

Ibn Khuzaymah (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) (d. 311H) on Contagion and Response to Doubts



Ibn Khuzaymah—[Abu Bakr Muḥammad bin Ishāq]—(d. 311H) was a great outspoken Imām¹ from era of the Salaf and he is the author of the ṣaḥīḥ compilation, **Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Khuzaymah**. He also authored **Kitāb al-Tawḥīd** on the subject of the Ṣifāt, and many others reaching approximately 150 works.

¹ **Al-Dārquṭnī** said: "Ibn Khuzaymah was an imām, reliable and trustworthy, without an equal." **Al-Shīrāzī** said: "He combined between fiqh (comprehension of rulings) and ḥadīth." **Abū 'Alī al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Nīsabūrī** said: "Ibn Khuzaymah used to memorise points of comprehension from a ḥadīth just like a reciter memorises a sūrah." **Al-Sam'ānī** said: "Imām of the scholars, the people of his time were agreed upon his advancement in knowledge (over others)." **Al-Zahabī** said: "Imām of the scholars, Abū Bakr, al-Ḥāfiẓ." He also said: "This Imām was a brilliant scholar (of critical mind), insightful regarding men (and their status with regards to narrating)." He also said: "Ibn Khuzaymah has greatness in the souls, and reverence in the hearts because of his knowledge, religiosity and following of the Sunnah." **Al-Subkī** relates: Ibn Bālūyah said: "I heard Ibn Khuzaymah saying: 'I was with the amīr, Ismā'īl bin Aḥmad, and he narrated a ḥadīth through his father, but he erred in the chain of narration, so I refuted his error. Then when I left his company, Abū Dharr al-Qāḍī (the judge) said: 'We have known that this ḥadīth is erroneous for twenty years, but not a single one of us was able to refute him on it (out of fear).' So I said to him: 'It is not lawful for me to hear a ḥadīth of the Messenger (ﷺ) in which error [has crept in] or alteration has taken place and I do not refute it.'" Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyyah of al-Subkī (3/111). Refer to Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Khuzaymah, Dār al-Ta'sīl, 1435H) 1/29-31 and also Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Khuzaymah (taḥqīq by al-A'zamī, al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1400H) 1/9-11.

The book “**Kitāb al-Tawakkul**”—from which his statement below is taken—is one of the many lost works of Ibn Khuzaymah. We are citing it through Ibn Ḥajar who quotes from it in *Fatḥh al-Bārī* and also in *Badhl al-Māʿūn*.²

Ibn Ḥajar (رحمته الله) said:

And Ibn Khuzaymah spoke about this in great detail in his book “*Kitāb al-Tawakkul*”.

He related the ḥadīth: “*There is no contagion*” through numerous Companions and also: “*Let not the owner of sick camels pass them by the healthy camels of another*” from the ḥadīth of Abu Hurayrah.

So here, Ibn Khuzaymah cited the two ḥadīths between which there is an apparent conflict and he will proceed to resolve this conflict by elaborating on their meanings.³

As for the first, he brought it with the heading: “**Reliance upon Allāh in negation of contagion**”.

Ibn Khuzaymah (رحمته الله) has drawn upon the Salaf before him such as **Abu ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim bin Sallām** in elaborating on the wisdom behind such Prophetic traditions. To understand this, it must be made clear first the “contagion” that is being negated. This can be summarised as follows:

Exaggeration in the presumed causality of mixing for which no evidence exists to eliminate the workings of other primary factors in disease causation, thereby confusing coincidence with causation and the construction of ideas, thoughts,

² *Fatḥh al-Bārī* (al-Maktabah al-Salafiyyah) 10/161-162 and *Badhl al-Māʿūn Fī Faḍl al-Ṭāʿūn* (Dār al-Kutub al-Athariyyah, 1413H) pp. 183-185.

³ There are numerous ways in which the scholars have tried to reconcile between the various ḥadīths on this subject matter..

feelings, statements and behaviours on top of such exaggeration and ambiguity in causation which enter into the realm of minor shirk.

Once that is clear, then disease is not a noun-entity like a dog, cat or squirrel that roams around of its own accord as the Pagans and Disbelievers may believe, in the context of their rejection of Allāh’s rubūbiyyah. Or, as the others may believe, that it is a quality Allāh has put in disease itself—similar to how cooling has been placed in ice, burning in fire, satiation in food and quenching thirst in water.

Rather, disease is **a state, a description, and incidental occurrence (‘araḍ)** in a body which has come about on account of multiple factors, all of which are brought together by Allāh in a person or a population through His creational systems of cause and effect at the precise time and location He has willed.

As such, **Allāh creates fresh instances of disease** in whomever He wills, whenever He wills, for whatever wisdoms and objectives He wills, through whatever means He wills.⁴

Allāh did not put any inherent ability in disease to “transmit” or “move” such that it is “infectious”. Disease is something created, brought about, through factors external to itself, in which individual susceptibility is a condition, without which disease cannot arise and settle.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “*Nothing transmits to anything else*” with the meaning explained by Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr:⁵

⁴ This can include **inoculation**—through which a fresh instance of disease is created in another person. No disease is “transmitted” or “passed on” because states and conditions cannot be passed on. They are created in entities if the right conditions and factors are present and in play. So from this angle there is no “contagion” so to speak because no “instance of disease” is passed or transmitted. Rather, every instance of disease has been created afresh.

