

The Plagiarism of Abu Huraira

Proofs and Evidences that Abu Huraira Al-Zahrani methodically
fabricated reports.

Presented to you by: al-Imamiyyah

Introduction:

Abu Huraira Al-Zahrani, or Abu Huraira, is an acclaimed Sunni narrator, who possesses over 5,000 Ahadith attributed to himself. He has been regarded by the consensus of Sunni 'Ulama as one of their primary narrators, due to his proclaimed reliability and supposed strength in his memorization of events. However, he has been a subject of great controversy in the history of Ilm ul-Rijaal, with many, especially among those such as the Shia, the Mu'tazila, the Zaydiyya, and many others, declaring him to be a notorious fabricator.

There exist many reasons for the rejection of the reliability of Abu Huraira as a narrator past and present, as produced by his opposition. They include, for example, his interest and belief in the Israiliyyat, or stories presented by the Ahlul-Kitab regarding the prophets and other scriptural matters, his attribution of said Israiliyyat to Muhammad, and the strange method of which he utilizes when narrating them from himself or from the mouth of Muhammad. A known case of the latter would be found in his narration of the story of Musa a.s. and the rock. In this Hadith, Abu Huraira attributes all of the information regarding this alleged occurrence to Muhammad himself, with exception to the final sentence.

The report in Al-Bukhari writes the following:

"Abu Huraira added, "By Allah! There are still six or seven marks present on the stone from that excessive beating.""

The final words of the Hadith are strange, as the final words of the Hadith imply that he did not claim that Muhammad had produced this part of the story, but that rather these were his own words. Yet, despite the fact that he also provides no other source for this information, he believed it to be entirely true, hence he exclaims "By Allah" before his recollection of the matter.

Aside from the mysterious character of his style of narration, and biographical disputes regarding the Acts of his life, including the dilemma of his personal honesty, it has recently come to light that there is far greater evidence which point to his lack of validity as a narrator, and as an unreliable individual.

Upon reviewing this evidence, one concludes that he has not only overstepped his boundaries in his usage of non-Islamic sources in religious affairs, but as well that he has fabricated narrations and attributed them to the life of Muhammad, using these sources as inspiration to do so. This paper will serve as an attestation to the latter, compiling instances of his plagiarism for the public to see.

Hopefully, those who take from him in reference to the Sunnah and other matters will soften their hearts to the truth and accept reality upon their reception of it.

Bismillah:

His Narration:

In Sahih Al-Bukhari, a Hadith is brought down from Abu Huraira which states the following:

“Narrated Abu Huraira:

A bedouin came to Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) and said, "My wife has delivered a black child." The Prophet (ﷺ) said to him, "Have you camels?" He replied, "Yes." The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "What color are they?" He replied, "They are red." The Prophet (ﷺ) further asked, "Are any of them gray in color?" He replied, "Yes." The Prophet asked him, "Whence did that grayness come?" He said, "I think it descended from the camel's ancestors." Then the Prophet (ﷺ) said (to him), "Therefore, this child of yours has most probably inherited the color from his ancestors."”

Here, Abu Huraira claims that a Bedouin man had come to Muhammad regarding the skin tone of his son being abnormal, and deviates from the phenotype of himself and his wife. The narration then establishes a line of questions and responses, with Muhammad as the inquirer, and the Bedouin as the provider of each response. Abu Huraira claims that Muhammad concluded that the reason for the child’s unusual pigment was the result of the color of the Bedouin’s livestock.

Now that the structure of the Hadith has been established, we should delve into a rather shocking, yet unsurprising matter. This Hadith is not authentic, not due to some disconnection in the Isnad, or due to a weak narrator included in the chain past the one narrating from Muhammad, but because Abu Huraira himself as fabricated it. But what could there be to suggest such a thing?

It has been established already that Abu Huraira utilized a great deal of Isra’iliyyat, and narrated them as well. Ergo, it is entirely factual to suggest that he drew from them for inspiration in relation to a variety of subjects.

