

The Science of History and the Biography of the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم)

Abū ‘Abdir-Raḥmān Uways aṭ-Ṭawīl (حفظه الله)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

It is important for us to take notes as it aids us in collecting the statements of the scholars and being able to revise our points.

Sa‘īd b. Jubayr (رحمه الله) said, “I used to sit in the sittings of Ibn ‘Abbās (رضي الله عنهما) and write in a sheet until the sheet was full.¹” Likewise, ‘Āmir ash-Sha‘bī (رحمه الله) said, “You should not leave any knowledge except that you have written it down. It is better for you than the space on that sheet of paper because verily, you will probably require that which you have written any day in the future.”²

The Definition of at-Tārikh

Ṣiddīq Ḥassan Khān (رحمه الله) in his collection called *Abjad al-‘Ulūm* (vol. 2, pg. 137) said, “History is defined as the knowledge/science relating to the conditions of groups of people, their localities, their countries, their paths, their customs, their accomplishments, their lineage and their deaths, and so forth.”³

As-Sakhāwī (رحمه الله), from the ‘ulamā’ of Ḥadīth, said, “The science of history is the art that searches for the facts of time in terms of occurrences in various periods as it relates to the world.”⁴

¹ Sunan ad-Dārimī: 1/439

² Taqyīd al-‘Ilm: p.100

³ Abjad al-‘Ulūm: 2/137

⁴ Al-I‘lān bi at-Tawbīkh: p.19

The Importance of Studying the History and Sīrah of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم)

1. The first angle of importance is that which relates specifically to the sīrah (biography) of the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم). Allāh (سبحانه وتعالى) says,

﴿لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا﴾

“Indeed, in the Messenger of Allāh (Muḥammad) you have a good example to follow for him who hopes in (the Meeting with) Allāh and the Last Day and remembers Allāh much.” [Sūrah al-Aḥzāb 33:21]

So by studying the sīrah of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) you become acquainted with this good example in the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم). Studying from his birth, his life, his journeys, his da‘wah (call), his etiquettes, his mannerisms with his people, with his wives, with his Companions (رضى الله عنهم) and fundamentally, his call to Tawḥīd.

2. We find in the Qur’ān that Allāh (سبحانه وتعالى) mentions stories about the past as a means for the purification and rectification of the souls through learning from that which occurred before. As He said (سبحانه وتعالى),

﴿ذَلِكَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا فَافْضُصْ أَقْصَصَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ﴾

“Such is the description of the people who reject Our Signs. So relate the stories, perhaps they may reflect.” [Sūrah al-A‘rāf 7:176]

3. It strengthens the hearts of the believers. When one reads history, and specifically the sīrah of the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم), this allows the individual’s heart to become

firm. Studying the stories of the Prophets and the history of the Salaf strengthens the heart of the believer. As Allāh (سبحانه وتعالى) said,

وَكُلًّا نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الرُّسُلِ مَا نُثَبِّتُ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ وَجَاءَكَ فِي هَذِهِ الْحَقُّ وَمَوْعِظَةٌ وَذِكْرَى

لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“And all that We relate to you (O Muḥammad) of the news of the Messengers is so that We may make strong and firm your heart thereby. And in this (chapter of the Qur’ān) has come to you the truth, as well as an admonition and a reminder for the believers.” [Sūrah Hūd 11:120]

4. It is a means by which to have knowledge of the biography of the people of good and to follow their way. Allāh said,

﴿أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَىٰ اللَّهُ فَبِهِدْلِهِمْ أَقْتَدِهْ﴾

“They are those whom Allāh had guided. So follow their guidance.” [Sūrah al-Anām 6:90]

This is why some of the ‘ulamā’ mention that stories are soldiers from the soldiers of Allāh (سبحانه وتعالى)⁵ in that they give an individual an outlook of the pious who came before, so they can imitate them.

