136772 - How sound is the hadith of as-Sufyaani?

the question

How sound is the narration of the following hadith? Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “There will emerge a man called as-Sufyaani from the depths of Damascus, and most of those who follow him will be from (the tribe of) Kalb. He will kill many people until he rips open the bellies of women and kill children. (The tribe of) Qays will gather against him and he will kill them. A man from my family will emerge in the harrah, and news of that will reach as-Sufyaani. He will send troops against him and he will defeat them. Then as-Sufyaani will march towards him accompanied by those who are with him, then when he is in a plain, they will be swallowed up by the earth and none of them will be saved except the one who will tell others about them.” al-Mustadrak.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

This hadith – the hadith of as-Sufyaani – is one of the hadiths that people have been circulating amongst themselves in recent years, and some people try to interpret it as referring to what the Muslims are going through of crises and wars. But it is a da‘eef hadith and is not saheeh.

Shaykh al-Albaani (may Allah have mercy on him) said concerning it:

It is munkar. It was narrated by al-Haakim in al-Mustadrak (4/520) via Muhammad ibn Ismaa‘eel ibn Abi Sameenah: al-Waleed ibn Muslim told us: al-Awzaa‘i told us: from Yahya ibn Abi Katheer, from Abu Salamah, from Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him), in a marfoo‘ report (i.e., attributed to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)).

He said: It is saheeh according to the conditions of the two shaykhs [al-Bukhaari and Muslim], and adh-Dhahabi agreed with him.

I – i.e., Shaykh al-Albaani – say: This is subject to further discussion from two angles:

Firstly, Muslim did not narrate any hadith from Ibn Abi Sameenah.

Secondly, al-Waleed ibn Muslim narrated by saying ‘an (“from”, as opposed to “So and so told us” or “I heard So and so say” etc), so he used to engage in tadlees (saying ambiguous words to give the wrong impression), by omitting the name of the shaykh of his shaykh, namely the shaykh of al-Awzaa‘i. It says in his biography: It was narrated that al-Haytham ibn Khaarijah said: I said to al-Waleed ibn Muslim: You have corrupted the hadith of al-Awzaa‘i! He said: How? I said: You narrate from him from Naafi‘, and from him from az-Zuhri, and from him from Yahya – i.e., Ibn Katheer – whereas others include between al-Awzaa‘i and Naafi‘ (the name of) ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Aamir al-Aslami, and between him and az-Zuhri they include (the name of) Qurrah. What made you do that? He said: al-Awzaa‘i is too noble to narrate from such as these! I said: If al-Awzaa‘i narrated from these munkar narrators – and they are da‘eef – then you omitted them and made the report look as if it was narrated from al-Awzaa‘i from the good narrators, then that will lead to al-Awzaa‘i losing credibility and being regarded as da‘eef. But he did not pay any attention to what I said.

It was also mentioned by al-‘Alaa’i in al-Maraaseel (p. 118), and by al-Haafiz in at-Tahdheeb. It was mentioned before him by adh-Dhahabi in as-Siyar (9/215), before him by al-Mazzi in his Tahdheeb (31/97), and before them by Ibn ‘Asaakir in at-Taareekh (17/906). And they quoted something similar from Imam ad-Daaraqutni.

Once you know this, and you know that al-Waleed also used to engage in tadlees (by omitting the name of the shaykh of his shaykh), then it is very strange to find that adh-Dhahabi did not explain that in his books, including as-Siyar, in which he said concerning him: He is trustworthy and haafiz (knows a lot of ahaadeeth), but he had a poor memory, so if he said haddathana ([So and so] told us), then his report is credible. Similarly he said in al-Kaashif: … and he engaged in tadlees, so one should be cautious of his hadith in which he says “ ‘an” (from). Perhaps what he meant was anywhere in his isnaad – I mean, as he narrated by saying “from” between al-Awzaa‘i and his shaykh Yahya, or between the latter and Abu Salamah. But his reports may be credible if he clearly states that it was narrated, rather than saying ‘an (from). This explanation is possible and

may be supported by what was mentioned above, but I think he stated something contrary to that, as he said in al-Mughni: If he says “al-Awzaa‘i told us” then it is credible. This is undoubtedly a shortcoming on his part. The correct view is to describe him as engaging in two types of tadlees, the first of which is tadlees as-samaa‘ (when he says ‘an (from) instead of So and so narrated/told me). This is what was stated clearly by al-Haafiz in at-Taqreeb and Muqaddimat al-Fath, where he says (450): Many criticised him for engaging in tadlees a great deal. The second type of tadlees is tadlees at-taswiyah, which is mentioned above, and they quoted as evidence for this kind of tadlees his hadith from al-Awzaa‘i. … But two suggest that the two shaykhs [al-Bukhaari and Muslim] narrated this hadith is subject to further discussion. Adh-Dhahabi said, after quoting the report of al-Haytham mentioned above and others: I say: al-Bukhaari and Muslim narrated some of his hadiths, but they were very careful about which his hadith to accept and they avoided the odd reports.

I say: perhaps the hadith in question is more akin to those that they avoided because it is odd (munkar) and because of the ‘an‘anah (narrating by saying ‘an/from) in its isnaad, and for that reason adh-Dhahabi – let alone al-Haakim – thought they were wrong to class it as saheeh according to their (al-Bukhaari and Muslim) conditions, because of what was known of the biography of Ibn Abi Sameenah, and because there is no clear mention of al-Awzaa‘i and earlier narrators having narrated that.

To this we may add that Yahya ibn Abi Katheer also engaged in tadlees when narrating from his shaykhs, and he was known for that, as it says in Maraaseel al-‘Alaa’i and elsewhere.

The swallowing up of the army in the earth is mentioned at the end of a saheeh hadith from Hafsah (may Allah be pleased with her), who narrated that she heard the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) say: “This House (the Ka‘bah) will surely be targeted by an army that comes to attack it, until when they are in a plain, the middle of them will be swallowed up by the earth, and the first of them will call to the last of them, then they will be swallowed up too, and there will be none left except a fugitive who will tell of what happened to them.” Narrated by Muslim and others; it is also narrated in as-Saheehah (1924 and 2432). End quote.

As-Silsilah ad-Da‘eefah (6520).

This hadith – and all the hadiths that speak of as-Sufyaani – was classed as da‘eef by Dr at-Tareefi (may Allah preserve him) in Multaqa Ahl al-Hadith:

http://www.ahlalhadeeth.com/vb/showthread.php?s=&threadid=2560&perpage=15&pagenumber=2

It was also classed as da‘eef by Dr Haatim al-‘Awni (may Allah have mercy on him):

http://www.islamtoday.net/fatawa/quesshow–60–10580.htm

Shaykh Hammood at-Tuwaijri (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

There is no saheeh, reliable hadith about the emergence of as-Sufyaani. End quote.

Ithaaf al-Jamaa‘ah bima jaa’a fi’l-Fitan wa’l-Malaahim wa Ashraat as-Saa‘ah (1/63).

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The hadith of as-Sufyaani was narrated by al-Haakim in his Mustadrak, and he said that its isnaad is saheeh. But al-Haakim (may Allah have mercy on him) was known to be lenient in accepting hadiths as saheeh. End quote.

Majmoo‘ Fataawa Ibn ‘Utahymeen (2/62)

And Allah knows best.