



Lecture notes from Shaikh Abū Suhaib's explanation of Usool as Sunnah

Imām Ahmed said: **"The Usool of the Sunnah with us is holding fast to what the Companions of the Messenger of Allah were upon"**

FL means Farasat's note

"The Usool of the Sunnah with us is...."

Explanation

Usool is plural of Usul. The word Usul has five meanings

- 1) Daleel (evidence)
- 2) That which is most likely to be correct
- 3) A principle. Eg "eating dead meat (ie w/o being slaughtered) is against the usul
- 4) In terms of analogy.
- 5) The consensus of the Sahaabah. If the companions ALL agreed upon a matter it became an usul. This is the meaning we are interested in.

So Usul as Sunnah (foundations of the Sunnah) is what the Companions agreed upon.

What is Sunnah

Has a general meaning and a specific meaning

General Meaning is "the entire religion"

Specific Meaning: this is divided into three:

- a) **Scholars of hadeeth** who look at anything authentically reported from the statements, actions, tacit approvals, physical descriptions and character of the Prophet (FL: e.g the Prophet had 20 grey hairs, or that he married Khadija when he was 40. Obviously some of these hadeeth have no bearing on Islamic law)
- b) **Scholars of Usool** (FL Legal theorists) They define the Sunnah as the statements, actions, and tacit approvals of the Prophet, after he received revelation, but not including the Qur'ān . (FL Their task is to determine what is an authority in Islamic Law ie what reports are an example for the Muslims to follow. So they are not interested for example in the Prophet's physical

description, or what happened to him before he was a Prophet, as these have no bearing in Islamic law and the Muslim is not required to follow it)

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

When Imaam Ahmed talks about "Sunnah" he means Sunnah in its general sense ie the entire religion, and not in its specific sense.

"With us..."

Ie Ahl Sunnah or Ahl Hadeeth, or the Salaf. Many deviated sects claim to be from Ahl Sunnah, but in reality they are not.

"holding fast to what the Companions of the Messenger of Allah were upon"

This book is a book of manhaj (Islamic methodology) and not aqeedah. A book of aqeedah would cover belief in Allah, His angels His Books etc.

(FL manhaj is the path we take in understanding and applying our religion – and our manhaj is the manhaj of the Companions. Ie we understand the religion as they understood it, and we apply the religion as they applied it. So we have a manhaj in seeking knowledge, in giving dawah, in dealing with the innovators, in dealing with oppressive rulers etc.)

Ibn 'Abbās when debating the Khawaarij said to them " I see no Companions of Allah's Messenger amongst you". (FL the khawaarij were the first deviated sect in Islam, they declared anyone who opposed them to be disbelievers)

Imām Ahmed said (when explain the foundation of the religion) that it is **holding fast to what the Companions of the Messenger of Allah were upon**, and he didn't say "holding fast to what the Messenger of Allah was upon". Why? Because every Muslim claims to follow the Prophet, no Muslim would say otherwise. But **"holding fast to what the Companions of the Messenger of Allah were upon"** is the point at which we split. (FL ie the people of truth hold fast to the way of the Companions, and the people of falsehood do not) The salafis distinguish themselves with this point.

Three Proofs from Quran for following the way of the Companions

1. Allah says in the Noble Qur'an: **"If anyone opposes the Messenger, even after guidance has been plainly conveyed to him, and follows a path other than that of the believers, We shall leave him in the path he has chosen and land him in HellFire, what an evil refuge."**

Who were the believers when this verse was revealed – the Companions, If Allah has Willed, He could have said "If anyone opposes the Messenger, even after guidance has been plainly conveyed to him.....We shall leave him in the path he has chosen and land him in HellFire, what an evil refuge"

But He added “...and follows a path other than that of the believers...” therefore following the path of the Companions is obligatory.

(FL. Allah mentions the “path” of the believers and not the “paths” of the believers. This shows the Companions were upon one path, and not many paths)

2. And the first forerunners [in the faith] among the Muhājireen and the Ansār and those who followed them in righteousness – Allāh is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him...{at-Tawbah (9): 100}

The Muhājireen and the Ansār were the Companions, and Allah is pleased with them AND is also pleased with “those who followed them in righteousness” ie with those who follow the Companions. So if we want to earn Allah’s pleasure, we have to follow the Companions.

3. The word Siraat

This occurs in the Quran 30 times. Has three meanings

1. The path of Allah. **“This is My Straight Path so follow it...”**
2. The path of the Messenger: **“And indeed, [O Muhammad], you guide to a straight path...”**
3. The path of the Companions. After Allah says **“Guide us to the straight path...”** He then says **“The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favour...”** Who are those who Allah bestowed His favour. They are mentioned in another verse. And whoso obeys Allah and the Messenger, then they will be in the company of those on whom Allah has bestowed His Grace, of the Prophets, the Siddiqun (like Abu Bakr As-Siddiq) , the martyrs, and the righteous. And how excellent these companions are” 4:69

Three proofs from the Sunnah to follow the way of the Companions

1. ‘Abdullah b ‘Amr b Aas said the Prophet said. “ the jews split into 71 sects, the Christians split into 72 sects, and my ummah will split into 73 sects. All in the Fire except one”. The companions asked who is this saved sect and he (salallahu alaihi wa sallam) replied **“those who follow what I and my companions are upon today”**. The Prophet did not say “those who follow what I am upon today” but he added “my companions”. So to follow the Companions is to be from the saved sect.

