

Meeting 13: Branches of Fiqhul-Hadith

Different Manuscripts (Ekhtelaf Al-Nosakh)

The first step in understanding a Hadith is to be confident about the accuracy of the text available to us. Surely, all of the books of Hadith were compiled before the invention of printing. The methodology of finding the accuracy of the texts is to discover as many manuscripts of a text as possible and cross examine them. Finally, the most accurate copy will be selected. The following examples can reflect the significance of the science of different manuscripts.

1. Muslim in his Sahih narrated from the Prophet (s.a.w.w), Whoever fasts the month of Ramadan and follows it by fasting six days (Settan) of Shawwal it is as if he has fasted his whole life. [1](#) In some of the manuscripts it is written 'Sheyan' (some days), instead of 'Settan' (six days). As you can see this slight difference can change the meaning of the Hadith completely. In the narrations of Ahlul-Bayt (a.s.) however, the following Hadith is narrated precisely: It is optional to fast six days of the month of Shawwal after the month of Ramadan, thus he may or may not fast. [2](#)
2. In lesson four we quoted a Hadith from Imam Baqir (a.s.) in which he was listening to Hakam while honouring him (Mokreman) or according to some other manuscripts while disliking him (Mokrehan). Similarly, this slight difference changes the perception of the scholars of Hakam.

2. Gharibul Hadith (Strange Hadith)

The science of Gharibul Hadith is a science in which difficult words and sentences will be explained. Undoubtedly, the Imams of Ahlul-Bayt (a.s.) were the most eloquent of speakers. They were always considerable of the degree of understanding of their audiences. Thus, perception of their narrations was not usually difficult for their audiences. However, in rare cases once the audience would request further explanation the Imams would verify their words in more detail.

Invention of the science of Gharibul Hadith is due to the fact that we have inherited the educational heritage of the Imams of Ahlul-Bayt (a.s.) after several centuries. Surely, the Arabic language similar to

other languages has had its own evolutions. Often a word at the time of the Prophet (S) had a totally different meaning than that of today. Moreover, lack of the contents in most of the narrations or their mutilations and such similar causes have contributed to the complexity of understanding the meanings of the Ahadith. In the following I shall cite some examples of the strange narrations:

1. Many Shia and Sunni narrators have narrated from the Prophet of Islam (S):

اختلاف امتي رحمة

“The ekhtelaf of my community is a mercy”. The term Ekhtelaf is a homonym. Its common meaning is to dispute and disunite. However, it also means to traffic or travel. Because of the first common meaning many Muslims have been wondering as to how the dispute and the disunity of Muslims are a mercy? Muhammad Bin Abi Omair from Abdul Mo'min Al Ansari narrated, I said to Imam Sadiq (a.s.) some people narrated from the Prophet The ekhtelaf of my community is a mercy.' Is this correct? The Imam confirmed that. I said if their ekhtelaf is a mercy then their association and unity must be a punishment!

The Imam explained That is not how you as well as they understood the Hadith. The Prophet (S) meant what the Almighty God has said: Of every group of people, a party should only go forth, that they may get instructions in the religion. (9: 122). The Imam (a.s.) further explained: The Prophet (S) asked them to travel to the Messenger of God and learn and then go back to their tribes to teach them. The Prophet only meant their travelling (ekhtelaf) in the cities not their dispute (ekhtelaf) in the matter of religion, for there is only one religion. [3](#)

2. Often it is referred to a person without naming him. In Arabic the term used is folan¹ which is like Mr X in English. In such expressions, usually the audience would understand who the person is referring to. However, after several centuries the term remains ambiguous and makes it difficult to identify the person. For instance, in sermon 228, Imam Ali (a.s.) while praising someone says:

لله بلاء (بلاد: النسخة) فلانٍ فلقد قَوَّمِ الاود و داوي العمد و اقام السنة و خَلَّفَ الفتنة

“May Allah reward Mr. X. who straightened the curve, cured the disease, established the Sunna and abandoned mischief.”[4](#)

The ambiguity of the term folan has provided an opportunity to some of the Sunni scholars such as Ibn Abil Hadid to amazingly claim that the Imam has used the term to refer to Omar Ibn Khatab! Nothing can be said farther from the truth for this claim does not match other speeches of Imam Ali (a.s.) about the person. It is obvious that the term is used to refer to one of the companions of the Imam (a.s.) who has died prior to the mischief occurring after the demise of the Prophet (S).

