



**Glimpses of Shi'ism
in the
Musnad of Ibn Hanbal**

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Abstract

Abu ‘Abdilla-h Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Hanbal Shayba-ni- (166-241 AH/780-855 CE) [1] is the founder of one of the four schools of Sunni jurisprudence and his book al-Musnad [2] is considered among the most comprehensive and early collections of hadi-th. It contains some 30,000 sayings attributed to the Prophet and the period of its writing makes it among the foremost of the siha-h al-sittah (six authentic books) of the Sunni sect. One of the characteristics of this work is the wide space given to hadi-th concerning the merits of the Prophet’s Ahl al-Bayt, most of which are confirmed from the viewpoint of Shi’ite Muslims as well. Compared to the other hadi-th compendiums of the Sunnis, the Musnad’s emphasis on this subject is so pronounced that it has attracted the attention of orientalist and other researchers. The writer of this article has attempted to focus on this particular point of the Musnad and its author by selecting some of the hadi-th mentioned in this bulky compendium with a short explanation wherever necessary.

Introduction

The Musnad of Ibn Hanbal is probably the first of the six books of hadi-th considered authentic by Sunni Muslims, since its author died 15 years before the death of the senior-most of the six hadi-th compilers, Muhammad bin Isma-‘i-l al-Bukha-ri- (d. 256 AH), and 62 years before the last of them, Ahmad bin Shu‘ayb al-Nasa-‘i-, passed away (303 AH). Throughout history, Sunni scholars have attached great importance to Ibn Hanbal’s Musnad and eulogized it. Ha-fiz Abu Musa-Madyani- (581 AH), writes:

This book is a great source and a reliable reference work for researchers of hadi-th. The author has selected from the bulky hadi-th literature, a large number of narrations to serve as guidelines and support for the people so that when differences arise they take refuge in them and cite them as authentic. [3]

Shams al-Di-n Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Dhahabi- (748 AH) writes:

This book focuses on the hadi-th of the Prophet. There are very few hadi-th not included (in this collection) whose authenticity has been confirmed...One of the fortunate things about the Musnad is that we find very few hadi-th which are considered inauthentic. [4]

Ibn al-Jazari- (833 AH) is even more ecstatic about Ibn Hanbal's Musnad, and says:

On the face of the earth no better book of hadi-th has been compiled. [5]

Ibn Hajar al-'Asqala-ni- writes in Tajri-d Zawa-'id al-Musnad al-Bazza-z:

If a hadi-th is mentioned in Musnad Ibn Hanbal, other Masa-ni-d are not cited for its sources.

Jala-l al-Di-n al-Suyuti- (849-911 AH) [6] says:

Even the weak hadi-th found in it are near to hasan (fair). [7]

Although these expressions are a clear exaggeration, they nonetheless confirm the importance of this book for the Sunnis. In the light of historical accounts, it was a habit among the Sunnis of the past to recite this book in the presence of scholars of hadi-th, and at times such a recitation would be held in a sacred place. For instance, during the first half of the 9th century AH, Ibn Hanbal's Musnad was recited in the presence of Shams al-Di-n Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Jazari- in the Masjid al-Hara-m of Mecca with the last session ending in the month of Rabi-' al-Awwal 828 AH.[8] It is also reported that during the 12th century AH (18th century CE), a group of pious Sunnis gathered in the Prophet's Mosque in Medina to recite Ibn Hanbal's Musnad in 56 sessions.[9]

However, the most outstanding characteristic of the Musnad is that it contains several eye-catching hadi-th on the merits of the Prophet's Ahl al-Bayt ('a), whereas most of the compilers of the other masa-ni-d, siha-h and sunan, have either ignored these aha-di-th or related only a few of them. Ibn Hanbal got into trouble with the authorities for having related these aha-di-th on the merits of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and his house was searched on the orders of the 'Abba-sid caliph Mutawakkil on suspicion of supporting the Alawid cause.[10]

It is a well known fact that Ahmad bin Shu'ayb al-Nasa-'i-, the last of the six Sunni compilers of the siha-h al-sittah, relied on Ahmad bin Hanbal's narrations for writing his excellent work titled Khasa-'is Ami-r al-Mu'mini-n 'Ali- bin Abi- Ta-lib ('a).[11] In short, the Musnad contains narrations, many of which are considered authentic from the Shi'ite point of view. These are so pronounced when compared to the other Sunni collections of hadi-th that orientalist and researchers have

attempted to investigate the cause, and after drawing a comparison between Ahmad bin Hanbal and his contemporary compilers of the siha-h al-sittah, have come to the conclusion that Muhammad bin Isma-'i-l al-Bukha-ri- and Muslim bin Hajja-j al-Qushayri-, for fear of the 'Abba-sids, left out these aha-di-th but since Ahmad was courageous he showed no fear in relating the aha-di-th on the merits of Imam 'Ali- ('a) and the Ahl al-Bayt ('a).[12]

Ibn Hanbal did not confine the merits of the Prophet's Ahl al-Bayt ('a) to his book, but whenever necessary he opened his mouth to speak about these virtues. Despite the fact that he held all the companions of the Prophet in great esteem and considered those who cursed them to be outside the pale of Islam,[[13]] he strongly defended the superiority of the Prophet's immediate family against their enemies, especially against Mutawakkil who left no stone unturned in his enmity to the Ahl al-Bayt ('a). His son 'Abdulla-h bin Ahmad relates:

Once, when I was sitting with my father, a group of the people of Karkh (a locality of Baghdad) came and started a discussion on the caliphate of Abu- Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthma-n and (Imam) 'Ali- [(a)]. My father raised his head and facing them said:

O people, you have said enough concerning (Imam) 'Ali- [(a)] and the caliphate. Be informed that the caliphate did not embellish (Imam) 'Ali- [(a)] but it was (Imam) 'Ali- [(a)] who embellished the caliphate.

Ibn Abi- al-Hadi-d Mu'tazili- (d. 655 AH), commenting on the above remarks of Ahmad bin Hanbal says:

The meaning of this statement is that the other caliphs adorned themselves with the caliphate and the caliphate covered their flaws, but there was no shortcoming or deficiency in (Imam) 'Ali- [(a)] to be made up by the caliphate.[15]

'Abdulla-h bin Ahmad bin Hanbal also quotes his father as saying:

No narration with genuine isna-d (chain of authority) has been related on the merits of anyone else (of the companions), as in the case of (Imam) 'Ali- [(a)].[16]

He further states:

I asked my father what credence he had concerning the preferential merits of the companions? He replied:

In the matter of caliphate, Abu- Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthma-n are superior to all others.

I asked him what about (Imam) 'Ali- [(a)]? He answered:

O my son! (Imam) 'Ali- bin Abi- Ta-lib [(a)] is from a family concerning whom (whose merits) no one can deliberate.[17]

One of the students of Ibn Hanbal narrates:

We were in the presence of Ahmad bin Hanbal when a person asked:

O Aba- 'Abdilla-h! What is your opinion about the hadi-th which says that (Imam) 'Ali- (a) stated:

“I am the distributor of hell?”

