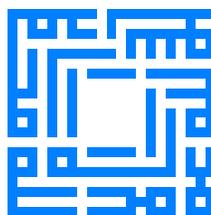




**Advanced Level Topics of Study for:  
Hadith Studies**

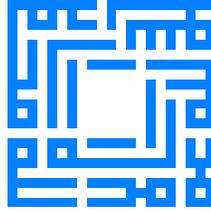




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## Advanced Level Topics of Study for Hadith Studies

From the following article, answer these questions:

1. Define the term “Hadith” and in a few sentences, prove in your own words the ‘need’ for Hadith.
2. What are the Sihah Sitta? List all of them with their authors.
3. List the number of Types of Hadith and define two in your own words.
4. List (without explanation) the types of Books of Hadith.
5. In your own words, in less than one paragraph, explain the status of Da’eef Hadith.
6. Explain and reply to in a few sentences the assertion that something is “Not Sahih”.
7. What is the ruling on fabricated Hadith?
8. Explain the types of rulings established by Hadith.
9. What are the two possibilities of strengthening a weak (Da’eef) Hadith.

### An Introduction to Hadith

*By Nadeem Abdul Hamid*

#### Introduction

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

We praise Allah, the Exalted and Great, and we send blessings upon His noble Messenger  
 صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ.

As most Muslims are aware, the life example of the Prophet Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) is the basis for the beliefs and laws of Islam. His sayings, actions and expressions are a fountain of guidance for the believers. The Sahabah themselves (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ) memorized each and every page of the life of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ)- standing and sitting, traveling and living at home. From the conditions of his household life to the political and economic laws he established, there is no incident from the life of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) except that the Companions (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ) took note of it and preserved its remembrance- some by pure memory and others by writing it down. After them, the Taabi’een and their followers continued this process of memorizing and compiling the Hadith to the point that by the second century Hijri, publication of entire books and writings of Hadith was widespread. It is because of those times that Muslims today have a picture of the entire way of life of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) laid out for them.

The great scholars and legislators of the ummah dedicated their entire lives to acquiring the knowledge of Hadith. They used to travel thousands of miles just to learn one Hadith. Nothing would deter or hinder them from their search for Hadith- they would even narrate Hadith from their own students. These scholars memorized and compiled books of Hadith and established an entire science around Hadith and the biography of narrators ('ilm-ur-rijaal: "the study of men"). In order to fully understand the greatness of their achievement and its value for Islam, one only has to consider what would be the state of the ummah if such narrations had not been collected and preserved- what a great foundation of the deen would have been missing.

The purpose of this small booklet is to provide an overview of the importance, history and study of Hadith. This summary barely touches the surface of the sciences of Hadith. As such it should be kept in mind that understanding of the intricacies and details of Hadith and the rulings derived there from requires intense and extensive study from a reliable Muslim scholar.

### **The Need for Hadith**

Allah ﷻ has summarized in a concise and beautiful way in the Quran the basic foundations of Islam. Without the explanation and elucidation provided by the Hadith, however, there is no other way to gain understanding of the details of all such rulings. The prophetic aHadith provide Muslims with the practical actions necessary for implementing the Quranic injunctions. For example, words like salah, zakah, tayammum, hajj and 'umrah each have a literal meaning in Arabic which is somewhat different from their meaning as used by the Shari'ah- without the Hadith of the Prophet (ﷺ), there would be no way to tell what the Shar'i meanings of such words are.

### **The Proof (Hujjat) of Hadith**

Allah ﷻ has firmly commanded the Muslims to follow the actions and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Thus, He has said:

﴿ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ ﴾

“Follow Allah and follow the Messenger.”

(Surah Nisaa, Ayah 59)

﴿ مَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ  
عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا ﴾

“And what the Messenger gives you, take it. And what he forbids you from, keep away from it.”

(Surah Hashr, Ayah 7)

﴿قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي﴾

“Say [to them O Muhammad (ﷺ)]: If you love Allah, follow me...”

(Surah Aali ‘Imraan, Ayah 31)

﴿لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ  
حَسَنَةٌ﴾

“Surely there is in the Messenger of Allah a most beautiful example for you...”

(Surah Ahzaab, Ayah 21)

From these blessed verses, it is clear that obeying the rulings of the Prophet (ﷺ) and following his actions is obligatory on every Muslim up till the Day of Judgment. The question then is how can people who come after the Prophet (ﷺ) know what his sayings and actions were. Allah sent the Prophet (ﷺ) as an example for us- how else is it possible that we model our lives on his life without the existence of Hadith? Just as the Prophet (ﷺ) himself was a direct example for the Sahabah (رضي الله عنهم), who took guidance from him in person, in the same way the Hadith provide this guidance to us. For if one does not accept the guidance given by the Hadith, the hujjat established by Allah will be incomplete. Allah not only sent the Quran for guidance- He also sent with it a Messenger (ﷺ) whose obedience and following has been made necessary as well, and again, without the Hadith there is no other way to know the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ).

If one does not accept the Hadith, then not only is one prevented from acquiring the guidance given by the Prophet (ﷺ), but one will also have an incomplete understanding of the rulings given in the Quran. Allah تعالى establishes that He has sent the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) to explain the meanings of the Quran and to teach their implementation:

﴿وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ  
إِلَيْهِمْ﴾

“And We have revealed upon you the dhikr, that you may explain to the people what has been revealed for them.”

(Surah Nahl, Ayah 44)

﴿ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ ﴾

“And that he (the messenger) may teach them the Book and Wisdom.”

(Surah Baqarah, Ayah 129)

Some people may argue that the meanings of the verses and the knowledge of the “Book” and “Wisdom” was only necessary upon the Companions. However, Islam is not only for the Sahabah (رضى الله عنهم). Rather, until the Day of Judgment, it is the religion for all the people and thus, the people need to know the same wisdom that the Sahabah needed to know. Furthermore, just as the Sahabah needed the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) to explain and elucidate the meanings of the Quran for them, even though they themselves were of sterling character, those people who come afterwards are lesser in quality of belief and understanding than the first generation. Thus, they will be even more needy of such explanation. Thirdly, Allah has said in the Quran:

﴿ هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ  
يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ  
الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ  
لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ . وَأَخْرَجْنَا مِنْهُمْ لَمَّا  
يَلْحَقُوا بِهِمْ ﴾

“He it is Who has sent among the unlettered nations a prophet from among themselves, who recites His signs to them and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and Wisdom, even though they were, before that, in manifest Error. And also to others after them who have not yet joined them...” (Surah Jumu’ah, Ayah 2)

From this verse it is clear that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) was sent not only to teach the Quran to the Sahabah (رضى الله عنهم) but also for those Muslims who would come after them. Thus, it cannot be argued except that just as the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) was a guidance and example for the Sahabah, so he is for all the Muslims up till the Last Day. If this were not the case, then there is no other way that prophecy of the verse above would be fulfilled.

Just think for yourself, that if one only tried to follow the Quran, then how would one determine that the word salah refers to that procedure that is familiar to all Muslims from the time the adhaan is given until the Imam says the salaam. Similarly, words like Hajj, Zakaat are only mentioned briefly in the Quran to establish their performance. How else, other than the Hadith, can one determine the detailed rulings, procedures and etiquettes of these and all other actions in the life of a Muslim?

