

The Authenticity of Salat al-Tasbih

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Summary:

Salat al-Tasbih (when prayed individually) 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 .

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  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 . Imam Muslim  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  in his *al-Qira'ah Khalf al-Imam* (Hadith #160), Imam Abu Dawud  in

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

his *Sunan* (Hadith #1297), Imam Ibn Majah رحمہ اللہ in his *Sunan* (Hadith #1387), and Imam ibn Khuzaimah رحمہ اللہ 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*.”

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

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

‘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.

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.

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 *Muqddimah 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).

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

‘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 Muhaddithin:

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

Imam al-Nawawi ؓ 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

¹⁸ *Tahdhib al-Kamal* 5:209-216

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

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

²¹ *Ibid*

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 ibn Hajar’s View

Hafiz ibn Hajar’s  view on the Hadith of *Salah al-Tasbih* can be challenging to pinpoint in this case as he arrives at different conclusions in different books. For example, he states in *al-Talkhis al-Habir*, “The truth is that all of its chains are *da’if*, although the Hadith of Ibn ‘Abbas comes very close to the condition of *Hasan*, however it is very anomalous.” However, he 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.”²³ Hafiz ibn Hajar has also declared the narration to be *Hasan* in his lectures on *al-Adhkar*, entitled, *Nataij al-Afkar*.²⁴ Clearly, Hafiz ibn Hajar changed his view on the authenticity of this Hadith, so we must determine which of his works he wrote later and which of them he wrote earlier. Towards the end of *al-Talkhis al-Habir* the following text is found, “Its abridger, Ahmad ibn ‘Ali ibn Hajar, completed it in **the year 813**.”²⁵ As for his lecture notes on *al-Adhkar* entitled, *Nataij al-Afkar*, his students had a habit of noting down the date for each session of his lectures. At the start of the session wherein he declares *Salah al-Tasbih* as being *Hasan* (sound in authenticity), his student writes, “Our shaikh, Shaikh al-Islam, the Hadith master of the east and the west, the Imam of his era, the unparalleled of his time, the judge of judges, Shihab al-Din Ahmad ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani al-Shafi...delivered a lecture to us on Tuesday, on the 20th of Rabi’ al-Awwal **in the year 848**.”²⁶ Thus his final view, which he held four years prior to his death, was that the Hadith of *Salah al-Tasbih* is *Hasan*.

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

²³ *al-Khisal al-Mukaffirah Li al-Dhunub al-Muqaddimah wal-Muakhirah*, pg. 38

²⁴ 5/163

²⁵ *Al-Talkhis al-Habir* 6/3295

²⁶ *Nataij al-Afkar* 5/160-161

Hafiz al-Suyuti 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.²⁷

Hafiz Salahuddin al-‘Alai رحمہ اللہ says,

“(The Hadith of *Salat al-Tasbih*) is *Hasan Sahih*. It has been narrated by Abu Dawud and Ibn Majah with a strong chain going to ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas رضی اللہ عنہ. 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, 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 رضی اللہ عنہ.

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 رضی اللہ عنہ that the Prophet ﷺ taught this Salah to Ja’far ibn Abu Talib رضی اللہ عنہ. 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

²⁷ *Al-Laali al-Masnu'ah Fi al-Ahadith al-Mashurah* 2:34-38

‘Abbas عليه السلام. 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-Tasbeih* 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.’²⁸ I said, ‘Mustamir ibn al-Rayyan²⁹ 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.”³⁰

‘Allamah al-Nimawi عليه السلام 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*

²⁸ **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 Thiqat ibn Hibban* 7:210.

²⁹ Mustamir ibn al-Rayyan was a reliable narrator. See: *Taqrib al-Tahdhib* 6591 and *al-Kashif* 5382

³⁰ *Majmu’ah Rasail al-Hafiz al-‘Alai* 4:76-79.

Ghayrihi.”³¹ Shaykh Nur al-Din ‘Itr ؒ also comes to the same conclusion (i.e. *Sahih Li Ghayrihi*) in his book, *Hady al-Nabi Fi al-Salawat al-Khaas*.³²

‘Muhaddith al-‘Asr, ‘Allamah Yusuf al-Binnori ؒ has a lengthy discussion on the Hadith in *Ma’arif al-Sunan*, wherein he also concurs with those who have authenticated the Hadith.

³¹ *Athar al-Sunan* and *al-Ta’leeq al-Hasan* for Hadith #763

³² pgs. 224 -234