

Authenticity of the Sahīfa¹

Before proceeding, to prove the authenticity of the Sahīfah, we first need to determine the necessity of it? It is necessary to elaborate on an introductory note prior to responding to this question. The topic of supplications is extensive, so we will have to limit our discussion to a few principles pertaining to it. Like other recommended deeds, the principle of *Leniency in evidence pertaining to recommended deeds*² applies to it even if a supplication is narrated from a weak source and has an unreliable chain of narrators. Therefore, it is still possible to recite it with the intention of drawing nearer to God. Furthermore, if the traditions that are weak, assert a certain reward for its recitation, while no such reward exists, the person reciting the supplication will receive the assumed reward. This principle has been derived from several traditions.³ It should also be noted that the aim of supplicating is to obtain God's proximity by creating a connection with Him. Therefore, if this connection is established by a supplication, then verifying the authenticity of its chain of narration becomes irrelevant.

The foundation of this issue lies in the fact that religious texts are either comprised of commands and injunctions, or divine wisdom. If it is a command, then it would be insufficient to rely on a weak chain of narrations. This is because servitude can only be achieved by obeying God's injunctions. One can only obey God when it is known with certainty that God has in fact commanded a thing. Therefore, when faced with text pertaining to God's commandes —by commands we mean obligations and prohibitions— it is necessary to verify the authenticity of the narration to ensure it is from a narrator, the obedience of whom is obligatory on us.

However, when faced with texts pertaining to divine wisdom, the content is important and not the narrator. It is narrated from Imam Ali عليه السلام:

مَحِذِ الْحِكْمَةَ مِمَّنْ أَتَاكَ بِهَا وَأَنْظُرْ إِلَى مَا قَالُوا وَلَا تَنْظُرْ إِلَى مَنْ قَالَ

*Take wisdom from wherever it comes to you. Look at what is being said not who has said it.*⁴

So, it is not necessary to verify the chain of transmission with the texts pertaining to issues related to theological ethics and supplications. This is because the aim is to complete our intellectual, ethical, spiritual understanding and these texts fulfill this need. Therefore if a narration deals with a certain theological issue and explains the fundamental underlying principles behind the issue then why would we need to verify its authenticity?! An example

¹ Muhammad Ali Majd Faqīhī, *An Introductory Commentary to al-Sahīfah al-Sajjadiyyah*, Tr. K. Bhojani, pp. 39 – 53.

² Editor: This principle allows a certain leniency with regards to derived evidence pertaining to recommended deeds. It states that if someone hears that a certain deed has a certain reward and acts to gain that reward, God will grant him that reward regardless of whether that law was divinely legislated or not. This principle itself, however, is founded on certain evidence derived from prophetic traditions.

³ These group of traditions mention that if anyone hears about the reward for performing a certain action and he performs that action for the sake of attaining that reward that same reward is given to him even if it is contrary to reality and even if the narration is without authority. Refer Muhammad ibn Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī, *Usūl al-Kāfi*, v. 2, . 87.

⁴ Āmadī, *Ghurur al-Hikam wa Durar al-Kalim*, section 30.

of this is *Nahj al-Balāgha*. Though its authenticity is established, the sermons themselves serve as evidence of their authenticity.

In conclusion, if the text of a certain supplication is not in contradiction with religious principles and ideology that has been established with certainty, and it gives rise to a state of self-abasement, humility and turns the heart towards God and teaches the proper customs and way one should speak with Him, then there is no obstacle in reciting it. It will then not be necessary to make an inquiry regarding its authenticity.

Considering what has been said so far, there is no need for us to verify the chain of transmission of *Sahifah* in order to prove its authenticity. However, in order to assure the reader of its authenticity, we will present three types of evidence.

Unbroken Transmission⁵ (تواتر)

One of the ways of establishing the authenticity of a tradition is to prove that it has an unbroken chain of transmission. In such a case verifying the chain of transmission will not be necessary. This is because when the transmission is unbroken, it means that the same tradition is narrated from a vast number of people. Using the probability theory, certainty is attained with regards to its authenticity.

