

AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE PROPHET'S HADITH: "YOU ARE MORE KNOWLEDGEABLE OF THE MATTERS OF YOUR WORLD" (أَنْتُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِأَمْرِ دُنْيَاكُمْ)

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ملخص البحث

العلمانية التي تفصل الدين عن الحياة عامة وعن السياسة خاصة نشأت في حضارة غير حضارتنا لظروف لا نظير لها عندنا. إن الغرب نادى بالعلمانية ليواجه بها كهنوت الكنيسة الغربية التي وقفت مع الجمود ضد الفكر ومع الجهل ضد العلم ومع الملوك ضد الشعوب. والإسلام لا توجد لديه بابوية ولا كهنوت ولا "رجال دين" ما حللوه في الأرض فهو حلال في السماء! من هنا فالعلمانية في الغرب لها ما يبررها في فكرها الفلسفي منذ عهد أرسطو الذي يرى أن الله لا علاقة له بالعالم، ومن فكرها الديني الذي يذكر ظاهر نصه مؤكداً قسمة الحياة بين الله وقيصر وترك ما لقيصر لقيصر وما لله لله. والعلمانيون عندنا يدعون إلى فصل الدين عن الحياة بحجة أن العالم يتطور، والحياة تتغير، ومنهم من يستدل إلى ما ذهبوا إليه بقول النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم بأنه قال: "أنتم أعلم بأمر دنياكم". ويتخذون هذا الحديث المشهور لفظاً مطلقاً دون قيد أو شرط للتهرب من أحكام الشريعة في المجالات الاقتصادية والمدنية والسياسية ونحوها لأنها - كما زعموا - من شؤون دنيانا، ونحن أعلم بما وقد وكلها الرسول صلى الله عليه وسلم إلينا! وفي مقابل هؤلاء "العصريين" أو "التقدميين" يقول آخرون بأن الامتثال لحديث النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم ما قاله شرعاً وما ذكره من معاش الدنيا هو على سبيل الرأي. ومن هنا يتناول هذا البحث حديث "أنتم أعلم بأمر دنياكم" لتبيان مقاصده وكيفية تطبيقه.

The Prophet Muhammad said: "You are more knowledgeable of the matters of your world". This authentic hadith is reported by Imam Muslim. How to understand the above hadith which poses a challenge to modern Muslim who is under the influence of the modern secular worldview? Indeed, Secularism can be justified through its philosophical thought that can be traced back to Aristotle era (Greek Philosopher) and the idea which is rooted in that community that life is divided between God and Caesar. Hence, what is for Caesar is for Caesar and what is for God is for God! But what is the basis used by the secular elites in the Muslim world to justify Secularism: within the religion? In general they did not feel necessary to justify themselves through religion, however, in some cases they tried to use some holy texts from the Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet in order to justify their adoption of Secularism. In this study I will analyze the hadith of the Prophet, which stated that "You are more knowledgeable of the matters of your world", which has been used in the above context.

On the other hand, it is well known by the Muslims that the revelation Prophet Muhammad (SAW) received from Allah is of two different kinds: First, the Quran; named in the Islamic terminology as *āl-wāḥy āl-māṭlūww* (the recited revelation), and secondly, the revelation received by the Prophet from time to time which is called *āl-wāḥy ghāyr āl-māṭlūww* (the non-recited revelation) which is the Sunnah of the Prophet. Therefore, all Islamic schools consider hadith of the Prophet (SAW) as the second source of Islamic legislation next to the Quran and stress on the necessity of obedience to it. Anything having a divine nature

is naturally held as sacred by Muslims who have conviction of its divine source.

In the light of this, how should we understand the above hadith? Beside this, we also know that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) used to exercise *ijtihād* not only on religious and legal affairs, but also on the worldly affairs. Thus, was his *ijtihād* based on his personal opinion or was it part of the non-recited revelation? Was it totally free from mistakes? For these reasons, an analytical study of the above-mentioned hadith is crucial, and will be undertaken in a scholarly manner in this paper.

“You Are More Knowledgeable of the Matters of Your World”

This hadith is among the famous sayings of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). However, it is open to misunderstanding if it is not analyzed within its full context as well as with other versions of the same hadith. This is because, at a glance it asserts that certain practices or institutions can exist separately from the religion or religious belief and secular ideas or values can be promoted through it since we are more knowledgeable of the matters of our worldly affairs. But, is this the real meaning of the hadith that we should understand it? Is it applicable to all generations of the Muslims?

