

## About the Book 'As-Sunnah' by Abdullaah ibn Ahmad ibn Hanbal

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### Question:

Assalaamu alaykum wa rahmatullaahi wa barakaatuh. I want to know about a book named 'Kitabus Sunnah' by Abdullaah ibn Ahmad ibn Hanbal may Allaah have mercy with him. Is this book authentic?

### Answer:

All perfect praise be to Allaah, The Lord of the Worlds. I testify that there is none worthy of worship except Allaah and that Muhammad ﷺ is His slave and Messenger.

The book that you are inquiring about is the book entitled As-Sunnah, authored by **Imaam Abdullaah**, son of **Imaam Ahmad ibn Hanbal**, the well-known Imaam. The book was published several times [various editions], including the edition reviewed by **Shaykh Dr. Muhammad Sa'eed Al-Qahtani**, and he assigned a chapter from it about the truthfulness of attributing the book to its author. He mentioned some scholars who stated that the book is truly attributed to 'Abdullaah son of **Imaam Ahmad**, and they quoted from it in their books; such as **Shaykh ibn Taymiyyah**, **Ibn al-Jawzi**, **Al-Laalaka'i**, **Al-Bayhaqi**, **Ibn Abi Ya'la**, **Ibn Al-Qayyim**, **Ath-Thahabi** and other prominent scholars of Islam.

The reviewer of the book stated that the book is one of the mothers of books and one of the resource books authored regarding clarifying the creed of the Salaf (righteous predecessors) and that it was written according to the methodology of the scholars who are specialized in reviewing the ahaadeeth. The main subject of the book is refuting the view of the Jahmiyyah in matters in which they differed with the Book of Allaah and the Sunnah, such as them saying that the Quran is created and denying seeing Allaah in the Hereafter; the book elaborated on this denial. The book also elaborated on eemaan (faith) and that it includes words and actions, and he refuted the view of the Murji'ah, which contradicts this view, and he also refuted the view of the Qadariyyah (who denied Predestination) and covered other matters of belief that are mentioned in the Quran and the Sunnah and which the Salaf believed in and from which the innovators deviated.

Among the topics that were addressed in the book are the criticisms that were attributed to the scholars about Imaam **Abu Haneefah**, and the reviewer of the book stated that much of what is quoted from them in this book is not authentically attributed to the scholars to whom it was attributed. The reviewer of the book also stated that **Abdullaah ibn Imaam Ahmad** was not the only one who criticized **Abu Haneefah**, but also **Ibn Hibbaan**, **Al-Bukhari**, **Ibn Qutaybah**, **Ibn Abi Shaybah**, **Al-Khateeb Al-Baghdaadi** and **Al-Laalika'i**, then he quoted from **Ibn Abdul-Barr** that those who considered **Abu Haneefah** trustworthy and praised him are greater in number than those who criticized him.

**Shaykh Saalih Aal Ash-Shaykh** was asked, "What is your opinion about what is mentioned in the book of **Abdullaah ibn Imaam Ahmad** about accusing **Abu Haneefah** of saying that the Quran was created and so on?"

He replied:

"That is a good question; this exists in the book As-Sunnah authored by Abdullaah ibn Imaam Ahmad. At the time of Abdullaah ibn Imaam Ahmad, the affliction about saying that the Quran is created was great, and they used evidence that they attributed to Abu Haneefah while he was completely innocent of it; the statement that the Quran is created. They also attributed matters to him that the Mu'tazilah quote, such as misinterpreting the Names and Attributes of Allaah by changing their correct meaning and so on, while he is completely innocent of it. Some of it was widespread among the people, and it was reported to some scholars, and they judged

according to the apparent meaning of what was reported to them. This was before the existence of the School of jurisprudence the belonged particularly to Abu Haneefah. That is because that period was near the time of Abu Haneefah and the views (of the scholars on Abu Haneefah) were being reported, such as the view of Wakee', Sufyaan Ath-Thawri, Sufyaan ibn 'Uyaynah, and the opinions of such and such scholars on Imaam Abu Haneefah. At that time, there was a need for that according to the personal reasoning of 'Abdullaah ibn Imaam Ahmad; so he exerted his efforts in reporting the views of the scholars about what was being quoted.

However, after that time – as stated by At-Tahaawi – the scholars unanimously agreed not to quote that and (they also agreed) that they should only mention Imaam Abu Haneefah with goodness. Of course, this was after the time of Al-Khateeb Al-Baghdaadi. This means that they might have spoken about this during the era of Imaam Ahmad. At the time of Al-Khateeb Al-Baghdaadi, he (Al-Khateeb) quoted well-known views on Abu Haneefah in his book entitled At-Taareekh, and other scholars objected to him after that, until the time when the methodology of the Salaf was adopted and followed in the sixth and seventh centuries. Ibn Taymiyyah wrote his famous thesis, entitled 'Raf' Al-Malaam 'an Al-A'immati Al-A'laam'. In all his books, he mentions Imaam Abu Haneefah with goodness and gratitude, and he seeks Allaah's forgiveness for him. He only attributes to him what is called Irjaa' of the jurists [please refer to fatwa [309085](#)], but not the many views that were attributed to him, as there is the great book of Abu Haneefah entitled Al-Fiqh Al-Akbar, and there are dissertations by him which prove that he follows the methodology of the Salaf in general except in one matter, which is the issue of the actions being included in the meaning of Eemaan (faith)...

When the scholars wanted to reprint the book As-Sunnah authored by 'Abdullaah ibn Imaam Ahmad, and the supervisor and reviewer of this book was the prominent Shaykh 'Abdullaah ibn Hasan Aal Ash-Shaykh رحمه الله who was the Chief Justice in Makkah at that time, he omitted this entire chapter from the new printed version. It was not printed because from a sharee'ah-based rational point of view, its time has gone. Also, this is an act of ijtihaad (independent reasoning), and taking care of the interests of the people requires that the chapter in question be omitted and not be included in the printing. This is not a betrayal of the trust; rather, the trust is not to make people turn away from the Sunnah and the correct creed which 'Abdullaah ibn Imaam Ahmad wrote about in his book because the quotes that were included in that chapter. Thus, the book was reprinted without this chapter, and it spread among the people and among the scholars that this is the book 'As-Sunnah' authored by 'Abdullaah ibn Imaam Ahmad.

Recently, it was printed in a scientific article or in a scientific research, and this chapter was included in the book, since it existed in the manuscripts, and this is something known; this chapter was included in the book again, and they (those who printed it) said that trustworthiness requires that we include this chapter and not omit it. However, there is no doubt that this is not correct, taking in consideration what the scholars of da'wah (call to Islam) did in the past which was in accordance with As-siyaasah Ash-Shar'iyah (the Sharee'ah-based or Sharee'ah-oriented policy) and knowing the objectives of the scholars in their writings and given the differences of time, place and circumstances; and the matters that have been firmly established in the creed and the views of the scholars concerning that. When this book was republished, we were at the house of the honorable Shaykh Saalih Al-Fawzaan as he invited His Eminence Shaykh Abdul Azeez (ibn Baaz) رحمه الله and I asked him (a question about that), and he told me in the presence of Shaykh Saalih, "What the Shaykhs did is what is required and omitting that chapter is in accordance with As-siyaasah Ash-Shar'iyah because including it is not appropriate, and this is the view and methodology of the scholars..." [End of quote]

Allaah knows best.