

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
الحمد لله والصلاة والسلام على رسول الله وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين



Intro to Usul Al Hadith Lesson 3 Overview

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The Claim that Ḥadīth Was Not Written Until the Second Century

Some have asserted that the codification (*tadwīn*) of the Sunnah did not begin until the second Islamic century. This assertion is based on a report transmitted by Mālik in his *Muwattaʿa* (narrated by Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī, p. 330):

Yahyā ibn Saʿīd informed us that ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz wrote to Abū Bakr ibn ʿAmr ibn Ḥazm:

“Look for whatever can be found of the ḥadīth of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, or his Sunnah, or the ḥadīth of ʿUmar, or matters of a similar nature, and write them down for me, for indeed I fear the loss of knowledge and the disappearance of the scholars.”

Al-Bukhārī also recorded this in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. Furthermore, it was noted that the earliest authors of compiled works of ḥadīth were all individuals who lived beyond the year 143 AH.

Prior to al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, scholars did not grant these earlier reports their due consideration in terms of critical interpretation and nuanced understanding. Instead, they transmitted them in a manner that gave the impression that Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhri was indeed the very first to write and codify ḥadīth, and that all subsequent compilers came only after him. This perception gained dominance among the authors of encyclopedic works, such as Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, al-Imām al-Dhahabī, al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar, al-Maqrīzī, and Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān (author of *Abjad al-ʿUlūm*), among others. They generally upheld this view, even while occasionally acknowledging contrary evidence—namely, that the generation immediately following the Companions (the *Tābiʿūn*) transmitted knowledge from written collections (*ṣuḥuf*) that, while unorganized, had already been recorded during the era of the Companions and their successors.

This view remained prevalent until al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī systematically investigated the matter, gathered its scattered evidences, and composed his seminal work *Taqyīd al-ʿIlm* (“The Restraint of Knowledge”).

Al-Khaṭīb's Methodological Contribution

Al-Khaṭīb sought to demonstrate that the practice of recording knowledge existed not only in his own time but also during the era of the Companions and their successors. This inquiry led him to undertake a comprehensive study of the historical development of written transmission. To this end, he gathered relevant prophetic traditions and historical reports concerning the origins of recording knowledge.

- In the first chapter of the first section of *Taqyīd al-ʿIlm*, he dedicated his discussion to the Prophetic reports that prohibit the writing of ḥadīth. He endeavored to collect these reports comprehensively, whether transmitted through sound or weak chains.
- In the second and third chapters of this same section, he presented reports from the Companions and Tābiʿūn that express their disapproval of recording ḥadīth or that explicitly prohibit it.

In the first chapter of the second section, al-Khaṭīb examined reports from the Companions clarifying their rationale for discouraging the writing of material other than the Qurʾān. He summarizes this rationale as follows:

“It has been established that the aversion expressed by some among the earliest generations was only to ensure that no other text would be placed in parallel with the Book of Allah, or that people would not be distracted from the Qurʾān by other writings. In the earliest period of Islam, the prohibition of writing knowledge was due to the scarcity of jurists and scholars able to distinguish between revelation and other forms of discourse. For most of the Bedouins were not versed in religion, nor had they sat with scholars, and there was a fear that they might attach whatever writings they encountered to the Qurʾān, imagining its contents to be divine speech.” (*Taqyīd al-ʿIlm*, p. 57)

At the beginning of the second chapter of the second section, al-Khaṭīb further identifies additional reasons for discouraging the writing of ḥadīth. Among them:

- The emphasis placed on memorization, given the proximity of isnāds (chains of transmission) and the short lapse of time since the Prophet ﷺ. Reliance on writing, he argues, could weaken the human capacity for memorization to the point of erasure. By contrast, when a written text is unavailable, memorization remains strong and portable, accompanying the scholar wherever he goes.
- He cites the saying of Sufyān al-Thawrī: “*What an evil repository for knowledge are scrolls.*”

In the third section of his work, al-Khaṭīb devoted three chapters to reports permitting the writing of knowledge:

1. Reports traced directly to the Prophet ﷺ, many of which he documented with authentic isnāds.
2. Reports from the Companions explicitly indicating their own writing of knowledge or commanding others to do so. Numerous such reports are preserved in both the *Ṣaḥīḥ* and *Sunan* collections.
3. Reports from leading Tābi‘ūn, which al-Khaṭīb documented through his chains of transmission.