To answer these critical questions, first of all, we need to know the ḥadīth in its full version in order to get the exact information regarding its context. Imam Muslim has reported

various versions of it ¹ pt in his authentic ḥadīth book known as *Ṣāḥīḥ Mūslīm*. The chapter is called “The obligation of imitating what the Prophet said and not what he mentioned in worldly activities on the basis of opinion”. He narrated on the authority of Anas that “Prophet Muhammad (SAW) passed by a group of Medinan farmers who were engaged in the pollination of Date seeds (*tā‘bīr āl-nākḥl*). Then, the Prophet said to them: “It would have been better if you did not do that”. Later on he passed by the same garden but the produce of the palm trees were ruined. Then, he asked them what happened? They responded that you said us to do so. Then the Prophet responded by saying to them: You are more knowledgeable of the matters of your world.” ²

Imam Muslim also reported another ḥadīth about the same incident on the authority of Mūsā ibn Ṭālḥāḥ who narrated it from his father in which he said: “The Prophet and I passed by a group of people who were busy at the top of the date trees, and the Prophet asked what they were doing? He was told that those people were attempting the pollination of date seeds that could yield better crops. The Prophet answered by saying that he doesn’t think that this will give them any benefit. These people were then told about the opinion of the Prophet concerning their action, and they gave it up. Subsequently, the Prophet was again

¹ All of them are authentic ḥadīths.

² *Āl-Qūshayrī, Mūslīm Bīn āl-Ḥājāj. Ṣāḥīḥ Mūslīm*. Beirut: *Dār Iḥyā’ āl-Ṭurāth āl-‘Arābī*. 4/1836; *Āl-Qāzwinī, Mūḥammād Bīn Yāzīd. Ṣūnān Ibn Mājah*. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr. 2/825, *Ibn Ḥānbāl, Ābū ‘Ābd ‘Āllāḥ Āḥmād āl-Ṣḥāybānī. Mūṣnād Āḥmād*. Egypt: Muassasat Qurṭubah. 3/152.

told about their reaction, and then he said: "If they think they can obtain any benefit from it they can continue their action, because it was only my personal opinion. However, if I convey anything to you from God you must take it, because I do not tell lie about God."³ This incident has also been reported in another version⁴ in which the whole story of the incident and the context of the hadith became very clear.

Analysis of the Hadith

What we can understand from the hadith when we look at the background of the incident is this: The Prophet (SAW) along with some of his companions migrated from Mecca to Medina. As we know, the Meccans were merchants and traders while the Medinans were people of agriculture. One day, in Medina, the Prophet was passing by a few Medinan farmers who were climbing high up on date trees to enhance the pollination of its seeds. They would manually put the male with the female seeds instead of leaving it to the wind to do it. The Prophet, who was

³ Ṣāḥīḥ Mūslīm, 4/1835, Ṣūnān Ībn Mājah, 2/825, Mūṣṇāḍ Āḥmāḍ, 1/162.

⁴ Again, Īmām Mūslīm reported on the authority of Rāfi' Ībn Kḥūḍāyĵ that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) came to Medina and saw the people mixing male and female seeds of palm trees. He asked them about their action and they told him about the pollination of the seeds. He said: "It would have been better if you don't do that". Then, they stopped it. When the Prophet was told about their reaction he said that "I am a human being like you; if I ask you to do something concerning your religious matter you must take it and do it, but if I tell you something from my personal opinion, I am only a human being like you." Ṣāḥīḥ Mūslīm, 4/1835, Ṣūnān Ībn Mājah, 2/825, Āl-Ṭābrānī, Ṣūlāymān Bīn Āḥmāḍ. (1983). Āl-Mū'jam Āl-Kābir. Māwṣil: Maktabat al-'Ulum wa al-Hikam. 4/280.

not a farmer, and without realizing the importance of this manual process, said to them “Perhaps it may be better if you do not do this”. The Medinans, hearing this from the Messenger of God, stopped what they were doing. Later on, their produce came out only scarcely as it was merely by the wind. As such, the Prophet clarified his role as a Messenger of God to the people saying “If I order you to do something related to your religion then take it (and do it) but if I order you to do something from my own opinion then verily I am merely a human being”. He also added “You are more knowledgeable of the matters of your world”.