This kind of unbroken transmission exists in the case of *al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyyah*. All Shī'ah scholars without exception have considered this book reliable. They have quoted its supplications in their books of tradition and supplications. Furthermore, a great number of chains have reached us leading to scholars who have granted authorization for its transmission. All these are indicative of their attention towards the *Sahifah* and its importance. Here we will cite a few statements from some scholars endorsing the existence of unbroken transmission in the case of *Sahifah*.

The renowned researcher and philosopher, Mīr Dāmād, says:

Sahifah al-Sajjadiyyah, also named as the Gospel of the Prophetic Progeny عليه السلام and the Psalms of the household: of Muhammad is unbroken in its transmission.⁶

The renowned traditionalist Fayd Kāshānī says:

Transmission of this *Sahifah* is unbroken from the master of the worshippers عليه السلام like other books attributed to its authors.⁷

The late Agha Buzurg Tehranī the author of the book *al-Dhari'ah* says:

⁵ When a tradition is narrated from a great number of chains of transmission such that it brings certainty about its authenticity through probability.

⁶ Sayyid Muhammad Bāqir Mīr Dāmād, *Sharh al-Sahifah*, page 45

⁷ Muhsin Fayd Kāshānī, *Ta'liqāt 'Ala al-Sahifah*, pp. 11 & 12.

It [al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyyah] contains an unbroken chain of transmission according to the companions and the scholars. This is because of existence of chains of authorization from the scholars to narrate it. Furthermore, presence of its narration in all the generations and all the times, such that the chain of transmission ends with Imam Bāqir عليه السلام and Zayd al-Shahīd narrating from their father Ali ibn al-Husayn عليه السلام serves as evidence of it.⁸

The Text

One of the methods that is often relied upon is to obtain information regarding the author by analyzing the text. It is possible to study the Sahīfah from this aspect to achieve certainty that these supplications are from Imam Sajjād عليه السلام.

The text of the Sahīfah is at the zenith of perfection from two aspects:

1. Eloquence and Rhetorical Excellence.
2. Content and the subject matter.

Eloquence and Rhetorical Excellence

The eloquence of the Sahīfah is manifest for anyone who has a taste for Arabic literature. In this section we will cite several literates who were captivated by its eloquence.

The renowned man of letters and expert in rhetoric, Sayyid Ali Khan Madanī, the author of the voluminous commentary on al-Sahīfah named *Riyad al-Salikin* in his commentary has analyzed the eloquent expressions present in it. In the introduction of his book he states:

Its eloquence and the caliber of its content is such that its readers are drawn to prostration. Even the most apt scholars of rhetoric are left with naught but to express their inability.⁹

Ibn Shahr Āshūb in his book *al-Manāqib* has narrated an incident in this regard:

The Sahīfah was presented to some scholars of rhetoric in Basra. One of them said, 'Keep this with yourself and I will produce one like it for you.' He lowered his head toward the ground, taking a pen in his hand. He was never seen to raise his head again [i.e. he died].

The late Mirzā ‘Abdullāh Afandī, the author of the book *Riyad al-Ulamā* and al-Sahifah al-Thālithah al-Sajjadiyyah, writes in his introduction to the Sahīfah:

The unbroken nature of the Sahīfa's chain of transmission, its lofty content, its subtle usage of words and novelty of its phrases is such that it has silenced and humbled its skeptics.¹⁰

⁸ Agha Buzurg Tehrani, *al-Dhari'ah*, v. 15, p. 18

⁹ Sayyid Alikhan Madanī, *Riyad al-Salikin*, v. 1, p. 51.

¹⁰ Mirzā Afandī Isfahānī, *al-Sahifah al-Thālithah al-Sajjadiyyah*, pp. 4 & 5.

Content of the Sahifah

The numerous commentaries written on the Sahifah by philosophers and sages is ample proof of its. Lofty content. Its profound content not only fulfills one's intellectual needs, it also quenches the thirst of the mystics and people of the heart. The following are some citations of their remarks pertaining to it.

