

SUMMER IMMERSION

CERTAINTY IN TRANSMISSION



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Introduction

Benefits of Acquiring Knowledge

- We should be certain that every moment that we spend on acquiring knowledge is being rewarded by Allah. This is an investment in ourselves.
- The first and most important benefit of knowledge is to the seeker of knowledge and secondly, it is an investment in our future as we continue to gain knowledge.
- Knowledge shapes our thinking. It teaches us to look at things in a certain perspective, with understanding and insight.
- Seeking knowledge is one of the most virtuous things. It is a great investment for our akhirah. It is one of the things that makes it very easy to enter into Jannah.
 - Narrated Abu Hurairah: that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

"مَنْ سَلَكَ طَرِيقًا يَتَمَسَّ فِيهِ عِلْمًا سَهَّلَ اللَّهُ لَهُ طَرِيقًا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ"

"Whoever takes a path upon which to obtain knowledge, Allah makes the path to Paradise easy for him." (Jami` at-Tirmidhi)

- The benefit of knowledge often spreads to those around us; our families, those we spend time with the most etc. We will have something to impart, something to share and something to spread with them.
- When knowledge is acquired in the right setting, with the right intention and with the right amount of effort, it propels a person to keep learning. Knowledge can be very addictive and once you get a taste of it.

Mutawatir Hadith

- In this class, we will be covering a collection of hadiths which is very unique in many aspects.
- These hadiths are all very well-known and they fall under a category of hadith called mutawatir (mass-transmitted) hadith.
- Mutawatir hadith means it is reported by a large number of narrators at every generation.
- The first generation are the companions of the Prophet (ﷺ); numerous companions have transmitted a hadith. And from those companions, numerous successors transmitted it, followed by numerous people in the next generation and so on and so forth.
- There are not only many narrators in every generation, but there are so many pathways to the hadith.
- There are two portions of a hadith:
 - 1. Isnad (chain of transmission)
 - This is the first portion of the hadith that is oftentimes not reported when it is publicly circulated.
 - For example, if a hadith was narrated by Abu Hurairah, Imam Bukhari will mention a chain of narrators; from the name of his teacher, the name of the person his teacher narrated the hadith from, the person's teacher and it continues right up to the companion and finally the Prophet (ﷺ), its original source.

- 2. Matn (text)
 - The second portion of the hadith is the text of the hadith. This refers to that the words the Prophet (ﷺ) said, the action that he performed, or the situation that he experienced.
- Mutawatir is not just about the words but the back end of the hadith; how many people transmitted the hadith. A significant number of companions heard the hadith from the Prophet (ﷺ), and from them, an even larger group of people heard the hadith, and from them many more people who heard it.
- For example, sometimes, Imam Bukhari will narrate the hadith with one chain and sometimes for one hadith he'll have many chains because he has also heard a hadith from many teachers. Sometimes, it is his teacher who will have many chains because he has heard it from many people. Sometimes, it is the person in the generation above his teachers that have heard it from many people. Hence, each one of these is an isnad – a pathway that the hadith is transmitted.
- Mutawatir hadith has many pathways.
- The definition of mutawatir:
 - A hadith that is transmitted on the basis of sensory input. Meaning, it has nothing to do with a theoretical, hypothetical or rational situation, but rather it is a fact that someone has personally seen it or heard it. (i.e. A companion will say "I heard the Prophet (ﷺ) saying...").
 - In some cases, it's an action of the Prophet (ﷺ). For example, when the companion is relating it, he demonstrates that action to his students. These students who have seen the demonstration of the action will then transmit it in the exact same way to their students and so on and so forth.

- It is considered unquestionable in its authenticity because:
 - The numbers of transmitters across the generations are so large that it is inconceivable that they could have all colluded on something false or coincidentally narrated something incorrect.
 - It's not possible because these are people who have heard for example the Prophet (ﷺ) say something on different occasions and they have then transmitted it to numerous people on different occasions. There is no connection between them and they could be people from different parts of the world coming to their seniors and taking the hadith and then spreading it throughout the world.
 - In addition, the number is large and significant in every generation, from the beginning of the chain all the way to the end of the chain. And from the beginning to the end, it is based on something that the narrator actually heard or actually saw.
- When a hadith falls into this category, it means that it is a hadith that is beyond famous. There is a category of famous hadith known as mashhur hadith – but it is a step below mutawatir. Meaning, mutawatir hadith is above mashhur.
- Similarly, the Qur'an is something reported with tawatur, meaning it has been transmitted through a large number of reliable sources in each generation since its revelation, ensuring its authenticity. So many companions heard it through the Prophet (ﷺ) and passed it on through successive generations that it is impossible for them to collude and fabricate a lie.
 - The Qur'an also indirectly guides us to pay attention towards something that is mass transmitted to the point where it's an undeniable fact. For example, in the Qur'an, Allah says:

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِأَصْحَابِ الْفَيْلِ

*Have you not seen 'O Prophet' how your Lord dealt with the Army of the Elephant?
(105:1)*

