# 190501 - There is no saheeh marfoo‘ hadith that specifies the place where the Mahdi will appear

## the question

With regard to the Mahdi, some reports say that he will appear in Khorasan, whilst others say that he will appear in Madinah. Are there any reports that put an end to the argument and explain the matter?

## Detailed answer

After checking in books that deal specifically with the narration of hadith about the Mahdi, such as al-Fitan by Nu‘aym ibn Hammaad, al-Arba‘oon fi’l-Mahdi by Abu Nu‘aym, ‘Aqd ad-Durar fi Akhbaar al-Mahdi al-Muntazar by Yoosuf ibn Yahya ash-Shaafa‘i, and al-Mahdi al-Muntazar fi Daw’ al-Ahaadeeth wa’l-Athaar as-Saheehah by Dr. ‘Abd al-‘Aleem al-Bastawi, it is clear that the marfoo‘ hadiths of which it was possible to examine the isnaads, which specifically indicate the place where the Mahdi will appear, mentioning his name explicitly or implicitly are the following hadiths:

1. The hadith of ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ood (may Allah be pleased with him)

It was narrated from him via two isnaads:

(i) Via Hanaan ibn Sudayr, from ‘Amr ibn Qays al-Malaa’i, from al-Hakam – who is ibn ‘Utaybah – from Ibraaheem an-Nakha‘i, from ‘Alqamah ibn Qays and ‘Ubaydah as-Salmaani, from ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ood (may Allah be pleased with him), that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “When the black banners come from Khorasan, then go and join them, for among them is the caliph al-Mahdi.”

This was narrated by Abu’l-Fath al-Azdi – as attributed in the isnaad via him by Ibn al-Jawzi in al-Mawdoo‘aat (2/39) – Abu’l-Fath said: al-‘Abbaas ibn Ibraaheem told us: Muhammad ibn Thawaab told us: Hanaan ibn Sudayr told us… with the wording of the previous hadith.

There are a number of copying errors in the isnaad of Abu'l-Fath al-Azdi here. Instead of 'Amr ibn Qays it says 'Umar ibn Qays; al-Hakam is changed to al-Hasan; and Ibraaheem an-Nakha'i is omitted. All of these in our view are copying errors and mistakes. It is not a different chain of the isnaad. As for the omission of Ibraaheem, it is a version of the isnaad mentioned by ad-Daaraqutni in al-'Ilal (5/184). We have not come across it in the printed copies of the books of Abu'l-Fath al-Azdi that are available today.

It was also narrated by al-Haakim in al-Mustadrak (4/511), where he said:

Abu Bakr ibn Daarim al-Haafiz told me in Kufah: Muhammad ibn 'Uthmaan ibn Sa'eed al-Qurashi told us: Yazeed ibn Muhammad ath-Thaqafi told us: Hanaan ibn Sudayr told us.

This version says: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) came to us, and he came out to us looking cheerful, with a happy expression on his face. We did not ask him about anything but he told us about it, and we did not fall silent except he told us without us asking, until some youngsters of Banu Haashim came past, among whom were al-Hasan and al-Husayn. When he saw them, he embraced and his eyes flowed with tears. We said: O Messenger of Allah, we still see in your face something that upsets us. He said: "We are the members of a family for whom Allah has chosen the hereafter over this world, and verily the members of my family after me will be faced with expulsion and banishment from the land, until the black banners appear from the East. They will seek their right but will not be given it, then they will seek it but not be given it, then they will seek it but not be given it. Then they will fight and will be victorious. Whoever among you or your descendants lives to see that, let him go to the leader of the members of my family, even if he has to crawl over snow, for verily they are the banners of guidance that be given to a man from among my family whose name is the same as my name, and his father's name is the same as my father's name. He will rule over the earth and fill it with equity and justice as it was filled with inequity and injustice."

We say: this is a very weak (da'eef jiddan) isnaad, because of Hanaan ibn Sudayr. Ad-Daaraqutni (may Allah have mercy on him) said: He is one of the shaykhs of the Shi'ah. End quote from al-Mu'talif wa'l-Mukhtalif (1/430). His biography may be found in al-Jarh wa't-Ta'deel by Ibn Abi Haatim (3/299); ath-Thiqaat by Ibn Hibbaan (8/219); and Tareekh al-Islam (4/1100). Not one

scholar stated that he is trustworthy. This hadith of his is one of the munkar (odd) hadiths that are not narrated by anyone else. It was not narrated by any of the companions of al-Hakam ibn ‘Utaybah from an-Nakha‘i, despite the fact that they were so many and included a number of prominent scholars. In our estimation the reason (for the weakness of this report) is this Hanan ibn Sudayr.

