

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
الحمد لله والصلاة والسلام على رسول الله وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين



Nukhbat Al Fikr Lesson 3 Overview

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The Number of Narrations Reaching the Level of *Tawātur* (Mass Transmission)

Classical scholars differed significantly regarding the *amount* and *existence* of *tawātur* in ḥadīth transmission.

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ maintained that reports reaching the level of *tawātur* were **very few**, while **Ibn Ḥibbān** held that such reports were **non-existent**. Ibn Ḥibbān stated:

“As for the reports, all of them are *āḥād* (solitary reports), for there exists no narration from the Prophet ﷺ that has been transmitted by two trustworthy narrators, each of whom narrated from two trustworthy narrators, and so on in this manner until it reaches the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.”

This statement suggests that Ibn Ḥibbān was rejecting a particular conception of *tawātur* as understood by some scholars.

In contrast, **Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī** held that *mutawātir* reports are **numerous**. In *Nuzhat al-Nazar*, he writes:

“The claim of their rarity (*‘izzah*) is unfounded, as is the claim of their nonexistence by others, for such opinions arise only from limited exposure to the vast number of transmission routes and the states and qualities of the narrators.”

However, **Mullā ‘Alī al-Qārī** critiques Ibn Ḥajar’s statement, arguing:

“It has been previously established that *tawātur* is not a discussion within the discipline of *isnād* (chain analysis), and that the narrators’ individual circumstances are not investigated therein. Therefore, even if we grant the limited awareness of those whom the author mentioned concerning the conditions and attributes of narrators, it does not necessitate what he has concluded.”

Reconciling the Divergent Opinions

Mullā ‘Alī offers a reconciliation, explaining:

“Those who denied *tawātur* were referring only to *verbal tawātur* (*tawātur lafẓī*), whereas those who affirmed it were referring to *meaning-based tawātur* (*tawātur ma‘nawī*). Hence, the disagreement is merely semantic.”

Anwar Shāh al-Kashmīrī, after classifying *tawātur* in *Fayḍ al-Bārī*, elaborates:

“Some claim that *tawātur* is rare, as reported by al-Ḥāfiẓ in *Sharḥ Nukhbat al-Fikar*—that certain scholars denied its existence entirely, while others considered it exceedingly scarce, providing only one or two examples. Yet, as I have mentioned, *tawātur* is abundant in our Sharī‘ah to such an extent that it escapes enumeration. A person may be heedless of it until he reflects, and upon reflection he will find it as self-evident as the apparent truths. This point deserves particular attention.”

It appears that this observation refers to *tawātur* in the broader sense within religion—undeniably abundant and not a matter of dispute.

The type of *mutawātir* report that yields necessary knowledge (‘*ilm ḍarūrī*’) is indeed rare. However, *tawātur* that imparts inferential knowledge (‘*ilm naẓarī*’) is far more common. In other words, *tawātur* may exist at varying degrees of certainty—some so evident that they are known universally, and others recognized only by specialists who investigate the subject in depth. After gathering the multiple transmission routes, a *muḥaddith* may attain personal certainty (*yaqīn*) of the report’s authenticity—certainty that might not extend to those outside the field.

Ibn Taymiyyah elaborates on this nuanced understanding in *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* (18:69):

“Among the scholars of ḥadīth, many reports are *mutawātir* for them that are not *mutawātir* for others, because they have heard what others have not and have knowledge of the Prophet’s circumstances unknown to others. *Tawātur* does not depend on a fixed number; rather, knowledge may result from the number of transmitters, from the qualities of the transmitters, or from contextual indicators that accompany their reports and other corroborative factors.”

Similarly, **Imām Muslim** writes in *al-Tamyīz* (p. 218):

“Know—may Allah have mercy on you—that the discipline of ḥadīth and the discernment between sound and unsound reports belong exclusively to the people of ḥadīth. They are the preservers of people’s narrations and the ones who recognize them as no one else does. The foundation upon which they build their religion consists of the transmitted *sunān* and *āthār*, handed down from generation to generation since the time of the Prophet ﷺ until our era. Those who oppose them in creed or methodology have no path to truly grasping ḥadīth or recognizing the narrators among the scholars of various regions across ages. Only the scholars of ḥadīth know them, distinguish between them, and place them appropriately in ranks of reliability and criticism.”

This reconciliation is sound; however, it should be noted that such forms of *tawātur* belong to the realm of **theoretical certainty** (*naẓarī*), which cannot independently serve as conclusive proof (*ḥujjah*) upon others. A similar case can be made for the *uṣūliyyūn* and *fuqahā’*, who may reject certain reports based on their inferential conviction derived from legal or rational indicators. Furthermore, this specific type of *tawātur* is not necessarily what the *uṣūliyyūn* intended when discussing the concept in their works.