In Genesis Rabbah, a Jewish source of Homiletics, compiled in the late 100s to early 200s CE by Rabbi Hoshiaiah Rabbah, a companion and student of Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi, the compiler of the Mishnah, the following narration is laid out:

“It happened once that a black man married a black woman and she had a white child. The father took the child to Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi and said: “Maybe this isn’t my son?” He (Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi) said: “Do you have portraits in your house?” He (the black man) said: “Yes.” (Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi) asked: “Of black or white (people)?” He (the black man) said: “White.” He (Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi) concluded: “This is why you have a white son.””

Here we see the true origin of Abu Huraira’s narration, which is something entirely foreign to the authentic sources. It is found in the narrations of the Jews of Antiquity, which precede him by hundreds of years. The plagiarism of this text is apparent, as Abu Huraira goes so far as to even copy the very word structure of the Midrash, as laid out previously. Beginning with the subject of a man and his wife bearing a child that has an abnormal pigmentation, then moving into a back and forth dialogue of questions and

responses, and the final conclusion of the effect of the color of the man's property on the skin tone of his child.

Yet, in another ancient source, compiled in the 300s CE, records a near identical occurrence. The work is titled "Midrash Tanchuma", written by Rabbi Tanchuma, an individual who also mastered the Homiletical teaching of the Jewish people. It remarks of the following:

"A king of the Arabs asked Rabbi Akiva: I am black and my wife is black, but she has borne me a white son. Shall I kill her because she has played the harlot while under me? He (Rabbi Akiva) said to him: Do you have images within your house? He (A King of the Arabs) said to him: Yes. He (Rabbi Akiva) said to him: Are your household images white or black? He (A King of the Arabs) said to him: White. He (Rabbi Akiva) said to him: When you were busy with her, she set her eyes on the images and bore (a child) like them. Now if you are surprised over this matter, learn from the Jacob's flock. They were conceived from the sticks, as stated (in Genesis 30:39): Then the king of the Arabs thanked R. Akiva. Thus, when any woman is alone with her husband in holiness, in the end he produces righteous children from her."

This Midrash replaces Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi with Rabbi Akiva and the anonymous black man with a "King of the Arabs". Yet as a result of this replacement we see an even more blatant similarity than the previous source. Aside from the mention of an Arab, we also see a reference to "flock" is made, specifically towards the miraculous occurrence in the Book of Genesis that records the sheep that Yaqub a.s. was tasked with breeding spotted and speckled lambs from, and what method he took to do so while utilizing divine providence.

It should be obvious to the thinking man that Abu Huraira did not stray away from nor did he fear fabricating reports and sewing them into history related to the life of Muhammad for a motive that fell outside the realm of honesty. The signature of the typical plagiarist is found within his Hadith, in which he takes the exact wording of the Homilies of the Jews and replaces the characters discussed within them to give the illusion of the authenticity. The theme is precisely the same, lacking any sort of deviation in the presentation of the matter from the manner of the Midrash.

The certification of such a claim would cause Abu Huraira's status as a reliable narrator to be retracted. For those who ascribe to the Sunni creed, a great deal of knowledge of which they attributed to Muhammad would be discarded as unreliable information, transmitted by a fabricator. Large sums of corroboration for other narrations through Abu Huraira would as a result then fall under intense scrutiny. Most matters relating to Abu Huraira, or matters of which were rectified using conclusions from statements given by said individual, would then rightfully be considered doubtful.

The nature of these sources, in hope that those who uphold Abu Huraira as an authority should open themselves to the possibility of accepting the truth, will be appropriately produced in order to strengthen the basis of the evidence presented here in the mind of the reader.

Sources of Antiquity:

In the likely event that the advocate of Abu Huraira, as most followers of the Sunni school are, appeals to the poorly crafted and erroneous statements of modern academics regarding ancient sources, which have no basis in the historicity of the times of which said sources were actually produced, in an attempt to save their religion, sufficient proof for the dating of these sources should be presented as a provisional action against such a common practice, which originates entirely in falsehood.

