



The Sunnah, its status, its role and its preservation

Lessons One

Introduction and Definition of Hadeeth and Sunnah

Introduction

The Importance of the Study of the Status of the Sunnah. Four reasons:

1. Misconception regarding the word “Sunnah”

- a) Many perceive Sunnah means “it is not obligatory” or “if you do it, it is good”
- b) Symptom: “Whatever in Qur’aan we should follow and Sunnah is just recommended”

2. ‘Qur’aaniyoon’ claim that Sunnah is not required. They give elaborate arguments to support their view. Though Muslims don’t follow these Qur’aaniyoon, some are influenced by them

3. Doubts raised by Orientalists and Missionaries.

These people fully realise the importance of the Sunnah to Islam. They are not able to openly attack Qur’aan as no Muslim would follow them in this. However due to the fact that the average Muslim’s knowledge on Hadeeth is very limited, they have found this to be an opening by which to attack Islam.

4. Understanding role of Sunnah is important part of understanding of this Deen

- a) It will serve as an encouragement in studying Hadeeth in greater detail
- b) It helps getting closer to Allaah and the Prophet and thus increases one faith.

Definitions

Sunnah is a term that has different meanings depending on the type of scholar using it. Infact one of the first sources of confusion regarding the word sunnah and its importance is the different usages of the word *sunnah*.

Lexically, *sunna* refers to the “flow and continuity of a thing with ease and smoothness” This original usage of the word paved the way for Lane’s definition; “a way, course, rule or manner, of acting or conduct of life or the like... whether good or bad; approved or disapproved...a way that has been instituted or pursued by former people, and has become one pursued by those after them” Hence linguistically Sunnah is either:_ A Way or Path, regardless of if it is good or bad , or Manner/Habit/Conduct

In its technical sense, *sunna* has a number of different meanings.

Around the third century Hijra, specialists in aqeedah started using the word Sunnah to refer to the correct Aqeedah and worship, as opposed to innovations, which is why many scholars refer to their books on Aqeedah as, 'the Sunnah,' like 'As-Sunnah' of Imam Ahmed, 'Sharhus- Sunnah' by al-Barbaharee.

Some scholars would use Sunnah as the opposite of bida'a . In this definition, Sunnah refers to anything that is sanctioned by the Shariah whether its from the Quran, the practice of the Prophet or the ijmaa of the Companions. So we hear scholars saying, *so and so is upon the Sunnah*, meaning with respect to his aqeedah and manhaj.

According to the *jurists*, the *sunna* is a recommended act, also commonly known as *mandūb*. Hence an act of the Prophet which was either obligatory upon the Muslim, or permissible, would not be '*sunna*' according to the jurists.

The topic of study for the **Muhaditheen** is everything that has been authentically narrated or reported concerning the Prophet. Hence they concentrate on any information narrated about him and therefore their definition of Sunnah is the broadest. According to the Muhaditheen (*scholars of ḥadīth*), *sunna* is "what has been passed down from the Prophet, peace be upon him, of his statements, actions, tacit approvals, manners, physical characteristics, or biography, regardless of whether it was before he was sent as a prophet or afterwards" An example of the Muhaddith usage of Sunnah is: The Prophet had approximately 20 grey hairs. Or that he was more bashful than the virgin girls kept in their private apartments. Or – he married Khadija when he was 25 years old. Note that many of the reports that fall under the Muhaditheen's definition of sunnah have no bearing on Islamic law.

The definition that interests us for the purpose of this lecture is that given by **Usooliyeen** (*legal theorists*). Their task is to determine what is an authority in Islamic Law ie what reports are an example for the Muslims to follow. They are not concerned with the details of the actual law, but they are concerned with the sources of that law. They define the Sunnah as:

the statements, actions, and tacit approvals of the Prophet, after he received revelation, but not including the Qur'ān .

His statements include what he commanded, recommended, permitted, disapproved or forbade. His actions only include selected actions, as some of the Prophet's are not considered as examples to be followed.

Notice that the Usooli definition of Sunnah, is the same as the Muhaddith definition minus the physical attributes of the Prophet and also subtracting anything that happened to the Prophet before becoming a Prophet, as such things would not be considered an authority in Islamic Law. Physical attributes of the Prophet before Prophethood does not have any weight in legislations found in the Shari'ah so this is left out. But the Muhaditheen are concerned with anything pertaining to the Prophet, so they include what the Usoolis have omitted.

An example to illustrate the difference between the muhadditheen definition and usooliyoon definition is the hadith that mentions that the Prophet used to snore lightly. According to the usooliyoon, this hadith has no bearing on Islamic law , ie the Muslim is not required to follow it, and therefore this action of the Prophet is not considered to be a Sunnah. However the muhadditheen would include this within their definition of the Sunnah.

The *sunna*, according to this definition is a source of Islamic law, equal to that of the Qur'ān with regard to rulings and obligatory to follow. The Prophet said: "I am leaving you two things, if you stick to them, you will never go astray, the Book of Allah, and the *sunna* of His Prophet"

To better understand each element of the Sunnah, examples of ahadeeth of each type are defined below:

Statement: Something the Prophet literally said. We find that the majority of ahadeeth that exist are actual statements of the Prophet

Example: "Actions are only by intentions..."

