

Home > The Prohibition of Recording the Hadith, Causes and Effects > First Part > First Reason: Justifications Of Abu-Bakr > Which Decision Preceded The Other?

---

## First Reason: Justifications Of Abu-Bakr

Abu-Bakr's justifications can be concluded from the following two texts:

(1) It has been narrated that `ishah said, My father collected the Hadith (of the Messenger of Allah), which was five hundred texts. He spent that night so sleeplessly and restlessly that I was sad for him. I therefore asked, 'Are you moving restlessly due to an ailment or information that you received?'

In the morning, he asked me to fetch him the collection of Hadith that he had put with me. When I fetched them, he set fire to them. As I asked for the reason, he replied, 'I anticipated that I would die while I still have this collection among which there might be reports of a man that I deemed trustworthy while he was the opposite; therefore, I would be the narrator of such false reports.'<sup>1</sup>

(2) The following report has been within Ibn Abi-Mulaykah's incompletely transmitted Hadiths (*mursal*):

After the demise of the Holy Prophet, Abu-Bakr gathered people and said, 'You are reporting about the Messenger of Allah inconsistent narrations. People coming after you will be engaged in more intense discrepancy.'

Therefore, do not report anything about the Messenger of Allah, and if anyone asks you, you should refer to the Book of Allah as the arbitrator. You should thus deem lawful whatever is lawful therein and deem unlawful whatever is unlawful therein.'<sup>2</sup>

Before discussing the two previous texts, two questions must be answered:

**First:** Did Abu-Bakr collect the five hundred texts during the life of the Holy Prophet and by his commandment, or did he collect them after that as a consequence of the political circumstances and the social exigency?

**Second:** Was the decision of prohibiting the recordation and reporting of the Sunnah issued in a late period, or was it the Holy Prophet who prohibited recording it during his lifetime.

It has been related to Abu-Sa`id al-Khidriy that the Holy Prophet said, 'You must erase anything that has been recorded about me except the Holy Qur'an.'<sup>3</sup>

From the expression of the first text 'My father collected the Hadith,' it can be noted that Abu-Bakr recorded the Hadith after the Holy Prophet's demise, especially the text affirmed that he had quoted them from other narrators, 'I anticipated that I would die while I still have this collection among which there might be reports of a man that I deemed trustworthy while he was the opposite; therefore, I would be the narrator of such false reports.'

Abu-Bakr's anticipation that such texts would be falsely related to the Holy Prophet does not agree with the supposition that the Hadith had been collected during the Holy Prophet's lifetime; otherwise he could show the collected texts to the Holy Prophet for scrutiny.

If it is claimed that the idea of showing such texts to the Holy Prophet for scrutiny had just slipped away from Abu-Bakr's mind, the answer should be that, firstly, it is unreasonable for Abu-Bakr to miss such a thing, especially that he had a close position to the Holy Prophet in addition to the fact that doubt regarding these collections was rooted in his mind.

Secondly, it is unlikely that Abu-Bakr had overlooked neglectfully such an important issue until a time close by his death, whereas the Sahabah used not to neglect asking the Holy Prophet about even the most trivial questions and whenever they had felt any suspicion.

The question of setting fire to the collections of Hadith and Abu-Bakr's concern about attributing them to the Holy Prophet and that he 'would be the narrator of such false reports,' since death was about to knock his door—this question proves that Abu-Bakr had collected the Hadith in the last of his reign and that he had never heard even one Hadith directly from the Holy Prophet; lest it would be extremely odd for him to set fire to Hadiths that he had heard from the Holy Prophet directly!

What is more is that had Abu-Bakr collected such Hadiths during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, historians and biographers would have certainly referred to this issue and he would never have spent that night restlessly plus `A`ishah would have narrated that her father had collected the Hadith during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet or any alike statement.

The reports that Abu-Bakr had written down the laws of almsgiving in the missive that he sent to Anas ibn Malik;<sup>4</sup> the governor of Bahrain at that time, and `Amr ibn al-`As<sup>5</sup> do not contradict the reports narrating his setting fire to the collections of Hadith, because the points that he had recorded to Anas ibn Malik were no more than the laws of almsgiving and taxation upon which a state relies, and a caliph must not forget for the good of his state.

It has been also narrated that `Amr ibn Hazm had recorded the laws of almsgiving as quoted from the Holy Prophet orally. `Umar ibn al-Khattab also had such a recording kept by Hafsah, his daughter, and then his family. Hence, the recordation of an issue upon which a state relies is a matter very different

from the prohibition of recording something else.

The second question can be easily answered through the acts of Abu-Bakr and `Umar as well as the general conduct of the Muslims. Abu-Bakr's collecting five-hundred Hadiths is a sufficient proof on the Holy Prophet's having not prohibited the recordation of the Hadith. If such a decision of prohibition had been really issued, Abu-Bakr would not have had such collections of the Hadith recorded.

The same thing can be said about `Umar; had a decision of prohibiting the recordation of the Hadith been already issued, he would not have gathered the Sahabah, who advised him to record the Hadith,<sup>6</sup> to discuss the matter.

