Qur'an, Hadith and Scholars:Muhammad's White Complexion

The Islamic tradition contains many descriptions of the prophet, including of his hair, beard, and particularly skin color. It is very insistent that he was extremely white of complexion.

Ahmad ibn Abi Sulayman, the companion of Sahnun said, “Anyone who says that the Prophet was black should be killed."

Ibn Musa al-Yahsubi, Qadi ‘Iyad, p.375

Contents

1 Legs

1.1 Entire Legs

1.2 Thighs

1.3 Shanks

2 Arms

2.1 Forearms

2.2 Armpits

3 Abdomen

4 Face

4.1 Cheeks

4.2 Complexion

5 General Appearance

6 Other Hadiths

7 See Also

8 External Links

9 References

Legs

Entire Legs

Narrated Abu Juhaifa: By chance I went to the Prophet at noon while he was at Al-Abtah (resting) in a tent. Bilal came out (of the tent) and pronounced the Adhan for the prayer, and entering again, he brought out the water which was left after Allah's Apostle had performed the ablution. The people rushed to take some of the water. Bilal again went in and brought out a spear-headed stick, and then Allah's Apostle came out. As if I were now looking at the whiteness of his leg. Bilal fixed the stick and the Prophet offered a two-Rakat Zuhr prayer and a two-Rak'at 'Asr prayer, while women and donkeys were passing in front of the Prophet (beyond the stick).

Sahih Bukhari 4:56:767

Anas (Allah be pleased with him) reported that Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) set out on an expedition to Khaibar and we observed our morning prayer in early hours of the dawn. The Apostle of Allah (may peace be upon him) then mounted and so did Abu Talha ride, and I was seating myself behind Abu Talha. Allah's Apostle (may peace be upon him) moved in the narrow street of Khaibar (and we rode so close to each other in the street) that my knee touched the leg of Allah's Apostle (may peace be upon him). (A part of the) lower garment of Allah's Apostle (may peace be upon him) slipped from his leg and I could see the whiteness of the leg of Allah's Apostle (may peace be upon him). As he entered the habitation he called: Allah-o-Akbar (Allah is the Greatest)...

Sahih Muslim 8:3325

Thighs

Narrated 'Abdul 'Aziz: Anas said, 'When Allah's Apostle invaded Khaibar, we offered the Fajr prayer there yearly in the morning) when it was still dark. The Prophet rode and Abu Talha rode too and I was riding behind Abu Talha. The Prophet passed through the lane of Khaibar quickly and my knee was touching the thigh of the Prophet . He uncovered his thigh and I saw the whiteness of the thigh of the Prophet. When he entered the town, he said, 'Allahu Akbar! Khaibar is ruined...

Sahih Bukhari 1:8:367, See Also Sahih Muslim 19:4437

Shanks

Abu Juhaifa reported it on the authority of his father: I came to the Apostle of Allah (may peace be upon him) in Mecca and he was (at that time) at al- Abtah in a red leather tent. And Bilal stepped out with ablution water for him. (And what was left out of that water) some of them got it (whereas others could not get it) and (those who got it) rubbed themselves with it. Then the Apostle of Allah (may peace be upon him) stepped out with a red mantle on him and I was catching a glimpse of the whiteness of his shanks. The narrator said: He (the Holy Prophet) performed the ablution...

Sahih Muslim 4:1014

Arms

Forearms

Narrated Al-Muttalib: When Uthman ibn Maz'un died, he was brought out on his bier and buried. The Prophet (peace be upon him) ordered a man to bring him a stone, but he was unable to carry it. The Apostle of Allah (peace be upon him) got up and going over to it rolled up his sleeves. The narrator Kathir told that al-Muttalib remarked: The one who told me about the Apostle of Allah (peace be upon him) said: I still seem to see the whiteness of the forearms of the Apostle of Allah (peace be upon him) when he rolled up his sleeves. He then carried it and placed it at his head saying: I am marking my brother's grave with it, and I shall bury beside him those of my family who die.

