

# **Abu Hurayra and the Falsification of Traditions (Hadith)**

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**Article**

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### Abu Hurayra and the Falsification of Traditions (Hadith)

By Yasin T. al-Jibouri

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*In this eye opening text, Yasin T. al-Jibouri sheds light on the true characteristics of one of the most famous narrators of traditions from the Ahlu-Sunnah, Abu Hurayra. Whom was known to have supposedly reported more traditions from the beloved lips of the Holy Prophet (S) than any other narrator in the History of Islam. Yet if one were to examine even in brief his life as has been done throughout this short book – it would be clear to every person of intellect how this man from whom reports are being widely taken and attributed to the Prophet (S) are nothing more than complete and utter fabrications told in falsehood for the purpose of deviation to meet the order of the political agenda of the time. It is a must read for all seekers of truth and knowledge.*

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Mu'awiyah ibn Abu Sufyan ibn Harb played a major role in distorting the Islamic creed by paying writers to tailor design "traditions" to serve his interests and support his deviated views. He installed himself as ruler of Syria<sup>1</sup> in 40 A.H./661 A.D. and ruled for twenty long years till his death at the age of seventy-eight. Mu'awiyah declared himself "caliph" in Syria when he was 59 years old and assumed authority by sheer force.

He was neither elected nor requested to take charge. He did not hide this fact; rather, he bragged about it once when he addressed the Kufians saying, "O people of Kūfa! Do you think that I fought you in order that you may establish prayers or give *zakat* or perform the pilgrimage?! I know that you do pray, pay *zakat* and perform the pilgrimage. Indeed, I fought you in order to take command over you with contempt, and Allāh has given me that against your wishes. Rest assured that whoever killed any of us will himself be killed. And the treaty between us of amnesty is under my feet."<sup>2</sup>

Shortly before his death, which took place in the month of Rajab of 60 A.H./May of 680 A.D., he managed to secure the oath of allegiance to his corrupt and immoral son, Yazid, as his successor. He did so by intimidation once and once by buying loyalty and favors, spending in the process huge sums of money that belonged to the Muslims, funds of their *baytul-mal*, state treasury. The weak-minded majority of the Muslims of his time swore allegiance to him. This proves that the majority does not necessarily have to be right. Imām al-Hussain (ع), together with a small band of devotees to the cause

of truth, refused to bow their heads to the oppressive forces.

Yet the worst type of mischief which Mu'awiyah committed was his embarking on the task of fabricating *hadith*, traditions detailing what the Prophet of Islam (ﷺ) said or did. *Hadith* is one of the two sources of Islam's legislative system, the Shari'a, the other being the Holy Qur'an. Selecting Imam 'Ali (ع) as his lifetime's adversary, Mu'awiyah soon found out that his cause was hopeless. 'Ali's merits were very well recognized by every Muslim while Mu'awiyah's family and dismal conduct were the objects of their contempt. Mu'awiyah's past record was dark and shameful whereas that of 'Ali (ع) was glorious and shining, full of heroism in defense of Islam.

In order to sustain his campaign and raise the status of his likes, Mu'awiyah had to attract the remnant of some companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) whose characters were known to be weak and who had a genuine interest in the material things of this world, in its vanishing riches. He employed them to fabricate traditions custom-designed to his own tailoring. This trend of fabricating *hadith* constituted a grave danger to the integrity of the Islamic tenets. It was very important to ward off such a danger. To expose such a trend to the Muslims at large was very vital, pivotal, of the highest priority. It would be accomplished by exposing and disgracing those who embarked upon committing and nurturing such terrible mischief. Imam al-Hussain's revolution broke out in order to undertake this very task.

Let us now review a few samples of fabricated traditions [3](#).

The main figure "credited" with fabricating "traditions" by the thousands was one Abu Hurayra. Who is this man?

In the year 7 A.H./629 A.D., a young and very poor man from the Daws tribe of southern Arabia (Yemen) named Abu Hurayra met the Prophet (ﷺ) immediately after the battle of Khaybar and embraced Islam.

He is well known in history as "Abu Hurayra," the fellow of the kitten, after a kitten to which he was very much attached. His name shone neither during the lifetime of the Prophet (ﷺ) nor of the four righteous caliphs but during the un-Islamic reign of terror of the Umayyads which lasted from 661 to 750 A.D.

It was then that the Islamic world witnessed an astronomical number of "traditions" which were attributed, through this same Abu Hurayra, to the Prophet of Islam (ﷺ). Since these traditions, known collectively as *hadith*, constitute one of the two sources of the Islamic legislative system, the *Shar'a*, it is very important to shed light on the life and character of this man.

Ab Hurayra is supposed to have quoted the Prophet (ﷺ) as saying, "Allah has trusted three persons for His revelation: Myself, Gabriel and Mu'awiyah." We wonder what Allah was doing for the revelation when Mu'awiyah was in the camp of the infidels. This quotation is cited by Ibn Asakir, Ibn Uday, Muhammed ibn Aa'ith, Muhammed ibn Abd al-Samarqandi, Muhammed ibn Mubarak al-Suri and al-Khateeb al-Baghdadi. They all quote Ab Hurayra as saying,

"سمعت رسول الله يقول: ان الله ائتمن على وحيه ثلاثة أنا و جبرائيل و معاوية".

Imagine! He even puts his name before that of archangel Gabriel! *Astaghfirullāh!*

According to al-Khateeb al-Baghdadi, Abū Hurayra claimed,

"ناول النبي معاوية سهما فقال: خذ هذا السهم حتى تلقاني به في الجنة"

The Prophet (ص) gave Mu'awiyah an arrow then said to him, "Take this arrow until we meet in Paradise." What a lucky arrow to enter Paradise! Let us stop here to discuss this man, Abū Hurayra, who may have had the lion's share in distorting the Prophet's Sunnah especially when we come to know that he was quoted by a host of *tabi'īn* who in turn are quoted by hundreds others who in turn are quoted by thousands others..., and so on and so forth. This is why his name is in the forefront of narrators of *hadīth*.

