams of qiraa'ah (recitation) like this?

Answer:

All perfect praise be to Allaah, The Lord of the Worlds. I testify that there is none worthy of worship except Allaah and that Muhammad, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, is His slave and Messenger.

Ath-Thahabi stated in his book Al-Kaashif that **Hafs ibn Sulaymaan** was accurate as far as the recitation of the Quran is concerned. **Ibn 'Adiyy** underlined in his book Al-Kaamil that the recitation of **Hafs** was more accurate than that of **Shu'bah**. **Ash-Shaatibi** commended him in his book Hirz Al-Amaani in the poetic lines in praise of 'Aasim and his two narrators, i.e. **Hafs** and **Shu'bah**.

Abu Shaamah wrote, "Abu Bakr Al-Khateeb said, 'The early scholars of Quran declared Hafs more accurate and better than Abu Bakr ibn 'Ayyaash (i.e. Shu'bah) as far as the memorization of the Quran is concerned..." [Sharh Ash-Shaatibiyyah]

When it comes to the recitation of the Quran, **Hafs** was declared more accurate and correct than **Shu'bah** in narrating 'Aasim's mode of recitation. The fact that scholars of Hadeeth declared **Hafs** a weak reporter in the field of Hadeeth does not undermine his great status in the field of Quran recitation. He excelled in the field of Quran recitation and reached a refined rank in it; however, the field of Hadeeth was not his area of specialization and he did not give it adequate attention. This is why he did not excel in it. **Ath-Thahabi** wrote, "Hafs was an accurate reciter of the Quran and a weak reporter of Hadeeth because he did not excel in the field of Hadeeth like he did in the field of Quran recitation. Otherwise, he was a truthful and honest man..." [Al-Mizaan]

Accusing him of lying in the context of Hadeeth transmission does not necessarily indicate accusing him of deliberately fabricating false ahaadeeth and attributing them to the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, by which the reporter is declared untrustworthy and his narration is rejected in the field of hadeeth. This is because, sometimes, the reporter might unintentionally narrate false reports and lies.

Imaam **Muslim** underlined this in the introduction of his book Saheeh Muslim, as he wrote:

"Muhammad ibn 'Abdullaah ibn Quhzaad from Marw narrated on the authority of 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn Waaqid, who reported on the authority of 'Abdullaah ibn Al-Mubaarak, that he said to Sufyaan Ath-Thawri, 'Indeed, you know the condition of 'Abbaad ibn Katheer and if he narrates, he brings about nothing but calamity; so, do you think I should tell people not to take from him (i.e. accept his narration)?' Sufyaan Ath-Thawri replied, 'Of course!' 'Abdullaah added, 'So, if I was sitting among people and 'Abbaad was mentioned, I would praise his religion and say, 'Do not take from him.'

Muhammad narrated on the authority of 'Abdullaah ibn 'Uthmaan that he said, 'My father said to me, 'Abdullaah ibn Al-Mubaarak said, 'I came to Shu'bah and he said to him, 'This is 'Abbaad ibn Katheer; be

aware of him."

Al-Fadhli ibn Sahl said, 'I asked Mu'aalla Ar-Raazi about Muhammad ibn Sa'eed on whose authority 'Abbaad narrated, and he told me that he narrated on the authority of 'Eesa ibn Yoonus, who said, 'I was at the door and Sufyaan was with him. When we left, I asked him about him; he said to me that he was a liar.'"

Muhammad ibn Abi 'Attaab narrated to me saying, "Affaan ibn Muhammad ibn Yahya ibn Sa'eed Al-Qattaan narrated on the authority of his father, who said, 'We did not see the righteous more false in anything than narrating hadeeth.'

Ibn Abi 'Attaab said. 'I met Yahya ibn Sa'eed Al-Qattaan and asked him about it; he said on the authority of his father, 'We did not see anyone more false in ahaadeeth than the people who intend good.' Muslim said, 'He means that lying is much upon their tongues, but they do not intend to lie.'"

