

Ibrāhīm ibn Ma‘qil said: I heard Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī say: “I was with Ishāq ibn Rāhūyah when a man said: ‘Why don’t you compile an epitome (*mukhtaṣar*) of the prophetic ways?’ This stayed with me, and was the reason why I compiled this book (the *Ṣaḥīḥ*).”<sup>1</sup> Al-Dhahabī said: “It has been narrated through two firm channels of transmission that al-Bukhārī said: ‘I extracted this book from about 600,000 (sound) ḥadīths, and I compiled it over sixteen years, and I made it a plea for what lies between myself and Allāh.’”<sup>2</sup> Al-Firabrī said: Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl said to me: “I never included in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* a ḥadīth except I made a major ablution (*ghuṣl*) and prayed two *rak‘at* beforehand.”

Al-Nawawī said: “The scholars have agreed that the soundest of all ḥadīth compilations are the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, and their vast majority have agreed that the soundest and most beneficial of the two was al-Bukhārī’s.” He continued: “The totality of its ḥadīths are 7,275 with the repetitions and about 4,000 without.”

In his *Kitāb al-Tatabbu‘*, al-Dāraquṭnī argues for the weakness of 78 ḥadīths in al-Bukhārī, 100 in Muslim, and 32 in both based on *isnād* and *matn* criticism.

Al-Nawawī said: “The two *Ṣaḥīḥs* differ from all other books only in respect to the fact that what is in them is *ṣaḥīḥ* and does not require investigation.”<sup>3</sup> Ibn al-Ṣalāh said: “Whatever only al-Bukhārī or only Muslim narrates enters [also] into the category of what is definitely *ṣaḥīḥ*... except a few letters which some of the expert critics objected to, such as al-Dāraquṭnī and others – and these are known to the specialists.”<sup>4</sup> He said this after stating that what they agree upon is “definitely *ṣaḥīḥ*” (*maqtū‘un biṣiḥhatihī*) for the *Umma*. Imām al-Nawawī objected to the terms “definitely *ṣaḥīḥ*” while granting all that is in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* the level of “strongly presumed [*ṣaḥīḥ*] until it becomes *mutawātir*” (*yufīdu al-zanna ma lam yatawātar*) as is the rule with all *ṣaḥīḥ* lone-narrated (*āḥād*) ḥadīths.<sup>5</sup> But Ibn Kathīr differed: “I am with Ibn al-Ṣalāh in his conclusion and directives, and Allāh knows best.”<sup>6</sup> Al-Suyūṭī in *Tadrīb al-Rāwī* cites Ibn Kathīr’s words verbatim then states: “And this is also my choice and none other.”<sup>7</sup> This is because of the standing of the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* in the *Umma* and because none of the past Imāms in Islām ever declared explicitly and rightly that all they had gathered in their respective books was *ṣaḥīḥ* except al-Bukhārī and Muslim, and the verifying experts have confirmed their claim. Al-Suyūṭī also states:

Shaykh al-Islām said: “What al-Nawawī mentioned in *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* is based on the perspective of the majority (*al-aktharīn*); as for that of the verifying authorities (*al-muhaqqiqūn*), then no. For the verifying authorities also agree with Ibn al-Ṣalāh.”<sup>8</sup>

By “Shaykh al-Islām” al-Suyūṭī means the spotless *Ḥāfīz* and immaculate Imām Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī and his book *al-Nukat ‘alā Ibn al-Ṣalāh*.<sup>9</sup> Al-Suyūṭī goes on to quote in detail – mostly from

<sup>1</sup>M.M. Azami writes: “Al-Bukhārī did not claim that what he left out were the spurious, nor that there were no authentic traditions outside his collection. On the contrary, he said: ‘I only included in my book *al-Jāmi‘* those that were authentic, and I left out many more authentic traditions than this to avoid unnecessary length.’ He had no intention of collecting all the authentic traditions. He only wanted to compile a manual of ḥadīth according to the wishes of his shaykh Ishāq ibn Rāhūyah, and his function is quite clear from the title of his book *Al-Jāmi‘, al-Musnad, al-Ṣaḥīḥ, al-Mukhtaṣar, min umūr Rasūl Allāh wa Sunanihi, wa ayyāmih* (“The Compendium of Sound Narrations Linked Back With Uninterrupted Chains and Epitomized of the Matters of the Messenger of Allāh, His Ways, and His Times”). The word *al-mukhtaṣar*, epitome, itself explains that al-Bukhārī did not make any attempt at a comprehensive collection.” *Studies in Early Ḥadīth Literature* (p. 304-305). This should be understood by those who ask: “If ḥadīth x is not in al-Bukhārī nor Muslim then how can it be authentic?”

