

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الحمد لله والصلاة والسلام على رسول الله وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين



**TALWEEH**  
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***Al-Jarḥ wa-l-Ta'dīl Lesson 1 Overview***

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## *Al-Jarḥ wa-l-Ta'dīl Lesson 1*

### *Introduction to 'Ilm al-Jarḥ wa-l-Ta'dīl*

#### *Opening Invocation and Purpose of the Discipline*

The study of 'Ilm al-Jarḥ wa-l-Ta'dīl (عِلْمُ الْجَرْحِ وَالتَّعْدِيلِ) traditionally begins with praise of Allāh and prayers upon His Messenger ﷺ, seeking divine assistance in acquiring beneficial knowledge. This opening reflects the understanding that sacred knowledge is not merely technical but ethical and spiritual in nature.

Jarḥ wa-l-Ta'dīl occupies a **central position within 'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth**, as it directly governs the evaluation of narrators (al-ruwāt, الرُّوَاة) and, by extension, the reliability of prophetic reports. Without this discipline, the processes of **taṣḥīḥ** (تَصْحِيح) and **taḍ'īf** (تَضْعِيف) would be impossible.

#### *The Two Foundational Conditions for Ṣiḥḥat al-Ḥadīth*

The scholars of ḥadīth established that a narration is initially presumed authentic when two foundational conditions are met.

##### **Ittiṣāl al-Isnād (اتِّصَالُ الْإِسْنَادِ)**

The chain of transmission must be uninterrupted, meaning that every narrator has demonstrably met and transmitted from the one above him. This condition is studied extensively under discussions of **al-ittiṣāl**, **al-irsāl**, **al-inqitā'**, and related topics in 'Ilm Muṣṭalaḥ al-Ḥadīth.

##### **Ḥāl al-Rāwī: 'Adālah and Ḍabt**

Each narrator must be evaluated with respect to two qualities:



‘**Adālah** (عدالة) refers to the narrator’s religious integrity, moral uprightness, and freedom from intentional lying.

**Dabt** (ضبط) refers to the narrator’s accuracy and precision in transmission, whether through memory or written preservation.

When both qualities are present, the narration is accepted *prima facie*, although later comparison with other reports may reveal ‘**ilal** (علل) or **shudhūdh** (شذوذ) that affect its final ruling.

### *Why Jarḥ wa-l-Ta’dīl Requires Independent Study*

Although discussions of Jarḥ wa-l-Ta’dīl appear in works such as **Tadreeb al-Rāwī**, **Fatḥ al-Mughīth**, and other manuals of Muṣṭalaḥ, these works were **not designed to train students in applied narrator criticism**.

They present principles (**qawā’id**, قواعِد) but do not systematically prepare students to research narrators independently, reconcile conflicting evaluations, or navigate complex cases.

For this reason, later academic curricula separated Jarḥ wa-l-Ta’dīl into a **stand-alone discipline**, supported by comprehensive works compiled from decades of teaching experience. Such works gather dispersed discussions into a coherent methodological framework, allowing students to develop **binā’ ‘ilmī** (بناءً علمي) rather than fragmented familiarity.

### *The Complexity of Evaluating Narrators*

#### **The Myth of Simplicity**

A widespread misconception is that Jarḥ wa-l-Ta’dīl is a simple matter of labeling narrators as **thiqa** (ثقة) or **ḍa’īf** (ضعيف). In reality, only a small minority of narrators occupy these extremes.

The majority fall into a **gray area** between full acceptance and outright rejection. This reality explains why Imām al-Dhahabī (رحمه الله) famously remarked that defining **al-Ḥadīth al-Ḥasan (الحديث الحسن)** precisely is exceedingly difficult.

This intermediate zone is governed by **ijtihād (اجتهاد)**, and scholars may legitimately differ in their conclusions.

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### *Linguistic and Technical Definitions of Jarḥ*

#### **Linguistic Distinction**

Arabic linguists distinguish between:

**Jurḥ (جرح)** with ḍammah, referring to a physical wound inflicted upon the body.

**Jarḥ (جرح)** with fathah, referring metaphorically to harm inflicted by speech, particularly upon a person's credibility or honor.

As stated by the linguists:

الْجُرْحُ بِالصَّمِّ فِي الْأَبْدَانِ، وَالْجَرْحُ بِالْفَتْحِ فِي الْمَعَانِي وَالْأَعْرَاضِ

#### **Technical Definition**

In technical usage, **al-Jarḥ iṣṭilāḥan** refers to identifying a flaw in a narrator that affects either his **‘adālah** or **ḍabt**, thereby necessitating hesitation, weakening, or rejection of his narration.

Conversely, **al-Ta‘dīl (التعديل)** affirms the narrator's reliability in these two areas.

### *The Spectrum of Reliability*

Jarḥ wa-l-Ta'dīl does not operate on binary logic. Instead, narrators exist along a spectrum ranging from:

Complete confidence and tranquility in acceptance

Partial acceptance with reservation

Doubt and hesitation

Weakness (ḍa'f)

Complete rejection (radd)

Importantly, declaring a narrator unreliable does **not** mean he never speaks the truth. Even the most unreliable individuals may occasionally speak truthfully, just as even the most reliable may err.

The famous incident involving Shayṭān and **Āyat al-Kursī** illustrates this principle: falsehood as a general trait does not negate the possibility of isolated truth.

### *Probability, Not Absolute Certainty*

The rulings of Jarḥ wa-l-Ta'dīl are based on **ghalabat al-zann** (غَلَبَةُ الظَّنِّ), not mathematical certainty.

Just as in fiqh, where probable judgment is treated as certainty in practice, the scholars of ḥadīth sought the **strongest reasonable conclusion**, not philosophical absolutes.

This methodological realism underpins the entire discipline.

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### *Ḍabṭ al-Ṣadr and Ḍabṭ al-Kitāb*

Retention occurs in two primary forms:

**Dabṭ al-Ṣadr** (ضَبَطُ الصَّدْر) – retention through memory.

**Dabṭ al-Kitāb** (ضَبَطُ الْكِتَاب) – retention through written preservation.

Contrary to popular belief, most reliable narrators were not accepted because of extraordinary memory alone, but because their narrations, when compared with their peers (**al-aqrān**, الأَقْرَان), demonstrated consistency.

The goal of ḥadīth criticism is not to test memory skill, but to establish whether the report can be trusted as a transmission from the Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم.

### *External Corroborating Indicators (Qarā'in مُرَجِّحَة)*

Narrators with lesser dabṭ may still be accepted when supported by external indicators, such as:

Reading directly from a verified book.

Corroboration from reliable contemporaries.

Consistency within a specific context or transmission setting.

These **qarā'in** (قَرَائِن) can elevate a narration from hesitation to acceptance without contradicting methodological rigor.

### *Ethical Gravity of Jarḥ wa-l-Ta'dīl*

The scholars consistently warned that this discipline deals with **people's honor** (الأَعْرَاض).

Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd famously stated that two groups stand on the edge of destruction: rulers, because they control lives, and muḥaddithūn, because they control reputations.

For this reason, Jarḥ wa-l-Ta'dīl was never a license for reckless criticism. It required knowledge, restraint, humility, and fear of Allāh.

### *Concluding Perspective*

Jarḥ wa-l-Ta'dīl is not merely a technical science. It is an ethical discipline grounded in justice, caution, and reverence for knowledge.

Its goal is not fault-finding, but preservation. Not condemnation, but protection of the Sunnah.

True mastery of this science cultivates humility before scholarship, respect for effort, and deep awareness of one's own limitations.