Hence Ibn al-Jawzi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

This hadith has no basis. End quote.

He also mentioned other reasons that we do not think are correct, because of the coping errors mentioned above.

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

This is mawdoo‘ (fabricated). End quote from Talkhees al-Mustadrak.

Al-Mu‘allimi (may Allah have mercy on him) said concerning the isnaad of al-Haakim going back to Hanaan:

Ibn Abi Daarim was a Raafidi liar. Al-Haakim himself said: He is a Raafidi and not trustworthy. I do not know his shaykh or his shaykh’s shaykh. Hanaan was an extreme Raafidi. This report, as far as I can tell, is one of the fabrications of Ibn Abi Daarim.

End quote from al-Fawaa’id al-Majmoo‘ah (412)

However, ad-Daaraqutni mentioned in al-‘Ilal (5/184) that some narrators differed from Hanaan ibn Sudayr, including some who omitted Ibraaheem an-Nakha‘i, some who mentioned al-Aswad instead of ‘Ubaydah, and so on. Then he said:

It was narrated by Yazeed ibn Abi Ziyaad, from Ibraaheem, from ‘Alqamah, from ‘Abdullah. Something similar was narrated by ‘Amaarah ibn al-Qa‘qaa‘, from Ibraaheem, from ‘Alqamah, which is the most sound. End quote.

This is a clear verdict that the report from Hanaan ibn Sudayr is wrong. In fact Shaykh Taariq ‘Awadullah said: Perhaps he stole it from Yazeed ibn Abi Ziyaad, as it says in al-Irshaadaat (p. 114). The isnaad of Yazeed is the second isnaad that we will discuss in detail.

(ii) This version is as follows: Whilst we were with the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), some youngsters from Banu Haashim came along, and when the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) saw them, his eyes filled with tears and his colour changed. I said: We see in your face something that upsets us. He said: “We are the members of a family for whom Allah has chosen the hereafter over this world, and verily the members of my family after me will be faced with calamity, expulsion and banishment, until there come people from the East carrying black banners. They will ask for good but will not be given it, then they will fight and be victorious, then they will be given what they asked for, but they will not accept it, until they give that to a man from my family who will fill it with equity as it was filled with inequity. Whoever among you lives to see that, let him go and join them even if he has to crawl over snow.”

Narrated by Ibn Abi Shaybah in al-Musannaf (7/527); Ibn Maajah in as-Sunan (4082) via ‘Ali ibn Saalih; Abu Ya‘la in al-Musnad (9/17) via Abu Bakr ibn ‘Ayyaash; at-Tabaraani in al-Awsat (6/29) via Sabaah ibn Yahya al-Muzani; Ibn ‘Adiy in al-Kaamil (9/164); al-Aajurri in ash-Sharee‘ah (5/2177); ash-Shaashi in al-Musnad (1/362) via Ibn Fudayl; al-‘Aqeeli in ad-Du‘afa’ al-Kabeer (4/380) via Khalaf; ash-Shaashi in al-Musnad (1/347) via Khaalid ibn ‘Abdullah; Abu Nu‘aym in Taareekh Asbahaan via ‘Amr ibn al-Qaasim. The seven of them are: ‘Ali ibn Saalih, Abu Bakr ibn ‘Ayyaash, Sabaah, Ibn Fudayl, Khalaf, Khaalid ibn ‘Abdullah and ‘Amr ibn al-Qaasim, from Yazeed ibn Abi Ziyaad, from Ibraaheem, from ‘Alqamah, from ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ood (may Allah be pleased with him) in a marfoo ‘ report [i.e., attributed to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)], in similar versions, some of which are abbreviated.

We say: this is a very weak (da‘eef jiddan) isnaad because of Yazeed ibn Abi Ziyaad. He was classed as da‘eef by the scholars of hadith, who criticised this hadith in particular. See: Tahdheeb at-Tahdheeb (11/330). Ibn ‘Adiy said: I do not know of anyone who narrated this hadith with this isnaad from Ibraaheem apart from Yazeed ibn Abi Ziyaad.

Imam Ahmad (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The hadith of Ibraaheem, from ‘Alqamah, from ‘Abdullah, is nothing, i.e., the hadith of Yazeed ibn Abi Ziyaad. End quote from al-‘Ilal by his son ‘Abdullah (3/465).

