

139531 - The number of names of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)

the question

Is it true that Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) has 99 names (Asma-un-Nabi), e.g. Ahmad, as-siddiq and al-ameen and if no can you tell me who started this concept and this ideas?

Give reference from Quraan and from the authentic Sunnah about this situation

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

Some of the names of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) are clearly proven in the Qur'an and Sunnah. In the Holy Qur'an he is called Muhammad and Ahmad. In the saheeh hadiths it says that he has a number of names, as follows:

"I have several names. I am Muhammad, and I am Ahmad, and I am al-Maahi (the eraser) by means of whom Allah erases kufr, and I am al-Haashir (the gatherer) at whose feet the people will be gathered, and I am al-'Aaqib (the last) after whom there will be no other."

Narrated by al-Bukhaari (4896) and Muslim (2354).

It was narrated that Abu Moosa al-Ash'ari (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) mentioned several of his names to us. He said: "I am Muhammad, and Ahmad, and al-Muqaffi (the last in succession) and al-Haashir (the gatherer) and the Prophet of Repentance and the Prophet of Mercy."

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Narrated by Muslim (2355).

In some hadiths the number of names is apparently defined. In Saheeh al-Bukhaari (3532) it is narrated from Muhammad ibn Jubayr ibn Mut'im that his father (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "I have five names: I am Muhammad, and Ahmad, and I am al-Maahi (the eraser) by means of whom Allah erases kufr, and I am al-Haashir (the gatherer) at whose feet the people will be gathered, and I am al-'Aaqib (the last)."

Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

What appears to be the case is that he meant: I have five names that are unique to me, which were given to no one before me, or they were not venerated or well-known among the earlier nations; he did not mean that he wanted to limit their number.

It was suggested that the wisdom behind limiting it to the five names mentioned in this hadith is that they were more well-known than others that are to be found in the ancient books or among previous nations. End quote.

Secondly:

The scholars wrote many books in which they compiled the names of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and there are more than fourteen such books. The scholars who wrote of the Prophet's biography (seerah) and attributes (shamaa'il) wrote specific chapters in which they highlighted his names (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), as was done by al-Qaadi 'Iyaad in ash-Shifa bi Ta'reef Huqooq al-Mustafa (1/228), in a chapter entitled Fasl fi Asma'ihis-salla-Allahu 'alayhi wa sallam wa ma tadammanathu min Fadeelatihi (Chapter on his names (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and what they highlight of his virtues). End quote. Al-Haafiz Ibn 'Asaakir also devoted a chapter to this topic in Tareekh Dimashq.

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Al-'Allamah Bakr Abu Zayd (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

A number of books were written about the names of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). In Kashf az-Zunoon there is a list of fourteen books, as it says in Mu'jam al-Mawdoo'at al-Matrootah fi't-Ta'leef al-Islami by Shaykh 'Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Habashi al-Yamaani (p. 435-436). These books are by Ibn Dihyah, al-Qurtubi, ar-Rassaa', as-Sakhkhaawi, as-Suyooti, Ibn Faaris and others.

This topic is also discussed in the books of biography (seerah), Prophetic characteristics and commentaries on hadith, as in 'Aaridat al-Ahwadhi (10/281), of which ar-Riyadh al-Aneeqah fi Sharh Asma' al-Khaleeqah by as-Suyooti has been printed. End quote.

Mu'jam al-Manaahi al-Lafziyyah (p. 361)

Thirdly:

The scholars differed concerning many names and whether they may correctly be attributed to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) or not. This led to them differing concerning the number of these names.

One of the most significant reasons for the difference of opinion is the fact that some of the scholars thought that every description given to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) in the Holy Qur'an was one of his names. So they included names such as ash-Shaahid (the witness), al-Mubashshir (the bearer of glad tidings), al-Nadheer (the warner), ad-Daa'i (the caller who invites to Allah), and as-Siraaj al-Muneer (the lamp spreading light) - because of the passage in which Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“O Prophet (Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him))! Verily, We have sent you as witness, and a bearer of glad tidings, and a warner.

