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Question 1 : Which is correct, “wa ‘itrati” {and my progeny}, or “wa sunnati” {and my tradition}?

The *hadith* scholars {*muhaddithun*} have narrated *hadith ath–thaqalayn* {Tradition on the Two Weighty Things} in two ways and it has been recorded in the books of *hadith*. An examination must be made to see which way is correct:

1. “*Kitab Allah wa ‘itrati ahli bayti*” {“The Book of Allah and my progeny, the members of my Household”}, or
2. “*Kitab Allah wa sunnati*” {“The Book of Allah and my tradition”}.

Reply: The authentic {*sahih*} and established {*thabit*} *hadith* of the Holy Prophet (S)¹ is the one with the phrase, “*wa ahl bayti*” {and the members of my Household}. The chain of transmission {*sanad*} of the narration which contains the phrase, “*sunnati*” {my tradition} instead of “*ahla bayti*” {the members of my Household} is invalid, therefore it is rejected {*mardud*} and the chain of transmission of the *hadith*, “*wa ahla bayti*” is absolutely sound.

The chain of transmission of the narration, “wa ahli bayti” {and my Household}

This text has been narrated by two prominent *muhaddiths* {*hadith* scholars}:

1. In his *Sahih*, Muslim narrates from Zayd ibn al–Arqam, thus: One day Allah’s Messenger (S) stood up to deliver sermon near a pool known as Khumm situated between Mecca and Medina. In the said sermon, he extolled Allah and exhorted the people, and then he said:

"ألا أيها الناس فانما أنا بشر يوشك أن يأتي رسول ربِّي فأجيب وأنا تارك فيكم الثَّقَلين: أولهما كتاب الله فيه والهدى والنور فخذوا بكتاب الله واستمسكوا به – فحث لى كتاب والله رغب فيه ثم قال: أذكركم الله في أهل بيتي."

Now to our purpose: O people, I am a human being. I am about to receive a messenger (the angel of death) from my Lord and I, in response to Allah's call, (would bid goodbye to you), but I am leaving among you two weighty things: the one being the Book of Allah in which there is right guidance and light, so hold fast to the Book of Allah and adhere to it.

He exhorted (us) (to hold fast) to the Book of Allah and then said: The second are the members of my Household; I remind you (of your duties) to the members of my family. I remind you (of your duties) to the members of my family. I remind you (of your duties) to the members of my family.²

Darmi has also mentioned this text in his *Sunan*.³ It must be said that the chain of transmission of each of the two is as bright as the sun and there is no room for doubt about it.

2. In his narration which contains the phrase, "And my progeny, the members of my Household" {*wa 'itrati ahla bayti*}, Tirmidhi writes that the Prophet (S) has said:

"إني تارك فيكم ما ان تمسكنم به لن تضلوا بعدي ، أحدهما أعظم من الآخر:
كتاب الله حبل ممدود من السماء

إلى والأرض عترتي أهل بيتي لن يفتقا حتى يردا عليّ الحوض فانظروا كيف
تخلفوني فيها."

Verily, I am leaving among you two weighty things to which if you hold fast, you shall never go astray. One is greater than the other: the Book of Allah, which is the cord extending from the heaven to the earth and my progeny, the members of my Household. These two will never separate from each other until they meet me at the Pond {*hawd*} (of *Kawthar*). Be careful as to how you will behave toward them after me.⁴

Both Muslim and Tirmidhi, who are among the compilers of *Sahihs* and *Sunans* (compilations of *hadiths* regarded as authentic by the Ahl as-Sunnah), highlight the phrase, "Ahl al-Bayt", and this evidence supports our view, and the chains of transmission of both *hadiths* enjoy such accuracy and special reliability that they need no discussion and argumentation.