It is of utmost importance to expose the facts relevant to Abu Hurayra so that Muslims may be cautious whenever they come across a tradition narrated by him or attributed to him which, all in all, reached the astronomical figure of 5,374 "traditions," that is, more "traditions" than anyone else in history...

This figure is questioned not only due to the short period during which he saw the Prophet (ص) but also due to the fact that Abu Hurayra did not know how to read and write, and although he spent no more than three years in the company of the Prophet (ص), that is to say, on and off, whenever such company did not involve any danger to his life.

This fact is supported by the renown compiler al-Bukhari, the most famous compiler of *hadīth*, who endorses no more than 93 of them! Muslim, another compiler of *hadīth*, endorses only 89 of Abū Hurayra's alleged *ahādīth*. The reader can easily conclude that this figure of 5,374 "traditions" is quite unrealistic when he comes to know that Abu Bakr, friend of the Prophet (ص) and one of the earliest converts to Islam, narrated no more than 142 traditions. 'Umar ibn al-Khattab narrated no more than 537 traditions. 'Othman ibn 'Affan narrated no more than 146 traditions.

And 'Ali (ع), the man who was raised by the Prophet (ص) and who was always with him, following him like his shadow for 32 years, and whose memory and integrity nobody at all can question, narrated no more than 586 traditions.

All these men, especially 'Ali (ع) and Abu Bakr, spent many years of their lives in the company of the Prophet (ص) and did not hide when their lives were in jeopardy, as is the case with Abu Hurayra, yet they did not narrate except a tiny fraction of the number of "traditions," many of which cannot be accepted by logic and commonsense, narrated by or attributed to Abu Hurayra.

These facts and figures are stated in the famous classic reference titled *Siyar A'lām an-Nubalā'* سير

أعلام النبلاء by at-Thahbi. This is why it is so important to discuss this man and expose the factories of falsification of *hadith* established by his benefactors, the Umayyads, descendants and supporters of Abu Sufyan, then his son Mu'awiyah, then his son Yazid, all of whom were outright hypocrites and had absolutely nothing to do with Islam.

There is no agreement about what Abū Hurayra's name was, nor when he was born or when he died. Yet his name is said to be 'Omayr ibn 'Amir ibn 'Abd Thish-Shari ibn Tareef, of the Yemenite tribe of Daws ibn 'Adnan<sup>4</sup>. His mother's name is Umaima daughter of Safeeh ibn al-Harith ibn Shabi ibn Abu Sa'b, also of the Daws tribe. His date of birth is unknown, but he is said to have died in 57, 58, or 59 A.H., and that he had lived to be 78. This would put the date of his birth at 677, 678 or 679 A.D.

Some say that his name was Abdul-Rahmān ibn Sakhr al-Azdi. He accepted Islam in 7 A.H./628-9 A.D. immediately after the Battle of Khaybar, and he was then more than thirty years old. He was one of those indigent Muslims who had no house to live in, so they were lodged at the Suffa, a row of rooms adjacent to the Prophet's Mosque in Medina. These residents used to receive the charity doled out to them by other Muslims. He used to see the Prophet (ص) mostly when it was time to eat. He missed most of the battles in defense of Islam waged after that date although he was young and healthy and capable of serving in the army.

What is the meaning of his *kunya* "Abū Hurayra", man of the kitten? Ibn Qutaybah al-Dainuri quotes Abū Hurayra on p. 93 of his book titled *Al-Ma'arif* المعارف as saying,

و كنيت بأبي هريرة بهرة صغيرة كنت أَلعب بها ...

"... And I was called 'Abū Hurayra' because of a small kitten I used to play with."

In his *Tabaqat* book, Ibn Sa'd quotes Abū Hurayra as saying,

كنت أرعى غنما و كانت لي هرة صغيرة فكنت اذا كان الليل وضعتها في شجرة فاذا أصبحت أخذتها فلعبت بها  
"فكنوني أبا هريرة"

"I used to tend to a herd, and I had a small kitten. When it was night time, I would place her on a tree. When it was morning, I would take her and play with her, so I was called 'Abū Hurayra' [man of the small kitten]."

The Umayyads found in Abū Hurayra the right man to fabricate as many "traditions" as they needed to support their un-Islamic practices and then attribute them to the Prophet (ص), hence the existence of such a huge number of traditions filling the books of the Sunnah. And the Umayyads rewarded Abū Hurayra very generously.

When he came from Yemen to Hijaz, Abū Hurayra had only one single piece of striped cloth to cover his private parts. When Mu'awiyah employed Abū Hurayra to work in the factories producing custom-designed "traditions," he rewarded him by appointing him as the governor of Medina. He also married him off to a lady of prestige for whom Abū Hurayra used to work as a servant and built him al-Aqeeq mansion. Who was that lady?

She was Bisra daughter of Ghazwan ibn Jabir ibn Wahab of Banu Mazin, sister of emir (provincial governor) Utbah ibn Ghazwan, an ally of Banu Abd Shams, the man who was appointed by 'Umar ibn al-Khattab as governor of Basra. Utbah ibn Ghazwan **عتبه بن غزوان** was a famous *sahābi* and a hero of Islam, and he died during the time of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab.

