



The hadith of Thuwayba and Mawlid al-Nabi ¹

Mufti Muhammad Khan Qadri

Translated by Abu Hanzala

(Released by www.aqdas.co.uk)

It is narrated by Abbas radiyAllahu 'anhu that a year after Abu Lahab died, I had a dream in which he was in a dreadful state. Abu Lahab said:

I have not found any solace since departing from you and am in a tormenting punishment, but, when Monday comes, there is a reduction in this punishment.

What was the reason for this reduction? Let us hear from Abbas radiyAllahu 'anhu himself. He says:

The Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam was born on a Monday and in this happiness, I freed a slave girl, Thuwayba, because it was she who informed me of his birth. Hence, when Monday comes, Allah reduces the punishment upon me for showing this happiness.²

From this event, the scholars have proven that even if a Kafir shows happiness at the blessed birth, he is rewarded, then why will a Muslim be left unrewarded if he does the same? Here are some references from the scholars regarding this:

1. The son of Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab Najdi narrates the event from Imam ibn Jawzi and then writes:

When this is the state of a Kafir like Abu Lahab – who has been condemned in the Qur'an – that when he shows happiness at the birth of the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam, he is rewarded; then what will be the status of a Muslim who believes in Allah and shows happiness at his sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam birth.³

2. Mufti Rashid Ahmad Ludhyanwi writes:

¹ The original book is at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/19386647/Reply-to-Objections-on-Mawlid> . This translation is from pages 32-44

² Fath al-Bari Sharh Bukhari, 9:145

³ Mukhtasar Sirat al-Rasul, p.13

When the punishment was reduced for a Kafir like Abu Lahab for showing happiness at the birth of the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam, then why will a Muslim not gain elevated ranks if he spends what he can in his love for the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam.⁴

There are 4 objections against using the narration for proving the celebration of Mawlid al-Nabi.

1. The narration is Mursal which is not accepted.
2. It is an event of a dream, hence, cannot be used as proof.
3. It is against the Qur'an.
4. Thuwayba, the slave girl, was not freed at the birth but at the time of Hijrah.

Isma'il bin Muhammad Ansari notes these objections thusly:

The narration of Urwa regarding Abu Lahab and his slave girl cannot be used to prove the gatherings of Mawlid because, firstly, it is Mursal. Secondly, even if it is Muttasil, it cannot be used as proof because it is an occurrence of a dream. Thirdly, it mentions that Abu Lahab released Thuwayba before she suckled the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam. This is against what the biographers write, that is, Abu Lahab released her a long time after she suckled. Fourthly, the Mursal of Urwa, which Nasir al-Din Dimashqi and ibn al-Jazari have used to prove the gatherings of Mawlid; it is against what is apparent from the Qur'an.⁵

Before we present our answer, it must be borne in mind that this narration is neither the foundation nor a Hujjah for the gatherings of Mawlid. Our proofs have been mentioned earlier and this narration is only used to substantiate them.

Objection: The First

This narration is rejected because it is Mursal.

Answer

We shall present the opinions of the Imams with regards to this so that we can decide whether Mursal narrations are accepted or not.

The four Imams – Imam Abu Hanifa, Imam Malik, Imam Shafi'i and Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal – are all in agreement that Mursal Hadiths are accepted. Three of them unconditionally accept them and Imam Shafi'i has some conditions for their acceptance. Hafidh Jalal al-Din Suyuti writes with reference to ibn Jarir:

All the Tabi'in agree upon the acceptance of Mursal and rejection of them is not narrated from any of them. None of the Imams for 200 years after this rejected them.⁶

Imam Nawawi writes regarding Mursal:

⁴ al-Hasan al-Naqwi, 1:347

⁵ al-Qawl al-Fasl, p.84-87

⁶ Tadrib al-Rawi, 1:198

According to Imam Malik, Imam Abu Hanifa, Imam Ahmad and most jurists; Mursal can be used for proof. The view of Imam Shafi'i is that when a Mursal is supported by other means, it can be used for proof.⁷

Shaykh Abdul Haq Muhaddith Dihlawi writes about the stance of the Imams:

According to Imam Abu Hanifa and Imam Malik, Mursal are accepted in all cases and proof for this is that Irsal is done due to absolute trust and reliability. Since they are concerned with Thiqa [trustworthy narrators], if the narration was not Sahih according to this Thiqa, he would not narrate it saying *RasulAllah sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam said this*. According to Imam Shafi'i, the Mursal is accepted if it is supported by other means and there are two opinions from Imam Ahmad – one of acceptance and the other of caution.⁸

