125919 - Reflections upon the hadith of the cistern, and the groups whom the angels will push away from it

the question

What is the meaning of the hadith qudsi which says that when the Muslims come to the cistern of the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) [on the Day of Resurrection], Allah will turn away a group of people, and the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) will say: “O Lord, my ummah, my ummah!”, and Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, will say: “You do not know what they did after you were gone”?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

The hadith scholars call this hadith “the hadith of the cistern (hadith al-hawd)”. There are several versions and narrations of the hadith, with no difference between them, by the grace of Allah.

There follow some of the versions of the reports:

It was narrated that Sahl ibn Sa‘d said: The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “I will reach the Cistern ahead of you. He who comes to me will drink, and whoever drinks will never thirst again. There will come to me some people whom I will recognize and they will recognize me, then they will be prevented from reaching me. I shall say: ‘They are of me,’ but it will be said: ‘You do not know what they introduced after you were gone.’ So I shall say: ‘Away, away with those who changed (the religion) after I was gone.’”

Narrated by al-Bukhari (6212) and Muslim (2290).

It was narrated from Abu Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) came to the graveyard and said: “Peace be upon the abode of believing people, and if Allah wills we will join you soon. Would that we could see our brothers.” They said: Are we not your brothers, O Messenger of Allah? He said: “You are my companions. Our brothers are those who have not come yet.” They said: How will you recognize those of your ummah who have not come yet, O Messenger of Allah? He said: “Do you not see that if a man has a horses that have white blazes and white feet among horses that are all black, will he not recognize his horses?” They said: Of course, O Messenger of Allah. He said: “They will come to me with bright faces and limbs (like the white markings of a horse) because of the traces of wudoo’. I will reach the Cistern before them, and men will be driven away from my Cistern as stray camels are driven away. I will call out to them, ‘Come here!’ but it will be said, ‘They changed after you were gone.’ And I will say, ‘Away with you, away with you!’”

Narrated by Muslim (249).

It was narrated that ‘Aa’ishah said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) say: “I will be at the cistern, waiting for those of you who will come to me. Some men will be prevented from reaching me, so I will say: ‘O Lord, my ummah, my ummah!’ but it will be said to me: ‘You do not know what they did after you were gone; they kept turning on their heels.’”

Narrated by Ahmad (41/388); classed as saheeh by the commentators.

It was narrated from Anas ibn Maalik that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Some of those who accompanied me will come to me at the Cistern, and when I see them and they come close to me, they will be snatched away before they reach me. I will say: ‘O Lord, my companions [usayhaabi], my companions!’ but it will be said to me: You do not know what they introduced after you were gone.”

Narrated by al-Bukhari (6211) and Muslim (2304).

It was narrated that ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ood said: The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon

him) said: “I will reach the Cistern ahead of you, and some of you will come close to me until, when I am about to reach out (to give them a drink), they will be snatched away before they reach me. I will say: ‘O Lord, my companions!’ He will say: ‘You do not know what they introduced after you were gone.’”

Narrated by al-Bukhari (6642) and Muslim (2297).

Secondly:

When reflecting upon the hadiths quoted above, we find that the words refer only to groups of people who will head towards the cistern of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) to drink from it, but the angels will push them back. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) will call out to them, saying words such as “my ummah” or “my companions (ashaabi or usayhaabi). This variation in wording is not contradictory; rather it is to be understood as referring to people who are referred to by these words, and we can sum up these people [who will be pushed away from the cistern] as follows:

1. Those who apostatised from Islam after the death of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and had become Muslim during his lifetime and had seen him when they were Muslims.

2. Those who apostatised from Islam at the end of the Prophet’s life, but he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was not aware of their disbelief.

3. Hypocrites who outwardly appeared to be Muslims, but concealed disbelief in our hearts.

4. Followers of whims and desires who changed the Sunnah and teachings of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), such as the Raafidis and Khawaarij.