In ad-Du‘afa’ al-Kabeer (4/380), al-‘Aqeeli attributed to Abu Usaamah – who was one of the shaykhs of Imam Ahmad – the following words: As for the hadith of Yazeed ibn Abi Ziyaad, from Ibraaheem, from ‘Alqamah, from ‘Abdullah, about the black banner, I say: If he were to swear fifty oaths to me, I would not believe it. Is this the view of Ibraaheem; is this the view of ‘Alqamah; is this the view of ‘Abdullah? End quote.

This was narrated by Imam adh-Dhahabi, who commented on it as follows:

Abu Usaamah is right – by Allah – and I say this because the name mentioned before him and the name mentioned after him are names of prominent scholars, so the fault lies with him [Yazeed ibn Abi Ziyaad], whether it was deliberate or in error.

End quote from SIyar A‘laam an-Nubala’ (6/278)

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

This is not saheeh. End quote from Mizaan al-I‘tidaal (4/424)

Shaykh al-Albaani (may Allah have mercy on him) deemed it munkar (odd), as it says in as-Silsilah ad-Da‘eefah (no. 5203)

Dr Basheer ‘Ali ‘Umar said:

This was narrated by ‘Abdullah ibn Daahir, from his father, from Ibn Abi Layla, from al-Hakam, from Ibraaheem, from ‘Alqamah, from’ Abdullah. This was narrated by al-Bazzaar. Concerning ‘Abdullah ibn Daahir, Ibn Ma‘een said: He is nothing. No one in whom there is any good wrote down anything from him. Al-‘Aqeeli said: He is an evil Raafidi. Concerning his father al-‘Aqeeli said: He was an extreme Raafidi whose hadith is to be rejected.

As for the isnaad of ‘Amaarah ibn al-Qa‘qaa‘, it was narrated by at-Tabaraani and al-Khateeb via two isnaads from Muhammad ibn Fudayl, from al-Mugheerah ibn Muqsim, from ‘Amaarah ibn al-Qa‘qaa‘, from Ibraaheem, from ‘Alqamah, from ‘Abdullah. After mentioning this isnaad, ad-Daaraqutni said: This is the most sound isnaad, i.e., it is more sound than the isnaad of Yazeed ibn Abi Ziyaad. This is clear, because ‘Amaarah ibn al-Qa‘qaa‘ is thiqah (trustworthy).

As for the isnaad of al-Hakam, there is a clear contradict in it which gives the impression that it is weak. Moreover, the isnaad is not free of Shi‘is or Raafidis. As for the isnaad of Yazeed ibn Abi Ziyaad, it is because of him that Imam Ahmad rejected the hadith.

It remains to examine the report of ‘Amaarah ibn al-Qa‘qaa‘ from Ibraaheem. That is because ‘Amaarah is not well known for narrating from Ibraaheem, as al-Mazzi did not list him among his students, although there is a report from at-Tirmidhi which indicates that he heard from him. Similarly the narrator from Muhammad ibn Fudayl, namely ‘Abd ar-Rahmaan ibn ‘Amr al-Harraani, cannot have been the only one to narrate a hadith such as this. Nu‘aym ibn Hammaad al-Khuzaa‘i and Moosa ibn Dawood differed from him and narrated the hadith from Muhammad ibn Fudayl, from Yazeed ibn Abi Ziyaad, as trustworthy narrators narrated it from Yazeed, and they are both more well known for seeking knowledge from ‘Abd ar-Rahmaan al-Harraani.

All of this indicates that the narration of ‘Amaarah ibn al-Qa‘qaa‘ is not to be relied upon. And Allah knows best. Therefor the whole issue goes back to Yazeed ibn Abi Ziyaad being the only one to narrate this hadith, and he is one of those whose narration Ahmad did not accept when he is the only one to narrate a report. Thus it is clear that the hadith is not reliable in his view.

End quote from Manhaj al-Imam Ahmad fi I‘laal al-Ahaadeeth (1/271-273)

2. The second hadith was narrated from Thawbaan who said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “When you see that the black banners have come from Khorasan, then go and join them, for with them will be the caliph of Allah, the Mahdi.”

The isnaad of this hadith came via three chains:

(i) Via Sufyaan ath-Thawri, from Khaalid al-Hadhdha', from Abu Qilaabah, from Abu Asma' ar-Rahbi, from Thawbaan, who attributed it to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

It was narrated by Ibn Maajah in as-Sunan (no. 4048); al-Bazzaar in al-Musnad (2/120); ar-Rooyaani (no. 619); al-Haakim in al-Mustadrak (4/510); and via him by al-Bayhaqi in Dalaa'il an-Nubuwwah (6/515).

