

## The *Kitab ash-Shifa* of Qadi Iyad

We could call it “Behold Muhammed, the Last of the Prophets,” or we could call it “The Song of Muhammed,” as it can be recited, so musical is its arrangement. If anyone wants to know what kind of person Muhammed was, read the *Shifa*. If one is assailed by troubles, the *Shifa*, as the title claims, is the cure. The subtitle has it: *ash-Shifa bi-Tarif Huquq al-Mustafa*.

It is one of the most popular and beloved books among Muslims. Like the *Delail ul-Khayrat*, it is one of the most copied works by scribes and calligraphers, the best copies of both being of Moroccan or Ottoman provenance. They are legendary.

While both books can be read silently, there is something of the song or recitative about them. The *Shifa* is unique in regards to category. Not exactly academically scientific or historical, it stands alone. It is the real thing. – *Mohamed Zakariya*

### The Long Hilye from Al-Hasan, Son of Ali, Recorded in the Book *Ash-Shifa [The Healing]*, by Al-Qadi Iyad, d.544 A.H./1149 A.D.

Al-Hasan, son of Ali [May God be pleased with both of them] said: “I asked my uncle Hind, son of Abu Hala about the hilye [description] of the Prophet of God, my peace and blessings be upon him. Hind was known to be a prolific describer of the Prophet, and I wished him to relate some of it for me so I might hold fast to it.”

So Hind said: “The Prophet of God, peace be upon him, was of mighty significance to God, and profoundly honored among the people. His face radiated light like the moon on its fullest night. He was a bit taller than the medium stature and a bit shorter than the tall and skinny. His head was large. His hair was wavy. If his hair parted, he would leave it parted, if not he would leave it, and it would not be long enough to pass his earlobes. His complexion was fair. He had a wide forehead, arched, thick eyebrows with a space between them. There was a vein between them that would swell and pulse when he was angry. His nose was aquiline; it had a brightness about the upper part that led those who were less observant to think him haughty. He had a thick beard. His eyes were very black and the whites very white. His cheeks were not prominent, he had a wide mouth. His teeth were white and there was a space between his front teeth.

“There was a fine line of hair on his chest, and it was as if it were an ivory statue with the purity of silver. His figure was well proportioned, full bodied and strong. There was no slackness in his musculature, his chest didn’t protrude over his belly, nor the reverse. His chest was broad

and his shoulders wide and muscular. He had large limbs. The parts of his body that could be seen while he was clothed were luminous. His body from the neck to the navel was joined by hair which flowed down like a line. There was no hair on his nipples. His forearms, shoulders, and upper chest were hairy. The bones of his forearms were long. His palms were wide and generous. His hands and feet were thick. His limbs were long. He had long sinews. His insteps were high. His feet were smooth without protuberances and water would run off of them. When he would move off, he would move with determination. He would step surely and unhurriedly and not proudly. He walked gently and with dignity, and he would take wide steps when he wanted to walk quickly. When he walked, it was as if he were descending from a slope and when he would look at someone, he would turn to him fully. He would lower his gaze and look down more often than up. He didn't stare. He would lead his companions by walking behind them out of modesty and would always be the first to greet them."

At this point, Al-Hasan said to Hind, "Describe to me the way he spoke."

Hind said, "The Prophet of God, peace and blessings be upon him, was continually full of concern. He was constantly deep in thought. He had no rest, and would not speak without a reason. He would be silent for long periods of time. He would begin conversations, and end them clearly and distinctly and would speak in a way that combined many meanings in few words. He spoke with excellence, and there was no excess in it, nor unnatural brevity. He was gentle by nature and not coarse, nor was he contemptuous of anyone. He would extol the favors he received, even when they were few and small. He never found fault with them. He never criticized the food or drink that was prepared for him, nor did he overly praise it. No one would stand against his anger when matters of the Lord's truth were opposed, until he had triumphed, but he would never get angry for his own sake, nor would he ever seek to win such an argument. He would gesture with his whole palm, to point. When he was astonished, he would make his palm face upwards. He used his hands frequently as he spoke, and would strike his left palm with his right thumb. When he would get angry, he would turn away and avert his gaze, and when he was full of joy he would lower his eyes. Most of his laughing was as smiling; when he did laugh, it was not loud, and he would show his teeth a bit like they were hailstones."

Al-Hasan said, "I kept this report to myself, away from [my brother] Al-Husayn for awhile, then I told it to him, but he had already heard it and found out even more. He had asked our father [Ali] about the way the Prophet of God, peace be upon him, was at home, when he went out in his assemblies, and about his way of living." Al-Hasan left nothing of this out.

Al-Husayn said, "I asked my father [Ali], may God be pleased with him, about how the Prophet of God, peace be upon him, was at home."