It appears from the different versions of the same hadith that the whole story is simply about *tā'bir āl-nākhl* (pollination of Date seeds), and it is based on the Prophet's personal opinion. This personal opinion of the Prophet was considered by the Ansar as a revelation or religious matter. Therefore, they gave up their traditional activity which, in turn, badly affected their produce. The Prophet clarified his statement by telling them that it is a matter only of his personal opinion.

Obviously, Allah sent his messengers to establish the principles and fundamentals of justice, and to ensure people their rights, duties and obligations in this life, so that they can avoid going astray. Quran describes the duties of the Prophet in verses such as: “Indeed, We verily have sent messengers with clear proofs, and revealed with them the scripture and the balance, that mankind may observe right measure”.⁵ Hence, it

⁵ All of them are authentic ḥadīth.

is understood that the Quran and Sunnah are essential sources to regulate human transactions, such as selling, buying, lending, loaning or crediting and so forth. In this respect too, the longest verse in the Quran is on the transactions concerning money.⁶

It is also obvious from the hadith that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) has his own personal opinion, and as a human being he could, therefore, be right or wrong. On the other hand, if he said something based on revelation, then people must accept it even if it is related to their daily affairs and routine activities. Nevertheless, if he said something based on his personal opinion, people should not take it for granted, although they may know what is good for them based on the situation and circumstance. Therefore, those companions who refrained from pollinating the date seeds did so due to their strong belief and conviction for the Prophet. But faith alone in this case was not enough as their crops failed to produce good dates for that particular year. For this reason, the Prophet corrected their belief and informed them that they were not supposed to take his personal opinion on worldly affairs which are based on tradition and work experience.

Muslim scholars have also commented about the deeds of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and his actions as follows: Intentional deeds of the Prophet are divided into four categories,

⁶ Āl-Qūṣṣāyirī, *Mūslīm Bīn āl-Ḥājjāj. Ṣāḥīḥ Mūslīm*. Beirut: Dar Iḥyā' al-Turath al-'Arabi. 4/1836; Āl-Qāzwīnī, *Mūḥāmmāḍ Bīn Yazīd. Ṣūnān Ibn Mājah*. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr. 2/825, Ibn Ḥānbal, *Ābū 'Ābd 'Allāḥ Āḥmāḍ āl-Ṣḥāybānī. Mūṣnāḍ Āḥmāḍ*. Egypt: Muassasat Qurtubah. 3/152.

namely; highly recommended, recommended, obligatory and compulsory. However, there is a fifth type which does not belong to any of these four categories, and it is called al-zillah (slip-up) because it cannot be utilized to imitate the Prophet.⁷ Furthermore, they have also discussed the meaning of the dispositions of the Prophet and how to imitate him in his deeds, sayings and tacit approvals. According to them, this does not include actions that occur during sleep or in the state of unconsciousness, because the goal of the message cannot be achieved in these circumstances and situations.⁸

Certainly the worldly affairs are of various natures. Therefore, something can come to the mind of the people for their benefits which is not necessarily known by the Prophet. As such, the saying of the Prophet “You are more knowledgeable about your worldly affairs” opens the way of how to utilize and benefit from these various enterprises. Obviously, the context in which the Prophet said this statement was in agricultural issue, yet we cannot simply take this saying and apply it to all of our worldly affairs and separate life into secular and religious.

This particular issue is not related to prophethood, nor has it any relation with political and social leadership. The Prophet was chosen to receive the revelation. But, it was not his duty to know the details of seed pollination and other related matters. This is the real meaning of the hadith “You are the most

⁷ See: al-Sarakhsi, Shams al-A’immah Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Abu Sahl Ahmad. Usul al-Sarakhsi. Beirut: Dar al-Ma’rifah. 2/86.