The complete understanding of the rulings of Quran is only gained through the guidance of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم). During the period of revelation, the Sahabah (رضى الله عنهم) obtained such guidance directly from his blessed tongue. For those Muslims coming later, the Hadith provide the same function.

Just as the Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) was sent to explain the meanings of certain words of the Quran, he was also sent to teach certain rules of the Shari'ah which are not even mentioned in the Quran. In this regard, Allah تعالى has said:

﴿ يُجِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ  
الْخَبَائِثِ ﴾

“... that he may make lawful for you the good things and make unlawful for you the evil things.”

(Surah A'raaf, Ayah 157)

Some things that the Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) made halaal or haraam are not otherwise mentioned in the Quran. Only in the Hadith can one find their mention. Without accepting the proof of Hadith, we would remain with an incomplete picture of the way of life that Allah has established for us.

Even to understand the literal meaning of verses in the Quran, the Hadith are necessary. This is because certain verses were revealed for a particular situation or in response to some specific question or statement of the non-believers and hypocrites. Sometimes a verse referred to an incident that would happen later or some verses came down to correct or support the actions of the Companions (رضى الله عنهم). Thus, without the knowledge of the reason for revelation of such verses (asbaab an-nuzool), it is not possible to understand their meaning correctly. Without accepting the Hadith, it is **impossible** that one will be able to practice upon the teachings of the Quran.

### The Collection of Hadith

Another argument of those ignorant people who reject the Hadith is that the collection of Hadith only started hundreds of years after the death of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم). Thus, they claim the books of Hadith are not authentic. However, this claim is entirely baseless because the memorization and writing down of the Hadith was begun during the very lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and continued in every generation with no exception.

During the blessed time of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) many Sahabah (رضى الله عنهم) started to preserve in writing the aHadith. Imam Bukhari (رحمه الله تعالى) mentions a tradition in his Sahih that at the time of the liberation of Makkah, the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) gave a long khutbah. Afterwards, a man from Yemen requested him: “Have it written down for me,

Oh Messenger of Allah.” The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) then gave the order: “Write it for so-and-so.”

In the same way, Hadrat ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Aas (رضي الله عنه) was given a general order and permission to write down Hadith:

عن عبد الله بن عمرو قال كنت اكتب  
كل شيء اسمعه من رسول الله صلى  
الله عليه اريد حفظه فنهتني قريش و قالوا  
اتكتب كل شيء اسمعه و رسول الله  
صلى الله عليه و سلم بشر يتكلم في  
الغضب و الرضا . فامسكت عن الكتابة  
فذكرت ذلك الى رسول الله صلى الله  
عليه و سلم فاوها باصبعه الى فيه فقال  
اكتب فوالذي نفسى بيده ما يخرج منه  
الا حق .

“On the authority of ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr (رضي الله عنه) who said: I used to write down everything that I heard from the Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) in order to preserve it. The Quraysh used to stop me and say: Do you write everything you hear from him, even though the Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) is a man and he talks in anger and pleasure? So I stopped my writing and mentioned it to the Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه وسلم). He (صلى الله عليه وسلم) indicated with his finger to his mouth and said: ‘Write it! For by the One in Whose Hand is my soul, nothing except Truth (Haqq) comes out from it.’”

Hadrat Abu Hurairah (رضي الله عنه) also mentioned the writing down of Hadith that was done by Hadrat ‘Amr ibn al-‘Aas (رضي الله عنه):

ما من اصحاب النبي صلى الله عليه و  
سلم احد اكثر حديثا عنه مني الا ما كان  
من عبد الله بن عمرو فانه كان يكتب و  
لا اكتب .

“There is no companion of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) who related more Hadith than myself except for that which came from ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr, for he used to write it down and I did not write it down.”

From these narrations, it is clearly established that ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr (رضي الله عنه) maintained a large written collection of Hadith. Because of the close proximity that Abu Hurairah (رضي الله عنه) used to keep with the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم), he himself was able to memorize Hadith very easily and thus did not need to write them down. However, he was still in possession of some written pages of the Hadith of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم). ‘Amr ibn Umayyah reported:

تحدث عند ابي هريرة بحديث فاخذ  
بيدي الى بيته فارانا كتبنا من حديث النبي  
صلى الله عليه وسلم وقال هذا هو  
مكتوب عندي .

“A Hadith was narrated to Abu Hurairah (رضي الله عنه) and so he took me by the hand to his house and showed us books of Hadith of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and he said: ‘This is what is written down with me.’ ”

Thus, one can see that even Abu Hurairah (رضي الله عنه) eventually had all his narrations of Hadith written down. Hafiz Ibn Hajar ‘Asqalaani (رحمه الله تعالى) says that Abu Hurairah (رضي الله عنه) did not write down any Hadith during the period of revelation. However after the passing of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم), he wrote down the Hadith or had someone write them all down for him.

Hadrat Anas (رضي الله عنه) used to write down Hadith and read them back to the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) as mentioned in a narration by Qataadah. Hadrat ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar (رضي الله عنه) also used to write down and keep pages of Hadith:

يروى ان عبد الله بن عمر كان اذا خرج  
الى السوق نظر في كتبه و قد اكد الراوى  
ان كتبه هذه كانت فى الحديث .

“It is related about ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar (رضى الله عنه) that as he used to go out to the market, he would look in his books. And the narrator confirmed that these books were books of Hadith.”

Besides these individual examples, there is also evidence that it was common among the Sahabah (رضى الله عنهم) to write down Hadith during the time of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و سلم). Thus, Hadrat ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr (رضى الله عنه) said:

كان عند رسول الله صلى الله عليه و  
سلم ناس من اصحابه و انا معهم و انا  
اصغر القوم فقال النبى صلى الله عليه و  
سلم من كذب على متعمدا فليتبوا مقعده  
من النار . فلما خرج القوم قلت كيف  
تحدثون عن رسول الله صلى الله عليه و  
سلم و قد سمعتم ما قال و انتم تنهمكون  
فى الحديث عن رسول الله صلى الله  
عليه و سلم . فضحكوا و قالوا يا ابن  
اخينا ان كل ما سمعنا منه عندنا فى  
كتاب .

“There used to be with the Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه و سلم) people from his companions, and I was the youngest of them. The Prophet (صلى الله عليه و سلم) said: ‘Whoever intentionally lies regarding me, then let him prepare to take his seat in the Fire.’ So, when the people left, I said: ‘How do you people relate so many Hadith from the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و سلم) when you have heard what he said? – [ie. you should be more cautious.]’ The people heard this and laughed, saying: ‘O son of our brother, truly everything that we have heard from him is with us in books.’”

From the traditions above, then, it is clear that from the time of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) the Sahabah (رضى الله عنهم) used to write down and preserve his sayings and actions. And those instances in which the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) did not allow someone to write down some particular Hadith were because of special circumstances, such as the fear of confusing a Hadith with the Quran.