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And as one who invites to Allah by His Leave, and as a lamp spreading light”

[al-Ahzaab 33:45-46].

At the same time, the scholars said that these are descriptions and not names.

Imam an-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Some of the words mentioned are descriptions, not names. End quote.

Tahdheeb al-Asma' wa'l-Lughaat (1/49)

As-Suyooti (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Most of them are descriptions. End quote.

Tanweer al-Hawaalik (1/727).

Al-'Allaamah Bakr Abu Zayd (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Some of them made them ninety-nine names, like the number of the beautiful names of Allah, of which approximately seventy names are the same as the names of Allah, may He be exalted.

In Dalaa'il al-Khayraat, al-Jazooli listed two hundred names.

In his book al-Mustawfa fi Asma' al-Mustafa, Ibn Dihyah listed almost three hundred names.

One of the Sufis took it to a thousand names. He said: Allah has one thousand names and His Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) has one thousand names. End quote.

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Hence it was said that these numbers contain a great deal of exaggeration. The correct view is

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that the names of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) are far fewer than that, and it is not permissible to regard every description of him that is proven in the Qur'an and Sunnah as being among his names. Moreover, his names are a matter of *tawqeef*, i.e., it is not permissible to add to them anything that is not proven in the Qur'an and saheeh Sunnah.

Al-'Allaamah Bakr Abu Zayd (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

That which has a basis in the texts is either a name, of which there are few, or a description, of which there are more. Everything else apart from that has no basis, so it cannot be applied to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), so as to guard against exaggeration and going to extremes. The prohibition is more emphatic if these names and attributes for which there is no basis involve any element of exaggeration or going to extremes in praising him. This category is what we are concerned with in this book, so as to warn against using any names that were not narrated from Allah or from His Messenger, of which there are very many. They usually occur in the books of Sufi tareeqahs and innovated awraad and adhkaar, such as *Dalaa'il al-Khayraat* by al-Jazooli. These names include Uhayd, Waheed, Minah, Mad'oo, Ghawth, Ghiyaath, Muqeel al-'Atharaat, Safooh 'an az-Zallaat, Khaazin 'Ilmillah, Bahr Anwaarik, Ma'din Asraarik, Mu'ti ar-Rahmaah, Noor an-Anwaar, as-Sabab fikulli Mawjood, Haa' ar-Rahmah, Meem al-Mulk, Daal ad-Dawaam, Qutub al-Jalaalah, as-Sirr al-Jaami', al-Hijaab al-A'zam, Aayat-Allah.

Ninety-nine of these names are printed on the back cover of the Mushaf, and on the front cover are printed ninety-nine of the names of Allah, may He be exalted. That is in the Indian edition. Our shaykh, Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azeez ibn Baaz (may Allah have mercy on him) pointed out that this should be removed from the Qur'an, and that was done; may Allah reward him with good. They are also written on the qiblah wall of the Prophet's Mosque. May Allah enable whomever He will of His slaves to remove from the Mosque of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) that which was not narrated from him. And Allah is the source of strength.

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After that I came across some very useful words, the meaning of which had crossed my mind – to Allah alone be praise. They were written by the great scholar of the Arabic language, Ibn at-Tayyib al-Faasi, in his commentary on Kifaayat al-Mutahaffiz by Ibn al-Ajdaabi. He said (p. 51):

Then he – the author of Kifaayat al-Mutahaffiz – described the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) as Allah, may He be exalted, describes him in the Holy Qur’an, as being the Seal of the Prophets, following good etiquette in that, because describing him as Allah described him – in addition to being in accordance with following his Sunnah, as he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) would not approve of anything else – is also acknowledging one’s inability to come up with new ways of describing him and to praise him as he deserves, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him. Hence you will find the greatest scholars simply mentioning him – peace be upon him – according to what is mentioned in the Islamic texts, Qur’an and Sunnah, without inventing new phrases by themselves, in most cases. End quote.

Mu’jam al-Manaahi al-Lafziyyah (p. 362-363)

And Allah knows best.