5. Some of these scholars include among these people those who committed major sins. There is evidence from the Sunnah to support this view. Imam Ahmad narrated in his Musnad (9/514) that Ibn ‘Umar said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “There will be rulers over you who will tell you to do what they do not do themselves. Whoever

believes in and confirms their lies, and helps them in their wrongdoing, is not of me and I am not of him, and he will never come to me at the cistern." Classed as saheeh by the commentators on al-Musnad.

The phrase "my ummah (ummati)" in the hadiths is applicable to nos. 4 and 5 above. The phrase "my companions (as-haabi or usayhaabi)" is applicable to the first three groups.

What indicates that they are part of his ummah is the fact that he will recognise them by the traces of wudoo' on their faces and limbs, which is a mark that is unique to this ummah. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) will recognise them by their general attributes, not individually, because they came after he was gone.

What indicates that the hypocrites are included in the phrase "my companions (as-haabi)" is the fact that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said [when some of the Sahaabah suggested killing the hypocrites, and he refused to do so]: "Lest people say that he is killing his companions (as-haabahu)." Narrated by al-Bukhari (3518). This is the purely linguistic sense of companionship; it does not mean that they deserve the honour of being called companions of the Prophet, because the definition of the technical term Sahaabi [companion of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)] is not applicable to these people.

There follow some scholarly comments on these hadiths:

1. An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said, commenting on the hadith:

This is something concerning which the scholars differed as to what is meant. There are several views, as follows:

i. That it refers to the hypocrites and apostates. They may be gathered (on the Day of Resurrection) with the traces of wudoo' on their faces and limbs, so the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) will call out to them because of the mark that is on them, but it will be said: These people are not among those concerning whom the promise was given to you, for they changed after you were gone, i.e., they did not die as Muslims although they appeared to be

Muslims.

ii. That it refers to those who were Muslims at the time of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), then they apostatised after he was gone, so the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) will call them, even if there is no trace of wudoo' on them, because he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) knew them as Muslims during his lifetime. But it will be said: They apostatised after you were gone.

iii. That it refers to people who committed sins, including major sins, but died believing in Tawheed, and followers of innovation (bid'ah) whose innovation did not put them beyond the pale of Islam.

Sharh Muslim (3/136, 137).

2. Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Al-Khattaabi said: None of the Sahaabah apostatised; rather those who apostatised were some of the rough, hardhearted Arabs, who were not known for making any effort in supporting the religion. Their apostasy does not undermine the status of the well-known Sahaabah. The phrase "my companions [usayhaabi, which is a diminutive form of the word]" indicates that they are few in number.

Fath al-Bari (11/385).

3. Shaykh 'Abd al-Qaadir al-Baghdadi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Ahl as-Sunnah are unanimously agreed that those who apostatised after the death of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) from the tribes of Kindah, Haneefah, Fazaarah, Banu Asad and Banu Bakr ibn Waa'il were not among the Ansaar or the Muhaajireen who migrated before the conquest of Makkah; rather the religious texts give the title of Muhaajireen to those who migrated to join the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) before the conquest of Makkah. They – praise be to Allah – remained steadfast in adhering to the true religion and the straight path.

Ahl as-Sunnah are unanimously agreed that those who were present with the Messenger of Allah (sa) at Badr will be among the people of Paradise; the same is true of those who were present with him at Bay‘at ar-Radwaan in al-Hudaybiyah.

Al-Farq bayna al-Firaq (p. 353).

4. Ash-Shaatibi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

What appears to be the case is that they will be included in the midst of this ummah, because of the signs that they will have on them [on the Day of Resurrection], namely the traces of wudoo’ on their faces and limbs, because that sign cannot be present on people who are complete disbelievers, whether they were originally disbelievers (and remained so) or apostates (from Islam), and because of the words “they changed after you were gone.” If that referred to disbelief, he would have said, “they disbelieved after you were gone.” The more likely interpretation is that what is meant is drifting away from the Sunnah, which is applicable to the followers of innovation. With regard to those who suggested that it refers to hypocrisy, that falls within the parameters of what we are saying, because the hypocrites did religious duties by way of dissimulation, not by way of worship, so they fulfilled religious obligations in a manner that was not proper, which is exactly what innovation is.