After the passing of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم), the Taabi'een began to gather and write the traditions from the Sahabah in a similar way. Hadrat Abu Hurairah (رضى الله عنه), from whom 5,374 Hadith have been narrated, taught those Hadith to countless numbers of students, who wrote down and memorized them and taught them in turn to their students. In Musnad Daarimi it is mentioned that one such student who wrote down Hadith from Abu Hurairah (رضى الله عنه) and preserved them was Basheer ibn Naheek. Besides other students, Kareeb wrote down Hadith from Hadrat 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbaas (رضى الله عنه) who narrated 2,660 Hadith. From Hadrat Anas (رضى الله عنه), who also narrated over 2,000 Hadith, it is mentioned in Musnad Daarimi that Abaan used to write down and memorize his Hadith. 'Urwah ibn Zubayr used to write Hadith from Ummul-Mu'mineen 'Aa'ishah (رضى الله عنها), who related 2,210 Hadith.

In general, it was common for people to memorize Hadith from the Sahabah. From the first century onward, numerous collections of Hadith were assembled. There was no single, combined, organized collection of Hadith- rather, the Taabi'een collected and preserved any Hadith that they could find. During the khilaafah of Hadrat 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Azeed (رحمه الله تعالى), he felt a great need for a reliable and complete arrangement of Hadith. Thus, he established a committee of well-known scholars to perform this task, among whom were the great Abu Bakr ibn Muhammad ibn 'Umar ibn Hazm, Qaasim ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr and Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Muslim ibn 'Ubaydallaah ibn 'Abdullah ibn Shihaab Zuhri (رحمة الله عليهم).

Hadrat 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Azeed (رحمه الله تعالى) arranged for the gathering of Hadith from all different places and had them written down. Ibn Shihaab Zuhri arranged and compiled those Hadith. In addition to gathering Hadith, the chains of narrators (sanad) were also meticulously preserved by az-Zuhri. Thus, he is often known as the originator of the science of isnaad.

The students and contemporaries of Zuhri (رحمه الله تعالى) continued and carried on this work after him. Thus, in the second century, one of his students, Imam Malik ibn Anas (رحمه الله تعالى), compiled the first major collection of Hadith arranged in the order similar to that common today. That book was called the Mu'atta.

Besides the Mu'atta of Imam Malik, the Imam-e-A'zam Abu Hanifah (رحمه الله تعالى) also recorded his narrations in his Kitaab-ul-Aathaar. Besides these two great works, other collections that were produced in the realm of Hadith during the second century were: Sunan Abul-Waleed (151H), Jaami' Sufyaan Thawri (161H), Musannaf Abi Salamah (167H), Musannaf Abi Sufyaan (197H) and Jaami' Sufyaan ibn 'Uyainah (198H). In the third century, additional great compilations were produced by ash-Shaafi' (رحمه الله تعالى) in

his Kitaab-ul-Umm (204H), Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal (241H), al-Jaami' as-Sahih of Bukhari (256H), al-Jaami' of Muslim (261H), Sunan of Abu Dawood (275H), Jaami' Tirmidhi (279H) and Sunan Ibn Maajah (273H).

Thus, from the history of the development of the ummah, it is clear that the work of collecting and preserving Hadith in all forms was practiced from the time of revelation itself up through the third century and onward. By the third century, this process had coalesced into an entire branch of study and the Sihah Sitta (six reliable works of Hadith) had been compiled, providing a well-documented and well-arranged collection of the Hadith that had been narrated by the earlier generations of Sahabah and Taabi'een.

### The Sihah Sitta

The term "Sihah sitta" or "the six sound books," refers to six collections of Hadith whose reliability is generally agreed upon among the Muslim scholars. These collections are:

Sahih Bukhari  
Sahih Muslim  
Jaami' Tirmidhi  
Sunan Abi Dawood  
Sunan Nisaa'i  
Sunan Ibn-i-Maajah

**Al-Jaami' as-Sahih li Bukhari:** Imam Abu 'Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ismaa'eel ibn Ibraaheem ibn al-Mugheerah ibn Bardizbah al-Bukhari (رحمه الله تعالى) (194 – 256H) was born in Bukhara, Iran. At the age of ten he began acquiring knowledge of Hadith and at sixteen years old he went with his mother to Hajj. He stayed in Makkah for two years and then went to Madinah, studying from the great scholars of Islam. He also traveled to Egypt, Basra, Koofa, Baghdaad and Syria. His greatest work, al-Jaami' as-Sahih, took 16 years to complete. It is said that he collected some 300,000 to 600,000 Hadith, of which 200,000 he memorized himself, and of those he selected 7,275 which he deemed to be the most reliable and authentic. The scholars of Islam have unanimously labeled his collection as "the most authentic book after the Book of Allah."

**Al-Jaami' as-Sahih li Muslim:** Next in reliability to Sahih al-Bukhari is the work of Imam Abul-Husayn Muslim ibn al-Hajjaaj ibn Muslim al-Qushayriy an-Naisaaburiy (رحمه الله تعالى). Born in 202 H. in Nisaabur, Iran, he died in 261 H. and was buried near the same place. He also traveled widely and among his many works is his al-Jaami' as-Sahih in which he selected about 4,000 Hadith out of 300,000 he collected. Among both his teachers and his students one finds the names of many great scholars of Islam. Together with Sahih al-Bukhari, his collection is known as one of the Sahihayn- "two authentic books." The term muttafaqun 'alayh ("agreed upon") indicates that a certain Hadith is to be found in both collections.

**Jaami' Tirmidhi:** Imam Abu 'Eesa Muhammad ibn 'Eesa at-Tirmidhi (رحمه الله تعالى) was born in 209 H. in Tirmidh, Iran and he passed away in the same town in 279 H. In

addition to his other books, he is most well-known for his collection of Hadith and for his *Shamaa'il*, a collection of traditions concerning the person and character of the Prophet (ﷺ). His *Jaami'* includes fewer Hadith than the previous two above (2,028) but is known for his critical remarks concerning the chains of narrators and the points of differences between the four *madhaahib*. Among his teachers were Imams Bukhari, Ahmad ibn Hanbal and Abu Dawood as-Sijistaani (رحمة الله عليهم). He also traveled through Khuraasaan, 'Iraq and Hijaz to collect his Hadith.

**Sunan Abi Dawood:** Imam Abu Dawood Sulaymaan ibn al-Ash'ath Sijistaani (رحمة الله تعالى) heard Hadith from over three hundred scholars. He was born in Sijistaan, Khuraasaan, near Afghanistan, in 202 H. and lived for 73 years. Known for a strong memory and a penetrating mind, his collection is composed of 4,800 traditions selected from a half of a million which he wrote down. Previous to his work, the collections of Hadith were arranged in the manner of a *Jaami'* (see below for definition). In his *Sunan*, he instead collected only traditions related to the laws, rulings and legal questions of Islam and arranged them by subject matter.

**Sunan Nisaa'i:** This fifth famous collection of 5,761 Hadith was compiled by Imam Abu 'Abdur-Rahmaan Ahmad ibn Shu'ayb ibn 'Ali Nisaa'i (رحمة الله تعالى). He was born in another town of Iran- Nisa- in 215 H. and died in 303 H. His book also mainly contains traditions related to legal issues of the Shari'ah.

