

HADITH STUDIES

Long Hands and Charity

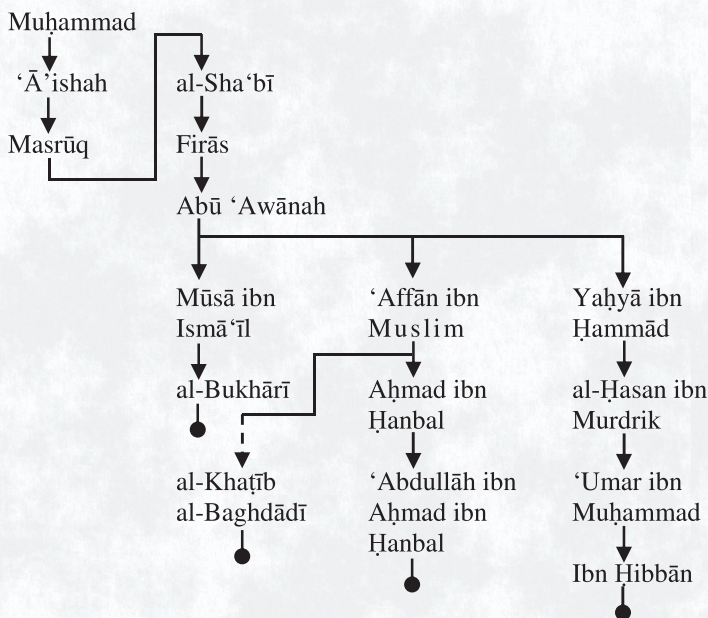
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حدثنا موسى بن إسماعيل حدثنا أبو عوانة عن فراس عن الشعبي عن مسروق عن عائشة رضي الله عنها أن بعض أزواج النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قلن للنبي صلى الله عليه وسلم أيُّنا أَسْرَعُ بِكَ لِحُوقًا قال أطولُكنَّ يَدًا فأخذوا قَصَبَةً يَدْرَعُونَهَا فكانت سودة أطولهنَّ يَدًا فعَلِمْنَا بَعْدَ أَثْنَا كَانَتْ طُولَ يَدِهَا الصَّدَقَةُ وَكَانَتْ أَسْرَعََنَا لِحُوقًا بِهِ وَكَانَتْ تُحِبُّ الصَّدَقَةَ

Masrūq reported from ‘Ā’ishah (rta) that one of the wives of the Prophet (sws) said to him: “Which of us would meet you first?” He replied: ‘One who has the longest hands.’ The wives started to measure their hands with stick of sugar cane. [They found that] Sawdah had the longest hands. So, we got to know later that the expression long hands referred to her being charitable and she was the first one who [died and] went to the Prophet (sws) the foremost and she was very fond of charity.”¹

Following is the schematic illustration of the variants of this narrative’s *isnād*:

1. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 2, 515, (no. 1354). See also: Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 8, 108, (no. 24943); Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 8, 108, (no. 2215); Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Tārīkh al-awsaṭ*, vol. 1, 50, (no. 179); Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdaḍī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol. 3, 112, (no. 1118).



It is factually wrong that Sawdah (rta) was the first among the wives of the Prophet (rta) to have died. It is evident from other sources that it was Zaynab bint Jaḥash (rta):

حدثنا حماد أبو أسامة قال حدثني عامر قال حدثني عبد الرحمن بن أبيزي قال
 صليت مع عمر على زينب وكانت أول نساء النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم ماتت
 بعد النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم

‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abzā stated: “I offered the funeral prayer of Zaynab with ‘Umar and she was the first of the Prophet’s wives who died after him.”²

Thus, it is recorded that she died in 20 AH.³

2. Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Muṣannaḥ*, vol. 7, 249, (no. 35764).

3. Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdullāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Sulaymān ibn Zubar al-Rub‘ī, *Tārīkh mawlid al-‘ulamā’ wa wafayātihim*, 1st ed., vol. 1 (Riyāḍ Dār al-‘āshimah, 1410 AH), 107; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Al-Thiqāt*, vol. 3, 144; Ibn Ḥajar, *Taqrīb*, 747; Al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, 35, 184.