Imam Khumaynī in his book *Ādāb al-Salāt* says:

This divine delicacy is frequently stated in the words of the pure Imams (عليه السلام), in al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyyah. It [the Sahifah] is a divine and illuminating book that has descended from the Gnostic heaven of the divine Gnostic, the luminous intellect, Sayyid al-Sājidīn [the master of the prostrate worshippers]. Its descent was to save mankind from the prison of nature, demonstrating the discipline of divine servitude.¹¹

In his introduction to his commentary on the Sahifah, Muhaqqiq Dāmād writes:

Heavenly secrets, divine words and the modes of revelation are hidden in this Gospel of the Prophet's family, the Psalms of the household of Muhammad (عليه السلام).¹²

The great mystic and jurist Muhaqqiq Isfahānī (Kumpānī) in one of his poems says:

It is the mother of all divine scrolls. Expounded therein is hidden wisdom. Honored and Lofty are these words, manifest they do, the station of its lofty author.¹³

The author of the commentary of Tantawī composed a letter to Āyatullāh Mar'ashī Najafī saying:

How unfortunate! Till this day we were unaware of this valuable and eternal work from the legacy of the Prophet (عليه السلام) and his household. The more I examine its content, I find that it is beyond the words of the created, but below the words of the Creator.¹⁴

The purpose of citing the afore mentioned quotes was to bring the nature of its lofty contents to the reader's attention. It can be said that the Sahifah is a self-contained proof for its authenticity. Its beauty and eloquence vividly affirm that it is from an infallible.

Verification of Chain of Transmission

Given the two afore mentioned methods of determining the authenticity of a text, it is not necessary to verify its chain of transmission. If one were to dispute the third method, it would not harm our purpose as its authenticity has already been demonstrated via the two previous methods.

¹¹ Imam Khumaynī, *Ādāb al-Salah*, p. 192.

¹² Mīr Dāmād, *Sharh al-Sahifah*, p. 45.

¹³ Shaykh Muhammad Isfahānī, *Hashiyah al-Makāsib*, v. 1, p. 15.

¹⁴ Quoted from Mudīr Kāzīm Shānihchī, Introduction to al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyyah, p. 50.

Al-Sahifah al-Sajjidiyah has reached us through different chains of transmission. Here are a few of them:

1. Chain of transmission from Muhammad ibn Wārith which is cited in al-Sahifah al-Thālithah.¹⁵
2. Chain of transmission from Ibn Shādhān which is also cited in al-Sahifah al-Thālithah and in Bihār al-Anwār.¹⁶
3. Chain of transmission from Ali ibn Muhammad Khazzār Qummī - one of the Shī‘ah scholars of the early era – which is cited in the book *Kifāyah al-Athar*.¹⁷
4. Chain of transmission from Najjāshī in his book of Rijāl.¹⁸
5. Chain of transmission from Shaykh Tūsī in his book al-Fiharist.¹⁹
6. The chain of transmission which is cited at the beginning of the Sahifah.
7. The chain of transmission cited in the manuscript dated in the year 1025 from Abū Bakr Muhammad ibn Ali Kirmānī.²⁰

There are several other chains. However, analyzing them all is outside the scope of this short discourse. But the chain of transmission that is cited at the beginning of the current Sahifah is narrated from some others. This chain dates to the 10th century.

The narrators of Najjāshī’s chain of transmission, two chains of transmission of Shaykh Tūsī and the chain of transmission cited in the oldest available manuscript dated year 1025 are compared in the table below:

| <i>Chain of transmission current present in the current Sahifah</i> | <i>Chain of transmission from Najjāshī</i> | <i>Two chains of transmission from Shaykh Tūsī</i> | | <i>Chain of transmission present in the oldest manuscript dated year 1025</i> |
|---|--|--|-----------------------|---|
| Imam Ali ibn al-Husayn عليه السلام | Imam Ali ibn al-Husayn عليه السلام | Imam Ali ibn al-Husayn عليه السلام | | Imam Ali ibn al-Husayn عليه السلام |
| Zayd ibn Ali | Zayd ibn Ali | Zayd ibn Ali | | Zayd ibn Ali |
| Yahyā ibn Zayd | Yahyā ibn Zayd | Yahyā ibn Zayd | | Yahyā ibn Zayd |
| Mutawakkil ibn Hārūn | Mutawakkil ibn Hārūn | Mutawakkil ibn Hārūn | | Mutawakkil ibn Hārūn |
| ‘Umayr ibn Mutawakkil Thaḳāfī Balkhī | ‘Umayr ibn Mutawakkil Thaḳāfī | ‘Umayr ibn Mutawakkil | ‘Umayr ibn Mutawakkil | ‘Umayr ibn Mutawakkil |

¹⁵ Mirzā ‘Abdullah Afandī, al-Sahifah al-Thālithah, p. 11.

¹⁶ al-Sahifah al-Thālithah, p. 127; ‘Allāmah Majlisī, Bihār al-Anwār, v. 87, p. 308.

¹⁷ Ali ibn Muhammad Khazzār, *Kifāyah al-Athar*, p. 302; Mu’assasah Imam Mahdi (‘a), al-Sahifah al-Jāmi‘ah, p. 631.

¹⁸ Najjāshī, *Rijāl*, number 1144.

¹⁹ Shaykh Tūsī, al-Fiharist, number 579.

²⁰ Kāzīm Mudīr Shānihchī, Introduction to al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiyyah, p. 41. This chain of narration is mentioned in a handwritten manuscript that was found in a box amongst other books when parts of the mausoleum of (continued from previous page) Imam Ridhā عليه السلام were being destroyed for renovation. The date mentioned on this book is the year 1025.

| | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Ali ibn Nu‘amān A‘alam | | | | Muhammad ibn Sālih |
| ‘Abdullibn ‘Umar ibn Khattāb Zayyāt | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ | Ahmad ibn ‘Abdullāh |
| Abu ‘Abdillāh Ja‘far ibn Muhammad Hasanī | | From his father | From his father | Ali ibn Mālik |
| Abū Mufaddal Muhammad ibn ‘Abdullāh Shaybānī | From his father | Muhammad ibn Mutahhar | Muhammad ibn Mutahhar | Abu Ali Muhammad ibn Hamam ibn Sahl Askāfī |
| Abū Mansūr Muhammad ibn Muhammad ‘Ukbarī | Muhammad ibn Mutahhar | Ibn Akhī Tāhir | Ibn Akhī Tāhir | |
| Abū ‘Abdillāh Muhammad ibn Ahmad Shahrīyār | Ibn Akhī Tāhir | Ta‘lkuabrā | Abū Bakr Dawzī | Abu al-Hasan Muhammad ibn Yahyā Dahanī |
| Bahā’ al-Sharaf Muhammad ibn Hasan ‘Alawī | Husayn ibn ‘Ubaydullāh | From a group | Ahmad ibn ‘Abdūn | Bandār ibn Yahyā Bazūzan |
| <i>Haddathunā</i> (He narrated for us) | Najjāshī | Shaykh Tūsī | | Abū Bakr Muhammad ibn Ali Kirmānī |

A few objections have been raised on the current and commonly used Sahīfah’s chain of transmission which make it appear weak. These are:

1. The last person in the chain of transmission where he says *Haddathunā* is unknown.
2. Abū Mufaddal Shaybānī is deemed weak.
3. The reliability of Mutawakkil ibn Hārūn, who is the first in all the chains of transmission, is unknown.

Here we present relevant arguments in order to confute the objections.

First Objection

There are two views pertaining to the last person in the chain of transmission:

Shaykh Bahā’ī says, ‘He is Abū al-Husayn Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Sukūn Hillī who died in the year 1209.’

Mīr Dāmād says, ‘He is the famous linguist ‘Umayd al-Ru’asā Habatullāh ibn Hāmid ibn Ahmad ibn Ayyūb.’