Action: a companion saw the Prophet sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam performing an action. We find that the second largest amount of ahadeeth preserved are actions performed by the Prophet (pbuh).

Approvals: An action, or statement that took place during the time of the Prophet and was known to the Prophet (pbuh) in which there was no objection. Because the Prophet remained silent, this is considered a tacit form of acceptance of the action or statement of a sahabah. One might ask the question, what if a sahaba did something that the Prophet didn't see or was unaware of? To address this, we know that Allah sees everything, and if there was something that needed to be addressed, Allah would have revealed Qur'an to the Prophet (pbuh).

Example:: Khalid ibn Waleed : He was eating with the with other companions in a far away place away from Medina and Makkah. The host brought some food. One of the things he brought was a Thub, a large type of lizard. Khalid was eating it and others were eating it but he noticed that the Prophet was not eating it but he was not saying anything. Khalid asked the Prophet is it haraam. The Prophet said No, it just is not the food of my people.

*Note that in this Hadith of Khalid ibn Waleed , even if Khalid did not ask the Prophet about the lizard, it still would have been halaal because the Prophet remained silent.

Sunnah vs Hadith

What exactly is a hadith? Is it the same thing as Sunnah? In some contexts, hadeeth and sunnah are used interchangeably. For example, if someone were to say our religion is to follow the Qur'an and Hadith, this would be equivalent to saying "follow the Qur'an and Sunnah." But to be more precise, a distinction should be made between the two.

Hadith is linguistically defined as: "Speech," or "Something new".

Accordingly to Islamic terminology, Hadith is defined as: **The means by which the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah reaches us.**

So a hadith is any report of the Prophet's sayings, actions, approvals, manners, physical characteristics, or b. of two parts: isnaad (chain of authorities) and matn (the actual text of the hadith). Both these parts have to meet stringent requirements for the hadith to be accepted. The accepted hadith are the Sahih and Hasan. The rejected hadith are daeef and mawdooh.

For a hadith to be considered Sahih it must meet five conditions:

- a) Unbroken isnaad
- b) Each narrator in the chain must be upright and righteous
- c) Each narrator must be precise when narrating with a strong memory
- d) The hadith must not contradict a stronger hadith
- e) There should be no hidden defects in the hadith.

Relationship between Sunnah and Hadith.

The Sunnah is the reality or the actual statements, actions and approvals of the Prophet. There is no such thing as a weak Sunnah. That actual Sunnah is contained within the reports that have come

down from the Prophet. The Hadith is the vehicle by which the Sunnah reaches us since we were not present at the time of the Prophet. *Hadīth* is the 'carrier' and 'vehicle' of the *sunnah*...it has been said that a certain *ḥadīth* contains five *sunnas*"

However not everything reported from the Prophet is correct – some are blatant lies and fabrications and hence not all hadith represent the Sunnah. Only the acceptable hadith represent and portray the real sunnah of the Messenger.

Shaikh Albanee said:" the sunnah that has importance in the law is the confirmed sunnah from the Prophet (sa) via methodological means and well known sound chains according to the people of knowledge of hadith and its narrators. It is not one that is found in the various books of tafseer, books of fiqh, and books of stories to make the heart soft. In these are many weak, rejected and fabricated hadith. It is incumbent upon the people of knowledge not to be so bold as to argue by hadith until after they certify its truthfulness.

Lessons Two

The authority of the Sunnah

In Arabic the word *hujjah* حُجَّة means a proof, argument or an evidence. When we talk about the *hujjatul sunnah* or authority of the sunnah, it means that the sunnah is a legitimate evidence in Islamic law that leads to a ruling of Allah.

By sunnah, we mean the definition of the usolyeen **the statements, selected actions, and tacit approvals of the Prophet, after he received revelation, but not including the Qur'ān .**

These were passed on to the Companions and captured in authentic hadith literature.

Thus the term authority of the sunnah means the authority of the authentic hadith.

The proofs concerning the importance of the Sunnah can be divided in four types: proofs from the Quran, proofs from the Sunnah, evidence from the statements of the Companions, and conclusions from the ulama of Islam.

The proofs from the Quran

These are so numerous that they can be broken down into sub heading.

1.Obedience to the Prophet is obedience to Allah.

And whoever obeys the Messenger, verily obeys Allāh. (4:80) This verse is clear and explicit that obedience to the Messenger is nothing less than obedience to Allah. The ayah is similar to the hadith in which the Messenger stated: "Whoever obeys me, obeys Allah. Whoever disobeys me, disobeys Allah". (Bukhari, Muslim).

"Indeed those who swear allegiance to you swear allegiance only unto Allah. The Hand of Allah is above their hand" Here Allah describes the making of an oath of allegiance to the Messenger of Allah as being the same as swearing allegiance to Allah.

