Narrations on Leper and Leprosy: A Critical Study

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Leprosy is an infectious disease caused by a bacterium called Mycobacterium leprae. Its simplest form primarily affects the skin, causing swollen, reddish patches. If the body’s immune system fights off the disease, these patches disappear. However, if the immune system fails to cope with, it may aggravate into three forms: the lepromatous type, or the tuberculosis type, or the borderline type, which is somewhere in between the other two types.¹

With the lepromatous type, the skin on the face and around the nose “thickens” making the face appear swollen. If it goes untreated, the cartilage of the nose can be destroyed, and the nose will look like it has caved in. It can also affect the nerves that control the sweat glands and the sebaceous glands. This can cause hair loss, especially loss of eyebrows, drying skin cracks, open sores that can become infected.²

With the tuberculoid leprosy, the skin, cutaneous and peripheral nerves and the regional lymph node are affected. The skin lesions are usually single, well defined, hypopigmented, erythematous dry, scaly and indurated, with complete or partial loss of hair in that area. The patient may have numbness and tingling, blisters or ulcers on the hand and feet, weakness and wasting of the muscles, contractures and wrist and foot drop.³

Borderline leprosy is the most unstable part of the spectrum and patients usually downgrade towards lepromatous leprosy or upgrade towards tuberculoid leprosy. There are numerous skin lesions which may be macules, papules, or plaques and vary in size, shape and distribution. Annular lesions with a broad, irregular edge and sharply defined punched-out centre are characteristic of borderline leprosy.⁴

Skin disease of this kind had been known to man since times immemorial. Archaeological evidence shows signs of leprosy in Egyptian mummies dating back to the second century BC. In the Indian and Chinese medical writings a disease like leprosy was described as early as the fifth century BC. The Indian word Kushtha found in the Indian writings, the Hebrew word Tazara’ath in the Old Testament and the Greek word lepra in the New Testament signify skin disease of this kind.⁵

The disease has been named in the aḥādīth of the Holy Prophet

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(SAW). The chapter al-judhām is included in the book of al- Ṭībb in the Ṣiḥāh. In the first section of the paper, the aḥādīth regarding the Prophet’s eating with a leper would be discussed. Later part of the paper deals with the aḥādīth on fleeing from a leper and those on avoiding a constant stare on him. In the end a conclusion will be made.

The Aḥādīth on Eating With a Leper:


Muḥammad b. Munkādir b. ‘Abd Allāh, al-Taymī, al-Madīnī (d. 130 AH):


Ḥabīb b. Shahīd, Al-Azdī, Abū Muḥammad, al-Baṣrī (d. 145 AH):

He is tābi‘ī and has met Abū Ṣafāyīl. Abū Ḥātim, Ibn Mu‘īn and Nasā‘ī call him reliable. Aḥmad considers him reliable and trustworthy. Abū Usāmah says that he has narrated one hundred aḥādīth. Ibn Ḥājar calls him firm and reliable. Dhahbī remarks that he is firm in ḥadīth.

Al-Mufaḍḍal b. Faḍālah, Abū Mālik, al-Baṣrī:

He is the brother of Mubārak b. Faḍālah. He is the freed slave of Zayd b. Khāṭtāb. Abū Ḥātim says that his ḥadīth should be written only. Ibn Mu‘īn says about him that he is nothing. Abū Dā‘ūd says that there is weakness in his ḥadīth. Nasā‘ī says that he is not strong in ḥadīth.

Yūnus b. Muḥammad, al-Baḥdādī (d. 280 AH):


All aḥādīth which mention the incidence of eating with a leper contain Mufaḍḍal b. Faḍālah. They are not authentic because of him. Tirmidhī, Abū Dā‘ūd and Ibn Mājah narrate only one ḥadīth from him and that is, in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) ate with a leper. Ibn ‘Adī also mentions the same ḥadīth and comments: “I have not seen his ḥadīth more deniable than this one.”