⁸ Ibid. 2/86.

knowledgeable about your worldly affairs”. According to Abu Ja‘far al-Tahawi (d. 321 AH), what the Prophet said on the basis of doubt or uncertainty, it is similar to people’s opinion and uncertainty. But, his statement about God does not contain any doubt or uncertainty. An example of this can be seen from the issue of cohabitation with a nursing woman. It was initially forbidden by the Prophet but later on allowed when he realized there is no harm in that action.⁹ This proves that the earlier prohibition was made by the Prophet and not from God. If it was truly from God, then it would be absolute and permanent.¹⁰

According to scholars, although the sayings of the Prophet on worldly affairs are not considered as legal issues, yet his *ijtihād*s are legally binding. Thus, in the case of *ṭā‘bīr āl-nākhl*, the Prophet’s opinion is similar to others as it was based simply on practice and experience. Therefore, he cannot avoid from

⁹ The Messenger of Allah said: “I intended to prohibit cohabitation with suckling woman to avoid pregnancy within the suckling period, but then I considered the practice of the Greeks and the Persians, and saw that they used to do it and that did not harm their children.” The Prophet did attempt to prohibit this practice simply because of his fear of its negative effects on the baby, as was believed by the Arabs. In commenting this hadith, Nawawi said that there is a strong indication from the content of the hadith that it is possible for the Prophet to do *ijtihād*. This view is, in fact, consistent with the view of the other scholars on the matter. (Sahih Muslim. 2/1067; al-Tirmidhi, Muhammad Bin ‘Isa. Sunan al-Tirmidhi. Beirut: Dar Ihya’ al-Turath al-‘Arabi. 4/406; al-Mubarakfuri, Muhammad Bin ‘Abd al-Rahman Bin ‘Abd al-Rahim. Tuhfah al-Ahwadhi Bi Sharh al-Jami‘ al-Tirmidhi. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiy. 6/207; and al-Nawawi, Yahya Bin Sharaf. (1392). Sharh al-Nawawi ‘ala Sahih Muslim. Beirut: Dar Ihya’ al-Turath al-‘Arabi. 10/16-17.

¹⁰ Al-Tahawi, Ahmad Bin Muhammad Abu Ja‘far. (1399). Sharh al-Ma‘ani al-Athar. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiy. 3/48.

doing mistakes of this kind simply because his concentration on the Hereafter is more than this life.¹¹ According to *Ībn Ṭāymiyyāh* (d. 727 AH), the Prophet has forbidden *ṭā‘bīr āl-nākhl* because he believed that there was no benefit from it. Then he said later that “You are more knowledgeable about your life affairs” simply because this matter is based on experience, culture, and norms.¹²

Thus, from this hadith it is clear that religion does not interfere with people’s daily affairs; especially if these affairs relate to their needs and instinct, unless there is any deviation or extravagance. Here it interferes to solidify and promotes people’s activities for the sake of God. Religion also tends to intervene in these affairs to strengthen ethical values to assist man in performing his duties, and it is in this aspect that differentiates him from animals.¹³ As we have mentioned previously, the incident of *ṭā‘bīr āl-nākhl* was not based on revelation, rather it was from the personal opinion and experience of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). As such, it is not infallible, as he grew up in a place that did not practice

¹¹ Sharh al-Nawawi ‘ala Sahih Muslim. 15/116.

¹² See: Ibn Taymiyyah, Taqi al-Din al-Harrani. Sharh al-‘Umdah fi al-Fiqh. Riyadh: Maktabat al-‘Abkiyan. 1/82.

¹³ See: Al-Qardawi, Yusuf. Al-Sunnah Masdaran Li al-Ma‘rifah Wa al-Hadarah. Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq. 14.

¹⁴ Prophet Ibrahim described Makkah, the place where the Prophet Muhammad grew up, as follows: “O our Lord! I have made some of my offspring to dwell in a valley without cultivation, by Thy Sacred House; in order, O our Lord, that they may establish regular Prayer: so fill the hearts of some among men with love towards them, and feed them with fruits: so that they may give thanks. Ibrahim: 37.

agricultural activities, and he did not possess enough idea about this matter.¹⁴

Şhāḥ Wālīyūllāḥ āl-Ḍāḥlāwī (d. 1176 AH) has divided the traditions from Prophet Muhammad (SAW) into two categories: **First; His sayings in terms of conveying the message of God.** In this regard God said "So take what the Messenger gives you, and refrain from what he prohibits you."¹⁵ This category includes the knowledge about the Hereafter, miracles of the universe, legal actions, acts of worship, and so on. **Secondly; traditions that are based on the Prophet's personal opinion.** This is the meaning of his words "*I am a human being like you, if I asked you to do something concerning your religion you must do it, but if I asked you to do something from my own personal opinion, I am just a human being like you*".¹⁶ It is possible for the Prophet to give personal opinion in matters on worldly affairs which are not related to the religion or faith. This is because these affairs are based on experience and culture which are known to anyone who practiced them.¹⁷ Here, we should pose some questions: Did the Prophet exercise *ijtihād*? If so, what is the rule concerning his *ijtihād* in Islam? Is it binding to all Muslims? These questions will be addressed below.

