

them by heart - all sound (sahîha) - and 4,000 falsified ones." [Narrated by al-Khatîb in al-Jâmi' li Akhlâq al-Râwî (2:380-381 #1832-1833).] He did not reach the same stature in fiqh. Al-Bayhaqî and others narrate that he unsuccessfully debated al-Shâfi'î on a legal question, as a result of which the latter disapproved of his title as the "jurisprudent of Khurâsân." To a Jahmî scholar who said: "I disbelieve in a Lord that descends from one heaven to another heaven," Ibn Râhûyah replied: "I believe in a Lord that does what He wishes." [Narrated by al-Dhahabî who identifies the scholar as Ibrâhîm ibn (Hishâm) Abî Sâlih. in Mukhta.ar al-'Uluw (p. 191 #234).] Al-Bayhaqî comments: "Ishâq ibn Ibrâhîm al-Hanzalî made it clear, in this report, that he considers the Descent (al-nuzûl) one of the Attributes of Action (min sifât al-fî'l). Secondly, he spoke of a descent without 'how'. This proves he did not hold displacement (al-intiqâl) and movement from one place to another (al-zawâl) concerning it." [See post titled, "The 'Descent' of Allâh Most High".] Sources: Ibn Abî Ya'lâ, Tabaqât al-Hanâbila (1:6, 1:184); al-Bayhaqî, Manâqib al-Shâfi'î (1:213) and al-Asmâ' wa al-Sifât (2:375-376 #951); al-Dhahabî, Siyar (9:558 #1877); Ibn al-Subkî, Tabaqât al-Shâfi'iyya al-Kubrâ (2:89-90, 9:81).

36. Narrated by Abû Ya'lâ in Tabaqât al-Hanâbila (1:329) and cited by Shaykh Abû Ghudda in his introduction to Muhammad al-Shaybânî's Muwatta' and his short masterpiece al-Isnâd min al-Dîn (p. 68).

37. Narrated by al-Râmahurmuzî in al-Muh.addith al-Fâsil (p. 560).

38. Ibn 'Abd al-Salâm, al-Fatâwâ al-Mawsiliyya (p. 132-134).

39. In al-Sakhâwî, al-Jawâhir wa al-Durar (p. 18).

40. Al-Sakhâwî, al-Jawâhir wa al-Durar (p. 20-23).

41. Narrated from Ibn Abî Khaythama by Abû Nu'aym in the Hilya (4:225) and Ibn Rajab in Sharh. 'Ilal al-Tirmidhî (1:413).

42. In Ibn Rajab, Sharh. 'Ilal al-Tirmidhî (1:413).

43. In Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, Jâmi' Bayân al-'Ilm (2:130).

44. Narrated by Abû Nu'aym in the Hilya (9:3).

45. Narrated by al-Khatîb in al-Jâmi' li Akhlâq al-Râwî (2:109).

46. Abû Ghudda, al-Isnâd min al-Dîn (p. 68). He means by his remarks al-Albânî and others of his ilk. Abû Ghudda's student, Shaykh Muhammad 'Awwâma, listed several examples of this rule of the Salaf in his Athar al-Hadîth al-Sharîf fi Ikhtilâf al-'A'immat al-Fuqahâ' ("The Mark of the Noble Hadîth in the Differences of the Imâms of Jurisprudence").