Al-Khaṭīb concludes that the expansion of written scholarship after the era of the Tābi‘ūn was driven by necessity:

“People only expanded in the writing of knowledge, and relied upon its preservation in scrolls after the initial disapproval, because transmissions became widespread, musnads grew in length, and the names and lineages of transmitters multiplied, while the wording of

reports varied. Hearts became incapable of memorizing all that we have described, and thus the science of ḥadīth became more firmly preserved in writing than in the memory of the memorizer. This came with the concession of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ for those whose memory was weak to make use of writing, as well as the practice of the Companions, the Ṭābi‘ūn, and subsequent generations.”

Principal Findings of *Taqyīd al-‘Ilm*

The major conclusions that can be drawn from al-Khaṭīb’s work are as follows:

1. No prohibition against writing ḥadīth is authentically established except for the report of Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī, recorded by Muslim. Even then, al-Bukhārī and Muslim differed over whether this report should be considered *marfū‘* (attributed directly to the Prophet ﷺ) or *mawqūf* (attributed only to the Companion).
2. The final ruling of the Prophet ﷺ was to permit the writing of ḥadīth. Al-Khaṭīb presents multiple lines of evidence in support of this conclusion, including proofs from both the Qur’ān and Sunnah encouraging the act of writing.
3. The practice of *tadwīn* in its broader sense—namely, the collection and preservation of material—began during the Prophet’s ﷺ lifetime.
4. The refusal of certain Companions and Ṭābi‘ūn to write ḥadīth was not grounded in the prohibition reported by Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī, but rather in other considerations, such as:
 - Fear that the people would overindulge in books and neglect the Qur’ān.
 - Concern that reliance upon writing would diminish the human faculty of memorization. For this reason, some early scholars would

write down material only temporarily, erasing it after committing it to memory. If the prohibition of writing had been absolute, they would not have written at all in the first place.

References for Further Study on the Codification of Sunnah

- Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taqyīd al-‘Ilm*
- Muḥammad Muṣṭafā al-A‘zamī, *Studies in Early Ḥadīth Literature*
- Muḥammad ibn Maṭar al-Zuhrānī, *Tadwīn al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah: Nash‘atuhu wa-Taṭawwuruhu*

Travel in Pursuit of Ḥadīth (al-Riḥla fī Ṭalab al-Ḥadīth)

Alongside the practice of transmission (*taḥdīth*) and narration (*riwāya*), the phenomenon of traveling in search of knowledge was already present during the time of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

The Origins of Travel in the Pursuit of Ḥadīth

The legitimacy and recommendation (*mashrū‘iyya wa istiḥbāb*) of travel for seeking knowledge are established through various textual evidences:

1. Qur’ānic Evidence

Allah, Most High, states:

وَمَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لِيَنْفِرُوا كَافَّةً فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ طَائِفَةٌ لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّينِ وَلِيُنذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ [al-Tawbah: 122]

Al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ comments: “This is a foundational proof for the obligation of seeking knowledge and for undertaking journeys in pursuit of the Sunnah.”

2. **Prophetic Evidence**

Abū Hurayra reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

“Whoever treads a path seeking knowledge, Allah will ease for him thereby a path to Paradise.”

3. **Prophetic Precedent from Earlier Prophets**

The legitimacy of travel in pursuit of knowledge is further illustrated by the journey of Prophet Mūsā (‘alayhi al-salām), who set out to meet al-Khiḍr in order to learn from him.