Both of these sources, Genesis Rabbah and Midrash Tanchuma, were compiled in the Academies of Pumbedita, Sura, as well as in Jerusalem, Tiberias, and various other places which the Midrash was taught. The method used for the compilation of these sources by their respective authors was precise, as they would draw upon the Homilies of their predecessors, contemporaries, and students, which would be preserved in the daily lectures given at these Academies, their personal records, the notations of previous generations, and many other mediums of transmission. Their respective authors, Rabbi Hoshaiah Rabbah and Rabbi Tanchuma, passed these works down to their students, who inherited their positions and authority.

Aside from the sources which trace the chains of transmission for these works in Jewish chronicles back to their respective authors through the different generations of the teaching of Judaism, it can even be established from external sources that these works that precede the birth of Abu Huraira and his alleged encounters with Muhammad by centuries.

The primary source of which will be drawn from today will be the Patristics of the Christian religion, specifically those produced during the Ante-Nicene and pre-Chalcedonian period. This period ended around a century and a half before the birth of Abu Huraira.

It should be noted that neither of these works possess any philological or linguistic evidence to suggest that they are works which had come after the time of Abu Huraira. Genesis Rabbah is written in the heavily Hebraicized Judeo-Aramaic of the Babylonian Talmud, or Gemara, which was completed in compilation and sealed in the 400s CE. It's grammar and style solely reflect that of the language of the Jewish Academies of the late 100s and 200s CE, with no language or figures from the time of for example the period of the Geonim or the Savoraim, which succeeded that of the Amoraim and the Tannaim. If there was a standard or usual presence of the aforementioned factors within the compilation itself, it would suggest that the work itself was that of a later period. Yet we see a lacking in this subject matter of later figures in Jewish antiquity, hence the likelihood of this being a work from before these two periods increases greatly in its favor. Midrash Tanchuma reflects the linguistics and notation of a work of the 300s CE, specifically that of the Jews in the Galilee. This is known due to the fact that Midrash Tanchuma is written in the Hebrew dialect of the Mishnah, a work of the 100s CE done by Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi, and actually serves to show a transitional period within the history of the Hebrew language. Therefore, even from a philological standpoint, it is discerned that these compilations are the products of Antiquity, as opposed to matters which emerged past the time of Abu Huraira.

Firstly, in regards to Genesis Rabbah's dating, we see that the date of which is ascribed to it as a work of the 400s-1200s is simply not possible. The work is attributed to Rabbi Hoshaiah Rabbah in the 2nd and

3rd century by way of successive transmission, and is quoted countless times by Patristic sources. An example of this would be Ephrem the Syrian, born around the year 300 CE, who quotes Genesis Rabbah constantly in his writings. He cites it in his Homilies on Genesis and Exodus. A few citations he brings down from it include the teaching on the resting of God in relation to creation as well as the immediate result of creation, Adam's imparting of the knowledge of all the names of the animals without repetition, and the negligence of Cain's offering, and hundreds of other quotations spread throughout his Homilies.

Because of the fact that Genesis Rabbah is referenced consistently in the literature of Middle Antiquity, and citations from all around the chapters of the compilation brought down in the same time period, one can safely say that the Midrash itself is a work of the 200s CE, existing long before the date that secular academics would like to propose for its composition.

Now, it has been proven in a short and concise manner that Abu Huraira has copied from a source, and that the source evidently precedes him by a period of centuries. With this alone, we see that he has plagiarized older writings for inspiration in fabricating reports.

Yet, to further give a basis to the point being made, evidence for the second narration as recorded in Tanchuma preceding Abu Huraira by generations will be produced.

Midrash Tanchuma was written by Tanchuma Bar Abba in the 300s CE. Like the rest of the authoritative Midrashim, the chain of transmission for the collection back to its author links to individuals across countries, jurisdictions, religions, and continents, falling into the hands of those outside the Jewish faith, including Christians, Greek philosophers, Historians of Antiquity, and more. Hence we see it is both referenced internally within Jewish sources and external to it as well.

An example of internal reference would be found in Leviticus Rabbah, a portion of Midrash Rabbah that compiles Homiletics related to the Book of Leviticus in the Hebrew Bible. It brings down a hermeneutical explanation regarding the matter of blasphemy done by an Israelite woman and her son as seen in Leviticus 24 from the work of Tanchuma himself. It is known that Leviticus Rabbah must be a work of the 300s or 400s at least, because of the fact it is cited by another Midrash that emerged at a similar time entitled "Ruth Rabbah", or the Expositions of Midrash on The Book of Ruth.