2 Allah orders obedience to the Prophet and warns against disobeying him.

O you who believe. Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you, And if you differ in any matter, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if you actually believe in Allah and the Last Day. (Nisa:59) 6 or 7 points of benefit

- you who believe – not restricted to just the companions in his lifetime, but to all believers. If a person says he doesn't have to follow the Messenger, then he is actually saying about himself, that he is not a believer.
- The verb "Obey" اطيعوا occurs twice. Allah uses the command "obey" not only for Himself but also for the Messenger. **Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger** .Thus Messenger is an independent source of obedience. The same verb does not precede "those in authority". Hence obedience to them is conditional on obedience to Allah and His Messenger.
- Obedience to Messenger is separate in one sense from obedience to Allah, i.e. it is not just obeying the Messenger in what he has conveyed from the Quran.
- Refer to Allah and His Messenger– to the Quran and to him directly in his lifetime, to his sunnah after his death. Hence the book of Allah and the Sunnah of the Messenger are placed together here and NOT refer to Allah, and then His Messenger. The following well known hadith is weak. *Mu'adh radiyallahu anhu reported that (when) Allah's Messenger sent him to Yemen, he asked him 'how he would judge (decide cases). He said, "I will judge in accordance with Allah's Book (the Qur'an)." He asked, "What, if it is not found in the Book of Allah?" He said, "Then according to the sunnah of Allah's Messenger ." He asked, "And if it is not in the sunnah of Allah's Messenger?" He said, "I will make ijtiḥad through my judgment." The Prophet - said, "Praise*

belongs to Allah Who has made the messenger of the Messenger of Allah consistent with what pleases him."

This was narrated by Ahmed 22161, Abu Dawud 3592, Tirmidhi 1332, al-Bukhaari at-Tirmidhi and others declared it weak. Shaikh Albanee said "It is rather necessary to regard the Qur'an and Sunnah as being one source with no discrimination between the two whatsoever. This is indicated in a saying of the Prophet (SAW): Certainly I have come with The Qur'an and its like (meaning the Sunnah)".

- True believers refer their disputes not just to Allah, but to Allah and His Messenger
- If you dispute in ANY matter. Whether worship, belief, trade – all matters.
- Ibn Qayyim mentions that the verse states **refer it to Allah and His Messenger**, and not *refer it to Allah and to His Messenger*. In other words, the word "to" is used only once. The reason for this is that whatever Allah decides is exactly the same as the decision of the Messenger of Allah, And whatever the Messenger of Allah decides is exactly the same as the decision of Allah. In other words, its one source.

"And obey Allah and the Messenger so that you may be blessed" (3: 132)

The phrase "**Obey Allah and the Messenger**" occurs four times in the Quran.

In addition, the phrase **Obey Allah and obey the Messenger** occurs five times in the Quran. For example: "**Say, Obey Allah and the Messenger. But if you turn away, he is only responsible for the duty placed on him, and you for that placed on you. If you obey him you shall be on right guidance. The Messenger's duty is only to preach the clear message**" (Al Noor: 54).

Allah also warns us that by disobeying the Messenger, we render our deeds vain. "**O you who believe, Obey Allah and the Messenger and do not make your deeds vain**" (Muhammad: 33)

In every verse of the Qur'ān in which 'obey Allah' is stated, it is followed by a command to obey the Messenger. There is not a single verse in the Qur'ān in which obedience to Allah is mentioned alone. This to emphasise that obedience of Allah is not possible except through obedience to the Messenger and to remove even the remotest of excuse for ignoring the obedience to the Prophet. However there are verses in the Qur'ān in which obedience to the Messenger has been mentioned alone, i.e. without mentioning obedience to Allah. For example: "**And if you obey him, you shall find the right path**" and "**obey the messenger so that you may receive Mercy**" (Nur:56). In this case, obedience to the Messenger implies obedience to Allah, as Allah states: "**And whoever obeys the Messenger, indeed obeys Allah.**"

There are many verses that state the reward for those who obey both Allah and His Messenger.

"Those who obey Allah and His Messenger will be admitted to Gardens with rivers flowing beneath to abide therein for ever, and that will be the supreme achievement.

In addition, in three places in the Quran, Allah describes the fatal results of deciding to disobey Allah or His Messenger.

For whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, for them is Hell, they shall dwell therein forever. (al Jinn:23)

The day that faces will be turned upside down in the Fire, they will say: Woe to us, Would that we had obeyed Allah and His Messenger" (Ahzaab: 66)

Allah has warned those who insist on going against the orders and commands that come from His Messenger.

Let those who oppose his orders beware lest a calamity or painful punishment befall them
(Noor:63)

3. Accepting the Prophets decision and rulings is part of faith

“But no, by your Lord, they will not believe until they make you judge concerning that over which they dispute among themselves, and then find in themselves no discomfort from what you have judged and submit in [full] submission”. Nisā 4:65

Yahya ibn Adam, in Kitab al-Kharaj, reports the case as follows, "One of the Helpers from among the Banu Umayya had a dispute with Az-Zubayr concerning a creek (sharj) in the harra, and the Prophet said, 'Irrigate, O Zubayr, and then leave the water alone.' The man of the Banu Umayya said, 'Justice, O Prophet, even though he is the son of your aunts!' And the face of the Prophet changed so that the man knew that what he had said had hurt the Prophet. Then the Prophet said, 'O Zubayr shut off the water till it reaches the height of two ankles' - or he said - 'until it reaches the fence - and then let the water flow.' It was revealed then **But no, by your Lord, they will not believe until they make you judge concerning that over which they dispute among themselves, and then find in themselves no discomfort from what you have judged and submit in [full] submission”.**

It is clear that the Prophet’s ruling was not an application of an existing verse in the Quran but rather was his own judgment. Therefore the Quran declared that a true believer is the one who accepts the prophet’s judgment (ie the Sunnah) without having any doubts or concerns about it.

