178907 - Did Shaykh al-Albaani class some hadiths in Saheeh al-Bukhaari as da‘eef (weak)?

the question

Is it true that Sheikh al-Albaani classed some ahaadeeth narrated by Imam al-Bukhari as daeef (weak)?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

The fair-minded researcher into criticisms levelled at as-Saheehayn (the two Saheehs – of al-Bukhaari and Muslim) has to differentiate between two types of criticism:

1.

The first type is criticism that is not based on a solid academic methodology and does not follow the rules of academic criticism that are accepted by researchers. Rather he starts searching randomly with no method, so as to suit his whims and desires, and he objects to anything that is contrary to his reasoning and opinion, not paying attention to the methodological principles on which al-Bukhaari and Muslim based their books. This type of criticism is to be rejected and cannot be accepted; it should be countered with sound academic research and evidence that is based on strong methodology, that will bring the critic back to his senses and highlight to him the invalidity of his method, and demonstrate that the issue has nothing to do with attributing infallibility to al-Bukhaari and Muslim, because Ahl as-Sunnah do not believe that anybody is infallible except the Prophets. Rather it is an issue of errors in research methodology and confusion in the reasoning of the critic, as in the case of one who rejects every hadith that cannot be proven by practical experience, and he rejects every hadith that has to do with matters of the unseen or is contrary, in

his mind, to that which he is familiar with, or he classes as da‘eef every hadith that was narrated by Abu Hurayrah or ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Aas (may Allah be pleased with them both) and other wrong methods.

This type of criticism is always accompanied by impugning the status of as-Saheehayn, saying bad things about them and attempting to eliminate them from the accepted legacy of the ummah. Rather they regard them as a crime against Islamic history and describe them as bad and corrupt. Such descriptions fill the contemporary books of groups such as the Raafidis and their followers, and many of the pretenders who claim to be modern, enlightened and rational. Among the books of this type are the following: Adwa’ ‘ala as-Sunnah al-Muhammadiyyah by Abu Rayyah; the books of al-Muhandas Jawaad ‘Afaanah; Nahwa Taf‘eel Qawaa‘id Naqd Matn al-Hadith by Ismaa‘eel al-Kurdi; al-Adwa’ al-Qur’aniyyah fi Iktisaah al-Ahaadeeth al-Israa’eeliyyah wa Tat-heer al-Bukhaari minha by Saalih Abu Bakr; the essay Jinaayat al-Bukhaari Inqaadh ad-Deen min Imam al-Muhadditheen by Zakariyya Ozon; a study entitled Adwa’ ‘ala as-Saheehayn by Muhammad Saadiq an-Najmi, and many others.

With regard to the scholars of Islam, both earlier and later scholars of hadith, usool, fiqh and tafseer, they are innocent of this method of criticism and are far removed from it; they are opposed to those who carry this banner and propagate this method

2.

The second type is methodological criticism that is based on evidence and proof that carry weight according to the scholars of Islam and are appropriate to the study of the Prophetic Sunnah as one of the branches of historical knowledge, so as to combine the critiques of both the isnaad (chain of narrators) and matn (text). They do not reject the rules of the muhadditheen (hadith scholars) in favour of ideas based on whims and desires, and they do not use the language of doubt and alarm to undermine the status of as-Saheehayn in the ummah. Rather this methodology recognises the status of these two books, maintains their honourable position and acknowledges the great efforts that were put into them.

This methodology was followed by many of the earlier and later scholars, such as Abu Zar'ah (d. 264 AH), Abu Dawood (d. 275 AH), Abu Haatim (d. 277 AH), at-Tirmidhi (d. 279 AH), an-Nasaa'i (d. 303 AH), ad-Daaraqutni (d. 385 AH), al-Bayhaqi (d. 458 AH), Ibn Taymiyah (d. 728 AH) and Ibn Hajar (d. 852 AH). In each case you will find that their criticism has to do with a very small number of hadiths that appear in as-Saheehayn, either before or after these books were written, and is based on academic, fair-minded, methodological research. In fact some of the hadiths in Saheeh Muslim were not accepted by al-Bukhaari himself, and some of the hadiths in Saheeh al-Bukhaari were not accepted by Imam Muslim himself.

We are not here to judge between the two shaykhs, al-Bukhaari and Muslim on the one hand and those scholars, muhadditheen and others, who criticise some of the contents of the books on the other. That is a vast matter that many scholars are engaged in and have written huge books on the topic, one of the most comprehensive of which is Hadiy as-Saari by al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him). Rather the point here is to contrast the methodology of these scholars, who should not be objected to or rejected on the basis that there is consensus on the soundness of everything in as-Saheehayn, with the methodology of those who strive to undermine the status of these two books and to lower the esteem in which they are held by people.

The method of the muhadditheen that is based on sound rules is distinguished from other methods that criticise as-Saheehayn by the following characteristics:

1.Soundness of motive and neutrality, by which I mean the soundness of the motive for the criticism and the fact that it is not based on doubt in as-Saheehayn.