**Sunan Ibn Maajah:** Imam Abu 'Abdullah Muhammad ibn Yazeed ibn Maajah al-Qazweeniy (رحمة الله تعالى) was born in Qazween, Iran in 209 H. and lived for 64 years. His compilation contains some 4,000 Hadith. The *Sunans* of Nisaa'i and Ibn Maajah are somewhat more lenient in their criticism of the authenticity of Hadith than the previous books, but nonetheless they are among the most reliable collections of Hadith.

Having discussed the importance of Hadith and the brief history of collection, we will now discuss some of the technical details related to the Hadith.

### The Definition of Hadith

There are two types of study of Hadith: one is 'Ilmul-Hadith *riwaayatan* and the other is 'Ilmul-Hadith *diraayatan*. As for the first, it is the study and knowledge of the sayings, actions, states, conditions and descriptions of the Prophet (ﷺ). The second type is the study of narrators and those narrated to, and the conditions of acceptability or rejection.

The word Hadith itself, in the context of Islam, refers to the sayings, actions, tacit approvals, character and descriptions of the physical features of the Prophet (ﷺ). A Hadith consists of two parts: the *sanad*, which is the chain of names of people who have narrated the Hadith through the generations, and the *matn*, or the actual text and substance of the report. Often the words Hadith and *sunnah* are used interchangeably. Their meanings are almost the same except that Hadith is slightly more general as *sunnah* does not refer to such things as the physical features of the Prophet (ﷺ). There

are other words, such as “khabar” and “athar”, which are often used synonymously with “Hadith” but some scholars also use them to indicate only certain types of Hadith.

### Types of Hadith

Below are listed the different types of Hadith that one may come across:

**Marfoo’**: That Hadith which is directly attributed to the Prophet (ﷺ) and tells of his actions, sayings or speech.

**Mawqoof**: That which tells of the actions, sayings or speech of a Sahaabi.

**Maqtoo’**: That in which the actions, sayings or speech of a Taabi’ee is described.

**Muttasil** or **Mawsool**: That Hadith whose chain (sanad) is not broken, eg. by missing the name of a narrator.

**Mu’allaq**: That Hadith from the beginning of whose sanad some or all of the narrators’ names have been dropped.

**Mursal**: That Hadith whose last narrator in the chain, ie. the Sahaabi’s name, is dropped. That is, when a Taabi’ee directly narrates something about the Prophet (ﷺ).

**Mu’dal**: Two consecutive narrators have been dropped from the chain.

**Munqati’** (bi ma’nan akhass): More than two narrators are dropped consecutively in one part of the chain, or two narrators are dropped consecutively in multiple parts of the sanad.

**Mudtarib**: That in whose sanad or matn additions or deletions exist. [That is, a Hadith might be transmitted along many chains and in one particular chain, there may be additions or deletions to some part of the sanad or matn that is found in the other transmissions.]

**Mudarraaj**: That in which the narrator added his own or some other sayings to the matn.

**Shaadh**: That Hadith of a narrator who has narrated something that is the opposite of what a narrator of more reliability narrated. Its opposite is **Mahfooz**.

**Munkar**: That Hadith of a weak narrator who narrates something the opposite of a more authentic tradition.

**Mu’allal**: That Hadith in which there is a major, hidden defect, such as a mursal Hadith which is narrated as if it is mawsool.

**Sahih li dhaatihi:** That Hadith whose chain of narrators is unbroken, every narrator is reliable ('aadil), well-known for memorization and preservation (dabt) of Hadith, and the Hadith falls in neither of the categories of the Shaadh or Mu'allal.

**Sahih li ghayrihi:** That Hadith which has the same qualities as the previous one except for the dabt of a narrator which may be slightly less reliable but that is compensated for by the fact that the Hadith is narrated from many chains of people. [The word dabt refers to a narrator having a good grasp of what he narrates as well as a sound memory and/or carefully kept books.]

**Hasan li dhaatihi:** That Hadith which has the qualities of Sahih except that the dabt is not as reliable and there are not enough other chains of narrations to raise it to the status of Sahih li ghayrihi.

**Hasan li ghayrihi:** That Hadith which is lacking in more than one quality required for the Sahih but this lack is again compensated for by the presence of other chains of transmission of the same Hadith.

**Da'eef:** That Hadith which is lacking more than one of the qualities of Sahih and there are not enough alternate chains to raise its status to Hasan.

**Matrook:** That Hadith in whose chain is a narrator known for lying.

**Mawdoos:** That Hadith in whose chain is a narrator upon whom it is established that he fabricated Hadith.

**Ghareeb:** That Hadith whose sanad is such that at some link in the chain, that narrator is alone in narrating the Hadith from the shaykh. [In each generation, many people might have narrated the same Hadith through different chains. A ghareeb Hadith is one in which the number of narrators of that Hadith in one particular generation is only one.]

**'Azeez:** That Hadith in which the number of narrators drops to two in one generation and is more than two in the rest of the chain.

**Mashhoor:** That Hadith which is narrated from more than two chains in every generation. That is, in each generation, at least three people narrated the Hadith. Slightly less than the number of a mutawaatir. This type of Hadith and the previous two are types of **aaahaad** Hadith.

**Mutawaatir:** That Hadith which is narrated from so many different chains in every generation that it is impossible to suppose that anyone could have conspired to fabricate the Hadith.

### **Types of Books of Hadith**

There are many different types of compilations of Hadith, each of which has gained a specific name. Some of these type of books of Hadith are:

**Sahih:** That book whose compiler indicated that he has only included Sahih Hadith. For example, Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim.

**Jaami':** That book which includes Hadith categorized under the following eight categories: Siyar, Aadaab, Tafseer, 'Aqaa'id, Futun, Ahkaam, Ishraat and Manaaqib. For example, Bukhari and Tirmidhi.

**Sunan:** That book which only includes Hadith that are related to rules (ahkaam). For example, Sunan Abu Dawood and Nisaa'i.

**Musnad:** That book which is arranged by the order of the name of the Sahabah who narrated the Hadith. For example, Musnad Imam Ahmad.

**Mu'jam:** That book which is arranged by the order of the shuyookh who narrated the Hadith. For example, Mu'jam Tabaraani.

**Mustakhrij:** That book in which the compiler brings chains from other shuyookh besides the author of another book to support the Hadith of that author's book. For example Mustakhraj Abi Nu'aym on Bukhari.

**Mustadrik:** That book which includes Hadith under various headings which another author has left out of his book. For example, Mustadrik Haakim includes Hadith that are not in the two Sahih but which Imam Haakim has indicated as satisfying the conditions for authenticity that were followed by Bukhari and Muslim.

**Risaalah:** That book which only contains Hadith under the heading of one of the eight headings mentioned in the Jaami'. For example, Imam Ahmad's book of Zuhd which falls under aadaab and Ibn Jareer's book of tafseer.

**Juz:** That smaller book which only contains Hadith about a particular subject. For example, Imam Bukhari's Juz Qira'ah Khalf al-Imam.

