

Downpour of Blessings

A Comprehensive Hadith Collection
for Every Muslim

Volume 1

Khalid Baig



openmind press
GARDEN GROVE • CALIFORNIA

Downpour of Blessings

A Comprehensive Hadith Collection
for Every Muslim

Abridged selection from *Ma'ārif al-Ḥadīth*
with additions

New organization, translation, and commentary

Volume 1

Chapters 1 – 8

Khalid Baig

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First Edition Ramadan 1443 / April 2022

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PUBLISHED BY
Openmind Press
Garden Grove, CA 92844
www.openmindpress.com
openmindpress@albalagh.net

Library of Congress Control Number: 2022904394

ISBN 978-0-9755157-7-8

Proofreading: Arsla Arain, Sumayya Baig
Editing: Mufti Javed Iqbal, Muneeb Baig
Cover: Sohaib Baig, Arsla Arain
Book Design: Muneeb Baig

Printed in Turkey on acid-free paper

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

عَنْ أَبِي مُوسَى، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ:

مَثَلُ مَا بَعَثَنِي اللَّهُ بِهِ مِنَ الْهُدَى وَالْعِلْمِ، كَمَثَلِ الْغَيْثِ الْكَثِيرِ أَصَابَ أَرْضًا، فَكَانَ مِنْهَا نَقِيَّةٌ، قَبِلَتِ الْمَاءَ، فَأَنْبَتَتِ الْكَلَّا وَالْعُشْبَ الْكَثِيرَ، وَكَانَتْ مِنْهَا أَجَادِبُ، أَمْسَكَتِ الْمَاءَ، فَفَنَعَ اللَّهُ بِهَا النَّاسَ، فَشَرِبُوا وَسَقَوْا وَزَرَعُوا، وَأَصَابَتْ مِنْهَا طَائِفَةٌ أُخْرَى، إِنَّمَا هِيَ قِيَعَانٌ لَا تُمْسِكُ مَاءً وَلَا تُنْبِتُ كَلًّا، فَذَلِكَ مَثَلُ مَنْ فَقَهُ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ، وَنَفَعَهُ مَا بَعَثَنِي اللَّهُ بِهِ فَعَلِمَ وَعَلَّمَ، وَمَثَلُ مَنْ لَمْ يَرْفَعْ بِذَلِكَ رَأْسًا، وَلَمْ يَقْبَلْ هُدَى اللَّهِ الَّذِي أُرْسِلْتُ بِهِ

صحيح البخاري كتاب العلم فضل من علم وعلم ٧٩


The example of the guidance and the knowledge with which Allah has sent me is that of a downpour falling on a land. Some areas had fertile soil that absorbed the water and grew vegetation and greenery in abundance. Some of it was hard rock that held the water. With it, Allah benefited the people as they drank it, fed their animals, and used it for irrigation. This downpour fell on another part that was barren land, which could neither hold the water nor grow any vegetation. Therein is the example of the person who develops an understanding of Allah's dīn (religion). He benefits from what Allah sent me with. He acquires knowledge of religion and teaches it. And therein is the example of the person who could not care less about it; he does not accept the guidance of Allah that I was sent with. Reported by Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī. Bukhārī 79, Muslim 2282.

May Allah make us among those who benefit themselves from this downpour of blessings and benefit others as well.

TRANSLITERATION KEY

ء (أء) ' (a slight catch in the breath)	غ gh (similar to French r)
ا a	ف f
ب b	ق q (heavy k, from the throat)
ة and ت t (ē has an “h” sound at the end)	ك k
ث th (as in “thorn”)	ل l
ج j	م m
ح ḥ (heavy h, from deep within the throat)	ن n
خ kh (“ch” in Scottish loch)	ه h (as in “help”)
د d (the hard “th” in “the”)	و w
ذ dh (the soft “th” in “the”)	ي y (as in “yellow”)
ر r	Vowels
ز z	ـَ = a (slightly softer than the “u” in “but”); an
س s	ـِ = i (as in “in”); in
ش sh	ـُ = u (“oo” in “book”); un
ص ṣ (heavy s, from the upper mouth)	آ ' ā (elongated a, as when you would stretch the “a” in “plastic”)
ض ḍ (heavy d, from the upper mouth)	أ ' ā at the start of a word, 'ā in the middle (pronounced like آء)
ط ṭ (heavy t, from the upper mouth)	و and ' ū (“u” in “glue”)
ظ ṣ (heavy z, from the upper mouth)	ي and ' ī (“ee” in “feet”)
ع ' (like two a's from deep within the throat)	ّ stress symbol, indicated by repetition of letter

Honorifics

	Glorified and Most High		May Allah's blessings and peace be upon him
	May peace be upon him		May Allah be pleased with him/her

Note: We have generally followed the International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES) translation and transliteration guide. Words that appear in Merriam-Webster are not transliterated or italicized. They have entered the English language. Examples: Ansar, Allah, hadith, halal, haram, hijra, imam, khutbah, muhajirun, Quran, salah, ulama. However we have made exceptions to IJMES wherever considered appropriate. Thus the Arabic tā' marbūṭa is rendered “a” not “ah” per IJMES, but we use Makkah, Madinah, Sunnah, etc.

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Introduction

HADITH IS A RECORD OF the Prophet's ﷺ teaching and mentoring. During his twenty-three years of life as Allah's Messenger, Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ taught everyone who came into contact with him. He taught by example, by words, by approving or disapproving actions performed in his presence, by answering questions, through small talks and formal sermons, and in private conversations and public lectures. He was also a mentor to his Companions, رضي الله عنهم may Allah be pleased with them, who consulted him regarding questions in their personal and collective lives. They were a varied group, ranging from the simple Bedouin who did not know or care much about anything beyond his nomadic life, to some of the best minds the world has ever seen in world leadership. They all came to him as humble disciples, and he quenched their thirst for knowledge, understanding, and spiritual guidance. And he did all this just as he led them on a historic and extremely successful mission that changed world history for good.