Sunan Abu Dawud 20:3200

Armpits

Narrated Abu Humaid As-Sa'idi: Allah's Apostle employed an employee (to collect Zakat). The employee returned after completing his job and said, "O Allah's Apostle! This (amount of Zakat) is for you, and this (other amount) was given to me as a present." The Prophet said to him, "Why didn't you stay at your father's or mother's house and see if you would be given presents or not?" Then Allah's Apostle got up in the evening after the prayer, and having testified that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and praised and glorified Allah as He deserved, he said, "Now then ! What about an employee whom we employ and then he comes and says, 'This amount (of Zakat) is for you, and this (amount) was given to me as a present'? Why didn't he stay at the house of his father and mother to see if he would be given presents or not? By Him in Whose Hand Muhammad's soul is, none of you will steal anything of it (i.e. Zakat) but will bring it by carrying it over his neck on the Day of Resurrection. If it has been a camel, he will bring it (over his neck) while it will be grunting, and if it has been a cow, he will bring it (over his neck), while it will be mooing; and if it has been a sheep, he will bring it (over his neck) while it will be bleeding." The Prophet added, "I have preached you (Allah's Message)." Abu Humaid said, "Then Allah's Apostle raised his hands so high that we saw the whiteness of his armpits."

Sahih Bukhari 8:78:631, See Also Sahih Bukhari 9:86:108, Sahih Bukhari 9:89:286, Sahih Bukhari 9:89:305, Sahih Bukhari 3:47:769, Sahih Muslim 20:4511, Sahih Muslim 20:4509

Narrated 'Abdullah bin Malik: Ibn Buhaina, "When the Prophet prayed, he used to separate his arms from his body so widely that the whiteness of his armpits was visible."

Sahih Bukhari 1:8:385, See Also Sahih Bukhari 2:17:141, Sahih Bukhari 1:12:771, Sahih Bukhari 4:56:765, Sahih Bukhari 4:56:766, Sahih Bukhari 8:75:392, Sahih Muslim 4:1000, Sahih Muslim 4:1001, Sahih Muslim 4:1003, Sahih Muslim 4:1004, Sahih Muslim 4:1951, Sahih Muslim 4:1953

Narrated Abu Musa: When the Prophet had finished from the battle of Hunain, he sent Abu Amir at the head of an army to Autas He (i.e. Abu Amir) met Duraid bin As Summa and Duraid was killed and Allah defeated his companions. The Prophet sent me with Abu 'Amir. Abu Amir was shot at his knee with an arrow which a man from Jushm had shot and fixed into his knee. I went to him and said, "O Uncle! Who shot you?" He pointed me out (his killer) saying, "That is my killer who shot me (with an arrow)." So I headed towards him and overtook him, and when he saw me, he fled, and I followed him and started saying to him, "Won't you be ashamed? Won't you stop?" So that person stopped, and we exchanged two hits with the swords and I killed him. Then I said to Abu 'Amir. "Allah has killed your killer." He said, "Take out this arrow" So I removed it, and water oozed out of the wound. He then said, "O son of my brother! Convey my compliments to the Prophet and request him to ask Allah's Forgiveness for me." Abu Amir made me his successor in commanding the people (i.e. troops). He survived for a short while and then died. (Later) I returned and entered upon the Prophet at his house, and found him lying in a bed made of stalks of date-palm leaves knitted with ropes, and on it there was bedding. The strings of the bed had their traces over his back and sides. Then I told the Prophet about our and Abu Amir's news and how he had said "Tell him to ask for Allah's Forgiveness for me." The Prophet asked for water, performed ablution and then raised hands, saying, "O Allah's Forgive 'Ubaid, Abu Amir." At that time I saw the whiteness of the Prophet's armpits. The Prophet then said, "O Allah, make him (i.e. Abu Amir) on the Day of Resurrection, superior to many of Your human creatures." I said, "Will you ask Allah's Forgiveness for me?" (On that) the Prophet said, "O Allah, forgive the sins of 'Abdullah bin Qais and admit him to a nice entrance (i.e. paradise) on the Day of Resurrection." Abu Burda said, "One of the prayers was for Abu 'Amir and the other was for Abu Musa (i.e. 'Abdullah bin Qais)."

Sahih Bukhari 5:59:612, See Also Sahih Muslim 31:6092

Narrated Abdullah ibn Abbas: I came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) from behind. I saw the whiteness of his armpits and he kept his arms away from his sides and raised his stomach (from the ground).