Then Mu'awiyah married Abū Hurayra off to Utbah's sister, Bisra, a number of years after the death of her famous brother. He used to work for Bisra as a servant. Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani mentions Bisra in the first setion of his famous work *Al-Isaba fi Akhbar al-Sahāba* **الإصابة في أخبار الصحابة** and says the following about Bisra,

و كانت قد استأجرته في العهد النبوي ثم تزوجها بعد ذلك لما كان مروان يستخلفه في امرة المدينة على عهد معاوية

"She used to let him work for her during the time of the Prophet (ص), then he married her after that when Marwan [ibn al-Hakam] used to let him be in charge of Medina during the time of Mu'awiyah." In his *Tabaqat*, Ibn Sa'd quotes Abū Hurayra as saying the following about his wife, Bisra,

أكريت نفسي من ابنة غزوان على طعام بطني و عقبه رجلي... فكانت تكلفني أن أركب قائما، و أورد حافيا، فلما !!كان بعد ذلك زوجنيها الله فكلفتها أن تركب قائمة و أن تورد حافية

"I placed myself at the service of the daughter of Ghazwan in exchange for food for my stomach and for something to wear on my feet... She used to order me to ride while serving her and to approach her barefoot to serve her. After that, Allah made her my wife, so I ordered her to ride as she served me and to approach me barefoot!!" Thus, Abū Hurayra "got even" with the unfortunate lady!

Abū Hurayra found himself during the Umayyads' reign of terror and oppression a man of wealth and influence, owning slaves and having servants. Prior to that, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab appointed him as governor of Bahrain for about two years during which Abū Hurayra amassed a huge wealth, so much so that people complained about him to 'Umar who called him to account for it. Finding his excuse too petty to accept, 'Umar deposed him.

'Umar also questioned him about the unrealistically abundant traditions which he was attributing to the Prophet (ص), hitting him with his cane, reprimanding him for forging traditions and even threatening to

expel him from the Muslim lands.

All these details and more can be reviewed in famous references such as: *Ar-Riyad an-Nadira* الرياض النضرة by at-Tabari, in Vol. 4 of the original Arabic text of al-Bukhari's *Sahih*, where the author quotes Abū Hurayra talking about himself, in *Abū Hurayra* book by the Egyptian scholar Mahmoud Abū Rayyah, in *سير أعلام النبلاء* *Siyar A'lam an-Nubala'* by al-Thahbi, in *شرح نهج البلاغة* *Sharh Nahjul-Balaghah* by Ibn Abul-Hadeed, in *البداية و النهاية* *Al-Bidaya wal Nihaya* by Ibn Katheer, in *طبقات الفقهاء* *Tabaqat al-Fuqaha* by Ibn Sa'd (also famous as *Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd*), in *تاريخ الأمم و الملوك* *Tarikh al-Umam wal Muluk* by at-Tabari, in *تاريخ الخلفاء* *Tarikh al-Khulafa* by as-Sayyuti, in *فتح الباري* *Fath al-Bari* by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, in *المستدرک* *Al-Mustadrak* by al-Hakim, and in numerous other references.

Yet some Muslims label Abū Hurayra as "Islam's narrator," propagating for his fabrications without first studying them in the light of the Qur'an and going as far as invoking the Almighty to be pleased with him....

Abdullah ibn 'Umar (ibn al-Khattab) claimed that the Prophet (ص) said, "You will see greed after me and things with which you will disagree." People, he went on, asked, "O Messenger of Allah! What do you order us to do then?" The Prophet (ص), Abdullah continued, said, "Give the governor what is his and plead to Allah for yours." Islam, true Islam, never condones toleration of unjust rulers.

Another fabricated tradition is also narrated by Abdullah ibn 'Umar who quotes the Prophet (ص) supposedly saying, "Put up with whatever conduct you do not like of your rulers because if you abandon the جماعة Jama'a (group) even the distance of one foot then die, you will die as unbelievers."

Surely many despots ruling the Muslim world nowadays can appreciate such "traditions" and will not hesitate to publicize for them and be generous to those who promote them; they would give them generous salaries and build them mansions... Such fabricated "traditions" are not only in total contrast with the Qur'an and the Sunnah as well as with other verified traditions, they invite the Muslims to be the slaves of their rulers.

This is exactly what Mu'awiyah wanted, and this is exactly what so-called "Muslim" rulers like him want in our day and time... Unfortunately for the Muslims and fortunately for their enemies, there are many "Muslim" rulers like this Mu'awiyah. This is why there is poverty, ignorance, dictatorship, injustice, oppression and subjugation to the enemies of Islam throughout the Muslim world nowadays.

When Abu Hurayra came to the Prophet (ص), he was young and healthy and, hence, capable of enlisting in the Prophet's army. But he preferred to be lodged together with the Muslim destitute at the Suffa referred to above. Most of the time which Abu Hurayra spent with the Prophet (ص) was during the lunches or dinners the Prophet (ص) hosted for those destitute.

Abu Hurayra himself admitted more than once that he remained close to the Prophet (ص) so that he could get a meal to eat. Another person who used to shower the destitutes of the Suffa with his

generosity was Ja'far ibn Abu Talib (588 – 629 A.D.), the Prophet's cousin and a brother of 'Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع). He was, for this reason, called "Abul Masakeen", father of the destitutes.

This is why Abu Hurayra used to regard Ja'far as the most generous person next only to the Prophet (ص). When the Prophet (ص) mandated military service for all able men in the Mu'ta expedition, Ja'far ibn Abu Talib did not hesitate to respond to the Prophet's call, but Abu Hurayra, who considered Ja'far as his patron, preferred not to participate, thus violating the order of the Prophet (ص). History records the names of those who did likewise.

In 21 A.H./642 A.D., during the caliphate of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, Abu Hurayra was made governor of Bahrain. After two years, he was deposed because of a scandal. The details of that scandal are recorded in the books of Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, the Mu'tazilite writer, and in Ibn al-Atheer's famous classic book *Al-'Iqd al-Fareed*. A summary of that incident runs as follows:

When Abu Hurayra was brought to him, 'Umar said to him: "I have come to know that when I made you governor of Bahrain, you did not even have shoes to wear, but I am now told that you have purchased horses for one thousand and six hundred dinars." Abu Hurayra said, "I had horses which have multiplied, and I received some as gifts." 'Umar then said, "I would give you only your salary. This (amount) is a lot more than that (more than your salary for both years). Pay the balance back to *baytul-ma'* (the Muslim state treasury)!"