Ibn Hanbal replied:

From what aspect do you doubt its credence? Has it not been related that the Prophet told (Imam) 'Ali- (a):

“None will love you but the faithful believer and none will hate you but the hypocrite?”

We said:

Yes.

He asked:

Where is the place of the faithful believer?

“In paradise”,

we answered.

He asked:

Where is the place of the hypocrite?

“In hell”,

we replied.

He said:

Ali is thus the distributor of hell.[18]

Ibn Hanbal's belief thus bears close resemblance to that of his teacher, Sha-fi'i-, who also recorded the merits and virtues of Imam 'Ali- ('a) and his descendants and considered himself their devotee. When Ibn Hanbal was asked about the battle between Imam 'Ali- ('a) and Mu'a-wiyah bin Abi- Sufya-n, he said regarding them he knew nothing but good,[19] but added that in the field of jurisprudential studies he found Imam 'Ali- ('a) to be linked to the truth. For instance, when in his presence Sha-fi'i- was accused of tashayyu for listing Imam 'Ali-'s ('a) battles with Mu'a-wiyah and the Khawa-rij under the rules of transgressors, he replied that among the companions of the Prophet, Imam 'Ali- ('a) was the first leader who had to deal with the sedition and revolt of opponents.

This reply makes it clear that Sha-fi'i-'s categorizing of the battles between Imam 'Ali- ('a) and Mu'a-wiyah under rules for transgressors, does not expose him to the fault-finding of his critics. In fact, for any fair observor, the verdict between Sha-fi'i- and his critics is that Mu'a-wiyah was a transgressor, as could be further confirmed by the famous saying of the Prophet to his companion 'Ammar bin Ya-sir: "taqtuluka al-fi'ah al-ba-ghiyah" (you will be killed by a party of transgressors).[20] No one can deny that 'Ammar, while fighting on the side of Imam 'Ali- ('a), was killed by the forces of Mu'a-wiyah during one of the battles of the Siffi-n War, and thus in the light of this hadi-th, beyond an iota of doubt, Mu'a-wiyah is a transgressor.[21]

Ibn Hanbal was a contemporary of four of the infallible Imams of the Prophet's Household – Imam Musa- al-Ka-zim ('a), Imam 'Ali- bin Musa- al-Riza- ('a), Imam Muhammad al-Jawa-d ('a) and Imam 'Ali- al-Ha-di- ('a). The author of Rawza-t al-Janna-t relates on the authority of Daylami-'s Irsha-d al-Qulub that Ahmad bin Hanbal was a student of Imam al-Ka-zim ('a).[22] Shaykh al-Ta-'ifah Tusi- considers him among the students of Imam al-Riza- ('a).[23] A contemporary researcher pointing out Ibn Hanbal's links with Ima-mi- scholars, writes that he studied under many of those known to be followers of the school of Imam Ja'far al-Sa-diq ('a), and for this reason he has often been criticised by the enemies of the Shi'ites.[24]

In view of the above facts it could be said that since Ahmad bin Hanbal was under the influence of the Infallible Imams ('a) or their disciples or that he had a spirit of courage and fair-mindedness, he did not hesitate to include in his Musnad many of the hadi-th on the virtues and merits of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a). These hadi-th are so eye-catching that one of the contemporary scholars has collected them in an exclusive work titled Musnad al-Mana-qib.[25]

In this article the writer has selected some hadi-th from the Musnad and highlighted them with brief explanations.

Notes:

[3] Abu Musa- al-Madyani-, Khasa-'is al-Musnad (This treatise has been published at the beginning of Ibn Hanbal's Musnad by Ahmad Muhammad Sha-kir), p. 21.

[4] Al-Jazari-, Muhammad bin Muhammad, al-Mus'ad al-Ahmad fi- Khatm-i Musnad al-Imam Ahmad, p. 39. This treatise has also been included by Sha-kir in his introduction to the Musnad.

[5] Ibid, p. 28.

[6] Al-Suyuti-, Jala-l al-Di-n, Ja-mi' al-Aha-di-th, compiled and arranged by 'Abba-s Ahmad Saqar and Ahmad 'Abd al-Jawa-d, pulished in 21 volumes by Da-r al-Fikr, Beirut, 1994.

[7] Hasan or fair, according to Sunni traditionists is the term used to classify a hadith which is traced to the Prophet or his companions or the second generation of Muslims, on the authority (sanad) of a person of short memory but considered reliable. This type of hadith is also free of sha-dh, which means a tradition of reliable isna-d but contrary to another similarly attested tradition.

[8] Ibn al-Jazari-, al-Mus'ad al-Ahmad fi- khatm Musnad al-Imam Ahmad, pp. 53-55.

[9] Al-Mura-di-, Silk al-Durar, vol. 4, p. 160

[10] On Ibn Hanbal's accusation of support for the Alawids refer to Abu al-Faraj 'Abd al-Rahma-n bin 'Ali- bin al-Jawzi-'s Mana-qib al-Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal with a foreword by 'Adil Nuwayhiz, Da-r al-Afa-q al-Jadi-dah Publishers, Beirut, pp. 359-362, 1973.

[11] This work brought about the death of al-Nasa-'i-. It is said that when on a trip to Damascus he found the people of Syria ignorant of the lofty personality of Imam 'Ali- ('a), he decided to write a book on the merits of the Commander of the Faithful. When al-Nasa-'i- started reading his work from the pulpit of the Mosque of Damascus, the enemies of the Prophet's Household pulled him down and beat him so severely that he succumbed to his injuries in Palestine.

[12] Ahmad Ami-n, Zuha- al-Isla-m, 6th edition, vol, 2, pp. 122-123, published by Maktabah al-Nihzat al-Misriyyah, 1961.

[13] Ibn al-Jawzi-, Mana-qib al-Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, p. 165.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibn Abi- al-Hadi-d, Sharh Nahj al-Bala-ghah, vol. 1, p. 17.

[16] Ibn al-Jawzi-, Mana-qib al-Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, p. 163.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Abu al-Husayn Muhammad bin Abi- Ya'la-, Tabaqat al-Hana-bilah, vol. 1, p. 320, edited by Muhammad Ha-mid al-Faqi-, Cairo, 1952. It is interesting to note that Ibn Hanbal's reply bears close resemblance to the answer given by Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) to Mufazzal bin 'Umar concerning this same hadith. Imam 'Ali- bin Musa- al-Riza- ('a) also gave a similar reply to Ma'mun; refer to 'Alla-mah Majlisi-: Biha-r al-Anwa-r, vol. 39, pp. 193-194, Da-r al-Ihya-' al-Tura-th al-'Arabi-, Beirut. It is essential to know that according to many narrations, Imam 'Ali- ('a) has stated: I am the distributor of heaven and hell", Biha-r al-Anwa-r, vol. 39, p. 199.

[19] Ibn al-Jawzi-, Mana-qib al-Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, p. 164.