Even if we give up our opinion and accept the claim that the Holy Prophet had prevented people from recording anything in general and his Hadith in particular, we would not find any persuasive meaning to the authentically narrated report that 'the Holy Prophet ordered the Muslims to record the laws that he said on the day of conquering Mecca,'<sup>7</sup> or the report that after his migration to al-Madinah, he had ordered to record the laws of the Zakat and their amounts, which were accordingly written in two papers and kept in the house of Abu-Bakr, the caliph, and Abu-Bakr ibn `Amr ibn Hazm,<sup>8</sup> or the authentic report that he said 'Feel free to record' as well as the other clear statements urging to record the laws and the Holy Prophet's conducts.

It is thus proven that the recordation was not prohibited in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet and that neither Abu-Bakr nor did `Umar record the Hadith during the Holy Prophet's lifetime; rather, Abu-Bakr recorded it after the Holy Prophet's departure. The Holy Qur'an has urged writing and recording the knowledge upon Muslims as is in the following Verses:

***"Noon. I swear by the pen and what the angels write." (Holy Qur'an: 68:1)***

***"...Who taught (to write) with the pen." (Holy Qur'an: 96:4)***

***"O you who believe! when you deal with each other in contracting a debt for a fixed time, then write it down." (Holy Qur'an: 2:282)***

***"And be not averse to writing it (whether it is) small or large." (Holy Qur'an: 2:282)***

***"He said: The knowledge thereof is with my Lord in a book." (Holy Qur'an: 20:52)***

The Arabs used to revere the writers and desire to learn it. Ibn Habib al-Baghdadiy has listed the names of the famous personalities who could write in the pre-Islamic as well as the Islamic eras.<sup>9</sup> Ibn Sa'd has said that the Arabs in the pre-Islamic and the early Islamic eras used to regard as perfect anyone who could write Arabic, swim, and shoot.<sup>10</sup>

Lessons of learning how to write used to be held in Makkah,<sup>11</sup> al-Madinah,<sup>12</sup> al-Ta'if,<sup>13</sup> al-Anbar,<sup>14</sup> al-Hirah,<sup>15</sup> and Dawmat al-Jandal.<sup>16</sup> It has been also narrated that the Holy Prophet established a class in

his Masjid (mosque) where `Abdullah ibn Sa`id ibn al-`is used to learn writing and calligraphy to all comers. 17

Dr. Ahmad Amin says,

“Illiteracy of the Arabs was not as common as presented by some authors and Orientalists. Because of their neighborhood to the Persians and Romans for ages, their surrounding circumstances, and the stages by which they passed with such civilized nations, it was not difficult for the Arabs, especially those lived in al-Hirah as well as the nomads of Syria, to learn how to write and acquire sciences and customs that would contribute in achieving a better living for them.” 18

The Holy Qur’an has thus prescribed writing and recording, and the Holy Sunnah has also cared for the issue of writing to a considerable extent that a prisoner of the war of Badr was released after he would teach ten Muslim children how to read and write. 19

On that account, the claim that the Holy Prophet prohibited recording the Holy Sunnah is definitely meaningless, since his conduct generally attracts attentions to the fact that he very much encouraged on culture, thinking, and learning.

Furthermore, he reproached some people saying, ‘Why have some people neither educated, nor taught, nor admonished their neighbors; nor have they enjoined them to do good nor forbidden them from doing evil? And why have some people neglected learning from their neighbors or received their knowledge and instructions?’ 20 From this reproach, we must understand a clear point as regards our topic.

It has been also narrated that the Holy Prophet once asked the delegation of the tribe of `Abd-Qays, saying, ‘How was your brethren’s hospitality?’

‘They have been the best brethren,’ answered they, ‘they offered the best beds and food and taught us the Book of our Lord and the conduct of our Prophet night and day.’

This answer pleased the Holy Prophet who asked each one of them about what they had learned and what they had been taught. 21

It has been also narrated on the authority of Hudhayfah that the Holy Prophet once ordered them to write down the names of everyone who declared being Muslim orally. They therefore wrote down the names of one thousand and five hundred men. 22 Finally, biographers have recorded that twenty-six, forty-two, or forty-five men used to record the Divine Revelation under the supervision of the Holy Prophet.

By adding the previous proofs of the Holy Prophet’s emphasis on learning reading and writing to the previous narrations of the Holy Prophet’s issuing the order of recording the Sunnah and the Sahabah’s carrying out this order during his lifetime up to a period after his death –when Abu-Bakr prohibited recording the Holy Sunnah–, it becomes clear that the ascription of the prohibition of recording the

Hadith to the Holy Prophet is no more than a fallacy aimed at deforming the sheer figure of Islam.

Likewise, such a fallacy gives reason for the enemies of Islam to claim Muslims' being in opposition to science, because they first decided that their Prophet had prevented them from narrating and recording the Sunnah while they, later on, violated their situation and went on recording it! If the recordation of the Hadith was permissible, why did they prohibit it; and if it was prohibited, why did they record it?

If true be said, the claim of the Holy Prophet's prohibition from recording the Hadith is contradictory to his famous sayings, 'write down,'<sup>23</sup> 'record,'<sup>24</sup> 'I swear by Him Who has full control over my soul, my mouth has never said anything other than the truth,'<sup>25</sup> 'Use your right hand to help you learn,'<sup>26</sup> as well as so many similar sayings not to be mentioned at this point for fear of lengthiness.