¹⁵ Al-Hashr: 7.

¹⁶ See: al-Dahlawi, Shah Waliyullah. Hujjah Allah al-Balighah. Cairo: Dar al-Turath. 1/128-129.

¹⁷ See: Al-Qadi al-'Iyad, Abu al-Fadl al-Yahsubi. Al-Shifa Bi Ta'rif Huquq al-Mustafa. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiy. 2/114-115.

The Possibility of *ijtihād* by Prophet Muhammad (SAW)

Ījtihād literally means an extreme struggle in seeking the truth about some matters; human or otherwise. It is a technical and central term in the relationship between theory and practice in the Islamic Law. It is usually defined in the Usul works as the greatest possible effort made by a qualified jurist to reach a legal decision within the framework of the *shāri‘ah*.¹⁸ Where the scriptural texts are silent or do not cover a new situation, an independent effort is called for as a result of the compelling necessity to lay down the line of action.¹⁹ *Ījtihād* also means thinking, comparing, and deducing meanings from the revealed texts through deductive methodology. In this respect, the Prophet was the best person to do this than everyone else; because of his correct thinking and his infallibility.

Indeed, there are differences of opinions among scholars regarding this matter. However, they have unanimously agreed that *ijtihād* is logically possible for the Prophet. They have even reported a consensus of scholars on this matter which is based on text of the Quran and Sunnah.²⁰ Yet, they differed about its occurrence into three opinions as follows:

¹⁸ Gleāve, R. and Kermelī, E. (1997). *Īslāmīc Lāw: Theory and Prāctice*. London: Ī.B.Ṭāūrīṣ. 119.

¹⁹ Āḥmed, Āl-Ḥāj Moīnūddīn. (1992). *The Ūrgency of Ījtihād*. New Delhī: Kīṭāb Bhāvān. 32.

²⁰ See: *āl-Shāwkānī*, Mūḥāmmāḍ Bīn ‘Ālī Bīn Mūḥāmmāḍ. *Īrshād āl-Fūḥūl*. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr. 1/426.

Firstly: Rejection of the possibility of *ijtihād* for the Prophet. There are some scholars who hold that *ijtihād* is not possible for the Prophet, because they could not expect any mistake coming from him due to his infallibility and also due to the continuity of the revelation. This view was also advocated by Ibn Hāẓm āl-Zāhīrī who argued that Allah (SWT) has compelled us to return to His book and the Sunnah of His Prophet when He said in the Quran: “*If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if ye do believe in Allah and the Last Day*”²¹. He also said “*Nor does he (the Prophet) say (aught) of (his own) desire. It is no less than inspiration sent down to him.*”²² Thus, it is enough to say that all sayings of the Prophet are based on the revelation from God. For this reason if the believers disagree about anything, they must refer it to God (the Quran), His messenger while he lives, and thereafter to his Sunnah.²³

For the supporters of this opinion, to obey the command of the Prophet simply means to worship Allah (SWT). For this very reason, his commands can only be through revelation. They also said that the Prophet used to wait for revelation to answer any question posed to him, and the best example for this can be seen from the time when he was asked about the *zākāt* of donkey. He answered by saying that nothing has been revealed yet regarding this kind of zakat except the general verse: “*Then*

²¹ Āl-Niṣā’: 59.

²² Āl-Nājm: 3-4.

