

Is there any saheeh text about the number of Prophets and Messengers?
Is there any saheeh hadeeth that gives the number of Prophets and Messengers?.

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

Allah, may He be exalted, sent Messengers to every nation and He stated that they came one after another, as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

“ Then We sent Our Messengers in succession, every time there came to a nation their Messenger, they denied him, so We made them follow one another (to destruction), and We made them as Ahadeeth (the true stories for mankind to learn a lesson from them). So away with a people who believe not ”

[al-Mu ' minoon 23:44]

“ Verily! We have sent you with the truth, a bearer of glad tidings, and a warner. And there never was a nation but a warner had passed among them ”

[Faatir 35:24].

Allah has named some of those Messengers and told us the stories of some of them, but not of many others. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“ Verily, We have inspired you (O Muhammad SAW) as We inspired Nooh (Noah) and the Prophets after him; We (also) inspired Ibrahim (Abraham), Ismail (Ishmael), Ishaque (Isaac), Yaqoob (Jacob), and Al-Asbat (the twelve sons of Yaqoob (Jacob)), Iesa (Jesus), Ayub (Job), Yoonus (Jonah), Haroon (Aaron), and Sulaiman (Solomon), and to Dawood (David) We gave the Zaboor (Psalms).

And Messengers We have mentioned to you before, and Messengers We have not mentioned to you, - and to Moosa (Moses) Allah spoke directly ”

[an-Nisa ' 4:163-164].

Ibn Katheer (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

These are the names of the Prophets whose names are mentioned in the Qur ' an: Adam, Idrees, Nooh, Hood, Saalih, Ibraaheem, Loot, Ismaa ' eel, Ishaq, Ya ' qoob, Yoosuf, Ayyoob, Shu ' ayb, Moosa, Haroon, Yoonus, Dawood, Sulaymaan, Ilyaas, al-Yasa ' , Zakariya, Yahya, and ' Eesa (blessings and peace be upon them), as well as Dhu ' I-Kifl according to many commentators, and their leader is Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

The words “ and Messengers We have not mentioned to you ” mean: other people who are not mentioned in the Qur ' an.

Tafseer Ibn Katheer, 2/469

Secondly:

The scholars differed as to the number of Prophets and Messengers, according to what reached them and their opinions on the authenticity of the hadeeths that mentioned their numbers. Those who classed the hadeeths as saheeh or hasan gave their opinion based on those reports; those who classed the hadeeths as da'eef said that the number could not be known except through Revelation, so they refrained from stating a number.

The hadeeths that mentioned a number are as follows:

1.

It was narrated that Abu Dharr said: I said: O Messenger of Allah, how many Prophets were there? He said: "One hundred and twenty four thousand." I said: O Messenger of Allah, how many of them were Messengers? He said: "Three hundred and thirteen, a good number." I said: O Messenger of Allah, who was the first of them? He said: "Adam." ...

Narrated by Ibn Hibbaan, 361

This hadeeth is da'eef jiddan (very weak). Its isnaad includes Ibraaheem ibn Hishaam al-Ghassaani, of whom adh-Dhahabi said: he is matrook (rejected). Indeed, Abu Haatim said: (He is) a liar. Hence Ibn al-Jawzi ruled that the hadeeth was fabricated and false.

Ibn Katheer (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

This hadeeth was narrated at length by al-Haafiz Abu Haatim ibn Hibbaan al-Basti in his book al-Anwaa' wa't-Taqaaseem, and he said that it was saheeh. But Abu'l-Faraj ibn al-Jazwi disagreed with him and included this hadeeth in his book al-Mawdoo'aat (the fabricated

hadeeths) and accused Ibraaheem ibn Hishaam of fabricating the hadeeth. There is no doubt that more than one of the imams of al-jarh wa ' t-ta ' deel (evaluation of hadeeth narrators) criticised him because of this hadeeth.

Tafseer Ibn Katheer, 2/470

Shu ' ayb al-Arna ' oot said: Its isnaad is da ' eef jiddan (very weak) – and he quoted the comments of the scholars about Ibraaheem ibn Hishaam.

Tahqeeq Saheeh Ibn Hibbaan,
2/79

2.

A hadeeth mentioning this number - one hundred and twenty four thousand – was also narrated via another isnaad:

It was narrated that Abu Umaamah said: I said: O Prophet of Allah, how many Prophets were there? He said: “ One hundred and twenty four thousand, of whom three hundred and fifteen were a good number. ”

Narrated by Ibn Hibbaan in his Tafseer, 963

Ibn Katheer (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Mu ' aan ibn Riffa ' ah as-Silaami is da ' eef; ' Ali ibn Yazeed is da ' eef; and al-Qaasim Abu ' Abd ar-Rahmaan is also da ' eef.