He [Ali] said, “He always asked permission to enter his home, from God, and those within. When at home, he would divide his time into three parts, one for God, one for his family, and one for himself. Then he would divide his own portion between himself and the people. His elite companions would mostly share this time with him, and they would convey his words to the common people. He would hold nothing back from them, neither knowledge or worldly things. It was his way to prefer the people of excellence, according to their merit in religious matters. Among the people there were those with a need, those with two needs, and those with many needs. He would work with them, and he would occupy them and the community in general with that which would improve their situations. This he would do by asking about them and their needs, and informing them what they ought to do. He would say, ‘Let the one who is present among you inform the one who is absent, and bring to me the need of he who is unable to tell me himself. Truly, the one who informs a person of authority of the need of one who is unable to convey it himself, God will make firm his feet on the day of judgment.’ This was the kind of topic mentioned in his presence, and he didn’t accept anything else from anyone [he didn’t like meaningless conversation and liked to talk about how to help people].”

Ali then said, in the hadith of Sufyan Ibn Waki: “They would come as scouts [seeking decisions or knowledge], and they would not go on their way until they had found what they sought, and then they would leave as guides and learned people.”

I said [Husayn to his father Ali], “Tell me about his going out and how he acted outside.”

Ali said, “The Prophet of God, peace and blessings upon him, would hold his tongue except in matters which concerned his companions. He would encourage affection and concord between them and would say nothing to alienate one from another. He honored the nobles of every people who would come to him and make them their leaders. He would be wary around some people and on his guard against them [especially nomads], but he would never withhold from anyone his open-faced friendliness and fine personality. He would ask his companions about their situations, and he would ask people about what was going on amongst them. He would approve of that which was good and advocate it, and he would denounce that which was base and discourage it.

“Everything he did was in moderation, without excess or contrariness. He was not thoughtless, out of fear that those who came to him would become unmindful or weary. He was prepared for every situation in this world and the next. He didn’t fail to fulfill what was right, and he didn’t overstep his authority in regards to those near him. The most meritorious and excellent people to him were those whose advice was most universal; the most significant of

them to him were those most beneficial to others, and the most helpful in helping others bear their burdens.”

Then Al-Husayn said, “Then I asked him [Ali] about his gatherings and about what he did in them, and he said: “The Prophet of God, peace be upon him, did not sit down or stand up without mentioning God, nor did he reserve for himself fixed places among the people to be seated, and he forbade others also to reserve places for themselves [especially in mosques and public gatherings]. When he would go to visit a group, he would sit in the nearest available spot, and ordered that others follow this practice. He would give those seated near him his full share of attention in such a way that no one would think others had been given precedence over him. Whenever someone he would be sitting with would tell him of his needs, he would bear with that person until that person left him. When someone would ask him to solve a problem, he would not turn him away without solving it for him, if possible, or saying a comforting word or a prayer for its fulfillment. His cheerfulness and open personality were felt by all the people, and he became like a father to them. They came to have the right of mercy and compassion from him, as they were close, like the relation of parent and child, distinguished only by virtue and devotion to God. And in another narrative, they became equals regarding their rights in his eyes.

“Assemblies with him were gatherings of gentleness, dignified conduct, modesty, patience, and trust. No voice would be raised, nor would women be spoken of in a depraved way, nor would peoples’ errors be mentioned. [This last item comes via different narrations.] They inclined to each other in affection out of devotion to God, as humble people. In these gatherings, the old were honored, the young were treated with gentleness. They would come to the aid of the needy and would have compassion for the stranger.”

And then I asked him [Ali] about the Messenger’s conduct among his close associates and servants.

[Ali] said: “The Prophet of God, peace be upon him, was unfailingly cheerful, easy going by nature, and mild mannered. He was neither crude nor coarse . He was not a clamorous loudmouth, nor a repeater of obscenities. He was not one to find faults in others, nor did he overly praise them either. He was unconcerned about what he did not want, and this did not bother him. He allowed his soul no portion of three things – hypocrisy, acquisitiveness, and that which did not concern him. He did not allow himself to engage in three things regarding people – he would not criticize others, he would not revile anyone, and he would not seek out others’ faults. He would speak of nothing unless he hoped a reward from God for it. When he would talk, the ones sitting with him would be so still and quiet, you would imagine birds were sitting on their heads. When he was silent, they would talk, but not quarrel in his presence. When one of them would talk, they would all listen attentively until he had finished. They

would speak about a subject that was brought up by the first to speak until they had finished with it. He would laugh at what they laughed at, and he would be amazed by what amazed them. He was patient with the stranger who had roughness in his speech. He would say, 'Whenever you see someone seeking to solve a problem, help him out.' He did not seek praise, except to be spoken of appropriately. He wouldn't interrupt another's speech unless it got excessive or too long, then he would end it or get up to leave."

Here ends the hadith of Sufyan IbnWaki. Through other narrators, Al-Hasan continues in the words of his brother Al-Husayn. I said [to Ali], "What was the silence of the Prophet of God [peace upon him] like?"

He said, "His silences were for four situations: forbearance, caution, estimation, and contemplation. As for his estimation, it was to take an impartial study of events and listen to the people in order to be just. As for his contemplation, it was about what was eternal and what was transitory. His forbearance was part of his patience, he was not angered by that which was provocative. His caution was for four reasons – taking good speech or action into consideration so he might use it in an exemplary way; abjuring the ugly and bad so it would be left alone; exerting his judgment to improve the situation of his community; [and] establishing ways to maintain the good order of his community in regard to this world and the next."

The description is finished, with thanks and praise to God for His aid.