[20] Ba-ghi- is used to describe a person who on the basis of a wrong cause rebels against and fights the just leader. In the view of Imami scholars, such a ba-ghi- is a ka-fir. Refer to al-Miqda-d bin 'Abdulla-h al-Suyuri-'s Kanz al-'Irfa-n fi- fiqh al-Qur'a-n, edited by Muhammad Ba-qir Behbudi-, al-Maktabah al-Murtazawiyah, vol. 1, p. 386, Tehran 1384 AH.

[21] For more details refer to Shaykh Muhammad Abu Zuhrah's book Ibn Hanbal: Haya-tuhu wa 'Asruhu, Ara-'uhu wa Fiqhuh, pp. 148-149.

[22] Muhammad Ba-qir al-Musawi- al-Khwansa-ri-, Rawza-t al-Janna-t, vol. 1, p. 187, Maktabah Isma-'i-liya-n, Tehran, 1390 AH.

[23] Al-Tusi-, Muhammad bin al-Hasan, al-Rija-l, p. 367, edited by Muhammad Sa-diq Al-i Bahr al-'Ulam, 1st edition, Najaf, 1381/1961. Also refer to Sayyid Abu al-Qa-sim al-Khu'i-: Mu'jam Rija-l al-Hadith, vol. 2, p. 260, 3rd edition, Da-r al-Zahra-', Beirut, 1403/1983.

[24] Asad Haydar, al-Imam al-Sa-diq wa al-Madha-hib al-Arba'ah, vol. 2, pp. 503-506, 2nd edition, Da-r al-Kita-b al-'Arabi-, Beirut, 1392/1971. The author has listed the names of Ibn Hanbal's teachers, who according to him had Shi'ite tendencies, but a review of Shi'ite narrators in Sayyid al-Khu'i-'s Mu'jam Rija-l al-Hadith shows that no hadith has been related from Ahmad bin Hanbal in authoritative Shi'ite books of hadith.

[25] Usta-di-, Riza-, Musnad al-Riza- ('a) in 40 articles, p. 154, 1st edition, published by Kita-b-Kha-neh Ayatulla-h Mar'ashi- Najafi, Qum, 1413/1371.

Chapter 1 : Admonition to Kinsmen and Nomination of Imam 'Ali- ('a)

Ahmad bin Hanbal says:

Aswad bin 'Amir has related to us from Shari-k from A'mash from Minhal from 'Abdulla-h bin Asadi, that (Imam) 'Ali- ('a) said:

When the a-yah "And warn your relatives of nearest kin" (26:214) was revealed, the Prophet gathered his family around him and treated 30 of them to a meal and then said:

"Who is willing to guarantee my debts and commitments so that he should be with me in paradise and should be my successor from among my family."

A person whom Shurayk did not name, answered:

O Messenger of Allah you are like a sea,[26] who can take charge of this responsibility.

The Prophet repeated his statement to his relatives, and (Imam) 'Ali- [(a)] replied:

"I will undertake this responsibility." [27]

Ahmad Muhammad Sha-kir the annotator of the Musnad has enumerated the isna-d of this hadith as hasan or fair. The same event has been narrated in greater detail in the words of Imam 'Ali- ('a) in hadith no. 1371 of the Musnad (vol. 2, pp. 352-353) and the annotator has termed its isna-d as sahi-h (authoritative).

Notes:

[26] Reference to the great generosity and munificence of the Prophet, Ahmad Sha-kir's explanation on the margins of this hadith.

[27] Ahmad bin Hanbal, al-Musnad, annotated by Ahmad Muhammad Sha-kir in 15 volumes, Da-r al-Ma'a-rif, Cairo, 1949-1958, hadith no. 883.

Chapter 2 : Hadith al-Manzilah

In 9 AH the Prophet prepared to march for the expedition against the Romans, and according to Shaykh Mufi-d and Shaykh Tusi- since he was concerned of the evil intentions of the enemies, he told Imam 'Ali- ('a): "It is not advisable to leave Medina without me or you." He subsequently placed Imam 'Ali- ('a) in charge of Medina before departing for the expedition to Tabuk, and in order to quell the hypocrites' ill-speaking of his cousin, he said the latter's position to him was like that of Aaron to Prophet Moses ('a). This saying is known as Hadi-th al-Manzilah and has been reported by all scholars. Ibn Hanbal has recorded it in the Musnad twenty times through different chains of isna-d on the authority of several companions of the Prophet including Ja-bir bin 'Abdulla-h al-Ansa-ri-, Asma-' bint 'Umays, 'Abdulla-h bin 'Abba-s, Abi- Sa'i-d al-Khidri- and Sa'd bin Abi- Waqqa-s.[28] The last named has related it ten times and one of the versions reads as follows:

Abi- Ahmad Zubayri quotes 'Abdulla-h bin Habi-b bin Abi- Tha-bit from Hamzah bin 'Abdulla-h from his father and from Sa'd (bin Abi- Waqqa-s) who narrating this hadi-th for us, said:

When the Messenger of Allah left Medina for Tabuk he placed (Imam) 'Ali- [(a)] as his vicegerent in Medina. (Imam) 'Ali- [(a)] asked the Prophet:

"Are you making me your vicegerent?"

The Prophet replied:

"Are you not happy that your position to me is that of Aaron to Moses, except that there is no Prophet after me?"[29]

Ahmad Sha-kir has termed the isna-d of this hadi-th as fair.

Notes:

[28] Hamdi- 'Abd al-Maji-d al-Salafi-, Murshid al-Muhta-r, vol. 1, p. 239, 2nd edition, Beirut, 1407/1987.

[29] Al-Musnad, hadith no. 1600 (Ahmad Sha-kir).

Chapter 3 : Abu- Bakr's Dismissal from leading the Hajj and the Entrustment to Imam 'Ali- ('a) to Convey Surah al-Bara-'ah

Ibn Hanbal says of the event which occurred in the month of Dhi- al-Hijjah, 9 AH:

Waki-' has related to us from Isra-'i-l from Abi- Isha-q from Zayd bin Yuthay' from Abu- Bakr:

The Prophet sent him (Abu- Bakr) with Surah al-Bara-'ah to the people of Mecca (to proclaim) that after this year no polytheist will be allowed at the Hajj, neither should the nude circumambulate the Ka'bah, none will enter paradise except the person who has become Muslim, whoever has a pact between him and the Messenger of Allah it is valid until the specified period, and Allah and His Messenger are free from any obligation to the polytheists. After a while, he told (Imam) 'Ali- [(a)], may Allah be pleased with him:

Overtake Abu- Bakr and send him back to me and you proclaim (the Surah to the Meccans).

(Imam) 'Ali- [(a)] acted as per the instructions and when Abu- Bakr returned to the Prophet he cried and said:

O Messenger of Allah, did anything happen?

He replied:

Nothing has happened concerning you except good, but I have been commanded (by Allah) that these (commandments) should either be conveyed by my or by a man who is from me.[30]

Ahmad Sha-kir, the annotator of the Musnad has considered the isna-d of this hadi-th as sahi-h (authoritative) and has said that Zayd bin Yuthay' was a trustworthy person of the first generation of Muslims after the Prophet and the name of his father has also been mentioned as Uthay'.

