

MIFTAAH HADITH INTENSIVE

SESSION 3

Sahih Bukhari: Chapter on The Beginning of Revelation (Cont.)

Hadith #3

- This hadith tells us how we should receive revelation. When the Prophet (ﷺ) first receives divine revelation and he is told to read, he negates himself: مَا أَنَا "I am not".
- This indicates an extremely essential adab when engaging the Qur'an. We have to humble ourselves in front of it instead of projecting our collective opinions on the Qur'an if we want to receive nur, hidayah, shifa etc. from it.
- When we negate ourselves and submit to the fact that "I am not" we are embodying the Prophet (ﷺ) and his orientation. This is contradictory to Iblis whose insistence is upon "I am" due to his lack of willingness to submit.
- The "I am" principle denotes a false sense of supremacy and it is a pathway of self-destruction. It was what brought Iblis to his exile and made him the accursed.
- The Prophet (ﷺ) enjoyed being in the cave of Hira, but he was suddenly constricted after facing this intense experience. These constrictions represent a few things:
 - 1. Physical submission:
 - He could not move his body and it entered him into a totality of submission in his servanthood.
 - This is what we should aspire to be, ibad al-Rahman.

- Intellectual submission:
 - He acknowledged his incapability to fulfill the command of Allah.
 - Imam Ghazali says the command to read is reading the reality as it is; that Allah is al-Haqq.
- 3. Spiritual submission:
 - He became fearful, that even his place of comfort became a place of fear.
 - The reality of the divine is from the divine. Hence, the reality of our soul is that it cannot be devoid of Allah.
- The secret to opening the door of the divine was finally revealed after three times. The key is in ب – whereby everything is by Allah; in the name of Allah.
- This is an acknowledgement of لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ, “There is no power and no strength except with Allah.”
- We cannot function without Allah and we are insignificant in our essence. The reality of ourselves is that we are nothing but a clinging clot.
- The only real dignity is the pathway to Allah, as He is The One that dignifies. He is Al-Akram (the Most Generous) to afford us dignity.
- The bond between the Prophet (ﷺ) and Khadija RA was unbreakable. She was a beloved wife who supported him as a seeker at this time.
- The experience was unsettling for the Prophet (ﷺ) that he became worried about himself. Scholars say, the first step in the station of a seeker is discomfort.
- Most people fail as they are unable to withstand the agitation of this station. Nevertheless, we have to embrace it and push through it.
- Khadija referenced the Prophet’s characteristics at the beginning of revelation. This is important to highlight as our character represents who we are.
- She also displayed the spirit of helping others. To genuinely come to the aid of others in their times of hardship is to feel for them deeply in our hearts, and this is a heavy burden to carry.
- Khadija’s cousin, Waraqa, was a learned person who was able to read and write in both Hebrew and Arabic. This shows us that he was able to comprehend the previous scriptures.

- The interaction between them is filled with kindness, respect and the usage of beautiful language.
- النَّامُوسُ – Means the carrier of secrets; referring to Jibril
- The scholars say, at this time, the Prophet (ﷺ) is a Nabi and not yet a Rasul. His Messengership began with the revelation of Surah Al-Muddaththir.
- The Prophet's shocked reaction that his people would turn against him tells us the reality that when Islam enters into a space, it problematizes the space – it shifts the status quo.
- In presenting Islam, we are bound to face rejection and dislike from others. Hence, we should not be obsessed with the notion of being socially validated or accepted.
- Islam is what it is, we have to embrace it. Our mission is to preserve, convey, and represent the Deen with dignity.

