

MIFTAAH SEMINAR

INTRODUCTION TO THE SCIENCES OF HADITH



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SESSION 1

Defining Hadith

- When the word hadith is mentioned, it refers to one of the following three definitions:
 - The statements, actions, and tacit approvals of the Prophet SAW
 - Tacit approvals means things that when they were done in the presence of the Prophet SAW, he did not disapprove it.
 - This definition is typically found in the books in the principles of Islamic law.
 - The three components of this definition help to formulate legal rulings.
 - The physical attributes and character traits of the Prophet SAW
 - The Prophet's SAW personality was an important part of hadith for the scholars of hadith (muhadithoon) who wrote the hadith books.
 - The statements and actions of the Companions
 - When we look at the early collections of hadith, they included hadith from the Prophet SAW as well as from the companions and their successors.
 - They included statements, actions, and legal rulings of companions and successors of the Prophet SAW

- Synonyms for Hadith include:
 - Athar - refers to the first definition of hadith
 - Khabar - refers to the first definition of hadith
 - Sunnah - has been used synonymously with hadith by scholars
- Every hadith consists of a chain (sanad) and a text (matn).
 - The chain is the chain of people who passed down the narration of the hadith.
 - The text (matn) includes the actual hadith (what the Prophet SAW said).
 - A hadith has several different chains.

Hadith vs Sunnah

- A hadith is simply a historical report.
 - It tells us about the history of the Prophet SAW and the companions.
- Sunnah is the tradition of the Prophet SAW.
 - It is what the Prophet SAW intended to be followed.
 - It is more related to law.
 - Legal rulings can be derived from the sunnah.
- Example:
 - Abu Ishaq said that: A man once asked Al-Bara' ibn 'Azib: "Was the face of the Messenger of Allah SAW like a sword?" He replied, "No, rather it was like the moon."
 - There is no legal ruling derived from this, therefore, it is not referred to as sunnah.
- The hadith scholars typically did not differentiate between the terms sunnah and hadith.
 - They used them interchangeably.
 - When they used the term sunnah, they did not have concern about whether you could act on the hadith or not.

Why is Hadith Important?

- Islamic civilization was built upon **both** the revelation of Quran and the life of the Prophet SAW.
- Hadith is the second most important source of law for Muslims.
- It explains the Quran.
- It has legislative power.
- Hadith displays model behavior for Muslim society.
 - It informs us of how the Quran impacted society and affected human behavior.
 - The Quran tells us how we are supposed to behave theoretically and hadith shows us how to actually implement it into our lives.
- The study of hadith allows us to gain proximity to the Prophet SAW.
 - It allows us to learn more about the Prophet SAW and love him more.
 - It also allows us to become closer to him SAW in the way that we act when we follow the hadith.
- Hadith allows us to understand and appreciate history.
 - It allows us to be critical of where we are getting our knowledge.
 - We know that hadith is very critically analyzed to ensure its authenticity.
 - This should encourage us to make sure that any history (world history, American history, etc.) which we study is accurate.

Authority of Hadith

- One of the common objections against hadith is the idea that hadith was not recorded until the time of Imam Bukhari (about 200 years after the life of the Prophet SAW).
 - There have been books written about the collection of hadith which counter these objections.
- It is important to understand the sources of these objections. These include:
 - Missionaries
 - In the 1700s and 1800s missionary work began in the Muslim countries.
 - Missionaries found it difficult to convert Muslims due to their commitment to the Prophet SAW, so they began to object hadith as a way of convincing them.
 - Western Historians
 - Some people began to look at the Islamic tradition and could not find similar references in their own traditions so they developed a jealousy for Muslims.
 - For this reason they began to look for objections in the preservation of Islamic history rather than admit that their own history was not well preserved.
 - Uneducated Muslims
 - Some uneducated Muslims began to repeat the objections which came from others and this caused them to spread.
- There are different types of objections including:
 - Objections which try to limit the scope of authority of the Prophet SAW.
 - Some try to limit the Prophet's SAW authority to only his lifetime or to just religious authority.
 - Objections which are about the preservation of hadith.

- The Quran emphasizes the importance of engaging with the Prophet's SAW hadith.

بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ
(16:44)

(16:44) We raised the Messengers earlier with Clear Signs and Divine Books, and We have now sent down this Reminder upon you that you may elucidate to people the teaching that has been sent down for them, and that the people may themselves reflect.

- This verse indicates that the Prophet SAW had a duty to explain to mankind the verses which were being revealed.
 - This shows that there is a **need** for explanation of the Quran or else it may be misunderstood.
 - If Allah SWT has preserved the Quran, He will also preserve the explanation of the Quran which comes to us through hadith.
- Allah SWT also said:

لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ
(3:164)

(3:164) Surely Allah conferred a great favour on the believers when He raised from among them a Messenger to recite to them His signs, and to purify them, and to teach them the Book and Wisdom. For before that they were in manifest error.

- This shows that the Prophet SAW was not only given the responsibility of conveying the message, but he was told to teach it as well.

وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ
الْعِقَابِ (59:7)

(59:7)...So accept whatever the Messenger gives you, and refrain from whatever he forbids you. And fear Allah: verily Allah is Most Stern in retribution.

- The Prophet SAW did not only speak to relay Quran.
 - He said things by his own will as well.
- He forbid other things which were not mentioned in the Quran and this verse proves that we must also follow what the Prophet SAW forbade

Preservation of Hadith

- Many people might assume that preservation is **only** through written documentation, however this is not true.
- There are different methods of preserving hadith. These include:
 - Practice (Ta'amul)
 - The companions, lived, breathed, emulated and practiced the teachings of the Prophet SAW.
 - The Hanafi and Maaliki scholars were particularly concerned with this.
 - If they had an isolated hadith they would look at the practice of the people of the earlier generation (Abu Bakr RA, Umar RA, the people of Madinah, etc.) and if they saw that their actions did not align with the hadith, they would look at the hadith as potentially an acceptance and most likely not what the Prophet SAW typically did.
 - Oral Transmission (Riwayah)
 - There are people who argue that oral transmission is actually a stronger way to preserve hadith than writing it.

- They stated that when hadith was written down, it may lose its context.
- When it is stated verbally, the context is better understood.
- Written Compilation (Kitabah)
 - Hadith was being written down before Imam Bukhari's time.
 - There were 50 different companions who had their own personal written compilations of hadith.
 - There were about 251 written works on hadith that existed before Imam Bukhari's time.

The Isnad System

- It is important to understand how it is that we attribute a statement to the Prophet SAW.
- Sanad is the chain of people who passed down the hadith.
 - Every narrator in that chain is analyzed.
 - Their biographies are analyzed to see if they are reliable sources of information.
- One can not simply analyze just one chain of hadith.
 - There are several different chains for a hadith which must be assessed.
 - This way, if one person in one of the chains narrates the hadith differently than everyone else in the other several chains, we can be aware that they may not be a reliable source for hadith.

Sanad Classification

- Hadith can be classified based on 4 different factors:
 - Acceptability
 - Is it Saheeh, Hasan, Daeef, etc?
 - Origin
 - Is it a statement of the Prophet SAW, a companion, a hadith qudsi, etc?
 - Interruption
 - Is there someone missing in the chain?
 - Interruption was indicative of weakness of a hadith for some scholars.
 - Path of Transmission
 - How many paths of transmission are there for this hadith?
 - If enough companions narrated the same hadith, it would make it more authentic.