



Ramadan Daily Quran Study, by Dr Zahid Aziz, 2023

Adapted and edited from *The Religion of Islam* by Maulana Muhammad Ali
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Fast 5: Sunnah and Hadith

- In the Quran the Holy Prophet is told to declare to people:

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٣١﴾

“Say: If you love Allah, **follow me**: Allah will love you, and grant you protection from your sins. And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.” — 3:31



And it goes on to say after this (in 3:32): “Obey Allah and the Messenger” (أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ). The same words occur in 3:132.

Another version of the same command is found in several places in the Quran. It is: “Obey Allah and **obey** the Messenger” (أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَ) (أَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ)—4:59, 5:92, 24:54, 47:33 and 64:12.

These verses show that Muslims must follow the sayings and example of the Holy Prophet.

- The terms *Sunnah* and *Hadīth* refer to the practice and the sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. These are the second source from which the teachings of Islam are drawn. This source is below in level to the Quran.



- In its original sense the word *Sunnah* indicates the doings and *Hadith* the sayings of the Prophet. But in effect both cover the same ground and are applicable to his actions, practices, and sayings. *Hadith* is the narration and record of the *Sunnah*, i.e. the record of the sayings and doings of the Holy Prophet. Hadith also contains some other matter.
- The Holy Quran generally deals with the broad principles or essentials of religion. The details were supplied by the Holy Prophet himself, either by showing in his practice how a command was to be carried out, or by giving an explanation in words.



- Since Islam covered the whole sphere of human activity, hundreds of points had to be explained by the Holy Prophet by his example in action and word. On the moral side, his was the pattern which every Muslim was required to follow. The Quran says: “Certainly you have in the Messenger of Allah an excellent exemplar for him who hopes in Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah much.” — 33:21.
- The transmission of the practices and sayings of the Holy Prophet, from one person to another, became necessary even during the Prophet’s lifetime. In fact, the Holy Prophet himself used to give instructions about the transmission of what he taught. For example, after giving people some teachings, he said:



“Remember this and report it to those whom you have left behind.”

“He who is present here should carry this message to him who is absent.”
(Bukhari, hadith 53 and 105)

- The Companions of the Holy Prophet, while translating his sayings into practice, did their best also to preserve them in memory as well as on paper. They realised that these things must be preserved for future generations.
- When one of the Companions complained to the Holy Prophet that he had difficulty in remembering what he heard from him, the Holy Prophet advised him to write it down (Tirmidhi, hadith 2666). Generally Hadith was committed to memory by people. It was occasionally, when there was need for it, that a person wrote it down.



- After the death of the Holy Prophet, many matters for decision had to be referred to the Quran or to some judgment or saying of the Holy Prophet. Many of his judgments and sayings therefore became well known.
- Also, large numbers of converts, who had never seen the Prophet himself, were anxious to know all there was to know about him. Everyone who had seen him became a source of knowledge for the later converts.
- The Holy Prophet had laid the duty, on those who saw him and listened to his words, of conveying what they saw and heard to those who were absent, to those who came after him.



- Many of the Companions, men and women, made the preservation of the Sayings and Practice of the Holy Prophet as the aim of their lives. People came to them from different areas of the Islamic lands to gain knowledge of Islam and its Prophet.
- After the passing of the generation who had seen and heard the Holy Prophet, Hadith reports continued to be taught by one generation of teachers to the next. In the second century of Islam, written collections of Hadith started to be made. These early collections were incomplete because each of the compilers only had access to Hadith reports taught in particular cities or areas, not to all available reports.



- In the third century of Islam, several complete Hadith collections were compiled. There were two types of these collections. One type classified the reports under the names of the Companions who had reported them. So all reports originating from, say Hazrat Aishah, on any subject are compiled under one heading, and likewise for other Companions.
- The other type of Hadith collections classified the reports by the **subject they related to**. It is this second type which are the most useful and the best known. There are six such main collections, known for short as Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, Ibn Majah and Nasa'i. In the next Study we will deal with those collections, with reference to the most famous of them: Sahih Bukhari.