

The Authenticity of Salat al-Tasbih

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Summary:

The hadith is authentic. The majority of Muhaddithin have declared it to be either authentic (*sahih*) or sound (*hasan*), including, but not limited to: Imams Abu Dawud, ibn Abu Dawud, ibn al-Sakin, ibn Mandah, al-Ajurri, al-Hakim, Abu Musa al-Madini, al-Daylami, al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, al-Baghawi, al-Munziri, ibn al-Salah, al-Nawawi, al-Sam'ani, Taqi al-Din al-Subki, al-Bulqini, ibn Nasir al-Din al-Dimishqi, ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani al-Suyuti, al-Nimawi, al-Binnori, and others ﷺ.

Introduction

The *Salat al-Tasbih* prayer is one that is well-known throughout the Muslim world due to its unique method, as prescribed by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. However, there remains confusion amongst some communities with respect to the authenticity of its attribution to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. This short paper will delve into the question of its authenticity, concisely displaying the sources of the Hadith, discussing the narrators within the chain of narration, while demonstrating the statements of the Muhaddithin regarding it.

Sources of the Narration:

The Hadith of *Salat al-Tasbih* has been transmitted via numerous sources. Khatib Baghdadi ﷺ compiled a treatise on the subject entitled, *Dhikr Salat al-Tasbih*, wherein he compiles 29 different chains of narration for the Hadith of *Salat al-Tasbih*. However due to the space limitations of this article, this discussion will only focus on one specific chain which has been narrated via 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas ﷺ. Imam Muslim ﷺ describes this chain of narration as the most authentic chain on the subject.¹

The chain of narration under discussion has been narrated by Imam Bukhari ﷺ in his *al-Qira'ah Khalf al-Imam* (Hadith #160), Imam Abu Dawud ﷺ in his *Sunan* (Hadith #1297), Imam Ibn Majah ﷺ in his *Sunan* (Hadith #1387), and Imam ibn Khuzaimah ﷺ in his *Sahih* (Hadith #1216).

Imam Bukhari narrates: “Bishr ibn al-Hakam narrated to us that **Musa ibn Abdul Aziz** narrated to us that **al-Hakam ibn Aban** narrated to us that 'Ikrimah narrated to me on the authority of ibn 'Abbas that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to al-Abbas ibn Abdul Muttalib: ...” and Imam Bukhari does not narrate the full narration but suffices by saying “then he mentioned the *Salat al-Tasbih*.”

¹ *Al-Irshad Fi Ma'rifati 'Ulama al-Hadith* 1:327

Imam Abu Dawud narrates: “Abdur Rahman ibn Bishr ibn al-Hakam al-Naisapuri narrated to us that **Musa ibn Abdul Aziz** narrated to us that **al-Hakam ibn Aban** narrated to us on the authority of ‘Ikrimah who narrated on the authority of ibn ‘Abbas that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to al-‘Abbas ibn Abdul Muttalib: ...” and he quotes the entire Hadith describing the *Salat al-Tasbih*. Imams ibn Majah and ibn Khuzaimah narrate the Hadith through the same chain as Imam Abu Dawud.

Narrators in the Chain:

Imam Bukhari’s shaykh in his chain is Bishr ibn al-Hakam (d. 238), whereas the shaykh of Imams Abu Dawud, Ibn Majah, and ibn Khuzaimah is ‘Abdur Rahman ibn Bishr ibn al-Hakam (d. 262). Both of them (Bishr and ‘Abdur Rahman) narrate from Musa ibn ‘Abdul Aziz, who narrates from al-Hakam ibn Aban, who narrates from ‘Ikrimah, who narrates from ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas, the companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

Bishr ibn al-Hakam ibn al-Habib al-Naisapuri: Imams Bukhari and Muslim narrate from him in their *Sahih* collections and was declared reliable (*thiqah*) by Imams ibn Abdul Wahhab al-Farra’ and Ibn Hibban.² Thus, he is a reliable narrator.