Abū Ḥanīfah (رحمه الله) said, “The narrations about the ‘ulamā’ and their merits is more beloved to me than a lot of Fiqh. This is because it is the characteristics and the manners of a people.”⁶ By studying the biography of the righteous, you are learning the correct etiquettes with Allāh (سبحانه وتعالى), the etiquettes with the Messenger (صلى

⁵ See Mukhtaṣir as-Sīrah of Shaykh al-Islām Muḥammad b. ‘Abdul-Wahhāb: p.7

⁶ Al-I‘lān bi at-Tawbīkh: p.33

(الله عليه وسلم), the etiquettes with the Sunnah, the etiquettes with the manhaj as-Salaf—you learn theses through studying tārikh (history).

5. It is a path to take heed and benefit from those occurrences in the past. For example, benefiting from the stories we read in the Qur’ān regarding that which occurred from those whom the Prophets and Messengers were sent to. Allāh (سبحانه وتعالى) said,

﴿لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا يُفْتَرَىٰ﴾

“Indeed, in their stories, there is a lesson for men of understanding. It (the Qur’ān) is not a forged statement” [Sūrah Yūsuf 12:111]

We have a narration of ‘Ā’ishah (رضى الله عنها) from the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) where he said, “O people, those who have gone before you were destroyed because if any one of high rank committed theft amongst them, they spared him and if any one of low rank committed theft, they inflicted the prescribed punishment upon them.”⁷ The Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) is calling the people to take heed and take lessons from those before.

And this is also mentioned in the ḥadīth of Abū Hurayrah (رضى الله عنه), which is in al-Bukhārī, where he said that the Messenger said, “Leave and stick to that which I have given you. For the people who were before you were ruined because of their questions and their differences over their prophets.”⁸ So here the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) is informing us of those things that occurred from the generations before. And this is from the benefits of studying history, in that we take heed. The one who has understanding and reflects with ikhlās (sincerity) and ṣidq (truthfulness) upon these

⁷ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: no. 1688

⁸ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: no. 7288

authentic narrations regarding the history of those before, benefits from that which occurred regarding them.

6. The importance of history as it relates to the science of Ḥadīth, Jarḥ wa Ta'dīl (criticising and commending narrators) and the affair of refuting the People of Bid'ah (innovation).

Imām Sufyān ath-Thawrī (رحمه الله) said, “When some narrators used lying, we used history against them.” This is found in *Tārīkh ad-Dimishq*⁹, which is the compilation of the history of Damascus, and also Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (رحمه الله) mentions this in *al-Kifāyah fī 'Ilm ar-Riwāyah*, showing the importance of history in that it is used to bring out the liars and the truthful ones as it relates to the narrations of the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم).

Ḥassān b. Zayd (رحمه الله) said, “Nothing is used more against liars than history. It is said to a narrator, ‘In which year were you born?’ Once he has confirmed when he was born, and we know when the person who he claims to have heard from died, then we can ascertain the truthfulness and the lies of his narration.”¹⁰

An example of this is mentioned by Ibn 'Asākir in *Tārīkh ad-Dimishq*, with his isnad from Ḥammād b. Zayd, that Ismā'īl b. 'Ayyāsh (d. 181H) said, “I was in Irāq and the People of Ḥadīth came to me and said, ‘There is an individual who is narrating from Khālīd b. Ma'dān.’ So I went to him and said, ‘Which year did you write your narration from Khālīd b. Ma'dān?’ He said, ‘In the year 113H.’ I said to him, ‘You are claiming that you wrote from him and took a narration from him seven years after he died?!’”¹¹

⁹ 1/54, also see al-Kifāyah: p.119

¹⁰ Tārīkh Baghdād: 7/357

¹¹ Tārīkh ad-Dimishq: 16/204

So his knowledge of the history, birth, and death of individuals was a weapon used to ascertain the lies of that individual who claimed to narrate from Khālīd b. Ma'dān. He was not even alive when he claimed to narrate from him! Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī also mentions this story in al-Jāmi'.¹²

It shows you the importance of history, which is why it has a major part in the 'Ilm al-Ḥadīth (the science of Ḥadīth) from the books such as *Tārīkh Baghdād*, which is a history of Baghdād by Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī and also *Tārīkh Dimishq* (the History of Damascus) of Ibn 'Asākir. Various collections of these books are used by the 'ulamā' of Ḥadīth as it relates to the death and the lives of narrators, and from there they can distinguish the truthful ones from the liars.