Abu Hurayra said, "This money is not yours." 'Umar said, "By Allāh! I would bruise your back!" Saying this, 'Umar whipped Abu Hurayra till the latter bled. Then 'Umar thundered: "Now bring the money back!" Abu Hurayra replied: "I am to account for it before Allāh." 'Umar said, "This could be so only if you had taken it rightfully and had paid it back obediently. I shall throw you back to your mother as though you were dung so that she would use you to graze donkeys." Some sources say that 'Umar ibn al-Khattab was able to extract ten thousand gold dinar pieces from Abu Hurayra which were deposited at *baytul-ma'*.

Even before becoming caliph, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab was fully aware of what type of person Abu Hurayra was, and he knew that the man did not enjoy any respect among the Prophet's *sahāba*. In his *Musnad*, Musaddad narrates through Khalid ibn Yahya who quotes his father quoting Abu Hurayra himself saying that 'Umar once reprimanded him on hearing that he was narrating incredibly too many traditions and attributing them to the Prophet (ص). He rebuked him once and said,

لتتركن الحديث عن رسول الله أو لألحقنك بأرض دوس أو بأرض القردة

"You shall leave alone quoting the Messenger of Allāh or I shall send you back to the Daws land or to the land of apes."

This same quotation is cited by Ibn Asakir and is *hadīth* No. 4885, p. 239, Vol. 5 of *Kanzul-Ummal*. The

reader ought to remember than even before becoming caliph, ‘Umar ibn al–Khattab was a man of power and prestige, let alone being the Prophet’s father–in–law; so, his word carried weight even then.

‘Umar had little or no toleration for people who abuse the Prophet’s *hadīth*, so much so that on p. 34, Vol. 1, of his *Sahīh* book, Muslim tells us that ‘Umar once hit Abu Hurayra during the lifetime of the Prophet (ص) so hard, causing the man to fall on his rear end. Here are Muslim’s exact words as they exist in his famous *Sahīh* book which is one of the main 6 books of traditions:

انه (عمر) ضربه على عهد النبي ضربة خر بها لأسته

As for ‘Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع), he came to know that Abu Hurayra used to say, “My friend (meaning the Messenger of Allāh) talked to me,” or “I saw my friend,” so he said to him,

متى كان النبي خليلك يا أبا هريرة؟

When did the Prophet (ص) ever be your friend, O Abu Hurayra?!” as we read on p. 52 of Ibn Qutaybah’s work *Ta’weel mukhtalaf al-ahādīth*.

According to the sequence employed by Ibn Sa’d in his *Tabaqāt*, Abu Hurayra ranks in the ninth or tenth class of narrators of *hadīth*. He came to the Messenger of Allāh near the end of the seventh Hijri year. Hence, historians say that he accompanied the Prophet (ص) no more than three years<sup>5</sup> according to the best estimates, while other historians say it was no more than two years if we take into consideration the fact that the Prophet (ص) sent him to accompany Ibn al–Hadrami to Bahrain, then the Messenger of Allāh died while he was still in Bahrain.<sup>6</sup>

Abu Hurayra was not known for his *jihad* or valour, nor was he among those who were regarded as brilliant thinkers, nor among the jurists who knew the Qur’ān by heart, nor did he even know how to read and write... Yet the man of the kitten became famous for the abundance of *ahādīth* which he used to narrate about the Messenger of Allāh.

This fact attracted the attention of verifiers of *hadīth* especially since he had not remained in the company of the Prophet (ص) for any length of time and to the fact that he narrated traditions regarding battles which he had never attended.

Some verifiers of *hadīth* gathered all what was narrated by the righteous caliphs as well as by the ten men given the glad tidings of going to Paradise in addition to what the mothers of the faithful and the purified Ahl al–Bayt, and they did not total one tenth of what Abu Hurayra had narrated all alone.

Then fingers were pointed at Abu Hurayra charging him with telling lies and with fabricating **and forging** *hadīth*. Some went as far as labelling him as the first narrator in the history of Islam thus charged. Yet

he is called by some Muslim narrators and is surrounded with a great deal of respect. They totally rely on him, even go as far as saying “*Radiya Allhu ‘anhu*”, Allāh pleased with him, whenever they mention his name.

Some of them may even regard him as being more knowledgeable than ‘Ali (ع) due to one particular tradition which he narrates about himself and in which he says, “I said, ‘O Messenger of Allāh! I hear a great deal of your *hadīth* which I have been forgetting!’ The Prophet (ص) said, ‘Stretch your mantle! I had created the heavens, the earth, and all creation in seven days.’”

When ‘Umar heard about it, he called him in and asked him to repeat that *hadīth*. Having heard him repeating it, ‘Umar struck him and said to him, “How so when Allāh Himself says it was created in six days, while you yourself now say it was done in seven?!” Abu Hurayra said, “Maybe I heard it from Ka’b al-Ahbar...” ‘Umar said, “Since you cannot distinguish between the Prophet’s *ahādīth* and what Ka’b al-Ahbar says, you must not narrate anything at all.”<sup>7</sup>

We have to stop here to discuss who this Ka’b al-Ahbar كعب الأحبار was.

He is “Abu Ishaq” Ka’b ibn Matti (Matthew) al-Himyari al-Ahbarī, a prominent rabbi from Yemen. He belonged to the clan of Thu Ra’in or Thu al-Kila’ from the Arab Himyari tribe to which Balqeess, the Queen of Saba’ (Sheba), wife of Prophet Solomon, belonged. Ka’b was Arab by birth, Jewish by faith.