**Arba'een:** A collection of 40 Hadith. For example, Arba'een-e-Nawawi.

### **Ranks of the Books of Hadith**

Shah Waliyullah (رحمه الله تعالى) has specified four ranks of books of Hadith with regard to their reliability, fame and acceptability. The first contains those books whose reliability is strongly agreed upon. For example, Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Mu'atta Imam Malik.

The second rank are close in fame and reliability to the first. Most of the Hadith in such books are either Sahih or hasan. Some da'eef Hadith may also be included but they are clearly indicated. For example, Jaami' Tirmidhi, and the Sunans of Abu Dawood and Nisaa'i.

The third level are those books whose authors preceded or were contemporaries of Bukhari (رحمه الله تعالى) and Muslim (رحمه الله تعالى). The competence of these scholars is firmly

established but in their collections they also included da'eef Hadith and even sometimes those which were known to be fabricated. For example, Musnad Shaafi'i, Sunan Ibn Maajah, Musannaf 'Abdur-Razzaaq, Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah, Sunan Daarimi, Sunan Daaraqutni and Sunan Bayhaqi.

Fourthly, there are those books of the later scholars which include Hadith that are not found to be related by the scholars of the early era. The reason for this might be that either the previous scholars were not aware of those Hadith or they left them alone because of some defect ('ilal). Some examples of such collections are Daylami, Abu Nu'aym, Ibn 'Asaa and others.

### **The Status of Da'eef Hadith**

When the sanad of a Hadith is the subject of dispute or unreliability, it is called mat'oon or majrooh. That are many types of Hadith that fall in this category, discussed above, such as Mudtarib, Munqati', Mu'allal, Munkar, Matrook and others. All such Hadith are known as da'eef, however they are of different ranks of weakness. In comparison to other types for example, the matrook is one of the most deficient types of Hadith. It is possible that the sanad of one Hadith may contain several types of weaknesses at once, however its status remains da'eef although its weakness increases. The purpose of mentioning this is that just because a Hadith is labeled as da'eef does not at all imply it is fabricated. Only a Hadith for which the chain of narrators contains a fabricator is known as mawdooh'.

### **The Assertion of Something as "Not Sahih"**

Sometimes, the muhadditheen have written regarding a particular sanad: Laa yasihh ("it is not Sahih"). This phrase is erroneously understood by ignorant people to mean that the Hadith is fabricated or rejected. However, in the terminology of the muhadditheen, Sahih is not the opposite of a fabricated or rejected Hadith. Rather, those Hadith which are not Sahih include Sahih li ghayrihi, Hasan and Da'eef. The meaning of the phrase above is that the Hadith is not Sahih li dhaatihi. In summary, the negation of something being Sahih is not necessarily an indication of its unreliability.

### **The Difference in Rulings on the Matn and Sanad**

A ruling regarding the strength of a chain is based on the reputation or reliability of a narrator. On the other hand, the matn is judged according to different criteria. For example, it is possible that in one chain a fabricator of Hadith narrates a Hadith which is otherwise Sahih. Thus that particular chain will be labeled as Mawdooh' (fabricated), however the Hadith may well be transmitted reliably through a different, acceptable chain. For example, regarding the Hadith, "The seeking of knowledge is obligatory..." Imam Hanbal (رحمه الله تعالى) mentions that this particular Hadith through a certain chain of narrators is fabricated. Allaamah Shamsuddeen Dhahabi (رحمه الله تعالى) writes that the particular chain of the Hadith is unreliable but the Hadith itself is supported by other reliable chains of transmission.

In the same way, a da'eef Hadith is so labeled because of a weakness in the particular sanad. So again, it is entirely possible that a particularly unreliable narrator narrates a Hadith that is otherwise Sahih. That particular chain will be labeled as weak but the ruling regarding the matn will not necessarily be the same. Imam Nawawi (رحمه الله تعالى) says:

ان روايات الراوى الضعيف يكون فيه  
الصحيح و الضعيف و الباطل فيكتبونها  
ثم يميز اهل الحفظ و الاتقان بعض ذلك  
من بعض و ذلك سهل عليهم معروف  
عندهم و بهذا احتج السفيان الثورى حين  
نهى عن الرواية عن الكلبي فقبل له انت  
تروى عنه فقال انا اعرف صدقه من كذبه

“The narrations of weak narrators may in themselves be Sahih, da'eef or rejected. So the scholars write them down and present them to those knowledgeable in this subject for clarification. And for those knowledgeable in such ways it is easy for them to distinguish one type from another. This is the meaning of Sufyaan Thawri (رحمه الله تعالى) when he prohibited others from narrating from Kalbi. It was said: You yourself narrate from him. He said: I know his truth from his falsehoods.”

### **The Ruling of Fabricated Hadith**

No ruling can be based upon a mawdoo' Hadith. Nor is it permissible to present such a Hadith without mentioning that it is fabricated. If a da'eef Hadith comes along several different chains of narration, its status can become stronger. However, if one Hadith comes from several different chains of narration, which are all mawdoo', the reliability of the narration is not increased. This is because a multitude of bad never builds up to produce good.

### **Types of Rulings Established by Hadith**

The types of matters, such as permissibility/non-permissibility, whose rulings are established based on Hadith are four: (1) firmly established beliefs ('aqaa'id) such as Tawheed, Risaalah, the Beginning and the End, (2) more general beliefs such as virtues of the prophets and angels, (3) rulings of law, (4) virtues and descriptions of good deeds and other characteristics.

**'Aqaa'id Qat'eeyah:** For the establishment of a basic Islamic tenet of belief a mutawaatir Hadith is required.

**‘Aqaa’id Zanniyah:** For its proof, a Hadith aahaad is sufficient.

**Ahkaam:** A Hadith Sahih is required for establishment of a legal ruling, or at the least the Hadith must not be weaker than hasan li ghayrihi.

**Fadaa’il wa Manaaiqib:** For this type of subject Hadith including those that are da’eef are acceptable. Thus, Imam Nawawi (رحمه الله تعالى) said:

انهم قد يروون عنهم احاديث الترغيب و  
 الترهيب و فضائل الاعمال و القصص و  
 احاديث الزهد و مكارم الاخلاق و نحو  
 ذلك مما لا تتعلق بالحلال و الحرام و  
 سائر الاحكام و هذا الضرب من  
 الحديث يجوز عند اهل الحديث و  
 غيرهم الساهل فيه و رواية ما سوى  
 الموضوع منه و العمل به لان اصول  
 ذلك صحيحة مقررة في الشرع معروفة  
 عند اهله و على كل حال فان الائمة لا  
 يردون عن الضعفاء شيئا يحتجون به على  
 انفراده في الاحكام .

“The scholars of Hadith have narrated (from weak narrators) ahaadeeth relating to encouragement and discouragement, virtues of good deeds, stories, piety, good character, and others as long as there was no implication of a matter of halaal or haraam. And narrating and acting upon such types of Hadith, except for the fabricated ones, is absolutely correct because the basic topic of such Hadith is established in the Shari’ah already. Thus, the scholars do not reject any weak tradition unequivocally but they use it as long as it is not a solitary Hadith relating to a legal issue.”