Hadith #4

- This hadith tells us about fatrat al-wahy, the temporary cessation of revelation. It was a period of time that caused the Prophet (ﷺ) a lot of agony after tasting the sweetness of revelation.
- In the cave of Hira, the Prophet (ﷺ) did not see Jibril in his full form. However, when Jibril appeared this time, he saw him sitting on a chair between the heavens and the earth.
- Revelation was temporarily cut-off because the Prophet (ﷺ) did not say insha'Allah as he had been accustomed to receiving it upon being questioned.
- This teaches us that we should never lose sight as everything happens by the will of Allah.
- When we are being questioned, it is also part of our tradition to say "لا أدري" "I don't know".
- We have to acknowledge our ignorance. Imam Malik once answered 36 questions saying, "I don't know."
- Beyond this, it is important to study and learn in order not to stay ignorant. This is why اِفْرَأْ is not a command to profess our knowledge. It is a command to increase and acquire knowledge.

Narrator Criticism

- The science of narrator criticism refers to the process of determining the reliability of a narrator. It ultimately boils down to two aspects; *adalah* and *dabt*.
- The scholars of hadith documented everything that they could about a narrator. They used four methods to assess the reliability of a narrator and determine their standing:
 - 1. Observation
 - They would spend time with the person and observe his everyday life.
 - 2. Asking questions
 - Through personal interrogation, they would ask questions to see if the person is making up information.
 - 3. Asking people around
 - By using existing information about the person, they would check with others if they see discrepancies, if the person cannot be trusted etc.
 - 4. Comparative analysis
 - Verifying the person's track record through their narrations and making a cross analysis.
 - For example, they would categorize the students or the source into different groups and then compare against the narrations of those who are reliable to determine if the person is acceptable.
 - This was the most frequently used method.
- The scholars have gone to great lengths to make sure all lives of these narrators are documented. Once they went through this process, they documented it in books of *al-jarḥ wa al-ta'dīl*.
- These books are the largest repositories of Islam; they were based on different genres and categorizations.
- Some methods of compilation for *al-jarḥ wa al-ta'dīl* books were based on: reliable/unreliable narrators, different regions, compilation of narrators from different books etc.

- In the 300s, the science of al-jarḥ wa al-ta'dīl began. Ibn Abi Hatim al-Razi who was born in Rayy (north-eastern Iran) saw the gaps that needed to be filled in this science.
- Ibn Abi Hatim al-Razi devised a dictionary of hierarchy in terms of reliability and unreliability narrators. Hence, this was when al-jarḥ wa al-ta'dīl was cemented.
- There are three aspects of al-jarḥ wa al-ta'dīl:
 - Terms used for discussing narrators
 - Criteria
 - Process of critique and validation
- Expressions of accreditation:
 - 1. Thiqah (Reliable), Mutqin (Expert), Thabt (Precise)
 - This is the highest tier of reliability
 - Narrations can be adduced in legal discourse
 - 2. Sadiq (Truthful), Mahalluhu al-sidq (His place is of truth), La ba's bihi (No problem)
 - Narrations will be recorded and examined
 - 3. Shaykh (Venerable)
 - Narrations will be recorded and examined, but status is below the sound category
 - 4. Salih al-hadith (Suitable in hadith)
 - Narrations will be recorded for consideration
- Expressions of criticism:
 - 1. Layyin al-hadith (Lenient in hadith)
 - Narrations will be recorded and examined for consideration
 - 2. Laysa bi qawi (Not strong)
 - Like the first in writing of narrations but lower status
 - 3. Da'if al-hadith (Weak in hadith)
 - Below the second and the narrations will be considered
 - 4. Matruk al-hadith (Abandoned in hadith), Dhahib al-hadith (Unreliable in hadith), Khadhab (liar)
 - This is the worst level
 - Unreliable and narrations will not be recorded

Analysis of Counter Arguments

- In the year 400-500, all the hadith narrations and their chains of transmission have been preserved in books of hadith.
- According to scholars of hadith, the Companions are exempt from the process of verification – and this made them all reliable narrators. However, there were contentions over this matter.
- The major contentions were:
 - 1. The presence of hypocrites
 - 2. The Companions would criticize one another
 - 3. The maxim defies human nature
 - 4. Some Companions reportedly committed major offences