Allah begins this verse with an oath – which is quite common in the Quran. However in this verse, Allah swears by Himself and this is the greatest possible oath. So the order to completely accept the authority of the Prophet and the negation of faith who does not do this, is preceded by this might statement **But no, by your Lord.**

It is not befitting for a believing man or believing woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decided a matter that they should have any say in the matter and whoever is disobedient to Allah and His Messenger has certainly gone far astray (Al Ahzaab: 36)

The verse was also revealed concerning a personal decision of the prophet. This ayah indicates that when it is confirmed that Allah ta'ala or His Messenger sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam have made a decision or have informed about a particular matter, then no believer, male or female, may choose differently. Any opposing choice would contradict Iman. Ash-Shafi'i reported a consensus among the

scholars of the Sahabah, the Tabi'in, and their followers, that: "If a sunnah of Allah's Messenger sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam becomes manifest to a person, he does not have any choice but to follow it, regardless of what other people say."

4. By following the Messenger we obtain the love of Allah

"Say, If you love Allah, then follow me (fatabi'ūnī), Allah will love you and forgive you your sins".

The verb ittabi'ū, in the above verse is in the imperative form and means 'to follow, to imitate, to pursue'. Hence in order to achieve the love of Allah, one must follow the teachings of the Prophet.

5. The revealing of the hikmah.

1) **"Allah revealed to you the Book and the Hikmah and He taught you what you knew not, and great is the Grace of Allah unto you" Al-Nisā 4:113**

2) **"Solemnly recall Allah's favour on you, and the fact that He sent down to you the Book and the Hikmah for your instruction..." Al-Baqarah 2:231**

Shafi'i explain that the letter 'wa' (meaning 'and') between Book and *Hikmah* in the verses above is: "a letter of conjunction in Arabic which requires that the two parts it joins must be different otherwise the sentence will be redundant" (Siba'i). Hence Allah revealed two separate things: the Book (i.e. the Qur'ān), and the *Hikmah*. What else was revealed to the Prophet other than the Quran. The answer can only be the Sunnah. Hence follows that the *Hikmah* in the above verses must mean *sunnah*. The following *ḥadīth* also supports this view: "Verily I have been given the Book and something similar to it". *Abū Dawūd*

"He is it He Who has sent among the unlettered ones, a Messenger from among themselves, reciting to them His verses, purifying them, and teaching them the Book and the *Hikmah*. And verily, they had been before in manifest error". Sūrah Jumu'ah 62:2

In this verse, four distinct roles are mentioned:

- Reciting the verses
- Purifying the believers
- Teaching of the Book.
- Teaching the *Hikmah*.

The first role of the Prophet was to recite the verses of the Qur'ān to the believers. About this point there is no disagreement or ambiguity. Secondly, the Messenger was to purify them from idolatry and sins. The third role of Messenger was "teaching the book". This is mentioned separately from "reciting the verses". Hence in addition to recitation of the verses of the Qur'ān, the Messenger was also ordered to teach the meaning of these verses. When the Prophet received revelation, he would convey this to his Companions *and* explain it through his statements and his actions (Azami, 1995: 8-9).

Conclusion from Quranic verses

Based solely on texts of the Quran we can conclude that:

It is Allah Himself who has ordered us to follow and obey the Prophet Muhammad. Thus this ruling is not from the *ijtihad* of the scholars, but directly from the Quran itself.

If anyone claims to follow the Quran, then he must also follow the Sunnah – as the Quran orders us to follow the Sunnah. Therefore it is inconsistent to claim to be following the Quran, and then not follow the Sunnah.

Allah has severely warned against not following the Sunnah.

The proofs from Hadith

1. Al-Tirmidhi reported from Abu Raafi' and others that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: **"I do not want to see any one of you reclining on his couch and, when he hears of my instructions or prohibitions, saying 'I don't accept it; we didn't find any such thing in the Book of Allaah.'" Abu 'Eesaa said: This is a saheeh hasan hadeeth. (Sunan al-Tirmidhi,).**

2. Also the Messenger of Allah said, after prohibiting the flesh of the domestic donkey. **"Soon there will be a time when a man will be reclining on his couch, narrating a hadeeth from me, and he will say, 'Between us and you is the Book of Allaah: what it says is halaal, we take as halaal, and what it says is haraam, we take as haraam.' But listen! Whatever the Messenger of Allaah forbids is like what Allaah forbids."** (Al-Fath al-Kabeer, 3/438. Ahmad, Abu Dawood and al-Haakim reported with a saheeh isnaad, Al-Tirmidhi reported it with different wording, and said that it is hasan saheeh).

In these two hadith the Messenger has warned, in fact prophesied that there will come a people who neglect the Sunnah and claim that they only need to live by the injunctions of the Quran. In the second hadith he(s) has stated that what he declares to be illegal should be treated in the same way

as what Allah has declared illegal. E.g the prohibition of eating the domestic donkey not stated in the Quran.

The Prophet also described these people, and the description of them was not positive – one who reclining on his couch. The scholars have explained this as one who is interested in luxuries and heresies in the religion, who stays at home and away from seeking knowledge.

