

[The Hanafi School of Thought and Ahadeeth](http://www.muftisays.com/blog/Seifeddine-M/476_26-10-2010/the-hanafi-school-of-thought-and-ahadeeth.html)

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The contention that the Hanafi school of thought bases its Fatwas upon weak Ahadith narrations is sheer ignorance. Reflection upon the books of Hanafi Fiqh impartially would leave no room for such an assertion. The following collections of proofs for the Hanafi Fiqh illustrate the deep and profound level of Hadith scholarship current amongst the followers of the Hanafi School of jurisprudence:

Sharah Ma 'ani al-Aathar. by Imam Tahawi

Fathul Qadeer by Shaykh Ibn Hamam

Nasbul Rayah, by Shaykh Zala'ee

Al-Jawaharul An-Naqi. Shaykh Mardini

Umtadul Qari. by Shaykh 'Aini

Fathul Mulhim by Shaykh Shabbir Ahmed Uthmani

Badhlul Majhood, by Shaykh Khalil Ahmed Saharapuri

Ma'ariful Sunan by Shaykh Binnori

Faidul Bari by Shaykh Shah Anwar Khashmiri

There are some fundamental points which demand clarification. Sound Hadith are not exclusive to Bukhari and Muslim, there are many books of Hadith containing thousands of sound Hadith. The basis for a sound Hadith is its chain of narrators (isnad) and text (main). Compilers of Ahadith other than Bukhari and Muslim have established sanads (plural of isnad) as strong as the ones present in their respective collections.

Ahadith not found in the collections of Bukhari or Muslim are not deemed weak by virtue of not being included in the two collections, this would reduce the science of Hadith to total conjecture, Ahadith narrated by transmitters other than Bukhari and Muslim are present in certain books of Ahadith which are infact stronger in their isnad than even the two most sound compilations of Hadith. For instance, Ibn Majah, which is the sixth of the canonical books of Hadith - has transmitted Ahadith, which in some regards are superior to those of his predecessors. The standard, therefore of measuring the authenticity of any Hadith is not whether it is present in Bukhari or Muslim, but rather the standards employed by these two great scholars of Hadith themselves. If a certain Hadith meets the same criteria as Bukhari or Muslim and is not necessarily found in the two collections, this Hadith nonetheless would be regarded as sound. Understanding this principle of Hadith would dissipate the somewhat misdirected criticism against the Hanafi fiqh immediately.

One of the main reasons why there are so many differences of opinion amongst Mujtahids in particular details of the law is that the method of analyses, reasoning and deduction, vary. If there is an apparent contradiction between two Ahadith, one Mujtahid may base his opinion on the stronger of the two Hadith - even though both may be sound

in narration. Another Mujtahid, however, may base his opinion on the rule that no Hadith should be discarded even though it may be weak in narration. Hence, the latter Mujtahid will attempt to reconcile both Hadith by interpreting one as the basis and the other as its contingent, regardless of how sound or weak any of the two Hadith may be. While yet another Mujtahid may base his opinion of the Hadith upon the practice of the Companions and their followers. Thus, every Mujtahid will adopt his particular method and none can censure the other for abandoning Hadith.

Imam Abu Hanifa (ra) attempted to reconcile contradictory Hadith and hence endeavored to apply every Hadith as long as it was not fabricated. Weak Hadith have also been utilised when no other Hadith was found to contradict it, even though it may be against legal reasoning and analogy, for example, the issues of wudu breaking if one laughs in salaah and Zakaat on honey, he has favoured even though their source Hadith is weak. Ruling over the authenticity of Hadith is in itself a process of Ijtihad. This is why this issue has always been disputed amongst the scholars who analyse the narrators of Hadith. The very Hadith, which is regarded as sound and good by one Imam of Hadith, may be regarded as weak by another. There are occasions where Imam Abu Hanifa (ra) regarded one Hadith as worthy of application and the same Hadith was regarded as unreliable by another Mujtahid. Imam Abu Hanifa was a Mujtahid himself therefore he is not bound by the rulings of other Mujtahids.

Occasionally a Hadith, which was transmitted to Imam Abu Hanifa with a sound narration, became weak after it passed him in the chain of narrators. In other words, the chain of narrators upto Imam Abu Hanifa is strong - but the chain from Imam Abu Hanifa to other scholars became weak because of a weak narrator entering the isnad. This sequence of events did not alter Imam Abu Hanifa's reasoning. Sometimes a Hadith may be narrated with a weak chain of narrators by one Imam, however the same Hadith can be traced back with a sound chain by another Imam.