Among the many useful references for the science of Gharibul Hadith the following are the most famous

ones:

1. Al Nihayyeh Fi Gharib Al-Hadith by Ibn Atheer Al Jithri (died in 606 AH). This book is very useful for the interpretation of the difficult words used in the Sunni books of Hadith.
2. Majma'ul Bahrain by Sheikh Fakhrudin Al Torayhi (died in 1085AH). Majma'ul Bahrain is the most famous book for interpretation of the difficult terms used in the Quran as well as the Shia books of Hadith.

Contexts of Issuing (Asbabu Sodour)

The following are some of the best examples for the significance of the science of knowing the context of a Hadith.

1. It is narrated from the Prophet (s.a.w.w): Salman is from us Ahlul-Bayt (a.s.).⁵ Surely Salman was one of the most distinguished companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.w). Yet, he was not a member of Ahlul-Bayt (a.s.). Thus, different suggestions are given to the meaning of the above Hadith. Some suggested that the respected title is given to him due to his extra-ordinary knowledge. Others proposed that the Hadith means that the original nature of Salman is from the nature of Ahlul-Bayt (a.s.)

The best understanding of the Hadith lies under the circumstances of the Hadith. Ibn Hisham ⁶ and other historians narrated: Prior to the battle of the Ditch (Khandaq) Muslims divided into groups to dig the ditch. Salman was a strong man. Thus, the Migrants (Mohajereen) requested that Salman joins their group saying: Salman is from us. On the other hand the Helpers (Ansar) liked him to join their group saying: Salman is from us. The Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.w) finalised the dispute saying: Salman is from us Ahlul-Bayt (a.s.). that means Salman will be with the group of Ahlul-Bayt (a.s.).

2. Bukhari ⁷ and Muslim ⁸ narrated from Abu-Horayra who narrated from the Prophet (S): Allah created Adam according to His image.

. خلق الله آدم علي صورته

Verse 27 of the first chapter of the book of Genesis reads: So God created man in His image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

﴿ فَاطْرُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ﴾ ﴿ جَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَمِنَ الْأَنْعَامِ أَزْوَاجًا ﴾ ﴿ يَذَرُوكُمْ فِيهِ ﴾ ﴿ لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ ﴾ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

Contrary to the above Hadith and the Biblical record, the Quran denotes any likeness between God and his creation. The Almighty Allah states: None is like unto Him. [42: 11]

Thanks to God that through the teachings of Imams of Ahlul-Bayt (a.s.) we know the real meaning of the above Hadith. Husain Ibn Khalid asked Imam Redha (a.s.) about the meaning of the Hadith. The Imam (a.s.) explained:

قاتلهم الله! لقد حذفوا أوّل الحديث. إنّ رسول الله (ص) مرّ برجلين يتسابّان فسمع أحدهما يقول لصاحبه: قَبَحَ الله وجهك و وجه من يشبهك! فقال (ص): يا عبدالله لاتقل هذا لاختيك فإنّ الله خلق آدم علي صورته.

May God kill them! Indeed, they deleted the beginning of the Hadith. The Messenger of Allah (S) passed by two men who were swearing at each other. He heard one of them saying to the other: May God make your face and the face of whoever looks like you ugly! The Prophet (S) said: O servant of God! Do not say that to your brother for Allah created Adam to 'h' is image. [9](#)

As you can see once the content of the Hadith is known the real meaning becomes clear. The pronoun 'his image' in the Hadith refers to the image of the man' not to the image of God'. Thus, in the English translation the letter h' should not be capital.

3. Abu-Horayra narrated from the Prophet (S).

غيروا الشيب و لاتتشبهوا باليهود و النصارى.