Given his mind-boggling achievements, if this record were not easily available, the world would feel compelled to dig deep and find it. But we are lucky. The accounts of his life and his doings and teachings were meticulously preserved, for he was the last of the messengers of Allah to mankind and his message was meant for all humanity until the end of time. During the past fourteen plus centuries, thousands upon thousands of people have devoted their lives to preserving and interpreting this record for the benefit of the world. They were people of exceptional capabilities, devotion, and piety. They created a new discipline called *ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth*

or Hadith Sciences and published Hadith collections, records of the lives of thousands of people who were engaged in the transmission of this sacred trust, detailed commentaries, and thousands of tomes in many related disciplines.

Hadith is a unique and unprecedented treasure of Islamic heritage. There are no other people in the world who have a record of such depth, breadth, and authenticity regarding their Prophets or leaders. It is truly a downpour of blessings, and blessed are those who value it and take benefit from it.

Most Hadith books are meant for experts. These include the six canonical books (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, *Sunan Ibn Mājah* and *Sunan al-Nasā'ī*) as well as hundreds of others, including such famous names as *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad*, *Muwatta' al-Imām Mālik*, *Muṣannaf Ibn Abī Shayba* and *Muṣannaf 'Abd al-Razzāq*. To benefit from these, one needs to know the context, terminology, and approach employed by the compilers, as well as the larger landscape of Quranic and Prophetic teachings within which individual hadiths fit. Students of sacred knowledge spend years acquiring the prerequisites for this study. A reader without sufficient background and guidance will derive little benefit and may even be confused.

Thus, early on, the need was also recognized to have smaller selections with appropriate commentary for the laypeople, so they could learn about prophetic teachings applicable to them and mold their lives accordingly. Some well-known classic books in this category are: *Kitāb al-Zuhd* of 'Abdullāh b. Mubārak (d. 181 AH), *al-Adab al-Mufrad* of Imam Bukhārī (d. 256 AH), *al-Targhīb wa 'l-Tarhīb* of Imam Mundhirī (d. 656 AH), the *Arba'īn* and *Riyād al-Ṣāliḥīn* of Imam Nawawī (d. 676 AH), and *Jāmi' al-Ulūm wa 'l-Hikam* of Ibn Rajab Ḥanbalī (d. 795 AH). These deal mostly with basics in beliefs, acts of worship, character, personal piety, and self-reform.

In the last century, Maulana Muhammad Manzoor Nomani (d. 1417 / 1997), the great Hadith scholar from India, realized the need for a new selection and commentary to meet the needs of the laypersons who were raised in a colonial world. The colonial project had uprooted their societies and dismantled their education systems. They were removed from the sources of traditional Islamic knowledge, and their world was being overwhelmed by modernity. Basic facts that were obvious to or considered

a given by their previous generations were no longer so for them. He knew the mindset of this class from detailed personal interactions and was especially adept at addressing their confusions and concerns. He decided to come up with a new selection and a new presentation. It was not going to be a small task. It took him the last forty-four years of his life to work on his book. The book *Ma'ārif al-Ḥadīth* (The Gnosis of Hadith) was still incomplete at the time of his death and was completed, according to his instructions, by his nephew four years later. As a thorough course of Hadith study for laymen, this has been the book of choice in Urdu ever since it was first published in 1953.

The book in your hands was inspired by *Ma'ārif al-Ḥadīth* and draws heavily from it. It is an abridgment and has nearly half of the total hadiths in *Ma'ārif al-Ḥadīth*. The abridgment was achieved mostly by removing repetitions. Further, the hadiths were reorganized for a more logical presentation. This also helped in eliminating the repetition of topics, which probably resulted from the long span of Maulana Nomani's work. With this reorganization, sometimes gaps in the selection became apparent, and I filled them with new selections. I also added a chapter on Prophetic Medicine (al-Ṭibb al-Nabawī). Every hadith book in the six canonical collections has a chapter on this. In addition, there are several treatises by that name that are devoted entirely to it. It is an important subject for our needs today, and with the increased medicalization of society, there is a greater interest in it. So, hopefully, this addition will be useful.

Ma'ārif al-Ḥadīth had used *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ*, the renowned hadith compilation by Imam Khaṭīb al-Tibrīzī (d. 737 AH), as its main source, which is itself a selection from the primary sourcebooks. For references, it only provided the names of the primary books as its source, without any details. Although it was sufficient for the needs of the readership at that time, this information is not sufficient to locate a hadith in the book from where it was taken. I have taken hadith texts directly from the primary books and provided full references to them in Arabic.

For translation and commentary, I have followed the general approach of Maulana Nomani. In keeping with that, the translation is idiomatic, not literal, and is aimed at minimizing the need for commentary. But it is not a translation from the Urdu translation of Maulana Nomani. It is an independent work for which I have also consulted available Arabic and Urdu commentaries to determine the most appropriate rendering of key

phrases. The commentary similarly follows the spirit of *Ma'ārif al-Hadīth* by focusing less on differences between schools of jurisprudence, and instead on the essential prophetic teachings for our world. For that, I have added information from many sources as appropriate. Some of the Arabic commentaries I consulted include the commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* by Ibn Baṭṭāl (d. 449 AH); *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, the most renowned commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, by Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852 AH); *Mirqāt al-Mafātīḥ* by Mullā ʿAlī al-Qārī (d. 1014 AH); *al-Kanz al-Mutawārī fi Maʿādin al-Lāmiʿ al-Darārī* by Maulana Muḥammad Zakariyyā Kāndhalwī (d. 1402 AH); *Fatḥ al-Mulhim* by Allāma Shabbīr Aḥmad ʿUthmānī (d. 1369 AH); and *Takmila Fatḥ al-Mulhim* by Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (b. 1362 AH). In Urdu commentaries, I have especially drawn on *Tuḥfat al-Qārī* and *Tuḥfat al-Almaʿī*, both by Mufti Saʿīd Aḥmad Pālanpūrī (d. 1441 AH); *Faḍl al-Bārī* of Maulana Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī (d. 1933); *Kashf al-Bārī* of Maulana Salīmullāh Khān (d. 2017); and *Inʿām al-Bārī* of Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani.

Broadly speaking, there are two purposes for studying Hadith.