⁵ Refer to our article: “**Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr on Contagion**”: [ibn-abdal-barr-contagion.pdf](#) — 9 October 2020.

—That the Pagan Arabs believed that being close to a person is the cause of transfer of features, traits, actions and diseases, leading them to their belief in omens and contagion, and

—That the Prophet negated that and taught his nation that just like disease was created in the first person through a combination of factors without requiring “transmission” from another, then that is also the case with subsequent cases of the disease and “contagion” is simply a presumption.

People in the same location, during the same time period, can be subject to the same health-producing or disease causing factors—inclusive of ticks, parasites and the likes from contaminated environmental surroundings—as a result of which disease can arise in a percentage of the population, in those with susceptibility to disease at that moment in time by Allāh’s decree. Any proximity and mixing would be coincidental.

We have illustrated this numerous times in other articles with diseases such as **cholera** and **pellagra**, wrongly thought in the past to be “contagious”. In the former, inoculation with fecal contamination through water and food is the cause, not person to person transmission, and in the second deficiency in Niacin, Vitamin B3, is the cause, due to a poor diet.

The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) explained in his statement: (لا يعدي شيء) (شيئنا) “*Nothing transmits to anything else*”, that qualities, traits, features and incidental attributes such as diseases are not “transmitted” or “passed on” by a person or a thing.

Rather, it is Allāh who creates fresh disease instances through factors he brings together for each person. Some of the disease inducing factors are shared and common to a population in a given place and time and some are unique and specific to individuals.

When certain language is used “So and so passed the disease to so and so”, “So and so infected so and so”, “this disease is highly contagious” and so on, then it opens the door for it to be said that disease has inherent capabilities of transmission regardless of

whether a person claims Allāh gave it such capability or not. And this in turn can lead to exaggeration, excessive fear, harbouring of omens, erosion of reliance upon Allāh and so on.

Once all the above is understood in light of the statements of the Prophet (ﷺ), then a person resorts to reliance upon Allāh in his conduct and behaviour and does not allow omens and belief in contagion to occupy his mind, play with his imagination, generate fear in his heart and affect his behaviour.

However, it should be kept in mind that this does not conflict with taking the means to avoid potential harm. This is where **individual disposition and inclination** and each person's strength of īmān, reliance, his control of his feelings and psychological states and the likes enter the picture.

Not everybody is the same.

And this is why some scholars reconciled the various ḥadīths in this topic from the angle that:

—“*There is no contagion*” is for those who are strong in faith, and who if, after mixing with sick, get sick, will know it was not due to contagion—the alleged “transmission of disease”—but it was because Allāh created the disease in him through the same factors that the other person got the disease.

—And: “*Flee from the leper*” and not mixing sick with healthy camels is for those who are weak, with loose imaginations, and prone to omens and contagion, those who would wrongly presume without any knowledge or evidence⁶—if they or their camels became ill—that they became ill through mixing and they may start believing in contagion and raising the question of “if”. Meaning “If only I had not mixed”, “If only I had not travelled to such and such a place” and so on.

⁶ The use of modern microbiological methods and procedures such as RT-PCR test cannot prove “contagion” and they are built on the assumption of the germ theory model of disease which is false and inaccurate.

It is related from ‘Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb (رضي الله عنه) that he used to drink from the same spot on the same vessel from which Mu‘ayqīb—his companion who had leprosy— would drink from, doing this on purpose in order to repel notions of contagion from his mind.

‘Abd Allāh bin Ja‘far bin Abī Ṭālib said: “For I have seen ‘Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb call for a vessel in which there was water, and Mu‘ayqīb would drink from it—and this disease [of leprosy] had taken hold in him—then he [‘Umar] would drink from it, and would deliberately place his mouth on the same spot [of the vessel] where [Mu‘ayqīb had placed his] mouth, knowing he was doing so because he disliked that anything of [belief in] contagion should enter into his soul.”⁷

So this is now the realm of each individual’s constitution, his inclination and disposition and not all people are the same in their fears, apprehensions and so on.

There are some people here in the West who wish to impose their own exaggerations, apprehensions and fears on to others, wanting them to fear a common cold illness with a survival rate of 99.997%—by way of example—as if it is the plague. It is for the likes of these weak and insecure people that the Prophetic guidance has come, to protect them from their own presumptions, imaginations and exaggerations.

Then Ibn Ḥajar continues summarising Ibn Khuzaymah’s treatment of the subject:

And for the second [ḥadīth], he brought it with the heading: **“Mention of a report in whose meaning some scholars have erred in and affirmed the contagion which the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) negated.”**

⁷ Al-Tamhīd (1/53-55), Ibn Sa‘d in al-Ṭabaqāt (4/109-111), al-Siyar (2/491-492).

This is the ḥadīth about the owner of sick camels not mixing them with the healthy camels of another. Ibn Khuzaymah indicates that some scholars have misunderstood this ḥadīth, and have not identified its true meaning and objective, which is to cut off the source of the doubt of contagion, the avoidance of circumstances in which people, due to ignorance and incomplete knowledge of the complexity of causes, are led to exaggeration.