What confirms that accusing **Hafs** of 'lying' in the context of hadeeth transmission was merely to indicate his weakness in the field of hadeeth and his narrating of false ahaadeeth without deliberately intending to lie upon the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, is that other statements were reported on the authority of **Yahya ibn Ma'een** about **Hafs**, and he did not state that **Hafs** was a liar; rather, he declared him untrustworthy (i.e. in transmitting hadeeth). It is known that if **Hafs** used to deliberately lie, **Ibn Ma'een** would not have settled for declaring him to be untrustworthy and would have declared his narration rejected.

It has been cited in Tareekh Ibn Ma'een that **'Uthmaan Ad-Daarimi** said, "I asked him about **Hafs ibn Sulaymaan Al-Asadi Al-Koofi** and his narration of Hadeeth, and he replied that he was not a trustworthy reporter."

It has been narrated on the authority of **Al-Layth ibn 'Ubayd** that **Yayha ibn Ma'een** said, "Abu 'Umar Al-Bazzaaz (i.e. **Hafs**), the Quran reciter, is not trustworthy; however, his recitation is more accurate and correct than that of **Abu Bakr ibn 'Ayyaash**, and **Abu Bakr** is more trustworthy than him..." [Al-Kaamel]

Another piece of evidence confirming this view is the fact that **Ibn Ma'een** commended **Hafs** as far as Quran recitation is concerned and declared him better than **Shu'bah**. If it was true that he held that **Hafs** was untrustworthy, as is being claimed, then he would not have commended him in Quran recitation.

As for what **'Abd Ar-Rahmaan ibn Yoosuf ibn Khiraash** said about **Hafs**, his opinion accusing **Hafs** of deliberately fabricating lies and attributing them to the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, cannot be accepted because he was one of the fanatic Shiites. He was even affiliated with the Raafidhah sect (the Raafidhah were called as such because they deserted and rejected **Zayd ibn 'Ali** when he refused to repudiate and condemn the first three Rightly Guided Caliphs [Abu bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmaan], while the Raafidhah did not recognize them as the legitimate successors of the Prophet ﷺ). He was known for his unfair criticism merely based on ideological affiliation. **Al-Haafith Ibn Hajar** wrote in the introduction of his book Al-Lisaan:

"The criticism made by a person who has enmity fueled by the difference in ideological affiliation and beliefs towards his subject of criticism (criticized person) must be rejected. When a wise person ponders over the criticism of **Is-haq Al-Jawzajaani** against the people of Kufa, he can easily notice strange things due to his deviation in nasb (being a naasibi, i.e. among those who consider other families, especially the Umayyads, better than the Ahl Al-Bayt) and due the fact that people of Kufa were well-known for their Shiism; so he continued to arrogantly and carelessly criticize all the people of Kufa that he mentioned in his writings to the extent that he even criticized **Al-'Amash**, **Abu Nu'aym**, **'Ubaydullaah ibn Moosa**, and other great scholars of hadeeth known for their authentic narration and trustworthiness. Hence, if he had declared some narrator untrustworthy but another imaam who is like him or more experienced in hadeeth than him happened to disagree with him and declared that narrator trustworthy, then the opinion of the other imaam will be accepted.

The same applies to **'Abd Ar-Rahmaan ibn Yoosuf ibn Khiraash**, the haafith scholar of hadeeth; as he was among the Shiite fanatics as well and was even affiliated with the Raafidhah sect; so his criticism for the people of the Levant was driven by enmity based on ideological background and beliefs." [Al-Lisaan]

As for the question regarding the existence of other reporters (of Quran recitation) who have been declared weak in the field of hadeeth, this is possible. The ten reported modes of recitation were transmitted through tawaatur (i.e. being reported by a group of narrators from a group of narrators, generation after generation and so forth, and they are all trustworthy people and it is absolutely impossible for them to agree on a lie); so the number of reporters in tawaatur is great. It is known that the existence of some weak reporters in the chain of narration in case of tawaatur does not affect the authenticity of narration.

Allaah knows best.

www.islamweb.net