Imām Tirmidhī narrates this ḥadīth as:
Jābir b. ‘Abd Allāh narrated that the Messenger of Allāh held the hand of a leper and allowed him to enter his hand in his bowl with him, and said: “Eat with the name of Allāh, attesting (the protection) of Allāh (against the contagion) and trusting in Him.”\(^{17}\)

Imām Tirmidhī comments that this hadīth is hasan gharīb. It is not known except via Yūnus b. Muḥammad from Muḥammad b. Faḍālah. He further narrates that this hadīth has also been narrated by Shu’bah via Ḥabīb b. Shahīd, from Ibn Buraydah which states that Ibn ‘Umar had held the hand of a leper. He remarks that the hadīth of Shu’bah is more authentic in his view. The words of Imām Tirmidhī signify that this hadīth is mawqūf on Ibn ‘Umar. And the mawqūf hadīth is more authentic as it skips Muḥammad b. Faḍālah.

Abū Dā’ūd narrates this hadīth from ‘Usmān b. Abī Shaybah who narrates from Yūnus b. Muḥammad, Muḥammad b. Faḍālah, Ḥabīb b. Shahīd, and Muḥammad b. Munkadir.\(^{18}\)Ibn Mājah narrates it from Abū Bakr and Mujāhid b. Mūsā and Muḥammad b. Khalaf al-‘Asqālānī who narrate from Yūnus b. Muḥammad, Muḥammad b. Faḍālah, Ḥabīb b. Shahīd, and Muḥammad b. Munkadir.\(^{19}\)Most narrations have the words fa wada’ahā ma’ahu (he placed his hand with him) instead of fa adkhalahā ma’ahu (he entered his hand with him). Ṭabarī’s hadīth has the words fa aq’adahā ma’ahu (he made him sit with him)\(^{20}\) and Al-Rāfa’ī’s hadīth has fa ajlasahu ma’ahu (he made him sit with him).\(^{21}\) And most narrations have the words kul bismi Allāh (eat with the name of Allāh). Abū Dā’ūd, Ibn Mājah, Ṭabarī and Rāfa’ī have the word kul (eat) only and Ṭahāwī’s hadīth has the words bismi Allāh (in the name of Allāh) only.\(^{22}\)

The above discussion makes it clear that although the aḥadīth regarding eating with a leper are narrated by Tirmidhī, Abū Dā’ūd and Ibn Mājah but they all contain Muḥammad b. Faḍālah who is not a reliable narrator. Therefore, this hadīth should not be presented to argue that the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not keep himself away from a leper suggesting that there is no contagion. There are other authentic aḥadīth which demonstrate that he explicitly ordered to flee from a leper and sent a leper back avoiding contact with him.

The Aḥadīth on Fleeing From a Leper:

The aḥadīth in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) commanded to flee from a leper have been narrated by Abū Hurayrah.
The Ḥadīth of Abū Hurayrah:

This Ḥadīth has been narrated via the following chains:

b) Wākī’, Nahās, Shaykh of Makkah, Abū Hurayrah
c) Abu Zinād, Al-A‘raj, Abū Hurayrah

a) The Ḥadīth of ‘Affān:

The Ḥadīth of ‘Affān has been narrated by Bukhārī in his Ṣaḥīḥ. He is a narrator of all except Nasā‘ī. He is a brother of Sulaymān b. Mīnā’.24 Ahmad b. Hanbal, Ibn Mu‘īn, Nasā‘ī call him reliable.25 Ibn Hibbān mentions him in al-Thiqāt.26 Ibn Ḥajar and Dhaḥbī also consider him reliable.27

Sa‘īd b. Mīnā’, Abū‘l Walīd, al-Madanī:

He is a narrator of all except Nasā‘ī. He is a brother of Sulaymān b. Mīnā’.24 Ahmad b. Hanbal, Ibn Mu‘īn, Nasā‘ī call him reliable.25 Ibn Hibbān mentions him in al-Thiqāt.26 Ibn Ḥajar and Dhaḥbī also consider him reliable.27

Salīm b. Hayyān, al-Hudhalī:

He heard from Sa‘īd b. Mīnā’ and ‘Amr b. Dīnār.28 Abū Ḥātim says that there is no harm in him. Ahmad and Ibn Mu‘īn call him reliable.29 Ibn Hibbān mentions him in al-Thiqāt.30 Dhaḥbī considers him truthful.31

‘Affān b. Muslim b. ‘Abd al-Ṣafīr, Abū ‘Usmān, al-BAṣrī:

Abū Ḥātim calls him agreed upon, firm and trustworthy.32 Ahmad b. Ḥanbal says: “I have not seen anyone better than ‘Affān in the Ḥadīth of Shu‘bah,” although Sulayman b. Ḥarb says: “You say that ‘Affān is authentic in the Ḥadīth of Shu‘bah, by Allāh, even if he worked hard he could not recall one Ḥadīth from Shu‘bah because he was a slow learner and of poor memory.”33 Once ‘Affān was mentioned before Ibn Madīnī, he remarked that how can he mention a person who if doubted a word would put it in five lines. Ibn Mu‘īn says about him: “We deny him”. On the other hand, Yahyā al-Qaţṭān praises him and says that if ‘Affān agrees with him, he does not care who disagrees.34 Dhaḥbī concludes that he is among the scholars of Islam and of notable imāms. He is more retentive than Sulaymān and the like. The words of the fellow men against him need to be reconsidered.35

This Ḥadīth is saḥīḥ. It is significant as it contains the injunction of the Prophet (peace be upon him) about the leper, which appears to antagonize the lā ‘adwā part of the Ḥadīth. It is obvious from this Ḥadīth
that when the Prophet (peace be upon him) informed about the non-existence of contagion he did not mean to rule out the possibility of transmissible diseases. He commanded to run away from a leper because he knew that this disease could transmit to others, hence, the healthy people should stay away from lepers.

Baghawī also quotes the same hadīth in Sharḥ al-Sunnah. Bayhaqī also narrates it via ‘Amr b. Marzūq in Sunan al-Kubrā.

b) The Hadīth of Wakī:

The hadīth of Wakī has been given by Ibn Abī Shaybah, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and Ṭabarī.

Ibn Abī Shaybah narrates that the Prophet (peace be upon him) has been reported to have said:

“Run away from a leper like you’re running away from a lion.”

This hadīth of Wakī is not authentic because of the ignorance in the name of a narrator mentioned as “Shaykh of Makkah”. The narrator Al-Nahās b. Qahm is also not authentic.

Al Nahās b. Qahm, Al- Qaysī, Abū al-Khaṭṭāb:

Aḥmad says that he is just a story teller. Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd, Ibn Mu‘īn and Nasā‘ī consider him weak. Abū Ḥātim says that he is nothing. Abū Dā‘ūd remarks that he is not reliable. Dārqūṭnī considers him turbulent in hadīth. Ibn Hibbān’s words are conclusive: “He used to narrate munkar aḥadīth from well-known narrators and used to antagonize the authentic narrators. Therefore, to argue with his hadīth is not allowed.”

c) The Hadīth of Abū Zinād:

The hadīth of Abū Zinād is given by Imam Bukhārī in his Tārīkh al-Kabīr via Al-A‘rāj, Abī Zinād, Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh, and ‘Abd ’l Azīz b. Muhammad as follows:

“There is no contagious disease, nor is there any bad omen (for birds), nor is there any hāmmah, nor is there safar, and run away from a leper as you run away from a lion.”

Al-A‘rāj (d. 117 AH):

He is ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Harmaz. Abū Dā‘ūd. Abū Zar‘ah calls him reliable. Ibn Maḍīnī says that the disciples of Abū Hurayrah are six; then he mentions A‘rāj among them. Ibn Sa‘d considers him reliable and
one who narrates many *ahadīth*. ‘Ajalī calls him reliable.\textsuperscript{46} Ibn Ḥajār considers him reliable and firm.\textsuperscript{47}

**Abū Zinād:**

His name is ‘Abd Allāh b. Dhakwān, Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān, al-Qurashī, al-Madānī. Ibn Mu‘īn and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal consider him reliable. Ibn Abī Maryam calls him a proof. Suḥyān used to name him the ruler of the faithful in *ḥadīth*. Bukhārī considers the chain: Abū Zinād, Aʿrāj and Abū Hurayrah as one of the most *ṣaḥīḥ* chains. Abū Ḥātim remarks about him that he is a jurist, a reliable narrator and a man of *sunnah*. He is among those with whom an argument can be put up when *thiqah* narrators narrate from him.\textsuperscript{48}

**Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Amr b. ‘Uṣmān (d. 145 AH):**

He is a son of Fātimah bint Ḥusayn. He was known as “al-Dībāj.” Nasāʾī considers him reliable while at another instance, says that he is not strong in *ḥadīth*.\textsuperscript{49} ‘Ajalī says him reliable.\textsuperscript{50} Ibn Ḥajār considers him truthful.\textsuperscript{51} Ibn Ḥibbān mentions him in *al-Thiqāt* and comments that in his *ahadīth* from Abū Zinād some are munkar.\textsuperscript{52} He was killed by Abū Jaʿfar Manṣūr in 145 A.H.