3.Also: **Verily I have been given the Book and something similar to it** . (Abu Dawood, Saheeh) In other words, he (s) has been given the Quran – which is the recited revelation, and in addition to this, he has been given its explanation – which is the Sunnah. Hence the Sunnah is another type of revelation .

Hasaan ibn Attiyah a senior atba tabi'een said: "Jibreel would reveal the sunnah to the Messenger of Allah like he would reveal the Quran. He would teach him it like he would teach him the Quran".

4. **I have left you among two matters that if you adhere to them, you will never go astray, the Book of Allaah and the Sunnah of His Prophet.** (Malik)

This hadith was said during the farewell pilgrimage, attended by thousands of Companions. The Messenger gave this advice when he knew his death was near – and it was like a farewell advice.

5. There is nothing left that takes one closer to Paradise or distances one from the Fire, except that I have made it clear it to you. (Tabrani – Saheeh)

Conclusion from these hadeeth

The prophet made it clear that Muslims must follow his sunnah in order to be rightly guided.

Allah revealed to the Prophet that in later times would come a people that would reject his Sunnah. Therefore the Prophet warned against such people

The Companions view of the Sunnah

1.'Abdullah ibn Mas'ood quoted said "May Allah curse the women who tattoo their bodies and those who pluck their eyebrows; those who separate their teeth in order to change the creation of Allah." A woman named Umm Yaqub from the tribe of Banu Asad came to know of these words. She approached Ibn Mas'ood and said: "O Abu 'Abd ar-Rahman! It was reported to me that you have cursed such and such women." He said: "Why should I not curse those whom the Prophet, peace be upon him, cursed and who are cursed in the Book of Allah as well." She said: "I have read whatever is contained between the two covers (i.e. the whole Qur'an)." Had you been a good reader, you would

have discovered it. Did you not read the following verse? **"So take whatever the Messenger gives you and keep away from what he forbids you."** (Surah Al-Hashr 59:7) She Said "Yes". He said: He (s) forbade these things.

2. Abu Bakr was asked to rule in the case of a grandmother who came asking for her right in inheritance, he said that he knew of no amount due to her neither in the Book of Allaah (i.e., Quran) nor the Sunnah of the Prophet . But when Al-Mugheera told that he has witnessed the Prophet give one-sixth of the total amount of the inheritance, he asked him if he had witness to substantiate this claim. And when Muhammad Ibn Maslamah witnessed to the truth of that figure, Abu Bakr accepted it and gave the grandmother exactly that.

There are numerous examples set by the Companions which show how emphatically they abided by the sunnah of the Prophet, peace be upon him, to the extent of severing their relations with their kith and kin once they discovered someone going against the sunnah. Let us have some examples from the lives of the great khulafah (Caliphs, i.e. leaders) of Islam followed by a host of other Companions. Just after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, three major issues confronted the Muslim community. They could have left it apart and disunited, had it not been for the wise guidance of Abu Bakr who settled them amicably in the light of the sunnah of the Prophet, peace be upon him. The first issue was related to the appointment of the Khalifah (i.e. leader of the Muslims). Assembled in Saqifa Bani Sa'ida, a great number of Muhajirin (i.e. those who emigrated from Makkah to Madinah) and Ansar (those helped the emigrants from Makkah) originally had been busy arguing this issue. The Ansar proposed that the leader (Arabic: Emir) should be appointed from both of the above communities. The noble companion Abu Bakr cited the saying of the Prophet, "Leaders (Arabic: Imam) should be from Quraysh (the tribe of Prophet Muhammad) as long as they have the understanding (of the religion)." The Ansar conceded to this quietly. The great companion 'Umar proposed the name of Abu Bakr as the Khalifah which was accepted unanimously by those present there and later followed by all the inhabitants of Madinah through the oath of allegiance.

The second issue was related to the place where the Prophet should be buried. Again the companion Abu Bakr cited the saying of the Prophet, "A Prophet is to be buried where he breathes his last." Accordingly, his burial took place in the apartment of his wife, the Mother of the Faithful - 'Aishah, where he died.

The third issue was related to the inheritance of the Prophet, peace be upon him, as raised by his daughter Fatimah who came to the Caliph Abu Bakr asking for her share. Abu Bakr replied by reminding her of the saying of the Prophet, "We, the community of the Prophets, are not inherited from - whatever we leave behind us is a charity." Fatimah didn't argue further, but retired quietly.

Following the news of the Muslim's victory in the conquest of Syria, 'Umar advanced to Damascus with a number of Companions. On reaching the outskirts of Amwas, a town in Syria, the news of a widespread plague in the town reached him. 'Umar consulted his people whether or not he should venture into the town. The heated discussion that followed came to an end when Abdur-Rahman ibn Awf cited this saying of the Prophet, "If you are inside a place where an epidemic breaks out, don't come out of it. And don't go in if you happen to be away from such a place." 'Umar, eventually commanded his people to retreat. Someone still remarked, "'Umar! Do you run away from a destiny decreed by God?" To this 'Umar replied. "Yes, we run away from one destiny to the other decreed by God as well." Such was the wisdom of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and centuries ago it foreshadowed today's quarantine regulations.

