

Hadiths of Believer and Disbeliever Clays

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
اللهم صلي على محمد وآل محمد
Allahuma Sali Ala Muhammed Wa Ali Muhammed

This article is a summary of Sheikh Hasan Fawaz commentary on Clay Hadiths taken from [his book](#) on the “Feeble-Minded” Page 93 and beyond.

The Hadith on the creation of Believer and Disbeliever from different Clays are plenty and in multiple different books such as Al Kafi¹, Basa'ir al Darajat², Al Mahasin³ and 'ilal al Sharai⁴.

The different interpretations of the Hadiths

- 1) That it is Ahaad Hadith that should be rejected especially that it contradicts Qur'an, Sunnah and Aqli proofs. **Commentary:** This interpretation is weak because they are narrated in multiple different Isnads and in multiple different books, and it is not far-fetched that it is considered Mutwatir. As for contradicting Qur'an, Sunnah and Aqli proof, then that is not established either.
- 2) That these Hadith are said in Taqiyyah, because it matches the Asha'irah view of Jabr and they were the majority Ammi, and because it contradicts the Ahadith of free will. **Commentary:** This interpretation is weak because the Hadith itself differentiates between a Shi'a of Ahl al Bayt (as) and their enemy, considering the first a Believer and the latter a disbeliever. This itself would go against the purpose of Taqiyyah.
- 3) That it is according to what Allah (swt) knew of what would happen in this life, that tyrants would rule over believers, and that believers commit sins because of the tyrants rule over them and thus they are excused and are forgiven, and the tyrants are punished for their sins as well as the sins whom they were the cause for.
Commentary:
- 4) That it is a metaphor based on what Allah (swt) knew of what each person will do in this life. **Commentary:** This interpretation is weak because there is no basis to consider this only a metaphor of Allah's (swt) knowledge, and it ignores all the other questions that arise when reading these Ahadith.

¹ <https://thaqalayn.net/chapter/2/1/1> & <https://thaqalayn.net/chapter/2/1/2> & <https://thaqalayn.net/chapter/2/1/3>

² <https://hubeali.com/books/English-Books/Basaair-AIDarajaat-2Edition/BasaairAlDarajaatP1.pdf> Page 28

³ http://shiaonlinelibrary.com/188_الكتب/1115_المحاسن-أحمد-بن-محمد-بن-خالد-البرقي-ج-١/الصفحة

⁴ http://shiaonlinelibrary.com/120_الكتب/1140_علل-الشرائع-الشيخ-الصدوق-ج-١/الصفحة

- 5) That it is a metaphor based on the difference of the readiness (to accept faith) of each person and the variety in their capabilities. **Commentary:** This interpretation is weak similar to the reason above, and also does not answer why is there difference in capabilities between person to person.
- 6) That all it means is that people created from Mu'min clay lean more towards doing good deeds and loving goodness, while the opposite lean towards bad deeds and towards loving evil, but it does not reach the level of Jabr especially after knowing that both clays were mixed together such that it reaches a neutral level where a believer is able to do a sin and a Kafir is able to do good deeds. **Commentary:** As for the meaning that the Clay in of itself does not lead to Jabr, then that is correct as seen in this Hadith⁵, but it also does not explain why these differences exist, for what reason is it?

Ali ibn Ibrahim has narrated from his father from Hammad ibn 'Isa from Rib'i ibn 'Abd Allah from a man from Ali ibn al-Husayn (a.s.) who has said the following: "Allah, the Majestic, the Glorious, created the prophets from the clay of 'Illyiyyin (paradise), both their bodies and souls. He made the hearts of the believers from such clay and He made their bodies from a world lower than that world. He created the unbelievers, both their bodies and souls from the clay of Sijjin (fire). He thus mixed the two clays. For this reason children of unbelievers become believers and vice versa. For this reason the believers get afflicted with evil and unbelievers receive good things. Thus, the hearts of the believers incline to that from which they are created and the hearts of the unbelievers incline to that from which they are created."

- 7) That based on Allah's (swt) knowledge, say that He knew that Zayd would choose goodness and belief, he created him from Mu'min clay, and he would have done so even if He wasn't created from it. And He knew that Amr would choose evil and Kufr thus he created him from Kafir clay, honouring Zayd who chose belief and goodness, and the opposite in case of Amr. And Knowledge of Allah (swt) is not the reason why they choose these actions, as Allah's (swt) knowledge does not force them to act on what He knows they will do. **Commentary:** While it is true that prior Knowledge of Allah (swt) does not mean Jabr, you cannot judge a person based on what he will do in the future, and the difference in clays has to be due to a voluntary action that can be used as Hujjah against them.
- 8) That when Allah (swt) created the souls before creating the bodies in the Alam al Dharr, he prepared a fire and ordered them to enter it, some of them obeyed and entered and others disobeyed and remained still. Those who obeyed are the Mu'mins whom the fire was safe and cold for them, and those who disobeyed are the Kuffar, and here the Belief and Kufr has been achieved through the obedience and disobedience in Aalm al Dharr, and then Allah (swt) created the obedient souls from the Mu'min clay, and created the disobedient souls from Kafir clay, just as Allah (swt) created heaven for the Mu'min and hell for the Kafir, such that each finds his place, and each returns to what he was part of. So creating people from the clay is based

⁵ <https://thaqalayn.net/hadith/2/1/1/1>

on what they did on Aalm al Dharr, such that there is no Jabr, nor does it contradict free will. **Commentary:** This is the closest to the truth, but requires modification in order to be compatible with the Ahadith on clay.

