

## Preface

When we think of 40 Ḥadīth (pl. aḥādīth) collections, the collection of Imam al-Nawawī, may God be pleased with him, usually comes to mind. However, gathering 40 narrations from Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is not exclusive to Imam al-Nawawī, but a tradition dating back to the first century after the Hijra, which marked the migration of Muslims from the oppressed lands of Mecca to the welcoming home of Medina.

The practice of gathering 40 Ḥadīth sprung from a ḥadīth, narrated through several Companions, that puts the spiritual rank of religious scholarship within easy reach of ordinary believers with the words: “Whoever safeguards 40 narrations for my nation in the matters of this religion, God will raise him as a scholar and I shall be an intercessor

Nevertheless, I witnessed the scholarship of knowledgeable women as I had never witnessed before in America. There in Jordan, the idea of collecting forty aḥadīth presented itself to me once again.

I settled on collecting 40 Ḥadīth of ʿAʿisha, may God be pleased with her, for several reasons. For example, I'd heard so much about what a great scholar ʿAʿisha, the daughter of the great Companion Abū Bakr, had been, but never heard much evidence of it. In fact, the only time she'd come up was as a defense. Someone would ask “Why are there no female scholars in Islam?” or some version of that question, and male scholars would retort by citing that ʿAʿisha was a great scholar. It was used as a pacification tool and not much more.

The second time ʿAʿisha would come up in discussions was in an attempt to defame the Prophet ﷺ

by questioning his judgement and ethics in marrying ʿAʿisha at such a young age—according to modern Western sensibilities. After I had heard enough talks defending the age of ʿAʿisha at marriage or about the fact that she was a scholar without saying much else, I was determined to elevate her from such superficial rhetoric and preserve her as she ought to be preserved: a beloved wife, a great scholar and a righteous woman. Knowing ʿAʿisha, may God be pleased with her, was a prolific ḥadīth scholar—she is, in fact, among the companions who memorized the most aḥadīth—it was easy to see that this could be the beginning of the pathway by which I could preserve her legacy, especially for fellow English speakers.

At first, I simply gathered 40 aḥadīth in English, compiled them into a PDF and then uploaded it on to my  
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those who are not yet Muslim but are interested in Islam, we have elected to use the English word ‘God’ more often than the Arabic translation ‘Allah’ throughout the book. The use of diacritics in the other transliterations of Arabic terms follows the style provided by the International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES).

It’s important for me to say I am not a scholar. Six years of inconsistent study will never allow me to claim that title. This book was not done as a scholar’s endeavor but as an endeavor of the heart. ʿAʿisha, may God be pleased with her, is more than just a footnote in Islamic history; she is a cornerstone. I hope this little book will inspire someone to walk in her footsteps and not feel like their gender inhibits them in any way from seeking knowledge and spreading it. And I hope it inspires our Islamic teachers (shuyūkh) to go

Bakr was the first man to accept Islam, according to Imam Abū Hanīfa.

Before Islam, not all Arabs were pagans. Some were and it could be said it was the mainstream religion of their society. Others were Christian like Khadīja's cousin Waraqa. Others believed in one God but did not practice any formal religion. This latter group is the one Abū Bakr belonged to before Islam. He never prostrated to any idol and far before revelation forbade it, he prohibited himself from drinking alcohol.

During this pre-Islamic time, he and Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ were close friends. ʿAʿisha narrates that her father was about 16 or 18 when he met the Prophet ﷺ—the age difference between Abū Bakr and Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was about two years—with Abū Bakr being the younger of the pair. Among the many

Bakr and said, ‘What do you think of your Companion? He claims that he was taken this night to Jerusalem (bayt al-maqdis).’ He replied, ‘Did he say that?’ They said, ‘Yes.’ He said, ‘He has definitely told the truth. I believe and affirm him in matters more remote than that: the news from Heaven in the early part of the morning and in the evening.’ For that reason he was called ‘al-Ṣiddīq’.”

ʿAʿisha grew up seeing this close relationship between her father and Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, who would often come to visit their home.

During Prophet Muḥammad’s marriage to Khadīja, he did not marry any other woman. She was not only his first wife but his loyal companion and source of strength. Her death left the Prophet ﷺ in

first migration with her husband, al-Sakran ibn ʿAmr, to Ethiopia. Having had children of her own and previously married, she easily filled the mothering void in the Prophet’s household, assisting him in raising his four daughters. Because of the Prophet’s ﷺ growing status some were surprised by his decision to marry an older widow, but the Prophet ﷺ loved Sawda in part because she sacrificed for Islam in its early days and her jovial spirit gave the Prophet ﷺ joy in times of difficulty. Her sense of humor often relieved him of stress. One such occasion is when she noticed the Prophet’s face filled with weariness and cheered him up with a joke, as recorded in Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā:

“O Messenger of God! I prayed behind you yesterday and you prolonged the prostration for so long that I nearly had a nosebleed!” Her

10. Narrated ʿAʿisha, Mother of the Believers: “The Prophet, ﷺ, said, ‘He who cultivates land that does not belong to anybody is more rightful [to own it].’ ʿUrwa said, ʿUmar gave the same verdict in his Caliphate.”

[Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ḥadīth °533]

20. Narrated ʿAʿisha, Mother of the Believers: “The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘Jibrīl kept recommending treating neighbors with kindness until I thought he would assign [to them] a share of inheritance.’”

[Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn, Book 1, Ḥadīth 303]

33. Narrated ʿAʿisha, Mother of the Believers: “The Messenger of God ﷺ said: ‘By his good character a believer will attain the degree of one who prays during the night and fasts during the day.’”

[Sunan Abū Dāwūd, Book 41, Ḥadīth 4780]