Aside from its clear intra-textual evidences that Ruth Rabbah is a work from the 300s CE, such as its discussion of matters and individuals from its respective time period in addition to that which preceded it, Ruth Rabbah is cited by external sources such as Jerome, the well known Church Father who translated the Vulgate. In his Latin translation of 1 Chronicles 4, Ruth Rabbah is quoted in reference to 1 Chronicles 4:22. It connects Ruth 1:22 to the previously mentioned verse in the exact same manner as the Midrash does. It first lists the names of the individuals and their literal Hebrew meanings, the individuals being "wedded into Moab", narrates that they had returned from Moab, brings down the content of Ruth 1:22, and then finally adds the ending of 1 Chronicles 4:22 to the end of the narration. This is performed in the exact same manner in the Vulgate, which was written in the 400s CE. Since Jerome brings down an exegesis from Ruth Rabbah and employs its method, one can then discern that Ruth Rabbah was indeed a work which existed in at least the 300s or 400s CE, over two centuries before the birth of Abu Huraira. As a result of the fact that Ruth Rabbah's origin is within Antiquity, it must be that Leviticus Rabbah,

referenced in Ruth Rabbah by way of quotation, must also be of a time previous to it. Hence, the source that brings down a quotation from Tanchuma is from the 4th or 5th century CE, presenting a proof for the extant nature of the Midrash before the time of Abu Huraira.

Another internal source which quotes Leviticus Rabbah is Exodus Rabbah. Exodus Rabbah's composition and sources which it brings down must be ancient, especially those of which are transmitted from the generation of the Tannaim. The Tannaim were the first generation of the inscription of Jewish oral tradition, lasting from the late 1st century BCE to the late 2nd century BCE. This period of which these sources emerge from both encompass the mentioned individuals of Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi, who were both Tannaim. Evidence for this is found within the Stromata of Clement of Alexandria, who cites the narration of Moses killing the Egyptian man who abused a Hebrew slave with a "mere word" with a great deal of mysticism surrounding it. He brings this from a Tanna who lived in the same generation as Clement, Rabbi Nehemiah, who is quoted in Exodus Rabbah as mentioning that this "mere word" was the concealed name of God. Exodus Rabbah does not cite figures who lived past the 400s CE, and it is written in the language of the Judeo-Aramaic used in 5th century Pumbedita. Nor does it appear that it possesses any knowledge or influence from a period which is in succession to the Jews of the 5th century in Mesopotamia, implying that it is from this period. As it has been proven that the sources it draws upon are ancient and from their appropriate time periods, it could then be argued that Leviticus Rabbah, as a result of being quoted among a collection of the teachings of Jewish Antiquity, that itself must as well be from Antiquity.

As a side note, it should be mentioned that Epiphanius of Salamis, born around the 310s CE, in his "Panarion", quotes an Aggadah referenced in Midrash Tanchuma, regarding a King and his decision to enlist everyone in his kingdom into his army, with exception for two, one lame and one blind, in order to explain a number of verses. This would further imply the origin of Tanchuma in the 4th century, 300 years before the life of Abu Huraira.

It has now been presented that Abu Huraira al-Zahrani, has participated in the methodical fabrication of reports, and attribution of them to the person of Muhammad, while using the Midrashim, or reports of the Jewish people, as an inspiration. To say that the wording of these Ahadith is mere coincidence is extremely naive and unlikely. It is not unlikely due to the fact that the words share an identical structure, but also that Abu Huraira was known for reporting the statements and narrations of the Jews as authentic, sometimes even leaving aside any attribution to Muhammad.

