

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Series of Questions Addressed to Eminent Scholar Ata Bin Khalil Abu Al-Rashtah,
Ameer of Hizb ut Tahrir through his Facebook Page (Fiqhi)

Answer to Question

Meaning of the Hadith: «وَتَفْتَرِقُ أُمَّتِي عَلَى ثَلَاثٍ وَسَبْعِينَ فِرْقَةً» “My Ummah will be divided among itself into seventy-three sects.”

To Abdullah Omar

(Translated)

Question:

Assalamu Alaikum Wa Rahmatullah Wa Barakatuhu

I am Abdullah from Afghanistan, may Allah preserve you our Sheikh,

The Messenger of Allah (saw) said: «سنتقسم أمتي إلى ثلاثة وسبعين فرقة وكلها في النار ما عدا واحدا» “My Ummah will be divided among itself into seventy-three sects.”

I hope you explain this Hadith.

Answer:

Wa Alaikum Assalam Wa Rahmatullah Wa Barakatuhu,

Firstly: The hadith you are enquiring about is not narrated in the format presented in your question, and we had covered this hadith in a Question & Answer published on 24 Rabi' ul-Akhir 1439 AH corresponding 11/01/2018 CE, in various narrations, some of which include different additions, and we concluded at the end of the answer that: (the hadith concerning the Ummah's division into 73 sects without any additions is a sahih hadith... and that the first addition: "كلها في النار إلا واحدة" "all of them are in hellfire except for one" has been considered hasan by many... as for the second addition: "كلها في الجنة إلا واحدة" "all of them are in jannah except for one of them," many have considered it weak, and only a few considered it sahih or hasan; therefore, I find the most preponderant the opinion that the addition in the narration: "كلها في النار إلا واحدة" "all of them are in hellfire except for one" is accepted, as for the addition: "كلها في الجنة إلا واحدة" "all of them are in jannah except for one of them," then it is not accepted, this is in reference to what we provided of narrations that include both additions...) And based on what we have mentioned in the answer to the aforementioned question, among the narrations that can be relied upon and inferred are the following narrations:

- Tirmidhi reported in his Sunan that Abu Hurayrah narrated: The Prophet (saw) said: «تَفَرَّقَتْ الْيَهُودُ عَلَى إِحْدَى وَسَبْعِينَ أَوْ اثْنَتَيْنِ وَسَبْعِينَ فِرْقَةً وَالنَّصَارَى مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ وَتَفْتَرِقُ أُمَّتِي عَلَى ثَلَاثٍ وَسَبْعِينَ فِرْقَةً» **“The Jews were split up into seventy-one or seventy-two sects; and the Christians were split up into seventy-one or seventy-two sects; and my community [my Ummah] will be split up into seventy-three sects.”** And in the same chapter, Sa'd and Abdullah ibn Amr and 'Awf ibn Malik said: Abu Issa said: the Hadith of Abu Hurayrah is Hasan Sahih. In another narration for Tirmidhi that Abdullah ibn Amr said: The Prophet (saw) said: «... وَإِنَّ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ تَفَرَّقَتْ عَلَى ثِنْتَيْنِ وَسَبْعِينَ مِلَّةً وَتَفْتَرِقُ هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةَ عَلَى ثَلَاثٍ وَسَبْعِينَ مِلَّةً كُلُّهُمْ فِي النَّارِ إِلَّا مِلَّةً وَاحِدَةً قَالُوا وَمَنْ هِيَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ مَا أَنَا عَلَيْهِ وَأَصْحَابِي» **“...Bani Isra'il divided into 72 sects, but my people will divide into 73 sects, all of which but one will go to hell.”** On being asked which it was, he replied, **“It is the one to which I and my companions belong.”** Abu Issa said that this Hadith is Hasan Gharib...

- Al-Hakim in Al-Mustadrak reported in the two sahih that Abu `Amir `Abdullah bin Luhay said; حَجَّجْنَا مَعَ مُعَاوِيَةَ بْنِ أَبِي سُفْيَانَ... ثُمَّ قَامَ جِبْنَ صَلَّى الظُّهْرَ بِمَكَّةَ، فَقَالَ: قَالَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ: «إِنَّ أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَفَرَّقُوا فِي دِينِهِمْ عَلَى ثِنْتَيْنِ وَسَبْعِينَ مِلَّةً، وَتَفْتَرِقُ هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةَ عَلَى ثَلَاثٍ وَسَبْعِينَ مِلَّةً فِي النَّارِ إِلَّا وَاحِدَةً وَهِيَ الْجَمَاعَةُ...» **“We performed Hajj with Mu`awiyah bin Abi Sufyan. When we arrived at Makkah, he stood up after praying Dhuhr and said; ‘The Messenger of Allah (SalAllahu alaihi wasallam) said, “Beware! The Apostle of Allah (ﷺ) stood among us and said: Beware! The people of the Book before were split up into seventy-two sects, and this community will be split into seventy three: seventy two of them will go to Hell and one of them will go to Paradise, and it is the majority group...”** Al-Hakim said: These chains of transmission are proof in categorizing this hadith as Sahih... and Al-Dhahabi agreed with him.