- The first address of this ayah is to the Prophet (ﷺ); he was born after the incident of the elephants. And secondly, to everyone. Despite not seeing this event, the reports of that incident were mass-transmitted through so many sources, across so many generations, that it cannot possibly be false and it's an undeniable fact.
- Ignoring it is like ignoring something that you can see with your eyes, and knowing it is like knowing something that you have personally observed. This is the significance of tawatur.
- In terms of the large numbers, there are no specific or fixed number of people, but rather there are two things that are looked at:
 - 1. The significant numbers of narrators
 - 2. The quality of the narrators
- The most relied upon view across the board is that there is no fixed number. According to the muhaddithun, we look at the qualitative outcome. Meaning, does the report result in certainty or not.
- Once it results in certainty, then it cannot be refuted. Because it cannot be refuted, it gives the benefit of what is called Al-Ilm Al-Dururi or necessary knowledge. This means the concept that is raised in these reports are irrefutable; they cannot be rejected.
 - For example, even if there are a handful of companions that narrated it, all of them are reliable narrators. They are upright, just and accurate narrators of anything that they saw or heard from the Prophet (ﷺ).

- For example, even a small number of people from the generation after them that are reporting from the companions are great imams and people who have already been vetted and thoroughly verified, and they are also of the same caliber in terms of their memory, retention, precision, accuracy and diligence in transmission. Hence, it gives the same benefit as if they were a large number of people and even if they weren't at the top tier as the companions.
- Some muhaddithun however, say there is a minimum threshold. There are varying views on this.
 - For example, some say the minimum threshold is four. While most mutawatir hadiths have more than four companions that are narrating, they say that there has to be at least four in every generation. They used the analogy of a minimum of four witnesses to prove someone guilty of zina.
 - For example, some say the minimum threshold is five. They used the analogy of the five oaths and testimonies that are required in li'an. The husband makes five oaths or testimonies, to avoid punishment for slandering his wife with adultery or denying paternity. The first four oaths involve swearing by Allah that he is truthful in his accusation, and the fifth involves invoking Allah's curse upon himself if he is lying. Thus, some say the minimum is five narrations.
 - For example, some say the minimum threshold is ten because the Qur'an when using the word ten it says that ten is a complete number. While others say twelve and seventy, according to different statements.
- Mutawatir hadith relieves us of the need to scrutinize individual narrators because the hadith has been mass-transmitted. This gives us certainty. Hence, there is no discussion whether or not the mutawatir hadith is sahih, because the fact is that it is at the highest level of sahih.

- Other categories of hadith that are under mutawatir are called khabar al-wahid – they could be narrated by individuals or groups. Nevertheless, somewhere in the sanad there could be only one narrator. Thus, these types of hadiths are scrutinized for authenticity. It could be sahih, gharib, hasan, daif etc.
- Different categories of mutawatir:
 - 1. Mass transmission of the isnad
 - This type of tawatur pertains to the isnad itself where the hadith is transmitted from certain individuals, and everyone who narrated from them, agree that it's those same individuals that the hadith is transmitted from. Meaning, it is a mass agreement that it's not transmitted from any from anyone else.
 - 2. Mass transmission of action of the Prophet (ﷺ)
 - This is called tawatur amali. In the content of the hadith, if there was a particular action of the Prophet (ﷺ) that is reported in the hadith, while the act may have occurred on many different occasions, there are so many hadiths citing that action that it is undeniable that it was done by the Prophet (ﷺ).
 - For example, the Prophet (ﷺ) raising his hands in du'a is not something that happened as a one-off but it happened throughout his lifetime and on numerous occasions. Hence, despite it being transmitted through so many different pathways, it is an undeniable act performed by the Prophet (ﷺ).
 - Another example of tawatur amali is something that was done by the Prophet (ﷺ) and then it was copied by the companions, and then after that copied by the generation after them.

- In each generation, there were so many people who did it across generations that it is undeniably a part of deen; even though there were only a few narrations, many people reported about the action. For example, there are many hadiths that talk about the Prophet (ﷺ) using the siwak.
- 3. Mass transmission of a concept or event
 - It is a concept or an event that is cited across so many hadiths, that the concept is proven by tawatur.
 - There are certain miracles of the Prophet (ﷺ) that fall under this category. There are different companions narrating it and it's mentioned in different contexts, but so many people have reported it and across these different narrations that are covering a wide range of subjects, that one miracle is mentioned in every single one of them and hence, it becomes undeniable.
 - Another example is the return of Isa AS before qiyamah. This concept is mentioned in so many hadiths and it reaches the extent of tawatur. Thus, it forms an undeniable part of our belief system. It is not something that can be ignored nor is it up for speculation because it has been mentioned in so many hadiths.

Imam al-Suyuti's Compilation of Mutawatir Hadith

- The book we will be studying is Qatf al-Azhar (A Collection of Mass-Transmitted Hadith) compiled by Imam al-Suyuti.
- He was a polymath. He had a very high degree of expertise in many different fields, many different sciences and many different branches of knowledge.