Delegations (Wufūd) to the Prophet ﷺ

During the Prophet’s time in Madinah, numerous delegations visited him. Some came seeking *fatwā* (legal rulings), while others traveled for the sake of learning directly from him.

- **Seeking Legal Ruling (Istiftā’):**

‘Uqba b. al-Hārith related that he married the daughter of Abū Ihāb b. ‘Azīz. A woman then came and informed him: “I suckled both you and the woman you married.” ‘Uqba responded: “I was never informed of this, nor do I have knowledge of it.” He then traveled to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to seek clarification, who replied: “*How can you remain with her when such a claim has been made?*” Consequently, ‘Uqba separated from her, and she subsequently married another man.

- **Seeking Knowledge (Ṭalab al-‘Ilm):**

Mālik b. al-Huwayrith narrated:

“We came to the Prophet ﷺ as a group of young men of similar age. We stayed with him for twenty nights and days. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was compassionate and kind. When he sensed that we longed for our families, he inquired about those we had left behind. After we informed him, he instructed: *‘Return to your families, remain among them, teach them, and command them (in matters of religion). Pray*

as you have seen me pray. When the time for prayer comes, let one of you call the adhān, and let the eldest among you lead the prayer.”

More than one hundred delegations are reported to have visited the Prophet ﷺ in the Madinan period, ranging from the fifth to the eleventh year after Hijra.

1. The delegation of Muzaynah in **Rajab of the 5th year after Hijrah.**
2. The delegation of Ashja' in **the 5th year after Hijrah.**
3. The delegation of Juthām **before the 7th year after Hijrah.**
4. The delegation of the Ash'arīs in **Muḥarram of the 7th year after Hijrah.**
5. The delegation of Daws in **the 7th year after Hijrah.**
6. The delegation of Banū Tha'labah in **the 8th year after Hijrah.**
7. The delegation of Sulaym in **the 8th year after Hijrah.**
8. The delegation of Rabī'ah ('Abd al-Qays) in **the 8th year after Hijrah.**
9. The delegation of Ṣadā' in **the 8th year after Hijrah.**
10. The delegation of Thamālah and al-Ḥidān in **the 8th year after Hijrah.**
11. The delegation of Bāhila in **the 8th year after Hijrah.**
12. The delegation of Asad in **Muḥarram of the 9th year after Hijrah.**
13. The delegation of 'Udhrah in **Ṣafar of the 9th year after Hijrah.**
14. The delegation of Balī in **Rabī' al-Awwal of the 9th year after Hijrah.**
15. The delegation of Yūḥannā ibn Ru'bah in **Rajab of the 9th year after Hijrah.**
16. The delegation of Jarbā' and Adhruḥ in **Rajab of the 9th year after Hijrah.**
17. The delegation of 'Urwah ibn Mas'ūd al-Thaqafī **before Ramaḍān of the 9th year after Hijrah.**
18. The delegation of Thaqīf in **Ramaḍān of the 9th year after Hijrah.**
19. The delegation of the kings of Ḥimyar in **Ramaḍān of the 9th year after Hijrah.**
20. The delegation of Ḍimām ibn Tha'labah in **the 9th year after Hijrah.**
21. The delegation of the Dārīs from Lakhm in **the 9th year after Hijrah.**
22. The delegation of Bahra' in **the 9th year after Hijrah.**
23. The delegation of Banū al-Bukā' in **the 9th year after Hijrah.**
24. The delegation of Banū Fazārah in **the 9th year after Hijrah.**
25. The delegation of Tha'labah ibn Munqidh in **the 9th year after Hijrah.**

