# 88746 - The hadeeth of the mountain goats is a weak hadeeth

**the question**

How sound is the hadeeth of the mountain goats? How should we understand it in the light of modern science?.

**Detailed answer**

Praise be to Allah.

The text of the hadeeth of the mountain goats is as follows:

It was narrated that al-‘Abbaas ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib (may Allaah be pleased with him) said:

I was in al-Batha’ with a group of people, among whom was the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). A cloud passed over him, and he looked at it and said, “What do you call this?” They said, Sahaab (a cloud). He said, “And muzn (rain cloud).” They said, And muzn. He said, “And ‘anaan (clouds).” Abu Bakr said: they said, “And ‘anaan.” He said: “How much (distance) do you think there is between you and the heaven?” They said, We do not know. He said, “Between you and it is seventy-one or seventy-two or seventy-three years, and there is a similar distance between it and the heaven above it [and so on]” – until he has counted seven heavens. “Then above the seventh heaven there is a river, between whose top and bottom is a distance like that between one heaven and another. Then above that there are eight (angels in the form of) mountain goats. The distance between their hooves and their kneesis like the distance between one heaven and the next. Then on their backs is the Throne, and the distance between the top and the bottom of the Throne is like the distance between one heaven and another. Then Allaah is above that, may He be blessed and exalted.

Ibn al-Atheer said in al-Nihaayah (3/355):

Mountain goats means angels in the form of mountain goats.

This hadeeth is well known in the books of the scholars, and is narrated in most of the books of Musnad. It was narrated by Ahmad in al-Musnad (1/206), Abu Dawood in al-Sunan (4723), al-Tirmidhi in al-Sunan (3320), Ibn Maajah (193), al-Daarimi in al-Radd ‘ala al-Jahamiyyah (50), al-Bazaar in his Musnad (4/134), Muhammad ibn ‘Uthmaan ibn Abi Shaybah in al-‘Arsh (1/66), Ibn Khuzaymah in Kitaab al-Tawheed (1/234) al-Haakim in al-Mustadrak (2/410) and other books of Sunnah.

The reports of these imams come through five isnaads, all of which meet in Simaak ibn Harb from ‘Abd-Allaah ibn ‘Umayrah from al-Ahnaf ibn Qays from al-‘Abbaas ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib (may Allaah be pleased with him).

As for Simaak ibn Harb, he met a number of the Sahaabah. Muslim narrated from him, as did al-Bukhaari in mu’allaq reports. He was regarded as thiqah (trustworthy) by a number of scholars, such as Imam Ahmad, Abu Haatim, al-Bazaar and others. But some of the scholars criticized for some strange matters in his hadeeth. Hence he was classed as da’eef (weak) by Shu’bah and Ibn al-Mubaarak, and Ibn Abi Khaythamah said: I heard Ibn Ma’een being asked: What is his fault? He said: He narrated ahaadeeth which no one else narrated, but he is thiqah. Ibn ‘Ammaar said: They say that he used to make mistakes, and they differed concerning his hadeeth. Al-Thawri regarded him as somewhat da’eef but no one rejected him. Al-Nasaa’i said: Sometimes he repeats everything he hears, therefore when he narrates a hadeeth which no one else narrated, that cannot be regarded as sound. Ibn Hibbaan said in al-Thiqaat: he makes many mistakes.

See his biography in Tahdheeb al-Tahdheeb (4/204)

As for ‘Abd-Allaah ibn ‘Umayrah: we do not know anything about his biography except that he narrated from al-Ahnaf ibn Qays, and no one is known to have narrated from him except Simaak ibn Harb. None of the scholars stated whether he was thiqah or da’eef except Ibn Hibbaan who mentioned him in al-Thiqaat. Ibn Hajar said in Tahdheeb al-Tahdheeb (5/301): al-Bukhaari said: It is not known whether he heard from al-Ahnaf. He was mentioned by Ibn Hibbaan in al-Thiqaat, and al-Tirmidhi classed his hadeeth as hasan. I (Ibn Hajar) say: Abu Na’eem said in Ma’rifat al-Sahaabah: He lived during the Jaahiliyyah and he was the guide of al-A’sha, but it is not proven

that he accompanied the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) or saw him. Muslim said in al-Wuhdaan: Simaak alone narrated from him. Ibraaheem al-Harbi said: I do not know him. End quote.

Because Simaak's report is not to be accepted when he is the only one narrating it, and because we find that there are some doubts about 'Abd-Allaah ibn 'Umayrah, the scholars differed as to whether the hadeeth should be classed as saheeh or da'eef.

Al-Tirmidhi said concerning the hadeeth: it is hasan ghareeb. It was classed as saheeh by Ibn Khuzaymah in his report in his book al-Tawheed where he stipulated some conditions for its soundness. Al-Haakim said in al-Mustadrak: it is saheeh according to the conditions of Muslim although they (al-Bukhaari and Muslim) did not narrate it.

Among the later scholars, Ibn Taymiyah in Majmoo' al-Fataawa (3/192) and Ibn al-Qayyim in Mukhtasar al-Sawaa'iq (433) said its isnaad is jayyid.

With regard to the scholars who classed it as da'eef:

This is what is understood from the words of al-Bazaar in his Musnad (4/115), where he says: We do not know of these words being narrated except with this isnaad from al-'Abbaas from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). We do not know of anyone who narrated from 'Abd-Allaah ibn 'Umayrah except Simaak ibn Harb. End quote.

Ibn 'Adiyy said in al-Kaamil (9/27): it is not known.

Al-Mazzi indicated that it is da'eef in Tahdheeb al-Kamaal (10/391).

Al-Dhahabi said in al-'Uluw (1/60): It was narrated only by Simaak from 'Abd-Allaah, and 'Abd-Allaah is somewhat unknown. End quote. But al-Dhahabi classed the hadeeth as hasan in al-'Arsh (24).

Another of the later scholars who classed it as da'eef was al-Albaani in al-Silsilah al-Da'eefah (1247).

What seems most likely – and Allaah knows best – is that the hadeeth is da'eef. As Simaak ibn Harb was the only one who narrated this hadeeth which has to do with matters of the unseen, this means that it is not acceptable. The fact that little is known about 'Abd-Allaah ibn 'Umayrah further damages the soundness of the hadeeth. Then there is the interruption (in the isnaad) between him and al-Ahnaf ibn Qays.

If anyone wants to quote this hadeeth as evidence that Allaah is above His creation and that He is above the mighty Throne, the Qur'aan and saheeh Sunnah are full of such evidence and there is no need to quote this hadeeth as evidence. There are a thousand pieces of evidence which Imam al-Dhahabi compiled in his book al-'Uluw, for those who want to know more.

We have already quoted some of the evidence on our site. Please see the answers to questions no. 992 and 11035.

And Allaah knows best.