<sup>2</sup>Narrated by al-Khatīb, *al-Jāmi‘ li Akhlāq al-Rāwī* (2:270-271 #1613).

<sup>3</sup>Al-Nawawī, Introduction to his *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (1:20): “*Innamā yaftariqu al-Ṣaḥīḥāni ‘an ḡhayrihimā min al-kutub fi kawni mā fihimā ṣaḥīḥ an lā yuhtāju ilā al-nazari fih.*”

<sup>4</sup>Ibn al-Ṣalāh, *‘Ulūm al-Ḥadīth*, chapter on the *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth (Dār al-Fikr ed. p. 29): “*Mā infarada bihi al-Bukhārī aw Muslimun mundarijun fi qābili mā yuqta‘u biṣiḥhatihī... siwā ahrufin yasīratin takallama ‘alayhā ba‘du ahli al-naqdi min al-huffāz kal-Dāraquṭnī wa ḡhayrih, wa hiya ma‘rūfatun ‘inda ahli ḥādha al-sha‘n.*”

<sup>5</sup>Al-Nawawī, *Taqrīb wal-Taysīr* (p. 70) and *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (1:20).

<sup>6</sup>Ibn Kathīr, chapter on the *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth of his *al-Bā‘ith al-Hathīth* (p. 45).

<sup>7</sup>Al-Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb al-Rāwī* (Dār al-Kalim al-Tayyib ed. 1:145).

<sup>8</sup>*Tadrīb al-Rāwī* (1:143).

<sup>9</sup>See also Ibn Ḥajar’s words from his *Sharḥ Nukhbat al-Fikar* to the effect that the foremost ḥadīth expert’s examination of and familiarity with any given *āḥād* ḥadīth may take him to the conclusion that it is *qaṭ‘ī al-thubūt* – categorically established as *ṣaḥīḥ*, i.e. in effect of *mutawātir*-like authenticity – unlike the feel of the rest of the scholars with regard to the same ḥadīth.

*Hadī al-Sārī* – the refutations of Ibn Ḥajar to al-Dāraquṭnī’s criticism, showing that, in effect, the latter fails to invalidate the view of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as 100% *ṣaḥīḥ*.

The fact is that they are all *ṣaḥīḥ* but not all of them reach the same high degree of *ṣaḥīḥ*. This is in essence what al-Dhahabī concluded concerning the few narrators of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* whose grading was questioned: “The narration of one such as those, does not go below the rank of *ḥasan* which we might call the lowest rank of the *ṣaḥīḥ*.”<sup>10</sup> Shaykh Abū Ghudda comments in the margin: “This is an explicit confirmation that al-Bukhārī and Muslim did not confine themselves, in the narrations of their respective books, only to narrate ḥadīths that have the highest degree of *ṣiḥḥa*.” Then again in his appendix (p. 144) he states:

Our Shaykh, the ‘Allāma Aḥmad Shākir – Allāh have mercy on him – stated: “The truth without doubt among the verifiers of those who have knowledge of the sciences of ḥadīth... is that the ḥadīths of the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* are all *ṣaḥīḥ* and there is not in a single one of them a cause for true [technical] disparagement or weakness. What al-Dāraquṭnī and others criticized is only on the basis that it did not reach the high criterion which each of them defined in their respective books. As for the [criterion of] soundness (*siḥḥa*) of the ḥadīths in themselves, then both of them lived up to it.