21. Cited by al-Dhahabī in the Siyar (al-Arna'ūt. ed. 9:158, 12:328-329).
22. Cf. al-Dhahabī, Tadhkirat al-Huffāz. (1:307) and Ibn 'Hajar in Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb (11:126-127).
23. In al-Sakhāwī, al-Jawāhir wa al-Durar (p. 21).
24. Ibn Rajab, Sharh. 'Ilal al-Tirmidhī (1:411).
25. Cited from Zayd ibn Abī al-Zarqa' by al-Dhahabī, Siyar (al-Arna'ūt. ed. 7:275).
26. Al-Sakhāwī, al-Jawāhir wa al-Durar (p. 20-23).
27. Narrated by al-Harawī al-Ansārī in Dhamm al-Kalām (4:139 #907).
28. In Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, Jāmi' Bayān al-'Ilm (2:175).
29. In al-Dhahabī, Tadhkirat al-Huffāz. (2:776).
30. Narrated by Ibn Abī H.ātīm in the introduction to his al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dīl (p. 293), Ibn al-Jawzī in Manāqib al-Imām Ahmad (p. 63), and al-Dhahabī in Tārīkh al-Islām (chapter on Ahmad).
31. In Muslim and the Four Sunan.
32. In al-Bukhārī and Muslim.
33. Ibn al-Subkī in Tabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyya, al-Sakhāwī in his introduction to al - Jawāhir wa al-Durar, and al-Haytamī in his Fatāwā Hadithiyya (p. 283). Something similar is narrated of Ahmad by Ibn Rajab in his Dhayl Tabaqāt al-Hanābila (1:131) and al-'Ulaymī in al-Manhaj al-Ahmad (2:208).
34. Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, Jāmi' Bayān al-'Ilm (2:160).
35. Ishāq ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Makhlad, known as Ishāq ibn Rāhūyah or Rāhawayh, Abū Ya'qūb al-Tamīmī al-Marwazī al-Hanzali (d. 238), one of the major hadīth Masters. Abū Qudāma considered him greater than Imām Ahmad in memorization of hadīth, a remarkable assessment considering Ahmad's knowledge of 700,000 to a million narrations according to his son 'Abd Allāh's and Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī's estimations. He once said of himself: "I never wrote anything except I memorized it, and I can now see before me more than 70,000 hadīths in my book"; "I know the place of 100,000 hadīths as if I were looking at them, and I memorize 70,000 of

5. In al-Fatâwâ al-Hadîthiyya (p. 283).
6. Narrated by Ibn Hibbân in the introduction to al-Majrûhîn (1:42). He then narrates from Ibn Wahb a similar statement where he adds the names of `Amr ibn al-Hârith and Ibn Mâjishûn.
7. Narrated by Ibn `Asâkir and al-Bayhaqî cf. Ibn Rajab, Sharh. al-`Ilal (1:413) and `Awwâma (p. 76).
8. Narrated by Qâdî `Iyâd.. in Tartîb al-Madârik (2:427).
9. In Ibn al-Subkî, Tabaqât al-Shâfi`iyya al-Kubrâ (2:128).
10. Narrated by al-Khatîb, al-Faqîh wal-Mutafaqqih (2:80).
11. Shaykh Ismâ`il al-Ans.ârî as quoted by `Awwâma, Athar (p. 77).
12. Ibn Hajar, Tahdhîb al-Tahdhîb (10:449-452 #817) and al-Dhahabî's Manâqib Abî Hanîfa.
13. Narrated by al-Dhahabî in Tadhkirat al-Huffâz. (1:307) and Ibn Hajar in Tahdhîb al-Tahdhîb (10:450).
14. Narrated by Ibn `Abd al-Barr in al-Intiqâ' (p. 124).
15. Narrated by al-Dhahabî in the Siyar (10:205).
16. Cf. Ibn Abî al-Wafâ, last page of the Karachi edition of al-Jawâhir al-Mudiyya.
17. In Ibn `Abd al-Barr, Jâmi` Bayân al-`Ilm (1:83-84), al-Qâdî `Iyâd.., Tartîb al-Madârik (2:62), al-Shâtibî, al-Muwâfaqât (4:97-98).
18. "The Knowledge That Benefits is That Whose Rays Expand in the Breast and Whose Veil is Lifted in the Heart." Ibn `Atâ' Allâh, Hikam (#213).
19. Siyar (10:642).
20. Narrated mursal from al-H.asan by Ibn `Asâkir in his Târîkh and al-Khatîb in al-Jâmi` li Akhlâq al-Râwî (1983 ed. 1:88 #27) cf. al-Jâmi` al-Saghîr (#9598) and Kanz (#29337).

* Ibn Abī Laylā said: "A man does not understand hadīth until he knows what to take from it and what to leave."43

ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn Mahdī, the Commander of the believers in Hadīth, said: "It is impermissible for someone to be an Imām [i.e. to be imitated] until he knows what is sound and what is unsound and until he does not take everything [sound] as evidence, and until he knows the correct way to infer knowledge [in the Religion]."44

Al-Shāfiʿī narrated that Mālik ibn Anas was told: "Ibn ʿUyayna narrates >from al-Zuhrī things you do not have!" He replied: "Why, should I narrate every single hadīth I heard? Only if I wanted to misguide people!"45

Shaykh ʿAbd al-Fattāh. Abū Ghudda mentioned some of the above examples and commented: "If the likes of Yahyā al-Qat.t.ān, Wakīʿ ibn al-Jarrāh., ʿAbd al-Razzāq, Yahyā ibn Maʿīn, and those who compare with them, did not dare enter into ijtihād and fiqh, then how rash are the claimants to ijtihād in our time! On top of it, they call the Salaf ignorant without the least shame nor modesty! Allāh is our refuge from failure."46

BLESSINGS AND PEACE ON THE PROPHET, his Family, his Companions, the Four Imāms, and those who imitate them until the Day of Judgment.