Before quoting what others have said about Ka’b al-Ahbar, the author of this book wrote this footnote for p. 102 of Dr. Muhammed al-Tijani al-Samawi’s book *Shi’as are the Ahl al-Sunnah*:

His full name is “Abu Ishaq” Ka’b ibn Mati’ (Matti, Matthew) (d. 32 A.H./652 A.D.). He was a Jew from Yemen who pretended to have embraced Islam then went to Medina during the reign of ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab. Then he went to Syria to be one of Mu’awiyah’s advisors. He died in Homs, Syria. He is believed to have succeeded in injecting a great deal of Judaicas into the Islamic beliefs.

Muslims are divided in their judgment of this man and his influence on the Islamic creed and on its followers:

1. Some Sunnis say that the man accepted Islam during the time of ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, so they count him among the *tabi’in*, quoting many of his Isra’iliyyat (Judaicas). Some other Sunni scholars say that he remained Jewish till his death in Homs, Syria, during the time of Othman ibn Affan after serving for a number of years as advisor to Mu’awiyah ibn Abu Sufyan, having lived more than a hundred years, which is more accurate.

Ka’b accompanied ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab during his trip to Jerusalem (al-Quds). He helped locate the foundations of the ancient Jewish temple where ‘Umar built the Aqsa Mosque. He also later helped find the place of the Rock. ‘Umar cleaned it from rubble and fenced it, and an Umayyad ruler later built the Dome of the Rock over it as an integral part of the Aqsa Mosque.

As regarding the “traditions” which he succeeded to infiltrate into Islamic literature, al-Bukhari does not quote any of them at all. There is one narration in Muslim transmitted from Ka’b al-Ahbar through the authority of none other than this Abu Hurayra who reported it relying on the authority of al-A’mash who cited Abu Salih. Muslim, Abu Dawūd and al-Tirmithi have recorded his “*hadīth*”. Some of his “*hadīth*” is included in al-Qurtubi’s *Tafsīr* on Chapter Ghāfir (Ch. 40 of the Holy Qur’ān).

Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, a 14th century Sunni Shafi’i Islamic scholar, regards Ka’b al-Ahbar as being trustworthy (calling him *thiqah*), ranking him in the second *tabaqa* (class of reporters of *hadīth*).

2. As regarding what Shi’ite Muslims think of this Jewish rabbi, all their scholars without any exception reject him, discard his stories, which he narrated from the Torah, and warn against accepting his narratives. According to Shi’ites, ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab and a number of prominent companions had a very positive attitude towards Ka’b.

However, the most knowledgeable and the most farsighted among them, namely Imām ‘Ali (ع), discredited Ka’b who did not dare to come close to Imām ‘Ali (ع) despite the fact that the Imām (ع) was in Medina for the duration of Ka’b’s stay. It is reported that Imām ‘Ali (ع) said about Ka’b: “Certainly he is a professional liar!”

One of the contemporary Shi’ite scholars who have expressed their opinion about Ka’b al-Ahbar is Dr. Muhammad al-Tijani al-Samawi, a convert to Shi’ite Islam from the Tijani Sufi *tarīqa*. Al-Tijani’s ancestors had originally come from Samawa, Iraq, but he was born in Tunisia on February 2, 1943 and earned two Ph.D. degrees one of which was from the Sorbonne (University of Paris).

He is famous for his first book titled *Then I was guided* in which he narrates his experience with converting from Sunni to Shi’ite Islam. The author of this book translated al-Tijani’s book titled *Shi’as are the Ahl al-Sunnah* to which reference is made in this Volume and in other books which he has written. Al-Tijani discredits Ka’b and makes a reference to him on these pages of his work referred to above: 74, 102, 208, 209 and 215. Here is what al-Tijani says about Ka’b al-Ahbar on p. 215:

Judaica and Jewish doctrines have filled the books of *hadīth*. Ka’b al-Ahbar, a Jew, may have succeeded in getting such doctrines and beliefs included into the books of *hadīth*, hence we find traditions likening or personifying Allāh, as well as the theory of incarnation, in addition to many abominable statements about the prophets and messengers of Allāh: All of these are cited through Abu Hurayra.

Imām Muhammad Jawad Chirri (who was born in Lebanon on October 1, 1905 and died in Dearborn, Michigan, on November 10, 1994), a 21st century Shi’a Islamic scholar, is credited for getting the Azhar University of Islam to issue on July 1, 1959 a statement recognizing the Shi’ite Ja’fari School of Islamic Thought. He is more famous for two books which he wrote: *The Brother of the Prophet Muhammad, The Imām ‘Ali* and *Inquiries about Islam*. Having quoted one *hadīth*, Chirri wrote saying,

This dialogue should alert us to the deceptive and successful attempt on the part of Ka'b to influence future events by satanic suggestions. It contains a great deal of deception which produced many harmful results to Islam and the Muslims.

Now it is up to the reader to make up his mind whether we, Muslims, should pay attention to what this Jewish rabbi had said or not.

It is also narrated that 'Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) has said, "Among all the living, the person who has told the most lies about the Messenger of Allāh is Abu Hurayra al-Dawsi," as we read on p. 28, Vol. 4, of Ibn Abul-Hadeed's *Sharh Nahjul-Balāgha*. Mother of the faithful 'Īshā, too, testified to his being a liar several times in reference to many *ahādīth* which he used to attribute to the Messenger of Allāh. For example, she resented something which he had once said so she asked him,

ما هذه الأحاديث التي تبلغنا أنك تحدث بها عن النبي؟ هل سمعت إلا ما سمعنا و رأيت إلا ما رأينا؟

"What are all these *ahādīth* which reach us and which you tell people that the Prophet (ص) said them? Have you heard anything which we did not hear, or have you seen anything which we did not see?"

In a rude and impolite way, Abu Hurayra answered the Mother of the Faithful with these words:

يا أمه! انه كان يشغلك عن رسول الله المرأة و المكحلة

"Mother! The mirror and the kohl diverted you from the *hadīth* of the Messenger of Allāh."