It is clear from this statement that following and acting upon da’eef Hadith related to virtues and good deeds is acceptable. In some cases, even da’eef Hadith are used for establishment of some rulings, after careful examination of the particular Hadith. Thus Imam Nawawi (رحمه الله تعالى) also states:

قال العلماء من المحدثين و الفقهاء و  
غيرهم يجوز و يستحب العمل فى  
الفضائل و الترغيب و الترهيب بالحديث  
الضعيف ما لم يكن موضوعا و اما  
الاحكام كالحلال و الحرام و البيع و  
النكاح و الطلاق و غير ذلك فلا يعمل  
فيها الا بالحديث الصحيح او الحسن الا  
ان يكون فى احتياط فى شىء كما اذا  
ورد حديث ضعيف بكرهه بعض البيوع  
او الانكحة .

“The scholars from the muhadditheen and fuqahaa and others say that it is permissible and even recommended to act upon Hadith da’eef in the realm of virtues and good deeds as long as it is not fabricated. And as for legal rulings such as halaal and haraam and trade and marriage and divorce, then it is not supportable except by a Sahih or hasan, except if it is due to some careful examination [of the status of a particular Hadith which might otherwise be weak]. For example, several weak Hadith are used to support the undesireability of certain types of trade and marriage.”

### Strengthening the Weak Hadith

The first example of how the weakness of a Hadith may be strengthened is if the Hadith is narrated through several chains, so it achieves the status of hasan li ghayrihi.

‘Allaamah Sha’raani (رحمه الله تعالى) writes:

“When a Hadith da’eef is narrated through many chains, the majority of the muhadditheen use it as a proof and they augment it as Sahih sometimes and hasan other times.”

A second possibility is that one finds in the statements of the mujtahideen some support for a Hadith da’eef. From such a statement, the weakness of a Hadith may be lessened. Thus, Shaami says:

ان المجتهد اذا استدل بحديث كان  
تصحيحا له كما فى التحرير و غيره .

“When a mujtahid draws judgments based on a Hadith, it is an indication of its being sound in his opinion.”

The third possibility is that one finds some support for a Hadith from the sayings of the people of knowledge. This also adds to the reliability of a Hadith. For example, regarding Tirmidhi’s comment about a particular Hadith: “This is a ghareeb Hadith, we do not know of its chain of narration, except through this particular individual, and the people of knowledge act upon it,” Mulla ‘Ali Qaari (رحمه الله تعالى) explains:

قال النووي اسناده ضعيف نقله ميرك  
فكان الترمذى يريد تقوية الحديث بعمل  
اهل العلم .

“Nawawi said that its sanad is weak and Tirmidhi desired to strengthen it by mentioning that the people of knowledge act upon it.”

A fourth situation is that sometimes evidence supporting a Hadith is found in the actions of the righteous people. For example, the narration which establishes Salaat-at-Tasbeeh is da’eef in itself but Haakim and Bayhaqi have indicated the reason for strengthening of its position as the fact that ‘Abdullah ibn Mubaarak (رحمه الله تعالى) used to act upon this Hadith. Writes Maulana ‘Abdul-Hayy:

قال البيهقي كان عبد الله بن المبارك  
يصليها و تداولها الصالحون بعضهم عن  
بعض و في ذلك تقوية للحديث  
المرفوع .

“Bayhaqi says: ‘Abdullah ibnul-Mubaarak used to pray it and the righteous people used to follow each other in performing it and thus is support for the strength of this Hadith marfoo’.”

Besides these ways, careful study and uncovering of conditions may also allow for the support of Hadith that are otherwise da’eef.

### Approaches of the Scholars in Dealing with Differing Narrations

When there are several differing Hadith on one particular topic, the four madhaahib have each undergone a careful study and analysis of the chains of such Hadith in order to form rulings. In the case of Imam-e-A’zam (رحمه الله تعالى), in such an event he tried as far as possible to satisfy every narration and if it is not possible to fulfill two opposing

narrations simultaneously, he picks the one which is closer in spirit to Islam and the fundamental of the deen. Imam Shaafi'i (رحمه الله تعالى) in such a situation takes the narration which is of the strongest and most reliable sanad and gives ruling based on that one. Imam Malik (رحمه الله تعالى) gave preference to those narrations which reflected what the people of Madinah acted upon. And finally, Imam Ahmad (رحمه الله تعالى) based his decisions upon the actions of the early Muslims.

### **Famous Hafiz of Hadith**

Each madhhab produced its own stars in the realm of Hadith. Below, some of the well-known memorizers and collectors of Hadith are given.

**Ahnaaf:** Hafiz Abu Bashr Dulaabi, Hafiz Ishaq, Hafiz Abu Ja'far Tahaawi, Hafiz Ibn Abil-Awaam Sa'di, Hafiz Abu Muhammad Haarithi, Hafiz Abdul Baaqi, Hafiz Abu Bakr Raazi Jasaas, Hafiz Abu Nasr, Hafiz Abu Muhammad Samarqandi, Hafiz Shamsuddeen Sarooji, Hafiz Qutbuddeen Halbi, Hafiz 'Alaa'uddeen Maardini, Hafiz Jamaaluddeen Dhayl'I, Hafiz 'Alaa'uddeen Maglataa'i, Hafiz Badruddeen 'Ayni, Hafiz Qaasim and others (رحمة الله عليهم).

**Shawaafi':** Hafiz Daaraqutni, Hafiz Bayhaqi, Hafiz Khataabi, Hafiz 'Izzuddeen ibn Salaam, Hafiz Ibn Daqeeq al-Eid, Hafiz 'Iraqi, Hafiz Dhahabi, Hafiz Ibn Atheer Jazri, Subki, Haytami, Ibn Hajar and others (رحمة الله عليهم).

**Malikiyyah:** Hafiz Husayn ibn Isma'eel, Hafiz Raheeli, Hafiz Ibn Abdul-Birr, Hafiz Abul-Waleed al-Baaji, Hafiz Qaadi Abu Bakr al-'Arabi, Hafiz 'Abdul Haqq, Hafiz Qaasni 'Iyaad, Hafiz Ibn Rushd, Hafiz Abul-Qaasim Suhayli and others (رحمة الله عليهم).

**Hanaabilah:** Hafiz 'Abdul-Ghani al-Muqaddasi, Hafiz Abul-Faraj ibn al-Jawzi, Hafiz Ibn Quddaamah, Hafiz Ibn Rajab and others (رحمة الله عليهم).

May Allah have mercy on all their souls.

## Conclusion

Among the Muslim ummah today, one unfortunately finds people who go to extremes in regards to the status of Hadith. On the one hand are those who reject the legitimacy of the Hadith in part or whole. Such people tread the borderline of Islam because they are in fact rejecting the authority of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) himself and they are not able to follow Quranic injunctions, as discussed in the beginning of this article. At the other extreme are those people who think that by reading Bukhari and Muslim, they have gained enough knowledge to issue rulings on matters that have already been established a thousand years ago by the madhaahib. The derivation of rulings from Hadith is a science that requires **much** more knowledge and grasp of Islam than an English translation of the Quran and the Sihah Sitta.

