

## The Authenticity of Salat al-Tasbih

By Maulana Muaz Billoo

### Summary:

*Salat al-Tasbih* is a practice which is rigorously established from the Sunnah. The majority of Muhaddithin have declared the Hadith wherein *Salat al-Tasbih* is discussed 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.<sup>1</sup>

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*.”

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<sup>1</sup> *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.<sup>2</sup> 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.”<sup>3</sup> Imam ibn Hibban includes him in his compendium of reliable narrators.<sup>4</sup> Hafidh ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani describes him as a reliable narrator (*thiqah*).<sup>5</sup>

**Musa ibn ‘Abdul Aziz:** Imam Yahya ibn Ma’in said, “I see no issue with him,”<sup>6</sup> which is an expression of praise in Imam Yahya ibn Ma’in’s terminology (*tawthiq*).<sup>7</sup> Imam Nasai also approved of him.<sup>8</sup> Imam ibn Hibban has included him in his compendium of reliable narrators.<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup> He passed away in the year 175.

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

<sup>3</sup> *Tahdhib al-Kamal* 4:375.

<sup>4</sup> *Tartib Thiqat ibn Hibban* 11:219.

<sup>5</sup> *Taqrib al-Tahdhib* 3810.

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

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> *Tahdhib al-Kamal* 7:268.

<sup>9</sup> *Tartib Thiqat ibn Hibban* 9:232.

<sup>10</sup> 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*),<sup>11</sup> as did Imams Nasai<sup>12</sup> and 'Ijli.<sup>13</sup> 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."<sup>14</sup> Imam Abu Zur'ah al-Razi declared him righteous (*salih*)<sup>15</sup>, which is an expression of praise.<sup>16</sup> Hafiz ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani says he is truthful (*saduq*) in *al-Khisal al-Mukaffirah Li al-Dhunub al-Muqaddimah wa al-Muakhirah*.<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup>

**'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 Muhaddithin:

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

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

Hafiz ibn Shahin says that he heard Sulaiman ibn Abu Dawud ؓ say, "The most authentic Hadith regarding Salat al-Tasbih is the (aforementioned) Hadith of 'Abbas ؓ."<sup>21</sup>

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

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

<sup>12</sup> *Tahdhib al-Kamal* 2:239.

<sup>13</sup> *Tarikh al-Thiqat* #312.

<sup>14</sup> *al-Tarikh al-Kabir* 2:336-337, #2662.

<sup>15</sup> *al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dil* 2:127.

<sup>16</sup> *Tadrib al-Rawi* 4:191.

<sup>17</sup> pg. 28

<sup>18</sup> *Tahdhib al-Kamal* 5:209-216

<sup>19</sup> *al-Irshad fi Ma'rifah 'Ulama al-Hadith* 1:327

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

<sup>21</sup> *Tarikh Asma al-Thiqat* of ibn Shahin #1362; also see: *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib* 4:81

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.”<sup>22</sup>

Imam al-Nawawi رحمه الله 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...”<sup>23</sup> 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 ibn Hajar رحمه الله 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.”<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, Hafiz ibn Hajar states in his answers regarding the Ahadith that have been disputed in *Mishkat al-Masabih*,

“The truth is that it reaches the rank of *Hasan* due to its numerous chains of transmission...”<sup>25</sup>

Hafiz al-Suyuti رحمه الله 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.”<sup>26</sup>

Hafiz Salahuddin al-‘Alai رحمه الله says,

“(The Hadith of *Salat al-Tasbih*) is either *Hasan Sahih*. It has been narrated by Abu Dawud and Ibn Majah with a strong chain going to ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas رضي الله عنه. The narrator from him is ‘Ikrimah, whom Imam Bukhari cites as a proof (in his *Sahih*). The narrator from him is al-Hakam ibn Aban, who has been declared reliable by Yahya ibn Ma’een, Ahmad al-‘Ijli and others. The narrator from him is Musa ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz,

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> *Tahdhib al-Asma wa al-Lughat* p. 627, under سج

<sup>24</sup> *al-Khisal al-Mukaffirah Li al-Dhunub al-Muqaddimah wal-Muakhirah*, pg. 38

<sup>25</sup> See: *Sharh al-Tibi ‘ala al-Mishkat* v. 1, p. 349 as per the edition published in 1997 by Maktabah Nazzar Mustafa al-Baz

<sup>26</sup> *Al-Laali al-Masnu’ah Fi al-Ahadith al-Mawdu’ah* 2:34-38

regarding which Yahya ibn Ma'een and al-Nasai have said, 'There is no issue with him.' Ibn Khuzaimah also narrates it in his *Sahih*.

Abu Hamid al-Sharqi said, 'I heard Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj – and he wrote this Hadith with me via 'Abdur Rahman ibn Bishr ibn al-Hakam from Musa ibn 'Abd al-Aziz – saying, 'This hadith has not been narrated with a chain better than this one.'

Imam Abu Bakr ibn Abu Dawud al-Sijistani said, 'I heard my father saying, 'There is no *Sahih* hadith regarding Salat al-Tasbih other than this one,' meaning, the Hadith of 'Ikrimah from 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas رضي الله عنه.

Al-Hakim also narrates the Hadith in his *Mustadrak 'Ala al-Sahihayn*, authenticating it. He also narrates it via Haywah ibn Shuraih via Yazid ibn Abu Habib via Nafi' via ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه that the Prophet ﷺ taught this Salah to Ja'far ibn Abu Talib h. Al-Hakim then said, 'This is an authentic chain; it contains no blemish.'

