

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الحمد لله والصلاة والسلام على رسول الله وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين



Tadrīb al-Rāwī Lesson 1 Overview

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Tadrīb al-Rāwī – Lesson 1

An Introduction to the Science of Ḥadīth and the Centrality of Revelation

The Virtue of Engaging with Revelation (al-Wahy)

Among the greatest blessings that Allah ﷻ bestows upon His servants is the ability to engage with revelation (**al-Wahy**). Revelation is the source of guidance, certainty, spiritual illumination, and intellectual clarity. Through it, Allah ﷻ removes doubt from the heart, rectifies belief, and establishes a clear path for individual conduct and communal order. A life lived in close attachment to revelation is a life of light, while distance from revelation inevitably leads to confusion, misguidance, and instability.

The early scholars repeatedly emphasized that true knowledge is not merely the accumulation of information, but rather light that Allah ﷻ places in the heart. This light is accessed through sincerity, humility, and constant engagement with revelation. For this reason, the study of revelation was always regarded as the noblest of sciences, surpassing all other forms of knowledge in rank and value.

The Two Forms of Revelation: al-Wahy al-Matlūw and al-Wahy Ghayr al-Matlūw

Revelation is divided into two foundational categories, each of which plays an essential and complementary role in Islam.

The first category is **al-Wahy al-Matlūw** (الوحي المتلو), which is the Noble Qur'ān. This is the revealed speech of Allah ﷻ, transmitted verbatim to the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ through Jibrīl عليه السلام. It is recited in ṣalāh, memorized by heart, preserved in written form, and conveyed generation after generation with

absolute precision. Every letter of the Qur'ān is an act of worship when recited, and its preservation is guaranteed by Allah ﷻ Himself.

The second category is **al-Wahy ghayr al-Matlūw** (الوحي غير المتلو), which refers to the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. This form of revelation is not recited in prayer, nor is its wording preserved in the same manner as the Qur'ān, yet it is divinely inspired in meaning. It encompasses the statements (**aqwāl**), actions (**af'āl**), tacit approvals (**taqrīrāt**), and comprehensive conduct of the Prophet ﷺ as observed and transmitted by his Companions.

The distinction between these two forms of revelation does not imply a difference in authority, but rather a difference in function and mode of transmission. Both are essential, and neither can be understood independently of the other.

The Sunnah as the Key to Understanding the Qur'ān

The Qur'ān cannot be properly understood or implemented without the Sunnah. The Sunnah explains what the Qur'ān states concisely, restricts what it mentions absolutely, specifies what it presents generally, and demonstrates its rulings in lived, practical form. Without the Sunnah, foundational acts of worship such as ṣalāh, zakāh, ṣawm, and ḥajj would remain undefined in their practical details.

For this reason, Allah ﷻ paired obedience to Himself with obedience to His Messenger ﷺ in numerous verses of the Qur'ān. The Sunnah is therefore not an optional or secondary source, but an integral component of divine guidance. Rejecting or neglecting it results in a fragmented and distorted understanding of Islam.

The Companions رضي الله عنهم understood this reality deeply. They preserved the words and actions of the Prophet ﷺ with utmost care, recognizing that they were safeguarding revelation itself. Their commitment laid the foundation for all later efforts in the preservation of ḥadīth.

The Emergence of the Science of Ḥadīth

As Islam spread beyond the Arabian Peninsula and new generations entered the religion, the need to preserve the Sunnah with precision became increasingly urgent. Errors in transmission, lapses in memory, and later deliberate fabrications posed serious threats to the integrity of prophetic teachings. In response, Allah ﷻ raised scholars who devoted their lives to protecting the Sunnah.

From this need emerged the science known as **‘Ilm al-Ḥadīth**, a discipline unparalleled in human history for its rigor and methodological sophistication. This science examines both the chain of transmission (**isnād**) and the text (**matn**) of every narration attributed to the Prophet ﷺ. It investigates the reliability of narrators, the continuity of transmission, and the presence or absence of hidden defects.

Through this science, narrations were classified into accepted and rejected categories, such as **ṣaḥīḥ**, **ḥasan**, and **ḍa‘īf**, based on precise, well-defined criteria. These principles were not invented arbitrarily, but developed through generations of scholarly practice and critical analysis.

The Role of the Early Authorities and the Codification of Principles

The foundational principles of ḥadīth criticism were applied long before they were formally written down. The Companions and the Tābi‘ūn instinctively evaluated narrations, questioning sources and comparing reports. As time passed, later scholars codified these practices into structured principles to preserve consistency and clarity.

Among the most influential works in this process was the *Muqaddimah* of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ رحمه الله, which organized the sciences of ḥadīth into distinct categories

and terminology. This work became the reference point for virtually all later writings in the field.

Subsequent scholars summarized, refined, and commented upon Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's work in order to make it more accessible to students. These efforts produced a rich scholarly tradition of abridgments, commentaries, and explanatory texts.

Imām al-Nawawī and the Taqrīb

Imām Yaḥyā ibn Sharaf al-Nawawī رحمه الله composed *al-Taqrīb wa al-Taysīr*, a concise summary of the principles laid out by Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ. His goal was to present the core concepts of ḥadīth sciences in a clear, organized, and student-friendly manner.

Despite its brevity, the *Taqrīb* became one of the most important introductory texts in the discipline. Its precision and clarity made it suitable for memorization, while its depth required explanation and commentary.

Imām al-Suyūṭī and Tadrīb al-Rāwī

Imām Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī رحمه الله authored **Tadrīb al-Rāwī fī Sharḥ Taqrīb al-Nawawī** as an expansive commentary on Imām al-Nawawī's text. In this work, he explains technical terms, cites earlier authorities, discusses scholarly disagreements, and adds valuable clarifications.

Tadrīb al-Rāwī occupies a central position in the curriculum of ḥadīth studies. It serves as a bridge between introductory summaries and advanced analytical works. A student who studies it carefully gains not only familiarity with terminology, but also insight into the reasoning and methodology of the ḥadīth scholars.

The Responsibility of the Student of Ḥadīth

The opening lesson of Tadrīb al-Rāwī reminds the student that studying the Sunnah is both an honor and a trust. It requires sincerity (**ikhlāṣ**), humility (**tawāḍuʿ**), patience (**ṣabr**), and respect for the scholars of the past. The goal is not merely academic mastery, but preservation of the prophetic legacy and correct understanding of the religion.

A student who approaches this science with reverence and discipline participates in a chain of transmission that connects directly back to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. This awareness should inspire gratitude, responsibility, and a lifelong commitment to truth and precision.