1. To be in the virtual company of the Prophet ﷺ and get inspiration, admonishment, insights, and general guidance about all aspects of our life.
2. To derive legal rulings according to the principles of Islamic jurisprudence.

While the second objective is no doubt essential, we need to realize that there is much more to religion than legal rulings. Rulings are essential. They set the boundaries within which we must operate. But life is much more complex than can be led by rulings alone. Only about 10% of the Quran and the hadith collections consist of what are called *āyāt al-ahkām* and *ahādīth al-ahkām*, or āyahs and hadiths giving direct rulings. The rest deal with beliefs, attitudes, insights, emotions, etiquette, character building, an outlook on life, and worldview. This is what this book is concerned with. Where it does touch on legal aspects, it is mainly to share background and insights that will make it easy to appreciate the detailed rulings in *fiqh* books.

I have benefited greatly from working on this book. It took more effort than any of my previous books, and I thank Allah that He gave me the ability (*tawfiq*) to put in that effort. I hope and pray that readers also find this book beneficial, that they feel the presence of the Prophet ﷺ up close

as they go through its pages, and that they find it helpful as they try to follow his Sunnah in their daily lives.

As I worked on this book, off and on, for the past decade, every time I came across a new hadith, I could not help but wonder about some Muslims for whom all of this meant nothing. They are the people who claim to follow the Quran only and reject Hadith. As Maulana Nomani said, “It is unbelievable that there would be people who would affirm their belief in a prophet and then refuse to listen to him.” But we cannot deny their existence, as we have seen them. Many excellent scholarly responses to their confusion have been given elsewhere. But I wonder how many of those who argue loudly and question the authenticity of Hadith have actually taken the time to seriously study Hadith beyond the few “problem hadiths” found in their propaganda pamphlets. So, I invite them to take a deep, hard look at this treasure and then tell us which of these gems they can do without. Would they dispute the explanation of beliefs given by the Prophet ﷺ? What about the detailed instructions about acts of worship? Or his teachings about character and morality? Would they argue with his guidance about family relations, social interactions, financial dealings, charity, and modesty? This is a selection from the downpour of blessings. Which of these blessings do they have an issue with, or for which do they have a better alternate?

As they say, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Here is the pudding. To the Hadith skeptics, we say, taste it. Then tell us what your problem with it is. If you approach it with an open mind, then that will, inshā’Allāh, be sufficient to rid you of your confusion.

I came across *Ma‘ārif al-Ḥadīth* as a young college student in the 1970s. This was the only Hadith book accessible to those like me who did not get a formal madrassa education. But its simplicity may be misleading. It has insights and discussions that would greatly benefit the formal students of sacred knowledge as well, and which they would not find elsewhere. That is why Mufti Sa‘īd Pālanpūrī refers in many places to *Ma‘ārif al-Ḥadīth* in his compiled Hadith lectures. A distinguishing feature of *Ma‘ārif al-Ḥadīth* is that it relates the hadiths to the lives and times of its readers. The question it has been concerned with is what the hadith is teaching us now and for our world today. As time and place change, the answers have to be refreshed with new information or couched in new language. This is a humble effort towards that goal. If you find any benefit in this work,

please pray for me and everyone who helped in preparing this work. And if you find any errors, please inform me so they can be fixed in subsequent editions.

Apart from Maulana Manzoor Nomani, may Allah shower His blessings on him, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank everyone else who helped with the production and refinement of this work. Dr. Muzammil Siddiqi was kind enough to read my manuscript and provide feedback. Mufti Javed Iqbal reviewed all the translations, as well as selected sections of the commentary, and offered helpful revisions. I also profited from the many imams and academics I met through internet discussion groups and consulted for everything from simple translation concerns to more complicated conceptual and idea questions. They were also a handy source for reference materials. Dr. Asim Yusuf, for example, provided a copy of an unpublished thesis from Umm al-Qura University on Tibb al-Nabawī that is referenced in the chapter on Prophetic Medicine.

As this book finally makes its way to the printers after a long wait, I think back warmly on my family's contributions. My mother made great sacrifices for my education, as well as that of my siblings and, in her old age, even for my daughters. My father instilled in me a love for reading at a young age and allocated a generous monthly allowance for the purchase of books. This helped expand my horizons. May Allah shower them with His blessings. I hope and pray the tradition continues with my grandchildren. My children have been an integral part of my writing projects. Their combination of contemporary and traditional Islamic education has been a blessing. My daughter Sumayya produced the Arabic text of the hadiths I selected in Word to begin work on this book ten years ago. A decade later, she, along with my daughter-in-law, Arsla Arain, assisted with proofreading. My son Muneeb helped with multiple tasks, including Arabic proofreading, editing, book design, and composing. He brought all his knowledge of Arabic, Hadith, and computers to bear on refining this work. Areeba, Sohaib, Umair, and Anas also offered help at different stages. And as always, my wife helped by maintaining a home where writing this book was possible. My heartfelt gratitude to all of them. May Allah bless them all.

May Allah make us among those who benefit from the downpour of blessings in all the ways mentioned in the hadith, and may He forgive any

of my errors and shortcomings in their presentation. May He make this book a means of counting me as a lowly servant of Hadith.

Khalid Baig
Garden Grove, California

Rajab 1443
February 2022

Foreword

THE HADITH, OR WHAT THE Prophet ﷺ said, did, or approved, is the second most important source of knowledge and guidance in Islam. The Hadith is a treasure house of wisdom. It does not only give us some wise sayings of the Prophet ﷺ, but it also teaches wisdom and helps us, hopefully, to become wise people. From the Hadith we can learn the life and teaching style of the Prophet ﷺ. We can also learn about the Prophet's blessed household and great Companions. They were the first and the best generation of Muslims who grew up under his tutelage and guidance. The more we read Hadith, the more we feel that we are in the company of the blessed Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The Hadith is essential and there cannot be any proper understanding of Islam, Islamic norms, and Islamic life without any reference to Hadith.