When looking at the Ahadith on the beginning of creation/Clay, you see that they reveal two realities/truths:

- 1) That Allah (swt) had created the creation in the form of Particles (Dharr ذر) and they were equal in creation, then he ordered them to enter a fire that Allah (swt) had made, those who entered were Believers, and those who refused to enter were the disbelievers, and at the time of the obligation of entering the fire, there was no difference between them. This is seen in multiple Hadith, such as this one⁶:

Ali ibn Ibrahim has narrated from his father from ibn abu 'Umayr from ibn 'Udhayna from Zurara who has said the following: "Once a man asked abu Ja'far (a.s.) about the words of Allah, the Majestic the Glorious, 'When your Lord took from the back of the children of Adam their offspring and told them to bear testimony to the words of Allah, "Am I not your Lord," they all said, "Yes, You are our Lord. . ."' (7:172) "He (the Imam), while his father (a.s.) was listening, said, 'My father narrated to me that Allah, the Majestic, the Glorious, took a handful of clay, from which He created Adam. He poured upon it sweet water from Euphrates and left it for forty mornings. Then He poured upon it very salty water and left it for forty mornings. When the clay fermented He then kneaded it strongly and they (children of Adam) appeared as particles from his right and left sides. He ordered all of them to enter the fire. The people of the right hand entered it and it became cool and peaceful for them but the people of the left hand refused to enter.'"

As seen from the Hadith, originally the Believers and Disbelievers were created from the same clay that was mixed with sweet and salty water, and as if it is a metaphor of free will, that the Mukallaf (accountable person) is able to choose whether to act or abstain. One thing to note is that while the apparent of this Hadith is that the obligation to enter the fire is what is meant by the verse of Children of Adam bearing witness⁷, but other Hadith show that the obligation of entering the fire happened before bearing witness, and at the point of bearing witness, there were already Believers and Disbelievers. An example is this Hadith:⁸

2. Ali ibn Ibrahim has narrated from his father from Muhammad ibn 'Isa from Yunus from 'Abd Allah ibn Sinan from abu 'Abd Allah (a.s.) who has said the following: "I asked him about the words of Allah, the Majestic, the Glorious, 'The invention of Allah (had a certain) nature with which He created all people. . . ' (30:30) What is that creation (and nature)? The Imam said, 'It is al-Islam. Allah created them with such nature at the time He made a covenant with them to believe in Oneness of Allah as He asked them all, "Am I not your Lord?" when all the believers and the unbelievers were there.'"

⁶ <https://thaqalayn.net/hadith/2/1/2/2>

⁷ <https://quran.com/7?startingVerse=172>

⁸ <https://thaqalayn.net/hadith/2/1/6/2>

- 2) That after Allah (swt) ordered them to go into the fire, the difference between the believer and disbeliever became clear through the whether they obeyed or disobeyed, and due to this, the ones who obeyed were created from the Clay of believers and the ones who disobeyed were created from the clay of disbelievers. As for saying that Allah (swt) knew who would be a believer and who would be a disbeliever and thus this Knowledge was the only reason for why some were created from clay of believers and some created from clay of disbeliever, then this view contradicts the apparent of the narrations, and that you cannot judge a person based on knowledge of the future, while he hasn't committed any deed yet.

A question that may rise is that, when the disbeliever bore witness to the belief of Oneness of Allah, is that considered a praiseworthy act? The answer that the action of bearing witness to the Oneness of Allah (swt) in Aalm al Dharr is similar to the events that will happen on Judgement Day⁹, such that there is no possibility to deny what is happening in front of you, and it does not become a matter of choice anymore, rather, due to what one sees in that situation, it becomes Dharori (a necessity), and one is not to be praised for that.

Conclusion: Allah (swt) had created particles from a mix of sweet and salty water, and ordered them to enter into the Fire. Those who obeyed are the Believers, and those who disobeyed are the Disbelievers. And on the time of bearing witness to the Oneness of Allah (swt), the division of Believers and Disbelievers had already happened.

Questions raised against this interpretation

Q: That people have different capabilities, some of them leaning towards Faith and love good deeds, while others leaning towards disbelief and love sins, doesn't this contradict Divine Justice?