Classical Sources on *Ḥadīth Mutawātir*

The most renowned compilations dedicated to identifying and classifying *mutawātir* ḥadīths include:

1. **Al-Azhār al-Mutanāthirah fī al-Aḥādīth al-Mutawātirah** – by al-Suyūṭī, arranged by thematic chapters.
2. **Qaṭf al-Azhār** – also by al-Suyūṭī, an abridgment of the previous work.
3. **Naẓm al-Mutanāthir min al-Ḥadīth al-Mutawātir** – by Muḥammad ibn Ja‘far al-Kattānī.

Al-Mashhūr (The Well-Known Report)

After completing the discussion on *tawātur* (mass-transmission), it becomes evident that any report which does not fulfill all the conditions of *tawātur* cannot be considered *mutawātir*.

The second is called the *mashhūr* report — also referred to as *al-mustafīḍ* according to one opinion.

Definition of al-Mashhūr

Ibn Ḥajar defines *al-mashhūr* in *Nuzhat al-Nazar* as:

“That which has a limited number of chains, numbering more than two.” This is the definition recognized among the ḥadīth scholars.

Types of al-Mashhūr

1. The Relatively Well-Known Report (al-Mashhūr al-Nisbī)

This refers to a narration transmitted by more than two narrators at some point in its chain, and it is well-known relative to that narrator.

An example is the ḥadīth “*Actions are judged by intentions*”, which became widely known through the narration of Yaḥyā ibn Sa‘īd.

This type of relative renown is frequent in the statements of early ḥadīth scholars.

For example, in *al-Kāmil fī Du‘afā’ al-Rijāl* (2/285), it is stated:

“The Shaykh said: This is a rejected narration from ‘Abd al-Malik from al-Zuhrī, whereas this ḥadīth is well-known (*mashhūr*) from al-Zuhrī through other than ‘Abd al-Malik.”

Likewise, Ibn Mundah records in *al-Tawḥīd* (2/122):

“This ḥadīth is well-known (*mashhūr*) from Isrā‘īl.”

Similarly, in *al-‘Ilal wa Ma‘rifat al-Rijāl* by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (as narrated by al-Marwazī, ed. Ṣubḥī al-Samarra’ī, p. 172), the narrator reports:

“I said to Abū Zakariyyā: ‘Ismā‘īl ibn Zakariyyā narrates this from al-A‘mash, from Ḥabīb ibn Abī Thābit, from Sa‘īd ibn Jubayr, from Ibn ‘Umar and Ibn ‘Abbās.’

He replied, ‘Yes, but Sufyān and Shu‘bah both narrate it differently.

Either this version is erroneous or it originates from al-A‘mash.’

I said, ‘So it is *mashhūr* from al-A‘mash?’ He said, ‘Yes, I believe so.’”

This usage continues across classical ḥadīth literature, such as in *Musnad al-Bazzār* (*al-Baḥr al-Zakḥkhār*), where numerous examples are given of reports described as *mashhūr* from particular narrators like ‘Awf, Ḥumayd, or al-Zuhrī.

2. The Well-Known Report Across All Levels of Transmission

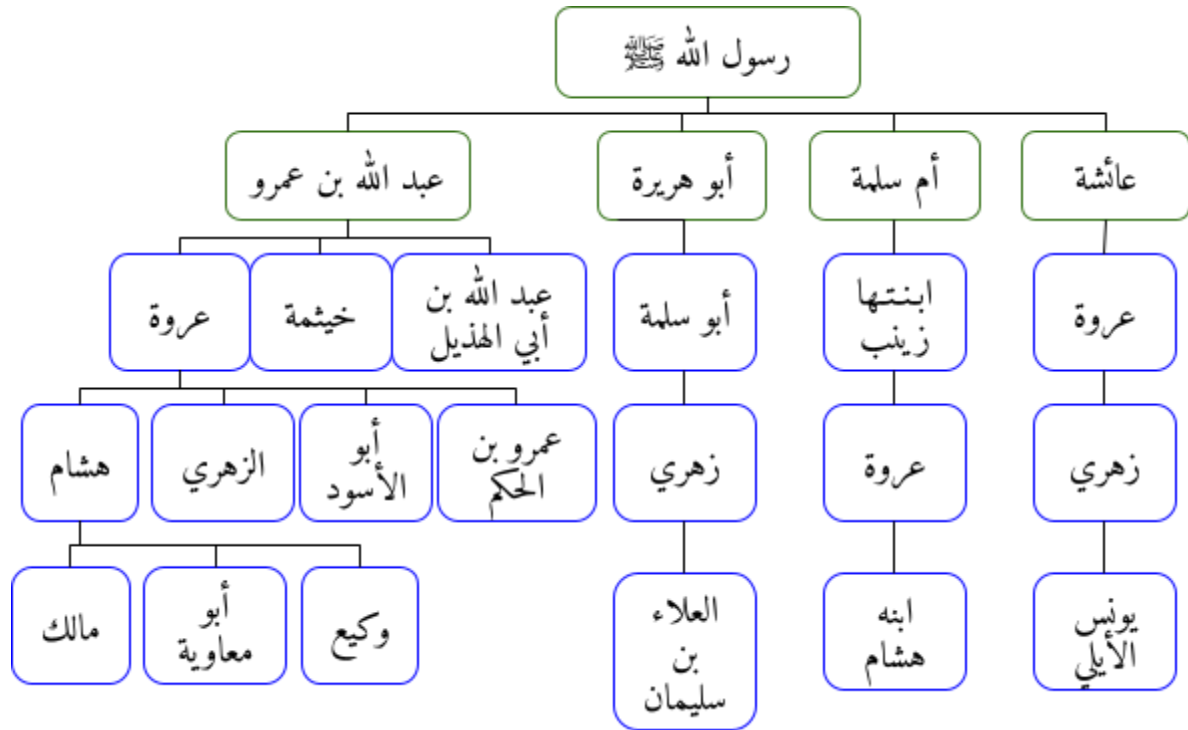
This category refers to narrations transmitted by more than two individuals at every level (*ṭabaqah*) of the chain.