He (ﷺ) advised them to avoid situations which are the sources of such thoughts, feelings and doubts. Thus, the intent is as follows:

“Do not believe in contagion, it is not permissible, as it is presumption and entities do not pass or transmit their incidental states (aʿrāḍ). And do not mix sick camels with healthy ones, because that is the route through which you will be led to believe in contagion, which you have been prohibited from.”

So this is like: “Do not drink alcohol, and do not sit in a place where it is consumed, because that is a route through which you may be led to drink alcohol, which you have been prohibited from.” And: “Do not commit fornication, and do not be alone with a non-maḥram woman, because that is a route through which you may be led to fornication, which you have been prohibited from.”

Ibn Ḥajar continues:

After this he wrote the heading:

“Evidence that the Prophet (ﷺ) did not intend the affirmation of contagion with this saying.”

And then he cited the ḥadīth of Abū Hurayrah [that the Prophet said]: “*There is no contagion.*” And a bedouin retorted: “What is it [that we see] a camel with scabies mix with other camels and they also get scabies?” He (ﷺ) said: “*And what passed it to the first one.*” Then he mentioned his routes [for this ḥadīth] from Abū Hurayrah.

And then he also related from the ḥadīth of Ibn Masʿūd:

| “*Nothing transmits to anything else*”...

So here Ibn Khuzaymah uses the ḥadīth of the bedouin and his camels where the doubt is presented to the Prophet (ﷺ) about camels, scabies and contagion. He explains its meaning in the same way as al-Ṭahāwī.⁸

For when the Prophet (ﷺ) said: “*There is no contagion*” and “*Nothing transmits to anything else*”, the bedouin was surprised. So he raised his misconception, which is:

“How can spread of disease through mixing be denied when we see with our own eyes a camel with scabies mix with others and then they all get it?”

So what the bedouin did was to confuse **coincidence** with **causation** and he **exaggerated** in the cause of “mixing” thinking that this is the route through which the disease of scabies came to the rest of his camels. He ignored the fact that Allāh makes herds of animals—and also populations of people—subject to the same disease-causing factors when they are in the same location and time. Just like the first camel or person got ill without any “transmission” of disease then likewise, the rest can also become ill if they have been enveloped and surrounded by the same shared, common factors of disease causation.

So what has happened here is that the bedouin exaggerated in a presumed cause and dismissed the role of primary causes of disease, those which enveloped the other camels as they did the first one. And the Prophet (ﷺ):

➔ [knowing that this is the natural tendency of people when they are ignorant of the complexity of causation in Allāh’s creation, that this would make them prone to certain thoughts, feelings and statements based upon presumptions]⁹ ➔

⁸ Refer to our article: “**Al-Ṭahāwī on Contagion**”: [tahawi-contagion.pdf](https://www.tahawi-contagion.pdf) — 22 September 2020, for a detailed discussion of this matter.

⁹ This is what is found today with respect to cold, flus and flu-like illnesses which are seasonal in nature and are in-built healing phase mechanisms for the

advised them to keep away from the leper and not to mix sick camels with healthy ones so that the source and root of false presumption and exaggeration would be cut off, never being given the opportunity to arise in the first place.

As for scabies (scabies), it is a parasitic infestation which is common in hot tropical regions, particularly in Australia, Africa, South America and South-East Asia. **The “immune” status of the host is a key factor in the ability of the mite to penetrate the skin.** The mite is present in the environment and infestation occurs through contamination of the surroundings.

We can understand the saying of the Prophet: *“And what passed it to the first one?”* Meaning, how did the first camel get scabies? Well the answer is that the mite is already in the environment and on the skin, and the first camel got an infestation because of factors such as malnutrition, weakened host “immune” response, or put another way, lack of vitality. Ordinarily speaking, if these factors were not present, the mite would not find a way to penetrate the skin and cause rash, which can also lead to bacterial activity.

The mite that causes scabies cannot jump nor fly.

expulsion of morbid materials from the body and regeneration of compromised mucosal linings in the respiratory tract. Symptoms such as fever, cough, runny nose, sneezing and so on are all biologically meaningful and all play a role in the resolution of the underlying problem. They are not caused by “germs”, “microbes” or “viruses”. Rather, “viruses” play a particular role in this cleansing and regeneration process when it is triggered by certain factors. When their role has been fulfilled, they are shed by the body alongside the waste, morbid materials. They are not the root cause of disease but are participants in the resolution of the disease, operating as system-wide transport vesicles and communications messengers. Healthy people will experience mild discomfort during this healing phase whereas it will be severe in the elderly and chronically ill. The germ theory model of disease and misunderstanding of the true role of viruses has led to a revival of the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of the Pagans and Disbelievers with respect to contagion and Muslims have been greatly affected by this.

