

311760 - Is this hadith authentic: “There is no charity that brings a greater reward than water”?

the question

How sound is this hadith: “There is no charity that brings a greater reward than water”? Al-Albani classed it as authentic (hasan).

Detailed answer

Firstly:

This hadith was narrated by Ibn 'Adiyy in *Al-Kamil* (9/114). He said: Ahmad ibn 'Asim al-Balisi told us: Ibrahim ibn Sa'id told us: Yahya ibn Yazid told us, from his father, from Sa'id, from Abu Hurayrah, who said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “There is no charity that brings a greater reward than water.”

Then he said: This Yahya ibn Yazid ibn 'Abd al-Malik has reports other than what I referred to. He is weak, and his father Yazid is weak, and the hadiths that I dictated to you are weak. The status of what I did not dictate is clear and most of it is not known. (*Al-Kamil*, 9/115).

Someone other than his son narrated from Yazid ibn 'Abd al-Malik, as was noted by al-Bayhaqi in *Shu'ab al-Iman* (5/67-68): From Dawud ibn 'Ata', from Yazid ibn 'Abd al-Malik ibn al-Mughirah an-Nawfali, from his father, from Yazid ibn Khusayfah, and from Yazid ibn Ruman, from Sa'id ibn Abi Sa'id, from Abu Hurayrah, from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) who said: “There is no charity that brings a greater reward than water.”

This Dawud was classed as da'if by the scholars.

Conclusion: all the narrators in the isnad of this hadith are weak, hence Shaykh al-Albani (may Allah have mercy on him) determined that it is a very weak hadith.

As-Silsilah ad-Da'ifah, 1451.

Secondly:

There are hadiths that are similar in meaning to this hadith.

It was narrated by Abu Ya`la al-Mawsili in *Al-Musnad* (5/77), Ibn Abi Hatim in *At-Tafsir* (5/1490) and others from Musa ibn al-Mughirah: Abu Musa as-Saffar told us: I asked Ibn `Abbas – or he was asked –: Which charity is best?

He said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “The best of charity is water. Have you not heard that when the people of Hell ask the people of Paradise for help, they will say: {Send down to us some of the water or other things that Allah has provided for you} [Al-A`raf 7:50]?”

This is a weak isnad.

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

Musa ibn al-Mughirah from Abu Musa as-Saffar.

He is not known and his shaykh is not known. (*Mizan al-Itidal*, 4/224).

Abu Dawud (1679), an-Nasa`i (3665) and Ibn Majah (3684) narrated from Sa`id ibn al-Musayyib, from Sa`d ibn `Ubadah, who said: I said: O Messenger of Allah, which charity is best?

He said: “Giving people water to drink.”

A number of scholars stated that this hadith is weak, because its isnad is interrupted; Sa`id ibn al-Musayyib did not hear from Sa`d ibn `Ubadah (may Allah be pleased with him).

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

Its isnad is interrupted according to all scholars. (*At-Targhib wa't-Tarhib* 2/42).

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

It is mursal, because Sa`id was born in the year in which Sa`d died.

This hadith has another isnad recorded by Abu Dawud and an-Nasa'i via al-Hasan from Sa'd. It is similar to the first isnad and is also interrupted.

And it has yet another isnad recorded by at-Tabarani from Humayd ibn Abi's-Sa'bah, from Sa'd ibn 'Ubada; it is also interrupted and is weak. (*At-Talkhis al-Habir*, 4/1705).

In conclusion, all these hadiths have weak isnads.

But Shaykh al-Albani (may Allah have mercy on him) thought that even though each of these hadiths is weak on its own, when they are put together, the text gains some strength. Therefore he determined that it is authentic (hasan) because of corroborating evidence, as he noted in *Sahih at-Targhib wa't-Tarhib*, 960, 962.

And he (may Allah have mercy on him) said regarding the hadith of Sa'd (may Allah be pleased with him):

Its isnad would be authentic (sahih) were it not for the interruption [in the chain of narration] between Sa'id and Sa'd, as noted above, and the interruption between him and al-Hasan – who is al-Hasan al-Basri – because they were not contemporaries either.

There is a corroborating report to this hadith, namely the hadith of Abu Hurayrah which is narrated in *At-Ta'liq ar-Raghib* (2/52-53). Thus it is authentic (hasan). (*Sahih Sunan Abi Dawud* 5/368).

Thirdly:

Even though the isnad of this hadith is weak, as noted above, giving people water to drink may sometimes be one of the best acts of charity, because the benefit of acts of charity varies according to the situation. Therefore providing drinking water in places and at times where there is drought and urgent need for water is better than giving high quality clothing, for example, in charity, because the benefit of water in such cases is greater, because it saves lives.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said: The best charity is that which meets the need of the recipient and is ongoing.

For example, the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “The best charity is giving water to drink.” This applies in a place where there is little water and a great deal of thirst. However, giving water to drink in a place where there are rivers and streams flowing is not better than giving food at times of need. (*Ar-Ruh*, p. 415).

As for giving water on its own in all situations being the best kind of charitable actions, there does not seem to be anything to support that, and we know of no sound basis for such a view.

For more information, please see the answer to question no. [227958](#).

And Allah knows best.