Tafseer Ibn Katheer, 2/470

3.

The hadeeth of Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him) was also narrated via another isnaad, without any mention of the number of Prophets; rather it mentions the number of Messengers:

He said: I said: O Messenger of Allah, how many Messengers were there? He said: “ Three hundred and umpteen, a good number. ”

Narrated by Ahmad, 35/431

According to another report (35/438): “ three hundred and fifteen, a good number. ”

Shu ‘ ayb al-Arna ’ oot said:

Its isnaad is da ‘ eef jiddan (very weak), because ‘ Ubayd ibn al-Khashkhaash is majhool (unknown) and Abu ‘ Umar ad-Dimashqi is da ‘ eef.

Ad-Daaraqutni said: al-Mas ‘ oodi from Abu ‘ Umar ad-Dimashqi is matrook (rejected).

Al-Mas ‘ oodi is ‘ Abd ar-Rahmaan ibn ‘ Abdullah ibn ‘ Utbah.

Tahqeeq Musnad Ahmad, 35/432

4.

It was narrated that Anas said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “ Allah sent eight thousand Prophets, four thousand to the Children of Israel and four thousand to the rest of mankind. ”

Narrated by Abu Ya ‘ la in his Musnad, 7/160

This hadeeth is da ‘ eef jiddan (very weak).

Al-Haythami (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It was narrated by Abu Ya ‘ la and its isnaad includes Moosa ibn ‘ Ubaydah ar-Rabdhi, who is da ‘ eef jiddan.

Majma' az-Zawaa'id, 8/210

Ibn Katheer (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

This is also a da'eef isnaad. It includes ar-Rabdhi who is da'eef, and his shaykh ar-Raqqaaashi is also weaker than him.

Tafseer Ibn Katheer, 2/470

5.

It was narrated that Abu 'l-Waddaak said: Abu Sa'eed said to me: Do the Khaarijis believe in the Dajjaal? I said: No. He said: The Messenger of Allah (sa) said: "I am the Seal of a thousand Prophets or more; no Prophet was sent but he warned his nation about the Dajjaal..."

Narrated by Ahmad, 18/275

This hadeeth is da'eef because Mujaalid ibn Sa'eed is da'eef.

Al-Haythami (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It was narrated by Ahmad, and its isnaad includes Mujaalid ibn Sa'eed. An-Nasaa'i classed him as thiqah (trustworthy) in one report but he said concerning another: He is not qawiy (strong). A number of scholars classed him as da'eef.

Majma' az-Zawaa'id, 7/346

It was also classed as da'eef by al-Arna'oot in Tahqeeq al-Musnad, 18/276

6.

This hadeeth was narrated from Jaabir ibn 'Abdullah (may Allah be pleased with him):

It was narrated by al-Bazzaar in his Musnad, 3380, Kashf al-Astaar.

Its isnaad includes Mujaalid ibn Sa'eed; it has been stated above that he is da'eef.

Al-Haythami (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It was narrated by al-Bazzaar and its isnaad includes Mujaalid ibn Sa'eed, who was classed as da'eef by the majority.

Majma' az-Zawaa'id, 7/347

From the hadeeths quoted above – and there are others that we have not quoted to save space, all of which are da'eef – it is clear that the reports differ concerning the number of Prophets and Messengers.

Every

group spoke on the basis of the reports that were saheeh in their opinion.

The most well-known of the reports mentioned above is the hadeeth of Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him), which says that the number of Prophets was one hundred and twenty four thousand, among whom the number of

Messengers was three hundred and fifteen. Some of the scholars even said that the number of Prophets was the same as the number of Companions of the

Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and the number of Messengers was the same as the number of those who were present at Badr.

But by examining the isnaads of these reports, it does not seem to us that these hadeeths are saheeh, either individually or when their isnaads are put together.

Thirdly:

There follow the opinions of some of the leading scholars who

said that these hadeeths and the numbers mentioned in them are not saheeh (sound):

1.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

From what is mentioned by Ahmad, Muhammad ibn Nasr and others, it is clear that they did not know the number of Books and Messengers, and the hadeeth of Abu Dharr that speaks of that was not proven in their view.

Majmoo' al-Fataawa, 7/409

From this report from the two imams Ahmad and Muhammad ibn Nasr al-Marwazi it is clear that they regarded the hadeeths which speak of the number of Prophets as da'eef. What appears to be the case is that Shaykh al-Islam (may Allah have mercy on him) supported them in that. And he indicated that the hadeeth of Abu Dharr was da'eef. As he said: It was narrated in the hadeeth of Abu Dharr that their number was three hundred and thirteen, but that hadeeth was not quoted as evidence; rather what is quoted as evidence is the verses that speak of their large number.