Abdur Rahman ibn Bishr ibn al-Hakam al-Naisapuri: He was the son of the same Bishr ibn al-Hakam that Imams Bukhari and Muslim narrate from, and it so happens that they both (Imams Bukhari and Muslim) narrate from ‘Abdur Rahman as well. Imam Salih ibn Muhammad al-Asadi said he was truthful (*saduq*) and Imam Hakim has described him as “the scholar who was the son of the scholar who was the son of the scholar.”³ Imam ibn Hibban includes him in his compendium of reliable narrators.⁴ Hafidh ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani describes him as a reliable narrator (*thiqah*).⁵

Musa ibn ‘Abdul Aziz: Imam Yahya ibn Ma’in said, “I see no issue with him,”⁶ which is an expression of praise in Imam Yahya ibn Ma’in’s terminology (*tawthiq*).⁷ Imam Nasai also approved of him.⁸ Imam ibn Hibban has included him in his compendium of reliable narrators.⁹ Claims of his being an unknown (*majhul*) narrator are incorrect as he has been praised by the likes of Imams Yahya ibn Ma’in and Nasai, as their praises demonstrate that they were familiar with him.¹⁰ He passed away in the year 175.

² *Tahdhib al-Kamal* 1:350; *Tartib Thiqat ibn Hibban* 1:41-42.

³ *Tahdhib al-Kamal* 4:375.

⁴ *Tartib Thiqat ibn Hibban* 11:219.

⁵ *Taqrib al-Tahdhib* 3810.

⁶ *Kitab al-‘Ilal wa Ma’rifah al-Rijal* #3919, *al-Jarh wa al-Ta’dil*, 8:174.

⁷ See: ‘*Ulum al-Hadith* (famously known as *Muqaddimah ibn al-Salah*), p. 124 along with *al-Raf’ Wa al-Takmil Fi al-Jarh wa al-Ta’dil* p. 221-223.

⁸ *Tahdhib al-Kamal* 7:268.

⁹ *Tartib Thiqat ibn Hibban* 9:232.

¹⁰ See: *al-Khisal al-Mukaffirah Li al-Dhunub al-Muqaddimah wa al-Muakhirah* by Hafidh ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani, p. 28, wherein he refutes the claim of Musa ibn ‘Abdul Aziz being an unknown narrator, and he declares the Hadith *Hasan* (sound in authenticity).

al-Hakam ibn Aban: Imam Yahya ibn Ma'in declared him reliable (*thiqah*),¹¹ as did Imams Nasai¹² and 'Ijli.¹³ Imam Bukhari narrates from his teacher, 'Ali ibn al-Madini, who narrates from his teacher, Sufyan ibn 'Uyainah, who said that he asked Yusuf ibn Ya'qub about al-Hakam ibn Aban, to which he responded: "He is our leader."¹⁴ Imam Abu Zur'ah al-Razi declared him righteous (*salih*)¹⁵, which is an expression of praise.¹⁶ Hafiz ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani says he is truthful (*saduq*) in *al-Khisal al-Mukaffirah Li al-Dhunub al-Muqaddimah wa al-Muakhirah*.¹⁷ He passed away in the year 154.

'Ikrimah: Imams Bukhari and Muslim narrate from him in their *Sahih* collections. Imams Ahmad, Yahya ibn Ma'in, 'Ali ibn al-Madini, Bukhari, 'Ijli, Abu Hatim al-Razi have all praised him. He passed away in the year 104.¹⁸

'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas ؓ: He was a companion of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and the companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ are all righteous, as is clear from the Qur'an, Sunnah, and consensus of the Ummah. He passed away in the year 68.

As displayed above, all the narrators of this chain are reliable, and the chain is fully connected (i.e. without gaps). It is due to this reason that numerous Hadith scholars throughout history have authenticated the Hadith.

The Statements of the Scholars Regarding the Authenticity of this Hadith:

Imam Muslim ؓ said, "This hadith has not been narrated with a chain better than this one."¹⁹

Imam Abu Dawud ؓ said, "There is no authentic Hadith regarding Salat al-Tasbih other than this one."²⁰

Hafidh al-Mundhiri ؓ said, "This Hadith has been narrated via numerous chains and from a group of the companions, and the most authentic of them is this Hadith of 'Ikrimah, and a group of scholars have authenticated it, including: Hafidh Abu Bakr al-Ajurri, our shaikh Abu Muhammad Abdur Rahim al-Misri, and our shaikh Hafidh Abu al-Hasan al-Maqdisi, may Allah have mercy on them."²¹

¹¹ *Kitab al-'Ilal wa Ma'rifah al-Rijal* #3916, *al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dil* 2:127.