‘The People of the Two Scriptures divided into seventy-two sects. This Ummah will divide into seventy-three sects, all in the Fire except one, that is, the Jama`ah. Some of my Ummah will be guided by desire, like one who is infected by rabies; no vein or joint will be saved from these desires.’”

- Abu Dawud in his Sunan, and Ibn Majah also reported a similar narration.

Secondly: the meaning that we find most preponderant for this Hadith is as follows:

1. The terminologies faction and division have been widely used in Sharia in the sense of clash in ‘Aqeedah and in the origin of Deen, and clash in the definitive and clear evidences:

- Allah (swt) says: ﴿وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ تَفَرَّقُوا وَاخْتَلَفُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ وَأُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ﴾ **“Be not like those who are divided amongst themselves and fall into disputations after receiving Clear Signs: For them is a dreadful penalty.”** [Aali-Imran:105].

- Allah (swt) says: ﴿وَمَا تَفَرَّقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَةُ﴾ **“Nor did those who were given the Scripture become divided until after there had come to them clear evidence.”** [Al-Bayyina: 4].

- Allah (swt) says: ﴿إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَعْياً بَيْنَهُمْ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ﴾ **“Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam. And those who were given the Scripture did not differ except after knowledge had come to them - out of jealous animosity between themselves. And whoever disbelieves in the verses of Allah, then indeed, Allah is swift in [taking] account.”** [Aali-Imran:19].

- Allah (swt) says: ﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِبَعاً لَسْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ﴾ **“Surely you have nothing to do with those who have made divisions in their religion and become factions. Their matter is with Allah and He will indeed tell them (in time) what they have been doing.”** [Al-An’am:159]

2. The ‘group’ here in these ahadith means the people of the religion of Islam, and Sharia texts have been presented that clarify this meaning, including the Hadith agreed upon, ‘Abdullah ibn Mas’oud said: The Messenger of Allah (saw) said: **«لَا يَحِلُّ دَمُ امْرِئٍ مُسْلِمٍ يَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَّا بِأَخْدَى ثَلَاثِ الثُّيُبِ الرَّانِي وَالنَّفْسِ بِالنَّفْسِ وَالتَّارِكِ لِدِينِهِ الْمُفَارِقِ لِلْجَمَاعَةِ»** **“It is not permissible to spill the blood of a Muslim except in three [instances]: the married person who commits adultery, a life for a life, and the one who forsakes his religion and separates from the group.”** This is the narration of Muslim. In this noble hadith, the Prophet (saw) explained that leaving the group is equal to leaving the Deen and forsaking it because he deemed the one forsaking his Deen as separate from the group, so it was learned from this that the paradox of the group in this sense is disbelief and equal to leaving the Deen and creed...

- It is mentioned in *Fath Al-Bari, Sharh Sahih Al-Bukhari for Ibn Hajar*, the following:

[... his saying ‘the one who forsakes his Deen, leaving the group’ as well as in the report of Abu Dhar for Akashmihani and the rest, and ‘the one who turns away from the Deen (Mareq)’, but in the narration of Nasafi, Sarkhasi and Almustmli: ‘turning away to his Deen’ Al-Taybi said: the one who turns away to his Deen is the one who forsakes it; taken from the word “apostasy” which means “leaving/forsaking”. In the narration of Muslim: “and one who turns aside from his religion and abandons the group,” and in the narration of Al-Thawri: “and the one who forsakes his religion and separates from the group.” ... **and what is meant by ‘group’ is the followers of Islam, i.e. he turned away from them or left them, meaning he apostate, as apostasy is the quality of the one who has left or separated...** Al-Baydawi said: **the one who has left his Deen is a definite character of a “Mareq” i.e. the one who separated from the group of Muslims and left their ranks...** END.