Types of Weak Ahadith

- Common misconceptions about da'if hadith:
 - It is baseless
 - It is an evil that has crept into society
 - Any books featuring da'if hadith should be shunned
 - Anyone who narrates da'if hadith should be shunned
- There are different levels of weaknesses in a da'if hadith. A hadith that is da'if doesn't necessarily mean that the narration is weak.
- A hadith may be considered weak due to three things:
- #1. The weakness of its narrators
 - Their character
 - Their capacity and ability to accurately transmit the hadith
 - Despite the weakness of its narrators, it can be strengthened through other narrations.
 - There are different approaches taken by scholars based on al-jarḥ wa al-ta'dīl, which changes the outcome of a hadith. And some scholars were stricter than others in ruling out a narrator.
 - Criticism of a narrator are mainly based on:
 - Adalah
 - If they are a good practicing Muslim; did they adhere to the tenets of Islam
 - If they had the correct belief system

- If they had accurate speech; were they truthful and honest
- Dabt
 - If they were alert and able to capture exactly as it was transmitted
 - If they narrated with precision and accuracy as it was narrated
 - Contention arises when the mistakes made are frequent; it shows that their memory is unreliable and their documentations are inaccurate.
- #2. The relationship between the narrators and the teacher
 - There is a missing link between the narrator and teacher; one or more names were not mentioned.
 - Have they met each other and at what phase did they meet etc.
- #3. The wording of the hadith
 - The wording of the narration is completely different that it cannot be reconciled with other narrations.

Scholars' Approach on Weak Ahadith

- There are differences in opinion with regards to da'if hadith. However, the opinion of one scholar does not break consensus, nor does it change the view about something.
- Imam Nawawi summarizes the collective approach to da'if hadith:
 - It is permissible to the scholars of hadith as well as other scholars of Deen, to use a lenient approach in matters of da'if hadith provided that it is not fabricated.
 - It is permissible to act upon da'if hadith because the message it is conveying will be well-established in Deen and well-known to the scholars of Deen – that the teaching has a strong basis in Islam.
- Ibn al-Salah makes a clear distinction between fabricated (mawdu') hadith and weak (da'if) hadith:
 - The worst of all hadith is the fabricated one. For anyone who knows that it is fabricated, it is not halal for them to narrate it in any context except with the disclaimer to explain that it is fabricated.

- As for other hadith that fall into the category of da'if, in which there is a strong possibility that the matter that is conveyed is actually true, it is permissible to narrate such ahadith in matters of targhib (virtues of good deeds) and tarhib (warnings to abstain from bad deeds).
- This shows us that the practical implementation of weak ahadith is permissible in the context of encouragement of virtuous deeds as well as abstaining from bad deeds.
- With regards to rulings for halal and haram, or necessitating something as fard or wajib, we do not rely on da'if hadith. Nevertheless, for rulings on makruh, mustahab and masnun, da'if hadith have been used.
- Da'if hadith have also been relied upon in matters in which there are no rulings found in sahih hadith. This is because it has some basis in the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ).
- It is better to take a hadith that is weak in terms of its chain, but in which its meaning and ruling that it is conveying is absolutely sound rather than take someone's opinion.
- The da'if hadith can be implemented if it is supported in the usul of Deen and other hadith. Therefore, da'if hadith should not be shunned.
- The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

مَنْ حَدَّثَ عَنِّي بِحَدِيثٍ يُرَى أَنَّهُ كَذِبٌ فَهُوَ أَحَدُ الْكَاذِبَيْنِ

"Whoever narrates a Hadith from me thinking it to be false, then he is one of the two liars." (Either the one who invents a lie or the one who repeats it; both are liars). (Sahih Muslim)

- Based on the above mentioned hadith, Imam Tirmidhi asked his teacher, Imam Darimi, who was a great scholar of al-jarḥ wa al-ta'dīl: "If someone narrates hadith knowing there is a flaw in the chain, will he be included in the warning of the hadith?"
- Imam Darimi responded, "No. The context of the hadith is that someone narrates a hadith and there is no known basis of the narration but he goes and narrates it anyway."
- According to Ibn Taymiyyah, "If a hadith is da'if and it has no known basis in the source of it, but the primary teaching of the hadith is well-established or it falls under one of the principles of Deen, then it is permissible to narrate and practice."