²³ Ibn Hāẓm āl-Zāhīrī, ‘Ālī Bīn Āḥmāḍ Bīn Ṣā’īḍ. (1405AH). *Āl-Nūbḍḥāh āl-Kāfīyāh fī Āḥkām Ūṣūl āl-Fīqh*. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiy. 29.

shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of good, see it! And anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil, shall see it."²⁴ The Mū'tazilītes were among those who advocated this opinion.²⁵

Secondly: *āl-tāwāqqūf* which means discontinuation. A small group of scholars take the stand of *āl-tāwāqqūf* because they are not clear about the possibility of *ijtihād* for Prophet Muhammad (SAW). They simply stopped giving any opinion on the matter.²⁶ However, from the available evidences on the occurrence of *ijtihād* by this Prophet, it is clear that this opinion is weak and unsupported.

Thirdly: The opinion which confirms that indeed Prophet Muhammad (SAW) used to exercise *ijtihād*. This is the opinion of the majority of scholars who said that the Prophet used to exercise *ijtihād* whenever he did not receive revelation on any particular matter.²⁷ In fact, there are many evidences from the Quran and Sunnah to support this view, and I will discuss some of them in the following paragraphs.

²⁴ *Āl-Zālzālāh*: 7-8.

²⁵ See: *Īrshād āl-Fūhūl*. 1/427.

²⁶ See: *Īrshād āl-Fūhūl*. 1/428.

²⁷ See: *Ūṣūl āl-Ṣārākḥṣī*. 2/96; and *āl-Āmiqī*, *Ābū āl-Ḥāṣān 'Alī Bīn Mūḥāmmād*. (1404 AH). *Āl-Īḥkām fī Ūṣūl āl-Āḥkām*. Beirut: Dar al-Kitāb al-'Arabi. 4/173.

Ījtihād of Prophet Muhammad (SAW): Is It Limited?

There are many evidences indicating that the Prophet used to perform *ijtihād*. He also taught his companions to perform it. As he was the leader and example for the ummah, he was also the best model for those who performed *ijtihād*. Therefore, his *ijtihād* was for the interest of the ummah and their benefit.

Actually, *ijtihād* is human endeavor to get legal practical judgment through deductive methods. As it is well known that every human mental activity is open to mistake, this means the Prophet was also susceptible to mistake when exercising *ijtihād*. However, the only thing that differentiates the *ijtihād* of the Prophet from other people is that his mistake is not permanent, and Allah (SWT) will correct him on this matter. There are several incidents mentioned in the Quran where Allah (SWT) has corrected His prophet, such as:

1. The Prophet's attitude towards *Ābdūllāh Ibn Ūmm āl-Māktūm*; a blind companion of his. Several commentators of the Quran have reported the incident that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was busy calling some dignitaries of *Qūrāyṣh* to convert into Islam, when *Ībn Ūmm āl-Māktūm* came to the Prophet and asked him about Islam. However, the Prophet was reluctant to pay any serious attention to him as he was busy calling the Quraysh

²⁸ See: *Ībn Kāthīr, Īsmā'īl Bīn 'Ūmār āl-Dāmāshqī Ābū āl-Fiḍā'*. (1401 AH). *Ṭāfṣīr Ībn Kāthīr*. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr. 4/471; *Āl-Ṭabārī, Muḥāmmād Bīn Jārīr Bīn Yāzīd Bīn Khālīd Ābū Jā'fār*. (1405 AH). *Ṭāfṣīr āl-Ṭabārī*. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr. 30/50-51.

dignitaries whose conversion will have a big impact for Islam at that time. However, Allah has revealed these verses to correct the Prophet : ²⁸

“(The Prophet) frowned and turned away, because there came to him the blind man (interrupting). But what could tell thee but that perchance he might grow in purity? Or that he might receive admonition, and the reminder might profit him? As to one who regards Himself as self-sufficient, to him dost thou attend; though it is no blame to thee if he grow not in purity. But as to him who came to thee striving earnestly, and with fear (in his heart), of him wast thou unmindful” ²⁹

2. The Prophet’s acceptance of the excuses of the Hypocrites who withdrew from the Battle of Ṭābūk without justifying their attitudes, Allah said:

“May God forgive you! (O Muhammad), why did you not let them join the army so that you could discern the liars from the truthful ones? Those who believe in God and the Day of Judgment do not ask you whether they should fight for the cause of God with their property and in person, or not. God knows all about the pious ones. Only those who do not believe in God and the Day of Judgment ask you such questions because their hearts are full of doubts and they cannot make any final decisions” ³⁰

²⁹ ‘Ābāṣā: 1-10.

³⁰ Āl-Ṭāwbāḥ: 43-45.