- He was an expert in tafsir and all areas of tafsir, as well as hadith and all areas of hadith.
- He has left behind over 600 books, covering a wide range of topics and some of them are voluminous. For example, his Al-Jami' al-Kabir is a massive hadith collection.
- While this collection we are studying is very brief compared to his larger works, there was an amount of diligence that was required for him to compile it. For example, under the hadith, there are the names of the companions and the books that the hadiths are transmitted in. These narrations are all scattered across different books, across many volumes.
- He wanted to disseminate this knowledge to the masses, and thus he compiled a shorter version of his larger work.
- There were some prominent scholars who claimed that it's very rare and hard to find a mutawatir hadith and thus, he wanted to make a point through this work and used it as proof that there are a lot of mutawatir hadiths.

Hadith 1

- We need to pay attention to the key wording of the hadith and shouldn't get stuck in the different wordings of different narrations.
- In this narration, "Whoever deliberately lies about me" – meaning, someone who attributes something falsely to me.
- In another narration, "Whoever attributes something to me and that I've said something that I have not actually said" – meaning, misattribution.
- "...and does so deliberately, then he should prepare his place in the fire of Jahannam."
- This hadith is indicating that it is a grave sin to say or claim that the Prophet (ﷺ) said a certain thing when he never did.

- The words of the Prophet (ﷺ) are a form of revelation. He does not speak from his own whims and fancies, but it is a revelation that is revealed.
 - Allah said:

وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ ۝ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ ۝

Nor does he speak of his own whims. It is only a revelation sent down 'to him'. (53:3-4)

- To falsely claim that the Prophet (ﷺ) said something, is to falsely claim that Allah said that or Allah revealed that.
 - Allah said:

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ أَفْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا

Who does more wrong than the one who fabricates lies against Allah (6:93)

- It's a major sin there is no disagreement about this. While it is a major sin, it does not mean that the person becomes a kafir, unless they are saying something that is completely against the deen and attributing it to the Prophet (ﷺ).
- The view of Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah is that if a person commits a major sin and they repent from it, it is possible that Allah forgives them. And if they are punished for it, if they had the kalima and had iman in their hearts, one day they will be removed from the fire of hell, as opposed to a disbeliever who will have to reside there forever.
 - Allah said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرِكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ

Indeed, Allah does not forgive associating others with Him 'in worship',¹ but forgives anything else of whoever He wills. (4:48)

- This also invites us to be a little bit diligent when we are quoting hadiths. We may quote from existing hadith compilations. However, to make up something, to fabricate something or to carelessly narrate in such a way that it completely changes the meaning of what was actually said, is unacceptable.

- Instead of saying that he will enter the fire of Jahannam, he said, let him prepare his place in the fire of Jahannam. This indicates a more serious kind of a warning. Meaning, this person is definitely going to go there.
- The few basic rules that we should stick to while learning hadith:
 - 1. Keep our study of hadith to authentic texts; Kutub al-Sittah, the six canonical hadith collections, compilations from authentic sources like Riyad as-Salihin, Mishkat al-Masabih etc. as it is filled with authentic hadith.
 - 2. If we see the hadith as something which comes from an unfamiliar source (i.e. on social media), we should stay away from it.
 - 3. If we have the opportunity to share a hadith, we must try to be diligent in the wordings. If we don't know the wording in Arabic, we must make sure we know the correct translation.
 - We don't want people taking generic information and passing it off as hadiths or being very careless in the transmission of hadiths.
 - We cannot misquote it because we are carelessly misattributing something to the Prophet (ﷺ) which is a serious offence.
 - The companions were afraid of inaccuracies while narrating hadith. This is the reason why some companions like Abu Bakr, Zubayr ibn al-Awwam, despite spending so much time with the Prophet (ﷺ), narrated very limited hadith. Meanwhile companions like Abu Hurairah and Abdullah ibn Mas'ud who narrated a large number of hadith would turn pale whenever they narrated hadith. Thus, we should be more afraid of inaccuracies.

- 4. If we haven't read that hadith ourselves in a reliable source, we should not narrate it. It is better to stay quiet than narrate something that has no basis.
 - For example, hadiths that are narrated in the talks we listen to – we might share it without knowing the context. However, the wise and diligent ones will go back and double check anything that was referenced. If we are certain, only then we can share it.
- 5. If somebody presents to us a hadith, only until we verify it, or until at least we know where the hadith is, or what the exact wording of the hadith is, and unless the person sharing it is a person of knowledge, we should not take it at face value. The careless person will take whatever they hear and they will pass it on.

- Abu Hurairah said: The Prophet (ﷺ) said,
"كفى بالمرء كذبًا أن يحدث بكل ما سمع".

"It is enough for a man to prove himself a liar when he goes on narrating whatever he hears." (Sahih Muslim)

- This statement applies to the hadith of the Prophet (ﷺ) and also to other things unverified things.
- 6. If we listen to the talks of people, we should know they are well-versed in what they're saying and they should have some kind of a certification in what they're talking about.
 - As a consumer of information, we need to be selective in who we take our knowledge from.