Let us now discuss the first text that shows Abu-Bakr's justification of issuing the decision of preventing recording the Holy Sunnah, putting the following questions:

Why did Abu-Bakr spend that night restlessly and sleeplessly? Was it because of an ailment, or was it because of a serious affair of caliphate and Muslims?

We have previously mentioned `ishah's wonderment, 'Are you moving restlessly due to an ailment or information that you received?' and Abu-Bakr's reply.

Would we accept his justification that 'I anticipated that I would die while I still have this collection among which there might be reports of a man that I deemed trustworthy while he was the opposite; therefore, I would be the narrator of such false reports'?

Does such a justification allow him to set fire to the collections of the Hadith?

Why did he treat the Hadith with fire, not water or burying in the ground?

To answer the first question, we say that the reason beyond Abu-Bakr's restlessness and sleeplessness was, as is proven by `ishah's words, 'In the morning, he asked me to fetch him the collection of Hadith that he had put with me. When I fetched them...' not an ailment or a matter respecting the campaigns or the like political affairs; it was rather because of the Hadiths contained by these papers to the degree that he thought that the reporting of the Holy Prophet's words and deeds would be the main cause of disagreement among Muslims, without making any distinction between the different kinds of the reported items or between the direct and the indirect reports. Abu-Mulaykah reports that Abu-Bakr said, 'Do not report anything,' while in the beginning he had not adopted such a situation.

Abu-Bakr's excuse for setting fire to the Hadiths, — 'I anticipated that I would die while I still have this collection among which there might be reports of a man that I deemed trustworthy while he was the opposite; therefore, I would be the narrator of such false reports,' — is subject to a number of objections:

**First:** how did the trustworthy man (whom Abu-Bakr accepted his narration) change into untrustworthy?

Did Abu-Bakr—who lived near the Holy Prophet in the holy city of al-Madinah—require mediation in narrating the Hadith of the Holy Prophet?

The news of Abu-Bakr's close association with the Holy Prophet are inconsistent with the existence of mediation between the Holy Prophet and him, especially for those who claim Abu-Bakr's having been the first to embrace Islam.

**Second:** Once a reporter is trustworthy; for Abu-Bakr says, '...reports of a man that I deemed trustworthy,' how is it acceptable to reject such an individual's reports because they are probably fabricated or originated from inadvertence?

According to such a rule, the authority of the reports of the trustworthy must unquestionably be invalid and it is not viable to depend upon the report of any narrator because it contains any amount of probability of fabrication.

Rafi` ibn Khudaykh reported that the Holy Prophet, once, passed by them while they were having a discussion and asked about it. "We are mentioning what we have heard from you, Allah's Messenger," answered they.

"Yes, mention it; but one who forges lies against me must find himself a place in Hellfire," said the Holy Prophet as he went on.

They therefore kept silence.

"Why have they stopped talking?" asked the Holy Prophet.

"Because of what we have just heard from you," one answered.

"I have not meant that you should not discuss what you hear from me," explained the Holy Prophet, "But I have only meant one who forges lies against me deliberately." We then resumed our discussion.

"O Allah's Messenger," one asked, "Can we record the matters that we hear from you?"

"Yes, you can," replied the Holy Prophet, "Record, and feel free to record."<sup>27</sup>

The previous report supports openly our claim that practice of reporting and recording the Hadith was not prohibited during the Holy Prophet's lifetime; rather it was totally legal. Besides, the phrase 'yes, mention it,' confirms the permissibility to relate the Holy Prophet's Hadith but with verification in order to avoid forging lies against the Holy Prophet.

Likewise, it confirms that the probability of a reporter's being liar or the fear of forging lies does not allow Abu-Bakr to neglect the Hadith. Focusing on being careful in the narration of a report in order to make distinction between the true and the false, the Holy Prophet never issued any order preventing from reporting and recording the Hadith.

As a sequence, Abu-Bakr should have examined these Hadiths; if there were inaccurate ones, he would correct them; if there were forged ones, he would delete them; if there were ambiguous ones, he would explain them; and if there were hidden themes, he would expose them. He should have never annihilated all the collections for the reason that he suspected or supposed falsity.

Generally speaking, any item of science must never be erased, especially when it is said by the Holy Prophet! Reported items must not be burnt under any circumstance, especially when most of them contain the Sacred Name of Almighty Allah and His laws, while it is impermissible to insult them at all. As an Islamic ruling, when such items are decided to be damaged, they must be erased by water, buried in the ground, or destroyed by any other unproblematic method.

Out of their cognizance and education, Muslims realized the fundamental correlation between reporting and recording the Hadith; they therefore asked the Holy Prophet permission to record his sayings since they expected that the Hadith would be prohibited or put under conditions. The Holy Prophet's answer came: 'Record, and feel free to record.'

This answer cancelled any problem that may be expected from recording the Hadith and gave full freedom to report it. A Muslim must be sure before he relates something to the Holy Prophet and must avoid recording the forged. These are the only conditions of reporting and recording the Hadith, and there is nothing more.