This text exists on p. 509, Vol. 3 of al-Hakim's *Sahīh al-Mustadrak*, and al-Thahbi testified to its authenticity, adding that 'Īshā did not accept Abu Hurayra's excuse by the token she boycotted him till she died. Marwan ibn al-Hakam, her cousin, interfered and took upon himself to verify one *hadīth* the authenticity of which 'Īshā questioned.

It was then that Abu Hurayra admitted, "I did not hear it from the Messenger of Allāh; rather, I heard it from al-Fadl ibn al-'Abbas," as we are told on p. 232, Vol. 2 of al-Bukhari's *Sahīh* in a chapter dealing with a fasting person who wakes up finding himself in the state of *janaba*, and also on p. 272, Vol. 1, of Malik's *Mawta'*. It is because of this particular narration that Ibn Qutaybah charged him with lying saying, "Abu Hurayra claimed that al-Fadl ibn al-'Abbas, *who had by then died*, testified to the authenticity of that tradition which he attributed to him in order to mislead people into thinking that he had heard it from him." [8](#)

In his book titled *Ta'weel al-Ahādīth*, Ibn Qutaybah says, "Abu Hurayra used to say: 'The Messenger of Allāh said such-and-such, but I heard it from someone else.'" In his book *Siyar A'lam al-Nubala*, al-Thahbi says that Yazid ibn Ibrahim once cited Shu'bah ibn al-Hajjaj saying that Abu Hurayra used to

commit forgery.

In his book *Al-Bidaya wal Nihaya*, Ibn Katheer states that Yazid ibn Haroun heard Shu'bah ibn al-Hajjaj accusing Abu Hurayra of the same, that is, that he forges *hadith*, and that he used to narrate what he used to hear from Ka'b al-Ahbar as well as from the Messenger of Allah without distinguishing one from the other.

Ja'far al-Iskafi has said, "Abu Hurayra is doubted by our mentors; his narrations are not acceptable."<sup>9</sup>

During his lifetime, Abu Hurayra was famous among the *sahaba* of lying and forgery and of narrating too many fabricated *ahadith* to the extent that some of the *sahaba* used to deride him and ask him to fabricate *ahadith* agreeable with their own taste.

For example, a man from Quraysh put on once a new *jubba* (a long outer garment) and started showing off. He passed by Abu Hurayra and sarcastically said to him, "O Abu Hurayra! You narrate quite few traditions about the Messenger of Allah; so, did you hear him say anything about my *jubba*?" Abu Hurayra said, "I have heard the father of al-Qasim saying, 'A man before your time was showing off his outfit when Allah caused the earth to cave in over him; so he has been rattling in it and will continue to do so till the Hour.' By Allah! I do not know whether he was one of your people or not."<sup>10</sup>

How can people help doubting Abu Hurayra's traditions since they are so self-contradictory? He narrates one *hadith* then he narrates its opposite, and if he is opposed or his previously narrated traditions are used against him, he becomes angry or starts babbling in the Ethiopian language. <sup>11</sup>

How could they help accusing him of telling lies and of forgery after he himself had admitted that he got traditions out of his own pouch then attributed them to the Prophet (ص)?

Al-Bukhari, in his *Sahih*, states the following:

Abu Hurayra said once, "The Prophet (ص) said, 'The best charity is willingly given; the higher hand is better than the lower one, and start with your own dependents. A woman says: 'Either feed me or divorce me.' A slave says, 'Feed me and use me.' A son says, 'Feed me for the woman who will forsake me.'" He was asked, "O Abu Hurayra! Did you really hear the Messenger of Allah say so?" He said, 'No, this one is from Abu Hurayra's pouch!"<sup>12</sup>

Notice how he starts this "tradition" by saying, "The Prophet (ص) said," then when they refuse to believe what he tells them, he admits by saying, "... this one is from Abu Hurayra's pouch!" So congratulations to Abu Hurayra for possessing this pouch which is full of lies and myths, and for which Mu'awiyah and Banu Umayyah provided a great deal of publicity, and because of which he acquired position, authority, wealth, and mansions. Mu'awiyah made him the governor of Medina and built him the Aqeeq mansion then married him off to a woman of honorable descent for whom he used to work as a servant...

Since Abu Hurayra was the close vizier of Mu'awiyah, it is not due to his own merits, honor, or

knowledge; rather, it is because Abu Hurayra used to provide him with whatever traditions he needed to circulate. If some *sahāba* used to hesitate in cursing “Abu Turab,” namely Commander of the Faithful ‘Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع), the man who was raised by the Prophet (ص), who married the Prophet’s sinless daughter Fatima and founded the first Infallible Family in Islam, who fought for Islam like a lion, a man for whose knowledge *Nahjul-Balāgha* book testifies, the man whose true worth is known only by Allāh and the Messenger of Allāh..., finding such cursing to be embarrassing, Abu Hurayra cursed ‘Ali (ع) in his own house and as his Shi’as heard:

Ibn Abul-Hadeed narrates the following:

When Abu Hurayra came to Iraq in the company of Mu’awiyah in the Year of the Jama’a, he came to Kufa’s Mosque. Having seen the huge number of those who welcomed him, he knelt down then beat his bald head and said, “O people of Iraq! Do you claim that I tell lies about the Messenger of Allāh and thus burn myself in the fire?!”

By Allāh! I heard the Messenger of Allāh saying, ‘Each prophet has a sanctuary, and my sanctuary is in Medina from Eer to [the mountain of] Thawr; so, anyone who makes it unclean will be cursed by Allāh, the angels, and all people, and I bear witness that ‘Ali had done so.’” When Mu’awiyah came to hear this statement, he gave him a present, showered him with his generosity and made him governor of Medina (then capital of the Islamic world).[13](#)

Suffices us to point out to the fact that he was created governor of Medina by none other than Mu’awiyah. There is no doubt that verifiers and researchers who are free from prejudice will doubt anyone who befriended the enemy of Allāh and His Messenger and who was antagonistic towards the friends of Allāh and of His Messenger...