2.Following the rules of hadith science.

3.Preserving the content of the text as is, for other reasons: either because the criticism is originally directed at some of the isnaads and not the matn (text), or because the content of the hadith is already being practised on the basis of reasons such as accepting mursal reports, giving the ruling of marfoo' to mawqoof reports, accepting the hadith of someone whose character or situation is unknown, and so on. In contrast, you will find that one of the main focuses of

contemporary criticisms of the hadiths in as-Saheehayn is rejection of the text of the hadith, ridiculing its contents, impugning everyone who believes it and categorising it as a myth from which efforts should be made to purify the religion.

4.Taking differences in stride and not over exaggerating the impact thereof, and stating one's view on the basis of probability, by using gentle and appropriate words, such as saying: this is more likely to be the case, this is more sound – and so on.

5.Not criticising a great deal, because when the critic follows the guidelines on the process of criticism, that leaves less room for manoeuvre, so he will not dare to criticise except in cases where he has clear proof and his evidence is confirmed. Hence the hadiths that were subject to sound criticism – those that were left after eliminating the types of hadith mentioned at the beginning of this discussion (namely those that were unfairly criticised) – will be very few. Al-Haafiz described them as being very few at the time when, according to some confused contemporary critics, they number in the hundreds, to the point that some of them were listed in a separate book entitled Da'eef Saheeh al-Bukhaari.

End quote from a research paper entitled al-Manhajiyyah al-Mundabitah lada an-Nuqaad al-Mutaqaddimeena fi Ta'leel ba'di Ahaadeeth as-Saheehayn (p.17-20), which was submitted to the conference al-Intisaar li's-Saheehayn [Defending as-Saheehayn] at the University of Jordan.

Secondly:

Anyone who reflects on these five characteristics and contemplates the difference between the two methods, then reads with an open mind the research of Shaykh al-Albaani (may Allah have mercy on him) in which he critiqued some of the hadiths of as-Saheehayn will realise that the shaykh (may Allah have mercy on him) followed the disciplined method that has clear guidelines, following in the footsteps of previous muhadditheen in critiquing some of the reports in as-Saheehayn. He will understand that this type of criticism is not casting aspersions upon the Sunnah and is not contrary to scholarly consensus; rather it is a continuation of previous, well-known efforts in critiquing as-Saheehayn, but that is done within the framework of sound principles

of debate and criticism, adhering to the characteristics or guidelines mentioned above, among the most important of which are following the rules of hadith science and maintaining respect for as-Saheehayn in people's hearts. This does not mean that there were not some mistakes in some of the verdicts of al-Albaani on some of the hadiths of as-Saheehayn. But his mistakes have to do with minor issues and not major principles. For a man of his standing such mistakes may be overlooked and forgiven as the mistakes of other critics and scholars were.

Here we will quote some of the comments of Shaykh al-Albaani (may Allah have mercy on him) that proved his adherence to the methodological guidelines, and that he was working within a particular framework, when he said:

I find myself compelled by academic honesty to express what I believe is correct and to discharge my duty, as the researcher who has deep knowledge cannot but admit an academic fact which was expressed by Imam ash-Shaafa'i (may Allah have mercy on him), as it was narrated that he said:

Allah has decreed that no book should be perfect except His Book, therefore some of the scholars objected to some words that were erroneously inserted by some of the narrators in some saheeh hadiths, some of which we will mention here by way of example:

·The words in the hadith about the leper, the bald man and the blind man (no. 1471), in which it says "it occurred to Allah" instead of the correct phrase "Allah willed", because speaking in terms of "something occurring" to Allah, may He be exalted, is not appropriate; how could that be acceptable when it is one of the beliefs of the Jews?

·The phrase "one who compromises" instead of "one who adheres to" in the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him): "The likeness of the one who adheres to the limits set by Allah and the one who transgresses them…" Hadith no. 1143.

·The words in the hadith about the plague (1475): "Do not leave except fleeing from it." The narrator's addition of the word "except" is an obvious error [so the hadith should read "Do not leave, fleeing from it"].

·The narrator’s addition in hadith no. 984: “The two parties to a transaction have the option of proceeding or cancelling… He may confirm agreement three times.” Al-Haafiz (4/327, 334) stated that the phrase that mentions confirming it three times cannot be proven to be from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

·He said (p. 176) concerning hadith no. 1160 about the words concerning the righteous slave, “By the One in Whose hand is my soul, were it not for jihad…” that this remark has been inserted into the hadith: these are not the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him); rather these are the words of Abu Hurayrah. So this is like the hadith mentioned above in Vol. 1 no. 90, in which the narrator added at the end: “So whoever can extend his traces of wudoo’ on his face, let him do so.” This has also been inserted.