Habashi- bin Juna-dah al-Suluki- who took part in the Farewell Pilgrimage of the Prophet, has recorded four hadi-th with a similiar text in his own Musnad which confirms Ibn Hanbal's narration of the above hadi-th. Habashi- quotes Abu- Bakr that the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

'Ali- is from me and I am from him. My words will not be conveyed except by me or by 'Ali-.[31]

Notes:

[30] Al-Musnad, hadith no. 4.

[31] Ibn Hanbal's Musnad published in 6 volumes by Matba'ah al-Maymaniyyah, vol. 4, pp. 164-165, 1st edition, Egypt, 1313 AH.

Chapter 4 : The Prophet's Declaration of Imam 'Ali-'s ('a) Vicegerency

Ahmad bin Hanbal says:

Burayrah (Aslami-) has related:

The Prophet (S) dispatched two regiments towards Yemen, one under the command of (Imam) 'Ali- bin Abi- Ta-lib [(a)] and the other led by Kha-lid bin Wali-d with instructions that when the two regiments are with each other they should be under the sole command of (Imam) 'Ali- [(a)], and when they are separate they will remain under different commanders. We the Muslim forces, encountered the Yemeni tribe of Bani- Zayd and fought and defeated these infidels. When their men had died fighting, the families surrendered and from among the captives, (Imam) 'Ali- [(a)] chose a maid for himself.

Burayrah continues:

Kha-lid bin Wali-d sent me to the Prophet with a letter informing him of this matter. I submitted the letter to the Prophet and when he had read it I saw signs of anger appear on his face. I said: O Messenger of Allah (S), you sent me with a man instructing me to obey him, and accordingly I performed whatever duty I was ordered to do.

The Messenger of Allah (S) said:

La- taqa' fi- 'Ali-yyin fa innahu minni- wa ana minhu wa huwa waliyyukum ba'di- wa innahu minni- wa ana minhu wa huwa waliyyukum ba'di- (Don't try to find faults with 'Ali-, he is indeed from me and I am from him, he is your leader after me. He is from me and I am from him, he is your leader after me).[32]

Notes:

[32] Ibn Hanbal's Musnad, vol. 5, 356, Matba'ah al-Maymaniyyah.

Chapter 5 : Hadith al-Thaqalayn

Ahmad bin Hanbal says:

Aswad bin 'Amir has related from Abi- Isra-'i-l, i.e. Isma-'i-l bin Abi- Isha-q Malaie, from 'Atiyah from Abi- Sa'i-d who quotes the Prophet as saying:

"Inni- ta-rikun fi-kum al-thaqalayn, ahaduhuma- akbaru min al-akhar, Kitaballa-h hablun mamdudun min al-sama-'i ila- al-arz wa 'itrati- Ahl-i Bayti-, wa annahuma- lan yaftaraqa- hatta- yarida- 'alayya al-hawz" (I am leaving among you two precious things, one of which is greater than the other. The Book of Allah which is the rope extending from the sky to the earth and my progeny my Ahl al-Bayt. And the two will never part with each other until they return to me at the pool (of kawthar in paradise).[33]

Notes:

[33] Ibid, vol. 3, p. 14. Hadith al-Thaqalayn has been recorded extensively in the Musnad, e.g. vol. 3, pp. 17, 26 & 59; vol. 4, p. 367; vol. 5, pp. 181, 189, 190.

Chapter 6 : Hadith al-Ghadir

Ahmad bin Hanbal says:

'Abdulla-h bin Ahmad relates from 'Ali- bin Haki-m Awdi- from Shari-k from Abi Isha-q from Sa'i-d bin Wahab and Zayd bin Yuyhay' both of whom have narrated:

(Imam) 'Ali- [(a)] complained and addressed the people at Rahbah, saying:

"All those who had heard the Prophet's words at Ghadi-r Khum, stand up."

The narrator says:

Six persons on behalf of Sa'i-d and six persons on behalf of Zayd stood up and bore testimony that they heard the Prophet say on the Day of Ghadi-r:

“A laysa Allahu awla- bi al-mu’mini-n? Qa-lu: Bala-. Qa-la: Allahumma man kuntu mawla-h fa ‘Ali-yyun mawla-h. Allahumma wa-li man wa-la-h wa ‘adi man ‘ada-h (Is not God superior to the faithful?)”

Yes! said the gathering. He said:

O Allah! For whomsoever I am master ‘Ali- is his master. O Allah! befriend his friends and despise his enemies)”. [34]

Ibn Hanbal has recorded the event of Ghadi-r over 30 times in his Musnad through different isna-d or chains of authority and in the words of more than 10 companions of the Prophet.[35] The version of Hadi-th al-Ghadi-r mentioned above is from the notes of Ibn Hanbal’s son ‘Abdulla-h on his father’s work. Ahmad Sha-kir the annotator of the Musnad has described as sahi-h the isna-d of this hadi-th and has said about Sa’i-d bin Wahab Khaywa-ni- that he was among the trustworthy and experienced Muslims of the first generation after the Prophet.[36]

Notes:

[34] Al-Musnad, hadith no. 950 (Ahmad Sha-kir).

[35] Al-Salafi-, Murshid al-Muhta-r, vol. 3, pp. 156-157.

[36] Ahmad Sha-kir’s explanation on Hadith al-Ghadi-r.

Chapter 8 : Three Merits of Imam ‘Ali- (‘a) in One Hadith

Ahmad bin Hanbal says:

Qutaybah bin Sa’i-d has related to us from Ha-tam bin Isma-‘i-l from Bukayr bin Misma-r from ‘Amir bin Sa’d from his father (Sa’d bin Abi- Waqqa-s) who narrated the hadith that when the Prophet on leaving for a campaign asked (Imam) ‘Ali- (‘a) to stay (behind in the city) in his place, the latter said:

“Are you leaving me with the women and children?”

I heard the Prophet reply to him:

“Ya- ‘Ali- ama- tarza- ‘an takuna minni- bi manzilati Ha-run min Musa- illa- annahu la- nabiyya ba’di- (O ‘Ali-! Are you not pleased that your position to me is similar to that of Aaron to Moses, except that prophethood will cease after me?).”

(Sa’d bin Abi- Waqqa-s says) I also heard (the Prophet say) on the Day of Khaybar:

“La-u’tiyanna al-ra-yah rajulan yuhibbu Allaha wa Rasulahu wa yuhibbuhu Allahu wa Rasuluh” (I will give the standard to the man who loves Allah and His Prophet and who is loved (in turn) by Allah and His Prophet).”

All of us raised our necks (to see). He said:

“Call ‘Ali- to me.”