7. The way of al-Islām is the first methodology in existence because Ādam, the first man, was a Muslim and Prophet of Allāh (سبحانه وتعالى). This is confirmed by the statement of 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās (رضي الله عنهما) when he said, "Between Ādam and Nūḥ are 10 generations; those 10 generations were upon Tawḥīd."

Therefore, we find that the Islamic history and the works of the historians from the scholars of the Islām go back to the first man Ādam. So the books of history contain all of this, and no religion does this with correct chains of narrations and text and strict scrutinizing of chains of narrations other than Islām. Imām aṭ-Ṭabarī mentions this narration of Ibn 'Abbās (رضي الله عنهما) in his Tafsīr and also al-Ḥākim in his al-Mustadrak.¹³

¹² al-Jāmi' li Akhlāq ar-Rāwī: 1/132

¹³ Tafsīr aṭ-Ṭabarī: 2/194 & Al-Mustadrak lil-Ḥākim: 2/546-547

Some Categories of History

1. *The stories of the Prophets and their nations (those they were sent to).* Like Allāh says,

﴿نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ أَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ بِمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنَ وَإِنْ كُنْتَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَمِنَ الْغَافِلِينَ﴾

“We relate unto you (Muḥammad) the best of stories through Our Revelations, of this Qur’ān. And before this (i.e. before the coming of Divine Inspiration to you), you were among those who knew nothing about it (the Qur’ān).” [Sūrah Yūsuf 12:3]

Studying the stories of the Prophets is an important science. An interesting book for this is *Āyātu Taṣnīf al-Qur’ān*, where certain topics in the Qur’ān have been categorised, and from those affairs that have been categorised are the stories of the Prophets. For example, you find that the story of Mūsá is mentioned in 466 verses in the Qur’ān. As for Ibrāhīm, there are 198 verses regarding him.

So the student of knowledge researches and focuses on those verses where Allāh (سبحانه وتعالى) mentioned the stories of Mūsá and Ibrāhīm, for example, and returns to the books of Tafsīr, like *Tafsīr at-Ṭabarī*, the Tafsīr of Ibn Kathīr, the Tafsīr of as-Sadī for a general outlook as it relates to those verses and takes notes and benefits that the Salaf have mentioned about these verses.

After the Qur’ān, we have the source of the Sunnah of the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم).

Stories of the Prophets that we find in the books of ḥadīth like Kutub as-Sittah (the six books [of Ḥadīth]). So we have for example in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb Aḥādithul-Anbiyā* (the book on the narrations of the Prophets). And in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim we have chapters about the virtues of Īsá, Ibrāhīm, Mūsá, Yūsuf, and Zakariyyah.

From the earliest books written and compiled regarding history, in general, is the *Tārīkh* of al-Imām aṭ-Ṭabarī (d. 310H), which is called *Tārīkh ar-Rusul wal Mulūk* (the History of the Messengers and Kings) or *Tārīkh al-Umam wal Mulūk* (the History of Nations and Kings). In it, he mentions narrations he collected about the beginning of creation up until the year 302H.

Imām aṭ-Ṭabarī is from the ‘ulamā’ of Ḥadīth so his methodology in collecting these narrations and statements of those before was based upon the methodology of the muhaddithīn (the scholars of Ḥadīth).

2. *The sīrah (biography) of the Prophet* (صلى الله عليه وسلم). The greatest blessing from Allāh (سبحانه وتعالى) is the sending of Muḥammad. Allāh says,

﴿وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ﴾

“And We have sent you (O Muḥammad) not but as a mercy for the ‘Ālamīn (mankind, jinns and all that exists).” [Sūrah al-Anbiyā’ 21:107]

This category will be discussed in more detail.

3. The knowledge and information about the Companions and their students from the Ṭābi‘īn, the second and third generation, and so forth.