- In their fiqh approach, both Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal and Imam Abu Hanifa, preferred taking a weak hadith over someone else's opinion.
- The greatest muhadditheen who were most stringent in ilm ar-rijāl were very lenient when it came to using da'if hadith for virtues and warnings. These are some examples:
 - Abdullah ibn Mubarak, whose narrations are hujjah and is one of the scholars of al-jarḥ wa al-ta'dīl, compiled various narrations from sahih to da'if hadith in his book, Kitab az-Zuhd. He justified its usage in targhib and tarhib.
 - Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal in his renowned Musnad and Kitab az-Zuhd similarly gathered narrations from sahih to da'if but none of the hadith pertained to aqaid, halal and haram. They were simply about virtues.
 - Imam Abu Dawud in his Sunan brought various ahadith into his collection. His objective was to bring any hadith that is used as evidence by one of the fuqaha.
 - Imam Bukhari, whose book is the gold standard for what is sahih, in his book Al-Adab Al-Mufrad, compiled ahadith about etiquettes and hukuk and used many da'if hadith.
 - Other scholars who have compiled books with da'if hadith: Yahya ibn Ma'in, Ibn Abi Dunya, Ibn Taymiyyah, among others.

Dealing with Problematic Hadith

- Problematic hadith:
 - It means apparently problematic – For example, it may seem unscientific, outdated, illogical etc.
 - It is any objection anyone has against hadith and anything one struggles to understand about a hadith that they come across.
- Reasons people may find issues with a hadith:
 - 1. Unscientific

- Narrated Abu Dharr:

كُنْتُ مَعَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي الْمَسْجِدِ عِنْدَ غُرُوبِ الشَّمْسِ فَقَالَ " يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ أَتَدْرِي أَيْنَ تَغْرُبُ الشَّمْسُ؟ " قُلْتُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ. قَالَ " فَإِنَّهَا تَذْهَبُ حَتَّى تَسْجُدَ تَحْتَ الْعَرْشِ، فَذَلِكَ قَوْلُهُ تَعَالَى {وَالشَّمْسُ تَجْرِي لِمُسْتَقَرٍّ لَهَا ذَلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ} "

Once I was with the Prophet (ﷺ) in the mosque at the time of sunset. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "O Abu Dharr! Do you know where the sun sets?" I replied, "Allah and His Apostle know best." He said, "It goes and prostrates underneath (Allah's) Throne; and that is Allah's Statement:-- 'And the sun runs on its fixed course for a term (decreed). And that is the decree of All-Mighty, the All-Knowing....' (36.38) (Sahih al-Bukhari)

- 2. Absurd

- Narrated `Aisha:

أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ تَزَوَّجَهَا وَهِيَ بِنْتُ سِتِّ سِنِينَ، وَبَنَى بِهَا وَهِيَ بِنْتُ تِسْعِ سِنِينَ. قَالَ هِشَامٌ وَأَنْبِئْتُ أَنَّهَا كَانَتْ عِنْدَهُ تِسْعَ سِنِينَ.

that the Prophet (ﷺ) married her when she was six years old and he consummated his marriage when she was nine years old. Hisham said: I have been informed that `Aisha remained with the Prophet (ﷺ) for nine years (i.e. till his death). (Sahih al-Bukhari)

- 3. Impossible

- When the Prophet (ﷺ) was taken up to the heavens on his night journey, Malik bin Sasaa narrated that he (ﷺ) said:

ثُمَّ أُتِيَتْ بِدَابَّةٍ أَبْيَضَ يُقَالُ لَهُ الْبَرَّاقُ فَوْقَ الْجَمَارِ وَدُونَ الْبَغْلِ يَقَعُ خَطْوُهُ عِنْدَ أَقْصَى طَرَفِهِ فَحُمِلْتُ عَلَيْهِ ثُمَّ انْطَلَقْنَا حَتَّى أَتَيْنَا السَّمَاءَ

I was then brought a white beast which is called al-Buraq, bigger than a donkey and smaller than a mule. Its stride was as long as the eye could reach. I was mounted on it, and then we went forth till we reached the lowest heaven. (Sahih Muslim)

- 4. Contradictory

- Standing while drinking

- Forbidden: Anas reported Allah's Apostle (ﷺ) disapproved the drinking of water while standing. (Sahih Muslim)
- Recommended: Ibn Abbas reported: I served (water of) Zamzam to Allah's Messenger (ﷺ), and he drank it while standing (Sahih Muslim)

- Every hadith whose content is seen as problematic has a specific explanation. In dealing with such issues, we have to give the hadith a second thought.
- Two basic things we should do:
 - 1. Ensure its authenticity
 - We must analyze the hadith to determine its authenticity and ensure it is not fabricated.
 - 2. Ensure a holistic understanding
 - Ali ibn al-Madini said, "Any hadith, until you gather all relevant hadith and build an entire picture, you will never appreciate and understand what is happening."
 - This means we should gather all the different routes of the hadith then see if there are different versions that can resolve the problem.
- Principles used when dealing with contentious hadith:
 - 1. The limits of human reason and experience
 - We have to stop essentializing/universalizing our own experience. Each and every one of us has a world view. There are a lot of assumptions that we take in without questioning.
 - Above our five senses, we have rationality. Therefore, we need to make some deductions and think about it.
 - Using the five senses in our realm, we should rationalize – there is the *ghayb* and nothing in our tradition or shariah is irrational.
 - Once we realize the subjectivity of our experience and understand the objectivity of the shariah as a governing force, we will read the hadith in a different light.
 - There are things in this world that are beyond our comprehension.
 - 2. The importance of contextualization
 - Our understanding of what's right and wrong should not be imposed on the past. We have to appreciate the context.
 - We cannot superimpose our cultural norms and project on the past society – it is unfair.
 - Understanding the Prophet's life will help contextualize hadith and objections people may have.

- For example, the hadith concerning the Prophet's marriage to Aisha at her young age. It was common in pre-modern society and the marital ethics of the Prophet (ﷺ) was done in a certain context. Hence, we should not be quick to judge after reading a hadith.
- 3. The usage of figurative speech (Al-Haqiqah wal-Majaz)
 - When the Prophet (ﷺ) speaks in Arabic, there is a literal way to understand it, yet there is majaz (metaphor) and forms of mubalagha (exaggeration, hyperbole).
 - If we are too literal, we will not be able to appreciate the beauty of the message that is being delivered. One should not get hung up on the words used.
 - We should not read the Qur'an and hadith from a materialistic lens.
 - Science is not the objective of the shariah.
 - For example, the hadith about the sun setting earlier, the Prophet (ﷺ) was trying to make Abu Dharr appreciate that the beauty of the sun is from Allah – we should not see the forest for the trees.
- 4. The need to distinguish between impossibility and unlikelihood
 - Impossibility vs Improbability: Something impossible can never come into existence; it is something that does not make sense. While something improbable or unlikely; it is a subjective assessment.
 - For example, the hadith of the Prophet (ﷺ) flying on the buraq. It is not physically impossible but it is improbable.
 - A lot of things that people think are impossible are actually improbable.
 - Our inability to make sense of improbability stems from our lack of knowledge and weakness. There is so much of the world we have yet to know and grasp.
 - Anything is possible with time and technology, and there is likelihood that it will happen – the same can be said about the akhirah.
 - When we have this outlook and consider these perspectives, over time, things will begin to make more sense and our perspective will change.