For instance, the Hadith, which says that: "**Whoever has an Imam (in salaah), the Imam's recitation is enough**" has been narrated with a weak chain- Then, we find that in Imam Tahawi's and Ahmed ibn Muni'ee's narrations, this Hadith is very sound. Occasionally a Hadith may be weak in its chain, but since there are several different chains narrated the Hadith, scholars will accept the Hadith as valid. This category of Hadith is known as "**Good because of others**". This type of Hadith is not a weak Hadith and therefore valid for application within areas of Fiqh.

There is no doubt, several Hadiths which are in fact weak. The weakness of the Hadith is determined by a weak narrator present in the sanad. However, it is not necessary that every weak narrator narrated a weak Hadith each time he narrated. In the circumstance of collaborating and supporting evidence to strengthen a weak Hadith, it will be accepted and applied. For example, if there is a weak narration in a book of Hadith upon which the Companions and their Successors have acted, then this practice

demonstrates that the weak narrator has indeed narrated correctly. This is why the Hadith **"There is no will for the heirs (who have pre-assigned shares in inheritance)"** have been accepted by all the Mujtahids - even though the Hadith is regarded weak in its narration.

In fact, this process can give preference to a weak Hadith over a strong one. For example, the Prophet sallallahu alaihi wa sallam's daughter, Zainab (ra) was married to Abu Aas who did not accept Islam immediately, but did so later on. The question amongst scholars is that did the Prophet sallallahu alaihi wa sallam renew his marriage contract, or did he allow them to live as husband and wife without doing so. The narration from Abdullah ibn Umar (ra) says that the contract was renewed with a new mahr, while the narration from Abdullah ibn Abbas (ra) says otherwise. The narration from Ibn Umar is weak whereas the one from Ibn Abbas is sound. Imam Tirmidhi, who was a master of Hadith, gave legal preference to the weak Hadith over the sound one because of the practice of the Companions. [148]

The objection against the Hanafi point of view is seldom due to scholarly study rather due to a lack of understanding and in certain instances even a want of attempting to understand the Hanafi point of view. Certain scholars have fallen into this indifference.

For instance. Maulana Salfi has criticized Imam Abu Hanifa's stand on the issue of offering salaah with due diligence and proper composure:

"A man was told by the Prophet sallallahu alaihi wa sallam to repeat his salaah three times after he had failed to complete with proper tranquility and composure. The Prophet sallallahu alaihi wa sallam's words were: "Pray for you have not prayed."

This means that the salaah has no legal value which is the opinion of the Shaf'iees and the scholars of Hadith. The Shaf'iee scholars say that once the legal definition of ruku' and sajdah is known, we cannot accept the interpretation of the Hadith, nor can we comment on whether the salaah has been accepted or not." [149]

The Hanafis, of course make no such claim. Hanafees likewise claim that salaah should be repeated if tranquility and composure is not established in ruk'u and sajdah, as implied by the Hadith. The problem is that the respectable critic has failed to understand the Hanafis position. Imam Abu Hanifa differentiates between what is Fard (obligatory and an essential component of an act) and Wajib or what is mandatory but not an essential component of the act. Other Mujtahids do not accept this division. Imam Abu Hanifa's ruling is that those components which are Fard have to be conclusively established from the Quran and Sunnah whereas those which are Wajib are established by the sound Hadith even with a single narration (ahad Ahadith). If someone misses either a Fard (for instance recitation of the Qur'an) or misses a Wajib (like not offering salaah with tranquility) salaah will still have to be repeated. What are the legal ramifications of this great hair-splitting nuance? The distinction is that one who misses a Fard will be regarded as someone who has missed his entire salaah. All the harsh rules of a person who misses salaah - in a Muslim state - will be levied against him. This is because he has not performed salaah legally and for this person it is not a question of repeating the salaah, but rather a question of offering it. The one who misses a Wajib will not be regarded as

someone who has missed his salaah, since legally he has offered his salaah - but incompletely and hence he needs to repeat it. This meaning is actually found in the Hadith itself.

