

Islam Question & Answer

General Supervisor:
Shaykh Muhammad Saalih al-Munajjid

124483 - Age of the Mother of the Believers 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) when the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) married her

the question

Whilst visiting some chat rooms, I read a very strange topic, and I want someone who has knowledge of the Prophet's biography (seerah) to explain this matter to me, may Allah bless you. To sum up, after researching the accusations the reports narrated in Saheeh al-Bukhaari which state that 'Aa'ishah's age, when the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did the marriage contract with her, was six years, and that he consummated the marriage with her when she was nine years old, a journalist cast doubts on Saheeh al-Bukhaari. The researcher did not only examine the reports from the angle of figures and dates, but also from the angle of the isnaads through which the most famous hadeeths were narrated, as mentioned in al-Bukhaari and Muslim. In both cases he seems to have wanted to demonstrate that he is smart and prove his point.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah

Firstly:

The definition of the age of 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) when the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did the marriage contract with her as being six years, and of the age when he consummated the marriage with her as being nine years, is not a matter of ijtihaad (individual opinion) on the part of the scholars, such that we could argue whether it is right or

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wrong; rather this is a historical narration which is proven by evidence that confirms its soundness and the necessity of accepting it. That is for several reasons:

1.

It was narrated by the individual concerned herself, namely 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her), and is not something that someone else said about her, or the description of a historian or hadeeth scholar. Rather it comes in the context of her speaking about herself (may Allah be pleased with her), when she said:

The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) married me when I was six years old. We came to Madinah and stayed among Banu'l-Haarith ibn Khazraj. I fell sick and lost my hair, (then I recovered) and my hair grew down to my earlobes. My mother Umm Roomaan came to me when I was on a swing and some of my friends were with me. She called me loudly and I went to her, and I did not know what she wanted of me. She took me by the hand and made me stand at the door of the house, as I was gasping for breath, until I had calmed down. Then she took some water and wiped my face and head with it, then she took me into the house. There were some women of the Ansaar in the house, who said: With good wishes and blessings and good luck. She handed me over to them and they adorned me, and suddenly I saw the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) at mid-morning, and they handed me over to him. At that time I was nine years old.

Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 3894; Muslim, 1422.

2.

This report from 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) is in the soundest of books after the Book of Allah, may He be exalted, namely the two Saheehs of al-Bukhaari and Muslim.

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It was narrated from 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) via a number of isnaads (chains of narration), not by one isnaad only, as some ignorant people claim.

·The most well-known chain of narration is that of Hishaam ibn 'Urwah ibn az-Zubayr, from his father 'Urwah ibn az-Zubayr, from 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her). This is one of the soundest narrations, as 'Urwah ibn az-Zubayr is one of the most well acquainted of people with 'Aa'ishah, because she was his maternal aunt.

·It was also narrated via another chain, by az-Zuhri from 'Urwah ibn az-Zubayr, from 'Aa'ishah. Narrated by Muslim, 1422.

·It was also narrated via another chain by al-A'mash, from Ibraaheem, from al-Aswad, from 'Aa'ishah, who said: "The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) married 'Aa'ishah when she was six years old and consummated the marriage with her when she was nine years old, and he died when she was eighteen years old. Narrated by Muslim, 1422.

·It was also narrated via another chain, from Muhammad ibn 'Amr, from Yahya ibn 'Abd ar-Rahmaan ibn Haatib, from 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her). Narrated by Abu Dawood, 4937.

Shaykh Abu Ishaq al-Huwayni compiled the names of those who followed 'Urwah ibn az-Zubayr, namely: al-Aswad ibn Yazeed, al-Qaasim ibn 'Abd ar-Rahmaan, al-Qaasim ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, 'Amrah bint 'Abd ar-Rahmaan, and Yahya ibn 'Abd ar-Rahmaan ibn Haatib.

He also compiled the names of those who followed Hishaam ibn 'Urwah in narrating this hadeeth. They were: Ibn Shihaab az-Zuhri and Abu Hamzah Maymoon, the freed slave of 'Urwah.

Then he named those who narrated it from Hishaam ibn 'Urwah among the scholars of Madinah. The reader should understand that this hadeeth is one of those that were also narrated by Hishaam in Madinah. They were: Abu'z-Zinnaad 'Abdullah ibn Dhakwaan and his son 'Abd ar-

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Rahmaan ibn Abi'z-Zinnaad, and 'Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Yahya ibn 'Urwah.

Among the people of Makkah (it was narrated by) Sufyaan ibn 'Uyaynah.