Example:

The ḥadīth of ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ (may Allah be pleased with them both), wherein the Prophet ﷺ said:

“Indeed, Allah does not remove knowledge by snatching it away from people, but He removes it by taking away the scholars, until no scholar remains. Then people will take ignorant leaders, who will issue rulings

without knowledge; thus, they will go astray and lead others astray.”
(*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*)



This report has multiple routes: through ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Amr, Abū Hurayrah, ‘Ā’ishah, and Umm Salamah.

Each of these chains, when analyzed, shows multiple transmitters at each level, thus qualifying it as *mashhūr* by transmission.

Another example is the well-known story of the three men trapped in a cave who were delivered through the sincerity of their deeds.

Al-Tanūkhī states in *al-Faraj ba’d al-Shiddah* (1/127):

“This ḥadīth is *mashhūr*; it has been narrated from the Prophet ﷺ by ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās, ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar, ‘Abd Allāh ibn Abī Awfā, al-Nu‘mān ibn Bashīr al-Anṣārī, and others, each through multiple routes, though the wordings differ while the meaning remains consistent.”

3. The Well-Known Report Across Most Levels of Transmission

This refers to narrations reported by more than two narrators in *most*, but not all, layers of transmission.

Example:

The ḥadīth on *qunūt* (supplication in prayer), reported by Anas (may Allah be pleased with him):

“The Prophet ﷺ performed qunūt for a month after bowing, supplicating against certain tribes of Banū Sulaym.”
(*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*)

This narration is transmitted through multiple routes — from Anas via ‘Āṣim al-Aḥwal, Qatādah, Anas ibn Sīrīn, and Abū Mujliz, among others — with each having numerous sub-narrators. Hence, it is *mashhūr* by majority transmission even if not across all layers.

4. The Well-Known Report by Common Usage

Sometimes, *mashhūr* refers not to the number of transmitters but to a report’s prevalence upon the tongues of scholars and laypeople alike.

- **Among ḥadīth specialists:**

The ḥadīth of Anas: “The Prophet ﷺ performed qunūt for a month after bowing, supplicating against Ri‘l and Dhakwān.”

- **Among scholars and the general public:**

“A Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hand other Muslims are safe.”

- **Among jurists:**

“The most detested permissible act to Allah is divorce.”

- **Among uṣūliyyūn (legal theorists):**

“My ummah has been excused for error, forgetfulness, and what they are

compelled to do.”

- **Among grammarians:**

“Excellent is the servant Suhayb; were he not to fear Allah, he would not disobey Him.”

- **Among the general populace:**

“Haste is from Shayṭān.”

Scholars have compiled dedicated works collecting such popularly cited narrations, including:

- *al-Maqāṣid al-Ḥasanah* by al-Sakhāwī
- *Kashf al-Khafā’* by al-‘Ajlūnī
- *Tamyīz al-Ṭayyib min al-Khabīth fīmā Yadūru ‘alā Alsinat al-Nās min al-Ḥadīth* by Ibn al-Dībā’ al-Shaybānī

On the Relationship between al-Mashhūr and al-Mustafīd

Ibn Ḥajar’s phrase “*and al-mustafīd according to one opinion*” alludes to the differing scholarly usage of the two terms.

Linguistically, *mustafīd* derives from *fāḍa al-mā’*, meaning “to overflow,” as noted in *Shams al-‘Ulūm*: “It increased until it overflowed the vessel.” Likewise, *istafāda al-khabar* means “the report spread widely,” similar to “the valley overflowed with trees” in *al-Tāj al-‘Arūs*.

Some scholars, however, differentiate between the two:

- *al-Mustafīd* is said to have numerous chains consistently from beginning to end.



- *al-Mashhūr* is broader, encompassing what began as solitary (*āḥād*) but later became widely transmitted.

Others hold that *al-mustafīḍ* refers to any report received and accepted by the Ummah irrespective of the number of narrators. Thus, Abū Bakr al-Ṣayrafī regarded *al-mustafīḍ* and *al-mutawātir* as synonymous, a position also cited by al-Sakhāwī from his teacher.