

Meeting 6: The Science of Knowing the References Part 1

Meeting 6: The Science of Knowing the References (E'Im Ma'refatul-Masader) Part 1, A Glance at the Sunni Books of Hadith

The first book of Sunni Hadith

Malik Ibn Anas (died in 179 A.H) the Imam of Maleki sect is the scholar amongst the Sunnis who compiled a book of Hadith called Al-Mowatta.

Different opinions about Al-Mowatta

The Adorers

Naturally Malek is the first person who has exaggerated in admiring his own work. In the introduction of his book he stated: "I presented this book to seventy jurists from the jurists of Madina and all of them agreed on it, and hence I called it Al-Mowatta' (agreed upon)." [1](#)

Similarly, in the beginning of Al-Mowatta' it is narrated from Muhammad Ibn Edris (died in 204 A.H); the Imam of the Shafe'i sect: "No book has appeared on the surface of the earth after the Quran to be more authentic than the book of Malek!"

The Opponents

Laith Ibn Sa'd said: "I counted seventy issues on which Malek has given his verdicts against the Sunna of the Prophet (S)." [2](#)

Al-Soyouti in his commentary on 'Taqrīb Al-Nawawī' in response to why the author has said: "The first author in purely authentic Hadith is Al-Bukhari", although the works of Malek and Ahmad (Ibn Hanbal) were published before the book of Al-Bukhari? Al-Soyouti Said: Malek did not collect the authentic

Hadith only. Rather he compiled the Ahadith that their chains of narrators are either cut or unknown." [3](#)

The second Sunni book of Hadith

The 'Musnad' is the second Sunni book of Hadith. It is compiled by Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (died in 241 A.H) the Imam of the Hanbalis. Ahmad was from Marv [4](#). The term 'Mosnad' is an expression for any book of Hadith that its Ahadith are compiled according to the names of the narrators. For instance, all the Ahadith narrated by Jabir Ibn Abdullah from the Prophet (S.A) will be compiled together in one chapter.

Although Ahmad is one of the four Imams of Sunnis, the Sunni scholars did not include his book among the 'Six Authentic Books of Hadith'. Al-Bukhari and Muslim are more accepted by the Sunni scholars although they were the students of Ahmad.

The Six Authentic Sunni Books of Hadith (Al-Sehah Al-Setta)

Among all the Sunni Hadith collections, there are six books that are more recognized by the Sunni scholars. They refer to them as 'Sehah Settah' which means 'the Six Authentic'. They are: Sahih Bukhari (died in 256 A.H), Sahih Muslim (died in 261 A.H), Sunan Abu-Dawood (died in 275 A.H), Sunan Termethi (died in 279 A.H), Sunan Nasaei (died in 303 A.H), and Sunan Ibn Majah (died in 273 A.H). [5](#)

As for the first five books, there is no dispute that they are part of the Six Authentic Books. However, as for the last one (Sunan Ibn Majah), some scholars replace it with 'Al-Mowatta', whilst others regarded Mosnad (Sunan) Al-Darami as the sixth authentic book.

In general, whenever they say 'the Five narrated it' they mean the authors of the first five books, and when they say 'the Two authentic narrated it' or 'the Two Sheikhs narrated it' they mean Sahih Al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim.

A Glance at the Sahihayn

Muhammad Ibn Ismaeel Al-Bukhari the author of Sahih Bukhari was born in Bukhara [6](#) in 194 A.H. and died in 256 A.H. [7](#) Sahih Bukhari is nine volumes in 3450 chapters. Its Ahadith including the ones repeated are counted to 7275 Hadith and without repeated Ahadith are 4000 Hadith. We should however remember the term Hadith amongst the Sunnis include the words of the companions of the Prophet (S.A) and their companions too.