There are thousands of hadiths and hundreds of Hadith collections. It is, however, important to find authentic, reliable hadiths. For Hadith we need both authentication and the proper methodology of interpretation and understanding. We thank Allah that, from the early centuries of Islam until now, many great scholars undertook this task seriously and spent their lives in the service of Hadith with great care and devotion. May Allah reward them all.

The present book, "The Downpour of Blessings" is not about *Ulūm al-Hadīth* or Hadith sciences, but rather it is a careful selection of some authentic and reliable hadiths from the works of many scholars. The book is primarily based on the famous *Ma'ārif al-Hadīth* of Maulana Manzoor

Nomani - may Allah have mercy on him. He was a great Indian scholar of the Quran and Hadith during the past century.

I am very pleased to see that our respected brother Khalid Baig undertook this task and prepared this beautiful collection. He has rendered a great service to modern Muslims, young and old, by making this resource available. The book gives us a large and comprehensive selection of hadiths on a variety of topics, including faith, morals, etiquette, and spirituality. It tells us about the Prophet's household and his closest Companions. Every hadith is presented with its text and an excellent translation. Following that is a short, clear, and thoughtful explanation. Hadiths are presented in their historical context, with useful lessons drawn for our lives and situations. The author tries to answer many challenging questions and critically examines the doubts and objections of the Orientalists, Islamophobes, as well as deniers of Hadith. The book follows, in general, the middle and moderate positions of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa 'l-Jamā'ah.

The book is enjoyable and easy to read and learn, but it is also very profound, educational, and instructive. It will be a welcome addition to our growing Islamic literature in English and hopefully be used by our Islamic schools as well as mosques in weekly or daily Hadith study circles. May Allah bless the author and inscribe this book in the record of his good deeds. Āmīn. I am grateful to the author for letting me share in the blessings by inviting me to write a few words as a foreword for this book.

Dr. Muzammil H. Siddiqi

The Islamic Society of Orange County, Garden Grove, California

Dhu'l-Qadah 1, 1442/June 11, 2021

CHAPTER 1

The World of Hadith

WE BEGIN OUR EXPLORATION OF the wonderful world of Hadith by first turning to the Quran to see what it tells us about the role of the Prophet ﷺ in the life of the believers.

The Quran on the Prophet's Role

Allah has surely done the believers a great favor when He raised in their midst a Messenger from among themselves, who recites to them His revelations, purifies them, and teaches them the Book and Wisdom. For indeed, previously they had been clearly lost in utter misguidance [Āl 'Imrān, 3:164].

This āyah¹ makes three statements:

1) The Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was sent to provide guidance, and without his guidance humanity would be in utter misguidance.

2) This is a great favor for which we should be grateful and take this guidance very seriously.

3) There are four components to this act of providing guidance: a) Teaching the words of the Book of Allah; b) Purifying the lives, hearts, and minds of all impurities for the people who accept this guidance; c) Teaching the meaning of the Book of Allah; d) Teaching the wisdom of the Prophetic way in following the Book. These four tasks have been repeated

¹ Normally, the Quranic term āyah (literally: sign) is translated as “verse.” But the verse is also the basic unit of poetic compositions, and the Quran is far from being one. So, we have generally avoided that usage in this book.

in exactly these words elsewhere in the Quran (al-Baqara 2:129, 2:151, and al-Jumu'ah 62:2). The third task is mentioned specifically in the following āyah: *And We sent down the Reminder (the Qur'ān) to you so that you can make clear to mankind what has been sent down to them, and so that they may reflect* [al-Nahl, 16:44].

It is also the Prophet's ﷺ role to declare what is lawful and what is unlawful. *(The Prophet) makes lawful for them all good things and makes unlawful for them all bad things, and relieves them of their burdens and the fetters that were on them* [al-A'rāf, 7:157].

He is also the exemplar appointed by Allah. *Indeed, a noble model you have in Allah's Messenger for those of you who put their hope in Allah and the Final Day and who remember Allah much* [al-Aḥzāb, 33:21].

It follows that for anyone who claims to be a believer in him ﷺ, the Prophetic commands and teachings are an indispensable part of their life. It was the Prophet's ﷺ job to command and of the believers to follow. It was his job to teach and the believers' job to learn from him.

Hadith is the record of that teaching. Since he was the Prophet for all humanity and for all times until the end of time, his teaching also had to be preserved and disseminated widely. The purpose of this chapter is to give an overview of how this was done: How Hadith was compiled and transmitted, what systems were formulated to distinguish the true from the false in these reports, and what some technical terms developed in this regard mean and (equally importantly) do not mean.

A Note About the Quran Only Cults

Beginning in the 19th century, some European Orientalists turned their attention to hadiths to question their authenticity. Gustav Weil (d. 1889), a German Jew, was among the first to claim that almost all hadiths had been fabricated. He published his work in 1848. In 1861, he was followed by the Austrian Alois Sprenger (d. 1893), a Roman Catholic, who was an employee of the East India Company. Sprenger repeated the claim of Weil, adding his own insults to the life of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, even as he presented himself as being Muslim friendly. The same year, the Scotsman William Muir (d. 1905) penned his biography of the Prophet ﷺ, claiming that hadiths had been fabricated to promote the Muslim "chorus of glory to Muhammad."

The first in-depth discussion of hadiths was conducted in 1890 by Ignaz Goldziher (d. 1921), who was a Hungarian Jew. He claimed that hadiths were forged on a huge scale for political considerations on orders of Umayyad and Abbasid rulers. This criticism was taken to the next level by the German Joseph Schacht (d. 1969), who in his book on the origins of Islamic jurisprudence (1950) claimed that Islamic jurisprudence had nothing to do with Prophetic statements, but later on, the schools of law had to fabricate hadiths to justify their legal stances.

The Western academy embraced all these works with great enthusiasm, not because of their academic rigor but because of two biases. A bias against religion, in general, that was a product of modernity, and a bias against Islam that had roots in the centuries past.² Regarding Schacht, for example, Mustafa Azami in his very thorough review observes: “Schacht has apparently failed to consult some of the most relevant literature; he often misunderstands the texts he quotes; the examples he uses frequently contradict the point he is attempting to make; on occasion he quotes out of context; and, most important, he applies unscientific methodology for his research, thus drawing conclusions that are untenable when the evidence of the text as a whole is weighed.”³ Despite these serious flaws, Schacht was kept on such a high pedestal that when the late Amin al-Masri chose a critical study of Schacht’s work as the subject of his Ph.D. thesis, his application was rejected both by the University of London and Cambridge University.⁴ At the centers that prided themselves on free academic inquiry, Schacht’s scholarship was beyond contestation.