Moreover, it is about her that sources specify that she was very charitable:

حدثنا مَحْمُودُ بْنُ غَيْلَانَ أَبُو أَحْمَدَ حَدَّثَنَا الْفَضْلُ بْنُ مُوسَى السَّيِّئَانِيُّ أَخْبَرَنَا طَلْحَةُ بْنُ يَحْيَى بْنِ طَلْحَةَ عَنْ عَائِشَةَ بِنْتِ طَلْحَةَ عَنْ عَائِشَةَ أُمِّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ قَالَتْ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ اسْعِي لِحَاقِي إِنْ طَوَّلَ يَدَايَ فَقَدْ كُنْتُ تَتَطَاوَلُنَّ أَيْتُهُنَّ أَطْوَلُ يَدًا قَالَتْ فَكَانَتْ طَوْلُنَا يَدًا زَيْنَبُ لِأَنَّهَا كَانَتْ تَعْمَلُ بِيَدِهَا وَتَصَدَّقُ

‘Ā’ishah bint Ṭalḥah reports from ‘Ā’ishah, mother of the faithful that she stated: “The Prophet (sws) said: ‘The foremost among you to meet me is the one who has the longest hands.’ At this, the wives started to measure their hands to know who had the longest ones.” ‘Ā’ishah said: “Zaynab had the longest hands among us because she worked with them and would give charity.”⁴

Though Ibn Abī Khaythamah says that Sawdah bint Zam‘ah (rta) died near the end of ‘Umar’s caliphate,⁵ al-Wāqidī and Ibn Ḥibbān say that she died in 55 AH.⁶

The only person to report the name of Sawdah (rta) in this narrative from ‘Ā’ishah is Masrūq ibn Ajda’.

Moreover, besides ‘Ā’ishah bint Ṭalḥah (as cited above by Muslim), ‘Amrah bint ‘Abd al-Raḥmān also reports from ‘Ā’ishah that the first to die after the Prophet (sws) was Zaynab:

أَخْبَرَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ أَبِي أُوَيْسٍ حَدَّثَنِي أَبِي عَنْ يَحْيَى بْنِ سَعِيدٍ عَنْ عَمْرَةَ بِنْتِ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ الْأَنْصَارِيَّةِ عَنْ عَائِشَةَ قَالَتْ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَا زَوْاجَ يَتَّبَعُنِي أَطْوَلُ يَدًا قَالَتْ عَائِشَةُ فَكُنَا إِذَا اجْتَمَعْنَا فِي بَيْتٍ إِحْدَانَا بَعْدَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ نَبِيٍّ أَيْدِينَا فِي الْجِدَارِ نَتَطَاوَلُ فَلَمْ نَزَلْ نَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ حَتَّى تَوَفَّيْتُ زَيْنَبَ بِنْتَ جَحْشٍ وَكَانَتْ امْرَأَةً قَصِيرَةً يَرِحُهَا اللَّهُ وَلَمْ تَكُنْ أَطْوَلَنَا فَعَرَفْنَا حِينَئِذٍ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِنَّمَا أَرَادَ بِطَوْلِ الْيَدِ الصَّدَقَةَ قَالَتْ وَكَانَتْ

4. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 4, 1907, (no. 2542). See also: Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 15, 50, (no. 2215); Ibid., vol. 8, 108, (no. 3314).

5. Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, vol. 12, 455.

6. Ibn Ḥibbān, *Al-Thiqāt*, vol. 3, 183; Ibn Ḥajar, *Taqrīb*, 748.

زينب امرأة صناع اليد فكانت تدبغ وتخز وتصدق في سبيل الله

‘Ā’ishah stated that the Prophet (sww) said to his wives: “The one to follow me would be the one who has the longest hands.” ‘Ā’ishah said: “Once we were gathered at the houses of one among us after the Prophet (sww) had passed away. We would spread our hands on the wall to find out which among us has the longest ones. So, we would continue to do this until Zaynab bint Jaḥash died and she was a woman of short height, may God have mercy on her and she was not the tallest among us. It is then that we realized that by the length of hands, the Prophet (sww) was actually referring to being charitable. Zaynab would work with her hands, bake hides and stitch them and spend in charity.”⁷

It seems that in the narrative cited earliest in this article, the error has been made by Abū ‘Awānah Waḍḍāḥ ibn ‘Umar al-Yashkurī about whom Abū Hātim says that he would make errors when he would narrate from his memory.⁸

7. Ibn Sa‘d, *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, vol. 8, 108. See also: al-Ṭaḥāwī, *Sharḥ mushkil al-āthār*, vol. 1, 202.

8. Al-Dhahabī, *Mīzān al-i’tidāl*,