This is applicable to anyone who follows the Sunnah and puts it into practice by as a means of accumulating worldly gains – and not as a means of worshipping Allah, may He be exalted, and drawing closer to Him – because that is toying with the Sunnah and practising it in a manner that is contrary to Islamic teachings.

Al-I‘tisaam (1/96).

5. Al-Qurtubi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Our scholars (may Allah have mercy on them all) said: Everyone who apostatised from the religion of Allah, or introduced into it something with which Allah is not please and for which He did not give permission, will be among those who will be pushed away and kept away from the cistern.

Those who will be most harshly pushed away are those who differed from the main body (jamaa‘ah) of the Muslims and drifted away from their path, such as the Khawaarij and Raafidis of various groups, and the Mu ‘tazilah who followed different whims and desires. All of these people introduced changes. The same applies to the wrongdoers who went to extremes in committing injustice and oppression, and tried to suppress the truth, killing and humiliating the people of truth, as well as those who committed major sins openly, taking the matter of sin lightly, and groups who drifted away and followed their whims and desires and innovations.

Moreover, they may be pushed away for a while, then allowed to come closer after being forgiven, if the problem had to do with misdeeds and not matters of belief (‘aqeedah). Based on this assumption, this group will be known by the light of wudoo’, then it will be said, “Away with them.” But if they were among the hypocrites who lived at the time of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), who made an outward display of faith whilst inwardly disbelieving, they will be taken as they appear to be, then their real nature will be exposed, and it will be said, “Away, away with them.” No one will abide forever in hell except a disbeliever, a denier and a follower of falsehood in whose heart there was not even a mustard seed’s weight of faith.

At-Tadhkirah fi Ahwaal al-Mawtaa wa’d-Daar al-Aakhirah (p. 352).

Thirdly:

What proves that the Raafidis are lying in their claim that the major Sahaabah Abu Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthmaan were among the apostates is the fact that it is proven, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that apostasy occurred and the apostates were fought, so who fought whom? Those who apostatised are those whose description we have mentioned, namely some of the Arab tribes, and the one who fought them was Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq (may Allah be pleased with him) and his brethren among the Muhaajireen and Ansaar – and ‘Ali ibn Abi Taalib (may Allah be pleased with him) also took part with them in fighting the apostates; he took one of the captured women of Banu Haneefah as a concubine, and she bore him a son who later became a prominent scholar, namely Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah. If the noble Sahaabah Abu Bakr and ‘Umar, and the

Muhaajireen and Ansaar who were with them, were apostates, then what would be the case with regard to Musaylimah and al-'Ansi, and their followers? No doubt this view (of the Raafidis) is the very essence of hypocrisy and troublemaking; it is a lie and false witness.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

May Allah punish these apostates and liars, the followers of the apostates, who are striving to oppose Allah, His Messenger, His Book and His religion; they exited Islam and threw it behind their backs, and they strove against Allah and His Messenger and His believing slaves, taking as allies the apostates and dissenters. This talk and other things they say, confirm that these people, who bear such resentment towards Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq (may Allah be pleased with him) and other Sahaabah, are the same as the disbelieving apostates, like those apostates whom Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) fought.

Minhaaj as-Sunnah an-Nabawiyyah (4/490).

And he (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

To sum up, the story of Musaylimah the Liar, and his claim of prophethood, and Banu Haneefah in al-Yamaamah following him, and Abu Bakr fighting them for that, is something that is well-known and narrated via mutawaatir reports; it is known to everyone, elite and common folk alike, like any other well-known incident that was narrated via mutawaatir reports. This story is not something that is known to the elite only; rather it is more widely known among the people than the Battle of the Camel and the Battle of Siffeen. It was narrated from one of the scholars of kalaam that he denied that the battles of the Camel and Siffeen took place, even though this denial was unfounded; yet we do not know of anyone who denied that the Muslims fought the people of al-Yamaamah and that Musaylimah the Liar claimed to be a prophet, and the Muslims fought him because of that.