‘Abd al-‘Aṣīz b. Muḥammad, al-Darāwardī, Abū Muḥammad:

Abū Ḥātim calls him a scholar of *ḥadīth*. Ibn Muʿīn says that there is no harm in him. Imām Mālik b. Anas considers him reliable.\textsuperscript{53} Dhahbī declares him truthful and comments that he is more retentive than others.\textsuperscript{54}Abū Zurʿah says that he had a poor memory. When he used to narrate something from his memory, he committed mistakes. Because of his flawed memory Nasāʾī thinks that he is not strong in *ḥadīth*. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal concludes about him that what he used to narrate from his book that is *ṣaḥīḥ* and what he narrated from the books of people that contained errors. Sometimes he used to change the *ḥadīth* of ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar and narrate it from ‘Ubayd al-Allāh b. ‘Umar by mistake.\textsuperscript{55}

The *ḥadīth* of Abū Zinād is *ṣaḥīḥ*. This *ḥadīth* is mentioned by Bayhaqī in his *Sunan*. It has the words wattaqūl *majḍūma kamā yattaqīl asāda*.\textsuperscript{56}

These *ahadīth* indicate that the contagiousness of diseases is an established phenomenon in the view of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him). His negation of contagion excludes transmissible diseases like leprosy. If the Prophet (peace be upon him) had meant that no disease is transmissible then he should not have warned his companions against leprosy.

More light is cast on the need of avoiding mixing with a leper by the action of the Prophet (peace be upon him). He has been reported to have
sent a leper back and took his allegiance from a distance without touching him. The ḥadīth runs in Ẓahīh Muslim as:

خَلَالَة يَحْيَى بْنِ يَحْيَى، أَخْرَجْنَا هُمْ، حَوَلْنَا آبَو بَكْرٍ بِنَ بَكْرٍ أَبِي شَيْبَةٍ، خَلَالَة شَيْبَةَ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، وَهُمْ

‘Amr b. Sharīq reported on the authority of his father that there was in the delegation of Thaqīf a leper. Allāh’s Prophet (peace be upon him) sent a message to him: We have accepted your allegiance, so you may go.  

This ḥadīth has been narrated via the chain: Abū bakr b. Abī Shaybān, Sharīq b. ‘Abd Allāh Hushaym b. Bashīr, Ya‘lā b. ‘Atā’, ‘Amr b. Sharīq, his father.

Abū Bakr b. Abī Shaybān (d. 235 AH):

His name is ‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Kūfī.  Abū Ḥātim calls him reliable. Aḥmad says that he is truthful and dearer to him than ‘Uṭhmān’.  Falās says that he has not seen anyone more retentive than him.  Dhaḥbī remarks that he is hāfīz, al-kabīr, al-hujjah. Ibn Ḥajar calls him reliable and hāfīz.

Sharīq b. ‘Abd Allāh:

His full name is Sharīq b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Abī Sharīq al-Nakh‘ī. Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Kūfī al-Qādī. He has seen the reign of ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz.  Yahyā b. Mu‘īn says: Sharīq is reliable and he is dearer to me than Abū al-ʿAlwaṣ and Jarīr. They were not equal to him. He used to narrate form narrators Ṣufyān did not narrate. He further adds that Yahyā b. Sa‘īd did not consider Sharīq anything, whereas he is reliable except that he commits mistakes.  Yahyā b. Sa‘īd did not narrate from him whereas ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī did.  Ibn Mubārak remarks that Sharīq is more knowledgeable of the ḥadīth of ʿUṯmān than Ṣufyān al-Thawrī. ‘Alī b. Maḍīnī says that Sharīq is more learned than Ḳūfīyīn than Ṣufyān al-Thawrī.  Imām Nasā‘ī says that there is no harm in him.