Sunan Abu Dawud 3:898

Narrated Aisha, Ummul Mu'minin: The people complained to the Apostle of Allah (peace be upon him) of the lack of rain, so he gave an order for a pulpit. It was then set up for him in the place of prayer. He fixed a day for the people on which they should come out. Aisha said: The Apostle of Allah (peace be upon him), when the rim of the sun appeared, sat down on the pulpit, and having pronounced the greatness of Allah and expressed His praise, he said: You have complained of drought in your homes, and of the delay in receiving rain at the beginning of its season. Allah has ordered you to supplicate Him has and promised that He will answer your prayer. Then he said: Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Universe, the Compassionate, the Merciful, the Master of the Day of Judgment. There is no god but Allah Who does what He wishes. O Allah, Thou art Allah, there is no deity but Thou, the Rich, while we are the poor. Send down the rain upon us and make what Thou sendest down a strength and satisfaction for a time. He then raised his hands, and kept raising them till the whiteness under his armpits was visible. He then turned his back to the people and inverted or turned round his cloak while keeping his hands aloft. He then faced the people, descended and prayed two rak'ahs. Allah then produced a cloud, and the storm of thunder and lightning came on. Then the rain fell by Allah's permission, and before he reached his mosque streams were flowing. When he saw the speed with which the people were seeking shelter, he (peace be upon him) laughed till his back teeth were visible. Then he said: I testify that Allah is Omnipotent and that I am Allah's servant and apostle.

Sunan Abu Dawud 3:1169

Abdomen

Narrated Al-Bara' bin 'Azib: The Prophet was carrying earth with us on the day of the battle of Al-Ahzab (confederates) and I saw that the dust was covering the whiteness of his abdomen, and he (the Prophet ) was saying, "(O Allah) ! Without You, we would not have been guided, nor would we have given in charity, nor would we have prayed. So (O Allah!) please send tranquility (Sakina) upon us as they, (the chiefs of the enemy tribes) have rebelled against us. And if they intend affliction (i.e. want to frighten us and fight against us) then we would not (flee but withstand them). And the Prophet used to raise his voice with it. (See Hadith No. 430 and 432, Vol. 5)

Sahih Bukhari 9:90:342, See Also Sahih Bukhari 4:52:90

It has been reported on the authority of Barra' who said: The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) was carrying the earth with us on the Day of Ahzab and the whiteness of his belly had been covered with earth. (While engaged in this toil) he was reciting:

By God, if Thou hadst not guided us

We would have neither been guided aright nor practised charity,

Nor offered prayers.

Descend on us peace and tranquillity.

Behold I these people (the Meccans) refused to follow us.

According to another version, he recited:

The chieftains (of the tribes) refused to follow us

When they contemplated mischief, we rejected it.

And with this (verse) he would raise his voice.

Sahih Muslim 19:4442

Face

Cheeks

'Amir b. Sa'd reported: I saw the Messenger of Allah (may peace be open him) pronouncing taslim on his right and on his left till I saw the whiteness of his cheek.

Sahih Muslim 4:1208

Narrated Abdullah ibn Mas'ud: The Prophet (peace be upon him) used to give the salutation to his left and right sides until the whiteness of his cheek was seen, (saying: "Peace be upon you, and mercy of Allah" twice. AbuDawud said: This is a version of the tradition reported by AbuSufyan. The version of Isra'il did not explain it. AbuDawud said: This tradition has been narrated by Zubayr from AbuIshaq and Yahya ibn Adam from Isra'il from AbuIshaq from AbdurRahman ibn al-Aswad from his father from Alqamah on the authority of Abdullah ibn Mas'ud. AbuDawud said: Shu'bah used to reject this tradition, the tradition narrated by AbuIshaq as coming from the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Sunan Abu Dawud 3:991

Narrated Al-Azraq ibn Qays: An imam of ours, whose kunyah (surname) was AbuRimthah, led us in prayer and said: I prayed this prayer, or one like it, with the Prophet (peace be upon him). AbuBakr and Umar were standing in the front row on his right and there was a man who had been present at the first takbir in the prayer. The Prophet of Allah (peace be upon him) offered the prayer, then gave the salutation to his right and his left so that we saw the whiteness of his cheeks, then turned away as AbuRimthah (meaning himself) had done. The man who has been present with him at the first takbir in the prayer then got up to pray another prayer, whereupon Umar leaped up and, seizing him by the shoulders, shook him and said: Sit down, for the People of the Book perished for no other reason than that there was no interval between their prayers. The Prophet (peace be upon him) raised his eyes and said: Allah has made you say what is right, son of al-Khattab.