On hearing this instruction (Imam) ‘Ali- [(‘a)] was brought to the Prophet with sore eyes. The Prophet rubbed his eyes with his saliva and gave him the standard and through his hands Allah conquered Khaybar for the Muslims. And when the ayah “Call our sons and your sons, and our women and your women and ourselves and yourselves” (3:61) was revealed, the Messenger of Allah called ‘Ali- (‘a), Fa-timah (‘a), Hasan (‘a) and Husayn (‘a) and said:

“Allahumma ha-ula-‘i ahli- (O Allah these [persons] are my family).”[40]

The annotator of the Musnad considers the isna-d of this hadith as sahi-h (authoritative) and writes:

This hadith has also been recorded through Qutabiyah on the same chain of authority by Muslim and Tirmidhi in their books. At the beginning of this hadith, it is mentioned in the two books (Sahi-h Muslim and Sahi-h Tirmidhi) that Mu’a-wiyah (bin Abi- Sufya-n) ordered Sa'd (bin Abi Waqqas) to curse (Imam) ‘Ali- (‘a), saying:

What prevents you from cursing Abu Turab?

Sa'd replied:

“I remember three things which the Messenger of Allah said to (Imam) ‘Ali- (‘a) and accordingly I will never curse him. If only one of these virtues was for me I would have considered it better than possessing red-haired camels.”

Then he related the three virtues (of Imam ‘Ali-) for Mu’a-wiyah as said before.[41]

Notes:

[40] Al-Musnad, hadith no. 1608 (Ahmad Sha-kir).

[41] Muslim bin Hajja-j, al-Ja-mi' al-Sahi-h, vol. 2, pp. 236-237, Bulaq Press, Cairo, 1290 AH; Muhammad bin 'Isa- Tirmidhi-: al-Sunan (al-Ja-mi' al-Sahi-h), vol. 4, pp. 329-330, printed in India, 1328.

Chapter 9 : The merits of Imam 'Ali- ('a) According to Ibn 'Abbas

Ahmad bin Hanbal says:

Yahya- bin Hamma-d has related to us from Abi- 'Awwa-nah from Abi- Balj from 'Amr bin Maymunah who narrated the hadith, saying:

"I was sitting with ('Abdulla-h) bin 'Abba-s when nine parties approached him and said:

Either get up and come with us or leave this place for us.

Ibn 'Abba-s who at that time had not yet lost his eyesight, answered:

I will come with you.

They conferred with him in slow tones and we did not understand what they spoke about. Ibn 'Abba-s then returned to his place and while shaking his clothes said:

Alas, alas! They are trying to fault with a man who has ten privileges (which he recounted as follows):

A.the Prophet (on the day of the conquest of Khaybar) said: "I will send the one whom God will never turn back distressed; he loves Allah and His Prophet." Then he enquired: "Where is 'Ali-?" They answered that he was at home writhing in pain. He said: "May none of you be afflicted with pain." Then 'Ali- came with his sore eyes in a state that he was almost unable to see a thing or the way. The Prophet blew his breath into his eyes and after shaking the standard thrice, handed it to 'Ali-, who returned victorious from this mission and brought with him (for the Prophet) Safiyyah bint Ibn Akhtab.[42]

B.the Prophet had sent someone (Abu- Bakr) for conveying Surah al-Bara-'ah (to the people of

Mecca). Then he sent (Imam) 'Ali- ('a) after him to take charge of the Surah and said: "This Surah should not be conveyed except by him who is from me and I am from him."

C.He told his near of kin (children of 'Abdul-Muttalib): "Who among you is ready to accept my wila-yah in this world and the hereafter?" They did not reply to him. 'Ali- ('a) who was sitting near him said: "I am your friend in this world and the hereafter." The Prophet said: "You are (indeed) my friend in this world and the hereafter." The Prophet again turned to the gathering and asked: "Who among you will choose my friendship in the world and the hereafter?" They did not reply but 'Ali- said: "O Messenger of Allah! I choose your friendship in this world and hereafter." He said: "You are certainly my friend in this world and the hereafter."

D.He is the first one after Khadi-jah to practice the Muslim faith.

E.The Prophet raised his cloak and covering 'Ali-, Fa-timah, Hasan and Husayn with it, said: "Indeed, Allah desires to remove uncleanness from you O Ahl al-Bayt and keep you pure as pure can be." (Holy Qur'a-n 33:33)

F.(Imam) 'Ali- sold (risked) his life, put on the Prophet's clothes and slept in his place when the infidels (of Mecca) intended to make the Prophet the target of their malevolence. 'Ali- [(a)] was sleeping when Abu- Bakr approached him thinking him to be the Prophet. (Imam) 'Ali- [(a)] told him: "The Prophet has gone towards the well of Maymun, go and join him." Abu- Bakr left and entered the Cave of Thaur with him. The infidels started pelting (Imam) 'Ali- [(a)] with stones (mistaking him to be the Prophet). He flexed himself, writhed in pain but did not remove the cloth covering his head. Only with the break of dawn did he remove aside the cloth covering his head.

G.When the Prophet was leaving Medina with the people for the Tabuk expedition, (Imam) 'Ali- ('a) asked him: "Am I not accompanying you?" The Prophet replied in the negative. (Imam) 'Ali- ('a) sighed and the Prophet told him: "Are you not pleased that your position to me is similar to that of Aaron to Moses, except that you are not a Prophet? Is it not proper for me to leave and you should stay as my vicegerent?"

H.The Prophet told him: "After me you are the Master and Leader of all faithful people."

I. The Prophet said: "Close all doors (of houses) leading into the Mosque (of Medina) except that of the house of 'Ali-." As a result he could enter the mosque in any state, since except for this passage there was no other entrance to his house.

J. The Prophet said: "For whomsoever I am Master, 'Ali- is his Master." [43]

Notes:

[42] The conquest of Khaybar by Imam 'Ali- ('a) is among the widely related hadith. Ibn Hanbal has recorded this several times in his Musnad, e.g. refer to vol. 3, p. 116 and vol. 4, p. 52, al-Maymuniyyah print.

[43] We have mentioned this hadith in brief because of its length. For the full text refer to Musnad, hadith 3062 (Ahmad Sha-kir), and also hadith no. 3063 recorded through different isna-d. Ahmad Sha-kir considers the isna-d of both the hadith as sahi-h.

Chapter 10 : The Canonical Meaning of Ahl al-Bayt ('a)

Ibn Hanbal says:

A. Ahmad has related from Muhammad bin Mas'ab from Awza-'i- from Shadda-d Abi- 'Amma-r who narrates:

I approached Wa-thilah bin Asqa' while a group of people was with him and were speaking about (Imam) 'Ali- [(a)]. When they got up and left, Wa-thilah said:

Do you want me to inform you what I had seen of the Messenger of Allah (S).