Imam Tirmidhi narrated that when the Prophet sallallahu alaihi wa sallam told this person to repeat his salaah, the Companions found this to be difficult that someone who offers his salaah in this casual manner would be regarded as one who leaves salaah. When the Prophet sallallahu alaihi wa sallam emphasised the importance of tranquility, after which the person repeated his salaah, the Prophet sallallahu alaihi wa sallam said:

"When you have done this, then you have completed your salaah. If you reduce anything from this, you will have reduced from your salaah."

Rifaah. the narrator of this Hadith remarked:

"This statement of the Prophet sallallahu alaihi wa sallam was far easier [for the Companions to tolerate] than the previous one [where he said that he had not offered his salaah]. In this statement there is the impression that not all of the salaah has been annulled." [150]

The Hanafi ulama have applied the Hadith in its entirety. The first part by stating that omitting a Fara'id will render the Salaah incomplete and fiqh demands that the Salaah be repeated, and the second part is applied for missing a Wajib, and therefore will not be regarded, technically, as missing salaah completely. Such examples illustrate the deep level of scholarship required to understand each Fatwa of the Hanafi fiqh.

Elaboration

upon subtle points clearly uncovers the apathy by certain quarters to understand the reasoning for the positions of the Hanafi fiqh. Hence, the comment: **"We cannot accept the interpretation of the Hadith. nor can we comment on whether the salaah has been accepted or not"** is a great distortion of the viewpoint of the Hanafi school of thought.

Unfortunately, jumping to conclusions concerning the Hanafi point of view without doing due diligence to the issue in question has unfortunately become the norm. To understand the legal Islamic reasoning, the principles which have been outlined above have to be studied, to avoid blanket statements pertaining to the Hanafi legal interpretations and from incorrectly assuming that undue preference is conferred to analogy over Hadith. Both conclusions are a tremendous injustice. There have been many non-Hanafi

scholars in the past who have defended the Hanafi approach to law.

Sheikh Abdul Wahhab al-Sha'raani, who although a follower of the Shaf'iee school of thought, dedicated a few chapters exclusively to reprimand the detractors of Imam Abu Hanifa's opinions:

"You should know, dear brother, that in these chapters. I will not be defending Imam Abu Haneefa merely out of sentiment or conferring the benefit of the doubt, but rather I have engaged in this endeavor after vigorous research and investigation into legal

proofs and reasoning. His school of thought was the first to be documented and organised, and, as predicted by some savants, it will be the last to dissipate. In my book "The Proofs of the Legal Schools". I have discussed his opinions and the opinions of his students and I have found that their views are based on a verse, a Hadith, a quotation from a Companion or something similar to it or a correct analogy which itself had a precedent. So whoever wishes to know more about those proofs should refer to that book of mine." [151]

Further, he refutes the idea that Imam Abu Hanifa (ra) preferred analogy to Hadith: **"Know that this allegation is based on prejudice, irresponsibly ascribing blanket statements. The Qur'an says: "Certainly, hearing, seeing and thinking all will be questioned."**

Then, he proceeds to relate an incident in which Sufyaan Thauri, Maqatil, Ibn Hayyan, Hammad ibn Salamah and Imam Ja'far As Sadiq (all who were great scholars of their time) came to Imam Abu Hanifa to substantiate directly whether or not he actually did give preference to analogy over Hadith. Imam Abu Hanifa responded that not only did he regard the Quran and Hadith stronger than analogy, but also he gave preference to the opinions of the Companions over analogy. He then proceeded to prove and substantiate his position for a few hours. The five great scholars departed with the following apology:

"You are the leader of scholars! Please forgive us for forming assumptions without due verification and out of ignorance."

Sheikh Abdul Wahhab al-Sha'raani proceeds to refute the position that Imam Abu Hanifa's proofs are weak and finally comes to the categorical conclusion that:

"I have, with all praise due to Allah, combed his school of thought with a fine brush and I have found that his school is extremely cautious and even ostentatiously virtuous."

These comments from Imam Sha'raani are merely to illustrate fundamentally that the Hanafi school is based on the Quran and Sunnah. [152]

Notes:

148 The Jami' of Tirmidhi. The above cited example is only an example of the rule mentioned. Otherwise, the Hanafi opinion on this issue is very difficult.

149 Tahreeke: page 32

150 Tirmidhi: chapter on the Description of Salaat

151 Al-meezanul kubraa, by Abdul wahhab Sha'raani: page 63/64 printed in Egypt by Mustafa al-Babi

152 For further evidence please consult his book Al-meezanul kubraa