A: The difference in the capabilities is based on whether they obeyed or disobeyed, and thus there is no issue in Allah (swt) rewarding those who obeyed by creating them from the Clay of Believers and making them lean towards good, and the opposite for those who disobeyed.

Q: The narrations mention that a Believer remains a Believer, and a Disbeliever remains a Disbeliever, does this not go against the purpose of this test?

A: The Believer remaining a Believer and the Disbeliever remaining a Disbeliever is simply Allah's (swt) Knowledge of what to come, and one cannot argue that Believers have a better chance due to their leaning towards good deeds, for that is explained in the answer above.

⁹ {On that Day all will follow the caller 'for assembly', 'and' none will dare to deviate. All voices will be hushed before the Most Compassionate. Only whispers¹ will be heard.} - {On that Day no intercession will be of any benefit, except by those granted permission by the Most Compassionate and whose words are agreeable to Him.} - { He 'fully' knows what is ahead of them and what is behind them, but they cannot encompass Him in 'their' knowledge.} - {And all faces will be humbled before the Ever-Living, All-Sustaining. And those burdened with wrongdoing will be in loss.} 20:108-111

Of course when looking at our daily lives, that does not mean that whoever is born a Believer will remain a Believer and vice versa, the Believer and Disbeliever in the Hadith is referring to those who obeyed and disobeyed in the test before coming into this life, and thus it is possible for someone to be born in a Disbeliever family, or have a period of time where he is a Disbeliever but then becomes a Believer and has a good ending. And the same is for the opposite, that it's possible for someone to be born in a Believer family or have a period of time where he is a Believer, but then become a Disbeliever and end in hell. The actions taken in this life are all voluntary.

Also, this Hadith¹⁰ explains that Allah Has the Will to decide, which one may understand it as Badaa'

2. Muhammad ibn Yahya has narrated from Muhammad ibn al-Hassan from al- Nadr ibn Shu'ayb from 'Abd al-Ghaffar al-Jaziyy from abu 'Abd Allah (a.s.) who has said the following: "Allah, the Majestic, the Glorious, created the believers from the clay of paradise. He created the unbelievers from the clay of fire. He then said, 'When Allah, the Majestic, the Glorious, decides to grant good to one of His servants. He purifies his spirit and body. Whenever he hears any good thing he recognizes it. Whenever he hears any bad things he dislikes them.' I (the narrator) then heard him saying, 'The clays are of three kinds: (a) one is the clay of the prophets from which the believers are also created, except that the prophets are made of the superior kind of clay. The prophets are the roots and the believers are the branches and for this reason they are more excellent than the believers. The believers are created from a stickier kind of clay. Thus Allah, the Majestic, the Glorious will not keep them apart from their followers.' The Imam then said, 'The clay of those who insult ('A'imma) are from a black clay that smells foul. The weak ones are made from soil. The believers do not change their faith nor do evil doers (those who insult 'A'imma, recipients of divine supreme covenant) do so and Allah Has the Will and Decision.'"

Note: al-Nadhr b.Shu'aib is majhool but he is Shaykh Ijaza of 'Abd al-Ghaffar

What we learn from reading these Ahadith

There is always a purpose for everything the Imams (as) say, and following on that, there must also be a purpose for why the Imams (as) revealed the secrets of creation, and here are some of the things we can learn while reading those Ahadith:

- 1) To show the dignity of the Believer and the humiliation of the disbeliever, and at the same time show the superiority of the Prophet (sawa) over all mankind (creation in general)¹¹
- 2) To show why a Believer can be born from a Disbeliever and vice versa, and that it is not considered a praise for the Disbeliever (to have a Believer born from him) nor is it condemning the Believer for being born from a Disbeliever or that a Disbeliever is born from him.

¹⁰ <https://thaqalayn.net/hadith/2/1/1/2>

¹¹ <https://thaqalayn.net/chapter/2/1/4>

- 3) To show the reason why sins occur from Believers and why good deeds occur from Disbelievers (This does not excuse the Believers sins nor renders the Disbelievers good deeds useless, just to show the reason why it happens)
- 4) That it is related to the that "Guidance" comes from Allah (swt), and this is a topic that is complicated and cannot be explained in short sentences, but one should collect all the narrations of guidance while refuting the argument that they prove Jabr, and we believe that these topics are related, but to further delve into it would take us out of the topic at hand, and Allah (swt) is the Guider.
- 5) These Ahadith refute Ghuluw accusations against Ahl al Bayt (as) by showing that they were created from clay, to show that they are servants of Allah (swt), and the superiority they have over creation is due to Allah's (swt) favors on them, while showing that they are the only ones that deserve this status. **Note:** Ahl al Bayt (as) deserve their status because they were the ones that obeyed and went into the fire first, not because they are originally created in a higher status, which proves that they deserve their status because all creation had the free will to choose, and they were the ones that were most obedient. This refutes some of the Philosopher's views that Ahl al Bayt (as) were actually created in such a way that they are inherently better than all other creation.