Their logic, presented as the scientific discipline of Historical Critical Method, has been simple. If a hadith had many chains of transmission from one narrator, that narrator fabricated it and invented the chain leading from the Prophet ﷺ or the Companion up to himself. That is how we explain that it had just one chain in the beginning and multiples at a later time. But if it also had other chains excluding that narrator, they were fabricated by someone else trying to boast about an elevated chain. Further,

² Orientalism started as “Rivalry Studies” in the service of colonialism to “help the friends, harm the enemies.” Its biases were very much part of its charter.

³ Muhammad Mustafa al-Azami, *On Schacht’s Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, (Lahore: Sohail Academy, 2004), 3.

⁴ Shaykh Muṣṭafā al-Sibā‘ī, *al-Sunnah wa Makānatuhā fī al-Tashrī‘ al-Islāmī* (Beirut: Dar Ibn Hazm, 2010), 43-44. However, later al-Azami was able to complete his PhD thesis on the critical study of Schacht at Cambridge.

CHAPTER 2

Pivotal Hadiths

Introduction

AFTER ELIMINATING REPETITIONS, THERE ARE a total of about 35,000 Hadiths in all the Hadith collections available today.¹⁹ Together, they provide Prophetic guidance on all aspects of beliefs and practices to lead a successful life, here and in the Hereafter. This book contains 989 hadiths from this vast collection, arranged in 656 sections and covering all subject areas that touch on our lives as Muslims.

Among these there are a handful of hadiths that encapsulate the essence of all this Prophetic teaching. Hadith scholars call these the hadiths around which the dīn revolves. They differ on this exact list, mentioning two to six hadiths as being the pivotal hadiths.²⁰ We begin our study of the treasure of noble Hadith with these. This is the cream of the cream. We owe it to ourselves to pay the highest attention to them.

¹⁹ Mufti Taqi Usmani, ed., *Al-Mudawwana al-Jāmi'a lil-Aḥādīth al-Marwiyya 'an al-Nabī al-Karīm* (Damascus, Dar al-Qalam, 1438/2017), 1:22. Based on their project to collect all the known hadiths in one collection and assign them universal numbers, the total number of hadiths was listed as 34520 taken from 910 hadith books. This is a work in progress that was started nearly two decades ago, and it is possible that the total count will increase when it is finally completed.

²⁰ “الأحاديث التي يدور عليها الدين”

I. ACTIONS AND INTENTIONS

عَنْ عُمَرَ بْنِ الْخَطَّابِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ، وَإِنَّمَا لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مَا نَوَى، فَمَنْ كَانَتْ هِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ فَهِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ، وَمَنْ كَانَتْ هِجْرَتُهُ لِدُنْيَا يُصِيبُهَا، أَوْ امْرَأَةٍ يَتَزَوَّجُهَا، فَهِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى مَا هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِ»

سنن أبي داود كتاب الطلاق باب فيما عني به الطلاق والنِّيَّاتُ ٢٢٠١

Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه narrated: The Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said: “Truly, actions (and their rewards) are governed only by intentions. And everyone will get (in the Hereafter) only what he intended. So (for example) the person who performed hijra for Allah and His Messenger, his hijra will be (counted as being) for Allah and His Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم. And whoever performed hijra seeking some worldly gains or to marry a woman, his hijra will be (counted as being) for his intended purpose.”

As stated above, the exact list of pivotal hadiths varies according to Hadith authorities. But this hadith about intentions is included in all these lists. It has been considered to encompass one half, a third, or a fourth of Islamic teachings by various authorities. It is no wonder that this is one of the most well-known hadiths and it has had a huge impact on the Muslim outlook and mindset. It is an axiom whose reverberations can be heard in all facets of Muslim life. Both jurists and the Sufis have discussed it at length and drawn far-reaching lessons from it. Among ordinary Muslims, it is invoked often.

What this hadith says is that good actions alone are not enough for earning the rewards promised for them; they must also be driven by good intentions. The example given is that of an extraordinarily meritorious act. Hijrah meant leaving a settled life and all one's worldly possessions in Makkah for an uncertain future in Madinah. That is why those performing hijra were promised great rewards and high merit.²¹ Yet this hadith warns us that even this act can be tarnished and rendered worthless by a poor

²¹ For example: “Those who made hijrah and were driven from their homes and were persecuted in My Way, and who fought and were slain, indeed I shall wipe out their evil deeds from them and shall certainly admit them into Gardens graced with flowing streams” (Āl ‘Imrān 3:195) and “The higher rank with Allah is for those who believed and emigrated and strove in His cause with their belongings and their persons. It is they who are triumphant” (al-Tawba 9:20).

intention. Emigrating for employment, business, or marriage is not a blameworthy act in itself. But migration for marriage will not earn the reward meant for hijra, which was migration for a higher purpose.

Does it mean that intentions are the sole determinants of the outcomes of *all* actions and can even override them? The answer is: not always. In reality, the role of intentions varies by type of actions.

Acts of Worship

For acts of worship,²² correctness of intention implies two distinct things:

- Specification of the exact act intended (Which salah? Which fast outside Ramadan, *qada'* or *nafl*? Hajj, 'Umrah or sacrifice on whose behalf? Etc.)
- Sincerity of performing the act solely for Allah.

The act would not be valid without the first. It may be a source of punishment instead of reward without the second. On the other hand, sincere intention of performing a virtuous act will earn a reward even if the circumstances keep the person from performing it. In the Tabūk expedition²³ there were people who could not go despite their intense desire because they did not have the means to go. They were praised and promised the same rewards as the warriors. This was solely due to their intentions.