3. His (saw) saying in the different narrations: **«وَتَفْتَرِقُ أُمَّتِي»** **“My Ummah will separate,”** **«وَتَفْتَرِقُ هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةُ»** **“This Ummah will separate,”** **«وَأَنَّ هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةَ سَتَفْتَرِقُ»** **“This creed will separate,”** are all clear that the Ummah or creed here mean the Ummah of Islam who believed in the religion of Islam, as the Messenger (saw) added in one narration the Ummah to himself **«أُمَّتِي»** **“my Ummah,”** **«هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةُ»** **“this Ummah,”** and **«وَهَذِهِ الْأُمَّةُ»** **“this creed,”** thus it is clear that the Hadith talks about one Ummah and one creed, the Ummah of Islam...

4. As it is known, some types of difference in Islam are blameworthy and some are praised. As for the praised difference, it is the difference in Ijtihad matters based on the difference in understanding the texts, for which the one who is right (in ruling) will have a double reward, and whoever errs (in ruling) will have a single reward as was mentioned in the Hadith narrated by Bukhari in his Sahih, that Amr ibn Al-Aas heard the Messenger of Allah (saw) says: «إِذَا حَكَمَ الْحَاكِمُ فَإِذَا حَكَمَ فَاجْتَهَدَ ثُمَّ أَصَابَ فَلَهُ أَجْرَانِ وَإِذَا حَكَمَ فَاجْتَهَدَ ثُمَّ أَخْطَأَ فَلَهُ أَجْرٌ» **“When a judge gives a ruling, having tried his best to decide correctly, and is right (in his decision), he will have a double reward; and when he gives a ruling having tried his best to decide correctly, and is wrong (in his decision), he will have a single reward.”** As for the blameworthy difference, it includes differences in ‘Aqeedah, evidence and definitive rulings, it is a type of difference that makes the person apostate from Islam, another kind of this difference is the difference based on whims and desires like the difference amongst the people of innovation (bid’ah), those who do not disbelieve in their innovation, and it also includes disagreement over the imam and his obedience, as well as other types of blameworthy differences with which the owner does not deviate from Islam...

Thirdly: Based on the above observations and by taking them into account, we can understand the noble Hadith about the division of Jews and Christians and the division of the Ummah of Islam ... and its explanation is as follows:

1. Allah (swt) sent Musa (AS) with the religion of truth to Bani Isra’eel, those who believed in him and gathered with him on the ‘Aqeedah of truth and Tawheed became one believing creed (millah).. however, groups of people separated from this creed over time, differing with it in the Deen «إِنَّ أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَفَرَّقُوا فِي دِينِهِمْ عَلَى اثْنَتَيْنِ وَسَبْعِينَ مِلَّةً» **“the people of the book divided in their Deen to 72 sects,”** separating from its creed, evidences and definite deen of Musa (AS), leaving his Deen and becoming kuffar. Those sects that left the Deen of Musa and became different sects with different opinions in the origin of the Deen (aqeedah) «إِنَّ أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَفَرَّقُوا فِي دِينِهِمْ عَلَى اثْنَتَيْنِ وَسَبْعِينَ مِلَّةً» **“the people of the book divided in their Deen to 72 sects,”** have reached seventy or seventy-one sect, all of which are disbelieving sects of the people of fire, as for the sect that stayed upon the Deen of Musa (AS), i.e. the creed of Musa (AS), which is the 71st or 72nd sect, it is upon the truth and from the people of Jannah, and it was the saved sect (Firqa Najiyah) from the followers of the Prophet of Allah Musa (AS)...

2. Also, Allah (swt) sent Issa (AS) with the religion of truth to Bani Isra’eel, those who believed in him and gathered with him on the ‘Aqeedah of truth and Tawheed became one believing creed (millah).. however, groups of people separated from this creed over time, differing with it in the Deen, separating from its creed, evidences and definite Deen of Issa (AS), leaving his Deen and becoming kuffar. Those sects that left the Deen of Issa and became different sects with different opinions in the origin of the Deen (aqeedah) have reached seventy-one sect, all of which are disbelieving sects of the people of fire, as for the sect that stayed upon the Deen of Issa (AS), i.e. the creed of Issa (AS), which is the 72nd sect, it is upon the truth and from the people of Jannah, and it was the saved sect (Firqa Najiyah) from the followers of the Prophet of Allah Issa (AS)...