**Third:** If we agree with Abu-Bakr's opinion that the likelihood of fabrication in the reports invalidates a narration's consideration, this will require all the Holy Prophet's narrated reports be unacceptable even if they are recorded in reliable reference books of Hadith, for the reason that they all are exposed to the likelihood of forgery; and if such an opinion is accepted, it will certainly overthrow one of the two major principals of the Islamic legislation, eradicate the Holy Sunnah completely and terminate all the secondary rulings that have been derived from the Hadith. Abu-Bakr's opinion is thus completely unacceptable.

We should then wonder how he adopted it. Did he close his eyes to the fact that the Holy Prophet used to entrust the decent Sahabah with affairs like these of the campaigns and battles in order that they would convey them to the others? He should have understood that the Holy Verse regarding the instruction of looking carefully into any news that is conveyed by an evil-doing, lest others would be harmed ignorantly<sup>28</sup> as well as many other Verses in this regard.

Furthermore, Muslims used to follow the reports of the decent ones and avoid those of the indecent. Likewise, reason judges that the report of a decent one must be believable, while the likelihood of fabrication, unintentional mistake, inadvertence and the like matters must be passed up due to the rule of the originally nonexistence of fabrication.

Consequently, Ibn Hajar's claim that Almighty Allah has purified the Sahabah of all vices, including lying, negligence, suspicion, arrogance and the like, has been proven as contradictory to Abu-Bakr's previous

testimony when he had only suspected some of the Sahabah to have all the previous vices up to forging lies. Undeniably, Abu-Bakr knew the Sahabah better than Ibn Hajar did.

Even if we accept the notion that suspicion and likelihood of forgery may invalidate the authority of a report in the view of the one suspecting, we must not consider such invalidity in the view of the others who neither suspect nor suppose the probability of forgery.

Abu-Bakr should thus have reported such narrations and presented his suspicion in certain reporters as well as the reasons beyond such suspicion. Then, the recipient of such narrations will have the freedom to accept or reject as maintained by the laws of the religion.

The most unquestionable issue that is concluded from Abu-Bakr's justification, in the event of its acceptability, is that it never imposes upon others to stop reporting or recording the Hadith. Nevertheless, his one and only purpose beyond his justification has been to prohibit reporting and recording the Hadith as a general rule; he therefore ordered people, as in the second text, not to report the Holy Prophet's Hadith at all.

As long as it has been proven that reporting and recording the Hadith had been permissible during the Holy Prophet's lifetime, what is then the meaning of its prohibition? And if it was really prohibited by the Holy Prophet, why did Abu-Bakr compile five-hundred items of Hadith?<sup>29</sup>

As a conclusion, Abu-Bakr's having prohibited Muslims from reporting the Hadith and having set fire to the collections of Hadith that he had compiled are not founded on any Islamic law.

The second text sheds light on the real situation of the ummah after the departure of the Holy Prophet. Abu-Bakr however referred the disagreement and discrepancies of the Islamic community to their disagreement in the narration of the Hadith and Sunnah. In this regard, he says,

'You are reporting about the Messenger of Allah inconsistent narrations. People coming after you will be engaged in more intense discrepancy.'

Although it is incompletely transmitted, the narration of Ibn Abi-Mulaykah expressed the opinion of the master scholars who objected to the decision of the prohibition of recording the Hadith. It also indicates that the insistence on the recordation of the Hadith became one of the means of opposing the caliphs. Muslims who felt the necessity of protecting the Holy Sunnah against waste and spreading the religious laws publicly began, soon after the departure of the Holy Prophet, to report his sayings so as to achieve the goals that they deemed necessary.

In their capacity as being the first generation of Islam, the Sahabah were bound by the explanation of the religious laws for people and the reporting of every single word that they had heard from the Holy Prophet to the new generation who were in urgent need for the acquaintance with the religious laws whose major source was the Holy Prophet's words and deeds. This was, of course, unfeasible except



through the decent Sahabah who represented the thriving archives of the Holy Prophet's lifetime.

Having realized the new generation's urgent need for the religious data and the first generation's duty to answer, Abu-Bakr used the expression, 'and if anyone asks you...' in the decision of the prohibition of recording the Hadith.

In any event, the urgent need for reporting the Hadith and the existence of discrepancies in the narrations were two serious issues that required solutions by all means.

As a solution for the crisis that augmented dangerously after the Holy Prophet's decease, Abu-Bakr opted for prohibiting the reporting and recordation of the Hadith and the restriction to the Holy Qur'an in order to get rid of the contradictory narrations that he seemed not to be skillful enough to bring them into agreement. He therefore had to ban them all unexceptionally, especially after he had anticipated that the problem would increasingly be bigger and bigger for the coming generations. All the same, Abu-Bakr's decision of the prevention of recording the Hadith arouses a number of questions to be presented hereinafter:

**First:** It has been proven that the Holy Prophet used to order the grand Sahabah to spread in the different areas so as to teach people and invite them to the religion. Also, he used to order people to learn and listen to those instructors. These procedures became more binding after the revelation of Almighty Allah's saying:

***“And it does not beseem the believers that they should go forth all together; why should not then a company from every party from among them go forth that they may apply themselves to obtain understanding in religion, and that they may warn their people when they come back to them that they may be cautious.” (Holy Qur'an: 9: 122)***

To prevent the Sahabah from reporting and applying to themselves what they had directly heard from the Holy Prophet has no meaning other than canceling the religious function of the well-versed in the religious affairs whose main task is to teach and edify the people; while the events of some of the Sahabah's having fabricated lies against the Holy Prophet must have been encountered by means of preventing the very fabricating ones from reporting the Hadith, not preventing everybody and for good!