There is no doubt that Abu Hurayra did not reach that lofty position of authority, namely being the governor of Medina, the then capital of the Islamic domains, except by virtue of the services which he had rendered to Mu’awiyah and other authoritative Umayyads. Praise to the One Who changes the conditions!

Abu Hurayra had come to Medina with nothing to cover his private parts other than a tiny striped piece of cloth, begging passers-by to feed him. Then he suddenly became ruler of the sacred precincts of Medina, residing in the Aqeeq mansion, enjoying wealth, servants and slaves, and nobody could say a word without his permission. All of this was from the blessings of his pouch!

Do not forget, nor should you be amazed, when nowadays we see the same plays being repeatedly enacted, and history certainly repeats itself. How many ignorant indigent persons sought nearness to a ruler and joined his party till they became feared masters who do and undo, issuing orders as they please, having a direct access to wealth without being accounted for it, riding in automobiles without being watched, eating foods not sold on the market...?

One such person may not even know how to speak his own language, nor does he know a meaning for life except satisfying his stomach and sexual appetite. The whole matter is simply his having a pouch like the one Abu Hurayra used to have with some exception, of course, yet the aim is one and the same: pleasing the ruler and publicizing for him in order to strengthen his authority, firm his throne, and finish his foes.

Abu Hurayra loved the Umayyads and they loved him since the days of ‘Othman ibn ‘Affan, their leader. His view with regard to ‘Othman was contrary to that of all the *sahāba* who belonged to the Muhājirīn and the Ansār; he regarded all the *sahāba* who participated in or encouraged the killing of ‘Othman as apostates.

Undoubtedly, Abu Hurayra used to accuse ‘Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) of killing ‘Othman. We can derive this conclusion from the statement he made at Kufa’s mosque and his saying that ‘Ali (ع) made Medina unclean and that he, therefore, was cursed by the Prophet (ص), the angels, and everyone else. For this reason, Ibn Sa’d indicates in his *Tabaqāt* that when Abu Hurayra died in 59 A.H./679 A.D., ‘Othman’s descendants carried his coffin and brought it to the Baqee’ to bury it as an expression of their appreciation of his having had high regards for ‘Othman. [14](#)

Surely Allāh has his own wisdom in faring with His creation. ‘Othman ibn ‘Affan, the master of Quraysh and their greatest, was killed although he was the Muslims’ caliph bearing the title of “Thul–Noorayn” and of whom, according to their claim, the angels feel shy.

Yet his corpse did not receive the ceremonial burial bath nor was it shrouded; moreover, it was not buried for full three days after which it was buried at Medina’s then Jewish cemetery. Abu Hurayra died after having enjoyed pomp and power. He was an indigent man whose lineage and tribal origins were not known to anybody. He had no kinship to Quraysh.

Despite all of this, the caliph’s sons, who were in charge of running the affairs during Mu’awiyah’s reign, took to bearing his corpse and to burying it at the Baqee’ where the Messenger of Allāh was buried...! But let us go back to Abu Hurayra to examine his attitude towards the Prophet’s Sunna.

In his *Sahāh*, al–Bukhari quotes Abu Hurayra as saying,

حفظت عن رسول الله وعاءين فأما أحدهما فبثثته، وأما الآخر فلو بئثته قطع هذا البلعوم

I learned the fill of two pouches (receptacles) [of *ahādīth*] from the Messenger of Allāh: I have disseminated only one of them; as for the other, if I disseminate it, this throat will be slit,” as we are told on p. 38, Vol. 1, of al–Bukhari’s *Sahāh*.

Here is Abu Hurayra revealing what erstwhile is hidden, admitting that the only traditions he quoted were the ones that pleased the ruling authorities. Building upon this premise, Abu Hurayra used to have two

pouches, or two receptacles, as he called them. He used to disseminate the contents of one of them, the one which we have discussed here that contains whatever the rulers desired.

As for the other, which Abu Hurayra kept to himself and whose *ahādīth* he did not narrate for fear his throat would be slit, it is the one containing the authentic traditions of the Prophet (ص). Had Abu Hurayra been a reliable authority, he would never have hidden true *ahādīth* while disseminating illusions and lies only to support the oppressor, knowing that Allāh curses whoever hides the clear evidence.

On p. 37, Vol. 1, of the same reference, we find al-Bukhari quoting him saying once, “People say that Abu Hurayra narrates too many *ahādīth*. Had it not been for two [particular] verses in the Book of Allāh, I would not have narrated a single *hadīth*:

‘Those who conceal what We have revealed of clear proofs and the guidance, after Our having clarified [everything] for people in the Book, these it is whom Allāh shall curse, and those who curse shall curse them, too’ (Qur’ān, 2: 159).

Our brethren from the Muhājirīn used to be busy consigning transactions at the market-place, while our brethren from the Ansār used to be busy doing business with their own money, while Abu Hurayra kept in the shadow of the Prophet (ص) in order to satisfy his hunger, attending what they did not attend, learning what they did not learn.”

How can Abu Hurayra say that had it not been for a couple of verses in the Book of Allāh, he would not have narrated a single *hadīth*, then he says, “I learned two receptacles [of *ahādīth*] from the Messenger of Allāh: I have disseminated one of them; as for the other, if I disseminate it, this throat will be slit”?! Is this not his admission of having concealed the truth despite both verses in the Book of Allāh?!

Had the Prophet (ص) not said to his companions, “Go back to your people and teach them”? as we read on p. 30, Vol. 1, of al-Bukhari’s *Sahīh*.

Had he not also said, “One who conveys is more aware than one who hears”? Al-Bukhari states that the Prophet (ص) urged the deputation of ‘Abd Qays to learn belief and scholarship “... Then convey what you learn to those whom you have left behind,” as you can read on the same page of the previous reference.