For the mite to move from one animal to another, or one person to another, **a sustained period of direct contact** is needed. “Direct skin-to-skin contact between 15 and 20 minutes is needed...” and “protracted direct body contact” we find in research papers on the subject and others state that very intimate, sustained contact is required, such as sexual activity.¹⁰

So what happens is that the primary cause of the disease—the fact that mites are present in the environment, and the factors of malnutrition, weakened immune status of the host and so on are present—and which can apply to an entire herd of animals because they have all been subjected to the same factors, due to being in the same environment and having had the same exposures to contaminated places, and some degree of malnutrition, these are ignored and a simplistic explanation of “contagion” is invoked.

Just because the camels were in proximity to each other does not prove **causation** to the exclusion of **the primary and initial multifactorial causes of the disease**.

So when exaggeration is made in the vague, ambiguous cause of “mixing”, a large scope exists for there to arise in the thoughts, feelings, statements and behaviours of people, that which is found with the Pagans and Disbelievers in their exaggeration in this matter and in their confusion between association and causation.

Knowing that this is the tendency of people, to presume things—to exaggerate in an alleged sabab (cause) while being ignorant of other asbāb (causes) and attributing causality to the wrong thing or set of things, and how this can lead them to corruption and harm in belief—the Prophet (ﷺ) ordered the owner of sick camels not to let them mix with the healthy camels of another owner so that the presumption never arises in the first place, and so that the owner of healthy camels is not subjected to

¹⁰ So this would be **inoculation** of a parasite, and this is a separate category to contagion.

trials in his thoughts and feelings, to an unnecessary mental struggle, which causes him harm.

Ibn Ḥajar then continues summarising from Kitāb al-Tawakkul of Ibn Khuzaymah:

Then he wrote the heading:

“Mention of the report [which has been] related about the command to flee from the leper—it could occur to some people that it contains an affirmation of contagion but the affair is not like that.”

Then he quoted the ḥadīth: “*Flee from the leper as you would flee from a lion*”, from the ḥadīth of Abū Hurayrah, and from the ḥadīth of ‘Ā’ishah and ‘Amr bin al-Sharīd, from his father about commanding the leper [from the delegation of Thaḳīf] to return.¹¹ And also the ḥadīth of Ibn ‘Abbās: “*Do not gaze constantly at the lepers.*”

So here Ibn Khuzaymah is bringing those texts which have led some people to claim that they contain an affirmation of contagion, whereas the affair is not like that. And this is because the meaning here is the same as the meaning of the ḥadīth of the bedouin and his camels. At this point Ibn Ḥajar quotes the words of Ibn Khuzaymah directly, wherein he said:

The Prophet (ﷺ)—with his compassion and mercy towards his nation—ordered them to flee from the leper just as he also prohibited the owner of sick camels from passing them by the healthy camels of another. This is out of concern for them and out of fear for them that some of them might come close to

¹¹ This is in relation to the Prophet (ﷺ) telling the leper not to come to him to take the pledge of allegiance in person because it has already been taken from him.

a leper and get leprosy,¹² or that the healthy camel may get the ailment of the ill one,¹³ and as a result of this, it might occur in the heart of some among the Muslims that the leprosy which afflicted him, was the leprosy from his companion, the first one who had it. And likewise when the camel is afflicted with scabies, it might occur in his heart that it was the disease of the first camel which passed on to it. As a result, he would affirm the contagion which Allāh's Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) had negated. So he ordered the avoidance of that [out of concern and fear for them] so that the Muslims may be saved from affirming contagion, and he explained to them that: *'Indeed, nothing transmits to anything else.'*

So here the argument is very clear. It is about confusing **association** with **causation** and exaggerating in an alleged, unverified cause, which then becomes the foundation for such thoughts, feelings, statements and behaviours which are those of the Pagans and Disbelievers as it relates to contagion. It provides fertile ground for the harbouring of omens, and seeing people whom one suspects might “transmit” disease, as omens.

All of this undermines and erodes **the normal, default state and default level of reliance that an average believer ought to have** wherein he conducts his day to day activities in the absence of baseless, unjustified thoughts, fears, whisperings, apprehensions and the likes.

Ibn Khuzaymah (رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ) continues:

¹² Meaning, through Allāh's decree wherein the causes and factors of leprosy had been decreed for this person as they had for the first leper, and mixing was incidental, not a cause in itself.

¹³ Meaning, through Allāh's decree wherein the causes and factors of scabies enveloped not just the first camel, but others as well, and thus, the mixing between them was incidental, not a cause in itself.

And the Prophet (ﷺ) had informed that harbouring an omen—[fearing a bad outcome on the basis of what one sees or hears]—is something that people find in their chests. Then he informed them that reliance removes it. And it is likewise with respect to leprosy and scabies [in giving rise to omens].

In other words, when a person sees a leper, a person is prone to presumptions and imaginations, and when the owner of healthy camels sees camels with scabies, those that belong to another owner, he will be prone to presumptions and imaginations. Thus, it is recommended to avoid such situations to prevent presumptions from arising because people are naturally prone to harbouring thoughts and feelings and seeing omens in things.

And this is something that a person will know from his or her own experience. For when you are next to someone with a severe skin disease, or strong symptoms of some other disease, the natural aversion that is felt feeds into such thoughts and imaginations that can lead to the harbouring of an omen in relation to what one is hearing or seeing.