It was also possible to refer to the Holy Prophet personally during his lifetime regarding the questions that were unsolvable and to check the matter with the Sahabah, after the Holy Prophet's departure, if they had heard something respecting the question involved in order to attain peace of mind or verification of the authenticity of the reporting. As a matter of fact, such conferences have been actually adopted by some of the Sahabah.

**Second:** In order to compile the reports of the Hadith, Abu-Bakr should have established a committee comprising the grand Sahabah for listening to the reports and then confirming the sound and rejecting the doubted.<sup>30</sup> For Abu-Bakr, this was easy, because they had not yet been engaged in the campaigns

and conquests nor scattered in the remote countries.

Furthermore, they had soon departed the Holy Prophet and consequently their memories were still powerful and flaws were hardly expected from them. Hence, it was actually an excellent opportunity to easily unify the reports of the Hadith, and it was also easy to identify the actual reality of a narrator before the multiplication of the media of narration, since most of them were still alive and living in al-Madinah.

**Third:** The prevention of recording the Hadith would, with elapse of time, increase the number of the religious laws unknown by Muslims. They therefore would have to extract them from the general and the undeniable narrations. As a result, the ways of extraction would vary and the viewpoints would multiply. All such variant viewpoints would have been nonexistent had the reporting and recordation of the Hadith been operative.

Because Abu-Bakr had notified of the fact that the coming generations would be engaged in bigger discrepancies, he should not have left the people rolling about ignorance in the religious laws or sinking in bitterer discrepancies owing to the rise of the variant personal viewpoints of the many investigators.

One of the results of such prohibition was that Abu-Bakr, despite his precedence to Islam and close relation with the Holy Prophet, reported no more than one hundred and forty two narrations, as Ibn Hazm claims.<sup>31</sup>

If the compiled narrations are compared to the collections which had been damaged, the result will be that great numbers of the Hadith were unfortunately damaged.

**Fourth:** It is impracticable to prohibit the reporting of the Hadith when it is known for sure that such reports included the major questions that Muslims would urgently require in their daily, worldly, and religious, activities. On this account, the eradication and intentional loss of such questions, including the religious laws, is considered forbidden, since it results in the loss of the fundamentals and laws of the religion.

The most proper situation to be taken in this regard should have been that all the reports would be decided according to a definite criterion adopted by Abu-Bakr, the fabricators would be forbidden from reporting the Hadith and the outward contrast between the reports would be removed by means of the Holy Qur'an or the other trustworthy Sahabah as well as other ways of checking up and adopting the authentic reports of the Hadiths in order that Muslims would successively follow.

Abu-Bakr's having instructed the Sahabah to answer the askers, whatever their questions would be, by referring them to the Book of Allah is obviously out of the question, since it is impossible to infer a question respecting a religious law from the Holy Qur'an alone without the reference to the Holy Sunnah.

Furthermore, a single statement in the Holy Qur'an may hold so many different notions; some are

general, private, decisive, allegorical, common, odd, repealed, or repealing. How is it then possible to specify what is allowable and what is forbidden from the Holy Qur'an alone? Similarly, how is it possible for Abu-Bakr to order people to refer to the Holy Qur'an alone while he himself had said about the *kalalah*,

'I will say my own opinion; if it be true, this will be Allah's, but if be untrue, I alone should be responsible for it'?<sup>32</sup>

If the Holy Qur'an has sufficiently covered all the questions of the religious laws, why did he wish had he asked the Holy Prophet, before he had departed life, about the amount of the inheritance of grandmothers and grandfathers, about the Ansar whether they should be given any position of leadership, and about the inheritance of nephews and paternal aunts?<sup>33</sup>

If his claim about the possibility to refer to the Holy Qur'an alone in the religious questions was true, what would we say about the unanimous agreement of the Muslims on the necessity of referring to the Holy Sunnah in order to acquaint ourselves with the religious laws?

What would we say about the Holy Prophet's having nominated the Holy Qur'an and the Ahl al-Bayt, or the Holy Sunnah according to other narrations, as the only two principals of the Islamic legislation in the famous Hadith of al-Thaqalayn (the two weighty things)?

Unquestionably, this meant that the two aforementioned principals would persist among the Muslims; therefore, the Holy Prophet said, 'I have left among you... etc.' It also meant that an interpreter for the Holy Qur'an, whether in a form of the Holy Sunnah or one of the Ahl al-Bayt, must be present among the Muslims since the Words of Almighty Allah cannot be individually comprehended. Hence, the Holy Sunnah or the Ahl al-Bayt to whom the Holy Prophet had referred his people after his departure must be clear enough in order that people would follow.