Can we help wondering: Why should the throat of a *sahābi* be slit if he quotes the Prophet (ص)?! There must be a secret here which the caliphs do not wish others to know. Here, we would like to briefly say that “the people of the remembrance **أهل الذكر**” was [a phrase in] a Qur’ānic verse revealed to refer to ‘Ali’s succession of the Prophet (ص). Actually, this phrase “**أهل الذكر**” carries a greater meaning than “the people of the remembrance.”

The word **الذكر** referred to in this Qur’ānic phrase means the Holy Qur’ān. So, the more accurate

meaning of it should be: “the people who have with them the knowledge of the Qur’ān.” Is there anyone else in Islamic history besides the Prophet of Islam (ص) who knew the Holy Qur’ān better than ‘Ali (ع)?

Abu Hurayra is not to blame; he knew his own worth and testified against his own soul that Allāh cursed him, and so did those who curse, for having hidden the Prophet's *hadīth*. But the blame is on those who call Abu Hurayra the “narrator of the Sunna” while he himself testifies that he hid it then testifies that he fabricated it and told lies in its regard, then he further goes on to testify that it became confused for him, so he could not tell which one was the statement of the Prophet (ص) and which one was made by others. All of these *ahādīth* and correct admissions are recorded in al-Bukhari's *Sahīh* and in other authentic books of *hadīth*.

How can anyone feel comfortable about a man whose justice was doubted by the Commander of the Faithful ‘Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) who charged him with lying, saying that among the living, nobody told more lies about the Prophet (ص) than Abu Hurayra?!

‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, too, charged him of the same; he beat him and threatened to expel him. ‘Āyisha doubted his integrity and many times called him a liar, and many other *sahāba* cast doubts about his credibility and rejected his contradictory *ahādīth*, so he would once admit his error and would sometimes prattle in Ethiopian language (Amharic). [15](#)

A large number of Muslim scholars refuted his traditions and charged him with lying, fabricating, and throwing himself at Mu’awiyah's dinner tables, at his coffers of gold and silver.

Is it right, then, for Abu Hurayra to become “Islam's narrator” from whom the religion's injunctions are learned?

Finally, there are more “traditions” narrated by Abu Hurayra which apparently came from Ka’b al-Ahbar and are cited in Volume One of this book. They depict the Almighty as having a material form, so He walks, talks, laughs, puts His leg in Hell in order to fill it..., up to the end of a long list of such nonsense in which unfortunately many Muslims of the world still believe and “credit” for which goes to Abu Hurayra...

Our conclusion is that we do not mean in this essay that Muslims should discard all traditions transmitted by Abu Hurayra; rather, they must be careful when coming across such traditions and must not accept them blindly. This rule should not be applied only to Abu Hurayra's *hadīth* but to all *hadīth*.

[1.](#) Actually, it was not Syria but Sham, a word which is not quite common in English. Sham used at the time to include Syria, Palestine, Lebanon and Jordan.

[2.](#) Ibn Abul-Hadid, *Sharh Nahjul-Balāgha* شرح نهج البلاغة, Vol. 16, p. 15

[3.](#) For more information about this man, Abū Hurayra, refer to *Shū’as are the Ahl as-Sunnah*, a book written in Arabic by Dr. Muhammed at-Tijani as-Samawi and translated into English by myself. It is available for sale from Vantage Press, Inc., 516 West 34th Street, New York, N.Y. 10001, or you may order it through the Internet's worldwide web: [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

[3]. Its title in the said web is “Shū’as are the Ahl as-Sunnah.”

4. According to Al-Munjid fil lugha wal a`lam المنجد في اللغة و الأعلام, however, Abu Hurayra's name is recorded as `Abd al-Rahmān ibn Sakhr al-Azdi, and that he died in 59 A.H./678 A.D. The same reference indicates that this man spent “a long time” in the company of the Prophet, which is not true at all; he accompanied the Prophet from time to time for less than three years.

The Publisher of this Munjid, namely Dar al-Mashriq of Beirut, Lebanon, is sponsored by the Catholic Press of Beirut. Undoubtedly, the information about Abu Hurayra in this Arabic-Arabic dictionary must have been furnished by Sunnis who try their best to elevate the status of Abu Hurayra even at the risk of sacrificing historical facts.

5. Al-Bukhari, Sahīh, Vol. 4, p. 175, where the author quotes Abu Hurayra talking about himself in a chapter dealing with the characteristics of Prophethood.

6. I have excerpted some paragraphs for this text from my own translation of Muhammed al-Tijani al-Samawi's book Shi`as are the Ahl al-Sunna (New York: Vantage Press, 1996), pp. 207-215.

7. Refer to the book titled Abu Hurayra by the Egyptian author Mahmoud Abu Rayyah.

8. This is stated in al-Thahbi's book Siyar A`lām al-Nubalā'.

9. Ibn Abul-Hadeed, Sharh Nahjul-Balāgha, Vol. 4, p. 68.

10. Ibn Katheer, Al-Bidaya wal Nihaya, Vol. 8, p. 108.

11. Al-Bukhari, Sahīh, Vol. 7, p. 31.

12. Al-Bukhari, Sahīh, Vol. 6, p. 190, in a chapter dealing with spending on the wife and children.

13. Ibn Abul-Hadeed, Sharh Nahjul-Balāgha, Vol. 4, p. 67.

14. Ibn Sa`d, Tabaqāt, Vol. 2, p. 63.

15. Abu Hurayra was bilingual. He spoke Arabic (his mother tongue) and Amharic. Historically speaking, during Abu Hurayra's time, Amharic was the language of “aristocrats” due to the fact that the Ethiopians had for many years colonized Yemen till they were kicked out of it at the hands of Sayf ibn Thi Yazun (or Yazin), Himyar's king who died in 574 A.D.

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