26. The delegation of Sa'd Huthaym in **the 9th year after Hijrah.**
27. The delegation of Murrah in **the 9th year after Hijrah.**
28. The delegation of Kilāb in **the 9th year after Hijrah.**
29. The delegation of Kinānah in **the 9th year after Hijrah.**
30. The delegation of Tujayb in **the 9th year after Hijrah.**
31. The delegation of al-Hārith ibn Ka'b in **Rabi' al-Awwal of the 10th year after Hijrah.**
32. The delegation of 'Adī ibn Ḥātim in **Sha'bān of the 10th year after Hijrah.**
33. The delegation of Khawlān in **Sha'bān of the 10th year after Hijrah.**
34. The delegation of Ghāmid in **Ramaḍān of the 10th year after Hijrah.**
35. The delegation of Ghassān in **Ramaḍān of the 10th year after Hijrah.**
36. The delegation of Jarīr al-Bajali in **Ramaḍān of the 10th year after Hijrah.**
37. The delegation of Salmān in **Shawwāl of the 10th year after Hijrah.**
38. The delegation of al-Azd in **the 10th year after Hijrah.**
39. The delegation of Zubayd in **the 10th year after Hijrah.**
40. The delegation of Furwah ibn Misk in **the 10th year after Hijrah.**
41. The second delegation of 'Abd al-Qays in **the 10th year after Hijrah.**
42. The delegation of Banū Ḥanīfah in **the 10th year after Hijrah.**
43. The delegation of Ṭayy' in **the 10th year after Hijrah.**
44. The delegation of Kindah in **the 10th year after Hijrah.**
45. The delegation of Muḥārib in **the 10th year after Hijrah.**
46. The delegation of the Ruhāwiyyūn in **the 10th year after Hijrah.**
47. The delegation of 'Abs in **the 10th year after Hijrah.**
48. The delegation of al-Ṣadaf in **the 10th year after Hijrah.**
49. The delegation of Ra'īyyah al-Suḥaymī in **the 10th year after Hijrah.**
50. The delegation of Qushayr ibn Ka'b in **the 10th year after Hijrah.**
51. The delegation of al-Nakha' in **Muḥarram of the 11th year after Hijrah.**
52. The delegation of Abū Razīn Laqīṭ ibn 'Āmir al-'Uqaylī.
53. The delegation of Abū Ṣufrah.
54. The delegation of Aḥmas.
55. The delegation of Azd 'Umān.
56. The delegation of Azd Shanū'ah.



57. The delegation of Aslam.
58. The delegation of Usayd ibn Abī Anas.
59. The delegation of A'shā ibn Māzin.
60. The delegation of Iyād.
61. The delegation of Bakr ibn Wā'il.
62. The delegation of Bāriq
63. The delegation of Banū Suḥaym.
64. The delegation of Banū Sadūs.
65. The delegation of Banū 'Abd ibn 'Adī.
66. The delegation of Banū 'Udhrah.
67. The delegation of Banū Kalb.
68. The delegation of Taghlib.
69. The delegation of Tamīm.
70. The delegation of al-Jārūd ibn al-Mu'allā and Salamah ibn 'Iyād.
71. The delegation of Ja'dah.
72. The delegation of Ju'fī.
73. The delegation of Jarm.
74. The delegation of Juhaynah.
75. The delegation of the Jinn.
76. The delegation of Jayshān.
77. The delegation of al-Ḥārith ibn Ḥassān.
78. The delegation of al-Ḥajjāj ibn 'Ilāṭ al-Sulamī.
79. The delegation of Ḥaḍramawt.
80. The delegation of al-Ḥakam ibn Ḥazn al-Kilfī.
81. The delegation of Khath'am.
82. The delegation of Khushayn.
83. The delegation of Khifāf ibn Naḍlah.
84. The delegation of Dhubāb ibn al-Ḥārith.
85. The delegation of Ru'ās ibn Kilāb.
86. The delegation of Sa'd al-'Ashīrah.
87. The delegation of Shaybān.
88. The delegation of Ṭāriq ibn 'Abd Allāh.
89. The delegation of 'Āmir ibn Ṣa'sa'ah.