In other words, that sick person becomes an omen. A mental struggle then ensues in the mind, heart and soul of a person. This is what the Salaf such as Imām Mālik, Abu ‘Ubayd and others pointed out, that a person is put to trial in this way and thus the Prophet’s guidance is from the angle of cutting off the source of potential corruption of creed, and not from the angle of fear of contagion itself.

Rather, Abu ‘Ubayd said that the view that these commands are based on fear of contagion **is the most evil interpretation** that can be given to these ḥadīths. This is because the very thing that the Prophet (ﷺ) was aiming to prevent, which is harbouring omens and a baseless, presumptuous belief in contagion, is being promoted through such an explanation, and people are driven to harbouring omens by way of it.

Ibn Khuzaymah (رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ) continues:

A person who is weak in his reliance—when a person who got close to a leper gets leprosy—he will believe in contagion and omens—due to his weak reliance—because the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) [appears to have] affirmed contagion through his command to flee from the leper and him ordering the leper [from the delegation of Thaḳīf] to turn back...

So in other words, a person who is weak, he will confuse coincidence with causation, and start believing in omens and contagion. He will have such thoughts and feelings which feed into his misunderstandings of these texts in which the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) advised with fleeing from the leper and turning a leper back. This is the very meaning that Abu ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim bin Sallām pointed out wherein he said, as cited by al-Baghawī:

And some people have carried [the ḥadīth] to mean that [the prohibition] is due to fear for the healthy on account of the one with the disease, **and this the most evil of what the ḥadīth has been carried to mean, because it facilitates the way for believing in omens.** And how can the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) not prohibit from this belief in omens [as it relates to contagion] while he [also] says: ‘[*Belief in*] omens is shirk.’ However, its angle in my view, and Allāh knows best, is that there comes to these healthy [camels] through Allāh’s decree what came to those [sick] ones [of disease], and so the owner of the healthy camels thinks that the sick ones passed the disease to them, and thus falls into sin.¹⁴

And the same is cited by Ibn Ḥajar as well:

¹⁴ Sharh al-Sunnah of al-Baghawī (al-Maktab al-Islāmī, Beirut: 1403H), 12/167 onwards.

The prohibition of *‘Let not the owner of sick camels pass them by the healthy camels of another’* is not affirmation of contagion. Rather, it is because if the healthy camels became sick through Allāh’s decree, it might occur in the heart of their owner that this was due to contagion. Hence, he would start doubting and be put to trial. Hence, he [the Prophet] ordered the avoidance of this practice. **And some people have carried [the ḥadīth] to mean that [the prohibition] is due to fear for the healthy on account of the one with the disease, and this the most evil of what the ḥadīth has been carried to mean, because it facilitates the way for believing in omens which is prohibited against. However, its angle is as I have presented.**”¹⁵

Ibn Khuzaymah continues:

And as for his prohibition of constantly gazing at the leper, then it is upon what has preceded [so that omens are not harboured]. And it is also possible for its meaning to be that the leper dislikes that the healthy should keep looking at him. For few are those intelligent people who have an affliction who do not love to conceal it.

So this is his explanation of this report about staring at the lepers, he mentions the wisdoms behind that.

This is the end of his speech and then Ibn Ḥajar then comments upon this clarification of Ibn Khuzaymah regarding these texts, praising it and agreeing with it and preferring it to other methods of reconciliation between the ḥadīths:

This reaches extreme verification and precision and it is better in my view than the reconciliation which al-Bayḥaqī

¹⁵ Badhl al-Mā’ūn Fī Faḍl al-Ṭā’ūn, pp. 187 and is mentioned by al-Baghawī in Sharḥ al-Sunnah (12/169).

mentioned and whoever followed him in that such as Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and those after him.¹⁶ This is because he negates contagion in principle, in totality just as the authentic narrations have explicitly stated. And as for whatever has been related in opposition to them [which appear to affirm it], then he carries them [upon the meaning of] cutting off the source [of belief in omens and contagion]. This is in opposition to the way in which they [the other group] have reconciled [between the ḥadīths], because that view wholly affirms contagion.

We can conclude our article with some appropriate notes that expand on what has preceded and also address some doubts and misconceptions that have been circulated.

NOTES AND REMOVAL OF MISCONCEPTIONS

1. Ibn Ḥajar is not a Ṣāḥirī (literalist)¹⁷ in his support for the view of the Salaf like **Abū Mūsa al-Ash‘arī** (رضي الله عنه), **Imām Mālik**, **Abu ‘Ubayd**, **Ibn Khuzaymah**, **al-Ṭaḥāwī**, **al-Ṭabarī** and others.

Rather, he comprehensively summarised all the views from all factions and gave preference to the most profound explanation and coherent reconciliation of the texts.

Likewise Ibn al-Qayyim summarised all the various opinions on this topic and nowhere is there any hint that the view of those mentioned from the Salaf is a “Ṣāḥirī” position. They preceded Ibn Ḥazm by centuries in any case, so this assertion is baseless.

¹⁶ In this view, it is explained that the contagion which is being negated is what was believed by the Pagan Arabs that disease transmits outside the domain of Allāh’s will and power, and that Allāh has made mixing to be a cause of the sick person passing his disease to the healthy person. This view will be analysed in future articles inshā’Allāh.