Shaykh Jamal al-Din Qasmi has mentioned three opinions regarding Mursal, the second of which is:

Mursal can be used for proof in all cases. This is the opinion of Imam Malik, Imam Abu Hanifa and, according to the narration of Imam Nawawi; it is also the position of Imam Ahmad, ibn Qayyim and ibn Kathir.⁹

Dr. Mahmud al-Tahan, teacher at the faculty of Shari'ah, Jami'a Islamiya, Madinah, has mentioned three opinions. The second and third are cited thusly:

The second opinion is that Mursal are Sahih and worthy of being used as proof. This is according to the three Imams, Abu Hanifa, and Malik and, according to the well known opinion, Imam Ahmad too, on the condition that the one who does Irsal is Thiqa and does Irsal with Thiqa. Proof for this is that how can a Thiqa tabi'i say that the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam said something unless he has heard it from someone who is also Thiqa.

The third opinion is that Mursal are accepted on some criteria. This is the view of Imam Shafi'i and some other people of knowledge.¹⁰

This passage also clarifies that there are two opinions narrated about Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal but the more well known is that Mursal are accepted.

This is also supported by these words of Imam Jalal al-Din Suyuti:

The well known opinion of Imam Malik, Abu Hanifa and the well known opinion of Imam Ahmad is that Mursal narrations are Sahih.¹¹

⁷ Muqaddima Sahih Muslim

⁸ Muqaddima Ashi'at al-Lum'at

⁹ Qawa'id al-Tahdith, p.134

¹⁰ Taysir Mustalah al-Hadith, p.72

¹¹ Tadrib al-Rawi, 1:198

As for the opinion that hadith scholars do not accept it, then we say that who is a greater hadith scholar than the four Imams? They are hadith scholars and also Mujtahids and jurists and their opinion takes precedence over the hadith scholars.

To say that other hadith scholars do not accept Mursal at all is also incorrect. This is because Imam Abu Dawud, who is a great hadith scholar, states:

The earlier generation [aslaf] such as Sufyan Thawri, Malik and Awza'i used the Marasil as proof. However, when Imam Shafi'i came, he disagreed regarding them and Imam Ahmad and others followed him in this.¹²

The truth is that the hadith scholars also opine the same as Imam Shafi'i.

The middle path concerning Mursal

We mentioned these sayings to show the status of Mursal narrations. Otherwise, our opinion is that of the research scholars who adopt the position of moderation and say: If it is well known about the person doing Irsal that he only does Irsal through well known Thiqa, only then will his narration be accepted, otherwise not.

Hafidh Salal al-Din Abu Sa'id Khalil bin Kaykaldi 'Ala'i [d.716 H] has done research on Mursal. He states that there are ten opinions regarding them and he mentions the most correct of these opinions thusly:

The seventh opinion is that if the habit of the person doing Irsal is known that he only narrates from Thiqa, then his narration will be accepted, otherwise not. This is the most correct opinion.¹³

This is the reason why even Imam Shafi'i, who holds an opinion against Mursal, says: I accept the Mursal of Sa'id bin Musayyib because he only does Irsal from Thiqa. Shaykh Qufal Marwazi writes with reference to Imam Shafi'i:

The Irsal of ibn Musayyib is a Hujjah according to us.¹⁴

Objection: The Second

This incident is from a dream and dreams are not a Hujjah.

Answer

We say that dreams of non-Prophets are not a Hujjah in the Shari'ah and we do not present this narration as such. Rather, we present it to substantiate our position, but, why does this necessitate that it cannot be presented at all?

The Qur'an has mentioned the dream of a non-Muslim to be true and also that some realities are derived from it. It is in Sura Yusuf that whilst Yusuf 'alaihis salam was imprisoned, two

¹² Risala Abi Dawud ila Ahl Makkah, p.24

¹³ Jami' al-Tahsil fi Ahkam al-Marasil, p.48

¹⁴ Ibid, p.46

inmates saw dreams which they narrated to Yusuf 'alaihi salam. He told them their interpretations which came true. After hearing of their dreams, he invited them both to monotheism and belief which proves that they were both upon Kufr at the time.