3. Then, Allah (swt) sent his Prophet Muhammad (saaw) with the Deen of truth and the ‘Aqeedah of Tawheed, Muslims believed in him and united upon the ‘Aqeedah that the Prophet (saaw) and his honorable companions believed in, with this unity, they became the Ummah of Islam and the creed of Islam and the Jama’ah (group)... but groups had (and will) deviate from the Deen of Muhammad (saw), and have separated (and will separate) from what the Messenger (saw) and his companions and the rest of the Muslims have believed in the ‘Aqeedah of Islam and the definitive texts and evidences of Islam... thus, each of those sects who have deviated away from Islam have become a sect and creed that differs to the creed of Islam, because they believed in creeds that are against the creed of Islam... those sects whose followers were Muslims then deviated away from Islam have reached or will reach 72 sect/creed, and they are all sects of kufr and are people of the fire... the 73rd sect/creed, the mother sect, which is the group (jama’ah) and the sect of Islam that believes in what the Messenger (saw) and his honorable companions believed in, holding unto the definitive texts and evidences of Islam, it is the Ummah of Islam that believes in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, the Last Day and the Qadaa’ Wal-Qadar – the good and bad from Allah (swt)... it is the Ummah of Islam in general, the saved sect (al-Firqa Al-Najiyah) and it is of the people of Jannah, the sect and creed united upon what the Messenger (saw) and his companions have brought, and it is the Jama’ah

(group).

Fourth: Based on this explanation of the meaning of the hadith and its reality, we can conclude the following:

1. The saved sect (al-Firqa al-Najiyah) is the Ummah of Islam in its general sense, and it is the one that gathered on the 'Aqeedah of Islam and the definitives of the Deen and its evidence, regardless of the differences between their opinions, ideas, and madhahib (schools of thought) on all matters of the branches of belief and the provisions of Shari'ah... etc., and the reason for its survival and being of the people of Jannah is their belief in the 'Aqeedah of Islam, its definitives and its evidence... Accordingly:

a) Ahlul-Sunnah wal Jama'ah among the people of speech (kalam), such as Ash'ari, Maturidiyya, and all other scholarly schools of thought, as well as those called "Salafis", the people of hadith, and other authors of articles and Islamic intellectual schools... are all of the Al-Firqa Al-Najiyah by the grace of Allah because they are the followers of Muhammad (saw), the believers in the 'Aqeedah of Islam, its definitive and evidences... and the differences between them does not take them out of the fold of Islam.

b) And the different jurisprudential schools of thought of Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanbali and other schools of jurisprudence, and the followers of the various mujtahids ... all of them are from the people of the surviving sect, by the will of Allah, because they are the followers of Muhammad (saw), the believers in the 'Aqeedah of Islam, its definitive and evidences... and the differences between them does not take them out of the fold of Islam.

c) And the Islamic groups and Islamic movements operating in the arena in our time, such as Hizb ut Tahrir, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Tabligh Group, jihadist groups, Salafi groups, and others... all of them are from the people of the surviving sect, by the will of Allah, because they are the followers of Muhammad (saw), the believers in the 'Aqeedah of Islam, its definitive and evidences... and the differences between them does not take them out of the fold of Islam.

Therefore, it is not correct for any group of the Ummah of Islam to claim, on the basis of this noble hadith, that it is the surviving group and the surviving sect because this means it is removing the Muslims who disagree with it from the circle of Islam into the circle of disbelief, and this is not right under any circumstances, because all Muslims who believe in the 'Aqeedah of Islam, adhering to its definitive and evidences are of the surviving sect, by the will of Allah.

4. The sects that left the fold of Islam and became disbelievers and thus deserved to be doomed sects of the people of Hellfire, are the sects that violated the Deen and deviated from the beliefs (Aqeedah) of Muslims and transcended Islam and its definitives and evidences, so they partnered with Allah other than Him or adopted a prophet after Muhammad (saw) or denied the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah or the likes... such as the Druze, the Nusayris, the Baha'is, the Qadianis and other infidel sects outside of Islam... and their counterparts from the Jews who deviated from the religion of Musa, peace be upon him, the people who made 'Azeez, peace be upon him, the son of God, and among the followers of Issa, peace be upon him, who made him the son of God... so those people swerved in their beliefs against the belief and religion of these two noble Prophets, so they became disbelievers.

I hope that the meaning of the hadith has become clear with this explanation, and Allah knows best and is the Most Wise.

Your brother,

Ata Bin Khalil Abu Al-Rashtah

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29/01/2021 CE

The link to the answer from the Ameer's Facebook page:

<https://web.facebook.com/HT.AtaabuAlrashtah/posts/2859430307636308>