## **The Hadith Of Arikah (The Couch)**

The previous instruction of Abu-Bakr draws our attentions to the famous Hadith that has been related to the Holy Prophet through different series of narrators. Ahmad,<sup>34</sup> Ibn Majah,<sup>35</sup> Abu-Dawud,<sup>36</sup> al-Darimiy, al-Byhalia<sup>37</sup> and many others<sup>38</sup> have recorded that the Holy Prophet once said,

*"I see coming very soon that a man from you will be leaning on a couch and as my Hadith is said to him, he will answer, 'the Book of Allah is the decisive judge; I will deem lawful only what I find lawful in it and deem unlawful only what I find unlawful in it.'"*

According to other forms of the same narration, the Holy Prophet then say, 'Verily, I have been given the Holy Qur'an and its like,'<sup>39</sup> or 'Verily, I have been given the Holy Book along with its like,'<sup>40</sup> or 'I see coming that a man from you will be leaning on a couch and as a matter that I have enjoined or forbidden is presented before him, he will answer: I do not know! I will follow only what I find in the Book of

Allah.’<sup>41</sup>

In *al-Kifayah fi ‘Ilm al-Dirayah*, al-Khatib al-Baghdadiy records on the authority of Jabir ibn ‘Abdullah that the Holy Prophet said,

*“One of you will be leaning on a couch and as he receives one of my Hadiths, he will say: Do not mention that! I will follow only what I find in the Book of Allah!”*<sup>42</sup>

Ibn Hazm, on the authority of al-‘Irbas ibn Sariyah, have recorded that the Holy Prophet, once, delivered a speech to people saying,

*‘One of you will be leaning on his couch thinking that Almighty Allah has not deemed unlawful anything other than what is mentioned in the Holy Qur’an! I swear by Allah that I have verily enjoined you to do good, warned you against immoral things, and forbidden you from evil. These things are surely like the Qur’an.’*

Commenting on this Hadith, Ibn Hazm says, ‘The words of the Holy Prophet have been utterly true. His verdicts are similar to the Holy Qur’an; no difference is seen between both respecting all that which is obligatory upon us.’

The Holy Prophet’s saying has been verified by Almighty Allah Who says,

***“And whatever the Messenger gives you, (then you should) accept it; and from whatever he forbids you, keep back.” (Holy Qur’an: 59:7)***

The Holy Prophet’s instructions are also similar to the Holy Qur’an since the source of both is the Divine Revelation. In this regard, Almighty Allah says,

***“Nor does he speak out of desire. It is naught but revelation that is revealed”. (Holy Qur’an: 53:3-4)***<sup>43</sup>

Before we leave the Hadith of Arikah, let us read the following quotation:

As long as the Arabic ‘arikah’ stands for a well-upholstered couch found in a house,<sup>44</sup> or any couch,<sup>45</sup> the ruler who governs the affairs of people must be the first one for whom an ‘arikah’ is arranged. If the phrase ‘very soon’ that appeared in the Holy Prophet’s words of the Hadith is taken in consideration, it will be clear that the ruler who governed the people’s affairs directly after the Holy Prophet was Abu-Bakr who actually said the very words predicted by the Holy Prophet.

Al-Dhahbiy has recorded that Abu-Bakr, immediately after the demise of the Holy Prophet, gathered people around him and said to them, ‘You are reporting about the Messenger of Allah inconsistent narrations. People coming after you will be engaged in more intense discrepancy.’

Therefore, do not report anything about the Messenger of Allah, and if anyone asks you, you should

refer to the Book of Allah as the arbitrator. You should thus deem lawful whatever is lawful therein and deem unlawful whatever is unlawful therein.’<sup>46</sup>

Consequently, it has become obvious that Abu-Bakr is the very ‘a man from you’ intended in the Hadith of Arikah and whom the Holy Prophet had predicted that he would oppose the Hadith saying, ‘The Book of Allah is the arbitrator. You should thus deem lawful whatever is lawful therein and deem unlawful whatever is unlawful therein.’

This fact has been one of the greatest points of evidence on the soundness of the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet.<sup>47</sup> Historically, Abu-Bakr and `Umar were the closest rulers to the lifetime of the Holy Prophet who opposed the Hadith.

Therefore, the Hadith of Arikah has meant them personally, none else. Those who came after them and adopted their decision of the prohibition of reporting and recording the Hadith were only following their examples and were not as strict as Abu-Bakr and `Umar in the application of the prohibition.<sup>48</sup>

## **Which Decision Preceded The Other?**

Having covered almost all the aspects of Abu-Bakr’s prevention of reporting and recording the Hadith, another question floats on the surface. Did Abu-Bakr prohibited the reporting of the Hadith and the recordation of it at the same time? Or were the two separate decisions that a period of time occurred between them?

It seems that Abu-Bakr prohibited the reporting of the Hadith after he himself had recorded it. The reason beyond such procedures will be mentioned later on within the discussion of the last reason. Abu-Bakr might have anticipated that the prohibition of reporting the Hadith would facilitate him to practice the legislation and hold the legislative authority besides the political one. In other words, he might have intended to put the two administrative and legislative authorities under the same cover so that the Islamic caliphate would be easily governed.<sup>49</sup>

Because of the departure of the Holy Prophet, the issuance of the prohibition of reporting the Hadith and the emergence of the movement that called for the adaptation of individual opinions—because of the three aforementioned matters, some of the Sahabah had to record the Hadiths that they had directly heard from the Holy Prophet in order to preserve them for the coming generations. Hence, Abu-Bakr issued the second decision of the prohibition of recording the Hadith.