2. From al-‘Irbād ibn Sāriyah who said: Allāh’s Messenger (sallAllāhu ‘alayhi wassallam) said “...for indeed whoever of you lives after will see much differing, so stick to my sunnah and the sunnah of the rightly guided Caliphs after me, hold firm to it and bite on to it with the molars”¹

¹ The full hadeeth is: al-‘Irbād ibn Sāriyah said: Allāh’s Messenger (sallAllāhu ‘alayhi wassallam) gave us an powerful admonition which brought tears to our eyes and shook our hearts. then someone said: “O Messenger of Allāh, it is as if this is a farewell sermon, so what do you exhort us with?” He replied (sallAllāhu ‘alayhi wassallam): “I exhort you to have taqwā of Allāh, and to hear and obey [the ruler] even if he is an Ethiopian slave. For indeed whoever of you lives after will see much differing, so stick to my sunnah and the sunnah of the rightly guided Caliphs after me, hold firm to it and bite on to it with the molars. And beware of newly-invented matters [in the religion], for every newly-invented matter is an innovation

The Prophet mentioned his Sunnah, and then he also mentioned “the Sunnah of the rightly guided Caliphs” (FL Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Alī) and he (salalahu alaihi wa sallam) said “hold onto to IT” and not “hold onto both of them”. In his (salalahu alaihi wa sallam's) Sunnah and the rightly guided Caliphs' Sunnah was one and the same thing.

2. Abu Moosaa Al-Ash'aree reported: "We prayed the Maghrib prayer with the Messenger of Allaah (saws) and then said: 'Let's sit and wait so we can pray the 'Ishaa prayer with him (also).' So we sat and then he (saws) came out to us and said: 'What kept you here?' We said: 'O Messenger of Allaah (saws), we prayed with you and then said to ourselves: Let's sit so we can pray the 'Ishaa prayer with you.' He (saws) said: 'You have done well' or 'You have acted correctly'. Then he raised his head to the sky - and he would raise his head up to the sky often - and said: **'The stars are guardians for the sky. So when the stars depart, the sky's affair comes to pass. And I am a guardian for my Companions, and my Companions are guardians for my nation. So when my Companions depart, my nation will get what it has been promised.'**"

So the Messenger of Allaah (salalahu alaihi wa sallam) has made his Companions' relation to those who came after them from the Muslim nation just like his (salalahu alaihi wa sallam) relation to his Companions and like the relation of the stars to the sky. The stars have: beauty, are signs to guide the travellers, and are missiles against devils.²

(FL From one of the scholars, Similarly, the Sahaabah are the beautification and adornment of this nation in terms of understanding, knowledge and action. And they (also) served as meteors and missiles against the misinterpretations of the ignorant, the lies of the fabricators and the distortions of the extremists. And likewise, the stars are lights for the inhabitants of the earth to be guided by, during the darkness of the land and the sea. Allaah says: "And by the stars, they (mankind) are able to guide themselves." [Surah an-Nahl: 16]. Similarly, the Sahaabah are followed in order to be saved from the darkness of desires and doubts. So whoever turns away from their understanding, then in his delusion, he clothes himself in darkness – layer upon layer of it – such that when he sticks his hand out, he is not even able to see it.)

END OF LESSON

and all innovation is misguidance." reported by Abū Dawood and others with an authentic chain of transmission [Saheeh li ghayrihi]

² Allaah says: "Verily, We have beautified the lowest (level of) heaven with an adornment of stars. And (in order) to guard against every rebellious devil. They are not able to hear the highest assembly (of angels) except that they are pelted from every side. They are outcast and for them will be a painful punishment. Except he who snatches away something by stealing, but a flaming fire follows after him." [Surah As-Saafaat: 6-10]

Appendix 1

I (FL) have added some other beneficial narrations here.

Allāh's Messenger (sallAllāhu 'alayhi wassallam) said: "The best of people is my generation, then those who come after them, then those who come after them (Bukhari)

Ibn Mas'ūd (radi Allāhu 'anhu) said: Whoever of you wishes to follow a way then let him follow the way of those who have died, as the one alive is not safe from tribulation. These [ones to be followed] are the companions of Muhammad (sallAllāhu 'alayhi wassallam), they were the best of this Ummah, they had the purest hearts, they possessed the deepest knowledge and they had the least burden [in terms of what they....]. They were a people chosen by Allāh to accompany His Prophet and establish His deen. Thus, you should recognise their virtue and follow them in their narrations, and hold firm according to your ability to their manners and religion as they were upon the Straight Path. Reported by Ibn 'AbdulBarr, *al-Jāmi' ul-Bayān*, vol.2, p.97; Abū Nu'aym, *al-Hilyah*, vol.1, p.305, narrated from Ibn 'Umar.

He also said:Indeed, Allāh Looked at the servants' hearts and found that the best of the hearts was that of Muhammad (sallAllāhu 'alayhi wassallam) and thus selected him for Himself in order to impart His Message. Then Allāh Looked at the hearts of the servants after Muhammad and found the hearts of the companions to be the best hearts of the servants, so Allāh made them ministers for His Prophet who fight for His deen. So whatever good the Muslims see is deemed as good with Allāh and whatever evil they saw is also deemed as evil with Allāh. Reported by Ahmad and others, the chain of transmission is hasan.