Let us have some more examples from the lives of the Companions. 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud heard a man saying after a sneeze, "Alhamdulillah was salatu was salamu 'ala rasulallah." Ibn Mas'ud said to him, "Whatever you have said is true, but that is not the way that the Prophet has taught us. He instructed us to say simply alhamdulillah after

Saying of the Scholars about the Sunnah

Imam Abu Hanifah was asked: "What do we do if we find a saying of yours opposing the Book of Allah?" He replied: "Leave my saying and stick to the Book of Allah." The questioner asked: "What if it contradicts a saying of the Prophet?" Abu Hanifah said: "Leave my saying in the face of the Prophet's saying." Again he was asked: "What if it goes against the saying of a Companion?" Again he said: "Leave my saying in the face of the Companion's saying." (Reported in Al-Qawl al-Mufeed by Shawkani.) Imam Abu Hanifah also declared: "My way (Arabic: madh-hab) is whatever hadith (saying of the Prophet) that is proved to be authentic." (Shami 1:50, Al-Fulani in Iqaz, p. 62.)

Imam Malik ibn Anas said: "The saying of any person can be accepted or rejected, except for the Prophet of Allah, peace be upon him." (Reported by Ibn 'Abd al-Barr and Ibn Hazm. Also in Al-Yawaqee' wa Al-Jawahir 2:96.) He (Reported by Al-Fulani in Iqaz, p. 72.) also said: "I am just a mortal; sometimes I am wrong, sometimes I am right - so check my opinions. Whatever agrees with the Book (i.e. the Qu'ran) and the Sunnah, accept it; whatever disagrees with them, reject it."

Once Imam Shafi'i narrated a saying of the Prophet (hadith). Someone from the audience said: "Do you say so as well?" On hearing this, the Imam was enraged. His face turned pale and he said: "Woe to you! Which earth would carry me, which sky would shelter me if I narrate a saying of the Prophet,

peace be upon him, and do not hold the same view! Do you see a zunnar (belt worn by non-Muslims) on me? Or have you noticed me coming out of a church? How can I report something from the Prophet, peace be upon him, and not agree with ?!!"

Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal said: "Do not follow me or Malik or Shafi'i or Auza'i or Thawri, but take from where they took (i.e. from the Qu'ran and authentic Sunnah)." (Reported by Al-Fulani and Ibn al-Qayyim.) He also said: "He who is on the verge of destruction rejects a saying of the Messenger of Allah, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him." (Reported by Ibn al-Jauzi.)

Conclusion

The Sunnah is definitively an authority in Islamic law as stated in the Quran and the hadeeth, and as understood by the Companions. Therefore a believer with true faith has no option except to submit and surrender whatever decision, command or statement came from the Messenger of Allah.

There is a beautiful statement from Imaam Ibn Al-Qayyim in his outstanding book Madaarij Us-Saalikeen (Stages Of The Travellers) wherein he says: "Whoever obtains an authentic hadeeth from Allaah's Messenger (saw) if he wants to turn away from it let him know that the Prophet (saw) is the one who is addressing you.

Lessons Two

The Role of the Sunnah

The *Sunnah* is the second source of Islamic law.

The verse, "And We have revealed to you the Reminder, so that you may explain to mankind what has been revealed to them" (Nahl 44) is a proof that one of the roles of the *Sunnah* is to explain the Qur'ān. Shaikh Albanees says that this verse means two things:

1. First, that the Messenger of Allah is not conceal any of the revelation that he has received but he must convey it to all of mankind. just as Allah, The Blessed Almighty, has revealed "O Messenger proclaim what is revealed to you from your Lord." [5:67]

Sayyida Ayesha (ra) is reported to have said "Whosoever says that Muhammad (s) concealed something which he was commanded to communicate, has perpetrated a great lie against Allah." Then she read the above mentioned verse. (Bukhari and Muslim)

And according to the narration of Muslim: "If the Messenger (s) of Allah had concealed something which he was commanded to communicate, he would have concealed the saying of The Almighty:

"And [remember, O Muhammad], when you said to the one on whom Allah bestowed favor and you bestowed favor, "Keep your wife and fear Allah," while you concealed within yourself that which Allah is to disclose. And you feared the people, while Allah has more right that you fear Him.." (33:37)

2. Secondly, the Messenger of Allah has the duty of explaining the finer details of the Quran and how the Quran is to be applied.

Now, if Allah commanded the Messenger to explain the Quran then without a doubt, He also gave him the necessary knowledge to explain the Quran. Thus whenever the Messenger of Allah explained the Quran either verbally or through his action, he was acting upon the knowledge that Allah bestowed upon him. Allah says in Surah Qiyamah about the Quran: **Then upon Us is its clarification [to you].**

If the Messenger did not have this role of explaining the Quran, then there would infact be no need to send the Messenger. Allah could have revealed the Quran on a mountain and then left us interpret ourselves.

This explanation occurs in a number of ways.

The Prophet implemented non detailed commands in the Quran – giving them the needed detail.

The injunctions regarding prayer, fasting, *zakāt* hajj, marriage, divorce, jihad and other acts of worship are not detailed regarding their implementation. The *Sunnah* provides the necessary details for these injunctions. For example the verse:

"Establish prayer and practice regular charity". All issues related to the prayer, such as the required number of daily prayers, the number of prayer rak'at and the recitation in each prayer, as well as how to perform the prayer from beginning to end, are explained by the sunnah. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Pray as you have seen me pray." [Bukhari] Similarly, all issues related to the poor zakat, such as the minimum amount on which zakat becomes payable, the percentage paid, the kinds of wealth, goods, and animals on which zakat is obligatory, etc. are clearly explained by the sunnah of the Prophet (sa).