NOTES

1. Hadīth of the Prophet - Allāh bless and greet him - narrated from Muʿāwiya by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.
2. Al-Qārī, Muʿtaqad Abī Hanīfata al-Imām fī Abaway al-Rasūl ʿAlayhi al-Salāt wa al-Salām (p. 42).
3. A nearly-mass-narrated (mashhūr) sound hadīth of the Prophet - Allāh bless and greet him - reported from several Companions by al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd, Ibn Mājah, and Ahmad.
4. Ibn Abī Hātim in the introduction of al-Jarh. wa al-Taʿdīl (p. 22-23); Ibn Abī Zayd, al-Jāmiʿ fī al-Sunan (p. 118-119); Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, al-Intiqāʾ (p. 61); al-Dhahabī. See Shaykh ʿAbd al-Fattah Abū Ghudda's comments on this statement in his notes on al-Lacknawī's al-Rafʿ wa al-Takmil (2nd ed. p. 368 - 369, 3rd ed. p. 90-91).

Most Hadīth Scholars Do Not Possess Intelligence of the Hadīth

* `Abd al-Razzâq al-San`ânî, Sufyân's contemporary, was the teacher of the pillars of hadīth memorization in their time - Ahmad, Ibn Râhûyah, Ibn Ma`în, and Muhammad ibn Yahyâ al-Dhuhlî. Yet when Muhammad ibn Yazīd al-Mustamlî asked Ahmad: "Did he [`Abd al-Razzâq] possess fiqh?" Ahmad replied: "How rare is fiqh among those who know hadīth!"³⁶

* Anas ibn Sîrîn said: "I came to Kûfa and found in it 4,000 persons pursuing hadīth and 400 persons who had obtained fiqh."³⁷

* Ibn `Abd al-Salâm said: "The majority of hadīth scholars are ignorant in fiqh."³⁸ A majority of 90% according to Anas ibn Sîrîn - among the Salaf!

* Al-Dhahabî said: "The majority of the hadīth scholars have no understanding, no diligence in the actual knowledge of hadīth, and no fear of Allâh regarding it."³⁹ All of the authorities al-Dhahabî listed as "those who are imitated in Islâm" are Jurisprudents and not inerey hadīth masters.

* Al-Sakhâwî in his biography of Ibn H.ajar entitled al-Jawâhir wa al-Durar relates similar views: .

Al-Fâriqî said: "One who knows chains of hadīth but not the legal rulings derived from them cannot be counted among the Scholars of the Law." His student Ibn Abî `Asrûn (d. 585) also followed this view in his book al-Intisâr.⁴⁰

Not Every Sound Hadīth Forms Evidence

Ibrâhîm al-Nakha`î said: "Truly, I hear a hadīth, then I see what part of it applies. I apply it and leave the rest."⁴¹ Shaykh Muhammad `Awwâma said: "Meaning, what is recognized by the authorities is retained while anything odd (gharîb), anomalous (shâhdhdh), or condemned (munkar) is put aside." Yazīd ibn Abî Habîb said: "When you hear a hadīth, proclaim it; if it is recognized, [keep it,] otherwise, leave it."⁴²

He is right in what he said because pursuing the study of hadîth is other than the hadîth itself."26

Understanding the Hadîth is Superior to Knowing It

* Sufyân also said: "The explanation (tafsîr) of the hadîth is better than the hadîth."27 Another wording has: "The explanation of the hadîth is better than its audition."28 Abû `Alî al-Naysabûrî said: "We consider understanding superior to memorization."29

Ishâq ibn Râhûyah said: "I would sit in Iraq with Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Yahyâ ibn Ma`în, and our companions, rehearsing the narrations from one, two, three routes of transmission ... But when I said: What is its intent? What is its explanation? What is its fiqh? They would all remain mute except Ahmad ibn Hanbal."30