“Change your aging and do not look like the Jews and the Christians.” [10](#) The above Hadith seems to suggest that dying the hair is mandatory for elderly people. However, Imam Ali (a.s.) was sometimes reluctant to dye his beard. Some people commented on him that why despite the Prophetic Hadith he did not dye his beard? He explained:

انما قال (ص) ذلك و الدين قُلّ فامّا الآن و قد اتّسع نطاقه و ضرب بجرانه فامرء و ما اختار

“Surely, he (S) said so when the Muslims were not many. But now that the territory of Islam is expanded it is up to people as they choose.” [11](#)

4. Understanding the context of a Hadith is imperative to distinguish the narrations that are expressed with the intention of Taqiyyah [12](#). The Imams of Ahlul-Bayt (a.s.) often under political pressure in protection of their followers answered the questions of people according to the mainstream Sunni verdicts.

Zorarah said: I asked Imam Baqir (a.s.) concerning an issue. His holiness answered me. Before I leave a man visited the Imam and asked him the same question but the Imam gave him a different answer. Soon after a third person visited the Imam and asked the same question. To my surprise the Imam gave him an answer different from the previous answers! When they left, I said: O son of the Prophet! Two

men from Iraq from among your followers asked you a question and you answered them differently! The Imam replied: O Zorarah! Surely this is better for us and more lasting for us and for you. If you are all united in one verdict, then people recognise you as our followers and that would diminish your existence as well as ours. [13](#)

5. I would like to bring the examples of the contents of the Hadith with a rather hilarious example: The Messenger of Allah was invited along with some of the companions to a party. The host had cooked the meat of a camel. After dinner as Muslims were sitting around the Prophet (S) asking him their questions, one of the guests passed wind and its odour disturbed the rest. In order for the Messenger of Allah not to get embarrassed the offender said to every body:

من اكل لحم جَـزَور فليتوضَّأ.

“Whoever has eaten the meat of a camel shall make a Wudhu.” [14](#) It is obvious that the consuming of food whether the meat of camel or anything else does not void one's state of Wudhu. The noble Prophet (S) had said so to refresh the gathering without pointing at anyone. Amazingly however, some of the Sunni scholars such as Ahman Ibn Hanbal, Ishaq Ibn Rahwiyah, and Shafe'ie in his old verdict claim that consumption of camel meat breaks the Wudhu!

Paradoxical Narrations

There are quite a number of narrations of which their contexts seem to contradict each other. Rhetorical expressions, abrogation, different levels of answers, Taqiyyah, distortion and many other reasons cause some narrations to differ from each other.

The science of reconciliation between paradoxical narrations is one of the important branches of Fiqul-Hadith. One of the four most important books of Hadith; i.e. Al-Estebzar by the late Sheikh Tousi was compiled on this field. Today, one of the most technical subjects in Usulul-Fiqh (the principles of jurisprudence) is 'Equality and Preferences' (Al-Ta'adul and Al-Tarajeeh) [15](#) which deals with different techniques and criteria of reconciling between paradoxical narrations.

The Faults of a Hadith

The fault or the problem of a Hadith is either in its chain of narrators such as being Mursal or Marfou'a and the like or it is concerning the body of the Hadith. For instance, the text of a Hadith is narrated in contradicting words. An example of such contradictions is what we mentioned in lesson nine concerning distinguishing between menstrual blood and the blood from a wound.

According to one narration, it is claimed that the menstrual blood is discharged from the left side of the vulva whereas according to another it is suggested that the blood is discharged from the right side.

Another example of a contradictory narration in the body of a Hadith is narrations concerning the desire of men and women. A narration suggests that men's desire is nine times of women. Whereas, another narration suggests the opposite:

Men's desire is nine times of women

محمد بن مسلم عن أبي جعفر (ع) قال: إن الله عز وجل خلق الشهوة عشرة أجزاء تسعة في الرجال و واحدة في النساء و ذلك لبني هاشم و شيعتهم. و في نساء بني أمية و شيعتهم الشهوة عشرة أجزاء في النساء تسعة و في الرجال واحدة.