90. The delegation of ‘Abs.
91. The delegation of ‘Uqayl ibn Ka‘b.
92. The delegation of ‘Anzah.
93. The delegation of ‘Ans.
94. The delegation of Ghāfiq.
95. The delegation of Qays ibn ‘Āsim.
96. The delegation of Kalb.
97. The delegation of Mu‘āwiyah ibn Ḥaydah.
98. The delegation of Mahrah.
99. The delegation of Nāfi‘ ibn Zayd al-Ḥimyarī.
100. The delegation of Najrān.
101. The delegation of Hilāl ibn ‘Āmir.
102. The delegation of Hamdān.
103. The delegation of Wā’il ibn Ḥujr.
104. The delegation of Wāthilah ibn al-Asqa’.

The Institutionalization of Travel in the Pursuit of Knowledge

Travel (*riḥla*) became a defining feature of the methodology of students of knowledge during the golden age of ḥadīth. Leading scholars treated this practice as integral to scholarly attainment.

- Imām al-Bukhārī dedicated three chapters in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* to travel in pursuit of knowledge, and Imām al-Dārimī also devoted sections to it.
- Imām al-Rāmahurmuzī, in *al-Muḥaddith al-Fāṣil*, arranged three chapters specifically on scholarly travel.
- Al-Ḥākim likewise emphasized the subject in his *Ma‘rifat ‘Ulūm al-Ḥadīth*, particularly in the opening on *ma‘rifat ‘ālī al-isnād*.
- Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī dedicated discussion to it in *Sharaf Aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth* and later authored a separate treatise entitled *al-Riḥla fī Ṭalab al-Ḥadīth*.

- Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr also addressed the significance of travel for learning in his *Jāmi‘ Bayān al-‘Ilm wa Faḍlih*.

Travel in the Era of the Companions

In the era of the Companions (ṣaḥāba), transmission took the form of direct narration to one another and to their students among the Followers (tābi‘ūn). Their reliability and integrity as transmitters was unquestioned, obviating the need for external corroboration.

Nevertheless, travel in search of ḥadīth continued in this period:

- **The Journey of Jābir b. ‘Abd Allāh:**

He learned of a ḥadīth narrated by ‘Abd Allāh b. Unays in Syria which he had not personally heard from the Prophet ﷺ. Jābir purchased a camel, journeyed for a month, and met Ibn Unays, who then transmitted to him the narration concerning divine justice on the Day of Judgment.

- **Further Travels of Jābir:**

Another report records Jābir traveling to Egypt to obtain a ḥadīth concerning *qīṣāṣ* (retribution), preserving it directly from its source.

- **Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī:**

He traveled from Madinah to Egypt to meet ‘Uqba b. ‘Āmir and confirm a solitary ḥadīth about concealing a believer’s faults. Upon hearing it, he immediately returned to Madinah.

- **Other Companions:**

Similar journeys were undertaken by other Companions and early Muslims, such as a man from the Anṣār who also traveled to Egypt for the same narration from ‘Uqba b. ‘Āmir.

Through such examples, the Companions established the precedent (*sunna ḥasana*) of traveling in pursuit of knowledge.

The Importance of Travel for Knowledge

The practice of travel in the pursuit of ḥadīth and knowledge more broadly came to be regarded as essential for true scholarly formation.

- Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ stated: “When a student completes the study of what is available in his own region—particularly the important higher isnāds (*‘awālī*)—he should then travel to other lands.”
- Yahyā b. Ma‘īn remarked: “Four types of people cannot be expected to benefit others: the gatekeeper, the court attendant, the son of a ḥadīth scholar, and the man who remains confined to his own town and does not travel for ḥadīth.”
- ‘Abd Allāh b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal reported asking his father about whether a seeker should remain with one scholar to write from him or travel widely. Aḥmad replied:

“He must travel. He should write from the Kufans, the Basrans, the scholars of Madinah and Mecca. He should engage with the people, hear from them, and compare narrations.”

Thus, travel was not merely an optional practice but was considered indispensable to the methodology of authentic knowledge acquisition.