In fact, the proper attitude for the average Muslim is to have the goal of increasing and strengthening one's belief by reading and hearing the narrations of how the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and his Companions (رضى الله عنهم) lived their lives. Reading the Hadith should have the effect of increasing one's resolve to act upon the Sunnah and the Shari'ah of Islam, which has in turn been expounded in detail by the pious scholars of the madhaahib. Attempting to go beyond this, without qualification, redefining the rules established by a madhhab, will lead to nothing but error and unnecessary division in the ummah. And Allah knows best.

May Allah grant all Muslims the ability to study and follow the sunnah as it should be followed. And may Allah grant all Muslims the strength of imaan to work together to establish the laws of Islam as described in the Quran and Hadith and expounded by the scholars of Islam. Aameen.

## Note

Most of this booklet is based upon a translation by Nadeem Abdul Hamid of the introduction to Jaami' Tirmidhi by Allaamah Ghulam Rasool Sa'eedi, Shaykhul-Hadith of Jaami'a Nu'maniyah in Lahore. Material from other sources was also added to provide more coverage of the subject matter.

Arabic text has not been verified with the originals. If any mistakes are found, in the Arabic or otherwise, please forward the correction to the publisher.

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Years given are for the death of the individual.

Justice Maulana Taqi 'Uthmaani has provided more detailed arguments for the proof and authenticity of Hadith in his Urdu commentary, Dars-e-Tirmidhi, and also in English in his book on the same subject, The Authenticity of Sunnah.

The appellation Sihah Sitta does not imply that all reliable Hadith are only to be found in these six books nor that each and every Hadith in them is reliable. In fact, there are as many authentic aHadith which are not found in these books as there are in them.

Some scholars include Mu'atta Imam Malik instead of Sunan Ibn Maajah among the six. Prior to Bukhari's collection, this title had been attributed to the Mu'atta.

Siyar: subjects relating to the life history of the Prophet (ﷺ); Aadaab: manners and etiquettes of daily life; Tafseer: commentary of the Quran; Aqaa'id: fundamental beliefs; Futun: the great trials and tribulations predicted by the Prophet (ﷺ); Ishraat: signs of Qiyaamah; Ahkaam: rulings, such as those related to fiqh issues; Manaaqib: virtues of the companions and various nations and tribes. The authors of such collections did not necessarily indicate the soundness or weaknesses of the Hadith in the collection.

1. In two paragraphs, explain what Shaykh Nuh Ha Meem Keller's advice to Muslims who wish to study Hadith without proper academic supervision of a trained and certified Hadith scholar (Shaykh) is. Should Muslims attempt to study Hadith without a teacher? What is his opinion regarding this.

## Studying Hadith without a Qualified Teacher

### Would you advise individuals to study Hadith from al-Bukhari and Muslim on their own?

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**Any Muslim can benefit from reading hadiths** from al-Bukhari and Muslim, whether on his own or with others. As for studying hadith, Sheikh Shuayb al-Arnaut, with whom my wife and I are currently reading Imam al-Suyuti's *Tadrib al-rawi* [The training of the hadith narrator], emphasizes that the science of hadith deals with a vast and complex literature, a tremendous sea of information that requires a pilot to help one navigate, without which one is bound to run up on the rocks. In this context, Sheikh Shuayb once told us, "Whoever doesn't have a sheikh, the Devil is his sheikh, in any Islamic discipline."

In other words, there are benefits the ordinary Muslim can expect from personally reading hadith, and benefits that he cannot, unless he is both trained and uses other literature, particularly the classical commentaries that explain the hadiths meanings and their relation to Islam as a whole.

The benefits one can derive from reading al-Bukhari and Muslim are many: general knowledge of such fundamentals as the belief in Allah, the messengerhood of the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace), the Last Day and so on; as well as the general moral prescriptions of Islam to do good, avoid evil, perform the prayer, fast Ramadan, and so forth. The hadith collections also contain many other interesting points, such as the great rewards for acts of worship like the midmorning prayer (*duha*), the night vigil prayer (*tahajjud*), fasting on Mondays and Thursdays, giving voluntary charity, and so on. Anyone who reads these and puts them into practice in his life has an enormous return for reading hadith, even more so if he aims at perfecting himself by attaining the noble character traits of the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) mentioned in hadith. Whoever learns and follows the prophetic example in these matters has triumphed in this world and the next.

What is not to be hoped for in reading hadith (without personal instruction from a sheikh for some time) is two things: to become an *alim* or Islamic scholar, and to deduce *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) from the hadiths on particulars of *sharia* practice.

Without a guiding hand, the untrained reader will misunderstand many of the hadiths he reads, and these mistakes, if assimilated and left uncorrected, may pile up until he can never find his way out of them, let alone become a scholar. Such a person is particularly easy prey for modern sectarian movements of our times appearing in a

neo-orthodox guise, well financed and published, quoting Quran and hadiths to the uninformed to make a case for the basic contention of all deviant sects since the beginning of Islam; namely, that only they are the true Muslims. Such movements may adduce, for example, the well-authenticated (*hasan*) hadith related from Aisha (Allah be well pleased with her) by al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi that the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said, *Shirk* (polytheism) is more hidden in my Umma than the creeping of ants across a great smooth stone on a black night . . . (*Nawadir al-usul fi marifa ahadith al-Rasul*. Istanbul 1294/1877. Reprint. Beirut: Dar Sadir, n.d., 399).

This hadith has been used by sects from the times of the historical Wahhabi movement down to the present to convince common people that the majority of Muslims may not actually be Muslims at all, but rather *mushrikin* or polytheists, and that those who do not subscribe to the views of their sheikhs may be beyond the pale of Islam.

In reply, traditional scholars point out that the words *fi Ummati*, "in my Umma" in the hadith plainly indicate that what is meant here is the lesser shirk of certain sins that, though serious, do not entail outright unbelief. For the word *shirk* or polytheism has two meanings. The first is the greater polytheism of worshipping others with Allah, of which Allah says in *surat al-Nisa*, "**Truly, Allah does not forgive that any should be associated with Him [in worship], but forgives what is other than that to whomever He wills**" (Quran 4:48), and this is the *shirk* of unbelief. The second is the lesser polytheism of sins that entail shortcomings in one's *tawhid* or knowledge of the divine unity, but do not entail leaving Islam. Examples include affection towards someone for the sake of something that is wrongdoing (called *shirk* because one hopes to benefit from what Allah has placed no benefit in), or disliking someone because of something that is right (called *shirk* because one apprehends harm from what Allah has placed benefit in), or the sin of showing off in acts of worship, as mentioned in the *sahih* or rigorously authenticated hadith that the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said, **The slightest bit of showing off in good works is shirk** (*al-Mustadrak ala al-Sahihayn*. 4 vols. Hyderabad, 1334/1916. Reprint (with index vol. 5). Beirut: Dar al-Marifa, n.d., 1.4). Such sins do not put one outside of Islam, though they are disobedience and do show a lack of faith (*iman*).