Bukhari is a Hadith collection in theology, interpretation of the Quran, jurisprudence, history, ethics, etc. In his introduction, Bukhari asserted that he compiled his book in sixteen years and chose its Ahadith from among 600 thousand Hadith to be the evidence between him and his Lord. Many explanatory books are written on Sahih Bukhari. One of the most famous ones is 'Fathul-Bari Fe Sharhe Sahih Al-Bukhari' wirttend by Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani.

Muslim Ibn Hajjaj Al-Naysabouri is the author of the second most important book of Sunni Hadith. Muslim was from Nayshapour [Naysabour in Arabic] one of the famous cities in Iran. He died in 261 A.H. Sahih Muslim is published in five volumes and like Bukhari contains 7275 Hadith including the repeated Ahadith or 4000 Hadith excluding the repeated ones.

Scholarly Comments on Sahihayn

Undoubtedly, the Sahihayn are the two most accepted books of Hadith amongst the Sunnis, thus Sahih (authentic) by default refers to them. Al-Thahbi one of the famous Sunni scholars in the introduction of his commentary on Bukhari says: "In the world of Islam, Sahih Bukhari is the greatest book, nay after the Quran it is the best book."⁸ Nawawi; the best celebrated interpreter of Sahih Muslim says: "The (Sunni) scholars are unanimous that the best books after the holy Quran are Sahihayn. The Islamic Ummah have accepted these two books and confirmed their authenticity."⁹

Despite many exaggerated praises some of the Sunni scholars especially the contemporary ones have confirmed that there are weak Ahadith in Sahihayn too. Ibn Hajar in the introduction of his commentary on Sahih Bukhari asserted: "The experts in Hadith criticised and rejected one hundred and ten Hadith narrated in Bukhari, thirty two of which are also narrated by Muslim."

Quoting from the weak narrators

One of the serious comments on Bukhari is that on the one hand he narrated from unjust sinners, Kharejis (rebels against Imam Ali's government) and puppets of Bani-Omayyah such as Amr Ibn Aas, Marwan Ibn Hakam, Mo'awiyah, Moghayrah Ibn Sho'ba, No'man Ibn Bashir, Abu-Horayrah, Emran Ibn Hettan, Eremah and the like. On the other hand he only narrated 19 Hadith from Imam Ali (a.s.) who was with the Prophet (S) from the first day of the advent of Islam to the last day of the life of the Prophet (S).

He narrated only one Hadith from Fatima Al-Zahra (a.s.) the daughter of the Prophet (S) and one of the Ahlul-Bayt (a.s.). He did not narrate any Hadith from Imam Hasan and Imam Husain (a.s.); the only grandsons of the Prophet (S) and the Masters of the youth of the Paradise. Bukhari did not narrate any Hadith from Imam Sadiq (a.s.) not even as a narrator of the Hadith of his grandfather! He was a contemporary to Imam Naqi, Imam Hadi and Imam Askari (a.s.) and yet did not narrate any single Hadith through any of them!

Examples from Sahihayn

Sahihayn narrated fabricated Ahadith in which it is claimed that God the Almighty will be seen in the hereafter in as clear as the full moon will be seen in the world.¹⁰ People will see His shine!¹¹ According to narrations of Bukhari the Prophet (S) was bewitched. Prophet Moses (S) hits the eyes of the Angel of Death Israil and turns him blind and many such fabricated and Israelite narrations.

Other Sunni Books of Hadith

The followings are some of the main examples:

Al-Mustadrak Al Sahihayn

Al-Mustadrak is the work of Muhammad Ibn Abdullah, known as Al-Hakim Al Maisabouri (died in 405AH) Al-Hakim is one of the Sunni Imams of Hadith. His book is a supplement to Sahihayn. He has compiled Ahadith that Bukhari and Muslim missed in their books although according to the principles of Bukhari and Muslim they are authentic. Some of the biased Sunni scholars have accused Al Hakim of being a Shia despite the fact that Al Sobkhi in his 'At-Tabaqat' asserted that he was a Shafe'i scholar.

