

?Hadith Al-Tafdhil, is 'Aishah Really the best of the Ummah

<"xml encoding="UTF-8?">

Officially, Abu Bakr is the best of this Ummah, after its Prophet, sallallahu 'alaihi wa alihi, according to the Ahl al-Sunnah. 'Allamah al-Albani (d. 1420 H) for instance submits

قلت: وكون أبي بكر رضي الله عنه أحب الناس إليه صلى الله عليه وسلم هو الموافق لكونه أفضل الخلفاء الراشدين عند أهل السنة

I say: the fact that Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, was the most beloved of mankind to him (i.e. the Prophet), peace be upon him, is consistent with the fact that he was the best of the rightly guided khalifahs in the view of the Ahl al-Sunnah.¹

However, this belief directly contradicts their "authentic" hadith. Imam Ahmad (d. 241 H) records

حدثنا عبد الله حدثني أبي ثنا يحيى بن حماد قال أنا عبد العزيز بن المختار عن خالد الحذاء عن أبي عثمان قال حدثني عمرو بن العاص قال بعثني رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم على جيش ذات السلاسل قال فأتيته قال قلت يا رسول الله أي الناس أحب إليك قال عائشة قال قلت من الرجال قال أبوها إذا قال قلت ثم من قال عمر

Abd Allah (b. Ahmad) – my father (Ahmad b. Hanbal) – Yahya b. Hamad – 'Abd al-'Aziz b. al-'Mukhtar – Khalid al-Khadha' – Abu 'Uthman – 'Amr b. al-'As:

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, appointed me as commander of the army of Dhat Salasil. So, I got to him, and said, "O Messenger of Allah, which of mankind is the most beloved to you?" He replied, "'Aishah." I said, "Who among the men?" He replied, "Her father." I asked, "Then who?" He replied, "'Umar".²

:Al-Arnau comments

إسناده صحيح على شرط الشيخين

Its chain is sahih upon the standard of the two Shaykhs.³

In other words, Umm al-Muminin 'Aishah is the overall best of this Ummah, above Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman, according to the Sunni-only report. It is, however, at this point that things get really messy! Allah has stated concerning two of the wives of His Prophet

وإذ أسر النبي إلى بعض أزواجه حديثاً فلما نبأت به وأظهره الله عليه عرف بعضه وأعرض عن بعض فلما نبأها به قالت من أنبأك هذا قال نبأني العليم الخبير إن تتوبا إلى الله فقد صغت قلوبكما وإن تظاهرا عليه فإن الله هو

مولاه وجبريل وصالح المؤمنين والملائكة بعد ذلك ظهير عسى ربه إن طلقكن أن يبدله أزواجا خيرا منكن
مسلمات مؤمنات قانتات تائبات عابدات سائحات ثيبات وأبكارا

And when the Prophet disclosed a matter in confidence to one of his wives, so when she told it, and Allah made it known to him, he informed part thereof and left a part. Then when he told her thereof, she said, "Who told you this?" He said, "The All-Knower, the All-Aware has told me." If you two repent to Allah, for your hearts have deviated. But if you both help each other against him, then Allah is His Helper (against you both), and Jibril, and the righteous believers, and furthermore, the angels are his helpers. It may be if he divorced you that his Lord will give him instead of you, wives better than you: Muslims, believers, obedient, repentant, devoted, fasting – whether previously married or virgins.⁴

:Imam Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 597 H) has this exegesis

ثم خاطب عائشة وحفصة، فقال: {إن تتوبا إلى الله {أي: من التعاون على رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم بالإيذاء} فقد صغت قلوبكما} قال ابن عباس: زاغت، وأثمت. قال الزجاج: عدلت، وزاغت عن الحق. قال مجاهد: كنا نرى قوله عز وجل: {فقد صغت قلوبكما} شيئا هينا حتى وجدناه في قراءة ابن مسعود: فقد زاغت قلوبكما.