For example, Abu Huraira narrated about the interaction between the Angel of Death and Moses before his passing, as recorded in al-Bukhari:

***"Abu Huraira narrated:** The angel of death was sent to Moses and when he went to him, Moses slapped him severely, spoiling one of his eyes. The angel went back to his Lord, and said, "You sent me to a slave who does not want to die." Allah restored his eye and said, "Go back and tell him (i.e. Moses) to place his hand over the back of an ox, for he will be allowed to live for a number of years equal to the number of hairs coming under his hand." (So the angel came to him and told him the same). Then Moses asked, "O my Lord! What will be then?" He said, "Death will be then." He said, "(Let it be) now." He asked Allah that He bring him near the*

Sacred Land at a distance of a stone's throw. Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said, "Were I there I would show you the grave of Moses by the way near the red sand hill."

Here Abu Huraira narrates that The Angel of Death had been sent to Moses in order to take his life, as it was his time to depart from this life into the next. He notes that Moses had resisted the Angel of Death and sought not to die by its hand, as well at the end of the narration he cites that Moses was buried outside the Land of Israel, something which will be noted later.

First and foremost the notion of Moses challenging or resisting the act of the Angel of Death at the time of his demise is not something original to Abu Huraira whatsoever. It is taught everywhere among the Jews of early antiquity, such as in the work of "Sifre to Deuteronomy", composed in the early 200s CE, which is evident by its constant reference and quotation provided by sources that originate from the aforementioned time period, which states the following:

"When Moses died, the Holy One Blessed be He said to the angel of death: "Go and bring Me Moses' soul." He went and stood before him, whereupon Moses said: Where I sit, you have no right to stand, and you say "Give me your soul!" He rebuked him and he left scorned. The angel of death went and repeated Moses' words to the Almighty, who again said to the angel of death: "Go and bring Me Moses' soul." He went to his place and sought him, but he could not find him. He went to the Red Sea and said to it: Have you seen Moses? It answered: From the day that Israel crossed in my midst, I have not seen him. He went to the mountains and valley, and said to them: Have you seen Moses? They answered: "God understands his way, God has secreted him for life in the world to come, and no one knows of him."

What should firstly be highlighted is the resistance from Moses exerted upon the Angel of Death, after the Angel of Death is mentioned to have been sent to take his soul from his body. A similar word structure between the Hadith and the Midrash begins to develop, already indicating a potentially borrowed source on the part of Abu Huraira. To reiterate, the narration stylizes itself where it mentions the Angel first being sent to strip Moses of his life, then the response from Moses, which is some sort of harsh resistance, whether it be rebuke, or striking.

We then see the Angel of Death returning to the One who had sent him, and recounts Moses's response to the presence of the Angel in both narrations. Both of the responses given are as follows:

For Abu Huraira's teaching of this narration: "You sent me to a slave who does not want to die".

For the source in the Sifre: "Where I sit you have no right to stand, and you say "Give me your soul" (...) The angel of death went and repeated Moses' words to the almighty".

Now in the middle portion of the narration we see a variance between the two sources. Whereas the Angel of Death in the original Jewish source is said to have been sent to look for Moses, in the narration given by Abu Huraira, Moses is given an offer to live for an extended period of time.

The fact of the matter is that there is a great deal of similarity between the beginning of these two narrations, one being produced earlier than another. Akin to the narration he provides about The Bedouin and his child which possessed a rare complexion, there is indeed a mark of the original source material still left within the text as a result of the mixing of different stories into one, which has just been

demonstrated as a common practice by Abu Huraira in relation to bringing down both Israiliyyat and Sunnah.

It must also be mentioned that in this narration, he only attributes its final sentence to Muhammad, whereas the rest of the recounting of the occurrence is provided with no other source. To reiterate, Abu Huraira does not attribute this knowledge to any other person. This indicates that he had heard this from the Ahlul-Kitab and accepted it as an authentic report about the life of Moses. The lack of any attribution, let alone an Isnad, shows that Abu Huraira did not hold to the Sunni standard of Rijal in any sense whatsoever. He had accepted reports about those who preceded him by thousands of years without any method or science to affirm their historical veracity, and tended to mix them with other events about people contemporaneous to himself or the lives of the prophets of which he narrates upon.