The perspicuity and fiqh of Abû Thawr among the hadîth Masters is famous. A woman stood by a gathering of scholars of hadîth comprising Yahyâ ibn Ma`în, Abû Khaythama, Khalaf ibn Salim, and others. She heard them saying: "The Prophet - Allâh bless and greet him - said," and "So-and-so narrated," and "No one other than So-and-so narrated," etc. Whereupon she asked them: "Can a woman in her menses wash the dead?" for that was her occupation. No one in the entire gathering could answer her, and they began to look at one another. Abû Thawr arrived, and they referred her to him. She asked him the same question and he said: "Yes, she can wash the dead, as per the hadîth of al-Qâsim from `A'isha: 'Your menses are not in your hand,'31 and her narration whereby she would scrub the Prophet's - Allâh bless and greet him - hair at a time she was menstruating.32 If the head of the living can be washed [by a woman in her menses], then a fortiori the dead!" Hearing this, the hadîth scholars said: "Right! So-and-so narrated it, and So-and-so told us, and we know it from such - and - such a chain," and they plunged back into the narrations and chains of transmission. The woman said: "Where were you all until now?"33

* Ibn `Abd al-Barr cites Imâm Ahmad as saying: "From where does Yahyâ ibn Ma`în know al-Shâfi`î? He does not know al-Shâfi`î nor has any idea what al-Shâfi`î says!"34 Ibn Râhûyah similarly conceded defeat before al-Shâfi`î's jurisprudence although himself reputed for fiqh.35

my Lord." 15 Mis'ar ibn Kidâm said the same with regard to Imâm Abû Hanîfa. 16

Knowledge Is Not Memorization but a Light

Fiqh is the context of Mâlik's statement: "Wisdom and knowledge are a light by which Allâh guides whomever He pleases; it does not consist in knowing many things" 17 and al-Shâfi'î's: "Knowledge is what benefits. Knowledge is not what one has memorized." 18 Similarly, al-Dhahabî defined knowledge in Islâm (al-'ilm) as "Not the profusion of narration, but a light which Allâh casts into the heart. Its condition is followership (ittibâ') and the flight away from egotism (hawâ) and innovation." 19 All this elucidates al-Hasan al-Basrî report that the Prophet - Allâh bless and greet him - said: "The purpose and energy of the Ulema is towards addressing needs while the purpose and energy of fools is to narrate" (himmat al-'ulamâ' al-ri'âya wa himmat al-sufahâ' al-riwâya). 20

The Hadîth of the Jurists is Preferable to That of the Non-Jurists

Wakî preferred long-chained narrations through the fuqahâ' to short-chained ones through non-fuqahâ' and said: "The hadîth current among the jurists is better than the hadîth that is current among the hadîth scholars." 21 This is a foundational rule in the School of Imâm Abû Hanîfa. Like Yahyâ al-Qattân, Wakî did not make ijtihâd but followed the positions of Abû Hanîfa. 22

Al-A'mash (Abû Muhammad Sulaymân ibn Mahrân al-Asadî the Tâbi'î 61/-148) also said: "The hadîth that jurists circulate among themselves is better than that which hadîth narrators circulate among themselves." 23

* Ibn Rajab said that Abû Dâwûd in his Sunan was more concerned with the jurisprudence of the hadîth than with its chains of transmission. 24

Knowing the Hadîth is Different From Practicing It

Sufyân al-Thawrî used to say to the hadîth scholars: "Come forward, O weak ones!" 25 He also said: "If hadîth were a good thing it would have vanished just as all goodness has vanished," and "Pursuing the study of hadîth is not part of the preparation for death, but a disease that preoccupies people." Al-Dhahabî commented: "He said this verbatim.

or it may in fact consist in discarded evidence due to some other [abrogating] evidence. None can meet the responsibility of knowing this except those who deepened their learning and obtained fiqh." Imâm al-Haytamî said something similar.⁵ Ibn Wahb is also reported to say: "I met three hundred and sixty learned people of knowledge but, without Mâlik and al-Layth, I would have strayed."⁶ Another versions states: "Were it not for Mâlik ibn Anas and al-Layth ibn Sa'd I would have perished; I used to think everything that is [authentically] related from the Prophet - Allâh bless and greet him - must be put into practice."⁷ Another version has: "I gathered a lot of hadîths and they drove me to confusion. I would consult Mâlik and al-Layth and they would say to me, 'take this and leave this.'"⁸ Ibn Wahb had compiled 120,000 narrations according to Ahmad ibn Sâlih.⁹ Hence, Ibn 'Uqda replied to a man who had asked him about a certain narration: "Keep such hadîths to a minimum for, truly, they are unsuitable except for those who know their interpretation. Yahyâ ibn Sulayman narrated from Ibn Wahb that he heard Mâlik say: 'Many of these hadîths are [a cause for] misguidance; some hadîths were narrated by me and I wish that for each of them I had been flogged with a stick twice. I certainly no longer narrate them!'"¹⁰ By his phrase, "Many of these hadîths are misguidance," Mâlik means their adducing them in the wrong place and meaning, because the Sunna is wisdom and wisdom is to place each thing in its right context.¹¹