Sunan Abu Dawud 3:1002

Complexion

Chapter 26 of Sahih Muslim on the USC-MSA website is entitled,

Chapter 26: ALLAH'S MESSENGER (MAY PEACE AE UPON HIM) HAD A WHITE ELEGANT FACE[1]

Jurairi reported: I said to Abu Tufail: Did you see Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him)? He said: Yes, he had a white handsome face. Muslim b. Hajjaj said: Abu Tufail who died in 100 Hijra was the last of the Companions of Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him).

Sahih Muslim 30:5777, See Also Sahih Muslim 30:5786

General Appearance

Narrated Anas bin Malik: While we were sitting with the Prophet in the mosque, a man came riding on a camel. He made his camel kneel down in the mosque, tied its foreleg and then said: "Who amongst you is Muhammad?" At that time the Prophet was sitting amongst us (his companions) leaning on his arm. We replied, "This white man reclining on his arm." The an then addressed him, "O Son of 'Abdul Muttalib."...

Sahih Bukhari 1:3:63

Narrated 'Abdullah bin Dinar: My father said, "I heard Ibn 'Umar reciting the poetic verses of Abu Talib: And a white (person) (i.e. the Prophet) who is requested to pray for rain and who takes care of the orphans and is the guardian of widows." Salim's father (Ibn 'Umar) said, "The following poetic verse occurred to my mind while I was looking at the face of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) while he was praying for rain. He did not get down till the rain water flowed profusely from every roof-g utter: And a white (person) who is requested to pray for rain and who takes care of the orphans and is the guardian of widows . . . And these were the words of Abu Talib."

Sahih Bukhari 2:17:122

Narrated Isma'il bin Abi Khalid: I heard Abii Juhaifa saying, "I saw the Prophet, and Al-Hasan bin 'Ali resembled him." I said to Abu- Juhaifa, "Describe him for me." He said, "He was white and his beard was black with some white hair. He promised to give us 13 young she-camels, but he expired before we could get them."

Sahih Bukhari 4:56:744

Abu Tufail reported: I saw Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) and there is one amongst the people of the earth who (are living at the present time and) had seen him except me. I said to him: How did you find him? He said: He had an elegant white color, and he was of an average height.

Sahih Muslim 30:5778

Other Hadiths

Narrated Rabia bin Abi Abdur-Rahman: I heard Anas bin Malik describing the Prophet saying, "He was of medium height amongst the people, neither tall nor short; he had a rosy color, neither absolutely white nor deep brown; his hair was neither completely curly nor quite lank. Divine Inspiration was revealed to him when he was forty years old. He stayed ten years in Mecca receiving the Divine Inspiration, and stayed in Medina for ten more years. When he expired, he had scarcely twenty white hairs in his head and beard." Rabi'a said, "I saw some of his hairs and it was red. When I asked about that, I was told that it turned red because of scent."

Sahih Bukhari 4:56:747

Narrated Anas: Allah's Apostle was neither very tall nor short, neither absolutely white nor deep brown. His hair was neither curly nor lank. Allah sent him (as an Apostle) when he was forty years old. Afterwards he resided in Mecca for ten years and in Medina for ten more years. When Allah took him unto Him, there was scarcely twenty white hairs in his head and beard.

Sahih Bukhari 4:56:748

Narrated Anas bin Malik: The Prophet was neither conspicuously tall, nor short; neither, very white, nor tawny. His hair was neither much curled, nor very straight. Allah sent him (as an Apostle) at the age of forty (and after that) he stayed for ten years in Mecca, and for ten more years in Medina. Allah took him unto Him at the age of sixty, and he scarcely had ten white hairs on his head and in his beard.

Sahih Bukhari 7:72:787

Anas b. Malik reported that Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) was neither very conspicuously tall nor short-statured, and his color was neither glaringly white nor brown; his hair was neither very curly nor very straight; Allah commissioned him (as a Prophet) when he had reached the age of forty years, and he stayed in Mecca for ten years and for ten years in Medina; Allah took him away when he had just reached the age of sixty, and there had not been twenty white hair in his head and beard.

Sahih Muslim 30:5794

See Also