The reason for such accusations is because Al Hakim has narrated many Ahadith in virtues of Ahlul Bayt (S) in general and Imam Ali in particular. Al Hakim asserts that these Ahadith are authentic according to the principles accepted by Bukhari and Muslim but they did not narrate it. For instance, Al Hakim narrated the famous Hadith of Al Ghadeer with the same Isnad that Muslim narrated from Zaid Ibn Arqam. However, unlike Muslim he quoted the important part of the Hadith in which the Prophet (S) said, "Whoever I am his master, then Ali is his master too."

Unfortunately, this is not the first time that the biased Sunni scholars have rejected a Hadith or a narrator or a book for the crime of being a Shia! To them whoever narrates any Hadith which is in conflict with their assumptions should be rejected and paid no heed to. Al Hakim is one of the eminent Sunni imams of Hadith about whom it is said "He was the most learned scholar of his time in knowing the authentic Hadith and distinguishing it from the weak ones." Al Mustadrak is published with the footnotes of Dr. Yusuf Al Mar'ashli

Jame'ul Usool Fi Ahadithe Rasool (Comprehensive Principles in Narrations of the Messenger)

Jame'ul-Usool is writtend by Mubarak Ibn Muhammad known as Ibn-ul-Athir (died in 606 A.H). Ibn-ul-Athir has compiled the six books that to his conviction were authentic. They are Al-Mowatta' in addition to the first five authentic books of Sunnis. Ibn-ul-Athir replaced Ibn Majah with Al-Mowatta'. [12](#)

In order, not to bore the unprofessional readers he omitted the chain of transmitters of the Ahadith and only mentioned the name of the one who is narrating from the Prophet (S). He has also deleted most of the narrations from other the Prophet (S). His work is a good source for a quick access to the Ahadith mentioned in the Six Authentic Books of Sunnis.

The Most Comprehensive Sunni book of Hadith

Historically the most comprehensive Sunni book of Hadith would be 'Jam'ul-Jawame' (Collecting of the

Collections) or Al-Jame'ul-Kabir (the Great Collector) written by Al-Soyouti (died in 911 A.H.) Al-Soyouti intended to collect all the Prophetic narrations in one book. To compile his book he referred to seventy one books of Hadith. He then divided his work into two main sections: the words of the Prophet (S), and the actions of the Prophet (S). Unfortunately, Al-Soyouti died before he finishes his work. Thus, his book was never published.

Less than half a century after the demise of Al-Soyouti, one of the famous narrators of the tenth century; Ali Ibn Hesham known as Al-Mottaqi Al-Hindi (died in 975 A.H) completed the unfinished work of Al-Soyouti. His book is called 'Kanzul-Ommal Fi Sunanel-Aqwal Wal-Af'al (The Treasury of the Workers in Verbal and Actions' Narrations). He compiled his book from 93 Sunni books of Hadith. The main sources of Al-Hindi in compilation of his book were three books of Hadith compiled by Al-Soyouti; i.e. Al-Jame'ul-Saghir, Ziadatul-Jame'ul-Saghir and Al-Jame'ul-Kabir.

Kanzul-Ommal is the most comprehensive Sunni book of Hadith. Al-Hindi has collected 46624 Sunni Hadith in his book. He has compiled his work in an alphabetical jurisprudential order, and thus a researcher can easily find any Hadith under its subject. Kanzul-Ommal is published in 16 volumes and is also available on the internet. [13](#)

Narrative Interpretations of the Quran

I would like to bring this lesson into an end by introducing a couple of most important Sunni books of Hadith on interpretation of the Quran.

Tafsir Ibn Jarir

Muhammad Ibn Jarir Al-Tabari (died in 310 A.H) is one of the most renowned ancient Sunni historian and exegesis of the Quran. He is well known for his two works; his book on history known as 'Akhbarul Rosol Wal-Molook' (The News of the Messengers and the Kings), and his book on the interpretation of the Quran: Jame'ul-Bayan Fi Tafsir Al-Quran (Comprehensive explanation in the interpretation of the Quran) known as Tafsir Ibn Jarir.