The chain of transmission of the narration, “wa sunnati” {and my tradition}

The tradition, which mentions the phrase, “*sunnati*” {my tradition} instead of “*ahli bayti*” {members of my Household}, is a fabricated *hadith*, which apart from the weakness of its chain of transmission, was concocted and transmitted by the ‘Umayyad agents:

1. In his *Mustadrak* (*‘ala’s-Sahihayn*), Hakim al-Nayshaburi relates this narration with the following chain of transmission:

عباس عن بن أبي أويس عن أبي أويس عن ثور بن زيد الدّيلمي عن عكمة عن
أبن عباس قال رسول الله: "يا

أيها الناس إني قد تركت فيكم ان اعتمتم به فلن تضلّوا أبداً كتاب الله وسنة
نبيّه."

‘Abbas ibn Abi Uways narrates on the authority of Abi Uways from Thawr ibn Zayd ad-Daylami from ‘Ukrumah from Ibn ‘Abbas: The Messenger of Allah (S) said:

“O people, I am leaving among you two things to which if you hold fast, you shall never go astray: the Book of Allah and the tradition of His prophet!”⁵

Among the transmitters of this narration are Isma‘il ibn Abi Uways and Abu Uways—a father and a son who were not found trustworthy, and they were also accused of lying, fabrication and forgery.

What the ‘ulama’ of rijal say about the two versions

In *Tahdhib al-Kamal*, Hafiz al-Mizzi,⁶ one of the researchers of the science of *rijal*,⁷ writes about Isma‘il and his father as follows:

Yahya ibn Mu‘in (who is one of the prominent ‘*ulama*’ of *‘ilm ar-rijal*) says: “Abu Uways and his son (Isma‘il) are ‘weak’ {*da‘if*}. It is also reported that Yahya ibn Mu‘in used to say: “These two persons used to steal *hadith*.” Ibn Mu‘in also says about the son (Isma‘il): “He cannot be trusted.”

Regarding the son (Isma‘il), Nisa‘i says: “He is ‘weak’ and not trustworthy.”

Abu'l-Qasim Lalka'i says: "Nisa'i has said a lot against him, concluding that his narration must be rejected."

Ibn 'Adi, one of the 'ulama' of rijal, says: "Ibn Abi Uways, a maternal uncle of Malik, narrates strange hadiths, which nobody accepts."8

In the Introduction to *Fath al-Barri*, Ibn Hajar (al-'Asqalani) has stated: "One can never refer (as proof) to the hadith of Ibn Abi Uways on account of the reproach which Nisa'i has heaped on him."9

In the book, *Fath al-Mulk al-'Ala*, Hafiz Sayyid Ahmad ibn Sadiq narrates on the authority of Salmah ibn Shayb, thus: "Isma'il ibn Abi Uways was heard to have said: 'Whenever the people of Medina split into two over an issue, I fabricated a hadith'."10

Therefore, the son (Isma'il ibn Abi Uways) is charged with fabricating hadith and Ibn Mu'in says that he lies. In addition, his narration has come neither in the *Sahih* of Muslim nor in the *Sunan* of Tirmidhi or any other *Sahih* books.

Concerning Abu Uways, it is enough to state that Abu Hatam ar-Razi in the book, *Al-Jarah wa't-Ta'dil*, says: "His narration may be recorded but it must not be referred to (as proof), and his narration is neither strong {qawi} nor firm {muhkam}."11

Abu Hatam who relates on the authority of Ibn Mu'in says that Abu Uways is unreliable.

Any narration {riwayah} related by any of these two is by no means authentic {sahih}. Moreover, it does not accord with authentic and sound narrations.

It is worth considering that the narrator of the hadith, viz. Hakim al-Nayshaburi has acknowledged the weakness of the hadith and instead of putting right its chain of transmission, he has brought forth a witness who speaks in favor of it and whose chain of transmission is also weak and devoid of any credibility and so, instead of strengthening the hadith, he has made its weakness more distinct. Now, let us see the following weak witness:

The second chain of transmission of the narration, "wa sunnati" {and my tradition}

With a chain of transmission that will come later on, Hakim al-Nayshaburi thus relates on the authority of Abu Hurayrah in a narration termed *marfu'*:12

"إني قد تركت فيكم شيئين لن تضلّوا بعدهما: كتاب الله وسنتي لن يفترقا حتى يردا عليّ الحوض".