¹² *Tahdhib al-Kamal* 2:239.

¹³ *Tarikh al-Thiqat* #312.

¹⁴ *al-Tarikh al-Kabir* 2:336-337, #2662.

¹⁵ *al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dil* 2:127.

¹⁶ *Tadrib al-Rawi* 4:191.

¹⁷ pg. 28

¹⁸ *Tahzib al-Kamal* v. 5, pgs. 209 - 216

¹⁹ *al-Irshad fi Ma'rifah 'Ulama al-Hadith* 1:327

²⁰ See Hafidh Mundhiri's notes under Hadith #1000 in *al-Tarhib wa al-Tarhib*

²¹ Ibid

Imam al-Nawawi رحمہ اللہ said, “As for the well-known Salat al-Tasbih, it has been named as such due to the abundance of glorification that occurs within it as opposed to the norm in other (prayers). In regards to it, a *Hasan* Hadith has come in the books of al-Tirmidhi and others...”²² He also declares Salat al-Tasbih as being an action that is *mustahab* and deserving of being part of one’s regular practice in *al-Adhkar*.

Hafiz al-Suyooti رحمہ اللہ says in *Al-Lalial Masnu’ah*, “Hafiz Salahuddin al-‘Alai says in his answers regarding the Ahadith in *al-Masabih* that were criticized by al-Siraj al-Qazwini: The Hadith on Salat al-Tasbih is either *Sahih* or *Hasan*, without any doubt.’ He also narrates Hafiz al-Bulqini as having declared the narration *Hasan* as well.”²³

Hafiz ibn Hajar رحمہ اللہ says in *al-Khisal al-Mukaffirah Li al-Dhunub al-Muqaddimah wal-Muakhirah*, “There is no issue with the narrators of the chain. Imam Bukhari has used ‘Ikrimah as a proof, and Hakam is truthful. As for Musa ibn ‘Abdul Aziz, Yahya ibn Ma’een said regarding him, ‘I don’t see any issue with him.’ Al-Nasai said something similar. Ibn al-Madini said, ‘This chain is upon the condition of *Hasan*, as it contains many supporting evidences that strengthen it.”²⁴ Hafiz ibn Hajar has also declared the narration to be *Hasan* in his lectures on *al-Adhkar*, entitled, *Nataij al-Afkar*.

‘Allamah al-Nimawi رحمہ اللہ says, “Its chain is *Hasan*.” He includes a lengthy annotation wherein he discusses the authenticity in detail wherein he lists a number of scholars who authenticated it, including Imams Ibn Mandah, al-Ajurri, al-Khatib, Abu Sa’d al-Sam’ani, Abu Musa al-Madini, Abu al-Hasan ibn al-Mufaddal, al-Munziri, ibn al-Salah, al-Nawawi, al-Subki, and others. He concludes, “Rather, it would not be farfetched to say that it is *Sahih Li Ghayrihi*.”²⁵ Shaykh Nur al-Din ‘Itr رحمہ اللہ also comes to the same conclusion (i.e. *Sahih Li Ghayrihi*) in his book, *Hady al-Nabi Fi al-Salawat al-Khaas*.²⁶

‘Muhaddith al-‘Asr, ‘Allamah Yusuf al-Binnori رحمہ اللہ has a lengthy discussion on the Hadith in *Ma’arif al-Sunan*, wherein he also concurs with those who have declared the Hadith to be authenticated, as mentioned previously.²⁷

There is much more that can be said to further support the authenticity of Salat al-Tasbih, but due to the space limitations and constraints for the article, this will be sufficient. May Allah allow us to engage in that which pleases Him.

²² *Tahdhib al-Asma wa al-Lughat* p. 627, under سبح

²³ *Al-Laali al-Masnu’ah Fi al-Ahadith al-Mashurah* v. 2, pgs. 34-38.

²⁴ *al-Khisal al-Mukaffirah Li al-Dhunub al-Muqaddimah wal-Muakhirah*, pg. 38

²⁵ *Athar al-Sunan and al-Ta’leeq al-Hasan* for Hadith #763

²⁶ pgs. 224 -234

²⁷ v. 4, pgs. 282-285