Examples of these books:

- *Al-Istī‘āb fī Ma‘rifatil Aṣḥāb*, written and compiled by Ibn ‘Abdīl-Barr al-Qurṭubī (d. 463H), which is from the foremost of books written as it relates to the lives of the Companions (رضى الله عنهم). It is a comprehensive compilation of information about the Companions of Muḥammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم). He mentions the lives of the Companions, when they died, who narrated from them and who were their students, which is important as it relates to the ‘Ilm of Ḥadīth because through this we can know those who were from the Companions and

those who were not, ie the Tābi‘īn (the second generation). This is important as it relates to specific sciences in ‘Ilmul-Ḥadīth like ‘al-mursal’ where you find a second-generation Tābi‘ī narrating from the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم). This would not be accepted because there is a missing link as that second-generation never met the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم).

- *Al-Iṣābah fī Tamyīz aṣ-Ṣaḥābah* by Ibn Ḥajr al-‘Asqalānī (رحمه الله). In this, he mentioned the names of the Companions and gave a brief biography of them. He made a distinction regarding those who it is authentically established are Companions and those who are not Companions. He mentioned 12,446 of the Companions of the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم).
 - *Sīyar A‘lām an-Nubalā* by Imām Dhahabī (رحمه الله), which is a biography of noble individuals. He mentions the Companions and likewise their students (the Tābi‘īn) in that compilation.
4. *The history of the Amawiyyah Dynasty (41H-132H)* as it relates to the kings and the rulers in that particular dynasty, which had two stints. From the books, a student of knowledge can refer to regarding this is *Al-Kāmil fī Tārīkh* (A Completion on History) by Ibn Athīr (d. 630H) who was one of the most well-renowned historians. It is upon the student of knowledge to at least have that collection in their library and refer to it as it relates to the Amawiy Dynasty.
 5. *The ‘Abbāsiyyah Dynasty (132H-431H)*. Again, you can go back to *Al-Kāmil fī Tārīkh* by Ibn Athīr for some details and interesting recollections regarding some of the occurrences of that period. From the affairs mentioned is the trial regarding the Qur’ān, and we know that the Qur’ān is the Speech of Allāh, uncreated. During the ‘Abbāsiyyah Dynasty there were a lot of trials for the imāms regarding this, and from

the foremost of those who were put to trial was al-Imām Aḥmad (رحمه الله). Ibn al-Athīr compiles the beginning and end of this testing period.

6. *The history of narrators, scholars of Ḥadīth, and religious people.* The foremost of this category are the books that have been authored about certain countries in the world of al-Islām and the scholars and narrators that passed through them.

Examples of these books:

- *Tārīkh al-Muḥaddithīn bi-Aṣbahān* (the History of the Scholars of Ḥadīth of Aṣbahān[near Īrān] by Abī Shaykh al-Aṣbahānī (d. 369H). This is from the foremost books collected on this subject. The author said in his introduction, “This is a book talking about the levels of the scholars of Ḥadīth from those who visited and went past Aṣbahān.”¹⁴
- *Tārīkh Dimishq* by Ibn ‘Asākir (d. 449H) which we mentioned previously. It is 80 volumes and is considered the largest compilation of books written in history. In this, he mentions all of the scholars who went past Damascus, even if they went past once. He mentions their names, their narrations, where they died, and so forth.
- *Tārīkh Baghdād* (the History of Baghdad) by Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463H). He described Baghdad (Iraq as we know today), its geographics, its condition and the Companions that went past Baghdād; when they traversed Baghdād, who took from them in Baghdād, and the first of the Companions that are mentioned is ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (رضي الله عنه). This is a very important book as it relates to history, ‘Ilmul-Ḥadīth and also as it relates to clarifying and mentioning some of the People of Bid‘ah who lived in Baghdād at that time.