Hushaym b. Bashīr:

His full name is Hushaym b. Bashīr b. al-Qāsim b. Dinār al-Salamī Abū Mu‘āwiyah b. Abī Khāzim al-Wāṣīfī. He used to narrate from Zuhūrī, al-A‘māsh, Ḥamīd al-Ṭawīl, ‘Alī b. Zayd and Jābir al-Ja‘fī whereas Shu‘bah, Ibn Mubārak, Jarīr, Abū Nu‘aym, Ibn ‘Awn, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī used to narrate from him.  ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī remarks that he has not seen anyone more retentive than Hushaym. His memory is more steadfast than the memory of Abū ‘Awanah. He is more learned of the ḥadīth of Sayyār, Manṣūr, Yūnus and
Husayn. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal says that no one is more authentic than Hushaym in hearing (Sam') from Husayn b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān. Abū Ḥātim considers him reliable and Abū Zur‘ah holds him more retentive than Jarīr.

Ya‘lā b. ‘Atā:
Ya‘la b. ‘Atā’ al-‘Amirī al-Qurashī al-Ṭā’īfī. He became settled in Wāṣīt. It is said that he was a freed slave of ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Amīr al-Qurashī al-Ṭā’īfī. Ḥaṭāmah b. Ḥanbal says that no one is more authentic than Hushaym in hearing (Sam') from Husayn b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān. Abū Ḥātim considers him reliable and Abū Zur‘ah holds him more retentive than Jarīr.

Ya‘lā b. ‘Atā:

‘Amr b. Sharīd:
He is a narrator of the authors of Sīhāh Sittah. His father’s name is Al-Sharīd b. Suwayd al-Thaqafī. He used to narrate from Sa‘d b. Abī Waqqāṣ, ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās, Miswar b. Makhrmah, Abū Rāfi’ and from his father. Tirmidhī has narrated from him in Al-Shamā’il. ‘Ajalī calls him hijāzī, tābī‘ī and thiqah. And he mentions that ‘Amr’s father was a companion of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him). Ibn Ḥibbān mentions him in his Al-Thiqāt. Ibn Ḥajar considers him reliable in Taqīrīb.

As the father of ‘Amr b. Sharīd is a companion of the Prophet (peace be upon him) he is also thiqah. There is no doubt in the authenticity of this hadīth.

These hadīth clearly indicate that the preferred action of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) was to avoid contact with lepers. Now the question arises why the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) commanded to run away from a leper? This is because this disease is transmitted via airborne droplets. The contacts have a high risk of inhaling the organism and getting the disease. Untreated patients with leprosy discharge abundant organisms from their nasal mucosa into the environment. The organism is then inhaled; it multiplied on the inferior turbinate and has a brief bacteremic phase before binding to and entering Schwann cells and macrophages.

The Aḥadīth on Avoiding a Constant Stare on Lepers:
There are aḥadīth in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) forbade to extend a constant stare towards lepers. These aḥadīth have been narrated by Ibn ‘Abbās, Husayn b. ‘Alī, and Mu‘ādh b. Jabal.

1. The Hadīth of Ibn ‘Abbās:
This is given by Ibn Mājah via Ibn Abī Zīnād and ‘Abd Allāh b. Sa‘īd.
Ibn ‘Abbās narrated from the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him):

“Don’t stare the lepers constantly.”

The narration of Ibn Abī Zinād is also given by Bukhārī in his Tārīk al-Awṣat and that of ‘Abd Allāh b. Sa‘īd is given by Ibn Abī Shaybah and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and al-Mizzī.

