



“They Hear What I Say”¹

Imām Ibn Hajar al-`Asqalānī
Released by www.marifah.net 1428 H.

Narrated `Ubayd ibn Ismā`īl, that Abū Usāma narrates from Hishām from his father that he said:

It was mentioned in the presence of `A`ishah that Ibn `Umar elevates a report to (*raf`a`a*) Rasūlullāh ﷺ that the dead are tormented when that person’s relatives wail over them. She said:

[tormented because of] of fright (*wāhil*). Verily Rasūlullāh ﷺ said that the dead man is punished for his mistakes and sins; and his relatives weep upon him now.

And then she said:

this is similar to what he [Ibn `Umar] has said [elsewhere – discussing funerals (*al-janā`iz*)]:

Verily, Rasūlullāh ﷺ stood upon the pit (*qalib*) where the polytheists killed in Badr were put and he did not say [as Ibn `Umar reports] ‘now they hear what I say’; rather he said ‘verily now they know [they realize] what I used to tell them is the truth.’ and then she recited the verses: ‘verily you cannot make the dead to hear’ (Sūrat al-Naml 27:80; Sūrat al-Rūm 52) ‘and you cannot make them hear, those in their graves’ (Sūrat al-Fāṭir, v.22)

He (`Urwa) said, ‘that is, when they are sent to hellfire.’²

[*dhukira*]: it has been mentioned in Ismā`īl’s narration, he says: ‘it reached `A`ishah but I don’t know who the *muballigh* (reporter) is.’ However, he [Ismā`īl] has another report from which it is inferred that it is `Urwa who has reported this.

[*wahil*]: fright, terror.

It has also been reported as *wabal* but that which is well-known is *wabil* (fright); it is wrong both in meaning and also incorrect in tense. If it is read *wabal* it means: [he is]

¹ Ibn Hajar, fath *al-bārī sharh saḥīḥ al-bukhārī*.

(<http://www.al-eman.com/hadeeth/viewchp.asp?BID=12&CID=367>).

² Al-Bukhārī, *saḥīḥ (kitāb al-maghāzī, bāb al-qatlī abī jabl*; Hadīth 3681)

terrified, forgetful, cowardly and apprehensive. Fārabi, Azharī, Ibn al-Qattā'a, Ibn Fāris, Qābisī and others have said: 'I was apprehensive about it' with the *fatha*; *abil* with *kasra* and *mablan* with *sukun*. That is, 'when your doubt inclines towards that.' Qālī and Jawharī said: 'And you mean [something] other than that and Ibn al-Qattā'a has added more.'

[He said: *'that is, when they are sent to hell'*]:

The reporter here is `Urwa. He is trying to explain what `A'isha meant and indicates that the negation in the Qur'ānic verse: **'you cannot make the dead hear'** is relegated and restricted (*muqayyad*) to the period after they [the polytheists] are put in hellfire. And here there is no conflict in the denial of `A'isha and the affirmation of Ibn `Umar [that the dead hear] as this has been clarified and explained in the chapter on funerals (*al-janā'iz*).

However, the narration after this one proves that `A'isha denied [such hearing of the dead] in absolute terms, since she insisted that the Hadīth was in the words **'verily, they shall know'** and that Ibn `Umar was mistaken (*wahma*) when he said **'they shall hear.'**

Bayhāqī said: 'Knowledge does not negate hearing.'

The verse is then explained that *'they cannot be made to hear when they are dead but then Allāh gave them life and then they heard'* according to Qatāda. [Also] `Umar and his son are not the only ones who have reported this event [of those killed in Badr being addressed]; even Abū Talha agrees with them as we have described earlier. Tabarānī has a rigorously authenticated report (*sahīh*) narrated from Ibn Mas`ūd similar to this one. There is a similar report narrated from `Abdullāh ibn Sīdān and in that report it is has these words:

**"They [companions] said, Oh Rasūlullāh! Do they [the dead] hear?
He replied, 'they hear as you hear, but they cannot reply.'"**

And in the Hadīth of Ibn Mas`ūd it states,

"However, on today they can not respond!"

In [the book] *al-maghāzī* [campaigns] by Ibn Ishāq there is an exceptional narration (*gharīb*) reported by Yūnus ibn Bukayr through a valid chain (*jayyid*) from `A'isha that is similar to the narration by Abū Talha and [additionally,] it contains:

"You do not hear what I say anymore than they [the dead] do."

And [Imām] Ahmad has [also] reported this with a well authenticated chain (*hasan*) and if this is retained, then it is as if she retracted from her former position of denial as proven from these companions [in these reports] because she had not witnessed that event [of Badr, whereas `Umar did].

Ismā`īlī says: there is no doubt that `A'isha had the perspicacity, intelligence, a vast collection of narrations and a deep insight in the sciences which is unrivalled; but still, even she cannot refute a report of a reliable narrator [in this case Ibn `Umar and Abū Talhah] except with a similar narration that can prove, either the abrogation, exclusivity or the impossibility of the contradicting report. Therefore it is impossible to reconcile [contradictory] reports of her denial and her affirmation except as above [that she retracted from her former position].

Also the verse ***'verily, you cannot make the dead to hear'*** does not contradict his ﷺ saying, ***'verily, now they hear.'*** because 'to make someone hear' is to deliver the sound in the ear of the hearer. And it is Allāh Ta`ālā who makes them to hear by making the voice of His prophet to reach their ears. And regarding what she [ʿAʿisha] said in her report, ***'verily they know,'*** she would not have negated the other report if she had heard of this one."

Suhaylī said that it is evident from the query of his companions, that the basis of the very report is an unusual occurrence and a miracle of Rasūlullāh ﷺ, when they asked him: ***'do you address a people who are dead and rotten?'*** and he replied to them [as is mentioned in the Hadīth above]. So, if they can 'know' in that state, certainly they can hear? This is possible by their external ears, according to most commentators, or by the ears of their heart. Those who say that 'the question is directed towards the soul and the body' use this Hadīth as their proof. And those who refute them say: 'the question is addressed only to the soul; because hearing can be either by external ears or by the ears of the heart., and there does not remain any scope for further argument.

I say [Ibn Hajar]: if this was a miracle of Rasūlullāh ﷺ, it is not correct to use this as a proof for [the generic] matter of questioning [in the grave.] The Qur'ānic exegetes have differed on who is described by the word ***'dead'*** in the verse: ***'verily you cannot make the dead to hear.'*** Similarly, there is a difference on who is described by ***'those in the graves.'***

ʿAʿisha inferred by the obvious meaning and took it as the principle to explain the saying of [Rasūlullāh ﷺ] ***'you do not hear anymore what I say, than they do.'*** that is what most scholars say [about ʿAʿisha's denial]. It is also said that ***'the dead'*** and ***'those in graves'*** is a metaphor (*majāz*) that describes the disbelievers. That is, even though they are alive, they resemble the dead. If that is the case, then this verse cannot be used as evidence for what ʿAʿisha negated.

Allāh Ta`ālā knows best.