¹⁷ Someone in the UK spread the idea, without investigation and verification, that negation of contagion is a “Ṣāḥirī (literalist)” viewpoint.

2. Ibn Khuzaymah is a great Imām from the 3rd century hijrah. He discussed this matter in his work on **tawakkul (reliance)**. Omens and contagion erode tawakkul because they affect the behaviour of a person, such behaviour that is built upon suspicion, presumption and unwarranted apprehension. It is behaviour that is founded upon thoughts and feelings which are not in accordance with factual realities. As such a person unnecessarily abandons his or her activities and engages in behaviours which are the behaviours of the Pagans and Disbelievers in their exaggeration in omens and contagion.

As for taking the means, **then they have to be in accordance with the realities and be proven and established means, in relation to the actually sick.** It is unjustifiable—when the realities are clear and apparent—to exaggerate in the means until they have little connection to actual reality and become laughable.

3. More evidence from Ibn Khuzaymah, in addition to others, that the claim that the dispute of the bedouin with the Prophet (ﷺ) was about whether contagion spreads on its own or through Allāh’s decree is incorrect. This was not the point of dispute and those scholars who confine it to this point are in error. Ibn Khuzaymah has considered them to be in error.

The Pagan Arabs affirmed Allāh’s decree. They argued:

أَنْطَعِمُ مَنْ لَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ أَطْعَمَهُ

“Shall we feed those whom, if Allāh willed, He (Himself) would have fed?” (36:47).

And they used the same argument for their shirk:

لَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا أَشْرَكْنَا وَلَا آبَاؤُنَا

“... if Allāh had so willed, we and our forefathers would not have committed shirk”.¹⁸

¹⁸ See the Qur’ān: 6:148 and also 16:35, 43:20. Al-Sa’dī commented: “Allāh has informed that the Pagans will justify their shirk and declaring unlawful what

And if there were any Arabs who said contagion does not occur through Allāh's decree, through His action, then they would have been rare, holding a fringe opinion among the Pagans.

Thus, this explanation is deficient, does not capture the truth, and affirms the very thing that the Prophet (ﷺ) is actually negating in the ḥadīth.

The actual point of dispute was exaggeration in causality and confusing coincidence with causation. This is very clear and apparent. The Prophet (ﷺ) knew what effect this would have on the thoughts, feelings and statements of people and the impact of this upon Tawḥīd and its perfection. Thus, he advised with the avoidance of situations where such presumptions and exaggerations may arise.

In a previous article, we summarised the various wisdoms behind these ḥadīths.¹⁹

—a) So that the statement “if” is not made, meaning that a person starts speculating about what has already passed of Allāh's decree, and lamenting over what has passed.

—b) So that coincidence and association are not confused with causation, and so that exaggeration is not made in causes.

—c) So that a person is not subjected to unnecessary mental struggle in being next to a person with a repulsive illness such as leprosy.

—d) So that the weak person's fears, imagination do not play up and lead him to thoughts and ideas about contagion and harbouring of omens.

—e) So that a person does not find fault with al-Qadar, and use the word “if”, meaning, “If I had not mixed, I would not have

Allāh made lawful through the argument of al-Qaḍā and al-Qadar, and that they will make Allāh's will which encompasses everything of good and evil a proof for themselves in repelling blame from themselves.”

¹⁹ Refer to “**Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370H) on Contagion**”: [jassas-contagion.pdf](#) — 16 October 2020.

become ill”, or “If I remained in the land, I would have also got the plague” and so on.

And we can add the following:

—f) So that encounters between the sick and healthy do not lead to the rare event of inoculation²⁰, which can, subject to other conditions and factors, lead to **the fresh creation of another instance of disease (and not necessarily the same one)**, through the creational systems of cause and effect which are part and parcel of al-Qadar. However, this is not contagion, it is simply the fresh creation of disease instance through the sum of its causes.

4. Regarding the previous point about inoculation:

While affirming this, we do not speak of “disease transmission” or “contagion”, because this is not contagion. No disease was “transmitted” from one person to the next, because no such thing is possible. **And this is because a cause among the causes of disease (such as inoculation) is not the actual disease itself, but external to it.** Disease is a state, a condition, an incidental attribute (‘araḍ) not a noun-entity, it is multicausal and multifactorial in nature. For the same state to arise and develop in another person, it requires numerous factors and conditions outside of itself as an ‘araḍ (incidental attribute), and is therefore created afresh. No instance of disease passed from one person to the next. No person, animal or thing can “transmit” disease.

Among those who do affirm contagion as part of reconciliation between texts, there is Ibn al-Qayyim who has used most precise words in one place in his writings on this matter which indicate what we have explained. He said:

قد يكون سببا يخلق الله تعالى فيه المرض

²⁰ Where someone has a graze, cut or wound, and some noxious, putrefying material enters the bloodstream, and as a result, a cleansing process is initiated to remove or neutralise the material, manifesting as disease symptoms.