Secondly, there are two issues here. The first is that Abbas radiyAllahu 'anhu saw a dream in which Abu Lahab informed him that due to the blessings of freeing Thuwayba, my punishment is reduced on a Monday. The second issue is that whilst in a wakeful state, Abbas radiyAllahu 'anhu said:

The reason for reduction in punishment is because the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam was born on a Monday and it was Thuwayba who bought this news to Abu Lahab, hence, he freed her.¹⁵

Hence, the incident is not just from a dream; rather, it is the saying of a companion of the Prophet who was an interpreter of the Qur'an. This saying of his holds the rank of Marfu' because it is not through Qiyas or Ijtihad.

Thirdly, if, Allah forbid, this was a wrongful dream, then Abbas radiyAllahu 'anhu would not have narrated it and if he did, then other companions [sahaba] and successors [tabi'in] would have rejected it. No such matter is found in the books of hadith. Moreover, they have all narrated it and derived rulings from it.

Another question raised at this point is that this narration of Abbas radiyAllahu 'anhu is not accepted because he was a Kafir at the time. In reply, we say that, firstly, he had become a Muslim at that time because the incident of the dream occurred approximately two years after the battle of Badr. This is because Abu Lahab died a year after Badr and Abbas radiyAllahu 'anhu saw him in a dream a year after his death. Also, when Abbas radiyAllahu 'anhu came to participate in Badr, the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam told his companions:

Whoever finds Abbas bin Abdul Muttalib, do not kill him because he has been forced to participate.¹⁶

This is also supported by the fact that when recompense was sought for the captives of Badr, Abbas radiyAllahu 'anhu replied that he has no wealth. The Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam said: Oh Uncle, tell me about the wealth that you have left with Umm Fadl. Hearing this, Abbas radiyAllahu 'anhu said:

I swear by the being who sent you with the truth, apart from my wife and I, no-one knew this and I know that you are the messenger of Allah.¹⁷

Secondly, even we accept that he was upon Kufr at the time; this narration is still acceptable because it is not a condition to be a Muslim at the time of the event but to be a Muslim at the time of narration. When the tabi'in heard this from him, he was certainly a Muslim. The hadith scholars have mentioned the principle that if someone heard something from the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam whilst they were Kafirs and narrated it in the state of Islam, even after the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam had passed away, then it is accepted.

¹⁵ Fath al-Bari, 9:118

¹⁶ al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh, p128

¹⁷ Ibid, 2:123

Yes, if he accepted Islam in the lifetime of the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam, then he will be called a *Sahabi*, otherwise, a *Tabi'i*.

Shaykh Ahmad Muhammad Shakir writes:

If the person who was not yet a Muslim heard something from the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam and became a Muslim after his demise, such as Tanuji, the messenger of Heraclius; even though he is a *Tabi'i*, his narration of hadith will be *Muttasil* [uninterrupted]. This is because reliance is upon the narration, that is, he has narrated it from the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam even though when he heard it, he was not a Muslim but when he narrated it, he was.¹⁸

Objection: The Third

This narration is against the following verses of the Qur'an:

- It says in Sura Baqarah regarding those who die on Kufr:

The doom will not be lightened for them, neither will they be reprieved.¹⁹

- In another place, it talks of the actions of the Kuffar:

And We will proceed to what they have done of deeds, so We shall render them as scattered floating dust.²⁰

When the Qur'an has made it clear that the actions of the Kuffar are futile and they will neither be rewarded for them nor will there be a reduction in their punishment, then how can the narration be accepted since both things have been proven for a Kafir in it, that is, reward for his actions and a reduction in his punishment.

Answer

1. The first thing that must be noted is that all opponents of gatherings of Mawlid agree that due to serving the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam, Allah reduced the punishment of Abu Talib even though he demised on Kufr. It is in Sahih Muslim that the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam was asked:

Oh Messenger of Allah, did Abu Talib receive any benefit due to serving you because he bore oppression upon himself because of you.

The Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam replied:

Yes, if it were not for me, he would have been in the lowest part of hell but because he served me, Allah has reduced his punishment so much so that only his feet receive chastisement.²¹

¹⁸ Sharh al-Fih al-Suyuti, p.26

¹⁹ 2:162

²⁰ 25:23

²¹ Sahih Muslim, 1:115

Hence, if the reduction in punishment for Abu Talib is not against these Qur'anic verses, why is the reduction in punishment for Abu Lahab against them? They are both the same in that they demised on Kufr.