The Prophet qualified the unrestricted and particularised the general.

For example "The male thief and female thief cut off their hands" (5:38). In this verse, the thief is general like the hand. Without the explanation from the hadith, this verse would imply that all thieves are to have their hands cut off. The hadith restricts it by 'as-sareq' (the thief) who steals something worth a fourth of a Dinar according to the saying of the Prophet (s), "There is no cutting - of the hand - unless the thing stolen is worth a fourth of a Dinar or more." (Bukari & Muslim) the two shaikhs have recorded this Hadeeth.

Secondly the word yad, can mean anything from the hand up to the armpit. Again, the other is explained by the action of the Prophet (s) or the action of his companions and his confirmation. They used to cut the hand of the thief from the wrist as is known in the work of Hadeeth.

Allah says: "The carcass and it's blood are forbidden to you." (5:3) In explanation of this verse, the corpse of locusts, fish, the livers, spleen of blood are lawful. So the Prophet (s) said: "He has made two dead things and blood lawful: the locusts and the fish, the liver and the spleen." Without this explanation, the Muslims would have prohibited for themselves these food products.

Allaah says what means: "Say: 'Who has forbidden the adornment of [i.e., from] Allaah which He has produced for His servants and the good [lawful] things of provision?..." [Quran: 7:32]

But the Sunnah has forbidden some 'adornments', and this is evident from the saying of the Prophet : "The wearing of silk and gold has been made unlawful for males and lawful for the females of my nation." [At-Tirmithi]

Allaah says what means: "Say: 'I do not find within that which was revealed to me [anything] forbidden to one who would eat it unless it be a dead animal or blood spilled out or the flesh of swine – for indeed, it is impure - or it be [that slaughtered in] disobedience, dedicated to other than Allaah..." [Quran: 6:145]

But the Sunnah has forbidden many things not mentioned in the abovementioned verse; an example of this lies in the saying of the Prophet : "All predatory animals with tusks and every bird with claws are forbidden for consumption." There are other narrations that have forbidden the consumption of such animals, such as the one where the Prophet is reported to have said: "Allaah and His Messenger have prohibited the consumption of domesticated donkeys, for they are filth." [Al-Bukhaari & Muslim]

In surah an-Nisa' (Chapter 4) verse 11, the share of children in inheritance is given: "**Allah directs you as regards your children's inheritance ...**"The general ayah on inheritance is specified by the *ḥadīth* which states that "the Muslim does not inherit from the *kāfir*, nor does the *kāfir* inherit from the Muslim"

The sunnah can establish a specific meaning when a number of meanings are possible.

For example the verse, 'And eat and drink until the *white thread becomes distinct from the black thread of dawn*' was explained by the Prophet to refer to the distinction between dawn and the night, and not literally to the distinction between a black and white thread. (Zarabozo, 2000:110).

1.Allah says: "It is those who believe and confuse not their beliefs with wrong, 'dhulm' that are (truly) in security for they are on (right) guidance." (6:82)

The companions of the Prophet (s) understood the word 'dhulm' in its general sense to mean every wrong doing, even if it be little. On this account the verse is regarded as dubious and they said, "O Messenger (s) of Allah, which of us did not involve his faith with dhulm (wrong)?" He (s) said; It is not that. It is only the 'shirk'. Have you not heard what Luqman said: "Verily, 'shirk' is a very great sin (dhulm)." (31:13) The two shaikhs have recorded it with others.

So the understanding of the 'sahabah' of 'dhulm' mentioned in the verse was in its general sense, despite the fact that they (s) were, as stated by Ibn Mas'ud: "The best of this community, most pious, profound in learning, least of dissimulation." Yet with all that they erred in their understanding of that. Were it not for the Prophet (s), who held them back from their mistaken notion, and explained the correct meaning of 'dhulm' in the context is shirk we too would have followed in their wrong thinking. Allah, The Blessed and The Most High saved us from that wrong notion by the grace of the right direction of the Prophet (s) and his Sunnah.

Allah says: "When you travel on earth, there is no blame on you to shorten your prayer, for fear the unbelievers will persecute you." (4:101) The apparent meaning of this verse that when travelling, fear is a pre-requisite for the shortening of prayers. If you are not in a state of fear, you may not shorten your prayers. This was the meaning that some of the Companions understood from this verse. Some of the Prophet's (s) companions asked him: "Why do we shorten our prayers while we feel safe?" The Messenger of Allah cleared up their misunderstanding and said "It is a charity from Allah, so accept it." (Muslim) So in this verse – the fear was not a condition for shortening the prayer, rather it was alluding to a common occurrence at that time.

The above examples show that even if an individual has excelled in the Arabic language, and he is familiar with all of the verses of the Quran – he will not be able to understand the Quran without recourse to the Sunnah. The fact that the Companions were unable to understand certain verses, without aid of the Prophet, proves this.

The *Sunnah* clarifies which verses of the Qur'ān are *nāsikh* and which are *manṣūkh*.