We can have multiple good intentions for a good action, and that will multiply the rewards. In going to the masjid for group prayer, one can have the additional intention of meeting fellow Muslims, inquiring about their well-being, inspiring others to pray in congregation, and populating the masjid. This will bring in additional rewards for the same act.

²² There is a slight disagreement between Hanafis and other schools regarding the requirement of intention for performing wuḍū' because Hanafis do not consider wuḍū' an act of worship in itself, but only a condition, like wearing clean clothes, for another act (like salah). Everyone agrees that intention is not required for the validity of cleaning clothes. However, this difference should not be blown out of proportion. Its practical implication is only that if a person performed an accidental wuḍū', say, by standing in rain with his wuḍū' limbs exposed and no thought of performing wuḍū', he will still be able to perform salah according to Hanafis. But everyone agrees that he will get no reward for this wuḍū'.

²³ The Tabūk expedition took place in Rajab 9 AH (October 630 CE). It was the largest and the most challenging of all the campaigns undertaken during the Prophet's ﷺ life. The army of distress, as it was called, consisted of 30,000 soldiers. A combination of drought, intensely hot weather, meager resources for supplying the army, and the challenge of facing the Roman superpower of the day made it an exceptional campaign.

Mundane Acts

Proper intentions can turn permissible mundane acts (like earning a living, eating, and visiting a park) into acts of worship. When a person holds a permissible job with the intention of discharging his obligation to earn a living and take care of his family, eats and exercises with the intention of keeping the body fit, and visits a park to rejuvenate himself, all to better perform acts of obedience, all of these acts become indirect acts of worship and a source of earning rewards in the Hereafter. Of course, an evil intention will turn any act, whether permissible or mandatory, into a sin.

Mixed Intentions

When we have a mix of worldly and otherworldly intentions, there are three possibilities.

1) The worldly component of our intention is solely for its worldly but permissible benefits. In this case, the reward will be proportional to the share of intention for the act of worship. For example, if a resident of a village (where Jumu'ah is not offered) goes to the town for some worldly (but permissible) business on a Friday, with the added intention of offering Jumu'ah there, then his reward for traveling will depend upon the proportion of his intention for offering Jumu'ah. Similarly, if a person goes to Hajj and also has a business motive for the Hajj journey, then his reward for the Hajj journey will be proportional to the share of his intention for Hajj in the mix of his intentions. If, for example, seventy percent of his purpose was to perform Hajj, and the rest was to conduct business, his reward for Hajj would be seventy percent.

2) We perform the worldly act with an intention that transforms it into an act of worship, as described in the preceding paragraph. Thus, in the previous example if the aim for the business is to discharge one's responsibility to earn a living and provide for the family, the reward for Hajj or travel for Jumu'ah is unaffected.

3) The other intention is to impress the people and show off our act of worship. Continuing the same examples, in this case there is no reward for Hajj or Jumu'ah, only punishment.²⁴

²⁴ Dr. Sharaf al-Qadāt, *Al-Ḥadīth al-Nabawī al-Sharīf* (Amman, Dar al-Razi, 1428/2008), 10. Mullā 'Alī al-Qārī, *Al-Mubīn al-Mu'īn li Fahm al-Arba'īn* (Istanbul, Dār al-Lubāb, 2018), 148-149.

87. BRANCHES OF ĪMĀN

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «الْإِيمَانُ بِضْعٌ وَسَبْعُونَ - أَوْ بَضْعٌ وَسِتُّونَ - شُعْبَةً، فَأَفْضَلُهَا قَوْلُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَأَدْنَاهَا إِمَاطَةُ الْأَذَى عَنِ الطَّرِيقِ، وَالْحَيَاءُ شُعْبَةٌ مِنَ الْإِيمَانِ»

صحيح مسلم كتاب الإيمان باب بيان عدد شعب الإيمان وأفضلها وأدناها وفضيلة الحياء وكونه من الإيمان ٣٥

Abū Hurayra رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said: “Īmān (faith) has more than seventy (or sixty) branches. The greatest is the declaration that there is no deity except Allah. And the lowest is removing harmful objects from the path. And ḥayā’ (modesty) is a branch of īmān.”

As is well known, the numbers sixty or seventy are used to mean a large quantity, not a specific count. The essential message of this hadith is that all virtuous acts of a believer emanate from īmān. Even a seemingly minor act of removing a harmful object from the path is a result of being considerate, which is a fruit of īmān. (And this being the lowest branch of īmān, one should be particularly careful not to actually cause anyone harm e.g. by littering, parking in an inconsiderate manner that blocks entry/exit for others, and myriad other things that we may do without realizing that this may be related to īmān or lack of it.) Further, ḥayā’ has a special place in this scheme. It is not a single isolated attribute but may impact most of a person’s life. That is why it was chosen for special mention. More on ḥayā’ will be found in the next chapter.

88. SIGN OF ĪMĀN

عَنْ أَبِي أُمَامَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَجُلٌ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ مَا الْإِيمَانُ؟ قَالَ: «إِذَا سَرَّتْكَ حَسَنَتُكَ وَسَاءَتْكَ سَيِّئَتُكَ فَأَنْتَ مُؤْمِنٌ»

مسند أحمد تمة مسند الأنصار حديث أبي أمامة الباهلي الصدي بن عجلان بن عمرو ويقال: ابن وهب الباهلي، عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم ٢٢١٩٩

Abū Umāma رضي الله عنه narrated that a person asked the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, “What is (the sign of) īmān?” He replied, “When your good deeds make you happy and bad deeds make you feel bad, then you are a believer.”

Feeling good after doing a good deed means we did not consider it a burden. Feeling bad after committing a bad deed means we did not take joy from it. These are signs of īmān. The logical corollary is that one will be thankful for his good deeds and repentant for the bad ones. On the other hand, if a person is comfortable and at ease with his or her sins, then they should worry about the state of their īmān.