Ibn al-Mubâarak said: "If Allâh had not rescued me with Abû Hanîfa and Sufyân [al-Thawrî] I would have been like the rest of the common people." Al-Dhahabî relates it as: "I would have been an innovator."¹²

The Imâms of Hadîth Defer to the Imâms of Fiqh

Imâm Ahmad's teacher, Yahyâ ibn Sa'id al-Qattân, despite his foremost status as the Master of hadîth Masters and expert in narrator - recommendation and discreditation, would not venture to extract legal rulings from the evidence but followed in this the fiqh of Abû Hanîfa as he explicitly declared: "We do not belie Allâh. We never heard better than the juridical opinion (ra'i) of Abû Hanîfa, and we followed most of his positions."¹³ Similarly, Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allâh ibn 'Abd al-Hakam said: "If it were not for al-Shâfi'î I would not have known how to reply to anyone. Because of him I know what I know."¹⁴ As for Muhammad ibn Yahyâ al-Dhuhli (d. 258) of Khurâsân, whom Abû Zur'a ranked above Imâm Muslim and who is considered an Amîr al-Mu'minîn fi al-Hadîth ("Commander of the Faithful in the Science of Hadîth"), he never considered himself a non-muqallid but said: "I have made Ahmad ibn Hanbal an Imâm in all that stands between me and

The Superiority of Fiqh Over Hadith

by Shaykh Gibril F. Haddad

{He gives wisdom to whomever He will, and whoever receives wisdom receives immense good} (2:269). "He for whom Allâh desires great good, He grants him (superlative) understanding in the Religion (yufaqqihhu/yufqihhu fî al-dîn). I only distribute and it is Allâh Who gives. That group shall remain in charge of the Order of Allâh, unharmed by those who oppose them, until the coming of the Order of Allâh."¹

Imâm al-Shâfi'î said: "You [the scholars of hadîth] are the pharmacists but we [the jurists] are the physicians." Mullâ `Alî al-Qârî commented: "The early scholars said: The hadîth scholar without knowledge of fiqh is like a seller of drugs who is no physician: he has them but he does not know what to do with them; and the fiqh scholar without knowledge of hadîth is like a physician without drugs: he knows what constitutes a remedy, but does not have it available."²

Imâm Ahmad is related by his students Abû Tâlib and Humayd ibn Zanjûyah to say: "I never saw anyone adhere more to hadîth than al-Shâfi'î. No one preceded him in writing down hadîth in a book." The meaning of this is that al-Shâfi'î possessed the intelligence of hadîth after which Ahmad sought, as evidenced by the latter's statement: "How rare is fiqh among those who know hadîth!" This is a reference to the hadîth: "It may be one carries understanding (fiqh) - meaning: memorizes the proof-texts of fiqh - without being a person of understanding (faqîh)."³ The Salaf and Khalaf elucidated this rule in many famous statements showing that, for all the exalted status of the Muhaddith, yet the Faqîh excels him:

Hadîth Misguides Those Devoid of Fiqh

Ibn Abî Zayd al-Mâlikî reports Sufyân ibn `Uyayna as saying: "Hadîth is a pitfall (madilla) except for the fuqahâ'," and Mâlik's companion `Abd Allâh ibn Wahb said: "Hadîth is a pitfall except for the Ulema. Every memorizer of hadîth that does not have an Imâm in fiqh is misguided (dâll), and if Allâh had not rescued us with Mâlik and al-Layth [ibn Sa'd], we would have been misguided."⁴ Ibn Abî Zayd comments: "He [Sufyân] means that other than the jurists might take something in its external meaning when, in fact, it is interpreted in the light of another hadîth or some evidence which remains hidden to him;