Collective Reliability of the Companions (Adalah al-Sahabah)

- The default view on Companions is that they hold a special place in Islam as mentioned in the Qur'an and Sunnah.
- There were 2,500 Companions who dedicated their lives to narrating and transmitting hadith.
- From amongst the 50 prolific narrators of hadith from the Companions, their lives were well-documented. Their lives bear testimony to their reliability.
- These are reasons why the Companions are unverified as narrators:
 - They are verified in the Qur'an and Sunnah
 - Allah praises the Companions and He was pleased with them.
 - The Prophet (ﷺ) said never to criticize his Companions.
 - Anyone who studies about the Companions' lives know that they had no ulterior motive or incentive to lie, make mistakes, or make up information
 - The Companions put their lives at the forefront of Islam and were the first to sacrificed everything for the Prophet (ﷺ) and Allah.
 - The concept of corroborations also existed amongst the Companions
 - When one of them was narrating, others were also there and they could determine based on corroboration.
 - The Companions came from an oral tradition and had strong memory
 - They are unlikely to falter in their memory as they had impeccable memory; they even memorized their genealogy etc.
 - When they relate information, it is firsthand information. The chances of them forgetting something they heard is highly unlikely – they were there.
 - When the Prophet (ﷺ) taught hadith, he would repeat it at least three times, and they would retain it. They then revised and reiterated it to the other Companions before transmitting it.
- As for the presence of hypocrites during the time of the Companions, they were well-known and their lives were also documented. For example, Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul, it is very clear that he is a hypocrite.

- Just by the basic study of their lives, one is able to identify who is a hypocrite. For example, the hypocrites were those who never participated in the battles that took place.
- The bigger picture in accepting a hadith is in viewing the shariah holistically and having an understanding of what Islam is. If it is aligned with the shariah, then it is accepted.

Classification According to Authority

- This classification is based on the primary narrator of the statement. There are four types:
 - 1. Hadith Qudsi (from Allah)
 - A narration from the Prophet (ﷺ) attributed to Allah
 - It is subject to the same critique as other ahadith
 - It is the highest form of hadith
 - Difference between Qur'an and Hadith Qudsi:
 - Qur'an is the uncreated speech of Allah; Hadith Qudsi is the speech of the Prophet (ﷺ) used to express meanings inspired by Allah
 - Reciting Qur'an is a act of worship that is rewarded; Hadith Qudsi is not
 - Qur'an is mutawatir (divinely protected); Hadith Qudsi is not
 - 2. Hadith Marfu' (from the Prophet (ﷺ))
 - A saying, action, approval or characteristic directly attributed to the Prophet (ﷺ)
 - It is the highest raised hadith.
 - Four types of hadith marfu':
 - Statements – what the Prophet (ﷺ) said; this is the strongest type
 - Actions – what the Prophet (ﷺ) did
 - Tacit approvals – what the Prophet (ﷺ) approved/disapproved
 - Characteristics – the Prophet's attributes
 - 3. Hadith Mawquf (from a Companion)
 - A saying, action, approval that is attributed to a Companion.
 - It means that the chain of narrators stops at the Companions.
 - This type of hadith can be a proof in the absence of hadith marfu'.

- If there were two different opinions present between the Companions – we accept both.
- If there were something the Companion agreed upon – the ummah will agree upon.
- Sometimes the Companions were weary of attributing a hadith to the Prophet (ﷺ) out of fear of misquoting him. Hence, they attribute it to themselves.
- Three types of hadith mawquf:
 - Statements; what a Companion said
 - Actions; what a Companion did
 - Tacit approvals; what a Companion approved/disapproved
- 4. Hadith Maqtu' (from a Successor)
 - A saying or action that is attributed to a Successor
 - Their statements are important as it was from the Companions.
 - Majority are commentary on hadith – they were not laws, but reminders.
 - This type of hadith can be a proof in the absence of hadith marfu' and hadith mawquf.