Such sequence in the issuance of the decisions of the prohibition are not so important if compared to the historical influence of the events; because the two decisions were issued in a period of four years only, and formed the first seed that produced other decisions issued by `Umar ibn al-Khattab as well as the other rulers, except Imam `Ali, until it was canceled in a late time of the Umayyad State.

Although Abu-Bakr, `Umar, and `Uthman achieved great success in the prohibition of recording the

Hadith, they could not achieve such success in the field of the reporting of it. Neither the Sahabah nor did the Tabi'un observe the prohibition even if they pretended that they had nothing to do with the recordation of it; and this manner lasted until `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz opened the door of recording the Hadith.

Even when the doors were opened for the 'governmental' recordation of the Hadith during the Umayyad State, it unfortunately acted as introduction to the currency of the phenomenon of recording false Hadiths so publicly that the rulers, especially during the first days of the era, could induce big numbers of writers to record for them the Hadiths that they liked.<sup>50</sup>

For instance, Mu`awiyah, the founder of the Umayyad State, ordered Ka`b al-Ahbar to sit in the Masjid and narrate for people the relations that Mu`awiyah would like and to prove the falseness of other Hadiths that he would not. On that account, many fabrications were forged against the Holy Prophet.

To sum it up, Abu-Bakr's opinion about the reporting and the recordation of the Hadith was the same, since he had already decided to ban both even though he justified the prohibition of reporting the Hadith by saying that he had anticipated discrepancy in the narrations.

He therefore ordered people to accept the Book of Allah only. Because of the anticipated discrepancy that urged him to issue the decision of the prohibition, Abu-Bakr's heart was filled in with suspicion that included even those whom he had deemed trustworthy; therefore, he rejected all the reported items, including those whom he himself had collected, and, having been more intense, prohibited the recordation of the Hadith, too.

In a reference to the origination of the Hadith, Dr. Husayn al-Hajj Hasan, in his book entitled *Naqd al-Hadith* (Critique of the Hadith), says,

"If we move to the age of the Sahabah, we will find most of them dislike recording the Hadith but like reporting it. This is in fact out of the ordinary and in need for search and interpretation."<sup>51</sup>

On the surface, this can be understood from the justification of Abu-Bakr, whereas the reality imposes that there were other reasons, save the two justifications that he had presented and we have beforehand proven their impracticability through many critiques, beyond the prohibition. Forthcoming in the chapter of the last justification, the actual reasons of the prohibition will be discussed thoroughly.

In abstract, we have previously proven that Abu-Bakr's justifications for the decision of the prohibition of reporting and recording the Hadith have been neither convincing nor conclusive when they were exposed to discussion and investigation.<sup>52</sup>

---

1. Al-Dhahbiy: Tadhkirat al-Huffadh 1:5, Al-Qasim ibn Muhammad (died in 1029 AH): al-I'tisam bi-Habl-illah al-Matin 1:30, and `Abd al-Ghaniy `Abd al-Khaliq: Hijjiyyat al-Sunnah 394.