2. When leading Qur'anic exegetes and hadith scholars have elucidated that there is no contradiction between the narration and Qur'anic verses and that they can be reconciled and this reconciliation has been explained, then what reason is left for objection?

Let us see what reputed hadith scholars and researchers opine. They have refuted all objections and have said that it is from the specialties of the Prophet sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam that whatever action is done for him, Allah forgives even a Kafir due to it.

- 2.1 We will begin with Hafidh ibn Hajar about whom it is claimed that he declared this narration to be against the Qur'an. Those who claim this present the beginning of his discourse but leave out the section where he reconciles and delivers his conclusion. He says that this narration is not about a Kafir, it is about the respect and reverence of the Prophet sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam. Allah knows best why this part of Imam ibn Hajar's discourse is excluded. We now present the whole of Hafidh ibn Hajar's passage:

This hadith proves that in some cases, the actions of even a Kafir can benefit him in the hereafter. However, this is against what is apparent from the Qur'an. Allah says: And We will proceed to what they have done of deeds, so We shall render them as scattered floating dust. It was said that the narration is Mursal because Urwa does not say who narrated it to him. Even if it is Muttasil, it is an incident from a dream and perhaps the one who saw the dream became a Muslim after it, hence, it is not a Hujjah. Secondly, even if it is accepted, there is a doubt that this is not for every Kafir and only specific to those connected to the Prophet sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam. The incident of Abu Talib points towards this that has been mentioned earlier that his punishment was reduced and he was taken from the lowermost level of hell to the uppermost due to serving the Prophet sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam.

Imam Bayhaqi said that what is narrated about Kafirs that their good actions are useless means that a Kafir will not be saved from hell and taken to heaven. However, it is possible that due to his good actions, he receives a reduction in punishment from all his wrongdoings apart from Kufr. Qadi Iyad said there is consensus that the actions of a Kafir are not beneficial to him and he will not receive bounties and there will be no reduction in his punishment though the punishment may be periodic. I [ibn Hajar] say that this cannot rebut the possibility of what Imam Bayhaqi mentioned, that is, whatever is mentioned is connected with Kufr. What prevents there being a reduction in punishment for any sin apart from Kufr? Imam Qurtubi said that reduction in punishment is specific to Abu Lahab and those people about whom

there is textual evidence [and not for every Kafir]. ibn Munir wrote a marginalia to this comment of Imam Qurtubi saying: There are two issues here. One of them is impossible and that is that obedience of a Kafir be attributed to his Kufr because it is a precondition of obedience that it be done with a true intention and this is not found in a Kafir. The second is that benefit is bestowed upon a Kafir solely due to the grace of Allah and the intellect does not consider this impossible. When this is clarified, then it should be known that Abu Lahab freeing Thuwayba is not obedience [due to his Kufr] but Allah reduced his punishment due to His grace similar to Him showing grace to Abu Talib.

We are bound by the Shari'ah in both accepting and not accepting punishment [our intellect has no significance here]. I [ibn Hajar] say that the crux of ibn Munir's passage is that the grace of Allah that has been mentioned [about the reduction in punishment for Abu Lahab] is due to the honour of that blessed personality for whom the Kafir performed the action [meaning, it is the honour of the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam and not the Kafir].²²

2.2 Imam Badr al-Din Ayni wrote the same and added:

This hadith expounds the issue that sometimes, even a Kafir receives reward for performing those actions that believers attain closeness through such as Abu Talib. The only difference is that for Abu Lahab, the reduction is less than that for Abu Talib because Abu Talib helped and protected the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam whereas Abu Lahab had enmity for him.²³

3. We shall also present the passages of hadith scholars who have used this narration to prove gatherings of Mawlid so that it becomes clear that they did not consider it to be against Qur'anic verses. If they did, then they would have rejected the narration.

Hafidh Shams al-Din ibn al-Jazari writes in his *'Urf al-Ta'rif bi al-Mawlid al-Sharif*:

When that enemy of Allah in whose chastisement a chapter of the Qur'an was revealed shows happiness at the birth of the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam and his punishment is reduced; then what will be the status of that Muslim who loves him and shows happiness at his birth? By the Lord, Allah will grant such a Muslim paradise due to his happiness for the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam.²⁴

Hafidh Shams al-Din Muhammad bin Nasir al-Din Dimashqi writes in *Mawrid al-Sari fi Mawlid al-Hadi*:

It is authentically proven that due to freeing Thuwayba to show happiness at the birth, Abu Lahab received a reduction in punishment.