His Tafsir is in 30 volumes and is one of the most ancient and comprehensive books of Tafsir, thus, it has always been a source for other compilations on the interpretation of the Quran. Although Tafsir Ibn Jarir is not merely a narrative interpretation of the Quran, a great portion of his book consists of the narrations that he has collected for the interpretation of the Ayaat of the Quran.

Al-Dorrol-Manthour

The most important Sunni book of Hadith on the interpretation of the Quran is Al-Dorrol Manthour Fil-Tafsir Bilma'thour (The Scattered Pearls in the Narrated Interpretation) compiled by Abdul-Rahman Ibn Abi-Bakr known as Jalalu-Din Al-Soyouti (died in 911A.H).

Unfortunately, however, his work similar to the Tafsir Ibn Jarir is very often stuffed with Israelites and fabricated Ahadith. For instance, under the interpretation of the first Ayah of Surah Al-Nisa (Chapter 4) he narrated some non-Prophetic narrations claiming that Eve was created from back left rib of Adam. ¹⁴

The Imams of Ahlul-Bayt (a.s.) have explicitly and without any ambiguity denounced such Israelite fabrications. Zorarah asked Imam Sadiq (a.s.): Some of our people claim that the Almighty Allah created Eve from the lower left rib of Adam! The Imam (a.s.) replied:

سبحان الله و تعالي عن ذلك علوا كبيرا! يقول من يقول هذا: ان الله تبارك و تعالي لم يكن له من القدرة ان يخلق
لآدم زوجته من غير ضلعه! و جعل لمتكلم من اهل التشنيع سبيلا الي الكلام، يقول: ان آدم كان ينكح بعضه بعضا
اذا كانت من ضلعه، ما لهؤلاء، حكم الله بيننا وبينهم

"Glory be to Allah and He is Exalted greatly from that! He who claims that(in fact) says: Allah; the Almighty was unable to create a mate for Adam from other than his rib! And thus he provides an opportunity for those who wish to vilify (Islam) to say: "Adam married part of himself if she was from his rib." What is wrong with those people (fabricators)! May Allah judge between us and them." ¹⁵

- ¹. Undoubtedly Imam Sadiq (a.s.) was not amongst those to whom he had presented his work.
- ². Abu-Rayyah: Adhwa'un Ala-Sunnatil-Mohammadiyah, p.299
- ³. Al-Soyouti: Tadribul-Rawi 1:67
- ⁴. An ancient Iranian city- today it is part of the republic of Torkamanestan
- ⁵. The authors of all the Six Books were Iranians. Yet, ignorantly some biased Sunni scholars claim that Shiaism is an Iranian phenomenon. We shall learn in the next lesson that the authors of the best four books of Hadith of Shi'a were also Iranians. As a matter of fact, Iranians whether Shi'a or Sunni have for long contributed to the Islamic heritage
- ⁶. Bukhara was one of the ancient cities of Iran. Today it is in the republic of Ozbakistan
- ⁷. Ibn Khalkan: Wafayatul-A'yan 3:330
- ⁸. Al-Thahabi: Ershadu-Sari Fe Sharhe Sahih al-Bukhari 1:28
- ⁹. Sharh Al-Nawawi: 1:15
- ¹⁰. Bukhari 8:179
- ¹¹. Bukhari 8:182
- ¹². We mentioned earlier that some Sunni scholars count al-Mowatta' the sixth authentic book instead of Ibn Majah
- ¹³. <http://www.al-eman.com/islamlib/viewtoc.asp?BID=137> [1]
- ¹⁴. Al-Dorrol-Manthour 2:423
- ¹⁵. Al-Sadooq: Elalu-Sharaye', p.29, al-Bahrani: Tafsir al-Borhan 2:155,156

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