Scholars say that the lesser *shirk* of such sins is meant by the hadith, for if the greater *shirk* of unbelief were intended, the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) would not have referred to such individuals as being *in my Umma*, since unbelief (*kufr*) is separate and distinct from Islam, and necessarily outside of it. This is also borne out by another version of the hadith related from Abu Bakr (*Nawadir al-usul*, 397), which has *fikum* or "among you" in place of the words "in my Umma", a direct reference to the Sahaba or prophetic Companions, none of whom was a *mushrik* or idolator, by unanimous consensus (*ijma*) of all Muslim scholars. As for sins of lesser *shirk*, it cannot be lost on anyone why their hiddenness is compared in the hadith to the imperceptible creeping of ants across a great smooth stone on a black night; namely, because of the subtlety of human motives, and the ease with which human beings can deceive themselves.

Similarly, al-Bukhari relates that the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said: "Truly, you shall follow the ways of those who were before you, span by span, and cubit by cubit, until, if they were to enter a lizards lair, you would follow them." We said, "O Messenger of Allah, the Jews and Christians?" And he said, "Who else?"

(*Sahih al-Bukhari*. 9 vols. Cairo 1313/1895. Reprint (9 vols. in 3). Beirut: Dar al-Jil, n.d., 9.126: 7320).

This hadith is also used by modern movements claiming to be a return to the Quran and sunna, to suggest that the majority of ordinary Sunni Muslims who follow the *aqida* (tenets of faith) or *fiqh* of mainstream orthodox Sunni Imams (whose classic works seldom fully correspond with their views) are intended by this hadith, while there is much evidence that the orthodox majority of the Umma is divinely protected from error, such as the *sahih* hadith related by al-Hakim that "**Allah's hand is over the group, and whoever diverges from them diverges to hell**" (*al-Mustadrak*, 1.116). Such hadiths show that Quranic verses like "**If you obey most of those on earth, they will lead you astray from the path of Allah**" (Quran, 6:116) do not refer to those who follow traditional Islamic scholarship (who have never been a majority of those on earth), but rather the non-Muslim majority of mankind.

It is fitter to regard the previously-mentioned hadiths wording of following the Jews and Christians as referring, in our times, to the Muslims who copy the West in all aspects of their lives, rational and irrational, even to the extent of building banks in Muslim cities and holy places never before sullied by usury (*riba*) on an institutional basis since pre-Islamic times. Or those who promote divisive sectarian ideologies under the guise of reform movements among the Muslims, as the Jews and Christians did in their respective religions.

Traditional scholarship is protected from such misguidance by the authentic knowledge it has preserved, living teacher from living teacher, in unbroken succession back to the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace). To return to our question, without such a quality control process, the unaided reader of hadith cannot hope to become a sort of homemade alim, giving *fatwas* on the basis of what he finds in al-Bukhari or Muslim alone, because the *sahih* hadiths related to Islamic legal questions are by no means found only in these two works, but in a great many others, which those who issue judgements on these questions must know. I have mentioned elsewhere some of the sciences needed by the scholar to join between all the hadiths, and that some hadiths condition each other or are conditioned by more general or more specific hadiths or Quranic verses that bear on the question. Without this knowledge, and a traditional sheikh to learn it from, one must necessarily stumble, something I know because I have personally tried.

When I first came to Jordan in 1980, someone had impressed upon my mind that a Muslim needs nothing besides the Quran and *sahih* hadiths. After reading through the Arabic Quran with the aid of A.J. Arberry's *Koran Interpreted* and recording what I understood, I sat down with the Muhammad Muhsin Khan translation of *Sahih al-Bukhari* and went through all the hadiths, volume by volume, writing down everything they seemed to tell a Muslim to do. It was an effort to cut through the centuries of accretions to Islam that orientalists had taught me about at the University of Chicago, an effort to win through to pure Islam from the original sources themselves. My Salafism and my orientalism converged on this point.

At length, I produced a manuscript of selected hadiths of al-Bukhari, a sort of do-it-yourself *sharia* manual. I still use it as an index to hadiths in al-Bukhari, though the *fiqh* conclusions of my amateur *ijtihad*s are now rather embarrassing. When hadiths were mentioned that seemed to contradict each other, I would simply choose whichever I wanted, or whichever was closer to my Western habits. After all, I said, the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) was never given a choice between

two matters except that he chose the easier of the two (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, 4.230: 3560). For example, I had been told that it was not sunna to urinate while standing up, and had heard the hadith of Aisha that anyone who says the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) passed urine while standing up, do not believe him (*Musnad al-Imam Ahmad*. 6 vols. Cairo 1313/1895. Reprint. Beirut: Dar Sadir, n.d., 6.136). But then I read the hadith in al-Bukhari that the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) once urinated while standing up (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, 1.66: 224), and decided that what I had first been told was a mistake, or that perhaps it did not matter much. Only later, when I began translating the Arabic of the Shafi'i *fiqh* manual **Reliance of the Traveller** did I find out how the scholars of *sharia* had combined the implications of these hadiths; that the standing of the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) to pass urine was to teach the Umma that it was not unlawful (*haram*), but rather merely offensive (*makruh*)--though in relation to the Prophet such actions were not offensive, but rather obligatory to do at least once to show the Umma they were not unlawful--or according to other scholars, to show it was permissible in situations in which it would prevent urine from spattering one's clothes.

In retrospect, my early misadventures in hadith enabled me to appreciate the way the *fiqh* I later studied had joined between all hadiths, something I had personally been unable to do. And I understood why, of the top hadith Imams, **Imam al-Bukhari** took his Shafi'i jurisprudence from the disciple of Imam Shafi'i, Abdullah ibn al-Zubayr al-Humaydi (al-Subki, *Tabaqat al-Shafi'iyya al-kubra*. 10 vols. Cairo: Isa al-Babi al-Halabi, 1383/1964, 2.214), and why Imams **Muslim**, **al-Tirmidhi**, **Abu Dawud**, and **al-Nasai** also **followed the Shafi'i school** (Mansur Ali Nasif, *al-Taj al-jami li al-usul fi ahadith al-Rasul*. 5 vols. Cairo 1382/1962. Reprint. Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi, n.d., 1.16), as did **al-Bayhaqi**, **al-Hakim**, **Abu Nuaym**, **Ibn Hibban**, **al-Daraqutni**, **al-Baghawi**, **Ibn Khuzayma**, **al-Suyuti**, **al-Dhahabi**, **Ibn Kathir**, **Nur al-Din al-Haythami**, **al-Mundhiri**, **al-Nawawi**, **Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani**, **Taqi al-Din al-Subki** and others; why Imams such as **Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Jawzi** followed the **madhhab of Ahmad ibn Hanbal**; and why **Abu Jafar al-Tahawi**, **Ali al-Qari**, **Jamal al-Din al-Zaylai** (the African sheikh of Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, thought by some to have been even more knowledgeable than him), and **Badr al-Din al-Ayni** followed the **Hanafi school**.

These facts speak eloquently as to the role of hadith in the *sharia* in the eyes of these Imams, for whom it was not a matter of practicing either *fiqh* or hadith, as some Muslims seriously suggest today, but rather, the *fiqh* of hadith embodied in the traditional *madhhabs* which they followed. There would seem to be room for many of us to benefit from their example.