³¹ Āl-Qūrṭūbī, Ābū Ābdūllāh Mūḥammād Bīn Āḥmād. *Ṭāfṣīr āl-Qūrṭūbī*. Cairo: Dar al-Shab. 8/154.

Āl-Qūrṭūbī in his interpretation of this verse mentioned that the verse “*Why you grant them to rest when they give their fake excuse*” is a very lenient and simple blame to the Prophet because God has already forgiven him. Ironically, the Prophet granted them the permission to be excused from the war without any revelation from God.³¹

3. The Prophet was also corrected when he put down his weapon after the Battle of Āḥzāb with the belief that the battle is over. However, the angel Gabriel came to him and said that you have put down your weapons while the angels are yet to put down theirs; so he asked the Prophet to proceed to Bānī Qūrāyḏah.³²

4. In another case, the Prophet appointed his good friend Ābū Bākr to convey the chapter of Bārā’ah to the unbelievers in the same year that he asked him to lead the pilgrims. In this case, the angel Gabriel came to the Prophet and told him that he should not convey it to anyone except his relative. Therefore, the Prophet sent his cousin ‘Ālī Bīn Ābū Ṭālīb to convey the Chapter to the unbelievers. From this it is clear that the Prophet used to act according to his personal opinion, but his mistake was never permanent.³³

³² See: *Uṣūl āl-Ṣārākhṣī*. 2/95.

³³ Ibid. 2/95.

³⁴ The first battle between the Muslims and the Qūrāyḏ of Mecca took place at Bāḍr; sixty miles from Medina on the trade route to Syria. The Muslims returned to Medina victorious along with the Qūrāyḏ captives. Many of the prisoners were eminent Qūrāyḏ nobles. The Prophet consulted his companions as to how these captives should be treated. ‘Umar took a strong view and urged that unless these captives accepted Islam, they should be executed. Ābū Bākr took a more lenient approach. He suggested that

5. The Prophet's attitude towards the fate of the captives from the Battle of Bāḍr. He asked the opinion of his companions regarding this matter, and preferred the view of Ābū Bākr which was more lenient. As such, Allah revealed a verse in the Quran to correct him.³⁴

*"It is not fitting for a Prophet that he should have prisoners of war until he hath thoroughly subdued the land. Ye look for the temporal goods of this world; but Allah looks to the Hereafter: And Allah is Exalted in might, Wise"*³⁵

6. Ābū Ḥūrāyrah narrated that the Prophet used to say that he will burn the house of men who did not present themselves for prayers in congregation.³⁶ However, this has never been done by the Prophet. This indicates that he has changed his opinion either through his own ijtihad or from revelation.

they should be set free on ransom. The Prophet said that as God has given the Prophet accepted the advice of Abu Bakr and acted accordingly. The following day, 'Umar visited the Prophet and saw that both the Prophet and Abu Bakr were weeping. 'Umar asked the Prophet: "Why are you weeping? Tell me if there is any reason to grieve so that I may also weep with you". The Prophet said: "O 'Umar, there is nothing for you to grieve. On the other hand, you should rejoice that God has upheld your view on the fate of the captives of Badr, and admonished those who have taken a contrary view". 'Umar wanted to know the revelation, and the Prophet recited to him the verse from al-Anfal which has been revealed to him. Saḥīḥ Muslim, 3/1385; and Ibn Hibban, Muhammad Bin Ahmad Abu Hatim. (1993). Saḥīḥ Ibn Hibban. Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah. 11/114-116.

³⁵ Āl-Ānfāl: 67.

³⁶ See: Āl-Būkhārī, Mūḥammāḍ Bīn Īsmā'īl. Ṣāḥīḥ āl-Būkhārī. Beirut: Dar Ibn Kashir al-Yamamah. 1/231; and āl-Nāṣā'ī, Āḥmāḍ Bīn Ṣḥū'āyb. Ṣūnān āl-Nāṣā'ī. Halab: Maktabat al-Matbu'at al-Islamiyyah. 2/107.