Ibn Abī Zinād (d. 174 AH):

His name is ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, Abū Muḥammad, Al-Madānī. Aḥmad says him turbulent in ḥadīth. Ibn Mu‘īn remarks about him he is weak and him is nothing. Ibn Mu‘īn, Nasā‘ī and Abū Ḥātim say that he is not among those whose ḥadīth is used for an argument. However, Ya‘qūb b. Shaybah says that he is reliable and truthful, but there is a weakness in his ḥadīth. Ibn Madīnī gives conclusive remarks about him that what he has narrated in Madīnah is saḥīh and what he has narrated in Baghhdād, the people of Baghhdād corrupted it. Ibn Ḥajar also declares that he is truthful and his memory deteriorated when he came to Baghhdād. Hence, the weakness in his narration comes from this particular aspect, so he should not be rejected exclusively. Bukhārī has used his narration as shāhid in his saḥīḥ. He has taken his narration in his treatise raf‘ al-yadayn fi ‘l-ṣalāt and in Kitāb al-Adab. Muslim takes his narration in the preface of his saḥīḥ.


Ibn Mu‘īn considers him reliable. Abū Zur‘ah and Nasā‘ī say that there is no harm in him. Ibn Ḥībbān says that his written ḥadīth is saḥīḥ but when he narrates from memory he errs. Bukhārī says that there is some shortcoming in his memory. His memory is known and denied, but his written ḥadīth is saḥīḥ.

‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ibrāhīm, Abū Sa‘īd, al-Damishqī:

Abū Sa‘īd b. Yūnus says that he is firm and reliable. Ahmad b. Ḥanbal praises him and tells him sane. Nasā‘ī says that he is safe and there is no harm in him. Abū Dā‘ūd calls him proof and in his time there was no one like him in Damishq. Ibn ‘Adī says that he is more authentic than Ḥarmalah b. Yaḥyā.
‘Abd Allāh b. Sa‘īd, al-Farārī, Abī Bakr, al-Madānī (d. 144 AH):

Aḥmad and Ibn Mu‘īn consider him reliable. Abū Ḥātim says him weak in ḥadīth.94 Yahyā b. Sa‘īd says that he has been praised by some and denied by others. Nasā‘ī remarks that there is no harm in him.95 Ibn Ḥajar and Dhahbī declare him truthful.96

‘Alī b. Abī al-Khaṣīb (d. 258):

He is ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. Al-Khaṣīb. Abū Ḥātim says that he is truthful. Ibn Ḥibbān mentions him in al-Thiqāt and he says that sometimes he commits errors.97 Ibn Ḥajar declares him truthful.98

The ḥadīth of Ibn ‘Abbās is Ḥasan.

2. The Ḥadīth of Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī:

This ḥadīth has been narrated by al-Haythamī in al-Maqsad al-‘Ulā.

 abduction of the leper constantly and when you talk to them there should be a distance of a spear between you and them.”99

Ṭabrānī also gives this ḥadīth via this chain.100 The ḥadīth of Ṭabrānī does not have the latter part of it. The ḥadīth of Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī is not authentic because of ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Amir and Faḍālah.

‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Amir, Al-Aslamī, Abū ‘Amir:

Aḥmad, Abū Zur‘ah, Abū Ḥātim and Nasā‘ī consider him weak.101 Ibn Madīnī says him weak twice.102 Dhahbī and Ibn Ḥajar call him weak.103

Faraj b. Faḍālah, Abū Faḍālah, al-Tanūkhī (d. 176 AH):

Aḥmad says that when he narrates from Syrians, he is reliable, but he has also narrated munkar aḥadīth from thiqah narrators. Abū Ḥātim says that his hadīth should be written but not presented for argument.104 Nasā‘ī and Dārquṭnī consider him weak. Yahyā b. Sa‘īd calls him the one whose hadīth has been denied.105

Ibn Mu‘īn has both words about him. At one instance, he calls him weak in hadīth and at another he says that there is no harm in him.106 Ibn Madīnī says that he stands in the middle of the terms “he is not strong” and “weak”. He did not use to narrate from him.107 Ibn Ḥajar declares conclusively that he is weak.108

Hence, the hadīth is not authentic.

3. The Ḥadīth of Mu‘ādh b. Jabal:

The ḥadīth of Mu‘ādh b. Jabal has been narrated by Ṭabrānī:
Mu‘ādh b. Jabal narrated that the Apostle of Allah (peace be upon him) said: “Don’t stare the lepers constantly.”