Verily, I am leaving among you two things to which (if you hold fast) you shall never go astray: the Book of Allah and my *Sunnah* {tradition} and they will never separate (from each other) until they meet me at the Pond {*hawd*} (of *Kawthar*).¹³

Hakim has transmitted this narration with the following chain of transmission:

“Ad-Dabi relating on the authority of Salih ibn Musa at-Talhi from ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Rafi’ from Abi Salih from Abu Hurayrah.”

Like the previous narration, this narration is a fabricated one, and Salih ibn Musa at-Talhi is one of its transmitters about whom great figures of *‘ilm ar-rijal* say:

Yahya ibn Mu‘in says: “Salih ibn Musa is unreliable.” Abu Hatam ar-Razi says: “His *hadith* is ‘weak’ {*da‘if*} and ‘unusual’ {*munkar*}; he narrates many of his ‘unusual’ *hadiths* from trustworthy individuals.” Nisa’i says: “His *hadith* cannot be recorded.” In another place, he says: “His *hadith* is rejected {*matruk*}.”¹⁴

In *Tahdhib at-Tahdhib*, Ibn Hajar (al-‘Asqalani) writes: “Ibn Hibban says: ‘Salih ibn Musa attributes to trustworthy individuals, things which do not correspond with their words.’ He then says: ‘His *hadith* does not represent a sound proof’ and Abu Na‘im says: ‘His *hadith* is rejected and he always narrates unusual *hadiths*.’”¹⁵

Also, in *At-Taqrīb*,¹⁶ Ibn Hajar says: “His *hadith* is rejected.” In *Al-Kashif*,¹⁷ Dhahabi says: “His *hadith* is weak.” In *Mizan al-I‘tidal*,¹⁸ Dhahabi relates a disputable *hadith* from him, and says that it is among his ‘usual’ *hadiths*.

The third chain of transmission of the narration, “wa sunnati” {and my tradition}

In *At-Tamhid*, Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr relates this narration with the following chain of transmission:

‘Abd ar-Rahman ibn Yahya relating on the authority of Ahmad ibn Sa‘id from Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ad-Dubayli from ‘Ali ibn Zayd al-Fara‘idi from al-Hunayni from Kathir ibn ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amru ibn ‘Awf from his father from his grandfather.¹⁹

Concerning Kathir ibn ‘Abd Allah, Imam ash-Shafi‘i says: “He is one of the pillars of lying.”²⁰ Abu Dawud says: “He is one of the mendacious and liars.”²¹ Ibn Hibban says: “‘Abd Allah ibn Kathir narrates from his father and grandfather a book of *hadith* based on forgery. Relating any narration from that book and any of ‘Abd Allah’s narration is unlawful except if it is intended to express surprise or for the sake of criticism.”²²

Nisa’i and Darqutni say: “His *hadith* is rejected.” Imam Ahmad (ibn Hanbal) says: “He is *munkar al-*

hadith (he who relates odd *hadiths*) and he is not reliable”. And Ibn Mu‘in has the same view about him.

It is surprising that in the biographical account of Kathir, *At-Taqrīb*, Ibn Hajar has contented himself with the term, “weak” {*da‘if*}, regarding those who have accused him of lying as fanatic. Meanwhile the forerunners of *‘ilm al-rijal* have charged him with lying and forgery. Moreover, Dhahabi says: “His statement is unfounded and weak.”

Narration without a chain of transmission

In *Al-Muwatta’* Malik has narrated it as *mursal*²³ without mentioning the chain of transmission,²⁴ and we all know that such a narration is devoid of any value.

This survey has clearly shown that the narration, “*wa sunnati*” {and my tradition} has been forged and concocted by the mendacious narrators affiliated to the ‘Umayyads who have fabricated it as opposed to the authentic *hadith*, “*wa ‘itrati*” {and my progeny}.