I replied in the affirmative. Wathilah said:

I went to Fa-timah [(a)] to enquire about (Imam) 'Ali- [(a)] and she said that he had gone to the Messenger of Allah (S). I waited for him to come and saw the Messenger of Allah (S) approaching with 'Ali-, Hasan and Husayn. The Prophet entered with Hasan and Husayn holding either of his hands, and he went near to 'Ali- and Fa-timah and made them sit on their knees in front of him and Hasan and Husayn. Then he covered them with his cloak and recited this ayah:

“Indeed, Allah desires to remove uncleanness from you O Ahl al-Bayt and keep you pure as pure can be.” (Holy Qur'a-n 33:33)

Then he said:

“Alla-humma ha-ula-'i Ahlu Bayti wa Ahlu Bayti ahaqq (O Allah these the people of my house and the people of my house are [certainly] most meritorious).”[44]

B. Aswad bin 'Amir has related to us from Hama-d bin Salamah from 'Ali- bin Zayd from Anas bin

Ma-lik who narrates that for six months every morning when the Prophet came out (of his house), he would pass by the doorstep of Fa-timah's house and say:

“To prayer O Ahl al-Bayt, Indeed, Allah desires to remove uncleanness from you O Ahl al-Bayt and keep you pure as pure can be.”[45]

The above description reveals that the word Ahl al-Bayt in the context of this ayah is a canonical term established by the Holy Qur'a-n and elucidated by the Prophet who determined the identity of this group. The Prophet by gathering his daughter Fa-timah ('a), her husband Imam 'Ali- ('a) and the couple's two sons Imam Hasan ('a) and Imam Husayn ('a) under his cloak and reciting this ayah which was revealed in praise of this group, made it clear that who actually are the Ahl al-Bayt and who are not included in the concept of this ayah.[46]

An interesting point to note here is that although Ibn Hanbal's narrations of the above aha-di-th have made clear the concept of the Ahl al-Bayt in Ayah al-Tathi-r (Verse of Purity), he has recorded under the section Musnad Ahl al-Bayt several hadith not only from Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn ('a) but from their uncles 'Aqi-l bin Abi- Ta-lib and Ja'far bin Abi- Ta-lib as well as from their cousin 'Abdulla-h bin Ja'far.[47] It is worth noting that the last three persons, despite being the meritorious scions of the Prophet's clan, the Bani- Hashim, are not members of the Ahl al-Bayt in view of the canonical term of the Qur'a-nic ayah. This slip on the part of Ibn Hanbal can be explained by the aha-di-th concerning Imam 'Ali- ('a) which he has included in the so-called group 'Asharah al-Mubashshirah and also mixed up aha-di-th on the merits of Hazrat Fa-timah al-Zahra-' ('a) in the section titled Musnad al-Nisa-'.[48]

Notes:

[44] Musnad, vol. 4, p. 107 (Musnad Wa-thilah bin Asqa'), Matba'ah al-Maymaniyyah; also refer to vol. 6, pp. 292, 298, 304, 323 (Musnad Umm-i Salamah).

[45] Ibid, vol. 3, p. 259 (Musnad Anas bin Ma-lik); also refer to vol. 3, p. 286.

[46] On the identity of the Ahl al-Bayt.

[47] Al-Musnad, vol. 3, pp. 167, 199 (Ahmad Sha-kir)

[48] For hadith on Hazrat Fa-timah al-Zahra-' ('a) refer to al-Musnad, vol. 6, p. 282, Matba'ah al-Maymaniyyah.

Ibn Hanbal says:

A. Ahmad has related from Ibn Numayr from A'mash from 'Adiyy bin Tha-bit from Zirr bin Husbaish from (Imam) 'Ali- [(a)] who narrates:

By Allah! One of the covenants which the Messenger of Allah (S) bound me with is this:

"None will bear enmity towards me but the hypocrite and none will love me but the faithful believer." [49]

Ahmad Sha-kir regards the isna-d of this hadith as sahi-h and says about 'Adiyy bin Tha-bit al-Ansa-ri- al-Kufi-:

He was one of the trustworthy persons of the first generation of Muslims after the Prophet and his being a Shi-'ah does not affect his narrations since he was trustworthy and truthful.

B. 'Abdulla-h bin Ahmad has recorded: Nasr bin 'Ali- Azdi- narrates from 'Ali- bin Ja'far from his brother (Imam) Musa- bin Ja'far [(a)] from his father (Imam) Ja'far bin Muhammad (al-Sadiq) from his father (Muhammad bin 'Ali- al-Ba-qir), and he from (his father Imam) 'Ali- bin al-Husayn [(a)], who from his father (Imam Husayn), and grandfather (Imam 'Ali-), who narrates the hadith that the Messenger of Allah (S) holding the hands of Hasan and Husayn said:

"Man ahabbani- wa ahabba hadhayn wa aba-huma- wa ummahuma- ka-na ma'i- fi- darajati-yawm al-qiya-mah" (Anyone who loves me and these two and their father and mother will be with me and on my station on the Day of Resurrection). [50]

Ahmad Sha-kir considers the isna-d of this hadith as sahi-h. It is also worth noting that when Nasr bin 'Ali- Azdi- narrated this hadith he was subjected to 1000 whiplashes on the orders of the 'Abba-sid caliph al-Mutawakkil. [51]

C. Abu Ahmad (Muhammad bin 'Abdulla-h bin Zubayr Asadi-) has related to us from Sufya-n (Thawri-) from Abi- Jiha-f from Abi Ha-zim from Abi- Hurayrah who quotes a hadith from the Messenger of Allah (S), saying:

"Man ahabbahuma- faqad ahabbani- wa man abghazahuma- faqad abghazani-, ya'ni- Hasanan wa Husaynan" (Anyone who loves them, I mean Hasan and Husayn, indeed loves me, and anyone who hates them, surely hates me). [52]

Ahmad Sha-kir considers the isna-d of this hadith as sahi-h.

Notes:

[49] Al-Musnad, hadith no. 642 (Ahmad Sha-kir). This hadith has been recorded through a slightly different chain of authority (isna-d) on pages 102 & 236 of the same book.

[50] Ibid, hadith no. 576. This hadith has been added by Ibn Hanbal's son 'Abdulla-h.

[51] Ibn Hajar 'Asqala-ni-, Tahdhi-b al-Tahdhi-b, vol. 1, p. 430, printed by Da-'irat al-Ma'a-rif al-'Uthma-niyyah, Haiderabad Deccan (India).

[52] Al-Musnad, hadith no. 7863 (Ahmad Sha-kir); also refer to hadith nos. 6406 & 7392 of the same edition.

Chapter 12 : Imam 'Ali-'s ('a) Comparison with Prophet Jesus ('a)

Ibn Hanbal says:

'Abdulla-h bin Ahmad has related to us from Abu al-Harth Surayj bin Yunus from Abu Hafs Abba-r from Hakam bin 'Abd al-Malik from Harth bin Hasi-rah from Abi- Sa-diq from Rabi-'ah bin Na-jidh from (Imam) 'Ali- ('a), who narrates:

The Messenger of Allah (S) told me:

"Fi-ka mathalun min 'Isa-, abghazathu al-Yahud hatta- bahatu ummahu, wa ahabbathu al-Nasa-ra-hatta- anzaluhu bi al-manzilati allati- laysa bih (You are like Jesus. The Jews hated him so much that they slandered his mother, and the Christians because of their extreme devotion to him placed him in a position which was not his.)"