Each of the two possibilities produces the same conclusion as both are deemed reliable and equal in their degree of trustworthiness.

Second Objection

Abū Mufaddal Shaybānī is the only person in the Sahīfah's chain of narration that Shaykh Tūsī has objected to and deemed weak. He has the following to say regarding Shaybānī:

He has narrated many traditions. He had a strong memory. However, a group of our scholars have deemed his transmissions as weak.²¹

Najjāshī has the following to say:

He was originally from Kūfa. He spent his life in search of traditions. He was firm in the beginning of his affair, but incertitude overtook him. Upon examining the texts, I observed a few of our revered companions subdued and weakened him [his arguments].²²

The afore mentioned evidence indicates that Abū Mufaddal Shaybānī was deemed reliable by Shi'a scholars. However, in the later period of his life, when he inclined towards the *Zaydiyyah*, they began to disapprove of him. Therefore, in summary, this tradition was rendered weak because he was attributed to the *Zaydiyyah* sect, to which he had inclined to during the latter period of his life.

In response to -this objection, it should be noted that he narrated it whilst he was on the right path, and hence it is authentic. Secondly, mere attribution of a person to a sect does not necessitate the rejection of his narrations. This is because in the science of *Dirāyah*²³ the criterion for accepting a person's reliability is his trustworthiness, not his deviation from his theological beliefs or sect. Hence the late Mir Dāmād after quoting Najjāshī says, "Najjāshī himself has relied on him on a number of occasions in the biographies of other transmitters and has deemed him reliable."²⁴

On the other hand, the likes of Shaykh Mufīd, Ibn Ghadā'irī and Ibn Ashnās, who are the predecessors of Shaykh Tūsī have narrated al-Sahīfah al-Kāmilah through Shaybānī. This indicates that his narration was prior to his deviation. Furthermore, as previously elaborated, even if he narrated it after he had deviated, it would not tarnish his reliability [as a trustworthy narrator], and therefore would not injure the chain.

Third Objection

It has been said that there is no mention of Mutawakkil ibn Hārūn in the books of *Rijāl*.²⁵ As a result, his status as a transmitter is unknown, though it is not improbable that he was reliable. Mir Dāmād says, "No information about the reliability of Mutawakkil has been

²¹ Shaykh Tūsī, *Al-Fīharist*, p. 299, number 651.

²² Najjāshī, *Rijāl*, p. 396, number 1059.

²³ It is the science of critical examination and classification of Hadith.

²⁴ Mir Dāmād, *Sharh al-Sahīfah*, p. 49.

²⁵ *Rijāl is a science of study of the biographies of the narrators of the traditions in order to know their reliability.*

provided by the traditionalists except that Shaykh al-Din Hasan ibn Dāwūd deemed him reliable”.²⁶

So, Ibn Dāwūd’s approval of his reliability on one hand, and the fact several trustworthy men narrated from him on the other is sufficient evidence of his acceptability.

Conclusion

1. The term *sahīh* (صحيح) as used by the scholars of early period differs from its usage by scholars of the latter generations. This is because the early traditionalists used to consider a tradition *sahīh* if it was accompanied by contextually clarifying evidence even if its chain of transmission is broken or the tradition is *mursal*.²⁷ We have no access to these contextual clarifiers, one of which is the existence of the tradition in one of the four-hundred principles. *Sahīfah* has been narrated by several predecessors and it was generally deemed an acceptable tradition amongst them. Hence, we should also affirm the soundness of its chain.
2. If several trustworthy people narrate a tradition from a person [who may be unknown], we can deem other traditions narrated by him acceptable.
3. Change of faith in the case of Abū Mufaddal does not harm the reliability of traditions transmitted by him, even if they are narrated in the period of his deviation.

²⁶ Sharh al-Sahīfah, p. 51, Rijāl ibn Dāwūd, p. 283.

²⁷ A tradition is called *mursal* if one or more links in the chain of transmission are missing. These traditions are a type of weak traditions.