This chain is da'eef because of Abu Asma' ar-Rahbi. No one stated that he was trustworthy, apart from al-'Ajli, as it was his habit to be lenient with regard to classing the Taabi'een as trustworthy.

End quote from Tahdheeb at-Tahdheeb (8/99)

(ii) Via Wakee', from Shareek, from 'Ali ibn Zayd, from Abu Qilaabah, from Thawbaan, in a marfoo' report. This was narrated by Imam Ahmad in al-Musnad (37/70).

What appears to be the case is that this chain contains a mistake made by Wakee' or Shareek, as adh-Dhahabi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: I think it is munkar (odd).

End quote from Mizaan al-I'tidaal (3/128). That is because of the omission of Abu Asma' ar-Rahbi from the isnaad. The evidence for that is the report narrated by al-Bayhaqi in Dalaa'il an-Nubuwwah (6/516) via Katheer ibn Yahya, from Shareek ibn 'Abdullah, from 'Ali ibn Zayd, from Abu Qilaabah, from Abu Asma' ar-Rahbi, from Thawbaan.

This chain contains other faults, namely Shareek ibn 'Abdullah an-Nakha'i, who had a poor memory; and 'Ali ibn Zayd ibn Jad'aan, on whose classification as weak there was agreement. See: Tahdheeb at-Tahdheeb (7/324)

(iii) Via 'Abd al-Wahhaab ibn 'Ata', from Khaalid al-Hadhdha', from Abu Qilaabah, from Abu Asma', from Thawbaan in a mawqoof report.

This was narrated by al-Haakim in al-Mustadrak (4/502) and from him by al-Bayhaqi in ad-Dalaa'il (6/5 16). It was also narrated by Nu'aym ibn Hammaad in al-Fitan (no.896) from Abu

Nasr al-Khaffaaf, from Khaalid al-Hadhdha', in a mawqoof report.

That this chain is mawqoof was regarded as more likely to be the case by al-Haafiz Ibn Katheer (may Allah have mercy on him), who said: This was narrated by some of them from Thawbaan in a mawqoof report, which is more likely to be the case. And Allah knows best.

End quote from al-Bidaayah wa'n-Nihaayah (10/55).

Thus it becomes clear that the hadith of Thawbaan (may Allah be pleased with him) is not saheeh in any of the three chains via which it was narrated. This based on the close examination of the hadith according to the rules of hadith. As for those who follow the path of regarding numerous reports as strengthening one another, they may state that the hadith is saheeh or hasan because it has numerous isnaads. But the correct view is what is mentioned above. For a hadith to be strengthened by having numerous isnaads, it is stipulated that it should not be munkar (odd), and that there should not have been any mistake on the part of the narrator.

'Abdullah ibn Ahmad ibn Hanbal said:

My father told me: Ibn 'Aliyyah was asked about this hadith and he said: Khaalid used to narrate it but no attention was paid to it. Ibn 'Aliyyah classed it as da'eef, i.e., the hadith of Khaalid, from Abu Qilaabah, from Abu Asma', from Thawbaan, from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) about the banners.

End quote from al-'Ilal (2/325)

It was also classed as da'eef by Ibn Khaldoon in at-Tareekh (1/320) because of some defects in the isnaad.

Shaykh al-Albaani (may Allah have mercy on him) deemed it odd, as it says in as-Silsilah ad-Da'eefah (no. 85). It was deemed defective by Shaykh Muhammad Rasheed Rida in Tafseer al-Manaar (9/419-421).

Conclusion: precise research into the hadith indicates that there is no proven marfoo' report from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) that defines the place where the

Mahdi will appear. It remains for us to note that the reports narrated from some of the Taabi‘een concerning that, and the lenient attitude of some of the scholars in accepting weak reports, led to the well-known view in the books of the scholars that the place where the Mahdi will emerge is the East, specifically Khorasan.

Ibn Katheer (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The promised Mahdi will appear at the end of time, and will first emerge from the East, then he will go to Makkah, where allegiance will be sworn to him at the noble House (the Ka‘bah), as it says in the hadith.

End quote from al-Bidaayah wa’n-Nihaayah (19/63)

For more information please see: Lawaami‘ al-Anwaar (2/70-94); Ithaaf al-Jamaa‘ah (2/270-311); al-Ihtijaaj bi’l-Athar ‘ala Man Ankara al-Mahdi al-Muntazar and al-‘Urf al-Wardi fi Akhbaar al-Mahdi by as-Suyooti in al-Haawi (2/69-103)

And Allah knows best.