89. TASTE OF ĪMĀN

عَنِ الْعَبَّاسِ بْنِ عَبْدِ الْمُطَّلِبِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ، أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، يَقُولُ: «ذَاقَ طَعْمَ الْإِيمَانِ مَنْ رَضِيَ بِاللَّهِ رَبًّا، وَبِالْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا، وَبِمُحَمَّدٍ رَسُولًا»

صحيح مسلم كتاب الإيمان باب الدليل على أن من رضي بالله ربًّا وبالإسلام دينًا وبمحمد رسولًا فهو مؤمن وإن ارتكب المعاصي الكبائر ٣٤

‘Abbās b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib رضي الله عنه narrated that he heard the Prophet ﷺ say: “He has savored the real taste of īmān who is pleased with Allah as the Lord, Islam as the dīn, and Muḥammad as the Messenger.”

Ḥasan al-Baṣrī was asked about his faith. He said, “Faith has two aspects. One is the declaration of faith in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, and Resurrection. In that sense, I am a believer. But if you were to ask me about the Quranic āyah: *Certainly, the believers are those whose hearts are filled with awe at the mention of Allah, whose faith increases when His āyahs are recited to them and who put their trust in their Lord* [Anfāl, 8:2], then I do not know whether I am one of them or not.” He was being humble. But he also pointed us to a standard whereby we can monitor our own state of faith.

It is also advised that we repeat the following words every morning and evening رَضَيْتُ بِاللَّهِ رَبًّا وَبِالْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا وَبِمُحَمَّدٍ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ رَسُولًا (I am pleased with Allah as my Lord, Islam as my dīn, and Muḥammad ﷺ as the Messenger). InshaAllah it will be a way of nurturing this feeling.

90. SWEETNESS OF ĪMĀN

عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: «ثَلَاثٌ مَنْ كُنَّ فِيهِ وَجَدَ حَلَاوَةَ الْإِيمَانِ: أَنْ يَكُونَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَحَبَّ إِلَيْهِ مِمَّا سِوَاهُمَا، وَأَنْ يُحِبَّ الْمَرْءَ لَا يُحِبُّهُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ، وَأَنْ يَكْرَهُ أَنْ يَعُودَ فِي الْكُفْرِ كَمَا يَكْرَهُ أَنْ يُقَذَّفَ فِي النَّارِ»

صحيح البخاري كتاب الإيمان باب حلاوة الإيمان ١٦

Anas b. Mālik رضي الله عنه narrated that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: The person who has three qualities has found the sweetness of īmān. 1) Allah and His Messenger are more beloved to him than everything else. 2) He loves another person solely for the sake of Allah. 3) He detests going back to unbelief the same way he detests being thrown into fire.

In other words, with this state of the heart, carrying out religious obligations becomes a labor of love. In another hadith, the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said that those who have tasted the sweetness of faith are humble and submissive to Allah. To achieve this state, one needs to develop the love of Allah and His Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم.⁷⁷

91. ĪMĀN AND THE LOVE OF THE PROPHET

عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ، قَالَ: قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ «لَا يُؤْمِنُ أَحَدُكُمْ حَتَّى أَكُونَ أَحَبَّ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ وَالِدِهِ وَوَلَدِهِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ»

صحيح البخاري كتاب الإيمان باب حُب الرسول صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مِنَ الْإِيمَانِ ١٥

Anas b. Mālik رضي الله عنه narrated that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, “None of you will have faith (īmān) until I am more beloved to him than his parents, his children, and all the people.”

Our relationship with the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is at the core of our entire religion. He is human, not divine, but he is our connection to the Deity. He relays to us the Word of Allah and explains what the Word means. He sets a personal example that we look to not just for admiration but for emulation. Our relationship with him is legal as well as personal; moral as well as spiritual;

⁷⁷ Nuh Ha Meem Keller, *Dalā'il al-Khayrāt* (1440/2019), 16.

intellectual as well as emotional. Allah chose him to guide us, educate us, inspire us, and purify us—and we remain indebted forever!

Imam Qurṭubī writes: “Every believer has some of this love, but their levels vary. Some have a very high share, and for others, the share is low, like the one who is preoccupied with heedlessness ordinarily.” Yet even such a Muslim will be greatly perturbed when the honor and dignity of the Prophet ﷺ is under attack.

The great love was demonstrated by the Companions, who had the privilege of being with the Prophet ﷺ and witnessing his noble personality firsthand. There are numerous incidents that highlight their love. In a famous incident, one of them, Khubayb b. ‘Adī رضي الله عنه, was captured by pagans by deception and was about to be murdered when he was asked, “Don’t you wish that you were spared and Muḥammad ﷺ got this punishment? Would not you like it if you were resting comfortably in your home while he was killed in your place?” Moments away from death, his reply was: “By Allah, I cannot even imagine that a thorn should prick the foot of Muḥammad ﷺ while I rest in my home.”

Their love for the Prophet ﷺ remains the gold standard for the rest of us.

92. ĪMĀN, DESIRES AND PROPHETIC GUIDANCE

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو بْنِ الْعَاصِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، قَالَ: «لَا يُؤْمِنُ أَحَدُكُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَكُونَ هَوَاهُ تَبَعًا لِمَا جِئْتُ بِهِ»
 شرح السنة للبعوي كِتَابُ الْإِيمَانِ بَابُ رَدِّ الْبِدْعِ وَالْأَهْوَاءِ ١٠٤

‘Abdullāh b. ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ رضي الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, “None of you will become a true believer until his desires become subservient to the guidance that I have brought.”

There is an ongoing conflict between basal desires and divine guidance. It is our lifelong struggle to tame these desires, so they submit to that guidance.

196. WUḌŪ' WILL LEAD TO SHINING FACES

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ: إِنِّي سَمِعْتُ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ «إِنَّ أُمَّتِي
يُدْعَوْنَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ غُرًّا مُحَجَّلِينَ مِنْ آثَارِ الْوُضُوءِ، فَمَنْ اسْتَطَاعَ مِنْكُمْ أَنْ يُطِيلَ
غُرَّتَهُ فَلْيَفْعَلْ»

صحيح البخاري كتاب الوضوء باب فضل الوضوء، والغرُّ المحجلون من آثار الوضوء ١٣٦

Abū Hurayra رضي الله عنه narrated: I heard the Prophet ﷺ say, “When they are summoned on the Day of Judgment, certainly my people will have shining faces, arms, and feet due to wuḍū’. So, whoever can increase this shine should do so.”