[Mixing] can sometimes be a cause **through which Allāh creates the disease** [in the healthy].²¹

Thus, now its just a matter of wording. How do you describe this. We say Allāh creates disease afresh and disease does not “transmit”, a person does not “transmit” or “pass on” disease to another. **The moment you start using this language of “transmitting”, “passing on”—which is something found in the other view by necessity—then you are opening the door which the Prophet (ﷺ) closed through his deep and profound guidance.**

So we say: There is no such thing as “contagion” (“disease transmission”)—**even after accepting inoculation as a cause of the fresh creation of disease instances**—and in doing so, we combine all aspects of truth. We say instead, that Allāh creates all instances of disease afresh through His decree.

This is what is found with the Salaf and it is the view Ibn Ḥajar supported because of its merit, internal consistency and depth and breadth of application to all aspects of this subject matter—not because he is a Ṣāḥirī.

He said, speaking of this view, and we conclude our article on this note:

[The last view]: That disease is not infectious by its inherent nature at all (aslan, fundamentally). Rather, to whichever person a disease occurs, then that is due to Allāh (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) creating that in him afresh... that which is preferred [as the superior view] in the subject of contagion is the last one, upon the generality of his (ﷺ) saying: “*Nothing transmits to anything else*” and his (ﷺ) saying to the one who affirmed contagion: “*So who passed it to the first one?*”, whose corroboration has already

²¹ Ḥāshiyah Tahdhīb Sunan Abī Dāwūd (10/290).

| preceded.²²

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3 Rabī al-Awwal 1442 / 20 October 2020—v.1.02

²² Badhl al-Mā‘ūn Fī Faḍl al-Ṭā‘ūn, pp. 212-213.

Reproduced below is a section from: “**Higher Wisdoms in The Ḥadīth Regarding the Land of Plague**”: [hadith-plague-land.pdf](https://www.hadith-plague-land.pdf)
 — 25 April 2020 due to its relevance to this article.

THE VARIATION IN DISPOSITIONS AND INCLINATIONS OF PEOPLE

Naturally, people vary in their mental constitutions and emotional dispositions. If one fears a particular sickness, it is an individual personal matter. Precautions can be taken by such a person in accordance with his or her constitution, disposition and fears. **However, that does not mean that such measures are always in accordance with the factual realities or ways and means that are justified and warranted.**

They may be measures which simply give reassurance to the heart and mind of such a person. If a person fears a butterfly as the scorpion or hornet is feared, he may take measures against butterflies, but those measures are in accordance with his beliefs and presumptions, not in accordance with factual realities.

And this is why scholars such as Ibn al-Qayyim make a very insightful point in that among the people are those predisposed to imagining things (*awhām*) and having fears which induce such psychological and emotional states that suppress the body’s vital processes, and which in turn lead to the very disease being feared. Such people predispose themselves to disease through such imaginations and fears and they are the ones likely to be put to trial with belief in contagion. It is for the likes of these people that the commands have come in the ḥadīths to not enter a land of plague, to flee from the leper and not to pass sick animals by healthy ones—so that they can be protected from the consequences of their own imaginations, presumptions and fears and not be put to trial with belief in omens and contagion.

From this consideration, we can also see the wisdom,

conciseness, breadth and depth of meaning (jawāmi‘ al-kalim) in the speech of the Messenger (ﷺ) in that he put ...

- belief in evil omens in their various forms,
- contagion,
- influence of stars and,
- imagined harm from Jinns in relation to travel

... all together in one sentence. This is because they all involve things which have no reality and which are but the presumptions and imaginations in the mind of the individual. And the Messenger (ﷺ) gave guidance for the benefit of such people. Hence, for the one who harbours omens, he advised that the omen be repelled and pushed out of the mind through reliance upon Allāh and continuing to do the activity which he set out to do originally. And with respect to the one who is fearful of disease and may be prone to belief in contagion should he get a disease, he advised him to not enter the land of plague and not to mix with a leper.

We mention once more what **Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim bin Sallām** (رحمة الله) said:

“The prohibition of ‘*Let not the owner of sick camels pass them by the healthy camels of another*’ is not affirmation of contagion. Rather, it is because if the healthy camels became sick through Allāh’s decree, it might occur in the heart of their owner that this was due to contagion. Hence, he would start doubting and be put to trial. Hence, he [the Prophet] ordered the avoidance of this practice. And some people have carried [the ḥadīth] to mean that [the prohibition] is due to fear for the healthy on account of the one with the disease, and this the most evil of what the ḥadīth has been carried to mean, because it facilitates the way for believing in omens which is prohibited against. However, its angle is as I have presented.”²³

²³ Badhl al-Mā‘ūn Fī Faḍl al-Ṭā‘ūn, pp. 187 and is mentioned by al-Baghawī in Sharḥ al-Sunnah (12/169).

ADDENDUM ON LEPROSY AND CONTAGION

According to the CDC:²⁴

Leprosy was once feared as a highly contagious and devastating disease, but now we know it doesn't spread easily and treatment is very effective... ***It is not known exactly how Hansen's disease [leprosy] spreads between people. Scientists currently think it may happen...***

These statements indicate that there is no scientific proof for these claims, only mere conjectures. It has been established through extensive experience in all parts of the world that leprosy is not contagious in the ordinary and common sense of the word, which is routine, normal contact. As for **inoculation**, then leprosy can arise in a person through it, but inoculation is not contagion, it is a separate category.²⁵

Scientists currently think it may happen when a person with Hansen's disease coughs or sneezes, and a healthy person breathes in the droplets containing the bacteria.