¹⁴ Tārīkh al-Muḥaddithīn bi-Aṣbahān: 1/1

From the People of Bid'ah mentioned is the second lieutenant of the Mu'tazilah, 'Amr b. 'Ubayd. He (Khaṭṭīb al-Baghdādī) mentions a narration from 'Āṣim al-Aḥwal who said, "I was sitting with Qatādah and he refuted 'Amr b. 'Ubayd. So I said, 'O Abal-Khaṭṭāb, do you not see the scholars talking about each other [meaning, you should not be talking about him]?' Qatādah said, 'O Aḥwal, do you not see that when an individual falls into bid'ah (innovation) that his innovation is made clear and he is mentioned so the people can take heed?'"¹⁵

Gems such as this are mentioned in *Tārīkh Baghdād*. He also mentioned Ibn Bandār al-Anmāṭī, who is known as ibn Aḥmā aṣ-Ṣamṣāmī. He was from the deviant sect, the Mu'tazilah. He mentioned that this Individual died in his house and nobody knew that he had died. Because they did not know his exact time of death, they considered it to be the day he was discovered; when discovered, they found that rats had eaten his ears and nose. This is the state of somebody of bid'ah and how they died, and this is mentioned in *Tārīkh Baghdād*.¹⁶

The Stories of the Prophets by Ibn Kathīr

This is a fundamental book that the student of knowledge should focus on because Ibn Kathīr (رحمه الله) was from the scholars of Ḥadīth, so he was very strict as it relates to the narrations he compiled in his works. And from his gems is this book, *Qīṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'* (the Stories of the Prophets), which is translated into English.

¹⁵ Tārīkh Baghdād: 12/178-179

¹⁶ 8/562

The first thing we must know is that this book is the first volume of his book *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah* (the Beginning and the End), which is from one of the most comprehensive collections of history, where he talks about the beginning of creation up until his generation. So in that, the first volume will be about the Prophets. The ‘ulamā’ have taken that volume and it has become an independent book called *Qīṣaṣ al-Anbiyā’*.

Some points regarding this book:

- He uses the Qur’ān as his main source in this compilation and anything that opposes the Qur’ān from the stories of the nations before is rejected.
- He mentions the stories of the Prophets and where they are mentioned in each sūrah (chapter of the Qur’ān) in the order that is in the muṣḥaf. Again, this allows a student of knowledge to go back to the books of Tafsīr to do research and look at the kalām (speech) of the ‘ulamā’ in more depth as it relates to the stories of the Prophets.
- He uses a lot of the books of Tafsīr, such as the Tafsīr of Ṭabarī for example and he utilises the methodology of Tafsīrul-Qur’ān bil-Qur’ān (verses explaining other verses). He starts by using verses that clarify the previous verse, then he would go to the narrations of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم), which is the methodology of Ibn Kathīr in his own Tafsīr.
- After that, he mentions the books of the scholars of Tārīkh (history); the foremost of those is *Tārīkh aṭ-Ṭabarī* that we mentioned previously.
- An interesting benefit that we can take from *Qīṣaṣ al-Anbiyā’* is that he refutes a lot of misconceptions and doubts relating to the Prophets and Tawḥīd that have been mentioned by the People of the Book. This is a fundamental book that the ‘ulamā’ advise with, especially because Ibn Kathīr is indeed a scholar of Ḥadīth, so you can

rely on his effort in sticking to authentic narrations and texts as it relates to the Prophets mentioned in his book.

The Sīrah of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم)

The sources for studying the sīrah (biography) of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم):

1. No doubt, the first and main source is the Qur'ān. Allāh (سبحانه وتعالى) mentions various āyāt regarding the life of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم).

- Sūratul-Mudaththir - when the revelation came to him (صلى الله عليه وسلم)
- Sūratul-Anfāl - Ghazwatul-Badr al-Kubrā (the Battle of al-Badr)
- Sūrah Āli 'Imrān - the Battle of Uḥud
- Sūratul-Aḥzāb - the Battle of Khandaq
- Sūratul-Fatḥ - the Conquest of Makkah
- Sūratul-Barā'ah (i.e., Sūrah at-Tawbah) - Ḥunayn

So again, the student of knowledge refers to the tafāsīr of the scholars regarding these verses to get clarification and further understanding from the statements of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم), the Ṣaḥābah and the Salaf as it relates to these occurrences.

2. *The Sunnah of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم)*. We find various narrations regarding the life of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) in the Kutub as-Sittah.

The symbols for the six books are:

- خ for Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī
- م for Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim
- د Sunan Abī Dāwūd
- س for an-Nasā'ī

- ق for Ibn Mājah
- ت for Tirmidhī.

In Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, various narrations have been mentioned about the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم). As it relates to Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, we have *Kitābul-Jihād* (the Book of Jihād) talking about the battles of the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم), the virtues of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and likewise the virtues of the Companions. In at-Tirmidhī, he mentions specific merits of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and the Ṣaḥābah, the companions (رضى الله عنهم). In Sunan Abū Dāwūd, there are various chapters and in Sunan Ibn Mājah likewise, particularly *Kitābul-Jihād*, and also in an-Nasā'ī.

So the student of knowledge has to return to the books of the Sunnah in these various chapters and study the narrations as it relates to the occurrences in the life of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم).

The student goes back to the various explanations of the books of Ḥadīth, such as Fathul-Bārī, to get further clarification as it relates to the life of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم).

3. *The books of sīrah*; books that have been collated regarding the life of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم).

The Efforts of the Salaf and the Scholars Regarding the Sīrah (Biography) of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم)

(صلى الله عليه وسلم)

1. From the first of those who documented aspects of the life of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) were 'Urwah b. Zubayr d. 92H (رحمه الله) and Abān b. 'Uthmān d. 105H (رحمه الله), who

were children of the Companions. They took narrations from their fathers and the rest of the Companions and documented certain aspects of the life of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم), specifically the maghāzī (battles).

2. The generation after that came Imām az-Zuhrī (رحمه الله) from the ‘ulamā’ of Ḥadīth, who also documented the life of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم).
3. A pivotal individual in the tārikh and the sīrah of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) was Muḥammad b. Ishāq al-Madanī (d. 151H). He wrote regarding the biography of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم), his battles, excursions and so forth. He collected all of those documents written by the Tābi‘īn (the students of the Companions) and formed a book in history and biography of the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and his battles. This is considered from the first complete collection. However, the book as it stands is not available in its complete sense for us. But what we do have is point number four.
4. And that is Ibn Hishām (d. 218H); he studied the book of Muḥammad b. Ishāq and summarised it, authenticated it and wrote what is known as *Sīrah Ibn Hishām*, which is from the most important books regarding the life of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم).
5. Al-Wāqidī (d. 207H) collected a lot of narrations about the battles but the ‘ulamā’ criticised him because of his status in his narrations. Meaning that his narrations were considered weak. Al-Imām adh-Dhahabī says, “Al-Wāqidī collected large amounts of occurrences in the life of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and he mixed the skinny with the fat (i.e., he muddled everything up) and he mixed normal wooden beads with pearls (i.e., he had no distinction in his narrations).”¹⁷ So his collection of history and life of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) is lacking in authenticity. It has various

¹⁷ Sīr A’lām an-Nublā’: 9/404

weak narrations, so the ‘ulamā’ have not used this book as a main source due to that. However, scholars who came after have taken those narrations and authenticated some of that which he collected in his book.

6. Then came his student Muḥammad b. Sa’d who has a section in his *Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā* (a book of history and Ḥadīth) about the life of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and the ‘ulamā’ praised this.

The Path of the Scholars of Ḥadīth as it Relates to the Life and Biography of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم)

(صلى الله عليه وسلم)

This is important for the student of knowledge to be aware of, that the scholars of Ḥadīth made effort in transcribing the life of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم).

1. The first path was (as mentioned before) the collection of aḥādīth, jawāmī‘, masānīd and chains of narrations in collections of ḥadīth such as Bukhārī, Muslim, Sunan Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī, Nasā’ī, Ibn Mājah and the Musnad of al-Imām Aḥmad.
2. The second effort of the ‘ulamā’ of Ḥadīth was something called *Dalā’il an-Nubuwwah*. These narrations specifically about the proofs and signs of the messengership of Muḥammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم). This is the correct term for it as mentioned by Shaykhul-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah (رحمه الله) in *Al-Jawāb aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*¹⁸, where he says that these types of narrations are proofs and signs and evidences of the Prophethood of Muḥammad (رحمه الله).

¹⁸ 4/67

From the first of the books written and collected on the signs of the Prophethood of Muḥammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) was *Dalā'il an-Nubuwwah* by Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Firyābī (d. 212H), who was from the scholars of Ḥadīth, a trustworthy narrator.