Then (Imam) 'Ali- ('a) said:

"Yuhliku fiyya rajula-n, muhibbun mufritun yuqarrizuni- bi ma laysa fiyya, wa mubghizun yahmiluhu shan'a-ni- 'ala- an yabhatani- (Two persons [groups] are doomed concerning me; the devoted extremist exalting me to what I am not, and the spiteful hater bearing malice towards me and slandering me).[53]

The annotator of the Musnad considers the isna-d of this hadith as hasan (fair).

Notes:

[53] Al-Musnad, hadith no. 1376 and also hadith no. 1377 with a slight variation in its text and a different chain of authority (Ahmad Sha-kir).

Chapter 14 : Imam 'Ali- ('a) will Fight for Interpretation of the Qur'a-n

Ibn Hanbal says:

Waki-' has related to us from Fitr from Isma-'i-l bin Raja-' from his father from Abi Sa'i-d who narrates that the Messenger of Allah (S) said (addressing his companions):

“Inna minkum man yuqa-tilu 'ala- ta'wi-lih kama- qa-taltu 'ala tanzi-lih” (Who among you will fight for the interpretation [of the Qur'a-n] as I fought on its revelation)?

Abi Sa'i-d says:

At this Abu- Bakr and 'Umar got up but the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

“la-, wa la-kin kha-sif al-na'l (No [not you] but the one who is busy mending the shoe).”

(Abi- Sa'i-d adds):

Wa 'Ali-yun yakhsifu na'lahu (And [Imam] 'Ali- [(a)] was mending his shoes.[56]

It is recorded that during the Battle of Siffi-n the Prophet's loyal companion 'Ammar bin Ya-sir who was on the side of Imam 'Ali- ('a), referred to this famous hadith of the Prophet in favour of Imam 'Ali- ('a) while facing the Syrian army of the rebel Mu'a-wiyah bin Abi- Sufya-n, and recited the following epic verses (rajaz):

Nahnu darabna-kum 'ala- tanzi-lih

Wa al-yawm nadribukum 'ala- ta'wi-lih

(We had fought you on the revelation [of the Qur'a-n] and today we are fighting you on its correct interpretation).[57]

Notes:

[56] Al-Musnad, Matba'ah al-Maymaniyyah, vol. 3, pp. 31 & 33; also refer to p. 82 of the same volume where the hadith says Imam 'Ali- ('a) was mending the Prophet's shoes.

[57] Ta-ha- Husayn, al-Fitnah al-Kubra- ('Ali- and Prophethood), vol. 2, p. 77, 6th edition, Da-r al-Ma'a-rif, Egypt, 1969.

Chapter 16 : Prophecy of the Martyrdom of Imam Husayn ('a)

Ibn Hanbal says:

Muhammad bin 'Ubayd has related to us from Sharhabi-l bin Madrak from 'Abdulla-h bin Nujayy from his father who narrates that he was marching with (Imam) 'Ali- [(a)] towards Siffi-n and when we reached Ninevah, (Imam) 'Ali- [(a)] cried in a loud voice:

“O Aba- 'Abdilla-h! Be patient. O Aba- 'Abdilla-h! Be patient beside the River Euphrates.”

I asked him:

For what?

He said:

“Once when I went to the Prophet I saw tears in his eyes and asked him:

O Messenger of Allah (S) who has made you upset? Why are your eyes moist with tears?

He said:

Bal qa-ma min 'indi- Jibra'i-lu qabl, fahaddathani- anna al-Husayn yuqtulu bishatt al-Fura-t. Qa-la: Hal laka an ushimaka min turbatih? Qa-la: Qultu: Na'am. Famadda yadahu faqabaza qabzatan min tura-bin fa a'ta-ni-ha-. falam amliku 'ayni- an fa-zata- (A while ago [the Archangel] Gabriel left. He has informed me that indeed Husayn will be killed beside the River Euphrates.

Then he [the Prophet] said:

Do you like to smell part of his soil [where Imam Husayn ('a) will be killed].

I said:

Yes.

He stretched his hand and taking a fistful of soil gave it to me. As a result, tears started rolling down uncontrollably from my eyes.)”[61]

The annotator of the Musnad regards the isna-d of this hadith as sahi-h and writes that Nujayy is not the only one to narrate this from Imam ‘Ali- (‘a).

Notes:

[61] Ibid, hadith no. 6480 (Ahmad Sha-kir).

Chapter 17 : The Number of the Prophet’s Righteous Successors

Ibn Hanbal says:

A. Hasan bin Musa- has related to us from Hamma-d bin Zayd from Muja-lid from Sha’bi- from Masruq who says that in Kufa ‘Abdulla-h bin Mas’ud was giving us lessons from the Holy Qur’a-n when a person asked:

O Aba- ‘Abd al-Rahma-n! Did you not ask the Prophet how many caliphs would this ummah have?

‘Abdulla-h bin Mas’ud said:

Since my coming to Iraq no one has posed me this question so far except you.

Then he added:

Yes! We did ask the Messenger of Allah (S) about this matter and he said:

“Ithna--‘Ashara ka ‘iddati nuqaba-’ Bani- Isra-’i-l (Twelve, equal to the number of the Chieftans of Bani- Isra-’i-l).”[62]

The isna-d of this hadith are sahi-h according to Ahmad Sha-kir.

Ibn Hanbal says:

B. Sufya-n bin 'Uyaynah has related to us from 'Abd al-Malik bin 'Umayr from Ja-bir bin Samrah al-Suwa-'i- who narrates that he heard the Messenger of Allah (S) say:

“La- yaza-l ha-dha al-amr ma-ziyan hatta- yaqum ithna--‘ashara ami-ran (This affair [religion] will continue until twelve leaders [Ami-r] will rise).”

Then he mentioned something which I did not hear, so I asked my father (who was sitting beside me), who said:

“All of whom will be from the Quraysh.”[63]

This hadith has been recorded over 40 times in Ibn Hanbal’s Musnad[64] and in some versions the word Khali-fah is found instead of Amir.[65] The version which I have selected here has the shortest chain of authority and reaches the Prophet through the medium of three narrators. Sunni scholars and exegetes of hadith have rather been perplexed and come up with unconvincing comments in their explanation of this particular hadith of the Prophet. They have been unable to reconcile with their beliefs the meaning of the figure of “twelve caliphs” as used by the Prophet. As a result we find conflicting and self-contradictory answers in their explanations.[66]

Notes:

[62] Ibid, hadith no. 3781. Refer to Holy Qur’a-n (5:12) regarding the Nuqaba-’ (Chieftans) of Bani-Isra-’i-l.

[63] Al-Musnad, vol. 5, p. 101. Also refer to al-Safa-ri-ni-, Shams al-Di-n Muhammad: Sharh Thula-thiyya-t Ahmad, vol. 1, p. 539, first edition, 1380, Damascus.

[64] Al-Salafi-, Murshad al-Muhta-r, vol. 3, p. 380.

[65] E.g. refer to Musnad, al-Maymaniyyah print.