(It was also narrated by) Jareer ibn 'Abd al-Hameed ad-Dubbi among the people of ar-Rayy.

Among the people of Basra (it was narrated by): Hamaad ibn Salamah, Hamaad ibn Zayd, Wuhayb ibn Khaalid, and others.

See the lecture given by Shaykh Abu Ishaq al-Huwayni (may Allah preserve him) discussing the ignorance of the one who wrote the article mentioned in the question, and the response to it, on the following link (in Arabic):

http://www.islamway.com/?iw_s=Lesson&iw_a=view&lesson_id=86106

See also the following link (in Arabic):

http://www.islamway.com/?iw_s=Lesson&iw_a=view&lesson_id=86495

All of these lists are mentioned in order to ward off the specious argument of some ignorant people who say that Hishaam ibn 'Urwah was the only one who narrated it. Even if we accept [?] that Hishaam became confused at the end of his life, the correct view is that this accusation was made only by Abu'l-Hasan ibn al-Qattaan in Bayaan al-Wahm wa'l-Eehaam, and he was mistaken in doing so.

Adh-Dhahabi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Hishaam ibn 'Urwah was one of the prominent and authoritative scholars, but when he grew old his memory failed, although he did not get confused, and there is nothing valid in the view of Abu'l-Hasan ibn al-Qattaan, which suggests that he and Suhayl ibn Abi Saalih became confused and changed. Yes, the man changed a little and his memory was not as sound as it had been in his

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youth. He forgot some of the things he had memorized and he made some mistakes, but so what?! He was not infallible. When he came to Iraq at the end of his life he passed on a great deal of knowledge, among which were a few hadeeths that he did not remember well. Something similar happened to Maalik, Shu'bah, Wakee' and other senior, trustworthy narrators. So forget about this nonsense and mixing trustworthy scholars with weak narrators and those who became confused. Hishaam was Shaykh al-Islam, and may Allah help us against what Ibn al-Qattaan suggested and what 'Abd ar-Rahmaan ibn Kharaash said: Maalik did not approve of him because he got angry with him for going and narrating hadeeth in Iraq. End quote.

Mizaan al-I'tidaal, 4/301-302

4.

There are reports from people other than 'Aa'ishah that speak of the Prophet's marriage to her when she was nine years old. Among those who were her contemporaries and knew her better than others were the following:

Imam Ahmad narrated in al-Musnad, 6/112 from Muhammad ibn Bishr, who said: Muhammad ibn 'Amr told us: Abu Salamah and Yahya told us: When Khadeejah died, Khawlah bint Hakeem, the wife of 'Uthmaan ibn Maz'oon, came and said: O Messenger of Allah, why don't you get married? He said: To whom? She said: If you wish, a virgin, and if you wish, a previously married woman. He said: Who is the virgin? She said: The daughter of the dearest of Allah's creation to you: 'Aa'ishah bint Abi Bakr... And he mentioned the story in detail, including the fact that she was six years old when the marriage contract was done, and was nine years old when the marriage was consummated.

5.

This is what 'Aa'ishah narrated concerning herself, and it was conveyed by the narrators from her,

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and it is what is stated in all the historical sources that give the biography of 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her). There is no difference among them concerning that, and the matter was not subject to ijtihaad. When a person speaks about himself (or herself), no one has the right to suggest anything else.

6.

The historical sources are also agreed that 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) was born in Islam, four or five years after the Prophet's mission began.

Imam al-Bayhaqi (may Allah have mercy on him) said - commenting on the hadeeth, "I only ever remember my parents as following Islam"-:

'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) was born in Islam, because her father became Muslim at the beginning of the Prophet's mission. It is proven from al-Aswad, from 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) married her when she was six years old, and consummated the marriage with her when she was nine years old, and he died when she was eighteen years old. But Asma' bint Abi Bakr was born during the Jaahiliyyah, and became Muslim when her father became Muslim. ... According to what Abu 'Abdullah ibn Mandah said, narrating from Ibn Abi'z-Zinnaad, Asma' bint Abi Bakr was ten years older than 'Aa'ishah, and the mother of Asma' became Muslim later on. Asma' (may Allah be pleased with her) said: My mother came to me and she was (still) a mushrik. According to a hadeeth that she quoted, her name was Qateelah, from Banu Maalik ibn Hasal. She was not the mother of 'Aa'ishah. Asma' became Muslim when her father did, not her mother. With regard to 'Abd ar-Rahmaan ibn Abi Bakr, it seems that he was an adult when his parents became Muslim, but he did not follow them in becoming Muslim, until he became Muslim a long time after that. He was the oldest of the children of Abu Bakr. End quote.

