310655 - Authenticity of Hadith That Says Righteous Humans Are Superior to the Angels

the question

In a mursal report that is narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and in the report narrated from ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr about the superiority of the angels, it says that the angels said: O Lord, You have created the world for the sons of Adam, in which they will eat, drink, wear clothes and get married, so make the Hereafter for us, as you made the world for them. He said: I shall not do that. They repeated their request, and He said: I shall not do that. Then they repeated it again, and He said: By My Glory, I shall not make the righteous among those whom I created with My own Hand like the one to whom I said, Be! and he was. Is this report sahih (authentic)?

Summary of answer

The hadith which says righteous humans are superior to the angels was attributed to Prophet Muhammad via weak isnads.

Detailed answer

This report was attributed to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) via da‘if (weak) isnads.

Firstly:

It was narrated by at-Tabarani in al-Mu‘jam al-Kabir (13/658) from Ibrahim ibn ‘Abdillah ibn Khalid al-Missisi: Hajjaj ibn Muhammad told us: Abu Ghassan Muhammad ibn Mutarrif told us, from Safwan ibn Sulaym, from ‘Ata ibn Yasar, from ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr, that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “The angels said: O our Lord, You have given the sons of Adam the world, in which they eat, drink and wear clothes, but we glorify and praise You, and we do not to eat or drink or have fun. As you have made the world for them, make the

Hereafter for us. He said: I shall not make the righteous among the offspring of the one whom I created with My own Hand like the one to whom I said, Be! and he was."

It was also narrated by at-Tabarani in al-Mu'jam al-Awsat (6/196) from Talhah ibn Zayd, from Safwan ibn Sulaym, from 'Ata ibn Yasar, from 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr, from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) that the angels said…"

These two isnads are very weak (da'if jiddan).

Nur ad-Din al-Haythami (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

"It was narrated by at-Tabarani in al-Kabir and al-Awsat, but its isnad in al-Mu'jam al-Kabir includes Ibraheem ibn 'Abdillah ibn Khalid al-Missisi, who is a liar and is rejected.

Its isnad in al-Mu'jam al-Awsat includes Talhah ibn Zayd, who is also a liar." (Majma' az-Zawaid, 2/10)

Secondly:

It was narrated via weak and problematic isnads from 'Urwah ibn Ruwaym al-Laythi, in one report from Anas ibn Malik; in another report from "al-Ansari", without specifying who he was; and in yet another report from Jabir ibn 'Abdillah.

'Abdullah ibn al-Imam Ahmad narrated it in as-Sunnah (2/469), where he said: al-Haytham ibn Kharijah told us: 'Uthman ibn 'Allaq informed us: I heard 'Urwah ibn Ruwaym say: al-Ansari informed me, from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) that the angels said…

It was narrated by al-Bayhaqi in *al-Asma' wa's-Sifat* (2/121) from Abu Zar'ah ar-Razi: Hisham ibn 'Ammar told us: 'Abd Rabbihi ibn Salih al-Qurashi told us: 'Urwah ibn Ruwaym told us, from al-Ansari – and he narrated the same report.

It is not known who "al-Ansari" was, or even whether he was a Sahabi or a Tabi'i. Therefore this isnad is da'if (weak) because this narrator's identity is unknown.

It was narrated by Ibn ‘Asakir in Tarikh Dimashq (52/139) from ‘Uthman ibn Hisn ibn ‘Allaq, who said: I heard ‘Urwah ibn Ruwaym al-Lakhmi say: Anas ibn Malik told me that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “The angels said…” But its isnad is weak because some of the men in its isnad are unknown.

It was also narrated by al-Bayhaqi (2/122) from Junayd ibn Hakim, and by Ibn ‘Asakir in *Tarikh Dimashq* (34/110) from Muhammad ibn Marwan al-Bazzar, both of whom narrated it from Hisham ibn ‘Ammar: ‘Abd Rabbihi ibn Salih told us: I heard ‘Urwah ibn Ruwaym narrate from Jabir ibn ‘Abdillah al-Ansari (may Allah be pleased with him) – and he narrated the same report.

Shaykh al-Albani (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“To sum up, this hadith of Ibn Ruwaym is da‘if (weak), because the identity of “al-Ansari” is unknown, and because the two other reports contradict one another regarding his identity. One of them says that he was Anas and the other says that he was Jabir.” (Sharh al-‘Aqidah at-Tahawiyyah, p. 308)

Moreover, the reports of ‘Urwah ibn Ruwaym are often mursal as he did not hear them directly from the Sahabi.

Al-Mizzi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It was narrated from Anas ibn Malik and Thawban, the freed slave of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and it was said that this is mursal. And the report from Jabir ibn ‘Abdillah is also mursal…

‘Abd ar-Rahman ibn Abi Hatim said, quoting from his father: “Most of his hadiths are mursal. I heard Ibrahim ibn Mahdi – i.e., al-Missisi – say: I wish that I knew from whom ‘Urwah ibn Ruwaym heard hadiths, for most of his hadiths are mursal.” (Tahdhib al-Kamal, 20/8-10)

Thirdly:

It was narrated from Zayd ibn Aslam, and there was a difference of scholarly opinion concerning it:

"'Abd ar-Razzaq narrated in *at-Tafsir* (2/305) with an isnad stopping at Zayd ibn Aslam, as 'Abd ar-Razzaq said: Ma'mar informed us, from Zayd ibn Aslam, regarding the verse *"And We have certainly honored the children of Adam and carried them…" [al-Isra 17:70]* – he said: The angels said: Our Lord, You have given the sons of Adam the world in which they eat and find pleasure, and You have not given that to us, so give us [that] in the Hereafter. He said: By My Glory, I shall not make the righteous among those whom I created with My own hand like the one to whom I said, Be! and he was.

This was narrated by ad-Darimi in *Naqd al-Imam Abu Sa'id 'Uthman ibn Sa'id 'ala al-Mirisi al-Juhami* (p. 257). He said: 'Abdullah ibn Salih told us: al-Layth told me: Hisham ibn Sa'id told me, from Zayd ibn Aslam, from 'Ata' ibn Yasar, that 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As – with the isnad stopping with him, and he did not attributed it to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

But there are odd [*munkar*] reports among the hadiths of 'Abdullah ibn Salih, the shaykh of ad-Darimi.

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

He narrated hadith, but is somewhat weak. … Ibn 'Adiyy said: In my view his hadith is fine, but he made mistakes." (al-Kashif, 1/562)

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

"'Abdullah ibn Salih, Abu Salih al-Masri, was the scribe of al-Layth. He was saduq [sincere] but made a lot of mistakes; he would verify whatever he wrote down but he was somewhat forgetful." (at-Taqrib, p. 308)

Whether this report is mawquf with its isnad ending with Zayd ibn Aslam or 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr, it is not far-fetched to suggest that it originated with the narratives of the People of the Book, which cannot be quoted as evidence. They said that 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr (may Allah be pleased with him) read some of the books of the People of the Book.

Shaykh al-Albani (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“It may be that this hadith originated from the reports from Jewish sources (*israiliyyat*) which were narrated by some of the People of the Book who became Muslim, then some narrators mistakenly attributed them to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), as they did with the story of Harut and Marut.” (Sharh al-‘Aqidah at-Tahawiyyah, p. 308)

For more information, please see the answer to question no. 177709 .

And Allah knows best.