The significance of this distinction is brought to full relief by another hadith. According to it, on the Day of Judgment, the Prophet ﷺ will be the first one commanded to perform prostration and the first one to rise from that prostration. He will recognize his people from among the sea of humanity that will be all around him—in front and behind, on the right and on the left. This will be so because of the distinct shine on their faces, hands, and feet mentioned here.

While almost all religions have some idea of ablution, only Muslims wash their arms, faces, and feet in preparation for their ritual prayers and before even touching their scripture.

Some hadith commentators are of the view that the second statement above was made by Abū Hurayra رضي الله عنه. He used to wash his arms up to his shoulders and his feet up to his shanks to increase this shine.

197. PERFECTING WUḌŪ' EVEN IN THE FACE OF HARDSHIPS

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ: أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، قَالَ: «أَلَا أُخْبِرُكُمْ بِمَا يَمْحُو
اللَّهُ بِهِ الْخَطَايَا، وَيَرْفَعُ بِهِ الدَّرَجَاتِ: إِسْبَاغُ الْوُضُوءِ عَلَى الْمَكَارِهِ، وَكَثْرَةُ الْخُطَا
إِلَى الْمَسَاجِدِ، وَانْتِظَارُ الصَّلَاةِ بَعْدَ الصَّلَاةِ، فَذَلِكُمْ الرِّبَاطُ، فَذَلِكُمْ الرِّبَاطُ،
فَذَلِكُمْ الرِّبَاطُ»

موطأ مالك رواية أبي مصعب الزهري جامع الوضوء ٧٧

Abū Hurayra رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Shall I not inform you about the acts which Allah rewards by erasing sins and elevating

status? These are a) perfecting wuḍū' even in the face of hardships, b) abundance of steps to the mosque, and c) looking forward to the next salah after a salah. And that is *ribāṭ*. That is *ribāṭ*. That is *ribāṭ*.”

Ribāṭ is a military term referring to a frontier post for border protection as well as the act of manning it. It is jihad. So, purification and performing group prayers in the masjid are a form of spiritual *ribāṭ*—a jihad that all of us must wage all the time.

Examples of hardships in performing wuḍū' mentioned by classic commentators include physical distress, unavailability of hot water in cold weather, having to fetch water from a long distance, or purchasing it at a high price. We can add difficulties particular to our situation. When water is not available at all, Sharia makes things easy by allowing tayammum, or dry ablution. However, when wuḍū' can be performed with some difficulty, then this hadith encourages us to do so without cutting corners. Perfecting (*isbāgh*) includes paying attention to details, for example, washing the limbs three times.

Every step to the masjid counts as a good deed, which raises one's rank and causes one of his minor sins to be erased. And one hopes so does every step on the way back (*Sharḥ al-Tirmidhī*, 'Abd al-Karīm al-Khuḍayr). Does it mean that one should deliberately live farther away from the masjid? Only, if one is sure that it will not cause him to miss any salah in the masjid. One should live close enough so distance will never be a reason for missing a salah. Steps to the masjid can be multiplied by walking to the masjid repeatedly.

198. IMPORTANCE OF SIWĀK

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «لَوْلَا أَنْ أَشُقَّ عَلَى أُمَّتِي لَأَمَرْتُهُمْ بِالسَّوَاكِ عِنْدَ كُلِّ صَلَاةٍ»

سنن الترمذي ت شاكر أبواب الطهارة باب ما جاء في السواك ٢٢

Abū Hurayra رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Were it not (for my concern) that it would become burdensome on my Ummah, I would have commanded them to use the *siwāk* for each salah.”

عَنِ الْمُقْدَامِ بْنِ شُرَيْحٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، قَالَ: سَأَلْتُ عَائِشَةَ، قُلْتُ: بِأَيِّ شَيْءٍ كَانَ يَبْدَأُ
النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِذَا دَخَلَ بَيْتَهُ؟ قَالَتْ: «بِالسِّوَاكِ»
صحيح مسلم كتاب الطهارة باب السواك ٢٥٣

Miqdām b. Shurayḥ narrated from his father, who said: I asked ‘Ā’isha ﷺ what was the first thing the Prophet ﷺ used to do upon entering the house. She replied, “(He would) use the siwāk.”

Siwāk (also known as *miswāk*) is the twig of the Arak tree that is used as a toothbrush and dentifrice rolled into one. The Prophet ﷺ emphasized its use strongly, and he himself used to use it the first thing after entering his home, every time he woke up from sleep, and before every salah.

It is generally known that due to its natural chemicals, siwāk has anti-bacterial, anti-plaque, and anti-inflammatory properties. Nylon toothbrushes were developed in the 20th century and are more prevalent today because they are more convenient, although not necessarily better for dental hygiene. Also, they are more expensive, and some of the common ingredients in toothpastes are of questionable value. One might consider using a combination of toothbrush and siwāk in their daily routine to get the best of both.

The use before salah is meant to ensure there are no offensive smells emanating from our mouths as we stand before Allah.

199. PERSONAL HYGIENE: PRACTICES OF NATURE

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ: سَمِعْتُ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ: «الْفِطْرَةُ
خَمْسٌ: الْخِتَانُ، وَالْإِسْتِحْدَادُ، وَقَصُّ الشَّارِبِ، وَتَقْلِيمُ الْأَظْفَارِ، وَنَتْفُ الْأَبَاطِ»
صحيح البخاري كتاب اللباس باب تقليم الأظفار ٥٨٩١

Abū Hurayra ﷺ narrated: I heard the Prophet ﷺ say, “Five practices are characteristics of fiṭra (our pure inborn nature): 1. circumcision, 2. removing pubic hair, 3. trimming the mustache, 4. clipping the nails, and 5. removing underarm hair.”

Fiṭra is the natural disposition instilled in humanity by the Creator. The Quran refers to it as *the primordial nature from Allah upon which He originated mankind* [al-Rūm, 30:30]. Both Islamic beliefs and Islamic precepts are in perfect harmony with that nature. Man’s inborn ability to judge right from