As such, it is necessary for those who deliver sermons in mosques, religious orators, and prayer leaders to abandon the unfounded narration attributed to the Messenger of Allah (S), and to familiarize, instead, the people with the authentic *hadith*—the *hadith* which has been narrated by Muslim in his *Sahih* with the phrase “*ahla bayti*” {members of my Household} and Tirmidhi (in his *Sunan*) with the words “*‘itrati ahla bayti*” {my progeny, the members of my Household}. It is incumbent upon the seekers of knowledge to observe the rules of the science of *hadith* and distinguish between the authentic *hadith* and the ‘weak’ one.

In conclusion, we have to note that by the term, “*ahla bayti*” the Prophet (S) is referring to his offspring {*dhurriyyah*}, namely Hadrat Fatimah, Hasan and Husayn (‘a)²⁵ as Muslim in his *Sahih*²⁶ and Tirmidhi in his *Sunan*²⁷ have narrated on the authority of ‘A’ishah:

نزلت هذه الآية على النبي صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم – إنما يريد الله ليذهب
عنكم الرجس أهل البيت ويطهركم تطهيراً – في بيت أم سلمة فدعا النبي صلى
الله عليه وآله وسلم وفاطمة وحسناً وحسيناً فجعلهم وبكساء على خلف ظهره
فجعله بكساء ثم قال: اللهم هؤلاء أهل بيتي فاذهب عنهم الرجس وطهرهم تطهيراً.
قالت أم سلمة: وأنا معهم يا نبي الله؟ قال: أنت على مكانك وأنت إلى خير.

The verse, “**Indeed, Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification**”²⁸ was revealed in the house of Umm Salamah.

The Prophet wrapped Fatimah, Hasan and Husayn in a cloak, and ‘Ali was behind him. He wrapped him

in it and then said: “O God! They are the members of my Household {*ahl al-bayt*}. Repel all impurity from them and purify them with a thorough purification.” Umm Salmah said: “O Prophet of Allah! Am I with them?” He said: “Remain where you are and you are in good (position).”²⁹

The meaning of Hadith ath–Thaqalayn {Tradition on the Two Weighty Things}

As the Holy Prophet has mentioned *‘itrah* {progeny} alongside the Qur’an, describing both of them as the proofs of Allah for the *ummah*, two conclusions can be deduced from it:

1. The words of the Prophet’s progeny {*‘itrah*}, like the very Qur’an, is a proof {*hujjah*}, and so in religious affairs—both ideological and jurisprudential—their words must have to be adhered and with the existence of the proof that they have to be followed, one must not turn away from them and follow others.

Although after the demise of the Prophet (S) the Muslims split over the issue of caliphate and administering the political affairs of the *ummah* and they became two groups each of which has its own logic and basis, they ought to have no disagreement about the intellectual authority of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) because all Muslims confirm the authenticity of *Hadith ath–Thaqalayn*, which regards the Qur’an and the Prophet’s *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) as the authority on beliefs and laws, and if the Muslim *ummah* abide by this *hadith*, the scope of difference will be narrowed and this will pave the way to the unity of the Muslims.

2. The Qur’an, the Word of Allah, is preserved from error and mistake. So how could it include errors when God says about it:

﴿ لَا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ تَنْزِيلٌ مِّنْ حَكِيمٍ حَمِيدٍ ﴾

“Falsehood cannot approach it, from before it nor from behind it, a {gradually} sent down {revelation} from One all-wise, all-laudable”³⁰?

If the Qur’an is preserved from error, then its partner and counterpart, i.e. the *‘itrah* must also be preserved from error because it is incorrect to couple an errant person or errant people with the Qur’an.

This *hadith* is a testimony to their immunity from any sort of impurity. It must be observed here that infallibility {*‘ismah*} is not a special privilege which only prophets (‘a) enjoy. It is not impossible for an individual to be immune from sin even though he or she is not a prophet. Based on the following verse,

إن الله اصطفاك وطهرك واصطفاك على نساء العالمين.

“Allah has chosen you and purified you, and He has chosen you above the world’s women,”³¹

Hadrat Maryam (Saint Mary) is free from sin though she is not a prophet.