[66] For more information on the views of the Sunnis refer to al-Safa-ri-ni-: Sharh Thula-thiyya-t Ahmad, vol. 2, pp. 540-566. Also see al-’Askari-, Sayyid Murtaza-: Naqsh-e A’immah dar Ihya-’-e Di-n, vol. 11, pp. 74-84.

Ibn Hanbal says:

A. Hajja-j and Abu Na'i-m have related from Fitr from Qa-sim bin Abi- Bazzah from Abi- al-Tufayl from (Imam) 'Ali- [(a)], who quoted the Messenger of Allah (S) as saying:

Law lam yabqa mina al-dunya- illa- yawmun laba'atha Allahu rajulan minna- yamla'uha- 'adlan kama- muli'at jawran (If only a day were to remain for the end of the world, Allah will raise a man from my progeny who will fill it [the earth] with justice as it was filled with oppression)"[67]

Ibn Hanbal says:

B. Fazl bin Dukayn has related to us from Ya-si-n al-'ljli- from Ibra-hi-m bin Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah from his father (Imam) 'Ali- [(a)], who quoted the Messenger of Allah (S) as saying:

"al-Mahdi- minna- Ahla al-Bayt yuslihu Allahu fi- laylatin (The Mahdi- is from us the Ahl al-Bayt, Allah will set right his affairs in [the course of] one night)."[68]

Ibn Hanbal says:

C. Sufya-n bin 'Uyaynah has related to us from 'Asim (bin Abi- al-Najud) from Zirr (bin Hubaysh) from 'Abdulla-h (bin Mas'ud) who narrates from the Messenger of Allah (S):

"La- taqum al-sa-'ah hatta- yalia rajulan min Ahli Bayti- yuwa-tiu ismuhu ismi- (The Day of Resurrection will not come until a man who is from my Ahl Bayt and whose name is my name, will rise)."[69]

Ahmad Sha-kir has termed the isna-d of all three hadith as sahi-h, and has criticised the North African scholar 'Abd al-Rahma-n bin Muhammad bin Khaldun (1332-1406) for rejecting the reports concerning the Mahdi- (a). It is worth noting that Ibn Khaldun in his famous Muqaddimah or Introduction to History has embarked on a lengthy discussion on the aha-di-th concerning the Mahdi- (a), and writes:

It has been well known (and generally accepted) by all Muslims in every epoch, that at the end of time a man from the Ahl al-Bayt (of the Prophet) will without fail make his appearance, one who will strengthen the religion and make justice triumph. The Muslims will follow him, and he will gain domination over the Muslim realm. He will be called the Mahdi-...Evidence for this matter has been found in the aha-di-th that religious leaders have published. They have been discussed by those who disapprove of (the matter) and have often been refuted by means of certain (other)

akhba-r.[70]

Ibn Khaldun in his discussion on the aha-di-th concerning the Mahdi- ('a) says that those who reject the coming of the Mahdi- have criticised these reports, which he acknowledges have been narrated on the authority of some of the prominent companions of the Prophet and have been recorded in all authoritative Sunni books, whose names he has mentioned.

He writes:

Hadith scholars acknowledge negative criticism to have precedence over positive criticism. If we find that some person in the chain of transmitters is accused of negligence, poor memory, weakness or poor judgement, it affects and weakens the soundness of the hadith. It should not be said that the same faults often affect the persons (mentioned as authorities) in the two Sahi-hs (Bukha-ri- and Muslim). The general consensus of hadith transmitters confirms the soundness of the contents (of the two Sahi-hs) as presented by Bukha-ri- and Muslim. The uninterrupted general consensus in Islam also confirms the acceptability of (the two Sahi-hs) and the necessity of acting in accordance with their contents. General consensus is the best protection and defence. Works other than the two Sahi-hs are not on the same level with them in this respect...[71]

He goes on to quote, one after another, several of the aha-di-th from the Prophet concerning the Mahdi- ('a), along with the chain of transmitters as found in the original sources, and tries to find fault with them in a manner which is clearly artificial. One of the aha-di-th which he criticises is the narration that Ibn Hanbal has recorded on the authority of 'Abdulla-h bin Mas'ud. Ibn Khaldun then directs his attack at 'Asim bin Abi- al-Najud even after acknowledging him to be "one of the seven authoritative Qur'a-n readers." [72] To deflect criticism from his assumption, he writes:

Were someone to argue that (Bukha-ri- and Muslim) published traditions of his, (we should reply that) they published them when there were also other (authorities for the same tradition), and that they did not use him as their basic authority.[73]

The annotator of the Musnad, Ahmad Muhammad Sha-kir, finds the criticism of Ibn Khaldun unconvincing and rejecting it, writes:

Ibn Khaldun attempted something for which he was not qualified and ventured into an arena which was not his domain. His preoccupation with state and political affairs and his serving of kings and nobles dominated his thought and speech, and as a result induced him to imagine that the report of the uprising and revolution of the Mahdi- [('a)], was a (purely) Shi'ite belief. However, it is worth noting that first Ibn Khaldun has not properly understood the statements of hadith compilers that negative criticism (jarh) takes precedence over positive criticism (ta'di-l). If he had properly understood their statements he would not have commented in this manner. It is

also possible that he understood their purpose but since his thoughts were profoundly influenced by the political views of his times, he has tried to weaken the aha-di-th concerning the Mahdi- ('a).

Second, 'Asim bin Abi- al-Najud is considered one of the reputed reciters of the Holy Qur'a-n and is also regarded as a trustworthy transmitter of hadith. Maybe he has made mistakes in some aha-di-th but these are not to the extent that his narration should be rejected. The strongest criticism against him is that he was not of good memory. But on the basis of such a single criticism, could we ignore him and consider this as a means of rejecting a report whose authenticity has been confirmed through various other chains and narrated in the words of several companions (of the Prophet)? The soundness of this report is to the extent that no one has any doubts about it, because among the transmitters could be seen just, truthful and candid persons. Moreover, since this hadith has been narrated by other transmitters as well, the likelihood of a slip concerning someone whose memory being sharp is somewhat under doubt, is completely eliminated.[74]

These were some of the examples of the large number of hadith concerning the virtues of the Prophet's Ahl al-Bayt ('a) found in the Musnad of Ahmad bin Hanbal. The writer of the article had to limit his selection in view of the space. It is hoped that this article would serve the purpose of bridging the gap between the Muslims and promote better understanding of each other.

Notes:

[67] Al-Musnad, hadith no. 773.

[68] Ibid, hadith no. 645.

[69] Ibid, hadith no. 3571. There are several other hadith in the Musnad concerning the uprising of the Mahdi- ('a), e.g. hadith nos. 3572, 3573, 4098, 4279 etc. Most of the isna-d of these ahadith have been confirmed as sahi-h.

[70] Ibn Khaldun, al-Muqaddimah, translated by Franz Rosenthal, vol. 2, pp. 156-157, published by Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1986.

[71] Ibid, vol. 2, p. 158.

[72] Ibid, vol. 2, p. 159.

[73] Ibid, vol. 2, p. 162.

[74] Sha-kir, Sharh al-Musnad, vol. 5, pp. 197-198.