This statement has zero evidence because "thinking" that something happens in a certain way does not constitute actual scientific evidence. The same applies to influenza and other illnesses for which similar claims are made. Further, this is undermined by what is stated next.

Prolonged, close contact with someone with untreated

²⁴ Refer to the following page on the CDC website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/leprosy/index.html>.

²⁵ For an explanation of this matter refer to our article, "**A Discussion of Imām al-Baghawī's Commentary on Omens and Contagion**" and refer to the introduction of this article.

leprosy over many months is needed to catch the disease. **You cannot get leprosy from a casual contact with a person who has Hansen's disease like:** Shaking hands or hugging, sitting next to each other on the bus, sitting together at a meal. **Hansen's disease is also not passed on from a mother to her unborn baby during pregnancy and it is also not spread through sexual contact...** Overall, the risk of getting Hansen's disease for any adult around the world is very low. **That's because more than 95% of all people have natural immunity to the disease."**

This is clear admission that bacteria are not the primary cause of this disease and that the vast majority of the world's population already have that bacteria and never get leprosy. There must be more that is going on and other factors must be involved which give a more complete picture than the narrow-minded one presented by the *one-dimensional, one-germ, one-cause, one-illness* "germ theory" model of disease.

In reality, leprosy is a disease of toxicity coupled with nutritional deficiency in some aspect or another, it is not caused by bacteria. Unfortunately, modern medicine is poisoned by the flawed, inaccurate germ theory of disease which does not account for, at least not in clinical practice, the multifactorial nature of disease. Bacteria come to the scene of disease and multiply where there is toxicity and morbid materials and waste caused by environmental and dietary factors. They play a role in recycling and cleaning up in the body. They are not the root cause of disease, but are on the scene of disease.

Leprosy disappeared from nations as soon as there were improvements in sanitation, diet, better housing and open spaces, clean water supply and so on, which shows that, like many other alleged contagious diseases, it is one of malnutrition and toxicity.

The above facts support the view of those scholars from the Salaf and beyond who say that the Prophetic command to “*Flee from the leper...*” is from the angle of preservation of creed, to prevent people from being prone to believing in contagion upon the way of the pagans and disbelievers, and not because of fear of disease upon the principle of contagion.²⁶ Otherwise, we risk making the Prophetic Sunnah to clash with what are empirically proven realities, such as leprosy not being contagious at all in the ordinary sense of the word.

To illustrate, someone might say that our Prophet (ﷺ) advised with fleeing a leper from the route of contagion, out of fear of it, holding that particular view.

And then a person from the enemies who wishes to bring a doubt, he can quite easily say:

That was understandable back then, as that was the erroneous notion held among nations, but now we know much better. It is not actually contagious as once thought, most people will never get it, they actually have the leprosy bacteria, but never develop disease, and lepers live among healthy people for decades without the disease being “communicated”.

However, this doubt does not exist when we say the following:

Our Prophet (ﷺ) brought the most complete and perfect guidance, so he:

—Advised with avoiding the leper to avoid **inoculation**, which is an empirically established means of **fresh disease creation** (and not “transmission” of disease instance from one person to another), keeping in mind that this fresh disease instance may not even be leprosy, but something less or other than it, depending on a person’s vitality.

²⁶ It is established throughout history that people have lived with lepers for decades, ate food with them, washed their clothes, and attended to their illness, without succumbing to the disease at all.

—Advised with avoiding the leper to avoid people being subjected to situations in which anxieties and fears can arise, because of exaggeration in particular causes (in this case, casual, routine mixing). This is the nature of mankind, they are naturally prone to omens and having thoughts based upon mere presumptions. And people being prone to such thoughts and feelings in these situations is more likely than getting leprosy from casual mixing with a leper, since empirical evidence and centuries of experience have shown that it does not happen. Thus, his advice is based on the stronger and dominant cause in the whole situation, which is prevention of unnecessary mental struggle and baseless or exaggerated thoughts and fears.

—Similarly, so that if a person did mix with a leper and then got leprosy, this having nothing to do with the mixing itself, but through other factors and causes from Allāh's decree, then a person may start finding fault with the decree and start saying “if only this”, “if only that.

—And in addition to the above, he may confuse coincidence with causation and be led to affirming contagion, when there was no such thing in reality, and so he ends up falling into exaggeration, leading to potential corruption in belief.

So this advice from the Prophet, it is not an obligation, but a recommendation. Within one command, he incorporated many wisdoms, all of which are based upon empirical, proven realities, whether about the nature of skin diseases or about the psychology and emotional states of people, and how they lead to belief-formation that is conjectural, and which in turn affect behaviours, making them irrational.

Hence, his guidance is the most perfect of guidance, and there is nothing in his guidance which opposes reason and wisdom and nor which clashes with factual realities.