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1. The abbreviation, “S”, stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, *sallallahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam* {may God’s blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny}, which is mentioned after the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S). {Trans.}
 2. Muslim, *Sahih*, vol. 4, p. 1803, hadith no. 2408 (‘Abd al-Baqi Edition).
Abdul-Hamid Siddiqui (trans.), *Sahih Muslim (English Translation)*, vol. 4, hadith no. 5920. {Trans.}
 3. Darmi, *Sunan*, vol. 2, pp. 431–432.
 4. Tirmidhi, *Sunan*, vol. 5, p. 663, hadith no. 37788.
 5. Hakim al-Nayshaburi, *Mustadrak (‘ala’s-Sahihayn)*, vol. 1, p. 93.
 6. Hafiz: literally means ‘memorizer’ and is used in hadith terminology, as in the case of this book, to describe a scholar who has an excellent memory and has memorized a great number of traditions. {Trans.}
 7. Rijal or ‘Ilm ar-Rijal: a branch of the science of hadith dealing with the biography of the hadith transmitters or reporters. {Trans.}
 8. Hafiz al-Mazzi, *Tahdhib al-Kamal*, vol. 3, p. 127.
 9. Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani, *Introduction to Fath al-Barri (Dar al-Ma’rifah Edition)*, p. 391.
 10. Hafiz Sayyid Ahmad, *Fath al-Mulk al-‘Ala*, p. 15.
 11. Abu Hatam ar-Razi, *Al-Jarah wa’t-Ta’dil*, vol. 5, p. 92.
 12. Marfu’: ‘traceable’ – refers to any tradition that can be traced back to a Ma’sum (infallible – referring specifically to the Prophet (S) and the Imams (‘a)), regardless of the continuity in its chain of transmission. {Trans.}
 13. Hakim al-Nayshaburi, *Mustadrak (‘ala’s-Sahihayn)*, vol. 1, p. 93.
 14. Hafiz al-Mazzi, *Tahdhib al-Kamal*, vol. 13, p. 96.
 15. Ibn Hajar (al-‘Asqalani), *Tahdhib at-Tahdhib*, vol. 4, p. 355.
 16. Ibn Hajar (al-‘Asqalani), *At-Taqrib (translated version)*, no. 2891.
 17. Dhahabi, *Al-Kashif (translated version)*, no. 2412.
 18. Dhahabi, *Mizan al-‘Itidal*, vol. 2, p. 302.
 19. *At-Tamhid*, vol. 24, p. 331.
 20. Ibn Hajar (al-‘Asqalani), *Tahdhib at-Tahdhib (Dar al-Fikr)*, vol. 8, p. 377; *Tahdhib al-Kamal*, vol. 24, p. 138.
 21. *Ibid*.
 22. Ibn Hibban, *Al-Majruhin*, vol. 2, p. 221.
 23. Mursal: ‘hurried’ – a tradition, whose complete chain of transmission is unknown, i.e. the names of one or more of its narrators are missing or unknown. The word ‘mursal’ literally means ‘forwarded on’ because often the tradition is forwarded on by a Follower {Tabi’i}, missing out the name of the Companion {Sahib} who narrated it to him. {Trans.}
 24. Malik ibn Anas, *Al-Muwatta’*, p. 889, hadith no. 3.
 25. The abbreviation, “a” stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, ‘alayhis-salam, ‘alayhimus-salam, or ‘alayhas-salam {may peace be upon him/them/her}, which is mentioned after the names of the prophets, angels, Imams from the Prophet’s progeny, and saints (‘a). {Trans.}
 26. Muslim, *Sahih*, vol. 4, p. 1883, hadith no. 2424.
Abdul-Hamid Siddiqui (trans.), *Sahih Muslim (English Translation)*, vol. 4, hadith no. 5955. {Trans.}
 27. Tirmidhi, *Sunan*, vol. 5, p. 663.
 28. Surah al-Ahzab 33:33. {Trans.}
 29. Quoted from Hasan ibn ‘Ali ash-Shaqqaf, *Sahih Sifah Salat an-Nabi (S)*, pp. 289–294.

30. Surah Fussilat 41:42.

31. Surah Al 'Imran 3:42.

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