Kathīr b. Murrah, al-Haḍramī, Abū Shajarah:
Nasā‘ī says about him that there is no harm in him. Ibn Kharāsh says him truthful. Ibn Sa‘d considers him reliable. Bukhārī narrates from him in his treatise “Al-girā‘at khalf al-imām”. Others also narrate from him except Muslim. Dhahbī calls him reliable. Ibn Ḥajar also declares him reliable.

Ṣāliḥ b. Abī ‘Arīb:

‘Abd’l Ḥamīd b. Ja‘far:
Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd and Sufyān Thawrī consider him weak. Ahmad and Ibn Mu‘īn think that there is no harm in him and declare him reliable. Nasā‘ī says that there is no harm in him. Abū Ḥātim thinks that he is truthful.

Sa‘dān b. Yaḥyā:
He is Sa‘īd b. Yaḥyā b. Śāliḥ, al-Lakhamī, Abū Yaḥyā al-Kūfī. Abū Ḥātim says that he is truthful. Ibn Ḥibbān calls him safe and reliable and remarks that his hadīth is upright. Bukhārī, Nasā‘ī and Ibn Mājah take his narration.

Ibn Mu‘īn says that there is no harm in him. Nasā‘ī calls him truthful. Abū Dā‘ūd says him reliable and remarks that he did err as others can err. Ibn Ḥibbān says that his hadīth is known when he narrates from al-Thiqāt. Abū Ḥātim says him truthful and remarks that his hadīth is upright, but he did narrate from unknown and non-authentic narrators. Dhahbī concludes that he is reliable but he has narrations from weak narrators.

The hadīth of Mu‘ādh is ḥasan.

Conclusion:
From the above discussion, the following conclusion can be drawn:

1. That the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) was aware of the contagious nature of leprosy. He knew that the disease is contagious
and spreads via airborne droplets through close contacts. That’s why, he commanded to run away from a leper as one runs from a lion. This command has been narrated by Abū Hurayrah from the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) as mentioned by Imām Bukhārī in his Ṣaḥīḥ.

2. The ḥadīth of Jābir b. ‘Abd Allāh which mentions that the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) ate his meal with a leper is not authentic because all of its chains of narrators contain a weak narrator Mufaḍḍal b. Faḍālah. Abū Ḥātim, Abū Dā‘ūd, Ibn Mu‘īn and Imām Nasā‘ī have reservations about him. Shaykhayn did not narrate his ḥadīth. Imām Tirmidhī, Abū Dā‘ūd, and Ibn Mājah also tend to avoid his ḥadīth except this single narration. Although Imām Tirmidhī narrates this ḥadīth but he clarifies that this ḥadīth has also been narrated from Shu‘bah via Ḥabīb b. Shahīd which skips Mufaḍḍal b. Faḍālah. This ḥadīth is more authentic than the ḥadīth of Yūnus b. Muḥammad and states that it was Ibn ‘Umar who ate with the leper, not the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him). So, the fact is that the marfū’ ḥadīth is not reliable and the more reliable one is mawqūf on Ibn ‘Umar. Based on the ḥadīth, lā ‘adwā (there is no contagion), he thought that this is a generalized statement and leprosy is among those diseases which do not transmit to others. However, the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not mean this. He meant that the communicable diseases like leprosy were excluded from his saying lā ‘adwā.

3. The ḥadīth of ‘Amr b. Sharīd narrated by Imām Muslim clearly mentions that the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) did not allow a leper to come and touch him. He accepted his oath of allegiance from a distance and sent him back. The Prophet’s action of this kind supports the view of communicability of diseases. This ḥadīth proves that the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) used to avoid contact with lepers.

4. The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him), in order to put more stress on the contagiousness of leprosy, commanded his followers to avoid staring the lepers continuously. If one is asked to avoid this, he is being taught subconsciously that there is some danger in gaining proximity with lepers heedlessly. The ahadīth of Ibn ‘Abbās narrated by Ibn Mājah and that of Mu‘ādh b. Jabal narrated by Ṭabrānī which state this command are hasan and support the concept of communicability of diseases.
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26 Ibn Ḥibbān, Al-Thiqāt, 8:263
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28 Al-Kalābādhi, Rijāl Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī, 1:344
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37 Al-Mizzī, Tahdhīb al-Kamāl, 30:28
39 Al-Mizzī, Tahdhīb al-Kamāl, 30:28
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