2.

Ibn 'Atiyyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said in his commentary on the verse in an-Nisa' :

The words of Allah, may He be exalted, " and Messengers We have not mentioned to you " [an-Nisa' 4:164], imply a large number of Prophets, without mentioning a specific number. Allah, may He be exalted,

says (interpretation of the meaning):

“ And there never was a nation but a warner had passed among them ”

[Faatir 35:24]

“ and many generations in between ”

[al-Furqaan 25:38].

What has been narrated about the number of Prophets is not correct; Allah knows best about their number, may the blessings of Allah be upon them. End quote.

3.

The scholars of the Standing Committee were asked:

What is the number of Prophets and Messengers (blessings and peace of Allah be upon them)?

They replied:

No one knows their number except Allah, because He says (interpretation of the meaning):

“ And, indeed We have sent Messengers before you (O Muhammad SAW); of some of them We have related to you their story and of some We have not related to you their story ”

[Ghaafir 40:78].

Those who are known are those who are mentioned in the Qur ' an or in the saheeh Sunnah.

Shaykh ‘ Abd al-Azeez ibn Baaz, Shaykh ‘ Abd ar-Razzaaq
‘ Afeefi, Shaykh ‘ Abdullah ibn Ghadyaan, Shaykh ‘ Abdullah ibn Qa ‘ ood

Fataawa al-Lajnah ad-Daa ‘ imah,
3/256

4.

Shaykh ‘ Abd al- ‘ Azeez ibn Baaz (may Allah have mercy on him)
said:

In the hadeeth of Abu Dharr that is narrated by Abu Haatim
ibn Hibbaan and others, it says that he asked the Prophet (sa) about the
Messengers and about the Prophets, and the Prophet (blessings and peace of
Allah be upon him) said: “ The Prophets were one hundred and twenty-four
thousand and the Messengers were three hundred and thirteen. ” According
to
the report of Abu Umaamah: three hundred and fifteen. But these are both
da ‘ eef hadeeths according to the scholars. They have corroborating reports,

but those are also da ‘ eef, as we have mentioned above. According to some
of
them it says that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)
said that there were a thousand Prophets or more, and in some it says that
the number of Prophets was three thousand. All the hadeeths that speak of
this matter are da ‘ eef; in fact Ibn al-Jawzi regarded the hadeeth of Abu
Dharr as being fabricated. The point is that there is no reliable report
about the number of Prophets and Messengers; no one knows their number
except Allah, may He be glorified and exalted. But they were a good
number.

Allah has told us the stories of some of them and He has not told us the
stories of others in His wisdom, may He be glorified and exalted.

Majmoo ‘ Fataawa ash-Shaykh Ibn Baaz,
2/66, 67

5.

Shaykh ‘ Abdullah ibn Jibreen (may Allah preserve him) was asked:

What is the number of Prophets and Messengers? Is not believing in some of them (because we are unaware of them) regarded as kufr?

What is the number of divinely revealed Books?

He replied:

In a number of hadeeths it is stated that the number of the Prophets was one hundred and twenty-four thousand, and that the number of Messengers among them was three hundred and thirteen; it was also narrated that the number of Prophets was eight thousand. All of these hadeeths were

quoted in Ibn Katheer ’ s Tafseer al-Qur ’ an al- ‘ Azeem, at the end of Soorat an-Nisa ’ , in his commentary on the verse in which Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): “ and Messengers We have not mentioned to you ” [an-Nisa ’ 4:164]. But the hadeeths about this matter are all da ‘ eef, despite the fact that there are so many. So it is better to refrain from discussing this matter. What is required of the Muslim is to believe specifically in those Prophets whose names were mentioned by Allah and His Messenger, and to believe in the rest in general terms. Allah condemned the Jews for differentiating between them, as He said

(interpretation of the meaning): “ ...saying, We believe in some but reject others... ” [an-Nisa ’ 4:150]. We believe in every Prophet and every Messenger whom Allah sent at some time or another, but each one ’ s message

was for the people of his own time and his Book was for his nation and his people.

With regard to the number of Books, it says in the lengthy

hadeeth narrated from Abu Dharr that the number of books was one hundred books and four books, as was mentioned by Ibn Katheer in his commentary on the verse quoted above. But Allah knows best how sound this is. Allah has mentioned the Torah, the Gospel, the Psalms (Zaboor), and the Scriptures of Ibraaheem and Moosa, so we believe in that and we believe that Allah has many Books of which we have no knowledge; it is sufficient for us to believe in them in general terms.

Fataawa Islamiyyah, 1/41

And Allah knows best.