As for these Raafidis, their denial [that Abu Bakr fought the apostates] is akin to their denial that Abu Bakr and 'Umar were buried alongside the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and their denial that Abu Bakr and 'Umar were allies of the Prophet (blessings and peace of

Allah be upon him) and among his inner circle, and they claim that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) appointed ‘Ali as his successor, mentioning him by name. In fact some of them even denied that Zaynab, Ruqayyah and Umm Kulthoom were the daughters of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)! They said that they were daughters of Khadeejah from her first husband, who was a disbeliever, to whom she was married before the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

Minhaaj as-Sunnah an-Nabawiyyah (4/492, 493).

And he (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

They – namely the Raafidis – claim that Abu Bakr and ‘Umar, and those who followed them, apostatised from Islam! But the elite and the common folk know that Abu Bakr was the one who fought the apostates. If they claim that the people of al-Yamaamah were wronged and killed unlawfully, and they disapprove of fighting them and try to find excuses for them, then this proves that these people [Ahl as-Sunnah wa’l-Jamaa‘ah] are following in the footsteps of those earlier generations [the Sahaabah], and that Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq and his followers fight the apostates in every era.

The claim of Ibn al-Mutahhar al-Hilli ar-Raafidi, that they regarded the tribe of Banu Haneefah as apostates because they refused to pay zakaah to Abu Bakr, is one of the most blatant and egregious lies, because Abu Bakr only fought Banu Haneefah due to their belief in Musaylimah the Liar and his claim to be a prophet. As for those who withheld zakaah, they were people other than Banu Haneefah. Concerning those people, some of the Sahaabah were not certain about the permissibility of fighting them, but none of them ever had any doubt about the obligation to fight Banu Haneefah…

Minhaaj as-Sunnah an-Nabawiyyah (4/493, 494).

Fourthly:

It may be said to these Raafidis: Why did the first three caliphs apostatise and not ‘Ali? Why is it

that people such as ‘Ammaar ibn Yaasir, al-Miqdaad ibn al-Aswad, Abu Dharr and Salmaan al-Faarisi were exempted from apostasy? Or is this simply nothing but whims and desires?!

We believe that the Muhaajireen and Ansaar will be in Paradise forever. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And the first forerunners [in the faith] among the Muhajireen and the Ansar and those who followed them with good conduct - Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him, and He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever. That is the great attainment.”

[at-Tawbah 9:100].

We believe that Abu Bakr is in Paradise, ‘Umar is in Paradise, ‘Uthmaan is in Paradise and ‘Ali is in Paradise, and this applies to all of those whom the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) mentioned by name; all of them will drink from the cistern of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and will enjoy that drink. Woe and doom to those who curse them and regard them as disbelievers, when they themselves are more deserving to be, on the Day of Resurrection, among the apostates whom these noble ones fought.

Fifthly:

These hadiths offer proof against the Raafidis, as they reiterate that the Sahaabah, with few exceptions, apostatised, and they claim that they introduced changes after the death of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). What this means is that they were believers before that! So what religion did they believe in after that? What did they do to deserve this denunciation and accusation of disbelief?! If you (Raafidis) say that they took the caliphate away from ‘Ali (may Allah be pleased with), that may be described as a sin, but if it is a sin, as you claim, then their good deeds could outweigh it. It is sufficient for the Sahaabah that you revile and curse them, so that all their (alleged) sins will be transferred to you, in sha Allah.

If they (Raafidis) refer to the alleged killing of the unborn child of Faatimah, we say: thousands of

people were killed at the time of ‘Ali (may Allah be pleased with him); will you apply the same rule and regard him as a disbeliever too?

From the above, it is clear that the noble Sahaabah are the ones who defended the religion of Allah, and they are the ones who stopped the spread of apostasy, which was supported and promoted by the forerunners of the Raafidis, such as Musaylimah the Liar and al-Aswad al-‘Ansi. In His holy Book, Allah, may He be exalted, praised the Muhaajireen and Ansaar, in Qur’an that will be recited until the onset of the Hour. Their Lord has declared them to be above falling into innovation, so how could they have fallen into apostasy, when they are the ones who spread Islam far and wide?

And Allah knows best.