As-Sunan al-Kubra, 6/203

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Adh-Dhahabi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

'Aa'ishah is one of those who were born in Islam; she was eight years younger than Faatimah. She used to say: "I only ever remember my parents as following Islam". End quote.

Siyar A'laam an-Nubala', 2/139

Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

She - i.e., 'Aa'ishah - was born four or five years after the Prophet's mission began. End quote.

Al-Isaabah, 8/16

Based on that, her age at the time of the Hijrah was eight or nine years. This is in accordance with the hadeeth quoted above from 'Aa'ishah herself.

7.

The historical sources are also agreed that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) died when 'Aa'ishah was eighteen years old, so at the time of the Hijrah she must have been nine years old.

8.

The books of biography and history state that 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) died at the age of sixty-three years, in 57 AH. So before the Hijrah her age was 6 years. So if you round up or down - as is the custom of the Arabs in counting years - they round up or down the first and last years, so her age at the time of the Hijrah was eight years, and her age at the time when the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) married her, eight months after the Hijrah, was nine years.

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9.

The above is also in accordance with what the scholars have narrated concerning the difference in age between Asma' bint Abi Bakr and 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her). Adh-Dhahabi (may Allah be pleased with him) said: She - i.e., Asma' - was ten or more years older than 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her). End quote.

Siyar A'laam an-Nubala', 2/188

'Aa'ishah was born four or five years after the Prophet's mission began. Abu Na'eem said in Mu'jam as-Sahaabah that Asma' was born ten years before the Prophet's mission began. End quote.

So the difference in age between 'Aa'ishah and Asma' was fourteen or fifteen years. This is the view of adh-Dhahabi quoted above: She - i.e., Asma' - was ten or more years older than 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her).

10.

Although we quote these numbers that are mentioned in the books of biography and history, what we mostly rely on is what is narrated with saheeh isnaads, not what we find in books quoted without any isnaad. But all of the reports are in accordance with the hadeeths with undoubtedly saheeh isnaads that we quoted at the beginning of this answer. Hence we quoted reports from the history books that support what we quoted above.

Secondly:

As for the response to the author of the hostile article quoting as evidence what is narrated in some sources about the age difference between Asma' and 'Aa'ishah being ten years, we say:

That is not proven in terms of the isnaad or chain of narrators. If its isnaad is proven, then it may

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be understood in a manner that is in accordance with the definitive evidence mentioned above.

With regard to the isnaad or chain of narrators, it was narrated from 'Abd ar-Rahmaan ibn Abi'z-Zinnaad that he said: Asma' bint Abi Bakr was ten years older than 'Aa'ishah.

This report was narrated via two isnaads from al-Asma 'i from 'Abd ar-Rahmaan ibn Abi'z-Zinnaad.

The first isnaad was narrated by Ibn 'Asaakir in Tareekh Dimashq (69/10). He said: Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali ibn Ahmad al-Maaliki told us: Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Waahid as-Sulami told us: My grandfather Abu Bakr told us: Abu Muhammad ibn Zabr told us: Ahmad ibn Sa'd ibn Ibraaheem az-Zuhri told us: Muhammad ibn Abi Safwaan told us: al-Asma'i told us, that Ibn Abi'z-Zinnaad said: ... and he quoted the report.

The second isnaad was narrated by Ibn 'Abd al-Barr in al-Isti'aab fi Ma'rifat al-Ashaab (2/616): Ahmad ibn Qaasim told us: Muhammad ibn Mu'aawiyah told us; Ibraaheem ibn Moosa ibn Jameel told us: Ismaa'eel ibn Ishaaq al-Qaadi told us: Nasr ibn 'Ali told us: al-Asma'i told us: Ibn Abi'z-Zinnaad told us: Asma' bint Abi Bakr, who was ten years or so older than 'Aa'ishah, said:...

If the fair-minded researcher thinks about this report it will become clear to him that accepting its apparent meaning and rejecting all the proven evidence to the contrary is an offence against knowledge and scholarship, for the following reasons:

1.

'Abd ar-Rahmaan ibn Abi'z-Zinnaad (100-174 AH) is the only one who stated that the difference in age between Asma' and 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with them both) was ten years. The evidence mentioned above, on the other hand, is abundant and was narrated from more than one of the Taabi'een. It is known that what is abundant takes precedence over that which is smaller.