Then He (Allah) addresses 'Aishah and Hafsa, saying: {If you both repent to Allah}, meaning from helping each other against the Messenger of Allah to hurt him. {For your hearts have deviated} Ibn 'Abbas said: "They (the hearts) deviated (zaghat) and committed a sin." Al-Zajaj said, "They (the hearts) deviated, and deviated from the Truth." Mujahid said, "We used consider His Words, the Almighty {for your hearts have deviated} has something easy until we found it in the recitation of Ibn Mas'ud as: {for your hearts have deviated (zaghat)}".⁵

:Imam Muslim (d. 261 H) also records

حدثنا هارون بن سعيد الأيلي حدثنا عبدالله بن وهب أخبرني سليمان (يعني ابن بلال) أخبرني يحيى أخبرني عبيد ابن حنين أنه سمع عبدالله بن عباس يحدث قال مكثت سنة وأنا أريد أن أسأل عمر بن الخطاب عن آية فما أستطيع أن أسأله هيبة له حتى خرج حاجا فخرجت معه فلما رجع فكنا ببعض الطريق عدل إلى الأراك لحاجة له فوقف له حتى فرغ ثم سرت معه فقلت يا أمير المؤمنين من اللتان تظاهرتا على رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم من أزواجه ؟ فقال تلك حفصة وعائشة

Harun b. Sa'id al-Ayli – 'Abd Allah b. Wahb – Sulayman b. Bilal – Yahya – 'Ubayd b. Hunayn – 'Abd Allah b. 'Abbas:

I hesitated for a (whole) year, and I had intended to ask 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb concerning a verse. But I could not ask him out of fear of him, until he went out for Hajj and I accompanied him. During his return, while we were still on the way, he stepped aside towards an Arak tree to

ease himself. So, I waited for him until he finished. I then walked along with him, and said, “O Amir al-Muminin! Who were the two women who helped each other against the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, among his wives?” He replied, “They were Hafsa and ‘Aishah.”⁶

There are three things here:

1. Both ‘Aishah, and especially Hafsa, betrayed the confidence of the Messenger of Allah.
3. Both of them literally helped each other against him in order to hurt him.
5. The hearts of both of them had deviated from the Truth. This is very obvious, anyway. No one with a clean heart would ever help another against the Messenger in any circumstance. Interestingly, the above verses were the last updates by Allah on the hearts of both women. Nothing else was revealed thereafter by Him to discharge them, or to indicate their repentance. It is a matter of great interest then that the deviation of their hearts means they both have little
:or no hope of salvation in the Hereafter

يوم لا ينفع مال ولا بنون إلا من أتى الله بقلب سليم

The Day whereon neither wealth nor sons will avail, except him who brings to Allah a clean heart.⁷

The perturbing question here is: how is ‘Aishah the best of this Ummah, after its Prophet, despite that she was a deviant in the Sight of Allah? Are our Sunni brothers telling us that Abu Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthman were worse than deviants? Besides, Allah mentions the existence of women who would be better wives to His Prophet; if case he divorced ‘Aishah and Hafsa. Does this fact alone not debunk the Sunni ahadith on the superiority of Umm al-Muminin ‘Aishah as mere sectarian polemical artwork?

References

1. Muhammad Nasir al-Din b. al-Hajj Nuh al-Albani, *Silsilah al-Ahadith al- a’ifah wa al-Mawdu’ah wa Athariyah al-Sayyiah fi al-Ummah* (Riyadh: Dar al-Ma’arif; 1st edition, 1412 H), vol. 3, p. 255, # 1124
2. Abu ‘Abd Allah Ahmad b. Hanbal al-Shaybani, *Musnad* (Cairo: Muassasat Qurtubah) [annotator: Shu’ayb al-Arnaut], vol. 4, p. 203, # 17844
3. Ibid
4. Qur’an 66:3-5
5. Abu al-Faraj Jamal al-Din ‘Abd al-Rahman b. ‘Ali b. Muhammad al-Jawzi al-Qurshi al-Baghdadi, *Zad al-Masir fi ‘Ilm al-Tafsir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr; 1st edition, 1407 H) [annotator: Dr.

Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Rahman 'Abd Allah], vol. 8, p. 52

6. Abu al-Husayn Muslim b. al-Hajjaj al-Qushayri al-Naysaburi, *Shahih Muslim* (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi) [annotator: Muhammad Fuad 'Abd al-Baqi], vol. 2, p. 1105, # 1479 (31)

7. Qur'an 26:88-89