Dr. Badī‘ al-Sayyid al-Lahḥām in his edition of Ibn Kathīr’s *al-Bā‘ith al-Ḥathīth* (p. 44-45) also closes the discussion on the topic of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* with the same words but without attributing them to Shākir. Abū Ghudda concludes (p. 145): “All these texts show that most of what is in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* is of the highest degree of the *ṣaḥīḥ*, and that some of what is in them is not of the highest degree of the *ṣaḥīḥ*.” More to the point, our teacher Dr. Nūr al-Dīn ‘Itr said in his manual *Manhaj al-Naqd fī ‘Ulūm al-Ḥadīth*: “The ruling concerning the ḥadīths of the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* is that they are all *ṣaḥīḥ*.”<sup>11</sup> All those mentioned above – Ibn al-Ṣalāh, al-Nawawī, al-Dhahabī, Ibn Kathīr, Ibn Ḥajar, al-Suyūṭī, Aḥmad Shākir, Abū Ghudda, ‘Itr, al-Lahḥām – agreed on the fact that all of what is in al-Bukhārī and Muslim is *ṣaḥīḥ*, and, apart from al-Nawawī’s duly recorded dissent, the *muḥaqqiqūn* such as Ibn al-Ṣalāh, Ibn Kathīr, Ibn Ḥajar, and al-Suyūṭī consider all the ḥadīths contained in them *maqṭū‘un biṣiḥḥatihi i.e.* of the same probative force as *mutawātir* ḥadīth. Further examination of the positions of the major ḥadīth Masters might add more names to this distinguished list.

The questions are sometimes asked (1) whether all the Ulema of Ḥadīth agree that all the ḥadīths in al-Bukhārī and Muslim are *ṣaḥīḥ* or (2) if there are any scholars who consider them to contain some weak narrations, and (3) whether one who believes that “the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* are not 100% *ṣaḥīḥ*” is an innovator. As was just shown, some of the greatest ḥadīth authorities such as Ibn al-Ṣalāh, Ibn Kathīr, and al-Suyūṭī answered yes to the first question. Imām al-Ḥaramayn (Ibn al-Juwaynī) said that if a man swore on pains of divorce that all that is in al-Bukhārī and Muslim is *ṣaḥīḥ* his marriage would be safe.<sup>12</sup> But Imām al-Dāraquṭnī said a small number may not reach that level so the answer to the second question has to be yes. Yet the objections were refuted one by one by Ibn Ḥajar at the beginning of *Fath al-Bārī* and Imām al-Nawawī at the beginning of *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.<sup>13</sup> The short formula “whether the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* are or not 100% *ṣaḥīḥ*” remains tenuous and misleading, for the *Umma* far and wide – meaning the Consensus of the *Fuqahā*’ generation after generation – have been satisfied that they are.

This conclusion excludes the chainless, broken-chained reports, or unattributed reports sometimes adduced by al-Bukhārī in his chapter-titles or appended to certain narrations. An example of the latter is the so-called “suicide ḥadīth” – one of al-Zuhrī’s unattributive narrations (*balāghāt*) which is actually broken-chained and therefore weak. It does not meet the criteria of ḥadīth authenticity used by the lesser and greater ḥadīth Masters, much less that of al-Bukhārī who mentioned it only to show its discrepancy with two other chains whose versions omit the attempted suicide story, and Allāh knows best.<sup>14</sup>

The above conclusion is proof that the position that everything that is found in the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* is rigorously sound refers only to full-chained reports positively attributed to the Prophet ﷺ, and Allāh knows best.

<sup>10</sup> Al-Dhahabī, *al-Mūqiza* (p. 80).

<sup>11</sup> ‘Itr, *Manhaj al-Naqd fī ‘Ulūm al-Ḥadīth* (3rd ed. p. 254).

<sup>12</sup> See Sirāj al-Dīn’s commentary on the *Bayquniyya*.

<sup>13</sup> In our own time Nāṣir al-Albānī, his arch-enemies the Ghumārī Shaykhs and Hasan al-Saqqāf, and their respective camps agreed – for once – upon the position that there are some *da‘īf* ḥadīths in them, which tends to confirm that, in real terms, the answer to the third question would tend to be yes unless the speaker is a ḥadīth Master of impeccable Sunnī belief sufficiently knowledgeable of the art to form an independent confirmation or invalidation, and Allāh knows best.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Fath* (12:359-360), Abū Shuhba, *al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya* (1:265-266), Mūsā Shahīn, *Fath al-Mun‘im* (2:337), al-Albānī in *Difā‘ ‘an al-Ḥadīth wal-Sīra* (p. 41-42), and Sa‘d al-Mirṣafī in *Ḥadīth Bid‘ al-Waḥī fil-Mizān* (p. 75-85).