This increases the īmān of anyone who yearns for it. This is a very important collection, and Imām Muqbil (رحمه الله) authenticated and collected these narrations also in his own *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Musnad min Dalā'il an-Nubuwwah* where he collected authentic chains and narrations about the signs of the Prophethood of Muḥammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم).

3. *Kutub ash-Shamā'il*. This is a beautiful collection of narrations about the qualities of the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم). 'Shamā'il', meaning the qualities of the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) as it relates to his physical attributes, his manners, and his characteristics. They mention how he was, how he spoke, the clothes he wore, how he smiled, how he walked, his favourite weapon, his favourite shield, his armoury, his favourite clothing, his teeth, his physical appearance (صلى الله عليه وسلم). The most fundamental book authored in this regard is *Ash-Shamā'il al-Muḥammadiyyah* by Abī 'Īsā Muḥammad b. Sūrah at-Tirmidhī (d. 209H). This is the most popular collection on the topic of the qualities of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم). He mentioned 50 chapters and comprising of more than 400 narrations about the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) as it relates to his attributes, his character and his description, which is a beautiful collection that indeed the student of knowledge should focus on when studying the life of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم).

4. *Kutub al-Khaṣā'is*. This deals with the exclusivity of the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم).

What do we mean by Khaṣā'is?

- Those affairs that are exclusive/specific for him (صلى الله عليه وسلم) in comparison to the other Prophets and Messengers.
- The exclusive nature of the ummah of Muḥammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) as it relates to previous nations, particularly the affair of ghanīmah (the booty/spoils of war) for example, which is specific for the ummah of Muḥammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم).
- Those affairs that are specifically for him (صلى الله عليه وسلم) as it relates to his ummah. For example, at-Ta‘addud, which means that he can marry more than four wives.

And from the best collection of this is *Ghāyatus-Sūl fī Khaṣā’iṣir-Rasūl* by Ibn al-Mulaqqin d.804H (رحمه الله).

Some Principles and Rules that the Student Studying Sīrah Should Hold Tight to

There are many, but the fundamental rules are three:

1. The student of knowledge must understand that when studying the life of the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم), it is not about fables. Rather, you are studying the life of the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) so you have to study it with a scholastic mentality. Meaning, you are going to extrapolate benefits taken from the life of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم). A very good book regarding this is *Zādul-Ma’ād* of al-Imām Ibn al-Qayyim (رحمه الله). In this book, he mentions various stories and occurrences that happened in the time of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and then he extrapolated the benefits and rulings that can be taken from them. He compiled this in six volumes and wrote it whilst upon his donkey on a journey.

The books of *sīrah* can be categorised into three:

- *Sard at-Tārīkhī*, which is mentioning the occurrences as they happened.
- *At-Ta'lif al-Mawḍū'ī*: this is about specific aspects of the *sīrah* of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم). For example, books that specifically mention the signs of Prophethood, the characteristics of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and also the exclusivity of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم).
- *At-Taḥlīl*, which is the extrapolation and benefits taken from the *sīrah*. For example, taking benefits from Badr, from Uḥud, from Khadaq, from the Faṭḥ, and the death of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم).

Ibn al-Qayyim combined *Ta'lif al-Mawḍū'ī* with the others, making it a comprehensive collection. He mentions the merits of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) in certain aspects and he also goes into the detail as it relates to the benefits that we can take from the life of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم).

The 'ulamā' have said that his initial intention objective was to document the guidance and life of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم), but due to his vast knowledge, he mentions the prophetic medicine, affairs of *aḥkām* (acts of worship), the purification of the soul and heart, and other affairs.

Zādul-Ma'ād was summarised by Shaykhul-Islām Muḥammad b. 'Abdul-Wahhāb (رحمه الله) and it is called *Mukhtaṣar Zādul-Ma'ād*.