To say that he was familiar with the material of the Jews at the time was an understatement. He possessed such a nuance of the literature of the Jews, he even knew the Hebrew terminology that they would use amongst themselves and not among others. For example, he uses the term “Bait al-Midras” to describe a place where Jews congregate to study the Torah. This is an arabized form of the word “Beit HaMidrash”, which carries the literal meaning of “House of Interpreting”. Linguistic knowledge, especially regarding that of the Hebrew language, among the Sahaba is rarely ever presented in the reports of the Sunni compilations. Yet, we see Abu Huraira demonstrating something which is quite unusual for a Sahabi, indicating that he may have delved deeper into the Hebrew scriptures than previously thought.

In conclusion, it is fairly said and rightfully declared that Abu Huraira Al-Zahrani had taken from the sources of the Jews of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th centuries, who preceded him by generations, in order to create thousands of new stories about the life of Muhammad, the past prophets, and many other legends inspired by external, non-Islamic sources. These same sources of which many among the supporters of Abu Huraira dismiss as corrupted fabrications, falsely attributed to a prophetic origin, despite the fact that the one who they regard as an exalted companion and as one of their most excellent narrators, had regarded these sources to contain a great deal of authenticity, going so far as to combine the history of which is brought down in them with his own creations, or other stories he has heard from works which are external to the religion of Islam.

It should make one question the veracity of the Rijali method of the Sunnis. If indeed the consensus of their Muhaddithun can be trusted, why is it that they placed an individual who fabricated Ahadith among the most reliable of their narrators? After all, we see that there are plenty of narrators of which the Sunnis take from who do not have a great deal of biographical information documented about themselves, but they are regardless called “Thiqah” by their Muhaddithun, despite the fact that in the cases of these same narrators, there is no reason presented to give them this rank of reliability. But Abu Huraira is a distinct case, due to the fact that he was entrusted with narrating thousands of Ahadith about Muhammad and his contemporaries, he was not some minor or unknown individual, he was one of the most renowned narrators of his time among the Sahaba, the Salaf, and the Tabi’un. It must be thereby understood that their criteria for reliability is generally useless, and does not truly suffice to separate the reliable and authentic, from the unreliable and inauthentic.

وَلَا تَلْبِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكُنُوا لِلْحَقِّ غَافِلِينَ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

Citations:

1. [Sahih al-Bukhari 278 - Bathing \(Ghusl\) - كتاب الغسل](#)
2. [Sahih al-Bukhari 6847 - Limits and Punishments set by Allah \(Hudood\) - كتاب الحدود](#)
3. [Genesis Rabbah: VaYetzei 73:10](#)
4. [Midrash Tanchuma: Nasso, 7:1, Numbers Rabbah: 9:34](#)
5. [Ephraim the Syrian - Commentary on Genesis: page 96, citation 107](#)
6. [Ephraim the Syrian - Commentary on Genesis: page 104, citation 138](#)
7. [Ephraim the Syrian - Commentary on Genesis: page 124, citation 218](#)
8. [Leviticus Rabbah: 32:2 \(see: "And Rabbi Hiyya said..."\)](#)
9. [Etz Yosef on Ruth Rabbah: 6:4:38](#)
10. [Vulgate: 1 Chronicles 4:22](#)
11. [Ruth Rabbah 2:4](#)
12. [Exodus Rabbah 10:1](#)
13. [Compare Stromata, Book 1, Chapter 23 \(see: "a mere word"\), to Exodus Rabbah 1:30 \(see "Rabbi Nehemiah"\)](#)
14. [Compare The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis, Books II and III, Section IV, 70:19, to Midrash Tanchuma: Leviticus 6:1](#)
15. [Sahih al-Bukhari 1339 - Funerals \(Al-Jana'iz\) - كتاب الجنائز](#)
16. [Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Makkot, Page 9b](#)
17. [Sifre to Deuteronomy 305:5](#)
18. [Same narration is repeated elsewhere in other early sources, see: "Midrash on the Death of Moses."](#)
19. [Sahih al-Bukhari 6944 - \(Statements made under\) Coercion - كتاب الإكراه](#)
20. [Sahih al-Bukhari 7348 - Holding Fast to the Qur'an and Sunnah - كتاب الاعتصام بالكتاب والسنة](#)