²² Fath al-Bari, 9:119

²³ 'Umdat al-Qari, 20:95

²⁴ Hujjat Allah 'ala al-'Alamin, p.238

Hafidh Dimashqi then said this poetry:

When a Kafir like Abu Lahab – who has been condemned in the Qur'an and has been told to be deserved of an eternity in hell – shows happiness at the birth of the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam and receives a reduction in punishment every Monday. Then how fortunate is that Muslim who spends his whole life showing happiness at his arrival.²⁵

Hafidh ibn Qayyim also writes about the reduction in punishment:

When the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam was born, Thuwayba went to her master, Abu Lahab, and said: Tonight, a son has been born in the house of Abdullah. Abu Lahab showed happiness by emancipating her. Allah did not waste this action of his and after his death; he is given water through that thumb.²⁶

Mawlana Abdul Hayy Lakhnawi writes:

When punishment was reduced for a Kafir like Abu Lahab due to showing happiness at the birth of the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam, hence, if one of his followers shows happiness at his birth and spends what he can in his love, then why will he not attain higher ranks?²⁷

Objection: The Fourth

It is wrong to assert that Abu Lahab freed Thuwayba at the time of the birth. Rather, he freed her after the Hijrah just as the biographers have written.

Answer

It is true that there are three views regarding the emancipation of Thuwayba. Some have said that Abu Lahab released her after the Hijrah and some have written that he freed her long before the birth. However, the correct view and that of the majority is that he freed her at the birth. Let us see what three biographers write:

1. Hafidh ibn Kathir has mentioned the freedom of Thuwayba and the reward she got from Abu Lahab in these words:

When Thuwayba delivered the news of the birth, Abu Lahab freed her straight away due to which she was rewarded.²⁸

2. We have already seen the words of Hafidh ibn Qayyim but let us revisit them:

When the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam was born, Thuwayba bought glad tidings of this to her master, Abu Lahab, and said: Tonight, a son has

²⁵ Hujjat Allah 'ala al-'Alamin, p.238

²⁶ Tuhfat al-Mawdud bi Ahkam al-Mawlud, p.19

²⁷ Fatawa Abdul Hayy, p.282

²⁸ al-Bidayah, 2:273

been born in the house of Abdullah. Abu Lahab showed happiness by emancipating her.²⁹

3. Nawab Siddiq Hasan Qinnuji writes:

Eight women suckled the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam. His mother did so for three or eight or seven days. Then Thuwayba Aslamiya Jariya who was freed by Abu Lahab at the time of her bringing glad tidings of the birth of the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam.³⁰

The second matter is that the caution and research that hadith scholars undertake, the same is not the case with biographers. Hence, when Bukhari and other books of hadith mention her emancipation to be at the time of the birth, then this will be given precedence.

Thirdly, research scholars have clarified that Thuwayba being freed was at the time of the birth and this is correct. Apart from this, the other two opinions are weak [da'if].

The author of *Sirat Shamiya*, Shaykh Muhammad bin Yusuf Salihi Shami writes with reference to the author of *al-Ghurar*:

There is disagreement about the emancipation of Thuwayba. One position is that she was freed at the time of giving glad tidings of the Prophetic birth and this opinion is the correct one. Another opinion is that Khadija radiyAllahu 'anha asked Abu Lahab to sell Thuwayba to her so that she may free her but he refused. When the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam made Hijrah to Madinah, Abu Lahab freed her but this opinion is weak.³¹

Imam Muhammad bin Abdul Baqi Zarqani writes in his *Sharh al-Mawahib* about the three opinions:

The correct position is that when Thuwayba informed Abu Lahab of the birth of the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam, he freed her and her words at the time were: Oh Abu Lahab, do you not know that at the house of Amina, the son of your brother, Abdullah, has been born. Abu Lahab said: Go, you are free – as mentioned in *Rawd*. Another opinion is that he freed her after the Hijrah. Imam Shami said that this opinion is weak and it is also narrated that he freed her a long time before the birth.³²

²⁹ Tuhfat al-Mawdud bi Ahkam al-Mawlud, p.19

³⁰ al-Shamamat al-'Anbariya, p.13

³¹ Subul al-Huda wa al-Rashad, p.485

³² al-Zarqani 'ala al-Mawahib, 1:138