

Removing confusion regarding fasting six days of Shawwal

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Revised: Shawwal 4, 1443H

There are some people who said fasting the six days of Shawwal is not from the sunnah. Their reasons are:

- a. The hadith regarding fasting six days of Shawwal is criticized
- b. Imam Malik, Abu Haneefah, Qadhi Abu Yusuf, Hasan Al-Basri used to dislike/disapprove of fasting these days
- c. Imam Bukhari didn't report the hadith of six days of Shawwal in his sahih

These criticism are sometimes based upon the observation of some scholars of the past but the question is

- a. Are these concerns really valid?
- b. Did great scholars like Imam Malik really dislike fasting these days and if so what were their reasons?
- c. What do the other scholars who approve of this fasting say about the hadith and these disagreements?

First of all, there are lots of books and treatises written by good, trustworthy scholars to refute these confusions. For example:

By Sheikh 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-'Utaybee مكانة الصحيحين والدفاع عن صحيح مسلم

Al-'Allaamah Mohammad Ibn Adam Al-Etheopi in his sharh of Sahih Muslim

Al-Ba'hr al Mu'hee't Ath-Thajjaj fee sharh saheeh Muslim Ibn Hajjaj

And many other scholars in the past like An-Nawawi, Ibn Hajr, Ibn Abdul Barr, Al-Baji and many others refuted these claims and confusion and clarified to the ummah that the hadith of fasting six days of Shawwal is authentic and practicing it and calling into it is from the sunnah...

There are several narrations from several companions with regards to the hadith of fasting in shawwal:

Abu Ayyub Al-Anasri, Thawban, Shaddad Ibn Aws, Abu Hurayrah

The other narrations on the authority of Jabir, Anas, 'Abdullaah Ibn 'Umar are not authentic...

As for the hadith of Abu Ayyub Al-Ansari, there is a reporter in the chain

Sa'd Ibn Sa'eed al-Ansari who reported from 'Amr ibn Thabit who reported from Abu Ayyub Al-Ansari [This is the narration of Imam Muslim]

Some scholars like Imam Ahmed, Ibn Ma'een (in one narration) and others criticized the narrator S'ad Ibn Sa'eed. They said he has weak memory and his narrations are not accepted. Based on this criticism Al-Qurtubi in His "Mufhim" criticized this hadith and claimed that although the narration is in sahih Muslim but this is one of those narrations that is criticized and can't be taken as hujjah...

But there are other great scholars of hadith like Ibn Ma'een, Ibn Hibban, Al-'Ijlee and many others who said he is acceptable as a narrator and his hadith are in the level of "hasan". This is also the position of Ibn Hajr, Adh-Dhahabi and many of the prominent scholars of hadith including Imam Nasiruddin Al-Albani and others...

Second, the scholars who did the detailed takhreej of this hadith examined that there are others who followed up this narration with Sa'd Ibn Sa'eed...

- a. Yahya Ibn Sa'eed [this is one of his brothers]
- b. 'Abd Rabbihi Ibn Sa'eed [his brother]

Their narrations are reported in mushkil al athar of Imam At-Tahawi...

So, with such muta'aba'at, the narration itself can't be rejected but rather accepted fully...

On top of that, there are other sahabah who reported this khabar and the chains of narrations are authentic. From them

- a. Thawban mawla rosulillaah
- b. Ash-Shaddad Ibn Aws
- c. Abu Hurayrah
- d. Jabir [reported by Ahmed...]

For sure the narrations of Thawban and Ash-Shaddad Ibn Aws are authentic. As for Abu Hurayrah's narration, many scholars accept it and some don't. But the point is that we have mutaba'at from the sahabah too...

So, the conclusion of this detailed research, is that

- a. The hadith of Abu Ayyub Al-Ansari is by itself authentic
- b. There are also other hadith from other sahabah supporting this hadith

Did Imam Malik dislike fasting these days?

In Muwatta we know from Imam Malik...

Yahya said that he heard Malik say, about fasting for six days after breaking the fast at the end of Ramadan, that he had never seen any of the people of knowledge and fiqh fasting them. He said, "I

have not heard that any of our predecessors used to do that, and the people of knowledge disapprove of it and they are afraid that it might become a bid'ah and that common and ignorant people might join to Ramadan what does not belong to it, if they were to think that the people of knowledge had given permission for that to be done and were seen doing it.

So the scholars like Imam Ibn 'Abdul Barr, Al-baaji and others explained this issue.

This could be because of many reasons:

- a. Imam Malik didn't know about the hadith of six days of Shawwal [although the hadith is Madani]
- b. Or maybe Imam Malik knew it but didn't deem it to be authentic
- c. Or maybe he was influenced by the fact that since he didn't see people of knowledge practicing it, he felt an aversion.
- d. Or maybe he was afraid people of his time might take this fasting as obligatory and connect it to Ramadaan!

All these reasons are just some justification the ulamah gave to the position of Imam Malik but in the end, all of them agreed that the hadith is authentic and fasting of the six days of Shawwal shouldn't be neglected just because some people disliked it for whatever reasons.

The same thing goes for the position of Imam Abu Haneefah and Qadi Abu Yusuf, what looks to be correct is they didn't want the people to join it with the fasting of Ramadaan. But they didn't dislike or disapprove of fasting these days.

As for Imam Hasan Al-Basri, then his statement is recorded in Musannaf Ibn Abee Shaybah

Summary: As you can see, these statements of scholars don't justify to claim that the six days of Shawwal are not from the sunnah. Even the claim that they all disliked is not true. And even if they did, their disliking shouldn't make us reject a sunnah that is clearly mentioned in an authentic narration.

Imam Bukhari didn't report this hadith in his sahih:

Imam Bukhari himself explained that he didn't intend to put all hadith he used to consider authentic in his sahih. In fact, he himself used to believe so many hadith to be authentic and acceptable but yet didn't record them in his sahih. So, the simple fact that he didn't record it in his sahih doesn't mean this hadith is questionable.

Conclusion

In summary:

- a. The Hadith of six days of Shawwal in Sahih Muslim is an authentic narration. Even though there is a narrator who is criticized but he is being supported by other scholars of hadith and the chain itself is supported by other trustworthy narrators (thiqah) who reported from his

teacher. Also, we need to remember that Imam Muslim was one of the major ulamah of hadith and he chose this hadith in his book after he saw that there is no harm in the narration of Sa'd Ibn Sa'eed

- b. The hadith of Sahih Muslim is supported by other narrations (authentic) from other companions.
- c. The fact that some scholars used to dislike fasting six days of Shawwal has no bearing on the ruling of this recommended deed which is supported with authentic and clear evidence.
- d. It is the position of Ahmed, Shafee, Dawud and other scholars that it is mustahab to fast the six days of Shawwal. This is also clearly referred to by Imam Ahmed in his masail by his son Abdullaah. Remember Imam Ahmed is one of those who criticized the narrator Sa'd Ibn Sa'eed. So, those who use the criticism of Imam Ahmed shouldn't forget that he himself when asked clearly mentioned it is recommended to fast six days of Shawwal.
- e. The Ulamah of past and present accepted the narrations and gave a clear verdict on the permissibility of fasting on these optional days. This is the correct opinion and anything other than this is unacceptable and is a mistaken position. And Allaah knows best.