2. The student must realise that the main affair in the life of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) was a dispute/contest between Tawḥīd and Shirk, from beginning to end. This has to be in our minds when we study the *sīrah*. This is why in *Zādul-Ma'ād* Ibn al-Qayyim

(رحمه الله) focused on this, and likewise al-Imām Muḥammad b. ‘Abdul-Wahhāb (رحمه الله) in his summarised biography of the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم), and also Ibn Taymiyyah (رحمه الله) in various places discussing life of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم).

Allāh (سبحانه وتعالى) says,

﴿وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُولًا أَنْ أَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ﴾

“And verily, We have sent among every Ummah (community, nation) a Messenger (proclaiming): ‘Worship Allāh (Alone), and avoid (or keep away from) Ṭaghūt (all false deities, etc. i.e. do not worship Ṭaghūt besides Allāh).” [Sūrah an-Naḥl 16:36]

We have to keep this as a focal point in our minds when we are studying the life of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم).

3. Speaking about the life of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) is indeed a category of speech regarding his Sunnah, and lying in that is tantamount to lying about the Sunnah of the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم). The Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) warned against this in the ḥadīth of Abī Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه), “Whoever lies against me intentionally, then let him have his place/seal in the Hellfire.”¹⁹ Therefore, when studying the life of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) we have to authenticate and remember that lying regarding his life (صلى الله عليه وسلم) is lying regarding his Sunnah.

This is why the ‘ulamā’ of Ḥadīth place emphasis on the isnād in all aspects as it relates to the Sunnah of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم). And this is from the affairs that make

¹⁹ Al-Bukhārī: no.1294 & Muslim: no.1

this ummah distinct from other nations. Ibn Ḥibbān (رحمه الله) mentioned that from the specific characteristics of this ummah are three:

1. An-Naḥw (Arabic grammar). No religion has the likes of the Arabic language except al-Islām.
2. An-Nasab (lineage): No religion preserves the lineage like the ummah of Muḥammad (the Muslims).
3. Al-Isnād (the chains of narration). The rules of the chains of narration: who said what? When it was said? Did the narrators meet? Is the one narrating a trustworthy narrator? We have a narration from ‘Abdullāh b. al-Mubārak (رحمه الله) and Imām Muslim mentions it, where he said, “The similitude of the one that is seeking an affair in his religion without isnād is like an individual who is trying to climb up the roof without stairs.”²⁰ Even in the affair of sīrah, the student of knowledge has to focus on authentic narrations and make sure that what is ascribed to him (صلى الله عليه وسلم) is authentic.

The Books a Student of Knowledge Should Start with in Studying Sīrah

1. *Mukhtaṣar as-Sīrah* (the Summarisation of the Life of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم)) by Muḥammad b. ‘Abdul-Waḥhāb (رحمه الله). His methodology in this book is tremendous. He has taken a lot of it from the sīrah of Ibn Hishām, which we mentioned previously. He extrapolates benefits from the life of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم). This book has a very good introduction, where the author mentions the state of Jahiliyyah (the pre-Islāmic period) and also the importance of opposing the people of Jahiliyyah

²⁰ Sharaf Aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth: p.42

regarding their beliefs, their etiquettes, etc., and he focuses greatly on the affair of Tawḥīd, as we have previously studied.

This is an important book that the brothers and sisters should study with their families. It is published in one volume.

2. *Sīratun-Nabawiyyah* by al-Imām Ibn Kathīr (رحمه الله). Al-‘Allāmah Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ al-‘Uthaymīn (رحمه الله) was asked about the best book to study on the life of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and he said, “The best book to go back to regarding the life of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) is *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah* by Ibn Kathīr. Because he (the author) is a scholar of Ḥadīth; he is precise. It is from the best books written as it relates to the Prophets.” And here specifically, we are talking about the life of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم).

And if you remember, we said regarding it that the first chapter was about the stories of the Prophets. But also in it is a section on the life of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) that has become an independent book, which the ‘ulamā’ have advised us to refer to.

So these are the two books I advise my beloved brothers and sisters to focus on. Undoubtedly, when we look back to today’s lecture, we can see the importance of the book by Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah*. We must have this book in our libraries. The best print is the Dārul-Hijrah copy with the checking of at-Turkī (around 21/22 volumes).

والحمد لله رب العالمين