These authentications stand at odds with Ibn al-Jawzi having including the Hadith in his *al-Mawdu'at*. This shows that he erred in doing so, as he brings three chains for it, two of which each contain a *da'eef* narrator whilst the third one is the aforementioned chain of Ibn 'Abbas h. He argues that Abu Musa is an unknown (*majhul*) narrator, but this is not the case as a group of reliable narrators have narrated from him, and as discussed previously, Ibn Ma'een and al-Nasai said that there is no issue with him. Therefore, he is undoubtedly **not** unknown. Furthermore, even if he is unknown, and the other two narrations are *da'eef*, this does not necessitate that the Hadith is a fabrication (as argued by ibn al-Jawzi), especially considering those who have authenticated previously. There are other chains for the Hadith as well.

As for what he (ibn al-Jawzi) has mentioned regarding Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal criticizing the Hadith, then bear in mind that al-Khallal has narrated in *Kitab al-'Ilal* that 'Ali ibn Sa'eed al-Nasai said, 'I asked Ahmad ibn Hanbal regarding *Salat al-Tasbih* to which he responded, 'I am unaware of anything authentic regarding it.' I responded, 'what about the Hadith of 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Aas?' He replied, 'Everyone ultimately narrates it via 'Amr ibn Malik al-Nukri<sup>27</sup>.' I said, 'Mustamir ibn al-Rayyan<sup>28</sup> also narrates it.' He replied, 'Who told you?' I said, 'Muslim ibn Ibrahim,' to which he said, 'Muslim is a reliable shaikh,' as if he was impressed by this.'

This further strengthens the Hadith as this serves a chain other than what has been mentioned previously. Furthermore, al-Tirmidhi narrates from Imam Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak that which further strengthens the Hadith."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> **Note:** 'Amr ibn Malik al-Nukri; Imam ibn Hibban has an entry on him in his compendium of reliable narrators and says, "His Ahadith with the exception of those which are narrated via his son from him," see: *Tartib Thiqaat ibn Hibban* 7:210.

<sup>28</sup> Mustamir ibn al-Rayyan was a reliable narrator. See: *Taqrib al-Tahdhib*

<sup>29</sup> *Majmu'ah Rasail al-Hafiz al-'Alai* 4:76-79.

‘Allamah al-Nimawi رحمہ اللہ says, “Its chain is *Hasan*.” He includes a lengthy annotation wherein he discusses the authenticity in detail listing 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*.”<sup>30</sup> 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*.<sup>31</sup>

‘Allamah Anwar Shah al-Kashmiri رحمہ اللہ says that the view adopted by the majority of Muhaddithin is that the Hadith of Salat al-Tasbih is *Hasan* (sound in authenticity).<sup>32</sup>

‘Muhaddith al-‘Asr, ‘Allamah Yusuf al-Binnori رحمہ اللہ says, “The vast majority of Muhaddithin have opted towards the Hadith being either *Sahih* (rigorously authentic) or *Hasan* (sound).”<sup>33</sup>

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.

**[See the following page for the methodology of performing Salat al-Tasbih].**

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<sup>30</sup> *Athar al-Sunan* and *al-Ta’leeq al-Hasan* for Hadith #763

<sup>31</sup> pgs. 224 -234

<sup>32</sup> *Al-‘Arf al-Shadhi* 1:447

<sup>33</sup> *Ma’arif al-Sunan* 4:285

## How to Perform Salat al-Tasbih<sup>34</sup>

**Note:** The *tasbih* (glorification) recited in this salah is as follows:

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ

For the performance of Salat al-Tasbih, one will make an intention of four rakahs of *nafl* (optional) salah. These four rakahs will be performed as normal, but with the addition of the aforementioned tasbih the following number of times at the following locations:

1. Recitation of the *tasbih* 15 times after *thana*, before the recitation of Qur'an.
2. Recitation of the *tasbih* 10 times after recitation of Qur'an (Fatihah & Surah), prior to *ruku'*
3. Recitation of the *tasbih* 10 times after *Subhana Rabbiyal 'Azeem*, before getting up from *ruku'*
4. Recitation of the *tasbih* 10 times after getting up from *ruku'*, after saying *Sami' Allahu Li Man Hamidah* and *Rabbana Lakal Hamd*, before going into *sajdah*.
5. Recitation of the *tasbih* 10 times each in both *sajdahs* after reciting *Subhana Rabbiyal A'la*.
6. Recitation of the *tasbih* 10 times while sitting between the two *sajdahs*.

Altogether, this will add up to the recitation of the *tasbih* mentioned above 75 times per rakah, for a total of 300 times in all four rakats.

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<sup>34</sup> There are two famous methods of performing Salat al-Tasbih. The method prescribed in this article is the preferred method in the Hanafi school which was practiced by 'Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak رحمہ اللہ. See: Imam Tirmidhi's *al-Jami' al-Kabir* under Hadith #481 in the edition published Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, Imam Hakim's *al-Mustadrak* 1:465 in the edition published Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, and Imam Baihaqi's *Shu'ab al-Iman* #602 in the edition published by Maktabah al-Rushd, as well as *Radd al-Muhtar* 2:471-472, Maktabah Zakariyya, Deoband.