·Similarly in Vol 1 (28 – Jaza’ as-Sayd/21) it says that a man said: My sister vowed to do Hajj. This is an odd report according to al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar. What is known is that a woman said: My mother vowed…. You can check this report there.

·Similarly with regard to hadith no. 1209, al-Ismaa‘eeli highlighted that it has an interrupted isnaad. Al-Haafiz approved of the hadith but had some reservations about the text which he mentioned in al-Fath, to which anyone who wishes may refer

·A similar example is the hadith mentioned above (28 – Jaza’ as-Sayd/11): It was narrated from Ibn ‘Abbaas that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) married Maymoonah when he was in ihram. The more correct view is that he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) married her when he was not in ihram.

·Similarly, in hadith no. 1050 it says: “Allah says: ‘There are three whose opponent I will be on the Day of Resurrection.’” Its isnaad includes a narrator who was the subject of a difference of opinion. What is established is that he had a poor memory. Al-Bukhaari himself indicated that the report of the one who narrated this hadith from him was not sound. You may see his comments there, so that you may be prudent with regard to matters of your religion and the hadiths of your Prophet.

I have mentioned these examples so that readers may be prudent with regard to matters of their

religion and will have a clear understanding of the hadiths of their Prophet and be certain of the soundness of the report mentioned above: “Allah has decreed that no book should be perfect except His Book.” Thus they will also not be deceived by what has been written by some of those who want to stir up trouble against us, such as the ignorant imitators and fanatical followers of madhhabs who talk nonsense about what they do not know, say what they do not know and ignore what they already know. … And on the other hand there are some people who have made some contributions in some fields of knowledge or in the field of da‘wah (calling people to Islam) – even if it is on the basis of their own understanding – who show audacity in refuting that which they do not like of saheeh hadiths, which they regard as da‘eef despite consensus in the ummah on the acceptability of that hadith. They do not reject it on the basis of sound principles of this noble branch of knowledge and the rules of knowledge according to the muhadditheen, or because of some doubts that they developed about one of the narrators of that hadith, for they have no knowledge of that and they have total disregard for the knowledge of people who specialise in that field. Rather they base their argument on their own whims and desires or on their education that was far removed from sound faith which is based on the Qur’an and saheeh Sunnah, in imitation of the Orientalists and the enemies of the faith, and those who imitate them of westernised people such as Abu Rayyah al-Masri, ‘Izz ad-Deen Baleeq al-Lubnaani and others with whom this ummah is afflicted in modern times, who reject sound hadiths on the basis of whims and desires, and cause confusion to some Muslims because of the specious arguments they present.

Allah, may He be exalted, is the One Whose help we seek and ask Him to protect the Sunnah from the hands of the ignorant, those who would tamper with it and the ignorant who follow whims and desires; we ask Him to make us recognise the efforts of the early imams in service of the Sunnah, who laid out for us principles and rules for knowing what is sound and what is not. Whoever adheres to those principles and rules will be following a clear way, and whoever deviates from that will go far astray.

End quote from Muqaddimat Mukhtasar Saheeh al-Bukhaari (2/5-9)

He (may Allah have mercy on him) also said:

Some young people who are fanatically devoted to Saheeh al-Bukhaari, and likewise to Saheeh Muslim, are ignorant and adamantly insist that everything in them is saheeh. In contrast to them, some writers have no respect at all for as-Saheehayn, and they reject of their hadiths any that are not in accordance with their rational thinking and their whims and desires, such as as-Saqqaaf and other writers. I have responded to both groups in more than one place.

End quote from Silsilat al-Ahaadeeth as-Saheehah (no. 2540)

He (may Allah have mercy on him) also said:

Imam al-Bukhaari and Imam Muslim did their duty of selecting these hadiths that they included in as-Saheehayn from among hundreds of thousands of hadiths, which was an immense effort. Therefore it does no service to knowledge and it is not wise at all for me to focus my efforts on examining as-Saheehayn and ignore the hadiths to be found in the four Sunans and elsewhere, which are not known whether they are saheeh or da'eef. But during my academic research, I came across some hadiths in as-Saheehayn, or in one of the two, and realised that there are some hadiths that are da'eef! But whoever has doubts about my ruling concerning some hadiths, let him refer to Fath al-Baari, where he will find very many things that (the author) al-Haafiz Ahmad ibn Hajar al-'Asqallaani critiqued.

End quote from Fataawa ash-Shaykh al-Albaani (p. 565)

To sum up: Shaykh al-Albaani (may Allah have mercy on him) did class as da'eef some of the hadiths that are included in as-Saheehayn. In some cases we do not agree with his verdict, but in general his method of criticism was sound and in harmony with the methodology of the earlier muhadditheen, who noted some reservations concerning some of the hadiths in as-Saheehayn. He was never for a moment trying to undermine the status of as-Saheehayn in people's hearts and minds, or exaggerating in the manner in which he critiqued some hadiths.

For more information, please see fatwa no. 119516

And Allah knows best.