If any of your women are guilty of lewdness (adultery), take the evidence of four witnesses from amongst you against them; and if they testify, confine them to houses until death do claim them, or Allah ordain for them some (other) way. Surat al-Nisaa' 15

Ibn `Abbas said, "The early ruling was confinement, until Allah sent down Surat An-Nur which abrogated that ruling with the ruling of flogging (for fornication) or stoning to death (for adultery)

The [unmarried] woman or [unmarried] man found guilty of sexual intercourse - lash each one of them with a hundred lashes, and do not be taken by pity for them in the religion of Allah, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. And let a group of the believers witness their punishment.

The Prophet sa said: "Allah has ordained for them a way, stoning for adulterers, and lashing for fornicators."

Narrated Abu Huraira: A man came to Allah's Apostle while he was in the mosque, and he called him, saying, "O Allah's Apostle! I have committed illegal sexual intercourse." The Prophet turned his face to the other side, but that man repeated his statement four times, and after he bore witness against himself four times, the Prophet called him, saying, "Are you mad?" The man said, "No." The Prophet said, "Are you married?" The man said, "Yes." Then the Prophet said, 'Take him away and stone him to death.' Jabir bin 'Abdullah said: I was among the ones who participated in stoning him and we stoned him at the Musalla. When the stones troubled him, he fled, but we overtook him at Al-Harra and stoned him to death.

The Sunnah explain some historical events in detail since they are mentioned only briefly in the Qur'an.

Behold! God promised you one of the two (enemy) parties, that it should be yours; ye wished that the one unarmed should be yours, but God intended to justify the Truth according to His words and to cut off the roots of the unbelievers." al-Anfal: 7:

Which two parties are meant? Which of them is unarmed? From books of ahadith we learn the relevant details about the Battle of Badr, which is the incident referred to in the above verses.

"(Allah turned in mercy) to the three who were left behind;" Surah at-Tawbah, 118

Who were these three people, and why did they remain behind? Again, the books of ahadith explain this.

"He frowned and turned away, because there came to him the blind man." Abasa verses 1-2:

Who frowned and turned away, and why? Who was the blind man? The details are furnished by the books of ahadith.

Also Surah Burooj is explained in detail by the Messenger in the hadith of the boy and the king.

The Sunnah is also an independent source of law

as explained in the verse in Sūrah *Al-Arāf*: 'He makes lawful for them the good things, and makes unlawful for them the corrupt things' Examples of this include the prohibition of consuming the domestic donkey, wearing of silk and gold for men, and the giving of *zakāt al fitr* the prohibition of marrying a woman and her aunt, the janaza prayer and the athaan.

In conclusion it is impossible to understand many of the verses of the Quran, without the explanation of the Prophet. There is ijmaa that the first source in explaining the Quran is the Quran itself, and the second source is the statements and actions of the Prophet – the Sunnah. Whenever the Prophet explained the Quran it was based upon revelation from Allah – ie the understanding that Allah had given to him

Hence when Saeed ibn Jubair narrated some hadith of the Prophet, a man came to him and said: The Quran differs from what you have said. Saeed ibn Jubair replied: The Messenger of Allah knows the Book of Allah better than you do" (Suyuti: Miftaah)

Umar (r) A people will come to you who will argue with you based upon the ambiguous verses of the Quran. Restrict them by the sunnah, for the people of the sunnah are the most knowledgeable of the Book of Allah. (ibn Qayyim, Ilaam)

The Prophet Muhammad as a model of behaviour

There is indeed a good model for you in the Messenger of Allah – for the one who has hope in Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah much.” Surah Al-Ahzab:21.

the Prophet as a worshipper of and believer in Allah,

his methodology of dawah,

his life as a husband, father, relative and friend – we see his mercy, kindness, easy going, sabr forgiving, loving, considerate to our peoples feelings, generosity, bravery, etc

And his leadership within the state administration, at the battle-ground, at the market place, at

All the Messengers had the same attributes as the other human beings to whom they were sent, including physical bodies which needed food, drink and rest. They had experiences similar to that of other human beings; they enjoyed health and suffered from sickness, they were exposed to trials and tribulations and they also faced death. They had no special divine qualities, power or strength. Thus, they could become a living example of the Deen they were sent with. This also discards any possibility of anyone arguing that the nature of the Messengers was different from the humans and thus, they could effectively accomplish all the duties of the religion, which are unfeasible for the humans to carry out.

The *ḥadīth* can be categorised into either *mutawāttir* or *āḥād*. The *mutawāttir ḥadīth* is defined as a report conveyed by narrators whose number reaches such an extent of abundance that their agreement on a lie is impossible (Kamali, 2003:93). Such a *ḥadīth* is *qat’ī thubūt*. The *āḥād ḥadīth* is one whose number of transmitters does not reach the extent of the number of transmitters of a *mutawāttir* tradition (Hasan, 2000:41). Such a *ḥadīth* is *ẓannī thubūt* and is also described as *ẓannī rajī’h* (having a certain degree of doubt that does not invalidate the *ḥadīth*) (Al-Albani, 1995: 56). Shāfi’ī brings a number of evidence for acting upon *āḥād* narrations. These include the fact that most Prophets were sent individually to convey the message. The people accepted them on the basis of their individual good character and not collective strength. Also the Prophet would send single people to preach to the people (Ḥasan 2000:43). Such preaching included teaching both *aḥkām* and *aqīdah*.

Farasat Latif