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Most of the scholars regarded 'Abd ar-Rahmaan ibn Abi'z-Zinnaad himself as da'eef (weak). In his biography of him in Tahdheeb at-Tahdheeb (6/172), Imam Ahmad is quoted as saying concerning him: He is mudtarab al-hadeeth (his hadeeth is faulty). Ibn Ma'een is quoted as saying: He is not one of those whom the scholars of hadeeth quote as evidence. 'Ali ibn al-Madeeni is quoted as saying: Whatever he narrated in Madinah is saheeh, but whatever he narrated in Baghdad was corrupted by the Baghdadis. I saw 'Abd ar-Rahmaan - i.e., Ibn Mahdi - draw a line through the hadeeth of 'Abd ar-Rahmaan ibn Abi'z-Zinnaad. Abu Haatim said: His hadeeth may be written down but it may not be quoted as evidence. An-Nasaa'i said: His hadeeth cannot be quoted as evidence.

With regard to at-Tirmidhi describing him as thiqah (trustworthy) in his Sunan, following hadeeth no. 1755, this contradicts the criticism of the previous commentator, and criticism (of a narrator) takes precedence over praise, especially with regard to the reports that were narrated only by 'Abd ar-Rahmaan ibn Abi'z-Zinnaad , especially when he says something that is contrary to what is well-known in the books of the Sunnah and history.

3.

According to the report of Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, he said: "She (Asma') was ten years or so older than 'Aa'ishah." This report is more sound than the report of Ibn 'Asaakir, because Nasr ibn 'Ali, who narrated it from al-Asma'i in the isnaad of Ibn 'Abd al-Barr is thiqah (trustworthy), as it says in Tahdheeb at-Tahdheeb, 10/431. With regard to Muhammad ibn Abi Safwaan, the narrator from al-Asma'i in the isnaad of Ibn 'Asaakir, no one described him as trustworthy.

The words in the report of Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, "or so", indicate that he was not certain about (the difference in age) being ten years. This makes his report weak and it is not permissible for the fair-minded researcher to reject the evidence quoted above for the sake of this uncertainty.

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Moreover, it is possible to reconcile this report with the other reports by saying that Asma' was born six years or five years before the Prophet's mission began, and 'Aa'ishah was born four or five years after his mission began. When Asma' died in 73 AH, she was ninety-one or ninety-two years old, as was mentioned by adh-Dhahabi in *Siyar A'laam an-Nubala'*, 3/380: Ibn Abi'z-Zinnaad said: She was ten years older than 'Aa'ishah. I (adh-Dhahabi) say: Based on that, her age would have been ninety-one years. Hishaam ibn 'Urwah, on the other hand, said: She lived for one hundred years and not one of her teeth fell out. End quote.

5.

It may also be said that Asma' was born approximately 14 years before the Prophet's mission began - which is what is affirmed by the author himself in his previous article - and that in the year of the Hijrah she was twenty-seven years old, and her age at the time of her death in 73 AH was one hundred years, so as to be in harmony with what the historical sources are agreed upon with regard to Asma' bint Abi Bakr, that she died in the same year in which her son 'Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr was killed (73 AH), and that she died at the age of one hundred years. Hishaam ibn 'Urwah said, narrating from his father: Asma' reached the age of one hundred years and not one of her teeth fell out and she remained alert all her life.

There follow the names of the sources that mention that:

Hilyat al-Awliya', 2/56

Mu'jam as-Sahaabah by Abi Na'eem al-Asbahaani

Al-Isti'aab by Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, 4/1783

Tareekh Dimashq by Ibn 'Asaakir, 69/8

Asad al-Ghaabah by Ibn al-Atheer, 7/12

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Al-Isaabah by Ibn Hajar, 7/487

Tahdheeb al-Kamaal, 35/125

With regard to the idea of her having been born ten years before the Prophet's mission began, this was only stated by Abu Na'eem al-Asbahaani, in a statement in which he said:

She - i.e., Asma' - was the sister of 'Aa'ishah through her father. She was older than 'Aa'ishah; she was born twenty-seven years before the Hijrah, and ten years before the mission of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) began. When she was born, her father (Abu Bakr) as-Siddeeq was twenty-one years old. Asma' died in 73 AH in Makkah, a few days after her son 'Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr was killed, at the age of one hundred years, having lost her sight. End quote.

It is as if Abu Na'eem meant that the Makkan period (of the Prophet's mission) lasted for seventeen years, which is the view of some of the scholars of seerah; it is a da'eef (weak) view, but it should be pointed out when trying to understand the opinion of Abu Na'eem.

For the wisdom behind the marriage of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) to 'Aa'ishah despite the difference in their ages, please see the answer to question no. [44990](#).

And Allah knows best.