2. Al-Dhahbiy: Tadhkirat al-Huffadh 1:32 and `Abd al-Ghaniy Abd al-Khaliq: Hijjiyyat al-Sunnah 394.
3. Al-Nawawiy: Sharh Sahih Muslim 17-8, Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal 3: 12, 21 and 39, and al-Khatib al-Baghdadiy: Taqyid al-`Ilm 29.
4. Al-Khatib al-Baghdadiy: Taqyid al-`Ilm 87; al-Bayhaqiy: al-Sunan al-Kubra 4:84.
5. Malik ibn Anas: al-Mutta' 1:5 as quoted from Mustafa al-A`dhamiy: Dirasatun fi'l-Hadith al-Nubawiy 94.
6. Al-Khatib al-Baghdadiy: Taqyid al-`Ilm 49 and Abd al-Ghaniy Abd al-Khaliq: Hijjiyyat al-Sunnah 395.
7. Sahih al-Bukhariy 1:39 Chapter: Recording the Items of Knowledge.
8. Dr. Muhammad Yusuf: Tarikh al-Fiqh al-Islamiy 173.
9. Muhammad ibn Habib al-Baghdadiy: al-Muhabbar 475-7.
10. Ibn Sa`d: al-Tabaqat al-Kubra 91-3.
11. Mustafa al-A`dhamiy: Dirasatun fi'l-Hadith al-Nubawiy, 44 as quoted from Nasir al-Din al-Asad: Masadir al-Shi'r al-Jahiliy (Reference books of the poetry of the pre-Islamic era) 52 and Ibn Abd al-Barr: al-Qasd wa'l-Umam 22.
12. Al-Buladhiriyy: Futuh al-Buldan 583.
13. Al-Buladhiriyy: Futuh al-Buldan 579.
14. Shaykh al-Saduq: 'Uyun Akhbar al-Rida 1:43 and Ibn `Abd al-Barr: al-Qasd wa'l-Umam 22.
15. Al-Buladhiriyy: Futuh al-Buldan 579 and Ibn Abd al-Barr: al-Qasd wa'l-Umam 22.
16. Muhammad ibn Habib al-Baghdadiy: al-Muhabbar 475.
17. Ibn `Abd al-Barr: al-Isti`ab 2:374.
18. Ahmad Amin: Fajr al-Islam (The Dawn of Islam) 13-4.
19. Ibn Sa`d: al-Tabaqat al-Kubra 2:22, Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal 1:247.
20. Al-Tarhib wa'l-Tarhib 1:71; Al-Haythamiy: Majma` al-Zawa'id 1:164.
21. Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal 4:206.
22. Sahih al-Bukhariy 3:1114 H. 2895.
23. Sahih al-Bukhariy 1:53 H. 112; Sahih Muslim 2:988 H. 1355; Sunan al-Tirmidhiy 5:29 H. 2667.
24. Al-Hakim al-Nisapuriy: al-Mustadrak `Ala'l-Sahihayn 1:188 H. 362.
25. Al-Hakim al-Nisapuriy: al-Mustadrak `Ala'l-Sahihayn 1:187 H. 359; Al-Khatib al-Baghdadiy: Taqyid al-`Ilm 80-81.
26. Sunan al-Tirmidhiy 5:39 H. 2666; al-Tabaraniy: al-Mu`jam al-Awsat 1:245 H. 801, 3:169 H. 2825.
27. Al-Khatib al-Baghdadiy: Taqyid al-`Ilm 73; al-Tabaraniy: al-Mu`jam al-Kabir 4:276 H. 4410; Ibn `Adiy: al-Kamil 1:36.
28. This is an indication to the Holy Verse, "O you who believe: if an evil-doer comes to you with a report, look carefully into it, lest you harm a people in ignorance, then be sorry for what you have done. 49:6"
29. See the previous narration of `U`ishah regarding her father's having set fire to the collections of Hadith.
30. Of course, this is at worst; rather, if truth be told, it is impermissible to reject even the doubted narration because there is a probability that it was truly said by the Holy Prophet. In view of that, Shi'ite and Sunnite Hadithists have not neglected recording even the doubted narrations in their reference books of Hadith.
31. See Ibn Hazm al-Andalusiy: Asma' al-Sahabah, where he has mentioned the number of narrations reported by each one of the Sahabah.
32. Sunan al-Darimiyy 2:462 H. 2972; Ta'wil Mukhtalaf al-Hadith 1:20.
33. Ibn `Asakir: Tarikh Dimashq 30:430; al-Haythamiy: Majma` al-Zawa'id 203; al-Tabaraniy: al-Mu`jam al-Kabir 1:63 H. 43; al-Muttaqiy al-Hindiyy: Kanz al-Ummal 5:631 H. 14113; Tarikh al-Tabariy 2:620.
34. Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal 4:132.
35. Sunan Ibn Majah 1:6, H (Hadith). 12.
36. Sunan Abi-Dawud 4:200, H.4604.
37. Al-Bayhaqiy: al-Sunan 9:331.
38. Isma'il al-Isbahaniy: Dala'il al-Nubuwwah 1:25 and 6:549, Ibn Hazm: al-Ihkam fi Usul al-Ahkam 2:161 and al-Khatib al-Baghdadiy: al-Kifayah fi 'Ilm al-Dirayah 9.
39. Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal 4:131 and al-Khatib al-Baghdadiy: al-Kifayah fi 'Ilm al-Dirayah 8-10.
40. Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal 4:131 and Sunan Abi-Dawud 4:200, H.4604.
41. Sunan Ibn Majah 1:6, H. 13, al-Hakim al-Nisapuriy: al-Mustadrak `Ala'l-Sahihayn 1:108, al-Khatib al-Baghdadiy: al-

Kifayah fi 'Ilm al-Dirayah 10 and al-Khatib al-Baghdadiy: al-faqih wa'l-Mutafaqqih 1:88.

42. Al-Khatib al-Baghdadiy: al-Kifayah fi 'Ilm al-Dirayah 10.

43. Ibn Hazm: al-Ahkam 1:159.

44. Ibn al-Athir: al-Nihayah 1:40.

45. Al-Shafi'iy: al-Risalah 89-91, al-Bayhaqiy: Manaqib al-Shafi'iy 1:330 and al-Hazimiy: al-l'tibar 7.

46. Al-Dhahbiy: Tadhkirat al-Huffadh 1:2-3.

47. Al-Bayhaqiy: Dala'il al-Nubuwwah 1:24 and 6:549.

48. Quoted, not literally, from Sayyid Muhammad Rida al-Jalaliy: Tadwin al-Sunnah al-Sharifah 356-7.

49. Later on, during the discussion of the final justification, more details will be given to this claim.

50. More details can be found in `Ali al-Shahristaniy's Wudu' al-Nabiy 256.

51. Dr. Husayn al-Hajj Hasan: Naqd al-Hadith 1:142.

52. For more details and a clearer explanation of the idea, refer to the author's book 'Tarikh al-Hadith al-Nubawiy; al-Mu'aththirat fi `Ahd Abi-Bakr (History of the Hadith; Motives in the Reign of Abu-Bakr)'.

---

**Source URL:**

<https://www.al-islam.org/prohibition-recording-hadith-sayyid-ali-al-shahristani/first-reason-justification-s-abu-bakr>