“Muhammad Ibn Muslim narrated from Imam Baqir (a.s.): Surely the Almighty Allah created a desire in ten parts, nine parts of it are in men and one in women. That is for Bani Hashem and their followers. But as for the women of Bani Ommayyeh and their followers the desire has ten parts nine of which is in women and one in men.”¹⁶

Women's desire is nine times of men

عن اصبغ بن نباتة قال: قال امير المؤمنين (ع): خلق الله الشهوة عشرة أجزاء فجعل تسعة أجزاء في النساء و جزءا واحدا في الرجال. و لو لا ما جعل الله فيهن من الحياء علي قدر اجزاء الشهوة لكان لكل رجل تسعة متعلقات به.

“Asbagh Ibn Nubateh narrated from Imam Ali (a.s.): Allah created the desire in ten parts, so He made nine parts of it in women and one part in men. Had not God made shyness in women in accordance with their desire nine women would have been hanging on a man.”¹⁷ Geraldine Brooks the Australian writer named her inflammatory and bigoted book 'Nine Parts of Desire' based on such faulty narrations.

Criticism of a Hadith

The criticism of a Hadith means necessary investigation about accuracy or inaccuracy of the Hadith. The scholars of Hadith present the narrations with the Holy Quran, confirm Sunnah, necessities of religion, rational scientific and historical facts. Should a Hadith contradict any of them its validity will be dropped. In the previous lessons, we cited many examples.

Difficult Ahadith

Difficult narrations are certain narrations of which their vocabulary or their meanings are very complicated and unclear. An example of such difficult narrations is what Yahya Ibn Aktham has narrated from Imam Al-Hadi (a.s.) concerning the interpretation of the seven seas in the Ayah:

With seven seas behind it to add to its (supply), yet the Words of Allah would not be exhausted.

(31:27).

The Imam said:

هي عين الكبريت و عين اليمن و عين البرهوت و عين الطبرية و حمّة ماسيدان و جمّة افريقا و عين باحروان
(ماجروان- النسخة) و نحن الكلمات التي لاتدرك فضائلنا و لاتستقصي

“It is the spring of Al Kebrit, the spring of Yemen, the spring of Al Barahoot, the spring of Al Tabariah, the hot spring of Masidaan, the Jumma or hot spring of Africa and the spring of Bahuraan (Majerwaan: in another manuscript). And we are the Words that our virtues could not be understood or counted.”¹⁸
Some of the terms used in the above narration are narrated differently in different manuscripts and yet we are unaware of any clear meaning for them.

And our last words are All Praise Belongs to the Lord of the Worlds.

The humble servant of God.

Mansour Leghaei

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- ^{1.} Sahih Muslim 1:822
- ^{2.} Wasa'elu-Shi'a vol. 10 p.411
- ^{3.} Al-Tabresi: al-Ehtejaj vol.2 p.258
- ^{4.} Nahjul-Balagha, Sermon 228
- ^{5.} Al-Majlesi: Beharul-Anwaar 22:326
- ^{6.} Al-Seerah 3:235
- ^{7.} The Book of Seeking permission, chapter of greeting 2:59
- ^{8.} The book of Paradise and its blessings, chapter of those who enter the Paradise
- ^{9.} Beharul-Anwaar 4: 11
- ^{10.} Ibid 76:98
- ^{11.} Nahjul-Balagha, Words of Wisdom No. 17
- ^{12.} Taqiyyah literally means to protect. It is an Islamic and logical means of defence when one's life is in danger that by uttering a statement without meaning its content can rescue his life.
- ^{13.} Al-Kaafi 1:65
- ^{14.} Abu-Rayyah: Adhwa'un Alal-Sunna al-Nabawiyyah, p.51
- ^{15.} See chapter 7 of our lessons on Usulul-Fiqh [http://www.ihic.org.au/courses.php?cat_id=9&a_id \[1\]](http://www.ihic.org.au/courses.php?cat_id=9&a_id [1]) =
- ^{16.} Al-Faqih vol.3 p.467
- ^{17.} Al Kaafi vol.5 p.338
- ^{18.} Al-Tabresi: Al Ehtejaj vol.2 pp.499-500

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