7. It was also narrated by Ābū Ḥūrāyrah that the Prophet used to send the Muslims in a military mission and said: “*If you find so-and-so and so-and-so, burn them with fire.*” However, when they intended to embark on the mission, the Prophet said: “*I have ordered you to burn so-and-so and so-and-so, yet it is none but Allah Who punishes with fire. So, if you find them, just kill them*”³⁷. In another version of this narration by āl-Dārīmī, the Prophet said: “.... *Then I realized that no one can punish anybody by fire except Allah*”³⁸. Here, Ibn Ḥājār derived an opinion from this hadith that it is possible to do *ijtihād*, and then changed it later.³⁹

From the evidences we have mentioned above, it is clear that the Prophet used to exercise *ijtihād* in some important affairs which were not supported by the revelation, and that his *ijtihād* in this respect can be wrong, because it is based solely on human's endeavor. To conclude, *ijtihād* is possible for the Prophet simply because it happened from him, and the subject of his *ijtihād* varies from religious to worldly affairs, as can be seen from the examples mentioned above.

Ijtihad of Other Prophets

If we look into the Quran carefully, we will realize that committing mistake while performing *ijtihād* is not only re-

³⁷ Sahih al-Bukhari. 3/1079; and Sunan al-Nasa'i. 5/249.

³⁸ Al-Darimi, Abdullah Bin 'Abd al-Rahman. (1407 AH). Sunan al-Darimi. Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi. 2/293.

³⁹ Al-'Asqallani, Ahmad Bin 'Ali Bin Hajar. Fath al-Bari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari. Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah. 6/150.

lated to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) but also to other prophets. Because they based their actions and deeds on their personal opinions, some of them were right in their opinions and some were wrong. An example of this can be seen in the case of the two prophets David and Solomon whom the Quran has praised many times. Allah (SWT) said:

“David and Solomon were trying to settle the case of the people's sheep that grazed in a corn-field at night. We witnessed their decree in that matter. We made Solomon understand the law about the case and gave both David and Solomon knowledge and wisdom” ⁴⁰

And in the case of Yūnūs whose anger has made him left his people without the order from God to do so. As such, he was swallowed by the whale as a result of his action. Allah said:

“And remember Dhu al-Nun, when he departed in wrath: He imagined that We had no power over him! But he cried through the depths of darkness, "There is no god but Thou: glory to Thee: I was indeed wrong!” ⁴¹

However, in the case of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), his *ijtihād* occurred in several instances, as have been mentioned by the scholars. Not only that, but some of these *ijtihād*s have also

⁴⁰ Āl-Ānbiyā':78-79. According to *Tāfīr āl-Jālālayn*, one of the interpretations of this verse are: “And We gave understanding of this, that is, the judgment, to Solomon. [It is said that] both of their decisions were [the result of] independent judgment [exercised by both], and that David consulted Solomon.” See: <http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=74&tSoraNo=21&tAyahNo=79&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0>.

⁴¹ Āl-Ānbiyā': 87.

been strongly supported by revelation. Moreover, some of these ijtihads were not only related to the worldly affairs, but some were also related to the religious and legal affairs.

Conclusion

Based on our discussion above, it is clear that several *ijtihād*s have occurred from the Prophet as far as human nature is concerned. It is also obvious that his ijtihad took many forms, such as in speech, or action, or agreement with the opinions of his companions, or disagreement with their opinions. Therefore, *ijtihād* has certainly been exercised by him as indicated in the Quran and Sunnah. Moreover, his *ijtihād* was not characterized by any special topic or place; but it consists of several issues concerning Muslims in their life. Furthermore, his opinion was not always correct or accepted by God. If he made a mistake, he will always be corrected by God or by himself or by his companion, although this correction may not take place immediately, and it is possible that it could take place after period of time.

The subject of *ijtihād* is varied; ranging from the religious to worldly and cultural affairs. If there was no judgment for some of these matters in revelation, the Prophet will then exercise his personal opinion. The best example of this kind of *ijtihād* is the case of *ṭā'bir āl-nākhil*, where it was based on doubt only. As such, the Prophet's hadith "You are more knowledgeable of the matters of your world" should be understood in this context.

However, the only difference between the Prophet and other people who conduct *ijtihād* is that God will never let his mistake to be permanent, and the correction will come in the form of revelation. This is because, the Prophet was sent by God to deliver His message to people and, therefore, he should be followed by the grace of Allah. That is why throughout history, from the time of the Prophet until now, the status of the Sunnah does not change in the perception of the Muslims.

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